

DIB DIB DIB



A typical
Dib
Subscriber

Welcome to the 52nd issue of Dib Dib Dib - a zine dedicated to games players and the letter writers of this hobby. The cost is a fixed rate of 40p per issue in the UK and 23p + postage overseas. Anyone wishing to send money, send it to Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks., HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

EDITORIAL

Much as I hate serious subjects in Dib (especially in my editorials), I feel I must take this space to get something off my chest, and clear up an important point that has cropped up (yet again). It appears my reply to a letter last issue has offended the writer. In fact has upset him enough to ask for his sub back, and stating, in no uncertain terms, that he wishes to leave the zine. Now, I have no objection to someone leaving the zine because of lack of money, boredom, but etc, I think it unfair to penalise me for expressing my beliefs in my own zine. This is the third time it has happened to me: once with Keith Black, once with Dave Bird and now with Mike Pollard. Before I go any further, and to head off any more misunderstandings, I must make my position clear. Any letter that is sent to me for publication is likely to receive some comment. Any of you who may not be able to stand my opinion (or the opinions of other Dib readers) I'd strongly advise not to write about emotional (emotive?) subjects. I actually ENJOY a good debate. It matters not a jot to me whether I'm right or wrong, because I WILL reply to subjects that interest me. If you merely wish to write to ME, personally, fine, mark your letter clearly 'Not for Publication' and you can rest assured I will not publish it. Also, it's no good saying to me, as Mike Pollard has done (see lettercol), that it's very easy being able to add unchallenged comments anywhere I like in the zine, because (a) I have to comment if I feel the letter needs comment, and (b) no comment is 'unchallenged' because any subscriber can write in and take me to task for what I say in the following issue. Most of you frequently do I'm pleased to say!

So please... give me a break, eh? If I offend anyone it's entirely unintentional (unless it's Richard Sharp, Mike Close or a few others I could mention). Give me the benefit of the doubt first and assume I've got you all wrong. I'd rather be given the choice of not publishing your letter, than taking a chance of losing a good subscriber. Let me know if I've offended, I mean, even a condemned man gets a last chance to say his piece. You never know, I may apologise.

Anyway to be serious again for the moment on the subject of Diplomacy. I'm becoming more and more concerned with the recent fashion of people joining Diplomacy games and not writing letters. Quite a few players have written to me complaining that no-one will reply to their letters, and, want to know what can be done about it. Well, not much really - I can only mention it here, or perhaps talk to other editors about it and see if they have the same problem. Looking at the NMR's and drop-outs in other magazines it seems possible they do. A 'good Diplomacy player' is a player who writes to everyone - at least in the first season. It seems certain to me that the drop-out rate and lack of good diplomacy players could be linked. How long could anyone stay interested in a postal Diplomacy without receiving any letters? Not long I'd imagine.

So, why the seemingly sudden disinterest and total apathy? I sat down and began to jot down all the things that kept me interested in the hobby when I started. At the top of the list were the Diplomacy stats and replying to other people's letters. With regards replying to letters, I felt I HAD to reply, or be thought of as ill-mannered, lazy and illiterate. As for the Diplomacy stats... well it was more the Diplomacy Ratings List I was interested in - I wanted to be up there with the top players. It gave me something to strive for in my games. Not only that but I felt it bound the, what I thought to be, somewhat anarchic hobby together. From the Ratings list I got to know names; names of people to beat, and those I was already playing games with. This made

it seem like one big happy family. We don't appear to have that sort of thing any more. Mind you, it's not that the hobby doesn't want to produce such lists, it's just that the stats are not readily available to the hobby. Wink Thompson tried to get his Ratings List restarted, and failed. The reason: Pete Calcraft wouldn't, couldn't, or didn't have time to pass all the relevant bits of information on. I've said it once and I'll say it again, this situation is bordering on rank stupidity. The hobby stats MUST belong to the HOBBY - for them to be used by anyone in the hobby, and not just for the gratification of the compiler.

POSTSCRIPT: (Me and my big mouth) Doltchstoss arrived today making much of what I said above redundant. It seems Richard has the relevant Diplomacy stats under control and hopefully will be producing the Ratings List in the very near future. However, he will need help, so let the cry go out: 'RS needs YOU!' He's looking for subscribers who have subbed to a zines extending back as far as possible, preferably to issue 1. Zines there's no need to bother with Gallimaufry, Dib, Greatest Hits, Mercurius or Mad Policy because he's already sorted those. But if you have anything else please contact Richard Sharp, 27 Elm Close, Amersham, Bucks. Tel. Amersham 6148, and help us get our Diplomacy Ratings list back. All praise to the great RS for taking the job on - something's being done at last. My God, if Clive Booth ever sees this I'll be kicked out of his fan club for sure!

ANOTHER bit of news about the stat situation. Hot off the Mad Policy press is a report that Pete Calcraft is finally giving the stats job up completely. Hallelujah! Richard Walkerdine will make the trip down to Dorchester to collect all the stats records, and should get them up to date soon. NOW things are moving.

Recently browsing through a few old copies of Dib (that had just been returned to me after I'd lent them to Richard Sharp) I noticed that two subscribers are still with me that have been with me from the very start. Yes, *FANFARE* it must be known, that for sheer guts and perseverance above and beyond the call of duty, Dave Tant and Nicholas Clifton deserve the 'Masochist of the Year' Award and Dib's heartfelt thanks. Let's hear it for these two who put so much of their hard-earned money into Dib's coffers - YEAHH! Good on yer lads, there aren't many like you (only two actually). Hope to see you both in the 100th edition of Dib.

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### JOTTO Turn 8

Some good guesses this time, with Kath and Rosie getting a 6 by guessing the same word! Hah! - have we now a worthy opponent to Rosie? We shall see. Hot on their heels though is Brian and Ulf with a 5, and Richard D with two respectable fours. £5 prize. (RJ, you'll have to send three guesses in next time if you wish to catch up - if not I may have to take you out of the game.)

|                 |             |                |             |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| KATH COLLMAN:   | 8th: 213632 | ULF JIRETORN:  | 8th: 323353 |
| R.J. LAMPARD:   | 7th: NMR!   | ALAN POWIS:    | 7th: 122110 |
|                 | 8th: NMR!   |                | 8th: 023110 |
| BRIAN MOORE:    | 8th: 215332 | ROSIE ROBERTS: | 8th: 213632 |
| RICHARD DOWNES: | 8th: 422234 | RICHARD SHARP: | 7th: 233221 |
| MIKE DEANS:     | 8th: 222212 |                | 8th: 221111 |

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FUTURE MAIN DEADLINE DATES: As it's coming up to Christmas I may be cramming some of my deadlines together to fit into the early Christmas posting times. After this deadline, 15th November, the next should be the 13th December. Because of quick turnaround don't be disappointed if it's a game-only issue.

I HATE FACE TO FACE DIPLOMACY

I've been in the hobby eight years or so now, and, last week was the first time I've ever taken my Diplomacy board out and played a game face to face. I've come to the conclusion, I HATE face to face Diplomacy. At least, games where one has to make alliances. It all started when Stuart came to me with the Diplomacy box and asked me to teach him how to play the game. Fine, it gave me a break from typing things into this computer, so I taught him how to play the two-player game using the postal I.D. rules. He certainly learned quick enough, and it didn't seem to matter to him that I beat him at every game - he was facinated by a new game that needed no dice. I was quite enjoying myself. It was even okay when one of his friends came along and we played a three-player game using the I.D. rules. But when it came to four players (another one of his friends wanted to join) I decided it was about time we scrapped the rules for credits and buying mercenary countries, and outlined the idea for alliances - what to do, what not to do and the possibilities. They seemed to take to this like ducks to water. Kids are a blood-thirsty lot, and the idea of backstabbing, secrets and dirty dealings appealed to them no end. Not that they had me worried you understand. With my years of experience, and having played three games with Mike Close, these kids should be a push-over. They were. I drew Italy, and in no time at all had fleets lined up from Smy to NWG. Then, I foolishly looked around me, and what I saw horrified me so much I actually had to drop out. Every time I stabbed one of them, and saw the look of absolute disbelief and despair on their faces, I found I just couldn't go through with the dastardly deeds I had in mind. They took the game so seriously, it seemed unfair to sit there chopping their hopes for the game to pieces. I began to feel GUILTY looking at those trusting faces as they sat there uncomplaining! What was happening... things like this didn't happen to me when I stabbed the wretched Close! Why should it bother me now? It would seem I had the scourge of many a fearless Diplomacy player - a conscience.

It finally ocured to me that perhaps all face to face Diplomacy games were like this. If this is so, then I can now understand what people like George North say about the game not being friendly. The conclusion I've come to then is I'm not cut out for playing face to face Diplomacy. I mean, I'm fine when I'm lying to someone by letter or by phone (as many can testify) but the thought of actually SEEING an accusing face as I slip the knife in, leaves me cold. Tweedy had finally met his match at the hands of a bunch of kids. I've been shown my limits. I guess I'm just a big softie at heart that's me.

THE TURKISH HEDGEHOG
by Nicholas Whyte

So you thought there were only two Turkish openings, the one where you move to Con, or the one where you move to Arm? Severely wrong, my friends, very wrong. Apart from the tainted joys of the Juggernaut: F(Ank)-Con, A(Smy) stands, or, to Ank; or the outright silly F(Ank)-Con, A(Con)-Smy, A(Smy)-Ank, or pathetic anything with F(Ank) stands or to Armenia (which I have seen happen before now) there is in fact another sensible Turkish opening. It is: A(Con)-Bul, A(Smy)-Arm, F(Ank)-Con. I like to call it the Turkish hedgehog.

The biggest concern for Turkey must always be the Black Sea. Statistics prove that Russia will go there four times out of five. So what if he has?

The Turkish hedgehog should be negotiated as a Black Sea stand-off; best of all, convince Russia to let you in. Then go ahead and play the Turkish hedgehog. A competent player will see Armenia as a fair exchange for the Black Sea. If Russia has moved in, you are very well defended; you can stand-off A(Arm) and F(Con) in Ankara, and build that vital fleet if you need it in Ankara or Smyrna if circumstances dictate. If on the other hand Russia has played ball

and left the Black Sea open, you can work minor mayhem with A(Arm) while capturing the vital Aegean with F(Con). As long as Russia has not moved to Sevastapool and the Black Sea - which he will not do if he thinks you are going to the Black Sea - you will be all right, perhaps better off than most Turkish players. Comments anyone?

((Personally, I always see Russia as Turkey's greatest threat, and will nearly always open with Ank-BLA and Smy-Arm if I don't receive friendly mutterings from the Russian player. As it is I see the agreed Black Sea stand-off as Turkey's only sensible opening option in this 'trust no-one if you don't have to' game. Why take chances? Anyone?))

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### HEROES AND HEROISM

For quite some time now this subject has fascinated me - though for what reason I can't quite be sure. I just know in times gone past I've often come to reflect on the difference between a hero, as we understand the sense of the word, and the normal average man-in-the-street (I suppose, myself). Once again this was brought back to me by a recent article in the latest Demon's Drawl, 'To Be a Hero' by Steve Weeks - though, Steve's article was more in connection with heroes in Role Playing Games and comic book superheroes. So, what IS a hero? What's the definition of a hero? Is it true that society needs heroes to look up to? If so, WHY? I hope to answer some of these questions, but I am sure some of the answers still evade me.

I think I'd like to start by admitting an embarrassing truth (though why I find it embarrassing I haven't quite figured out - perhaps I'm ashamed of the warmongering Rambo-style figure it conjures up), no, I'm not gay, but ever since the time I read my first comic book - Tex Ritter, Lash Laroo, Superman - and saw my first TV heroes - Hopalong Cassidy, Cisco Kid, Range Rider and The Lone Ranger - I wanted to be heroic like them. All the fights I ever got into - generally over damsels in distress and sometimes to protect someone from being bullied (I HATE bullying) - if I ever knocked my opponent to the ground, I stood back fists ready to let him get back up. A hero NEVER struck an adversary while he was down! This sometimes led to some unfortunate consequences, i.e. they would then get up even madder than before, and kick the living tar out of me. At times like these I tried various strategies, like holding up crossed fingers and yelling "Pax!", or "Vainites!" as a gentleman should when he wishes to rethink the situation or regroup, but these generally had the affect of my sparring partner getting another good wallop in (oh my aching nose!). It soon became apparent that this hero lark was going to be a little more difficult than I had first thought. Time to rethink a few of the rules mayhap - perhaps I'd stand more chance if I didn't let them get up so quickly? (I was a SLOW learner.) It certainly helped to redress the balance, oh my yes - but it didn't half tarnish my superhero image.

It was because of this (very naive) attitude that I began to wonder if others thought as I did - did they wish to align themselves with heroes and on the side of 'good' (as opposed to 'evil') in society? Perhaps I was different because of my convent upbringing? Certainly it didn't seem like my opponents were on the side of good - why, they sometimes even KICKED me when I was down! The forces for Good would never lower themselves to depravities such as this! How then, I surmised, could they even look at themselves in the mirror in a morning? I came to the conclusion they couldn't. I think most people see themselves as essentially good, and at sometime in their lives had visualised themselves in the role of a superhero - the lone mysterious rider on the skyline, the quick dealer of justice against injustice. Some people had different ways of going about it was all - they had their OWN heroes which were probably different than mine (some people might wish to model themselves on Billy the Kid, or, more up-to-date, so called freedom fighters, IRA, and other terrorist organisations). I won't go into what I consider to be anti-

heroes here (not my scene man), but shall merely content myself with sticking to the grey areas of the differences between the hero and the vigilante.

I'm sure many of us at one time or another have held strong enough beliefs, that if the law couldn't protect you and your family, you just weren't going to sit idly by and let someone 'do unto you' first. I can say without any hesitation that while someone was raping my wife I wouldn't be calmly dialing 999 and waiting for the police to honour themselves with their presence. If I couldn't stop the rapist in any other way, believe me, I WOULD kill him. This is strong justice, but would the police approve? I doubt it - and they certainly couldn't and wouldn't advise us with an alternative course of action to the situation. Insisting in fact we always 'rely on them'. Why, I've even had subscribers writing in saying they've had police turn up, eventually, after a break-in only to say: "Well there's nothing much we can do."

Steve Weekes mentions the same thing in his article when he said: "The idea that revenge is sweet is often used in comic books to motivate a new superhero. They may have suffered at the hands of the criminal world, or have become angered at the way the criminals are managing to get away with crimes due to an inadequate law system, or through pay-offs being made to the law-enforcing body. The super powered individual may feel obliged to take things into his own hands because the system has failed. They become vigilantes and as such will soon be hunted for by the policing body - though public opinion would be on their side, and the vigilante thought of as a hero."

This is an interesting point. Steve talks only for comic book heroes of course. But, most certainly, it seems films about vigilantes - most Charles Bronson and Clint Eastwood films - are extremely popular. Why? Why do children need comic book heroes like 'Dare Devil' and 'Batman'; two such heroes wronged by the criminal world? A lot of grown ups even read these comics (I like some of them still) and enjoy watching films like 'Death Wish' and the more fanciful 'Fistful of Dollars'. Some might even identify themselves with the heroes portrayed. Look at the popular support people gave in the real life situation of an American on a tube train who stabbed some muggers that attacked him. He was arrested of course. I didn't get to hear of the final outcome, but the huge public support must have helped him in his trial. Was the vigilante wrong, should he have let himself get mugged? I think we all know the obvious answer to that one.

So then, back to my original question, what IS a hero? Is it someone like the vigilante to stands up for himself when others wouldn't? Is it the once-in-a-lifetime person who saves another from death (drowning etc)? Is it the public serviceman like the fireman, policeman, soldier, the Bomb Disposal men of both the latter groups? Certainly the once-in-a-lifetime person won't think of himself/herself as a hero; they just do what they have to do on the space of a moment. As for the public servicemen... they may like the thrill of danger doing a dangerous job (I know I did when I spent 4½ years in the Royal Engineer Bomb Disposal team); but there's also the satisfaction of doing a public service. Some of you might just label them as potentially suicidal. I'd disagree for myself, I enjoyed what I did. I certainly would feel like I was dying doing a factory job.

This then just leaves the vigilante... or even the comic book hero - could it be either of these? I think, although we might approve of them, most of us wouldn't choose the vigilante for what we'd class as The Legendary Hero. Which just leaves us with something which is little more than a mere myth. Is this finally what being a hero is all about; a mythical something we just WISH to emulate and leave it like that? Perhaps it is merely an inbred racial thing like eating the heart of a beaten warrior to make one more fearless, or wearing the head of a slain lion, or not eating lizards, snakes, worms or anything crawly lest we take on these attributes with the assumption 'you ARE what you eat'. Looking up to heroes, as a racial trait, is certainly feasible - but it doesn't answer why. A lot of civilisations do it - the myths -

Seigfried, Tristan, Horatius, Robin Hood, King Arthur. It appears to me that heroes are merely 'banners' to follow, to ride behind, an unobtainable but much sought after mental ideal. Something to bolster flagging spirits in times of war - perhaps much talked about around campfires through the ages; and, maybe just mental escape in often mundane lives.

I know one thing - TV heroes like 'The Saint', 'The Professionals' (Conan and Doyle), 'Dempsey & Makepeace' aren't heroes. They merely rely on luck to 'keep them alive'. In the real world they'd be dead; guns don't always jam when used by a professional assassin, and being professional, I'm sure they'd ever rarely miss what they aimed at! However, I like to escape (sometimes) with my heroes.

"Hi ho Silver awaaaayy!"

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LETTERS

Just get a couple of important letters out of the way first...

ANON: "I wonder if you could answer a query Tom, and let me remain anonymous. Being new to the hobby and in only a couple of games I am not sure of the correct procedure. Perhaps you could let me have the benefit of your wisdom.

I am currently playing a game in another zine, which, it appears, seems to be getting more and more unreliable (the zine I mean, not the game!). Several of my fellow players are very unhappy about the situation, we are caught between paying more subs to keep in credit and hope to finish the game, or pull out of the zine and lose the game. I, for one, would hate to throw away the hard diploming I have put in up to now.

My question is, if all the players in my game agreed amongst themselves, is there any way we could arrange to play the game in another zine? Not necessarily yours, but one where we could be sure of playing the game to a fairly reliable deadline? How do we go about it, is there a special service like the Orphan game rehouse, or anything?

It seems to me, a mere beginner, that the zines were set up to enable people to play Diplomacy, surely we can have some say in how our game, which after all we do pay for, is run?"

("I'm sorry to hear you're having trouble with your host zine - it's unfortunate but things like this do happen every now and then, even though the hobby tries to cover every eventuality. Yes, you do have some say in how your game is run. Don't you worry about hurting the feelings of the editor concerned - he's supposed to be giving you a service, not the other way around. Of course I will always take over any game if unsatisfied Dib subscribers have cause for complaint (and the other players in the game agree). Those players who have credit with their old zine will not ultimately lose out, as I would expect any rescue GM to bear the cost of transferring their credit over. I know I would for one. This doesn't mean that I will be likely to believe you had £26.52 on your account! Perhaps there should be some sort of rescue service to cover games like this?

I suggest if you have cause for complaint you try the Orphan Game's Rehouse first. Just write to Nick Kinzett, 11 Daleway Road, Green Lane, Coventry, CV3 6SF. Tel. 0203 414759, telling him you'd like your game transferred, or contact me.)

Re my request for people interested in 'En Gardel' - Peter Sullivan has kindly volunteered to GM a campaign for me. He's had experience and writes and says:-

PETER SULLIVAN: "I think 6 or 7 players is the minimum for a reasonable start - on the other hand I wouldn't like to start with more than about ten, until I get back into the swing of things.

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With regards my time and other commitments I've got important exams in November so I couldn't start until then, but after that I should be alright. At the moment CMag is a Friday evening Monday morning concern and will remain so. I do as it comes. (Thanks Peter.) Other important discussions.

GEORGE NORTH: "Last time I mentioned the front cover and was surprised to learn that Jan was the clever old cock that did the drawing. And talking of clever old cocks I have to question the method used to open an egg - of course, you do not cut the top off with a knife for goodness sake, you smash it with a spoon and remove the shell siver by siver. I have a word. (Hah! Philistine! Any civilised person will tell you that the only way to open a boiled egg is to gently slice off the top with a knife. Smashing it with only a cave man throwback to a time when they had to bust Teradactyl eggs with crude clubs. I can assume most of us have become more sophisticated as time has past? Would you now bring a club to the breakfast table? Manners, sir, manners.")

MIKE CLOSE: "Who's this Peter Sullivan who says he's scared me off? What a silly snog! ((I guess he was living in hope)) And he criticises the great George North in the same paragraph. Dearie me - knocking two of the greatest geniuses of Dib! We bring the latest scientific (remember the Chameleon Experiments?) and artistic achievements (e.g. Angel Dolls music) to the attention of the world through the lettercol of Dib; and all they do is moan! It's partly your fault of course - you left off the treble clef + bar lines from my scintillating piece of music. George is so clever that he doesn't have to bother with trivialities such as which clef to use, and besides, it all depends on the size and quality of the knicker elastic you use. For example, if I used my girlfriend's knicker elastic, then I'd end up with a bass about ten inches high and with a very high note, not because she is very thin but because she wears very skimpy knickers!! Hal! that's what's missing from your lettercol - SEX!!

((Ssschhh! We can't go around talking about sex, and your girlfriend's skimpy knickers in Dib! Apart from it being sexist, and the fact that I now have a few female readers, a lot of my subscribers haven't discovered this side of life yet. What do you want to do, bring them all out in pimples? Now if you were talking about Damart underwear...))

GEORGE NORTH: "Trust my old friend Mike to come up with something and the Jews Harp is right up Mike's street! Anyway, if I play the knicker elastic base and Mike twangs the Jews Harp, will Jan and you do a duet? I enclose the record for your perusal and hope it will sell."

((Believe me, you wouldn't WANT to hear Jan's singing. We don't call her 'Foghörn Lil' for nothing y'know. Why, even as far back as her school days she was asked to mime in the school choir - she sounded bad, but looked enthusiastic. It's an unfortunate fact of life that Jan likes singing, and sings with gusto, but it certainly puts a strain on the ol' eardrums. We all have our crosses to bear. This one's mine.))

LUKE CLUTTERBUCK: "Issue 51 contained at least 51 points that I wanted to take up: from sexism (in Dib? - never!) to unemployment and from semantics to game rules but I shall confine myself to only two points. Firstly, I believe the washboard part to the North/Close composition would go something like 'a-whoosh-a-whoosh-a-whoosh-a-whoosh-a-whoosh-a-whoosh' (they

didn't give me a seventh grade in classical guitar for nothing, eh?). Secondly, could you please answer two questions which have puzzled me for a long time: Why 'DIB DIB DIB' and why 'LUTON AIRPORT'?"

((Yes there's something for everyone in Dib, and you certainly picked out the more important points. I can well believe they wouldn't give you a seventh grade in classical guitar for nothing, but just what it WAS is what I want to know; how much was the bribe price? More to the point did they have change when splitting your dollar?)

The name 'Dib Dib Dib' came about when I had a friend and his wife staying with me for the weekend. He looked and acted so much like the comedian Russ Abbott (the fall-guy of 'The Black Abbotts', when they were around) of which I am a fan, that it seemed a great idea to use the catchphrase of one of the funniest characters Russ Abbott ever created; that of a bungling Scout Leader who dib dib dib'd himself through almost every other word. 'Luton Airport' started because of the Sopwith games - the only games I used to run when Dib started. I wanted 'Tower Control', Jan wanted 'Luton Airport' it was as simple as that. Naturally I get what I want, but who wants to go without breakfast dinner and tea because of a silly name? Not me!))

KRIS MORRIS: "I'm sure I'm not the only player to be astounded at your reasoning behind allowing a double-deadline in 'Uther'. Quite honestly, I was really annoyed at you. I realise that in some instances a double-deadline is perfectly in order, as in 'Lamfhada' (my commiserations to Alan by the way), but I do not accept that holidays are a valid excuse."

And...

KATHY COLLMAN: "I was a bit cheesed off about the double deadline - I felt that we'd all been warned when the gamestart would be, and James should have let you know from the outset that he couldn't start then - as it is, we've all been left up in the air, running out of steam at a rapid rate of knots (get the mixed metaphor there, what form of transport am I describing?)" ((My wife's car))

((You'd be quite right at any other time, Kris, Kathy, about holidays not being a valid excuse to hold a game over - but not in Spring 01. You see it's entirely normal to request a double-deadline in the first season, and the GM ALWAYS allows it. This is because of the time needed to write important Diplomacy letters. Quite often one season is not enough time to feel out and cement the all-important alliance, because of players being unknown to each other. All GM's have this rule. Sorry it upset you though, I know it's a drag when one is looking forward to getting a game started.))

And even... (these Morris' and Collman's are everywhere!)

MICHELE MORRIS: "First of all I would like to apologise for the quality of this letter. It will not be up to my usual standard of sparkling wit and brilliant repartee. Since I last wrote to you my mother has died (hence I've been busy dealing with solicitors re probate and selling her house etc.), the middle male chauvinist piglet has had croup and Kris and I have both had the flu. I do not function too well under such circumstances. ((Please accept my condolences, Michele - Kris with flu?!))

What's all this with a double deadline for 'Uther'? Perhaps I have a nasty, suspicious mind but when I heard about it I had visions of the following scenario taking place. One person returns from holiday to find Dib sitting on the mat. It has obviously been there several days. He finds he is playing a potentially vulnerable country and realising that everyone has probably been busily diploming in his absence, and that as he hasn't written that this means it is likely they are ganging up on him, he panics. I know what, he thinks, I'll contact G.M. and tell him if he doesn't give me a double deadline I'll drop out and bugger up his entire game before it even gets started. Poor GM is in a quandry, he

doesn't want his game messed up and so gives in. Does that ring a bell Tom? Perhaps I'm slandering a certain person(s). Perhaps there was a good reason for a double deadline (a holiday is not a good reason), and maybe he just didn't want it published in Dib. If so, he could at least have had the courtesy to explain himself to the other players. ((See above))

On to the 'lettercol'. It is nice to see that phase one of the Morris plan-to-take-over-the-world (i.e. to take over Dib lettercol), is proceeding well. Heaven help you all, poor unknowing fools!

It's no good calling on Kris for help. He's been trying to control me for the last ten years and hasn't succeeded yet! Anyhow he's Cornish by nature. If you don't know what that means, well the Spanish have a phrase Manyana (or something like that) which means, I'll do it tomorrow. The Cornish consider that to be terribly hasty. My brother-in-law summed up Kris beautifully when he said "if his trousers, (actually he said arse, but I'm a lady), was on fire he'd be too lazy to sit in a well!"

((Jan says the phrase which sums me up most is, "My husband was always accident free, then one day, he fell into a routine...!!!" Of course I don't believe her - hell it's nearly tea-time, must dash. Kris a Cornishman eh, well that explains everything. I wonder if I should once again start off the 'Cornishmen v Others' joke competition? Nah, the Cornishmen always lose!))

GEORGE NORTH: "I was pleased to read a letter from an old friend, Brian Moore, who seems to have entered the hobby the same time as I did. This is the second time in a week that I heard mention of Will Haven. Steve Norledge of Rapsallion wrote a petulant article about his newly revived Bellicus column in some magazine or other (can't find Rapsallion to check at the moment), referring to Will as an old fogie raving on about what happened years ago. Well, Brian and I were grateful to Will for helping us into the hobby at a time when it was between being organised by a Committee run by Richard Sharp, and going back to the old way of each zine fending for itself. Like Brian, I sent along my £1 and heard nothing until contacted by the rebel Will Haven and invited to join Bellicus, followed by Chimaera and so on. Personally I thought Will had left the games club, but now he is back I shall hasten to subscribe to the zine in which this fellow is featured. I don't know what happened to the pound I sent but in the long run it was worth every penny, and I'm grateful for the slip that I presume Richard and his Committee placed inside the boxed game. Opened up a whole new world of postal games it did, and I regard it as the best pound I ever spent."

((Hear hear - need more be said?))

RICHARD SHARP: "I thought I'd annoy you by writing a letter. I know you regard your letter column as an extensor of your Editorial, where you publish letters from imaginary subscribers expressing opinions of such idiocy as rather to give the game away. However, since none of your other four genuine subbers ever seem to write to you, I suppose it's up to me as usual. ((Oh come now Richard, how you can even suggest I'd invent names like Clutterbuck and Emblem, I just can't imagine.))

What's all this nonsense about the '71 rulebook being hard to understand? You should try the '69 rulebook! Rule XII, for example, is perfectly clear and well expressed - it's even in capitals, so that products of the modern educational system can read it easily. A CONVOYED ATTACK DOES NOT PROTECT THE CONVOYING FLEETS says everything you need to know. The second sentence could admittedly be improved - preferably by leaving it out, but acceptably by changing 'a fleet which is attacking' to 'an attack on'. A good job was done on revising the rulebook - God help us if some idiot starts tampering with it now. I am aware that there are some people who can't understand it, but this is not the fault of the rulebook.

My memory is better than yours (or that of one of your recent inventions, 'Brian Moore'). So far as I am aware, the Postal Games Asso-

ciation doesn't exist and never has; if it ever did, I was not connected with it. You wisely refrain from giving dates for 'Moore', but in your own case I still have the records: you did indeed send me £2 in February 1978 (over a year before the NGC died, not 'a couple of months') and you'd had value for it because you sent me another £5 two months later."

((You have, I admit, picked me up on one of my weak points - that I have a lousy memory - but I know I didn't accuse you of heading an organisation called the PGA, because it was just a fancy name being bandied around after the collapse of the National Games Club. I realise that. Various people seemed to find a need to call the hobby something, and at that time NGC was little more than a dirty word.

As for the extra £5, don't make the mistake of putting that down to added value, because (a) it was either a fiver sub I sent you to give me the chance to read and scoff at your miserable rag, or (b) it was the fiver I sent Birks in a collection to help save your worthless hide from those foreign froggy doctors. Both of which I might well come to regret!))

RICHARD (CONT): "'Mike Pollard' is another quite good comic creation, though a bit stereotyped. I've heard that there are actually some real people who think we we should have left the Falklands to that nice General whatsisname. Quite right too. Who cares about them? They're a long way away and they're the wrong colour anyway. As for unemployment in Britain, I thoroughly enjoyed my spell of it. Alas, they wouldn't give me unemployment benefit at all, which made paying the school fees a bit tricky, so I had to go back to work. Incidentally, do you ever find it strange that although unemployment figures are published daily, figures for coloured immigration are secret? Could it be because the two are in some way related?"

((Could be. My guess though is we're not supposed to even mention things like 'coloured' immigration. Becoming interested in such things could brand you as a racist! *Sigh* - cynical? - I guess I'm just fed up with hearing all the excuses about the riots, and I'm angry at the way the coloured communities seem to be laughing at our ideas of law and order.))

DAVE TANT: "Just a note to say I popped into Hamley's in Regent Street this week. (It was my first visit for years and I was mightily disappointed - the staff are ignorant and surly and the circular model railway layout was gone.) But to the point (and if I want to start a sentence with and or but I'm jolly well going to - my English teachers must all be dead by now so there's F.A. they can do about it) they had the new Sopwith game on display, selling at £9.99 I think. I wasn't very impressed on the whole. The board is very jazzy and there are lots more counters for balloons and things, but I couldn't see the 'dashboards' in the box I opened. ((I still haven't received mine))

Mind you, I had my hands rather full and dropped the box contents on the floor twice (no, the assistants were SURLY before that) so I may have missed them, but if I did they can't be in the nice stout cardboard we are used to.

One point you might care to air in the 3 Dib pages, following on from Piglet's comments on the young: (Or at least younger than he.) My main grumble at today's youth is that they are mostly ignorant and badly spoken (the two not necessarily going together when I was young, as speech depended more on your environment).

Now my father had every excuse for being ignorant. He left school at 11, worked in a signal box, on a farm, did 9 years as a ranker in the army, then spent some forty years as a Commissionaire. He was a voracious reader, though, and could usually beat me at quizzes (and in case you think that's nothing much, I've had a lot of success in general knowledge quizzes and am a MENSA member).

My daughter, on the other hand, deliberately speaks the most appalling English, to the extent that I genuinely cannot understand what