

**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

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### 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 If you merely wish to write to ME, personally, fine, mark your letter clearly 'Not for Publication' and you can rest assured I will not publish it.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 -