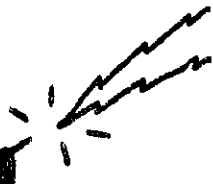


Gawd, BRUX! Not another issue of...



# THE VOICE OF DOOM

#96

June 12, 1984

Circulation: 121

by BRUX

## Important Announcement

On October 2, 1984, The Voice of Doom will celebrate its fifth anniversary by publishing issue #100. On that date, the zine will be five years old to the day. I am hoping to publish an issue that you, my friends, will remember for a long, long time. A very special issue that we will all take pride in producing.

However, I will need plenty of help in producing this issue. I will need contributions, especially original articles, from you people. I am looking for well-written material, preferably about some aspect of the game or hobby of Diplomacy, though good articles on other topics will be accepted as well. Cartoons relating to Diplomacy will be more than welcome, of course, as will anything else of interest that you can contribute. I have already begun writing for the issue, but clearly I will need a lot of support from you readers if it is to turn out as well as I hope. Let's go for quality rather than quantity -- I doubt that the issue will approach my fourth anniversary in size, but I do want good stuff.

Contributions should be sent in by the end of August, preferably, though I'll accept them later if need be. It will make my job much easier if the bulk of the material gets here early, that's all.

I will of course pay the usual rate for your original articles -- three free issues per printed page. But I'm hoping that you will be "paid" in another, more meaningful, way as well. I'm hoping that after you receive the issue, you will read it and feel proud that you had a hand in producing it. And I'll accept contributions starting now.

The cost of this publication to you, my subscribers, will be 50¢.

Consider this a personal plea, then, from a friend. You Doomies are very special to me. Is Voice of Doom special enough to you that you'll go out of your way to help make its fifth anniversary/100th issue a really great one? This I promise you: if you readers will do your part, I'll do mine at this end. And together, as a team, we will publish an issue we can all cherish.

Now, let's go and do it!

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The Voice of Doom is a journal of postal Diplomacy published every now and then by Bruce Lansey, 73 Ashuelot 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 July 6, 1984.

## Hobbytalk

2

Once again a huge volume of really fascinating poop has found its way into my mailbox, and a whole lot of that is worthy of comment, both critical and otherwise. Actually, I think this is pretty neat, just sitting back in VD and summarizing the various goings-on in the hobby as I see them. A few people (very few, fortunately) seem to have taken offense at the fact that I criticized so many zines and people last issue, but at least this way when I say something good about someone or something you'll know I'm sincere about it. Besides which, my criticisms aren't generally meant to tear others down, but rather to offer suggestions on how they might improve. And of course, I enjoy receiving such criticism myself. To me, the ideal state of affairs would be if I could criticize every zine in the hobby, and in turn find myself roundly criticized in every zine the following month. I would enjoy the resulting debates and discussions, but alas, this shall never come to pass anyway, so why am I prattling on about it?

Anyway, so what's going on? Raging Main is a good zine which is still improving with each issue. James Woodson has just put out his first anniversary issue, nine pages long, but with the size print he uses, that's perhaps 12 or more of my pages. James printed a nice plug for the RIGEL press, quoting Rod Walker as saying that "The best press occurs when player-created characters begin to move through serial game-related situations and interact as between the press written by one player and that written by others." James adds that the press written by the RIGEL players falls into this category. James Woodson, PO Box 18645, Corpus Christi, TX 78418-0645.

The latest Cathy's Ramblings features one of the funniest things I've ever read, a classic article about a trip across much of the United States in a car that was reluctant to crawl ten feet without breaking down somehow. Write to Cathy Cuning, 1526 N. Lawler Ave., Chicago, IL 60651, and request a copy of the issue containing "The Little Car that Couldn't". You'll die laughing. GR reminds me somewhat of an East Coast Clique zine in style, but there are two major differences: a total absence of the vicious backbiting that is a staple of some ECC zines, and a high degree of British participation. Both of these are pluses in my book, and the zine is just, well, downright pleasant to read.

I nearly had a heart attack upon receiving Graustark #491 a few days ago. First of all, the issue was numbered #91, which sort of threw me for a loop before I recognized the typo. But of far more importance, 1981IQ just ended, listing Italy as having gone out in Spring 1911. Maybe I've been doing something wrong all these years after all, but in VD countries don't go out in the Spring of any year. They can only be eliminated in the Fall (oh, all right, or the Autumn, for you nitpickers). Supply centers don't change hands in the Spring. Even if a player has his last unit destroyed in the Spring, and has no chance of building any new ones, he is still in the game until someone occupies his last center in a Fall turn. It's curious, then, to see John Boardman listing a country as going out in the Spring.

The same issue of Graustark also contains an article by Allan B. Calhaver on Avalon Hill's new Diplomacy computer program. Allan lists several advantages of the program, one of which I find really hard to swallow. He says that "If you don't have seven people, the computer will play as many countries as you wish, though not necessarily strongly." I think that Allan would be more accurate if he had said "orders the units for" instead of "will play". Most of playing is in fact negotiating, not submitting orders. It is for this reason that I firmly believe that no computer will ever really play Diplomacy. Other than that, it's a really good article, and I'd certainly be interested in checking out the program myself. Graustark is a very reliable and at times entertaining zine, too, and although I strongly disagree with some of Boardman's GMing procedures (such as typing up the games in advance and then putting late order changes elsewhere in the zine, thereby possibly revealing the orders that a player might have been thinking about using but didn't actually use), it is still one of the best zines for postal play and I recommend it highly. John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11226, Great Big United States of America.

I just realized I've been doing something wrong: giving addresses of all the zines I've been discussing. Hell, this isn't supposed to be a series of plugs; it's just supposed to be a (hopefully) entertaining discussion of what's happening around the hobby, so from hereon in you won't see the addresses of any zines (since addresses hardly qualify as entertaining reading) unless they're really spectacular.

73 Ashuelot St., Apt. 3, Dalton, MA 01226.

In Diplomacy Digest #81, Mark Berch has a good write-up of Marycon, though he errs in saying that Dave Lincoln won Best Austria. As is reported elsewhere this ish (of VD), Dave won a game as Austria (by concession at 14 centers) and won the whole tourney, but he did not win Best Austria. Had he known that someone else was going to beat 14 centers, I'm sure he would have played on to an 18-center win. DD has lately been featuring very fancy lettering for its titles and some gaudy linear separators, a feature I personally dislike as it destroys my image of the zine as one that is "all content and no form", as someone once put it.

NMRI 48 (they don't use the ground sign as an abbreviation for "number" in Great Britain) features a big, hairy vagina on the front cover; obviously just Brian Creese's attempt to beat out perennial victor Greatest Hits in the British Zine Poll this year. I like vaginas, but I must admit that I was a bit taken aback to find one on the cover of NMRI. NMRI is one of a number of very good British zines that compare favorably to most North American zines. Mark Berch once told me that the average British zine is much better than the average North American product, and I disagreed at the time, but now I'm not so sure. Europa Express is still my favorite, but I think the next four on my list would be British -- Denver Glont, NMRI, The Acolyte, and Greatest Hits all outclass any other zines from this side of the ocean. Actually I'm still not sure if I agree with Mark since the British zines I get represent the cream of their crop while I get some of the junkier North American zines, but I must admit that he may have a good point.

Latest issue of Home of me Erave complains about Derek Caws' recent claim in War and Peace 16 that "...Homosexuality can cause harm to other members of the public, both mentally and physically. Hence in many ways it is similar to rape (deviant and harmful). Therefore I suggest that we should treat the two acts in a similar way in law..." Geoff Challenger then goes on to say that he has cut his trade with Derek: "Well wouldn't you cancel trades?"

Um, not really, at least not without a better reason than this. So Derek doesn't know what he's talking about when it comes to homosexuality. Big deal. I've dealt with ignorance and prejudice like Derek's in the past, and undoubtedly will be forced to do so in the future. The answer isn't to stop dealing with the guy, but rather to persuade him in a rational manner that he's being a jerk. If that fails, just sit back and relax in the knowledge that he's looking foolish, not you. Though I must admit disappointment that attitudes like Derek still exist in this day and age.

Steve Hutton has promised to write me a letter on this, so maybe I needn't mention it here, but it appears I erred last issue in stating that his attack on Walker was provoked by Walker's dispute with Caruso. Steve assures me and the rest of his readers that the two events were entirely independent, so I stand corrected on that point. I still think that his criticism of Rod was absurd beyond all reason, though.

Some recent discussion has taken place concerning whether certain of the hobby's zines are in fact "hobby custodial projects". Apparently Rod Walker referred to DW as such, and he also prominently promotes Diplomacy Digest as the "Hobby Reprint Service". Well...OK. Then Europa Express is the Hobby Custodial Project for linking Europeans and North Americans, VD is the Hobby Letter Column Service, Cheesecake is the Warehouse Project, and so on. Instead of all the fancy labels, why not just refer to DW and DD as what they really are -- very good zines, but zines nonetheless. "Hobby Custodial Project", indeed.

Ozymoron 33, just in, shows an Italian player winning by concession with only 9 supply centers! Boy, those Europeans are strange!

I just reread what I wrote about DW and DD on the last page, and don't want to leave anyone with the wrong impression. For the record, Rod Walker does more for this hobby than anyone else (although Berch, Davis, and Coughlan are all very close) and apparently many people agree with me, since Rod was voted the Don Miller Award for outstanding service last year. I for one am very grateful to Rod for all the help he has given me and many others over the years, and although I disagree with him on certain issues, I still feel, as do many, that there are none finer in this hobby. And I have no qualms about saying so. Put that in your Hobby Custodial Project and smoke it!

Latest issue of North Sealth, West George shows "Bernie Oaklyn" Tretick signed up for a game, so if you want into a game with a proven cheater, here's your chance.

Europa Express #34 contains a very cogent essay by Pat Conlon on why the Grenada invasion was necessary. Not to save the students, but to preserve our oil shipping routes from Venezuela to the U.S. I hadn't heard this argument before, and I'm curious to see what kinds of rebuttal the European readers might come up with. Maybe we shouldn't fight for the security of our oil supply? Hmmm.

In Thirty Miles of Bad Road #22, Mark Luedi announces that he will no longer give out game results over the phone. One of the reasons is that he finds it a bit irksome to receive a letter from a fellow player which was clearly written after a call for results (i.e. it arrives too early to have been written after the writer received the results by mail.). While of course I don't question Mark's right to run his games as he chooses (and he does give other, more valid reasons), I find this particular reason rather silly -- after all, it's not Mack (the GM) who would be receiving these "early letters", so why should he worry about it? Whoops, there go my brownie points!

Dimmer Williams informs me that Straight From the Dimmer's Mouth is going to be erratic for the duration of the summer, due primarily to a change in his job situation, but that he is running his games separately. I had called because I was worried that something might have happened (Jim and Marti have had a rough go of it lately), but Jim sez that his subbers shouldn't worry.

Keith Sesler still hasn't sent me my sub refund for Manifest Destiny, and stands in imminent danger of losing his VD sub if he doesn't send it within the next four weeks.

Ter-ran #92 has Kathy Byrne and Charles Byrne signed up for the same game. GM Steve Heinowski wisely inquired whether they are related, and finding out that they are not, agreed to place them both in a game together. But then he goes on to say that one of them must take England and the other Austria. I disagree with this decision, on two counts. First of all, if they aren't related, then there is no need to impose even this restriction on them -- they should be treated just as are all the other players, and that includes the opportunity to play any country. Secondly, if they were related (or geographically close, or whatnot), then assigning one England and the other Austria is no solution to the problem. In Diplomacy, all countries interact with all other countries, and while England/Austria are unlikely to cooperate at the game's outset, it's not so improbable that they will act together later on. By the way, don't anybody go back and read the KEPLER gamestart in VD #28; I was young and foolish then anyway.

The above discussion about results via phone brings to mind a recent conversation I had with Nelson Heintzman, who opined that I must be some sort of maschist for allowing my players to submit orders or receive adjudications by phone on a 24-hour basis. I'm afraid that I don't understand Nelson's reasoning, though. The way I see it, if I agree to GM a game for a group of players, then Bruce Linsey the GM has no business allowing the personal life of Bruce Linsey the Person to affect his games. While I won't tolerate habitual abuses, I see no reason why I shouldn't occasionally accommodate a player who, unable to call at a "reasonable" hour, finds himself in the position of having to call during the wee hours. I'm just thankful, though, that none of the RIGEL players called and forced me to read 32 pages of press over the phone at 3 AM. I'd have done it, but probably would have been mildly annoyed. My record in this regard is 2 pages of CENTAURUS press given out by phone at 3 AM, but that was years ago, and the player dropped out a season or two later anyway.

Recent issues of Festungs Hof have carried editorials by Bob Howerton on what he feels is wrong with the Scouting movement. As a former Scout myself, I have my own gripes with the movement, though they are not quite the same as Bob's. I feel that in bending over backwards to accomodate inner city boys, the leaders of the Scouting movement have cheapened the experience for others. It is no longer nearly as difficult for a kid to reach Eagle as it once was. He just doesn't have to learn to do nearly as much, because the requirements have been eased considerably, in the hopes of making it possible for inner city kids to have a shot at advancing.

All of this would be fine and noble if the Scouting movement were specifically founded to allow for boys from all walks of life, without any discrimination whatsoever, but such is not the case. Scouting was founded, among other things, as a vehicle by which boys could learn to live with nature. The requirements for the ranks and many of the merit badges reflected this. The fact that some boys are unfortunate enough never to have a chance to experience camping is a poor excuse for changing the whole nature of the organization. And, I can even show where Scouting specifically does attempt to exclude some boys: when I was in the Scouts (and I suspect still to this day), you had to believe in god. I read once of a boy who was turned down for the rank of Eagle because he was an atheist (though if I remember correctly, he eventually got it anyway, but had to really munge his words on the topic to do so). So Scouting discriminates against boys who happen not to believe in god. (I cringe to think what would have happened had I had an Eagle Board of Review -- I was an agnostic with strong athiestic tendencies even back then, and like now, I was a straight-from-the-hip shooter, so I probably would have been turned down). But this serves to illustrate my point that Scouting does not try to accomodate all boys equally. It is folly then for it to try, especially at the expense of teaching boys about the outdoors and nature.

Actually I have often thought of getting involved in the Scouting movement again, as my presence and influence would be a more positive way of changing things than is sitting back and bitching about it in VD, but time's just a bit short for that, isn't it? Maybe someday, though. Despite its faults, Scouting is a marvelous organization and I miss it greatly. I learned a lot and made many good friends. But enough of this.

In Thirty Miles of Bad Road #21, Nelson Heintzman states that "Buffalonians are not 'east coasters'...They consider themselves Western New Yorkers and a part of the Great Lakes communities." I could not agree more. Midwestern cities in general are hulking, ugly, smelly affairs, and Buffalo fits that description quite nicely. This is not to imply that east coast cities are any better, but there is a distinct difference between the two, and Buffalo is definitely in the Midwest. Now, if you want to talk about nice cities, then we're talking Texas or Arizona or California...

...which brings me to the next topic. Recent Andulus have featured a running debate on whether New York is a better state than California or vice versa. As one of the few people in the hobby who has lived in both, I am qualified to rule on the matter. California wins, hands down. New York's climate, scenery, and people don't even begin to compare to California's. I always get irritated when I see those "I ♥ New York" stickers that infest the entire Northeast. What the hell is there to love about New York? I got out (into Massachusetts -- bleccch!) so it can't even claim to be the home of VD any more. My favorite city is San Diego, by the way, due to its outstanding climate, among other things.

This reminds me of a recent press release in RIGEL, claiming that Indiana is a much better state than Idaho. Baloney. Indiana is a flat, boring, quintessentially midwestern, dreary place. Idaho has some of the cleanest air, friendliest people, and most spectacular scenery I've ever seen. The two don't even compare. Why am I being so dogmatic about this?

Steve Knight has asked me to announce that he will be starting up an International Zine Exchange in conjunction with one of the British hobbyists very shortly. What this means is that if you want to sub to a British zine, you simply send Steve your money, and he will take care of converting it to British funds, and send it to the

guy running it at the British end (I forget who Steve said it is), who in turn will send it in to the publisher of your choice. It works exactly in reverse for British hobbyists who wish to sub to American zines. The formal announcement should be in the mails shortly, undoubtedly with a much better explanation than I just gave. I am indeed pleased to know that this service will be offered, as it will facilitate the trans-Atlantic interaction that I feel is so valuable to the hobby. Those of you who enjoy reading good zines would be well advised to check out a few British pubs once this service gets rolling. But you'll be hearing more about it soon. And I might add that, at least at this end, the service could not be in more competent hands.

And while I've got British zines on the platform again, I might want to mention what has to be just about the most imaginative issue of a zine ever published: NMR! 50. I listened to Eric Kane's copy on the way down to Marycon. That's right -- listened. The issue was a half-hour long cassette tape; very, very clever. It has to be heard to be believed. Congratulations to Brian Creese and Ken Bain. But that spot with the guy getting a shave was disgusting!

The Acolyte 57 contains a list of nominees for the Rusty Bolts Awards. Listed as a nominee for Hobby Heart-throb is Kathryn Tamlyn, who gets my vote. Simon Billionness was telling me, when I met him a couple of months ago, that Kat has a practice of sending all the men in the British hobby into a tizzy by giving them a "cuddle" whenever she meets them. Among the British she is famous for her cuddles. This alone almost convinced me to take a vacation in England later this year, a possibility I had been considering anyway, but will have to scrap for lack of funds. Still, I don't know that there is anyone the equivalent of Kat Tamlyn in the States; Cathy Cuming is also listed as a nominee but I didn't get a cuddle from her when I met her so I can't vote for her. I may, however, have to submit a write-in vote for Joan Extram, depending how my back rub goes. Golly, I'm in a hell of a mood to be typing a zine, aren't I?

In The Electric Penguin #3, a zine which by the way is off to a rather slow start, John Mirassou notes that Pete Gaughan objects to his printing of nudes. Printing nudes is of course in the fine tradition of the Diplomacy hobby. A Bur S A Pic-Par can be livened up considerably by the presence of a good pair of tits, or didn't you all know? To be serious about the matter (since John asked for his readers' comments), it's your zine, John, so print what you want. Peter doesn't have to sub. I personally don't find nudity in Dip publications very thrilling, but some people clearly do. (Look at the afore-mentioned issue of NMR!, for example, or many old issues of Black Frog, which sometimes seemed more a porno zine than a Dip zine.) I guess I really don't care much one way or the other. But if you want to print nudes, then do so. If enough people are offended by it (and they won't be), you'll have to change your style if you want to keep them. Case closed.

In the latest Diplomag (which is the newsletter of the American Mensa Postal Diplomacy Special Interest Group) contains the good news that the American Mensa SIG has a new policy that all newcomers who sign up for Diplomacy games will be given a copy of Supernova. Naturally, I heartily approve of this policy. Bruce Poppe, chairman of the SIG, has been kind enough to send along the dollar per packet when giving me the addresses of newcomers who should receive a copy. I dropped from Mensa some time ago, not feeling up to paying the \$35 renewal fee at the time since I hadn't done anything while a member anyway, but maybe I'll rejoin someday. I find that I generally get along very well with Mensa people.

The latest Whitestonia contained a refund for the balance of my subscription, and Kathy has cancelled her VD sub for the third time. Chalk up another hobby record for VD.

Latest issue of The Prince contains this endgame statement from Bob Gosselin, who won as England in 1982AP (The Iron Dream): "The Iron Dream ended Friday, April 20, 1984. I won. (Is that what you meant by an end-game statement, Jim?)"

The two latest issues of Caruso's roving subzine Foot in Mouth are out, one in North Sealth, West George and one in No Fixed Address. Both of them contain attacks on Rod Walker. Actually this is a pretty clever idea on John's part; put the attacks in a roving subzine and send them all over the hobby so that Rod can't respond. I hope John keeps up the good work. After all, we can't have all these hobby members thinking that Rod is a Good Person just because he works his butt off for the hobby, now can we? The hobby needs subzines like Foot in Mouth to keep the Rod Walkers of the world cut-down to size. Good show, John.

Paul Rauterberg of Midlife Crisis seems to share my view on letters, at least in part, in his reply to a particularly entertaining letter from Ig Lew in the latest issue: "Can I soil a stream-of-consciousness letter such as this with a mundane thing like a reply? I like to think of letters as art, and this is one of such." Art. I wish I'd thought of that three issues back when I wrote my front-page editorial on letter columns.

The opposite view is espoused by John Marsden of Ode, responding to my editorial, when he says that "I don't know about American letter writers, but I find that most British letter writers write such 'bitty' letters that editing them improves the style and continuity." Perhaps so. I've recently spoken with Larry Peery on the subject of letter columns, and he expressed the view (with which I wholeheartedly agree) that editors train their correspondents to write certain types of letters. So Doonies generally write long letters, in the knowledge that they won't generally be chopped up, while British hobbyists and EE readers, among others, probably don't worry so much about continuity or length, knowing that both will be lost in the editing process anyway. You wouldn't expect someone to write me the sort of letter that appears all the time in Kathy's Korner, and the opposite is equally true. So we editors have you readers trained. Now, Doonies, beg...

By the way, that issue of Ode also mentions that VD #93 took only three days to arrive by surface mail! Amazing -- it often takes longer than that for an issue of VD to travel from Massachusetts to Virginia or Maryland.

Fred Davis has announced in Bushwacker that the Post Office is once again selling Post-a-fix machines, which are handy for stamping envelopes if you don't like licking stamps. Personally, I'm not glad to see this. There are certain publishers out there who could use a little gore glue in their mouths.

I see that Dave Kleinman uses one of the same criteria for choosing standbys in The Diplomat as I do in VD: once a player has played or even stood by for one country in a game, he cannot be asked to stand by for another country in the same game. This is a good policy, too often not adhered to by many GMs (sometimes because their standby list is too short), and I would urge other GMs to follow it, for reasons discussed in VD #93.

On the other hand Pete Birks of Greatest Hits seems to have adopted a very poor policy due to the large size of his zine and its large circulation: he has found it too much work getting all copies of the zine in the mail at a time, so he posts the copies for subbers whose surnames begin with A-M one day and the N-Z people the next, though I believe he reversed this in the latest issue. Thus Paul Oakes gets his copy mailed a day later (or earlier) than John Balson, with whom he is in a game. I view this as unfair, if only mildly so if Birks is going to alternate which half goes out first, and would recommend a better policy of sending players' copies the first day, and others the next. But all players should get equal treatment, in my opinion. Nationally equal.

Erehwon #123 contains a several-page insert of general and background information for Rod's players and readers. A very clever idea, in my opinion. I should come up with something like this for new Doonies so that I don't have to keep answering the same questions periodically. He covers such things as how the zine got its name, his guidelines for press, some of the fictional characters which appear in the zine, and so on. Ha. Maybe that's not such a great idea for VD, though -- I'd miss having to explain the origin of "ERUX" every year!



However, one of the Erehwon house rules leaves much to be desired. When a player proposes a concession in Erehwon, "the concession is defeated if any playing owning 3 or more centers votes against it." Well, what about one-or-two-center powers? As players in the game, they should still have a right to veto any game-ending proposal as well. Concession and draw votes are supposed to be unanimous. What if the game happens to contain a five-way alliance consisting entirely of two-center powers? This ten-center coalition could not veto a concession to a 13-center leader, even if they believe they have a reasonable chance of persuading second-place Mr. 11 to switch sides somewhere down the line. This is a bad rule, and I hope Rod will amend it after reading this.

Some poor slob over in Great Britain by the name of Matt Quartermain is cutting back on his hobby involvement because, among other things, he is receiving anonymous hate mail, according to Home of the Brave 37, and some other zines. To me, anonymous hate mail would be strong proof that whatever I was doing is right. If someone's too chickenshit to sign his name to his arguments, then he hasn't got much of a case, has he? It is for this reason that I have always been leery of anonymous criticisms of anyone in a zine, even in the form of anonymous zine reviews such as appeared in Give Me a Weapon a few months back.

Speaking of which, GMAW #38 contains the welcome news that Konrad will not fold at least until #50, and probably not for a long time after that. I regard Konrad as a long-time pillar of the hobby, and was very sad when his old zine Egnog went under. However, I hope he'll ~~PULLAHEEEEEEEZE!~~ find a printer or xerox machine that copies better than whatever he's using now. I almost couldn't read his diatribe against the Rumstone Poll in this issue.

In the latest issue of Anduin, Mark Berch responds to a question from Eric Kane asking "Does what Kathy (the BNC) say go? Period?" with this reply: "In a word, yes. That's the way things are, and, in my opinion, that's the way things ought to be...I don't see that Kathy has done anything wrong by saying that her position will be the rule, period." In a word, bullshit. The BNC is a custodian of the hobby, not there to rule it but rather serve it. Now listen up, Docales, because this is serious and I'm not just spouting off at the mouth. What Kathy says emphatically does not go for Voice of Doom games. The only "power" in VD games belongs to the players, and to a very limited extent, me. (I say "very limited" because my lengthy house rules more or less take the power to make arbitrary decisions out of my hands.) Nobody who is not directly involved in a VD game has any "power" over it, and that includes the BNC. There is no question in my mind that Kathy has done an excellent job in giving out Boardman Numbers and certain other areas of responsibility as BNC. However, the only (and I mean only) involvement Kathy will ever have with any VD game in the future will be to assign it a number and record the results.

You're right if you perceive that this topic has touched a very raw nerve. And I have reasons for having said what I said, which I regard as sufficient.

I must make a slight correction to one of my above statements, though: as you readers are aware, there are times when an ombudsman can hold "power" in a VD game as well, but these times are few and far between, and that discussion has already been beaten to death here.

The most recent issue of Denver Glont contains a strange request from Glover Rogerson: that his readers leave DG off of their ballots in the British Zine Poll. If I hadn't been too lazy to vote, I would have obliged, though I'm not sure I understand the request. DG is my favorite British zine, despite Glover's not-so-enthusiastic attitude toward VD, and I would have voted it a "9" if I had voted for it at all. But Glover's request merely ensures that DG will finish low, and the people least likely to comply with his request are going to be his less supportive readers anyway. Take me, for instance: I would honor a similar request from Gary, if he were to make it, but would not honor such a request from, say, Highfield or Martin. So I brashly predict a horrible finish for Denver Glont this year, despite its very high quality. Because believe you me, Glover's subbers are not going to unanimously abstain.



Don Williams of California (not the one playing in ORION) publishes a subzine to Magus called Duck Soup, and in the latest issue talks about "Olsenisms", those being terms that Bob Olsen has contributed to the hobby Lexicon. The two he mentions are both in error, though. "Simple-minded antelope" is a Woodyism, invented to apply to me along with some other less humorous terms. "Peery/Woody/whoever-bashing" is a term (well, "bashing" is, anyway) coined by Mark Berch, and originally applied only to Peery's detractors. Both have been given widespread publicity by Olsen, but he invented neither, though I must admit that they do sound like something Pudge would come up with.

Also in Duck Soup Don is starting a "Socrates Award", to be given to some hobby member who, despite the nature of the game of Diplomacy, has managed to keep feuding out of his or her repertoire of tactics. Actually, that definition is so broad that at least 95% of the hobby qualifies, having never participated in a feud of any sort, but Gary Coughlan narrows down the range of possibilities somewhat in Europa Express #34 by saying that the award should go to someone who manages to stay on the good side of almost everyone while being able to disagree and even while also being friends with people who are enemies of each other. Gary then goes on to suggest Joan Extrom as a very deserving nominee. I can still think of quite a few people who qualify (examples: Noto, Woodson, Cuning, Jim Williams for starters) but overall I agree with Gary that Joan has been outstanding in terms of staying friends with parties on both sides of a feud, and in giving advice designed to cool things down rather than escalate matters. There is no more deserving person for this award than Joan and I back her nomination.

Another person would easily qualify: Judy Winsome, publisher of Winsome-Losesome. In its latest issue, it plugs Ron Brown's game openings in Murd'ring Ministers, but I understand from Melinda Holley that Ron's game is now filled. But Judy also mentions that John Daly has openings in his impeccably GMed The Dogs of War, a zine I no longer receive, but John has a reputation as one of the hobby's very finest GMs. So if you're looking for a well-run game on 24-day deadlines, write to John Daly, Route 2, Box 136-N5, Rockwell, NC 28138. Winsome-Losesome itself is one of my very favorite zines (reads: it would make my current top ten). The games are presented as well there as in any other zine, with large, well-drawn maps and the players' addresses given with each game report so that players don't have to look them up all the time.

Diplomacy World won't be out till July, a month late, and it will stay permanently on a one-month-late schedule, which of course means that it isn't really late at all, I suppose. VD offers its sincere sympathy to Rod Walker, whose father passed away just recently. Also, sympathies to Jake Halverstadt, whose father passed away in Florida a few weeks ago.

Last issue I announced that Alex Lord had made the honor roll at her high school again. Shortly after the issue went out, I was proud and delighted to learn that Alex has been elected to the National Honor Society, together with a handful of other kids from the school. The induction ceremony was held about three weeks ago. Congratulations to Alex; we Doomies knew all along that you have the smarts. But I wonder if the expert tutoring had anything to do with it. (u)

VD also wishes Alex a happy 17th birthday on July 5, and a bon voyage as she prepares to leave for a month in Europe. She will return home just in time for Joan and me to stop in and visit when Joan is here. Alex has promised that she will try to write an account of her trip for VD. If she does, it will go into my fifth anniversary in October.

That's about it for Hobbytalk this month. The response to last issue's The Zine Column was 2 to 1 in favor (Steve Knight and John Kelley have said they enjoyed it; Kathy Byrne said she didn't). I rather enjoy doing this column if and when I have the time. Do the rest of you readers like it, or not?

And a quick late note: VD congratulates Ed Wrobel on the birth of his new baby boy. May he grow up to be a loyal, screaming Doomie just like his daddy!

ORION

1982X

ONLY THREE UNITS MOVE OUT OF ALL THIS!

Summer 1913

RUSSIA: A Mos r STP

Fall 1913

ENGLAND (Ansoff): F NWY S RUSSIAN A StP (OTM), F MID S FRENCH A Gas, A LVP H,  
F TRI S F Mid, F NAT S F Mid

FRANCE (Williams): A GAS S TURKISH F Spa(no)-Hell (H), F BRE S ENGLISH F Mid

GERMANY (Wittmond): A MUN H (A BER S, A RUH S), A PRU H (F BAL S),  
F ENG S ENGLISH F Mid, A BUR S FRENCH A Gas

ITALY (Howerton): F WES-Mid (F FOR S), A TYO-Mun (A BOH S), F TYR-Wes, A MAR-Gas,  
A PIE-Mar, A Tri-VIE

RUSSIA (Beyerlein): A STP-Mos

TURKEY (Leritte): A Mos-LVN (A WAR S), A Sev-MOS (A UKR S), A GAL S A SIL, F BLA H,  
A SIL S ITALIAN A Tyo-Mun, F LYD S ITALIAN A Pie-Mar,  
F SPA(no) S ITALIAN F Wes-Mid, F NAP S ITALIAN F Wes-Mid

Supply Center Chart:

ENGLAND: Lvp, Lon, Nwy, <del>StP</del> , Spa	4, remove 1
FRANCE: Par, Bre, <del>StP</del>	2, even
GERMANY: Home, Dan, Hol, Bel, Bdi	7, even
ITALY: Home, Gre, Tri, Vie, Mar, For	8, even
RUSSIA: <del>StP</del> , STP	1, even
TURKEY: Home, Bul, Ser, Bud, Rum, Tun, Sev, War, SPA, MOS	12, build 2

Game Notes: The proposals for an E/F/G/I/R/T draw and a concession to France both failed. Proposed now are an E/F/G/I/R/T draw and a concession to Turkey. Please vote by next deadline.

Press:

SULTAN to KAISER: It sure looks unbreachable. We like playing with Spa, Mid, For, and Mar. Hope you're having fun, too. Bless you all.

ROME: It was announced today that Count Roberto of Italy and Omar Leritte, Sultan of all the Turks and a few others as well, met recently on the Isle of Capri and have decided that the women and children (under 12) will be spared in any future expansion into new territories. All able-bodied men will be put to work rebuilding the various cities destroyed during the course of this long war. The Sultan agreed that the women should be spared as his harems are filled to overflowing with captives already.

KAISER to WORLD: I call on all parties to meet me in Geneva to negotiate an end to this senseless conflict. Surely the bloodshed and, most especially, the waste of national treasure should come to an end! I am willing to consider all reasonable proposals (i.e. those that include me).

ROME: The Italian government calls upon the French to lay down their arms and accept a just peace (with honor).

Subby's Simile: One man's meat is another man's poison, or, kitty heaven is mouse hell.



Q U A S A R

1982AE

CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS GERMANY USED TO HAVE ONLY ONE CENTER?!

Fall 1911

- AUSTRIA (Lucas): A ROM S A Ven, A TIO-Pie, A VEN S A Rom, A TRI S A Ven, A VIE H
- ENGLAND (Glaspey): A Mos-UKR, A StP-MOS (A LVN S), A GAL S FRENCH A Boh-Vie (NSO),  
A RUH S GERMAN A Ber-Mun, F WES S FRENCH F Tyr (OIM), F swe-DEEN,  
F BOT H, F BAL H, F NTH H
- FRANCE (Burd): A BOH-Mun, A TUS-Ven, F LYO-Tyr (F TUN S), A PIE S A Tus-Ven,  
F TYR-Ron, A Mar S A Piz (NSU)
- GERMANY (Howerton): A Ber-MUN, A WAR S ENGLISH A Mos-Ukr, A SIL S ENGLISH A Gal
- TURKEY (Sweeney): A Rum-ELD, A Sev-RUM, A Ann-SEV, A Ukr-War (ann), F ION-Tun,  
F NAP S AUSTRIAN A Rom, F AEG-Ion, F GRE S F Aeg-Ion

Supply Center Chart:

- AUSTRIA: Vis, Tri, ~~Wid~~, Ser, Ven, Rom 5, even
- ENGLAND: Home, Bel, Nwy, Den, Hel, StP, Swe, Mos 10, even
- FRANCE: Home, Tun, For, Spa, ~~Wid~~ 6, even
- GERMANY: Kis, Ber, MUN, War 4, build 1
- TURKEY: Home, Bul, Gre, Rum, Sev, Nap, BUD 9, build 2

Game Notes: Brian Orloff has submitted his resignation, so the orders submitted by Jerry Lucas are used, and he now takes over as Austria. Thank, Jerry.

The E/T draw proposed last season did not pass.

Press:

CON: "What!" cried the Sultan, "the moron misordered a unit!" The Sultan continued to throw books, statuettes, and harem girls around. "He didn't follow his orders!"

"But sir," I began, "Gen-Adm Exlax is new to his command. A momentary lapse, I'm sure..."

"Momentary is right!" the Sultan shouted, "As temporary as the period of time he has to retain his head! And, my dear minister, what about this!" He threw some documents to me; I hastened to catch them.

I quickly scanned the pages... "My god! (Allah) These are the dispatches to the Austrian monarch. He never received them..." My voice began to crack. "My Sultan, what happened in the Med?"

"The foolish monarch of Austria, loyal man that he is, threw party after party and without receiving our dispatches must've decided to hold his ground. The fool didn't even raise up another unit!" The Sultan sat down heavily. "He didn't even bother to protect his own homeland."

"Sultan, the English?" I gulp, "They haven't broken through, have they?"

"No, but perhaps it is only a matter of time." The Sultan appeared fatigued. "I will issue orders in the morning. Oh, and tell Gen-Adm Exlax that 'The Force' will brook no mere dereliction of duty. You may go..."

AUSTRIA to TURKEY: I think I've been receiving your letters.

CON to PAR: Re back door: please note that it would have been closed.

CON to VIE: Brian, Brian -- are you there Brian?

GERMANY: The Kaiser is happy to announce that the Hofbrau House has been liberated.

((QUASAR continues next page))

QUASAR (continued)

CON to BRUX: Eng has 10 units, France has 7 units, and Germany 3. A/H and I have 13 (should've been 14!) and he NMRs! (After he failed to aid in securing a stalemate line!) But I'm not upset, I'm not upset -- THE HELL I'M NOT!

TRIESIN: Angered by the Sultan's last missive, the child queen pouted. "How dare he ridicule me like that," she thought. "He's such a jerk. Robust indeed! My bust is bigger than his and I'm only twelve."

She rose from her writing desk to look out the window. The garden outside was just beginning to awaken from the long winter. She enjoyed the colors and the play of light through the leaves. It softened her pique. She laughed at the pun. "I'll soften his peak, I will," she thought as she returned to the writing desk.

LONDON to THE REST OF THE WEST: I've heard of the Rapid Deployment Force, but what do you call this egregious example of proccurante escargotism facing us -- maybe a Vapid Deploement Farce? Whatever it is, it sure is SLOW.

~~~~~

R I G E L

198X

LACK OF SUPPLY CENTERS PUTS DECIDED DAMPER ON ITALIAN PLANS!

Summer 1906

AUSTRIA: A Ser r TRI

Fall 1906

AUSTRIA (Knight): A TRI S A Bud, A VIE S A Bud, A BUD S A Tri

FRANCE (Hare): F Aeg-Gre (d; r Eas, OTB), F Tun-ION, F Tyr-NAP, F SPA(sc)-Mar, F Mid-NAF, A Bur-BEL, A PIE-Mar

GERMANY (Heintzman): F Nth-NWY, F Ska-SWE (A IREN S, F BAL S), A Pru-LVN, A Boh-GAL, A SIL S A Boh-Gal, A VEN S AUSTRIAN A Tri, A ROM S FRENCH F Tyr-Nap

ITALY (Ellis): A Nap-Rom (d; r Apu, OTB), F Lyo-TYR

RUSSIA (Kleiman): F Nwy-NWG, F Swe-BOT, A Fin-STP, A Gal-RUM, A WAR-Gal, F Rum-BLA, A SER-Tri

TURKEY (Beilly): F ADR S AUSTRIAN A Tri-Ven (NSO), A GRE S AUSTRIAN A Bud-Ser (NSO), F Bul(sc)-AEG, F CON S F Bul(sc)-Aeg, A Ank-SMY

Supply Center Chart:

AUSTRIA: Vis, Tri, ~~Tri~~, BUD

FRANCE: Home, Spa, Por, Lyp, Tun, BEL, NAP

GERMANY: Home, Hol, Den, ~~Tri~~, Ven, Edi, Lon, ROM, NWY, SWE

ITALY: ~~Tri~~, ~~Tri~~

RUSSIA: Home, ~~Tri~~, ~~Tri~~, Rum, ~~Tri~~, SER

TURKEY: Home, Bul, Gre

- 3, even
- 9, build 2
- 11, build 2
- 0, remove 2 (out)
- 6, remove 1
- 5, even

Game Notes: The F/G draw proposal did not pass. Now proposed are an F/G draw, a German win, an Italian win, and a concession to Lori Kleiman in the Press War. Only the first two would legally end the game. Please vote on them by next deadline.

COA: Greg ELLIS, 700 Rio Grande...hey, why am I bothering to print this?

Press:

BRUX to RIGEL: I inadvertently neglected to print the following press release with the last season (all players have been notified):

WHITE ((via RUSSIA)) to BLACK:

- 5) P-B3 Q-B3
- 6) Q-B3 ??

((RIGEL continues next page))

UKRAINE ((via ENGLAND)): The Prime Minister of England, Grand Admiral of the Fleet, Knight-Commander of the Royal Dragoons, Slayer of Tyed Hares sat shivering in the timber studded slopes of Ukraine. His recent escape from the Russian prison in St. Petersburg was nothing short of a miracle...

...in my cell, I clutched the pistol and canteen to bosom; my security -- my sanity. I began to feel once again, a hope, a hope that I could one day escape and lead a coup in my beloved England. But first things first. How to escape.

One day, one fateful day, Master Kleiman summoned me to his apartments to (again) write his press dispatches. He was more cruel to me than normal, and his diplomacy (as usual) was turning his allies against him. After his customary (if somewhat distracted) beating of me, he came to the point. "Germany is a treacherous dog," he starts. "He forgets our benevolence in allowing him enough air to fill his and his scummy people's lungs each day." (A direct quote.) Write us some press designed to remind him of his desperate straights." He smiles. "Spare no harsh word and have the 20 pages done in one hour. They must make the wire services by then. Now move out, scum!"

The guards were leading me back to my cell, when from down the hallway, a strange glow sprang out of thin air. It was the shape of one, no, two men! The guards fell terrified to their knees. I, the son of nobility, ruler of England, stood, face frozen, prepared for the worst (i.e. scared stiff!)

The two men had two small pistols (one each) and fired them at my guards. No bullets ejected from these barrels, no, beams of light sprung from them. Then, one of them stood forth and said, "I'm Captain Kork and this is my First Officer Mister Sprock. The Dwarf sent us." With that he raised his pistol. "When you wake up, you'll find yourself in Southern Russia. Head for Turkey -- time is limited for Russia and Kleiman." He fired.

When I came to, I realised that Captain Kork was right, I was in Southern Russia. I also found that he'd stolen the gun. Well, I'm heading South and if the cold doesn't get me, I should be able to find a nice, quiet place somewhere. A place to plot.

There's one thing that I'm afraid I must find out soon -- who is this mysterious dwarf, and why does the name sound so familiar?

SWENEY to BRUX: It's well known that you don't like one-line press releases. How about one-page releases?

BRUX to SWENEY: In VD #93, I made a crack about silly one-liners. In #94, I dumped on long, boring press releases. Other than that, I like all press...except...how long are you guys going to keep up with these mediocre medium-lengthers?...

GERMANY to WORLD AND BEYOND: The chess game continues, folks, despite omission the past few issues. Thus:

|    | <u>White</u> | <u>Black</u> |
|----|--------------|--------------|
| 5. | P-B3         | Q-B3         |
| 6. | Q-B3         | B-Q5         |
| 7. | Q x Q        | N x Q        |
| 8. | B-Q2         | N x P        |
| 9. | ???          |              |

GERMANY to ITALY: What lovely blue ink you've begun typing with...I'd like to see more of it, but, I'm afraid circumstances do not permit...

TY (LONDON) to RIGEL ((via FRANCE)): Weather is here, wish you were beautiful.

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

A RUN-DOWN WHOREHOUSE SOMEWHERE IN MONACO ((via FRANCE));  
violently together, consummating our love.

A while later, we lie together in the ramshackle hotel bed, Lorique browsing through a well-thumbed magazine (Dragons and Dwarves, as I recall), as I pore over the map.

"Are you doing good, Tykie?" she asks, throwing the 'zine aside.

"Yeah, things are looking quite good now, Lorique," I answer patiently, sliding the Austrian army into Budapest. "A rather pleasant turn of events." Her next comment is interrupted by the knock at the door.

"Message from London, sir," a voice calls. I go to the door, open it and take the carefully sealed envelope from the waiting soldier. Turning back into the room, I open the letter and begin to read.

"What is it, Dearest?" asks Lorique, her interest waxing as the smile begins to play across my face.

"Excellent! Excellent!" I crow, waltzing back to the bed. "The bomb is in place and everything is proceeding as planned."

"Bomb? What bomb?" she asks.

I continue reading, answering the gifted but innocent girl distractedly. "The bomb in the Sweeney clone we're sending to the Russian Czar. The Germans should be delivering it" -- I glance at my watch -- within an hour or so."

"What?!? What do you mean? I thought you were allied with u---... the Russians!" Strangely, Lorique seems a little heated over this matter. It must be the excitement of the news.

Turning towards her, "Hadn't I mentioned it to you? We're no longer allied with Czarist Russia. We are now allied with Austria. I am to sign the accord with Cupcake day after tomorrow."

"But...but!" she stammers, pitch rising. "You can't do this! What happened? Why?"

The Czar has shown the true worth of his commitment to us in our struggles in the South: none. He has given the French nothing more than verbal support in all of our undertakings. Without his help against the yellow Ottomans, we can make no advances there. Instead he wishes to continue attacking the Austrians, gaining for himself while the French go without. So," I conclude, "I took the liberty of initiating negotiations with the Archduke. And he has been much more responsive to the wishes of the French."

Lorique is wide-eyed, her mouth working frantically but no sounds coming forth. Of course, I know, it must be the joy she feels. She stops, then turns to the closet, pulls out her suitcase and begins throwing clothes into it.

I continue, "Listen to this: 'The bomb, equivalent in force to 120 sticks of dynamite, is engineered to the specifics of the voice patterns of the Czar himself. When the Czar asks the clone a question, any question, the clone will respond with the phrase, "Famous Stabs for \$20", which will detonate the bomb.' God, those German engineers are amazing. Just amazing!"

I put down the letter, and turn to my dear Lorique. I begin to ask for her guidance in planning this spring's maneuvers, but she is already out the door, suitcase in tow. I am only momentarily concerned, however, as I realize that this must be laundry day. I go back to the map to plan strategy, and only by chance do I glance out the window as Lorique stands on the far side of the street. She is talking to a very short man -- a dwarf. Oh, yeah. What was his name? They seem to speak a few words and then hurry into the rising sun.

SOMEWHERE IN GERMANY, BUT NOT THE ELACK FOREST ((via FRANCE));

The carriage bounces along for a week, with occasional stops for water and fresh horses. The Hated Bob has grown increasingly uncomfortable, both physically and mentally, with each passing day.

((RIGEL continues next page))

RIGEL (continued)

"Guard! Hey Jerry!" he says, jostling the German across from him. "Where are we going?"

The young soldier smiles and replies, "Why, to Switzerland, like you were told."

"Don't give me that," snaps the British Prime Minister heatedly. "We've been travelling almost due east since we left Trier. We're heading towards Russian territory."

"Oh, really?" asks the guard, eyebrows arched in mock surprise. "How can that be? You heard the orders from von Heintzman himself; 'Take his Ministership' -- you -- 'to Geneva. It is there he will sit out the rest of the war.'"

"And I tell you, we are headed east!" Bob sits in fuming silence for a moment, angrily cleaning his fingernails with the swastika buttons on his jammies. Then, "Why haven't we entered any big cities? We've skirted both Brussels and Dusseldorf, though they seem to be right on our path. And why are we avoiding all German military convoys we come across?" Bob's voice is thoughtful, as though he is thinking out loud. "It's almost as though...as though you're hiding something. As though...you're hiding ME!" Bob turns to the guard, who is no longer smiling.

"So that's it, eh? Nelson doesn't want anyone to know he's got me. Why? The whole world must know that I am in the custody of the Germans. Why shouldn't the German army know that I'm in Germany?"

The guard shifts uncomfortably, glances over Bob's head where the driver and another soldier sit; they can be barely heard talking over the galloping of the horses and the rumbling of the wooden carriage.

He leans forward, motioning the Prime Minister towards him. "Look," he begins earnestly. "You're half right. We are travelling east. You've wondered why we avoid cities, changing horses instead in small villages? Why we travel mainly at night to avoid the military police? Why we receive messengers along the way at odd times and places? You are right, Mister Prime Minister, we are heading east. But not towards Russia..."

Bob's eyes widen as he cranes forward to catch the German's words. "We're headed for Austria."

A CARRIAGE SOMEWHERE NEAR, BUT NOT IN, SWITZERLAND ((via FRANCE));

For miles upon miles, Bob continues to ride in what amounts to a bouncing, jolting crate, like so many sacks of potatoes, as he travels over the war-torn roads of Western Europe. His guard has become uncommunicative; when the man does talk to him, he is now uncivil. Bob is in a quandry; he fears what will happen to him at the end of this journey, yet cannot wait for the interminable jouncing he has taken to be over.

Finally, a good road up a mountain, coupled with a tired team of horses, provides an opportunity for a long sleep. Sweeney drops instantly into a deep slumber, one devoid of dreams, as his body relaxes and falls into harmony with the now-gentle swaying of the carriage. For some hours he sleeps and recovers, and, finally, he does dream...

Bob looked around him. He stood on a road, at dusk, that seemed to stretch on forever in one direction, and disappeared around a knoll in the other. To either side, the darkening light showed moors that were slowly becoming indistinguishable, as the evening mist poured like grey molasses down their slopes. Bob felt a chill, and shivered, not sure if it was the cooling night, or a subtle fear of dark loneliness that made him tremble. He quickly glanced down both ways of the road again, then chose the close curve. He hurried around the hill, and was relieved to see the edge of a town in the near distance. He nonchalantly slowed his pace, and strolled into the village, as the night and the fog closed in around its borders.

As Sweeney walked down the street, he began to notice something rather strange. The houses he passed, although not boarded up, all appeared to be completely empty. No light of any kind showed through any of the windows, yet it was the supper hour.

((RIGEL continues next page))



RIGEL (continued)

How strange, and how ominous, Bob thought to himself. Is the town deserted? Just then, however, he glimpsed a light coming from a window up ahead. As he moved toward the small building, he was able to make out the sound of voices and laughter, and his heart was cheered. Coming up to the door, he saw it was an inn, or a bar of some sort, yet the sign was so weather-beaten, and the evening so dark, that he could not make out the name. Still, he was cold and tired, and rather thirsty, and a nice mug of ale was all he could think about at the moment. He reached for the door latch, pressed it down, and entered.

It was a small tavern, lit only by candles and a fireplace; smoke filled the air, mostly from the peat moss burning in the fire, though the inhabitants' pipes added enough to cut some of the strong peat odor. What faces he could make out were a mixture of young and old, most of them smiling, though their smiles changed subtly as Bob came in, closing the door behind him.

All eyes watched him as he moved hesitantly to the small bar and the large man standing behind it. The bartender grinned wolfishly, and asked, "Tu es un étranger, non?"

Sweeney frowned, not sure of his French, and shrugged his shoulders. "I don't understand, I'm afraid."

The bartender's grin seemed to widen, and he said, with a perfect accent, "Ah, you are the Englishman. I asked if you were not a stranger. It is obvious, so don't bother to answer. Here," and he placed a large mug on the counter. From it came the delicious aroma of a sweet brew, as Bob raised it to his mouth and drank. Oh, how good it tasted! He could never remember an ale that was at the same time as bitter, and yet as exquisitely mellow, as this. With three gulps the liquid was gone, and Bob slowly placed the mug back on the counter. He turned to the man who stood to his left and, with a smile, asked "Won't you join me?"

The man, from under a low cap, replied, "Danke schön, no."

Sweeney, somewhat taken aback, turned to the man on his other side, and said, "And you, sir, will you join me in a cup of this wonderful brew?" "Nien, mien freund. It is not to my taste."

Sweeney turned, bewildered, back to the new mug that sat in front of him. He took hold of it, started to raise it to his lips, but put it down as the hairs on his neck tingled. Something, he felt, was not quite right. French. German. German with a slight Hungarian accent. Where in Hades was he? What was going on? Who were these people???

Bob spun 180°, and was horrified to find Cupcake, the Austrian leader, standing directly behind him, a devilish grin playing across his features. "Hello, Bob," he said, "glad you could make it. Let me make the introductions. This is Sultan Reilly," and a turbaned man stepped forth from a corner and bowed in a flurry of robes, "... this is Prime Minister Ellis." A small, olive-skinned man with greased hair and a cigarette dangling between his lips stood up from a table near the fireplace, and scratched his armpit; Bob took this as some strange Italian greeting, and tentatively waved back.

"This, of course, is Tsar Dave and Tsarina Lori," Cupcake continued, waving his hand toward an old fart and his nymph of a wife, who slowly inched her dress up over her shapely gams to apparently smooth the wrinkles in her black fishnet stockings.

"I know you've met Commander von Heintzman," and the man to Bob's right, with the cap over his countenance, tipped it toward Bob, revealing the Prussian features with which he was familiar. Commander? Bob was sure Cupcake meant "Kaiser", and said so. Cupcake simply smiled, and gave Sweeney a condescending look, as though Bob was to be pitied. "Poor Bob. Taken in to the last. Allow me to finish this 'family' gathering with my final surprise. Please, a big hand for the little man, my close, personal friend, Rasputmann!"

RIGEL (continued)

A black, rolling cloud issued forth from the fireplace, followed by a blinding flash. When the smoke had cleared some, Bob was able to make out the ugly facial features of that pituitary freak. Bob had always hated little people, ever since his mother had taken him to a circus, and a drunken side-show "little person" had lost his liquid lunch in Bob's lap. Bob grimaced at the memory, stepped back in disgust, and realized he was pressed up against the edge of the bar.

"Wha...uh...ah, um...uh, wha, what is it that y-you all want? I m-mean, why am I here?"

"Why, Bob, surely you jest," laughed Cupcake, as he reached into his pocket. "We've all gathered here for a little fun, and you're it!" With that, he pulled his hand from his pocket, bringing with it a small, shiny, deadly derringer, pointing it right at Sweeney's large belly. Everyone else also now bore a pistol of some sort in their hand, except for Rasputmann, who brought out of thin air a device that seemed to come from some nightmarish future, as indeed the Ouzi he hefted did. "Guten nacht, Herr Schweinhund," muttered the dwarf, and swung the nozzle of the machine gun in an arc toward the former P.M. Bob, however, was not one to stand around and be shot at, and with a burst of adrenalin pushed off from the bar, and barreled his way through the murderous mob, as bullets exploded into the wood where he had just been standing. He reached the door of the tavern in one bound, and was outside in another. He ran headlong down the empty street, hunching his back in expectation of a bullet ramming into him. There was no sound of pursuit, though, just a distant, hollow cackling, reminiscent of the strange African dogs he had seen at the London Zoo, during feeding time. Still, Bob continued to run, hoping to reach the moors before they could pick up his trail.

He reached the border of the village out of breath, but was unwilling to slow until he could no longer see the empty buildings of the town. He plunged into the fog and mist of the dark moors, looking to stay off any beaten path. When he was finally satisfied that no one was chasing him, and when he could go no further without collapsing, he halted, and leaned against a scrawny, gnarled oak, sucking in great gulps of air, his head between his knees to stop it from spinning off his shoulders. In a while, when he could almost breathe normally, he looked up, and tried to get his bearings. With a start, he realized that he could not remember from which way he had come, and that, in fact, he could not see more than ten feet in front of him. He was lost, until the morning sun burned off the haze, and he knew that to be hours and hours away. It would be smart, he was sure, to stay where he was, but his fear of a possible man-hunt overrode his rationality, and he stumbled off into the dark.

Bob blundered about for some time, falling down whenever the footing beneath him turned boggy, tearing his pants and jacket on low tree limbs and scrubbrush, receiving small gashes on his face and hands. Finally, a creeping vine brought him to his knees, and his exhaustion would not allow him to rise. He knelt in mud, taking ragged breaths, nose seeping into his shoes and through the tears in his trousers.

Suddenly, he heard a snapping sound. He cast about desperately, looking for anything close at hand with which to defend himself, while trying to raise himself to his feet. The effort proved too much, and he sank back on his haunches, unwilling to wait for his back, yet too tired to care that much any more. A squishy footfall to his left made him turn that way. There, just within range of Bob's sight, stood a familiar-looking figure, one he had never expected to see again.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't the hated bob. Tak, tak, H.b., you do look a frightful mess. Have you lost your way?" "Yes, it was Bob's most wicked enemy, Ty Hare, who had shot dead in his own office, the man whose corpse he and von Heintzman had riddled with bullets aboard the German's ship. How could Hare now be here? Was this a ghost? Was he going mad?"

"Well, Bob, what a little fool you are. That wasn't me you shot. It was... my clone!" With that he flourished his hand toward Bob's other side, and as Bob turned that way, Ty Hare stepped out of the fog, only now he had what appeared to be several

RIGEL (continued)

gaping wounds throughout his body. In a trice, however, these seemed to completely heal, leaving clean flesh visible through the rips in his shirt. Slowly, though, his hands enlarged and curled, his body grew to a monstrous 5' 10", and his fingernails grew long and talonous. He took a step toward the muddy Sweeney in a menacing manner, then barred his teeth to reveal long, wolfish fangs. Bob turned to implore the real Ty to please stop this monstrosity, only to find no one standing there. He turned back to the approaching werebeast, struggled to at least crawl away from it, yet found his lower legs totally encased in the sticky mud. A second sound off to his left gave him a glimmer of hope, and he tore his eyes away from the grotesquerie, only to gasp at the sight of yet another figure emerging from the moorish mist. "Help me!" he cried, spinning his head back toward the...toward the...the clone-beast was gone. "Ooooh," Bob moaned, pressing his hands to his forehead to try to control the incessant pounding. This just wasn't his day.

Bob peeked from between his fingers. The third figure still stood there. It was, well, it was him, that is, it was he, himself, Bob Sweeney, only he was here in the mud, not standing over there!

"Wh, who, uh, wha-what are you?" Sweeney I asked tremblingly.

The other Sweeney said nothing, only stood without moving, not even blinking, staring at Bob-in-the-mud. Bob I looked at him. There was definitely something different about him, something to do with his chest. Yes, it was as though he could see straight through the skin of, well, it was probably a clone, a clone of himself. There was something about the ribs, or rather, something stuck to the ribs, that seemed to be out of place. It looked like a bomb, though Bob had never actually seen one before now.

Slowly, Bob I tried once again to remove himself from the mud. This time he was able to move, as the mud now easily gave way to his efforts. Bob stood up, and slowly faced himself. He stood there for a moment, thought about thinking, then gave it up as a lost cause. He had the urge to move, so he did, hesitantly, toward Bob II. At the same time, both Bobs raised their arms, and Bob I stepped into Bob II's embrace. As they clasped each other, Bob could feel himself beginning to meld with his double, and it seemed okay, as though everything would be alri...

"G5t in Himmel, vat do you tink you are doing!" the guard yells in Bob's ear, whose mate is for some reason on the guard's shoulder. Bob is pushed back across the carriage, his head hitting the carriage wall with a distinct thud. "You English types, I always knew you were effeminate bastards!" the guard snarls.

"No, no, I, I was just, mmm, just having a dream, I mean, a nightmare, really." Bob fingers the growing knot on his head and winces. Glancing out the window, he sees it is a cloudy, misty, dull morning, and off in the distance he can barely make out the rooftops of a fairly large town. Knocking on the ceiling, he calls up to the driver and asks, "Where are we?". "On the outskirts of Innstruck," is the reply, and Bob sinks back into his seat, an exhausted and broken man, a man who no longer cares about anything.

SIP to RIGEL: Interesting season. I receive 3 pieces of mail from Germany and 1 from Italy. Let's hear it for my German ally!

ITALY to RIGEL: I can't believe that you all are picking on poor Lori K. so much. I don't think that I would stand for you saying all of those things about my wife. It's just a good thing that none of you know Polly's name!

ELLIS to REILLY: So that's what you were doing when we all thought you were thinking about your moves, you were catnapping! You catnapper you!

WEBSTER ((via ITALY)) to RUSSIA: droog (droog) n., pl. -ogs. Any of various North American or European Diplomats of the family Droog, characteristically having glassy dark eyes and forked tongues. --adj. droogie. One who displays droog-like behavior or appearance. A derogatory term.

((RIGEL continues next page))

**DARKNESS FALLS ((via ITALY))**: The forces of the Italian Republican Army have been badly defeated in fighting with the superior forces of the French Navy and German armies. Many of the reports have reported that the armed forces will have to go underground as soon as Naples itself falls to the Germans. One source reported that he had orders to resist only the French units, but reports out of his capital have been spotted since the German forces moved in six months ago. The confusion in the Italian ranks is understandable, and several troops broke ranks and have gone renegade after protesting the orders to relinquish control of Rome to the Germans. "We could have taken Venice if we had the proper support!" one angry young soldier proclaimed. "Indeed the people themselves have found the situation alarming. Our correspondents in Rome have reports of small elements of resistance to the Germans, but the majority of the population simply carry on their daily duties as they did several years earlier under the Austrian Military Government. Although the government seems to be still in the hands of the Italians, several press releases issued under the Prime Minister's heading on the official stationery have caused considerable alarm. The first announced the Italian government would be seeking the protection of the German Emperor and called for peaceful occupation of Rome and Naples. Another declared the French as the most traitorous and ignorant of the European peoples, and declared unyielding hatred for everything French. The Prime Minister himself has not been seen for several months now.

**GERMAN IMPERIAL HIGH COMMAND** issues the following announcement: As of this date, German naval forces have begun operations designed to restore Swedish neutrality. The Swedish people have always been secure in the knowledge that they enjoyed the protection of the German Volk. The originally temporary guardianship established by the Teutonic government, under German acquiescence, has now come to an end. In other areas of Europe, our military units have shown remarkable restraint. However, the Spring shall witness an awesome unleashing of German force and might never before seen in this time continuum...

**THE MASKED GHOST ((via GERMANY))**: Actually, an underground Venetian chamber, in a cellar room of an old Renaissance-style building in Venice inhabited a frightened woman and her children. Dank water seeped through the cracks of decaying walls as the canals of Venice slowly continued their centuries-long task of drowning the city. Cold and miserable, blind in the moist darkness, the family of the Italian Prime Minister stole their lives. The sound of the ceiling door being opened startled the Italian Minister's wife, or the Prime Minister's Italian wife, whichever, to raise her head and peer into the sudden shaft of light cutting through the blackness. She watched a thin and emaciated figure descend. The being carried a lantern and with despair she recognized the wan, hollow, wooden-faced features of his Italian guardian. Its empty eyes did not tilt in their direction, however, rather, they remained uplifted toward the doorway. With revulsion and astonishment, the Prime Minister's wife watched a second figure laboriously descend. As it reached the floor of the cellar and walked toward her, she nearly vomited. Instead of clothing, she saw only its skeletal body upon which lay only traces of rotting flesh. The remnants of the garment draped upon the skeleton were yellow and musty with age. No longer the figure of the Prime Minister's wife brought to mind the ancient Roman toga. Indeed, antique rings of gold and sapphire and onyx dangled loosely from its fleshless fingers, and some moldy velvet wreath adorned its bony pate. The family of the Italian Prime Minister, in shock, fell into a faint.

When they came to, they found themselves lying outside in a Venetian alleyway in the middle of the night. Heavy dark clouds obscured the moon and no lights shined in the darkened and abandoned buildings clustered about nearby. Although no sound could be heard, the soft gurgle of the canal waters as they lapped steadily at the city's foundations. But, clearly visible within a dim radiance of a pale, eerie glow, stood the two scoundrels. Facing each other, arms spread wide but with hands touching, the two creatures stood

RIGEL (continued)

motionless and silent, creating a circle with their outstretched limbs. As the family watched in horror, the pale light within the circle seemed to brighten, becoming so bright and shiny as to serve as a sort of translucent mirror. Within the shiny surface seemed to appear a figure. Straining to see, the Prime Minister's wife gasped in shock at what appeared to be a dwarf -- one she knew -- clothed in robes saffron and ivory, in his and wielding a jeweled scimitar. As the image appeared to be focusing into substance, seemed to be materializing into flesh and blood, a sudden horrendous screaming broke the concentration of the two zombies, and the image being brought to concrete form abruptly vanished. All, the living and the dead alike, looked up into the darkened sky.

Shooting down from the heavens, three winged dragons sped toward the earthbound humans. Green-gold eyes glittered in the night and their long, narrow jaws were open wide as they descended during their descent. Abruptly, they halted in mid-flight and looked at the humans with malicious amusement.

The sky gaze of Ysser slid back and forth between the Prime Minister's family and the two zombies. "Alive or dead, they don't appear much, do they?" he smirked.

Svvy and Szry, two fledgling dragons from the same egg, looked at each other uncertainly. Timidly, Svvy remarked, "Do we extinguish them all?"

"No, no," Ysser chuckled. "Only those of Rasputmann's make... watch, young ones, and learn."

So saying, Ysser arose to his full height and began to plummet downward. The Prime Minister's family shuddered in terror at the approach of the fire-breathing monster. The two undead began to mechanically glide back into the shadows in hopeless retreat. But the undead creatures recognized their fate and perhaps even welcomed their release. At a distance of ninety paces, Ysser slowed his approach and began to fly in a long curve around the hapless zombies. Timing his discharge expertly, Ysser opened his long jaws and a stream of fire lashed out, striking the two undead beings and obliterating them in a sheet of flame. Ysser's gleaming gaze swung over to the Prime Minister's family. He regarded their reactions of horror and terror with sardonic amusement, but contemptuously declined to establish mental contact to ease their fears. Instead, he signalled to the two adolescent dragons hovering above.

"Hurry," he ordered. "Snatch up these humans -- gently, gently, don't scratch them -- and we shall take them to Qasar who has a grand plan for these hostages." And all was done as he bid.

In a distant eastern land, Rasputmann, wielding a scimitar and clothed in robes ivory and saffron in hue, was aware of this transgression by the dragons. He was displeased, worried and uncertain. In a land of another time and place, Wyyyx, the High One, was also aware and displeased, though not worried or uncertain. He still conversed with Thor and Zeus in the castle in the sky; he continued to laugh at Loki's clever jokes and allowed baby Eve to toss apples down his gullet. And, too, he continued to offer the lovely Aphrodite those wonderful rides through the white, fluffy clouds while she softly petted him in places his scales did not touch. Still, he knew always what his dragon folk were about, and soon, very soon, the young rebels would learn the meaning of respect and obedience. This he vowed...

FRANK to RIGEL: Most of us seem interested in RIGEL II (easy, Bob, you're alabbering), but perhaps we should wait until this game is over. Can you imagine writing twice as much press as we are now? Why, Rich would have to drop out of school to keep up with the loads! (By the way, Rich, the Press Wars release you wrote for Steve was great! Can you do something like that for me?)

BRUX to RIGEL: Speaking of RIGEL II, consider this official. I will fill in if any of you decide not to play in the game, provided you guys wait till this RIGEL ends and we can agree on a GM (and you know I'm quite picky in that regard!).



Some Perished...Some Survived

by John Hellely

Having been a member of the postal Diplomacy hobby in the United States and Canada for seven years, I feel reasonably well qualified to discuss the rise and fall of zines. What made the great ones great? What made the rotten ones deplorable? This is my official Rex Reed impression for the year, so be prepared for some vitriolic remarks. None of the names will be changed to protect the innocent, and of course these are my personal opinions; not everyone will agree with them. That's life in the fast land. No hero worship, no personal attacks unless my mood changes between now and then. Just a bit of guidance for those of you trying to publish your own zines.

To start off on a positive note, let's talk Brutus Bulletin. In its time, BB was an accepted pillar of the hobby. It lasted 2-3 years ((4, actually)) under the sure hand of John Michalski. What made it great? Lack of inhibition, for one. I once actually saw a copy of some material Michalski wouldn't print. That was a rare thing; hell, he was threatened with lawsuits at times. The fur flew in that zine. He participated enthusiastically, and added good humor to augment the political commentary. He was successful in presenting a right-wing standpoint to the hobby because he didn't sound like a storm trooper when he argued. His points were cold and precise, earning him respect from people of many ideologies. His downfall? It had nothing to do with the zine. Job turnover and unemployment finished BB, but you can still see him in Mos Miesley Spaceport, and can take it from me that MES is the closest thing to BB that you can get today. An unqualified success.

A less happy story is that of Paschendale. P began in Ottawa about 1977 and hung on in some form or another for 3-4 years. Its early history was characterized by a large readership, good content, and well-run games. Francois Guerrier, a French-Canadian, was its publisher and was witty and imaginative, avoiding the trap of anti-Anglism (is that a word? It is now.) that we hear about in the French-speaking parts of Canada. What happened? Several (well, more than one) problems cropped up, clouding both Francois' enthusiasm and attitude while damaging the zine's reputation beyond immediate repair. I hesitate to venture details for there are many reading this who are far better informed, but there were problems with a prize game (\$30/person, to the winner go the spoils) and questions arose about propriety (with \$210 at stake, one might predict this no matter who ran it). Fair warning, though, was a phony fold. At one point, Francois gave a strong impression that he was hanging it up, then resurfaced months later expecting things to be as they once were (the fact that his games were already rehoused, etc., screwed that up). Things weren't. This shows that a publisher can be eaten alive by reputational damage; after that, no one trusted him quite as much as before. Sad; I liked him then and still do.

I can relate a classic burnout story from personal experience. I published The Beholder starting about 1978 and went on for fifteen issues. I was in high school at the time and my political views were quite similar to those of Bill Highfield, though I'd like to think I was only 85% as obnoxious. I made many GMing mistakes early on and was too sensitive to let the flak roll off; this sapped my desire to publish and eventually extinguished it. TB was never a prize-winning zine, but it was adequate in most categories except for the level of editorial comment, which was atrocious. What killed TB's zine, therefore, was oversensitivity. I reacted too quickly and strongly too many times, and fell before the tide. I could do it now -- five years later -- and succeed, having done some growing up, but I don't have time. Someday.

An example of solidity and steadfastness is Fol Si Fis. Randolph Smyth has been running FSF since 1974 and as best I can recall has never been involved in any scandal that hurt his rep in the least. Not to say he hasn't ever stood by his opinions or been disagreed with; he just knew how to handle it. The zine was/is punctual (I can't imagine it being otherwise) and he has always run games well with a minimum of snafus. What makes Smyth a premier publisher, then, is his singleness of purpose. He knows what the conventions and rules are; he knows how to quell disturbances without making people go bananas about them. He doesn't overreact. The hobby will miss him one day.



The temptation was strong not to mention Voice of Doom, but I changed my mind. Bruce has been disseminating VD for upwards of four years now, and is well-established in the hobby. Positive points that have aided his development are: 1) he generally has not shrank from controversy, making VD a focus for arguments and attracting readers like me; 2) he provides a GMing philosophy different enough from those of his fellow hobbyists to make his games a specific attraction unavailable anywhere else, attracting players; 3) he consistently publishes so much material that it is not only a bargain but is sure to have something to interest everyone; 4) he is friendly enough most of the time that even his enemies find him hard to dislike. He combines these points with some drawbacks, which are happily less in number. Bruce has my tendency (now somewhat overcome on both of our parts) to overreact. ((Now, just a goddam minute! When the hell did I ever overreact?! And here I thought you've been my friend for all these years, and then you go and make a horrible, awful, disgusting claim that I tend to overreact!!!!!! Of all the nerve!...)) He tends to get too worried about minor issues and goes overboard frequently when involved in a disagreement; this causes people to lash out at him once in a while over issues that weren't even worth fucking around with in the first place. At that point what you have is a feud that never should have happened. He is improving this as well as his ability to absorb setbacks without taking them as crushing defeats. Other publishers can learn from this and take note of his strengths while trying to minimize the weaknesses. VD is and will continue to be a strong hobby contributor for a long time, as long as Bruce can maintain his enthusiasm.

Zines that carved out a specific niche in the hobby tend to do well. Andy Lischett is a good example of this. He has been running Cheesecake now for years and to the best of my knowledge shows no signs of slowing down. His province is orphans. He takes them. He doesn't take anything else. He gives the zine to standbys and won't give it to anyone else. A novel idea made feasible by his quality GMing and refusal to join in hobby controversy when the world is damning itself to a thousand hells all around him. You have to respect him at least; more probably you'll like him outright. He has risen on his own merit.

Last zine on the list is Le Front de Liberation du Diplomacy. It ran for several years in the late seventies/early eighties under Bernard Tretick, who used the pseudonym "Bernie Oaklyn" for much or all of this tenure. Things seem to have gone all right for FLD for the first (1-2?) years of its career, before trouble started. The issue was GMing dishonesty and lack of ethics, and they (we) had him pretty well dead to rights. He was variously accused of putting his sons in his games, mishandling them, screwing around with others' games, and being Bernard Tretick (who was run out of the hobby in the early seventies (?) for most of what he was now being charged with). The effect of the controversy was to practically ostracize him from the mainstream of the hobby, and this ruined FLD's long-term prospects. Recently he folded, admitting the pseudonym, and is not currently in circulation. This shows that if enough people in the hobby get mad at you and feel it's worth the trouble to ruin you, they can. I had a part in the campaign -- and I'm not sorry for most of it -- and relate this from personal experience as a member of the mob who called for his ears. A word to the wise: too many enemies can be fatal to a GM.

If you are offended, please write me directly at Box 35, Klickitat, WA 98628 and tell me so. Don't drag it into VD unless I fail to satisfy your grievance by retraction or apology. OK? Thanks for your time.

((And thanks for an interesting article about some of the hobby's old zines (every one mentioned is at least four years old). You get 6 free issues.

When I first began publishing, I figured I'd be all right if I had the letter column of a Brutus Bulletin, the editorial fairness and impartiality of a Diplomacy Digest, the steadfast GMing of a Greenstark, and the interesting articles of a Fel Si File. Whether I've succeeded in any or all of these goals is a decision the hobby can make, not me. I had to laugh at John's statement that even my enemies find me hard to dislike. No offense, John, but false words were never written.



Taking the article from the beginning, I agree with John's high praise of the Brutus Bulletin. With the probable exception of Europa Express, I've seen no better zines. I am one of very few people who owns an entire run of BB (up to and including his issue #110, which had a circulation of 3) and I will cherish them for a long time.

My views on Paschendale appear elsewhere in this issue and #95.

John gets into a good bit of introspection in his discussion of The Beholder, and most of his points are accurate, though I'd say he was only 43% as obtusious as Highfield, and about 4.71 times as smart. But he is right on the mark in saying that oversensitivity killed TB, and I look forward to its eventual return someday.

FSF is a great zine which has gone just a bit downhill of late. The play-of-the-game articles which were the zine's strongest attraction don't appear as often now, and the zine lost just a bit of its flavor when he switched from ditto to computer-printed. Randolph has publicly admitted that his enthusiasm is not quite what it once was. FSF is still a great zine, though.

I hope John didn't take offense at my little interruption in the middle of his discussion of VD; I couldn't resist. Thanks for both the kind words and the criticisms.

I don't think the paragraph about Cheesecake is 100% accurate; I'm pretty sure that Andy runs games other than orphans. Cheesecake is a warehouse zine which I recently stopped receiving (Andy's choice; not mine. He wants to limit his circulation to players, standbys, and perhaps a few others). Once in a while Andy would put out something really imaginative, such as his classic "warehouse" #14, but recently it's been straight games. On the strength of its longevity and reliability, I would rate Cheesecake as another great zine.

Le Front du Fraud has been discussed ad nauseum throughout the hobby's zines, so I won't reply much here. Trelick was simply a harmful, dishonest publisher and I consider it a service that I had a part in revealing him for what he was, along with others such as Kelley, Michalski, Berlin, Boardman, and Walker.

As John told me over the phone, this article is more than a little nostalgic. I liked it. There is no set formula for success at publishing, although there are a few set formulas for how to fail in a hurry.

One point on which John errs is in saying that too many enemies can destroy any GM. Baloney. If this were the case, Coughlan and I would both have folded long ago. More accurate would be "too many enemies can destroy any GM if those enemies have a valid point. Hyork, hyork...)

Announcing...

### The "Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zines" Roll

So far, four zines have publicly claimed the honor of being "Ed Wrobel's Favorite Zine." They are Voices of Doom, Beisaglieri, Raging Main, and Kreshon. But which zine is really Ed Wrobel's favorite? Obviously, the only valid way to determine this is to poll the hobby on this important question.

Voting deadline is July 6, 1984. Send ballots to BRUK Linsey, 73 Ashuelot St., Apt. 3, Dalton, MA 01226. You may vote for only one zine, since obviously Ed can have only one favorite zine. You may (if you like) indicate the reasons why the zine you are voting for is Ed's favorite. Sign your ballot. Results will appear in VD #97.

Despite his probable bias in this matter, Ed Wrobel is eligible to vote.

Humor mostly from Finagher T. Quiddipeo, Jr.:

"I tried a game of Dippy once, but I kept missing the deadlines," says Finagh, belatedly. "I was scheduled to take off '97 on that run to Danville, but I missed the train," said Cassey, wrecklessly. "I just threw the English player out of QUASARI" said BRUK, ruthlessly.

The solution to the second Dippy Crossword Puzzle is to the right. See Ghuff's letter in this issue; there was an error of sorts... BRUX visits Alex for a tria, not a trip; and feta, not leta is a Greek Cheese, to correct the most common mistakes.

Three perfect entries came from Chuff Afflerbach, Mark Luedi, and Ruth Glaspay. Jeff Noto had 2 wrong, and Don Del Grande and Greg Ellis 3 apiece.

Flipping a coin among Ghuff, Mark, and Ruth gives the winner...Ruth, who therefore gets 5 free issues. Coin flip for second prize of two freebees goes to...Chuff. Honorable mention for ya this month, OK Mark?

Thanks to all who participated!

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The Gossip Column

((Last month I ran a letter from Dave Kleiman explaining his side of the current Wrobel-Linsey controversy. Dave sent a copy of the letter to Ed, who replied to Dave with the following letter. Ed also sent me a copy, requesting that I print it together with Dave's letter in the last issue. Alas, Ed's letter arrived too late for inclusion in VD #95, so here it is now. (Ed told me at Marycon that he still wanted this letter printed.))

Dear Dave,

Sorry about the misunderstanding. My "suppressor" comment was part of the joke about Bruce being too powerful to oppose. It sure looked to me as if Bruce misrepresented your views. Do you mean that your views have changed since the poll? Or that you answered the question not as you yourself would have ruled but as you expected Bruce to rule? Of course, he interpreted your reply as the former, but you are repudiating that now, I see.

I do appreciate your informing me privately about the discrepancy. As you know, I did not print your letter or your name, because you stated that you were not interested in the feud, and I did not want to involve you publicly, as Bruce had done by including you on his list of supporters. I did feel justified in pointing out to my readers that Bruce had included an apparent non-supporter on his list of supporters. I find Bruce's tactic of printing the names of his "allies" to be somewhat distasteful. I'm sure he feels strongly that such action buttresses his position but, as in the present case, it may not be acceptable to those who are drafted.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Bruce for publication because some readers of your public letter may get the idea that I was the one to print your name. Such is not the case, as readers of the May issue of Politesse can attest.

((OK, more on this after Ed's later letter. So Ed finds it "distasteful" that I printed the names of those who said they agreed with me. I find it distasteful that he quoted or paraphrased the comments of those who told him they disagreed, without printing their names. And that he printed part of a letter which said "Don't print this!"))

From Bob Sweeney (5/17/84):

BRUX,

Please note that I titled this as a letter so that everyone (including you) would not mistake it for a RIGEL press release. More on RIGEL later...

About 2 years ago (plus or minus a decade of months), I began PEM Diplomacy. I, like others, didn't write DD but was introduced (seduced?) to its charms by a guy named Gregg Stebbins (known as Gregg the Usurper, as The Nut from Texas, and as Faceface), who "showed me the ropes" in 1982AD QUASAR, a position I now hold. Now, after being beaten (destroyed) in 3 games and being currently active in others, I must ask -- how long does it take to win one? So far, I've lied, cheated, and stolen just about every SC on the board. I've played every country (except Germany -- thank God) and am proud to say that I can be beaten as any one of them. I've tried every strategies listed in numerous sines from the "pleasant neighbor" to "I'm a Fuhrer -- how are you?" I've tried bribes, sold my sister, and helped kidnap cats. I've written press, letters to players, letters to the GM; I've tried jokes, pokes and insults; letters, postcards, and telephone calls.

Now, from this previous paragraph, one might say I'm obsessed with this game. THIS IS NOT TRUE! However, one thing -- one tiny, little thing does irritate me.

LOSING!

RIGEL. Told you I'd come back to this point. First, the F/R/I/G/A/T/E crew in RIGEL must have been proposed by a descendant of a simian. Obviously, the readability and you have failed to understand the awe-inspiring content of my press. The fluidity with which it flows onto paper and, in reading, to the Doobie. So, I hereby order U Doobies to read RIGEL press. Else, we'll have to write so much that VD as we know it will cease to exist. (Sorta like Larry Peery after a "...beer.")

To anonymous -- I like your style (I also like anyone who wants to give me money). Take care and until next ish -- rest your fingers whilst you may.

((Regarding the RIGEL press: I think that most readers (including me) are interested in quality, not necessarily quantity. There's been plenty of both lately! The key to winning is to write often and write well. That is, not only must your negotiations be frequent, but they must be persuasive and reasonable. That's the single most important point; doing this should get you a good, solid game more often than not. It's the finer points that will translate these solid games into wins: good tactics, writing your orders correctly, familiarity with the game rules and the house rules your GM is using, an occasional passed letter or forged letter (under the right circumstances) and so on. But your letter evokes an even more important message than "how to win"; namely, WHY win? What I mean is that, since Diplomacy is a seven-player game, nobody is going to chalk up wins all that often. You say that losing irritates you. If this is true, I'm surprised that you've been in the hobby for two years, for losing is a much more common event than winning and we all have to accept it, or not play. However, I can understand your frustration if you never win, too.

Keep playing, and sooner or later a win may come. But always remember that the main goal of your games is to enjoy them, win or lose.))

From Mike Eli (5/21/84):

Dear BRUX,

Here's \$10 for 20 more issues. I'm not trying to win the subscription war. I just figured that as long as I'm spending a lot of money anyway (i.e. resubbing to sines, buying a large stack of HBs from Mark Lew, and making numerous bids in the PEO Auction) I might as well splurge and pay for another 1,000 pages of VD (if my addition is right, my last ten issues (11, actually, with the free Xmas issue), totalled 542 pages.) God, I must be as much of a masochist (financially) as you are. ((Blush!))

From Bob Osuch:

Dear Bruce,

Here's the picture you requested. The little boy is my son, Daryl, & the girl is a friend's daughter. As you can see, we were coloring Easter eggs, so it's fairly recent.

Your request gave me a chance to let you know that I'm leaving Dip, probably for good. My game has ended and I dropped the one standby position I had as a player, leaving me with no commitments to fulfill. I've been wanting to get out for a while now -- my contributions have been close to nil for the last year or so and I've lost all interest, so it's time to drop the curtain. I certainly had some good times, but those days are gone. I may hit a con if I feel the urge, but nothing more.

It's no surprise to me that you still enjoy Dip. As with any endeavor, one gets what one puts into it. Keep it up. If anything, publishing seems to enhance your self-image. Yeah, all that asskissing -- HAH! Don't tell me you didn't take exception to that -- I know better -- just as you're irritated by Tallman's antics. I can tell by the way you choose to give the matter as little of your ink (read: response) as possible. I've seen it before, and don't think it's the best way to handle criticism, but I think I've told you that before too. So what, right? Sweep it under the rug and keep on keepin' on.

What else did I want to tell you? Oh, my sub -- I was going to give it away, but I think I'll keep it and take a walk down memory lane once a month or so.

Hey, I liked that letter of yours in ME a couple of issues back. Nice try, kid. Too bad you didn't have your facts straight. Now, I would expect you to write back and admit as much, CHOKE.

Shit, Kathy called before she came out, but I was out of town when she was here. My dad had a quadruple bypass done and there have been post-op complications. He still isn't doing all that well. I hope she doesn't think I was being rude; I did want to see her but the timing was bad. Wanted to take her to the dog races. I don't care if they train them with live babies -- they're a gas. I won \$100 last time we went.

You're in luck. I'm not voting in the Leader ((Runestone)) Poll this year.

As you may have noticed, I'm getting a tad cynical here so I might as well close. I wish you the best always, regardless of my thoughts otherwise. So long, sucker.

PS. "The British Diplomacy hobby is likewise a pretty entertaining place these days too,...". Don't let Kador see that!

((I am saddened indeed to hear that you have lost interest in Diplomacy and will be leaving the hobby. Best of luck to you, too, and I'm sure all your friends out there in Doomieland share my wishes for your father's recovery. Your name will be remembered for a long time in this hobby, especially in future articles about Swedish Roundabout here (☺), and we'll miss you. So long to you too, sucker! And thanks for the pix. You look just like the Hulk.

Actually, Tallman's stuff doesn't really irritate me all that much, nor do most things any more. Two or three years ago I probably would have gotten all hot and bothered about it, but these days I'm usually content just to sit back and let my record speak for itself, for better or worse. Must be getting sedate in my old age, hey? No, but what it really is is that I have so many good friends in this hobby that I can't help but continue to love it, and a few loud negative voices just aren't going to take away from that pleasure, now or ever. Aside from which, the game itself is only the best one ever invented!

I hope your "probably" is wrong and that you will return eventually. Bye!))

From Melinda Holley (5/14/84, excerpt):

Dear BRUX-

"Press Wars" was hilarious and so were the other press releases for RIGEL. If those guys play as well as they write press, that must be one hot game.

((It certainly is! Thanks for the further compliment.))

From Ed Wrobel (5/17/84):

Dear Brucifer--

Sigh...my reference to those who had contacted me privately to express support for my position was not related to the substance of our dispute -- readers of the entire article (except for you, apparently) are well aware that I only wished to note that so many feared to express publicly their opposition to Brucifer. Perhaps they suspected you would twist their meanings through lifting a selected phrase or draw them into a dispute they wished to avoid. The arguments on the merits of the case have been explored ad nauseum in several publications. I do not believe that either your position or mine requires further explication.

Love, Ed

((OK, OK, so you were only trying to point out what a dreaded villain I am rather than trying to further justify your point in the original dispute. I concede that, but you're still toadystashing. You decry my practice of naming those who agreed with me, while at the same time refusing to name those who agree with you, instead just printing their remarks anonymously. I personally view my stashing as far more aboveboard than your toadystashing, but what the heck.

Gee, did Ed Wrobel really sign his letter "love"? Hyork, hyork...))

From Ruth Glaspey (5/22/84):

Dear Bruce,

Many thanks for your kind thoughts regarding the state of my health -- I'm feeling much, MUCH better now than when I spoke with you. Vacation and the double whammy "flu" (bacterial and viral) commenced concurrently. I remember your call, and a midnight trip to the emergency room, but that's all I remember of the first five days of my seven-day vacation.

As a matter of fact, May has not been the best of months for me. For several months I had been looking forward to spending my vacation at a WAC reunion at Fort McClellan, Alabama (affectionately known as "the Mother House"). Everything was all set until I had my car checked over about a week before I was supposed to go. The work necessary to get it up to snuff cost almost to the penny what I had saved for the trip. Then here came the flu, as if to insure that I wouldn't be going. To top it all off, the shot they gave me to bring down the fever had a rather unpleasant side effect. But then, the USAR has just notified me that I've been promoted, so May hasn't been a complete bust after all.

Did you watch NBC's mini-series about the first modern Olympic games in 1896? It was especially interesting for me; Tom Burke, who won the 100 and 400 meter races, was my great-uncle. As a charter member of OURS (Old-time Unreconstructed Romantics Society), I pine for the good old days when the name of the game was sport, not politics. You'd think, though, that the Russians could come up with a more believable excuse for not coming to L.A. -- the detrimental effect of smog on their athletes' health, or something.

Ah -- lists! O.k., here are mine on folks I would like to invite to dinner (present and past) and historical events I would choose to view. This reminds me of the discussions we would have when I was young about what book, or three books, or five books, you would want to have with you if you were shipwrecked on an uninhabited island, so I'm throwing in that list, too.

1. Five people I'd like to have over for dinner sometime:

~~Robert Kennedy~~ (Get serious!)

Barbara Tuchman

Emperor Hirohito

Henry Kissinger

Lech Walesa

Eric Kane (To ask questions and generally keep the conversational ball rolling.

My second choice for this role would be either Barbara Walters or Dick Cavett.)

2. Five people I would have liked to have over for dinner (which brings to mind a tv program series of not long ago in which Steve Allen hosted a panel of historical personages; I can't remember its name):

Moses

Alexander the Great

Hildegard of Bingen (A medieval abbess, a certifiable genius who wrote some of the most stunningly beautiful music and poetry to come out of that period.)

Richard III (He's got a lot of explaining to do...)

Franklin D. Roosevelt

3. Five historical events at which I would have liked to be present:

D-Day

Waterloo

The First Christmas

The Battle of Bosworth (Bosworth?? Well, o.k., it wasn't particularly interesting militarily, but I think of it as a genuine pivot point in western history -- partly because it was such a near thing. The forces were pretty even, and it could have gone either way. What if Richard III had won, and there had been no Tudor dynasty; no Henry VIII, no Elizabeth I?)

The Siege of Eger (Hoo, boy -- a really obscure one! In the middle of the 16th century, the Turks, having worked their way well into northern Hungary, invested the fortified town of Eger. In the course of the siege all of the town's men were killed, so the women took over. So skillful was their defense, and so devastating were their raids on the besieging forces, that the Turks never realized that they were opposed by "mere" women. The siege was lifted.)

4. Five books I'd like to have with me on an uninhabited island:

L. Tolstoy -- WAR AND PEACE (Why does this book get such a bum rap as tedious and dull?)

H. Hesse -- MAGISTER LUDI

W. Shakespeare -- COMPLETE WORKS

H.G. Wells -- THE OUTLINE OF HISTORY (Outdated and utterly wrong in some places, but nevertheless interesting and thought-provoking.)

THE BIBLE (in one of the modern versions -- perhaps THE WAY)

There's another "book" I'd like to have along, but I dunno whether I'd give up one of the foregoing titles for it. That's a looseleaf notebook filled with blank pages. Maybe on a desert isle I'd find the time to write my own masterpiece. Of course, a book on wilderness survival skills might come in handy, too...

I was going to try to work Boy George into one of the lists, but I'm not quite sure whether he should be classified as a person or an event. And Ted Turner has done so many fascinating things that he would seem a likely candidate for a dinner invitation, except that I've seen him being interviewed; his monosyllabic answers hardly qualify as sparkling table-talk.

Uh -- say there, Mr. Dodgers fan, might I mention that out here in the hinterland, far, far from either coast, we have a team with a pretty decent record going (32-5 as of this writing)? They are called the Detroit Tigers. And the Cubbles aren't doing badly so far, either.

You may or may not find a picture of yours truly enclosed. I haven't decided yet. Right now, the most current picture I have was taken in 1976. I was still a CAPTAIN, for heaven's sake, and a bit chubbier than now. Last night I unearthed my Polaroid and spent a little time refurbishing it, and today I bought some film. Actually, I was surprised to find that they're still making film for such an antique. I don't know whether it's a Good Idea to let a picture out for general display, though. See, there are some folks in games with me who still think I'm petite and blonde, and it might very well be detrimental to my diploming if they found out the truth.

It's hard to believe that you and Ed Wrobel are still sniping at each other over something that happened over two years ago. I'm reminded of one of those kid's arguments where neither is willing to let the other have the last word: "Well, you're one!" "AND you're another!" "Am not!" "Are too!" "Am not!" "Are too, are too, are too!" C'mon, guys, it's just a GAME -- it isn't like it's bridge or chess or something. (Oh, oh -- better duck, Ruth!) Why don't you take a poll to see if anyone besides you and Ed is still interested?

By the way, "assinine" is really spelt "asinine".

Give my best to anyone at Maryoon who recognizes my name --

Lots of love & big squaky kisses.  
Ruth

((Blasphemy!))

I knew the correct spelling of "asinine", but didn't want to be accused of altering the quote from Politesse. I'm perfectly willing to let Ed Wrobel have the last word in our dispute, so long as he lets me have the postscript!

So the truth comes out and we now discover that Ruth Glaspey is petite and brunette! OK, everyone -- stab away. Blondes should have more fun.

The Tigers are pretty good for a minor league team. But in the majors (read: the National League), they'd have a much tougher time of it. Besides, I think the Orioles are going to pass them this year.

Well, if you ever invite me to dinner (scraping the bottom, hey?...), be sure not to serve spaghetti with red pepper. Just ask Eric Kane someday what happened at KansKon last year at dinner, hyork, hyork.

Glad to hear you're feeling better than when I called, and congratulations on your promotion. I missed the TV series about the First modern Olympics. My thoughts on the Russians' boycott are let's play without 'em, and cut the shit about all the victories being "hollow". Whoopie, the Bulgarians and Mongrels aren't coming either. Play without 'em. If we have to, let's play with ourselves. Seriously, if they're so afraid that their athletes are going to defect (and of course that's the real reason for the boycott, along with revenge for 1980), they ought to think about improving the quality of life in Mother Russia rather than slapping stupid restrictions on their citizens who who to participate in the Olympics.

You mean the VD Fourth Annish isn't one of your five favorite books?..))

That's no novel! That's a dipzain!

From Cluff Afflerbach (5/28/84):

Bruce,

Sorry, but this one ((the crossword puzzle)) still wasn't perfect. Hate to burst your bubble, but "Thank-God-I'm-a-Country-Boy" Denver and "You-Fill-Up-My-Senses" Annie want their separate ways ages ago. Didn't you know that?

Glad to say your puzzle was no hindrance to my scrabble play this weekend. Took 3 of 3 games in spite of my attempt to play "RRRRR". I really wanted to spring "brux" on 'em, but it wasn't in the draw.

((Of course brux wasn't in the draw. I'm a win-only player, remember? And she'll always be Annie Denver to me, which of course is my way of saying that I don't want to admit I made yet another mistake. Oh well.))



From Greg Ellis (5/28/84):

Dear BRUK,

Here it is three days before I move and I still can't tell you what my forwarding address will be. For the moment just continue to send all mail to my old address and I will have to trust my wife to get it to me. Uh, I think that you can skip sending me the chess moves. Just when you and Peery start getting me all sympathetic for the dollars that you lose in pubbing these wonderful zines, you go and pull something like spending the 35¢ or so it cost you to mail me a press update. ((It only cost me 20¢, and I sent out a correction because I omitted an entire press release, so it's the least I can do.)) Just for that here is my ((crossword)) entry for another 5 freebies. I think you should have reversed the clues and answers for 117 down and 70 down.

I have wanted to comment on at least a dozen of the issues brought up since I last sent you a letter, but I haven't had the time. Now that I have the time I can't remember everything I wanted to say. Lucky you. The two things that hit me the most were Knight's remarks this last issue, and another letter about the Reagan administration's enforcement of Affirmative Action, although I can't recall offhand who wrote it. ((That was in the ~~paper~~, a few issues back.)) He made a case both for and against Affirmative Action using as examples himself and his Hispanic wife, if I remember correctly. I believe the fiendish perpetrator of all their woes is a company called AROO. I really only have two comments about all of that. First, why didn't they both quit? Any time that I have felt that the company I was working for was not giving me the credit I felt I was due, I left. Every time that I have left a company I have gone to another company in short order and gotten a better deal. People are products in the market place just like anything else. If you think that your product (personal labor) can get a better price that it is presently pulling, then it is up to you to find that market which will pay that price. Too often people have turned to the government to solve problems that the government has no business being involved in to begin with. If we are worth more money, or a promotion, and we are not getting it, then we go someplace where we can get it. If we can't find anyplace that will pay us what we are worth, then we are lying about our worth.

Every time that the "people" ask the government to "protect" their rights, they invariably end up losing more rights. Because some people decided that they should have the right to work for a certain company, in a certain town, at a certain wage rate, for a certain amount of time and with only certain duties, we now have lost the right as employers to hire who we want for how much we want. The Free part of the enterprise is gone.

My second comment was that I never really understood what the author wanted. Either he was for AA in the case of his wife, or against it in his own case. Like so many other people (and I plead guilty as well) he wants what is best for him at the moment. An excellent analogy is the move to put teacher-led prayer in the schools. The people who are for it want it because most of the US is Protestant. Would these same people want it if their children attended schools of predominantly Shiite Muslims praying to Muhammed? I doubt it. But why should we worry about the future? The Congress doesn't.

That brings me to Steve's letter. "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." I take issue with everything that direct quotes of Steve's says. The President responsible? What happened to the 535 members of Congress? What happened to the 40% of the budget that is listed as "uncontrollable" because they can't set a spending limit on welfare? What happened to the billions of dollars of additional spending cuts that were blocked by the Democrat-controlled House? I think that Mr. Knight has been listening to too much campaign rhetoric.

The House controls the budget; the President's office only submits a recommendation.

The present deficit is completely attributable to the increases that have taken place in the various social programs that happen automatically. First, when more people lose their jobs (the natural consequence of 20% interest rates, 12% inflation, and several Presidentially-sponsored foreign trade boycotts, all of which this country experienced under Carter) then more people need welfare and unemployment benefits. Second, the amounts awarded are tied to the consumer price index of the previous year. The first year of Reagan's tenure, the outlays for welfare increased by 15%, and there wasn't thing one that he could do about it. Even if he had tried, imagine the stink the Democrats would have raised.

The only way that we are going to get the deficit down is to eliminate the Federal government's role in our personal affairs. Let the State and Local governments care for the welfare of their inhabitants. If we need to transfer some of the wealth from the rich states to the poor states during emergencies then let's do it. But this method of sending billions of dollars into the Federal Bureaucracy Machine for laundering and getting a few million back out is ridiculous. If every penny that was spent over the last ten years on welfare was simply given to the welfare recipients then they would have gotten over \$100,000.00 each. Where did all the money go?

I not only urge you and all of your readers to vote for Reagan in November, but I also ask that they put more Republican Congressmen to work helping the President carry out his planned New Federalism. Once we have given all of that money (read POWER) to the Congress it is going to be very difficult to get it back again. I think President Reagan is the man to do it. And it needs to be done.

I am happy to announce that I will be starting a game of Presidential Politics in June on two-week deadlines (or faster if all of the participants cooperate), for a sub/gamethe of 1000\$. Participants will need to buy the game from Jake Halverstadt, 1106 Castle Rock Road, Fort Collins, CO for \$5. If you would care to wait you may be able to get an autographed copy from the game designer himself at Origins. Imagine what an autographed '59 version of Diplomacy would be worth today! The game results will be published in my flyer which will have a title by the time it is important. I may even publish a few letters (if they are sent camera ready since I don't like typing) on political topics of general interest, since most of you pubbers don't like us infesting your letter columns.

Aha! I just got my new address. Mail all inquiries to Greg Ellis, 700 Rio Grande, Austin, TX 78701. Take care,

Love,  
Greg Ellis

((Once again I very highly recommend Presidential Politics to my readers. Write to Greg and/or Jake.

Positive. Sigh. Your letter ought to get a fair bit of response, since your views are, shall we say, a bit to the right of most Doomies. I will ask only that replies be kept as short as possible, since I really don't care for such politics in the Comsig Column.

Good luck in your new home!))

From Spades (Spring 1984) excerpts):

...about to jump to conclusions about dick's statement that gas ought to be not fair... I think he meant it given some people's definition of fair. For instance, according to some (you?) giving an advantage to some players and not others is not fair (e.g. putting players to tail then if they messed up their moves is unfair to those who never mess them up). I think a gm ought to tail players if they mess up their moves, if he happens to notice. so using the aforementioned definition of fair, I agree that sometimes a gm should not be fair.

I suspect that dick must forever be crucified about this. boardman is still frequently attacked or at least poked fun at about something he did in the mid-60s. I like to think that I'm not held blamed for things I did when I was a fetus.

i think that explaining what REAL anarchists do, defeats the purpose of being one. i wish i could remember the rest of a message my english teacher wrote on a paper in 10th grade which began "the trouble with iconoclasts is that..." it seemed cryptic at the time, but i think this has something to do with that.

i imagine distinguishing vowels and consonants makes more sense if we're talking of phonemes and not letters. i suppose other languages have more regular correspondence of the two than english does. "w" is a vowel in walesh (or should i say gaelic?) and therefore in english words which were borrowed therefrom. if you read about mountain climbing then you may have heard about cw, or also if you play scrabble in which case you may also be familiar with crwth, sh, shh, and pht, as well as nth. the idea that the OSPD contains sick and perverted words which would never be seen in a respectable dictionary is a myth. cw, crwth, nth, and sh appear in webster's collegiate and i'm sure that shh and pht are in some other one. there are words that would be handy in a scrabble game which appear in other dictionaries but not the OSPD: funk & wagnalls desk dictionary has quo and ja while websters collegiate has qt. and if you've ever worked seriously on one of the word-oriented GAMES magazine contests, you know that webster's 3rd new international is loaded with mouthfuls so bizarre you wouldn't expect them to turn up in your alphabet soup.

seems like a lot of things turn out to be matters of semantics, doesn't it? zealous taxonomists might point out that one of the reasons ig lew turned to pragmatism is that it offers a solution to semantical problems. if we can bicker and bicker about the meaning of a term, the term is obviously serving no practical purpose, so it is thrown out or at least the concept is deemed "artificial". if you think about it, i think you'll agree that instead of arguing about what a word means, it makes more sense to decide what concept you'd like to discuss and ASSIGN A WORD TO A CONCEPT rather than the other way around.

in a poll once upon a time i chose E-R as the best alliance and would do so again. i share mr. ditz's regret that he lost my address at an important time in LUNA. LUNA was my #2 choice for game to NOT resign from when i burned out. this probably would have renewed enough interest to keep me in.

diplomacy is of course an exception, but generally, in 2-or-more player games (titan, rail baron, acquire, &c) i prefer to have fewer players. i suppose this is partially because i am so accustomed to playing 2-player and am thus more familiar with 2-player strategies which can be vastly different from the multi-player ones. (i suspect i could win in 2-player rail baron against most of you who are used to 5 or 6 players because things are so much different (i know because i have been stomped in 5-player games).) in acquire my preference is 3 because i don't like to ~~hear~~ a ship for the bank which you do in 2-player. a few days ago i played 2-player acquire with frankie and we had 4 mergers in one turn -- each time we picked a tile for the bank, it made another merger! too bad after 4 mergers there weren't any more unsafe chains.

very nice of you to use the oldest quote you could find for me. damn near four years ago. i didn't recognize it first time through (i thought konrad's was mine) but upon re-reading i double-took. fortunately i recalled that the issue (which sent me into an absolute tizzy as i recall) was orange, so it was rather easy to find it in my grocery bag of VDs and DDs, and sure enough, there was the quote. i feel sorry for the poor slimas who are looking through their 3-year-old collections -- "let's see, do we have it yet? no? damn, that means i have to read another one of his horrible letters."

i do believe that you did this in one afternoon. had you spent more time, you'd not have passed up some of the juicier quotes like:

"Eminis Appleseed sees himself as a modern-day American folk hero planting nuclear weapons all over the world."

"Go pick somebody else's nose for a change."

"will somebody please tell me what the hell people magazine has to do with people? i guess bullshit magazine wouldn't sell well."

AE

"Negotiate my ass! I'm gonna kill somebody!"

"BRUX's solution to the hobby personality problem: if it moves, feud with it."

"no one would care about daily hobby being clubbed to death if they were it cute."

when i read you do. i want to confess that the way you dodged the use of (strictly speaking) unkeyed letters was somewhat clever but i'm afraid it only serves to make them slightly less tacky than the use of two-letter words. island is aire and hamsters is spelled without a "p" but in spite of those minor faults and even in spite of your extremely gauche acronyms, i think yours was a slightly better effort than mine. i'm tempted to send another to prove myself, but i hope to resist that temptation. in my younger days, i wrote puzzles for the inflight magazine of some airline up here and they insisted on an alaska theme. i learned that when you write for a topical publication, the theme becomes the master and the puzzle is necessarily compromised. besides, i like to think that if i ever get off my butt and make something, i'll put in the extra eight hours and submit it to somewhere respectable like genes or the ny times. if writing articles in vd helps one to go big-time, writing puzzles should too, right wain?

as the foremost proponent of the neo-vorticist movement in the avantgarde school of gning, my advice to young gns is that they ignore the Mr. Yuk stickers on the words "gn interference". the gn cannot help but affect the game; strictly speaking, he interferes by running it. anything he does to interfere will affect the game by making it better or worse (or indifferent). it seems to me that only bad interference ought to be avoided; who would fault a gn for making the game better? hecklers will now invent some oaklymequer examples in which the gn thinks the game would have been more interesting with some different moves, so he changes them; but just a bit of thinking will reveal that the gn is not making the game better.

it looks like you enjoy supernova for the same reason i oppose it. you want all those squimy little puppies for yourself! fess up brux,

really you can't help being selfish, as the existentialists enjoy pointing out, but i think those who accuse you of being unbenevolent about it are unaware of your zeen and its price. (and that you feel compelled to defend yourself indicates how hung up about it you are.)

nice to see that the rigellians didn't steal half the wine this time. i like short press too, parlantter was my favorite here.

hey everyone this is bruce here this is a contest because i'm curious to see how many of you actually read ig's letters. anybody who informs me in writing that he read this by july 6 is eligible to win. from all eligible people i will choose one at random by flipping a coin and that person will get a free vd. back to ig we go.

i sympathize with tonnie about "reaganomics". nobody ever explained to me what went wrong either. of course, i know so little about economics, the only way i could decide if he knows what he's talking about would be by some character judgement or some such. i've also wondered just what it was that carter did wrong. i hadn't doubted that he did do something wrong, but i might start if everyone keeps refusing to explain it to me.

the more i think about politics, the more i believe that public opinion of it is so much like public opinion of the superbowl. i can recall being told that a terrible president he was about every president since coolidge, but things don't look so bad to me.

i typed an article for a school newspaper in which some guy opposed school prayer first because of the terrible effects it'd have on some poor kid's psyche, and then because it's a waste of time and nobody would pay attention anyway. hmmm. new idea: mandatory 15 minute prayer period for students before every final exam. might do some good.

actually, the gnal reason why you and ed won't feud is that a good feud requires at least one derational person.

i actually was impressed by nixon's foreign policy. liberals yell at me when i say that.

most of words come from german. those oughtn't count.

i have an irrational fear of having my picture taken. must be the 1/64 passing quddy indian in. if i go to dipcon i'll have to wear a bag over my head, or pretend i'm someone else, just in case you send a sniper. i feel jumpy in airports -- not because of the guards carrying guns, but because of the tourists and their cameras. they just don't care who they point those things at...

your method of combining the normal score and preference matrix seems unnecessarily perverse. i think the sensible thing is to skip the preference matrix and instead adjust a persons's normal votes if necessary. if the mean of the scores a person sends is more than 5.5 or less than 4.5, all his scores are adjusted by whatever integer would bring the average into that range. i didn't say that very well but i think that the idea is pretty easy. if some guy thinks that we're voting from 4 to 10, let him, we'll just drag his votes down to the correct range. any scores which go out of range are discounted.

actually i think the whole operation is silly. i think people support it to get ego boosts, but these ego boosts have to come at the expense of mediocre publishers and then everyone gets all uptight about it.

i'm distressed to see that subzines found their way onto the ballot. does anyone know just what the hell a "subzine" is (i do, but i ain't tellin'). last year it was alex's column; this year it'll be rigel press, potato head articles in retail, pilgrim & dipinaster articles, gary coughlan plays...

about that new deviant -- you can't be sirius!

yeh, i know you were just waiting for someone to say that, but it has been my experience to learn that your 99 zillion LSDs are a bit slow to realize the obvious.

you seem to be appalled at the idea of giving to minorities to prevent rioting, presumably because it smacks of extortion. but perhaps you're forgetting that most of our government is based on extortion.

okay, we'll take welfare for example: the essence of this, it seems to me, is that there are poorer people and there are richer people; many of the poorer would rather be richer; the richer would rather not have their lives made miserable by the poorer. so they make a compromise and the richer give a certain amount of money to the poorer. it is more complicated than that, of course, as there are myriads of interrelated compromises. extortion is balanced by counter-extortion -- witness the illegality of extortion (as defined by the law) from here -- the system evolves much in the same manner as does a species -- that which works, propogates itself.

i'm afraid i've bored your more academic readers. i was only trying to demonstrate the silliness of being offended morally by extortion (whether you were or not).

i think you are perhaps condemning racial discrimination categorically, in a manner not unlike your government's condemnation of marxism. i am not opposed to discrimination, but rather the bad things it does. shall we say: i care to judge a situation on its own merit, without regard to the presence of discrimination... ( )...?

i find that allying to eliminate other communicators is a wiser policy. the non-communicators seem to eliminate themselves (but i suppose olsen is happy to eliminate anyone he sees).

That does sound like something i'd say.

i think olsen meant to say that DIAS is pro-surinansess.

HELP! jehaz garson is over and "friday night videos" is coming on. but i need a cat in my lap so i can't get up to turn off the TV.

speaking of lap cats, may i make a few comments about vd? it's my paper, although i guess i can. i would like to make a couple of suggestions. first, you should label the black press games as such since nobody remembers which they are, although as you know press is even less interesting than the games. also, i have noticed that you are participating in the press. can't you see that this just encourages them?

i think your editing of mr. wrobel's letter was a clever idea, poorly executed. i'm reminded of a rail baron game here. --"only 16 for chicago to el paso? that seems low for such a long trip." --"are you kidding? that's high for such a short trip." that readers of both publications would need to be careful just to suspect, is an exaggeration; but the notion that ad's taste of his own medicine was an equitable dose is no less hyperbolic -- because the presence of ellipses makes a big difference (notices of their expungement notwithstanding) (okay, maybe my argument is running in circles but at least i'm not trying to make a degenerate case).

((it took me a while to catch onto that. anyone who doesn't get it is advised to focus his thoughts on the nearest parabola...))  
seems to me that if you're worried that an ombudsman might not understand a rule, you ought to be more worried that a player might not understand; and if that's the case, perhaps the hra are the culprit(s).

if you're interested in freelance programming, i imagine that the best market is for "educational" programs (my opinion is that educational programs may be educational, but their primary purpose is to make people feel not so bad for having bought a home computer) (not unlike good writing in playboy) for home computers, especially for the new ones if you hit them just as they come out.

deep down, i wonder if i'll ever actually complete one of my projects (though i am confident that if i do, it'll be marketable), so i stick with writing games with a lot of action, which i think is the most fun to write. all i know is 6502 machine language... oops, also basic but it hardly counts. is cabol more wordy than basic? i didn't think that was possible. ((it is, and it is.))

titan has held my interest for five solid months now, which is better than any of the others. rail baron and chess became pedestrian after a few weeks of playing. acquire is so intense that it burns me out, often after one game. diplomacy gets to be too long and tiresome after a while (that would lessen with more enthusiastic opponents, i imagine) and civilization does so even more. nevertheless, all the aforementioned games command my highest respect. i believe that scrabble would hold my interest for a long time if i could only find a good opponent.

i saw nothing absurd about the food-for-everyone notion, too.  
clearly all the atoms haven't gone anywhere, and energy can put them back into the right form, just as soon as we figure out the process. if you're not satisfied with the energy we get from the sun, remember that mass can be converted to energy at a rather efficient rate. so i see no major theoretical barriers (such as there is for faster-than-light travel, e.g.) (and therewith, colonial empire of planets), it's just a matter of researching the methods. and yes, it seems to me that this is a more worthwhile endeavor than working to ensure that the available food stays mostly in this country.

i think i've said this before, but no discrimination is ridiculous. no discrimination means all stimuli get the same response, which makes for a very poor function machine, i think. you're discriminating against ambiguous orders, brux. (or you're discriminating against lousy workers, just because he doesn't ever come to work). racism, i believe, is an example of oppression. discrimination is just the medium here (or perhaps i'm just bickering about semantics).

i believe that there is one rule (at least) which defies hobby tradition, that's the april fools black press rule. maybe you get rid of it already and i didn't notice; but if you haven't, you ought to. it's a cute idea, but it weakens your case, as well it should because it's a dumb rule.

right, and the rulebook has won every game of dip which ends in a win, by dictating that the power with 18 dots wins.

i never notice taylor ads, but douche ads, which are now appearing on TV, really offend me. perhaps i'm just old-fashioned.

((Thanks for the quick note. I think your idea about adjusting each person's Runestone Fall votes so that their mean falls between 4.5 and 5.5 is actually pretty good. Not faultless, mind you, but pretty good.))



From Steve Langley (5/21/84):

Dear Bruce,

VD #95 and counting. Thanks for the mention of Hare of the Dog.  
I see no problem with concurrent prizes to members of the same household. Although, that limitation might not be as fair as the limitation of by subscription. I can conceive of a situation where two Doomies might share an address and yet have their own subs to VD. A college dorm or a large boarding house or the same military establishment. Allowing only one prize per sub is both fair to those hypothetical Doomies, and to us less hypothetical Doomies who share a single sub between us. Tough about Mark Lew not sending in his answers. If he had, Joan wouldn't have made the top three, so it is just as well. I didn't send you the first crossword puzzle -- but I wasn't in the running either. Maybe I'll do better (with regard to sending it, at least) this time.

Your BRUX Speaks about H&L is, of course, your point of view. How does it feel to be on the other end? I'm referring to the situation that Dick will go right ahead and do what he wants despite well-reasoned pleas to the contrary -- or even pleas that are not well-reasoned -- just as you have done time and time again in VD. Please don't conclude from the above that I think you should change your mind. I don't really see why it matters if a H&L reader or contributor is a GM or gubber. If I were running a hobby letter column mine, the case would be different. The point is, I'm not -- nor are you (running H&L -- you run a fine LoG zine) -- Dick is, and so it is Dick's rules that we follow. Just as we follow BRUX's rules in VD or mine in Magus.

Bob Olsen is quite wrong. I did not steal answers from Daf. We jointly found sixty some odd quotes and from that point on, we each guessed. I imagine that some of our guesses were the same, although we didn't cross-check. I was amazed that I had so many correct guesses. I expected one or two but got six or seven.

Ignore Steve Knight's remarks about Steve Knight's press. What does Steve Knight know about Steve Knight's press writing anyway? I think Steve Knight's criticism of Steve Knight's excellent press was just a cheap shot way to get Steve Knight mentioned in VD.

Back to contests -- if Joan can get Cupcake and one other to send in answers to any contest and get them to assign their winnings to her, then she deserves all three top prizes for pulling off a diplomatic and contest-solving coup -- not to mention for setting another record for VD. So don't bother about these hypothetical cases, BRUX, just keep giving out the free issues.

And I too found some of Jim Meinel's logic a bit too difficult for easy swallowing and I felt that he still made a valid point. For someone to set himself up as not needing hobby services is a form of selfishness. For Jeff Panches (your hypothetical player) to pay a diptax to support services he neither uses nor even knows about seems unfair to Jeff, since his games all run smoothly and he never has a problem. But what about Jeff Panches (my hypothetical player) who wants to check out his fellow players' standings in Everything before discovering the hard way who is a novice and who is a shark, and whose first game under GM Novice was abandoned in 1902 when Novice found out that his GM duties were conflicting with his high school social life and was rehoused thanks to the Orphan Service, and who is interested in establishing his dippy rank and so sees the BNC even if he doesn't quite understand how? My Jeff Panches should kick in a few bucks for the services he uses. Outside of educating the dippies involved and then polling all of them accurately, there is no fair way to determine who should pay how much for which service. That last snacks too much of organization to suit me, anyhow -- so what's left? The semi-voluntary donations via the many paths we have now. It may be anarchy -- but it's getting most of the job done, and it's lots easier than trying to figure out a better way, much less impose that way.



((The problem with limiting prizes to one per sub is that then people like Stephen Wilcox (who isn't a Doonle but nonetheless entered the Dippy Spaces Contest) would be banned entirely. As for the hypothetical situation where Joan wins all three top prizes by persuading other Doonles to send in entries for her; well and good, but the purpose of most of my contests is not to see who can pull off the best diplomatic coup, so I don't think this should reflect in the final results. Of course, the Quotes Contest was an exception to that.

I agree entirely with you that Hof is Dick Martin's zine, to run the way he chooses. All I was doing was making what I viewed as a constructive criticism, which Dick is welcome to follow or not follow as he sees fit. But more on that after Dick's letter later.

Yes, your Jeff Punches should pay for the services he uses, but my Jeff Punches should not be required to subsidize your Jeff Punches or any of the bunches of Punches that are out there. My Jeff Punches should have to pay only for what he buys, in this craziness we call a hobby.))

From My Jeff Punches (5/21/84):

Dear Bruce,

Sorry it's been so long since I've written but I have been exceedingly busy at work lately. I've been traveling a great deal on business to such places as Orlando, Fla., Lemore, Ca. (no garden spot, I assure you), and Montreal, Quebec. It's been tough just to keep up with all the games I'm in in a number of other magazines. Additionally I have gotten a computer to play with at home much to the chagrin of my wife who thinks I have a fixation on the thing. It's a Zenith Z-100 and I really like the machine. It has both a MS-DOS(Z-DOS) and a GP/M processor so it can use a great deal of software. Overall a great toy.

I would very much like to get into another game in VD as I very much miss writing to and getting mail from the Doonles. I did get a letter from Jeff Noto who invited me to visit next time I'm in Orlando, something I'll try to do if I can get the time away from work. I still hear from Jake Halverstadt via Presidential Politics. I miss that game too now that I have spent all my campaign funds. However, I am hanging onto my accumulated votes so that I can cut a deal for the vice-presidential slot. Speaking of politics did you hear that Walter Mondale has selected Dolly Parton as his choice for vice-president... that way they can be the three biggest boobies in history!! Bah!! ((And old!!))

Not sure how here on the West Coast. I've been working too hard of late and we intend to escape to San Francisco for Memorial Day for a well-deserved mini-vacation. After that I have my two weeks of Naval Reserve duty in Fallon, Nev. (another garden spot). My wife started her own business last month so I've been helping her get that started. She's become an independent win broker representing several wineries. She says it's a profession she believes in!

Enclosed is a black and white picture of yours truly... sorry that's all I have right now. Hope that mug does not offend anyone. Have fun at Maryland and take care, Bruce.

((I sure did. Part of the fun was showing off the Dippy Photo Album which included your picture. Thanks.

I'd love to spend a week in Fallon, Nevada. I'm not kidding. Hope you enjoyed San Francisco! I was there in '76 and had a ball.))

From Melinda Holley (5/29, excerpt from a response to a letter I'd sent a while back))

Dear Bruce-

...West Virginia does have beautiful scenery. (We may not have much else, but we do make it look good.) I've traveled a bit in the South the past few years & still get a "lift" when I get back to West Virginia.

((W.V. is in my opinion the most beautiful state east of the Rockies, and VD now has its first Doonle from there since Al Pearson departed many moons ago!))

((The following letter is from Dick Martin. I have numbered the paragraphs in the left margin, as I will be responding to them by number. The letter is dated 5/20/84))

Dear Doomed Ones,

1 I fully expect Bruce to edit this letter to incomprehensibility as he did my last one, but maybe this is worth one more try. As a result of my inability to trust you, Bruce, I must insist that you print this letter in its entirety, in the next VD, or not at all.

2 Just the other day, I received yet another set of "courtesy copies" from VD #95. Why one would bother to hide his personal attacks behind the veil of a "courtesy copy" is beyond me, but Bruce is known for doing the incredible.

3 My response to this "editorial" on elitism in House of Lords (which is actually a thinly disguised attempt to send a shot at me and HOL) is a simple one, consisting of two quotes from Bruce.

4 1) "First of all, I'd like to say that I think Peerless is an excellent idea. Hope you keep it up." --This is from Peerless #2, a zeen which described itself as "A brand new publication meant only for those holding a position in the Diplomacy hobby." (As a matter of fact, I got the idea for HOL from Peerless, as I said in HOL #1. I sent Bruce a copy when it came out.)

5 2) "Limit, one per Doonie; none per non-Doonie." --This is from VD #95.

6 As the two quotes demonstrate, Bruce is not at all opposed to elitism. He supports the idea of a zeen with a subscribership limited to "important people" and special privileges for certain groups -- in this case, subbers to VD. I think he really has only two objections to HOL. First, I publish it, and Bruce will do what he can to put me down. Second, HOL won the freshman poll, demonstrating to Bruce that this zeen of mine needs a strong dose of negative propoganda to "put it in its place". Why didn't Bruce write his wonderful editorial six months ago when the topic was a live one in HOL? Probably because that would have been the decent thing to do.

7 I have made it clear on several occasions why I wish to limit my number of subbers to HOL. I want active subbers, and more than about thirty of them would overload the zeen (HOL has about forty subbers). I will not publish a twenty-page zeen and send it out to eighty subbers. I've done that before, and got tired of it. With that in mind, I wish to limit the subbers I have to those most likely to profit from the discussions and contribute to them -- pubbers and GMs, past, present, and future.

8 I thought it hilarious that Bruce would refer to Mark Berch as coming to the rescue of the "dregs" of the hobby. This is the same Mark Berch who not long ago referred to everyone in Dipdom (except for four people) as "the ignorant masses"! He just happened to do it in a Dipcom committee letter, and not in the public eye, so he's a good guy and I'm a bad guy. Ah, well, if I am attacked by Bruce I must be doing something right. Just like in the old days if you were attacked by Curt Gibson you knew you were OK. (I suppose it's understood that Bruce took the "dregs" comment out of context, isn't it?)

9 But all of this will soon be a moot point. House of Lords will be folding shortly, a few more issues to clean up present business and that's all for me. I find myself as a victim of these irresponsible attacks in zeens like VD and DD often enough as it is. Why give the naysayers another opportunity to take potshots at me? I already get plenty for the census and orphan service. Then everybody will be equal again (at least in regard to HOL), and Bruce will be happy.

10 Side note; all this time that Bruce has been whining about my sending him only half an issue (which he owes me for, by the way) of Retal, he has not mentioned that I sent him the first two issues of HOL free of charge, has he? No, I thought not. Someday Bruce your lies and half-truths will catch up with you. It took me long enough to figure out what was going on, but you're showing your true colors more often these days. If you want to call personal attacks "non-controversial" that's up to you, I usually don't. But you say it's OK if it's Bill Highfield who is the

10  
(cont.)

victim. Not Robert Seaks. Or Frances Guerrier. Or Peter Walker. Or Dick Martin. Or Ed Krobek. Or Kim Dent. Or John Caruso. Or Bernie Oaklyn. Or Bob Albrecht. Un-huh! And this was just from VD #95! (quick question, Doodles: what's the difference between Guerrier and Richard Sharp (both are excellent writers who folded their seens messily)? Answer: Bruce doesn't like Guerrier, so strongly recommends against submitting to his seen.)

11

"But -- wouldn't it be foolish enough to get specific -- I can name an example of a presently existing "hobby service" that I feel is an absolute and total farce. It may very well have been invented just for the express purpose of allowing the "mediator" to put his hand in the till." --Bruce Lindsey

12

"I have a list..." --Senator Joe McCarthy  
No. Coughlin/Holmes, you've been plenty foolish in the past, why change now? When you're hot, you're hot. Name names. Or is it the Hobby Reprint "Service" you're referring to?

13

14

What have you done of a positive nature lately, Bruce? I mean, that a ten-year-old couldn't do?

15

Well, I don't, that's about all I can muster at the moment. All this negativism really takes it out of me. And Bruce, please spare me the "courtesy copies" this time. I really don't think you're very funny or cute anymore. Take your vendettas elsewhere.

((Coughlin, Dick. It seems to me that you're getting upset over this. All right, here are my responses to each of your paragraphs.

1. I didn't edit your last letter to incomprehensibility. I took out the part which referred to your feud with Coughlin, a topic I have stated will no longer be covered here.

2. I'll take it as a compliment that I'm known for doing the incredible. You're far from the only one who has told me that. I'll get to the business about "courtesy copies" later on.

3. No, my editorial wasn't an attempt to send a shot at either you or Hol. But more on that later, too.

4. I never took a stand one way or the other on whether Peerless should allow non-thing non-publishers to subscribe and/or contribute. Heck, I don't think I'd been in the hobby long enough back then to have an opinion on the matter either way. What I do support is the concept of a zine devoted to discussions of publishing and things alone nothing wrong with such a zine, provided that there is someone who wants to read it and or contribute to it.

5. Since when don't I have the right to buy my Doodles milkshakes?

6. Your claim that my two objections to Hol are that you run it and that it won the freshman poll are just plain silly. I don't object to either. In fact, the freshman poll never received any coverage in VD, either before or after it was conducted. For reasons I've already explained to my readers. I don't give a shit who wins it. As for you running it, the zine wouldn't exist if you didn't. So how could I object to it? I didn't write my wonderful editorial six months ago because I didn't receive issue #4 and 5 of Hol till about three weeks before I wrote the editorial. And something tells me that you wouldn't have considered it a "urgent thing" even if I had published it six months ago.

7. Hey, I really like this paragraph! You make your points very well as to why you wish to limit your circulation. This ties into what I'm about to say in response to paragraph 9. Only one question arises from this paragraph: when you say past, present, and future, does that mean that someone who plans to publish can tell you so and get you at the reduced rate? Oh, and one further comment: I envy all the spare time you must have had publishing a 20-page zine and sending it to 30 subscribers. (Doodles.)

8. I am not familiar with the Mark Borch letter which he wrote as a member of a Dipoon committee, so won't have much to say. But I will make this observation: most of the hobby, myself included, is ignorant when it comes to running a Dipoon. To refer to the "ignorant masses" in that context would simply be telling it as it is.

8 (cont). In what context did you make the "dregs" remark? As far as I can tell, the quote was both accurate and in context.

9. Ah, the martyr approach! You're receiving criticism, so you're gonna pack it in. God, if I reacted that way to criticism, I'd have folded dozens of times so far.

But really, this paragraph is the most telltale point of your entire letter. My editorial was not a personal attack, and your reaction is all wrong. Rather, I was giving you some constructive criticism, based on my own (successful) experience in running a zine with a letter column and with discussions about publishing/GMing procedures. Correct reaction to such criticism is not to take it as a personal attack, as you have done, but rather to react in either of the following two ways:

1. I appreciate the criticism, but would rather not change my policy in HOL or
2. I agree with the criticism and will change the policy in HOL.

Either of these would have been acceptable. Your whining about how you're going to fold as a result of all this is just plain baby talk. If you can't take a little criticism to begin with, publishing is a poor idea for you. To fold or not to fold are both options open to you, and the decision is entirely yours. I personally have no desire to see you fold HOL.

Grow up.

10. Ah, so you want to discuss who owes who money, eh? If you're so confident that I owe you and not the other way around, then why have you consistently ignored my repeated, private requests that we resolve the matter through a neutral ombudsman? (I only named about 20 respected possible arbitrators, you know...)

My personal opinion is that I have an obligation as a publisher to send a readable copy of my zine to each and every paying subscriber. A couple of my readers in the past few months have gotten copies with a page inadvertently left blank. They received whole new copies of the issues in question in short order. Obviously, you think it's OK to damage issues of your zine beyond readability, and then send them to your paying subbers. And I disagree, and submit to Retal under the assumption that I'd be able to read my issues. I repeat: if you think you don't owe me money (and that I owe you money), why won't you agree to have a neutral party resolve the matter?

The point that you sent me the first two issues of HOL free of charge is a red herring. I don't have to pay for unsolicited items that I receive through the mail. And you seem to forget that issues #23-30 of VD were sent to you free of charge.

I don't call personal attacks non-controversial. But your list of people who were supposedly personally attacked in VD #95 is ludicrous. Kim Dent? I only criticized one of his house rules. Peter Walker? I only made passing reference to his irregular zine, in discussing a mention thereof in a recent Snafu. Bernie Oaklyn? Where did I personally attack Bernie Oaklyn (and in his case, why would anyone object anyway)?

What's the difference between Guerrier and Sharp? I was party to the messy fold of Guerrier's zine, and know from my own personal experience that it's a poor idea to sub to his zine. I know nothing of the Sharp matter other than that he folded messily, and therefore I did not plug his zine -- I merely noted his return, and the fact that he'd folded messily.

11. Thanks, but I'd just as soon not get into a discussion of which hobby services are valuable and which are not at this time.

12. So Joe McCarthy had a list. What's that got to do with the rest of your letter?

13. I don't consider the "Hobby Reprint Service" to be any more of a service than any other good zine, but I've already said that here.

14. I don't have time for positive things. I'm too busy sending two or three Supernovas a week to novices and answering the frequent questions that arrive in return. Too busy publishing a zine which generates a fair bit of response from the readers, because many of them are interested. Too busy putting together the Dippy photo album. Too busy running round-table discussions on GMing practices, devising contests, printing dozens of pages of press for the best press game in the hobby.

too busy preparing to put out my fifth anniversary issue, and so on. With all these things taking up my time, I just don't have time for anything positive. (☺)

15. I'm not sure what you mean when you ask me to spare you the "courtesy copies". Do you mean that you want me to hold back altogether on sending copies of the pages on which you are criticised (such as you did when you called me a child molester in Ratal) or do you want me to send the copies without labeling them as courtesy copies? As for vendettas, well, you're the fine one to talk. At least I keep my criticisms in bounds. I don't go around calling people a "child molester" in print, or a "drunkard" or a "dishonest GM", unless the charge is true.

All in all, Dick, you seem inordinately upset that you have to take criticism from certain people. If you really can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen of publishing or at least stop doing things that will only continue to make people criticise you. I'm referring to the afore-mentioned libelous statements in Ratal, and to your shabby practice of sending subscribers issues which you have deliberately rendered unreadable. I think you've got enough brains to know that such actions are going to get a lot of flak.

I do want to thank you for a nice letter despite the many disagreements we have, and hope that we can continue the discussion, though it would be appreciated if you would respond to my articles as the constructive criticism it was rather than flying off the handle with all this "personal attack" nonsense and whining that you're going to fold, and so on. Please let me hear from you again.))

From Conrad Minshall (5/30/84):

"Dregs" - BRUK,

I have had the good fortune of being able to read three issues of HoL for free. The zine is very interesting and I might try to contribute were I not prejudged.

I do not find HoL's restrictions "destructive"; I find them extremely insulting. I also cannot agree with your "way of thinking" -- that "we're all equal." Other than those quibbles, I am in complete agreement with your editorial.

I simply do not believe that experienced hobby publishers and GMs have a total monopoly on insights in their area of expertise. Every field of human endeavor has hubristic experts. Their overweening pride causes them to over-generalize. There is always the exception, the little child who says, "But gee mister, couldn't you do it like this?"

A policy which wouldn't offend would be to state that submissions are judged on their merit and that, in the editor's opinion, the chance of publication for material submitted by "dregs" is thus quite small.

Incidentally, this "dreg" does not appreciate being a dysphemism's referent. I'd prefer a less offensive expression -- even this greenest of novices must maintain some self-esteem.

So, BRUK, how's about a "Name dem dregs" contest?

((Instead of that, let's just say that all Doomies are dregs and be proud of it!))

As you know, I share your view that publishers and GMs do not have a monopoly on insights into publishing and GMing, which is why I wrote the editorial. (I have, in the past, criticised other good zines when I thought they could be improved; zines like EE, DD, DW, and so on.) But if Dick prefers not to change his policies, that's his prerogative. If I were to run HoL, I'd do it differently and that would be my prerogative too. I can't see myself restricting VD's letter column to publishers and GMs, even for those topics which pertain to publishing and GMing, and I don't think it would be very successful if I tried. But Dick has succeeded with House of Lords, and who's to argue with success?

Uh, seriously though, you are right that "dregs" is kind of insulting...))

From Don Del Grande (5/21/84):

BRUX:

500 games, huh? Let's see...Afrika Korps, After the Holocaust, Air Force, Air War, Alexander,...

In the meantime, here's what is supposed to be the solution to the Dippy Crossword in issue 95...

With my luck, I'll have enough answers to win, but the coin won't turn up my way. (Reminds me of a GI: Anvil of Victory contest in The General -- I had one of the 19 correct answers, but only 10 can win...)

Re Langley's letter: Alarums and Excursions is a monthly APA (amateur press assoc. -- a lot of small zines, usually 2-4 pages, put together, mainly to comment on what others have said previously) which has so far reached 105. My copies (from 60 to present) have a total of over 7000 pages. However, I don't consider it a true zine, at least not in the sense of dippines. 42 LOMs have added up to 556 pages, but over the past years I have had neither time nor funds nor loads of press and letters to stretch out to 2000. Maybe now that I've left school... (Side note: as far as I know, the other Dippers besides Steve that have written for A&E are Robert Sacks, Peggy Gemignani, myself (the only "active" one, as far as I know), and Cathy Guming, not to mention a few British dippers who wrote for a special issue. John Boardman is probably the most active writer/dipper (of course), but he writes for a different APA...Mech War 2, Mech War 77, Mech War 84, Midway...

Games between the Padres and Giants are not meaningless -- not at Candlestick Park, anyway. At least there, you can see the Candlestick Crab (the commercials here have the crowd booing the crab, after which Frank Robinson chases him off; at the stadium, they do the same thing (except for the bit with Robinson), and they give away buttons if a night game lasts extra innings and you stay until the end (assuming anybody is crazy enough to stay at the park with the cold and wind that late). Who cares about the game? The Dodgers never lose...

...Zulu. There, 500 games.

((Well, glad you got that out of your system. OK, I'll admit that games between the Giants and Padres may have some meaning if you're interested in watching two teams square off secure in the knowledge that both of them will end up behind the Greatest Team in Baseball at year's end anyway. Nothing wrong with a good ball game between also-rans.

Alarums and Excursions isn't at all what I have in mind when I talk about records held by dippines, any more than is The General. I still claim third place on the all-time page list, behind Graustark and Greatest Hits, but there are several that could still be ahead of me. I passed Brucus Bulletin early this year. I think we ought to have a Hobby Book of Records to keep track of these things...))

From Edi Birsan (5/19/84):

Dear BRUX et al:

I am rather confused by some of the lines of debate going on in VD. Not being exactly in the mainstream of the hobby since I am only receiving DW and VD I can only guess that there appears to be two current hot items judging from the pages of those zines:

1. money for hobby projects
2. what a GM should rule if a unit is ordered to hold and at the same time ordered to give support.

#### Money for projects

What is this talk about a diplo-tax? The very idea of it sounds like a headache and a collection nightmare as well as being repulsive in name. Maybe I am missing the

essence of the debate being a blast from the past but indulge me in a little time to develop the framework of the real problem here:

- A. Partiss or Party unknown wants to raise money to do hobby projects.
- B. In answer to A above someone has come up with the idea of a diplotax.

It may not be the common thing to do these days, but let's drop the whole debate of raising money for it makes no sense until you develop the problem more. After all, raising money is supposed to be a solution to a problem, but I don't see anywhere what the problem is, or the extent of it. Sooooo:

- 1. Who wants money?
- 2. How much is needed?
- 3. What for?

There never was a problem in raising money in the hobby; usually all you had to do was ask for it and you had more than you could handle if whatever it was you were going to do with the money had any kind of sense. Money is the last thing to worry about; first let's figure out what the hell is to be done, who is going to do it and the cost of it. Once we know what is to be done, then the hobby can start to line up backers and fund raising projects if it is needed.

Support and Hold

I cannot believe that this is an ongoing debate and truly this must be the diversion of frustrated press release writers. We all know that the Rulebook states that a badly written order that allows only one interpretation should be followed. Many sins are thus committed and forgiven in writing orders. Clearly a set of orders that allow for a unit to do two things in conflict with each other invalidates both attempted orders. For example an order to move to a location and support another unit is invalid because the unit cannot accomplish both at the same time. This is not true in the case of a unit ordered to hold and ordered to support another unit. The very concept of a support order requires that the unit doing the support actually hold.

If a gamesmaster ruled otherwise I don't think it is worth all the noise either way.

((OK, let me see how briefly I can summarize each of the discussions you have brought up.

There are people in the hobby who feel that we should tax all Diplomacy players, with the proceeds to go to currently existing hobby services such as the BNC, MNC, Orphan Games Service, and so on. There are others, among them me, who feel that it is wrong to tax players for these services, and that they should be paid for only by those who use them.

Regarding the "hold and support" controversy; first of all I think you're overstating matters to call it an "ongoing debate". The discussion only began 32 issues ago here, in August 1982, when I ruled that hold + support is a double order and threw out both. The player ultimately resigned from that game and another he was playing in here, and his supporters have argued as you have, citing the "badly-written order" rule.

The other side, which of course includes me, has argued that the "badly-written" rule is not operative in this case, since neither the hold order nor the support order was badly-written, and that the rule which applies is VII.1, which states that "A unit may be ordered to do only one thing on each move: an army may be ordered to move, hold, or support". Proponents of allowing the support orders have never been able to answer the question of why then does the Rulebook treat the two orders as mutually exclusive?

By the way, Larry Peery proposed the diptax (not diplotax) and Ed Wrobel is the player who submitted the double orders.

(Thanks muchly for the input!))



From Mark Berch (5/16/84):

Dear Bruce,

I don't think that Randolph Smyth is making a "glaring error" in generating two lists from the Zine Poll's votes; I think it's a very sensible plan, and exactly what I would do. I happen to think that the new system (the preference matrix) is a better procedure. However, there are still going to be people who want to see the results calculated the old way for the sake of continuity and comparison to the past. Some may not understand the new system, or may think it inferior. The desires of these people should also be taken into consideration and catered to. This could well be a transition period, when both types of results are presented. This way the hobby gets to see them side by side, and if a strong consensus develops, one of them could be dropped at a later time -- but there's no need to rush into that at the present. I might add that the British have used such a dual system of reporting results for several years (at one time there was even a third, called "average position", though I don't think that would work here), and people seem to like it that way.

If you really object to the idea of a plurality of ranking systems, I don't see the justification for you generating a third. Unless you think your combined system is superior to the other two, if you really feel that only one system should be reported, I'd suggest that you select one of Randolph's and print that, rather than creating a third.

I don't agree with the placement of "SIRIUS Decision" on your list of "10 Most Controversial Actions or Decisions", since, so far as I'm aware, there was no controversy at all in this matter. If you need a replacement, I'd include your "Cat's Head" Whitestonia fake (which was not in poor taste, it was just plain stupid) or your feud with Bob Arnett.

I was surprised to see Linda Simpson's name; could you tell us how she was "influential" in VD's history?

((I'll stick with the combined rankings I announced two issues ago, even though it's true that I'm creating a third ranking as you say. The way I see it, there's nothing wrong with Randolph generating both lists for study and comparison, and I believe that one or the other will eventually be chosen as the method. But in the meantime, I think we'll do well to combine the lists and create one definitive list, just so that Joe Publisher can walk around boasting that, "Gee, I was thirty-third in the zine poll this year" and not have to qualify it.

Actually I don't think the "Cat's Head" fake was so stupid. It was a pretty good imitation (as evidenced by the number of people it fooled, and raised hell, which was its successful if ignoble intent.

Linda Simpson (my ex-fiancee, for those of you who've joined us in the past two or three years) was influential in ways which mostly did not appear in the zine. She helped with the collating quite a bit, for instance, and put up with all those deadline weekends when she wanted stimulation from me in ways more conventional than listening to me type. By the same token you could question Debbie Lord's name in ninth place, but like Linda, her contributions have been mainly invisible to the subbers: they consisted very largely of moral support for Alex and me; support which doesn't appear in the pages but is important nonetheless. Hell, my own mother is far less supportive than Debbie. And, many of Joan Extrem's contributions have fallen into this category as well.))

From John Kelley:

Bruce-

#95 was the best VD I've read in months. It had all the kind of stuff I like, and almost none of what I perceive as nauseating garbage. TZC is an excellent idea and I hope you'll continue and embellish it. ((Done, but we're calling Hobbytalk now.))



Crickets are extremely hard to find. Once in a while one will get inside my parents' house in summer and make a horrible racket until I am sent to oust him.

Passchendaele did, indeed, undergo a clumsy fold in the past. I would, however, not make a blanket condemnation of Francois' publishing efforts at this point. He is in his early-mid twenties, and like myself, is at the stage where he can still learn things and benefit from mistakes by doing things differently the next time. Let's wait and see if he conducts himself differently now; otherwise, what point is there (from his point of view) in bettering himself?

Nothing interests me less than paying \$8 for 200 pages of Xenogogic.

I wonder if Steven Wilcox is the Steven Wilcox of Task Force Games. They are the producers of the excellent "Star Fleet Battles" games and I've seen that name in the credits. If so, a new hobby connection has been made.

Sayth's article on losing was up to par for him. For the hobby in general, it was above average. He has a tendency to think of things first, and as such always has an original idea. Who would write a semi-serious article on losing?

Sure, the hobby has plenty of people whose political opinions are right-wing. Every group has its nonconformists. Right now, in America, it's fashionable to badmouth your country, call it a travesty of democracy, and compare it to the Soviet Union. People who hold these views are merely following a trend, nothing more; hey, whatever's the fashion. Someday, probably, there will be a movement (like the WWII era) toward patriotism. At that point, the nonconformists will call for unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from Europe, and the fashion will be to support our country's actions. Does it sound like I'm accusing the "New Left" of insincerity and sheep-like hypocrisy? I'm afraid I am.

((I think you judge these people too harsh, however. You seem to feel that they are insincere and hypocritical in their views, the implication being that deep down they know they are wrong. I'm just a bit more benevolent toward them: I feel that they are very sincere and well-intentioned in their stupidity. Just because someone holds a view that is absurd (such as calling for a nuclear freeze, e.g.) does not mean that the person is insincere.

Ham. I have a feeling I've just offended at least two-thirds of the readership. No offense, please.

That's Steven Wilcox.

You're being too nice to Guerrier. Let him return the two hundred dollars he stole from people in his prize fund game, and the other money he stole, and then I'll go along with letting him have another chance. Although I'd still probably never sub.

Regarding Sayth, his filler in Vol 51 File is better than the cream of most other, and his good stuff about the play of the game has never been matched, in my experience. Afflerbach and Hamlin are equally good if not better writers, but they write about other things.

The interesting thing about Xenogogic is that it is a curious inverse of most zines. Most zines get better as they increase in size; Xeno gets worse. I've seen some issues of Xeno that have been mildly interesting in a few places; the latest issue was not one of them. Maybe it's just that, like eating a pecan, I don't feel like chewing through all the other stuff to find what little good stuff is there. Oh, well.

Actually you're not being very specific in your first paragraph. Other than the Zine Column, what did you like about #95, or this issue? And what do you perceive as "misleading passages"?

Well, I've been killed by crickets. An explanation of that is near the beginning of the "Losing" article this issue.

Thank you for the belated picture. I'll add it to the Dippy Photo album. (You look like a football player.)

From Rob Winslow (6/7/84):

Dear BRUX,

I'm glad I finally got around to subbing to VD. I'm really enjoying it.

I'd like to make a comment or two about House of Lords. First of all, the term "dregs" is actually quite derogatory. My Thesaurus gives rabble, riffraff and scum as some of the better synonyms. Oh well, I guess this is a moot point anyway, or is it?

Secondly, no one should be fooled. For all practical purposes, HOL is unavailable to us dregs. In college, a university rule was that non-alcoholic beverages had to be served at all events in which liquor was sold. My fraternity got around this rule easily; a draft beer would cost 25¢, a 7-UP would cost \$2.00. We didn't do this to make 7-UP available to teetotalers! Dick Martin's using this same rationale.

Thirdly, Dick has every right to keep HOL out of the dregs' hands. But why? Speaking for myself, I may upgrade my subzine to a zine if I ever get settled. For me, HOL would be great as I could see how the Carusos and Walkers of this hobby handle pubbing and learn from this. Better to do it this way than to make a lot of "rookie" mistakes. Does this sound reasonable?

If Dick dropped his "no dregs" policy (\$2.50/issue = no dregs), who would sub to HOL? Only people with a deep interest in the hobby beyond playing games. How many do you suppose are out there who aren't (or haven't been) pubbers or GMs? How many are in a handful?

Keep up the good work, and remember that crickets are good luck!

((Well, if you read my Maryoon writeup, you'll know that my cricket is finally dead.

In fairness to Dick, I should mention that I think he allows subzine editors on board at the lower rate, as that qualifies them to shed their dregs status and assume the title of PUBLISHER. But I'm not sure. Your basic point remains valid whether or not it applies to you personally. Potential publishers and GMs could learn from HOL if it were readily available to them.

However, there are other places where you can learn more about publishing and GMing than you can from HOL anyway. Check out the responses to the GM Interference article, for example, where "elite" and "dregs" alike have contributed to a very enlightening round-table discussion. Diplomacy Digest frequently contains discussions of ethics, GMing, or just generally useful topics, and it too is open to everyone. So missing out on HOL isn't going to prevent you or others from learning about these kinds of things -- not by a long shot. Nuff said.))

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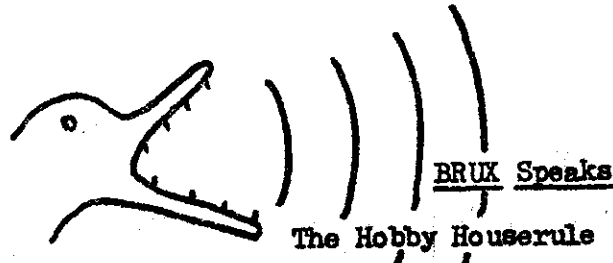
And now, a serious matter. You can skip to the next page if you want, Decades; this is rather ugly.

A certain person in the hobby is attempting, for all practical purposes, to blackmail me. This person has made some threats to try and ruin my reputation as a person, as a publisher, and as a GM. The threats presented to me were vicious, cruel, and unethical in the extreme. The person has threatened to drive me out of the hobby, a threat which this same person has used against me and others in the past.

Because I am already familiar with this person's tactics, I know that the threats may very well not be a bluff; this person is capable of stooping very low. And that's why I'm mentioning it here; so you'll know what's going on if it comes to pass. I am hopeful that I won't ever have to discuss this in more detail. I am not optimistic.

Most of you know me well enough to know that I will not give in to blackmail. This person thinks that he/she runs the hobby, but is sadly mistaken. I am going to stand tall despite whatever this person does, and no person or group of people can force me out of the hobby -- least of all this person.

Thank for bearing with me.



BRUX Speaks

## The Hobby Houserule Inspector

The question of regularity and irregularity of postal Diplomacy games has been bandied back and forth at much length lately. Broadly speaking, there are two categories of irregular games: out-and-out variants, and games which are intended to be "regular", but which end up irregular because the GM screwed up dreadfully. It is my contention, however, that a whole third category of irregular games exists out there, a category which has been waiting all these years for me to enter the hobby, and discover and identify it. I refer, of course, to those games which are (or should be) irregular because they are run under silly houserules. If you think I'm kidding, read on and I think you'll find my logic irrefutable.

Suppose we consider an extreme example of a silly houserule:

"An English army in Armenia can move directly to Munich in one turn."

Now, nobody doubts that if this ever actually occurred in a game, the game would immediately lose its irregular status. Good little English armies just don't go jumping into Munich.

But there is more to it than that. Suppose now that England spends the entire game trying to get an army into Armenia so he can move it to Munich, but fails. Clearly this game is irregular as well, since one of the players formulated his entire strategy on the basis of the "Armenia" houserule.

But now take still another step back: England opens to the Channel and goes to the Mid-Atlantic in the fall, then abandons this early "attempt to place an army in Armenia" (as he may refer to it after getting wiped out), and plays normally for the rest of the game. This game, too, has been influenced to no small degree by the "Armenia" houserule, and is clearly just as irregular as the one described previously.

I think by now many of you might see where this is leading. The very presence of such a "silly" houserule (and believe you me, I've seen a few winners) can affect the game, and this effect in turn must be viewed as grounds for irregularity. The difference in the above examples is only a matter of degree. In fact, one cannot always determine whether there was any effect at all: maybe the Fall '01 move to the Mid would have happened anyway. But then again, maybe the English player who spent the entire game trying to reach Armenia would have done so anyway. Except by a direct statement from the player(s) (which may or may not be truthful anyway), there is no real way to tell whether the "Armenia" houserule has actually affected the game and thereby rendered it irregular.

The implications of this logic are profound. Clearly, it is necessary that all games run under silly houserules be declared irregular, on the grounds that they might have been affected as in the above examples, and there is no way of determining whether this has actually happened. What is needed, then, is someone who is willing to examine all of the houserules of all of the hobby's GMs in acute detail, searching for any silly houserules that, if found, will immediately demote all games run by that GM to irregular status.

Normally, the best person for the job would be the Boardman Number Custodian, since he or she is the person who would judge the regularity of a game. However, we should keep in mind that the current BNC is a Hard Worker and Very Busy Person, and undoubtedly hasn't the time nor the inclination to sit up nights analyzing all of the hobby's houserules. In the spirit of helping our BNC, then, I propose that a new custodial position be created for this purpose, and that we call this person the Hobby Houserule Inspector.

The Hobby Houserule Inspector must of course be not only a hard worker, but also a technical (read: nit-picking) sort with a solid knowledge of houserules and Houserule Theory, and a strong desire to help out both the BNC and the hobby. Someone who has experience at spending his nights in utterly meaningless pursuits. Wellll... cough...since I don't hear anyone else volunteering...

Marycon '84

Most Diplomacy cons are held in conjunction with large gaming conventions, usually in crowded, smoke-filled rooms at an inadequate site in the heart of a big metropolis. Accomodations are often off-site, and the participant is required to sort his way through confusing and conflicting schedules and elbow his way through the throngs trying to find the people he wants to meet. Tournaments are often organized and run by impersonal, harried directors who themselves have a tight schedule to meet.

Not so with Marycon. Marycon 1984 was one of the best organized and most pleasant Diplomacy conventions I've ever attended. The man in charge, Dick Warner, did an outstanding job arranging and conducting the whole affair from beginning to end, while still finding time to play in the tournament himself and become friendly with many of the people who were fortunate enough to be there. The tournament itself was a big success: one board per room (and the rooms were plenty big), a reasonable scoring system, and enough time to play the games. There were around fifty people there, few enough so that we weren't crowded, but enough so that we could hang around with friends.

It all began for me on Thursday evening when Dave Lincoln showed up at my apartment, so that we could get an early start down on Friday. Dave and I did a lot of talking and looking through old zines that night, but our biggest accomplishment was that we finally killed the cricket that had been plaguing me for three months or so. How did we do it? Well, when Dave walked in, I warned him that he would have to endure that infernal chirping in the living room. He listened for a moment, heard the cricket chirp once, and calmly suggested that I remove its battery. In response to my surprised look, he pointed to my smoke detector. We listened, and sure enough a few seconds later, "CHIRP!". Red-faced, I unhooked the device and took it down, then pried out the battery. The chirps finally ceased after all those months of aggravation. Dave had shown me how to kill my "cricket".

I've since thrown out the can of Raid that I told you people I had bought last month. It was too embarrassing to behold.

We got a 6-o'clock start the next morning and headed down to Long Island to pick up Eric Kane and John "Silver Spoon" Ferguson. On the way down, Dave asked me whether most of the players were going to be really good. Poor novice, I thought. Yeah, I replied, trying not to make it sound too intimidating, some of these people are all right. I was puzzled by the slight smile playing at the corners of Dave's mouth.

We hit Kane Manor around 10 AM. Mrs. Kane, ever the generous hostess, gave us cookies and drinks, and then we headed across New York City and down the New Jersey Turnpike. The day's historical highlight came when we reached the Delaware Memorial Bridge. Everyone knows about George Washington, but I lay claim to being one of the few who accompanied Lincoln crossing the Delaware.

Late afternoon saw us pull into Bruce Poppe's house in Maryland, where the other three would spend the night. My father drove up from Alexandria, Virginia to pick me up, and I took him out for an all-we-could-eat crab feast as an early Father's Day dinner and spent the night at his house.

Next morning, Dave and company arrived to pick me up. Bruce Poppe had decided to ride down with us, so we really had to stuff and jam to get all of our gear -- and ourselves -- into the car. We arrived at the campus right at 9 AM, and were surprised at just how serene and beautiful Mary Washington College is. What an unlikely, yet ideal, setting for a Diplomacy tournament! The dorms were better than adequate. Dick Warner was there to meet us, so with his help we set up our room and, after a brief orientation in the auditorium, went to lunch. As luck would have it, a whole nest of East Coast Cliques had the room right across the hall from us, but thankfully they behaved themselves and there were no problems.

Sharing the campus with us for the weekend was a too-wholesome-to-be-true group of very religious women, there for some prayer session or whatever the hell it was. My "Voice of Doom" tee shirt caused more than a few eyebrows to move an inch or so in the direction of heaven, and indeed I reveled in the irony of the circumstances. I

mean, throwing a group of wholesome young ladies into the same cafeteria for lunch as a cutthroat squad of Diplomacy players is somewhat akin to letting a pack of hungry wolves loose inside a sheep's pen. Luckily, the food offered was adequate, and by some miracle all of the ladies escaped unscathed.

Round one saw my Russia demolished by Lee Kendter's Germany. We broke for dinner, which I shared with Lee and Don Del Grande, who had flown in from California for the occasion. (For Marycon, that is, not just for dinner with me.) Don looks strikingly like Bob Olsen, but I knew it wasn't Pudge because he survived the game and even was part of the draw. I took pictures of several postal people there, later to be added to the Dip Photo Album (which was very well received, by the way). Also I picked up two new Doonies -- "Silver Spoon" Ferguson and Rob Robinson. Dave Lincoln had the only first-round win, as Austria. I spent the time after my elimination amusing my opponents by reciting pi to 80 decimal places from memory.

3.14159265358979323846264338327950288419716939937510582097494459230781640628620899...

At the beer blast that night, I played Gunboat Dip and Trivial Pursuit. In between all this I entertained myself by arguing with Berch and Kane about house rules, and just generally discussing the hobby at large. Fred Davis is an absolute encyclopedia of information, as became obvious during the Trivial Pursuit game.

Part way through the beer blast, I made a run for Doonie Shakes, with Mark Berch doing the driving. (There were ten Doonies present (not counting the two new ones). Berch, Lincoln, Del Grande, Kane, Davis, Tom Swider, Ed Wrobel, Ken Peel, John Kador (from Florida!), and me. All were treated. Then I went back to the dorms and to bed, while visions of milkshakes still danced in my head.

After breakfast the next morning, we began round two. The luck of the draw saw me with Turkey to John Caruso's Russia, Silver Spoon in Austria, and Dick Warner playing Italy. Kathy stuck her head in the doorway, took one look at the country assignments, and blurted out, "Linsey and Caruso in the same game?! I know one person who's gonna die!" In fact I stabbed John in Spring '01 and ended the game twice as large as him, but it was all for naught as Don Scheifler's Germany drove to a win. I had initially allied with Silver Spoon against Caruso, but times grew rough and I regretfully had to gobble up Austria before again stabbing Caruso. In the end, though, it was Warner's Italy that cost us the game. He kept nibbling away at my centers even as Germany grew into a major threat. Finally I'd had enough and attacked him, after several seasons, and Germany's win was child's play after that. Dick and Julie Martin did a generally good job in their role as GMs, although Dick ruled incorrectly on the one situation that came up in our game. The German player, on the last turn of the game, had asked me to use my F Fla "to cut support in Sevastopol", so like a good little ally I did just that: "F Fla cuts support in Sevastopol", which to my surprise Dick allowed, and which therefore almost gave Don Scheifler first place in the tourney. I would have felt bad if Dick's ruling had affected the standings; it would have been my fault for trying to be cute, of course, but the ruling was wrong. Units cannot be ordered to "cut support"; they can be ordered to move.

Happily, Dave Lincoln went on to win the tourney, which explained his mysterious smile on the way down, the sandbagger! Scheifler took second, and Jim Yershey third. Several other Doonies won awards, but the only one I remember offhand was Eric Kane's Best England. At the award ceremony, I found out that Ed Wrobel and Ken Peel will both be back in the States, so I'll be seeing them again shortly. The awards were easily the nicest I've ever seen given at a Dip tourney.

We spent Sunday night at Bruce Poppe's house after inhaling a few pizzas and beers at the back Shaley's, then later amused ourselves playing Family Business and Beauocracy. I was playing in my sleep, however, and remember very little of it. On Monday, we headed home, dropping off Eric and Silver Spoon in Great Neck on the way. Dave Lincoln had become a close friend, and back in Massachusetts he took me out for dinner before heading home to Rhode Island.

Marycon was a huge success, then. There were only two minor points which I would

criticize: the country assignments were posted in advance for the second round, which led to some pre-game negotiating; and there was an inordinately long wait for the awards ceremony to begin. But the weekend was a very nice one overall, and I can't wait till Marycon '85. Hope to see a lot of you there!

Finally, a very special thanks to Dick Warner for a job well done.

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### GM Interference: the Readers Respond

I'm pleased to report that 16 Doomsies responded to the questions in VD #94, regarding GM interference. Because of the high rate of response, we now have another round-table discussion on a topic of interest to players and GMs alike. With my comments, there will be 17 points of view presented in response to each question. Additionally, I'll occasionally interject my own remarks after some of yours, just in order to play devil's advocate, and perhaps open up some new lines of thought on the topic.

Thanks very much to all 16 of you who chose to participate!

**SITUATION 1:** Many GMs start off their game reports with a headline describing some phase of the action on the board. But how far can a GM go? Which of the following game headlines are acceptable, and which interfere? And why?

"FRANCE ATTACKS GERMANY!"

"FRANCE, GERMANY SIGN PACT!"

"FRANCE STIRS UP EUROPE AGAINST GERMANY!"

"FRANCE STABS GERMANY -- OR IS IT A STAB?"

"FRANCE, GERMANY ABOUT TO GO TO WAR!"

How do you distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable headlines for a game?

**James Wall:** Anyone who allows a headline to interfere in alliances isn't worth his/her salt anyway.

**Mark Lew:** The GM uses his brain to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable -- GM's judgement, you know. None of your examples look harmful to me, but they depend on the board situation I suppose. If I had any doubt at all I'd not use it. Better to err on the side of caution and all that rot.

**John Pack:** Any title which says something subjective, future, or yet unrealized would be interference. "FRANCE ATTACKS GERMANY" would be fine if such an attack had occurred, as would "FRANCE, GERMANY SIGN PACT" if their new cooperation was self-evident. The other three all seem to show a judgement on the GM's part which could not have been known and shouldn't be released even if known by the GM (as some of the players probably don't know).

**Don Del Grande:** I, for one, don't take headlines very seriously -- as long as there aren't any low-blow personal attacks, anything goes. The board does the talking.

**Mark Luedi:** Yes, one tries to create as exciting a headline as possible. The first two would seem to be acceptable in most situations, the others not acceptable in most situations. They wouldn't be unacceptable, however, if, for example, there was game press which said as much. I would think a headline is acceptable so long as it is clearly verifiable in the game report and/or press. It's not always an easy distinction. That's one reason I gave up on them fairly early in IMoBR. The headline, in a way, is a GM interpretation of a/the player's(s') intent and what is happening on the board. The function of the headline, just as in a newspaper or magazine, is to draw attention to the game, so there would be the same tendency to sensationalize things. Headlines should be objective. I guess I got discouraged of coming up with objective headlines that were somehow attention-getting; and also, attempting to "read" player intent.

Rod Walker: These headlines are much too mundane. I would never write headlines like these. They are flat and tasteless. The question one must ask, however, is what took place in the game to cause these insipid things to be written. I would say, for instance, that if France had just ordered A Bur-Mun, A Bel-Ruh, P Nth-Hoi, the headline "FRANCE ATTACKS GERMANY" is justified. But the GM who uses it has even less imagination than a toad (Boardman's headlines are much, much better).

BRUK: I agree with you that the headlines posed were not at all imaginative. But in your eagerness to make that point, you barely answered the question at all.

Edi Birk: All headlines are acceptable.

BRUK: Really? How about these? "SEASONS SEPARATED BY REQUEST -- GERMANS BUILD ARMY MUNICH TO DEFLECT THE UPCOMING SPRING STAB BY THE FRENCH" or "GERMANY AND FRANCE TO BE OVERSHADOWED BY THE EASTERN ALLIANCE UNLESS THEY ALLY FAST!" or "FRENCH MOVES REVEAL HIS OWN INDIFFERENCE!"

Steve Langley: Headlines: I don't use them because I have always felt that they are evidence that the GM doesn't understand what's going on and I didn't want such evidence of my miscomprehension published for all to see. GM interference? Not really. I don't let headlines tell me how I'm doing in a game.

Bob Olsen: I don't see anything wrong with any of the headlines, as long as they reflect something visible in the moves or written in the press, rather than some inside information the GM may have received from one of the players. Going down the list they are progressively more unconventional and "provocative", but inherently there's nothing wrong with them.

Edi Birk: The problem with saying they're OK if they reflect actions on the board or in the press, but not OK if they reflect inside information given to the GM by a player, is that some players frequently give such inside info and others (the majority) never do. Suppose England in a certain game has a habit of telling me his plans in confidence each season. Then I can never write "ENGLAND ATTACKS FRANCE", because I know for sure, whether it's an attack or a phony war. Also, if I say "ITALY ATTACKS AUSTRIA" and the Italian player has worked like the devil to convince Austria that his moves are not an attack, and because of my headline Austria feels justified in defending himself next season, then how can it not be viewed as interference?

Jim Keenan: My criteria for headlines is, how would a person viewing this game think? After reading notes in the orders that may give me information that an outsider looking on might have, I think I can justify making up headlines from what I see. I could easily see situations where all of the below headlines are okay:

- 1) A single stab, or ordering of units across an unguarded border.
- 2) Either a mutual withdrawal of units from a border or area, or press which indicates a part has been reached.
- 3) Only in the press, I couldn't see moves justifying this. Something like a press release from France to all other countries to gang up on Germany.
- 4) A lot of moves where France moves across Germany's border but France also supports German units into centers in another area.
- 5) Press releases may justify this, also, a mutual troop movement towards the respective borders of the two countries.

I agree headlines can direct attention or highlight certain aspects of the game, but what is the nature of headlines. If you agree to the concept of headlines (which I do -- they add flavor and entertainment to the game), then one must accept the degree of bias introduced by the GM's choice of headlines.

BRUK: It seems to me that in your answers #4 and 5 above, you're really going out of your way as GM to analyse the board action, farther than I'm comfortable with.



Konrad Baumeister: I don't write headlines for my games for precisely this reason. How far is too far? I don't really know, but I suppose I would say that announcing anything not painfully obvious by simply the board position is too far. Unfortunately, many people can see quite a bit more in a board position than others, and what may to me look like a near-draw situation can look to another person as just the right time to stab for a win. What one announces can thus tip off the other player as to something he might have missed. Just announcing the facts strikes me as the safest, though least adventurous, route.

Mark Berch: Commentaries are a generally accepted form of commentary on the game. ((I think he means headlines are a generally...)) Thus, the GM can say pretty much whatever he likes so long as he does not break a confidence to do so. If a GM has novices playing in his wine, he probably ought to put in his HRS, or in the wine at the start of the game with a novice, something along the lines of, "I'll be writing a headline for the season's results. It may not be accurate or even serious; I just say what I like."

Mike Barno: I don't like headlines at all. Too easy for something in the "grey area" to upset someone. When I GM'd, the only headlines I used were either humorous or objective, obvious facts. Interpretation isn't the GM's business, except in the infrequent role as demo-game commentator.

Steve Knight: Too dependent on what's happening in the game and the press. In general, I'm *laissez-faire* about headlines; since the GM is virtually an outsider to the inner machinations of the game, the vast majority of headlines will be pointing out things that are readily deducible anyway. A GM should, however, keep out any "inside" information he happens to know -- e.g. if a player is in the habit of telling the GM what he's up to.

Charde Edison: All of these could be said to be interference, depending on what's happening on the board and behind the scenes. "FRANCE ATTACKS GERMANY" seems to me to be the least likely to be called interference, as it will usually just be a reflection of obvious moves on the board. Now that I think about it, most of these are too ambiguous. If the GM is using information available to him that is not available to everyone in the game, such as a player writing specifically to the GM about his own negotiations, then it is obviously interference if the GM uses that knowledge in a headline. #2 almost necessarily has to be interference; #3 could be, unless it's part of, say, France's press, wherein he calls on other countries to attack Germany. #4 could go either way. #5 almost definitely is; or maybe it isn't. Just too ambiguous. Personally, I don't mind headlines at all. I haven't noticed any blatant interference, or even subtle interference, in any dipsine to date.

Michael Kottman: I think all the headlines are acceptable. I view headlines pretty much as advertising in the sense that the buyer must beware. I think the GM can package the game any way he/she wants and the players should determine whether or not to use the headlines. I view headlines as the packaging and hype that go with any product. Some of it is true, some useful, some false but it all adds up to the total package -- the game.

BRUX: Well, the consensus seems to be that the GM must use his judgment based on the moves and the press, but must not use any inside information. I agree, but admit to feeling slightly uncomfortable about injecting my judgment into a game. Apparently I've erred on the side of caution so far since no VD player has ever protested a game headline. The closest anyone has come to that is to request that I don't use his name in the upcoming season's headline; when I checked back, I had talked about that player for three or four consecutive previous headline.

Most of you agree that this is a very grey area, then, and one which must be approached with caution.



**SITUATION 2:** It is a common practice for GMs to call players collect if they are about to miss their moves. Is this acceptable procedure, or is it interference? If it is acceptable, then how about the GM who calls because a player has left one unit out of several unordered? Is he interfering? Where do you draw the line in this situation?

**James Wall:** The practice is usually known prior to the situation arising. I prefer it as sometimes the post office acts as a government agency instead of a service. NMRs should be minimized whenever possible.

**BRUX:** OK, but you neglected to answer the second (and harder) part of the question.

**Mark Lew:** I draw the line further out than anyone I know. If I can afford it, I'll call a player to question anything that looks like a disorder, missed vote, amb, nsu (not nsu, unless it's his own), lap, etc.

**BRUX:** Boy, that sounds like out-and-out interference to me!

**John Puck:** It would hopefully be assumable that all players desire to order their units each season. Realizing that some mediums of communication break down on occasion (i.e. the postal, uh, service), I feel it'd be fair to call players who'd otherwise NMR collect. If, after all, the player desires to NMR, he can simply communicate this desire to the GM or refuse the charges. However, it would be interference if the GM performs this service for one player and not another. The same would go for one piece being left unordered, if the same was done for everyone without fail. However, I wouldn't do that (one piece stuff) for anyone (as I doubt I'd make an order until I looked at orders, after deadline).

**Don Del Grande:** It's not done in FIF -- why should it be in PEM?

**BRUX:** It often is done in FIF. How many times does someone look through the box and say, "We've got six sets of orders -- who's missing?"

**Mark Lucidi:** So long as the policy is stated beforehand, it is acceptable. Conceivably, a GM could have a policy of calling a player up for one unordered unit provided he was doing that in all such cases. (1. I don't have NMR insurance. 2. I don't pay much attention to what orders are on file or their content until I'm ready to adjudicate, which is then too late anyhow.)

**Rod Walker:** I do not call players collect for any reason. Period. This is postal Diplomacy. They can call me, up until the day before the postal deadline, and maybe I'll be there to answer the phone. If a GM calls collect in a "no orders" situation, and that's in his NMR, fine. But calling because a single order is wrong or missing is interfering. The GM would have to call in all such situations and frankly he may not notice all the errors right away. Calling collect is analogous to FIF play in the sense that in most friendly games you go searching for a player whose orders aren't in. But once the orders are in, the GM is merely a neutral conduit through which they are processed. He may record a unit as "unordered", but whether the order is "missing" is a matter of judgement he may not make. When the orders are opened in a FIF game, it's too late to amend them. Ditto in a postal game.

**Edi Birman:** I would call collect only if there were no orders received. As games were not adjudicated until I actually typed up the ditto unordered unit in the orders would be discovered only then. My feeling is that I call only to avoid NMR, not to correct poor orders.

**Steve Langley:** An NMR call is not the same as an inquiry about a unit. I've made calls to NMRing players and been told, "But I sent you moves," and the next day's mail would carry the moves, postmarked nine days earlier. I see no interference in overcoming the postal handicap that way. I have also taken orders over the phone, that were obvious mis-orders. "I want F Sky to hold" -- when the only fleet in the

area was F Aeg, and have not prompted. ~~There is a significant~~ difference between a forgotten unit (forgotten? I know two players ~~who~~ habitually leave all holding units off their orders) and a lost letter.

Bob Olsen: Calling the player for his moves strikes me as a courtesy that the GM does for the player, not a necessity. I don't think the GM should have to chase down a player who doesn't submit a full slate of moves...only to find out, perhaps, that that's all the player wanted to move anyway. I had a recent game where I moved one unit out of 12 or so, and not only deliberately ignored the rest, but deliberately made a retreat implicit, just to annoy the GM. I certainly didn't want him calling me to find out why. Yeah, I lost the game. Of course.

BRUX: I don't understand why making a retreat implicit would annoy the GM. GMs aren't supposed to be people (in their role as GMs, that is) and therefore do not get annoyed. They just react to all stimuli input by the players in an algorithmic manner; coldly, calculatingly, and efficiently.

Jim Meinel: Again, I could see where calling for a set of uncompleted orders would be okay. If the player has left specific instructions to the GM like "If in my orders there is an illegal move, call me" or "If these orders are unclear call me" then I would comply. In fact, players have asked this but I have always been able to figure out the orders. It usually arises when there is a complex set of conditional orders -- they think they may have missed a possible situation.

But, given no special instructions, my definition of "NMR insurance" is implemented when a set of orders does not arrive. What is a set of orders? Basically, for my purposes, a sheet of paper that somehow indicates they are orders. If it's a heading with no moves written, they are orders. If it's a blank piece of paper or a personal letter, they are not. In summary, a player must change the insurance policy, so to speak, in order to be called when they mess up their orders.

As in scenario #1, if you agree to the concept of NMR insurance there is very little justification in drawing a difference between "no orders" and "screwed up" orders. My basic premise as a game master is that the players are here to play, that a game is better for everyone if all orders are in, and that anything that can be done to avert an NMR is beneficial. The very thought that two or three years worth of work for a player could be flushed down the toilet because of an inadvertent missed set of moves is abhorrent to me.

The concept of NMRs is alien to FTF play and is a result of adapting the game to postal play. I strongly feel that the end result of a game should be based on the moves made and not the result of a lost/forgotten/misdirected set of orders.

BRUX: Regarding your unusual "insurance" policy; if I were in one of your games, I'd simply make that request every season!

Konrad Baumdister: Since I do call collect if I'm given a number to call and permission to do so, it seems clear that I view this as perfectly acceptable. I do not call if people have left one or two or more units un- or mis-ordered, nor do I correct them or mention to them that they might have done so over the phone. I see the line at receiving any instruction at all for the next season; i.e., if a player has sent in one order, it shows that he has considered the situation and this is his move, whether he has seventeen units or just that one. The rest may be left unordered on purpose; what do I know? If no orders at all are received, there exists the possibility that the materials got lost in the mail or something.

Overall, this doesn't strike me as having to do with GM interference per se, but rather just as a general policy regarding missed moves vs. unordered units.

Mark Berch: Player insurance is not a good idea unless the GM says at the outset (e.g. in the NRS or in the wine) that that is how he'll operate, in which case it's fine. Even without such notice, it's such a common practice that a GM could hardly

be criticized. As for what is covered, it doesn't matter, so long as the GM sticks to his stated policy, e.g. "...call you collect if I receive no orders at all." A call on account of a missing unit would be rather unusual, but quite acceptable if the GM states that such was his policy.

Mike Barne: No amount or type of calling is interference if the policy is made clear and all players are treated equally. (Exception: Tretick was known to suggest order changes (or simply make changes himself) based on others' positions or moves on file. But I doubt such things were either announced or equally available anyway.)

BRUK: ~~That's~~ an extreme example; not really what I meant in asking the question. I think we can all agree that Tretick's actions as you describe were interference.

Steve Knight: I'm inclined to say both are okay as long as it's spelled out in advance, but I'd be nervous about games where a single unordered unit merits a form of NMR insurance. From there, it seems only a small step to calling and asking, "Are you sure you didn't mean to actually order F Mid-Spa south coast?" I still suppose it's okay if everyone likes it like that -- my own tastes run to no NMR insurance at all.

Chardo Edison: This is easy. If it's part of your houserules, then it's not interference. If it isn't in the houserules, then it is interference. This should always be covered by houserules. If a player doesn't like a GM calling players to remind them about their moves and it is part of a GM's houserules, then he need not play in that zone. Simple enough. As long as the GM lets all players know ahead of time that he will call, then it cannot be deemed true interference. If all the players in a game vote not to include the rule in their game, that is their prerogative ((provided the GM permits such changes of procedure by player vote, as I do in VD)). Personally, I'm not fond of such a rule, but don't mind playing under it.

Michael Kettman: I don't believe it is interference for the GM to call to solicit moves from a player. I would view the practice as an attempt by the GM to provide his gamers with a complete game. The GM is merely doing what he can to supply as complete a product (the game) as possible to his consumer (the gamers). However, if the GM calls to solicit an order for one or any units left out of a player's orders, I would view this as definite GM interference. A player is responsible for submitting orders for his units. If he omits orders or sends incorrect orders, the GM should leave them as is. If the players agree at the beginning of the game to allow the GM to solicit such orders, that is a different matter and would be perfectly acceptable.

BRUK: Quite a variety of viewpoints on this question, no? I tend to go along with those like Michael Kettman who say it's OK to call for missing sets of orders, but not for corrections to faulty sets of orders. Several of you seem to be in agreement. And many of us recognize that this should be established beforehand in the houserules or at the start of the game; almost anything goes if it's in the houserules.

I tend to think of Mark Lew's procedure of calling for just about anything that looks wrong as interference, though I admit that my view is partially based on the practical side of the matter: I'll be darned if I've got the time to go into the zone and see if there's really a unit in Belgium to be supported this turn, e.g. VD keeps me busy enough that I don't have time to perform such partial adjudications as the moves come in. But I'm philosophically opposed, too.

I used to be fairly lenient over the phone and up till a couple of years ago would occasionally blurt out something like "Axy Vienna supports Budapest? Don't you mean Axy Vienna supports any Budapest?", but some time ago decided that since players who make their orders in don't get that courtesy, neither should phone. Now in VD, and orders are taken just as they come in, by mail or phone, and I will not prompt for clarifications or corrections.

A note will be made that this practice discourages players from sending in preliminary orders, and that's just too bad.

SITUATION 3: You're GMing a game from your home town of Fake Snowbegone, Minnesota. One of your players from Noway Rosen, California, calls you up one night, and the conversation runs as follows:

"Hello, Mr. GM. I've a favor to ask you. I've typed up a phony readjudication for my game in your sine, and I want to send it to you so that you can mail it to the Russian player for me. That way, I can get a Fake Snowbegone postmark."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Player, I can't help you deceive another player. That would be GM interference."

"Just a minute, Mr. GM. What about Joe Schmo, who lives 40 miles from you in Duluth and is also in the game? He can get your postmark any time he likes without your help. That's an unfair advantage! All I'm asking you to do is help reduce the disadvantage I am faced with due to an accident of geography. I don't see how that's interfering."

Do you agree to mail the phony readjudication for him? If not, how do you refute his logic?

James Wall: A GM should never mail a letter that is about one of his games. If someone has a geographical advantage that's too bad.

Mark Lew: What logic? How would you refute it if someone said, "What about xxx? He's smart. He can figure out good moves all by himself. I'm asking you to tell me his moves to help reduce my disadvantage of being a moron. I don't see how that's interfering!?" Of course, when I turned him down in the first place I wouldn't use "GM interference" as an excuse. I'd just tell him I don't feel like it. Or maybe I would with a note: "The Turk told me to mail this to you. I wonder what's inside." I think this little bit of GM interference falls under "indifferent" in the effect it has on the game.

No, really, I wouldn't do anything funny; I just wouldn't mail it for him. If he lives too far away that's just tough luck. If life were fair it would end in a 7-way draw.

BRUK: I'm glad you changed your comment that you'd mail it with the note on the outside. I almost had a heart attack; coming from you that could have been serious!

John Paks: Mail it? No way José! I wouldn't mail Joe Schmo's either. Each player is left to himself as to means of winning a game. While the GM should try to reduce geographical advantage at the game start, once underway the GM cannot be held accountable for any such slight advantage. If he really needs the postmark, he can always mail it to the GM's postmaster and have him send it (it works about the same).

BRUK: The problem with that is that sometimes the postmaster will (I believe) stamp the envelope with an indication that the piece has been forwarded, indicating the zip code or locale of its origin. This also applies to Don's answer, next...

Don Del Grande: "If you want a fake postmark from Fake Snowbegone, take the envelope with a stamp and the Russian player's address, put it inside another envelope, and mail it to the Fake Snowbegone Postmaster with a request for a Fake Snowbegone postmark." This information is public, so it is not an advantage to tell someone. (Otherwise, if someone suddenly forgot what the new postal rates were, and you told him, that would be an unfair advantage.)

Mark Luedi: GM interference! Joe Schmo, living 40 miles away, shouldn't be in the game! Ombudsman! Ombudsman! Seriously, though, you don't help him. Tell him that the other five players could also do the fake readjudication mailing if you let him do it. I'm sure the notion that Joe Schmo could send out a fake readjudication enters this guy's head every time he opens his mailbox, otherwise he wouldn't have mentioned Joe Schmo at all. Maybe Joe's already done this. Gee, Bruce, that's why some GMs have player codes!

BRUK: I don't: the opportunity to experience a terrific case of paranoia is a major attraction of my games. Are you sure this isn't just a very elaborate fake of VD?

Rod Walker: My HRs specifically forbid involvement of the GM in any deception of any kind in the game. That includes phony readjudications to which the GM's name (signature) would necessarily have to be forged. Beyond that, the GM in your example would be quite right in refusing. An accident of geography is an accident of geography. There's the breaks. It is also an accident of geography that the player can't order F Loh-Mos. Sorry about that.

BRUX: It's acceptable to forbid any involvement of the GM in a player-to-player deception, but why do it, for heaven's sake? You close some of the more exciting diplomatic avenues off when you do so.

Edi Birman: As GM you don't mail other people's mail to screw up another player. I could care less about the so-called advantage of nearby players. It is not my job as GM to make all the countries and players equal, only treat them equally.

BRUX: That last sentence was very well said.

Steve Langley: Would it really be GM interference to mail a fake adjudication for a player? I'm not so sure. Would it be GM interference to mail a letter to a player for another player? Why? Why does the content of the letter matter? Why isn't it GM interference to refuse to mail the fake? Would you mail the fake if you were not the GM? Yes.

BRUX: Very penetrating questions, those. Here's another one. What if the player simply sends you an envelope addressed to another player and already sealed, and asks you to forward it? And you were a player in another game with the two of them? So you can't know whether what is in the envelope has to do with the game you're running or one that you're playing in, or something else entirely. Is it your job as GM to find out what's in that envelope before passing it on? Can the original sender, who is playing in a game with you, lie about its contents?

Bob Olsen: That isn't logic, that's nonsense. Making the GM a co-conspirator in some scheme or other is not allowable, no matter how convenient it might be for the player. After all the player did sign up for the game in the first place. Let him fight fair, or be more ingenious in his methods of fighting dirty.

Jim Meinel: There really isn't any logic to refute here -- Mr. Player is engaging in an illegal act and therefore has no right to perform such an act. It is irrelevant whether Joe Schmo is closer to the GM than Mr. Player; it would be an illegal act there, too. Mr. Player can't ask the GM for an equally easy chance to break his rules. (By the way, I consider phony adjudications deception involving the GM -- maybe not deception of the GM, but interfering with correspondence between the GM and the players.)

BRUX: OK, I should have been just a bit more specific in the question, since both you and Rod have given this type of answer so far. I should have added the premise that your house rules allow deception of another player which uses the GM.

Konrad Baumister: Forget it. Sure, the player near me has an advantage in mailing from my postmark, but that doesn't mean that the player from California can't drag his butt out to Minnesota to mail his letter if that's important to him. So long as the player near me does it without my help or involvement, I owe nothing to the others. In his next game, the geography may be reversed, but I do not provide a mail forwarding system for the players. By remaining totally out of it, I can stay neutral. By distributing this other guy's letter, I am showing clear favoritism.

Mark Bagg: You don't mail it. That's taking too great a part in the player's own diplomacy. Besides which, if you send it out, it's not a phony readjudication, it's a legitimate, though mistaken, one. The GM is not there to smooth out all accidents. Otherwise you'd have letters like, "F and G use the same strange typewriter, so F can forge a letter purporting to come from G, but I can't. But I notice that you have that type of typer, too. So please retype the following letter."

Mike Barno: Just tell him to mail the readjudication and a cover letter to the local postmaster for res mailing. You're only providing him with public information which he ought to know, without violating your neutrality as a GM. A GM is not responsible for effects of geography, mail service, telephone rates, etc.

Steve Knight: No, you don't remail the phony readjudication, and you say, "Tough luck, buster, them's the breaks." I can see it now: "Mr. GM, will you read this phony readjudication over the phone to Italy? Austria's voice sounds like yours, and that's an unfair advantage!" Sorry, but no game is ever going to be fair concerning extra-game factors, so there's no sense trying to balance out all of them. If a player's really worried about this he could always request not to be put in games with players who live less than x miles from the GM, yes?

BRUK: Yes, though in some sizes that would reduce his chances of getting into a game. But that's his problem.

Charo Edison: This falls under what I call an "Act of God" situation. It's the player's tough luck. If the GM helps the player from Noway Moses, I believe it would be interference, helping in the deception of another player. Such an unfair advantage as the player claims Joe Schmo has is exactly what he calls it, an accident of geography, and it is not up to the GM to remedy the situation. It's just the way things are. 'Nuff said.

Michael Ketzman: I agree that it would be GM interference if the GM were to mail the phony readjudication. As for the need to refute his logic, there is no need. It is an act of God, nature, etc. that one player lives closer to the GM than another player. No apology or special handling is required for this fact of geography. If the player is upset, let him find a game where everyone lives in the geographic area acceptable to him.

BRUK: Well, thanks to Steve Langley I am spared the embarrassment of having devised a question so obvious that the response is unanimous. I don't normally like to go along with the majority, but in this case I must. You don't mail the readjudication, for reasons explained by many of you. And you tell him that his geographical location in relation to you and the other players is not your problem.

SITUATION 4: Many GMs like to banter with their players in the game's press, using a dateline reserved solely for the GM. But where does the banter stop and interference begin? Which of the following press items from the GM constitute interference, and why?

"TURKEY to RUSSIA: My move to the Black Sea is purely defensive. Trust me."

"GM to TURKEY: I wouldn't trust you as far as I could thrust you!"

"GM to RUSSIA: Do you really trust him? Hah?"

"GM to TURKEY: Trust you? With all those stabs you've pulled off recently in other sizes?"

"GM to TURKEY: Hyork, hyork!"

James Wall: As long as they are well intentioned, anything should go. The players trust the GM to run an honest game anyway so there isn't any reason I can think of that should prevent him/her from enjoying the game as well.

Mark Lew: This is essentially the same as the headline one.

BRUK: You're right. These two questions were so similar that I probably just have chosen only one of them to use. Oh well. On we go.

John Pack: Personally, I don't like any of the GM press given as examples. As long as it's in fun and has no bearing on the image of the player or course of the game, great!

Don Del Grande: No interference -- like the headlines, it's hard to take any of these really seriously. How does the GM know what Turkey and/or Russia is planning?

Mark Luedi: The last one, "GM to TURKEY: Hyork, hyork!" is the least non-acceptable, but I would say they all constitute GM interference in that they all comment on Turkey's press statement.

Rod Walker: If the two players involved are, say, Byrne and Woody, then none of the GM's clever little... uh... witticisms is interfering. It just depends on the players. But I prefer to avoid brainless crap of this sort in my own zine. The original "TURKEY to RUSSIA" item would never have seen print in the first place. He can write a letter.

BRUX: True, but once again I wasn't trying to write quality press for the sake of this example, only trying to write press that would illustrate the question.

I am not really comfortable with your assertion that the acceptability of the GM's press correlates with the identity of the player. All players should be treated equally. In practice, I know that Byrne and Woody would be less likely to take offense at this than some other players, but that's beside the point. What's OK to do to one player must be OK for all others.

Edi Birgan: Aside from headlines, most games and press releases aren't worth the trouble to comment on. If the GM wishes in effect to prepare a commentary on the game and discuss strategy or make wisecracks about a game while it is in progress, it is his right to do so, just as it is the right of a non-player to at times write commentary or interesting press. The aspect of automatic response, gained by being a publisher and a GM, gives the GM an advantage at times in a press war, but so what?

Steve Langley: Banter in the press is that and no more. It may annoy a player but it is either all interference or none of it is interference. There is no line beyond which a GM interferes in a game via a press release.

Bob Olsen: Nothing wrong with any of the GM's press, except perhaps the thing, one which smacks of crossgaming. But if so it's the GM's reputation being hurt, not the player's.

Jim Meinelt: This, I admit, is a real hazy area. I try to keep my banter related to non-game topics. I would guess that the criteria for deciding whether a comment was interference or not would be whether the comment was regarded as a joke, or kidding around, by those watching, rather than a serious comment. This has to be judged by what other people think, not what the GM intended. For example, the GM may have said "Trust you, huh," intending a joke, but if the players think he's serious, he interfered. The reference to "past stabs in other zines" looks pretty clear cut to me, though. A strong factor is the GM doing the commenting, and the player to whom the comment is directed. I can think of vastly different connotations in identical comments made by, say, Mike Conner and Mark Luedi, to a player who may be either very extroverted or very introverted.

Konrad Baumeister: Habaha. My problem is that in my zine, the datelines normally reserved for the... are used all the time by the other players! While I technically have a house rule covering it, the punishment is merely "reprimand" and I haven't been able to bring myself to do even that since it's just too much fun, not knowing whether it's me or another player writing the press.

BRUX: That's a poor policy. If you're going to let the players use your datelines, you should make that clear. If you're not going to let them use it, then you shouldn't let them use it. Period.

Mark Berch: No one should take press too seriously; I would not object to any of those press releases.



Mike Barnes: As long as the GM doesn't reveal any confidential information, such comments may be a bit tacky but are acceptable. Among friends, this would normally be recognized as nothing more than banter, and would not affect negotiations.

Steve Knight: The first and fourth responses are okay -- they're typical internal-to-the-game replies that don't raise any doubts that aren't already on the victim's mind. The second one is borderline -- the GM's reply should be to the author of the release, not to the victim. The third is interference -- throwing completely extra-game matters into things.

Charo Edison: I think most people will say that all of these constitute GM interference. I won't disagree; all of them are. The GM should write in the press only when someone addresses him. He should not comment on press in such a way as to make someone think one way, when a player wants that someone to think something else. This goes for headlines, as well.

Michael Ketzman: See comments on Situation 1 above ((headlines)). The same applies here. Caveat Eaptor.

BRUK: Good variety on this one, ranging from Berch's soft stance to Charo's hard-line comment that GMs should speak only when spoken to. I tend to go with the middle-of-the-roadsters on this one; I've written a fair bit of press in VD games over the years, and not all of it has been in response to a player's press directed toward me. This is another of those (shudder) judgement situations. I would never write the third of the four examples, and probably not any of the other three either. Another situation where I've managed to stay entirely out of trouble, I might add.

SITUATION 5: You're GMing a game in which a player is about to win unless the other players band together to stop him. As it happens, you were all set to publish an article you had written entitled "How to Stop the Leader". Although the article of course does not mention this particular game, would you be interfering to publish it right now, when it might well affect the game? (Suggestion: send it to VD for the free issues...)

Or consider a different example: you have just opened a game in this issue. Do you publish that article on the Lepanto Opening as you had planned, or must you wait? How does one reconcile one's GMing responsibilities with one's rights as a publisher in this sort of situation?

James Wall: A sticky situation. I'd say that again the judgement of the GM should be trusted. In a zine such as VD it may just get lost in the shuffle of pages. In a zine such as Midlife Crisis, with its smaller format, deferment would likely be the answer.

BRUK: I got news for ye, ol' buddy. This zine does get read by some people out there...

Mark Lew: I think I'd avoid said articles just to be safe. But I don't think the GM is guilty of any crimes if he decides to print them anyway.

John Packer: If you believe it might have an impact, delay the article a month or two or send it to VD. I'd go right ahead and publish the opening article on the "Lepanto". Articles appear all the time on openings, and most people use what they want and disregard the rest anyway. After all, no one would hold a diplomatic style article or play of the game article just because the game is underway in his/her zine even though some of the players might get good advice that helps them from such an article. (Ex: Your deceit, logic, emotion article (("Elements of Persuasion")).)

Don Del Grande: Consider the article and the game as separate entities. (I.e. assume the game had not been there.)

Mark Luedi: Gee, I wouldn't even be aware of it! (Besides, we publish a tactics article?! That's not a hint, is it?) So what, the article may be appearing in Voices of Doom and all (if not most) of the players are going to see it anyways. Then Bruce Linsey would be accused of interfering in a game he doesn't have anything to do with (sort of the habitual osmosis effect). But yes, I would be skeptical of something like the article you describe being run with that game situation you describe. Of course, Bruce, we all know the truth...

On the other hand, the Lepanto Opening article isn't so bad. If you've got a game full of experienced players, they all know about the Lepanto anyways (or they should!). If, however, you have a game chock full of novices, the publication of such an article throws an (or another) interesting cog into the game. Italy and Turkey will have to outguess one another about the Lepanto. (Italy: "I'd better not open Lepanto. Turkey's going to expect me to with that article." Turkey: "Italy's going to use that Lepanto against me. I'd better take precautions.") It would be just one additional game factor in a virtual myriad. Reconciliation?! Come on Bruce, you know the answer! Tell us.

BRUK: Boy, you have a baffling writing style! You do raise an interesting point in your first paragraph, when you say that perhaps four of your seven players will see it anyway if it goes into VD instead of THOR. Maybe, then, you're interfering even more to send it for publication where only some of the players will get to see it.

Rod Walker: First example: I would delay the article. Or publish it in another zine, since D (the first zine's GM) wrote it.

Second example: I feel this article should be delayed or put into another zine also. There is no sense in taking a chance. The GM has a right to do what he wants, of course, but I see no reason why he should not be considerate.

Edd Birman: Publishing articles that may affect games is why articles are published, I could care less if it is directly used; in fact, I find it rather humorous to watch. For example, at Origins I in Baltimore, Mike Rocamore and I ran a Diplomacy tournament with some 23 boards in the first round and 16 in the second round. Prior to the first round there was a seminar/talk etc. to about 130 people in a small lecture hall on aspects of the game. I did a routine on the Lepanto Opening and the general strategic-diplomatic situations that may be desired to be used in such a limited opening. Well, 2 hours later when round one started no less than 12 boards featured a Lepanto Opening. (As info I also played Italy in the first round and did not use it, I ended with the best first round Italy of 15 centers by 1907.) I thought it was quite humorous to watch the effect; however, I see nothing being done wrong by the presentation. Big deal if you are a GM, you don't stop being a writer while a game is in progress.

Steve Langley: I would try to keep an article which could affect a game out of the zine. That is some ego man not, assuming my article could really affect the game. But I can publish the article later at no great cost to myself. Some 100 articles on openings just before starting a game.

Bob Olson: This sort of situation happened to me in Tactic's zine some time ago. A GCM's game with me and Uncle Bernie in it started, and lo and behold, an article by Bernie appeared, explaining some tactics that were just what Bernie was asking me to do in the game. So I ignored it and secretly despised him for it, of course. If possible, the GM should avoid printing an article too relevant to a game at hand. There's not necessarily anything wrong with it per se, but it's better to be safe, and squally about it.

BRUK: You aren't describing the same situation posed in the question, however. This situation referred to an article written by the GM, not by a fellow player.

Jim Meinel: I see no problem with running any article concurrently with a game. The presumption you make is that people will tie the games and articles together. This may or may not be true, but whether the players in a game read an article, let alone follow its recommendations, is a decision of theirs, not yours. I assume you must be referring to a zine with only one game, for if there were more than one game how could a person think that a particular article relates to a particular game?

Konrad Baumeister: I suppose that I would wait until after the opening two or three turns in the Lepanto/new game situation, and I guess (this has never happened to me, so I'm not sure) I would probably also wait a few turns in the near-stalemate case, just to see whether or not the players were going to get it together, before I published the article.

In this case, though, I don't base the decisions on a GM's responsibility-vs.-rights-of-a-publisher kind of setup, but rather, are the players being treated fairly? If it's no skin off my ass, and waiting to print an article from one month to the next is nothing serious in my book, why not do it just to avoid the possibility of trouble?

Mark Berch: This is a much greyer area. The more the article is applicable to the game, the more legitimate the "that's interference" complaint is. In both cases, the GM should hold off, because they sound rather applicable, though a more general article on "How to Win" or "How to Write Good Letters" might be fine. The same would go for private advice. If a Turkish player is having trouble constructing a stalemate line, the player cannot be told how to do it, but he could be told that Berch has published a compilation of SLs.

Mike Barne: In theory, I see no conflict; no reason to hold back on the articles. In practice, I'd avoid the appearance of trying to influence the games, just to minimize the risk of unnecessary hassles.

Steve Knight: There's nothing preventing you from publishing the articles, although there's nothing compelling you to, either. If the zine and the games aren't fairly separate entities, you tie your hands too much -- "Gosh, I'd better not publish any articles on how to play France as long as anyone's playing a French position in my zine!" I don't buy it -- but again, that's not to say a publisher who's conscientious about such matters should publish it automatically.

BRUX: Actually, there's a simple solution to your "How to Play France" dilemma. If you don't want to interfere by publishing such an article while anyone's playing France in your zine, just publish an article about how to eliminate France -- and once all your Frances have been eliminated as a result, then feel free to publish the "How to Play" article without interfering.

Charo Edison: Both examples are truly hazy. Not in the way you described them, but as to whether or not they constitute interference. Hmmm. I'd play it on the safe side in both cases, and wait for the problems to pass before publishing, or, as you off-handedly suggest, send it to a different magazine for publication there. Still, let's say the GM doesn't like the player who is about to win in the first example, but knows if he publishes the article he's considering in his own zine, he'll get more flak than he wants. So he finds a zine which he knows most of the other players in the game also get, and sends it there for publication. Interference? Sure. Of course, the GM will be smart and send it in anonymously, and later reprint it in his own mag.

BRUX: The GM you describe is unethical beyond any shadow of a doubt. Ethical GMs don't look for devious ways (or any ways) to affect their games or screw their players. Also, strictly speaking, GMs do not "like" or "dislike" any of their players; the person who is GMing might like or dislike one of the people who is playing, but that relationship can have no bearing on the game. The GM who even thinks that way is in big trouble.

Michael Kettman: I see this as a no win situation. The GM is damned by the player if he does and forfeits part of his right as a publisher if he doesn't. My personal choice would be to delay the publication of such articles in favor of keeping the customer satisfied. If I felt an overwhelming need to publish them I would do so with an editor's note indicating the coincidence of any article published and its relation to any game was purely by chance.

BRUX: But in so doing, wouldn't you be drawing closer attention to the article and how it might relate to the game?

BRUX: This was probably the best question of the lot, as indicated by the broad variety of responses. I liked Mark Barch's answer best. The GM must make a judgment regarding how closely the article pertains to the game. To take examples from both extremes, I would not hesitate to print a general "How to Win" type article at any time. At the other extreme, Oaklyn once published an article on how to break through a certain bear-stalemate -- which just happened to be the exact tactical situation on the board at that time in a game in that zine. Maybe Edi Birsan and Don Del Grande (judging from their replies) don't think so, but to me, that's interference. In fact, I'd lean very strongly toward delaying the articles in both of the situations I asked about in this question.

SITUATION 6: A hobby member has done something for which you feel obligated to criticize him in your zine. Maybe he has folded his zine and stolen everyone's sub money, yours included. Or perhaps he has been convicted of attempting to assassinate the President of the United States. The problem is, he's playing in one of your games. Is it interference to publicly chastise one of your players (and thus risk turning others against him in his game) for something unrelated to the game?

James Wall: If a player deserves to be criticized then that's what he should get. A newspaper may endorse a candidate and still criticize him, a GM shouldn't lose his/her right to an opinion just because of his position.

Mark Low: Yes, Bruce, it is interference, but I don't think there's anything wrong with it. 5 through 9 are all asking about non-game things which will somehow affect the game. I think it would be nice to refrain from something else you had planned for the benefit of the game, but it's nothing to get all excited about.

John Back: I don't know, I'd find it hard to allow someone who took my money to continue in a game I GMed. Course, I'd probably just forfeit enough of his sub to pay for it. Sure, I'd criticize him if he deserved it. Most people would probably not worry about it and it'd have little effect on the game. Of course, no one should worry about that type of thing while playing anyway. If the issue'd be published elsewhere, the effects would occur whether or not the GM/pubber made such a statement.

Don Del Grande: It's public information -- as long as it was the truth, it's the player's fault for pulling off such a stunt.

Mark Luedi: You feel obligated to criticize someone? Of course, it may also be interference to stop his zine, too...

BRUX: Yes, there have been circumstances where I felt obligated to criticize someone in VD. I would have been remiss if I hadn't mentioned Masters' plagiarism or Oaklyn's dishonest GMing here, e.g.

Rod Walker: I'd go ahead and print. The criticism has nothing to do with the game and the players should understand that. If they don't, you're dealing with children and the opinions of children should be given due weight (none). I would say, however, that a person who is in any of the situations you described has by then dropped out or soon will.

BRUX: But it does have something to do with the game if the players know he's likely to drop out and then attack him because he's now a poor risk as a long-term ally.

Edi Birsan: Feuds, chastisement, and outright slander are part of the hobby at times. If you are excessively upset at a player...ask him to resign. If he is really obnoxious and refuses, then spin the game off to another GM so you don't have to deal with him.

BRUX: GULP! Since when does a GM have the right to ask a player to resign?! And if you unload the game to another GM, what about the other players who signed up to play under you?

Steve Langley: No, it is not interference in the game to point out a problem that is not related to the game.

Bob Olsen: Probably not really interference, but the pubber stands a good chance of leaving himself open to the charge, or perhaps making himself look foolish. I think most people, including me, look on most of the hotthead pronouncements that come out from time to time as akin to somebody breaking wind in public -- something to be ignored, with perhaps strained silence, in polite circles. Only if taken to extremes can it have any effect on the game since most people very sensibly look to their own positions before the publisher's fetishes.

BRUX: Your reply is based on the not-necessarily-correct assumption that the publisher is unjustified in his comments.

Jim Meinel: Privately, either in a letter or a note attached to the issue, or in a letter to another zine. Why the necessity of spilling it to all your own subbers via inclusion in the zine? I never run disparaging items about my subbers in my zine -- drops, late fees and subfees, sloppy orders, notes on NMRs, insults in press, "outrageous" hobby stunts; they are handled with simple little notes attached to the zine. It'll be a cold day in hell before I berate a subber in any zine for late fees or something of that sort. Even a fold with massive subfees being retained would still see me leaving his sub and game unsullied in my pages, though I may have a few shots to hurl in other zines and privately.

BRUX: Rumor has it that the hobby has its first candidate for sainthood...

Konrad Baumister: I see nothing wrong with giving my opinion about a player's non-gaming characteristics and actions in my zine, whether or not he is still playing therein. I don't know whether this would set his fellow players against him or not; they may ally with him out of pity, who knows? My experience has been that it's very rare for extra-game matters, other than straight-out cross-gaming, to affect the game. Hell, even Buddy Tretick found allies in his games...

Mark Bercht: Unless this has a direct, clear connection with the game, the GM is OK in publishing such criticisms. The problem is not with the examples you gave -- those are too easy. The problem is with something like criticizing him for a pattern of, say, NMRing out of games.

Mike Barno: No interference at all unless you actually try to influence the game.

Steve Knight: No, it isn't. Joe Schmoe, the person, does not cease to exist as a person in the rest of the zine merely because Joe Schmoe, the player, is playing a position in one of the games.

Charco Edison: In this cutthroat hobby, it seems to me most GMs would throw the offending player out of the game he's in, and then viciously attack him in print, cursing him and his offspring to the heavens, generally without knowing all the facts. Most definitely would be interference. A possibly better way to handle it would be to call the offensive little blighter, and tell him he's suspended from the game until he's rectified whatever situation has been deemed so distasteful.

Michael Kettman: I think it would be poor judgement on the part of a GM to chastise a player in a game for something he/she did in the hobby. It would tend to take time and energy away from the game which is what the hobby is all about. There will be plenty of time later for browbeating, chastising, and one-upmanship. Let the game end before the rancor begins.

BRUX: Among those who understood the question (which implied that the player did do something genuinely wrong), the consensus seems to be that such criticism is OK. Mark Berch is right when he says that this was too easy -- I should have picked examples relating to the player's playing (such as a pattern of dropping out of games) or even an example in which the game in the sense is directly involved.

I take the hard-line attitude on this one; if somebody does something for which he deserves criticism, I will criticize regardless of whether the event concerns his game or not. I have in the past strongly criticized active players here (e.g. Woody) when they did something that was clearly out of bounds. Players who don't like being yelled at should toe the line and be good. (But two three four, but two three four..)

SITUATION 7: A player of yours calls you, and during the course of the conversation asks if you've spoken recently with another player. Can you answer? What if he wants to know whether the other player has recently called you to find out his game results for the session just played? How far can a GM (who is, after all, a human being within the social network of the hobby) go when it comes to discussing his conversations and interactions with his players (who in many cases may be personal friends)?

James Walls: I'll believe it when I see it. My only comment is that a "no comment" response may be necessary.

Mark Law: ((No answer received))

John Pack: I'd just say "use your judgement". Normally, I'd suspect it'd be fine to release such information.

Don Del Grande: Phone calls are solely the business of the parties involved in the call, unless they want to volunteer information. I don't think the GM should say anything.

Mark Luedi: I actually had this happen to me recently, except the player didn't use a whole lot of tact. I told him, "I can't answer your question." It seems that even the tone of voice can betray GM knowledge about the game.

Rod Walker: The correct answer to the question is, "You know I can't tell you that."

Edi Birman: Phone conversations are touchy subjects. Often players will make a last-minute change of orders and will call in their moves. One player may want to know if so-and-so called in a set of moves, thus signalling that the agreed change has been accepted. As a general rule I didn't comment on who called the day of the deadline and avoided commenting on who called when if at all.

If you did comment, it wouldn't be so much interference as sloppiness.

Steve Langley: I would say whether or not I'd spoken with another player without specifying exactly when and I would reserve any information about the game during our conversation. Non-game social topics might be passed along or not depending on my memory.

Bob Olsen: Gee, this one's a little tough. But it seems to me that I've seen many a time when people have called and the GM says, "I talked to him" or "He was going to call me right back with news" -- thus, communication socially does not necessarily imply having turned in orders. If it appeared that the caller was fishing for something in asking, though, I'd clam up.

BRUX: But in making the judgement on whether he's fishing for info about the game, aren't you then assuming the role, in a sense, of a player in the game?

Jim Meinel: Sure. Why not? I'll answer any question unless it refers to a game that I am GMing, then I'll say, "I can't say". I suppose a player could call on a deadline night and ask if I've talked to X today. Perhaps they agreed to change their orders and he wants to see if X kept his word? I suppose I could refuse to discuss anyone else on deadline day, but for the most part my people have been good about that. So what if X calls and asks me if Y got the game results read over the phone? But the entire issue is a relevant one, I am a GM-player-friend to several people in the hobby.

What about this: I am in a new game, with one of the players being a player I GM for. How far can I divulge information learned about him in my game I GM to others? My own position is that if it is specifically non-specific, it's okay. For example, I can say, "He's a sneaky shit" or "He's pretty good" or "He's careless" but I can't say "He miswrites his orders on purpose sometimes" or "He always calls his orders on deadline day". When asked how I know I just say I've seen him play. As long as I don't divulge information that only a GM would know I'm on safe ground. That leaves open to use any information an observer would know. Of course, I define that observer as a careful and insightful one!

BRUK: You pose some awfully good questions in your second paragraph. I wish I'd thought to include something like that in the article. I have run these questions through my diplomatic analysis mechanism (read: I've thought about them) and have not reached a definitive answer. Tell me this, what do you do if a player in one of your games says the following to you: "Well, since we are playing in a game together and since I don't want you to be able to comment on the fact that I always call in my moves on the deadline night, I'm signing up for a game in your size, effectively immediately since you have openings, and will call you with my moves each deadline night. That way, you are prevented on commenting about this in the game we're both already playing in!"

Konrad Baumeister: This happens all the time in my games. All the time. When it first began, which was rather shortly after I started GMing, I was at a loss for how much I could say, but now essentially I've fallen into a comfortable pattern where I will go so far as to say, after being asked, whether or not I was talking about any game with another player, but I will not reveal what he said to me, in terms of future plans, comments about players which might affect the game, and so forth. When asked for an opinion or a suggestion about what to do or what's going to happen in the game, it depends on the situation. If it's absolutely stalemated, I will say so. If I know that another player plans on stabbing the shit out of this guy I'm talking to, I will say nothing of what I know. Generally I try to turn it around and ask the player what's going on, and they are usually more than willing to tell me.

I have to admit that I really enjoy having people talk about their games with me. I'm just a curious GM. Once in a while I even learn a few tricks or ideas from players, which I might then use. My basic rule of thumb is to let them do the talking, and not say anything that I consider to be none of the player's business. I try my best to maintain a player-GM confidence.

BRUK: I have one player who very often writes me letters describing what is going on in his game in great detail, as well as telling me this over the phone. I personally find these revelations very interesting (I hope the guy's reading this) and devour all this info eagerly. However, I never respond to his letters on the topic and when he talks to me about the game, I limit my comments to an occasional "uh huh" or a bland, "Gee, it sounds like an interesting game" or whatnot. I'm not 100% comfortable with saying the game is interesting, since he may take it as a subconscious tipoff of an upcoming stab or some such, but I guess I can get away with that much and still be safe.



Mark Beroh: All GM-player conversations are privileged, including requests for results; you couldn't even acknowledge that such a conversation existed. On the first, I'd answer, "I can't discuss whether we've spoken on game matters, but other than that..."

BRUK: But check out the points brought up by Edi Birsan and Jim Meinel earlier. By revealing whether you've talked to a player about anything, that might be all the info the questioner needs to determine that you have indeed spoken with him, and he (at least, probably) did call in the agreed-upon change of orders while he was at it.

Mike Barno: We'll pass, Richard.

BRUK: You're not a "we", you're an "I"; this isn't football, it's Diplomacy so you can't pass, and my name is BRUK, not Richard. Other than that, your answer is fine.

Steve Knight: Er, "ahem"...cough, cough. Yes, mentioning the conversation itself is okay (if you're so inclined), but answering about the other player's receiving a phone adjudication probably isn't.

Charles Edison: A toughie. I'm pretty sure I know how you will answer, having been around when Ty called you during the press war. I think this is just part of GM discretion. A GM cannot constantly be on guard for questions like these asked by people in the lobby; any player could always attempt to ask someone else not involved in the game to make a call to his GM and ask him "innocent questions". I don't think anyone will be able to cover all the problems and situations involved; any player asking about another player in the same game should not be given any information, but past that, you need to deal with situations as they occur.

Michael Kettman: I would say that a GM should be very cautious in discussing any factual details in the course of conversations with other members of the game. However, I don't think it is unethical for the GM to discuss personalities or characteristics of another player. This information would be available from another source. The player is just showing some skill in pumping the GM for information.

BRUK: Really missed bag of results here. This question was taken from my own experience. A player once asked me whether another player had received the game results over the phone. I think and think and didn't see any harm in it, so I replied to the question. Later that night, I sat bolt upright, my conscience having jarred me out of a sound sleep, and realized that I should never have done it. Nowadays I wouldn't. I decided after that incident that I'd be more careful from then on and in general I won't even answer whether I've spoken with one of my players.

BRUK: The situation is not totally clear-cut, due to the social nature of the hobby. Suppose XXX and YYY plan to go with me next summer to Lake George, and we've all been making plans over the phone, and XXX wants to know if YYY has spoken to me about it recently. Does my role as their GM prevent me from behaving as normal friends would behave? I think not, and yet in saying so, I recognize that there is a slight risk that I could be inadvertently interfering in their game by unwittingly revealing info that I shouldn't. There is no black or white on this one, only judgement.

SITUATION 8: One of your players submits for publication an article which you know is an elaborate attempt to deceive a fellow player about his playing style. Do you publish it or not, and in doing so aid his deception? If the article is entitled, "Why I Like to Play for Two-way Draws" and you were also planning to publish the latest ratings which will show that he has just won three games, what do you do?

James Hall: Other GMs have done so and if a player is stupid enough to believe what he/she reads that's his/her bad. You can't protect people from their own stupidity.

Mark Low (no answer received)

John Pack: If the article's any good, I'd publish it as any other article. The players have a right to fool each other. When the poll ((ratings)) results arrive, publish them. The GM has no obligation to help in any deception, but shouldn't interfere unnaturally either; i.e. if poll results would normally go out in an issue, they should go right on out. However, it'd be wrong to save the poll until the article showed up so that you could contradict the article with the poll results.

Don Del Grande: Consider each thing separately; make the decision on each as if it was the only thing to be considered.

Mark Luedi: Publish both. And await dead skunks.

Rod Walker: The GM can make no judgement in this matter. How do you know the article is a deception, or that it is aimed at a game in your mine? ((The player might have told you.)) You don't. Even if it is, so what? All's fair and so on, and I submit that the GM is not certifying the truth of the thing. It may be a perfectly interesting and valid article in its own right. Of course, the article would have to be truthful insofar as that can be verified. In the cited instance, if the writer made claims about the results of his postal games which were not true, then you'd have to demur from publishing it. But the article would not otherwise ipso facto be a deception. It might not be believed for instance. The business of a phony readjudication is totally different...that is a deception because it is false but trustworthily true on the face of it. Believing the assertions of such an article, contrariwise, is a matter of judgement. Given a good article, I'd publish it.

BRUX: I'm curious: why can't you publish the article if it makes unfactual claims about the player's game results? After all, he could put such claims in a private letter.

Edi Birsan: Publish whatever you want in the zine. I could care less if another player is misled as a result of it.

Steve Langley: I'd thank him for the article and publish it and the ratings. Who knows, maybe he has changed his ways. Maybe the wins were flukes. Then again, maybe not. The ratings are of interest to all.

Bob Olsen: Let his article be published; if it's a blatant piece of hypocrisy, the truth will come out. Nobody reads that stuff anyway. Also since the statistics are public record, they can be printed too.

Jim Meinal: See #6. We are not our subber's keeper -- he's deceiving another player, not us, so we don't care. I suppose an argument could be made that he told his ally that he was going for the two-way, and by printing the story we are abetting the deception. Maybe. But do we decide to run any article based on its veracity? Or try to discover the author's motives? Perhaps a seemingly innocent article represents the same elaborate plan in another zine? The fairest and easiest ploy is to look at all articles with a white heart and empty head.

BRUX: I try to look at everything with an empty head, especially in my function as a GM.

Konrad Baumeister: I go ahead and publish this article he has written, whatever it is, and if I have room for the ratings list, publish that too. The readers don't have to believe the article. This is not, incidentally, uncommon; I've done it myself. The problem is, it's not a thing that's easy to measure in terms of effectiveness.

Mark Berch: There's nothing wrong with publishing such a self-serving article, and you don't aid him any more with that than you would with self-serving press. The ratings question is a variant of question 6, and I would see little problem, though I can understand the opposite position.

Mike Barnes: Hell, print 'em both. It's not the GM's responsibility to either help or hinder player interrelations; but he should not make any conscious effort to aid in the deceit of another player.

Steve Knight: You know it's an attempt to deceive the player? The article should stand or fall on its own merits; if you're squeamish about it because the author won't label it as fiction, kill it. Would you publish it if the author wasn't in a game in your zine?

Charo Edison: If his article is well-written, and you like it because of points he brings up in it, then I'd say yes. If you had planned to publish the latest ratings before he submitted his article, then it's not GM interference. If you decide not to publish his article at all then that is not GM interference, either, for whatever reasons you give. You, as publisher, make biased decisions about articles all the time; why should this time be any different?

Michael Kettman: The GM should publish what he sees as appropriate. The reasons cited for situation #1 also apply here.

BRUX: My view seems to coincide with the majority again. Publish either or both based on their own merits. If other players draw any conclusions about the player who wrote the article, that's their business, not yours.

SITUATION 9: A player asks you, the GM, for your opinion of another player. Being ethical, you don't say a word, of course. Then he says this: "OK, Mr. GM, I want to purchase some of those old zines you have for sale, and specifically I want to buy the ones which contain endgame statements from and about this other player. These are, after all, in the public domain." You know that these issues will reveal the other player for the scum-sucking slime that he is. Can you sell them to the player requesting them? Can you refuse to do so? (Aaaaarrrgh...)

James Wall: If your policy is to honor past issue requests you have to live with the request. Unless you don't want to go through all the past issues to figure out where the endgame statements are.

Mark Law: ((No answer received))

John Packer: Sure, ask the player to list off the numbers he wants, and they're his. But I wouldn't go through and select which issues to send. The player'd have to make his own order for back issues.

Don Del Grande: Back issues which are not sold or given away belong to YOU; you don't have to sell them if you don't want to. However, I wouldn't change the standard back-issue policy just for a case like this. If you offer those issues to others, you have to offer them to the player making the request. (Personally, my policy is to make all back issues available.)

Mark Lucchesi: Sure, you can sell them to him; you don't have to tell him which issues the endgame statements are in...

Rod Walker: If the player knows the numbers of the back issues he wants and offers to pay for them, sell them. He's right; the info is in the public domain. Now, if you volunteered to him that he might be interested in thus-and-so issues of the zine... that would be a different matter. However, if the request is just for "back issues that contain endgame statements",...well, sorry, I don't have time to do the guy's research for him. He gives me the issue number and I'll sell it to him.

Edi Birman: Anyone who wants back issues is welcome to them. As GM, you are not in the business of censoring published history.

Steve Langley: I'd sell him a stack of old zines with the understanding that it was catch as catch can. I have neither the time nor interest to do his homework, but if he wants to do the research I see no reason to refuse him the chance.

Bob Olsen: Sure, sell him the back issues, no problem. Though he is in a sense asking you to edit your response...

Jim Meinel: No big deal. He can buy all the back issues he wants, yes, they are in the public domain. But he has to choose the issues to buy, not me. As long as I am not making a decision on what to include in what is to be sent to him, my hands are clean. What if I had no issues and he asked to run an announcement for old issues? Sure, why not? It's just a request for information. As long as he is choosing the information to be obtained, we as gamemasters are okay.

Konrad Bammelstein: Anybody can buy whatever back issues he wants, subject to what's available. Everyone should be careful of what they do and say, as when this stuff does become public, it stays public.

Mark Berch: So long as you would ordinarily honor such a request for back issues, you should honor this one too. You aren't there to put roadblocks in front of the players, besides which, he could use a friend to purchase the back issues.

Mike Barne: Sell 'em. Why not? You aren't giving him anything unfair or confidential or aiding one player to the detriment of another.

Steve Knight: Sell him the zines. No, you can't refuse. You would have sold them had he not mentioned doing the research on the other player, right?

BRUK: You can't refuse? I can, though I don't think I ever would.

Chardo Edison: Yes, of course you can sell them. If you have set a precedent of selling old issues in the past, then you may certainly sell the ones the player asks for, no matter his reasons, without worrying about GM interference. Of course, you can also refuse to do so, as long as you tell him that the ones he has requested are sold out, whether they are or not. This certainly is GM interference, but there's no way he can pin it on you, and as long as you're not caught in a lie, who gives a sh\*t? (If you really don't have any of the ones he wants, then the question's academic, isn't it? Well, isn't it!!!!???)

BRUK: Boy, remind me not to play under you, if you ever start GMing. The GM who needs to lie to his players about anything has gone astray somewhere!

Michael Kettman: The GM should sell the requested publications to the player requesting them. Not only should he sell them but he has an obligation to do so. The GM has contracted to provide a service and not to follow through would be inexcusable. The player requesting the back publications should be congratulated for his foresight in ordering them.

BRUK: Well, we pretty much agree that you can sell them. Several of you feel that the player has to choose the issue numbers, rather than making you do the research yourself. Normally, I will do that research for someone who's buying back issues (e.g. if someone wants to purchase issues containing strategy articles, or letters from Berch, or whatever; I'll try to accomodate him within reason) and the same holds here. The endgame statements are in the public domain and he may buy them if he wants. I also have the right to refuse any sale, though I wouldn't do so in this case unless there were other reasons.

SITUATION 10: As a GM, you have (horrors!) made a judgement call and separated the seasons because there were lots of adjustments due this winter. A few days later, the Frenchman calls you to protest. The conversation goes as follows:

"Mr. GM, I protest. I built a fleet in Brest with the intention of stabbing England in the spring by moving it to the Channel. Now that the seasons are separated, England will know he is being stabbed and will stand me out of the Channel."

"Wait a minute Mr. Frenchman. He could have "seen" your build anyway by using conditional orders."

"But he wouldn't have. England is too careless a sort of player to write conditionals, and you know it."

The GM's option of separating seasons without prior warning are not covered in the house rules. Does France have a valid point? Have you interfered in the game?

James Hall: The GM should have separations covered in his/her house rules. After the usual GM separation, though common sense dictates that the players should make separation requests and that the GM should only separate seasons based on such requests. This is the one instance where your situations really do seem to have the GM going way out of bounds.

Mark Less: He does and you have, but that's too bad for him; the French player will hitch but it's certainly not worth replaying a turn or something. I suppose others will argue whore-fuck (underlined because it's a word in a foreign language) is it, but that strikes me as rather silly.

John Pack: My separation judgement call should have occurred before builds had occurred. The GM has interfered unless his HRs give him such a strange right. A player-voted separation would always be a possibility and a careful player should take that into account. But, a GM call should be placed with the Fall results, not made after receiving the orders or after executing the Autumn and Winter results.

Don Del Grande: Do the house rules say that there will be two mailings per game-year? If they do, then the GM is interfering by adding a third mailing. If they don't, then the GM can do whatever he wants; France's statement of "But (the English player) wouldn't have, (made conditional orders)" is an assumption. (That's equivalent to saying that I was a two units give mutual support because I never die in H5 (which I didn't -- it was my first game, PHM or otherwise).)

BRUK: I fail to see the similarity at all.

Mark Luedi: It seems that if seasons are separated strictly by the number of adjustments, the GM should have announced with the Fall results that seasons would be separated. Yes, France does have a valid point; playing the players is as much (if not more) a part of the game as playing the board situations.

Rod Walker: The French player is all wet. In FIF play, the Winter adjustments are always seen by the players before they write their Spring orders. The combination of seasons is a device to save time where the Winter results are pretty simple and pretty obvious. The combination of seasons does not have as its purpose making a stab easier. Sorry about that. If, in my judgment as GM, Winter is separated then Winter is separated. If the player doesn't like that, he can play in some other game. It is NOT EVER in my opinion for the GM to state a firm policy in advance and then say it out. The player has no recourse and in fact is trying to get the GM to cover up his stab for him. No way.

This is true even if it is not mentioned in the house rules. The GM would also presumably make a similar combination of seasons either. Since in FIF play the players see the adjustments before negotiating (much less writing) Spring orders, the GM is perfectly correct in what he did. It is the GM's job to do his thing fairly and consistently. It is not his job to worry about what this or that action will favor. The French position is totally irrelevant to his decision and he should refuse even to discuss the issue...at least as you present it here.

BRUX: In all my years of GMing, I've heard only one player express the viewpoint that perhaps the purpose of combined seasons might be to allow players to shield a stab in this manner. That was Steve Angle, and I disagreed with him at the time and still do. FIF and postal play are different, but the concept of successive seasons is so fundamental to the game that I can't see combined seasons as a legitimate way to hide a stab, only as a means of speeding up the game. So on that point, we agree.

However, I think you might be getting just a bit carried away, Rvd. If indeed the GM has a provision for combined seasons, then it does become a legitimate option for a player to use this fact and try and hide a stab in this manner. The problem is that he'd better be damned sure that the seasons will be combined, and in this case he had no way of knowing that, since the houserules said nothing. And of course there is always the possibility that the player will use conditional orders anyway...which means the play is never guaranteed of working.

Edi Birsons: Sounds like France has a personal problem. The only real objection he should have is if the GM called for joint builds ((combined seasons)) and then unilaterally separated them after everyone got their moves in based on the fact that the GM called for a joint set of orders. Some of the best stabs can be done in a joint Winter-Spring combination because you can build an obvious threat and move it to the attack with most players being caught off balance. Even if a conditional order picks up the move, the enemy loses a whole season of diplomatic talks to stop you. So the only interference in this case is if the GM published intent of joint orders and then without notice split them after the orders were in.

Steve Langley: A separation of seasons is not against the rules nor is it a hardship. If France's game depends on a sneak attack through non-separated seasons, he probably ought to read some Linsey, Berch, Smyth articles on the play of the game. Protest denied.

BRUX: I agree with your conclusion, as you'll see when we get to my turn, but your reasoning is all wrong. Players have the right to be incompetent, and they also have the right to base their strategies on sneak attacks involving non-separated seasons, or on any other of the rules in force, or whatever.

Bob Olsen: Frenchie takes his chances. If the seasons are separated for just cause, then combining them to facilitate France's plans would be UNjust cause. In a way the French player has backed the GM into a corner where he can't separate the seasons without interfering.

Jim Meinel: This is really the only valid scenario of the bunch. The GM has clearly interfered. If the players wanted a separation they would have asked. France was entirely justified in assuming the seasons would be played together and planning his moves accordingly. The GM should adjudicate both seasons based on all orders on hand as of the deadline for Winter/Spring.

Konrad Baumstern: The bad for France. One shouldn't make plans on such unknown possibilities, anyhow. The insistence that England is too careless to write conditionals doesn't hold much water, either. I personally like to combine seasons to get a faster-paced game, but ideally it is true that there are just two seasons: Spring and Fall (which incorporates builds). In the postal game, it's lengthened to three seasons, adding Winter. The combining of seasons is somewhat of a luxury; the players must expect that the game will be run on the separate Spring, Fall and Winter turns, and plan accordingly.

BRUX: How can they expect that if the houserules didn't tell them so?

Mark Berch: This isn't even close to being a problem. France's speculations on how England conducts himself are entitled to no weight. If you felt you had valid reasons to separate seasons, that is reason enough.

Mike Barno: Assumptions about England's playing style are irrelevant. If you'd separated seasons regardless of who played the relevant positions, it's OK. In any event, it would seem that either the GM would have announced the separation ahead of time, in which case France would have known what he was dealing with, or the seasons were separated by what the GM felt was a sufficient number of requests, in which case France has no gripe.

Steve Knight: A toughie. Any judgement call of this nature is going to be "interfering" to some degree. I'm still inclined to say it's okay, though.

Chardo Edison: Yes, you have interfered, especially since the situation is not covered in your houserules. No matter that you may argue that the English player could have written those conditional orders this time. About this one there is no doubt.

BRUX: Your first sentence is entirely backwards, in my book. I say that no, you haven't interfered, since the situation is not covered in your houserules!

Michael Kettman: The GM has definitely interfered in the game. However, in the case you cited France does not have a valid point. Due to poor rules or inadequate coverage of the situation in the houserules, the GM took appropriate action as he saw fit. I would resign from such a game if the GM made such a move. In the circumstances, the GM had every right to make such a move. However, I would find the game to be unenjoyable as I wondered what the GM might also not have covered in his houserules.

BRUX: An ounce of prevention... Instead of resigning from such a game, why not check out the houserules before joining it? (Joining??)

BRUX: I deliberately put this question last because I knew it was going to give me a golden opportunity to pontificate on my favorite topic. Michael Kettman and Don Del Grande both touched on what I feel is the correct answer. You simply say to the French player, "No, it isn't interference. I can do anything I want regarding season separations because I gave myself this power by leaving the topic unmentioned in my houserules. It's your own problem that you joined my game. If you want a game in which the GM has to rule one way or the other, rather than make an arbitrary decision, find a GM with more comprehensive houserules!"

So there!

Mark Berch poses situation #11: You are a GM running a game with black press. A player, wishing to establish that press is his, inserts a phony move into his orders, e.g. A Swiss-Pied, or A Tyo-Mun (let's assume that he doesn't have A Tyo). He then begins his press release with "A Swiss-Pied" or "A Tyo-Mun". Do you print the phony order, even though it's going against the "black press" aspect of the game?

Good question. I'd say yes. There are other ways of establishing that a press release is really yours -- like writing to the players in advance and telling them. I am on the other side in this one, though.

Many thanks to all who participated in this discussion. Your views and insightful comments made for good reading and were very educational to me and perhaps others. It was a great idea and probably the most successful of the round-table discussions so far held here.

Michael Kettman also writes, "Well so much for the comments by yours truly. I will be very interested in seeing the response of other people. I imagine it will fuel quite a bit of controversy for your VI and provide pages and pages for future issues." My response? "Exactly so!"



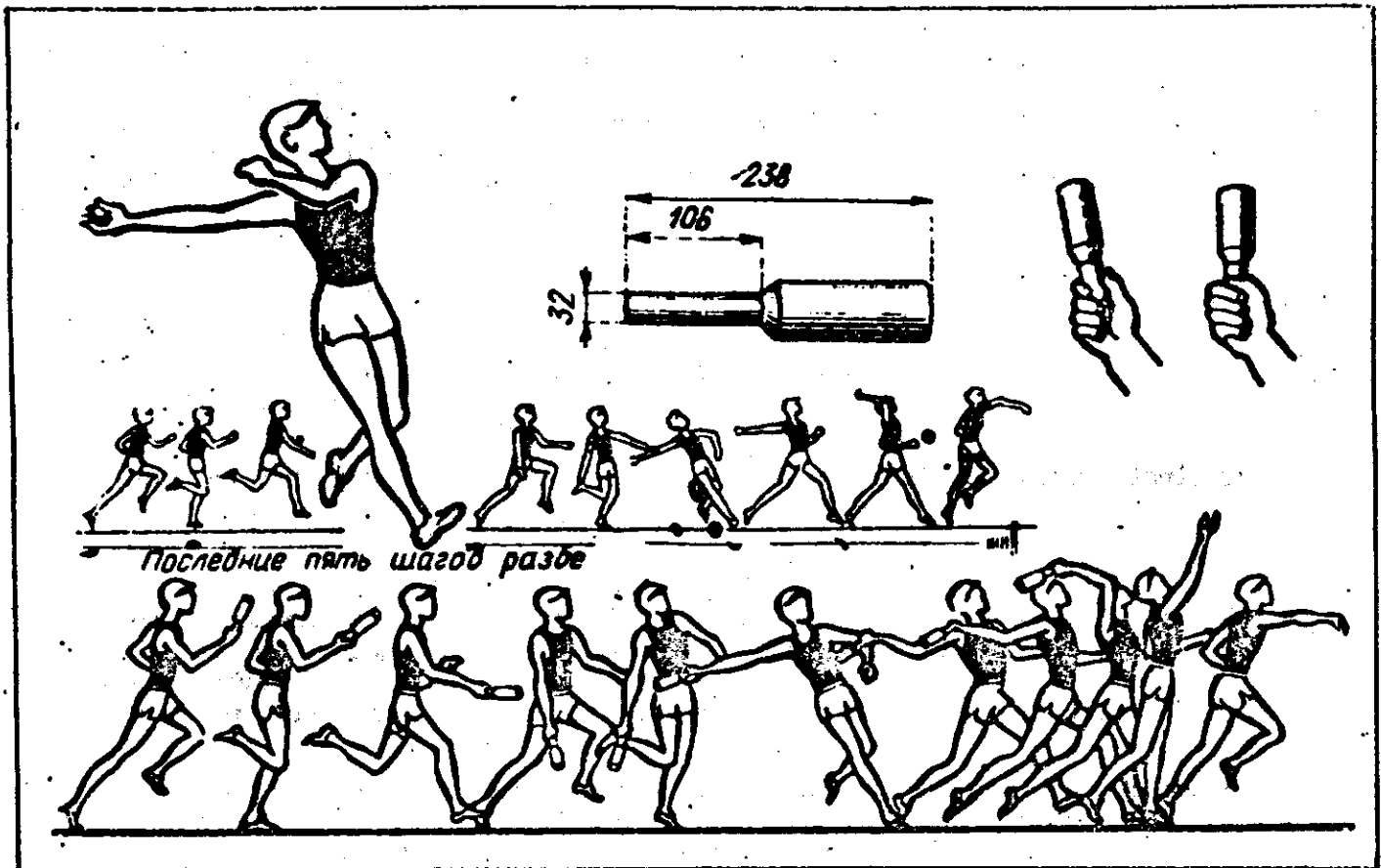


Illustration from a Soviet physical fitness book shows proper way to throw a grenade

### The Last Next Olympics

by Chuff Afflerbach

The Official Boycott of the 1984 Olympics is finally underway, and just in time. So the Russians and their toadies won't be able to make it this year -- good riddance. Now if the rest of the world would just follow suit, this whole nasty business would be ended.

And I do mean business. Do we really need an official beer, or soft drink, or candy bar, or toilet paper for these games? I will refrain from reciting the Official Litany of Sins of the Los Angeles Olympics; it's a list we all know only too well. But I will indulge in my own personal anecdote, that final indignation which struck me like a bolt of Official Divine Revelation.

Appropriately enough, I was in the monastery at the time. Nothing long-term, just an afternoon retreat for solace among the Benedictines. The site is as it should be; an old ranch house as a residence, barn converted to chapel, contented lambs under whispering cottonwoods, and all of it nestled in the hills that keep Los Angeles from pouring into the Mojave Desert. A worthy endeavor.

Following the Mass, I ambled the pristine grounds -- through the Oriental Garden with its soothing waterfall, around the scenic duck pond, along the Nature Meditation Trail, then past the Visitors Information Center. At last my stroll delivered me to the Curio Shop.

"By the labor of your hands ye shall eat," saith the Lord, and for these monks that labor is the crafting of ceramics (which they then must sell, of course). Their modest studio was cluttered with stacks of angelic cherubs and cherubic angels. Serene Christs and Blessed Virgins smiled their encouragement upon all pilgrims. And there, prominently displayed within the room, were an absolute gross of Olympic Angels holding aloft the symbol of the L.A. Games.

Not since the Cleansing of the Temple has sacrilege provoked such a holy wrath. But as God is my witness, mine would be but a drop in the sea of righteous fury should the International Olympic Committee ever get wind of this little scam. Why, just last month the Committee won a \$100,000 settlement for copyright infringement, from a gaggle of imposters who dared to call themselves "The Gay Olympics." What balls!

\* \* \*

Hypocrisy is satire's natural prey, hunted by a cannibal with a boomerang. If one's aim is unsure, then best to choose a large target. Popular sport of late has done just that: stalking the World's Biggest Lie. Leading the list seems to be the ubiquitous "the check's in the mail," followed closely by a rather vulgar reference to unannounced ejaculation. But after years of stumbling through this impenetrable wilderness, I have chanced to come face-to-frightening-face with the Greatest Lie of All -- the King Kong of Deceit, more sinister, more insidious, more prevalent and pervasive than any other in the jungle. I am referring to the Lie known as "It's Only a Game." Clearly, it never has been and never will be.

Consider the Olympics. What was the purpose of these ancient "games" except to prepare the athletes for combat? Running, jumping, wrestling were all valuable -- nay, vital -- skills on the battlefield. (Yes, even discus throwing -- have we forgotten already the Pentagon's study on "The Military Applications of the Frisbee?") True, some of these endeavors have outlived their effectiveness; a gold-medal javelin toss didn't do the Ethiopians much good against Mussolini's tanks at the Addis Ababa "Games" of 1936.

So, let us bid farewell to these (hopefully) Last Olympics with their outdated concept of "it's only a game." Then, let us make ready the way for the Next Olympics, where the competition will be elevated to a new and proper level of hypocrisy and greed.

Did I hear someone mention Diplomacy? Exactly the point I was driving at. In fact, it seems so obvious a conclusion that sometimes I wonder if I could have thought of it myself. The parallels are apparent: the Olympics were started at the turn of the century, the same historical period in which any Diplomacy contest begins. The setting, too, is appropriate: The Great Powers of Europe vying for mastery over all others. (Of course, with Third World participation must come some variants of Third World War.) If we are ready to admit that our "games" are merely our training for the real thing, then the next logical step is to adopt Diplomacy as a vast improvement over those quaint and pointless anachronisms of track and field.

So, do I hear a second to the notion? Imagine a new era of Olympic competition, where fraud, treachery, and greed are openly rewarded. Assassination and terror would be recognized as legitimate Diplomatic and Olympic options. Yes, even surprise orgasms could capture a prize. Soon we can look forward to the day when we pick up a newspaper and read:

Prime Minister Wally Jumblatt of Lower Lebanon today denounced in the press Yazzir "Boss" Arafat and his striking Palestinian Labor Organization. Jumblatt also denounced "Boss" Arafat's denunciation of the Outer Syrian occupation of New Jerusalem, and for good measure threw in denunciations of the U.N. Peacekeeping Farce as well as the recent bicycle-bombing of the Severed Phalanges Headquarters. Jumblatt was a gold medalist in Press Denunciations at last year's Beirut OlympiCon."

Because, after all...isn't this hobby too important to be left to the amateurs?

((Whew! That was quite a statement, Chuff. Perhaps your scenario is closer to the mark than many of us would like to admit.

It is clear to me and probably just about everyone that the Olympics are not "only a game". They are a propaganda device being manipulated by the power-mongers of the world. And yet, once they begin, they are a game to the athletes and the fans. I hope they continue indefinitely in their present form, despite the politicians.

(ix fine. Thanks, Chuff, and sorry thank for another great article.)

((Got this from some friends at work. Do I now qualify for the Dave Carter "Most Sexest" Award??))

**BIG DANS**

**SUNG TO THE TUNE OF JIMMY DEANS "BIG JOHN"**

**WAS THE SIXTH OF MARCH IN EIGHTY THREE  
ALL SHE REALLY WANTED WAS A DRINK FOR FREE  
SHE TOLD HER MOM SHES GOIN' FOR SMOKES  
NEVER REALLY THOUGHT SHE'D BE GETTIN SIX POKES**

**AT BIG DANS  
BIG DANS  
BIG DANS  
BIG BAD DANS  
(BIG DANS)**



**CHORUS**

**THE BAR WAS DARK, THE MEN WERE DIRTY  
SHE FINALLY RAISED HER SKIRT BOUT EIGHT THIRTY  
VICTOR AND JOSE AND THE OTHER FOUR FOOLS  
WERE PLAYIN A NEW GAME CALLED FALL RIVER POOL  
AT BIG DANS - (CHORUS)**

**WELL SHE BROUGHT EM TO TRIAL, SHE STATED HER VIEWS  
BOUT HALF A DOZEN PORTAGEES WHO CHALKED THEIR CUES  
THE COURT WAS TOUGH, BUT SO'S THE STREET  
HER MAMA ALWAYS SAID "BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU EAT"  
AT BIG DANS - (CHORUS)**

**THE JURY CAME BACK, SAID "GUILTY OF RAPE"  
THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY ALL WENT APE  
THE JUDGE SAID "BOYS, SHE TURNED SOME TRICKS  
BUT YA SHOULDA KNOWN BETTER THAN TO DIP YOUR STICKS"  
AT BIG DANS - (CHORUS)**

**THE BARS' A BAKE SHOP, THE PATRONS SAID "BYE"  
SIX BOYS ARE SERVIN' EIGHT TO TEN AT M.C.I.  
BUT THEY'LL BE OUT AS SOON AS THEY'RE ABLE  
AND NEVER GO NEAR ANOTHER 7-HOLE TABLE  
AT BIG DANS - (CHORUS)**

# Bruxism: Thief That Steals Teeth While You Sleep

John Rugh Ph.D., associate professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, spent the last 14 years studying bruxism and is one of the pioneer researchers in stress-related oral disorders.

Rugh said studies show there is a genetic predisposition for bruxism, that it occurs equally in males and females and, although researchers don't know why, it generally occurs during the arousal phase of sleeping.

Rugh admits researchers still don't know much about nocturnal bruxism or how to treat it.

Research studies of about 500 volunteers at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, according to Rugh, show a "clear, strong correlation between stressful events in a person's life and events of bruxism."

He said certain forms of extensive brain damage are correlated with bruxism, as are extreme nutritional difficulties, drug side-effects (particularly from amphetamines) and alcoholic consumption "in heavy jolts." They account, he said, for about 5% to 10% of bruxists. (Another 10%-15% is currently unexplained.)

He emphasized, however, that "we first have a preference to get people to change their life style." "We speak of managing it rather than curing it," he said. "It's like ulcers, if you can manage the stress you can pretty well keep the symptoms under control."

"Probably in the last two or three years stress management has been shown to be very effective," he said. "If somebody will make a major change in their life style, that makes the most dramatic change. In our clinic we can get about 20% of the patients to go into the program and they (about 80%-90%) do well if they stay with it."

"There's a definite trend in that direction," he said. "The big problem is getting people to go through the program: motivated enough to change their life style that significantly."

((This page submitted by Flumph T, Quiddipoo, Jr.))

like, a big mouth?

arousal phase - is that when she reaches over & grabs you ---?

only 10-15%? My!

LOVELY!

Hmmm!

Give up Backstabbing!  
Oh my God!  
I just cant!

## BRUXISM: Thief That Steals in the Night

Remember, we can help you; but first you must help yourself. Call us. Today.

All loyal, screaming Doomies should immediately report to the nearest Mental Health Center to be checked for contamination.

# America Revised . . . Beyond Recognition

The following is an excerpt from a "history" of the United States pieced together from several years of test papers, book reviews, and research reports produced by the 8th-grade students of a Pine Bluff, Ark., history teacher named Billy D. Lawrence. First published in 1969 under the title, *Then Some Other Stuff Happened*, Mr. Lawrence's book of essays has been out of print for several years. It is being re-released this month by Atheneum Publishers.

By Billy D. Lawrence

## Stiring Up Truble

Abe Lincoln had a wife named Bathsheba. But she died and he got married to Mary Todd who was crazy. Carol Sandburg was the girl he really wanted.

## Deadicating the Dead

At Gettysbug Lincoln made his most famous speech, the Gettysbug Address. It was only a paragraph long, but it was the best said and wrote in all history. It was really two mixtures of two speeches by two men. Lincoln was not the principle speaker, a man named Edward Everett was. They were trying to see which was best.

Lincoln didn't speak but a few minutes and Everett talked a long time. They were deadicating a dormitory for the wounded soldiers that died at Gettysbug.

Lincoln's speech started out: "Four scores and seven years ago our fathers came into this land conceived in liberty and justice for all. . . ." People liked Lincoln's speech so much they wanted him for president. Later Everett wrote Lincoln and said: "I wish I could have got down to central like you did. I wish I could have fought the people in two hours like you did in two minutes."

Lincoln was suffering a mild case of chicken pops at the time he gave his address, but he didn't know it till later. They say he wrote the famous speech on the back of old cigarette packages, but this is not true.



## No Law and Odor

After the war was over Jefferson David was kept in prison for two years without no trial or nothing. Finally Horace Greedy, the editor of the New York Tribute, bailed him out of jail and told him to go west, young man. But Jeff David didn't want to go west.

(Greedy had been a calvary leader in the war and was known as Light Horace Harry.)

When he got out of prison Jeff David's luck changed. He became president after Lincoln was shot.

Reconstruction was the Golden Age of the South. The Republicans are responsible for Reconstruction and they have voted Republican ever since. You might call them the Yankee Party. There headquarters is at the Taj Mahal.

Some Republicans went into Southern cities and tried to sell stuff they carried around in little baggs they made of carpet. So they called them Carpetbaggers. They gained large sums of money by sneaky working. They put in gambling joints and stuff like that and gypt the people and cheaped them out of their money. They stured up a lot of truble like that.

The 13th Admenment freed the slaves from slavery and the 14th Admenment gave the ex-Negroes citizenship.

The Clue Clux Clan would torcher, torment and lynch the ex-Negroes and other innesent victoms. It claimed it represented law and odor.

Andrew Johnson came in after Lincoln and was a well-meaning man. He wanted to follow Lincoln's plan of a gentile Reconstruction but was tried for impeachment instead. He was really blackmailed by a bunch of Raticals.

Fatish Stevens, one of the Ratical leaders, pointed at Johnson during the trial and said, "Unfortunate, unhappy man—behold your dome!" But Johnson was found not accused by one vote.

(Andrew Johnson couldn't read or write till he married a schoolteacher. She learned him how.)

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# Assination

On the night of April 14, 1865, Lincoln went to the theater and got shot. The assassin was John Wilkins. Booth's career though had planned to kill him three times, but Lincoln didn't show up for any of these assinations. Before that even Booth and his gang had tried to kidnap Lincoln, but the Pinkerton Boys mussed up all these plots. Booth was a fanatic and wanted to exchange Lincoln for the slaves.

The assination started off when Booth bored a hole (for peeping through) in the floor of the Ford Theatre. The policeman that was supposed to guard Lincoln's body that he was wanted on the telephone. The guard was a pretty dumb fuzz and didn't know that the telephone had not been invented yet.

Booth then went into the show in a box so no one would see him or what he was going to do. Since he was an actor he knew the part in the movie when the laughter would be the loudest. Booth then leaped out of his box and shot Lincoln in the head at one of the funnest parts.

At first the president's wife didn't take notice to him slumped over in her lap. She thought he had just snoozed off as usual. But when she saw the blood rushing out of his head she screamed. Then she carried him off to a house across the street and put him to bed. Before he died Lincoln never even woke up.

Back to Booth. He ran and jumped from the president's cockpit to the bottom of the stage. On the way down he got his spur caught in the flag pole and broke his ankle. Booth was quoted during his flight to the stage. He jumped up with his 38 cal. darringer in one hand and his dagger in the other and his broke leg and shouted, "sic simple tenepic!" which means latin for "goodbye to old tyrants!" Booth then hopped out the back door to his getaway materials. He jumped on his horse and headed for Virginia, his home town. Sec. of Wars Stanton took up a dictator for a small while and ordered all the road exits out of Washington closed, but Booth escaped on Hampton Road or something like that.

Booth stopped on the way to get his ankle fixed. Dr. Mudd put it in a sling. Later on Dr. Mudd was sent to prison for that, but got turned loose before long because he stopped a outbreak of yellow fever that was going around in there. He discovered the serium for it. An infantry of calvary tracked Booth to a burned down barn in Vagina. Some one shot him, but we don't know who that some one was. John Wilkins Booth was only 26 years old and died young. But didn't he deserve it!

This just wasn't Lincoln's murder. It was a lot of things together.

V. P. Johnson should have been shot too. The man that was supposed to kill him went from bar to bar trying to find his courage, but he lost it. He got drunk and was hanged for it.

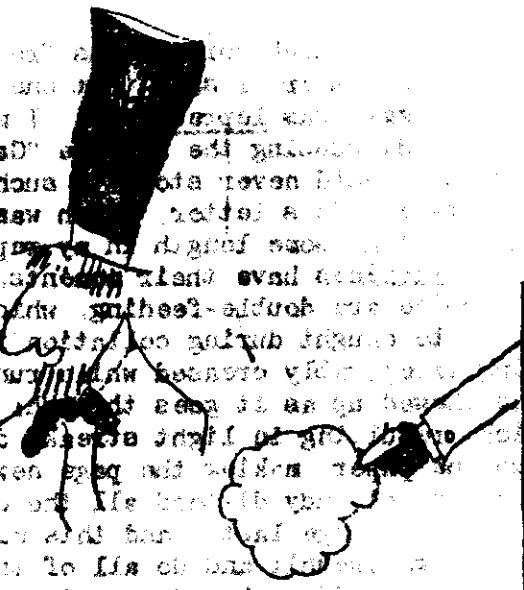
A big dumboaf named Paine was supposed to assassinate Sec. of State William H. Sewer. Paine was so stupid he was not very bright and when Booth told him to "split his throat," meaning Sewer's, he tried to stab him in the neck even though Sewer had had a carriage accident and was wearing a iron brake around his neck. So Paine didn't cut Sewer's throat, but he did slay his body pretty bad.

The whole plot took place in Mary Suratt's boarding house, but we don't know whether she was in it or not. Anyway when the cops found out Booth had been staying there Mary S. was hunged by the neck till she was dead. She was the first woman to be persequed by the federal government of the United States. The other people that was involved in the Lincoln assination later exequed or killed themselves. Mary Tood Lincoln locked herself up in a closet and went crazy. She was declared mentally insane and put in a insane silome.

One day a long time later a man walked into Lincoln's office and found his son, Robert Tood, burning some of his daddy's old pappers. The man asked him why he was burning the pappers and Robert Tood said, "Maybe they will criminate one of the members of the goverment," which his daddy was in.

That criminal may have been Edwin Stanton, the Sec. of Wars. There are four reasons why this may be:

- (1) He closed all the exits from Washington except the one Booth took.
- (2) He tore some pages out of Booth's diary that was found on him in the barn.
- (3) He didn't say nothing about Booth being seen in the theater.
- (4) I don't remember another one. Maybe they is only three reasons.



ALEX HEARD

A couple of quick corrections from last issue are needed. In response to Kathy Byrne's letter, I said that one of the misspellings in the previous month's crossword puzzle was leprechauns. I meant (sigh) leprecons. Ed Wrobel's letter on page 24, in discussing the article "Gaining an Ally" (VD #93), contained the sentence, "I, for one, would never stoop to such duplicity." I inadvertently left this sentence out when typing Ed's letter, which was quite embarrassing because I then proceeded to respond to it at some length in my reply. The error was accidental, I assure you!

Ditto machines have their moments. Some of the problems one can encounter with a ditto machine are double-feeding, which if not caught results in blank pages which will only be caught during collation if they are facing upward at the time; masters becoming irreparably creased while running; paper feeding through crookedly; paper getting chewed up as it goes through; and uneven distribution of the ditto fluid on the wick, resulting in light streaks down the pages or wet spots where the ink runs through the paper, making the page next to impossible to read. I mention all this because I've already dittoed all the other pages for this issue (yeah, sometimes I do do the last page last), and this month was a blue-ribbon winner. My ditto machine decided to go apeshit and do all of the above, very much and very badly. The worst pages are the odd-numbered ones in this ish, in the 50s and 60s. If you really can't read any pages in your copy, let me know and I'll do what I can. I've already tried some pretty vile language directed at the ditto machine, but somehow that only seemed to worsen things. Oh well.

Not much else to discuss here. Remember VD's upcoming fifth anniversary issue, though. In my fourth anniversary I promised to try and make VD's fifth year its best so far. How'm I doin' so far, teach?!

BRUK

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Your sub expires with issue #

97

→ time to renew!