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DEADLINE

**SATURDAY
25th SEPT.**

SPRING OFFENSIVE



A postal Diplomacy zine which aims to be four-weekly, from Stephen Agar, 79 Florence Road, Brighton, BN1 6DL. 0273-562430. Cost 90p (UK) (60p unwaged), £1 (Overseas).

EDITORIAL

To my utter amazement, not only did *Spring Offensive* muster a Diplomacy team, but thanks to the efforts of Messrs. we managed to acquit ourselves very well indeed, coming 3rd out of the 14 teams taking part. The full results of the ManorCon team competition were:

1st	Mad Policy	274.4	<i>Spring Offensive I</i> team results:		
2nd	Age of Reason I	262.6	James Hardy	A	10sc draw 1909
3rd	Spring Offensive I	258.8	Stewart Cross	E	elim. 1904
4th	Smodnoc "H"	239.5	Peter Berlin	F	12sc draw 1908
5th	B.U.D.S. "A"	238.7	Sean Weir	G	5sc draw 1906
6th	Smodnoc "L"	228.4	Steve Cox	I	7sc draw 1906
7th	Age of Reason II	227.7	Conor Kostick	R	9sc draw 1905
8th	Trojan Horse	204.1	Graham Staplehurst	T	11sc draw 1908
9th	Age of Reason III	189.5	I know it appears that a <i>Spring Offensive</i> team		
10th	Ode	182.7	came last, but in fact that was the evil <i>Liverpool</i>		
11th	The Laughing Roundhead	182.6	team playing under a pseudonym.		
12th	The Barbarians	164.1			
13th	Oxford	156.5			
14th	"Spring Offensive III"	125.3			

I think it would be nice if we can keep the same team for next year, though maybe we should put two teams together just so I can relegate poor Stewart (who has yet to pass 1904 in a FtF game of Diplomacy...).

This issue has an 1880's theme to it. I was originally going to print Fred Davis's *1885-III*, but as the rules for Paul Barker's new variant dropped on to the mat today, I have dusted off my trusty scanner to put it into this issue. Maps are enclosed separately. If there is any interest I will try and persuade Paul to GM a game. Any takers?

There was a meeting at ManorCon on hobby recruitment and similar issues, which resolved nothing on interest, generating much hot air and little else. This piffing about really is not good enough. I have confined some new proposals to a mere half page inside and Iain Bowen and I would like this to be considered a firm proposal for discussion (and implementation) from MidCon onwards. Will those who can be bothered to address their minds to this brain-numbing topic please let me (or Iain) have their comments. No doubt Danny will have something to say on this issue.

The observant among you will notice that this is a 7 week deadline - to allow for the August Bank Holiday and the fact that I and probably many of you are going on holidays over the next few weeks. What a generous soul I am!

ANOTHER QUICK FUMBLE

Smodnoc No.52 has a nice picture of Toby on the front. News of the various undesirable sorts that Toby invites to parties (I prefer croquet, Pimms and cucumber sandwiches on the lawn myself). There were a few comments about Mid-Con that I could take issue with, but can't be bothered. Thank God that Toby has finally run out of the pink bog paper that he usually prints the zine on.

Three more issues and **Ode** reaches 150. Fourteen years of continuous publishing must be a UK record. **Ode** is ridiculously underrated and an ideal place for enthusiastic gamers, mainly Dip and variants, but other games as well. No doubt the next issue will include a lot of crowing over the Christchurch by-election result. And why not? The Tories (spit) will just win it back at the next General Election.

I hadn't seen **Odardle** before, but issue 10 dropped on to the door mat following the recent fold of **Yer Tiz** into the said **Odardle**. A lot of space devoted to the *Owzat!* cricket league and some American Football games. Lots of non-games articles on the theatre, computer games reviews, pop concert reviews, record reviews, film review, humour and a crossword. A refreshing change really if you're tired of games stuff.

In **Hopscotch** No.121 Alan Parr discusses the possibility of a one day games event in Tring, one Saturday in September. Give Alan a ring on 0442-824173 if you're interested. Alan also discusses the unlikely possibility of raising a British team for a puzzle contest in Moravia in October. Alan has my undying admiration for being able to get away with margins of as little as 2mm!

A short **Scorpio** No.65 brings news that the Zine of the Year Poll had more voters than the good old Zine Poll...

With issue No.74 **Y Ddraig Goch** continues much as ever, despite being officially in hibernation. In reality it's the same as ever, minus a letter column. Food is a strong feature though, a nice recipe for Cheeseburger De Luxe (fillet stake and Wensleydale) and a brief review of our expedition to Ockenden Manor a few weeks ago. Iain promises a review of Le Silverside, the restaurant where we indulged ourselves on the Saturday evening at ManorCon. Iain is welcoming new subscribers who are both reliable and actually interested in playing games.

In issue 18 of **Age of Reason** Andrew Moss concedes the layout problems that

he denied in the previous issue. Having read Andrew's comments in his letter column I am surprised that he is capable of standing upright under the enormous weight of the various chips on his shoulder!

Megalomania is becoming distinctly regular, and in recognition of this fact Chris Tringham is actually planning to start a game of Diplomacy! **Meg.** must be the best value of any Diplomacy zines, lots of chat and it's free for a s.a.e. Issue 54 mused on ManorCon, Ronald McDonald, Computers, the Media, and now even features a letter column. This **must** be worth a 24p stamp (soon to be 25p).

I was impressed by issue 6 of **Box Frenzy**, a new Diplomacy zine which lives on the margins of the hobby. Chris Robey (3 Superity Cottages, Churn Road, Compton, Newbury, RG16 0PR) is running a couple of games of Diplomacy and a couple of variants and is looking to expand. Only 8 pages but good potential.

Speaking of newish zines, I picked up issue 3 of the anarchic **Born Losers** entitled "The Post-Exams Piss-Up Begins." Quite. Film review, lots of concert/record reviews, letters, a variant, but as yet no games. Contact Edmund Morgan at 22 Meadow Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 4NF.

And the new zines just keep on coming. This one is **Something to Declare** from Paul Bennett (103 Deleval Close, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4QP), as the **Laughing Roundhead** sub-zine goes independent to escape Duncan's problems. Hmm. Mr Bennett only folded his last zine **Lobster Quadrille** a couple of years ago, so I hope he is sure of all this. I note that Paul is writing a Diplomacy adjudication program in BASIC - re-inventing the wheel somewhat, given that Stewart Cross has written one in C which is been used by several zines as we speak.

Just for a change let's mention a... new zine. What a surprise. Kevin McGowan (27 Bennetts Ave, Shirley, Surrey, CR0 8AL) has just launched **Revolution**, a zine dedicated to Railway Rivals. Yours for the price of a second class stamp.

Enough of the tyros. Issue 100 of **Pyrrhic Victory** finally limped in, several weeks late and only 8 pages long. Basically just game reports. Mike Allaway had a reputation for being a little depressive even when he had little to be depressed about, but now that unemployment is really starting to bite, he appears to be drowning in the blackness of it all. And who can blame him, I'd probably be just the same myself.

On a happier note Mike Clarke has decided not to fold **Sidewalk**, but to turn it into a 4 week zine in order to see if he can attract the players who can't cope with 3 week deadlines. I have grown bored with telling you to support this zine, so I won't say it to you all again. If you are young at heart and into popular music this really is the place for you.

My first contact with the awesome Douglas Kent was through the US chatzine **Foolhardy**, and the overall impression was of someone who was quiet and industrious. Having had a few letters from Doug and seen the last couple of issues of **Maniac's Paradise** I can see that I was wrong - industrious he certainly is, but quiet? If James Hardy ever produces a zine it will be like **Maniac's Paradise**, which to those of you who know James will speak volumes. **Foolhardy** I find a bit dry and susceptible to naval fluff collecting on a grand scale, but at least the US have a proper hobby discussion zine - there is no equivalent in the UK, whatever Mark Nelson's pretentiousness may suggest. If you want to be bold and subscribe to a US zine, send **sterling** to Iain Bowen (who runs the International Subscription Exchange) and ask him to arrange a subscription to **Maniac's Paradise** or **Perelandra** - you won't be disappointed. I particularly liked Doug's response when someone queried whether Doug lost more money by publishing than anyone else in the US - "*Hey, I lose in life! All other losses pale by comparison.*"

After a delay long enough to write a (small) novel in, **Assassins Handbook** issue 7 turned up. The price is up to £1 an issue, as John is on income support. This is fair enough, in fact I for one would gladly initiate the **Campaign for Real Zine Prices**. What we need is a cartel - any publisher who produces at a break even level or a loss should be shunned and trades cut. Those who force people like Mike Clarke and John to lose money by subsidising their zines with **stolen** photocopying are just plain anti-social. These ridiculously low prices just crucify the zine editors who aren't earning pots of money. Consider this a warning that as soon as the postage goes up, then **Spring Offensive** will be £1 a shot. John publicises something called **DangerCon** which I won't plug in case it's a wind-up and **Assassins Handbook** becomes the first Diplomacy zine to reveal the secret of Fatima. Wow!

THE FLYER IN THE DIPLOMACY BOX

There is a general consensus among zine editors and convention organisers that the way in which responses from the Diplomacy box flyer are dealt with needs to be changed. Despite the fact that to my certain knowledge almost every single person at the recent meeting at ManorCon wanted to address this issue (including myself - let's not sit on the fence), everyone is too nervous to raise the issue to Danny's face.

I think that Danny has had an effective monopoly of novices for too long by virtue of the control he exercises over the flyer. Iain Bowen and myself are further refining the Hobby Advertising Campaign and we intend to put in a strong bid that there should be a unified flyer in the Diplomacy box, advertising **both** postal Diplomacy and Conventions, that all respondents should receive Chris Tringham's **Convention Book** and a version of the **Introduction** that I have already drafted (but to be edited by Iain), and that this **Introduction** should advertise on **absolutely equal terms**, the hobby at large (and **Mission from God**), **Springboard** and a Central Gamestart Service. That Iain and I intend to work together is appropriate given that the ManorCon and MidCon Committees are the main source of hobby cash to spend on such projects. ManorCon and MidCon provide a forum for discussion and the two Committees have enough members to provide continuity of service. I should also add that both Iain and myself are prepared to operate a self-denying ordinance in that no one who replies to the flyer would be sent a copy of **Spring Offensive** or **Y Ddaig Goch** and no CGS games would be placed in either of those zines.

I would envisage that Iain would handle the general responses and send out the **Introduction**, I would administer a CGS and you (if you are willing) would run a novice zine for those who want it. However, the flow of novices via the flyer would no longer be controlled by an individual and both Iain and myself would be happy to step aside if there was ever a consensus at one of the Hobby Meetings at MidCon or ManorCon to that effect. It is bad for jobs to be kept by individuals forever and without question, if a service is being provided on behalf of a group, then that group must be able to say when it wants a change.

Of course Danny has provided a valuable service over many years, in that he acted when there was no one else willing or able to help. But times have changed and the Hobby is now in a far better position to order its own affairs in an accountable way with a healthy separation of powers. The time to end the **Springboard** de facto monopoly by breaking Danny's direct link to the flyer has come and if no one else is prepared to say it up front, then I suppose that Iain and I had better put our heads above the parapet.

Springboard should just be an option for the newcomer, but if the person who responds to their initial enquiry is the editor of **Springboard** and spends the greater part of the introductory material plugging **Springboard** then it is inevitable that few will opt not to play in **Springboard**. The only way for everyone to get a fair crack of the whip is for those with a vested interest (Danny and the CGS) to be separated from the flyer and the **Introduction**. This is not a threat to the existence of **Springboard** - Iain and I (and we believe a great number of others) merely think that it is time for a someone else to be the initial point of contact for novices, rather than the editor of the novice zine himself.

The question is, will those who have been saying that it is time for a change in private come out of the closet with me, or are we doomed to be a couple of lone voices in the wilderness?

THE MARK NELSON EXPERIENCE

Available from Mark Nelson (if you're considered fannish enough) who can be contacted at 21 Cecil Mount, Armley, Leeds, LS12 2AP.

What can one say about the ever-modest **Mark Nelson Experience**? All adjectives are inevitably inadequate to describe this monumental work of incisive wit and colourful invective. If there is a Higher Place, a Pantheon, where postal games players go to when they pass over, in which they can savour the best of what the postal Diplomacy hobby has to offer by way of entertainment and enlightenment, then there can be no doubt that such souls will spend their time engrossed in issue after issue of the **Mark Nelson Experience**.

Jealous fools have on occasion criticised Mark for imagined slights, they have claimed that he invents and distorts facts to fit his own ends, that he deliberately sets out to mislead people in order to create trouble, that he is in fact nothing more than a parasite sucking the life blood out of the efforts of other zine editors... but they are, of course, **wrong**. Mark is a sweet, sensitive and gentle person, who takes comfort from the fact that not an iota of such allegations are true - in short, he is a noble and honourable creature who deserves to be cherished by the entire hobby.

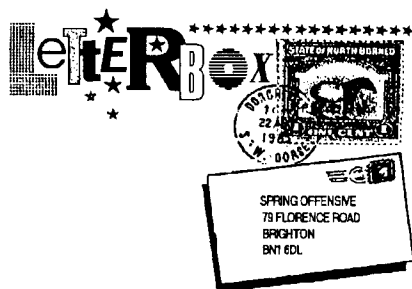
Mark's efforts on our behalf need to be appreciated. Even his critics accept that the work he did in updating hobby statistics was a valuable and worthwhile endeavour. However, they fail to realise the immense contribution to the development of the postal Diplomacy hobby that Mark is making by allowing some of us, mere mortals that we are, access to his golden words - that we may savour his wisdom. It is ridiculous to allege that Mark is elitist by only allowing a select few to view his organ (and what a mighty organ it is!) for Mark knows that to spread his word far and wide would be pearls before swine. If Mark cannot spare the time to converse with non-zine-editing mortals at Conventions, it is because he knows that his time on this world is limited and that the Word can be propagated most efficiently by confining his revelations to zine editors who can in turn convert the masses.

It is downright malicious to suggest that our Mark is inadequate as a human being or in any way "crazie" - indeed, he has only adopted the epithet "crazie" in order to show to us all that his shoulders are big enough to bear the brunt of all that such evil cynics can throw at him. Mark wears such insults from unbelievers as badges of honour, medals which serve to decorate him in recognition of the many campaigns he has waged against those who would demean him in our eyes.

Not only is there is a place in this hobby for Mark Nelson - this hobby **IS** Mark Nelson. For the truth is that we are all figments of Mark's imagination, apart from Mark there is nothing: no Diplomacy, no variants, no editors, no zine, no reality. Thus we owe our very existence to Mark, and what bigger debt can you owe to someone than that?

The fact is that Mark is the Truth, the Word and the Light and we should offer Him our thanks. Thanks Mark. Thanks very much.

EDITOR'S HEALTH WARNING: SOME ZINE
REVIEWS CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR
HEALTH!



IAN COLEMAN

I don't know if it's of any interest to you, but I enclose a print out of some pieces that appeared in *The Times* of April 1887. It seems to capture the flavour of the real Diplomacy that was happening during this period and makes an interesting comparison with gaming Diplomacy.

SA: Thanks, I printed it as it helped lend this issue a theme.

PETE BIRKS

Thanks for *Spring Offensive* No.14. I agree that I was somewhat sceptical when I heard about "qualifying rounds" for the National Diplomacy Championship. The number of boards had been falling for a few years, so I thought that the need to qualify would make things worse. I am glad to have been proved wrong. Vick Hall seems confident of three boards at the Royal George on Saturday, and attendance this year may be higher as a result.

The Whielden Street hard disc disasters are mainly a result of them being tied to an electricity sub-station which is also linked to the local hospital. The hospital clearly has "priority" (even Richard would be hard-pressed to argue that an Intensive Care Ward should be put below a hard disc controller on the list of priority, or, perhaps not) and as a result Whielden Street is vulnerable to power cuts and surges. It is clearly the best argument you can have for one of those "surge controllers" that you can think of, although the option of a reserve generator might be a little bit over the top. Actually, these are not incredibly expensive. All Mecca shops used to have a battery-powered one which could run a camera and two tills for about three hours; I can't imagine that a computer would need that much power. As for the sub-station, this is just one more thing to add to the list of questions needed to be put when considering buying a house. The most important, of course, is, "When does the postman arrive?"

Well, I got to go to work now (one until nine on a Friday - super, especially when you get comments on the radio on a Fri-

day morning that "the weekend starts here!") God, don't they know that only a small minority of the total population (and, I suspect, a minority of the working population) work nine to five, Monday to Friday? It feels to me on Friday that the week starts here. Monday to Thursday is just coasting while Friday and Saturday are bloody hard work.

And so, with the miracle of time-lapse calligraphy, I arrive back at the word-processor at 10.40 on Saturday night. Yes, the weekend really does start here!

Actually, the weekend started about three hours ago, when I got home. It would have been earlier, but on arriving at work this morning I was greeted with two things. The first was welcome (a cup of coffee) but the second was not - a telephone call telling me to go to another shop.

"Er, Pete, can you go to a shop in Lordship Lane?" Now, I happen to live only five minutes from Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, and I happen to know that there are no A.R. Dennis shops in Lordship Lane. However, there is one in Lordship Lane, Tottenham.

So, after a train trip, an underground trip, another train trip (accompanied by several dozens of Tottenham, Lazio, Chelsea and Ajax supporters, all on their way to something called the Makita Mouse Cup), and two bus rides, I found myself in Tottenham. Hence my latter than normal arrive home.

SA: I remember being asked at very short notice (9.15am) to go and represent someone accused of ABH at Tottenham Magistrates Court (10.30 hearing) which is also in Lordship Lane. The journey was awful and as a south London person I felt I was really travelling into the back and beyond - wild country indeed. That's one thing I don't miss about being a junior Barrister, all that travelling to obscure Magistrates Courts in parts of London which are just names on a tube map to me (or worse still, names which are not even on a tube map).

After eating my curry, I sat down to read the remainder of Thomas Kennealy's *Flying Class Hero*. I've been unhappy with most of his work since *Schindler's Ark*, but this struck me as something of a return to form. However, it is a distinctly Australian novel, in a way that *Schindler's Ark* is not. Perhaps I was only struck by this because I had only just finished Peter Carey's latest, and Carey writes books which are as typically "Australian" as you can get. The trouble was, I couldn't quite pin down what the factors were which gave me such an impression.

On second thoughts, though, why should I try? Such a tendency to over-analysis or intellectualization is something I really don't need anymore. Instead, I suppose I could sit down and watch *The French Connection* for the fifteenth time before I go to bed.

SA: I'd go and watch The French Connection, or rather I did.

ANDREW FEATHER

It's been reported in the paper that the Post Office has admitted keeping records of political affiliations of its employees. With all the talk about privatisation of the post, ain't you worried that your political exploits recently for Labour may affect your career? Have you noticed a strange clicking on the telephone line when you pick up the telephone, or unmarked transit vans parked outside your house recently? For a small fee I know a guy who can get you a Bolivian passport and plastic surgery - though from James Hardy's letter it sounds as if some of them would give you them for free!

SA: As the lawyer in charge of the privatisation project I'd better not comment on that. The Post Office has its own investigation department which keeps employees in sorting offices under tight scrutiny (hidden observation rooms with one-way glass, hidden cameras, undercover agents on the shop floor etc.) - all in the name of stopping thefts from postal packets.

Pete Sullivan in his reply to my letter in *Spring Offensive* No.13 made the point that to win a game of football 2-0 is better than to lose it 3-5. I'm sure that many football fans would rather watch the 3-5 match, even if their team lost, as it would be more exciting and better value for money than the 2-0 match. The analogy used typifies the kind of thinking that is ruining a lot of sport nowadays; that winning (or probably "avoiding defeat" is a better term to use) is so important that greater emphasis is placed on defensive strategy than on attacking strategy. The result is a dreary game with little individual initiative or excitement, the team making the least mistakes being the one more likely to win, or in many cases the teams are so good defensively the result is a boring goal-less draw. I'm sure many have played a game of Diplomacy just as similar.

I'll be honest and say I cannot watch a game of football for the full 90 minutes, and as for American football - forget it, I'd rather water the garden. The game I can watch, and would recommend to anyone to see if they can, is Rugby League. You have to admire the players for their level

of fitness and intelligence (yes, intelligence!) required to play the game. For the full 90 minutes non-stop these guys are running, tackling, and having to plan what they are going to do with the ball. the scoring system also adds extra interest as so many combinations of tries and goals can alter the match in a see-saw battle. by contrast soccer and American Football don't offer that excitement, the excitement has been killed off by big business interests, especially the TV sponsorship deals which in order to finance the sponsorship have to sell the advertising slots during the match. It won't be long before the TV companies pressurise the FA to adopt four quarters instead of two halves, just to have more advertising.

SA: *I agree, though I'm not sure our American readers will. Diplomacy can be played in a fun and exciting way though - just look at James Hardy in Pydna - 1902 as France and he has an army in Galicia!*

RICHARD SHARP

Curiously my records - or rather Mick Bullock's, as I wasn't in charge at the time - do not show you as playing in DS2. However, there is a record of an unnamed standby playing Austria for a short time - perhaps that was you. It doesn't, of course, affect the validity of what I said, as my games in 1978 were run to an entirely different set of house rules... including stand-bys, even! But your knowledge of my present GMing style, house rules, etc. is, as I said, non-existent except from hearsay, and as a lawyer...

SA: *Odd, I am sure I played in DS2 (France I thought, but I could be wrong about that). I certainly did play in a Dolchstoß supplement game, I can even remember feeling cheated when you decided to start the supplement after I had put my name down for a game and the feel of the carbon copy game reports. Hearsay has been admissible in this country in the civil courts since 1968, and as a commercial (as opposed to a criminal) lawyer...*

DOUGLAS KENT

A few quick notes on yours and Markie's comments on the PDO census and *Pontevedria*. First please note that the 47 zines included in the 1993 Census did not include three fairly important zines - *Canadian Diplomat*, *Home Office*, and (most importantly) *Graustark*. *THO* probably only had 4 or 5 unique subbers, but my guess is *TCD* and *G* had 30 or more between them, as both represent special sectors of the hobby (*TCD* being the biggest Canadian zine, and *Graustark* being

the longest-running zine where a number of unique people play). *Graustark* had been included in the 1992 Census, while the other two were not (if memory serves). In other words, my guess is the true count should have been about 700. I'm going to hound people more next time to get those lists in.

As for *Pontevedria*, it is by no means a complete listing of all games open. If Phil Reynolds (or now Andy York) didn't see a zine, its game openings weren't included. By a quick glance through the latest *Zine Register*, I count maybe 28 or 29 zines with current variant offerings. With Andy York now at the helm, I expect *Pont.* to become more complete, but probably will only cover 80 to 90% of what's out there. Say what you want about the state of the U.S. hobby, but don't use the latest *Pont.* as an accurate thermometer.

Finally, as to UK zines being better than those in the US, I'd have to say that, from what I've seen, they come out about even. US zines seem to be a bit more regular, while UK zines overall are more friendly and personable. That's probably because, on balance, the UK publishers are more friendly and personable. I'm not speaking from experience, though - even having published 53 issues of *MP*, I've only met one U.S. hobby member face-to-face...and I would have avoided that if I could get away with it. I'm in hiding until this hobby agrees to pay all my expenses to attend a major Con of my choice. Hey, anybody want to pay my way to next year's ManorCon?

My mother has been a member of Mensa for years, and yowza - she pays her bills rounded up to the nearest dollar because "I don't like to subtract all the pennies". Ugh!

FRED DAVIS

A recent study of American Mensa members has shown that most of us are not failures or misfits, if you count annual income as a sign of "success." In 1992, the average household income of American Mensans was \$73,000, considerably above the national average, and the employment level was also above the average. However, I do believe it's true that a higher percentage of mensans are lone wolves or "flakey" than in the general population. This came up in a discussion at the recent U.S. Mensa Convention in Orlando. Most of the people agreed that among those members who do not attend meetings or other Mensa events, there are many oddballs who are poor socializers and want to be left alone. There are others who are wallflowers, who need a stimulus to come out of their cocoons and start talking, but, once started, many of

them turn out to be very interesting people.

SA: *Many oddballs are very successful in a financial sense, but that doesn't mean they are well-adjusted. I can understand people wanting to come together if they have a common hobby or interest, but the idea of coming together because they have a common IQ (but not necessarily anything else) seems, to me, very odd. I suppose that's why Mensa has SIGs (Special Interest Groups) - but if the idea is thus to meet people with a common interest, why restrict it to people with a supposedly similar IQs. John Dodds (who is a very senior civil servant) recalled a tale of going to a games meeting at which they were playtesting a version of the 18xx games and when the assembled crowd realised that he wasn't a member of Mensa, they insisted that those playing 18xx should move to a different location as they couldn't possibly ply the game with a non-Mensa member. That sort of behaviour is elitist nonsense and it stinks.*

PETE BIRKS

Mensa seem to have been going downhill for over a decade (when Mick Bullock left in protest at the money-makers who were moving in). Advertising in The Sun for God's sake. It seems that all you need is the money for the entry fee to get in these days. Andrew Feather's point that he has found it useful when he moves from city to city is valid, but the organization's commercialism grates somewhat.

FRANK BLADES

Apparently you have run an article in *Spring Offensive* on whether there ought to be a Postal Diplomacy Group in Mensa. I have heard this via Fred C. Davis Jr. (in an American accent) who runs the American Mensa Diplomacy S.I.G. and who, prompted by your article, sent me a massive letter - most of which was pretty incomprehensible to me.

I think both yourself and Fred are going to be a tad disappointed. I took over running the British Mensa RPG and Postal Games S.I.G. earlier this year. As you'll see from our magazine, *SIGIL*, it is mainly RPG material - indeed there is only one or two mentions of postal games which is a review of *B.U.M.* and a mention that the PBM side "is so quiet".

Historically the Postal Games used to be a separate S.I.G. but interest waned and eventually rather than let it fold, it was incorporated into the RPG S.I.G. My predecessor had only a passing interest, so it was left to die off somewhat.