

The eighth most popular zine in North America is...

THE VOICE OF DOOM

#81

July 12, 1983

Circulation: 117

by BRUX

Let's start with a very important announcement to all players: do not expect to catch me by phone with your orders this coming deadline! There is a very good chance that I won't be here to take your call. Send them in, and do it soon. I usually try to be here to take phone orders, but this coming two weeks is going to be ultra hectic for me, as I'm leaving for Lake George the day after deadline Friday. If you depend on the phone this month, you may very well NMR.

For the same reason, this note to all readers: don't expect a whole lot next issue as I'll be too harried to put out much. I'll print the games and whatever else I have time for, but it's not going to be anything spectacular, OK? I thought of just delaying the deadline for all games, but I won't be home the two following weekends either, so that won't do.

Anyway, that out of the way, here now is the mid-monthly I promised you all a couple of weeks ago. Should turn out to be 30 pages or so, all reading material, no games this time. I'm making up a few extra of these to distribute at Origins; anyone who reads this as a sample should be informed that this issue is reasonably typical of what to expect from me, except that most of my issues carry games. There are no game openings now, though, so don't sub if you're not interested in the letters and articles.

A couple of very special zines hit my mailbox lately. First was Billy Highchair's 132-page anniversary issue of The Modern Patriot. This issue was loaded with great reading material and to the best of my knowledge Bill has set a record for size of a zine published in North America. Congratulations, Bill!

I also must mention the latest issue of 30 Miles of Juicy Gossip, published by Mark Inedi. Sad to say, some people regard me as the Bad Boy of Postal Diplomacy, and this issue contains an interview with me which explains why. Plus, there's a really sweet photo on the front cover! I've reread this issue at least ten times; it was great!

Many people have told me that they plan to attend the Origins Beer Blast. Why not come and join us, if you're gonna be there. Thanks also to the publishers who have generously given this publicity in their zines. Try to bring cold beer; I just realized we don't have a fridge in the room!

~~~~~

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, and there will not be any for a long time, sorry.

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

~~~~~


Come Play with Us

A Short History of the Postal Diplomacy Game Flyer

by Rod Walker

A recent issue of VD mentioned (in the letter column) Conrad von Metzke's campaign to get Charles Reinsel's name removed from the postal game flyer which was then found in Diplomacy sets. That raises all sorts of questions, such as how there came to be a flyer in the first place, whether that campaign was successful, and how the flyer got to its present form (which does not name any postal GMs at all). Perhaps nobody cares about the answers. Well, you are going to get them anyway, even though there is some implicit curiosity about these things, so I'll forebear to say "you asked for it". But you are going to get it, anyway.

Postal Diplomacy got its start through science fiction fandom primarily, and for a long time that was the chief source of input. Most of the players were also part of the college crowd...undergrads, grad students, and faculty. Fellow students and faculty were another chief source of new players. In those early days, too, Graustark was the hobby center, and all inquiries about the game seemed to find their way there...through Allan Calhauer, Games Research (then owner of the game), other GMs, sf conventions, and what have you.

The time came, however, by about 1967-69, that the hobby became more diversified and much larger. Concern was expressed then, too, about expanding the number of postal players, of locating people who might want to play by mail and giving them a chance to join the fun. Wargaming, per se, was beginning to become very widespread and it was recognized that these people would be drawn to Diplomacy but would not get into the traditional entry-ways of the hobby (I'm saying all this from hindsight; we didn't express all this in nearly such neat phrases in those days.)

Somewhere along the line somebody (I don't recall who) bruted about the idea that there should be a general information flyer in the Diplomacy game box, with information on the hobby and a list of GMs. Nobody seemed to know how we might accomplish this. I decided to try the direct approach: I drafted a text for the flyer, a list of the then-active GMs, and a letter to John Moot (President of GRI) and sent it off. John liked the idea and after some circulation of the text to other prominent people in the hobby, it was printed and inserted into the game box. It was that simple: John was delighted with the idea...after all, the availability of by-mail play will cause the popularity of the game to increase.

At that time, we really had not considered the problem of keeping that list of GMs current. Every GM in the hobby was included...we felt then that there was no other way to do it. So Reinsel's name was on the list, despite a lot of misgivings by the prime movers in the affair. But GMs moved, zines went out of business, and so on, so that the flyer got out of date very fast. The problem there is that the economy demanded that the flyer be reproduced in large numbers, so that any change would require re-printing and maybe also the expense of pulling old flyers out and putting new ones in. GRI liked the idea of the flyer as a service but the expense of keeping it anything like current soon proved to be a barrier to the concept of listing all GMs.

Conrad von Metzke's campaign to get Charlie Reinsel off the list occurred at about that time. Charlie did indeed kick people out of games for no reason (not that many, but the instances were blatant) (one of them was Buddy Tretick, who had done the same thing to Norb...now there's a pair of ethical drabs for you). The problem here was that while nearly everyone admitted the justice of Conrad's cause, we really had no agency which could decide the merits of that case (and others like it) with finality...and, it was argued, once you exclude someone, where do you draw the line as to what sort of behavior would cause exclusion and what sort would not?

In the upshot, Conrad won his case, for a different reason. The determining factor

was the already-mentioned practical difficulties with the GM list. It was finally decided that the more practical approach would be to list only a few GMs. Thus the problem was no longer whom to exclude, but whom to include, a much easier and fairer decision. It was generally agreed that GMs who were well-established, reliable, and with larger circulations would be the ones. They would in turn publish the names and addresses of all those who contacted them through the flyer so that all the other GMs would be able to send out samples and whatnot. John Boardman, myself, and other GMs had long been doing this anyway, the traditional hobby "new blood" lists (not much done these days, alas), so this was no problem. True, those listed GMs had an advantage in the sense of "first shot" at the new people, but in fact they frequently had no openings of their own (and, when they did, their zines were so popular that the games usually filled with people already in the hobby). Most established GMs tend to prefer established, reliable players anyway).

So it was done. Boardman, Walker, von Metzke, Boyer, Buchanan, and a few other publishers were included. That system worked well until my own disasterously precipitous drop from the hobby. I did continue to forward inquiries on to Conrad von Metzke, but my frequent moves in those days quickly put a stop to that. This limited-list system continued, however, until 1974.

By this time it was clear that even a limited list had its problems. Nearly every GM on the original limited list had left the hobby at least temporarily. But in 1974, the hobby got a new zine... Diplomacy World, originally a cooperative venture between Walt Buchanan and Games Research. GRI helped capitalize the venture initially, and Walt did all the work. It was generally agreed (particularly by GRI) that a central point of contact for new players would be better. Walt undertook to do that firstly because it would provide a good way to help the fledgling zine's circulation, secondly because he could then provide a list of all GMs in the hobby... thus effectively going back to the first, and more equitable, way of handling new player contact. This "Need a Game?" list was a continuation of my own Pontevedria game lists, begun in 1970 so that I'd have some info to send out to those inquiring. Pont itself temporarily ceased publication when I left the hobby, and when I came back there was at first no need for it because of Diplomacy World's list. When I took over DW, I revived Pont for its original purpose, and it is today active, the oldest GM listing in the hobby. (I suppose I could have continued Walt's "Need a Game?" title, but most people in the hobby know my partiality to the old hobby tradition of naming zines after fictional countries.)

Of course, the disadvantage of a single point of contact is... what if it changes? Since Walt Buchanan, DW has had 3 other editors, counting myself, and during that time the flyer continued to list Walt's name and address. That was luckily no problem since he is still there (although the Post Awful has by fiat changed his address... but luckily most of the inquiries still seem to be getting through). The current plan (which I believe now affects the games currently going on the shelves) is to revise the PWM flyer to refer the prospective player to Avalon Hill directly, whence the queries will be forwarded to me (at whatever address I'm at) or to the current editor of DW. We then still provide the service of mailing copies of Pontevedria listing every known GM with game openings.

So there you have the evolution of the game flyer... from a complete listing of hobby GMs (much too extensive to print nowadays anyway) to a referral back to the game's manufacturer for re-referral to a central information point within the informal hobby service mechanism. We're hoping that there will be less side-tracking of inquiries and better service this way. We're supplementing this with a regular column in The General, at the end of which appears some general information about DW and the hobby. Response to this has been pretty good this year. Through all of this we have had one end in view: that anyone wishing to play Diplomacy by mail should have a fair chance of finding the information and contacts he or she needs to do so.

From Don Del Grande (6/15/83):

BEUX:

I looked it up in my records -- it's been 15½ months since I coughed up \$11 for 20 issues of VD. OK, I'll be a nice guy and fork over \$10 more for another 20. (Did I notice a price drop? I still remember low prices...like when Diplomacy, at \$11, was the second-highest priced Avalon Hill game behind the \$12 Tobruk. Today, new games go for over \$20 -- not including the famous The Longest Day at about \$65.)

Say, if you're passing by the Avalon Hill booth at Origins... never mind! I tried that on Dick Martin last year when GI: Anvil of Victory was released, ignorant to the fact that he had recently been married (nobody tells me anything!).

What -- nothing from Mark Paul? No cartoons on what's wrong with gaming today? No picture of a hockey player with the caption, "How come games like Flat Top, Civilization, Conquistador, and Struggle of Nations all get the warped mapboards while Avalon Hill uses the good backing for Slaphnc?" How about...

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE OF "ADVENTURE GAMING" AND DIPLOMACY...

- * Not happy with replacing the old wooden pieces with plastic pieces and then cardboard counters, following that up with a warping map with hexes instead of areas, Avalon Hill announced today that they would no longer sell Diplomacy until Allan Calhamec rewrites the rules to incorporate a die-rolling combat system complete with CRT.
- * In a move to help save the troubled USPS, the ARCA Ratings Chairman announced today that games played via electronic mail reported as PDM would immediately result in the permanent removal of the participants from the ARCA pool, and no refund of the (recently increased) \$20 fee.
- * The TSR/SPI fight ended today when TSR announced its plan to file for bankruptcy, due mainly to its losses in attempting to defend itself against former subscribers to SPI products suing to get refunds. Gary Gygas announced that the courts discriminated against TSR because they refused to rule that, since he was God, TSR should be declared the winners by divine right.
- * GDW announced today that they will release Decline of the Reich, the last of the Europa series. A search was made for every person who had actually planned to play the entire war using the system -- but he couldn't be reached for comment inside the asylum. Next planned for GDW is an expansion for Traveller's entire universe on a 1 km/hex scale.
- * Volume 27 of the Official Voice of Doom House rules, Abridged Edition, was released yesterday. Among the added rules: "Units may not increase their movement allowances through sliding down a warped section of the map. You only get as many hexes as the counter says, adjusted for terrain and enemy zones of control and influence, plus artillery bombardments, gas warfare, political effects caused by premature American entry, and a partial trench situation."
- * The ninth edition to the Squad Leader series, entitled Rising Sun and Swastika, is available. This game involves possible Axis invasion of North America, and includes 6400 counters, 12 mapboards (on good backing, in true SL style), and 144 pages of rules, including 36 pages of errata to the previous books (and ads for the first eight versions of the rulebook). Don Greenwood announced that he is STILL working out the DYO values for each country, and apologizes to the loyal SL fans out there who'll have to stick with the scenarios given. Besides, what do you expect for only \$100? The tenth game is rumored to deal with an Eskimo repulsion of an Aleutian attack.
- * John Boardman put out an extra-special Graustark to celebrate the fifth anniversary of his death. On the front page, John says, "To all of those skeptics who didn't believe that I could take it with me -- nyah, nyah!"

* Kathy Byrne, in a confrontation with a mugger, took 15 bullets, 3 knife wounds to the heart, and was run over 9 times by a David Leitcher of a moped, after which she got up and spent the next hour finding a policeman. After the incident, she said, "It's hard to make a cop believe you've been killed if you're immortal."

* Bruce Linsey hit another milestone -- he began the 500th issue of his hobby career arguing with the entire British hobby on the merits of ordering Fall and Winter together instead of Winter and Spring.

By the way, I got a C in history and never took chemistry in college. Which reminds me...one day, my parents saw one of my grades from Berkeley, grabbed me, took my shirt off, whipped me with a leather rope, seared me with a superheated fork, threw me through a window, pushed me off the roof, and said, "Did you really think that was bad, be glad you raised that grade from a B+, or you would really have had it!"

((Gosh, that sounds like a rather drastic punishment to me. They could have made their point very adequately without tearing off your shirt.

I enjoyed your look into the future of gaming. Thanks for mentioning.))

From Ron Brown (5/31/83) ((of California! The Canadian one is always 'Ronald' in the

Dear Bruce,

I'm sure you will not regret saving yourself a lot of money by going to the direct format. Unless you have a friend who has access to a quality copier and can get your stuff printed up at a substantial discount or some such deal, the costs of professional copy service is ridiculously high for a hobby such as ours! There's nothing wrong with ditto. Good move.

I continue to be amazed by the volume of material you publish. How do you do it?

What is your opinion of Langley's and Martin's decision not to honor "not for print" letters? I would bet you don't agree with this policy...

Personally, I don't think it's a great idea, but to each his own. I just hope that everyone is aware of the policy of these two publishers and doesn't ignorantly send their "not for print" stuff as both have proven their willingness to print anything. I want to wonder out loud, though, how this will affect their careers as players. Knowing full well that a letter about a game (a game letter) might be reproduced within the pages of Magus or Retaliation,...well, wouldn't you be very guarded about what you wrote? Maybe you'd prefer not to worry about the problem of negotiating with a guy who might print anything (everything?) in his zine and decide to try and eliminate him as soon as possible? I wonder... But I don't think I'd be brave enough to try it.

How long did you know Judy Winsome was really Jerry Lucas? It took me by surprise! Jerry's a hell of a nice guy and it was a hell of a scam!

Well, got to get back to it!

((I figured out Judy Winsome's true identity shortly before publishing my "Scam" issue. Remember the line about "When you share your name with a great basketball star"? That referred to Jerry Lucas of the New York Knicks, of course!

I think that Langley and Martin made an unwise choice when they decided not to honor "not for print" letters. However, Steve, at least, assures us that he will take care that no one gets hurt by it. Also, let's at least give them credit for making their policy public in advance! That way, people are much less likely to get hurt than if they didn't let us know what to expect. Some other publishers (notably Kathy Byrne) see nothing wrong with discussing an off the record letter in their zines -- with no warning to the writer in advance. But my personal belief is that labels of confidentiality should be honored very strictly, unless there is a compelling reason not to. And I think most of the hobby shares this opinion.)

From Greg Ellis (6/14/83):

Dear BRUX,

Once again, in spite of a dazendmonious number of more important things that I should be doing, I have taken typewriter in hand and am writing you. I think I spelled your word wrong. Do you correct the spelling in the letters we send you, or is that considered editor interference. ((Normally I do, but in this case I didn't, since your last two sentences wouldn't have made any sense had I done so. Given a choice between fixing a word and killing two whole sentences on the one hand, and leaving well enough alone on the other, I normally choose the latter. I also might add as a point of interest that I hate interrupting people's letters with boring statements about my editorial policies. Now, where were we?))

Enclosed you will find my article on a particular French opening, which I will also be sending to DW. I will probably have my wife retype it so it may make some sense. Other than that I have only a couple of things that I would like to comment on.

First, your last issue ((#79)) was one of the best! an excellent variety of articles, humour, letters, and...and...oh yeah -- games! Rod's article was especially good. The letter home was hilarious. The Presidential Politics game sounds intriguing. Overall a splendid issue.

Second, I feel that there were a few misconceptions that need clearing up. I was very impressed by Billy's patriotism. I know of very few "teenagers" who say the pledge every morning. In fact, I don't know anybody who does that. Unfortunately he had his definitions wrong, along with one or two contradictions. A democracy is indeed a system where everyone votes, but he left out the key difference: everyone votes on everything. In a republic the general population elects representatives who vote on most of the issues for them. A republic is far more efficient than a democracy when you consider the number of people in the country. The idea that the entire population gets to vote for representatives is not only sound, but it is the very thing that separates the United States from our so-called enemies. What good would it do to make the world safe for democracy if the democratic governments were just as despotic as the communists? At one time we did employ literacy tests in the U.S. The idea was finally outlawed because of the numerous abuses by the election judges. Whenever you pass such a law someone must enforce it. It is in the enforcement that the abuses occur. Many good laws have been ruined by the very people charged with enforcing them. During the forties and fifties the election judges were keeping the blacks in the South from voting by using literacy tests. If a black man who could read came to vote the judge would claim that he couldn't really read and that someone had coached him. He would then be given a more difficult test to read. How many of us could read Shakespeare cold? The fact remains that in spite of the lack of restrictions on voting only the most concerned and informed people tend to vote. Thus the effect that you wish to create through a test is occurring naturally. The most dangerous possibility that I see in restricting voting rights, is where does it stop? Will we eventually see people denied the right to vote because they are the wrong religion, or race, or they intend to vote for the wrong party? Once you have given the government the right to determine who gets to vote and who doesn't, it will be very difficult to stop them. If you don't believe it then just take a look at the taxes we pay. In the early 1900s the Supreme Court declared the proposed income tax as unconstitutional. Ten years later the Congress successfully passed a new law setting the tax at less than 5% of taxable income. Today corporations pay as much as 52% of their income in taxes. And people wonder where inflation got its start! Anyway, I digress. If anyone would like to read an excellent book on the subject of governmental growth I highly recommend A Time for Truth by William Simon.

Third, a lighter subject: back to the unwanted convoy. How can you say in your house rules that you ignore the unwanted convoy and also say that you don't intend to interpret the player's intentions? What happens if one player mistypes an order to

read C instead of S? As an example:

ENGLAND: A Lon-Bel (F Nth C)

FRANCE: F Eng C ENGLISH A Lon-Bel

GERMANY: F Bel-Nth (F Den S)

How do you adjudicate that? The move of F Bel-Nth succeeds because the English did not have support. The question is whether or not the convoy works. If the English player had written F Nth S then the move succeeds. Now reverse the positions of the French and English fleets so that France is in the North Sea. Was it an unwanted convoy, or did the French player simply screw up his order? I would think that any time a piece can move from one province to another without need of a convoy then it should succeed (provided, of course, that it can succeed) regardless of any fleet activity around it. If either of the above situations should occur, my adjudication would be that the convoy does not succeed. How do you vote? If you can read this then you are eligible to vote! (I thought I should clear that up.)

I really need to get back to the books, so this should do it for now. Tell Billy that I really do admire his patriotism, and that the country could use a few more individuals like him, as it needs any intelligent, involved citizens. That means Mr Tallman counts too. Remember that adversary makes us great.

Love,
Greg

((I just love all these love letters! I appreciate your compliments about VD #79. Had it contained Alex's Column and/or some cartoons from Mark Paul, then I would agree and call it one of my better efforts. As it was, though, it didn't feel complete.

I am fully aware that the literacy test can be abused. But the fact that a good law can be abused doesn't make it necessary to repeal the law -- it only makes it important to stop the abuse.

The house rule regarding convoys is one which I plan to amend in my upcoming revisions. The way they will read when I am finished is that an army's move will succeed regardless of any dislodged fleets ordered to convoy it, provided that it has one valid, nondisrupted route (and, of course, that it would otherwise succeed). Thus both of the situations you describe would result in an English army successfully landing in Belgium.))

From Steve Knight (6/10/83):

Dear BRUX,

How's it going? Thank god the academics are temporarily out of the way and I can comment on #78 and 79!

A reputation in the hobby...hey, maybe I have one, too...Yeah, sure! Okay, NO ONE better take my claim to fame. You all hear me out there? trying to edit Britannica-sized house rules is my ball of wax, dammit! Stay the hell away! (Say, would someone care to explain to me why the hell I'm defending this?)

I hope we get another column from Alex soon. Subbers have been known to exhibit withdrawal symptoms on occasion.

Loved your additional sentences for the "Fuck" article. Say, how about a contest for the best sentence containing both the word "fuck" and the word "house rules"? There must be some improvements on that pithy yet concise classic, "Fuck the house rules" which my roommate claims he's heard me mumble in my sleep.

Reading Osuch's coup, I had very much the same reaction that I get if I read the Penthouse forum -- if things like this are going on somewhere in the world out there. WHY NEVER ME?

(('Cause you're too busy with the house rules, that's why.

OK, I'll print any clever sentences which come in containing the words "fuck" and "house rules". Good idea!))

From John MacFarlane (6/5/83):

Dear BRUX,

Just a few comments on your last two issues and some other miscellanea (does John Kador strike twice in the same place?). First off, thanks for the back issues of VD you sent a while back. I enjoyed them -- they seem to have a light-hearted, "fun" attitude that is lacking in the hobby today. (Well, maybe your mines don't have attitudes...mine do.)

House rule amendments: I suggest one that prohibits having both an English fleet and a French fleet in the Mid-Atlantic at the same time (see PEGASUS). (.)

In all fairness, I think the USPS is doing pretty well. Consider the immense volume of correspondence going through the system each day, and the fact that over ninety-nine per cent of the mail they handle reaches its destination without mishap. No one's perfect. And from what I've heard, we've got far and away the best postal service in the world. There's no reason to gripe. (To be fair, though, I've never been screwed by the post office, so this is somewhat biased.)

Bill Highfield's correct rank is classless.

El Salvador: No Latin American government lasts more than five years. Why waste our time -- any government we prop up is only temporary anyway. Let the commies come in and in five years, Salvador will have a democracy. ((Just like Cuba, right?))

I agree with your statement that a literacy test should be a prerequisite to voting. The media is not the only method by which candidate's views are aired, but it's pretty darn close. And how many people who can't read own a television, or for that matter, a radio? No illiterate voter has the data necessary to come to a decision of any value. The literacy test was abolished before because it kept many blacks from voting. That's ridiculous. A literacy test obviously has nothing to do with racism. If this country ~~had~~ just as many illiterate whites as illiterate Hispanics, for instance, the test would be just as necessary.

The liberals of the sixties didn't abolish racism; they merely turned it around. Now we have scholarships for "Hispanics only" or "Blacks only". Now if that isn't racist, what is? The winners of those scholarships are selected partially on the basis of their race, not their abilities. As a white Anglo-Saxon, I feel discriminated against.

I agree 100% with Walker's comments on hunting.

To extend Jake Halverstadt's discussion of shortwave radio a bit, think about what an excellent tool for Diplomacy two-way shortwave ("Ham") radio would be. Cost of the equipment aside, it would be free. Additionally, it would offer the convenience of telephone Dips: instant response, no waiting for letters to arrive, etc. Deadlines could be set at two weeks, allowing plenty of time for negotiations (over the radio) and orders (via USPS). And think of the added intrigue radio would offer: it'd be possible to listen in on an enemy alliance's conversation, making a system of changing negotiation times and frequencies a necessity, along with (possibly) a code system. This idea would never be very popular, but I can envision one or two "ham" games being organized if it caught on.

What would you do if you got something like this?

Hope you enjoyed this letter

The mine is up to its usual standards.

I liked the "not for print" discussion.

((I'd ask the author in print whether the intention was that I run his letter. (.)

The USPS at least ought to pay for its own screwups, rather than making us do it.

"Ham" Diplomacy sounds like lots of fun. I especially like the idea of being able to eavesdrop -- the answer to which is that you and your ally could arrange a "phony" conversation'

(your comments on discrimination are right on.))

From Gary Coughlan (6/9/83):

Dear BRUX,

I want to thank you for what you said about me on the front page of VD #79. Last December and January, when I was being criticized in 6 zines, including yours, and 3 subzines, I considered the criticism to be one-sided and unfair in these zines and subzines.

By contrast, only Appalling Greed by Mark Larzelere and Anduin by Eric Kane made any attempt to criticize the others, besides just me. It would have been so easy for them to jump on the anti-Coughlan bandwagon that rolled through this hobby last December and January when, as you said, "everyone and his brother" seemed to be criticizing me.

Out of all these critics who gleefully jumped on my back with what Rod Walker called "football cleats", only Scott Hanson of Irksome and you in Voice of Doom have had the balls to come back and express regret, before your subbers, for the things you said about me last winter just as publicly as you did the criticism of me. I respect that. And, according to Debra Winger ("An Officer and a Gentleman"), in the latest Playboy, women also have this particular quality of "balls". Or not, as the case may be.

You and I disagree on a lot of things and will probably continue to do so. But one thing I back you on completely, and hope you continue to carry it out, is that editorial you wrote on controversy in VD #74. The particular kind of filth you mention is still being carried on by a few people. Some conflict is inevitable, some controversy is unavoidable and some people will remain unfriendly because too much water has gone under the bridge.

But you have the answer in your editorial when you say: "If we can't be friends, at least can't we just ignore each other for the sake of those who want to enjoy the hobby without getting involved in personal feuds concerning someone's sexual preference or drinking habits?" As a victim of this particular type of slander, I find it most irritating. Besides, what purpose does it serve? What constructive purpose? It seems designed only to hurt the victim and smear his reputation.

I think, by now, you know what it is like to have what amounts to a lynch mob coming after you. A lynch mob that does not give you any credit for your good points. A lynch mob that is one-sided and unfair in its criticism of you. That was my situation last December and January and my pet name for these critics, which at the time also included you, was the "East Coast Witches", the east coast being where most of them live. The East Coast Witches seem to get involved in every controversy, every feud, and every disagreement which arises, whether it concerns them or not.

I dealt with my East Coast Witches by ignoring them as much as possible. There is really very little you can do when 6 zines and 3 subzines come after you with all their guns blazing away. Except to remember that this tiny number of critics, though very well-known, very visible, and very loud-mouthed, are not the hobby and that they can do very little to affect most people's opinion of you.

Last winter, I cut my subs to several zines to avoid reading controversy, name-calling and backbiting. One of these was The Voice of Doom. As long as you live up to your editorial in VD #74, I am glad to become a Doomee again. And I hope that the other East Coast Witches follow your lead in deeds and not merely words.

((Well, you're welcome back. I do have a problem with your assertion that I was part of a "lynch mob" that didn't give you any credit for your good points and that I would ever "gleefully jump on (your) back". I think if you look over everything I've said in the past six months, you'll realize that that's stretching matters just a bit.

I do, however, agree with the basic thrust of your letter. There is a small group of very vocal people in this hobby (I prefer the name "East Coast Clique", as this seems more accurate than "East Coast Witches") who seem to feel that their opinions

matter more than other people and anyone who disagrees is likely to be subject to whatever cheap personal cracks they can dream up. I feel exactly the same way you do about the tactics these people have used and are using. Thank for writing.))

From Mike Conner:

Dear BRUX,

Thanks for the courtesy copies of VD. I have been letting my Dippy mail accumulate for periods of several weeks (an undesirable practice, I know), and thought I would straighten out the sub status issue when the next (now current) issue came out. My apologies for the delay.

I'm now shifting to a six-week publication interval (which means that 3 VDs are on the newsstands for every LSD, if you are still doing a two-weeker.) I'm now down to running four games, and will open one more when one of the current games ends. That will be all for LSD, unless unforeseen events restore my active interest in publishing. The wind-down should take a year or so, and during that period I expect my circulation to decline gradually, as it has done in the last year (peaked at 130+, now to about 70).

Thanks for your comment on our friendship. I confirm it from my side. Although my efforts at maintaining my Dippy contacts have not been notable of late, I still value the friendships and acquaintances that the hobby has given me. But I just can't put the enthusiasm into the hobby that I once did -- other activities have edged themselves into my schedule. But that doesn't lessen my esteem for the many people who have offered help, friendship, and good wishes. You among them, of course. If I made a list, it would go on for the rest of this page.

((Thanks for a nice letter. Once again, I stand corrected in my earlier statement that LSD was late -- it was a simple misunderstanding.

I'm also very sorry to hear that you're winding down. In its prime, LSD was one of the finest publications this hobby has ever produced. Keep in touch.))

From Ronald Brown (6/10/83):

Hi Again!

I feel, on reflection, that I didn't really answer Mark Barch's argument in my letter of yesterday.

Mark refers to the rulebook, quite correctly, when he says orders do not need unit designation. It requires only the place of origin, the move order, and the destination. I have NEVER said that orders must include unit designations as Mark implies I have.

What we were arguing about is the transmorgification of fleets into armies. If a player tries it, his orders fail. Seems to me that the GM is upholding the rulebook when he disallows that, as I can find no rule which allows this miraculous transformation to take place.

If a player has "F Eng-Bre" one season, and "A Bre-Par" the next, something is screwy somewhere, right? But what if it was "A Bre-Pic"? How is that "more" legal? He's still trying to change from a fleet to an army and that is not allowed. Rod and Mark feel it is their duty as GMs to "correct" the poor misguided player -- and I call that GM interference.

Mark's example of "A Munichh-Ruhr" is an example of a "poorly written order"; but "A Bre-Pic" when one has no army in Brest is illegal. Unless Mark is going to argue that "A" can mean "fleet" in certain special circumstances?

As for the player's intentions, that came into it when Rod was making the assumption that such cases must be errors. He is making the assumption that the player did not intend to write "A" when he did. I gave a case where players intentionally make this error. My approach, of disallowing the order, does not consider player

||

intentions at all; I'm going by what he actually wrote. Rod and Mark, in correcting the order, are assuming that the player did not intend to write what he wrote. So, I agree with Mark when he wrote: "The GM is NOT there to consider the player's intent, he's there to adjudicate what the player actually wrote down." (emphasis mine). How can Mark believe this and yet feel he can change what the player actually wrote down?

Mark may counter with the fact that I receive: "A Munich-Ruhr"; "A Kiel S A Munich to Ruhr"; it appears as "A Kiel S A Mun-Ruh" in my game reports. The meaning is crystal clear to anyone, both of the original orders and my peculiar style of reporting those orders. But no "A" will ever magically become an "F" in my game reports. It's "A Bre-Pic (NSU); F Bre U". -- And that's what I want any of my GMs to do if I'm the guilty player.

I guess I'm somewhat passionate in arguing these things, as my first few games when I entered the hobby were screwed up by incompetent GMs. One gets bitter when one sees two or three years of effort get labeled "irregular" because of sloppy GMs.

I am not saying Mark and Rod are in this category. In fact, I'd not hesitate to play under them, despite minor disagreements. At least I'd know in advance where they stood. What really rots my socks are GMs who don't know what they're doing and make different rulings for similar situations.

Anyhow, I hope arguments like this will make some stop and think, saying, "Hey, I should make up my mind about that."

I'd play under you too, BRUX, if you had game openings and I had more time. Maybe some day...

((And I'd have no qualms about playing in one of your games either, except that I've resolved to stick to American zines because mail takes too long to Canada. Thanks for the compliment.

I'd not play under Berch, however. Are you aware that every single season he's ever GMed has been sent out 192 days late, nor has he ever GMed a game with less than three thousand adjudication errors? (☹)

Seriously, I agree 100% with your ruling and your reasoning for it. Except that in VD, your order fails even if you merely omit the unit. For instance, "Bel-Hol" will not succeed. When pressed for my reason, I reply that the province of Belgium cannot be ordered to move -- only a unit there can do that.))

From Jeff Albrecht (6/5/83):

Dear Bruce,

I enjoyed Ronald Brown's discourse on the word "fuck". Especially interesting to me was the development of the word "fuck". I had once been told by an English major that the word "fuck" goes back to the Middle Ages where it was originally an abbreviation for "fornication under the crown of the king" meaning royal adultery. The hesitance to use "fuck" in polite conversation was probably due to the fact that the king or queen would not appreciate having their extracurricular sex discussed in public. But then, that English major probably was using her discussion of "fuck" as an introduction to her extracurricular sex, or something like that.

Regarding Richard Edison's letter and your reply, we had a fellow on our dorm wing at college who collected class schedules from all his friends so that he could figure out routes to his classes avoiding all of his "friends" from the dorm wing. The fellow who practiced avoidance had a last name of Invy, we called him Penis; and, the nickname was due to the pronunciation of his last name, of course. Ty, Kurt and Lettuce should contact Paul "Penis" Invy to find out about a real nickname problem.

Luckily, Mr. Invy's classes were concentrated in the pharmacy building so he didn't have many problems as none of the rest of us were smart enough to make that grade.

((Reminds me of my friend Larry Bator, knowaround here as "Master".))

From Red Walker 6/11/69

10
12

Dear BRUCE-

Some comments on VD 79. First off, your comment on my article, to the effect that you "take exception to (my) comment...that players who wait for a draw or commutation are necessarily letting ratings or reputations influence their play." Please reread my article. I made no such statement. I did make the statement that there are players so motivated. That is certainly true. I did not say that players are necessarily so motivated. Please do not put words in my mouth.

Re: "True Story of Creation" - I assume that Rob Schank can take a joke. It was one of the funniest things I've read in a long time. If God actually knows the truth of these things, She ain't telling.

Re: Geoff Challenger's letter. Conrad von Metzke is alive and well and utterly uninterested in the hobby. He's got two sons, still works for the Post Awful, and sings on stage in a small way.

As to Conrad's being the best writer ever in the hobby, I'll have to disagree. And to the my close friendship for him. In terms of actual sales, that honor might have to go to Jerry Pournelle. Jerry aside, however, I would rate some other writers as better than Conrad at least in some way: John Boardman, John Koning, Jack Chalker (John's now a well paid pro), John Smythe and myself, among others. Conrad was the only one of these well-known in England. There is certainly no one in the hobby today who writes as well as any of the early (1953-1969) people, all of whom, by the way, came into the hobby out of SF fandom. Wargamers, pay to suppose me an in-line hobby semi-literate at best.

And England did produce its own Reinsel, many years ago. I forget the guy's name (among other things) made players' retreats and builds for them. This chap was the author of the worst features of Reinsel and Tretick (and didn't last long).

Regarding the postal "flyer"...see enclosed article. Reinsel would, however, be totally uninterested in discussions. Norb believed in pontificating, not in discussing, and could not have cared less about the opinions of others.

As to the 55mph limit, nonsensicality is in the eye of the beholder. I suppose, after all, to a burglar or a purse-snatcher, the law against taking other people's property must seem nonsensical too. The fact is that the law was first aimed at cutting gasoline consumption in this country, since most cars operate at peak efficiency in the 50-60 mph range. Statistically, however, it can be shown that the death rate on our highways began to decline when the lower speed limit was in.

If the law is nonsensical, however, there is nothing which states that it cannot be changed. It is a sad commentary on the state of things in this country that the public response is not to change the law but to break it. Sufficiency, as I mentioned in my March 1969 editorial not long ago, is a national plague. Oh, well. You know you never meet anyone who thinks the law against murdering people is "nonsensical".

Dog racing: another amusement of the feeble-minded, like cock fighting and bear baiting. It is yet an additional living example of what happens to a fool and his money. I don't feel particularly much moral outrage (although I suppose I should, considering how these animals -- dogs and rabbits -- are abused) but just a sense of amusement that adults can find something of this sort amusing, much less admit to it in public. Same sort of thing as showing off your scars and boils, I suppose.

Re: Bill Highchair's letter. Like his idol in the Oval Office, Bill is utterly shortsighted regarding Latin America. I may write you an article one of these days on that one; however, suffice it to say at this point that our present policies are dead wrong. It is utterly naive to believe that the general course of Latin American history will be much influenced by Russia. There is a loose relationship between the Latinos and ourselves, and we are putting ourselves in the position of being a wish child with vinegar. Had we followed a wise policy of withdrawal and withdrawal from the American community of nations instead of trying to force our own will on a community with Russian aid. When are the idiots in Washington going to realize that the only way to deal with the world is to deal with it as it is, not as we wish it to be. The only way to deal with the world is to deal with it as it is, not as we wish it to be.

I'm delighted to think that Bill actually believes that "republic" is synonymous with freedom. He ought to check out that term some time. A republic is a state not ruled by a hereditary monarch. Nazi Germany was a republic, and so is present-day Russia, as well as China, Argentina, Cuba, Cambodia, and other rather repulsively governed states. By contrast, England, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, and Holland are monarchies. Of the afore-mentioned republics, none are truly democracies. Of the afore-mentioned monarchies, all are democracies. Since Bill seems to prefer a republic which is not a democracy, it would appear that he would not like living here and might be happier in one of the nasties mentioned in my first list. The notion that democracy does not promote liberty is a lie promoted by the acolytes of despotism. I challenge Bill to name a single state in which personal liberties were respected and protected and which was not democratically governed. (Recalling, of course, that there has never been a "pure" democracy in all of human history.)

Re: Ronald Brown... "fuck" does not derive from any Norwegian or Swedish root. It arises from the Anglo-Saxon fykkan, which means about what you think it means. This and the words Ronald mentions of course all arise from a common urTeutonic root.

Re: Gary Coughlan, Dick Martin, et al: I agree with you that Gary is a good person and I agree with you that he was "dumped" on more than was necessary. With Martin, at least, the problem (based on what I've seen) seems to have been Dick's utterly cavalier attitude toward GMing, his apparant inability to be consistent or fair in various instances, and his abusive reaction to complaints or criticism (in fairness to Dick, the last may have been abusive in themselves). However, Gary was part of the problem too. He did lose his temper and he did get right down there in the mud with the others. This was not so much in EE, as you rightly point out, but in letters to zines, private letters and perhaps phone calls. One of the problems in all this mess was (and is) the feeling that many people have that "it's OK for me to get nasty, but it's never OK for someone else to get nasty", and I think you've run across this attitude yourself. There is a general failure to recognize the simple truth that getting nasty, no matter what the provocation (real or imagined), is admirable, constructive, virtuous, and right.

Thanks for your endorement on the Miller Award. Ironically, DW is going to be 2 weeks late this time. Sigh...

((Getting nasty is admirable, constructive, and right? Surely you jest... Anyway, I got a good overview of the feud between Gary and Dick, and from where I sit it didn't appear that Gary was down nearly as low as Dick.

With all due respect, I think it is people like you who are shortsighted regarding Latin America, not Highchair or Reagan. How do you bring the United States to its knees, short of launching an all-out nuclear attack? Simple -- they're too powerful to attack outright, so you first weaken them by stirring up dissent among their allies and implanting governments hostile to U.S. interests wherever and whenever possible. Do this in several dozen countries, and the U.S.'s influence worldwide is significantly weakened. Keep doing it, and eventually, they will be isolated and will be forced to their knees. That this is the Russian strategy ought to be obvious to anyone who takes a serious look at recent world history. Isolationism is a nice concept in theory, but impractical when a sworn enemy is actively trying to overthrow us.

I am unfamiliar with the best writers of the early period of the hobby, but there are several active today who I bet would compare favorably. Randolph Smyth has no peer when it comes to writing about the play of the game, and I would be hard-pressed to believe that anyone ever was his equal in that regard... though perhaps seeing samples of their work would convince me. Jake Halverstadt, Bob Olsen, and Chuff Afflerbach are all amazingly talented, as are Garry Hamlin and Gary Coughlan. But I must admit that you're in a better position than I to judge these matters, having seen both ends of the spectrum.

Gee, just think how drastically the highway death rate would decline if we had a speed limit of 35 mph. Yet I would still call it "nonsensical" :))

From Ivo Bouwman (5/29/83):

14

Dear BRUX,

Hi! How are you doing? I'm fine. Just a few weeks ago I came back from the U.S. where I went on vacation. I traveled from San Francisco to Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Death Valley, Yosemite, and back to the City. I had a great time! Well, this being the third time coming to your country probably tells enough about how I like it! It's very possible that I'll come back again next year. You do have a funny climate though! I haven't had one day without rain in Sunny California; my days in L.A. were without a dry second... then entering Arizona I just stepped into another world! It was dry, sunny, and hot! So I was getting a suntan already. Until we crossed the Mojave Desert, back into the State of California. As soon as we were out of there, it started to rain again. We ended up in a genuine blizzard up in the Yosemite Mountains! It was a great time anyhow.

Back to the reason for writing. Could you send me a copy of Supernova? ... You might wonder why I ask for it, well I'll explain. To do so I have to tell you in short about the Dutch hobby. As far as is known to us, the start was in 1973 (I was in elementary school, so I had nothing to do with that; I entered in 1980, but that's yet to come). This guy Paul Meerts bought the game in London, and started to play it with friends. After a few years, an "official" organization is born, of which the Diplomacy group becomes a part. There still is only a very limited number of players, mainly because of the game not being for sale in Holland. However, there are several international contacts, with Switzerland and Germany, for instance. Then in 1980 a magazine published an article on the game. And I am one of the many who read that and was curious enough to order the game in England. Both Jaap Jacobs (you may have heard of him) and I wrote to the English hobby to try to play the game through the mail. And via England (can you believe it?) Jaap and I got in touch, as well as with the "old" hobby. So since that moment our hobby is growing rapidly. Jaap publishes Oxymoron for two years now. Two friends and I publish the second zine, called Je Maintiendrai since last August, and recently a third zine, Brutus has appeared. Add to all this that last year (finally!) a Dutch version of Diplomacy came out, and you will see that there are a lot of new players right now. So far there was this "in crowd" who were able to cope with the few new ones. But now it is going a little too fast. We still are very well organized, but if we want to keep that up, some important decisions must be made. One of them is the production of a novice packet. Having been a novice myself three years ago, I do possess the English one. But in producing a good one I would also want to read the American one. Of course we have a general frame upon which we intend to produce it, but any suggestions are welcome.

Well, now you have a vague idea about our hobby at the moment, and I may tell you more if you like...

((Sure, I'd like to hear more about the Dutch postal Diplomacy hobby, and I'll bet many of my readers would too. You are free to use any material from Supernova that you wish, and I'll be very happy to answer any further questions that you have.

Glad to hear you enjoyed visiting the U.S.A. If you make it here next year, why not visit the East? Then you can stay at my house! Let me know...

Good luck to you and the other postal players in The Netherlands!))

From Ben Schilling (5/29/83):

Dear BRUX,

I am finally getting to your remark about fascism and communism. Bob Olsen was quite correct in his remarks, but I want to elaborate a bit.

My dictionary defines fascism as: "political movement or system of government

characterized by dictatorship, suppression of all dissent, complete regimentation, glorification of nation and race and a belligerent foreign policy." I think that pretty well describes the government of the Soviet Union. Additionally, the Nazis were really the National Socialist German Workers Party. That sounds quite a bit like what the Soviet government likes to call themselves, doesn't it?

((Yup!))

From Peter Ansoff (6/14/83):

Hello BRUX,

Enclosed are two recent issues of Pulp and Crown, which I publish every month or so. See my letter in VD #77 for the source of the marked press items. Also enclosed is a xerox of the East Con flyer that I received recently. Would you say that they tend to be somewhat RSC oriented? Maybe they establish their trustworthiness levels by rolling 20-sided dice!

Sure, I'd be happy to take you for a cruise any time. All you have to do first is appoint me Commodore of the VD Sailing Fleet. Actually, I qualify because I still own two boats at the moment -- anybody interested in a '79 Buccaneer day sailer?? I had someone take some pictures of the Drascombe Lugger the first time we took her out; we'll see how they turn out. The Lugger is definitely a character boat; she is the same type that Webb Chiles is currently sailing around the world. My ambitions are a bit more modest; maybe I'll try taking her down to Mount Vernon some time.

I'm glad that you and Pete Birks think that the USA is a highly regulated country. How would you like to live in a place where you had to carry personal identity papers at all times and produce them on demand, report to the police each time you changed your address, go downtown and bribe the right officials to get a package mailed from overseas, and be subject to a fine for failure to keep your car washed? Such laws are commonplace in Western Europe. If that's what you call "freedom", I think I'll take over-regulation.

To my surprise, I actually received a couple of inquiries about Parliament. Parl is similar in many ways to Jake Halverstadt's game (at least I gather so from Jake's writeup in VD 79), although of course it's based on European rather than American politics. You too can trounce the vile Monarchists and lead the Socialist-Communist alliance to victory at the polls, on the floor of Parliament, or in the smokey back room...

I was very interested in your response to Mark Berch's letter on orders writing. You said, "I admit that the Rulebook does not require that the unit be correctly designated, but I do. I feel, as do many other GMs, that it's an essential part of an order." The question leaps from the page...WHY?? Yes, I know that you're the GM and what you say goes; I'm not questioning that. But why, from a philosophical standpoint, do you feel it necessary to impose an arbitrary rule on your players, even though it isn't in the rules and serves no other useful function?

Got to close. Someday I'll get to that houserules article!!

((Two reasons why I "impose" the rule requiring that the unit be correctly named. First, it's my personal preference -- the unit is moving, not the province. But I realize that you were asking for a more practical reason. Very well; I type the adjudications in VD directly from the players' orders, after first underlining the moves that fail. Having the players name the units makes it possible to do this, without referring to the last adjudication. Fair enough?

I was not aware that the Western European countries are as you say. I'll take you up on your cruise offer some day!))

From Ruth Glaspey (6/21/83):

16

Dear Bruce,

How goes the job hunt? I can certainly understand your position vis-a-vis all those charming little 7th graders. I taught music of every variety -- general music, vocal/choral, band and orchestra -- at all levels in environments ranging from a tiny farming community to a large inner city. Finally, 18 years ago, I concluded that I was just losing too much sleep over dreading to wake up in the morning, so chucked the whole idea. The odd thing is, now I want to go back to college to get another degree -- in History, probably. And what could be the use of it, except to teach? Anyway, good luck in your quest for something that suits you better.

This past weekend incorporated the worst and the best moments of my life. I had gone to Mackinaw City with a friend, and had taken my 7-month-old puppy along. As a dog lover, you can imagine how I felt when she pulled her leash out of my hand and bolted across the street to disappear between two buildings. She runs like greased lightning, and by the time I got to where I had last seen her, she had completely vanished. My friend and I searched all over the town's east side, but she wasn't to be found. No one had even seen her! The town is divided by an interstate highway leading to the bridge across the straits, and you can bet I was praying that she hadn't somehow got onto it. After about four hours of hunting, we sadly turned the car toward Traverse City, as it was getting dark. However, we were both so preoccupied (read: tearful) that we missed a turnoff and had to retrace our steps. I suggested that it was pretty late to be starting home; why didn't we stay overnight and look some more the next day? So we did just that. Need I mention that I got no sleep that night?

In the morning we resumed the search, and also posted signs on utility poles around town. By now, though, we were beginning to think she had been picked up by a tourist, or perhaps had got herself stuck by the leash in some remote area. Playing a long shot, my friend checked at the ticket booth for the ferry to Mackinac Island; had anyone there seen her? The lady at the booth said she had nearly run over a puppy of that description on her way to work about an hour before; she over to the west side of the interstate. There another kind soul told us that she had seen a dog dragging a leash -- back on the east side of the highway -- a few minutes previously. This woman ran under the viaduct to where she had made the sighting, and when we got the car turned around and over there she was pointing to a building across the street -- the dog had just run behind it. I raced around from one direction, my friend drove the other way around -- and there was the puppy, in tall grass by the railroad tracks! What with the absolute dizzy thrill that comes with such a moment, I can understand how someone could have a heart attack because of sheer happiness. It's really astonishing how fast those little furry friends worm their way into a person's heart. Well, she was tired and dirty and scared, but OK aside from that.

Though I'd hoped to get to Origins to meet some of the folks I only know through correspondence, it looks as if it is not to be this year. I was going to ask you to do me a favor and buy Avalon Hill's new card game, Up Front, to send me -- I'd written you a check and everything. Then a few days ago, I received notification from AH that they were awarding me credit toward merchandise as a prize for my answer to their contest question on Struggle of Nations. It's an odd thing, because my answer wasn't anything like the "school solution". So I'll just use the credit and order it from AH.

Running out of paper -- got to quit and get this in the mail.

((Sorry to hear you won't make the Big O, as it's relatively close to you this year. Next year you'll have to go all the way to Dallas!

Your story about the little puppy doggy was very touching. Thanks for sharing it, and I'm happy at the way it turned out. Gotta keep ahead of the little furballs!))

From Chuff Afflerbach (6/20/83):

Dear Bruce,

I'm embarrassed. Is it that time again? (A note to Doomless: Bruce is too kind. His flattering invitation to me to write another article is just his very polite way of reminding me that my sub has just run out. So it's speak up or pay up, eh, BRUX?)

But first, I do have an excellent excuse to make. The cat urinated on the article I was writing for you. Hey, would I lie about something like that? Now, before you erroneously conclude that it was some sort of an editorial comment on her part, let me assure you that this cat is an absolute imbecile when it comes to the finer points of the game. Last time we played she ordered a unit to support and hold at the same time. ((Ah, but you forget that such an error could be intentional!) Your little kitty cat may be smarter than you think...))

Just as well that I never finished the piece. It was a feeble attempt to describe my Greatest Coup. After reading about Osuch's conquest, I conceded the prize. I was stretching things as it was just to find something to write about. If the truth was to be known I've never played a Diplomacy game from start to finish. But that is your quinn File!

"He ruled the toads of the short forest
And every newt in Idaho..."

Gee, Mr. B, now that you're born again and have sworn off controversy, your gossip column has become rather, well, banal. C'mon -- a census of metropolitan Boise? Okay then, I won't be embarrassed to ask this question in print.

Does anybody out there remember an old sci-fi novel about a Nova Bomb which could destroy a whole solar system? Seems there was this evil Federation which used the threat of these N-Bombs to keep their subjects in line. The rebel alliance sends a teleport named Terle to snatch the secret, and the Feds send their best agent, York, to stop him. I first read this book some fifteen years ago and I'm curious to see if it is still as good as I remember it. I thought it was called The Programmed Man but that lead seems to be a dead end. Desperate, I'm now writing to The Voice of Doom. Out of ten dozen geeks and freaks, someone is bound to have read this book. C'mon folks -- I've got a bet riding on this with my Siamese twin.

Much has already been said about VD's new look, but I need a "photo for me". There's just one thing missing. What happened to the prize A, high school? It would bring back fond memories of that little red schoolhouse and those purple pages fresh off the press. My classmates complained bitterly that the sheets smelled like the doctor's office. But I was never sick much as a child and I always did rather well in school, so I never did equate getting shots with taking tests. In fact, I found that filling in those blanks instilled in me a superior attitude. After years, it was I to know that I was high not on joy of learning, but on sleep at school!

"...And every cricket who had chorused
By the bush in Buffalo..."

Which reminds me -- won't somebody please take away Billy Rightfield's exclamation point? Don't waste 'em, Bill, stockpile 'em. Do your part to help America achieve superiority over the Russians in the Element of Surprise.

((Yup, your sub's about up. I'd rather have your articles than your dollars, although if you want to compromise you can write me an article on the back of a sub check...))

Can anyone out there help Chuff identify the novel he describes?

From Mark Duedi (6/6/83, excerpts):

Dear Bruce

This is probably going to be rather lengthy (area) and I'll be warning you now -- as there's a lot to say. I just hope I can finish it before you drop.

course, then again, most everything coming out of this typewriter is pretty rough -- all those bumps, potholes, pits, typos, and other defects one is likely to encounter if one hangs around here for too long.

Report from Bloomington: ditto's looking somewhat better, definitely fewer really difficult pages (or have I been lucky?): keep up the good work, Bruce; maybe one of these days I'll approve of it.

A lot of really interesting stuff in the last couple of VDs (#s 78 and 79). Not only does Plumpher have some interesting things to say, so does his wife. And the etymology and usage of "fuck" is great, but where's John Kador to set us straight on the matter?!

Well, I guess I get classified as one of Rod Walker's raving paranoics for objecting to Bill Quinn's "dangerous" new service. I do not object, basically, to this information being compiled, nor to its being available. What I do object to is the manner in which this "service" is being handled, and the notion that, at some point, someone will decide that this is not enough -- that more information on players is needed -- and proceed to collect and distribute such information.

First, the manner in which the information is being handled. Rod explains that there were objections raised in the past for rating systems. Yet these were publicly presented. Anybody could see what player was rated how. It was public information. The results of games are public information -- that cannot be argued. How players perform in games is public information -- as much as can be deduced from game statistics. The information is there for anyone to use, including Bill Quinn.

That he is selling this public information is not an argument I wish to address; it could be argued at great length both ways: "real" public information (in the "real" world, at least in this country) is free of charge. However, this information is not being presented publicly, but covertly. Player "A" requesting information on Player "B" is doing so secretly, without the knowledge of Player "B". Nor does Player "B" in this case have an equal footing unless he purchases information on Player "A". Only those with the money and willing to spend it will be buying this information, (perhaps) giving them an advantage. It sort of reminds me of selling arms to third world nations, and nobody knowing save the buyer and seller. How about some accounting for what is otherwise public information? If this is public information, why be silent about it?

There are two ways this could be handled. 1) Publish all information on all players together, in one publication, with updates. 2) A player whose record has been requested is informed that his record has been "bought" by another player. (The question of requestor anonymity I'll leave open.) This ups the price from 3/\$1.00 to 3/\$1.39. Or a third alternative is to publish a listing of who requested information on whom. Fun!

As I stated before, I do not object to the information being available merely to the way in which it is handled. (I have no qualms about my own record (other than its dismalness) being in the hands of opponents.)

If this service is handled covertly, what about the next one? What will the next one be? Somebody going through endgame statements to come up with an even more comprehensive player profile? Or an analysis of correspondence? Or a listing of devices? When do you draw the line? When can you? There always seems to be this tendency to escalate, in real war, and in our little wargame.

I'm not trying to put Bill off for his work and efforts. I can see how his compilations can benefit the hobby at large. Players (hopefully) would become more concerned about dropouts, resignations, playing the same game plan game after game (i.e. stabbing for the win, going for the draw, being stabbed for the win, etc.). But, how about making this service a public affair and not a private one? (It should be noted that Jim Meinal's Player Reliability Ratings and Dan Stafford's Influential Player Rankings are both widely published throughout the hobby.)

Well, if you've made it that far, congrats. Hope there are still some of you

looking for a light at the end of the tunnel. How did we get into that, anyways? Gee, this last VD is opened to a Rod Walker article. Hmm. Suspicious. Hmmm. Here's Ig. Isn't he funny? I wish he'd write you all the time. Between him and Osuch, it makes VD worth 50% easy. Oh-oh, here comes Billy Highfield. I can only sigh and shake my head.

Fortunately, I do have something that might help, and I'd appreciate it, Bruce, if you'd pass it along to Bill. It's a new wonder drug called M.N. Rhetoric. It's guaranteed to cure faulty logic, encourage clear and concise argumentation, and works great as an anti-laxative, too. Seriously, I can't agree, can't disagree -- he mostly contradicts himself.

Actually, since we've got all these people in VD with something to say about the world, why not use VD as a forum to solve the world's problems? Seeing as how none of us will ever be in a position to change the way things are, we can at least do our best in VD. Maybe collectively, we can come up with something that'll work.

I did come up with one idea already, though. If you don't mind my jumping the gun (no pun intended). We should send all the deer hunters to El Salvador (Central America). This would make everybody happy. The deer -- no one would be shooting at them. The deer hunters -- they'd have plenty to shoot at. Bill Highfield -- America would be safe from communism. (Or did someone already suggest this?) (What can you expect from an idealistic pacifist anyways?)

Guess we're both burned out by now.

((Guess not. I liked your suggestion a lot. I also felt you made some very well-thought-out statements regarding the Quinn Files -- I thought your solution #3 was the best idea on the subject so far.

I'd answer you more, but my typewriter's beginning to get pissed off, and when it gets grumpy, I get in trouble.))

From Billy Highchair (yay!) (6/14/83):

Bruce,

How have you been? Big issue of TMP, huh? I sent a letter and copy to Kelley; I hope he subscribes!

I'm glad you, too, like the literacy test. We should also have a law stating that those who don't pay taxes should not be allowed to vote in school, county, or city budget issues. What do you think about that? I say that if they don't pay, they don't vote on that budget!

As for El Salvador, I think we'll go in with troops after the '84 elections (of course) if needed. We can't let another country fall to those pig farming Russians and their toadies! When we go, we must toss politics away. We should destroy communist Nicaragua -- shoot anything with a gun! The populace should be spared as much as possible, but if they have a gun, they die. We should destroy their bases and economy and install a pro-American government, then pump in the aid to rebuild it.

And I'm not talking about 10,000 or 20,000 men. I mean 100,000 troops with the full support of the Air Force and Navy. If Castro and Cuba try something, threaten to eliminate them. They'll back down when confronted with overwhelming American strength. Sure, it'll be expensive, but in the long run, it will be cheap for us. We must stop this spread of communism any way we can! I hope we stay out of El Salvador but if we do, we should go in and play to win!

I'd like to see "Iron Balls" Haig in command. He's got some guts. Oh well, I've got to go. I'll see you.

((I agree 100% with your second-to-last sentence. ☺))

Seriously, I agree with you in principle, and I think a lot of people out there do. But sometimes you tend to, um, overstate matters just a bit, and that gets people riled. Fight to stop communism, yes; but destroy communist Nicaragua...))

From Kevin Stone (6/18/83).

20

Dear BRUX,

You are really some kind of basketball expert! Your crystal ball must have been working overtime when you said the Sixers would sweep.

I just have to respond to Billy Highchair's letter. I agree with his comments on Reagan doing an adequate job with the economy. Now if only he'd cut the damn defense budget and trim the deficit...

What's this noise about literacy tests for voting? What about somebody who can read, but their language is Spanish, not English? Could they vote? What sort of test would be given? Who would give it? Would it be just one test, or would there be a bunch of versions? If you only have one, how would you keep somebody from taking it and then telling everyone else? When would the tests be given? Right before you wanted to vote? The voting would take a lot longer and many people wouldn't vote just because they can't afford to spend six hours waiting to vote.

I think we've done pretty well so far with everyone able to vote. Besides, uneducated people generally don't vote anyway.

Billy is always bitching about the people on welfare. What about the illiterate factory worker who busts his ass for 60 hours a week? Where would he find the time to learn how to read? Should he become unemployed, so he'd have the time to learn enough to be able to vote? If he's a productive member of society, then why the hell should it matter whether he can read or write? He should not be denied the right to vote! (Sorry if it sounds like I'm getting irate.)

((That's OK, VD pisses people off with astonishing regularity anyway.

I don't propose to have the answers to all of your questions. These are problems which would have to be faced and solved before instituting a test for voting, and I'm no expert on the matter. I simply feel that, in principle, an illiterate drunken bum who wanders the streets of New York City should not be given the same right to determine our country's fate as someone with a law degree from Cornell. (And I'm not even going to consider the drunken bum with a law degree...)

Then again, to expand the discussion just a bit, our whole system of elections could use a healthy shakedown anyway. Take the electoral college, for instance, which gives Alaskans several times the voting power of Californians. Now tell me, is one Ig Lew worth a dozen Rod Walkers?...well, never mind. But we do need some improvements, and we may as well try to make our electoral process as fair as we can.))

From Paul Rauterberg (6/8/83):

Dear Bruce:

In your response to Highfield's letters of 5/18 and 5/20, in issue 79, you compare Willie's expostulations on America's virtues to those of John Boardman. Once again, you are ignoring the fact that Boardman's diatribes are exercises in sarcasm, while Highfield's appear to be sincere utterances (however immature or misguided they may be).

Why does Highfield believe Ronald Reagan's assertion that the conflicts in El Salvador are primarily reflections of the external struggles between capitalism and communism? Why doesn't he read analyses by people who have been down there, and have seen the Salvadorian people being oppressed by a handful of wealthy families? Why does he believe that the people in these families are "dedicated" to the concept of free elections, which would logically result in massive declines in their material fortunes?

Highfield wants to live in peace here in the USA, but he has no qualms about living in "non-peace" everywhere else. His "freedom" is worth the cost of countless human lives, in his book.

((And my freedom is worth the lives of those who would take it from me, too!))

From Bob Osuch (6/14/83):

Dear Bruce,

Just a reaction or two from your most recent letter column.

I agree with Walker regarding Quinn's project. The info's all there for anyone who wants it, so why not consolidate it? I suppose the big gripe is that it will lead to events outside each respective game having an influence, but that happens more often than not in most games.

Hey, Dick asked you to put his letter in #78, or an issue before the end of May, so you put it in #79 on May 31. Hmm, wonder if that was planned.

So Lew makes the most interesting parts of his letters NFP? No problem, print them anyway. I'm sure he wouldn't mind. Tell him I gave you my permission. Don't worry, I won't mention your horrible reputation as one who prints NFP stuff.

Edison thought you published DW? Hah, what a jerk. Nah, I guess he's OK, just upset because I won't ally with his four-center powerhouse and stalemate myself.

Mark Perch obviously has the newest revised rulebook. My 1976 edition doesn't state exactly what is necessary for an order to be acceptable. My rulebook is still vague on the mechanics of writing orders. For example, it could easily be argued that mislabeling an army as a fleet (or vice versa) "admits at two meanings", thus is not to be followed. Mark can imply as he wishes, but the issue isn't clear, otherwise why would there be so much problem with it over the years? It's quite obvious that the rule is vague, no matter how much Mark and Red deny it.

Also, Mark says that for a move order to succeed, you need a "move symbol", either "to" or "-". Brother, does that mean, as it would seem, that if a player forgets his dash, Mark makes that an unordered unit? It would seem so, as Mark says the rulebook is extremely specific about this being required. Mark accepts mislabeled units but not orders without dashes. Yow.

I would sooner place a power in CD than call a standby who has already been in the game and been eliminated. Too many games could be ruined by immature reactions stemming from the original elimination. Of course, in the older days GMs didn't always have the luxury of fresh standbys. I would make it my first priority before GMing a game.

((I agree with the conclusion in your last paragraph, namely that it is a poor idea to let a player play two positions in one game, but disagree with your premise. That is, the argument that an immature reaction could result from the first power's elimination, if accepted, could just as validly be used to make a case against ever letting two players who have played together join a second game together. You know: one player might go after the other because the other wiped him out in the first game. This happens, of course, but we don't separate players who have played together as a result. I think my reasoning that the eliminated player may have been told secrets in his role as the first power has more validity.

I liked your discussion of the missing dashes, and wonder how Mark will respond.

VD's publication dates are always Tuesdays and Dick's letter got here after #78 was out. So the situation wasn't planned. If June 1 had been a Tuesday, his letter wouldn't have made it in at all.

I have a reputation of printing NFP stuff? I'd like to see someone try to point to an example! (Maybe I should watch it, though, I just received a letter from a subber who wants part of his letter deleted. It got here too late, though. Didn't we discuss this very situation in the "Off the Record" article a while back?)))

From Doug Beyerlein (6/12/83):

Dear Bruce,

I greatly enjoyed Geoff Challinger's letter in VD #79. In particular his comments regarding Conrad von Metzke brought back many fond memories from the past. Conrad was

unique. Since Conrad left the hobby in 1970 I have not seen any US zine which had the style and class of Conrad's Costaguana. Back in the 70s when I was SNC I received about half of the UK zines and some of the best were in Costaguana's league. My personal favorite was Ethil the Frog, produced by John Piggot. I am sure that both Geoff and Pete Birks remember Ethil. I wonder what Piggot is doing these days. And for that matter, what about von Metzke? Maybe VD should start an oldtimer's column for all of us relics of the past.

I thought that I had sent you an article for the Greatest Diplomatic Coup Contest, but apparently since you didn't mention it I must have forgot. It was the story of 1968E where I stabbed Rod Walker twice and won the game. I wrote the article ten years ago, but it has never been printed in a zine. Oh well...

((I didn't receive it, but would love to have it. Send it along, hay? Ten years is long enough for any article to have to wait to be printed!

VD does seem to have its share of hobby fossils, and I generally find their writing to be among the most interesting stuff that I get. (I'm referring to Rod Walker, Paul Rautenberg, Fred Davis, Geoff Challinger, Pete Birks, Peter Ansoff, and, of course, you. Rod has written in already about Conrad's current activities; I wonder if Geoff or Pete would care to fill us in regarding John Piggot? (Send me his address and I'll see if I can get him to sub, too!))

I wish I could have seen some of those zines of the past. I'd like to see how they stack up against, say, Europa Express or some other of today's top zines. I think I came into the hobby ten years too late to satisfy my curiosity...))

From Jim Holmel (6/4/83, excerpts):

Dear Bruce

Yes, in that last issue of LSD Mike said he was winding things down. I think he's planning on starting one more game (he's got a big waiting list) but besides that it will just be him finishing off our games. He's doubling all our remaining sub credits since he's changing to a warehouse format so I expect he'll finish everything up.

The ditto is looking better.

So the original batch of zines you sent (or one of the batch) was lost en route? Well, that's no surprise. I got some zines from Sherwood, he put his in a box which wasn't the corrugated cardboard stuff, just a box like a new shirt would come in. The sides were broken open and zines were hanging out when the postman handed it to me. If it wasn't for the tape he put around the box I would have lost that shipment too. What the hell do they do in third class?!

((I dunno, but they ought to sell it to the US Armed Forces. Maybe we could use it to rip apart enemy tanks!))

From Rick Ragsdale (6/17/83):

BRUX

This comes to you from the cargo compartment of a C-130 en route from San Francisco to Scott AFB, so if parts of it are illegible...blame it on rough air.

THE WORD has come down from Alcaia that Bill Quinn's computer compilation of records from Everything is GOOD. A hobby Old Fogey admonishes us w/ rejoice, secure in the knowledge someone may care enough to spend a buck to find out what our playing records are. I feel I am beside the still waters.

And much of the Old Fogey's reasoning seems rational and measured. The information is, after all, available to the public now. No one established that record save

the player himself. And, after all, the folks who play Diplomacy for fun probably don't view the "Quinn Files" as "dangerous".

But beyond that the Old Fogey's reasoning/arguments become somewhat fuzzy and irrational. The information available from Bill Quinn is a matter of public record; how could anyone "demand that it now be kept secret?" To the best of my knowledge I don't recall anyone in these pages calling for public information to be made secret. Where did the Old Fogey get that interpretation of the discussion? I simply decried the fact that information previously available only to the "hyperindustrious few" who compiled player stats/profiles on their own at much cost in effort is now available to everyman for a buck. And I decried one more computer compilation of data which, while public in nature, would remain relatively obscure were it not for the energy of a programmer and the speed of a computer.

I am a member of the Air Force and much of my personal life is available for scrutiny to those with access to a computer and innocuous public records. For instance, you can determine to the penny how much I am paid from records other than those kept by the IRS. Most people privately employed consider the amount of their income to be highly personal. Sure, I'm paid by the tax dollars and we all have the right to know where most of our tax dollars are spent, perhaps that's as it should be. BUT, I simply don't like my hobby/recreational activities being subjected to the same fishbowl type of scrutiny possible in my other affairs.

Why? What have I to hide? What harm can possibly come from having such innocuous information catalogued and available for instant retrieval? I've nothing to hide, and can see no immediate harm now. But the country is populated with supposedly intelligent, well-informed individuals who fail to grasp the complexities of high school-level civics/constitutional knowledge and thus say, "Not only are objections to their (dipdata) publication poorly reasoned, nobody has a right to make any such objection." I don't want people who think that way to know any more about me than is absolutely necessary.

Reflect for a moment on how pervasive data gathering and "crunching" is in our society. It's even invaded a hobby as unstructured as postal Dip! And reflect on the old axiom of war, "Know Thine Enemy." The more someone intent on controlling your behavior knows about you, the easier it is for him to pick out weak spots to exploit. I'd rather the mindless listing for listing's sake not make it easier for such a person to succeed.

Am I making a mountain out of a molehill? Perhaps. Innocuous information indicating a person's eligibility for resettlement to National Socialist work camps was available in Germany in the 1930s in the form of birth and marriage certificates, Synagogue rolls, and the like. How much more efficient the Nazis could have made their final solution to the "Jewish Problem" had they been able to sift these widely scattered and non-integrated public records via computer rather than relying on manual record checks. How many more eligibles who escaped identification by the manual search would have been "tagged" through the automated search of a central data bank?

Thus, as long as there are people outside the U.S. who want to restructure our system, and people in the U.S. like the Old Fogey who fail to grasp the basic, underlying principles upon which our Republic is based, I'm philosophically opposed to data gathering and "crunching" such as Bill Quinn's work. And, I'll take the soapbox any time to exercise my Constitutionally guaranteed right to voice my objection.

The listings are available from Bill Quinn, 1225 Ridgecrest, Orlando, FL 32806; any three players' records for \$1.00. I'm still opposed to the idea. Now, have we belabored this topic long enough?

((Almost. You are 100% right to criticize Rod's statement that no one has a right to make an objection to the Quinn Files. I don't know what Rod was thinking of when he said that..

I do think, though, that you are making a quantum leap from data gathering in the postal Dip hobby to data gathering in Nazi Germany. Thank for writing.))

Number nine in the Runestone Poll and Number one in our hearts...

24

Alex's Column

Alex's Column is published by Alex Lord, Doonie of the Year, Box 178, Hannacroix, NY 12087.

Hey, you queers!

Today I had a very emotional experience as I was trying to perform a brain-straining activity. Have you ever seen those absurd nicknacks that have a sand design on the bottom and paraffin poured on the top to make a candle? They're always on display in malls and so on. Well, since I'm an autistic child, I thought that the sand was loose on the bottom and wanted to get to it. Little did I know that it was baked, or fired, into a solid rock. As I was trying to pry the red wax off the top with a Philips Head screwdriver, I suddenly shattered the glass. I looked down at my hand and saw a big, white gaping hole revealing my tendons and bones, lying beneath the skin of my poor mistreated thumb. Then gallons of blood.

Well, curiosity did kill the cat, but in this case satisfaction brought it back because now I get to lie on my bed and dictate this to Bruce. (He's already complaining about writer's cramp!) The result of this bloody mishap was seven painful stitches and one pissed off BRUX, because I couldn't go swimming with him, sneak up behind him, and pull down his shorts.

I never thought I would enjoy having a man hold my hand so much, but the doctor who sewed me up was gorgeous, so I didn't mind. When I first went in, I was shocked at the revealing questions they asked me in front of my poor innocent father: are you married, are you taking birth control pills, have you ever been under treatment for VD? "Well," I told him, "I had my first experience with VD over a year ago, and it's been with me ever since!"

His eyes widened in horror and disbelief. He said, "And you just turned sixteen yesterday?!"

"Yes," I replied, "I've been a Doonie since the tender age of 14!"

"Oh, I should have known you meant The Voice of Doon! You must be the notorious Alex Lord who was struck down by VD in her childhood." As all the nurses and doctors gathered around, I could have sworn that I heard Bruce in the background chortling merrily, "Oh goody, here comes another funny article!"

Now that they knew who I was, they took care of me even before the man who was holding a bag of ice containing his severed middle finger -- the most important one, I hope they saved it! From the angry look on his face, I thought for a minute that he was going to give me the finger. Gross! I felt guilty from taking all the sympathy away from that poor man who would never be able to display his true feeling toward road hogs again while driving.

Gee, I'm glad I got the doctor's number, now he can take care of me in the future. Next time, it might not be just my hand that needs attention! ((Heh, heh! And Alex thinks I'm writing this just as she says it. With her nestled snugly between the sheets and me here at the desk, she doesn't know what is going on. She'll kill me for this!))

I know what I want to be when I grow up. There are so many handsome interns training around the hospital, I think I'll work in a hospital as Florence Nightengale or better yet, a trained professional such as a full-fledged doctor. This has really changed my ideas about the difficult medical field. Now I want to play in that field. I can be the ballgirl!

Anyway, my stitches come out in eight days. I never thought I'd look forward so eagerly to seeing a hospital again.

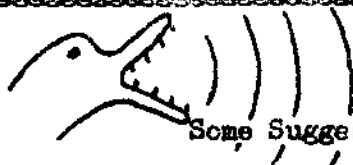
Love,
Alex

PS. I've been getting some really strange stuff from the casa de correos (house of ~~the~~ mails) lately. Thanks to Bruce and all of you who have helped to make my sixteenth birthday extra special. (It must be my birthday; since when does Bruce help me rather than hinder me?!) But seriously, friends, I was very deeply touched by your kindness and thoughtfulness. Thank you all.

((Gee, it's too bad Alex doesn't cut her hand more often! It's lots of fun helping her do all the things she can't do by herself with just one hand: tie her shoes, cut her food at dinner, change into her pajamas, and so on. (Just kidding, but now she's really gonna kill me!) Seriously, I had a great time visiting Alex the other day and celebrating her birthday, even if she couldn't come swimming with me due to her injury. She watched me swim, then we went inside and she dictated her article to me, then we went downstairs for dinner (which, at Alex's house, usually means a feast, and this time was no exception!).

As for Alex's FS about strange stuff in the mail; 60 of you know what she's referring to (though when I was there only 24 things had been received). More about Alex's "Postal Birthday Party" in a later issue, but I could tell that she was deeply touched as she says. Thanks to all our friends out there who participated in making Alex's birthday a very happy one.))

~~~~~



### BRUX Speaks

#### Some Suggestions for the Runestone Poll

With the results for the 1983 Poll just out, now may be as appropriate a time as ever to discuss what might be done to improve the poll next year. Randolph has already said that he is open to suggestion, so I shall offer mine. I'll start, though, by lauding Randolph for his promptness in handling this year's poll and his willingness to produce a much more detailed summary of the results than Leeder ever did. The following criticisms are offered in the spirit of making a good thing even better.

1. It is not now clear who may vote for which zines. A publisher may not vote for his own zine, but may a subzine publisher vote for the zine which contains his or her subzine? And may a zine publisher vote for subzines carried within his zine? My personal opinion would be "yes" to both -- otherwise several people would be barred from voting for a zine like Coat of Arms, and the publishers of such zines would be ineligible to vote for many subzines. Additionally, we should face the question of does someone have to sub to a zine to vote for it? My opinion is no -- there are many people who read zines without subscribing. Until last month, I was not a subber to Graustark -- yet I read each issue from cover to cover! Best solution may be to keep it the way Randolph had it this year -- just put people "on their honor" (?) to vote for zines on which they can make an objective judgement.

2. Should a player be able to vote only for those GMs under whom he has played? I don't think so. There are many ways to judge a GM without having played under him. For instance, I am quite familiar with Dick Martin's GMing from reading his zine and talking to people who have played under him. And much can be learned just from reading a GM's house rules and observing his games. Although it would hurt my own score to have non-players vote for me, I think this restriction should be removed.

3. Randolph uses an arithmetic mean to figure the averages. I would suggest a modified mean, wherein the top, say, 5% of votes for a given zine or GM are discounted from both the top and bottom. This would reduce the impact of "hate" votes and "love" votes, and it is a method often used in statistical analyses, to help prevent a few radical responses from throwing a score totally out of whack with most peoples' opinions.

4. This year there was a restriction that people should not vote for a zine based on feuds or disagreements with editorial policies. Poppycock. Not only is this unenforceable, it's unrealistic. If a publisher has crummy editorial policies, he or she should get a low vote. How do you distinguish a "feud" from legitimate reasons for voting someone low? I think Retaliation is a dreadful zine due to the slander Dick prints. Should I be banned from voting it low because I'm "feuding" with him?

These are all questions for discussion, and since my Gossip Column is widely read, I would like to open it up as a forum for discussion of these (and other related) issues. Randolph will, I'm sure, be interested. Let's have your comments, please.



Runestone Poll Results!

Following are the results of the 1983 Zine Poll. I'll begin by listing the top 31 zines, together with my comments...

1. Europa Express. Congratulations to Gary for a well-deserved win! I agree entirely with this ranking. I wonder how it must feel to publish the best zine on earth.
2. Diplomacy by Moonlight. A great zine which, alas, has folded.
3. Snafu!. Ronald Brown's beautiful zine gets what it deserves!
4. Just Among Friends. Folded. I miss it.
5. Appalling Greed. As reliable as they come.
6. Sleepless Knights. I dream about this one!
7. The Prince. Way to go, Jim Meinel!
8. Well, modesty forbids...Thank to all 54 who voted for me!
9. The Dogs of War. I don't sub to it, but I know it's super reliable.
10. Envoy. Roy Henricks' multi-game zine. Just restarted my sub, and I'm glad!
11. Diplomacy World. Underrated. Contains much of the hobby's best writing.
12. Magus. Massive amounts of effort go into each issue of this zine.
13. Bushwacker. Fred Davis' reliable variant zine.
14. Whitestonia. Good showing for an entertaining zine.
15. Xenogogic. Larry Peery's massive zine.
16. Peralandra. Don't know much about it; it may have folded.
17. North Sealth, West George. Terry Tallman's handwritten zine.
18. Cheesecake. Warehousey, but very reliable.
19. Coat of Arms. Woody's zine. I don't get it. I don't want it.
20. Diplomacy Digest. Lower than deserved. Much good reading.
20. Murd'ring Ministers. Ron Brown's excellent zine. This should have done a lot better.
22. Anduin. Eric Kane says this will be out again soon, and I can't wait!
23. Paranoiac's Monthly. Folded, I'm pretty sure.
24. Lone Star Diplomat. Not the zine it used to be, but still beautiful.
25. Everything. The official zine of the Boardman Number Custodian.
26. Midlife Crisis. The zine with the fractured skull. Expect it to do better next year.
27. Umbain Macha. Don't get this one, so can't comment.
28. No Fixed Address. Becoming a favorite. Lots of great sick humor!
29. Thirty Miles of Bad Road. Vastly underrated. This may be the best zine in the hobby for good, clean, inoffensive fun.
30. Damn the Torpedoes. Folded. It wasn't exactly reliable, anyway.
30. Retaliation. Radically changed from two or three years ago; now loaded with personal attacks and character assassination. Surprised it did this well.

Subzines next; I'll just list the top ten and comment on those I know about.

1. Nos Eiseley Spaceport. Clearly the best subzine around. Congratulations, John!
2. Humboldt.
3. Mass Murders. I like Osuch's free-swinging style. Good show, Bob!
4. Strange Doings.
5. Flat Bellum.
6. Free Speech Alley.
7. Kathy's Korner. Lots of entertainment. Controversy and Kathy's ideas about "ethics" may have brought this one down a notch or two.
8. Expletive Deleted.
9. Alex's Column. Sentimental favorite finishes well. Congratulations, Alex!
10. Vertigo.

Very realistic results overall. Thank to Randolph for a job well done, and to everyone who voted. GM Poll results are on the next page.

I'm not qualified to comment on most of the GMs listed, so will save what few remarks I have till the end. We'll go with the top thirty; complete results can be found in other zines very soon.

- |                    |                       |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Doug Beyerlein  | 11. Jack Fleming      | 21. Konrad Baumeister |
| 2. John Daly       | 11. Judy Winsome      | 22. Mike Conner       |
| 3. Bob Osuch       | 13. Bob Sergeant      | 23. Dave Marshall     |
| 4. Dave Carter     | 14. Steve Arnawoodian | 24. BRUX Linsey       |
| 5. Andy Lischett   | 15. Mike Mills        | 25. Scott Hanson      |
| 6. Jim Meinel      | 16. Tom Mainardi      | 26. Greg Frits        |
| 7. Mark Larzelere  | 17. Barry Hichey      | 27. Tom Swider        |
| 8. Steve Heinowski | 17. John Caruso       | 28. Roy Henricks      |
| 9. Gary Coughlan   | 19. Steve Langley     | 29. Eric Ozog         |
| 10. Ronald Brown   | 20. Ron Brown         | 30. Dick Martin       |

OK, my comments. From my own experience, Gary Coughlan and Ron Brown are both excellent GMs and both deserved to do better than they did, though Gary may have had to suffer through two or three hate votes. My own distribution of votes was interesting and tells the story well enough: three 0's, two 5's, and all the rest were 7 or better. As with the other two polls, I am more than pleased with the results of this one. As for my own Gming score, I shall work harder next year so that it might improve. Thanks to all who voted.



Seasons of the Heart

I don't normally write reviews of music in VD. Never have before, probably never will again. There is a good reason for this: I don't know the slightest thing about music. I couldn't tell a bass guitar from from a tenor piccolo. However, I do think very highly of John Denver's latest album, now a year old, called "Seasons of the Heart".

What I really like most about this album is that John returns to his old style of music; the kind all his die-hard fans like me have come to associate with him. His three previous albums had each departed radically in style; it seems as though he was experimenting with different types of music, and with no great degree of success at any of them. The album called "John Denver", released in 1978, sees him going after faster and livelier tunes; the style just doesn't go with his voice. There are exceptions, notably the beautiful "Garden Song". In 1980 "Autograph" was released, containing several good songs including the title cut, but a slushy mass of sickening stuff about whales. In 1981, the worst one of the bunch came out, "Some Days are Diamonds". Sorry, John, you're not a country music singer and that's that. The title cut and "Sleepin' Alone" are passable and the remake of "Boy From the Country" is super, but the rest is (for John Denver) just plain junk.

"Seasons of the Heart" is like most of his older albums: six or seven outstanding songs, most of them written by the man himself. Most people have probably heard "Shanghai Breezes" and "Perhaps Love" by now, and indeed they are the gems of the album. But "What One Man Can Do " is a gorgeous blend of melody and lyrics, with a deeper message than most Denver songs. "Opposite Tables" is absolutely beautiful, though marred by sickenly religious lyrics. The title cut isn't bad at all; in fact, all of side one is very good. I saw John Denver in concert before the album came out, and he played "Shanghai Breezes" and "Perhaps Love" and told the stories behind them, so I couldn't wait to get the album.

Well, like I said, I don't know anything about music (and don't ever try to get me to listen to anything harder than The Beatles or Electric Light Orchestra), but I do like John Denver most of all. Especially his return to his old style of home-and-hearth type love songs.

Just Whose Game is this, Anyway?

by Paul Reuterberg

In view of recent discussions in The Voice of Doom concerning season separations, perhaps an overview of the issue might be helpful.

In face to face (FTF) play, Fall, Winter, and Spring seasons are always separated, as required (by implication) by the rulebook. Negotiations are permitted between Spring and Fall seasons, and between Winter and Spring seasons, but are not allowed between Fall and Winter seasons.

In postal play, a seasons separation involves a delay running from 3 to 6 weeks rather than the 5 minute span involved in FTF. Although postal GMs could put players "on their honor" not to negotiate between Fall/Winter seasons, they by and large have chosen not to do so. This is an excellent example of the postal hobby's tendency to "evolve" from strict adherence to FTF traditions, in specified cases where "common sense" or "player preference" mandates such changes.

Another prime departure from FTF norms of behavior is the postal practice of combining Winter/Spring seasons. This is a popular means of "speeding up a game", and the vast majority of postal GMs ((in North America)) incorporate it into their houserules. In most cases, players will try their best to accommodate themselves to the combined season situation. They may submit "conditional orders" - they may try to "break" a build in behind a gullible player's back; they may all make assumptions, in cases where builds/removals are "obvious", or where they are few in number and/or far from the front lines. In such cases, season separations take place only occasionally.

In other situations, however, a player may feel that the number and complexity of his options exceed his ability to capably cover them via conditional orders. And, changes in negotiating strategies may be generated by unforeseen combinations of adds and removals. Since this is a game, and not a business, Postal GMs tend to provide loopholes, whereby season separations can be achieved. If a player feels that a separation shall enhance his enjoyment of the game, he shall make an effort to avail himself of such loopholes. Who will dare to gainsay him?

For some, the honoring of a single player's separation request is obligatory. The GM is perceived to be a neutral referee, unqualified to judge the merits of player preferences. The game, after all, "belongs to the players".

Other houserules require that two or more players be involved in the separation request. Such GMs are catering to a feeling that most players prefer combined seasons, and that separations impede the majority's enjoyment of the swift-flowing game. Such rules may generate a need for extra levels of negotiations, when players seeking separations must attempt to convince others to go along with them. This requirement could unfairly compel a player to reveal his stand on the issue of separation, or to "expose" his reasons for wanting it. Hostility could be engendered as a result. Can a GM justify houserules which unduly compromise a player's negotiations, or a player's "image"?

Other houserules require the player seeking separation to provide "good and sufficient reasons" to the GM, to justify his request. The GM plays god and decides on the merits of this argument. If a player feels "screwed" by that decision, he is left with no recourse. The game is construed as "belonging to the GM", and the player should have been aware of this fact before he contracted to play in this particular zine.

Still another example of GM arbitrariness occurs in cases where houserules "neutrally" mandate season separations, in games where combined Winter/Spring seasons are the norm. The rules spell out certain definitions of "complexity", and pre-assume situations where players cannot be trusted to cope on their own. Once again, the game is determined to "belong" to the "neutral" GM, and player preferences are relegated to the sidelines.



It all boils down, in the final analysis, to the question of "whose game is it?". Is a game merely a variant coinciding with a GM's personal quirks, or is it a framework under which eight people amicably play together?

((I have done some serious thinking about VD's policy on season separations, even before receiving this article from Paul, and I've decided there is only one fair way to go. My houserules will soon be amended to provide for season separations if and only if requested by at least one player. The only exception will be for Winter, 1901, which will still always be separate.

Paul touches on the reason for this in his article, and Mark Berch discussed it in more detail in a recent letter. The reason is that a player's negotiating strategy can be greatly affected by the winter orders -- even if it's only a single build or removal that is due. I see no way to rebut that logic, and in fact my new houserule will even provide for a separate autumn or summer retreat season at the request of one player, for the same reason.

I don't like the prospect of having the games slowed down, as surely some of them will be under this new rule. But this is by far a lesser evil than denying a player his right to negotiate based on the results of non-moving seasons. I would hope that players will use their judgement carefully before making a request for separation. (In a VD game not long ago, I received two requests for a separate summer. Normally, I would have honored the requests, but when I looked at the last adjudication, there were no retreats to be made! (It was NEPTUNE, in case anyone's wondering.) This is what I mean when I say that I hope players will use better judgement.)

Paul also touches on a point early in his article which was first discussed in VD #15 -- the rulebook's prohibition against negotiating between Fall and Winter (and, for that matter, before retreats). This I have always regarded as the biggest single mistake in the rulebook, as it violates the whole spirit of the game. All actions on the board should be subject to the negotiations of the players, and this includes retreats, builds and removals. I generally try to get other players in my FTF games to agree to a very brief negotiating period before non-moving seasons, and regard this way as far superior to the rulebook's way. But I digress...

Thank for some thought-provoking comments, Paul, and four free issues.))

~~~~~

The Italian Who Went to Detroit

One day Ina go to Detroit to a bigga hotel. I go down to eat some breakfast. I tella the waitress I wanna two piss's toast. She branga me only onea piss. I tella her I wanna two piss. She say go to the toilet. I say you no understand. I wanna two piss on my plate. She say you better no piss on the plate you sonna ma bitch. I don't even know the lady and she call me sonna ma bitch.

Later I go to eat some lunch at Drake Restaurant. I waitress branga me a spoon, ana knife, but no fock. I tella her I wanna fock. She tellsa me everybody wanna fock. I tella her, you no understand, I wanna fock on the table. She say you better not fock on the table, you sonna ma bitch. I don't even know the lady and she call me a sonna ma bitch.

So I go back to my room inna hotel, and there's no sheet on my bed. I calla the manager ana tella him I wanna sheet. He tells me to go to the toilet, so I say you no understand, I wanna sheet on the bed. He say, you better not sheet on the bed, you sonna ma bitch. I don't even know the man and he call me sonna ma bitch.

I go to check out and the man at the desk, he say peace to you. I say piss ana you too, you sonna ma bitch.

I go back to Italy!!!

I'll close with some miscellaneous notes.

After typing up my reply to Ron Brown's letter this ish, I received an issue of Kathy's Korner in which she does inform her readers that she will not honor any requests for confidentiality. I just wish she would have let me know this a few months ago, when I wrote her an off-the-record letter which she discussed at length in her zine. I understand that Mark Berch was burned too, so I urge my readers to exercise caution when writing to Kathy about matters you don't want made public.

I neglected to mention it in my comments following the Runestone Poll results, but in my personal opinion, there were four zines (that I can think of offhand) that were omitted from the top 30, and should have made it. These are Winsome-Lessome, Give Me a Weapon, Fol Si Fie, and of course The Modern Patriot. Better luck next year to these guys!

Stocks and Bonds is going very well, though it's a lot more work than I bargained for. We're in about the sixth year of play now, out of eleven. I don't think I'll start another one when this ends, at least right away.

And finally, since this is going to be distributed as a sample at Origins, I might as well mention here that anyone interested in beginning postal play of Diplomacy would do well to order a copy of Supernova, the Novice Packet, from me. Cost is \$1, and copies will be available at Origins. It's a 35-page booklet designed to help introduce people to postal Diplomacy. You won't regret buying one!

BRUN

Bruce Linsey
24A Quarry Drive
Albany, NY 12205