

URF DURFAL: Mama will hug you. Mama will keep on hugging you. Every five
 mama will hug you a little tighter until you feed a hundred dollars into mama, you
 where. This is URF DURFAL, GRANDSON OF POUCH #38, and this sine is the One True
 Descendant of the Fallen Pouch. In addition to our offer to run any variant someone
 organizes the players for, we've currently got openings in regular Diplomacy, Youngstown,
 Swiss Variant II, and Machiavelli. Articles are paid for at the rate of 2 issues/printed
 page, except for E. Danger Lederheim and Adam Kananof, who have subscriptions for life.
 Subs are 7/\$2. Back issues are 5/\$1 or 25¢ each. The following variants can be had
 for an SSAE: Excommunication, Near Utter Chaos, Utter Chaos, Indonesian Diplomacy,
 Dudland, Grand Fenwick's Revenge, Ancient Hebrew Kingdom, World War III, Partition of
 the Ottoman Empire, and 1721. The following Origins variants are available: Unifica-
 tion of Germany and Origins of World War III. Urf Durfal house rules and postal rule
 for After the Holocaust, World War I, and Frigg It! are also available. The Costikyan
 Publishing Empire is also offering: The New York Conspiracy Hymnal for \$1; all five back
 issues of GIGO for \$2 or 50¢ each; issues 2 & 3 of The Inverted Grapefruit at 75¢ each
 or \$1.25 for both; issue one of FIRE THE ARQUEBUSIERS! for 50¢ and PHOENIX for \$2.
 Persons with subscriptions to Urf Durfal may cash their subscriptions in for any Costikyan
 Publishing Empire product at the rate of 25¢/issue.

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1. 76JJ AND 75BHfh PLAYERS TAKE NOTE: David Barlow has quit his
 position as gm for Urf Durfal; I'm taking over gm'ing 76JJ. Tom Gould
 doesn't want to take over 75BHfh, and I can't since I'm a player. I'll try to find a
 new GN. Both games are delayed till next issue. There's been a suggestion that BHfh
 be dropped because of lack of player interest. BHfh PLAYERS: write to Tom Gould
 (address above) and tell him wether you want the game to continue or to be dropped.
 Anyone who fails to write Tom will presumably desire the game to be dropped. If any
 single player desires the game to continue, the game will continue.

2. I'm abandoning the attempt at weekly deadlines. This issue is 6 weeks late, and
 the fact that I haven't produced any of the weekly issues when they were scheduled
 makes the whole thing a farce. Please note that this is not entirely my fault; the
 players in general have been missing moves en masse. Thus, subscriptions are now
 again 7/\$2.

3. This issue is, as I've said before, 6 weeks late. There are a number of reasons
 for this; two of those six weeks I've been in New York (over Christmas vacation, and,
 later, intercession); I've had a 40-page paper to write, and exams to get through;
 and I had to produce an issue of SLOBINPOLIT ZHURNAL (77 pages long). None of these
 (with the exception fo SLOBINPOLIT ZHURNAL) are valid excuses, of course; the magazine
 comes before the education machine. Nonetheless, the other work I've had to do will,
 I hope, be accepted as extenuating circumstances. The next issue, incidentally, will
 be on time.

4. Openings in YOUNGSTOWN are available at \$3 plus sub. The \$3 is refunded as for
 the same rules as regular Diplomacy (see note 5). I also have openings in SWISS VARIANT
 TWO and MACHIAVELLI at \$1 plus sub (nonrefundable)

STAR WARS RECONSIDERED

Over the last two decades, science fiction has acquired increasing acceptance as a literature. Such excellent writers as Harlan Ellison, Fritz Leiber, and Theodore Sturgeon are now able to sell their stories to magazines such as PLAYBOY and THE NEW YORKER; science fiction writers are no longer required to write at 1¢ a word, and no longer need write pornography and westerns in order to make ends meet. In academia, as well, science fiction and fantasy have acquired a cachet of respectability that was previously denied; many colleges now have science fiction or fantasy courses, some quite excellent. In the mass book market, too, science fiction is no longer ignored; no fewer than five science fiction or fantasy works have made the New York Times bestseller list in the last year, and Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven received \$100,000 (according to rumor) for the last sf novel, LUCIFER'S HAMMER---the first 6-figure sale price for an sf/f work.

Given the mass appeal of science fiction for the American public, it is to be expected that filmmakers have once again turned to the production of science fiction film. STAR WARS is still the world's all-time largest grosser; Bakshi's LORD OF THE RINGS is currently third on the VARIETY list; CLOSE ENCOUNTERS and MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH both were highly successful; and BATTLESTAR GALACTICA is currently one of the most successful tv series.

However, the incredible success of STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS has effectively abrogated any possibility of the production of decent, well-written meaningful science fiction film in the near future. Both are adolescent myths; STAR WARS the myth of adolescent triumph, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS the myth of adolescent idealism---peace and freedom from the stars. Both emphasize flashy special effects at the cost of plot, characterization, and story; both are, ultimately, mediocre and out-dated science fiction.

STAR WARS is a model example of what is known to fans of science fiction as "space opera". The best written example of the genre is E.E. "Doc" Smith's LENSMAN series. Space opera deals with intergalactic battles, stellar empires, pirates, the struggle between justice and evil---in other words, Wagnerian mindless tripe, the sort of thing no self-respecting writer would be caught dead writing. Mind you, I LIKED STAR WARS; it is excellent space opera. But to assume that STAR WARS is representative of the genre of science fiction is to make a terrible mistake---heart-rending for the writers who have spent years building sf from pulp to literature.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, while science fiction in the strict sense, seems to have been made more with the exploitation of flying saucer mania than the production of a legitimate science fiction film in mind. Aside from numerous logical errors (how come the aliens use the western tonal scale? Why do they go through this musical rigamarole---why don't they land on the White House Lawn and say "here we are"! Why don't we paly some Bach back at them, instead of letting the aliens set the tune---are we barbarians, should we not consider ourselves the equals of those who are superior to us only in technology, not intelligence? Why are humans taken away in the alien spacecraft, why are no aliens left behind?), CLOSE ENCOUNTERS has damn little plot and practically no characterization. Further, its sickly-sweet assumption that everyone in the world (and off it) is kind, nice, and lovable sticks in my craw. CE3K is not space opera; rather, it is science fiction trash of another type. The theme of "aliens come to save us" is so familiar, so common in science fiction that every sf editor rejects dozens of such stories every year, along with stories in which "there's a war, and there are only two people left, and their names are Adam and..." and

"dehumanized technology results in a regimented, overpopulated world." In other words, CE3K is old hat; the theme has been dozens of times before, and done BETTER.

Possibly the worst result of the success of these two films has been the advent of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. BATTLESTAR has all of the bad qualities of STAR WARS, and none of the good. STAR WARS is good space opera; BATTLESTAR is atrocious space opera. Characterisation is wooden in STAR WARS, nonexistent in BATTLESTAR. Plotting is at least tight in STAR WARS; plots in BATTLESTAR are usually incomprehensible and stupid. The laws of science are ignored in STAR WARS to some degree (sound in space?); but totally rejected in BATTLESTAR (I recall one episode in which the Battlestar hangar bay caught on fire--when the bay was open to space! Where's the oxygen coming from?). STAR WARS has fascist overtones (the medal-awarding scene in particular, in which the inferior alien doesn't get his medal), but BATTLESTAR is almost openly fascist (everyone owes absolute obedience to a supreme leader; "democrats" are considered traitors...) I advise anyone who must watch BATTLESTAR to do so with the sound turned off---that way you'll catch the special effects and not be subjected to the dialogue.

But the most dangerous trend that seems to be resulting from STAR WARS and CE3K is that filmmakers seem unwilling to treat science fiction except as high camp. At the World Science Fiction Convention of 1978, held over Labor Day Weekend, Harlan Ellison, the winner of a half-dozen Hugo and Nebula Awards (the science fiction equivalents of the Emmy and Pulitzer) as well as several awards from the Screen Writer's Guild, read a portion of the first draft of a screenplay of Isaac Asimov's I ROBOT series. While the I ROBOT stories are not the finest example of good sf writing, they are solid thought-stories, well-executed and tightly plotted. Ellison, however, is universally recognized as a brilliant writer; and, from what I heard of the I ROBOT script, the script is an order of magnitude better than Asimov's original stories.

The primary motivation for the I ROBOT stories are Asimov's unique, completely logical robots. Robots are machines; they do not have emotions, they follow orders explicitly. Each Asimovian robot has as its primary and most important motivation the famous Three Laws of Robotics, which can be summarized as follows:

- I. A robot may not, through action or inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
- II. A robot must follow any order issued by a human being, except where such would conflict with the First Law.
- III. A robot must preserve its own existence, except where this would conflict with the First or Second Laws.

Asimovian robots, then, are not cute, muppet-like mechanical men; they are alien beings with alien motivations, soulless and fascinating. Further, the most important character in the I ROBOT stories, and in the script itself, is that of Susan Calvin, a robopsychologist. An unattractive and self-contained woman, she never (well, hardly ever) displays emotion; she is almost one of the robots she studies. When emotion appears in her, the result is devastating. Susan Calvin, a fascinating figure in Asimov's stories, becomes in Ellison's script an almost archetypal figure, one of awesome complexity.

If I ROBOT were to be made as Ellison has written the screenplay, it will be a superb example of all that is best in science fiction; more, it will probably be a screen classic.

Now, the legacy of STAR WARS. CE3PO and R2D2 were popular because of their humanity; like Falstaff, their lesser stature (opposed to the superhuman figures of Kenobi, Skywalker, or Prince Hal) provides comic relief. The characters of STAR WARS are not complex; they are almost monochromatic in their simplicity. They represent adolescent archetypes, the embodiment of childish daydreams.

According to Ellison, he is under some pressure to make Asimov's robots-----cute.

It is only in socialist states, in which all industries are monopolies owned by the state that employers can afford to be discriminatory. In a capitalist society, an employer who is discriminatory places himself at a competitive disadvantage; in a socialist society, a monopoly employer has no competition, and therefore cannot be disadvantaged.

Thus, civil rights in America go hand-in-hand with economic rights. The two are indivisible and alternative sides of the same coin. Socialism means denial of basic rights to workers as well as "exploiting capitalists". Only in a capitalist society are our liberties assured.

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BLINDTESTERS WANTED

I'm currently designing a game for a small gaming company which will start up in the New York area in the near future. The game will be entitled "PEACE IN OUR TIME", and will be a relatively simple, multi-player, fast-playing (3-4 hours) simulation of the European Theatre in WWII. 300 counters, approximately 8-10 SPI-pages of rules, 17" x 22" game-map, seasonal game-turns. The five players represent Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France/America. Two scenarios are drawn up at the moment (I may add a couple more); in the Historical Scenario, the game begins in F 1939, with Germany at war with Britain, France, and Poland---Poland is initially controlled by the French/American player. In the Munich Scenario it is postulated that France and Britain stood by Czechoslovakia at Munich; the result is that Germany, Poland and Hungary are at war with Britain, France, and the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania). Poland and Hungary are controlled by Germany; the Little Entente is controlled by France. The Munich Scenario begins in F 1938, and thus the Spanish Civil War hasn't quite ended yet; thus, the Soviets control the Republican Spanish, and the Italians the Fascist Spanish.

If you have access to a group of gamers consisting of at least five people (including yourself), and are interested in blindtesting "PEACE IN OUR TIME", I'll be glad to send you a copy.

What I'm interested in is rules critiques and balance-playtesting. The first-draft rules, map, and counter manifest are completed. If you're a novice gamer, or a blood-and-thunder gamer, please don't bother to contact me; what I want is a thoughtful analysis of the rules, and play of the game to determine whether the scenarios are balanced (and if not, how they can be). I do NOT want some hotshot gamer to play the game for blood, and send me vague comments telling me the game is "good"; I want specific comments and suggestions.

If interested, contact me and I'll send you a copy of the map, rules, and counters. The only thing you'll get out of it is your name in the credits and a free copy of the published version.

|||||

"...For some reason I've never been able to understand, most men are supposed to go for girls who look like champion cows with frontally displaced udders. But it's not true of men of real taste. It's not true of me. It's my theory that the hypermammalian monstrosities were popularized by male homosexual editors who wanted to hold girls up to ridicule as top-heavy walking milk factories, or perhaps boys with balloon tires and bumpers. But me--give me Diana, give me Eros, give me a girl who looks as if she'd been built for fun and games, not dairy products!"

---Gaspard de la Nuit, THE SILVER EGGHEADS, by Fritz Leiber

Austria (Penn) NMR! a BUD, a ALB, f GRE, a UKR /h/.
 England (Vesneske) NMR! f HOL, f SWE, f NTH, a DEN /h/.
 France (Gister) a mar-PIE, a par-BUR, a BEL-ruh, a MUN-tyo, a RUH-mun, f tyn-NAP,
 a TUN h.
 Germany (Forrest) NMR! a VIE, f KIE, a BER /h/, a war /h/ (r-lvn, pru, sil, otb).
 Italy (Barlow) NMR! a ARM, a VEN /h/, f abg /h/ (r-eas, ion, otb).
 Russia (Kelly) a MOS s a gal-WAR, a BOH-tyo.
 Turkey (Tutacko) f SMY s f con-ABG, a BUL s a SER h, a ANK-arm.

VISCIOUS CYCLE

Normally, a fanzine is considered successful if it contains interesting reading material---this is the case with science fiction and gaming fanzines. The prime purpose of dipzines, however, is to provide an arena for the postal play of Diplomacy and variants of Diplomacy. Thus, in addition to providing reading material, a dipzine must also provide a successful environment for postal play---it must be regular, its gamesmaster must make few adjudication errors, players must miss moves as infrequently as possible, a pool of replacement players must be readily available.

In the adjudications that have been printed in the last 2 issues, 6 out of 21 (nearly a third) of the players have missed their moves. In the last five issues, games have been delayed 18 times---10 of these times were the result of insufficient player response (i.e., not enough people got their moves in); the other 8 were the result of a fuck-up on the GM's or publisher's part.

Thus, over the last 5 issues (a period of 6 months), Urf Durfal has had a pretty miserable game record. A number of problems can be identified. Firstly, Dave Barlow doesn't have a phone at Yale, which makes it virtually impossible to get in touch with him if he forgets to mail me adjudications---which has invariably been the case in the recent past. Dave has now quit as GM, so this problem should be cleared up. A similar, though not as severe problem has occurred with Scott Rosenberg; Scott has promised to keep better track of his game henceforth, and, one hopes, 78Mgo will get moving again.

The major problem, however, has been the fact that URF has been an average of two weeks late every issue for the last year. This is a result of a combination of factors: I've got a lot of other things to do (more so than I did a couple of years ago), and, admittedly, my interest in the zine has waned somewhat in the past year. Players tend to get their moves in more regularly if a zine is regular; they know that, consistently, every three weeks they will be required to write moves and that they will receive adjudications on a regular basis. Player schedules are thrown off by an irregular zine; thus, an irregular zine breeds NMR's.

However, NMR's breed irregularity. Part of the reason I continue to publish Urf is that I know there is a public (admittedly a small one) that enjoys reading and playing in my zine. When players begin to NMR, I know they're losing interest in the zine---and this makes my interest in producing the zine wane, making me more nonchalant about delaying the issue by a week or two.

GM:

near Utter Chaos)

GM: Scott Rosenberg

Winter 01

Austria (Gould) B A Vie
 England (Stevens) B F Gla, F Lvp, A di
 Germany (Stimmel) B A Kie, A Mun
 Italy (Barlow) NBR! Neutral builds provided. B F Nap.
 Russia (Costikyan) B A Mos
 Turkey (Newell) NBR! Neutral builds provided. B A Con*, A Ank*.
 *Con is duded, so A Con is duded to Bot (eliminated); Ank is also duded, to Erc.

Spring 02

Austria (Gould) a SEN s a vie-TRI*(elim), a BOS s f gre-ALB, a gal-BUD.
 England (Stevens) a EDI s a NTH s a blob (r-fin) s a nth, f gla-CLY; f lvp-IRI.
 France (Goldman) NBR! a par /n/ (r-IAS), a SPA* /n/, (f BOB /n/, f MID /n/).
 Germany (Stimmel) a BUS s a als-PAR, a mun-ALS, f bel-ENG, a HOL-nth, a kie-RUN.
 Italy (Barlow) NBR! f NAP /n/, f IV /n/, a tri /n/ (r-VEN*), a alb /n/ (r-otb).
 Russia (Costikyan) a RUM* s a se-bul (neo), a LVN s f BOT s a mos-BLOB.
 Turkey (Newell) NBR! a BUL /n/, a SY /n/, a BRE /n/.
 Courts of Chaos (GM-Rosenberg) a/f se-con*(duded) to

because of random events:

GM a con duded to PIE.

French a spa is split into a MAD and : GRA.

Austrian a tri is eliminated

Italy a ven becomes f VEN

Russian a rum is duded to POR

RANDOM EVENTS:

Schizo's:

SWE splits, but is absorbed by blob.

SPA splits from Por to Wes. Northern part is MADrid; souther is GRANada.

ARM splits from Sev to Syr. Western part is VAN; southern is URPa.

GAL splits from War to Bud. Western part is SLOvaki; eastern is LNOw.

Neilson/Draws: Sev.

Stonewall: Tri

Blob: Swe becomes part of blob.

Diluvian: Ven

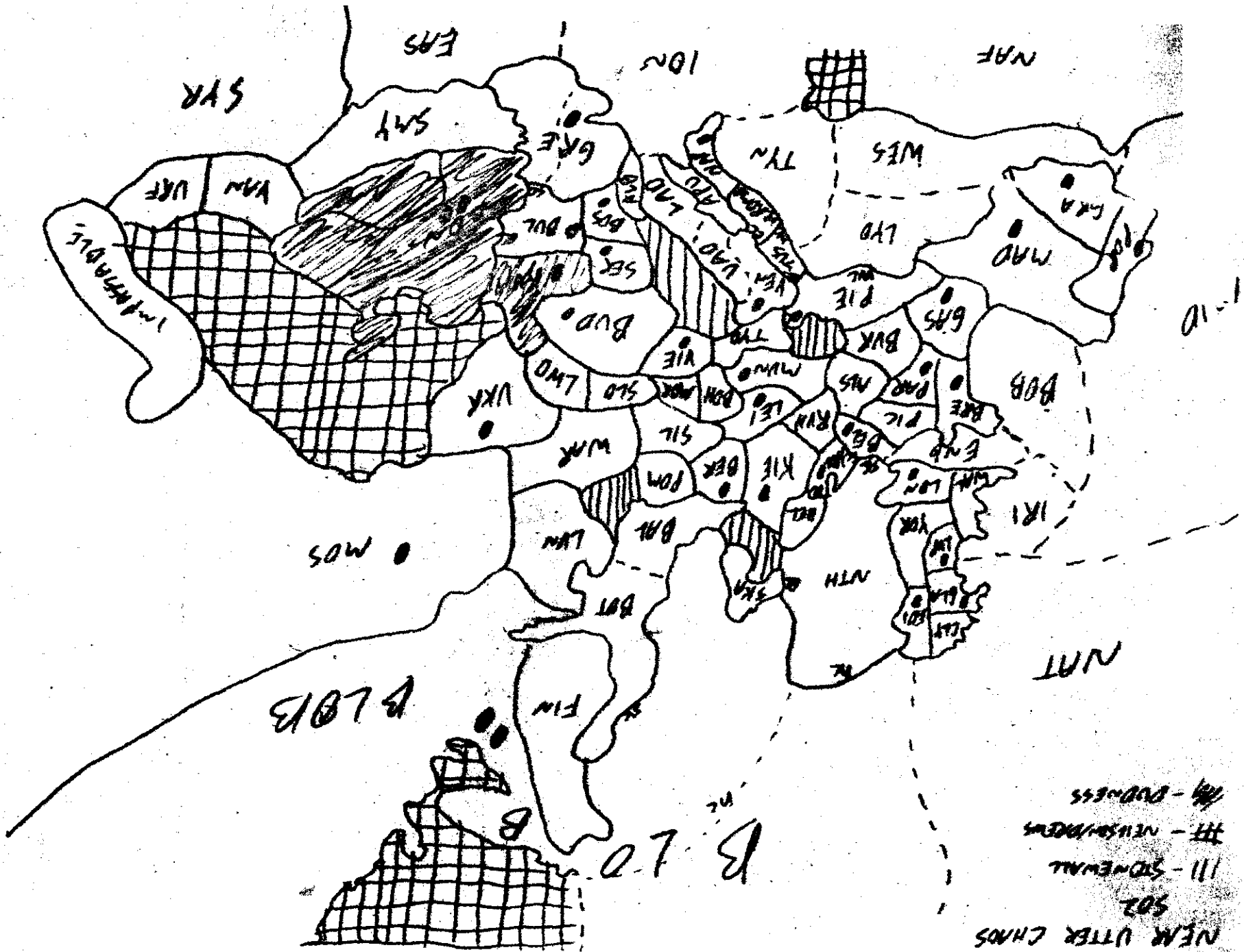
Dilatory: Smy

Dudness: spreads into Rum

Squash: Mar and Pie merge. New province called Pie.

S/C Move: Ank's supply center moves into Con.

NOTE: Random events are supposed to occur after all moves are adjudicated. Consequently, retreats must occur BEFORE random events are adjudicated. In most URF DURFAL games, players are supposed to submit retreats for one season after that season has been adjudicated, i.e., with the moves for the next season, and players are allowed to make their moves conditional on the retreats necessitated by the previous season's orders. In NEAR UTTER CHAOS, however, PLAYERS MUST PROVIDE CONDITIONAL RETREATS FOR UNITS in their orders, so that if any of their units are forced to retreat, the GM may adjudicate the retreats immediately, before adjudicating random effects. You may make your retreats conditional on the orders of other player's units. If you miss your moves or fail to submit retreat orders for a unit forced to retreat, the following rules will be followed by the GM: If there is only one province to which the unit could retreat, the unit is retreated there; if there is only one supply center province to which the unit could retreat, it is retreated there; otherwise the unit is eliminated. Units in civil disorder that are forced to retreat are eliminated.



NEAR UTTER CHAOS
 S02
 III - SIDEWALL
 III - NEWS/PROBS
 III - ADDRESS

VARIANT AWARDS Nomination Ballot

The DVO's Variant Awards Panel for 1978 is required to publicly solicit nominations in all categories of award. In addition, the Panel is authorized to fill vacancies in its own membership whenever it has less than six members.

Nominations will be considered at any time prior to a decision in the particular category, so it is recommended that nominations be filed as early as possible. Documentation for nominations is not required, but would be helpful.

Please address all correspondence on the Variant Awards to

Raymond E. Heuer
Secretary, Variant Awards Panel
162-10 87th Road.
Jamaica NY 11432
USA

OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION (exclusively or in major part) FOR VARIANTS

- 1 -
- 2 -

OUTSTANDING VARIANT GAMEMASTER

- 1 -
- 2 -

OUTSTANDING VARIANT DESIGN

- 1 -
- 2 -

OUTSTANDING ARTICLE ON VARIANTS

- 1 -
- 2 -

GENERAL CONTRIBUTION TO VARIANTS (may be for events prior to 1978)

- 1 -
- 2 -

SPECIAL AWARD (may be for events prior to 1978)

- 1 (only) -

signature

[] I wish to be appointed to fill any vacant seat on the Variant Awards Panel (check in brackets).

5. Openings in REGULAR DIPLOMACY are available at \$5 plus sub. The \$5 is returned at the end of the game or when you are eliminated, but is forfeit if you drop out. Additionally, each time you NMR or NBR, one dollar is forfeit from the \$5 total.

6. JEFF WILBUR: A guy called Jeff Wilbur sent me some stamps and a request for a sample issue of Urf Durfal; but he didn't put his address on the letter; only on the outside of the envelope his letter was sent in. Naturally, I threw his envelope away since there's no point in keeping torn and used envelopes. Thus, I don't know what his address is. If anyone knows where he lives, please contact me.

The following people have paid the gamefee for or have expressed interest in the following games:

REGULAR: Tom Shulz, Edward Vesneske, Bernard Sampson

NACHIARELLI: Larry Elliott, Jeff Wilbur(?)

SWISS VARIANT II: Stephen Lee

YOUNGSTOWN: Dave Barlow, Fred Hyatt, John Strain, Victor Ricci, Stephen Lee

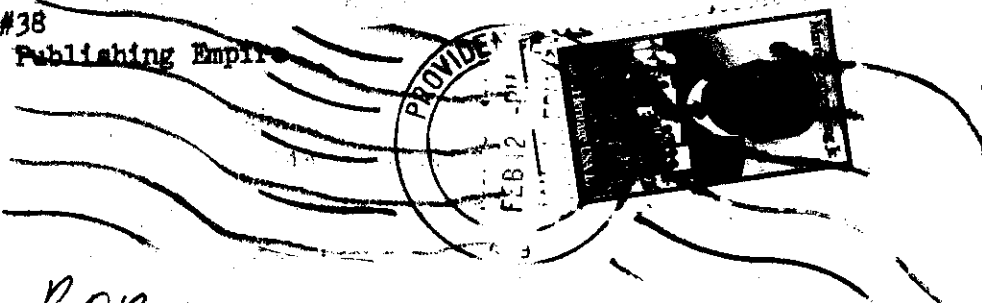
7. AFTER THE HOLOCAUST!: There are now openings in a game of POSTAL AFTER THE HOLOCAUST; the rules are written for any number of players. Postal rules available from me for a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Gamefee will be \$1 (plus a sub, of course). If you're interested, contact me. We've got two or three people signed up already.

8. REPLACEMENTS WANTED: I need people to take over positions in games in which there've been too many NMR's. If you take over a position, I'll tack advan issues onto your subscription. If you're interested, please write and tell me which games (regular or variant) you're interested in standing by for.

guess what's under this stamp?

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DEADLINES: 77IU, 78Mgo: MARCH 1, 34 A.E.
OTHER GAMES: MARCH 4, 34 A.E.