

DIB DIB DIB



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Welcome to the 57th issue of Dib Dib Dib - a rather largish issue due to clearance of articles, letters, etc. The cost is a fixed rate of 45p per issue in the UK and 28p + postage overseas. Send money, to Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks., HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

EDITORIAL

I must take this space to give you warning. After this issue I'll be cutting Dib back a bit: no editorials, less letters, and less articles. The reason is that over the Summer (up until late Autumn) we'll be busy househunting, or rather a larger garden hunting (on Jan's instructions). I don't know where to yet, but no further north than Birmingham, no further west than the Welsh border, no further east than Cambridge, and no further south than where I am or perhaps Reading. It's a lot of ground to look over, and I don't want to be held down to long deadlines. THIS IN NO WAY MEANS I'm FOLDING, I'm certainly NOT. Dib will be carrying on for ages yet. What it will mean is that Dib's turnaround will be speeded up and the zine will be 4 weekly instead of 5 weekly. Though if we find something earlier it'll mean I'll be able to get back to normal earlier. We'll have to wait and see.

I realise that some of you get the zine because of the chat side of it (especially trades), if this is the case and you want to stop trading or receiving Dib please let me know - though I'll be sorry to see you go, I realise nothing can be done about it. GOOD that's all the boring stuff over with, now I can get on with it.

I seem to be meeting a lot of new hobby people lately. Richard Downes has been up a couple of times (I think I mentioned how 'normal looking' he seemed last time, ~~didn't I?~~). Then, ~~right out of the blue~~ John Bycroft turned up (on Richard's second visit) and last night Roberto Della-Sala and Pete Sullivan arrived on the doorstep.

John Bycroft was a surprise, looking more like a bank manager than anything else with his pin stripe suit and black attache case. Intrigued I asked him what was in the case, and John managed to piss me off by unloading a 650K Olivetti flat screen portable computer + modem. What do these men DO I wondered, to be let loose in the world with equipment like this!

Yes, John was a surprise, however seeing Pete Sullivan was a shock. My God I thought Gary Piper was big, but Pete blotted out the sunlight as he passed the patio doors! Mind you, I'm not referring to his ample girth (a 'little' bigger than mine maybe) but more to his height - the man must be 6' 6" at least!

Of course I managed to con both Roberto and Pete into doing some work on Spots of News before they left (thanks fellas), and whilst Roberto hunkered down on the floor easily in comfort (apart from getting pins and needles) I had to turn a whole settee over to Petel God knows how his mum manages to feed him - probably throws a leg of mutton at him to be getting on with! No, just joking Pete, honest...

I had to chortle though at Richard Sharp's latest offering using his new Amstrad word processor. Not that Dolchstoss was bad mind you, far from it. It was just Richard's naive quote that using a computer things MUST get easier to do in the long run, eh? Ha ha, hahaha HAHAHAAaa... I mean... doesn't he realise that now he's hooked, now he's made the £400+ investment, his troubles are only just starting! Everyone knows that computers are designed to cope with one problem, merely to create another! After a month we'll have another dedicated terminal junkie; hollow-eyed, balding of head (though Richard has no problem here), with hooked talons stabbing spasmodically at the keys in the hope that THIS time things will turn out right. Be kind to him, another traditionalist has succumbed, and this could be the passing of an era.

Another of those 'schoolboy' editors, 15 year old Mark Campbell is keeping up the tradition (were Steve Agar, Pete Northcott and others left off) of starting up a new zine called Taste of Paradise which will be out in early April. Those interested need only send Mark a 17p stamp. Mark Campbell, 27 Cardigan Drive, Belfast, BT14 0LX, Co. Antrim, N. Ireland

DECISIONS

(Loosely based on 'Busy' by A.A. Milne)
by Michele 'Hacker' Morris

I think I'll sub to DibDibDib. That would be rather swell. Or MP could be better. It's so difficult to tell.

Perhaps I'll try Vienna? No, I think I'll take a dram. I'm feeling rather funny and I don't know who I am -

But

What to do,
And what to do,
And what to do, again?
All around the zine scene,
The zines for Diplomacy.
What to do,
And what to do,
And what to do again?

I think I'll play as Russia, play without a care. I think I'll play as England, who gets another centre, beside another centre, because it's only fair.

So

Who to be,
And who to be,
And who, what, what'n'who.
What to do,
And what to do? Who to?

I think I'll try a Juggernaut and cross the map with ease. I think I'll try Lepanto, poor Austria for to tease.

Perhaps I'm just a stooge, behaving like a lamb. I'm feeling rather funny and I don't know what I am.

But

What to do,
And what to do,
And what to do, again?
All around the zine scene,
The zines for Diplomacy.
What to do,
And what to do,
And what to do again?

I think I am a Novice, looking out for fun..

I think I am a nation, who

Is looking for an ally, who

Is looking for an ally, who wants me on the run.

So

Who to be,
And who to be,
And who, what, what'n'who?
What to do,
And what to do? Who to?

THE 1986 GLADYS AWARDS

Well, as I mentioned in my editorial last issue, it would take a strong personality to get these awards up and running again after the Pyrrhic Victory Rapscaillon failures, and we may well have it in the shape of the new custodian, Geoff Challenger (editor of Home of the Brave). I certainly hope so, and wish Geoff the best of luck. I'll support him so why don't you. It's only supposed to be a bit of harmless fun leading up to the main 'Diplomacy Zine Poll'. It's getting the backing from its originator, John Miller, who hopes it'll be used again in the fun it was intended. It wasn't until Mike Alloway took it over that the categories started getting serious. Anyway, 'nuff of this, on with the show. Geoff invites nominations for the following categories; as many as you want for each category, or vote for just one category - it's entirely up to you.

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|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Best Diplomacy Zine | 8. Best Looking Zine |
| 2. Best General Games Zine | 9. Best New Zine |
| 3. Best F.R.P. Zine | 10. Best Zine for Hobbynews |
| 4. Best Chatzine | 11. Most Improved Zine |
| 5. Best Lettercol | 12. Best Diplomacy GM |
| 6. Best Writer | 13. Best Games GM |
| 7. Best Subzine | 14. Most Regretted Fold |
| 15. The Dame Edna Everidge Award for Nicest Hobby Person. | |

Oh well, no comic categories this time it seems. What happened to the 'Grass Widow of the Year' category? Jan won this the first year - wot a cheek. Anyway, all nominations must be sent in to Geoff by May 8th 1986 to 117 Shrubbery Road, South Darenth, Kent, DA4 9AP.

JOTTO Turn 6

The prize is £4.50. Don't forget if anyone forgets, or loses, their words or their results, feel free to contact me for a check. And talking of checks, I made a little mistake with Matthew's 5th word last time. His result should have been: 5th 221211. Rosie has NMR'd again so you all have a better chance of winning... Mike, you're still one move behind remember.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ROSIE ROBERTS : 5TH NMR; 6TH NMR | MATTHEW WRIGHT: 6TH 110210 |
| ULF JIRETORN : 6TH 332212 | DENISE SMITH : 6TH 423222 |
| KATH COLLMAN : 6TH 543133 | MIKE CLOSE : 5TH 120120 |
| MICHELE MORRIS: 6TH 223202 | BILL HAYGARTH : 6TH 213101 |
| BRIAN MOORE : 6TH 433014 | |

It had to come eventually - so I'll just quickly get it out of the way. A not-so-brief intro from the one and only: LUKE CLUTTERBUCK

You asked for a brief personal introduction so here goes: I began life in Ankorage, Zambia in 1335. One of my parents was a US medieval historian doing some fieldwork, one was a gnat vet and the other was a specialist in making wine from yak vomit. After a childhood spent in seclusion, I was eventually severed from my identical Siamese twin, Louise, and attended Kabul University where I studied the theory and practice of hot dogs in industry. At this point I should explain that I was not actually 'born' in the normal sense. Nor was I hatched, mined or harvested. In fact I was knitted into being and I think it was this that first led me to becoming a tailor.

Unfortunately, the green uniform they gave us to wear clashed with my purple skin and it wasn't easy to sew with tentacles either so I left to pursue my ambition to become the first twenty-sided creature to beat Tom Tweedy in a game of D&D. Politically I used to be an anarcho-syndicalyst-

humanist-conservationist before moving on to Diabetes after a brief fling with being a Martian. People often ask me how I managed to live so long. Well, I've drunk forty bottles of Creme De Menthe every day for 651 years so it can't be the alcohol. And, being a Mormon, I've been married 78,000 odd times so it can't be the women. Maybe it's the cigarettes I avoid that's caused my longevity. I did try to smoke about 482 years ago but I didn't like it. One final thing, the name 'Clutterbuck' is of course made up - no-one would believe my real name.

((Yes, okay, all that explains a lot; that you are definitely Australian, but it doesn't explain why you're so WEIRD!))

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BIRMINGHAM WEEKEND DIPLOMACY  
from Danny Collman

((I had this fully typed up to be included this issue. It was with some surprise then when I saw this article published in the latest Zeeby. I won't publish articles that have been printed elsewhere (sorry Danny, but there's lack of space as well) unless it's articles on gaming strategy and tactics of interest to novices. However, I've carried on with Danny's article where I think there's some relevance.))

"If perchance you happen to live in or near Brum, and want to know why the hell you didn't know about this little happening ((the Birmingham weekend)), I suggest you have an insy-winsy little word about it in a certain editor's ear... the one who left the letter at the bottom of his 'in' tray.

As for the next BWD, sometime in May, those who come are expected to bring along a friend, and I shall have already found some people by then (how's that for optimism?). If you're interested, then look out for advance publicity. It'll cost you £1.50 for six hours (or more) play, against people pretty much of your own standard.

What you lot can do in the meantime is consider these two Gordian Knot-type puzzles: a Scoring System and a Rating System with the National and International use in mind. Yes, I know Manorcon and Midcon have their own scoring systems, but I don't think much of either. In both cases they are based, at least partially, on your performance matched against 'same country' performance in other games, rather than your performance in your own game (and sometimes that as well). Also, in both cases a degree in higher maths is needed to work out your own score.

I know Richard Sharp has his own Rating System (which I don't like because it does not start from '0'), it assumes a hypothetical rating for your very first game. Then, after a game or two, your actual rating goes up or down from there, I think.

I'm hoping to repeat the success of the last Birmingham Weekend Diplomacy at the end of April/beginning of May. The last one was very successful in terms of sheer enjoyment, and I'm hoping to get larger numbers this time. At the time of writing, I've been unable to book the date (can't get through to the damned woman) but Saturday 3rd of May is the date I want: the doors will open at 4pm and the games start at 4.30. They will stop, if not already finished, at the end of the Autumn season following 11pm.

The cost will be £1.50, and I'm hoping to actually cover my costs this time. My phone number is 021-554-9401 for enquiries, and my address is in Dib 56 under Diplomacy Conference Maps in Dibs and Drabs. If you know someone who might be interested bring them along."

LUTON AIRPORT: I was going to answer this to some great extent but I've left it a little late. Suffice to say that I think Danny is taking on more than he knows. The various Rating systems have been tried and tested over a period of time, and people won't be too pleased at someone dragging the systems through the mud without a better way of replacing them. You have been warned Danny.,

CUP OF CONFESSION

by Alan Powis

I recognised him as soon as I saw him, even though I did not know him. I knew his type. To me his walk, the frown of mental concentration on some, unfathomable problem, the lack of attention to his surroundings all marked him as different. I decided to find out more about him.

He was in the cafe when I entered, sitting at a table, drinking coffee. I ordered a coffee and watched him, studied him, while it was being poured. The frown, the intense mental concentration, the air of indifference, they were all there still. My coffee arrived and I carried it over to his table.

"Do you mind if I join you?" I asked. He started visibly as he realised I was speaking to him.

"Certainly," he replied. I sat opposite him and decided to get straight to the point.

"I know you." I said. He looked at me, puzzled, trying to put a name to my face. "No," I went on. "We have never been introduced but I know you. One of the band of postal Diplomacy players that, banded together, call themselves 'The Hobby' with capital letters."

"How did you know?" he asked, the frown vanishing to be replaced by a smile.

"I recognised the signs." I replied. "I would like to know one thing though."

"And what is that?" he asked.

"Why do you play Diplomacy?"

The question, simple as it was, seemed to take him by surprise. He sat back on his chair and considered a while how best to answer. Finally he was ready.

"Firstly, there is the game of Diplomacy. No dice, no cards to draw, no luck factor, only skill. The only other game to compare it to is Chess, but with Chess you can beat your opponent simply because he has a bad night. With Diplomacy you have six opponents and the only way you will beat all of them is with skill.

"Next there is playing the game; the art of Diplomacy, Communicating with your opponents, bending them to your will, persuading them to do just what you want them to do, persuading them that you mean what you say. There is skill in that but the joy of sending and receiving letters gives some satisfaction. I often find myself waiting eagerly for the postman to arrive. Sundays, when there's no post are terrible.

"Finally there is the pleasure of receiving the 'zines. There is usually so much more than just the games, but the main things are the game reports. Oh, the misery of it when you read that the promised support never materialised. Oh the despair when someone stabs you and you are already in a desperate position. But, ohh, the pleasure when everything goes well, the expected gains are gained. And the ecstasy when a stab works and you find yourself at the throat of a vulnerable opponent. You know how he will feel when he reads the report and the picture of how he will look makes it even more enjoyable. That is what it's about."

At this, his eyes closed and an ecstatic smile spread across his face as he remembered some past Triumph no doubt.

When I opened my eyes again I was alone. There was nobody seated opposite me. Mine was the only cup on the table. Of my questioner there was no trace, if, indeed he had ever existed. I looked around me but no one was paying any special attention to me. Still, I decided to drink my coffee and leave quickly, just in case someone had heard...

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((It's no use saying "there but for the grace of God...", we all know most of us act this way with our hobby, admit it! It's just that in Alan's case he can't help being schizoid. Thanks Alan.))

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTER

KRIS MORRIS: "Could you print the following:-

Kris and Michele would like to thank everyone who sent messages of sympathy on our recent bereavement and other family troubles. They were very much appreciated."

((Yes, I was sorry to hear of all your problems in recent letters, Kris, Michele, it does you both credit that you managed to cram humour into your letters afterwards - hell and I thought I had problems.))

MIKE CLOSE: "It's a pity so few people can say anything nice about me. (George North doesn't count, we all can guess what the smell of brewing beer for forty years does to your brain.) Still, they do say that no publicity is bad publicity!"

((No, no, ANY publicity I give you is hopefully bad publicity! Now, be off with you wretch lest I forget myself and say something nice - pity doesn't even come into it.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "I must offer an apology to Luke Clutterbuck. I was much moved by his appeal for Valentines/birthday cards etc, and as I had an Xmas aerogramme left over I decided to send it to him with a variety of greetings messages to be deleted as appropriate. After I'd written it out I got Kris to dictate the address to me and duly posted it off. It was only the next day when I was going through the past Dib's looking for clues as to what computer you had, I noticed I'd sent the damn thing to Luke's old address."

((You shouldn't have wasted an expensive second-hand aerogramme on the likes of Clutterbuck, Michele, he doesn't deserve it. You're too soft that's your trouble. Er, by the way, steady on the "Kissy, kissy, cuddle, cuddle for St Valentines" in future will you, it's ever so embarrassing; I didn't know where to put myself! I mean, I'm sorta used to getting abused by my subscribers now...))

ANDY MANSFIELD: "I was immature enough at the age of 17 to have my left ear pierced (it was a trendy and shocking 10 years ago), and can assure Michele that there was nobody more apprehensive than me when it came to the fateful day, however it didn't even hurt. Unlike a friend of mine who was working at a stables at the time, he used a hypodermic needle designed to penetrate the thick skin of the equines he looked after to put a hole in his lobe, now that did hurt. However take a tip from me and don't work for a chemical company and use a fungal encourager designed to attract bugs from the air for measuring purposes, I did and found that a few days later I had a colony of nasties firmly entrenched in the hole and beginning to 'party'. ((Ugh!))

Where does one sign to take part in the 'Stocking vs Tights' debate? Being a typical male (!) with voyeur tendencies I can contribute an extremely biased opinion on the subject, but to kick off how about a discussion on which adverts are read more avidly on the London Tube, I bet the Stocking adverts win hands down (if you pardon the expression). I know they get my vote. P.S. When were your younger days and what happened to the car?"

((My God yes, I haven't been on the London tube for YEARS. I can remember the adverts though, I used to go up and down the escalators three or four times until I had read them all. Very therapeutic I must say. As for my car, I don't wish to talk about it, lest I manage to convey to my subscribers just how much of a degenerate they have for an editor.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "After all our troubles I was really looking forward to getting Dib, but what did I find? Not only had that rotten bar-steward Frostie nicked NTH off me after he'd sworn on his honour he wouldn't (should've known he didn't have any), you'd gone and censored my press, you rotten swine you. Made my day I don't think! I'd have gone and put my head in the oven only it's electric and I look terrible with frizzy hair. Still at least John Colledge loves me! A most discerning fellow if ever I saw one. (I'm considering having his letter framed. You do suppose he was sincere don't you, and not just taking the mick?) Mind you you did describe me as "so special" so perhaps you aren't all bad. Alright Tweedy Pie, I forgive you this time.

On to Dib 56. I loved the cover Jan, reminded me of when I was little. Every morning I used to come down to brekkie to see my Noddy egg-cup with its blue felt hat (complete with ting-a-ling bell) waiting for me, and there underneath the cover was the smiling face of that cheery little lion! It was a nice way to start the day, you were guaranteed to see at least one smiling face. I wish they'd bring him back. Bye-the-bye a HAPPY EASTER TO YOU."

((Hey, you can't pin me down to being nice, when I mentioned "so special" it was a slip of the tongue, that's what I say. As for the little blue lion, yes, I can remember that. I wonder why they got rid of it though?))

CHRIS SANDOW: "Re Kris Morris: why don't you sell off back copies of Dib - at extortionate prices, of course - as collectors' items?"

Re George North: Did you know (did you want to know?) that it is possible to make a mirror that doesn't 'reverse' you and that shows you as others see you: (ghastly thought!). Ideally it should be a curved mirror, but failing that you can use two mirrors placed edge to edge at 90 degrees to one another, like an open book. Try it and see. (Never say you don't learn anything from these letters - the Dib letter column opens up new horizons!)"

((Oh my God, this is a Chimera style letter if ever I saw one, don't tell me we'll next be on the subject of 2-D flies, please! Look Chris, just ignore George North. You shouldn't take the chance of encouraging him. Can't you just have visions of him trying out the mirror experiment? I can.

As for back copies of Dib, I do have a few recent ones. Nothing else though, they've all been snapped up! Certainly they're collectors' items.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "You can tell George North that the reason why the blood doesn't rush to your feet when you stand up is that your veins have semi-lunar valves along their length to stop any back flow! When you stand on your head the valves open and allow the blood to rush to your brain. ((More little gems of knowledge - can Dib now be classed as an educational magazine?))

Oh God I feel old! Roberto Della-Sala was born in 1967! I was already mumble years old then and Kris mumble plus five. I remember that as the year my father wouldn't let me buy a bell on a chain from a hippy on Paignton sea front. Everyone was wearing beads and tie-dyes in those days. I think he, my father, thought I might catch fleas if I went within a ten foot radius of that guy! Ever since I've always wanted a little bell on a chain. (The first person to make any reference to swiss cows and me in the same breath gets their head filled in.) I guess I'm just a frustrated hippy at heart. I was just that little bit too young to be a real hippy, though my mum bought me beads, tie-dyed T-shirts and a beautiful pair of jeans covered in little red stars. (I cried buckets when I outgrew them they were so nice.) My compatriots at school were all skin-heads. I never could get to like Ben Shermans, boots and braces. So unbecoming!"

((For a girl, yes... But there was nothing wrong with a decent pair of levis, Ben Sherman shirt and highly polished Dr Martins. A bit dated now, of course,



but BEADS, BELLS and TIE-DYES! How old did you say you were, mumble, or mumble mumble?))

BRIAN MOORE: "Have you seen the 'new' Sopwith? I bought one at Manchester Dragonmeet and when I read the rules I began to wonder what had changed. The Immelman Turn can now only be done on MOVE 1 and you can do nothing except fire in MOVES 2 & 3. AA guns and Balloons can be positioned around your airport - ROBOTS have even been added to the game!

So, were these options in the original versions, and did you alter the Immelman move postally or have they altered it?"

((I haven't seen them yet, no, but I've ordered a couple of boxes. Mind you, from what you say it seems I may well regret it - ROBOTS in a Sopwith game?! What a ridiculous idea. It seems then they've changed a lot, and perhaps for the worst. The original Sopwith was played face to face exactly as is played postally (apart from the repair rule, which was a postal invention). The Immelman Turn played face to face was awarded to Aces (as an optional feature) after, I think, 15 points were scored. Nothing more. Why complicate the game, when it doesn't need it?))

ANDY MANSFIELD: "Being fairly new to the hobby (receiving my first zine and gamestart last June) it strikes me that the oft talked about dividing lines between Purist Diplomacy Zines and others concentrating on football and other games are becoming firmer and I wonder hour long before this swings further and we see a rift between the Stats zines (MP Dolchstoss etc) and the Chat zines (Dib being a fine example). Now I sub to both and each have their own advantages but I suppose I tend to judge them on their 'readability', this being deferred on the amount of content as well as the quality of the writing. I do not enjoy receiving a zine which once the game report has been studied taken me less than 10 minutes to read and consider, being a voracious (?) reader I enjoy the letter column and all the zine I see (if they have one) and articles on game related subjects are also a good read as long as they are not full of % signs and decimal points.

I suppose my ideal zine would consist of a long humorous letter column, lots of games with plenty of press and a regular turnaround (if this sounds like Dib then believe me I'm not crawling)."

((There's always been a dividing line between football, fairygame and purist Diplomacy zines, and there always will be. It's nothing new, it just seems so to newcomers every time it crops up (around and about Zine Poll times). It first cropped up when Clive Booth brought out his much loved 'games' zine, Chimaera. This 'sacrilegious' offshoot paved the way for all game zines to come; Hopscotch, Zeeby, Vienna, BttDA, etc. In fact the mould for all our modern zines today. Most zines, apart from the archaic Dolchstoss, now run some game other than Diplomacy - because it's what the public/GMs seems to want. Having said that a lot of people like Dolchstoss because (a) Richard is a very entertaining writer and (b) the hobby is still predominantly made up of Diplomacy lovers. After all said and done it's still just a matter of 'Yer pays yer money and takes yer choice'. Don't worry about it splitting the hobby, it won't. The arguments and feuds are loved as news and gossip by all, and not really taken seriously by anybody. Though you might not get anyone to admit it.))

TONY REYNOLDS: "Some info regards Roberto Della-Sala. In November 85 I toured the States using an air pass. The cost was \$400 unlimited for 60 days using the North West Orient system. Other air lines operate similar systems although North West appeared to be best value. The cost of Greyhound (or Trailways) passes are approx \$10 per day which is a little less than flying but more time is spent travelling - swings and roundabouts I suppose. Airline systems are not as comprehensive as the buses but I recommend Roberto gets in touch with the likes of Pan-Am, NW Orient, Eastern Airlines, Western Airlines, TWA and any others he could think of.

I found that travel agents are useless when it comes to this sort of thing so I telephoned the respective offices in London who willingly supplied info on passes and comprehensive timetables. From these I chose NW and ended up making over 20 US internal flights and visited amongst other places N. York, Miami, Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago, Washington, San Francisco. Excellent holiday that was.

The American Youth Hostel Association is a cheap (\$5-13/night) way to meet lots of other travellers. Get the address from the US Embassy.

If you pass on my address I'll be glad to offer him further details."

CATHY OZOG: "Air fare - it's not cheap in the States. You usually have to purchase tickets on month in advance to get any discounts. To fly from Chicago to Phoenix it's at about \$200 round trip. Chicago to New York is at \$175 round trip. As you can see it adds up. Bus - Greyhound is slow and I wouldn't want to sit in a bus all day long. I don't know prices there. Sorry I can't be of more help."

((All these Dib subscribers with money... Thanks for the info, Tony, Cathy. There you are Roberto, something to be going on with. Tony Reynolds, 17 Cotton Place, Hadrian Park, Wallsend, NE28 9UG.))

MARK CAMPBELL: "Roberto's fairly lucky alright clearing off to muck around the states. I've been abroad twice - and this summer thank God the family intends to spend July in Vienna. I couldn't face living through July here in Belfast, and I imagine that's when loyalist violence can really explode due to the 'marching season' tension. I'll probably have to emigrate to the Republic to avoid postal disruption!"

((You mean it gets violent in Northern Ireland in July? What then have we been having now? ...No, -- don't tell me, - I don't think I want to know... Irish politics, or politics of any kind I don't want to go into. Mind you, it comes to something when even the Irish want to come out. I can remember times when members of the family used to go on about holidays in Ireland, and how friendly the people were: "Why, if you were even passing a farmhouse the people would come out and offer you a cup of tea!" Was it just a dream...?))

HEIKO SCHAFFER: "I've asked Geoff Kemp (he was listed as Variant Bank in the Novice Package, I think) for various variants before Christmas. I got no reply and launched the enquiry of which I enclosed a photocopy. Still no lifesign - what do I do?"

John Piggott mentioned (in Dib 56) a 'book by Richard Sharp'; seemingly on openings. Can you give me the name of the title and the publisher so I can get a copy?"

((The book is called 'The Game of Diplomacy', but I'm sorry, I don't know the publisher. However, it can't be bought now as it's out of print. If you're very very lucky your local library might just have a copy; or, failing that, might be able to get it in. I know the Amersham library has a copy.

As for Geoff Kemp and variants, I talked to Geoff and he's still around. It's just that he's been busy with other things. However he tells me everything will soon be handed over to Pete Sullivan - so perhaps it'll be worthwhile trying him. His address is on the back of Dib if you're still interested.))

MARTYN IVES: "Have you any readers who live in Derby? I need a bed for the last weekend in August as I've entered the 'World Team Wargames Championships'. I would arrive on the Friday evening and leave Sunday. I am house trained and have been known to buy a round of drinks on a Saturday night. Mind you the beer ain't as nice up there as it is down here is it."

((I do have a couple of subscribers living up there which you could try: Clive Booth and James Mills-Hicks - but I don't know if they'll be free to help. If

anyone can help a long-standing Dib subscriber, Royal Marine, old sweat and all-round super hero, Martyn, write either to me, or contact Martyn direct at 76 Lumsden Road, Southsea, Hants, PO4 9LR. Tel. 0705 823993.))

PETER SULLIVAN: "Time to knock sense into the lettercol. Diplomacy is overwhelmingly a middle-class hobby. Teaching is one of the largest single professions amongst the middle class. The fact that they make up a proportionately large sector of the Diplomacy hobby is thus hardly surprising. The same argument applies to the high number of students."

((Ho ho, this will certainly go down well with some of the more pinkish of us in this hobby, being called middle class... Hah! I like it.))

ANDY MANSFIELD: "My letter writing time is being drasically cut, at present I'm doing two jobs (in the same place) but it means that there is little time left to participate in the more enjoyable part of the postal hobby, the letter. I do get upset when a diplomacy Correspondence just consists of a few scribbled lines and I get really annoyed with the line "I'm not a great letter writer so my letters will be short". I have had this happen to me twice already (in 7 games) and it really makes me wonder why somebody actually wants to play Postal diplomacy.

The all female Dip game - this should be interesting to watch as although there is no difference in approach etc, between male and female the knives are going to be drawn from outside the game - any mistake or wrong move is going to be greeted by howls of derision, it might be more interesting to watch the insults fly while the ladies get on with the game."

((Howls of derision... insults... these are ladies you're talking about y'know, not just some of yer rag-tag, lowly Mad Policy players. Should there be a difference in play, or is this merely a sexist ploy to get them going? Shame on you, Andy..

As for writing letters, I agree with you entirely. However, I've said before, in most games it's apathy that rules. This is why a lot of us pick games with veterans in, John Piggott, Mike Close, Richard Walkerdine, Rob Chapman, these are all great players. Maybe some of them will get the odd move wrong (John Piggott knows as much about tactics as my Great Aunt Matilda knows about Nuclear Physics), but you can bet the game will prove very entertaining. These are proven writers, and that being the case, they'll contribute to the game with letters and press if pushed by others who enjoy themselves. Don't be afraid to go up against old timers.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "Finally, a word about the 'All Women International'. I have written to Luke and Cathy thanking them for his offer of assistance and introduction of Marion, and her interest and possible recruitment of another player or two. I haven't yet written to the ladies in the Vienna directory. I thought it best to wait and see how things stand after Easter. After all we don't want to recruit too many eager young nubilees now do we? Just in case I've prepared my preference list and it should be enclosed along with my orders for Jotto and Vortigern. Have you had any ideas about the name to give the game or are you going to be boring and give it a 'Y' name? I reckon it should be something special but I don't know what. Perhaps you could even give a prize? (one free issue of Dib)?"

((Of course. I don't want to recruit too many eager young nubilees it's very true, however some of my subscribers might wish me to... an' on behalf of them, wot am I to do? Actually, you'll notice that Julie Burton has written to me, and Paul Finch who says he's living in s+n says his girlfriend is interested - though I haven't received anything from her yet. I haven't received anything from Marion in Australia either. So that leaves, er, 1.. 2.. another 1... well a lot anyway, but not yet enough. However there's no rush, I certainly don't want to push anyone into it. To that extent I won't advertise the

game, but then I don't mind others bringing it to the attention of interested players either.

As for a name for the game... I've tentatively put 'Wildcat' but this can be changed if anyone can come up with a better one not more than 8 letters long. Certainly one free issue of Dib, why not, I'm generous.))

KATH COLLMAN: "A quick thought on the all female game: there was a female playing at Midcon, by the name of Judy Lock - can we contact her by any chance? The Midcon organisers probably have her address. By the way should I let you have a preference list? ((Yes))

Finally a suggestion for a nice contentious topic for your lettercol: I HATE METRIC! I still measure in feet and inches, travel in miles, would never consider cooking in anything but pounds and ounces and if I want to know how hot the weather is I understand Fahrenheit far better than Celsius, whatever that is. Metrication is one of those subjects Danny is always pontificating about - he's all in favour of it, yet still measures his petrol consumption in miles per gallon, he can't understand litres!"

((Sorry to hear about your poorly leg, Kath - still my Birthday song to you must have made up for it, eh? But what's this, I don't need a contentious subject in Dib, I have enough. Mind you, I hate metric as well, though I do prefer Celsius; much better to start from frozen zero. As for drinking a 'metre of ale'... eh? well it doesn't sound right does it? A yard is much better. God knows what metric does to the good ol' glass Imperial Wellie. Would one have to drink out of the 3½ odd litre boot? Boringg. One might just as well drink out of a straight glass and have done with it.))

KRIS MORRIS: "Thanks for another useful article on Diplomacy Tom, how about a real meaty one on Italy, I certainly could do with a few hints. The number of people who seem to hate f-t-f Diplomacy is rather surprising to one who is a virgin (if you'll pardon the expression) to the game. I would dearly love to play a game f-t-f, but the chances of doing so are very slim, in fact non-existent. We are hoping to get one of the 'cons this year, so perhaps I'll get a chance then. As for you wanting to GM an all female game, well you have my utmost admiration and don't worry, I at least will come and visit you in hospital when you suffer your nervous breakdown!"

((I would certainly like to do more Diplomacy articles like the one 'Playing Austria', but I just don't seem to get the time. Perhaps in the near future I may be able to force myself.))

MICHELE MORRIS: "I suppose you put that bit by Mike Close in 'cos you knew it would get me going? O.K. so if women didn't work there'd be more jobs available for fellas, but what jobs they'd be! Women are mostly employed in the sorts of work that many men wouldn't want to do e.g. packing, sewing machinists, nurses etc. Women's wages also tend to be much lower than mens, even when similar jobs are performed. Hence if these jobs were given to men they would either have to up the wages and employ fewer people and therefore in all likelihood get less production, or else many more families would have to claim benefits like FIS.

Those families where the women gave up work would also lose some of their income and would probably be unable to make all of it up on FIS. Their reduced income would lead to reduced spending and further unemployment. Single women would still have to go out to work to earn their living, or are you seriously suggesting all women stay at home to be cared for by their fathers until they get a husband to take over? If not, just when would women have to give up work? When they married? When they were expecting their first child? Do you really want the talents of half the population to be almost totally wasted as it was before the days of female emancipation?"

((It wasn't suggested that women give up work, Michele, I'm all for it, I'll stay at home any time and let my wife support me. I think what Mike suggested was that there was actually less work around because women were doing jobs that used to be thought of as predominantly male-only. The fact that they do it for less wages (in some cases a debatable point e.g. doctors, teachers, lawyers) has nothing to do with it. Mind you, now that I think about it, I suppose if women did stay at home and turn their jobs over to men, you'd still have the same number out of work, wouldn't you? Now isn't that odd, I've never ever thought of women being out of work as part of the unemployed statistics! YOU SEE WHAT YOU GET ME INTO, CLOSE! Ye Gods, I've never thought of myself as sexist, yet this revelation is a bit like finding the world is not really flat. Sod this for a lark, on to something else....))

ANDY MANSFIELD: "Bernard's philosophy, which turned on its head has been the central theme of many a science fiction novel, namely we will never be admitted to any 'central galactic empire' because we are too pushy. I would have thought a review of history will dispute of talents argument. Talented people have brought us near instant communication ((And near instant death)), better medical care (just look at the death rate in the 1800's) and a host of other life saving and life giving opportunities.

However what I would suggest is that Man has constantly been unable to avoid the misuse of power which has been given to the receivers instead of the 'talented'. Can you name me one Prime Minister of any note who has contributed anything original to mankind, or alternatively any 'talent' who has been in a position to direct the worlds affairs?

Linking this to the non existent nuclear debate I would argue that if mankind as represented by the politicians decided to press the button then the universe as a whole would be worse off.

We've reached the edge of the solar system in a voyage which started back with Yuri Gagarin in the late 50's, so where can we be in another 30-40 years. This is where mankind's salvation lies, we need to establish enough breathing space to make the 'Super Powers' redundant."

((I still refuse to be drawn into this on the grounds it'll get me in deeper than I intended. As a parting shot I'll just say Gladstone gave us the Gladstone Bag. Hah, what more could we want from a Prime Minister?))

BERNARD EMBLEM: "The impressively pretentious MB logo you see above is the culmination of as week's free time devoted to the domination of Mirrorsoft's Fleet Street Editor - see MB for more details. Complete mastery of the system is obviously not going to be the work of a moment, and the package won't, despite the publicity's claims, be the answer to every editor's problem. Nevertheless, we think the thing has potential, and will be inflicting our efforts on the zine buying public over the next few months or years - if it's any good. Comments as welcome as ever, as the tale unfolds. meanwhile, I'm enclosing a bit of Mirrorsoft's publicity on the subject."

((Quite an impressive logo. Which you can see if my new Roneo Electroscanner has copied it properly. I can't wait to see what you make of this new bit of software. I've yet to be impressed with any ease of use when it comes to computers though. Even this WordStar has it's drawbacks.))

ANDY MANSFIELD: "I saw a demo of the Armstrad up the other day, now I'm not sure if I told you in my original letters but I run a word processing department for a Tour Operator, we use a Wang VS90, more of a main frame computer than a stand alone wp, obviously this is a fairly powerful beast which allows you to do all manner of tricks. The Amstrad surprised me, it was powerful in terms of its functions, easy to use and comprehensive and the price very attractive. If family circumstances allowed there would be one here now and this letter would not be so scruffily written - however its not to be - but its something to aim for.