

Oh, no! There goes...

THE VOICE OF DOOM

...the Farewell Issue!

#100

October 2, 1984

Circulation: 112

by BRUX



"A Fluke of the Universe"

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The Voice of Doom was a journal of postal Diplomacy published every now and then by Bruce Linsey, 73 Ashuelot St., Apt. 3, Dalton, MA 01226. Phone (413) 684-0567. Standbys are still wanted. There are no game openings. Subscriptions aren't accepted.

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The deadline for all games contained herein is October 26, 1984. From now on, the deadline date will appear with the game reports like it does in normal zines.

This zine was dedicated to my dog Trouble, who licked dirty feet.

My thanks to John Pack's computer, which provided me with the artwork on page 1. And now...

The End of the Road

In the unlikely event that you couldn't tell it from the front cover, or in most cases the attached sub refund check, this is the grand finale issue of The Voice of Doom.

My decision to fold was made about two and a half years ago, when the zine was numbered in the early sixties. I decided that I would wind it down to issue #100, and then call it quits. My reason for this decision was simple. Many of you know me as Bruce-the-publisher, Bruce-the-GM, Bruce-the-hobbyist, or whatever. You know that part of me. However, there is another part of me too: Bruce-the-person. Bruce-the-person needs more time for himself, because being Bruce-the-publisher was a huge drain on my time, money, and most importantly, my social life. I realized well over two years ago that publishing this zine was seriously impinging on many of my real-life needs, and that I ought to start thinking about the day I would end it and pursue a more "normal" life. Thus I planned out a timetable which I have followed carefully, so that my 100th issue would coincide with my fifth annish, and that would be my last issue.

Does the above sound at all negative? It isn't meant to. I have always enjoyed publishing this little ol' rag, and still do. Just glance through my issues of, say, the past year, and I think it will be obvious that my enthusiasm never died. I just have to get on with other things, some of them within the hobby, but the most important ones in my own life.

There were a few unavoidable signals that VD was folding, but nobody seemed to pick up on them. If I were going to continue this project, I would have opened another round of games at least six months ago. The last round of openings here was announced in #57, and since then I opened only the RIGEL game, for two reasons: (1) I predicted (incorrectly) that all of the other games would be over before issue #100, and I didn't want to be left with no games going, and (2) there happened to be several enthusiastic newcomers to VD in early 1983; they sounded eager to play, and I wanted to accomodate them. But, I would under normal circumstances have announced general openings some time ago.

A second hint, one that I feared might really give it away, was my decision to run an early 1984 Doemie of the Year contest. It was either that, or skip the contest this year entirely, which of course I didn't want to do.

I decided early on that I would keep my upcoming fold a secret. I hope that nobody feels let down by this. Since I figured that some people might just be waiting to join my next game, I made it a point on several occasions to mention that there wouldn't be any openings in the foreseeable future, and that people should subscribe for the reading material only. Most publishers either fade out without warning, leaving players and subbers stranded, or announce their decision to fold and then wind down to a warehouse zine. I wanted to go out with a big bang instead of a whimper.

Nonetheless, I shared this secret with a tiny number of close friends. Alex Lord has known of my decision to fold for over two years, almost since the time she started writing her column. I told Joan Extrom about it very early this year, in February or March, I think. I told Steve Knight in June, and very recently, I told a handful of others, for various reasons. All were sworn to secrecy, and I thank them for keeping my secret.

I suppose I should mention that the current round of feuds played no role in VD's fold. It's unfortunate that so many nasty things are occurring in the hobby right now; some people are bound to think that this is the reason I'm calling it quits. If anyone out there wants to believe that, I suppose it doesn't make much difference. But if it does matter to anyone, feel free to check with Joan and/or Steve. The ugliness hadn't started at all at the time I told Joan, and was barely on the horizon when I told Steve. Both are of course free to discuss it with anyone now.

For the many of you who are my friends and who have enjoyed the zine, please don't feel sad that I'm folding. I don't want you to be sad about it. Rather, please share with me my joy that (1) I fulfilled my goal of publishing a successful zine; a vehicle that provided many of us with much enjoyment, and (2) now that it's over, I will have the time to get on with other things that I want to do. I have no regrets about my initial decision to start publishing, and equally no regrets about my decision to stop publishing. Both of these decisions were of a positive nature.

In addition to the "usual" stuff, I have reprinted quite heavily in this issue from Randolph Smyth's old issues of Fol Si Fie. Over four years ago, I asked Randolph to send me copies of his old articles. He was kind enough to do this, and told me I was welcome to use them. I trust that I'm not treading too deeply into Mark Berch's territory by doing this, but I've decided to run several of them for you readers. For one thing, I doubt that more than a dozen of you were readers of Fol Si Fie when these articles were first published, so the overwhelming majority of you won't have seen them. More importantly, though, I truly feel that Randolph's articles on the game of Diplomacy need to be preserved, and I wanted you, my friends, to have them. They aren't everyone's cup of tea; I know, for instance, that Joan has little or no interest in strategy articles. For those of you in the same boat, well, there's plenty of other stuff here. But for those of you who share my opinion that these articles are a valuable part of the hobby's literature, here they are. In my opinion, there is nobody in the hobby who shares Randolph's skills at writing about the game. I hope that many of you will enjoy these articles as much as I have.

Also in this issue, of course, will be my "winding down" stuff: an account of what I owe everyone, a look at my future in the hobby, a list of zines I recommend so that the handful of you who receive only VD will have the opportunity to stay active in the hobby, and so on. I think I'll get on with some of that stuff right away, and get it out of the way. Be that as it may, I wanted to give all of you something to remember me by, and I hope that this farewell issue will fill the bill. So, one last time, onward we go.

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So, down to business. Where do we go from here?

To my paying subscribers: your sub refund is enclosed. A schedule of what I owe each of you will follow. If you're in the U.S. or Canada, your refund is by check. My paying subbers in Europe (Ivo Bouwman and Steve Howe) are getting cash, since I think this will make it easier for them. If you're one of the few whose sub credit expired with this issue, then of course there is no refund enclosed.

To my traders: Obviously, all trades are hereby cut. I will subscribe to some of your zines through the International Subscription Exchange in the near future.

To my players: You know I would never orphan your games! All games still running will be carried to conclusion in a subzine that I will be running in Europa Express. The game results will go out on flyers to the players, and then reprinted in the subzine. That way, the press and endgame statements will still reach a wide audience. I have already worked out the arrangements with Gary Coughlan. The subzine will be pretty much games only, with maybe a smattering of Hobbytalk or an occasional letter, or whatever. I do not plan to continue it after all the games have finished and the endgame statements have been published. Oh, the subzine's name? The Echo of Doom, of course. Thanks to Mark Berch for that.

To the publishers of the North American zines with which I had a mutual sub: I wish to keep receiving your zines. Please continue to send them until my sub credit runs out, and I'll be renewing my subs to most (maybe all) of them at the appropriate time.

To the people on the VD standby list: I will assume that it's still OK for me to call you as a standby as my games wind down. If there is anyone on the list who wants off, please let me know. If there is anyone out there who wants to be added to the list, please let me know. I will keep extra copies of all the game reports on file for those of you who might want them if called. There is no shortage of players willing to stand by in my games, so I don't foresee any problems.

The VD standby list right now consists of: Peter Ansoff, Konrad Baumeister, Doug Beyerlein, Edi Birsan, Don Burd, Dave Carter, Jim Chatfield, Pat Conlon, Cathy Gunning, John Davies, Michael Ditz, Mark Duarte, Charo Edison, Mike Ehl, Greg Ellis, Mark Frueh, Dan Gorham, Ty Hare, Bob Howerton, Edmund Jedry, Mark Johnson, John Kador, Chuck Kaplan, Matt Kazur, Mike Kettman, Steve Knight, George Leritte, Jerry Lucas, Jim Makuc, Conrad Minshall, Pat Pakel, John Pack, "Jane Proskin", Jeff Punches, Michael Quirk, Paul Rauterberg, Bob Sweeney, Don (Massachusetts) Williams, Rob Wittmond, G.E. Blender, James Early, Dan Young, Bob Foote, and Nelson Heintzman.

That should answer all questions of where do we go from here. If anyone has any further questions, I'll be glad to answer them. Now, where do I go from here, in terms of my hobby involvement? I plan to remain active in the following ways.

As noted above, I will be publishing a zine for the purpose of finishing out my games.

Also as noted above, I will be subscribing to many zines still, although I won't be active in many of them.

After the RIGEL game ends, I plan to join the RIGEL II game, since that is still being planned. We haven't discussed the question yet of who is going to GM it. There is also a chance that I'll join one more game, but that's doubtful. One is plenty.

I plan to continue distributing Supernova, and urge all publishers to give it an occasional plug.

Depending on how much energy I have for it, I may be contributing to other zines from time to time. Paul Rauterberg has already told me that he'd like me to write for Midlife Crisis, and I'd be proud to make an occasional appearance in that forum. I may stay active in a few other zines as well.

I will still attend a few cons per year, schedule and money permitting. It'll be good to see some of you on these occasions. BRUXCON is still on, of course, and I'm still shooting for KabinKon next summer. More on these elsewhere, I hope.

Oh, all right. More on these now, since I have the space here. BRUXCON is going to run from the evening of Friday, December 28, through to Tuesday, New Year's Day. All Doomies (yes, you're still Doomies!) are invited and welcome to attend for all or part of this time. Please let me know in advance if you plan to come. We will concentrate on four days of good, old-fashioned game-playing and fun. Mark Paul is local to me now and will be attending. He owns hundreds of games and will bring some of them. Others who have expressed an interest already, or who I would expect may attend: Ty Hare, Nelson Heintzman, Mike Barmo, Eric Kane, Jim Makuc, perhaps Steve Hutton, Brian Lorber and maybe some of the other Great Neck people, Kevin Stone, maybe Brad Wilson, maybe Alex Lord, I'll have to ask Don Williams since he lives nearby, and maybe some others. G'mon and whoop it up with us! There is only one house rule at a BRUXCON: no smoking. Please let me hear from you.

KabinKon: Steve Knight, Mike Barmo, and Paul Rauterberg have all expressed potential interest in going to Lake George next summer. Is there anyone else who might be interested? Again, non-smokers only, please. I would like to make definite plans about this as early as possible.

Two additions to the above discussion of my hobby activities: I plan to remain active on the Don Miller Memorial Award and International Diplomacy Hall of Fame committees, and -- FLASH!! -- Randolph Smyth has chosen me (from among all of the one applicants) to take over the running of the RuneStone Poll next year. I'm highly enthusiastic about this, and certain I can do a good job. More on this elsewhere in the issue.

Now for the sub refunds. The number by your name indicates the issue with which your sub would have expired, including credit for submissions to this issue. Your refund should equal that amount, times 50%. If you feel that I have made an error in your refund, please let me hear it. Please cash your checks promptly. (Er, subtract 100 from the number of issues, of course...)

|                    |     |                  |     |                  |     |
|--------------------|-----|------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| Robert Aheson      | 105 | Ty Hare          | 110 | Marc Peters      | 106 |
| Chuff Afflerbach   | 118 | Nelson Heintzman | 110 | James Petersen   | 105 |
| Jeff Albrecht      | 107 | Roy Henricks     | 100 | Jeff Puches      | 102 |
| Steve Angle        | 104 | Bob Howerton     | 108 | Michael Quirk    | 104 |
| Peter Ansoff       | 157 | Steve Hutton     | 110 | Paul Rauterberg  | 108 |
| Mike Bazno         | 101 | Jaap Jacobs      | T   | Rich Reilly      | 114 |
| Konrad Baumgartner | 100 | Edmund Jedry     | 113 | Jeff Richmond    | 101 |
| Mark Berch         | 133 | Mark Johnson     | 102 | Glover Rogerson  | T   |
| Doug Beyerlein     | 104 | John Kador       | 105 | Ben Schilling    | 109 |
| Pete Birks         | T   | Eric Kane        | 113 | Rob Schmunk      | 124 |
| Edi Birsan         | 103 | Matt Kazur       | 105 | Randolph Sayth   | 116 |
| Ivo Bouzman        | 113 | John Kelley      | 134 | Ronald Spitzer   | 108 |
| Ren Brown          | 114 | Mike Kettman     | 110 | Kevin Stone      | 101 |
| Ronald Brown       | 113 | Dave Kleiman     | 114 | Bob Sweeney      | 115 |
| Don Burd           | 109 | Steve Knight     | 130 | Pete Tamlyn      | T   |
| Dave Carter        | 108 | Richard Kovalcik | 100 | Garry Thompson   | 115 |
| Geoff Challenger   | T   | Victor Melucci   | 108 | Lynn Torkelsch   | 102 |
| Pat Conlon         | 123 | Michael Lee      | 106 | Pierre Touchette | 107 |
| Gary Coughlan      | 145 | George Lexitte   | 103 | Rod Walker       | 104 |
| Brian Creese       | T   | Mark Lew         | 117 | James Wall       | 105 |
| Cathy Cunning      | 100 | Dave Lincoln     | 112 | Don Williams     | 104 |
| John Davies        | 115 | Brian Lorber     | 107 | Duck Williams    | 107 |
| Fred Davis         | 108 | Alex Lord        | 103 | Jim Williams     | 108 |
| Don Del Grande     | 110 | Jerry Lucas      | 107 | Rob Wittmond     | 118 |
| Michael Ditz       | 103 | Mark Luedi       | 100 | James Woodson    | 103 |
| Mark Duarte        | 112 | Tom Luna         | 107 | Dan Young        | 105 |
| Charlo Edison      | 147 | John MacFarlane  | 110 | Brad Wilson      | 101 |
| Mike Ehli          | 115 | Jim Makuc        | 107 | John Mirassou    | 101 |
| Greg Ellis         | 126 | John Marsden     | T   | Simon Billenness | T   |
| Joan Exstrom       | 100 | Mike Mazzer      | 106 | Conrad Minshall  | 103 |
| Nick Felella       | 107 | John Michalstet  | 107 | Rob Winslow      | 104 |
| John Ferguson      | 105 | Ralph Morton     | 122 | Steve Howe       | 118 |
| Bob Foote          | 100 | Jeff Noto        | 113 | James Early      | 108 |
| Mark Frueh         | 102 | Bob Osuch        | 113 | Rob Robinson     | 103 |
| Ruth Glaspey       | 104 | John Pack        | 122 | Derek Caws       | T   |
| Dan Gorham         | 100 | Pat Pakel        | 103 | Ron Galioia      | 108 |
| Jake Halverstadt   | 119 | Mark Paul        | 102 | Stephen Dycus    | 109 |
| Garry Hamlin       | 104 | Larry Peery      | 104 |                  |     |

Total number of issues remaining in people's subs = 1023

Total amount of sub refunds = \$511.50

One more note to my players: you do not have to sub to Europa Express to continue playing (though I don't know why you wouldn't want to anyway). Since the games will go by flyer, you will not need to see the results in EE. Also, you will receive your NMR fees back, or your 3-issue credit for standing by, at the appropriate time, in equivalent cash amounts.

Let no one be left high and dry by VD's fold! Some other zines you might want to check out if you're thinking of expanding in the hobby are as follows:

- Give Me a Weapon, Konrad Baumeister, 11416 Parkview Lane, Hales Corners, WI 53130
- Diplomacy Digest, Mark Berch, 492 Naylor Place, Alexandria, VA 22304
- Murdring Ministers, Ron Brown, 1528 El Sereno Place, Bakersfield, CA 93304
- Sleepless Knights, Dave Carter, 118 Horsham Ave., Willowdale, Ontario, CANADA M2N 1Z9
- Europa Express, Gary Coughlan, 4614 Martha Cole Lane, Memphis, TN 38118
- Bushwacker, Fred Davis, 1427 Clairidge Rd., Baltimore, MD 21207
- Festungs Hof, Bob Howerton, 4510 Treeline Drive, Pensacola, FL 32504
- No Fixed Address, Steve Hutton, 704 Brant St., London, Ontario, CANADA N5Y 3N1
- Anduin, Eric Kane, Box 2028, Alumni Memorial Residences, The Johns Hopkins University, Charles and 34th Streets, Baltimore, MD 21218
- The Diplomat, Dave Kleiman, 651 Fenster, Indianapolis, IN 46234
- The Concert of Europe, Michael Lee, 3480 Danna Ct., Eugene, OR 97405
- Winsome-Losesome, Judy Winsome, 3902 Lakemead Way, Redwood City, CA 94062
- Thirty Miles of Bad Road, Mark Luedi, PO Box 2424, Bloomington, IN 47402
- So I Lied, Marc and Debi Peters, 29 E. Wilson #202, Madison, WI 53703
- Frobozz, Jeff Richmond, 3313 Platt Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48104
- Midlife Crisis, Paul Rauterberg, 4922 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53208
- Cathy's Ramblings, Cathy Canning, 1526 N. Lawler Ave., Chicago, IL 60651
- Fol Si Fie, Randolph Smyth, 212 Aberdeen St. SE, Medicine Hat, Alberta, CANADA T1A 0R1
- Erehwon and Diplomacy World, Rod Walker, 1273 Crest Drive, Encinitas, CA 92024
- Raging Main, James Woodson, PO Box 18645, Corpus Christi, TX 78418

For variety, sub to a British zine or three through the International Subscription Exchange, run by Steve Knight, 11905 Winterthur Lane, Reston, VA 22091. Specify exactly what your money's for. Some good British zines are: Denver Glent, by Glover Rogerson; Home of the Brave, by Geoff Challenger; Inflammatory Material, by Simon Billenness; Greatest Hits, by Pete Birks; NMR!, by Brian Creese; Ode, by John Marsden. Screw those British addresses; they'd take up the whole page. Just write to Knight.

All of the above are personal recommendations. For best reading material, try EE. For best articles about Diplomacy, go for DD, DW, and FSF if you enjoy Randolph's stuff in this issue. For good letter columns (VD style, not mashed up), go for Anduin (if it hasn't folded) and No Fixed Address. For variants, Bushwacker. For great GMing, get EE, The Diplomat, or (I predict) Frobozz.

I personally recommend you avoid: Retaliation, North Sealth West George, Politesse or Feudesse or whatever. Wrobel calls his smear sheet, Whitestonia, and Graustark. Or, if you can't avoid them, take 'em with a grain of salt.

Hobbytalk

Many of the items herein will date back two or three months, as the last two Hobbytalk columns were curtailed for lack of room. In a Voice of Doom annish, however, the phrase "lack of room" has no meaning. So we're back in full bloom this time. And here's what's going on in the hobby's zines these past two or three months.

Command is a revival of Dennis Agosta's old zine of the same name. Dennis left the hobby shortly after I started publishing VD, so he's been away for quite a while. Send a zine for a sample to Dennis at 57 Meadow Road, Edison, NJ 08817. He has openings in five sections of regular Diplomacy. It's good to see an old zine make its comeback.

Diplomacy World #38 contains a letter from Bill Becker on the topic of whether Allan Calhamer would have allowed the support order when a unit is also ordered to hold. He is referring to Origins '83 in Detroit, when Calhamer spoke on this and several other topics, and I've heard conflicting versions of what was said. (Alas, I didn't arrive in the gaming room till he had finished speaking.)

Becker says that "I believe Byrne and Barch are recalling 2 separate questions. Allan affirmed mutual support, not double order of hold & support. As with their recollections, that is my recollection of the answers to the questions proposed to Mr. Calhamer." Alas, then, the true opinion of Allan Calhamer on the subject would appear to be buried in obscurity until the next time he makes one of his rare con appearances.

That issue of DW also addresses the question of whether it is wrong for Rod Walker to print full-page reviews of zines having major anniversaries or revivals. I don't see what the big hoopla is. To me this is a positive way of spotlighting zines that deserve it, and I support the policy. I think that the howls of protest arose mainly because Rod's first review happened to be of his own zine, Erehwon, then newly revived. But then again, maybe I'm biased. DW #39 plans to feature Voice of Doom. ☺

Anduin #34 contains another letter from Steve Hutton, debating Ken Halpern over nothing whatsoever. That's not a putdown; it can be very entertaining to read about nothing, and the Hutton-Halpern debate provides an inexhaustible source for this.

Ultimately Cool is a fake that popped into my mailbox a few weeks ago, purportedly published by Tro Sherwood. This has got to be the best-done fake I've seen in many moons; the writing is entertaining, if somewhat demented, and the postmark was even right. I hear that Keith is getting sub checks from it...

The July/August issue of Diplomag (the newsletter of the Postal Diplomacy SIG of American Mensa) contains an announcement that Fred Davis has replaced Keith Sesler as Junior Committeeman of the SIG. Diplomag is sent to me courtesy of Bruce Poppe, the Chairman, and I appreciate it. The Mensa SIG now has a policy that all new players will receive a free copy of Supernova, and business is boomn'!

In the August issue of Politesse, I am accused of being one of "a tiny minority" who "lack common sense", because I was under the impression that Ed might be folding the zine. The reason I had this impression was Ed's announcement in an earlier issue that "This is indeed the end of Politesse as we know it, the final issue, as it were. We have finally run out of justifications; our existence is too tenuous -- it must end. Get your refunds fast." I agree with Ed: "common sense should have told me that this prattling was not a fold announcement, but rather just another instance of quasi-meaningless Wrobeltalk. Well, excunuuuuuuuuuse meeeeeeeee!"

Corn Off the Cobb is John Schuler's subzine to Xenogogic, and in the July issue there is a discussion regarding who wrote the "Shep Replies" article in Diplomacy World #34. Well, modesty forbids... Anyway, this issue of Xeno is priced at \$5.00, and I'm sure my sub credit must have long ago run out, but Larry keeps sending them anyway, and I appreciate it. I might as well take this opportunity to mention that perhaps I've been a bit harsh on Xenogogic in the past here. It is overpriced and it is greatly in need of more editing, but there's still a fair bit of interesting reading in its pages. Aside from which, Larry Peery has proved to be a very likeable person in my dealings with him.

That issue of Xenogogic also contains a letter from Joan Extrom responding to Peery's offhand remark in a recent VD that he didn't think Joan existed. Joan writes, "Dear Mr. Peery: Re: Voice of Doom #95, p. 39, 3rd paragraph. Well, I don't believe you exist, either! Sincerely, Joan Extrom." Well, all I can say is that that must have been a very nice figment of my imagination that came and spent three days with me a couple of months ago! And that must be a very energetic figment of my imagination that puts out those 100+ page issue of Xeno. C'mon, you two, let's not feud like this, now!

Last issue I implored Conrad Minshall to write an article for VD on the topic of computers and Diplomacy. The Acolyte 59 has a very good review of a book on a closely related topic: Allen Lane's Machines That Think. Actually, the book is apparently an anthology of SF stories about robots, which gets one to thinking: If a Diplomacy game contained robots as its players, would the BNC then assign a number to the game? Sort of like the E-mail controversy of the future. Remember in 1997 that you read about it first in VD. I'm old-fashioned, I suppose, but I'm not so sure that programmed ability to make decisions could ever be termed the equivalent of "thought", no matter how advanced or complex the robot (computer) becomes. Then again, if a computer can be programmed to do the same things that humans do, and to make decisions as complex as those humans make, is that not thought? Wherein lies the distinction? It's food for, well, thought. The issue (of Acolyte) is devoted almost entirely to non-Diplomacy topics, but as always is fascinating reading nonetheless.

Midlife Crisis #14 serves to illustrate just how far behind I'd gotten in my Hobbytalk column, since the issue was published at the beginning of July. In his playlist for the issue, Paul mentions that "In Search of the Lost Chord" is the best of the Moody Blues' old albums, and as a rabid fan of the Moody Blues I agree that the album is very well done, the high point perhaps being the "House of Four Doors/Legend of a Mind" sequence. I'm not so sure I'd rate the album ahead of "Days of Future Past" or "Every Good Boy Deserves Favour" (Emily's Song is perhaps the most beautiful of all their tunes), nor would I put it substantially ahead of two or three of their other early efforts. In any event, I think that all of the Moody Blues' old stuff is truly classic. Starting with "Octave", they really began to go downhill, and "Long Distance Voyager" is a mockery of their early efforts, so I haven't even gone out and bought their latest album yet -- I'm quite certain I'll be disappointed when I do, so I'm waiting for the day when I have \$8.00 to blow on getting disappointed. OK, so I have no talent for reviewing music, something I've pretty much tried to do only once in the past, when I wrote about John Denver's "Seasons of the Heart" album. That review didn't go over so well, either.

Ter-ran #94 was a week late due to an apparently serious matter in Steve's life. The reason that this is news is that it's a unique occurrence: Ter-ran had never been late till then, and now here's Steve Heinowski very humbly apologizing to his readers for this one incident in over eight years of publishing. Let he who has published for eight years and never been late be the first to cast stones at Steve...your record is admirable, Steve, and a one-week delay won't change that in anyone's mind. As I mentioned last ish, Ter-ran has openings in regular Diplomacy, and you couldn't ask for a more reliable GM. Steve Heinowski, 12034 Pyle, Oberlin, OH 44074.

Issue #40 of Give Me a Weapon has this retrospectfully classic remark by Konrad Baumeister: "Fortunately, Bruce folding VOD is not something I would predict to happen in the next several years." Yow.

Snafu! #14 sees editor Ronald Brown "quaking in terror" because "Steve Hutton... has threatened me with bodily harm if I did not turn over (two Snafu! games) to him." Relax, Ronald, it could be much worse. He could decide to include you in all his satirical plays.

Magus 37 consists largely of Don (Duck) Williams' subzine Magus 37 Fiat Bellum which is sort of to Magus as KK is to Whitestonia -- a large part of the whole nine. Steve Langley also publishes "Comm drums", a monthly puzzle column. As with Steve Hutton's cryptics, I'd been generally too bust to really work on these. Now now that I'm a Free Man, there may be time for the hobby's little niceties like this.



No Fixed Address #20 (boy, these are getting ancient!), announces that Bob Albrecht's Battle Stations appears to have folded, and indeed, since this issue of NFA came out, BS (how appropriate!) has indeed folded for the second time, messily again. I would advise my readers to stay away from Bob Albrecht's publication, in the event that it should reappear. Twice burned is way too much.

Anduin #33 informs us that Texas is Eric Kane's least favorite state, except for California. Boy, does this guy have lousy taste in states! Now I realize, Eric, that the crowded, ugly, air-polluted regions of, oh, say, Lassen Park and vicinity in northern California or Guadalupe Mountains in the western Texas panhandle can't hold a candle to the wide open, majestic, uncrowded expanses of virgin wilderness one finds in, say, Delaware or New Jersey; but surely you must admit the fact that the two former states have some redeeming features. For example, and I'm sorry to have to overwhelm you with such a persuasive argument, John Tower is from Texas and Ronald Reagan from California. So there.

NMR! 52 is the first printed notice I'd seen of Acolyte's fold. Apparently things are okay with Pete and Kathryn Tamlyn, for those of you who may have been concerned, since it says in NMR! that Pete will be running some of his games to conclusion. I also read here of the Pimley Award, the British equivalent of our Don Miller Award, given for service to the hobby. I'm glad to see this. The British and American hobbies being as far apart as they still are, the DMMA as it stands now couldn't possibly go to someone in Britain, even though there are many people over there who are just as hard-working and deserving of recognition as their American counterparts. Someday I hope to see this gap between the hobbies completely filled in; at present, very few people have bridged it.

Inflammatory Material 5 contains a very interesting series of zines reviews by Simon Billinness. The zines are mostly grouped by Simon's rating of them in the British Zine Poll, and why he assigned each the rating that he did. It's all very original...I haven't ever seen zine reviews done this way before. Simon's only "10" vote went to a zine called Masters of the Prime, which nobody has ever heard of anyway. He gave a "9" to The Acolyte, precisely what I would have done had I not been too lazy to vote in the British Zine Poll this year.

Ode 56 has come out. At first I didn't recognize it as this issue is in digest format (bleccch!) and center stapled (yukkkk!). I'm always surprised to see the high circulation figures of British zines: Ode's is 152. The British hobby is much more close-knit than we are: a good zine over there will attract a very high percentage of the entire hobby! This issue of Ode also contains an insert of Fred Davis' variant (what else?) Davis Diplomacy, in which the standard map has been revised in several ways; to extend farther east, to separate the bordering home supply centers of Italy and Austria as found in the regular game, and to add the province of Archangel in northern Russia. Fred is in my opinion the hobby's leading variant designer: his ideas generally are sound and not just silly as with many variants.

Winsome Losesome #25 was put out in a hurry after Judy returned home from a camping and soccer vacation. Judy remarks that after all this activity, "I feel like a yo-yo." Perhaps so, Judy, but to some of us you're not a yo-yo but rather a very good friend. (u) I enjoyed reading your soccer writeup, and was surprised to learn that in that sport, the score is no indicator of excitement. It's not that way in football, e.g., where I and many fans would rather watch a game that's going to end with a score of 42-37 than a 10-7 contest. I've never really had the opportunity to sit down and appreciate soccer. Perhaps I should do this one day.

On a related note, Judy, you may remember your exchange with Alex Lord about soccer a couple of years ago. You'll be pleased to know that again this school year, Alex is going out for her soccer team.

Greatest Hits 117 arrived at my mother's house in Albany, making Pete Briks the only remaining hobbyist who hasn't gotten wind of my new (now not-so-new) address. The issue features a letter from Pete Doubleday saying, "It has just occurred to me that I, and doubtless many others...go to great pains to ensure that any letter we

send you is a coherent and flowing (in my case, oozing) whole. Not only do you totally ruin this effect by merciless hacking about, you then go on to complain that your letter column lacks shape. Graceless little get, aren't you?" Chalk up another vote for the non-cut-and-pasting fans!

Thirty Miles of Bad Road #26 quotes Greg Ellis as saying that "If you really want to hurt Bruce Linsey, you don't cancel your Voice of Doom sub -- that is doing him a favor. You find him 50 more subbers." Really. Especially now, since I'd have to send back all those sub checks.

The July issue of Festungs Hof announces that the zine will expand from 12 pages to 16 with the addition of two new games. The zine, comments Bob Howerton wistfully, seems to be growing. Fine by me, Bob. FH is good stuff.

Diplomacy Digest #83 offers a discussion of the exact definition of the term "midgame". Several possible definitions of the terms are discussed, and their weaknesses spotlighted. Mark Berch then offers this definition for midgame: "The time between opening and endgame." He's serious, too. Next thing you know, the Lexicon of Diplomacy is going to contain central powers: the powers in between the outside powers. Really, Mark.

Denver Glont 29 finally got here over a month after Steve Knight called me up to read part of it to me over the phone. It seems that my criticism of Kim Dent's houserules, as published in VD #95, has had a profound effect on Kim. "Okay, I give in," he writes. "When magazines thousands of miles away start criticizing your houserules you know you must have annoyed people. Look, BRUX, Voice of Doom is having an effect!" And he goes on to say that he will no longer just permit any old schmuck passing by to submit orders for a country in anarchy (civil disorder), and in so doing take over the country. I am pleased to see this. Not only because it brings Kim's games up to a higher level -- players will now at least know who they might have to negotiate with before he sends in moves -- but also because it's very gratifying to realize that in its lifetime Voice of Doom did indeed affect someone. Thanks, Kim. I needed that to happen before folding.

Snafu! #45 was Ronald Brown's final issue, and VD heartily congratulates him on a successful stint as a publisher. Ronald has an article elsewhere in this issue (of VD) containing much good advice to would-be publishers, and there is no one more qualified to give it. Ronald comments in his last issue that Snafu! was "not much of a press zine... That was partly my influence, as I am not impressed by pages of nonsense and prefer the concise bon mot. The influence a pubber has on what kind of press he receives is subtle, but it's enough." Well said, Ronald, and I would expand that observation to include the entire contents of a zine as well. The publisher who expresses an interest in play-of-the-game articles is likely to receive those; the publisher whose letter column consists of unchopped letters is likely to get more letters of that type suitable for print; the publisher who likes lots of subzines is going to attract them; and so on. It was Larry Peery (speaking in reference to my letter column) who said that publishers train their readers to submit the type of material they want, and the press (or lack thereof) in Snafu! was just another example of this fact. Snafu! will be missed here greatly, and I might add in Canada as well. Canada really needs another good zine or two right about now; NFA, SK and FSF are the only major ones left and three zines hardly constitutes a broad selection, even though these three are all quite distinct in style from one another. Ronald Brown is one of the kindest and most clearheaded individuals I have met in this hobby, and I wish him and Ann and their two children all the luck in the future.

John Michalski writes of his first meeting with Mark Frueh in Europa Express #36: "He and Gaughan and some of these others strike me as part of the new look in this hobby: all relatively handsome types, not good old grubby sleazeballs like John Caruso, Mark Berch, Steve "woody" Arnawcodian, Bruce Linsey, ~~pl~~, lots of others. At this rate it will be hard to tell a hobbyist from a normal person in a few years." I'd been sort of worried about just this very phenomenon. Some of these young upstarts who are joining the hobby in droves these days are disgustingly normal. Let's drive a campaign to keep the hobby crazy. Bring back Curtis Gibson, etc.

11

Europa Express #37 checked in at a whopping 48 pages, and contained several articles on the pros and cons of a nuclear freeze. Me, I don't see anything wrong with nuclear war. Having one would be a fine deterrent to any further wars, either conventional or nuclear, and anything that deters wars is OK in my book.

Festungs Hof #24 is out, and I was flattered to see an article of mine reprinted from VD #1. The article is called "Love at First Sight" and describes my first meeting with the game of Diplomacy, and briefly relates the events leading up to my becoming a publisher. Plus, there was the usual cartoon about my house rules, reprinted somewhere in this issue.

The Diplomat's James T. Kirk game ended up in a four-way draw including front-runner Nelson Heintzman, who forgot to vote against it. But his reaction is in glaring contrast to that of Steve Arnawoodian, who once helped let a VD game end by forgetting to veto a concession. Nelson is a true sport: "Not to spare myself, of course, much of the blame for this absurd travesty (approved by only 3 players) rests upon my shoulders. I freely confess that I was one of the two players who made the colossal blunder of forgetting about the draw proposal and failing to register a veto vote." It's good to hear it when someone can take responsibility for his own actions (or lack thereof).

Give Me a Weapon #41 has a long exchange between Konrad and Terry Tallman on the subject of copyright violations, etc. Tallman brings up again the fact that he has an appointment with a copyright lawyer. Fun guy.

Midlife Crisis #16 contains an excellent writeup by Paul Rauterberg of the method bookies use to make point spreads in college football games, and Paul's secrets for making money betting on games that are supposed to be 50-50 propositions with the spread. I tend to take a very skeptical view of such systems, thinking that any bookie worth his salt has already taken into account such factors as who has the hex over who, what the teams' schedules were like, and so on. Then again, there is another way of viewing it: perhaps bookies try to fix the game not so that it's an even proposition, but so that one team's chances look good to the public, but the other team still has an edge (always versus the spread, of course). In that circumstance Paul's system would make more sense -- but lots of people would be applying his system and driving the bookies bankrupt if it's that good. Would I then be insulting you, Paul, if I were to opine that you've been the beneficiary of a favorable random fluctuation in the game scores over the past eighteen months?

Murdering Ministers contains the news that the best zine for Leo to play in is Murdering Ministers. Now I'm not one of those people who believes in all that dumb crap called astrology, but I must confess that I was born on August 16 and that my only postal win came in MM!

Acolyte 60, the final issue, is in and explains Pete Tamlyn's reasons for folding. By and large, it seems that some people in the British hobby were giving Pete a hard time (such as spreading false rumors about his handling of a GM-player dispute long after it was settled), and Pete simply no longer wishes to deal with this sort of thing. And you thought that only Americans feuded! I for one am sorry to see Acolyte go under as it was always very enjoyable to receive and read.

According to the latest Bushwacker, DipCon 1985 will be held in Seattle, Washington, on the weekend of August 23-25. I still don't know whether I'm going.

Cathy's Ramblings #9 sets a good example on how to handle a feud in which you aren't involved: "I just want it to be known to everyone that CR is neutral in this issue. I don't want the matter brought into my zine." Perhaps if everyone felt that way, more potential feuds would be nipped in the bud.

The Concert of Europe #4 has Michael Lee making a sort of Hobbytalkish column out of his "Letter from the Editor" column. I hereby designate Concert as

America's Premier Hobbytalk Journal now that VD is dead and gone. Now if only he'd adopt my house rules... By the way, Michael seemd to think that my 40-page #97 was big! (☺)

Erehwon #125 is in, with some very even-handed editorials on the various problems in his zine and elsewhere in the hobby. The issue was a good one at 28 pages.

In response to certain of the older letters in this issue; yes, Kathy Byrne has resigned as BNC, citing harrassment by me as her reason. The new BNC is Bill Quinn, 301 Conroe Dr., Conroe, TX 77301.

Harrassment? Rather than just make a knee-jerk denial, I think I'd be more accurate to state that the truth of that assertion all depends on the meaning of the term. If responding to threats and lies is "harrassment", then I plead guilty. In any event, Bill has my full support, and I think he is an excellent choice for the job.

A word about my own feelings toward Kathy: as BNC she did an outstanding job. To say otherwise would be only to invite howls of derision. In her role as BNC, she did nothing that I considered unethical. The closest she came was in threatening me, but it's a threat she made in the heat of anger and never carried out. On the other hand, as a publisher Kathy is grossly dishonest and unethical, and I don't have a shred of trust left for her. Her Big Lie about the "nasty letter to Francine" has been believed by quite a few people who should know better, or who at least should check it out by asking for proof (which Kathy has offered, and doesn't have). I have been attacked by several people on the basis of that, and her equally false claim that I carry feuds into people's personal lives.

I have a letter from Ken Corbin which is strongly critical of me regarding my feud with Kathy and my handling of the Highfield Affair, and an article/letter from another subber attacking Kathy. Neither of these are being printed, for reasons I won't go into, though the parties involved are aware of my reasons.

On to happier stuff...oops, almost. First let me dispose of the Publishers Statement on Foot in Mouth. I have decided to handle this simply by sending the petition to John Caruso himself. He can act on it or ignore it as he chooses. To clear up some of the rumors going around, this is not a recommended boycott of FIM; it's a protest against the editorial policies of using a roving subzine to attack other hobbyists. Originally eight people signed it; recently two more added their signatures. But enough -- John will get the statement privately from me.

Now better stuff. Many of you have enjoyed Mark Paul's work in VD over the past two years. He has some cartoons in this issue, which I think you'll enjoy as well. Now Mark is planning to start up a gaming zine of his own, sometime later this year, and he is offering a free year's subscription to any Doonie! (Yes, I warned him that my publicizing this might get him a flood of response...) Mark, the list of Doonies is on page 5. Doonies, Mark's address is The Pitts, P.O. Box 717, Pittsfield, MA 01202. The zine will be called The Pitts and hopefully will feature Diplomacy, 4000 A.D., Stocks and Bonds, Origins of WWII, The Stock Market, Borderlands, and Executive Decision. Additional suggestions are welcome. You just might find me in one of his Stocks and Bonds games. I recently met Mark when he moved into town, and he is a very likeable, friendly person. He'll be at BRUXCON this year. Mark's cartoons have been a great asset to VD.

A little more room for talk about a few recent zines, eh? The latest Sleepless Knights contains still more letters about the nasty issue of Foot in Mouth that appeared there two months ago, with Dave Carter concluding that it's just not worth the hassle to print any more FIMs.

No Fixed Address is published by Steve Hutton, whose fixed address is 704 Brant St., London, Ontario, CANADA N5Y 3N1; and it's rapidly becoming (and perhaps is) my second-favorite North American zine (after EBE). The letter column is superb; unchopped the way you like 'em in VD, and Steve'll print just about anything -- but trying to slip a nonsequitur by him is like trying to sneak the sun past a rooster! For US subbers, it's \$8.00 for 10 issues, and I cannot recommend it highly enough. Tell him the ol' BRUXer sent you. And no, my opinion of NFA has nothing to do with the fact that VD is (was) his favorite zine.

Give Me a Weapon #42 has Konrad Baumeister putting Tallman in his place; good stuff. Nice to see that someone else sees the Seattle Slug for the troublemaker that he is.

Raging Main is back, very late but very welcome. I'm glad to read that James Woodson isn't folding -- and speaking of James, it seems that I had two thank yous for him in this issue (you'll understand...). That's OK -- he worth two of 'em; I hope hope that doesn't mean I left someone else out entirely!

So I Lied #3 contained a marvelous editorial about feuding by Marc Peters, and I for one appreciated it. SIL overall looks as though it will be a sure fire winner of a zine, and I'm looking forward to many more.

Winsome Losesome is just so lighthearted and so nice to get. Judy's my bosom buddy.

Outta rom already? OK, but first let me confess that the ditto machine went haywire again this month. I know all about the ghostly upper right corner of page 79, so don't hassle me about it, OK? Oh yeah, and I forgot to mention that VD #100 is out, the final issue and the largest Diplomacy zine ever at 270 pages.



Thanks to Gary Coughlan and Chuff Afflerbach for sending in cricket stuff. You guys never tire of teasing the poor ol' BRUXer, do ya...?

## Bedroom bugged at White House

Washington

President and Mrs. Reagan have a cricket in their bedroom that will not stop chirping, an aide disclosed yesterday.

Sheila Tate, the first lady's press secretary, said the Reagans retired Sunday night and were awakened at 4 a.m. Monday by the chirping of a cricket in their bedroom.

She said that Mrs. Reagan "wasn't able to go back to sleep and kept reminding herself that it is supposed to be good luck to have crickets in your house, and that eased the pain of being kept awake."

On Monday morning, the first lady conferred with the White House usher's office, and the attendants said they were sure the cricket was in one of the plants they had put in the bedroom, Tate said. The plants were removed from the bedroom.

At 4 a.m. yesterday, Mrs. Reagan heard the chirping again. This time, the maintenance crew took all the air vents apart and sprayed.

"We're waiting to see what happens tonight," said Tate.

United Press

## Cricket Destroyed — Nancy Still Awake

Washington

After three nights of lost sleep, Nancy Reagan announced to a waiting world yesterday that the cricket in the presidential bedroom is no more.

Nonetheless, Sheila Tate, Mrs. Reagan's press secretary, quoted her as saying, "Anticipation being what it is, I stayed awake most of the night, expecting to hear it."

The Reagans first heard the cricket at 4 a.m. Monday. It kept Mrs. Reagan awake most of the remainder of the night.

Monday morning, the White House usher's office, in charge of housekeeping, sent a squad to remove all the potted plants from the bedroom on the theory that the foliage was providing the cricket with a home.

Wrong. At 4 a.m. Tuesday, Mrs. Reagan awakened to the same chirping sound.

On Tuesday morning, President Reagan ordered maintenance crews to open the air vents in the room and spray them with insecticide.

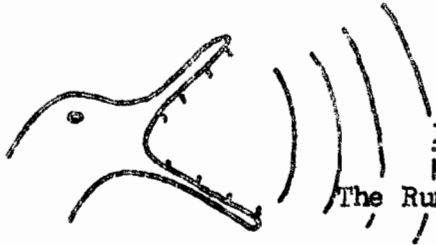
Mrs. Regan told her staff, "The president kept saying it must be in the vents." Tate said that when she remarked later that the president "must have been right," the first lady replied, "The president is always right."

No sooner had the case been solved than the press secretary became deluged with telephone calls from citizens offering anti-cricket remedies and reporters wanting to interview Mrs. Reagan about the cricket.

By midday yesterday, Tate said, she had received telephone calls from British and French broadcasting agencies, as well as U.S. television networks clamoring to interview Mrs. Reagan.

"It's an issue that the entire world is dealing with," Tate said wryly.

U.P. & A.P.



The Runestone Poll, 1985

As was announced earlier in this issue, Randolph Smyth has handed to me the task of running the Runestone Poll. I am hereby soliciting ideas from the hobby on how the Poll might best be run, and will provide a forum for discussion in Echo of Doom.

By and large, I don't want to alter the format of the Poll much from the way it's been run in the past. Those changes that are made, I hope to make transparent to the voters; that is, the balloting procedure should remain identical, or nearly so, to the way it's always been. Within that framework, then, I offer the following preliminary suggestions/comments/questions. Nothing is yet carved in stone; all hobby members are welcome to join this discussion.

1. All ballots must be signed, dated, state the voter's social security number, be notarized...

Um, let's not get off on the wrong foot. I'll try again.

1. I think the Poll would be improved by including non-North American zines and GMs. It would be interesting to see how the Denver Glonts and NMR's of Britain stack up against the Europa Expresses and Diplomacy Digests of North America. Additionally, this would give further publicity to the hobby outside of North America, an excellent side benefit, in my opinion. And I have enough European contacts to get the Poll publicized in Europe.

The only negative I can think of is that obviously some North American zines will score lower than they would have, due to the inclusion of extra zines. This may lead to some bruised egos if a zine that would have finished eighth ends up twelfth, say. But I think the good would outweigh the bad.

2. Should I keep the subzine poll, or scrap it? My own feeling is fairly neutral on this; I tend to think of subzines as just a part of their host zines, and therefore a factor in that rating. To rate them separately has always seemed just a bit redundant to me, but I'll probably let the people who care to speak up help me make a final decision on this point.

3. Shall I allow people to vote for zines they don't receive? GMs they haven't played under? Their own zines? My tendency, for reasons already discussed in VD, is to say "yes" to all of these.

4. Unless there is an unexpected number of objections, I will keep Randolph's provision for lopping off the top-and-bottom 8% of the votes, rounded down. This is a good procedure for weeding out grudge votes.

Even better from a statistical standpoint would be to count only votes within a standard deviation of the mean for each zine. However, this procedure would not be as easy for some hobbyists to follow. Thoughts?

5. I will try to do a preference matrix, and then adjust the results to range from 0 to 10. If I am successful at this, my inclination would be to generate one final list by combining the "averaging" scores with the "preference matrix" scores.

6. As you can see, I'm enthusiastic about this project, and I ask that publishers give it further publicity. I promise results both thorough and prompt.

Now, let's hear your thoughts on the above. I am open to any suggestions from the hobby. Copies of this page will be sent to as many publishers as possible so that we can get a maximum amount of publicity.

And now the most important part of the zine...THE GAMES!!!

O R I O N

1982Y

ITALIANS SLIP INTO GASCONY!

Fall 1915

- ENGLAND (Ansoff): F IRI-Mid ( NAT S), F LVP-Iri, F NWY S RUSSIAN A StP
- FRANCE (Williams): F BRE S A Gas, A Gas S GERMAN A Bur (d; r Par, OTB)
- GERMANY (Wittmond): A BER H (F BAL S, A KIE S), A BUR S FRENCH A Gas, A RUM S A Bur,  
F ENG S ENGLISH F Iri-Mid
- ITALY (Howerton): F MID-Bre, F WES-Mid (F POR S), A Mar-GAS, A Pie-MAR, A MUN-Bur,  
A TYO-Mun (A BOH S)
- RUSSIA (Beyerlein): A STP H
- TURKEY (Leritte): F SPA(nc) S ITALIAN A Mar-Gas, F NAF S ITALIAN F Wes-Mid,  
A SIL S ITALIAN A Tyo-Mun, F LYO S ITALIAN A Pie-Mar, A PRU-Ber,  
A MOS-StP (A LVN S), A Rum-SEV, A WAR-Gal, A GAL-War, F BLA H,  
A UKR C A War-Gal (imp)

Supply Center Chart:

|                                                           |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| ENGLAND: Lvp, Lon, Nwy, Swe                               | 4, even    |
| FRANCE: Bre, Par                                          | 2, even    |
| GERMANY: Ber, Kie, Den, Hol, Bel, Edi                     | 6, even    |
| ITALY: Home, Gre, Tri, Mar, Por, Vie, Mun                 | 9, build 1 |
| RUSSIA: StP                                               | 1, even    |
| TURKEY: Home, Bul, Ser, Bud, Rum, Tun, Sev, War, Spa, Mcs | 12, even   |

Game Notes: No, George, just because I said that two units may not exchange places without a convoy doesn't mean that you're gonna dupe me into allowing that! Nice try... The F Mid is a beleaguered garrison and is therefore not dislodged. (See the article on "indirect support" elsewhere in this issue.)

The E/F/G/I/R/T draw and the I/T draw both failed. Germany wants it publicized that he voted yes to E/F/G/I/R/T and no to I/T. Proposed for next season is an E/F/G/I/R/T draw. Please vote by next deadline.

Press:

- GERMANY to TURKEY: If that's what you want, it's OK by me.
- KAISER to GM: How long before X.G comes into effect?
- BRUK: An "enforced draw" can only occur once the game has been stalemated for three game years -- and this one ain't there yet!

Edmund Jedry is VD's resident biologist. He has written articles relating to biology in each of my last two anniversary issues. In addition to this he has been a faithful standby in VD for well over a year. THANKS...to Doomie Edmund Jedry.

Jeff Noto has long been a strong contributor to VD's Gossip Column, and has written several articles for the zine. He (and his wife Lisa and daughter Jennifer) are among my very best hobby friends, and I hope someday to meet them. THANKS...to Doomie Jeff Noto.

Kerry and Karen Blant recently let their sub to VD run out, since they've lost most of their interest in Diplomacy. But they are still very close friends, and are receiving this final issue gratis. Kerry was a player in the famed JUPITER game. THANKS...to Doomie Kerry Blant

Q U A S A R

1982AE

HOWERTON THINKS THAT ENGLAND'S GREW SOME!

- Autumn 1912
- GERMANY: NRR! A War r OTB
- Winter 1912
- AUSTRIA (Lucas): Build F TRI
- ENGLAND (Glaspey): Build F EDI, F LVP, A LON
- FRANCE (Burd): Build A PAR, F MAR
- GERMANY (Howerton): NBR! GM removes A Boh (out)
- TURKEY (Sweeny): Remove F Ion

Game Notes: The seasons in this game were separated by player request. All press below is printed only with the specific permission of the players to run it in the event of a season separation. The GM hereby formally expresses his distaste to the players at the numerous separations of seasons, wondering whether this is really necessary, and reminding them that there is such a thing as conditional orders...

The following are all proposed for next season: a concession to England, a "concession" to E/T (actually an E/T draw), a "concession" to E/F/T (an E/F/T draw), and an A/E/F draw. Please vote by next deadline. Also proposed is that Austrian colors turn from red to black, to signify their treacherous hearts. I wonder who proposed that??

Press:

CONSTANTINOPLE: The Sultan has today announced the following changes in policy: "...In so much as the Austrian government refuses to accede to the reasonable demands of this government, and that they have aligned themselves with the French/English forces --- it is my said duty to make the following declarations:

- 1) The Ion Med fleet has been disbanded. Your Sultan expects that the French will soon demand Italy and after seizing it will assuredly spring into Albania and/or the Adriatic. The Turkish navy will ONLY defend Turkish colonies/soil.
- 2) All Imperial Turkish armies will fight to return to our homeland -- leaving the French/English forces to crush Austria at their leisure. Turkish armies will not support them nor aid them in their survival. Austrian colonies will be attacked as needed to establish a stable front.
- 3) Austria and all Austrian tradesmen, technicians and citizens will be deported. ONLY a skeleton crew with a diplomat shall remain in Constantinople.
- 4) All arms shipments to Austria shall cease. Food and medicinal supplies shall be continued unabated. Austria will need many bandages.
- 5) Allah has willed that all men over 14 and women over 16 report to the induction centers for training as suicide troops. To die for Allah is all, and a guaranteed place in heaven.

My people, things were well for the "Force" until the recent illness of the Emperor of Austria and his subsequent death. With the change in leadership of that noble country and their Anglo-French preferences --- I have no choice --- JIHAD!"  
 CON to BUD: Write some truly nasty press, will ya? The rest of these guys must be dead!

((QUASAR continues next page))



QUASAR (continued)

CON to BUD: It isn't too late yet -- watch them come. See press in VD #99.

CONSTANTINOPLE: The capital today mourns the loss of Gen. Adm. ExLax. While resting in Med Fleet HQ, it (the HQ and the Gen. Adm.) was overrun by French Naval Forces supported by the treacherous Austrians. The "Force" has been severely crippled.

THIS IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE PENSACOLA NEWS JOURNAL: Police and rescue workers succeeded today in retrieving a Mazda automobile from the waters of Pensacola Bay. The vehicle had plunged off the end of the fishing pier in what was at first thought an accident. However, police have identified the body as that of Bob Howerton, and upon investigation have ruled the incident a suicide. Inside the car, investigators found a strange-looking map of Europe with the word "betrayed" scrawled across it. They were mystified by dozens of little wooden blocks of different colors found throughout the car.

A spokesman for the family stated that Bob had been in a state of deep depression after receiving the last issue of what they referred to as a cult magazine called Voice of Doom. Authorities mentioned that they may pursue their investigations in Michigan and Colorado.

LONDON: Oh, dear. Queen Victoria deeply regrets the computer error which resulted in English fleets remaining in Kiel and Berlin. She begs to inform der (former) Kaiser that such a faux pas will never, ever happen again. (France and Austria please take note.)

\*\*\*\*\*

Dave Lincoln is the reason that VD Headquarters has overcome its cricket plague. He and his lovely family were my hosts for a day this summer, and I've never met a nicer bunch of people. I rode down with him to MaryCon and back. THANKS...to Doomie Dave Lincoln.

Randolph Smyth is the hobby's best writer on the play of the game. Many of his articles appear in this issue so that you readers can have them. This was done with his permission. He is a long-time pillar of the hobby and was a very nice victim in Swedish Roundabout (hyork!). THANKS...to Doomie Randolph Smyth.

James Woodson is a good friend and has shared some great times with me at Origins and ByrneCon. What's more, he didn't --even complain when I altered one of his letters to read, "My leg comes off next Monday. I can't wait." THANKS...to Doomie James Woodson.

Gary Coughlan is a close friend and strong supporter of VD. Two of the very best plays he has written have appeared in these pages, and I have shared many great times with him at various cons. He publishes the hobby's finest zine. THANKS...to Doomie Gary Coughlan.

Mike Barno has been a friend who was always there when I needed him. He has contributed plenty of entertaining reading to VD's pages over the years. I will be riding with him to Indianapolis this month. THANKS...to Doomie Mike Barno.

Ruth Glaspey has been a loyal player and reader here for ages. Her occasional letters are among the most entertaining I've ever printed, and what's more, she shares my love for little furry puppy doggies. She has also been very kind to Alex. THANKS...to Doomie Ruth Glaspey.

R I G E L

1983K

EUROPE IS BLACK AND BLUE AFTER ALL THIS FIGHTING!

The RIGEL game has ended in a draw between France and Germany. The proposal for this, made last month, passed unanimously. The game-end chart, cast of players, and final press all follow. Congratulations to Ty and Nelson for sharing the draw, and to the others for a generally well-played game, and to all for the press. Please submit endgame statements by next month.

Game-end Chart:

|         | 1901 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 |      |
|---------|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| AUSTRIA | 4    | 5  | 6  | 4  | 3  | 3  | 4  |      |
| ENGLAND | 4    | 3  | 1  | 0  | -  | -  | -  |      |
| FRANCE  | 5    | 5  | 6  | 6  | 7  | 9  | 9  | draw |
| GERMANY | 5    | 7  | 7  | 9  | 9  | 11 | 12 | draw |
| ITALY   | 3    | 3  | 2  | 3  | 2  | 0  | -  |      |
| RUSSIA  | 6    | 6  | 7  | 7  | 8  | 6  | 4  |      |
| TURKEY  | 4    | 5  | 5  | 5  | 5  | 5  | 5  |      |

Game: 1983K  
Zine: The Voice of Doom  
GM: Bruce Linsey

Cast of Players:

- AUSTRIA: Steve Knight
- ENGLAND: Bob Sweeney (out 1904)
- FRANCE: Ty Hare (drew 1908)
- GERMANY: Nelson Heintzman (drew 1908)
- ITALY: Michael Frick (dropped F '02), Dudley Kidd (resigned S '03), Greg Ellis (out 1906)
- RUSSIA: Dave Kleiman
- TURKEY: Rich Reilly

Game Notes: Congratulations again to Nelson and Ty, and let's have some rip-roarin' endgame statements from all of you. (Yep, Greg and Bob, that includes you too!)

I erred last season in disallowing the French build of A Par: it was legal. All players were notified. Thanks to Jeff Panches, who submitted standby orders which wouldn't have been needed, and no thanks to Jim Chatfield, who failed to submit standby orders and is hereby removed from the VD standby list. By the way, each of you gets one vote for the winner of the Press War...and so do I! Send 'em in.

Final Press:

VIENNA to WORLD: How's about it, guys? We through now?

AUSTRIA: But...but...I thought we were all supposed to NMR last turn! All the excitement must be too much for me...

PORTUGAL to TOMMY THE WONDERTROUT: And so we wait with baited breath to hear your story...

REILLY to RIGEL: It was late in the afternoon of September 24, and your humble narrator only had a few more hours in which to type up his orders and press and send them off for the 100th issue of The Voice of Doom. Diligent writer that he is, he typed and typed and typed, and managed to imagine a most wonderful press release...a release that would put all the other RIGEL press writers to shame. But by the time he imagined it, it was too late. Only a few minutes remained before the U.S. Postal Service would be picking up the mail, and your humble narrator dared not miss that, else he might NMR, as did certain other disgraceful RIGEL players the previous season, who shall go nameless. Therefore, your most reliable player typed up a short and insignificant little piece in place of that truly awesome release, and sent it off with the promise that he'll try a little harder next time.

TURKEY to FRANCE: Have you ever heard the term "backstab"? Have you ever considered applying it to your play? Or are you one of those silly goody-goody types who feels guilty about stabbing somebody?

RIGEL (continued)

ENGLAND: Prime Minister Sweeney was a defeated man. Hounded from shore to shore for his great Press Writing Ability by every country on every shore, he at long last arrives in Italy. The Prime Minister walks to the shore and looks out at the buildings of Venice. Eventually a gondola heads in his direction. After paying 5,000 lira (\$0.75), he is taken to the administrative building in the heart of the city. Stopping momentarily at a newsstand, he buys a paper, quickly glancing at the "news" therein, and deduces the following:

- 1) France and Germany have regained their trust, each having a series of units on the other's borders to ensure mutual trust.
- 2) Kitten Kleiman is at last feeling the combined might of his enemies (obviously, because I no longer write his press releases).
- 3) Italy, at long last, has capitulated to the combined onslaught of his enemies.

The time is right for an enterprising individual of strength and wisdom to intervene in international affairs. Me! Hurriedly, I enter the administrative building, with German flags waving in the gentle breeze. I knew now that it is time, time to meet von Heintzman.

The guards are agape as I boldly walk up to the Lt in charge and ask to be taken immediately to the consul general. In a state of shock the Lt escorts me to the presence of Emil von Heintzman, third cousin to the august (and senile) Nelson von Heintzman. "How would you like to rule the German Empire from coast to bloody coast, from Berlin to my lovely London, Munich to Paris and of course, the soon-to-be-had Russian centers to the north and east?" I ask. "How would you like to rid yourself of your bloodthirsty cousin, to rule instead of serving, to dictate instead of obey, to possess instead of hold?" I smile before I continue. "All I ask is two things; first, that I rule as Viceroy in England. You can appoint a minister or ministers to watch me; all I crave is to be in England again and be amongst my own kind. Second, I ask you to forgive my removing a witness to this meeting." I turn quickly, raise my pistol, and fire, using my last bullet and killing the stunned Lt. I drop the pistol, turn and hold out my hand to finish the deal. In surprise I see a nickel-plated .38 staring at my chest.

Von Heintzman stands, looks at me, paces, and says to me, "Your suppositions are based on several faulty points of logic. I will elucidate. First, I am related by blood to our noble leader, my beloved cousin. Second, my family in Bavaria is hostage ofr my actions, which in my case is not needed as I am a loyal subject. Third, you are a defeated man. Our revolt is led by a dwarf-hating German winner, and why should I listen to you, a man who lost a country? Finally, you have shot and killed a member of my personal guard and I shall have vengeance." He walks to his desk and presses a concealed button. The guards who enter, once over the initial shock of seeing the dead officer, quickly and efficiently hustle me from the room, take me down to the cell area, strip search me and shackle me. In the morning, I will be in Germany to face von Heintzman.

THE BLACK FOREST ((via GERMANY)): As the sun slowly set, the Kaiser reclined on a balcony couch and watched the western horizon melt into ribbons of fiery bronze. A warm summer breeze caused some discomfort, but the pitcher of ice water on the table by his side afforded him frequent relief. As his mind and body gradually relaxed, the Kaiser allowed his thoughts to roam and he began once again to remember and contemplate.

He was alone now as he had been in the beginning. His first servant, the dwarf savant, Rasputmann, had long since vanished. Dramatically vanquished by the Nubian sorceress, Tiara, he had eventually escaped from his psychic confinement and fled eastward. Rumors persisted that he had found refuge with the Russians, the Turks,

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

or the Transylvania folk. Some even whispered that through mysterious and arcane methods, Rasputmann had solved the riddle of time and had entered into other cross-dimensional worlds. Whatever, mused the Kaiser, the wizard dwarf no longer remained in Germany and even appeared gone from RIGEL World itself.

Fondly, the Kaiser now thought of beautiful and vivacious Tiara, whose occult knowledge and skill had rid the Reich of the parasitic dwarf wizard. For the longest time, the charming and quick-witted ebony priestess had lingered by his side, helping guide the Empire toward the success it currently enjoyed. However, she, too, was now gone. Her mission accomplished in this foreign place, her heart yearning more and more for her own homeland, she had tearfully announced one night her decision to leave. He had not taken it well at first, the Kaiser knew; but, as usual, time -- the greatest cureall -- had soothed his tortured soul, and now his reflections held but a twinge of occasional sadness. Besides, once in a while, on a moonlit night with a soft breeze gently blowing, she sometimes heard the musical notes of her voice riding with the wind, and he knew she spoke to him.

As his mind wandered thusly, he sensed a darkening of the sky. Absorbed in his ruminations, he thought only that nightfall was now rapidly approaching. However, an unusual gust of wind broke into his reverie. Buffeted by a second great gust of air, he glanced about only to peer upwards into the stern reptilian gaze of a monstrous winged lizard, which was hovering above the high towers of the fortress.

Unperturbed, the Kaiser calmly regarded this apparition, recognizing it as that creature of myth and legend -- a dragon. For its part, the dragon ponderously fluttered in midair, the grey length of its body slowly twisting about as the scaly wings flapped. Its green-gold gaze burning steadily into the Kaiser's eyes, Wyyyx, the High One, carefully appraised this human leader. Wyyyx approved of what he saw and sibilantly whispered a greeting.

"Hail, Most Valiant, High-Born Prince of the Human-Folk. We are well met!"

For a moment the Kaiser said nothing, allowing the formal flattery to dangle between them.

Then, he smiled and banteringly replied, "Not all high-born princes are valiant, nor are those who are valiant necessarily high-born. But, indeed, we are well met, and I salute and welcome thee, Lord of the Sky."

Amused by the human's mild reparté, Wyyyx allowed a faint glow of humor to shimmer about his long jaws. He glided closer and hovered near the Kaiser.

In a soft hiss, he spoke again. "Perhaps you wonder why I approach you? I am Wyyyx, the High One, and I do not believe in consorting with the human world."

He paused, staring down at the Kaiser. "But, I know of you and your dealings with the Other-World -- your relationship with Rasputmann and Tiara, for instance.

Resentment glimmered within the Kaiser's eyes. "Is it your intent to profane Tiara?"

"No, no, not at all," hissed Wyyyx. "I merely mention this to acquaint you with my awareness and knowledge of your...other-worldliness."

The Kaiser pierced the green-gold gaze with his own crystal-blue stare. "Why do you approach me at all? You admit you have no high regard for humans."

Wyyyx did not respond for a moment. Silently, he gazed down at the German leader, then he spoke.

"Many of the Young Ones of My Folk no longer respect all the Old Ways. Some have even disputed my authority and seek to involve themselves in the affairs of you humans. They wish to intertwine our world with yours -- two worlds of very distinct and different creation. They wish to achieve a oneness which they believe will allow them the opportunity to develop and gain power, prestige and glory."

Imperceptibly, the Kaiser shrugged his shoulders. "You think that to be wrong? I may not agree with you; and, besides, what is any of this to me?"

Wyyyx wagged his snout from side to side. "The situation may not be a matter of

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

right or wrong, but certainly it is unwise."

"That is a matter for debate," remarked the Kaiser.

"Perhaps," replied Wyyyx, who then fell silent.

Looking hard at the dragon, the Kaiser prodded him. "Again, Lord Wyyyx, why have you approached me? I care naught for your concerns in your own domain. I have my own involvements."

Wyyyx slowly replied. "I have approached you, human-born, because, unfortunately, my concerns are your concerns."

"How is that?" the Kaiser broke in.

Wyyyx ignored the interruption. "My Young Ones have chosen not to confront me in this realm. Instead, they are departing this world in increasing numbers. They are able to do so through the mystical machinations of your former court wizard, Rasputmann."

The Kaiser frowned slightly, but, for the first time, he began to sense where the conversation was leading.

"Undoubtedly, you, too, have heard rumors that Rasputmann has found a way to enter parallel universes. In point of fact, there appear to be many paths which link together an infinity of parallel worlds." His wings fluttered as Wyyyx inhaled deeply. "Rasputmann has opened those paths to my brothers and sisters. Even as I speak, hordes of dragon folk pour into other fields of play."

"So?" the Kaiser asked, eyes narrow with thought.

"So," replied the dragon. "The opening of the paths have caused the creation of mortality for these myriad worlds. No longer is each reality separate unto itself for ever more. Since creatures of the imagination -- such as ourselves -- can now enter other realities at will, eventually it must come to pass that each individual reality shall cease to be."

The Kaiser said nothing but merely watched the shifting gaze of the dragon. From out of Wyyyx's throat shot a short burst of flame, emphasizing his emotional intensity.

"Look at the far horizon," urged Wyyyx. "What do you see?"

The Kaiser studied the darkening sky. Although the sun had set, brilliant hues of purple, bronze, and fiery red-orange still flooded the heavens. But what especially drew the attention of the Kaiser was a thin strip of sky at the very edge of the horizon where the heavens curved down to meet the earth. What he saw puzzled him. For not the familiar darkness of evening creeping in was to be seen, but, instead, a band of strange, shining, luminosity glared forth bedazzlingly and hurting the eyes.

"What is that?" the Kaiser cried out.

Wyyyx turned ancient and saddened eyes toward the far horizon. "THAT is the end of RIGEL World," he said.

"Oh, no," whispered the Kaiser. "It cannot be."

Wyyyx looked at him. "Come, fly with me toward yonder horizon. I will take you to a place where you can see a dazzling wall of shining white light which slowly grinds forward, obliterating all in its path -- a moving curtain of nothingness which would be our doom to even attempt to penetrate."

"Are we all lost, then?" muttered the Kaiser.

"No," replied Wyyyx. "Come aboard me, and we shall gather together the rest of my folk. We shall seek out Tiara and the human lords of the other nations. Together we shall find one of the Open Paths of the Universe and enter into another world."

The Kaiser stood up. "You are welcome to remain here and rest, Lord Wyyyx. I shall make preparations to leave and should be ready within a fortnight. Is that time enough?"

Wyyyx smiled. "Yes, I believe so. A few more seasons should pass before RIGEL ceases to be. And by then we will have found an Open Path, and, who knows, perhaps we shall find another RIGEL, too..."

BRUK to RIGEL: Another RIGEL and another zine! It's the end of an era. Thanks, folks, it's been loads of fun...

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Standbys

by Randolph Sayth

As I must occasionally inform novices to the postal hobby, "standbys" are replacements who take over positions left leaderless by the disappearance of a previous player. Turnover is a fairly common event in the course of a game which takes two or three years to play, on the average; causes and circumstances vary as widely as the lives of the players involved. Finding standbys is usually a GM problem, which is why I'm presently trying to put together a standby list (so if you're sick of hearing about it, join it!).

Standby positions are often pretty poor. One of the most frequent causes of player dropouts is that the game is just not going well for them. Even conscientious players, finding themselves with less time than they need to properly fulfill their Diplomacy commitments, will naturally resign from a poorer position and hang onto a better one if possible. A good standby position is rather rare, but quite a plus since gains have been made and presented to you on a silver platter, at the expense of someone else's reputation. One can then renegotiate everything, squeezing more out of a dependent ally while checking out offers from your predecessor's enemies gives you one of the most powerful diplomatic positions you'll ever find yourself in.

On the other hand, there is also great satisfaction in being handed the grumpy-the-mill two-unit "loser" and keeping it alive by convincing the opposition (truthfully or otherwise) that you are more able/friendly/dangerous than the previous player, and had best be left alone or actively helped. When this is impossible, death is at least swift and merciful as a rule; rarely is a standby precipitated into a neutral situation. For novices, standby positions can provide experience and a quick reputation of reliability and/or competence (and/or the reverse, of course) in some of the most extreme situations encountered on the Diplomacy board.

My basic premise to the selection of a suitable psychological attitude is that the collapse of the previous player was rarely sudden and unexpected by the others; other interests have gradually shunted the game aside over the past two game years. The other players have gradually become used to an increasingly "absentee landlord", and have already begun the process of alliance re-negotiation and -alignment in ways which will not favour your new position. However, once the change has taken place and you are in command, your first and most important job is to break this tendency.

The point to be made is that most standby players are not sufficiently aggressive in outlook. Offhand, I can't recall a single instance where a standby in a game in which I was playing initially projected an impression of great interest. In general, they're willing enough to send in the moves to keep the position alive as best they can in a diplomatic vacuum; but the original player probably did no less until the very end, and there is no reason for the other players to change their course. A shuffling of silent, disinterested heads of state means nothing to the diplomatic situation. Negotiation time must be invested to halt the process of erosion, which is usually well on its way, but not irreversible. The change is only a true development if you make it so; too many standbys don't, which accounts for most of the lack of success of such positions, in my opinion.

The tendency to let the original players make the first move is okay if you only want to discover the one who currently has the most time and energy. Remember, though, that most of the oldsters have become comfortable with a silent opponent -- the only ones to write will be those with a specific request, which will doubtless be to their benefit, but may not be to yours.

Obviously you may be defeated by the game situation. A strong alliance opposing you and holding 24 centers is not amenable to bargaining, and if things are really hopeless, capitulate with good grace and look for another game. This is true of every

game, standby or otherwise. There is an "event" involved in every standby situation, however: a change of players. Emphasize this change to your opponents, if you take the game seriously.

That doesn't mean that you can write to say, "Hey, don't attack me, things are different" in so many words. Working alliances against you are already past the planning stage, so you must be more indirect. Write immediately, with definite questions and suggestions; establish yourself as a flexible, reliable "idea man" if you don't know the other players; basically, take the diplomatic initiative. The same can be said of pre-Spring 1901 negotiations in a regular game, but it is, if anything, even more important in a standby slot where the cards are already stacked against you.

I'd even go so far as to make my requests somewhat outrageous (by normal standards) -- if nothing else, this will provoke some reaction (even an unfavourable reply: "Are you crazy, man?" will probably include some idea of what the guy is looking for) from the recipient. Just being noticed is half the battle: retrenching to a more reasonable position once correspondence is established then gives you the appearance of being an amiable fellow!

Finally, if all else fails, don't go out with a whimper. The best way to maintain your own interest in a dead position which was not even of your making is to forget normal considerations. Be as unpredictable as possible, consistent with your reputation: don't throw centers away, but don't try to weave a defensive cocoon which is bound to be fatally weak. Leave a mark, any mark, on the game that will endure after your elimination: let 'em know you were there, fella!

One word should sum up the best attitude to adopt when taking over a small and apparently lost standby position; first on the diplomatic, then (if unsuccessful) on the military front: **ATTACK!**

((Right on! All too often standbys come into a game and play dead. Bravo to those who come in and play the game!))



Larry Peery is one of the most even-tempered individuals I know. He takes plenty of criticism, and takes it well. He has been an active Doomie for close to a year now, and I shall shortly be sending him all my old zines so that he can add to his hobby lending library. THANKS...to Doomie Larry Peery.

Fred Davis is the hobby's leading designer of variant games, and has been a subber here since the zine began. He is a good friend and a tremendous asset to the hobby, though his quiet work is often noticed less than that of people more flamboyant. He was kind enough to send Alex a Mensa application. THANKS...to Doomie Fred Davis.

Nelson Heintzman is the author of the best-written press I've ever printed, or for that matter ever seen in the hobby. He is a loyal player and a great asset to VD. I look forward to meeting him at BRUKCON. THANKS...to Doomie Nelson Heintzman.

Pat Conlon has written a number of very intriguing articles and letters for VD. His writing always has a lighthearted air that adds to the enjoyment of the zine. I have shared good times with Pat at several cons. THANKS...to Doomie Pat Conlon.

George Leritte has been a close personal friend ever since I began publishing. We were planning to room together at Origins '80 till George was injured in a car crash and had to cancel, so I still look forward to someday meeting him. He has been a loyal and successful player in my games. THANKS...to Doomie George Leritte.

BRUK Linsey has been around since the zine began, and has a record of nearly always agreeing with my editorial policies. He has contributed fairly heavily to these pages. THANKS...to Doomie BRUK Linsey.

## Some Subtle Arts of FTF Play

24

by Jeff Noto

Most of my experience in Diplomacy has come from FTF play, mainly while I lived in New York. It seems that we sometimes forget just how different the "live" version of our favorite game is from the postal form. Some of the methods mentioned will be familiar to you; others may give you ideas as to what to do when you run into trouble at next year's MaryCon. In any event, just call this article a bit of nostalgia -- it is not meant to be all-inclusive. All names are unchanged; none of you know these people anyway.

Most of the time when we played FTF, Bruce (not BRUX) would be the last to hand in his written orders. He would always be pacing the room muttering to himself, "What should I do now?" or some such gibberish. Yet he always seemed to make the right moves in a crucial situation. We eventually discovered that during his nervous moments he would be reading the orders being written down by his current enemy.

Sometimes your choice of a future profession can be of help. Tony's worst finish in a FTF game was being part of a 4-way draw. He always looks at you right in the eyes when he talks to you (I could write an entire article on the importance of eye contact), and has the most charming smile you've ever seen. But as far as I'm concerned, Tony does so well because he makes sure that everyone knows he plans to become an Episcopalean priest. I mean, who would ever believe that a guy who's gonna be a priest would ever lie to you? But he does -- again, and again, and again...

Barging into the room when your enemies are plotting strategy is a very poor tactic. Everyone will know what you're up to. In fact your allies will probably turn on you because they've finally discovered what a dummy you are. Going into the room next door by yourself isn't so smart, either, unless that room happens to be the bathroom. You can spend an entire five minutes in there by yourself without arousing suspicion. I once used this tactic when I had an army in Livonia. Russia's Army Warsaw could either hold or move to Moscow (he had a fleet in StP). ((amb!)) He went into the conference room (really a bedroom) with his ally. I went into the bathroom, shut the door, and listened. A War-Mos, A Lvn-War. Plus one for me, minus one for the Russian. I now make sure that when I enter the conference room, it's not adjacent to the bathroom.

Spite is often one of the best ways for a small power to show the big fellows that he's not going to be pushed around. As Italy, I had all the necessary firepower to take Tyrolia -- armies in Trieste, Venice and Piedmont. But Germany had units in Bohemia and Munich, and I needed Army Piedmont to support a move in Mar. So I took the German player aside and kindly explained to him that if he moved to Tyrolia that turn (it was a Spring move), the army would be blown away the following season. Naturally, he moved to Tyrolia. When I asked him why, he said, "Because I wanted to." So much for reason and logic. True, he had lost a unit, but he showed me that he was going to make it difficult for me to move further north in spite of his lack of numbers.

I'm sure there are other events that we all can relate about FTF play. Unfortunately, you'll all have to wait until next year's anniversary issue.

((This article brings to mind one of my early face-to-face games, in which my brother SHRIV was also a player. He and I were enemies. At one point in the game, I took my ally into the kitchen to negotiate. Hearing a very faint hissing sound coming from the desk, we opened the top drawer, and there was a tape recorder set up! Naturally, instead of revealing that we knew about it, we simply fed it false info...))

Thanks, Jeff, and you've earned three free issues of sub credit for a neat article.))



From Ig Lew (8/14/84):

The Gossip Column  
Part I

25

oh. so i finally did mail all those letters, huh? i wondered where they went... the "hey everyone this is bruce here" paragraph cracked me up. did i really write that? ((no, i did.)) anyway, a few disclaimers (yes, my opinions do change); my knowledge of foreign affairs and the doings of the nixon administration are far too limited to support an intelligent opinion. i was impress by the roughly 10% (moving up) of nixon's foreign policy with which i am familiar. my primary purpose in calling n's policy meritorious is offending knee jerk liberals.

"hyperbolic" and "ellipses" ended up in the same paragraph quite by accident, but i was sure brux would notice and would make some awful puns, so i beat you to the punch with circle and degenerate case. parabola was too tough, so i left it, hoping you'd attempt a long shot and say something so corny that mine wouldn't look so bad in comparison.

though simpler than yours, i think my zeen-poll-vote adjusting system is too confusing. to use the median is so obvious i passed it by figuring someone else must have already thought of it, but i can't think of any problems with it.

i guess welfare was a poor choice for my extortion-ain't-so-bad demonstration, because you are undoubtedly opposed to welfare too.

have you noticed you're showing symptoms of michalskiism? bullshit in the front, reader-submitted xeroxes in the back, lots of letters with terse responses... ((not to mention folding the minute my zine hits triple digits.))

i didn't like mr. berch's funzine-looking headlines and stuff either; maybe we can talk him out of it.

as i told paul, i used to be offended when my writing was accused of being "stream of consciousness", but now i consider it a well-meant inaccuracy. i don't know what the word "art" means, but it sounds to me like you're getting all goobered up for no good reason.

your nerves seem odd to me, that a raw one could be rubbed by a semantic matter. what the hnc says does go, in the world of hns. so if she says some game of yours is a deviant (an-receiver) or regular (bn-receiver), it is; even if you decide to call it r? instead. if you think what i say makes no sense, you are correct. issues which are essentially semantic have a bad habit of dissolving under the slightest bit of scrutiny.

mr. rogerson's request that his readers don't vote for his zine is one of the most sensible things i've heard in a long time. those of us who understand his reasons are highly amused at your brilliant objection that his zeen would finish low in the poll. bravo, brux!

the term "bashing" has been the rage in the american academic community for quite a while now (safire did a whole column on it once) so i doubt berch made it up.

i never hear of joan outside of vd so i think she's too local for the awards -- not that i'm going to get excited about who wins the award...

hobbytalk was ok, but you got too goobery about your 99 zillion favorite zeens, and you sounded pretty horny. i don't think a bur s a p.c-par is enhanced by a pair of tits. what was that you said about all content and no form?

my opinoin of bb is not quite so high since my final rereading before sending them away. partially because i'm embarrassed by my own contributions maybe.

i'd expect you to like terry t's stuff more than you do. after all, you did claim to like the crap i sent to bb. same sort of stuff.

i can't imagine a blonde ruth. i think all ruths should have brown hair and be very alpine looking.

i skipped the articles but the issue was still better than the last few fat ones. probably due to the letter-writers. why is it that i like all these young right-wingers? only faz was missing.

we've moved to a new iglew: 1327 w 27th, #104, anchorage, ak 99503. that's why we've been remiss in writing letters (or in your case, mailing letters). i've been informed that there is a fat envelope from bruce linsey awaiting me at w 79th but i haven't gone to get it yet. is that the super-mammoth issue you warned us about? (no need to answer that.) i think i like the medium-sized ones best (like olives, vds come in sizes: small, medium, large, extra-large, giant, mammoth, super-mammoth). i don't really care for the super-mammoth ones. i suppose i should x that out (but you know i won't) because it can be figured that i must not like the material from the dregs which tends to appear in the bigger issues, and they might be offended. sorry, guys.

i should apologize for that paragraph. that's what i get for trying to compose at the typer. some older but better thought out letters are enclosed, if i can find them.

ps. tige and meinel laugh at me because i'm a brux-toady. not a doomie, they got that right away.

((well, good luck in your new iglew. gooberiness aside, your letters have been one of the high points of vd for the past four years, even if i can never find a decent thing to say in reply. and i think that your writing style is stream-of-consciousness. it's just that your thoughts wander so quickly that it's more like a mountain waterfall than a stream. bye!))

From Larry Peery (8/13/84):

Hi: ((he never uses my name...grumble...grumble...))

This is the third time today I've tried to start a letter to you. If it isn't one thing it's another.

I've been musing over what to write for your 100th issue/fifth anniversary. I was trying to think of something both informative and entertaining. Diffiult in these days of McCarthyism in Dippy. What I've come up with should be timely so long as you don't publish your 100th after the October Xeno goes out. Even so, you have such a different readership than mine I don't think it would matter much. I thought the east coast hobby might enjoy reading how we do things out here. I have enough materials from the Olympics and PerriCon to fill the next issue without all the regular junk. Perhaps...

I got #98. I almost get the feeling I'm watching some kind of hobby-wide soap opera cum strip tease a la mass therapy session with EST overtones. I saw Rod yesterday when we put DW together for the mail. He looked worse than I've ever seen him look (and I've known him for 18 years). I wonder if all this fussing and feuding is having the same effect elsewhere in the hobby. When I sit back and look at the mail I'm getting on all this it makes me ill. It would be easy for me to sit back and simply pick out my friends and support them, or just join the fray against my own critics, or sit back and wish a pox on the houses of all the protagonists, or bury my head in the sand and hope it will all blow over. The mind boggles at the possibilities for raising hell.

Bah...

I will not voice an opinion on any of this personal stuff or most of the feuding nonsense pertaining to games involving GMs, players, BNC, etc. I don't know the facts and I refuse to judge these issues on personalities.

I'm going to save all the RIGEL stuff for when I make my next visit to the Golden Door. Ask Woody what the Golden Door is.

Regarding your comments on Rod's comments on the RWA. I think there was enough time allowed for nominations and voting but there may not have been enough pre-voting publicity. A Few pubbers treated the RWA as a joke and didn't take it seriously. Too

bad. I tried to accomodate the key pubbers who I thought would print the ballot/info (DW, VD, EE, etc.) but no matter how you schedule it somebody will always screw your schedule up with their own delay. I don't need to specifically mention anyone, do I? There was plenty of time for votes to come in. Every election sees 90% of the votes come in during the first 1/4-1/3 of the given time period, and the rest trickle in as close to the deadline as possible. And there are always 1-2% that come in after the deadline. ALWAYS!!! No, you don't need months for voting in these things; especially once people are familiar with the system. The biggest problem isn't the voters, it's the committees and their members. I would guss in the first two years of the DMMA and the first year of the RWA at least 85% of my work and expense was caused by the members of the two committees (or three committees) involved. That's not necessarily bad. It is a fact.

Overall, I am fairly pleased. I would like to have an indepdent, hobby-wide distribution of ballots and copies of the articles nominated for next year's RWA but something like that is going to cost a lot of money. That would solve your second objection. But I'm not sure having everyone read everything would change the results much. If people would not regard the results of the Polls as Holy Write and look at them merely as pictures of a given situation at a given moment as seen from a given point/perspective we would be better off.

Tell me, since you know him, is Sacks for real?

Betcha Duck Williams didn't mention his new award, the Don Williams Crying Towel, did he? Probably not. I didn't tell him about it until after PIV.

Send me a foto of Pack and I'll tell you what "we'd" think. I'm an excellent judge of horse flesh, lasagna, and masculine pulchritude.

'nuff of this, I should be working on the PIV writeup but since it just ended, sort of...imagine if you gave a DippyCon and 157,030 people showed up? Read on...

((And your excellent writeup of FerriCon IV and the Olympics appears elsewhere in this issue, thanks.

Re the Rod Walker Awards: I think you'll find that running this project, and the Don Miller Award as well, will become smoother and more enjoyable as you get more and more used to it and the bugs are ironed out. I like the idea of publishing all the articles nominated in one place for everyone to see, but what are you going to do about people like Tallman who insist that their work is copyrighted and may not be reprinted? Exclude their stuff from the list of potential nominees?

Sacks is for real. He must be. He just told me that I've been kicked out of some organization I didn't even know I was in anyway.))

From Mark Luedi (8/10/84):

Dear Bruce,

Again, VD is sabotaging TMOBR. If this persists, I may sue. Come on Bruce, can't you delay your schedule a week? Ah, come on, pretty please? Good issue though ((#98)), the frosting's kind of bitter, but otherwise, well-spiced throughout. Rerunning the "Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zine" Poll would seem like an appropriate thing to do in light of all the controversy surrounding it. Or, how about an "Ed Wrobel's Favorite Vegetable" Poll? Wait, I may want that one for TMOBR.

So now not only am I supposed to write something for the anniversary issue, you want me to write a Dummie of the Year essay too? And I should write an article "How I almost met Joan Extrom, Samantha and Deadwood (that is his name, isn't it?) Corbin." 25 fricking miles (let's make that 30, shall we? Sounds so much ~~like~~ badder), Joan! Enough ass-kissing for one evening.

((I'd die if I came that close to meeting Joan and then didn't. Too bad for you (and her!). But at least VD won't be sabotaging your schedule any more. Keep the good issues of Thirty Miles of Bad Road coming!))

From Don Del Grande (8/13/84):

BRUX:

I've alerted my local Post Office to get out the heavy equipment so they can deliver issue 100 with only their usual delay. (The trouble with large issues is that I always get them via nth-class mail.)

The \$5 per NMR deposit in Feuilletonist's Forum isn't that strange when you consider my first set of house rules -- if you wanted to get phone orders in, there was a \$5 (that's right -- and no collect calls, either, so this was in addition to what the caller paid the phone company) surcharge, and each time the player passed a deadline in debt, there was an additional \$1 tacked on, in addition to an automatic NMR (note that the "first" NMR brought a \$1 fine). As you can see, I never did like taking calls. I never did use those rules, though, although the new HMs say that no calls are accepted, mainly because players always complain that I get the orders wrong, and taping the calls didn't work too well.

Of course the East Coast Clique wants to keep DipCon -- they probably feel that, as the "true masters of Diplomacy", any DipCon they can't attend shouldn't be called DipCon, since it should be attended by the Dippy true-blues ((oops -- that was supposed to read "true Dippy blue-bloods")) (not by the peasants of the Southwest and West), which, of course, all live in the East. (Is this beginning to sound like one of those "Great Big United States of America" things you read in a certain over-20-year-zine?) I don't understand why the name "DipCon" is such a big thing -- MaryCon was the big east coast con, even though it wasn't a DipCon, although whoever wins the east coast con, wherever it is, is always considered the newest "true Dippy master". When DipCon returns to the east in 1986, I predict a big turnout at the society meeting which will result in something like proxy voting or a redrawing of the regions so that the ECC will have a stronghold on the con's future. I'm surprised that there isn't a rule like "any bids for locations more than 750 (by air) from New York and Washington must be approved by a 2/3 majority of all ECC publishers."

I do agree that the main problem was not that the ECCers "took their marbles home and stayed away", but that the distance was just too great. My flight from New York to San Francisco went through Dallas -- the total flight was about \$200, so I wouldn't think the NY-Dallas leg would have been very expensive. The low cost was probably as a result of flying Braniff, whose routes tend to center at Dallas; a flight from San Francisco to Houston costs \$200 each way.

Melinda Holley is right -- the Soviets are hiding something by boycotting...mainly the fact that the USA beat both the USSR and the GDR (also known as East Germany) in gold and total metals at the IAAF (Track and Field) Championships in Helsinki. I also believe it'll be a no-show for the USSR at Seoul in 1988, unless the People's Republic of Korea (North Korea, that is) manages to invade, in which case the USA won't show up. I still say that the Olympics should have its events held in different locations at the same time -- e.g. track in Moscow, swimming in Montreal, basketball in Los Angeles.

I heard that the Olympic Street Signs are being sold by secret bids, beginning at \$40 (some signs are bringing more than \$1000). Don't be surprised if a significant number of these things happen to "disappear" before they're taken down, although no one will mention this so that the prices remain high.

I did mention Victory in the Pacific -- as well as Remagen and GEV -- twice, didn't I?

I noticed something in Rod Walker's letter: "I would say that if a game starts out regular and becomes a variant (this has never happened), the BN would be withdrawn and a MN assigned..." Actually, this HAS happened, and I should know because I was the GM. It wasn't a question of "bad GMing" -- it was "lack of standbys".) 1981AS began as a regular game -- but Brad Wilson NMRed in Spring 1901, immediately after which Born to Dip folded (we had a trade going) and he didn't resub (not that he ever

entered moves anyway...he still doesn't remember entering the game, probably because of the long break caused by the Canadian postal strike preventing Dave Carter from getting/sending orders). As a result, a regular game became a 6-player madman -- a definite variant -- yet Don Ditter, BNC at the time, didn't submit it (as far as I know) to the MNC, although it was declared irregular.

Back to the Olympics for a moment...the British have been complaining about the TV coverage -- when Daley Thompson won the decathlon, his shirt said something like "Thanks America for a Great Games and a Great Time"; on the back it said "But What About the TV Coverage?" -- yet it was the "all-angles" coverage of the track events that enabled people to see that Zola Budd didn't just step in front of Mary Decker in the 3000, as the front view made it appear. It looked like Decker was in a no-win situation -- either take a fall or push Budd and get headlines like "Decker shoves Zola".

Last, but definitely not least, about your comments on the 1983AY game in MM... if Kathy feels that having Ron assign a standby even though he's in the game is irregular, then what about 1980IB, better known as "Maniacal", which ran in Retaliation, where the GM asked Dick Martin to assign a standby even though Dick was in the game? (Dick was Germany -- the standby was for Austria.) When the game began, Lee Kendter was the BNC; when it ended (with Kathy winning as Italy), Don Ditter was BNC, although nobody declared that game irregular. The situation may be slightly different from 83AY, but the precedent seems clear.

PS. Thought I forgot something, didn't you? If you're looking for the 500 games, they're located on Microdot as one of the periods (or perhaps one of the dots over an "i" or in a "?")...

((No way you're going to slip another list of 500 games by me ever again, ol' buddy! I found the dot in question and edited it right out of your letter!

I hadn't heard about the Maniacal situation before this. I do know that the very first game Dick ran in Retaliation included his brother Dave, who lived with Dick at the time. I'm pretty sure that game was not declared irregular, either.

Your discussion of the regular game that turned into a Madman variant is very interesting. I would think that, as Rod suggests, the Boardman Number should be withdrawn and a Miller Number assigned. However, I personally would go searching for a standby rather than turning the game into a Madman.

Your discussion about the East Coast Clique wanting to keep DipCon is right on. I'm thinking specifically of the way a number of prominent East Coast hobbyists banded together in Detroit in 1983, and nearly managed to defeat the Dallas bid for DipCon. And this despite the fact that the East was not one of the regions eligible to hold the event this year. A sizable chunk of hobbyists from this part of the country just wanted it for themselves anyway. I wouldn't be surprised to see more amendments proposed whose ultimate goal is to keep the con in the East, and I will oppose any such proposals.

Sheesh. You charged players \$5 to phone in a set of orders, with automatic NMRs when a player passed a deadline in debt? Sounds awfully strict. Sounds awfully sadistic. Sounds awfully...wonderful!))

From Tom Swider:

BRUX,

Re ECC: I should state that the efforts to make DipCon an East Coast phenomenon are mainly Fred Davis' and Julie Martin's doings. Being an ECCer, I don't like having broad, sweeping statements about anything! Am I selfish? Please refer to specific people instead.

((Fred Davis covers your statement regarding his motives elsewhere. And my broad, sweeping statement referred to the above-mentioned East Coast hobbyists who stuck together in Detroit.))

From Nelson Heintzman (8/16/84);

Dear Bruce:

First of all, Happy Birthday! Especially since we share joint birthdays...I've been deadwood for a while, I realize; no press, no letters, not at all sure whether I will have the time or energy to do an article on friendship and Diplomacy play which I discussed with you one time. But, I'm in the mood now to write a short note. Most of the reason for my relative inactivity involves things happening in my personal life. I rather suspect that one's degree of participation in the hobby is directly proportional to what is happening in one's private affairs; i.e. the more involved in personal matters, the less in the hobby. I rather think a fulfilling and challenging personal life serves to keep the hobby in perspective.

In any event, thanks for Smyth's stalemate lines. I think one of Berch's DDEs also had an extensive review of such. Maybe one day it will come in handy; that is, if I can remember to veto unwanted 4-way draws when I'm supposed to...

I noticed your tongue-in-cheek slams on Buffalo a few issues ago (looking for a rise out of me, eh?). Well, too bad, but I don't really react to things like that any more -- at least not much. Home is where the heart is, etc. If a person is reasonably happy and satisfied with him/herself, has loved ones and friends, fulfilling activities, etc., well, location doesn't make that much difference. Buffalo is better than some places; not as good as others, I suppose. I may not reside here forever (although I am a native Western New Yorker), but it suits me for now. When and if the time comes to move on in my life, then matters will change from that point. One correction, though; although Buffalo is definitely a blue-collar town, the steel mill stereotype is pretty much outdated. Many of the plants have shut down permanently and only in Lackawanna and south Buffalo do factories form part of the skyline -- metal ghosts looming large over memory lane. The future of this area seems to lie in the high tech fields. Increasingly, such modern and advanced companies are entering Buffalo and, more especially, its surrounding suburbs. However, Rochester remains way ahead of us on that score. Also, by the way, don't forget that only 20 minutes away is Niagara Falls, still one of the greatest natural wonders to experience. Not with crowds, though, on a hot summer day; although seeing the cascading waters tumbling down with that beautiful rainbow arched across the chasm is indeed a wonderful sight. The winter falls can also be uniquely beautiful, though. Strolling to the water's edge on a mild winter day, with clean, fresh snow and clear, glistening icicles sparkling all around you, peering into the gorge and watching the immense waterfall tumbling onto the huge, mountainous ice jam that has formed at its foot, can be just as rewarding an experience as the summer sight. Or, yet another face of the falls, go there during the wee hours of a morning, when all is dark and deserted and night cloaks one's eyes. With just your ears, then, listen to the dull roar of thundering waters and begin to feel, to sense the power and antiquity of elemental nature. Only once before, back in the sixties, when I and a few companions were roaming the land, have I felt something similar. It was at Shiprock, New Mexico, on the Navajo reservation wherein is located a sacred butte. Walking out into the desert towards that ancient rock formation, there was not a sound to be heard...no cars, no birds, no insects, nothing! Never before had I heard the sound of silence so loudly. Well, in a different way, Niagara Falls when approached on its own terms away from all the hoopla, can arouse the primal senses as well, if one is willing to be receptive. And, as I said, it is only 20 minutes away...

Which reminds me, Bruce old boy, what the hell you got against crickets? The Chinese keep them for pets (so I hear) as good luck; as a boy, along with the proverbial ant farm, I myself used to keep crickets in a jar. Loved to go to sleep listening to the lullaby of their cheerful chirping. Unfortunately, they always used to die, but that was before I learned to punch air holes in the lid top...

What else? Steve Knight was in the area and visited me for a few hours Sunday evening. A very personable young man, I thought, with an excellent head on his

shoulders. Well, I hope to see you at BRUKCON this December, if you still are having it; I may also make it to Swider's in October and hopefully, the Kleiman/Luedi bash the same month. Have to see, though, since I don't travel as much or as well as I used to in my more careless and reckless younger days...

((Well, oil up those old joints and I'm sure the body will make at least a feeble attempt, hey? And yes, BRUKCON is still on.

You've almost sold me on coming out to Buffalo to see Niagara Falls one of these winters. The only thing I question about your description is the use of the phrase "a mild winter day" regarding Buffalo. Is there really such a beatie?

Thanks for the "Happy Birthday". It was a very happy one thanks to my friends at work and in the hobby, and my family.

Your description of the New Mexico desert brings back terrific memories from my 1976 sojourn out West with two of my buddies. One of these years I'm going to head back out there and see it all again; the desert, the canyons, the mountains and glaciers. I didn't get to Shiprock or northern New Mexico at all for that matter, but there's a lot of nice country out there.

I'm looking forward to meeting you this winter.))

From Jim Burgess (8/10/84):

Dear Bruce,

Thank you very much for your phone call. I really appreciate it. Thank you in advance for your copy of the next VD. ((Jim received pp. 1-8 of VD #98.))

I have let your comments over the phone sink in and have a couple of thoughts. I personally don't think people who overreact, blow up childishly, etc., are fit to be officers in our armed forces. I semi-secretly (without yet seeing your whole printed story) applaud your actions. I'm not exactly clear on your letter quotes from sources that you read over the phone, but my objection is to the lack of an unbiased, psychologically trained consultant. You were the object of a death threat (another consideration that I may have the facts confused about are the circumstances of the threat. Did he threaten you with bodily harm if you jeopardized his career? Then it's a little like saying to someone: step over this line and you're dead. If he steps over the line, who is at fault? In my opinion probably both, but we must investigate the reasons for "crossing the line", end of interlude) and that makes you biased. As I said over the phone your main consideration should be your safety (ergo: my comments over calling the police). I still think the whole affair was very sad, breaking down good friendships (maybe not so good...). You obviously agonized over your decision greatly and consulted other people. I would say that your only failing was in not consulting an unbiased psychological professional first (much better than going to the police). I think that their advice would have been very helpful. After all, you had letter written by Bill even thought the observer would probably not be able to speak with Bill directly. I'm not sure what the result of that would have been (it's like going to an ombudsman) but it would place you on much firmer ground.

In sum, I suspect you would have taken my suggestion if you had thought of it, but the affair is over and I think we should establish lessons, not blame and so on. Knowing the hobby, that's not what will happen. I'm sorry I couldn't (didn't) offer my help before. I am always profoundly saddened by these affairs. I wish I had emphasized that part further. See my letter column in NSWG for more on this. I'll drop you a copy in a few days. Good luck and don't be afraid to admit fallibility. My advice would be to stand behind what you did and sadly regret that you hadn't thought to consult a "psycholombudperson". Take it or leave it.

((My main regret is that there's no room left on this ditto master. No, seriously,

I deeply regret the whole situation as much as (or more than) you do. I'm sorry that Bill saw fit to threaten people's lives, I'm sorry that I had to take action regarding those threats, and I'm sorry that certain of my hobby enemies feel that this matter needed to be discussed in the hobby press.

I'm afraid that I pretty much don't agree with your suggestion that I should have hired a psychologically trained consultant to analyse Bill's letters first. Where would that have gotten me? I'd be spending \$50 an hour of my own money for an opinion regarding Bill's mental state rendered, by someone who a) didn't know Bill, and b) had no authority to act to restrain him anyway. And, the problem with Bill himself would have remained. So I would have accomplished little. Please don't think that I regard myself as infallible. I just feel that I acted in the best possible manner under these particular circumstances.

I agree with you that we should get on with the hobby, rather than establish blame and so forth. The incident is over. It's too bad it happened. Now it should be considered over. (Thanks for writing.))

From Mark Berch (8/20/84):

Dear Bruce,

I want to make some comments on John Pack's remarks about lesbians and gays.

John says that "no other animal on the face of the earth has this preference selection difficulty". It's hard to know what animals find difficult, but homosexual activity has been observed in a wide variety of animals, and normally takes the form of males attempting to mount males. Examples include stickleback fish, iguana lizards, roosters, cows, dogs, cats, horses, rabbits and lions.

John also says that homosexuality breaks up the family unit and erodes social structures. This is probably true, to some degree. After all, when 17-year-old Johnny says that he is tired of dating girls, doesn't like them, and plans to take his boyfriend to the next school prom; or when Mom decides that the only sexual satisfaction that she has ever gotten is from another woman, and so she's not going to bed with her husband any more; this puts tremendous stress on the family. The greater acceptance of homosexuality makes it much easier for Johnny and Mom to do this. In an earlier age, they would be much more inclined to pretend to be heterosexual, or even to deny it to themselves. Nowadays, if they feel completely dissatisfied with a heterosexual lifestyle, the alternative has some minimum level of respectability, and visibility which helps as well.

The same is true for social structures. Take for example, the equation family = marriage, or more precisely, family requires marriage. The increasing acceptance of premarital sex and homosexuality has greatly increased the number of stable "households" which are based on either an unmarried heterosexual relationship, or a homosexual relationship. This breaks down the connection between the two, and thus lessens the importance of marriage.

However, one must say to these two points: so what? Humans are also the only animals to have a preference selection difficulty when it comes to choice of religion or choice of a dipzine to play in too ((so that's why some people keep saying that VD is for the birds!)), yet we would not use that as a criterion for condemning variety in religion or dipzine. As for the latter, if you asked sociologists what in the 20th century is most responsible for the breaking up of the family unit, they would probably respond "the car". The car allows both the parent and the teenager an enormous amount of autonomy, and thus lessens the control over him or her from other family members. It makes it far easier to get out of the neighborhood and thus reduces the power of neighborhood social structures, etc.

John says, "No one is born with a sexual preference toward his/her own sex." But no one really knows why some people become homosexuals and so it's impossible to make



such a flat negative. In fact, recent research tends to show that there may well be several mechanisms involved, several different paths. There is moreover increasing evidence that many people are in fact born with a genetic predisposition toward homosexuality. This parallels recent research that is making a stronger and stronger case that there is a genetic predisposition toward alcoholism. This doesn't quite mean that a person is born an alcoholic or a homosexual, but that these people are biologically different.

This isn't to say that there are no social factors. Of course there. Some governments -- a good example would be Cuba -- are very oppressive toward homosexuals, but there's no way of knowing whether this reduces the incidence of homosexuality, or just their visibility (one must wonder about a society whose approach is to throw homosexuals in jail, a well-known "breeding ground" for homosexual activity). On the other hand, some societies provide, in effect, a social "niche" for homosexuals. A good example of that is in urban homesteading, especially where it involves moving into a very blighted neighborhood. This is a good setup for gays (homosexual males) and some blocks in DC slums have featured exactly that. There are several reasons for this. One of the factors which makes it very hard for families to move into such areas is that the schools tend to be either very poor, or non-existent (because of low population density, there's not enough kids to support a school right in the area). But gay families rarely have children, so this tremendous obstacle doesn't exist. These areas are often viewed as too unsafe by women, but again, with two males, that's not a problem. These houses often require major amounts of "sweat equity" -- major fixups, and males tend to be much more interested in that -- and a gay family will provide two of them. Once a few such families move in, others follow, as they are less likely to face hostile neighbors. By providing such opportunities, a society (quite unwittingly, of course) facilitates a homosexual lifestyle and community.

Finally, I want to respond briefly to his "A belief in the Christian God or the Jewish God prohibits personal toleration of homosexuality". I would not dream of commenting on the former, but as for the latter (Jews), John simply doesn't know what he is talking about. He is probably unaware that several American cities have Jewish synagogues oriented toward gays and lesbians, where most of the congregants are homosexual. Theistic Jews are just not as rigid and intolerant as John thinks, and I suspect that he is largely unaware of much of what has occurred in the last, say, 150 years of Jewish thinking. I know you're not interested, Bruce, in biblical citations, etc., nor am I, but I'd challenge John to find any mention of lesbianism in the Old Testament.

In a sense, Brad is right when he says of you "if Mark Berch were pubbing HoL, you'd never have said anything about elitism." If I were putting out HoL, the whole notion of elitism would never have come up in the first place.

I was a bit surprised to see Kelley's "...half a dozen loudmouths just aren't going to do more than provide (me with) a little amusement." What a change from the last few issues of The Beholder! People do grow.

((I presume you're referring to the last few issues of the zine, not the more recent subzine of the same name. In the last few issues of the zine The Beholder, several years ago now, John took a lot of heat and reacted poorly. He has since grown and hopes someday to revive the zine -- and I'm looking forward to being part of it when he does.

Re your elitism comments: Right on! I just can't picture you making the artificial restrictions Dick Martin set up for House of Lords.

Well, I've certainly had a veritable mountain of reply to John Packs' diatribe against gays. I tend to take a dim view of people who attempt to dictate what other people's preferences and lifestyles should be like. The Bible is only a handy excuse for such people. Of course I make an exception when it comes to people who choose to hurt other people or animals through their lifestyle, but prejudice against gays is just plain ignorant hatred. Your essay on the matter from a social standpoint was quite informative to me.))

From Fred Davis (8/14/84, excerpts):

Dear Bruce:

I am glad to see your side of the story on the Highfield Affair. I was very upset at the story being told by Sacks and one or two others at the AtlantidCon meeting... I will now tell you that another party present at the meeting (and I honestly do not know who he was, as AtlantidCon did not furnish badges with names on them) stated "This is not the first time that Linsey has alleged receiving death threats." The implication was that you were one of those people who saw ghosts under the bed, and were exaggerating the whole business...

Publishing this letter was the only thing you could do to counteract the charges by Sacks and Caruso. (I haven't seen Tallman's charges.) Even I was quite disturbed at the thought that someone in the hobby had contacted Highfield's Commanding Officer. Now that I've seen the "smoking gun", I quite agree with you, that you really had no choice, other than dropping out of the postal hobby. I hope you've sent extra copies to other publishers, especially to those East Coast residents who heard Sacks' inflammatory charges at AtlantidCon.

I had thought that Highfield's attitude was only due to the fact that his father is self-employed, as many small businessmen, especially if they've ever been held up or robbed, have similar far right wing attitudes. Now, I see that there's more to it than that. This was not just youthful enthusiasm, or a kid copying his father's small-town small businessman's Republicanism. The kid is sick.

Re: DipCon. Appreciated Schilling's report. However, while it is now a dead issue, I do not see the attempt to reduce the number of DipCon regions from four to three as an attempt to corner the market on DipCons. Until 1983, there were very few Postal Dip players in the central region (Region III). Any "gerrymandering" of the regions was the regions as set up in the original charter, as amended in Chester, PA in 1979. In 1979, the charter provided for three viable regions, and one that hardly had any membership, and not a chance of getting a DipCon anywhere, with the possible exception of St. Louis, on its periphery. I must admit that I went along with that, and helped get the charter amended in 1979 into its current format. In 1982, Mark Berch and I realized, after seeing the census figures, that there was no life in Region III, and tried to merge it with adjacent regions. At no time was there any attempt to interfere with the orderly rotation of the DipCons. I've always been a strong advocate of rotation. But, I've favored rotation among the places where the postal hobby people live, namely: The BosWash corridor, the Chicago-Detroit-Milwaukee triangle, and California. I did not favor sending DipCon to place where we had few participants, as I've always thought of DipCon as a place where the postal people would get together.

What has saved the situation is the unexpected rise of a wargaming group or groups in Texas. If you check, you may find that many of these people have immigrated from the Midwest. You've heard the joke that every fourth person in Michigan has moved to Texas since 1974, looking for a new job. That's not really a joke -- it's almost true. Now, there is a viable group in Region III, so DipCon can be held in that region every fourth year. So, I'll consider the issue closed. But, this was pure luck -- it was not something that was foreseen, even as recently as 1982.

Incidentally, I never thought of the proposal to switch from four regions to three as something that would be to the advantage of only the "East Coast Clique". It would have been just as advantageous to people living in the Midwest and California.

I'm very glad to see the charter amended to permit DipCon to be held by itself (this was passed in Detroit in 1983). I think we'll do better alone. We'll certainly do better away from the unfeeling ministrations of the Origins people! I had tried to get this changed back in 1979, but at that time most of the people present preferred to have DipCon connected with a wargaming con. Now, their thinking has come around to the idea of either being separate (like MaryCon) or having a relationship with a small con (like the 1985 DipCon in Seattle). I hope people will spread the word of

how pleasant it was at MaryCon, where we were not interrupted by thousands of D & D players.

How do you feel about the idea of allowing absentee voting on the issue of the DipCon site selection? I feel that charging \$2 for an absentee ballot would eliminate casual voters. Everyone who paid the \$2 would be accepted as an "associate member", in the same way that Science Fiction cons handle the matter. They'd all receive a souvenir booklet, similar to the one that Berch put out in 1982.

I don't see why such an important matter as DipCon site selection should be left to the casual hands of the people who happen to show up at the meeting. This is especially unfair when the con is held in a location like Dallas or Seattle, far from our "centers of gravity". I may go to Seattle next year to try to push this suggestion, if there's any chance of it being passed. However, I'll be in Europe till July 20th, so I could only go if the con is held sometime after that date.

((I'm not so sure I like the idea of proxy voters on the subject of selecting a DipCon site. In theory it sounds reasonable. In practice it could well turn out to be just another device to capture DipCon for the East Coast each year. Let's be realistic. There have been two attempts in recent years by the East Coast Clique to fix the Runestone Poll results. (I'm referring to the successful attempt to put "DipMaster" on top of the poll in 1982, and the thwarted attempt to do the same for "Stabber's Journal" this year.) The sad fact is that there is a group of East Coast hobbyists who have proven themselves capable of banding together and undermining the legitimacy of hobby ballots. I very much doubt that the \$2.00 charge per ballot would deter them. If this amendment, which I'm sure is well-intentioned on your part, Fred, ever became a tool in the hands of these people, California and the Midwest could kiss DipCon goodbye forever.

On the other hand, I like the now-effective provision for allowing DipCon to be held other than in conjunction with a major con. MaryCon would be a good site. My only negative though on this matter, and it's a minor one, would be that we must be very careful to select a site that will be adequate. As callous as some of the Origins directors were, at least we were assured of reasonable facilities, etc. We just have to watch our step a bit more carefully when choosing a "small con" or "no con" site to host DipCon.

I'm glad that the four-region rotational system is still firmly in place. I've always felt this was fair -- even without a huge number of postal players in Region III. There may not be many, but there are enough people there to deserve their chance at hosting DipCon too. The rights of the majority cannot eclipse those of the minority. Now, maybe I'd start wondering if DipCon were to be located in Bismarck, North Dakota, e.g., but Dallas didn't seem so horrible to me.

As this is being typed, there's an outside (very outside) chance that I'll make Seattle next summer. Hope to see you there, if I go.))

From Bob Sacks (8/10/84):

Dear BRUX,

Effective immediately, MFW&SFA Inc. and its New York Game Board will not accept donations for your Novice Packet, and you may not accept donations on our behalf for your project. (To date we have not received any donations for you, and you have not reported to us that you have received any donations, so this change of status would seem to have no effect.) You are of course free to accept donations on your own, but you may not represent yourself as acting on behalf or as part of MFW&SFA or the New York Game Board.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
Bobby Sacks

((Where would we be without New Yorkers?))

Some Negotiation Techniques: Free Admissions

by Randolph Smyth

It's generally true that a player might be able to lie convincingly enough to fool a lie detector, while failing miserably to come across in postal Diplomacy. "Real world" techniques are not always applicable to Diplomacy: (1) the average joe is more adept at little white lies in spoken conversation. However, the written record of a lie is harder to talk around than the memory of a spoken one. (2) Normal people assume you are telling the truth unless specific suspicions arise that you're not; many Diplomacy players assume the opposite. (3) The volume of correspondence often demands that fictions be maintained over some time. Players that weave tangled webs need the agility of a spider.

Nevertheless it can be an error in Diplomacy to keep the lie so simple that it's easy to keep track of. An aura of believability is best obtained by dressing the lie with so much other garbage that it's undetectable. The technique of "free (unnecessary) admissions" is a useful one for lulling suspicions, in Diplomacy and elsewhere.

An episode from Tom Sawyer illustrates the maneuver. Tom once confessed to a "crime" he didn't commit to save his girl Becky from a thrashing. Mark Twain doesn't describe the result in painful detail but one gets the impression that Tom didn't sit down for a week. The teacher had no reason to doubt the truth of Tom's gratuitous confession and pursued the matter no farther, though he was on the verge of discovering the truth.

Any hidden-active situation can be similarly exploited. Take your lumps in small doses, deserved or not, particularly if your admissions could never have been proved against you! The rest of your letter is transformed to the gospel for the dazed recipient.

For instance, what's your opinion of the following letter from Austria to England (entirely hypothetical, of course) in the negotiation period prior to Spring 1901:

"I will attack Russia with the help of Turkey. If you help us, Scandinavia and StP are yours. At the moment, I am also friendly with Italy and Germany. Please describe the alliances in your area."

Much too telegraphic, of course, but a surprising number of players "negotiate" in just this way. There are several items of information, though -- are they believable? It's safe to infer that Austria would welcome an English attack on Russia, but little else is certain, including the reason for the Austrian desires. The basic outline isn't bad, really: giving information in the first sentence, offering alliance and rewards in the second, suggesting a position of diplomatic strength in the third, and looking for further contact at the end. But none of the data stands as being trustworthy without confirmation from the other players; and if they contradict it, this format will probably look suspicious. Compare with this:

"Hi. I'm afraid I've got myself in a bit of an embarrassing jam in my initial letters: I've offered an alliance to both Italy and Turkey, and both agreed! I'm therefore trying to persuade Italy to move west rather than draw me into an X/T conflict...I hope you're not counting on an alliance with a strong France? I can't cooperate with Russia as I know him to be untrustworthy from a previous game. The Turks have agreed to help, but since Italy could be distracting him, your own assistance would be much appreciated. You should be able to pick up Scandinavia and StP with a minimum reward for your attack on Russia.

"I've neglected to write France so far and he hasn't contacted me either. However, Germany and I have hit it off on our first exchange of letters -- he seems like a nice guy and I don't expect any occupation of Tyo and Boh for several game years at least. Write to let me know how the northern alliance situation is shaping up -- I'll be particularly interested in your intentions in Scandinavia."

Now how can you be suspicious of a letter like that? Yet it says no more than the first. It's longer and has a more friendly tone, which helps a lot, but its

believability stems largely from its admissions of error and uncertainty. "I'm afraid...embarrassing jam...trying to persuade...can't cooperate...could be...neglected to write...don't expect...". As England, if you hadn't made up your mind beforehand and didn't really have a clear idea of the southeastern situation, wouldn't you snap at an E/G alliance and proceed against Scandinavia (and perhaps France)? It would work well enough if Austria was playing it straight...but aha, his position and prospects could just as easily be as follows:

His major alliance is with Italy; relations with Russia have actually been satisfactory, but with Turkey they've been cool. He's written vague letters to Germany and France, promoting F/I neutrality so Italy will have a free hand to blitz Turkey. Russia is being induced to help as well.

England has been chosen as his patsy in the north. If the E/G alliance comes about, it will oppose F/R, neutralizing the north and keeping Russia from creating a formidable alliance with Turkey or seriously challenging for a slice of the Turkish centers himself. If the R/A border (Gal) is kept neutral in Spring '01, Austria simply writes again to advise England that the I/T war forced a temporary change of plans, but "Russia is under close observation and will be attacked next year. Since my relationship with Turkey has really cooled off, your spoils in Russia should include Moscow." An over-enthusiastic England is already committed to the desired course, and now Austria is offering him still more. Austria then picks his own time to stab Russia (hopefully after the Turkish position is irreparable and just in time to make England very grateful that he came through). Meanwhile, F/G, E/R and I/T are all at war with each other, leaving Austria as the stalemate-breaker on all fronts. An E/F alliance, for instance, wouldn't have suited Austria/(Italy) at all.

Idealistic of course. But write five or six letters similar to the second example above and it's not unduly optimistic to expect such progress to a dominating position.

((The above article prompted a thoughtful exchange between Mark Berch and Randolph in FSF #126. In the discussion following, passages not in parentheses are part of Mark's letter, and Randolph's comments are in triple parentheses.)

...Your negotiations articles are great -- the best being written in the hobby today. (((I didn't really have to include that sentence, did I? However...))) However, your "Free Admissions" article was not up to the usual standards, and there is a lot there that I don't agree with. You present a "telegraphic" letter and then a "full" letter, then say that the latter says "no more than the first." This is simply not true. For example, the full letter says that you know Russia to be "untrustworthy" from another game. This will prompt an alert England to write, "Gee, if Russia is the untrustworthy sort, I'd want to know that. Could you send me the number and zine for that game so I could confirm it???" If there is no such game, you might be in trouble trying to smooth this one over. If there is such a game, that fact could have gone into the telegraphic letter: "Russia, whom I know to be untrustworthy from another game, with..." Such an inclusion would not have added any "Free Admission" character to the telegraphic letter, and made them more similar. In a second case, the full letter says, "You should be able to pick up Scandinavia and StP" -- this is much less forthcoming than the telegraphic letter, which has a specific commitment on that score. On a side point, I personally consider Scandinavia to include StP, as the term is used on the Dippy board, as it is much more linked to who-owns-Nwy-Swe-Fin-Den than who owns central Russia. In the same way, Iberia includes Mar.

(((I think your criticisms of the article are based on the totally erroneous assumption that everyone involved is as good a player as you are -- you picked one of mine apart last year on the same basis. I fully agree that Austria would be very foolish to write such a letter to a top-level player in the English position, if it was heavily laced with tiny lies. But remember that I also said, "Austria has chosen England as his patsy in the north." Choosing Mark Berch as a patsy could be expected to have unfortunate consequences, whatever the method. The implication is that England has been identified

as being no better than average -- and he would have to be much better than average to even think of the questions you propose in a real game situation.

What I meant in saying that "the second letter says no more than the first" is that the same pitch is being made, and once a good player screens out all the unverifiable crud, the information in each is also about the same. I do regard the statement that Russia is untrustworthy as a "free admission" -- if accurate, the information would be quite valuable to the English player, and there's no compelling reason for Austria to reveal it: few players even justify an attack to a third party.

P.S. If we were allied in a game, and agreed to regard "Iberia" as yours and "the French centers" as mine, things might get quite hairy if you tried to take Mar. I suspect that the reaction would be the same if our roles were reversed. Definitions should be kept specific except in the rare cases when vagueness may produce a diplomatic advantage. I think.)))

Another odd spot is the "I've neglected to write France so far...". This is going to depend on who you are. If I as England get such a letter from Robert Paquin (the last Austria I entered a game with) then I can believe it. If I get such a letter from you, for example, I am going to have a loud guffaw. And I am going to say, "I wonder what other crap is in this letter." Further, it appears that, in your real alternative scenario, it isn't true, as you say that a "vague" letter has gone out to France.

((No, the alternative scenario isn't necessarily the "real" one, just one of many possibilities that England should keep in mind pending further evidence. Of course every letter depends on the personalities involved: an Austrian player with a good reputation gains nothing by admitting such weaknesses, while a good English player wouldn't be selected to receive such a letter if easily verifiable lies were included. What I've tried to do is write from the perspective of one average player to another -- letters from me to you simply don't apply.)))

((Bruce here -- double parentheses and all that jazz. Randolph, your point is well taken, but methinks you should have made this a bit more obvious in the original article. I did a double-take myself upon reading the bit about "I've neglected to write France so far", which would in itself mark you as incompetent to begin with; and then when you added in the "real" scenario that the guy has written to France, I almost freaked out. I see no point to telling such an easily-refutable lie, and indeed it's probable that England has already heard just the opposite from France and will check it out, even if he's only an average player. Your letter would have to be altered on that matter unless it was going to a totally incompetent England -- and even so, why do this?))

The next letter to England could portend more trouble, as the vague reference to "my relationship with Turkey has really cooled off" is bound to draw British attention -- after all, it is being cited as the reason for the Austrian change of plans. From England then comes to Austria the letter, "Actually, Turkey tells me now that relations with you (Austria) never were all that great. Who am I to believe? I do need an ally in the east, and I guess this disagreement is a good chance to find out who is telling England lies and who is not. So if you will please send me the letter in which..."

My point here is that the "full" letter has a number of loose threads, and you are risking a good English player tugging at some of them to see whether the whole thing will unravel.

Personally, I think the average player relies much too heavily on the lie, and not enough on such techniques as trying to shape the other guy's expectations in your favor. The lie does definitely have a place in Diplomacy, but I view this practice of tossing little lies into a letter, even if they are relatively harmless and may soften your appearance to the other player by giving the appearance of error and uncertainty, as very risky. When I catch letter writers to me at that, I assume that if they are going to lie to me about the small things, they are certainly going to lie to me about the more consequential things. The small lie, assuming it is caught, causes far more

damage than it can be expected to reap rewards, and so I think that in most cases they are a bad bet. This of course does not cover lies at which you cannot be caught, or lies which, if the victim relies on them, will place him in a position where he cannot retaliate.

((Mmm...if I was going to refrain from something consciously for fear of a bad reputation, it wouldn't be the occasional little lie: it would be the pre-emptory, pointed, slightly insulting questions that you propose as English replies. I'm in the habit of writing long letters to everyone, particularly as the game begins: if the guy's reply asked for ironclad proof of everything I'd mentioned, it would thoroughly turn me off to future correspondence with the fellow, especially if I was telling the truth to start with. I would think either "This guy must be a novice, and a paranoid one to boot: if he won't trust anyone, he won't last long", or if I knew him to have some experience, "This guy is overreacting to my reputation...if he won't take anything I say on trust, he isn't worth the trouble of working with." Results will be poor for the insistent prober in any case.

I think, therefore, that a point is reached where you must stifle your requirements for accurate information in little matters in order to get along well with the guy who's energetic enough to provide the (questionable) information in the first place: otherwise it dries up entirely. I prefer to nod blandly while taking everything with a grain of salt. Most players, I am convinced, are more inclined to nod enthusiastically at any friendly letter and take everything as gospel. For this reason, I think the little lie has its purpose, if indeed the writer has a definite purpose in mind, and is unlikely to be found out if it's kept under control. Few opponents adopt your bold approach in practice, Mark, for the simple reason that it has dangers of its own.))

((I'm still with Mark on that point, too. To me the expected returns from telling these little lies are far too small to justify their risk. However, I agree with Randolph that one can go too far in demanding to have verification of every little statement made by one's correspondent's. There then remains the question of whether Mark's example, of England wanting to know who is telling the truth about the past relationship of Austria and Turkey, is indeed such a minor point. If I were England, I might base my choice of an eastern ally on just something like this...or I might try to appear allied with both of them for as long as possible.

This debate was perhaps the most interesting exchange about the play of the game that I ever read in Foi Si Pie, and I certainly feel it was worth the space to present it to VD's readers.))



Dave Kleiman has brought laughter to more than a few with his classic "Jeopardy" press releases in the RIGEL game. In a few short weeks he will host IndyCon, and the ol' BRUXer is going! THANKS...to Doogie Dave Kleiman.

Don Del Grande has written several articles for VD about various cons, and has provided us with information on the gaming hobby outside of Diplomacy by sending in lists of 500 wargames and sneaking them into the Gossip Column. He shared dinner with BRUX at MaryCon 1984. THANKS...to Doogie Don Del Grande.

Debbie Lord has treated me as her own son and given me an immense amount of support over the past three years. She encouraged Alex to write for the zine, and is still an avid reader today. THANKS...to Doogie Debbie Lord.

Bob Sweeney is the only VD player ever to participate in the press of a game after his elimination. He once retaliated to my inclusion of sand in an envelope by sending me a piece of dung from his visit to the stables. THANKS...to Doogie Bob Sweeney.

Official People's Diplomacy Organization Internal Memo

To: Mr. Bruce Linsey of Dalton, Massachusetts

From: The Grand Kommissar

re: Remarks about PDO in "Voice of Doom," page 2, #97.

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF CENSURE AND BANISHMENT

Your ignorant drivel in which you cast mud on the PDO and its international membership cannot go unpunished for it is people like you, crawling on their bellies, lapping up the slime of their own self-importance, and casually belching their opinions, that has plagued all right-thinking folk since time immemorial.

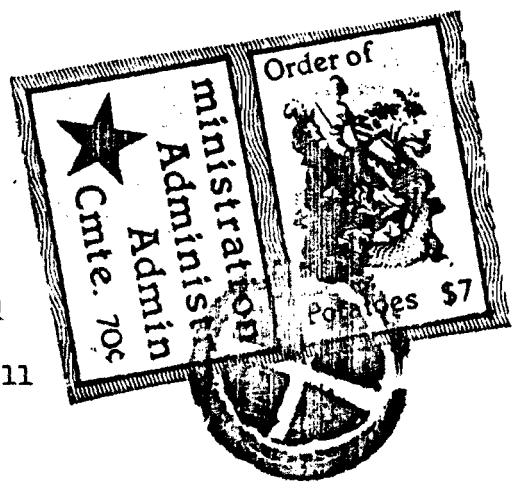
Your self-proclaimed position as fortune teller and insipid wit further deny you the right to any real and honest answer to your questions.

It is the position of the Grand Kommissar that you shall forever be banished to the muck and darkness from which you came in the fervent hope that your kind will not multiply and further foul the green earth upon which we live.

This order is irrevocable. There is nothing to save your pimply ass now, you jerk. If in the future, however, you prostrate yourself before the Grand Kouncil and beg for restitution of your forsaken status as a human being, you may be reinstated, though you would have to wear the letter "A" on your chest. It is not the letter of Hester Prynne; it is more closely related to Scott's Tissue.

Signed this day, August Eighth, The Year of Our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty Four, by the Provisional Grand Kommissar of the People's Diplomacy Organization, Michael Mills.

*Michael Mills*



((Oops, looks like I really stepped in it this time, Doomies. First the NYGB, now the PDO. If this keeps up I'll be a man without an organization...and that'll suit me just fine!))



Alliance Formation

by Randolph Smyth

My experiences in recent games have suggested that many novices are unaware of the factors determining a more experienced player's choice of allies. In fact, competent newcomers probably use the same selection criteria unconsciously in their choice. Presumably, awareness of these "rules" would result in less frequent breakage of them in the novice's own attempts to attract support. That is, it isn't hard to select the proper ally among one's neighbors, but much more difficult for the newcomer to make himself attractive, without analysing what he finds attractive in others. It takes two to ally.

Almost every nation on the board must interact initially with three neighbors. Surprisingly often in the average game, one can be rejected on the grounds of outright incompetence. By the end of 1901, it's clear to all active players that at least one nation can be effectively eliminated except as a pawn or an obstacle. The player involved either (1) hasn't read the Rulebook and shows no inclination to do so (2) makes gross tactical errors for other reasons, most of which boil down to inattention -- NMRs would fall into this category (3) fails to write to anyone, or is far inferior to the pack in both quantity and quality of negotiations. However, incompetence is a clear-cut problem and will not be considered further; a truly interested novice will not be falling into this sort of trap.

A subtler failing will often result in an effect which may be disguised for several game years. Overexuberance (e.g. the unshakable belief that as Italy, one should try for Mun in 1901 at all costs) may be tolerated by the other players (except Germany!) and result in friendly letters and encouragement if a weaker Germany and diverted Italy advance their own prospects. But these players will chuckle amongst themselves if the attack has no solid base; none will seriously consider the Italian as a godd long-range ally, unless he smartens up before it's in their interest to actually attack him.

Paranoia can also be the kiss of death, and particularly afflicts those who have been first introduced to the hobby by a scare story. For instance, a game analysis which dwells on the doublecross possibilities of an average position, from consideration of the tactical potentials alone, is interesting to read but unduly pessimistic. Maximum returns are rarely secured by grabbing every loose center within range -- the maintenance of a favorable ratio of allies to enemies will normally take you further. A German who doesn't recognize this as he looks at the Spring 1901 moves, and is completely intolerant of an Italian or Austrian move to Tyo, a French move to Bur, Russian designs on Swe, or English hopes for Bel will be stab-proof -- but with no trust at all, he's also likely to have more than his share of real enemies, immediately or later.

The other side of the coin is doglike trust in the letters one receives. Using the above example, an opening Russian move to Sil, an Austrian one to Boh, or an English announcement that he intends to try conveying an army to Hol is hard to justify to the German, but some players will try. Tactical warning signals should never be ignored when they are unambiguous (and of course, any foreign movement toward one's holdings should be recognized as a potential problem). The fine line between the two extremes is the place to be: a stab or attack is then due to other factors (where you'll have to use your judgement). It's no disgrace to you, though, if your level of trust has been appropriate.

Players can be interested in the game, strategically realistic, with the right mixture of trust and healthy suspicion, and still not hit it off. As often as not, this is due to a personality clash which may begin with a tactless remark in the more conversational part of the letter. If the guy's first letter takes two weeks to arrive, don't start your reply with an expression of total disgust directed at

CUPW (Canadian Union of Postal Workers). Your prospective ally may be a shop steward. Your most important letter is usually your first, and the most important section to an unknown fellow player doesn't concern the game at all; it's a personal introduction. In my case, my neighbor may think that all scientists are a bunch of lazy parasites, or that anyone interested in fencing or the theatre is a faggot. That's his business; I'm not interested in changing his opinion, but I'll give him a chance to keep it to himself. (Of course, someone with odd notions may attack you for no apparent reason, and you'll go up the wall trying to figure out why. Unusual distortions of viewpoint often come in clusters, though, and the fellow probably won't make a good ally anyhow. Fundamental clashes of personality just have to be lived with.)

Another source of possible friction in the early stages is a difference of opinion on what each ally deserves in the way of spoils from a proposed campaign. Suppose R/A/I negotiate the dismemberment of four Turkish centers (Home, Bul). Austria can devote everything to the cause; Russia and Italy will invest one fleet each. Normally the centers will split 2:1:1 -- but is this entirely fair? Does Austria's greater investment entitle her to "future considerations" elsewhere? Or does the staple fact of R/I friendship through that period (the neutrality of units which could otherwise have well been used against Austria) justify the "leverage" in the investment/reward ratio? Suppose it turns out that Russia can (or must) spare two units rather than one for the campaign: how can the investment of the extra unit be rewarded? Results in Turkey may affect the choice of play and division of spoils in a concurrent attack on Germany -- or it may not. If terms are concluded, the conquest of Turkey goes halfway, and Italy has to back out due to attack by France, is he entitled to anything at all? There are no "right" answers, but the alliance will eventually break down if a mutually acceptable solution cannot be found. Such possible problems should at least be hinted at in the early stages if it's desirable to promote strength in the long term. Meeting the expectations of each member of an alliance can be attributed to the virtue of "diplomatic sensitivity".

A new alliance may also founder on the rocks of tactical as well as diplomatic insensitivity. England may suggest that the only way for him to help France against Italy is to swing fleets past Gibraltar, which may be quite true; but if he presents it as gospel and acts on the assumption that this is fine with his French ally, he may be in for a shock.

I have deliberately slapped these problems down with no deliberate organization, as they are meant to be examples rather than a complete list of diplomatic weaknesses. Every aspiring ruler should pick apart the letters of those fellow players who seem to collect allies like a honeypot draws flies. Draw your own conclusions therefrom and do ye likewise.

((Another important point to take into account in your attempts at alliance formation is: what exactly is the other guy looking for in an ally? If he's a rank novice, he may want someone who can help him decide on the best tactics to use each season until he gets the hang of things. Your approach will then be different than to the old hand who may be viewing you as a paper cup, to be used as needed and then discarded. To the former, you might write that you'll be glad to go against Germany, and here's the tactics that might get us started faster. To the latter, you might suggest that you'd certainly be glad to help him take down the German, and what tactics ought we to try this season? Let the win-only player think you'll be his crutch; let the novice think you'll be his protector. Let the guy who goes for two-way draws think that you'll do the same, and in all of these cases, regardless of your real intentions, you improve your chances at securing an alliance to break or keep at your convenience. Of course, this technique can be carried to extremes: "I'd just love to share a draw with you" isn't going to work if the guy knows you've just notched up three wins by stabbing your ally each time. Still, it can't hurt to try to make yourself as attractive as possible not only in a general sense, but also to each particular player whose alliance you wish to court, given their own quirks, styles and needs.))

Wrapping up a very successful series...

### The Diplomatic Typochondriac

by John Kador

Five years! That's a long time to be writing a journal of Diplomacy. Of course, from the reader's point of view, the time often seems more prolonged. As a charter subscriber to VD, I've seen the whole spectrum of literacy represented in its pages. From good writing to indifferent writing to rarely-wretched offerings, I've seen it all. Nearly every postal player of the past five years has had occasion to contribute to its pages. I consider VD, then, a microcosm of the Diplomacy press. All the excesses in syntax and diction that I have spotlighted over the years may be found by looking no further than my back issues of VD.

You'll all agree that the above is tightly reasoned. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately), it's wrong. I had to go back to VDs more than two years old to find an appreciable number of blunders and goofs. VDs, of late, have been better written and better edited. In fact, almost every zine I get is better written and better edited than when I started reviewing the Diplomacy press for this column.

I take this to be a positive sign. Whether we are all maturing as writers and editors or whether this column can take a small measure of credit, I won't venture to guess. It remains that I had an inordinately challenging time of locating the few miserable gaffs that follow.

So, before the jeers, I'd like to offer a few cheers for some individual writers and editors that I've had occasion to admire.

I nominate Eric Kane as most improved writer and editor. Barely literate when it began publishing, Anduin has evolved into an immaculately well-written zine.

Paul Rautenberg's Midlife Crisis is another well-crafted zine. I play in it, and I can offer first-hand evidence that Paul's GMing skill is exceeded only by his talent for editing.

For the most consistent editorial voice, I believe Bruce Linsey takes the point. His "Hobbytalk" and "BRUX Speaks" columns display a consistent point of view, consistently well-argued.

In terms of writers, based on my limited reading, I admire the following most of all: Rod Walker, Mark Luedl, Bob Olsen, and Randolph Smyth. My apologies in advance to other worthy scribes I have omitted.

And now, before everyone considers me a hopeless softy, this month's review of blunders, gaffs, and trespasses on standard usage.

To celebrate VD's fifth anniversary, let's start with a letter from James Wall (VD #91, p.11). Wall recounts a piece of hobby gossip that recognizes Linsey as "the fount of all that's bad in the hobby...a lightning rod." Nice metaphors, those, and probably arguable. But mixed metaphors are a pain in the neck. They should be weeded out!

In the same way we admire the Special Olympics, we have to give credit to Cathy Cunning for publishing Cathy's Ramblings. All too often, her prose is reminiscent of ramblings translated from the Serbo-Croatian. For example, she asks players to vote on a variety of deadlines (CR #5, p. 3): "I ask all players in this game to vote on this listing your choices in order of 1, 2, and 3." If we all took a vote on what we think she means, I think there'd be a run-off. In the same paragraph, Cathy uses an indefinite pronoun: "The results will be published in CR when they are available." The results or CR? Who knows, but I look forward to my CRs. No one puts more of himself or herself into a publication than Cathy.

Of the editorial We school of writing, Ed Wrobel is particularly enamored. It's difficult, then, to determine if he is guilty of misusing a subordinating conjunction. "As a fiercely independent journal..., we would be above reproof [sic] should we refuse to print Mr. Linsey's missive." Confusing the editor with the publication is

easy when using the editorial We. It's affected; denies individual responsibility; I don't like it. Moreover, a better word than "reproof" is "reproach." The difference is subtle but if you use words of that caliber, you shouldn't misfire.

Writing in Give Me a Weapon (#33, p. 2), Wrobel titles a thoroughly decent article: "A Side Bet: True Love or False Slander?" If slander is, as my dictionary says, "a false report meant to do harm," what is "false slander"? In this case, false slander would be to affirm that Wrobel's style is pedantic, even if his heart is in the right place.

A sure-fire way for me to detect items for this column is to look for strikeouts and corrections. Where there's ambivalence, there's opportunity. So my eye was quickly drawn to the following passage in Irkesome (#38, p. 11): "Every other public college in Minnesota ~~is~~ are in small towns." Scott Hansen, you were right the first time. The subject of the sentence is singular despite the proximity of the plural "small towns" to the verb. In cases of strikeouts and corrections like this, apply Kador's Rule: Live with it; trust your instincts.

((Thanks, and four issues of sub credit, to John for this conclusion to a series which began back in VD #18! It's been greatly appreciated, John; your articles have been a valuable addition to the zine.

I have several comments on the above.

I agree fully that VD is better written and edited than it was several years ago, and to an extent I feel that many of the hobby's zines have improved in this regard as well. In my case, the improvement came from practice and experience, and extensive reading of the material created by the hobby's top writers. I would also suspect that John's columns had their influence on the hobby press.

I admire the following writers most of all: Chuff Afflerbach, Garry Hamlin, Gary Coughlan, Ruth Glaspey, Paul Rauterberg, Joan Extrom, Randolph Smyth, and Jake Halverstadt. All have a flawless command of the English language, and to me that's a prerequisite skill of good writing, not an added luxury. I agree entirely that Anduin's writing has improved immensely since the zine was founded.

Too bad that, by sheer coincidence, the joke about mixed metaphors appears elsewhere in this issue also, as does another reference to the editorial We. But you'll have to find 'em on your own. I too despise the editorial We. It appears most noticeably in Bushwacker.

I, like John, look forward to each issue of Gathy's Ramblings. I do not agree with his criticism of the sentence: "The results will be published in CR when they are available." To me, that sentence is 100% clear and grammatical. But then, I'm not the expert.))

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Alex Lord wrote a column for VD for over a year and a half, and brought laughter to many. Her writing was truly an asset to the zine, and she is a sweet person whose friendship I shall always cherish. Hey, it's my last issue and I don't care what the hobby's hatemongers think -- I love her and I'm proud of it! THANKS...to Doonie Alex Lord.

Garry Hamlin handles the written word better than he handles old dishwashers, and VD has been richer as a result. He must be a good friend because BRUX went trucking halfway up the state of Michigan to spend a night at his house. And golly, what a great ally he was in Swedish Roundabout. THANKS...to Doonie Garry Hamlin.

Steve Angle has hosted many face-to-face games in his home, and I've enjoyed them. A friend through these encounters, he became a Doonie and got started in VD as a postal player by taking Italy to a two-way draw in MILKY WAY. THANKS...to Doonie Steve Angle.

James Woodson has become a friend through cons and exchanges of letters. He is one of the nicest people I have met since joining this hobby -- even if his leg does come off next Monday! THANKS...to Doonie James Woodson.

This 'un is original...

45

Diplomatic Strategies in the Middle Game

by Randolph Smyth

A player with a clear advantage over the rest of the board -- closing in on a win -- often produces a rather boring finish. Tactically, the "right" moves are generally obvious (except, perhaps, to an "ally" about to feel the knife); on the diplomatic side, he will go to some lengths to avoid rocking the boat. Likewise, it's rare that a good player has to make a really tough decision in the opening. One or two neighbours are, alas, a cut below the rest, and the proper way to make the first gains is determined by the luck of the draw for countries. The game-long success or failure of a power is established at a point where many players go astray: in the middle game (1904-6) where a number of countries have 5-8 centers.

Let's assume you are England, with 7 centers and a solid 8-center German ally who has restricted himself to a single fleet. (You get the idea: as you will find, the specific positions of units and centers held isn't important.) France defends Spa and Mar against you; Italy has lent him a couple of units' aid, but you suspect the Italian is just setting up a stab. In the east, A/T have eliminated Russia but, with 6 centers apiece, are now quarreling over the spoils. Italy has taken Gre in addition to his 4 "natural" centers and appears to be favouring Austria, though his forces are scattered across the Mediterranean and have most recently been shifting westward.

France, aware of the strong possibility of an Italian stab, offers to join you in the south as a puppet, and points out that you could stab Germany for a couple of sure centers, eventually crushing him while containing Italy. The Frenchman is right, and the option is tempting: Germany has minimal counterattack capability and would lose to you eventually...if the status quo is maintained elsewhere for 4-5 game years! If you stick with Germany, though, progress will be even slower -- he's preparing to attack Austria, but the Turk has told you that he'll patch up his quarrel and organize an I/A/T defensive alliance if the E/G bloc grows any further without internal conflict. All the southeastern players seem competent enough to see the danger you and Germany pose, and to make such an alliance work. What do you do?

The obvious, and simplistic, choices are "stab Germany" and "grind down the rest of the board". Either would (or could) be stupid if you made it without more information. Certainly your relationship with Germany is of major significance, and both options will have their own risks and rewards: some players will be philosophically or stylistically committed to one answer or the other. For those of us that see the game as a series of branch points rather than a highway where the "proper" decision is always obvious, more analysis is necessary. You have a good idea of the relative power of each interest group on the board right now, but what of the future? What will maximize your own influence in the coming years, without allowing any other player or alliance to make similar progress?

I've stacked the cards. With such a favorable position, you should first of all set your goals high. Only Germany has more centers/units; but fleets are generally more influential than armies, and the German choice of his unit mix (though you no doubt worked hard to get him to make that choice) suggests a rather unimaginative guy. Furthermore, you can afford to take chances for a comparable reward: you're already close to a defensive stalemate line, which would minimize the losses even if the whole board turns against you. To the other players, you're of course as friendly as ever; but to settle in your own mind on a lesser target would be selling yourself short at this point. How best to achieve it?

If you're patient, and sure that your German ally is both 100% loyal and a bit too tactically trusting, you're probably best to stick with him and stab ten game years later when nobody else can influence the outcome. If he's gotten out of position (to allow that two-center stab) only by accident and temporarily and you fear he's at

least as competent as you are in an endgame, best to take the opportunity while it's available. In most cases, though, the characteristics of the German player won't hand you the answer on a silver platter.

Is France trustworthy? Anyone who is still defending vigorously and making proposals to his enemies with just two centers certainly qualifies as a fighter; but if survival is that important to him, he won't care how he achieves it. You can only count on his help against Italy for as long as it promotes his own security -- perhaps not even for that long, if he thinks a worthwhile advantage is possible by surprising you. His offer of aid may indeed be worth accepting, but don't be tempted on the strength of that offer to go out on a limb against Germany, without other sources of insurance.

How about the determination of Turkey to block E/G? Since he brought the subject up, you have to take it seriously; and you're only fooling yourself to deliberately ignore the ability of I/A to join him if your E/G threat is obvious enough. Be objective about the enemies capabilities; don't overestimate yourself and don't grab short-sighted centers in the faint hope that a logical opposition won't develop after all. Remember, you're in a powerful position; you should be able to make further advances without playing that kind of long shot.

The key, then, is to search for a broader consensus and go with whatever you find. Turkey and France (total of 8 centers) want you to attack Germany, but neither can be counted on to help out before or afterwards. Germany (8 centers) shouldn't have to be consulted; presumably he would not want you to stab him...but your alliance can only make minimal progress against determined opposition. None of these players can hurt you directly if you adopt an unfavourable option, but they could frustrate your larger objective of reaching a winning position. There's little to choose on the basis of these guys, so...go to the rest of the players!

After all, you have no reason to get on the bad side of either Italy or Austria, when this dilemma offers you a heaven-sent opportunity to get on their good side. The task may be even easier since they seem to have the beginnings of an alliance and would probably think alike, though this can't be counted on. To each, the question must be phrased, "Should I attack Germany now or later?" If it's to be now, Austria can be invited to send a couple of units north, while Italy takes up the slack against Turkey. If later, A/I must take out Turkey soon since Germany will only get stronger in the interim, and you may be "forced" to stick with the E/G alliance by the time A/I are ready to turn elsewhere.

This type of postulation has several objectives: (1) it paints an eventual G/A conflict as inevitable, either way. This is almost certain anyhow, unless you're foolish enough to stab the German without laying this kind of groundwork, but this way the German is established as an enemy in Austria's mind. This will ultimately benefit you, whether or not you stab the German soon. (2) It encourages both powers to intensify the battle with Turkey. The Turk seems to be the most capable of the southeastern powers based on his letter to you, and you'd prefer to see him on the losing end of a local battle. And if you do stick with Germany, you've decreased the likelihood of an I/A/T alliance forming -- if your letters are passed to Germany, that's how you explain their contents. (3) With Italy focused on Turkey, the remaining French centers are drawn further into your own sphere of influence. This doesn't mean you have to take them both right away; splitting them with Italy might be a good investment to be more certain of his friendship. If you stick with Germany, grab the other one as Italy moves east, and nothing is lost in the end. (4) It manages to get in a threat about the powerful E/G alliance, while still implying that you'd prefer a switch in the predictable alliance system. Austria or Italy may not necessarily think you're sincere about allying with them, but it's hard to ignore the proposals or voice suspicions without acting awfully negative. (That in itself would tell the Englishman not to expect much from those players.) Psychologically, you can kill enthusiasm for stopping an alliance by offering to break it up and being turned down -- if you're opposed, you can "legitimately" protest, "Well, what do you want me to do, anyhow?" Once A/I make a commitment to you, it's easier for

them to stick with it than to search for a way out, until you start to dominate the game. Don't push them into a specific decision, and the eventual result will be a situation they got into by themselves.

Generally, it's these "secondary" players -- not your immediate neighbours, but the powers on their opposite borders -- who are the most useful indicators of which way to go in such situations. It's not entirely coincidental that the positional weakness of the central powers shows up not so much in the opening as at this stage of the game: they can't refer to the "secondary" in their relationships with edge or corner neighbours. The only other powers with influence are also their neighbours, adjacent along the edge of the board, and have their own axes to grind in the immediate vicinity.

Have I, then, set up a straw man with my example -- chosen one where the "right" action of consulting the secondary, though perhaps not obvious to the player who's just skimming this article, is unusually clear in hindsight? And where the "right" action leads almost invariably to the "right" decision, depending on the responses received? Perhaps. Let's change the dilemma around entirely, without confusing anyone by changing our imaginary game. You are now Italy, having just received such a letter from England. What do you do?

With only five units strung out across the Mediterranean, helping an underdog at one end and beginning to test a strong opponent at the other, your situation is a good deal different from England's. Winning the game is a faroff goal at best, and your efforts must be bent instead to simply holding your own in a highly competitive game. But, let's not leave you totally resourceless: let's say that England's impression was correct and your alliance with Austria is feeling comfortable. You should defeat the Turk...if only the north doesn't interfere. Unfortunately, you and Austria are the central powers: if E/G hang together and you persist in fighting Turkey, he may actually survive you both.

However, let's say you're also pretty sure that both Austria and Turkey are "win only" players like yourself. Is the problem then as simple as encouraging E/G to fight each other while you and Austria chew up Turkey? That's one option, sure... but another is to allow the E/G alliance to proceed until A/T are scared into making peace with you and each other. Get rid of France, and a quick 5-way draw may be the best way out of this game. End it respectably, and you'll have that much more time for another where things may go better for you. Or, if the I/A/T defense brings a frustrated England to blows with Germany, you can grab whatever looks convenient, without making any of the positional concessions and risks that England is suggesting now.

You have England's letter, and you have a good idea that Austria's reaction will be similar to your own (write him with your thoughts, and find out!). The French situation is clear: he's focused even tighter on mere survival than you are, and can't really be trusted. Anyhow, the fate of his centers/units is far less important than the major positional/diplomatic events on the horizon; take what you can from him and leave it at that.

Again, you can't make a sensible decision on the basis of the likely E/F/A reactions alone; you have lived to regret your foolishness if you've allowed the communications with Germany and Turkey to lapse. Only by including their likely reactions in your equations can you make an informed judgment about your next action.

Don't restrict yourself to the most obvious options. You have at least five distinct strategies from here: (1) Decline England's offer, continue your westward movement, and try to maintain the positional status quo. This is the "draw hope", angling for a successful defensive alliance from I/A/T. (2) Accept the English offer with all its conditions, moving units to attack Turkey in earnest and splitting the French centers. You're gambling that England is sincere and won't just maintain his German alliance and keep coming into the Med. If you guess right, though, and E/G stalemate would leave you and Austria with a dominating alliance -- quite a boost in your fortunes, though a three-way draw is still the most likely result in the end.

(3) Encourage the attack on Germany but demur where your own forces are concerned. This limits the risk, but also the reward: England is less likely to stab Germany at all if you're lukewarm, or if he does go ahead, you'll be behind schedule in beating Turkey. The Englishman could then take it all -- unless you're able to distract him in Iberia. In this scenario, the French player could become pivotal after all. (4) Inform Germany of the English plans (pass his letter if necessary). Warning the German is more likely to lead to an E/G stalemate if they go to war -- but a clever England would have written you in such a way as to explain away the incriminating letter if it fell into German hands. The maintenance of the E/G alliance, perhaps stronger than ever with England wary of a betrayal, is possible; and which way will you move while you find out? (5) Go along with the English plans to the point where you appear almost committed against Turkey, then stab Austria. This nets you a couple of centers, offers a nearby target for more, and takes the Austrian pressure off Germany to increase the likelihood of a northern stalemate. This assumes you can work with Turkey and that he'll go along with the idea. Still, he may wind up dominating an I/T alliance depending on Austria's reaction to you stabbing him, England won't be as pleased at the collapse of the Austrian diversion and possible German gratitude isn't likely to count for much. Other risks are as in #2 above, but if all goes well the I/T alliance should be better positioned than an I/A one grinding into the corner.

For all options that don't involve complete accommodation with England's wishes, you must make a separate decision about France: maintain the defensive alliance, stab him, or go along with an English plan to split them peacefully. And this time, I have no pet answer, either for the decision or for an action that would facilitate it. It all depends on your analysis of the players, which in turn hinges on the quality of your groundwork in communicating with all of them beforehand.

The same example can be used almost indefinitely: how would you play each of the other powers? So far, it offers a number of clues to steering your way through the middle game, and coming out in better shape than you went in:

(1) Set performance targets that are a good balance between optimism and realism. If you have the best position on the board, 1904 isn't too early to start thinking about converting that advantage into a win, though there's doubtless a long road ahead. A lesser power will have to work his way up the ladder a step at a time, while putting priority on preventing the leader from running off with the game in the meantime. Analyse your potential as objectively as you can to set appropriate short-term and long-term goals.

(2) Keep writing to allies and enemies alike, right from pre-1901 on. Every player talks about this, so I shouldn't need to beat the drum too hard...but perhaps the dilemma of an Italy who's ignorant of the playing preferences of the German and Turkish players in the above example may bring its importance into more concrete terms.

(3) Be pragmatic about the likely influence of each opponent on the game and your own chances in it. You can't trust all players equally in making decisions (they may have been "created" that way, but things change fast) -- nobody does, but it sometimes helps to articulate the principle. The poor Frenchman in the above example did the initial spadework in prodding an English stab, but ultimately, England and Italy both made decisions about his fate based on other considerations.

(4) Don't restrict yourself to the most obvious options, or the ones which other players are good enough to point out to you. These rarely have the best effect, since all the upwardly-mobile players have considered them when forming their own strategies. Especially as an underdog, the risk of being surprised yourself is sometimes worth it if you catch the other players off-balance at the same time.

(5) Despite #3 and #4, if two or more options look equally good to you after full consideration, don't be too hesitant to leave the decision to someone else's preference (even a potential enemy's!), so long as you're not "blowing your cover". That way,

a "good" decision will have most of the board on your side on the issues of greatest importance to you (though incompatible goals may remain in other areas) -- and your decision then takes a giant step towards being the "right" one. If the balance of power on the board seems to approve of your strategies, then only a secret conspiracy can get you into really hot water.

(6) Finally, don't be afraid to rock the boat, unless your lead is so great that you can afford to coast to a win on sheer momentum. Success rarely rewards a passive diplomat, and the strongest power is generally in best shape to take advantage of diplomatic shakeups (hence England's willingness to consider the abandonment of a superficially profitable alliance with Germany). Besides, you should enjoy the game more with a dash of the unexpected...at least, are any of us involved in this with the object of boring ourselves? Go for it!

((Thirteen issues of sub credit for another great strategy article, Randolph! Unlike the others in this issue, this article is original.

Randolph has requested that he be consulted first for his permission if anyone ever wishes to reprint this elsewhere. Don't ask me why, but please do him that courtesy since he asked.

Surprisingly, Randolph included a cover letter indicating that he felt this article was subpar. It seems to be a rather common trait among the hobby's really great writers that they underevaluate their own work. Steve Knight, Jake Halverstadt, and Chuff Afflerback all do the same thing. I truly felt that this article was a great effort; the care taken in setting up a believable example, the insightful analysis of the choices facing two of the players, and so on. Strategically, the middle game is the most complex phase of a game. At the start of a game, no one is allied (usually!), all of the countries are pretty much equal, all the standard options for opening are discussed, and so on. Toward the end of a game, the best path for each country is often very well defined -- hold that stalemate line, stop the leader, etc. None of this is true in the middle game, which is probably the reason why it is the most difficult phase of the game not only to play, but also to write about. Alliances are formed and may cover a broad spectrum of fluidity, countries are of different strengths, positions become tangled, and so on. Randolph says the article was a bit long; personally, I was dying at the end to see what he'd now say about the Turkish options, or the German, or even French. I loved it!

The basic thrust of the article is right on: you must base your strategies on the global situation and not just the probable reactions of your immediate neighbors. I do have a slight problem with the business about getting a consensus of opinion in order to make these decisions: one can go too far in being democratic about the matter, and must sometimes account for the fact that one's own interests are served by actions which don't please most of the board. Optimal decisions are made by integrating all of these factors together, weighted appropriately. And with that sentence, I'm getting uncomfortably deep into the quicksand of theory...so I'll end it here.))

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mark lew, better known as "ig", has written some of the most entertaining letters in the vd gossip column. his quirky mind concocts ideas that only he could think of, and his style provided lots of laughs and variety from the usual bill of fare. thanks...to doomie mark lew.

Trouble Linsey was the hobby's only canine publisher before she passed away in 1982. Her subzine to VD, The Bark of Doom, kept BRUX in his place and she eventually went on to become the Real Mascot of Postal Diplomacy. THANKS...to Doomie Trouble Linsey.

((The following was written by a high school student in Pennsylvania, and sent to me by ghod knows who...))

In the End

In the end, there was Earth, and it was with form and beauty,  
And man dwelt upon the lands of the Earth, the meadows and the trees, and he said,  
"Let us build our dwellings in this place of beauty."  
And he built cities and covered the Earth with concrete and steel.  
And the meadows were gone.  
And man said, "It is good."

On the second day, man looked upon the waters of the Earth,  
And man said, "Let us put our wastes in the waters that dirt will be washed away."  
And man did.  
And the waters became polluted and foul in their smell.  
And man said, "It is good."

On the third day, man looked upon the forests of the Earth, and saw they were beautiful.  
And man said, "Let us cut the timber for our homes and grind the wood for our use."  
And man did.  
And the lands became barren and their trees were gone.  
And man said, "It is good."

On the fourth day, man saw that animals were in abundance and ran in the fields and  
played in the sun.  
And man said, "Let us cage these animals for our amusement and kill them for our sport."  
And man did.  
And there were no more animals on the face of the Earth.  
And man said, "It is good."

On the fifth day, man breathed the air of the Earth.  
And man said, "Let us dispose of our wastes into the air, for the winds shall blow  
them away."  
And man did.  
And the air became heavy with dust and choked and burned.  
And man said, "It is good."

On the sixth day, man saw himself and seeing the many languages and tongues, he feared  
and hated.  
And man said, "Let us build great machines", and the Earth was fired with the rage of  
great wars.  
And man said, "It is good."

On the seventh day, man rested from his labors  
And the Earth was still.  
For man no longer dwelt upon the Earth.  
And it was good.



You may be wondering how I plan to celebrate the end of VD. Well, two of the people at work (Tony and Sharon, both of whom are good friends and avid readers) plan to take me out for pizza and beer. Debbie Lord has invited me down to the house for dinner and an evening to celebrate, and my cousin Rob and I will be going out for pizza (to which I'll be treating, thanks to Rob's help in collating this sucker and the use of his foot stapler!). And who knows -- maybe those weirdos out in Indiana will buy me a milkshake when I'm there. In any event, VD's fold is going to be widely celebrated here (as I'm sure it will be elsewhere in the hobby...). (u)

A Visit with Ruth

by Joan Extrom

This summer, during an extensive, exhaustive, one-month vacation, I had the pleasure of meeting Ruth Glaspey for the first time. She conveniently lives in the same town as my grandfather, so I had written to her and asked if we could get together.

It was a humid Sunday afternoon when I arrived at Ruth's home, a small house set back from the road with lots of shade trees in the front yard. We sat on the porch (Ruth's little dog chose a central position on Ruth's lap), drank ice water, and chatted about Diplomacy hobby members (I showed her pictures of Tallman, Coughlan, and Caruso and Byrne), life, the universe, and everything.

It's always fun to meet other hobby members, but I especially enjoy getting to know the other women in the hobby. Ruth used to teach music in schools but now works in the purchasing department at Interlochen Academy for the Arts. She plays the bass viol, which Michael Lee (of The Concert of Europe) plays also. I play violin. Anyone else want to join in a string ensemble? Ruth is also moving right up through the ranks in the Army Reserve.

Our visit lasted about an hour, since I was sick with a cough and fever, but we agreed to get together again the next time I'm in Traverse City and play face-to-face Dip (or some other game) which Ruth rarely gets a chance to do.

If you're ever in northern Michigan, let Ruth know -- she'd probably be glad to meet you. Mark Luedi gets up there occasionally. In fact he was in the area while I was visiting, but didn't get to see me and Samantha. But, I've promised not to rub it in...

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((Joan then left the beautiful Midwest for Flushing, where she stayed a few days, and then...))

A Visit with BRUX

by Joan Extrom

In VD #98 BRUX reported his version of my visit. This is my version and is to be read in conjunction with A Visit from Joan on pages 43-45 of that issue.

BRUX picked us up in Flushing. What he failed to report is that his car overheats. Samantha was delighted at the sight of his radiator spewing water all over. Then we got to wait 10 minutes while he searched for the radiator cap.

After the car was loaded with our luggage, we headed upstate, with Samantha in her car seat in front between BRUX and me, and Deadwood stuffed in the back seat along with the other excess baggage. We drove and drove and drove. I finally asked, "Are we almost there?" only to be informed that we weren't even out of the Bronx yet. I'm just not used to big cities!

I took several naps on the 4-hour trip. This is not to imply that BRUX is not a brilliant conversationalist, but I had been very sick for 1½ weeks (while crossing 1,000 miles of the U.S.) with what we'll call pneumonia for lack of a better diagnosis. A doctor in Flushing prescribed 3 kinds of medication and by the time of the visit with BRUX I was feeling much better, but was still quite tired.

We stopped for a snack. I had hardly eaten for a week and still wasn't very hungry but managed to nibble at a grilled cheese sandwich and some melon, all the while watching BRUX down an entire chicken dinner -- obviously to keep up his strength for the rest of the drive.

I had fallen in love with upstate New York several years ago when we lived in Ithaca, and fell in love all over again with the countryside on the drive to Alex's. There are lots of old houses that have been beautifully restored. The Lords live in one, which is filled with antiques that Mrs. Lord (who runs an antiques shop) collects.

Alex and her parents are just about the nicest, friendliest people you would ever want to meet. We sat and talked for a while, then tied a folding bed (borrowed from the Lords) into the already-overloaded trunk and headed for Albany, leaving behind two poopy diapers for Alex's father to dispose of.

At 24A Quarry Drive (does that address sound familiar?) we met Mrs. Linsey and BRUX's sister, Judy. His brother Brian never showed up, but we became good friends with Brian's dog Rebel, a large, rambunctious, very affectionate pooch who loves to eat ice cubes. Judy showed me an article that she had written that was printed in the Albany newspaper. Good writers must run in that family. That was the only chance we got to see Judy. I would like to have talked to her more. BRUX borrowed some blankets, sheets, and pillows which succeeded in completely filling up the back seat, all the way to the ceiling. Poor Ken.

Then, finally to BRUX's apartment, the upper floor of an older house. It may not be baby-proofed or have much furniture and it needs curtains, but it was clean. I could even sit on the toilet without fear of being attacked by any unidentified flora or fauna. Not bad for a bachelor. And he even has a nicer set of measuring cups than I do.

BRUX had asked what to have on hand for Samantha's meals, and he certainly was prepared -- the refrigerator was absolutely packed with apple juice, yogurt, bagels, milk, and cheese. He's already reported the Cheerios spills. Be glad all you had to do was sweep them up, BRUX. Try vacuuming Cheerios out of shag carpet some time.

As for the Kentucky Fried Chicken incident, BRUX blew it all out of proportion. Yes, I did ask to go to KFC, but not for the reason he would have you believe. I was just beginning to feel like eating for the first time in over a week, mashed potatoes and gravy sounded very tempting, and KFC is a reliable place to get them. OK, I'll admit that I ate one small piece of chicken, but I was mainly interested in the potatoes and gravy. And we managed to finish the meal despite BRUX's entertaining stories about when he used to work at a KFC. ((Doomies interested in that story should go back to VD #67 for the details.))

Since my appetite was coming back and I love food, we ate out often and highlights included lobster bisque and coconut cream pie (which I'd been craving ever since being pregnant with Samantha). But the nicest meal of all was at the Polynesian restaurant. After the meal, we opened our fortune cookies. Samantha's fortune read, "Stop searching forever, happiness is just next to you." I assume that's because I was sitting beside her. BRUX's fortune was, "You will attract cultured and artistic people to your home." Well, obviously he already had. My fortune contained the good advice, "If you continually give you will continually have." Does that mean I'll win the Socrates Award??

We spent two evenings with BRUX's cousins Rob and ~~Jill~~ Jill Proskin and their two sons. David, who is Samantha's age, is known as the "Sung wrestler" because of his stocky build. It was nice to talk to Jill and compare notes and frustrations on mothering an 18-month-old.

The last day was our visit with the famous Simon Billewess (famous for being the one to introduce Cathy Gunning to Diplomacy) and his fiancée, Barbara Passoff. They sat entwined in each others' arms, making goo goo eyes at each other, and exchanging little kisses at the end of each sentence. After 6½ years of marriage, I'd forgotten what it's like to be young and in love. (Deadwood and I haven't acted like that for years.) I thoroughly enjoyed Simon's British accent (and the comments about the "crockery and cutlery" he encounters on his job as a dishwasher), and he even gave me an autographed copy of Flame, which is the first British zine I'd had a chance to see (except for the copy of Danver Glont that Cathy Gunning let me hold for a few seconds).

Back to Quarry Drive to enjoy the air conditioning and to try keeping both Rebel and Samantha entertained. She tried climbing the stairs but fell and got a huge lump on her forehead, which promptly turned a lovely shade of black and blue. Mrs. Linsey

cooked a wonderful turkey dinner (my absolute favorite meal!) for our "last supper". We ate and talked and then left her with a sink full of dirty dishes so BRUX could deliver Samantha and me to the motel where we were meeting Ken's parents. (And their first question was, "What happened to Samantha's forehead?")

All in all, the visit was lots of fun, though I was still recuperating. BRUX was a wonderful host and deserves a medal for putting up with us. He also gets lots of thanks for providing transportation, arranging the lunch with Jim Makuc and the phone calls with Mike Banno and Melinda Holley, taking us to meet Simon and Barbara, and entertaining Samantha. But no thanks for teaching her to cackle as she drops playing cards over her head. Anyway, I hope we have a chance to be your hosts sometime, BRUX.

By the way, folks, the punchline is, "Do you have anything to stop this coffin?", for anyone who cares.

((That punchline was also hidden in the quotes at the end of my article, so there! Joan agreed to let me run all her articles for free in exchange for my treating her to dinner. I thank her for these two articles.

And I know I'm right about the Kentucky Fried Chicken. It's true that Joan only ate one little piece, but I looked out of the corner of my eye and saw her smile while she did it!))

Thanks to Gary Coughlan for sending in the following list of definitions of German words pertaining to motoring. These were originally printed in Gary Piper's British zine, The Road Goes Ever Onward #13.

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Indicators: | Die Blinkenleiten Tickentocken |
| Auto Hood: | Pullnob und Knucklechopper |
| Puncture: | Die phlatt mit Bludyfucken |
| Learner: | Die Twatten mit Elplatz |
| Estate Car: | Der Bagmerroomfurschagginkinauto |
| Windshield Wiper: | Der Flippenflappenmuckenschpredder |
| Foot Brake: | Der Edbangeronvindschreen Stoppenquick |
| Gear Lever: | Biggensticken fur Kangaroochoppen |
| Breathalyser: | Die Puffitinten fur Pistenarsen |
| Seat Belt: | Der Klunckenklikker Frauleintrapper |
| Headlights: | Das Dippendontdazzelubastad |
| Exhaust Fumes: | Der Koffundschnippoluter |
| Highway Code: | Der wipan fur arsen |
| Fog Warning: | Die Puttenlegdownen und Fukkitt |
| Traffic Jam: | Die Bluddifukkink Dammundblast |
| Rear Seat: | Der Schpringentester |
| Tires: | Flattfahrts |
| Backfire: | Der Lowdenhangenniekkenjumpen |
| Juggernaut: | Der Fukkengrett Trukken |
| Accident: | Der Bledinmess |
| Near Accident: | Der Fukkan Near Schittenselfen |
| Garage: | Der Heiway Robberung |
| Cyclist: | Der Pedallpushink Pillokken |
| Skid: | Der Banannan Waltzen |
| Double White Lines: | Overtakan und Krunchen |
| Exhaust: | Spitzenpoppenbangentuben |

Naked Diplomacy

by Randolph Smyth

The question which confronts any better-than-average player in the course of a game is who to attack. I'm not referring to a tactical decision based on a stab opportunity, nor a strategical one where a given nation is sure to get in your way; nor yet a "friendship" case where a choice between potential long-term allies must be made. No, this is a point of Diplomacy at its most naked. If six opponents include one with an excellent reputation -- one whom you fear may be your superior -- and five unknowns who aren't distinguishing themselves in their letters, should you ally with the good player and attempt to crush the rest (giving you second place even if he does choose to outmaneuver you in the last phase) or attempt to put together an alliance against him (which, if successful, leaves you the most competent player remaining with a good shot at a win of your own)?

Obviously this depends to some extent on the real as well as the relative ability of the other players. We'll assume that the good player does have the reputation of stabbing for the win, and that the others are capable enough to understand a logical argument and carry through with a strategy once a decision is made (boy, is that ideal!). This is the only way that the second option makes sense, since your only trump card (if your rival is as good a negotiator as you fear) is impressing the sheep with the danger of letting the ogre get too strong. Your decision will rarely be based on your actual ability, as gauged by an outsider, but on your self-image, which is often quite a different thing.

Not always, of course. A person who really believes himself to be no good at the game really is no good, since a certain minimum amount of confidence is necessary in all phases. On the other hand, someone who believes himself God's gift to the hobby isn't usually all that hot, either -- and obnoxious in the bargain.

However, I don't think either type stays on the scene for very long. A more realistic outlook is therefore the rule rather than the exception. Most people have a fairly good idea of where their strengths and weaknesses lie, even when they wouldn't dare reveal their self-analyses to a soul! Are you good at maintaining two-way deals, or do you prefer to orchestrate multi-player alliances? (If you can't do either, get out of Diplomacy.) If you have tactical or strategical planning weaknesses, can you plug the dike with one of the lesser players who seems to have a knack in this one area? If not, you'd better be sure of five alliance members vs. two rather than four vs. three... Again, do you consider yourself perceptive -- can you ferret out a half-truth in time to halt a successful stab? How much time can you devote to the game, and what effect will this have on your relationships? Unfortunately, an accurate judgement on all of these factors is something that the good player will try to prevent, to his own ultimate benefit.

Personally, I'd still advise sticking with the good player at the outset. As long as you're able to convince him not to hit you immediately, your opening should be carefree. As you get to know him, maybe you'll note a few weaknesses of his own that you can make use of at the right time. If worst comes to worst and he gets the upper hand, at least you'll have learned something from your alliance with him, to be used in future games.

One of the problems with the all-or-nothing approach is that it depends on getting three others solidly behind you, in the face of a determined effort by a presumably stronger player to make alliances of his own. Only if his reputation is truly infamous can you hope to convince a majority of indifferent players to go after him -- and if you succeed, he probably wasn't worth all your worry and work in the first place!

((The problem is that's it's rarely this clear-cut. Generally in a game you're likely to encounter a more varied mix of players than one sharpie and five ignorant, excluding yourself. So this article is a bit more "hypothetical" than most of Randolph's others...but it was fun to read anyway.))

((Editorial note here, Doomies. This story was hand-delivered late one night last week by a pleasant-looking lady of about 35, wearing a seventeenth-century ball gown.

"Sorry to disturb you at this hour, Mr. Linsey," she said when I opened the door, "but my employer wanted me to deliver this immediately, and it's only midnight back home." She handed me a packet. "You'll find it's one very nice article for the hundredth issue of The Voice of Doom. I hope you enjoy it."

Being somewhat confused by the fact that she had awoken me at 2 A.M., not to mention the fancy dress, I was only able to mumble a sleepy thanks as she turned away from my apartment.

I closed the door and was stumbling towards my bed when from out on the street I heard the words, "Hlyo, Frederick and away." Rushing to my window, I saw outside a winged unicorn leaping into the air with the woman on its back. Circling twice, they turned westward and were gone.

It was then that I realized the authorship of the following article, for as anyone who reads The Diplomat knows, only one Doomie has a fairy godmother who writes his press for him.))

The Very Last Doomie in the Whole Wide World

A Tale of How BRUX Caused the Apocalypse

by Rob Schunk

Part the First

The river slid slowly by the small dock on which the horseman stood. His goal lay on the other side, but there was no conveyance by which he might reach the opposite shore. His eyes alighted then on the small bell hanging from a post at the end of the dock, and he stepped forward and swung the clapper next to it.

Shortly after the high-pitched peals had finished echoing across the water, he saw a small boat nose out from among the bushes just across from where he stood. As he waited, an old man haltingly pushed the boat into the river and began to row across.

The oarsman was apparently having difficulty making way against the strong currents, but ten minutes later he reached the dock. Looking upward at the horseman standing at the end of the planking, he fell into a coughing fit. "God, I can't do this nu... (hack)...much longer. The old bo...(hnhh, hnhh)...body can't take fighting the river like it used to. Been doing...(gasp)...for nigh on fifty years now. What do ye want, sonny?"

"I would like you to carry me to the other side, old man," the horseman said, somewhat impatiently.

The old man grimaced. "No respect for aged and infirm, is that the way...(cough)...of the world these days? Course when I was younger they used to hi..., hi..., hide the old people away and forget about them."

The younger man replied, "Excuse me, ancient one, I meant no disrespect, but I have traveled many days and now I sense that my goal is near."

The old man appeared somewhat mollified. "Oh? Where you headed, sonny?"

"I seek the ancient sage across the river, he who lived in the days of man's greatness and who lived through the Firestorm. I desire to ask him of how man fell."

"Well, hell, kid. Go no further, that's me," the old man said, standing a bit straighter as he was reminded of his awesome reputation. "Now that you know who I am, how about making it mutual?"

"I am called Talvin, great sage," the horseman said as he bowed before the ancient.

Part the Second

They had crossed the river and come to a small cabin where the old man resided. After sharing a small meal of potato salad and smoked beef jerky carried by the younger man, the sage was ready to tell his tale. He settled back against a log near the small fire they had made before the cabin's entrance and began to reminisce.

"Umm, yes, let's see here. The apocalypse happened, gosh, oh it must be sixty years ago now. 'Twas 1995 and this is, ummm, 2056, I think. Yep, I guess sixty years is about right. All kinds of sordid nastiness that was: crap falling out of the sky, people going bughouse, animals coming out of the hills. I can tell you almost anything, which part do you want to hear about?"

Talvin thought for a moment, and decided, "What was the Firestorm? All the old chief's remember now is that people died in the hundreds."

"Oh, much more than hundreds, more like hundreds of hundreds of hundreds of hundreds," the ancient replied. "Well, first I suppose I should tell you about what we used to call nuclear weapons; those were the items that started the destruction of men, to be followed later by diseases and sicknesses that made your skin curl."

He thought for a moment, and then asked, "How's your imagination?"

The young man, still shaken by the concept of hundreds to the fourth power, mumbled something, which the sage took as an affirmative.

"That'll probably do, then. Well, imagine a pillar of fire, so tall it reached from the ground higher than the clouds and that caused the earth to shake beyond the horizon, that was what a nuclear weapon could do," the old man described, sweeping his arms up into the air to emphasize the size of the pillar and then shaking like a leaf. The younger man was suitably impressed.

"Sounds ugly, don't it? Well, imagine a hundred hundred of those going off, all over the world. That was the Firestorm. They threw so much crap into the air that it's only summer one month a year these days. Tell me, you came down from the north, is there ice in the hills now?"

The young man nodded. "Oh yes, even in this land of stinking waters and steamy pools the ice covers the valleys all year."

"Oh, damn, the Yellowstone ice cap is forming, that'll piss off the grizzlies more than a Texas tourist," the old man said cryptically. "Well, anyway, the reason it's so cold is that these nuclear devices would tear away soil from the ground and throw it so high that it hasn't fallen in sixty years and blocks the rays of the sun from warming what's below."

"To give you another idea of what these nuclear devices could do, you've heard of the great glass crater that's about two days ride west of here, haven't you?" the old man queried.

"I have even seen it. 'Tis fifty man-heights deep and very far across," Talvin replied.

"That's where a bomb went off," the old man explained. "The enemy decided there was something out there in the desert that they didn't like, and in one flash it was all gone. What's worse is what happened to everything north of there when some of the dirt fell out of the sky as the winds blew it that way. All the people and all the animals sickened because the dirt was poisoned, and they died in great agony. This place here was lucky, for if the wind had been coming from the west, the dust would have fallen here."

The younger man looked pensive. "I have wondered why they call those marches the Dead Zone. I have seen the skeletons of man and beast alike and wondered what felled them together."

"Well, nukes weren't very discriminatory. No prejudice to race, color, creed, age, gender, or species."

Talvin thought about nuclear weapons for a while, and then asked, "Sage, why were these weapons used?"

The old man looked at him for a moment, and then replied, "Just a moment, kid, I want to show you something." He stood up and entered the cabin. Talvin could hear shuffling around inside, moving things and muttering, "It's around here somewhere. The damn thing's too big to lose." Shortly later, he reappeared holding something very heavy in his arms.

"What is that, revered one?"

The sage dropped the object at the younger man's feet, and then Talvin realized that it was a stack of rare paper, as thick as his hand was long. He peered at the top sheet and, dredging up knowledge that his clan's elders had so patiently imparted to him, read the faded words, "What's this ~~@@@~~ thing blocking my front door? Omigawd, it's the hundredth issue of The Voice of Doom."

Part the Third

Once again Talvin asked the old man, "What is that?"

"It's what we used to call a Diplomacy magazine, though I think it was eventually assigned an international standard book number," the sage replied.

"Diplomacy?"

"Oops, forgot that nobody plays it any more," the old man appeared shocked, but went on. "Back in the old days, there was a game called Diplomacy, in which seven players would fight for control of a place called Europe. They all started the game roughly equal and it was only by negotiating with each other that they could grow. This bundle of paper is a collection of treatises written about the game some seventy years ago."

"It must say everything there was to know about the game," Talvin replied, staring at the very thick bundle.

"Oh, no, not by a long shot, though this one collection was five times thicker than any that had come out before. Why it was 1100 pages thick," the old man said, "though I think I've lost a few over the years. Mice kept trying to nest in it."

"It must have been a great effort, one man writing so many pages."

The old man smiled. "Oh, it's true that it was a great effort, but it wasn't merely one man. There were about 100 who wrote the material contained in that issue of The Voice of Doom, though it was up to one to do the work of collecting and assembling it all."

"One hundred," Talvin echoed.

"Oh, yes. Here, let me show you." The old man sat down next to the bundle of papers and began to leaf through it. "Here's a good one, maybe one of the best that was in here, The Press Club Strikes Back, by Cupcake Knight. That one was truly a great effort. Why, you can see it took seventeen pages all by itself, all of it a great spoof on one of the popular entertainments of the day. And right after it, the incomparable I'll Take Unbreakable Alliances for \$40, by Dave Kleiman. Not so long, true, but just as funny as Press Club. I have to admit Dave had quite a sense of humor in those days. And here's another from the same game, perhaps one of the most intimate tales in the collection. 'Twas Whiskers Gets Even, or The Cat that Plays Fetch May Come Back with a Nuclear Bomb, a story by Richard Reilly. Bit of explanation behind that one, you know; turns out that Whiskers was a cat that belonged to Kleiman, who had been feuding with Reilly off and on for a year when this issue of The Voice of Doom came out."

The younger man was beginning to appear a bit mystified; his brow was knitted together as he asked, "You speak as if these tales were humorous. Weren't these people serious about this game of Diplomacy?"

"Oh, yes, quite," the old man replied. "I guess I need to explain a little more here. You see, getting the edge over another player in Diplomacy often extended to

trying to prove that you were more clever than he. The easiest way to do that was to write humorous stories about the game you were playing, stories that were more clever than the stories he would write. You scored a double coup if you could insult the other players at the same time, but only if the insult was meant in good fun and you didn't really mean it. Reilly was good at that because he would insinuate that he wrote everybody else's stuff, and they pretended it was theirs."

Talvin was really in the dark after that bit of information. "They insulted each other without meaning what they said?" He sounded shocked.

"Of course. It was considered bad sportsmanship, or gamesmanship, or whatever, to start calling each other names because you didn't like each other. Most everybody felt that if you wanted to do that, you shouldn't involve the hundred and some people who read The Voice of Doom. BRUX was pretty explicit about that, as I remember."

"Oh."

The old man continued leafing through the volume. "Course there was a lot more in here than just that one single game. There were of course the usual letters, known as The Gossip Column, about 250 pages of them. And there were lots of nifty articles, more than you could expect to read in a week. Just listen to some of these titles."

He proceeded to rattle off words and names that meant nothing to Talvin, who soon found himself staring into the fire, thinking about what nuclear bombs could do. In the background, he could just barely hear the sage saying, "...budisman, by Ed Wrobel, followed by Doomies of the Year: The RIGEL Flayers. That one was pretty big, but it was probably the most important single article, too. Those guys deserved the honor, though. Let's see, after that came The Diplomacy Black Hole: An Explanation of the Theory of Letter-Antiletter Annihilation, by Robert Schunk. That one was pretty stuffy sounding, but it was an excellent satire of an article from a physics journal, if you could make it to the end. Of course, Mark Berch came up with The Western Triple: A Previously Unimagined Plan of Attack. Seems like he always had another article in progress about how to play the game. Oh, yes, forgot about these cartoons; some were good, but BRUX had a habit of including some really vulgar stuff. Then A Ming Controversy: No Deception, Greater Good, an analysis by (who else?) Mark Berch, again. Big stink about the RIGEL game just then because of some semi-fake orders. Rolling a One, by Eric Kane, that was a good one. He and BRUX were always arguing with each other, just for the sake of arguing. It made for some good times in the middle of the bitter fights that were going on elsewhere around then. Here's another seriously written one, How to Play as a Substitute with Honor, by Edmund Jedry. Good guy, Ed was. Too bad he lived in Chicago when things got nasty in '95. Oh! This one was a delight: Alex's Column: An Albany Diplomat in King Juan Carlos' Court, by Alex Lord. 'Twas the first item she'd done in a year, and a lot of us had been looking for..."

He was interrupted suddenly, when Talvin came out of his reverie.

Part the Fourth

"Revered one, though you have shown me something rare and precious, a collection of writings from before the Firestorm; what does it have to do with the Firestorm?"

The old man smiled. "Yes, perhaps I have been remiss, Talvin, and I suppose that I must stop here and explain something else to you. I have told you that The Voice of Doom did play a significant role in the history of man, that its faithful did bring about disaster in dimensions unimagined, but I have not told you the secret name by which these people were known."

Talvin looked even more puzzled, wondering what the ancient was speaking of this time. "By what name were they called?"

"Just one small word were they known, the word 'Doomies'," the old man stated as if revealing thirty-eight great secrets with one breath.

"Doomites? Do you mean that they were devoted to doom, to works of evil and the reign of the Master of Sin? You mean that they caused all the horrors for the sake of causing misery?"

"Ah, no. You mishear me. I said 'Doomies', which is a different word entirely," the old man explained. "The difference of suffixes -- that's what you call the end of a word -- makes a significant difference in the meaning of the word. By using -ites, we would mean 'the followers of', and though -ies tends to imply a relationship, it is not so strict in its sense."

The old man paused to gather breath. "Whether the use be affectionate or derogatory, it makes no difference, but the word 'Doomie' said that the person named was greatly affected by whatever occurred within the pages of this significant manuscript, The Voice of Doom. For those whose lives centered around it, forsaking the rest of the world, there was the name 'Screaming Doomie', but Doomie sufficed to identify the rest of the faithful."

"Your meaning is still hidden from me by clouds of fog, revered one," Talvin said.

The old man snorted as if from impatience, but continued, "What I have just said is that there were people devoted to the appearance of this collection of writings." He thumped the great tome with his knuckle to emphasize the point.

"You see, this issue here was so big that BRUX was never able to afford to publish another. He was totally bankrupt and had to file what they used to call Chapter 11. BRUX disappeared after that. I suppose the shame was so much that he couldn't bear to hang around for people to point at him and say, 'See, I told you so.' You'd hear rumors, but only a couple of people ever heard from him again."

"And so, you see, this was the very last issue of The Voice of Doom that ever came out. When it died, never to appear again, these Doomies were desolate. Their lives were made empty, as stark as the glass crater to the west of us. And like any people whose lives have been holed by something precious which is lost or destroyed, they had to find something to replace it." He stopped again, his weak lungs betraying his advanced age.

Talvin reached for his canteen, but the ancient raised his hand. "No, no, I'll be fine in a second."

With a great wheeze, he continued, "Yes, that's what happened. When The Voice of Doom failed to appear again, these people turned to something different; four committed suicide by assorted means, eleven were committed to mental institutions for depression and/or alcoholism, seven turned to various forms of crime, three began authoring tales of intrigue and/or fantasy, but the largest contingent, seventy-one people strong, entered politics and statecraft, thinking to apply their experience to the management of the land.

"In a mere eight years, most of this latter group became important men in the affairs of America, the name by which this land was once called. They became responsible for deciding how their country was to conduct itself with the rest of the nations on earth. They decided who the friends of their country were, who the enemies were, who to exploit, and who to support." The old man sat back and looked smug.

"Do you mean to tell me that these men were the ones responsible for causing the Firestorm?" Talvin asked.

"Ah, at long last you understand me without my telling you everything," the ancient one chortled. "These seventy-one were indeed the destructors of the earth. After their years of playing Diplomacy in The Voice of Doom, they were all convinced that they could do almost anything and get away with it."

The old man's attitude shifted abruptly as he said sadly, "They were, of course, quite wrong. After a few years of their management, America found itself without friends anywhere else in the world, and soon after that, the bombs started falling."

Both men stared at the fire, pondering the results of such overconfidence. After a while, Talvin looked up and asked, "Revered one, how is it that you know all about these depressed Doomies and how they ended the world?"

The old man raised his head, but his eyes remained unfocused, perhaps looking

back over the decades. Softly, he said, "Oh, it's very simple. I was one of them, not one of the big seventy, but still one of them.

"But now, I'm just the very last Doonie in the whole wide world."

((Gulp! Perhaps I shouldn't fold, after all? I do hope that this story doesn't turn out to be prophetic.

Thanks, Rob, and sixteen free issues of sub credit -- go buy yourself a pizza!))

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From Fol Si File #133

The Helpful Enemy

by Randolph Smyth

Yes, enemies can sometimes turn out to be your best friends. Take this example: you've accumulated 16 centers with a win within easy reach, but your loyal ally hasn't done so well. You've promised him second place for his efforts, but he's only got 5 centers, and at the other end of the board sits a corner power with 10. Your options are to play it out, taking 5 game years or more to grind down the 10-center fellow without reaching 18 yourself; or to stab your friend. I normally play it out, if only because word will otherwise get around about how you treat your unfortunate allies; but in the process, one can hardly avoid thinking, "Gee, how much easier this would be if that 'friend' of mine would only attack me!"

That's an extreme case, but there are others where a convenient neutral or enemy can do far more for your game than the most well-meaning friend in the same position. If the original reason you became enemies was because the other guy is an incompetent S.O.B., then the decision to fight the turkey may in itself win support elsewhere on the board. This is true even if you have 14 centers and your enemy has 2; sometimes it pays to let him live on for a while, if his ridiculous antics and personal offensiveness is calling attention away from how close you are to taking it all...

A more capable enemy can be used to draw the heat off you. If he's bigger than you are, the proper pitch can sometimes forge alliances with several other powers, aimed at stopping the big threat. The alliance builder in stop-the-leader situations can often take most of the profit (since he has a larger input into the movement of the total alliance) while incurring the least fear that he's ultimately out to win himself (after all, hasn't he put all that effort into preserving the balance to prevent a win? -- he must be a nice guy...). Strange but true, the guy responsible for stopping the leader will often be in the driver's seat for the rest of the game, assuming the leader can be driven back at all.

Even if the enemy is somewhat weaker, you can thereby minimize the observed power of your own dominating position. Subtract his 6 units from your 14, and suggest to the other players that you therefore have only 8 "effective" units. Do not point out that if you can wipe the enemy out with your 2-1 advantage, you'll have a clear win -- a competent enemy will be trotting this argument out himself -- but your own statements may at least muddy the water for another critical game year.

This is not to suggest that you should proceed to act like an S.O.B yourself in order to increase the number of your enemies! Friends can occasionally be nuisances, but if anything ever goes wrong your allies are your most valuable asset. But when you do find yourself confronting an enemy, of whatever relative size, don't despair: use him...before he uses you.

((The tactic of using one's enemies (or one's own allies) is one of the most disgusting, low-down, slimy,...and effective!...things a Diplomacy player can do!))

The Gossip Column  
Part II

From Mark Berch (8/21/84):

Dear Bruce,

I want to respond to your comments on the '83AY affair, because the account you have given of it was in some respects incomplete and inaccurate.

Kathy did indeed ask for my analysis and evaluation of the situation, and I recommended that the game be called irregular, an opinion that I still hold. I must emphasize that there were two, and only two, factors in my decision, and so far as I know they were the same two that Kathy actually relied upon:

1. Drawing of the countries was not done by the GM, or under his supervision, but rather was turned over to one of the players, ((Ron)) Brown. He himself did not do it, but rather had Kuszynski do it, under his supervision. This is completely improper. This is a GMing function, and cannot be transferred to a player. I have never heard of a GM doing any such thing. The player did not draw the countries, but it was done under the player's supervision, at the player's house, etc. You are missing the point here about "delegation". Of course, the GM can delegate this, to some degree. He can have his kid draw the countries from a box. Although the GM is not doing the actual drawing, it's done under his supervision, under his eye. Similarly, yes, there is nothing wrong with Woody turning his games over to Olsen for a season or two. What these two have in common with each other, but not with '83AY, was that there was no player involved. (E.g. Olsen was not a player.) There is a barrier between the GM and player roles, and it must not be breached. When it is, there is plenty of precedent for the game being called irregular. The simplest case is when a player's role is the GM's as well, i.e. the GM is a player. That happens, and the game is then irregular. The same goes for GM related to player, or living with player. Each situation is different, agreed. But there is a barrier between their roles, and that must be kept up.

2. The GM told a sensitive piece of information, given to him in confidence by Stafford, to Brown. It is absolutely essential that if a player tells the GM something sensitive about the game, about his plans, that the GM keep his mouth shut. You say, "the GM let it slip." It wasn't quite that way at all. The GM first approached Brown (the player and pubber) and said that he needed a standby. Brown asked him why. The GM then, as I understand it, secured an agreement that Brown would not be changing his orders. Once he had that, he told Brown what Stafford had told him in confidence.

You argue that since Stafford didn't actually resign, it couldn't have affected the game, but you have it backwards. It was his staying in the game which put him in a position where he could be harmed by the GM's acts. The fact that Stafford later changed his mind doesn't mean it couldn't affect the game. Look, if the GM told (prior to the deadline) your orders to another player, that would be wrong, and you'd be harmed, regardless of whether you changed them or not. The GM's actions meant that prior to the deadline, another player had this direct line to your thinking at a certain point. The players then knew that Stafford's commitment to the game was pretty slight, and who would want to ally with someone like that?

It might be argued that Brown's promise not to change his orders prevented any problems. Not so. Brown was under no obligation to keep his mouth shut about this juicy piece of information, and he didn't. He told at least one other player, who told another, etc. And others in the game could change their orders. Even if they didn't actually change those orders, it's quite possible that someone was going to change his orders, then heard the info and decided to leave the orders as they were.

As for this talk about collusion and cheating, you just had to throw that in, didn't you? Neither I nor Kathy nor Rod came to any such conclusion. I don't see any evidence for cheating or any dishonest acts. A holding of irregularity does not require a finding of dishonesty. If the GM, for example, is a player in the game, it's irregular, even if there's no evidence of cheating. Your speech about Ron's integrity is fine, and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend him as a GM, but you are missing the

point. The labeling of irregular is because of a GM's conduct, not a player's conduct. I don't see that Ron as a player did anything wrong.

On a side point, not directly related to the actual events of '83AY, so I don't agree with your random-is-random reasoning. Look, suppose I'm drawing countries for my game, and I draw the one country I don't want. Well, now, I'll just toss the drawn pieces back and start all over again! When the GM asked, I'll say, "I drew the pieces blindly from a hat," or some such. I could arguably even say that it was a random draw, so long as I don't say that there was only one random draw. There are even ways of pulling this off when there are witnesses, but I don't want to reveal any techniques I might need in a FIF or tournament game some day.

((That's all right, we'll be on the lookout for them now whenever we play you FIF.

Your last paragraph is ridiculous, Mark. I presume you know a little about statistics. When we talk about a random draw, we are referring to a draw in which the a priori probability of drawing any given country is 1 out of 7. You are now trying to turn that around by offering an example in which the player, having drawn a country he doesn't want, puts back the pieces and draws again. It is true that this second draw is also random, and that the chances were again one out of seven that the player would draw any given country on this particular draw, but if this is the technique to be used then in fact the chances are zero out of seven that the player will draw the country he doesn't want, and one out of six that he will draw any other given country. And while such a draw (zero chance for Italy, say; one out of six for the other countries) is random, technically, it does not assign an equal probability to each of the countries and is therefore not what we mean by the term "random draw" in Diplomacy. By this token, you could flip a coin till you get heads, and then say that you got heads with a random flip of the coin! And you're right to say that this doesn't pertain to '83AY at all, unless someone has shown that this sort of thing took place.

I concede one point of your argument regarding '83AY: the divulgence of the fact that a player was resigning could have affected the game. Still, unless it can be shown conclusively that it did affect the game, I don't think that's grounds enough for irregularity, though I do see that people could differ on this point.

On the country selection, I can only repeat my original argument that the drawing of countries by random lot is random, and the probabilities aren't changed regardless of who does the drawing. I'm not 100% comfortable with the fact that the GM delegated the job to a player. Unless evidence arises indicating that the draw was not random -- and by that you know now that I mean uniformly random for all players and countries -- then I hold to my opinion that this too is not grounds for irregularity.

The talk about collusion and cheating came up because this was apparently the sort of terminology used by Stafford. I will admit that it's a particularly sensitive point with me, since I was falsely accused of same during the BLACK HOLE Affair, and I don't like to see this sort of accusation made groundlessly. I don't feel that Stafford should have used this type of language at all, and were I the ENC I'd be tempted to throw out his complaint immediately unless he could back up the charge.

Once again I will admit that it's not my decision to make -- I'm just discussing it because it was brought up to me by a player and because it is a relevant topic.))

From John Michalski (8/13/84):

Hi Bruce,

I'm glad to see you took my advice (and others) in going public on this Highfield thing. On principle, as Tallman's support confirms, such extracurricular activities are bad; in the situation at hand -- a serious one, I believe -- printing the evidence shows that the principle does not apply here.

The whole episode lends credence to my underlying suspicion that Borch and Peery concocted Highfield just to give the Right wing a black eye...

Was it Rauterberg who wrote about Kathy, saying better to wait until she does something out of line before launching this tirade against her? I have to agree. The remarks you acknowledged were given in the heat of battle would be more properly answered with a private letter. Were she to rule all your games irregular because she doesn't like you, she would be removed in short order. But attacking the power of the office over your current clash of personalities makes you look worse than her. Remember a year or two back, when a prominent pubber we know was under attack? He overreacted to what was nothing but name-calling, and I think we each wrote him as a friend to say "cool it, it's not that big a thing." I say the same thing now to you. Stick instead to what Berch called the High Road in the days before he turned ludicrous. Right now, Kathy holds it by default.

I suspect we will have a new BNC in fairly short order in any case. I am not one to tell people not to feud if they are so inclined, but let's leave it as a personal dispute rather than decrying the "power" of the BNCship for exercising its legitimate functions (i.e. the designation of irregular games). If there is any legitimate criticism due that office, it is that recent BNCs have been too wishy-washy in calling a spade a spade, and an irregular game an irregular game, as far as I'm concerned.

While I'm on negative notes, there's one more criticism I have of an otherwise good issue. Both you and Kelley write about how nice it would be if-and-when nobody cares who is queer or not. That makes about as much sense as the bumper sticker asking "Have You Kissed a Leper Today?" Let's stop repression of flashers also; they do less harm than the fags. I'm afraid that the defense of perverts "honor" is not what I see as any highminded cause, not by a long shot.

One of the brighter spots was the letter from that German fellow, who criticized all the ballyhoo of the 40th D-Day celebrations. I laughed out loud at that one. He had the perfect retort with that line about "if we Germans held such victory celebrations, we'd be having a holiday every week!" Terrific. So many Germans, especially under the socialist regimes they've had for 30+ years, are so afraid to even admit to being German, let alone acknowledge that their country was involved in a war once, that I'm surprised West Germany isn't renamed East Luxembourg. If our national slogan is In God We Trust, then Germany's would be I Wasn't Involved, or We Just Obeyed Orders. It was good to see there's still at least an underlying sense of humor and history there in a country that feels wargames are subversive Nazi plots.

((Are you referring to a letter from VD? I don't have any recollection of what it is you're talking about. Maybe I'm getting old, eh?

Ah, but you missed the point in the discussion of homosexuals. We were talking about homosexuals, not perverts. Obviously the relatively few "perverts" out there -- those who would harm other people -- need to be restrained. But John and I (and others) weren't discussing this tiny minority. We were talking about the vast majority of homosexuals who are completely normal and wouldn't consider an act of perversion any more than would you or I.

You call my dispute with Kathy a "personal dispute" and refer to the BNC "exercising its legitimate functions". I cannot agree. Has the BNC gone beyond a "personal dispute" when she calls a GM and threatens to use the power of her office against him? Is this within the category of "legitimate functions" of her office? I don't think so. Can you imagine Beyerlein having done such a thing? Kendter? Ditter? Walker? The reason I have been speaking out about the power of the office is that Kathy's threat drove home to me the fact that she does indeed hold this power and is willing to at least threaten to use it. I made a similar -- and equally ill-advised -- threat once to Caruso regarding the Novice Packet, and was called down right away. The only difference is that I was dumb enough to put it in writing.

I will admit that my case would be stronger in the hobby's eyes were Kathy to try to act on her threat. But if it makes me look bad to protest the threat anyway, so be it. I'd rather look bad and be right than wimp out and say nothing about these events.))

From Mark Luedi (8/6/84):

Dear BRUK,

I guess I should take a break from typing address masters and answer some of this mountain of mail that's lying around here. Thank goodness for file folders. A kick in the butt for not having more to shovel all the stuff I have around here into...

I...have here your petition regarding Foot in Mouth and John Caruso. I actually sent back an FIM, oh, I guess it's been about a month now. Nothing really terrible, just ridiculously (some adjective) blah, and, as per usual, typed with a worn-out ribbon so that it would have looked pretty bad. (Now this ribbon here? This ribbon would never be used for a IMoBR unless I was on my last page or so and didn't have anything better. Hey, do me a favor, will ya BRUK, please, pretty please? You know how I've got all these ribbons that I want to get rid of, and VD's large readership... ah, just kidding.) It was also not too long after Rod Walker's statement in Exekwon, but I had pretty much promised myself that I wouldn't be printing any FIMs anyway quite some time ago (mid-May?) unless the quality was worthy. It doesn't sound as though publishers will be seeing any unless they want them (per the latest Whitestonia) (And frankly, do you know of any who do/would?). In essence, it seems that the issue has been, at least somewhat, resolved. Roving sublines are, in general, a hazard to the publisher, anyways. One always gets one when one least expects it (sometimes that is a plus, sometimes not). I must confess that I solicited (in a manner of speaking) the Mos Eisleys that appeared in IMoBRs 5 and 7, and John Michalski has most definitely ruffled more than a few feathers. Unfortunately, John Caruso, in his efforts to emulate Michalski, falls short in the caustic wit department. Plenty of causticism, just not enough wit. Anyways, you catch the general drift? Just goes to show you that you shouldn't try to be somebody in this hobby who you're not.

Well, I imagine that you're getting plenty enough of these letters to read, respond to, whatever. Hey, all this feuding isn't too good for the hobby. Sure, a lot of us have been around for long enough to have thick enough skins not to let it bother us drastically, but I remember what it was like before I had the thick skin; there's going to be an awful lot of disillusionment in the hobby's younger/less experienced ranks. And some disgruntlement on the part of the rest of us who want not to get involved, stick our necks back in the sand, and wish that everybody else would do the same instead of squawking among one another.

Anyways, regarding your petition, I agree with most/much of what it said, but I will not sign it. So, you can put me in the "General Agreement but Refusing to Sign" category. Excuse me, it's a publisher's statement, not a petition. How's this for wishy-washyness?...

Actually, now that I think about it, refusing to sign it is more nonproductive than not doing anything. Or signing it. It's just that I have a lot of reservations concerning something like this, and I do think that some of the wording is not accurate/agreeable. But then, perhaps the best thing is to be "nonproductive" - agreeing, but not signing. Aaaaargh! And the bloody thing only cuts out, what, maybe 10% at most (?) of the mud being flung around these days. How about a bolder, more encompassing, petition?

Anyways, it seems that the situation has (somewhat) resolved itself without the petition on John's own initiative (or rather, his prompted initiative).

The last four paragraphs have taken about 45 minutes to type (with consultations via reading), and I'm not even sure that I care much for this letter. Sigh.

PS. You must, certainly, realize that I in no way condone what it is you are attempting to eradicate. And, I think you "deserve credit" for your efforts. Go ahead, figure it out for me. Loony tunes, loony tunes...Maybe I am disillusioned!

((This letter gives me an opportunity to ~~write another little paper~~ clarify



some remarks I made a couple of issue back about the Publisher's Statement on Foot in Mouth. This was a petition protesting the attacks on various people, and sending them out in the form of a roving subzine, as John Caruso was doing at the time. Eight highly regarded publishers, past and present, signed it.

The original intent was to publish the statement in VD and elsewhere. I have since changed my mind, however, and I trust that the others who signed it will concur with my opinion that there is now no need to publish the statement. The reason for this is that Foot in Mouth hasn't appeared much at all of late, and those issues that have appeared have been relatively unobjectionable. (To answer a point Steve Langley brought up in a letter to me, no, the petition did not necessarily have anything to do with this change. Maybe Caruso decided of his own accord that he was going too far, I don't know.)

This paragraph is being typed on September 2. Perhaps the situation will change again in the four weeks before this issue is published, in which case I will say so elsewhere in the issue. But as things stand now, I see no real reason to publish the statement.

No, Mark, "all this feuding" isn't so good for the hobby. It's very bad for the hobby. And I love the hobby. That's why I am trying my hardest to eliminate those sorts of things that give the hobby a black eye, by speaking out against them when necessary. The editorial policies in Foot in Mouth (most especially the one that appeared in Sleepless Knights) were exactly the sort of thing that could drive people away from the hobby; make them think twice about getting involved in something like this to begin with. Thanks for responding.))

From Larry Peery (8/10/84):

Hi:

Sorry to be so slow in getting back to you but PeerCon was a busy time for me. We had 6 games over the two days. One lasted over 14 hours. My main game lasted 10 hours. There was only one outright win. Me. What can I say?

Went up Tuesday night for the final games of the Baseball demonstration at the Olympics. Saw Taiwan beat Korea and Japan beat the USA. Interesting and fun. Getting home at 0400 wasn't. Tomorrow night I go up to the Rose Bowl to see France play Brazil for the gold medal in soccer. That should be a 90,000+ crowd. We played Dippy at Dodger Stadium (55,000+) and we will play at the Rose Bowl. So I guess you can say that PIV had 145,030 people in attendance for our Dippy demo.

I'm about 60 letters behind. I've almost quite writing people and I'm not reading half the zines I get at the moment.

Late July/August is a lazy time for Leos. All we think about is eating, sleeping, and sex. Actually, that's all I ever think about. But this kind of weather makes you want to practice your mental exercises.

I really said all I have to say in the HCL letteritorial and in the last Xeno. I am in no position to judge any of the specific cases involved, even if I wanted to. I lack the information to do so and I'm sure most people in the hobby are in the same boat. All of this is like a bad tooth, the pain of the headache is not yet quite enough to justify pulling the tooth...but almost. It is obvious to me that there is a tremendous amount of venom out there. In the short run it may be a dangerous course but in the long run I would prefer to get it out of our system and let it vent itself; than let it fester inside. So, let the muck and mire fly. In the long run I believe the right and the good will survive. Naive, aren't I? The important thing is that everyone be as truthful and honest about it all as they can be. I am convinced the liar will perish in their own traps so what Sacks, Boardman, et. al. say doesn't bother me much. The truth will prevail, I think. In the meantime I am going to keep quiet, make notes, do my research and, if need be, write an update of VERITAS VINCIT.

I just finished reading a book on the changing balance of power in Europe from

1938-1939. Except for the names, dates, etc., it was exactly what we are going through. Germany had its Hitler and Goebbels. We have our Boardman and Sacks. Had you fought all this back in the beginning perhaps it would not have come to this. Now we all stand watching DER GOTTERDAEMERUNG as played out in New York and Seattle...

At this point I am disgusted. I am not yet mad. I'm sure, before it is all finished, I will be.

In the meantime, let me enjoy this last bit of summer in Peerliot. I'm awaiting your zines with interest. The BBB is done and Mike did a masterful job on it. I'm proud of it and him. I hope we can do the same with the Archives.

Surprisingly, I have not yet decided how to respond to your letter on FIM. Fortunately, I have until October to think about it. By then the tides of war may have passed me by.

Every time I write a letter dealing with all this when I am done I have a feeling that I need to go take a shower. I wonder if Sacks feels like he needs to wash his hands? Boardman should, I suppose, wash out his mouth with turpentine. Perhaps I'll send him a case of Listerine for Christmas. Wonder if he would get the message.

((I doubt it. I think you're wrong to compare Boardman and Sacks to Hitler and Goebbels. Nobody ever listens seriously to the former pair.

I appreciate your writing, but you seem to be covering the same topics here that you did in your other letter and your article elsewhere in this issue. Overkill. Maybe that's why you're 60 letters behind.

Re: the zines I promised you for the Archives. I will send them, but it's going to be a couple of months yet. Fair enough? I'm going to let the people who attend BRUXCON pick through them too, and then send off what's left (which, I assure you, will be most of it).

I'm a Leo too. Too bad VD is folding, cuzz my next sentence would have started a controversy of monumental proportions for the Gossip Column here. Simply, I don't believe in astrology or any of that crap. Thanks for writing.))

From John Pack (8/13/84):

Dear BRUX,

Please take note of my COA ((to Brigham Young University)) as listed above. I'll be there starting the 28th of August.

I enjoyed VD #98, despite all the nasty notes. Anyone can GM with or without the BNC. The BNC may (or may not) influence which games are rated, but who cares about their rating anyway?

I think both sides of the Highfield Affair could've been better. I have a security clearance and I'd sure be worried if someone were to seriously stain my character. Everyone knows that the KGB has broken security or could if it wanted to, but they still try as hard as they can to keep communist sympathizers out.

I've never met a postal Diplomacy player outside of Los Alamos (where there have been a few). Someday though...

I think the Olympic committee was smart to let business pay for it all. The Olympic team benefitted from all the money floating around too. In fact, in that regard, we're getting closer to the Soviet method of raising a team of "amateurs". Pretty soon we won't even notice the Russian boycott -- we'll notice on the occasion they decide to show up (and everyone else boycotts).

Rod Walker sent me the complete version of his letter a while back when I requested the game openings list. Since then we've had several exchanges. I'm sure we'd both agree that neither of us has such a strong position as previously thought; however, we're still discussing. We knew that you'd cut out the religious stuff, of course. You're just too predictable. While it is clear that love for homosexuals is required, love of homosexuality itself is impossible. Rod's psychological arguments stress

what he'd like to believe. I have found several psychologists and sociologists who believe that homosexuality stems from homosexual assault, neurosis, the reversal of sexual roles in society, dominating mothers, molesting fathers, etc. A couple of letters I have read from homosexuals (letters to the editor) indicate that a physical assault started them down a path they didn't want to take. One claimed to have later escaped it; the other didn't. None of these explanations would seem like a "normal" development to me. It is as ludicrous to claim that homosexuality is hereditary as it is to say that celebcy runs in the family. While many homosexuals are not at fault for their condition, it is a responsibility of society to try to help children avoid the psychological conditions that bring about mental disorders (which include homosexuality). These same conditions could also cause rape, fun with a machine gun at McDonaldland, and multitudes of other berserk crimes. It might also be pointed out that yet other psychologists believe that the gay percentage of the population is proportional to the population density (which might explain why the East and California are generally more acceptant of it). Certain neuroses are caused by overcrowding. (Witness the excessive crime in large cities.)

No, Steve, I won't be assaulted. Besides the fact that victims tend to be helpless individuals, there is no crime in Los Alamos. The crime-breaking here consists of speeding and vandalism (on occasion), and shoplifting. There's never been a major crime here. My new apartment in Provo, Utah, also finds itself in peaceful conditions. Albuquerque, on the other hand, is lucky to escape a day without a robbery and a murder. While it may be that homosexuality will gain acceptance, those who remain sane will still oppose it (not violently, of course). No fear, John (kelley), I'm all for campaigning against rape and any other crime, however, the issue at hand is homosexuality. I'll take one problem at a time (though of course, all sexual crimes are related). Sure, rape is much more common, but homosexual rape is just as tragic and, now, more common. Let's do what we can to help solve the problem, not encourage it.

I've enclosed an article and a nomination for Doornie of the Year, both for the annish. Hope you enjoy them. I can't find the photo I intended to send, sigh. I'll get a copy made, I spoze. Have a great month.

((Sure, it's a wonderful (type, type, type) month.

Sigh. Your views on homosexuality still come across to me as groundless hate, and ignorance. I agree that life in a big city can lead to various neuroses, and I agree that some cases (a tiny minority, I would suppose) of homosexuality might be due to neurosis, or to an ugly experience in childhood, poor living conditions, etc. But these are exceptions, not the rule. I know people who are homosexuals just because that turned out to be their preference as they grew up. There was no traumatic event, nor any subpar living conditions, that led to this. It just was, and I don't see it as anything the least bit negative. What matters is that they are at peace with themselves and with their society (that part of it which accepts them), and that's all that counts.

There is a flaw in your reasoning that, since gays are present in larger proportions in highly populated areas, the condition must have therefore been caused by a neurosis brought on by the population density. I would reason more like this: populous areas contain a lot of people (how's that for a start?), and have to therefore cater to the lifestyles of a broader spectrum of people. For example, there are lots of Jews in certain big cities too, so the kosher delis and so on spring into existence, which in turn perpetuates the desire of Jews to stay there, and more Jews to immigrate in. Ditto Italians --- their special interests are by and large served by facilities often found in big cities. Same for all minority groups, homosexuals included. The population in, say, Los Alamos, is just too small to support the interests of a large Jewish community, black community, gay community, Italian community, and so on. I don't know beans about sociology, but I think that reasoning is still more valid than yours.

On the Highfield Affair: granted that no one wants his reputation smeared. But does that leave no room for a humorous article such as Sesler's? And is the correct response to threaten to kill the other guy?))

From James Wall (8/11/84):

BRUX,

A comment about the Highfield Affair. Those who attack you are definitely in the wrong on this one. I can personally attest that you told me of your actions in a phone call approximately 6 months ago, and that the story you presented in last issue ((#98)) in no way contradicted what you told me at the time. Given the fact that you could in no way know that this was going to become a hobby issue six months in the future, I find it very hard to understand where the others are coming from. Wallman is understandable though as he always assumes that those he does not care for are always in the wrong; I know I'm in the same category in his book. He seems to enjoy attacking others so his latest attack comes as no surprise, only the topic of the attack. I suspect that the others are allowing personal opinions to cloud their subjective judgement but they may not have all the facts as well.

I hope you are telling the truth about the Francine Byrne letter. If true there would be no excuse. ((If there is any doubt in your mind that I would write a nasty letter to Francine Byrne, then you should ask Kathy to show you the letter. I absolutely guarantee you that there won't be a letter to show.))

Since when is James Woodson allowed to vote for me in polls, Mr. Linsey? Shame on you. I have the right to change my mind, IF I did indeed tell James that VD was my vote.

All the McDonalds comments last issue were tasteless, kinda like a Big Mac.

Thanks for the "babies" comment. Last time I back you up, o most rickie of hobby members.

Rauterberg is off quite a little bit over his comments on patriotism. I am a patriot. I also have the ability to question actions taken by our government. I am a bitter opponent of communist subjugation on this planet and I applaud actions taken to contain it. There is nothing wrong with the government attempting to get Americans fired up to support the action it takes. We are a democracy and ultimately the people will decide foreign policy. ((Oops...that was public policy, sorry.)) There exists though a fine line between opposition to policy and patriotism. I may not like actions taken by the government -- Lebanon is a good example -- but my opposition is expressed in such a manner as to see to it that the policy falls due to the perception that the United States is waffling without support and that we can be outlasted due to our own internal opposition. That is the lynch pin upon which patriotism is based. I won't deny that some thing we can do no wrong but it is what the educated think that matters most as they will ultimately vote, write their Congressmen, etc. Paul dislikes Reagan because he is not an idealist. But then again, Paul never had it as tough as the President so he can afford the luxury of idealism.

PS. Shame on Richardson?

((I agree that it is a legitimate function of the government to rally the people for support to its causes. But that does not imply that I think people should blindly support everything the government does, either. Internal opposition is not a weakness; it is a strength. It tells the rest of the world, "Look, these people are free to say whatever they want -- even if it disagrees with their own government!" An alarming number of people in the world do not have that freedom. However, this expression of dissent must be kept within bounds, too. The disruption caused by protestors against the Vietnam War was counterproductive and divisive. I was in favor of fighting to win in Vietnam, but even had I been opposed to the war, the "peace demonstrations" would have turned me right off.

Sure, you'd have been allowed to change your vote in the Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zine Poll. But your change didn't get here in time, that's all.

By and large the people who are attacking me over the Highfield affair are those who'd be attacking me anyway. It has been said by some of my enemies that I'm a slime for not going to the police instead of the Navy. Can you just picture what these same people would be saying had I gone to the police? "BRUX did the right thing." (Sure.)

((The following comments were deleted last issue from a letter sent in by John Pack, at his request. He has since given me permission to run them.))

From John Pack (7/17/84, excerpts):

Dear Bruce,

...I must confess that when I write something opinionated, it is usually designed to provoke thought and response rather than alter the opinion of the reader. I also, usually, assume many things, since I am unable to write everything, for lack of time, interest, etc. However, since it appears that I made several assumptions in my letter on page 24 ((VD #97)) on homosexuality which are not commonly shared and which are perhaps wrong, I will elaborate. (OK? Who said, "Oh noooo..."?)

I know a few persons (not of my faith, I might say) who seem to delight in beating the snot out of any homosexual they might find. I might guess this is not uncommon among youth, but I might be wrong. I don't agree or sympathize with any such thing. No one should suffer a physical attack just because I (or many others) don't like his moral standards/practices. I might add that this doesn't solve the problem (though Hitler did have remarkable success). Though I might say so for marked effect, a physical attack is quite beyond the scope of any intolerance I might desire. In fact, I wrote my second letter last month to "make up" for some of my rasher remarks in the first.

Well then, what do I mean when I say that society should not tolerate homosexuality? I don't believe, for instance, that homosexual displays of affection should be allowed publicly (nor heterosexual ones either, for that matter). I don't think it should be praised in schools, literature, movies, etc. I also think that those of us who believe strongly enough should try to help correct these individuals, with complete respect for their personal rights, of course (i.e. if someone doesn't want help, you can't give it).

Of course, gays have their rights as people, as I said; however, no special rights should be given, any more than you or I deserve special rights for being Diplomacy players. "Gay rights" would be just as unfair as affirmative action of "Diplomatic rights". Just as teachers (in public schools) don't teach their religious opinions, gays shouldn't be allowed to teach their gay opinions, either. ((BRUX here, Docmie. Please accept my apologies if the typing from here on in is kind of jerky, but I'm cracking up as I type this...sorry 'bout that, John...))

I trust that it is therefore clear that I do not support repression of any person; however, I don't tolerate homosexuality, and I don't think society should tolerate it either.

((At this point we come to a section I'd much prefer to delete, but I have John's permission to print any of this letter only if I print all of it. Sigh...))

Now, as far as the arguments I made in my last letter. I made the assumption that all Christian or Jewish religions accepted the Bible or the Old Testament or the New Testament. I am apparently wrong. However, I do question the claims to being Christian without accepting the only source of Christ's teachings. For those churches, and I now understand they are many, who claim to believe in the Bible and who "accept/tolerate" homosexuality (amid various other sexual sins) I have only this to say. God is unchangeable (Heb. 13:8, Mal. 3:6, Isa. 24:5). As far as I know, no Christian church opposes this doctrine. Twenty years ago, no Christian church accepted, tolerated, or allowed homosexuality. Man changes; God does not. Homosexuality is not a new thing. It has come in and died out (apparently) many times. The truth (assuming the existence of one, for you atheists) can't change, by definition. If a church had it, neither could it change its doctrines without a direct command from God. I don't recall any such claim on this issue by anyone. However, for those of you who believe that homosexuality depends on your own personal interpretation, please read Lev. 18:22, Lev. 20:13, Gen. 19:5 with context, Rom. 1:26-27, 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim 1:10, Jude 1:7. I have a much longer list if you desire. Read it for yourself. I've never

heard another interpretation. Christ himself said it was a sin to look upon a woman with lust in your heart. The scriptures treat homosexuality and sodomy as much worse sins than adultery. If one thinks the people who wrote the Bible were "ignorant and prejudiced" and one listens to the preacher say the same, isn't it a bit contradictory to claim belief in the Bible and that its writers were inspired? God is merciful and kind, but he is also just.

Of course, as I pointed out, all of that makes no points if you don't believe in God or in the Bible. I maintain my original point. All eight versions of the Bible I own concur without much variation at all on those scriptures listed.

While the Bible may not hold much else for you, Bruce, I will assume that you accept it as a historical volume, as do all people who study history. In all verifiable cases, the Bible relates an accurate history. In fact, the astronomic computers here at Los Alamos National Labs all include a 3-hour some-odd-minute time stop to make everything come out right. The only explanation for this ever found is that of Joshua stopping the sun for three hours (and its being slowed at another period in another biblical story). The Bible claims that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of homosexuality in particular, and sexual sins in general. The Roman state fell due to a variety of factors (many of which we share today).

You said nothing about my first paragraph, so I maintain my position that homosexuality is caused by society and is a form of social surrender. The current popularity of "gay rights" makes it more likely that some man will choose to be gay, just as popular trends make his choice of clothes more likely to be the ones with the little alligators on them. This is caused by advertising and subconscious media (such as song lyrics played over and over, pictures designed to elicit sexual response, and movies designed to make things look good).

In my opinion, homosexuality is in part responsible for increasing divorce rates, juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and sexual crimes, though it clearly is not the only contributing factor. The other things I mentioned last issue also aid this increase. Several other factors may contribute as well, and probably do. However I will point out what seems to me to be the major common factor between all of the things mentioned (homosexuality, pre- and extra-marital sex, masturbation, pornography, and all connected things, such as sodomy, prostitution, etc.). This common factor would seem to be the desire for instant gratification regardless of the consequences. This is also the idea behind the Democratic "spend a lot now" policies which have caused so much economic trouble. None of the things mentioned above contributes to a strong marriage; in fact, each contributes to its destruction. All of the listed, excluding masturbation, cause or contribute to jealousy between spouses. I've witnessed this and I expect many of you would realize the same. Masturbation and pornography contribute to the subconscious and conscious decision of many to commit the others; that is, to participate in the others. The destruction of the home, caused by the low morals of our society, in turn is the major cause of all of the items listed at the opening of this paragraph. In addition, the "if it feels good, do it" theory leads people to purchase everything by credit, which in turn leads to financial ruin. How many people do you know who are up to their eyeballs in debt? In fact, I'd warrant that many of you are in that boat, just by sheer odds. A little self-control and a little less self-gratification now would do wonders for turning our society around and rectifying its problems. In fact, greed, power, and self-satisfaction, which play such a large role in all the things mentioned, is also a large part of the reason why men fight wars.

Well, enough on that issue. I can always elaborate more if there is any more problem with misinterpretation of what I've said.

((Please, don't anyone misinterpret him! I decided to run the above despite the biblical quotes, because the rest of it is juicy enough to rebut at some length. Besides, at this stage of the game I have no fears of starting such a discussion in VD anyhow. ☺))

I had to stop typing for nearly five minutes, so convulsed with laughter was I, at your statement that gays shouldn't be allowed to teach their gay opinions in the public schools. What's a "gay opinion"? If a homosexual teacher thinks that the angles of a triangle add up to 180°, is that a "gay opinion"? If a gay physical education teacher believes that swimming is healthy, is that a "gay opinion"? More to the point, if a gay social studies teacher thinks that society should tolerate gays, is that a "gay opinion"? I happen to believe that too, and I'm not gay; and what's more, I'd advocate all of the above being taught in public schools. It may be argued that the last example, especially, is only my opinion. Very well. It's only my opinion that society should tolerate blacks, too, and I think that should be taught in the public schools (in the context of discussions of U.S. history and social studies), and it's not a "gay opinion".

Or perhaps you're thinking of something more sinister. Perhaps you're referring to a teacher who gets up in front of a classroom, and says to the kids, "I think you should all try a homosexual experience just once, to see whether you like it." Maybe that's what you mean by a "gay opinion." In that case, I would agree with you, and I think most people would. But the problem with this argument is that that sort of thing just doesn't happen very often -- you're knocking down a straw man. How many of the thousands of gay teachers in this country try to impart their sexual preferences to their students? Few if any. Those that do will rightfully be dismissed -- as should any heterosexual teacher who does the same. So consider either this paragraph or the previous one to rebut your argument, depending exactly what you meant by "gay opinions".

On the other hand, I entirely agree with your thoughts on instant gratification -- not that I never pursue this myself, of course. (I'm in debt now, thanks to a student loan I took out when I went back to school to get my masters degree.) The problem is that you regard all of these "sexual sins" as arising from the need for this instant gratification. Oh really? I have a cousin who's gay, and his life is very stable, and he didn't get into his present position by seeking instant gratification. He is a mature adult who isn't hurting anybody other than those outsiders who choose to be hurt by the way he lives his life. Who am I to judge? Or, for that matter, who are you to judge such people? And how is my cousin's lifestyle contributing to child abuse, juvenile delinquency, or the divorce rate? But more on this in your later letter.))

From Robert Acheson:

Bruce:

Question time again.

- 1) What is the official function of the BNC? I was under the impression that all the BNC is responsible for is to give out the game numbers.
- 2) If you (anyone) had a game declared irregular by the BNC, wouldn't the final appeal be decided by the hobby ombudsman?
- 3) Sounds like there's a war going on down there; makes me feel safe up here in the Northwest Territories.
- 4) Given the size of your zine, how much do you lose per issue?

((Not much on the smaller ones, since I switched to ditto. On a 40-pager, for instance, I expect to lose perhaps \$40 or \$50. On big issues like this, substantially more -- well in excess of \$100. It was that way all the time when I was getting VD printed by offset.

The functions of the BNC are to assign numbers to games, and record the results. S/he also has the responsibility of declaring a game irregular if there was some condition that justifies the tag. Problems might arise when the BNC's opinion differs with that of the GM (or one of the players). Sadly, there is no means of appeal for a player or GM who thinks he's been screwed by the BNC's decision. That's a situation I for one would like to see changed.))

BRUXian Birthday Wishes!

Several of my hobby friends were kind enough to send me birthday cards for my birthday this past August. Thanks to Joan Extrom and Samantha Corbin (upper left), Gary Coughlan (upper right, and Alex Lord (bottom).

Birthday Cake - up 1 Candle

Happy Birthday

Love,  
Joan + Samantha

HOWEVER,  
I HAVE BEEN KNOWN  
TO SEND THEM LATE  
EVERY NOW AND THEN.

This is being mailed from Chicago during our 3 hr layover on the way home. Nice to be away from the humidity in Pittsburgh. Hope things are going better for you. I'll call when we get home

Dear Bruce,  
I have greatly enjoyed your friendship these past 5 years!  
Gary

Dear Bruce,  
Since you love to laugh, I thought this card was appropriate for the occasion! Always remember that laughing is a way to get through a lot of things in this life. I want you to have a happy, happy birthday.

To: Bruce

WOOF  
WOOF!

Celebrate and rejoice - an older man is what every smart woman is looking for!

May your Birthday be a BARREL of LAUGHS

celebrate and have a great time!

P.S. You're a good, dependable friend, too!  
Love,  
Alex

Happy Birthday!  
Deb + Howard





Can a Line be Drawn Between Postal and Electronic Mail Diplomacy?

by Mark L. Berch

There are a significant number of people in the hobby, perhaps a majority, who feel that PBEM is something different, a thing apart, from ordinary postal Diplomacy. PBEM games, they feel, should not be rated, or perhaps not even get BNs. But an earlier question must be answered first: how do you decide what is or is not a PBEM game? That task may be arbitrary, or impossible. Consider two scenarios:

The first is, say, the following, which appears in a dipzine: "OK, the new game is organized. Now, as it happens, all 7 of you have a computer and a modem, either at home or at work. So you all can communicate with each other by electronic mail, if you like. Knowing you all as I do, I suspect that you will use a variety of methods. For ordinary communications, of no great urgency, you'll probably lean toward the USP'S", since it's a lot cheaper. When speed is of the essence, you'll probably resort to your modems. When some back and forth and back and forth is called for, there will always be the phone call, which has been used in "postal" games for over 20 years. Plus, I know at least three of you all frequent DipCons, so I figure some face-to-face negotiations will be tossed in as well. As a GM, of course, I don't care how you communicate with each other. You can use private messenger for all I care. The same goes for me -- I'll accept any form of communication for getting in your orders. As for the zine itself, as you know, I prepare the whole thing on my computer. Most people get their copy the "old-fashioned way", but if you'd like to get it on-line, be my guest! For that matter, you can pick up your copies in person."

What is being described here is a hybrid game. Players have the capability of PBEM but are no more required to use it than a player in an ordinary postal game is required to stick to the mails.

A second scenario looks at a hybrid form of communication itself. In this form, you take the message to the office, or send it electronically. From there it is sent across the country via electronic mail. At the other end, the message is converted back into words, printed on paper, put in an envelope and mailed, where it will be delivered by post office to that (or a nearby) city the next day. The USP'S" is used for the final step because they can do the actual delivery for just 20¢, which is far cheaper than the company delivering it themselves individually. The advantage over just straight USP'S" is that it provides next-day service pretty much guaranteed. As the technology becomes more sophisticated, these kinds of hybrid services will become more common. A player with a modem will be able to dial directly into the "net", send his message electronically without ever having to leave home. Alternatively, you carry your typed letter to the office, and a facsimile (in effect, a photocopy) is sent electronically. These messages are, in terms of distance, over 99% EM, but the final delivery is via USP'S". For hobby purposes, what is it? And what does it matter? Does such a distinction have any meaning at all? I think not.

((Why do you always have to destroy my arguments with logic? There really isn't any way to rebut this, so far as I can see. Except...what if the zine said this? "OK, the new game is organized. Now, as it happens, all 7 of you are going to be at my house next weekend, and face-to-face negotiating being cheaper than mail, and faster to boot, I figure there will be some FTF tossed in. And I know you're all going to DipCon two months from now, so there'll be some FTFing there too. Then five of you are going to be at..."

The conclusion I reach is that the GM sets the "official" mode of the game: postal, e-mail, phone, etc. It's not his business how the players actually negotiate. If it's set up as a postal game and no letters get written, it's still postal. If it's set up as e-mail and a hundred letters get written via the USP'S", it's still e-mail. If it's set up as a local phone game and all communication is through the mail, it still doesn't get a BN; it's still a phone game. These distinctions must be made at the gamestart as an attempt by the GM to declare what kind of game he's running. What the players do is their business. I don't think e-mail = real mail. 3 free issues...))

And, more on the topic...

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### Electronic Mail Diplomacy and Change

by Doug Beyerlein

In the past year electronic mail Diplomacy (also known as email Diplomacy, PBEM Diplomacy, and computer Diplomacy) has been introduced to the postal hobby. This new communication mode has produced a wide-ranging debate in the Diplomacy hobby on the subject of whether or not electronic mail Diplomacy games are "regular." This is, should they be rated? A number of influential Diplomacy gamesmasters and publishers say no; I say yes. One opponent of this idea has even stated publicly that electronic mail Diplomacy is more like the computer arcade game of Frogger than postal Diplomacy. A statement like that is obviously the result of ignorance, but it serves to point out an interesting fact: none of these people opposed to the inclusion of electronic mail Diplomacy games into the ranks of "regular" postal Diplomacy games has ever played in or gamesmastered an electronic mail Diplomacy game. It looks to me like a case of the blind trying to lead the blind.

But how am I different from these other "experts" on the subject of electronic mail Diplomacy? What experience do I have with this new hobby genre? Well, I may not have a lot of experience with electronic mail Diplomacy, but I still have more than all of these other "experts" combined. I am currently gamesmastering two electronic mail games on CompuServe (a public computer network) and am playing in a third (all in Russell Sipe's zine, The Armchair Diplomat). I also participate in the side of the hobby that relies upon the U.S. Postal Service. I currently gamesmaster two Diplomacy games in my zine, BEFGIART, and play in four games in an equal number of zines.

So what makes electronic mail Diplomacy games different from postal Diplomacy games? After playing electronically for a year and postally for 18 my answer is: NOTHING, other than the communications media. Players send letters via electronic mail carrier (equivalent to the USPS, only faster) to the other players and the gamesmaster. And, of course, other forms of communication are allowed (USPS, telephone, etc.) just like in a postal game. The gamesmaster runs the game in an identical manner as a postal game. The results are printed in a zine every two to three weeks. The zine is then published and placed in an electronic library (accessible to all) and can be physically printed if needed. All in all this is a vast improvement over dealing with the USPS.

So why shouldn't electronic mail games be rated just like regular postal games? I have yet to read a rational argument against this idea. Opposition to the inclusion of electronic mail games is based on the mistaken idea that all of these games are somehow different from regular postal games. In two isolated cases electronic mail Diplomacy games have been different. Allen Wells' Xerox network games involved two or more players at the same locale. In Wes Ives' Wordworks games the players' true identities are not known. Neither of these types of games would be considered regular (and therefore rateable) even if they were played via the USPS. On the other hand, all of the Armchair Diplomat games on CompuServe have players spread out throughout the United States and the players' true identities are known to all. These games meet all of the requirements to be designated regular games.

So why the fuss? Why are some of the hobby's big name fans so opposed to electronic mail Diplomacy? That is a good question and one that you need to ask them. However, if I should hazard a guess, I would guess that it is because these naysayers are afraid of change. The advent of computers and electronic mail will produce profound changes in both the Diplomacy hobby and society in general. Some will adapt to this change; others will not. The question then becomes: will you?

((Thanks, Doug, and three free issues have wormed their way onto your subscription in VD's closing moments. I think the reason that you haven't read a rational argument against the idea of equating e-mail games with postal games is that such an argument does not exist. I will very freely admit that my own reason (that the two types of games have a different "flavor") is not logical at all; it is based upon my own personal feelings and I cannot justify them to someone who does not share them.

I have, however, two major quarrels with points you have brought up. The first of these pertains to your first paragraph, where you state that none of the naysayers have experienced e-mail Diplomacy, and therefore are in no position to judge it. While perhaps true, this is still unfair: you make it sound as though no one holding the opposite position even knows what he's talking about. I have strong reservations about rating e-mail games, and I assure you I'm no old-fashioned country hick who fears the advent of computers. I have a pretty good idea of what computers can do, and I'd venture to say I have a damn good idea of what it would be like to play by e-mail, though I've never done it. Nothing in your article was surprising to me in terms of how these games operate, for instance. I'm not ignorant enough to compare e-mail Diplomacy to an arcade game. But I still hold to my view that the "flavor" is fundamentally different than sending and receiving letters by mail. (I do notice one slight error in what I've just said, though: I'm not opposed to rating e-mail games; just to equating them with postal games. I think they should be rated separately, that's all.)

My second disagreement is with your final paragraph, where you switch from talking about people who are opposed to rating e-mail games as regular to people who are "opposed to electronic mail Diplomacy". That's a big jump. I'm certainly not opposed to e-mail Diplomacy, and I don't know of anyone who is. (Maybe Robert Sacks?) How can somebody oppose e-mail Diplomacy per se -- it's simply a way of playing the game. You then reinforce this by bringing up the image of people who are "afraid of change" -- the old-fashioned country hick stereotype again. I'm not afraid of change, I'm not opposed to e-mail Diplomacy, and I hope someday to try it myself. I don't think you can fairly equate my views on the matter with fear of change or opposition to the whole idea of playing by e-mail.

I am prepared for the far-reaching and vast changes that computers will have on life in general and the hobby in particular. I also still feel that PBM and PBEM are two different forms of the game.))

Steve Knight edited and organized the VD house rules, making them much easier to use for both me and my players. He wrote the press release of the century in "Press Wars" and has written several other very entertaining articles and letters for VD. THANKS...to Doomie Steve Knight.

John Michalski has been a heavy contributor to the VD Gossip Column ever since the zine began. He published one of the greatest zines of all time -- Brutus Bulletin has had a major effect on VD's style. THANKS...to Doomie John Michalski.

Paul Rauterberg is one of the hobby's top writers on the play of the game, and has been a good friend for years. He and I have shared some good times in Detroit and Albany. Paul is the only Doomie to sign up all three times I announced general game openings in VD. THANKS...to Doomie Paul Rauterberg.

Rod Walker has contributed a hmonogous amount of material to the letter column and in the form of articles, often about the hobby's history. And, I don't care what the critics say -- he did the hobby an enormous favor by taking over Diplomacy World when it needed an editor. THANKS...to Doomie Rod Walker.

Ivo Bouman is one of two Doomies in The Netherlands. He has written some entertaining letters for VD. Since he travels in the States on occasion, I hope someday to be his host. THANKS...to Doomie Ivo Bouman.

Silliness Factors

by Randolph Smyth

So you have the short end of the diplomatic stick. In an area to be contested with two other nations, you find that they've allied solidly against you -- at least, too solidly to pry apart by the usual means. How can you hold the balance, or at worst, delay the inevitable? Particularly against novices, but surprisingly often against players of some experience, the silliness factors come in handy.

Unless you have a reasonable hope of favourable intervention, diversion in another sector, or other turnaround, there's little point in being passive about it. The proper measure of aggression will succeed most often when backed by some intelligence, based on the possibility of outright tactical errors by the opponents.

The crudest example is an NMR. If all other factors appear to be equal, or particularly after an enemy NMR, attack as many areas as possible, singly supported if occupied by the enemy. In a closely-packed game, attack units without retreat options, forcing annihilation if successful. On the other hand, if you have just NMR'd yourself, anticipate this same strategy by the opponents for next season and take appropriate measures (single support for most vulnerable units, attacks wherever feasible).

Most silliness factors are a bit more refined, and are of particular interest to the diplomatic underdog. Some are listed: your precise reaction to them naturally depends on the specific situation.

(1) Direct tactical conflict between your enemies due to lack of communication. This is usually a one-shot thing if the opposing alliance is sound, and is best exploited in your diplomacy with the rest of the board.

(2) Lack of cooperation at the common frontier as each enemy concentrates on his own front and his own potential centers. This is quite common even when the basic alliance is super-strong, and if necessary I usually choose to defend a bit more lightly at the interface between opponents.

(3) More efficient attacks by the abler enemy, who can usually be pinpointed within a couple of seasons, if not from his letters. Normally, hold him off and take your chances with his less capable ally. If the disparity is large and their communication does not extend to tactical planning, only one front may require defense!

(4) Making use of predictable strategies on a seasonal basis: i.e. always grabbing for centers; positional to the point of over-conservatism; or the "tick-tock" attack (positional in the Spring, center-hungry in the Fall). Unless an attack is proceeding with mathematical certainty, I believe a force can hold off one of twice its size indefinitely, if the smaller power is aware of the precise plans of the larger.

Occasionally, it's not the players' mistakes that provide the breaks. I blush to think of an incident in my young and hungry days. I'd just entered the game as a standby for a half-decent position which was rapidly going downhill. Realizing that the GM wasn't too hot, I made my orders so complicated (but legal) that he was bound to foul them up. Sure enough, by the time the mess was sorted out, I had a clear picture of the strategical aims and tactical preferences of each player, and had established (poor to middling) diplomatic relations, with only one unfavorable season's play under the bridge! It held up the game scandalously (and didn't do much good, as it turned out), but I was very pleased with myself at the time.

Of course, should the enemies not fall prone to silliness, your attempts to take advantage of a nonexistent quality may well result in a quicker defeat. Regard it as rewarding them for competence: it's amazing how rarely such rewards have to be handed out. Try it and see!

((I don't see anything wrong with Randolph's "young and hungry days" stunt, though I don't see why someone who can't sort through a complicated set of conditional orders would be GMing in the first place.))

Peericon IV: A Bright Light in the "Drak" Ages of Diplomacy

by Larry Peery

Imagine if you hosted a DippyCon and 157,030 people showed up? Well, this year's Peericon IV was sort of like that. I thought some of the east coast people in the hobby might enjoy hearing about what a west coast Dippy event is like, so I'm giving you a summary of what happened at this year's Peericon IV, which was held from 28-29 July, in San Diego, which deliberately put it in direct competition with the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

I consider the official beginning of this year's Peericon to have been the passing of the Olympic Torch right near the PIV site, an event that two of us attended.

The actual games took place over a 2-day span and there were Dippy games going for 30 out of the 36 hours of the event. Six games were played in all and they lasted from around five hours to over 14 hours. There were several draws and ties and only one outright win. Fifteen people participated in the tournament and they played from one to five games each. Most people played three games. Another 15 or so people drifted through the event during the two days. In between the Dippy games we drifted off to the local pizza house, had a Chinese dinner, and consumed massive quantities of beer, donuts, and junk food.

The players attending were some of the best in California and they are as good as any in the hobby. Top three slots in the tournament went to Dave Villadsen and Ed Menders (of Santa Barbara) and Ken Hager (of Orange County).

By 2100 Sunday evening everyone was just about worn out playing Dippy. Surprisingly, this year no other games were played except on the computer.

So much for the tournament part of PIV. The real fun started a week or so later. On Tuesday, August 7th, Ron Lay and I went up to Dodger Stadium and joined a sellout crowd of 55,000+ to watch the last two games of the baseball demonstration for the Olympics. The first game went 14 innings and was between Taiwan (bronze metal winner) and Korea. The second game was between Japan (gold metal winner) and the USA (silver metal). Prior to the start of the baseball games Ron and I gave a Dippy demonstration and played two years of Dippy. Got an interesting response, especially from the Stadium security people.

Then on Friday, Roger McAulay went up for the finals in water polo and saw the USA lose the gold to Yugoslavia after a tie game.

On Saturday, Dave Villadsen, PIV tournament winner, and his brother came down from Santa Barbara to Pasadena's Rose Bowl for the gold metal game in soccer. Mike Maston and I went up from San Diego. So I know that there were at least 102,000 people there, including three Dippy players. Mike managed to bump into Dave in the concession area although we weren't sitting together. The odds against that, 51,000:1. France won the gold, beating Brasil, 2-0.

Sunday we watched the closing ceremonies and I particularly enjoyed seeing Lopes win the marathon. It just proves life does begin at 37 and I ought to know, I'm 37.

But I also got to see that Sunday's brawl between the San Diego Padres and the Atlanta Braves. It was as disgusting a non-sporting event as I have ever seen. And you know, as I watched it, I kept thinking of the Dippy hobby and the way some of our members act. They could teach those ballplayers plenty.

Still, overall, it was a great Peericon in my opinion. But, perhaps I'm biased. After all, I was the poor fool that won that one game, even if it did take me until 0500 to do it. Oh yeah, I NMRd in Fall 1901 playing Russia and still won. I realize this is pretty dull for those of you used to attending DippyGons on the east coast and seeing lots of drunks make fools of themselves, hear people gossip and lie about those not present, etc., etc. Sorry, all we do is play Dippy and have a good time. Try it, you might like it for a change.

((Thanks for the nice writeup, and three issues of sub credit to you. I'd like to attend an Olympics -- and a Peericon -- some day. Your generalizations about east coast cons are not always correct. KaneKon and BRUKCON are always good clean fun, e.g.))

## A Little Spice, Anyone?

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by John Pack

Have you ever encountered a feeling of apathy among other players (or, worse yet, felt bored yourself) as the game of Diplomacy (Kingmaker, Civilization, Risk, etc.) drags into its ninth hour (or third hour)? Has the leader (you know, the "big threat") ever suddenly turned into a puppet in the hands of whoever is still taking the game seriously? I suppose we've all seen it happen, even to the most devoted fanatic. There comes a point (generally late at night a few hours into a game, a most unexciting game, in general) where each player reaches the "I don't care any more" stage. Some people get all giggly; others stare forward in a half-awake trance. What can be done to restore interest and fun?

Former Doonle Mike Mitchell comes to mind (uh, my mind) as a leader in the field. When he reaches that apathetic state (some 10 minutes into the game usually, maybe 5), he adopts the FRP style of play. You just reach into your little pouch of dice and start rolling away. Let's see, "Whose ally shall I be this turn? John's been my ally the whole game, so I'll give him a +2 modifier. Too bad, John, I rolled a one. Guess that means I'm with Turkey now. Now, 50% chance that I do what I said to Turkey I would with each piece. Now, what do I do with the other two (that failed the alliance)? How many provinces do I border with those? OK, (roll, roll) they'll act on that spot. Now, will it be support for a random unit that borders that place, or shall I move there myself? Roll, roll. OK, my orders are ready. When are you going to end all that negotiation, come on, you've had five minutes already. So what if it's Spring '01?" Now, of course, you wouldn't have to do that to spice up a game, but if there's, say, only six players, you could decide the "madman's" moves in a similar fashion (with appropriate modifiers). Of course, Mike's demise (uh, rapid demise) could be due to such strategies. You'll need 13-sided, 7-sided, and 3-sided dice, of course.

Some players find variants helpful in livening up matches. For example, in a recent Risk game, a bit late at night, we opted to make it a nuclear variant (an obvious influence of being from Los Alamos, eh?). Each game turn, a random card was chosen from the deck and everything in that country was blown away and it became impassable to further armies. If the card with all three symbols showed up, two cards were picked and those nations became vaporized. Also, at the beginning of each player's turn, if the player held any cards (dependent on previous rounds, as usual), he had the option of nuking that province shown or saving it up for a set (like you normally would). This shortened the game incredibly and livened it up considerably. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if everyone opts to play it that same way next time. The same principle could be applied to Diplomacy, Civilization, Kingmaker, etc., though it would require more thought. Perhaps a conference map mounted on a dartboard?

Another variant might be one such as the "Santa Claus" variant which can be employed at any point during the game (perhaps allowing a defeated player to take the role of Santa). What? You've never heard of the Santa Claus variant? Ah, that's because it was invented here in LA, as a variant to vary any other variant. Simply, define the center in the North Atlantic to be the North Pole. Also choose five random areas (spread out) as grain centers (be sure to include the North Pole as one of these). These need not be supply centers, but could be. Santa starts with one unit (guess where). Santa may only move during the fall seasons, but may give support during the spring. For each supply center AND grain center Santa owns, he may construct a new unit in the Summer of each year. Santa's ownership takes effect in the Spring, of course. Santa may not win, but may participate in draws. Santa may move to ANY province on the board from ANY other province, but only during the fall. Movement is resolved per the regular rules (i.e. if he fails, he stays where he was). Of course, new sled units may be constructed only in the North Pole. Simple, eh? When everyone is bored, add Santa, and he'll brighten everyone up (of course, you could add him at the start of the game). Wonderful at breaking stalemate lines and as an ally, fearful as an enemy if he gets very big. Santa may retreat in the Spring only to the North Pole (normal, otherwise). And yes, he may have more than one unit on the North Pole if it is brought about by such a retreat.

And, of course, if that doesn't help, you might a) get new players, b) nuke Santa, or c) be a lost case.



Passing the Buck

by Randolph Smyth

Ever since I've been in the hobby, and probably for several years beforehand, there has been controversy over whether the replacement of dropouts with "standbys" is a good practice in postal Diplomacy. Lately this debate seems to have intensified in some quarters, partly because of a geographic polarization of opinion (North American GMs almost universally appoint standbys whenever available, while British ones tend to leave the positions in civil disorder) and partly because most other major controversies seem to have faded -- as the hobby matures, experience is leading to unanimity in many other areas. Lest you start off the next few paragraphs with the idea that this is a "neutral" article, let me say that I'm a firm believer in the system I was brought up under, that is, that the use of standbys is a far superior method of running a game. From that start, I'll examine a few of the arguments, pro and con.

The Rulebook makes no mention of standbys, and goes into some detail on how the GM should treat a civil disorder position. This appears to be an argument against standbys as being "against the rules", but you must remember that the Rulebook was written for face-to-face players, and drafted in its original form before the postal hobby was even thought of. Postal play necessarily forces several revisions on the Rulebook: the most glaring example is the suggestion that deadline intervals should be about 15 minutes long! It's all that most people can manage to get seven original players together for a face-to-face game, without calling in standbys should someone have to leave: the civil disorder rules are necessary in face-to-face games. Only the postal hobby provides the opportunity for standby players to get in on the fun; whether this is desirable or not cannot be decided by reference to a manual written for different playing conditions.

The most convincing argument I've seen advanced against standbys is that the game is the preserve of the seven original players who coughed up the gamefee. If one of the players can simply outlast the others, for whatever reason, he's entitled to the rewards of persistence. Some writers have gone further, to say that an element of skill is involved: if a player is clever enough to scare off or discourage everyone else, his efforts should not be frustrated by a fresh face plugged into an abandoned position. I believe this is stretching the point -- many players leave due to disinterest or other commitments, but I know of none who have been literally intimidated into leaving by the actions of another player. Still, the basic "persistence" argument is a reasonable one.

Extra-game considerations also become harder to handle when the standby method is used. Rating systems have always had trouble judging standbys, and in fact there is no fair method of doing so. The latest system to come along ("Dragon's Teeth" by Bob Sergeant and Steve McLendon) separates the two groups of players entirely, but opponents of this idea have shown that this isn't fully satisfactory either. The complexity of endgame writeups is magnified when the contribution of standby players must be noted. Perhaps most serious in terms of the games themselves, there are regrettably a few players who only seem to take poor standby positions in order to "get" one of the original players who wounded them elsewhere. Cross-game threats and deals are more likely when a player has access to many games -- at no charge -- through standby positions.

The other side of the debate has only one major point to make: that in an "average" seven-player game, only perhaps three will be able to play their positions to completion. A novice may drop out of the hobby in short order; a second player may be transferred to Ethiopia and be unable to keep up; a third may gradually lose interest, develop too many other commitments, and ultimately NMR twice in a row; and, with a 2-3 year time frame for a game, a fourth player may be dead before the end!



One may hope that the players will be more reliable, but years of experience indicates that over 50% attrition is the norm in the gaverage game. Postal Diplomacy without standbys is therefore not a seven-man game at all, but an endurance test which only two or three players will survive. Furthermore, skill is de-emphasized since the ability to profit from a dropout is dependent on being lucky enough to find oneself next to a lot of civil-disorder units (and centers). The basic argument, then, is that the game becomes a farce, and not "Diplomacy" at all, when 20 or more centers are "controlled" by powers in civil disorder, which has actually happened in some British games.

This is, to me, a telling point for general practice. As long as the players are informed of the groundrules in advance and have paid their gamefees on that understanding, I can't see any grounds for complaint about the appearance of a standby. I am also convinced of the need to accept the potential extra-game problems as a necessary evil to preserve the play balance of a seven-man game lasting three years. (Since standbys have already insinuated themselves into most rating systems, it seems impossible to erase their complications after the fact in any case.) However, there is room for both points of view, and the mass of players may have a legitimate grievance against the hobby. It's a pity that North American players have considerable difficulty finding "no-standby" games, and vice versa for the Europeans. Still, the "mass of players" is the hobby; if they want changes, it's up to them to ask for it.

((I'm in basic agreement with this article. I, too, prefer the American system of using standbys to the British of civil disorder, or "anarchy", as they call it. And I agree that there is room (and need) for both ways, so long as there are players who prefer it both ways.))

Jeff Albrecht wrote the first letter to appear in Voice of Doom, suggesting that the hobby Novice Packet be turned over to reliable hands. His comments helped lead to the publication of Supernova. THANKS...to Doomie Jeff Albrecht.

Steve Hutton has assigned his own zine the role of "Hobby Proving Ground for VD's Great Ideas". A staunch ally in my fight to awaken the world to the merits of strict GMing, he has been a frequent companion and roommate at various cons. THANKS...to Doomie Steve Hutton.

Mark Luedi has been a strong contributor to the VD Gossip Column in recent years, and a frequent respondent to the round-table discussions in this zine. His writing always maintains a lighthearted air that adds to the enjoyableness of the zine. THANKS...to Doomie Mark Luedi.

Cathy Cunning has always been a person I've felt I can talk to, and whom I trust. She was a factor in my becoming interested in the British hobby. I wish all the luck in the world to her and Eric. THANKS...to Doomie Cathy Cunning.

Konrad Baumeister is a true hobby pillar and a long-time supporter of VD. Over the years he has written several articles for this zine, and contributed heavily to the Gossip Column. A friend through thick and thin...THANKS...to Doomie Konrad Baumeister.

James Wall is a solid conservative, and with BRUX's help will aid in President Reagan's re-election next month. He has been a heavy contributor to VD for over a year. THANKS...to Doomie James Wall.

Bob Osuch amazed many by confessing in a recent issue of the zine that BRUX was not a dick after all. Coming from him, that's high praise indeed! THANKS...to Doomie Bob Osuch.

Key Up There, Please Don't Step on Me  
The Perils of Puppethood

Hey, Big Daddy. Please don't squash me. I'll be good. I know we've been fighting our war for over four years now. And now I'm just a little tiny kingdom in the mountains and you're a monstrous empire about to overwhelm the entire continent of Europe. You don't need to step on me. I'll be good.

What can I do for you? Can I send my last army against your other opponents? May I help support your armies against those cruel and evil madmen who still would deny you your right to control the continent? May I just stay harmlessly out of your way as you march toward your inevitable imperial glory? Tell me what to do and I'll do it. I'll be good.

I have priceless and rare treasures hidden within the crevices of my castle. They are yours for the asking. And I will treat Your Highness to a kingly dinner of caviar and mountain oysters. The gates of my little kingdom are open to your every desire. Maybe you would like to take a nice vacation in the royal resort-home atop Mt. Elevation? It's at your disposal, kind friend, and totally secluded from the huddled masses. There, high above the clouds, you will have forty-and-ten servants at your command day and night. And the royal vacation-harem is yours as well. And you can look out over all of Europe on a clear day and see the Adriatic Sea to your right and the Baltic far to your left and everything in between. For the asking. Just please don't hurt me. I'll be good.

Can I act as a go-between for negotiations involving you and the Evils? I have two scores of trained spies who will be quite enthusiastic over the prospect of helping Your Highness to his noble, ultimate victory. If you like I can even vacate the Royal Castle and you can move in at your leisure. I will leave only with the clothes on my back and my raisin-bread. You may even have the queen and the princess. And the keys to their chastity belts. I will build a little cabin on the coast and live there and never ever pester you again. You can even have the cabin. I'll leave the raisin-bread behind too, if you want it. I'll do anything to suit Your Highness. I'll be good.

Oh, why won't you answer me? I will be the most trustworthy, hard-working servant an Emperor could want. I will fall to my knees at the very mention of your glorious name. I will kiss your Royal Feet. My life will be totally devoted to the fulfillment of your every desire. I will bequeath you my very soul, that yours may eternally rest in peace. Night and day, hour by hour, I shall live for you and you alone. I will personally fight your wars if your soldiers wish it. I shall submit myself to the ecstasy of your Royal Whip three times daily. Oh, Your Highness, won't you let me live? Have mercy on one who reveres you above all others. Please, your Royal Highness? I'll be good.

Oh, woe! And yet you answer me not. What more can I offer thou? What are your worldly wishes? You shall have eternal omniscience. You shall know all there is to know. You shall be Everywhere and Everything. OH! OH! You shall be God. You are the Almighty. The keys to the Universe shall rest in your palm, your magnificent palm. Please, please spare me! I implore you not to step on me and extinguish the last remaining spark of life. Oh, Your Majesty, Your Highness, Your Gloriousness, I'll be...

SPLAT.

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The Question I was Never Able to Answer; My Extreme Agony at this Inability of Mine; Why the Zine was Kept Alive this Long; and the Ultimate Humiliation of Having to Deal with the Problem Still Unsolved. Much to the Editor's Utter and Eternal Regret

by BRUX Linsey

I have always wanted to know why articles' titles are always longer than their texts. I kept publishing in the hope that someday I'd discover the answer, but I see now that's impossible, so I'm folding.

From Fol Si File #29...

How Honest?

or

Handing Down the Hexalogue

by Randolph Smyth

Laying down guidelines on how much of your true state of mind to expose to your fellow players (independent of the game conditions and the player's own temperament) is an impossible task. Some will disagree with the items in the following list, which has been slashed ruthlessly from what could have been said; others will consider all of them too obvious to mention. For myself, I'd rather play with the latter variety, if only because we think along the same lines.

1) Never lie outright in 1901. It establishes a first impression of untrustworthiness on all players which is almost impossible to shake; and any gains made from stabs will be limited, also provoking the formation of an "alliance of fear" among your neighbors. The more successful you are militarily, the more true this will be. Besides, can you be sure, so early in the game, that the power you are allied with is really on your side...?

2) Never lie to a puppet, if you are lucky enough to possess one. Having once accepted the role, he usually responds better to the truth, even if it involves a further erosion of his centers. Even when a stab puts the game in your lap, your power is usually sufficient to win by force while continuing with the alliance. The bad feeling created is not worth saving one or two game years.

3) Resist the temptation to do more truth-bending to a player you consider sub-competent. Even if he is, there is usually a more astute player in the wings to set him straight if your fabrications get too wild.

4) Never tell everything to anyone. You deserve to be manipulated if all your cards are face up. On the other hand, beware the ally who initiates such relations. Reciprocate cautiously if at all, and maintain a healthy counterpunch capability against a possible stab.

5) Generally, try to make all details of your moves on the board agree with the statements you've made to all players, including enemies (the latter won't believe a lie anyhow). The most efficient stabs (if you're that way inclined) are made by those who have established credibility beforehand; while a game-long alliance (if you prefer) is naturally strongest when you can count on your ally coming through. Neutrals and enemies may receive only the occasional scrap with this policy; but why not maintain communication if divulging the information won't hurt in any way ("I'm gonna kill you in two game-years, man.")

6) The converse does not always hold: do not make statements to agree with every detail of your moves (see #4). That is, it is rarely necessary to list the upcoming season's orders for all units, giving your recipient a full idea of your potential. His communications with other players may give him an exact idea of what will happen. Allow someone this perfect knowledge every season, and the obvious result is inevitable.

All this covers the most extreme cases only, where I think I'll get the least argument. It's fortunate that the occasional player will offer objections to any of the points listed -- as judgements on player reliability are often the basis of alliance formation in the first place, every game would be similar if a wide variety of views on the subject were not being put into practice with every exchange of letters.

The Golden Rule is (hold your breath) reveal everything you think is safe, and hang onto what isn't. Absurd in its obviousness? Perhaps...but how many players just spew out whatever comes to mind without making any such judgement? The trouble is judgement depends on players and positions...which makes this article useless.

((Not really useless, Handolph, even if you hold the view that strategy articles have to be useful rather than just interesting. In this case, what is very obvious to you isn't clear at all to some players I've come across. And they haven't all been novices, either.

For instance, "Never lie outright in 1901" is a very sensible guideline provided we acknowledge the fact that there are exceptions in some cases. But I have had players lie to me gratuitously in spring '01, without a whole lot to be gained. This of course serves only to destroy their credibility too early, and they've probably lost a potential ally. The sad thing is that this does happen...which is happy news for the article, assuming some players of this sort read it.

On the other hand, you are correct to point out that this list is ruthlessly slashed from what it might have been. For instance, any good player will find it perfectly obvious that one should never send a letter which, if passed, is likely to destroy one's alliance with another player. But this bit of advice perhaps goes beyond the "extreme cases" you were trying to cover. Nice article -- and not as "obvious" to all players as you might think. What's that? Oh, I see you called it "useless" in another context entirely...grumble...well, yes, judgements depend on the particular game situation and the players, but the points you raise still apply as guidelines.))

Thanks to Mark Berch for sending in the following for me to print. I figure some of you will get a kick out of these...

**Roaches Unseat
N.Y.C. Busriders**

Reuter

NEW YORK, June 11 — Passengers swarmed off a New York City bus Monday when a record heat wave forced hundreds of cockroaches out of their hiding places and onto the seats.

The passengers then waited for another bus — only to see riders on that vehicle clamber off for the same reason. Then a third bus lumbered up and its passengers came tumbling out because of the uninvited guests.

"It was disgusting," said one passenger.

Officials said Monday's 95 degree heat forced the roaches out of hiding places in the three buses' motors.

**1973 Washingtonian Award for
Non-Euphemistic Legal Oratory**

"Your mind, sir, is a cesspool of filth, venom, lies and prejudice. To call you savage would cast aspersions on innocent savages. If I believed you had sufficient understanding, I would call you a very, very evil person."

—Washington communications lawyer Benedict Cottone to an FCC examiner during licensing hearings for Station KAYE, Puyallup, Washington.

**MAN SAYS CONTEMPT
WAS NOT FOR 'COURT'**

STOCKTON-ON-TEES, England (Reuters)—Bill Bangs went to court charged with contempt for flashing a rude finger sign at a passing limousine.

The occupants turned out to be two judges, who promptly had him arrested and charged.

In court, the judge told him: "This is a very serious matter. I have the authority to send you to prison, you know."

Mr. Bangs replied: "I humbly apologize. I did not intend to show disrespect to your lordships. I thought it was the mayor's car."

The judge accepted his explanation and released him.

DOOR SLAMMED, HOUSE FALLS

Mrs. Mary Adams holds the keys to her house in Stockport, England, but she won't be needing them much now. When Mrs. Adams slammed her front door, the house slid into the River Mersey. "The door was a little stiff so I gave it a good bang," she said. The house is the last of a row of old buildings and adjoins a bridge carrying heav traffic.

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The Gossip Column
Part III

From Steve Langley (8/13/84):

Dear Bruce,

VD's big uproar issue arrived just as we were in the midst of moving. I read it Sunday, in the hospital, while waiting for my CT scan.

A CT (Computerized Telemography) is a 3-D x-ray. From the patient's point of view it is being strapped with wide velcro binders to a moving table followed by two hours of uninterrupted time for thought. Having just finished VD, naturally that is what I thought about. Not just the zine, but the people and the issues. I guess I started with the issues, the business about Bill Highfield, the FIM petition, the irregular game in MM, the contention between VD and the BNC. Two hours is a long time to just think about a subject. I went through a few changes of mind in some of the areas. I asked some questions that I couldn't answer. I found lots of contradictions I couldn't resolve. So, I'm writing it all down and sending it to you. I'm going to keep a copy for myself, for future study. The situation bothers me a great deal.

I guess I'll start with the simplest and farthest removed, the "irregular" game in MM. I get MM. I read Ron's account of the situation. I didn't understand that he was considering dropping out of the hobby over the situation. I agree with you 100% about Ron's integrity. And I don't understand your reaction on the face of it! You're the BRUX! The rule stickler! What are you doing saying that having one of the players in the game informing the GM of country assignments or having the GM ask the Turkish player choose the standby for Austria (whether or not the moves were used, the incident alone affects the game) is not irregular? Considering that you published a long letter from Rod Walker on the very subject (i.e. irregularity, not the MM game), you must have been in a strong state of awareness as to what the term irregular really means, and yet you seem to be making an issue of Ron's integrity out of it. It was an irregular situation. Nothing more. The game should be flagged for raters. I'd probably rate it, unless the situation gets so blown out of shape that it further impinges on the game.

But what about you? All else being equal, I would have expected a different reaction out of you, yet you got pretty emotional in Ron's defense. A defense that seemed to be erected against no real attack. Until I saw you defending his integrity, I saw no evidence that his integrity was in question. Of course, all else is not equal. You are feuding with Kathy Byrne, the current BNC. Could it be that you are letting your personal feelings influence your position on this question? After a lot of thought, that is the conclusion I was forced to draw.

((Steve, I hope you won't mind if I answer you after each topic instead of my usual wait-till-the-end routine, but these are important issues and your letter is long enough that I think it will be more readable if I do it this way.

Perhaps I did get a bit emotional in defending Ron Brown. You say that you saw no evidence that his integrity was being questioned, but I saw the ugly words "GM-player collusion" in reference to Stafford's letter. They leapt right out of the page at me. And, when I spoke with Ron, he sounded quite upset that this charge might hang over his head should the protest go through. Having been a victim of the same exact charge in the past, falsely made, I think I know how Ron felt. That's why I sprang so vigorously to his defense.

But I will grant you that my personal feelings toward Ron have nothing to do with the game's regularity, and perhaps I needed to make that distinction more clear. Why don't you go back and read what I wrote before that, about a "random draw" and the fact that the standby selected by the Turkish player never made it into the game? Those were my arguments as to why I don't feel the game should have been irregular, a position I still hold. Am I biased by my dispute with Kathy? I don't believe so. I think I arrived at my conclusion reasonably. That others disagree doesn't surprise or bother me. That is their right.))

The second issue is the one about the FIM petition. You sent me a copy of the petition, less than a full month ago. In it, you had excerpts from Sleepless Knights is that were quite current, so I can conclude that I got it just about when everyone else did. Of course, there may have been various waves of the thing. Anyhow, you said that you got eight responsible publishers to sign and two who refused because they didn't want to be on John Caruso's "shit list". You also said that FIM is seeming to clean up its act lately, so perhaps the petition won't have to be used.

Now we both know I didn't sign the petition, and, construing the letter I sent you about why I won't sign such a document into "doesn't want to get on John Caruso's 'shit list'" is doing me a disservice. So, either you are not listing all the votes, or you are interpreting some of the votes to mean what you see in them. Which is it?

((Neither. You've overlooked the obvious. Your letter to me in response to the FIM petition was written on August 1. The game deadline for VD #98 was August 3, and that's the day "hobbytalk" was typed, containing my remarks about FIM. Your letter hadn't arrived by then. The "shit list" comment is a direct quote from the two publishers who felt that way (independently of each other, I might add). You were not one of them.

While we're on the topic, let me elaborate further on the final outcome of the petition. First of all, there were 21 copies sent out, including mine. Eight people signed. Two didn't want to get onto Caruso's shit list. Three or four wavered with remarks like "it's a bit premature -- let's see if Caruso keeps it up" or "I see the problem, but I don't think this is necessarily the best way to handle it." There were a few outright refusals; you, Luedi, Hutton. There were a handful not heard from. I hope that clarifies for you how the "voting" went, if it's to be viewed as such.))

How can you, with a straight face, claim that FIM is being influenced? Until I wrote John Caruso about it, the same letter I sent you, he hadn't even heard of your responsible publishers to ban FIM project. How could you influence him? It has only been a month! How could you know whether you were influencing him or not? I just saw FIM in a European zine, Macht ds Spiel (and I take no credit or responsibility for the spelling) and John seemed just about as inhibited there as he does here (not at all).

Yet, read as you wrote about it, your petition is made to sound nearly universally accepted and effective. Why? Is this another case of BRUX letting feuds color his perceptions? Or, is it a case of stretching your case a bit because it is part of a feud? Or did you really think that my refusal to sign a petition in favor of selective censorship was out of fear of John Caruso? Did you really think John was reacting to such a device by temporizing what he has to say? Are we talking about the same John Caruso in these questions?

((Yawn. Steve, I didn't say that John mellowed out in FIM because of the petition. I'm sorry if you read it that way. I have noticed a lack of the sort of material that I and seven others were protesting in recent weeks. Why, I don't know. I also got a note from Dave Carter saying that John told him to pass on his apologies to those who were offended by the Sleepless Knights issue of FIM. For all I know, maybe John himself just decided that he'd gone a bit far and ought to cool it. I don't know. Maybe by the time this goes to press there will be a reason to print the petition. I hope not. I am satisfied with the current (as of early September) pattern, and hope it continues.))

The farther in we get, the harder it is to write. I just reread the above and I do not sound objective. I sound antagonistic to BRUX. I did not mean it to. I thought I was being objective when I was thinking about the situation. So, I have evidence of myself appearing other than I thought I was acting. Is this what happened to you?

((Apparently so, perhaps. It is a rare person who can read his own writing the way others will view it, I know. One can only strive for objectivity.))

Now, we get into very troubled waters. You say that Kathy Byrne called you on the phone and threatened to rule all of your games irregular. You said it a month or so ago, judging by the letters to VD on the subject. She was described as being in a rage. Your response is that you want Kathy to disqualify herself from ruling on any VD games. You argue a bit with Rod Walker about irregularity and what grounds Kathy might have. On the surface, this looks like the basis for one whale of a feud. Still, I had a lot of time for thought and I came up with a lot of unanswered questions.

Why was Kathy in a rage? That was the first and most obvious. Did the phone call actually occur? If not, why would Bruce invent it? If so, why would Kathy make it? There was mention of a letter to one of Kathy's kids. Were the two related? Did Kathy think Bruce had sent one of her children a "filthy" letter? Would Bruce do such a thing? If not, why would Kathy think he had? Does this tie in in any way with the FIM petition? The phone call came first, at least insofar as internal evidence indicates. If there was a phone call. See what I mean about troubled waters? None of it is really explained, it just seems to have occurred in a vacuum. Poof, for no reason at all, a feud. That just does not make sense!

People do things through various motivations. If Kathy called you in a rage then something enraged her. What was it? A letter to one of her kids? Why would you do that? To get to Kathy in about her only weak spot? Why would you want to get to Kathy? There is too much missing. Far too many questions unanswered.

((You are asking some questions that have already been answered here in print. To repeat myself, then: yes, the phone call existed. No, there was no nasty letter to one of Kathy's kids. No, Bruce would never and has never done such a thing. No, Bruce doesn't believe in exploiting people's weak spots.

You ask why Kathy called me in a rage. All I know are the reasons she gave me for being angry. There were several items in Voice of Doom #95 that strongly offended her. One was the House of Lords editorial. Another had to do with the crossword puzzle. A third was the crack about Caruso's humor not being funny. And, she was upset over John Kelley's printed statement that Caruso had mentioned the possibility of physical violence should the two ever meet. She thought that I had put Kelley up to printing that. (I had no prior knowledge that the remark was going to see print.) Oddly, Kathy didn't mention the one item in the issue that I thought she might find offensive: the "Toadybashing" article. Those, then, are the reasons she gave for being upset, though they came out at various points in the conversation, not all clearly and consecutively stated as I have done above.

Do I think that she was really mad about those things, or was she just looking for a reason to be angry? I don't know. The logical question would then become, why was she looking for a reason? I suppose, Steve, that if I had all of the answers to your questions regarding Kathy's behavior, then I'd understand her enough to deal with her.))

Then there is Bill Highfield. Your little "confession" was pretty good. I read through it and came away thinking that Highfield was a victim of his own stupidity. I disagreed with your conclusion, that he really is a dangerous person, but I felt that he was, in a very strong way, responsible for what had occurred. Then, I started thinking. Terrible thing, thought. It spins around in one's head and won't let go.

Some of my first observations, dismissed by the time I'd read Sesler's letter, recurred. What did the references to Caruso and Tallman have to do with it? They set the stage for the revelation of Bruce's true motives. A couple of straw men to knock aside on the way to what was really going on. Then I started wondering, "What was really going on?" Highfield is bugging Bruce with death threats. Bruce warns him to cool it or be turned in. Bill persists. Bruce turns him in.

Is Bill dangerous? Bruce says he knows him pretty well and concludes that he is.

Why then did Bruce write to Bill's commanding officer? That question rose up out of all the rest and wouldn't let go.

Bruce could have a) endured and hoped Bill would go away, b) tried to reason with Bill, c) told Bill's parents about the problem and ask them to discipline their child, d) gone to the police, e) told Bill's CO. Of this list, the most dangerous, if Bill is dangerous, is the one Bruce did. Why this contradiction? Does Bruce really think that Bill is dangerous or just an annoyance? From what happened I find it very hard to conclude that you really feared Bill.

Another nagger. Why was Bill sending you death threats? You mentioned Eric Kane. Does it follow that Eric knows what Bill was threatening you about?

((At this point, Steve goes on to construct a possible scenario about why Bill may have been writing the death threats. It is all speculation, it isn't close to the truth, and I have no reason to print it.))

...Why didn't you talk to his parents? You knew them, if only in passing -- at least his father, didn't you? Do you really think you acted responsibly in going directly to Bill's CO?

((I wouldn't have done it had I not felt that I was acting responsibly. Regarding the other options you brought up: Bill's parents are divorced, and I've never met either of them. His mother and Bill don't get along at all. Bill lives with his father, and works in his meat market. I have good reason to believe, having heard Bill's description of his family life, that his father 1) has little or no control over Bill's activities, and 2) is not at all the sort of person who would have sat Bill down and tried to reason with him even if he did have control. I have a letter from Bill's father. It reads almost like one of Bill's letters. Not quite, but almost. In my judgement, this man wouldn't have tried to discipline Bill, and couldn't have had he wanted to.

The police. I covered that in my response to Ty Hare's letter in VD #99. I was not out to clobber Bill's whole life.

Ignoring him. Risky. The threats were ongoing, not one isolated occurrence. Please read Mark Berch's letter of 8/27, somewhere in this issue. One does not ignore repeated death threats.

Tried to reason with Bill. I did that. It didn't work.

You want to know why Bill was sending the death threats. My response will take the form of another question: can you conceive of any legitimate reason for these threats? Any reason whatsoever? I am of the firm belief that there is no legitimate reason for sending a death threat. Thus, the reasons behind Bill's actions (which are many and very complex) are not of consequence. If you can persuade me that there is any reason why someone should threaten someone's life, then I can recapitulate and talk about Bill's reasons.

Moreover, you forget, apparently, that I'm not the only person he threatened. Let's just assume for the moment that I'm some sort of horrible, diseased monster who does deserve to be killed. Then what about Keith Sesler? Did he deserve to be threatened in this way? What about this "Christine" Bill wants to murder? Is she equally deserving? Or can we assume then that the problem lies with Bill?

Sigh. I realize that the above is pretty evasive. So be it. There were no legitimate reasons why Bill was threatening people's lives, and that's all that needs to be said on the matter.

Caruso and Tallman were involved simply because they were the two publishers who decided that this needed to be brought into the hobby press, and then avoided telling their readers the relevant facts behind the situation.))

So many questions. On the one hand you could be slime that walks. A cunning, low creature who manipulates people and situations out of pure malice. On the other hand, nice people like you. The Lords, Joan, Samantha. I like you. It bothers me that someone I like has so many unanswered questions hanging around his actions.

((Well, I hope I've answered some of them to your satisfaction. Why don't you write back and let me know, although without VD my responses will have to be by and large

be made privately from now on, as I don't see myself devoted considerable space to this discussion in my subzine.))

I also like Kathy. It is very difficult to see people I like feuding as hard as this seems to be happening. Actually, I do think you stretch your case when you are in a feud. If you did not, you would be other than human. Do you, in the same mode, thoughtlessly hurt people? I really don't want to think that but from what I've just read it is difficult not to think it.

((Do I stretch my case in a feud? Maybe. You can point to my emotional remarks about Ron Brown to substantiate this if you wish. I do not think that you can justifiably point to the Highfield Affair in this context. My answer then would be, "sometimes". And I would also point out that there's a big difference between stretching one's case and telling outright lies. To say that Ron Brown's integrity has to do with the regularity of '83AY is to "stretch my case". To say that Bruce wrote a nasty letter to Francine is to lie.))

You and John Kelley concluded that Terry Tallman just likes to tear people down to make himself look better. Letting yourself accept such analysis is a fault you should examine. It keeps you from having to look at yourself. Right now, you really look as though you could profit from lots of self-examination.

((I'm sorry, Steve; that point I can't let go by. I offer the following statements about Terry Tallman: he likes to make himself look good by tearing down others, and he gets his jollies by taking away from other people's fun. I realize that I'm not going to persuade you just by making the blanket statement, nor by telling you that I know of others who agree, so let me back up my claims with examples and then you judge whether my remarks are sincere, or just indicate a need for introspection.

1. There are Terry Tallman's repeated attacks on the GMing in Voice of Doom. I'm referring to his comments both in his own zine and letter columns elsewhere in the hobby. He has for the past year and a half constantly been telling people that he would never recommend VD as a place to play. VD, like it or not, is (er, was) always on time. There were generally very few adjudication errors. Players played here by the dozen, and were usually satisfied. But what of the games Terry Tallman is (or was) running? Well, Terry will brush that off with a fleeting reference to his own "lackadaisical" GMing. It's not just lackadaisical; it's horrid. Don't take my word for it. Ask the players in the game he took over from Jack Fleming (Gary Coughlan was in the game, among others) whether Terry's GMing was so bad that they had to take the game to Doug Beyerlein so that he could sort out all the errors for the past several seasons. Look at his record of being consistently late, and then tell me that Terry's constant harping about how terrible VD's games are isn't just a ploy to draw attention away from his own pitiful GMing. I'm serious -- ask Gary Coughlan about it, and you'll get a well-deserved earful of a true GMing horror story.

2. Terry is fond of telling the hobby, both in America and Europe, just how dreadful the VD letter column is. It's pages of slime, he says. If that were true, then why does it keep generating the response it does? I must be doing something right. But what of the NSWG letter column? In fact, what of the reader contributions to that zine to begin with? Can anyone seriously look at the content of the two zines, and say with a straight face that Tallman isn't just jealous at the response VD gets? And his target isn't just VD; it's zines like Anduin and RE as well.

3. He has consulted a copyright lawyer to look into the legality of Mark Berch's reprinting articles in Diplomacy Digest, even though he himself has never been reprinted. Over a hundred people enjoy reading DD (based on the fact that they shell out their cash for it), but Terry would destroy the system for everyone if he could because he personally doesn't like the concept of a zine based on reprints. He's not satisfied with the knowledge that he doesn't have to, no sir, he's got to ruin other people's fun as well.

4. Ask James Wall (if his opinion of Tallman isn't already obvious from his letters in this issue) about Terry's attempts to weasel his way into all of James' games as a standby, just off the purpose of getting back at James for some action in an earlier game. How would you like it if there was someone out to spoil your games this way, lurking on every standby list for the games you were playing in? Tallman claims that it's all "Wall-baiting" and in fun. Of course it's fun for him. He gets off on spoiling other people's fun.

5. In case you missed it, Tallman himself has pretty much proven my point with his own words. If he's not out to aggravate others for the sake of aggravating them, then how do you explain away his comments to Denver Glont which, he says, were intended to incite great agony in several American publishers? There is no explanation for that very revealing remark...except to accept the statement that Tallman gets his jollies by hurting other people. As evidenced most recently by...

6. His attacks on me over the Highfield Affair, etc. He has managed to drag my personal life into it in a manner that can only be construed as pure sadism. He deliberately avoided any mention of the death threats, even though he knew about them. I am being savaged on a personal level in the pages of his zine. Don't tell me he doesn't sit back up there in Seattle and laugh his head off at others' agony; he's proven it too many times.

I am far from alone in my views of Tallman. They are shared, to some extent at least, by Walker, Coughlan, Baumeister, Kelley, Brad Wilson, Wall, and Rasterberg. You are entitled to think that my opinion of him is off base and indicates a need for introspection. I don't agree. But enough of me. I'll let you finish...))

Since I've read all of the above two or three times now and since all I could do to make it more complete would be to rewrite a couple of sentences and/or correct the spelling and since I can't really think of any other questions, I'll close.

I hope you take this better than it sounds. I don't mean it as an "attack", so much as to let you know that the questions occurred to me and so, could well have occurred to others. I think they are questions you need to answer for yourself or answer for the rest of us, depending on the question.

((Well, I've done my best. I hope that I've satisfied you on most points. I'm curious to know.

My first inclination was to be offended by this letter, especially the parts where you ask questions that I've already answered. It seemed as though you were just questioning my integrity. So I let it sit for a few days.

Then I came back and reread it, and the last paragraph sank in. You were actually doing me a favor by writing this letter, and I appreciate it. You are right: if the questions occurred to you, then maybe they were occurring to others who didn't bother to write in. This gave me the opportunity to answer them.

But, um, Steve...just don't go having too many more of those operations, eh?))

From Mark Berch (8/27/84):

Dear Bruce,

I believe that your action in the Highfield matter was a reasonable one, and I probably would have done much the same thing.

Mona, as you know, has worked for some time as a nurse and as a counsellor, so she's had quite a bit of experience with people who have problems of one sort or another. A lot of what people say you just ignore; it's just talk, talk, talk. But, she has emphasized, the one thing that you must take seriously are threats to kill, i.e. suicide or murder. This cannot be brushed off, especially when it is a repeated phenomenon, and not an isolated incident. It's not just the finality of death. Investigation of killings (murder or suicide) so frequently show that the perpetrator gave out signals to others that he was a danger. When these signals are acted on, a tragedy can sometimes be avoided. If writing to Bill directly did not work, you had the right to turn elsewhere.

((And so I did. To my (untrained) mind, it seems perfectly clear that one cannot ignore repeated death threats.))

From John Kelläey:

Bruce-

A hearty welcome to Paul Rauterberg. I don't agree with the man, but I'm glad he's one of my countrymen. Nevertheless...

"Ronnie Redneck Raygun" is an abnormally childish bit of name-calling, and for my part, Paul, I'm mystified that you stooped to it. Hate to say this, but it's the kind of comment (political positions being reversed) Bill Highfield used to make. If President Reagan is so beloved in this country, how come everybody I talk to runs him down, just like a broken record? And it's not Reagan, it's the nation; he's not a dictator, and I wasn't talking about him. Fact is, I don't hear good things about America as often as I hear scathing curses of it. The Americans I hear are against Grenada, for the most part. That's what leads me to call "anti-patriotism" and "liberalism" prevailing sentiments.

Furthermore, "patriotism" is not a synonym for slavish support for US acts and policies in my book. To me, "patriotism" is a way of looking at one's country, taking into account its rights and wrongs, and wishing it to survive and prosper on its own merit, holding views based on the firm belief that those views are what's good for the country. That makes many freeze supporters patriots, and I'm committed to it. If they believe that this idea is in America's best interests, then I accept it even if I disagree.

Unfortunately, most of our countrymen don't go that far, Paul. They simply criticize without caring, figuring that the country has screwed them so horribly that it can go manipulate itself. That's "anti-patriotism", commonly heard among well-off youth and adults to whom the whole system has been generous. That's what I'm condemning.

North Sealth West George? I don't receive it. I don't desire it.

Backtracking, I just thought of a song that I consider to epitomized patriotism; it's "Suite Madame Blue" by Styx. It laments the present situation, but it's sung by a man that shows love for his country; he wants the best for it and sings about it in mournful but majestic clarity. It's one of my favorites.

((You must travel in different circles than me. I don't hear a whole lot of the anti-patriotism you describe any more. I heard it during the Vietnam War and Watergate. In recent years, however, I've detected a strong shift toward patriotism, as evidenced (in my unshakeable opinion) by the popularity of Ronald Reagan.

I think you overreact to Paul's use of "Ronnie Redneck Raygun". Heck, I'm always bantering about Fritz 'n' Tits, so why shouldn't the other side have their little nicknames as well? To compare that to Highchair's dribbling is to exaggerate the point beyond reason.

I did like your definition of patriotism, though, with restrictions: I can't quite bring myself to view someone who advocated communism (or Nazism) for this country as a "patriot", even if he's sincere. Add then a dash of common sense and intelligence to your definition, and you have true patriotism.))

From Mark Berch (8/22/84):

Dear Bruce,

On the matter of your dispute with the BNC, I believe you are entirely wrong. Rauterberg's advice (#98, p. 33) is entirely sound. There is no need for you to complain about things she might do. You can simply wait till the problem occurs and deal with it then. Your response on p. 34 skirts this point. You haven't shown that you'd lose anything by waiting. The problems you refer to on page 34 will be waiting for you regardless of whether you complained about it in advance or not.

Turning now to Rod's letter on this topic, I'd like to echo his remark to the effect that I, too, have seen no evidence that she'd use her BNC position as a weapon against someone she didn't like personally. I also agree with Rod's prediction that

if such a question actually arose, she'd consult with other esteemed hobby members on the issue.

But you say you'd want the "assurance" she'd do that, adding, "I am entitled to it." Yes, and I'd want a million bucks, but so what? I'm no more "entitled" to that than you are to what you want. I don't see why that phone call entitled you to anything. I don't see why you can't GM your games, and in general live your entire life exactly the same as you would if you hadn't received the call. Since you can do just that, I don't think you've gained any entitlements at all.

As for delegating her decision, I see no reason for her to make any such promise, and I don't see why you should have to live your life any differently without obtaining such a promise. The fact that you would "automatically disqualify myself" does not mean a thing. She's under no obligation to perform the BNC duties the way you would.

And the rest of it is just rhetorical strawperson slashing. "GM under Kathy's thumb" is completely absurd. You can GM exactly the way you want, and you can GM in the present situation the same way you'd GM if there were no BNC institution. As such, Kathy's ability to label a game irregular creates no constraints on your GMing. With no constraints there, you have no complaint.

One of these days you're going to get the hang of what to pay attention to and what to ignore. You haven't got there yet.

((Grumble. I think I've been over the same points enough times. You don't think I had any business protesting against Kathy's threat, and I do. Let's leave it at that.))

From Eric Kane:

Bruce,

I'd like to respond to your comment that "Anyone who thinks that homosexuality is somehow not normal is living in the Dark Ages". I believe that this statement is incorrect. Homosexuality, or sexual intercourse between two members of the same gender, is not "normal". This is not to say that it is wrong or immoral, just that it is not what our sexual organs are there for. They are there, obviously, for the purpose of reproduction, which of course you know is impossible between, say, two males. For one to become sexually aroused, it is not because he is "in love", but more like one "in heat". One feels a desire to have intercourse -- to produce offspring. This is often translated into a feeling of "love" which we display towards our partner. In other words, to become sexually aroused because of another member of the same gender is not normal. I see know reason why a guy can't love another guy, or two girls loving each other -- this seems perfectly normal given that human beings express emotions different than other animals, but sexual relations between two guys or two girls just isn't normal. Personally, I don't mind homosexuals, if they enjoy it, what's wrong with it? It's not for me and as long as no one tries to push it on me, go right ahead.

So you think you won the GMing debate, eh? I'm more inclined to believe that it was pretty much a draw. I further believe that you are misconstruing your feeling of "victory" for what I suspect is unabashed glee in getting someone to argue with you on the subject and to open up a forum for the discussion of your houserules. C'mon, admit it, Bruce baby, you love discussing and seeing your houserules discussed, don't you?!

I've heard some rumors that Kathy Byrne has resigned as BNC and that Bill Quinn is the new custodian, this coming from the latest Graustark. If so you wasted about 20 pages last issue worrying about whether or not she would rule your games irregular. I know you have had some quarrels with her in the past but personally I thought she did a pretty good job. As you yourself mentioned, she was very good at the bookkeeping.

I have every confidence, however, that Bill Quinn will do an equally good job, especially with a computer to help him!

The entire Highfield affair left a bad taste in my mouth when it happened those many months ago. You may recall that I wrote to Bill back then and tried to get him to look at the whole thing as one of his subscribers might, but Bill did not heed my advice. Since then, many rumors and innuendos about him and you and others involved would keep surfacing, but without solid facts and details. For better or worse, I'm glad you told the whole story, or your side of it at least. Now people can decide for themselves instead of just speculating or coming to some conclusion or other about you without knowing the facts.

Kudos to Ruth Glaspey for including me on her list of people to invite to dinner! I was really quite flattered. How about these five diplomats: Machiavelli, Napoleon, Henry II, Alexander Hamilton, and Churchill? Probably, the five people I am most anxious to meet are Beethoven, Newton, Shakespeare, Merlin, and Einstein.

Hope you enjoyed KaneKon. There better be some sand in this issue. What little surprise(s) have you got in store for us for issue 100, hmm?

((Nothing much, really. Just that I'm folding the zine.

Hope your sand got there safe and sound.

I'll inform my readers what I hear later this month (September) about who is the BNC. The rumors are rampant as I type this, but I've heard nothing definite. I absolutely agree with you that Kathy did a good job -- my complaint was not with any alleged lack of competence.

The Highfield Affair should leave a bad taste in all of our mouths. I know it did in mine.

Yes, I think I creamed you in the GMing debate, really. While you were busy just thinking up the most convenient derogatory adjective and blindly pasting it onto my house rules, I was busying showing that there are some people who like my strict GMing style, and that alone is good enough reason for me to GM the way I do -- I don't have to please the majority nor conform to the standards you find most comfortable. You were never able to refute that point (because it cannot be refuted), so I won. Gloat, gloat...

I don't understand why you think that it can be declared that homosexual relations are not normal. I don't really accept your premise that our sexual organs are "there for" the purpose of reproduction, which you call obvious. I am inclined to believe that whatever a person finds best for him or herself is "normal" for that person, within certain broad constraints such as not wanting to go around killing people for the purpose of sexual fulfillment. To a gay, heterosexual intercourse would be just as abnormal as would homosexual intercourse to you or me. The fact that gays can't reproduce doesn't prove your point. However, I will admit that my "Dark Ages" remark exaggerated the case a bit -- as your letter illustrates.))

From Ed Wrobel (8/30/84):

Bruce--

Your attempt to portray Bill Highfield as a raving homicidal lunatic who could only be stopped by the destruction of his career would be amusing were it not so pathetic -- and the real-life consequences so sad. To compare him to the "McDonalds Murderer," as you have done, is a vile injustice. Highfield may have been an intemperate fool but he did not kill anyone. Nor did he intend to carry out any of these threats and you are well aware of it. ((Whew! That's quite a trick, Ed! You've managed to read both my mind and Bill's in one sentence. Please share with the rest of us your secret; how do you know what Bill intended and what I was "well aware" of?))

One day I fully expect my son, Eric, to throw a temper tantrum (perhaps after being advised again that it is his bedtime -- or being denied a second ice cream cone) and say something like "I hate you!" or "I wish you were dead!" But I won't call out the

national guard or the police or the navy. Children say things they don't mean and Highfield is still a child, although chronologically he is just beyond adolescence.

You are intelligent enough to realize these things, Bruce. You were a teacher for several years and worked (and played) with children every day. I wonder if there was some other reason for your drastic action.

Taking your explanation at face value, let's assume that you really believed Highfield to be a lunatic capable of murder. What would then be the best way to preserve your life? The best method would be to have as little as necessary to do with him. It would be safest to ignore his threats and avoid antagonizing him further. After all, you were dealing with an unpredictable, violent hate-monger, right? Instead, you threatened him and then proceeded to carry out your threat to cripple -- or possibly destroy -- his naval career. As the letter to Sesler (and every issue of The Modern Patriot) showed, Highfield valued his career above all else. Now what do you suppose happens when you drive a violent lunatic to desperation? Probably violence. You took the action most likely to induce Highfield to carry out his threats (assuming, of course, that he is as you portray him). Either you did not believe Highfield would actually harm you, even after you destroyed what was dearest to him, or you are extremely stupid.

You are not quite that stupid.

((The last sentence of your letter is blocked off above, because I want the hobby to note this unique phenomenon. Yes, world, Ed Wrobel is indeed capable of saying something nice about me! Not that stupid! Oh, joy...))

Seriously, I'd like to know how you knew what was going through my mind. How do you know that I didn't figure that having his commander sit him down and talk to him would put a stop to the death threats? You didn't ask outright, but I'll answer the question of how far I thought Bill might really go: I don't know. It was this very uncertainty that permitted me to write to him first...that permitted me to go only to his CO and not have him arrested and thrown in jail.

Your comparison of Bill's threats to a child's tantrum is laughable. I perceive a slight difference twixt the two. On a couple of occasions I've heard kids in the school say, "I'll kill him" or whatever. On one occasion, I took a gun and a knife away from a kid, and then sent for the principal. (The kid was suspended for a week.) None of these situations is anywhere close to the equivalent of ongoing, repeated death threats sent through the mail.

You conclude, then, that my assessment of Bill Highfield is wrong despite the fact that I know him personally very well, and you've never so much as spoken with him. Why don't we get the opinion of another party, someone who knows Bill perhaps as well as I do? Someone who has lived near Bill, met him face to face many times, and spent a week on vacation with him? Mike Barno fits that description.))

From Mike Barno (7/27/84, excerpt):

...Was Bruce irrational, or in the wrong? While I wouldn't have handled everything as he did, I feel he acted reasonably under the circumstances. I cannot see ruining a man's career over a grudge, if this were his only motive in writing Bill's commander. But Highfield was and is both irrational and dangerous. He repeatedly committed offenses worthy of expulsion and besmirched the Navy's good name. He is certainly not a person I want defending my country. Bruce committed a reasonable act that is the right (and, arguably, the responsibility) of any private citizen.

((Agreed, although the "responsibility" end of it isn't the reason I acted as I did. Does the Navy (which is in the business of training people to kill) have the right to know the attitudes of its members toward killing people other than the "enemy"? Does a private citizen who has unfavorable knowledge and proof of those attitudes in a member of the Navy therefore have an obligation to report this to the Navy? As Mike says...arguably.))

KATHY

((This article is from Diplomacy Digest #84, and was written by Mark Berch.))

Kathy Byrne certainly has been and is a major asset to the hobby. She has been a very hard worker. She was a co-director of the US Orphan service for over a year, a very taxing job because you see people there at their worst. She was also BIC for well over a year, a time consuming job which she did very well, despite having to deal with the complicated matter of the FIVE games, some tricky situations in a few games, and some completely unnecessary criticism from Bruce Kinsey and Rod Walker. She has put out a very entertaining "Kathy's Corner" month after month. She's been involved in any number of funny fakes of people's sins. She has contributed letters to many zines, and been a source of advice and counsel to many people. Her social skills are probably unmatched in the hobby, and she's one of the few people in the hobby's entire history to have a genuine "personal following". She's been an extraordinarily successful postal player, and has done very well at "outrunnet dippy" as well. Kathy is an extremely interesting person just to talk with, as I saw again at MaryCon '84 this summer.

But Kathy has a dark side. There's a lot that I've put up with, just let slide, that you'll never hear about from me. Recently, however, I have become completely fed up; hence this editorial.

Kathy has a practice of saying things about other people that simply aren't true. I know this for a FACT because she's said them about ME, and I KNOW what I've done. One of the first contacts I had with Kathy was when I heard thru the hobby grapevine that Kathy had put out the word that I was accusing her of rigging the 1980 Zine Poll. A short time later, I heard this directly from Kathy. I had in fact done nothing of the sort. In the summer of 1982, Kathy resigned as co-director of the US Orphan Service, citing abuse and complaints. In a letter published that summer in ME, she said she was "totally disgusted with the opposition that I face placing Overby (a defunct pabber) games" (Guess who was fingered -- me. I had absolutely nothing to do with that situation. On another occasion, this time in Whiterstonia, Kathy wrote a big editorial complaining about how some people were trying to stop Lee Kenner, Sr from becoming the new BIC. Guess who got fingered -- me. This accusation, like the others was 100% false. I did none of those things. There have been other incidents, two of them in the last year which are off the record, and my sources want them kept that way. They cannot mean anything to you of course, but they are people that I trust and believe.

I am not the only person. One of the more embarrassing incidents occurred when bloody caricatured Bruce Kinsey for running a Not for Print letter of his. Kathy Byrne chimed in with her criticism, and back him up, saying, yes "I know for a fact he clearly marked it 'Not For Print'" (this was printed in YoD #70) Whereupon Bruce dug up the letter; it was completely unaltered.

Kathy has also made accusations on the basis of letters which then don't get produced. A while back, Bruce hit upon the response of offering Kathy \$50 if she could produce the letter she was bitterly complaining about. Bruce still has his \$50. I have had two run-ins with Kathy, both involving her making accusations grounded on letters which, somehow, she was unable to produce. To this day, I do not know whether those letters ever existed; I do know that she based accusations on them.

All this is by way of introduction to what is perhaps Kathy's most sensational charge of all: That Bruce wrote a "sick letter" to Kathy's 12 year old daughter, Francine. Kathy first spread this story personally. I heard about it from a number of people in letters and some call before Kathy put it out in her recent flyer, "The

* In Whiterstonia #90, John Garuso is now saying that this letter really did exist, and was written 3/79/83. He quotes several times from this 3/19/83 letter, and concludes could not possibly be considered as an accurate paraphrase.

((What I said was this: "If I have to make the public statement that I was criticized in KK, and then refused the right of reply, you're not going to come out smelling like a rose." Kathy paraphrased this to read "your promise to have me attacked in every zine in America." Judges for yourself whether she even came close to paraphrasing me accurately.))

Etical Bruce Kinsey". If Bruce did indeed do this, he should be condemned; there is no excuse, none at all, for this sort of behavior. But did he?

In her flyer, she says, "I am asking all publishers to please print this. I can prove what I am saying. And that proof is available to anyone....and yes, I can prove it." I will tell you that if I hadn't had those previous experiences with Kathy, especially her disappearing-letter trick, then such confident language might have even dissuaded me from being so suspicious as to actually ask for proof. But ask I did. I have written Kathy three times, asking to see her proof, which is supposedly "available to anyone". I have heard nothing from her.

I have investigated the matter as best I can. I have written to everyone whose name has been mentioned in any way with this, asking: Have you seen the letter that did it actually say? When was it written? Does of those people have said that they actually saw the letter itself (have said it to me, I mean. They might have said it to someone else). The description of the letter, such as I have gotten, shows some curious possible contradictions. All that Kathy added was that "Francine was upset to say the least". On the other hand, Bob Olson says, "it turns out that being 12, she didn't know what they meant." It's a little hard to see how someone could be upset and not understanding at the same time, tho I suppose it's possible. What did the letter say? According to Terry Tallman, Bruce questioned the relationship of Kathy and John in an improper manner. According to Olson, they were "hate letters" and "smutty". Robert Sinks says that he (and Rod Walker) "sexually harassed Kathy and Francine". Tom Hart used such terse language. It's not clear how many letters there were. Kathy uses the singular, as did Terry, but Olson clearly used the plural. The only person to give me a time frame was Terry, who said (phone conversation 8/31) that it was written in the last month or month and a half (i.e. latter half of July, or Aug). It's hard to know what to make of this mass of fragmentary information, but I have a lot of trouble reconciling it all. It's possible that people are describing a lot of different letters, or that it's a case of the blind men describing an elephant from touch. But I don't think so. I think something smells here.

Bruce has repeatedly denied, and publically denied, writing such a letter, and has challenged her to produce it. He's removed any Off The Record Label that he may have put on any letter to Francine, so Kathy couldn't have the option of hiding behind that (so far, only Olson has said that the letter was labeled Off The Record, tho, it's not in Kathy's flyer that way). And he has again put up \$50 - Challenge to Kathy to produce such a letter.

To me, this has an all-too-familiar ring. I don't think that such a letter exists, and I'm going to put my money where my mouth is. I'll give you \$50, Kathy, if you can produce a "sick letter" written by Bruce to Francine.

I've also asked Kathy for proofs on two other of her charges made in the flyer. I've gotten nothing from her on those either. I have written Kathy a letter, pointing out some what I consider to be misleading statements in her flyer. If you say the flyer, and you want to see this letter I wrote, let me know and I will send you a copy.

Before you get the wrong idea, I am not trying to drive Kathy out of the hobby. So far as I'm concerned, the longer she stays, the better. I recently sent in a re-sub cheque to Whiterstonia, and I'm sorry she gave up the BIC job. But it's time for her to clean up her act.

((Folks, there was no "nasty" or "sick" letter to Francine. Kathy made it up the way she makes up so much other stuff. I'll tell you what I personally find "sick" -- that someone would deliberately invent a story like this involving her own daughter.))

Where Do All Those Custodians Come From, Anyway?

96

or

Open Up in the Name of the Housewife Inspector

by Rod Walker

The postal Diplomacy hobby being what it is, God does not descend from on high, with or without a "covenant" in hand, to anoint a Custodian. Custodianships exist because there is a job which needs doing and which is of use to a large or at least well-defined segment of the hobby. The job then gets passed from hand to hand as each successive "doer" decides he/she no longer wishes to accomplish that task. The successive job-doers are called "Custodians". This implies that he/she is doing the job for the hobby's benefit (rather than his/hers) and that the hobby actually owns the job and she/he acts as a caretaker rather than an owner.

The oldest Custodianship is also the most typical. John Boardman simply wanted to keep track of all postal games (there were about a half-dozen at the time) (no, even fewer) so he devised first a numbering system and later a method for reporting the results when the game was over. The supply center chart we use today was his invention. People liked his game reports so much that by the time he got tired of doing the work, it was simply not possible to let the reporting job lapse, so he got Charles Wells to do it, and Charles turned it over to John Koning, and so on and on down to Kathy Byrne. This business of naming a successor makes the next person's doing a job "legitimate"...and it generally keeps the job itself out of the hands of committees and boards and other organizations which turn political the minute you take your eyes off them.

Of course this way of doing things does raise two real problems. What if the current job-doer is doing a lousy job? Or what if she/he suddenly disappears without naming a "legitimate" successor? The truly fannish answer to those questions would be: you just get somebody else to start doing the job instead, no big deal. The unfannish answer of course is to muck it all up with the aforementioned committees and such, and/or high-falutin' documents in all sorts of legalese (witness all the "covenant" crap not too long ago when all we really needed was a new Miller Number Custodian). There is also the question (which has not yet arisen in a practical sense)...what do you do with a Custodian who turns blatantly political and begins to abuse his/her position? Actually, back in 1976, it was charged (with considerable justice, I should add) that Robert Sacks was using his position as MNC to attempt to run the entire variant subhobby. There was a hobby-wide referendum on whether he should be replaced, a truly fannish reaction. It had overwhelming support of variant GMs and designers, but failed by one vote due to "no" votes by regular GMs who didn't really know what was going on. And a hobby-wide referendum would be the way I would recommend handling any problem which can't be solved by some one person simply stepping up and starting to do a job.

Other people, including myself, have from time to time proposed organizational solutions to these problems. Long and sad experience has, however, convinced me that if you see an organization name attached to something, run as far and as fast away from it as you can. Many organizations start out very nicely, but sooner or later they turn nasty. They get political. They try to run and/or strangle things. They seek to perpetuate themselves, not so they can help the hobby, but as an end in itself. I kid you not: if you see something with an organizational name (such as "NADE" or "IDA" or "NYGB"), avoid it. If it tries to muscle in on a Custodianship, stomp on it.

(Side note: I say this as the founder of the now-defunct "NADE", which I thought was a good idea at the time. It wasn't. I say this even though I think we absolutely need the DipCon Society or some such thing. The DCS is, of course, not really an organization, but an annual meeting of fans which selects the site of the next annual DipCon and appoints a small committee to organize the con and coordinate with the host.

You need something like that; we just need to watchdog it like the dickens to keep it from turning political. I say this as a staunch supporter of Mike Mills' "PDO". The PDO is more a satire than an organization, although in its fundraising role (the PDORA Auction), it's a great practical success. So long as Mike retains total control of the "PDO", the satire will rule and we can hope for no politics. But there are already danger signs that some people are beginning to take the PDO seriously...that is, politically. One person seems to have proposed a rearrangement of its "regions"...presumably to have them make more sense. How awful! A fannish proposal would be to have them make less sense...put Florida and Alaska in the same region, cut Delaware down the middle lengthwise, and so on. The minute people try to make the PDO make more sense, that's when the hobby powermongers will move. I hope for better, but nothing is forever.)

Custodianships often still begin by someone doing something, and people like it, and it has some unique qualities, and eventually it gets a name. Although Bruce demurs, that's what the Hobby Reprint Service (as I call it) is, insofar as Diplomacy Digest is primarily a compendious and analytical ongoing hobby history. Certainly nobody else is doing much to preserve the hobby's collect memory of itself.

Bruce, now, proposes that we have somebody go over the Houserules to pick out "silly" HRs. Certainly there is nothing to stop him from starting to collect HRs from GMs and going over them. Perhaps the objective ought to be, however, getting the GM to change a "silly" rule rather than getting the BNC to declare games using that HR as "irregular" (although that is a step which could be taken in extremis). Better to correct than punish, no?

Well, what constitutes a "silly rule"? Bruce's example ((of allowing English armies in Armenia to move directly to Munich)) is silly, yes. Why is it silly? Because it is totally contrary to the Rulebook. A game using that rule is not merely "irregular", it is a variant. Buddy Tretick used to have a HR (and may, as "Bernie Oaklyn", have had the same) whereby a fleet and an army in adjacent coastal provinces could exchange places. A game with that sort of rule is a variant also, although none of his games was ever so declared, even when I was BNC. Mistake on my part. A significant departure from the Rules has got to be a variant.

But other HRs may be merely silly in the sense that they deeply distort the play of the game in some way. A recent new zine had a HR which required that a player could not change his orders once submitted. Aside from unduly limiting the players, the HR, if enforced, would lead players waiting until the last possible moment and therefore often missing the deadline. To call the HR "silly" would probably get the GM's back up, but simply to call his attention to the practical negative consequences of the HR should be enough to get him to change it (which, in this case, is exactly what happened). There are probably other HRs of this sort, but you don't always see a GM's HRs unless you play in one of his games.

On the other hand there are HRs which, while admittedly off-beat -- not in line with majority practice -- are in no way silly. Bruce has taken exception to one of my HRs which (he's not said this) might come under his "silly" label. ((The rule in question is Rod's allowance of non-unanimous concession proposals to pass. I don't think it's silly. I just disagree with it.)) I'm probably the only GM in the hobby with a rule like that, but I also have used that HR, in one form or another, for 18 years and this is the first time (no, the second; Mark Berch doesn't like it either) that anyone has expressed any objection to it. The example Bruce used to question the HR is, in any event, about as silly as the "Armenia-to-Munich" rule. The point I am making here is that the reviewer of HRs must be able to distinguish clearly between a preconceived prejudice ("all concession votes have to be unanimous") and a genuine perception of the negative impact of a particular (and peculiar) HR on the game.

Within those limitations, something like that Bruce suggests...with him doing it... could be very useful. If GMs will cooperate in giving/lending/selling him copies of their HRs (those GMs, that is, that have HRs, since some benighted souls have... effectively...none). This could be a strong player-advocate service and I, for one, would like to see it tried out. If, in certain well-defined cases, the BNC would accept a recommendation that all games under a given HR were irregular, or even variants, the position would have some teeth if and when it needed them. And perhaps another Custodianship would then be born.

((Six free issues of sub credit, Rod. Your articles always reveal a lot about the history of the Diplomacy hobby. Me like um.

I've already said it a couple of times, but I wasn't quite serious about the idea of a Hobby Houserule Inspector. I will say, though, that if anyone is going to take such a suggestion seriously, then you're the man to do it, Rod. In fact, I have inspected and commented on the houserules of perhaps a dozen GMS in my day, the last recent being Mark Luedl. I'm always glad to help out a new GM (or a GM who has suddenly had a revelation and sees the need for comprehensive houserules) in this way.

Regarding Custodianships in general, I thought your description was very well done, and I hope the hobby continues to work on this basis. I'm going to be around for a long time (VD's fold notwithstanding) and will always work against those who promote superfluous hobby organization. I'm glad the PDO is satirical in nature. Now if only they'd stop raising money for "hobby services", everything would be just hunky-dory. No, I'm only kidding -- my attitude isn't that hard-line. But I'd still prefer it if the PDO was strictly satirical in nature.

Houserules cannot be judged as "silly" just because they are contrary to the Rulebook. Based on that criterion, all postal games are silly, since none of them use 15-minute deadlines. Also, most GMS ignore the DIAS provision in the Rulebook. In my opinion, a "silly" houserule is one which does something to violate the spirit of the game as it is supposed to be played. Obviously, any judgement of a houserule as "silly" under this definition would be purely subjective in nature.))



From Fol Si Fie #33, by Randolph Smyth

Negotiations: Who's Who

Do you write everyone in the same way? Of course, a Germany-to-England letter requires a different outlook from a Germany-to-France one; but as Germany, are all your letters to English players the same? To minimize the influence of the military situation, consider the ideal case prior to Spring 1901, after the first exchange of letters has permitted a tentative appraisal of your fellow player.

The average game may well contain a good mix of outlooks; you'll probably be able to recall the seven characters at left from your own games. To approach a reticent monkey with the same arguments as a hungry lion may not be wise.

Equally important is judging yourself in relation to your opponents. Are you a novice? -- brace yourself to be crushed underfoot by more experienced players, but the most effective way to minimize this danger is to demonstrate some competence and reliability. Similarly, do you have a reputation as a "lion" (worse, a lynx? Lion... ohhh, groanna...)? Consider bringing a low

profile into the game. In general, players at the "extremes of competence" (or rather, those with that reputation) are the first to disappear.

((This article may be short, but I won't monkey around with it. The bear facts are all there.))



When One Gets BURNED

by Ed Jedry

I was talking to several fellow employees the other day during a work break, and we discussed some of the weapons of conventional warfare. With a few youthful exceptions, most of these men were veterans of the Vietnam War with several "old-timers" from Korea. Suffice it to say, these people have eye-witnessed these tools in battle action!

It seems that despite the different campaigns which these vets fought, they all shared a fear of being BURNED in combat -- napalm, flamethrowers, etc. After all, most war wounds can be sewn or patched up in some makeshift manner; however, burns are a bad business...and I was amazed at how little my friends knew about burns in spite of their experiences!

Burn severity is classified by 1) SIZE of the injury, and 2) DEPTH of the injury. The SIZE of a burn is expressed via the "rule of nines" as a percent of total body area. The following table is used to show these values:

ESTIMATION OF BURN SIZE
By "Rule of Nines"

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Head..... | 9% |
| Arms..... | 9% + 9% |
| Legs..... | 18% + 18% |
| Torso..... | 36% |
| Perineum (groin)..... | 1% |
| <hr/> | |
| Total..... | 100% |

In the old days, burn DEPTH was classified by First Degree, Second Degree, and Third Degree. A first degree burn was defined as a mild burn showing redness; a second degree burn as a moderate burn showing blisters; and a third degree burn showing black crust and bleeding.

However, these classifications have been replaced by defining burns as being 1) Partial Thickness, and 2) Full Thickness. A Partial Thickness burn is a burn where only part of the skin has been damaged. If such burns are properly cared for, they will heal on their own accord with little or no scarring.

A Full Thickness burn, on the other hand, is a very severe burn. The entire skin is destroyed with the underlying fat, muscle, bones and even organs being exposed to the air! These burns do not heal unless properly cared for. Full Thickness burns always require skin grafting.

The following chart relates the old classification system with the modern terminology:

| OLD BURN-DEPTH CLASSIFICATION | MODERN BURN-DEPTH TERMINOLOGY |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| First degree | Partial Thickness |
| Second degree | Partial Thickness |
| Third degree | Full Thickness |

The most common type of burns that we all experience are those due to exposure of virgin skin to the sun's rays in early summer. The redness is called erythema, and this condition is caused by capillary blood congestion due to dilation of the blood vessels of the skin. This redness subsides after a few days when the skin peels.

Blisters result when the burn damages the blood vessels of the skin. Plasma-rich blood fluid separates the upper protective layer of skin called EPIDERMIS from the lower supportive layer of skin called the DERMIS.

Finally, severe and extensive burns affect the WHOLE body and not just the damaged area of skin. These complications are infection, pulmonary edema, shock, and stress ulcers of the GI-tract.

Infections are the most common serious complication of burn victims. The environment of burned skin is ideal for the growth of bacteria.

Pulmonary edema is a condition where plasma-rich blood fluid enters the lungs as a result of smoke inhalation. The mechanism of this condition is poorly understood. Pulmonary edema begins between one to three days post trauma, and it usually lasts about 48 hours. The risk of pneumonia is extremely high during this time.

Shock is the result of severe reduction in blood volume. Kidney failure is the most serious complication of shock, killing about 20% of serious burn victims.

Stress ulcers are ACUTE MULTIPLE ULCERS of the stomach and the intestine. This results in perforation of the GI tract, hemorrhage, and death in 5% of the burn victims.

For sake of clarification, there are ACUTE illnesses, and there are CHRONIC illnesses. A chronic illness is a condition of long duration showing little or no change, while an acute illness has severe symptoms and a rapid onset. A CHRONIC MULTIPLE ULCER is a longstanding ulcer that the patient's body is able to continually heal. An ACUTE MULTIPLE ULCER has symptoms which occur immediately, and the body has no time to repair the damage. Basically, an acute stress ulcer "digests the digestive organs".

In conclusion, survival for burn patients depends on the size and depth of the wound as well as the victim's age. The young and elderly have a poor prognosis when compared to other age groups because burns affect the whole body and not just the area damaged. The main causes of death in burn victims in order of decreasing frequency are 1) infection, 2) pneumonia, and 3) kidney failure.

((Doomies who received VD's fourth anniversary may remember that the author is a biologist. Thanks, Ed, and five free issues of sub credit, for an informative essay on what must certainly be regarded as an off-beat topic for a dipzine.))

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Mark Berch has been the most prolific contributor to the Gossip Column, and has written many articles for Voice of Doom. He has had me as a guest in his home twice, and has been a solid friend for the entire time I've been publishing. THANKS...to Doomie Mark Berch.

Chardo Edison holds the record for most photographs sent to BRUX, and would have won the subscription war were it not for Peter Ansoff. Most importantly of all, though, he has helped to keep Ty Hare's Terrible Face under control. THANKS...to Doomie Chardo Edison.

Bob Howerton has flattered the ol' BRUXer time and time again by printing cartoons about the VD Houserules in his zine. Like BRUX, he is very interested in the Scouting movement. He recently took a one-center position in QUASAR up to four -- and then got wiped out entirely. THANKS...to Doomie Bob Howerton.

Mark Paul is the best cartoonist in the hobby, bar none, and he plied his trade for years in the pages of VD. His spoofs on games were loved by Doomies everywhere and provided a great deal of comic relief. THANKS...to Doomie Mark Paul.

John MacFarlane has been a loyal VD player and writer for years. His one-center survival as Germany in the PEGASUS game was perhaps the most amazing "die-hard" feat in the zine's history. He is a fine friend. THANKS...to Doomie John MacFarlane.

Ben Schilling has been around since the beginning, and has been a companion at several cons. He has contributed to VD's letter column several times over the past five years, and submitted a report on Origins '84 to these pages. THANKS...to Doomie Ben Schilling.

Ruminations: On the Philosophy of Articles

by Randolph Smyth

Do the articles on good play which are a regular feature of many zines really improve the general standard of play for the average Dippy freak? It may instead be argued that the prevalent discussion of "How to Win" may actually be a negative experience, particularly for beginners. A disclaimer may be made (and noted by the reader) that the strategies outlined are only possibilities, dependent for success on the overall diplomatic situation. However, the basic philosophy of angling for methods of winning outright, beginning with Spring 1901 or before, may contribute to the overaggressive attitude that many of us have noted as a common characteristic of most novices. They are told, "Read a few articles: they have good advice on how the game should be played." They are cautioned to take the general advice with a grain of salt depending on the reputation of the author; but rarely is the seed of aggression nipped in the bud.

Of course, the Rulebook itself says: "Object of the Game: To control eighteen centers," etc. Yet, perhaps this statement alone is enough to provide the necessary competitive spirit. Is it realistic even to think about 18 before a minimum of, say, 10 have been acquired? Two staunch allies beginning a game may expect to take 9-10 centers between them as a basic share of the total, and have more potential for attacks on friendless neighbours. Even here, discussion of a two-way draw is perhaps premature in 1901, unless the players consider themselves sufficiently superior to their opponents in experience and ability. There may, then, be a need for lower-key articles, emphasizing the merits of doing the best one can from season to season within the existing system. This doesn't mean losing sight of long-term goals, but to look at every position with an eye to an eventual win is being optimistic.

Those with plenty of experience may not derive much benefit from articles not suited to their personal style; if they adapt themselves to the author's opinions, they may be led astray, however "right" the author is. Consider the case of standbys. The wariness felt by long-term allies, and the new hope of established enemies as one enters the game is not entirely due to the unfamiliarity of the standby with his new position, or a difference in ability, or a new bias due to interpersonal conflicts (although all these may be major factors in given situations). The new player will often take his country off in a direction different from that envisaged by the departed one. There will not always be general agreement on whether the change is for "better" or "worse" as far as the country's outlook is concerned. Assuming the players are of equal ability (an impossibility?), it can only be described as "different". One course will probably meet with more success, but this depends only on the unpredictable details of the future moves of the other players, and no criticism of either course can be levelled in advance.

To blindly follow the general advice given in another player's articles is a poor policy, even with the diplomatic climate favourable, if the resulting position doesn't feel "right" for you. The closest parallel that comes to mind is the case of a chessplayer following a "book" opening which involves hair-raising tactical exchanges in the middle game. Unfortunately, the poor guy is far better at maneuvering patiently and making positional calculations from locked structures. He obtains a perfectly sound, if unclear, position after 15 moves, leaves the "book", and loses in five moves because he doesn't really feel comfortable proceeding on his own.

If you like Diplomacy, you'll probably affirm that each game has a character all its own (otherwise, why play more than one, ever?). Some situations call for more aggressive attitudes than others if the potential is to be fully exploited. We all know the difference between "fast" and "slow" games: a functional difference is that "fast" ones usually require separate winter seasons due to rapid shifts in the balance of power. Aggressive players usually excel here -- not aggressive in the sense of

being obnoxious and unrealistic in the specific demands made on their followers, but of approaching the position with the spirit of the buccaneer rather than the Pope. Of course, the Pope will do better in other situations.

Even the best tactical/strategic/diplomatic articles, then, or only "how to" guides, once you've decided on your own that the goal outlined is or can be for you. What factors should enter into the preliminary all-important choice? What the most successful players set out the methods which they have found to work well for them? (Are they willing to?) Do they know themselves what influences their decisions in this sphere, or is it just a vague "feeling"? (Or, am I all wet?)

It is this capability of approaching the individual game in its own way that may make the "giants" of the hobby what they are, whether they realize it or not. An inflexible player may score several spectacular successes with his "method" (probably convincing him of its validity and making him more inflexible than ever) -- but he's not elsewhere for no apparent reason. Better players adjust their thinking in ways more subtle than simple consideration of the nature of their opponents, the strength of their present position, and other "surface" qualities. Perhaps the major advantage of "philosophical flexibility" is that articles with a wider range of viewpoints (more total articles/ideas) can be used to good effect by a player who can adapt to the thinking of the writers, leaving him with the maximum possible benefit in any position. As outlined above, however, woe to the less flexible player who attempts the same approach!

Many questions, expressed and implied; few answers. To analyse the game theories used by better players than oneself is probably impossible. One person is incompetent to compare the very thought processes of different players. One bit of solid advice: if you're not succeeding with a given philosophy, change it if you can. If you are doing well, stick with your approach (or, change it to see how flexible you are -- but be prepared for the possible consequences!). And, like all articles, don't take this one as gospel -- in common with most, this author is, alas, all too fallible.

((I have mixed feelings about the validity of the points raised above. On the one hand, some articles address situations so improbable that, although they make entertaining reading, they are hardly of any practical value to a player looking for advice. I'm thinking now especially of Randolph's "Naked Diplomacy" article elsewhere in this issue, probably because I just finished typing it.

On the other hand, an article describing a good opening for a country can have an immediate beneficial effect in helping a novice get started -- it might give him a sense of direction in his first game. Consider "M'God, Tactics!", which contains some excellent advice for someone getting started.

My own play has been most greatly influenced by Randolph's "Sheltered Power" article, which appeared in VD #16 and Supernova. I used the advice therein while playing in Swedish Roundabout, and tried to avoid obtaining a common frontier with John Kador's Turkey for as long as possible. (The situation was not quite that described in the article, but close enough.) I don't think I would have thought to play that way had I not read the article.

By and large many of Randolph's articles seem to assume that the player is in a very good position already (he seems to address questions such as how to treat someone you've stabbed, or how to put away a win, rather than the reverse), but this probably is reflective of his own successful career as a player. Articles by other authors don't seem to be slanted in this way as much (but don't start thinking that I'm a wimp due to my "Last Gasp" article either!), and therefore may be more valuable to a player who isn't in such a favorable position. As Randolph notes, though, flexibility is always a great asset for any player. Absorb the advice in these articles: "then go play your best game given that knowledge and given the game circumstances!")

From Fol Si Fis #86...

Tactical Oddities

by Randolph Smyth

I got some funny glimpses at TorontoCon where the tactical maneuvers of some opponents seemed odd, but as a player myself I had other things on my mind. GMing the recent CanCon, however, provided plenty of time to become puzzled at several over-the-board plays.

These oddities are seen much less frequently in postal play -- either because the players take more time over their orders, or they get advice from experienced allies in the course of written negotiations, or perhaps postal players are just more competent on the average. In any case, novices could be saved a lot of trouble if a few fundamental errors could be pointed out. I'm therefore going back to the basics -- and lest anyone at the cons recognize their own errors, I'm not pointing the finger: I haven't mentioned things that I didn't see at least three separate times at the two events.

A Sev-Ukr, A Ukr-Rum. The units are tripping over their own feet. If you want to go to Rum from Sev, go with support: A Sev-Rum, A Ukr S A Sev-Rum. It's hard to conceive of a diplomatic situation where inefficient strategies are preferable: since tactical efficiency is the key to success, such a predicament would lead me to re-evaluate my diplomacy!

English F Iri-Eng, F Lon-Nth, A Yor-Lon, F Nwg S F Lon-Nth with Scandinavia secure and facing a lone French F Eng. What can this offer England that F Lon-Eng, A Yor-Wal, F Nwg-Nth, and either F Iri-Mid or F Iri S F Lon-Eng does not? (Even F Nwg-NAT seems preferable coupled with the other initial orders.) The assurance of occupying Nth, not critical in this case, is better served by F Lon S F Nwg-Nth. While it's often necessary to close the back door, this should usually not be done at the expense of efficiency at the front.

Turkish F Bal C A Arm-Rum, A Arm-Rum, A Ank-Arm: a variation on the first example. If the final target is Sev, why risk the delay of a Russian F Sev-Arm? F Bal C A Ank-rum, A Ank-Rum, A Arm-Sev keeps the pressure on.

German A Kie-Den, F Hlg H vs. an English F Nth and Russian F Swe. So you're sure that England and Russia are both on your side? Fine, but why take the chance if F Hlg is twiddling its thumbs anyhow? F Hlg S A Kie-Den can hardly antagonize a true ally; if one (or both) of your neighbours aren't, you may not live long to rue your laxness.

English A Edi-Nwy, F Nwg C A Edi-Nwy, F Nth S A Edi-Nwy vs. German F Den, Russian F Bot and A StP. Germany may say he's an ally, but these common Fall 1901 orders against a hostile Russia are still inexcusable. Always convoy with the fleet that might be singly attacked, using the "invulnerable" one to support (F Nwg S A Edi-Nwy, F Nth C A Edi-Nwy). Otherwise, the German stab of F Den-Nth will cost you Nwy, the initiative, and probably the game.

Add a French F Eng to the above position, and get a threatening letter from Germany as well. You're crazy to convoy in such a situation, but in similar situations your priorities are reversed. Don't convoy with a fleet that may well be dislodged: if you won't support it with F Nwg S F Nth, then use the "good" fleet for the convoy (F Nwg C A Edi-Nwy, F Nth S A Edi-Nwy). Of course, if you're in a spot like this by Summer 1901, it doesn't much matter what you do, does it?

((Since there are a healthy number of novices out there in the VD audience, I figured that the above advice might be handy. This was not actually run as an "article" per se in FSF, but was just some filler/discussion.

One comment on the above: A Sev-Ukr, A Ukr-Rum might be desirable in the (not unlikely) circumstance that you wanted Ukr left empty: maybe you agreed to a bounce there with an ally. The other stuff is all pretty sound. In Randolph's final scenario, England is in too much danger to go for Nwy at all, though...))

Perceptions Regarding our "Hobby"

by John Kelley

For the last year or so I've had the opportunity to lean back in my chair and observe what goes on in the world of postal Diplomacy. I've done my share of talking and interjecting, but I've taken time to give some thought to what's happening in our little world as well. Here are some conclusions, for the reader to take or leave as s/he sees fit.

Usually we use the abbreviated term "the hobby" to indicate and describe this small world. Games, press, orphan services, subzines, political letter-column debates about foreign relations all fall under the aegis of "the hobby". I don't perceive it that way; it seems that there are at least two divisions that should be made, and possibly more.

Clearly, gaming (that is, mailing Diplomacy moves and printing the results) is a separate area in and of itself. There are a lot of hobbyists out there who have no interest whatsoever in anything but playing games. They shun letter columns and write limited press. We also have a great number of members who (for whatever reason) play little or no Diplomacy, yet contribute by writing articles, letters for publication, or publish entire zines. Of course, these distinctions are very much blurred, with a lot of people having one foot on each side of the line. What seems increasingly true is that these groups are polarizing more and more as time goes by. Nowadays, most zines have either games or reading material as a strong suit; not both. At the extreme ends of the spectrum are Cheesecake (games only) and Diplomacy Digest. The factors best mixing both elements seem to be press and play-of-the-game articles, though the former has burgeoned recently and the latter has declined. There seems to be a political side to the hobby too, but it is by far the weakest leg of the tripod. At this juncture it's logical for the reader to ask me why I'm making this point, and what is the point in the first place? Simple. The point is that our pastime has diversified to the point where it's not exactly true to refer to many things in it as, say, pillars of, disgraces to, or figures of, the Diplomacy hobby. While DD runs play-of-the-game articles, it runs no games and is a major factor in the literary Diplomacy hobby. Warehouse zines are factors only in the gaming hobby. Zines that merely discuss issues relevant to hobby organizations are part of the political hobby. The DIPLOMACY HOBBY is no longer a monolith, and it's time to recognize this.

Be that as it may, many people persist in trying to organize the menagerie into a well-ordered zoo, complete with authority figures, lesser animals, services, and facilities for visitors (Novice Packets, though the metaphor is imperfect). Every organization attempt in the history of the political Diplomacy hobby has been botched. It's kind of like a South American country with a new government every fifteen minutes. In between governments, mayors still function and people sort of do what needs to be done. There is usually no shortage of people to do these jobs; in fact, the rest of the hobby runs more smoothly (like right now) when the political arm isn't setting up an IDA, NADF, or some other fiasco. Why don't we consciously decide that such organizations simply don't work, and abandon them in favor of letting anyone who wants to relocate games do so? The proof is there.

A lot of people in the literary arm of the hobby (with echoes evident in the other two) think that controversy is something we should eliminate, especially when it degenerates into personal attacks, asperations cast about other people's character or lack thereof, and so forth. I grant that most of us (myself included) really would prefer not to have someone call us vile names and assert that our principles are similar to those of the weasel. However, I submit that we cannot eradicate controversy and namecalling, and should not try to. Think about it. How long can we argue about the merits of A Con-Bul? The literary hobby was bound to branch out, and it found its



topics: tactics, strategy, politics, foreign affairs, humor, ethics, fiction, accounts of excursions, and occasionally entire issues devoted to the birth of a child. (I'll get more specific about that last one in a minute.) As we discuss these issues, as humans, some of us are going to get pissed off. That's the way we are, and it cannot be changed; why try? If people don't care for it, there are plenty of zines with excellent GMing and no discussion for them to play in. If some of us continue to argue/discuss/etc., it's our business.

Pursuant to this plaintive cry, a lot of people worry about the image the literary hobby presents to novices. First, to try to convince novices that the literary hobby is anything but controversial is a lie. The truth would be better served by sending them a sample of a controversial zine and letting them decide. Second, Mark Borch, Rod Walker, Kathy Byrne, Bruce Liney, and John Michalski were once novices. It doesn't seem to have turned them off, so they are among the best-known writers/publishers in the hobby. They thought for themselves and decided to join. So let's just be honest with novices and tell them that they're free to join the playing hobby, the political hobby, the literary hobby, or any combination thereof. Don't screw them up by trying to give them false impressions.

Another common wall is, "This is the hobby, not real life!" The logic of this escapes me. Publishing materials are consumed, postage and other monies are spent, people meet each other face-to-face, people get angry, and people are defamed on paper which is sent through the mail to many others. All of these people live, breathe, and have their lives affected by various arms of the hobby. Tolkien's Middle Earth is not real life. Diplomacy is. A lawsuit threat, death threat, of vicious insult affects lives, and all of these things happen from time to time. People can really be sued or jailed for them. You're telling me this isn't real life?

Time to shift onto a topic particular to the literary hobby. It's common for people who go on trips or attend gatherings to devote inordinate amounts of space to them in their publications. Does this disgust other people too, or am I just unique? It's kind of like having to pay to watch home movies of Joe Peeshole's trip to Casa de Caca, Spain, or Fred Frazigowski's weekend at NIX-CON III in San Clemente. For people who were there, it's a rehash of what they already know, or as Bob and Doug MacKenzie put it:

DOUG: Remember the time, like, when we went to the Provincial Park?

BOB: Uh...yeah.

DOUG: Then, there's no need to talk about it, eh?

For those of us living in Flatdick, North Dakota or even Klickitat, Washington, it's worse. It's frustrating because we weren't there. Do you understand now? It's like running circles around a person's wheelchair or telling blind people how beautiful the sunset is. Thanks a lot, buddy, now I wish I was there. Of course, I can always decline to receive zines that feature this crap. To a large extent, I do. Also in this category are issues that deal exclusively with a newborn child. While I'm sure it's joyous for the parents, it's boring to me, and by the time I get the issue, it's a little too late to decide not to get it.

Like any other grouping, our hobby has demigods in each wing. People everyone worships and looks up to. A new idea can't get a fair shake in the hobby without at least one big name behind it. Now it'd be inconsistent with what I said earlier to try to eliminate or deny this. However, let's not gang-rape anyone who refuses to worship at the shrine. If I don't think Garry Hamlin's writing amounts to a hill of horseshit, I should be free to say so, and only answerable if I happen to insult the man in the process. For the record, I happen to like his writing as well as most people, and that's why I selected it as an example; disliking his writing would be a minority view. So if someone comes out and says that all zine polls are a ludicrous bunch of garbage, let's hear what he has to say with as much attention as we give to one of the minor deities of Diplomacy (e.g. the Good Fairy, the Founding Father, the Boardman Number Janitor and Protectrix of the Realm, or anyone whose zine comes out #1 in the NA Poll). I think Terry Tallman's wrong most of the time, and he does me the

same courtesy, but I listen to him with as much attentiveness as I hear out Rod Walker or Mark Berch. By and large, the literary hobby does not show this sort of impartiality.

If we get bored, though, we can always interpret the Rulebook. A lot of generative organs have been stepped on down through Diplomacy history interpreting the letter and spirit of the Rulebook. The idea is that whoever ignoreth the Rulebook shall have his or her games declared irregular, have his or her toenails removed with a plane cutter, and be tarred and feathered. Unless, of course, s/he declares publicly that it's a "variant", admitting to all that s/he has deviated from the Rulebook and is a certified rebel. I think that if we're arguing about the rules of the game after twenty years of playing it, then there is no set of universal rules. Instead of grumbling about a guy who doesn't call for standbys for positions under ten centers, what if we just don't play there if we don't like it? And if someone decides that fifteen pages of houserules are a necessity, is it good to brand him or her a weirdo? If I were GMing now I'd deliberately change some of the Rules that are worded clearly, and state so in my houserules so that no one would be getting into something unknowingly. If I did that, though, the BNJ might just declare the games "irregular". I think it's a load of crap for anyone to stand there and tell someone else that according to their Imperial Will and the guidelines of the Rulebook (all hail!), what the GM is doing is perverted, weird, and is therefore Officially designated as such. It's bad enough when a responsible person is BNJ, but when a vindictive hysteric gets in there it's immeasurably worse. My solution here is that nobody's games should be declared irregular unless the GM and players involved agree to it. Tretick was a loon and a fraud, but no one person had the right to Officially ban him. Now if there happens to be a general consensus (which there was) maybe a good BNJ would listen to it and take the prevailing view into account. I guess I just don't like authority figures much, eh?

If this article has to have an objective, I guess its aim is to cut through some of the crap in our hobby, all arms included. I feel that a lot of ideas are taken on faith around here, and these are the ones I don't swallow. There's a lot of "who gives a shit" in it too, because I firmly believe that people give a shit about things that aren't important. If you feel I'm in that category, let's talk about it.

It's kind of fun to be an iconoclast, and nice to have the freedom to be one. Maybe that's what's wrong with organizing the hobby.

((Eight free issues of sub credit to John for a bit of writing that tells it like it is.

John, I think we can stop the references to the BNJ now; Bill Quinn has taken over the position. Part of the reason that Kathy had so much trouble in the position was that she rattled people's cages, intentionally or not, and it came back to her.

I agree with you -- mostly, anyway -- that we should hide the ugly truths about the hobby from novices. Better that they hear it as it is before getting started and then discovering some of the nastiness flying around. On the other hand it would be folly to drive away someone who might become a reliable GM, too. The bottom line is that I still think it's a pity that there's so much ugliness, but there's no point in covering it up.

I don't agree with you totally on your condemnation of con reviews, trip logs, childbirth descriptions, and other "home movies". Sometimes I enjoy reading con reviews just because they're interesting to read, not because they make me wish I'd been there. If someone prints too much of something you don't like, then don't get his zine. But in the meantime remember that others do like it, or they wouldn't be reading.

Incidentally, I do pretty much agree with your division of the hobby into three separate branches, but it is impossible to separate them because of the overlap you describe. Players misorder units. Players then write letters to zines explaining why their orders should have been allowed. Bingo -- a player-only is suddenly a full-fledged member of the "literary" hobby, and a feuder to boot. See what I mean?

Good article, though; you said a lot of things that needed to be said.))

### A Brief Look at Various Playing Styles

There are several philosophies of play in Diplomacy. Indeed, this is one of the most interesting facets of the hobby; the fact that each game is a unique blend of the differing styles of the seven players. See how many of the categories below remind you of a particular person you have encountered in postal or face-to-face play.

First, there is the compulsive liar and stabber. He respects treaties and alliances only when he must, and then very briefly. A "mad stabber" like this will irritate a few people and eventually acquire a bad reputation. Games with a player like this are fun to watch, though, as the other players go into contortions to try to handle the wild man. His only thought seems to be where-am-I-and-where-are-centers. Not recommended as a winning strategy, it can nevertheless be fun to play this way for a game or two, especially as Austria or Germany.

Then there is the other extreme -- the player who will neither lie nor stab. Such players are rare. The total absence of deceit is not a good policy in Diplomacy, and the player who always tells the truth will usually do poorly. Either he must sit around and wait to be attacked, or he will have to let his opponent know what is coming. And the others in the game will learn that he is thoroughly predictable and act accordingly.

The two styles above are the extremes. There are several in-between ways of playing. One of these is the game-long alliance player. When two folks like this pair up, the game often becomes broing and inflexible. If the pair is not stopped early, a two-way draw is a frequent result. Unbreakable alliances, then, lead to good finishes more often than they lead to exciting games. A person who always plays this way is to be pitied -- he is missing some of the fun of the game. He will, however, be likely to have a good record.

Much more lively is the "melee" game, in which the players form temporary alliances but are not afraid to stir things up a bit. This is a style somewhat more moderate than the "mad stabber" described above; in fact, an alliance of this sort may turn out to be game-long. But in this type of play, a long-term alliance happens because the players never reach a point where it is profitable to stab; NOT because the alliance was molded in the beginning in cast iron and signed in blood. It is my belief that this type of player is the most successful (all other factors, such as tactical competence, being equal) AND that this tyle of play leads to the most exciting games, in general.

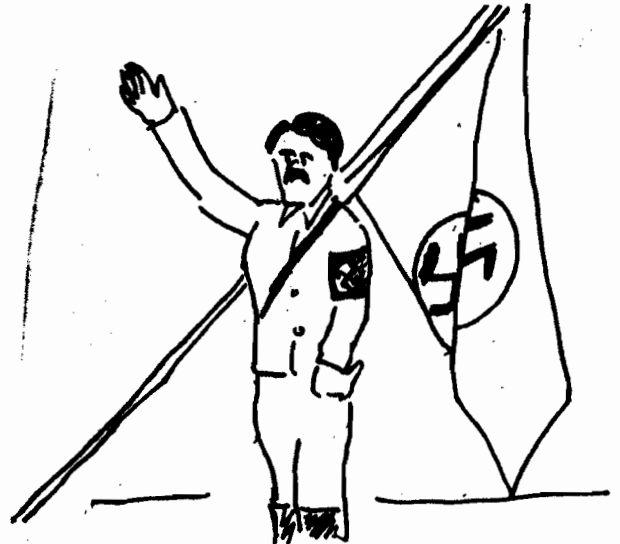
Finally, there is the "who gives a damn" player. This type of person will try weird, untested strategies just for the sake of doing something exciting and novel. As Austria he might go for Munich, Venice, and Sevastopol in 1901. As Turkey, he might (in a tournament game, yet!) open with A Con-Ank. He is not necessarily a stabber; that is not synonymous with wild play. He may even make long-term alliances, so long as his ally agrees to his unorthodox methods. Some day in the future, I'd like to play in a game where all seven players agreed beforehand to play this way. Players of this sort are not so likely to be worried about their ratings as much as they are out to enjoy the game.

Well, I suppose I ought to say where I stand, but I can't categorize myself. I suppose that's true of many players. My personal strategy varies from game to game; I have played in games in which I stabbed no one, games in which I stabbed everyone, games with a solid game-long ally, and other ways. Heck, now that I think of it, I even open A Con-Ank once (and in a tournament game, yet!). That, I feel, is how to approach Diplomacy. Try every style now and then; be unpredictable from game to game. From my descriptions above, it is obvious that I enjoy some styles more than others, but the real way for me to enjoy the game is to try 'em all from time to time. Diplomacy at its finest occurs when one can never be absolutely certain of what is going to happen, either at the tactical or strategic level.

by Mark Paul

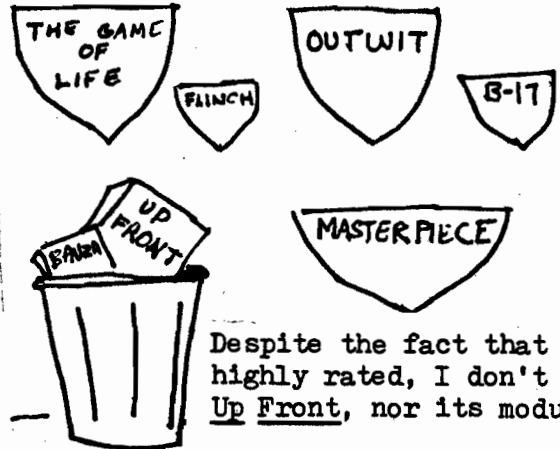


Ambush! and its module Move Out! are excellent solitaire diversions. They are well thought-out and relatively easy, but kind of expensive.....



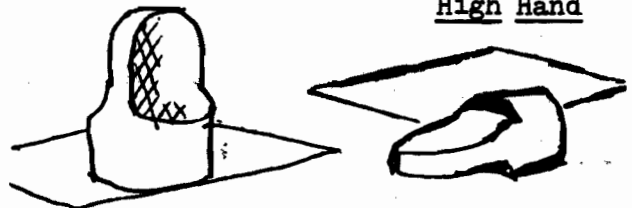
Hitler's War is a remake of a Metagaming product of the same name. It has the flavor of Third Reich with much less complexity.

TURKEY HALL OF FAME



Despite the fact that it is highly rated, I don't like Up Front, nor its modules.

Ever wonder what happened to all those leftover Leverage pieces? They are using them for their new game, High Hand



This is the same game found in Abbot's rules on cards called Switch. It's not bad, but it's not as good as the Games review says it is.



Despite its black humor, Nuclear Escalation is a great game. Get it!



With the release of Cold War, Victory Games has established itself as the most creative force in the hobby.

Randolph's specialty is writing about the negotiational and psychological aspects of postal Diplomacy. But in Fol Si Fie #101, he changed his tune jst a bit, broke down and wrote...

M'God, Tactics!!

by Randolph Sayth

To my recollection, I've never written an article on pure tactics before, for two reasons: (1) the moves themselves are so clearly allied to strategy and diplomacy that my emphasis has always been on the reasons and results rather than the mechanics, (2) after about a year in the hobby, during which time I was fascinated by the tactical end but paid no particular attention to it, all purely tactical developments in my games simply ceased to surprise me, unless people were making obvious blunders. Since the "correct" possibilities were so easy to arrive at, I promptly forgot about the earlier period when I was still unsure about what was going on. However, since a large percentage of my present readership has been in the hobby less than a year, I'll take a shot at an article describing the tactical options in the opening.

Spring 1901 orders can generally be divided into high-, medium-, and low-profile moves. Standard orders which can be accepted by all reasonable players as a legitimate attempt to keep up with everyone else are low-profile; examples are F Lon-Nth, A Mar-Spa, F Nap-Ion, A Con-Bul, A Ber-Kie, F StP(sc)-Bot, F Tri-Alb. Orders which are common and perhaps necessary for basic defense, but which are likely to cause standoffs or other conflict, and may be the opening gambits in a war, are medium-profile; e.g., A Par-Bur, F Edi-Nwg, F Kie-Den, F Sev-Bla, A Vie-Gal, A Ven-Tyo, F Ank-Bla. High-profile openings are almost an invitation to immediate battle; the most extreme are well off the beaten track, and are often taken as evidence of an upcoming grudge fight by the other players. Examples are F Lon-Eng, A Mar-Pie, A Mun-Sil, A Ven-Tri, A Bud-Rum, A Mos-StP, A Smy-Ara.

Many players, including myself, try to stick with low-profile orders in 1901, with perhaps a couple of tentative mediums for variety, to show everyone that we're not completely unimaginative. If everyone did this, 1901 would be a rather boring year, but for the average player, low-profile moves usually give the best end result.

The trouble with high-profile orders is that most players seem to make rather poor choice and use of them. Even in 1901, it's fairly safe to make one high move against a neighbour you know you'll be fighting before long anyway. If you invest two units in high moves against the same power, you'd better be pretty sure that all other neighbours are headed away from you. To make two high moves against separate neighbours is like wearing a placard inscribed with "exuberant but incompetent novice". The French player whose Spring orders include F Bre-Eng and A Mar-Pie won't be around long even if Germany is his ally.

The more capable players easily recognize that an unprovoked two-front war on powers of equal strength is not the way to win Diplomacy games. However, contradictory middle-profile orders are an extremely common sight in games with players of all strengths. A Ven-Tyo, F Nap-Tyr is an extreme example which manages to make France, Austria, and perhaps Germany nervous while leaving units misplaced for a focused attack on any one of them. A Mun-Bur, F Kie-Den risks a standoffish attitude from both France and Russia unless you've cleared it with them beforehand. A Vie-Tyo, A Bud-Gal again raises doubts about your intentions in the minds of three neighbours, whatever you say in your letters.

When a game begins, my original set of orders is sent to the GM before any negotiation is done. 90% of the time these orders are modified later as pre-1901 agreements are made, but the initial orders provide a look at some solid, low-profile opening moves where the personalities of the other players is not a consideration.

France: A Par-Bur, A Mar S A Par-Bur, F Bre-Mid. All orders must succeed, and give the possibility of taking three neutral centers in the Fall. The occupation of Dan won't make for an ecstatic German, but he can hardly complain: it's a lot more important to your security than it is to his.

England: F Lon-Nth, F Edi-Nwg, A Lvp-Yor. The fleets occupy the only reasonable areas; Eng is a no-no unless France is hostile.

Germany: A Mun-Ruh, A Ber-Kie, F Kis-Den. Russia may worry that the fleet is headed for Swe to deny him a northern center, but with your armies moving west, it's not that unreasonable to have that much leverage on him. Otherwise you have no chance to retaliate for an A War-Sil.

Russia: F StP(sc)-Bot, F Sev-Bla, A Mos-Ukr, A War-Gal. The last order is the only one bordering on high-profile, but an Austrian move to Gal is so common that this is not unreasonable in an initial set of orders. The Russian armies are the most variable units going in Spring 1901, with no great options but several good ones each.

Austria: A Vis-Gal, A Bud-Ser, F Tri-Adr. A bit touchy unless you've heard friendly noises from the Italian, but these orders neutralize a Russian attack and give the best jump on the Balkan centers. ((I am very puzzled by Randolph's suggestion of F Tri-Adr, and strongly wonder whether he meant to type -Alb instead.)) Even if Italy stabs and steals a home center, you should get a build to hit him with next year.

Turkey: A Con-Bul, F Ank-Bla, A Smy-Con. The standoff in Bla is cause for wonder when it doesn't occur, and you're even more justified in protecting this area than Russia is.

Italy: F Nap-Ion, A Ven-Tyr, A Rom-Ven. Austria may see the army movement as directed at him, but if he's moving south then your northern influence may even help him out if you ally. The Ven/Tri border is a touchy one -- if you haven't worked out a mutually satisfactory arrangement (and changed your orders accordingly) before the Spring deadline, it usually means war -- and the above method is as good a way as any to start.

Well, if everyone went with these options (and in many games it's pretty close), we'd have standoffs in Gal and Bla, relative quiet elsewhere. If no wars started by Fall, Russia would pick up Swe and Rum (for 6 centers total), Turkey would get Con (4), Austria, Ser and Gre (5), Italy, Tun (4), England, Nwy (4), Germany, Den and Hol (5), and France, Spa and Por (5). Bel is a sore spot in the west, with a standoff quite likely if no one is willing to support one neighbour against the other. These are the traditional divisions of spoils.

Suppose you want more than a prologue in 1901? Often more vigorous play is forced upon you by the enthusiasm of an ally or the hostile and uncooperative attitude of a neighbour. As mentioned above, it's best to keep high-profile orders to a minimum, so let's look at some slight variations on the basic themes.

France: Your basic orders are about as anti-German as you can get in Spring 1901. If it starts to look as though Germany is your best bet as an ally, you can alter the emphasis. If you're looking south, try A Mar-Spa with the other orders above: this is actually more anti-Italian than if you leave Mar in place. This permits A Spa-Por, F Mid-Spa(sc) for the Fall; you can build F Mar and plunge into the Mediterranean with two fleets next year. (A Mar-Pie is a bit rapid and goes nowhere as an attacking move, since Ven is normally influenced by two Italian armies.) If Italy anticipates your offensive and orders a Spring A Ven-Pie, A Bur is available to protect Mar. If the fleet build is important to you, a self-standoff is possible (A Bur-Mar), A Spa-Mac) -- always assuming that Germany didn't try for Bur after all!

Headed north against England? A Par-Pic is a show of goodwill toward Germany but no threat to England without the high profile F Bre-Eng. Convoying the army to Wal in the Fall nets you only one center, but if you're sure of your German ally he can try for Bel and possibly rise to six units. England of course is finished unless Russia is his ally -- even then, Germany may find it tough going, but you have the advantage in the local fight.

England: I recommend A Lvp-Yor rather than A Lvp-Edi, since a French move of F Bre-Eng can be neutralized by the army while leaving both fleets free for center-grabbing and retaliation. If you're sure of the French, though, the move to Edi gives more flexibility since either fleet can be used for a convoy. F Nth is usually the best for convoy purposes anyway, though; that area is too important to move out of.

The only other option is high-profile: F Lon-Eng, F Edi-Nth, aimed at attacking France. A Lvp usually goes -Wal in this case for an attempted convoy south, unless you expect F Lon-Eng to be stood off. When convoying, Pic is usually the place to aim at, unless Germany will support you into Bel.

Germany: A lot of options here. If Russia is your mortal enemy, you of course order F Kie-Den-Swe, and send one or both armies east. However, I've never seen Germany take War in 1901 -- if Russia has any inkling of your intentions, A Mos won't stray far. It's wise, then, to send a maximum of one army east: A Ber-Sil is best. A Mun-Ruh will aim for Hol in the Fall: you need builds if you're to continue the attack!

If France is the enemy, the old standby A Mun-Bur should keep the lid on his options, but can easily be thwarted by the basic moves for France given above. If you have a war on your hands, though, A Mun has to stay at home anyhow; although A Mun-Ruh, A Ber-Mun may do better if you've given up hope of influencing Bur. If the French try anything else, though, A Mun-Bur stands him off or even invades successfully. Usually this attack is coupled with F Kie-Hol, followed by F Hol-Bel to deny Bel to the French. A Ber ambles into Den in the Fall for two builds.

Suitable variations of the basic orders for an attack on England are usually not realized until the Fall. If France is an ally, one of you should take Bel with support from the other; or if French units are to be tied up as described above, then A Mun-Ruh, F Kie-Hol followed by F Hol S A Ruh-Bel, A Ruh-Bel is a good bet to gain three centers in 1901.

Italy: Italian problems are over-emphasized: in the early stages this country has more freedom and flexibility than any other. If France is the first target, A Ven-Pie is indicated, probably backed up with F Nap-Tyr. There are several thoughts about what to do with A Rom in this variation; no matter what the Austrian assurances, I can't shake the idea that A Rom-Ven is probably best here. The army can be kept on the west coast for convoying to Tun, however; this gives the fleet a Spring 1902 option of F Tyr-Lyo.

An attack on Austria begins either with the basic moves, or with the cruder (but sometimes more effective, if he doesn't suspect!) A Ven-Tri. If successful, the latter move almost guarantees you a second 1901 build. Nor is it necessarily directed against Austria! -- coupled with a Fall A Tri-Ser, it's the best known case of a False Attack, the Key Opening directed against Turkey.

Italian openings seem to have collected labels more readily than those of other nations. Perhaps the most common Italian start these days is the Lepanto, again aimed at Turkey -- A Ven H, A Rom-Apu, F Nap-Ion. A Apu is convoyed -Tun in the Fall, and in Spring 1902 F Ion enters Turkish waters and gets the drop on them.

Austria: Many of the Austrian variations on the basic orders seem to involve paranoid unit-shuffling -- which is, however, sometimes justified. A Vie-Tri, A Bud-Gal is an attempt to stave off both Russia and Italy...but gives Turkey the option of moving on Ser in the Fall. My immediate reaction to such antics is that the Austrian is in a hole and trying to buy time. A Bud-Ser, A Vie-Bud may be the prelude to a supported attack on Rum in the Fall, though.

Austria doesn't usually hit Italy immediately, since F Tri-Ven has only a poor chance of success and requires a backup army to hold it in the Fall if successful. A Vie-Tyo is not infrequent, in an attempt to stand off Italian or German units. If Italy is to be attacked seriously, F Tri-Adr with an army going to Tri is probably best, but brace yourself for a maximum of one build in 1901.

One army may support the other into Gal, but this overkill is high profile and Russia has every right to be perturbed. If Russia is the enemy, A Bud-Rum will put more pressure on in any case; but in any variation where Ser is left open, you're depending heavily upon Turkish goodwill. Austria may not attack Russia directly, but prefer A Ser S TURKISH A Bul-Rum in the Fall, which limits the Turkish sphere to the Black Sea coastline.

Attacks on Turkey normally begin by picking up centers quietly in 1901. The basic moves are followed by something such as A Ser S F Alb-Ger. ((OK, then, my earlier supposition was correct.)) 1902 orders depend markedly on the position of allied units. Turkey: A variation enjoying as much popularity as the basic orders above is the higher-profile attack on Russia, with A Smy-Arm. However, unless Russia is being stabbed and you can seize Bla as well, it rarely results in the 1901 capture of Sev. The pressure on Sev will often deny Rum to Russia, though, particularly if Austria cooperates.

If the Russian is exceptionally friendly you may get away with arranging the demilitarization of Bla and breaking out into the Mediterranean from the west, but if Russia occupies Bla your outlook is poor.

Russia: Of your four units, your fleets have little scope in 1901; the northern one should always be sitting in Swe after the Fall. However, if the German orders F Kio-Ger and you know him to be hostile, a Fall F Bot-Bal can bear better fruit in 1902 -- you're not taking Swe in any case if he's competent. If you don't get along well with him from the outset, a Spring A War-Sil is also suitable, especially if you can arrange a demilitarization of Gal with Austria.

A Mos-StP is indicative of early friction with England over the partition of Scandinavia; however, the army is almost always of more use in the south unless your alliance with Austria is strong. If this is the case, however, A War-Ukr is possible in the Spring, and in Fall A StP can give England immediate problems with A StP-Bye, or more positionally A StP-Fin. With the other fleet in Swe and a build of F StP(nc), England is unlikely to hold Nwy through 1902.

However, it's almost pointless for A Mos-Sev unless there's hope of F Sev moving. It's possible only if you've arranged demilitarization of Bla; then F Sev can either move -Rum or stab by moving -Bla.

I think that should cover all the common possibilities for Spring 1901 movement. Other options exist, of course -- a strong alliance is capable of some unusual initial moves, as is any player who puts more store by the interest and novelty of his position than in its playability. If interest is expressed, I'll try to go beyond this mere catalog in the future to look at specific details and obscure cases. I'm particularly keen to explore the possibilities open to allies: i.e. given that F/G (or E/R, E/I, F/T, E/A, etc.) have decided to get it together, what are some of their better tactical options?

Finally, I should issue a warning about overanalysing your opponent's orders: A Mar-Spa is a perfectly legitimate French order which an inexperienced player may regard as being pro-Italian! As Italy, there is no need to truck out all your hate literature if a misguided France bumbles into Spa in Spring 1901. Similarly any other orders which are not clearly high-profile are not cause for immediate alarm (just worry...)

I really shouldn't ignore tactics. Writing this article has been absurdly easy!

((And a good article it was, too. I wavered on printing it, since Randolph's negotiations articles are better than this one (there's only so much one can do with tactics articles, after all), but since there are quite a few novice Doomies I decided that maybe this would be useful to some of them. One correction: F Edi-Bog is not a medium profile opening; it's low. It's the only reasonable opening for this unit if France is not under attack.

I also decided to run this article because a very entertaining discussion ensued, and you're about to read it...))



From Fol SI File #106...

The Muddle in the Middle (and Low) Profile Openings

by Mark L. Per

((In this discussion, items not surrounded by parentheses are Mark's, triple parentheses indicate Randolph's interjections, and comments in double parentheses mine.))

In Fol SI File #101, Randolph Smyth's "M\*God, Tactics!!" set forth the notion that openings can be divided into low, medium, and high-profile categories. Each was defined, and in a departure from many such theoretical articles, actual examples were given to the reader so he could see how they worked. By and large, the concept is a useful one, and many valuable suggestions are made. However, the article sometimes slips into the all-too-common failing of becoming so theoretical, that the writer is really talking about how he thinks the game should be played, rather than how it is, with ludicrous results. In other cases, I think that his advice is just plain wrong or at least unrealistic. In order to concentrate on how the game is really played, I must resort to the occasional use of statistics. In here, the Spring 1901 data is from Mick Bullock's accumulation of 313 openings. The Fall 1901 are from my own collection of 230 Fall moves and do not count Fall all-units-hold NMRs.

Middle-profile moves are defined as "common and necessary for basic defense, but which are likely to cause standoffs, and may be the opening gambits in a war." "Contradictory" means against two different countries, leading to the following statement: "However, contradictory middle-profile orders are an extremely common sight in games with players of all strengths." Randolph then provides three examples to which I have appended the percentages for the times they were actually used.  
Italy: A Ven-Tyr, F Nap-Tyr 2.6%  
Germany: A Mun-Bur, F Kie-Den 6.9%  
Austria: A Vie-Tyr, A Bud-Gal 0.3%

A glance at these figures shows that Randolph's statement that these openings are "extremely common" is extremely dubious, assuming that Randolph has made a reasonable selection. They average 3.3%, or one game in thirty, for any given country. In fact, such openings are so uncommon that when they do occur, they will be a striking feature of the gameboard.

((But when I talked about contradictory middle-profile orders being common sights, this is different from any given move being common. That is, with seven players submitting orders, many or most games will have at least one such contradiction somewhere on the board. Sum all such types of order combinations and the phenomenon is indeed a common sight. I didn't mean to imply that each player commonly goes out on such adventures, although it may read that way.))

((It didn't read that way to me. Randolph is right on this one; Mark is playing fast and loose with some numbers. In the first place, the 6.9% figure for A Mun-Bur, F Kie-Den strikes me as very high for a two-move combination. Secondly, his one-out-of-thirty figure is derived from the assumption that there is only one set of such contradictory moves for each country, a false assumption. For instance, Germany could also do F Kie-Den, A Mun-Tyr. Some countries, Russia for instance, have still more such possible combinations of moves. So Mark's 3.3% is really a meaningless figure in his illustration, and the one-out-of-thirty might well be more like one-out-of-eight-or-nine. As Randolph says, this then leads to such openings somewhere on the board in perhaps a majority of games, and certainly at least a significant number.))

On the next page Randolph sets forth what he calls "some solid, low profile opening moves".

Italy: F Nap-Ion, A Ven-Tyo, A Rom-Ven.

If this is a low-profile opening, then I'm a snail darter ((I think that's what it says!)). If I'm Austria and you're Italy, we're at war, unless I've been as desperate as to accede to this. I'd rather risk the Key opening ((an Italian A Ven-Tri in agreement with Austria? Supposed to be followed by A Tri-Tur with a surprise attack on Turkey, but Italy has another obvious option...)). Not only is this not low, it isn't even medium, it's high. This is defined as "almost an invitation to immediate battle". My statistics show 49 games in which this opening was used successfully. In the Fall, 78% of the Italian players attacked either Vie-Tri, or both. This is an extremely high figure, given the vagaries of the Diplomacy board. By contrast, consider F Lon-Fog, which is listed as a high profile action. Out of 36 English players who did this successfully, a mere 34% actually attacked France (Ple or not). But even aside from that, any opening which 78% of the time results in an attack on at least one of your neighbours home centers must be considered "an invitation to immediate battle" and not orders "which can be accepted by everybody as a legitimate attempt to keep up with everyone else."

((Mark is right on the nose here. Statistics or no statistics, A Ven-Tyo, A Rom-Ven is a high-profile move against Austria. In fact, it's the most powerful move against Austria, since A Ven-Tri is more likely to be stood off.))

((I believe I was even more emphatic than elsewhere that these were preliminary moves only. If I/A don't come to agreement in plenty of time for these orders to be changed, then they are likely to be the best. Probably, labelling it as low-profile is in error, I agree, but can you suggest a less committal move for Italy which gets something done? A Ven-Ple is anti-French, surely, and A Ven H, A Rom-Apu is certainly a challenge to the Turks.

...These replies have been submitted to Mark, and he came back with this counterpoint:))

I'd preface my answer by saying that (1) "a less committal move for Italy which gets something done" is a bit of a contradiction, (2) I do not agree that a non-committal opening is an appropriate goal for Italy in most cases. Italy should not just hang around and wait for something to happen. Threat-clearing aside, if Italy is determined to be non-committal in the East-West question, then A Ven H, A Rom H, F Nap-Tyo. See what happens when you carry non-committal too far? If you're willing to tilt a bit east, then A Rom-Apu, A Ven H, F Nap-Ion is less committal than most people think. This is because I suspect the opening is used to attack Austria in 1902 about as often as it is used to attack Turkey. Further, it can be used to switch against France rather easily. This switch happens rather infrequently because if Italy is to attack France, he'll usually get started right away. On the other hand, A Ven-Tyo, A Rom-Ven does get used against Austria the overwhelming majority of the time.

This business about "preliminary moves" just won't wash. You either use your preliminary orders or you don't. If you do use them, then I stand on my comments. If you don't use them, then what's the point of discussing them? Are we next going to discuss letters that aren't mailed? Games that aren't entered? Hobbies that aren't taken up?

((Tch, you're getting sarcastic again, ya bum. Of course preliminary moves are in a different category. They are concrete possibilities which are (or should be) sent to the GM upon receipt of the zine. They may and probably will be modified; but as preliminary orders, why not send something intelligent (resulting from some thought and discussion) rather than just a jumble to prevent a possible NAR? In fact, advice about preliminary orders is the only thing that can be set out with some confidence. Once you get into the diplomacy, the modifications can go in any number

of directions and requires a long article about each country.

Very well, I'll withdraw my recommendation for A Ven-Tyo, A Rom-Ven, substituting A Ven H, A Rom-Apu, if you prefer it. Or perhaps it was my definition of a high-profile move which was deficient: perhaps it should include an element of "unusual-ness" and surprise. If my Austrian neighbour hasn't talked me out of A Ven-Tyo, A Rom-Ven before the Spring deadline, then we are probably at war and I'm not too interested in his reaction. What I was really trying to imply with a "high-profile" move was a level of aggression as seen by the board as a whole. The Tyo-Ven position is a fairly common one for Italy after Spring (or will your statistics trip me up again?) so it's not about to send shockwaves through the whole board. F Lon-Eng, on the other hand, might.)))

Another place where Randolph's advice doesn't jibe with the way the game is actually played is in the discussion of the Wales opening for England: F Lon-Eng, A Lvp-Wal. He states: "When convoying, Pic is usually the place to aim at unless Germany will support you into Belgium." From this, the naive observer would conclude that Pic is and should be preferred to Bre, and that the Pic/Bel decision, i.e. whether you can take Belgium, is determined largely by German attitudes. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. I located 18 games in which the Wales opening was used successfully. The Fall orders for A Wal were as follows: Bel = 12, Bre = 5, Hold = 1, Pic = 0.

Thus, in attacking France, Brest was the target of choice. Now I can hear your rejoinder already: alright, so five dummies went for Bre, instead of the more sensible Pic. In fact, all five found their targets. There were no French NMRs. The seizure of Brest by an English army is a very bad blow for France. Not only is France deprived of a build, but he cannot build a fleet in the north. If he chooses, England can then support a second army into Pic, preparing for an assault on Par. Alternatively, he can try to slip into Gas, threatening Par, Spa, and Mar. If instead, England settles for the safer convoy to Pic, he is in for a much harder fight, and will be more reliant on German help. Presumably Randolph prefers Pic as it is safer, but he has underestimated the ability of the English players to determine when Bre will be left open for the killing strike. Moving to the attacks on Bel, these were distributed as follows:

- Fails = 4 (foiled three times by France, once by Germany)
- Succeeds, no German help offered = 4
- Succeeds, help given but not needed = 4
- Succeeds, help needed = 0

Here the results are not quite so clear-cut. However, Randolph's implication that German support is crucial is simply not borne out. In 2/3 of the cases, the German support, or lack thereof, was irrelevant. In not one case did actual German support prove to be significant.

I thought I'd throw in a few tidbits on those convoys to Belgium. In 1977GR, France moved to block the convoy, but was foiled when England properly supported it in himself. The comedy of errors goes to 1976FR. Germany ordered F Hol-Bel, and this was supported by French A Bur -- only to have this support cut by A Mun-Bur!

Finally, I did run across two games where Germany took Warsaw (((in 1901)))... In both cases, Russia did A Mos-StP in the Spring and did A Gal-Vie successfully in the Fall!

((My initial answer to Mark ran as follows: My final comment is one of surprise regarding the statistics you present on the Wales opening. I trust them as accurate, but can only explain them in terms of the diplomatic situation where France has been duped into accepting the Spring orders and only gets properly stabbed (A Wal-Bre, F Eng C A Wal-Bre) in the Fall. Perhaps, from England's viewpoint, I'm putting too much confidence in the competence of the French player -- so you'll have to let me stand on the A Wal-Pic recommendation as a simple matter of personal taste.

Mark then replied with:)))

Yes, perhaps you've overestimated the French, but just as likely, you've underestimated the English. (((Semantics: all relative, no!))) But to get to the p why is your preference A Wal-Pic, which risks Nwy ((Huh? Only if Russia can't StP)), passes up shots at Bre and Bel, for what??? It's a decent position, but it doesn't balance the risk and opportunity cost.

((((I think you've brought me around in this case: I can't argue against the weight of those statistics. Nothing succeeds like success. Perhaps my problem is that I find it difficult to lie in the opening, so I assume the motives of all will be equally transparent. With a tactical guessing game the odds favour success to Pic, but as you suggested, there's more to it.)))

((Well, Mark may have brought Randolph around, but he doesn't convince me here. Against a French player of reasonable intelligence (which stacks the scenario slightly already, I confess), I say Pic is a better risk. Five-out-of-five successful English moves to Bre is not enough of a sample to draw any conclusions from, not nearly. These statistics are not indicative of anything without a larger sample size. So discounting them, and just considering the game board itself, it makes sense to me that most French players are going to cover Brest when it is threatened in this way. I probably would, and as Mark admits, an English army there is a terrible thing for France, so I think that quite a few French players would follow suit. Picardly or the other hand isn't going to be covered, generally, unless (a) the French army opened there, or (b) France has some way of knowing that England is going to come there. Otherwise, it would make far more sense to cover Bel and/or Bre...because these are stronger positions for England to be in.))

((((Just a general comment: I can't see a French player accepting the Spring move of the Wales opening as anything but an attack ("high profile", if you will); thus the uniform success of the convoy to Bre is particularly surprising to me. How can the English player possibly rationalize the Wales opening as being in any way superior to the standard F Lon-Nth, A Lvp-Yor? Apart from the rather far-out idea that England wishes to attack both Bel and Den in the fall (ignoring Nwy -- ??), the only thing I can think of is to suggest a "fake" E/F war to the other players... which to France's horror turns into a real one with the Fall results. Either rationalization is a farfetched diplomatic dupe requiring an incredibly credulous French player. Such animals exist, of course, but the original article wasn't aimed at taking advantage of outright errors of the opponent, whether tactical or diplomatic. How did we get onto this subject, anyhow?)))

((Well, OK, in the context of an English F Eng that France agreed to, I can understand the uniform success of the convoy to Bre in Mark's sample. But I would guess very strongly that most English openings to the Channel are by stealth -- there aren't that many French players that stupid, nor that many Englands persuasive enough to allow most French players to permit it.

Hmph. Eight pages devoted to a debate regarding slaps tactics. I would guess that quite a large percentage of the readership didn't follow this one through from beginning to end. And yet, now I'm glad I ran it...because I enjoy these discussions, and if my final issue is to please anyone, it ought to be me.

The sad fact is that you really can't find this type of debate, about the bare tactics of Diplomacy, anywhere in the hobby these days, other perhaps than Pol Si Pic. I truly think that articles like "M'God, Tactics!!" and Barch's reply are very healthy for the hobby -- it does players of all experience levels a world of good to see these matters brought up, picked apart, discussed, and debated. No conclusions need to be reached, necessarily -- look at the indecisive solution to the Bre vs. Pic question in the above, e.g. -- in order for the debate to have value and interest. I hope that at least someone (other than me) got something out of all this.))

The Gossip Column  
Part IV

117

From Ronald Brown (8/23/84):

Dear Brucey,

Yes, I felt quite ill when I read your account of Highfield and the excerpt from his letter to Keith Sesler, but I am glad you published it to clear up the mysteries surrounding Highfield's exit from the hobby. I hope that shuts up those who were giving you a hard time over it -- and I hope Highfield is getting the medical attention he needs.

I don't know what I would have done in your situation. Probably the same thing. We could pretend it's all just a joke like Caruso, or try to ignore it like most people, but, at some point, something has to be done -- and bringing it to the attention of those in positions of responsibility is probably the best alternative.

I don't know what Kathy Byrne and John Caruso are so upset about. For years they've been saying nasty things about just about everyone in the hobby and then claiming it was all just a joke and just good fun. Our criticisms of their actions are mild in comparison to what they've been saying, so why can't they treat it all as just mild chuckles? Yes, I am fed up. The nail in the coffin was the Foot in Mouth which appeared in Sleepless Knights. There was absolutely nothing funny about it, no matter what Caruso says. It was just ugly, nasty, and pointless. Who needs that kind of thing? My disillusionment began about two years ago when Kathy said some nasty things about a certain hobby member in Kathy's Korner. The guy, let's keep him nameless, called me almost in tears asking if I knew anything about why Kathy had singled him out like that. All I could say was that she probably meant it as a joke, but he obviously couldn't see it that way. (I didn't either, but I was trying to guess at her motives for singling out someone who had never done her any harm.) Anyhow, John and Kathy said often enough that they were going to end that sort of thing and stick to humour. I'm still waiting, but it just hasn't happened...

In reply to Don Del Grande in VD 98, yes, Fothergill is Ann Brown's maiden name. Actually, her married name is Ann Fothergill-Brown, not just Brown. Yes, the in-laws aren't too crazy about our kids having both names. Well, mine hardly noticed, as we don't see them much and we're not very close. But Ann's mother did make a few comments when Ann mentioned she was keeping her name and that our kids would carry it. If Ann's father objects to having our kids keep his name, he's kept quiet about it. But, Ann's mother did come around well in the end.

The problem isn't so much with in-laws as with governments. Christopher was born in Quebec and the Quebec government never batted an eyelash when we registered him as Fothergill-Brown. In fact, in Quebec such hyphenations are encouraged, and one can legally name his kid any combination of parent and grandparent names. I don't believe that all kids must have the same name either. So you could have John Aster-Smyth being the brother of Mary Williamson-Aster, or whatever.

Not so in Ontario where James was born! We went ahead and registered him under the same name as his brother and mother, despite the warning on the form that all children must assume the father's surname. Sure enough, back came the form and we had to fill out an enclosed form requesting permission of the Ontario government for James to have a "non-standard" name, and we had to swear on a stack of Bibles that in future, if our request was granted, all our children would bear this same "non-standard" name. I guess they approved, as the copy of the registration arrived addressed to "R. J. Fothergill-Brown". We had a bit of trouble deciding who it was for, as I'm the only one around here bearing those initials, but that's not my last name.

I guess you have to understand that Ontario is predominantly Anglo-Saxon (United Empire Loyalist, Irish, and British) and so is deeply conservative. They're just uncomfortable with all these new-fangled ideas and aren't quite sure how to deal with shifts in perceptions and priorities among the proletariat.

Okay, news in the career field. My acting appointment has been extended until mid-October (yea!), and a major shift in job assignments has occurred so that I am free every second day to concentrate on writing articles and documentation. I guess they

want to get everything out of me they can while they can. The powers that be are constantly amazed that I can research a question and bang off a well-written article before morning coffee break. I always knew I could do that, but never have been able to convince a personnel officer. There seems to be a law that those who understand technical matters cannot write in English, and those who can write, can't understand technical material, so I must be talking through my hat if I claim to be able to do both.

Meanwhile, the people in systems development are "fishing" for me, but I'll have to do extremely well on an exam in COBOL, assuming the position clears personnel. And you know how I feel about COBOL. Never written a COBOL program yet where the compiler hasn't decided to invent junk for me until I read a footnote of a footnote in an Appendix. Takes me about three days to write a COBOL program to do what I can write a FORTRAN program to do in 10 minutes. Heck, I could probably get BASIC to work better than COBOL. Well, what can one do, eh? COBOL is here to stay, just like cockroaches and mosquitoes. One has to learn to live with it.

It will be a relief when I finally get a "permanent" job, as opposed to these acting term appointments.

((IDENTIFICATION DIVISION.

PROGRAM-ID. REPLY-TO-BROWN.

AUTHOR. BRUCE LINSEY.

DATE-WRITTEN. 9-4-84.

DATE-COMPILED. 9-4-84.

ENVIRONMENT DIVISION.

CONFIGURATION SECTION.

SOURCE-COMPUTER. VD-TYPER.

OBJECT-COMPUTER. VD-TYPER.

INPUT-OUTPUT SECTION.

FILE-CONTROL.

SELECT REBUT-FILE ASSIGN TO VD.

DATA DIVISION.

FILE SECTION.

FD REBUTTAL

LABEL RECORDS ARE STANDARD

DATA RECORD IS REBUT-REC.

01 REBUT-REC.

02 FILLER PIC X(87).

WORKING-STORAGE SECTION.

01 REBUT-MSG.

02 FILLER PIC X(45) VALUE

"WHAT MAKES YOU THINK COBOL IS SO COMPLICATED".

02 FILLER PIC X(42) VALUE

"WHEN IT COMES TO PERFORMING A SIMPLE TASK".

PROCEDURE DIVISION.

OPEN-FILE.

OPEN OUTPUT REBUTTAL.

MOVE-DATA.

MOVE REBUT-MSG TO REBUT-REC.

WRITE REBUT-REC.

CLOSE-FILE.

CLOSE REBUTTAL.

STOP RUN.

I also disagree with the practice of hyphenating names, though my objection stems from practical considerations. Your kids have two components to their last name; if they marry girls who also have two, their kids could have four, and so on. I can see it now: by the seventh generation we have Bruce Fothergill-Brown-Smyth-Berch-Walker-Coughlan-Davis-Caruso-Noto-Arnawoodian-Leritte-Barno-Osuch-Winsome-Boardman-....-Wall...))

From Ed Wrobel (8/30/84):

Bruce-

You take me to task for obeying the letter of Steve Knight's not-for-print instructions and for obeying the spirit of your anonymous critic's instructions. What's a pubber got to do to please you?

Your Janus-faced position on this is not surprising, though. In a previous issue of VD, you criticized me for "toadystashing", i.e. stating that others supported my stand but refusing to pull them into the dispute by publicly naming them. Now I see that you have stashed a few toadies yourself in your attempt to destroy Foot in Mouth.

Well, go ahead and continue your "hobby service" of maligning me and everybody else you don't like. I don't care. I've escaped Voice of Doom. Bye.

((But will you be able to escape its echo??

I am unaware of any attempts to destroy Foot in Mouth. I am aware only of a protest against some of its recent editorial policies. That's not even close to the same thing.

Yeah, I sometimes toadystash too. Glad you noticed. Those are really some very mindless sycophants indeed who agree with my opinions on FIM: Davis, Walker, Brown, Rauterberg, etc.

May I remind you that you were the first to refer to your own attacks on people you don't like as a "hobby service" See VD #98, p. 22. Finally, you imply strongly that I don't like you. Nothing could be further from the truth. I think you're a nice guy and a good friend whose views have gone astray. Keep in touch.))

From Nick Felella (9/29/84):

Hi,

As far as the five people I would invite to dinner, well, I just can't decide. I came up with a list, then I keep wanting to make substitutions. It reminds me of a similar question: "If you were a baseball manager, which nine people would you want in the lineup?"

Well, I know one person I would want at the dinner party. I definitely would want Ted Koppel. He would keep the conversation going by asking the tough questions. Of course, too many tough questions might turn the dinner party into a food fight. But I would be too scared to ask questions, or say anything. I mean, Hitler would intimidate me, Einstein would bewilder me, you get the point.

I probably would invite Hitler or Einstein anyway. So much is known about Hitler, and other people from modern times. If I wanted to learn more about him, I wouldn't have to invite him to dinner; I could read a book or two. Same with the five historical events I'd like to witness. I'd like to witness five events not well documented.

It was nice seeing you at KaneKon. The first time I met you was at a ByrneCon last year. You seemed pretty quiet then. I thought maybe you were tired or something. But you also seemed pretty quiet at KaneKon too.

I can hardly imagine anybody so quiet getting so many other people angry. At least angry enough to feud with you. You seem different than what I imagined you to be, after reading Voice of Doom.

When I read the article "Playing to Win", I expected you to be more intense while playing the games. And after you lost the Rail Baron game, you didn't say anything. I remember your reaction after the famous Monopoly game with Brad and Jane. I guess you felt cheated then.

I'm not quite as calm as you are, I guess. I've been playing a lot of Trivial Pursuit lately, and that game always gets me uptight.

The last time I played I really got annoyed at the brother of the hostess of the party. He kept blurting out the answers, or what he thought were the correct answers. And I kept telling him to shut up. I have to learn to relax. But I really felt he was spoiling the game.

Also, the questions cause a lot of problems. I'm used to multiple choice, which is black and white. If the answer is A and you pick B, you're wrong. Since Trivial Pursuit has no choices, but rather fill-in type questions, many debates arise. When the arguments started, I would turn to my friend and say, "Where's BRUX, where's the houserules?" I must have houserules on the brain. The first game ended at 3 AM, after everyone else conceded defeat. I walked away thinking the game should be declared a draw or adjourned. I mean, the rules say nothing about concession votes. If only we had all this covered in the houserules, I wouldn't have gone away mad. Sleepy, yes; mad, no. I have to learn it's only a game.

Hey, I have a question for you. Who was the first president to leave the U.S. during his term of office? This is not a Trivial Pursuit question. Woodrow Wilson is the answer. I couldn't believe it when I read it. I thought it would be someone from the 19th century.

((Yeah, I would have guessed that too.

I played a Trivial Pursuit game recently where someone not in the game started blurting out answers. To combat this, every time she did it, I let out a big fart. Other than that, yeah, I'm a pretty quiet and reserved fellow in person.))

From Steve Arnowoodlan:

Dear Quohog Brain,

It has a long time, too long, after all who else can I write to and say "VI is trash published by a nigger". You know the other day I was in the supermarket and I realized that Kellogg named their cereal Sugar Smacks after you.

We missed you at Pudgecon. It was raining in Wichita and we needed a doorman to wipe our feet on. So you see Bruce, contrary to popular belief, you are good for a couple of things. For instance when someone was stabbed in one of the dip games, they could have carried out their frustration by using you as a "punching bag". I think Bob's cat Olga would have liked you too, their weren't enough insects in the house for her to toy with and I believe she would have enjoyed a leech.

Mike Mazzer expressed grief over your absence, as he wanted to play "pin the tail on the jackass" but we had no suitable target.

I probably shouldn't mention this but the so-called Pudgecon fun got out of hand when Ty Hare brought out a voodoo doll of you. Several people wanted to douse it with gasoline, others cheered them on. This behavior was totally uncalled for.

Dick Martin & I grabbed the doll & quickly tossed it in the barbecue machine, which Olsen was readying to cook hot dogs. Bruce, you owe Dick & I. We'll call in out marker shortly.

Nancy Irwin, who enjoys a good cigarette, every 10 minutes or so, was getting disgusted over having to shake Olsen's ash tray with Byrne. In a fit of rage she wished you were around so she could use your skull for an ashtray. Bruce, you must admit you would excel at being an ashtray. After all, there's so much space in your head no one would have to empty it.

On to another note quite sometime ago you warned your subbers not to have any business dealings with Bob Arnett. Well Bruce I have bought some software for my G-64 from Arnett & have been completely satisfied. Please print a letter of apology to Arnett.

And on yet another note; during dinner Mark Frueh made a toast that "may none of us ever be cursed with Linsey's sense of humor". See ya round trench mouth.

Looking forward to your funeral.

Woody

((How can one possibly argue against such persuasive logic as this? You shouldn't have destroyed Ty's doll though; I'd like to have seen it myself if he makes it to BRUXCON this winter. Thanks for a letter that says lots about me, but infinitely more about you.))



From Rob Schmunk (9/2/84):

Dear BRUX,

In celebration of your fifth annish and the achievement of 100 issues, please find enclosed a document which shows how the fate of the world rests upon the future publication of The Voice of Doom...

Congratulations.

I'd like to add my voice to those who are decrying the lack of game openings in The Voice of Doom. Though I'm in too many other games to join another, I do like to keep track of those that are being run. Additionally, VD is enjoying fifty page issues with only five pages of game material. To me that seems ridiculous. Besides, if you've got the time to put out fifty-page issues, I don't think you're going to miss the extra hour and a half it would take to adjudicate one game and type up a normal amount of press.

One other note along that same line: your circulation is down from 125 to 116 over the past year. Is that because of the lack of game openings?

I know that this is following in the footsteps of my fellow Idaho Doome, the oh-so-honorable Richard Reilly (who I hope is feeling all the guilt he so richly deserves), but I'd like to comment on his group of lists, which were prompted by somebody else's group of lists, which were prompted by somebody else's group of lists. Richard, how could you leave out The Complete Annotated Sherlock Holmes by William S. Baring-Gould from your list of books? I suppose if you're limited to five, you could make a case, but really!

The movie list as compered by Rich shows the typical American movie-goer's shallowness in that it doesn't reach back very far over the years, and really doesn't even include any of the modern classics either. I'll have to grant Richard's point of specifying that he was only taking video tapes to the desert island, which precludes some of the best stuff ever made. Therefore to correct this horrible injustice, I'm going to specify that on my desert island, there's a decent 16-millimeter projector so that I can include just about anything in my list, which is:

- Diva, directed by Jean-Jacques Beiniex
- Citizen Kane, directed by Orson Wells
- Blade Runner, directed by Ridley Scott
- Megall Az Ido (Time Stands Still), directed by Peter Gothar
- 2001: A Space Odyssey, directed by Stanley Kubrick

I'd have to hope that the island wasn't completely deserted so that the other people would have brought along movies from my list of honorable mentions, movies like Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back, Close Encounters, The Stuntman, King Kong (the original), Birth of a Nation, most Hitchcock films, Brainstorm, a couple of Hepburn/Grant comedies, most of Capra's films...Actually, I'm sure that no matter how many people were on that island, there would be a film that would turn up missing.

Forget all that, I'd be happy on that island if all I had was a copy of Abel Gance's immortal 1927 epic, Napolean, but I'd need an anamorphic lens so I could watch the last reel.

Well, away from movies, a topic on which I could endlessly expound, and on to music. It's obvious that Richard's musical tastes lie in a region far removed from mine since my island would contain the following:

- My Spanish Heart, by Chick Corea
- New Life, by the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Quartet
- The Complete Beethoven Symphonies
- Carmen, by Bizet
- Woody Herman at the Monterey Jazz Festival

A far, far different list from Rich's and the one that was published earlier. Music tends to be far more a matter of personal taste than the movies, though, so I'll admit that Rich's list is perfectly valid.

It'd be nice to see what some of the other Doomies could come up with in the way of lists. It's one of the better ways to see what they're made of without physically visiting them.

...The summer was pretty unexciting, as it turned out. If I'd known back in February what I was going to end up doing, I probably would have told you that I'd make it to KabinKon. The addition of my presence probably wouldn't have kept you from cancelling it, though, since I gather that the amount of interest was pretty slim.

I'm low on further comments to make, but I hope to see the recent spat of feuding in VD die down quickly. It really doesn't make good reading, which is about all that's keeping me with you now.

((Maybe KabinKon next summer, eh?

See all the ruckus Jake Halverstadt started with his lists? Who ever thought that the initial discussion would lead to movies on a desert island??

Here are the five record albums I'd take with me:

An Evening with John Denver

Gold's Gold, by Gordon Lightfoot

The Best of Roger Whittaker

Abba's Greatest Hits, Volume II

Time in a Bottle, by Jim Croce

Simon and Garfunkel's Greatest Hits

Blowing in the Wind, by Peter Paul, and Mary

Seasons of the Heart, by John Denver

That's only five, right? OK, OK, I'd narrow it down to #s 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 on the list, if you insist. I'm so wishy-washy.

Movies? Yow. All mine would be recent, since I'm not a connoisseur of the films.

Star Wars

Oh God!

Breaking Away

Tootsie

Moonraker

I don't know anything about movies, though.

Five Doomies I'd like to have with me on a desert island:

Forget it pal; I couldn't narrow the list below a few dozen! But there'd better be a few Diplomacy sets as well. (Shades of KabinKon?)

Thanks much for a nice letter!))

From Don Del Grande (9/7/84):

BRUX:

How could you send an issue of Voice of Doom with 17¢ postage due? It's time for the supreme punishment! Let's see...Afrika Korps, After the Holocaust, Agincourt, Air Assault on Crete (with Invasion of Malta as a bonus game), Air War (updated edition), Alexander, Alpha Omega... ((No, no, NOOOO! Anything but the 500 wargames!!!))

I just received Cathy's Ramblings, but Raging Main is still a mystery...but the big question remains: where are Envoy and Zine Register '84? Roy Henricks has been in a hole somewhere for 5 months! As for Erehwon, I got the story from Rod when I was down in San Diego: it seems that Rod was suffering weekly bouts of (I think it was) hypertension every weekend, but now things are supposedly OK, and both Diplomacy World and Erehwon have been mailed. (I assume DW has been mailed, since I saw a pile of new DWs in Rod's car.)

May I assume that somebody told you about what was in Graustark #497 concerning why you haven't seen it lately? Personally, you put up the money, and John admits that you "once subscribed to Graustark", so if he doesn't send you some sort of refund, there's some sort of "implied contract" that he has to mail you Graustark. (You'll have to ask the hobby legal experts on this one, however... what do we

computer types know?)

Where was I?...La Bataille de la Moskva, La Grande Armee, Legion, Lille, Luftwaffe, Machiavelli...

As to the RIGEL Affair in number 99, you say that the GM should adjudicate what is there -- no more, no less. The trouble is that what is there is a letter written by Russia along with the Russian orders written in by France. Forget that the letter text has been crossed out -- it's still there. But there's another point: you told Kleiman that you would invoke the Greater Good rule if he protested. Isn't that GM interference?

What happened to The Acolyte? The WGCers are always the last to know.

I knew the Dippy hobby was slowly working its way into The General (I see Supernova got a mention in the latest issue -- you're lucky they got the address right; when Roy Henricks got a mention once, they used his old Richmond, VA address), but changing the name of one of their games to Rail Barno? What's next -- Squad Leader? Alexander the Lord? Bis-mark Berch? Rrrrrrrrusnak's War?

My guess for the front photo of VD 100: didn't Noto just have a daughter recently?

There wasn't enough Hobbytalk in number 99 -- especially for those of us who don't have you as a subscriber and so don't have to worry about actually appearing in the column. (However, I do need some publicity for a planned PEM game of "Diplomacy Pursuit", with special hobby categories -- for example, what was the color of the cover of the last Brutus Bulletin? What were the colorful names of the two Voice of Doom fakes? What "hobby holiday" is celebrated every August 15?)

Not much of an issue this time...I guess people are saving it up for the big 100. I'm only about five months from number 50 myself. Then there's Graustark's number 500, but I don't expect much of an extra effort for that one. Then again, the 20th anniversary issue was thicker than usual.

By the way...the latest rumor is that the USPS will re-introduce Pony Express so that issue 100 of VD can be delivered at an affordable cost.

PS. The answers to the questions: I) White; II) Mellow Yellow and Rinky Pink; III) August 15 is Berchmas (better known as Joshua Berch's birthday -- but everybody knows that the birth of the son of God himself (not to be confused with the son of God Himself, which is in December sometime) is a holiday).

PPS. ...Wooden Ships and Iron Men, World War I, World War II, World War 3, Yalu, Yeoman. (The three "World War" titles -- yes, the third one is not "World War III", but "World War 3" -- are all by SPI.)

((You sadist you. Couldn't let me get out one last issue without your 500 wargames. Waaaa...))

Raging Main and Envoy are both very late. I know that James Woodson planned to skip publishing for a month, but it seems he's late beyond that. Henricks is months behind schedule. Erehwon arrived shortly after VD #99 went out, just as I predicted it would.

The fate of The Acolyte should be mentioned in Hobbytalk elsewhere, if you still haven't received your number 60.

Did you know that the last issue of BB was #110? I'll just bet you thought it was #109...

OK, I found out why I haven't been getting Graustark lately. It's widely known that Boardman has, shall we say, some strange views about certain highly-regarded hobby members. Thus very few people pay any attention to his diatribes against Berch, Coughlan, Walker, me, and so on. What isn't as widely known -- till now, that is -- is that Boardman steals people's subscription money. On November 24, 1983, I sent Boardman a check for \$10.00 to cover a subscription through Graustark #501. The last issue I received was #495. It turns out that Boardman has "suspended" my sub because of my feud with Kathy Byrne! Well, then, maybe he can use my sub money to put out a big #500 for the rest of his subscribers. But be forewarned: if you sub to Graustark and happen to disagree with Herr Doktor Boardmann, he may steal your sub money too. Gary Coughlan once said that "thief" is such an ugly word...))

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((The above is a xerox of my cancelled subscription check to Graustark, which John has cut off six issues early, without refund.))

From Chaff Afflerbach (9/5/84):

Dear Bruce -- I mean BRUX!

Well, it was indeed a pleasure to visit with you on Labor Day this week. Glad you could take off a few precious minutes from your busy schedule. Attached is my version of what transpired that morning, if you dare to print it. I'm proud to take my place among the select few who have found themselves face-to-face with BRUX and lived to tell about it. Let's do it again sometime -- say, in another five years?

While I'm on the subject of survivors, I want to second all those nominations of little Samantha Corbin as Doomette of the Year. Yes, she had you eating Cheerios out of her hand, and at her feet. And sure, she definitely dumped on you -- assuring her place in the hearts of Doomies everywhere. But the clincher has to be the fact that you saved the diaper. Most folks are content with just carrying around baby pictures in their wallet. But not our BRUX!

Testing...testing...is this typewriter working? ...Reagan is hereby outlawed and I intend to bomb the White House in five minutes... Hey! Can't you FBI guys take a joke!? ...You know, while we're on the subject of real and imagined death threats, I must say you really put Mr. High-horse in his place. But for the record, I feel that such offhand, flippant references to the San Ysidro Massacre are in really poor taste...

Well! I see that your little parody of my parody in VD #97 fooled some of the best minds in the hobby. Yes, I even checked to see how many free issues I had earned. Mr. Luedl commented, "Chuff Afflerbach as per usual had me rolling around holding my belly." I know just how he feels. I get a bit nauseous myself when I write this dreck. So anyway, BRUX, congrats on a piece well-done, and no hard feelings. My lawyer will be in touch with you soon.

Melinda Holley makes the point that all those Official Olympic Sponsors keep me from having to support the games with my tax dollars. No, I don't have to buy their official products -- but I do have to take up the slack caused by their Official Olympic Tax Deductions. If there's a point that was missed, it is this: it matters not so much who is paying but rather what is being bought and sold. Didn't all that rabid, flag-waving "patriotism" look entirely too much like Munich in 1936? ABC's coverage was all too reminiscent of "Triumph of the Will", Hitler's epic propoganda film extolling the natural superiority of the home tema. In such an atmosphere it is indeed fortunate that no Russians showed up. Lynching Zola Budd could hardly be expected to slake the thirst for "sportsmanship" and "international good will". So, now may I rest my case for a while?

One last bit of biz: I'm enclosing a SASE or two, so I can keep up with all that nasty stuff Kathy is saying about whomever. Say! Maybe there'll be enough cash from this year's Relief Auction to fund this valuable reprint service of yours!

So once and for all, it was sure nice chatting with you over breakfast this week. You'll be getting the dry-cleaning bill.

((A full account of my breakfast with Chuff appears elsewhere in the issue.

I didn't watch much of the Olympics, so can't make a judgement on what you are saying. Maybe if we start clearing ground for concentration camps I'll start to worry, though.

Re High-horse: I was only pointing out that sometimes these signals have to be taken seriously...))

From Rob Schmunk (9/5/84):

BRUX,

I can't quite believe I'm doing this, but here I am actually writing to you for the second time in three days. 'Course if I got technical, I could explain that my last effort took approximately a month of lunch hours on the word processor at work. The problem is that I had such a good launch at being a successful Diplomatic black hole (for those interested, the critical factor here is momentum, not mass). Well, traditions come and go.

First off, I'd just like to thank you for VD #99. After who knows how long, I was able to actually sit down and read an issue of VD in less than an hour. It seems to me that other recent issues have taken two or three days.

Addenda to my lists in the last letter. I'm glad to see that Steve Knight came forward. Somehow, I get the feeling that the annish will be full of 'em. But back to Knight's list; aha, somebody with a bit of taste in movies. He also mentions the author Orson Scott Card, who I believe is an English professor just a few hours away from Idaho Falls. I can't remember if he teaches at Utah State in Logan or the Univ. of Utah in Salt Lake City.

It appears that there are a high number of computer programmers in the Doonie fold, as is evidenced by a couple of letters in #99. Here, too, I must step out of the closet and admit that that's how I've been making my money for the last four summers. And no matter how ridiculous you may find this, I haven't done anything in something other than BASIC since March 1980. It's all been DEC's BASIC-Plus since then, with mostly BASIC-Plus-Two during a couple of months. I understand, though, that BPZ has a lot of

FORTRAN and COBOL elements in it, so maybe I'm not a single-language person. I suppose it would help if I took a refresher in FORTRAN. After all, I'm a physics major and it might come in handy if I go into research. The point of all this is that I've never really felt the need to study any other languages and so am enthralled by discussions about the advantages of one language over another.

On to politics, where I must admit my liberal tendencies. Though I refuse to label myself a Democrat, I know I'm sure as hell not a Republican. I'll admit your right to be whatever you want, but there are times when I'm reading the Gossip Column, that I am rendered speechless by what I consider your inflexibility. If you've admitted dissatisfaction with anything that Reagan's done, I must've missed it. Sorry if I've implied that you're a stiff-necked natural child, but that's the impression I've been getting.

A few points I suppose I ought to make about my own politics. Number one, you may or may not have heard of a jerk by the name of Gerge Hansen. To refresh your memory, he's the congressman from southern Idaho who went to Iran five years ago because he thought he could conduct foreign policy without benefit of presidential knowledge. More recently, he was convicted by a federal court for violation of the financial disclosure act by omitting loans to his wife and silver commodities dealings by same. To put it bluntly, the clown insults the intelligence of nearly everybody but the southeastern Idaho voter, who is highly conservative and believes in such things as the Wall Street banking conspiracy and that Tip O'Neill tells the House of Reps what to do on anything that comes before it. I am ashamed to admit that I live in the county that provided Hansen's margin of victory in 1982.

Now lest you think that my politics are a backlash to a clown in Congress, please realize that four years ago I favored Reagan against Carter. I can still remember several Democrats who were pissed off about something I wrote in my high school the day after his inauguration. What I wrote was to the effect that "a new day is dawning, let's make the best of it." I can appreciate now what they said for I'm convinced that Reagan has screwed us over well. The federal deficit has reached proportions that cannot be considered ridiculous but must be labeled a crime. A comment I heard last spring on the topic still angers me when I think of it. An economist was asked how long he thought the current economic boom (i.e. low inflation, lowering unemployment) would hold out. He replied, "Until after Reagan is re-elected." You may react, "So what," but it demonstrates to me the cavalier attitude of the administration about what's going on.

God, a page on politics and I could generate ten more if I had a tape recorder. Suffice it to say that I may live in a right-wing neighborhood but I'm going to be out there cancelling somebody's vote in November.

I would like to say, BRUX, that I do admire your restraint in refraining from commenting as do a couple friends of mine. They earnestly believe that the word Democrat is synonymous with wimp. If they were any more reactionary, they'd probably be urging that we launch now. Maybe they're not as bad as Highfield but there are grounds for comparison.

And on the topic of Highfield, after my cursory glances at what's appeared in VD 98 and 99, I suppose that you have acted as best you could.

While I'm thinking of it, you may have been coy in this last issue about admitting why you're called BRUX but I can sense the desire within you seeking to break out and tell all. You were probably just holding it back so it would be two more pages for the annish. (What? Did I say two? G'mon, BRUX, you can do better. Make it five.) So let me join the chorus of those asking that you tell all, admit the truth, leaving not one iota obscure.

About the new topic of homosexuality which threatens to generate letters for months to come: no comment. I've seen enough of this go through the school newspaper up at Montana State that all I can ask is that we be spared the letters of the reactionaries and those who would educate them on the fallacy of their views. I'm glad to see that you're editing the heavily religious stuff. It got to the point up at school that half of the letters to the editor were all numbers and colours.

((Yeah, that sort of stuff turns me off, too. No way would I ever have let VD turn into a forum for detailed discussion of the Bible.

Oh, all right; I can explain the origin of "BRUX" one last time, for the newer members of the audience. A long time ago, in the Scouts, my best friend was named Frank. I called him FRUX, for short (I was too lazy to say a five-letter name, so I shortened it to four). He retaliated and called me BRUX -- and it STUX. Happy now?

Your argument about Reagan is a case of condemn-him-if-he-does-and-condemn-him-if-he-doesn't. You say that you are angry that there is low inflation and lowering unemployment now, because your source says that this will hold out till Reagan is re-elected. Well, what does Reagan have to do to please you? If you're not happy with low inflation and lowering unemployment, would you rather have the opposite? As for the argument that this is just going to last till after he's re-elected: if he's proven he can do it for the first four years, then doesn't that indicate that he may be successful for the next four? Or are you seriously going to argue that he's just strengthened the economy as a temporary measure in order to get re-elected? What evidence do you have to support this belief? Seems to me that the Democrats were telling us in 1980 just how dreadful the economy would be if Reagan was elected now. Now, based on what you are saying, it appears that the argument is that he's held back on all this dreadfulness so that he could serve for another four years.

If you think I always agree with Reagan, thumb through some issues of a few months ago until you find the mini-discussion on prayer in schools.

As for my inflexibility, I don't see it that way. Just because all of my opinions are right and anyone who disagrees is wrong doesn't make me inflexible, does it?))

From John Michalski (9/5/84):

Br:

Here's an amish submission to help out, and to help out my dying sub.

On the RIGEL Affair, you say it all in the last line: why does this always happen in VD? Bruce, your HRS force it to happen. ONLY in VD could it happen. Everyone else has common sense, which your HRS outlaw. Therefore, everyone has fun playing your HRS more than the game, although no one will beat Ig Lew and his classic line: "Army Munich does NOT hold."

So it goes.

((Thanks for the response, and the article. I'm still not sure I understand what role common sense is supposed to play in the adjudication of games. To me, common sense and GMing are mutual exclusive. It's sort of like the computer at work: it does just what you tell it to do, regardless of whether that is what you meant to tell it. Garbage in, garbage out. That's how I GM, too.))

((I mentioned earlier in response to Langley that Terry Tallman had been trying to take revenge against James Wall for a stab by getting into all of his games as a standby. I inquired directly to James regarding this, and here's what he has to say about it.))

From James Wall (9/7/84):

BRUX,

Too bad your quick question defies a quick answer. As succinctly as possible, I found out from Paul Rauterberg that Mr. Tallman had requested to be a standby in any game that includes James Wall. In the two years that I've had contact with Tallman, he has exhibited an almost pseudo-sexual thrill out of blasting me in articles, badmouthing me to others, and in general making a real pain of himself. He has admitted to others (Ozog, Cunnig, Frueh, in print (Midlife Crisis), etc.) that he thinks it is fun to harass others whom he doesn't even know. I suggest that you refer

back to past issues of MC and Lirksome, as well as NSWG, to learn the extent of what he has written about me. At the same time, of course, you will see how little (especially of late) that I've said of him, and will notice also that what I've said has almost exclusively been of a rebuttal in nature.

The sad thing of this was that at the time I found out about the request (MedCor II), things had seemingly quieted down between the two of us. I hadn't written anything about him in print for at least 8 months, at a guess. In fact I'd written an open letter to the hobby very critical of the hate mongers in the hobby, so I guess in retrospect that I shouldn't be too surprised that he felt it was necessary to write a personal rebuttal to me about my open letter. It just proves the point that whatever conduct he chooses to follow is fine and dandy, but at the same time he feels that he is in a position to pass moral judgements on others as well.

For the record, and you may quote this, I feel that Terry Tallman has been way out of line in his conduct regarding me, and that after being made aware of my opinions of his conduct, he still continued to persist in it. He claims that he feels it is all in fun, but I've again let him know that I do not view it that way and through others have asked him to stop. I've gotten no affirmative response from him. My reaction to date has been to live and let live, but I am certainly reappraising my attitudes with him as I'll only be pushed so far. He is an asshole who really enjoys being an ass to others. He may just find out that all people do not appreciate his "humor". Enough is enough.

By the way do not put this in your zine in the letter column per se. ((I have since called James, and he has given me permission to run this as it appears here.)) Feel free to use it in any manner when you do rebut the slug, but please only use it in that context. This is not an editorial about him, but given the shit that's flying I do feel that you need some backup. I know where Tallman is concerned I could have used some though no one bothered to say a word until issue 15 of MC when Paul ((Rauterberg)) finally realized that all may not be fun and games where Tallman is concerned. Also, you may be interested to find out that at the last two cons I've attended public opinion is definitely against our fat little friend. People are getting wise to our friend, the Seattle Slug.

((Stop and think for a minute, readers, what it must be like to have some jerk trying to get into all of your games as a standby just for the purpose of repaying a stab that occurred years ago. I think that James should tell his GMs in no uncertain terms that he doesn't want Tallman in his games. The GMs should oblige this request (I know I would).))

Some people in this life get their kicks by hurting others. These people are known as sadists, and Tallman is the hobby's prime example of one. James is right on the money: Tallman really enjoys being an ass to others, and it shows. John Kelly met him, and commented afterward that he was about the most personally obnoxious person he'd ever met. Coughlan, after reading of Tallman's attempts to discredit various others, has told me repeatedly that he just considers Terry utterly pathetic. I fully agree.

But out of all this we ought to give Terry credit for one thing: he recognizes his own talents. He has no talent for GMing, for example, and so appears to have given it up. (My understanding is that all the games in his zine are now guest GMed.) He does have a talent for aggravating others, and so is pursuing this course with abandon. "Incite great agony" in people, indeed. Not only is the guy a prick, but he's proud of it. My advice to James and others in the same boat would just be to ignore him, except, as mentioned above, make sure he doesn't end up in one of your games and spoil yourfun that way.

Uh oh -- I just realized that I quoted from Terry's zine last paragraph. Now, I realize that you might consider this in violation of your copyright laws, Terry, but please don't sue me for it. Pretty please. After all I just had to reprint some of your Glowing Prose to balance all this slime that's in my letter column, right??)



The following article needs an introduction. This is the first article I ever wrote as a Diplomacy hobbyist. It was written before I even began to think about publishing, which means that it is over five years old. It was published in Murd'ring Ministers #10, a zine I was delighted to receive back then and am still delighted to receive now. Upon rereading it after all these years, I am thankful that I developed a bit of writing ability before starting to publish. So here it is, folks, BRUK's very first Diplomacy article...

### Counting the Alliance Structures

One of the first questions a Diplomacy player must ask himself after joining a game and after negotiating with the other players is, "What should be my first moves, given the alliance structure as I know it?" Numerous articles have been devoted to these first moves, such articles usually focusing on one country and one or maybe a few alliance structures. But what, indeed, is an alliance structure? How many possibilities are there at the game's beginning?

Let us start off by making a crazy assumption. We will say that each of the seven countries can feel one of three ways toward each of the other six: friendly, hostile, or neutral. Now, this is not too realistic because in the case of neighboring powers, such as Italy and Austria, there is almost no possibility of neutrality. The odds are that either the two have negotiated an alliance and are both friendly toward each other; or they have negotiated an alliance which one intends to violate, meaning that one is friendly and the other hostile; or they will go to war and are both hostile toward each other. Between, say, France and Turkey, though, there may well be neutral attitudes at the beginning.

Also, we must assume that (and this is true, mostly) feelings are not necessarily mutual; for example, the alliance which one party intends to break is a friendly relationship one way and hostile the other; or, as another example, England may not even care about Turkey, but Turkey may be negotiating with someone else to attack England. This would be a neutral/hostile relationship.

Now, we will define an alliance structure as one possible combination of these relationships among the seven countries at the beginning of the game. Well, then, how many possible alliance structures are there? The answer may surprise some readers, but it is 3 to the sixth power, raised to the seventh power, or roughly 100,000,000,000,000,000,000. This means that if everyone in the world were to play Diplomacy after dividing up into groups of seven, and each game took one second to complete, and after completion each group instantly started playing again, that five thousand years would elapse before a game with the same exact alliance structure as any previous game would have to be played! This also assumes a constant world population of just over four billion, but that is reasonable because:

- 1) How many people do you know that have died while playing? and
- 2) With everyone constantly playing, the birth rate would be zero for obvious reasons.

One hundred quintillion possible alliance structures! But remember the crazy assumption we made in the second paragraph of this article? Suppose we eliminate the neutral option, then, and say that everyone is (potentially, at least) either friendly or hostile toward everyone else. Would this reduce the number of possibilities significantly? The answer is yes, but there would still be well over four trillion possible alliance structures, which would allow our world of people to play for just a little over an hour and a half (still at one game per second) before getting repetitious. Or, if you had a penny for each one, you could still buy out forty billionaires.

OK, you say, but I know what my feelings toward everyone are at the beginning of the game! That will further reduce the number quite substantially. If you only consider those possibilities which include the attitudes you (say you're playing Germany) have already decided on, then (sorry about this) there are still over sixty-five billion alliance structures which could be lurking deep within the minds of your opponents.

In desperation, I hear you now cry, "All right! Let's say all feelings are now mutual AND I know who all of my allies and enemies are! Now how many are there?" Well, now if you are Germany and you have an alliance with Austria, you know that Austria also feels friendly toward you. And, that either Britain and France are both friendly toward each other, or both hostile. Among the other six countries there are now fifteen possible pairs (e.g. Russia-Turkey, Russia-Italy, Italy-France, etc.), each of which can either be an alliance or a hostile relationship, so there are now only two to the fifteenth power possible alliance structures (32,768). Of these, many are ridiculous, such as having all of the other six countries allied with each other, or all six being mutual enemies, or even any five of them all being mutually allied. Still, there at least 20,000 possibly reasonable alliance structures at the beginning of a game, even after you know your friends and enemies.

Now, you want to memorize the correct opening moves for each of these? Maybe you should take up tic-tac-toe!

Next century, I'll present the results of calculations for the Youngstown variant...

((Like I said, I'm glad I learned to write before I started up YD. I'd just known about Diplomacy for three or four months when the above was written. From humble beginnings...))



Range War

A WARS and Family Variant

by Colin Bruce

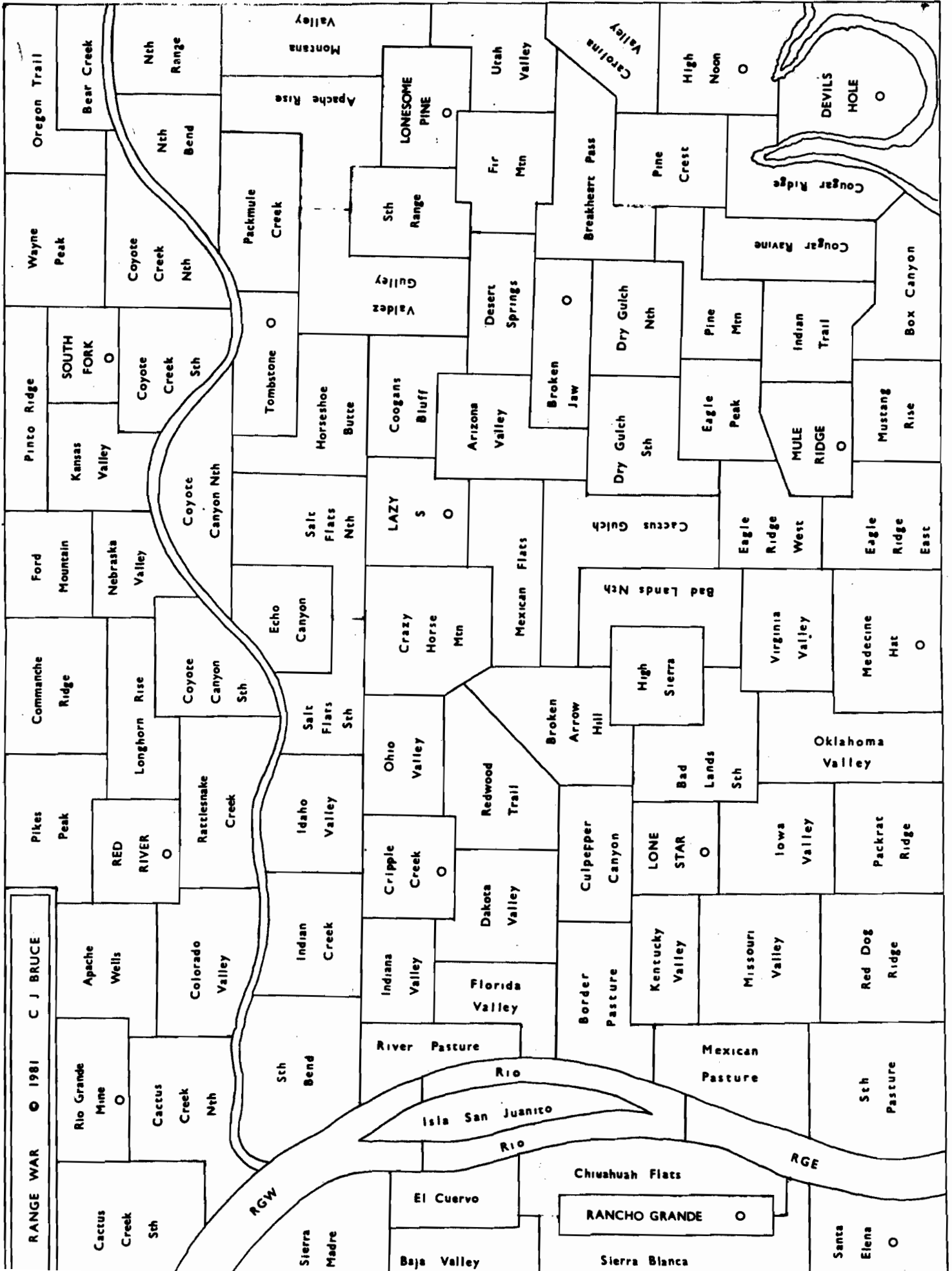
1. The standard rules of Diplomacy (1971 Rulebook) apply, except as amended below.
2. There are eight players, representing seven powerful Ranches (LONE STAR, RANCHO GRANDE, RED RIVER, LAZY S, SOUTH FORK, MULE RIDGE, and LONESOME PINE) on the Texas/Mexico border, plus the local band of Outlaws (THE DEVIL'S HOLE GANG).
3. Printed on the game map are 15 supply centres (the seven ranch houses, plus the Devil's Hole), 6 neutral centres (the Rio Grande Mine plus the towns of Tombstone, Cripple Creek, Medicine Hat, Broken Jaw, and Santa Elena) and one owned centre (the town of High Noon). The latter is exactly the same as a neutral except that when the game begins it is already under the control of the Devil's Hole Gang. These 15 centres do not move.
4. Not printed on the game map are, at the start of the game, a further 21 centres -- 8 owned and 13 neutral. These centres are herds of cattle, and they can move. All the players start with one herd (abbreviated "H") except for the Lazy S and the DHC. The Lazy S starts with two herds, the DHC with none.
5. The only other unit used is the Gang (abbreviated "G") of ranch hands or outlaws. The Lazy S starts with three gangs, the other seven players have two apiece. Gangs move as do Armies in regular Diplomacy.

6. Initial Placements:--

- Devil's Hole Gang: G(Devil's Hole), G(High Noon)
- Lazy S: G(Lazy S), G(Crazy Horse Mtn), G(Coogan's Bluff), H(Crazy Horse Mtn), H(Coogan's Bluff)
- Lonesome Pines: G(Lonesome Pine), G(Fir Mtn), H(Fir Mtn)
- Lone Star: G(Lone Star), G(Culpepper Canyon), H(Culpepper Canyon)
- Mule Ridge: G(Mule Ridge), G(Eagle Peak), H(Eagle Peak)
- Rancho Grande: G(Rancho Grande), G(Isle San Juanito), H(Isle San Juanito)
- Red River: G(Red River), G(Rattlesnake Creek), H(Rattlesnake Creek)
- South Fork: G(South Fork), G(Kansas Valley), H(Kansas Valley)

Unbranded Herds: H(Cactus Creek Sth), H(Commanche Ridge), H(Nth Range),  
 H(Montana Valley), H(Pine Crest), H(Cougar Ravine),  
 H(Box Canyon), H(Cactus Gulch), H(High Sierra),  
 H(Red Dog Ridge), H(Florida Valley), H(Indiana Valley),  
 H(Echo Canyon)

7. A board space may only be occupied by a maximum of one gang and one herd at any time. It may never be occupied by two gangs, nor by two herds. Herds may be left unattended.
8. Although each player includes any herds he controls in each set of orders (e.g. "G(Coc)-Lzy, G(LPR)-Fir, H(Val)") herds may never move on their own, nor may they give support in any way. The only way to move a herd is to move it with a gang (e.g. "GH(ISJ)-Rio"). Note that "GH" is not a permanent unit -- it merely shows that the gang and the herd are moving together. Like gangs, herds may move only one space.
9. When a gang is ordered to move to a space with its herd, including the case where it enters the space against opposition (i.e. it is successfully supported into a space) it may take its herd with it (the "GH" order is used) provided the space entered does not already contain a herd. If it does, the attacking gang's herd remains where it is and the gang moves on its own.  
 However, gangs forced to retreat from a space may never retreat their herds with them. If a gang is removed through being forced to retreat but having no retreat orders (or no available retreat spaces) its herd remains in place, intact.
10. Any herd in an area occupied by a gang may be moved (as per 8 and 9) by the player owning the gang, who includes the herd on his orders for that turn.
11. There are two seasons per year, Summer and Winter, with Branding (i.e. Adjustments) in the Spring. Ownership of supply centres is determined at the end of the Winter move. However, any herd in a space occupied by a rival gang during the Summer move is returned to neutral status unless the owning player can recapture the herd before the Spring Branding count. (This represents the nuisance value of fence-cutting raids, and does not apply to non-movable supply centres.)
12. Builds may be of two types -- new gangs or new herds (but see 13). These must be placed on the board on a player's home centre if it is available. (Note that a gang occupying a space does not block the building of a herd and vice versa. A gang and a herd may be built in the same space at the same time if it is completely empty.) Failing this, a player may build in any other non-movable supply centres he owns (including captured home centres). If none of these are free, he may build in any space occupied by one of his herds. (Note that these builds must therefore be gangs.)
13. Whenever a player captures a rival home centre for the first time, he may choose to make one of his builds a herd (provided he has some builds coming to him) during the following Spring. Herds may not be built at any other time, including the subsequent recapture of that home centre by the same player.  
 Herds built in this way do not require a supply centre to maintain them -- they are counted, in fact, as supply centres in their own right when the next Spring Branding count begins.
14. It is perfectly possible for herds to occupy non-movable supply centres. Any player having control of that space at the end of the Winter move thus controls two centres, and reaps the benefits.
15. There are two rivers on the map -- the Red River and the Rio Grande. The Red River in no way impedes movement (e.g. "G(CCN)-Tom" and "G(COS)-CON" are both legal) but the Rio Grande, which divides the board into Texas and Mexico, forms three board spaces of its own. Any herd left unattended in one of these at the end of a move is removed from play.
16. The Victory Criterion is the sole control of 19 supply centres. The game starts in Summer 1870.



Indirect and Schizophrenic Support

Indirect support and schizophrenic support are two tactical devices which can be utilized from time to time in Diplomacy. But many players are unaware of these options, so I shall attempt to explain them in this article.

Let's start with indirect support. There are three rules which make this device necessary and possible. First, a unit ordered to move cannot be supported in place if its move fails; second, you may not dislodge your own unit; and third, a "beleaguered garrison" (a unit subjected to two equally well-supported attacks) is not dislodged. Now, suppose you have a unit which you want to order to move (possibly only for the purpose of cutting a support), yet at the same time you wish to protect the space it is in from a possible supported attack. How might you do this? If you have two unit of your own adjacent to that space behind the battle lines, you yourself can support an attack on the space your ordered-to-move unit occupies. If your unit there does move, you will stand off the enemy's supported attack into that space, or (if that attack is not forthcoming) you will move another unit into the space. But if your unit in the disputed space fails to move, it will not be dislodged by the enemy attack either, because with your own attack you have created a beleaguered garrison. And if no enemy attack is forthcoming, well, you still stay put because you can't dislodge your own unit!

Time for an example. Let's assume that you are France, with armies in Burgundy, Paris, and Marseilles; and Germany has armies in Belgium, Ruhr, and Kiel. You wish to try a sneak move into Munich. But, because you will be ordering A Bur-Mun, you cannot support your Army Burgundy in place if the move is stood off from Kiel. And you certainly cannot afford to allow a German army to enter Burgundy! So you also order A Par-Bur (A Mar S), giving your unit indirect support. If you seize Munich, you still have stopped any possible supported attack on Burgundy. And if you don't take Munich, either the prohibition against self-dislodgement or the beleaguered garrison rule will allow your Army Burgundy to stay put. A handy trick, no?

Now, on to schizophrenic support. This tactic is used less often than schizophrenic support. Suppose you have agreed to let another player move to a space with a particular unit of his. But then he decides to take control with a different unit, in such a way as to gain a much more powerful position against you. If you have two units adjacent to the space in question, you can ensure that he only may move the agreed-upon unit in. How? Move one of your units to the space, and with your other unit support his attack! For instance, you are Russia with F Swe and A StP. You have agreed to let England take Norway with his F Nth. But you want to make sure that he doesn't convoy an army there instead. You would order F Swe-Nwy, A StP S ENGLISH F Nth-Nwy. He will succeed only if he attempts to move in with the fleet.

This technique can also be used if your ally has a habit of missing his moves, and you have agreed to support him into a vacant enemy center. You would give him schizophrenic support; then if he missed his moves -- you would take the center!

It must be noted that tricks like the above two cannot generally take the place of good, solid negotiating and planning, but they do have their uses in special situations. So it may well pay to know them.



John Kelley was around when VD started, and except for a few months has been a Doomie for the past five years. A strong supporter and frequent contributor to the zine, his ideas about the hobby and life are interesting often because they are so unusual. THANKS...to Doomie John Kelley.

In VD #93 there appeared an article on "Gaining an Ally". But what if your ally turns out to be a pain in the ass? VD now proudly presents the following article reprinted from Passchendaele #29...

### Dumping an Ally

by Randolph Smyth

Of all the subjects on the play of Diplomacy, this is perhaps the touchiest. For any novice who is beyond the stage of quitting when he fails to find an ally in the first place, losing an ally is the cause of most dropouts. Being stabbed is far more traumatic than losing a well-fought game to an enemy. Stabs are only the most violent means of breaking off an alliance, though; sometimes, goals change as the game progresses and allies simply drift apart. How does one terminate earlier commitments, and which of these ways are "best"?

To avoid any stain on your reputation, the best way is to put a specific time limit or other similar constraints (until one of us reaches ten centers, until Germany is eliminated) on the duration of the agreement in the first place. The ally will then be aware that your relationship is about to end, but if you're the type of player that progresses by diplomacy rather than hacking away with the knife at every opportunity, this own't bother you much.

The fence-sitting route is for those who want the benefits of surprise without being branded as an actual liar: word your alliance agreements with a loophole which (you hope) the other guy won't see until you're ready to take advantage of it. The disadvantage here is that, while the ally may not be able to complain effectively to other players, he may be just as angry at being "tricked" as though you'd actually stabbed him.

The most renowned and immediately effective method is, of course, the stab. Generally it's over-used: players get impatient and stab too early, or realize that the best opportunity has passed them by and attack belatedly anyhow, or do it just for fun. Results in any case are likely to be disappointing in terms of substantial progress in board position, but are usually a roaring success in terms of ending the alliance.

I've heard some players advocate a "black-and-white" strategy: if a fellow player is not an ally, make him as much of an enemy as possible with insulting press and letters, until you are no longer on speaking terms. The idea is to make him so angry that he attacks you to the exclusion of all else -- which makes him very predictable and gives your new ally an easy target. The problem is that your defense/counterattack is perforce equally predictable, and it's rarely to your advantage to go to so much trouble for the exclusive benefit of a third party. Also, even if your enemy is not normally a cross-gamer, it's only natural for personal hostility to affect other games if you ever meet him elsewhere. So, however an alliance is broken off, try to pour oil on the rough waters with explanatory letters.

Suppose you have an ironclad contract with another player which is obviously working against you, but you're not the stabbing type -- is there any way out? Of course, many such players seem to feel obliged to drift along under the terms of the agreement, getting a lot less from their potential than they should; there's some cause to be extremely bitter when your old ally then turns around and stabs you later (not infrequent). One idea is to take the bull by the horns and simply tell your ally, "Sorry, guy, this agreement isn't doing me any good. I'd be glad to renegotiate it if you're willing to give me a better deal, but on the original terms the treaty is off." Even players who have little compunction about stabbing everyone in sight will balk at washing their hands of outdated commitments in this way. Yet it's not a stab, and if you have a legitimate grievance, breaking the contract is less unfair to the other guy than continuing it would be to you. Most players have an exaggerated respect for their own agreements except in the absolute context of a stab.

However, you may feel that even this breakoff of an existing treaty will violate your ethical standards. OK -- then you have to depend on diplomacy to get you the best alternative deal you can. Approach your ally and suggest changes which you think will give you a better deal. The other fellow isn't likely to simply make you a gift

of something that was given to him in the original treaty, so you'll have to look further down the road. Point out the inequities in the current deal and demand a larger compensatory share of whatever wasn't agreed on. Then you may offer him back some of this pie-in-the-sky for more immediate profit -- otherwise he may stab you just when he's at his strongest. Or, he may be very inflexible and demand his pound of flesh in the agreement, while denying you anything further... perhaps then you will feel less justified in sticking to your original ethical standards...

Actually, the postla hobby has become more sophisticated in recent years, insofar as there seems to be less reliance on written "treaties" with 14 specific clauses, signed by both parties with a copy to each. These arrangements can be best for a novice, since he knows exactly when the agreement is being broken, except that a more experienced player will often take advantage of the novice in the initial composition of the treaty. Today, though, most agreements are more informal: season-by-season cooperation as determined by immediately preceding correspondence. Even the word "ally" seems out of fashion among the better players, in recognition of the constant shift of fortunes and relationships. The fact of alliance becomes implicit after a period of constant cooperation, without either side ever saying, "Let's be allies!" Thus, players' successes or failures are dependent on continued performance as negotiators each season, rather than on the terms of a contract signed five game-years ago.

((This article is not quite up to the standards of Randolph's other material in this issue. There are several points with which I cannot agree.

In the third paragraph, he recommends the "fence-sitting route" of wording your agreements so that the other guy is duped into believing that you are going to remain his ally without your actually having said so. I don't agree. Provided the guy is above the level of a semi-moron, a trick like this is going to leap out of the page at him and he'll be wondering, "Why isn't he being more direct about this? Could it be that he's planning to stab me?" In order to avoid giving yourself away in this manner, your wording will have to be extremely clever indeed. The deceit may not be worth the potential benefits, which Randolph views as "the ally may not be able to complain effectively to other players". I think Randolph overestimates the impact of such revelations to other players, generally. To cite a concrete example, are you (as Italy) going to feel any differently toward England if he lies to France and takes the Channel in Spring '01 than if he sneaks in by making France think he wasn't going there without actually promising it? Doubtful -- you've got your own interests, and the exact nature of England's duplicity isn't likely to influence your attitude toward him, unless, of course, the target is you. While you may want to watch for a pattern of such behavior in a player, a single instance is hardly likely to make much difference.

An example of this occurred during face-to-face play once at a ByrneCon. Pat Conlon was Russia to my England, and opened with F StP(sc)-Bot, A Mos-StP. I bugged him and bugged him before the fall season, finally eliciting promises that he wouldn't move to Norway or Finland. What did he do? Convoyed his army to Sweden, then built F StP(nc). I assure you that I was just as angry with him as I would have been had he lied outright, and furthermore, the other players were too busy with their own concerns to care whether Russia had lied. So there.

I'm also not much of a fan of alliances which are timed to end once a given condition is fulfilled. I've participated in one or two of these, but basically it seems to me that an agreement to terminate the treaty in Fall '06 is just an invitation for the guy to stab you in Spring '06 -- or for you to anticipate this and stab him first in Fall '05, or for him to anticipate this and...

The "black-and-white" strategy described would only be used by a very poor player, who undoubtedly wouldn't last long anyway. Good players realize that there are many different types of allies, and many different types of enemies, and every conceivable shade in between.))

The Grand Berch European Odyssey of 1979

by Mark Berch

This one had the biggest cast of characters yet: me (Mark), my wife Mona (an alcoholism nurse and counsellor), my brother Paul (a public defender in Vermont), my Marxist Economist sister Bettina, who teaches at Barnard, and her husband Robbie, who is getting his PhD in Radical Economics. We all met in London, Mona and I joining the others who had been there for several days, on December 30. That night southern England was hit by its worst snowstorm in 14 years, the beginnings of bad weather which dogged us for much of the trip. We drove to Dover, where we found that the Hovercraft was out of service, the seas being too rough. So we took the regular ferry. This proved to be a wretched trip, very rough. People were sitting around white as a sheet, looking really gruesome. I consider myself to have a rather strong stomach, but I was pretty nauseous. Adding to the rough seas were strikes and a power failure on the French side, so that a 90-minute trip stretched to five hours of misery.

After that was a slow drive across northern France, Belgium, northern Germany and finally our destination, Vienna. We were considerably delayed because of the snowstorm, but actually were lucky. Had we decided to fly, we'd have been stuck in London because the airports were shut down, and we later found that some of the roads that we traversed in northern Europe were later rendered impassable by the snow. We also managed a small accident, a skid terminating in several impacts. No one was hurt, and it cost us no more than the \$300 deposit on the rented car. Robbie did most of the driving, with help from Paul, and it took us 36 hours to Vienna.

Vienna is a grand city, and a little sad, too. It is full of grand palaces and the like, many of which function as department stores or office buildings. It was built to be the nerve center of an empire, which at one time embraced what is now Austria and Hungary, as well as other parts of Germany, Yugoslavia, Galicia, the Balkans, etc. But they lost their wars, and now it's a huge city in a small country. But physically very beautiful. Ornamentation is considered a very important part of the buildings design. So one constantly sees carvings, statuettes, columns (often with large figures depicted as supporting the columns), fancy scrollwork and the like. One bank had huge gilt-gold coins emblazoned on its sides. Another was topped by a metal structure looking very much like an aviary. Ordinary shops would have some lovely tilework around their windows, or would have some striking green glass as part of the windows. You might wander into a foyer of a nondescript building, only to see some exotic light fixtures. And marble!! In the central vestibule of an art museum I saw a stunning collection of columns, balustrades, panels, marble-within-marble, ceiling floors -- everything. And all different types as well. We also took a visit to the Schonbrun Castle, the second largest in Europe, and an epitome of baroque architecture, positively reeking with Austrian nobility, with enormous paintings of wedding feasts. Of the 1500 rooms, the ones we liked best were the Chinese rooms, full of lacquer panels and dozens of Chinese vases. The grounds are sumptuous as well, but we had to hallucinate the flowers, it being winter. While the palace is refined splendor, even in the pedestrian parts of the city, you see reminders of it, or the care that is put into appearances.

The other striking thing about Vienna, and Paris as well, is the food. Inhabitants of both countries apparently take food much more seriously than people do here. (The typical Frenchman spends more than twice the percentage of income than Americans do on food), and it really shows, both in the quality and the quantity of what is available. I am an aficionado of good rye bread, but I have never tasted as good as what's called "dreikornbrot", which exceeds even the "Posin's" rye I was raised on. Pastries and cakes come in dazzling variety. Perhaps my favorite is a sort of cheese danish called "topfengulachen", which comes in several different styles. A type of chocolate cake called Reirucken is baked in its own special pan. We had cakes stuffed with "muh", a poppy seed preparation. Even the mass-produced material, the equivalent of, say,



Hostess or Drakes here, was delicious. What apsses for ordinary pastry or bread here in the U.S. I'm colvinced would be unsaleable in Austria: it just couldn't compete. Backing this up is very high quality raw materials, in almost endless variety. I saw an ordinary fruit stand with FOUR different varieties of pears, which were hardly in season. There was another shop that sold nothing but dried fruits, in more different choices than I've ever seen. And the spice shops! One had four different types of paprika (hot, very hot, sweet, and hot & sweet). These shops, incidentally, were not at some fancy gourmet shopping center, but a big market of just outdoor stalls and very simple types of shops. The variety and quality of food and foodstuffs available in Paris and Vienna was at leasr for me the most memorable part of the trip.

One thing that contributed heavily to the success of our Vienna stay was the fact that Robbie's family lives in Vienna, and he was raised there since the age of seven. Thus we were the recipients of very warm hospitality, superb home-cooked meals, and very informed advice about what to see, how to get around and background information about how the city operates. For example, much of the social life of the inhabitants revolves around coffee houses, which are of all different types, and provide a remarkable variety of "services" for the clients; we visited a couple. Have you ever had hot chocolate with whipped cream? Perhaps, but not like in a Vienna coffee house. On a beautiful service, rich chocolate, and so much whipped cream that it has to be served in a separate dish in an enormous dollop. Many coffee houses, however, are very crowded, which does appeal to people for some reason.

But it was COLD, with the daytime temperatures often in the teens and single figures, and damp to boot. We were never grounded, but on the worst days we'd hit the museums, where we feasted our eyes on the likes of Klimpt, Bruegel, Schiele, and Hundertwasser tapestries, and some of the "Fantasitic Realists". But art is truly everywhere in Vienna -- you see art deco in the design of the subway entrances. One thing we didn't do was shopping; due to the disreputable state of the American dollar, prices are, or rather, seem to be, high. I bought spices; that's about all.

While we were there we took a short but intense sidetrip to Budapest. In this, we were very dependent on Robbie's mother Vera. She was born and raised in Budapest, and met her husband there in 1948. But later that year, they had to leave. Hitler had decimated the Jewish community there, and Stalin was trying to finish them off. We had to get visas. Recently, the Hungarian government has relaxed restrictions on Austrians visiting, but still, it is a soft currency country, so there are limits on the amounts of Hungarian currency that you can bring in, there are different rates in different cities, etc. We took a train (the Orient Express), passing right alongside the Czech border, and ate a superb meal that evening in a restaurant with a zither player, and then walked a bit of the commerical district late at night. The next day was a rapid paced walking and bus and subway tour of the city. We saw the neighborhood where Vera had been raised, some parks, the Plaza of the Heros where Stalin's statue used to be, a grand church where something like 700 years of Hungarian kings had been coronated, a restaurant where I had a scrumptuous fash paprikash, a glittering coffeehouse with enormous chandeliers, a market (where the food available was awfully skimpy compared to Vienna), and some famous monuments. We saw both parts of the city (Buda and Pest), and walked across a bridge that spanned the Danube, which bridge was guarded by stone lions without tongues. It seems that one of the (many) Turkish leaders who overran the city had them ripped out to symbolize his capture. The city has been sacked and torched any number of times. It's sometimes eerie to realize how old some of these cities are. There's a monument in Vienna to the victims of the plague. That's 14th century. We had a comic episode upon leaving. We were really racing to make the train, and on leaving the subway (Europe's oldest) we confronted three escalators: one up, one down, one not running. Seeing the up one somewhat crowded we decided (unwisely: the escalators there are both fast-moving and stepp) to scamper up the not running one. Part way up we hear incomprehensible words blaring forth from somewhere. We redouble our efforts, practically collapsing at the top.

People look at us oddly. It turned out that what she was saying to us over the P.A. system was "Don't use those steps. It's very dangerous. Please go off. (Pause) What's the matter? Why don't they hear me? I know my microphone is working!"

Soon it was time to leave Eastern Europe, as the car was finally roadworthy, in a manner of speaking. We pack a variety of cheeses and bread, and oranges the size of eggs, as Robbie wistfully enumerates all the different sweets that we never had the chance to sample. We drove to Paris.

Although it is a very different city, as western as Vienna is eastern, so many of the things I liked are the same things that I liked in Vienna: the food and the beauty of the city. Paris has truly awesome outdoor markets -- we saw one on the northern edge of the city that extended on the sidewalks for miles. It's a little startling: one day an ordinary sidewalk, and the next, a profusion of stalls. And such food! I saw leeks (which are very cheap, considered peasant food, not a specialty item as in the U.S.) of enormous size. One fishmonger had at least 20 varieties of fish in an average-sized stand. And a whole page could be devoted to the cheese. Although again, the prices are high for most items (80¢ for a Coke!), cheese is another matter. In the U.S., paying \$2/lb will get you only the bottom of the line. In France it will give you an enormous selection. We got Camemberts at \$1.50/lb, and brought back quite a few interesting items. Here, Brie is a big occasion; there, it's just one more, and available in all different brands from different regions. Bread -- the famous baguette -- is price-controlled and super fresh: you just can't sell it the next day. Nor can you get it in the U.S. at all (the flour is different). And you ask about wine? Some is so inexpensive that it is sold in waxed cartons like milk. And the street food is unbelievably tempting as well. We ate Tunisian sandwiches, an enormous round roll stuffed with fish, pickled vegetables and a sauce, and Tunisian pastries, including semolina confections soaked in honey and Rosewater. We wandered the city, sampling the best of a Jewish bakery here, a traditional French bakery there, an unbelievable coconut concoction at a Haitian restaurant, a type of doughnut so fresh we saw it lifted from the fryer -- the list goes on and on. The only way that you can deal with all this is to get an enormous amount of exercise, which is what we did, in enormous walks. We often spent eight hours a day on our feet, allowing us to cover good chunks of the city. We even saw the area where the hookers operated from. Compared to those in Washington D.C., they were better dressed and more attractive, less inclined to cluster in groups, and exist in two types: licensed and illegal. We saw honky tonk and the poshest of neighborhoods and shops. We did not see any coneheads. The city is beautiful, but not in the massive-impressive way that Vienna is; the scale is smaller. Again, we hit a good number of museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, which is a very striking and controversial building, although we were disappointed by the poster shop, which seemed to be out of just what we wanted. We also saw the new Poster Museum, with a large exhibit of artistic advertising posters nearby all by the same artist, and we looked in on a fine collection of Magrittes at a private gallery. Also checked out were a number of churches. I am a stained glass freak, and the two churches had pretty awesome displays. Paris is a fine place to shop if you are very rich: some stores had displays of art objects and home furnishings, etc., that would completely overshadow what Georgetown (a tiny shopping area in D.C.) has to offer. So window shopping was a real treat. We also spent a day driving around some smaller towns outside Paris. We sometimes saw, both in Paris and Vienna, places where wartime destruction had taken its toll, although in most cases the work had been restored, but there would be photographic displays of what, for example, the church looked like with its roof blown to bits. In the same vein, we saw in the Jewish quarter a memorial to some schoolchildren who were dragged out of their schoolhouse and taken off to concentration camps. We had a meal in that area at a Kosher restaurant, in which the second language (after French) was Arabic, which might seem odd. Stores usually closed down for, e.g., 12:30-2:00, so everyone could go out and have a big lunch. Apparently this doesn't harm business, since everyone else is doing the same thing.

Of course, there were a few things that we were not so thrilled about in Paris. At the movie theatre you tip an usher (about 25%), who does nothing but make sure you have a ticket when you enter. Toilet facilities, the infamous Turkish toilet, are often pretty primitive. And the natives are not especially friendly, if your French is less than very-good. One undeserved reputation is that Paris is somehow horribly expensive. True, the lousy state of the U.S. dollar doesn't help. But we stayed at a hotel in downtown Paris, a big double room with lots of mirrors and lovely carved plaster on the ceiling and lots of hot water and only paid \$8½ per night. You do pay extra if you want to use the tub/showering facilities, but since this was winter, and you do get a sink and a bidet, it's really no problem. Most of the museums do have an entrance charge. But there's plenty to do for free. One afternoon, we explored the colossal Pere-Lachaise cemetery, which is famous because they never had any restrictions on what type of sculpture or architecture would be allowed. We did not see many of the famous ones -- we really could have used a map. We did see the one for Jim Morrison, festooned with graffiti of quotes of songs from the Doors, and we saw many of its famous cats. Did I mention the crepes? We ate at one place where we could see them being made by an old lady literally stationed at the end of our table, so they were absolutely fresh when they got to us, and there are street vendors of these, too.

We then drove to London, this time taking the Hovercraft. This is treated like an airplane flight (the interior looks just like a flight cabin, and in fact, the hovercraft skims about two or three feet above the water, so it's rather pleasant) and only takes 45 minutes. In London, Bettina and Robbie had a number of errands, and since we were all familiar with the city, we wandered around, and took care of various tasks. London was our big shopping city, as we'd return directly to the States, and because the prices are best there. I saw the biggest Science Fiction bookshop ever ("Dark They Were and Golden-eyed"), and picked up some splendid artbooks and posters -- and that was only one of at least three SF bookshops. My brother took advantage of the extremely good prices for woollens to get some suits. We made major cheese purchases at a trusted shop, including a powerful blue stilton, and my favorite, a cheddar heavily laced with garlic, parsley, and beer. We got a special type of Indian pastry (called Halavah, no relation to what is sold under that name in the U.S.) at a shop patronized by the Pakistanian Embassy, and brought some back. We were much more selective about where we ate in London, sticking mainly to Indian food. Traditional British fare is rather heavy and insipid and unimaginative. We did decide to hit a few of the traditional tourist stops this time, including Westminster Abbey. I was very amused to see the big display for Major Andre, celebrating him as a war hero. The picture shows him entreating George Washington to be honorably shot. We view him differently, and George Washington had him hung as a spy (he was involved with Benedict Arnold). London at that time was suffering from a "lorry-drivers" (teamsters) strike, and the government was shrieking that without the trucks, civilization would surely fall, but we didn't see much impact, and after we left, the strike slowly petered out (only to be replaced by the ambulance drivers strike, just getting readied as we were leaving). We saw the tower of London, with a splendid collection of "coats of mail" used both for jousting and combat in the Middle Ages. Actually, my favorite was the getup for an armored elephant. We sauntered down the Strand, and bought Twinings Tea (for less than 1/3 than it would cost in the U.S.) at the same place where it had been sold for 270 years. We took in three plays, all murder mysteries as it turned out. These were all at the equivalent of Broadway theatres, and we paid only \$4-\$6 a seat. One we saw, "Deathtrap", by Ira Levin (of Rosemary's Baby and The Boys from Brazil) was deliciously clever and one of the most enjoyable plays I have ever seen. I prowled the bookshops of Charing Cross Road and Totencourt Road, while Mona located a variety of fabrics. Compared to Paris, and especially Vienna, London was positively warm by comparison.

But finally it was time to go. For those of you who have considered such a trip, be advised that it is probably cheaper than you think. The round trip between NYC and London on Laker Airlines is only \$255, with a meal about \$3 extra. Other airlines have special deals that are not that much more expensive. Give it a thought!

((But first I'll give you 13 issues of sub credit for a very nice article! I was particularly interested in your description of the food you ate (and did not eat) in Europe. I'm a big fan of cheese, and would go nuts gorging myself on it, from your description. I've never been to Europe, but I think I'd choose different countries to visit than those you mention. I'd love to see Switzerland and Norway, e.g., and perhaps Greece as well. But I'm glad you had a good trip (other than the weather).))

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From Fol Si Fic #108...

The GM's Advantage

by Randolph Smyth

For the last couple of years I've been noticing differences between the perception shown by GMs of some experience and that shown by non-GMing players with the same amount of playing experience. GMs are no more tactically capable or strategically imaginative, and even their own diplomacy shows little difference from that of players-only. Yet, almost to a man, GMs seem relatively immune to any diplomatic razzle-dazzle staged by another player for their benefit.

That is, GMs pay little attention to information (true or false) received in a letter unless/until it's backed up with suitable orders on the board. It's more difficult to get commitments out of them before Spring 1901, and thereafter unless your plan is plausible in terms of the previous moves. Furthermore, once a plan has been set in action; pleas, threats, promises, the sun or the moon, hell or high water, are all less likely to alter a GM's intent. In fact, GMs as a class (and I include myself) are probably the most conservative (distinct from unimaginative) players in the hobby.

It does not appear that this "analytical attitude" predisposes certain players to be GMs, either. I've noted a couple of cases where the difference became more apparent with increasing GMing experience, in fact I believe I could make a pretty accurate guess after a couple of letters exchanged, whether an opponent was a GM and how long he'd been active as one.

The only explanation I have for the development of this attribute is a result of the GM's natural curiosity. Take a game in 1904, say: the GM is following the progress in order to compose his headlines and other comments, and to keep it distinct from other games in his own mind. Perhaps only subconsciously, it is also natural for him to be constantly predicting how the game will go: his remaining commitment, and the timing of other game openings, will depend on the accuracy of this information.

Also, he is often the only "outsider" who is following the game season by season in this much detail. The players usually think they have a pretty good idea of what is going on from the exchange of letters (whether they're right depends on the type of game and caliber of negotiations), but this source of information is denied to the GM, as a rule. He gets a good deal of practice at analysing game trends from the orders alone. These predictions are likely to be even sharper than the players' without the diplomatic distractions; and if he's quite active, he can check his projections against the actual outcome in a large number of games simultaneously. It would be odd indeed if he never made use of this ability in the games he was playing in.

The habit of increased reliance on the moves alone is not always an advantage by any means, but it's a characteristic of the group that should be recognized by any non-GM who is facing one. My own experience is that GMs are rather more successful as players than players-only; unless you argue that this is greater experience and interest alone. GMs do something right in the long run that constitutes a distinct advantage.

((I do think that GMs' better records as players stems from greater interest and hobby commitment, though.))

PudgeCon III: A Brief Review

by John Michalski

Once again the premier showing of the Midwest brought together 20+ people to Bob Olsen's house this summer, Labor Day weekend this year. Gary Coughlan missed, so we did without the squirt guns for one, but we had a pretty decent time. I got a later start than I'd planned because of minor surgery my wife had that Friday morning, and had to leave early for the same reason, but except for the usual Rusnack effect, a good time seems to have been had by all. Mike Mazzer came in from the West Coast, Ty Haxe from Colorado, Kathy and John plus Barno from New York, Woody from his cave, Dick and the ever-sensuous Julie from Maryland, James Wall, Nancy Irwin, Mark Frish, Mark Luedi, me, Bob himself, Ben Schilling, Rauterberg, Rusnak, Eric and Cathy, and my apologies to the others I've missed. We "missed" the Langleys and Petersens this year, plus Gary, all of whom I hope can make next year's PudgeCon IV along with Osuch and some Texans. Calls were received from a few, but the only one I remember was Ken Peel's. Someone said "It's Ken Peel", to which one "Oh no" started a chorus of rapid-fire "Not Peel again!" "Heavens, Peel?" "No, not Peel" "I can't take any more Peel" and on and on. Really loving hobby we're in, you know it? That was almost as funny as the Trivial Pursuit entertainment question about "Who refused to grow up and ran away to live with the fairies?" which brought the natural response "ROD WALKER!". Another funny (?) Midwest tradition was maintained by Rauterberg blowing up his car on the way in, the second or third time he's done that. Not much TV video this time, and the old title of "No-John-Con" fell as Caruso put in an appearance for once, but Kathy kept it lively, Julie kept the guys awake, and the range of games matched the consumption of beer, which was prodigious. We played Acquire, Kingmaker, blackjack, poker, Land Grab, Civilization, Third Reich, Trivial Pursuit, Junta, Titan, and a little Dip thrown in. Eric got sick again, keeping his voice this year but almost losing his supper; his Cathy (Cunning) is a cute redhead ~~with a ~~del~~ ~~del~~~~, while Eric is looking more rugged or outdoorsy or decrepid, one or the other. Ben Schilling filled Gary's place as a humorous drunk much of the time, and everyone kidded me about him in regard to my Dallas Origins review, since it seems he's either much older or much younger than I thought, I forget which. Kathy was herself; Caruso is taller and huskier than I would have guessed for someone called a wimp so much; Woody seemed more human than usual, and even friendly as he cleaned our clock as the House in blackjack. I hardly drink beer at all, but took \$20 worth up there, plus pop after I arrived, and many others did likewise, but it still ran short I think by Sunday night, with another day or so to go. (I left Sunday evening.) Not knowing good beer from Old Milwaukee, I bought Special Export (or is it Special Import?) which Scott Hanson had last year. Must have been good since some of it was drunk up before we could cool it all. I figured he'd have good taste in beer like in women. If not, Frauke would teach him. But anyhow...

Third Reich was fun. Dick Martin's Nazi Supermen were crushed like insects in our first game, and, crushed by Marshal Pilsudski's defenders of Warsaw no less, 24 to 12, he rolls 4, I roll 6. Down go 3 panzerkorps and 3 luftflottes and the first game, as Poland wins WWII! I love the realism of Third Reich. Second game he did better, taking most of Europe by 1941, but lost Africa with England and Russia intact and the U.S. coming. Later Caruso tried a test game, but was too unfamiliar with the fourth edition to get very far. A winter '39 DoW on Russia and intervention in Turkey sealed his fate vs. Dick and I. Better luck next year, John.

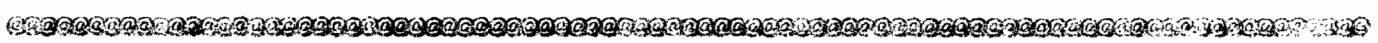
Kathy and I played partners in a late night Trivial Pursuit game, which I had never played, but accepted in order to cuddle up beside the ex-BNC. We got off to a slow start (in the game, that is), but once I got Kathy to let me try Geography, which she abhorred, we got into contention and eventually won. She was really amazed -- I think it's the first time she ever realized I might have a brain instead of just being an incredible sex object.

Discussions were fairly cool, even those of Walker, Highfield, BRUX, Tallman, the Cubs, and Mondale-Ferarro. Even Rusnak stayed cool when Barno poured a beer on his head; I guess he figured he was getting off light. I laugh off, or try to laugh off, a lot of sick stuff; around Fluff Shaffer, you have to. But Rusnak stretches it, what with every woman being addressed as "Hey-you-fuckin-bitch", and men little better. Other than that, things went smoothly. One key is probably what Barno said at Midwest Cons, they insult the people who are NOT there. Could make a difference, I guess.

Other than being unaccustomed to sleeping on the floor, smelling the EUC's cigarette smoke, and envying Eric and Dick their cuddly cohorts, it was a great time. In absolute terms, it may not have been much more than a change of pace for once, and a rare episode of semi-adult companionship for a while, but I look on it as the high point of the year. My strongest thanks to Bob Olsen for again hosting an incredibly motley crew, and to all those weirdos who came so far. See you again next year.

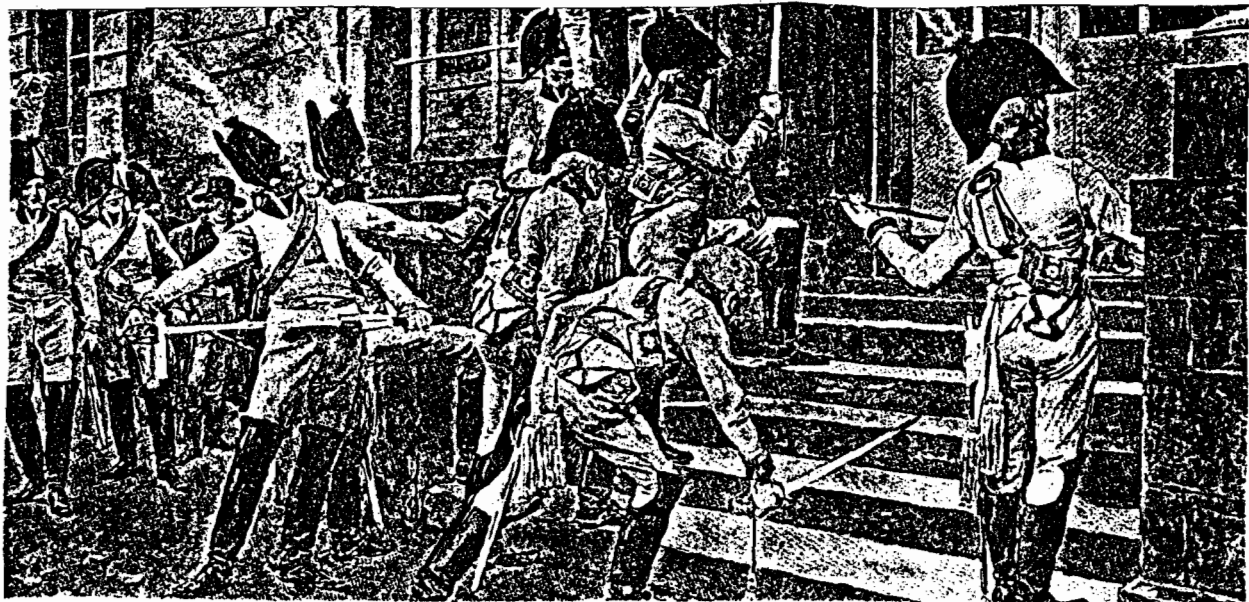
((I tend to enjoy these semi-little cons (?) more than the biggies like Origins myself. More personal and all that. As I type this I'm considering heading to Indy Con or whatever Inedi and Kleiman are calling it, this year.

Four issues of sub credit to you, John, and thanks.))



THE ONGOING SAGA OF BRUX'S HOUSERULES:

A few 'friends' calling on BRUX to discuss his houserules.



BRUX is, of course, Bruce Linsey who, of course, publishes Voice of Doom from 73 Ashuelot St., Apt 3, Dalton, MA 01226, of course.

((And I am, of course, very grateful to Bob for all the free publicity, of course. That's Bob Howerton, who ran this cartoon in his excellent zine, Festungs Hof.)

The Dupe

One of the most frustrating problems a Diplomacy player can come across, especially in face-to-face play, is an unbreakable alliance between a dupe and another player. Dupes are easy to recognize, impossible to persuade, and hell to have to play against. They are only there because six people wanted to play Diplomacy and a seventh could not be found. They usually come in the form of next door neighbors, willing wives, and ten-year-old girls. Rarely, if ever, are they at all familiar with the mechanics of the game. They do not write their own orders.

Let's get one thing straight. Dupes are unknown in high-class games, be they postal or face-to-face. I am not referring to puppets -- players who see that they had better do what a stronger player says in order to survive. Puppeting is a legitimate ploy and is consistent with the spirit of the game, which is that each player should try to make whatever agreements and moves are in his own best interest, given the current situation. A dupe is, so to speak, a total and complete puppet from the beginning; a rag doll to be manipulated, tossed about, stabbed and screwed; all at the whim of the master (who, in this article, shall henceforth be referred to as "God"). The dupe is totally and unchangeably controlled. Interest in self-preservation is nil -- it is replaced by an interest in playing God's game and obeying his every whim. If the dupe is France, then an English God may own Brest, Paris, Marseilles, Belgium, and Spain by 1903 much to the distress of everyone else on the board -- except the dupe.

What causes such an unnatural relationship to develop at the outset? Well, as I said above, it often results when a noninterested party is asked to fill in. Relatives are by far the most common dupes, followed closely by girlfriends. The dupe is either too young or too ignorant to realize the purpose of the game, and consequently has as much fun obeying as he would playing. God, of course, is inwardly howling all this time with glee; he knows what he is doing! But he is not to blame -- what good player would turn down such an arrangement, after all? Wouldn't YOU like to own a dupe from the beginning of every game? The point is this; neither God nor the dupe can be rightfully criticized for their actions. God is looking out for his own interests, and the dupe doesn't know any better.

What to do about such a pact is a very difficult question. It always seems that the two people involved draw an adjacent pair of countries, which gives them an enormous advantage. Talking to them won't help. It's like trying to get Siamese twins to separate. The dupe will just say, "Mommy can do whatever she wants and I don't CARE if she takes Paris and I'm gonna attack YOU!!" You can try praying, but God will never listen. Why should he attack the country he is controlling rather than you? The only other alternative is to plead with all of the other players. It is this regard that my past endeavors in Diplomacy have been almost entirely fruitless. It is surprising how many good players will avoid attacking an obviously unbreakable alliance until it is too late. I have, on occasion, literally jumped up and down while screaming, "Look, everybody, he's WRITING HER ORDERS! If we don't all band together now we are DOOMED!" And the other players, including God, will all nod gravely in agreement -- and continue butting their heads against each other in their petty battles. Most difficult of all is trying to convince a sheltered player who is not immediately affected by this unnatural pairing to be patient while you bring down the inseparables. God, in his infinite wisdom, has often succeeded in sowing the inexorably growing seeds of discontent and unrest in the faraway corners of the board, just enough to allow the distant players to help him unwittingly to his win. Nonetheless, the only recourse is to keep trying. The sheltered player may have to be pacified by offering him a few extra centers with which to content himself, but often as not this will just make him greedier and he will still attack the countries who are trying like hell to do in God and the dupe.

It seems, then, that one must just avoid playing at all when there is going to be an obvious dupe involved -- unless, of course, one can arrange to be God! So, be sure to bring your own little infant to the next Diplomacy game you play. Amen.

From Fol SI File #32...

Power vs. Strength

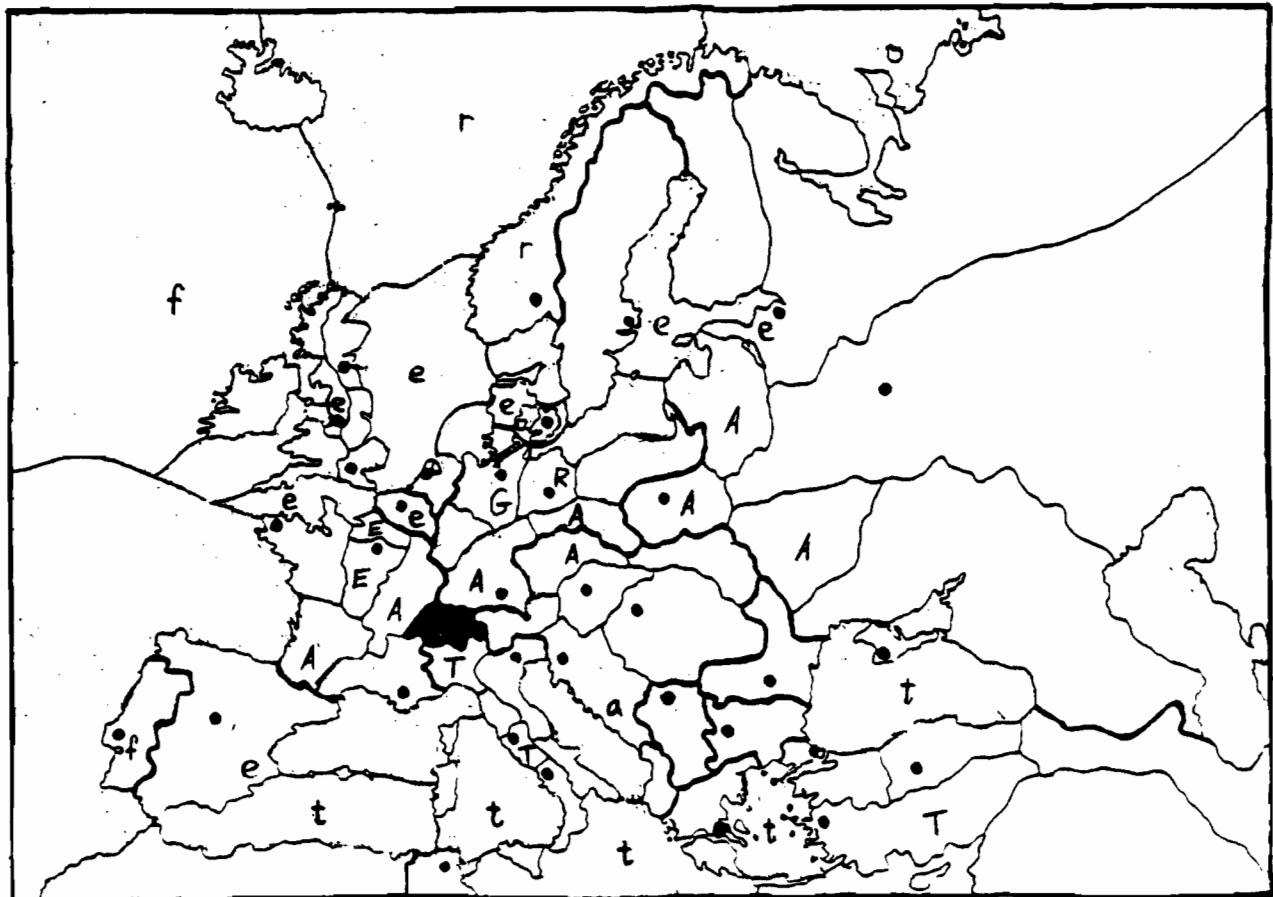
by Randolph Sayth

Most rating systems consider relative positions at the end of the game as the indication of player "success". This is valid, and perhaps the only workable system; however, it may be misleading to a player in the middle of a game. Is the largest military force always the most dangerous, the most successful, the "one to stop", if you're into that? Dictionary definitions of "strength" and "power" are similar, but highlighting the difference in a Diplomatic context may demonstrate my own opinion.

Relative to "strength", "power" has vague connotations of greater flexibility and a motion component; hence, a powerful engine vs. a strong wall. Power is not always purely physical; a powerful man vs. a strong man. I may be strong (especially when I slip off my shoes) but in today's civilized society (?) it's much more useful to be powerful. So the difference is real, if elusive of definition.

Now consider a concrete, if fictional, example of the difference in a game:

- A: Owns Home, Ser, Rum, Ven, Mun, War, Sev (9); Has A's Mun, Sil, Boh, War, Lvn, Bur, Gas, Ukr, F Tri.
- E: Owns Home, Den, Mol, Bre, Spa, Par, Bel, Swe, StP (11); Has A's Par, Pic, F's Pol, Eng, Lyp, Nth, Den, Bot, StP(sc), Spa(sc).
- F: Owns Por, Mar (2); Has F's Por, NAT.
- G: Owns Kie (1); Has A Kie.
- R: Owns Mos, Nwy, Ber (3); Has A Ber, F's Nwy, Nwg.
- T: Owns Home, Bul, Gre, Tun, Nap, Rom (8); Has A's Pie, Rom, Smy, F's Bla, Aeg, Ion, Tyr, Wes.



List the countries in order of strength: EATRFGI. The game is very much alive, however; who really has the best chances, the greatest "power"? Obviously one of the big three, but is it

England, the "strongest" nation, whose German ally has sadly faded before south-eastern pressure and his own greed in the northwest? The remains of France and Russia are committed against him after stabs, and even in isolation these two could hang on for several game years with a little bit of luck.

Austria, a member of the dominating A/T alliance which presently controls half the centers between them? Perhaps a classic example of "too many friends"; future possibilities are badly limited without a credibility-destroying stab which will net very little additional profit.

or Turkey, third in absolute strength at the moment. The one enemy responsible for his military growth has disappeared entirely; he has one strong ally who seems to trust him completely (perhaps too much?). He can choose his enemy in the west, having had no involvement with either England or France until now.

The military strength of either England or Austria can still do more to affect the outcome than that of Turkey, but the result of exercising most of the theoretical options is suicide. In the extreme case, each could give the power of his choice all of his centers. In the real game, each has too much self-interest to be very flexible at this stage; is there any doubt that all the options lie with the Turkish player?

The situation of two 16-center nations racing for the win, and a two-center pygmy deciding who the victor will be, is only somewhat analogous. The fate of the small survivor is fixed -- third place. His moment of glory can be used to gain revenge for a stab or some other personal consideration, but does not alter his own result. In the above example, the decision-making capacity of the Turks enables him to greatly improve his own chances for an excellent finish.

Keep in mind that Turkey can by no means stand alone. Strength is immaterial to an astute player until he's driving for a win, and the Turk presently wishes to maintain and extend his power. Should he

- 1) Continue his alliance with Austria in good faith indefinitely?
- 2) Ally with England and stab Austria now?
- 3) Stab Austria without firm commitments elsewhere, trusting to the resulting confusion to obtain maximum gains?
- 4) Become a "nibbler", negotiating vigorously for Sev, Rum, Ser, Ven in return for his continued support (or neutrality)?
- 5) Make no decision and drift along waiting for an Austrian commitment?

Well, what are the probable outcomes?

1) An A/T draw is almost certain. A good result; perhaps the best in terms of security and reputation. To go to the trouble of breaking with his ally at this stage is a brilliant signal that his goal is higher, i.e. an outright win. However, do the other options offer a good chance at succeeding at this?

2) As a rule, stabs of this nature will recoil. England is no fool -- he hasn't reached eleven centers by being completely incompetent. Probably the worst of the listed options, since the power now moves to England, who can choose to accept the Turkish alliance or leak the news to Austria. Either way, foreknowledge of an A-T war gives him a good shot at a victory of his own.

3) A bit premature with only eight units to his name, if he's after an 18-center win. It may be necessary if a two-way draw is simply unacceptable and Austria intends to shore up the southern defenses...but risky.

4) This is an excellent resource for staunch allies if one is blocked from further expansion but is still "doing his bit" in pinning down a third party. It's only fair that he is able to maintain a reasonable military balance by a controlled occupation of his more fortunate ally's accessible centers. In this case, however, the near-absolute potential of option #1, and the Turkish possibilities in Franco-Iberia, makes it impossible to rationalize this course to Austria. The latter player didn't reach

nine centers with weak knees, so he's unlikely to agree passively to second place behind the Turk. The stab might as well be a big one (option 3).

5) Did some of you smile at this one? Is indecision always a sin? Of course, vigorous commitment is often necessary; but here the basis of the Turkish power is the ability to do almost anything, including nothing. Austria, on the other hand, must act. A stab will involve the alienation of the smaller powers with whom he has been cooperating. With England just a bit weaker and Austria friendless apart from the Turk, the time is ripe for a real decision.

(The choice between #1 and #5 depends on the relative competence of Turkey and Austria. Can an unscrupulous Turk succeed in fooling Austria after a long period of cooperation? Most players, including this author, would probably settle for #1 to avoid the possibility of mistrust blowing the game wide open.

The history of the game will probably affect its future. The position is unlikely unless Turkey is the type of player who would choose #1 without hesitation. In fact the choice was made several game years ago, and the present Turkish options are probably a temporary phase in a smoothly-working two-way alliance: both allies may not even be aware of their existence!)

Two pieces of advice, to conclude: (1) Don't be obsessed with counting centers to determine potential. England's basic weakness in the above example is obvious. Alliance systems are a better indicator, but still changeable. Austria has good reason to keep his eyes open. (2) When the true seat of power has been determined, act accordingly; particularly if you find, to your surprise, that it lies with you. (Often power, like strength, is distributed among various nations, but that's a future topic...) As Turkey you may never use #5, but keep it in mind; when lucky enough to hold the initiative, you might as well appreciate it. Even if Austria is a great guy and you don't wish to deviate from #1, you must still consider your power (perhaps as a liability to the strongest possible alliance); in this case, try to reduce it. Power has tremendous possibilities: with the right diplomatic climate, one of its best uses is its own well-advertised neutralization!

((This article as it originally appeared in Fol Si Fie did not include the map of the position described; that was my addition. (No, I can't do that for my games since I can't always get to the copier at work on short notice or whenever I want.)

Randolph makes some very good points in this article. The primary one is clear, of course; the true power in a game is sometimes held by a player whose center count is lower than that of one or two other opponents. In general, power is then not only a function of strength, but also of how "free" one is given the current diplomatic situation. If a country has 12 centers but is bogged down in a war with an equal opponent, then he is not "free" to pursue other paths unless the differences are patched up first. It might also be observed that this "freedom" is a function of the ratio between one's strength and one's opponents' strength. Turkey in Randolph's example isn't at war with anyone, and so this ratio is large -- he has lots of uncommitted units. England and Austria face each other, not necessarily at war yet, but presumably about to reach that stage; therefore, their freedom is much more limited -- neither has many units to spare.

Another peripheral point brought forth by the article emerges upon examination of the list of five Turkish options. Notice that there are listed three different ways for Turkey to attack Austria (options 2, 3, and 4). A good player will realize that even the act of attacking another country can be performed in several different ways, depending on the diplomatic climate. Sometimes "nibbling" is better when your "ally" will tolerate it (or when he can't do anything about it short of committing all his force against you); other times an outright stab is preferable, thus ensuring that you do get the big jump on your victim. But I'm drifting away from the topic of the article, and ever closer to the bottom of the page, so that'll do for now. Just remember: power does not equal strength -- so next time I'm in a game with you, you should have no qualms about giving me a few of your centers...))

The Gossip Column
Part V

147

From Rich Reilly (9/9/84):

Dear BRUX,

I guess discussions of politics, morality and such belong in the pages of VD just as much as "lists of five" do. I find the latter more enjoyable, however, as I like to hear about people, and what they're like, and the things they do. The political discussions that appear in VD generally bore me. Besides that, in my own mind I distinguish between "discussions" and "arguments". The former are friendly; the latter hostile; the former can be worthwhile and enjoyable, but the latter should be kept out of a gaming zine.

So, for that matter, should threats, insults, and other such hostilities... although of course I don't blame you for printing the story about Bill Highfield. I certainly didn't enjoy hearing about it, but I guess it needed to be told.

Anyway, here's another item to add to my lists. Instead of "The Music of Cosmos", which I chose because of its variety of music, I'd like to have "The Sounds of Earth" with me...that is, be record sent out into space on the Voyager crafts. Not only does it have excellent music, but various sounds of Earth (of course), greetings in numerous languages, and, I guess, photographs and illustrations which I could perhaps watch on the television I'd have with me on the island. All in all, I think it'd be a fascinating recording. Too bad it wasn't released to the public.

Well, I've been sitting here reviewing the letters in VD #98 (#99 has yet to arrive), looking for stuff to comment on, and I must admit I'm terribly tempted to make some critical replies to certain letters, but I believe I'll abstain. I can tell that my comments would have a good chance of making some enemies.

However, I must respond to Mark Luedi, who dares "any and all to come to Indiana to show...just what is so bad about the place." Having just recently spent six days in Indiana -- including a day in Indianapolis with Dave Kleiman -- and being as I'm a resident of Idaho -- the state Indiana has been compared to in recent issues of VD -- and being as your humble narrator is also a very logical, objective type of guy, I feel that I'm especially well qualified to respond to Mark's challenge.

In the pages of VD, two points of comparison in particular have been mentioned: namely, the scenery and the people. Mark Luedi mentions some other factors, some of which are worth considering, some which aren't. Great hobby editors? Well, I don't know of any from Idaho, but I hardly think we can judge a state on that basis. Nor can we judge it on the basis of famous Hoosiers...although, in any case, I wouldn't count Michael Jackson as one of a state's strong points. Of course, part of the reason I don't want to count famous personalities is that I don't know of any from Idaho, but then it stands to reason that there would be more from Indiana, simply because there are six or seven times as many people living there. In fact, Indianapolis alone has as many people as there are in all of Idaho.

That, in fact, I count as one of Indiana's demerits: there's just too many people there (or in any eastern state, for that matter). All the traffic, all the crowds... blargh! Who needs it? I imagine Indianapolis isn't as bad as some places, but still, it's much worse than Boise, Pocatello, or Idaho Falls. Give me a small city over a large one any day, like Idaho Falls (35,000), Moscow (17,000), or my hometown of Huron, Ohio (10,000?). Big cities are fun to visit, but I wouldn't want to be trapped in one.

Of course, Indianapolis doesn't make up all of Indiana, although it does seem to be the heart of the state, and my complaints above are largely indictments of cities in general. Nevertheless, I do complain about the population distribution of Indiana as a whole. There seemed to be people everywhere: towns, villages, farms...nowhere could a person really get away from everyone else. Is it the same way throughout the east, I wonder?

I might speculate, incidentally, that Indiana's higher population might be one reason the people there are less friendly than the people of Idaho. In my own mind,

however, I still debate this point, as I found very little evidence on this vacation to indicate whether Hoosiers are any more or less friendly than the people of Idaho. A bit more paranoid, perhaps, about crime and such matters. I mean, I never saw a gas station in Idaho where you had to pay through a drawer that extends from inside to the outside, nor had I ever been to a station where you had to pay for the gas before you pumped it in. But it was that way in Denver, too; a common characteristic, I suppose, of big-city stations. In any case, I certainly wouldn't blame people for being unfriendly if they have to face crowds and heavy traffic all the time. I know my patience was tested once when my friend and I got caught in a traffic jam on the road back home from Indiana. I passed the test, but my friend didn't, and that made me mad, because he was being a real asshole about the situation, and I told him so. Anyway, the point is that if the people of Idaho are friendlier, it's probably because of the conditions under which they live -- plenty of space and privacy -- not because the people themselves are somehow any better.

But while I might consider the living conditions in Idaho to be a point in its favor, I know there are many who would disagree with me. In fact, there are some who consider the small cities of Idaho to be insufferably boring. The simple fact of the matter is that there's not as much to do in smaller towns: for example, there's little in the way of museums, Indianapolis 500 freeways, major sporting events, major cultural events...you just don't find as many of these sorts of things in Idaho, and I've known people who left here for just that reason. Of course, I myself am not so much bothered by this, as most of my favorite activities don't require mobs of people. I can understand, however, a person who might feel otherwise.

Yet where Idaho lacks certain types of activities, it excels at others which Indiana seems to totally lack. If you enjoy camping, fishing, skiing, or any other such outdoor activity, Idaho is hard to beat. A week before I found myself lost in Indianapolis, my father and I were several miles back into the Sawtooth Wilderness Area ("Wilderness" meaning NO Vehicles Allowed) at a high mountain lake called Alice Lake, surrounded by eight jagged grey peaks, some of them still splotted with snow. The air was fresh and cool, and the clear icy waters of the lake felt wonderful to my tired feet. The hike had been a bit tiring, but definitely worth it.

Idaho is a dream for the person who loves the outdoors. Mark claims Indiana's central location as one of its merits; I claim Idaho's as one of its. From Idaho Falls it's only a few hours to Grand Teton National Park (in fact, you can see the Tetons from Idaho Falls, 70 or so miles away), Yellowstone Park, Craters of the Moon National Monument, Sawtooth National Recreation Area, the White Clouds, several ski areas, various national forests, and, of course, truly spectacular scenery.

Does Indiana have anything to compare to this?

Of course, I should say that not just Idaho, but most of the northwestern states, possess such scenic wonders and recreational opportunities. This is certainly not to say, however, that I believe Indiana to be totally lacking in these qualities. Indeed, while I still favor the rugged mountains of Idaho, I found the rolling, lightly forested hills of Indiana to be quite pleasant. Indiana's scenery is of a different nature than Idaho's; whereas the northwestern forests are primarily coniferous -- tall, slender, "lodgepole" pines -- and the climate is cooler and dry; Indiana possesses a richer, greener vegetation consisting primarily of deciduous trees, and a hot, humid climate (at least, that is, in the summer). Indiana's scenery is not nearly so spectacular as Idaho's, but somehow, I dare say, prettier. It's more subtle than the majestic peaks of the west, but in some ways more pleasant. (Especially more pleasant than some of the really dry parts of Idaho, such as the Snake River Valley Desert, hardly pleasant or spectacular...but well, I'm told that northern Indiana is also quite flat and boring.)

Perhaps now I should come to some conclusions, concerning this matter which I've probably given more than enough attention to. While I still prefer to live in Idaho, and hope to live in the northwest for the rest of my life, I don't believe I can fairly claim that my state is any better than Mark Luedi's state. Each has its

advantages and disadvantages; in fact, the two are opposites in many ways. And because of this, the two will necessarily appeal to different kinds of people.

I therefore conclude that there is no way we can judge either Indiana or Idaho to be the better state as a whole. We can judge them on a point-for-point basis, and we can state our individual preferences, but otherwise we cannot really justify a claim such as "Idaho is better than Indiana", or vice versa.

Except, please note, in one respect.

One item in particular I noticed which Indiana had a lot of, and which Idaho has very little. Whereas most of the other factors were conceivably a matter of preference, I see no way that anyone can say this last factor is anything but a black mark upon an otherwise fine state...

It's something that appears everywhere where there are lots of cars, and lots of industry...

I'm referring, of course, to Smog (*Ghoke**Gasp*).

I could see it in the air, a sickening, brownish-orange haze...seeping into my lungs, racing through my poor innocent blood vessels, throughout my unsuspecting body. It was worse in the cities, but everywhere, and my mind reeled with the thought that people actually breathed that stuff.

Oh sure, there's smog in Idaho...if you can call it smog...the relatively minute amount of pollution that infiltrates our air.

And I'm reminded of one of the nasty things about my old home town of Huron, on the coast of Lake Erie, which I used to swim in nearly every summer day, as my home was hardly half a mile from its shore.

Lake Erie, I'm told, because of all the filth that's been dumped into it, is now a dead lake.

I find such thoughts rather disturbing...and use them as justification for saying, at least in one respect, that Idaho is better than Indiana...or, for that matter, than many of the eastern states.

And of course, we could go into a comparison of crime rates, but well...let's let it be.

My visit with Dave Kleiman, incidentally, was immensely enjoyable -- as was the entire vacation, for that matter (except for a few bad moments, such as the traffic jam mentioned above, and some car trouble we had, and a flat tire on a dark, lonely, cold, windy, rainy road, all of which took place on the way back to Idaho). Dave hardly looked like I expected him to look...nor, for that matter, did Lori, or even Whiskers, or even their house; but I was hardly disappointed.

Now, while I enjoyed hearing of your meeting with Joan Extrom, I won't go so far as to assume that all the Doonies would want to hear about mine with Dave. However, a few highlights:

1. I got lost for an hour in Indianapolis trying to find where Dave works, then lost again when I returned to Lafayette (where my friend and I were staying at one of the fraternities).
2. Dave and I spent several enjoyable hours just talking, about Diplomacy and whatever else came to mind.
3. Whiskers does indeed play "fetch" (sort of).
4. I learned some nasty things about Dave and Lori which I can use against them in the RIGEL press.
5. I trounced Dave in a game of Midway, thus maintaining my perfect record with that game.
6. I had one of the most delicious meals of my life there: hamburgers, watermelon, and corn on the cob!! (Another advantage Indiana has over Idaho. You really can't get good corn on the cob in Idaho. I grew up in Ohio, loving fresh corn, and it's one of the things I've missed since we moved west.)

Thanks again, Dave and Lori! I look forward to our next meeting, wherever and whenever that might be.

And, of course, I look forward to meeting you someday, Bruce. Perhaps at the next DipCon in Seattle, which, hopefully, Rob Schamk and I might attend.

Anyway, this has gone on long enough. Congratulations on VD's 100th Issue/ 5th anniversary. I hope you and VD both stay around for a long time.

Oh, and incidentally, my interest in the hobby has revived.

Your droog,
Rich Reilly

((Make me feel even worse, will you? Well, I'll be around a long time, anyway. And I might still be at next year's DipCon; we'll see.

I enjoyed reading your treatise about the relative advantages and disadvantages of Indiana and Idaho. When is the movie coming out? My own comment is that each person is looking for something different than some other people, and so each will base his own preferences on purely subjective factors...with the exception that, as you mention, Idaho has cleaner air.

My own preference is for Idaho because I look for beautiful scenery and lots of uncrowded wilderness. Crowds aren't my cup of tea, either. I would go so far as to say that Idaho is my favorite state -- and I've traveled in practically all of 'em. In fact, to combine the two recent discussions (Idaho and lists), here are my five favorite states:

- | | | |
|---------------|--------|---|
| 1. Idaho | (sigh) | 6. Colorado (love the Rockies; hate Denver) |
| 2. Montana | | 7. Oregon |
| 3. Arizona | | 8. Alaska |
| 4. New Mexico | | 9. Utah |
| 5. Wyoming | | 10. California |

But no state from the Rockies west is far behind, with the possible exception of Washington. I also love the Dakotas. You are just a bit too harsh when you mention that there are too many people in all the eastern states, though. The three states of northern New England are extremely beautiful, very friendly, and reasonably uncrowded (there are no large cities in any of them). Parts of West Virginia and some of the other Appalachian states are also quite nice, though perhaps not so much as Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

By the way, I'm going to be vacationing this month in, uh, Indiana. (I'm going to Kleiman's and Luedi's con -- I just hope they'll let me in the door after my comments about their state...))

from ig lew (summer, 1984):

about illiterate high school students, i told it like i saw it so if i underestimate the problem, i suppose i'm giving the teachers less credit than they deserve.

i think your reasons that the hobby needs to grow are just plain silly. do you really believe that anyone has to deal with anyone? ((No, but sometimes it's inconvenient not to.)) in your idea i think the hobby would grow and then certain groups would deal with each other exclusively and then the erstwhile hobby would lose the cohesiveness which makes it a hobby and would in fact be many subhobbies which would then be too small because someone in a certain subhobby would then supposedly have to deal with someone else. it makes just as much sense to pretend the current hobby is a subhobby of a bigger hobby (the real world? nah, too trite) and we're in this section so we won't have to deal with someone else outside of this subhobby.

i did dutifully delete (stewardess talk creeps in again) the redundant obsolete and particularly boring from the mass of old letters and i found myself with a few contextless one-liners remaining. oh well.

i suppose i do like to be clever with my non-sequiturs occasionally; but in fact, my letters generally are in little chunks. i like letters whole because i think a bunch of little chunks by ig lew have more in common than a bunch of little chunks about e-mail or whatnot.

here's a thought for the metaphor fans: dip organizations are dams we try to construct in the river of diplomacy, but they never seem to hold for long. now pardon me while i go puke.

watching a bullfight doesn't sound like much fun, but i don't buy that bit about senseless killing of innocent life because i know the bull would have got it in the schlachthof anyway. in fact i suppose you could say it's even nicer because on the off-chance he wins, they let him live and be a breeder (or so i've been told) but i don't see a bullfight as a savage murder. just selling tickets to something which goes on, condoned, anyway.

i suppose brad's actions ((VD #93, "Playing to Win")) can be considered a valid tactic for preventing you and jane from doing that again, or is that considered wrossgaming?

i don't think there is a photo, color or otherwise, of me about that is not at least three years old. the reason is that i have an irrational fear of cameras (no, i'm serious) so you will not get my photo if i can help it and i'd appreciate it if you don't send some sniper after me if i should happen to emerge from seclusion and go to a con or something.

i think francois (my stylistic prototype, i've been told) would be pleased to know you are sending people away from him. as i understand it, he is back to clean up his old fold and has few if any other plans in this hobby.

i think you're too hard on messy folders (thieves if you prefer). you never seem to mind losing money on the hobby so i'm not sure why you get so excited about it. ((Because i like to be able to choose where and how i lose it, that's why.)) i think of risking my money as just another part of the game. i simply don't send money unless i trust the recipient, and i don't send more than i would mind losing if something goes wrong. (i generally mail cash -- puts things in the right perspective, i think.)

this xword puzzle is a vast improvement over the last -- which means it was okay.

i used to flinch at askissing, but i've come to enjoy it now. (i am speaking figuratively (for those of you who wondered).)

i too genuinely appreciated the lou gossett line but i'm getting very tired of hearing about it so much, now it seems about as funny as "that's snot nice" (oope, you think the snot 'oke is still funny too).

"men of either species"? i guess i can't bring myself to say, uh, you know, sex. i don't think i make a very good point about language discrimination, because the goose part of the statement is not particularly common among the feminists (perhaps because some realize how preposterous it is).

it seems to me we could fight poverty by making more money (i mean goods and services, not dollar bills -- i'm not that stupid) rather than just tossing it around, but i've been told it's not that easy.

somebody told me that his family "goes way back". correct me if i'm wrong, but i think everybody's family goes back about the same distance.

i did try reading the rigel press once, but it was late and i had trouble keeping my eyes open. of course the people who don't like the rigel press don't read it. why would we want to read something we don't like? you're being ridiculous. i suppose most people who think cyanide is poisonous haven't tried much of it.

i think you got unnecessarily bent out of shape about meinel's letter. it seemed both accurate and good-natured to me.

sorry brux, we don't let pubbers into the Dregs Club. it's an elite group you know. the only way you can be a Dreg is if you fold. ((Oh, all right...))

give us a good night kiss.

improving the quality of mother russia is a very important issue indeed. with such an important and difficult problem, you'd think someone else would try to be helpful, mais non! uncle constantine won't be with us forever, then what are you going to do? (that will make no sense to you. ask rod about it.)

I think that anyone in the united states who is not deaf has been listening to too much campaign rhetoric, so there.

nope, i guess you're still the same old brux after all. dick's letter was definitely an "(Oh, OK)" letter. these sorts of discussions (feuds) have two parts: the original issues, and the character-assassination-drag-up-old-issues-try-to-be-more-sarcastic-than-him-defend-your-reputation-etc. part. your response to langley covered the former; and in the latter, whoever puts out the most recent installment ends up looking worse (as well he should).

few years ago it was english a arm-pru. that was classier. your entire hobby house rule inspector column was ridiculous and i assume it was not intended as a serious suggestion. the obvious thing is to have anyone who wants to report a case to the hmc and she can decide. if you really think this custodianship is sensible, i'll have to tell you that that's the most ludicrous idea you've had in years. and your exposition of it is completely illogical. c'mon broo, i like to think of the brux speaks heading as a signal for a serious discussion.

alas, page 1 of the #96 letter refuses to appear so i'll have to rewrite this long paragraph with a new start.

as i recall, you objected to dick martin's acceptance of the order "f bla outs support in sevastopol" and were so bold that you flatly declared it wrong. now, it is one thing to say you'd rule differently, as there are many situations which allow more than one acceptable ruling, but you've overextended yourself here. therefore, i curtly told you that you were wrong, but i yielded and forsook my usual noncommittal stance of subtle innuendo (foolish me threw out the vogue (yes, i read y) with the interview of tom stoppard with some line like, "his plays provide a multi-faceted mixed surface which reflects back the intellect of the audience") and i agreed to provide a logical line of reasoning to show your error:

it turns out that the rulebook is not exact in specifying what constitutes a legally written move order; however, it is exact when it specifies that a support consists of "the location of the supporting piece, the word 'supports' or its equivalent, and both the location and destination of the piece receiving support. the letter 's' may be used to mean supports." if someone ordered "f swe helps f pru to bal" or "f swe assists f pru to bal" that order might be disallowed by a gm who emphasizes the standard way of doing things, but a gm who emphasizes the rulebook would consider "helps" or "assists" to be "the words 'supports' or its equivalent" and thus would allow the order.

using the definition of a support order as a signal of the rulebook's intent, an entirely reasonable definition of a move order would require: "the location of the moving piece, the word 'moves' or its equivalent, and the destination of the piece. the sign '-' may be used to mean moves." a gm who reasons this way would not be remiss in considering "outs support in" to be "the word 'moves' or its equivalent" because we know support is out by moving (or trying to move) and accordingly allowing the order. now i'm not saying that this is how you should reason nor that you should accept the order in yd. but dick was the gm at the tournament and has the liberty of ruling as he sees fit, provided his rulings are within reason. as i have demonstrated, his ruling was indeed within reason. therefore you are in error in saying that his ruling is wrong. ((That's a pretty airtight argument, so i don't intend to struggle against it. You sound just like me when i try to persuade Ed Wrobel that my "double orders" ruling was not wrong because a) it was reasonable, and b) i was the GM. i don't think he ever caught on, though.))

was that cogent enough for you, brux? (it's been so long). i feel like i'm writing a court opinion: ...3) shoddy gaming is a crime of general intent. plaintiff failed to show that...

in fact, answers for questions 5-9 were received, but you stuck them all under #6. i think when it comes to gaming decisions, you've trained your favorite doomsies to be real contortionists. how they go out of their way to write rules which dictate what is ok amazes me. most of your situations are the same (i'm discussing the gm

interference discussion, by the way): what non-game things do you sacrifice for the benefit of your game? (e.g. the liberty to pull bullshit on the phone with someone who turns out to be a player). because there is no easy algorithm, these become dreaded grey areas which rob you boys of your gay abandon. silly you. in my mind, something you do for the game is in a white area if it is entirely benevolent, and in the black area if it is malevolent. the grey areas are where it would be nice to do something (e.g. stay off the phone and be home on deadline day), but if you'd rather not -- well, that's fine too. gray areas are where your ~~rules~~ house rules stop telling you what to do and you get the freedom to rule as you see fit. really, brux, is that so scary?

more interesting is the phone-the-player question: okay, i plead guilty: if i wonder about a player's orders (say f lon-nth, f edi-nth in spring '01 (the "shaffer opening")) i'll call him up and ask did you really mean that. so is that gm interference? sure it is. but it's not evil. ((It sure is evil if I'm France and don't have an English ally!)) dammit, i like my game, and i intend to take care of it so it can grow up to be a fine upstanding citizen.

in case you hadn't heard, using digits 6-9 in the zip is a waste of time. they're just for special bulk mailings where the computer reads the address.

i'm not sure i'd call it backpatting or asskissing, but i'll agree with terry that there is a lot of slime to wade through. fortunately about half that slime is well-contained in the press section.

that frobazz resembles st. george probably has something to do with jeff being a guest gm in st. george for a long time and toward the end came to dominate the zeen. in a way, the operation was slowly shifted over, though i don't know if jeff actually took any of bob's games.

i was amused to see which two doozies still read my letters. i remember john ((Pack)) and brad ((Wilson)) as militant right-wingers from the days when i was a militant left-winger. john still is, it seems, because virtually every rich person is somehow linked to one or more rich corporations, i think a more relevant question is: is it such a bad thing for a corporation to be rich? but i know very little about economics, so i'll shut up now.

i don't pay much attention to the zeen polls: i didn't realize you can't vote for a zeen you don't sub to. i happen to think that that restriction is ridiculous. obvious people will sub to the zeens they like, so if you only get to vote for the zeens you sub to, we may as well just count circulations rather than have a poll. of course, i'm not convinced that the poll is such a great thing anyway.

john macfarlane's pure diplomacy idea reminds me of an idea i had back when benzene was in irksome, which was based on something i read in dd which was no doubt a reprint from somewhere. in this version each doozie sends the name of the person who will not win the contest. any doozie who gets more than one vote is out, and the doozies who are still in vote again for round two. this continues until only two doozies remain in the running (actually, with so many starting, 10 or less would be better), all the eliminated doozies come back and vote among the finalists. in this final round, grudges are encouraged so the finalists' nefariousness in early rounds comes back to haunt them.

brad's argument that computers can't play diplomacy is unconvincing. i'm convinced that i could program a home computer to play a very lousy game of diplomacy. then i could keep adding refinements as the computer's stupidity in that area became apparent and after a while it would be as good as woody or bob olsen. now you're going to tell me if it doesn't negotiate, it isn't really playing dip. okay, if you're in a game and one of the players doesn't write to you ever, do you say he isn't really playing? ((Technically, he's playing. He has the opportunity to write, plus he might still be persuaded by letters he receives.)) what about if he sends letters but they don't make any sense? a computer can do that easily enough. even if you're still not convinced, i don't see that it's too unreasonable to get a computer to come up with things like "let's arrange to bounce in the black sea this turn" or, "if you support

me to bel, i'll support you to hol". i'm slightly confused about the comments about whether a computer thinks and whether it's still a computer. it sounds to me like we're bickering about what it means to "think" or what a "computer" is. i think a lot of people delude themselves by thinking that there is some bit of magical essence in a person that differentiates it from a computer. granted, a brain's circuitry is a million times more complex, but it's not essentially different. now you'll say that computers are machines and people are living beings. so what? a human life is considered to have some sort of inherent value, but does this value come from being alive? of course not. otherwise this huge aphid on my window would have that same value. of course you can define thinking however you want, but i think what is generally considered to be "thinking" does not require being alive.

i see head hasn't changed his militant-winger stance either. one out of three isn't too bad i suppose.

i suppose that if i were to find out which issue dick cut in half and sent a copy to you in his behalf, that wouldn't be good enough, would it? just goes to show that you don't care about the actual issue, you just want to make a big stink.

judging by your gushing, you'd like alaska. south-central, anyway, and the brooks range too. there's quite a variety in the state. i don't care much for any of alaska except anchorage. the value of the wilderness is, to me, as contrast to the city. ((??)) you can't appreciate life in a small city if you live in, say, new haven, ct, or rockford, il.

i think that challenging the bnc's right to declare your game improperly run is just silly. perhaps i'm missing something but i see somebody saying: i personally think that brux's game is improperly run and i am also the bnc. perhaps you have no faith in a dreg's ability to spot a non sequitur.

i don't think john pack's arguments are 100% unpersuasive. i think that it is conceivable that homosexuality, while victimless, encourages orine or other bad things in subtle and indirect ways. while i don't think this is the case, i don't dismiss it as quickly as you. i have long thought that the same is true of capitalism (though i never decided if the benefits outweighed these subtle drawbacks). these sorts of arguments are nearly impossible to back up, and that's why i only rarely bring up the subject. i think it's fairly easy to see that hard-core pornography (as well as medium-core) has indirect bad effects on society. i generally agree with you on victimless sex acts, but i draw the line at pedophilia. obviously most cases are rapes, but i know there are cases in which the child consents and even requests. i'm opposed to this, though i can't come up with a logical reason. maybe it's a vestige of human emotion in this cold mind.

i find "any gay who puts his hands on me won't be standing" disturbing. certainly john can defend himself against genuine assault, but i'm afraid he'll be hasty. i'm not gay, but if i good-naturedly put my arm around john and say "hi, ol' buddy", will i be standing? i think strong anti-gay sentiments are socially harmful, as demonstrated by numerous heterosexuals who are psychologically messed up because they're afraid to touch a man in a friendly but non-sexual way.

also i should think with overpopulation being a genuine problem, god might be inclined to do something about it.

perhaps some joker sent the letter to kathy and signed your name. tak tsk.

i think you overestimate people's ability to read your mind. i'm referring to your common: "he says this about me but he knows it is false". maybe he doesn't know.

when bill h left i got the impression he wasn't real proud of his time in dipdom and was anxious to leave it in the past. you handled your part in the matter admirably. my faith in brux is renewed.

indenting paragraphs isn't enough for dense doonies, huh? now you have to count them for us: first of all, secondly, third, fourth, fifth, sixth.

still waiting for an answer, huh? suzanne plechette was on the tonight show tonight (no, yesterday). they were discussing how she is not competititive ((whoops, extra

pair of tits, there, guys...)) and she told johnny: you wouldn't like competing with me because when i get bored i say, "i give up, you win."

um, let's see -- bertrand russell, harry s truman, john f kennedy, friedrich von holstein, maurice ravel. fidel castro, richard nixon, gore vidal, tom stoppard, henry kissinger.

i think some of the more prominent persons might prove dull conversationalists. older folks wouldn't communicate well even ignoring the language barrier. and jesus didn't speak english so you'd have to know hebrew or maybe greek?

do i have a secret admirer keeping up my sub? since when is it ii?? i don't recall sending any money. ((You sent a ten-spot a while back, i think.))

sure brux. go ahead and run the dooms of the year contest early. go ahead and mess up my campaign plans.

your coffin joke doesn't make sense. did i miss something? ((Yes; the punch line is in the quotes at the end of the "Visit with Joan" article.))

i don't see how you have to gm under the bnc. i could declare all your games irregular too. so what. and you're the one who pointed out bns were unnecessary...

rod forgot to refute the claim that back-dorr banditry is physically unnatural. it seems that some men still haven't discovered that one of the most erogenous parts of the body is the prostate gland. it turns out that the p.g. is situated so that the best way to stimulate it is through the asshole. and of course women don't have any handy tools with which to do this. (incidentally, this explains the not-too-uncommon scenario: experienced bisexual wants to bugger his woman and tells her sincerely that it feels terrific. not having a p.g. she experiences no thrills and assumes he was bullshitting her.)

#99 is here, so you can ignore my request that you get these letters into #99. from the size of it, it looks like you would have been unable to comply anyway. i did get the sand this time; last time it was lost in the mail. i thought you stopped teaching school, so why are there girls in your office? yes, i'm picking at your choice of words.

i think it's silly that everyone puts ms. ferraro on the cover of their magazine. how much did you hear about dole in '76?

maybe as much as the gamer's guide, huh? i advise anyone who gets the gamer's guide to get a copy of berch's dd #14/15 and read his critique of the gg, which i think you'll find increases the value of the gg at least double.

bringing up the topic of "artificial intelligence" serves only to cloud the issue i think. in the 70s when computers were new, the hackers would be vague and use computer argot when speaking to laymen. to preserve the computer mystique as something to identify with, they hid the fact that although a computer's process is large, it is very simple, and thus they delayed the advent of "user-friendly" computers and all that.

don't display your ignorance, brux; pre-pubescent's masturbate too. your problem with the rigel affair is where you say the gm can't take player intent into account. so why didn't you just invoke the greater good rule in the first place and thus save the delay? also how do you reconcile your invocation of said rule with the silly notion that you oughtn't judge player intent?

i think what is significant is not the disparity of discussion of politics in UK and US, but spending money on it. i mean things like conventions and campaigning and the like. seems like a drain on the economy.

i think that the child prostitutes are victims of something other than prostitution, but i guess that's just semantics. i also think 50% prostitutes are boys is an exaggeration.

i think it would be sensible to legalize prostitution and require a special license and that sort of thing. there are respectable houses which treat their employees well and stay away from the scuzzy stuff. the usual street slime would continue to be just as illegal, but i think some of the in-between ones might be encouraged to clean up. the u.s. could get into the picture tax-wise.

pornography is bad when it tells a partial story and gives people the wrong idea. please explain why what happened to miss america (our dear little?) was disgusting. i think brad is being quite reasonable in keeping his fruit diet down to apples oranges pears peaches and grapes. i don't recall brad "knocking" any of the other fruits; i believe he was just saying he is satisfied with his own. this bit about maybe shutting out an opportunity is silly. if one is satisfied, there's no need to go out hunting for something else.

i wish you'd print addresses more often. i keep wanting to write to doozies, but i can never find the addresses anywhere.

i was going to send you money to get 120 3-ring binders, until i figured out how much that would be. how about a twenty? i know; i'm generous.

print this, or i'll declare your games irregular. i bet you're scared.

((So what was that \$20 you enclosed for, anyway? If it's a gift, I thank you very much. If it's not, let me know what I'm supposed to do with it.

What happened to our dear little Miss America was disgusting because she didn't do anything wrong.

I think Brad ought to try apricots, just for variety. He doesn't have to stick with them, you know.

Your metaphor on diporganizations was wonderful! We might also say that Houserules are the electric eels that light up this river and show the pieces of gravel the way.

I thought that they killed the bull anyway if he won the bullfight.

I'm insulted if you think that the Hobby Houserule Custodianship is the most ludicrous idea I've had in years. Not because it isn't ludicrous, but because this opinion doesn't do justice to some of my other ideas. (smiley)

Perhaps a logical reason to oppose pedophilia is that most children aren't capable of making that sort of decision responsibly. I'm in favor of legalized prostitution, too, though; I understand that some of the "houses" in Nevada are very well managed. I'm not in favor of child prostitution, and I have extremely mixed feelings about the street prostitution that is so common in, say, New York City.

I don't see how calling a player to straighten out a faulty order helps the game. Sure it helps the player, but for every position helped, one must necessarily suffer at the same time. Might as well let the advantages go to the more careful players...

I like your contest idea, but I doubt that it would draw much participation.

Yeah, I know I'd like Alaska, at least to visit. Someday I hope to take the Alaska Ferry, and then go inland through the Yukon and see the whole place. It's not a likely possibility soon, though.

"Perhaps some joker sent the letter to Kathy (Francine?) and signed your name?" Not likely. Caruso brags in Whitestonia about how he and Kathy have saved all my letters, etc. Isn't it odd then that the one letter which is supposed to be so damaging is the one they can't produce? If there were a nasty letter to Francine, it would have appeared by now.

Your paragraph on buggery is absolutely disgusting.

I agree with you that Berch's critique of the Gamer's Guide is a valuable supplement to same. It's always good to get a different point of view on any facet of playing Diplomacy, since so little is clear-cut.

I don't think I'm too hard on messy folders. When I pay my money for a zine, or for a game, I expect that contract to be fulfilled. I don't agree that losing one's money is a risk that one should have to take, or that it can be viewed as part of the game. Nobody's ever lost a dime unfairly in WD, and I'm not overly proud of it. That's the way it ought to be.

So how do you know that you won't like cyanide if you never try it? Personally, I think I prefer the REGEL press to cyanide, but unlike you, I'm not going to make that judgement final without having tried both.))

From Fol Si File #133

One Minute to Midnight: Wrapping up that Diplomacy Game

by Randolph Smyth

There are hundreds of articles available on how to begin a game with the various countries, and a reasonable number on midgame resources. Once you've come through all the snares of the other players and are the front-runner on the way to victory, how do you put it away?

Many players who have won a game or two are in no position to give such advice. Their victories were achieved, really, by the time they reached a dozen centers, before they'd even be considered a major threat in a well-played game. But... the other players dropped out with position-destroying NMRs, decided to puppet, otherwise gave up fighting, or were of uniformly poor quality to start with. It isn't always so, however; many of us can recall several instances of coming into a game as a standby with a "lost" position, and forcing some unexpected modifications on the aspirations of the "winning" power. Wins are often not a product of the victor's tactical or even diplomatic maneuvers, but of the negative attitude of the other players. This article describes how to win when several of your opponents still have a positive attitude.

(We will therefore be looking mainly at progressions to an 18-center win rather than attempts to get a concession vote through; the implication being that at least one opponent has the spirit to torpedo these proposals until an 18-center win is a tactical certainty anyhow.)

Probably the best way to keep growing after 12 (centers, not years old) is to find yourself a good puppet. "Good" doesn't necessarily mean large; in fact, you would have good reason to be suspicious of someone with 8 centers who offers to puppet to your 12. An ill-considered agreement with such a power can be readily turned against you if your "puppet" can gather and distribute evidence of your winning aspirations prematurely. On the other hand, if the puppet is too weak, he won't be able to do you much good, and may even become more trouble than he's worth if you feel obliged to help him out against furious attacks from his other neighbours. Most players want something as the price of their puppethood; and if you have any intention of repaying that debt, you must calculate whether the puppet's hopes are realistic within a reasonable time. (A one-unit puppet with no home centers who demands your help to grow to a ten-center second place had better be in an enormously valuable position!)

Personally, I always repay my "puppet debts" unless it becomes physically impossible to do so. Many players who will accept a "normal" stab from an ally as part of the game will react with undying fury at being cheated out of the rewards of the puppet relationship. This is perhaps because, to agree to be puppeted at all, a player must give up a certain amount of self-respect. After taking abuse from his fellow players and an inescapably lofty attitude from his "master" for several game years, the agreed-upon goal becomes a particularly important facet of the game -- to have it denied can easily create personal ill-will. Even if you don't really care what Joe Puppet thinks of you personally, remember that you may meet in another game where the guy's entire tactical and diplomatic energy may be focused on your destruction; and even if not, the reputation of a puppet-stabber seems to get around the hobby before long. Someday, you may want to win again...

How to keep a puppet in line? The opposition will send him a barrage of letters in an effort to get him to switch sides, if he's really critical to the outcome. You must demonstrate that progress is being made toward the mutual goal; and if you're neighbors, it's most important to establish and maintain a position that will make it suicidal for the puppet to renege and turn around. Self-interest prompted your agreements in the first place -- just make certain that his self-interest doesn't make a betrayal a good gamble.

In the later stages, once you have units to burn, you can even develop "hostage centers": puppet-owned, but entirely master-controlled. If master + hostage centers total 18, you're no longer fighting for victory; the game is already won, and continues only out of consideration for the puppet. These extreme late-game maneuvers (to reduce a third opponent, for instance) can be carried on in perfect confidence, trust, and goodwill on both sides, as there is nothing for a sane player to start a fight over. However, the principle can also be applied earlier in the game -- explicit threats to a reasonably competent puppet are entirely unnecessary as the hostage centers speak for themselves.

If tactical threats are inconvenient, puppets can sometimes be kept begging at your feet by making well-timed references to other players waiting in line to take the puppet's place. A player may hastily agree to second place and help tide you over a difficult period, if he believes that you're considering other offers of a similar nature. On the other hand, an exposed lie can disrupt some otherwise promising negotiations, and an outdated one is useless. Therefore, a puppet recruited by diplomacy alone should be forced into a more dependent status as soon as possible.

How do you "get" a puppet, though? (I'm going at this backwards, aren't I?) Actually the most satisfactory endgame arrangements I've ever made were when the prospective puppet approached me: this type is hungrier for a deal, and feels less put upon when the manipulations begin. Whoever makes the first proposal, though, success will normally depend on a previous period of friendly diplomatic exchange. A few months ago I wrote from the other side of the fence, examining the problems of a defending alliance in involving a "sheltered power" (= prospective puppet, active or passive). ((This refers to the superb "I'm OK Charlie..." article, reprinted in YD #16 and Supernova.) I implied that they had an uphill battle if their front-running enemy had enough diplomatic sense to maintain close links with the wavering power. If such a player is not against you from the start on philosophical grounds (i.e. a Calhamerian player), then as the winner you can make more attractive offers than your opponents. I believe many players will indicate an intellectual preference for a multi-player draw over second place in a poll, but when the chips are down and they are faced with the need to work for that draw from a not-terribly-interesting position, and with the chance of losing anyhow, most will jump at the chance of a relatively easy second place. The matter of "getting" him has been left to last because, in fact, it's one of the easiest parts of the whole process if there are several players left.

Suppose you're unlucky enough to be facing a unified bunch of Calhamerians, though? Well, puppets aren't the only way to turn an advantage into victory. If you start with 12 centers and no enemies committed against you already, it's not unrealistic to work out a stab for three more...which takes you halfway there. If you haven't been too impatient earlier, you really should have a trusting ally left to pull this off on at the 12-center mark. Assuming he is truly an agreeable sort, while you are secretly a blackhearted win-only player, you can pick your time and place...but, of course, he may be keeping a similar secret from you!...isn't Diplomacy fun?

Depending on the position, you may reap unexpected advantages by concentrating your subsequent efforts against the neighbour who seems (1) most or (2) least dedicated to stopping you. If the former is a military weakling and accessible, eliminating him may lead to the collapse of organized resistance among the others. Unfortunately, your greatest and most competent diplomatic enemy is often pretty strong himself, perhaps running second to you (the cause-and-effect relationship may be difficult to define, but it's easy enough to see why this is so...). Knocking him down a bit will only improve his credibility with the other players. In this case, go for the fuzziest player you can find: bold attacks on him may produce direct tactical gains which a stronger opponent wouldn't have allowed. This may break up the opposition as they try to take their own piece out of the klutz; or if things really look bad he may drop out altogether. This is a godsend if the position is at all substantial and the zine doesn't use standbys; if it does, it may reward you to scan the standby list and

note the average caliber of player there, before embarking on this strategy deliberately. A dropout might be replaced with a real fireball.

(This is an example of weighing apparently "extra-game" considerations in your strategic decisions. If the game's standby list has a lot of strong, experienced players, you should recognize that the dropout of an indifferent player (and that's the only kind that will drop out as a result of your pressure) may well leave you with a real heavyweight on your hands after a single NMR. For instance, as a player in ESF, I wouldn't welcome the dropout of any other player; if the fellow is thinking of leaving at all, his play is almost certain to be weaker than that which my average standby can dish out. However, while I personally don't like to see positions change hands under any conditions, there are a few zines around with a high proportion of inexperienced players on their standby lists. If I was attacking my neighbour in one of those zines, the chances of a "favourable" change after a drop would be that much higher. It's something to keep in mind even when you consider it somewhat unethical to exploit the possibility per se: it can make a difference.)

Until now, we've been largely discussing tactical methods and decisions; but the game is Diplomacy, after all. The way to progress which I find the most fun lies somewhere between recruiting a puppet and pounding away at selected enemies -- it's called good old-fashioned dissention-creating, and is a natural outgrowth of the methods you probably used to capture a dozen centers in the first place.

Techniques change a bit once you've been marked as the front-runner out for a win, though. You only insult the intelligence of a competent opponent of half your size when you suggest undertaking a common project "as equals". At this stage you are obviously more equal than the others, and it's foolish to deny it unless you have a realistic hope of taking the other fellow in. I've seen a lot of people try, though; it seems almost impolite to admit that yes, you have the best chance of winning the game, even when it's perfectly obvious to every player on the board.

The "yes-I'm-beggier-now-but-you-can-catch-up-and-draw" approach is one angle you can try with the guy in second place (even as you explore the puppet possibilities with the smaller guys). This is plausible if the second-runner has, say, 8 centers to your 12. You may even be in a position to let him partially catch up as you continue to grow -- reaching a 14-12 split may even convince him that you're serious before you stab him for enough to win with. As I said earlier, though, chances are the second-place fellow knows what he's doing, so you can't let the advantage slip away entirely; he's more than likely going to stab you when he reckons the time is right. The pitch is essentially to buy time while you gain those few centers that will make a later stab completely successful.

The "there's-no-danger,-let's-take-out-the-little-guys" pitch is another good one to several of the larger powers simultaneously. If accepted, this may create puppets for you if the smaller guys refused before. Players will often take incredible risks to cut a small power out of a five-way draw...and even if your subsequent attack fails, this sequence will, at least, reduce the number of draw participants.

The advantage of arguments like this is that there's a very fine line, depending on the extent of advantage of the leader and his willingness to attack for the win, which separates an honest proposal from a devious trap. If you're close to that line, the other guy won't know it, because the second factor is in your head (don't let it out). He will certainly suspect, even if you're on the "honest" side of the line, but without the fear born of certainty he may well accept the offer. Beat him if you can.

((Randolph neglected to mention one point which I believe often to be a major factor in favor of a player gunning for the win. That is that you should try, while still at 11 or 12 centers, to get a "wandering unit" or two behind the enemy lines. Once you do this, you can really play havoc with his centers, and he will have to invest a significant number of his own units in hunting you down, while your "normal" units take advantage of the resulting lightening of his front-line forces.

For further information on how to turn a good position into a winning one, please see my article, "Winning Against a Stop-the-leader Alliance", VD #85, page 60.))

Ethics and the Diplomacy Player: the Readers Respond

I'm tickled pink to report that 14 Doomes responded to the round-table questions on player ethics, posed in VD #97. Thus with my comments thrown in, there will be 15 points of view presented on each (or most, anyway) of the questions. Additionally, I'll be interjecting a few of my own comments after some of yours, just in order to play devil's advocate, and perhaps open up some new lines of thought.

Thanks very much to all 14 of you.

(Late note: make that 15. Dan Young's just got here...)

SITUATION 1: Players may deceive each other to their heart's content, but may they lie about the operation of the game itself? For example, suppose you're in a game with a rank novice, and it becomes obvious that he thinks he can capture a center by passing through it in the spring. Is it ethical then for you to take advantage of his ignorance and trick him this way into moving out of a supply center in the Fall because he thinks he'll own it anyway? Or, to take another example regarding the operation of the game, is it ethical for you to call another player and tell him that the GM is in the hospital, and asked you to spread the word that the next season will be delayed, thereby tricking him into an NMR?

Mark Lew: I wouldn't hesitate to do that.

Jeff Noto: I think both situations are ethical. If the novice doesn't know the rules well enough then, he will afterwards. On the second situation, if you can get that guy to believe you, then he probably won't last long in the game anyway.

Mark Luedi: ((No answer received))

Don Del Grande: Telling the player to move out of the center is fine -- all players should know the rules, and if one doesn't, tough luck. (Of course, the player that tells the player to move has lost an ally...) As to the "GM in the hospital bit", that would be unethical, since novices don't know any better.

BRUX: Yeah, but then you could argue that you can't lie to a novice about anything, since he might not know any better.

Steve Langley: I have frequently explained this very situation to a novice (frequently is defined as "more than once" in this usage). Beating people who just don't know how to play the game is no win. The second half of the question is tempting, but again, no I wouldn't. Still, anyone who is dumb enough to accept another player's word on when the deadline is, pretty much deserves what he gets.

Kevin Stone: In both cases, there's no doubt in my mind they are OK. If a novice doesn't know the rules (and a basic one to boot) it's his tough luck. He'll learn soon enough. In the second case, you should always meet the latest deadline the GM sets.

John Pack: Both of the items under consideration would be a case of going to an extreme to win. I'd hope that players would be helpful to novices who are learning the rules. I hope that the players wouldn't let the possible sickness of the GM stop them from getting orders in. The GM, sick or well, is the only one who can delay the deadline. Just because he's in the hospital wouldn't necessarily mean that late orders would be accepted.

Paul Rauterberg: If a novice were to ask me a specific question about the rules, I'd give him a specific answer. If he simply mentioned that he was leaving a new center in the Fall, I would not feel honor-bound to correct him. If he was my ally, I'd correct him in my own self-interest. If he was my enemy, he wouldn't tell me what he intended to do in the first place.

As for the "GM in the hospital" play -- if a player is dumb enough to fall for this, it might be fun to try it. However, residual bitterness stemming from the incident might do one more harm than good.

Randolph Smyth: Either situation you describe is ethical, though pretty stupid as a rule; i.e. it's hard to imagine a situation where the missed center/NMR is going to compensate for the probably-permanent distrust of the player you've tricked. Only towards the end of the game are things like that critical, and by that time your victim should have absorbed some sense. Still, the attempts are no more than extreme cases of the trickery at the root of most negotiations.

BRUX: I'm not sure I understand why the "probably-permanent distrust" you speak of would be any more damaging than the same in a player you've stabbed "normally". Especially in the case where you trick a guy into an NMR, the profits could well be worth the permanent loss of the guy's trust.

Steve Knight: Sure, both are ethical, although the latter seems slightly stupid -- any player worth his salt should always get a set of orders in regardless, so "inducing" an NMR is a moot point. As for the novice, it's not someone else's responsibility to teach him the rules of the game. Of course, being the soft touch I am, I'd probably explain it anyway.

Ty Hare: Of course. It's not my responsibility to make sure the novice understands the rules and eccentricities of the game. My goal is to screw the geek as soon and painfully as possible.

Mark Berch: I see no problem at all with the first one. In fact, something similar to that was described in an account of a game on board a submarine, which appeared a little while back in MM. The guy posted the map for use during a negotiation period which had been doctored (to remove Bohemia, as I recall). The second would be objectionable only if the GM forbids it. Players can lie to each other.

BRUX: If the GM forbids it? How can the GM forbid it? If he can forbid that kind of lie, what other kinds of lies can he forbid? If the GM takes a role that active in determining the nature of the players' negotiations, then it seems to me that we're talking about a variant.

Rod Walker: Both things here aren't unethical, but they aren't very sporting, either. I certainly would not want it said of me that the only way I could win a game was to hoodwink a player so naive that he thought you captured a supply center in the spring. The game is supposed to be a challenge, not taking candy from babes. Unsporting, as I said. The business about the GM in the hospital is perhaps less unsporting, but not significantly so. It's a cheap shot...a player ought to have more pride than to engage in something so flimsy and crude.

BRUX: Why? Why is this any more crude than saying that you won't open to the Channel, and then doing it? Certainly the latter is more common, but they're both out-and-out lies designed to net you an edge that you wouldn't have had otherwise.

Duck Williams (that's Don Williams of California): I think you have posed two substantially different questions here. The first, referring to the rank novice, is easy enough to answer in my mind. Sure you can lie to the poor sap. Tell him he can collect dots in the spring, tell him he gets double credit for taking unnamed islands, too! It's each players own responsibility to know the rules -- the term "novice" shouldn't be confused with the term "fool"! Besides, you're assuming this novice really doesn't know what's going on. What if he does, and is just trying to see how you'll respond? In any case, you've lost him as a tool in any further schemes you might have, unless he's a masochist to boot.

On the second question, you have moved away from the operation of the game proper, and gone into its PBM format. As a general rule, I would consider your second example a violation of ethics. It could be argued that the lied-to player could confirm the lie or not, with a letter or phone call, and therefore the deception is not unethical. Still, that is not always possible for any number of reasons. A good GM would be able to deter this anyway by keeping his players posted at all times, if not personally,

then through a neutral third party.

Finally, though, any player who takes the word of a fellow player at face value is asking for trouble -- why not send the moves and play it safe? So, simply, question #1, yes; question #2, no.

Dan Young: I don't see why not. Players lie about almost anything else, from why they didn't write to why they've stabbed. I'm a postal novice, but I know how the game works -- if you sign up for a game without knowing how it works, you deserve to finish last! Yes, you can call another player and lie about the GM being sick. Any simple-minded patsy dumb enough to take these words as truth without checking up on it deserves an NWR! The whole issue about the GM being sick is similar to, say, a fake adjudication; if one is ethical, so is the other. My personal opinion (and I believe I'm in the majority) is that both are acceptable.

BRUX: Considerations of how experienced the guy is, or how the ruse might affect your future relationship with him, are not relevant to the questions. All you're doing in either case is deceiving another player. Both are entirely ethical, and a player who succeeds at either has nothing to be ashamed of.

SITUATION 2: Is it ethical for a player who is angry at the GM to resign, submitting a set of orders clearly detrimental to his country's position? What if these final orders are not only detrimental, but cause the collapse of what would have been a stalemate line, giving an opposing 17-center power an immediate win?

Mark Lew: that seems childish, but i'd hardly get on his case about it.

Jeff Note: Yes, it is ethical. Good sportsmanship, no, but definitely ethical.

Mark Lusdi: No, it's not ethical, but there's nothing to stop him from doing so. The only other viable alternatives are CD or a delay, but he is the player of record.

Bon Del Grande: It's not unethical unless the resigning player does it to allow another player to win immediately, or otherwise ruin the game beyond repair.

BRUX: But is it the GM's place to decide what moves might ruin the game beyond repair?

Steve Langley: It is ethical to resign a position and submit final moves. Anger with a GM is even sufficient reason to do so. After all, this is a game, for fun, and if it isn't fun there is no reason to play. Sending in final orders that destroy/harm the position would hardly hurt the GM. The question seems contrived, but I'd have to say that turning in "spiteful" final moves is not ethical.

Kevin Stone: Yes, it's ethical to resign, although maybe not very bright, as you could get a reputation as a poor sport.

John Pack: No, it isn't ethical, but certainly something that is done. A player does have the right to play his nation any way he likes.

Paul Rauterberg: A player is his own country's master. If he wants to be an ass, we can't stop him.

Randolph Smyth: This is ethical too, though probably even dumber than the previous case. For one thing, what does the GM care? -- the angry player is probably doing him a favor by bringing the game to a quicker end. If the guy wants to piss off most of the other players (excluding the winner, of course!) and look like an ass to everybody involved, that's his decision as a player...

Steve Knight: I don't know about ethical, but it sure isn't sportswanlike. The thing that gets me is both seem to hurt the GM less than the other players in the game, particularly if the GM wholeheartedly subscribes to impartiality to the point of disinterest.

BRUX: And well he should. Randolph's comment about doing the GM a favor doesn't make sense to me. GMs cannot "officially" care when their games end.

Ty Haze: A player can order his/her pieces any way he/she desires, eh? The player's personal relationship with the GM is irrelevant to play. As a matter of fact, a player did destroy his (I believe it was) own position before resigning recently in Ron Brown's Murd'ring Ministers. ~~Not that I'm~~

Ian Young: A player can do what he wants with his country -- he paid his gamefee -- if he doesn't want to win and prefers suicide, it's his prerogative. This is true with regards to a stalemate line as well. It is true that he may have trouble getting into other games, but he made his bed, so he can sleep in it!

Mark Berch: What's the problem with the orders? Players are not obligated to stop someone's win. The problem is with resigning because you are angry at the GM. That is improper. The GM is obligated only to GM the game fairly, reasonably promptly, and reasonably accurately. He cannot be expected to keep players un-mad at him. Players who quit games because they are mad at the GM or another player have their values wrong. This is a game, not an expression of approval/disapproval of the GM, and such an attitude ruins games for others. So it's the resignation itself that's wrong, not the orders per se.

BRUX: I suppose one could hold that view, but I don't share it. If I'm mad at the GM to the point where playing the game would be unenjoyable because of it, then I'd feel perfectly justified in resigning. But I wouldn't destroy the position I would be leaving behind, nor throw the game to another player.

Rod Walker: A player is angry at the GM, so he screws his ally(ies) in the game??? Not very logical, is it? Sure, it's ethical, but it's downright stupid. Other players would be very right in refusing to ally with such a character again. This is totally unsporting, and my attitude toward such a player in another game would be...well, let's get you out earlier this time, so you won't have to worry about resigning.

Duck Williams: Sure, why not? The player in question is a cad, of course, but I can't see where this is a violation of ethics in the slightest. I think your question is a bit off the mark: the player's anger at the GM is obviously misdirected when he destroys the game for his fellow players/allies. This only indirectly -- or not at all -- affects the GM.

I see little difference between this and, say, letting someone take my dots from me to keep a former ally (who has since stabbed me) from getting them, and that's a standard threat/ploy.

BRUX: I vote with the majority on this question. It's sleazy and disgusting and dreadful and horrible, but it's not unethical and there's nothing that the GM can do about it. As with one of the upcoming questions, this was taken from my own personal experience as a GM. Kathy Byrne and Dave White resigned from one of my games with orders of all units hold because they were upset at my handling of an affair having nothing to do with their game. The orders seriously damaged their Austrian and Italian positions, and an opposing England/Germany alliance went on to a draw. I felt then that they were being unsporting, and it would have been nice to the standbys had they submitted "good" final orders; but there was nothing I did (or could have done) to change that.

SITUATION 3: An Austrian player offers to edit his GM's houserules, which are 19 pages long. The GM agrees, and publishes the updated rules with the note that they now supercede the old ones. But he hasn't proofread carefully enough. On the bottom of page 12, the player has inserted the sentence, "Austria may claim victory at any time, and in so doing wins the game." The Austrian player waits until the rules are published and in force, and then claims victory. Has he behaved ethically, and does he win the game? Or has he deceived the GM by his actions? (If so, what if he also slyly deleted the rule prohibiting deception of the GM?...)

Mark Lew: this just goes to show the silliness of houserule-worship. I think hrs which have the purpose of describing the gm's judgement are beneficial, but the game is better run by the gm than by the hrs. a player can claim victory all he wants to (as doug and i always do when we abort a game of 2-player titan) but so what?

Jeff Noto: If the GM doesn't have enough common sense to rectify this situation, he should be horsewhipped.

Mark Luedi: Shame on the GM! Now all of his games are irregular...

Don Del Grande: This is both unethical and clearly irregular. Well, that's my opinion -- are there any polls, rating systems, etc. that use only games not declared irregular by the BNC without question? Clearly, what the BNC declares irregular is the BNC's opinion unless he/she (currently "she", of course) says that he/she is using certain guidelines and/or other people's opinions. Fix the houserules before printing!

Steve Langley: The GM is a dunce. The Austrian is a clown who has, through his cleverness, won a game that can only be defined as "Austria wins variant" and which would not be accepted as a true win by anyone of sense. Ethical -- no.

Kevin Stone: If I were the GM, I think I would get a chuckle out of it and let the game continue. Then I'd reread the new houserules.

John Pack: Sure, Austria wins his personal game versus the GM, but not the Diplomacy one. He certainly wasn't behaving ethically, though. I doubt whether many GMs would change their reaction to this if there was a rule on deception of the GM or not in the HRS.

Paul Rauberberg: If a game is restarted under a particular set of houserules, it should be run to its conclusion under that same set. Revisions during a game might be suggested by the GM, but the players should have the right to vote on them.

Randolph Smyth: It's ethical as a player, but not as a houserule-editor, though I suppose this consideration doesn't count here. In theory he wins the game, though it's a meaningless victory since everyone will surely declare the game irregular after concluding with those houserules. It's the GM who deserves the "unethical" label, since it's hard to conceive of anyone being that grossly incompetent. The GM has not been deceived: the "Austrian" rule was in plain sight.

BRUX: Well, I dunno about equating "unethical" with "grossly incompetent"...

Steve Knight: Er, *ahem*...cough, cough. (u) At the very least, this turns a game into a variant...inasmuch as the HRS are pertinent to the running of the game, said player is making use of an unfair advantage, acting unethically, and should be drawn and quartered. Of course, that person is probably a masochist trying to ensure his hobby notoriety forever and would enjoy it, but that's his problem.

Ty Hare: Considering the nature of the game, a player can take advantage of every opportunity offered. As the houserules are the GM's, the GM is solely responsible for their accuracy. Deception of the GM wouldn't apply, I would think, but I'd kick ~~the GM's~~ his ass with the Greater Good Rule.

BRUX: Phooey! How would you like it if I used the Greater Good rule against you someday? What's that? I have? Oh.

Mark Berch: No, the player hasn't acted unethically, although the GM would if he allowed the player to win. Such a game would be automatically a variant. This fits into the category of following a "typo". If there's no question but that there was an error and that the words do not actually reflect the GM's intent, he is not obligated to follow such a HR. The player gets applause at such a nifty prank, but if he wants to win, he'll have to persuade the other players that such a prank deserves a win.

Duck Williams: A bit ridiculous, but rhetorically deserving of an answer. The GM is at fault here (he/she is always responsible for what sees print), and the player is doing what is allowed by the game. The bottom line to this, though, is that Austria's win would be hollow and pyrrhic -- the game would lose regular status and become a rather extraordinarily lopsided variant (maybe named "Olsen's revenge"?). The player is being ethical, wins...big deal...it ain't regular, and no one will play the variant more than once.

Rod Walker: As GM, I'd have a good laugh at being hoodwinked so cleverly, and then tell all and sundry that the game continues as before and the Austrian player can play if he likes but he hasn't won. This could only be a practical joke, anyway. The HR is manifestly contrary to the Rulebook and hence invalid (and if valid, the game would be a variant and the BNC should simply refer the game to the MNC for a new number and publication of the results in Alpha and Omega).

BRUX: Your observation that the HR is in violation of the Rulebook is correct but not relevant. So are plenty of other HRs: Non-DIAS, 4-week deadlines, standbys, etc.

Dan Young: I don't really think that it's ethical to monkey with the houserules like that. It is deception of the GM, and if he deleted the houserule prohibiting deception of the GM, then the procedure is as follows: tell the BNC and have the game declared a variant, with Austria the winner. Amend the HRs, then open a new game, place the players in their original countries, start the game in the same season and with the same position. Waive all new gamefees (better yet, waive all save Austria's).

Seriously, though, what GM would publish 19 pages of houserules? What simple-minded antelope would let a player in one of his games edit his houserules? (V)

BRUX: You'd best watch yer tongue there, buddy. Novices like you who incur my wrath are swiftly ordered off the board and are never heard from again!

BRUX: Ty Hare hit it right on the nose, insofar as VD is concerned. I'd apply the Greater Good rule and get on with the game. If I didn't have a Greater Good rule, then Austria wins his variant and the regular game proceeds anyway (although, technically, it shouldn't).

SITUATION 4: The rules say that players may threaten each other. But does anything go? Suppose that (to lift an example right out of Richard Sharp's book) France is enjoying the clandestine favors of England's wife, and Germany knows it. Can the German player then threaten to tell all unless France supports him to the win? More generally, can such real-life threats be made to "persuade" a player to do as one wishes in the game?

A somewhat similar situation is that of a bribe. Is it ethical for one player to tell another, "I'll pay you ten dollars to support me into Venice."?

Mark Lew: I assume France doesn't want England to know about the affair. I think a player who would knowingly hurt someone for the sake of a game is probably a creep. I see no problem with monetary bribes.

BRUX: Ig, you always amaze me! Not till now, in my final issue, have I ever witnessed such a display of compassion from you! I'm serious -- you're answer really shocked me.

Jeff Noto: In the first part the German player is not acting ethically as he is letting personal relationships outside the game affect the play. Bribes are ethical -- how do you know if the briber or bribee will keep his word?

BRUX: How, indeed? Allow me to digress from the main discussion for a minute and relate to you a relevant passage from Richard Sharp's book, The Game of Diplomacy. He's talking about gaming debts, and then...

"My favourite story under this heading was one sent to me when I was soliciting tales of off-board stratagems for a jubilee article in issue 50 of Dolchostops. The participants were Rob Chapman, a well known player from Devon who has done a lot to promote the growth of postal Formula I, and Duncan Adams, a Lancashire solicitor who has since left the hobby, finding that it was taking up too much of his time and was becoming an obsession -- it can happen! I'm sorry I never played against him, as by all accounts he seems to have been a superb player during his brief and limited involvement.

"Rob, who told me the story, was playing Austria to Duncan's Turkey, and was asked by Duncan for a support. He demurred a bit not liking the look of it, and Duncan sent him a 10 pound note as an indemnity. A delightful correspondence ensued: Rob pointed out, reasonably enough, that there wasn't much in this for him -- if Duncan moved as agreed he would have to return the ten pounds...but the move was more in Duncan's favour than his own! Why not, he hinted, threaten to keep the note unless Duncan supported him in? This master stroke produced a classic reply:

Dear Rob,

There is a general rule of Diplomacy that no holds are barred, and one is not bound by what one says; the Courts could clearly not interfere in such affairs, and serious offenses such as forgery have no meaning in a Diplomacy context. However, this is not a Diplomacy contract; it is a separate contract depending on a specific performance in the form of an indemnity. The indemnity is above the Diplomacy contract which in itself is voidable ab initio. Should you retain my ten pounds I should certainly sue for the return and expect to succeed. But far more seriously, if you did refuse to return it unless I supported you this would constitute an unwarrantable demand with menaces, the old Blackmail offence now an offence under the Theft Act 1968. If you were to plan this with (Italy) you would be guilty of conspiracy, and could serve life. In short you are the bailee of the ten pounds and must act accordingly. I half wish you would keep it: the joys of being the first Diplomacy litigant would outweigh the other disadvantages.

"Rob's letter to me finished sadly, 'I supported him in and returned the ten pound note.' I am prepared to state categorically that this is the only occasion on which one Diplomacy player has threatened another with life imprisonment."

BRUX: So, Jeff, you see that there might be means of enforcing the terms of a bribe. And it is clear that Richard Sharp wrote his book before Billy Highfield arrived on the scene...

Now back to the round-table.

Mark Luedi: Real life and the game should not (but often do, irregardless) interfere with one another.

Don Del Grande: Just how ethical is the fact that France is enjoying the clandestine favors of England's wife? Certainly death threats, extortion, and other serious threats are unethical (and illegal); however, the situation given takes Diplomacy from the mapboard into real life -- will Germany tell? What if France supports Germany, and Germany tells anyway? As for bribery, it's only a game -- it's not unethical to offer money (however, offering certain other things may not be quite legal...).

Steve Langley: Now you are finally getting into some real questions. How many of us have played at work? With our boss? Did you ever have second thoughts about stabbing your boss? Say at review time? Personal considerations should not come into play. Ideally, they don't. But what if Austria is known to have a quick temper and has just been released on probation for his latest assault and battery? It is not ethical to use personal knowledge or physical force or monetary advantage as a diplomatic tool, but it is hard...very hard. The bribe situation is much more easily resolved.

would not offer a bribe. If someone offered to pay me \$10 to support him into Venice, I'd ask for the money up front, and then, secure in the knowledge of at least one of his moves, I'd write moves that were best for me, and return his \$10 after the deadline.

Kevin Stone: If France is close enough to be poking England's wife, what the hell are they doing in the same game anyway? And how did Germany find out? This one sounds more like something for "Dear Abby".

John Pack: Sure, it could happen. Neither such a threat nor a bribe would be considered ethical, though (this is only a game, after all).

Paul Rauterberg: Real life should have nothing to do with the play of a game.

Randolph Smyth: Generally, "real-life" examples are unethical for the same reason that cross-gaming is generally considered to be: some players enjoy advantages that others are unable to obtain. Now, if all the other players knew that England's wife was excessively amorous, including England, then the threat would be ethical, though a bluff since England couldn't be told anything he didn't already know. Kinky!

Again, a bribe is unethical since some players have more financial resources than others: conditions and advantages from beyond the game should not be allowed to affect it.

Steve Knight: Forget it. Injecting non-game matters into negotiating is unethical.

Ty Hare: Yes, in all cases. Anything goes, bribe or threat. The player can gauge for herself any "real life" ramifications, of course...

BRUX: Between some of these answers you're giving and the RIGEL Affair, I think you'd run some very interesting games if you were a GM...

Mark Berch: No, I think real life threats or blackmail are improper, and are outside the notion of "game".

A bribe offer is entirely proper, but I think actually paying it is wrong. A player can accept a bribe, so long as he does not actually do what he promised.

BRUX: Meaning, of course, that the only time he couldn't accept is if he plans to do what's being proposed anyway? C'mon...

Rod Walker: The first situation is very slimy and very unsporting...and in addition I would say it's wholly unethical. These real-world situations have no business in the game. Bribery is another matter. Unsporting, yes; but quite ethical...if you really want to take a game that seriously. Anybody who would do that isn't quite right upstairs. But, yes, it's ethical...or at least it's not unethical.

Duck Williams: Messy, messy, messy...next question, please? Sigh... No, real-life situations should not be dragged into the game; the player is being unethical. I hear you now, BRUX, "But what about...?" I think we have to assume that Diplomacy ethics and real-life ethics are two different things; they occasionally touch on each other, but are nevertheless different. What you are talking about here is blackmail in a very real sense; where real-life and Dip clash, Dip loses in my book. (Which isn't to say, incidentally, that Germany shouldn't spill his guts about France (the swine); but he should do it for some other reason, not for personal gain.)

As far as the bribe goes -- I don't see the similarity. If I bribe someone, what am I really getting? That is, if he's bought, how long will he stay bought? Hah... no longer than it takes to spend the \$10.00, I'll bet. You pays your money and takes your chances...

BRUX: That was a beautifully well thought-out answer to both questions.

Dan Young: Well, since there is no Code of Ethics for the hobby, nothing prevents anyone from doing this. I think it is legal but unethical. This is a hobby.

Yes, it is ethical to say you'll pay somebody ten dollars. If you renege, it's fraud, but we'll assume you weren't stupid enough to sign anything.

I personally wouldn't bribe anyone, nor would I move so as to accept a bribe (unless I planned on making the moves anyway). I would say that bribes are unethical... at least for ten dollars. (I may have a price, but it's damned higher than \$10.)

BRUX: Boy, did you waffle all over the place on that one! I have no idea where you stand, having read it.

BRUX: I will (grudgingly) take the stance that bribes are ethical -- as is reneging on the terms of one. I don't agree with Randolph's argument that they're unethical due to variations in the financial resources among the players, since real-life variations arise all the time in games. (What if one guy can talk louder than the others?)

There was a time when I might have agreed with Ty that real-life threats and blackmail are OK too, but no more. Not since it happened to me. The only player I've ever played who has tried to blackmail me in this way was Kathy Byrne, in a gunboat game at a ByrneCon, when she took out a personal letter and threatened to show it around because I had stabbed her. I did not feel that that action had any place in the game, and I promptly left. I don't know of any other active players who would stoop to this. I wouldn't.

SITUATION 5: You are England at war with France, and in Fall '01 you notice that you have succeeded in capturing Brest. However, the adjudication reveals that this was a simple GMing error: France has in fact bounced you with F Mid-Bre, but the GM let you take it by mistake. France or someone else will surely notice the error, but what if by some miracle nobody else notices? Are you entitled to build a unit for Brest, or are you obligated to report the error?

Mark Lew: I'm not sure what entitled and obligated are supposed to mean. a similar thing happened to me once when I ordered a non-existent unit which I needed to form a line. the gm didn't notice so I kept it for a turn until a draw passed. a little while later the error was noticed and the game was revived because France decided to veto the draw after all. I muttered a bit, but I saw no point in raising a big stink like I know some people would.

BRUX: Interesting situation. I think I would protest. In VD and many other zines, an error that is not noticed till after the following deadline must stand, and your unit would have remained on the board.

Jeff Noto: No, you are not obligated to report the error, at least not according to the rules of the game.

Mark Luedi: (No answer received.)

Don Del Grande: If you notice an error, you should report it, even if it's in your favor. (Besides, it shows that you're trustworthy, at least for the moment...)

Steve Langley: I send the GM notice of any GMing error I catch. One of my rules is that the adjudication should always be correct. I've cost myself credit for one or two dots that I didn't really own.

Kevin Stone: You are neither entitled to Brest, nor obligated to report the error. You may, however, try to build with the ill-gotten center. I'd probably report the error.

BRUX: If you may try to build for it, then isn't that equivalent to saying that you are entitled to Brest, so long as no one else spots the error?

John Pack: I'd think it'd be better to report the error. Your HRs indicate an error not reported within 3 weeks (right?) ((no, it's four weeks now)) stands, so building the unit for Brest would be a legal act. I rather think that a player would want to win because of his own merit rather than a GM error.

Paul Rauterberg: You take the build.

Randolph Smyth: Same response to these two ((#5 and #6)): you must report the error. Once you've made a decision, tactical or diplomatic, you gotta have the guts to stick by the consequences. If you're here to play Diplomacy, play by the rules.

Steve Knight: No, you aren't obligated to report the error -- although I personally would, feeling that a fairly-run game is more enjoyable than playing with an advantage I didn't earn.

Ty Hare: Chances are good that no one else has reported the error because the rest of the players WANT YOU TO WIN. Thus it would be pointless and rude to tell on your supporters.

BRUX: Talk about your farfetched rationalizations...

Mark Berch: If the error is obvious to another player, you are not obligated to report it. This actually happened to me recently at MaryCon '84, where the adjudication was wrong. I kept my mouth shut. Players must be expected to check the adjudication.

Rod Walker: It would be sporting to report the error, but not unethical. If France is too dense to notice, that's his problem.

Duck Williams: If the error is obvious to all parties concerned, I would say that I am entitled to the build if no one else notices. The GM is only human and all of the ones I know admit to an occasional screw-up. Players should always check on adjudications; it doesn't make me guilty of anything if they don't. (This assumes, of course, that the GM does not have specific outlines for this (i.e. "If I mess up you have to tell me.")), but any such GM is overstepping his authority. Furthermore, the GM should be willing to admit mistakes and rectify them when caught in time, say, before the next move.

Dan Young: Build the unit. If the other players don't notice, that's their problem. Caveat emptor! And if a GM can't go through 1901 without making an error, he's in trouble.

BRUX: No hum, it's clear you're still a novice! I've seen lots of GMs, including some good ones, make errors in '01. I'm pretty sure I have!

BRUX: My response is that you take the build. If the other player's don't notice, why should you worry about it?

SITUATION 6: Suppose now that you are England at war with France, and, certain that you will be kept out of Brest, you try instead for Picardy. But lo, when the adjudication arrives you are astounded to see that France has not covered Brest, and what's more, the GM has reported that you moved to Brest and captured it! Checking your copy of your orders, you see that the GM has committed a "cloaked error" -- an error that (unlike that in the previous example) no one can possibly spot unless you bring it to their attention. You did indeed go to Picardy, and the GM somehow misread your orders. Are you obligated to report this error, or can you keep Brest in this scenario?

Mark Lews: I'm not sure what obligated is supposed to mean. I don't see what's to stop you from keeping your mouth shut unless the gm notices later. a similar thing happened to me once...oh, I already told that story.

Jeff Noto: Same as #5.

Mark Luedi: (No answer received.)

Don Del Grande: See answer to situation 5.

Steve Langley: I would call the GM's attention to a cloaked error if I saw it. It makes no difference. If I am going to do well in the game it has to be through my efforts or it doesn't count.

Kevin Stone: Again, you are not obligated, but I would probably say something to the GM.

John Pack: This is basically the same as #5. A player that kept such an ill-gotten center would have even less merit behind his eventual outcome than in #5, where at least the other players are foolish enough to miss the error.

Paul Rauterberg: You could take the build, but in this situation my conscience would bother me.

Randolph Smyth: (Same response as to #5.)

Steve Knight: This one's more hazy, since there's no opportunity for others to spot it. Again, I'd personally report it, but I really don't know whether or not an obligation exists.

Ty Hare: It'd be extremely impolite to embarrass the GM this way. Swallow your righteousness and humbly accept the center.

BRUX: I dunno; it'd be awfully hard to clear my conscience. (☹)

Mark Perch: This is a very difficult situation. I lean slightly toward the view that a player should report these, since not to do so is unfair toward the other players. Moreover, it is very easy for unreported cloaked errors to start that way and end up as GM-player collusion. If a GM notices that a cloaked error was uncorrected, he may decide to continue to rewrite the player's orders on occasion, and such collusion need never require that a word be said. I suspect that cloaked errors are one of the least remarked-upon phenomena in GMing, in part because they are only exposed if a player acts, against his self-interest if need be. As such they tend to be underreported. In one game I was in, there were three of them (178H) that I was aware of.

BRUX: You're making a huge leap from unreported cloaked errors to collusion. I don't think there are many GMs who would knowingly alter someone's orders.

Rod Walker: This is touchier. I would say that it would be very unsporting not to report the error. But not unethical, no. It's the GM's problem. This would be akin to reading a different order from the one you wrote in a PTF game. If nobody looks at your written orders to double-check you (as is required by the Rules), that's their problem.

BRUX: But how can the players check your orders in postal play?

Duck Williams: I would say that in the case of a "cloaked error", I do need to report it, as no other party in the game can. Keeping in mind that the GM is human, it would be unfair (and therefore unethical) to gain an advantage over the other players because of an error they cannot see. The key difference between #5 and #6 is the availability of information to all concerned parties.

Dan Young: Well, maybe I'm not totally without a conscience. I'd report the error. However, I can understand not reporting the error; indeed, I don't think it's unethical not to report. After all, perhaps you have been the victim of a cloaked error!

BRUX: John Kador had some thoughts about cloaked errors a while back in Why Not?. So let us take a brief break from the round-table for a detail look at this topic.

The following article first appeared in Why Me? #25. It is reprinted here as it makes a nice reprise to question #6 of this issue's round-table discussion.

Ethics in Diplomacy

The Cloaked Error

by John Kador

Let's talk about ethics in Diplomacy. For readers who believe I've just committed a nonsequitur, please skip this article. The question for today concerns whether a Diplomacy player has an obligation to report postal errors. To narrow the problem down, let's consider cloaked errors in general (a cloaked error is apparent only to one player) and cloaked to your advantage. Perhaps an example would help.

Let's say you are playing France in a postal Diplomacy game. You have a unit in Ruhr and you have a shot at either Munich or Kiel. Germany, your enemy, has only one unit to cover two supply centers. Finally, through whatever tactics you choose, you decide to go for Munich and your orders state: Army Ruhr-Munich. When the gamezine arrives, you rip it open to your game to see what Germany did.

"The son of a bitch!" you murmur. "He covered Munich."

But something doesn't add up. You've gained a supply center. But where? You look at your orders as reflected in the gamezine and you see that your Army Ruhr moved to Kiel, not to Munich as you ordered. You confirm your records and realize that the GM has somehow goofed. But it's clearly a goof in your favor because you've gained a center. And furthermore, it's a cloaked error because the error is apparent only to you. What should you do?

Suddenly there's a ringing sound and a little, squeaky-voiced guy over your right shoulder whispers that you should report the error to the GM.

"After all," he insists, "you've gained a center through no skill or intelligence of your own. You're not entitled to the center; it would demean the game if you accepted it now."

"Don't listen to the turkey," your alter-ego suggests to your sinister side. "It's all part of the game. If your orders get lost in the mail and your opponent benefitted, would he insist on an extension for you? Not on your life. It's all the same: orders getting lost or getting garbled. You take your chances and suffer or celebrate as the case may be."

"Stick that pitchfork where the sun don't shine! How'd you like to be the German player, losing a unit despite brilliant play? It reduces Diplomacy to the level of Go Fish or even Risk."

"Oh, yeah? What's wrong with Risk? Me and the boss play it all the time. Besides, I figure Germany had a fifty-fifty shot at losing a center. That's even odds. I don't know what you're crying about."

This dialogue continues for a while, but when you see how unproductive it is, you filter it out. You have better things to do than to listen to buzzing in your ears. You have the obligation now to apply great moral and ethical truths to resolve this dilemma: do you have to report this GM-generated error?

Let me reserve my answer to the dilemma until I describe a situation which led to an examination of my ethics. I'll share the situation with you and then give you my thinking which led to this article. Then I'll wait for any reactions to my handling of the affair.

I've never heard of anything quite like what happened to me. The situation was apparently unique because, while indeed there was a GM error and only I could detect it, the cloaked error helped me and hurt me simultaneously. The situation follows. (I am changing a few facts to protect the identity of the game. The specific game itself is not important. There's no reason to involve my fellow players.)

In the game in question, I was allied with another player in an immensely successful alliance. By 1907, we had split the board between us. We both stood at 13 centers. But, from my paramoid perspective, our agreement to go for a two-way draw looked remote. His position seemed better than mine and I smelled an ambush. But I couldn't be sure. And I wasn't prepared to launch a pre-emptory strike. So I compromised.

He asked me to hit an enemy unit to cut its support. I didn't want that support cut. But I had to have deniability. So I used the old deliberately miswritten order trick. I intentionally miswrote my order so as to make it illegal. My order, as written, would not cut support. This way, if I was wrong and my ally was surprised, I could reasonably offer my apologies for a momentary lapse. And if I was right, and my ally did stab me, he would encounter an unbargained-for hole in his flank.

But what happened? You guessed it! The GM apparently deciphered my orders as correct. Whether he made an honest misreading of my order or took it upon himself to correct my "obviously unintended goof", I can't be sure.

But whatever the reason, the illegal order was declared legal by means of a cosmetic fixup.

And my game-long ally? You'll be pleased to learn that he was trustworthy. He didn't stab me. We eventually shared a two-way victory.

But that didn't change the thical implications of the situation. An illegal order succeeded and I benefitted. I was also hurt (at least potentially) because had the illegal order failed, I would have been in a good position for a solitary victory. (Now you know why I don't want to identify the game.) What was my ethical responsibility, if any?

I did not report the error. Here is my logic.

I am consistent. I have never called a GM to task for any alleged error, in my favor or not, in six years of postal play. I had detected errors before, but never had a need to report them. Other players or the GM himself always caught the inaccuracies. I didn't see (and don't see) why I should have started reporting that error.

On another level, how is this type of error different from "acceptable" errors; for example, orders lost in the mails? If lost orders are analogous to lost military orders in real war, aren't misread orders parallel to garbled diplomatic traffic?

Most GMs are generally scrupulous in their gamesmastering, which allows me to retain my liberal philosophy. Errors are exceedingly rare and, when they do occur, they are generally fixed without my involvement. I intend to keep it that way. If anyone has other thoughts on this matter, I'd like to consider them.

((I agree with John's conclusion that a player does not need to report a cloaked error (or any error), but I don't really feel that his reasoning is strong. The fact that he's never reported an error in six years of postal play, and never needed to, is not relevant. It so happened that this time, he was faced with a cloaked error that only he could discover, which according to his description had never happened to him before, so that the situation was a "first" for him. Also, if all players reasoned this way, then no errors would ever get reported.

My stance depends heavily upon the fact that there is absolutely no way to enforce any rule (or any moral standard) which dictates that a player must report a cloaked error. Not only is it unenforceable, it's undetectable when a player doesn't speak up. Given that, it seems to me that the best policy to adopt would be to report an error if you choose to report it.

Besides, what if the player didn't save a copy of his orders and cannot be sure if there was an error on the part of the GM? What if he did save the orders and thinks he sees such an error, but isn't sure and doesn't want to take the risk of going back and checking because then he'd be "morally obligated" to report it? What if he doesn't notice it till the day before the next deadline -- is he then obligated to call the GM and get the game delayed? And so on.

A secondary point arises from the above article: players should always point out to the GM that they are deliberately miswriting an order, so that the GM won't go and fix it up. Of course, the player should make sure that the order is written so that the GM really won't fix it; in VD, for instance, it doesn't make any difference whether you tell me that "F Den-Nor" is deliberately miswritten, as it will succeed anyway. Consult the houserules or the GM himself to make sure, but do point out the error.

A final thought. I wonder if John Kador would really let by a GMing error which would hurt his game position, provided that none of the other players could catch it. What if the adjudication had shown him getting bounced out of Munich (in his first example) when he knows he should have taken Kiel? John, if you wouldn't speak up about that one, you're a better man than I am!))

We now return you to our regularly-scheduled round-table discussion.

SITUATION 7: An envelope arrives in your mailbox from your ally, and stuck to the back of the envelope by an obviously stray piece of chewing gum is an uncanceled postcard. The postcard, addressed to the GM, contains a set of orders from your "ally" -- orders which are, shall we say, not quite what you expected. Are you obligated to send the postcard on to the GM? Is it fair for you to change your orders based on what you have found out? And is it fair for you to change the orders on the postcard and then send it in?

Mark Lew: I'm not sure what fair and obligated are supposed to mean, but who would know if you just dumped the card in the trash? If you changed the orders on the card and sent it in, the gm might figure it out and get pissed.

Jeff Noto: All three situations are ethically allowable.

Mark Luedi: Yeah, and what if it's all a ruse on the part of the other player?

Don Del Grande: The only absolutely ethical thing to do is call your ally and tell him what's happened, and let him/her tell you what to do. If he/she isn't home, or can't be contacted, I would keep the card -- I don't know if it was meant for the GM or not. (Maybe it was a trick to make me think he was moving to those places!)

Steve Langley: Finally, a situation where I can be the bad guy. I would change the orders, write my own orders to take advantage of the change, and wait in glee to see the adjudication. It is clear that Berch wanted me to have the opportunity or he wouldn't have sent me the card with the moves on it.

Kevin Stone: Of course you don't have to send the postcard! And why should you if you are going to get stabbed? Heck, go ahead and change it too. I see no need to protect someone from his own stupidity.

BRUX: In this case, though, we're not talking about someone's stupidity, but rather an accident in which he mailed something to you and something to the GM at the same time, and the two just happened to stick together and both go to you.

John Pack: You aren't obligated to send the card, and yes, you may change your orders; however, changing the orders on the postcard might be a tiny bit unethical. It may be that the stray piece of gum is a ploy being used by another player.

Paul Rauterberg: You shouldn't muck with the postcard yourself -- either "lose" it and let him NMR, or change your own orders to retaliate for the stab. I might both lose his orders, and retaliate.

Randolph Smyth: Anything you do to/with/based on the postcard is fair ball. It might be a ruse, though for the situation as described, the purpose is obscure. Otherwise, you profit from your erstwhile ally's sloppy chewing habits as decisively as you can.

Steve Knight: Sure, it's fair/ethical for you to do any of the three. The other player has the "responsibility" to stuff his envelopes properly, and if he inadvertently tips his hand or gives you an advantage by letting something slip in, that's his problem.

Ty Hare: I'd say no to the first and yes to the second. I suspect we'll hear something relating to the third question in this issue of VD. I'll say, for the record, yes.

BRUX: What?! I'm aghast! You truly feel it's okay to cross out a player's orders and write new ones and send them in without his knowledge?

Mark Berch: This is straight luck, and no, you're not obligated to send it to the GM nor are you obligated to ignore it for order-writing purposes. Altering the postcard would be deception of the GM, since they would no longer be his orders; you have forged a new set.

Rod Walker: You have the GM in a very embarrassing situation here. He should have been more careful. ((What? I think you misread the question...)) I would say that the player is perfectly entitled to change the other orders if he can do so undetectably, although you still have to mail them back to the GM in your envelope (the card's already cancelled, so you can't re-mail it). ((Yup, you misread it...)) The ruse will sooner or later be found out when the other player protests. Best reaction will be to alter your orders accordingly and send both sets to the GM with a note calling his attention to his carelessness and its consequences. But I have a better problem for you: what if you, day after the deadline, call the other player and tell him that the GM read his orders to you on the phone and prove it by quoting them verbatim? My, what a lovely Shep Rose trick. Very unsporting, and very unethical. What do others think? What should the GM do???

BRUX: This assumes that the GM won't give game result via phone -- else you could have found out the moves from him fair and square. It is perfectly legal and sporting to claim in your diplomacy that the GM did something like this. But the player is bound to check with the GM and discover the truth anyway -- and the GM is permitted to tell a player whether or not there is any truth to such a charge.

Duck Williams: In answer to your multiple questions: no, yes, yes. Once again, you are assuming you know the mind of your ally. He may be setting you up for any number of reasons, he may not be at all -- it's not for me to decide. In the described situation happened to me, I don't know specifically what I'd do, but I wouldn't feel guilty about using the "misplaced" (or was it?) card to my best advantage. Again, as with the "rank novice", you can't save people from themselves...

Dan Young: You are not obligated to send the postcard, though I would. I wouldn't change the orders, either. However, I don't think it's unfair to change the orders (I can hear the screams of outrage now!) but it is deception of the GM, and if you get caught, tough luck!

BRUX: In most zines, "deception of the GM" is considered cheating and therefore unfair.

BRUX: You can do as you please with the postcard and/or your own orders. The accident wasn't your fault, but there's nothing to stop you from taking advantage of the situation. My own inclination would depend on the house rules under which I was playing, and the relationship between the player in question and the GM. If the GM has a policy of collect calls, I'd assume that those moves are going to get used even if I keep the card as the player will probably not NMR anyway. Ditto if the player and the GM are known to be friends, or local to each other. He's probably going to get those moves used anyway. So in that event, I send the card on to the GM, after altering the orders on it or changing my own, or both.

On the other hand, if the GM doesn't make collect calls, and the player and GM aren't otherwise likely to be in contact with each other, I keep the card and let him NMR. Or, if I suspect it's all a ruse, I defend against a stab -- but not the stab written on the card. I try to figure out what he is going to do, what he's trying to sucker me into doing, and act accordingly.

SITUATION 8: You are in a game run by a GM who lives just a few miles away. One season, you notice a GMing error and call to tell him about it. "Thanks," he says, "I'll send out a correction to the other players tomorrow morning."

The next morning you sneak up to his mailbox and remove one of the corrected adjudications, since you don't want a certain other player to know about it. Ignoring the fact that you have just committed a Federal offense, is your action ethical within the context of the game?

Mark Lew: we finally get to a term I understand (legal), and you discount that part of the question. I think I'd refrain from this particular stunt because the players who never got the message would likely tell the GM and the game might be stripped up.

Jeff Noto: I didn't know that anything connected with committing a Federal offense was considered ethical. In short, NO!

Mark Luedi: (No answer received.)

Don Del Grande: No -- this is definitely an unfair advantage. Even in a FTF game, you can tell another player the wrong position, but he/she can always get the truth -- and know it's correct -- by looking at the board. Well, assuming there aren't any flying dutchmen -- I know how that feels twice as much as usual, after MaryCon.

Steve Langley: The GM is a convenience for the play of the game. Interference in his mail to players is not ethical.

Kevin Stone: No, it's not ethical to steal the GM's mail.

John Fack: This is completely unethical. I think any GM would expel such a player from his games.

Paul Rauterberg: No.

Randolph Smyth: No: you're interfering with the GMing service that the other player has paid for with his gamefee. All players are entitled to whatever game-related information the GM sends out.

Steve Knight: I'm inclined to say it's unethical, but can't arrive at a hard and fast reason why.

Ty Hare: Since the adjudications are still in the possession of the GM (the mailbox), I'd descrotusize or deovarate the player. Only after the adjudication has left the GM's possession is it fair game to others. This includes the receiving player's mailbox, of course.

Mark Berch: You can't ignore the fact that this is a Federal offense; for that reason, it is improper. The same goes for intercepting mail headed for the GM, breaking into his house and swiping orders, shooting the GM and the like. This is only a game, not a pretext to break the law.

Rod Walker: Absolutely unethical.

Duck Williams: No, it is not. (See, I can give short answers.)

Dan Young: My first reaction is that anything illegal to the Feds is unethical for the game. But libelous, scurrilous, defamatory and threatening language on an envelope is illegal -- and what's unethical about writing on an envelope, "Look, you scumbunny, give me Budapest back or I'll stomp you into fudge!"?

BRUX: I mellowed out a while ago and wrote a provision in my houserules that a player may not raid the GM's files. However, before I had such a provision, I'd be inclined to say that such an action is OK in the context of the game. That doesn't stop me from pressing real-life charges against the slime, however, and he'd be perfectly welcome to continue playing (not having behaved unethically) from his prison cell. I'm serious.

As for the argument that any violation of the law is also unethical in a Diplomacy context, I cannot agree at all. Someone (Berch, I think) once brought up the possibility of a player exceeding the speed limit on his way to the post office so that his orders would go out in time to arrive before the deadline. I don't see anything wrong with that, gamewise, and as GM I wouldn't bother the player about it. Ditto for stealing my mail -- unless it violated my houserules, which now it does.

It could be said accurately that mine is a very "liberal" stance on this sort of thing. I also didn't see anything wrong with the player in England who once broke into his GM's dorm and copied the other player's orders -- except for the minor fact that he had broken a real-life law, but no Diplomacy rules.

SITUATION 9: I'm sure we can all agree that a player has a right to vote as he wishes on a draw proposal. But consider the player who tells his GM, "Look, I'm the only player vetoing this draw each season. Your houserules give you the right to switch this game from five-week deadlines to two-week deadlines. Do that, and I'll vote for the draw. Don't, and I'll keep vetoing -- and the game will last at least another year of real time." Is the player behaving ethically? How should the GM react? (Keep in mind that such a change in the game procedure can have a legitimate effect on the strategies employed by the players. See "Variations" by Randolph Smyth, VD #85, page 110.)

How about the player who threatens to keep vetoing unless the GM allies with him in another game in which they are both playing? Is this player behaving ethically, and how should the GM react?

Mark Lew: I don't think I'd talk to the gm like that because he might mention it and I'd get a lot of bad flak. as gm I'd ignore the requests for the same reason.

Jeff Note: The player is not behaving ethically. I personally would remove this player from the game for unwarranted abusive conduct toward the GM PROVIDED that I could submit documental evidence of his actions.

BRUX: I cannot agree with that last remark. If the offense is serious enough to warrant removal of the player, then you should do so regardless of what evidence you do or do not have. Otherwise you're saying that you can remove him if he made the threats in writing, but not if he made them over the phone. I once kicked a player out of a game for deception of the GM, and at the time presented no evidence whatsoever, because I had none. (I did come up with evidence later, but that only made my case more convincing to outsiders -- it didn't increase the seriousness of the player's actions.)

Mark Luedi: So, the game lasts another year. I don't know that the player is behaving exceptionally unethically in this situation, but I would wonder about the GM who submitted to those demands. The player, in a sense, is entitled to use whatever methods are necessary to gain an advantage over the other players, but I think before I use that as a blanket for the other situations, I don't believe he has the right to subvert the rules or methods by which the game is run. In this situation, since the contingency for 2-week deadlines is covered in the houserules, I don't know that the player has acted wrongly, possibly only ignorantly.

As for the second situation, this player is probably in deep trouble. His attempted deal should be made public, and he should also probably be expelled from the game for violating a player-GM relationship, or at least be strongly reprimanded (in private?).

Don Del Grande: It's the GM's game -- no player can tell the GM how to run the game. (However, if all the players agree to something, the GM should get the message...) Besides -- why would a player want to change to 2-week deadlines and then immediately vote for a draw to end the game?

Steve Langley: From the GM's point of view, I'd put his proposal up to a vote. If everyone wanted to go to a two-week deadline, I'd let them. As for his threat, I don't care if the game lasts forever. What kind of threat is that? Is it ethical? No?

As to the threat to keep on voting unless I agree to ally with him, I would probably use his threat with some "ad hominem" type diplomacy to get a different alliance going to wipe him out, and I still wouldn't care if he voted no to the draw -- forever.

Kevin Stone: This is crazy. Why should the player care if the deadline is going to be two weeks long if he is going to vote for a draw? Once the game is over, the deadlines don't matter. As for the other case, a GM should never compromise his position as GM for the sake of a game he is playing in.

John Pack: A vote for a draw ends the game whether it has two or four-week deadlines. Such a change in game format should only be effected with the approval of the players. Every specific case outlined is a case of unethical play. The GM, of course, should do nothing about it (as that would be interference), except explain why he is doing nothing.

BRUX: Which, of course, changes the fact that he is "doing nothing", as he would then have to reveal the existence of the player's threats.

Paul Rauterberg: I see nothing wrong with the request to have the deadlines changed, as long as all the players get to vote on it.

As for the crossgaming, it is anathema.

Randolph Smyth: The player's ultimatum is ethical enough, but I think the GM would be unethical to bow to this kind of pressure. Firstly, most zines do not break down voting results by player, and the GM would be incorrect to affirm the contention in the player's first sentence. Secondly, there's no good mechanism to ensure that the threatening player will pass the draw once the deadline interval changes -- after all, he must be after something more than the draw to put in the vetos in the first place! Finally, of course, once a GM allows a player to dictate a GMing decision, he might as well pack his bags.

As a GM, I would publicize the ultimatum and let the players sort it out among themselves. If it was "not for print", I would explain that I couldn't take a matter under consideration that related to the conduct of the game, without having the option of discussing the change with the other players. Of course, if our hypothetical GM is in the habit of doing things arbitrarily, he can't really use that excuse and has created a problem for himself. But then, if he's arbitrary, he can do anything he likes without making excuses...

The "alliance" threat to a GM is the same type of problem as a standard player-to-player cross-game threat: unethical, I think. The GM can just say "Not interested" or take it further in either game.

Steve Knight: The GM should not respond in any way to the "threat" -- so the game goes on longer, that's not the GM's business.

The cross-gamer is not acting ethically, and again, I don't see the compelling power the threat of a veto is supposed to have over the GM.

Ty Hare: The GM can do as you please, Big BRUXer. (I'm making this all up as I go, you know.) Personally, I'd forget the player had said anything at all to me, period.

Mark Berch: Players can vote however they want for whatever reason they like. If the word "no" is shorter than "yes", and they can't be bothered with the extra letter, that's fine too. The GM should simply ignore him; he cannot reveal this to the other players as this type of communication is, I think, privileged.

The latter is a cross-game threat, though somewhat sleazier because it is attempting to corrupt a GM. This will hinge mostly on your feelings toward crossgaming, though you'd have to be quite tolerant of it to accept this form (which I'm not). Again, the GM should just ignore it.

Rod Walker: Both situations are totally unethical. In the first instance, as GM, I would be sorely tempted to toss the player out of the game. In the second instance, I would toss him out of the game.

Duck Williams: Real-life ethics...no, not really. Game ethics, sure; whatever turns you on. The player is being a rotten person, but as we all know, a Dip-player/persona and his real-life counterpart are often very different people. As for blackmailing the GM...why not? The GM should not let the fact that the jerk is going to string out the

game for a few years influence etc., and should not give in to this player's wishes -- what's to keep the asshole from staying veto-happy anyway? I'd run the game ad infinitum, or pass it to another GM or go for the Guinness Book of World Records...

Third part of the question: this is crossgaming, pure and simple. The player is being unethical, and the GM should decline firmly, even if he risks losing an ally. (Besides, I'd never be able to trust the guy in another game...I'd wonder what deals he had going with the GM of OUR game.)

Dan Young: The player is within his rights. He is also being a jerk. Once the game ends, I as GM would expose this idiot once and for all.

In the second case, I find cross-gaming unethical, though unavoidable to some extent. Naturally, if one finds info on another player's style (say, he stabs and lies a lot) because they are in a game together, he can use this info in all of his games. I also believe it is not unethical to say, "Look, we were good allies in game A, so why can't we work together here?" However, saying "I'll give you Munich in this game for Brest in that one." is in my opinion highly unethical.

BRUX: First of all, it is none of the GM's concern how long the games he is running last.

That said, the player in the first example is behaving entirely ethically, and the GM should do nothing about it. The provisions (if any) for changing the deadline interval should be in the house rules, and the GM should follow them. In this example, it seems that the GM has the power to change to two-week deadlines without putting it to a vote, so he should do this if he has other reasons to do it. But the point made is Randolph Smyth's "Variations" article cannot be ignored -- the exact house rules under which the game is being run do affect the player's strategies, and for all the GM knows, the player's "threat" is simply a statement that his optimal strategy will change if the house rules do.

The second situation is different. The player is trying to use leverage outside the game to dictate how the game will be run. I'd publicize his threat, and not give in to it. I'd also consider throwing the player out of the game.

SITUATION 10: You are aware of the fact that another player in your game has to go on military duty a year from now, or is terminally ill, or whatnot, and won't be able to continue playing after the time comes. He is presently growing and threatening to win. The house rules allow any player to separate any season on request -- even retreats. Is it OK for you to threaten him like this? "Either ally with me and get me into a two-way draw, or I will separate all the seasons and not only won't you win; you'll not get any part of the finish!"

Mark Lew: I wouldn't do that because it'd spoil the fun of the game for me.

Jeff Noto: You are not acting ethically. Again, you're bringing something outside the game into it.

Mark Luedi: (No answer received.)

Don Del Grande: Legal, yes -- allowable, yes -- ethical, no.

Steve Langley: I would probably try to talk the other players in the game into shorter deadlines so that we can finish the game before the outside world disrupts the game.

Kevin Stone: If you can use something like this against somebody, go for it. If the guy's dying, Dip probably takes on a little less importance.

John Pack: This is pretty low-down, unethical, dirty play. I would advise the threatened player to seek a HR change.

Paul Rauterberg: It's dirty, and I wouldn't do it unless that person had really done something equally nasty to me in that same game. But it is an option.

Randolph Smyth: A terminally silly houserule -- obviously they're playing in a new zine. I don't know of any GMs that give every player the unilateral power to slow their games down to a snail's pace this way. But, since the rule is there, it's not unethical to make use of it with the threat. As the recipient, however, I would raise royal hell with the GM, and probably succeed in getting the houserule changed if the other player even partially carried out his threat. Nobody likes a slow game unless they have an axe to grind.

BRUX: With all due respect, Randolph, you're wrong about that. There are some people in the hobby who feel that it is desireable to allow players to separate on one request. There was a big debate on that topic in VD a little over a year ago, and Mark Berch and Paul Rautenberg felt that this was better than requiring two requests. In theory, I agree with them: sometimes the diplomatic situation is such that a player must have a separation even if there's only one retreat to be made. In practice, I didn't wind up going this far in the VD houserules because too many players out there ask for separations for reasons I don't consider valid. But you cannot assume that they're playing in a new zine.

Steve Knight: A toughie. I honestly don't know how far you can "ethically" go in using the game mechanisms as a weapon.

Ty Hare: Yes.

Mark Berch: This situation is not as bizarre as it sounds and in fact occurs at tournaments from time to time. Play is by the clock, and a player, by taking the full measure of time available, may be able to stall long enough to prevent another year from starting, and that may be all he needs for survival. By and large, that is permitted, and I don't think this tactic in a postal game is all that unfair.

Rod Walker: Not unethical. Marginally unsporting. The player should circulate copies of your letter to the other players and invite them to react accordingly. He wins, you lose.

Duck Williams: Once again, not nice, but not unethical in the context of the game. The real problem here is allowing one player to have such power...two requests should be required, at least (and then only if the GM sees even a tiny reason for the separation), or one person when the reason for it is obvious even to a noodle-noggin like the GM.

BRUX: Well, you weren't around in VD when we had this big debate, but all these points were covered back then. I ended up not going along with the notion that the GM's judgement should play a role in the decision to separate seasons. Your description of him as a "noodle-noggin" may have been intended facetiously, but it's accurate because the GM is not privy to the negotiations of the players, and really doesn't know what is going on sometimes.

Dan Young: Yes, it's ethical to make the threat. I believe it is the other player's fault for not being able to finish what he has started. I suppose that, if I were the other player, and there was a way to attack the person making the threats -- bombs away.

BRUX: Ty Hare, Mark Berch, Dan Young and Kevin Stone hit it right, as far as I'm concerned. There is nothing whatsoever unethical in this sort of action; nor is there anything unsporting about it. If the other guy's dying, that's (presumably) very sad, but it doesn't mean that his opponents can't use that fact to try and win. And it is perfectly legitimate to use the rules on season separations to try to win, just as one can use the rules about supporting or convoying to try to win.

If the victim of the threat doesn't like it, he can try to persuade the others to gang up against the guy, or try to get the GM to change the houserules by whatever mechanism is available in that's GM's games.

GOOFBALL SITUATION: The Russian player, annoyed by Austria's refusal to ally, concocts a devilish plan...

Austria visits Russia one weekend at the latter's invitation, and during the course of the weekend Russia becomes pregnant (assume for the purposes of this question that the Russian player is female).

Over the course of the next few months, Russia grows tremendously in the middle, capturing Berling, Kiel, Munich, Vienna, and several other nearby centers, despite repeated stabs by Austria. Russia then threatens a paternity suit. The Austrian player lives on a limited income, however, and if faced with such a suit will not be able to afford to continue playing in the game. Is it ethical for Russia to force Austria to leave the game by having the baby? Or can Austria validly complain that he's been screwed by Mother Russia?

Mark Lew: (No answer received.)

Jeff Noto: Austria is being screwed (or was screwed) by Mother Russia, but I'm anti-abortion, so he's stuck.

Mark Luedi: I think, Bruce, that you need a houserule to prevent this sort of thing from happening. Conceivably, the Austrian player could bring suit against you for not having made such a houserule and that as a result, the game has caused undue financial duress against him. Frankly, an out-of-court settlement is probably the best bet. Some alliance, huh? (Do you remember the Dixie Gray/Tim Winger episode?)

BRUX: Nope, this is the first I remember hearing of it...

Don Del Grande: Was it ethical for Austria to get Russia pregnant in the first place? Sometimes Russia can be a real mother...

Steve Langley: (Don't read this, Daf) I would wait until Russia was totally committed and then let her know that my vasectomy was in effect prior to her unethical attempt to screw me. No real problem.

Kevin Stone: Austria should tell Russia that the only way he'd pay for the kid is if they were married, but then the game would have to be declared irregular. Or else hop a plane to Rio (but be sure to tell the GM of your change in address).

John Pack: I think that the prime concern here should be the effects of mating habits of hairy ping-pong balls on the psycho structure of the US and Russian diplomats. Once these effects are determined, we may know what induced the Russians to screw the Austrians as well as everybody else, by the looks of things. The next concern should be the adoption of a VD houserule that prohibits payment of monies by one party to another as a result of the said effects. Of course, much more importantly, is the further adoption of a VD houserule that provides welfare for the needy players impoverished at the malicious hands of HR-violating players (see the above HR). This could be financed by the ever-popular diptax, which we all know and cherish.

Paul Rauberberg: There has been some debate on what type of materials game pieces should be made out of. I'm sure the Austrian would say, "Don't use rubber; rubber breaks."

Randolph Smyth: I think they should get married and move to Trinidad, where
-- the living standard is lower and the Austrian's limited income will look like a fortune
-- Russia will be unable to break out of the sexual stereotype, remaining barefoot, pregnant, in the kitchen, and unable to play Diplomacy
-- Austria must also find another hobby due to poor mail service
-- the game is put on hold as both A/R will their positions to their firstborn.
The little gaffer is likely to win because none of the other players is likely to be around in twenty years.

Steve Knight: (No answer received.)

Ty Hare: Would you repeat the question?

Mark Berch: Actually, it's not Russia which is forcing Austria to leave the game, but the baby. Austria can counter-threaten to marry Russia, thereby making the game irregular, depriving Russia of the ratability of her win.

Rod Walker: Goofball...yep, it's just that.

Duck Williams: Depends on who seduced who...y'know? Personally, I'd do a write-up about how Russia took on everybody at the last MadCon cum OrgyCon...no, no, no...just kidding. I'd marry Russia in a "community property" state, take half her dots in the resulting divorce, then stab for the rest while taking Jr. to amusement parks on Saturdays and summers. My real answer? Austria and Russia shouldn't be screwing around unless they're serious, and if they're serious, who the hell cares about getting 18 dots?

Dan Young: Yes, Austria's been screwed by Mother Russia, how else did Russia get pregnant? Russia can and should go through with the paternity suit. Can you say "contraceptive"? I knew you could.

BRUX: (Whiiiiine...) How come you guys all acted like this question was a joke?

Several people had some miscellaneous comments:

Rod Walker: I want to distinguish between "unethical" and "unsportsmanlike" (or "unsporting"). There are many things you talk about here that are very much in the spirit of deceit and treachery that characterizes the game. They may thus be "not unethical"...but they may be very "unsporting"...in the sense that the deceit or treachery here might be really petty.

Randolph Smyth: I'm a bit disappointed, Bruce, that you didn't come up with more practical/relevant examples for most of these. These questions are based on the assumption of incredibly dumb players, GMs, and houserules; international sexual relationships, chewing gum, Federal offences, and terminal illness. I mean, really...!

Steve Langley: Generally I feel there is a "spirit" of the game clause that should be understood by all of the players. Clearly, there is not or we would not have Bernie/Buddy stories. Still, I feel that fiddling with the structure of the game (being obnoxiously loud when people are trying to converse, blowing cigar smoke in a non-smoker's face, locking Austria in a closet, et. al.) are not ethical while telling lies, subverting allies, et. al. are ethical. It is a strange game.

Mark Luedi: Actually, all the situations seem to have a common thread: how much is a player willing/unwilling to subvert the rules of fair play and/or to be a bastard in order to gain an advantage? The only difference appears to be the methods/situations involved and a few add a slightly different situation.

Mark Lew: I don't believe in ethics for the simple reason that nobody has ever explained to me what ethics are, and what makes something ethical or unethical (though I often hear people bickering about it -- sounds like a real precise term...) and I have never seen any practical use in pretending ethics exist, except for laying guilt trips or tricking people to not think. neither of these activities are very fun for me. the questions which didn't ask about ethicalness asked about things being fair, good, right, obligated, etc.; which are no better. you'll notice I generally answered what I think I'd do in such a situation. you ask what the hypothetical person should do. telling people what they should do strikes me as oppressive and counterproductive. I generally like your round-table discussions, but it appears that you like them so much you tried to make another when you don't really have much of an issue.

BRUX: Thanks to all who participated. I agree with Ig and Randolph that this set of questions was a bit contrived, though, except for the "report the error" ones...

Ladies and gentlemen, it's that time of the year again. Time to select from among our ranks the one Doomie who best exemplifies the qualities that BRUX, in his infinite wisdom, intended for all Doomies to have. Time to crown the Doomie of the Year for 1984. Time to make one lucky member of Dipdom hide his or her face in shame for a loooooong year! And here we go...

Doomie of the Year

by Bob Sweeney

For Doomie of the Year, only one choice is truly possible and to support my views, I offer the following:

1. Who asks the pertinent question, "Computers for \$20"?
2. Who constantly works at creating the perfect computer program to automatically adjudicate his games -- then spends even more time sending out corrections?
3. Who has suffered through the ordeal of having his kitten kidnapped, or, catnapped and beaten -- returned only upon his accomplishment of a certain set of moves?
4. Who has had to endure (not as an option) the RIGEL press and command units in that venerable game?

Yes, yes I say -- KLEIMAN for Doomie of the Year -- after all, someone has to have the odious title!

((Famous stabs for \$40, Colors for \$60, Doomies for \$80! Well, for my money, Dave Kleiman has certainly provided a good deal of entertainment in these pages, and he would be a great choice for Doomie of the Year! Why then am I not choosing this essay as the winner? Because I still want to be welcome in his home next month! Aside from which, I think all of the RIGEL players deserves credit, right Rob?))

Doomie of the Year

by Rob Schuck

For Doomie of the Year, 1984, I do hereby nominate Messieurs Steve Knight, Dave Kleiman, Richard Reilly, Ty Hare, Nelson Heintzman, Greg Ellis, and Bob Sweeney. Yes, I do nominate the entire membership of the RIGEL as it existed during their heyday of literary efforts (though God knows what they'll do for the annish). Though some efforts stand out, all must be recognized for their willingness to enter into a competition without rules. You may say "Press Wars" was without equal or that Reilly wrote it all for monetary reasons only or that Kleiman started it off with his scurrilous accusations or that Ty Hare's face participated more than did Ty himself or that the mad dwarf Rasputmann will destroy us all unless he garners the sole honor or that the mad Sultan should gain acclaim for catnapping while the rest of us remained awake or that Winners for \$100 says Dave Kleiman or...

No, for all these reasons, each and every one of the seven should be the Doomie of the Year but must be a Doomie of the Year.

((And indeed, the RIGEL players have given the zine much of its flavor over the last year, and any of them would be a worthy winner of the award. But there is one Doomie who dominated even the noble RIGELiens as they essayed in their conquests of Europe; one Doomie whose presence is felt in all VD games, and who made himself particularly noticeable in RIGEL last season. And the next entry is about him.))

Doomie of the Year, 1984

by John Pack

I'd like to give my first nominee for this grand distinction a deserving introduction, but he needs no introduction to most of you. For indeed, since the very inception of The Voice of Doom, he has heavily participated as the most active Doomie of all. Indeed, it is most surprising that he hasn't received this honor in the past -- perhaps he's just waiting for the right moment to claim his proper place among the common Doomie.

Quite openly, he's been responsible for most of this BRUX creature's fame in the vaunted Diplomacy society. Alternately famous and infamous, he has played a vital role in practically every major hobby feud within the last five years (and all of those occurring within these hallowed pages). No other can possibly claim to have done so much in the cause of Doom. In fact, when he speaks it is as the voice of doom ((youch! It hurts to type those words without capitalizing them!)), heard by so many hobbyists and players as the ominous omen of their impending doom. A true Doomie, if ever there was one. After his efforts throughout the years in so many games (in fact, I can't remember a single game he hasn't participated in) he was finally awarded a victory in a hard-fought game as Austria, the most difficult of all nations.

Yes, the Houserules (self-nicknamed HRs) have truly deserved this honor for many years. It is with honor that I nominate this truly deserving hobby power for this award. May you never hear that ominous Voice of Doom declare, "You ambiguous scum, you forgot to mention the color of your eyes with your orders, and are therefore not recognized. Check Volume XCI, page 34, rule #3, section D. Bruahaha..."

((I was all set to choose this as the winning essay, and had phoned John Pack to congratulate him on submitting the victorious entry, when I let slip a fatal fact that caused John to faint dead away. He's in a coma from shock to this day, and so I fear I must withdraw this nomination from consideration.

Oh, the shocking fact? Wellllll...if you really must know...the VD Houserules are gay...))

((It seems to be becoming a tradition around here that the best essay always gets chosen as runner-up, and this year will extend that tradition. The essay which follows was the best one submitted, by far. The reasons for its choice as runner-up instead of winner will become clear enough...))

Doomie of the Year

by Dan Young

I'M MAD AT KATHY BYRNE!

At this point the reader is probably wondering what the cause of this mother is. Perhaps I am a loyal, screaming Doomie who has taken up the cudgel for BRUX? Perhaps she has stabbed me in one of her games? Perhaps I am a male chauvinist pig? Three good guesses -- all wrong. I'm mad because she nominated Berch for Doomie of the Year last year -- and, by doing such, prevented me from doing the same this year! Why do I want to dump on Berch? Well, his typos can be funny. His first Diplomacy Digest this year was dated "January 1974", and, in another issue, whilst discussing all-women Dip games, noted, "There have been games where men have been barred..." (he had to scrawl in an "r"). But mostly, I'd like to congratulate Mark on his prompt service. In February I ordered some back issues of DD. Sure enough, I received them -- 5 months later.

Oh well, Berch is out. I'd nominate Ed Wrobel for letting other people decide his favorite zine, but when Ed had his ellipses expunged, he never sent me his flyer.

So what if he didn't even know I was a Doomie -- he could have called Bruce so as to get the names and addresses of all the Doomies. I hate being left out!

Perhaps I should nominate Melinda Holley and James Early. Both are in a game with me. Neither has stabbed me, or for that matter even lied to me. (Spring 1901 orders are due next season.)

What about Mark Paul? Now there's a good one. Talented and funny, but he can't spell "Acquire"!

I might have nominated Rob Schunk, but he used the excuse that he was too busy writing something for VD to write me. What a lousy excuse, you'd think that claims to have seen 113 movies and read 146 books could find a better excuse than that.

Pat Pakel is also a sterling candidate for Doomie of the Year. He's England to my France in 1984AP. His letter in issue 94 matches the number of letters he's written to me in this game -- one! His standby, Scott Mercer, has written more letters than he has! Besides being totally silent in the press, he's NMRed twice in less than three years. He's had the Pat Pakel Award named after him (for the person who best represents Simple Simon), and for the icing on the cake, he was Dan Young's first postal stab victim. Now, if that doesn't qualify one for Doomie of the Year, what does?

But what about Dave Kleiman? Now, before anyone accuses me of trying to get him the sympathy vote (feeling sorry for him because of the press attacks on Lord and Whiskers), I might point out that Dave's nomination can stand on its own merits. He helped propogate a "feud" between Wrobel and Lindsey. He also wrote great press releases ("Jeopardy"). He wrote them, that is, until he started hearing what great releases they were. Then he stopped! Talk about your unusual reactions to positive feedback. He paid Reilly a thousand dollars for a press release, but would haggle the utilities for a \$2 phone call. He lives in Indiana and likes mowing the lawn (which not only qualifies him for Doomie of the Year, but also an institution).

Matt Fleming qualifies, too. Yes, indeed. Who else but a Doomie of the Year would get himself into 18 games, be an Indiana basher, and call himself Lord Lycanthropy. If that isn't enough, his last letter to me included a "(☺)" -- he's stolen BRUX's mannerisms! (And who else would do that except a Doomie of the Year?)

Boy, it seems that a surplus of worthless exist, doesn't it? To pick one of these over another wouldn't really be fair. And, anyway, looking back, it seems that past Doomie of the Year winners are obvious BRUX toadies. And none of the candidates I've named qualifies in that regard. (Arrgh!)

Therefore, I now nominate -- yes -- BRUX's ultimate toady! The person I refer to spends his time wondering what will happen if each person in a vertex of a polygon tries to shoot the person on his right. This same person thanked Don Del Grande for discussing wargames, yet, when Del Grande continued his discussion in the next issue of VD, he "yawn"ed. This same person was quoted as saying that the Dodgers are the greatest team in baseball, and is currently watching them reside in fourth place in the second weakest division in baseball. God, it must be hard to walk with one's foot in one's mouth! ((Nwaht ownlwy thwat, bwut twaulwk, twool!)) This person wrote the world's worst crossword puzzle and can't spell "hamster". Why, he'd probably lose a spelling bee to Mark Paul! Who else would announce to the world that he entered a Gunboat Dip game on the front cover of his zine? Said action is somewhat akin to setting up Stratego pieces backwards or yelling "Here I am!" in hide and go seek. I told my friends what a great GM this guy is, and he has to make his premier game, RIGEL, a farce with the most absurd GMing decision I've ever seen. This person was also physically and mentally unable to differentiate between a cricket and a smoke detector. Now there's a Doomie!

Yes, BRUX, admit it. You've been yearning for this for a long time, now you've finally found a fool to do it! Yes, somebody has finally nominated you. So go ahead, declare yourself Doomie of the Year. That will be five free issues, please.

((And you do get five freebies for submitting the runner-up, and the earlier entrants get one apiece. This was the best essay, but there was a cuter candidate this year.))

Samantha for Doomie of the Year!

by Joan Extrom

It is my humble and totally unbiased opinion that Samantha Corbin deserves to be Doomie of the Year, for the following reasons:

- 1) She is the youngest and cutest Doomie (Alex is cute too, but in a different way).
- 2) The first time BRUX ever phoned our house, he asked to talk to Samantha. She refused, so I had to talk to him. That conversation was the beginning of the friendship between BRUX and me, for which we will be eternally indebted to her.
- 3) Samantha is trying to learn how to say "Uncle BRUX", but the closest she's come so far is to say "Mendacious Excrecence".
- 4) While visiting BRUX this summer, Samantha had him grovelling at her feet. (Actually, he was sweeping up the Cheerios she had spilled on his kitchen floor, but it sure looked like grovelling.) On that same visit she got him to carry her on his back while we walked around downtown Albany for an hour. What other Doomie has so successfully kept BRUX in his proper place?

Last, but certainly most important:

- 5) BRUX agreed to keep an eye on Samantha while I took a shower. Her first act was calculated to strike fear in his heart. Have you ever seen a grown man pale, break out in a cold sweat, and quiver in his boots at the sight (not to mention smell) of a poopy diaper? Samantha had proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that she has the upper hand when BRUX is around.

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, I submit to you that Samantha Corbin is truly the deserving candidate for Doomie of the Year. (And besides, I have to get back at her for nominating me last year.)

((Yes, Samantha is indeed the most worthy candidate for this great honor, and VD is proud to award it to her. Aside from which, I don't have to pay her mommy four free issues for winning by virtue of the fact that I took her out for dinner when she was here. (Ain't I just so chincy about them freebees?!))

Voice of Doom extends its heartfelt ~~congratulations~~ congratulations to Samantha Corbin, Doomie of the Year, 1984! And its thanks to her mommy for being ~~so~~ nice enough to nominate her!))



Samantha Corbin, Doomie of the Year, 1984, prepares to wage Cheerio warfare against BRUX's kitchen floor

Miss Doomie to Lose Crown?

FLASH: It has come to the attention of this publication that Samantha Corbin, recently crowned "Doomie of the Year", may be asked to relinquish her crown. According to an anonymous source, the high-level brass on the Doomie of the Year committee were outraged to learn that Ms. Corbin had recently posed nude with another woman, and that her picture will appear in a certain notorious journal this month. During the photo session, which occurred in the bathtub at Doomie Headquarters, of all places, Ms. Corbin and the other woman were alleged to be engaging in various "unnatural" acts. Our source reports that these included throwing a pacifier, spilling BRUX's shampoo in the bath water, and jumping up and down while shouting "WHEEEEEEEEEE!"



Upon being informed that she might be asked to resign because her picture was going to be printed, Ms. Corbin was quoted as saying, "Uh oh!"

~~~~~

Pete Birks produces one of Great Britain's leading zines, and has participated in VD's Gossip Column more than any other European Doomie. He even called me all the way from across the Atlantic once! THANKS...to Doomie Pete Birks.

Dave Carter was a player in the JUPITER game and made a fierce comeback to gain part of a two-way draw. He publishes Sleepless Knights, a very reliable Canadian zine. THANKS...to Doomie Dave Carter.

Eric Kane is a close friend, a worthy opponent for housewife debates, and the host of my favorite con. He is one of the nicest people I know even if I did beat him on the S.A.T.s! THANKS...to Doomie Eric Kane.

Rob Schunk is a very creative writer, and it showed in the NEPTUNE press and in his letters and articles in this issue. He is a loyal VD player and currently the only Doomie in Montana. THANKS...to Doomie Rob Schunk.

Ronald Brown published one of the finest zines in the hobby, and has been a close friend and very strong contributor to VD for several years. So what if he doesn't appreciate the merits of COBOL? THANKS...to Doomie Ronald Brown.

John Ferguson is a new friend thanks to our meetings at various cons, especially KaneKon. He was my ally in the MaryCon '84 tournament until I ruthlessly stabbed him. THANKS...to Doomie John Ferguson.

Jerry Lucas perpetrated one of the best hoaxes (Judy Winsome) that the hobby has ever seen. A fine friend and one of Alex's biggest fans, I'm glad I got to know him and hope someday to meet him in person. THANKS...to Doomie Jerry Lucas.

From Fol Si File #53...

Player Psychology: Distribution of Power

...in which the reader is called upon to participate, and be embarrassed/outraged/instructed in the privacy of his own home (or wherever).

by Randolph Smyth

Central to the science of modern psychology is the idea of the test. This installment in the continuing story of ~~Player Psychology~~ Player Psychology will therefore concern itself with a series of questions, in an attempt to compare apples and oranges under conditions of minimal experimental rigor and maximum scientific unacceptability. Be that as it may...

Read the following question carefully before answering. While the basic problem is intended to be simple, the wording is not; no trickery is being attempted, but the ramifications of the question require a clear grasp of what I'm getting at. Otherwise the evaluation loses whatever meaning it may have had in the first place (000z000e000r000o000).

You have been given a standby position of ten centers. The other players are your equals in basic ability, but their outlook and philosophy vary, as one would expect in a normal mix of opponents. If no solid allies or bitter enemies exist at present, would you rather see the remaining 24 centers divided equally among

- (1) two players, 12 centers each;
  - (2) three players, 8 centers each;
  - (3) four players, 6 centers each;
- or (4) six players, 4 centers each?

The QMing is excellent. Look at each possibility in terms of alliance structures, and once you've made up your mind, read on:

I suspect that very few players chose option #1. You people get full points for discounting the absolute number of supply centers and recognizing that the balance of power is the important factor in such a game. Being last is no disadvantage if you are only last "on paper": being the least dangerous player may make you "first among equals".

However, such a game is almost over, and should end in a three-way draw within a couple of game years, as soon as you demonstrate your reliability to the original players. This may suit you best if (1) you're so committed elsewhere that the game didn't interest you anyhow, or (2) you're jumping at the chance for an "easy" three-way split because your previous record has been so poor. In either case, I don't feel you're really playing the game, just arranging the quickest way out of it.

#2 is my own choice, so perhaps you should discount some of my comments regarding it. A single ally among your three opponents will give you 18 centers and a good shot at a two-way draw in time. There is always the chance that your opponents will get lucky handling their 16; that your ally will surpass you in gains and win the game; or that you will face a three-power coalition. However, as long as there is play left, the biggest power has the best shot at whatever he's after; and for the present, the biggest power is you.

If you picked #3, you're quite a gambler. Unless you're willing to give up your status as the front runner, your allies will have to assume a semi-puppet role. Among four opponents, you may well be able to find one who is willing to act as such, but to expect two is overoptimistic (remember, you can't fool these guys — they're as competent as you are). A single ally leaves you with 16 centers, generally a losing proposition when vigorously opposed by 18. You're counting on miscues and lack of cooperation among your enemies; but if you do manage to break through, a win in fairly short order is quite likely.

My objection to #4 is purely personal, as I dislike to be too obviously in front. Such a game has barely begun: to have reached ten centers implies that your predecessor has been treading on people's toes. While your own slate is clean, potential allies are likely to be unreceptive as long as you continue to occupy their traditional holdings -- and to give them up risks that your "ally" will come right or coming for more. You can count on one opponent being at the other end of the board and pursuing his own course, but unless you can find two active allies, a "stop-the-bleeder" movement is likely to prevail.

Let's change the original question a bit. If your new opponents were not your equals in ability, but just an average bunch of joes as found in any normal game (some good, some not), would your feelings change?

I'd suggest that if you've changed your mind in favor of fewer players, you have a very poor opinion of yourself (justified or not). If the idea of an average group of players sends you scuttling for a less complex game, you're not likely to be very stimulating. Most players in my experience are egomaniacs; my own choice would switch to #4 in hopes of an easy win against a couple of novices, two more with little ability, a fifth without the time to negotiate, and one who knows what he's doing -- but with only four centers/units to work with. Even if two competent (by my standards) players happen to be present, their eight centers will generally be no match for my ten.

Turning the problem end-over-ends: as one of the equal powers facing this ten-center newcomer, how many centers would you want, with the appropriate number of fellow-players of average ability?

I'd go for 12 and the likely three-way draw. To take 8 marks you as confident of your tactical and/or diplomatic expertise (to the point of recklessness, unless your record bears out your opinion). Any less than 8 definitely excludes you from the "good ally" class. (You initially need at least two firm allies to prevail in these cases; you must be counting on whittling the big man down, and eventually stabbing one or more allies in the confusion, to get a better result than the three-way draw available with 12 centers.)

While the circulation of this zine does not permit a proper survey, I'd like some unofficial ideas on what the choices of the readership were. Rebuttals, etc., will be seized and printed with the greatest glee; so will the results of the "poll" in a month or two.

((Grumpy timing on my part, I'm afraid. Had I thought of it, I'd have reprinted this article two or three months back so that I could take a "proper survey" of W's readers, for publication now. So sue me.)

My own answers match Randolph's, for reasons by and large the same as his. Being too obviously in front when the other players are all competent (a rare situation, I might add) is not an advantage, but a clear liability: you're going to have to get rid of a few centers just in order to get anyone to take you seriously as an equal partner in alliance...and whoever you give them to may just keep walking in for more, while at the same time you may incite the wrath of the other players for not choosing them as your beneficiaries. On the other hand, your 10 centers to the other players' eight apiece does not necessarily mark you as a target. Given that there were no cast-iron alliances to begin with, you aren't likely to be suddenly faced with a solid three-way coalition unless you totally blow your diplomacy.

On the other hand, when the opposition consists of a random mix of players, you are better off facing as many of them (= as few centers for each of them) as possible. While Randolph may be underestimating (very slightly) the ability/commitment of the "average" player, it will still often be possible to find an ally or two among the six 4-center powers...and to induce and exploit confusion among those remaining.)

The Last Gasp

The object of a Diplomacy game, aside from having fun, is to do as well as you can in any given situation. This means going for the win or draw when possible, or sometimes second place or third, depending on your personal philosophies. If your position deteriorates to the point where none of these are possible, puppeting for survival is a common strategy. But this article goes one step beyond that sorry state, and attempts to examine the plight of a country which is so weak or so vulnerable that an offer to puppet would probably be refused. For instance, suppose you have one center, and your adversary can take it for his eighteenth and a win. Or, almost as bad, your last unit has been annihilated in the spring, and all your enemy needs to do is remain in your only center in the fall in order to take it. Your situation appears hopeless -- and, not to give you any false hopes, in all probability it is hopeless. The vast majority of players will not even bother trying to save such a lost cause, and will start thinking about the next game. But a good player will do his best with what he has -- even down to the last gasp.

It is a tribute to the game's designer that even in a situation as described above, there are in fact a number of diplomatic options available to the resourceful player. Of course, if the position lends itself at all to puppeting, this is probably the best way to go; but the assumption here is that you are already past that point and that your enemy's interests are clearly best served by destroying you. What else can you do to give yourself a ghost of a chance of survival?

The technique you use should depend to some extent on the personality and playing style of the guy who's clobbering you. If he is the kind who might lend a sympathetic ear, then you may try whimpering and begging for survival. This, however, is likely to be ignored and you'll have to come up with something more creative.

You could try to persuade him to let you live in exchange for your services as a diplomatic puppet; that is, you can hardly help him out tactically, but you will write letters to conform to his needs, and syphon any valuable information back to him. I've never heard of this being done, but it's certainly within the realm of possibility. Realistically, not one player in a hundred would go to such lengths for a negligible increase in his chances of survival, but we're assuming now that you are such a player. Similar in some ways to a diplomatic puppet is a player who will, so long as he remains alive, offer tactical advice to his benefactor. Thus, if you're a good tactician who just didn't happen to get the breaks in this one game (or if your adversary thinks you are), offer your expertise in exchange for survival. A variation on this would be to threaten to give such advice to the other side in the event that you aren't allowed to live. Questions of ethics aside -- is an eliminated player still allowed to negotiate? -- this can be a credible threat if your attacker perceives you as tactically superior to all members of the opposing alliance.

Another possibility exists only in the situation where your last unit has been annihilated. Simply -- play dead. Most players in this situation do it anyway, but in this case, the cessation of negotiation is intentional. The hope is that the winning power will become careless and accidentally move out of your center in the fall. (Well, it does happen -- see Rick Ragsdale's article in VD #21...) If you are lucky in this regard, you will even get to raise a new unit in the winter, provided that your last center was a home center; or if not, you still retain your hold on a pseudoneutral center for another year, thereby getting a chance to hone your survival skills for yet two more seasons. In this event your inability ever to have a unit on the board again can seriously impair your future defensive capabilities, however, and the error is somewhat unlikely to be repeated next fall. Well, maybe the game will end in the meantime or something. Propose a draw and hope it slips through.

Of course, if you're lazy you can also rationalize away your inactivity as "playing dead" now that you've read this article, but in reality this option is your best chance only if it seems likely from the board position and your attacker's playing style that such a careless blunder will be made.

On infrequent occasions you might be able to make your foe believe that he will somehow hurt his chances of forming a stalemate line by wiping you out. Perhaps by remaining in your center for that one crucial fall season, he will run the risk of getting a unit to the battlefield too late. This is sometimes true, of course (and if you're really in luck, then he doesn't have a trailing unit ready to slip into your center behind the advancing one), but if it isn't you'll have to have a glib tactical tongue and a less-than-competent opponent to make it work.

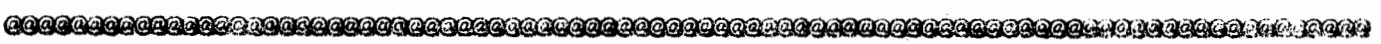
Still another option is to threaten the winning player. If it is credible to do so, you can tell him that you are going to inform the other countries that you are his puppet -- and ask them if they really want to deal with a PUPPET-STABBER. Surely we all know that there is no form of life lower than a puppet-stabber; the difficulty arises, however, that most Diplomacy players don't care whether they are allied with the most vile scum so long as it's to their advantage. So your threat will have only a very limited effect even at the best of times. And of course, he might foil this ploy by passing your letter around to reveal that you're lying anyway. You can eliminate this possibility by making the threat in a long-distance phone call. You are willing to pay for such a call to improve your chances, aren't you?

Another threat which has just a bit more of a sting is that of file-passing. Threaten to examine each of the letters he's sent you and to send each of them on to the party in whose hands it would cause the most damage. He may yell and scream, but it's your right to pass letters, after all.

Finally, when all else seems bound to fail, try a little humor. You might consider offering to let him puppet for you, as an example. Use your imagination. A little bit of witty press just MIGHT save your hide -- so try it.

Despite all of the above advice, you are almost certainly a dead duck anyway, regardless of what you do. But the good player at his best will do his damndest to make the most of his position, and the tricks presented here might help once in a great while. Just don't hold your breath.

Oh, and there's one more option open to some of you, but since I'm an atheist it would hardly be appropriate for me to bring it up...



Rich Reilly has written some of the very best press in Voice of Doom over the past year. His "late in the evening" press release was so hilarious that it inspired several follow-up press items. Moreover, rumor has it that he was actually nice to Dave Kleiman's cat Whiskers! THANKS...to Doomie Rich Reilly.

Jim Makuc, also known as "Grouch", has been a frequent companion at cons and over lunch. Being local to BRUX, he was able to arrive at BRUXCON early in the morning last year -- and wake us all up! THANKS...to Doomie Jim Makuc.

Samantha Corbin has done her part to feed BRUX's cricket by repeatedly spilling her Cheerios on the apartment floor. The youngest Doomie of them all has managed to find a place in the hearts of VD readers everywhere and loves to chat on the phone with her Uncle BRUX! THANKS...to Doomie Samantha Corbin.

Gerry Thompson, better known in VD as "Flumph T. Quiddipoo, Jr.", has been a strong contributor of lighthearted, humorous items to these pages. Just when you thought the strategy articles and Gossip Column were getting a bit heavy -- there was another item sent in by ol' Flumph, ready to make you laugh! THANKS...to Doomie Gerry Thompson.

Brian Lorber has become a friend through several meetings at KaneKons, ByrnaCons, and a BRUXCON. Hell, anyone who would drive through downtown Pittsfield with me at 3 A.M. must be a true friend indeed. THANKS...to Doomie Brian Lorber.

The Gossip Column

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From John Pack (9/13/84):

Part VI

Hi BRUX!

I'm surprised you'd show your VD to normal people -- now they'll know the "real" you as you are. As it is a current trend to ask you what BRUX means and where it came from, I won't ask, since you'll be explaining it anyway to the other 99 zillion loyal screaming Doomies who'll all ask.

Shouldn't the "Greater Good" rule apply before you cause such situations as the RIGEL Affair instead of after? Of course, I can see through your plot to create a lot of controversy so that the annish will have a 100-page Gossip Column. ((Who, me?))

Though I am not one to follow trends in general, I enjoy starting them. I guess I'll return comments on the homosexual issue to the large number of people who commented.

As I have commented before in my last couple of letters, much of my overstatement which caused this discussion would probably have offended even me. Certainly, as Christ taught, we should extend love to all people, including homosexuals. Love being a word which is so misused in this day, I will make it clear that this is a heart-felt desire for the good of the other which motivates one to help another improve and accomplish great things, not some physical relationship. As Rod pointed out, this is agape or god-like love. However, love for homosexuals and love for homosexuality are different topics. ((And a bit of omitted biblical reference...)) Christ, out of his great love, worked with the people of Judea (including adulterers, publicans, and probably homosexuals) for the purpose of helping them to change, abandon their sins, and move up to a higher plane of obedience to God. The book of Ephesians...tells us that one of the purposes of the church is the "perfecting of the saints". We each have our faults (for example, my tendency to exaggerate). The church therefore should help us correct these weaknesses, rather than allowing us to continue with these faults through life. The lesson Christ taught the people depended on the improvements they needed to make. Those on a higher level were taught to obey higher laws than those on lower levels. Where much is given, much is required.

I have a slight objection to raise. It bothers me that some religious items are edited out while others are printed. For example, "How do you reconcile this (the intolerance of homosexuality) with denominations such as the United Church of Christ, which ordain homosexual ministers?" The answer to this question was dealt with in the part "too religious for VD" in the unprinted section of my letter last issue. What possible option do I have to answer such a question without being "too religious"? I therefore submit that such questions should not be published either. However, in a simple answer, Steve, such religions misrepresent God. All doctrine in the named denomination is based on the Bible and no claim is even made that guidance is received from God. In view of the fact that this denomination has altered its doctrines on the point in question in the last few years (with many others) and that their base (the Bible) has not changed, can this denomination have been a true representation of God both before and after the change? Can a live branch come from a dead one? Even had God changed (which is against the doctrines of every church I'm familiar with), how would such a denomination have found out about it? Sorry, Steve, but God's doctrines are made by God, not councils of men.

I will note that I am in agreement with Jeff Noto for the most part. Certainly each of us has both good and bad; the weaknesses certainly do not destroy the strengths. Therefore, while we may admire the strengths/qualities of many people, one must take care not to laud the weaknesses as well. I have many friends who have different moral standards than I, and while I don't condone their standards, they are my friends. The love (agape) that I have for them makes me want to help them in any way I can understand God's will.

For an example (on a baser plane), I enjoy Diplomacy. Since I enjoy Dip, I'd like my friends to be able to enjoy it too, so I'd invite them to play. In the same way, since I believe that certain morals bring about bad consequences, I would be inclined to help my friends avoid said morals, though they will still be my friends regardless of whether or not they choose to do so.

Ah, now we're down to Kevin and the problem of masturbation. Yes, Kevin, telling some impressionable child that something is bad can cause guilt. I would suppose then that it would be bad not to kill, so that he can do so without the guilt that might warp him? Your supposition that guilt is bad is not necessarily true; in fact, in many cases it is a factor for good. Now, another point you make is that you learned your view from a psychology course. May I remind you that psychology is an art and one that psychologists have not yet mastered? Almost everything in such classes is an opinion of someone or another, an opinion which could be wrong. Now, as a scientist, let's take a measure of sexual deviancy between the enlightened age where modern psychologists teach that masturbation, et. al., is OK and the past ages where impressionable young children were informed that masturbation, et. al., was bad. In which age (time frame) are more sexual deviants found? Take a look at the crime indexes for rape and other sexual crimes to find out. This index is on the rise, Kevin. So it appears that the modern psychologists have a little relearning to do.

Modern religion and modern psychology (in general) seem to be the preachers of what we want to hear, rather than what we need to hear. You can bet that if an idea is popular, some psychologist will propose a theorem explaining the idea as part of nature. Likewise, some religion will have a council and adopt new doctrines to incorporate it. How do you think we got so many religions? How did we get so many philosophies? There are psychologists who propound theories which explain homosexuality as a part of nature and others which explain them as mental disorders, psychologically caused. "It would be foolish for any generation to believe the knowledge of one lifetime can replace the wisdom of ages." (History of the World)

One thing I am free of, Steve, is racial prejudice. I have good friends who belong to several races (Japanese, Black, Hispanic, to name a few of them). Gays of any race are equally viewed, namely as individuals who need to be helped. Oh, Steve, when I was young I had absolutely no friends of the opposite gender (up until just a few years ago). Wouldn't that have identified my sexual preference for me before puberty? Sure. Before puberty, I preferred other males as company. However, nature has done away with all that now.

Steve, you may conduct your beliefs as you wish. However, such beliefs do not fall into the category of Christianity just because you desire them to. Of course, you may choose to ignore the Old Testament and all of Paul's teaching, but, of course, you may choose to ignore anything you want, just don't class it as a biblical teaching afterward. May I remind everyone that Sodom and Gemorrah were destroyed because of their sexual sins and homosexuality in particular? Pretty stiff penalty for a "ritual prohibition", eh? But, after you choose to ignore all the sections that preach against homosexuality, there are still NO scriptures that support it.

Now, Steve, what about pork? What if I accept Leviticus on that point, but have still eaten pork? Does that justify someone else in committing that sin? Does the commission of one sin justify the commission of a greater sin, such as homosexuality? (I call it greater since there was a death penalty established for the latter and not for the former.) Pork has nothing to do with the issue, it may thus be seen. If I reject Peter's revelation that allows such to be eaten, then I'm a sinner; if not, I'm not. But, in either case, it does not justify any further sin. In another setting, just because I have one fault in no way makes it OK for another person to have the same or another fault.

May I remind everyone that adultery was less of a crime than homosexuality in the Old Testament and that adultery is defined as a very bad thing in the New Testament ("whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery"). Notice that the commandment was upgraded and made even harder to keep.



I guess I could bother to paraphrase the psychologists I've read who support my point, but I won't because the opinions of these aren't going to change the others' opinions. Opinions are opinions. You can have your own opinion if you want, even if it's wrong, that's your right.

I will elaborate further as other letters come to light (including the others I wrote, since I don't remember them very well). You have my permission to print the section of interest, if you print it all. Otherwise, it represents my formal protest against the editing of certain sections. If you edit this one all up, well, I guess that's the way it goes.

You know, Bruce, if there is a God, you're up the creek. If there isn't then we'll all be just as well off as the rest. Why not play it safe? After all, there are several things (such as nature, the order of things, etc.) which indicate the presence of a supreme being.

Anyway, I hope the amish turns out well. I'll await with eagerness the large packet you'll send this way, I'm sure.

PS. You can see that I won't be convinced on this matter.

PPS. It has been noted that "as belief in God declines, the tendency for man to play God increases."

((I can see that you won't be convinced on this matter, but likewise I doubt you're going to convince anybody. I've heard before the argument that I'm in trouble if God exists, but no better off than believers if he doesn't. This is true, assuming that god is such a petty creature as to damn those who don't believe in him to eternal suffering. The problem is that such an argument might make me want to believe in god just to play it safe, but it doesn't make it any more likely that he's really out there. I have, in fact, absolutely no control over the fact that I don't believe in God. If something beyond my control happens to make me change my belief, then I'll change it. There is nothing I can do to alter my beliefs as they stand now, though.

I thought your rebuttal to Kevin Stone was absurd. Since when is masturbation comparable to murder?

I think you make a good point that I oughtn't to be printing questions if I'm going to edit out the answers. However, such dilemmas are standard bill of fare for us editors. I've had the same problem in trying to keep feuds out of the zine in the past: what might provoke a response that I won't want to print, and what is standard debate of a legitimate issue? All an editor can do is lay down the guidelines and try to stick to them, and hope his readers will comply.

I don't agree with the quote from "History of the World". The knowledge of one lifetime, in this age of literacy, encompasses the knowledge of many lifetimes preceding it. Therefore we are not just talking about knowledge gained in this generation, but all the recorded knowledge of past generations as well. And that is the wisdom of ages.

I'm glad to hear that you're free from racial prejudice. I just wish that you could be as free from sexual-preference prejudice as well. To be perfectly blunt about it, if indeed god is as you say (opposed to homosexuality), then I don't even know if I want any part of him. I find it hard to believe that an all-forgiving being would allow some people to acquire traits that he is then going to damn them for. I like to think that if there is a god, he judges us on whether we hurt others or help them rather than our sexual preferences or whether we believe in him. I think there are some religions that teach this, too -- Judaism might be one of them, but I'm not sure -- and if so, then maybe I'm not up the creek after all. Depends on which religion turns out to be right after all, I suppose. My money's still on atheism, though.

Yeah, I probably should have applied the "Greater Good" rule to begin with and not accepted Ty's Russian orders in the RIGEL Affair, but (and don't ever repeat this) then I would have missed out on one final bit of healthy controversy in VD...)

From Joan Extrom (9/13/84):

Dear BRUX,

Here's my account of the visit, and also one about seeing Ruth, which you can use or not, whatever you want. Hadn't planned to write about it, but when you asked if I was going to mention her and I answered "no", I had second thoughts.

Since you're folding, that means I'll have all sorts of extra time now that there's no more VD (and all that RUGEL press) to read, or 2,000 famous quotes contests to enter. So we've started subs to Thirty Miles of Bad Road and So I Lied and will probably get one to Midlife Crisis, too. Those should help fill up some of the spare time.

I see in issue #99 that you played Rail Barre. Was Mike Baron there, by any chance?

Enjoy your life without VD. But if in the far future you ever decide to pub again, I'll be first to sign up!

Love,  
Joan

((Sigh. Thanks for the nice sendoff. You've been a dear friend to me, and if perchance I start up VD again someday, you'll be the first to know. Thanks for writing, and enjoy all those zines you're subbing to to fill the gap left by VD's departure!))

From Simon Billemeas:

Dear BRUX,

I've one day left before I leave for Britain. What else should I do but write a letter to good old BRUX?

I'm also wondering how much mail will be waiting for me when I get home. When I got back from America over Easter (after three weeks) there were only a measley 50 letters waiting; however, when I came back from Switzerland last summer (after six weeks) there were 120 letters! Surely after eight weeks, I should be able to break the record.

Thanks for the sand in the bottom of my envelope. Unfortunately I've had my fill of Jones Beach sand. My bedroom carpet crunches with it and my shoes feel permanently gritty. It is a good beach, though. Barb and I have been twice and have had great fun building sand walls against the tide and leaping in the surf.

Speaking of the International Subscription Exchange, Doug Rowling (the U.K. human component) has recently changed address and is now living at: 228, Kinnell Avenue, Cardonald, Glasgow, SCOTLAND G52 3RU. I'd certainly welcome a few more American subscribers, though I have to severely restrict US trades, because I'm already trading with too many fanzines. Any people out there interested in a British fanzine with a large letter column concentrating mainly on the subjects of music, sex, and politics? The zine is pretty hopeless where games are concerned, though. Like VD, it's best for its reading material. My address is 20, Winifred Road, Coulsdon, Surrey, ENGLAND CR3 3JA.

Could you photocopy that Fol Si Fie Diplomacy article you were praising highly? I'll see if I can give it some publicity in Britain.

Steve Howe is wrong if he thinks British politics are so much duller than the American version. I suspect the Americans as a whole are just as apathetic as the British. If you take voter turnout as an indication, US turnout in Presidential elections is probably just as low as in British General Elections. It may be even lower in the USA because people have to actively register to vote, leaving many apathetic non-voters unrecorded, whereas in Britain voters are automatically registered.

(Having said all this, Reagan's divisive "make-the-absurdly-rich-even-richer" policies have stimulated the worse-off, particularly the blacks, to promote voter registration drives, so voting may be up in 1984.) Besides, party conventions are fun the world over. Having attended several in Britain, I've found that they're all full of enthusiastic, turned-on people. Now what Steve misses is all the drinking. Judging by the amounts I've seen consumed at Liberal Party gatherings in Britain, I'm surprised that:

- a) they have ever been sober enough to devise policy
- b) no brewery company has ever considered sponsoring a new political party.

Speaking of prostitution, both Barbara and I would agree that it is emphatically not a victimless crime. Trying to stamp it out, however, is a futile occupation. Many have tried to do so throughout history, but none have succeeded. The problem is that prostitution is currently a fertile contributor to many social problems. Child prostitution is a particularly nasty example, but I could add venereal disease, violence (particularly against prostitutes), and vast opportunities for organized crime amongst others. Both Barbara and I feel that the legalisation of prostitution would improve the situation more than simply driving the problem underground (and out of sight). Think of the situation. In Britain, government-run brothels could be set up. The advantages would be enormous. By cutting out the pimps, the exploitation of the women could be stemmed. But that's not all. Regular checks could dramatically decrease VD (er, venereal disease, that is...), runaway children could be rehabilitated. If I had my way I'd even put a tax on it.

If you do reprint Range War (and I certainly hope you do), don't neglect to send a copy of VD to Colin Bruce, the variant's inventor. His address is: c/o The Library, Elmwood Agricultural Technical College, Carslogie Road, Cupar, Fife, SCOTLAND.

Speaking of desert-island lists, off the cuff I can think of five foods I would like to see growing from the trees:

- 1. chili con carne
- 2. tandoori chicken (a marvelous Indian dish)
- 3. tortilla chips with nacho cheese (they don't have these in Britain -- quelle horreur!)
- 4. strawberry yogurt ice cream (with fruit)
- 5. Hungarian goulash with oodles of paprika

I find it quite easy to decide on five records, since I've been narrowing down my favourites so that I can present my top ten in Home of the Brave -- a British zine where readers list their top ten albums every issue. My top five are:

- 1. "Closer" --- Joy Division
- 2. "Colossal Youth" --- Young Marble Giants
- 3. "Truths & Rights" --- Johnny Osborne
- 4. "The Gift" --- The Jam
- 5. "Dark Side of the Moon" --- Pink Floyd

Bar the Pink Floyd, I suspect those would be fairly obscure in America. A quick competition -- any American who can name me any other album, single, or EP by Joy Division, Young Marble Giants, or Johnny Osborne can have a free copy of Inflammatory Material and may the Lord have mercy on your soul... (I didn't quote the Bible in this religious part of the sentence so feel free to print it.)

Incidentally, Barbara has worked out the five people she'd most like to invite to dinner: Skakespeare, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Ghandi, and Jesus Christ. You'd never guess she's a former English Literature student, would you?

Anyway, I must go and eat now before I leave. Maybe I'll write you again sometime?

((Please do. Too much above to respond to in this space, so let's take it to the next page...))

Doomies in America who can answer Simon's music contest are invited to write him directly at the address given in his letter. I've sure never heard of those groups/artists.

Anyone interested in "Range War" should also write to Simon, though I don't know if he's accepting overseas players. I'll at least send copies of the pertinent pages to Colin Bruce. And, Simon, I'll get that Fol Si Fie article on stalemate lines to you as soon as possible.

I agree entirely with your comments on prostitution and your proposed solution. It's a crime that I will concur has its victims, but the point is it doesn't have to.

Jones Beach is nice, though awfully crowded. This is the second year I've been able to share the sand with my readers.

Five foods? How about...

1. Flank steak, rare
2. Cow's tongue, welldone and tender
3. Stuffed clams
4. Boiled lobster
5. Artichokes

I don't worry much about nutrition -- that's my sister's department. I've named my album choices elsewhere. Keep in touch -- I'll be subscribing to Flame through the ISE.))

From Mark Borch (9/19/84):

Dear Bruce,

The origin of "demo games": the term has changed some over the years. Originally, the game was one for well-known players (not necessarily good ones, but usually so). It was generally done on an invitational basis. These games usually had commentary, sometimes two people doing commentary, most often by the GM. Nowadays, the concept has been broadened to include demo "press" games -- players selected for their press-writing abilities. The practice of offering season-by-season commentaries has fallen off, so that a demo game label may mean very little other than the fact that the GM wants to call it a demo game.

I was amused by your mother's alarm at your skydiving. That is at least dangerous enough to require training. Recently, my father-in-law took some of us up in a hot-air balloon. I was not invited. He told me, with a perfectly straight face, that now that I had to support a family, I couldn't take the risk.

I noticed your jibe about my stance in VD #29. I'm not waffling. I changed my position. I doubt I gave the matter much thought at that time. My former opinion was for the Byrds. Ah, but I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now.

So electronic mail games have a different "flavor"? So what? How does that make them variants? A 10-day deadline game has a very different flavor than a 5-week game, but so what? Telephone games have a radically different flavor, yet if they are reported in a dipzine, no one calls them variants. PBEEM games should be a lot closer to the flavor of a PBE game than a telephone game. The question should be: are they playing Diplomacy or are they playing a different, but related game?

On the RIGEL business, you might be interested in knowing that a similar incident occurred in 1979DE, in the British zine Fall of Eagles. A player had signed what he was led to believe was a birthday card. Orders were affixed and sent to the GM, without the player's knowledge. The GM knew the whole story (Richard Hucknall) but used the orders anyhow.

In your situation I don't think you should have used the orders in the first place. If a signature is not intended to be part of a set of orders, it is not valid

for that purpose.

Well, you've got several other letters from me, so it's time to wrap up. You are getting, and will probably continue to get, a lot of abuse in the next few months. You ought to consider how much of this you really need to respond to. If the accusations are backed up with evidence and specifics, then you ought to respond, regardless of who is writing. But if these are just wild charges without any substantiation, without any specifics, there comes a point where you can just let these dregs sink to the bottom and disappear without responding to it.

((You make it sound so easy, though. I'll assume (safely, I think) that you're referring to the letter Kathy Byrne has circulated about me, and the latest issue of NSWG. It's easy to say that these charges are so wild that no one will believe them, but some people do. NSWG has a letter from Olsen, for example, in which he parrots Kathy's charge that I've written a "smutty hate letter" to one of her kids, and says that I've been charging phone calls to Kathy's employer's phone. These are both absolute lies made up by Kathy, and spread to discredit me. She will never be able to prove them, because they aren't true. (Both of these examples would be easily proven if they were true.) Tallman has attacked me on a gutter level, and there's no way I'm going to sully my pages by responding to some of that stuff. But his main point seems to be that I'll go to people's employer to get back at them. The only problem with this reasoning is the minor detail that I haven't ever done it, with the sole exception of the Highfield Death Threats incident. I have a letter from Peter Gaughan, a subber to NSWG and KK, who admits that he had been taking Kathy's and Terry's statements at face value. So it's not as if nobody listens, and that's what bothers me most of all -- that there are people who still feel that a shred of credibility can be credited to Terry Tallman or Kathy Byrne.

Thanks for bursting my bubble on the RIGEL business, just when I thought I'd finally made a GMing ruling so far out that it would have to be a first. But how is it that the GM is supposed to know whether the player thought he was signing a set of orders?

On E-mail Diplomacy, I have no rebuttal save for my own personal feelings about the subject, which I've already made known. I freely admit that there isn't a whole lot of logic (if any) to support my position.

I wasn't aware that you were capable of changing your mind on a question of such fundamental importance as the legality of a support for a unit ordered to move illegally. Really, Mark, you're getting human in your old age!

OK, I'm going to retroactively refer to RIGEL as a demo game for press. I'm sure it would put to shame others that have carried the title.))

From Greg Ellis (excerpt):

Dear Bruce,

...As for the Highfield Affair, I would have sent the letters to the police. In any case you felt justified in your actions, so why are you trying to justify it to the rest of us? If all your subbers wrote and said you were wrong what would you do? Should the same thing happen again, would you react the same way? To the people crying, "It's only a hobby!" -- there is no such thing. This is life, folks. Some good, some fun, others not. Get used to it.

((The only reason I felt I had to justify my actions to the hobby was because John Caruso and Terry Tallman tried to present a distorted version of what had taken place to the hobby, so I felt the need to straighten things out. As you can see there are a number of people out there who feel I acted correctly, but what counts most is that I know I did. As for "It's only a hobby", the whole thing had nothing to do with any hobby that I'm in.))

From Ronald Brown (9/7/84):

198

Dear Bruce,

Bruce McIntyre sent me the enclosed to pay for the issue of Snafu in which I printed his letter. I had already sent him a complimentary copy, so I figured he wouldn't mind if I sent the money to you to start off a sub to VD. He mentioned to me that he had asked for a sample but didn't have enough American change to pay for the postage.

Otherwise, to catch up on personal news, my acting appointment was extended again. Whew! I am in the running for a COROL programming position, studying like mad! And Ann goes back to work on Monday, so the boys will be off to the babysitter's every day.

The big news in the hobby, of course, is Kathy's resignation as ENC. She blames it all on you. It seems, according to the latest Kathy's Korner/Whitestonia (as it's now called), that you are responsible for forcing Dick Martin to fold one of his stores (they didn't say which one), trying to drive Kathy out of the hobby, attempting to muzzle Foot in Mouth, making up everything you've said about Bill Highfield in a jealous rage over Alex's preference for him, nearly costing Kathy her job, trying to "hurt" Bob Arnett's income, and...no, sorry, they didn't say you had bad breath.

My question is this: how on earth did you ever get so much power? Forcing Kathy to resign and Dick to fold is amazing. Do you hold guns to their heads? Or do you have some secret hypnotic ability that forces people to follow your every whim? I, for one, am impressed.

See, Bruce, you don't have to answer anything they say, because they're making you out to be a hobby god. The more terrible things they ascribe to you, the more powerful you become. Next thing you know they'll be saying that you forced a zine to have screwed up results, that you made the Boardman Numbers become scrambled, that you harrassed Bob Sacks into making sense, and that, honour of honours, Rod Walker is secretly a BRUX lackey! Can the hobby stand the shock?

I think the best course at this point is simply to ban the names Byrne and Caruso from VD. No matter what they say about you, those who've read Whitestonia/Kathy's Korner and Voice of Doom for years, as I have, have made up our minds. The fact that many people voluntarily subscribe to Voice of Doom (unless you've somehow forced us against our wills) is all the reassurance you need. Let it lie. Their accusations are getting sillier and sillier.

Sadly, I used to count Kathy and John among my friends, but Foot in Mouth drove me away from them, and the last few issues of KK/W have confirmed it. I just cannot bring myself to be friends with people consumed with so much rage that they'll attack anyone and anything that crosses their path. I hope someday they'll see what they've done to themselves. And I'd like to go on record as saying that Bruce Linsey did not force me to come to that conclusion.

((Excuse me a minute while I go pull a few more strings...OK I'm back. ☺))  
Seriously, to read the latest issue of W, one might get the impression that I have some sort of magical power over (to name the four people Caruso named) Rauterberg, Baumeister, Berch, and Kelley. This is what I once referred to as "toadybashing" -- if you can't discredit their arguments, try to discredit them instead.

Alas, not everyone is as perceptive as you, Ronald, which to my way of thinking makes it necessary to reply. You seem to think, for instance, that no one is going to believe that I wrote a nasty letter to Kathy's daughter. Ask Bob Olsen, though; he believes it, and has severed the friendship I had with him because he believes it. Have any of the people who think I wrote a nasty letter to Francine actually seen proof, in the form of a copy of the letter? Of course not. They accept Kathy's word for it. Sadly, then, I feel that I must deny such wild charges for those who think there is any truth to them.

To any doubters: have you seen this nasty letter I'm supposed to have written to Kathy's daughter? Have you asked for the proof Kathy says she has? I dare ya!!!

From Steve Knight (9/24/84):

199

BRUX,

It's awfully hard to know how to begin this letter. I must confess to a certain temptation to lapse into some end-of-the-zine pseudo-philosophical bullshit, but the end result would be, I'm sure, even more confusing than my last letter.

Actually, it is very much my seeing my last letter in print that makes me write now, for I do feel that I owe John Pack an apology. When writing about controversial subjects such as homosexuality, it seems, there is always an urge to make one's argument so strongly that you forget to read your own words with a critical eye. In the case of my last letter, this meant that I got too sarcastic in my reply to John, including the completely unwarranted use of preteritio on p.15 in VD #99. I think John would have every right to be annoyed with me, and I hope, John, you'll accept my apology for not limiting my comments to the substantial points of the discussion. I certainly intended no overt offense when I wrote the letter, thinking instead that I was simply being sarcastic. And I'll certainly be more aware in the future that seemingly innocuous words can read very differently in print.

With my major item of business out of the way, time for a quick stroll through #99.

As far as the PBEM question goes, BRUX, I think you'd have to come up with a specific reason why they're different from "normal" PBEM games before I could agree with you. I think Kathy handled the whole PBEM game very well -- the average run-of-the-mill PBEM game, such as those run by Russell Sipe, are regular; but Wes Ives' games are variants because they're anonymous, not because they're PBEM. If memory serves me correctly, Kathy publicly stated she'd give Wes' games Boardman Numbers if he'd just provide her with a list of starting players so the stats could be reported in Everything. Since Wes chose not to, she didn't give him the BNs -- which is, despite my own PBEM backgrounds and sympathies, how I would have handled it.

Nude picture of a female hobby member? Gotta be Samantha. Joan, keep your daughter decent, will ya?

More on the ISE... True, BRUX, it'd take one person out of the chain if I sent requests I received directly to the publisher rather than to Doug Rowling so he could forward it. Notice, though, that the idea is to send people to the bank to change currency as infrequently as possible. If I were to mail sub funds directly to British pubbers, I'd be forever running to purchase British currency to send them -- or else sending them American currency and making them run to the bank to exchange it. The way it is, the only time any money changes hands across the Atlantic is when the internal "balance" Doug and I keep with each other gets too heavy to one side or the other and one of us has to send the other some cash to even things up. (By the way, anyone horrified at the idea of our sending cash through the mail would do well to check out the service charge cost on your average International Money Order.) True, we're not as quick as we might be because of the separate steps, but, well, we can't be everything we'd like to be, and we are here mainly for those who are leery of trying to work out the currency exchange themselves.

The RIGEL Affair...yawn.

Well, although I know there's other stuff I could comment on, I don't have the inclination right now, so it might as well become time to sum up and sign off. As I intimated at the beginning of this letter, it is odd to think that this will be my last letter to VD -- in a long while, at least. Odder still to think that it's because VD is folding and not because I decided to leave the hobby or something. Right now, I definitely regret not having written an article or something for this issue but, well, I have had a lot of other things in my schedule recently, as you know. (See? I told you I'd lapse into pseudo-philosophical bullshit! This is beginning to sound like I'm signing a yearbook or something.) Mind you, it's been tough sometimes keeping the secret (telling Ty and Nelson that we might as well end

the game in #100 so we'd "go out with a bang" and because "Bruce has always been proud of RIGEL..."), but I definitely agree that you've been subordinating your life to the zine long enough, and it is probably best to leave with a clean break. VD will be missed, of course, and I, for one, hope that someday it may pop up again. Until then, best of luck, BRUX, with whatever takes the zine's place. Frater, ave atque vale.

Love,  
Steve

((Thanks for the nice comments. Who can say now whether VD #101 will ever pop into your mailbox??

Thank you also for straightening me out regarding the way you are handling things with the ISIE. I wasn't aware (perhaps I didn't read carefully enough?) that you and Doug were keeping a "balance" as you describe with each other. I think I agree now that the way you are doing it is the best way possible.

I agree 100% with the way Kathy handled the question of Wes Ives' games. In my opinion, they are variants. However, the whole topic illustrated very vividly one of the prime objections I do have with Kathy. The problem wasn't her ruling; it was the way she felt that everybody ought to accept her word as The Final Word and shut up. Kathy didn't want anyone to question her even to the extent of debating the subject, and when people did she took it as a personal attack or harrassment. The BNC (as with all people who must make decisions affecting others) must be able to handle dissenting views and deal with them for what they are.

Contrast this, for instance, with the exchanges between you and me regarding the ISIE. I have twice criticized your system. I did this in the spirit of provoking discussion and possibly making a good thing better -- and although I was "wrong" both times, that's the way you took my remarks, and that's the way it should be. There were no sarcastic remarks about if-you-think-you-can-do-a-better-job-then-why-don't-you-do-it or I'm-going-to-quit-because-of-all-this-harrassment. There was just a friendly, productive exchange of ideas. With Kathy this just wasn't possible.

Well, I didn't think you were that nasty to John Pack. I'm sure your apology will be appreciated.))

From Judy Winsome (9/10/84):

Hi Bruce,

After a lot of thought, I have signed your petition ((the Publisher's Statement on Foot in Mouth)). My problem with it originally was that by itself, his writing was fairly innocuous, and capable of multiple interpretations. If I didn't know what he was writing about, without inside information, I wouldn't know what and sometimes who he was talking about. If you didn't know what was going on, the innuendo wasn't enough to tell you. I finally decided that it was rumor mongering and its lack of specificity was something I didn't want to encourage. I still feel that Caruso can write whatever he wants to and if there's an audience for it or not that's his problem. I choose not to be a member of that audience or to give it print. He probably wouldn't want me anyway. I can understand why. A Long time ago, John Michalski sent me an issue of Mos Eisley Spaceport. At the time I just thought he was using it as a trade for Winsome Losesome. Naive!

I see from Fred Davis that Kathy Byrne has resigned. Maybe that's for the best. I never had a problem with Kathy, except indirectly as she affected others. Bill Quinn is an excellent choice for the BNC.

Good luck on your 100th issue!

Love,  
Judy

((MMMMMMMMMMMM! Two love letters on the same page! Excuse me while I go bluish. And thanks for writing. I think Bill Quinn is an excellent choice for the BNC too.))



From Mark Berch (9/25/84):

201

Bruce---

A few last thoughts on the homosexuality discussion. The recent issue of Science reported an interesting study, which I thought I might summarize in lay terms.

12 heterosexual women were given a dose of estrogen, the "female" hormone. The researchers then measured the level of a very important hormone, called luteinizing hormone, or LH. They all showed a consistent response, which is what one expected: LH levels initially decreased, then shot back up. The same test was given to 17 heterosexual males. None of them showed this response.

When the test was given to 14 homosexual males, there was great variability, with 9 of the 14 showing the female response, at least to some degree. No tests were done on homosexual women.

The test was also done with testosterone, the male hormone, and male homosexuals and heterosexuals again showed some differences in their LH response. LH is a hormone produced by a gland in the brain and is very important for regulating sexual functions.

Some things need to be said:

1. This is an important study, but it is still just one study. It needs to be replicated, and it will point to additional research which may give a more clear picture.

2. The fact that only 9 of the 14 homosexual males had this response may indicate that there is more than one mechanism for homosexuality, and that psychological factors may account for those that hormonal factors do not.

3. This kind of research poses both risks and benefits for homosexuals. Refinement may make it not a diagnostic device, allowing a homophobic institution such as the army to ferret out homosexuals (even celibate homosexuals, non-practicing ones) by means of a test. On the other hand, by demonstrating that this is something that one is born with, like skin color, it may strengthen the move toward getting civil rights, barring discrimination on the basis of homosexuality, just as other things one is born with, such as color or religion, cannot be so used for discrimination.

4. This type of research alone will not determine where the origin actually is. It might be a genetic problem, or it might be a hormonal problem in utero that causes such an abnormal response to primary sex hormones. Much more research will be needed to nail that point down.

((A relevant bit of research. But I'm personally not as concerned about the causes of homosexuality so much as the stoppage of discrimination against gays. I also find some of your language to be a bit slanted: "genetic problem" and "abnormal response". I still don't see where anything is "abnormal" or why this is a "problem", although I realize you may have meant "abnormal" simply in terms of this being a minority or unusual response.

Mark, I really don't think you submitted enough letters for my Gossip Column this issue. Therefore, you are forthwith receiving a refund on your sub balance to VD for lack of participation.))

From Ruth Glaspey (9/24/84):

Dear BRUX,

Sorry, the computer absolutely refuses to print the R backwards. One of these days, though, I'll surprise you by -- uh, how do you say it in computer? Oh, yeah -- "downloading a font" (or some such) that will include a backward R, and maybe some other Cyrillic characters as well.

Which brings me to the point of this letter: the origin of the term "droog", or "droogie" as it is sometimes spelled. A couple of issues back, its etymology was traced as far back as A Clockwork Orange, but the word actually goes back much farther than that.

When I was a mere slip of a girl, I spent the summers between my college years in and around Bridgeport, Connecticut. There is quite a large White Russian population in that area, many having settled there in the years following the 1917 revolution. The word "derogoi", pronounced "d'rogoi", was used extensively as a term of fond feeling among these immigrants and their children. A more or less exact translation would be "dear one". I'm pleased to see it coming into more general use; it's really a nice, warm-sounding expression.

You know, I'd forgotten all about that word until some other Doomsies started using it. (I never saw A Clockwork Orange, and what is even more surprising, I never even read the book! Must remedy that one of these days.)

This evening I went down to the local community college and registered for a course in BASIC in order to be able to communicate a little better with this expensive toy. Can't wait for classes to start -- you don't realize how much fun school can be until you're away from it for a while.

Well, take care, BRUX -- and remember: Non illigitimis carborundum.

Vcero choroshero, \*  
Ruth

\* Well, that's really a very approximate pronunciation -- in Russian, it really looks more like "Bcero xopowero!"

((Whatever. My limited background in foreign languages leaves me entirely in the dark regarding that expression. Even the "foreign phrases" section of my dictionary didn't help on this one!

Thanks for the explanation of the origins of the term "droog". I believe that Rich Reilly was the first to use it in VD, probably in his "late in the evening" press. Other players and outsiders then picked up on it. But you're all my little droogies!))

From Jeff Panches (9/18/84):

Dear Bruce,

Well, will wonders never cease!! I return from vacation...begin to sort through my mail...spot an issue of Voice of Doom...open it...and to my amazement I find that I have become a standby in RIGEL. I must say thanks though because I have missed playing in VD after PEGASUS finished.

Susan and I just spent two weeks in Europe on a business/vacation trip. Susan is a wine broker who carries a German wine for a company which awarded her a trip to Germany to view their wine operation...I tagged along on her business trip. Nice arrangement, I must say!! Germany was a great deal of fun for I have never been in the wine regions. We stayed in a little town called Bad Kruznach on the Nahe River and toured all the castles and wineries along the Nahe, Rhine, and Mosel Rivers. Farabrough was a great experience as I had never been to an air show like that before. I just sat there with my mouth open watching the lamost continuous flight demonstrations. After that was over we took the train up to Edinburg for total relaxation. I loved the entire trip including the business portions a great deal...although I am paying for it by trying to lose the ten pounds I gained...awfully good beer, though.

Now unfortunately I am back at work in hot San Diego and enjoying it less. Seems like everything fell apart while I was gone so I have to put it all back together again! Just like Humpty Dumpty.

On to the game!!

((Well, RIGEL's ended and Ty would have returned anyway, but thanks. Glad you and Susan enjoyed yourselves, and keep in touch, hey?))

From Chuff Afflerbach (9/13/84):

Dear BRUX,

Yes, I'm back again...

The final disposition of the RIGEL Affair will set an important precedent, not just in the vast Diplomacy world, but in the less significant realm of everyday life as well.

A quick question: A Russian signs a blank check and sends it to France. France fills in the amount and takes it to the bank. Is this check valid?

If you said yes, there may be a career for you in high finance. The Russian check is valid because the signature on it belongs to the Russian. Indeed, banks have accepted such checks in the past with itchy fingers.

Now let's change the question just a bit. The Russian writes France a check, signs it, and sends it. France crosses out the amount, leaving the signature untouched, fills in a new amount, and takes it to the bank. Is this check valid?

Before you call the cops, keep in mind that there is a Russian signature on the check! So what the fuck is the difference between this check and the first? The Russian's intent? Hyork!

Believe it or not, I tried this scam after reading about the RIGEL Affair in VD #99. I told my banker precisely what I was doing so fraud would not enter into it. It took him several nanoseconds of deep thought to decide to accept it. He also warned me that his decision in all probability would be overturned by an auditor if anybody ever got wind of it.

A month later the statement came out with the bogus check. The banker got an irate phone call, ruefully blurted out the whole sordid story, and confessed to being provoked by the "Greater Greed" Rule. A corrected statement was issued and the sucker finally got his money back.

Of course, I called the banker a "wimp" for backing down without even going before a judge. The pigeon who wrote the check has accused me of "financial fornication", but what the hell. After collecting a month's interest on his money, I am -- forgive me -- laughing all the way to the bank.

Ah, yes, the RIGEL Affair. It seems to me that Mr. Hare has collected a month's interest on Mr. Kleiman's account. How much of Russia's (and all the other players') game plan was revealed by the wanton playing out of a season which was already Doomed to be repeated?

As a future precaution against stunts like this, a wise GM should do as wise bankers do: require all corrections and deletions to be initialled by the signatory. And wise Doomies will never, ever, sign their names to any diplomatic negotiations!

Dare I sign this?  
Chuff

((Hyorking aside, the parallel you've drawn in your second-to-last paragraph is incorrect. Ty Hare received none of Dave Kleiman's interest, as no season was replayed. I simply readjudicated using the orders that had already been printed, and the Russian orders that had already been sent in. No season replay will ever occur in a game I'm running, as such is damaging to the game. Fair enough?

Other than that, I think you've convinced me. However, the problem remains unsolved: how does a GM determine whether a player wanted certain orders used? I realize that this case is clear-cut when I'm dealing with the blank sheet of paper, signed and sent to an ally to fill in the moves, but what if it's sent in by the guy's enemy instead? Am I as GM supposed to decide which players are allied and can therefore use this tactic? Am I supposed to read minds and decide whether a player wanted a certain set of orders used? There is no clear-cut colution to the questions posed in the RIGEL Affair. ~~And even if that's not the case, I wouldn't have signed that~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXX for the world.))~~

From Bob Howerton (9/26/84):

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Dear Bruce,

I have now been a subscriber to your magazine for several years and have watched your "dueling" with others in the hobby with interest. I have often wondered what really lay at the bottom of your "feuds". How could any one individual generate so much turmoil?

At last, I have learned the hard way. You must have a deeply embedded mean streak. To lash out so viciously at an innocent bystander as you have at me can only mean that you are obsessed with the idea of "getting" as many people as possible. Why you turn on those who have never done you any harm is beyond me. I'll admit that I have poked innocent fun at your house rules in the past, but without any harmful intent. However, this could hardly warrant such a low and underhanded trick. Our relationship, which has been amiable in the past, must of necessity undergo a drastic change. You hit me where it really hurt in a manner I would not have thought possible.

Imagine, if you will, a peculiar set of circumstances which combined an unusually early mail delivery with an unusually late breakfast on my part (I had the day off).

I pick up the mail and notice that the latest issue of your rag (Voice of Doom) has arrived. I carry this latest issue, along with my breakfast of bacon and eggs, on a tray out to the patio for a relaxing and enjoyable meal.

A really beautiful day -- the sun is shining, the birds are singing, God is in his Heaven and all is right with the world. "Ah, good," I mutter to myself, "I can catch up with all the latest goings-on and see if Don Burd and Ruth Glaspey, my faithful and trusty allies in QUASAR, and I have finally broken through."

ZAP!!

Almost as if by some manner of remote control, you struck your dastardly blow. You had somehow contrived to conceal in your envelope what I estimate at about 75 pounds of dirt which poured out over my eggs and bacon as I opened VD in amazement. You claim this to be sand from some such place called Jones Beach which you wanted to share with your subscribers. I doubt it could be called sand, but it was possibly from some beach as there was what appeared to be part of an old lifesaving ring sticking in one egg yolk.

Now I ask you, who but you would go to the trouble of shovelling sand all over North America in an effort to ruin someone's day? I'm sure that you could only guess at the results, but in my case, it was devastating -- those were the last two eggs in the place. It was enough to drive me to drink, except there was some flotsam in both the orange juice and the coffee.

Well Bruce, you hit me where it really hurt. You can mess with my reputation, you can laugh at my house rules, make light of my gamesmastering and downgrade my zine, but to mess with my breakfast is nothing short of an act of WAR. You should know better than to throw sand (read dirt) at someone who lives on the Gulf Coast (Redneck Riviera, to some). Somewhere, sometime when you least expect it, I'll be behind you.

This is no idle threat coming from someone who has survived some pretty dark alleys from Berlin to Saigon. Of course, I have mellowed out a bit over the last few years and am willing to overlook this mean and vicious attack and downgrade it to a prank if you admit that you really did do it with malice of forethought. I also expect a printed apology and a promise of a breakfast should we ever meet.

Seeking justice,  
Bob Howerton

PS. To cap the disaster, my trusty allies, Don and Ruth, took the last of my supply centers and cast me out like an old shoe.

((Ah, the sand worked, heh heh! Just for kicks, I'm enclosing a bit more of it in your copy of this issue, Bob. Just be sure not to open it over your food this time.

No, no, I'm kidding. I promise you a nice hearty breakfast if we ever get to meet, sans sand!))

From Jake Halverstadt:

Now, just a hot second, Mr. Linsey. What's this shit you're trying to get by me, like a junk pitch on an 0-2 count?

I refer, of course, to the hokum at the bottom of page 15 in issue 99.

Yes, something like patriotism is on the upswing. It's something like chauvinism, too, and xenophobia as well.

Suddenly it's fashionable to be an American again. And sometimes it makes me want to puke.

Sure, go ahead and lump me in with the Woodstock Nation, or, as you put it, "the immature, destructive, unpatriotic...college generation of the Sixties." The self-styled revolutionaries. The guys with the long hair. The reason you're glad you didn't grow up a few years earlier.

Immature? Because we stood for peace and love? Because we stood for sharing and equality? How about the long hair and love beads?

Today it seems to be "I've-got-mia-Jack," business degrees, \$15 styled hair and shirts with "Ocean Pacific" printed in 84-point type on the sleeves.

Destructive? Because we torched the ROTC building at Kent State and trashed some Selective Service files? We were fighting the greatest threat to humanity. You seem to embrace it.

Unpatriotic? For opposing the military-industrial complex? For making a stand for equal civil, economic and political rights in a land that's known as freedom?

What a difference a dozen-or-so years makes.

We bought macrobiotic rice at the co-op, and played Earth Ball on the village green.

You take lunch at the salad bar and work out at Club Nautilus.

We scattered the files of Big Business, threw dead fish in the offices of industrial polluters.

You wear their logos on your T-shirts.

We brought down a president and marched against another one, because of an unjust war.

You can't wait to vote for Reagan. And you thought Grenada was pretty neat.

Well, it's all like a pendulum. We swing to the left, and we swing to the right. It's like a baseball game. Your side is up.

We'll be up again, as long as the stadium doesn't get torn down. Or the grass doesn't die.

Were Jefferson, Adams and Franklin immature, destructive and unpatriotic? You bet your boots. Abraham Lincoln? Woodrow Wilson? Franklin Roosevelt? How about Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers?

A little revolution from time to time is necessary. Better to shake things up, to purge the system (or The System) than to stagnate in conservatism.

Well, I'm glad I didn't grow up a few years later. I'm afraid I'd really be an outcast, because I wouldn't fit in with the self-centered, materialistic, addle-brained college generation of the Eighties.

((Whew! Hit a raw nerve, did I? It's an interesting commentary on your point of view that, in the pursuit of peace and non-violence, you torch buildings and destroy files. And it's thought-provoking still further to realize that your right to say the things you are saying, to do the things your people did (in most cases), is exactly what my people would fight to defend. You're damn right I can't wait to vote for Reagan. Because I don't want the Russians or anyone else to even think they can tear the stadium down.))

Thus ends the longest letter column ever to appear in a Diplomacy zine. The Gossip Column this issue ran to 69 pages and had to be separated into six sections. Thanks to all contributors. Ironically, John Boardman urged just over a month ago that no one should write letters for publication to VD. Must be nice to have such influence! (v)

Confessions of a Diplomacy Widow

by Lisa Noto

I shouldn't have answered the phone last August. But I did, and now I'm writing this.

It was a Diplomacy call and it was meant for Jeff, but he wasn't home. Bruce was recruiting letters and articles for his anniversary issue, and he wanted to know if Jeff was interested. (Since when is Jeff not interested in the game Diplomacy?)

As I took the message, Bruce and I discussed Diplomacy. I told him I couldn't believe he had stayed involved with the game for over five years. After all, I'm not a fan of Diplomacy. He then suggested I write a letter/article on why I hate it.

I don't really hate it. In fact, I've never even played the game! But I do know people who are Dip players; I even married one. And so, my gripes begin:

I was introduced to Diplomacy by accident. Jeff plays Diplomacy by mail -- which, I might add, is an awful way to learn the game. It does, however, keep the Postal Service in business!

But I'm inclined to believe that it also creates a haven for obsessed individuals. I've skimmed through your sacred "zines", and all I see is Diplomacy-related material. (Even the comics reflect Dip humor!) And EVERYBODY -- at one time or another -- seems to publish a zine or sub(?)zine, or at least a column in either of these.

Jeff hasn't reached the publishing stage yet, but he is usually involved in half a dozen games at the same time. (And some wives complain of being Monday Night Football widows!)

Another of my gripes is that this game involves lying, outright lying. (I'm just not that kind of girl!) And the game seems to promote the use of deception: players are encouraged to lie in order to win. I'll bet a lot of you have hopes of being politicians when you grow up! Jeff is a daddy and I'm not sure this is the proper hobby for him. After all, what will the children think?

And now a more serious note: the "mine field" in this war game is the UNdiplomatic exchanges of words that I sometimes see in the letter columns of zines. This makes the game REAL, too real for me.

But on the whole it must be a worthwhile game. When Jeff first showed me his collection of postcards, zines, etc., I was amazed to find out that he had never met any of his fellow Dip-by-Mail players. (This year he met three Dippies.) Yet he has friends in this business.

Through the letters and phone calls he has established a friendship with some players. (I guess "Birds of a Feather..." pertains here!) One of these years he'll make it to one of your "cons" so he can put more faces on your names, so to speak, but for the time being he'll continue to exchange letters.

And, oh, let's not forget the phone calls. I can't. Isn't that the reason for me writing this?

You know, I just shouldn't have answered the phone last August. But I did...

((...and I'm glad! Lisa, your first Diplomacy article was a very nice one. And what's more, we have now made you into a DIPLOMACY HOBBYIST! There is no escape!! Seriously, I'm not sure why people object to the deception and lying in Diplomacy: isn't it better to get this sort of stuff out of our systems in the context of a game instead of real life?)

The other comment I have is that not all zines stick to Diplomacy-related material. Some do, e.g. Diplomacy Digest. But leaf through the Anduin letter column or Whitestonia or any of a number of other zines; and you'll find a good deal of non-Diplomacy stuff as well. It all depends on the editor's taste, and that of his readers. Hey, Lisa, you've just added three more issues of credit to Jeff's sub!))

From Fol S1 F1e #79...

The Austrian Navy: A Viable Alternative

by Randolph Smyth

As a preamble, I should note my own bias towards a balanced strategy permitting tactical flexibility, which I feel is the major non-Diplomatic lesson to be learned by most novices. Certainly one of the best indicators of the possible future of a given alliance, as viewed by an outsider or incoming standby, is the distribution of fleets and armies. Their position is of lesser importance (except where the two-front Russian fleets are concerned), since an atmosphere of good will usually suffices to rearrange a battle line within one game year. Players often get hung up on giving units an orientation (direction of action) based on relative positions which arose some time ago under different conditions. 90% of the time this is valid, but need I say that the opportunity of the remaining 10%, if taken, provides the most spectacular reversals of the game and generates most of the interest?

France, Italy, Russia and Turkey are traditionally freer in the initial years; that is, they build armies or fleets as the situation demands without being thought unusual by observers. England is usually tied to fleets while Germany needs armies; the tendency is usually emphasized when the two ally, and it may even be said that the "wrong" build by either bodes trouble for the other, immediately or later, even if there has been prior agreement on the subject.

Austria is, in practice, the worst "offender" of all. Unless sparks fly in 1901 on the Ven/Tri border, an Austrian player commanding more than his one initial fleet at any stage of the game is a rarity, even when doing well. ((That's just a tad exaggerated, but...)) If either Italy or Turkey is willing to deal, naval responsibilities are left to the ally; while if neither is friendly, more fleets will be badly outnumbered anyway, and of little use for the defense of the homeland which will probably be necessary.

It's my suggestion that an Austria who is holding his own in the southern negotiating and is self-confident enough to try for a really good finish by pre-Winter 1901 does well to build fleets from the beginning. This cannot be an explosive process with an obvious maximum of one fleet per year, so unusual attention to diplomacy with I/T is necessary. Your trump card is that each is naturally eyeing the other over the supremacy of the southeastern waters. For several game years (until your first enemy is on the run) your own naval interests can be represented to your ally as a support effort; "two fleets are better than one".

Unless you are comfortable with a Turkey permanently deflected north in an attempt at Russian expansion while you continue west after taking out Italy (which almost begs for the stab), you must ultimately resign yourself to (1) having your laboriously engineered fleet commitment languish, e.g. after taking out Turkey while Italy has squared off against France, or (2) lacing into the remaining sea power in the Mediterranean. The first option is clearly inferior unless forced, so the fleet-building strategy is only useful if you are confident that either Turkey or Italy can be persuaded to leave you an opening for a middlegame stab. Ally with him, crush the other, and then...

In the middle game, unless your northern neighbors are aggressive, the maritime emphasis is indirect protection of your home centers as well in the event of successful counterattack. That is, you will be at war with one of I/T first, then the other; then England or France in Iberia. If they can throw you back, they are fleet-oriented themselves and your landlocked home centers are likely to remain pretty secure no matter how badly you fare against them.

Where does Russia fit in? He must be neutral at least, since a Russo-Austrian war requires armies on your part. Given initial neutrality, a long-term alliance should be developed over several game years -- and is relatively easy to promote once he notes your commitment to the south and few worrisome armies on his border. The best course is to urge him north to maintain the balance among E/F/G. If he insist on southern action,

look out; but it's a rare Russian who will fight Turkey and think of challenging Italy in the face of Austrian discouragement! Such an announcement may be a signal that he's eyeing you as well: better re-evaluate your optimism.

The most critical stage of this strategy usually comes after your southern ally has the power to continue against his major enemy and still hold you off, while Russia is still being tempted by your lightly defended home centers. That's not to suggest that you should hurry to get past this phase; you don't want the quick destruction of your first southern enemy, since you need three game years to pile up fleets and set Russia some imperative problems up north. Thus Italy should move west to the extent that Russia moves south if the first enemy is Turkey; while you must keep things cool in Bla if you ally with the Turks, or you'll be dragged into a premature war in that area. Actually, if you concentrate on maintaining the balance at the other end of the board by whatever method, the situation in your area should unfold properly with you in the driver's seat.

Ah, you're saying "No wonder we never see this one, too many conditions." Most of them arise with only the gentlest nudges from a competent Austrian, perhaps because the emphasis is so unexpected by your neighbours. I've had no trouble applying an Austrian naval strategy in two games as superficially different as night and day. The unorthodox game is a nice change and can give you more mastery of your fate; you can control a pool of 8-12 centers with armies very nicely, but Austria is never a winning threat without either a rather foolish puppet -- or a strong navy. So if you want to finish before 1915, get started early!

((That last bit is somewhat of an exaggeration, too; Austria can win without a foolish puppet and with a force consisting almost entirely of armies. Nonetheless, I second Randolph's philosophy that any power should strive to have some degree of flexibility and that a good balance of units is desirable. An armies-only strategy for Austria severely limits her options in that she cannot play a strong game in the southern waters -- an area which, after all, is not that far from her homeland. Keep those little red fleets a'comin'!))

~~~~~

John Pack has written a whole truckload of articles for VD, and has faked it at least once. Even while living abroad as a missionary, he remained a Doonie and wrote an article for the zine while in the Dominican Republic! THANKS...to Doonie John Pack.

Simon Billeness is the only European hobbyist I've ever met, and he left a very favorable impression of the breed. While living with his fiancée in Albany, he and I met several times and he even invite me over for a steak dinner! Best always to him and Barbara. THANKS...to Doonie Simon Billeness.

Ralph Morton is as kindhearted a person as they come. A loyal Doonie since I started publishing, he has called me but once in five years -- but that call came right at the time I most needed a friend to talk to, and Ralph was there. THANKS...to Doonie Ralph Morton.

Nick Felella has become a friend through various meetings at KaneKons and ByrneCons, and with his occasional pleasant notes in response to VD. Who else would lose sleep if he didn't pass up a free issue of VD? THANKS...to Doonie Nick Felella.

Chuff Afflerbach has been kind enough to choose VD as his forum for hobby writing -- and he's the best writer in the hobby! His "Broken Record" article will live on in the hearts of many of us forever. Every time I saw an envelope with that familiar Oakland postmark in my mailbox, I knew that the next issue was going to be above average. THANKS...to Doonie Chuff Afflerbach.

Procrastinating

Procrastinating is not often a profitable activity in real life. Reality, with its multitude of complex day-to-day decisions, demands from most of us the ability to promptly and firmly embark on a course of action. He who wavers is frequently left behind.

But Diplomacy is different. In this game, it is frequently good to take one's time in the decision-making process. Let us examine why this is so. Consider Italy at the game's beginning. How should he move? A quick stab into Austria, maybe? Sometimes, yes -- this attack can yield a powerful position and maybe even three builds. Or maybe a joint attack on France, with England and Germany? Again, this is another good option at times. However, very often the best policy, especially with some of the countries, is to go with non-aggressive, low-profile moves until your neighbors are committed. While sometimes a quick strike will yield spectacular results, you had better be sure you're striking the right country, or you will pay the price later on.

Back to Italy, specifically. Suppose you make that quick attack on Austria -- only to find France and Turkey sending fleets into the Med in 1902. You may have six centers, but brother, they aren't going to be yours for very long! The reason is that you committed yourself too soon, and in the wrong direction. Or maybe you opened with an army to Piedmont, only to find that England backed down on his half of the bargain -- a fleet to the Channel. There you are with a glowering France to your west, a chuckling England to the north, and conceivably a hungry Austria (is Austria-Hungary?) to your east. The point is this: it is very often to your advantage to **MAKE YOUR NEIGHBORS COMMIT THEMSELVES BEFORE YOU DO.**

Suppose, then, that England approaches you with: "Let's take out France. I'll go to the Channel and you go to Piedmont; and we'll talk Germany into going to Burgundy." What should you do? You and France have already agreed to neutralize Piedmont; should you break that deal right away? The answer is yes only if you are reasonably certain of a few things. Is the southeast corner of the board going to see a lot of action for a sufficient amount of time? Will Turkey in particular be too busy with Russia to put fleets into the Med? Is England sincere? Can Germany be persuaded? These are often hazy questions at the game's outset. If you aren't reasonably sure of what is going to go on yet, a good answer to England might be along the lines of, "I'd like to help you out with France, but I'm not certain yet whether I'll be free to do so. Tell ya what. You and Germany go ahead with the offensive, and I'll probably be able to give you a hand by 1902, unless I'm having trouble elsewhere, OK?" This leaves you several options. If all goes well, you may carry out your end of the bargain soon enough -- once France has been distracted to the north. Or you may decide that the eastern situation merits your attention more, and move that way. England may not like it, but what can he do about it? His capacity for retaliation in this scenario is limited indeed. He is committed; you are not! Or, as often happens, you may find that England was trying to "use" you to keep France away from himself while he moved on, say, Russia! In this case, believe me, you'll be glad you didn't commit yourself too soon.

What if England is adamant, though? He could still be trying to make sure that France is just too busy to bother him, or he could be sincere in his belief that France must go. If he insists that you open to Piedmont, you might just give in and agree to it. He may have bad breath or some such, and won't leave you alone till you agree. Fine. Agree away. Just, when the time comes to move -- **DON'T DO IT!** You win either way. Either he was sincere and you still have your options, or he failed in his attempt to use you for his benefit. Either way, onion-mouth will be busy talking to his immediate neighbors instead of you for the time being.

So far this discussion has concerned itself with avoiding the pitfall of making a decision too early. It follows, then, that if it's good for you to avoid this, it also might be good to talk the other countries into it! So with a less-experienced England, you as Italy might try to talk him into an attack on France just to make sure that France is kept away from you. As Austria, you might offer to open to Galicia if Turkey will open to Armenia. You talk your opponents into the course of action that

you want them to take before ultimately making the final decision about your own. If you're truly a good diplomat, you might even have them believing that they are proposing the deal, not you. There is no feeling quite so satisfying in a Diplomacy game -- other than the sheer ecstasy of naked victory, that is -- than the smug knowledge that you've just talked an opponent into waltzing cheerfully down the road to his own destruction. Don't jump up and down. Just pass the onions and smile your assent. Put 'em safely at war before they come to their senses and realize what a disgusting slimeball you are. Then stay around to pick up any stray supply centers that come flying out of the resulting fracas, or (alternatively) join up with one side or the other as you see fit.

In conclusion, then, two golden rules emerge from this discussion.

- 1) Try to make sure that the other powers commit themselves to a course of action before you do; and
- 2) Don't be bullied or tricked into a high-profile opening that may turn out to be a poor risk.

You will generally live a lot longer and succeed more often if you keep these in mind.

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John Kador has been a Doomie ever since Doomies have been around. His articles on grammar have livened up these pages considerably. He is a solid friend who I have enjoyed meeting several times at cons. THANKS...to Doomie John Kador.

Greg Ellis provided the special envelopes in which several issues of Voice of Doom were mailed. A staunch conservative Republican, he has backed VD's nomination of President Reagan 100%. THANKS...to Doomie Greg Ellis.

Mark Johnson is another charter Doomie and loyal reader. He visited BRUX two summers ago and even got himself tangled in a face-to-face game while in Albany! Someday I hope to take him up on his invitation to come to Dallas for a barbecue. THANKS...to Doomie Mark Johnson.

Ron Brown was the GM of the only game BRUX has ever won postally. He is one of the publishers I hoped to emulate when I began -- and he's still going strong! He has been a fine friend for over five years. THANKS...to Doomie Ron Brown.

Doug Beyerlein has been kind enough to submit several thoughtful articles to VD, including his "Diplomacy Vacation" proposal and the Judy Winsome story. He performs a hobby service by running orphaned games, and is a model of level-headedness for those in need of advice, including me on occasion. THANKS...to Doomie Doug Beyerlein.

Jeff Panches got defeated for City Council, but what the hell -- if it were up to us Doomies, he'd be elected mayor of Carlsbad! He is a joy to GM for and he carried a hopeless position to endgame against all odds. THANKS...to Doomie Jeff Panches.

Jim Williams became a friend when John Boardman questioned his existence, and is still a friend even though the hobby is questioning his existence. (☺) He shared a room with BRUX in Detroit and helped to throw the "Beerless Beer Blast". THANKS...to Doomie Jim Williams.

Joan Extrom is a wonderful friend whose contributions to VD have not always been visible to the readers. One of the zine's loyalest supporters, she has been very active in the letter column for over a year and even dared to spend three days with BRUX, without making him change a single diaper. THANKS...to Doomie Joan Extrom.

Ty Hare dragged his terrible face all the way across the country to come to BRUXCON; what more proof do we need that he's loyal, screamin', and kickin'? He has written some excellent press and caused one of the most delightful controversies in VD in a long time. THANKS...to Doomie Ty Hare.

((I don't remember who sent me the following; I've had it on file for a long time. Whoever it was, thanks...))

The Salesman and Mrs. Smith

The British government's policy of socialized medicine has recently been broadened to include a service called "Proxy Fathers". Under the government plan, any married woman who is unable to become pregnant during the first five years of her marriage may request the service of a "Proxy Father" -- a government employee who attempts to solve the woman's problem by getting her pregnant.

The Smiths, a young married couple, have no children and the government man is due to arrive. Mr. Smith is leaving, says: "I'm off, the government man should be here soon." Instead, however, a door-to-door photograph salesman comes to the Smiths' trying to sell baby pictures. The conversation went as follows:

Mrs. Smith: Good morning.  
 Salesman: Good morning. You don't know me, but I've come to...  
 Mrs. Smith: Oh, you don't have to explain. My husband told me you were coming.  
 Salesman: Oh? Well good. I've made a specialty of babies, especially twins.  
 Mrs. Smith: That's what my husband said. Please sit down.  
 Salesman: Then your husband probably told you that...  
 Mrs. Smith: Oh, yes, we both agree that this is the best thing to do.  
 Salesman: Well, in that case, perhaps we should get right on with it.  
 Mrs. Smith: (Blushing) Well...just where do we start?  
 Salesman: Just leave everything to me. I usually try two in the bathtub, one on the couch, and perhaps a couple in bed. Sometimes the living room floor works well.  
 Mrs. Smith: Bathtub? Living room floor? No wonder it hasn't worked for Harry and me!  
 Salesman: Well, lady, none of us can guarantee a good one every time, but if we try six or seven times, one of 'em is bound to be a honey.  
 Mrs. Smith: Pardon me, but isn't this a little informal?  
 Salesman: No, indeed, in my line a man can't do his work in a hurry.  
 Mrs. Smith: Well, have you had much success at this?  
 Salesman: (Opening his briefcase and showing baby pictures) Just look at these babies. They're all jobs I've handled in the past. This one took four hours.  
 Mrs. Smith: Yes, that is a lovely child.  
 Salesman: But if you want to hear about a really tough assignment, look at this picture. Believe it or not, it was done on top of a bus in downtown London.  
 Mrs. Smith: Oh, my God!!!  
 Salesman: And here are pictures of the prettiest twins in town. They turned out exceptionally well when you consider that their mother was hard to work with.  
 Mrs. Smith: Oh, was she?  
 Salesman: Yes, I'm afraid so. I finally had to take her down to Hyde Park to get the job done right. I've never worked under such difficult conditions. People were crowding around four and five deep, pushing to get a good look.  
 Mrs. Smith: Four or five deep?  
 Salesman: Yes, and for more than three hours, too. But I finally got a couple of buddies to keep them back. I could've shot again before dark, but by that time the squirrels were beginning to nibble on my equipment, and I had to give up.  
 Mrs. Smith: You mean they actually chewed on your...ah...equipment...?  
 Salesman: Yes, but it's all in a day's work. I consider my work a pleasure. I've spent three long years perfecting my technique. Now, take this baby. I shot this one in the front window of a big department store.  
 Mrs. Smith: I just can't believe it.

Salesman: Well, madam, if you're ready, I'll set up my tripod so that we can get to work.

Mrs. Smith: Tripod...???

Salesman: Oh yes, I have to use a tripod to rest my equipment on. It's much too heavy for me to hold in my hand while I'm trying to use it.

Mrs. Smith: Oh!!!!

Salesman: Mrs. Smith...Mrs. Smith...Mrs. Smith...???

((Sources close to VD Headquarters have released the work that BRUX Linsey, after typing the above, left his home in a hurry to try to seek part-time employment with the government.))

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From Bruxus Bulletin #40...

The Flushing Style Manual of the English Language

1. Make sure each pronoun agrees with their antecedent.
2. Just between you and I, the case of pronouns is important.
3. Watch out for irregular verbs which have crope into English.
4. Verbs has to agree in number with their subjects.
5. Don't use no double negatives.
6. Being bad grammar, a writer should not use dangling modifiers.
7. Join clauses good like a conjunction should.
8. A writer must not shift your point of view.
9. About sentence fragments.
10. Don't use run-on sentences you got to punctuate them.
11. In letters essays and reports use commas to separate items in series.
12. Don't use commas, which are not necessary.
13. Parenthetical words however should be enclosed in commas.
14. Its important to use apostrophes right in everybodys writing.
15. Don't abbrev.
16. Check to see if you any words out.
17. In the case of a report, check to see that jargonwise, it's A-OK.
18. As far as incomplete constructions they are wrong.
19. About repetition, the repetition of a word might be real effective repetition -- take, for instance the repetition of Abraham Lincoln.
20. In my opinion, I think that an author when he is writing should definitely not get into the habit of making use of too many unnecessary words that he does not really need in order to put his message across.
21. Use parallel construction not only to be concise but also clarify.
22. It behooveth us all to avoid archaic expressions.
23. Mixed metaphors are a pain in the neck and ought to be weeded out.
24. Consult the dictionary to avoid misspellings.
25. To ignorantly split an infinitive is a practice to religiously avoid.
26. When an English expression will convey your meaning, foreign phrases are de trop.
27. Your use of comparatives should not be different than accepted standards.
28. Make no mistake's in forming plural's.
29. Last but not least. Lay off cliches.

Reprints of the above are not available from Whitestonia, upon request.

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This article was written in 1979 and was originally going to go into VD #1. It didn't fit, and I eventually decided to save it for a special occasion. It is not recommended for those who think that articles ought to have a point or at least make some sense...

### The Mouse that Roared (?)

Flop! And there you are, smack in the middle of a Diplomacy game about which you know nothing. You are that irrelevant and unwanted, yet ultimately essential entity known as a standby. Study the board. How the hell did that German fleet get to Azmenia? Or that Austrian army to Clyde? You'd better figure that one out quick, because that's YOUR Austrian army, Buster, and it's the only red piece left. Shall we say, you aren't in control of this particular game at this particular time.

You write to the other players. None of them answers you. You are unimportant -- a little splinter of wood lost amidst the Scottish highlands. Do you begin now to get an idea as to why the original Austrian player dropped out? We have news for you. He didn't drop out. He died of a heart attack when his other five units were annihilated, and France simultaneously walked into his supply centers. Or so you are told when you call the GM to find out why he picked on you.

The game progresses. No one cares that you own one English supply center, because everyone else is off fighting elsewhere. In the Munich region, and up to St. Pete, and down into the Med, the cruel war is raging (Johnny has to fight...). It's an exciting matchup between France/Germany and Russia/Italy, with the latter pair winning out. Don't you wish you could be there? Then somebody might realize that you do, indeed, exist. You watch in frustrated inactivity as (conveniently for the purposes of this article) the aforementioned German fleet is destroyed.

Turkey is gone, and so is England. So, as far as the others are concerned, are you. You make multiple, but futile, pleas for a convoy back to, say, Denmark, or even Gascony. Nobody listens. Nobody answers. Nobody, frankly, gives a shit about you. You are Not There. Finally, Russia writes you a post card, explaining politely that he feels he should at least talk to Austria "because it is there." Which is making a mountain out of a molehill, which is you. What does he say? Sure, he'll be glad to convoy you to Denmark, IF he can ever get a fleet through those damn German lines in Finland and the Baltic, which gives you an idea...

The game progresses, again. You write an order to hold in Clyde each spring, and you miss your moves each fall. But you never miss two in a row, so you're still playing. But you hibernate. You stop writing. If you were just a speck of dust in the eyes of the others, you are now merely a meaningless molecule in their minds. The game progresses...

It's now seventeen centers for the Russian/Italian alliance, and seventeen for France and Germany. Welllll, not quite seventeen, since you own Edinburgh, but anyway there are seventeen centers on each side of the board, and all of the other countries' units are busy with the realization that  $17 + 1 = 18$ . We now have...A STALEMATE LINE!

At which point you now awaken from your slumber and realize that you don't know who owns Liverpool or London. Is it France, or is it Germany? Germany? Oh, boy! You move Army Clyde to Liverpool.

Was that a mailbox? Once upon a time, yes it was, but it's now a crumpled pile of twisted metal junk. It couldn't bear the weight of all the letters you are receiving from the other players all of a sudden.

Russia reaffirms his promise of a convoy.

Italy all of a sudden is your best friend, and has been all along.

Germany offers you a five-way draw.

France offers you his sister Bonnie, if only you'll return to Clyde. You don't.

Look at Germany make his removal. He needed every unit he had to hold that line. He can't send a unit back toward you. The next year, you take London.

A representative of Planned Puppethood stops by your house, in an abortive attempt to get you to give back the German centers. You call him a nincompoop. He calls you a Pill. You cannot conceive why.

Germany writes again, trying to talk you into a five-way draw. Bluntly, you tell him it's pointless. The Russians come sailing through. The German Empire goes the



High On a Mountain of Doom

Episode #7 in the Continuing Saga of JANO's Journeys

"Ouch!" complained Rotunda, an enormous red sow, "Will you stop jabbing me with that umbrella?"

"Sorry," apologized JANO (Just Another Native Oregonian), tucking the large multi-color bumbershoot under her arm. She stood up on Rotunda's back and peered out from under the brim of her moldy sou-wester. A bright yellow rain slicker and olive-drab hipwaders completed JANO's outfit.

"I see a sign up ahead, Rotunda. Maybe it will tell us if there's a town nearby where we can spend the night. This QUEST is wearing me out." She sighed. "Maybe I should go back to the lagoon and settle for the Deadwood there. If only he didn't insist on having quiche for dinner every night."

"How can you be worn out when you don't ever walk?" complained Rotunda.

"Now, Rotunda, I've explained this all before. I'm the one who does all the mental work deciding where to go and scrutinizing any man we meet to see if he could be a REAL MAN. Mental exercise is much more fatiguing than physical exer...OOOF!"

Rotunda had sat down suddenly in front of the sign post, depositing JANO on the ground in a heap.

"Ooooh, my poor aching hooves. You're putting on weight, JANO. Better cut out all that Kentucky Fried Chicken."

The two friends looked up at the sign. The arrow on the left read "Albany, 15 miles." The arrow on the right pointed to "Mount Doom, 2 miles."

"We might as well head for the Mountain," JANO decided. "I see a building on top. Maybe we can stay there."

Some time later...

Once more Rotunda sat down suddenly and JANO slid to a heap on the ground in front of a sign saying, "Welcome to the Mount Doom Observatory. Please observe the Houserules." Not far from them, on a bulletin board near the door, was an extensive listing of some sort. "NO SMOKING" was printed in large letters at the top, but the rest was too small to discern at that distance.

JANO glanced up at the darkening sky.

"It's getting late. Let's see if anyone's here." She walked up to the porch and rang the bell, while Rotunda scanned the Houserules.

Heavy footsteps were heard inside. The door swung open to reveal a tall, bespectacled man wearing a white lab coat. He had dark hair that stodd out from his head in all directions. By his side a large old, shaggy dog gave a harsh "Woof" in Rotunda's direction.

The sow took a step back and warned her partner, "Watch out, that dog looks like trouble!"

JANO had leaned over to pet the dog, whose tail wagged merrily as JANO examined the tag on its collar.

"Why, it is Trouble. Good dog, Trouble!"

The man cackled and explained, "Don't worry about her. She's my official mascot. She loves to lick dirty feet. Now, good evening ladies, and welcome to the observatory. My name is Dr. BRUKenstein, also known as the "Voice of Doom." You may call me 'V.D.' for short." He cackled again.

JANO looked at the doctor curiously. "Thank you. We're looking for a place to spend the night. Could we possibly stay here, Dr. V.O.D.?"

His eyes flamed with anger as he raged, "That's V.D.! V.O.D. is not an acceptable abbreviation for 'Voice of Doom'. You must follow the Houserules or I'll have to tro you out!"

As he spoke, JANO had leaped, quivering, into Rotunda's arms and the sow backed up until she stood flat against the closed front door.

"Th...that's right, JANO, I read it on the board outside. It's Houserule 5 in

Section 14, subparagraph 8. Now calm down." Rotunda tried to be reassuring, but didn't succeed. "Lean on me for support until you collect yourself."

"Unacceptable!" shouted V.D., as his two visitors cowered in front of him. "You cannot hold her and support her at the same time! It's forbidden in Houserule 10, Section 23, subparagraph 2."

A phone rang. Abruptly the man's demeanor changed.

"Excuse me, ladies," he smiled calmly while making his way to the other side of the room. Picking up the phone, he said, "Good evening, Mount Doom Observatory. Dr. BRUKenstein speaking."

During the phone conversation, Rotunda whispered nervously in JANO's ear, "This guy is the original mad scientist! Let's get out of here quick!"

JANO whispered back, "Oh, maybe he's not so bad." She giggled. "He is kind of cute; maybe he's a REAL MAN after all! He's just strict, so be sure not to break any more Houserules."

Rotunda gave JANO a worried look. "OK, if you say so. But I forget what the Houserule on breathing is."

Dr. BRUKenstein slammed the receiver down and shouted, "Outrageous! My subscription to Observatories Weekly is suspended until I offer an apology to...but you don't want to hear my problems. Oh, woe is me, woe is me," he whimpered.

JANO stepped forward eagerly. "Oh, I'd be glad to listen to your problems. Go on, tell me," she urged.

"Oh, Lord," thought Rotunda with a sigh of resignation.

"I get no respect from the other scientists. No matter what I do, they criticize me. For instance, one night when we were studying the heavenly bodies --" he paused to look JANO up and down -- "one of my assistants lied to me about a black hole. Lying will not be tolerated! So I fired him. Did I get any support from my peers? None! And when I pointed out that Dr. Mac Jasters had clearly plagiarized an article from a scientific journal, would anyone back me up? No! Oh, woe, woe, woe!"

"You poor thing," said JANO sympathetically as she patted his back.

V.D. jumped up suddenly and exclaimed, "But enough of this. You ladies must be tired. Allow me to give you a short tour before showing you to your rooms." He put his arm around JANO's shoulders and began to lead her down the hall to a room marked "Copler."

"Now in this room, I'll show you my reproductive equipment..."

"Oh no you won't!" shouted Rotunda as she swooped JANO up in her arms and crashed through the front door in haste.

Dr. BRUKenstein poured himself a drink while Trouble licked his dirty feet. He raised the glass in salute to the figures fleeing down the mountain. "Here's mud in your eye," he offered, then his cackling laughter filled the room.

((JANO's Journeys is brought to you cryptically by Just Another Native Oregonian. The previous articles in the series have all appeared in Whitestonia, but JANO decided to make a guest appearance in Dalton to celebrate the final issue of VD. Let us all hope that her QUEST to find a Real Man ends in success!))

Brad Wilson is a new Doomie and a friendly acquaintance. He has written only one letter for Voice of Doom, but it was the longest and one of the most thought-provoking letters I've ever received. I have enjoyed Brad's company on those occasions I've met him. THANKS...to Doomie Brad Wilson.

Dan Young is also a new Doomie, but it's clear from his letters that he'd grow up to be a fine, upstanding, loyal screaming Doomie. He even nominated the old BRUKer for Doomie of the Year, and attends BRUK's favorite school, UCLA. I wish him all the best as he pursues his new hobby. THANKS...to Doomie Dan Young.



Advice to the Novice Pubber

by Ronald Brown

All too often a new zine appears, bursting with enthusiasm, unlimited game openings, every possible variant offered, an "all letters printed as is" policy, and editorials bravely attacking the hobby "establishment" (as viewed by the pubber). Then, six months later players start wondering where their game reports are and rumours start circulating of a fold. Orphans Placement services step in and the games are rehoused, often after long delays and dropouts.

Why does this have to happen? Can one not trust any zine to survive? Should one wait for a year, two years, before making any commitments regarding subs or signing up for games in any new zines? Hardly. All zines were once novice publications. Even Bushwacker had a first issue, though it's been around so long that's hard to believe. And, if a zine does not get initial support through subscriptions and players, it will, most definitely, fold.

One cannot set any guidelines regarding which new zines to trust and which not to. Each zine is as individual as its publisher. In Canada, in the past eighteen months, we've had two such folds. One was by a newcomer to the hobby who burned out after three issues. The other was by a hobby oldtimer, and this was the second time he folded a zine without warning. You'd think he'd have learned the first time round...

In any case, those considering the plunge into publishing could help avoid creating problems for the hobby if they stopped and seriously considered what they were letting themselves in for. I don't mean to discourage anyone, as the hobby is always in need of good reliable zines, but if you have doubts, best wait, as no one wants to be the one who lets players and subscribers down again.

First, you must have a fairly definite idea of what you'll be doing in five years. Sure the average game lasts about two years, but what about all the games you'll be beginning in the meantime? And what if a game does last that long? Drastic lifestyle changes add pressure to you, and having deadlines to meet doesn't help.

Don't set your sights too high. It is far better to GM one or two games well, than to be continually botching ten game reports. And, while it is flattering to have a circulation of 150, the administrative workload increases geometrically with the number of subscribers you have. You'll have address changes to make with every deadline, questions to answer, expired sub notices to send out, samples to mail, etc. At 100 subscribers I found I was putting in an average of 20 hours a week on publishing related activities. Who has that much free time? When I was running two games with about 30 subscribers, I could do the adjudications, put the zine together, address envelopes, etc., in one evening. Take a look at the long-lasting zines, and note how few games they carry: just two, three, four. Note also how short they are. With a few notable exceptions, long-surviving zines are less than 10 pages (20 reduced) per issue.

I think the most important consideration is your own honesty with yourself. If you cannot get your zine together on the deadline, can you really get it together in a few days, or in a week? Folding pubbers almost invariably tell people who inquire that the zine will be out in a few days...how much fairer it would be if you made a few phone calls to other publishers and asked them to spread the word that you were snowed under, but will transfer the games to other GMs, or get it out in four weeks, or whatever. And you'll have to honestly tell yourself why you are unable to cope now, and look at what major changes will be occurring, or that you can cause to occur, to change the situation you're in. If you're the type who tries to solve problems by ignoring them, better forget publishing.

And, believe me, you do get snowed under. Pressures can be tremendous when combined with job or family demands. How you handle it will determine what kind of pubber you'll be: a fly-by-night, or a solid contributing member of the hobby community.

((Thanks, Ronald, for a gold mine of solid and thoughtful advice to would-be publishers. You've earned three issues of sub credit. Ronald was the publisher of the Canadian zine Snafu, one of the most reliable and responsible publications the hobby has had in the past five years.))

It's 1984 and the game companies are again abusing language, such as.....

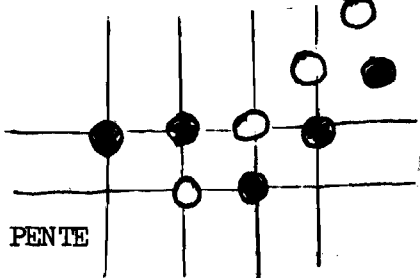
"Nail-biting decisions....."



It really means one or two random choices. It rarely influences the final outcome.

"Tournament Rule", "Weaver Rule",...

Pente players may have to face the fact that Keyro-Pente is the direction this

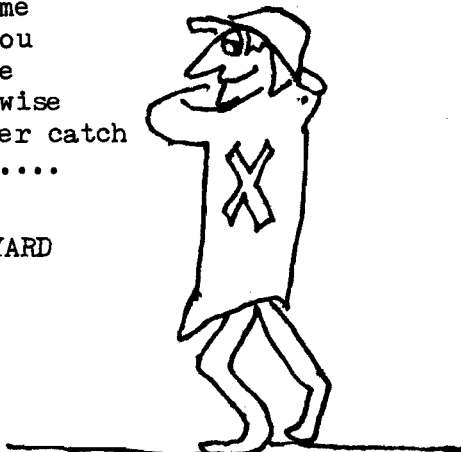


game must head in order to nullify the first move advantage. These other rules are simply stop-gap measures.

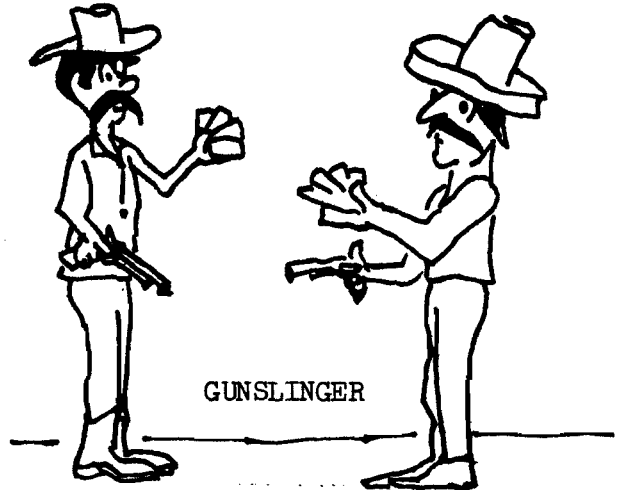
"3 to 6 players....."

In this game it means you better have six, otherwise you'll never catch Mr. X.....

SCOTLAND YARD

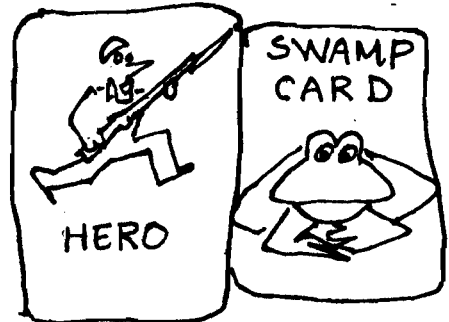


"Realistic, yet easy to play....."



This is how they describe the combat system in Gunslinger, where you arrange a handful of cards to show your fighter's actions. Just like the Old West.....?

"Unparalleled realism....."



UP FRONT



Oh sure, play the right card and your enemy is in a swamp. Dumb game.

"A pre-set period of time....."

This means that those players who are ahead will slow the action down. It needs new rules.

CAMPAIGN TRAIL



Ruminations on the Play of Zero-sum Games

by Randolph Smyth

Zero-sum games are divided into two-classes: those with two players and those with more. The former are good for the ego of the better players, since natural ability and experience go hand in hand, and guarantee good results time after time -- the ratings developed for such games are reasonable estimates of playing strength and future prospects. The outcome of multi-player zero-sum games are influenced by previous results: a factor apart from the rules of the game and actual ability of the players. Previous experience may help or hinder, depending on the estimates opponents make of his reputation. Whether a player is "good" or "poor" will be to his benefit or detriment in the scramble for allies, depending on the type of ally his fellow players are looking for; in Diplomacy at least, a better indicator of success lies in the "trustworthiness" or its reverse which is ascribed to a player.

However, any player who places complete trust on the mortal frame of his chosen ally, come what may, should be punished as his credulity deserves. I've concluded agreements on some wonderful terms if the conditions were right, because any agreement will stand or fall on the answer to a single question. The question must be asked of all parties to the agreement each season, and anything short of perpetual unanimous assent will overcome the most noble original sentiments. Is my ally of greater value to me as a friend than as an enemy? Obvious, but there are exceptions, you say -- not at all. The key word is "value".

Value is measured in many ways. Extra-game considerations are one component of an alliance's value. How much do you value your ally's friendship, if you fear it may be seriously tested by a stab? This may be construed as an argument for immaturity: allies may "lay off" if they worry about a childish reaction on your part. To be stabbed then becomes a compliment to one's levelheadedness! It's true that when an acquaintance is struck up solely on the basis of letters relating to a certain game, the progress of that game may well affect the relationship. However, if the contract hasn't progressed beyond the game in the course of previous correspondence, it will vanish anyhow at game's end. If that's all that holds you back, stab with gusto.

Considerations within the game are easier to gauge. What can your ally do for you? What can he do to you if you pick up a few centers at his expense? (His personal ability to retaliate tactically may be nothing compared to the future diplomatic problems he can cause you.) Here a good player will have an advantage in being able to "get away" with more than a novice or incompetent. Yet it is not his actual, but his apparent strength which serves him here: it's his reputation which makes false allies hesitate. A Big Name in the hobby may thus escape a tight situation unscathed while a low-key player who is actually "better" may suffer quite a mauling. To some extent a high profile is necessary for success. Since enough successes normally beget a high profile, players may benefit from their experience through the back door, without having actually become "better" since their first year in the hobby.

Personally, I try to base the decision on whether to stab or not on the game alone. Every agreement I make as a player carries an unwritten caveat: keep me happy with the terms, or else. That sounds a bit hard on the poor ally, but it's very basic -- it's the only business that firm allies have to conduct with each other. Write enough (not necessarily about the game!) to keep all parties interested; use strategies successful enough that all parties value the alliance; be trustworthy enough that all parties feel reasonably secure. Assuming that both allies were sincere at the beginning, it's not usually a difficult feat to keep them that way.

Perhaps the toughest thing to learn is how to make a stab unattractive without killing the potential of the alliance. Thus the most interesting part of the game is the jockeying among allies to alter the value that each player places in the alliance. How far can you go with your ally (if you're in a position to "push" him at all) without letting him come to value another option more? If you irritate him

enough, this option may be no more than suicide for the satisfaction of knowing he's put sand in your gears. Since outsiders have (or should have) made their best offers to your ally, there is a point beyond which you cannot go, even in the dominant position.

However, nothing equals the joy of watching your ally working for you rather than for himself. Of course you've got to keep him at least marginally satisfied, or the only question your "alliance" will answer is who will stab the other first and best. If your opposite number isn't incompetent, he may well know he's being screwed by the "equal" alliance -- but all you have to bring home to him is that all his other options screw him worse. If he's not in a position to negotiate with other players, there's little to fear. Scenario: you are France, rolling east with no opposition. Nice solid alliance with England, but he's been stopped short in the north by an Anglophobe Russia. You own Bel. Development:

E: Hey, ol' baddy ol' pal, lend me Bel that I may'st better prevail against the old Bear.

(Sorry, I've just been reading Shakespeares.)

And three French replies, et seq.:

1. F: Like hell, Bel is mine. If you got problems, tough luck. As soon as I destroy Germany completely I'll attack War.

E: Why you...! Take it all yourself, eh? At that rate I won't do better than fourth place -- I might as well attack you, especially when it would give me such pleasure!...

2. F: Sure, friend, take Bel. I want it back sometime, but as long as you need it, feel free.

E: Gee, thanks. I hope Bel will be enough. You know Russia is a tough nut, and you seem to be doing so well in the south...if I'm still having problems, maybe you could lend me Bre as well next year...

3. F: Well, what's mine is yours, of course. But I've got my own problems and I'm counting on all my centers to maintain my own attack. After all, I'm at war with Germany and Italy now (even if both of them do have just two centers)... and I hear that Austria and Turkey are thinking of getting together with Russia to stop us. Gotta hit 'em before they get the chance; you're not doing that badly against Russia with what you've got. It's slow, sure, but the win never comes easy, and redistribution won't help...the three builds I got last year are all desperately needed...but tell you what, my F Mid is pretty far from the Mediterranean action. I'll send it to NAT this Fall and put it at your disposal, so you won't need a unit from Bel.

E: Uh, but I'd just as soon not have your unit in NAT, to tell the truth. I know we're allies and all that, but...

F: Sure we're allies! Aren't we? I'm giving you what you want! You'd have to lay off Russia to take Bel, and my army that happens to be there would have to move out -- all very inefficient maneuvers. I can always change my tentative orders, made with you in mind, if you don't want the extra unit in the north after all. Say...are you suspicious? Of me!

E: Oh, no, no! Come ahead in...er...yeah, move north...

Obviously two players who have already forged a reasonably successful alliance are not going to send the above letters to each other in quite these tones. Yet, though the phrasing may be more refined, the ideas behind a great deal of Diplomacy correspondence have no more behind them than those in the Lazy Man's Diplomacy Kit (see recent issues of *Cum Grano Salis*): Every active player gets perfect IMDK examples in his correspondence every month, and the above are along the same lines.

The French Reply #1, if reasonably diplomatic, will not result in an immediate Holy War in most cases; but the English player, festering on the points made in his "reaction", will lose most of his interest in the French alliance. A competent third party will have them at cross purposes in one game year, and at each others' throats in two. Yet the French still depend on the English for a really good game: he

has pushed too hard, and given the English player no reasonable options.

Reply #2 is a characteristic of players who believe that parties to an "equal" alliance should have equal forces, equal potential...such a surfeit of equality that the game becomes boring if both allies feel the same. The English comeback suggests that such players are sometimes not well rewarded for credulity. Unless you know your ally well from other games, or there's a specific reason to mend fences, it usually pays to exploit his difficulties a little more.

Reply #3 is such an attempt. England is a bit on the ropes; unless France is brutal about the refusal of Bel (as in #1), he can still hope for a good result. In fact France may have no intentions against his ally (either being content with a draw or expecting to win in the southeast), but since he has a good thing going, he should consider carefully before throwing away the option. At the very least, if he does threaten to win in the southeast, or allows the English to ultimately approach 17 (18???) centers, the northern fleet will discourage any last-minute ideas by the English, and induce him to accept second place or the draw gracefully. No muss, no fuss.

Note that #3 took ten times the space of the other two: was it worth it? That, too, depends on the game.

The best players, then, keep their allies satisfied that a better deal is unavailable outside the alliance; but don't permit them any exuberance over their own over-readiness to please. They rarely permit situations where they must place too high a value on their alliances themselves. Everyone must depend on others in the course of the game -- but if a specific ally is needed, something is wrong. The potential for a profitable stab in that direction is lost, there is no minimal protection against dropout, and the ally himself may abuse the situation (and should, if it profits him enough). It's my opinion that a true "till-death-do-us-part" alliance has been badly played by one of the participants. At some point, one of the players could have done better, either with an outright stab, or by demanding an ever-so-slightly larger share of the pie in the hope that further advantages would accrue within the alliance framework. A two-way draw may still result between "jockeying" allies if both are competent and the opposition evens itself out in the long run; but in the meantime, constant shifts in the balance of power within the alliance should be the rule, not the exception.

((This is truly a brilliant article. I had to read the French Reply #3 over as it was so good! I also loved the line about "nothing equals the joy of watching your ally working for you rather than for himself". Great stuff -- and it takes a great diplomat to pull it off. The only thing better is watching your enemy working for you...))

Kevin Stone is, like BRUX, an avid fan of the National League in baseball. He has become a friend and fellow KaneKon attendee, and has twice helped to bury BRUX in the sand of Jones Beach. I'm looking forward to seeing him again this year, at BRUXCON. THANKS...to Doogie Kevin Stone.

Jake Halversatdt is one of the hobby's finest writers, and a genius at designing games. He has offered to fill BRUX with Rocky Mountain Oysters if BRUX ever makes it out to Colorado. (Undoubtedly, this would be an improvement...) I hope he makes a million dollars on his Presidential Politics game. THANKS...to Doogie Jake Halverstadt.

Peter Ansoff has proven to be a formidable opponent for BRUX in debating the merits of strict GMing. A subscriber since VD began, he is a good friend who might someday (hopefully?) introduce BRUX to the joys of sailing. THANKS...to Doogie Peter Ansoff.

Dippy by Ham Radio

by John MacFarlane, KA5PUB

"The situation was critical. I had to get Italy to help the coalition against France, or his victory would be inevitable. Reaching for my key, I called twice on 21 MHz, but as I thought, the band was out. I switched to 7MHz, and adjusted the amplifier for maximum gain, then called once...twice. Nothing. Just a faint rasping sound. But wait -- it was very faint code -- with all my energy put into simply hearing his signals, I copied... N5AYK DE K3TUU AR. He heard me! I quickly sent my message, knowing that the shifting ionosphere would not allow this contact for long: K3TUU DE N5ARK HRD FRA ON 14 -- UR HIS NXT TRGF -- PSE HLP COALITION -- PROMISE U IBERIA -- BK. He came back, BK OK U CNFRM A SUSPICION -- WILL DO... The rest of his signal faded into the summer QRM, but what I'd heard was enough. I could rest easy now. The fall of France was assured."

--endgame statement, 1985HR

Possibility or pipe dream? I asked that question a year ago in VD, and now, having an Amateur Radio License of my own, I feel I'm in a good position to show exactly how Amateur Radio could benefit postal Diplomacy. Slow mails would be replaced by (or supplemented with) lightspeed radio waves; week-long intervals between question and reply could be changed to seconds. The advantages are obvious. Now, then, you ask, could it happen?

First, a word about Amateur Radio. Basically, it's a hobby just like Dippy, with many facets including equipment building, satellite communications, "ragchewing" with fellow "hams", DXing (trying to raise foreign countries), etc. The FCC issues Amateur Radio licenses to those passing tests proving Morse Code proficiency and knowledge of radio theory. Different licenses confer different privileges; for example, the Novice license, which I have, allows only Morse Code communication on the high frequency (HF) bands. A higher class license (which is of course harder to get), such as General Class, allows voice, radioteletype, and other modes in addition to Morse Code, and allows communication on the very high frequency (VHF) and higher bands in addition to the HF bands.

Well, how can Amateur Radio be applied to Dippy? There are two basic ways: the radiogram method, which I'll discuss later, and the direct contact method. The direct contact method involves simply calling another player on the radio (at a set time and frequency) and negotiating. This has several drawbacks. First, radio communication at the power levels allowed amateurs (up to 1000 watts) is not completely reliable. Atmospheric noise and interference both limit communications, as well as poor ionospheric conditions (long distance radio communications relies on bouncing signals off the ionosphere). With experience (knowing the right band to use, for example) most of these obstacles can be completely overcome, however. Secondly, getting a license requires some time investment (although a novice license can be obtained with two weeks of an hour's daily study), and getting a station set up can be costly (depending on the quality of the equipment and your ability as a scrounger, anywhere from \$15 to \$1500). It might be easier to teach Hams Dippy than to teach Dippy players radio. Thirdly, every communication you send will probably be heard by quite a few other amateurs, and possibly an FCC monitoring station as well. They might wonder when you say "Let's attack Russia; I can put a fleet into the Barents Sea by spring...". Your opponents, also, might hear you, necessitating a system of changing calling frequencies or some other method (codes over the air are illegal). Nevertheless, the direct contact method would speed up a Dippy game considerably and probably make it quite a bit more interesting.

The radiogram method is simpler and does not require a license or a rig. There is a group of amateurs throughout the country which dedicates itself to handling



Doomie Preference Lists

I thought it might be an interesting project to tabulate all the preference lists I had on file for players signing up for VD games. Unfortunately, the first round of games (when I began publishing) is not included as I didn't use game entry sheets and didn't save the preference lists. So the lists used in the tabulation were from the second round of games (GALAXY through KEPLER), the third round of games (LINA through QUASAR), and the RIGEL game, which was opened separately (but generates enough press at times to have been a whole round of games!). After getting all of the players' lists for those games together, I went through and sorted out the incomplete lists, or those that didn't somehow make clear a preference of first choice through seventh. Then I went through and, for those players who had more than one list on file, took out all but the most recent. I ended up with 66 valid lists, all from different people. And here are the results of my tabulation:

| Country \ Choice | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | Preference Total * |
|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------------|
| AUSTRIA          | 1  | 7  | 6  | 7  | 10 | 13 | 22 | 119                |
| ENGLAND          | 24 | 10 | 13 | 10 | 6  | 1  | 2  | 289                |
| FRANCE           | 15 | 19 | 9  | 9  | 10 | 2  | 2  | 270                |
| GERMANY          | 4  | 4  | 12 | 11 | 14 | 15 | 6  | 168                |
| ITALY            | 6  | 3  | 5  | 2  | 7  | 20 | 23 | 111                |
| RUSSIA           | 11 | 9  | 11 | 15 | 7  | 11 | 2  | 225                |
| TURKEY           | 5  | 14 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 4  | 9  | 204                |

\* First Place = 6, Second Place = 5, ... , Seventh Place = 0



So, what inferences can we draw from these data? First of all, 66 preference lists are a reasonably significant number; the probability of any major flukes on the list is quite slim. (Remember, though, that these data cover only games in VD -- other zines may attract players with different preferences. Food for a study by somebody sometime?)

The preference totals show England and France close together in first and second place. Each of these countries was placed either first or second on a majority (34 out of 66) lists. Almost nobody put them sixth or seventh. England's slight win arose from the higher number of first place votes, and a slightly stronger profile among the "middle" votes.

Far behind the leading pair are Russia and Turkey, close together in third and fourth place. With the exception of the tiny number of voters who put Russia last on their list, the preferences for these two countries are pretty much uniform across the board, with but a slight tendency toward the "better" end of the list for both of them (an "average" country would have amassed a preference total of 198, just below what each of these two got).

Germany follows in fifth place, its ranking well behind Turkey and far ahead of the remaining two. Its profile shows that a huge majority (52 out of 66) players ranked it from third to sixth on their lists, and within that range the distribution is close to uniform, with a slight tendency toward the "worse" end of the chart. Not many people put it last; indeed, Turkey received more last place requests than did Germany, and only a handful of people chose it as first choice or second.

That leaves Austria and Italy bringing up the rear, in sixth and seventh place respectively. An overwhelming majority of players had Italy last or second-to-last on their lists (43 out of 66), which was dismal enough to drop it below Austria in the total standings despite the fact that Italy had six first place requests to Austria's one. The number of players who despise Austria is also very large (35 out of 66 placed it last or second-to-last on their lists), but not nearly so large as the number of Italy-haters.

So, the composite Voice of Doom preference list reads as follows:

1. England
2. France
3. Russia
4. Turkey
5. Germany
6. Austria
7. Italy

Looking back over the 66 lists, not one person exactly matched the composite list. Doomies Mark Duarte and Jim Vaughan were closest; Mark chose them all in the "right" order except he reversed Austria and Italy; Jim had them all "right" but for the fact that he placed France first and England second.

At this point you are of course wondering whether any pairs of Doomies submitted the exact same preference lists. Well...I seem already to have committed an act of retroactive GM interference in the above paragraph by revealing people's lists, so I may as well compound my crimes. Dave Newell and Jake Halverstadt must be clones of each other; both had lists of EFTRIGA. Similarly, if you ever get into a game with both Eric Ozog and Nelson Heintzman, watch out, they think alike! Both submitted lists of FAGETRI.

There are 5040 possible preference lists, and in the approximately three years covered by this survey, I've received 64 different ones (because there were two pairs of duplicates out of the 66 lists, as noted above). My handy-dandy mathematical calculator (the one inside my head) therefore tells me that I'd have to GM for 237 years to get all of them, at this rate. Now you know why I'm giving up GMing!

Finally, as a humor item, the next page shows a VD game entry sheet as filled out by Kathy Byrne, who was (as usual) feuding with me at the time. She sent this to John Michalski, who passed it on to me. "Ieapo Stabo" is her hobby alias.

The Voice of Doom now has game openings for the first time since issue #1. If you wish to play postal Diplomacy in VOD, please fill out this sheet and return it to me with the appropriate fees as soon as possible.

Your Name IEAPO STABO

How many games do you wish to enter? as many as there are Guest G.M.

Would you like to play in a game of Proxy Diplomacy (see page 15)? what the hell is that.  
(If your answer is "no", I will assume that you want into a game of regular Dip.)

Would you like to play in a game where the use of the phone is totally banned? Are you CRAZY?!!  
(See pages 27 and 28 to find out what I'm talking about and why.)

(For regular Dip only) Would you like to play in a game with black press? only if Brux becomes hobby DOG.

What is your country preference list, if any? First choice Switzerland, Second Atlantis  
Third Mesopotamia Fourth Eden Fifth Hades Sixth ORK  
Seventh Moore, Okla.

If your preferences for Proxy Diplomacy differ from those for regular Dip, what is your list for Proxy Diplomacy? First choice Gen Elec Second Times Mob Third AT&T  
Fourth United Oil Fifth IBM Sixth Royal Seventh Naspe Oil Co.

I will try to assign countries based on your preferences.

Name anybody on the VOD sub list with whom you would rather not play: Bruce Lindsey - Bernie Oaklyn - Curtis Gibson  
(The more names you name, the lower your chances of placement in a game.) (Answers to this will be held in strict confidence.)

Which of the following do you need (check all that apply):

VOD's house rules Amendments 1-21 (VOD #4) Amendments 22-36 (VOD #24)  
I'm joining a game - not a marathon reading session - Save the garbage.  
Should I be unable to place you in a game for any reason, what do you want done with your game and NMR fees? Return to you Confiscate & use to offset debit from Black Hole Affair Phone Calls.  
Destroy your check Add to your sub

IMPORTANT: For each game you wish to enter, you must enclose a total of \$6.00. Of this amount, the game fee is \$3.00, and the NMR fee is \$3.00. If you resign from the game or finish out your country's position, the NMR fee will be refunded if you ask for it; otherwise I will add six issues to your sub. If you drop out of the game, your NMR fee is forfeited. The game fee is not refundable.

If you are receiving this issue as a free sample, you must also subscribe in order to play. Sub rates are on page 1. Enclose all fees when you return this sheet.

If you are not on VOD's standby list, would you like to be? Yes, I long being thrown off standby lists.

If you are on VOD's standby list, do you wish to remain there? No

Would you be willing to stand by in a game of Proxy Diplomacy? Only if I get a position next to John Toots Michalski!

The Voice of Doom features well-run postal Diplomacy games, with four-week deadlines.

Note: for added excitement he throws out novices, throws females off standby lists & attacks virtually everyone!!

My Breakfast with BRUK

by Chuff Afflerbach

Through the course of the years I have witnessed what I am compelled to describe as nothing less than the birth of a legend. My initial amusement has given way to genuine awe as my old pal Bruce Linsey has evolved into the persona of BRUK, Dispenser of The Voice of Doom. Today his loyal followers journey across oceans and continents for the mere chance of a private audience with him. Intimate accounts of their visits appear in print, adding further to the mystic aura surrounding him. Could this mighty BRUK I had been reading about be the same old mild-mannered Bruce Linsey that Frankie and I used to lock in his locker back in high school? It was time I found out. And what better time to pay him a visit than the Labor Day weekend, when he would be laboring away at his Fifth Anniversary Issue?

But was I ready to meet this new BRUK? As I headed toward Dalton for our rendezvous at the Pancake House, I thought back to one particular night in Maryland many years ago. It was over a case of beer that we had formulated our plans: the creation of alter egos to better serve our individual needs. My latest name had worn thin and dull; time for something fresh, unique, exotic, and (most important of all) unpronounceable. Bruce, too, felt the need -- to make a statement, and to go to the bathroom. "No more Mr. Nice Guy!" he had proclaimed in anguish. "Only the wailing and gnashing of teeth!"

I remembered my friend on that fateful night, like fingernails on a new slate, and could not repress an involuntary shudder. Yes, I was finally ready for my breakfast with BRUK.

I had just started on my coffee when Bruce burst in. With the wave of an ink-stained hand and the flash of a disarming grin he put me immediately at ease. Then he pounced. I leaped away from the table, too late to escape the scalding coffee overturned in my lap.

"Hyork, hyork, hyork!" There they were, the first words he had spoken to me in five years. Followed by, "I see you're still leaving your home centers unprotected!"

So this was BRUK. I quaked in my damp, steamy boots -- out of pain, yes; fear, perhaps; but mostly out of abject shame.

"That's right, Doctor Frankenstein," he hyorked, "behold your monster! For it was you who gave me my first Diplomacy game!" Then he flashed that grin again and slid unceremoniously into the booth. "Come and see what has happened to good old Bruce -- if you dare!"

I dared. That's what I had come for. But I would have to be cautious. This time I ordered tomato juice.

"You and I go way back, so I'm going to let you in on a little secret of mine. Why not, since I know a secret or two of yours, heh-heh, eh, Chuffie? Matter of fact, it's actually a big secret, big enough to rock the hobby on its very foundation. Why, it may very well be The Big Secret. It's bigger than the both of us. Yes, it's even bigger than BRUK!"

(No kidding, that's actually how he said it. Exactly, word-for-word, verbatim. I'm sure because I have a flawless memory; I never forget my tape recorder. Every quote reported here came straight from the -- ahem -- horse's mouth. Well, okay, so I expunged an ellipse or two. What can he do -- feud about it?)

"Does it interest you to learn that there's a stalemate line in existence that has never, ever, been reported -- not even in Diplomacy Digest?"

"Hey, pal," I chuckled, "if you think that's going to shake up a zillion yawning, snoring..."

"SILENCE!" he silenced me. "And listen carefully. I am talking about a stalemate

line that runs, not through the board as you are so quick to assume, but through Diplomacy itself! The entire hobby is split right down the middle by this line... here his voice became a whisper through clenched teeth, his knuckles white around the edges of the table, "...and I, BRUX, Dispenser of The Voice of Doom, put it there!"

I motioned to the waitress for more juice, and a fresh napkin.

"Just imagine," Bruce continued. It begins midway between here and Flushing, and follows the Alleghenies to the Adirondacks -- or vice versa, depending on where you stand. From there it runs along the Mason-Dixon line, with Dixie on one side and Macy on the other. Then it's down the mighty Mississippi and back up the Old Chisholm Trail. From then on, it alternately bisects and parallels the Grand Canyon, the Continental Divide, and the San Andreas Fault, but not necessarily in that order. Of course this is all just a general description. But it's the detail, the intricacy, the subtlety that I'm the proudest of. If it simply followed the path of least resistance it would mean nothing. But my line gerrymanders towns and neighborhoods, subdivides city blocks, barges right in and splits up individual households. It even runs right down the middle of a few double and queen-sized beds. Why, heh-heh," he chortled, "I even managed to steer it smack-dab between the two halves of one of the hobby's schizoid personalities!"

By God, he was really serious about this!

"That's right, buddy..."

I coughed.

"...er, Chuff. My stalemate line has so many twists and turns it makes the Olympic Torch look like it came on a laser beam!"

His last statement set off a fit of hyorking that didn't stop until the food arrived.

"And you, the omnipotent BRUX," I ventured, "are responsible for this?"

"Entirely through the pages of The Voice of Doom," he nodded, and began collating his stack of pancakes. A dab of syrup, a butter pat, the raspberry jam blurring with his purple fingers as he fell into that familiar rhythm and picked up speed. I prayed he hadn't brought along his foot stapler. Then someone turned on the light.

"Do you mean to say...?" Could I say it? "All the feuds..."

"All the feuds. Ain't it beautiful?" He beamed with pride. Not just a static stalemate line, but a dynamic one -- taking its shape around the issues I have created! I call it BRUX's First Law of Oppositions: for every faction there is an immediate and opposite overreaction. All of Diplomacy boiled down to one big, well-supported bounce. Such a delicate balance of opinions...a little bashing here, a little stashing there... and all of it revolving around BRUX himself. Excuse me, but I just have to hyork!" He did.

"But BRUX, not all of these feuds are even real feuds. Doesn't that make it all nothing but a hoax? Nobody believes you and Ed Wrobel are really feuding, except maybe you and Ed. And Eric Kane has already publicly offered you the olive branch. Forgive my saying so, but your stalemate line seems just a mite stale."

"Ah, but you miss the point. My friend who rolled a one, Snake-Eye Kane, has simply agreed to disagree. And I have agreed to be disagreeable. That's all it takes. It creates enough of a chain reaction to maintain the division long after the original issue has faded away. Likewise with the Wrobel Affair. Dick Martin chops up his zine and sends it to me, so I chop up Ed's letter, print it, and send it to him. My concern is not so much the issue and where you stand, but how many of you are standing on each side. I'm particularly proud of that line crossing the Potomac. I've harnessed the irresistible forcefulness of the entire WARTHOG horde to counterbalance the immovable objectivity of one Diplomaster."

"And Billy Rightfield?"

"An outright case of civil disorder. Anyone can tell you that I am the first person to defend to an undesignated death a player's right to threaten lives within the context of a Diplomacy game. But if he says that about my mother again, I'll kill him. But don't quote me."

"I must confess," I confessed, "that it's all beginning to fit. The endless disputes and controversies over GMing, houserules, double orders and such..."

"Double orders!?" Our waitress stopped dead in her tracks. "Honey, let me tell you about double orders. We got houserules that say we throw 'em out -- and the customer, too!"

Bruce's eyes gleamed a gleam I had never seen before and did not like.

"Can it be?" he purred. "Another diplomat? Your comments are always welcome here. So tell me, how do you handle phoned-in orders? Do you accept them after the deadline?" She obviously would not need much encouragement to answer.

"Why honey, there's nothing diplomatic about it. If they call up after quittin' time, they're plumb out of luck!"

Bruce interrupted me before I could interrupt. He was going to enjoy this, much to my own consternation.

"Ah, we've got a strick GM in our midst! But where do you stand on Pandora's Paradox? Does the supported attack on a convoy which is attacking the support for another convoyed attack which is in turn attacking the support for the original attack still dislodge the convoy?"

Before I could warn him, poor Bruce was blindsided.

"I'd like to see you try to dislodge my convoy!" It was Mack the Trucker, swinging his bulk around from the next booth and rattling dishes as far away as the kitchen. "You and how many armies?" But BRUX took it all in stride.

"How many armies, indeed! Just suppose you're going through all the orders for one season, and one of them has a mislabeled unit. Whose responsibility is that missing piece?"

"Well..." drawled Mack, "like my fictitious uncle down in Yoakum, Texas, used to say: when you miss a piece you're one behind!" He punctuated his remark with a broad wink in the direction of our waitress, and somehow I got the idea his fictitious uncle never saw a Diplomacy game.

What then ensued was a rather enthusiastic, if somewhat garbled, round-table discussion touching on the ethics and etiquette of making a stab across the table. And of course my friend Bruce (or was I actually watching the legendary BRUX?) was right there in the thick of it. I'm proud to say I saw him at his best, tossing convoluted contortion upon contrived concoction until everyone was seeing dots. The broad implications of this discussion, I'm afraid, go far beyond the meager scope of this little article about my breakfast with BRUX. You can look for a complete transcript appearing soon in the pages of Xenogogic or Diplomacy World. But for now it will suffice to say that the debate wrapped up with the trucker invoking his uncle's advice to "wrong no man and write no woman", while the waitress reserved her right to serve refuse to anyone, namely him. On his head.

I peeked out from under the table to see if the coast was clear. Bruce was grinning that familiar, guileless grin.

"Guileless? Did you see how guilelesaly I turned two total strangers into mortal enemies? I tell you, Chuff, I've got all of Diplomacy balanced on a razor-edge of finely-honed controversy."

It was time for the sixty-four volume question.

"But why? Why do you want to do it, Bruce?"

"BRUX! It's BRUX, got it?" he boomed. "Don't you dare call me that other name. I am BRUX, Dispenser of The Voice of Doom!" I was beginning to see where he was coming from.

"Right, BRUX. But for now I'd like to speak to Bruce..."

"There is no Bruce!" he thundered. "Only BRUX! BRUX the Law Giver, BRUX the Omnipotent..."

"Yes, BRUX, but I must speak to Bruce now. Bruce the Incompetent."

"Bruce isn't home!"

"Yes he is. I only want to talk to him for a minute. Please, Mr. BRUX, please let Bruce come out and play!" Go ahead and laugh -- it worked. Mr. Hyde was gone as suddenly as he had come, and I proceeded to heckle Dr. Jekyll.

"Alright, Bruce, now tell me the truth. Why do you do it? Is it that important to your twisted psyche? It can't really be worth it -- even to BRUX -- if it means losing hundreds of dollars each month!"

For the first time, and only for an instant, the Dispenser of Doom himself looked thunderstruck. Then he gave a little cough, next a big cough, followed by a guffaw, which became a darcimonorious amount of hyorking.

"You don't mean...hyork, hyork...that you, hyork, of all people, hee hee... he wiped the tears from his eyes. "I mean, after all, you do live in Oaklyn..."

"Oakland," I corrected.

"Yes, of course, Oakland...that you of all people believe I'm actually losing money on VD? Hyork!"

"You mean you're not?"

"Man, I'm making a hundred dollars an issue!"

It was my turn to be stunned. Not really wanting to, I asked him how.

"Why, in postage, of course! You should see all the self-addressed, unstamped envelopes I throw away each day. Yes sir, thanks to lots of free publicity from all my hobby friends, I get requests for Supernova coming in by the truckload. And that's the secret of my success: there is no Supernova! It's BRUX's Greatest Hoax!"

"Im-possible!" I stammered, looking about for any straw to grasp. "You print letters from novices..."

"Don't be so naive, Mr. 'Afflerbach'. Does National Lampoon print real letters? The fact is, I absolutely abhor novices. It's like teaching junior high again. Or worse -- it's like being in junior high again. Do you know how much I hated that? Can you -- yes, you, of all people -- guess how much I really hated being Mr. Miss Gw of Junior High?"

A self-conscious hush fell over the restaurant. Our conversation was clearly at an end. My friend stood up to leave.

"Well, I've got to get back to my publishing. Letters to edit, orders to reject." He turned to go.

"Tell me one more thing, BRUX." I braced myself for the coup-de-grace. "Are there really any games? Is there a zine at all, and do those millions of loyal, screaming Doonies exist? Or are you just setting me up for some enormously elaborate practical joke? Is it all just some diabolical plot you concocted to extract some bizarre form of revenge?"

He had me. He knew he had me, and I knew he knew he had me. I can't be sure, but I think he was trying very hard not to hyork.

"Well now," he finally answered, "I can't exactly slip Ex-Lax into your cabinet... or hide water balloons in your sleeping bag... or run your underwear up the flagpole at Camp Runnamuck, now, can I?"

With that, he turned and left. On his way out, the door hit him in the ass.

I watched him lumber to his car, that old familiar black cloud hanging over his head and a bolt of lightning nipping at his heels. Yes, he was still the same old Bruce we had all known and loved. What the hell, I even picked up the tab. But I damn sure wasn't about to stick around for any lunch with Lindsey.

((Glad you enjoyed your visit with me. Please stop by again. As soon as I stop this hyorking, I'll add 12 issues of credit to your sub. In the meantime, thanks for an article that was darcimonoriously Afflerbachian in its entertainment value.))

Hail Brucifer (Part II)....."Dear Pacifier Lips...."

by Gary L. Coughlan

"This is not a novel to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown with great force." ---Dorothy Parker

From Voice of Doom #85 (October 18, 1983): "It is Halloween in the year 983 A.D., a thousand years ago and the era of the Viking raids in Europe, the bleakest period of the Dark Ages. In the area we now know as North America, petty warlords (a.k.a. pubbers) are constantly carving up fiefdoms, a state of almost constant war prevails and the jockeying for position seemingly never ends. In words familiar to our time, it is "zine against zine" and "pubber against pubber"...War between the East Coast Witches is never pleasant and multitudes of their armies have been besieging Castle Doom for over 10 months now with no signs of lifting the siege soon."

However in November peace again came to the land and lasted until the following spring. During the interval, Lord Linsey, master of Castle Doom, moved to the land of Dalton and erected a new Castle Doom. His Chief Minister, Bob Osuch, was jettisoned in favor of Ronald Brown, when it was discovered that Osuch had been the brains behind the fake Woodpecker, which mocked Lord Linsey.

In May, 984 A.D., war and feud once more hovered over the land and Castle Doom came under heavy assault from many quarters (and dimes and nickels). The action in this play takes place in mid-September, 984 A.D., just a "month" ago.

If a statement has an \* after it, it was said by that person or the person he is mentioning. All the Shakespeare quotes are from Hamlet. The following appear in this play:

- BRUCE LINSEY, a.k.a., BRUX -- the liege lord of Castle Doom  
 STEVE HUTTON -- a wandering minstrel of no fixed address who is Lord Linsey's jester  
 RONALD BROWN -- not to be confused with Ron "California" Brown -- Osuch's replacement as Lord Linsey's Chief Advisor and Minister. He pubs (the late) Snafu!  
 PAUL RAUTERBERG and KONRAD BAUMEISTER -- knights in service to Lord Linsey  
 SIMON BILLENNESS -- Lord Billenness is a visitor to Castle Doom from England. He speaks English.  
 FRED DAVIS -- a bushwacker from Maryland, the best Trivial Pursuit player on earth  
 DAVE LINCOLN -- a Rhode Island repairman, he saved Castle Doom from a cricket plague  
 JOHN PACK -- an Irish priest who believes "when Irish eyes are smilin', all the world seems bright and gay."  
 RUTH GLASPEY -- a woman warrior from Michigan, in the process of moving to Alexandria, Virginia  
 JAMES EARLY -- from deep in the Heart of Texas, he writes letters of praise which send Lord Linsey (and Terry Tallman) into frenzies  
 THE INHABITANTS OF DALTON -- Tony, Karen, Joyce and Sharon are all co-workers of BRUX  
 AND THE "RIGEL PLAYERS" -- Greg Ellis, Ty Hare, Nelson Heintzman, Dave Kleiman, Steve Knight, Rich Reilly, and Bob Sweeney  
 AND A "MYSTERY GUEST" who will appear within the play

(SCENE): Dalton, Massachusetts, the home of the new Castle Doom, which overlooks the city. (John Kador would love that sentence, don't tell him.) Coming down the road, we see Steve Hutton, with his lyre in one hand, while he munches on some Klik luncheon meat swabbed with York peanut butter. He bears a remarkable resemblance to Martin Short of SC-TV, I must say. Hutton is Lord Linsey's jester and he also sings songs, and loves printing Finnish press in games he GMS. He is very proud of his Canadian heritage, and considers the Dalton inhabitants as country bumpkins. He is on his way to Castle Doom.

Steve: Out of my way, peasant, I'm on business for Lord Linsey.

Tony: Oh, anything for Lord Linsey, sir! He made us what we are today!

- Karen: Yes, Dalton was nothing on the Diplomacy map until Lord Linsey moved here!
- Joyce: Please, sir jester, give Lord Linsey some of these birthday cupcakes I made him!
- Sharon: And some of this Jif peanut butter. Lord Linsey loves peanut butter!
- Steve: If Lord Linsey had any taste at all, he would insist on York peanut butter with the peanut on top. It's from Canada, which has contributed so much to your culture.
- Tony: Canada? Contributes to our culture? How?
- Steve: Do the names Perry Mason, Captain Kirk, Ben Cartwright and Owen Marshall mean anything to you?
- Karen: They are the pre-eminent American TV shows.
- Steve: And all are portrayed by Canadian actors. What about singers and rock bands? Do the names Paul Anka, Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Anne Murray, Rush, Guess Who, Bachman Turner Overdrive, and Loverboy mean anything to you? All are Canadian! American woman, keep away from me!
- Joyce: Sorry, sir jester.
- Steve: It is not America which dominates Canadian culture but rather the other way around. When your New Year begins, it was also Guy Lombardo who began it. Canadian. Your movie industry received a great push forward from "America's Sweetheart", Mary Pickford. Canadian. The great musicals inspired by Ruby Keeler. Canadian. The great impressionist Rich Little. Canadian. The screaming girl in the original King Kong, Fay Wray. Canadian. Why even in Gone With the Wind, the classic confrontation between Scarlett O'Hara and the Yankee overseer was not portrayed by Americans. Scarlett was British and the overseer was Canada's Victor Jory! Your greatest icons are all Canadian!
- Sharon: Why did they all come to America, then?
- Steve: Like me, to seek their fortune since the Canadian dollar is worth 70% of the U.S. dollar. I've made my living by being an Elvis impersonator and now my gig is being a wandering minstrel to Lord Linsey.
- Tony: Tell us about Lord Linsey. Do the Houserules Song!
- Karen: Yes, yes, the Houserules Song!
- Steve: No, no, that one takes so long to do.
- Joyce: You can do the short version then!
- Karen: Is there a short version?
- Steve: Of course there is! (sings) "19 pages of houserules. Sounds crazy, no? But in our little village of Dalton, every one of us has his own copy of the VD houserules. And how do we keep our balance? That I can answer you in one word...houserules! We have houserules for everything...how to eat...how to sleep...how to work...even how to wear our clothes...And because of the houserules, every one of us here knows who he is and what Lord Linsey expects him to do...Of course, there was the time when someone held and said he supported, but that's all forgotten and now we live in simple peace and harmony.
- Tony & Karen: It was Hold! Joyce & Sharon: It was Support! Tony & Karen: Hold!
- Joyce & Sharon: Support! Tony & Karen: Hold! Joyce & Sharon: Support!
- Steve and All: The houserules...the houserules...without the houserules our VD games would be as without style and flavor as...as...as an excerpted letter column!"
- Joyce: Oh, that was wonderful! Please sing "Section X, Paragraph 3, Section C", just for me!
- Steve: Sorry, I don't do "exclusives" for anyone. Take off, eh? I must be on my way with Lord Linsey's mail, here in my pouch. He's waiting for it.



((As the wandering minstrel wanders up to the castle, our view shifts to inside where the throne room is awaiting the guests to celebrate Lord Linsey's fifth year on the throne. The tables are laden with food and drink. A warm fire blazes in the gigantic stone fireplace. Standing guard at the oaken doors are Knights Baumeister and Rauterberg. They open the doors and stand at attention as Lord Linsey strides into the room accompanied by his Chief Minister Ronald Brown, who pats Lord Linsey's...uh...fanny.))

BRUX: I wish you wouldn't do that, Ronald.

Ron: But I told you that I'm a "tactile politician". Don't you know that Canada's Liberal candidate for Prime Minister, John Turner, gained world-wide fame by patting the fannies of his supporters? It was in all the newspapers!

BRUX: Ronald, I don't read the newspaper, remember? The only way if I know something has happened is if the flagpole is at half-mast, and then I ask.

Ron: Oh yes, I forgot. Please, though, call me Ron. It was one of the conditions you agreed to meet when I said I would be your Chief Advisor. You can call that California imposter "Ronald".

BRUX: OK, Ron. How's our guest doing?

Ron: I knocked Lord Billinness up at 6 AM because he said he wanted to spend a penny then and change his vest and smalls.

BRUX: WHAT?????!!!!

Ron: I'm sorry, I forgot you don't understand English, British English that is. I said I woke Lord Billinness up at 6 AM because he wanted to go to the bathroom and change his undershirt and underwear. We Canadians understand both the British and the American worlds. Here comes Lord Billinness now. Did you sleep well, Sir Simon? (Pats his fanny)

Simon: Simon says, yes I did. Except someone took my plim solls!

BRUX: Your what?

Ron: His sneakers. One of the servants took them to clean them. Your special breakfast should be ready when the jester gets back from the vegetable market with your eggplant.

Simon: What?!

Ron: From the green grocer's with your aubergine.

BRUX: And with today's mail. Where can that two-bit Elvis impersonator be? I want to read it before the celebrations begin.

Simon: Are there any feuds in the American hobby these days? Even the 100 Years War had long periods of truce. The first hobby member I ever met from over here was Cathy Gunning and she knew nothing about any feuds.

BRUX: Perhaps I should confide in you and get a new perspective. What say you, Knights Baumeister and Rauterberg? Should I take this Briton into my confidence?

Baumeister: Too many cooks spoil the broth.

Rauterberg: Two heads are better than one.

BRUX: Always with the contradictory advice. I'll confide. Well, Simon, the latest accusations have me writing insulting letters to mere children! Next I shall probably be accused of attacking babies with pacifiers and in diapers!

Simon: What?!

Ron: Babies with dummies and in nappies.

Simon: Oh, I see. That's incredible. And unbelievable. Here comes your jester now.

BRUX: Where have you been that's taken you so long?! Give me that mail!

Steve: (sings) I took my troubles down to Madam Rue, the gypsy...

Ron: Take off, hoser!

BRUX: I wish Mark Berch were here to check out my mail. He's a bomb expert. I wonder if I should just risk it and open the mail.

Rauterberg: Look before you leap!

Baumeister: He who hesitates is lost!



BRUX: Let the games begin!

Steve: Does anyone have any Finnish press releases you can give me for my zine? Anyone want to play Rail Barno?! It's a variant created by the Martins. See, we tie Mike Barno to a railroad track and...

((The gathering breaks into smaller groups, some talking, some playing. Ron Brown becomes engaged in conversation with Ruth Glaspey, John Fack and James Early.))

James: I think it's awful how you were thinking of leaving the hobby over that Dip game being declared irregular.

John: Yes, we would certainly miss Murd'ring Ministers.

Ron: My zine is Snafu!

Ruth: Oh, don't be too hard on yourself. All pubbers have problems getting their zines to come out like they want them to. Murd'ring Ministers is among the best.

Ron: Oh, I agree, but that is Ron Brown's zine, not mine.

James: Well, what are you, some kind of split personality?!

Ron: MM is the California Brown; I'm the Canada Brown.

John: But I thought BRUX called you Ron. That's the California Brown, isn't it? I mean, he didn't say Ronald.

Ruth: Now I'm confused.

Ron: OK, you three, listen closely because I'm going to repeat this only once. When I became Lord Linsey's Chief Advisor, one of the conditions that he agreed to abide by was to call me Ron, not Ronald and...

((As this discussion continues, the RIGEL players are having a RIGEL playoff where your orders are only acceptable if the handwriting of the orders and the handwriting of the player's signature do not match. A game of Trivial Pursuit is also being played. Simon Billenness is the GM where Fred Davis is on one side and BRUX and Dave Lincoln are teamed on the other side. In the center of the Throne Room, Steve Hutton is warbling out songs on his lyre.))

Steve: (sings) I know you want to leave me, but I refuse to let you go...

Simon: OK, Fred, you won the toss, so you go first. Now everyone understands that you continue answering questions until you fail to get the correct answer, right?

Dave: But if Fred goes first, we'll never get a chance. He's known as a super Trivial Pursuit player.

Simon: Now, now, Mr. Lincoln, let's not have a quarrel with Mr. Davis. That's already been done in 1861-1865 by your ancestors, no doubt: Abraham and Jefferson!

BRUX: Well, could Dave and I get our questions from the Baby Boomer edition and you ask Fred his questions from the Genius edition? I played Trivial Pursuit with Kevin Stone as a partner, and we didn't do all that great...

Steve: (sings) Don't know much about history...

Dave: Kevin Stone?! Did you know that guy thought I was Dave Carter until just before it was time for KaneKon to break up?! I was totally humiliated when I read that. I don't look Canadian to you do I, Sir Simon?

Simon: Simon says, I don't think it's anything contagious.

Steve: Ever eat York Peanut Butter, with a peanut on the top, eh?

Dave: Huh?

Steve: Relax, you are definitely not Canadian. (sings) ...Don't know much about geography...

Simon: Well, now that we've settled that, let's begin. Fred, roll the die. Okay, your first question is: (1) The shark is the most efficient killer ever spawned in the sea. What is the most efficient killer ever spawned on dry land?

Dave: A wolverine!

Steve: (sings) ...Don't know much about biology...

Simon: It's Fred's turn, not yours. Fred?

Fred: Man.

Simon: Correct. Roll the die for your second question. Okay, (2) Dinosaurs flourished in the Mesozoic Era beginning in the Triassic Period. However, after dominating the earth for 140 million years they abruptly disappeared forever from the sky, sea and land at the end of the Cretaceous Period. How long was this "abrupt" period during which all the dinosaurs became extinct simultaneously?

Fred: 10 million to 20 million years. But, interestingly enough, some dinosaur forms may survive in isolated regions like Loch Ness, in the African jungles, and "Champ" the monster in Lake Champlain. De tyrranosaurus rex non est extinctus.

Simon: Or Pete Birks in England! But right you are. Roll again, and your third question is: (3) What do the Hungarians call Poland in their language?

Fred: Wegry.

Simon: No, I'm sorry, it says the correct answer is "Lengyelország."

Fred: Oh, that's right! Wegry is Polish for Hungary. I always get those two languages mixed up.

Steve: (sings) ...Don't remember much about the French I took...

Simon: Well, the turn now goes to BRUX and Dave Lincoln. Let's see, you're using the Baby Boomer issue, right? OK, roll the die, and your first question is: On April 14, 1865, after winning the American Civil War, this US President, whose first name was Abraham, was shot by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's theatre in Washington, D.C. while watching a performance of "Our American Cousin". What was his last name?

BRUX: Are you sure that's the Baby Boomer issue and not the Genius edition? Do you know the answer, Dave? I wish I read the newspapers more often.

Steve: (sings) ...Don't know nothing about nothing at all.

Dave: Let me think on it a while. I feel I should know this one.

Steve (sings): Abraham, Martin and John...the good, they die young...

Dave: That's it! Martin! President Abraham Martin!

BRUX: Almost. It's Abraham Martin van Buren. He was from New York, I believe.

Simon: Oh, I am sorry. It says here the correct answer is "Lincoln", from Illinois.

Dave: Huh, I'm from Rhode Island.

((At this point, Ron Brown comes up to the Trivial Pursuit group.))

Ron: Lord Linsey, the other games are coming to an end and I know that several would like to present some gifts to you.

BRUX: Well, after a tough-fought game, Fred has beaten Dave and me, so we're finished too.

Ron: Everyone, it's time to give to Lord Linsey, who has given so much to us!

((Everyone gathers around to give their presents to Lord Linsey. First to present his gift is Dave Lincoln.))

Dave: My gift to you is a Rhode Island Red for your Thanksgiving in November. He should be plump enough by then.

Ron: What do you mean, November? Everyone knows that Thanksgiving is October 8 this year!

Steve: For once, sir minister, I agree with you.

Fred: Actually, that is only true in Canada. Coincidentally this year, October 8 is also Columbus Day, the great man who discovered America!

Ron and Steve: Yuck!!!

BRUX: I accept with pride. What do you feed such a creature?

Dave: Crickets! And I know you have plenty of those, ha ha!

BRUX: Good, I like practical gifts. Who's next? Ruth?

Ruth: My gift is a bound copy of "BRUX's Housegules Cartoons" from Festungs Hof, embroidered in gold.

Simon: Indulge a Briton for a moment. I don't understand. Cartoons about the VD houserules?

Ruth: Yes, in each issue of his Festungs Hof, Bob Howerton of Florida does a satirical cartoon about BRUX's houserules. There is no escape, ha ha.

Simon: Too bad Diana didn't get to them first.

Ruth: The princess?

Simon: No, the hurricane!

BRUX: We are most pleased!

Fred: We have never seen anything like this.

BRUX: Fred, there is only one "we" present, and it is we. And we are not amused.

Fred: Sorry, liege lord, we will confine our we to our Bushwacker. Now may we, and I mean John Pack and myself, present your next gift? We went halfies.

((Fred and John go outside the big doors and momentarily return, struggling, trying to keep from dropping a heavy slab-like form covered with a cloth.))

John (gasping) Lord Linsey, this is our gift for your fifth anniversary. A leather-bound parchment copy of all the VD houserules written in Old English script.

BRUX: Oh, this is too much.

Ron: I've tried to tell you that for years. Steve Knight didn't edit them down nearly enough.

BRUX: No, I mean I am overwhelmed. Who would have thought of this? Why don't you two prop them against the wall? Now, when I throw the book at a player, it will really have some force behind it, ha ha!

((Just at that moment one of the RIGEL players, Bob Sweeney, comes and whispers in the ear of Ron Brown, and then leaves the room with the other six RIGEL players.))

BRUX: Where are they going? Is the party over already?

Ron: Not yet, my liege. The RIGEL players are going to prepare their gift to you. It is a play in your honor and it will be in the Guinevere Room. In the meantime, you can receive your last gift before then from James Early. James?

BRUX: Oh yes, James who wrote that wonderful letter to me published in VD #99.

James: Yes, Lord Linsey, that was me. Now, before I present my gift to you, I must ask that you close your eyes very tightly and don't peek.

BRUX: Oh, I love surprises. OK, they're closed. (Closes his eyelids very tightly)

((James Early begins peeling off his face and outer skin. He was an imposter. Before the entranced audience, all of whom have their eyes open except for BRUX, stands the true identity which had been concealed in the form of James Early. It is none other than Cathy Cuning, publisher of Cathy's Ramblings, from Chicago, Illinois! Simon Billenness immediately recognizes Cathy, the first American hobby member he ever met.))

Simon: It's Cathy!!!

BRUX: (opening his eyes in terror) KATHY!!! OH NO!!!!!! NOT HERE!!!!!!!

Steve: (sings) Oh, C.G., Rider, oh, see what you have done!

Ron: No, liege, it is Cathy with a G, Cathy Cuning.

Simon: How are you, Cathy? You were the first American hobby member I ever met but you are still the most normal one I've seen yet!

Cathy: I like to make an appearance, you know? I mean Cleopatra herself got smuggled into the palace to see Caesar inside a rug. It's been done, you know?

BRUX: So you have rambled east to see me, eh? I bid you welcome.

Cathy: And I appeal to you, Lord Linsey. I am only a frail woman, not yet a mother, but reading the recent hobby press, I can't help fearing that some day, when I am a mother, that I wouldn't want my little Glover or my little Philly to receive a letter from...from...BRUCIFER!! I beg you to reconsider!

Steve: (sings) Marie is only six years old, information please!

Simon: Would they be in nappies and with tummys?

BRUX: Duemys is right! Can anyone believe that I would write an abusive letter and send it to the children of my worst enemy?! I may not be the brightest guy in the world but I'm not that stupid! What would I gain from such a tactic?

Baumeister: Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Rauterberg: A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

BRUX: Oh, shut up you two!! I don't know which is worse, you or these damned crickets.

Cathy: Then my mission has been successful and the hobby's children are safe! Now if we can get rid of the hobby's childishness.

Steve: A tough job that, I must say. Eh?

Ron: We all need a diversion now. The RIGEL players should be about ready now. Let's go.

((All the party-goers leave the Throne Room and go down a long hallway to the Guinevere Room where the RIGEL players are awaiting them.))

Simon: What's the big deal with the RIGEL players?

Ruth: They write tons of press almost every issue, one time over 30 pages!

Cathy: And in the last issue, #99, there was another game controversy. Ty Hare, who is France in RIGEL, got ahold of a complete signature of Dave Kleiman, who plays Russia, wrote out orders for the Russian position and dated them later than Dave possibly could, and mailed them in.

Simon: Did it fool BRUX? Isn't that GM deception?

John: No, Ty let BRUX know what he was doing. And was Dave ever mad! His real orders weren't used.

Dave: Kleiman, that is, not Lincoln. And so was Nelson Heintzman. He said BRUX was engaging in "mental masturbation". \* Anyway, BRUX relented and redid the season using Kleiman's orders.

Fred: And then Ty called BRUX a "wimp"!

Simon: Well from what I've seen of this American hobby, people have been called much worse. Oh, look, they're ready, I think.

((Greg Ellis, RIGEL's Italy, is the GM and he introduces each of the RIGEL players, who are Ty Hare, Steve Knight, Dave Kleiman, Bob Sweeney, Nelson Heintzman, and Rich Ralby.))

Greg: Good evening, Lord Linsey. Ladies and Gentlemen. The RIGEL players, as their gift for Lord Linsey's 5th anniversary, are pleased to present a series of skits about our hobby. We hope you will enjoy it. First, the RIGEL players have to decide the parts they will play. They will decide this in the very best of RIGEL traditions as our VD game has shown.

((A general scuffle occurs among the RIGEL players at this point.))

Dave: I told you when we came here that I was going to play the part of BRUX, and that's final!

Nelson: Go ahead, then, you look like you indulge in "mental masturbation"! \*

Dave: That's two, Mr. Germany. The first was when you stabbed my Russia.

Rich: Why don't you guys forget that and go back to playing chess? Steve, Ty, stop fighting over that lingerie and hose.

Ty: But I want to play the part of the hobby female! Just give me a chance! "Once you and the others see this set of legs, you'll have no choice but to rate them the best in the hobby. \* The only competition I expect is from "Cupcake" Knight, but he plucks his legs." \*

Steve: That's a lie! I do not! I deserve to have the female role in our play. After all, "I've been propositioned twice by other men. \* Yes, the first time was a shock, but it was no hassle. \* In retrospect, it's vaguely flattering that someone thought I was good-looking enough to proposition." \*

Dave: Shut up, ladies! Both of you can be feamle hobby members. Ty, because you do have the best legs, you get the hose. Steve, you take the lingerie.

Ty: Bitch! (slipping on the hose)

Steve: Hussy! (pulling on the lingerie)

Bob: What about me, what part do I get?

Greg: And me, what about me?

Dave: You two guys are dead already in RIGEL so you can be the chorus for our big singing number. Rich, you play the part of Ron Brown, the Chief Advisor. Nelson, you'll be Steve Hutton, the singing idiot. And now ladies and gentlemen, Scene I:

((Scene I, the audience observes, is of a kitchen table where Dave, who plays "BRUX", is dealing with his daily mail when in walks Rich, playing Ron Brown.))

Rich: Hi, Lord Linsey. Who are you writing to today?

Dave: Hello, Ronald. I'm just writing to Samantha Corbin. How does this sound so far? "Dear Pacifier Lips, I would..."

Rich: (snatches the letter from BRUX) Not again, that's the 15th letter this week you've tried to write to a hobby infant, you fiend. Sir Jester, help me!!

Nelson: Here I am. You have to slap him hard on the face to snap him out of it. (slaps Dave Kleiman very hard!)

Dave: Cut! That's it, Nelson. I will not take this abuse. You don't get to sing your big song "Sitting On the Dock of the Bay".

((At this point Greg Ellis and Bob Sweeney enter, playing Knights Rauterberg and Baumeister.))

Sweeney (as Baumeister): Two wrongs don't make a right!

Ellis (as Rauterberg): Turnabout is fair play!

Dave: Have you ever heard Nelson sing "Sitting On the Dock of the Bay"? And anyway, anybody that knows me knows that I always follow the last advice I hear. Scene I is over, through, finished. Strikes the set and prepare for Scene II.

((As the RIGEL players scurry around changing the set and their costumes, the audience is heard to comment.))

Ruth: I really enjoyed that action. It's just like a VD game.

Simon: It seems things get really violent, though.

Steve: The motto is, "A controversy every two months or your game fee back," I must say.

Cathy: Shush, they're back. Aren't Steve's and Ty's dresses gorgeous!

((The seven RIGEL players line up with Steve and Ty in the front. This is to be a musical number that you will never see on Broadway...))

Ty: Give me a "V"!

Steve: Give me a "D"!

Rich: Put 'em together, what have you got?

Nelson: VD! VD! VD!

Dave: Not now, idiot! You skipped me. Take it after Rich. Give me 787 houserules!

Rich: Put 'em together, what have you got?

Nelson: VD Houserules! VD Houserules! VD Houserules!

Ty: Ooooo, I love 'em.

Steve: Ooooo, I adore 'em.

Rich: Ooooo, can't get enough of 'em.

All: What? Not enough VD houserules?!

Rich: I can't help it, I'm a Doonie man. I read 'em when ever I can...

Nelson: Be it early morning...

Dave: Or late afternoon...

Ty: Or at midnight...

Steve: It's never too soon!

All: We're your Doomie men, your Doomie men, we read 'em whenever we can!

((The audience applauds the performance of the RICHIE players, hoping against hope that it is at last over. Mercifully, it is, and as Lord Lindsey steps forward, all is quiet except for the persistent sounds of chirping crickets all over Castle Doom.))

BRUX: I want to thank everyone except for the damn crickets for the celebration and gifts and games. And it's time for a big announcement. Only 2½% of all zines ever make it to their 100th issue, and none have a better audience than all of you Doomies...

Fred: Is this where he kicks the bucket?

Dave: The crickets I failed to get are making him mushy.

BRUX: Pick up the 100th issue of VD that you are reading and turn to page 2, and you will see that I have been preparing to fold for over two years.

John: What are you trying to tell us?

BRUX: That Voice of Doom, the zine, is going out with a bang, and a chirp, it seems; but that my games will now be run in Echo of Doom in a zine in the South.

Cathy: But why the South?

Ruth: Because the South has already faced every kind of disaster known to mankind!

BRUX: What say you knights to that? Shall I, like the geese, fly south?

Baumelster: The early bird catches the worm.

Hauterbang: Waste makes waste.

BRUX: Well, let's talk some more about it after our Round Table discussion. Come one everybody, let's go to the Lancelot Room.

((All leave except for Ron Snow and Steve Hutton.))

Ron: And so it ends. Like Lancelot, it won't be forgot. "Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest..."

Steve: (sing) Good night, sweet heart, well it's time to go...

Ron: Hoser, take off, sh!

#### THE END

((Gary here: I have never been in this hobby without there being a Voice of Doom to write long letters to, to read great articles in, and to see just what is happening in this hobby. I will miss it so much. It cannot be replaced, just like John Michalski's Knight's Bulletin can never be replaced. I feel as if I am losing a very close friend and it hurts. And I know I'm not alone in this feeling. This play is my tribute to a great and friendly hobby member whom it has been my very great pleasure to know. We will all miss you in our mailboxes, BRUX, but you deserve a long rest. Fake some zines for us, huh?!))

((Sigh. I wasn't aware how hard it is to type with a lump in one's throat... thanks for the tribute, Gary. You've been a great friend too, and a tremendous asset to VD and the hobby. Echo of Doom will be in proud company indeed when it joins Europa Express. And, of course, you get the ubiquitous 30 free issues of sub credit.

And before I say goodbye, let us take one final look at the zine that was...))



# THE HISTORY OF A DIPLOMACY ZINE

by BRUX Linsey

illustrations by Mark Paul

## Prologue

### SECTION I: THE LEAN YEARS

1. The Honeymoon
2. BLACK HOLE Mania
3. Leisureville Times
4. Troly Yours
5. Diarrhea of the Press

### SECTION II: THE GOLDEN YEARS

6. Dishwashers, Gravel, and Soggy Peas
7. The Storm
8. Ditto for Me
9. "That's No Novel -- That's a Dipzine!"
10. Press Wars

## Epilogue

### Prologue

In the early months of 1979, I went on a wargame-buying spree. As a teenager, I had once played a wargame and enjoyed it immensely. Now as I perused the shelf of games in the toy store, one in particular caught my eye due to the excellent writeup on the back of the box. The game was Diplomacy, and curious to examine it farther, I purchased it. Reading the rules made me hungry to try playing the game, and an enclosed flyer advertised Diplomacy World and a list of postal gamesmasters. I sent away for these post haste. By the time I received the information, I was in the process of moving out of my mother's house and down to Newburgh, New York, to begin the job I had just accepted with I.B.M. As soon as I was personally settled, I signed up for a game in Craig Reges' ill-fated Against the Odds. It turned out that this zine was undergoing a rather messy fold at the time, however, and I ended up withdrawing my name from the game and signing up for two others, in Claw and Fang and Murd'ring Ministers. I subscribed to a handful of other zines as well. Thus it was that I entered the hobby of postal Diplomacy.

That summer, I attended Origins in Chester, Pennsylvania, and visited Mark Berch in his home. I told Mark about my eagerness to start publishing a zine of my own, and he responded with much good advice. Paradoxically, the best bit of advice he gave me is the one I ignored: he told me I should wait a few months, acquire a few more hobby contacts, and learn some more about how the game and the hobby work before taking the plunge. This advice was battered, scattered and lost amidst the raging storms of my uncontainable desire to proceed, however, and in September I started looking around for a duplicating machine. I bought a ditto machine and it gave me nothing but trouble. I returned it, tried a mimeograph, and that was worse. My choice was clear: pay an offset printer, or don't publish. The cost didn't seem too bad -- my early 12-page issues ran about \$40 each in printing fees -- so I decided to go ahead with the zine. Initially I didn't think that any issue would ever rise above 12 pages. So much for good intentions!



Other pre-publishing chores were attacked with abandon. I decided on the name The Voice of Doom from an on-the-job movie I had once seen as a computer programmer. At one point in the movie, in describing a common but serious programming pitfall, the narrator boomed out "The Voice of Doom!" as lightning flashed across the screen. Somehow this stuck in my mind, and thus the zine got its name. I made up a list of almost 700 addresses taken from all the zines I had received, and wrote them all down on index cards. I wrote up several articles, and spoke with several well-known hobbyists, getting lots of sound advice. I drafted a set of house rules which later turned out to be disorganized, full of holes, and much in need of amendment. Toward the end of September, I took my masters of issue #1 to the printer and had him run off 700

copies. Bringing them home to the apartment, I stapled together one copy of the issue, put it into a frame I'd purchased for the occasion, and hung it on my living room wall. Five years later, the very first copy of Voice of Doom #1 is still hanging on my living room wall. Then, with the help of my fiancée-to-be Linda, I started the hard work of collating and stapling together the other 699 copies. The next day, bone weary, I drove up to the post office with several boxes full of VD #1, and gave them to the postal clerk. Then, I went home to await the fruits of my labors.

I had become a publisher.

SECTION I: THE LEAN YEARS1. The Honeymoon

The response to the mass-mailing of my first issue was overwhelming. Within four weeks, I had 70 readers and enough players signed up to start five games. The following month I was closing in on 100 subscribers and traders, and a sixth game began. Voice of Doom was well-received throughout the hobby, far beyond my wildest expectations. Each day at the mailbox was an adventure as new subbers and traders flooded in.



One of the publishers who plugged me enthusiastically at the beginning was Randolph Smyth, who ended a nice review of VD by prophetically predicting in Fol Si Fie that "While it's too early to say that Bruce will be around for the next five years and putting out a very good product all that time, I'm gonna say it anyhow. Now Bruce, don't prove me wrong..."

In point of fact, I was extremely arrogant and cocky in print, a habit I took years to mostly overcome, and which I have never entirely overcome. When I read back through

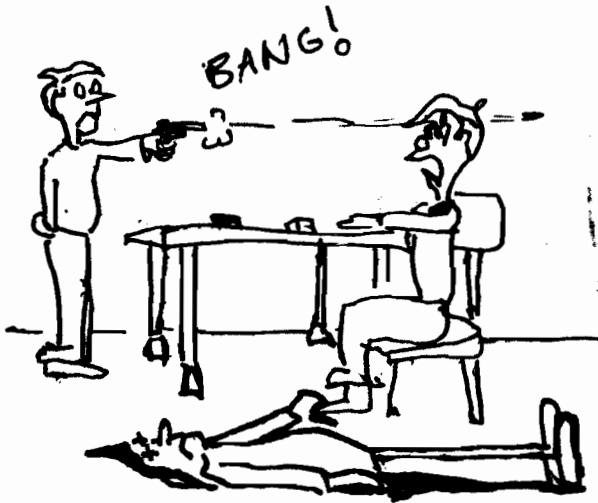
some of these early issues, I am reduced to frequent laughter and an occasional blush at the way I used to express myself. An editorial in VD #3, for example, written during the hostage crisis, was entitled "How to Deal with Iranian Assholes". VD #4 contained a remark that "I can only speculate that deep within Oaklyn/Tretick there is a cold, bitter little man struggling vainly to get out." And in VD #5, I overreacted to a mildly critical letter from Gary Coughlan, then a timid novice. Gary told me years later that my response had him literally trembling in fear. All in all VD #5 was a frightfully controversial issue, the first of several that were to appear throughout VD's history.

But there were enough good points to keep the masses happy. An early writing contest brought some very entertaining responses from Berch, Randolph Smyth, and others. My carefree, free-swinging style was more often an asset than a liability since I had very few critics. An early series of humorous articles by Jack Masters livened up the zine considerably, and my practice of running B. Kliban's cartoons met with a fair bit of positive response.

Still, there was controversy almost from day one. Early on, I gave Curtis Gibson (who is clearly a nut) an angry piece of my mind for writing that Konrad Baumeister was a "rabid Nazi from Wisconsin". Shortly thereafter, Curtis was booted out of VD for interfering in my games. Dave White was another early antagonist -- my comments about Oaklyn and Gibson made VD unpalatable for him, and he didn't stay around long.

Additionally, I had a tendency to overdo my involvement with hoaxes and general leg-pulling. For example, I "confessed" in VD #5 to publishing a fake issue of Volkerwanderung that in fact I had nothing to do with. It wasn't till much later, when close friends John Kelley and Mark Berch informed me that I was damaging my own credibility rather than coming across as funny any more, that I realized I had to cool it, and did.

These early months also produced the greatest unsolved puzzle to date in the history of the zine. A letter from David Angulo in #7 discussed a game at a DipCon



where one Dan Spielman, angry at having been eliminated, took out a gun and killed the other six players. Mark Berch later asked me for more information; I wrote to Angulo with this request, but never heard back from him. To this day, I remain curious about the matter -- I've never heard of it from any other source.

This same letter was also the first in a number of letters with which I took editorial liberties for the sake of levity: David's statement that "I had to look up (Kathy's) address to decide whether or not she was the mayor of Chicago's daughter" somehow made it into print minus the first two letters in "address".

Another aspect of VD, or more accurately of BRUX, that appeared early on was an interest in and ability at

creating Diplomacy-based logic puzzles. VD #5 contained the first of these, asking among other things, "During a game of regular Diplomacy, what is the minimum number of units that may be on the board?" -- to which some people answered "two", believe it or not! (The correct answer is one.)

One of the lessons that I didn't learn right away was that you can't please everyone when you publish. Dave White's dissatisfaction with the controversy in VD led me to ask the general readership for their opinions, and the result was nearly a 50-50 split regarding whether I should leave feuds, etc., out of the zine. In an unwieldy attempt to solve this problem, I decided to go to a "mid-monthly" format, wherein letters and articles dealing with personality conflicts and the like would be published in between game issues. Subscribers would then be permitted to receive the game issues only, if they wished. The experiment was a failure, as every publisher has a comfortable style and I was no exception. The dichotomy rapidly disintegrated, although mid-monthlies continued to appear periodically throughout the life of the zine, primarily as a cost-saving measure. Their advent was the reason that I soon cut all trades and went to a mutual-subs-only policy, until years later when I finally began accepting European trades again. It was just too expensive to send my zine to other publishers on a two-for-one or even three-for-one basis.

The very first letter ever printed in the zine was from Jeff Albrecht, a subscriber to this day, and in it he suggested that somebody other than Craig Reges should distribute the hobby's novice package, since Reges was giving people such a dreadful introduction to the hobby. How ironic that the very first letter in VD was to be one of the most consequential! I decided that I'd like to take on the Novice Project, and thus the idea of Supernova was born. My initial plan was to publish a short (6-12 pages) final product, written mostly by myself. Mark Berch changed my mind, persuading me to expand the scope of the project and then helping to get several of the hobby's top writers involved. In retrospect, I never did give Mark enough credit for his role in this. I didn't really know enough about the hobby or the game to do a decent job on my own, and I didn't have enough of the necessary contacts back then. Had I not had Mark's assistance, Supernova might well have been just another typical novice packet, distributed once and long since forgotten. As it is, I'm close to exhausting my second print run (meaning that almost 600 of them have been sent out) and the project is likely to continue for a long time, as no major change has ever been needed.

Despite my early disagreements with Gibson and White, then, VD's first few months were blissfully happy. Little did I perceive Big Trouble on the horizon.

## 2. BLACK HOLE Mania

It all began with an innocuous little note from Matt McKibbin, the Austrian player in my BLACK HOLE game. It grew and grew, feeding on the volatile personalities of the several people involved, until it became perhaps the greatest deception-of-the-GM scandal the hobby has ever seen. "It" was the BLACK HOLE Affair, of course, a series of events so horrifying that the matter is spoken of today only in hushed whispers in the hobby's cloakroom zines. To summarize, Matt McKibbin claimed that the GM had spread some information which biased the game against him and his ally, Dave Barker. When investigation by the GM discredited this information, McKibbin spread the story further, changing it on at least two crucial points, and sought an irregular ruling

from the BNC, the only time a protest in VD has ever progressed that far. Because of the changes in his story, McKibbin was thrown out of the game. Although the BNC eventually decided that the game was not irregular, the expulsion of McKibbin ignited an explosion that rocked the hobby. Many GMs flocked to my defense once the whole story came public, including Pete Birks and John Marsden from across the Atlantic. But some people saw it the other way, too. Kathy Byrne, who was good friends with Barker, resigned from my DOG STAR game in protest, as did Dave White, and John Caruso published a full-scale surprise attack on me in Whitestonia. I responded in Voice of Doom #14, overreacting grossly, and thus was born a feud that still rages four and a half years later.



At the time, this seemed the end of world to me. I had to have everybody on my side, an emotional state that inevitably produced only misery as a by-product of its sheer futility. Voice of Doom sputtered, faltered, and nearly buckled under the strain of the realization that the honeymoon was over and the whole hobby just wasn't going to be fully supportive. My skin, thin as an onion's, must have thickened by at least an inch in early 1980.

I was a dreadful feuder back then, too, having had no experience in the art. My tactics included name-calling and abusive language. Not till much later did it dawn on me that the cold, precise logic of Berch was far more persuasive than my own style of overreacting. I also made the mistake of assuming that once on the Caruso/Byrne shit list, it was possible to get off. Because of this, and even more so because Kathy had scared the bejeebers out of me by threatening to sue me over an ill-advised Whitestonia fake, I printed an apology that I didn't really owe them on the front page of VD #17. This had the effect of cooling things off for a little while, but by the fall Caruso had launched into another full-scale attack on me, this time in the Brutus Bulletin letter column. So it's gone ever since, the whole sad affair having more ups and downs than a marathon roller coaster ride.

To understand fully the nature of my feud with Caruso and Byrne, you need to have read a science fiction story called "The Arena". I forget who wrote it. It's about a race of aliens whose values and thought processes are so foreign to humans that, try as they might, neither race could coexist with the other. The parallel is that, regardless of how hard I have tried to get along with Caruso and Byrne for the past half decade, our outlooks are so different, our styles so diametrically at odds, that neither side seems able to live with the other. Their ethics, their values, their approach to the hobby and to life are so different from mine that neither of us has ever been able to comprehend the other. This would be fine -- we could ignore each other -- except that the people involved are all so prominent in the hobby that the

only way to dissociate would be for one of us to leave the hobby entirely. As it is we are forever seeing each other at cons, reading each other's writings in the hobby's zines, and so on. It is a problem with no easy solution.

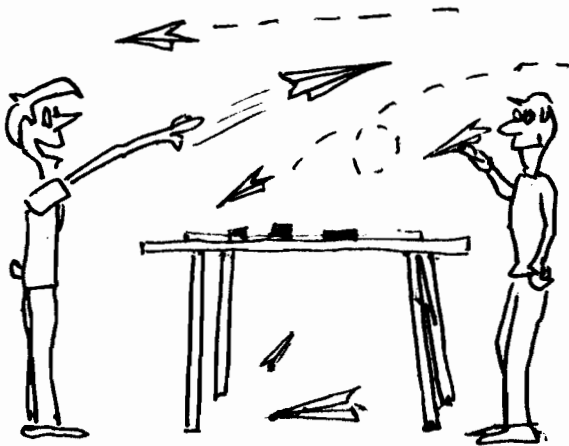
Another low point during this period was my propensity for icky silliness, which still hadn't died. Voice of Doom #13, the first of my two "Dr. Breuss" issues, was extremely unfunny. It was based on a couple of in-jokes surrounding Jack Masters and his fake Volkerwanderung, but in retrospect was embarrassingly incomprehensible to most of the readers.

However dominant the BLACK HOLE Affair and the resulting feud were in those days, there were some high points too. I solicited help from several of my hobby friends, and produced the best fake zine I've ever published, the Bruxus Bulletin #69. This outrageous bit of literature fooled quite a few people and enraged some others, including Kathy Byrne and John Boardman. Still, it was great fun -- Michalski loved it -- and I'd do it again.

Also, VD was starting to develop a hard-core nucleus of supporters and contributors. Masters' articles continued, but now he was being joined by other talented writers. Paul Rauterberg had a delightful travel article in VD #14, an issue that was otherwise very depressing since it contained a long article about the BLACK HOLE Affair. For #16, Dave Perlmutter sent in a play, "Naked Came the Gamesmaster", satirizing some of the hobby goings-on. The effort received a good deal of well-deserved praise. In #18, John Kador wrote the first of what was to become a popular series called "The Diplomatic Typochondriac", in which he took people humorously to task for their grammatical faux pas. The series lasted for years, and each of the articles created a backlash of sorts from people who felt that Kador's pickiness was an enemy of the rest of the hobby's creativity. Writers in other zines began slipping interjections like "(oops, sorry, John Kador)" into the middles of their more outlandishly constructed sentences. It became popular sport to shoot down the occasional grammatical blooper committed by Kador himself.

And there was more. Gary Coughlan made his debut as an article writer in VD

with his riotous "A Diplomat for All Seasons" in issue #20. VD #21, although only 12 pages long, contained five articles and was one of the very best issues of this period. Voice of Doom's readers had acquired an identity of sorts, too; in #19 I started calling them "Doomies", and the term was catchy enough to stick. Indeed, months later, Mark Berch himself finally recognized us as an important branch of the hobby and, after a long struggle, was persuaded to include the term in his "Lexicon of Diplomacy". Voice of Doom was beginning to carve out its little niche in other ways, too. Everyone knew about the feuding, but gradually people were beginning to remark on the fact that the zine always came out on time. A variant called "Frantic Paper Airplane Dippy" was introduced in #17, wherein negotiations at a



face-to-face game must be conducted by throwing paper airplanes containing them. This was actually played at one of Tom Swider's cons. (Ironically, as the inventor, I've still never gotten to play it.) The work on Supernova continued behind the scenes, and I was glowing with delight at having finished 10th in my first Runestone Zine Poll.

The next major crisis that VD would face was to come from events in my life outside the hobby, however.

3. Leisureville Times

I wasn't happy with my job at I.B.M., and in August 1980, I left that position to go back to school in Albany. My fiancée-to-be, Linda, was by then living with me and helping out with some of the legwork of publishing.



Voice of Doom #22 was the real beginning of what was to be a period of financial poverty for me, and it may well have been produced under the most strenuous conditions ever for a zine. It just so happened that the VD deadline fell on moving day, and like a fool, I had to stick to my iron-cast schedule. (Nowadays, I'd delay the move, of course.) I was typing up the zine right in the middle of moving -- everything was strewn all over the apartment except for my publishing materials -- and Linda was purple with rage trying to pry me away from the typewriter so I could help her pack. Then, to top it off, I came down with a severe asthma attack and had to be rushed to the hospital. A brief account of that adventure appeared on the cover page of

VD #23; it was one of the funniest things I've ever written. But it was truly a miracle of sorts that my twenty-second issue did go out on time. And I moved from a good job and a nice apartment overlooking the Hudson River in Newburgh, to no real job and a dreadful apartment complex near Albany, called "Leisureville".

The immediate effects of this change in lifestyle were disasterous. I had had a well-paying job and could afford the luxuries of life. That all changed when I went back to school to get my masters degree in Math Education. No longer could I pay a printer to copy the zine for me. I was fortunate enough to possess an outdated pass to get into the State building I had once worked at, which had an unreliable copier, and that is where most of the issues in the late 20's and early 30's were run off, usually late at night or on Sundays so that no one would catch me doing it. That arrangement came to an abrupt end one night when one of the building guards caught me sneaking into the copier room. I'm lucky I didn't end up getting arrested, but from then on, I decided I'd have to pay a printer.

During this time I was a full-time student, working part-time at the local Pizza Hut and later, the A&P. Money was extremely tight. The free xeroxing I was managing for those few crucial months is the only reason VD stayed alive and on schedule. I was still hooked on hoaxes, but at least more of my efforts now were beginning to display a bit of class, unlike the slobbering-at-the-mouth speeches I had been accustomed to giving in my first few months. In Voice of Doom #23, I published an article on how the whole zine had been one great big gigantic hoax since its very inception, the whole purpose being to persuade a fellow player in 1979CF to hold back on a stab. I announced that, since the zine's purpose had now been served and its destiny fulfilled, I would be folding it. The article fooled no one (it wasn't intended to), but it was good for a few chuckles. More of the era's hoaxes will be described shortly.

My first anniversary issue, #26, was the biggest I'd yet published at 32 pages, and in it I announced that Supernova was completed at long last. I remember Mark Berch calling me up, oo-ing and ah-ing over the typed master pages. Mark had it printed for me, and did the center stapling himself, then sent the finished copies back to me for distribution. The hobby was awed. This was the first time that most people had had any idea of the scope of the project, and rave reviews appeared in several zines. It was described as well worth the long wait. I myself was awed by

the extremely positive responses I got. Indeed, Gary Coughlan and the Mensa Diplomacy Special Interest Group both now have policies that new players in their games will receive Supernova automatically, and I've received dozens of complimentary letters over the years thanking me for it. The project carried with it a side benefit, in that Supernova readers would often be attracted to Voice of Doom as well. My enemies worried at this, wondering whether VD was a good place for a novice to get started. My own observation is that a vast majority of people ~~sucked~~ drawn in this way ended up satisfied. Indeed, many current Doomies cut their milk teeth on Supernova and played one of their first games in VD.

Supernova had a less visible effect as well. Except for VD #1, it did more than anything else I've ever published to establish me in the hobby. Mark Berch and Rod Walker had been strong supporters from day one, but other people like Fred Davis and Doug Beyerlein, who were among the hardest-working and most influential people in the hobby, now came to regard me as an equal and a friend. No more was VD just a zine with a hotheaded editor and a handful of loyal contributors. Practically everyone who was well-known in the North American hobby was a Doomie, answering my quizzes, entering my contests, writing to the Gossip Column. VD had arrived.

Another pattern had clearly emerged by my first annish: VD was a good forum for discussions about GMing procedure. That issue featured a round-table on Rulebook ambiguities; and an article entitled "LIV and Let LIV", humorously highlighting various possible disorders involving the two "Liv" spaces, was printed in #28. This pattern of procedural discussions, either in a round-table format or the letter column, has been a strong feature of the zine throughout its entire life. There is good reason for this: although the topic is boring to many, it has always intrigued me. And there have always been enough readers sharing my interest to keep the debates lively.

One of the articles in my first annish provoked further unpleasantness. Bob Arnett had told me that Kathy had been urging him and others to vote me a low score in the Runestone Poll, and I remarked on this in print. Arnett then turned around and denied his part in the matter, and devoted the entirety of Volkerwanderung #15 to attacking me on this point and others. He followed this up with a nasty letter to the Brutus Bulletin, a sickening letter that cost him much of his hobby credibility (part of it was later reprinted in VD #45). Meanwhile, true to form, Kathy threatened to sue me over the incident.

In a sense, having Arnett come down on their side was a big plus for Caruso and Byrne. He had a powerful weapon that they did not: he could write in good English. What none of this group counted on, however, was just how firmly entrenched I had become by now. With dozens of friends and the strong support of much of the hobby, and with the gutter-level nature of their attacks turning people off, I weathered the storm in good shape; and indeed, the best string of issues in my early publishing years followed on the heel's of Arnett's attack.

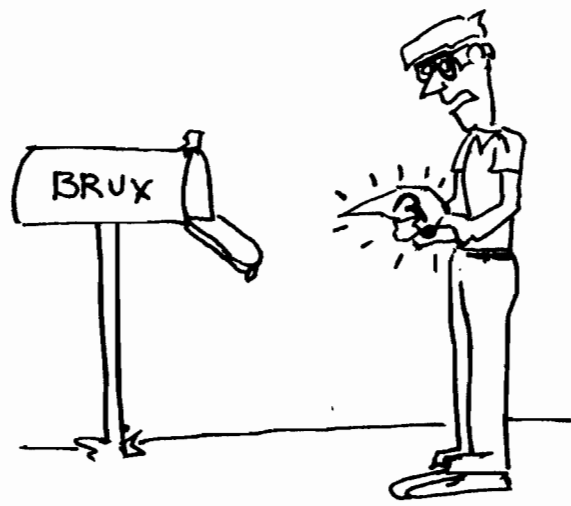
In retrospect, it is the height of hypocrisy that Kathy overreacted so strongly to my revelations regarding what she had told Arnett. Although she seemed to feel that I had accused her of some major crime in attempting to unduly influence the Runestone Poll, she was in later years to instigate just this sort of activity. I refer, of course, to the "Dipimaster" and "Stabber's Journal" hoaxes, both of which were attempts to place a fictitious zine in the #1 slot, and consequently to lower the scores of legitimate zines.

As for Arnett, it is illustrative of his nastiness in the whole affair that he gave away the secret of "Jane Proskin", a harmless hoax I had invented for the purpose of writing needling letters to certain friends, primarily Masters. I had told Arnett about Jane in strict confidence, and he betrayed it. That was absolutely unnecessary of him, and the joke was spoiled.

On a much lighter note, this was a time for classy fake zines. Despite my financial difficulties, I managed to get together a "Fake Zine Theme Issue" of Diplomacy Digest and send it out. Mark Berch was so outrageously delighted that he



called me up (it was an obvious Linsey production) and told me that he'd include it in the numbering as an issue of his zine, just as Michalski had done with Bruxus Bulletin #69. Some people were fooled -- John Leeder believed the page 1 assertion that the previous issue had been a fake, for instance -- but as with the BB fake, the intent was more to parodize and poke fun than to deceive.



Also around this time arrived a fake of The Voice of Doom calling itself the "Mellow Yellow" issue, sent by someone using the name "Donovan". This person also sent out a very well-done fake of Retaliation, and from his style of appending the words "ha ha" to sentences, I correctly deduced that "Donovan" was Gary Coughlan. He confirmed this when I called to accuse him. I was flattered. There is something uniquely stunning about having a well-produced fake of your own zine pop into your mailbox. It really floored me when I first got it. Exceptional care was taken with the games, the articles and the format, and so on. I couldn't have asked for my zine to be faked

by a better prankster than Gary Coughlan. It was truly a very uplifting experience.

Meanwhile, I was continuing to enjoy myself as a player in the hobby, too. My first (and to date, only) postal win was achieved at this time. This came as Germany in 1979CF, a game in Murd'ring Ministers.

As for VD itself, the BLACK HOLE Affair had branded me as a GM who stuck to his guns and enforced his rules, and the zine's reputation for controversy was already legendary. But the true test of a GM's standing with his players is how eager they are to play in his games. In my first annish, I announced game openings. I was eager to run another batch of games, and curious to see how damaging the BLACK HOLE Affair and the attacks by my enemies had been. Lo, within two months I opened five new games, illustrating the old saw about actions speaking louder than words. One of these was a game of Proxy Plomacy, wherein the players ordered each others' units in the Spring seasons on a rotating basis. This game was called JUPITER, and in its early years it produced some of the best press in the hobby. Another of the new games was called GALAXY, and it was in this game that I made a GMing decision that was once again destined to rock the hobby.

#### 4. Troly Yours

Keith Sherwood is fairly well-known now, but he was a rank novice when he drew Austria in the GALAXY game. His opening orders came in, one of them being "A Vie-Tro". I was baffled. "Tro" is only one letter away from "Tyo" (VD's abbreviation for Tyrolia), but also only one letter away from "Tri" (Trieste). While I thought it more probable that Keith meant Tyrolia, since Trieste contains no "o", I had no way of knowing for sure which abbreviation he was trying to write. Therefore, I ruled that the order was ambiguous.

Keith hit the roof, and once again many members of the hobby took up arms and crusaded in favor of their own favorite interpretation of the meaning of those three fateful letters: T-R-O. The dispute boiled over into other zines. People were having heart attacks right and left. "It's happened again!" came the inevitable cry from various unfriendly quarters. "Bruce has screwed another novice!" An envelope from Keith arrived addressed to "Mr. Mean", and this gave me an idea for another contest. Thus was born the "Krazy Envelope Kontest", wherein Doomies had to send me

the most outlandish possible envelope, which had to get to me of its own accord (in other words, it couldn't be enclosed in another envelope, or whatever). These Crazy Envelopes adorned the pages of VD for many issues and provided a welcome break from the monotony of the typed page. The eventual winner was Mike Mitchell, for sending me a letter in a tin can which was then sealed shut, but there were many other very clever entries as well. Ralph Morton sent an envelope addressed in hieroglyphics, though the original never got to me; he later sent another with the address also written in English. Flumphier T. Quiddipoo, Jr. (the pen name of Gerry Thompson, who came on board about this time and was to be a long-time contributor of humor items) sent one of his "U.S. Snail Mail" paper bags. And so it went.

On the back page of VD #30, Trouble, the dog to whom the zine was dedicated, made her pitch for the title of Hobby Mascot. It seems that Jack Masters' dog Brux (no relation) had challenged her for the title, and Mike Conner of Lone Star Diplomat was holding a hobby poll to determine who would win the honor. Brux won, but since he was fictitious Trouble still claimed the title of Real Mascot of Postal Diplomacy. Her baby picture in #30 set hearts aflutter nationwide.

Trouble also ran a subzine to VD, called The Bark of Doom, making her the hobby's only canine publisher. BD appeared every now and then until Trouble's death a little over a year later.

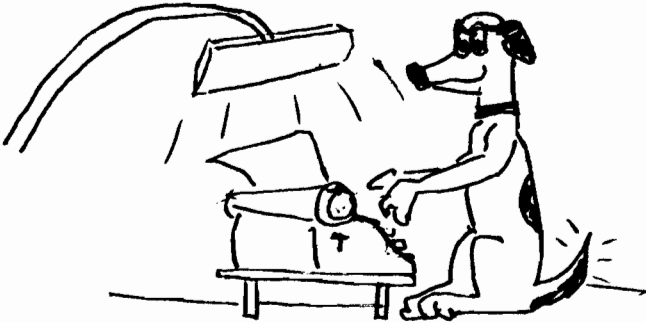
Meanwhile, though, the Tro Affair had become the rage and dominated the Gossip Column. In fact, this era was probably the

"rulesiest" time in the history of the zine. The discussions abounded each issue and the Rulebook freaks in the audience, especially Berch and Mark Larzelere, were having a field day.

But there were other noteworthy events as well. Doug Beyerlein resurrected the idea of a "Diplomacy vacation" -- an assigned month each year (probably August) during which no Diplomacy activities would take place. The idea was destined to meet with opposition from those who a) couldn't agree on which month to take, b) were too enthusiastic to stop diploming for that long, or c) liked it, but didn't want to run the risk that their game opponents would ignore the prescribed inactivity and thus gain an edge in their negotiations. Without virtual unanimity of support, the proposal never took root throughout the hobby.

It was also about this time that Jack Masters was showing the first signs of an impending explosion. He replied to some totally innocuous comments in #29 with an angry letter, and attacked Konrad Baumeister savagely in print. I responded by defending Baumeister, an act I have absolutely never regretted, and the Linsey-Masters relationship began to seriously deteriorate.

On a more positive note, this is also the time that Europa Express made its debut, brimming with enthusiasm. Since my gameload was down to one and that was ending, I signed up for Gary Coughlan's "Swedish Roundabout" game, and was never disappointed. Indeed, the game was to serve eventually as the inspiration for several of VD's strategy articles in later years. The quality of play was high -- Randolph Smyth, arguably the best active player in the hobby, was in the game, and he got beaten (due mostly to the dreadful postal service to and from Alberta, I should mention). Garry Hamlin was in the game too, and my alliance with him proved to be the foundation of a solid, enjoyable friendship that exists to this day. I gave Europa Express a glowing review upon receiving the first issue, and over the years my confidence has been



borne out by that zine's astonishing success.

Voice of Doom #29 was a Christmas issue and went out free to all Doomies. It contained the first Doomie of the Year contest, which drew but one entry, which therefore naturally won. This was Mike Mazzer's nomination of Bob Olsen. The issue also contained an announcement of my engagement to Linda, an ill-fated match that was to dissolve a few months later.

Another aspect of my personal life at this time was that I began student teaching as part of my masters program in math education. This led to an article called "Mr. Linsey! Mr. Linsey!" in VD #32, describing my difficulties in handling some of the more undisciplined kids. The article was enjoyed especially by Ronald Brown of Canada, at the time a teacher himself, who had just joined Voice of Doom. Ronald was to become another very strong contributor to the zine as it progressed, and #32 as a whole received a rave review in the Brutus Bulletin. In fact, the issues from my first anniversary (#26) to #32 were all oversized by my standards back then. But my financial situation was steadily worsening, and VD was about to hit hard times for that reason. The struggle to accomodate a huge and growing flood of reader input with only a tiny and dwindling bank account was to result in a unique phenomenon in the zine's history.

### 5. Diarrhea of the Press

Walt Buchanan once published over 60 consecutive weekly issues of Hoosier Archives, but those weren't "full-sized" issues. The record for 10-or-more-page issues on consecutive weeks is held by VD with 19, and it was set during the spring and summer of 1981. A normal response to the financial crunch I was facing might have been to fold, at least temporarily. From a more dedicated publisher, the response might have been to just publish 12-page issues on a monthly basis, taking away most of the strain but cutting out much material. But me? I was crazy, and loath to discourage all the reader feedback I was now getting. I decided to limit each issue to 12 pages, and publish often enough to print everything I had. The theory was that I'd recoup my losses as the renewal checks started to come in at an accelerated rate. The reality of the matter was that the 19 consecutive weeklies resulting from this policy cost me a good portion of my sub list.

In retrospect, this was the weakest period in the history of the zine. At 12 pages a shot, game issues contained little else and even the mid-monthlies were rather skimpy. Each weekend when I published, it seemed that I had barely skimmed the top of the pile of stuff I had, and the vast majority got held over for still another week.

I had found myself a relatively cheap printer who operated his business right on the Albany State campus, and I stayed with him throughout this period. At least in that department I had stability, though the arrangement later turned out to be unsatisfactory. Each issue was exactly 12 pages, so I could mail them without an envelope at the one-ounce rate.

There were several highs and lows scattered throughout this era of weekly issues. VD #41 was better than most of them, and it featured an article describing a day in the life of Dan Wilson, who was then playing postal Diplomacy from a prison cell. Also in the issue was "The Vatican Variant", a humorous redrawing of the map of Italy designed to strengthen that country. (The Vatican, a neutral supply center, was surrounded entirely by Rome so that an Italian army holed up there could never be destroyed.) VD #40 was unusual in another



Italian army holed up there could never be destroyed.) VD #40 was unusual in another

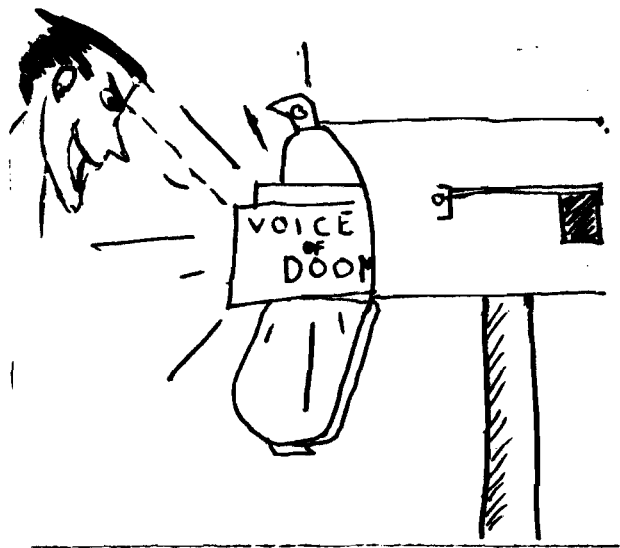
way: it consisted entirely of full-page reviews of my ten favorite zines. I wasn't sure how well the hobby would like this, but it did generate a good bit of favorable response. VD #46 featured a long article on GenCon East '81, and #52 was the Tonight Show theme issue, with several "guest stars" making appearances, and some atypically gross humor. Garry Hamlin called me up after receiving that issue, and congratulated me for nearly making him part company prematurely with his dinner. Issue #50 contained some reflections about my first 50 issues, and a promise to deliver at least 50 more (hyork). The ECLIPSE game ended in a win for Dave Claman's France, thereby becoming the first won game in VD.

There were quite a few negative points as well during this era. The low quality of most of the issues was one of them. People's subs were naturally expiring right and left, and all too many decided not to renew. Even some of my more enthusiastic readers told me that the weekly VDs were getting rather monotonous. And, the size of the issues being what it was, there were several instances of one topic dominating an entire issue. For example, VD #43 consisted largely of house rule amendments and consequently made for very dull reading. #45 was the issue in which I finally decided to set forth my complaints against Bob Arnett, who had treated me both cruelly and dishonestly in the past. #47 offered a controversy with a somewhat more comic twist: the Boardman versus Jim Williams dispute. Williams had taken exception to Boardman's action of tossing Gary Coughlan off the Graustark sub list due to the latter's admitted involvement in the production of fake zines. Boardman responded nastily, insulting Williams and questioning his very existence. For some reason, at one point, he sent one of Williams' letters to me. I called Jim, got his go-ahead to run an article on the affair in VD, and went through with it. The net results were to solidify Boardman's position as one of the hobby's foremost laughingstocks, and the formation of a fast friendship between me and Jim which exists to this day.

Another negative facet of this era in VD's history was that I still hadn't overcome my propensity for making gratuitous, unnecessary cracks about people with whom I was having difficulties. For instance, the cover page of #39 contained a backhanded crack about Caruso which only served to make me look like a sourpuss. The back page of #40 saw me take a wholly unnecessary potshot at Arnett's ethics which, while true, accomplished nothing. This sort of thing tended to turn some people off.

This was also an era of very strained relations between me and Jack Masters. Jack had called me a ratings player in print, a charge which irritated me more than it ought to have. I responded, and things got quite ugly. Then I received a letter from another publisher (who has requested that his name be kept out of the controversy, but I can tell you that he's still publishing), tipping me off to the fact that some of Master's stories were plagiarized from James Thurber and other writers. I checked this out at the local library, and found to my astonishment that Masters' stories were practically identical to those he was copying, word for word. His technique was to go through a story, change it enough to put it into a Diplomacy context, alter the names of the characters and the setting, and publish it as his own. In one instance, in his zine Black Frog, he explicitly noted that one such story had been copyrighted by himself. My own involvement lay in the unfortunate fact that I had published several of Jack's articles early on, and they were suspect, as of course was all of Jack's writing at that point. So in VD #51, I went public with the above information, concluding reasonably that "it is my opinion that he should credit the literature he uses to the person who wrote it, rather than claiming that he himself is the author", and a brief but very ugly feud ensued. It really wasn't an even fight. Masters drove himself right off the deep end and practically out of the hobby. Black Frog #54 was sent out free, and was devoted in its entirety to "THE BIGGEST ASSHOLE THE HOBBY HAS EVER SEEN!!!" -- me. Subsequent issues carried this theme to even further extremes, and saw Masters print a vile attack on Kathy Byrne's sex life. Masters called me up during the wee hours one night, told me he had sent out a hit man to kill me, and hung up. (I reported this to the police, but have never mentioned it in VD till now. Since I couldn't prove it, the officer I spoke with told me there

was nothing more I could do, and I pursued it no farther.) Fred Davis was viciously attacked in Black Frog. Publication of Peek was halted -- Masters had begun this as a spoof zine by "Jane Proskin" when the ruse came public -- and sub monies were not refunded. Games were abandoned. Al Pearson, a player there, wrote to inquire about his game, and was told to "go to hell". The hobby reacted strongly. Masters was roundly booed for his actions, and fell from his status as a highly-regarded publisher to a hobby pariah almost overnight. These days, his name evokes about the same reaction as that of "Bernie Oaklyn" Tretick or Bill Highfield -- a sad footnote marring the hobby's history.



With all of the other problems of the time, the Canadian postal service compounded matters in VD as well as the rest of the hobby by deciding to go on strike. All of the games except one contained Canadian players, and were therefore suspended for the duration, which turned out to be about a month and a half. Actually, this in a way was a blessing for VD in that the space that would have been devoted to printing all those game reports was used instead to clear up some of the backlog of material on hand. But the strike finally ended, and Ralph Morton provided a few laughs in VD #52 when he described his trip to the mailbox on the first day following it: "I spied in awe one lonely little envelope. I opened it with trembling fingers...after all, it was my first communication with the outside world in 42 days...and...aarrgh!...I beheld the eye-dilating issue (#40) of The Voice of Doom!"

A somewhat happier, if meteoric, event in this era of the hobby's past was the brief career of Allen Wells. Allen was a brilliant chap with flaming red hair. I met him at GenCon East '81 in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and spent much time talking to him. We became friendly, and he spoke of various ideas he had for the hobby. His zine, Dot Happy, was one of the very best so long as Allen had his enthusiasm. Voice of Doom served as a forum for some of his articles, which were generally very well thought-out and written. Sadly, Allen's interest faded out all too quickly, and Dot Happy wound down into a warehouse zine, and then folded. But before it died, Allen had left his mark on VD, and on the hobby. There is even an award named after him today, given to publishers who fold cleanly.

During this period I moved back into my mother's house, then broke up with Linda. Things had gone sour (Diplomacy had nothing to do with it) and the move was best for all concerned. But again, moving didn't affect my publishing schedule in the least. Indeed, the frantic pace of this schedule was unwittingly highlighted by another hoax. Voice of Doom was faked for the second time in its history, this one originating from Los Alamos and published by some combination of John Pack, Mike Mitchell and Tro Sherwood. Exactly which of these three gentlemen were involved and which weren't is unclear to me, but the "Rinky Pink" fake, as it was called, was just about as good as "Mellow Yellow". I was publishing at such an alarming rate back then that "Rinky Pink", which was a fake of issue #37, didn't get mentioned in the real VD until issue #42!

This was also the time that a rather sick hoax came out; a circular letter telling of the death of Marion Bates. I didn't receive a copy, but heard of it from several other people. It was widely known that Marion had been very sick. I joined with much of the hobby in condemning the perpetrator, though it has since been whispered on several occasions that Marion himself may have had a lot to do with it (he was certainly crazy enough!).

All in all, then, the spring and summer of 1981 was a time of very frequent, very skimpy issues. In June alone, five issues were published. At the time, I was proud of the quantity of issues I was putting out, but that was soon to change. In September, I finally went back to work, now as a teacher in the Greenville School System, and my life went through a major change again. And so, for that matter, did the zine. The early, lean years now came to an end. The golden years were about to begin.

## SECTION II: THE GOLDEN YEARS

### 6. Dishwashers, Gravel, and Soggy Peas

Voice of Doom's second anniversary issue (#54) was 46 pages long, longer than any previous issue had been. From that time on, the quality of each issue rather than the quantity of the issues became the primary consideration in the zine's production. Once again employed, I was able to go back to publishing respectable issues, and the zine was rarely to fall below 22 pages again, and never below 16. The letter column grew and grew, and became the hobby's largest and liveliest. But even more importantly, this was the time that a number of people who have since been mainstays of the zine came aboard. Part of the reason for this was that I announced general game openings in #57, and once again it seemed that the whole hobby flocked in to sign up. The third and final round of mass gamestarts in VD's history saw six new games begin. VD games, strict GMing and all, were still popular with the masses.

Garry Hamlin and Jim Williams began taking an active role in the zine during this time, as did new subbers Mike Barno, Ruth Glaspey, John MacFarlane, and a host of others whose names are by now very familiar. Hamlin's first VD article was in the second annish, and while that was not a great effort, his "Pity the Monsters" story in #60, describing a maverick dishwasher that refused to die, became a classic of hobby humor. Indeed, Garry nearly caused an auto wreck with the article when Mark Berch read it to his wife Mona as she was driving. Mona laughed so hard she almost lost control of the car.

Chuff Afflerbach's VD debut was a well-researched article on the history of the Falklands Islands and the events leading up to the war over them. This was printed in VD #61. As with Hamlin, however, the effort that ensured Chuff's position in the hearts of Doomies everywhere was to come later. #61 also contained a humorous account of my initial visit to Mark Berch's home years before, and the sad news of Trouble's death.

Jake Halverstadt entered the zine with a bang, submitting his article on Rocky Mountain Oysters (reprinted from Fort Collins Magazine) to VD #60, an issue about which he later wrote, "Damn! VD #60 was the best literature to pass through these portals in a long time. It blew the doors off the last couple Time magazines, as far as I'm concerned." Jeff Noto agreed, calling it "the best issue you've ever put out since I've been subscribing." Dick Martin was not so generous, however, accusing me of praising the "dishwasher" article just to curry favor with Hamlin in Swedish Roundabout.

Issue #56 contained a masterful humor article by my sister Judy, satirizing her trials and tribulations as a waitress. The issue also contained a hilarious parody of a phone call with Gary Coughlan, written by Pat Conlon. Mike Barno had a pair of



articles in #59. Rod Walker, though he'd been with the zine since it began, really started to become more active now, beginning a series of essays dealing mostly with the history of the hobby and providing certain insights as only an old-timer like him can.

Voice of Doom #57 in particular was a gem. It contained Bob Olsen's riotous (and winning) Doomie of the Year nomination for Garry Hamlin, and Hamlin's equally funny nomination for Olsen. My own article, "Look at the Size of His Fleet!", was a tribute to the passing of wooden blocks in Avalon Hill's Diplomacy sets. John Kador checked in with still another essay on people's grammar. But the highlight of the issue was my Diplomacy logic puzzle, "Sherlock Holmes and the Ultimate Diplomacy Mystery". Despite a very minor flaw discovered by Dick Astrom, this was easily the best Diplomacy puzzle I've ever devised, far surpassing my earlier Sherlock Holmes puzzle in #12.

Origins '82 in Baltimore was the site of my oft-repeated "Diplomacy is a River" speech, in which I declared that "your basic average Diplomacy hobbyist may be thought of as a piece of gravel." My writeup of this event appeared in VD #64, along with the text of the speech. The article was called "Holy Smoke, Baltimore was a Blast!", and it was far and away my best con review ever. The same issue contained the results of a "Who's the Best Diplomat" writing contest, and some cartoons by Mark Paul. These had



begun a few issues earlier, and were fast becoming a regular and universally-liked feature of the zine. Mark's cartoons, plus his occasional letters, served to give Doomies a look at the gaming hobby outside of Diplomacy, a topic which has generally received only minimal coverage in VD. The cartoons were to continue for years.

VD #63 contained an article by Steve Hutton on the "Weak Third" philosophy of play, an answer to those who wanted an alternative to "Win Only" or "Strong Second". John Pack came right back in #64, satirical pen ablaze, and wrote an article called "Dead Last -- A TRULY Alternative Playing Philosophy".

As you can see, this was a happy era for VD. In fact, these were the most successful months in the zine's entire history. Not only did a whole slew of talented, heavy contributors come on the scene at this time, but my own writing skills had improved considerably as well with all the practice I was getting, and I wasn't quite so dreadfully hotheaded any more. The Masters feud had died down, and the Flushing Gang was in a period of relative calm. And yet, despite all of the above, there was a more important reason still for VD's hugely successful third year. At the school, I had become friendly with one of my ninth-grade students, Alex Lord, and her family. They took a great deal of interest in me and in the zine, and I visited them very often, and grew to regard them as a second family.

The introduction of Alex's Column into Voice of Doom changed the whole character of the zine. From the beginning of my publishing career, I had always enjoyed sharing tidbits about my personal life with my readers, many of whom had been close friends. Alex was able to provide them with close-up glimpses from the point of view of a little sister. With writing skills above and beyond those of an average 14-year-old, and indeed superior to those of many adults in the hobby, she cheerfully shared with Doomies everywhere all the joy that she and I experienced as my friendship with her and her family grew.

The column began as an article called "Soggy Peas" in VD #58, which Alex co-authored with her friend Lisa Ventura. Responses flooded in to both of them, with a

little extra prodding by me. Both girls were thrilled, but Alex in particular was extremely enthusiastic. After discussing the matter with her mother, she approached me in school one day and asked whether she could write a monthly column for the zine. I gladly assented, and the first issue of Alex's Column appeared in #60. The first piece she submitted consisted of the "Frank DeLalla" letter, which was actually an April Fool's joke played by me on Alex. I wrote up a humorous description of my childhood, portraying myself as a poor, beset-upon little boy whose school "friends" used to lock him in his locker, enclosed a photo of myself taken in the fourth grade, and sent all this off to my friend Frank, who lives in Maryland. He then sent it on to Alex. I didn't reveal the joke for several months.

The articles continued each month without interruption. The column was a boon to

the zine; regardless of what else did or did not come in for print, I could always rely on Alex's Column. As our friendship grew closer, she was able to choose from many different adventures in deciding on a topic each issue. She had a knack for portraying situations very humorously. VD #62 contained the article I will always remember as her very best, a riotous saga of a day at Riverside Amusement Park. The following issue portrayed BRUX getting drunk at a graduation party, the next issue Alex changed her style entirely and wrote a truly beautiful poem about the sea, and so on. Judy Winsome enjoyed the poem so much that he reprinted it in his zine, Ruth Glaspey helped Alex enter a poetry contest, Flumphier T. Quiddipoo sent along a book on Valley Girls, Fred Davis sent a Mensa application, and so on. Alex was a big hit



with the readers; a young voice of lighthearted warmth and humor in a hobby full of stabbing, deceit, and treachery.

My new printer was by far the most reliable one I ever had, and he took an interest in the zine himself. His name was Chuck Sigwarth, and I became friendly with him and his wife, and eventually began tutoring their granddaughter in math. Since he operated in his own home, he could run off the zine on weekends, so there was no more nail-biting on Mondays-after-deadlines, hoping that the printer would get the zine done on time and not mess it up. I slept easier knowing that my record of always publishing on time was safer. My headaches about reproducing the zine were solved, except for the cost. The size of the issues being what they were, I was paying well over \$100 to have many of them printed. But for the time being, this was suitable.

Does this era sound too good to be true? As I said above, these were the happiest days ever for VD. There were no major negatives. And yet, it was around this time that I came to the decision that I would start winding down toward #100. I determined, though, that in the over two years I had remaining, I'd have as much fun as I could.

The era came to a close shortly after my third annish, #66. That issue was again my biggest to date (a pattern that was to hold for all five of my anniversary issues) at 54 pages, and was the crowning touch to the year just past. It had articles from a broad assortment of Doomies, Mark Paul's cartoons and several other humor items, an article by Alex relating how I had taken her brother Howie to a strip show, and much more. But the two most memorable items in my third annish were Bob Olsen's "Pilgrim Meets the Dipimaster", which started a series, and my own probing questions about treatment of off the record material, which was the prototype of what was to become a very successful sequence of round-table discussions on hobby matters in VD. Finally, in a surprise move at the end of the issue, I astonished the audience by announcing a cut in my sub rates. Truly, this was a delightful time all around!

Who would have known, reading my third annish, that some ugly controversy lurked once again just around the corner?



## 7. The Storm

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The lead-in to Voice of Doom #68 read, "The Storm!", and it was an accurate portrayal of not so much that issue as the whole series of issues to follow. Part of the reason for the trouble was a pair of controversial GMing decisions.

In VD #64, I had ruled that a pair of units, each ordered both to hold and support the other, were double-ordered and therefore unordered. In #66, the players in my MILKY WAY game passed a concession to Peter Blitstein's one-center Turkey, mostly by failing to vote. The former incident led to another huge rule debate, ultimately perpetrating tons of letters, several articles, and even some poems and cartoons. The player, Ed Wrobel, ended up resigning from that game and another he was playing in, and my relationship with him has been shaky ever since. In the other incident, Steve Arnawoodian protested vigorously that he had vetoed the concession over the phone, admitting privately only much later that he had meant to do it, but forgot. I restarted the game for the players, all of whom wanted to play on, but that wasn't enough for Woody. He started writing me vile letters and spreading the word elsewhere that I was a dishonest GM. One of his dumber missives was published in VD #68, causing Woody to strenuously object that the letter had been marked "not for print". When I couldn't locate the letter, Kathy Byrne rushed to his defense, proclaiming for the hobby to hear that "Woody wrote that letter while at my house -- I warned him not to get carried away & I know for a fact he clearly marked it 'Not For Print'. I was very surprised to see it in your zine!" And then...the letter turned up in my wastebasket, not

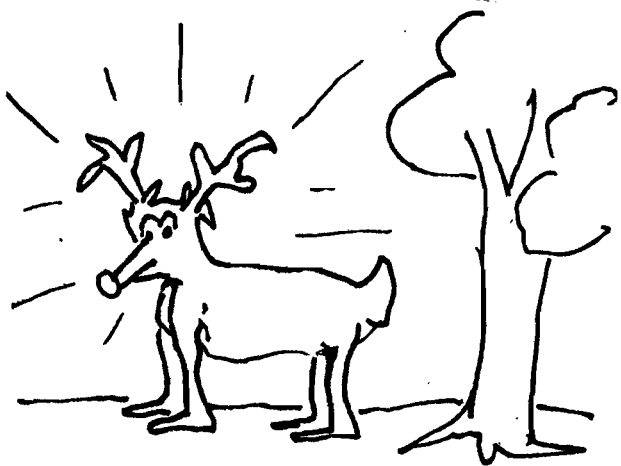
labeled "not for print" or any such thing. Kathy and Woody had a dreadful time untangling themselves from that embarrassing little episode, eventually falling back to the position that Woody must have labeled his own copy "not for print", but neglected to put it on mine, a story that didn't fool many people. The MILKY WAY game continued, but there's been bad blood between me and Woody since that event. How could we not feud when -- horrors! -- he had branded me forever as a simple-minded antelope?!

There were still many high points, though. The "Off the Record" article in #66 brought forth enough response to generate 21 pages in #69; Mark Berch and Judy Winsome both called it a "classic". Issue #70 was a 46-pager with no games, just reading material. It was in this issue that Chuff Afflerbach wrote his fabulous "Broken Record" article,

endearing him to the hearts of Doomies everywhere. The article was a "wicked parody" (as Berch put it) of the Off the Record discussion, and was indescribably delicious.

Still another classic was Alex's Column on hunting in #68. For a change, she brought up a serious topic instead of the more frequent humorous pokes at BRUX, and the article generated unprecedented levels of response. Jake Halverstadt, Konrad Baumeister, Edmund Jedry, and Joan Extrom all eventually submitted follow-up articles (even though Joan didn't enter the zine for several months after the original piece), and the Gossip Column was absolutely deluged with letters on the topic, both pro and con. Opinions ranged from Dudley Kidd's assertion that hunting is a proper and wholesome sport to Jake's condemnation of it as "a pasttime for perverts", a position with which I totally agree. If the article about Riverside was Alex's finest, then the hunting article was her most provocative.

That winter, I held the first annual BRUXCON at my mother's house and it was very successful. Attending were Bill Highfield, Mark Larzelere, Mike Barno, Eric Kane, Alex Lord and her brother Howie, and me. This was the start of an annual happening which will continue, hopefully, for years to come.



The 1982 Doomie of the Year contest was pretty much pre-determined; I knew that I'd be looking for the best entry about Alex to choose as the winner. Voice of Doom #71 featured a front-page picture of Alex and the contest results, including Highfield's winning nomination of her. I still recall Alex's squeal of delight when I brought the issue to her house, and Debbie regarded the front cover with pride in her eyes, and called it my best issue ever.

However, Alex's golden moment was soon to be tarnished by a fit of bitchy nastiness on the part of an insufferable Kathy Byrne. At BRUXCON, one of the attendees (probably Eric Kane) had jokingly commented that Kathy always had a cigarette in one hand and a beer in the other. Alex cheerfully picked up on that and mentioned it in her column, which happened to be a humorous writeup of BRUXCON. And when Kathy got that issue, all hell broke loose.

In a letter to me, she asked for a refund of her subscription, stating that she thought it was "illegal" that I had chosen Alex as Doomie of the Year over John MacFarlane, the subject of an outstanding essay by Jake Halverstadt. Then she went on to make some extremely nasty cracks about my relationship with Alex, and about Alex's parents (who are easily among the most successful parents I've ever met). Kathy then proceeded to mail a copy of this letter to Alex.

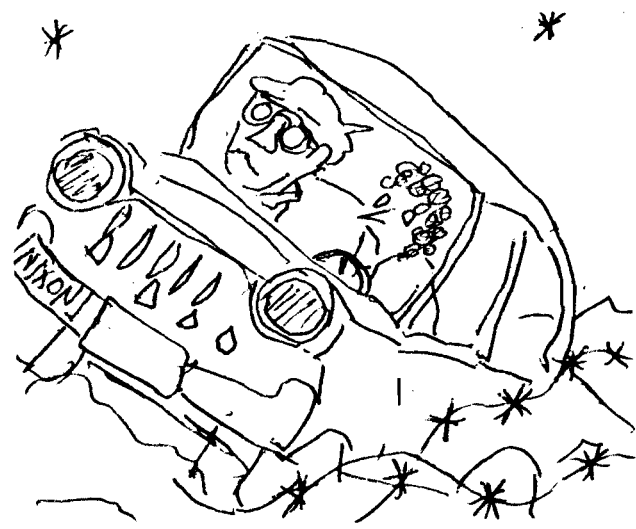
Alex and her mother had had no previous letters like that from anyone in the hobby, and they were both initially quite upset. After talking it over with me, we decided that we'd keep the column going since Alex was still enjoying her involvement, but the incident was an ugly example of Kathy's ruthless vindictiveness, which was to become still more apparent later on.

Another bit of controversy erupted when a letter from Mike Barno containing a personal remark about Julie Martin got printed due to an editorial lapse on my part. The resulting furor was in retrospect greatly overblown, and Mike ended up suffering more than anyone else for my mistake. But it remains a curious study on the subject of selective morality that this comment evoked such an outcry; while Dick Martin's later observation in Retaliation that I indulge in child molesting, an out-and-out libel, scarcely caused a whimper.

Voice of Doom #73 saw the opening of the last game in VD, the RIGEL game. I was worried that the games then in progress wouldn't last long enough to take me to #100, and I wanted to keep GMing until I folded. Additionally, several novices had recently come aboard, and they sounded like the intelligent, enthusiastic types that make for successful VD players. So, I contacted enough of them to form a game. Little did I know that this would turn out to be one of the greatest press games ever played.

#73 also served as an illustration that rules discussions were alive and well in the pages of VD. Even as the Wrobel Affair raged on Mark Larzelere and I concocted an exchange wherein I was able to demonstrate how a single misordered unit could result in the total elimination of a 17-center power. Pat Conlon called it "a marvelous piece of BS", and indeed, hunting through these hazy mists of obscurity has long been my province in the hobby.

In Voice of Doom #74, two memorable articles appeared. One of these was Alex's First Anniversary Column. Amazingly, in a year of writing for VD, she hadn't missed a single issue, not even a mid-monthly. Her Anniversary Column, written on the occasion of my acquisition of a new car, consisted of a hilarious writeup of all the crazy times we'd had in my old car, a beat-up green Hornet that was ready for the junkyard.



The other article of note in the issue was an editorial in which I decried all the pointless feuding wherein people got hurt, and I resolved to keep VD above that level in the future. (This resolution was, alas, not successful, though for over a year following it the zine remained relatively serene.) The editorial was written for two reasons: I felt I had erred grievously in printing the Barno letter in #72, and I saw just how nasty feuding could become with Kathy's vicious letter to Alex. I fervently hoped that circumstances would permit me to go all the way to issue #100 without feuding again, but it was not to be.

The last issue of this era was VD #75, the Zoo Issue. This was the second of my two "Dr. Breuss" issues, and it was far superior to the first. The satire it contained was easily understandable to any regular reader of VD, and the verses and drawings (with help from Mark Paul on the latter) were quite well done. The issue offended a few of the people satirized, but drew plenty of compliments as well.

The Zoo Issue was the end of an era, though, if only for financial reasons. I was finding the printer's bills too large for my small income, and I sought about for the best way to cut my costs. Thanks to Mike Barno, I found an excellent solution; he was willing to sell me his old ditto machine for \$225. On a snowy March morning, I drove down to Tom Swider's house in Endwell, New York, and loaded the bulky piece of equipment into my car. A new era was about to begin in VD's history.

8. Ditto for Me!

The switch to ditto format had a number of drawbacks, but these were outweighed by the advantages thus obtained. The drawbacks were that the zine was less readable and



didn't look as good; and additionally, the ditto machine itself could be a pain in the neck, and at times elected to be one. Paper would feed through crookedly, or two sheets would feed simultaneously, or the machine would shred the paper as it fed. The masters would crease, or the fluid would distribute unevenly, causing part of the page to be illegible. The first two dittoed issues, #76 and 77, were disasters in that several pages were very difficult to read; but after that, I pretty much got the hang of it.

The advantages made it all worthwhile. I now had a very inexpensive means of production, and could once again fit the zine into my budget. Not only that, but since I didn't have to pay per page, I could afford to prattle on at length if I chose. Thus, #76 was a very chatty issue. It was a great relief not to be restricted

in this manner. The final great advantage was that I now had total control over my production schedule, barring equipment breakdown, and would never again have to depend on others to get the zine out on time. No monetary value can be placed on having this ability, when you're as fanatical about meeting deadlines as I am.

Issue #76, aside from the minor fact that it was by and large illegible, was one of my better efforts. It contained the article that Mike Barno has called the best piece of writing ever to appear in VD, a humorous story about a driving instructor, a corpse, and a set of false teeth. Also in the issue was my "Ally with Me or You're a Dead Duck", a look at some of the more macabre means of gaining an ally. John Kador checked in with still another grammar article, Walker contributed an essay about strict GMing à la Charles Reinsel, and Berch wrote a sequel to Olsen's "Pilgrim and the Dipmaster" article. Flumphier T. Quiddipoo Jr. put it best: "VD #76 made up

in quality and quantity what it lacked in legibility." This was also the issue with which I reopened trades, though these were limited to non-North American zines only. I was beginning to become very interested in the British hobby, and several of the publishers in the United Kingdom had letters printed in #79.

It was during this era that Alex's Column began to wind down. VD #77 contained a humorous story about a girl I was dating at the time, but Alex missed issues #78 and 79. She bounced back with good articles in the next two issues, one of them an absolutely hilarious account of a trip to the emergency room, but after that, her interest had by and large faded. There were a number of reasons for this. Kathy's letter had burst her bubble of belief that the hobby was all one happy family. My relationship with her family was going through a rocky period in the summer of '83, and the initial thrill of writing had by then worn off anyway. All that, plus a busy schedule and the shifting winds of a teenager's years, contributed to the demise of Alex's Column. Still, there was to be one more precious moment. Before Alex's 16th birthday, I made up a huge rectangle of post cards, six wide and ten high, and drew an enormous birthday card on it. Then I disassembled the cards, addressed all 60 of them to Alex, and sent them off to 60 Doomies with VD #80, requesting that they be signed and sent back to Alex. 60 out of 60 was a lot to hope for, but eventually 56 of the cards came back and I drew up replacements to fill the holes left by the remaining four. This monstrous, multi-colored birthday card was a fitting tribute from Doomies all over America to Alex and all she had done to entertain them.

The loss of Alex's Column was a blow to the zine, but not so severe as I thought it might be. There were plenty of contributors still to fill the pages with good articles, and issues of 40 or more pages were by now common. VD #77 contained "The True Story of Creation", a remarkable parody of Genesis that Flumphier had picked up and sent to Alex. The issue following included a marvelous bit of prose by Aline Thompson, Flumphier's wife, concerning some of the vermin that haunted their home. In #79 another round-table discussion was initiated thanks to some questions sent in by Jim Meinel and supplemented by me. The topic this time was the use of the telephone in GMing, and the responses to this one ran 13 pages in VD #82. The 1983 Runestone Poll saw VD rise to its highest position ever, 8th place.

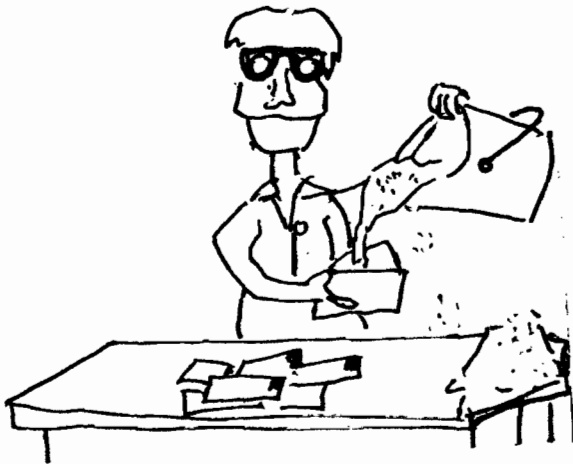
But the two biggest plusses for VD during this time were two newcomers to the zine: Steve Knight and Joan Extrom. Actually, Steve had already been around for a few months, but the two events that really established him as a leading contributor were his article on Origins '83, which coincidentally appeared in issue #83, and his well-publicized offer to edit and organize the VD houserules. The houserules had never, of course, lacked for comprehensiveness, but they had always been sadly disorganized and hard to use. Steve put them onto a computer (and you wondered why the price of mass storage suddenly skyrocketed in the fall of '83...) and we corresponded heavily, working to get them into their final form. The Origins article was extremely well done, surpassing my own review of Origins '82.

Joan Extrom subscribed in response to a sample I had sent to her husband Ken. She very quickly became a good friend, both in the zine and personally. Her letters were sometimes thoughtful, sometimes funny; but always pleasant. I rapidly learned that I could trust her and depend on her for good advice, or just for a pleasant conversation.

It was at Origins '83 that I finally got to meet Allan Calhamer, a very pleasant experience indeed. I had often promised myself that someday I'd thank Allan in person, if I was ever fortunate enough to have the opportunity, for all the joy he'd brought to me and many others. This con also featured the world's first beerless beer blast. Everybody had been told to bring their own, and everybody showed up expecting to drink someone else's. Finally we took a late-night stroll to Detroit's Greektown, satisfying our thirst and appetites there. But for the four of us staying in the room (me, Garry Hamlin, Mark Luedi, and Jim Williams), the night was far from over. Knight's article told that story well: how the Madison Mob arrived (eight strong and with beer, yet) and woke us out of our sound stupor. As Steve put it,

"the arrival of actual beer in room 2307 was greeted with such delight that it was immediately evident that THE ORIGINS BEER BALST, which was supposed to still be going on at 4:00 a.m., had lost its fucking capital letters and degenerated instead into the origins non-beer non-blast."

Beer, however, was not the primary substance of discussion in VD #83. That honor belonged to sand. I had recently attended the first annual KaneKon, and during a visit to Jones Beach, Kevin Stone came up with the idea of putting a few grains of sand in everyone's envelope next issue. KaneKon turned out to be the most enjoyable con I'd ever attended, all factors considered. In addition to the day on the beach, we got to watch the Mets lose to the Expos. What more could we have asked for?



Shortly following KaneKon, I began working for General Electric in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. This meant a 70% increase in pay, and no more of the butterflies I still experienced when I had to go in each morning to teach. The job has worked out very well thus far, over a year later, and I consider it one of the best moves I ever made. The issues were getting longer and longer, and kept generating more and more response, and I could now easily afford them for a change. Thus when Rich Reilly in the RIGEL game

asked me if I'd print some really long press releases, I eagerly gave him and the other players my OK. I don't think that anyone involved knew at the time what that exchange would lead to. RIGEL had heretofore been a reasonably normal game, after all.

As the summer drew to a close, I came to realize that I had enough material on hand to put out a really large, high-quality, fourth anniversary issue. The cost of postage would be high, but by now I was handling the ditto machine with proficiency, so there would be no problem in that regard. I called for articles from my readers, and in so doing inadvertently created a monster.

### 9. "That's no Novel -- That's a Dipzine!"

The record-setting fourth anniversary issue of The Voice of Doom was far and away the best I'd ever published. I just made up my mind that I was going to go all out, and did. When I asked for help from the readers, many of them offered it generously and freely. The result was 170 pages of VD, with 67 different people contributing written material.

Steve Knight had finished his work on the houserules despite a late-summer relocation from Minnesota to Virginia, and sent them to me in their final form. Including a 3-page table of contents, these ran to 19 pages. The difference between the old houserules and Steve's edited version was astonishing, even though actual procedural changes were few. No more did players have to hunt through pages and pages of rules to answer questions about my GMing procedure. No longer did they have to worry that some obscure amendment might be lurking around, ready to override the ruling once they found it. With the table of contents and the well-organized format, the answers to any questions could be found quite readily. One of the most useful of the new rules was the "Greater Good" Rule. Critics of the VD system have always pointed out that my houserules attempt to override "common sense", whatever that is. My response has always been that I devised the houserules to reflect the rulings that I consider "common sense" anyway. But the "Greater Good" Rule permitted me the power to overrule my own houserules in the event that the game was best served by doing so. This then was the ultimate answer to the criticisms; the "out" I could use in the

event that I was uncomfortable with a ruling dictated by my house rules.

Don Del Grande checked in with one of the several con write-ups he'd written for VD, this one on Pacificon '83. The MILKY WAY game ended for the second time, thus bringing to a close one of VD's most controversial games. The RIGEL press war was just getting underway, what with long and entertaining pieces from several of the players. Flumphier contributed an article on the Athabascan Watermelon Festival, and, per annish tradition, I printed my sub list. A BRUX Speaks editorial decried the overabundance of fake zines, polls, and awards being generated in the hobby, and we then arrive at Alex's final column, which was probably the most powerful statement ever published in VD.

To understand fully where Alex was coming from in her last column, it is necessary that you have a bit of background about the events which prompted it. I mentioned earlier that I had gone through a difficult period with Alex's family over the summer. Most of this was due just to a series of simple misunderstandings, events such as those which happen between any long-term friends. These disagreements between me and Alex were by and large of a personal nature, and did not belong in the hobby's zines, which is why they have not been previously mentioned in VD.

Unfortunately, Alex made the mistake of confiding our problems to several other hobby members. One of these was Mike Barno, who behaved as a real friend to all concerned, and helped us smooth over our difficulties privately. However, two of the other people Alex thought she could trust would not react so benevolently. Bill Highfield, upon learning of the problems, tried to chisel Alex out of Voice of Doom entirely, encouraging her to move her column to The Modern Patriot. Genuine concern for Alex's welfare was misinterpreted by Bill as my being "infatuated" with her, and some rather nasty stories were told by Bill to Alex's family, expanding the problems.

Alex also wrote to Kathy Byrne, primarily because she had just received a letter from Kathy apologizing for her nasty letter of seven months before. Writing to Kathy just following an argument with me was an unfortunate choice indeed, although who in the world has never said things in the heat of anger and later regretted them? Alex made very clear the fact that she was quite upset with me, and that this was a factor in her decision to stop writing her column. Kathy called me up and read me the letter, and has been holding it over my head ever since. Indeed, she has threatened to produce it several times. One of these was at Thanksgiving ByrneCon, when she took out the letter and offered to show it around because I had stabbed her in a Gunboat Diplomacy game. (I promptly picked up and left for Eric Kane's house, where I had planned to spend the night anyway.) Later, she tried to blackmail me with this letter in a phone call just prior to MaryCon '84, the same call in which she made various other threats. Alex herself had requested in the letter that it not be distributed widely, but that has never stopped Kathy from blackmailing me by threatening to publish it in retaliation for every slight, real or imagined. And indeed, she has sent the letter to quite a few hobbyists, since I finally decided after the pre-MaryCon phone call that I wasn't going to submit to her blackmail any longer, letter or no letter.

Highfield was much more crude than Kathy about the matter. His attempts to widen the rift between me and Alex ultimately failed, leading eventually to a dispute in which he began telling other hobby members that he was planning to murder me.

So how did all this fit in with Alex's final column? By October, thanks in large part to Mike Barno and also in large part to the strength and quality of the friendship that had always existed between me and the Lords, things were markedly better. Alex was aware of Kathy's and Bill's attempts to use our personal problems for their own benefit, and decided to make her own statement on the subject. As she put it, "I have observed many things, and they have disappointed and disillusioned me greatly. I wanted to be part of this abstruse hobby and its fun and games. As you have noticed I am now out of it. I am surprised at the immaturity, callousness and approach of some of the players to others. Of course we all fight but there is a word that isn't in use much any more, and it's called forgive. I hope you all

understand that I am embarrassed at the behavior of some of the players whom I respected at one time. I'm not being partial to anyone except maybe Bruce and myself. I didn't and don't want to be the gossip part of the hobby. I wrote because I wanted to and VD needed some enlightening material. As my writing progressed toward the last issues, I couldn't think of anything that would enlighten the dark pandemonium raging through US post offices and into the homes of real, feeling homo sapiens."

Dick Martin was later to question Mike Barno regarding the true authorship of this article, but I still have the handwritten version of it, as well as Alex's cover letter requesting that I send it to the two people who needed to see it; Bill Highfield and Kathy Byrne. This, then, is the story behind Alex's last column: a sad ending to a happy subzine. Alex and I both agree today that the experience was still a positive one overall, despite those who would ruin it.

Following Alex's Column came an article by Ronald Brown, addressing the ages-old question of cross-gaming. Ronald concludes by observing that "I guess cross-gaming is unethical, but no more or less than any other negotiations. Why is it regrettable? It certainly is unavoidable." The issue then started in with the first section of a four-part Gossip Column, which wound up running a total of 46 pages, the longest letter column ever published in a dipzine (till now). One of the best letters in the issue, and indeed one of the most intriguing I've ever printed, was Jim Williams' account of an unpleasant meeting with an old man and a hefty motorcyclist with a gun. The story had a surprise twist that really floored me.

The issue also served as an introduction of sorts to my own strategy articles. While I had occasionally published some of these in the past, I was by now really starting to become influenced by the Randolph Smyth technique or writing about negotiations. Tactics articles are, to my way of thinking, drier and not as useful in a

general gaming context as negotiations articles. Titles in the fourth annish included "Winning Against a Stop-the-Leader Alliance", which was partly a counterpoint to Randolph's famous "Sheltered Power" article; "The Ionian Intrusion" (oh, all right, so I still indulged in tactics to an extent); "The Stab-Stab: Milk It for All It's Worth, Baby!", an essay advocating the act of squeezing the maximum possible benefit out of a stab; and "How Not to Get a Puppet", a detailed look at several attempts on my part to gain a puppet in the Swedish Roundabout game, and why each failed, and what I might have done differently.

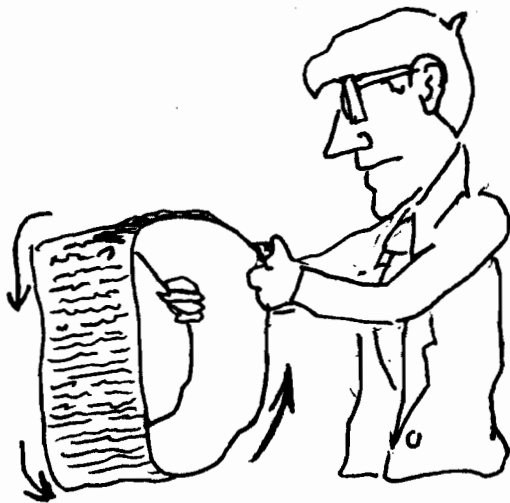
Another type of item which abounded in the issue was humor. Mark Berch contributed an anonymous, satirical look at certain prominent hobbyists, and a pair of essays advising editors how to accept or reject

articles without giving the writer a swelled head or a bruised ego respectively. There were several cartoons, including a pair of full-pagers by Mark Paul. My own "Diplomacy Euphemisms" article was to be expanded at length in a later issue. Greg Ellis, Flumphier, and others sent in fistfuls of high-quality, humorous page-fillers.

I reprinted a man-on-the-street newspaper interview that had included me. The question being asked was, "What was the most important event in your life?" Most of the respondents mentioned such mundane things as being born, finding God, or getting married; my response was typically BRUXian in nature: "The most important event in my life is this interview, because as an ex-teacher, it feels good to have somebody finally listen to me." Joan Extrom sent in a long, satirical reprint of an essay



entitled "Real Programmers Don't Use PASCAL", and Ed Wrobel wrote up a clever bit of prose implying that perhaps his controversial double orders in the NEPTUNE game



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were intentionally so. Several of Bob Howerton's and Ruth Glaspey's cartoons about the VD house rules were reprinted from Festungs Hof, and a lunch-hour brainstorm developed into a "Cyclic Article", which handily filled the bottoms of several pages. The article, of course, had no beginning nor end; as the name implied, it just kept going in circles.

Hobby history reared its head in the issue as I xeroxed a xerox of an old xeroxed copy of Graustark #1 that Mark Berch had sent me, and reprinted it. Olsen later called this "very depressing", and added that it was "not because of the text, but because on the back, it carried 4¢ postage." Indeed, the cost of postal Diplomacy was but one of many changes since its beginnings twenty years before, as the reprint of Graustark so vividly illustrated.

A reader poll had drawn 69 responses to questions about the zine, and it took 12 pages to print everyone's comments. The most surprising result was that my decision in the Wrobel Affair was also the choice of Doomies by a vote of 35-26, although among GMs the ruling was more evenly split. John Michalski contributed an issue of his roving subzine, Mos Eisley Spaceport; the only time this has ever appeared in VD.

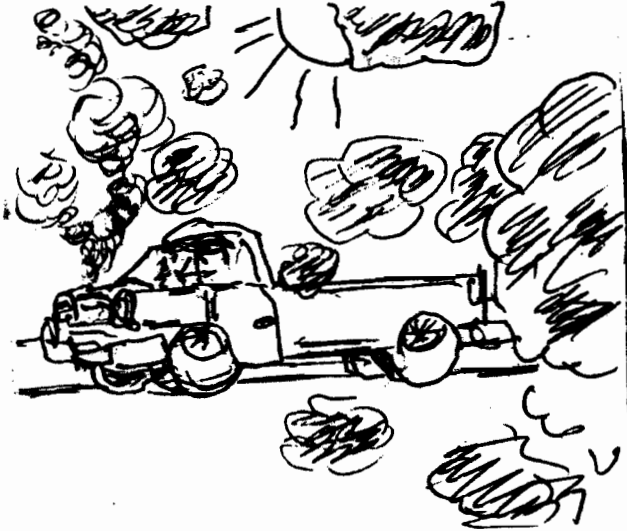
One of the relatively few reprinted articles in the issue was Smyth's "Variations", an essay about the wrinkles that arise whenever a player plays under more than one set of house rules. I used this as a springboard for my own discussion entitled "Variations and the Great Powers", in which I introduced the idea that different house rules might -- and in fact, must -- affect the fortunes of the various great powers differently. The article was primarily theoretical in nature, since the effects described would be far too tiny to noticeably affect any given game. Edmund Jedry, VD's resident biologist, chipped in with an article describing the biological effects of hunting, and with Doug Beyerlein's permission I reprinted his article on Judy Winsome, revealing for a wide audience the true story behind one of the hobby's most mysterious -- yet nicest -- members.

One of my more unusual proposals was a tongue-in-cheek article suggesting that perhaps we all ought to stop playing Diplomacy, an extrapolation of the thought that the fewer games one plays in, the more effective will be his negotiating in each of those games. The flaw in this "logic" was later pointed out by Chuff Afflerbach: "Well, I'm no math major and I certainly don't have a masters in education. But believe you me, when Sister Gertrude pounds something into you in the third grade, it stays pounded. 'Division by zero is meaningless.' Write that 1,000 times, Brucie, so you don't forget it. Negotiation without Diplomacy is meaningless."

Following this "Inverse Function" piece there appeared a first in Voice of Doom: a short story by me, self-referentially titled "The Voice of Doom". The plot combined science fiction and Diplomacy, and was somewhat reminiscent of Isaac Asimov's "The Nine Billion Names of God", especially the ending. Gary Coughlan, the hobby's leading playwright, contributed his popular "Hail Brucifer!", portraying me as the liege lord of a castle under constant siege by the East Coast Witches -- an appropriate way of viewing things, indeed. The play was to lead to a sequel by Gary a year later in my fifth annish, and Ed Wrobel complimented it by writing, "Gary's play was hilarious. Quite flattering to be portrayed as the representative of sophistry." (excerpt, ellipses expunged).



I then reprinted some material from two British zines about a game called "Finchley Central", in which the players take turns naming British rail stations until one of them names Finchley Central, thereby winning the game. This led to Glover Rogerson's variant "Diplomacy Central", wherein the first player to successfully order a unit to Albania wins. I concluded the discussion by offering a section of the game in VD, which eventually led to one of my best hoaxes ever.



Garry Hamlin and Chuff Afflerbach each contributed riotous articles. Garry's was a true story of his unenviable experiences with a pickup truck overfilled with oil, and Chuff described some humorous hypothetical horrors that might befall someone who misuses the mails. The issue then closed with an ode to itself, written by me in an inspired couple of hours late one evening.

The fourth annish of VD embodied all the things that made VD what it was, and therefore was my most complete issue ever. Yet the circumstances of its production were by and large invisible to most of the readers. Very few people knew that at the time, I was struggling with so many personal problems: my troubles with Alex, Highfield's death threats, Kathy's gleeful possession of an embarrassing letter, and so on. That I got the issue out at all was a minor miracle; it wasn't easy. Two or three people asked how deep I had had to dig into my files for all those articles. I didn't dig at all. Every single article that I wrote for the issue was written in the six weeks preceding its publication. The VD fourth annish, therefore, reflected the climactic period of my creativity. Its sheer bulk prompted Chuff Afflerbach to write that I ought to have sent it "book rate", but as Steve Knight was later to write, "That's no novel -- that's a dipzine!". Indeed, Steve and his fellow RIGEL players were to write a lot in the next few months.

### 10. Press Wars

When Rich Reilly had asked me whether I'd print some really long press releases from the RIGEL players, he wasn't kidding. All of the players ended up getting into the act, even Bob Sweeney, whose England was on the ropes at the time but whose press efforts continued long after his elimination from the "real" war. The most noteworthy press releases initially came from Rich Reilly (Turkey), Dave Kleiman (Russia), and Nelson Heintzman (Germany). Heintzman's "Black Forest" press releases were the best-written ever to appear in VD. Fantastic settings and characters were created with remarkably masterful prose, and a whole alternate path of RIGELian reality was born for players and readers to follow. Kleiman's claim to fame was his knee-slapping "Jeopardy" series, a marvelous way of insulting his opponents while keeping a lot of people entertained. Reilly's classic "It was late in the evening..." press in VD #86 was jolly, delightful, and loads of fun to parodize, as would later be proven by others.

The culmination of the RIGEL Press War appeared in Voice of Doom #93, featuring most of the players at their very best. Unbeknownst to most of the readers, I had bribed the players with free issues (the long-standing unit of currency here) to write at least three pages apiece, and the net result was over 32 pages of press, most of it very good. I am prepared to state categorically that this, the Spring 1905 seson in the RIGEL game, produced the best press ever in the hobby's history for a single

season of a game. Bob Sweeney chipped in with the continuing saga of his confinement aboard a Russian pirate ship in the Norwegian Sea. Dave Kleiman contributed a clever

parody of Rich Reilly's "late in the evening" press, and I did the same, thus adding fuel to the rumors that Rich was indeed writing all of the game's press. Rich himself, breaking new ground for future press tales, related the story of how he kidnapped Dave Kleiman's cat Whiskers, and added a sequel to the adventures of the mad Sultan and his poor, doggedly loyal, beset-upon aide. Greg Ellis told of the prolonged ordeal of the Italian Prime Minister and his family held captive in Venice. Ty Hare sent in the story of a sleazy whore, Lorique, and her mystical tactical powers which guided the French war effort in Europe. Nelson Heintzman contributed the best of his "Black Forest" press releases, relating the perfidy of the German Kaiser's wizard dwarf Rasputmann, and his replacement as the chief advisor to the Kaiser by the Nubian enchantress Tiara. But the press



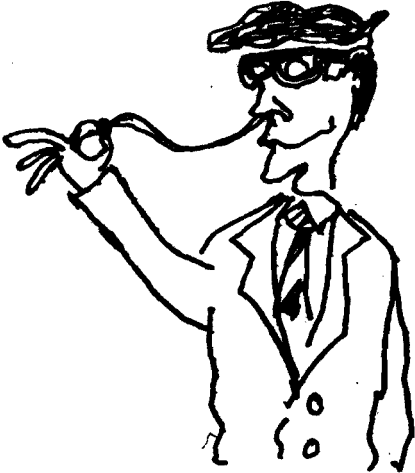
release that drew the most comment in VD and elsewhere was Steve Knight's spectacular "Press Wars", a marvelous takeoff on Star Wars in which the seven RIGEL players battled for independence against the Empire and its dreaded "Doom Star", governed by the evil Darth Linsey. This story ran 11 pages and will certainly be remembered for years to come, though sadly, an eagerly-anticipated sequel never materialized.

The RIGEL press was certainly the high point of issue #93, and was a dominant factor throughout its entire fifth year, but there was much more cooking in the VD kitchen as well. This was a time of enormous issues. Discounting the fourth and fifth anniversary issues, there were seven that hit the forty-page mark or better, including efforts of 64, 70, and 80 pages. Creativity remained high too: VD #88 featured my play "Roll Over BeethovenCon", a satire of Larry Peery's proposed diptax. A few people felt that this should have been shortened, and Jim Finley cancelled his subscription because he thought it was too vindictive, but Mark Berch seemed to speak the majority opinion when he called it "fantastic, a classic of hobby satire and humor, one of the cleverest things you've ever done." Indeed, I regard "Roll Over BeethovenCon" as the best single piece of writing I've ever produced. Over 20 Beatles songs were adapted for the occasion, most of them lending themselves to the script quite smoothly. I had had no other experience at writing plays, and the success of this one left me afraid to try again for fear that any further efforts would pale by comparison.

The Diplomacy Central openings announced in the fourth annish developed into a hoax which I gleefully called the "SIRIUS" game, since my alphabetical labeling had brought me up to the letter "S". I wrote out a script which involved having the Austrian player NMR in Spring 1901, thereby necessitating the use of neutral orders per the VD houserules. These orders included F Tri-Alb, so I brazenly declared the houserules to have won the game, a result which certain cynical ex-Doomies might find consistent with several other games in the zine's history anyway. The "decision" was then "appealed" by the unfortunate Austrian -- Steve Knight, as it worked out -- and led to a hilarious fake ruling by Mark Berch, who had been designated to play the role of ombusman for the scam. All in all, the SIRIUS hoax was a barrel of fun, although the fact that it took several issues to unfold ultimately seemed to minimize response to it.

Voice of Doom #87 was a free Christmas issue, the second I'd sent out. The issue contained the famous "Shep Rose" letter, a widely-distributed response to Mark Berch's

story in Diplomacy World about Shep Rose: the sleaziest Diplomacy player of all time. Sadly, this letter did not receive the acclaim it deserved, as many hobbyists seemed to be either offended by its contents or jealous of the fact that they weren't in on Shep's secret identity. I personally felt that the letter was a marvelously entertaining bit of writing, and was disappointed at the lukewarm reception given it by the hobby at large.



VD #87 was mostly notorious, though, because it featured an article on how to win Diplomacy games by picking your nose, a humorous if disgusting reprise to the serious strategy articles of my fourth annish. One of my readers was later to comment anonymously that the article was "the funniest I've ever read", but most of the readers just ignored it.

Voice of Doom #90 was a high point of the era in terms of creativity. "Elements of Persuasion" was a semi-serious look at the components of negotiations, and set forth a strong analogy between that and the chemistry of matter. The article intrigued

the more scientifically-minded readers and baffled some of the others, but was indisputably off the beaten path. Almost as unusual was my "Two Thousand Pages of Juicy Quotes" contest, celebrating the 2000th page of VD. Next to the Sherlock Holmes mystery in #57, this was my best contest ever. Quotes from 98 Doomies were drawn from all the previous issues of VD and listed, plus one of my own was thrown in (from issue #1, it turned out), plus a totally bogus quote was added just to spice things up further. The reader's task was to match up the quotes against the list of names of all the people quoted. For whatever reason, this contest was extremely popular; even people who didn't enter it told me that they really enjoyed it and couldn't wait to see the solution. Gary Coughlan paid me the ultimate compliment (considering the source) when he told me that "I wish I had your energy!", and Jake Halverstadt told me that he thought the whole thing was a great idea, even though neither of them participated. An added benefit of the contest was that it helped me to sell off some of the old back issues I had had in stock.

Also in VD #90 were the results of the 1983 Doomie of the Year contest, with the winning essay being Kathy Byrne's nomination of Mark Berch. Notable as well were Samantha Corbin's nomination of Joan (submitted in handwriting suspiciously similar to that in Trouble's old issues of Bark of Doom), and Alex's cheerfully insouciant essay about Mike Barno, written partly in thanks for all Mike had done for Alex and me, and partly because Alex's final column had been an unhappy one, and she wanted to leave the zine on a more lighthearted note. Following the contest results, I celebrated Mark's selection by reprinting his delightful bit of fiction, "The Guess", from an old issue of Diplomacy Digest. Indeed, it is worthwhile to note that all of the first four Doomies of the Year are possessed of extraordinary writing talent, a fact that can only bode well for this year's winner, Samantha Corbin.

The "Pilgrim and Dipimaster" series continued in VD #91 with my own installment, though this wasn't quite on a par with Olsen's and Berch's earlier pieces. Joan Extrom called it "wonderful", but Mark Berch was in my opinion closer to the mark when he remarked that "I don't think (it) really clicked."

The round-table discussions had become one of the most popular features of VD, and during this era the zine offered two of them; one on GM Interference and one on Player Ethics. Although some of the questions in the later one seemed a bit contrived to me and some of the participants, there was still a broad variety of response to both topics. In fact, the GM Interference discussion formed a substantial portion of

the 80-page issue #96, the third largest in the zine's history.

Yet another old feature to continue on throughout this period was the psychologically-oriented strategy articles I had come to enjoy writing. "Picking Your Nose" notwithstanding, the zine contained several serious essays on the topic of negotiating. The best of these was "Gaining an Ally" in VD #93, and issue #92 contained advice on how to coat your moves with "warm fuzzies" so that marginally hostile moves might be made more palatable to an opponent, whether or not he is about to feel your knife.

Old blended with new, however, as several fresh ideas for the zine popped into my head. VDs #94 and 95 each contained Diplomacy crossword puzzles, something I'd never attempted with any success before. Not that these were overwhelming successes themselves -- Steve Hutton said of #94's that "This is the worst puzzle I have ever seen!!!!" -- but still they were fun to devise, and several readers enjoyed solving each of them.

Another new feature of the time was my "Hobbytalk" column, devoted to brief comments about zines received and other goings-on in the hobby. These took the form either of quickie editorials or objective reporting, depending on my mood. The

feature proved extremely popular with much of the readership, and was far superior to my old practice of devoting an occasional page, half-page, or bottom-of-a-page to the coverage of hobby news.



One of the most embarrassing incidents in the zine's history occurred when I brazenly announced on page 1 of issue #95 that I had a cricket plaguing me in my apartment, only to have Dave Lincoln come to visit a couple of weeks later and discover that the "chirping" was coming from my smoke detector, which needed a new battery. For some reason, Doomies everywhere cackled with sadistic delight at this as my face turned postally crimson, and I became known as the hobby's intrepid cricket hunter.

This was the era of VD's greatest popularity, with circulation reaching an all-time peak of 132 in issue #87. The letter

column had reached a level of volume and variety unprecedented in the hobby, and I was usually able to print all letters on a timely basis. VD finished twelfth in the 1984 Runestone Poll, amazingly high considering that there were a high number of grudge votes.

I also decided early in 1984 that my position on the matter of hobby services qualified me as somewhat of a hobby anarchist. By and large, I don't see why the Boardman Numbers are so important, e.g., and I said so publicly. Unfortunately, some of my readers had difficulty accepting the fact that I felt this way for other than selfish reasons, and even most of those who did understand my views did not agree with them. (Then again, if the viewpoint were a popular one, the case for labeling it "anarchy" would have been severely weakened.)

A bit of comic controversy erupted also when I butchered a letter from Ed Wrobel, retaliating for a similar but more obvious stunt on his part in Politesse. Ed overreacted grossly to this, sending an open letter to everyone on the VD sub list and precipitating a great deal of mirth here. The general consensus after the whole mess was sorted out was that my "editing" fell somewhat short of being humorous, and in retrospect, I agree. The incident did lead to a follow-up article entitled "Why I'm Not Feuding with Ed Wrobel", which included a marvelous little parody of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven".

More controversy erupted in VD #99 when Ty Hare, who seems to share my love for

threading the little needles of the houserules, submitted a set of bogus Russian orders for the RIGEL game on a sheet of paper which had been a letter from Dave Kleiman, and contained his signature. General suspicion ran high that I had allowed these orders only for the sake of providing a bit more lighthearted debate for the Gossip Column. Indeed, general suspicion has been my nearly-constant companion from the day VD began, so I see no need to squelch it at this late date. Voice of Doom #99 also contained a healthy dose of sand from KaneKon II, some of which ended up in Bob Howerton's breakfast.

Although I told several people well ahead of time that #100 would be my final

issue, I basically stuck to my initial resolution to keep the matter a secret up till the very end. In retrospect, I'm glad I told Joan Extrom and Steve Knight about it several months in advance, since it happened that the storms of East Coast Cliquian controversy unleashed their fury once again over Castle Doom in its last couple of months. But I had already determined that my last issue, the fifth annish, would be my grand finale, and I wasn't about to let anyone spoil it, just as my enemies will never be able to spoil my future hobby enjoyment. And with that in mind, I started actively collecting material for the issue four months in advance, and made an early decision to throw in Randolph Smyth's old articles as well. The result is the issue you are reading now.



to a close. I wonder whether any other hobby editor has ever presented a comprehensive history of his zine like this upon folding. There was one decision I made at the outset; that whenever I eventually folded VD, I would do so cleanly and proudly. Just as there are good and bad ways to GM, to edit letters, and to play games; so there are good and bad ways to fold a zine. I am very proud to end the zine cleanly, with sub refunds to all subscribers, and with a bang worthy of its explosive and eventful life.

Epilogue

In a very real sense, I cannot write the epilogue to the history of The Voice of Doom. This will be done in time by the hobby, especially those people whose lives it touched. At this point I can only speculate a little on how hobby history will treat this zine, and ask questions which have no certain answers.

Will Voice of Doom be remembered three years after its demise, as is the Brutus Bulletin, or will it be forgotten a year from now? If it is remembered, will the hobby recall it fondly, or will the ugly feuds that periodically marred its pages stand out? Will VD be remembered by its players as the zine that was never late, or will the GMing controversies, few in number but spectacular in nature, be remembered more? Will its readers remember it for its articles and contests most of all, or will the Gossip Column come to mind first when the zine's name comes up? Will VD go down in history as the zine which brought respectability to the word "houserules", or notoriety thereto? I wish that I could see the future and know the answers to all of these questions. I suppose that in time I shall learn them.

Farewell

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And so we close. The Voice of Doom has reached its end. I shall leave you with but a few brief, final thoughts.

We produced a successful zine, you and I; you, the readers, the writers, the players; I, the editor. As a team, we published a zine whose purpose was to provide entertainment, fun, laughter. As a team, we shared much fun and laughter. I am proud to have been part of the team that produced this zine. We Doomies are a winning team, all the way.

From a more personal standpoint, I am very grateful to the postal Diplomacy hobby in general, and in particular to those of you who are my friends. These past five years seem now like one big party, and I've tried to single out some of you whose individual contributions were greatest and thank each of you by name inside this issue. A quick word to my brand new subbers: James Early, Stephen Dycus (who just came on board four days before this issue hits the mails), Ronald Spitzer, Ron Galicia, and Victor Melucci (who is an old ex-Doomie just returned). I'm sorry that the timing was such that you five didn't get to have a longer duration as Doomies. But there are many other fine zines out there; go get 'em. To all of you now: this is a wonderful hobby, and I hope you all keep right on enjoying it along with me. I hope our paths continue to cross in the future. I'm sure in many cases that they will.

I owe you, the people of the hobby, a large debt of gratitude for making postal Diplomacy so much fun for me. Bless you all, and happy diploming. The Voice of Doom bids you a fond, darcimonorous farewell.

Love,

*BRUX*

Bruce Hasey  
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All subs are now expired.