

Still another issue of Ed Wrobel's very favorite zine!

THE VOICE OF DOOM

#97

July 10, 1984

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by BRUCE

Contributions for VD's fifth anniversary have begun to trickle in, and several people have promised me they will try to write something for it. Keep 'em coming, folks! The more, the merrier.

For those of you who missed it, there was a contest hidden within Ig's letter in VD #96, wherein anyone who told me in writing that they had read the paragraph in question would be eligible to win a free issue. John Pack and Brad Wilson were the only two to respond, so a flip of the coin and...Brad Wilson is one VD richer. Nick Felella was also kind enough to send in the following remarks: "Yes, I read Ig's letter. But don't give me any more free issues. I feel guilty enough paying 50¢ for an issue that cost (\$1.22) to mail. Please no more, or I won't be able to sleep at night." Thanks for the nice note, Nick. But sleep easy. If it's fun for you and fun for me, then nobody loses, right?

I'm considering running an early Doomie of the Year contest this year so as to get the results into my fifth anniversary. If I do, you'll of course hear about it by next month. So start thinking about who you're going to nominate.

I really should apologize for the size of this issue, to everyone except Fred Davis, who says he likes them small. This is the smallest VD I've published since February. There are a number of reasons it's so tiny, the primary being that an active summer schedule has decided to wage war on the amount of time I try to devote to VD. Alas, #s 98 and 99 are threatening to be tiny as well, since I already have plans for every weekend for the next month, and by the time #99 rolls around I'll be trying to get ready for the anniversary. Anyway, please bear with me. I've tried to include some good junk to read, at least.

I was considering telling you people about how I nearly poisoned myself trying to kill some moths a few weeks ago, but I've already told the people at work, and they aren't letting me live it down. And they're normal compared to you folks, so I think I won't tell you after all.

Joan Extron just called to tell me that I ought to start up a zine exclusively for non-GMing non-publishers, and call it House of Dregs.

The Voice of Doom is a journal of postal Diplomacy published every two and then by Bruce Linsey, 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 August 3, 1984.

Hobbytalk

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It looks as though this column is rather popular and therefore here to stay, at least for now. Only ex-Doomie Kathy Byrne has expressed a dislike for the column. Brian, John Kelley, Nelson Heintzman, Gary Cougland, Robert Acheson, and Jim Buckley all have said they enjoy it so far. Me too!

Actually this was a rather slow month for zines. Raging Main and Feeling Good were both delayed and didn't show up, though the RM game results went out on the 15th. Prayers, I understand. Diplomacy World isn't out yet, Dip Digest the same. Europe the Dinner North is still delayed, I haven't yet received an issue. Prayers which I understand Terry Tallman has yet another letter dumping on me. I have not yet received my copy of the cassette tape EMM! 50, and High Plains is delayed while Jake's personal life returns to some semblance of normalcy. In all of that, it's surprising that I remembered that there is a hobby out there. Europa Express #35, for one. This issue was delayed as Gary held over most of the letter column, but there was a good bit of good stuff. One of the letters Gary did print was from Michael about the slide "What on earth are they talking about? Does it have anything to do with anything, or is it just another ludicrous plan to 'organize' the hobby?" Gary goes on in great detail about the EMO, naming some of the "Zones" and "Regions" and so on. I dare say that you've seen this stuff before in EM, and probably won't after this. That's what Michael's question is, no, it doesn't have anything to do with anything, and yes, it is just another ludicrous attempt to organize the hobby. All such attempts are ludicrous). I wish that Gary would have answered this question anyway. I'll be sending this issue to Michael in the hope of starting a discussion about it. The Concert of Europe, and will hopefully see it in the next issue. I haven't yet seen Concert, by the way, but it comes highly recommended. I know it must be good.

My dog is in the mail, I know, having just spoken with Eric Kane. It's a very nice dog and contains anything worthy of comment (which invariably it does) you'll hear more about it later in this column.

As the issue of Yakagigic arrived, the best one I've read in months. Yakagigic is the only one I've read in months. Larry Peery has announced the winner of the Jim Miller Memorial Award: Yee Kender. Also, Mark Berch has won the Walker Award for literary excellence for his outstanding "Shep Rose" article. I have some reservations about the way the balloting for this award was conducted, but I do think that "Shep Rose" was probably the single best piece of writing published in the hobby over the past year. Steve Hirtler's "The War" and Dave Knight's "Iness Wars" should have at least been mentioned. And of course I'm far too modest to talk about "Roll Over Peering".

Derek's love of homosexualityphobia notoriety has been kind enough to contribute to one of his good-looking British zines, Wax and Peace. Yes, Derek, we're not really an arrangement with the reliable Swedish OM Ake Jonsson to run an international tournament (in games) in W&P. The games will be run by separate fixtures and will be held about five weeks, and the seasons later reprinted in the zine. The purpose is to attract players from a wide range of countries for these games. The only deviation from "normal" rules is that WMRing units will be allowed to also count it as a "war hold". It seems from Derek's write-up that there will be a list for rules which Ake will send to the players. Inquiries about the tournament should be addressed to the Jansson, Regementagatan 53, S-723 45 Vasteras, Sweden. If you wish to play in one of the games should, however, be sent to Derek at the address: 1111 Hill Road, Ocean Isle of Wight, United Kingdom SO31 7EQ.

Setting up our post addresses makes me appreciate the simplicity of our own. I'll be using a five-digit ZIP code and two-letter state abbreviations. I'll be using a four digit area code to have it over the longhairs, and I won't care if the

On a very happy note, VD extends its congratulations to James Alfred Pothergill-Brown, who by virtue of his birth on June 4 acquired a wonderful set of parents, Ronald and Ann; and an older brother, Christopher. James Alfred weighed in at 7 lb., 15 oz.

The latest issue of Give Me a Weapon is legible! And it also contains the news that Conrad von Metzke, P.O. Box 27273, San Diego, CA 92128 has openings in regular Diplomacy in his newly-restarted Costaguana. Check it out. Conrad is a very highly-respected hobby old fart. His zine was widely accepted as one of the greatest of all time.

Latest issue of Politesse contains the news that "this is, indeed, the end of Politesse as we know it, the final issue, as it were. We have finally run out of justifications; our existence is too tenuous -- it must end. Get your refunds fast." In fact, I have reason to believe that Politesse may not be folding; I guess the next issue will tell, eh? But those of you who try to get your refunds may be in for a somewhat unpleasant surprise. Ed's policy on subscriptions is that they are fully adjustable; you pay as much per issue as you feel the zine is worth. At least that's what I understood when I exchanged \$10 worth of sub credit last summer with Ed. When inquiring about my refund, then, I was curtly informed that of the ten issues Ed has published since our mutual sub began, eight were doubles and two were triples -- thus I owe Ed \$1.00 instead of the \$5.00 refund I would have had coming had each issue cost me 50¢, as I had thought was the case. The June issue, for instance, was a triple at 24 pages and cost me \$1.50; and moreover I was never informed that Ed's issues were being counted as multiple. Just thought any of you in the audience who sub to Politesse might like to know.

By the way, I have decided that this issue of VD is an octuple and therefore its cost is \$4.00. However, out of the goodness of my heart I am sending seven of the eight issues to each of you for free, except that Ed Wrobel is getting charged for the full amount, and his VD sub therefore ends with #98 instead of #105. Since Ed's policy is to publish unannounced multiple issues, I'm sure he won't object that I'm doing the same. Hey Ed, if 24 pages is a triple, then what does that make 170 pages?...

Ed also has printed some correspondence from Rod Walker which, I am informed, was intended as personal rather than for print. This is not an isolated case, alas, so it appears that people would be wise to think twice before sending Ed material which they don't want printed. A few months back Ed printed a paragraph of Steve Knight's which made obvious the content of a letter which Steve informs me he did not want public, and as has already been noted here Ed also printed part of a letter from an unidentified writer who requested, "Don't print this". Since this breaching of confidences seems to be standard bill of fare in Politesse, I urge people to tread cautiously. I get much confidential correspondence; not one piece of it has seen print.

Latest issue of The Prince contains an unusual request from Jim Meinel: that no one refer to his zine by its initials. No, I'm not going to be crass enough...

A really great looking new zine has appeared from still another of the Mad Mob: So I Lied, published by Doonie Marc Peters and his wife Debi, with contributions from other members of the Mob. My sub check is going in, and I recommend that you check it out if you didn't get a sample. Write to Marc and Debi at 29 E. Wilson #202, Madison, WI 53703. One thing I like most about the emergence of SIL is that Tom Swider will be publishing his subzine Expletive Deleted there. Since ED used to be part of the now-folding Coat of Arms, I never got to see it. (I wasn't about to shell out money for COA, after all...) Tom I consider a good friend and it will be good to read his subzine after a long hiatus.

Ter-ran #93 contains the note that editor Steve Heincowski was not at all offended by my criticism of his handling of the Charles Byrne/Kathy Byrne situation in the last VD. I knew he wouldn't be. I met Steve briefly at Origins in Detroit last year, and I've never met anyone more pleasant. The guy's always got a friendly smile on his face. But Steve, I'll bet I'm gonna beat you to #100!

In the latest Erehwon, Rod Walker decries the practice of cancelling subs on the basis of a feud. I've stated my position on this before, but it bears repeating. I don't agree with Walker on this matter. I feel that a subscription to a zine should be a mutually enjoyable activity for the two parties involved, and if either of them doesn't enjoy the fact that one is subbing to the other's zine, then the arrangement may be called off by either party. Thus I have, in the past, thrown two or three people off the VD sub list because I choose not to deal with them. (And remember that most issues here lose money -- why should I pay to send my zine to someone I want nothing to do with?) And several people have cancelled their VD subs in the past, which I regard fully as their right.

Rod also urges other people not to give John Caruso's Foot in Mouths home in their zines unless Caruso stops using it as a vehicle for his hate campaigns. Anyone who's read any of the past few issues of FIM knows what Rod is referring to, and I have no intention of running it here, in the extremely unlikely event that one should be sent my way.

Rod also comes down very hard on Kathy Byrne for her nastiness and viciousness. If I said what I thought about that, she'd probably threaten to sue me again, so maybe I'd best just keep simmering. (☹)

One zine that has not been at all slow of late is Mark Luedi's Thirty Miles of Dusty Highway, Overgrown with Weeds and Covered with But a Thin Layer of Old Gravel and Topped with Stinky Horse Manure. Indeed, TMODHOWaCwBaTLooGaTwSHM has been coming out almost with the frequency of the old weekly VDs, and is always lighthearted and humorous. The cover of issue #23 was one of the most imaginative I've ever seen, but inside the issue Mark warns that the zine is perhaps about to get much more warehousey than it's been to date. This would be a pity if it comes to pass. Luedi's humor is one of the hobby's most enjoyable moments.

Bersaglieri #36 arrived, quintessentially Eastcoastcliquian in style but with some entertainment nonetheless. The "Celebrity Page" was kind of cute, e.g. Still, Bersag is perhaps the weakest zine I'm currently receiving and I'm probably not going to renew even though I've come to like Tom Mainardi. Tom, that's Dave Lincoln who won the tourney at MaryCon.

The latest issue of Sleepless Knights asks why you can't go to the bathroom at a Beatles concert. Because there's no John, of course.

In Snafu!, Ronald Brown expresses his current annoyance with Larry Peery, who in an earlier article confused Randolph Smyth with John Leeder by saying, "So far three awards have been given, ((one of them to)) Randolph Smyth, Fol Si Fie (or was it John Leeder? And if so, why? And why not both?)"

Ronald goes on to state, and very rightly so, that it bugs the hell out of him when Americans can't get their Canadian counterparts straight. After all, both Leeder and Smyth are/were pillars of the Canadian hobby, and the least that we Americans can do is remember who's who among the relatively few Canadians around. I agree. We Americans should pay closer attention to Canada and give it the attention it deserves. Ronald, by the way, publishes the excellent zine Snafu! from out of Ontario (or is it Manitoba? I forget which is which.)

Received a very impressive issue of Lokasenna, published by Brian Dolton in Great Britain. Alas, he has declined my offer to trade. Aha -- Steve Knight, here's where your service is about to come in handy... Anyway, the issue contains an entertaining allusion to an argument that the Negro is inferior to the White because, after all, Negroes did not invent the atomic bomb, germ warfare, or the city. So there, all ye would-be non-bigots!

The latest issue of The Diplomat is highly unusual and noteworthy in that it contained nothing for me to comment on here.

On the other hand, Graustark #493 contains the news of the arrival of Anthony Christopher Perez, John Boardman's first grandchild. Congratulations to John and Perdita. May he grow up to be a good little mendacious excrescence.

Another zine which hasn't been zine here in quite a while is North Sealth West George. I forgot to list it as one of the overdues at the beginning of this column simply because this is par for the course for NWSG. Indeed, it would be something of a minor miracle if this zine ever does come out on time.

Also missing is Inflammatory Material, which I am supposed to be receiving as a trade from Simon Billionness. Simon gave me issue 3 when I met him last spring, but I've yet to receive any copies in the mail despite sending him several. No offense, Simon, I like you and you're a swell guy and all that, but if I don't have some Flame by next month, the trade's off. Fair enough?

Since I'm back on the topic of British zines, I might mention that the issue of Denver Glont that I said hadn't come a few pages ago finally came (yeah, Doomies, this column sometimes does take more than a day to type...). Terry Tallman, unable to elicit so much as a humrrmph over here in the U.S. with his attacks on me and Gary Coughlan, seems intent now on trying to convince the British hobby just how bad Gary and I are. For instance, "If you read Voice of Doom you will see an awful lot of what Linsey calls back patting, and what I call askissing. Readers write saying what a swell szine it is and how Bruce is a swell guy. This is not to say that no letters with any content are printed, but rather that you have to wade through a lot of slime to get to any real content." I totally agree with Terry, but will never be dumb enough to admit it in print. Thanks much to Terry for the broadened publicity. And I'll look forward to another issue of North West Sealth George sometime. Just hurry up, will ya? I've only got around 50 more years to live...

Pete Tamlyn's The Acolyte 58 has just checked in at a typically humongous 36 pages, full of reading material, although a good percentage of it deals with fantasy games and that sort of junk. Still, there's plenty of good stuff. Acolyte is one of the mainstays of the British hobby these days, right behind Denver Glont on my list of favorites from over yonder. Actually I do have another (minor) gripe with the zine: Pete sends it rolled up in a brown paper sleeve, and by the time it hits the mails over here in the States, it is so used to being rolled up that it jumps out of my hands when I try to read it and rolls itself back up. Kind of like a fetus unwilling to face the inevitable fact of birth.

Latest issue of Murd'ring Ministers (which incidentally I regard as a long-time pillar of the American scene) has a letter from Jerry Lucas talking about his recent gamestart as Austria in Cathy's Ramblings. Jerry moans, "I am making a career out of playing Austria." GULF! Seems to me I just called on Jerry to stand by in QUASAR here as...as...Austria! Sorry 'bout that, Jerry ol' buddy. Mine was an unwitting contribution to this "career" you seem to have chanced into. Oh well.

Received recently a whole pile of Lives of Monty from Don Del Grande, mentioned also in the letter column here, but I wish to thank Don again for his generosity. Best of the bunch, of course, was the issue where he nominated (in spirit, anyway) me for the Don Miller Memorial Award. Thanks for the kind words, Don. Also of interest in one of the issues was a Foot in Mouth which I scoured and scoured, but couldn't find an attack on Rod Walker. Caruso had typed up the issue using a worn-out ribbon and the whole thing was absolutely unreadable. Hyork, hyork.

Magus #36 contains a very clever satire about VD in Daf's marvelous Hare of the Dog. Daf -- I almost died laughing! "Blasting woodys," indeed! Keep up the hilarity.

Fol Si Fia #157 (157!) contained one of the very best and most useful articles on the play of the game that I have ever read, a well-organized compilation of stalemate lines presented in a very readable manner. THIS ARTICLE IS CLOSE TO BEING A "MUST" FOR ANY SERIOUS DIPLOMACY PLAYER, and I have Randolph's permission to send a xerox of it to any interested Doomie. Just send me a SASE and I'll send you a copy. If you're in any game that's winding down to a stalemated position, you should have this article on hand. Congratulations and thanks to Randolph for a piece of writing well done.

By the way, "readbale" in the above paragraph is somewhat synonymous with "readable."

I understand from Thirty Miles of Bad Road that St. George and the Dragon has folded quietly with its 100th issue. Congratulations to Bob Sergeant on a fine hobby career, and although I was never fortunate enough to play there, thanks on behalf of the hobby for all those fine games you ran. St. George was easily one of the hobby's most highly respected zines back when I joined the hobby.

Was browsing through the latest issue of Everything, and I couldn't help but note that practically every gamestart and finish contained at least one Doemie. Also that of the 17 winners listed in this issue, 9 are present or former Doemies. Must be all those strategy articles rubbing off, hey?

Frobazz, from Jeff Richmond, has a distinct resemblance to the afore-mentioned St. George. Mostly games (although no current openings, alas), with a smattering of humor and a contest for non-players, just to keep things a little lively. I think I've already said this, but I'm getting very good vibes about this new zine, especially as a place to play. Jeff has been kind enough to adopt one of the games from the irresponsibly-folded Manifest Destiny.

Cathy's Hamblings #8 is just in, a bit late but eagerly gobbled upon its arrival anyway. The letter column is bursting with political commentary, the most cogent this month being from John Norris. There was also an enjoyable article on MadCon. Whoops, make that artical. Next to Europa Express, of course, CR is the zine one reads about most often in the British press. I chided Brian Dolton earlier for refusing to trade with me, but he does trade for CR so he's got some class, anyway.

Ode 55 contains an excellent article by John Marsden entitled Whatever Happened to the Juggernaut?, an analysis of the recent trend against the Russo-Turkish alliance. Is it my imagination? -- I think this alliance is less common now than it was five years ago, too. My personal opinion is that R/T is the strongest alliance on the board, all other things being equal, which of course they never are. The very first game in VD, ANDROMEDA, featured this alliance, and it was quite successful.

Let me wrap up the column this month with some information about non-zine stuff. Doemie George Leritte, 116 Pebble Beach Dr., Youngsville, LA 70592, has asked me to mention that he is interested in obtaining a copy of the game War In the Pacific. He will consider purchasing it or, since he owns some other wargames, trading for it. Write him directly if you can help him out.

Alex Lord is in the news once again here even as she tours Spain with some of her classmates. About three weeks ago, I was pleased to hear that Alex has been elected President of the Student Council at her high school. She will serve for the duration of her senior year next year. Also, I understand from talking with her mother that Alex had a very happy 17th birthday while in Spain on July 5.

Dixon 1985 is going to be held in Seattle. If I go (which is a remote possibility) I'll probably stay with Joan and Deadwood and ride up and/or back with them from Oregon. More likely, though, I'll be attending...

Kabin Kon '85. Paul Rauterberg called a few weeks ago and indicated that he is interested in starting early to make our trip to Lake George a reality for next year, and since then Mike Barno and Steve Knight have expressed potential interest. So, is anyone else out there (non-smokers, that is) interested in starting to plan this thing with us? Peter Ansoff, Mark Luedi? Let's do it.

BRUXCON is going to be held at my apartment once again this winter; the last two have been loads of fun. I may decide to hold it from Friday the 28th through to Tuesday, January 1; we'll see how things shape up. This of course would conflict with ByrneCon for those who plan to attend that august event (well...that december/ january event, actually, but...). BRUXCONS are different than ByrneCons in several ways. There is no smoking and less drinking, no animosity and far fewer people. I'll be happy if we get eight or ten people. Why not take the plunge and plan to come this year? You might, if you're REALLY lucky, get to see Alex throw her ice cream across the dinner table again, or better still, you just may be one of the select few people in the world who gets to see ERIC KANE ROLL A ONE!! Let me know.

Finally, PudgeCon is Labor Day weekend. Alas, I can't make it -- that's the deadline weekend for VD #99.

Alms forgot. KaneKon is August 10-12, and I'm definitely going.

R I G E L

1963K

RUSSIAN PIRATE VESSEL DISCOVERED IN NORTH ATLANTIC; FRENCH SLIP INTO TURKISH HOMELAND; GM APPEARS TO HAVE TIRED OUT ALL THE RIGEL PRESS WRITERS AT LAST!

Autumn 1906

FRANCE: F Aeg r EAS

ITALY: NRR: A Nap r OTB

Winter 1906

AUSTRIA: even

FRANCE: Build F BRE, F MAR

GERMANY: Build F KIE, A MUN

ITALY: NBR: GM removes F Tyr (out)

RUSSIA: Remove F Bot

TURKEY: even

Spring 1907

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

FRANCE (Hare): A PIE H, A BEL doesn't hold (H), F Eas-SMY, F Spa(sc)-WES, F MAR-TUN,
F NAP-Ion, F Ion-Aeg (d; r Eas, Alb, Tyr, OTB), F Bre-FRO,
F Mar-LYO

GERMANY (Heintzman): A Rom-APU, A VEN S AUSTRIAN A Tri, A Mun-KIE, F Kie-MLG,
A Lvn-STP (F NWY S), F Swa-BOT (F BAL S), A DEN H, A Gal-War,
A SIL S A Gal-War

RUSSIA (Kleinman): F Nwg-NAT, A StP S A War-Mos (d; r Fin, OTB), A War-MOS
A RUM S GERMAN A Gal-Bud (NSO), A SER-Vie (imp), F Bla-RUG(sc)

TURKEY (Beilly): F Acr-ION (F AEG S), F CON S F Aeg, A GRE H, A Smy-SYR

Game Notes: The F/G draw and the concession to Germany both failed. Russia wants it publicized that he voted "no" to the F/G draw and "yes" to the concession to Germany.

Now proposed are an F/G draw and a concession to Germany. Please vote by next deadline.

Press:

KAISER to TSAR: 9. N x N B x B

BRUX to RIGEL: Nyah, nyah, guess I wore all you guys out already! I think we should therefore concede the press war to me!

The Voice of Doom is proud to announce that it is Ed Wrobel's very favorite zine, although he likes Raging Main almost as much. The poll results are in (thanks to James Woodson for passing along the votes of several people who sent them to him instead of me), and the voting went as follows:

The Voice of Doom (7): Steve Langley, John Pack, BRUX Linsey, Mark Borch, James Wall, Ben Schilling, Scott Luckenbill

Raging Main (5): James Woodson, Matt Fleming, Sumner Steinfeldt, Gregg Fritz, Jim Makuc

Politesse (3): Rod Walker, Ken Hager, Kathy Byrne

Also receiving one vote each were Retaliation (Brad Wilson), House & Garden (Andy Lischett), Who Cares? (Robert Acheson), Denver Giant (Don Del Grande), Europa Express (John Woodson), and Andrin (Judy Winsome). Mark Luedi's ballot is invalidated, because he told me he was voting for Politesse and James Woodson that he was voting for Whaitestonia/KK. Ed Wrobel did not cast a ballot, probably realizing that no is biased in this matter. Thanks to all who voted. This, then, is a Great Honor for VD. Ed Wrobel's very favorite zine!

Diplomatic Reverse Psychology

John Paul

The art of Diplomatic Reverse Psychology is distinctly different from its counterpart "Normal" (and I use that term lightly) Diplomatic Psychology. Many of you may think that "The Art of Losing Diplomacy" is reversed psychology; however, this is not reversed psychology, it's just stupid psychology. Reverse Psychology is the art of winning (or doing well) while employing completely abnormal tactics. Being abnormal, I could be considered an expert at this.

Normal Diplomacy Psychology would dictate a nice, logical, perhaps deceitful approach to relations with the other players. All of you are quite good at this. For example: O Mighty Sultan whose wisdom exceeds even my own, I will be thine ally forever and ever and I stand ready to help thee in all thy plans, blah, blah, etc., etc. Of course, you'd then present your impeccable plan for world conquest or whatever you have in mind. Fairly straightforward, eh? Diplomacy isn't supposed to be straightforward, at least, not completely.

If we are to believe what BRUX wrote about logical, deceitful, and emotional diplomatic efforts ("Elements of Persuasion", VD #90), then logical efforts retain their effects over long periods of diplomatic correspondence while the other two decay in effectiveness with use. So it is with Normal Diplomacy Psychology vs. Diplomatic Reverse Psychology. Normal stuff will continue to have its positive effects after many uses while the effect of Reverse Psychology will decay with usage. Now, after that warning, what is Diplomatic Reverse Psychology?

Suppose BRUX was going to jump out of a skyscraper window and imagine that (for instance) we did not want him to do so (we're supposing, remember). We might (normally) fall to our knees and beg him not to jump, telling him how much he means to us, what VD subscribers will think if he breaks his own houserule, etc. OR we could (using Reverse Psychology) tell him how happy we'll be to see him jump and how much VD will improve without him, etc. Which would be better? Well, if BRUX thought he could torture us by not jumping, he wouldn't jump. Therefore, if we didn't want him to jump, we'd best tell him to jump. As you can see, Reverse Psychology requires special case situations for use. Normally, I wouldn't use it on my best ally unless he was going to stab me. The best place to use it is with your enemies or potential enemies (though sometimes Reverse Reverse Psychology is needed depending on the enemy).

Let's say I'm England. I have an alliance with France, but since Germany is now destroyed I suspect that the large Russian northern force and France have been working together all along. Italy is extremely loyal to France (no hope of breaking that alliance, which you, of course, helped to build). Let's try Reverse Psychology here. I'll write Italy and ask him to stay allied with (i.e. out of) France while Russia and I divide him up between ourselves. I'd work my butt off trying to get Austria or Turkey to beat up on the Russians in the south, relating to them that Russia will be moving against France. Hopefully one of them will be a loyal ally to France, not wanting him to be divided quickly and hoping to avoid a larger Russia, and will inform France of the impending Russo-English attack. Hopefully, Italy would be so upset at the thought of not getting any of the spoils that he'd attack Russia or France, and/or (at least) make sure that France doesn't trust Russia. I would also write France telling him how doomed I feel in the face of the R/F alliance and that I'd like him to get all of my centers instead of that Russian (accompanied by a list of very good logical moves to attack me with). I'd bet any France would be suspicious of such a note especially if anyone is warning about a possible Russian knife, and he might suspect Russia of double-crossing him. I might also consider telling the Russian the same thing (making sure to mention how safe his southern flank is and suggesting moves that leave him helpless in the face of any southern enemy). Letters like that always make people very nervous/suspicious. It's like the guy who's smiling -- what the heck is he smiling about? (Smiles work well in face-to-face Diplomacy when you come out of conference with your opponent's ally.)

Of course, there is also the question of the dangerous small power you stabbed who gets into a position where he can adversely affect you in many ways. For instance, a vengeful player can either take Budapest or Vienna. You can recover more easily if he takes Vienna. You could write a letter to him indicating that you will hate him for life if he takes Vienna, because reason, reason, and more reasons. He will then, of course, take Vienna if you have forcefully demonstrated why his doing so will hurt you more than anything else he could have ever done.

Taunting ("You couldn't take Budapest if you had 5 armies bordering it!!") your opponent may help him decide to do exactly what you said he couldn't out of sheer anger before he stops to think about it. Of course, this pre-supposes that you want him to do this.

Announcements in public or press ("OK, you can have Budapest this time.") may make your opponent believe he couldn't take it even with 5 armies. ((??))

You can see well how the trick is to say something or give some instruction which isn't taken at face value but causes deep psychological reaction resulting in the opposite effect. Bruhaha...

((Except when I do it and it works, that's BRUKhaha.

Reverse Psychology is of course in the arsenal of diplomatic techniques of any good player, and variations on the theme are almost countless. Some examples are described by John above, although in some of the cases it sounds as though he's being so blatant about it that the whole strategy would be absolutely transparent. For instance, rather than tell someone that you'll hate him for life if he takes Vienna (if the guy's already your enemy, such a letter will be thoroughly transparent), maybe be a bit more subtle and propose ways in which the two of you can ultimately patch things up and work together next season if he'll take Budapest for now. Or, use reverse reverse psychology (allude to at one point in the article) and send him the same letter -- but substitute Budapest for Vienna.

Thanks, John, and four free issues for a nice bit of writing.))

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The International Subscription Exchange is now operative. It is being run in the United Kingdom by Doug Rowling, 19^{1/2} Hawkswad Rd., Paisley, Renfrewshire, SCOTLAND PA2 7B5; and in the U.S. by Steve Knight, 11905 Winterthur Lane, Apt. 103, Reston, VA, USA 22091. It has been established with the primary intent of making it easier for British and American hobbyists to obtain subscriptions to American and British zines.

Requests for subscriptions to cross-Atlantic zines should be sent to the ISE Operator in the subscriber's home country, stating clearly and legibly the following information:

1. Subscriber's name, address, and telephone number.
2. Zine or zines requested, including the publisher's name and address.
3. Specific mailing instructions for the zines (airmail or surface mail), if any.
4. Amount intended for each zine or publisher, OR number of issues desired.

When requesting a subscription to a zine which charges a flat rate ("X dollars/pounds for Y issues") instead of maintaining credit balances, add 10% extra to cover variations in the exchange rate; excess over the requested number of issues will be returned. All requests will be dealt with as rapidly as possible.

Voice of Doom is available to British hobbyists, but by SURFACE MAIL ONLY, at the same rate charged to Americans (10 issues for \$5.00).

Thanks very much to Doug and Steve for starting this valuable hobby service; I will be using it myself in the near future. One suggestion: Doug and Steve may each wish to publish a list of zines available in each other's country TOGETHER WITH THE CONVERTED RATES, so that, for example, American readers will know how many issues of Denver Glont can be bought for \$5.00. What say, guys?

For further info, write to Doug or Steve directly, and please enclose a SASE.

First came "GM Interference", then "Response to Interference", and now an all new article about the same old thing. All this interference is beginning to sound like a great big bunch of...

Doomie Static

not by Chuff Afflerbach

Case A: You are GMing a game in which one of the players is a close friend. One night, you are jolted out of a sound sleep by the ringing of the phone. As a GM, you are naturally not free to get annoyed, but as a person you do feel a mite irritated when you discover that it's your friend on the line.

"Hey, BRUXeroonie," he crows. "How ya doin'?"
"OK," you mumble, still half asleep.

"Hot damn!" he exclaims, and slams down the phone. You are suddenly wide awake. What have you done? Maybe one of the other players in the game told him you weren't OK! Have you interfered in the game by giving out this information? Maybe he told him you were dead. Maybe you shouldn't be answering your phone at all.

Yes, Doonies, we have barely begun to scratch the surface of this hot potato. There are dozens and dozens of ways that a truly inventive GM can find to interfere in his games. And we really ought to unveil a few more of them. For example:

Case B: You carefully unfasten the staples holding shut the zine you have just received in the mail. Lo and behold, stuck inside the zine is an envelope addressed to "Grandma, 160-02 43rd Ave., Flushing, NY 11358" with an uncanceled stamp. You are about to drop this obviously misrouted letter into a mailbox so that some poor grunt dogface's grandma will get her smarmy little love note, when you notice that the address is strangely familiar. You rip open the envelope and lo -- it's a phony adjudication for a game you're GMing. Do you quickly call Kathy and inform her of this odious plot, thereby interfering in the game? Or do you forward the letter anyway, and risk incurring the Wrath of Byrne? Well, which is more important, this stupid game, or your life?

Case C: It's all for naught. You've just lost your wife, your home, your job. Plus, that damn kitchen faucet is still leaking. You were hoping it would never come to this. Slowly you walk to the dresser. Your legs are like lead. You open the top drawer. You take out your .45. You lift the gun. You press the barrel against your temple. Your finger starts to squeeze...

"Just a goddam minute!" yells a panicky voice inside your head. "Put that gun down! You're still running a Diplomacy game, remember?" Visions start appearing in front of your eyes -- visions of your perfect track record of reliability going down the drain, of your players voting for the first time to move your game to another GM, of your game being run under the house rules of some run-of-the-mill lenient GM, of...

"Aaaargh!" you scream in horror. "I can't...I can't do it!" But can you? Well, which is more important, your stupid life, or this game?

Case X: You suddenly realize that in your obsession never to mail a game adjudication late, you have mistakenly sent one of your players the results of his game a week before the deadline. You catch a midnight flight to his home town and pay a cabbie triple fare to zoom to his house at 90 miles per hour. But you're a split second too late; as you burst in the front door you see him ripping open the envelope. "Give me that adjudication!" you scream. "Not on your life!" he leers at you. In a fit of GMing integrity, you reach for the nearest heavy object -- a fourth anniversary issue of Voice of Doom -- and wing it at his head. He ducks and your throw misses, but you have by your action thrown the earth entirely out of orbit. In the resulting tidal wave, both of his allies on the west coast are killed. As the sirens begin to sound

The Gossip Column

From Peter Ansoff (6/16/84):

Dear BRUX,

Greetings. Enclosed should be some \$ to extend my VD sub.

As you probably noticed, I didn't make it to MARYCON. I was involved in the Alexandria Waterfront Festival that weekend, and my plan to make a "cameo appearance" at the beer blast didn't work out. Unfortunately, it looks as if this is going to be a recurring problem for me, since both MARYCON and the Festival are scheduled for the first weekend in June.

Actually, I had a rather interesting experience on the first of June. Our local tall ship, the LINDO (since renamed the ALEXANDRIA; dumb idea) was due to return from Norfolk, so I sailed HORNELOWER down to Mt. Vernon to escort her up the river. LINDO showed up on schedule, along with two other ships on their way up to Alexandria: the WAN FU, an Australian-built sailing junk, and USS HOLST, a Navy Salvage Ship. We made a splendid procession coming up the river; it was a sunny, windy day and LINDO and WAN FU made most of the run under sail. A DC fireboat met us above the Wilson Bridge, spraying water from its monitors. Unfortunately I had no camera. Anyway, LINDO needed some help handling her mooring lines, and little HORNELOWER was available...we got the job done, but it was sort of like "LINDO meets the Keystone Cops." In the process, HORNELOWER broke her engine mounting and narrowly avoided being dismantled by LINDO's jibboom. I wasn't sure what sort of reception I'd get when I went aboard LINDO on Saturday (I've been working on board as a volunteer tourguide), but the captain thanked me for helping out. With a straight face even.

Do you speak Pascal? I recently bought a compiler for my PC (TURBO Pascal, from Borland International -- it costs only about \$50 and is worth every penny), and am trying to pick up the language. One of my "someday" projects is a Diplomacy utilities package that will resolve orders, allow "what-if" analyses, save games and board positions, print situation maps, and produce game summaries and statistics. Pascal seems to have some nice data structuring capabilities that would be useful in Diplomacy applications.

Keep up the good work. I'll try to come up with something for issue 100, assuming the excitement in ORION doesn't get to me first.

((Do I detect a note of...

No, sorry, I don't speak Pascal. COBOL is the only language with which I'm really familiar at the moment; I've used Basic and Fortran in the past, but don't remember a whole lot about either.

I'm still eager to go sailing with you one of these years. That's something I've never had the opportunity to try.

So with your \$30 sub check, you are now winning the Subscription Wars. Tough luck, Chardo!))

From John Pack (6/19/84):

Dear BRUX,

...I don't know, Bruce. If an ordinary issue makes 80 pages, why shouldn't a fifth anniversary take the cake/record/whatever? If RIGEL puts out another 32-page season, I'm sure we can do it. A newspaper reporter thought my copy of VD was a monstrous book. I do read the entire issue when I get it, even if it takes me a couple of days. I even read the little comments you (or perhaps Ig) stuck in Ig Lew's letter. I'm not so sure it was worth the time four pages took to read, but I did read it and will probably continue to read everything. OK, so what if I'm a masochist?

Personally, I agree with Derek Caws' remark. I think Adolph Hitler's plan for dealing with prostitutes and gays was a good idea, something akin to the Final Solution. People have rights. As people, gays have rights; as gays, they don't and shouldn't. Same with any other class of thing. As a person, we should have rights; but as this or that or whatever thing we don't. Gays can't be shot on sight, so they already have enough protection. Any gay following me with lusty locks in his eyes may lose a few rights for a moment, though...

I'm glad to see that Kathy Byrne has set another record for VD.

I'm glad to note that RIGEL II will be played in some other zine. That way, our favorite publisher won't go broke too soon. The press is good, though.

Ed Wrobel's favorite zine must be The Voice of Doom; after all, I've seen something from him in every issue I've read for quite some time. He surely gave VD a 10 in the Runestone Poll. His favorite GM is Mark Berch, though. Since he's never played under Mark, he hasn't found anything bad to say about him as a GM. Now, Mark is one of his least favorite Ombudsmen though. I look forward to my co-enjoyment of VD with Ed for a long time to come.

I used to be like Mike Ehli, but now that I'm broke, I'm not. Spend it while you can, Mike.

If enough people feel strongly about a Dippy Organization/Custodian, then those people can pay for it. Others will help as they glimpse the true need of such, if there is one. You can ((I gather from the context that he means "can't")) force anyone to pay for something they aren't sure they want. This is a hobby.

I enjoy being a dreg; it gives me a sense of class -- after all, how many people would say they are a dreg? A definitive distinction for us Doomies.

I'd like to think that the "Greater Good" rule would allow some imbecile to order a unit to hold and to support and to get away with it, since units supporting must "hold" their position as well.

I don't like to think that anyone would take this hobby seriously enough to do anything about it in real life, other than write letters, publish zines, etc.

OK, inspect the houserules. I expect that that will be quite a task, and that someone may slip something past. Glad to hear that MaryCon was successful. Perhaps I'll even come to one of these things someday.

I enjoyed the GM Interference discussion. I'd say yes to Situation 11. I'd think any GM who replied as you did in "your" answer to Situation #10 would shortly have severe problems continuing to GM without such a houserule. Permission to separate seasons isn't given in the Rulebook, so no GM has the right to do so without a HR to that effect.

I think I'll just suffer through BRUXism, rather than seek a cure. I enjoy it.

I'm an extremely opinionated person politically (right-wing, of course), but I'll hold it down to just a comment or two. I enjoyed Chuff's Olympic article. The point of view taught to students in school is the liberal point (the popular view). However, those of us who have given the matter an ounce of thought have realized that, as usual, the majority is all messed up. I enjoyed Greg's letter as well, of course. There is one problem, though. Bad people don't make good ideas work. Good people have a hard enough time making them work as it is. Once upon a time ago, JFK said something worthwhile (a rare event). He said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." All I ever hear is "What can we make him/them do for their country?" Is it a bad thing for rich people to be rich? The income tax policies of our country would seem to make it so. It's even worse to make little exemptions all over the place for everyone and everything Special Interest Group. How about some General Interest? Why don't we look at the whole instead of ourselves? Some programs are going to have to be cut if the budget is going to go down. Why shouldn't it be "our" program? What make anyone think that their program is more important than one other or the whole? Nuke Special Interests!

Well, I anxiously await another great issue of VD. Have a great month!

((That paragraph about politics left me totally baffled -- but that's OK, please don't elaborate further.

Well, of course any GM who would reply as I did in Situation #10 ("I can do whatever I want regarding separations of seasons because I gave myself this power by leaving it out of the Houserules!") probably would have a houserule to cover it anyway...thereby alleviating the need to deal with that situation.

No, the Greater Good Rule isn't there to correct or change players' orders. It's there to give me a loophole in the event that my houserules would dictate a ruling that clearly goes against common sense. I can legally override the offending houserule (which would likely be amended in short order anyway) by invoking the Greater Good Rule. I think it's one of the best ideas I've had in a long time, even if I never have to use it.

Your comments about gays merely reflect ignorance, sorry.))

From John MacFarlane (6/19/84):

Dear Bruce,

Here's five bucks to extend my sub through #106. Keep up the quality! I have much enjoyed the last string of issues.

I agree with you that letters are better printed whole than chopped-up, as in EE. No specific reasons, just that I much prefer letter columns such as yours and Eric Kane's to EE's (one of the less interesting parts of that zine, I feel). However, I got a sample of Psychopath, with an EE-style lettercol, and it had a nice feel to it. Maybe Europeans and Americans have different letter-writing styles, suited to different editing styles?

I want you to call me at 3:00 AM on the morning after the zine is printed and read me all of the RIGHEL press. Why wait for the mail?

The International Zine Service sounds useful; most people don't want to go to the trouble of getting IRGs, finding addresses, etc., so the service should do a lot to promote intercontinental Dippy. One question -- will the project be funded by an overall contribution (like to USOS) or by individual monies sent in by the people requesting zines?

Sad to see Bob Olsen leaving. The hobby is losing a valuable asset, as well as a very nice person. ((That's Bob Osanch, but your comments still apply perhaps 75% as much as they would have to Olsen...))

Ig Lew's letters are often hard to comprehend but quite often he says something that is very insightful
not to mention humorous.

There is a problem with adjusting a voter's scores so that they all fall within the mean. Example: let's say I've received many different zines throughout my years in the hobby, and now sub only to those that I feel are best, having dropped the ones of lower quality. Thus, I rate the ones I get 7,8,9,10, for example. If I still got some of the "dregs", I'd rate them 1,2,3,4 -- but since I don't get them I don't vote for them. With Lew's system, my votes would be dropped to 3,4,5,6, thus not reflecting my real appraisal of the zines. In fact, this might persuade me to sub to a really bad zine, just so I can vote it "1" and thus preserve my votes for the really good ones. Though I doubt I'd go to such lengths just for a poll.

Why don't you run a "pure diplomacy" contest? All your subbers can send in the name of one person, themselves excluded, and whoever gets the most votes wins the issues. Negotiation, etc., is of course encouraged.

Glad to see another one of Chuff's articles. Excellent, as usual.

Well, gotta go. I'll try to get in something for your #100.

((Your criticism of Ig's proposal is valid. I like your idea of a "pure diplomacy" contest, but would probably embellish it just a bit. I have some ideas, but of course then it wouldn't be pure.

My understanding is that Steve Knight would collect money directly from people who want to get British zines, take out enough to cover his expenses, and forward the rest.))

From Brad Wilson (6/21/84):

Dear Bruce:

The usual way I write to pubbers is to flip through the zine and comment on interesting items. I usually do correspond with my pubbers (Martin, Caruso/Byrne, Walker, Baumelster, Woodson, Briggs, Heinowski, Rautenberg) quite frequently.

However...if I did that with VD my letter would be 50 pages long. I've tried to write before but by the time I did get around to writing the sheer bulk of VD sitting on my desk would usually intimidate me. ..."Gee, I'll get to that later..." I will try with VD #96. Here we go:

...on the 5th ann. issue: yeah, maybe I'll try to send something. Then again, maybe it won't be "good" stuff. After all, if I wrote a page-long plug of Retaliation I bet that wouldn't get pubbed, chuckle chuckle. No, seriously, maybe...

On Hobbytalk:

Raging Main is one of my very favorite zines. Nice & small & good.

A computer might be able to play Third Reich, Blitzkrieg, etc., etc. But Dip? Impossible. Until the computer can "think" -- at which point is it really a computer? -- Dip by computer sounds impossible. NOTE: I do not, of course, refer to EBEM ((Play by Electronic Mail)) Dip -- just to Dip vs. a computer.

DD is at times interesting, at times downright informative, at times downright dull. My sub is up; I'll be resubbing (hear that, Mark?) but still... I get it mostly for a) Berch's writings on the current hobby situation -- "The Zine Column", for instance, which I find informative and provocative and b) to see what he said this month that Kathy will bend my ear on next time I talk to her. How about some more reprints from people who are still in the hobby but wrote in the early-mid 70s, Mark?

To my mind, the only hobby "service" is the BNC/MNC. It is certainly the only one I would/will pay to support; when my DipCon fee gets divvied up, that's not my willing payment -- I want to play in the tournament. The Census is quite useful and handy (what is Mr. X's address?...) but not a necessity. Orphans? If the players in a game really care about it, they'll find a GM. Sure, they'll have to look; but I would if I had an interest in the position I was playing. If not, well, let it go... I'm sure I missed an alleged "service" but that should tell you what I think of them. (John Caruso's Ombudsman Service is fine as it's free.)

Now, really, Bruce, Walker does the most for the hobby? Maybe has done; but I really can't say any one person is currently doing the most for the hobby. Kathy Byrne is BNC, and allows a sizable segment of the hobby to get to know each other at her house; Al Pearson has done some yeoman work on the last two DipCons; Fred Davis has done a lot of things no one else would want to; and what about pubbers like yourself who are, after all, the hobby's lifeblood? My vote on the IMMA this year went to Lee Kendter; he's done a good job with both BNC/MNC and is a solid hobby member. Some of the nominees were, to my mind, weak. What about Fred Davis, John Boardman, Don Ditter? I'm not saying they should win; maybe they should have been nominated.

I might say at this point that politically, I'm with you all the way. Bonnie Rules in 84(5,6,7,...).

On taking orders at all times of the day/night/ungodly hours: as you may know, I GM under practically no houserules; a few to make things run easier. When I'm at college I don't give a damn when people call; 3 or 4 am phone calls can be quite interesting. When I'm at home I don't care but the others who live here do. So, I don't legislate against late calls in HRs but when they are discouraged I will say so. I certainly think I can ask for this courtesy from my players every so often. I will not, however, refuse a late phone call.

I too was a Scout and enjoyed it greatly. My father was a Vigil Honor OA member, scoutmaster, and Eagle with pains. Be prepared! Maybe the Scout Law could be a GM Law: A GM is trustworthy, loyal, etc., etc.

On Northeast/California: I am a fanatic Northeasterner. I am viciously provincial about my favorite city, Philadelphia. I love Philadelphia. There are only five cities I want to live/work near after school: 1) Philadelphia, first choice far and away; 2) NYC; 3) Boston; 4) Chicago; 5) Washington/Baltimore. I like slush and cold. Down with the Sunbelt! No, seriously, I've never known anything but the N.E. (except for 5 months in Chicago) but I love it. I hope I don't have to leave to be able to work. After all, can you see good jazz in Oklahoma? Avant-garde theatre in Georgia? No. Give me a Northeastern city anyday.

One thing that makes VD occasionally very difficult to read is your potshotting at two or three of my very close, nay, closest hobby friends. Now I realize you've got a right to say what you want; and you feel you've got a good case against them. Fine. Just put me on record that I don't like it.

And yes, I'm going to be extremely hypocritical in the next paragraph...no, I don't tell them that when they snipe at you. Why? Quite honestly, I lose objectivity when I'm dealing with very close friends. I would go to the end of the world for any of my really close friends, hobby or non-hobby. Surely you can appreciate that. I don't know you well enough to call you a "friend" (that designation of hobby members by me is rare; maybe there are 5-10, maybe three of which haven't been involved in a feud with you. Ham...) but I consider you a friendly acquaintance. Hopefully I will one day call everyone in the hobby a friend. (Jack Masters is gone so that's possible.) However, I hope we can disagree emphatically with you over these people without it hurting our "relationship", such as it is/could be.

For instance, guess which two zines got "10s" from me in the ((Runestone)) Poll? Yep, you're right. Buddy vote? Sure. Can't deny it. But I enjoy them most. So they got 10s.

It would be nice if Konrad could make GMAW readable, right? Still, I really like GMAW, especially the incisive, well-written music column, "The Toast of Philadelphia." Don't you?

I enjoyed John Kelley's article. As one who -- ahem, blush -- folded quite messily, though without malice, I can appreciate where he's coming from about The Beholder. John Michalski once compared me to John Kelley. Wonder why... I agree that a pubber shouldn't be torn apart because of a messy fold. I hung on through the help of friends. Now, I'm really enjoying the hobby and am Gming again. Gary Coughlan called me "a good and conscientious GM" -- so support your local messy fold! (Just kidding, of course, for all of you old Born to Dip subbers.) What I'm saying is that we should give a dog two bites, not just one. Still, I charge no fee for my (sub)zines and games; Guerrier has nerve charging for Fasschendaale. He should pub for free or for a future payment for 6 months or so.

I've been playing for 4 years and don't have anything close to a win. Two three-way draws with Woody in each. I don't write enough but I have fun anyway. So maybe Bob Sweeney and I should play together. Want to, Bob?

Short reply to Greg Ellis' article: he's absolutely right. Dead on right. Why can't more people think like that? Now, Greg, please NMR in 82F...

I read Mark Lew's letters. I like them. There are some... others I skip... and, officially, I read your comment on page 33 of VD 96...

Perlgutter...as you may (not) know, Dave and I are personal friends; we've known each other for years. Lew's right; Dave's press was unique. Remember the 7UP commercial, "light and crisp and clean", etc.? Pearly did this to that:

"...here we kick Walters' butt
Light and crisp and clean..."

For your info and your readers, Dave is a senior at Penn, spends all his time playing hexgames (not Dip) and is in Los Angeles this summer. If you ever get to see that movie Taps, you can see the Master of Merion -- he's the townie with sunglasses and a plaid shirt. One hell of a character. Lew's letter was all-around great. Mark, drop me a line. Or I'll drop you one.

I (kind of) support your response to Langley's position on hobby services. I think paying for anything in this hobby other than zines and cons is generally stupid, and I think Peery's idea was, to put it mildly, bad.

I won't comment on Dick's letter except to say that I have never received an unreadable copy of Retal and have gotten it since issue #9. The other thing I'll say is that if Mark Berch were pubbing HoL, you'd never have said anything about elitism. And finally: I really doubt whether anything you'd write to Dick after putting him in your "Deadbeat Column" or whatever a few issues back would be construed as constructive criticism.

As for Conrad Minshall, he's a good example of a trained Doonie.

See Martin.

See Conrad.

See Conrad attack Martin.

If it was known that you liked Dick I wonder if Mr. Minshall would have attacked HoL like he did. I find HoL's restrictions fine. Someone who's never pubbed/GMed can hardly be expected to know as much or contribute as much as you or Boardman or Walker or Baumeister. Why should an experienced pubber listen to Conrad Minshall? If Conrad Minshall wants to change something in Dippy, he could write to VD and say it, or to the individual pubber. HoL is a "trade"-type of publication and it's fine for circulation/participation to be restricted to those in the "trade".

Some people might forget that Dick pubs two zines at once, too, and sending out two zines at once can be, or is, a difficult task.

Come on Bruce, who is the "certain person" you refer to on page 46? Old "Straight-from-the-hip" BRUX hiding behind this one? If what this person is doing to you is so sad then print their name and accusations in detail, you'll probably get a lot of people reacting negatively toward this person. But let us judge for ourselves whether this person is so awful. By the way, would "this person" be: 1) Dick Martin, 2) Julie Martin, c) John Caruso, d) Kathy Byrne, e) Terry Tallman? How could anyone blackmail you out of a hobby you like so much? But don't hide behind your self-righteous whitewash that page 46 carries.

As for your Hobby Houserule Inspector -- oh, really now, what silliness. Who defines what "silly" is? You? Or Russ Rusnak? Or Don Del Grande? Or Woody? Or Sacks? See? Some of my few HRs might be called "silly", but my games are hardly irregular. This idea is one whose time will never come.

I enjoyed your MaryCon report and am quite happy to see your (relative) fairness towards Dick and Julie. I really wanted to go but I was quite broke -- read penniless -- and simply could not attend it. How about AtlantiCon? That should be fun. Sacks as GM? Actually, Robert's tournaments aren't too bad at all. Gee, I missed my milkshake. Can you mail me one?

The GM Interference roundtable was quite interesting and very well done. A round of applause to Bruce, fans. I really enjoyed it. By the way, I

- a) use headlines, occasionally provocative ones.
- b) do dabble in the press -- quite heavily.
- c) will call non-collect for moves tho not for partially-missing moves.
- d) yes, I tell people, "Yes, I talked to X the other day..." How can I not?

These people are my friends.

All in all, a lively and fun section.

Well, geez, 9 legal pages thru of response to VD 96. I enjoy getting VD (not the disease) with the reservations noted above. I won't ever be a classic Doonie but all in all VD provides good reading material. Is the letter long enough? No? Good... geez, I'm just about out of things to say. That means I should finish. OK, I'll finish my virgin letter to VD. Hope you liked it.

((Liked it? LIKED it??! I loved it. This is one of the juiciest letters I've ever received; so much to respond to, so many points we can argue about. But I think we ought to go to the next page first, don't you?... Without actually checking back, I'd guess that you're about to get the longest response I've ever given a letter here.

I hope you will decide to contribute something to VD's fifth anniversary. Hey, I don't care whether it's a full-page plug for Retaliation -- I judge material submitted on the basis of quality and not whether I agree or disagree with the author's point of view. I will say that a full-page plug for any zine is unlikely to make very entertaining reading, and might not see print for that reason.

You're correct in stating that a computer can't play Diplomacy, but rather only submit orders. The tactics are such a small part of the game, though, compared to most other games. That's why I criticized Galhamer's Graustark article in VD #96.

Diplomacy Digest is often entertaining, almost always informative, occasionally dull, and almost never well-typed. It's one of my favorite zined due to the wealth and variety of reading material and the editorial fairness. It's true that Mark criticizes some people more often than others there, but those who get it generally have done something to deserve it.

I cannot agree with your opinion that the BNC/MNC is the only hobby service. As I've said before, I personally think that the Orphan Service is the single most valuable in the whole hobby, with the Novice Packet taking a close second. Caruso's "Ombudsman Service" isn't really a service at all -- it's rather a compilation of the names of people who themselves are willing to perform a certain service. The Census is very handy (I have a copy courtesy of Dick), but I haven't plugged it publicly because Dick has a bad practice of cutting his publications in half before sending them out and I don't want to get any nasty phone calls at 3 AM from my readers telling me, "Hey, that Census you advised to buy, Linsey; it's only got the addresses of players east of the Mississippi -- what do I do for the others?!" No, seriously, it's well-done and useful.

My personal opinion is that Rod Walker does the most for the postal Diplomacy hobby. I can easily see how a case can be made for several others: Berch, Coughlan, Davis, Wrobel, Boardman, and so on. It's too bad that there are only five nominees for the Miller Award each year, but the line does have to be drawn somewhere and there's the rules, so we play by them.

Well, since you like slush and cold, I can understand your fondness for the Northeast. Give me the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, the wide-open panoramas of Montana, the colorful desert of Arizona or the wilderness of central Idaho any day of the week! I've travelled extensively throughout the U.S., missing only Alaska, Hawaii, and five states of the Deep South; and to me the Rocky Mountain states are head and shoulders above the others.

I'm sorry that my public "potshotting" directed at some of your friends makes VD occasionally very difficult for you to read. And I admire your open admission that you are being "extremely hypocritical" for criticizing me, but not the other side. But a better word for it is nonproductive. If you truly are friends with these people, and if you truly don't want to see them criticized here, then the most productive course of action would be to try and persuade them to stop doing things that are going to result in that criticism. Consider, for instance, my publicizing of Dick Martin as one of the publishers who hasn't squared with me on my subscription to his zine. Maybe you don't like my saying so publicly, but I wouldn't have done it had my sub to Retaliation been handled honestly. Or a while back I mentioned that Kathy Byrne had publicly denounced me for sending her a letter threatening "to have me attacked in every zine in America!" The claim was a total fabrication, as evidenced by the fact that Kathy was unable to produce the letter even when I offered her \$50 to do so. So you can say all you like that you don't want to read my rebuttal...but the statement in VD would have not been necessary had it not been for the initial action on Kathy's part. Of course you don't need to side against your friends. The correct course of action is to tell them something like this: "Look, Bruce has shown for years now that he's going to respond to this sort of thing, so right or wrong why not refrain from doing it?" Nyah, nyah...

I like your idea of trying to become friends with everyone in the hobby. Not that such an ideal is attainable, given the large number of people, their transience, and the wide variety of personalities; but the ideal is a nice one to strive for anyway. I am blessed with perhaps six dozen very good friends in this hobby, almost all of them Doomies. And I'm just counting the people I really feel close to, not just friendly acquaintances (such as you). I'd go to just about any lengths for any of these friends, and I think most of them would do the same for me (and some of them already have!). That's the reason that I'm in this hobby to stay, blackmail or no blackmail, enemies or no enemies...which brings me to that part of your letter.

I don't feel that I'm biting behind anything by printing the "blackmail" notice as I did last issue. I was merely placed in an awkward situation wherein someone was making some really vile threats, and I wanted my readers to know what was going on in the event that they were carried out. They haven't been yet, and they may never be, so I see no reason to discuss it further. The person knows who he/she is, and so do a few of my close friends. I can assure you that if all the threats were carried out, I'd come out of it looking like the white knight anyway in the end... which I presume is the reason they aren't being carried out.

It is entirely proper of you to vote the zines you like best 10s in the Rustestone Poll, regardless of your reasons. Randolph Smyth tried to encourage objectivity in the voters by including an admonition against grudge votes; I felt then, and still do, that such a restriction is not only unenforceable but just plain unrealistic as well. People's opinions of zines are not objective; they are subjective and they are based on a wide variety of factors. My best hobby friends (those who publish) did very well on my ballot because I truly enjoy their zines more than some others. Better than just to say that zero to ten is the range, with ten high; vote as you wish.

You are very similar to John Kelley: close in age, outspoken, very loyal to your country and your friends, etc. You remind me a lot of him. The major difference between the two of you, hobby-wise, is that you "grew up" on opposite sides of the tracks. That is, Kelley befriended people like me, Berch and Michalski early on and is therefore loyal to that particular set of hobbyists; you met up with Caruso/Byrne and the Martins first, and that's then where your strongest loyalties lie. I can very easily picture you and I as good friends under different circumstances, and maybe even under the current circumstances as well, just so long as neither of us insists on dictating who the other may have as friends. Heck, Kathy and I have quite a few close friends in common as it is.

Glad you read my contest in the middle of Mark Lew's letter last issue.

Thanks for the update regarding Dave Perlmutter. Dave was a good friend and strong VD contributor back in its early days when there weren't nearly so many strong supporters. I'm sorry that he no longer plays Diplomacy, but it wouldn't surprise me to see him come back one day -- he's already done that once. I regarded him as one of the most unique individuals in the hobby.

On messy folds: I am now and always have been of the opinion that someone who does something wrong in the hobby should be given another chance, under certain conditions. If the person is willing to admit that what he did was wrong, make amends as well as possible, and take steps to ensure that the mistake won't be repeated; then I say welcome him back. People are only human, after all. It's for that reason that a player who drops out of a game in VD will be removed from the blacklist if he apologizes and/or explains (witness Mark Johnson's return to the VD standby list, e.g.). Similarly, I was one of those who did not call for Eric Ozog's hide a few years back when he admitted to his GMing indiscretion, and I'm proud that I stood up for him. (I remember a heated argument with Kathy on the matter at a ByrneCon.) The problem with some people, most especially "Bernie Oaklyn" Tretick, is when they show signs of repeating the same old mistakes over and over again. I will never support Tretick in the hobby, because he has convinced me through his repeated abuses that he is not about to reform. On the other hand, I would very much welcome the return of Born to Dip. (v)

I've been playing for over five years now, with only one win. My other two regular starts have ended in a two-way draw and a weak third (survival). To me the fun of the game is not in winning, though that's always nice, but rather in the diploming. I confidently predict that, at the rate I play games, I won't win another in the next ten years. At the same time I confidently predict that I'll still be in the hobby at that time in some form or another, and enjoying the hell out of it.

You say that you don't think I'd have said anything about elitism if it were Mark Berch publishing House of Lords, but you don't know me! I'll not hesitate to criticize anyone in the hobby if I think that there is a valid criticism to be made. I criticize Dick much more than Mark Berch simply because I happen to hold the opinion that Dick does more objectionable things than Berch. And of course my criticisms of Martin become still more glaring and noticable because he overreacts, takes it as a personal attack, and brings all sorts of irrelevant issues into the debate, as in his letter last issue; whereas Berch tends to take these things in stride so they don't become drawn-out, overblown affairs. But please don't ever make the mistake of thinking I won't criticize a friend. I will on occasion, and to me constructive criticism is part and parcel of friendship (and of course I expect and receive it in return when applicable).

So Conrad Minshall, who has been a subber here for all of three issues, is a good example of a trained Doomie, eh? Heck, I hardly even know the guy! Just maybe, he formed his own opinion on the House of Lords question independently of me rather than because of me. Give people credit for being able to reason on their own, even when their opinions don't coincide with yours, OK?

Why should an experienced pubber or GM listen to Conrad Minshall? For the same reason they should listen to anyone who might have some fresh ideas. I've been publishing for almost five years now and I don't have a single subber who couldn't give me some good advice on publishing under the right circumstances. I'll listen to Conrad Minshall or anyone else any day of the week. I might learn something, and I might not, but it never hurts to remain open-minded.

As for publishing two zines at once, I don't see anything so hard about that given the size and frequency of Retal and HOL (they certainly don't add up to half of the one zine I publish), but I also don't see the relevance of that point to the discussion.

The Hobby Houserule Inspector should be someone who is familiar with the real purpose of houserules. Kathy Byrne has publicly stated that she thinks GMs with long houserules only want to harass their players, so unless she has since changed her stance she would be a poor choice for the job. I'd be perfectly willing to take on the task myself, since I'm pretty familiar with what goes or does not go when it comes to houserules. Heck, I'm sure I've reviewed the houserules of at least a dozen GMs, including the EE houserules, at the request of the publishers. So I've plenty of experience in the matter. Although I might also add that my tongue was nestled firmly against the inside of my cheek when I wrote the article, if that's any help...

I've heard lots of good things about tournaments run by Robert Sacks. In general, I try to give credit where credit is due -- thus, as you say, I strive to give "(relative) fairness" to Dick and Julie since they did a very good job at MaryCon despite a very minor error on Dick's part. As for your milkshake, I'm about to make you an offer I hope you'll consider. Come to BRUXCON this winter (it will probably be the weekend before New Year's, up to and including Jan. 1) and I'll treat you to your Doomie Shake at that time. BRUXCON is small and fun. I'm hoping that this year's will include Mike Barno, Eric Kane and maybe some of the other Great Neck locals, Jim Makuc, maybe Steve Hutton, maybe a few others. It's different than ByrneCons by a long shot, but always very enjoyable. You're invited, as are all Doomies. Just let me know.

Glad you enjoyed "GM Interference". Maybe you'll want to participate in this month's round-table questions regarding player ethics? Your input would be very welcome.

And I agree that you'll never be a "classic Doogie", simply because there's no such animal. That's one of the things I like most about my subscribers. They are supportive in so many different ways. Some of them play here, others write letters, one of them draws the cartoons here, others don't contribute much to the zine itself but are just very loyal friends outside of the zine, and so on. I couldn't describe a "typical" or "classic" Doogie to you, nor could you be one, simply because there's no such beast. If you have fun receiving VD, and (hopefully) continuing to participate in it, that's what counts.

Thanks for your virgin letter to VD. How was my response??)

From Rod Walker (6/26/84):

Dear BRUK:

I'm not sure why you would state that Diplomacy World is not a custodial project. If memory serves you were not in the hobby when DW was founded, back in 1974. It was founded then as a custodial project, and insofar as I am aware nothing has changed since then. The zine was begun under the direct support of the International Diplomacy Association (now defunct, of course, but then a major hobby group) and Games Research, Inc., then owner of the game. Direct financial assistance and other support continued to be provided by Avalon Hill when they bought the game in 1976. The term of fiscal support has long since run out, but the remainder of the DW-AH relationship still stands and under the terms of that agreement the editor of DW performs certain tasks for AH under that agreement. The editorship of DW also changes hands just as all other custodianships do, and the Editor Emeritus (Walt Buchanan) still retains veto power over any proposed new editor. Furthermore, the editorial policy of DW is strictly circumscribed by the terms of its founding. My editorial in DW was written specifically because I believe (and you have just demonstrated) that people have mostly forgotten the circumstances of DW's founding and what its situation is. Bruce, if DW were just another zine, no matter how fine, I would never have considered taking on its editorship.

You are right on about NY and CA. And about IN and IL.

Sorry you don't like my HR on concessions. This HR dates from 1966 (although in those days in addition a 3-center power also could not veto a concession or a draw). The fact is, however, that if there is a coalition containing the leader, one of its members must have more than 2 centers. Consider this: nearly 2000 postal games have now been completed. Can you name one game in which, in any game-year, there were five 2-unit powers at the same time? No, of course you can't because that situation has never occurred (to my knowledge) in the history of this hobby. Furthermore, if you did have such a situation, then the two leaders are either going for a draw or planning to come to blows for the win. In either case, one or both of them would vote against a concession. Your objection to my HR is based on a situation which will probably never occur. There is nothing sacred about the idea that a concession vote must be unanimous; I have never held that opinion and while you and others may disagree with me I have no great objection to being in a minority. My HR is based on the very probable situation of a "sour grapes" vote from a very small player, which drags out the game for another game-year or two with no change in the ultimate result. If there is any real chance that the leader won't or can't win, then you can depend on plenty of "no" votes to a concession.

You are absolutely right about the BNC. I don't know where people get the idea that the BNC has, or ought to have, "power". It's mostly just a bookkeeping position. Oh yes, the BNC has total control within his/her own province, such as determining which game gets what number, and any BNC request regarding helping his/her job...such as format of end-game reporting...ought to be respected. But the BNC certainly has no power to tell other people what to do or how to run their games...or how to rate games, for that matter. The BNC can declare games "irregular" until he/she is blue in the face, but only I can determine what games will be rated in my rating system, and

only Steve Wilcox can determine what games he will rate, and so on. I agree that the BNC job is important, but it is still only data collection and transmission. That hardly translates to "power", and anyone who lets his/her decisions be controlled by what the BNC will do, or believes that the BNC is necessarily qualified to act as an ombudsman, is very foolish indeed. The current BNC (by the way) is doing a very good job at what the BNC is supposed to do, and seems to be extremely careful about avoiding any attempts to interfere with ongoing games. The idea that the BNC has, or ought to have anything like real "power" (whatever that is) is potentially dangerous for the hobby. It is therefore important to remember, in the event any BNC ever proves overly ambitious or turns out to be incompetent, that anybody can compile game statistics and publish them.

((Absolutely. Under normal circumstances, the BNC does have the power to declare a game irregular (which is an official statement that the game was an out-and-out variant, or that the GM acted grossly improperly in running the game). In the case of the current BNC (Kathy), I am absolutely not willing to let her have even that degree of "power" over my games, for reasons with which you are familiar by now. Some may argue (and I have in fact been told) that an irregular ruling is not mine to accept or reject, but I challenge this supposed right that the BNC has to make an "official" declaration that one of my games was run improperly. Where has it even been written, in the past history of the hobby, that any one person has this power over all of the hobby's games, by virtue of the fact that he/she is giving out the Boardman Numbers? It hasn't -- it's just been a tradition up till now; a tradition which even I would not be questioning had not the danger of such a policy been driven very forcefully home to me recently. I will vigorously oppose any efforts by Kathy to place such a label on one of my games, and we will see if and when the time comes just how unbreakable this "tradition" really is.

I admit that my comments would be much less forceful were there a different BNC than there is. No, I take that back. I wouldn't be making these remarks at all if, say, Don Ditter was holding the position. That's because Don Ditter, and others before him, didn't see their position as a weapon to be used against people they didn't like personally.

It seems to me that we may just be arguing about semantics on whether DW is a "custodial project". OK, if you define a custodial project as a publication which was set up under certain conditions as you describe, then DW fills the bill. It's nice to think of DW as something special, and indeed in some ways, it is special. For instance, no other Dip publication is so widely read. And very few contain as much good reading material per issue or per year as DW. I personally believe it to be one of the very best (although not the very best) zines in existence. But all the terms, and all the quality, doesn't alter my opinion that it's still just one of a few very good zines that I enjoy receiving. And I can certainly see where you're coming from, even though I don't concur.

I agree that there's nothing sacred about the idea that a tiny power should be able to veto a concession; I just think it's highly desirable to allow all players in the game to have this power. The 13-11-2-2-2-2 situation I described is just an example. What if Mr. 2 is the only player who sees that a stalemate line can be thrown up against the leader in the next couple of game years, and needs more time to convince the others of this? What if he truly believes that he can negotiate effectively enough to come back and be part of the draw? If a player is vetoing because he's sore at the leader, then fine; let the players play on another game-year or two and wipe him out.

I'd be arguing much more strenuously if you still had the houserule that such a power can't veto a draw as well; for even a one-center power can form a crucial part of a stalemate line and the houserule would allow the other players to exclude him from the draw even though his elimination would entirely change the course of the rest of the game; but thankfully, you've abolished that provision.))

From John Pack (6/26/84):

Hi BRUK!

I thought I'd write again this month. I've included a couple of graphic pieces of art from the computer. Its favorite zine is VD too. It just says it better than I.

On other matters, I guess I'll clear up my "intolerant" (as you might say) views on homosexuality (expressed in my other letter). One might ask, "What makes some men homosexual?" No one is born with a sexual preference toward his/her own sex. Sexual urges aren't felt until puberty. Most young boys don't relate well to young girls (they have cooties, of course). Some men never develop the ability to relate well with women, and are fooled by present trend of thought into accepting this lack of ability as a different sexual preference, an unnatural preference. No other animal on the face of the earth has this preference selection difficulty. Modern psychologists actually encourage men with this disorder to be homosexuals. Naturally, once the "decision" has been made, further attempts to normally socialize with the opposite sex are eliminated or thrown away. It is therefore my opinion that homosexuality is social surrender. Surrender never was a healthy state of mind.

A belief in the Christian God or the Jewish God prohibits personal toleration of homosexuality. The miracles I have seen and my personal experiences make it impossible for me not to believe in God, though previously I had been inclined to do so. Cindy Maxwell, a friend of mine from a devoutly atheist family, would also relate a similar experience. You don't believe in God; therefore, until you do, you may be tolerant of homosexuality.

However, sociologically speaking, homosexuality is one sign of a degenerating society. Past societies (eg. Rome) as well as histories of even other societies (eg. the Bible and some other ancient texts) indicate this. The family is the basic unit of society. Despite what popular trend may say, homosexuality (along with premarital sex, extra-marital sex, pornography, masturbation, the welfare state, etc.) breaks up the family unit and erodes social structures. Divorce rates, increasing juvenile delinquency, increasing child abuse, and increasing sexual crimes (perpetrated on both men and women) all bear this fact out.

Homosexuality is bad, as are the other things listed above. While homosexuals have rights as people, I don't think society should tolerate this degenerative disease.

I don't think I'm ignorant, but I'm definitely prejudiced. Those who support homosexuality like to think they're more intelligent, that's true, but are ignorant of the side effects it has on society. They may not be prejudiced, but politicians don't take stands on anything either, and no one lauds them for that. Any guy who puts his hands on me won't be standing either.

Anyway, now that I'm done with that topic, I might ask, "Are you going to be opening any games soon?" I'm sure this isn't a new question. There are only three games left in VD right now, so I thought I might venture. Course, I suppose that you're going to let RICHEL die down before you risk any more space on games in your zine. I did send out a few stamps though, so I hope that I'll shortly find at least one game.

((No games opening here in the foreseeable future, sorry. I'm at a very comfortable level right now. Non-players should be getting the zine only for the reading material, as the won't be any new games soon.

Thanks much for your computer printouts of VD's initials. But that's VD, not VDI!

Let us examine the two reasons that you give for you prejudice against homosexuals. One is that tolerance of these people violates your believe in God. But in order for others to be persuaded by this argument, they must 1) believe in the same God you do, and 2) interpret the teachings of your Bible the same way you do. To those of us (a large majority, I would venture to guess) who accept neither the exact same God as you nor the argument that belief in God prohibits personal toleration of homosexuality, that part of your argument is 100% unpersuasive.

Your second point is that homosexuality erodes social structures and breaks up the family unit. But you offer no evidence that this is the case. Oh sure, you cite Rome and some other (unnamed) past societies, but you don't say how they were eroded away by homosexuality.

To me your argument is nothing more than another episode of the time-honored tradition of using the Bible to justify hatred and repression. I question your labeling of homosexuality as a "degenerative disease", just as I question your decree that premarital sex, masturbation, and pornography are necessarily bad. Maybe they're wrong for you. But there are other people in the world whose beliefs, values, and desires are not the same as yours.

To be perfectly blunt about it, what I find disgusting is the act of someone who tries to dictate to other people what is right or wrong for them, unless that someone is moralizing against acts which hurt innocent parties. Homosexuality, masturbation, premarital sex, and pornography are all (in most cases) victimless acts; so why preach against them? If they're wrong for you, don't you indulge. But don't go telling the rest of the world what is wrong for it, unless you can demonstrate that innocent people or animals are being hurt. I will agree though that if a homosexual attacks you personally, you have every right to beat him off.))

From Don Del Grande (6/17/84):

BRUX:

I can't stand here and see your mailbox suffer from the likes of poop like Raging Main and Cathy's Ramblings and Graustark and Diplomacy Digest and Europa Express and The Acolyte and Whitestonia and Erehwon and Give Me a Weapon and Winsome Lossome. I know how it feels -- my mailbox gets all of those as well. However, I know that it remains happy because it gets 50 issues of LOM every month, ready to be delivered to all parts of North America and Europe, more or less. However, what with your diplomatic philanthropy (I almost wrote your name in for the Miller Award -- I can't believe that Kathy turned down the nomination last year and is (more or less) mad that she wasn't nominated (for being the BNC) for the award this year...if being the BNC was an award-winning thing, then why would we need the Miller Award when the BNC would get it every year?). Also...since you sprang for a Doonie Shake at MaryCon, I decided to give you a chance to see what you've been missing since you let your sub to LOM lapse (promising to return someday...meanwhile, you sign up for games in Cathy's Ramblings when I've had openings for who-knows-how-long -- true, you signed up for a Gunboat game, but I needed a seventh for a game with John & Kathy, Dick & Julie, and Scott & Frauke)...

PS. If I can get Kathy & John, Dick & Julie, and Steve & Daf Langley into a game, would you join?

((Er, ahem...I can think of nothing that interests me less than playing in a game with John & Kathy, Dick & Julie. Someday I'd love to cross swords with Steve & Daf Langley, although not both in the same game. As for Cathy's Ramblings, it is solely my business where I choose to sign up.

Appreciate your almost-writain vote for the Miller Award, but I don't need an award to let me know that what I do is appreciated. My reward comes in the form of responses to VI and Supernova, and that means far more to me than the Miller Award ever could.

Don was generous enough to send along a whole pile of his back issues for me to read. Thanks muchly, Don -- that was extremely nice of you and I appreciate it. Gee, at that rate you can have all the Doonies Shakes you want!))

From Don (california) Williams (6/30/84):

Dear BRUX,

Thanks for the sample page from VD #96, and thank you for your Socrates Award write-up, and your Joan Extrom suggestion -- I've never had any contact with her whatsoever, but I see that that has apparently been a mistake, and one I will soon rectify.

I've heard a lot about you and VD since I got into the hobby mainstream in August 1982, and have considered subbing from time to time. But it seems I've never had your address, the cash, or the "reason" (if such a word is necessary to subscribe) all at the same time. VD comes highly recommended from several sources, Steve Langley being the most vocal. Whatever. I would like a sample copy, if you do such things, and an enclosing two stamps to help defray costs...

The xerox insert here is a page of the June Fiat Bellum!, my subzine to Magus. Steve was surprised you made the Duck Soup mistake. To quote him, "I thought Bruce read Magus..." Oh well, we all make mistakes. (Duck Soup is a battleship game in ES, so you weren't far off the mark...and considering my nickname in the hobby is "Duck" Williams (among other nicknames...some rather brutal...) I can understand your mistake.) I would appreciate a correction, though, if you could squeeze one in...we subzines get little enough respect as it is. Thanks.

By the way, the "Olsenism" thing is all for laughs...Woody did tell me to tell you Olsen started "Simple-minded Antelope", but Peery had nothing to do with the "Reagan-Grenada-bashing" copy...that's all from my own over-tired ((??)) imagination.

Hey, I'll keep this short (otherwise you'll end up with one of my infamous 20-page letters -- don't believe me? Ask Woody or Kathy.)

One more favor to ask, though; would you send me the address for the ORIGIN Don Williams (Massachusetts, isn't it?). I'd like to drop my namesake a line sometime to tell him I'm going to sue him if he doesn't change his name, or at least do a better job in your ORION game.

((Addresses first: Don Williams, 185 New Ludlow Rd. #106, Chicopee, MA 01020. Joan Extrom, Rt. 1 Box 26W, Philomath, OR 97370. You're in for a real treat if Joan befriends you and starts writing to you.

I'm sorry if I mistranscribed any of your letter; I had quite a bit of trouble with the handwriting. But thanks for writing to set me straight regarding Fiat Bellum!. I did know, actually, that Fiat Bellum! is your subzine to Magus. When I was typing up last month's VD, I just looked up at the top of the page, saw "Duck Soup", assumed it was still another of these new-fangled subzines, and typed it up as such. Sorry for not paying closer attention. I do read Magus generally, except for the games (which I rarely read carefully in any zine).

I've no problem if you wish to write me a 20-page letter. You sound like the sort who would fit right into VD's letter column, despite your apparently close association with various and sundry "other" sorts of hobbyists. Hey, if you've enjoyed the two samples of VD you now have, wanna become a Doemie? You're more than welcome...and I print 20-page letters here!))

From Bob Sweeney (6/20/84):

BRUX,

Last issue's letter was meant to be humorous -- but since you probably did make a good point and since you answered me seriously, then I'll answer you seriously.

I play Diplomacy because...I like talking/writing to six neurotic people, like myself...the challenge it provides -- winning isn't necessarily needed -- I enjoy the challenge...the outlet it gives for frustrated writers...I enjoy VD & Diplomacy -- not winning...yes, I enjoy Hobbytalk...

((That's the spirit!))

From John Kelley:

Bruce--

#96 as a whole earns the same comments as #95; lots of interesting stuff, lots of stuff I didn't read, but who can complain about 80 pages for 50¢?

Scouting is a good thing, but should not discriminate on the basis of religion. I'd go so far as to say that an aspirant Eagle should profess some sort of personal creed, but that's impossible to judge effectively unless you avoid judging it except on the basis of the scout's sincerity. If he worships gecko lizards, and is committed to it, then well and good.

It really seems to me that the position of Boardman Number Custodian should be renamed "Boardman Number Janitor". Think about it. While the two words affected don't mean quite the same thing according to Webster, they do tend to be used synonymously in casual parlance. Or maybe "Boardman Number Sanitation Engineer". The current state of the administration justifies this, as it is notorious for slinging trash about and disseminating it. Lee Kendler wouldn't have deserved a modified title, being an ethical man, but things have degenerated. What gives the BNJ the right to play hobby dictator?

Met Joan Extrom over the phone recently. Mature, friendly, well-spoken, and open-minded. I concede that some persons of strong liberal viewpoint are sincere and would maintain their position even if it wasn't the fad to do so.

Am thinking of subscribing to GMW. Konrad and I share a certain amount of cultural, ideological, and personality similarities; in addition to the fact that he is well-known as a quality writer.

Thanks for printing my article. I knew I would make some semantic mistakes, getting some of the dates and periods wrong, but I expect it was generally correct. More interesting, though, would be something from someone who goes much farther back than I. How about Doug Beyerlein, Rod Walker, or Conrad von Metzke?

OK, Bruce, you can argue that enemies don't generally like you. Rhetorical license, please. As to FLD, sure it's been discussed over and over. Michalski, Berch, you, me, and anyone else who was around when the storm broke knows the story. The new people don't, though, and I thought it might interest them as well as inform them about a known nuisance. I maintain, however, that too many enemies can destroy a zine, but it depends who they are. Millions upon countless millions of Treticks can condemn you to the heavens and have no effect other than humor, but if the people are prominent (thus commanding an audience) it doesn't matter if they have a valid point or not. We called for Tretick's head and got it, and would have been unlikely to call for that of, say, Jack Brawner; but I submit that if we had, and he (or whoever; it was the first name that came to mind) or she hadn't had enough Certified Public Defenders, the effect would have been the same. You and Coughlan have enough supporters to stand against the most determined attacks by the most unscrupulous assailants, and in fact have done so to prove it.

This "hyork" business really bites the moose.

I did not say that leftists were hypocritical. That's too insulting a word, and I don't want to be attacked for it. Humans generally tend to follow trends; it is no more hypocritical to wear Levis than it is to take up the prevailing anti-patriotic chant. The two gestures mean just about the same to me, too. And I wouldn't say that liberal intentions are any less noble than mine.

Still never been to a con. Might go to Lepercon, though, if I can get my boss to let me go early at spring break next year.

Do I look like a football player? I'm not tall enough, but since the picture is from the waist up maybe that isn't obvious. At 5'9" and #210 I could stand to lose about ten pounds, but it'll come off. One of my residents at the UW is/was 6'4" and #340, which makes me feel a hell of a lot better.

((Re your comments about the "Boardman Number Janitor": hilarious! I agree, of course, with your praise of Lee Kendter.

By all means, hurry up and get your sub check to Konrad Baumeister. GAW is a zine I would recommend to anyone on the basis of Konrad's personality and hobby standing alone. The content is sometimes good, sometimes only fair; but when Konrad puts his mind to his writing there are few that can match him.

I'm glad you got to meet Joan over the phone. It's always good to hear that two of my friends got to know each other, and hit it off.

Am glad also that you admit that leftists and liberals may be sincere rather than hypocritical. I certainly have difficulty understanding the foreign policy of these people (though I'm far more liberal when it comes to certain domestic issues; see my response to John Pack's letter on homosexuality), but that doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't themselves very sincere. I know Mike Barno personally very well, for example, and I've never met anyone more sincere in his beliefs -- even though they don't match mine by a long shot.

Regarding your comments about hobby enemies: it's true that enough enemies will destroy anyone, but to someone as well-entrenched in the hobby as Coughlan or me, a half dozen loudmouths just aren't going to do any more than provide a little amusement, or in Gary's case a bit of annoyance. And generally speaking, one isn't going to collect half a dozen enemies in the hobby unless one a) does something grossly wrong, or b) runs afoul of the East Coast Clique. In either case one had better have a good deal of support, or say goodnight.))

From Robert Acheson (6/23/84):

Bruce,

I have a few questions about your zine.

No. 1. Why do you list two addresses; one on the first page of your zine and the other on the envelope?

No. 2. Do you print every letter, or edit out anything?

Now, a few comments.

No. 1. I like your "Hobbytalk" section, but after your semi-plugs, why not print a few addresses and sub fees?

No. 2. I don't agree with your comments about the "National" major league. Note, the last World Series winner, Baltimore. Also, the last dynasty team was Oakland. Nuff said.

No. 3. American politics are very similar to the Canadian scene. The Republicans and Liberals always win, while the Democrats and the P.C.s infight and bicker internally to yet another election loss.

No. 4. I have to defend Francois Guenzier a little; i.e. I didn't lose my game deposit. I believe it was transferred to his re-entry, although he is a little late. C'est la vie.

No. 5. I must admit that the history of most American zines is much more open to controversy than our more level-headed Canadian ones.

No. 6. Worst player: don't agree with the comments in that regard.

((Thanks for writing in after a long silence. My correct address is the "Dalton" one; when I moved last November I had several hundred return address stickers from the old address and wanted to use them up -- and now I've done so. That's my mother's address, so mail there does eventually get to me, as did your letter.

I print most letters I receive. Exceptions would include letters of a clearly personal nature, or which the writer indicates are not for print, or which deal with game negotiations, or which aren't really of general interest (i.e. a simple request for a sample issue). I probably edit letters less than any other active editor in the hobby, though.

Steve Hutton has informed me too that he received his money from Guerrier's prize fund game back, so I stand corrected on that point. I do know that he kept sub monies at the time he folded (I was very lucky to get mine back) and is now offering to reimburse people. But that hardly helps for someone who is no longer in the hobby, or no longer has any contact with Guerrier, does it?

American zines are on the average not run quite as responsibly as Canadian ones, for whatever reason. We seem to have a higher percentage of deadbeats south of the border than you do up there. Thus when a Guerrier does surface, it's big news. On the other hand, we have zines down here that are run every bit as responsibly as Snafu! or Fol Si Fle, so no blanket condemnation of American zines will hold much water either.

Yeah, the Democrats here seem to have trouble rallying behind a leader the way the Republicans are doing this year. I think it's kind of pathetic the way Gary Hart and Walter Mondale tore each other apart before it became obvious that Mondale would get the Democratic nomination, and now they're playing kissy-kissy and pretending there were never any disagreements just so that Mondale will stand a better chance against Reagan. It won't work; the public is smarter than they apparently think. We are going to reelect Reagan in November, despite the fact that Democrats far outnumber Republicans in the States.

OK, I'll admit I'm biased in favor of the National League. I'm just a rabid Dodger fan. The Orioles are my second favorite team, by the way, so I always root for them during the season.

The purpose of "Hobbytalk" is to provide entertaining and informative discussion about what's going on in the hobby as I see it (read: there is some editorializing in there, too). Printing the addresses of all those zines each issue would make for very dull reading, especially since some zines will probably be mentioned each month. And since the purpose of the column is to plug zines per se, I'll usually omit the addresses. In selected cases I'll make an exception, though; and I'll always provide addresses to my readers either publicly or privately upon request. Fair enough?

Thanks again for writing in and sharing your views.))

From John Michalski (an Origins review, of sorts):

Hi Bruce,

...I was one of the few hobby people there. Mark Luedl was probably the big name, plus Puppy Frush, Nancy Irwin, Ben Schilling, Jack Brawner, Pete Gaughan (running the Dip tourney), a couple other lesser lights I've forgotten. I roughly broke even, due to excellent prices on some rare stuff I sold at the auction, and bumming 1/7 of a room for \$12. It's good there was some Dip almost constantly, so I had somewhere to stop and BS. I went for the auction and the open gaming, and altho the auctions (one each day) were successful, there was NO open gaming I could find, aside from a few late night tactical games in the empty conference rooms. "NO OPEN GAMING" signs abounded, though. The physical facilities were very good, and the idea of keeping the FRP creeps and Wizard weirdos in a separate hotel from normal people was excellent.

I enclose assorted stuff from Origins and the Dip tourney table for your curiosity/perusal. The con was nice for me (3 hours away) and probably best that so many others stayed away altogether. Aside from some Dip ~~arguments~~, ex. games, you didn't miss a lot.

((Thanks for the quick write-up, and for sending along all that poop from the con. I wish I could've been there.))

From Steve Langley (7/2/84);

Dear Bruce,

It is sometimes difficult to know when you are being serious. The latest for instance is your little diatribe about how the BNC has absolutely no control over games run in VD. This was in response to a Mark Berch letter in Anduin as you will no doubt remember. Mark made the point that the BNC had absolute discretion about whether a game would be given a BN or not. That is the case, isn't it? He wasn't claiming any other power for the BNC, was he?

Do you still maintain, within that scope, that the BNC has no power? Are you using this as a subtle announcement to us Doomies that you are no longer getting BNs for VD games? Or did you just go off the deep end?

Another nit, smaller but important to some; Don Williams' subzine is Fist Bellows. Duck Soup is a game carried in FB.

In response to Ruth Glaspey's lists of five, I propose a closer to home list. Which five Doomies would you invite to dinner? Ruth has a place on my list, as do about eight others. The hard part is paring it down to five.

As for a contemporary list, William Rotsler, Marv Wolfman, John Nichols, Robert Blake and one other to be announced later would suit me.

An historical list (provided there were no language problems) is far more difficult. Rene DesCartes, Socrates, Leonardo, Gauss, Archimedes, Alexander, Edison, Einstein, Newton, Michelangelo, Jean d'Arc, Lorenzo d'Medici, and many, many others. At that I've left out whole areas of human endeavor that I find interesting.

I found the GM Interference round table quite interesting. While reading through, I noticed a hole in the questions. Where was the question about GM or guest commentary influencing a game? I know I decided, as a novice, not to sign up for a "commented" game. It's difficult enough to outsmart six other players without an outsider listing off the various possibilities as he sees them.

Which brings me to a question that I've asked several GMs who have so-called demo games. What is a demo game? Does having a commentary make a game a demo? Does being a demo affect regularity? So far, the response to my questions has been nil. I realize I've been around for a while and probably should have absorbed this information by osmosis, but I have a low absorption rate. So, kind sir, if you would take a few moments and define demo game for me I would greatly appreciate same.

How's the voting running for your poll? I vote for VD as Ed's favorite zine.

Speaking of Mark Berch, and I did a few paragraphs back, we have had over a week of 100° weather with no cooling off in sight. There are parts of California which have comfortable summer weather. Sacramento is not one of those parts.

((It's been raining cats and dogs here. Which means that most of the people have been hailing taxicabs.

Insofar as I can tell, a "demo game" is one which is played for the purpose of entertaining or educating the readers of a zine. Since GM or outside commentary would make such a game more interesting to follow, most demo games would, I imagine, have such commentary. But I'm just guessing. Hmm. Maybe this is a question to which nobody really knows the answer.

I'm sure there were other "holes" in the GM Interference discussion as well. Thanks for pointing out a gaping one.

Which five Doomies would I invite to dinner? You mean I can't invite all ninety-zillion, and give my landlord a heart attack?

Yes, Mark was making the point that the BNC has absolute control over which games get BNs. This is close to being equivalent to saying that the BNC has absolute control over which games are considered regular, since games without BNs are not considered regular. Go off the deep end? Moi? No. I have merely stated, and will not deviate from, my stance that the current BNC is going to have no involvement with VD games other than assigning the numbers and recording the results. See Walker's letter and my reply for further discussion on this matter.))

More Diplomacy Euphemisms

In Voices of Doom #85, I published a guide to certain Diplomacy euphemisms: what do players really mean when they say such-and-such a phrase? But those euphemisms were applicable to most if not all Diplomacy players. It turns out that many of the well-known personalities in the hobby have their own little quirky ways of expressing themselves as well; expressions that hobby novices might not totally understand, not having known the particular person long enough. So as a guide to the novices of the hobby, I present the following translation of euphemisms by hobby old hands.

When this person	says this	he/she means this.
↓	↓	↓
Buclic Duhigg	"And I say to you...STR! I am <u>not</u> Buddy Trelick!!!"	"I'm dumb enough to think I can still pull the wool over the hobby's eyes."
Sary Coughlan	"This issue is free to all <u>Europa Express</u> subscribers."	"I'd rather spend \$113 extra than hear one or two people gripe about paying to read my article about the trip."
John Ross Ross	"The Supreme Warlord, Alpha Male, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the American Empire has proclaimed..."	"Reagan said..."
Keith Casler	"Your sub refund will be in the mail a week from today."	"I'm keeping your money. Now stop bothering me."
John Garuso	"Just a thought from the hobby's number one funzine. Wouldn't dipdom be a better place if nobody would make unsubstantiated allegations. Wouldn't alot of us enjoy it more if people ignored the 1 or 2 pubbers who are always engaging in VENDETTAS?"	"If you dare try to respond to any of the attacks in this <u>Whitestonia</u> , you will be on my shitlist for the next five years."
Don Del Grande	"Dear Bruce,..."	"Here comes another list of 500 wargames..."
Deadwood Corbin	(anything)	"Boy, am I in a talkative mood today!"
Eric Kane	"Not only do I find it inconsistent, silly, pointless, outlandish, redundant, and absurd, but I hereby label it <u>HYPOCRITICAL</u> as well!"	"I personally don't agree with this idea."
Jack Masters	"This story copyrighted 1981 by John R. Masters"	"Thurber's dead, and the rest of you are too illiterate to know the difference."
Rick Lindsey	"Under the <u>VE</u> House rules, I must rule that..."	"I don't feel like trying to rationalize yet another absurd thing that's been..."

- Mark Berch "If I then fones T, your plan mite
fail even tho you've thought it
thru enuf."
"If Italy then picks Turkey,
your plan might fail even though
you've thought it through enough."
- (NOTICE THAT EACH OF THEM TOOK THE SAME NUMBER OF LINES, MARK!!)
- Steve Knight "BRAX, I'd like to help you edit
your houserules."
"I'm a masochist looking for
the best possible way to
ensure my hobby notoriety forever."
- Judy Winsome "Here are some CHEAP REPLIES..."
"Your letters are too mundane to
print, so I'm just going to
publish my answers and everyone
will have to guess what the
questions were..."
- Robert Sacks "Under article XVII of my proposed
covenant, the committee would then
conduct a referendum to..."
(absolutely nothing)
- Rob Olson "He mind? No, of course I don't
mind the latest episode of
Olsenbashing in VD. Better that
we, your woebegotten readers, should
read this type of stuff than some-
thing as dull and irrelevant as, oh,
say, a list of game openings in
other zines."
"Goddammit, Linsey, join another
game and stop writing articles
bragging about how you clobbered
me in Swedish Boardabout!"
- Ferry Tallman "This month, I have axed trades
with the following szines..."
"Here are half a dozen more
zines that put North West South
George to shame, and a few nasty
cracks about each..."
- Kathy Byrne "You have no friends, they're all
writing to me saying that they hate
your guts, and I'm going to use my
influence to DRIVE YOU OUT OF THE
HOBBY!"
"I'm upset with you at the
moment."
- Rod Walker "The fen have a right to this
public information, so I am
entirely justified in printing it
in my hobby custodial project."
"Your game openings are going
to be published in Partovedia
whether you want them to be or
not."
- Ed Wozel "Must we, the suffering proletariat
of the hobby, indulge the ephemeral
and whimsical fancies of the
entrenched hobby brass?"
(I dunno either, but in all
probability it's anti-BF'ian
and anti-Berchian in sentiment.)
- Bill Highfield "I'm going to sit on the sidelines
and not talk about politics."
"There will only be a couple of
pages describing how the Linseys,
Frogs, Krauts and Gops are too
yellow-bellied and spineless to
speak the truth about the camp-
plassin', Russian double DOGS!"
- Larry Peery "I propose that..."
"You've about to read four pages
of the most outlandish bullshit
ever concocted by a human mind."

I'll Be a Chuting Star!

A few days ago one of my friends at work went skydiving for the first time, and then brought in some photographs of herself and her fellow divers for us to see. The event touched a nostalgic chord in me, for it was around six years ago that I made my first -- and only -- parachute jump.

It all began when I was walking along the podium on the Albany State campus, gawking at the usual plethora of posters displayed by students advocating everything from Marxism to lesbian rights to gun control. From among this motley assortment, one in particular caught my eye: a picture of a person seemingly floating in the air miles above the ground, without any visible means of support. The caption urged me to attend a meeting later that week to find out whether I'd like to try skydiving. Out of curiosity more than anything else, I went. Now friends, I can resist just about any sales pitch around, but when I saw the movies of people flying through the air, forming graceful stars in the sky, twirling and dancing before opening their parachutes and floating gently to the ground, I was hooked.

Actually it's not that way at all -- not when one starts out. In New York State one's first five jumps must by law be made using a static line -- a 30-foot cord attached to the plane at one end and to the chute at the other, and which automatically opens the chute as one exits the plane. It's just as well. Skydiving for the first time hardly ranks as one of life's most calming moments, and loss of nerve in the sport means loss of life.

I brought home the parachuting literature that I had acquired, secreting it in what I thought was an obscure dresser drawer. Only my sister Judy knew what I was planning to do. The arrangements for my training session -- six hours, by law -- were all made discreetly by phone. Or so I thought, anyway. After one call during which I carefully avoided any explicit mention of the sport, talking only about my "appointment" for a certain day, I hung up -- and turned to face my mother's glare. "You're going skydiving, aren't you Bruce?" she said. It was an accusation, not a question. I replied truthfully, and the intensity of the glare increased till it reflected the stern anxiety of every mother who ever worried over her boy about to go to war, every mother ever faced with the revelation that her child had accepted a job as a trapeze artist with the circus. The tirade that ensued was thus anticlimatic, though rather heated.

You see, I have to mention here that I don't come from foolish stock, and yet in my mother's eyes what I was about to do was foolish in the extreme. I think that's what bothered her the most. Statistically, skydiving is far safer than football or skiing. And yet, subconsciously, I shared my mother's misconceptions: a vivid nightmare a few days later woke me out of a sound sleep absolutely determined to call off the whole venture, but the arrival of morning saw me bold and unafraid once more.

The jumpmaster at the Fulton-Montgomery Drop Zone was a big, friendly guy named Mike Vogt. His first concern was to put me and the other timid souls at ease; he'd jumped over 400 times himself and, so he claimed, had given up sex in favor of skydiving. Right, I thought, and I'm Abe Lincoln's reincarnation. But Mike was a superb instructor; not only did we learn what to do, but his matter-of-fact demeanor really calmed us considerably. At one point one of the girls asked nervously what would happen if neither the main chute nor the spare were to open. Without batting an eyelash, he responded, "You die, and I go to jail." I mean, he made it sound so natural!

In fact, the lessons were quite grueling; we were drilled over and over on the correct procedure for everything from exiting the plane to landing, from steering the chute to emergencies. Much of the afternoon was spent jumping off a four-foot platform, practicing the correct way to roll upon impact. If Mike was anything, he was thorough. By the time I got into the plane, I was brimming with confidence and anticipation.

Have you ever watched a drop of water fall onto a hot grill, sizzling and evaporating instantaneously with a quick, curtailed HISS? That's about what happened to my so-called confidence the minute the plane took off. As the ground fell away below, panic gnawed at my stomach. My sister Judy was in the plane just to watch me jump. She later told me I was ~~as~~ white as a sheet. I remember watching the ground below as we climbed higher and higher; the houses and people became toys and little ants respectively. But that's about all I remember. I have really never been so scared in my life.

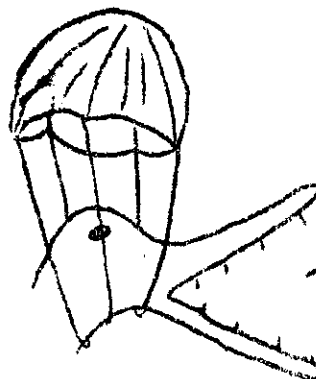
Presently the door of the plane was thrust open and the wind roared in. I must have checked the static line at least a dozen times; it was secure with time. Then the jumpmaster uttered the first of the three fateful commands: "Feet out!" I gingerly positioned myself so that I was sitting in the doorway, my feet on the strut underneath the plane's wing. "Get out!" -- and I was standing on the strut in a crouch, my hands grasping for dear life to a bar attached to the underside of the wing.

How does one feel when one is crouched beneath the wing of a plane, two seconds before his first jump, with a broad panorama of central New York State drifting by 2800 feet below and the wind howling through one's ears? Don't ask me -- I was scared far too shitless to remember! Mike had told us that anyone who could turn and flash a big grin just before jumping would be treated to a nice, cold beer after landing. On the ground that morning, I had smiled inwardly, anticipating a refreshing brew as an added bonus to the day's adventures. Now, as I faced the interior of the plane and safety, the promise of a free beer was the farthest thing from my mind. I clenched my teeth...

"GO!" I felt Mike's slap on my thigh, and pushed off hard from the plane. I forgot all about the fact that I was supposed to arch my back, forgot to look up, forgot...heck, I forgot everything in this, the ultimate moment of my terror. But suddenly, magically, I was hanging there in the air. The plane was a silver speck in the distance. Forests and farms were sprawled below in a 360-degree panorama; the Adirondack Mountains in the distance to my left, and the Mohawk River to my right. There was a dead silence as I stood there. Stood -- on nothing! Panic gripped me again for an instant -- what was holding me up here?! Then I looked up, and saw the reason that I'm here to tell you this tale today in Voice of Doom. A broad, round, multi-colored canopy hung silently above me. The whole scene then lost its frightfulness at last, and a feeling of awe and splendor prevailed. It took me several seconds to realize that I ought to start thinking about steering myself down to the airport, which incidentally took a few more seconds to locate from up there.

But the rest is totally anticlimatic -- the patient, five-minute descent; the megaphoned instructions of the guy on the ground as I dropped below a thousand feet; the direct hit on the dirt runway and the subsequent gust of wind that nearly blew me away before I could collapse the chute; the proud moment when I accepted my first Jump Certificate.

Yes, hearing the tale of another new skydiver and seeing the pictures of the event has whetted my appetite to try it again, perhaps later this summer or maybe next. OK, Doonies, so I'm a crazy S.O.B. But you all knew that anyway, right?



DON'T CHUTE ME,
I'M ONLY THE
DIPLOMACY PLAYER!

Ethics and the Diplomacy Player

Oh oh, BROK has surely gone off his rocker now, right? Since when do Diplomacy players have ethics?

Perhaps surprisingly, there are a number of things that a player can't do in order to help himself win a game. Most GMs forbid deception of themselves, for instance. And certainly we can almost unanimously agree that a player doesn't have the right to kidnap another player's cat and hold it hostage -- right, Rich Reilly? But what about some of the borderline situations? How do you feel about the actions of players in the following examples?

SITUATION 1: Players may deceive each other to their heart's content, but may they lie about the operation of the game itself? For example, suppose you're in a game with a rank novice, and it becomes obvious that he thinks he can capture a center by passing through it in the spring. Is it ethical then for you to take advantage of his ignorance and trick him this way into moving out of a supply center in the fall because he thinks he'll own it anyway? Or, to take another example regarding the operation of the game, is it ethical for you to call another player and tell him that the GM is in the hospital, and asked you to spread the word that the next season will be delayed, thereby tricking him into an NMR?

SITUATION 2: Is it ethical for a player who is angry at the GM to resign, submitting a set of orders clearly detrimental to his country's position? What if these final orders are not only detrimental, but cause the collapse of what would have been a stalemate line, giving an opposing 17-center power an immediate win?

SITUATION 3: An Austrian player offers to edit his GM's houserules, which are 19 pages long. The GM agrees, and publishes the updated rules with the note that they now supercede the old ones. But he hasn't proofread carefully enough. On the bottom of page 12, the player has inserted the sentence, "Austria may claim victory at any time, and in so doing wins the game." The Austrian player waits until the rules are published and in force, and then claims victory. Has he behaved ethically, and does he win the game? Or has he deceived the GM by his actions? (If so, what if he also slyly deleted the rule prohibiting deception of the GM?..)

SITUATION 4: The rules say that players may threaten each other. But does anything go? Suppose that (to lift an example right out of Richard Sharp's book) France is enjoying the clandestine favors of England's wife, and Germany knows it. Can the German player then threaten to tell all unless France supports him to the win? More generally, can such real-life threats be made to "persuade" a player to do as one wishes in the game?

A somewhat similar situation is that of a bribe. Is it ethical for one player to tell another, "I'll pay you ten dollars to support me into Venice."?

SITUATION 5: You are England at war with France, and in Fall '01 you notice that you have succeeded in capturing Brest. However, the adjudication reveals that this was a simple GMing error: France has in fact bounced you with F Mid-Bre, but the GM let you take it by mistake. France or someone else will surely notice the error, but what if by some miracle nobody else notices? Are you entitled to build a unit for Brest, or are you obligated to report the error?

SITUATION 6: Suppose now that you are England at war with France, and, certain that you will be kept out of Brest, you try instead for Picardy. But lo, when the adjudication arrives you are astounded to see that France has not covered Brest, and what's more, the GM has reported that you moved to Brest and captured it! Checking your copy of your orders, you see that the GM has committed a "cloaked error" -- an

error that (unlike that in the previous example) no one can possibly spot unless you bring it to their attention. You did indeed go to Picardy, and the GM scratches his head at your orders. Are you obligated to report this error, or can you keep Brest in the scenario?

SITUATION 7: An envelope arrives in your mailbox from your ally, and stuck to the back of the envelope by an obviously stray piece of chewing gum is an uncanceled postcard. The postcard, addressed to the GM, contains a set of orders from your ally, which are, shall we say, not quite what you expected. Are you obligated to stick the postcard on to the GM? Is it fair for you to change your orders based on what you have found out? And is it fair for you to change the orders on the postcard and then send it in?

SITUATION 8: You are in a game run by a GM who lives just a few miles away. One season, you notice a GMing error and call to tell him about it. "Thanks," he says. "I'll send out a correction to the other players tomorrow morning." The next morning you sneak up to his mailbox and remove one of the expected adjudications, since you don't want a certain other player to know about it. Ignoring the fact that you have just committed a Federal offense, is your action ethical within the context of the game?

SITUATION 9: I'm sure we can all agree that a player has a right to vote as he wishes on a draw proposal. But consider the player who tells his GM, "Look, I'm the only player vetoing this draw each season. Your houserules give you the right to switch this game from five-week deadlines to two-week deadlines. Do that, and I'll vote for the draw. Don't, and I'll keep vetoing -- and the game will last at least another year of real time." Is the player behaving ethically? How should the GM react? (Keep in mind that such a change in the game procedure can have a legitimate effect on the strategies employed by the players. See "Variations" by Randolph Smyth, VE, #36, page 110.)

How about the player who threatens to keep vetoing unless the GM allies with him in another game in which they are both playing? Is this player behaving ethically, and how should the GM react?

SITUATION 10: You are aware of the fact that another player in your game has to go on military duty a year from now, or is terminally ill, or whatnot, and won't be able to continue playing after the time comes. He is presently growing and threatening to win. The houserules allow any player to separate any season on request -- even retreats. Is it OK for you to threaten him like this? "Either ally with me and get me into a two-way draw, or I will separate all the seasons and not only won't you win, you'll not get any part of the finish!"

SOFTBALL SITUATION: The Russian player, annoyed by Austria's refusal to ally, concocts a devilish plan...

Austria visits Russia one fine weekend at the latter's invitation, and during the course of the weekend Russia becomes pregnant (assume for the purposes of this question that the Russian player is female).

Over the course of the next few months, Russia grows tremendously in the middle, capturing Berlin, Kiel, Munich, Vienna, and several other nearby centers, despite repeated stabs by Austria. Russia then threatens a paternity suit. The Austrian player lives on a limited income, however, and if faced with such a suit can't not be able to afford to continue playing in the game. Is it ethical for Russia to force Austria to leave the game by having the baby? Or can Austria validly complain that he's been screwed by Mother Russia?

Let's hear your views on these situations, Doornies (you may omit the SOFTBALL one if you wish) and we'll try to make this into another round-table discussion!

Runestone Zine Poll Results!

For the fourth time in five years, Voice of Doom is the first zine to publish the Runestone Poll Results, at least in part. I have spoken with Randolph Smyth and gotten all the information he had available by the time this goes to press. No word yet on the GM Poll or Subzine Poll, and despite my well-publicized intentions of combining Randolph's two lists to generate a third, what is published here is only the "averaging" list. The reason is simple -- Randolph hasn't had time to do the preference matrix yet, and informs me that he won't have it done for at least another week. So much for good intentions!

Also given are the number of votes each zine tallied overall, and the average score to the nearest hundredth, after the top and bottom 8% of the votes were discounted.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Europa Express (67) 8.49 | ✓27. Straight From the Dimmer's Mouth (21) 6.68 |
| 2. Envoy (31) 8.00 | 28. Anduin (45) 6.66 |
| 3. Politesse (27) 7.86 | 29. Magus (41) 6.65 |
| 4. The Prince (38) 7.68 | 30. Xenogotic (31) 6.62 |
| 5. 30 Miles of Bad Road (55) 7.65 | 31. Bushwacker (18) 6.56 |
| 6. Life of Monty (29) 7.64 | 32. Winsome Losesome (33) 6.51 |
| 7. Sleepless Knights (28) 7.62 | 33. Cathy's Ramblings (38) 6.34 |
| 8. Diplomacy World (74) 7.60 | 34. Murd'ring Ministers (35) 6.32 |
| 9. No Fixed Address (34) 7.60 | 35. Diplomacy Digest (53) 6.31 |
| 10. Snafu! (33) 7.51 | 36. Cheesecake (15) 6.30 |
| 11. Fol Si Pie (13) 7.45 | 37. House of Lords (23) 6.28 |
| 12. Voice of Doom (74) 7.43 | 38. Appalling Greed (29) 6.16 |
| 13. Retaliation (30) 7.34 | 39. Graustark (12) 6.16 |
| 14. Raging Main (32) 7.21 | 40. Erehwon (37) 6.09 |
| 15. Whitestonia (47) 7.12 | 41. Everything (25) 6.09 |
| 16. Bersaglieri (19) 7.11 | 42. Festings Hof (13) 5.90 |
| 17. Perelandra (31) 7.07 | 43. Hai Jakai (32) 5.75 |
| 18. Coat of Arms (37) 7.00 | 44. Libertainean (15) 5.69 |
| 19. North Sealth West George (36) 6.93 | 45. Who Cares? (27) 5.60 |
| 20. Emhain Macha (21) 6.89 | 46. Lone Star Diplomat (22) 5.60 |
| 21. Ter-ran (16) 6.85 | 47. Paranoid's Monthly (19) 5.52 |
| 22. End Justifies the Means (18) 6.81 | 48. You Know My Name... (11) 5.36 |
| 23. Irsome (42) 6.80 | 49. Give Me a Weapon (34) 5.06 |
| 24. Midlife Crisis (45) 6.76 | 50. Manifest Destiny (33) 4.65 |
| 25. Dogs of War (18) 6.75 | 51. Battle Stations (12) 4.25 |
| 25. The Diplomat (18) 6.75 | 52. Modern Patriot (34) 3.03 |

t13

I believe Randolph said that there were about 130 ballots cast this year, but I'm not sure I got that number quite right. Europa Express is clearly the class of the hobby as it has been for several years now. Scanning the list, I notice a few zines surprisingly high and some that finished far too low, in my opinion, but then, not everyone has the same opinions as me. Thanks to Randolph for a job very well done. I'm sorry that the publication deadline for this issue prevents me from printing more comprehensive results, but you'll be hearing more about those soon enough.

As for VD's finish, I'd like to thank all 74 who voted for me. Typically, no zine gathered more votes. I am pleased to have finished so well in such a fine field, especially when I look down to the zines that finished below me and deserved much better. To all, thanks, and I will continue to try hard.

The distribution of votes for VD ran as follows: 1 zero, no ones, 3 twos, 5 threes, 6 fours, 3 fives, 7 sixes, 7 sevens, 12 eights, 12 nines, and 18 tens. Not wanting to run up any more of a phone bill than the monstrous one I already have this month, I didn't ask Randolph for any of the other zines' distributions, sorry.

LAIE NOTE: I managed to get the GM and Subzine Poll results after typing up the previous page; average rankings only and no 8% cutoffs on these:

Subzines

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Sex Appeal (5) 9.00 | 19. MeANnderings (6) 6.50 |
| 2. Temporarily Delayed (13) 8.84 | 20. Hare of the Dog (12) 6.41 |
| 3. High Plains Conzo (3) 8.25 | 21. ESAD (32) 6.31 |
| 4. Femme Fatale (6) 8.00 | 22. Benzene (30) 6.16 |
| 5. Submarine Warfare (3) 7.87 | 23. Chomps and Miams (20) 6.15 |
| 6. Maggle's Zine (5) 7.60 | 24. Maneater (21) 6.14 |
| 7. Strange Doings (21) 7.47 | 25. Perlmutter's Revenge (18) 6.11 |
| 8. Kathy's Korner (39) 7.43 | 26. Alex's Column (27) 6.07 |
| 9. Vertigo (19) 7.21 | 27. FNORD (10) 6.00 |
| 10. Dip City (5) 7.20 | 28. Mass Murders (27) 5.70 |
| 11. Expletive Delatad (26) 7.19 | 29. Betty Daly's Subzine (8) 5.62 |
| 12. Flat Bellini (25) 7.16 | 30. Father Knows Less (20) 5.50 |
| 13. Elephant Heart (5) 7.16 | 30. Free Speech Alley (6) 5.50 |
| 14. Mos Eisley Spaceport (55) 7.01 | 32. The Beholder (19) 4.89 |
| 15. Humboldt (23) 6.95 | 33. Mr. Ree Theatre (9) 4.88 |
| 16. Little Dipper (19) 6.89 | 34. Foot in Mouth (8) 4.67 |
| 17. Gallinatas (15) 6.86 | 35. Dippy Daddy (6) 4.66 |
| 18. Corn off the Cobb (10) 6.80 | 36. Frump the Midget (7) 4.28 |
| 19. Straight Shooter 6.68 | 37. Reagan's Youth Newsletter (7) 2.71 |

Hope I spelled all those right. I'm not familiar with some of them. I'm particularly like to thank the 27 people who were kind enough to vote for Alex's Column, even though it's now folded. A lot of people still remember all the entertainment she provided for VD's readers. Only four subzines got more votes!

GMs

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. John Daly (8) 9.50 | 23. Russ Rusnak (12) 7.75 |
| 2. Andy Lischett (8) 9.25 | 24. Dick Martin (10) 7.60 |
| 3. Bill Placek (5) 9.20 | 25. Matt Fleming (6) 7.50 |
| 4. Paul Rauterberg (23) 9.15 | 26. Steve Langley (14) 7.42 |
| 5. Gary Coughlan (11) 8.82 | 27. Pete Gaughan (6) 7.33 |
| 6. Jim Meinel (23) 8.76 | 28. Roy Henricks (6) 7.16 |
| 7. James Woodson (9) 8.77 | 28. Tro Sherwood (6) 7.16 |
| 8. Dave Carter (8) 8.50 | 30. Steve Hutton (7) 7.14 |
| 8. Dave Kleinman (8) 8.50 | 30. Don Williams (7) 7.14 |
| 10. Mike Mazzer (5) 8.40 | 32. Ron Brown (11) 7.00 |
| 11. John Caruso (9) 8.22 | 32. Tom Mainardi (9) 7.00 |
| 12. Randolph Smyth (5) 8.20 | 34. Cathy Cuning (6) 6.83 |
| 13. Mike Mills (6) 8.16 | 34. Larry Peery (6) 6.83 |
| 14. Judy Winsome (8) 8.12 | 34. Rod Walker (6) 6.83 |
| 15. Mark Luedl (18) 8.05 | 37. Eric Kane (9) 6.77 |
| 16. Steve Arnawoodian (8) 8.00 | 38. Konrad Baumeister (11) 6.63 |
| 16. Scott Hanson (16) 8.00 | 39. Mark Larzelere (12) 6.25 |
| 16. Ronald Brown (8) 8.00 | 40. Terry Tallman (8) 4.75 |
| 19. Steve Heinowski (8) 7.87 | 41. Keith Sesler (9) 3.88 |
| 20. Dan Stafford (7) 7.85 | 42. Bill Highfield (6) 1.56 |
| 21. BRUX Linsey (21) 7.80 | |
| 23. Tom Swider (5) 7.80 | |

Again, thanks to all who voted and especially to those VD players who voted for me. 21st place ain't too bad, but with a little hard work maybe I can do better next year. Finally, I am informed that 119 people voted in the polls over the year.

Excerpt from The Game of Diplomacy, by Richard Sharp

The First Letters

The letters you write to other players before spring 1901 are likely to decide your fate, assuming you are reasonably competent at tactical play. If you make a mess of them, your "investment" of time and money could be wasted before you even start. Here are a few hints on composing these vital letters.

First, and most important, be informal. If you start your letter "Dear Mr. Smith", or even worse "Dear Sir", you are quite likely not to get a reply at all, and you are certainly unlikely to succeed in your diplomatic aims. "Dear Fred" is correct form. Mock-formal letters ("Your Imperial Majesty", and so on) are all right up to a point -- in my first game I wrote all my letters in this vein; it worked well with some people, less well with others. Some players maintain that they are put off by typewritten letters, but I think that's a lot of nonsense; I type all mine, because I like to keep carbon-copies and remember what lies I've told to whom! Certainly I would rather receive a well-typed letter than a spidery scrawl on a dog-eared page torn from an old exercise book, but so long as you remember that legible letters are more likely to be answered, you'll be all right.

My second pointer may seem absurdly unnecessary; I assure you it is not. Head up all your letters with your address, the date, the game number, and the country you are playing. If all this information is there, you are more likely to get an answer. The recipient of your letter will not have to turn up his file copy of the game-start to discover your address; he can just reply at once, without any research. Believe me, it makes a big difference. The game number is particularly important. In my first game, playing Austria, I wrote to France a letter addressed to "M. le Président" and complete with all the right headings except the game number. I received a curt postcard in reply: "Some of us are in more than one game, you know." That was all. I was taken aback. I didn't know, to be honest. In fact, players in those days might be in over fifty games at a time; increasing postal charges have changed this, and few people play in more than a dozen now, but the point is still valid. Of course, that was bad tactics by France, though, as I realized later when I got to know him well, it was entirely in harmony with his abrasive personality; I blushed to think of the way he would have sneered at my elaborate mock-formal style! But probably that simple error, not using the game number, cost me my chance of establishing friendly relations in that game; as things turned out, it may even have cost me a win.

This brings me to my next point. Don't assume that the other players are similar to you in any way -- they won't be. A random example: one of the first games I ran (BDC 14) included a businessman in his fifties, a solicitor and a librarian in their twenties, two schoolboys and two "unknowns", one of them an Australian playing from Canberra. This is not untypical: players I have encountered have ranged in age from thirteen to over seventy, with a range of occupations and life-styles to match. The best technique is probably to lay your cards on the table: say who you are, and ask who they are. Not all will respond, but those who do will be that much more likely to place confidence in you if you are something more than a mere name and address.

Again, don't make the major error of trying to conceal the fact that this is your first game. Anyone who has played before will see through you at once; anyone who hasn't will be wary of your "greater experience"; and you won't know which is which. If you find an experienced player who replies kindly and patronizingly, exploit his obvious vanity -- ask his advice, tell him how out of your depth you are, explain that you will be satisfied to avoid seventh place. When he has committed himself to allying with you, wait for your chance, then stab him.

...My next point is don't be too aggressive. Be at pains to point out that you would welcome your ally's advice, and that the moves you have outlined are only "suggestions"; this will make him more likely to accept them, which of course is what you want. If he takes you up and suggests modifications, bad luck; now you'll have

to see it through, and accept at least some of what he says.

I never cease to be amazed that there are some people who never write at all. I can't stress this too much: when you start your first game, write to everyone. In later games, when your name is familiar, this is not so important. I confess that I no longer bother to observe this rule a hundred per cent, but I used to, and I still feel I ought to, even if idleness occasionally prevents it.

...The opposite case is the one that makes me really cross: though rare, this type unbalances the game and thus spoils it. This is the fellow who writes only to one other player, usually someone he knows already, either personally or from another game. Suppose you, as Austria, don't hear from Italy, what on earth are you to deduce? Clearly you're going to be attacked, and you react vigorously to defend yourself. The most amazing thing of all is that sometimes he doesn't attack, and you have in effect "attacked" him without cause, probably not wanting to at all. One or two experiences of this kind were enough for me, and I began to choose my opponents more carefully.

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And that about wraps another another issue. Again, sorry I didn't have the time to do a big 'un this month. Some closing notes:

Dave Lincoln called this morning and was kind enough to invite me to come and visit him in Rhode Island later this month. Maybe he'll teach me how to play well in face-to-face Diplomacy!

You heard it here first dept.: Sometime within the next three years, somebody is going to refer to Steve Knight as a Pillar of the Hobby. By then, nobody is seriously going to argue the point. Wait and see.

BIMBY

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

Your sub expires with issue # 97, but I'll keep sending 'em!