

Obviously the work of a very dedicated pervert...

THE VOICE OF DOOM

#73

February 8, 1983

Circulation: 121

by BRUX

With this issue, VD rises to new heights -- 121 subbers for an all-time high! Mark Berch, I'm right on your tail again. This issue will be going as a sample to a number of people who don't normally read it. Anyone reading this is invited to subscribe; however, I won't be opening any new games in the foreseeable future. VD features a good letter column with lots of controversy, articles, well-run games, and of course the biggest attraction of all -- Alex. The games are run on four-week deadlines and are always on time, without exception. I sometimes publish issues between game deadlines; these are called mid-monthlies and feature more reading material than do the game issues. Hope I can snare a few extra Doomies this way.

Dick Martin is running a "WHAT BRUCE LINSEY HAS DONE FOR ME!!!!!!" contest in his zine Retaliation, and has asked me to plug it. Well, I'm flattered. Dick has even gone so far as to offer 15 free issues of VD for the top two finishers (so I'll be expecting his check for \$7.50 when the contest ends). To enter, simply tell your favorite BRUX story. Whether you were the novice who got into (and quickly out of) his first game in VD, the player who doesn't know province abbreviations, the houserule addict who ODeD, or the pubber who is slandered one issue on the front page with the corrections buried somewhere in a later issue, this one is for you!! Deadline is the last day of February, so hurry and get your entries in. This could be the easiest bunch of free issues you ever earned. I'll look forward to reading your entries. Dick lives at 26 Orchard Way North, Rockville, MD 20854. Thanx, Krud, for the publicity!

You will notice an unfortunate trend toward smaller and somewhat more frequent issues these days. Alas, I simply can't afford to publish 30-pagers all the time as I've been doing for over a year, so expect 18 to 24 pages for the time being. Hope y'all aren't too disappointed, but I've never promised more. I'll do my best to keep the quality as high as I can, though.

Response to my quest for more European subbers has been disappointingly low, but one new mutual sub that I did get was Home of the Brave, published by Geoff Challinger, 100, High Street, Swanscombe, Kent, UNITED KINGDOM DA10 0AH. Good stuff, plenty of reading material. Write him for a sample if you're interested.

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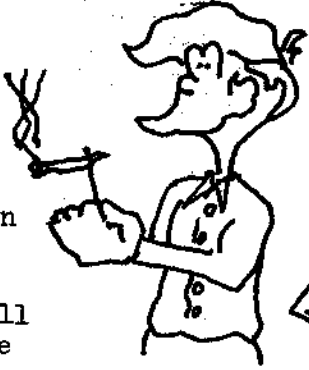
The Voice of Doom is a journal of postal Diplomacy published every now and then by Bruce Linsey, 24A Quarry Drive, Albany, NY 12205. Phone (518) 459-9250. Subs are 10 issues for \$5.00. Standbys are wanted. There are no game openings, nor will there be any for a long time. (RIGEL starts here now, sort of by accident -- see inside.)

Diplomacy is a registered trademark for a game invented by Allan B. Calhamer and copyrighted by Avalon Hill.

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The deadline for all games contained herein is March 4, 1983.

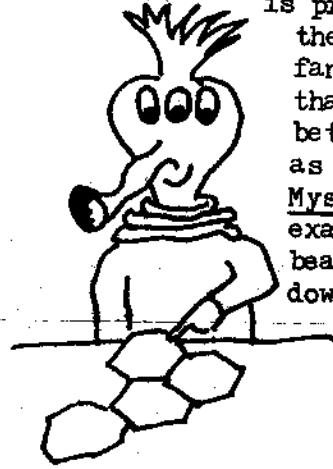
Grass is one of the most boring games I've ever played. It's just Milles Bornes with a little pot thrown in. It's not a bad family game, but your kids will no doubt like the real thing better.



Football Strategy is no doubt one of the most overrated games in history. It's just a guessing game with a matrix. I'd rather sit on the bench.



Cosmic Encounters is pretty good, but there are other fantasy games that are much better and just as simple. Mystic Wood for example would beat it hands down.



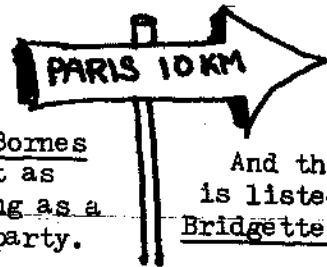
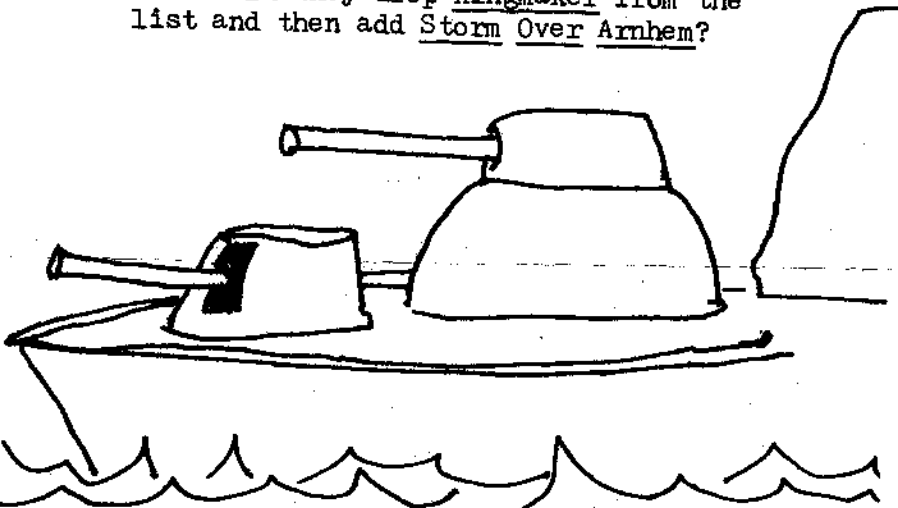
Freedom in the Galaxy is the best science fiction game on the market and it receives not even a mention.



Oregon Trails is an excellent game and it deserves the mention it got, but let's face it, it's just Source of the Nile with a cowboy thrown in.



How could they drop Kingmaker from the list and then add Storm Over Arnhem?



Milles Bornes is about as uplifting as a valium party.

And this game is listed while Bridgette is not.

I love playing Midway, but the game's been around for years. Why now is it on the 100 list?

I didn't mind them listing Risk, but how do they figure it only takes an hour?



The game of Uno ranks on my list about where the game of Life and Canasta do. Rock bottom.



M. PAUL

JUPITER (continued)

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PENNY LANE ((via ENGLAND)):

In Albany there is a duplex down on Quarry Drive
With a nice little fam'ly living there
Some folks won't go there on a dare
It gives them a scare
In the duplex is a teacher with a dippyzine
his little students all abuse him every day
'cause the teacher's head is made of clay
He is very strange -- only BRUX
Quarry Drive, it could give anyone a fright
worse than walking through New York at night
yet I come driving back
to Quarry Drive the dippy orders all come pouring in
sent by people living all over the land
his magazine is never bland
but it's often canned
Quarry Drive spews out great reams of weird reading
Beatles song takeoffs you cannot sing
yet I come driving back
to Quarry Drive the lovely young Lordlady comes
Insulting Bruce really puts her in the groove
I just don't see how her folks approve
They'd be smart to move
On Quarry Drive the GM dumps another set of moves
We see the dippies visiting collating zines
Judy makes us run around the block
and we'll all play Spoons -- gee, what loons
Quarry Drive is the true home of this abuse
It's enough to frighten off a moose
yet I'll come driving back
Quarry Drive has hosted some of my best times
I don't know why but at least it rhymes...
Keeps me 'live!

Brux: Oh, I forgot to mention it earlier, but Bob Olsen has resigned the Turkish position. Would Dick Martin, 26 Orchard Way North, Rockville, MD 20874 please assume the position? (Hyork.) The country you should order next season is listed in the game notes; you should also submit backup orders for Turkey.

TUR to ENG: I'm bored with Beatles quotes -- let's go back to literary allusions. Let's go back to the Bible. Yayyuz yayyuz yayyuz!

INTRODUCING ((via ENGLAND, GODDAMMIT MIKE, WRITE YOUR OWN DATELINE, WILL YA?)): New BSer Negotiations. Mazzer's letters can be chalky, hard to swallow. But BSer's patented new Micropudge Coating makes it all slide right down to ease your fears. No more stabbing pains.

Q ((via ENGLAND)): Why don't I save any of this for Benzene?

A ((via ENGLAND)): Are you kidding?

AUSTRIA: What did the leper say to the prostitute? Keep the tip. Why did the ref stop the leper hockey game? There was a faceoff in the corner. Why did they close the leper sushi bar? The finger bowl was full.

DRY SARCASTIC HUMOR to DOOMIE OF THE YEAR ((via ENGLAND)): Congratulations! Fer sure!

TUR to ENG: Listen, peanut head, my middle name is not James. It's not even something like James. And until you guess my middle name we can never be allies. Hint: It's not Rumpelstiltskin either.

ALL TOGETHER NOW ((via ENGLAND)): "Happy Birthday, Billy!"

((JUPITER continues next page))

From John Kador (1/18/83):

Dear Bruce,

I have some sad news, but news nonetheless, that I'd like you to print.

It was true that my wife and I were expecting a child, but Anna Beth had a miscarriage at the end of last year. It was a difficult time for us.

Many people in the Diplomacy hobby have taken the time to congratulate us, and that's good. We appreciate all the kind words. We hope that sometime soon similar words of support will be forthcoming again.

Meanwhile, my experience with the miscarriage and its after effects shows me that many people have a real hard time knowing what to say or how to act around death. This society has always had trouble dealing with death or grief. It comes out in many ways. A lot of my friends tried to be helpful by attempting to make me stop feeling bad or, failing that, feeling at all. So the following are some things not to say to someone who just went through a miscarriage:

"Well, you know, it's nature's way of protecting you. The baby was probably deformed in some way."

"God has a plan for all of us. He works in mysterious ways, and with faith you'll accept His plan."

"Don't feel bad. You'll have another baby soon."

"Don't feel bad. My aunt (cousin, sister) had six miscarriages in a row and then she had a beautiful girl."

"Oh! You poor thing! You must be feeling terrible. I know just how you feel!"

But the worst thing you can do, even worse than saying something stupid, is not to say anything at all. As bad as the miscarriage (or death) is, the isolation is worse.

The most supportive and appropriate thing anyone said to me was, "I'm sorry, John. How do you feel?" It was wonderful because it let me know that my friend cared and because it gave me the space to feel whatever I was feeling. Of course, my friend was prepared to hear whatever feelings came up for me.

Thanks again to everyone who wrote.

((The advice in this letter is very good. Thank you, John, for sharing it with us. I'm very sorry, too, to hear the bad news. Write again when you're up to it and let us know how you and Anna Beth are doing.))

From Flumphier T. Quiddipoo, Jr. (1/13/83, excerpt):

Broo,

Friday the 13th comes on Thursday this month.

VooDoo 70 excellent. Alex is refreshing. Hang on to her -- uh -- literarily, not literally. How's this for a Krazy Envelope? I actually used your whole correct name and spelled it right! (Unless it's really "Brucephus" or some such.)

I wouldn't publicize the acupuncture bit to widely ((referring to an enclosure with his letter)). Too many of your circle of -- umm -- acquaintances trying it would create undue hardships on the local welfare office.

Of course, considering where some people's brains are, merely sitting on a tack would do the job. Like Watt, f'rinstance. You hear that he's working on a plan to lease fresh air and water?

I agree with Jake H. on hunting as a "sport". Little persons on a power trip. How many shots to prove you're more bestial than that fierce ol' jack rabbit?

((Agreed. I enjoyed your Krazy Envelope. I think it's one of the first times in the past three years I've gotten a piece of mail addressed to "Bruce Linsey". Maybe you'll start a trend... You're wrong about Friday the 13th. It fell on January 14th.

No, I won't publicize the acupuncture bit. America needs it like it needs a hole in the head.))

From Bob Osuch:

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Dear Bruce,

Can't believe I'm here ((in Arizona)). A friend and I drove straight through from Chicago to Mesa, 1760 miles in all. It took us 32 hours, which is damn good time, no? Not much nice scenery on the way, till we hit Arizona. We went south through Illinois till we hit I-70, then west through St. Louis and Missouri, taking I-44 through Missouri and Oklahoma. Nothing much to see there, though the Ozarks were OK. Not really mountains though. Then we picked up I-40 in OKC and took that across Texas and into New Mexico. I have a feeling that Albuquerque was really beautiful but we went through it at night, in the snow yet. It seemed to be right in the mountains because the roads were going up and down in steep grades. Anyway, these silly old rednecks out here don't know how to drive in the snow. If there's an inch on the ground, that means don't go over 30 MPH, so I had to blow all of them. That was the worst part of the trip, also considering the dense fog that accumulated in the valley as we were driving through.

We hit AZ by daylight and saw the southern end of the Painted Desert. The best scenery was the drive from Flagstaff to Phoenix. Flagstaff is right in the mountains with pine trees and ice caps, similar to the Rocky Mountains. From there, we kept going downhill, through Prescott National Park ((National Forest, you mean)). Really amazing scenery. As we descended, the pine trees disappeared and were replaced by brush, until we finally hit the desert and the cactus.

Did anyone ever tell you the two biggest lies in the world? 1) "The check's in the mail." 2) "I won't come in your mouth." HA HA, love that last one.

My interest in Dip is seriously waning. If it doesn't pick up soon I'll probably finish up my games and observe from afar.

Oh, I noticed that you're finally easing up on Martin. What brought that on? Not that I don't know, just makes me wonder what the big stink was to begin with. Hmm?

((The "big stink" was that Dick is a sloppy GM (unless you consider unannounced delays of several weeks duration to be good GMing) who doesn't feel he should take criticism over his GMing; and that he tried to disrupt Swedish Roundabout by complaining about some unspecified "possible GM misconduct" which later turned out to be totally absurd, in my opinion. I've eased up on Dick simply because I said all I felt I needed to say, and felt no need to hash and rehash the same topic. Case closed unless something new comes up.

I'm sorry to hear you're losing interest in Diplomacy. Maybe after you get settled your enthusiasm will rise again.

No, nobody's ever told me that second great lie. Yet.))

From Ed Wrobel:

Bruce--

Bellyaching, eh? Well, you pays your money and you prints your zine. You can't say I didn't already try rational discourse and humor. Speaking of which, what inspired you to edit the humorous portions of my last communication? For the record, as it were, I would never have bellyached if you had let your error of judgement slip into the past instead of holding it up as an example of BRUXian fairplay. I subbed to VD because I wanted a reliable GM, not a supercilious school-marm.

Copies of "I disobeyed Mr. Linsey" x 100 forwarded under separate cover.

((I don't necessarily print everything that finds its way into my mailbox. I enjoyed the humorous enclosure you sent, but decided not to run it.

"Reliable GM" versus "supercilious school-marm"? I think you got both here!

I was not holding up my decision in NEPTUNE as an example of fair play; rather, I was pointing out that in this situation (and others) I have given the player the courtesy of calling an ombudsman even though I felt reasonably sure I was right. You can claim, if you like, that my decision itself was unfair; but I don't think you can say that my method of resolving disputes is unfair. There's a difference.))

From John Leeder (1/11/83):

Dear Bruce;

I'm not doing very well at cold turkey, writing these letters...but it'll come...

The lateness of my doing the calculations for the Zine Poll was approximately one month -- not the latest (or the earliest) I've been. My real mistake was made on the original poll: assuming that in the summer I'd have more time to do the calculations. My second mistake was holding to that schedule (announcement end of March, deadline end of June) year after year. This year, as so many times before, a succession of unexpected visitors and unexpected developments both before and after the deadline kept me from working on it.

Make no mistake -- doing the Zine Poll is a lot of work. It was especially so before people listed the zines alphabetically (some still don't). It may be that you'd be able to run the poll exactly on time; if so, I admire your single-mindedness. It means putting lots of personal life on the backburner for a weekend or so. (That's what it took me this time to do it all at a crack.)

(I travel in late August at least every second year -- to attend a family reunion in Ontario. This pattern may change now that my kids live with me, so likely will visit their mother every summer. Just thought you'd like to know -- not that it'll affect the hobby much.)

I don't disagree that the poll was "mishandled" this year -- at least the logistics of getting the results to the public. But it was mostly unforeseen circumstances (on my part and Rod's) rather than a bad original plan. If all had gone smoothly, the delays would have been minimal.

On the draw/concession issue: the rule I've used for a long time is as follows. If the player NMRs (thus NVRs) the question is left open (unless a "no" vote from another player causes the vote to fail). The player (or replacement) may vote next season. (Other players may change their votes in the meantime.) If a player sends orders but neglects to vote, it counts as a "yes". I assume that if a player is so blasé about the game that he doesn't bother to read the voting instructions, or forgets, he can't complain if the game ends without his approval. But I also reason that a player is not kicked out of the game for a single NMR, thus a single NMR should not determine the outcome of the vote. Only one player has ever objected to this rule. I don't think I convinced him. (It was Roland Prévot, if you were wondering.)

Re double price for double issues: Funny, Randolph Smyth and I (at least) charge by the page for our zines and no one has ever complained. We are effectively doing the same thing as you, and I think it's only fair. (Uh, oh -- did I blow our cover?)

Re Peter Blitstein's letter ((VD #70, p. 31)): Some people are naturally argumentative and enjoy controversy for its own sake. Others genuinely enjoy the minutiae of the hobby, without rancor even in disagreements. We shouldn't lose sight of the difference.

I'd sooner see too many houserules than too few. Houserules should try to cover all reasonably conceivable circumstances which can arise -- a GM should have a well-thought-out policy before disputes arise (which he can formulate from experience as a player and from studying other GMs' houserules). Houserules communicate this policy to the players. Houserules which appear "cumbersome and ridiculous" may in fact just be all-inclusive.

Back to the Zine Poll (via Kevin Stone's letter) ((VD #70, p. 34)): as I did not get all the zines in the hobby, I was never in a position to know which zines were subzines (assuming that I can even define "subzine"), fakes, one-shots, etc. I have to assume that ineligible zines will not receive many mentions -- an assumption which seems not to have been the case this year. If ineligible zines are rated, surely the fault lies with the voters who didn't read the rules, not with the rules themselves! But the new pollster will no doubt write his own rules anyway...

I suppose one could ask all publishers to send their zines to the pollster, but I doubt if they'd go for it. After all, they won't do it for the Boardman Number Custodian and Miller Number Custodian...

I doubt if a "Best Single Issue" category would be meaningful without a much higher voter participation and a much higher number of people getting most zines in the hobby.

Does all this shit get me another free issue? You must quit printing all this interesting stuff -- it's interfering with my disengagement!

((Good! We want to keep you in the hobby as long as possible!

I didn't mean to strongly criticize your handling of the Zine Poll -- nor that of any one individual in particular. 'Twas a combination of factors that caused the Poll to take so long to become public -- the rolled-back deadline, the sale of first rights to DW, and your difficulties in finding time to work on it. It is true, though, that if I were running the Poll, I'd have the results ready the day following the deadline.

I don't like your rule concerning NVRs. It seems to penalize a player for getting his moves in -- his failure to vote counts against him only if he does not NMR. But if it worked for you for so long, then I spose it can't be all bad...

I don't understand what you mean when you say that you and Randolph are doing the same thing as me when you charge per page. I don't do any thing like that -- I just charge 50¢ an issue and that's it.

Your comments about houserules hit the mark 100%, so far as I'm concerned.

You're right in saying that some publishers would not send their zines to the pollster unless he subscribed. VD, for instance, can only be had by paying for it, either with cash or a mutual sub. Unless, of course, people like you constantly force me to send free issues by writing all this interesting shit... (Actually, that's not true; I send out lots of freebees for other reasons as well.)))

From Rich Reilly (1/13/83):

Dear Bruce,

Nice of you to send me a copy of The Voice of Doom. Seems to contain some interesting and entertaining material. Interesting enough to make me want to read some more, in fact, and I have therefore included a check for \$11.00...start my subscription immediately.

Of course, you might also put me on whatever lists you have of players wanting to join a game (as a standby or whatever). Whenever there's a game opening, I'm ready to begin. (I notice, however, that there is already a considerable number of people on the VD standby list. Hope I don't have to wait too long.)

Now then, as long as I have your attention, if you'd care to take the time to answer a question for me, I'd be most appreciative. I am currently gamesmastering my own game of Diplomacy; a PBM/PBP game currently on the Spring 1903 turn. It's being played by a group of my friends who became Diplomacy fanatics last summer, who were then split up as we all headed back to school...anyway, all that's not important to the question, which is: how exactly does a draw come about in a game? Specifically, who gets to vote on it, and how many votes are needed for it to pass? (Not that anybody's proposed a draw yet, but the question has come up in a few FTF games.)

Another question: is there a separate cost for playing in a game, or is that included in the cost of VD?

Let me know anything else I should know. Thank you, and farewell!

((Welcome aboard! I have added your name to my standby list, and will try to give you a call soon. ← Late note: the RIGEL game was started after that was typed.

A draw can be proposed by any player in the game (meaning any player who owns at least one supply center), and is voted on by all players. It must be unanimous to pass. Some GMs also have a provision for declaring a draw if no centers change hands for, say, three game years. This prevents a player from perpetually vetoing a draw while in a stalemated position, in the hope that another player will eventually miss his moves.

In VD, there is a \$3.00 game fee which is not included in the sub rate. There is also a refundable \$3.00 NMR fee, which is returned to players who don't drop out of the game. Let me know if you have any further questions. Also, I don't remember if I sent you a copy of Supernova, the Novice Packet. The cost is \$1.00, and it will answer a lot of question you (or any novice) might have. Good luck!))

From Billy Highchair (excerpts):

Dear Bruce,

Yay! Alex is Doomie of the Year! I didn't think that my essay would win. Hmm, now I must think of how I can become Doomie of the Year!

You know, I did send Alex those Heath bars that I promised her at her house. I'll bet she thought I was kidding! Sure, it cost me about \$10 to send it, but the shock value was worth it. It's all your fault, too. If I hadn't met Alex and liked her, I wouldn't be doing all these crazy things.

The city of Rochester is in mourning as I write this letter. On 11 Jan 83, Peter Castrate, a Rochester City school teacher was stabbed to death. The picture of you and Alex in the last VD reminded me of you and your teaching job. The teacher stabbed was in his thirties, played pro softball with a now-defunct Rochester team, and had a few hobbies. The similarity between you and him scared me just a little. Anyway, I want you, Alex, and other Doomies to be careful. Tragedy can hit anyone at any time.

I'm giving you, Alex, and all my friends warning that when I go on my four-week summer cruise, I'll be working a lot and my only recreation will be reading, writing, and sleeping. Oh well, that's alright, because after a month at sea, I'll be out of control at Origins '83 (as if I'm not laready!). Hey, you simply MUST get Alex to go!! Also, note that John Banke is having a con in February. Can you and Alex come to Rochester? Us Rochesterians would like to return your hospitality!

((I'd like to, but it looks like the only cons I'll be attending this year are the Big O in Detroit, and KaneKon in Great Neck. Alex may go to that one...))

What similarities are you talking about between me & the guy that got killed? That we're both perverts? That we both seem to enjoy getting stabbed? Or what?

I'm looking forward to your vacation!))

From Doug Beyerlein (12/25/82, excerpt):

Dear Bruce,

In VD #68 you printed a series of letters regarding the article that Ron Brown of Murd'ring Ministers wrote for Supernova. I became curious as to the origins of that article and decided to see if I could find it.

I have not found the original article or author (assuming that it isn't actually Ron), but I did find out a few things that might help in the search. The Supernova article discusses the Southern Hedgehog opening (F Tri-Ven, A Vie-Gal, A Bud-Ser). This is the British name for this opening. Richard Sharp in his book, The Game of Diplomacy, states that he coined the name of "Hedgehog" in 1975. So the article was first written around or after 1975. Ron first wrote (or rewrote) the Austrian article in MM #2. I don't have a copy of MM #2 so I don't know the date of that issue, but it was probably prior to 1980. That should narrow the range of possible sources for the article. My guess is that the article was originally printed in an English zine in the late '70s. An English publisher who has been in the hobby for some years (Peter Birks, for example) may be able to track it down.

((Thanks for the leads. I'll contact Birks to see whether he can help out with the search.))

From Ed Wrobel (2/2/83):

Bruce,

On February 1, I called you to submit a revision of my NEPTUNE moves and to let you know that I harbored no animosity toward you, despite the tone of my recent letters regarding our dispute over your disallowance of my previous support orders in NEPTUNE. You asked to quote me and I declined, primarily because I feared that my conciliatory statement might be misinterpreted. I continue to disagree with your action and I find

your philosophy of GMing unacceptable. But that's all within the context of the game. For all I know, you may be a fine teacher and a decent human being. I don't judge your personal or professional worth. As for the hobby, you seem to put a good deal of effort into your Diplomacy activities and I find that admirable. What I object to is your bureaucratic, supercilious approach. In his decision, Berch wrote that I should have know all about this when I signed up for games in VD. Well, I did not. In fact I wrote the orders as I did with the intention of pursuing BRUXian clarity. You should have seen my face when I opened that issue of VD and saw what happened. I was shocked.

Language is one of our greatest accomplishments. The use and study of language is a joy to many people. Yet its limitations can be a curse. The abuse of language is a terrible crime. I don't mean ungrammatical construction or impolite slang. By "abuse", I mean the manipulation of language to impede communication. (Kind of like what we do in Diplomacy. But it's destructive outside the game.)

My position rests on the assumption that the communication of my move -- the meaning I attempted to convey by writing certain symbols on a piece of paper -- was quite clear. And once again I cite Berch's rational in support of this assumption. Your interpretation ignored the clear meaning -- the communication -- and substituted a dusty, unbending rule. I was punished for failing to adhere rigidly to BRUXian ritual. Assuming the supremacy of the ritual, the decision is clear-cut, as you wrote in response to one of my letters. I challenge the ritual itself. I challenge it because it elevates bureaucratic rigidity over rational interpretation. I challenge it because it is demeaning to the players and to the game.

I must lose, of course.

((Thank you for a well-written and thought-provoking letter. If in saying that you "must lose", you mean that I will not be persuaded to change my strict style of GMing, then you are right -- but I'll do my best to give you a fair explanation of why.

There are many different styles of GMing in the hobby. There are GMs who will run games on two-week deadlines, and GMs with six-week deadlines. There are GMs who allow black press, and GMs who don't. There are GMs who will do their utmost to fix up a miswritten order to avoid "screwing" a player -- and there are GMs like myself who feel that if the player doesn't get it right himself, it's not the GM's job to change the faulty order even if the intent is clear. Each GM chooses the style with which he is most comfortable, and runs his games in that fashion. And, just as there are many different GMing styles, there are many diverse preferences among players. Some players like fast games; others like slow games. Some like GMs to be lenient with orders; some prefer a greater degree of strictness. As a player, I prefer a strict GM, and probably as a result, I am more comfortable GMing this way. But what all of this boils down to is that there is a lot of diversity in this hobby, and that diversity is desirable. What you view as "demeaning to the players and to the game" is viewed by many others as a GMing style under which they like to play.

What's more, despite your claim that you didn't know about my strict GMing, I am very careful to warn anyone who signs up in VD that I am extremely strict. Maybe you didn't know, but you should have. In VD #57, page 1 (with the announcement of my game openings), I said, "I should explain what you're in for if you sign up here. I'm a very strict GM...and if you miswrite your moves I'm not inclined to fix them up for you." And, with the gamestart announcements in #58, I wrote the following: "IMPORTANT NOTES FOR NEW PLAYERS IN VD -- PLEASE READ! ... Be very careful in writing your orders, as I'm a strict GM." You say you didn't know, but I could not possibly have made my philosophy more clear. And, of course, the houserules go into detail about the parentheses notation -- it's considered a set of orders for two units (and lots of my players have used it over the years, so I don't wish to change it). So I plead innocent not only to your specific charge that this particular decision was unfair, but also to your greater charge that my GMing style itself is demeaning. It's not for everyone, of course, and those who really don't like it should play elsewhere. But there's no reason why I shouldn't run games strictly, so long as I can find players who wish to play in such games and so long as everyone is informed in advance how I GM. Both of these conditions have been met.

Hope that explains my position well enough. I'm sorry that you don't find my GMing to your liking, and, like you, I bear no animosity as a result of this dispute.))

From Mark Berch (1/15/83 and 1/27/83, excerpts):

Dear Bruce,

...The page 22 pic of Alex was better than the page 1 picture.

Am I missing something, or did you change the rules to the Doomie contest? Wasn't it supposed to be whoever was named in the best essay, in which case shouldn't it have been MacFarlane?

...Bill Quinn is planning to put the end game stuff from Everything into a computer to make a fully accessible archive of postal games and players. Rick Ragsdale wonders whether this is good either for individuals or the hobby, asking whether we want this "information available to the rankest novice", and wonders what "old hands" think.

This old hand has no problem with it at all. Some people don't realize what handicaps novices operate under. They may be unfamiliar with the routine of postal Diplomacy, and have only the most rudimentary ideas of how to write a good letter. And the players are all total strangers. It's no wonder that some of them get so discouraged from the start that they quit the hobby before they've had a chance to find out what it's all about. If a novice could find out some information about the other players, that would help even things up a bit, and so I'm all in favor. Moreover, it can make it easier to break the ice. He could say, "Gee, I see in the Quinn file you won with France in only 1906. How did you manage that?!" Novices are targets for such statements as I'm-a-very-unsuccessful-player (when the player is not unsuccessful) which will work only against novices. The less of that, the better. My only doubts are whether this would be used enough to justify the huge amount of time it will take.

Ed Wrobel is still grouching about the situation where he ordered a unit both to hold and to support. Bruce treated the piece as being double-ordered, and I as ombudsman upheld that. Ed has taken to quoting me as saying his intent was clear. Sure, it was clear, we knew you didn't intend to double-order your pieces. But that's irrelevant. If a player writes A Bel-Hel, it's clear that he didn't intend to have the army jump into the sea, but had A Bel-Hol in mind. But regardless of his intentions, he wrote Hel, just as regardless of Ed's intentions, he did double-order the piece, and we have to go by what the player does. Players don't usually intend to NMR, but that is really beside the point.

Ty Hare objects to the "real perverts" who raise "domesticated animals for the sole purpose of killing them", and decries the "slaughtering, en masse" of pigs, cows, etc. What about the mass slaughter this year of my carrots? There's not one left! There's a difference, you say? I doubt it. I raised my carrots expressly to be slaughtered. The only reason they ever saw the light of day was because I raised them to be eaten. The same goes for chickens. Without the intent to eat them, they would never have been born in the first place, and that to me is the essential similarity -- they were both born to be eaten. Perhaps Ty will carp that he resembles a pig more than he resembles a carrot. So what? What a ridiculously egocentric standard of ethics! It's just a few short hops from that to the notion that killing someone of a different race isn't as bad as killing someone of one's own race -- after all the person of one's own race is a lot closer resemblance.

((I agree with you, of course, because I would rather live and get eaten than never to have lived at all. Heck, as far as I'm concerned, I didn't live at all until I got eaten! So, count me among the "perverts".

Several people have wondered about my procedure for choosing the Doomie of the Year. So far as I can remember, I have never said that the winner will be the person nominated by the best essay. The strongest thing I believe I've said on the subject was after the 1981 contest was over (VD #57, p. 23): "My choice was based more on the quality of the essay than on how deserving I felt the nominee was." -- implying that both criteria were contributing factors. This year, I will admit without any shame that I was very biased in favor of Alex -- a decent essay nominating her would win because in my opinion she deserved to win. I don't feel that this method of choosing is unfair, though I admit I should have made the procedure more clear. Anyway, the contest is intended to be strictly in fun.))

From Steve Langley (1/17/83):

Dear Bruce,

I finally got around to reading VDs # 70 and 71. The highspot of both issues was the "Broken Record" article. That was truly delightful.

Comment on the "give deer rifles" school of thought. It wouldn't work, deer are not smart enough to fire a rifle. If they were, we would have exterminated them or they us long since. I rather prefer the idea of throwing hunters into a common hunting ground and letting them all prey on each other. We could call it New York City.

In response to your request for more information about the Frost game, Jack had tied his deadline to Dick's publishing schedule. When Retal stopped its regular schedule the game halted for a month or so (sorry if I'm not more precise). Someone (I think Bob Olsen) told Kathy of the problem and she wrote to Frost, who then sent out an adjudication directly to the players. He offered to continue doing so if the players wanted him to do so, and were willing to send him 50¢ to cover costs. This went on for two more adjudications.

Meanwhile I was starting Magus. I sent Jack an invitation to house the Frost game in Magus. He proposed it as a vote. It passed unanimously and so is now run in Magus.

At the point the vote was passed, Bob Olsen suggested to me that Dick Martin was due the courtesy of being told about it. I feel that I should have thought of it myself. At any rate, I wrote to Dick and told him that the Frost game had moved. So far as I know, I told Dick the entire story. If I left something out it was oversight due to bad memory.

Other than being one of the players in the game and voting yes to the move, I don't know what part Ron Brown played. It was my impression that Ron played no other part.

I don't think that the situation merits unethical charges from either side. Thoughtlessness, slow publishing schedules, now these are charges that might stick, but who cares? Congratulations to Alex.

((I enjoyed your crack about NYC. I also agree that the R7 controversy was not handled in an unethical manner from either side. Thanx for writing.))

From Jim Meinel (1/26/83):

Dear Bruce,

Hey, that last letter confused me too! I reread the letter Dick wrote to you in #70 and saw I mixed up your comments with what he was writing -- you charge \$3 for a game! You're right, Dick's games are free, and my apologies to him for the smart remarks; he is totally justified in his opinion of game fees. It's stupid-ass comments like mine that start some of these disagreements.

Also, I've been meaning all these months to ask you but have never gotten around to it: just who is Jane Proskin? I've heard rumors that she is just a pen name, and that her address was just a maildrop for a friend/relative of yours??? Her "plug" of Peek #2 came about the time I was joining the hobby, and I dutifully sent two or three stamps to "occupant, etc." for a sample. Never got a thing. If it was a fake/hoax/whatever, whatever happened to all those stamps that the "plug" must have undoubtedly drawn? I've always wondered about that.

Keep up the good work with VD. The quantity of quality you put out every two weeks is phenomanal.

((The story behind the name "Jane Proskin" is an interesting one. I invented the name as a pseudonym with which I was going to poke fun at some of my hobby friends. After Bob Arnett spilled the beans, Jack Masters picked up on the name and published some issues of Peek using the name from an address in Burbank, CA. He asked people to send him some stamps for further issues, and I (and many others) obliged. He then stopped sending Peek, keeping our stamps (I lost a couple of bucks, I think). Although I invented the name, I had nothing to do with Peek and the money that Jack stole.

Thanks for clearing up the confusion regarding Dick's gamefees.))

From Jeff Noto (1/25/83):

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BRUX,

Time for some comments on the most recent issues of VD.

I was rather surprised that you printed Barno's letter describing the Vac Dip affair. Some of his comments about Julie could cause a lot of trouble. I know you have a policy of printing anything, but it appears to me that a lot of what Mike said is going to be looked upon as pure character assassination. Then again, I also thought that some of Julie's comments on Gary were character assassinations, too. I guess the vicious circle goes round and round.

I'm surprised as well that no one has made mention of the worst aspect of Woody's houserule about sending in orders after the deadline if the game is not adjudicated. Let's say you and I are in one of Woody's games (fat chance, huh?) and we're allies. I call you on the day after the deadline and ask you for your orders, explaining that I'll be out of town for a few weeks. Being the faithful ally that you are you give them to me (hang on, it's going to get better). I then call Woody and lo and behold, he hasn't done our game yet. I ask him if I could change my orders. He says OK. So, I decide to stab you. And it's all perfectly legit according to the houserules.

Congratulations to Alex on Doomie of the Year. As for my article; well, if there's a gullibility award, I guess I'm the front runner. I'm also convinced that Steve Langley is an Arnawoodian toady -- this is the second year in a row he's nominated Woody.

Mark Paul is a comic genius. Not only can he draw well, he comes up with some great creative ideas.

Time to head off to more mundane topics like studying. Hope to meet you someday this summer. Has Ron Brown announced the winner of the Nixon Award?

((Not as I type this.

In the example you cite, I'd be a fool to give you my orders without knowing that the adjudication had been finished. Heck, even players in VD shouldn't give their moves to other players before determining that the deadline for the game has passed because game delays and separations of seasons do occur every now and then.

I don't have a policy of printing anything, just most things. Kathy Byrne tried at ByrneCon to get me to promise to print a letter she was planning to send me, without my first being able to read the letter. That's a commitment I'd never make, though she gave me a lot of heat over it.))

From Richard Edison (1/16/83):

Dear BRUX,

I've been reading my roommate's back copies of The Voice of Doom (my roommate is Ty Hare). As a result, I'd like my own sub to your "extremely controversial" and "relatively humorous" (humorless?) dipzine. In reading issues #65 - 71, a few questions pop inot this tyro's head: 1) What, or perhaps who, is Tro? Is she (?) dead or alive? Also, what's a "dead skunk"? Also, who is this "Woodpecker", and why is he saying these terrible things about you? (No need to answer that, really.) Finally, I'd like to get a copy of your issue #52, if you still have any, as fakes hold some interest for me. Finally (again), could I get a copy of your houserules tome? Thanks.

((OK, though I hardly think that California needs another earthquake.

The story behind the name "Tro" is an interesting one. I invented the name as a pseudonym for Keith Sherwood as a result of the "Tro Affair" in VD a while back. Keith, playing Austria in the GALAXY game, opened with "A Vie-Tro", which I threw out as ambiguous, not knowing whether he was trying to write "Tyo" (Tyrolia) or "Tri" (Trieste). A furor ensued, naturally, just as I had hoped it would, and the nickname stuck.

A "dead skunk" is another name for the matter that occupies the space between Mark Luedi's ears.))

Larzelenze:

Dear Bruce,

I see you gave me two free issues for helping to collate VD #70. Now, what did you have to do that for? I didn't do it to get free issues. Christ, you often lose \$100 an issue, you spend countless hours typing it up...I don't think most of your readers realize how much effort you put into the zine. Do they realize you typed in the two rows of "=" signs on page 1 individually for all 117 copies of #70? I've been getting the zine for nearly three years, so helping to collate one issue is the least I can do in return for all the effort you've put into your zine in that time. So please, put my sub credit back to #81. I'll have guilt feelings if I take any more free issues from you. I'll pay for more issues when my sub runs out. I think a lot of other Doomies would be willing to contribute to your zine because they feel it's worth contributing to, not to get free issues. Maybe you could continue to offer free issues, but I hope more people will start turning them down. I'm sure you'll say something in response like "I don't care about giving away all those free issues", but I hope some people will start turning the freebies down anyway, just to make a point -- that they appreciate all the effort and expense you put into VD.

Schilling would choose destruction of the world "every time"? If you destroy the world once, there won't be another time. I don't know why people assume the Russians would control the world forever if they gained control of it once. No human government will ever last forever. The world recovered from the Dark Ages after several centuries, and it would also recover from an oppressive Soviet regime after centuries. If you do not wish to live under an oppressive government, you can disobey it until they execute you. You'll be just as dead as if you were killed in a nuclear war, and you'll leave survivors. Destroying the entire human race forever is just insane.

I liked Ty Hare's letter. Why do some of your readers call bow hunting more humane than shooting a deer? Do they realize how much longer it takes the deer to die?

I hope you'll consider changing your rule to allow what Ed Wrobel ordered in the future. It's true that the Rulebook lists "hold" and "support" as two different things that a unit can do. But in reality, holding is part of supporting. You've had no qualms about changing the Rulebook on a number of other points, so why stick so rigidly to a point in the Rulebook that only makes things more difficult for your players?

You've now printed good reasons for NVR = "yes", for non-DIAS, and for allowing players to pass a concession to a minor power. You have decent cases for all of these separately. But when you have all of these at the same time, you end up with MILKY WAY. If that was really the result your players wanted, you wouldn't have ended up restarting the game. For at least the ridiculous proposals (as you'd define "ridiculous" in a rule) you should have NVR = "no". It's impossible for a 17-center power to be eliminated due to a disorder of one unit, so eliminating such a power due to forgetting to vote should be similarly difficult. Perhaps you'll construct another screwy example to try to sway your readers again, but you won't fool me -- the case you've rested is very weak.

((So, it's impossible for a 17-center power to be eliminated due to a disorder of one unit, is it? See my article later this issue. However, my houserule amendments (which hopefully will be published next issue, at last), will provide for NVR = "no" on ridiculous proposals.

No, I will not change the rule Ed Wrobel got caught on. The parentheses notation has come in very handy for dozens of players over the years, and has been very rarely misunderstood. It's a good rule, and it stays.

I don't necessarily agree that destroying the human race forever is insane. Maybe without us to interfere, a better race would evolve...

I appreciate the kind words at the beginning of your letter. I offer free issues as a way to encourage people to write for me, as VD depends on the contributions of its readers. To me, it's worth the price to have a zine with a high degree of subber participation. But thanx.))

by John MacFarlane

Why does controversy seem to gravitate towards The Voice of Doom, paying only occasional attention to the many other zines, and ultimately ending up in BRUX's letter column? Undoubtedly, many Doomies have asked this question at one time or another. Indded, why? Is it the zine's very character, or the unusual personality of its editor? Methinks it is neither: VD is successful because BRUX creates controversy!

There are numerous cases in point, and I shan't bother to list them all. Many methods have been used, ranging from subtle suggestions in a forged letter to ridiculously faded and unreadable houserules. Sometimes, though, Bruce can get away with open but subtle suggestions in his zine. This technique has manifested itself most recently in a controversy over the third annual Doomie of the Year contest. After the runner-up essay was printed (written by Jake Halverstadt and nominating John MacFarlane), BRUX wrote, "I will freely admit that this was the best essay submitted, and that John MacFarlane has all the necessary credentials. However, as some people have already noted, there is one candidate who truly deserves the honor head and shoulders above all others this year, and the winning entry is about her..." This simple but effective sentence threw everyone into a state of confusion. Letters started appearing in the mailbox at 24A Quarry Drive: "But I thought the award was supposed to go to the person nominated by the best written essay! John deserves the title!" Sharing the mailbox with those letters were others that went like this: "I know you'll get a lot of flak for choosing Alex, as you admitted that the best essay was about MacFarlane, but you chose right -- Alex is certainly the best choice." BRUX smiles as he reads the letters, wondering how long it will last. He has pulled it off again. Exuberant, he drags out his typewriter and starts typing all of them, together with this silly article, into his zine...

((Me? Create controversy? What a hilarious suggestion. It's so funny I'm going to add two free issues to your sub!

Alex has been amused too, by all the controversy surrounding the Doomie of the Year award. She says that she is glad that she was able to stir up some of the controversy for which VD is famous. Chip off the ol' BRUXian block, she is!))

Now, all of you have a very happy VD!

BRUX

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Your sub expires with issue # 79