

EGK! - DEADLINE: 6TH JAN '83  
 TO: PETER DOUBUEDAY  
 MAGDALEN COLLEGE  
 OXFORD  
 OXI LAU

PHONE NOW: (0865) 246929

THE AMERICAN RESIDUE (25)

THE STRANGE AND  
 SORDID TRUTH ABOUT  
 AMERICAN PUBS

Why these things happen to me, I don't know. I mean, if I'd had any idea, I wouldn't have accompanied the fellow in the first place. After five weeks with no Morrells, no Morlands and not even the faintest drop of Ansell's, however, your judgement gets a little warped. Have you ever tasted Schlitz, 'The beer that made Milwaukee famous' (where?)? Let me give you some sort of idea. Imagine a pint of keg tartan on an off day. Think what it would taste like if it had been left out in a rain-shower directly under a cloud of sulphur dioxide. That's Schlitz. So, this guy asks me into 'the nearest thing we have to an English

Pub', and off we go. And there's no beer, is there, and I drink a triple Manhattan Tea under the impression that it's fruit juice, and on my way back from my fourth visit to the barroom this blurred figure comes up to me and asks 'Hey guy, you uninterested in group sex?' I mean, does this happen in English pubs?

(cont p 13)

OUT ON THE STREETS  
 OF NEW YORK, THE  
 WEATHER'S FINE, BUT

THE  
 PEOPLE  
 ARE  
 HIDEOUS

The first thing you notice about all old Americans is that they're fat. Not just fat, man; they're obese. Look, fat is fine, but these people are as purulent as the types

in the Monty Python 'Travel Agents' sketch. They have rolls of goose flesh sagging over tenuous bones. I blame it on the admissions policy - see, 'Bring me your poor, your huddled masses' isn't much of a eugenic tenet on which to base a brave new world, is it?

(cont p 13)

FROGHORTON ALIVE AND  
 WELL IN PHOENIX, AZ.

Did you know that in Arizona shops this instant, they're selling a video game cassette called 'Communist Mutant Menace from Outer Space'? (cont B13)

2

O Lord, deliver us ...

"Igor, let him out. It's time for another issue ..."

Well, that was a fine start, wasn't it? Three lines in, and already I've spilt cleaning fluid all over the page. If I hold close to my recent record I shall be following it with coffee, phlegm and all manner of unspeakable liquids. Starting any issue of a zine is like sitting on the starting line of a rowing race - people are depending on you, and there's a hell of an uphill struggle in front of you. It's all very well for the cox to point out that there's a finite amount of Hell in front of you, and that you can relax as much as you want at the end, but you've done it all before, and you know how excruciatingly painful it will soon become. Yes, zine production is indeed like a boat race. Why, you even get the same rush of saliva at the off (another liquid to add to the Thing collection. Moreover, however fine your intentions, you always fuck up. So, herewith find enclosed another mixed bag of GMing errors, logical syllogisms, offensive obscenities - in fact, all the ingredients that have made Thing the zine it is today. Totally ignored.

With this issue I change definitively over to an A5 format, the practical result of which is that I have already put no little care into presentation and layout. The result will be the usual mess, but at least I've tried.

Is this another defector to the scum of RYODA, you will ask (or at least paranoid mimeo editors will ask). Not so; in fact I am going my own way, as usual, and using the services of the student union. Yes, once again I have become politicised by standing for a post in the JCR (in this case that of Policy Convenor, of which more later); once again, you will find me in jeans and a pin-striped blazer, mumbling incoherencies about the Bakuninist dialectic and the need for student representation on every council under the sun. Is this going to get in the way of my work on Thing? Heck, no. I am going to put precisely the same amount of effort into it as I put into any of my other activities: none whatsoever. In any case, it has nothing to do with the change of format, which is simply a result of my discovery that OUSU has an electronic stencil cutter, and will therefore enable me to type my crud up on plain paper, photocopy and reduce it to A5 size, cut a stencil and duplicate it on the usual machine. This production business is more complex than you'd think, you know. Anyhow, as far as I can make out, this has all the advantages of the RYODA service and none of its drawbacks. Of course, it may not work, which would be a little awkward; in that case, I would have to send this entire issue to RYODA, and Gooch would probably take umbrage at my comments above. I had better, therefore, be propitiatory. RYODA is, indeed, a fine service within bounds; if anyone in the Hobby wished to print a rulebook for some inane role-playing game for the purposes of making money, the costing System of RYODA would almost certainly make it non-profit for such purposes. It is not, however, suited to zine production. Editors are writing ephemeral junk for an audience of (typically) 100, a quarter of whom are free-loaders (or, as we prefer to be known, traders), and a half of whom have not the slightest interest in the contents beyond their game reports. The most competitive litho system in the world cannot hope to be cost-effective for any but the most casual millionaire. Let us, make an argument a fortiori, as Arnold Toynbee would say (it is relatively easy to see when an 'intellectual' writer is struggling, because he comes out with a familiar catch-phrase to regain his breath. By this criterion, most of Toynbee's works are onelong stumble). Let us take the hypothetical case of an editor named Richard Sharp. Let us assign to him the following qualities in abundance ( - oh, so this is an inane role-playing game after all - ): wit, writing ability, gamesmastering competence, a phenomenal output, a loyal and numerous readership (gained, say, from his zine's emergence from a hypothetical organisation called the NGC) and a genuine interest in games. This man isn't for real, is he? Besides such a paragon even Shaw would cringe into his inferiority complex. Maybe we'd better add in a few compensatory, though on the whole minor, human failings. Let us assign him cash-flow problems from being self-employed; ditto, time-flow problems (I don't care if the word makes no sense to you. I just invented it to fill a need, and it makes perfect sense to me); let us give him rather more games than he can comfortably handle.

Something will then go wrong with his life. He may catch the Mike Benyon problem of getting a job. He may find, like me, that something (probably alcohol) has pumped up his manic depression so far that he feels ill every time he sits down to a typewriter. He may find himself indicted for tax fraud, and in my opinion this should be the fate of almost every self-employed person I know. If the tax system were computerised, and not its current inefficient self, we'd catch a lot more of the bastards. It'd help if Challenger and his ilk were lined up against a wall and shot, too ... as I was saying, he may find that his

interest in the sort of games his subscribers clamour for is on the wane; or he may be confronted of a sudden with his marriage falling apart around him, two kids in prep school, another woman and a full-time preoccupation with bridge. In the scenario we are constructing, a combination of the latter two is what is responsible for the next events. He will now look at issue 70, thirty-six neatly typed pages of which, produced over a period of seven months, lie around his bachelor flat in the Salvation Army hostel for the unneeded, and he will say, "Publishing be damned!" - much as the proprietors of the Daily Telegraph are now saying, because they can get so much more political capital out of blaming the whole mess on their workers, and the losses are ideal for a tax offset. "Publishing be damned!" - because the sheer effort of collating, enveloping, addressing, stamping and finally posting seems too much of a cliff to him in his reduced circumstances. Even more complicated, this zine-production business, isn't it? Partisans of the RYODA complex will interject at this point that it is now possible to have the zine collated by the printer. Fine; so now we have the spectre of issue 70, in all its mismatched glory, hitting the streets, and the next issue not even reaching the minimal stage at which Richard will type up a crayon-scrawled draft, adjudicate the games and pass the result on to Martin, who will make the stuff presentable and hurl it to the sweet mercy of the post.

Am I browed off by the cancelling of trades with 'Stick the knife in'? Not at all, because I got very little out of the heaps of juvenile minimalism that crawled through my letterbox at irregular intervals (many people have said the same about Thing, but that's another story). I have little regard for the trading system, anyway. No, I am merely leaping gratefully on the bandwagon with other editors who have expressed disquiet at the manner of Stick's passing: old zines no longer die, they merely fade away. I wonder how many 'clean' folds we are going to see from the stables of RYODA? Bedbug predictions for the next two fiascos are Don't Shoot Me and Bohemian Rhapsody, the latter of which gets up Bedbug's nose in any case by betraying a complete absence of knowledge of German and the function of the umlaut. Bedbug (Magdalen) Ltd is prepared to take bets of events that both will have folded by four issues! time, and we can only hope that they go one better than Stick in the manner of their passing.

Astute readers - indeed, anyone who has withheld his bile long enough to read this far at all - will notice that I have departed somewhat from the forceful line of argument that I began by expressing. Whatever we may think of the merits and demerits of RYODA, it is incontrovertible that the format of Thing has changed. I hope that this will be permanent, since I shall otherwise be assaulted in the knees, next time I am at a hobby meet featuring London personalities, by an enraged dwarf yelling 'Wot abaht me filing system, then?' (Along with Bedbug and Glyn Palmer, this is another legerd foisted on the Hobby by Sharp. Birks does not speak thus at all. Indeed, one wishes he would - anything is preferable to the more typical alcoholic slur at manic speed). Wot abaht me filing system, indeed. More germane are the following two points: I shall be able to use illustration whenever I wish, and I shall have to buy a new, long armed stapler. Er, how was that again? Well, clearly, if I am to spend yet more of the great British public's money on frapperies (and periodically they will remind one of this by sticking a foot through the spokes of one's bicycle and ranting incomprehensibilities concerning the criminal waste of their precious ha'pennorth of Income Tax), then I might as well get value for money for it. As one last blast at the RYODA system, I should note the paucity of editors using it and concerned enough about the appearance of their zines to invest in a long-armed stapler. Not only do I have innumerable copies of DSM with identical covers; separation of one from another is rendered all the more difficult by the fact that their insides are crapily interchangeable. Mike has solved this of late; BR is as messy as ever, and Stick had the brainwave of stapling an A5 booklet in the top left-hand corner; let no-one say that today's youth is constrained by outmoded canons. On the credit side for RYODA, I must make it clear that page 8 of last issue's supplement was pirated from the RYODA daddy zine, Ripping Yacne, which would probably grab more of my attention if I were not receiving it in quarterly form. As you can see from that page, RYODA at its best is a masterpiece of presentation - indeed, probably the only realistic outlet for Richard's undoubted skills of draughtsmanship. It's a pity that others cannot match his level and live next door to him, though.

Gawd, I hope the stencil cutter works, because otherwise I've put myself in deep shit...



Charles M Hendren III, I salute you

Indeed, I do so with a far more appropriate member than you saluted Phoenix with. Who is Charles M Hendren III? What has he to do with the Hobby? And just where is America at?

Charles has nothing to do with the Hobby at all. He was an American, or rather a Tennessee man (for such things matter much), with whom I had the mixed pleasure of working and sleeping, and who was by his own admission something of a computer whizz-kid. Any other admission, he was a dingbat of the highest order. Tennessee divides itself into two social groups, the shack-dwellers who, surprisingly, have no money, and a handful of families who have all the money that should have belonged to the shack-dwellers. They are filthy rich. The shack dwellers are merely filthy. Charles, of course, was a hybrid. He wasn't filthy rich, otherwise even he would not be such a dingbat as to work for an obscure small business on lousy machinery (Intel software, contract.) at the pittance of \$20,000 p.a. Nobody in their right minds would do so, because for this one was forced to do the work of the prince dingbat, the project manager, who was on \$57,000 and was totally, catastrophically incompetent. Even I was a little overpaid. Hendren wasn't filthy rich, but Hendrens were: his family didn't believe in sons being given money, so they had to work for it.

Charles does not like work. He is very good at it. Indeed, as I left after twelve weeks of work on the same project, he was cheerfully promising that he would be re-designing the entire section I had already written. But Charles' concept of work is, shall we say, a little abnormal. Desks are things you stuff junk food in when you've finished eating for a while, so that his was filled with half-digested burgers with the moulds cheerfully overbreeding; once it even featured a greasy apricot which almost clumbled out of the drawer in its anxiety to go for your throat. Computer rooms were wont to be littered with the debris of endless Big Gulps that had been medium gulped, leaving decaying ice and soda in a soggy cardboard base. Charles himself was a trifle absent-minded, usually walking into the office in stockinged feet. Sometimes he had left his shoes at home. Other times he had simply left them in the office, the previous night. His socks smelt. They were invariably to be found pointing in my direction as he sprawled in bizarre positions such as the Kama Sutra would countenance over the floor, the filing cabinets - in short, over anything but the seat. In this position, he would be reading up on Intel manuals, which normally conveyed no information at all to me, and even worse, conveyed precisely the wrong information to him.

Let us face it, Charles was pretty sordid. Not all men with preppe names have preppe genes.

Ah, but mens sane in corpore sano, I hear you say, went out with Rugby school ... maybe, but Charles wasn't going to let this stop him. As well as being the most complete twenty-one year old physical wreck I have yet come across, he had a mind whose every last refinement was unattractive. He was a snob - about English mannerisms, the French, his own clothes (which were immaculate before being slung onto his body) and almost anything else. He was egotistical to a fault: he once claimed to me that he had never in his whole life made a mistake - no, that was wrong: he'd made two mistakes: one, a trifling error on the machine earlier in the day, and the other in claiming that he'd never made a mistake. With anyone else it would have been a joke, with Charles it was, inevitably, no joke. You can always tell when Charles has made a joke. He makes a back-rabbit grin. Starts, and breaks into uncontrollable sniggers.

Oh yes, and he was also a bigot. Don't let anyone tell you that the spirit of the south lives at Appomattox, or at Selma. Partly it lives on in Jack Daniels and Wild Turkey, but the main part it relies on exponents such as Mr Hendren, who confided that he was not, in fact, racially prejudiced - he just didn't want to have anything to do with blacks or Hispanics because they all smelt. They are "disgusting". An me; the war lives in Appomattox, a middling town typical of the metropolitan area of Washington D.C. and from the politics of Virginia, I fear he may be all too typical.

His musical tastes ran to the Go-Go girls, who are probably quite fine in situ, but lose much of their allure when played through the ubiquitous 'personal' hi-fi, a device designed with the basic intent of chopping out all the base and just enough of the treble such that it is impossible to hear the lyrics, so that the operating end of the headphones

6

delivers a perfect mix of whine from the singer and jangly percussion. The operating end is defined as the end facing outwards, and away from the 'user'. Working with this is not easy.

New York Interlude: I now know why the blacks of New York carry ghetto-blasters around with them. It is not through any wish to offend; it is merely a survival mechanism, to stop their brains being turned to mush. This is because there are only three types of music in America. There is American 'Heavy Metal', which manages at once to be talentless and inoffensively dull; this is what all American cars have four-way interior hi-fi systems of Byzantine complexity for. It is, in other words, just one more way of cutting the driver off from the outside world, where otherwise inconvenient affairs occur like cars being pulled up at traffic lights, and the inmates being pulled out and shot for no particular reason. If the insulating music challenged you to to think, you could be in dead trouble. No problem: it doesn't. The second variety is the funk-crappo style, which is what ghetto-blasters are used for; this music has no intrinsic merit at all - it merely serves to cut out the other two forms rather effectively. And the third form is the most wonderful, and American, of all. You will find it issuing forth from Greyhound stations and many other public places; it is what the subject of this encomium, in one of his rare lucid moments, described witheringly as 'elevator music'. The only common feature is that the lyrics have completely disappeared; it is akin to muzak, but a little more subtle. You see, the music usually started out as something quite good, typically a Beatles tune (indeed, the Beatles are staggeringly popular still, chiefly through their use in this capacity), but has been stretched for no very good reason into a standard format. The tune starts out as 512 strings, all in unison (and they never divide), and this continues for just long enough to make you heartily sick of it; the maestro then goes a step further by repeating it in a trumpet obbligato; and so on. It is quite the most dispiriting experience one can have in America - that, and tripping over untended drunks in doorways, in mid-afternoon. However, as I say, there are three types of American music, all with their admirers organised into little tribes who try desperately to drown out the trash from everyone else. The only people who know what they're doing, therefore, are the chaps with the ghetto-blasters.

New York itself is hideous, consisting of rathole tenements all over the island and suburbs of mind-boggling tedium and infinitude stretching out in a light red sprawl. It is, however, instructive to get on a subway at about 30th St and get off at 125th, for the Museum of the American Indian; in between, the personnel will have changed dramatically from business types, to blacks, to white trash, and to blacks again. It would not, in fact, take much to divide New York back up into the ghettos from whence it sprang. The area of 125th St is supposedly rather dangerous, although I happily trotted around it in my usual imbecile fashion, just as I happily trotted over the road in Philadelphia just after the police had given me some avuncular advice - 'don't go over there, kid. It's a black area!' Actually the black areas are distinctly safer in summer, because no-one there has air-conditioning, and in consequence they're all too shagged out to do anything to you. The other worthwhile thing about 125th is that it's at the pointy end of the island, and so you can see down the street in both directions to water, which is quite impressive.

Charles, meanwhile, is fulfilling the cryptic message of my first line. We are now in Phoenix on contract, and as Cathy Canning will tell you, Phoenix is a very unpleasant place to be. It looks like a giant construction site (a fact of which its inhabitants are mighty proud), because none of its buildings outside of the central skyscrapers are over one story high. Posters everywhere advise that Arizonans are wasting water, a precious natural resource, whilst meanwhile the Phoenixians (for such is how these cavs style themselves) pump their gardens full of grass, at great expense. Out in the suburbs, distinguished from the main part of the urban sprawl largely by the fact that they border on desert (which is a considerably more interesting sight than any Phoenician has yet managed to come up with), there are monstrosities called 'executive homes': these are basically converted garages with a few partitions knocked in for rooms, and a dirty great palm tree jammed outside for character. Since every other goddamn house on the street has the same decor, the character adduced is not great.

Charles is not in an executive home, although as you may have gathered he certainly belongs in a Home of some sort. He is in our joint motel room, which we are snaring in order to make vast sums of money out of the per diem, and he is getting up, because it's twelve o'clock and time for work. I have been up for fully three hours, desperately



FFF (Craig Miles - Black) 30 & 5(FIR) & 6(SFH) & 4(FOR) - 3(CRI) = 42  
 2a) (G62) I62 Ke' b) (K62) L62 M61 c) (H61) C100 Paris E98  
FCV (Paul Burr - Blue) 21 & 5 - 1(FOR) - 1(CRI) = 24  
 3a) (N12) J14 b) (J14) Toulouse c) (H56) L54

Buils for round four: 6, 6, 5

Third Game Four      Diplomacy      Autumn 1903

Let's start with corrections to the last report, courtesy of Messrs Shepley and Hazlewood. Austria has A(Alb), not -(Ser); the English A(Hol) was destroyed, which was thankfully obvious to those involved, Russian A(Ukr) was destroyed in W02 (well done those who noticed this on the next page, as I failed to do), Italian N(Tun) - IOS should have read F(Nap) - IUS. And if you think I have problems, read on ...

AUSTRIA (C-J Steers) NFP2! A(Tyr), A(Thu), A(Alb), A(Gal), F(Gre) stand u/o  
 ENGLAND (Dave Huson) NMR! F(Den), F(NTH), F(Wal), F(Lpl), F(StPnc) stand u/o  
 FRANCE (Les Hazlewood) F(ENC) - Wal F(NAU) S F(IRS) - Lpl A(Bel) stands F(Spasc) - MAO  
 GERMANY (Julian Shepley) A(Sal) - War A(Hol) S French A(Bel) F(BAL) - Den A(Kie), F(Swe) S F(BAL) - Den  
 ITALY (John Wilman) A(Ven) stands F(ADS) S A(Ven) F(IOS) C A(Apu) - Alb  
 RUSSIA (Chris Gordon) NMR! A(War), F(GB) stand u/o  
 TURKEY (Nigel Bateman) F(BLA) S A(Arn) - Sev F(Con) - AES A(Ser) S A(Run) - Buc.

Winter 1903

Retreats : English F(Der), F(Lpl) both disbanded by GM

Austria : Tri Vie ~~Bel~~ Gre loses two. GM disbands A(Gal), A(Alb)  
England : Lon Edg Lor ~~StP~~ NMR. No change. One short.  
France : Mar Par Bre Spa For Bel Lol Gains one: builds A(Bre), F(Mar)  
Germany : Kie Mun Ber Den Swe Hol Gains one builds A(War)  
Italy : Ven Rom Nap Tun No change.  
Russia : Mos ~~War~~ loses one. No change.  
Turkey : Ant Con Smy Rum Bul Sev Ser Bud Gains three. Builds A(Con), A(Ant), F(Smy)

May I remind you of the house rule on drop-outs: after two successive NTRs, Christie is now in anarchy and will only be permitted to re-enter the game should she send enough cards to enable me to forgive the other players of this intention.

Third Game Eight      RR ???      Round 0

I have four names on my RR(N) list, so we may as well start. On the other hand, I have no preference lists at all. I have therefore concocted the following, start

- Dave Erridge: Boston      22 Modena St. Jafford, London      SE6 4JA
- Derek Crumpton: Bronx      91 Albion St,      Osley, w Yorkshire
- Ian Ferguson: Fortland      5 Cherrytree Drv, Whickham, Newcastle upon Tyne      NE16 4TC
- Brian Moore: Boston      17 Westway, Hall in the Wood, Bolton, Lancs      BL1 8SS
- Ian's tern address: Cavoy Hall, Lbro Univ, Loughborough, Leics      LE11 3TU.

Throws for round 1: 6, 5, 7      Please submit colour preferences ...



### MidCon IV Report?

Well, I was only there for the Sunday, wasn't I? Even with my chronic inefficiency this is hard to explain; it has something to do with the usual essay crisis on Thursday evening, a most inconvenient and unaided bit of re-scheduling on the part of British Rail (who are rebuilding Botley Bridge at the witty little time of weekend evenings), and a meal from a master chef. Look, there are only four of these in Oxford, and only one that offers a three-course meal for £2, and he only does that rarely. If you ask anyone which comes first, my stomach or my friends, they will indubitably tell you that, like Baird, I am a stomach man. So, after my Steak au Poivre and assorted tidbits, I retire to the Turf Tavern for a couple of well-merited reminders, and as usual leave getting to the station to the last minute - only this time it doesn't work, for reasons already enumerated. So, I turn up on the Sunday and miss all of the excitement, although if you read other MidCon reports it does not appear that there was much excitement at all. Why must these fools assume that readers are interested in their miserable personal games of Diplomacy? I really cannot imagine what possesses so many to fill out zines with reports that rival the worst that any end-game statement can put out for sheer irrelevant boredom. Did no-one pull off any great coups? Did no-one have anything amusing to say? Did no-one, in short, do anything but truck on in an isolationist, introverted way for two days? No wonder that David Dilling, whom I attacked most unfairly and accurately in my report last year, came second for the second time. In a field of loonies, the half-sane man is king: if you're as boring and intense as most respondents at MidCon were, you will obviously fall for the sheer niceness of David, who, whatever his faults, is the perfect example of Challenger's 'Rabbit' character in Diplomacy today. As Northcott scribbles to me, "The amazing thing about my second game is that David Dilling did exactly the same thing to Jones as he had done to Redfern ((last year)) ... but Steve Jones is a very good player. Is Dilling a hypnotist? " Strange sort of tournament, in other words, but it seems to give a whole lot of people a good deal of satisfaction. Once again, many thanks are due to Simpkins, Tringham, Dodds et al (I don't believe that the last chap played a great part in the proceedings; I merely put him in to prove that I do on occasion use first names).

I don't care how late I arrived; I still had a good time. It is, indeed, rapidly coming to me that I have nothing very much in common with anyone outside the Diplomacy Hobby - you're all wonderful, and I love you. Yes, even you, Shepley, despite your comment that "personally, I found your Itf GMing at MidCon very efficient". Permit me a hollow laugh. I will acknowledge that it suffered slightly from lack of sleep and other essential drugs, but it might have gone better had not one J Shepley insisted on GMing his end of the board - not that he got anything wrong (as far as I could tell), but it did make things a little more confusing for my permanently bewildered brain. On the other hand, perhaps Julien meant this as a serious compliment. Perhaps the Conservatives will pull us out of this recession, just as they keep reassuring us they will. If Julien did mean his comments to be interpreted positively, then a) thanks, and I'm sorry for doubting your sincerity, and b) Tullett, who was in the same game, will probably have something more cutting to say about it. Don't bother, Jeremy ...

Well, I talked even more rubbish than I usually talk; I spent a convivial half-hour with Geoff Challenger and Ken Bain, of which I typically remember nothing; I had a slight contretemps with Beryon, who informed me (believably) that the US post, not he, nor Gooch, was responsible for the disappearance of my DSM 7, and consequently my NMR. Not that I have received my DSM yet, though, so my insults to Mike still stand. You really are a bit of a prannock, you know.

Ah yes, MidCon - a delightful exercise in what American executives regard as 'interpersonal relations', and go on courses to learn about. I'll be there, a little more efficiently, next year, if I haven't been shot in the meantime.

.....  
Waiting lists: Diplomacy (£1) : Robbins, Marshall (?) - five wanted.  
RR(N) - starts this issue.  
RR(C) (75p inc map): Crumpton, Adams, Cunning(?), Robbins(? (3?))  
Sopwith (75p): Adams, Brine, Lozynsky], Morris, Crumpton; one more.  
Crusades (£1.50): Berry, Norris(?), Powell, Kinaett - four wanted.  
Bourse (50p) : four down. Postponed to next Dip start. Roll up!  
Abstraction, Maya: still available. Any interest?

That shrivelled organ of unrequited love ...

Yep, the letter column is back again.

Jeremy "Hello Fishface,  
Tullett 'st-fucking is not confined to one man and another, but  
(Dorset) I wouldn't care to enlarge on this topic too much unless my reputation of  
innocence becomes tarnished. But then again, one has to be a man of the  
world to even consider subscribing to 'Thing'"

... said he, mercilessly splitting another infinitive. Not at all, squire: all you need is a bank account healthier than mine, which at the moment of typing is not a very rare commodity. I was quite aware that my localisation of the phenomenon under consideration to San Francisco was not entirely accurate; I merely hoped that it would convey the meaning sufficiently to spare me the more gruesome details. If Jeremy has not cleared the issue up sufficiently for you, I suggest you write to him asking for a photocopy from the relevant page of his 'Kiddie's guide to kinks, twists and unsavoury activities'.

"One is aware of the name 'Brian Auger', but I had thought that he had dropped out of the scene in the early seventies. Never heard of 'Search Party' - perhaps they got lost."

"I too use Barclays. I used to go to the TSB, but after four years as a student who never went overdrawn, they refused me a loan to start work on. So I walked across the road to Barclays who arranged one in 10 minutes. With service like that it would have been cunrlish indeed to continue at the TSB, so I swapped. During my first week at SEH I was persistently bombarded with material asking me not to bank with these supporters of Apartheid. Many of my colleagues immediately opened Barclays accounts because they objected to being told who they should be banking with by the NUS. The whole issue is a red herring anyway, as Barclays Bank International has nothing to do with the domestic operation."

I must say, I've always thought that the NUS executive must have shares in Barclay's; nothing else explains their constant obstinacy in maintaining the 'Barclays' propaganda in the face of thousands of students doing just what Jeremy describes. It isn't that such propaganda is necessarily self-defeating; it's merely the strident, whing tones in which it happens to be expressed. Even I could do no better. As for the last observation, I will make no rejoinder, except that I happen to have met one of the Barclay's heirs apparent, and I don't happen to think he was a very nice man. Then again, no one in banking ever is.

Becky "I much enjoyed your last issue ... I notice also, with a touch of  
Ranninger miffedness, that Uncle Seth Ruffuzz Orlow got a mention in it, and I  
(USA) ((being the source of this gentleman's name)) didn't."

Thus laying herself open to the following quote. While we in Britain eat masses of food in order simply to keep the cold out, Americans have no need to do so in general, and maintain the memory of such festivals of gluttony only in Thanksgiving Day. One should note, therefore, that such date is the time of the year when all one's most appalling relatives, family friends, etc come round and remind you how much fun it is to be alone:

"The Altenfelders are friends of my mother's. My father hides in the garage whenever it is intimated that they might be in the vicinity. I retch with all-concealed nausea whenever I get within twenty feet of the offensive George Altenfelder. George has been making offensive remarks to me and taking every opportunity to lay his slimy paws on my pristine person since I had barely made the acquaintance of puberty. Their daughter, Cindy, is a year younger than I am and does not wear and rwear, and never speaks in anything but whines. Lrna has the bearing of a sick horse and is wont to trip and stumble a lot, thereby sending my mother's finest crystal and china crashing to the floor.

"The Altenfelders are the pits."

Well, yeah. And I have not left myself the space to conclude with a letter from Nick Marshall, who kindly sent me a tape of the Second Viennese School after hearing that I like Schmidt's 4th. Serves him right. His so-called 'generosity' has cost me tens of pounds in records I must now buy. And yes, I can obtain a copy of Prokoviev's 'Cantata for the 50th anniversary of the Revolution' - although I warn you: it's a very nasty piece ...

to do the mundane back work of abstraction for a bunch of mean scrotes like you.

Home is available from the tax-evasion address of Continental Accountants, Ltd, at 100 High St, Swanscombe, Kent DA10 0AH. It's 30p/hit, it features mainly Diplomacy plus controversially Marsdenesque chat, and it has one of the few zines in this Hobby worth reading (unlike that last sentence, which made itself conveniently illegible ...).

::  
::    ::  
::  
::  
::

Or then again, possibly that wasn't such a great linear separator. Other hobby news comes to you this month in the form of the announcement of new zines. Pride of place, for some reason I can't quite explain to myself, goes to the much heralded 'Lokasenna' from Brian Dolton, which is not a commercially available laxative but merely a bloody silly name whose mythological derivation, if any, I can't place. Curses. Yes, another RTDA zine, but this time Brian is a guaranteed reliable chap who has been editing a compendium of D&D articles for some time. What difference the new name will make I don't begin to guess, which is contrary to my usual bigotry; I never saw an issue of his last effort, not being interested in all that fantasy nonsense. "Present envisagement", he says in a manner worthy of TSR (UK) Ltd, "involves the 'zine falling somewhere between postal games zine, FRP fanzine, comics fanzine, comics fanzine, and of course somewhere for me to sound off my own boring opinions and all that egoism stuff." Give Dolton a stool, in other words, and he will do his best to fall between it. However, he has been one of the major selling points of that wholly remarkable (and damnably heavy, in the sense of avoirdupois) zine, Denver Glont, and we can therefore guess what we're up against from the start - the Hobby's second drivelling moron (myself being the first). Denver Glont, I confidently predict, will deflate like a Texan with an enema. Let's have the addresses, including that of DC, since it was the only zine kind (and extravagant) enough to be sent to me in the States:

- Lok: 94, Waddington Avenue, Old Coulsdon, Coulsdon, Surrey CR3 1QN (30/35p)
- DC : Glover Rogerson, 11 Buckingham Palace Rd, Clifton, Bristol BS8. (35p)

Passing merrily on from my appalling solecism above, where I assign a character judgement to an inanimate object through sheer bad syntax, I come to the brand new zines.

I think I can safely afford to recommend Foiled Again, even though the title seems to be bad pun no. 33 on the theme of En Garde. Presumably up to issue three by now, this is another of those zines that hasn't come my way - am I doomed to be the new Filibuster, standing in Dolton-like isolation at the very fringes of the Hobby? Yep, probably. Games on offer include Diplomacy, White Box, Sopwith, Kingmaker, Cricketboss, Circus Maximus and Lap; fees seem uniformly low, and the sub cost is 35p per issue (bear me, these expensive zines ...). And why do I recommend something I've never even seen? Because it comes from the man responsible for my Diplomacy game nominally placed in DSM, the well-known wonder organ for Mike Benyon's ego and periodically contracting free time, that's why. Were it not for Alec, this game would have been even more disastrous for me than it has so far proved to be. Alec is a good lad. When he sorts out which games are time-wasting dross, and which games he can actually afford the time to run, he will indubitably be producing a jolly good zine; currently he is one of the Griffin lookalike zines, of whom there are disturbingly many. Younger readers will not have the faintest inkling what I'm talking about, and older readers will doubtless be scratching a familiar patch on their head, so I'd better explain that Griffin was in the habit of running every game under the sun, with Keith building up his workload to the maximum possible level. He then found his spare time curtailed, and the whole caboodle collapsed under him like a limp squid. All the games disappeared, some never to reappear (despite Keith's noble efforts), and unless we organise a games Orphans Rehousing system to match that for Diplomacy proper, then I can foresee a lot of the same in the future. Never mind: Alec Winton, Ashdown House, Varley Hall, Coldean Lane, Brighton BN1 9GR. Ask for a sample copy.

OK. So, what have we got? I don't like to belittle Geoff's article, but I'm afraid that it just doesn't bear much relation to the reality of Postal Diplomacy, because it is very difficult indeed to categorise players even vaguely. "Richard Sharp's theories have, for the most part, been debunked by now", says John Marsden (although he doesn't quote sources; I suspect he's thinking of John Wilman's articles, which is a pretty narrow basis for such a claim. No-one would accuse John of winking the issues; my impression of most of his strategy is that it's as idiosyncratic as Richard's, just like its author). Nonetheless, I prefer his simplification of Diplomacy into three groups to that of Challenger. The Sharp model comprises the centre, a large body of decent to good players, and two extreme wings: the Stoooge, who'll do anything you want, if you ask him nicely enough, and the Armour'd Duck, who takes offence at the slightest incursion and won't turn back from a retaliatory attack under any circumstances. Is this not a more helpful weltanschauung than Geoff's?

I think it is, although it isn't designed to categorise games (Geoff has a waiting list open for Tigers). Richard's designation allows you to plan strategy from the beginning, allowing the player to be flexible rather than deluding himself that he fits any real category. So long as you recognise the game's self-defined 'looms', you can afford to "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" (and I promise you I'll make Geoff sick as a parrot of animals by the time I'm through).

So why not have a Tiger game? Because it won't work. If I were to declare myself a Tiger, and Geoff thinks that most players will embrace this notoriety, then I might well play like one. I would not, however, have a specifically Tigerish nervous breakdown. I would not drop out in a true Tiger fashion. I have no statistics to hand, but I believe the dropout rate is still around two per game, which is far more of a curb on anyone's enjoyment than which particular animals they are given the chance of bugging. And even if we have a perfect Tiger game, we shall still see some players drop to about two units, or rise to fourteen, and this will quite possibly affect their strategy; it is difficult to act the castrated Tiger, and if on the other hand the Big Cat is about to fight his way to King of the Jungle (most inappropriately), he might well get more cautious. Even cool cats need friends.

Strangely enough, Mollo didn't design his Bridge animals with any thought of starting a tournament in segments, appealing though the concept of four Hogs gathered round a bezel table may be. He invented them as central characters for his stories, and this is clearly what they are good for; our very own animal plagiarist, Pete Birks, has done a fairly effective Dolittle on Poker beasts. Geoff is quite welcome to carry on this tradition into Diplomacy, or to find some other mug to do so. Otherwise: neat idea, but no banana, I'm afraid.

Kind you, the article was yet one more indication that Geoff is taking over the market in Diplomacy articles for the light reader, who has no wish to struggle through the Aristotelian deviousness of one of Wilman's efforts. It was followed, in a rather good issue, by an interesting piece on German opening strategy which I would reprint were I Northcott or Watts. I am neither, and shall therefore merely content myself with the observation that those of you not subscribing to Home of the Brave should get off your ignorant backs and do so immediately - I'm not going



Menagerie and Diplomacy Don't Alliterate

So, now we have our own Victor Mollo in Geoff Challenging, as Home of the Brave 19 features an amusing little article on the bestiary of Diplomacy (no, that doesn't alliterate either. Keep trying). Rather than reprint the entire article, an expedient to which inferior editors resort when they can't think of anything original to say, I shall limit myself to a précis of Geoff's five categories of player:

The Hound: a rules freak who likes making pretty patterns with the pieces, and doesn't care about the result at all.

The Rabbit: Diplomacy is all a lot of fun, isn't it? (This is like saying that rowing is the greatest feeling on earth, but some people will. De gustibus non disputandum est.) He "plays for his own satisfaction", which means that he's happy to go for a win, although he's unlikely to annoy other people with stabs.

The Wolf: will go for a win, although he enjoys the game as well.

The Tiger will just as happily play tiddlywinks, so long as he gives the other guys' ego a drubbing. This isn't vindictive; it's just part of his enjoyment.

The Rat: who is vindictive. He plays like I write; ~~but~~ when someone attacks him, he retaliates with overkill.

Rather fun, this zoo, isn't it? Still doesn't go with Diplomacy, though. What was that? No, I wasn't thinking of literary qualities this time; I just don't see how a member of canine family can come between a rodent and a feline (which puts me in mind of the Woody Allen joke, "Love between a man and a woman is fine, so long as you can find the right man and woman to be between"). The wolf doesn't have any clear independent existence, but Geoff obviously needs a category to fit the vast majority of players who are neither rabbits nor tigers - I take this back, most players are a very inferior, stringy type of rabbit, but no-one likes to admit this. And what's all this about tigers not wanting games with rabbits? I can't think of a better repast than six rabbits, and I certainly wouldn't be arrogant enough to class myself as a tiger. Martin Feather was at his best when surrounded by rabbits, which is why he liked to play Russia. Given two rabbits in the front-line status of T/A/G/E, particularly the middle two, Russia usually gets off to a flying start, if your imagination stretches to an airborne tiger. The game is damn boring, though. Nevertheless, it's exactly what a tiger wants, whereas few tigers appreciate being stuck with Turkey (oh dear ...), which is more the province (oh dear again. I appeal to have my sense slightly twisted at this point) of a Stoat, like Figgot.

Take a deep breath. Has your head stopped spinning? Now, consider what the above implies. I don't think you can have an accurate, or even useful, classification system for Diplomacy players, or at least not one based on the above. There are too many deviations from the norm. What about the Rabid Rabbit, who will occasionally turn and bite someone for no reason at all? Or the Toothless Tiger, who's grown too old for this sort of game and can't get it up even if he wants to? Well, we may not have a classification system, but we seem to have reached successful alliteration at last: there are an awful lot of words in the English language beginning with 'r' and 't', many of which are adjectives (and you notice I didn't try to complement the wolf, you don't think I'm that stupid ...). Not content with exorcising literary pretension, we should note that the Rat character can mate with the Tiger, who will not be entirely delighted when another Tiger stabs him. We may need a bit of sellotape for that one, though. More promising genetically is miscegenation within the same family, the Rat with the Rabbit. Just when the Rabbit has built up an attractive set of mud pies over the Diplomacy board, the Tiger moves in and rips his guts out. Brownd off with this, the Rabbit turns psychotic and nibbles the nearest part of the Tiger's retreating anatomy (you've guessed it. Pretty sordid, these animals, aren't they? For further information about psychotic rabbits please consult Edmund Cooper's 'Kronk', altogether one of his funnier books, the rabbits are the funnest part of the book). We also have the Bull Elephant, who charges through everything regardless until he hits a brick wall; the Platypus, who can't do a thing right because he's not designed for it, but is poisonous when you step on him; and the character I'm currently most like, the Dodo, who drops out like a stone from the sky.

7

trying to find a phone from which to contact John Marsden with orders. This is not as easy as you may think. You may have noticed how British telephone boxes are cunningly designed so as to make you think you're isolated from traffic noise, whereas it is in fact always impossible to close that last little inch. Well, American telephones do not even go this far. The Bell Company takes the, probably justified, view that if you don't own your own phone, then you're not worth chickenshit anyway. Phone booths are rare: most public phones have an intriguing system whereby they are sited in an acoustic funnel at about head height. This can lead to some interesting effects, since they are invariably placed next to the busiest road in the vicinity, and they face (naturally) in the direction of that road. Not all phones are placed on roads. A few, a very few, are placed in public buildings, or motels and hotels, in which case they are always right next to the ice machine and you can't hear a word you're saying over the 'brrrr.whrrr. click.zzzztp.brerr' of the machine. I finally tracked one down in the restaurant (next door to the kitchen, natch, so that the swinging door kept hitting me in the face), which suffered the peculiar Arizona defect that it would not make direct calls of any kind - they all had to go through the operator.

I am therefore in a foul mood when I get back to the room and fling the door open. There before me, silhouetted in the Arizona noonday sun, in full view of myself, the swimming pool, the benused maids making their rounds around it, and any other guest in the rooms opposite, Charles is standing in the middle of the floor gazing pensively down at a semi erection. Yes, I know Hunter Thomson's friends do this sort of thing when totally twisted (of Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, where there is a Steedman cartoon which vaguely indicates the sight), but Charles M. Hendren III does it as a matter of course.

When not involved in such activities he is prone to driving a car around; indeed, this occupation is what appears to give his life meaning.

Auto Interlude: Life without a car, preferably two in case the first breaks down, is, as we all know, unthinkable. Few realise, however, quite how far this affects their social life. Charles owned a Firebird on HF, which was his only really large possession. He drove it around, therefore, like a maniac and/or test driver; whenever he parked it, he would describe a curious five-point turn of his own devising, designed partly to demonstrate the sleek handling of the car, and Charles' pinpoint precision in handling it, but mostly to fuck the entire mechanism up in every way possible, because being American it had several built in defects such as the fact that its wheels rubbed against the chassis when at rest. Fortunately, it was rarely at rest. Charles' entire spare time was taken up in driving it around, burning up the traffic and generally explaining what he could do with it. And he is not alone in this; for the daughters of the people I stayed with in Virginia would also abstract the car of an evening for their cutting. Now, you or I, we would regard the car as a means of getting from A to B. Not so an American. When these girls got to point B, usually a nightclub, they would sit around for a considerable time morosely staring into their drinks before finally the old feral glint would enter their eyes, and they would leap back into the car for another jaunt with death. I tell no lie when I say that, at the wheel, they were transformed. Chattering and laughing merrily away, they would burn rubber and skid through traffic on their way to an earthly Nirvana; I, meanwhile, would sit in the back and consider the imminence of an old Science Fiction concept. Do you remember all those stories featuring a series of conveyor belts, each 5 mph faster than the one next to it, so that by the time the pedestrian reached the outside one, he was travelling at 70 mph or so? No sweat, baby; this is precisely what the girls did. When they wished to move into another lane they didn't so much accelerate as jerk smoothly; suddenly, we were travelling 5 mph faster. It's quite an eerie sensation. I don't feel much better when I reflect that every American I know has totalled at least one car at some point in their life. Frankly, the whole country is crazy. Most of them coast about it, for goodness' sake.

So, how did I manage to stand Mr Hendren triplicate? Largely because he was human too. Possibly the most poignant moment of my stay in America was when, at the end of a long day at the office, the phone rang and he was called to it, only to be told that a favourite grandmother had died. I don't like watching emotion, and I didn't like watching his, but the news obviously had a very heavy effect on him. Unpleasant incidents like that have a way of making even the most inhuman weirdie seem very down-to-earth afterwards.

Winter 1901

Austria : Vie Tri Bvd Ser = 4 = 4 no builds ordered, one short.  
England : Lon Lpl Ear Wor = 4 = 4 builds F(Lpl)  
France : Bre Mar Par Spa = 4 = 4 Builds A(Par)  
Germany : Fun Kie Ber Hol Den = 5 = 5 builds A(Fun), F(Kie)  
Italy : Ven Rom Nap Tri = 4 = 4 builds F(Nap)  
Russia : Sev Mos StP War Swe Rum = 6  
Turkey : Ank Con Smy Bul = 4 = 4 builds F(Ank)

Sigh ... George is free to build his two units if he so cares, since he obviously didn't anticipate a readjudication. Make any orders conditional on these builds, please. Granam and Chris have both resigned, and I don't hold out much hope for Gordon's return from that position, so I shall declare this game over unless I get three sets of orders by the next deadline. Four? Even better. Even with three I don't think this is going to be very interesting for any of us, so I shan't continue without clear expressions of interest from all three. OK?

Rail Baron 27

... coming to you, very late indeed, from the fold of Duel Purpose. I'm not going to adjudicate the orders I have, because as you know I'm playing in this and the next game, so I would like to hear from anyone out there still interested in that game. If anyone is interested, and no-one has shown any interest at all so far, then please vote on the following options:

- 1) I continue to submit orders, before the deadline, and GM the result without giving myself any benefit of the doubt.
- 2) I drop out, but operate my position as though I was still playing it in order not to unbalance the game.
- 3) I find some other poor fool to GM the whole unholy mess.

If I get no replies by the next deadline, I shall drop the game like a hot potato.

Rail Baron 29

The same applies as above, with minor modification of personnel.

Rail Baron 327

This one doesn't feature me at all! Hooray! However, it features an absent Thomasson, an absent Hood, and a soon-to-be-absent Loveys, unless I miss my mark. I don't even think that the other four are particularly interested. Once again, therefore, brickbats/interest to be delivered by next deadline, if you don't want the game to fade into oblivion.

Rail Baron 35

Nobody showed any interest after the last adjudication, this summer. Once again, therefore, the game will be declared dead unless I hear any protests from survivors.

Addresses for Eilkinagh:

Nick Kinzett : 11 Daleway Rd Green Lane Coventry CV3 6JF  
 Graham Champs: confirmed by phone as a dropout.  
 Grog Davies: "Kingsley", 31 Cowick Lane St Thomas Exeter EX2 9HN  
 Brian Hammond : 28 Edgehill Rd Aberdeen AB2 4JH  
 Andrew Robinson: 151 Birmingham Rd Kidderminster Worcester DY10 2SL (0562 3197)  
 Gordon Smith : 173 Benhill Rd Sutton Surrey

<u>Thin Game Seven</u>	<u>Diplomacy</u>	<u>Autumn 1901</u>
AUSTRIA (Pamela George)	A(Ser) S F(Alb) - Gre	<u>A(Tri) - Ven</u>
ENGLAND (Mike Woodhouse)	A(Yor) - Nor F(NWG) C A(Yor) - Nor F(MTH) S Ger A(Ruh) - Bel F(MTi) S <u>German A(Ruh) - Bel</u>	
FRANCE (Ian Ferguson)	F(Pic) - Bel A(Mar) - Spa A(Bur) S <u>Russian A(Sil) - Mun</u>	
GERMANY (Allan McGregor)	A(Kie) - Ber A(Ruh) - Hol F(Den) stands	
ITALY (Craig Miles)	A(Ven) - Tyr <u>A(Apu) - Ven</u> F(IOS) - Tun	
RUSSIA (Peter McDonald)	A(Liv) - StP A(Sil) - Gal F(Sev) - Rum F(GB) - Swe	
TURKEY (Jeremy Tullett)	A(Con) - Bul <u>A(Bul) - Gre</u> F(Ank) - Con	

Winter 1901

Austria:	Vie Tri Bud Ser Gre - builds	A(Bud), A(Vie)
England:	Lon Lpl Edi Nor - builds	F(Lon)
France:	Par Mar Bre Bel Spa - builds	A(Par), F(Bre)
Germany:	Mun Ber Kie Hol Den - builds	F(Kie), A(Mun)
Italy:	Rom Ven Nap Tun - builds	A(Ven)
Russia:	StP War Sev Mos Swe - builds	A(Sev), A(Mos)
	Rum	
Turkey:	Con Ank Smy Bul - builds	F(Smy)

Press: Russia - Germany: Gesundheit!

Constantine Porphyrogenitus: I haven't got anything to say, but it seems rather a pity to waste such an impressive dateline ...

Thin Game Seven-2 Source

... is herewith abandoned. I'll leave the game hanging for the next Diplomacy start, which may or may not be when Tom Tweedy decides I'm sufficiently more dedicated than Nigel McCabe to deserve a CGS start. Any more people interested in playing it?

Duel Purpose "Elkinagh" Autumn 1901 Re-adjudication (reprinted from American)

Sigh. One last try to arouse interest in this one, which I typed up at great expense from America, only to find that the USPO characteristically lost the whole flaming lot. Or so it may well be. For the benefit of confused players, then, I should make it perfectly clear that this game has been re-adjudicated for the last season played, because Mike made such a cock-up that I couldn't honestly continue as was.

AUSTRIA (Gordon Smith)	NMR! A(Ser), A(Vie), F(Alb) stand u/o
ENGLAND (Andrew Robinson)	F(NWG) + Nor <u>F(MTH) - Bel</u> A(Wal) - Lon
FRANCE (Brian Hammond)	A(Spa) stands <u>A(Par) - Bur</u> <u>F(ENC) - Bel</u>
GERMANY (Nick Kinzett)	F(Den) stands <u>A(Kie) - Hol</u> <u>A(Mun) - Ruh</u>
ITALY (Chris Steadman)	A(Apu) - Ven <u>A(Ven) - Tri</u> <u>F(IOS) S Turkish A(Bul) - Gre</u>
RUSSIA (George Davies)	F(IOS) - Swe <u>A(War) - Gal</u> <u>F(Sev) S A(Tur) - Rum</u>
TURKEY (Graham Champs)	F(Ank) - Arm <u>A(Bul) - Ser</u> <u>A(Con) - Bul</u>