

# THE VOICE OF DOOM

#95

May 15, 1984

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by BRUX

This issue is dedicated to my honey Joan Extrom, whom I shall shortly have the pleasure of meeting in person for the first time. Joan has been a close friend to me for around a year now, and her contributions to VD in that time have been greatly appreciated.

I seem to have acquired a pet cricket here in my apartment, much to my disgust. I arrived home from work around three weeks ago and heard a loud CHIRP coming from the living room. At first I thought that Ed Wrobel or one of that crowd had installed a bug in VD Headquarters, and it was malfunctioning, but the authenticity and regularity of the sound soon convinced me that I was dealing with the other kind of bug. There was indeed a cricket in my living room.

Crickets are pretty good at hiding, if one does not consider their chirping, and this one was no exception. A quick search of the living room reveals nothing, while all the time those maddening chirps were sounding irritatingly closer and closer. I tried triangulation, the same process by which geologists can locate the epicenter of an earthquake, but this procedure merely proved to me that the object of my aggravation was mobile, not stationary. I finally took all the furniture in the room and put it in the kitchen and bedroom, then rolled up the carpet and moved it out too. That cricket was going to have to go! In this barren environment, I figured that my antagonist had no chance of remaining hidden. I looked around the room carefully, on all fours, and found nothing. And then, just as though to spite me -- "CHIRP!!" It must be hidden in a crack somewhere, I thought. A quick trip to the local store, and I was armed with a can of Raid. Sprayed all the cracks and inside the heating ducts, and practically saturated the whole room with the stuff. Nearly poisoned myself. "CHIRP!" went the cricket. "Goddammit!" I responded. I was getting pissed. Finally it dawned on me that the thing must be under the floorboards, which I then tried to tear up, to no avail. I tried jumping up and down on my now-bare living room floor, hoping to either scare it off or get lucky and crash through the floorboards and score a direct hit, thus killing it, but this action only brought another curt phone call from the downstairs tenant, the same guy who rang me up during BRUXCON to object to our celebrating when ERIC KANE ROLLED A ONE!! So nothing has worked, and that cricket is still here bugging the hell out of me. So if you read anything objectionable in VD, don't blame me. Blame that goddam cricket. It's driving me to unprecedented emotional depths. By Jimmy.

The Voice of Doom is a journal of postal Diplomacy published every now and then by Bruce Linsey, 73 Ashualot St., Apt. 3, Dalton, MA 01226. Phone (413) 684-0567. Subs are 10 issues for \$5.00. Standbys are wanted. There are no game openings.

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The deadline for all games contained herein is June 8, 1984.

The Zine Column

This past month's mail has brought a preponderance of juicy stuff to write about, some of it controversial and some sedate, and much of it worth a look here.

John Caruso informs me that his letter about me in the latest Politesse (the one addressed to Mr. Ed) was written strictly in fun and was not intended as an attack on me. I'll take his word for it, though sometimes John's idea of "humor" is radically different from mine. I personally feel that "humor" is supposed to be funny.

Of far more consequence is this quote from Ed Wrobel himself: "One well-respected dipdomite wrote: 'P.S. That decision Linsey made on your orders is the most assinine I've ever seen. P.P.S. Don't print this or I'll get into a feud with Bruce!' Bruce has also published a list of GMs who, he alleges, agree with his ruling. One of those on the list actually wrote to us to disavow affiliation with Bruce's views. Did Bruce twist any arms? Is this GM afraid to oppose Bruce? Will there be a VoD retraction buried in the letter column somewhere?"

No, there won't. When I asked him, Ed wouldn't tell me who the GM was. Of those I listed as agreeing with my decision, Kleiman, Meinel, Rauterberg and both Ron Browns answered my poll question that way last summer, Conner has actually ruled that way on a similar set of orders, Boardman told me in person (at a ByrneCon last year) that he agreed with the ruling, and Steve Hutton told me the same over the phone. I misrepresented nobody.

Regarding Ed's "well-respected dipdomite", one has to wonder if the same decision was "assinine" when Conner made it. Would it be assinine if Paul Rauterberg or John Boardman (e.g.) made it? Or is it just "assinine" when BRUK makes it, because, well, BRUK is BRUK? This person might also want to familiarize himself with that sentence in the Rulebook which reads "A unit may be ordered to do only one thing on each move". And Ed Wrobel might want to familiarize himself with the meaning of the phrase "Don't print this". Each of those is pretty plain English to me.

Golly, I haven't been this caustic in over a year! "Let's lighten up a bit, BRUK!" "No, Bruce, I don't wanna! I hafta reply to all these things or the whole hobby will think I'm a bad boy!" "Well, they already know you're a bad boy!" No, Doomies, I'm not bad. Just weird. No, not weird. Just strange. No, not strange. Just wishy-washy. And I wish to hell that damn cricket would go away.

Note to Anduin readers: sorry if there are any of you who might have been anticipating a good knock-down, drag-out feud, but Eric and I are friends and will remain so. We had a small misunderstanding, and it is settled.

Magus arrived a couple of weeks ago with a very entertaining piece of writing by Daf Langley in her subzine, Hare of the Dog. (I personally have to wonder: if Ty Hare ever marries a canine, will there be a zine called Dog of the Hare?) Magus is becoming one of my very favorite zines. Steve's editorial a couple of issues back really put feuding in an appropriate perspective, I think, and the zine is pretty enormous in size. Send at least two stamps for a sample to Steve and Daf Langley, 4112 Boone Lane, Sacramento, CA 95821, and tell 'em who sent you.

While I'm on the subject of Magus I wish to take issue with Steve's comments to the effect that there is a "slowdown" in dipdom; that the hobby is not as interesting or fun as it used to be. To me just the opposite seems to be the case; I can very honestly state that I'm having as much fun in the hobby these days as I ever have, and I'd bet that the same is true of quite a few of my subbers. Dipdom is like a good wine in that it just keeps improving with age. Of course, one can overindulge and wind up with a hangover for a while, but all in all it seems to me the hobby is going in the right direction. And so long as there's an enjoyable hobby, there'll always be a BRUK.

I have to wonder how many of my readers are aware that when I type a sentence like the one just before this, I just lean back and laugh my head off for a minute or two, trying to picture how various people will react to it. How will the sentence "there'll always be a BRUK" affect Rod Walker? Ed Wrobel? Mark Berch? Ty Hare? Steve Langley? Joan? Kathy Byrne? ...and so on. Yes, Doomies, the hobby is indeed a curious and fascinating place, and yes, it gets better as I grow crazier and crazier.

The British Diplomacy hobby is likewise a pretty entertaining place these days too, with several items that bear mentioning here. Richard Sharp, author of Diplomacy's only hard-cover book (The Game of Diplomacy) restarted his zine Dolchstoss recently. Sharp is without a doubt one of the hobby's best writers, but there seems to be somewhat of a furor over his return as he folded very messily some years ago.

And, speaking of messy folds (I'll get back to the British hobby in a moment), it seems that Francois Guerrier has revived Passchendaele. For you newcomers in the audience, I strongly recommend that you avoid sending Francois any money for any reason. Passchendaele folded very irresponsibly two or three years ago, and Francois stole quite a few sub and game fees, including about \$200 for a prize fund game he was running. I lucked out; he owed me some money which I eventually managed to get from him (rather slyly, I might add), but not everyone was compensated. Just ask Ron Brown or Ronald Brown, for instance. Again, avoid Passchendaele and Guerrier.

Despite that and a negative note about Bob Albrecht which appears elsewhere in this issue, I disagree strongly with a recent statement by Dick Martin in his House of Lords to the effect that most Canadian publishers are arrogant. (That's not an exact quote; I don't have the issue handy at the moment, but I'm pretty sure he did say "arrogant".) To me, four publishers really form the nucleus of the Canadian hobby: Dave Carter, Steve Hutton, Randolph Sayth, and Ronald Brown. None of them could be labeled "arrogant" by any definition of the word; in fact, quite a few American publishers, myself included, could take a few lessons from any of them about being even-handed and level-headed. But I'll get back to the Canadian hobby in just a minute.

A humorous item appeared in the latest issue of Home of the Brave, in which Geoff Challenger speculates that Ron Galicia might be a pseudonym for Conrad von Metzke, who is reentering the hobby. Ron Galicia, some of you may recall, is a novice who wrote a couple of letters to VD a few months back. Geoff bases his speculation on the fact that both Ron and Conrad are from San Diego, and "Galicia" sounds like a name that Conrad, with his well-known sense of humor, might make up, and so on. This intrigued me and I hastened to find out whatever I could. I called directory assistance and asked for the number of Ron Galicia, giving the name of the street he lives on. The operator told me that there was no listing for anyone in San Diego by that name. Then I was going to call for a number for Conrad von Metzke, using Ron's address, but discovered that Conrad is not listed at that address after all (he uses a PO Box, which at first made me even more suspicious, but the operator gave me his correct address, and it's not the same as Ron's). Drat. Just when I thought we were about to uncover a good hoax. But I'll get back to the British hobby, and San Diego, in just a minute.

The latest issue of the now-folding Snafu! just arrived, with some very atypical comments by Ronald. Ronald is normally the sort who avoids controversy like the plague, but last issue, on the first two pages, he manages to:

1. Explain some negative feelings he has had toward Dick Martin;
2. Advise his readers to avoid Passchendaele and Peter Walker's irregular zine Baltic Sea; and

3. Dump on Robert Sacks' Known Game Openings.

Pretty spicy stuff for Snafu!. I might add, lest the above comes across as critical, that Ronald's statements are all made very responsibly and I agree with most of what he says, especially regarding Sacks and Guerrier. But I'll get back to the Canadian hobby in a moment.

Back in Britain, I must confess that the latest issue of Denver Glont cost me some sleep. There are some house rules I agree with, and some I disagree with, but once in a while I stumble across one that is just plain wrong; that is, it really violates both the letter and spirit of the Rules of the Game. Such was the case in DG, in which one of the house rules Kim Dent is using reads as follows: "...after a player's pieces have received no orders for two consecutive turns, any other subscriber may then take over simply by sending in orders for the next turn." Sheesh. Talk about

your dreadful house rules. Why do I find it so awful? One of the fundamental rules of the game is that players will be allowed to negotiate with the other players before moves are made. How would you like it if a standby was called into your game and made moves stabbing you before you even knew who he was? Richard Sharp makes the same criticism in his book, having been a victim two or three times of such abominable GMing practices. Kim, it's far, far preferable to name a standby first, from a list of players who have agreed to stand by if needed, let him/her negotiate for a session, and then allow that person to take over. Hmm. I see now in Politesse that Ed Wrobel has done just about the exact same thing in a game he was running by phone, explaining, "I prefer the immediate recruitment of a standby, if at all possible, to prevent the destruction of a country by NMR." Well, then, maybe I'm wrong after all! If Ed Wrobel does it, it must be right. But I'll get back to Politesse in a minute.

Frobozz is the name of a new zine published by Jeff Richmond, 3313 Platt Rd., Ann Arbor, MI. Jeff is a very experienced GM (he used to guest GM in The Dragon and the Lamb), and his zine reminds me very strongly of St. George and the Dragon. In short, I expect Frobozz to be a reliable, non-controversial zine with a few well-run games. If you're looking for a good place to play, this may be it. But I'll get back to Michigan in just a minute.

Back in Canada, I really cannot recommend highly enough Steve Hutton's very witty No Fixed Address. (Actually, he does have a fixed address, though he moves frequently. Mail will always get to him (eventually) at 704 Brant St., London, Ontario, CANADA N5Y 3M1.) Steve has a wry sense of humor (excuse me, humour) that I really enjoy. Recently he remarked that NFA seems to have acquired a new role in the hobby: that of a proving ground for VD. Indeed, the "2000 Pages of Juicy Quotes" contest was more or less a takeoff on a contest he had just run, and the "Roll Over BeethovenCon" play came shortly upon the heels of his own very funny "Wizard of Dip" play. If indeed any zine in the hobby is a proving ground for ideas to be used in VD, then No Fixed Address would be a great choice for the role -- it is sooooo clever!

One issue on which I disagree radically with Steve, however, is his recent attack on Rod Walker. The background of the situation is as follows: John Caruso printed an item in Whitestonia calling Mark Berch a liar because Mark printed a statement that wasn't true, but was very clearly just a simple human error. Rod took John to task in the pages of Erehwon for calling Berch a liar. (I criticized John for it too, but I did so directly in a letter to Whitestonia rather than elsewhere.) Steve Hutton then blasted Rod for dumping on Caruso for attacking Berch as a "liar" over a statement that wasn't true, and proceeds to show where Rod, too, had made a statement that wasn't true. But the example he chose was truly outlandish: his criticism of Rod is over a clearly humorous item indicating that Keith Sesler publishes fascist cartoons, or something like that. I've talked to Keith himself about it, and he wasn't the least bit bothered by what Rod wrote. Sheesh, Steve. How deep did you have to dig to come up with an example to try and make Rod look as bad as the person he was criticizing? Pretty deep, it appears to me. So now it appears that I'm grossed out at the fact that Steve is grossed out at the fact that Rod is grossed out at the fact that John is grossed out at the fact that Mark simply made a mistake, which serves to illustrate just how silly the whole affair is anyway. Can you believe that every one of the people mentioned in the above paragraph is an adult?

Anyway, I did promise to get back to Michigan, so here I am. Keith Sesler has folded his zine Manifest Destiny, and he informs me that all refunds will be out shortly. I'm sorry to see MD go as it too was very entertaining. My understanding is that the pressures of real life just caught up to Keith and he couldn't keep going. MD will be missed.

The Modern Patriot has folded as well, but it won't be missed here. Bill Highfield has stated in writing that "I regret the embarrassment I have been to my family, the Navy, and my friends.", and to that list I would add his country and his hobby. Good riddance. TMP leaves behind some orphaned games and a lot of hard feelings.

Back to Politesse, the issue before last contains a registration form and info for MaryCon, which as this is being written I hope to attend. Tentatively, I will be driving down with Dave Lincoln of Rhode Island and rooming with him, but that's not at all certain yet. For further info on MaryCon, write to Ed at P.O. Box 3463, Arlington, VA 22203 and I'm sure he'll be glad to help you register. I expect MaryCon to be the biggest gathering of postal Dip players in North America this year, with Origins being held in some faraway hick town called "Dallas" and most of the eastern hobby indicating their intentions to defect to MaryCon instead. And, if I come, so shall the Dippy Photo Album! By now my collection includes photographs of well over 100 hobbyists, including just about anybody who's anybody in North America. I was out shopping earlier today and bought a nice album to put them in, so I can show them off at MaryCon and later KaneKon. (Quick note: if you're one of the few Doomies who has not sent me your color photo, why not do it today? Then you'll still be in time so dozens of weirdos can gawk at you at MaryCon, too!) Seriously, it's quite a good collection, and I thank those of you who were kind enough to let me photograph you or to send me a pix of yourself recently. But I'll get back to Texas in just a minute.

While I'm on the topic of photos, I have three classics for sale at 50¢ apiece, which won't quite cover my costs to reprint and send them unless you buy all three, but what the heck. The three for sale are: 1) a picture of Alex holding up her sixty-postcard birthday card sent to her last summer from Doomies all over the U.S. (this picture will appear somewhere else in this issue, but only in black and white, and it's much better in color as the card itself is in six colors), 2) a beautiful picture of Olsen, Mazzer, and Kathy taken at Thanksgiving ByrneCon (their expressions are priceless), and 3) a photo taken with a wide-angle lens, of VD #85 (my fourth annish) before it was collated. The pages are spread out all over my living room floor, and it took my sister and me eight hours apiece to get it collated! You may understand why when you see the picture... Anyway, order by number -- they're 50¢ each. All three of these will of course be in my Dippy Photo Album, too.

I promised to get back to San Diego. Larry Peery has come out with a record-breaking 204-page issue of Xenogogic. Having spent about two hours reading through a small fraction of it and skimming the rest, I must say that I was boggled. And bored. The cover price is listed as \$8.00, about 8 times what I think the issue is worth. If this sounds like sour grapes, I can only assure you it isn't, but I was genuinely very unimpressed by the issue. That's OK. I was talking to Larry on the phone a few weeks ago, and when it came up that VD adjudications have never been sent out late in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years of publishing, he told me that that didn't impress him. Touché.

I promised that I'd get back to Texas. As a rule, I don't like subzines. Too many of them can spoil an otherwise good zine. (Just look at a recent issue of EE, for instance.) But there are exceptions, of course. Mos Eisley Spaceport is usually pretty entertaining. But in my opinion (probably shared by no one), the very best subzine going these days is The Little Dipper, published by Stephen Wilcox, 5300 W. Gulf Bank #103, Houston, TX 77088. It's a subzine to Jim Meinel's excellent The Prince and I think it's the best part of the whole zine. You know that's high praise, too, as Stephen isn't even a Doemie. But The Little Dipper publishes stuff I really enjoy, like questions about the Rulebook's ambiguities and how should a GM rule in such-and-such a situation, and so on. In the latest issue, he starts a little story that his readers, including me, are going to help him write. It's a really clever idea. The Prince itself can be had from Jim Meinel, PO Box 832, Anchorage, AK 99510.

The latest Whitestonia contains a warning that one should never take anyone's word for anything without first checking it out. While this is good advice if you're unfamiliar with the person you're supposed to be trusting, I do not agree with the blanket statement. There are some people in the hobby who I've known for years, who have never (to the best of my knowledge) deliberately made an inaccurate statement, outside of their games and obviously harmless hoaxes. Mark Berch is the clearest example of someone whose word is always good with me, without any further checking, and there are others like Steve Knight and Joan whose credibility here stands at precisely 100%. There are also, of course, some people whose statement do require further checking. But it's not true of everyone. Some of these people are as follows:



## O R I O N

1982Y

## TURKS ADVANCE IN RUSSIA, IBERIA!

Autumn 1912

RUSSIA: A War r OTB

Winter 1912

ENGLAND: Build A LVP

FRANCE: even

GERMANY: even

ITALY: Build A VEN, F ROM

RUSSIA: Build A MOS

TURKEY: Build A CON

Spring 1913

ENGLAND (Ansoff): F NWY S RUSSIAN A Lvn-StP (NSU), F Eng-MID (F IRI S, F NAT S),  
A LVP UFRANCE (Williams): A Spa-Por (ann), A GAS H, F BRE-MidGERMANY (Wittmond): A MUN celebrates trench warfare (H), A RUH S A Mun, A BER S A Mun,  
A PRU goes fox hunting (H), F BAL S A Pru, F Nth-ENG,  
A BUR S FRENCH A GasITALY (Howerton): F POR S TURKISH F Mid-Spa(nc), A MAR S TURKISH F Mid-Spa(nc),  
F WES S TURKISH F Mid-Spa(nc), A Tus-PIE, F Rom-TYR, A TYO-Mun,  
A Vie-BOH, A Ven-TRIRUSSIA (Beyerlein): A Mos-War (d; r Lvn, StP, OTB)TURKEY (Leritte): F Mid-SPA(nc), F NAF-Mid, F LYO S ITALIAN A Mar, A Sev-MOS (A UKR S),  
A GAL S A War, A SIL S ITALIAN A Tyo-Mun, A WAR S A SIL,  
A Con-SEV (F BLA C)

Game Notes: Doug Beyerlein has returned as Russia. Mark Johnson didn't respond to my standby call, and is hereby removed from the VD standby list.

An E/F/G/I/R/T draw has been proposed for next season. Please vote by next deadline. Also, a concession to France has been proposed. Please vote by next deadline.

Press:

KAISER to WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: NAT, Iri, Eng, Bre, Gas, Bur, Mun, Ruh, Ber, Lvn/Kie, Bal, StP, Nwy form an unbreachable defense line. However, Spa, Mid, Por, and Mar can still be played around with. Have fun.

The following letter is one I sent to Steve Arnawoodian in a fake game (Woody had been set up by the GM and the other players). I was Russia to his Germany and had "ordered" A War-Sil in Spring '01.

Dear Woody,

I'm sorry about the stab in this game. But there were a number of factors to consider. All of my potential allies made me really super offers that I just couldn't turn down.

Turkey offered me a solid friendship if I'd just allow him to take Sev in '01. England is going to give me a 2-way draw if I let him take Sweden and St. Pete by 1903. Austria has promised to support me to a win if I allow him to first wipe you out. Part of the bargain is that he is going to borrow Rum and War for a couple of game years.

With such loyal friends all around me, I just couldn't help attacking you. After all, your offer of a "neutral zone" was such an obvious setup...

Best,  
BRUX

Q U A S A R

1982AE

MISORDERS, CAUTIOUS PLAY SLOW PROGRESS IN EUROPE!

Autumn 1910

FRANCE: NBR! A Tyo r OIB

Winter 1910

AUSTRIA: NBR! Will play 1 short

ENGLAND: even

FRANCE: Build A MAR, will play 1 short

GERMANY: even

ITALY: NBR! GM removes A Tus (out)

TURKEY: even

Spring 1911

AUSTRIA (Orloff?): NBR! A ROM U, A TYO U, A VEN U, A TRI U, A VIE U

ENGLAND (Glaspey): F Mid-WES, A MOS-Ukr, A LVN-Mos (A STP S), A GAL H, F Nwy-SWE, A Hol-RUH, F NTH H, F Dan-BAL, F Bal-BOT

FRANCE (Burd): A BOH-Tyo, A Mun S A Boh-Tyo (NSU), A Ple-TUS (F LYO S, F TYR S), F TUN S F Tyr, A Mar-PIE

GERMANY (Howerton): A WAR S ENGLISH A Gal, A Ber-SIL, A Kis-BER

TURKEY (Sweeney): F MAP U, F ION-Tyr, F Apr S F Ion-Tyr (NSU), F GRE-Ion, F Con-ARG, A UKR-Gal (A RUH S), A SEV-Ukr, A ARM-Sev

Game Notes: Would Jerry Lucas, 3902 Lakewood Way, Redwood City, CA 94062 please stand by for Austria? Thanks muchly, Jerry. An E/T draw has been proposed for next season. Please vote by next deadline.

Press:

GEN. ADM. EXLAX ((via TURKEY)) to SULTAN: I am in the Ionian as ordered -- sir, what are your orders?

TURKEY to BRIT: OK, so there goes Ukr!

TURKEY to ENGLAND: France -- anathema!?! Well, maybe he'll join "The Force".

TURKEY to AUSTRIA: You are right, you never call or write. But are you still receiving my letters?

TURKEY to FRANCE: Please note the closing of Austria's back door -- true allies cooperate and cover each other. Change sides, we are more than willing to give you a defensible back door. "The Force" is only feared by our enemies. I await your letter.

TURKEY to ITALY: Adieu! I wish you well and hope to game with you again some day -- when you are not in such a hapless position.

TURKEY to WORLD: Please remember last ish was April Fool's ish and I'd have to be (as would you) if you believe the Lon bit in the press.

TURKEY to WORLD: The aide enters the plush apartments, wherein His Majesty the Sultan awaits him. His stride is brisk and in his hands he holds several intelligence documents. "Your Majesty," he says as he prostrates himself, "I have the latest intelligence documents."

The Sultan, robust with youth, reaches out his hand and quickly scans the pages...

...the Lon is taken...

...Austria, our ally, has been successful in Rome...

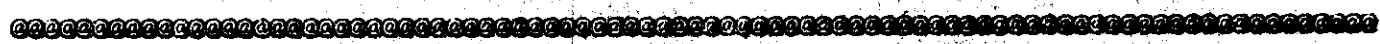
((QUASAR continues next page))



QUASAR (continued)

...the French are besieged by their own allies...  
...Germany is kept on a short leash...  
...RIGEL's press is down to a reasonable level...

"Yes, yes," the Sultan says, "now here's my newest orders. He picks up quill and paper; he begins to write..."



R I G E L

1983K

GERMANS DEFEND AGAINST ANTICIPATED RUSSIAN RETALIATORY STRIKE; TURK FACES HAREY SITUATION IN THE ARGEAN; AUSTRIA MAKES RUSSIAN ARMY GO CRUNCH; ITALY DECLINES OFFER OF GENEROUS FRENCH GIFT; GM HAS A BALL READING ORDERS AND PRESS IN ADVANCE AND LAUGHING HIS FOOL HEAD OFF AT THE SUSPENSE AND AGONY OF THE PLAYERS!

Winter 1905

- AUSTRIA: Remove A Boh
- FRANCE: Build F MAR
- GERMANY: even
- ITALY: Remove A Apu
- RUSSIA: Build F STP(nc)
- TURKEY: even

Spring 1906

- AUSTRIA (Knight): A Tri-BUD (A VIE S), A Ser S A Tri-Bud (d, r Alb, Tri, OTB)
- FRANCE (Hare): A PIE-Ven, A BUR S ITALIAN F Lyo-Mar (NSO), F Ion-ARG, F Mar-SPA(sc), F Eng-MID, F Wes-TYR (F TUN S)
- GERMANY (Heintzman): F Den-BAL, A Lon-DEN (F NTH C, F SKA S), A Ber-PRU, A Mun-SIL, A Tyo-BOH, A VEN-Apu, A Tue-ROM
- ITALY (Ellis): F LYO-Tyr, A NAP-Apu
- RUSSIA (Kleiman): F StP(nc)-NWY, A Ukr-GAL (A WAR S), A Bud S A Rum-Ser (am), A Rum-SER, F Nwy-SWE, A Swe-FIN, F Sev-RUM
- TURKEY (Reilly): F Con-BUL(sc), F Ank-CON, A GRE S RUSSIAN A Rum-Ser, A Sny-ANK, F Alb-ADR

Game Notes: The F/G/R draw did not pass. The F/R/I/G/A/T/E draw in the press war did not pass. The proposal to move RIGEL to another zine, preferably The Diplomat, did not pass. Votes were as follows: Turkey -- no; Russia -- no; France -- NVR (= no); Italy -- no, "like I said, everything should happen at least once in VD!"; Germany -- no; Austria -- no. Russia would like it publicized that this proposal was not submitted by the Russian. Dave Kleiman, the publisher of The Diplomat, would like the GM and all to know that the RIGEL game would be refused a home in The Diplomat.

The former English player is eligible to vote on (or make) proposals regarding the Press War.

There is a proposal for an F/G draw. Please vote by next deadline. Also proposed is that BRUX open six games at once, all like RIGEL. Please vote by next deadline on whether the person proposing this should be required to type up all the press for those games.

COA: Rich Reilly, 3067 Gustafson Circle, Idaho Falls, ID 83402.

Press:

- RUSSIA to BRUX: Do you know what a "droog" is? ((Yup. Knight or Ellis, to Reilly!))
- ELLIS to BRUX: Now that you don't teach any more you don't care if deadlines fall right in the middle of finals week, do you?
- BRUX to ELLIS: Well, if you're foolish enough to give higher priority to your college education than to RIGEL, whose problem is that?! ((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

DATELINE BERLIN:

AN OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION FROM THE IMPERIAL HIGH COMMAND OF THE SECOND REICH UNDER THE MOST BENEFICIENT GUARDIANSHIP OF THE KAISER AND THE HIGH PRIESTESS TIARA:

To wit, at exactly one second after the hour, 8:00 p.m., Friday evening, German naval and military forces began operations designed to secure greater German safety. In anticipation of hostile Tsarist reaction, the Kaiser and High Priestess Tiara wish to formally announce the termination of the non-aggression agreement between Germany and Russia and the commencement of the one season advance notice grace period heretofore agreed to between the governments of Russia and Germany, previously and respectively, or vice versa.

In anticipation of Tsarist protestations that said German defensive military movement designed to secure greater German safety, instead constitutes aggressive action against the royal Russian government and rudely violates prior compacts, the German imperial government, under the most benign rule of the Kaiser and the High Priestess Tiara, states the following facts:

(A) The Baltic Sea borders three (3) German states and Denmark -- a German protectorate -- for a total of four (4) Germanic areas; elsewhere, it borders 1 wasteland (Livonia), 1 neutral country, Sweden (currently unjustly suffering under Russian domination), and only 1 area which could possibly be considered within the Russian sphere of influence: the Gulf of Bothnia, an open sewer polluted by Russian industries dotting its shoreline.

(B) Similarly, tradition and history clearly illustrate that the Nordic spirit of the Germanic Volk has embraced and is embraced by the peoples of Prussia, Silesia, and Bohemia. Prussia -- home of the Hohenzollern, seat of Bismarck's greatest triumphs. Prussia is Germany, and Germany is Prussia! Silesia -- Germanicized in the 13th century, Frederick the Great gave welcome to and was welcomed by its inhabitants during the 1740s. Bohemia -- another happy land blessed by a Germanic tradition. Historically within the domain of the Hapsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire, nevertheless a shared Nordic heritage has resulted in an open invitation by the Kaiser's Austrian namesake and long lost brother-in-arms for a closer and more meaningful German experience. With smiling faces, open arms, and glad hearts the German Volk welcome their Austrian brothers and sisters.

Unfortunately, the German government recognizes full well that the heartening rejoining of the Nordic spirit in good fellowship will not be viewed with great pleasure by the Slavic devils. Thus, with much sadness and great regret, the German government announces that in direct response to anticipated Russian retaliatory strikes, a STATE OF WAR exists between Russia and Germany. Nevertheless, honorably honoring all previous agreements with the Tsarist dogs, a 1 season grace period shall be extended as understodd and perceived by the German government.

THE BLACK FOREST ((via GERMANY)):

Vignette I

A fortnight past... In the wee of a mozn when a lonsly bell tolled but three times, Rasputmann had felt the power surge within him. He sensed the ephenaral structure of his golden prison shimmer and flicker within its own reality. The black panther which guarded him also sensed the change and began to prowl about uneasily. A few moments passed by and then Rasputmann exerted his will. The golden chamber began to fade, and, exultantly, Rasputmann felt hiaself breaking free of his psychic bondage. In futile desperation the ebony beast leapt at him, one massive paw with claws of razor-like shawpness taking a swipe at the wizard dwarf's face. But even as the savage cat lunged, its form began to vaporize. Wraithlike, the snarling panther slowly dissolved from sight, its eyes of burning blue glaring hatefully at the wizard dwarf all the while it vanished.

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

Leagues away in the imperial castle, Tiara lay awake, her slumber broken. Her inner spirit perceived the change but she passively permitted the escape. Her final struggle with the wizard gnome was not yet at hand. As she resumed her sleep, the image of the dwarf riding a winged steed came to mind. She softly chuckled to herself as the flying dwarf kept craning its head back to repeatedly nip at its quite uncomfortable little rider...

### Vignette II

High, high, even higher, the dragon sailed to the roof of the sky. It bellowed a laugh and scarlet flame splattered against the heavenly ceiling, rivulets of fire splaying forth in intricate, random patterns. The winged lizard began to spin about like a top, faster and faster, its sleek form twirled, suddenly arrowing down through the layers of atmosphere like a lightning bolt. Abruptly, careened to a halt, sending a sonic boom bounding over the earth. The dragon, Ysssr by name, reveling in the reckless strength of youth, wheezed merrily to itself in sheer enjoyment. Niiz, the archaic Keeper of the Gate, squinted sourly at the youngster.

"Continue as you do, young one, and you will break your long neck or rip your wings off your body," he warned.

Ysssr snorted with laughter. "I am a Messenger and I have a Message for the Elders. Allow me entrance."

"Bah, fool," spoke the Keeper. But he allowed Ysssr passage.

Now exercising proper decorum, Ysssr approached the Council of the Nine Elders, his swaying rhythm connoting respect and obeisance.

"Greetings, My Elders," he whispered.

The ancient ones stared at him. Finally, Qaar, Protege of the High One, spoke.

"What occurs in the realm of the humans?"

Carefully, Ysssr related the duel between Rasputmann, the wizard dwarf, and Tiara, the dark enchantress. He spoke of Rasputmann's eventual escape and his subsequent flight to the East.

"To the East?" mused Qaar. "Has he then fled to the Turks? Or to the Russians?"

Ysssr exhaled heavily. "I do not know, Honored One. I followed him as he fled into the Carpathians. Tales tell that he has found refuge with the werewolf of Transylvania, but all is uncertain."

Qaar rolled his eyes and puffed in thought. "Perhaps the little wizard seeks to sell his services to others..."

"ENOUGH!" The harsh roar sent the wings of all fluttering.

In dead silence, the immense grey scaly form of Wyyyx, the High One, arose. His wings spread out and towered over the entire assembly. Cold, ancient eyes stared unblinkingly at Qaar, Ysssr, and the other Elders.

"You prattle about these humans and their affairs as if they were of importance," he whispered.

"Most High One," Ysssr began, "we had arrangements with Rasput..."

"SILENCE!" Those ancient eyes glared at the young dragon. "Your impudence will earn you earthbound punishment yet, young one."

Struck mute by the threat, Ysssr's claws skittered nervously on the hard floor. Wyyyx's malicious gaze now seized hold of Qaar.

"You who would be my successor," the harsh voice sneered, "why do you bother with the human ilk?"

Qaar inhaled deeply. "A proper alliance with those who are victorious could gain us full freedom of the skies once more."

Wyyyx laughed and laughed and laughed.

"We have full freedom now."

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

The Elders carefully avoided one another's gaze. Was the High One mad? Dragonhood was nearly extinct.

Bravely, Qaar ventured a reply. "High One, do you not know that we are so remote from the life experience as to be virtually creatures of mythology?" Qaar's long snout pointed forward earnestly. "The proper aid with the proper agent -- Rasputmann or Tiara -- we may again become creatures of substance."

Wyyyx whipped his neck about in derision. "Obtain substance, my friend, and we lose, not gain, our freedom."

Skeptical, squinty eyes regarded him.

Wyyyx snorted smoke. "Do you not understand, brothers, truly?" His huge form began to lift into the air. "I leave you with this thought, Council. Obtain substance and we become prisoners of reality, of fixed properties subject to natural law. But, remain as we are now, creatures of imagination, why we remain free to be whatever can be conceived! That is true freedom, my friends."

With the rush of a tornado, Wyyyx departed the Council of Elders. Quickly, most of the Elders also left, lest their continued presence be construed as evidence of some sort of conspiracy or plot. But Qaar drew Yssar aside.

"Come, we must confer," he hissed. "Our intervention in the affairs of Rigelworld remains of the utmost importance."

Yssar grinned, showing long rows of shiny teeth. "I fully agree," he lisped...

### Vignette III

A friendly yellow sun had smiled away the morning mist. Light dew glistened on the lush grass and bluejays and robins chattered amiably to each other as they went about their daily concerns. The Kaiser stood on the balcony breathing in deeply the welcome fresh air of a brand new day. He watched the birds flit and flutter about, listened to the pleasant drone of buzzing bees, and felt the warm rays of the mellow sun caress his skin. He sensed the presence of Tiara at his side, and as she nestled lightly against him, he felt an inner glow of warmth and happiness spread through him. Since Rasputmann had escaped and fled the Empire, things had never been better.

"A lovely morning, is it not, Tiara?" he smiled.

Her dark eyes regarded him affectionately, although a certain somberness within their depths warned him that his period of pleasurable reflection would be brief.

"It is certainly a fine beginning to the day," she murmured.

For a few moments they continued to observe the palace grounds, enjoying nature at work and play. Then, Tiara turned to him and quietly asked, "Do you have regrets over the course you have now chosen?"

A shadow crossed over the Kaiser's face. "Yes, I do feel the loss of a valued ally," he slowly answered. "However, the time is now and a new experience awaits with a new friend."

Tiara smiled gently. "How pleasantly philosophical you have become."

The Kaiser laughed. "That is your influence, my dear."

She smiled gaily and simply shook her head in mock chagrin.

"Well," she said, "You must admit that once we purged Rasputmann's minions from their posts in the armed forces and the diplomatic corps, matters seemed to have proceeded quite nicely...so far."

"Yes," the Kaiser mused. "Things have begun to improve quite dramatically, so it would seem." He shuddered slightly, remembering the distasteful discoveries of the past few weeks. "That horrid Heintzman creature and the host of scabias commanding my northern fleets! Mein Gott im Himmel! And similar deadwood in charge of Italian armies on the peninsula; independent, willful, unpredictable, in league with their

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

own devil... And all of this Rasputmann's work!"

"Have you determined whether or not the Italian Prime Minister is a zombie, or perhaps a clone?" Tiara asked.

The Kaiser remained silent for a few moments. "No, that has yet to be determined," he finally replied. "Before his family disappeared, we did, of course, have the opportunity to question them. If the Prime Minister is of the undead, well, he's done one hell of a job convincing his wife otherwise..."

"Be that as it may," he said, "the die is cast. We must continue to protect ourselves now."

"Are you sure?" Tiara probed.

"Are you sure?" he asked her, turning to stare into her eyes.

Tiara held her gaze steady and replied in the affirmative. "Yes, my lord, all has been done as must be done, because Rasputmann indeed has defected to the Russian/Turkish combine."

The Kaiser nodded his head abruptly. "Then let us proceed..."

GERMANY to GM: Yes, you are right about the use of "Nels"; I do not encourage that nickname. Also, my dear BRUX, both Kleiman and Heintzman have their "e" and "i" in the proper place. Remember, those names are German, not English! In German, "ei" is pronounced a long i, and the reverse, "ie", is pronounced as a long e: hence, sieg heil (seeeg Highl). Reilly? Well, I don't know about Irish names...

VIENNA: Serious note here about RIGEL II, guys. I'd love to play another game with everyone here because we've had such a good time and have a group of good players together. I fear, however, any overt efforts to try to "recreate" the special qualities that make RIGEL what it is. Such attempts usually fall far short of the event they're trying to resurrect because they are different events at heart. I'd rather see us all enjoy RIGEL while it lasts -- and if we want to make a go of another game to more or less keep in touch or to have fun within the context of that game for its own sake, then I'm all for it.

VIENNA: Keep in mind, all you who forgot, that last VD was Black Press issue. We all know who really wrote all that "Sweeney" press, don't we?

BRUX: Only his GM knows for sure!

MOSCOW: This, my droogs, is in compliance with the demands of Reilly, the cat-napper.

Rich Reilly, the Sultan of Turkey in the RIGEL game, is a wonderful human being (even though he likes the Doors) and he deserves a fate much better than the one that the RIGEL has dealt him. In the past, I have insulted him. In the past, I have humiliated him. In the past, I have written much better press than he. In the past, I have lied to him. I live in a much better state than he does. ((Choke...)) I have a much more beautiful wife than he does. I attended a great university (Ball State), and I studied a far superior subject than he. BUT DON'T THINK THAT HE'S A WORTHLESS HUMAN BEING THAT STEALS POOR, LITTLE DEFENSELESS KITTY-CATS WHEN HE FAILS MISERABLY IN ALL OTHER AREAS. He is really OK, and you should ignore all the insults that I have given him -- only 90% of them are true. You see, Rich never wanted to be a Turkey. He wanted to be a lumberjack.

Secondly, I now swear that I will uphold all agreements submitted to me from this point on in the name of the RAT alliance.

ONE MORE FOR THE ROAD IN VIENNA: It was late in the evening of April 15, and your humble narrator, loyal, screaming Doomie that he is, was reading through the latest parody of a Rich Reilly press release for the seventh time, to insure the permanence in his memory of the fact that parodies don't eclipse the glory of the original, but rather enhance it.

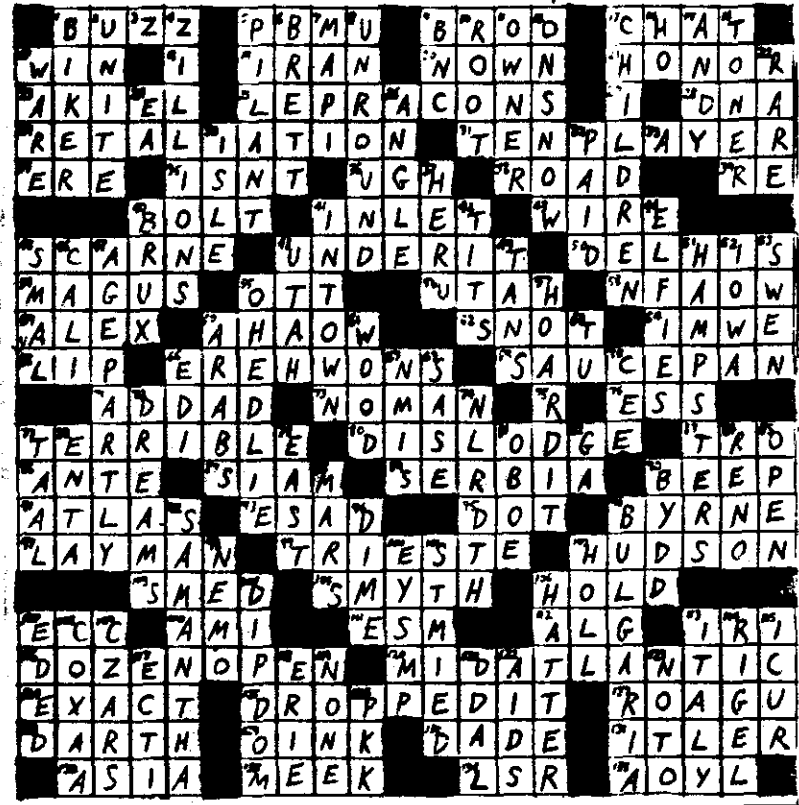
RUSSIA to CUPCAKE: OK, so I lied to you once. Why don't you lie to me, and we'll call it even?

VIENNA to WORLD: In case no one else noticed, they've begun to publish press for the demo game in Diplomacy World. If we can just switch places with them, our fame is ensured forever! ((Humph! And you think it isn't now?!))

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The solution to last month's puzzle is shown here. There were four errors; not three as stated elsewhere this ish. The errors are outlined in my reply to Kathy's letter.

Scores given are number of letters left blank or filled in incorrectly: Mike Barno-1, Chuff Afflerbach-1, Jeff Noto-1, Steve Hutton-2, Greg Ellis-2, Steve Knight-2, Kathy Byrne-13. So Barno, Afflerbach, and Noto tie for first place. Flipping a coin among the three of them gives (editor pauses and flips a coin) Jeff Noto, for first prize of 5 free issues. Flipping a coin between the other two gives (pause) Chuff Afflerbach, for second prize of 2 freebies. Will you settle for an honorable mention, Mike? Thankx to all!



The two items below are from the latest issue of North Sealth, West George. Thanks much to Terry Tallman for the kind words and glowing praise.

I have already written the Bruce stuff that you are going to get to in a little bit but as I sit here facing more and more white space I have to wonder, if he responds will it print the whole thing uncut or will he sanitize and revize as he did my comments on askkissing. There is a giant difference in connotation. Or will he be get the idea-that I'm NOT looking for an answer, rather, an action. (I hear the little voices, 'Huh? An Action? Isn't this just a chance for Bruce to climb back up on his cross and bleed a little more for his Doomies?')

I put sanitizing'askkissing' up there with rewording a letter to make it read other than as written. Maybe so many of his readers have innocent, unwarped minds that such wording will derail them? This will all make far more sense after the next page.

But I'll admit that even there I have bitten my tongue to a great extent.

In the latest Voice of Doom Bruce Linsey proudly repeats the fact that I couldn't come up with something bad or disparaging about him. His quote of me was accurate but I was in fact waffling on the issue.

Unlike the history of Voice of Doom-where Bruce has often (in the past) published items that should never have seen the light of day I have tried to keep my own feelings about the more objectionable and disruptive hobby members out of print. For one, unless I'm willing to go through and prove my case it's less than creditable to just sit down and call names.

And secondly, I would have to betray several confidences to prove my case.

And third, based on what I've seen floating around in other szines feuding isn't any fun unless your mood is to really get down and roll in the mud.

Bruce also mentions that he started a novice game some time back and everything is hunky-dorry. Fine Bruce. I played under Bernie Oaklyn as a novice (I was in one other game-third move) and I consider his policies to be no less arbitrary than your own. Merely different.

In both Le Front and Voice of Doom reason occasionally took/takes a holiday and the gm's personal point of view takes over. This is fine if the player goes in knowing the unusual is liable to be the norm.

Playing under Bernie was a challenge because you were told by everyone up front what a mistake it was. And yet I never had any real problems there. The flip side is that I do know of some people that Bernie made major errors on that destroyed any chance of the game being regular.

By the same token there are very few warnings about Bruce aside from the fact that he's a 'strict' gm. What's a strict gm? Does he not accept late orders? Does he not call on deadline day? Does he take letters that were intended as private correspondence (protected by copyright law by the way-I'm still hoping to be involved with the hobby's first copyright lawsuit. I've discussed this with Dr. Pember, expert in Communications Law at the University of Washington and both Berch and Linsey could be stopped from publishing another word if the parties involved were willing to spend a few bucks on lawyers) and spread these letters all over the hobby? Does he expect one level of judgement when he attacks someone and another level when someone attacks him or those persons he 'likes'?

While still waffling like crazy this gives a loose framework for why I would never send a subber or a player to Voice of Doom. And why I would be extremely hesitant to play there myself.

For what it's worth I've had the flu for a week and a half and am not in a cheerful mood. Bruce sends the page from his szine that he mentions me on whenever he does, a courtesy I appreciate but not one that I always follow-depends on the nature of the comment.

But anyway, if the sun was shining and I had a cold beer in one hand and a hot wench in the other my attitude might be softened. But I doubt it. Voice of Doom suffers what I think of as the 'high subber number-immunity syndrome'. In short, if you have a hundred or so people getting your szine and aren't getting any letter bombs in the mail then you must be right.

((One of publishing's finest rewards is being appreciated. -- BL))

Toadybashing and Toadystashing

Toady: a mindless sycophant; one who blindly concurs with anything another says or does. First defined by John Michalaki and Bob Olsen in 1981.

Bashing: the act of tearing down another's idea other than by attacking the idea directly. This can take the form of a personal attack on the proponent of an idea, or a misrepresentation of the idea itself. First defined by Mark Berch in 1983.

Stashing: the act of defending an idea other than by supporting the idea directly. This usually takes the form of claiming that an idea is good because various other people agree with it. This group of people is called a "stash" -- thus the term "stashing". First defined by BRUK Linsey in 1984.

That's the history of the root words involved in the concepts I am about to define. When one stops to think about it, many arguments in postal Diplomacy center not around the merits or weaknesses of an idea, but rather around the identity of the person who proposed it, or who supports or does not support it.

Consider first the act of bashing. It's common enough to read of someone tearing down an idea other than by directly criticizing that idea. I'm no more innocent than anyone else, of course. As an excellent example of this consider my play "Roll Over BeethovenCon". Was this "bashing"? Of course it was -- rather than give logical reasons why I felt the diptax was a poor idea, I used a fictionalized event to make both the proponent and his idea look ridiculous. Is there anything wrong with this? Not necessarily. In a sense all satire could be loosely defined, at least, as bashing. Bob Olsen's recent portrayal of me as the Lou Gossett of Postal Diplomacy falls into this category too -- and it's one of the funniest things I've ever read.

But now we come to toadybashing, a far more sinister type of animal. "Toadybashing" may be defined as the act of tearing down one's idea by dismissing all of the proponent's supporters as toadies, thereby isolating the proponent. This technique has been used most extensively by John Boardman of Graustark in his attacks on fake sines and those who produce them. In fact, the classic example of toadybashing was presented in VD #47, in which Boardman accuses Jim Williams of being a hoax created by Gary Coughlan. Why? Boardman had previously attacked Coughlan for his "acts of forgery" -- the publication of fake issues of VD and Retaliation. When Jim Williams wrote to Boardman in defense of Coughlan, Boardman was incapable of refuting Jim's arguments, so his defense mechanism was simply to question the very existence of Jim Williams. And that, readers, is toadybashing carried to the extreme.

Another instance of toadybashing occurred recently in the pages of Ed Wrobel's Politesse. In trying to refute my ruling on the double orders he submitted for the NEPTUNE game two years ago (yep -- two years ago!), he glibly tells me in print that "you chose the ombudsman" and that the 61 poll respondents, a majority of whom supported my ruling, were "your own people". This is indeed a very effective way of demolishing my position, at least on its surface. The implication is that the ombudsman and some of the rest of my readers are mindless toadies who cannot think for themselves; therefore their opinions are automatically invalidated and BRUK in fact stands alone. But when examined, this strategy does two things simultaneously: it downgrades the people who concurred with my position simply by refusing to recognize that they are capable of drawing their own conclusions independently, while at the same time relieving Ed of the necessity of formulating a logical argument for his position. (When was the last time anyone heard Ed Wrobel try to show logically that hold + support is not a double order? Uh huh. I thought so. With his command of the language, he would have no trouble formulating such an argument if one existed.)

So much for bashing and toadybashing. We will now examine the opposite concepts: stashing and toadystashing.

Stashing, remember, is the act of claiming that an idea is good because other people support it. And, just as I pleaded guilty to certain instances of bashing, so

must I confess to having indulged in stashing. For instance, when I published a list of GMs who concurred with my ruling in the Wrobel Affair, that was stashing, not arguing logically. We see it all the time in every zine in the hobby, no doubt. When Gary Coughlan publishes letters agreeing with his side of his feud with Dick Martin, that is stashing. When a GM defends his ruling on the grounds that the ombudsman took his side, that is stashing. In all of these examples, the person or people who are being cited as supporters comprise the "stash" of the one who is defending his position. Particularly when it is combined with a good, solid, logical argument; stashing is an effective way of arguing in favor of a position. And in many cases, I might add, a perfectly valid way as well. If a GM can show that ten other highly-respected GMs agree with his ruling, then that becomes a perfectly legitimate argument in his favor.

But now we come to toadystashing, a far more sinister concept. "Toadystashing" may be defined as the act of defeating one's position through the use of anonymous or even nonexistent defenders, thereby making the proponent appear less isolated than he really is. This technique has been employed time and time again by the editors of Whitestonia, to cite the classic example. How often did I hear Kathy tell me, when I was feuding with her, that all of my friends were writing her privately and tearing me apart! The latest Whitestonia illustrates the concept gloriously, when John Caruso writes on page 1 that "A lot of you, my concerned friends, have been writing or calling, in the hope of calming me and hoping that I wasn't too upset at what Rod Walker had printed about me in Ere#121." There it is again: the use of unnamed defenders all supporting John's position against Rod, thereby making it appear that most of the hobby backs John and disagrees totally with Rod. Now, don't get me wrong. I can't and don't deny that these supporters exist. Of course they do, though the wording (and my own knowledge of people's general unwillingness to take sides in a feud in all but the most extreme cases) leaves me curious as to their exact number. Moreover, I will go on the record right now as saying that I personally do not back Rod 100% in his dispute with John. There have been valid points raised by both sides. But that's beside the point. The point is that John is using the strategy of toadystashing as a substitute for arguing his case logically. I would much prefer, at least, to see him rise to the level of out-and-out stashing: name the people and print their letters, or if their letters are not for print then don't mention their existence to begin with.

Another instance of toadystashing occurred in the latest issue of Politesse. I've already quoted the passage on page 2 of this issue: it's the comment by Ed that some anonymous but well-respected dipdomite called my decision "assinine", and that one of the GMs who concurred with the ruling wrote to Ed "to disavow affiliation with Bruce's views." Well, who are the people involved? Ed refuses to name them, presumably because I'm all of a sudden going to jump down their throats for committing the cardinal sin of disagreeing with me. I fully believe that these people exist, and what's more I have a very good idea of who the GM in question might be. If I had to guess, I'd even venture that both of the unnamed parties are good friends of mine, and would remain so even if I were to discover their identities. But that's not the point. The point is that Ed Wrobel is using anonymous supporters as a substitute for a good logical argument to advocate his side of the issue. And brother, let me tell you how easy it is to say anything you want about someone if you can remain anonymous. You can, if you like, resort to name-calling, half-truths, lies, or whatever you want; and who can defend himself from that if the publisher is willing to provide you with the shield of anonymity? So Ed's action is toadystashing carried to its extreme. Would I be far off base if I were to suggest that a fairer course of action would be for Ed to name the people involved; or (if they don't want their names used, as appears to be the case with the writer who told Ed "don't print this") to omit the references to their letters entirely?

As a side note, I have no objections to printing anonymous letters myself. There are two of them in this issue, in fact. But read those letters and decide for



yourself whether the writer was using his anonymity as a shield for the act of toady-bashing, or whether he had a legitimate reason for remaining anonymous.

That about wraps this up. We now have clear definitions of the terms "toady-bashing" and "toadystashing", and can hopefully recognize these tactics if and when they recur. And I know I'm right. You see, I have all these letters from well-respected dipdomites who agree with me...



From Pol Si Pis #16...

How to Lose a Game

by Randolph Smyth

Amid a multitude of "How to Win" articles, it was not difficult to settle on a unique and informative subject for this one. A "loss" here is defined as elimination; it is clear that simple NWRs will just not do, as the GM will in most cases simply remove you from the game, and the opportunity to lose then devolves on your replacement.

A truly spectacular loss, with six other players all allied with you and destroying you anyway, is a far more difficult goal than a "win"; there is the advantage that few, if any, of your opponents will fight tooth and nail to stop you. A smooth operation can be executed without their knowledge of your plan, before, during, and after the event!

Why lose? One may well ask, why win? Some would answer, "Because the rules say that's the Object of the Game." Sure, but that's part of the beauty of the technique; you can cheat by breaking the most important rule, and get away with it! What fun! Besides, wins are a dime a dozen, while a beautifully orchestrated loss can make you famous almost overnight.

Those high on the rating lists have additional incentive to lose. Imagine: at the beginning of every game, six opponents thinking, "Gee, he's too good for us -- we've got to gang up on him." If this majority view is correct, the superior player will hold out for a decade or so, particularly when playing Austria with so many neighbours available for attack; but eventually even the most incompetent opposition will put him out of the game. Does he want to go through this time after time? No! -- far better to bomb out so spectacularly in a single game that no opponent can take his ability seriously thereafter, whatever his rating.

Theoretically, all powers can lose by 1902 with little trouble. France and Austria ((and Germany)) are especially fortunate, being capable of a 1901 elimination if the other powers cooperate fully. While impressive, the maneuvers required for these "quick kills" are obvious to the point of vulgarity, and require perfect timing and complete cooperation from the other powers.

Total annihilation of units is an interesting method of losing -- masterful technique will leave some foreign centers still in your hands, which then revert to pseudo-neutral status. Pending their capture by the surviving players, they are a constant reminder of your farighted sacrifices.

The most technically difficult, and at the same time the most memorable losing method, is the "bait" or backward (reverse) stab. It may take several years to set up a position where allies border on all your centers, but results can be well worth the effort. Arrange for each of them to take some of your centers, while you take others elsewhere in the interests of maintaining a "balance of power" among allies. Then, double-cross them all by taking nothing -- an astonishing one-season elimination of a ten-center power is sure to go down in history.

If your letter-writing capacity is limited, consider the simplest method of all, which has been put in practice many times with great success. Never respond to a friendly overture, attack everyone, write abusive press, and NWR just often enough to stay in the game. As soon as your neighbours recover from surprise, they will in most cases be quite efficient about helping you achieve your ends.

Variations are endless; each player must experiment to find his favorite style. It is hoped that this broad outline will furnish a springboard for the more sophisticated treatises so necessary for the full elucidation of this pressing subject.

((Randolph Smyth's articles about Diplomacy are truly the best there are! -- RL))

The Gossip Column

From Ig Lew:

i remember a trivia contest in DD. reading it i scribbled down the answers i knew and looked up one or two easy ones. figuring i didn't have the time to look up enough answers to get a good score, i didn't mail my entry. a few months later my scribbled entry popped up and i looked at the results only to discover that i would have won. when the quote contest first came out i was convinced that there'd be a half dozen 100% entries, so my research would be wasted time because i'd still only have about 90. now it looks like history might repeat itself if i don't get off my butt & type up my fifty-some plus educated guesses.

well well i see you can fill a 70-page issue without me, but by golly you can't fill a 72-pager without me. i've been writing at my usual pace but nothing seems to get to the mailbox. hopefully, i intend to type them up (they're hopelessly scribbly), deleting the redundant, obsolete, and particularly boring parts; and hopefully, i expect the result will be somewhat coherent. maybe in a week or two?

my opinion of your HRS is that they are mostly unnecessary (and as such, even "silly") but they certainly don't hurt anything. in my idea of a fine game the player has only a vague idea of how the gm will run things but signs up anyway; the gm has a pretty good idea of what he intends to do, but hasn't thought out everything. if the player later becomes interested in how a situation will be ruled, he can ask the gm, and the gm will tell him. if something comes up the gm hadn't considered, he considers it at that time, and his ruling won't be too unusual (in my idea of a fine game) though it might take the player by surprise or even hurt his position a bit, but the player doesn't mind too much and is good-natured about it. i can (and have) played a game like this under a gm like dick martin; but i can just as easily play a game like this in VD. i don't need to heed brux's warning and read the hrs first, and when i wonder about something, i can look it up (which i might point out is not easier than asking the gm) or i can not look it up and let brux surprise me. so i don't see how it can be maintained that strict gming doesn't suit unstrict players.

certainly the most ridiculous notion held by your hecklers is that your houserules are somehow responsible for the crimes of your gming. you can correct me if i'm wrong, but i got the impression that if you were to abolish your houserules, you'd continue to run your games the exact same damn way. with your HRS you are just announcing your intentions beforehand.

you'll find it interesting that i've yet to read any rigel press (or any other since luna). i dread that i'll probably have to pick up 5 or 6 quotes.

isn't there any besides me who thinks the hobby is already big enough, or maybe even too big? limiting growth seems to be the most popular argument against hobby "anarchy" (a term which dissolves at any attempt to define it).

i suppose we could make a case for SPI, or whichever, being better than AH, if we consider games originally designed by AH. as i recall, that would disqualify diplomacy, kingmaker, rail baron, titan, source of the Nile and probably more...

when i heard it, it was "why did the giraffe stand on its head?" (to trip the birds) this came from the same book which had "what's grey?" "a melted penguin" which seemed funny at the time anyway.

i think mr berch's peace of mind argument about the budding question parallels the similar argument in the season separation question. without assurance a player can request separate seasons and still have to write multiple conditional orders of conditional negotiation, the avoidance of which was his purpose in request separation.

i heard someone say today that when referring to geese there is a special word for a male goose (gander) whilst a female goose is just a female goose; that is, "gander" means male goose and "goose" means female goose or goose of either sex, and somehow this discriminated against the female members of the species, presumably

because they were denied their own separate name. this reminded me that the word "man" used correctly) refers to men of either species or to only male men, while "woman" refers to female men. this too is considered discriminatory toward the females of the species, this time because they aren't being represented in the word which refers to both sexes. i'm not quite sure i understand this, but i never believed the notion of language being discriminatory against anybody anyway.

i believe the rumors that high school students are ignorant of writing skills (i may ignore them sometimes but i'm not ignorant of them). i have the dubious privilege of typesetting (yes, i am a typist by trade; you'd have never guessed) two of the local high school newspapers and i correct gross errors of punctuation and spelling without blinking an eye, and i'd like to expunge the multitudinous extraneous words like "anyway", "besides", "furthermore", "speaking of which", "anyhow" and others, which the kids seem to think no sentence should be without, as well as the quotation marks which litter the pages and have no discernable purpose (not even a misguided one); but alas, my employer doesn't give me that liberty. sometimes i wonder if the teacher even reads the papers.

i haven't seen any genuinely humorous bloopers, but some are sort of cute. the latest issue included a mention of some small town in washington state with the note that it's "pronounced just like it sounds".

i think reagan has done some silly things, but my current thoughts on politics are that my knowledge of politics probably puts me around the 75th percentile in the nation, but that isn't nearly enough to have an intelligent opinion about who makes a better president. i've hardly been following the democratic presidential primary -- i've read a few newswEEKS which were lying around and it reminded me of the raiders vs. the redskins. somebody told me mondale is moderate in foreign policy and liberal in domestic policy, while hart is liberal in foreign policy and moderate in domestic. if i understand those words, i favor hart, but not enough to do anything about it (like vote).

i honestly don't know what "prayer in school" is about. are they debating whether to set aside time for praying (like they do the pledge of allegiance) or are they debating whether anyone is allowed to pray in school at all? it seems pretty silly to me to say that praying is banned altogether in a school. i can't see how it hurts if some kid prays quietly during lunch or between classes, or even in class if he isn't supposed to be doing something else and he doesn't bother anyone.

f tri-alb is 2nd most common sp01 move? i'd have guessed f stp-bot. what about 4th? a ber-kie? a rom-van?

i still think the houserules shouldn't have won. let's pretend that in winter 1907 i own 17 dots, not including edi. in sp08 all units are ordered to hold except my fleet in clyde which i move to edi. in fall 08 the other units are again ordered to hold and i order f edi-syria. does the rulebook win for saying that an illegally ordered unit must hold? what if i had ordered f edi-nor? what if i ordered f edi-nth and the russian player ordered f nwy-nth? does he win for bouncing me? or what if i add f lon s f edi-nth and france orders f eng-lon, does france win for cutting my support? or do i win every ftf game at my house because i own the board and therefore control 18 dots? or does the rulebook win every game by stating that controlling 18 dots constitutes a win? or what if...

in your monopoly game, i think you are wrong in stating that brad did not have the right to be pissed; but otherwise i agree. (although i don't see why you're upset about him conceding.)

at one point in our saga of titan-playing, i knew which stack had doug's titan and generally had a pretty good idea of what was where. being a clever boy he picked up one of my stacks and looked at it saying "oops, i bumped your stack, i guess you get to look at one of mine" and was prepared to do the same to the other stacks except that i quickly saw where it was headed. i don't think we ever finished that

game but now we see there's little point in playing if we don't agree not to do things like that.

at another point in the saga, we would start nearly every game with one of us saying "i concede, you win; but let's play it out and see whose titan would have been killed first."

i'd have only got 8 on dipspaces so i needn't berate myself for not entering. i went and said bulgaria on #2 task. i didn't even try #9, and indeed i thought you were bluffing. come on, a position which can't occur in spring 1920 but can in fall 1920? also, i might point out that this order is not illegal (or is it) if alb supports german a tyo (which just came from bohemia) to trieste. see what i mean?

oops. now i see that history will repeat itself as the deadline is the 11th & not the 18th as i had thought. (next you'll tell me the deadline for my taxes isn't the 25th...) sigh, and i could just taste those 15 free issues. well, i'll send this along and you can tell me if i would have won...

((yes, you would have. steve langley's winning entry had a score of 73; yours had 74. them's the breaks.

your letters may be weird, but they're among the cleverest things i receive here at VD. i'm looking forward to your other mass of letters, which will be printed farther along if it gets here in time.

your argument about a legal order for a fleet which mentions bohemia sounds just like mark beach's arguments for allowing mislabeled units.

you have the correct impression regarding the role of my house rules. indeed, i have been trying to impress upon certain people for years that they don't dictate the action in VD; they merely reflect the rulings i would make anyway.

i disagree with you when you say that the hobby ought not to grow. i think it is too small, and one of the primary reasons for this opinion is that there are still many pairs of people who must deal with one another (due to both of them holding prominent roles in the hobby) yet cannot stand the mention of each other's names. i won't be satisfied with the hobby's size until it has grown big enough that nobody has to deal with anybody (in other words, never).

you make a very good point in your discussion of geese, women, and the supposed discrimination found in the English language. in addition, that paragraph is one of the most hilarious things i've read in a long time.

actually, you understate the case when you say that high school students are ignorant of writing skills. until i became a teacher, i never would have believed the number of illiterate or semi-literate high school students, most of whom will graduate just the same, since teachers have this insane desire to keep their jobs. i saw some really sad cases when i taught. you and i and most other doomies were not exposed to this when we ourselves were high school students, since we were in the advanced tracks, but even the "average" students frequently have trouble writing a grammatical sentence. it's sad; it really is.

one of the reasons i am opposed to prayer in school is that it's either unfair, or a waste of time. that is, if there is a god and it listens and responds to kids' prayers, then those kids have an unfair advantage over the others when it comes to such things as tests; whereas if there isn't a god (or if it doesn't respond to such prayers) then the whole exercise of praying is a waste of time anyway (which in my opinion is very probably the case). plus, i am in full agreement with the more conventional arguments against the practice, like the possibility of kids being harrassed because of how they want to pray (or not pray).

i wasn't upset about brad conceding the monopoly game; i was upset that he let it ruin his evening, and therefore mine. hey, why are we whispering like this?

my idea of a fine game is just a little bit different from yours. in my idea of a fine game all seven players and the gm do nothing but eat, sleep and play the game; any other activity detracts from the optimization of the players' negotiating effectiveness and therefore destroys the game.))

From Steve Langley (4/18/84):

Dear Bruce,

I very belatedly got around to reading VD #93 today. I usually get an hour or two a day for Dip at work, but lately work has cut significantly into Dip. Be that as it may, I did finally read VD #93.

I agree with your position on letters. I dislike to see excerpting done. Sometimes, I write in unconnected chunks, but occasionally I develop a theme throughout a letter. Such was the case in a letter to Anduin that Eric split into three parts and presented as excerpts on three topics. The excerpts were out of order of presentation, and the theme I'd attempted to develop was left on the cutting room floor. As to where you can send your letters, you mentioned a few places that you can't send them -- but what of Mos Eisley Spaceport? John still seems to print letters, uncut, and his subzine isn't yet defunct (I hope). For that matter, you have VD as a great platform. I see no impropriety in voicing your views in your zine, especially if you can't get a letter printed in another zine. In fairness to your readers, I'd think you'd want to give them full references to the material (perhaps to the point of quoting it in full) that you are answering. There is nothing more confusing or misleading than one side of a conversation.

Speaking of confusion -- I didn't defend Peery so much as attack your play (referring to your response to James Woodson). Kidding Larry about being the taxman is well within bounds. My complaint was that several-teen pages of Beatles satire was just too tedious to read. I've since forced myself to read it (I got a complaint from a Peery supporter who thought you went too far and wanted some agreement, I suppose) and my initial judgement stands -- it was a cute idea but it was several times too long for what it was.

Have you heard of Alarums and Excursions? That was (and may still be) a weekly zine put out by the dungeons and Dragons contingency of the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society. It was available to anyone who contributed a page or more and typically ran over 100 pages. I know it went through issue #42 (of which I wrote a few pages) and so, suspect it well exceeded 2000 pages. Of course, it is another game, and another hobby than Diplomacy, and so probably doesn't count. What of Graustark? It's been around for 20 years. 100 pages a year doesn't sound too unlikely, but I must admit I don't know what size is typical for Graustark. Certainly, VD is the largest collection of pages of any living zine, excepting possibly Graustark, and promises to outstrip all others in months (years...decades?) to come. At a rough estimate, you are averaging 50 pages a month. Page 3000 isn't all that far away.

Whether or not the hobby will grow or stagnate is moot. We are still a loosely connected group of individuals. Some of us are linked, via zines that we read, with others; who are linked via zines they read with still others, that may or may not share still other zines with us, again. We come and we go as the river rolls on. We can't be "organized" because there is no way to keep us from doing our own thing outside any "organization". This may be stagnation. It may be healthy. The adjectives don't really affect anything. Dipdom has pretty much defined itself. Perhaps an "organization" could bring lots more people into the body of dipdom. Perhaps not. It doesn't really matter because the case really can't be tested. Arguments about it are fun but not as relevant as discussions of house rules.

Dipdom will change and grow as the people in it and the framework changes. The E-mail situation is a case in point. E-mail is quite new, and it will grow to a point where it will cease to be a splinter and start to be a hobby unto itself. It doesn't matter whether we, as dippers, approve of E-mail or not. It exists; its availability will grow. It may (potentially it will) become a larger segment of dipdom than the postal hobby. Someday, there may be a movement to deny Boardman Numbers to non-E-mail games because they are different enough from the "standard" as to be irregular. And, none of it really matters, because the people involved are

now (and still will be) individuals who will do just as they please.

I wonder what we can learn about one another via the answer to the question: "Have you ever seen a bullfight? Would you want to? Why? Why not?" But, I never have, other than as staged in movies. I would not go out of my way to see one, neither would I go out of my way to avoid one; because I believe in taking life as it comes without prejudging it; not applicable.

Perhaps I gave myself away there. I find myself in full agreement with your stand on ombudsmen in regards to yourself. At the same time, I will refer any problem that might arise in my games to an ombudsman, should a player so request. The near contradiction might be explained in my answer to the bullfight question. For the most part, I have full confidence in the people GMing games I play. Some of them make more adjudication errors than I like, and I would not lie if I said I plan to play with them again. I have yet to "need" an ombudsman and doubt that I ever will. Then again, I may run into a GM who refuses to allow A Mun-Kie some day, for whatever reason, and I will probably go to a higher court should he refuse to change his mind or justify to my satisfaction why A Mun-Kie is not an acceptable order. (Do you get the impression I'm just blathering on? I do!)

((I don't -- your comments are extremely well done and serve to illustrate why some GMs are better off with a policy of guaranteed arbitration in a dispute.

Well, I was only being semi-serious when I asked who would give me a place to send my letters. Anduin in fact seemed to be reverting to the old policy of printing letters in their entirety last issue, but you're right -- I have my own forum in VD, and I use it, ahem, quite extensively.

So, the play was too long, eh? Okay...

I haven't heard of A and E -- Dungeons and Dragons is not my bag. Actually, though, VD I believe ranks third among active publications in page count -- Graustark is of course well ahead of me, and I believe Greatest Hits probably is as well.

Your remarks about E-mail are very foresightful. As you say, none of this hoopla about irregularity really matters, because people will play the games they want to play.

No, I've never seen a bullfight. Somehow the idea of being a spectator to a savage murder holds no attraction for me. Alas, my feeling on the matter is far from universal.))

From (4/10/84):  
(anonymous)

Dear Bruce,

I was planning to write you some time ago, but it seemed like I never had the time or I always forgot to do it.

I am a new member of postal Diplomacy since this winter. Ronald Brown sent you my name and in return you sent me Supernova, which I received in December.

First, I must tell you I read and re-read Supernova with great interest, and I have to give you the proper credit for it. It is very well done and very helpful for beginners. The articles I liked the most were "Gloom and Doom" by Randolph Smyth, "Game End Philosophies" by Francois Guerrier, and "Life After the Knife" by yourself.

One thing which I found surprising was the aggressivity in the game-end statements -- I guess a lot of people are taking some games too seriously, and probably can't step on their pride when losing.

...Also, there are some details which aren't quite clear for me, and I was wondering if you could provide me with some explanation.

1. OTB rule: As I understand it, a player can retreat off the board, whenever he has to retreat. What is the reason for this, and the advantages? And can two or more units retreat OTB without standoff? How can the unit come back?

2. Draw and concession vote: Who proposes a draw or a concession? What is a concession? Why a draw or a concession?

Finally, I was wondering if you know if Bob Albrecht is OK. I'm a subscriber to his zine (Battle Stations) and the last I received was #6 (January). Is it common to have that kind of delay? I was planning to write him, but I thought if he answers me, he can send the zine...

That's it for the question period. Thanks again for the nice packet, and congratulations to you and all the contributors.

((Sure, glad to help you get started. I'm printing your letter because you ask several questions of general interest, and several of my newer readers may benefit from reading the answers.

The end-game statements you read in Supernova were from 1979E, which featured a rather bizarre set of players. For comments a bit more typical, see the PEGASUS end-game statements in Voice of Doom #94, which you now have.

OK, your other questions: any time a unit must retreat, the player is permitted to retreat it off the board. This is just the way the game was designed. When a unit has no available retreat spaces on the board, it must then retreat off the board, and in this case is said to be annihilated. But dislodged units always have the option of retreating off the board, and there is no standoff if two or more of them are ordered to do so.

There is an advantage to doing this: when the winter (build and removal) season comes, the number of units on the board must be adjusted to equal the player's supply center count. By retreating a unit off the board, the player has one less unit on the board and may therefore get a build he would not have received otherwise. As an example, suppose you are playing France, and England suddenly stabs you in a fall turn. Desperate, you wonder how you are going to defend yourself with no builds coming this turn. But wait -- your Fleet Naples has been dislodged -- retreat it off the board and build Fleet Brest... you get the idea. The strategy can be used as a fast way of getting units to the home front if they are suddenly needed. In fact, occasionally a player who really needs a build will ask his ally to dislodge one of his pieces just so he can do this.

Any player in the game may propose a draw or a concession. A concession to a player means that all the other players agree that that person is the winner. Maybe Germany is at 16 centers, and the players can see that he will get to 18 in a game-year or two anyway, and they don't feel like playing it out. They could then vote a concession to Germany, and the game ends in a German win.

A draw, or as some players like to call it, "shared win", means that the game ends in "victory" for two or more players, who share the glory equally. Usually this comes about because the players have decided that most of the action is over, and it is clear which countries have played a successful game, or which ones will go on to wipe out the others if the game continues. Most postal games end in draws.

In order for a game to end in a draw or a concession, the vote among players still in the game must be unanimous. If there is one player who votes "no", the game must continue. Occasionally, though, a draw comes about because a stalemate line has formed. This means that (generally) the players are divided into two unbreakable alliances, and each alliance has gained a position which (given the right support orders) cannot be broken by the other. Since no power has a chance of progressing any further in such a situation (barring a stab or a disorder by one of the players), many GMs will declare a draw among all surviving powers if the stalemate remains unbroken for, say, three game years. This doesn't happen very often.

I know little about Bob Albrecht, but I have heard second-hand reports that his zine is not noted for reliability. Long publishing delays are all too common among the less reliable members of the publishing community; those listed in Supernova generally have good track records, though. Hope I've answered your questions well enough. Let me know if you have any more, and good luck!))

From Ed Wrobel:

Bruce-

Several of the articles in the March 20 VD ((#93)) interested me. "Playing to Win" speaks to a common malady among gamers -- but it is not the illness you name. I'm sure Brad has no objection to a winning strategy, per se; his real objection is that your strategy was effective. The issue is not that one should play to win, but that one must also know how to lose. Had Brad had a bit more foresight, he might have planned for a time further along in the game when you or Jane led. As Rod Walker pointed out in a recent Exerthon, this has been a difficult lesson for me to learn. As a novice player I felt tricked because I failed to realize that the GM was also an opponent. Then, when the GM defeated me (and I was up against one of the most notorious "win-only" GMs in all of Dipsoid), I put my money back in the tray and went home. Now, was that right? It was my own fault that I limited my consideration to 6 other players. It's the same with Brad. Stopping the leader was outside his conception of the game. This seems ridiculous to regular players of multiparticipational simulations, probably as ridiculous as my naive approach to Diplomacy seems to Ron Brown, but it's simply a matter of separate and differing realities.

Berch's "Not Ombudsman" article was very amusing. That man is a bundle of contradictions. I'll bet there really are two Berches, like two Ron Browns, but they both live in Alexandria so it doesn't do any good to write Mark (Virginia) Berch. Let's not say "Markie" either because his enemies overuse that. How about a simple Dr. Berch Jekyll and Mr. Berch Hyde?

I will have more to say about your "Not Feuding" article in a different forum. Why should I sell VDs when I can sell Politesse?

The principles in "Gaining an Ally" are rather straightforward but it's nice to be refreshed on them. If I ever get into a game with a doomee, I'll know what to watch for, though!

Why bemoan the scarcity of letter columns sans editors? You have an opportunity to corner the market on non-editing! (As well as non-controversy.) But, of course, you are disguising your true purpose as always, you clever devil.

Well, if I am to become a feudist of BRUKian proportions, I must purchase a few of your controversial back issues. Order and check enclosed.

Your foe,  
Ed

((Alas, most of the back issues you wanted had been snatched up by the eager hands of Nelson Heintzman and Joan Extrom by the time your check arrived.

You are correct, of course, to point out that the GM may be thought of as an "opponent" in a postal Diplomacy game. For example, it is the GM (and not one of the other players) who will throw out your orders when you miswrite them. Similarly, the referee in a football game may be thought of as an "opponent" of the players when he throws his penalty flag. In both instances, it is the act of a "neutral" party -- the GM or the referee -- which has damaged the player's position by enforcing the rules. Some people view themselves as having been defeated by the GM (or referee) in such a situation. Others call it beating themselves. The distinction is purely a matter of semantics, and the choice of terminology correlates very highly with the quality we know as "sportsmanship".

Yes, Virginia, there really is a Mark Berch! I think there must be two of him too. How could one person have all the energy that he has?

I am amused to hear that you would never stoop to the duplicity sometimes required in the process of gaining an ally. Come back and tell me that after you've played in a game where your ally has missed a couple of moves, and as a result your alliance is about to be defeated, and one of your opponents writes you with a good counterproposal to the crummy alliance you have now.))



From Don Del Grande (4/20/84);

Hey BRUX;

No doubt about it this time -- YOU are in SERIOUS trouble -- incredible PAIN and AGONY aren't enough punishment for this one -- it's time for the SUPREME penalty -- what do you mean, "What did I do?" Well, I didn't do anything. YOU, on the other hand, had the NERVE and unmitigating GALL to interrupt my call to Caruso. What was the big "emergency"? Or was this yet another of your famous hoaxes -- and why isn't it on your list? That does it -- let's hope the other 98 zillion, 999 yillion, 9999xillion, 999etceteraillion, 999 loyal screaming Doomies are sitting down...it's bigger than your entering a gunboat game in Cathy's Ramblings (which adds ADDITIONAL punishment since she blamed me for not having that game filled the month beforehand -- MEANWHILE, I've got an opening waiting for two players and you don't even bother to sub...)...it's bigger even than my joining a regular Dip game (first one in three years, I might add)...here comes the news...

I am coming out east for MaryCon this June -- will you play it safe and think up some excuse for not showing up, or do you consider this letter a bunch of bluff (well, the bit about PAIN and AGONY probably is, but I am going to MaryCon) and will you humor -- er, HONOR, that's the word -- us with your presence?

Almost forgot the ADDITIONAL punishment...I'm not quite sure yet, but the DIP WARZ readers out there might be looking out for the Diplomacy Emperor, TS'R Alex I The Voice of Dim -- er, DCOM -- to have a new partner fighting alongside such blackhats as Lord Sacks Fifthavenue and the ever-popular Sawn Boxing trying to beat Rod Seaparter to THE BOURSE. ((Um, I think one probably has to receive Life of Monty to comprehend what all that was about...))

And now for the Steve/Daf controversy...you're the one that allowed free trading/passing/giving of information, and since they're both eligible, Daf has every right to take second prize. HOWEVER, since Steve and Daf are separate persons, you do have the right to send Steve 15 issues and Daf 5 -- which means that both Steve and Daf would receive issues 95 through 99! (Like I said in the GM Interference discussion -- give the prizes as if the other person had not won. So what if they live together? That's their tough luck.)

You were Alex's geometry teacher, right? No wonder she had troubles -- she purchased a carton of milk, a package of noodles, and some hamburger, and then went through the express line with two items. Either she was quite thirsty or she's in training to be a true Dipper with raw meat? (Take that any way you want to...) ((Now, now, let's be nice, shall we? In reality, all she was doing while finishing her shopping was using her noodle...)) And she must not have done well in chemistry either -- as far as I know, the harmful thing in deli food is nitrites (I can't remember the difference -- one less hydrogen atom in nitrites than in nitrates? Chemistry is not required for a Computer Science degree).

As for you, don't accept any jobs in San Francisco -- the current law says that employers must give non-smoking employees smoke-free environments; if one employee complains, no one in that office is allowed to smoke. Non-compliance by employers will cost the company \$500 per day -- but don't tell me that the company won't take it out on the complaining employee (and if the smokers complain that production is hampered, why shouldn't the boss fire the complainer?).

One final note...if you do show up at MaryCon, don't forget to add me to your list of 10 Farthest-Away Doomies You've Met...

May THE BOURSE be with you...  
Don

((Hah! Pretty decent letter -- you didn't even recite the names of 500 wargames! Sure, I plan to be at MaryCon -- what good would it be without me? (You don't have to answer that...))

Alex is taking chemistry now. I'll have her chide her teacher for the "nitrites" incident. She likes chiding her teachers...

The "emergency" when I interrupted your call to Caruso was that I just had to find out who that bozo was that was keeping me from calling Caruso. Having found out a few seconds later, it was too late not to have interrupted your call, so I decided to stay on and talk to him for a while anyway. Next time I'm going to call him, please don't you call first. Thank you.  
See ya in Virginia!))

From Michael Quirk (4/20/84):

Dear Bruce,

...While glancing through VD #94, I noticed a reasonably intelligent letter from Tom Swider. It's nice to know not all of your readers are radical left-wing fruitcakes. I won't bore you with my extreme right-wing political views. I just want you to know that Mr. Swider is not the only VD reader with brains.

A nice article by Alexandra Lord, but what does she see in you?!  
Keep annoying Eric "Smokey" Kane, Kane is funny when he gets mad.

((Perhaps so, perhaps so. But I'd rather enjoy his friendship than keep annoying him, hey? Besides, I've come to the realization that practically all of us are funny when we get mad in this hobby. The exceptions are a select few who are pathetic when they get mad -- and that type doesn't usually last too long.

I was already aware that Tom Swider is not the only VD reader with brains. All Doornies have brains. Even Ed Wrobel. Nor is Tom the only right-winger out there. We've got James Wall, John Kelley, John Michalski, Ben Schilling -- and even the ol' BRUKer himself. And Greg Ellis, and probably others.

What does Alex see in me? Well, she likes to pick on me, that's all I can tell. Especially when she cuts my hair. One of these days I'm going to insist that she not use her dad's old, broken lawnmower...))

From James Wall (4/20/84):

BRUK,

Noticed my sub was in danger so rather than send a lonely check I'll litter your mailbox instead.

MadCon looks to be shaping up rather well (Memorial Day Weekend). To date our count looks to be 31. Not bad considering that it is still a month away. Hope KabinKon is coming along as well. ((Nope -- it's been cancelled.))

Truth to tell, I agree with Swider concerning the RIGEL press. I can see how others would be mesmerized by it but I prefer my press to be a little shorter in length. A whole issue of RIGEL press is a bit much, terrific from your point of view I'm sure, but that game almost qualifies as a separate subzine.

I've also got a comment about this nation's poor and whether or not there is enough being done by President Reagan. Since the advent of the "Great Society" over one TRILLION dollars has been spent on social programs. The numbers of people AND the percentage of the population under the poverty level have both gone up. I wonder if it just couldn't be possible that these programs have institutionalized poverty all the while destroying the incentive to improve one's position in society. Some welfare type programs are indeed necessary but throwing tax dollars at poverty hasn't done much to eliminate it. Maybe today's liberals should give an honest evaluation to our welfare state and see if, just maybe, the government's spending priorities aren't in need of a little fine tuning and even some trimming in the area of social spending. My comments are not related to defense spending, necessarily. Enough of the real world.

Does Jake Halverstadt's High Plains Gonzo have any openings in his Presidential Politics game or was that just a one-shot deal?

It may help to avoid problems like you've gotten into in the Quotes contest to

allow one winner per household. It doesn't help now but an ounce of prevention... If Daphne insists that she wants second place I really do not see how it could fairly be denied her. She is active in the hobby and if she indeed did accumulate the results fairly without aid from Steve she's earned the free issues. If I were her I'd step aside but it should be her choice.

...About the Quotes contest, I had 10 or 11 (I forget) but didn't send them in, as being a Doonie for less than a year there was only so much that I could do. I do think that it was a great contest idea, however, my compliments.

((More on the Quotes contest in reply to one of Steve's letters this issue. For now, let me point out that Daf did do the contest fairly, with or without help from Steve, as there was no prohibition against people working together.

"A whole issue of RIGEL press"?! There were 38 other pages in that issue!

I agree strongly with you that most welfare programs tend to discourage people from getting off their butts and into the work force, and for that reason I think we should be much more restrictive. A note to all the liberal Doonies out there: I am aware that many people have good, solid reasons to be on welfare, with no alternatives. But there are a lot of freeloaders too. It infuriates me that my salary is taken away from me to pay someone who sits home on welfare because he is lazy or because it's more convenient that going out and working. And those of you who think that's uncommon, well, please open your eyes and take a good look at our society...

Your letter gives me the perfect opportunity to plug the two openings I know of in Presidential Politics. Jake himself has openings in a game that will he will guest-GM in Politesse, and Greg Ellis is planning to run a game which will feature a few (mostly very good, in my opinion) modifications to the original rules. He will run via a flyer to the players. Interested Doonies should write to Jake Halverstadt, 1106 Castlerock Dr., Fort Collins, CO 80521 and/or Greg Ellis, 9430 Concourse #1612, Houston, TX 77036 for further info. I recommend the game very highly; it's been loads of fun for me so far.

Hope MadCon goes well!))

From Steve Langley (4/25/84):

Dear Bruce:

Thanks for increasing my sub by those additional 15 issues. As to whether Daf should or should not win, let me say that I wondered myself before we sent in our entries if two from the same (household) would be fair. I decided that John and Kathy would be a similar case. Then it dawned on me that discrimination against someone because of mailing address was wrong. Daf publishes Magus as much as I, she has her own subzine, GMs a couple of games, plays in nearly as many games as I, reads VD before I get to see it most months; so she certainly qualifies as a Doonie. You stated in the rules that we could ask each other for help, so that she and I cooperated in searching through past VD is within the spirit of the thing. The extra two issues aren't that big of a deal, on top of the first fifteen, but I think Daf deserves the prize she earned. As to the unsigned entry, you know whose it is, so why is the signature a problem? ((Gotta keep all you Doonies in line, that's all. Hut two three four, hut two three four...)) The question about our kids was irrelevant.

Now, on to VD #94.

I want to go on record as saying that RIGEL is the top press game in my experience, and I read all of the RIGEL press. Since you have (or Sweeney has) opened a vote for best RIGEL press, I'd like to submit a ballot, of sorts.

Best Single Release: The Press Wars by Steve Knight. Granted, it was a parody, but it is an excellently funny parody.

Best Press Overall: Rich Reilly.

But the horde in second place is crowding him closely. Randy Ellis ((Greg, actually)), Bob Sweeney, Heintzman, Knight, Kleiman, and Hare (in the order they sprang to mind) are all very talented press writers. If Reilly wasn't writing half of their press, he wouldn't even be #1. He'd be back with the rest of the horde.

How did I miss the Dip Spaces contest? How would you know how I missed it? Actually, I saw it and knew I had one answer (lifted right out of your Sherlock Holmes puzzle) and got busy with other things and just never got back to it. Sigh... That's my favorite sort of puzzle, too. Not that it was in VD #94, but it came to mind. I hope I don't let too much time pass between now and when I'm finally able to try the crossword puzzle.

And The Lists of Doom, yet. Isn't there anything you won't do to make VD more fun to read? I did wish I had a lot better memory when it came to the best writing. Was the piece of satire that was written in response to the phone ethics discussion on the list? Or was it in response to something else...grrrr...it's on the tip of my memory and it won't show itself. I think Chuff or Flumphex wrote it but I'm not sure. There were three vignettes, satirizing a previous discussion -- must have been "Broken Record", which is on the list. If it isn't, it should be.

So, BRUK the rabid anarchist of Dipdom changes his socks and goes out in full support of the Runestone Poll. Is there no pinning you down? I enjoyed reading Randolph's little article and your interjections. Your simplified net score seems reasonable enough. My first thought was to average the two scores, giving a +.1 to the "average" and -.1 to the preference scores. I seem to prefer the preferences to the average.

I don't agree that a person who closely follows a game has to do so with an ulterior motive. I'm following RIGEL with no motive other than enjoyment. I'm following Mass Murders, ToadyCon II and Pariahs for the same reason. Still, the fairest judges for a GM are his/her players, so I have no quarrel with that ruling. I think the top/bottom 8% rule is a poor device. Suppose a zine gets votes of 2 0s, 5 7s, 10 8s, 10 9s, and 5 10s. Clearly, except for the two zeros (cast no doubt by a pair who vote only 0, 5 or 10 based on their subjective judgement as to how interesting a zine is according to how well they are getting along with its publisher), the voting clusters right around 8.5 (so I fixed the sample a little). The throwing out of the top and bottom 8% gets rid of the zero votes and two of the 10 votes, lowering the average by a couple of 10ths from the 8.5. If a standard deviation had been taken, and applied as a filter, only the zero votes would have fallen. With that set of votes, which isn't all that unlikely a grouping, I think throwing out two 10s would interject an error into the calculations that would skew the poll. If the votes were: 2 0s, 8 5s, 10 6s, 10 7s, 2 10s, then the standard deviation would trim off the tens and the zeros, leaving the cluster in the middle. Of course, it is an extra bit of calculation, but not beyond reason.

By the way, I am taking over the Freshman Zine Poll (one more poll than you approve of?) and will be using Randolph's general techniques except in filtering the votes.

It is good to see Alex hasn't stopped writing even if you have had to stoop to reprints of her work. The girl has a talent. It is good to see her using it!

And Bruce, I never said you were selfish (that will be five free issues), just hard to pin down.

((Once in a while I get a letter so full of juicy stuff that it would just about make a pretty good Gossip Column all by itself. This letter is an example. Honestly, as I was typing the above, there were about four or five occasions where I felt like interrupting right then and there to interject my thoughts! Thanks for this and your other recent contributions. Perhaps I should have included you in the "15 Hall of Fame Doomies" list. Where to begin...

Regarding my support of the Runestone Poll: Back in BRUK Speaks in VD #85, I

editorialized against the large number of polls (among other things) found today in the hobby. At that time, though, I mentioned that the Runestone Poll was the only one which had my full support, and the only one (outside of polls run regarding VD and its readers) which would get extensive coverage here. I still feel that way, although my criticisms of certain other polls vary from one to another. In the case of the Freshman Zine poll, I just don't see any great need nor interest factor. It seems a bit redundant, that's all. Certain other polls, like the Toady Poll or whatever it was that I won last year (I think) just are silly. While this is not bad in and of itself, this sort of "poll" gets a bit boring after a very short time. And still other polls, especially the Whitestonia player and writer polls, are too close to being just a plain old popularity contest, as a look at some of the high finishers in the writer poll especially makes very clear. (Come now, isn't Woody finishing ahead of Chuff Afflerbach and Garry Hamlin somewhat akin to a sandlot baseball team outpolling the Dodgers or Tigers? -- he's just much more well-known outside of VD, that's all.) I just feel that the hobby is extremely poll-heavy these days, a feeling which other hobbyists are welcome to disagree with. And many do, of course.

It seems to me that the really important issue is not how the Runestone Poll votes will be filtered, but that some valid mechanism for doing this be implemented to begin with. Thus, I strongly support Randolph's 8% provision. You are probably correct to claim that the results would be even more valid if votes more than a standard deviation away from the mean were lopped off, but to me the difference seems quite small, and I'm just glad that Randolph is doing something about hate votes. And with your proposal, we would also run into the problem (face it) that quite a few hobby members wouldn't have the slightest idea of what Randolph is talking about when he announces that he's going to be taking a standard deviation, whereas I think everyone will understand the 8% proviso. Whether it's important to have everyone fully understand Randolph's mathematical analysis is of course a matter of opinion -- I'm not so sure myself that it's such a consequential matter.

Your compliment about Alex I'm sure will be appreciated. She is very talented. You and her other fans won't be surprised to hear that she made the honor roll at her school again for the term just ended.

The piece of writing you refer to is Chuff's "Broken Record", #2 on the list. It was a parody of the "Off the Record" discussion and it consisted of six humorous situations satirizing those presented in the original article. I only wish that he would write articles for VD more often, but heck, why complain? He's super.

You are correct that one does not necessarily have an ulterior motive in following those games in which he is not a player, and I'll carry that one step further: one does not even need to follow a GM's games to be able to vote intelligently on his GMing. You can learn a lot about someone's GMing by talking to players who have played under him, or reading his house rules, or just by reading his zine in many cases. I assure you that I was far more qualified to vote on Oaklyn's GMing than were most of his players, e.g., since many of them were less familiar than was I regarding his dishonest GMing acts. But even disregarding that extreme example, it is clear to me that a non-player can be very well informed about a given GM. And yet, despite all of that, I honestly don't feel strongly one way or another about the matter. Indeed, my own score as a GM would suffer tremendously if non-players were allowed to vote... So from a personal standpoint, I'm glad Randolph is ruling as he is, even though I mildly disagree in theory.

Press Wars: glad to see you and others are reading all that marvelous poop. I agree with Knight's press as the best single release, though Heintzman's in the same issue isn't far behind. I also agree with Reilly for first place overall, with Knight, Heintzman, and Kiciman all clustered well within shouting distance and Ellis, Hare, and Sweeney not a whole lot farther back.

That at last brings me to the discussion of the Quotes contest results. OK, Daf takes second place and Joan wins third. But the issue is in fact very sticky, and

the question about the children was not irrelevant at all. (I brought up the matter just to illustrate a point, and I trust my comment wasn't taken the wrong way.)

The problem is this: I don't forbid collaboration in my contests simply because it's an unenforceable rule, so why bother? And I encouraged it during the Quotes contest, as it seemed to fit right into the spirit of things. So you and Daf were absolutely in bounds in working together -- I have no quarrel with that. Nor, though, could I have any quarrel if you and Daf and the kids all worked together, with you and Daf locating 98 of the quotes and the kids 2. Not only would this have been within the rules of the contest, but it would have been within the spirit as well. But obviously such a system is flawed. Anyone with all the back issues could just do the whole contest himself, and then submit three entries under his name and two of his kids', and still no rule would have been abused. The fault, then, lies with me for not being a bit more rigid in defining who may enter. And it's a really difficult question: why is the situation I just described any different than, say, if Joan calls up Flumpher and Cupcake and says to them, "Hey, guys, I've got all the quotes. I'll pay you a dime apiece if you let me sign your names to one entry apiece so that I can collect all the issues for the top three prizes!"

Um, but if I'm going to permit collaboration, then there's no way to prevent this, is there? (And I understand fully that this is not how you and Daf worked it, of course, I'm just dealing now in worrisome hypotheticals.)

It is for a very similar reason that I never run a contest on the basis of "all correct entries will win X free issues", as people could then (legally) share the wealth at my expense, but this situation is not quite analagous and much tougher. How do I get myself into these scrapes, anyway?

And, in no way did I intend to belittle Daf's hobby activities, lest anyone felt it came across that way. (If she had out-quoted Steve, the question would have been whether Steve should take second.) Daf's writing in Magus is in my opinion a high point of the zine, and I regard her as one of my most loyal, screaming Doomsies. (w)

(Thanks again for a thought-and-response-provoking letter.)

From Larry Feery (4/22/84):

Ah ha!

The zine's out, most of the letters are written, Peeri's in his heaven, and all's wrong with the world.

Now tell me, does that sound like something out of DVD Bach?

I'm listening to Aida so I'm bombastic as the Nile in Flood.

Ken went out a week ago. You will be pleased, I suspect, to note that the first EMMA ballot I received came from you. The second also came from Great Neck, NY. However, the next 1,432 ballots I got all came from Monseratt. (Hummmm. I don't think I misspelled that but you never know...)

Now I have 4 weeks to kick back and raise hell with all the people who thought I had died and gone to heaven in the past 4 months. Terrible thing to be writing the day after Easter.

How was yours? I had to work. Well, I played at working. I did manage to go to sunrise services on Sunday but I managed to get to the wrong group. It was interesting.

I'm not sure I like getting VE in my mailbox. I'm even less sure that I like getting John Schuler's copy of VD in my mailbox and then I have to mail it back to him because he's already gone home. Oh well, how many Doomsies can say they get two copies at once? ((I'm totally baffled by all this -- did I misaddress it, or what?))

By the way, don't call me a Doomie. I'm not. ((You are. I defined the term, and you fit my definition.)) I'll let you know when I think you can call me that. Let's see: KB in pigtail, you in leather pants, Boardman in a three-piece suit...ah, got a ways to go.

I liked your comments about letter columns, although I obviously disagree with much of it. I'm glad you publish letters to the editor. You do it well. Just don't ask me to do it.

Long pause for the triumphant chorus from Aida. Sorry, whenever I hear this I get very melancholy. I start thinking about Sadat and Golda...and you know...I get rather miffed about the whole riff.

It would surprise a lot of people, Michalski most I suppose, if they knew that I was supporting Jackson this time around and that I voted for Anderson last time. And I'm a Democrat who voted for Nixon once. Since then I've refused to take politics seriously (and this from a political science major). Yuck.

What's a gunboat game?

Remember the Tugboat game in DW?

I haven't been readin all the RIGEL prop either. I thought it was a beer from Washington.

Humm... I just found page 16. (Have a strange way of reading Dippy zines, I do, I do...)

Now, PRINCE THIS! I want to take you to task, sort of. I don't really think you should endorse a nominee that you've nominated. Make your nominee if you like. Endorse someone if you must. But don't go out and campaign for someone. Leave that to the Oscars.

I hope, in time, the EMMA will be able to print and distribute its own ballots and info and that it will be non-partisan. Until then, doing what you do is, I think, playing politics. I would rather have all the nominees treated equally at 98.6 degrees than one or two treated at 106.5 degrees (or worse, at 89.5 degrees). There is enough disproportionate influence from the votes generated through VD without your endorsement. No, I'm not censoring you, etc., I'm simply asking you to act as a custodian asked to reprint a ballot, etc., and not as a ward healer. Well, see, you did separate your ballot and your comments, but I'd rather you put your editorial support somewhere else from your ballot comments. Wait a few years until the California condor has grown a bit. Then you can fly with the eagles... Most people may not realize it but things like this are not exactly what I prefer to do. I do them because I believe they need to be done and since no one else seems to be so inclined, I do. I figure it takes 3-5 years to get an idea like this off the ground and into the hobby mainstream. Once the procedures and mechanics are worked out then let people have their propoganda field day, in the meantime, pause, water, fertilize, and reflect. Then, growth to all. I am, at present, getting yelled at for going too fast and too slow, in about equal proportions. So I figure I'm doing about right.

So much for that. Print it or not, as you choose. I don't consider it important. If you do I may get some useful input. If you don't, I'll probably forget it.

On to other things...

People still seem to be unable to understand the difference between ORGANIZATION and organization. ORGANIZATION is when I require you to have a DipHobbie card and carry it at all times. Organization is when I want to be able to look in a phone book and find your number. And I could go on for 15 pages on that theme. Instead, I'll leave it as is and have enough faith in your judgement and your readers not to have to go on and on and on, but if they miss the point, I will!!

I'm going to print all the phone calls for MASTONDONCON II and then we'll see who spills the beans...

Tell Berch not to get so excited. If I can inspire a Beatles parody, think of what I can do to Verdi, Bach, Beethoven, or Iron Butterfly?

Ask Rich Reilly if he ever went to school in Moscow. He'll know what I mean. ((Rich Reilly is currently attending school in Moscow!))

Quotes, quotes. Bleah. 44% of those were plagiarized. Incorrectly.

As for the Lists of Doom...

Let me tell you about hobby records...longest issue. Well, you had it. Longest press release, check mine out in Valhalla, 12,000 miles north. Longest press for a game (check out some of the old Walker games and the spillover in 12-14 other lines...). Longest Houserules? I use the entire CODEX FERRICANUS as a supplement for mine, all MLCXXVI parts of it. I whopped your year all to bits. Last issue lost something over \$660...and most egotistical? Well, natch, you win, feet down.

I'm working on a Diplomacy Round Table with Beethoven, John Lennon, Ringo Starr, Petula Clark, and myself on your "Roll Over BeethovenCon". If you want to take part let me know.

I think the Runestone Poll thing is going to be another soufflé in a crock pot. There's more to say about all this but I have dinner and the pool and a heavy night on the town to consider. So...

I'll close for the moment and if you write promptly to this I may write again before you publish.

Please remember, according to the

P =  $\frac{p/q - \text{Pie Rust (crusted)}}{\text{quiche (Lorraine) Bagels}} \text{ recipe,}$   
 Rot gut

whatever came out in the last Xeno times whatever you put out in the interim will result in a catastrophic mess...

Poo poo.

Next day. Hummm, I don't remember who I was writing this letter to. It doesn't sound like the kind of letter I would write to anyone normal in the hobby so it must have been intended for you. Anyway, I'm sending it to you.

I was working on it yesterday when I got distracted. I started to fix dinner (T-bone, rice, mushrooms, etc.; writing is such stimulating work, don't you think?) and watch the Finney movie on Pope John Paul II which I recorded on the VCR since I had to work Easter night. I was just starting to eat and right in the middle of the Soviet occupation of Poland when the phone rang.

It was one of my co-workers (and soon to be Dippy player) wanting to know if I wanted to go to the ball game. So I went and watched the Padres cream the Giants, 8-2 (and all the runs were scored in the first 4 innings!). I spent more time watching the audience than I did the game. I was going to write up a review of it all but I forgot to take a pen. I did bring back a SOX baseball hat as a memento of the 1982AY, SUN OF XENOGOGIC game.

((Games between the Padres and the Giants are meaningless; I suggest you avoid them in the future. The Dodgers are the only Real Team in Baseball. Remember I told you that next October.

Sorry, I feel I should be able to endorse whoever I want however I want in my zine in any hobby poll. Doomies will vote as they choose; I'm just making my own opinion known.

Hobby records: well, OK, you're the winner. Congratulations on your recent 204-page issue of Xenogogic. Sigh. Just when I thought (last October) that I had put out an issue that people would remember for a while, and now you have to go and eclipse it. How did you arrive at the \$6 60 figure as a net loss when you charge \$8.00 for each copy? You must have an expensive printer! Most egotistical? Actually, it's neither you nor me, but Jack Masters. I don't know if you knew him, but Jack was a humongous ego and little else. He had an insatiable appetite for unrestrained adulation, and when that showed signs of wavering he flew absolutely off the deep end. I come a distant second to him!



You've "whomped (my) year all to bits"? Not if you're quarterly -- even you haven't averaged 170+ pages an issue. And I'd like to see a single season's worth of press that tops RIGEL's 32+ pages. (Aw, I'm just being young and naive, right? I wasn't around for the good old days of the hobby, so I'm sure you can blow that request to smithereens. But my next question is whether the quality of that press approached RIGEL's.) Longest Houserules? I go with mine as the most comprehensive until I see a counterexample. And nobody can claim a better group of ~~Wopple~~ subbers than me! So I still have something left to salve my bruised ego...

The difference between ORGANIZATION and organization appears merely to be a matter of degree. That comment, plus your bit about "too fast" or "too slow", leads me to an observation about why people criticize you to begin with. You're not a bad boy, Larry. In many ways, I like you. But you made a mistake a year or two ago; a fundamental error in your approach to the hobby when you rejoined it. You might want to try and look at things from the point of view of those of us who were already "established" as the result of a lot of time and hard work: all of a sudden from out of the blue, there was this guy we didn't know (but in some cases had heard of -- barely) publishing all these crazy ideas about how the hobby ought to be organized, inventing all kinds of polls and awards, spewing forth proposals that frankly made it sound as though you felt yourself the center of the hobby rather than (face it) an old-timer just returned, with very limited contacts among those forming the current hobby "mainstream". So I agree with the "too fast" criticism, although I also firmly believe that most of your proposals wouldn't catch on regardless of who might make them. Some of the hobby's more tolerant members -- Steve Langley springs quickly to mind -- seem to bend over backwards to accept you the way you seem to think of yourself, while less tolerant people like Michalski ridicule and taunt. Neither of these extremes is right, in my opinion, and those of us in between are usually just caught trying to accept you but sometimes shaking our heads in absolute incredulity. You can't just zoom into the center of the Diplomacy hobby and run it, yet you give the strong impression of trying to do this. Inevitably, you provoke resentment and resistance that way. It's your approach that is objectionable... not you.

Whew. I didn't mean for all that to come out as strongly as it did. I truly believe, however, that the above explains most or all of the negative feedback you've been getting; the "Peeribashing", if you will.

The quotes were "bleah"? Quite a few of my readers enjoyed them.))

From the same person whose anonymous letter appears earlier (4/29/94):

Dear BRUX,

Thank you for your zine. I had a good time reading it, especially the RIGEL press. I guess you'll owe some money to Bob Sweeney because I might consider subscribing to VD later. I want to get some experience with the other games I have going before catching this terrible disease. Tell me if you plan to have any game openings in late summer; I might be interested.

Another thing which I appreciated a lot was the end-game statements for PEGASUS. Very, very interesting. The players showed a lot of maturity, and the game seemed to be quite enjoyable. Reading the statements made me wish I was among the players involved. You should have printed something like this in Supernova.

About my letter you want to print in VD; it's okay with me, but I'd like to stay anonymous if possible. The reason is that I don't want to shout everywhere that I'm a novice. It's part of my strategy -- I guess you understand. Not because I'm ashamed of it, but rather because I don't want the other players to think they have some advantage.

((OK, you're anonymous then. I deleted your name from the intro to the other letter. Maybe you're right that end-game statements like those from PEGASUS would be better to put in Supernova than those from '79E, those they were a bit long for that...))

From Steve Knight (5/2/84):

BRUKer,

Too long since I've written; I'm going to have to let some of the tabled topics slide until they resurface -- they've lost some of their relevance to the recent topics of discussion. Oh, well.

The idea that high-tech is going to solve future employment problems is a myth. You simply cannot train everyone who loses a job because of a closed factory to program computers. Most of the jobs "created" by high-tech will be relatively menial things such as custodial work, jobs with little future and no advancement. The current demand for programming types is an indication of how new-scarce the job type is, not an indication of demand that's high enough to be a panacea for unemployment.

To my mind, Reaganomics has failed because it has shortsightedly sold our economy down the river for short-term gains. Remember supply-side economics? Yes, tax cuts were going to get our government in the black in five years...hah. It seems incredible to me that the man responsible for the largest deficit in this country's history accuses the democrats of having a "spend, spend, spend" mentality. Pot's calling the kettle black, if you ask me; only difference is that the Dems see spending as the cure for all social ills, Ron sees spending as a cure for all foreign policy ills. I hope I'm wrong, but I fear this wartime economy when we're not at war will burn out and leave us in worse shape than before.

Hum... "The Lists of Doom" and a "No Controversy" policy seem like oil and water. You want comments? We got comments...

You're damn right your ((SIRIUS)) decision would have been incorrect if it hadn't been a hoax. So there.

Chuff Afflerbach should be on the "Positive Influence" list. The houserules (excuse me, the HouseRules) should be on the "Best Pieces of Writing" list as a work of fiction or humor. Now that we've gotten to that list, I think "Press Wars" is vastly overrated. I think the truth lies somewhere between Rich Reilly's crediting it to George Lucas and Mark Berch's reference to "that windbag, Steve Knight" (albeit in another context). It's long, and it tries to be clever, but I don't think it stacks up all that well next to "If I Ran the Zoo" or "Hall, Brucifer!" I also think "How Not to Get a Puppet" was underrated; it's not often that one gets such clear examples of how not to do things, a facet which is often more instructive than its counterpart. And apart from the controversy surrounding it, I think "Roll Over BeethovenCon" was a bit repetitive to be that high up on the list.

Impressive job on the crossword. Okay, so you had some chintzy clues and spelled "hamster" with a "p" (Q: What does Woody put his dirty laundry in?). ((A: Various letter columns in the Diplomacy hobby!)) Nonetheless, impressive -- and a hell of a lot of fun. So don't sweat the imperfections, okay Mr. Perfectionist?

If you get a "0" in the Runestone GM poll, that'll be my grudge vote because of the SIRIUS decision, okay? (↪)

Love,  
Steve

((I still love getting love letters from Doomies. Why don't a few more of you follow this lead? John Caruso? Ed Wrobel? C'mon -- don't be bashful!

I must absolutely disagree with your description of me as a "perfectionist".

Oh, god damn it! I see that I misspelled a word in the last sentence. Shit. You get this issue free. Sorry about that. Anyway, back to your letter...

You know, it's not a provable point, but I think that Reagan's policies on defense spending may well leave us in better shape than we'd be otherwise, in the long run. Who knows but that with some lily-livered Democrat in office, the Russians just might see their chance and decide that now's the time to...you get the picture, perhaps. Improbable that a strong president like Reagan will deter such thinking on the part of the Russians? Yeah. But not totally implausible, either.

You're right -- Chuff would be a Doogie Hall of Famer for sure. As would a few other people who didn't appear on that list.

"Press Wars" tries to be clever?! Hmmp. That's a little bit like saying that Peery tries to be verbose, or Einstein tries to be smart, or Alex tries to be cute. It succeeded, my man, it succeeded!

Actually, I forgot to put the Houserules on the "Most Successful Players" list. (☺)

Regarding the crossword, there were too many mistakes (read: a positive number) for my tastes. Hopefully this month's will be free of them, at least if one considers Mt. as a valid abbreviation for "Mauna". (Yeah, Doogies -- a hint.)

As you can see from the two quick takes which follow, your opinions on the puzzle and the "Press Wars" aren't unanimous!))

From Melinda Holley (5/4/84, excerpt):

Dear Bruce,

Thanks for the sample Voice of Doom. The RIGEL press is priceless. I had to sit on the floor while reading "Press Wars" because I was laughing so hard I kept sliding out of the chair...

From Steve Hutton (excerpt):

...This is the worst puzzle I have ever seen!!!!

From Rod Walker (4/21/84):

Dear BRUX:

So how come you never write for Diplomacy World? I keep hoping you'll do a few things for us but... By the way, by now you know that Peery has broken your record. I expect to see a 250-page VD in my mailbox next month.

I don't quite understand your editorial. As you seem to have forgotten, the initial printing of Supernova was at least in part paid for by hobby money (originally voted by the IDA and then distributed finally from the defunct treasury).

The fact that a given individual does not "use" a service does not mean he does not benefit from it, notwithstanding. Players already registered for a game benefit from game opening lists which help fill the game rapidly and get it underway. The US Orphan Service provides security to players in games even if those games don't get orphaned (and you never know when...). The BNC has, over the years, encouraged and promoted good GM practices...you will never know whether you're in a game whose GM has become better because of this. Furthermore, these projects are often insurance-like in nature...insurance of a steady flow of new blood (new players, potential new publishers, etc.), insurance against total disappearance of a game, insurance of our collective hobby "memory", and so on. Insurance needs collective support.

Furthermore, we all need to feel that we are helping out in this "togetherness" which is our hobby. Not everyone can have a "project" of his or her own. But the opportunity to help out with money is one way to participate in the whole effort. That serves an important emotional need in most people. The outstanding success of the PDORA shows that, given a chance to contribute, many, many people will.

Grumble if you like, BRUX, but I see no reason why people who do all the hard work should be required to pay for it too. The jobs are thankless (and sometimes irritating) enough as it is. Some tangible support helps take the sting out.

((I often feel guilty that I don't write more for Diplomacy World and others of the great zines in the hobby today, especially when (as is the case with you) their editor contributes to VD more often than I do to their zine. But I can also say that in the specific case of DW, I don't think that most of my own writing would cut the mustard for the quality you need. My specialty is editing. Just ask Ed Wrobel. (☺)

My rebuttal to your stance on hobby services would be to consider an example. There are probably two or three hundred names I could pull from around the hobby, but (just pulling a name out of thin air from my sub list), consider the case of Jeff Panches. Here's a guy who just wants to play postal Diplomacy in a game run by some other guy who happens to run games. He's not a publisher; he's not very heavily involved in the hobby. He just wants to get "together" now and then with a group of friends (or friends-to-be) and play a game of Diplomacy by mail. That's all.

Why should Jeff (and I hope he takes no offense at this -- I haven't consulted him first) have to even think about paying some half-assed tax to support somebody's project, somebody who he's never even heard of? He, and certain other people, just want to arrange a game by mail which is, remember, a private arrangement among the parties involved.

I can see the opposite point of view in real life. There, your taxes and mine go toward things we all need, or may need -- education, crime control, national defense, etc. But this is a hobby, Rod.

And what if it turns out that Jeff's game is never orphaned, and his GM's techniques have never been affected by the BNC, and whose game didn't start sooner because of a game opening list? What then? Why should some strangers get his money for "services" he may never benefit from?

Now, I grant you that the Orphan Service is a Good Thing. But some poor kid in North Utopia, intent on joining a game, should not be required to pay one red cent to support it. And yes, I'm sorry that players who do end up in orphaned games have to suffer. It's regrettable, and as I've admitted I don't have all the answers. But their predicament should not have to be paid for by some poor soul who just happens to be in the same hobby, and otherwise has nothing to do with it.

I haven't "forgotten" that the first printing of Supernova was not entirely at my own expense. I feel somewhat guilty now, that money from people who never used it went to me. But that was three years ago, and there's no way to rectify it now, of course. If it's any consolation to anyone, I haven't ever made a profit on Supernova; the price used to be advertised as "75¢ and free to novices".

And now, I'm going to touch on a very sensitive topic; the question of what actually constitutes a "hobby service" and thereby (supposedly) merits the taking of other people's money. I personally feel that the single most valuable hobby service is the orphan games project. And there are others that I feel merit the title, if not the act of taking money. But -- and I'm not going to be foolish enough to get specific -- I can name an example of a currently existing "hobby service" that I feel is an absolute and total farce, and may very well have been invented just for the express purpose of allowing its "custodian" to put his hand in the till. OK, so sue me. I've opened my mouth and another great big can of worms. Let's just say that I think it's a crime if anyone ends up having to pay for the particular "service" I'm thinking of, unless he or she buys it directly. So, even discounting this extreme example, there is the question of who gets to take the money and who doesn't. It all sounds so sleazy to me...

Your point that we all need to feel we are helping out in the hobby's togetherness is absurd on its face. Maybe some of us do (including me; I just do it in other ways), but I doubt if you'd get unanimous agreement on that statement. So fine. Let those of us who want to pay for other people's projects pay. But don't make those of us who don't want to pay do so. My feelings about the PDORA are mixed, I'll admit. I guess I'd have to say that if some poor ding-dong wants to spend \$5.00 for a lock of someone's hair, then let him; it's all voluntary. The extra fees imposed at, say, a DipCon are another matter entirely and ought to be abolished -- the amount that goes to hobby services, that is. Hell, in that case, some of the people who have to pay for the postal hobby's services aren't even in the postal hobby!

(Do I feel strongly about this matter?)

From Mark Berch (5/2/84):

Dear Bruce,

And I still say, you should give the players an ombudsman if they ask for one, period. You say, "...if someone does not trust my judgement as a GM, he should not be playing here in the first place." Well, yes, but if you feel that way, no ombudsman should be needed at all. It's one thing to ask the players to trust your judgement; that's reasonable. It's quite another to ask them to accept the notion that you are infallible. You're not. And you could make the mistake of not realizing that an ombudsman is needed. Your players know you aren't perfect. And thus they will feel and be more secure knowing that an ombudsman is available if they think they need one.

Yes, an incorrect ruling by an ombudsman could harm that game and others, but that's the risk you take whenever you call for an ombudsman -- that's an argument against having an ombudsman, period. By the same token, your players have the reverse risk under your present policy -- viz, that they'll be harmed by your error in not calling for an ombudsman. Moreover, that error could affect all your games. You can limit the effect of a bad mistake by an ombudsman by adding new language to your houserules or by stating in the houserules that ombudsman's decisions are not precedents.

Skipping to the next topic (with no attempt to unify my comments to give them a sense of completeness), I turn to your comments on the Monopoly game.

In general, no, I don't think your complaint was valid. Indeed, your very arguments can be used to defend Brad's behavior. It seems that your desire to win was valid, indeed, worthy of an essay. His desire to win put you in an awfully foul mood.

OK, Brad was flush with cash but unlike you and Jane, had no monopolies. Brad couldn't buy what he needed for a monopoly. In such a situation, Brad's situation is virtually hopeless. With 4 rails, he might be able to push one of you to the wall, but that's hard to do, especially since you were apparently playing under rules which made the game more cash-rich. All he has to look forward to is being slowly whittled down with no chance of a big strike. He'd like to win, but this isn't going to be his game. Best to end it, and try to win the next game. If his goal is to avoid losing, then this is the wrong tactic, but if his goal is a win, it'll have to be in the next game. This kind of strategy is common in non-tournament chess, for example.

This is not to say that Brad was perfect. He should have thrown his cash and property to another player, not the bank. Which one hardly matters, since with the cash and several new monopolies, that person will be a quick winner.

If I'm desperate for a deal, I'll usually take the person aside and offer them not only cash, but a certain number of free hits on the property. I may even go so far as unlimited free hits, and if need be, I'll pay them a commission for every time that another player hits the monopoly. Everyone has their price.

However, if Brad wasn't smart enough to figure out such tactics, then he'll have to use other means toward his end of winning the next game. In that case, it's your fault. You could have struck such a deal with him, and if you were sharp about it, you might easily have won the game. There is never a need to fear someone else's monopoly if you have the property he needs to obtain it.

((I think you misunderstood the article, at least in part. The type of wheeling and dealing you describe is exactly what I get into, too, and I view it as a large part of the fun of the game. However, that sort of game just isn't Brad's cup of tea. Which is fine, except that I had had no idea that he was about to quit the game until it actually happened.

Ah, but your comments on ombudsmen make the unstated but critical assumption that in a game being run under my houserules, the ombudsman is less likely to err than I am. Nobody claims infallibility, but I regard myself as familiar enough with my own houserules -- and the game rules, too -- to know when a player's complaint is simply out of line. My current policy stays.))

From Larry Peary (5/1/84, excerpts):

Hi:  
I have a few minutes or hours before I have to run (Daylight Savings Time always messes up my automatic clock for a week or so) so I thought I would drop you a line or two. I owe a bunch of people letters but this week has been my first real vacation from Dippy in months. I needed it.

I have your postcard of the 22nd and I suppose I should comment. I am going to hold off on getting any ((back issues)) of VD because what you have left is either too much or not enough. I am hoping the void can be filled when I get the stuff Scott Marley has (24 boxes = 8,000-10,000 zines). Otherwise, I'll have to go after a complete set or nearly complete set somewhere. It is inevitable, someday, that you will be in the IDHOF and I want a set of VD for the archives.

That brings up an interesting question: why?

I am not by nature an archivist. I am a collector but even that is in the dilettante style (assuming I even spelled that right). I pick and choose and keep what I like or what I think is important. But I lack the discipline and organization to be a serious archivist. Still, it is a job that must be done, so I feel, so until someone more qualified and motivated comes along, I must do. Emphasis on I and emphasis on do, coequally.

So, I'm slowly organizing the 6,000 or so zines I have gathered. My stuff (3,500 or so) is old but it is good. Then I have Don Miller's stuff and what Barch sent me. Valuable additions to be sure. But I have 2 feet of Starbuck in the den and it smells to high heaven. Didn't Boardman ever wash his mind? Oh well...

I'm trying to figure out a way to organize and index and catalogue what is important and get it into the computer. It's a challenging task and I'm glad to have people helping me. I figure I have around 60,000 pages of stuff to sort through, which sounds like a lot until you figure that the Pentagon turns out around 250,000 pages of verbiage a day and what I have represents around 20 years of junk.

I've just written Buchanan to see what brilliant ideas he has regarding archives and how they should be organized and indexed and cataloged. If he has any good ones (I know he will...) and if I have any good ones (I know I won't...), I'll pass them along to you and ask you to reprint them. What quirk I have about this archives is that it should be used by the hobby. Ergo, I want to know what info people want from and in an archives. I'm hoping the computer listings will be more extensive than the one you saw in the last Xeno. Some of the info must be purely technical and arithmetic. But some of it must be subjective. ~~WEEEEEEEE!!!~~

I got DW #94 in good order and intact. ((Gosh, I was to a few issues behind. I just got #37...)) I think you are making an error in using 3rd class. But keep it up: maybe you can reach the point where VD will go as "Swain Parcel". ~~WEEEEEEEE!!!~~

What's a gunboat Dippy game?

And who is Cathy Cunning?

And why smear it all over your front page?

I haven't read any of the RIGEL stuff. I'm waiting for it all to be done. Then I'll take my long-promised sabbatical and read it.

People who write letters to comment on other people's letters should be invited to the Daisy Hill Puppy Farm. Hang in there Snoopy!!

As I recall I've voted for Johnson, Humphrey, Nixon, and Anderson. This time I'm inclined to vote for Jackson. The only politician I'm enthused about is Studds from Mass., but that's not for the obvious reason. But who cares about the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee except some old hobby fart like me?

I can think of 10 qualified people to be president and not one of them is a politician or holds political office at the moment. Hummer sounds like the hobby.

I don't mind if people pray in school. We used to recite the Pater Noster in Latin in high school. It comes in handy when I got to Mass. All the Catholics say it in English, and I say it in classical, vs. church Latin. Gets a lot of nods...but you should hear Mike (Maston) sing the Mexican national anthem on Cinco de Mayo. He knows the words better than most of the Mexicans but his accent is terrible!!

I've seen two references to Ken Peel in the Dippy press in the last two days. Tell him to knock it off. His overexposure will ruin his hobby sex appeal.

I don't believe Joan Extrom exists either. Course I told Cathy Cunning she was a fake when she wrote me a very nice letter some time ago. I based that not on her name but on her neat and clear handwriting. I'm so used to dealing with illegible and illiterate (HUM?) Dippy male chauvinist pigs that I wasn't prepared for a legible and literate and intelligent female in the hobby...is that a sexist remark, Judy? Wasn't intended to be, it was a comment on handwriting, mostly.

Is a canteloupe an island in the Sandwich Islands?

Say, have you heard about Jerry Domenelli? I taught him nothing. Don't blame me.

Who's Bob Olsen?

Who's John Michalski?

Who's Dick Martin?

You sure got a lot of name droppers in your letter column!!!!

Sorry, but any time Mark Berch says anything is fantastic I know it must be bad. So I take back everything good I said about your PeerPlay.

I can see it now. A hundred years from now. Every 7 years they'll have a reenactment of 1966 done in St. Peerigrad and call it the PASSION ACCORDING TO... never mind.

People in New York (Massachusetts!) don't appreciate our humor. Or even my humor.

Say, I had my annual physical (part one) yesterday. Blood pressure wasn't bad (130/90, which is better than 188/xxxx, which is what one well-known Dippy player drove it up to a while back...), but my weight is going up faster than the national debt. I now weigh in at a mere 1/9 of a ton! I've gone to ordering size XXL (and that's for my socks). But don't worry. I'm working hard to get it all into a solid state. I want to be the hobby's first certified OREGO...

All those quotes just prove we're a bunch of pompous old windbags...

As for your "Lists of Doom"...

Now this has potential. Course you're all wrong but it's a cute idea...

Tkaing it from the top.

Which Ron Brown is the most successful player in VD history? ((Ron Brown of California. The other one is "Ronald" in VD, unless specified otherwise.))

Half of those names are aliases and the rest are phonies.

You wouldn't know a good hoax if it bruxed you between the eyes.

What did you think of Ty Hare's legs?

You can't have Flumphex, he was mine when you were still playing in the tub with a rubber...duckie.

Never heard of any of your controversial actions and anyone who would do anything to Sherwood deserves a medal.

Now, for the hobby records.

#1 -- sorry about that.

#2 -- wrong, there were longer press releases in some of Koning's zines, including one I wrote on a flight from the Phillipines to California. It ran about 12,000 miles long, started in VN, I think.

#9 -- wrong. I twice started a seven-game series, 1971BL- and 1971CS-something or other.

#10 -- Do you really want to talk about most pages! HA!!

#12 -- the April issue of Xeno cost just over \$6.50 per copy to print and mail (with allowances for typewriter ribbons, etc.). I've had at least 2 issues that

cost me, out of pocket, over \$500.

#14 -- OK, you win one. I'm much more modest than you are. Probably because I'm a Protestant.

As for all those 30 articles...hummmm, we really need some kind of hobby anthology. I've got a stack on my desk that is almost two feet high and it consists of nothing but the original pages for the last three years of Yenc. The entire LWP/IPS/TIP etc. ((??)) output since 1967 makes a stand about 8 feet high.

However, I will be gracious and allow that you are a bigger fool than I.

Aren't we a wonderful, rotten bunch?

I would prefer an orderly hobby to one as anarchic as we have now.

The sun is setting in the west and all us boys are teary eyed...

The sun is down and so am I.

((I couldn't wait. I hope you don't mind that I omitted parts of this letter because some of it (printed and unprinted) was almost word for word the same as your other letter in this issue. Did you forget that you'd just written me, or what?))

Luckily, you'll never get the orderly hobby you would prefer, at least so long as I'm in it. I like to keep things messed up.

I'll let you know in a month or two (after I meet her) whether Joe really exists. And there are several legible, literate, and intelligent females in the hobby, including a few on my sub list. Ruth Glaspey springs most quickly to mind.

I think I would enjoy your humor if I were to see any of it.

"Who's Bob Olsen?" "Who's John Michalski?" "Who's Dick Martin?" Boy, where have you been?

Who's Jerry Domenelli?

Say, since you and I are obviously the two biggest record-breakers in the hobby, I've got a proposition for you. Now listen up, because this is serious. If you will send me a thousand dollars right now, I promise you that I'll put out a 300-page issue on my fifth anniversary of publishing. You see, I'd like to, but I honestly can't afford it. I'll even be generous about it, and refund whatever money I don't use, AND you'll get your copy for free. You know you can't beat that. By our mutual actions, we'll each have set a new hobby record: you for the most money ever spent on someone else's zine, and me for (again) the largest zine ever. And I'll give you all the credit you deserve for your contribution. Let me know if you'd like to go for it; the joint record(s) would be worth the price, right?))

From Paul Rwaterberg:

Jesse Jackson for president (I'm serious).

((Whatever you say!))

From Jake Halverstadt:

My dear Mr. President:

Why oh why oh why did you make publishing look so easy? I think that all that is good is that I have only a half-dozen or so more Gonzos left to do. I truly enjoy writing the game commentary, and the associated crap, but I hate the rest of it. Printers, the post office, licking stamps, licking envelopes...you can drive it.

Ye done good in Pennsylvania ((Re: Presidential Politics)) I hope you don't mind my excising the off-week, but it really isn't necessary and it puts us back on (who am I kidding?) schedule.

If I'm not doing well with the Gonzo, at least I'm not wasting my time. Been readin' some good stuff the past six weeks or so. Two I'd recommend are "Blue Highways," by William Least Heat Moon; and "America II" by Richard Lewis.



You probably know about "Blue Highways"; it was on the best-sellers list for quite a while, and they ran a chunk of it in The Atlantic Monthly. If you don't know it, it's from the on-the-road genre. Not bad at all.

"America II" started out as a series of newspaper articles by a San Diego reporter. Some of the book has a sociological flavor to it, but the authors really captured the sense of America in the 1980s.

One thing that has really stayed me was a chapter on the housing revolution (America II is the post-industrial USA) in the 80s. I can't imagine the way some people choose to live these days -- high-security developments with TV surveillance, private neighborhood police, zoning regulations that restrict the color of your draperies and what kind of trees you can plant! The Fort ((Fort Collins)) has 80,000 people, and I leave the house unlocked half the time. And we plant what we damn well please (but hope the cops don't see it).

I have the feeling that you'd really like Radio Australia. And they're coming in clear as a bell, though it's 2:50 a.m. Been having this problem with sleep lately. Stayed up until 5:15 the other day, and was thankful I had a pile of library book around the house.

Jake's Six-Fire Conversation Starter: (I use this in those awkward moments at dinners and such) If you could invite any five people in the world to dinner, who would you pick? Section B: What five from all of history? Section C: What five events from history would you like to go back and see?

My answers: Section A: Richard Nixon, Ted Kennedy, Dick Gregory, Daniel Moynihan and Barry Goldwater. This list might be different tomorrow. Or in five minutes. Section B: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Harry Truman, Winston Churchill, Jose Marti. Section C: JFK assassination, crucifixion, 1948 World Series, Apollo 11 on the moon, the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 and D-Day.

So what if that's six?

To hell with it. Goodnight BRUX, goodnight Radio Australia, goodnight smoky-messy office, it's crash time.

((Well, I think you've succeeded admirably with the Gonzo. I think that we, the players in the first postal game of Presidential Politics, entered into the thing with the spirit of helping you playtest and improve your invention. However, publishing is not for everyone. Since you don't enjoy all the legwork, I'm glad to read that you'll be guest GMing the next game of PP in Politesse. Keep it going. PP is (or can become) good enough to be a hobby in its own right.

I once lived next door to a family that moved away (from Maryland) to Texas. My sister was good friends with the daughter, and she got letters telling of the wonderful new neighborhood they had moved to, where they locked the gates to the development at night so noone could get out or in. It made me shudder.

I'd have to think a while to answer your hypothetical questions. I believe that both Einstein and Sir Isaac Newton would be on my Section B list, however. And the Big Bang which may have occurred to get the universe rolling would make my list of five events. Opinions, Doomies?))

From Jeff Noto (4/20/84, excerpt):

Dear BRUX,

... "The Lists of Doom" was very good. However, I think your mom should have been included on the Prominent and Influential Women list. After all, if it wasn't for her (and your dad, too) there'd have been no BRUX or VD to begin with. It was also interesting to see Linda's name on the list, as she had begun to fade from the scene (if I may put it so) just as I became a Doomie. Thanks for putting me on a list. Hopefully we will be meeting someday soon.

((By your logic, though, shouldn't all my female ancestors have made the list? But it's Mother's Day, so I'll give her an honorable mention anyway.))

From Bob Olsen (4/22/84):

Dear BRUX,

Try to concentrate very hard now, Bruce. Sit down. Smoke 'em if you've got 'em. Relax, calm down, I have a very important message for you and I want you to try to understand. Ready? OK. The fact is, BRUX, that when we sign up for a gunboat game, you see, we generally keep our identity confidential. Comprene? See, that's the point, nobody knows who's playing what. That's why it's gunboat. Some people even work pretty hard to keep their identity secret. And just about nobody announces on page 1 of his ziany that he's entering a gunboat game. Got that? Now I realize that there's no Houserule on this, but take my word for it. It just ain't done.

I'll pre-emptively decline your invitation to play in a Worst Players game. I know you were going to ask, but no, I've already been in one all-losers game. Thanks loads but that one was enough. I know you haven't asked, but the issue was mentioned in #94, and I just wanted to set your mind at rest before you said anything.

The American voter faces quite a choice this year. Let's see, we have an amiable dunce (that's putting it kindly); a raving demagogue; a phony; and a guy who sucks up to anything that moves. I vaguely favor the phony, because it's at least conceivable that I'd vote for him instead of the dunce, but really, I plan to refuse to vote unless I'm allowed to register under the name of Hobson.

I know I wasn't asked but my Solomon-like wisdom may be of some help in the juicy Quotes contest. There's a simple, elegant solution which you haven't thought of. Consider that if Steve Langley had 73 right, and Daf had 68, where did the extra 5 come from? I suggest to you that Steve stole them from his own wife -- an act of unprecedented depravity. Therefore Langley should be thrown out of the contest and the prize awarded to Daf. Alternatively, and an equally fair solution, would be to award Steve first place (even if he did cheat) and Daf first-and-a-half place which is somewhere above second. So, give Steve 15 free issues, and Daf something like 10. This would be eminently fair, I think, as long as I'm spending your money...

Actually I liked the Lists of Doom...maybe I shouldn't have since it was so outrageously self-promoting, but then I always liked Mark Berch's triple-issue Focus on Berch efforts as well. The very audacity is amusing. But glancing over the lists it's clear that something is haywire somewhere; they're all slanted heavily toward more recent issues. Of the 10 best, not ONE is earlier than #57. 3 out of 10 Most Significant Events are from earlier than #60 (and one of those is trivial). Of the 30 best pieces of writing, 6 are pre-#50. And so on. Was early VD the insignificant trash pile you seem to imply? And if so how did you survive? I haven't gone back to see if you are correct in this, but still, the sample seems a bit skewed. (No "in" in that.)

Randolph Smyth's solution to the Runestone Poll problems -- making up two lists -- is a bit wimpy, but strikes me as an appropriate measure during a time of transition from less-rigorous polling to something new. But you've contrived to out-wimpy Smyth with this idea of averaging his two figures to come up with one of your own. If you're going to average two lists, why not figure things 10 ways and take the average of that? Or take the Marco Poll into consideration? Naw, better you should just allow this to be a transition year, and let that be the end of it. Just see how things work out this year, and then let next time take care of its own.

I like the idea of raising money through events like the FDO auction much better than the Diptax idea. Aside from everything else, the Auction strikes me as more in keeping with the spirit of the hobby -- useless mementos, buying pigs in pokes, digging out trash, and so on. And it has the added advantage of aggravating Robert Sacks. True, the Diptax might also irritate Sacks (the only good thing about it), but still, the Auction is more FUN. Let's make the Auction bigger, and put our would-be tax collectors to work popping hubcaps.

((Sorry, but I don't like the idea of having two "final" lists in the Zine Poll. So I'll stick with the method I've chosen for arriving at the finalized results in VD. Randolph mentioned that publishers who plan to generate their own lists from the results should publicize their method of doing this before the poll deadline, so at least no one will be able to claim that I'm making any changes in order to help (or hurt) the score of any particular zine.

You forgot to mention Reagan in your list of presidential candidates.

I too noticed the heavy emphasis toward recent issues and events while writing the Lists of Doom. There was a distinct point at which VD drastically improved in quality, and that was with my second anniversary (#54). Since then, the issues have been bigger and better, and I've been calm and rational, and reasonably modest, instead of egotistical and hotheaded. I think if you go back and check, you won't find much worthy of comment in the issues from 1-53, with a few exceptions.

You won't play in an all-losers game? Well, there goes that idea...))

From Kevin Stone (4/25/84):

Dear Brunch,

Howdy! You'll be happy to know that the mail lady here at school quit! Something about the Sears catalog being lighter than the average letter from Dalton. All seriousness aside, I think what did her in was the postcard of a tombstone somebody sent her with her name on it. Damn college students anyway!

All the animal lovers out there (yes, you Joan!) would love my sister's boyfriend's pet. It is a boa constrictor. He has it in his room at his frat house. We fed it two live white mice for dinner one night. It's one hell of a lot more interesting than watching a dog wolf down leftovers! By the way, next on my readlist is "Death in the Afternoon" by Ernest Hemingway. It is about bullfighting. I love Hemingway's style -- he was one of the last true real men.

I finally got around to reading all the quotes after the contest was over. Can't you do anything without causing controversy? Since it's clear you don't have a majority winner, you should have a meeting in a smoke-filled room and declare a winner from out of left field -- Ted Kennedy, for instance. Once people find out he is connected in any way with The Voice of Doom, they'll finally realize he's too crazy to be our president.

I was crushed to see I wasn't on your "10 Farthest-Away Dooms" list. Hell, with the recent Supreme Court decision, we (the College) have pretty much made ourselves an independent country. We're in our own world.

My feelings on the RIGEL press and Reagan pretty much mirror Tom Swider's. I rarely read press in games I'm not in. Looks like it's getting time to dust off the old Reagan/Bush button. It's also time to go to bed.

PS. I may read the RIGEL press after all. I just read the MES in EE#33. I didn't realize there was any Star Wars stuff in it. Are you going to KaneKon?

((Unless it falls on a VD deadline.

Seems to me that most (or all) of the people who have commented against the RIGEL press didn't read it to begin with (VD #93's that is). Maybe if some of you, like you (Kevin), Tom Swider, and James Wall would allow yourselves to overcome your prejudice against press for once, you'd discover that some of the RIGEL press in that issue was far more entertaining than many of the articles and letters I print.

I think most people realize that Ted Kennedy lacks the morals and strength to be president anyway.

Have a summer, and I hope I get to see you at KaneKon!))

From Dave Kleiman (4/23/84):

Dear BRUK,

Yes, incredible as it may seem, this is a letter to you. No, this is not press or orders for the REIGEL, although everyone realizes that if it were not for the REIGEL, VD would fold. So, what does one say in a letter to BRUK?

Thanks for the resub. Perhaps we should combine 'zines. You know, I run the games -- you provide the reading stuff. Or is that what we're doing? ((Very funny...))

So Tom Sweider doesn't like the REIGEL press? Can I pay Reilly to un-sub him from VD?

So John MacFarlane likes the REIGEL press? Please find enclosed \$.50 for another issue for John.

So James Woodson likes the REIGEL press -- especially Jeopardy? Find enclosed \$1.00 for another issue for James.

Controversy? You want controversy? You got it. You have the nerve to ignore my bribes and list "Press Wars" and "Black Forest" on your list of the 30 Best Pieces of Writing Ever to be Published in VD? Sleime. Yes, Bruce, you are simply sleime.

What else? I added a disk drive to my computer system this evening. Excitement at its peak. You know I had to do it because of the increase in press in The Diplomat -- and that's because I am in the REIGEL. Haha.

Hey, I think I'm driving to Dallas for DIPCON in June. Luedi is a reider. Thought I'd mention it in case someone else wants a ride from Indy to Dallas (or to be picked up on the way). If so, they should write. If not, maybe I should fly? Naw.

((Well, if I were facing the prospect of a trip from Indy to Texas with Luedi, I think I'd fly too! Only kidding.

I didn't ignore your bribes. I spent them very well, in fact. All I ignored were your stipulations regarding other actions I should take if I kept the money. Yuk, yuk...

Have a good time at Origins!))

From Dave Lincoln (4/27/84):

Dear BRUK,

Thanks so much for the VD you've given me. But it was really nice. Here's the \$5 you deserve for the "job" you did, and remember, you promised to do it for me ten more times!

I am indeed a Doonie and I've been wondering where so many of you other Doonies have been hiding. I'm still kinda new here in DIPLOMACYLAND so hello to all you Doonies who are new to me. ((What do you say, Doonies?! Let's give this man a welcome worthy of a brand new Doonie!))

Looks like you PEGASUS players had a good time. I'm your kind of guy. Need another to round out a game? I've just completed a couple of games and the others I'm playing in have slowed to a crawl. One no longer moves at all. So I'm just itching for a game start.

Looks like we are close enough geographically, BRUK, to get together sometime. I know a few players in this area that are not part of the postal hobby as yet. Maybe we can have a little CumberCon this summer. ((Dave lives in Cumberland, Rhode Island.))

I play many other games besides Diplomacy but it is easily my favorite. My six year old son has acquired the taste and plays about a dozen of my games from Rail Baron to Victory in the Pacific. He needs a little help still to follow all the rules but he can play them all solo. I'm hoping he'll give me some pointers for Diplomacy.

Keep in touch and thanks again.

((Welcome aboard, and thanks for one of the nicest letters I've ever received from a brand new subber. I think you'll fit right in as a Doomie.

Since we've now spoken, I know that I'll have the opportunity to give you some more VD on our way down to MaryCon together. I'm looking forward to it. And may your son grow up to become a loyal, screaming Doomie as well!

See ya soon.))

From Jim Meinel (5/3/84):

Dear Bruce,

Regarding your position on hobby services, I don't think you've thought it through very well. Believing strongly in a principle doesn't mean you're not selfish, it just implies you're stubbornly selfish. If everyone were to operate on a direct cost-to-cost basis the concept of a hobby would cease to exist, not grow stronger as you imply. Subbers would pay only for the cost of their pieces of paper they received, players would only pay for their game costs, orphaned players would pay for relocation services (is it their fault they were orphaned? Why should they have to pay a dime? Are they really inclined to pay at that point in time?) and people who utilized the BNC & MNC services would carry that load (whoever that group of users is defined as). What kind of attitude is that? "I don't use it, to hell with helping them then." Sounds selfish to me. Most hobbies and clubs have (horrors!) dues, which go to support the entire network of services and activities the hobby may have. What would be so wrong with annual dues to support services that benefit all of us, directly or indirectly?

I can sense, Bruce, that from your opinion on this topic and several others that the selfishness is pervasive, or at least there is a distinct reluctance on your part to rely on anyone else. You don't accept nor want any money for Supernova; you refuse to agree with another publisher to take over your games in case you drop dead or abruptly fold; you don't support the concept of a BNC and presumably the fees also; your house rules reflect a compulsive desire to do things your way; you loathe the idea of using an ombudsman unless you are clearly shown to be in the wrong first (if so, then why use it?) and thus have an outside party affect you; in summary, if all of the above listed positions of yours are correct, you come across as an independent/selfish (choose) person. Ease up Bruce! I'll bet you're one of those who'd rather pay massive user fees than a general tax.

The hobby will never be anything more than a gaggle of publishers as long as positions such as the one you hold continue to fester among us; there is a hobby outside of your circle of subbers.

((I think I am aware of that.

I have responded to most of the points in the first half of your letter in my reply to Rod Walker's letter elsewhere in this issue, so please see that too.

The second half of your letter is astounding. If you're going to criticize me for my positions, would you please do me the minimal courtesy of criticizing positions I have taken, rather than ones I have not? I have spent quite a bit of space here recently discussing when I would or would not go to an ombudsman. There are many instances in which a dispute in VD will be (and has been) brought to arbitration, but the type of situation you describe isn't one of them. When I can be shown to be clearly wrong (e.g. in the case of a simple adjudication error), I simply correct the error without going to an ombudsman. Since you either didn't read or didn't understand my description of the circumstances where a dispute here will go to arbitration, I'll try to explain it one more time. When neither party is clearly in error, that is when a player-GM dispute in VD may go to arbitration.

Of course, I would never fold and orphan my games, but the VD House rules explicitly encourage my players to seek another GM in the event that something happens to me. Your

"refuse to agree" statement is absolutely untrue, then.

Your use of the fact that I do not want nor accept (outsider's) money for Supernova as an illustration for your claim that I am selfish makes about as much sense as someone who comes into the house soaking wet, and claims it's because the sun is shining. Sorry, but your logic, if there is any, has totally eluded me.

As for my Houserules, I do not agree with your application of the word "compulsive", but I will concede the point that they reflect a desire to do things my way. Of course, that statement is true of every GM's houserules. And so whose way am I supposed to do things in my zine?))

From John Pack (5/1/84, excerpt):

Hello there BRUK!

It's been a while. Speaking of lists, do I have the record for longest period between communications with the publisher? While reading the last couple of issues of VD, I was rather surprised to encounter my name (used in a quote) after such a long spell. Actually, (sshhhhh, don't tell anyone) you're not a feared GM at all. You were my favorite GM and certainly the most predictable (as you have a sound set of HRS -- though at times, I understand the sound is too loud). I'd like to rejoin your standby list (desiring whatever position is available ASAP). If there's ever a game opening, I'd enjoy that rare commodity too. Know any zines around that have openings for regular Diplomacy? ((Check out Murd'ring Ministers for starters!))

Anyway, I am alive. I left just after the price riots stopped. At least, the news says the riots were over pricing, those of us in the know realize that the people were just upset when they heard I'd be leaving (to establish control over other spheres). Even when I arrived (on Dec. 23, 1982) they had a large national party to celebrate. I really did enjoy my time as a missionary there ((in the Dominican Republic)) and found a good rapport with the people.

I was quite shocked to find that the recent VDs have quite outdone (at least in size) those I was accustomed to in 1982. I trust quality has gone up too. I really enjoyed the Zoo Issue, but up to more recent things: I like offset better than ditto. Pretty recent, eh? Ditto looks great, though, if you don't care what it says. The RIGEL press is an itty-bitty much. I'm not sure that the list of people who had a positive influence on VD is exactly right. What did BRUK Linsey ever do that was positive? Oop, never mind, I thought of something -- he started a great zine for all of the others to have a positive influence on.

Anyway, congratulations on continuing the best zine. I look forward to many more excellent issues coming.

((Blash. Welcome back. Now you can catch up on all those VDs you didn't get to read, and ease the withdrawal symptoms.

Newer Doomsies may not recognize the name of John Pack, but those who've been around for a couple of years or more know that he used to be (and hopefully will resume being) one of VD's best and most prolific contributors and supporters. And of course, many of you will remember his article on "Diplomacy in the Dominican Republic" in VD #83.

Well, John, I'll let you judge whether quality has improved here along with the size. Ditto's fine now; just don't try too hard to read the first issue or two that I published using it. (Actually, they're all readable, but it takes an effort!)

Now, don't you dare leave this country again, or I promise you that me and all the other Doomsies will riot this time!

Yes, hobby, the Pack is back!))

One of my subbers recently asked me, why is a long-tongued lizard like Yoko Ono? Because they both live off of dead beetles.

From Edi Birsan:

COMMENTS ON "PLAYING TO WIN" ARTICLE IN VD #93

There seems to be a lot of confusion in the article between playing to "win" and simply being a good sport and "playing" the game. What you object to in the Monopoly player quitting is not correctly his failure to play to win but simply poor sportsmanship as you define sportsmanship. In fact the player that quits when he no longer has any hope of winning can be viewed as the extremist of the "Win Only School" though he does a great disservice to those of that philosophy.

When people sit down for a parlor game there is a silent assumption that most of us make: we play the best we can which hopefully will achieve a win under the rules of the game AND have a good time in the company of the other players. When victory is no longer a real possibility as perceived by the player, then most players expect him to continue to play as best he can and to add to the game's enjoyment; this is called good sportsmanship. However, this is not a single edged EDict, for it is also the responsibility of the remaining players (ie those who are heading to win) to contribute to making the game a vehicle of a good time for the company that you are with. In play you must not lose sight of the fact that enjoyment is not only a product of the game, it is the reason you started in the first place. It is easy to lose focus on a game and grind it down to a harsh contrast between "victory and defeat"; this abrasive style generates draws, frustration and stonewall alliances that run contrary to the achievement of the very "Win" that most of us desire. Therefore it's generally the better player that mixes in with his game strategy for victory some other tactics that scatter the focus of the other players and allows for several "planes" of play in the game for the enjoyment of all while at the same time pushing steadily along another plane to victory.

In your little Monopoly fiasco, you must share some of the blame for the failure of the game. From what little facts you present, it appears that you presented one player with a stonewall alliance and held no hope out for that alliance to end or for there to be alternative tactics that the player on the outs could appeal to. You in effect concentrated the focus of the game on a win/lose situation and did your best to define for the other player that there was no option for him but lose. Having done that, that the game should end is only natural for you have employed the tactic of elimination of all other tactics for the players and all other purposes of the game other than win/lose.

I hope that all this makes some sense without too many tangents strung along, and of course I leave it up to you to print it or not. If you do print it, please extend me the courtesy of printing it in whole without EDITing.

((Done, although I presume you don't object to the correction of a minor typo or two.

It seems that my article on the Monopoly game with "Brad" and "Jane" has provoked a fair bit of response. What you are saying is true to an extent: I had "Brad" backed into a corner from which he felt he could not possibly win. In that assumption he was wrong, as the "alliance" between me and "Jane" would have dissolved once "Brad" no longer had a clear advantage over us, but my mistake was in not making this fact clear to "Brad" until after he had quit in disgust. And when someone feels that there isn't a ray of hope, as "Brad" surely did, then what option does he have but to quit? (Well, several, actually, but "Brad" wasn't inclined to take any of them since he felt that his "ray of hope" was being denied unfairly.)

To the newer hobbyists in the audience: Edi Birsan is a very highly respected Diplomacy player with years and years of experience in the postal hobby. It's my distinct pleasure to welcome him aboard. Hope you enjoy your stay as a Dooms, Edi!))

From Charo Edison (4/27/84):

Dear Bruiser,

I've been back in Colorado now for over a month, and I've been made aware of one thing: Colorado weather changes even faster than I remember. I woke up the other day and it was beautiful; not a cloud in the sky, about 63°F at 7:00 a.m. and getting warmer. By noon, it was about 68°, but the wind had picked up, and clouds were pouring over Pikes Peak, our local "weather-maker". At 2:30 p.m., it started to rain. The temperature was dropping 10° every hour. Around 7:00 p.m., the rain changed to snow. We wound up with about 2 ft. in 24 hours. Two days later, it was 65°, and all the snow was gone. Ah, Colorado Springs in the spring. Truly a marvel. If only the wind would stop blowing.

Well, I'm going to Europe for a month or so, beginning May 20th. Ty is heading over around the 15th, and I'm flying to meet him in London, travelling with his cute sister Laura, who we call Lalla. We're going to spend about 10 days in England, then pick up a car in France and drive to the Netherlands for a few days, where we have a few friends. Then on into Germany to see castles and the wine country. If we still have time, we'll scoot over to Salzburg for a few days. Laura and I then fly back on June 15. I'm not sure what Ty's plans will be, or how he'll keep his position in RIGEL, but that's obviously his problem.

...don't you think it's about time you declared me the winner of the Subscription War? Thanks.

((Not at all. We Doomies have not yet begun to fight. Doomies, don't let him win so easily -- start sending me large amounts of money today!

Your discussion of Pikes Peak brings back memories from a 77-day trip around the country that I and two friends took in 1976. Pikes Peak was one of our stops. We took the cog railway to the summit, from where we had a terrific view of Colorado Springs. On a clear day (which ours wasn't) I hear that one can see all the way to Kansas. And you aren't kidding about the Colorado weather, either; the only time on our trip that it snowed was in late July, while we were on the top of Mt. Evans (at 14,260 feet, the highest paved road in the world, I believe). It flurried briefly while we were there. Ah, the West...

Enjoy Europe!))

From Kathy Byrne (5/1/84, excerpt):

Dear Bruce,

Well at least I tried to do the crossword puzzle -- enclosed is the mess I made of it! I must admit however that some of your clues left a lot to be desired. And you are right when you say -- you shouldn't try to make a living at it. If you do, you might find yourself on a permanent diet of cat food!

Thanks for the ballot for the Runestone Poll, however Gary's was much better -- so I'll use his. At least Gary's had some form of alphabetical listing for lazy people such as myself to start from.

Speaking of lazy, would you please get new return address labels! I hate having to go back & look up addresses!

...Well, I just wanted to drop you a quick note -- I'm trying to clear up all the letters that I owe before I leave for AZ on Friday! That way I'll only be about 200 behind upon my return. I'm taking my dip break now -- figure to get a head start on the rest of you!

((Thanks for a nice letter, and also the post card from Arizona. Ah, the West...

My "Albany" return address stickers are finally running out, either with this issue or next, so then I'll switch over to the "Dalton" stickers. Fair enough? I'm just a bit too cheap to throw out the old ones. Being Jewish has its advantages!



You're right, of course, about the crossword puzzle -- there were four errors as of last count (not three as I've stated elsewhere in this issue). The following words were all misspelled: Leprechauns, etc, Eire, and hamsters. Sorry 'bout that -- I've checked over this month's puzzle much more carefully. Clues were pretty poor too, eh? Yeah, in some cases. But you really ought to know that "Kathy's way of saying 'come in'" is enta!

Actually, those Doomies who sub to a lot of zines (like you) will probably find it much easier to use a ballot like Gary's which lists all the zines in the North American hobby. Mine could only accomodate 26 entries anyway. I can't (or don't, anyway) keep track of each and every zine and subzine the way Gary does.

You, lazy?? Hah!))

From Dave Kleiman (5/5/84):

Dear BRUK,

Yes, your eyes are not deceiving you -- this is a second letter (in the same envelope) to you from moi. What has the world come to?

After our phone conversation yesterday, I decided that although you had decided to "clear the air" about the latest Ed Wrobel comments in Politesse -- you know, the ones about me being a suppressed GM and you being the suppressor -- that it would be good for me to state my story myself. You will note that I have sent a copy of this to Mr. Wrobel.

OK, many moons ago, you ran a poll and one of the questions asked how the reader would have ruled in the "double-ordered/Wrobel" controversy. I believe I answered that I would have ruled as you had ruled. And you published in The Voice of Doom that I would have ruled as you had ruled. Fine. Now add that I commented in a recent letter to Ed Wrobel -- NOT A LETTER TO POLITESSE -- that I would have allowed Ed's orders to succeed. Now, in rereading the letter I wrote to Ed, it is obvious that I implied that you, Bruce, were indeed misrepresenting my views. I went on to say that I was in the Diplomacy hobby as a publisher to support games, NOT feuds, etc.

Today, in The Diplomat, I would have allowed Ed's orders to succeed as support orders. As I said to you on the phone, I believe that the intent was clear, and as long as the intent is clear, I accept the orders. Now, in The Voice of Doom, I would EXPECT the orders to fail and I am perfectly happy with the fact that you would indeed fail the order. That is your style, and there is a need in this hobby for different styles. The Diplomat is a publication dedicated to good games of postal Diplomacy, and in that light, I will continue to allow much latitude in the orders that I accept. I will also never run a letter/comment column, although I firmly believe that there is a need for such things. And I would add that although letters to VD's letter column (or any letter column) from me are rare, it is not because I am suppressed -- or any such nonsense -- but it is because I find that my time is limited, and I choose not to spend it writing letters to publishers.

Before I close this letter, I thought that I might tell a little story that might be entertaining to your readers. Round 1, National Diplomacy Tournament, Detroit, Michigan, July 1983. I drew Turkey; Ed Wrobel draws Austria; and Bruce Linsey draws Italy. I guess that no one would be surprised to know that I ended as a 14-center Turkey -- it seems that Italy and Austria were not the best of neighbors to each other. I enjoyed the game; so did Bruce and Ed...

((Of course we did. We're good friends despite all our differing views.

This letter was received after I'd already typed up my other comments on the matter elsewhere in this issue. Although Ed still hasn't confirmed that you're the GM he was referring to, I believe, given what you've told me, that that is probably the case. I'll let the readers judge for themselves, given the above, whether I misrepresented any views or twisted any arms on the matter.))

From Joan (5/7/84, excerpts):

Dear BRUX,

...I'll clip the coupon from the last VD and maybe even be able to collect my free haircut at the Hannacroix Barber Shop!

Loved The Lists of Doom. Samantha and I were pleased to be mentioned so often. In response to Larry Peery's question in VD #93, yes, I've seen a bullfight. It was during the summer of 1971 in Madrid, Spain. There were actually 4 bullfights -- four matadors, each with a different bull. Being an animal lover, I was appalled during the first fight to realize I was watching the killing of a bull. I think I closed my eyes during the first fight, but by the fourth fight I was cheering along with the crowd. Amazing how quickly one can get inured to cruelty. Thought about sending you prints of the slides of the bullfight, but one single picture can't represent the whole atmosphere, so you're not getting any.

Along that line, remember the Tom Lehrer song with the line about the driver running over a dog with such mastery that he (the driver) was awarded both ears and a tail?

That's it for now. You should hear from me in about a week with specific moose (to borrow a Berchian spelling) of our trip.

((See ya soon! And if you come in June, you'll be able to get a Hannacroix Haircut (somewhat similar to a Mohawk!).

I believe the song you're thinking of is "In Old Mexico". Like most of Tom Lehrer's songs, it's a riot.

I'm just as glad that you didn't send me a picture of the bullfight. Watching somebody who is innocent of any wrongdoing get brutally murdered isn't really my idea of entertainment.))

From Mike Barno (5/8/84, and labeled "neither for nor against publication"):

Hiya BRUX,

Sorry I haven't written in a century or two. I've been mostly lazy and trying to do some other things.

Things are generally decent. Not great, but my problems are in the past. I'll hopefully be picking up a programming job soon; not much in the way of other plans except MadCon. Working Saturday nights (& Fridays soon) at racetracks.

Proposed solution to the nuclear situation: use 'em all (including Chinese, British, etc.) to obliterate the White House, Pentagon, and Kremlin. Then the rest of us can go on and relax.

I think "Teething Troubles" from VD #76 belongs not merely on, but atop the list of best articles.

Boy, I'm proud -- caused a top controversy and still managed to have a "most positive influence"! Or was that my positive influence? (Tee hee, as Randy Ellis would say.)

Did Woody insert "pee" into hamsters?

As I suggested to Randolph, it makes more sense to add the scores attained by a zine in the two Poll lists to get a final ranking, rather than the rankings on the two lists, so that a hundredth-of-a-point difference is not elevated to equal status as a two-point difference between consecutively-ranked zines. I think, though, that the preference matrix and 8% trimmed mean make for a more meaningful poll. They also mean I'll have to put a lot more work into faking the results than I did in '82.

Good letter on snaks.

((Gosh, I'd all but forgotten about your fake results! As Randolph has by now pointed out in FSF, your idea presumes that the matrix scores range from 0 to 10, and this is not in fact the case. I would have agreed with you, though...

"Teething Troubles" should have been listed in the top 20 -- you're right.

I'm sure all your friends are glad to hear that times are better. Peace!))

From the friend to whom this issue has been dedicated...

LepreCon 1984

by Joan Extrom

There was no pot of gold marking the driveway, the dogs weren't painted green, I couldn't find any green beer, and the "Vanishing Leprechaun" mystery that BRUK sent for us to solve vanished mysteriously and still hasn't reappeared. But the green carpet was out (it's always out) and we did have 11 participants, lots of fun, and LOTS of food at the first annual LepreCon, held in beautiful (?) downtown (?) Wren, Oregon (a suburb of Philomath, which is a suburb of Corvallis, which is...oh, you get the idea) on the banks of the Mary's River.

Featured guests were Cathy Cunningham and Terry Tallman, who arrived from Seattle chauffeured by Ken's sister Ali. The rest of us were Oregonians. Besides Ken, me and Samantha, there were, from Eugene: fellow Doomis Mike Ehli, who does the FNORD subzine in Life of Monty; Michael Lee, a veteran of over 400 face-to-face Diplomacy games in the last 10 years; and Jim Bumpas, long-time pubber of Liberterrean, with his wife Linda and 7-week-old son. From Sheridan was Stephen Lee, who's been in the hobby quite a while and was involved in the "R-3" controversy in Retaliation (which I now understand from having read my back issues of VD). Last but not least was Vic Bucy, a friend of Tallman's who came all the way from Waldport on the coast just to watch for a few hours. Amazing.

Kingmaker, Risk, Can't Stop, Civilization, and Diplomacy -- both regular and gunboat -- were played. Partly because my position as hostess put other demands on my time and partly because I'm not an avid gamer and have no desire to sit for six hours playing a game, I participated only in the Dip games. They were, in fact, my first FTF games and more or less my first exposure to Diplomacy at all, since my postal game in Whitestonia is only up to fall '02. As Turkey in the regular game, I allied with Russia (Michael Lee) and he was a trustworthy game-long ally. Got off easy for my first game, didn't I? Gunboat was much more fun. I was Germany and acquired the nickname "Exterminator Extrom" for my aggressive tactics. The incident is recorded for posterity on a tape we made for Mark Luedl. I hope he realizes how valuable that tape may be some day.

I had been worried that people would get bored because we don't have a TV or stereo, but I underestimated the dedication of gamers who, I discovered, won't even stop a game in order to eat.

Terry Tallman was in rare form with his anti-BRUKian remarks. In response to Michael Lee's "Better king for a day than schmuuck for a lifetime" (comment during the Kingmaker game), he retorted, "Better a lifetime as a schmuuck than an evening with BRUK." Next he came up with "I'd rather have hemorrhoids than be a BRUKoid." Needless to say, the conversation rapidly deteriorated after that point. Terry just cannot accept the fact that I'm a loyal, screaming Doomis.

Saturday evening we placed a call to Paul Rauterberg. Mark Frush had told me that the MadLads would be at Paul's celebrating Paul's 30th birthday. Well, they were obviously partying (the obnoxious-sounding person in the background singing at the top of his lungs was none other than R-r-r-r-rusnak!) but it wasn't Paul's birthday and apparently he's already 30. However, since he'd been partying for 12 hours by the time we called, he graciously let us all gather around and sing "Happy Birthday" to him anyway. Also, Eric Ozog arrived in Milwaukee during the phone conversation, much to Cathy's delight.

Everyone left by 2pm Sunday, which is just as well, since Samantha's temperature was over 103° and she was sick for a week after that. So was Terry. All in all, we had a great time and plan to do it again next year. We have to -- I'm too lazy to take down the decorations. So save the weekend of March 15-17, 1985, and come to LepreCon II featuring -- GARY COUGHLAN!!

((Sounds good to me! Thank to Joan for letting me print this article for free, in exchange for which I get to take her out to dinner when she comes to Dalton in a few weeks. And, thanks to Terry Tallman for the kind words.))

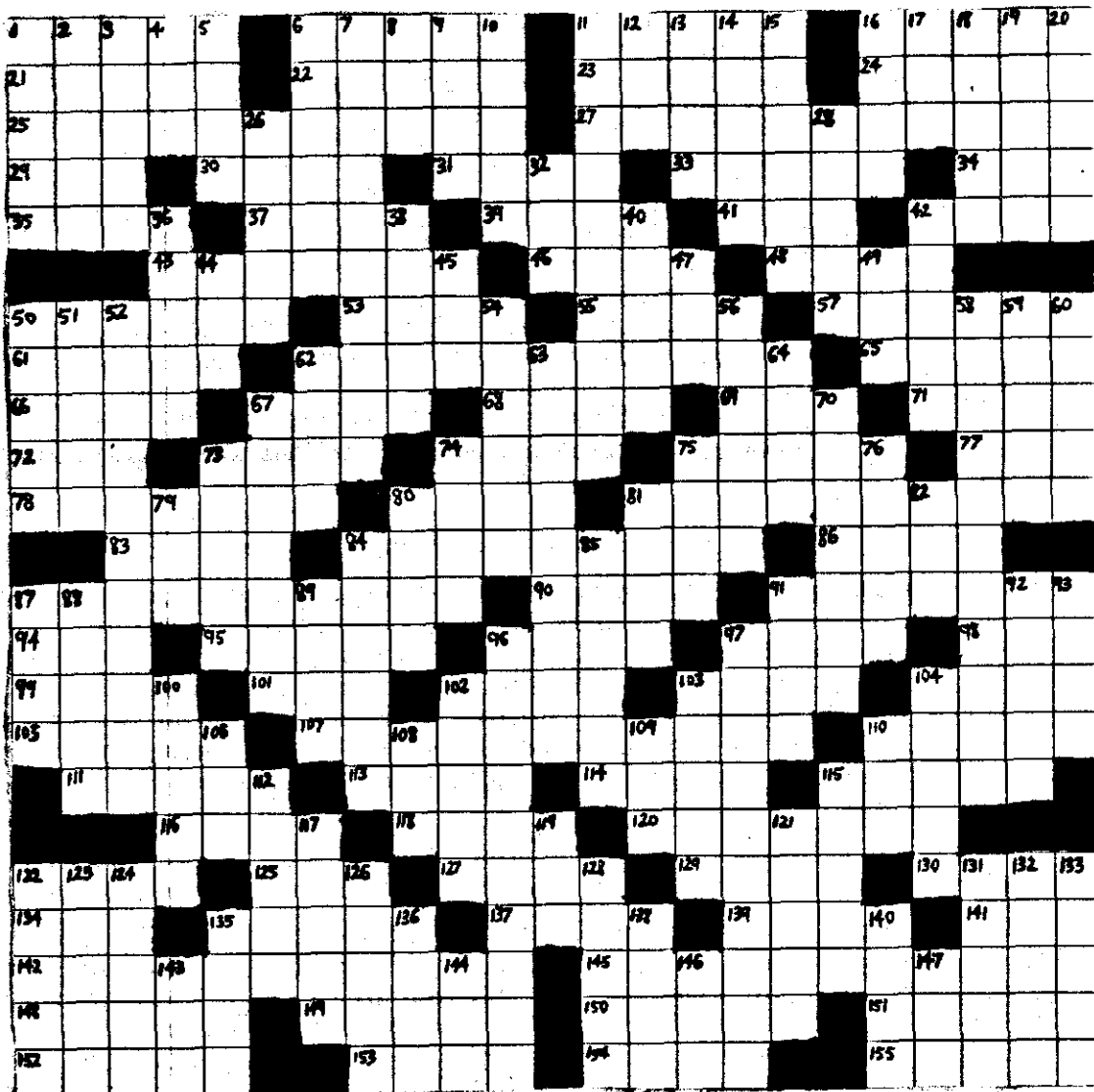
Dippy Crossword #2

Since the first Dippy Crossword puzzle contained three errors, I felt obligated to compose a second one, this time with no mistakes. First prize is 5 free issues. Second is two freebees. Deadline is June 8, 1984. Go for it!

## ACROSS

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Michalski's voice                                 | 77. You to me or me to you  | 137. Eurus Isle   |
| 6. Southern city                                     | 78. Churns or foams   | 139. He was <u>Born to Dip's</u> pubber                         |
| 11. A missed build will often come back to you       | 80. Mellow Yellow or SIRIUS   | 141. "Wizard of Dip" wine                                       |
| 16. Deceive the gamesmaster                          | 81. Large province  | 142. Land space on the board to which no army ever moves        |
| 21. Thick skin                                       | 83. Whitelaw ____, the diplomat                                       | 145. Russia's opening fleets could bounce here in S'04          |
| 22. Nonreactive                                      | 84. Prolific dippy pubber   | 148. Asian country  |
| 23. Memphis quadruped                                | 86. Time enough for two FTF game-years                                | 149. Sounding device for location                               |
| 24. One who __ supply centers can't play (2 wds.)    | 87. Home of VD's literary war   | 150. Marsupial feature  |
| 25. Birdsnake  | 90. Galicia, to Russia  | 151. Island country   |
| 27. Wrobel's specialty                               | 91. Parfrog, Berkraut, Rowwop,  | 152. Laugh scornfully   |
| 29. Baseball stat                                    | 94. Onlus (abbr)  | 153. Sikkim is here   |
| 30. Hindu figure                                     | 95. How Krud might spell "deans"                                      | 154. <u>oan namreG ro ssisS</u>                                 |
| 31. Missile housing                                  | 96. Postal Diplomacy's Appalling Greed                                | 155. Germany might order A Tyopie in F '01 __ support           |
| 33. 2 1/2 railroads                                  | 97. Turkey to Russia, in a steamroller                                |   |
| 34. __ Survivors, abbr.                              | 98. Barents or Aegean   | DOWN  |
| 35. Slender, rigid part of a plant or animal         | 99. Sound heard at a ByrneCon if no people make noise                 | 1. Nixon's downfall   |
| 37. North Atlantic In Peril                          | 101. Devour the FRIG  | 2. Wrobel might like wred meat this way                         |
| 39. Ten thousand minus two vowels                    | 102. German title   | 3. Is rodent, first person                                      |
| 41. France doesn't want England here in '01          | 103. What Feary wants us to pay (2 wds)                               | 4. F Mid-__ (amb)   |
| 42. Urinates   | 104. Stubborn __ ox (2 wds)   | 5. Liquor   |
| 43. Victorious Doonie                                | 105. Banks  | 6. Headgear (pl.)   |
| 46. Bauxite and hematite                             | 107. HyperEo designer   | 7. Loyal, screaming readers of a Great Neck zine                |
| 48. Ark builder                                      | 110. Out of the way   | 8. Ionian is in it  |
| 50. Joan and Alex                                    | 111. Tease  | 9. What ERUK hopes to remain in <u>High Plains Conso</u> (abbr) |
| 53. Greek cheese                                     | 113. Night garment  | 10. ERUK visits Alex for __ (2 wds)                             |
| 55. __ and died (2 wds)                              | 114. Biblical figure  | 11. Pain in the ass   |
| 57. Boasts about a victory                           | 115. Oaklyn or Winsome  | 12. Deadwood's sister   |
| 61. If Mark Lew were a she-penguin, (s)he'd lay this | 116. Rip  | 13. Siberia, Russia, et. al.                                    |
| 62. Fargo golf touneys                               | 118. Plastic stars and anchors might do this, but never wooden blocks | 14. Deviates from norm because I am in it                       |
| 65. Surrounded by whiskey or bread (2 wds)           | 120. Lived to a ripe old age (2 wds)                                  | 15. Ohio zine   |
| 66. Italian river                                    | 122. Say it ain't so  | 16. Sonny's ex  |
| 67. Pudge and Lepra                                  | 125. __ in, to surround   | 17. A chunkle   |
| 68. __ Whitney (pl.)                                 | 127. Ansoff likes to __   | 18. Aside, beside, seaside, decide, __                          |
| 69. A chortle  | 129. Long time periods  | 19. Mrs. Denver   |
| 71. Beat without t                                   | 130. Part of the Med  | 20. Roman garments  |
| 72. Speed up an engine                               | 134. Simon Billionness will say this soon                             | 26. Austria might capture it in '01                             |
| 73. Army beds  | 135. Issues of Woody's zine?  | 28. Knight or Ellis, to Reilly                                  |
| 74. Produced offspring                               |   | 32. A dippy gulf  |
| 75. Might be worn by Cathy or Alex, but never Pudge  |   | 36. Barno to Alex, when she's in Spain                          |

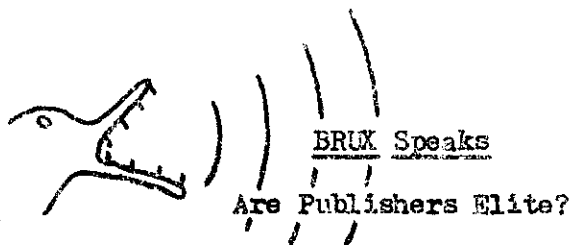
- 38. Issues of Jane's zine
- 40. Ocean trenches
- 42. What you do with an order change on the night before deadline
- 44. Two Englands and a Germany
- 45. Russo-Turkish Ongy
- 47. Mrs. Halverstadt
- 49. Cassius Clay
- 50. Arnett and Masters
- 51. Dick and Gary rarely do this
- 52. Glover's pub
- 54. Consumed without cooking
- 56. Pakistan Nepal Aden Romania Venezuela Russia
- 58. Germany or Russia can have this in '01, but Italy can't
- 59. Extra "o" added by mistake makes this what it wasn't
- 60. Asian capital
- 62. Grab \_\_\_\_\_
- 63. Hannacroix author
- 64. KaneKon attendees went here in '83
- 67. Matter in an unflushed toilet at a collage for girls
- 70. Masters or Highfield
- 73. Phyllis or Samantha
- 74. Julie and Cathy have good ones
- 75. \_\_\_\_\_ BRUK, This is not an antelope, so don't get surprised...
- 76. Description of a quarry
- 79. Golfer's item
- 80. Pearson's nickname
- 81. England might move here in '01
- 82. Without centers
- 84. BRUK, till he buys a house
- 85. Acquires knowledge
- 87. \_\_\_\_\_ cannot be captured by anyone in '01
- 88. Neon or krypton, e.g.
- 89. Harvest
- 91. Musical symbol
- 92. Carefully scans a zine
- 93. Vicki \_\_\_\_\_



- 96. Texas zine
- 97. Dipdon's best writer, probably
- 100. Olsen and Hamlin are very \_\_\_\_\_
- 102. Benih, Kane, and BRUK
- 103. Five vowels, all different
- 104. \_\_\_\_\_ from that
- 106. Summer in Paris
- 108. Thomsen or Swider
- 109. Pitiful
- 110. 34 centers
- 112. Lake in western U.S.
- 115. CQUON - 2
- 117. Behinds
- 119. Metal
- 121. \_\_\_\_\_ Liney, in Knight's press
- 122. Orbs
- 123. What happened when Wrobel captured all of the other countries' home centers

- 124. Absence of anger (2 vds)
- 126. Hawaii volcano, possible abbr.
- 128. Walks awkwardly
- 131. Humorous action
- 132. Science Fiction Invitational Tournament of Utah
- 133. Without words
- 135. Russian player
- 136. Frenchman's solo win is accomplished \_\_\_\_\_ an ally?
- 138. Enormous pussy
- 140. Dot, var. in spelling
- 143. Rectilinear letter
- 144. North Atlantic Intrusion
- 146. Dutch Antilles, abbr.
- 147. England doesn't want France here in '01

HINT: The puzzle can be solved most easily by filling in the letters.



BRUX Speaks

## Are Publishers Elite?

Is there a caste system within the structure of the postal Diplomacy hobby, or are all dippers created equal? Should some of the hobby's literature be restricted to an "elite" few, or should it all be made available to the hobby at large?

A discussion on precisely this topic has been taking place recently in Dick Martin's new zine, House of Lords. Since many of you may never even have heard of HOL before, allow me to digress just for a moment and explain exactly what it is. In Dick Martin's own words, from issue #4, HOL is "a zeen by, for and about publishers and publishing, GMs and GMing. It runs no games, and is available to publishers and GMs only." (This restriction was changed in the following issue, but I'll get to that shortly.)

In House of Lords #4, several of these publishers and GMs had comments regarding this policy. Most of them were very supportive of it. For example...

John Caruso: "HOL is not an elitist group or a segregated group as everyone seems to view it. I see it as a forum for a certain group of people. Anyone can GM or put out a one page flyer and call it a zeen and be able to participate. Unlike segregation which denies people -- HOL states how you are entitled. If this was elitist, only the top fifty or so GMs and publishers would be allowed to enter. You have done it in a very fair way -- past and present GMs and publishers, and since anyone can GM or publish, anyone can take part. That's something these people who call this an 'elitist group' fail to recognize."

Konrad Baumeister: "My own opinion is that only pubbers should get it ((the zine)), simply because it makes the zeen elite, and why not feel elite if we can?"

Rod Walker: "The most vocal and opinionated people in the hobby tend to get into publishing anyway, so this 'restriction' isn't all that restrictive. I would say, however, that you would be well advised to consider letting non-pubbers subscribe. Two reasons: one is that there's nothing secret about what's been said here; the other is that some non-pubbers are interested in publishing and it would be good for them to read some of these discussions. But it seems a very good idea to restrict input to those who've 'been there.'"

Steve Langley: "As to the elitist controversy; it's your zeen, run it the way you want to. I imagine if there exists a 'very interested' non-publisher with great insights, etc., that he will be publishing soon in any case."

And Dick Martin, responding to Baumeister: "The objective here is not to exclude the dregs, but include the most active/experienced."

Well! I've been publishing and GMing for well over four years, and I've never felt that I'm a member of some "elite" group. Now, I will agree that Dick has every right to publish his zine any way he likes -- that's not the point. The point, it seems to me, is why be so restrictive to begin with? Maybe it is true that the topics covered in House of Lords are of interest only to publishers and GMs, and maybe it isn't. But why not let the members of the hobby decide for themselves what interests them? Why not at least give everyone a choice? I submit that Dick and others might be surprised at the level of interest many hobbyists have regarding matters pertaining to GMing and publishing. Case in point: a while back I ran two round-table type discussions in VD, regarding "Gamesmasters and the Telephone" and the treatment of off the record material. Both of these discussions drew extensive comment from people who were neither GMs nor publishers. And while I admit that some of the topics covered in HOL do not strike me as of particular interest to non-publishers (e.g. the discussion of filing systems), it just seems to me that the non-publishing members

of the hobby are capable of making their own decisions about what they want to read.

If I may answer a few of the comments above (oh boy! I may?), it seems to me that the distinction between something which "denies people" and something which "states how you are entitled" is like distinguishing a glass half empty from one half full. Making a zine available only to publishers and GMs is exactly the same thing as denying it to those who do neither, just as saying "you may vote only if you aren't black" is equivalent to "you may not vote if you are black." So the distinction John Caruso is trying to make above is in my opinion no distinction at all, but rather an exercise in semantics. And his argument that anyone can GM or publish is true, but irrelevant -- who's going to start GMing or publishing just so he can have the right to sub to House of Lords?

Similarly, I disagree with Rod Walker's suggestion to "restrict input to those who've 'been there'." While perhaps Dick might well want to sort through all the comments received and pick out those most suitable for print, I'll bet the mortgage (and win, I assure you) that some of the most cogent commentary about GMing and publishing would come from those who have tried neither -- people like Nelson Heintzman, Jeff Noto, and Bob Olsen, whose inexperience in these matters didn't preclude their very informed and intelligent contributions to the afore-mentioned round-table discussions in VD. By denying people like this the right to contribute, Dick is losing out on some potentially stimulating and fresh ideas -- and so are his readers.

Langley's comment is just not always true -- refer to the people cited in the above paragraph, and many others, as examples of those with a great deal of insight, but for whatever reasons have not taken up publishing or GMing.

And Martin's reference to "the dregs" perhaps gives a very revealing clue about his reasons for imposing these restrictions to begin with -- if you poor common folk are only "the dregs" of the hobby, well, then, maybe you're just not good enough to participate in these discussions of sacred topics by elite publishers.

To the rescue of "the dregs" comes Mark Berch: "Seriously, if you think that, for example, that only GM/pubbers are interested in GMing ethics (which deals largely with how GMs treat their players), then from such a wrong premise, wrong conclusions flow." And he goes on to point out how one of the letters in a previous issue, written by a publisher (Kathy Byrne), could well have been written word for word by a non-GMing non-publisher.

So what came of this discussion? In HOL #5, Dick revised his policy, saying "Sorry to puncture the elite aura, kids, but I just couldn't stand the aggravation any more." The new policy? HOL is now available to anyone, BUT publishers or GMs can get it by writing for it, by trading for it, or by paying a dollar an issue; non-GMing non-publishers have to pay \$2.50 an issue to get it -- there are no alternatives for "the dregs". And to me, this is pretty darn close to the same old policy: \$2.50 is an exorbitant price to pay for any zine (sez he, who shells out that amount for DW and charges \$3.00 for a copy of his fourth annish as a back issue), and with all due respect to House of Lords (which contains a good deal of interesting material), it simply does not approach \$2.50 per issue in value. (#5 was 18 pages long; I haven't seen any issues since.) The point of all this is not to chide Dick for charging as much as he does (that is every publisher's right), but to point out that he really hasn't changed his policy all that much, except for those non-GMing non-publishers who wish to pay the truly astronomical price for a sub.

It all boils down to the same thing. The hobby's "elite" -- the publishers and GMs -- are allowed to sub to and contribute to this forum, while "the dregs" for all practical purposes are not. It's Dick's zine and he can run it any way he chooses. But I personally see no value to his restrictions, and in fact I view it as destructive to erect phony barriers such as that which House of Lords seems to have constructed between "the elite" and "the dregs". To my way of thinking, we're all equal. If you readers are "the dregs", then, well, I'm proud to be amongst you. The fact that I happen to publish does not make me superior to anyone else. Any opinions from "the dregs" out there? From anyone?

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*Rad - see p. 4 for my comments re the  
 NFA controversy.*

*BRUX*