

News from Bree

Middle Earth PBM Newsletter - Issue 17, August '02

"Strange as News
from Bree..."

The Lord of the Rings, chapter 9

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MEPBM Economics

Part 2: Hints & Tips

by Jason Bennett

After the first part of Economics in Middle Earth was published (Bree 15), our fearless leader Clint wrote me, requesting a second part that included some examples of the various categories I discussed (gold donators, gold neutrals, gold debtors). I told him that an early draft of my article had included some, but I was wary of "naming names" because of my lack of experience with some nations, and the variability of play styles. Our solution was to ask the Middle Earth PBM list (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mepbmlist/>) what nations they felt tended to fall into the various categories. I'll summarize the (quite gracious) responses, and then give some general tips on how to improve your economy.

For 1650, everyone generally felt that the front-line and army-heavy nations were the ones most in need of gold. This includes the Woodmen, the Eothraim and the Northmen on the Free side, and the Witch King and Dragon Lord on the Dark side. The Sinda were also mentioned in passing by a couple of people. North Gondor was a point of contention, with various opinions on whether they should be burning all their gold, or whether Gondor's tax base should allow them to fund other Free nations. On the donator side, the Noldo and South Gondor were emphasized for the Free, while the Cloud Lord and Blind Sorcerer were mentioned for the Dark. There was some disagreement over the Blind Sorcerer, however, as one player mentioned that running any level of armies would put the BIS squarely into the debtor camp. As always, your mileage may vary. The Dwarves and Quiet Avenger were also mentioned, for the QA especially if the Southern neutrals are handled. One point that was emphasized was that any nation could end up in the poor house if it doesn't get a jump on planting camps early. A late start on planting camps means less camps planted before the limit is reached, a deficit

that will plague a nation for the rest of the game. A nation could also shift categories quickly if the war turns against it. South Gondor might be the most dramatic example here, as a Corsair invasion or a Dark breakout from Mordor is likely to ravage their tax base.

There was much less discussion about 2950, but a few suggestions were made. The Woodmen make their usual appearance on the needy list for the Free, along with North Gondor, the Silvans and the Riders (especially if under pressure from the Duns or White Wizard). The Noldo and South Gondor are the usual donators, with the Rangers and Dwarves joining them. For the Dark, the Witch King and Dragon Lord make their customary appearance on the needy list, along with the Long Rider (who tends to get a late start camping). The Cloud Lord, Quiet Avenger and Blind Sorcerer are the donators, with the QA once again impacted by the neutrals. Note that the economies of 2950 nations are much more fragile than their 1650 counterparts, due to the scaled-down nature of the game, but the same general patterns still hold.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed, both on and off list: Tony Zbaraschuk, Mick Jaggard, Richard Devereux, Dan Newman, John Gates and Marc Pinsonneault. My apologies if I forgot anyone. While I was making my notes for this series, I ended up writing down a bunch of random thoughts for how to keep an economy on track. They're presented here, in some logical order, in hopes that whoever reads this will be on my team in the future.

Treat your economy like a chess game: think at least a couple of moves ahead. Your maintenance is already guaranteed before any orders are given, gold transfers from your allies come after bankruptcy, and the market limit means you might not be able to cover your debts. Allowing your taxes to be automatically raised to cover your expenses is a guaranteed way to lose camps to attrition and drive you further into debt.



new games

Waiting List: When I get all 25 (or 24 for Gunboat) nations into the game I will allocate you your choice of nation from the list of nations that you have sent me - please send multiple nation choices. Upto 2 nation game: play 1 or 2 Aligned nations, or one Neutral nation.

Battle of the Five Armies (Bofa)

[Game 4]

2week turnaround

Veteran or Beginners game - (Vet: ALL 1650 orders available): 2 Nations taken. Note that FP have been upgraded.

1650

[Game 135]

1week turnaround

Waiting List, Upto 2 nation game. 12 nations available.

[Game 52]

2 week turnaround

1,2, 6,9,12, 13, 14, 15, 17-21, 24-25

[Game 57]

2 week turnaround

12v12 Grudge game - needs 1 DS team.

2950

[Game 236]

2 week turnaround

Postal & Email game. Waiting List. 4 nations available.

1000

[Game 40]

2 week turnaround

Probably going to be a Normal game (ie one nation per allegiance allowed +20% kid/ass). 4 FP, 2 Neutral, 3 DS taken so far.

Note please ask for variant games we can try to get you opposition for them if you are interested - mostly Grudge teams though - if I get 10 players for any single type of game then I will put it up for general availability below and push it.

Grudge Games we need opposition for:

1650: D Foreman (FP team), Simon Tvede (FP?)

2950: None.

1000: None

WoTR: None

Last Alliance: None

World Championship: None

Check out the Front sheet / turn email for all the latest news on positions available!

Sell as close to the market limit as possible as often as possible. While prices, orders, or gold thefts might not always make this wise, in general you're better off with liquid assets. If you wait to sell, the market might prevent you from liquidating as much as you need.

Keep a close eye on the market! Always be thinking about buyouts, to maximize your team's sells. Notice price spikes, and make sure to sell that particular commodity to take advantage. If you suspect a commodity is in danger of being bought out, sell into the buyout, making it harder for the other team to raise the price. Also watch for specific commodities that are usually cheap to get expensive. Make sure to sell food at 2, because it won't be there for long. The same goes for leather and bronze at 3 or 4. Make hay while the sun shines!

Your turn one orders (the first set you submit) should include a tax raise to 60, if at all possible. You need to raise taxes before you lose too much income, and before you start planting camps, which are much more vulnerable to degrading than your starting pop centers.

You can't equip armies with golden weapons or armor. Gold alone will never win a game of MEPBM, but unfortunately it's far too easy to sit back and hog gold while your team goes down in flames around you. If you can't effectively spend the gold yourself (because you're too far from the front), arrange to have a regular infusion to a front-line nation, or trade several of your pop centers for one near the front where you can be useful. Regardless of the path you choose, always have your money working.

Make sure someone on your team is coordinating the team economy (or do it yourself). Make sure every nation is at an appropriate tax rate, spending wisely, and fully funded. Also, try to organize commodity buyouts to boost prices. Combined, this will help eliminate desperate begging by the Woodmen when their 200 HI army overwhelms their economy.

Camp early, and camp often. If you've ever played German board games (like Settlers of Catan), you understand how early economic setbacks can cascade through an entire game. If you don't have money at the beginning, you can't protect yourself or your team from the ravages of the enemy, thus further setting back your economy and position. In addition, once the camp limit is hit, adding more pop centers becomes exponentially harder. It takes money to make money, and the sooner it starts flowing, the better off you will be in the long run.

Many nations not on the front lines have extra army commanders with useless troops at the start. Put these guys to good use posting camps all around your area. You'll get started faster than with emissaries, and if you use a 40pt commander or higher, your chance of success is quite high. Note that your commanders don't get better posting camps, so make sure to have them 430 TrpsMan the first turn before moving out. The better they are to start, the better chance they have of posting camps, and the higher loyalty the camps will have. Also note that it costs twice as much (4000 gold) to post a camp as to have an emissary create one. As long as you can afford it, though, spend the money. Any camp worth its salt will pay for itself in 3-5 turns, depending on production and the market (especially hills camps). This works very well if you have a back area that the enemy cannot easily reach without going through the bulk of your troops. Planting camps in his path, however, only wastes

your money.

When planting camps, hills and rough and mountains are the best bet for gold, while forest hexes are likely to only produce two commodities (although one of those is timber, which can be valuable for many reasons), and swamp hexes produce nothing. Don't camp one hex type exclusively, though. Plains produce mounts, which are very valuable and usually expensive to buy, and timber is required for ships, fortifications and war machines. Keep your production diverse!

When upgrading pop centers, remember two important points: upgrade your major towns to cities early, and upgrade camps to villages before upgrading bigger pop centers, unless there's a strategic need. Remember the chart at Bobbin's site (<http://www.middleearthpbm.co.uk/main/articles2.htm#Pop%20develop%20by%20Brian>): it takes seven turns (at 60% taxes) to recoup the cost of upgrading a major town to a city. If you wait until turn 10 or 15 to do that, the game might be decided before you start to recoup your losses. On the other hand, it only takes three turns to recoup the cost of a village. Obviously, recruiting and backup capital considerations may make the gold calculation irrelevant.

Don't let your capital become an ATM for the enemy! If you're a big stealing target (which is quite likely if you're the Haradwaith, North Gondor, or another rich nation), get rid of your money! This can be done by giving it away, lowering taxes to 39% and taking the loyalty gains, or buying product until the thieves leave. As an exception to the "sell to the limit" rule, you can also run off your natural gold production and horde product until it's safe to sell (and send that product to needy neighbors instead of gold). No matter what, do everything you can to avoid funding the opposition.

Remember the order of play: sells, maintenance, upgrading pop centers, stealing, naming new characters, and then hiring armies. Thefts cannot bankrupt you on their own, and it's safe to sell product to upgrade a pop center, but that money will be long gone by the time it's time to name characters or hire armies. Your only way around that is to sell as much as possible, and hope you have money left over (violating the previous rule), or hang on until the thieves leave. Just make sure to name as many characters as possible when you get the chance.

Keep your army expenditures to a minimum! Retire troops that you can't use (or it's cheaper to rehire elsewhere), don't let troops sit around burning off your surplus, and keep seed armies around to eliminate the 5000 gold cost of hiring a new army. In the same vein, don't overhire. If you can't afford that heavy cavalry over the long run, either move it into combat immediately, or hire infantry instead, and keep your nation in the game.

Don't spend too much on characters! Using 730 NamChar is very handy, but can add up over time. Have characters name their own type as often as possible, and literally get another character for free. It might even be worth moving characters back to the capital to allow this, but be very mindful of the strategic situation.

Equipping heavy infantry with weapons and armor is usually a poor use of commodities. Heavy infantry are generally "throw-away" troops that likely won't survive more than a battle or two. Unfortunately, you can't scavenge their weapons for your next army. Sell those metals instead and hire more troops, or hire heavy cavalry and equip them with steel everything. HC is much more likely to survive, maximizing their use of equipment.

by Richard Devereux

I was much annoyed recently by a Witch-king team-mate who persisted in hoarding dragons at a pop centre miles from the front line armies and thus denying them to his team-mates. Every time a dragon landed on one of his pops, whether he needed it or not, he sent a character to recruit it, with the ridiculous result that he had a whole pack of dragons on a safe major town, whilst his team-mates were left dragonless to fight overwhelming numbers of FP troops.

Firstly, please consider the nature of Tolkien's dragons. Each and every one is a solitary beast. A dragon might co-operate with a DS army for a while, and presumably has to get together with a dragon of opposite gender to breed, but otherwise dragons are pretty damned anti-social.

Therefore allowing more than one dragon to join a single army is illogical. It is even more illogical if that army is static. One dragon will quickly hunt the surrounding area clean of game - witness the Desolation of Smaug in The Hobbit. If there were two dragons they would clear the area even quicker and like any other wildlife, would fight for possession of territory.

I suppose in these days of political correctness we have to allow for the possibility of gay/lesbian dragons. Imagine the conversations:

"Oh daahling, I just luurve those red scales. They go so well with your eyes."

"Oooh you bitch, I'll scratch yer eyes out!"

"Green and black, what an absolutely fabulous ensemble. Shame about the carbuncles, but we can brush them out. Those horns will HAVE to go, and daahling, you absolutely MUST do something about your breath."

"Is that your tail, or are you just pleased to see me?"

"How d'you like yer eggs in the morning, darling?"

"UNfertilised thank you."

"I'm a magic dragon. Just by looking into your eyes, I can tell your deepest secrets."

"Oh yeah?"

"For instance, I know you're not wearing any knickers."

"Of course I'm not wearing knickers, I'm a dragon!"

"Wot about it then darling?"

"What a DELIGHTFUL bag. Is it Gucci?"

"No, it WAS Glorfindel."

Proposed Changes

Part 2: The Idea of a 2nd Edition

If you wrote this article, please contact the editor!

36. High level characters May acquire movement creatures (Fell Beasts, Giant Eagles) that they lose whence they join armies or companies.
37. Natural disasters can reduce population centres and/or stores. Hurricanes in Harad, volcanoes in the mountains, etcetera.
38. Perishable population stores can rot.
39. Create specialty buildings, ie production centres or barracks.

I used to play that game on the computer. No place for that stuff here, I've got villages to threaten and mages to kill before they throw biological weapons at me...

40. Scouting parties. Allow a character to become a Chief of Intelligence or so, and get some Palantirs out of him within a certain range. Character must be in capital, the "scouting" requires a skill order. Or something along those lines.

Another fun idea that feels too much like wanting it all...

41. Mages with mithril can manufacture artifacts or at least combat bonus weapons. Could be a spell list? Lost, with Noldo and, say, Dark Lieutenants, having access to?

Yet another fun idea, but I was under the impression that that kind of knowledge/skill/power was forever lost to Middle Earth....or at least was by 2950, according to the books, no?

42. Ships do not cost maintenance. Rà once they're built, they're built.

Things break down. Maybe reduce the cost, or put ships out of commission unless some timber is invested after a certain amount of turns? Too much complexity for too little gain there, just reduce the cost, but you can't eliminate it...

43. Define mages when named: Combat or Lore. Rà they are being "trained", so they should be trained in a particular direction, no?

44. NPC's recruitable. Ex Gandalf, Galadriel, Celgor. *Agreement in principle, but some NPC's have a reputation for doing whatever they want. I can't see Hallas bossing Gandalf around...*

45. Improve Free Characters. Ex: Beorn, provide Northmen with a starting 40 emissary, etc.

46. Place more Eothraim and Northmen characters in their respective capitals to start.

47. Improve Guarding. Add say, 1/2 the guard's rank to the guarded character. Also randomize the amount of damage taken by guards instead of the set agent rank of the meanie...

48. New Spells. Spells to increase morale (important if Desertion above is accepted), spells to increase troop loyalty (in order to "defer" troop maintenance until "after" the war....suckers!) Artifact researching allows caster to discover powers of more than one spell (important if artifact lists randomized).

Randomizing the artifact lists is an effort to negate the compiled data and bring us back to the day when the Research Artifact spell was important. Like the Agent Scouting argument, why do one, and then the other? Why randomize, then make it easier to research than in the "good old days" the effort harkens back too?

49. Army Maintenance. Armies must carry their gold with them. This gold is added to the baggage train upon hiring, like food. Once gold runs out, morale problems and resultant possible desertion occur, etc.

More pandora here...

The Idea of a 2nd Edition

Many of the changes proposed were based on the game as it is, essentially tweaks. But why not go a little farther? If the attempt is to take our current game as a starting point, why not rebuild from the foundation instead of simply remodelling? Imagine a bungalow. Many ideas are akin to repainting, new flooring, maybe bashing down some walls, installing central vacuuming, etc. How about tearing the timber down and building a 3 storey on the same lot?

New Map

Currently the map goes to 4438. Why not go to 9982? That is appx 2 1/4 times the number of hexes. Simply take the map as it stands, eliminate the hex lines, keeping the terrain, and impose a new octagonal map of 9982 on top of the current geographical map? Assign the pop centres and fix the terrain borders, roads, bridges, etc, such that they all line up as they do now.

Movement would have to be recalculated, based on Tolkien's travel times between pops.

Imagine a city drawing on the resources of the adjacent hexes. An increased number of more interesting fixed encounters. Different routes to travel and intercept the enemy upon. Eight directions to move in. Mind you, I'd also like to see the 0000 oct (?) in the bottom left, with 9982 in the top right.....

New Dimension to Nation Administration

Each pop centre has orders, the number of which are based on it's size, and the chance of their success based on it's loyalty. Buy's and sells (based on it's own economy), general direction (suburban expansion vs fortifications vs trade/industry) etc. Much like the idea of the Chief Administrator for the nation, but more of a Sheriff or Mayor type of control....?

Character Retinue

Not sure if I have the word correctly, but would powerful people have a circle around them? Apprentices, messengers, lower commanders around the General, etc. A set of miscellaneous orders can be created for these functionaries. Imagine a commander with a trusted confidante that is able to rally the troops to prevent desertion in the event of kidnap/assassination? This barely-led force is then forced to either retreat at 1/2 movement else suffer increased desertion, until a new character assumes command?

Basically, I'm talking about creating an entirely new game. A good portion of those 2nd Edition ideas would be incorporated, like racial and combat improvements. The main problems, besides the development and programming, would be complexity - the game as it is is often too difficult. It may seem simple enough to veterans, but many of the subtle nuances take years to master. Many newbies also run into the "this doesn't make sense" wall. I've had my share of arguments with the company and allies alike over things in the rules that I had a hard time wrapping my head around. I try to explain many of these to newbie allies now, and they appear to me as sooo obvious... L. Who would play a game that is 3 times as complex and detailed as the one we have now? I would hazard a guess that all those 1-week, 2-nation players might be a good source of players, but to get 25 of which on a consistent basis would be difficult. Especially, as I know of many players who insist on playing 2 nations because that way they know there is at least 1 ally they can rely on...

who's who

A look at the major characters in the LOTR: #7 Sam

Aliases: Gardener
Date of Birth: 2980 TA
Race: Hobbit (Harfoot)
Date of Death: unknown
Parents: Hamfast Gamgee and Bell Goodchild
Spouse: Rose Cotton
Date of Marriage: TA 3019
Children: Elanor, Frodo, Pippin, Bilbo, Goldilocks, Hamfast, Merry, Tolman, Robin, Rose, Daisy, Primrose, and Ruby

Physical description: Short with curly thick, brown hair. Brown worn hands from garden work.



Biography: Samwise was the youngest son of Hamfast Gamgee. He led a fairly uneventful life up until his beginnings in the tale of the Ring.

Sam was deeply curious about elves, partly because of this, (and partly because he was an eavesdropper), he was selected by Gandalf to accompany Frodo to Rivendell. Elrond also selected him to join the fellowship of the ring.

Throughout the journey, Sam proved his loyalty several times over, and without him the quest would have surely failed. After the betrayal by Smeagol to Shelob, Sam saved the ring from falling into enemy hands, and attempted to destroy the Ring himself. Samwise's strength and plain hobbit sense allowed him to resist the lure of the Ring's power, and realise that it was too much a task for him to do alone.

After the War of the Ring, Sam was elected Mayor of Michel Delving 7 times. He and his wife Rosie Cotton had 13 children before her death in Fourth age 82, when he sailed over the sea as the last of the Ring Bearers.

Terrorism & Tikka Masala

by Richard Devereux

Thirty weeks into the War against Evil, the United Nations Security Council met. The Noldo Elves, Arthedain and Cardolan reported success. The terrorist bases in the Misty Mountains had been almost totally eliminated and numerous caches of arms had been destroyed. In the east, Northmen armies and special forces had wiped out the last Dragon lord strongholds in Mordor (cue pictures of pitiful columns of ragged barefoot starving disease-ridden orc women and children begging for aid).

On either bank of the Anduin River there had been atrocities by both sides: a whole series of assassinations of Gondorian military and government officers plus the sabotage of the bridge had been followed by brutal reprisals by Gondorian military forces, destroying what they claimed were terrorist bases, but which the Mordorians insisted were refugee camps.

However what really occupied the minds of the security council was the plight of Khand. Khand had fought a courageous solo action against the Quiet Avenger, Blind Sorcerer, Long Rider, Cloud Lord and other terrorist organisations. In military terms Khand had held her own, capturing or destroying every single settlement east and south of Mordor almost to the gates of the Quiet Avenger capital; but assassins had reduced the Khand leaders to just the "Magnificent Seven" and terrorism made both the Khand major towns no-go areas.

Within a fortnight the Magnificent Seven were reduced by further assassinations to the Famous Five and things looked desperate. It was surely only a matter of time before terrorist groups took over both Khand's major towns.

Beorn of the Woodmen spoke: "Khand must establish a government in exile, as safe from terrorist groups as we can make it. I suggest the Noldo Elves give them a backup capital in the far northwest."

Elrond's aristocratic eyebrows rose. He could see how his proud people would take the idea of handing over one of their fair cities to a bunch of rag-heads! It was bad enough having to share the same corner of Middle-earth with Dwarves. He thought quickly. "Of course Khand must have a backup capital. But if the Noldo Elves provide it, it will severely limit our capability to wage war. How are we to finance our famous special forces? How are we to continue funding our allies?"

"NIMBY!" *

Elrond glared around but could not pinpoint the

heckler. A hubbub arose as every representative tried to explain to his neighbour why his nation could not provide the backup.

CRASH! Thorin only meant to pound the table with the flat of his axe, but it splintered to matchwood under the blow. However, it got the council's attention. Elrond stared slack-jawed at the wreck of what had once been an elven work of art.

"Oops," said Thorin, which was the closest he ever came to an apology. "I have a solution. Nobody need give up an existing city. I know an excellent building contractor, who will build you a major town in just eight weeks." "His name?" asked Elrond.

"Bob the Builder," answered Thorin.

Gasps went around the hall. Everybody had heard of Bob the Builder. He seemed to be able to build a house in less than half an hour. He was a hero to thousands of children, who watched him on their parents' palantiri.

"I propose we accept Thorin's offer," said Beorn, and the proposal was carried unanimously, everybody glad to be rid of the responsibility. Even Elrond, who was certain there was a catch, did not dare oppose it openly. "There's just one more thing," said Thorin, "who is going to pay him for this work, which is after all, in all our interests?"

Everybody looked at Elrond.

"I suppose you think that was clever, Master Thorin." Elrond stepped from the shadow of the pillar where he had been waiting since the council meeting broke up. Thorin stopped whistling and halted in mid-stride. He hoped his beard hid the grin which otherwise he could not hide. "There is something else troubling me," Elrond continued, "Where do you propose to build this new major town? That fool Beorn closed the meeting before I could ask."

Thorin could not prevent himself from chuckling. "Don't worry, Master Elrond, nowhere in your precious forests. Too close to my mining towns!"

Elrond thought for a moment. "That only leaves the hills and plains - you mean in Dunedain territory?"

Thorin nodded smugly.

Elrond caught his thought immediately. "So - you provide the builders, I provide the gold, 'tis only fair that the Dunedain provide the land. And the fools voted for it without realising it!"

Bystanders were amazed to see Elrond and Thorin emerge from the hall laughing together like long-lost friends.

To be continued ...



payments

Payments to **Middle Earth PBM Games** not Harlequin. 5% charge for UK Credit card payments & you can pay directly through our website (World Pay [WP] will appear on your statement).

You can also set up a monthly payment with us for a SET amount taken from your credit card at the beginning of each month. Ask for more details if interested.

If your account is low funds there will be an administration charge of £1 for the first turn, and 50p for subsequent turns on Low funds.

Note that CC payments are accepted in the following currencies: UK£, US\$ & AU\$ as well as some other currencies.

Breaking news ...

Payments can now be made via NOCHEX, PayPal opr by direct bank transfer. See page 11 of this issue of Bree for further details.

stand-by positions

Drop-outs available - don't forget you get a **free turn** for taking these up!

E [Early] = 0-10 turn,
M [Midgame] = 11-20,
L [Late game] = 21+,
[A= Aligned if a Neutral, N= not aligned if a Neutral]
P = Postal and Email game,

BoFA Veteran NM - e
1000: Two (e, l)
2950: Sindar (e), DogL (m), Quiet (e - P), Fire (e-P), (e - P), Long (e - P)
1650: Wood (1-1w) SoutG (1, Gun), WitK (1-1w), Harad (e-g), Dun (Gunboat)

CHECK OUT THE FRONT SHEET / TURN EMAIL FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS ON POSITIONS AVAILABLE!

Bree artwork

Not much art this tiem round as the issue was a bit longer than usual - art may look pretty but it makes the file you get sent a LOT bigger!

Art will return next time ...

Hall of Fame

Fourth Age c1000: Game 46

by the *Bramble Queen*
and later *Graypeak Kingdom*

This game started off with a bit of a surprise, when we discovered it was 12 Neutrals (including both Kingdoms) against 13 FP. I think that initially that should have been to the advantage of the Neutrals -- though having 8 fewer characters to begin with, the extra economic power of both Kingdoms, and their ability to soar past other nations' limits on characters, should have given them an edge. However, I am not sure how many players, if any, realized that this would be the setup -- and one or more of the neutrals may well have been disadvantaged by this, as they could well have planned for having a little time to decide which way to go, or at least be able to negotiate a little breathing room -- and instead found themselves in a world where Neutrality was not really an option, they had predetermined allies and enemies, no ability to change allegiance (which also cut down on artifact usefulness), and quite possibly nearby neighbors that they would NOT be able to convince to become friends! So that probably more than made up for the initial economic advantage.

The war began! My own situation looked very intriguing -- three different enemy nations on the other side of the Gap of Rohan, in various areas of Dunland, two of which were clearly close enough to provide an immediate danger -- and the SK just down the road a ways! My capital at 2218 suddenly felt a bit exposed -- although an FP, I had actually set my nation up as a Neutral, with nothing in the mountains, and told MEGames that I would play any allegiance. But I did have an ally to my north, in Lorien and just east of Moria, and another in the hills just south of Mirkwood, very close by. Yet the NK could be a problem too, as he had made Hornburg a Town/Castle! I worried that he might Hire there and prove difficult...

Yet I was extremely lucky in this game, and that made all the difference. For my two starting artifacts, I could hardly have asked for better, given my situation -- two weapons, one +2250 and the other +1750! Perfect for a nation which might be facing numerous enemy troops very shortly. And indeed, our first battle could well have set the tone for our entire campaign.

Our main army moved out and met the main army of the Middle Kingdom in the middle of the Gap of Rohan. We both had the same idea -- we each had a subcommander challenge the enemy commander so that our army commander could attack and move. Alas for the Middle Kingdom, his subcommander merely bore the Stewards Blade, a paltry (but far more common) +750 weapon, while my army commander bore the mighty blade Aranruth at +1750, so his subcommander lost that challenge. And my

mage, Queen Bramble herself, bore the powerful bow Belthroning at +2250 -- so her challenge, ironically against the 'King' of the Middle Kingdom, also proved successful -- and our army watched as the enemy force disbanded, leaderless, and we then moved onto the enemy town...

I would have paid to see the expression on the Middle Kingdom player's face when he saw the artifacts I had and thus the results of that challenge. The Middle Kingdom nonetheless fought valiantly and well -- taking much more care not to step into the dueling circle thereafter -- and only fell when out ally the Throne of Baltez brought troops down through the hills after the conquest of Moria.

But the Middle Kingdom was not my only foe -- and again, I was incredibly lucky. For early in the war, I managed to get, not one, but

TWO separate groups of Ents to join my capital army -- and both times managed to get more than one battle out of them! The first group of Ents proved vital in first eliminating a newly hired NK force at Hornburg and then taking both Hornburg and Aglarond from the NK, ending any influence that the NK

may have had on that region. And the second group of Ents proved most timely in stopping a large counterattack by a couple of armies as they tried to get through the Gap to attack me. Indeed, the Assiniboine and Merovingians both fell in part thanks to the timely aid of those mighty tree-like being we share our home in Fangorn with...

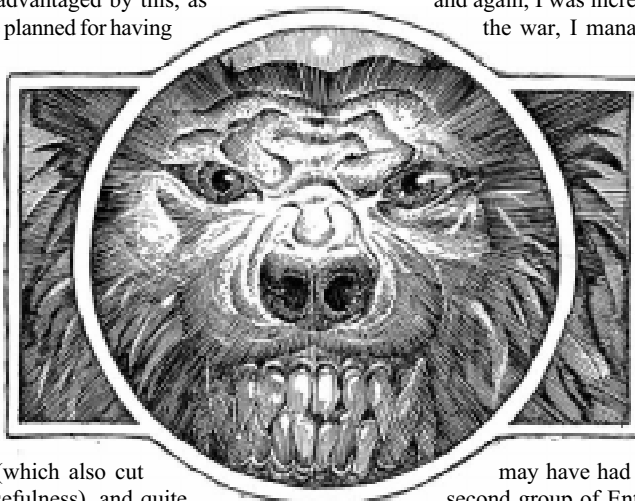
And the silent, but nonetheless active allies we knew of but never spoke with in western Gondor must have done much to keep the Merovingians and later the Assiniboine off balance and distracted as well. Furthermore, the isolated Gondolin, fighting bravely against high odds, managed to fend off the NK and Merovingian efforts against them much longer than anyone might have expected, until the Graypeak Kingdom could get a strong force into the NK area and intervene as well, or else the NK might well have come riding down the road to the rescue of their allies!

Meanwhile, of course, I heard of great victories and disparate battles elsewhere in the world, and thanks to my nearby Varyanadir allies, as well as the Anvil in the southlands, I never did have to fight off any SK armies.

Thus, in the end, victory -- won through a combination of luck, skill, strategy, and the choices made by my enemies, along with sheer stubbornness. A victory nonetheless -- but one only possible due to the efforts of many Free Peoples, not just my own. Many thanks to my allies -- those who fought on as long as they could, and those as well who took over the tattered remnants of war-torn nations and kept them going just a while longer...

Thanks to all for an exciting game! At least in the first dozen turns or so, VERY exciting...the last several turns being devoted to seeing which would happen first, the military destruction of the remaining Neutrals or a Strategic victory to finish the game a little earlier...

Ernie III / Bramble Queen / Graypeak Kingdom



Day One:

Frodo stabbed by Morgul blade. Oh no! Pippin cried. Told Pippin it would be all right as Mr. Frodo far too hot to die.

Did I say that out loud?

Day Three:

Have followed Mr. Frodo to Rivendell where Elves will heal him. Gandalf told me to help poor unconscious Mr. Frodo get out of dirty clothes. So took clothes off him and gave him a bath. And another one. Then gave him another bath. Gandalf came and told me six baths was quite enough, Samwise Gamgee.

Poncy old git probably hasn't taken a bath since the Second Age.

Day Four:

Wonder if it is time for Mr. Frodo to have another bath yet.

Day Five:

Elf bubble bath v. colorful and pretty.

Gandalf no fun at all. *sulk*

Day Six:

Mr. Frodo awake! Is doing well although also seems concerned as to why his fingers are all wrinkled.

Decided not to tell him about all the baths.

Day Seven:

Snuck into Council of Elrond. Frodo offered to take Ring to Mordor. Mr. Frodo is so brave, handsome, tall and wonderful!

Okay, so possibly isn't all that tall.

Day Eight:

Off to Mordor. Other members of Fellowship v. dodgy if you ask me. Especially Boromir. "Teaching Merry and Pippin how to sword-fight" my Aunt Lobelia. Obviously pervy hobbit-fancier who likes to roll around with small men in shorts.

Day Nine:

Aragorn just as pervy as Boromir. Obviously fancies Mr. Frodo. Will kill him if he tries anything.

Day Ten:

V. dark in Mines of Moria. Used flat edge of sword to whack Aragorn every time he tried to pinch

Beginner's Guide

Part 4: The Mid Game (cont)

by Jeffery Dobberpuhl

Economics

Mastery of mid-game economics is like juggling cats: it's impossible. However, there are some good things to consider.

First, a nation should consider using a 'scorched earth' policy on enemy nations. Whenever an Army destroys an enemy population center, a 'slot' opens up in the camp limit. Since the enemy will not necessarily know that its population center will be destroyed, chances are the destroying nation could use an Emissary to place a new camp in friendly territory. Another benefit of scorched earth is that it prevents a nation from tricking itself into believing it has to hold on to a piece of real estate it does not need. Unless an enemy population center could be easily defended, or used for a quick recruiting center, the advantages of holding a population center may be outweighed by simply destroying it.

Second, communication with team-mates for a 'buy-sell' strategy is critical. Is there a resource the team can corner the market in? Careful planning can result in all the team buying a product on one turn (driving the price up) and then selling on the second turn (driving the price back down). It is difficult for any single nation to exercise this strategy, but it is possible.

Third, examine whether the tax rates can be increased. If a nation kept its rate at 40 from the start, an increase to 60 can increase income by a third. Alternatively, if a nation fortified the majority of its population centers, the tax rate can be raised even higher. This is because no matter how low loyalty drops (a raise in taxes lowers loyalty and high taxes lower loyalty every turn), a population center cannot degrade if there is a fortification on it.

Fourth, increase the nation's own holdings. Emissaries are the only character in the game than can make a camp a village. Building a number of villages will directly increase a nation's economic base in short order.

Finally, take the enemy's gold! Agents and Emissaries are critical for swinging a bad economy away from the brink of disaster. Agent 'steal gold' strikes on enemy villages or towns, especially those in rough hexes, can result in literally thousands in stolen gold. Emissaries can steal away an enemy population center - even a lowly camp - each turn. This denies resources to the enemy while increasing a nation's net worth.

Consolidating the Nation

If the opening moves of a game are about expansion, then the mid game is about consolidation. All of the 'camping armies' (small Armies led by higher level Commanders to place camps) should be recalled and either joined or buffed up with new troops. Emissaries should be employed in groups either to increase the loyalty and size of existing population centers rapidly, or to steal population centers from the enemy.

Commanders should be doubled up to decrease the chance of a loss of an Army to enemy Agents or Curse Companies. Mages should be organized into

Curse Companies. Agents should form killing/stealing squads. Often, this consolidation can take place with other nations. Curse squads are difficult for a single nation to establish, for example, but not that difficult for two or three nations acting together.

Attacking the Enemy

This should really be established as the dirty tricks department. It is simple enough to amass a horde of troops, move in on an enemy population center, and attack. It is an art to use 200-man Armies to destroy an advancing 2000-man Army. Here is a quick half-dozen ideas.

- 1 The fence line: When hunting pheasants in the prairies of South Dakota, one will often come to a fence line. At that point, you need to stop, put down your trusty 20 gauge, and crawl through the barbed wire to get to the other side. Enemy nations can be made to do the same thing. Throw a series of camps around a vital population center (or a single camp in the middle of a pass). Then, throw a fortification up. The enemy Army will have to stop there. This is also where your sickness squad is sitting... For flavor, alternate with an Agent to issue assassination orders.
- 2 Prop up fence line: Similar to the fence line, this establishes a camp in the middle of an enemy advance. One can either hire an Army (risky due to overruns) or throw up a fortification that the enemy did not know was going to be there. Then see the fence line for finishing off the enemy. This can be also used with Armies to whittle down an enemy's advance.
- 3 Extreme Agents, chapter 1: Stealing from an enemy major town or city is cool. Its also risky. It is much safer to look for enemy villages and towns that are located on typically gold producing hexes, such as hills and rough. Because of the way the 'steal gold' formula is set, there is almost no limit how much gold can be stolen from safer hexes.
- 4 Extreme Agents, chapter 2: Move into an enemy population center, not to steal gold, but to scout for resources. If lucky, a large stock pile of food, timber, etc will be discovered. Successfully sabotage will hurt an enemy far worse than any gold steals. This is because a nation may be living off its sells...
- 5 Locate Artifact: I think this is one of the best ways to track enemy characters. First, you may not know that your enemy named a character 'Miss Fluffy', but if Miss Fluffy is holding an enemy starting artifact, you now have a new target for your agents and mages.
- 6 The land of mists and shadows: This only works for the Free Peoples. Use the Noldo hiding artifact to place and hide a population center in Mordor. Use your imagination after that...

Success

Mid game really belongs to the experienced players. This is where a soft opening strategy begins to fall apart, and well-laid plans grow fruit. A successful mid game will result in a successful end game.

*This article first appeared in **Flagship**, issue 96, and is reprinted here by permission.*

Mr. Frodo in the dark.

Gandalf fell into bottomless pit. Mr. Frodo said something later about pointy wizard hat, but did not understand it as am innocent young hobbit from Shire not versed in wordly ways.

Pippin says Legolas is shagging Gimli.
Ick.

Day Fifteen:

Lothlorien v. pretty. Blonde elf lady absolutely hitting on poor Mr. Frodo left, right and center. Pippin agrees. Told Pippin height difference would make relationship impossible. Pippin said Mr. Frodo could stand on stilts.

Hate Pippin.

Day Twenty-Two:

Leaving Lothlorien. Bye-bye grabby elf lady.

Not sure where going exactly, but is obviously somewhere water-related, as have been given boats. Do not care really as long as get to share boat with Mr. Frodo.

Day Twenty-Three:

Boromir finally acted on pent-up lust for Mr. Frodo. Got shot down of course (hurrah!) but not before made spectacle of himself. Claims was trying to take Ring so as to rule world and bring down evil, but we all know that's a big fib don't we.

Day Twenty-Four:

Boromir killed by orcs. Knew orcs good for something.

Frodo off to Mordor. Taking me along, hurrah! Mr. Frodo needs cheering up as seems inexplicably sorry to say goodbye to Gimli, as well as is depressed and claims is now sure he will die a virgin in the barren wastelands of the Dark Lord's realm.

We will see about that.

Part 6: Gandalf the Grey

Day One:

In Shire. Stunning vista of innocent and pastoral beauty. Is it me, or was Frodo just hanging around in that field masturbating before I came along?

Day Two:

Bilbo's Birthday party improved by substantial amount of hobbit weed. Everyone sho nice. Bilbo nice too. Lights sho pretty. Frodo not bad either. Hobbits sho cuddly. Whups. Fellover.

Hall of Fame

1650: Game 65 (by Tony Ackroyd)

After 33 turns the DS triumphed, but this game had some serious twists and turns.

Only a couple of the DS team knew each other from previous games, there were two totally new players, quite a few inexperienced and one player who seemed very experienced, but this was later determined to be an illusion. Communication was very patchy from the off. Our team covered the UK, US, French Canada and Australia. We soon found out that Kevin (Bobbins) was on the FP team, but that they had newbies as well.

We got in contact with the Easterlings and Dunland, but discovered that the FPs were 'bombarding' the neutrals with communication whereas our nominated diplomats seemed incapable of stringing words together. A period of in-team bickering began just after turn 1 and continued on and off until turn 7, not really ideal. At one point a player later excuses sending a very fraught email on the grounds of 'drinking too much coffee and Red Bull'.

Luckily the Freeps didn't really take advantage of our chaos and didn't press Mordor, they also put very little economic pressure on us throughout the game, with market prices quite high most of the game.

There was an early stumbling block when Dark Lt and Fire King Commanders died failing to take 3124, and the DS managed to use a huge number of characters and mages in an extended, and failed, attempt to find the Ring of Wind which covers turns 1-5. Early contact with the Corsairs and Harad indicated that they were either mercenary or deranged. Dunland and Rhudaur seemed friendly and Easterlings made a reasonable request of 2 artifacts to go DS.

Turn 4 and everything went wrong. The Dragon Lord had missed turn 3, he then missed turn 4 and was eliminated when the Eothraim, Sinda, Noldo, Northmen and Woodmen worked together to take his two MTs. At the same time an Eothraim cavalry army had got into the back of Mordor and onto Cloud Lord towns.

We had a bit of fun when the Sinda impersonated the Corsairs and was caught out, the real Corsairs didn't appreciate being misrepresented, but unfortunately the QA had also upset the Corsairs with some Aussie honesty. It was looking like the South was unstable, but it also didn't seem likely that either big neutral would jump in a hurry. In fact they were both telling us that they'd like to declare the same way, which seemed like good news as the Corsairs told us he had 'evil leanings'.

Turn 5 and an order error caused us to fail to take 3124 a second time we also discovered that Dudannis (Northmen agent) now had the ROW, despite us having located it on turn 1! We still haven't recovered any major artifacts.

Turn 6 and the WK is feeling under pressure, but it seems like Arthedain and Cardolan both miss their turns at just the right time. The Easterlings and Rhudaur tell us they will go DS, but Dunland is going FP. The Eothraim burns a CL town.

Turn 7 and the Fire King drops stating disgust at our (lack of) team play, but the drop might be more due to the condition of his position. Kyle (Dog Lord) takes it over, there is a Huge SG army on the FK

capital...and the Fire King only has 3 commanders for some reason, not ideal in a nation that hires armies for free.

Turn 8 and Haradwaith surprises everyone by turning DS. He tells us he has 347,000 gold, which explains why the market has been so good, we don't get much information on his position but it later becomes clear that hes got loads of gold because he hasn't spent much improving Harad or its characters. We also get confirmation that the Easterlings are DS and attacking the Freeps. At the same time the Blind Sorceror drops and we get to see his pdf for the first time. It explains why we haven't found any artifacts - the BS position is in a mess, the new BS, Jacques (WK), describes it as 'almost useless'. Pat the Ice King, plays a blinder and charges down to sort out the West gate. Corsairs tells us that he's going DS on turn 9. The Eothraim cav in Mordor burns another CL town. Communication has now improved massively, whether this is due to need, better results, or the loss of certain players is up for debate. The Dog Lord and Ice King are doing a good job with their armies.

Turn 9 and the Corsairs go FP, incensing the QA who had made complex arrangements for the transfer of his navy and a V/T for a Corsair victory condition. Corsairs navies are all over the Harad pop centres. It makes for a more balanced game though! Up North the WK is under pressure from loads of different Freep nations and Rhudaur remains neutral.

Turn 10 and the Easterlings go DS officially, but they seem to have been attacking the FPs for 4 turns. Communication with them is sparse in the extreme. Cloud Lord agents are active in the North. Harad is being overrun by Corsairs, NG and SG, and is not putting up much of a fight. The Eothraim Cav burns the 3rd and final CL town.

Turn 11 and the QA keeps the WK in the game by giving him a MT and gold. Murazor gets eaten by Scorba the dragon. The IK captures 3024. Reports of Freep agents increase significantly. All we hear from Harad is that he is being overrun, but with no detail, no pdfs and no replies to offers of help. Rhudaur goes DS but is under massive attack immediately.

Turn 13 and the CL has terminated 13 FPs, holds 4 hostage, and has now made the SG and Corsairs capitals no-go zones. The market prices collapse. Harad's capital is under threat. NG's capital at 2924 is hidden just as overwhelming DS force arrives there, brilliant timing by the FPs. Harad gold finally leaves his vaults: 100k sent to the QA.

Turn 15 Elrond is taken out by Din Ohtar and the Pectoral is recovered in the process. The QA is fighting a losing battle against the Corsairs. The Easterlings get in touch after five turns of silence and offers gold to desperate Dark Lts, Cloud Lord and Blind Sorceror. He reveals that he owns the Rhun area, but the Eothraim core remains. Two Cloud Lord agents in the North have now removed over 10,000 troops from the FPs. Dog and Ice King armies are tearing into NG, but 2924 remains hidden.

Turn 17 The Dog Lord keeps Rhudaur in the game with a MT transfer, but is then under attack by two Huge Sinda armies. A huge battle takes place at 2927 and the DS capture it with Dog, Drk Lts, Fire King and

Day Three:

Massive fucking hangover. Off to Minas Tirith for some aspirin.

Day Twelve:

Went to Saruman for advice about Ring but he had become evil. Nobody tells me anything. Apparently there was a memo. Radagast the Brown probably stealing paper out of my inbox again.

Day Thirteen :

Stuck on top of tower. Great view, but constant pelting sleet not good for pointy hat. Am amusing self by spitting gum down on the Orcs.

Day Fourteen :

Visited again by Saruman who tried to grab a feel. As if!

Day Sixteen :

Am lonely. Saruman maybe not so unattractive after all. If only were not for giantly flaring nostrils and huge clawlike fingernails...okay you'd think I might have figured out he was evil before.

Day Nineteen :

Escaped. Am in Rivendell. Sam slightly out of control. Keeps giving Frodo baths. Elves all out of strawberry-scented soap now. Elrond getting annoyed.

Day Twenty :

Elrond has decided to send Frodo away as is tired of never being able to get into the first-floor bathroom. Big folderol about Ring. Have agreed to go with Fellowship in case Sam might decide to give ME a bath. Could use one.

Day Twenty-One:

Aragorn obviously into Frodo. Sam will kill him if he tries anything. Asked Sam to give me a bath. He said, "Ha ha, Mister Gandalf, you're not serious." Useless git.

Day Twenty-Three :

V. cold on top of Caradhras. Aragorn won fight about who got to carry Frodo up the mountain. Boromir sulking. If Legolas keeps nancing about on top of the snow, may have to hit him with my staff.

Day Twenty-Five :

Do not want to go through Mines of Moria, as suspect Balrog still angry about bad date we went on back in Second Age.

Day Twenty-Six:

In Mines of Moria. Yep, Balrog still angry.

CL armies participating. The ROW is finally taken after chasing it for 12 turns by assassinating the current FP owner. The Cloud Lord has killed 22 Freeps and holds 5 hostages. The Sinda capture a Dog Lord town and City. Kevin (Bobbins) tells us that the Freeps have had a mass drop, with seven nations dropping out, but that they have found replacements for them all!

Turn 18 The WK and Rhudaur have been removed from the North and the Freeps own all the North and West of the map. Harad is still struggling, but DS armies are swarming around SG and NG.

Turn 20 and SG is holding the DS off at 2527. The DS finally have an active Curse squad and Tharudan is assassinated, recovering Tinculin. The Cloud Lord has iced 29 Freeps and holds 6 hostages. 2924, NG capital is finally revealed. Harad is still playing but hasn't spoken to the DS for four turns. The Long Rider has no hostages, but has collected 17 artifacts.

Turn 21 and the IK and LR are attacking the Eothraim core. For some reason the Dwarves and Sinda send 40k gold to the IK. Dog and IK are starting to attack Dunland. The Dark Lts drops for personal reasons and Aussie Phil (QA) takes over.

Turn 24 CL Emi takes 2924 from Eothraim (NG is out) and CL agents are covering Arthedain, SG, Duns and Cors capitals. The QA capital falls to the Corsairs. Harad gets in touch after nine turns of silence.

Turn 25 and Glorfindel dies on a Cloud Lord knife, liberating 5 artifacts, including +85 of Command arties. QA captures Corsair capital, returning the favour, all Corsairs forces have now been swept from the QA map for the first time in the game. The WK is eliminated.

Turn 26 and FK captures Woodmen MT/F 2527. CL threatens Eothraim MT/F 2325. The FPs have a curse squad operating. LR assassinates Thranduil and gets some nice arties. IK burns Duns city at 1917. Freep Emis flip 2121 MT/F from the Dog Lord.

Turn 27 and IK burns the Dun capital, CL threatens SG MT/F 2223

Turn 28 and the QA captures a Cors City, Rhudaur takes a Cors MT with Emis and the BS captures a Cors MT. There are lots of Freep agents training up stealing from the DS.

Turn 29 The Freeps appear to rally, with curse squads, Emi companies, assassins and lots of agents stealing.

Turn 30 after lots of army and Emi pressure, the CL Emi flips SG Capital 2227. The Easterling drops and transfers the position to the Long Rider. Somehow, over the ten turns that the Easterlings have not spoken to the rest of the team the position has been devastated, with all North and Rhun holdings being recaptured by Sinda, Northmen and Dwarf armies. QA takes two more MTs from the Corsairs. Dark Tower constructed at Barad-Dur. CL has Cors, Woodmen, Arthedain and Dwarf capitals under agent siege, Rhudaur is covering the Cardolan capital with agents. The DS have been trying to find the One Ring to stop the FPs getting it, but haven't yet found it.

Turn 31 Harad drops and has also left his nation in disarray. It is picked up by an IK/BS tag team.

Turn 32 QA captures another Cors MT. Minas Arnor lost to FP emis. CL has terminated 54 Freeps and has 15 Freep hostages. LR, Dog Lord and IK have the last Eothraim and SG MTs surrounded by

armies, agents and curse squads. Northmen Emis take 2927 from Fire King. QA Emis are pressurising Arthedain and now the Noldo capital is under agent siege, too. The Duns appear to be out. The DS have a 3rd curse company up and running. The Rhudaur map has been incredibly useful since the WK was eliminated. Communication and co-operation have been at a high between the DS for the last 5 turns.

Turn 33. The FPs concede. The DS are surprised, we thought they were rallying and we were quite worried about what this horde of FP training agents might soon be capable of. Special thanks to Kyle for the organisation, Pat for the superb FP character threat summaries, Jacques and Phil for their wild enthusiasm in the face of almost continually tough circumstances for their nations, Mac for sticking with it despite being a 3rd world Rhudaur for most of the game (I really think that without the Rhudaur map we could have lost, or at least been in the game for another ten turns!) and Chris for quietly fighting the good fight in the East.

Overall it was a lesson in persistence and resolving differences between team members, but against a better organised FP team we would have certainly lost. Final standings: 1st Ice King, 2nd Cloud Lord (Tony Ackroyd), 3rd Quiet Avenger

2950: Game 223

After 9 months and 350 some odd posts on the message boards, Game 223 has finally ended in a Free Victory! A brief recap from the Free perspective.

The early game was almost entirely DS! North Gondor dropped the bridges without telling anyone (he eventually dropped and was replaced!) and our Noldo player was inactive for the first two turns before we got him replaced. The DS capitalized on this by sending hordes of armies into Rohan, Mirkwood and Lorien. Things looked even more bleak when the White Wizard and Duns went DS! The Rohirrim quickly relocated to the sunny shores of South Gondor along with the Sinda once Lorien was smoked out! But, to use the cliché of things being darkest before the dawn... a stunning string of lucky turns saw the DS scattered in Rohan, and several major DS characters lost beneath the eaves of the Golden Wood (Gothmog and Din toname but two!)

With the sun starting to shine over the Free, the Rhun, Khand and Corsairs all came aboard to help us out! Thankfully, this allowed us to take the fight to Mordor! The WW bankrupted himself and the Sinda were able to convince the remnants at Isengard to join their cause!

The final few turns saw Mordor beset in the east by the Northmen, Dwarf, Khand alliance. Free Troops massing near Morannon, Dunland overrun by the Rangers, Dwarves and Noldo, and North Gondor rebuilt the bridges and began pushing up the pass with 40 plus war machines. At this point the DS graciously decided to concede.

Overall, a very intense game with a lot of lucky twists and turns. Lots of trash talking and taunting by all, the DS were great opponents. It was close, but as they say, the winners write the history books!

The 223 FP were: Alan Gourley (Woodmen), Greg Mickle (Northmen), John Choules (Riders), Paul Brandon (Rangers), Jakov Sekelja (Silvan), Stefan Urban (NG), Fletcher Brown (SG), Steve Prindeville (Dwarves), Peter Pankalla (Sinda), Stephan Kehrer (Noldo), John Barrett (Rhun), Miles Fagrie (Khand), Chris Marler (Corsairs)

Day Twenty-Seven:

Fell into shadow. Balrog such a prat. Had to do some quite unspeakable things before he would let me leave the caverns. Have decided not to tell the rest of Fellowship. Will make up story about having engaged in huge battle instead. Off to see Elrond to get quite unpleasant third degree burns in embarrassing places treated. Hope Elrond does not laugh at me. If he does, will tell everyone about his dirty weekend with Sauron. Ha!



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news from
Bree

My thanks to everyone who has
sent articles. I am still looking for
more though! Please try to keep
your articles to about 900 words
(or shorter), otherwise I may have
to edit you severely!

Editor: Colin Forbes,
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MEPBM Order Companion

Part 3: 525 - 690

by Brad Brunet

525 - Influence Other's Population Centre Loyalty

This is the primary offensive order of the emissary. Just as you want your loyalties high, you want your enemy's loyalties low... The effects of this order vary with emissary skill. The lower the emissary that actually pulls the order off, the lower the resulting decrease in loyalty. 50ish emissaries will be able to lower loyalty around 5 or so, over 70 emissaries get it down closer to the 15. While it's an Average order, like many other's, it's slanted a little more towards Hard - even if an emissary in their 40's was able to pull it off, the linear relationship between emissary skill and loyalty decrease makes it hardly worthwhile until you're towards your 60s or beyond. It generally isn't worth your time trying this order until your emissaries are at least in their 50's.

Once loyalty hits 15 or less, the population centre can degrade 1 level. If the 525 order lowers the loyalty (or is issued when the loyalty is already this low) to this point and beyond, the population centre may join your nation! The citizens revolt and are swayed by your smooth words of assurance and glory, etc... This is the primary offensive use of the emissary. 3 or more in their 60's and beyond (preferably in a Company!) can steal towns, or even major towns. As the game wears on, and all nations are suffering the effects of prolonged war, loyalties around the world are generally low. Stealing pop centres for free has a dramatic effect on Both you and your enemy!

530 and 535 - Improve Harbour to Port and Add Harbour to Population Centre

Why these are emissary orders, I haven't heard... Very little infrastructure is ever actually built in the game (1650 at least..), excepting population centres, fortifications, and bridges have to be replaced often. Docks are actually destroyed (to save money and prevent landings) easily 100 times more often...

550 - Improve Population Centre

The bigger the better! Larger population centres give more tax revenue, are harder to take over, and you can recruit more troops from them. Population centres are essentially the keys to the game - you want as many and as large ones as possible. Improve your camps to villages at least. Camps, while great producers, do not give tax revenue.. At 60% taxes, villages give 1500 gold, towns 3000, major towns 4500, cities 6000. Or, each improvement increases the tax revenue of your nation 1500 gold. Improving a camp to a village costs 4000, a village to a town 6000, etc. Thus, the best and cheapest way to increase tax revenue is to improve your camps to villages. Improving villages or other population centres is done after all camps are pumped up, or to create better recruiting centres.

552 and 555 - Post and Create Camp

Population centres are the keys to the game. You want as many as possible as soon as possible. It's standard practice to name at least 2 emissaries at game start and have them 555 Creating Camps until

the pop centre limit is reached. There is a finite number of pop's allowed in the game. As camps are created, it gets more difficult to do so. Similarly, climate and terrain are also camp creation modifiers. Mountains are difficult to create in, as are northerly conditions. Standard practice is to have new emissaries 520 a couple turns in the capital, and then head out creating camps everywhere they can! Hit plains/forest hexes first, and then move to rough and mountains. Emissaries (555) gain skill when they create pop centres. Army commanders can 552 Post camps, but they do not gain skill AND it costs twice as much. Most armies are too busy to be wandering the empty wastes posting camps, but it's useful to post while on your way to war, plan on it actually!

Once the limit is reached, your initial emissaries should be skilled enough (50+) to begin improving those camps to villages. Best bet is to bounce your emissaries around your camps to either raise their loyalties (order 520) or improve them to villages. A general guide to improving population centres is as follows:

Success depends on the sum of the Emissary Rank and the Loyalty. Of course, the emissary must be skilled enough to accomplish the Average order.

- to improve a camp to a village, the sum should be equal to or greater than 70
- village to a town - 90
- town to a major town - 110
- major town to a city - 130

560 and 565 - Abandon Camp and Reduce Population Centre

Another couple of orders that are very rarely, if ever, used. If you've got a pop where you are confident that it will be taken over, then on your way out it may be worthwhile to reduce it/abandon it to ensure the enemy gets as little free goodies as possible.

585 - Perceive Secrets

This will give random information regarding Victory Conditions of different nations around the world. The key use for this order is IF you are on a population centre of another nation, it may give you the capital location of that nation. Capitals get moved around during the game, so this order can track down that bugger of an enemy that scurries around and just won't die.

Agent Orders - the 600's

Agents are often considered the most fun characters, and the Cloud Lord, the agent nation supreme, is often considered the most fun nation to play.

600 - Counter Espionage

Useful when your ally who had your character Doubled (see 500 above!) advises you that he is no longer receiving reports from that character. Note: it takes an emissary to Recruit a Double Agent, it takes an Agent to ferret that spy out.

605 and 610 - Guard Location and Guard Character

Basic agent training. Guarding a location protects from gold thefts or sabotages (bridges, fortifications, product stores) while guarding a character protects against assassinations, kidnappings, or thefts of any artefacts

shelob's weB Tolkien Websites

Arms & Armour

<http://members.aol.com/gijchar/aame.htm>

A well researched essay into the arms and armour described by JRR Tolkien in the various books.

The Middle Earth Historical Re-enactment Society

<http://members.aol.com/gijchar/mehr.htm>

One of the ultimate goals of the Middle Earth Historical Reenactment Society is to recreate some of the huge battles of Middle Earth involving thousands of combatants. If it ever happens, someone tell me so I can come and watch!

Related link: The MEHRS guide book can be found at ... <http://members.aol.com/gijchar/mguide.htm>

Ancanar

<http://www.ancanar.com/>

You won't believe this one - there is an amateur film in production of some part from The Silmarillion! I don't want to even think about the legal ramifications, though perhaps if it's not for commercial release it would be ok? Having said that this is an amateur production, It's worth noting that the website is *far* from amateur, maybe Independent would have been a better description.

Anyway, this site is dedicated to the independent film "Ancanar" from directors Sam R. Balcomb and Raiya Corsiglia. Here you will find up-to-date and detailed information regarding the pre-production, shooting, and distribution of the film. As the production moves forward, pictures, clips, sounds, featurettes, trailers and more will become available. This film is being shot digitally, made with the hearts of the fans of J.R.R. Tolkien in mind. "Ancanar" is an original story, a tale set in a land of growing fear and evil, in a time awaiting the onslaught of the great storm of war.



A still from Ancanar

the guarded character is carrying. Guards reputedly are effective against agents up to double the guards rank (43 agent "guards at 86) but a failed guard will generally be injured, usually a set amount equal to the agent skill of the guy who "blew past" your guard to success. New agents generally guard until they're in their low 40's, when they are capable of stealing gold from enemy camps.

615 and 620 - Assassinate and Kidnap Character

The best reason to have agents. Generally, agents cannot perform these orders until they're in their 60's or so. Kidnapping is easier than assassinating, but one agent can only have a maximum of 3 hostages, and hostages escape, sometimes injuring their keepers! While keeping hostages is often worthwhile, it's mostly better (certainly more effective psychologically!) to just kill and kill and kill...

665-680 - Sabotage Orders

Depending on the strategic plans of you and your allies, you may prefer to blow something up instead of killing someone, especially if you find nobody to kill...may as well leave your mark! Bridges (see 475 above) are often worthwhile to destroy, as are fortifications if you intend on moving militarily against a target. If you know that your enemy is stockpiling timber to build war machines or a bridge, it may be worthwhile to try and burn their woodpile. BUT:

note the order sequence required to gather timber in order to say, replace that crucial bridge. At the end of one turn, the transport orders (947 and 948) are used to gather all the timber at the population centre. You cannot sabotage the timber this turn because it isn't there yet... Similarly, the bridge would generally get build immediately thereafter, at order 490, so there won't be any timber to burn...(but there "may" be a bridge to sabotage...).

685 - Steal Artefact

Artefacts are extremely valuable. What you can't find for yourself, someone else has already picked up somewhere, so steal it from them! Similarly, you CAN steal an artefact off of a dragon...if you give up artefacts in order to recruit a dragon, just move to the army he has joined and steal it back! Sucker!

690 - Steal Gold

Basic Agent Training Part II. Once your hit your 40's, you should be able to steal from camps. The larger the population centre, the greater it's fortifications, the higher its loyalty, the more difficult it is to steal from AND the greater the chances of getting injured! Also, you do NOT want to be relying on stealing gold to keep your economy afloat. If nothing else, you pay maintenance before this point, so stealing a million gold won't prevent bankruptcy that turn...

[To be continued ...]



From out of the West

Well, here I sit, looking at a computer screen with Clint's words ringing in my head - 'I need someone to write something for Bree!' Looks like I'm the one who was drafted. That's O.K., though - I can handle this with the same aplomb I do everything else. The only problem I can see is that my writing will be using American spellings and American turns of phrase, rather than British ones.

I know everyone's probably heard about how different the language is between the UK and the States. It's all true. When I first came over, I wanted to get a device to measure liquids for cooking. In the States, this is called a measuring cup. I know all the Americans out there are thinking 'Yes, of course. A measuring cup.' When I went out to try and buy one, however, it was a whole different ballgame (perhaps another Americanism?). I asked the first shopkeeper for a measuring cup - blank stare. I asked the second shopkeeper - same thing. I went into a third shop, looked around to make sure there were none readily apparent, and asked the shopkeeper. He looked at me like I was speaking Martian. I finally found out that, here in Britain, a measuring cup is called a measuring JUG. Oh, of COURSE no one knew what I was talking about. It's a measuring JUG. That one word is SO important in determining what it was that I was looking for.

Another thing that I had an argument about is the whole cookie/biscuit debate. In the States, it's easy. If it's small, sweet, has chocolate chips or a crème filling, it's called a cookie. End of story. But in Britain, a chocolate chip cookie is called a cookie, but pretty much everything else is called a biscuit. Apparently, they don't have what we in the States call a biscuit.

For those of you in Britain, in the States a biscuit is a bread product that is not sweet. It's kind of a cross between a crumpet and a scone - more like a scone but it's not sweet nor does it have raisins or sultanas in it. We eat them for breakfast with gravy and sausage and it is very delicious. That, to me, is a biscuit.

But according to my mates, I'm talking complete bollocks. They look at me like I am a poor deluded fool who knows not what he is talking about. And they couldn't seem to get it through their heads that a cookie is a cookie. Oh no, there are cookies and there are biscuits. They pointed at a chocolate chip number and said 'What do you call this?' 'A cookie,' I said. Then they pointed at a sandwich/custard crème and said 'What do you call this?' 'A cookie,' I said. At this point, they sighed and rolled their eyes as if to say 'He can't help it - he's AMERICAN!' Well yes, I AM American - and it's a friggin' cookie, damnit!

While I'm ranting, here's another thing. First, I am from Miami, so this whole cold weather thing is kind of new to me. So in the winter, when it's cold and I want to wash my hands, I'd like to wash with warm water. The only problem is, in Britain, they have two separate taps for the water. One is for hot, one is for cold, and never the twain shall meet. So if you want to wash your hands, it's either scalding hot water or freezing cold water. In the States, we have mastered the single tap, thank you very much. We can turn on a little hot water, a little cold water, and get WARM water. Is this such a difficult concept to grasp? I don't think so.

O.K., that's my rant for this month. Be forewarned, though, there may be more in the future. Now I'm going to go yell at everyone in the office.

Good Gaming,

Stuart

Laminated maps

We're looking to create a Laminated 1650 map with all the PCs (at game start on it) A2 size (around half the original size map). (Saves around £20 a map).

Would anyone be interested in that? It's Oystein's map (check out the website for a version of this map it is not Oystein's map which has 25 colours for the separate nations and a movement plot but should give you the idea).

I suspect it would cost around £15.00 - the more players we get the cheaper we get them and can pass that saving onto you.

We would also consider producing sheets for each nation.

- 1) Perforated paper/card so that you can rip them off and place over the map to show changes of PCs
- 2) Plain paper that you can cut up and blue-tak to (Stu can't recall the US version of this - the bits that you can stick things onto other things with which are flexible like chewing gum - "wall putty" ...) [-:]

We would produce: 1-25 nation sheets, 1 for unknown, one for DS, one for FP, one for terrain. You can just buy them from us - once again not sure what the cost would be! [-:]

We're looking into the price of these at present but I suspect that they might be too expensive.

- So I need to know who wants
- 1) Just a 1650 A2 laminated map.
 - 2) The card to go with the map.



Flagship

Bi-monthly, not-for-profit, magazine covering PBM and a wide variety of other gaming (including computer games, web gaming, tabletop roleplaying & boardgames).

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From out of the West

New ways to pay ...

In response to player requests, we have now set up three new methods of paying us: by NOCHEX, Paypal, and by direct payment into our bank account.

Direct Payments

In order to pay money directly into our account, you will need to make arrangements with your own bank. These arrangements differ between banks, so please contact your bank to find out how to do this. You will need some or all of the following information about our bank account:

Bank: The Co-Operative Bank

Sort Code:
089299

Account number:
69110627

Account name:
"Mr C Oldridge
T/A Middle
Earth PBM
Games - Payments Account"
(which can be abbreviated to "Middle Earth")

You will also be asked if you wish to provide a reference to accompany your payment. YOU MUST GIVE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND ONLY YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER! This is important, because whilst your

bank may tell you that you can have a long reference, we only see the first 6 digits of this. So if you give your name and account number, for example, we will only get to see part of your name.

If you do not give your account number, the money will not be added to your Middle Earth account until we can confirm that the payment is from you. This will take both you and us time and effort, and so we will charge an admin fee for this.

This service is free for both UK and non-UK players. We will check our account at 8am (UK time) each working day, and add funds received at that time. However, please be aware that making payments this way is not instantaneous. It can take up to 5 working days for money to be transferred between UK bank accounts, and up to 20 working days between a non-

UK bank and our account. So please take this into account when arranging payments. As normal we will only release held-back turns when we actually receive the funds, not when you make payment.

NOCHEX

In order to pay us by this method, you will need an account with NOCHEX, which can be set up free at www.nochex.com. When you have set up a NOCHEX account, you can then pay into our NOCHEX account by following the instructions on their website. To do this, you will need to enter our email address, which is me@MiddleEarthGames.com.

For UK players, there will be a 5% surcharge on

payments made to us via NOCHEX, in addition to any charges NOCHEX may make. For non-UK players, this service is free. We will check our NOCHEX account at 8am (UK time) each working day, and add funds received at that time.

Paypal

In order to pay us by this method, you will need an account with Paypal, which can be set up free at www.paypal.com. When you have set up a Paypal account, you can then pay into our Paypal account by following the instructions on their website. To do this, you will need to enter our email

address, which is me@MiddleEarthGames.com. You will be given the option of providing a reference to accompany the payment. YOU MUST GIVE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER.

For UK players, there will be a 5% surcharge on payments made to us by Paypal, in addition to any charges Paypal may make. For non-UK players, this service is free. We will check our Paypal account at 8am (UK time) each working day, and add funds received at that time.

Note that all the previous methods of payment (cheque / via WorldPay etc) still apply!

