

" ... the screaming Martian war rocket dived into the Earth's atmosphere, spraying alien microbes as it drove powerfully and ceaselessly towards the terrified city of Cambridge. Cowering dons hid behind helpless students as the monstrous snip landed in a field by an Orchard. The ship sat still, silent, in threatening contrast to the horrendous roar of its sudden arrival.

A large circular door opened in its side, revealing a meaningless black nothing. A huge alien being came out and moved towards the nearest human being, a quivering lone farmer, standing shrunken behind his fruit stall. The green being flowed slowly towards the stall, frightening in its alien manner. The farmer, shaking violently, watched it come to the stall, stop, and slowly, precisely, pick up an apple.

The alien opened its mouth, and in its wierd accent, uttered the immortal phrase: "Two pints of lager and a packet of crisps, please."

The farmer, recovering, pointed towards the bovine limbs sticking out from odd angles under the alien's ship, and replied: "I do wish you'd be more careful. Thats the second time this month you've landed on Daisy and Buttercup, Mr. Doubleday."



HT 8

Published by Dylan Harris for Greenwich YLs
Printed by Emjay for lots of money

50p an issue.

EDIT

RANT

I am coming to think that the world is out to get me. First of all, I have to suffer the indignity of shortened hair. But then, worst of all, my bristles go macro and my blunt razor blade makes the whole shaving business sting. I have to shave because a growth of fungus on my chin wouldn't half wreck my snooker, you know, getting my cue caught in such facial hair ruins the cue action and my concentration (and my opponents concentration; laughing isn't good for potting the black down the table).

Then I have to get a job to live and pay off my debts. Work is necessarily an indignity: is it really such a fantastic thing to submit yourself to exploitation? The trouble is, of course, that our society is structured in such a way as to make the alternatives unacceptable, except for the very rich. I do not foresee an economic revolution around the corner - to be honest, an economic revolution isn't enough to clear things up, its the whole question of power, of which economics is an important subset, that counts.

Kind you, as jobs go, this one isn't too bad. Its a small company, which means working in a team, not as a cog. It involves teaching paying students all about CEM, the new work environment from Digital Research, that makes a PC look like a Macintosh. Its very good, and I suspect will sell like hot cakes when its launched properly. My employers are a training company. When I teach courses, I get three course meals, free goodies, and so on. That bit is both rather good and fattening as you can probably imagine. I should even be able to pay back the money I owe, soon-ish.

I currently living underneath Heathrow Airport, but I won't be staying there long if I can help it, so I won't change the address for sending in orders, letters and threats for the time being. Actually, I suspect my mail is being intercepted. That sounds grand and paranoid, doesn't it. The thing is, I haven't got a letter for some time, and I'm expecting quite a few, so where are they? Incidentally, I don't mean intercepted by the various sneaky bodies of the authorities, rather, some nasty fellow tenant who hasn't realised that these letters he keeps nicking are actually for someone who has just moved into the house. We shall see (and I bet I'm being mega-paranoid).

The snooker tournament is on - volunteers will be getting a separate note with this HT - and my proposed Diplomacy weekend is off. There are a number of games playing events going on at the moment, so anyone interested can go along to them instead. You may, or may not, find a flyer in this HT. In particular, there is the Con-Quest, 13th to 15th September in Hastings, organised by John Marsden. The next HT should include such things as booking forms (£7.50 a night B&B, £2.00 convention fee). If I don't include flyers for Manorcon in this issue, thats on July 19-21st in Birmingham, and which should be somewhat on the cheaper side, like Con-Quest (I really think John should apologize for that name).

Now for the gloat. What about those election results, eh? EH?? Gloat, gloat.

I'm definately having problems with NERs. A couple of players have volunteered to stand in, but I need a couple more. The only extra cost is a deposit, which I will not insist upon. If anyone is interested, please let me know. Thanks.

Just to remind you, this is HT 8, at 50p an issue, payment in advance please. I'm Dylan Harris, living at 55 Station Road, Tempsford, Sandy, Beds., SG19 2AU. I have been asked to remind players that post codes can make all the difference in the timing of letters, so if you haven't told me your postcodes (the majority of players), do so and I'll pass it on to the players in your game.

I owe Fred C Davies an apology, because I think I mailed him the last HT without a stamp. Ooops. Sorry.

Reviews

Heretics of Dune Frank Herbert

This new Dune novel is set many thousands of years after the death of the God Emperor of Dune, told in Frank Herbert's previous, rather boring Dune novel. The sands have returned to Dune, and the people of the 'scattering' are returning to their origins. The old orders are threatened with extinction. The Bene Gesserit find, to their horror, that the returning peoples are dominated by 'Honoured Matres' who appear to be corrupted, and far more powerful, versions of themselves. As the old worlds are overwhelmed, helped by the traitorous Bene Tlilax (whose origins are revealed to the readers). The novel ends with ... well, the beginning of the next novel in the series, Chapter House Dune.

This is definitely his best Dune novel since Dune itself. It doesn't come across to me as the product of pressure from the bank manager, rather as a new exploration of the forces of the universe of Dune. The novel consists of various threads of plots, which come together at the end without really climaxing - like cooking a chilli con carne and then serving all the ingredients at the same time but separately, things don't really mix together. I enjoyed it, despite this.

The Venture series

The first of two new collections of novels, this series is, it says here, 'a new publishing imprint to bring you the very best in Adventure SF'.

We all died at Breakaway Station Richard C Meredith

I enjoy a good adventure novel, especially when I don't want to think. This is certainly a good one. The setting is a strategic staging post for communication between Earth and the colonies, under threat from nasty aliens (indeed, hordes of nasty aliens). Unusually for such corny settings, the aliens are given (a little) character.

The book has a similar feel to Gordon Dickson's Dorsai novels, although the heroes are 'volunteers' in the regular navy, as opposed to mercenaries. They are war wounded, returning to the surgeries of Earth to be rebuilt. They find that their journey is no longer safe, and Breakaway station is under threat. The war will be lost if it does not hold out long enough to get a particular message through to fleet headquarters on Earth, and only the heroes can make the difference between victory and defeat. But the mission is a suicide mission.

One thing I like about the book is its treatment of death. It suffers from the usual Western avoidance of death by providing means to live again, through hi-tech medicine, but at least it asks questions and encourages the reader to think. Overall, this is more than the run of the mill adventure novel, and I recommend it.

Come hunt an Earthman Philip E High

Although this book has at the centre an interesting concept of immunising cultures as opposed to bodies, I'm afraid I didn't particularly like it. Its just another 'How the Earth took on the entire galaxy at incredible odds and won, with a little help from the super-wise races'. I hate to say this, but this is definitely hack writing, in the embarrassing style of EE Smith.

The Women's Press SF

This is the second of two new publishing ventures. They have published four new paperbacks, of which two are mentioned here.

The Planet Dweller

Jane Falmer

The inhabitants of a rather eccentric English village save the Earth from an unintended destruction by aliens attempting to win a battle against their forces of evil. With the exception of the hero, a middle aged woman, the characters suffer from being one dimensional, in the manner of Blake's 7 and Hollywood SF. Such comedy is effective on screen to a mass audience, but an author does not have these advantages, and has a lot more work to do. It doesn't really work.

The story, though, is a good one. The evil Mott have subjugated a universe, which is approaching the Big Crunch. They are attempting to find the way out, in the manner of their good predecessors. However, these predecessors have left secret agents to control the Mott's worst excesses. This includes giving a living planet an escape route, which turns out to involve the Earth.

In the meantime, the eccentric Russian scientist Yuri, who has settled in England much to the disquiet of my favourite background character, jolly-ho hockey sticks Daphne, has realised that the destruction of Earth is threatened and as a result spends most of his time drunk. The Hero, Diana, hears voices, and learns of the problem. Between the two of them, and the secret agents, ... well, you'll have to read it.

The Female Man

Joanna Russ

This book is one of the classics of SF, and its about time that its published in paperback in the UK. Having said that, I felt that the plot, and the whole novel structure, were add-ons not really relevant to the central core of the book.

This book is about feminism, and, in particular, the emotions and resentment that drives feminists. Reading the book gives a deep insight into what it is like to be the victim of sexism. I feel the book is, in many ways, an expression of the unpleasant dreams victims can feel towards their oppressors.

If, like me, you are white, middle-class and male, you do not have any comparative experience to those who suffer bigotry. If you receive the worse side of social attitudes, it is because of who you are, not what you are. The power of this book is that it communicates feminism and what its like to be a woman without letting the resentment get in the way.

Sexism is an interesting form of bigotry. It does not deal with strangers, rather with people seen every day, and with whom you are likely to become very intimate. Yet bigotry is often based on a lack of knowledge of its victims. The whole 'mystery' of being a woman is partially blown by this book, helping communication and reducing barriers.

Unfortunately, this book isn't going to be read by those who need to read it. They don't read.

Orbitsville Departure

Bob Shaw

The follow up to Orbitsville, which, if you believe the back cover of this book, resulted in many free lunches for critics. I hate to say this, but it can't of impressed me a great deal; I don't really remember it. What I do recall is that it was a tight and interesting plot, worth a bedtime read.

Further to my comments in the last issue on NMRs:

Bob Reeves:

Personally I have always tried to ensure that I do not NMR as I think it is unfair to the other players.

I have substituted on two occasions. I do not think that it causes that many difficulties. It possibly causes more for the other players than the one coming in. Additionally, I would be quite happy to take over in this kind of situation so I will volunteer my services - subject, of course, to commitments. Playing in too many games causes NMRs as well.

I think the idea of a divided waiting list is good and I would like to join the waiting list for Expert's Diplomacy.

Your Glorious editor:

Consider it done! Thanks for the offer to substitute.

Mike Hanns:

With your decision to include people in your games only if they have sufficient to pay your deposit would it not be a good idea to mark each copy of HT with the amount of sub not spent and therefore remaining, as well as the scale of deposits required so that people can be in no doubt on this score.

I would be prepared to step into the shoes of a Dip dropout if you need me. I dislike games where people fade out so I would like to prevent other games being spoilt if possible.

I was shocked to find myself described as an 'expert' in your lists; my most painful stab was received at the hands of a chap playing in his first game and I am not sure that your splitting of the list will necessarily be any advantage.

Learning that most/some of your subscribers are Y.L.s (as opposed to normal people such as myself), do you think I should only open and handle letters from them whilst wearing surgical masks or would dunking them first in Domestos be sufficient to prevent infection?

The man from Mars:

Thanks for your decision to substitute. Anyone got any further comments on the two Diplomacy lists?

As for the best protection from being infected by liberalism (assuming that's what you meant), it's difficult to recommend a method since I, myself, have unfortunately suffered from this unpleasant 'social' disease for a few years (for those in the know, the term 'social disease' is an accurate reflection of the main method of recruitment by a number of YLs: not including me!!).

One technique that has proven quite successful is to yodel. The sight of an individual yodelling at three o'clock in the morning to drive off evil canvassers is frightening to many liberals, and thus effective. It must be said, however, that this technique can have other side-effects. For example, a not too well known fact is that blackbirds are particularly attracted by a good yodel, and you may well become swamped with these creatures. The Swiss instigated yodeling as a method of building up their blackbird population following a disastrous biological experiment in the 12th century, involving a certain brand of washing powder, attempting to find a method of making it unnecessary for a knight to come out of amour in order to have a bath. The resultant screams and giggles played havoc with the mating habits of the local blackbirds (washing armour with a certain brand of powder turns it black, with yellow streaks).

Of course, if you do decide to yodel, I strongly advise that you get a good bottle of brandy in. The advantage is that once you have consumed most of the said bottle, you are no longer in a state to wince each time you attempt to utter the yodel, and indeed, you may even congratulate yourself on the quality of your sounds. The brandy should also help you feel less pain when your neighbours physically assault you in their desperation to shut you up.

In the last edition, I went out of my way to help one of those less fortunate than us lucky southerners. Indeed, normally the idea of allowing someone from the less civilised part of the world the chance to write something in these hallowed pages would not have occurred to me, for fear of their mis-use of such facilities in a typical barbarian manner. However, what do I find? Instead of being satisfied with his lot, Jim Robertson has refused to pick his sword up again and continue to hunt polar bears, or whatever they hunt up there.

Jim Robertson:

Fitt like? as we say up here in the Northern wastes! Just because Moray voted for a Tory wimp (Pillock - or is it Pollock?) in the last general election don't think that you can ignore the fact that there is such a place.

"North of the Watford Gap" you say. My God, that's enough to get the old Tartan blood pounding through the veins. I've got a good mind to raise the standard and march south. Mind you, a country that's scared to let it's national side play it's national game in it's national stadium in it's capital city isn't worth bothering about!

I'm interested in your snooker competition only if you promise to pay for my expenses. I would, however, provide my own chalk and giggle juice.

The Southern Bell:

I am amazed that a Scot could believe that soccer, assuming that this is what you mean by our national game, is our national game. It was overtaken by cricket along time ago, at least three hours before a certain announcement was made.

Look, I'll certainly consider paying those expenses if you could let me know how much a stagecoach from Moray is. If, by giggle juice, you mean a certain Scotch liquid, I suspect that a number of us may be interested in clubbing together (there, I bet you weren't serious about the expenses bit: it's amazing that the promise of five litres of whisky can do!)

Kevin Elliot:

I was interested to hear about your interest in Artificial Intelligence. My own interest in writing overlaps yours. In low or middle grade fiction there is an easily followed 'plot process' which helps you knock out a saleable story line for undemanding markets. The plot process involves a kind of flowchart, involving the emotions you want to arouse in the reader, how to increase the tension by stacking obstacles, and so on. All this is readily translatable into a set number of variables, for instance, there are only seven types of conflict in drama, only thirty six plot themes, and a set number of emotions. With this in mind, do you think it would be possible to write a computer program which could make a realistic model of a plot? I'd be interested to hear from you. I can let you have the full plot processing outline if you'd like.

OK:

My views on AI have evolved since the article, and I feel tempted to write an update. In particular, the example application discussed would, I feel now, use at least three separate AI 'minds' in the one probe, to get round the problems associated with intelligent data acquisition.

I'm certainly interested in that plot flow diagram. Can I publish it in HT? I would have thought that it would be possible to use to generate a plot for an el cheapo novel, although I ain't going to commit myself because of the problems of coming up with something that is reasonably realistic. Using fifth generation -ware, it should be possible to get the computer to write the thing as well, although the language would be sufficient, not brilliant (I would think that). The last word from Jim Robertson:

P.S. Will Glover take the bait??

Me:

Good question.

Shitwrite

What?? Well, I got this strange letter from Bob Horrible, which I shall print below, I hope.

A hero named Gyllan Paris is going round the universe doing Gyllan like things each episode (except the first) is written in turn by each person, and consists of three parts:

- Escaping from the previous situation
- Moving on
- Being caught in an impossible situation, a situation that will cause Gyllan considerable pain, loss of limb, life or both unless the next author can get him out of it.

This is, in fact, more like a game of Mornington Crescent, with the following rules:

- 1) each episode must be more than 500 hundred words, and less than 1000.
- 2) if its printed in HT it must get to the glorious editor on time
- 3) Gyllan must remain in character, or have a good excuse.
- 4) A good reason must be given for his escape.
- 5) You loose if you can't get Gyllan out .
- 6) etc..

The organisers of this unsolicited material are:

Robert Horribin
177 Greenvale Road,
Eltham,
London SE9.

Kevin Elliot,
19 Edward Road,
Clevedon,
Avon.

SHITE WRITE

a novel in too many parts by Kevin Elliot, and some
other guy (?).

Part one: an arm and a leg.

Life had always been hard for Gyllan Paris, but he had never had to face this sort of mess before. Now seemed as opportune time as any to reflect upon his past escapades. He would probably have spent his last few moments in reminiscing anyway, five minutes wasn't really enough to have another adventure.

He tried to dredge up his earliest memory. That came when he was about twenty. Yes, that was it. He remember the rave reviews of that album he had composed. What was it called? Oh yes. Testicular Balls, or something like that. Anyway, it was both his debut album and the first release from the record company, Nun in the monastery Records. It caused quite a fuss when it was first released. Perhaps he shouldn't have put in the song about the antics of the Pope with three virgins and a cucumber. It wouldn't have been quite so offensive if it hadn't been true. Still, it was worthwhile, even the time he had spent in the bedroom of the pope's wife.

And then what? Wasn't that the time he had decided to give up music on account of the awful injuries people had inflicted on him whenever they listened to his songs? Then he took up Engineering. That was probably a mistake, at least the people his buildings fell on said so. He really should have spent more time studying. He might have learnt how to avoid the three identical accidents with the pneumatic drills and the schoolgirls. Never mind. At least he had been able to study the effects at close hand, thanks to that passing electron microscope

salesman, and that was useful for the medical course he took up next.

He was chucked out of that fairly quickly, but not before he had managed to make a small fortune from selling parts of bodies to the odd war veteran, who had something missing. The other doctors who were working with him noticed something funny going on when patients were sent on for minor things like form filling or plaster removal were always being pronounced Dead on Arrival. Gyllan Paris was sued by several irate ex-patients, but got off when he pointed out that all the jury had bits missing, and weren't fit to judge anything.

Anyway, with the money he got from his sales, he managed to buy some Boosterspice, the amazing anti-aging drug. It was expensive, but he still had enough money left over to get into politics (bribes are so much faster than democracy). He had quickly carved out a career for himself, carving up a few other people who got in his way. He still remember the time with the booby trapped doll and the vicar with great affection. Of course, it had said on the box that it was a blow up doll, but the vicar probably thought it had meant something different. The room had been difficult to clean afterwards, but that's politics. If the blood isn't on your hands, it all over the ceiling.

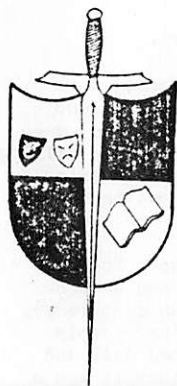
But perhaps he had gone too far, especially that time he had successfully removed one of the larger inhabited planets in the known universe on the grounds that the people on a small moon nearby were turning into werewolves. His political opponents pointed out that the planet had always voted against Gyllan Paris's policies.

Perhaps that was the reason he had been thrown in jail. After all, five hundred billion people is a lot. Especially when you consider that so many of them were relatives of the people Paris had removed on his way up. He had been sentenced to five years imprisonment for every life he had taken, when added up that would mean he could expect parole some twelve billion years after the end of the universe. He thought it rather hardh at the time, but he wished he was back in his comfy cell now.

His boosterspice had run out while he was in jail, and he needed some more to stop himself from ageing. Unfortunately, none of the inmates had any; they were generally too busy being molested by the guards, who had been especially recruited from among Geenwich Young Liberals for that purpose. Eventually, he found a warden who sold him a dose of the drug, albeit at a very high price. Gyllan Paris had to fork out an arm and a leg, but the nice man kindly took them from differing sides so he didn't fall over too much.

The same warden helped him escape, but now he was beginning to wish that he hadn't bothered. The derelict ship that he had been given to make his escape in was slowly melting down as the reactor went critical. There were no planets, suns or black holes he could hide in, and several thousand of the most modern police ships were closing down on him. Paris's ship was going as fast as it could, but the police ships had to fire retro-rockets to keep from overtaking him. He could hear the hiss of escaping air as the hull splintered open, and he gazed over his possessions, a spare pair of underpants, a toothbrush. He was still missing an arm and a leg, and he could hear the threats coming from the police ships over the radio. The police were accompanied by an outraged posse of hard-done by people, all of whom had met Gyllan Paris some time in the past. They were threatening all sorts of dreadful things, involving balls, cucumbers, pneumatic drills, bits of bodies, balloons filled with nasty things, vicars, and even more dreadful things they were going to do to him. With nowhere to hop, and almost nothing to do but wait, things really looked very grim.

END OF PART 1. Now for the Adverts.



Excalibur

34 Durnsford Road

LONDON

SW19 8HQ

01-946 4956

Quest for the Midnight Tower :

THE LEGEND OF IDRA KHAN

'You are my only daughter, the last of our line. I am trapped on a path not of my own choosing, but I must meet my destiny, for good or ill. Should I not return, you must rule wisely and well in my stead. But beyond all things, you must carve out your own way; that when the time comes for your book to close, you may say, "The story was of my own composition. I held the pen, and I have wrought well in the world".'

An old man sits alone in his bedroom, writing. A story for his granddaughter. A tale of mighty deeds and high-born heroes, a tale of myth and magic, swords and chivalry; his legacy to her. Yet things are not quite what they seem. How is the old man's destiny bound up with that of his creation? What are the mysterious and terrifying Kadark? And whose is the hand that guides his pen towards the awesome tower of Idra Khan?

An enthralling blend of sword play and sorcery, of fantasy and reality, of breathtaking action and subtle simplicity, culminating in an evening of pure theatrical magic that will draw you into itself, and lead you on the incredible quest for Idra Khan!

THE LEGEND OF IDRA KHAN

A theatrical fantasy for the "Childe" in all of us.

At the Heriot-Watt Theatre Upstairs, 30 Grindlay St., Edinburgh
4 p.m. - August 12th - 31st inclusive

A nationwide tour will follow, it says in the accompanying letter. (Dylan).

Pretty Average

by Kevin Elliot

"Smiff, come 'ere!" roared the telescreen.

"Er, coming sir" said Smiff, wiping his backside. He stumbled into the main room, and unable to stop, crashed against the screen.

"You blazing incompetent fool, Smiff! Can't you see where you're going?"

"Sorry sir - its this free fall. I'm not used to it yet." Blood began dribbling from his nose. Smiff produced a small rag and covered his face.

"Never mind your bloody nose! God's teeth. I wonder sometimes why you were ever picked for this mission, Smiff. Its not as if you were any good at being an ambassador - you're utterly useless for anything. What are you Smiff?"

"Er, utterly useless sir!" said Smiff brightly.

"Right. Now wipe the screen. You got it dirty."

Smiff smiled and started wiping the screen with his blood stained rag. He jumped back quickly as the television began screaming.

"Oh my God! Oh my God! Smiff, where are you hiding? I want you here now, with something clean! Do you hear me?"

"Sorry sir. I'll get some water and hose you down."

"Oh no. Stay away. I'll get one of the maintenance robots to do that when you return. I don't trust you."

"Thank you sir."

"Now you know what it is you have to do?"

"Um, well its about the survey, isn't it sir?"

"Yes Smiff. That's right. You know what the result was, don't you?"

Smiff scratched his nose. "I know what the result was sir. But the natives aren't going to like it sir. Do I really have to go and tell them?"

"Yes you damm well do have to go and tell them Smiff. You're not on holiday now, you know. They may not like it, but if we wanted to tell them something nice we would send an entertainer, not a useless piece of garbage like you!"

"Thank you sir."

"Shut up Smiff!"

"Yes sir."

There was silence. Smiff waited in front of the screen.

"Smiff?"

"Yes sir?"

"You're going to Earth and tell the natives where they came in the survey."

"Well, sir, I'd rather not. You see, they won't take it very kindly if I'm the one who tells the truth. And judging by where they came in the survey, they'll

probably try to kill me!"

"Yes, that sounds fine. Where's your problem?"

"Er, well sir - if its all right with you - I would like to stay alive. You see, I paid a visit to my doctor last week, and he had a look at me, and well, he said that in the condition I was in, being killed would be very dangerous. My doctor said that being killed would be one of the very worst things that could happen to me."

"Right Smiff. I understand. And I'm ready to give you a choice. You either go to Earth and, as you say, face a lynch mob, or you stay behind and get demoted."

"Demoted? Oh no, sir! That's a bit heavy, isn't it? After all I've done for you?"

"Shut up Smiff."

"Yes sir."

There was silence.

"Smiff?"

"Yes sir?"

"Are you still willing to stay behind?"

"Well, not if you're going to demote me sir. That really isn't fair. I've got a wife and two families to support. I mean, you're totally unfeeling and uncaring sir."

"Thank you Smiff."

"Well. I'd better carry on then, hadn't I sir?"

"I think you had!"

The screen went black.

Smiff walked away from the telescreen. While he was approaching Earth the natives had been watching his path. Now Smiff could see their reaction by watching their television. He trembled slightly before turning on his little receiver. The room became noisy as static and voices came out from his set. Smiff listened carefully.

"All right!" said an angry voice. "So what do you think the future holds now we have this monstrous object hurtling towards us, no doubt filled with diabolic blood lust, fire breathing demons, each bristling with all sorts of torturous weapons? And you know why they've been sent, don't you? They're a judgement. They've come to bring fire and brimstone raining down on this benighted planet because we're the most evil cancer in the universe. Why else is their ship painted black? Eh? Just answer me that."

Smiff recoiled, then forced himself to listen. After all, it was the expected reaction, according to all previous encounters made. Smiff bit his lip.

"Rubbish!" said a quieter voice. "Rubbish rubbish rubbish. Anyone can tell just by looking at that lovely piece of architecture that it contains nothing but the kindest of people whose only wish is to make peaceful contact with our beautiful civilisation and to enrich their own wonderful galactic community with our learned and magnificent society and besides why if they're going to destroy us do they only come in one ship instead of an invasion fleet?"

Smiff laughed nervously. That too was a reaction he'd been expecting after having studied so many civilisations before. It got boring after a while, but now Smiff had to go to these people and tell them something unpalatable, he was worried about his future, and whether he would stay alive. Things looked bad.

Right now Smiff was falling towards Earth. He needed do nothing, and he would land safely. But what would happen, thought Smiff, if I did less than nothing - if I sabotaged the ship. I might not land. That would be something to laugh about. "I wonder if it's possible" said Smiff aloud.

"Wonder if what is possible, Smiff? What are you talking about?" said the telescreen.

"Well sir, just, er, nothing really."

"I wonder about you sometimes Smiff. I really do. What are you thinking of doing?"

"Er, I can't exactly tell you now sir, but I will..."

"Smiff - are you going to try and sabotage the ship so you won't have to land?"

"Not exactly, but..."

"I wouldn't try it if I were you. By law, all space pilots must possess no technical knowledge at all, so they can't turn the ship around if they don't want to go where the ship is heading. Face it Smiff. Do you have any technical knowledge?"

"No" admitted Smiff miserably.

"Right. Put down that monkey wrench before you rupture yourself."

"Yes sir."

"Smiff?"

"Yes sir?"

"Shut up Smiff."

"Yes sir."

There was silence. Smiff considered suicide.

Smiff had been dreading the actual landing since embarkation. When it stole up on him without so much as a friendly bump, Smiff crawled into a corner and sat there shaking. He heard the usual babble outside, and saw through the telescreen the faces of those outside, the usual jumble of officials, policemen, politicians, and people who just happened to be there at the time.

"Get out there Smiff. Tell them like it is!" said the telescreen energetically.

"Oh no. Its raining outside. Can I have an umbrella please?"

"All right, but make it snappy. Get out and say hello. Remember that this is their first visit, so you ought to try and act all smug and conceited."

"Er, all right sir. I'll try."

"Right then, Smiff. Out you go!" A door creaked open along the two wide cracks in the wall, and Smiff peered out into the crowd. His head was quickly soaked by the rain, and he put his umbrella up. His audience gasped, then applauded. Smiff

grimaced. He knew that would happen. It such as much in the survey. "Excitable and easily impressed - as usual."

"Greetings from Earth, noble visitor from afar. May we take this opportunity to extend the hand of friendship across the sea of space to..."

"Er, I'm sorry to break in," broke in Smiff "but I would rather like to get this over with. I don't want to stay out in this weather, and there's a cake I left in the oven. Sorry about that. I was never too well organised."

"Well, er, um. We of Earth have long cherished the notion of flexibility, and..."

"Hang on." said Smiff. "I got a piece of paper here."

"Ahh!" said a politician. "Peace in our time?"

"Well, not really. You see, we've been having a bit of a survey back at our place."

"About us?"

"Umm, actually the whole galaxy. You see, we went to all the planets in the galaxy."

"So interstellar travel is possible!" screamed a scientist. "How's it done?"

"I'm afraid I don't know anything like that. I'm only the pilot."

There was a shocked silence.

"Anyway, we studied all the planets looking for one in particular. A unique planet, which has no equal, and was exceptional in one fascinating respect." lied Smiff.

"And you chose us?"

"Well, yes."

There were loud cheers and roars from the crowd. The politicians danced until they started creaking.

"Hooray, hooray, hooray. We're unique, we're exceptional!"

That was exactly the reaction Smiff had been expecting. He was dreading the next outburst. Smiff sniffed. He thought he could smell something. "Please don't get carried away. I've got to tell you about the thing which makes you exceptional."

"What's that? What's that?" screamed everybody.

"Umm. I don't know how to put this. But you see, we did a survey on every planet in the galaxy."

"Get on with it Smiff" roared the telescreen.

"We checked every planet for details such as weaponry, pollution, famine, illiteracy, segregation, and so on."

Every face became sullen and downcast. Everyone took on a guilty look.

"I suppose we came bottom?" piped up one tiny voice.

"Oh no. Nothing like that!" said Smiff.

Everyone brightened up.

"Just let me finish please." said Smiff. "We also looked at things like how much the natives laughed, how much friendship and cooperation there was, and how much people helped each other out."

"And I imagine we came top!"

"Not really."

"What?"

"Not really."

"But you said that we were exceptional in some way. What makes us so unique then?"

"Well, we worked out that there were planets much worse off than you, and there were some a lot better off."

"Yes?"

"Umm. Then we found that there were lots of planets a little worse off than you, and lots a little better off."

"Yes?"

"And when we came to study your planet, yours was..."

"Yes?"

"Right bang in the middle." said Smiff quickly.

There was a stunned silence. Everyone gaped at Smiff.

"You see" said Smiff. "Everything has a middle value, and in the galaxy's case, that happens to be you."

"Never!"

"Well, yes, I'm afraid it is."

"But you said we were unique!" said a politician.

"Exceptional!" said a scientist.

"What about your cake?" said a chef.

"Oh, thanks for reminding me." said Smiff. "I thought I could smell something." Smiff produced a small stick with a ribbon tied to one end. "Anyway, you get a special award for being the most perfect average, which I would like to..."

The crowd grew angry. "You came here to tell us, the most important planet in the galaxy and give us some tripe like that?" said a general. "I'm going to tear you apart, sonny!"

"Me too. Me too" screamed the rest of the crowd.

But Smiff was already back in the ship. The door slammed behind him.

"That was too dangerous for me." said Smiff. "I'm going home to train lions."

The ship took off automatically.

"Don't rest yet Smiff. You've got plenty more awards to deliver to the other thousands of perfectly average worlds in the galaxy."

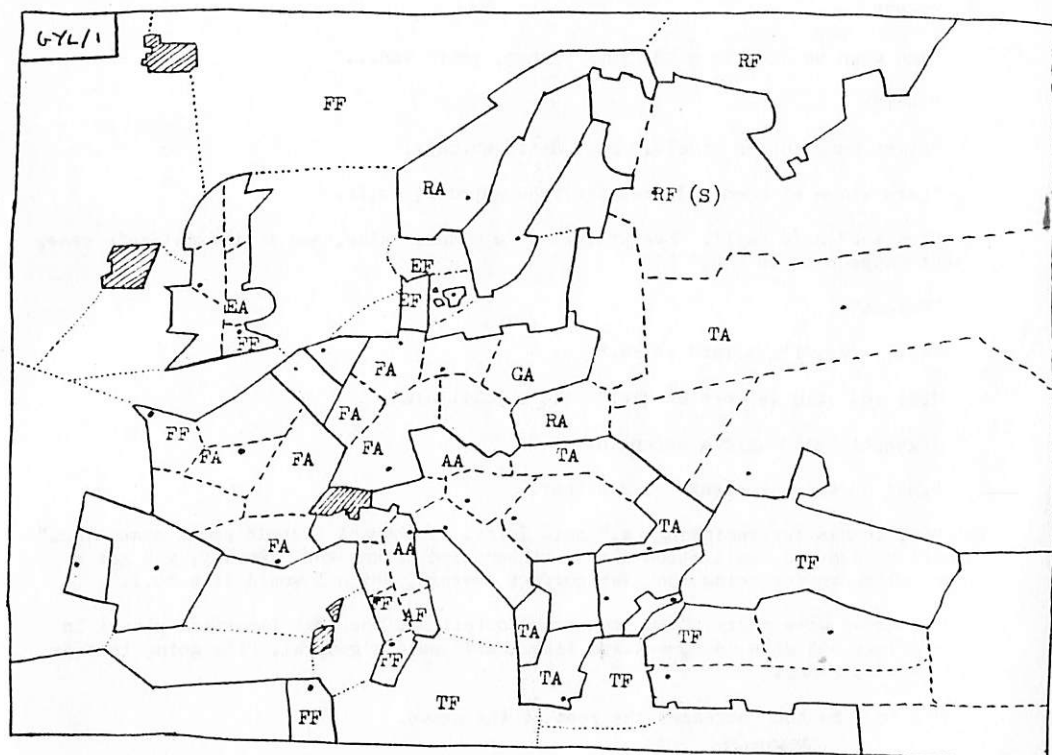
"Oh no."

"Yes Smiff. And next time you land, don't use that gag about the world being unique in being average. It might save your dirty little neck, but I don't want you telling fibs."

"Oh no." Smiff considered suicide.

"Yes Smiff. And don't try and commit suicide either. We've seen to that. Ahh h na ha ha ha..." The telescreen went black, then showed a picture of the receding Earth.

"Oh no. I'll never get it all finished before tea. And all those averages look the same. Still" mused Smiff, looking back at the pastel blue green of the planet. "That one was prettier than most."



GYL/1 (1984ER) Autumn 1906

ITALIANS KNOCKED OUT

Tsar re-introduces policy of "confusion".

Austria (Graem Peters): F ADR-Aru, [[A Boh s ITALIAN A Tyr-Mun]], A Tri-Ven.
England (chaos): has A Yor, F HEL, F Den.
France (Paul Wiggin): F Hol-Kie, F NTH-GRW, A Ruh s A Mun, A Mun HOLDS,
F Rom HOLDS, A Mar-Pie (FAILS), F Apr-Map, F ION HOLDS (retreats Tur),
A Bur s A Mun, F ENC-Lon. Builds F Bre, A Par.
Germany (chaos): has A Ber.
Italy (Nigel Gordon): NRI had A Tyr, A Pie, but JM removes both of them.
Russia (Robert Horrobin): [[A Nwy-Hol]], A Sil-War, F BAR unordered. Builds
F StP (S).
Turkey (Clive Buckman): A Alb-Ser (FAILS), A Gre-Ser (FAILS), [[F Con-Bul]]
(no coast specified), A Ukr-Mos, F BLA c A Ank-Rum, A Rum-Gal, F EMS-ION,
F AEG s F EMS-ION, A Ank-Rum.

The state of the game is:

| | | |
|---|----|----|
| Austria: Vie, Bud, Tri + Ven (one build due) | +1 | 4 |
| England: Lpl, Edi, Den - Lon | -1 | 3 |
| France: Bre, Par, Mar, Spa, Por, Tun, Bel, Hol, Nap, Mun + Kie, Rom, Lon | +3 | 13 |
| Germany: Ber - Kie | -1 | 1 |
| Italy: - Ven, Rom OUT!! | -2 | 0 |
| Russia: StP, Swe, War, Nwy | 0 | 4 |
| Turkey: Ank, Smy, Con, Gre, Bul, Rum, Mos, Sev, Ser | 0 | 9 |

Press

Russia-Turkey: if you don't watch out I'll collapse in favour of France.

Russia-France: if you don't watch out, I'll collapse in favour of Turkey.

Russia-Austria: if you don't watch out, I'll collapse.

GE-Typewriter: if you don't watch out, I'll collapse you down a black hole.

Somewhere, you'll find a map.

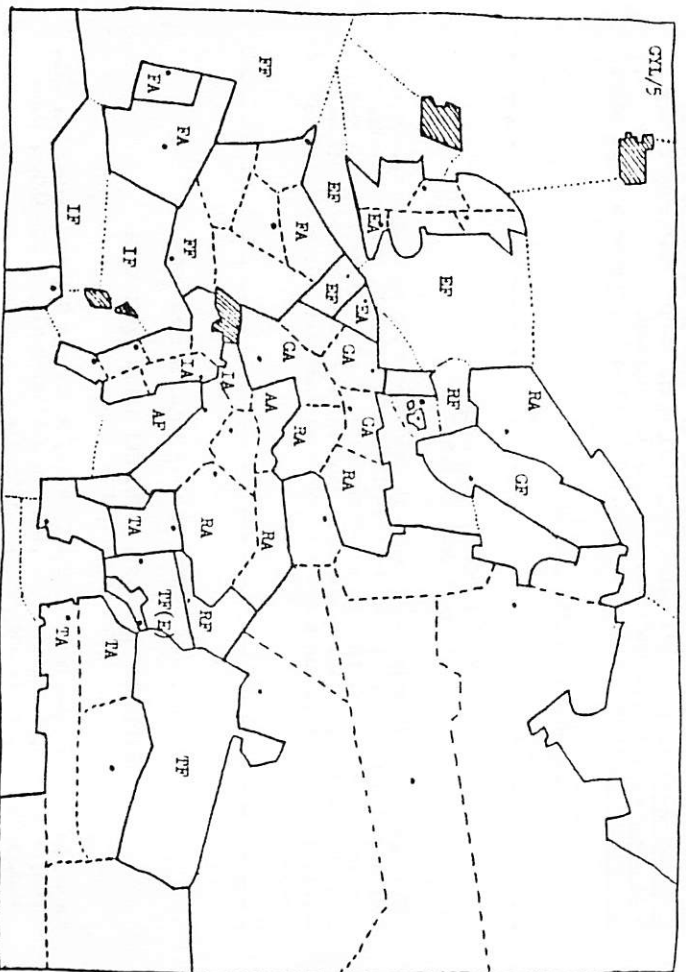
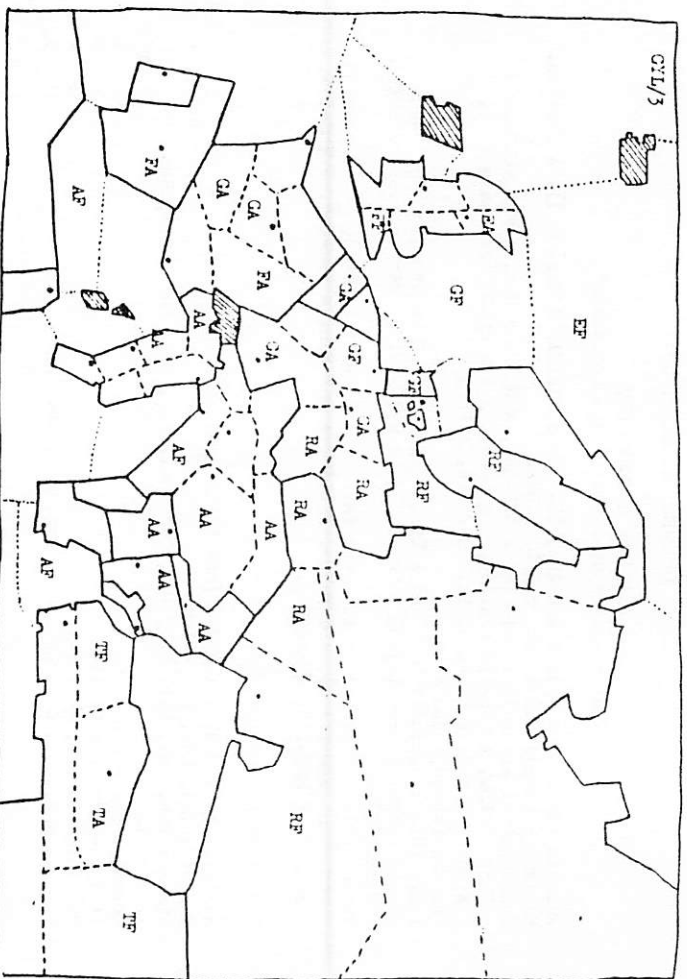
GYL/2 (1984ES) HELD OVER (Robert does an NWR')

This game is held over due to what is commonly known as a cock up. In the last adjudication, I accepted the move ITALIAN F ION-WFS. Unfortunately, this move is illegal. Thus, this move did not occur, and the game is held over until the next HT. If anyone wants to send in some revised moves, please go ahead, otherwise I'll use the moves you've already sent in. Apologies to everyone.

GYL/3 (1984ET) 'Monkey Nuts' Spring 1905

REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA - PHILSKI LENIN TAKES OVER
France surrounded

Austria (Clive Buckman): A Tus S A Tyr-Pie, A Bul s A Gal-Rum, A Ser s A Gal-Rum, A Gal-Rum, A Bud unordered, [[A Hun s A Gal-Rum]], F ION-AEG, F Tun-WFS, A Tyr-Pie, F Tri unordered, A Vie-Gal.
England (chaos): has F NFW, A Edi.
France (Kieth Edge): A Spa HOLD, F Lon HOLD, A Bur unordered, [[A Mar-Bur]]



Germany (Kevin Elliot): F Den-Swe (FAILS), F NTH-Mry (FAILS), A Hol-Bel,
A Par-Bur (FAILS), A Bre-Gas, A Ber HOLDS, F Kie-BAL (FAILS), A Mun s A Ber
Russia (Philixi Lenin): F Swe-Mry (FAILS), F BAL-Ber (FAILS), A War-Sil,
A Ukr-War, F Sev s A Rum, A Rum HOLDS retreats to Ukr, A Pru s F BAL-Ber.
Turkey (chaos): has F Con, A Ank, F Arm.

Press

Austria-Russia: Sein Sreigelei ist mein mittagessen!

GE-Austria: Sorry if I got that wrong. Never did understand Serbo-Croat.

Russia-World: In late March 1904 forces of the Radical Liberal Movement took
up arms in all the major towns and cities of Russia in order to end the
corrupt regime of the Tsarist imperialists. Within days they had been joined
by most workers and many army and navy units. In early April the Tsarist
family and their supporters fled to the protection of the German empire.
This week representatives of all sections of Russian society met and
announced the creation of 'The Federation of Radical Liberal Russian
Republics'. Democratic national elections will be held before the end of the
year.

Russia-Germany: go forth and multiply!

Russia-Austria: I hope we will be able to live in peace.

GE-Russia: !

Russia-France: Ugh!!

There should be a nice pretty map of the game somewhere.

GYL/4 (1984EU)

Autumn 1902 ...

Austria (Howard Cohen): A Ser s A Bud-Rum, A Bud-Rum (FAILS), A Gal-Ukr,
F Alb HOLDS.

England (chaos): has A Edi, F Lon, F NTH.

France (Nigel Gordon): NRed, leaving F MAC, A Gas, A Hol, F ENC, A Bur, A Pic

Germany (chaos): has F Kie, A Ber, A Mun.

Italy (Dylan Harris): F Gre HOLDS, F Nap-ION (FAILS), F ION-AEG (HOLDS), A Ven
HOLDS.

Russia (chaos): has F StP(S), A Mos, A War, F Sev.

Turkey (Peter Ladanyi): F Smy-AEG, F BLA-Rum (FAILS), A Bul s F BLA-Rum,
A Con s A Bul.

For various reasons, builds are to be submitted seperately for this season.
Please submit builds as your next orders.

GYL/5 (1984GG)

Autumn 1902

ANGLO-ITALIAN ALLIANCE ????

Russians attack Germany

Austria (Mike Harskin): A Boh-Mun (FAILS), F Tri-ADS.

England (Ralph Atkinson): F WTH c A Yor-Hol, A Yor-Hol, F Bel s A Yor-Hol,
F Lon-ENC. Builds A Lon.

France (Janet Redfern): A Por s A Mar-Spa, F Gas-MAC, A Mar-Spa, A Bur-Pic.
Builds F Mar.

Germany (Paul Wiegand): F Swe HOLDS, A Hol-Rum (FAILS), retreats Kiel, A Mun-
Ruh (FAILS). Builds A Ber. One build due.

Italy (Phil Challis): A Tyr-Tri (FAILS), A Ven HOLDS, F WMS-Spa (FAILS),
F TYS-JOL.

Russia (Dave Hewitt): F Sev-Rum, A Bud-Tri (FAILS), F Nor-SKA, A StP-Nor,
A Ukr-Gal, A Gal-Sil, A War-Pru.

Turkey (John Lamb): NMR! has F Bul (E), A Con, A Ser, F BLA A Smy. One due.

The state of the game (GYL/5):

| | |
|--|------|
| Austria: Tri, Vie - Ser | -1 2 |
| England: Lon, Edi, Yor, Bel + Hol | +1 5 |
| France: Bre, Par, Mar, Spa + For | +1 5 |
| Germany: Kie, Ber, Mun, Den + Swe | +1 5 |
| Italy: Ven, Rom, Nap, Tun | 0 4 |
| Russia: StP, War, Mos, Sev, Bud, Rum, + Mor, - Swe | 0 8 |
| Turkey: Con, Smy, Ank, Bul, Gre + Ser | +1 6 |

Press

Germany to World (Austria in particular): What MLYL elections?

Germany to Western World: Beware the Russo-Turkish juggernaut.

Germany-Russia: The Mongols were turned back.

Germany-Turkey: The Ottoman empire is supposed to be in decline. Remember that before western Christendom reunites and drives you into Asia.

— Berlin this Spring? —

Join the Euro-Package tour ... bring your own guns. Friendly British guide, and a chance for everyone to visit their imperial cousins in the most memorable fashion possible.

GYL/8 (1984GH) Spring 1902

GH-All: this game is in a bit of a mess. I have only three sets of orders in, and two of the players are, not surprisingly, expressing annoyance at the delays in the game.

What I am going to do is to try an experiment. First of all, I am going to take advantage of the offer by Mike Hanns and Bob Reeves to substitute, for France and Russia. Secondly, I have received an offer - via Turkey's flatmate of a substitute for England. Unfortunately, I haven't received a name!!

The experimental bit is that I'm going to adjudicate this game, making some powers relatively strong, and others weak. In militaristic terms, the result is obvious, but I think the opportunity for some energetic diplomacy gives the prospect of some interesting results. I would welcome comments on this idea.

Finally, as a form of apology for this miserable state of affairs, I am going to credit John Redfern, Derek Jackson and Gordon Prest with £1 each.

Austria (John Redfern): F ADS-ICN, A Ser s A Bud-Rum, A Bud-Rum, A Vie-Gal, England (???): has F Lon, F Edi, A Lpl. \A Ser zappedMRO
France (see above): has F For, A Bur, A Spa, F Bre, F Mar.
Germany (Derek Jackson): F Den-Swe, A Hol-Ruh, A Bel s A Hol-Ruh, F Kie-BAL, A Ber-Mun, A Mun-Bur.

Italy (chaos): has A Ven, A Rom, F Nap.

Russia (see above): has F Sev, A Ukr, F GOB, A War.

Turkey (Gordon Prest): F BLA s A Arm-Ser, A Arm-Ser, A Bul HOLD, F Con-AEG.

Austria: John Redfern, 15 Crisedale Drive, Langley, Middleton, G.Manchester, M25 3QS.

England: 105 Heathwood Gardens, Charlton, London SE7 8ET.

France: Mike Hanns, 118 Drovers Way, Dunstable, Beds..

Germany: Derek Jackson, 226 Richmond Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, KT2 5HF

Russia: Bob Reeves, 2 Harptree Close, Nailsea, Bristol, BS19 2YT.

Turkey: Gordon Prest, 105 Heathwood Gardens, Charlton, London SE7 8ET.

Game 9

is in the same state as game eight. I have three sets of orders for Autumn 1901. Does anyone want to substitute for any of the other countries? Magnificent benefits!!

There certainly seems to be a distinct lack of luck. Tony Ross sent the following:

"I now have orders from Austria, England, France, Italy and Russia and I have been assured that Turkey is interested in playing - so it must merely be that his orders have gone astray in the post. We don't seem to be having much luck."

Since I assured Tony that Turkey was playing, and since I haven't seen him for a month, I think I must have been wrong. I shall pay the price by volunteering to take Turkey over myself. He continues:

"The problem is that at the moment I have still not heard anything out of our German player. I therefore assume he is no longer interested and as of now replace him with Mr. John Denniston of 141 Bridges Hall, White Knights Road, Reading. Unless there are any violent objections John takes over immediately and all discussions with Germany should be recommenced with him.

Now that means the game is held over again, but I'll keep everybody's current orders on file for Spring 1901. They will be used unless I hear to the contrary though of course they may be changed in the light of subsequent diplomacy with Germany" (or Turkey) ", or any other country for that matter. I trust all the remaining players are still interested, although probably disappointed with the delay. It's not really my fault, OK?"

No, it's probably mine! Tony continues:

"John" (and me) "may well have his work cut out in view of the fact that alliances have already been formed, but I make a plea to the existing players not too automatically gang up on the newcomer, particularly since he is playing a central power. Give Germany a chance guys!"

A word of explanation: last issue, I assured Tony, your GM, that Turkey was interested in playing. I haven't been able to contact him whilst typing up this HT, because I lost my pet pink elephant. Thus he will find out what he gets this edition that I'm volunteering to substitute. I hope that I haven't cocked things up, Tony, and I apologise for any trouble caused.

Gamestarts

GYL/12 is a game of ULTRA-STAB. Players should get a copy of the house rules with their HT.

Austria: Tony Ross, 110 Leamington Road, Coventry, CV3 6JY.

England: Mark Holiday, 85 Thornham Street, Greenwich, London SE10 9SB.

France: Mike Hanns, 118 Drovers Rd., Dunstable, Beds., LU6 9SB.

Germany: Phil Challis, 96 Well Hall Road, Eltham, London SE9.

Italy: Paul Wiggin, 124 Alexandra Road, Croydon, Surrey.

Russia: Kieth Loveys, Room 7, 50 Warwick Road, London SW5.

Turkey: Martin Powell, 20 Dawn Walk, Fazakerly, Liverpool 10.

GM: Dylan Harris, 55, Station Road, Tempsford, Sandy, Beds SG19 2AU.

Please submit provisional Autumn 1901 orders with your Spring 1901 orders.

GYL/13 is a game of Mornington Crescent, handled in the traditional way. The players are:

Robert Horrobin, 177 Greenvale Road, Eltham, London SE9.

Martin Powell, 20 Dawn Walk, Fazakerley, Liverpool 10.

GM: Dylan Harris, 55 Station Road, Tempsford, Sandy, Beds..

GYL/14 will be a game of Diplomacy. Will Derek Jackson, Phil Rimmer, Mike Harms, Bob Reeves, Louis Bezodis, Martin Verron and Paul Ellison please send me their preferences.

Waiting lists

Beginners Diplomacy: Jeremy Cox, Paul Rogers, Gavin McManus. 4 wanted.

Expert's Diplomacy: Empty. Seven wanted.

Cline-9 (Gt. Pete Mason): Bob Reeves, Geoff Kemp, Dylan Harris, Tony Ross, and Kevin Elliot. 4 wanted.

Definitive Mercator: Robert Horrobin, Kevin Elliot, Tony Ross, Clive Buckman, Bob Reeves, Martin Powell, Kieth Loveys. 6 wanted (still).

Machiavelli: Mark Holiday, Phil Challis, Ralph Atkinson, Phil Rimmer. 4 wanted.

Railway Rivals: Peter Ladanyi, Martin Powell, Kieth Loveys. 2 (?) wanted.

Executive: Clive Buckman, Mark Holiday, Kieth Edge, Jim Robertson. 4 wanted.

Scrabble: empty, 6 wanted.

Geophysical Diplomacy: empty, 7 wanted.

The last game on the above list, Geophysical, is introduced as a replacement to Ultra-Stab, which starts this issue. The game is like a normal Diplomacy game, except that players may re-arrange provinces, effectively introducing earthquakes as a tactical option. As a result, for example, Sevastopol can be removed from the Black Sea, joining Armenia and Roumania, and cutting the Russians ability to build fleets in the south.

I am also willing to open a waiting list for MiniEc, a managable economic variant, if players so desire.

Civilization (almost forgot this) gamestart. Will Kieth Loveys, Bob Champion, Clive Buckman, and Dave Hewitt please get their preferences to me. You have the choice of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria or Asia. This is GYL/15. On the off chance that another player expresses a desire to play Civilization (none have over the last month), I suggest you send in a preference for the five player game as well. Any player who does feel like joining in should include a preference list.

D E A D L I N E

Get your moves to your GM by the following date:

Thursday, 20th June 1985.

Gt's: GYL/4: Clive Buckman, 76 Haddo House, Haddo Street, Greenwich, SE10.

GYL/11: Tony Ross, 110 Leamington Road, Coventry, CV3 6JY.

all others: Dylan Harris, 55 Station Road, Tempsford, Sandy, Beds.

Scrabble

This popular game is run postally in several gamezines, and I'd like to run it in HT if anyone is interested. The number of players varies, depending on who wants to play. Each player gets the same letters, and can submit a word based on those letters, as per the rules of scrabble. The score is kept, and players get points from the words they submit. The word that goes on the board is the one that scores the most points. Each player starts the next round with the same letters, as though they had all chosen the high scoring word and had then all drawn the same letters out of the pot - in effect, all postal players control one face to face player.

For example, in a recent game in Quartz (I hope Geoff Kemp doesn't mind this) four players chose FRONTIER, gaining 83 points (triple word score, the F was already on the board), one chose TENFOLD for 11 points, and one chose REDUIT for 10 points. FRONTIER went on the board, and all players then started with fresh letters (none being left from their previous hands), specifically E, G, I, N, O, R and U.

The game report will include a drawing of the latest state of the board, and the players' scores. For the first round in particular, players should specify the position of their chosen words. The dictionary used will be the Penguin paperback.

Chess

Running chess in HT would be a bit daft, since there is no need for anything resembling a centralised game organiser. However, I do know that some players may be interested in playing. It seems logical to try and set up some means of getting them together. Thus, if you'd like to play chess, send me your name and address, and it would help if you gave me an idea of your playing ability, so that I can try and match even players. Unless you decide otherwise, the actual playing of games will be entirely up to the players themselves, with HT taking no further part in such activities.

Variants

In case anyone needs reminding, here is a quick review of the Diplomacy variants currently on offer in HT:

Cline-9: a nine player variant, very similar to the basic game, adding Persia and the Barbary Coast. When this starts, I shall open a waiting list for 1885-III, another nine player variant, played in the states.

Definitive Mercator: a thirteen player variant, played on a world map with changes to the rules for transporting armies (and other things).

Ultra-Stab: a hidden movement variant. One game is starting in this issue. I will open another waiting list if people want me to.

Machiavelli: a commercially successful Diplomacy variant, based on renaissance (utterly mis-spelt) Italy.

Executive: my very own variant, which needs revision, based on - well, a piss take of - the executive of a certain youth movement.

Pot Luck: a new category I'd like to try. Players enter this variant, telling me which variant they've played. At a convenient point, I try and find a variant which none of the players have played before. Ideally, which one one is played is pot luck.



Just a quick mention to some zines that have been sent to me recently. Actually, I received quite a few, but these are the only ones which I happen to have in front of me at the moment.

Ode's latest edition is a games only edition, because the editor (John Marsden) has been rather busy winning most of the council seats in Hastings. No, I don't mean being the candidate. Anyway, the zine is a good, reliable games zine, often filled with interesting games orientated articles. The letter column has picked up. You can even see some wally playing Austria appalling in Ode Doeme. Ode is at 17 Church Road, St. Leonards, Hastings, TN37 6EF. 50p an issue.

Quartz popped through the letter-box recently, following some difficulties. Again, it has a good range of games, with some, such as judge dread, reflecting Quartz's SF background. It also includes an article on UFOs, which is very well written, which seems to come to the same conclusions about UFOs as Jung (wishful thinking, with rather fun mechanisms to explain it). Quartz comes from the new operator of the warient bank, Geoff Kemp, at 23 Haygill, Wilnecote, Tamworth, Staffs, B77 4JY. 40p an issue.

Mad Policy, with the 107th issue due soon, is certainly well established. Lots of games and a fascination with putting Ulrika Meinhof on the front cover. However the thing MP is known for is the zine poll, which has just been announced for 1985. I have to admit I'd like HT to do well, but I don't think it will, mainly because HT has a relatively low circulation amongst those nutters who subscribe to lots of Diplomacy zines and vote in this kind of thing. Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6PC. Incidentally, MP is rather well known for promising to publish stuff from Richard's Diplomacy archives and collection, but not actually doing so (hint hint). The price is changing soon.

Zeeby, or the Zine to be Belived (or even believed - I think belived is better) is another zine with more games pages than anything else (is HT really following such an unpopular formula?). Generally, there's some good chat on what exactly is going on in the world of postal Diplomacy, mainly, it seems, because it's editor, Nick Kinzett, is somewhere at the centre of things. The letter column is quite active, although the latest edition is absent of any other contributions (can anyone give me an English lesson - I think I need it). Nick is also rather good at coming up with postal rules for other popular games - I'm using his rules for Civilisation, so if anything goes wrong, I've got a scapegoat. Nick Kinzett, 11 Daleway Road, Green Lane, COVENTRY, CV3 6JF. Can't find the price unfortunately; at a rough guess I'd say about 45p an issue.

Marshmellow, from Nigel Gordon, 14 Charlotte House, Caroline Estate, Hammersmith London W6 is thoroughly new to me. Nigel is a subscriber to HT, which is probably why I've been honoured with a copy - as far as I know, he hasn't distributed it to anyone else. The zine has some chat, but concentrates on both traditional games (such as Diplomacy, etc.) and some games which, as far as I can see, have been designed by Nigel or one of his associates (eg postal Snooker, which I suppose is why he wants to play in the HT Snooker bin). I gather the zine is distributed at his work place, and most games are played internally. Certainly worth a look, if only for the odd games. Nigel wants to increase the number of outside players. 50p an issue, including postage.

The Thing on the Map continues to be an excellent read, even if the review of HT was depressingly honest. His name is Mark Holiday, you know, the one you like. Actually, at the time I'm writing this review, it looks like DC will miss this HT. Get The Thing for the stories of Pete's troubles and strife. He's even improved the game's deadline, so now it twice as frequent as HT, with an equally chatty non-chat issue in between each chatty chat issue. Peter Doubleday PO Box 907, King's College, Cambridge, CB2 1ST.

The Masters of the Prime (I assume) includes a strong film section, some reviews of Eric Clapton, some letters, some games (including En Garde), well, a wide range of wide-ranging games (I do need Eng.ksh - or even English - lessons) and is a good tightly packed package (I must stop this) from Bryan Betts, 48 Cotham Vale, Redland, Bristol BS6 6HS. If you want to try a wide range of games, this is the one to get (now can I have a plug?).

Infernal Desire has a strong historical flavour, with games like En Guage - er, En Garde - indeed a variant of En Garde, set in the period of the English civil wars, the Victorian adventure, a role-playing extravaganza, a diplomacy variant called War of the Roses, and so on. It comes from (there is definitely some alien thing out there re-arranging this typewriter keyboard as I type - perhaps it got annoyed because I wouldn't let it change the size of my staples) I'll start again. It comes from Matt Harrison, at 6E Whitefield, no Whitefields, look, I mean 6E Whitefields, University of Warwick, Coventry (Coventry, that should be), CV4 7AL. It currently costs 25p including postage, but by the looks of things is about to go up.

20 Years On, from Ian Shaw, lists all the gamezines to be found in the United Kingdom, and some from other parts of the world. If you're thinking about subscribing to more zines than you do at the moment, don't believe the trash I've written on this page (I know I don't); try this as well. Ian Shaw can be found at Stephenson Hall, Oakholme Rd., Sheffield S10 3DF, and 20YO costs ... er ... money?

I trade with quite a lot more zines as well, and it's simply my failure to get them to a location in space-time similar to my typewriter as I'm typing this which prevents me from mentioning them. Don't worry, chaps, I'll mention you soon - you're the ones a bit behind with the bribes, that's all.

In front of me I have a map. I like maps so I can follow all the nice railway lines on them. This map is not very nice, indeed it is not nice at all. It has no railway lines in it. Why does it have no railway lines on it? Because it's a fucking pain, that's why. Why do some map printers assume all the map reader is interested in is the latest route of the M25 (which it even got wrong!!!), and have nothing on railways. I don't want to know where London Transport says the Piccadilly line goes, I want to know where it actually goes.

And furthermore, my dear map-maker, Heathrow airport is not a mere blank in reality. When crossing it, planes do not enter an area of nothingness (after all, I should know what blank nothingness is like - I was brought up in Bedfordshire). There will be roads across and round it. There are roads across and round it. I don't suppose it occurred to you that people like me, who live on one side of the airport and work on the other side might, just might, not want to go all the way around it? What - oh, that's alright then, is it - you didn't think at all so why do I expect you to have thought about airports and railways?

And next in my list of pet hates - actually, the top of my list of pet hates - is dawdlers. This is a unique species of insect, evolved to look remarkably like human beings. The only way to identify them is their behaviour. Place some dawdlers in a crowd, such as a narrow pavement, and they are the ones who block the damn thing and chat carelessly about the latest price of rhubarb. or simper along at such a slow rate that scientists use them to calibrate instruments used to judge the performance of crippled snails slithering in their sleep dreaming about sloths. I hate dawdlers. There is no law to dawdle, yet these excuses for insect drones still exist. When I'm feeling humanitarian, I believe pavements should be divided into human and insect lanes, and when I'm not I dream about dawdler-seeking guided neutron bombs. Why do they do it?

A Political position

Recently, a number of people have been asking me about my politics. These questions were not so much along the lines of "Which party do you like", but more of the "What do you believe in" nature. Since HT is edited on behalf of a political group, I have decided a statement of my political position would not be out of place.

To understand and appreciate my political viewpoint, you need to know my philosophical views, on which they are based. I have been interested in philosophy for a long time, initially as a tool to help me overcome my fear of death (half the readers of HT suddenly decide to stop reading this article). I found the fear was getting in the way of my thinking about life, and other things. Since the problem was emotional, the solution was emotional, using the tools of philosophy. It isn't worth repeating here. However, it did have the effect of making me very interested in the nature of things.

Actually, that's not quite true. I was always interested in the nature of things. However, I was prompted by this successful investigation to read up; something I hadn't done before.

Anyway, I started reading a few books, and, not before long, I picked up a copy of Bertrand Russell's "A History of Western Philosophy". It was what I was after in that it was a summary of the Western tradition of philosophy, and so gave me a look at all the ideas developed and written down (in the West). The key section proved to be that from Descartes; "I think, therefore I am" seemed to stand out from the page like an intellectual beacon. It must also be said that Russell did not present the most neutral analysis of views possible, but that was beside the point.

This lead on to thoughts about the nature of consciousness. I rapidly found that I could not answer the question "What is consciousness", except with an answer I found to be relatively inadequate; that is: "I am". I do, however, feel that consciousness is the key to appreciating things as they are, in that without consciousness I could not feel pain or pleasure, or, indeed, wonder about them.

I did note that the 'internal' world of the mind and the 'external' world of the senses were related by the property of time. I concluded that it did not make much real sense to separate the two, except as a tool for thought. I also came to the conclusion that the interface between the two was important, and this became the key to my thoughts on religion. A good book to read on this subject is the novel "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance", by Robert Pirsig.

I came to the conclusion that I was a conscious being, probably with a limited period of existence. I also found that I seemed to develop with time, in that I had both changed and grown as time progressed (and before you nitpick, Robert, I'm fully aware of the assumptions I'm making here!). I had a great deal of potential as a conscious being, and furthermore I seemed to be quite automatically developing that potential. I came to the conclusion that I existed in order to develop my potential. The ideal state to be in was therefore that of fulfillment of my potentials, and that became a personal goal.

A point I haven't considered so far in this discussion is the very important point of the possibility of the existence of other conscious beings. I think it would be very arrogant to assume that other conscious beings did not exist. If they do exist, then they may (or may not) be attempting to fulfill their potential as conscious beings. They will probably be, like me, complex and imperfect. I cannot know them completely; they cannot know me completely (this was developed much more in my discussion on artificial intelligence in HT4). It would therefore be wrong for me to make assumptions about their desires and wishes, or, equally, about their nature. The same goes for their attitudes towards me. Thus

I am libertarian, in that I believe that I cannot fully know another conscious being, and therefore am not in a position to make decisions about them. I cannot decide what is best for them, or worst for them, and therefore can only make decisions on their behalf which they are in a better position to make for themselves. Authority is irrational, assuming the existence of other conscious beings.

How do I know other beings are conscious? I do not. I cannot objectively define or even describe consciousness. However, if I assume that other beings may be conscious, and attempting to achieve some form of fulfillment, then it would probably help if I had some method of determining what is and is not conscious. If I make the assumption that all things are conscious, then no matter what I do or do not do I will be affecting a conscious being in some way, and probably interfering in that being's fulfillment. In such a situation, I may as well assume that no other thing is conscious, because at least I could then achieve my own fulfillment! If I, on the other hand, assume that some other things are conscious, then I can work towards my own fulfillment, and at the same time avoid interfering with and perhaps even helping other beings achieve fulfillment. Thus I can make the greatest contribution towards fulfillment if I judge for myself the consciousness of other things. However, I need a method.

There are two common methods (it seems to me) for judging the conscious of other beings, their shape and behaviour. Both are necessarily subjective. Lets look at shape first. The current cultural attitude appears to be that those things with the properties of appearing rather like people are conscious. However, it is quite easy to tighten up this: how about human beings with tits are excluded because their shape is different. What about someone whose lost a leg - I mean, only one leg, how can someone like that be conscious? What about that SF medical nightmare, the living brain in a bottle. Could that be conscious? Talking of SF, what about Martians - would they look like people? Could computers, which look like black boxes, be conscious? It would be arrogant to assume not. I don't like shape as a means of judging consciousness. I suppose if I used it I could argue that the best method for deciding whether something is conscious is whether or not they have a beer-gut.

Another alternative, which I feel is a slightly better method of judging consciousness, is behaviour. No matter what shape others perceived me, I would still behave in the same manner. There is no justifications whatsoever to assume that other conscious beings behave in some particular manner, except observation. Certain other things seem to behave as though they feel, in such a manner as I suspect I may appear to other people in a similar situation. This is why I don't eat meat.

A point which relates to consciousness and fulfillment is the matter of force. In this context, I would define force as 'something used by one individual to coerce another'. Force is in effect used to deny the victim the opportunity to make decisions for themselves, in that the aggressor makes a decision and then forces the victim to follow that decision through. Since it is logically impossible for the aggressor to make the 'best' decision on behalf of the victim it follows that force can only be used to harm the fulfillment of the victim. The only justifiable use of force in this context is where that force prevents the use of a greater force, and that furthermore it is the minimal force necessary to deny the greater force. Violence is the main tool of force, but I believe in a reduction in the use of force to the minimum necessary, not in violence per say (ok, so my Latin's useless).

Another point which my philosophy contributes to my politics is more relevant to the matter of approach rather than basic viewpoint. I simply do not believe that it is necessary to make a decision before it becomes necessary. New knowledge may appear following commitment to a decision which would have enabled a better decision to be made. Indeed, it may be the case that a decision is made which subsequently turns out to be utterly wrong in terms of the aims of that decision, yet which cannot be changed. This means I personally prefer not to make decisions until I feel it is necessary to do so. When is it necessary? That depends on the problem.

So where does all this leave me politically? The first, and very important point is that in politics, it is essential to temper philosophy with reality. Not all people are philosophers, and few base their actions on carefully developed opinions (and would not be human if they did). The nature of human beings is very much shaped by their humanity, their human strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, politics is a practical art which is all about changing the current society in the direction which is currently popular. It is extremely arrogant to assume that a particular political viewpoint is right or best, for reasons mentioned above. Politically, I am a libertarian tempered by awareness of the nature of people. I know this means that my 'ideal society' (if I have one) cannot be achieved, but it also means that I can help move things in a direction I like. Thus I am a Liberal.

I do not like dogma, since that is necessarily making a decision before it is needed. I have to admit that one of the greatest disappointments I found inside the Young Liberals was the presence of dogma, which, furthermore was not really thought out at all well. However, I suspect dogma arises when people need something to believe in, and therefore the responsibility for the existence of such dogma is partially mine, for allowing such views to become dominant. But that happens everywhere.

Ok, pigeon-hole time. What are my views on particular political subjects? Certain subjects are particularly fashionable at the moment, so let's go through them.

Racism: I do not like bigotry in any form. It is also far more common in our society than most people seem to realise.

Communities: my philosophy clearly implies that I believe that the best person to make any decision about a subject affecting that person is that person themselves. Obviously, it may prove rational for a group of people with a common interest to get together and sort things out together. Equally, any attempt by a community to force an individual into doing something necessarily implies that the individual does not feel that it is in her/his interest to do that something, implying that the individual is not a member of that community. Thus I believe in the principle of communities so long as they reject force in any form. Incidentally, I regard nationalism as best expressed as a community of people with a common culture.

Peace: I believe in the absence of force, or the presence of peace. I am also going to annoy a lot of people by stating that I think the best tactics for achieving peace depends on the situation at the time of application of those tactics. If I happen to be in a position to influence the tactics of disarmament when moves are made to achieve it, I will advise in favour of whichever method happens to be most likely in my opinion, to achieve success, without the use of force. I believe the question of 'unilateral' versus 'multilateral' disarmament to be sterile. The key is disarmament itself.

Ecology: the Ecology movement is one of philosophy, and I agree with most of it. Two important points which I have not mentioned above, but with which I strongly agree, is each person would find their own route to fulfillment, and we should live as part of our environment. I regard my politics as being green.

Feminism: read 'The Female Man' by Joanna Russ. I intend to review it in this edition, but at the time of writing have not done so.

Economics: is a subject I am ignorant of, but which I wish to learn about. I believe that the quality of life is the important thing, and if this means a few less green pieces of paper flying about, so what? I strongly believe that work is a means of exploitation forced on us by a consumer orientated society, and that in the ideal society, each and every person would be guaranteed the necessary power to gain any material objects they happened to need to aid their self-fulfillment. Economics should be simply another tool to help achieve this aim. It has wrongly become an end in itself.

Advertising agencies: a pet hate, that promote consumerism to a ridiculous level. Replace them with the popularisation of art.

Unemployment: in the long term, see economics. In the short term, problems. I suppose the actual solution which will be eventually used is work sharing, but I think the ideal one is community ownership of means of production. Its an economic matter, but economics is so conservative that it doesn't seem to have discovered yet that its a Western middle class science applied to a Western 19th century society, and that there are probably other ways of living. Work is currently a God, and its a false one. Its also forced on us.

Culturism: how many people realise that they get annoyed by people who refuse to make certain cultural assumptions, assumptions that are irrational and insulting? Racism was accepted in the 19th century. What are the unquestioned opinions of modern society which the 21st century will regard with equal vermerance? Be sure they will be about some modern social assumptions.

Nationalism: see communities. Provided nationalism is about the self-achievement of self determination of a community of people, its a good thing. If its got anything to do with one group of people saying that they're better than another, I don't like it. Thus:

South Africa: The sooner there's an armed revolution there, the better. The government here should ensure that the funds necessary for that revolution come from those UK companies funding the current repressive regime.

Palestine: Israel is a racist state, and should be replaced by one which allows all occupants of that part of the world human rights.

There are many other parts of the world where repressive regimes need to go. Its up to the people living there, and our role is to stop British involvement. In the long term, the whole concepts of nation-states needs to go. How do I equate that with what I said above on nations? Simple, its the state bit thats wrong. Get rid of it.

Third World: we've got to get a lot poorer, so people in the third world can live, and the planet Earth is not raped. Lovely to say, difficult to live with. We need an economic revolution at home, and that ain't going to happen overnight.

Animals: Animals may be conscious. I don't eat meat. The great majority of beaurocratically required experiments have equivalents which do not involve the suffering of animals. Stop them, there is no real justification for them. Indeed, a great deal of political problems come down to the matter of other people suffering a great deal for the sake of a few moments comfort for us.

Artificial Intelligence: this ain't an issue yet, but it will be. All things that may be conscious have the right to achieve self-fulfillment.

Its ten past five on Sunday afternoon, and I discover that I've miscounted my paging ... I'm two short. So you're going to suffer with two sides of ClapTrap, to make it possible for me to send this latest edition of God's gift to the paper recycling industry, Hacking Times, off to Emjay for printing.

Some of the more observant amongst you may have noticed that a large number of people have two noses. It is an interesting fact that a large proportion of the population cannot see a person's second nose, and sometimes even believes that people, including themselves, only have one nose apiece. If you feel you suffer from this problem, I strongly suggest you write to your local doctor, who'll probably refer you to a psychologist.

Its a real pity that Dead Cabbage didn't make it this month. Actually, some of you may not know where Mark, the editor of Dead Goldfish, got his name from. Don't say 'He was born with it' - I'm talking about his subzine, Dead Artichoke. It was genuinely going to be called 'Dead Cabbage', but Mark thought that this name was a bit silly, so he called it Dead Centre instead.

A few years ago, Mark espied a cabbage lying on his mum's draining board. The sight of the cabbage, its life bleeding away down the sink, lying there, about to be converted into a salad, caused Mark to have significant and deep thoughts about the very meaning of the words 'life', 'death' and 'cabbage'. This eventually lead to his religious conversion, and ever since he has spent Sunday with his uncle on his family's allotment, although while his uncle gets on with the gardening, Mark bows and worships his shrine to cabbagekind.

Mark joined the Young Liberals in the hope that he could convert some members to his religion. Unfortunately, he is doomed to failure: ~~As~~ worship the holes you find in well-worn shoes. This, you may think, is slightly odd. But is it? Tories worship green bits of paper. The Labour party actually worships a large number of things, different forms of themselves.

Enough of this sectarian rambling. Hang on a second, I've got one and a half pages to go. Lets have some more sectarian rambling.

Do you realise that in Northern Ireland, they have footpaths for Protestants or Catholics only. Geddit. GEDDIT - Sectarian Rambling. Oh, be like that!

A bit of hot news which didn't make the honest press:

David Steel denied today that there was any connection between the £500,000 donated to the Liberal Party by Warmongers, Inc., a large arms manufacturer, and his recent public criticism of President Reagan for not starting WW III soon enough. He stated that despite the fact the sum of other donations to the party was £1 2s 3½d during the last 20 years, he would not allow himself to be influence by donors, and anyway, an interpretation of the party's defence policy clearly stated that they were against cruise missiles, and a very good way to get them off British soil was to use them.

The latest Traveller stuff is signal GK, and alien supplement 4, the Zhodani. I didn't review Vargr when it came out, because it was so appallingly typeset it kept on having bits of Aslan (supplement 1) in it for no apparent reason. I'll comment on these at some stage.

I've just seen the news. A Sergeant Major in Germany has just walked for a week, non-stop, a bit of a nutcase thing to do. Apparently, though, he was still in contact with his superiors via a phone cunningly disguised as a shoe. He was seen regularly taking off his shoe to talk to his officers. What was being discussed? What secret mission required him to walk for a week in a circle? Perhaps he was carrying a magnet, attempting to induce a very low wavelength transmitter to send secret information to agents behind the iron

curtain. One can image KGB agents, inside the USSR, keeping an eye open for people walking around in circles for a week in order to get some secret instructions. Perhaps athletes, practising for the next olympics, aren't quite what they seem. We shall see, we shall see.

Some of you may have noticed that many of the GYL games have been given strange numbers, along the line of 1984??, where ?? is a pair of letters. This is what is called a Boardman number, after the inventor is postal Diplomacy, and it means the BT games will contribute towards the statistics of all Diplomacy games. You stab may make the difference between Austria and Italy being the worst country there is to play ... you never know.

I recently got a letter in the post that I was going to tell you about, but I seem to have lost it. It was all about a new company's week long adventure holiday, a sort of real-life pretend Dungeons and Dragons. Holiday makers dress up in the relevant costumes, gather wooden swords and shields, and spend a week in different scenarios basing the hell out of monsters and each other, and anything else that look bashable.

Where is that brochure .. ah, found it. Its called timescape, and you pretend to be a time traveller, playing a hero battling to save the universe from ... an evil dwarf? You have a week at Leicester University for £110 (cheaper out of season), with a variety of scenarios to enact. The company spend a great deal of their press release claiming they have nothing to do with the Treasure Trap company, an earlier, similiar idea. If you're interesting in spending a week saving the universe, contact Timescape Adventures, at PO Box 9, Harwich, Essex. The adventure takes place in Leicester, a city famous for bashable monsters. It looks worthwhile.

I got a great SF fanzine recently. Well, actually, Obscurity Inc. is an RPG zine. Like most such zines, its full of articles on RPGs (!), and in particular, Runequest. This issue contained articles about RQ3 and Glorantha, a new RQ monster (a "womble"), reviews of the new Pacesetter RPGs, a look at religion in Call of Cthulu, a review of Elfquest (which nicely took the piss) something on the Morrow Project, a review of the Lords of Creation, FIST, which had me utterly lost, some letters, and, what makes the zine definately worth looking at, a fantastic cartoon strip, with a magnificent style which struck me as the best I'd ever seen on the theme of adventure. Obscurity Inc. comes from Tony Keen, Kitchener House, 6 Gordon Terrace, Edinburgh, EH16 5QH.

I swear there was something on the Star Trek RPG in it.

I have a strong dislike of dogs. You see, they've got cold noses, they bark they whine, and they have the moral substance of a prune: they're far too obedient.

Do you know how to make a large quantity of money? Teach a typewrite to spell, thats how.

I've still got some space to fill. Oh, for some inspiration. You know, in ancient times, I bet that would've been regarded as a plea to the Gods. 'Dear God, could you give me some inspiration, please. I'm right out of it. I can give some some trouble in return, for you to pass on to someone whom you feel needs it, such as an editor of a gamezine in the 20th century who doesn't believe in you, but has a typewriter' ... the God muses: 'shall I give the squirt some inspiration; why not ... oy, squirt, how about bananas have slippery skins' ... the squirt, overjoyed, starts making his perpetual motion machine based around ancient Greek shopping centres and banana skins.

