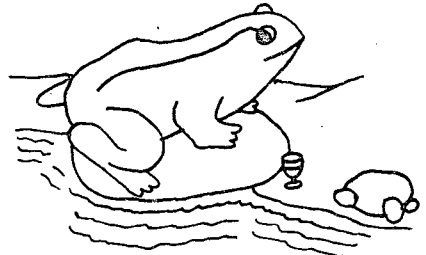


ethil the frog

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ISSUE 3: 2 APRIL 1977

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DEADLINE

Orders for Games 1 to 3 must be in Ealing by:
Friday (9 am) 29 April, 1977

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ENDLESS PRATTLE

It is now clear that Ethil's numbering system is the new controversy which is going to split the hobby asunder. Already, battle lines are being drawn up, antagonists are making their allegiances plain. Clive Booth has claimed the title of peacemaker - his motives are not the most noble one would wish, however, for he is simply jealous of the publicity which the conflict is bringing me.

At present, the Campaign to Renumber Ethil is considerably stronger in numerical terms than the Forces of Right - though God, of course, is on my side. Recent additions to the CRE team include Pete Swanson, who'll never publish an issue 46 even if Rats lasts a hundred years, and Paul Humphreys, whose vow never to get involved in controversy again (presumably connected with his abject performance during past ones) was published simultaneously with his first shots in this new campaign. If you don't normally get Albatross, by the way, it's well worth the bother of obtaining the latest issue just for Paul's review of Ethil. Eight lines long, it contains four untruths, at least two of which I judge must have been deliberate. This shows that Paul Humphreys' command of the English language is superior to mine in at least one respect; for, with my self-indulgent, verbose style, I find it impossible to trot out a fresh lie more often than once a page.

Victory for the forces of Piggott is inevitable in the long run, however. Already some of my opponents are beginning to waver. Richard Sharp, for instance, is exhorting people to join the 'Right Number for Ethil' campaign, and it hasn't gone unnoticed here that that particular choice of words could apply with equal validity to either standpoint. From someone like Sharp, that just must be deliberate !

I was amused to read in the latest Greatest Hits that Pete Birks, who claims to know something about horses, tipped a nag called 'Gay Vulcan' to win the National. Well, really. Just who did Birks think he was kidding? I may know very little about racing, but I do have enough grey matter between my ears to realize that a homosexual horse has about as much chance of winning a gruelling steeplechase as a female jockey has.

What, then, possessed Birks to open his mouth with such a choice inanity? I think I know the answer. He hoped to channel thousands of pounds of Dippy players' cash into

hopeless bets on this certain loser, hoping that the odds on his own fancy might lengthen a bit in consequence. That he succeeded in his vile aim is beyond question - how else do you explain Gay Vulgan's extremely low SP of 9-1?

Well, Birks, you can fool most of the people most of the time and some of the people all of the time - but you didn't fool me. As intimated earlier, my empirical knowledge of racing is confined to the simple fact that it involves horses, and so I adopted the scientific approach to picking winners, just as I did with such success eighteen months ago at Catford Dog Track. Assiduous perusal of The Times gave me the background information I required. A horse called 'Red Rum', it transpired, had already won the event twice in previous years. Obviously, its incentive to win for a record-breaking third time would be terrific - much greater than a less experienced horse would have to win for the first, and maybe the only time. Furthermore, Red Rum was bound to receive encouragement from every other horse in the race - I mean, think of the embarrassment it would cause another horse, to have spoiled Red Rum's chances of achieving his third win by snatching victory himself!

Applied Psychology, then, predicted an easy win for Red Rum. But was I content with that? No! I must invoke other scientific disciplines to see whether my predictions would be confirmed. Almost at once I was up against a seemingly insoluble problem. Red Rum had been in countless other Nationals before this one; my knowledge of physiology showed me immediately that he might now be getting a bit old and tired. Would Red Rum have trouble finishing? If he failed at one of the fences, the psychological disincentive, stopping the other horses from finishing until Red Rum had done so, would no longer apply. Anyone might then take their chance at winning, even (shudder) that female jockey...

It was evident that the problem was insoluble. Further, there wasn't long to go before the start of the race. I resorted to Physics for a final test, rolling a pair of percentile dice to determine which beast I should back. I knew that the masses of the dice, combined with Newton's Laws of Motion and Gravitation and the coefficient of friction between the dice and the floor, would produce an exact result, which I could cross-reference with the list of horses, each one numbered, in my newspaper.

My first two rolls produced 67 and 94, both invalid throws. A throw must be between 01 and 44 (excluding 36 and 42) to be any use. My third roll came up trumps: 01. Excellent. I lost no time then in carting myself off to the bookie's, for a bet of £2 each way on Red Rum; and shortly afterwards I experienced the pleasure of seeing him romp past the finishing post well ahead of any possible opposition. The profit is enough to pay this issue's printing bill.

The Birks tip, Gay Vulgan, came nowhere. In fact, he failed to finish at all, pulling up with NMR at the 21st fence. Even the female jockey did better - her horse carried on for six further fences before refusing at the 27th.

My initial reaction at my good fortune is to increase the size of this Ethil, especially as poker games have been quite kind to me lately as well as racing. But, at the time I'm typing this, it may not be possible; I've lost some of the time I intended to spend typing because of an unexpected visitor, and I may only be able to manage 16 pages again. Pity. But if I extend the typing past this weekend, I shan't be able to get the zine to the printer before Thursday (Monday and Tuesday evenings are fully booked for me, unfortunately), which would mean I couldn't post it until the Tuesday after Easter at the very earliest.

So here's an interesting question: which would you prefer: four extra pages, or prompt delivery? A poll of the readership on this issue might be instructive; I suspect the extra pages would win easily, but am prepared to be proved wrong.

Given the deficiencies inherent in all polls - that the sampling is biased since the only votes counted are from those sufficiently motivated to send them; that the phrasing of the questions is crucial to success because most people (unconsciously or not) give the answers they think they're expected to give, rather than true answers; and that many peoples' answers differ according to what day of the week it is - there are any number of questions which it would be nice to ask 'the hobby at large'. Obviously answers wouldn't be binding; in fact, I'd like a sort of attitude survey about things unconnected with Diplomacy - politics, for instance.

This is probably wishful thinking on my part, of course, especially when the traditional British unwillingness to give information to pollsters is taken into account. (I must admit that if some social scientist wanted me to fill in a lengthy questionnaire in order to help his research along, I'd send him squealing away with a flea in his ear). Lew Pulsipher is planning to carry out a British Diplomacy Players'

Survey - I believe polls are commonplace in the American hobby - but intends to confine himself to largely uninteresting matters directly connected with Diplomacy: 'What is most important for the forces of each country: A = armies, F = fleets, N = no difference' then a list of the seven countries with a space beside each for the answer, for instance. Like, wow.

Lew has sent the draft of his survey to various people for their comments and suggestions, and I'll be replying with my proposals to get rid of some of the boring Diplomacy guff and add some meaty questions in due course. There's no particular hurry; Lew is intending to wait until he has heard from Richard Sharp before distributing the final form, and judging by Richard's disinterest in similar matters he's in for a long wait! And, of course, Lew will depend on the willingness of publishers to include the survey form with issues of their zine. I wonder if everyone will bother? And even if they do, will enough players answer to make the results worth taking note of?

One poll that is worth paying attention to, of course, is the Mad Policy zine poll. Last year over 50 people voted, a very high turnout, and this year the response should be even greater, despite some unwelcome innovations.

I mean, what ever possessed Walkerdine to rule that subzines could be rated separately from their parents? The idea's totally absurd. I toyed with the idea of giving every subzine 10 points, the maximum, whilst consigning their parents to the outer darkness with a mark of 1, but refrained, concluding after some thought that I shouldn't be seen to make the poll a mockery even though, with this ludicrous ruling, it certainly is. So I contented myself with ignoring subzines altogether in my votes, giving each parent zine an overall mark which gave due weight to the content and size of any subzines therein. That everyone connected with a subzine lost marks for it is no coincidence, of course, but this is due to the innate absurdity of the whole subzine concept rather than my prejudice against them - even though that prejudice is very real!

The poll is over now for another year, in any case; all we can do now is sit back and wait for the results, hoping that by next year Walkerdine will have regained his sanity.

The other flaw I've noticed is more serious, and, if it proves to be based in fact, may make any further zine polls quite meaningless. It concerns a comment in Jigsaw 27: Roy Taylor said, 'By the way, don't expect Jigsaw to do well - I've got too many personal enemies who'll take their revenge in the poll! Eg, Eric Willis doesn't like the NGC or Richard Sharp and has voted Dolchstoss '2'. Yet Dolchstoss, now it's improved its turnaround time, must be the best zine anywhere'.

I hope Roy's comment is groundless; I'm afraid that it's not. But Eric Willis might like to ask himself why his dislike of Richard Sharp and/or the NGC adversely affects the quality of Dolchstoss, and those enemies of Roy Taylor who may have given Jigsaw a low rating ought to realize that Rat's admittedly quite despicable behaviour over the Diplomacy board doesn't cause Jigsaw's quality to plummet the moment the stab comes to fruition.

What we may be seeing here is a transformation from zine poll to personality poll. Okay, if a personality poll is what people want - but we've already got one of those (see later) and there's no need for two! Many of us would like to have a zine poll as well, but if certain cretins are going to bring personalities into it, there isn't much point in the rest of us playing the game.

It's only a bit of fun, boys - but as long as it's there, let's keep it the way it is, huh?

And so we turn to the personality poll, or, to give it its full title, the Dolchstoss Player Poll. It's the second such poll: last year's was won by Tony Ball, followed by Holborn, Jarski, Palmer (N) and Johnson. The idea is that you list as many players as you like, giving each a mark between 30 (excellent) and zilch (awful), relating to your personal experience as an opponent or GM of their performance at regular Diplomacy only. Nominations may include anyone now playing in a UK or continental zine, and you may vote for yourself. Votes should reach Richard Sharp, 27 Elm Close, Amersham, Bucks, by Saturday April 30; if you don't normally receive Dolchstoss, include a 10" x 7" or larger SAE to obtain a copy of the issue containing the results.

There is a serious logical flaw in the system, I regret to say. Everyone will want to do as well in this poll as possible, right? So what does one do in order to maximize one's chances? That's right, kiddies, you give yourself a mark of 30, and zero to everyone else. What's more, you list all the players you can think of - it doesn't matter whether or not you've actually played against them all, 'cos Sharpy will never

be able to check every vote that comes in. (Anyway, if you draw Turkey in a game and get eliminated by 1903, what knowledge have you of the French player's ability in that game? Not very much).

I'm not saying, of course, that everyone will think this way - in fact, I'm quite sure that most people will try to keep their votes as honest as possible. But you can bet your life that there'll be a hard core of troublemakers who do indeed send in a ballot set out in exactly the way I've described, and you know what? They'll have a better chance of winning, all other things being equal, than the respectable people! Surely that can't be right...

I suppose I'll just have to console myself that the ballot-riggers are unlikely to be good players, and so won't get much support from the rest - in which case the final placings will not be much altered.

The other flaw in the Dolchdross Poll is less serious - a niggling itch rather than a nasal cancer eating away at the great pharynx of Diplomacy. Simply, the poll is too unwieldy. I myself have probably encountered upwards of a hundred players in my time; merely to list them all will be quite a major task, and to assign relative values to their playing abilities will take a long time indeed if I am to do it properly. Others will be in a similar plight - Andy Davidson, for instance, or Richard Sharp himself. Yet if we confine ourselves to listing just a few of the players, the ones we know best, we'll be biased in favour of the most prominent hobby members. Roland Prévot, for instance, is probably a better player than Andy Davidson. But Roland's in eight games only, while Andy has two dozen or more to his name. Result, Andy, being more prominent, is more likely to receive a vote than Roland, if people like me skimp on our votes. A big if, I trust, now that I've pointed this out.

Hard luck, Andy.

Of course, in the early days of the hobby there was a much better player poll. Oh, yes, a much better poll indeed. The results were much better, too - the winner of the first one was someone called John Piggott. I refer, of course, to the Ethil Player Poll, of which there were two in 1973 and 1974. (Sharp snuck in with his plagiaristic Dolchdross version only when I made it clear that I intended to revive Ethil). Voters in the genuine, never-to-be-repeated Ethil poll had to nominate a list, in order, of the seven best players in their opinion - such was the size of the hobby then that I had to tell people they could name less than seven people if they couldn't think of enough deserving players! And, in the second of the two, nobody was permitted to vote for himself. In the first one, I had naively forgotten to outlaw self-votes, with the predictable results, though when I came to count up the marks it didn't seem to make much difference whether I allowed them or not - the result remained substantially the same.

EASTER PUZZLE

by Simon Dally

'I enjoyed GM'ing the game in ~~Paris~~ the asylum,' the Keeper told me. 'The players were Gay, Bumley-Kerr, Spanker, Padlock, Whipkisser, Petticoat and A N A Lentry. They're all incurable perverts, of course, but oddly enough no individual's perversion - transvestism, coprophilia, bondage, masochism, homosexuality, sadism or buggery - matches his name.'

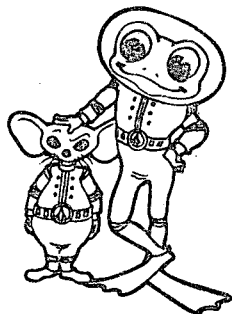
'When the draw was made a few groans were heard. The bondage freak and Lentry were both sorry not to have France while the transvestite was glad to avoid drawing Germany, France or Turkey. The masochist was most upset to get a good defensive country as he naturally loves to be attacked on all sides! Germany and the eastern powers were scathing about the bondage fan's abilities, but come Spring '01 it was apparent that they mistrusted each other more. France had a stand-off with the sadist and Petticoat and Padlock clashed at sea. In the Autumn Paris fell (the only home supply centre to do so) but everyone managed at least one build and there were no disbandments. Tunis and Belgium somehow remained neutral while Spanker and the coprophile clashed in Sweden and the transvestite had a stand-off in Warsaw. Gay refrained from a potentially unsuccessful attack on Holland and Bumley-Kerr occupied Greece.'

'Very pretty,' I replied. 'How many supply centres did the bugger own at that point?' ((1))

'That should be obvious by now,' he snapped. 'If you can't work it out, I shall have to ask you to step into this straitjacket. By the way, what did you say your name was?' ((2))

Correct solutions to John Piggott or me by next deadline. ((2)) is a tiebreaker, for the most amusing name - editor's decision is final. £1 or 5 issues of Ethil to the winner.

SCIENCE FICTION



SF magazines have been on the edge of disaster for as long as I can remember. Unable to pay contributors as much as the original anthologies, and hampered almost beyond endurance by unsympathetic distributors, they seem perpetually on the brink of disaster. Only Analog regularly makes a respectable profit, and even this one has just had to raise its price again (the latest issue costs 90p in the UK); If recently merged with Galaxy because of low sales; Amazing and Fantastic can exist only because their editor draws a salary which would be laughable even by British publishing standards, and their sales still drop every year.

So it's something of an event when a new magazine is launched, and we really ought to support it. Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine, replete with a \$1.00 price tag and a portrait of the Good Doctor on the cover (god, he's an ugly-looking customer!) has been patchily distributed in this country. The first issue has been seen on Charing Cross Station, but apparently nowhere else - I have been unable to buy a copy - and the second issue also seems to be absent from many places it ought to be. Pity, 'cos it's received quite good reviews elsewhere.

I must admit that when I first heard about it I envisaged the worst. Clearly Asimov himself won't have much connection with the magazine, apart from lending his name to it as a sales boost (the publisher is Joel Davis, who runs a chain of magazines, notably Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine which you'll find in most branches of W H Smug - why don't the buggers take IASFM? And the editor is a chap called George Scithers, who runs the highly successful and long-running Conan fanzine Amra). The last 'name' mag, in fact, was a British production of the early fifties, to wit, Vargo Statten's Science Fiction Magazine. 'Statten' was Ted Tubb in one of his many guises, and the magazine was every bit as dire as you might expect from the title, featuring (as it did) the rapid writings of such as John Russell Fearn, Volstead Gridban (sometimes Fearn, sometimes Tubb again) and so on.

The second issue of IASFM has turned up in the London bookshop 'Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed', and I had a look at it. It seems quite good, actually, as well as I can judge from a cursory skimming - the main fault seems to be that it features a lot of very short fiction, presumably punch-line ending stuff which tends to pall after one's read a few thousand examples. Capsule book reviews are contributed by Charlie Brown, who is well qualified for the job - he is the publisher of the SF newzine Locus, which is where I obtain most of my information about current events. (I can provide more information about this publication if required). There are logic puzzles by Martin Gardner, the Scientific American man.

Any writers among the readership should note that IASFM's rates of pay are good, and that as a new magazine they are anxious to build up their inventory.

It has been pleasant to be able to say nice things about IASFM. I wish I could do the same for Vortex, the latest attempt to produce an indigenous British SF magazine; unfortunately I cannot. In layout and content it resembles nothing so much as a rich man's first fanzine, and the main influence on its editor seems to have been New Worlds in its most pyrotechnic awfulness. Crap in 1968 is still crap in 1977, I'm afraid. The editor, Keith Seddon, attempted to pull off a coup in his first issues by having Moorcock donate free publication of his latest 'Dancers at the End of Time' novel - a coup ruined when printing delays caused the book to appear before the first issue of the magazine.

At a price of 45p it might be worth buying copies of this as investments (seven-year-old copies of Vision of Tomorrow now fetch up to £2, an eightfold increase in value) - it won't last. All in all I can think of much better uses for Arts Council money.

I have been asked to give the names and addresses of specialized SF bookshops, and am glad to do so. Try any of the following:

Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed, 9 St Anne's Court, London W1. Mail order outside London.
Fantasy Centre, 43 Station Road, Harlesden, London NW10. Mail order and retail - good for old magazines and out-of-print titles.

Andromeda Book Co, 57 Summer Row, Birmingham B3 1JJ. Mail order and retail.
Fantast (Medway) Ltd, 39 West Street, Wisbech, Cambs. Good mail order service with standing orders available for regular publications - 'series' novels, etc.

NEWS AND NOTES: Jonathan Palfrey commented that Larry Niven's latest book, TALES FROM KNOWN SPACE, includes Niven's vow that he'll never write any more stories in the Known Space series, not now, not ever, never! Does this then cast doubt on my claim in Ethil 1 that he is writing a new Ringworld novel? No, it doesn't. Niven has tried to ditch Known Space once before, just after he finished writing the first RINGWORLD book, and look what happened! Never believe an author who claims he's killing off his series; just remember what Sherlock Holmes did after the Reichenbach Falls.

Laser Books, the SF subsidiary of Harlequin Books, is to cease publication. Harlequin, the US equivalent of Mills & Boon, hoped the books, sold in drugstores, supermarkets, etc, just like nurse novels, would reach a more general audience than the usual SF lines. Unfortunately market research showed that only habitual SF readers were buying Laser books, and not very many of them at that. So ends another failed experiment.

The writer John T Phillifent, who wrote SF under his real name and under the pseudonym 'John Rackham', has died aged 60. Phillifent, who was born in Durham, England, worked as a planning engineer, and also wrote three books in the MAN FROM UNCLE series.

John Brunner is the subject of a BBC 'Life Story' programme which may or may not already have been transmitted. He was filmed, amid general disgust, at a SF convention last November. And did anyone see Bob Shaw on Melvyn Barg's ego-trip 'Read All About It' last month? A person called Bernadette McAliskey, whose main claim to fame seems to be that she once hit Reggie Maudling in the mouth during a H of C debate, had the sheer gall to claim that she never read fiction and wasn't interested in it, then rip the book (ORBITSVILLE) apart because she didn't like it. Unfortunately BoSh is far too polite and nice a person to come off best in that sort of encounter; I can think of many more acerbic writers who would have told Mrs McAliskey exactly what she deserved to hear.

Films in the shooting stage at the moment include 'Capricorn One', about a government conspiracy to fake a manned landing on Mars by means of TV footage taken on Earth, featuring Elliott Gould, Telly Savalas, James Brolin and Candice Bergen; 'The Island of Dr Moreau', with Burt Lancaster and Michael York; 'The Omen II', sequel to last year's most tasteless release; and 'Thunder and Lightning', which is described as a woman's science fiction film... And a revival of the TV series 'The Man from UNCLE' is planned; it is rumoured that David McCallum will play an agent while Robert Vaughn has been kicked upstairs to occupy the part of Mr Waverly, originally played by the late Leo G Carroll. 'Logan's Run' may also become a TV series; CBS has ordered three scripts.

Jonathan Palfrey (again!) casts doubt on another of my statements in issue 1 - that Campbell, not Asimov, was responsible for the Three Laws of Robotics. I can confirm that it definitely was Campbell; in one of his recent collections Asimov says this explicitly. Campbell worked out the Laws, then sent Asimov away to turn them into stories. (This was typical of Campbell's method of getting stories out of people). Asimov, who has devoted an entire lifetime to giving ordinary evil a good name, and who has broken all natural laws himself (except those of robotics) would not stoop to taking the credit for something he didn't do himself...

The latest AVAM but one poses a question: 'Why don't they show the film '2001' on TV?' Answer: although it's more than five years since 2001 was made, and can legally be shown on TV now, the exact time of its release into the boob tube depends on the distributors, whose property it is. Evidently they believe they can make more money out of it by showing it in cinemas, and I should say they're probably right. 'Gone With the Wind', which was made in 1939, has only this year finally appeared on American TV, and it has not yet been booked for a showing over here - a great pity, of course, but no doubt I shall get the chance to see it again on the wide screen before long.

LETTERS

RICHARD SHARP Dear Paul,
Just thought I'd say how much I enjoyed the fake Ethil 48. How did you manage to disguise so effectively the literacy, maturity and wit for which Albatross is so famous? I wasn't fooled, though: John Piggott (who has folded more zines than you've met heterosexual GM's) will never enter the publishing field again, and you can print that in Albatross as a fact.



LEW PULSIPHER While Ethil 1 was very interesting, I swore off subscribing to Dipzines years ago (with two aberrations when I arrived - HDJ and Leviathan, the one a fold and the other now excruciatingly boring for non-players). The only British zine I receive regularly now is Chimaera, because Clive Booth keeps sending me copies so I can see the latest attack from Dave Tant. Anyway, Ethil looks as good as Chim, though in a very different way, and was certainly more entertaining than the single issue of Dolchstoss I once saw.

Why did you ever pick a name that sounds as silly as 'Ethil the Frog'? You may have explained once in the old Ethil, but if I read it then I don't recall what you said.

I am writing an article on British Dipfandom for Diplomacy World. I don't suppose you have any general observations you might want to add to what I already know?

((But how much do you already know? If you only receive one zine on a regular basis you can't possibly know enough about the British hobby to be able to write the accurate, exhaustive study that Walt Buchanan needs - DW is, after all, the most prestigious publication in the entire hobby, is owned by Avalon-Hill (who make Diplomacy sets), and had a circulation of 676-and-rising several months ago. Maybe you should farm this job out - to someone with much greater knowledge of the subject. There is no shortage of British people who have the necessary qualifications. I may add that it's this sort of thing that helps give Americans in general a bad name over here.))

Your so-called First Law of Fanzines is either untrue, or a tautology not worth mentioning. I must say that in your arguments with Eric Willis at Games Day you sounded like a silly ass, but I wasn't happy with Eric's attitude either. As I recall, you said that the only reason anyone could possibly have for publishing a Dipzine was 'ego'. Moreover, you expressed the opinion that human nature was such that a group could not possibly cooperate successfully in producing a fanzine. I disagree strongly with both suggestions. On the other hand, Eric seemed awfully nonchalant about the possibility of a zine folding - it is better to try (he said), and if you fail that's the breaks, than not to try at all. After hearing you and Willis, and before that Swanson and Willis, I wonder if there is anyone in the entire country who has a mature attitude about publishing. I'd certainly be hesitant about joining any game run by any of you, if (a big if) you really meant what you said.

About the ego idea: well, no doubt this is the reason why people start Dippy-zines, although there are practical reasons - in order to have something to trade for umpteen other zines, for example. I suppose usually the editor wants an outlet for his mouthings, and only in rare cases can he find that outlet in someone else's zine. But it's not ego that persuades a publisher to carry on with his games until they're over, long after he's lost interest. You could say it is to his benefit, as he feels better about carrying out his responsibility than dropping it all; but then your first law becomes a tautology - naturally the publisher does whatever pleases and benefits him, otherwise he wouldn't do it! I prefer to look on it as a habit. Given the sense of responsibility (which was not once mentioned in your argument when I was listening in), publishers develop the good habit of getting the zine out on time and doing a good job with it. Once the games are over, and interest is lost, it becomes a bad habit because it serves no purpose. Who would spend so much time and effort on a habit? Smokers and heavy drinkers waste much more time, money and health (and let's not hear you say, as you did at Games Day, that everyone does it. A great many people

don't smoke, and many drink little or not at all - in America, at least; one might get a different impression about British from reading Dipzines).

As for human nature, I think just about any historian will tell you that humans have a considerable capacity to cooperate. You seemed quite certain of your knowledge of human nature, but I think you ought to consider it again.

One further point - perhaps British publishers don't get into the publishing habit the way Americans do. A great many American zines turn around in less than a week, often three or four days. I understand that's quite rare here.

((No, it's not rare at all. Most of our zines aim at a turnaround time of one week or less; most achieve it regularly, and not a few always arrive on time! The brand leader, 1901, has never been more than three or four days late in 76 issues, and several less ancient zines are right up there with Mick. Leviathan, The Norms and Bellicus are as out-of-place in this country as they would be in America (and Bellicus has usually been very prompt just lately).

((The point about responsibility is a good one, and I'm glad someone has brought it up. You say it isn't ego that drives a departing publisher to finish his games after he's lost interest, and you're quite right; usually such games don't get finished, and that's why we have problems with orphaned games. Given the undeniable facts that (1) a publisher whose departure is imminent always says, 'Dropping out? Nothing could be further from my mind, guv !'; and (2) it isn't much fun being in the zine business if all you print are the bare bones of game reports - well, who's the more responsible? The chap who gives priority to game reports above all else, who is bound to lose interest quite soon? Or someone who recognizes the ego-trip function of the publishing game and runs his zine accordingly, and who might conceivably be around the hobby in five years' time? Everyone can make his own choice, of course, but I know which one I would choose as a GM.

((One of the notable things about this hobby is that the zines widely advertized as 'good for players' always give emphasis to the myriad madneses of their editors: Roy Taylor with his crusade against wins by concession, Bullock with boogie, and so forth.

((I don't think the desire to trade is why people start Diplomacy publishing; as any reputable editor will tell you, it's less trouble to subscribe to all the zines you want, and a lot cheaper, too. But

certainly the fact that producing a zine gives the editor a platform from which to declaim his eccentric enthusiasms is very important; when I ceased publishing the old Ethil one of the hardest things I had to accept was that I couldn't give an instant reply if anyone took my name in vain, but had to rely on other editors to accommodate me. This is a great advantage of having a hobby replete with large letter columns, of course. I believe that in the US hobby more prominence attaches to 'articles' than to 'letters'. There's no real difference between the two, of course; an article is simply a long letter printed without editorial comment with a title at the top. But a 'letter' can touch on more than one subject, and may also be very short. Hence more people participate in the discussion, and that means a more interesting hobby for everyone. As always, Britain leads the world! Except when the subject is boogie, of course...

((Before I leave Lew's letter, I'd just like to answer his query about my title. I'd intended to do it yoncks ago, but I got sidetracked. The name Ethil the Frog derives from the world's greatest TV show, Monty Python's Flying Circus, now (O woe!) defunct; its suitability as a title comes from three important factors: (1) it's short; (2) it's easy to pronounce; (3) it's hard to forget.))



WILL HAVEN You could at least have had the decency to wait until I'd produced Bellicus 47 - and had one issue's growing - before returning to the fray. Shame on you, shame! Doubtless your decision to renumber was the backlash from your conscience, in its tactful way trying to save your ignominy.

I like your First Law of Fanzines; and (given liberal interpretations of the word 'benefit') I think it is absolutely true, with the obvious corollaries mentioned. About the Second Law I have some doubt, for certainly while you may not like Owl and Weasel, and few people ever liked Shenandoah Services, it is possible to imagine a Dippy hobby based on zines like this, ie, where the whole content is dedicated to the games themselves rather than the people. (Indeed, SS might bring the First Law into doubt, but here a liberal use of 'benefit', = money, suffices). And this brings me to my own humble submission for a Law of Fanzines - that is, 'fanzines are predominantly about fans'. Or maybe that's just wishful thinking on my part?

Standbys? Nobody 'noticed' my comments, as you put it, because the logic is self-

evident to a GM/editor, but it might be undesirable for his readers to know of his agreement with it. Obviously a game ends quicker if people drop out - an agreed end is almost guaranteed by 1908. As against this, I can cite several cases of games (even in Bellicus) whose end has been considerably prolonged by the introduction of standbys - a few indeed, where all the players at the end of the game were standbys, some of the third or fourth generation! This means, of course, with games at a premium (one GM can only run so many games), that the rate of game-starts must be slowed well before it would otherwise need to be if standbys weren't used. Therefore, the players suffer, because they cannot get new games started until the old ones finish; the readers suffer because press is generally sparser from standbys than it is even from other players; and the GM suffers, because if he cannot offer game-starts he cannot really expect to get new subscribers, can he? All in all, standbys are a lousy idea - and I said this when I first started: accepting Diplomacy games in Bellicus - but I was pilloried by public opinion and forced to accept their use. And who threw the first stone? Why, Mick Bullock, of course...

By the way, my house rules are even simpler than yours. They read, 'Will Haven's decision is final'. Recommended.

((Ta for the letter, Will. Your suggestion for a Law of Fanzines is good, of course, but I think it's actually the same in principle as my Second Law. My version is a bit more generalized, that's all; by and large, the incestuous material about other hobby members and fanzines are what this hobby does best.

((Now for standbys. I've never denied that a lack of standbys makes games a good two or three years shorter, on average - but I've never seen why this should be desirable and your arguments do nothing to change my mind. You claim game-starts are at a premium. Bollocks! There are at least a dozen zines at the moment whose editors are crying out for new players; and you, with your insidious selfishness, seek to keep your share of these captive in Bellicus! Are you perhaps afraid that if your readers start games in new zines they may eventually desert you for good? Shame on you for even thinking such thoughts, and know that the remedy lies in your own hands, Will.

((Lew Pulsipher made a much better case against my anti-standby position; he invoked a game in Big Brother, which was played without standbys; eventually six out of seven countries were in anarchy

and the remaining player, Edi Birsan, was able to win - though it took him a while. I'm not convinced of the fairness of that example, though; Big Brother's editor, Charles Reinsel, is notorious for his sheer awfulness. I believe I'm correct in saying that he refuses to allow players to amend orders once submitted, even though the deadline may not have been passed; that he puts people into games they have not asked for, and 'drops' them when they refuse to play; and that he once expelled several people from games because he believed (wrongly) they were homosexuals - at which several others resigned from their games in protest, and these, too, were registered as dropouts... There is no-one quite so bad in Britain at the moment, though competition for 'worst GM' is brisk at the more noisome end of the Diplomacy spectrum.

((Lew also said, 'The name of the game is Diplomacy; you can't negotiate with an unplayed country'. True. Jonathan Palfrey takes the opposite view, though: 'If a player is replaced by a standby his neighbours have been sneakily cheated of their bonanza; after all, the likelihood that someone will drop out can be a factor in the game.' Also true. I rather think there isn't a lot to choose between the two possible stances on this matter, as long as no disasters happen. Arguments one way or the other seem mostly to be instances of extremes, and I think it's fair to say that a game with six countries in anarchy is as bad (but no worse than) a game where there may have been twenty or more different players participating at various times. Differences of opinion don't matter much, as long as enough zines exist to satisfy people of either viewpoint.))



JONATHAN PALFREY I don't go along with your condemnation of the Birks initiative for atandardization of house rules. If opinion is indeed unanimous about 'simple rulebook problems', then it might be a good idea and quite a simple matter to set down the consensus in black and white (or red and yellow as the fit takes you) for the guidance of new GM's and indeed new players. Your question, 'What GM worth his salt would atrogate his responsibility of making his own rulings about his own games?' is rather curious - surely, the game is played by rules, and GM's mostly knuckle under and observe these things. It seems to me that the proposed standardization is merely for the purpose of rectifying what can be seen

as omissions from the rulebook. It is obviously confusing to players if different GM's use contradictory systems. I have quite often listed conditional retreats when sending in orders for my 1901 game, for instance, though fortunately this confusion is in the right direction and so doesn't do me any harm.

I'm not arguing against Mick's three-season year, etc; I think this is the sort of GM discretion which should remain, as it is perhaps useful for players to have a choice. But as it can cause confusion I think that differences between GM's should ideally be eliminated, except where there is a demonstrable benefit in giving players a choice. I mean differences in game rulings only, I hasten to add, not meaning to imply that I think GM's should be cloned look-alikes producing identical zines...

You say that you don't have to put in writing that late orders will cause NMR, etc; you don't put this in writing (or, to be exact, you do), assuming that your players will be experienced enough to know about such common habits of GM's. But a GM who has to deal with novice players must put everything down specifically, and it would really be more efficient to get out a set of standard house rules that could be sent to everybody. This would mean that GM's would only have to put in writing any non-standard rulings that they wished to apply.

((Well, it looks as if standard house rules are going to be written anyway, despite my opposition; there's something called a 'Three Wise Men' Committee, which will feature Birks, Howes and Walkerdine, with Piggott cast in the role of King Herod. Well, actually, Birks is the only 'definite' - Howes and Walkerdine may yet turn out to be too wise to have anything to do with this hare-brained scheme! Seriously, I do think that standardized rules, if accepted by the hobby at large, will cut down significantly on players' choice, despite the fact that no-one wants that to happen - standardized things have a habit of creating their own norms. I can see it now - 'Ooh, look, Mavis, he's not going to use SHR XVII.3! Bleah, I'm not playing there then!' In other words, there will be pressure (conscious or not, it makes no difference) on the mavericks to conform.

((There's already an authoritative guide to the resolution of rulebook-type problems - it's called The Rules of Diplomacy, and not a few of the present crop of GM's would do well to familiarize themselves with its contents! (Actually, I can't talk - I made a dreadful faux pas

at Hammoncon over a simple rulebook problem - whether F(GoB) can legally give support to F(Nwy)-StP:nc. It can; but I said it couldn't, my excuse being that I wasn't that sure of myself and if the situation arose during a postal game I'd consult the rules before adjudicating. Fortunately, Sharp insisted so forcefully that I should back up my opinion with money that I was afraid to wager the grid I might otherwise have lost).

((As regards the novices' situation, I'm less certain. One occasionally hears horror stories - there was a particularly fine one a year or so back about a new player who failed to realize he was meant to write letters to the others. I'm not at all sure what I'd do in a case like that; but I suspect that most newcomers have a pretty good idea of what to expect, their biggest help being a sight of games already in progress in their zine. Several pages of bureaucratic house rules could well confuse rather than enlighten. But, as I say, I don't know.

((Of course, a few zines nowadays don't issue house rules. Do they take any new players, I wonder - if so, it would be very interesting to know what they think about it all...))



A ZINE WITHOUT A
JONATHAN PALFREY
LETTER?

A CONTRADICTION
IN TERMS, SIR!

I see you've swallowed the Asimov line on psychohistory hook, line and sinker, despite calling it 'human nature'. In fact one has to qualify this sort of thing. You say that you 'know with 100% certainty' that apples drop downwards. I think you mean either 'with certainty' or 'with 100% probability' - in either case, the expression would be anathema to a statistician. Certainty about the future is a mythical concept; you cannot know that an apply will drop downwards. What if there's a high wind? What if the law of gravity suddenly stopped working? All we know is that it's been working for quite some time - there's no reason why it shouldn't change.

In the case of masses of people one can be even less certain. Asimov's analogy of masses of people against the masses of atoms in a billiard ball has its fascination, and contains some truth, but people do interact in a more complex fashion than atoms, and are themselves more individual than atoms. A mass of people is less predictable than a mass of atoms because the mass of people may be significantly affected by the actions of a few individuals, which are pretty unpredictable in the long term (at least). Asimov paid lip service to this, but skated over it for the sake of his story. In fact, you wouldn't need someone as extraordinary as The Mule to mess up a Plan that had the nerve to span centuries without taking alternative scenarios into account. I like the idea of psychohistory, but it's not that simple.

I did get cross at university, though, with the unscientific approach some people have to the social sciences - I get the impression that a lot of 'Arts' types have drifted over and infected these subjects with a pernicious preference for tedious argument over scientific experiment. Give them two different weights and ask them which will fall faster, and they'd stand around arguing and quoting references at each other instead of trying it.

The people here at IIM are mostly doing research in Economics, and fortunately the ones I work with directly have a reasonably empirical attitude (not an accident - I am here doing computer work, and you don't need a computer to theorize abstractly). But when you look at the tiny advances made by Economics, and the vast amount of literature on the subject (much of it without adequate empirical backing), it does suggest that the value of most of that literature must be pretty small.

((I think this is true for all social science disciplines, not just Economics. But isn't the theoretical nature of most of the work due simply to the difficulty of carrying out adequate experiments? At the risk of putting my foot in my mouth (for I know very little about Economics), I'll give an example of what I mean.

((Since 1945, successive governments in Britain have been deciding their economic policies by using the principles propounded by John Maynard Keynes. This, in effect, has been a long-term experiment to test whether Keynesian theory works in real life. Only quite recently has it become clear, as our double-figure inflation coincides with a high rate of unemployment, that it doesn't. To extract

this one piece of information has taken three decades !

((And what now? Does the Keynesian theory contain a fundamental law; was its apparent success in the fifties and sixties mere coincidence? Or is it basically correct, merely needing small refinements (an analogy in the natural sciences field being Newton's Law of Gravitation being slightly amended by Einstein's relativity theory)? No-one knows. Presumably monetarist theories will be put to the test in the next decade, during a period of Conservative rule... and no doubt the particular version used will also turn out to have flaws in the end.

((My argument refers to experiments on a very large scale, of course. Theories of a less grandiose nature should be much easier to test by experiment, I agree. What of the economics of the Diplomacy hobby, for instance? Back in 1972 or 1973, the hobby was exceptionally socialist in outlook. Zines were filled with copious plugs for the opposition; players were few, newcomers sparse, and though competition between zines to get new players was quite fierce everyone advertised each other's waiting lists. But now, the hobby begins to resemble 19th-century robber-baron capitalism at its very worst. Gone are the days when interesting features in my zine would be commented on by everyone else in their next issues. Players are plentiful, and we are still in a period of quite rapid growth, yet some editors go out of their way to discourage their readers to sample the opposition - see my reply to the Haven letter, earlier. If editor Joe Soap wants to run a game of Transcendental Thunder Diplomacy XVI, he cannot rely on every other editor to give this a mention. I'm as neglectful about plugging little things like game openings as everyone else, of course, and perhaps part of the problem is simply that the hobby has grown too much, and is now just a bit too unwieldy for anyone to be able to encompass it all. I don't know.

((One other thing. In the old days, before the problem of orphan games became a problem, the general attitude was that publishers should take orphans because it was right that they should. Now, it seems, we take orphans because we will get extra readers. Some difference.

((I'm getting old, that's my trouble. Back to you, JPRP...))

Science fiction. Ah, the breath of life. I've been reading it more since I arrived in Germany, and it's very nice to see you giving the subject a regular slot in Ethil. A fact about my interest in SF

that you may find curious is that, though I've been reading (and sometimes attempting to write) it for some 14 years, often with an enthusiasm amounting to addiction, I've concentrated on books and remained largely ignorant of magazines, and completely ignorant of amateur zines and conventions. Perhaps there are gaps here that could do with filling. I should say that for most of my life I've either been abroad (mostly Africa) or at school, and wasn't really aware of SF as something existing outside a library. I does seem to me a point, though, that in the games field there is a natural *raison d'être* for zines and for conventions (playing games!) which is less obvious in the field of SF, in which the primary activities are surely the solitary ones of reading and writing - and amateur writing will presumably just mean bad writing in general.

But I must admit that I find your SF section interesting, and I do like to talk to a fellow enthusiast about SF sometimes.

((I think SF conventions started in the first place because reading and writing are such solitary activities! SF fanzines originally contained mostly amateur fiction (their editors modelling their productions on the prozines of that time), but pretty soon book reviews and other general criticism caught on, and then stuff about personalities. Second Law: Good Fanzines contain material which cannot be obtained elsewhere. Or the Haven version - Fanzines are about Fans - is relevant.

((On the top of the fanzine pile here at the moment is a copy of Stop Breaking Down, an SF-oriented fanzine produced by Greg Pickersgill. Not that SF features much - it's just something which the editor and most (by no means all) of his readers share a common interest in. The main feature in the editorial is a dose of boogie, no less: 'Imagine my surprise when I picked up what had every feel, touch, aura and emanation of being a very dull Australian fanzine ('Australian' in the generic sense; even I recognized the American stamps) and wrenched it open to reveal a completely new joy. No plain old ordinary SF type fanzine either, but a Good God honest-to-Gibson rock fanzine.' Hack professional writer Robert Holdstock contributes a piece on his working week: 'Just for the hell of it I write, "Simon's screams were terrible to behold". I imagine that'll be edited out, unlike my joke in Legend of the Werewolf in which I called a hospital in Paris the Sacré Bleu Hospital. It's still in there.' Then there's eight pages of SF fanzine reviews (quite a short column), ten pages of

reportage on a recent convention, sixteen pages of letters, and other items which wouldn't mean much to the outsider. The writing throughout is of near professional standard; indeed, about half is contributed by professionals.

((At the other end of the scale, I have in my collection Volume 1, Number 1 of a thing called The Fantast, dated April 1939. The editor, a teenaged fan called C S Youd, later to become the pro writer John Christopher, chose as lead item a poor poem by someone called Arthur C Clarke: 'For some day our vessels shall ply / To the uttermost depths of the sky', and the accompanying illustration shows cigar-shaped rocket ships running circles around each other. Uuugh!

((Actually, the most amusing part of The Fantast is what happened to it after it was mailed. Youd decided to try out a new-fangled American method of sending his zine - he folded it three times, stapled it and stuck the stamp on the outside. The Post Office franked the ha'penny stamps - then sent the thing back, saying it had to go into envelopes!! Plus ça change...

((Damn... why do I keep getting sidetracked? Jonathan, your ignorance of magazines isn't surprising. I myself did not buy my first SF magazine until 1971; the only indigenous British magazines for several years, New Worlds and then Vision of Tomorrow, were both very patchily distributed. Cons, and the world of fanzines, got mainly advertised through the magazines - get one, and you've got the lot. All right my loves?))



CHARLES VASEY The Great Bores picture in Ethil 1 was very true indeed. I think I'll pinch it for my own wargaming zine. Doubtless some bore will complain about it. The more time that passes, the more I consider your First Law is correct. I am currently suffering a deluge of idiots whose letters go something like this:

"Dear Charles, I never bother to write articles for you but your editorial attacking X has changed this. I have known X for 2 years and until I hear that he corroborates your story I am not going to believe a libellous little liar like you. If you really want your 'zine to be any good, you oaf, you should not make any personal statements but should restrict yourself to typing up articles which come in, but not from me. I trust you will realize that this letter is not personal. Yours Eric Pode, BA(ret)."

Of course I don't bother

replying to this, although a 'stiff letter' can do wonders. Unfortunately, British fair play (ie, hack the sod when he is down) demands that one at least pretends to consider this sort of letter. The temptation is then to put the writer to the rack in the lettercol, using such fun devices as marginal notes and frequent interruptions. Another wheeze is to rip up the offending document (after xeroxing it for your files) and return it with a terse card to the recreant.

((When I receive something unusually twitlike, I'm always afraid to give it the full third degree in case it turns out to have been a put-on all the time. A safe way out, and recently one of my favourites, is to send a short note saying something like this: 'Sorry I shan't be printing your letter, but I'm afraid the humour may be a bit too subtle for most of my readers. Please feel free to contact me again if you have any other material suitable for publication'.

((On the other hand, there is nothing quite so pleasurable in this hobby than ripping a choice inanity to shreds - answering non sequitur with non sequitur, bad grammar with bad grammar, and (best of all) accusation of bad grammar with accusation of bad grammar! The point being, of course, that the readers at large will recognize the exchange for the humour it contains, but the patsy will take it all seriously.))



BOB HOWES I can't possibly afford to miss Ethil, as you are now in the position of being possibly the only 'independent' Dippyazine left in the country! Rather like starting a new political party - you can be beastly to everybody with impunity. Mind you, you will never quite get away from the NGC image if the format and style of Ethil 1 (second volume) is retained - or was that a deliberate mistake to fool us all?

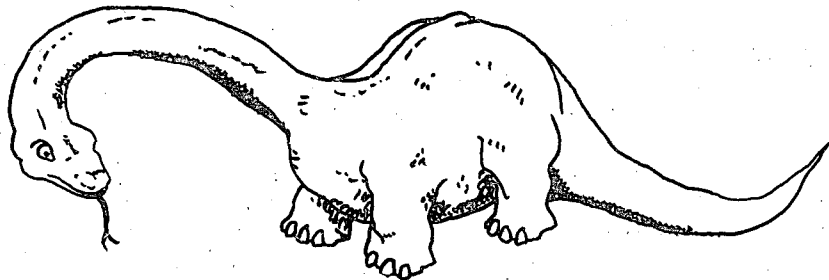
It is pleasing to see someone being even nastier to the schoolboy editors than myself. Even Sauce of the Nile, which seemed quite unusually promising with its first issue, is now looking not very good. I suppose the schoolboy subscribers like it that way, and I sometimes wonder what my juvenile subbers think of Ellie sometimes. Ah well.

Congratulations, anyway, on the revival of Ethil, long eagerly awaited and now a fact. May you go from strength to strength now that you are freed from the yoke of the NGC.

((Thanks, Bob. Yes, my first issue did look a bit like Toad, didn't it? It wasn't meant to; in fact, I made efforts to ensure that it didn't! Still, I think Ethil's contents are much more interesting than Toad ever was - they're certainly more interesting to me, and that's obviously important - and the coloured paper I'm now using where possible should also help.

((Your comments about my independence from all known groups are noteworthy, and one in the eye for such as Nicky Palmer who claims there is now no difference of opinion between hobby members over the vexed question of organizations. Now I'm producing a real zine again, I have to conclude that there seems no reason for me to support any hobby organization whatever, and so I'm not going to. Game insurance, the only logical reason for coming down on one side or other of the fence, seems to inspire total boredom among the players; of 25 people who so far have signed up to play Diplomacy here, only one has raised the subject - and he was Andy Davidson, and so doesn't count.

((Am I nasty to schoolboy publishers? I don't mean to be - it's just that many of them seem to carry general faults to extremes. Young Bartle and his five subzines is an example. I doubt if there is much difference between 'schoolboy subscribers' and the rest of us; if it's a state of mind you mean, there is only one schoolboy subscriber I should care to name, and that's George North.))



GAME REPORTS

WHEW!



GAME ONE 1977-DB Diplomacy Spring 1901

Hedgehog snares Russia ! ??

ENGLAND (Keith Loveys): F(Lon)-ENC; F(Edi)-NTH; A(Lpl)-Yor. (16.2%)
GERMANY (Stephen Docwra): F(Kie)-Hol; A(Ber)-Kie; A(Mun)-Ruh. (19.6%)
RUSSIA (Simon Dally): F(Sev)-BLA; A(War)-Ukr; A(Mos)-StP; F(StPisc)-GoB. (5.0%)
TURKEY (Andy Davidson): F(Ank)-BLA; A(Con)-Bul; A(Smy)-Con. (25.8%)
AUSTRIA (Richard Sharp): F(Tri)-Ven; A(Vie)-Gal; A(Bud)-Rum. (1.0%)
ITALY (Allan Ovens): A(Ven)-Tri; A(Rom)-Apu; F(Nap)-ION. (4.5%)
FRANCE (Steve Plater): F(Bre)-MAO; A(Par)-Pic; A(Mar)-Spa. (16.7%)

The percentages refer to Mick Bullock's April 1976 survey of 313 game openings. A few of these are rather wildly out-of-date by now; the Austrian 'Hedgehog' opening, for instance, is far more common than it used to be. The 'Make Mick update his survey' campaign must succeed !

Vienna to Constantinople: I trust you, baby. Don't let me down.

Piggott ! - What's the meaning of starting your games off at number 1? You realize that I had already played 147 in the real Ethil, and am approaching my 1000 in total. It's immoral. And why have you let Sharp play? He'll probably send orders for Spring 1925.
--- Davidson.

Vienna: As I was saying in my last press release... no, it's no good, I've forgotten. Ah, those were the days; where are they now, the Wards and the Lettices? Where is Ar Phasipence, what hideous fate overtook the Hobbiton to Barad-Dur Underground Railway, is Glyn Palmer still alive, what really happened that steamy Wednesday night in Jesus Lane and who the hell is Jesus Lane anyway? These and many other equally unimportant questions must remain unanswered, I hope. Yesterday's science fiction is today's sociology, and as boring as ever. I'm getting old, that's the trouble: the new Ethil will be inhabited by a different breed of idiots, most of whom were only a twinkle in Peter Charlton's eye when the old one folded, and I shall feel left out and start writing acidulous Bullock-like editorials. Already I've outlived my time - I play in a press game in Greatest Hits, and the only press I understand is mine, and not all of that. The regurgitation of Ethil is only a brief backward step, away from the abyss - the new world where people like Birks get degrees, and Glyn and I will be displayed in glass cases in dusty museums no-one ever visits. All too soon John will feel a strange lethargy creeping over him; Ethil will split into two parts, then three, then more and more until it disappears altogether, dispatching another crop of orphans to start their ten-year purgatory in The Norms. Quite soon fifteen more schoolboy publishers will rise up out of the ashes, and the last flickerings of the Golden Age will be forgotten.

The question is, can I afford to play the Hedgehog if I want to be around to see it all happen?

*

GAME THREE Start Spring 1901 orders by next deadline, please !

ENGLAND: Alan Sedgwick, 8 Hampton Gdns, Prittlewell, Southend-on-Sea, Essex.
GERMANY: John Balson, 56 Alexandra Road, Kew, Surrey.
RUSSIA: Dave Allen, 11 Alma Heights, Cavendish Way, Mickelover, Derby.
TURKEY: Ian Mardle, 4 Overdene Drive, Gossops Green, Crawley, Sussex RH11 8DU
AUSTRIA: Tadek Jarski, 7 Quintin Avenue, London S.W.20
ITALY: Pete Cousins, 35 Miltons Crescent, Godalming, Surrey.
FRANCE: Barry McManus, 45 Leith Towers, Brighton Road, Sutton, Surrey.

GAME TWO 1977-DC Diplomacy START

ENGLAND: Mark Sanders, 19 Cass House, Harrowgate Road, Hackney, London E.9
GERMANY: Dave Fisher, The Flat, Little Dene, Oldmixon Rd, Weston-Super-Mare, Avon.
RUSSIA: Alan Bustany, 16 Kilmory Gdns, Belfast, BT5 7GB, Northern Ireland.
TURKEY: Bob Grove, 105 Marlborough Park Avenue, Sidcup, Kent, DA15 9DY
AUSTRIA: Martin Styler, 53 Shenley Fields Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 5AL
ITALY: Andy Norman, 45B Clarence Road, Chesterfield, Derbyshire
FRANCE: Howell Davies, 86 Glebelands Rd, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 9EA ((note change))

This game has in fact been in progress since I posted the last issue - the player list above is given for reference - so let's get straight on with:

Spring 1901 orders

Good start for Italy ... ?

ENGLAND (Mark Sanders): F(Lon)-NTH; F(Edi)-NWG; A(Lpl)-Edi. (35.9%)
GERMANY (Dave Fisher): F(Kie)-Den; A(Ber)-Kie; A(Mun)-Tyr. (0.3%)
RUSSIA (Alan Bustany): F(StP:sc)-GoB; A(War)-Gal; A(Mos)-Ukr; F(Sev)-BLA. (19.8%)
TURKEY (Bob Grove): A(Con)-Bul; F(Ank)-Sev; A(Smy)-Con. (0.3%)
AUSTRIA (Martin Styler): A(Vie)-Tyr; A(Bud)-Gal; F(Tri)-ADS. (Zilch)
ITALY (Andy Norman): A(Rom)-Apu; F(Nap)-IOS; A(Ven)-Tri ! (4.5%)
FRANCE (Howell Davies): F(Bre)-MAO; A(Par)-Bur S by A(Mar). (21.6%)

Percentages again refer to the Bullock Frequency Survey. Non-conformist lot, aren't you? These unusual moves reinforce my claim that the survey badly needs bringing up-to-date - the campaign to this end shall succeed !

On with some press ---

London: For those of you who are even busier than me and have no time to write - almost all of you, I assume - please note my telephone number: 01-986 7275.

Is there any truth in the rumour sweeping the country that an increasing proportion of the population can't write properly, and so don't for fear of embarrassment? The other rumour, about an alliance between England and France, has no truth... yet.

Trieste: And to think I trusted you !

*

WAITING LIST: Game Four of standard Diplomacy will feature Sellick Davies, Ian Mardle, Anne Morris, Malcolm Shaw and Roy Taylor. Two needed. To play in this or any future Diplomacy game in Ethil, send your game fee of £1.50 (no deposit, no return) along with your application to the Ethil sender.

*

ENDINGS: Well, I'm afraid I haven't got time to type four more pages by tomorrow, so we'll have to stop here. In hand is the first draft of a review column about subzines, game-only zines and their relevance to the digestive biscuit industry, and in particular the similarity in the feelings experienced when reading Sauce of the Nile and the terminal itch induced by a bed full of biscuit crumbs. And I have a 'Great Bores of Today' from Nicky Palmer, who Daned to send it only after proddings by me. If I can get those and other contributions typed up nice and early it will help me to make next issue a decent size.

I must advertize two new zines. Nitehawk, Laurence Parrott's Soccerdross subby to Ad Nauseam, is going independent and offers games of Diplomacy at 50p plus several variants at 50p or 70p. Soccerdross is £1. Hah! What's this? 'There is a charge of an additional penny for those who do not take the Soccerboss section'. Blackmail !!! Address is 'Polly' Parrott, 33 Wellwood Rd, Goodmayes, Ilford, Essex IG3 8TR. Steve Pratt is getting far too many mentions here, even for a child star, but the next Ad Nauseam will carry the first issue of Tony Crouch's zine Rhubovia, offering Dippy games for a quid, plus a Bourse. This one is typed on the typewriter that produced 46 issues of old Ethil, and mimeographed on an ex-Bruce duplicator, so it's bound to feature the most grotesque and ridiculous contents in future issues - you've been warned. Write to Anthony Peckinpah Crouch, 35 Melbourne Avenue, W.13. Have a good time... till next time !