



ethil the frog

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GAME REPORTS

ETHIL 'L' GAME 1973-DD Diplomacy

ANOTHER WIN FOR CAMBRIDGE FAILURE !

Spring 1912 orders

AUSTRIA (Anarchy): Has: A(Sev), A(Ser), A(Rum)*.

ENGLAND (Richard Sharp): A(War) stands S by A(Ukr); A(Mos) S Austrian A(Sev);
 F(NTH)-HEL; F(Bel)-NTH; A(Hol)-Bel S by A(Pic) & F(ENC); F(Ber) & F(Kie) stand;
A(Bre)-Par; F(Gas)-MAO S by F(IRI) & F(NAO).

ITALY (Andy Davidson): A(Bud)-Rum S by F(BLA); A(Gal)-Ukr; A(Arm)-Sev; A(Gre)-Bul;
 A(Ven)-Tri; A(Pie)-Mar; F(ION)-TYS; A(Bur) MS A(Par); A(Ruh)-Bel; A(Sil)-War;
 A(Boh)-Mun; F(MAO) stands S by F(Por), F(Spa:sc) & F(NAf).

*Retreats: Austrian A(Rum) disbanded.

Autumn 1912 orders

AUSTRIA (Anarchy): Has: A(Sev)*, A(Ser)*.

ENGLAND (Richard Sharp): A(War) stands S by A(Ukr); A(Mos) S Austrian A(Sev);
 F(HEL)-Hol; F(NTH)-Bel; F(Kie) MS F(Ber)*; A(Bel)-Bur; A(Bre)-Par S by A(Pic);
F(Gas)-Bre S by F(ENC); F(NAO)-MAO S by F(IRI).

ITALY (Andy Davidson): A(Tri)-Ser S by A(Bul); A(Gal)-Ukr; A(Sil)-Ber S by A(Mun);
 A(Arm)-Sev S by F(BLA) & A(Rum); F(NAf)-MAO S by F(Por) & F(Spa:sc); F(TYS)-GOL;
F(MAO)-Bre S by A(Par); A(Bur)-Pic; A(Mar)-Gas.

*Retreats: Austrian A(Ser) & A(Sev) both disbanded; English F(Ber)-Kie.

A: 0 bases: ~~Bel~~, ~~Ruh~~, ~~Tri~~. Eliminated.

E: 13 bases: Lon, Lpl, Edi, Hol, Den, Nwy, Kie, Swe, StP, Bel, ~~Bel~~, Mos, Bre, War.
 Removes F(IRI).

I: 21 bases: Ven, Rom, Nap, Tun, Smy, Bul, Mar, Spa, Con, Por, Vie, Ank, Mun, Bud,
 Tri, Par, Gre, +Sev, +Rum, +Ser, +Ber. Builds A(Ven), A(Rom), F(Nap) - one
 short - and wins !

Final statements, excuses for dropping out, etc, by next time please.

GAME ONE 1977-DB Diplomacy Spring 1902

ENGLAND (Keith Loveys): F(NTH)-Hol S by A(Bel); F(Edi)-NTH; F(Bre) & F(Lon) stand.

GERMANY (Stephen Docwra): A(Ruh)-Bur; A(Mun)-Tyr; A(Kie)-Mun; A(Den)-Kie; F(Hol)-HEL.

RUSSIA (Simon Dally): F(Swe)-BAL; A(Nwy)-Swe; A(Mos)-StP; A(Ukr)-Gal; F(Arm)-BLA S by F(Sev).

TURKEY (Andy Davidson): A(Con)-Bul S by A(Ser); A(Ank)-Arm S by F(BLA)*.

AUSTRIA (Richard Sharp): A(Rum)-Ser; F(Tri)-Alb; A(Gal)-Bud S by A(Vie).

ITALY (Allan Ovens): A(Ven)-Tri; A(Gre)-Alb; F(Nap)-TYS; F(ION)-ADR.

FRANCE (Steve Plater): F(Por)-MAC; A(Spa)-Gas; A(Par)-Bur S by A(Pic).

*Retreats: Turkish F(BLA)-Con.

For Whom The Bell Tolls: You know how it is in the winter when the Turkish boats are bobbing out at sea loosing off their guns; you get caught up in the atmosphere of the place and you drink too much red wine and forget what it is that you were going to do in the spring.

The old man came early to the meeting and the Fundador fumes cut through his balacava helmet and the stench of cardboard cigarettes like a forester's axe. He spat once. 'Cojones!' he said. 'Young one, the Italian has an alliance against me.'

'Is it with the Sultan of whom men do not speak?' I said.

'Yes,' he said. 'It is with the ruler of whom men do not speak and who does not speak with men.'

'I am sorry,' I said. 'I did not know. Old one, there are times when I feel I cannot go on with the war.'

He looked away. 'You must go on with the war,' he said. 'There is nothing any of us can do about the war. That is the way it is.'

'Yes,' I said. 'I suppose so.'

Figgott! - I hope you have noted the consummate ease with which Sharp has been beaten again. Already I am the first winner in the new Ethil. There can now be no doubt as to the fact that I am the World's Greatest Diplomacy Player. In fact, I must be THE player. And why shouldn't I bleat about my victories over Sharp? His only victories to date stem from verbal battles with such poor unfortunates as Willis, or the late unlamented Jeremy Maiden (RIP). The way he torments these poor peasants borders on sadism. Well, it won't work here. If I am the first winner, he can be the other first. The first out of a game. ----- Davidson.

PS - That man makes me quite neurotic.

Vienna: Aren't you forgetting something, Pilot Officer? I've got fifty quid of yours - leave me alone and I'll see you get some of it back!

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GAME TWO 1977-DC Diplomacy Spring 1902

ENGLAND (Mark Sanders): NMR - has: A(Nwy), F(NWG), F(NTH), F(Lon).

GERMANY (Dave Fisher): A(Mun) stands S by A(Ber); A(Hol) S English F(NTH)-Bel; F(Den)-Kie; F(Kie)-SKA.

RUSSIA (Alan Bustany): A(StP) S English A(Nwy); F(Swe) S German F(Den); F(Sev)-BLA; A(Mos)-Sev; A(War)-Gal; F(Con)-Bul* S by A(Rum) ((coast not specified))

TURKEY (Bob Grove): A(Smy)-Con S by F(Ank); A(Bul) S A(Gre); A(Gre) S A(Bul).

AUSTRIA (Martin Styler): A(Tyr)-Ven; A(Bud)-Ser; F(Alb)-Tri.

ITALY (Andy Norman): A(Ven)-Tri; F(Nap)-TYS; A(Tun)-Gre C by F(ION) & S by A(Ser).

FRANCE (Howell Davies): NMR - has: A(Bur), A(Spa), F(Por), F(Bre), F(Mar).

*Retreats: Russian F(Con)-AEG.

Advert: Germany requires trustworthy ally. All genuine replies answered.

GAME THREE 1977-?? Diplomacy Autumn 1901

ENGLAND (Alan Sedgwick): A(Yor)-Bel C by F(NTH); F(NWG)-Nwy.
GERMANY (John Balson): F(Den)-SKA; A(Ruh)-Hol; A(Kie)-Den.
RUSSIA (Dave Allen): F(Rum)-Bul:ec*; A(War)-Gal S by A(Ukr); F(GoB)-Swe.
TURKEY (Ian Mardle): F(BLA)-Sev S by A(Arm); A(Bul) S Austrian A(Bud)-Rum.
AUSTRIA (Tadek Jarski): A(Bud)-Rum; A(Gal)-Ukr*; F(Tri)-Ven.
ITALY (Pete Cousins): A(Apu)-Tun C by F(ION); A(Ven)-Tri.
FRANCE (Barry McManus): A(Gas)-Por C by F(MAO); A(Pic)-Bel.
*Retreats: Austrian A(Gal)-Vie; Russian F(Rum)-BLA.

E: 4 bases: Lon, Lpl, Edi, +Nwy. Builds F(Lon).
G: 5 bases: Kie, Ber, Mun, +Den, +Hol. Builds F(Kie), F(Ber).
R: 4 bases: StP, Mos, War, ~~Sev~~, +Swe. No change.
T: 5 bases: Con, Ank, Smy, +Bul, +Sev. Builds F(Con), F(Smy).
A: 4 bases: Tri, Vie, Bud, +Rum. Builds A(Bud).
I: 4 bases: Ven, Rom, Nap, +Tun. Builds F(Nap).
F: 4 bases: Bre, Par, Mar, +Por. Builds A(Par).

Dear Mr Piggott - I am just a lonely, simple but honest games player. Unfortunately my circumstances force me into a compromising position between a 2903 computerperson with faulty security and an (oriental?) gentleman with an unintelligible but threatening accent. They phone me continually; but as I have two telephones I let them talk to each other. After a month of them thinking that they have been conversing intimately with me, one of them has now submitted a proposal in writing. What should I do?

Yours, Worried of Fishponds.

Number one in an interminable series of apocryphal and largely irrelevant stories.

It is said that there was once a wealthy man who lived in a small town, about a day's camel ride from Bhokhara. One day he sent a trusted servant into the town to purchase some provisions at the market. Whilst there, the servant felt, all of a sudden, a feeling of great foreboding steal over him. Glancing around nervously, he was shocked to see, on the other side of the street, the figure of Death, staring at him intently. Shaking with fear, he rushed home to his master, and blurted out what had happened. Now, his master was a kindly man, who was very concerned at this, and he suggested that the servant take some gold, and the fastest camel in the stable, and go immediately to Bhokhara, stay there a few days and recover from his experience. Nothing loath, the servant departed hotfoot. His master, however, unused to having his staff treated in this fashion, even by one such as Death, went to the market-place, where he espied Death standing to one side. At once he went and accosted him, demanding to know what he, Death, meant by scaring one of his servants so. Death was very apologetic, and replied that he was sorry to have caused any trouble, it was just that he was so surprised to see the servant there at all. 'You see, I have an appointment with him tomorrow, in Bhokhara.'

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GAME FOUR Diplomacy START Spring 1901 orders by next deadline, please !

ENGLAND: Sellick Davies, P O Box 642, Isfahan, Iran.
GERMANY: Ian Mardle, 4 Overdene Drive, Gossops Green, Crawley, Sussex RH11 8DU
RUSSIA: Malcolm Shaw, The Elsie Abbot, 9 Broadhurst Road, London NW6
TURKEY: Cliff Kennedy, 'Kilcree', Sandyford Rd, Dundrum, Dublin 14, Irish Republic.
AUSTRIA: Anne Morris, 2 Harrow Court, Oxford Road, Avondale, Salisbury, Rhodesia.
ITALY: Roy Taylor, 63a St Nicolas Park Drive, Nuneaton, Warwicks, CV11 6DZ
FRANCE: Norman Williams, 135 St Albans Road, Barnet, Herts, EN5 4LD

WAITING LIST: Game Five of regular Diplomacy will feature Phil Bass, Geoff Challenger and Mike Lay - four more needed. To take part in this or any future Ethil game, send your game fee of £1.50 (no deposit) along with your application. At present there are no vacancies for games other than Diplomacy in these pages, for which all good men give thanks.

LETTERS

PETE BIRKS I must confess I thought Gay Vulcan's performance would have done justice to a 2½-mile seller at Pontefract rather than the Grand National. It's my life's ambition to back the winner in this ghastly race; five times on the trot I have bet against Red Rum, and I've yet to see my horse even cross the line, let alone win! But I never back Red Rum, not because it isn't a great National horse, but because every mug under the sun always puts his money on it, and its 'value' is therefore abysmal. In the same way, Piggott always attracts a lot of cash in the 'Classics'.

I hate to be a grouse, but Red Rum was phenomenally lucky this year. Andy Pandey would have streaked home, had it not decided to fall over at Becher's. As for next year, I confidently predict Churchtown Boy, and I'll take a level tenner with anyone that it will finish in front of that unspeakable nag Red Rum.

((I know exactly what you mean, Pete, but you have to remember that the 'value' of a horse depends on the result of the race for dilettantes like me. Red Rum would have been excellent value this year at 6-4 on! Come to think of it, Lester Piggott would have given me pretty good value for money in the Derby last year, if only I had bothered to enter the betting shop. I have to admit, though, that my warm glow of satisfaction about Red Rum, and my £2 each way bet, has dissipated somewhat since I learned that the landlord of the Boot and Slipper, Amersham, won £6000 with a similar (but larger) bet.

((Your grouse is in remarkably poor taste, because luck, as everybody knows, is what steeplechasing's all about. How well I remember that excellent creature Foinavon (great value at 100-1!), staying sensibly out of harm's way while the rest of the field shoved and jostled each other - nasty, rough animals! Only after his rivals had all done the decent thing and fallen over did Foinavon emerge from safety, to become the most celebrated National winner since the war. Piss off back to the flat, you form-book fairy!

((In Ethil) I showed very clearly that a homosexual horse could not possibly win the Grand National. I am convinced

that a religious horse has no chance, either - it'll probably stop to pray half way round! I therefore accept your wager for Churchtown Boy vs Red Rum, the bet to be null and void if either horse ~~gets off~~ ~~start speed~~ ~~from~~ fails to start. Really, Pete, you might as well pay me £10 now and save yourself the suspense - Red Rum surely cannot fail to win the National for a record-shattering fourth time!

((Enough of these trivial matters, anyway - let's talk about something really important, like postal Diplomacy...))

For God's sake try and dissuade Lew Pulsipher from writing an article on British Dipfandom. He doesn't know anything about it. 'An American's first impressions of British Dipfandom', okay, but for a factual article on what it's all about over here, far better to get Richard Walkerdine or Pete Swanson to contribute something. Lew's sentence about turnaround of less than a week being 'quite rare' shows how little he knows. From the American zines I receive, I'd say that British zines tend to be bigger, better written, and only slightly less efficient. Very few US zines I receive are more than 14 sides long, and most carry no more than five or six Dippy games. 48-hour turnaround is a doddle with that size zine - it's when you get to the Jigsaw/1901aat level that the achievement of a regular three-weekly production becomes nothing less than a miracle.

As for Lew's survey - well, what's the point? Is it meant to establish what is the case, or just what people think is the case? As any researcher in public opinion knows, they tend to be two completely different things. The one I remember is the survey of peoples' socio-economic class linked to newspaper readership. The Express results were the funniest, with a vast majority of readers being in the D/E range, yet over 50% placed themselves in C1/C2. With the Mirror the reverse was true. I don't know what it proves, except, perhaps, the futility of surveys.

Will Haven is becoming awfully sensible and rational, isn't he? Unfortunately he won't trade for Greatest Hits, so I don't see Bellicus, but his letters are becoming

a very paragon of restraint. His view of the 'Laws of Fanzines' struck me as wrong, but maybe I was the one getting it wrong all the time. I thought you meant that a publication not following these rules was, by definition, not a fanzine - thus excluding other amateur magazines and carbon-copy Dippy games in such zines as Shenandoah Services and BDC Journal - but maybe I read it incorrectly.

((You are wrong, Pete. The word 'fanzine' encompasses all magazines that are published for fun rather than profit - even though certain cretins (Eric Willis, for instance) may try to deny this fact. The Laws of Fanzines merely state that any zine which doesn't obey them is headed for trouble.))

As for the standardized house rules, I think I was misunderstood in my original editorial. All I want is: (a) the setting out of the rules of postal Dippy which are inalienable to a good game - no unnamed standbys, the various province abbreviations, limits of GM discretion (quoting past incidents which can act as precedents), and common GMing mistakes. All these can be as much a guide to the novice GM as the novice player; and (b) the possible variations within these limits - three/two season game year, builds with Autumn moves or (as is common in the States) before Spring moves, conditional retreats or the possibility of a separate retreat season, various rulings on joint orders, and so on. All of these are not covered in the rules as they stand, and the points need to be clarified. I don't think this will lead to pressure on mavericks to conform! I like playing in 1901aat, for instance, because of the three-season game year and the non-conditional retreats. Some players prefer games with standbys, some don't; it would be nice to know the choices available when one enters the hobby.

It must be good to be completely independent! I sometimes hanker for that myself, but then I realize I like running novice games, simply to see people who first played in GH expand into other zines and a greater involvement with the hobby. Roy Taylor, Laurence Parrott, Tony Crouch - all these played in GH first, and it's nice to imagine (however untrue it may be!) that the success of their initial involvement in the hobby led to a greater interest. Far better than for their first games to have been in Albadross, or The Norns....

((Yes, it must be a great feeling, knowing that Victor Logan's prominence in this hobby is due in no small measure to

his having played his first game in GH... Bloody hell, Pete, two years' compulsory Advanced Monopoly would not be a sufficient punishment!

((About standardized house rules, I have only two points to make: if you're a novice you don't yet know whether you'd prefer standby players or not, and if 'accepted' rulings get written down there will be pressure on nonconformists to step into line. There always is in that sort of situation!

((Anyway, if you're worried about new players being channeled into unsuitable zines, exert pressure on the NGC to make sure Hawes only gives novice games to reputable GM's. After all, that's where nine-tenths of all novices start nowadays, right?))



'LORD FOPPINGTON' It is seldom that I take pen in hand to delineate a missive to one such as you. I believe a gentleman should restrict himself to running off small but tasteful epic poems, or perhaps the odd flute concerto or motet. However, my faithful scribe, Biddle, has had to retire to his suite of rooms in Chateau Foppington to recover from a deep wound you gave him. I refer, sirrah, to your appellation of 'butler' for Biddle! Tiens! Biddle is a gentleman's gentleman and general facyotum. He may have been noted on occasions to shimmer in an eminently butlerine manner - but, I can assure you, butler he is not. Not for him the humiliations that attended the pliant Wilde, body-servant (!) to the late d'Amber (a man in whom the Greek Vice had become a disease), or the servile position of Bidet, Butler and Bouncer to Count Chukusafiva. Far from it - Biddle is one of the scions of the noble house of Czartoryski, and his sad decline was the result of drink and intemperate friends at his university.

As to Lucifer! Tush, tish and even tosh! Of course I knew Lucifer before he became 7th Earl of Gehenna. We studied together at St Custard's, when he was a mere Baron Beelzebub. You may remember his brother, the heir, Marquis Mephistopheles, who died in strange circumstances. It seems he and Lucifer had been playing Russian Roulette, and Lucifer, generous to a fault, had foregone his first three turns. His father, the 6th Earl, died of internal drowning; he had been swimming, and was seized by a terrible cough - well, you know how a siphon works. Lucifer was glad to get the title as he had invested heavily in pepper futures. Later we both served in the

A DIPLOMAT IS...

... a person who smooths over frictions which would not occur in the first place if there were no diplomats.

... a person who uses more words than necessary to express much more than he knows.

... a person who thinks twice before he says nothing.

... disarmingly charming when his country is rapidly arming.

... a person who says today what will happen tomorrow and explains tomorrow why it did not happen yesterday.

... a person who does not believe political rumours until they are denied by his government.

On aid to the developing countries: This is a tax which the poor of the rich countries pay to the rich of the poor countries.

On the UN: An excellent organization. A pity there are so many foreigners in it.

Guards - Gardes de la Prevote - where he won the brigade Poodle-Faking award and a course of rabies jabs. All the needles died however. I seldom found our paths crossed, though when they did one Poppingtonian stare would quell him in his tracks. Lucifer, despite his choleric colouring, was the most slightly foxed man I ever met. To cure this he took many a potion, from Young's to Watney's, but he ended up in a Hell's Kitchen sniffing British Rail tea (one lump or two). Truly a sad end. Still, I shall always think of him holding his weekly horsewhipping on the steps of the Horse Guards. Un homme sans courage, et sans reputation. A very worthy Archbishop of Canterbury.

((The Editor of Ethil the Frog would like to apologize to readers of a sensitive disposition for that letter, but we feel it is important that the topics it brings up should be brought to public gaze. If this is the way the aristocracy normally behave, it's small wonder that the country has gone to the socialists.))



DAVE LANGFORD Owing to convulsive events following the One Tun meeting, it wasn't until today that I peered at Ethil 4 with that stern fault-finding gaze I reserve for the reproduction of Langford articles... I had wondered what Dippyfandom would make of certain esoteric references to D West et al, now firmly rewritten. Oh well. The Editor knows best. The Writer is not sufficiently bothered to treat you to even a mild display of Artistic Temperament. But you might have mentioned that changes, no doubt

vast improvements, had been made. (For one thing, the implication is that True Rat is a gamezine). I get enough flak from people I know, thanks, without crazed C-in-C's called Glyn Palmer, or Sharp, shrieking bloodlust through my letterbox and ordering in division after division of troops to rape and loot and pillage me...

((I don't think you'd need to worry about reprisals, Dave, if you ever met the leading lights of Dippy fandom; while they are as grotesque as D West, they're not quite as malevolent. Richard would rather play cards than pick fights, and though Glyn Palmer is a very irascible fellow, he is unable to exchange punches with his enemies because he would have to adjourn to the lavatory between alternate blows.))

Just now my only contacts with the games world are through D&D. I even produced a one-sheet effort which went out with the second lot of 'Trollcrusher' apa material. 'T' contains things I can do without - combat 'improvements' involving half an hour's higher mathematics before you can draw your sword, new character classes which become invincible at second level, dungeon expedition reports in interminable verse - but there's some Good Stuff here and there.

Like one of your correspondents, I found it startlingly easy to ignore the scattering of esoterica and enjoy Ethil as an interesting personalzine. I'd like to see more copies, if only to admire the suavity with which recycled SF-fan material is foisted upon your unsuspecting audience of diplomats. And I always find a new fandom (new to me, that is) strangely intriguing. I ploughed through those

occultzines out of sheer interest, alien though the subject-matter was, long before thinking of an article. D&D (and now Diplomacy) fandoms are more fun still, partly as enigmas to be slowly solved, partly as a means of seeing new pecking orders unknown to SF fandom, yet without the excruciating tedium of reality...

((Right on !))



PETE SWANSON I'm glad to see that you have stopped your practise of the first few issue, which might well have been called John the Piggott rather than Gorf the Lithe or whatever. Although you seem to have the edge over most people when it comes to writing reams of reckless rubbish in an entertaining fashion, there is a stage when it gets a bit overdone. Issues 2 and 3, which I received in the same envelope and devoured over breakfast, were a definite case of overkill; yep, on the second occasion I got too much exposure, and, lacking protective measures, was Piggotted into submission. Issue 4, on the other hand, was more balanced. Mind you, I think it's a damn cheek ripping-off articles and artwork from old SF zines - the least you could do would be to steal stuff from old Dippyazines.

((How can there be such a thing as too much Piggott? Awcumon... Anyway, without lots of outside contributions what choice has the editor but to pack his zine with his own prattle?

((The reason I raid SF zines rather than Dippy zines for material is simple: my readers won't have seen any of it before. Add to that the fact that most Dippyazine material isn't worth printing once, much less twice, and the logic of my position is clear.))

Speaking of SF zines, why don't you give a few addresses and/or reviews of these for us initiated. More than three months after receiving my only SF zine to date, Rob Jackson's Maya, I am still frightened to pick the thing up, knowing that if I do I'll be unable to put it down again without rereading Roy Kettle's article on 'How Not To Be A Writer'. Damn, I just did it again. Very revealing and very funny little piece of writing, that. I've said this before recently, but I found Maya 12/13 to be the best fanzine I had ever read, and if SF fanzines in general are a fraction as good, I might switch my allegiance to SF fandom. The only thing that might stop me is the fact that I'd have to go through the painful

egoboo development process again from scratch, and that may be too much for any man or beast. Still, might be worth it...

((Egoboo development process? Sounds like a good candidate for Pseud's Corner, that. Still, SF zines in general are better than Dippyazines, mainly because more time is lavished on their production. There's a limit to the amount of polish one can achieve in 48 hours (listening, Pulsipher?) and SF fans don't publish to deadlines, so... (The absence of a deadline can have a bad effect, too - many SF zines appear months late, or not at all, though regular publications do exist; the longest-running one is probably Lee Hoffman's Science Fiction Five-Yearly, whose 6 issues have come out at regular intervals in 1951, 1956, 1961, 1966, 1971 and 1976 !).

((I'll do a few reviews of SF zines in future issues; meanwhile, interested people could do worse than to start with Maya: send 60p to Rob Jackson, 71 King John St, Heaton, Newcastle on Tyne NE6 5XR. There's also Peter Roberts' Little Gem Guide, which is the SF fandom equivalent of Roll Call: 25p from Peter at 38 Oakland Drive, Dawlish, Devon. You might have to wait - a month ago Peter told me he was having trouble getting it printed.))

Fanzines themselves are the be-all and the end-all of the hobby for me these days. I agree wholeheartedly with your dissection of the species in Ethil 1, of course. You know, it really surprises me that so few Dippy publishers have any idea of exactly what a fanzine is and should be.

Finally, on to your little numbering fiasco. You seem to think you have got away with this outlandish trick, and on the surface it appears you have. After all, I have just written a page of a letter in which I referred to Ethils 47, 48, 49 & 50 as 1, 2, 3 & 4. Aha, but wait until you reach issue 46 under this newfangled system ! Yep, the next one will be issue 1 again ! Cackle ! You're caught up in a time warp, Piggott ! !

((Your reaction to issue 1 is welcome, however tardy. Here's another reply to my initial mailing which arrived only the other week...))



RALPH VICKERS Your plain brown unsolicited envelope arrived on my desk, and I'm sure you'll be delighted to hear that my reaction was exactly what you must have gleefully anticipated. I unsuspectingly thrust my hand inside - aaaaaagh ! Uuuuugh. A semi-

putrefied frog's cadaver with a grotesque impish grin endeavouring to masquerade as a Phoenix.

Well, Mr Piggott, you're one up on me and I hope you're satisfied. I cannot imagine why you perpetrated this dastardly deed on me - on me, someone you've never met, never even corresponded with, someone you haven't had any conceivable opportunity to dislike. In fact, you would never even have heard of me if we didn't just happen to be playing the same Diplomacy game in Med Policy. I would be most disillusioned if a sportsman of your renown (some 50 games, didn't you say?) could be so nasty and vindictive as to send me such a grisly mess - through the mail! - just because I snatched victory from your paws.

Anyway, holding my nose and averting my gaze, I was just about to consign Ethil the Frog 1 to the fire when I glanced once more in fascinated horror - as people will - at the thing squelched between my tongs, and two words of the garbled text leapt out at me: issue free.

Decisively I popped the thing under a bell jar, and after I had thoroughly aired my room I returned to the jar to study those arresting words. They were contained in a sentence of unbelievable grammatical sloth:

"As no fanzine can recklessly dole out large quantities of cash to the deserving poor, sending anyone who contributes that issue free is a realistic alternative." (Sic).

What did it mean? I could not find 'fanzine' in any of my dictionaries, yet as this term might conceivably be intended as the subject of the contorted sentence - rather, a conjunction of two dangling clauses - I saw that I was confronted with an intriguing puzzle indeed. As 'fanzine' was contained in a clause with 'dole out large quantities of cash' and 'the deserving poor' I assumed (reasonably, I believe) that this expression had some financial connotation. I decided to proceed on the premise that fanzine = financial foundation. I then began to juggle the words seeking some coherent solution. Not all the words fit the puzzle, but this did not discourage me because throughout the text there was much verbal superfluity:

"A realistic alternative is the financial foundation sending/contribute (an obvious case here of confusion of verb tenses and using two words where one would do) that issue free to the deserving poor who cannot recklessly dole out large quantities of cash."

Grammatically this was almost satisfying, but I could scarcely believe it. I

decided to double-check my answer by studying the dangling clauses in their context. They are preceded by two sentences of dumbfounding verbal extravagance:

"It's a funny thing, but many of the people who habitually bleat about how much better the hobby was before the advent of the NGC/Richard Sharp/Ethil/postal Kingmaker/ what have you are assiduous in ignoring the most basic hobby tradition of all, that of rewarding contributors with free issues. It isn't so much the polite behaviour one would expect in a civilized society (though it is, of course), but sheer common sense to dangle a carrot in front of someone who performs a favour, because it's part of human nature to expect a reward."

The first thing that leapt to my mind was here was the glaring answer to Mr Piggott's riddle: What was the missing Third Law?

Editors should be terse.

I swiftly distilled the first sentence to its essence:

"... many people ... are ... ignoring ... the most basic ... hobby tradition ... of rewarding contributors with free issues."

What a pack of unmitigated lies! You may believe that Diplomacy players are mentally deficient, Mr Piggott, but I assure you they are not such complete fools as to be persuaded that it is a hobby tradition to contribute to your financial foundation, and then be fobbed off with free issues of frog's merde. And then you go on to speak hypocritically of polite behaviour in a civilized community! Do you really believe, sir, that appeals to polite and civilized behaviour can save you from the reward of the thrashing you so richly deserve?

((Fantastic!! Someone as forceful as this would make a good candidate for NGC General Secretary. And all because I actually won that MP game, too - that's the beauty of it.

((Not that it matters, but there is in fact one dictionary which does list the word 'fanzine' - Webster's 3rd, if memory serves.))



GBOFF CHALLENGER

I find it a little frightening, the speed with which Ethil keeps turning up. In the last couple of years my time sense seems to have changed considerably; I can remember when three weeks between successive copies of 1901a seemed like an age, but these days even Leviathan comes quite quickly.

Maybe it's because I now have a regular 9-5 (in theory) job. One day is so much

like all the others, there's no sense of time passing. One thing, though - it certainly makes Dippy an easier hobby. When I wrote all my letters at home I used to have to spend a couple of whole evenings a week hunched over a hot typewriter; now I just while away a couple of hours at work every so often.

Do you remember I suggested a Civil Service game? No? You did vaguely agree at the time. You could at least open a list for it and see what happens. The massive amount of spare time which most Civil Servants have could lead to more written work than you generally see in other games.

((If there's enough interest I'll run a Civil Service game; I'm not sure how many of us there are on Ethil's mailing list, though. Offhand I can only think of five: Malcolm Shaw and myself in the Cabinet Office, Tony Crouch in MOD and Bob Grove and yourself, both taxmen. I suppose we could extend the range to include local government people (Will Haven), nationalized industries (Dave Allen) and lame ducks (Andy Davidson and Ron Fisher).))

((Okay, if anyone's interested in this, please write and say so: if seven of you turn up, I'll run a game. Can't say fairer than that, eh?))

It's nice to know Duncan Morris has such fond memories of me. I shall always treasure a comment about Duncan from one of my old players in the States. 'I have heard from a Duncan Morris who's taken over Nicaragua. He does seem fairly trustworthy, if a little thick-headed.' And I thought I was a bad judge of character !



LINDA THOMPSON I knew this morning was special. Why else would I rise from my bed before 11.55 am? 7.15 am saw me sat by the letter box, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the postman (no, I don't fancy him, and he wouldn't fancy me in my condition!). What would he bring me today?

Four envelopes dropped through the box. One, obviously a bill, I pass on to the head of the household. One is addressed to Wink. I'm feeling generous this morning, so I let him open his own letter. That left two big envelopes. With mounting excitement I opened the bigger of the two. It was...

The Open University Prospectus for '78 which Wink wants me to enrol for, so my

mind doesn't become too stale, and so that I'll be able to talk about something other than how many times I've changed baby's nappy.

While I was glancing through the prospectus, Wink had taken the opportunity to grab the other envelope and open it. I think he hoped to see something interesting. Suddenly I heard a funny gurgling noise. Thinking Wink was choking on a grapefruit pip, I tapped him on the shoulder blades. The noise stopped; I had saved Wink's life. Suddenly it started again! Several seconds passed, and then I realized it was me. There, before my eyes, was Ethil the Frog... at last it had arrived....

((What an excellent letter. Such admirable sentiments. Coming next issue: House of Correction horrors as Wink forces Linda to reveal where she's hidden Turn of the Screw !))



TIM ROBERTS I never thought I'd be accusing you and Tadek of not knowing the rules of Diplomacy! Have you never read the central paragraph on page 3 - 'A fleet...', you palookas ???

One free issue of Ethil demanded from you, John, as a penance, and one grovelling apology demanded from Tadek...

((What's this? Blackmail! Tchah - I shall confiscate your remaining credit, Roberts, you presumptuous boy. (Pause to check mailing list). Rats! You expire anyway this issue - kindly send some more cash pronto so I'll have something to steal.))

((As for the bloody rulebook follies, there is clearly no rhyme or reason to them. Can't I claim to be a handsome nitwit, or something?))



"GREAT NEWS! VIENNA'S BEEN RELIEVED!"

COURT AND SOCIAL

The death-knell of an era for Britain's gangland sounded two weeks ago when master criminal Richard Sharp was fined £10 at Amersham Magistrates' Court for failing to fill in a form. Sharp, 34-year-old 'Mr Big' behind the recent epidemic of London parking offences, arrived at the court dressed in the traditional garb of a free-lance twister: black shirt, white tie, fedora, blue jeans fraying at the knees, and open-toed sandals. After waiting ignominiously in line for twenty-nine other cases to be heard, Sharp stepped into the dock, pleaded guilty and stood smartly at attention as the sentence was read out to him. He was then led away in handcuffs to Barclays Bank Ltd, High St., Amersham, where the fine was paid into the Court account under the watchful eyes of Horace 'Moneybags' Blenkinsop, front man for Barclays' loansharking racket.

Our Crime Reporter writes: Many observers were shocked by the severity of the sentence Richard Sharp received here this morning, and it is evident that the Courts are taking a very hard line indeed against offenders with a known criminal bent, no matter how trivial the offence. Sharp is no stranger to the bench: his pervious appearances, including a £5 fine for speeding in July, 1963, and the notorious 'Magic Licence' case of 1970, must have counted against him. (The latter case was dismissed, readers will recall, on the somewhat flimsy grounds that a licence is not needed to practise magic; as Mr Justice Woolstonecraft said at the time, ignorance of the lore is no excuse).

Our Third Leader Writer comments: The fate of Sharp, so richly deserved, is an object lesson to every thug and hooligan who thinks he may flout the law with impunity. Justice has now run its course, and has been seen to do so; society is avenged. And the citizens of Merrie England will sleep easier in their beds, secure in the knowledge that another reckless hoodlum has paid the penalty for his crimes.

Readers of Private Eye will have been following the 'Colemanballs' debate in its lettercolumn; this deals with the verbal inanities perpetrated by David Colebox, Ron Pickering and their imitators. Well, I was sitting around at home one evening

the other week, when what should I hear issuing forth from the goggle-box but the following:

'Some of Davidson's stabs have really given Fletcher some trouble ... a really good performance by Andy Davidson whichever way this decision goes.' (Sic)

Disappointingly, when I turned my eyes to the screen I found it was a boxing match, with commentary by Harry Carpenter. And the Andy Davidson in question was not the milk-toting computerperson we all know and love, but a self-employed carpet-fitter who eventually lost the bout.

I have just been to the London Regional Semi-Final of the National Scrabble Championship. Last year my performance was appalling - I scored 570 in two games - and the day was notable mostly for the spectacle of a very drunken Hawes attempting to ring up Richard Sharp from a call-box to tell him the good news. (He didn't know which of the six slots would accept his 2p piece).

This year I did somewhat better, but not well enough, I fear; my score of 678 put me in 59th place. In a field of 110 that isn't high, and I can only console myself with the fact that Hawes, my arch-enemy, did even worse in Leeds a fortnight ago. Ah! if they'd only bring back those halcyon days of 1975, when my score of 1209 in three games in the finals put me in fifth place.

Of course, one doesn't go to the NSC just to play Scrabble - it is a social occasion as well. One of the highlights of the event should be a series of witty and illuminating anecdotes told by the Master of Ceremonies while the scorers are computing the results. Unfortunately, instead of a proper MC a chap called Gyles Brandreth keeps turning up, and he will insist on boring everyone to tears. This time he told three long-winded 'jokes' about Lord Curzon, of such mind-numbing unsubtlety that I have already forgotten the punchlines. I will say, however, that they were not as offensively crude as his usual NSC story: 'I was woked in a Wussian lavatowy. Incarcerated in a Communist convenience. Behind bars in a Bolshoi bog' and so on. Nor did Brandreth prattle on about his exploits in the World Monopoly Championship - this time. But the most amusing thing that happened, to my mind, was when Gyles B introduced my second

opponent, a chap called Bill Edwards-May, as... Mrs May Edwards !

If you were asked who has folded more zines in this hobby than anyone else, the chances are that you would name Conrad von Metzke, whose leaps in and out of the hobby are the envy of many a trampolinist. Well, folks, it's going to happen again ! Talabwo, Conrad's variant zine, and Escore, a sort of San Diego TUCA, are to cease publication next month; Costaguana will run down gradually. Instead, Conrad is taking over as editor of Diplomacy World ! Walt Buchanan is quitting - the decision is announced in the issue of DW which is even now on its way to us, and it takes effect immediately.

Apropos of his intention to fold his existing zines in order to take on a new one, Conrad says, 'Producing a magazine such as DW is, to say the least, a massive job. And having learned my lesson from days of yore, I do not intend to over-commit myself again and thus do a wretched job of everything. So I will take the step up the ladder, but it will be essential to leave some old things behind. I must point out that, while the changes are sudden, so was the opportunity; if there might have been a better way in idealism, there was none in reality. It was take-it-or-leave-it, so I took.'

Edi Birsan, whom I questioned last Monday in the Lamb, said that while Conrad is taking over the post of DW editor, the hobby archives are remaining with Walt, so all publishers will, I presume, still send their trade copies to Lebanon, Indiana. I say 'all', but I mean 'nearly all', as I note (with not a little surprise) that some UK publishers are not trading with DW. Their loss, of course, but I just can't understand why someone should go to all the trouble of producing a zine and not want copies preserved for posterity.



"ALL RIGHT, I AGREE TO ATTACK
TADAK. NOW WILL YOU MARRY
ME, YOU LUSCIOUS DIPLOMAT?"

Speaking of Edi Birsan, which I was - Richard Sharp, Greg Hawes and myself spent a very enjoyable evening with this fellow in the Lamb, that Mecca of hobby drinkers. Edi is in Europe on business, and will be wandering in and out of England for the next several months. This is his first trip to the Diplomacy board.

In appearance, Edi resembles a balding Richard Walkerdine (but with a neatly-trimmed beard rather than a sweep's brush). He proved to be that rarity, a rich American whose conversation is both witty and stimulating. Excellent ! We tried to fill Edi in on what's happening in the British hobby, but with limited success. I fear; our subtle and accurate rendition of Victor Logan's demeanour was met by a stare of rank disbelief !

This is ETHIL THE FROG's Special Disaster Issue, from John Piggott, 15 Freeland Rd, Ealing Common, London W5 3HR. The disaster stems from the fact that, a little more than half-way through the typing, my machine broke down - I came back from buying some food to find I couldn't turn the thing on - and I was unable to secure an instant repair. As I no longer possess a manual machine I had no choice but to go to press with the material I had already prepared, 12 pages of it rather than 20. I intend to produce a large issue next time in order to make up... assuming (and I am keeping my fingers crossed about this) my typewriter is mended by then.

This colophon is being typed at work, but no way can I produce a whole zine, or even a significant fraction of one, in my office.

Anyway, apologies to everyone for the inevitable drop in standard this time.

Next deadline: Friday 17 June, 1977.