

Strange Meeting 2

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DEADLINE = MIDNIGHT (GMT) FRIDAY 19th DECEMBER

IDLE THOUGHTS

Many thanks for all the good wishes I have received since last month – much appreciated. Thanks also for the kind comments about the online archive of zines which is steadily increasing in size at www.diplomacyzines.org.uk. Due to popular demand (no, honestly) this issue includes a list of what is in the Zine Archive (more or less), rather than a list of what I know is missing. If anyone can help plug the gaps for posterity (or even explain any of the gaps!), I would be very grateful.

This collection has been the work of many people over the years. Back in 1981 Richard Walkerdine thought it would be a good idea to try and collect together a comprehensive archive of all that had gone before. Starting off with his own considerable collection and that of Mick Bullock, Richard managed to assemble a large archive which he passed on to Andy Bate in 1988. Andy added to the collection, but it is fair to say that with the disappearance of Andy's zine, *Froggy*, it soon became out of date.

In 1994 Nick Kinzett gave me his collection of mostly 80's zines, so I set about building his collection into a backup archive, receiving much help from Richard Sharp, Chris Tringham, Geoff Challinger, Pete Birks, Jeremy Tullett and others. Extra assistance was received from the USA when Walt Buchanan agreed to repatriate the UK zines from the **Hoosier Archives**, which included a complete set of *Albion*, the first British Diplomacy zine. In the summer of 1996 Andy agreed to hand over the old Hobby Archives so the two collections could be merged. Since then I have tried my best to keep it up to date (though the last audit published inside was done in 2003) and I am still updating the catalogue and trying to identify gaps.

Well, that's enough of that.

Given the recent publicity over the recent World of Warcraft (or WoW as aficionados call it) expansion, I was wondering how many traditional board gamers have gone over to the MMORPG (Massive Multi-player Online Role Playing Game) experience. I have tried World of Warcraft, Conan and Lord of the Rings. In many ways they are all the same - you start

with a Level 1 character and compete various quests (usually going to a specific location and killing / find a particular item and then returning). Along the way you kill more evil-doers. The more quests you compete and baddies you kill, the higher your level grows and the more money you get to spend on new equipment which allows you to kill even more evil-doers etc. They can become quite repetitive. Some tasks require several players to co-operate to complete them and it is the fact that you are operating "live" in an environment where you can interact with other players that can make it fun.

Games tend to be "PvE" (Player vs Environment) in which case other human players can't attack you or "PvP" (Player versus Player) where they can (within certain limits). It can be quite addictive, you end up staying up late just trying to make your level 16 Paladin into a level 17 etc. I have to confess that on occasion I have got hooked, though when you stand back it can all seem a bit empty.

The three games I have tried have been quite different in character. WoW is the most popular, but seems a bit cartoony and has a lot of teenagers playing. Conan claims to be rated 18 and is a lot more bloody and gruesome, better graphics than WoW (in my opinion) but few human players. I suspect it is the only game where you can play as a sword-wielding topless female Barbarian (though I bet none of the shapely female characters in any of these games are female in real life). Lord of the Rings probably has the best graphics of all, but in my experience is not as gripping as the other two.

I will keep a WoW subscription as Freddie and I can play online together (even when he is at his Mum's), but I think I will cancel my LotR and Conan subscriptions - because once the initial enthusiasm has gone, there doesn't seem to be much point to it all. But maybe one could say that about all games? While I think about it, perhaps I will log on one final time just to get my Thief up to level 40 (when he can get his own horse!).

Two hours later... See what I mean – time just vanishes when you play these games. Seriously addictive.

Where Is My Mind?

Where Is My Mind? No.82 dropped on to my doormat recently with a menacing thud (much like the **Wimm?** I remember). It is an enjoyable read - David has an easy writing style and makes some entertaining and pertinent political points in a **South Park** sort of way. For example, I agree with him that it is irritating the Obama is always described as being black even though he is half white - still I thought it refreshing that Obama recently described himself as a "mutt" even though his campaign team have been happy to describe him as "black". Racial groupings are tricky things and as a society we seem to have adopted an approach which lets people define themselves how *they* want to (so race is now subjective) and says that it is not open to anyone to question how someone wants to define themselves - i.e. you have the right to define yourself as you want. So it isn't about objective facts, it is about perception of your position in society, and in our society many still associate position in society with race. Hopefully Obama will do a lot to change that.

I think the thing that most frightens me about a black President of the USA is that Hollywood teaches us that he (for it is always a he) must be the harbinger of global catastrophe. Look what having Morgan Freeman as president did for the world in **Deep Impact** (a far better film than **Armageddon**)? The sub-text must have been having a black President is as unlikely as the world being hit by a comet 11km wide. Well, we now have the first...

I also agree with David that house prices must fall if most of the next generation are ever to have a chance of owning one. I suppose I kind of "own" a house, though in truth by virtue of two mortgages the house is really owned by the Nationwide Building Society. That said, I'm not sure if I would invest in shiny beads or interestingly shaped pebbles as he advises (I'd go for tinned food, a tin opener and a rubber dinghy), but I do feel sorry for those who have stretched themselves to buy a house in the past couple of years - whatever were they thinking? If, like me, you have neither shares nor savings, then the impact of bank failures and stock market crashes is at least blunted. The trick in a recession is to keep your job - if you can, you should be OK - though we may now all be paying higher taxes for the next generation or so to pay for the current cash giveaway.

Nice to see Fiona Campbell is still around and still writing **Tanstaaf!**. I must have first met her when she was a mere slip of a girl and going out with Mike Clarke (wonder what happened to him?). I sympathise with her reflection that she doesn't have enough enjoyment in her life - I feel just like that, but I haven't got a clue what to do about it (other than start another Diplomacy zine). Fiona's solution was champagne cocktails, but I have never been a fizzy

drinks sort of person. Any polite suggestions welcome.

Other old names from the past running sub-zines in **WIMM?** are Conrad von Metzke (has he dropped the "von"?), running the RR and Allan Stagg running everything else. I've always had a begrudging sort of admiration for people who can run a variety of games. My preference for Diplomacy essentially comes from an innate laziness that having mastered the rules to one game, how can I be expected to hold in my head rules for other games at the same time? I suppose I still have some residual snobbishness from the fact that I have never respected games where the game itself introduces on-going randomness (such as rolling dice or drawing cards), but I am more than happy to believe that nowadays there are all sorts of games that are better and more entertaining (and shorter) than Diplomacy. I am so out of date with things games-wise, that I don't even know what board games to buy for my son (just turned 12), who clearly likes board games. Yet again, suggestions welcome.

Sadly David is keen not to add me to his list of zines with which he trades (all three of them) in order (he says) that we can perpetuate our pointless feuding. Please reconsider David; how can we possibly feud if we don't send each other our zines so as to create and foster the opportunity to insult each other? This reminds me of the old philosophical nugget "If a gratuitous insult is made in a zine and is not heard by the insulted, is it really insulting?" To which the answer is clearly no. Thus I have to keep sending David this zine, because it irritates him. Only if he becomes indifferent (which I suspect he really is) can I possibly take him off the mailing list. Having said all that I honestly can't remember what our feud was supposed to be over, and I'll bet David can't either. I think it was about how my zines were narrow in scope and quite boring, in which case fair cop, but it hardly amounts to a feud.

So of course, based on this issue (and what I remember of David) I think you might well like this zine. I, of course, am not encouraged to subscribe - but my very old cat Ginger has expressed so much interest in this zine (walking over it continuously as I tried to read it while sitting on the living room floor) that I have acceded to his request to send David a subscription on his behalf (Ginger doesn't have a chequebook) and agreed to turn the pages for him (not having an opposable thumb must be a bugger - indeed, having claws must be a considerable inconvenience when wiping ones backside, which probably explains his refusal to do the same). I do hope David doesn't want to turn away his first feline subscriber on the basis of who he chooses to live with?

WIMM? Is available from David Oya, 24 Kingsway, Banbury, OX16 9NY but don't say I sent you...

LETTERS

NIC CHILTON

Well it has been a long time - but congratulations on the zine launch (or is it commiserations on succumbing to the addiction once more).

Issue 1 was good, and I'd be happy to continue to receive it, after all sounds like a good chance to catch up with old friends - a Facebook for dip-heads.

SA: Though of course there is now a Facebook group for "UK Postal Gaming Zine hobby Old Farts".

It is nice to see "4-weekly" described as leisurely when traditionally this was considered fairly fast. Back in 1998 I tried setting up similarly "slow" internet games on the Dip Judges but there was little uptake - most preferred daily or at the most weekly deadlines. Being able to take out a couple of hours every few weeks offers something different now, though will it mainly be old hobby stalwarts returning to play or will others find it appealing too?

SA: Well, being a child of the 70's, I always thought 4 weeks was a bit slow, most zines in the early 70's were 3-weekly. By the 90's 4 weeks was fairly fast and many zines were 5 weekly. This always struck me as odd as by the 90's the technology was far more efficient and the prevalence of photocopying mean that editors didn't actually have to duplicate it themselves, so it was all less effort.

It was nice to see an old diatribe of mine reprinted though it didn't receive much comment at the time (I guess I shouldn't have been over-cautious with "2010"), though it was as a result of negative comments from what I'd thought was a friendly hobby, even though largely it was. I had a look at your diplomacy archives website, and look forward to more zines appearing.

Will there be a list of all zines you aim to add? It's just I looked through my part of the "Anti-Agar Archive" and found several dip zines not mentioned (mind you I realise it's a work in progress). I do have some on your missing list, such as **Smodnoc** 42 and **A Little Original Sin** 7 and 8, but then I have some that you may believe don't exist. For instance you have **Mad Policy** ending at 73 but I have some in the 100's from 1985. So are you now considering a reply to my comment on the zine archive or wondering what the AAA was? I guess you already know, but back in 1995 I found it strange, there were people with collections of zines who would swap copies etc under the explicit instruction they were never to be handed over to you! When I started **GAME** I was on the lookout for articles, partly because I was relatively new to the hobby and wanted to find out more info, and to reprint as I was sure I wasn't the only one in that position. I was offered a few boxes of old zines, someone's AAA that they had to leave of as part of a move, that have

mostly lurked in a filing cabinet, though many now have been disposed of over the years. So I'll have a look and see what I can send, since I'm likely to put the rest into recycling at some point.

SA: No I didn't know about the AAA, but it doesn't surprise me. Amusing that some people would rather zines were lost forever (as it appears they have been), rather than find their way into my collection - even though I have always thought of this collection as being "in trust" for the rest of the hobby. Oh well.

Of course, the missing zines would be very welcome. The zines uploaded are only a tiny part of the complete archive. I audited the archive when I last moved house in 2003 - that audit is reprinted elsewhere in this issue.

JIM BURGESS

Hi Stephen, great re-start, so happy to have you back.

I have a lot of the szines you're missing, including some or all of those very old **Obsidians**. Unfortunately, my record keeping and filing is not very good, so I have meant to spend some time around Christmas going through records and pulling things for you. Before I actually do it, I will ask you for your current list of "missing szines". Once I find things, what do you want, for me to send you originals (I am willing to do that to fill out your records), or PDFs that I scan? Or both?

*SA: A fairly up to date list is available at http://www.diplomacyzines.org.uk/missing_zines.htm - the only other additional zines missing are some published since 2003. So if it is on that list as missing, then it still is. The **Obsidians** would be particularly welcome, as even Alex Richardson doesn't have htm and it would be nice to be able to give him a DVD with all his back issues on. Originals are always best - but scans (at 300dpi) would be OK.*

I wish I had been more on the ball and joined one of your new games, they look like great lineups. Oh well, I'm also back into my publishing grind again. At the least I will be a vehicle for Doug.

SA: Yes, you and Doug seem to be pretty much the collective lynchpin of the US hobby these days. Don't know where you get your energy from!

SIMON BILLENNESS

Damn you, Agar! I clicked on the link to your new zine. Then I found the zine archive. Then I spent from midnight to 6am reading old **Megs** and **Dolchstosses** while also finding old hobby friends on LiveJournal and Facebook. You owe me a good night's sleep. Any chance you could put **Thing on the Mat** on the archives?

SA: Done.

Why don't we simply set up a Facebook group for clapped out old postal Diplomacy fans?

SA: Which you have now done and at the time of writing the group has 27 members.

MARK STRETCH

As a dinosaur, I know nothing about Facebook.

SA: And neither did I – apart from an invitation to join from a friend a year or so ago. But I thought what the hell – and I have now been reunited with old friends from college and an ex-girlfriend in Australia. So it's not all bad.

<http://www.facebook.com>

ROBIN AP CYNAN

Do you go for the original Wilfred Owen poem, or for the Britten setting of it in his War Requiem?

SA: The poem, because that's what I knew first. I was taken to see War Requiem by an ex-girlfriend's mother in the last 80's at the RFH (she had a spare ticket) and was mesmerised. Now you've reminded me of it, I'll just pop over to Amazon and buy the CD. Whenever there's two versions of something (usually pop songs) people do always seem to prefer what the knew first.

TOM TWEEDY

Lol - you just couldn't leave it alone, could you? ☺ All that heartbreak again. You do realise you are crazy, don't you?

Well best of luck in your new (old) endeavour, you are going to need it. I shan't be taking any place in it this time of course (Dip2000 is still your fault from the old six games you left me before). And besides I'm getting too old for snail mail or anything of the sort.

SA: That's a shame – but I guess you must be ancient now as you were grown up when I was just a kid! The only problem I have with real letter is that my arms are no longer long enough to hold paper at the required focal length.

TUESDAY RAYNE (courtesy of the MidCon website)

Go on, ask us a question! This is to Stephen Agar. What sort of game is this? How far does one take it, and how far have you gone to win? Please be honest, if that is possible. What pleasure do you get from this game. I want to know.

SA: Err....

RICHARD WILLIAMS

Although I doubt I wish to receive *Strange Meeting*, you at least deserve the courtesy of a reply. Basically, I don't play Diplomacy by e-mail, so while I have no problem with the content, the fact that I won't be playing, I see little point in receiving it. I appreciate there are now very few places one can still play by post, made even harder by the part time

postal service now in operation, but it's the way I wish to continue paying.

I wish you success in your current venture and should you decide at any stage to have games purely by post, then I would probably reconsider my position. By that I mean a mixture of both styles of play, not dropping the e-mail games.

SA: Thanks for the letter Richard – reassuring to see your trademark small blue notepaper is still being used. I am more than happy to have postal games, though I don't think you can preclude players from using other means of communication as well (telephone or email). It has always been thus, I remember horrifying my parents at my use of the telephone when playing postal Diplomacy as a teenager (particularly the long conversations with Tom and Jan Tweedy). However, I could ask that players in a particular game are prepared to use the postal system as well as other forms of communications so that they can play alongside someone who does not want to use email (or a telephone). Would that meet your requirements? If so, shall I try and find six others?

ALAN PARR

It looks pretty likely that one day you'll be able to claim the title of The Last Zine Editor, if not with *Strange Meeting* then certainly with your next zine but one or two - amazing dedication. Likewise the diplomacyzines.org.uk site as well. I enjoyed glancing through this as well - even more amazing.

SA: I always hoped that the last zine editor in the US would be John Boardman (who was also the first), but that seems less likely these days. The last zine editor in the UK will probably be John Marsden, speaking of whom...

JOHN MARSDEN

Well, this is a turn-up for the books after so long...

Anyway, I have found *Dolchstoß* 79 and will photocopy it for you. I probably have some of the other missing items, but most of my archive is now in boxes in the loft and not easy to get at.

SA: many thanks! I think the *Dolchstoß* collection is now complete. As a priority I will try and get all old *Dolchstosses* on the site.

I haven't seen your full list of missing zines - I don't use the internet a lot. Partly due to a lack of time and partly because we still only have a dial-up connection. This could change - Suffolk is piloting the government's plan for all secondary school pupils to have broadband access, and Elizabeth is 15....

SA: this issue I am publishing the results of the Audit I did in 2003, so it shows what zines were in the Archive at that time.

Ode's website, www.ode-online.net, has been dormant for too long. Firstly software changes meant

I lost communication with it. Last year I moved the name to a different ISP, but I still haven't found the time to master the ftp software.

*SA: Other than a couple of sites which just make back issues available (**For Whom The Die Rolls** and **Variable Pig**) there doesn't seem to be any real attempt by the remaining zines to actually use the Internet to compliment the zine and get new readers. I appreciate that is what Ode-online was starting to do. I really need to bring all my Diplomacy websites together into one big site.*

When I do, I still have in that folder all the records of every Diplomacy game ever finished that I took over from Richard Sharp. It needs bringing up to date and at some point I shall need from you the results of the **Armistice Day** games that continued by e-mail.

SA: Wouldn't it be nice if all those records were available online?

IAN HARRIS

The mention of 'dead' zine websites struck a nerve. I used to do a **Borealis** page on Compuserve, but after I moved to Blueyonder never gave the Compuserve site another thought and assumed it would have been deleted. Then, just last week, while browsing though that excellent site BoardGameGeek <http://www.boardgamegeek.com> I found a list of sites having useful links to other sites supplying games rules, and there was my old **Boris** site listed among them! Sure enough, there it was, just as I'd left it years earlier. It was weirdly like entering a time warp and meeting a younger version of yourself.

SA: And what is a little scary – if you go to <http://web.archive.org/collections/web/advanced.html> you can even find pages that have been deleted from the Internet!

JOHN WILMAN

Confound this new version of hotmail - I just sent you, completely by accident, a copy of a totally unrelated message. Still, it could have been worse, I might have accidentally sent you a Facebook lapdance (do we really need to know about such things?)

SA: But I don't know about such thing... And I want to!

Anyway, thanks for sending me issue 1 of your latest zine - a bit on the dry side, with those two pages of house rules, but I expect it will liven up.

SA: I hope so. Maybe Toby and Gihan can help?

TOBY HARRIS

At MidCon, Gihan pointed out that he felt your new zine lacked some "je ne sais quoi", emphasising with support from the five ill-groomed sausages of his right hand forming an apex together at his mouth ... and then stretching wide at the word "quoi-aaaaah".

So perhaps you might like to ask Gihan to help out; I'm sure your readers would love to know his current affairs at work, and how his superiors have learned the basics of office-chess. i.e., don't use your underlings as pawns coz pawns upgrade to queens!

GIHAN BANDARANAIKE

What utter balderdash!

What I said was I was underwhelmed (nods of agreement from Vick and Toby) as it did not compare with spring offensive in its heyday but I excused this by saying it's had no chance to develop a lively letter column yet. We then all agreed a lively lettercol (**SNOT**, **TCP**, **SpOff**, **ALOS**, even that mouldy **Fungus**) is the heart and soul of a zine that you are not playing in.

Toby then spent the whole con ***** (who is ***** in your zine) and egging him to ** ***** (as they were ** ***** together)! The whole con was one long... ***job! If poor ***** survives all that interminable barrage of sickening ***** , muchos kudos to both ***** and ***** for ***** through Toby's *****!

Now that last paragraph would certainly spice up the zine!

SA: I seem to remember that I have got into a lot of trouble printing your letters before. So this time I have censored it appropriately, to protect the vulnerable.

As for my work situation, I've won a political battle at work, but not the war. In Toby-speak, just because you have promoted your pawn to a queen does not mean you have won the game! How I allowed myself to be sacked from Comet for photocopy abuse of **Carpe Diem** instead of contesting it (naivety?) escapes me. Perhaps I subconsciously wanted to leave a job where I was underused for 6 years. I am now far wiser and more savvy than those youthful carefree days, and cannot afford unexpected leisure time with the recession. To be sacked once is unfortunate, to be sacked twice would smack of carelessness...

SA: I guess I have had surprisingly few jobs in my career to date – only three different employers since University and I've been with Royal Mail since 1991. Never ever got into trouble though.

On your last issue's content, I found it slightly disconcerting reading the pros and cons of feuds where you, Stephen, were trying to be (laughably) impartial! Whilst not to the extreme of Piggott (now there is an editor I wish I had read), your reputation as a feud provocateur (though in my experience never malicious, just mischievous) made the articles especially ironic...

SA: Perhaps. But I never wanted to get into a feud, it just, sort of, happened.

GUY THOMAS

Long time no hear. I don't expect to get wind of new zines these days! However, **Strange Meeting** was very welcome, and I've enjoyed wallowing in the nostalgia of hobby politics and feuds from bygone days.

When I was editing **Realpolitik**, I don't recall having any feuds at all, which in retrospect was a pretty poor effort. It was probably partly because I'm not naturally vitriolic, and partly because I didn't write too many zine reviews. Which begs the question: does one do the hobby less of a favour by publishing caustic reviews or by publishing none at all?

SA: I think you do the hobby a favour by publishing any zine review at all – without mentioning other zines, there is no hobby as there is no collective involvement. Something between the minimalist basic facts and a two page exposé is probably about right. That said, there are so few editors left these days I really wouldn't want to be feuding with any of them – and to be honest I think I have outgrown it.

SIMON IVES

I don't play anything these days (except Warhammer and the odd wargame with my boys) so will probably just be a lurker.

SA: Freddie is into Warhammer, but it never seems to progress beyond painting the figures. Just as well, as I can't stand the idea of fantasy wargames, though I still have a hankering for traditional historical wargames – particularly the ancient period. You can get some of the tactical thrill from a good computer game – but you can't beat the spectacle of a few hundred painted miniatures.

SANDRA BOND

I for one appreciate your scanning labours, particularly with **Dolchstoss** (nice to catch up with the later issues, though sad to read of Richard's ultimate demise) and **Thing on the Mat** (which I never had a full run of). Any chance of **NERTZ** sometime soon? I challenge you to fit the spoon issue or the ruler issue through your scanner!

*SA; I will add **NERTZ** to the priority list – I want to finish **Albion** and **TCP** first. I am trying to scan zines in complete runs. As you say, **NERTZ** will be something of a challenge due to William's habit of attaching plastic objects to the paper.*

Yes, I am a fully fledged solicitor now. Finally qualified in September 2007. Well, having gained 1 year PQE (as they say) I'm actually about to pack in work for a year or so and spend some of my late father's money on travelling the world and trying to write a book or two, before I get too old to enjoy it. As you'll see if you get copies of **Quasiquote**, I've been learning to play guitar this year in a very

amateur band, and having started writing songs off the back of this, the creative bug is biting me hard at the moment.

*SA: Well done on the change of career and sorry to hear about your father. As I said last issue, I like buying myself presents. One present from earlier in the year was an ice blue Fender Stratocaster and a practice amp. I have tried teaching Kate how to play **My Chemical Romance's** *Welcome to the Black Parade*, but in the main I am paying Bowie and Bragg songs. Billy Bragg just doesn't sound right on an acoustic guitar.*

Yes, I revived my SF zine **Quasiquote** this year and have done two issues -- if you want to see them I will happily sling you spares of both 6 and 7 (1-5 came out in 1999-2003 approx, before law school). Chris Dickson's on my mailing list, as is Pete Sullivan, who seems to have turned wholeheartedly to SF zines these days. And I can't quite bring myself to stop sending Iain Bowen copies...

*SA: If I had Iain's current address, I think I too wouldn't be able to stop myself. No doubt he will emerge one day to complain if I ever up load **Y Ddraig Goch** to www.diplomacyzines.org.uk, so I'd better not.*

If you're doing a zine again, I'd be interested to see it. I still get **Borealis**, bless Ian Harris' little cotton socks, but that's the only contact I still have with the hobby other than reading a few peoples' blogs or LiveJournals (Pete Birks, Chris Dickson, Pete Strover, William Whyte, Trevor Mendham and Pete Sullivan, off the top of my head. There are probably more if I but knew of them).

SA: Yes, quite a few editors have blogs or their equivalent. I will try and compile a list.

PAUL REEVES

Thanks for the copy of **Strange Meeting**. I enjoyed reading it, and am glad you are back in the hobby. I must admit with the end of **Dolchstoss** and the move of Peter Birks online, I am only receiving **Ode**.

Would love to see more issues, and well done for your work on putting the archives online. I must admit it would be good if you did all the zines I have in the loft, as I could copy to DVD and save the space... but surely I should be voting for ones I don't have. If you are missing any copies of **Ode** (2003 on) **GH** (2001 on) or **Dolchstoss** (98 on), I must have them lying around somewhere.

*SA: What's the last issue of **GH** you have? Pete reckoned it folded last year.*

If you really intend to send the hard copy out, then that would be my preferred format - anything over a page is better read on the train, and as I don't often get a seat on the Thameslink to/from London Bridge, paper is better. If you emailed it, I would probably print it and cost myself a fortune in inkjet ink.

SA: *I am happy to send out paper zines free to anyone in the UK who would prefer to get the zine in the post. I would rather pay myself than have to organise looking after subscriptions and banking cheques. I have a nice quick and cheap laser printer which prints both sides (and personalises each copy with the appropriate name and address ready for a window envelope) so it is fairly easy. I am often on the Thameslink train as I travel from Brighton to Farringdon most days. A revolting train and hideously overcrowded. I have to confess to buying a 1st class season ticket as I refuse to stand to Haywards Heath most evenings – maybe that's a luxury to cut during the recession.*

Maybe I will have time for a game some time (and then I will want the email version, so as not to lose diplomacy time), but at the moment our youngest (age 20 months) and oldest (age 10) take up all the time.

SA: *Kids do. But they grow up so quickly, I wish I had spent more time playing with mine now.*

DOUG KENT

It is sad but true that the zine format is generally dead. Of course there are some holdouts...even here across the pond, we still have *The Abyssinian Prince*, *Cheesecake*, *Boris the Spider*, *Northern Flame*, and *Graustark* among others (plus *Damn the Consequences*, *Western Front*, and other non-US zines). And there's my own *Eternal Sunshine* (www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/) which hasn't quite settled on zine or subzine, despite lapping Jim-Bob many times in the issues department since I started publishing again.

But the fact is the games are often only secondary, and I like it that way. It took me months to fill my first Diplomacy game, and as you know the second game is just beginning...but I didn't much care. I get more feedback from my personal writing and stories than I do on anything else in *Eternal Sunshine*, and that's the part of the hobby I continue to get the most enjoyment out of: learning more about other people, making new hobby friends, and catching up with old ones. So when you have people only looking for Diplomacy, the idea of a game with monthly turns is a hard sell.

I found the article on criticism quite enjoyable. Certainly sniping is the most fun, and the most dangerous. But I have reached the point in my life where if somebody takes anything I say seriously, even if I meant it seriously, that's their problem. But within the Diplomacy hobby, and zines in general, I have always found it rather silly.

By that I mean, if somebody wants to subscribe to, and play in, a zine I think is a pile of crap, why should I care? (All of this is more properly spoken in the past tense, as the options are few, but the point is still valid). I don't believe in "protecting" others

from a bad zine. If a player subscribes to a zine without seeing a sample or two, or without asking players in the zine what it's like, they deserve whatever they get.

This point of was the basis of what grew into a mini-feud between Garret Schenck and I, when he took over the *Zine Register*. In my mind, **ZR** was supposed to be a hobby service, listing all the known zines and giving some basic information on them. Readers would submit their own mini-comments or reviews, and the zine publisher would often do the same. I have very fond memories of leafing through the issues that Ken Peel and Tom Nash did, seeing what was out there, all the different styles and content. With Garret, on the other hand, I felt an overwhelming sense of scorn exude from his personal comments on each zine. It was as if Garret could not imagine that some hobby members might prize other things above maps and timeliness.

This was also the basis of the "turbofreak" battle, which (again) Garret couldn't understand my position in. *Maniac's Paradise*, my primary Diplomacy zine, had always been posted within 24 hours of the deadline. That's the way I ran it, and I always made it a point to warn players that the deadline was the deadline...submit orders five minutes late and you were out of luck. Yet at the same time I was not a "turbofreak" because that is simply how I ran my zine. As a publisher, that's how it worked best for me. As a player, I was active in some of the slowest zines around, and was happy to accept those slow zines for what they were. What's the point of having 40 zines in the hobby, and having every one of them run the same way, containing the same content?

The zines fit the personality of the publishers, and the players each zine attracted. I had plenty of people who subscribed to *MP* and chose not to play there; they liked the zine and enjoyed the content, but they preferred not to play in games with such strict deadlines.

The reviews Garret put into his *Zine Register* issues went way over the top, in my opinion. When you start making reference to how many days pass between the prior issue's deadline and the postmark on the latest one, I think you've gone too far. It should be enough to say something about it might be better to play elsewhere if you need a fast-paced game. Instead, reading through the **ZR** it felt like the same review over and over: too slow, maps aren't as nice as in *Upstart* (Garret's zine), I hate it, maybe you'll like it. That's not accurate, of course, but that's how it felt.

The sniping is where I think things got screwed up. Garret must not have realized how hurt and betrayed some publishers were going to feel about his comments (in part because he didn't view **ZR** or its mission in the same way as many others did). So in hindsight I believe some of the worst comments he made were meant as friendly jabs instead of blunt

force to the head of the zine publisher. But as it is with emails, it isn't what you say or what you meant, it's what they THINK you said and meant. And once feelings get hurt, it can be very difficult to restore a relationship.

I know I got off on a tangent here. Oh well...glad to have another zine from one of us dinosaurs.

*SA: Interesting – we had similar battles here in the UK, but maybe not so pronounced. **Mission From God** worked on the principle that the readers sent the reviews in, so at least if you had a few reviews it helped maintain some balance.*

I think Garrett was playing a different game from Diplomacy – he was playing Competitive Zine Publishing. The thing about gamers is they usually like to win (not always – there do exist gamers who just like to compete – but I am not one of them). I think I used to play Competitive Zine Publishing sometimes – the idea that somehow your zine needs to “beat” other zines. In that respect the Zine Poll didn't help as it made editors with a competitive streak (such as Toby Harris and myself) worse.

PS - I suggested Grey Seal as a title because I'd like to club you to death, and use your body parts for holistic medicine...

SA: I thought it was because I was cute and fluffy.

GRAHAM TUNNICLIFFE

Hi, Stephen - thanks for the copy of your latest re-incarnation. You may be pleased to learn that *Pigmy Soccer Supremo* is still going strong as **REF** under Andy Hyams and that both Ian and David Phillips are playing in it as am I.

SA: Really! So it has being going continuously for 30 years! Brilliant!

MARK STRETCH

In *Strange Meeting* you mentioned about email zines being or not being the way forward. There are a number I receive. I am sending you a copy of **Dane's Games**, which also lists a number of others that are out there.

SA: Thanks – I will have to investigate further.

With internet capabilities the way they are, games can now be played remotely in real time over web interface. The best example is on BSW:

<http://www.brettspielwelt.de/>

This means that games tend to get played as they are face to face even if everyone is on different continents.

SA: OK, but that will just do for the multi-games zines what the Diplomacy Judges have done for the Diplomacy hobby. Namely, siphon off the hardcore games players leaving behind not enough people to maintain a zine based hobby.

UK DIPLOMACY ZINE ARCHIVE 2003 AUDIT

Zine	In Archive
“ ”	1-5
1901 and all that	1-102
Aardvark Poetry	0
Abode of the Abnormal	1-20
Abbott, The	
Absolute Zero	“-273” – “-265”
Ac-Mong	4, 5, 8-50
Acolyte, The	1-60
Action Not Words	0
Action Replay	1-10, 12, 18, 22-25, 28-37, 39-48, 50-54, 58
Ad Nauseam	1-33
Age of Reason	1-25
Aide de Camp	2-10
Albatross / Cormorant	1-25, 28-35, 40
Albion	1-50
Amazine	0
An Taidhleoir	15-30
Annals of Rome	1
Arfle Barfle Gloop	13-63
Argle Bargle / Brothers Grimm	4, 6-50
Armistice Day	1-22
Artful Assassin, The	1
Assassin's Handbook	1-16
Astradyne	53, 56-59, 61, 64, 72, 85, 90, 94-95, 97-98, 100, 105, 171
Asylum Zone, The	19-28
ATU XVIII	0-3, 5-12, 14-17, 19, 23
Aut Vincere Aut Mori	1-18
Back to the Dark Ages	1-50, 55-56, 59, 69-70, 81-82, 86-127, 129-130
Bannana	1-6, 8-9, 11-12
Barbarous League	1-21
Bats	1-24
Battleground	1-5, 7-12
BDC Journal	1-169
Beeston Beadle, The	1-8
Bela Lugosi's Dead	28
Bellicus	1-50
Betelgeuse	1-18
Between The Wars	24-27, 32
Black Hole	28
Black Spot	-1-17
Blackmail	1-19
Bleeder	147, 156, 163-164, 176, 209
Bloodstock	1-155
Blue Smarties	12-14
Bohemian Rhapsody	1-11: Vol 2 1, 4-5, 8; Vol 3 1, 3-8; Vol

Strange Meeting 2

Zine	In Archive
	4 2-5, 7, 10-12; Vol 5 1-7; Vol 6 1-2; Vol 8 3
Bolshevik Star	1-12
Boojum	1-27
Borealis	0-4, 6-51
Boris	1-3, 5-7
Born Losers	1-4
Box Frenzy	2-68
Brain Ache	1-20
Breakdown	1, 3-24, 26-27, 29
Brilliance of Massed Violins, The	1
Bring Her Outta	17, 19
Bron Y Aur	1-46
Bruce	¼, 1-94
BUM	17, 23-28, 30, 32-114
C'est Magnifique	1-131, 136-142
Caissa	1-6
Candle	5
Carpe Diem	1
Cassandra	1-8
Casus Belli	1-4
Certa Cito	1-4
Chimaera	1-102
Church Mouse, The	1-25
Comet	1-29
Commissar	1-2
Compendium	1-6
Conquest	2
Coolnacran	1-5
Courier	1-236, 238-241
Court Circular	-2, -1, 0, 1-9, 11-19, 19½, 20, 20¼
Coyote	1-65, 67, 69-70, 72, 74-77, 79-83
Crosstalk	2-3, 6-10
Cui Bono	1-3
Cunning Plan, The	1-161
Cut & Thrust	1-3, 5-214
Daily Mole, The	1-23
Darien Settlement	3
Dead Man's Chest	6, 10-12, 15-17, 21
Death's Dance taken Slowly	1-13
Demonic Designs	1, 3
Denver Glont	1-84, 86-87
Der Krieg	1-40
Devolution	1-4
Diary of a Dead Raven	27-34, 36-46, 50-53, 58-66, 69
Dib Dib Dib	4, 8-87
Die Grosse Dampfmaschine	1-27
Dingo	1
Diplomacy Quaterly	4-6

Zine	In Archive
Diplomat, The	2-12
Diplomatic Backstabber, The	1-3, 5, 7
Diplunacy	4, 7, 15
Dippy Ambassador, The	32-39, 47
DipSoc	2-3
Diversions	2
Diversions (on its own)	1-11 19½ 35 38 43-47, 49-50
Dolchstoß	1-277
Don't Shoot Me	1-14
Down Alien Skies	1-4, 6-10; 11-26
Dragonlords	6-7, 14, 16-22
Drooling God, The	3-14
Duck Dies At Midnight, The	1-18
Duel Purpose	1-10a
E&OE	3-6, 10
Eclipsor	1-10, 12-28a; 51-52, 54-100
Eh?	1-10
Electric Monk	1-53
Elmer Fudd	2-3, 5
En Garde	11-12
En Gardian	2-5
Enigma	1-20, 23-30
Entente	1-8
Et tu brute? (in V&U)	1, 4-6, 8-9; Vol 3 2; Vol 4 4
Ethil the Frog [I]	1-46
Ethil the Frog [II]	1-23, 96, 100-102
Everything You Always Wanted to Know...	1
Excidio	1-23
Exeunt	1
Factsheet	1-3
Fall of Eagles	1-91
Faster Than Light	1-31
Ferkin	1-6
Field Events	1-7, 9-21
Fifth Column	1-37
Filibuster	1, 3-33, 35-36, 38, 40-41, 43-44, 46, 52
Final Conflict, The	1-16
Finishing Touch, The	1-25, 38-45, 50, 52-61
Finisterre	1-13
Fire & Ice	8-9, 18
Fit of Rage	30
Five Year Plan	13-61
Flight Recorder, The	1-8
Flights of Fancy	1-5, 7-16, 18-31, 33-36, 39-58, 60-76
Flying for a Quail	2-3, 5
Foiled Again	1-14
Fokker Fodder	1-3
Fool Plays On, The	1-5

Strange Meeting 2

Zine	In Archive
For Whom The Die Rolls	1-92
Forден's Epitaph	None
Fortis Est Rana	1-26
Fox	26-29
Freaky Fungus, The	1-26
Frigate	1-26
Froggy	1-42
Gallimaufry	1-143
GAME	1-55
Game Openings	5A, 6B, 7AB,
Gameplay	7
Games	1-6
Games & Puzzles	54, 67-72, 74-77
Games & Puzzles (II)	1-16
Games By Post	1-3, 6
Games Castle	6
Games In Testing	8, 19
Games Review	1-2
Gamesmaster	1-3
Garbage In, Garbage Out	1-9
Gazfinc	1-42
Geneva	31-35, 60-73
Geshundheit	13
Gesta Imperiae	1-2, 4
Ghot!	1-16, 21
Gimme Three Steps	2, 4
Gingwatzim	3-9, 11, 13
Globetrotter	1-3; Vol 2 1-3 ; Vol 3 1; Vol 4 6-7;
Go Go Power Rangers	1
God Knows	11-23
Gods Themselves, The	2
Grafeti	1-38
Greatest Hits	1-170, 172-260
Greatest Tips	1
Green Goblin	1-7, 9-10, 12, 14-17, 19-26
Grey Hare, The	1-12,14-22
Griffin	3-25
Ground Zero	1-5
Guano Gazette	15-46
Guilder, The	1-3
Gummiballs	1-10, 14-35
Ha! I Have No Tuba	2,6
Hacking Times	1-10
He's Dead Jim!	10-19, 21-22, 24
Herald	15, 17-18, 23-57
Herald Supplement	8, 10-19
Here We Go Again	1-2
Hobby Contacts	July 87, Nov 87, June 88
Hobby News	6-11; Vol 2 1-4
Hobby News (II)	All apart from May 93, Oct 94, Oct 95
Hobby Services Bulletin	Nov 95
Hobbymeet News	1
Home of the Brave	1-128

Zine	In Archive
Hopscotch	1-129, 137-198
Howard's Wake	1-6
Howay the Lads	1-45
Hyperion	1-8
Iani Bowen Appreciation Magazine, The	1
Icarus Flight Manual, The	3-13
Ides of March, The	1-28
Imazine	1-2, 5-6
In The Beginning	12-21
Inbetween Days	2-8, 10-15, 21-25
Infernal Desire	1-52
Infinite Threads	1-5
Inflammatory Material	1-7
Into The Night	1-11
Iskra	1
Isozine	2-3
It'll Be Out Next Week	1-6
It's Really Not My Fault (aka Iron Muff)	Vol 4 1; Vol 5 1-8
Jack Duckworth's Alternative Universe	Season 8 11-16; Season 9 1-14; Season 10 1-8
Jammy Pussy, The	1
Japhidrew	1-26
Jawz	1-5
Jigsaw	2-11, 13-57
Junk Mail	1-3, 5, 7
Kayleigh's Korner	3-4
Keeping Track	1-5
Kick Off	1-3
Knife & Fork	1-20
Lankhmar Star Daily	27
Last Stand	1-57
Laughing Roundhead, The	1-13
Lemming Express	1-60
Letter, The	1-2, 10, 12
Leviathan	1-21
Lies	1-53
Life in the Fast Lane	1-8
Life, the Universe and A(Par) (aka Armageddon)	1-12
Life's Rich Pageant	1-18
Lion & Lamb Chonicles, The	2
Little Imp	1-7
Little Original Sin, A	1-3, 5-7, 9-55
Lobster Quadrille	1-4
Lokasenna	1, 7-10, 12a-24, 26-27
Lost Cause	1-8
Mad Policy	1-161
Mag With No Name, The	1-21
Mag, The	1-2

Strange Meeting 2

Zine	In Archive
Mallard	1-30
Marengo	3
Mark Nelson Experience, The	Vol 1 4-12; vol 2 1-3
Match Abandoned	1-82
Megalomania	1-62, 64-78
Mellow Yellow	1-23, 28-29
Mercurial Messenger, The	2-4
Mercurius Aulicus	1-28
Mica	5-29
Mike Oldfield Collection, The	1-4
Minstrel	15-27, 32
Miser's Hoard	1-7
Mission from God	1-22, 24
Misteimer	1-6
Monochrome (sometimes with Diversions)	1, 6, 9-14, 16-24, 26-37, 39, 41-42, 51-53A
Monthly Bureaucrat	1-6, 8
Moonlighting	1-11
Mopsy	1-112
Moranme Jobswurf	1
Morrigan	1-26
Mother Miles	2
Mouse Police	4, 6-36
Mouth of Sauron, The	Vol 5: 17; Vol 6: 1, 3-4, 8-9, 13, 17, 20; Vol 7: 3, 5-6, 13; Vol 8: 1
Move Out!	1-20
Mr Gladgrind	1-48, 50-51, 53
My Name Is Not Duncan	1
Mystery of the Pyramids	1, 3-20, 22, 24-26
Necromancer	1-6
NERTZ	All known issues
New Statsman	1-14
News From Bree	20-22
Newspeak	0-13
NGC Bulletin	Feb-May 73
Niflheim	2
Nitehawk	1, 3, 18, 20-22, 31-40 (1-17 were a sub-zine to Ad Nauseam; 23-30 do not exist)
NMR!	1-137
Norns, The	1-12, 14, 16-26
Not MP 161	1-5
Not So Much A Greatest Hit...	1-5
Nothing to Declare	6-19 (1-5 was a sub-zine in The Laughing Roundhead)
Numbers Game, The	1-10, 12-13, 15-29
O Tempora! O Mores!	1-4
O.J.	1-13

Zine	In Archive
Obsidian	1-23, 25-28, 31-41, 43, 45-46, 48-118
Odardle	3, 10-29, 31-32
Ode	1-242
Ogremeat	5
Oink	1-7
On The Game	0-39
One Man's Rubbish	1-33
One-off	6
Openings Survey	6
Orbit	0-3
Orient Express, The	1-11
Orion	1-14
Our 'Enry	1-14
Outbreak of Heresy	1-18
Outposts	1-16, 18, 21, 26
Overkill	47, 60
Overstop	1-2
Panzerkreuser	1-20
Party	1-5
Pax Britannica	1-2, 6-20, 23
PBM Scroll	2
Pen Is Mightier Than The Sword, The	0-10, 12, 14-15, 17-18
Pendulum	1-43, 45-53
Pentahedroid	1
Perfidious Albion	36-37, 39, 42, 71
Personal Foul	1
Perspiring Dreams	1-44
Pheonix [I]	1-7, 9
Pheonix [II]	9-25, 30
Pick of the Bunch	51-53, 55-61, 64-69, 71-72, 75-78, Anthology issue
Pieces Of Eight	1, 3-4
Pigbutton	1-49, 53, 55-71, 76, 83-93, 95-111, 113-115, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126-143
Pigmy	1-32
Play It!	1
Polar Pig	15-23, 36
Polaris	17
Postal Gamesplayers Yearbook	1-3
Powerplay	1-7
Prisoners of War	1-51
Protoplasm	1-9, 11
Psychomayhem	0-1
Psychopath	3-16; 17
Punt & Pass	1, 5? 6? 7-8, 19-20, 22-31, 34-35
Puppet Theatre News	1-36, 38-86
Putty Riffo	1-38, 47, 50, 52
Pyrrhic Victory	1-109
Quality Turbo	30
Quartz	1-32, 34-35, 40-63, 65-66

Strange Meeting 2

Zine	In Archive
Quasits & Quasars	8-10
Queen Victoria's Funeral	1-14, 16-19
Queen's Lane Advertiser	1-10
Question Mark, The	1-20
Quetzalcoatl	11-14, 16-16a
Rag	1-3
Rapscallion	1-16
Ratadan	130-131
Rats live on no evil star	1-10, 12-18
Realpolitik	1-84, 91-100
Recover From Limbo	1, 4-6, 8-9, 11-13
Ref	8
Retief	1-12
Revolution	1-3, 5-7, 12-13, 15-24
Rhubarb Rhubarb	28-31, 33-36, 38-42, 44
Rhubovia	1-43
Rianna Games Review (Rostherne Games Review)	88-121, 123-124
Richard's Bull Run	1-6
Ring, The	1-2, 6-33, 35-39, 48
Ripping Yarns	1-2, 5-22, 24-28, 36-37
Road Goes Ever On, The	1-25
Roar of the Greasepaint, The	1-18
Rocinate	1-15
Roman Holiday	1-3
Rostherne Games Review (aka Railway Rivals Recorder)	1-39, 41-87
Round Table, The	1-3
Sacrificing The Goat	2-4
Sauce of the Nile	1-6, 8-19
School for Scandal	1-19
Scorpio	86, 90
Scorpio	1, 13-49, 59-72
Scotch on the Rocks	1-21 (incl Polycon con zine)
Sector General	1-3, 5, 8
Sensation	4, 6, 22-23, 29, 31, 33-41
Serendipity	83-104, 107
Shadowplay	4-5, 7, 10-13, 16-18, 21, 24-25, 47 [30,31, 37]
Shadows of Amber	1-9, 11-29
Share and Enjoy	1
Sharp Practice	1-12
Shellshock	1-12
Shelob's Lair	1-12
Shenandoah Services	1-12, 14-32, 34-41
Shire Record	5-10
Sidewalk	1-20½

Zine	In Archive
Silly Variations Swap	1-5
Various Rabbits	
Silverthorn	1, 11-14, 17-18, 33-34, 36, 39, 43-44, 62
Slap & Tickle	1-6
Small Blue Thing	1-7
Small Furry Creatures Press	0-1, 3-56, 58-59, 61-65, 67-68, 70-74, 76, 86-90, 92-93, 97, 101, 104, 106-123, 130, 132-133, 135-138
Small Furry Playground	26-38, 51-52, 70, 75-80
Smiffy's Marvellous Electronic Gameszine	5-23
Smodnoc (was a sub-zine from 1-24)	20-21, 24-41, 43-62
Snap	1, 33-43, 45
Sno-pake and the Seven Dwarves	2-29
Snowwood Gazette	1-42
SNOT	1-40
Sodd's Law	1-11
Sodder	2-20
Something Else	1-3
Son of Bellicus	1-9
Sopwith Stats	1-9, 13-25, 27, 31-32
Spanner	26, 30, 37, 45-68, 75-76
Spirit of the age	1-24
Spring Offensive	1-73
Springboard	1-125
Sprouts of Wrath, The	21-57
Step Further Out, A	1-51
Stick the Knife In	1-7
Stop Making Sense	0-7
Storm Ruler, The	1
Strange Times	
Strangitude	1-28, 30-31, 33
Stuart	1-6
Subtle Powder, A	???
Suits, The	1-52
Sumo's Karaoke Club	Pilot, 1-4, 9-11, 13, 30
Sun of Quetzal	3
Supanova	1-4
Surfer Rosa	1-13
Take a Look	1-6
Take That You Fiend!	1-102, 104-105, 107, 109-162, 166
Tales from Tanelorn / Swansea with me	1-8, 12-18
Tales from the Black Forest	1-11
Tangerine Terror, The	6-17
Tantalus	1-10

Strange Meeting 2

Zine	In Archive
Tarkus	1-6
Taste of Paradise	1
Telegraph Road	18-21, 23-26
Ten Lime Avenue	6-45
Terminus	0
The Fat Lady Sings	1-5
The Tangled Web We Weave	
The Wind's First Quarter	1-12
Theatre of Pain	4
Thing From Another World, The	41, 88, 103-108, 114-129, 133, 137-144, 146, 148-158, 160-162, 164
Thing on the Mat	1-55 (there was no issue 20)
Things Could Be Worse	1-4
This Is It	1-7
Thunder Road	1-13
Thurb	1-4, 12, 20-22
Tinamou, The	1-75
To Win Just Once	3-4, 6-30
Top of the Pile	1-6
Tournament Ratings	1
Trojan Horse	1-28
Trout In The Milk	1-4
Tumbling Dice	1-55, 60-68
Turbo	30
Turn of the Screw	1-20
Tween	3-7, 9; Vol 1 (2); Vol 2 (1-6)
Twenty Five Years On	1-2
Twenty Years On	2-4, 8, 10, 13
Twenty Years On	1-13
Two's Company	1-7
Ultimate Chaotic Act, The	1-2, 4-6
Ummagumma	0-7
Under The Wire	1-17
Underneath The Mango Tree	1-15, 20-30
Unlimited	1-7, 9-11, 14, 16-17, 19-21
Up Around The Bend	1-40
Up-Tight	1-3
Uriah's Heap	1-5
Utter Drivel	13
Vacuous Grimoire	1
Variable Pig	Various
Variable Title	25-46, 48-65
Variants & Uncles	1-34
Variety	1-3
Veni Vidi Vici	1-53
Victor Ludorum	1-12
Vienna	1-70, 75
VNVS	1
Voice in the Wilderness, A	1-29

Zine	In Archive
Vox 42	1
Voyage of the Dreamer	1-67
Waif	1
Walamalaysia Gazette (previously Lemming Express)	14-57
War & Peace	1-62
War Bulletin	1, 3-29, 31-46, 48-49, 51-65
Watch Your Back	1-46, 53-74
We Kill For Peace	2-8
Weird	9
Where Is My Mind?	1-46
Whiskey Mac	1-14
White Cat, The	1-23
White Paper	1-16
White Rabbit, The (aka Sweaty Nightmares)	1-27
Whizz Lines	1-6
Who Cares?	1-19
Who Me?	0-10, 20
Who's Where?	1-11
Will It Lead To Trouble!?	3, 17, 21, 23, 25, 27-28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 70-71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85-86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100-102
Winter Retreat	1-8
Wooden Horse	5-6
Wreck of Osgiliath, The	Vol 1 1-2
XL	1-14
Y Ddraig Goch	1, 3, 6, 8-90
Year of the Rat	2-3
Yer Tiz	0-19
Yggdarsil	1-15
Yorkshire Gallant, The	10-12, 14, 17, 19-27, 29-35, 38; Vol 5 1, 6-10, 12-14
Your Albert	1-5
Zeeby	1-100
Zine of the Times, A	1-4
Zine With No Name	1-2

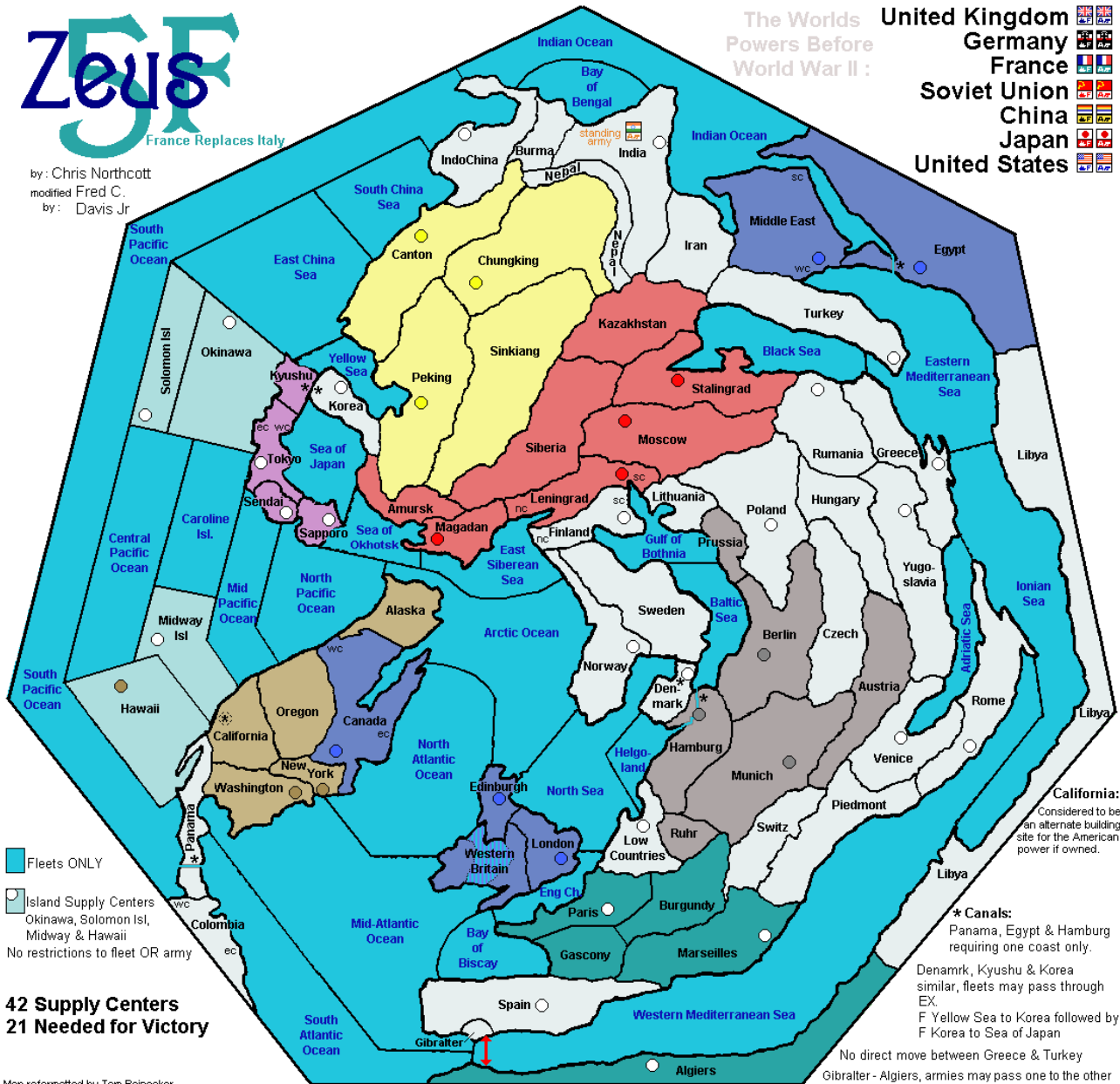
This audit was completed in the summer of 2003 and generally does not include zines published since then nor the odd donation received recently.



by: Chris Northcott
modified Fred C.
by: Davis Jr

The Worlds Powers Before World War II :

- United Kingdom
- Germany
- France
- Soviet Union
- China
- Japan
- United States



ZEUS 5-F

By Chris Northcott
and Fred Davis

Rules

1. Except where mentioned below, the 1971 and 1976 Rules of Diplomacy apply.
2. There are 43 Supply Centres. The Victory Criterion is 23 Centers.
3. The Home Centres for the Great Powers are (Capitals listed first):
BRITAIN: London, Edinburgh, Canada, Egypt and Middle East (5)
CHINA: Chungking, Canton, Peking

- FRANCE: Paris, Marseilles, Algiers
- GERMANY: Berlin, Hamburg, Munich
- JAPAN: Tokyo, Sapporo, Sendai
- U.S.A.: Washington, Hawaii, New York (but N.Y. unit may be built-in either N.Y. or California)
- U.S.S.R.: Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad, Okhotsk (4)
- 4. The first move of the game is Winter 1939. On this turn, the players specify their builds, which may be negotiated. If a Fleet is built in Canada, Leningrad, or Middle East, the coast must be

specified. USA does not have to disclose whether it has built a unit in New York or California until the Spring 1940 moves are disclosed.

5. Special build Centres

(a) Rome. If Rome is captured by Germany then she may build units there as if it were a home supply centre.

(b) California: The U.S.A. may always build units in California instead of in a Home SC if it wishes, provided it owns California.

6. Canal Provinces.

Egypt, Hamburg and Panama are considered to have only one coast. Fleets passing from one sea space to another via a canal must first move to a canal province (e.g. F EMS Egypt; then F Egypt-Indian Ocean).

7. Land Crossings (Direct Passage):

Both Armies and Fleets may move directly between:

Denmark and Sweden;
Korea and Kyushu;
Tokyo and Kyushu; and
Gibraltar and Algiers.

Fleets may move between North Sea and Baltic Sea or between Sea of Japan and Yellow Sea or Okinawa only by first moving to one of the intervening land spaces. Denmark, Spain, Sweden, Korea, Kyushu and Tokyo are considered one-coast provinces. Units may not move directly between Greece and Turkey.

8. Fleets may move directly between WMS and either MAO or SAO; and between EMS and Black Sea.

9. Pacific Island Areas. Armies may enter the Hawaiian, Midway, Okinawa and Solomon Is., spaces without convoy, as if they were land provinces. Fleets may move and convoy through these spaces as if they were ordinary sea spaces.

10. Western Britain is a coastal province consisting of Wales, SW England, Irish Sea and Ireland. All units treat this area as a single space.

11. India contains a Standing Army, which must be dislodged before it can be occupied and claimed as a Supply Centre.

Forthcoming Cons

27th February-1st March 2009: SoRCon, Ramada Hotel, Colchester. For details see <http://www.sorcon.co.uk/>

4th April 2009: TringCon XVIII, Marsworth Village Hall, Marsworth, nr. Tring. For details see <http://www.fwtwr.com/tringcon/>

16th-17th May 2009: Beer and Pretzels, Burton Town Hall, Burton-upon-Trent. For details see <http://www.spiritgames.co.uk/bnpdetails.php>

6th-7th June 2009: UK Games Expo, The Clarendon Suites, Edgbaston, Birmingham. For details see <http://www.UKGamesExpo.co.uk/>

17th-20th July 2009: ManorCon, Stamford Hall, Leicester. For details see <http://www.manorcon.org.uk/>

GAMESTART

Regular Diplomacy

CHIMAERA

AUSTRIA: Tim Deacon (tim@wcava.org.uk)

ENGLAND: Nigel Pepper (nepper@totalise.co.uk)

FRANCE: Robert Jewett (Robert_Jewett@navyfederal.org)

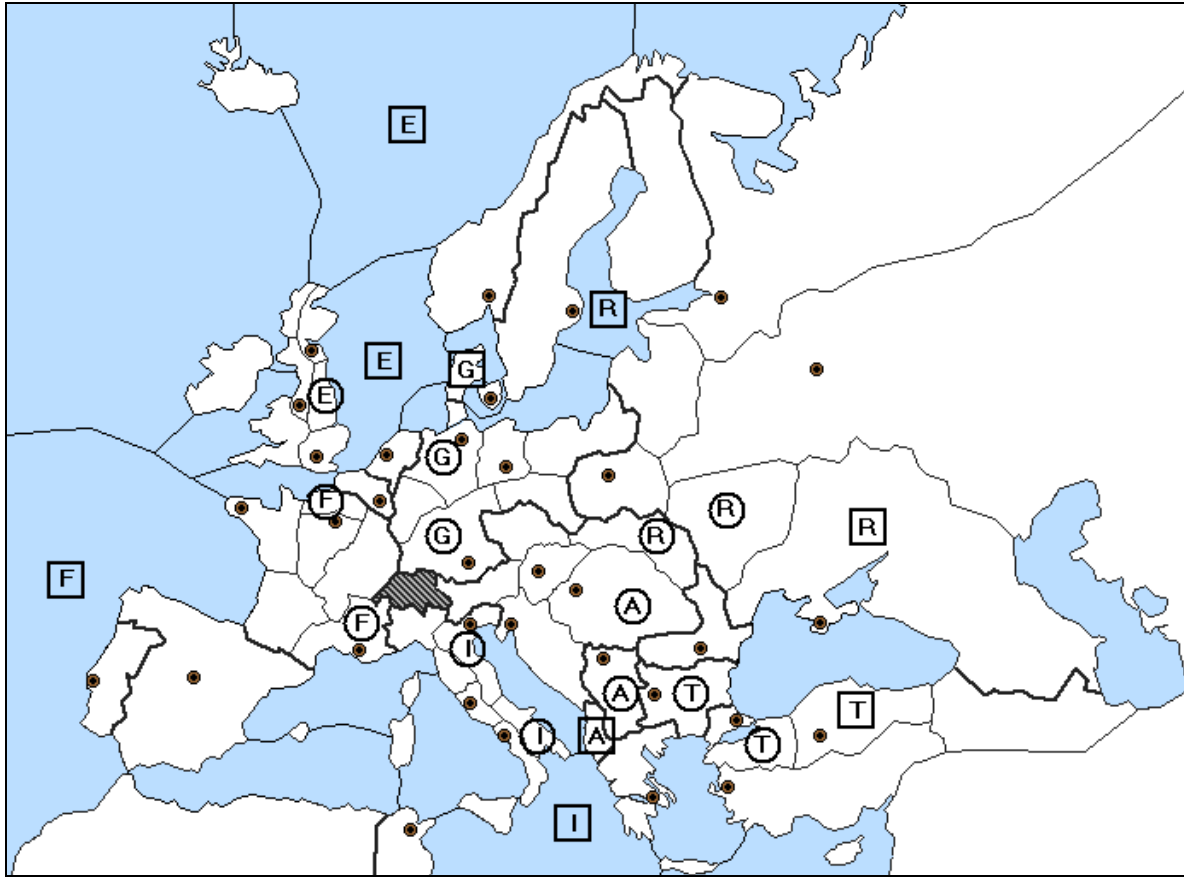
GERMANY: John Wilman (jwilman@hotmail.com)

ITALY: Jimmy Cowie (jcowie@madasafish.com)

RUSSIA: Mike Oliveri (oliverima@aol.com)

TURKEY: Eric Knibb (eric_knibb@blueyonder.co.uk)

OK. Deadline for Spring 1901 is **MIDNIGHT (GMT) FRIDAY 19th DECEMBER**. House Rules are available at www.strangemeeting.org.uk.



Regular Diplomacy

ALBION (Spring 1901) 2008BB

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Douglas Kent) F(Tri) - Alb; A(Vie) - Bud; A(Bud) - Ser

ENGLAND (Jeremy Tullett) F(Edi) - NWG; F(Lon) - NTH; A(Lpl) - Yor

FRANCE (Mark Stretch) F(Bre) - MAO; A(Par) - Pic; A(Mar) - Bur (FAILED)

GERMANY (Toby Harris) A(Mun) - Bur (FAILED); A(Ber) - Kie; F(Kie) - Den

ITALY (Mog Firth) F(Nap) - ION; A(Ven) Stands; A(Rom) - Apu

RUSSIA (Robin ap Cynan) A(War) - Gal; A(Mos) - Ukr; F(Sev) - BLA (FAILED); F(StP) sc - GoB

TURKEY (Ian Pringle) A(Con) - Bul; A(Smy) - Con; F(Ank) - BLA (FAILED)

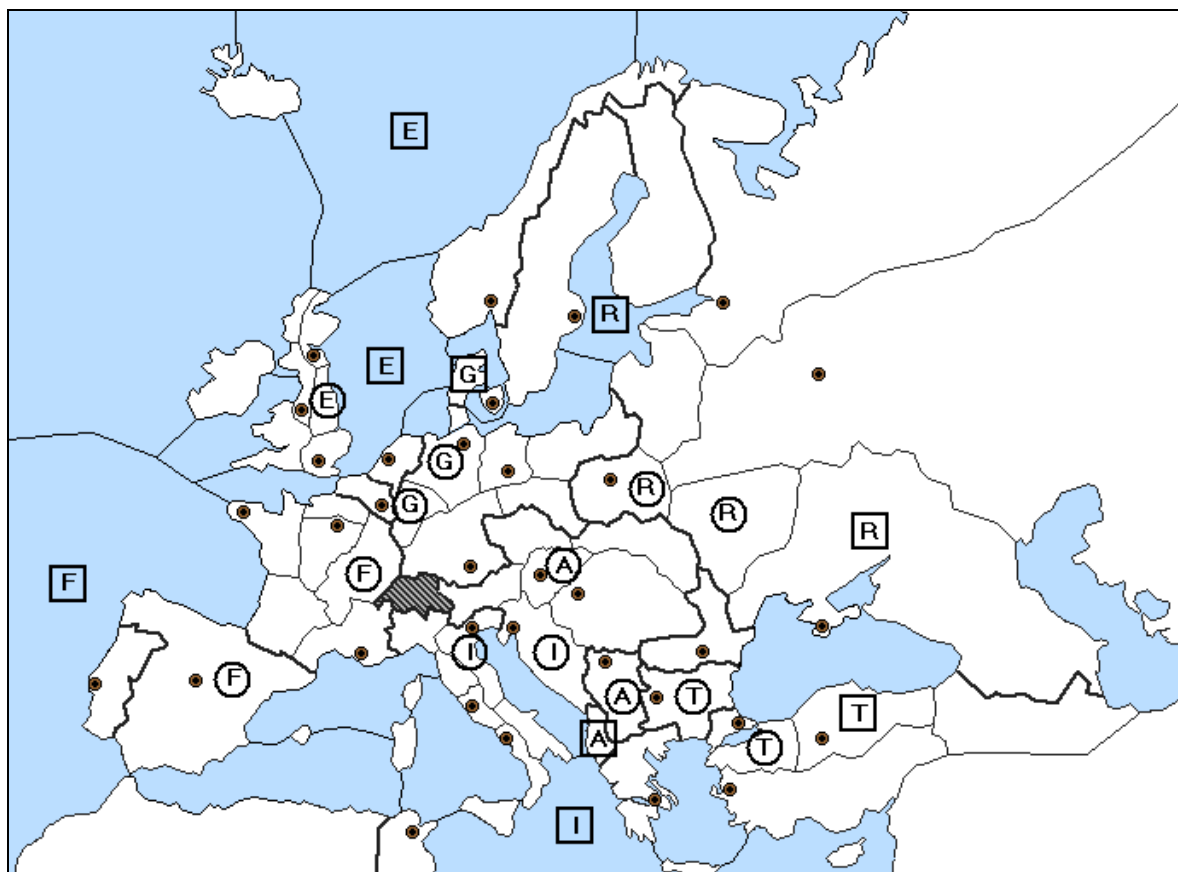
Press:

As the sun fell, the long shadows disappeared into a sea of darkness. Only the lights from the candles remained, radiating a flickering view of the room. The luxurious sofa and dark wood walls were not stereotypical, but local legend be damned; he was more concerned with comfort than conformity. Lifting the hinged lacquered lid slowly and resting it against the wall, careful not to scratch it, he rose and stretched. He would bathe and dress, and perhaps later after feeding he would build a roaring fire. The flames would do nothing to warm the chill from his bones - the only momentary relief to that was the first swallow. But he enjoyed the smell, the pops of the wood, the dance of the smoke.

A quick glance around the room revealed nothing moved, nothing out of place. His senses did not suggest any nearby visitors. Yes, this structure outside Budapest had been a good choice, and served him well. But perhaps it was time to move on for a time. He could always return home after a journey.

"Perhaps a taste of the local Serbian cuisine would be an enjoyable change," he said aloud to himself. He had always enjoyed the local dances, and the women's traditional costumes were strangely arousing.

Yes, a trip to Serbia....and then, who knows? All of Europe was there for the taking, after all.



Regular Diplomacy

Bellicus (Spring 1901) 2008BC

- AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Terry Hayes) F(Tri) - Alb; A(Bud) - Ser; A(Vie) - Gal (FAILED)
 ENGLAND (Smiley McKinnon) A(Lpl) - Yor; F(Edi) - NWG; F(Lon) - NTH
 FRANCE (Pat Vogelsang) F(Bre) - MAO; A(Par) - Bur; A(Mar) - Spa
 GERMANY (Beartla de Burca) F(Kie) - Den; A(Ber) - Kie; A(Mun) - Ruh
 ITALY (David Latimer) F(Nap) - ION; A(Ven) - Tri; A(Rom) - Ven
 RUSSIA (Chris Babcock) F(StP) sc - GoB; F(Sev) - BLA (FAILED); A(War) - Gal (FAILED); A(Mos) - Ukr
 TURKEY (Phil Amos) F(Ank) - BLA (FAILED); A(Con) - Bul; A(Smy) - Con

Deadline for Autumn 1901 is **MIDNIGHT (GMT) FRIDAY 19th DECEMBER.**

Eternal Sunshine

This awkward space is just the right size to plug Doug Kent's latest offering ***Eternal Sunshine*** – which I think is a sub-zine in ***The Abyssinian Prince***, but seems to appear quite independently. Issue 23 runs to 19 pages (an advantage of being an e-zine – no need to have an even number of pages). Many congrats to Doug on his first wedding anniversary and on his 40th birthday – I hadn't realised he was a youngster. However, given his description of how difficult he is to live with, it is indeed remarkable that he has lived long enough to even get that far. This zine is a great

read, you can find out all about Doug's love-life, his addiction to farting, his film reviews and his fascination (or fetish) for cats (the latter of which have been a feature of Doug Kent zines from time immemorial). Most of the zine is Doug just chatting about his life in a carefree and interesting way which I have just never managed myself. Recommended for anyone who wants to read about a likeable (but clearly crazy) American.

Game Openings for Diplomacy, Chaos II, Deviant Diplomacy II and By Popular Demand. For a copy of the latest issue go to <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/>

WAITING LIST

Regular Diplomacy (email only): This list is for people who only want to communicate by email. 6-7 wanted. Dipper McGregg (?)

Regular Diplomacy (email and postal): This list is for players who are happy to write to a player who doesn't have Internet access. Garyth Wright, Richard Williams (???) ; Allan Gordon (???) 4-6 wanted.

Zeus V-F: Seven wanted.

Any demand for anything else?

This was

STRANGE MEETING

ISSUE 2 (November 2008).

Available for free on request from Stephen Agar, 4 Cedars Gardens, BRIGHTON, BN1 6YD, UK.
Email: stephen@strangemeeting.org.uk

DEADLINE

MIDNIGHT (GMT) FRIDAY 19th DECEMBER

BACKBIT

It's quite difficult to get back into the swing of doing a zine. I'd forgotten how much administration is involved, keeping track of names and addresses, waiting lists etc. In the good old days I had real pieces of paper which I could put into different folders etc.. you would think that as the hobby has virtually gone over to email for everything, that it would all be easier. But it isn't – I find email far harder to control, lose and accidentally delete than anything which would fit in an envelope.

Still, this issue has given me a chance to catch up with CDs purchased but never listened to (unlike my daughter I do still buy the real thing). It is a way of doing penance for committing the sin of buying them in the first place. Please don't judge me – but this issue I have had to listen to **12 Songs** (Randy Newman), **Along Came a Spider** (Alice Cooper), **Bring Ya To the Brink** (Cyndi Lauper), **For The Sake of the Song** (Townes van Zandt) and **Aftermath** (Rolling Stones). Anyone care to guess which one got played twice?

As I type this I am just listening to Alastair Darling's mini-budget speech. Very interesting – trying to trap the Tories into protecting the better off. Looks like we have gone back to traditional class politics and that the new labour experiment is at an end. Will that be enough to save Labour? Or is it a massive mistake? I suspect the latter.

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