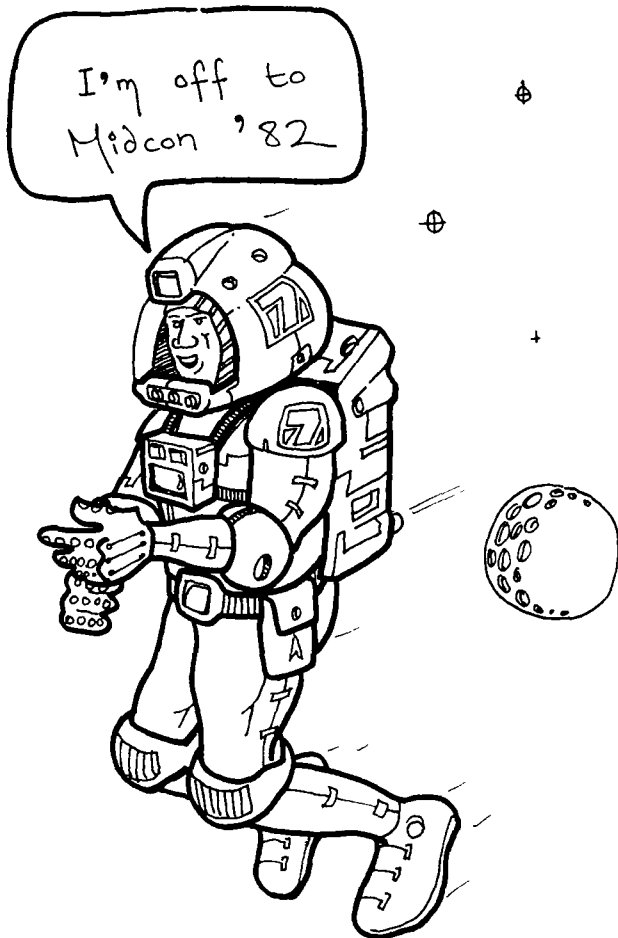


NEW MEGALOMANIA EXPRESS

The hobby's most deteriorated zine

Once upon a time there was a Diplomacy zine called Megalomania. It first appeared in 1978 to considerable public acclaim, and went on to do well in the 1979 and 1980 Zine Polls. Then the zine went missing for several months, and starting appearing less regularly. Many people announced that it had folded, only for it to re-appear. This is a reprint of one of the issues from the "missing period", shortly before the zine regained its former glory and went on to take the 1983 Zine Poll by storm. It is pieced together from various odd pages, and lacks both page numbers and an issue number. The dating is approximate, given that it contains pages produced over a period of approximately six months. Next month we'll be reprinting some old material by Brian Creese that was rejected by eight publishers and then appeared in NMR!



ZINE POLL 82

<u>Titles (Last) Year Overall</u>	<u>Subscribers</u>	<u>Publishers</u>
1. (9) Ode	1 Ode	1. Greatest Hits
2. (1) Greatest Hits	2 The Acolyte	2 Fall of Eagles
3. (4) Fall of Eagles	3. Watch Your Back	= Ode
4. (13) The Acolyte	4. Chantecler	4. DibDibDib
5. (3) NMR	5 NMR	5. NMR
6. (16) Watch Your Back	6. Fall of Eagles	6. Watch Your Back
7. (23) DibDibDib	7 Greatest Hits	7. The Acolyte
8. (-) Home of the Brave	8. Home of the Brave	8. Home of the Brave
9. (-) Chantecler	9. BATS	9. Chantecler
10. (4) Chimaera	10. DibDibDib	10. Chimaera

Well, who'd have guessed it? Ode was hardly the hot favourite, and John will probably be as surprised as everyone else by his victory. Truth to tell, though, most interest will centre on the fact that Greatest Hits didn't win. After three straight wins, GH hasn't really changed to any extent, so why shouldn't it have won again? There are two possibilities: either Ode won or GH lost.

The number of grudge votes that GH picked up tend to suggest that GH lost, but of course other people would argue that votes of less than 3 are a fair reflection of the voters opinion on the zine. On the other hand, John has worked extremely hard at Ode, and it is certainly a much better zine now than when I was slagging it off. The letter column and hobby news are both very impressive, and the games are run very efficiently. But what will happen when he gets back into employment, one wonders. Nevertheless, congratulations are undoubtedly due to John for joining a select band of zines - Ethil, Dolchstoss, Chimaera and Greatest Hits.

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that once again the poll has been won by a purist Diplomacy zine, leaving Chimaera as the only 'gameszine' to have won. Although the hobby has changed considerably, and all manner of games are now run postally, it is the Diplomacy-orientated zines that dominate the Zine Poll (holding the top three positions). In fact, only DibDibDib and Chimaera itself even make the top ten.

The high position occupied by The Acolyte is a rather special case. It isn't a Diplomacy zine, but then on the other hand it is. The main subject matter is Pete's own FRP game 'Baja', but he and the zine are very much in the Diplomacy hobby. Many who have been put off FRP games by the inane burblings of fantasy-biased zines (either in the Diplomacy hobby or not) will have a different view on things after The Acolyte. D & D it ain't!

Fall of Eagles did surprisingly well considering that it has cut down on hobby involvement and is running down to a fold - a recognition of remarkable consistency over the years rather than anything else, I suspect.

The two highest new entries are odd cases: Home of the Brave, although a new zine, benefits from the mistakes that Geoff made in his previous zine Hyperion (5th in 1975), and Chantecler has been running for 36 issues but was previously ineligible (being Belgian). Both are very good (I haven't actually seen Chantecler, but judging by his other zines that I have seen and by other people's comments I have no doubts), and must be potential winners of the future. Denver Glont on the other hand is unlikely to do particularly well, for the same reasons as Thing On The Mat (11th and 13th respectively) - they are both too idiosyncratic and upset too many people.

But who will be upset by the results? Well, big drops for Putty Riff (th - 15th) Ripping Yarns

Ripping Yarns (7th - 17th), Pyrrhic Victory (10th - 22nd=) and Puppet Theatre News (2nd - 16th). All have suffered from slow turnround and other problems rather than a decline in quality Mr Paranoid is the only one who can be expected to take it personally (probably as yet another plot by the 'London Hobby' against the North-East)!

In the basement we have a few new zines that shouldn't be discouraged by a snap judgement on a few early issues, Don't Shoot Me, which has only just re-appeared after a near-fold, and all the old favourites. One must feel sorry for the likes of Thorby, Marchese, Loveys, Malc Smiff, and David Watts, who soldier on in spite of regularly getting the thumbs-down from the voters

Megalomania, of course, was ineligible on the grounds that I produced no issues at all between the announcement and the closing date. In previous years the lack of Diplomacy games would have also ruled Megalomania out, but that rule has been changed now. Watch out next year, folks'

Perhaps the most interesting analysis is the split between subscribers (who pay for their zines) and editors (who trade) Editors vote for 18.72 zines each, compared with only 7.68 for subscribers - not surprising, really, as no-one in their right minds would pay for 18 zines. Under the system currently used for calculating the results, the more zines you vote for, the more influence your votes have. Whether you think this is fair or not (I'm sure it is) that's the way things are. The 19 people who voted for 21 or more zines were together responsible for nearly 60% of the preferences. It seems not unreasonable to assume that those 19 are almost all editors.

This apparent unfairness is nothing of the sort - the more zines you see, the more information you provide, so the more influence you have. However, the fact that these people are almost inevitably zine editors does have a marked influence on the Poll, in that they will tend to vote in a different way. This seems to have been the case every year that a separate analysis has been done of editors voting, but actually sorting out the difference is not easy. It would seem that good zines which appear irregularly, or have slow turnround will be marked higher by editors (Ripping Yarns, Putty Riff), but other than that there are no obvious trends. Why do editors put Rostherne Games Review 18th, whilst subscribers put it 30th? Or BATS last when subbers put it 9th? Such as Blackmail and Snowwood Gazette are presumably marked down by editors because they lack reading matter

Editors would have put Greatest Hits top and swapped D1bD1bD1b and The Acolyte, but other than that their preferences are expressed far better than the subscribers' by the overall result

Subscribers would have pushed GH down to 7th place, propelled BATS all the way up to 9th (though with so few voters that's a bit suspect) and moved Zine to be Believed down from 24th to 31st (out of 32).

Some facts remarkably, last year we had 101 voters and 32 zine which is exactly the same as this time. However, ten of last years 32 (Bron Yr Aur, Filibuster, The Tinamou, Voice in the Wilderness, Spirit of the Age, Duel Purpose, Sodds Law, Megalomania, Courier and Something Else) have been replaced by ten new ones (Home, Chantecler, Denver Glont, Thing, Oxymoron, Bohemian Rhapsody, Zine to be Believed, En Gardian, Don't Shoot Me and Stick the Knife In)

Full results are available in Mad Policy 74, published (like the previous 73) by Richard J Walkerdine, from (unlike the previous 73) 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6PG) for the cost of postage.

Of course it's all a load of old rubbish really. The results don't actually mean a thing. But that's another story.

Why is it: Mad Policy 74? Well, that is yet another story. Don't ask me!

Another issue of Megalomania hits the streets but no-one takes any notice. The response to last issue was rather disappointing, to say the least. Not that should be any surprise really - after all, if you don't produce a zine pretty regularly you soon lose touch with other editors. Many editors have cancelled their trades with me (though not all seem to have told me of this development) with the result that I'm not really up to date with everything that's going on. Subscribers do not seem keen on investing their money in a zine that appears irregularly and could fold at any time, meaning that I've had virtually no income at all in the last year.

The question, of course, is what is my best course of action. Do I soldier on, and ignore the bad press and frequent declarations that Megalomania has in actual fact folded, or do I succumb to this pressure and actually fold. There are, I suppose, two reasons for not folding the fact that so many people have pronounced it inevitable and my own reluctance to admit defeat. Even if the last few issues of Megalomania have been, err, rather late, it's tempting to believe that this will change and I'll be able to get back to a regular schedule of some sort. On the other hand, it would be nice not to have so many people complaining that the zine was late, and going-on about it all the time. (Cretins of the Tony Hetherington School, who witter on about the zine being late in a generally witless way, unencumbered by zines of their own, tend to make me want to carry on rather than fold, however) Brian Creese has suggested to me that it would be best to make a 'clean break' so that Megalomania won't be remembered solely as the zine that is always late, or as a 'hobby joke' (to quote one of my esteemed colleagues).

In practical terms, it will make very little difference which option I choose - if I carry on, it will be on the same 'irregular' basis as now, but if I fold I will certainly produce another zine of some kind from time-to-time and either way I still be in the hobby and organize Midcon 82.

Enough of this tedious speculation, and lets carry on with the zine.

One of the major problems with a 'leisurely' produced zine is that it's difficult to know when it will appear and hence whether it will be out-of-date by then. In PV Mike Allaway foolishly typed up his comments on the SAS raid on the Iranian embassy whilst it was taking place, to be read several days/weeks later with the full facts of the escapade well known to everyone. If I discuss the Rail Strike everyone will have forgotten about it by the time this appears!

Anyway, I am currently looking for a new job, having incautiously resigned from Menzies before finding anything else. My flurry of activity after giving in my notice has left me with an intensive course of eight interviews in just over a week. Inevitably I have developed a nasty cold just to make things more difficult! I had to get into central London on Thursday, which was not exactly straightforward (there being no trains that day) and when I got to the interview, only about ten minutes late, I was given a quick-fire spelling test followed by a less pressurised maths test. This was not easy, however, and demonstrated how reliant on calculators we have become. (Apparently a large part of the population is innumerate, presumably because of bad teaching and the availability of calculators, which is rather worrying) (Well, I find it worrying, which may make me sound like a Daily Telegraph leader writer, but there we are.)

The strangest experience I've had (so far) was with a job that the Jobcentre advised me against applying for. After they had spoken to the company about me, they rang me up and told me he was interested in spite of my lack of experience in the retail electrical business and would see me. I rang him up to arrange an interview, whereupon he said that he was looking for someone with experience, at which point I became rather annoyed and told him what the Jobcentre had told me. Eventually he fixed up an interview for me, but when I got there I actually saw someone else, who proceeded to go through the whole

business of telling me that I wasn't suitable, but gave me an application form to fill in anyway. Then he had a brief chat with me, which somehow persuaded him that perhaps I was some good. He then mentioned three jobs that they had, and asked me to come back a few days later. Unfortunately I wasn't clear which of the jobs he had in mind, but I turned up and discovered that it was the most interesting of the three (H1-F1 and Video). Remarkably enough, we didn't go through the same charade but I've heard no more so perhaps they were right in the first place.

I find it very depressing to consider how many interviews I've been to since leaving college. My only success in that time was getting the job at Menzies, and that was more-or-less a case of "Good Morning. Can you start on Monday?". I have a large collection of "We Regret..." letters, though that is at least better than companies that don't even bother to let you know.

Having been in the Job Centre a few times, it's striking how many jobs they have up on the boards, but only when you check does it become apparent that the vast majority require experience or offer pathetic wages (or both). The Standard is full of jobs, but most turn out to be selling insurance or double glazing and appear every day. There simply aren't many jobs around. (I noticed today that Allders have removed the signs directing people to the Personnel Office, presumably to stop people coming in and asking whether there are any vacancies!) If it's like this in prosperous London, what can it be like in the North-East?

Enough of this, though, and on to other matters. Voice in the Wilderness has folded, which rather took me by surprise. The usual reasons (exams), and handled responsibly. Perhaps one day it won't be worth noting that a fold has been responsible but as long as people like Mark Strangward just disappear without trace the hobby has cause to be grateful to the likes of John Lee who do it properly. The loss of any zine is, of course, to be regretted, even when it's one that I have had nasty things to say about in the past. The main reason for lamenting Voice's departure is for the Diplomacy games that John Lee ran, though we do seem to have plenty of good GM's around at the moment (indeed we are told that one reason for Voice folding now rather than later was the number of GM's looking for games). Whether I like it or not, it is zines like Voice that are the backbone of the hobby, and without a steady supply of them the hobby would be in serious trouble.

Incidentally, I see that Pete Birks thinks that 'a "good" fold should be worth of only acceptance rather than praise'. I would have thought that it was certainly worth saying - there's a lot of work involved in sorting things out, and it's a lot easier to just disappear, so why not give praise where it's due. When everyone does it properly, perhaps it won't be worth saying it, but until then I'm sure it ought to be said.

Zine folds are perhaps the Hobby's most difficult problem, causing all manner of problems. Games may be transferred, but the new zine is unlikely to please everyone, and a high proportion of the players in the transferred games will drop out before long. The only way round this problem is the "PTN Solution", whereby you hand over the zine as a going concern to someone with a similar sense of humour and general approach to the hobby. It would not be impossible for other editors to do likewise, though it obviously requires a fair amount of advance planning (gradually handing over GMing, getting the new editor to contribute increasing amounts of the zine, etc.). The problem is that many folds are done on the spur of the moment, but it would undoubtedly make the hobby far more stable if even a few zines were handed on in this way.

One obvious way of reducing the number of folds is to make it more difficult to start a zine, on the basis that if it was hard work starting up you'll be less inclined to drop it at the first difficult hurdle. It has been suggested that Richard Gooch's cheap litho printing is a bad thing in this respect, since it enables almost anyone to start up a zine. What that ignores is the fact that subscribers will think carefully before sending money to an editor of a new zine - an editor who has been around in the hobby for a while is far more likely to make a success of it than someone new to the hobby, an unknown quantity

unknown quantity as far as most people are concerned. This means that any new zine will have to struggle for a while before being "accepted", and more than a few zines haven't made it that far.

Given these various barriers, I see no need for any further action. Anyone starting up a zine with Gooch's printing service is probably making things more rather than less difficult for themselves, and if they can survive that then they can survive anything! As long as novices are kept well away from new zines until they've proved themselves, no real harm can be done by people having a try at editing a zine. Putting potential editors off must be a bad thing, since you might well deprive the hobby of the next Pete Birks or Richard Sharp!

It's interesting how the National Diplomacy Championships changed my view of the hobby. I had come to the conclusion that Diplomacy was becoming increasingly irrelevant to the hobby, and my only reason for being involved was for zines, cons, hobby-meets and the many friends I've made through the hobby. Then at Birmingham the Diplomacy Championships were unquestionably the major part of the con, to the extent that some who hadn't played in the tournament felt rather 'left out'. Certainly if I wasn't organizing the thing I would seriously consider playing, rather than avoiding games-playing as is usually my way at cons. The reason for my general attitude to games-playing is simply a result of getting involved in too many boring games with boring people when there were many more interesting things going on. That's the trouble with cons - there's rarely enough time, so it's a question of which things you don't do. If we had more cons, of course, you could play Diplomacy at Midcon, have your annual game of ten-pin at Geordiecon, play Kingmaker at Stabcon, be ill at Noccon, play Junta at Kenscon, and so on. I don't know what one does at Toucon, but I'm sure Calcraft will tell you when you get there. (Gosh what a long paragraph - let's start another one)

← MARCH 1982

I think I was probably going to make a terribly profound point there, but I seem to have rather lost the thread of the argument. (Do arguments have threads, he wondered idly, or am I getting my metaphors mixed. Who knows? Who cares....)

Hobby-meets seem to be coming thick and fast in this neck of the woods (no, I can't keep it up - lets go back to English) with the Stainesmeet and all-new Beastmeet. I missed the first Staines one because of the Rail Strike, but made the February event instead. In typical fashion, I left my map behind and then tried to remember which way to go, and inevitably took a long time to find the pub. Well, actually it isn't a pub, but a hotel by the side of the river, not exactly my choice of venue - but what would you expect in Staines? It was much like any other hobby-meet, of course, with many of the same old faces from the Lamb, plus various locals who don't usually get to the really important hobby-meet. In recognition of my being unemployed, I got to buy a round as soon as I walked in the door, and worse still Birks arrived before I'd finished buying. The beer was awful (as one would expect in a hotel), but more than that I don't really remember.

I know from experience that instant reactions should not be committed to print, but I've just discovered (from NME) that Philip.K. Dick has died. The strange thing about this is that only yesterday I read an interview with him in an awful American Science Fiction magazine, principally concerning the forthcoming Ridley Scott (Alien) film of Do Androids Dream, titled "Blade Runner", and chronicling his battles with the studio over the screenplay. He seemed from the interview to be very happy with the third and final script, so perhaps it'll be a decent film. The irony, of course, is that well-deserved fame and fortune (if it comes about) will be too late for Dick himself. Being a cult success is all very well, but it don't pay the bills!

I long ago ceased to be amazed that people should prefer bad books to good ones, or that the general public's idea of Science Fiction should be so far removed from the intelligent fiction of Philip.K. Dick, but I still find it rather galling.



NATIONAL DIPLOMACY CHAMPIONSHIP—1982

at THE ROYAL ANGUS HOTEL, BIRMINGHAM
on FRIDAY 12th/SATURDAY 13th/SUNDAY 14th NOVEMBER 1982



This is a brief report on last year's Diplomacy Championships and look forward to the 1982 event

MIDCON III was, by general consent, a success. The Diplomacy Championships in particular went very well, and were enjoyed by all who took part. The final result was as follows:

1st David Long	115 pts
2nd David Dilling	111 pts
3rd James Mills	107 pts
4th Peter Northcott	106 pts
5th Phil Smedley	106 pts
6th Richard Morris	103 pts
7th Bart Huby	102 pts

Full results are available from Paul Simpkins (35 West Park Street, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF13 4LE) for 30p.

The rules are a bit complicated, and have proved to be somewhat controversial. My thoughts appear overleaf, but further comments would be welcome so that we can make any changes for this year. The full rules will appear in the next Progress Report (due late August).

The fact that the rules are causing so much interest is indicative of the fact that for the first time we have managed to run an efficient tournament with the quality and quantity of players to make the result matter. 63 players last year, and in all probability a fair few more this time, make it a title really worth winning!

But anyone who went to Midcon III will tell you that it was more than just the Diplomacy. For many people it is the only opportunity to meet fellow Diplomacy players from all over the country. We will once again be providing a games room with darts, pool and video games in addition to the hotel's normal facilities (bar, lounge, restaurant etc.) and when the Diplomacy is finished there will be plenty of room for other games in the Wroxtton Suite.

Various snack meals have been arranged to supplement the hotel's regular catering throughout the weekend, and bar snacks will be available at all times (specially for the all-night '1829' or 'Civilisation' players)

Various other events are planned in addition to the Diplomacy Championships. These will include a quiz, running on Friday and Saturday nights, and a darts tournament (also on Saturday night) and a games auction on Sunday afternoon. Any other suggestions are welcome, particularly if you're prepared to do something!

More Thoughts on the National Diplomacy Championship

Paul Simpkins has published the results of the National Diplomacy Championship in Angus (30p from 35 West Park Street, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire), and they make very interesting reading.

Before discussing the results, I ought to explain the system we used to calculate them: players were rated in relation to the other players with the same country, with 6pts for every other player you beat, plus 1pt for every supply centre you hold. So, in the 1st round, the best France had 12 centres, so scored 60 pts ($8 \times 6 = 48 + 12 = 60$). Players with the same number of centres shared the rating: two Turkeys with 8 centres came 4=, so scored 35 pts each ($4\frac{1}{2} \times 6 = 27 + 8 = 35$).

This rating system produces some apparently illogical results. The table to the right shows that a Russian player got a far higher rating for finishing the game on 4 centres than an Italian player on 4 centres. The difference between these two scores is quite considerable, and could certainly be the difference between winning and finishing down in 10th place. This arises because of the universally bad Russian performances and generally much better Italian results. Another

SAMPLE 1st ROUND SCORES

<u>Country</u>	<u>centres</u>	<u>points</u>
Russia	4	49
Italy	4	22

AGGREGATE SUPPLY CENTRE COUNTS-

<u>Country</u>	<u>No. of s. c.'s</u>
Austria	24 + 7 = 31
England	75 + 28 = 103
France	43 + 71 = 114
Germany	43 + 41 = 84
Italy	51 + 33 = 84
Russia	10 + 32 = 42
Turkey	60 + 60 = 120

strange result was that the seven Austrian players in the first round who were eliminated before Autumn 1907 (when the games ended) each got 24 points, the same rating as a 6-centre France!

It becomes clear that the best tactic as Russia or Austria was to play a quiet game and aim for 5 or 6 centres, whereas English and French players needed to get 12 - 14 centres to remain in contention. Unfortunately, the players didn't know that in advance, so Russian players probably played an over-ambitious game and then came a cropper. After all, Russia ought to have an advantage in a short game, starting with 4 centres! What makes it all more complicated is that other players' tactics will be affected by how well they expect your country to do. Clearly the English players in the 2nd round suffered from the strong English performances in the first round. (An interesting effect of this is that jammy Brian Creese got 46 points for his 7 centres in the 2nd round, compared with Victor Logan's 19pts for his 7 centres in the 1st round.)

The aggregate supply centre counts make interesting reading - who would have expected boring old Turkey to finish up on top? The reasons aren't hard to find - in a short game, there just isn't the time to grind Turkey down, so most people didn't even try. Apart from two outstanding performances in games 'A' and 'B' where Turkey was actually eliminated (and by Italy rather than Russia), none finished with less than 3 centres. Only France is anywhere near as consistently strong defensively! Russia is the natural enemy of Turkey, so one can only assume that (in the first round at least) this battle was always won by Turkey.

One point that clearly emerges from the results is that a strong alliance is particularly effective under this rating system: the top two scores in the first round were by James Mills and Alan Sharples, playing Germany and Italy in game 'A'. They swept the board, finishing with 16 and 15 centres respectively, to earn scores of 64 and 63. Bart Huby and Peter Northcott (E & F in game 'E') finished on 13 and 9 centres, to give scores of 58 & 51 respectively. Alliances make sense because you really can both benefit from them, and are easier because the game ends before you reach the stage of having to go for a win and stabbing your ally. In addition, two weaker countries can stick together and do very well - Austria and Russia, for example, are both in the points just by surviving to the end of the game! - or a weak country can be protected by a more powerful one (Turkey protect- Russia in return for control of his units?) giving both good scores!

Perhaps the most important point to bear in mind when playing in a tournament is that it is quite unlike the postal game. Game-long alliances don't work so well in postal play because only one of the alliance partners can win, but that doesn't apply in a game that ends in 1907. Also, it can be easier to stop your ally conspiring against you when you can see what he's doing.

The last-minute stab becomes even more important than in the postal game, with the difference that rather than going for 18 centres you want any centres that you can get your hands on.

Various people have commented on the system. Alan Sharples points out the unfairness of giving 1 point per supply centre when, say, Austria had to work far harder for each supply centre than Turkey. (see table on the far left) and the difference between scoring on the two days. The scores that England got in the two rounds demonstrate this - getting one centre on Sunday gave you more points than seven centres on Saturday for example. However, the reason for this is very simple - good performances on Saturday caused the backlash on Sunday, so it was much easier to do well on Saturday. The obvious solution is to combine the two rounds before scoring, but that has an interesting effect - you would always do well to make sure that the 2nd round player in your game playing the country that you played in the first round does as badly as possible.

ENGLISH SCORES.		
s. c	Points	
	1st	2nd
0	3	9
1		25
7	19	46
9	27	
10	34	
11	41	59
12	48	
13	56	

David Long (the winner) recommends that the supply centre holdings throughout the game should be taken into account. This seems fairly reasonable, because as the system stands you get the same score for being eliminated in 1902 as in 1907. However, if you take the system to its logical conclusion, and count the total at the end of each season and add them together you are completely transforming the nature of the game (though you've done that anyway by terminating the game in 1907).

The fundamental problem is that when you can't play the game to a finish, it's impossible to arrive at an objective result. Whatever system you choose will have various faults and will be unfair to someone. It will also be possible to "play the system". There is a fascinating article in Diplomacy World 24 by Ben Zablocki on the best ways of playing under various well-known systems, which raises the interesting question of what effect it would have if you didn't tell the players which system was being operated. What if, for example, you didn't tell the players when the game was going to end? But the real obstacle to "playing the system" is that your strategy can be completely destroyed by the results on other tables. A Turkish player who believed that 7 centres would be enough and settled for that result would have come a cropper (in the first round it was only worth 25 pts).

Any systems have their disadvantages, but the one we used last year is as good as any other and I suspect that we'll be making only minor alterations rather than trying something completely different.

Paul asks me to point out that he will require entries in advance this year, in order to get things organized in advance. As last year, there will be an entry form with the next Progress Report (late August) along with a hotel booking form and other bits and pieces. If you don't receive it by mid-September, let us know and we'll send another copy.

COUNTRY.	E	F	G	T	I	R	A
Wins.	5½	4	2½	2½	1½	1	0
Eliminations	4	3	3	2	4	6	11

THE COMMITTEE

CHRIS TRINGHAM, 25 Auckland Road, London SE19 2DR	Chairman and editor
HOWARD SAYLES, 197 Longley Hall Road, Sheffield 5	Secretary
PAUL SIMPKINS, 35 West Pk St, Dewsbury, W. Yorks	Tournament Director
BRIAN WILLIAMS, 30 Rydding Lane, Millfields Estate, West Bromwich, West Midlands	Registrations
JOHN DODDS, 28 Woodvale Road, Darlington	Publicity

Registrations (£6.50) to Brian, general enquiries probably best to me

Chairman's Bit

(Silly really, as I've written everything else as well, but never mind) It hardly seems more than a few weeks ago that we sat down at the end of the weekend to hold an inquest on Midcon III, and now here we are looking forward to November again. The general response has been very gratifying, with almost everyone saying that they'd be back this year. If you are one of those people, and you haven't booked yet then do it NOW

It would, however, be foolish to pretend that everything went smoothly last time. Most of the difficulties were caused by the hotel misunderstanding our instructions. It seems that they had expected our hotel room bookings earlier, and when they failed to materialise they panicked and cancelled some of the arrangements. This resulted in an attempt to close the bar at 10.30, whereupon some people upset the barmaid by bawling her (when it was clearly the fault of the management, represented on this occasion by a smarmy Night Manager). It also meant the disappearance of the promised snack meal on Friday night. We complained strongly about all this on Friday night, which resulted in the return of the snacks (and very popular they proved) and the provision of a late-night barman.

We had a few problems with the darts, when the cleaners removed the oche and I rushed around fixing up a new one and then some of the players and teams dropped out. That's the trouble with these Diplomacy players - they need so much organizing. The video machines were rather second-rate, but that's the hotel's loss as they took any profits.

All of these were fairly minor irritations compared with the excellent accomodation apparently very good breakfasts (I wasn't up to eating at that time of the morning) and ultra-efficient Diplomacy Tournament.

None of those will change this year, and with the minor irritations dealt with plus the additional events should make it a superb weekend.

MIDCON 82 takes place at the Royal Angus Hotel in Birmingham over the weekend of Friday 12th to Sunday 14th November 1982

It is the Diplomacy Hobby's only major convention, and will feature the 2nd National Diplomacy Championships.

Registration costs £6.50 (from Brian Williams, 30 Rydding Lane, Millfields Estate, West Bromwich, West Midlands, cheques to "National Diplomacy Championship 1982") which includes entry to the Championship and entitles you to rooms at the Angus at special concessionary rates: £11 per night for a twin room, £14 for a single. Both rates are per person, and include full English breakfast. All rooms have TV, radio, telephone, bathroom etc

Send only your registration fee. Money for rooms is only required on the actual weekend, and is paid directly to the hotel.

JUNE 1982
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Dick's latest, "The Divine Invasion" is still on my pile of books waiting to be read, below "The White Hotel" and above "Earthly Powers". The stuff on the back tells us that Dick, 'science fiction's most metaphysical writer for two decades, takes a giant step along a vector he has long been travelling' but I'm sure I'll enjoy the book nevertheless. Do people get paid to write that sort of nonsense, I wonder? Earthly Powers is even worse in this respect, with Martin Amis drivelling away about "garlicky puns" whatever they might be.

Why haven't I read any of these books yet, you wonder. Well - and this is my excuse for Megalomania being so late, (though the bourgeois concept of 'lateness' has, of course, been abolished) - I've had a rather incident-packed few weeks.

It all started when I finally decided that I'd had enough of Menzies, and gave in my notice. The interviews mentioned earlier in this editorial all came to nothing, and by the time I finally left Menzies (five weeks after giving in my notice) I was starting to agree with all the people who had told me how silly I was to give up a secure job. So, when I saw a card in the Job Centre for a manager of a newsagents ("No Experience Required") I thought it worthwhile applying. The following day I got a phone call asking me to go for an interview at their shop in Wrythe Lane, Carshalton. When I finally got there (having started at one end of Wrythe Lane and walked to the other) and saw the Area Manager, he told me that I hadn't enough experience for the job. However, he could offer me a job as Relief Manager, but warned that they weren't a very good company to work for, and there was little chance of getting on. But if I wanted to do it for a couple of years it would be good experience!

I was somewhat taken aback by all this, particularly as most interviewers tell you how wonderful the company is, and expect you to feel the same way and want to make a career with them. However, in view of the fact that there weren't any other jobs on the horizon I accepted the offer.

A few days later I started at the shop which had the vacancy for which I had originally applied (the manager was on holiday, but the idea was to sack him on his return). The following afternoon I was asked whether I'd like to be the manager of the Wrythe Lane shop where I'd been interviewed, but it soon emerged that I hadn't really got much choice in the matter.

Then I had to get a car, newsagents tending to open rather early in the morning and public transport not being at all practical. Right, where do you get the money from to buy a car? Yes, you ask your bank manager. What does he say? Sorry, not at the moment, but perhaps in a few months time. This is a singularly unhelpful answer, being as how you need the car to get the job, to earn the money to pay off the loan. Fortunately I managed to persuade them to loan me the money, so I now have a nice little red Datsun Cherry.

The shop in Wrythe Lane is quite pleasant, being fairly large but not particularly busy (it's on the wrong side of the road). It has, however, got through managers at quite a rate in the recent past, and customers keep asking me how long I'm going to be there!

I'd just about got settled down when the Area Manager resigned! This was totally unexpected, and as yet largely unexplained. It won't make all that much difference, as the new Area Manager (in all probability) will be the Relief Manager, who has effectively been Assistant Area Manager for quite a while, but it's a pity because he seemed a nice bloke - unlike the Menzies area manager!

The main problem, of course, is that I have to get up rather early in the morning. Just when I'd got used to it, the clocks went forward, and when I'd got over that there was Easter. After the Lamb on Wednesday, I went to Amersham on Thursday evening for a couple of days, and then spent an evening playing bridge with Dave Clarke, Birks, Doubleday, Rayner and one or two others. All this plus working on Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday!

COUNTEREUROCON

After going to France for Eurocon four years in a row, it seemed like time for a change. Birks suggestion of an 'alternative Eurocon' seemed very interesting, and going to Portugal seemed promising.

The Lamb on Wednesday 19th June saw the gathering of most of the motley bunch, many of them stopping overnight in Brixton (chez Birks). Woodhouse appeared in a three-piece suit, apparently the worse for wear as a result of his birthday.. Little did he realise that things were to get much worse!

When I arrived at the Malt and Hops on Thursday lunchtime, the full party (bar Keith Black) were assembled. Pete tried to find the coach terminal, and I tried to find the money I'd lost. I ended up going to the bank for new supplies, and we all ended up going by train. On our way to the station, Pete disappeared for a bet, and Colin and I had a quick drink - not quite quick enough in Colin's case, when the barman cleared it away. Taking no risks, Pete returned from the bookies and drank his whisky in one before I'd even paid for it!

The train and cab got us to Luton in plenty of time, to meet Keith and have a cup of coffee and a few oddments of food before going through to the departure lounge with its bar unencumbered by licensing laws. (Going through the self-service cafeteria with Marie was an interesting experience, as she doesn't seem to like food!) A few hands of bridge, and we were off.

The flight was the usual intensive course of drinks, food, coffee, duty-frees etc. On arrival, we discovered that the Portugese take you by bus from the plane to the terminal even if it's only ten yards.

For the next part of the story, you need to know that you are only allowed to take £40 worth of Escudos, a fact that most people had discovered when ordering money from the bank. Pete, however, had not been told this until after he had collected his money, which is how he came to have 13900 Escudos over the limit, secreted in the suitcase that Keith unknowingly wheeled through Customs. All's well that ends well, I suppose.

The coach from the airport to the hotel was an experience and a half. Right at the front were perhaps a dozen ordinary holidaymakers, and right at the back were the nine of us. Things started well enough, with 'Born to Run' on Mike Allaway's cassette, but then Gamble and Woodhouse set upon the litre of duty-free El Cheapo Vodka. None of us were overwhelmingly sober (several pints in the Malt and Hops, a couple of drinks at the station, a few more in the airport, the odd miniature or two on the plane) but watching Mike and Colin drink made one feel sober. The funny side of the journey seemed to be lost on some of the party, (though I admit that at times it did seem rather dangerous) particularly Allaway when Colin offered him a drink, and I dread to think what the people at the other end of the coach thought. "Mummy, mummy, why is that man being sick out of the window?" "I expect he's not feeling very well. Look at that house over there. . . .".

We finally arrived at the Aparthotel and tried to sort nine people into four rooms and find passports, pick up the right cases etc. Pete has the worst problems, as he was sharing a room with Gamble and Woodhouse, neither of whom was exactly co-operative. Keith and I managed to get our key and left them to it! After a quick look round the room I crawled into bed.

The following morning I was woken by the arrival of breakfast, and after eating that and admiring the apartment I went down to find everyone else eating breakfast in the bar and complaining about the coffee. After this, things began to go downhill. We all went off to the other hotel to be offered sherry and welcomed by the Thomsons rep who gave us a not particularly useful talk about the resort and area.