

Spring Offensive 54



IMPORTANT

Change of Address from 11th September 1997

Stephen Agar and Esme Grant will be living at
47 Preston Drove, Brighton, BN1 6LA

Spring Offensive 54

Stephen Agar, who from 11th September will be living at 47 Preston Drove, BRIGHTON, BN1 6LA. Tel. 01273-562430. Email: stephen@spoff.demon.co.uk. 75p per issue (50p unvaxed, £1.50 overseas)

DEADLINE: FRIDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 1997, Midnight

COULD WE ALL START BEING NICE TO EACH OTHER, PLEASE?

This editorial is a rather unfashionable plea for niceness. In recent months there has been an unwelcome amount of vilification going on in the pages of some zines, mainly those produced by the group of editors who have become known as the self-styled London Mafia. As I said at the time, the attack on myself instigated by Toby Harris in The Freaky Fungus was well over the top, but that pales into insignificance compared to the outrageous attack mounted by Gihan Bandaranaike in the latest A Little Original Sin. I know both these guys well enough to know that a large part of the motivation for each piece was a desire to be controversial and initiate debate – but in their desire to become the Damien Hirsts of the Diplomacy world, they are turning a lot of people off.

As far back as I can remember, there has always been an element of feuding in Diplomacy fanzines, but traditionally it has followed three rules:

- (1) Always argue about things which are inherently unimportant (e.g. hobby organisations, novice packages, zines, Diplomacy etc.).
- (2) Be ironic and sarcastic, not offensive.
- (3) Don't let it get personal.

While I would accept that Gihan and Toby were within the spirit of the first rule (in that they clearly worked themselves up into a lather about things which are deeply unimportant), they did indeed break rules Nos.2 and 3. Now anyone who gets personal and offensive about things which are inherently unimportant (see rule 1) needs their head examining. Cool it, guys.

Far be it for me to rush to the defence of Richard Sharp, but he is someone who I find quite likeable, if infuriating. Those who have criticised him for making digs, especially at me, don't really understand that it is not at all personal – indeed, in a perverse sort of way it is almost a sign of mutual respect. I have always enjoyed making little niggling comments about Richard (some fair, some unfair) and it is always fun to see what comments Richard can come up with to retaliate (some fair, some unfair). Gihan's piece was not so much a critique of Richard, as an example of the "unadulterated bile" which he was accusing Richard of writing. Anyway, I am sure Richard will find Gihan's piece supremely entertaining!

There has also been comment about the incestuous nature of the London Mafia and the zines within their circle, Gihan even going to the extent of defining the Old Fart zines in the Hobby (apparently this zine isn't one). Well, those of us who have been around for a while have seen it all before - cliques of editors who socialise have always been around, and those on the outside have always had digs at those on the inside. But hell, it's fun to be a member of a clique (I imagine, I've never managed it myself) and it's also fun to criticise from the outside as well, so no real harm is done. Cliquey zines can be entertaining if you know enough about the individuals to appreciate the humour, but are usually a turn-off for newcomers. If that's a price the editors concerned are happy to pay, then so be it. All this has made me think about what motivates people like Toby, Gihan, Richard and even myself. Here are my provisional conclusions...

MY PERSONAL FETISH

Why is it that some editors such as Pete Birks, Richard Sharp or John Marsden go on forever, and yet others such as Chiz Chisholm, Mark Strangward, Norman Williams and Anthony Bourke can't make double figures (or in some cases even issue 2)? Why do people like Geoff Challinger, Phil Murphy, Paul Willey, Malcolm Smith and myself come back to zine editing after a break of years? And why do so few of the people who play postal games want to run zines? I think the different motivations and feelings that lie behind the desire to produce a zine can often explain some of the conflicts that periodically occur within the hobby and make intelligible why it is that two perfectly reasonable people who happen to be zine editors can fall out over something which to the outside world is completely unimportant.

The Editor as a Performer and Artist. An editor of a zine has a captive audience to whom he can perform on a regular basis. It is a chance to show off, to demonstrate how witty you can be, or how well-read you are, or even what an expert you are at DTP. Editors want to be appreciated and valued, and by displaying their wares in front of an appreciative paying audience, editors can feel good about themselves. Producing a zine can be a very creative act. There's layout to design and articles to write. Some editors are frustrated writers or journalists, for whom the zine is the nearest thing they'll ever get to writing their novel. Editors like this usually enjoy the literary side of editing and are inclined to ramble on about nothing in particular. Example: Pete Birks?

The Editor as a Control Freak. It's all about power. The editor controls what letters are printed, he edits the letters as he thinks fit, he has the last word. He determines whether orders are legal or not, he chooses what goes into the zine, subscribers have to wait for him. If you are not in a position to control your work life, or even your home life, then seizing control of anything, even a Diplomacy zine, can be a very satisfying experience. Example: Danny Collman?

The Editor as a Competitor. The game is called zine editing, being but a spin-off of the more popular game of politics. My zine is bigger than your zine, has more subscribers, costs less, runs more games, has a shorter turn-around time and did better in the zine poll. It's all about inter-zine competition, feuds, reviews and gossip. I have been known to act in this way in weaker moments, but even my worst excesses pale besides our prime example, Toby Harris!

The Editor as a Games Player. Some people just like running postal games (be they Diplomacy or otherwise). The games they run are important to them and the value they add to the postal games hobby is principally as a GM. It needn't be any particular postal game (though it may be). This editor just wants to provide a service. Chat is something which is difficult to do and time consuming, but is just about OK if its related to games. Hell, if you want to hear about the latest films and books go and get something from a newsagent. It is an interest in games which provides the zine its direction, rather than an interest in zine editing. Example: Alan Parr?

The Editor as Parent. A zine is like a child, love me, love my zine. If you attack my zine, you attack me. Running a zine takes a hell of a lot of time and effort, however big or small it is. If you edit a zine you have to make sacrifices - no you can't go away for the weekend, yes you do have to stay up until 3am typing and devote a whole evening to sticking stamps on envelopes. It is an organisational nightmare with orders, zines, cheques, changes of address etc. to manage. And then some editor with a competitive streak comes along and criticises it! Zines are living things that need nurturing and they can certainly take up as much time and attention as any child. Example: Chris Palm?

The Editor as Technocrat. Computers are wonderful things and running a zine is as good a thing to do with one as anything. Admire the fancy columns, the fancy fonts, the material I found on the Internet. Playing computer games is all well and good, but they can't begin to compare with being on-line. Example: Nic Chilton?

The Editor as Trainspotter. No offence intended to trainspotters, indeed the best editors to have ever edited a zine called Perspiring Dreams was a train spotter as an adolescent (and proud of it). Can anyone seriously deny that there is something very nerdish about spending so much time on an activity that is essentially pointless? It is naval gazing on a grand scale. Who cares that Chimæra was the first

zine in the UK to run Soccerboss or that The Cunning Plan started life as a sub-zine. There is not much to distinguish the hobby historian from the trivia obsessed anal retentive. Example: Stephen Agar!

The Editor as a Celebrity. The “There may only be a few hundred people in the UK who play postal games, but to them I’m famous!” Syndrome. Celebrity editors don’t necessarily run efficient zines, or even very many games, but the zine gives them a profile. The zine is a means to an end and likely to be discarded when the editor discovers that fame isn’t all its cracked up to be. Celebrity editors thrive on gossip under the guise of hobby news - they print plenty of the stuff about others in the hope and expectation that other editors with a similar bent will print similar stories about them. Behaviour such as that then mutually reinforces the editors perception of themselves as a celebrity. Such zines can be quite amusing, if a little like *Hello* without the pictures. Example: Gihan Bandaranaike!

The Editor as Fetishist. Now this may something which just applies to me, but I just *love* stationery. The whiteness of clean paper, the smell of mimeo duplicating ink, the pristine zines on fresh clean paper waiting for their envelopes. I love browsing in stationery shops and often find myself looking around *Office World* even when there’s nothing I need. At college, whenever I was behind with my work I would go out and buy stationery - much more satisfying than doing the work. So you could almost say that editing a zine can be a sensual experience. Example: Stephen Agar, but I always had my doubts about Iain Bowen...

The Editor by Habit. These are editors who started life with their prime motivation being in one of the other categories described above, but who now edit a zine because its so much a part of their routine of living, they can’t really imagine not editing a zine. This is not to say that all editors who have published for a long time fall into this category, but the tell tale signs are zines which haven’t changed in any significant way (content, layout, format, influx of new subscribers) for, say, 5 years and now appear to run on autopilot. Example: Richard Sharp?, John Marsden?

Now just consider the possibility for conflict here. A competitive zine editor, high on the gossip from the London Hobbymeet criticises a zine run by a Games Player, who puts out a warehouse zine full of game reports (diplomacy, football or otherwise). They are looking at the hobby from totally different perspectives, the former sees criticism as part of the game, the latter reacts like a Parent and sees it as an attack on his child. Worse still is if the criticism is of a zine run by a Celebrity, who will see it not as an attack on their child, but an attack on themselves and their status as a celebrity. An editor who’s a Control Freak can’t understand the Artist/Performer editor who has the temerity to accept late orders. That’s not how games should be run. The Celebrity editor puts out a couple of issues, discovers its hard work and gives up at the first obstacle.

What makes all of this worse is that most editors have most of the attributes described above, though the importance of each characteristic will vary both between editors and even for the same editor over time, though I’d guess that most editors have two dominant traits. I will leave it to you to work out which editors are which. This all reminds me of the various behavioural questionnaires they get you to fill out on management courses to determine how you interact with people and achieve self-knowledge. The fun really starts when you consider that the motivations and behaviours of subscribers are totally different and may even be at odds with what an editor is trying to achieve. So who are the typical subscribers? I think I’ll leave that piece to be written by someone else.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON ZINES

One zine which I have seen for the first time since last issue is Unlimited No.21 from Warren Gillham, but not for long as it is about to be “taken over” by one of its own subzine editors, namely Mark Wightman (who came top in the Diplomacy at ManorCon). Unlimited is a little detached from the mainstream, but seems a solid enough zine with quite a lot of Diplomacy and chat, plus a few other games. If this issue is typical of what has gone before then I regret not having tracked down Unlimited earlier and I look forward to its re-launch, presumably under the name of Mark’s subzine, The Sprouts of Wrath. Contact Mark at 52 Park Road West, Bedford, MK41 7SL.

Another zine new to me is Who Me? From Keith Smith. Wow. Just how do you describe this zine? Well, it's a very personal zine, it just oozes Keith Smith all over it. It's written in a conversational style which can mean that it is difficult to follow sometimes, but then it does give the zine something of a unique character. Keith basically writes about himself and the things that interest him and has this disarming tendency to talk about himself in the 3rd person singular, just like Julius Caesar. Keith and I go a long way back - he played in the first ever Diplomacy game that I ran back in 1976, and he really doesn't seem to have changed that much, which is strangely reassuring. Come to think of it, Richard Sharp or Pete Birks hasn't changed that much either, so maybe our personalities are fixed more than I'd realised. The story of how Keith met his wife was rather sweet, and the article on Poo was, er, memorable. Come to think of it, Kate is obsessed with Poo (but then she's not quite 3 yet...). Keith Smith, 19 Keir Hardie Way, Barking, Essex, IG11 9NZ.

At the risk of nit-picking, I just want to make a brief comment on Richard Sharp's editorial in Dolchstoß 224 on the subject of unordered removals. I completely support his simple rule, which corresponds to the rule used for Spring Offensive games. It's not often that we agree, so I thought it would be worth mentioning. Richard's rule is as follows: "Unordered removals will be made in the following order: sea spaces, non-centres outside the homeland, ditto inside, foreign centres, home centres. Fleets before armies where relevant; nearest "A" comes off first." However, I can't think of any situation where, using this rule, it would ever be necessary to remove a unit in a supply centre because by definition if all you have are units in supply centres then you don't need to make a removal. Or have I missed something?

Another issue raised in the Dolchstoß letter column, is when should a GM allow someone who has dropped out of a game to return and play another one. How long should elapse between dropping out and having the equivalent of a "spent conviction". I have only had to face this issue once, when an ex-subscriber sent me a cheque to renew his subscription nearly two years after he had dropped out and asked to go on the waiting list. To add insult to injury, the game he had dropped out of was still going on. I dealt with the situation by returning his cheque and suggested that he go elsewhere. That is not to say that I would not have someone back if they gave a convincing explanation of what had gone wrong before and convinced me that it wouldn't happen again.

In my view, people who dropout fall into two distinct groups. There's those who are always a bit unreliable, with the off NMR and late moves. I have fallen into this category myself over recent years as I have struggled to juggle Spring Offensive with playing games. Eventually they do it two times in a row and they're out (which is what happened to me in a gunboat game a few months back). This behaviour is of course inexcusable as it is laziness and disorganisation and the fact that I have done it myself does not stop me condemning it. What I find more mysterious are the people who are as regular as clockwork for months, if not years, and then all of a sudden they vanish. Nothing more is heard. Often they are even in good positions and may even have criticised dropouts in the past (Dave Allen springs to mind). I often wonder what has happened to such people - some personal private tragedy? Or did they just find something more interesting to do?

I have always adopted a policy in Spring Offensive of printing the name of dropouts in all subsequent game reports, so at least other editors have a chance to be reminded who the perpetrators are. In the 70's Mick Bullock used to print a Black List of dropouts in New Statsman, so at least editors would take people on knowing their past behaviour. Is this something we should revive?

Despite having both Hortons on the team, the One Man's Rubbish collective came an ignominious last at ManorCon, which is reflected in the cover of OMR No.22. Maybe if Mark Stretch actually played for his own team then their performance might improve? It was interesting to see a letter from Ian Harris (editor of Borealis) saying he didn't think he would play Diplomacy again, because it was such a nerve wracking and nasty game. Maybe this is more common than I suspected, because I remember Tom Tweedy gave me the same explanation as to why he no longer played Diplomacy (despite having once edited a successful Diplomacy zine, Dib Dib Dib). FtF Diplomacy is nerve-wracking (I have only once managed to play more than one game in a weekend) and very stressful, but I can't say that the idea of the game being nasty has ever put me off. Surely, that's part of the

attraction? On the other hand I must confess to being slightly mystified by the fanatical devotion of a small group of FtF Diplomacy players who seem to want to play the game none-stop at conventions. I have always thought that it was potentially a far better postal game than a FtF game, because FtF it simply isn't a sociable game and I thought people went to conventions to socialise.

I get the impression that I would quite like Chris Dickson's subzine in OMR, for some reason called Games In Testing (or GIT for short), but even glancing at it induces an immediate blinding migraine. Monospaced type, no blank lines between paragraphs and margins that small that even Alan Parr would be impressed, combine to produce a sheer wall of text which I find quite impenetrable. Am I alone in having this problem or am I just growing old? If you want to see if it has this effect on you, write to Mark Stretch, 48 Wilsdon Way, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 1TN.

It was pleasing to see that Chris Palm is enjoying a temporary respite from his illness and has found the time to put out The Ides of March 24. I notice there's lots of NMRs and Anarchies in the UKPDC games, which is a pity. I do hope Chris make a 110% recovery and I time can be persuaded to bring TIM back centre stage, rather than surrender the limelight to the Hall/Harris/Bandaranaik confederation. ☺

Having mentioned Gihan's contribution to A Little Original Sin No.50/51 earlier, mention must be made of the otherwise admirable issue which Vick Hall has just put out. This issue is in two bits, a celebratory issue 50, full of chat, articles, retrospectives, etc., and an issue 51 which carries the games plus a few letters. A magnificent effort from a zine which will do very well in the Zine Poll this year (unlike this humble rag). Definitely worth a subscription, write to Vick Hall, 115a Offord Road, Islington, London, N1.

While we are on the subject of celebrations, it would be a great pity if the appearance of Pigbutton No.100 went unremarked. Very few zines indeed ever make it as far as issue 100, so even though Pigbutton is a bit semi-detached from the Diplomacy hobby these days, hearty congratulations and thanks to Clive Palmer for his efforts over the past 13 years. Congrats are also due to Simon Cutforth who edits a sub-zine therein called The Amnesia Express which has also managed 50 issues. Rob Mullholland has also produced 91 issues of his sub-zine Ratadan as well. Great stuff.

Another zine deserving of a mention in the longevity stakes is Astradyne which has reached issue 171. If you would like more details of the longest running Soccerleague game in the UK write to Ian Lee, 13 Isis Drive, Upminster, Essex, RM14 1LJ. I heartily agree with Ian's observation about how obnoxious some of the Brighton supporters have been in recent years - all over Brighton there is graffiti to the effect that "Archer Must Go" or in some cases "Archer Must Die", and one supporter has just been released having served 3 months for threats to kill. It almost makes you want the team to do badly (which they seem to be managing without any help from me).

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES

I've spent quite a bit of time on organising the zine archive in recent weeks, with a imminent house move likely I thought it essential to get rid of unnecessary duplicates and try and get as many zines filed away as possible. Over recent years getting this archive together has been something of a labour of love, and now that it is taking shape and becoming more usable I hope more people in the hobby will pay a visit and take a look.

All zines in the main collection are kept in foolscap envelope folders with the name of the zine written on the side and a number indicating whether it is the 1st folder for that zine, the 2nd etc. Greatest Hits holds the record at the moment with no less than 12 full folders to itself. Any zines which didn't produce enough issues to merit a separate folder are kept in miscellaneous folders "A", "B", "C" etc. For easy filing there is a separate set of folders for current zines and when a zine folds or a folder fills up it is put into the main collection. At the last count there were 11,656 zines in the main archive taking up some 48 feet of shelving. I dread to think how much they weigh and I am surprised that the floor of our spare bedroom hasn't collapsed already. When our projected move goes ahead, in future they will be kept in a rather spacious and damp-free cellar.

The main work which needs doing is that there are some 1,000+ zines which have already been catalogued, but need sorting and putting into folders - say two days work. Having done that, I think a stock-check would be in order. The current archive consists of donations from over 20 different people, plus material from the Hoosier Archive in the US and the old Hobby Archive held by Andy Bate. I am sure that I will have made mistakes when compiling the catalogue over the past three years - some zines will be duplicated, others will be marked as present when they are missing. Mistakes are inevitable. If there is anyone out there who would be willing to help with a stock-check towards the end of the year, I would be very grateful. We could even put someone up for the weekend.

Once that's done, there are a few remaining sources of zines that need to be gone through. I need to pay a return visit Andy Bate, to go through what he still holds of the old archive to try and fill any existing gaps. When I visited Andy last autumn I managed to get about 2/3 of the old archive into my car, but there is probably still some material there that isn't in the main collection. Pete Birks also has some material he is happy to pass on, so a visit to Dulwich is also needed. At one time Ian Bowen offered to let me have any of his remaining zines that I needed, but I don't know if that offer still stands. Is there anyone else out there with substantial zine collections who is willing to help?

I have a few projects which, in an ideal world, I would like to develop from the Archives:

- (1) An updated list of every Diplomacy zine ever published in the UK, the editors, numbers of issues published, start and end dates. Richard Walkerdine produced such a list in the early 80's, but it is well out of date and contained some errors. Such a list is essential to start tracking down missing zines.
- (2) A database of Diplomacy articles and variants in zines in the archive. Perhaps this could be done during the first stockcheck and then updated as new zines are added to the collection. The Archive could then provide material to other editors for a small charge to cover expenses.
- (3) An A-Z of British zines based on the above information. This is something which could be done over time, serialised in SpOff and updated occasionally. I would like to publish a comprehensive A-Z by the end of the century.
- (4) The definitive history of the postal Diplomacy hobby in the UK. Perhaps one day...

A Plea for Help

There now follows a list of zines missing from the Archives from current or recent zines, plus a few others. If you can help fill gaps in the archives, please, please do.

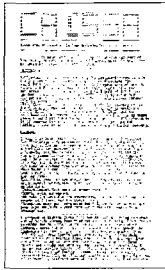
Arfle Barfle Gloop 42
BUM 1-16, 18-22, 25-27, 29, 31, 34, 54
Bad Connexion all...
Bela Lugosi's Dead 1-16, 18-27, 29+
Borealis 1
Born Losers 1
Box Frenzy 1
Bruce 95+
C'est Magnifique 114
Conquest all...
Courier 237, 242+
De Excidio 1-5, 10, 14, 16
Denver Glont 85
Die Grosse Dampfmaschine 1, 3-7, 14
Diplomacy all...

Dolchstoß 88, 90-93, 95, 98, 106
Eliminator all...
Entente 7
For Whom the Die Rolls 1, 20+
Gallimaufry 109-118
Geneva 1-30, 36+
Greatest Hits 170-171
Home of the Brave 72-75, 79-80
Hopscotch 108-109, 126-136, 151+
Lankhmar Star Daily all...
Lies, Damned Lies and Diplomacy all... [nb. This is not LiES]
The Mag With No Name 11
The Mark Nelson Experience Vol.1, 1-3
Megalomania 19, 30-34, 63, 75-76

Misr Al-Dig all...
Morrigan 7,
Mr Gladgrind 49, 51-52
NERTZ "96", "129"
Obsidian 1-5, 7-15, 17-20, 22-27, 29-35, 42, 44-47
Pax Britannica 3-5, 21-22
Pigbutton 50-52, 54, 72-75, 78-82
Prisoners of War 50
Quartz 2-4, 32-33, 35-40, 42-44, 46-54
Unlimited 1-20.
Veni Vidi Vici 52
Watch Your Back 1-30, 32
Who Me? 0-4
Y Ddraig Goch 2, 4-5, 7, 76

The Encyclopedia of UK and Irish Diplomacy Zines - "C"

by Stephen Agar



Caissa

Editor: Norman Williams
Issues: 1-6
Started: August 1976
Folded: February 1977
Zine Poll: (77) 35th

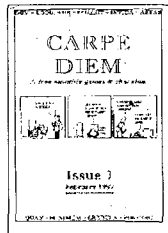
Norman launched Caissa while looking after Paul Simpkin's Bruce games for a season while Paul

was on holiday. Never really broke the 4 sides barrier, although Norman did start 2 games. Lack of material and subscribers meant that Caissa never really got going. Norman kept involved on the periphery of the Diplomacy hobby but sadly died a few years back.

Carpe Diem

Editor: Gihan Bandaranaike
Issues 1
Started: February 1997
Folded: April 1997

An excellent first issue which was unfortunately destined never to be followed by No.2. Lots of gossip and chat, Carpe Diem then agreed to take the games from Spring Offensive when that zine folded after issue 50. Issue 2 was delayed and before it finally came out Gihan had been given the sack by his employers for using their photocopying facilities without proper permission. The zine promptly folded and the games returned to a relaunched Spring Offensive.



Cassandra

Editors: Anthony Bourke and Damien Maddalena (Belfast, N. Ireland)
Issues: 1-8
Started: September 1985
Folded: October 1986
Zine Poll: (86) 11th



Basically a RPG chat zine with Diplomacy waiting lists, the idea being to run to 6 weekly deadlines with interim games-

only supplements (under the title The Wooden Horse). As the zine matured it had more and more Diplomacy chat in it and even managed a Diplomacy and an Abstraction gamestart. The zine had a lot of reading material, with articles on RPGs, history, Diplomacy etc. Both editors were at university, which probably explains its short life. Damien had previously edited The Guilder and had a short-lived sub-zine in Coolnacran.



Casus Belli

Editor: Mark Strangward
Issues: 1-3
Started: May 1981
Folded: September 1981

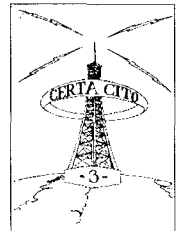
I only have a copy of issue 1, which was a rather unremarkable first issue. Strange sense of humour.

Certa Cito

Editor: Chiz Chisholm
Issues: 1-4
Started: December 1982
Folded: February 1983
Zine Poll: (83) 47th

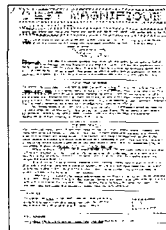
Started life as a Dip zine run to 2-weekly (!) deadlines. Certa Cito

No.3 took on the BR games when Malcolm Smith couldn't cope with BR anymore, and allowed Malcolm some space to himself in a sub-zine. The pair of them managed two issues on this basis and then they both folded their contributions into Richard Gooch's zine Ripping Yarns, only for RY to fold two issues later. Not one of the hobby's success stories.



C'est Magnifique

Editor: Peter Sullivan
Issues: 1-142
Started: March 1985
Folded: August 1994
Zine Poll: (85) 49th; (86) 34th; (87) 25th; (88) 38th; (89) 6th; (90) 8th; (91) 8th; (92) 6th; (93) 13th; (94) 22nd



Peter started C'Mag when he was a tender youth of 17, a schoolboy editor. Soon established itself as an efficient traditional mimeo Dip and variants zine, run to 3-week deadlines. Peter quickly became involved with the variants scene, reviving Miller Numbers as well as becoming the OGRE. Pete intended to fold at 50 (Jan 1988) and handed his games and subbers over to Will it Lead to Trouble?, carrying on C'Mag as a restricted circulation zine to finish off the Rather Silly Diplomacy. However, instead of folding, Pete restarted the zine at issue 70 (July 1989). It was if it had never been away and went from strength to strength. In the latter half of 1993 C'Mag became a sub-zine of YdDG while Pete took accountancy exams, and though it reappeared as an independent zine at the beginning of 94, Pete was not happy with the zine and folded suddenly in August 1994. Pete's international games were completed in US zine The Abyssinian Prince. Pete continued as a ManorCon Committee Member until 1997.

Chimaera

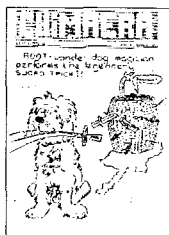
Editor: Clive Booth

Issues: 1-102

Started: May 1975

Folded: July 1983

Zine Poll: (76) 1st, (77) 1st,
(78) 3rd; (79) = 3rd, (80)
= 5th; (81) 4th, (82) 10th; (83)
23rd



Straight in at No.1 in the Zine Poll, from the modest beginnings of a small spirit duplicated zine, Chimaera soon took the hobby by storm. Clive always intended to run more games than just Diplomacy, though it took a few months for games other than Dip to get started. In issue 6 Clive published rules for postal Soccerboss and by issue 9 the zine included a 9 page Soccerboss report. Since then football gameszines have developed a lot, but Clive got there first. Within a year of starting up, Chimaera was a massive mimeo zine, with lots of different games on offer and plenty of chat, including a postal D&D subzine. Clive could be pretty sharp in print and enjoyed mixing in with all the hobby politics of the time (often revolving around the NGC and Richard Sharp). The fact that the zine was run very efficiently put the seal on its success, winning the Zine Poll twice, and staying in the Top 5 for a further

four years. For nearly all of its life Chimaera was a very successful zine indeed, though towards the end Clive's enthusiasm was on the wane. Clive folded the zine very tidily, passing it all on, lock, stock and barrel, to Richard Morris to run under the name Boojuum. Very much a ground-breaker.

Chronicle

Editor: Andrew Knowles

Issues 1-19

Started: Mid-1990?

Folded: April 1992

A one-game zine, two sides of A4 straight off a dot matrix printer. When the game finished, the zine died.



The Church Mouse

Editor: Dave Thomas

Issues: 1-25

Started: March 1982

Folded: February 1985

Zine Poll: (83) 19th; (84) 8th

Dave's first zine was called The Diplomatic News but was only for

colleagues at work. Bitten by the editing bug he started TCM soon after, though it was still a local zine until issue 6, which was the first to be widely promoted. A very entertaining and witty zine, Dave used cuttings from other sources in an anarchic and amusing way, rather like Men Behaving Badly ten years too early. Throughout 1984 Dave spent more and more time on amateur dramatics, so he folded the zine suddenly, but tidily. Dave was out of the hobby for quite a while, but made a welcome return at MidCon 95. Sadly Dave died on 27th August 1996.

Comet

Editor: Ken Jones

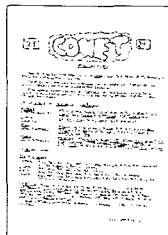
Issues: 1-29

Started: February 1974

Folded: March 1976

Zine Poll: (74) = 7th; (75)
11th

One of the earlier NGC Dippy zines, Comet was always a mainly games warehouse zine, little chat apart from the odd Diplomacy article, with distinctive blue ink on white paper. Unusually



for the time, Ken gradually ran the zine down to a fold, passing on no orphans.



Coolnacran

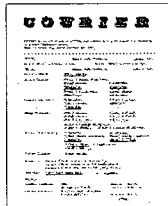
Editor: Nicholas Whyte
Issues: 1-5
Started: January 1985
Folded: June 1985
Zine Poll: (85) 9th

17 year-old Nicholas started Coolnacran while studying for his 'A' levels,

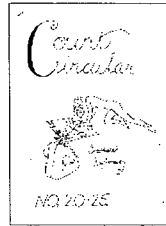
probably inspired by his brother's new zine NERTZ. Issue 1 was a pretty solid start some silly variants (Hitch-Hikers Diplomacy and Disney Sopwith), but with some serious Diplomacy articles by Geoff Tonks and general science content as well. Issues 2 and 3 had lots of chat, book reviews, zine reviews etc. but no gamestarts despite acquiring a sub-zine from Damien Maddalena (ex-editor of The Guildler). Issue 5 was shared with NERTZ No.58, but it proved to be the last. No games were ever started as far as I am aware.

Courier

Editor: Don Turnbull
Issues: 1-241+
Started: October 1970
Folded: February 1987
Zine Poll: (73) = 13th; (74) 11th; (75) 14th; (76) 17th; (78) 24th; (79) = 21st; (80) 20th; (81) 28th



Started as a companion zine to Albion No.22 onwards to run Albion's Diplomacy games. Although in time games other than Diplomacy were run, Courier was only ever games reports, no chat at all. Courier continued even after Albion was long gone, though it became less reliable towards the end. As I type this Courier holds the record for the most number of issues published by a UK Diplomacy zine, though you should remember that many issues of Courier were only 2 sides long, so they don't really compare to a more conventional zine. The last issue I have is No. 241 from February 1987, by which time there were no games of Diplomacy running, only a couple of games of Rail Baron. I would love to know if there were any more issues after that.



Court Circular

Editors: Gordon Beck, Merf Adamson, Ken Brown and others.
Issues: -6-20.25
Started: January 1974
Folded: November 1976
Zine Poll: (74) 10th; (75) 23rd

Unconventional numbering, Court Circular commenced with issue "-6" as a weekly internal Durham University Games Society Diplomacy zine, though external players appear in the zine by issue "-2" in Feb 1974. Never as regular as it promised, CC had difficulty using the University Reprographic Dept. and then had the vacations to contend with. Being a club, the Committee kept changing, as did the editor. A bit of a shambles really.

Coyote

Editor: Steve Jilks
Issues: 1-100+
Started: December 1984
Zine Poll: (88) 24th; (89) 33rd



Steve started this zine soon after entering the hobby - an interesting mix of pythonesque humour, Diplomacy, film reviews. Coyote stayed a relatively small low circulation zine. (and often didn't get enough votes to qualify for the Zine Poll). Steve took a bit of a break around issue 50 to get past his exams. These days the zine is still entertaining with a good use of graphics, but only appears 6-7 times a year. No longer runs Diplomacy, but is a good place to play Speed Circuit.

Cui Bono

Editor: Iain Bowen
Issues: 1-5
Started: November 1989
Folded: September 1993

A one page occasional newsletter put together by Iain Bowen for publicising the Zine Poll.



The Cunning Plan

Editor: Neil Duncan

Issues: 1-54+

Started: November 1992
Zine Poll: (93) 7th; (94) 5th;
(95) 14th; (96) 1st

Started life as the variant sub-zine of Age of Reason, though Neil

always produced some separate independent issues of his subzine right from the beginning (leading to a dispute with Iain Bowen over whether TCP could qualify as a zine for the Zine Poll). When AoR folded Neil took over the games from issue 16 (April 1993) establishing TCP as a fully-fledged zine beyond any doubt. A reputation for being very reliable has meant that TCP has retained a solid Diplomacy base, while the zine itself has always had a lively lettercol. A poor showing in the 1995 Zine Poll was more than made up by a deserved clear victory in 1996. Neil is also a MidCon Committee Member and does his bit for the National Diplomacy Championships.



Cut & Thrust

Editors: Derek Wilson and Glyn Roberts.

Issues: 9-158+

Started: November 1982
Zine Poll: (83) 16th; (84) 6th;
(85) 10th; (86) 16th; (87) 3rd;
(88) 4th; (89) 11th; (90) 6th;
(91) 10th; (92) 12th; (93) 3rd;
(94) 8th; (95) 10th; (96) 16th

Started life as an En Garde game in The Tinamou, was then a subzine in Ripping Yarns and went independent when RY disappeared (hence issue 9 was the first independent issue). Broadened its appeal by running various boardgames apart from En Garde, and established an early reputation for game reviews. Early issues of C&T were a true partnership with Glyn writing the editorials and game reviews, while Derek managed the zine. Tragedy struck in March 1988 with Glyn's sudden death. Cut & Thrust continued much as before, the use of reliable external GMs and other contributors together with the fact that it was a visually attractive zine has made a notable success. For a time Dane Maslen co-edited C&T with Derek (Nos. 132 - 153).

RIVER DIPLOMACY

By Dennis Brennan

1. Use the Standard map, but two rivers appear: the Rhine and the Danube.

The Rhine

The Rhine river is in the following zones: Holland, Ruhr, Burgundy, Munich. (The river comprises the border between Burgundy and Munich).

The Danube

The Danube river is in the following zones: Vienna, Budapest, Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania. (The river comprises part of the border between Bulgaria and Rumania and then enters Rumania proper before emptying into the Black Sea.)

2. Fleets can move from one river zone to an adjacent river zone in the same way as crawling along a coast. For instance, a fleet in Belgium may be ordered to Ruhr. Because the Rhine river comprises the border between Bur and Mun, a fleet in Ruh can be ordered to either Bur or Mun. A fleet in Mun can be ordered to Bur and vice versa. Similar rules apply to the Danube.

3. Germany can build fleets in Mun. Austria can build fleets in Vie and Bud. Fleets on rivers can support into any zone into which they can move. Note: Because the Danube comprises part of the northern border of Bulgaria, it is necessary to distinguish a fleet on the Danube in Bulgaria from a fleet at Bul (ec) or Bul (sc). A fleet on the Danube in Bulgaria should be referred to as at Bul (nc).

4. Fleets on rivers can convoy, and can participate in a convoy including fleets at sea. Thus, F Ruh can convoy A Bel - Mun. F ENG, F Bel and F Mun can convoy A Bre to Mun.

5. A fleet dislodged from a river province may be able to retreat to a river province. Thus, if F Bel is dislodged from an attack from Hol, F Bel can retreat to Ruh (provided that Ruh is vacant). A fleet in Mun which is dislodged may only retreat to Ruh or Bur. If neither province is a valid retreat, the fleet is destroyed.

posted to rec.games.diplomacy on 22/7/97

AUTUMN 01 PROVISIONAL ORDERS

or Why Are They Doing This To Me?

by Dave Newnham

F(MAO) - Por, but if English F(ENG) and A(Par) - Bur fails; then F(MAO) - Bre.

A(Spa) Stands, but if F(MAO) - Bre; then A(Spa) - Por, however, if Italian A(Pie); then

A(Spa) - Pie.

A(Bur) - Bel, or A(Par) - Bur.

The other day I submitted the above provisional orders for Autumn 1901. I knew as I was doing it that I hadn't covered nearly enough possibilities and that these orders were worthless! I suddenly wondered why I was submitting orders when I knew that they could have no meaning? That's easy - the GM requires them! But why?

This is 'Mission Impossible' stuff and no player would ever bother to submit provisional A.01 with S.01 orders unless forced to. And just in case anyone reading this thinks he can submit orders that cover every potential situation, consider! You will have to provide an appropriate response to cover every move by every other player. Each move of every other player will have to be categorised as one having a direct tactical effect (on one or more of your units) or a strategic movement effecting your overall planning but of no immediate threat - and your response determined appropriately. You will have to provide alternate responses to cover for each other player being an ally, neutral or an opponent. Further, you will have to consider modifications to your moves in the light of your perception of the alliance structure likely to be achieved between other players. A quick glance at the board suggests that with one or two exceptions, every unit of another player has five choices (four moves to adjacent provinces or Stand). I'm no mathematician but that looks like altogether too many alternates to write down, to me!

Ah you say, but several of the potential moves are so unlikely to be made that they can, for practical purposes, be ignored. OK, I'll concede that there are a few moves that are almost unheard of, e.g: Turkey's A(Con) to other than Bul. But the Openings Survey shows that virtually every possible move has been tried; so we've added another variable to be considered! Before deciding that you can ignore certain possibilities you'll have to define the "type of player" each of the other players is, and use this as a basis for deciding how much you can limit the possibilities you have to consider. Do you know the other players well enough?

I also reject the argument that the relationships forged between yourself and the other players will, for practical purposes, limit the number of options you have to consider. My quick answer to that is "what relationships"? I fully agree that this point would be true later in the game when one has interacted enough with ones fellow players to be able to determine the degree of trust that one is prepared to place in them. But pre Spring 1901; when you haven't even seen whether he'll keep to the moves that he has said he'll make in this initial season! In most cases the S.01 moves are the first concrete evidence one has, as to the degree of rapport that one has achieved with each of ones neighbours and it is the actual S.01 moves that commence the "forging of relationships".

I think most players would agree that the possibilities are so limitless that one knows when one is writing provisional orders that one hasn't a hope of covering every situation. What happens upon the S.01 adjudication? You've started the first (timid) steps in deciding who your friends (and your opponents?) are. And you've seen where ALL the players have **actually moved** to! The chances are very good that you didn't write provisional orders for every one of your units that covered the situation as it has actually unfolded; so the first thing you (should) do it to modify your provisional orders to cater for the actual events! So, from the players point of view; the task of writing full provisional A.01 orders is far too large, has no base which you can effectively use to limit the scope of the task and the orders are almost certain to be superseded by the actual events in the Spring 1901 adjudication. So what the hell is the point in writing them?

Well, perhaps they serve some purpose for the GM? The only answer I've ever been able to get out of

most of these GMs is that:- "it prevents a 1901 NMR". An editor that uses this system has announced to me, **with great pride**, that he has never had a 1901 NMR in any of his games! You're wrong son! You have; it's just that you haven't admitted it until the S.02 NMR and A.02 Anarchy.

However, before discussing that subject further, does preventing a 1901 NMR have any value? Almost all of the "provisional order GMs" that I know, say that an NMR in S.01 will result in a re-start with another player - good! It follows that the situation they are trying to avoid is that of a player loosing interest in the game during the period from gamestart notice till the A.01 deadline. Given that a player will have enough bottle to tell the GM if he doesn't like the other players in a game; the reason for this loss of interest must be a change of personal circumstances resulting in a player not wanting to play at all, or that as of the gamestart he perceives an "unholy alliance" against him. Whatever the reason, has the submission of provisional orders changed anything? If he is not intending to continue playing will the requirement to have (already) submitted provisional orders encourage him to stay the course? If he's going to bomb out in A.01 then the only effect of the application of provisional orders is to delay exit of the player from the game until A.02! Indeed might it not be that players that have not submitted provisional orders are more likely to let the GM know that they are not continuing, than those that have?

I suspect that most of the GMs employing this system are aware that the requirement for A.01 provisional orders changes nothing, so why do they require them? Here we have to look into the editorial psychology aspects. Every editor (who is also the GM of all/most of the games in his zine) wants a smooth running, efficient looking zine. Fumbled gamestarts and game re-starts are an embarrassment and do nothing for this (macho) image - and are to be avoided? "Such abominations don't happen in my zine, subbers!" Ah, now how do I avoid that? Ah yes; require A.01 provisional orders and then I can't be accused of a false gamestart. Well, dropouts can occur at any time and if one of my players NMRs in S.02 and disappears in A.02 that's hardly my fault - after all drop-outs can occur at any time.

What they are really saying (and one wonders if some of them even realise they are doing it) is that to avoid the embarrassment of players dropping out before the game has got properly underway, they will employ a system that allows the game to continue, and appear to be a normal gamestart, **even when they know** that they are actually accepting a 6-player gamestart! I would question whether a game that has an A.01 NMR after which the offending player is never seen again, should not be considered as a variant for rating purposes? Ah, but then our GMs have just avoided this problem, haven't they?

Having written the above, I've had occasion to discuss the issue with Stephen before submitting this article. He makes the following points:

1. A drop-out in any other game-year unbalances the game less than one in 1901.
2. A drop-out in Spring 02 unbalances the game less than one in the Autumn 01 since the s.c's will be filled by builds ordered in the A.01 orders [and thus other players will need to employ supported attacks to gain the centres.]

I agree with both of these contentions, but using these as justification for provisional A.01 orders is side-stepping the main issue. If a GM requires provisional orders then he is accepting gamestarts in the full knowledge that by the time a drop-out is discovered (S/A.02) it will be too late for any corrective action; and thus is effectively condoning 6-player gamestarts.

What they should be saying is that an NMR in either season of the 1901 game-year unbalances the game and will not be accepted, and that they will re-start the game if one occurs. Certainly most players that I know would agree that a 1901 NMR ruins the game, and don't consider that provisional orders do anything to improve matters. I would agree that re-starting a game where the S.01 season has been played is more difficult, and this probably influences those GMs that use the provisional order system. However, taking the easy way out and boosting your ego at the expense of your players is not the way to go! Face the 1901 re-start problem squarely, spend a lot of time re-organising the game and smoothing the remaining players ruffled feathers - and you will be far more inclined to deal properly with the sh*tbag who started it all, next time he asks for a gamestart.

A REPLY OF SORTS

By Stephen Agar

I think I was the first GM in modern times to ask for on conditional A01 orders, so Dave's article could well have me well and truly in its sights. Personally, I find Dave's arguments unconvincing, but let's take the points he makes in turns:

A01 orders can't take into account all other possibilities and therefore they are useless.

In this, Dave over-eggs the pudding. If you are France, then the only other units on the board of any direct import are what F(Lon) A(Mun), A(Ber) and A(Ven) did. Whether Turkey ordered A(Smy)-Con or A(Smy)-Ank is, I would submit, irrelevant to France in planning her A01 orders. I would have more sympathy with Dave's point of view if it were not the case that the hobby uses conditional builds and retreats where it is arguably even harder to cover all the bases (as what you are doing is making decisions based on everyone else's orders and retreats). I must have GM'd 40ish games of Diplomacy and I reckon that true conditional builds (in that they have conditions attached) are only used in about 15% of cases. Most players can see the obvious possibilities and make shorthand decisions. Therefore I reject the proposition that in practice writing conditional orders is a *Mission Impossible*.

Using provisional A01 orders means that you are accepting a six player gamestart

This is simply not true. Seven sets of orders were received for Spring 1901 (written by the players) and seven sets of orders will be received for Autumn 1901 (written by the players). It is certainly not a six player gamestart, and I have GM'd games where players have NMR'd in A01 (because no provisional orders for A01 were received) and yet continued to play in 1902 and thereafter. Indeed, I reckon over half of A01 NMRers continue to play despite the NMR.

My rationale for using conditional orders in A01 is explained in Dave's article, so I won't repeat myself. It is a straightforward attempt to mitigate the effect of a very early dropout on a game of Diplomacy. There are three obvious alternatives:

1. **NMR the offender in A01 and then place the Power in anarchy in S02 if necessary.** This I dislike because it hands all the centres over on a plate to neighbours – the odds are that the units will have moved out of the home centres meaning they can be captured without any effort. As noted above, A01 conditional orders have the effect of populating the supply centres and thus mitigate to some extent the effect if the dropout.
2. **Restart the game.** The problem with this is that not all players may want to go through all the hassle of a 5-7 month delay from the first gamestart to A01. For example, Jan: gamestart; Feb: double deadline; Mar: S01; April: game abandoned due to A01 NMR; May: new gamestart (players having reconfirmed); June: double deadline; July: S01; Aug: A01 at last! This is a long game already. What's more, having already played two seasons, some players may feel that they have already formed relationships, broken promises, etc. which means that they don't want a restart with the same players. If you were an Italy who had lied through his teeth to Austria and then stabbed then successfully in S01, would you really want the game re-started with you as Austria and them as Italy? or Russia?
3. **Use standbys instead of anarchy.** And therein lies a completely different article.

Dave should remember that until recently it was quite common to see games started with NMRs in S01! Indeed, the first ever postal Diplomacy in the UK started with a S01 NMR (though the player did continue playing for a few years), as did the first ever game in Dolchstoff. As recently as 1992 I layed in a game where Toby Harris allowed a game to continue despite a S01 NMR (which turned into a A01 dropout).

Finally, I have thought for sometime that if a player drops out, a rule whereby all that players units are removed from the board and replaced by an army in every vacant SC that power owns would unbalance the game far less than the usual "all units stand unordered" solution. As yet no GM has dared to be so radical.

LETTERS

Paul Simpkins

Time has passed me by but I seem to think I made it to 100 plus albeit with not many subbers. Otherwise your review is pretty fair. I have of course thrown out all back issues of Bruce. Send me 94 and I'll tell you if it was the last I produced.

SA *I think it's a bit sad if you've thrown out all your copies of Bruce. I don't have copies of all the zines I produced in the 70's and I rather regret that. If nothing else, zines can be unique sort of diary for the editor - when I'm dead and gone, Kate and Freddie might even learn things about me from Pigmy or Spring Offensive that they never knew.*

I would like to think that I pioneered use of Computers in zine production - wordwise plus and a smith corona daisy wheel to cut stencils; indentation of letters and replies (still practised by Dolchstoß); I was also rather fed up with the positions in the zine poll. One year I remember beating VVV (which was a very similar zine) in every category except the 1s and 0s yet finished several places below it. It was at this time I formulated the theory of Buggins turn whereby if you produce a zine for long enough you make it to the top ten. Zeeby was to my mind not a very good zine as it was always packed with games with no thought to layout or presentation. It took me 10 seconds to read because I wasn't a player. Bruce was well laid out (I looked after my widows and orphans and filled gaps with nice graphics) but it wasn't what the market wanted. I was always targeting the same market that RS and RJW were hitting and would always lose to them in a preference matrix.

SA *Yes, I think some very creditable zines have never done well in the Zine Poll for reasons that are not obvious. The main killer must be if you had lots of subscribers in common with the very successful zines, but also a few subscribers in common with minority interest zines (so you lost out to Postal Duvet Stuffing Monthly 2:0 on the preference matrix as well). I think Bruce would have done better under the current system.*

In the end I folded because I'd just had enough. Family arrived and times were hard and you know the rest...

Ian Lee

You requested me to write you my specific objections to the piece that was entered for Albatross in your Encyclopaedia within This Tangled Web We Weave.

Whilst most of the piece is factually correct there are two small details that are not. Firstly I have always edited my magazines from Upminster and not Basildon, which is where Paul Humphreys hailed from. Secondly Albatross was first renamed to Cormorant and not Comorant.

SA *Fine. I hadn't realised that coming from Basildon was such a stigma, but now you mention it...
☺ The mis-spelling of Cormorant was, of course, a typo.*

My main objection is that you have included Astradyne in your Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Diplomacy Zines! Astradyne has never run anything but soccer, cricket or ice hockey so you cannot include it as a Diplomacy zine in my opinion. One of the main reasons why Albatross got changed to Astradyne was to indicate a clean break from the mainstream, and to set up the zine as the flagship of the postal soccerleague scene, which soon ballooned to around ten or so magazines, all totally independent of any relationship to the mainstream'.

SA *Yes, in retrospect Astradyne has no place in the Encyclopaedia and will be removed from the finished version.*

If we concede that Albatross issues 1 to 33 do warrant an entry then there is one other point that I have never understood and that is the intolerance of a large part of the Diplomacy fraternity that holds

soccerleague in contempt. as highlighted by your comments that Albatross was a butt for some jokes, either for the soccerleague or for inefficiency.

SA *Yes, I agree that the sniping at Soccerdross, as some zines used to refer to it, was silly. My old zine Pigmy carried the first game of Soccer Supremo from Ian and David Phillips. Oddly enough, one of the fiercest critics of the soccer games was football-mad Mick Bullock who played in the first game of Soccerboss in Chimaera.*

If I want to run a soccerleague in a magazine why should so many bigoted Diplomacy editors of the time take up so much time deriding me for it? Each to his own is what I had always believed, but the intolerance to soccerleague did not lead me to criticise the failings that I always saw in postal Diplomacy, namely that one NMR or a drop out could totally alter the result of a game. Unlike Diplomacy a soccerleague is not affected by NMRs in such a huge way, and there is no long term affect on a game. An NMR for one club in a week of a soccerleague season that has been going on for twelve seasons is a mere hicough!

SA *You were not the only editor to be criticised for running a soccer simulation, though I always had the impression you took it more personally than most.*

As regards to the charge of inefficiency Albatross was always out in good time. I can only presume that this comment arises out of the reputation of Paul Humphreys and Richard Nash for GMing errors in the Actaeon and Catastrophe games. As far as my GM mg is concerned when I reviewed the early zines I produced I was amazed to find that I didn't make any!

I had two players resign from Actaeon even before I got a chance to GM that game, and Berserker and Cabin were error free, save for one error in Cabin which was spotted after the zine went to print and was advised to all the players in a broadsheet. When Richard Nash handed over the Catastrophe game to me from UKDA PF he also handed me a headache in that he'd made a GMing error, and omitted to send me some of the player's orders!

Clive Booth was unhappy with everything I tried to do to resolve the issue and eventually I tried to appease him by arranging for the game to be rehoused in Forden's Epitaph. If I remember correctly that zine folded whilst I was trying to rehouse the game, and it looks as if I ditched Catastrophe as it made no re-appearance in subsequent issues. Booth had already started printing vitriolic abuse at me in his Chimaera and the other players didn't care much to carry on so I probably had no qualms about doing so. Punk rock was at its zenith and total Anarchy was my response to Booth at the time....

SA *You were pretty good at the old vitriolic abuse yourself at the time, you know. My main memory of you was when you cancelled our trade because I had criticised a run of poor turnaround, but you never told me, so I kept on sending you zines for months without realising that there was anything wrong.*

However such luminaries as Piggott, Birks and Booth had already assassinated Paul, and I was never given a chance, being painted with the same brush as Paul despite the facts. At one point Dave Tant tried to get the Actaeon game revived in Ethil the Frog and held me responsible for the collapse of a game that I didn't have anything to do with! If you review the game you'll find I was actually Germany in that one, though I did spend most of the game ordering A(Ho)Std....

Another mute point was that the two subzines that Paul allowed in to Albatross were also given a fair amount of criticism, and as I had no intention of allowing them huge amounts of space, as Paul decided to do, I got rid of them. Nobody gave me credit for that at the time either.

I hope that all this gives a revisionist view of what actually happened when reviewing the facts of 1977-78 as far as Albatross is concerned. Your entry seems to me to repeat all the same prejudices that were put about at the time and I would like it to be made clear that the "efficiency" problems were all down to Paul, and that it was Birks, Piggott and Booth that were responsible for most of the distortion of facts.

SA *I can't buy that line totally, as compared to other zines at the time early Albatrosses under your command (I never traded with Paul) were less frequent than most other zines. It was when I pointed this out in print that you cut our trade (as mentioned above). But yes - other zines were just as bad - Lemming Express was one example, similarly the dying spasms of Dolchstoß Mk.I. I don't think my entry is anything other than factually correct (the two minor corrections noted above excepted). That said, I'll rephrase it in the final version to make it clear there were two sides to the story.*

Astradyne continues to run the soccerleague started up in issue 29, and is now in season thirteen. In the mid-eighties the zine had three subzines running soccerleagues, one of which was a rescued game from a folded soccerleague, Channel 5. In the early nineties it started up an ice hockey game, and this is now in the fourth season. In addition to Astradyne I have been running a second soccerleague in Superliga 6, my second zine, which is now at issue 137. This was run as a subzine in Stick The Knife In, Ripping Yarns, Channel 5 and Free Kick, before I realised that where it went, it folded the parent zine within a few years! I also ran a soccerleague of the 1982 World Cup and 1984 European Championships, and helped prepare the stats for a soccerleague of the 1986 and 1990 World Cups, the latter two of which were run by Astradyne managers.

So as you can tell from the above the soccerleague postal zine developed very nicely on its own in the eighties without the prejudices of the mainstream Diplomacy hobby.

Vorwaerts, Astradyne!

SA *Your record in producing Astradyne is truly remarkable, even outdating the editing career of John Marsden. That record alone can stand as an answer to what you obviously still feel was a great injustice. Care to trade in order to stay in touch?*

There's a lovely bit in Woody Allen's Annie Hall where Woody overhears someone mouthing off in the cinema queue as to what the Director of the film intended. Woody disagrees, so he walks over to a large pot plant and pulls into the shot the Director of the film who proceeds to disagree with the amateur critic. Therefore I thought it would be interesting to forward Ian's letter to Clive Booth, who replies...

Clive Booth

I honestly can't remember anything at all about Albatross or about Ian Lee (made a big impression, eh? - strangely though I can well recall Dave Thorby and the Walamalaysia Gazette!). However, if the letters Ian sent me were anything like the above, then he would have been just asking to be sniped at in Chimaera. I never could stand pomposity. The fact that (according to Ian's letter) Piggott, Birks and myself actually agreed in our opinion of him should tell you something. We NEVER agreed on anything as a matter of principle, so the evidence against Ian must have been overwhelming if we all lined up on the same side! It seems to Ian's mind that Dave Tant was a part of the conspiracy against him too, yet a nicer guy than Dave you could never hope to meet. Having been close friends with Dave at the time and having spent many enjoyable weeks in the company of him and his family, I am quite certain he would have got his facts right before saying anything untoward about anyone. During it's time Chimaera was the butt of many jokes about Soccerboss, Monopoly and other non-Diplomacy games too. But that's all they were - jokes - and I simply gave as good as I got. You mention that Ian was a schoolboy publisher so perhaps he was just a bit too immature to cope - he must be the oldest schoolboy in England by now.

I have no idea what my involvement with the Catastrophe game that I am supposed to have printed such vitriolic abuse was about. My recollection is that I was not involved as a player in any Diplomacy games after my first few years in the hobby (other than one in a magazine I cannot now recall the name of, where I and six friends played under assumed names just to wind the GM up by conveying from Turkey to Moscow using fleets of every nation - the memory starts to go as you get older...). All my old Chimaeras are packed away in boxes in the attic and not easily accessible, so I can't check.

Your summary of Chimaera for your encyclopaedia looks fine. One thing I can recall clearly is that after the first Chimaera zine-poll win, Richard Sharp said publicly in Dolchstoß that it was a fluke and that there was no way it would win the next year. He said he would eat his hat, or something equally ridiculous, if it did - so when it actually happened I found it the most amusing thing in all my years in the hobby. I think I had a Chimaera cover with Richard's quote on it after the second win - though I don't recall him actually eating his hat (or whatever it was). A bit of trivia - the original working title for Chimaera was The Nutbrook Gazette and it was going to be a Rupert the Bear fanzine. I even produced a mock first issue with pictures of Rupert and Bill Badger in before replacing them with good ol' Boot.

SA *I can't bring myself to believe that a zine called The Nutbrook Gazette could ever have won the Zine Poll...*

Pete Birks

I did remember the £20, honest. I'll pop it in the post.

SA *When, exactly? ☺*

Gihan Bandaranaike

It was great to meet the family and zines on that Sunday trip to your p(a)lace. My only regret was later discovering that, unknown to me, Richard Sharp (hawk - spit!) was, at the time of our visit, using my failure to launch Carpe Diem properly as ammunition against you because you temporarily transferred your games to CD. I can only apologise for letting you down and any embarrassment this misplaced trust has caused you. As for Sharp, I think I have made my feelings abundantly clear: I have never felt such an intense hatred towards anybody - and with good reason too - in a long time.

SA *It really is no big deal. I would expect Richard to make a dig, and there was an element of truth in what he said - it is more risky passing on games to a new zine. Then again, there have been many instances in the past where a new zine has been given the push it needed by taking on orphans. Chimaera springs to mind, but there are many others.*

I don't know why you put up with his constant sniping. You certainly have the tolerance of a saint. I, however, don't. Perhaps I should take his snipes as a compliment (although it smacks of the playground bully to me - after all, he has 25+ years in the hobby whilst little ol' me has at most 3 years). What was his latest swipe? "That itinerant photocopy-stealer from Ceylon" (although, by linking derogatory words with Ceylon, he reveals his anti-immigrant tendencies here, not to mention that he still lives in the bygone era of the Raj by using the colonial name for Sri Lanka). Yawn. That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore. I can take the snipes. It was more the embarrassment that he was gleefully using Carpe Diem's fold to criticise you that pushed me over the edge.

SA *As I said before, don't worry about me. Many have said worse of me than that, and no doubt will again ☺ Of course Richard's attitude to race is not exactly liberal, though I have not seen him use the word "nigger" in print since 1978, so maybe he's going soft.*

I know people will compare that single page in my 12 page subzine with Toby's attack on you but there are key differences: (a) I am genuine in my hatred of Sharp whilst Toby's piece was just a cynical attempt to generate controversy, (b) mine was prompted after understandable provocation whilst Toby's was out-of-the-blue and (c) I'd like to think that mine had a bit of panache that, alas, Toby's piece lacked. I know that my angry display is pretty indefensible to the shrinking violets in the hobby but it felt good getting it off my chest instead of impotently raging to my friends when they point out Sharp's latest attack on me.

SA *I don't think I hate anyone specifically; I think I will reserve that emotion for people who abuse and torture children and generally do inhumane things. Pieces written about me in Diplomacy zines only have the power to annoy and irritate, and even that doesn't last. If you really do*

"hate" Richard, then I think your priorities are wrong. Life's too short to get that stewed up about a hobby.

Toby says that what hurt me most was the fact that RS used me as "a pawn" in this "Feud Of The Ghods" which he insists in having with you and that this hurt my pride. He is partly right but everybody knows that, sometimes, a pawn turns into a queen. And a bitchy queen at that! (just pre-empting the obvious joke to me made there).

SA *I don't buy in to this Hobby Ghods thing at all. We are all important to the well being of this hobby, and any mythology that over-emphasises the role of certain editors is not helpful because it only incites "wannabe" editors like Harris.*

As for your peculiar assertion that I had missed your "A-Z Of Zines" because the next letter was "C", I simply don't know what you're getting at... You were referring to Cry Havoc, I take it? Or perhaps Cynicism? Or maybe even Cliques! Oh dear, "C" is such a Controversial letter to use these days...

The above paragraph is tongue-firmly-embedded-in-cheek for those unable to realise this.

I'll do that Napoleonic variant a.s.a.p. - not quite happy with the current product really (bit of a perfectionist) but you'll have it at least a week before the next deadline. You were serious?

SA *Of course, I am always on the look-out for new variants.*

John Wilman

Re there ethics in Diplomacy? It was fascinating to read the comments of Pete Birks and Dave Horton. Both approach the subjects from entirely different directions, and I take a third tack, based on respect for the rulebook and the premise that we are talking about serious games. Just as there is no such thing as a friendly game of Poker, there is equally no such thing as a friendlt game of Diplomacy. But there the similarities end. Poker relies heaily on etiquette and is played for money, which Diplomacy never should be. Indeed, the successful Poker player needs money, as well as a mathematical brain, a strong character, the ability to bluff, a cool head, nerves of steel and an inscrutable countenance. All a successful Diplomacy player needs, apart from some elementary knowledge of a trivially simple boardgame, is the ability to lie convincingly. My background in chess. There are friendly games of chess, known as "skittles", but even these are usually played with a clock.

I believe that as a player I have every right to resign from a game if my position is hopeless and I have failed in all my efforts at diplomacy. The result is that my units stand in civil disorder. I've only done it once; if anything I was notorious for my stubborn defence of bad positions until eliminated. According to Pete, this is unethical and means I should be avoided in future! But you can lave a poker game at any time, and fold when you want to. Just as you can resign a chess game. In tournament games, I've seen any amount of play which is unethical, probably illegal, but usually just incredibly stupid. I gather from Toby's excellent con reports that the standard is much higher now – certainly much too good for me, even if I can resist the rival attractions of 18xx and the bar.

SA *Surely the difference is that leaving a poker game or a game of chess doesn't arbitrarily effect the chances of others players to win the game?*

To me, "signing over your units" means exactly that – giving an indefinite proxy. And it's illegal. If you do as Pete suggests and sign every set of orders, you haven't signed over your units! You're still playing in the game and observing the rules. It may seem like a moot point, but you're the lawyer. What do you think? Where in the rulebook does it say that a player may order for more than one country?

SA *Where the rulebook is silent, the local tournament rules should prevail. Most tournament rules would not allow it.*

Dave is in the position of being a much stronger and more active player than the rest of us, so I'd like to assure him that "hard-fought survival" (as long as I share in the draw; I'm not interested in places) is always high on my list of priorities. One of the (many) reasons why I'm such a crap player is that I'm

not really interested in, or competent at, persuading other players to do what I want them to. I just go along with good ideas and reject bad ones. I spend most of the diploming time looking at the board and analysing – the chess player's approach. The wheeler-dealer, salesman technique – yer, Niall Litton, lovely bloke though he is – is not for me. I get on best with payers who talk sense, even if they are lying and subsequently stab me.

Dave seems to have the balance right. Enjoy your games, play to do well, be pleasant and civilised at all times... and hope not to be involved in those nasty situations which we were asked to comment on. If I could live up to those ideals I'd still be playing a lot more Diplomacy myself. MidCon is in the diary, but then so was ManorCon. One thing's for sure; I can't afford to play poker this year.

Michael Goldthorpe

I must confess to being new to the game. The board was a Christmas present and I sent the flyer off. Obviously, I received Springboard and have now been bitten. So what are my views so far? I'll use your lettercol as a way of breaking them down.

Peter Birks mentions your "new" layout. I have not seen your previous zines and so can't comment on how they were. What I can do is look to what they are at the moment and it will be to this that my contribution will go. So, what do I think. Having done a little publishing, in different guises, myself, I know that what I really want to do is make the best 'product' that I can. This is not just in content, per Dave Newham's letter (and others) but also it must be pleasing to the eye - Allan Gordon's letter.

SA *Agreed. These days this zine isn't the "best" I could make it, but it is the best I can produce with the time I have available while holding down a demanding job and helping to bring up two small children. Life is about compromises sometimes. I'll send you a couple of the old Spring Offensives.*

Next - cliques. With a group over seven, and I take this from a scouting/hiking point of view, sub-groups will form. So long as you know this in advance, it can be used to advantage. You should find the leaders of each group and bring them round to your point of view. The game itself, however, forces cliques. In order to win you initially need the help of others. Is there anyone who will admit to winning on their own? Any way, groups can't be seen as bad, they should be used for the best.

SA *But is it bad if a clique of, say, ten people dominate a hobby run for the benefit of 500?*

And finally, SO v T2W3. As a new comer to the game, what I want is as much advice and suggestion as possible. T2W3 attracted me because of this need. If T2W3 is to be replaced by a 'new' SO, I still want advice. Will SO provide that?

SA *If it's advice about playing Diplomacy, then yes. If it's advice about the Diplomacy hobby then probably. I do intend to produce the odd issue of T2W3 anyway, which will go to all SO subbers and traders.*

JohnWilman

Re. Anson. That's an interesting coincidence – four players wanted Germany and in the same issue you feature Hucknall on Munich being such a vital centre. Since Germany starts with it and has to be jolly careless to lose it, one would think it is the best country. But Diplomacy isn't Deluge. France is best placed to force and hold Munich from the west, via Bur and Ruh, followed by Kie. From the south Tyr, Boh and Sil do the trick. But there is a 7th province adjacent, Berlin, which I consider more important since it can be held from the west against any southern power (Italy, Austria, Turkey).

One support from BAL, plus the western defence for Mun already mentioned locks up all the German centres – forever. Without control of Berlin, Munich is unstable and cannot form part of a stalemate line. Rather than just looking at the centres (and check out Paris for Austria) it might be more illuminating to consider how often Austira or Turkey (not Russia or Italy; they win differently) manage to force Ruh on the way to victory.