

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



FAME
SYSTEMS
INC.
PO Box 160129 Miami, FL 33116-0129

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WORDS FROM THE WOOD

Spring has finally arrived and, with it, thoughts turn to new beginnings, budding life, and, of course, le amore. That's right, it's rutting season, where young men's thoughts turn toward . . . young women. Hormones are shooting through bodies so that guys act like total idiots, trying to impress girls who usually want nothing to do with them. Guys will wear lip stick, blush and sexy lingerie just so girls can laugh at them, destroying any sense of self worth they might have fostered. Why, I even . . . O.K., new topic.

Well, April is here and with it, GSI's anniversary. That's right, we've been in business for 15 years. That's 15 long years of providing the best in play by mail games to players over the world. And we couldn't have done it without you. At this time, we'd like to thank all of our players for your support, your encouragement and even your complaints, as that is how we get better. We've done it for 15 years--let's hope we can do it another 25!

For those of you who are receiving your turns via email, we'd like to remind you of the procedure when joining a new game. If a new game is starting and you want to receive your turns via email, YOU NEED TO LET US KNOW THIS WHEN YOU RETURN YOUR FIRST TURNSHEET!! GSI has a large number of email players and we do not assume that email players automatically want their turns returned via email. We do have some players who receive some games via email and some games via regular mail. As such, if there are no instructions on the first turnsheet (there is a page wherein this information can be provided on the first turnsheet), then the position will NOT be set up for email. So if you want email service, make sure you include a note or indicate this on your first turnsheet.

All of you should take a gander at our press release which is included in this issue. The press release details our plans for a Fourth Age scenario in Middle-earth, wherein each player gets to design their own nation. Playtest is beginning and/or has begun. GSI will keep you, the erstwhile reader, informed of when the game will be released to the general public, so stay tuned here for all of that information. Meanwhile, make sure to take a look at the press release for the changes proposed in this scenario.

Well, we announced it last month, and it looks as if it is here (almost)! The GSI ME-PBM Web page should be up and working by April 15th. This is still a bit tentative, as we are waiting for confirmation on all of the particulars, but barring any unforeseen circumstances, the page should be ready by April 15th. Included will be nation descriptions, nation sheets, reviews, strategy articles from Whispers, and a bundle of other information. I know you're asking yourself, "Well, what's the address?" Glad you asked. The Web page address is: [HTTP://WWW.GAMESYSTEMS.COM](http://WWW.GAMESYSTEMS.COM). So if you are hooked up to the information superhighway, make sure and take a gander.

Middle-earth™: The Wizards is certainly a hot commodity. We had a limited supply of the Limited edition of the game but, at this time, we are sold out. We are currently working to get some Unlimited edition cards and, as soon as we do, we will let you know we have them. If you wish to pre-order, simply drop us a line and we will take care of the rest. When we receive the cards, we will ship them to you. It's a good idea to let us know soon, as the last batch we had went fast. Interested parties are free to contact us.

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WHISPERS OF THE WOOD is a monthly publication primarily for the use and enjoyment of GSI players of STATE OF WAR and ME-PBM™. Subscription rates: \$15.00 for one year (12 issues) or \$25.00 for two years (24 issues). Individual issues cost \$1.75. GSI reserves the right to change these prices without prior notice of any type.

Credits

Editor.....Stuart Taft
Staff.....Yaman Battikhi, Frank Delarosa, Harold Ford, Michelle Heath,
Stephanie Jones, Sabrina McNeely, Anthony Vialon
Publishers.....Pete Stassun & Bill Feild Jr

Editor's Note: GSI neither confirms nor denies the accuracy of any figures or the efficiency of any strategies published herein.

This Month's Cover: "Wind Spirits" by John Kissee

Volume XIII Issue #1
Published by GAME SYSTEMS INC
April 1, 1996
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PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

Every current GSI player is entitled to a free 60 word personal in this column each issue, for each game they're in. Submissions require a \$2.00 charge for each additional set of 40 words (61-100 is \$2.00 etc.). Submissions should be in by the 15th of the month prior to the publishing date. GSI reserves the right to edit or refuse material deemed unsuitable.

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 1650

GAME 45

To my last dying breath, I defy thee.

Odagus

Last Leader of the Woodmen Nation

GAME 125

Dwar, do not ever forget, communication is a two way street. How are we to know of your dilemma if you didn't tell us? I tried to contact you but you were out. Our whole team has had this problem, more so than the Freeps. I'll rejoice when this is over, regardless of the outcome.

A Very Frustrated
Zarendarger

GAME 181

Terror filled the orc battle ring. Shields involuntarily lowered, mighty arms suddenly weak. Many fell to their knees. Many an orc maiden would go unsatisfied. Many an orc battle cry would become a high pitched scream. All knew dwarven pony riders' axes swung so much lower than men's lances.

El & The Vaders

GAME 186

"Let the games begin."
Gandria

GAME 190

Mirkwood has been cleared of Sauron's deluded minions as town after town renounces the darkness or

faces the torch. The Easterlings cannot save them, for the Dark Lieutenants fought alone too long while you focused upon Harad. Are you prepared to spend eternity attempting to re-conquer what you allowed to slip from your grasp?

Rhys, Rhudaur

GAME 195

When prey is scarce, predators often feed on each other.

Orillion Darkblade

"It is over," and Bain stood.

"What will happen?" said the young one.

"Gandalf, Galadriel and all Dwarves & Elves left shall go to the golden land till the Return of the King, then rise again against Sauron."

GAME 203

Weary with the North, the Master of the Endless Wood turns his gaze to the South and East. Gothmog, I come for you.

Beoraborn
Warlord of the Wood

GAME 205

The night came slowly. Looking out across the sea a faint glimmer of light extinguished. The dark man chewed his lip in concentration. Folding his arms across his broad chest, he sighed. "The time has come."

Darkman

GAME 209

Tarandor: Clever move allowing yourself to be captured to avoid the assassins' blades. As you've no doubt realized I'm declaring for the D.S. I was afraid it would be a short and boring game if I went Free. Keep hope alive though, Minas Arnor yet stands.

Haruth Rathmam

Free People Beware!

The arm of the Ice King is long. Why, just the other day a dwarf named Bain I wandered into the sword on the end of it.

GAME 212

Four thousand Wuss King trolls slaughtered at the ruins of Shedun, Angmar overrun with Free People. Mirkwood is now Greenwood. Free cavalry ride on the plateau of Gorgoroth. Funny, haven't heard any "mouths" of Sauron lately. Wonder why?

Hallas Trollslayer

GAME 215

Hail FP's, and those that would support their cause. Do you hear the ringin'? Do you hear the bell? You should, because the bell tolls for you. I am here to take your lives, because: Killing is my business, and business is good.

Sir Psycho

GAME 218

"Congratulations to the Free on their masterful assault on Mordor. The 'Screaming Eagles' of N. Gondor sweep past Barad Ungol to pillage Barad-Dur while 7000 Eothraim bear down from the north. Don't start jockeying for victory position yet though. It's far from over."

Urzahil

To the Dark Servants:

Your bluff has failed. The Free People are both generous and honorable. Maybe now you'll see the error of your ways.

Ovatha II Emperor of Khand
P.S. Cloud Lord, you can consider me a threat now!

GAME 219

Adûnaphel prostrated herself before her Master and with his blessing a nation was born with a lust for blood. And all was hell.

GAME 221

To All Freep,

It will only be a matter of seasons until you are all crushed beneath Sauron's heel! Flee now, while you can! Osgiliath is no place to be for the likes of you! Easterlings, hold your tongue! You ask much for what little you offer. All other neutrals, chose DS or be crushed (by battle or by blade!).

GAME 223

"Time is money... my foes have spent too much time! Old tactics cannot fool an old dog of war!"

Orillion Darkblade
Knight of Gondor

GAME 225

Dave the Wonder Chimp: Hey Bill, who do you think is gonna win this one?

Bill: Dunno Dave, too early to tell.

Dave the Wonder Chimp: Yeah, you're probably right. Hey, wanna see my pet dung beetle?

Bill: Uh... no thanks, maybe later.

GAME 228

I tire of the threats from the Vile Dark Servants. Maybe I should side with the United Gondors. Huh?!

Haruth Raman

And Dwar, the Dog Master, stretched and howled at the blood moon. Then he started the pack for the hunt. North or West. A flip of a pence...

GAME 231

Greetings Citizens,

There has been a revolution on the Bay of Belfalas. The Corsairs have a new leader and the people a new look. Look into their eyes, you have seen my people selling flowers in the airport. Beware, whoever becomes our enemies. For we serve the God of Fate.

The Prophet

P.S. Don't mess with the clergy!

Greetings Dark Servants,
"Say when."

B'racer

Spring has begun, and with it the war! Or has it? No sign of life in Úvatha to date. Of course there haven't been any signs of life in him for a thousand years so I guess it isn't that surprising... I wonder if he'll notice me sealing him up in Tol Buruth?

Rhys of the Northmen

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 2950

GAME 7

"Wake me when it's over, touch my face. Tell me every word, has been erased."

They Might Be Giants

GAME 20

Dear Northmen,

Please see attached bill with surcharge included for damages caused by Thorin II:

16,000 Gold: Destruction of Morannon/ fortifications

7,000 Gold: Destruction of Carach Angren/ fortifications

3,500 Gold: Destruction of Ashkiri

Pay now or later--Dwar

GAME 26

The tide turns in Rhun, just in time for Spring. Cloud Lord's agent corps took a big hit, 3 dead agents including Jí Indûr. Finally, relief for the Northmen. 'Twas a hard winter.

Zarendarger

Alas, Durthang was a dismal failure. No more predictions on my part, only hard facts. As it stands there are no lines. Agent and Emissary companies roam all over the land. No pop center is safe Dark or Free. Spring is upon us but who cares.

Zarendarger

GAME 28

This space for rent. Reasonable rates. Contact Huz III at 22 Rhun Road, Riavod, me, 3316-0129

Dendra Dwar deigned to join the feasting in Mirkwood. Unfortunately, he had a case of bad indigestion and will not be returning home.

Thranduil

GAME 33

Jí Indûr, Akhórahil, I salute you. Celedhring, keep trying. The rest of you must have amazing stealth, because I have seen no evidence that you're even alive.

Bard I

GAME 35

The crowd cheered as Dwar flung the lifeless smoldering "willow" into his warg-pit, the energy still crackling through his ethereal form. Just then Tonn Varthkur called challenge to Fengrin. Thunders Edge pulsed as it drank deeply of the Elven blood. The crows scattered as Warlord Bulrakur's regiment of Heavy Cavalry thundered towards the Black Gate. "No prisoners!" exclaimed Dwar.

GAME 37

Lord Vargaelas was on a routine mission. Go to Tolfalas and join navies with the forces of Captain Allurac.

As his first mate shouted, "Land ho!" he noticed an unusually large black speck on the horizon. From his vantage point the pirate in the crow's nest shouted down the words that set his blood a-boil: "A huge fleet, cap'n. Southern Gondor's, by the looks of things." Vargaelas tensed. Memories of his now dead friend Alukhor flooded his mind. He yelled, "Heave to!

Set her in close to our port, and when they come in, ATTACK!"

To be continued

Matteus I- Dread Pirate of Middle-Earth

GAME 39

Puzzling. The only good nation to be among the top three since turn five is Southern Gondor, and even it has drifted off the list. Where are the Elves? Any of you guys even care what I'm doing? Guess not...

Ovatha IV

GAME 41

Winter must be rough- no gold at Durtmang. Don't worry all you Dark Servants, we're coming to put you out of your misery--winter's gonna get rougher.

Stormbringer

P.S. Is anyone playing you?

GAME 42

Uklurg was very happy these days. He had been worried when Ren put him in charge of the armies. After all, the Gondors were powerful opponents and the Fire King's allies were busy elsewhere. After many battles though, North Gondor was crippled and South Gondor ineffectual, while the demise of Greenwood meant help would arrive. Uklurg loved his job.

GAME 48

"My Lord, all the envoys have departed and a great storm is rising."

"Tell me their offers."

"A few trinkets when we ally, but naught until then."

"Call the sea-captains and tell them to batten the hatches for we may have to weather the storm a while before we sail off to war."

"A wise decision my Lord Sangaronya."

GAME 50

Let the contest begin--only in unity will the Free Peoples prevail. To all FP-- write or call me .

S. Gondor

The flame of war will soon be carried home to the Dark Servants. Free People unite! Neutrals--we seek your favor & will aid you as needed. Together we can overcome blight upon our land.

Imrahil

Quoted from "Biography of a King"
circa 2952:

Feb. 10, 2951: "Everyone in Bree stood and stared, for here was a mere forest ranger, standing in the midst of town square. But, lo! When they looked in his hands, they beheld Narsil, the

sword that was broken, and it was reforged anew!"

Shadows cover your lands. Your souls belong to our Master--we will harvest them at will. Your freedom is false as is your sense of security. Prepare for your journey into the abyss.

Stormbringer

Looking out into the forest, Beorn sighed to himself. The army in front of him moved in precise formation, their armor glittering in the sunlight. Thinking to himself, "Will it be enough?"

On the horizon a dark storm pushes forward. "Let them come, we will be ready with swords drawn and intent true!" With that, he smiled to himself.

Histories

Strategy and Tactics: Rhudaur

by

Bradford Fisher

Lord Arfanhil stood before Broggha, Chieftain of the Westclans venting his irritation. "I tell you, we have to choose soon! We cannot remain neutral, as you seem to think we can, without getting crushed by the coming conflict!"

Broggha laughed. "Oh really? Been to the training grounds recently? I think that our forces are more than sufficient to keep our neighbors at bay."

"That," sneered Arfanhil, "is part of the problem. Or have you forgotten that soldiers have to be paid? We can ill afford the legions we have now, let alone the numbers we'll need in the coming conflict. I tell you Broggha, we're standing on the edge of a precipice, and the moment we slip there's going to be a long fall..."

Rhudaur has the misfortune of being perhaps the single-most precarious neutral position on the map. Just as Poland is the doormat of Europe, Rhudaur is the doormat of Angmar and can get stepped on by armies both coming and going. Unlike the Harad, Corsairs, and Dunlend, Rhudaur cannot be ignored

because its towns lie practically on top of the Witch-king. Unlike the Easterlings, Rhudaur does not have a core of relatively secure population centers to rely upon should things go badly. Thus, Rhudaur walks upon a diplomatic tightrope, and every turn of its precarious neutrality will have you sweating bullets. You must communicate with both sides if Rhudaur is to survive, and be very careful in what you say--any slip is likely to result in your getting attacked. Therefore, this article focuses first upon the player-to-player communications, not the other way around, or your kingdom is going to get reduced to smoldering wreckage. As the set-up warns, you truly are between the anvil and the hammer.

A diplomatic nightmare:

1) War in Angmar (Arthedain and Cardolan): The armies of Arthedain and Cardolan are going to strike against the Witch-king, and it is a short jaunt from there into Rhudaur itself. How do you know that they won't turn against you to remove a potential threat? Unlike the Witch-king, the Free can make short work of your lightly-fortified population centers should they choose to do so. Nor are the Free going to like watching the huge Rhudaurian armies sitting idly by, circling like vultures while the war rages. Pressure is going get exerted on you to join in, and you can't wait too long! Should you wish to join the Dark Servants, you must intervene before the Witch-king loses any of his initial Major Towns or you will be joining him on the chopping block shortly thereafter. Should you wish to join the Free, you need to strike against Angmar to get a share in the spoils.

2) War in Angmar. (Witch-king): A completely separate problem is the armies of the Witch-king. Don't kid yourself about how mighty your starting armies are. The forces of the Witch-king are every bit as powerful at the game's start, and his characters and artifacts are far, far superior. He's going to have dragons, he can turn your characters into hamburger in any challenge, and he can destroy your towns and major towns far more easily than you can his. It is not unheard of (though in my opinion a mistake) for the Witch-king to march on a neutral Rhudaur. Don't let this happen! You and he can ill afford to battle each other. His armies can easily get destroyed in the process of reducing half of your realm to a smoldering wreckage, armies he needs to battle the Free. Do not get into a war with the Witch-king while you're neutral! On the other hand, you don't want his armies sitting at home, either. Promise not to attack him while neutral, and keep this promise. You want to see the Witch-king battling Arthedain and Cardolan on their soil, not on his. This keeps all armies involved away from Rhudaur, and temporarily solves diplomatic problems #1 and #2. This in turn allows you to delay your decision as to which side to join and will allow you jump in to subjugate Eridor or destroy Angmar as you see fit. When Free armies begin battling in Angmar, it's a sure sign that you're going to begin feeling the pressure to declare.

3) Bribery (Both sides, but generally the Witch-king): It's quite possible that there is going to be some straightforward "Join us and we'll give you X" going on. I strongly advise against conditioning your joining a side based on bribes. First, it'll irritate whoever gives it to you, and your diplomatic headaches are great enough without intensifying them. On the Free side of things, the Free have enough to do without wasting orders giving you things, for these are orders that could be better used destroying Angmar, increasing your security. ("Gee, my army would have been there to shield your capital but I had to transfer that artifact to you..." On the Dark Servant side of things, NEVER accept a bribe

from the Witch-king (unless, of course, he is completely incompetent and thus will be of no help anyway). He has enough to do without being bothered by greedy neutrals making him waste orders. Furthermore, any artifacts he transfers you will just undermine his own security, and hasten his destruction. (Remember what I said about your head going on the chopping block shortly after the Witch-king falls if you go evil?) The Witch-king characters are also less likely to be lost than yours, preserving those artifacts for the Dark Servant team.

If the Dark Servants want to bribe you, (and you are going to join them) I'd suggest two. First, demand that the Cloud Lord send two agents up to help immediately, and get that promise in blood. The Dark Servants might ignore the pleadings of assistance from the Witch-king, but you and he together might be able to get them to send direct aid (if they haven't already). The other "bribe" you'll want is a town (which you'll upgrade) or a major town in Mordor. Aside from financial support, it'll give you a retreat should things go badly.

4) Imladris (Noldo): Yet another source of trouble is Imladris at 2209. The Noldo have an army there, and you can assume that they're going to be raising troops there every turn. Those troops cannot march to war against the Witch-king without cutting across your territory, interfering in the Free's war against Angmar. The major town itself provides a temptation for your armies, particularly if the Dark Servants reveal it for you, and you're not going to like staring at that Free icon every turn. "What if it marches on me?" (See #1). This is a problem best ignored. Do not attack it while you are neutral, and do not allow the Noldo army there to march across your territory. If you declare for the Dark Servants, you can assault it easily enough then. If you declare for the Free, you're going to want a large army to be there to help you against the Witch-king. Either way, don't screw around with it, and promise the Noldo not to mess with it even if it gets revealed while you are undeclared. Keep this promise.

5) Goblin Gate (Dragon Lord): Like Imladris, this is a problem best ignored until you declare. You can't really affect it as long as Imladris is in the way, so why worry about it? You can send troops to support it or take them...

6) The Army of Khazad-dum (Dwarves): Ever hear of the expression, "Better him than me?" It applies here. You want the Dwarves to march east from 2211. If you join the Dark Servants, you'll have a short life span if he hasn't marched east by the time you declare, for you can be easily crushed by the Dwarves. Keep in mind that if the Dwarves march on Goblin Gate they can easily go into Rhudaur next if they haven't already turned back into Mirkwood; and you'll need a large army to face them. If you join the Free, you'll want him to march east to crush the Dragon Lord anyway. Either way, you don't want to fight it and you want him pounding the Dragon Lord (sorry Khamul!). As a side note, I'd pretty much stake out a claim to the entire area between the rivers south of Rhudaur for camp placement, and I'd stand firm on this against the Free (probably the Dwarves) and Dunlend. The Dwarves can easily place camps out west by the Noldo, and Dunlend has tons of hexes crying out for camps. You don't, and putting them within easy access of Arthedain and the Witch-king isn't particularly appealing.

7) The Ruins of 1609: Someone is going to put a camp here, and it isn't going to you (at least while you're neutral). True, it would be nice to have a camp here, but it'll cause far more trouble than it's worth. Arthedain isn't going to like seeing anything preventing him from marching on you if you decide to go

evil, and he's going to block the road against the Witch-king. It isn't worth it to aggravate any tensions between you and the Free by trying to get a camp there. (If you are declaring for the Dark Servants and there isn't one there yet, then by all means, put one down. It'll give you one turn's notice before the Free can assault your home areas.)

8) Dunlendings: A neutral Dunlend. Wouldn't it be nice to go the same way as them? Shouldn't you discuss which way you're going to declare with him? Absolutely not. Tell him that you're not sure which way you're going to declare, that you're not leaning either way, and that you haven't decided yet. Your position is entirely too tenuous to risk either side getting a whiff of which way you're going to declare prematurely. If the wrong side hears which way you're leaning, all of your diplomatic headaches are going to get far worse than they already are (if they don't just destroy you.) On the other hand, don't blab to either side which way he is leaning either; Neutrals should stick together...

9) Your armies: Your last, and probably worst, diplomatic problem is your armies. As things stand at the game's start, you cannot afford them and have probably three turns before you exhaust your gold reserves. Additionally, your armies are large and capable of doing a fair amount of damage to either side if you use them quickly. Hence, your economy and your desire for quick military gain are going to tempt you into leaping into the fray quickly. This is a bad idea. Don't let greed get in the way of a considered decision. Do not attempt to conquer your neighbors until you have declared and have reached a decision as to which way you want to go after careful thought. If you attack the Witch-king immediately, he'll burn several of your population centers because you won't have enough support from the Free yet. If you attack Cardolan or Arthedain "instantly" it is unlikely you'll really be ready for them. You'll take (maybe) a town or two, then get thrown back. Then all those armies...the Dwarves, Imladris, and anyone else the Free has, will devote their full attention to crushing you (as the easier target) before you are ready for them. Remember, you've got a road right down the middle of your nation and lightly fortified towns sitting in the center of the easily reachable plains. Attacking a neutral Dunlend is also a bad idea. First, he might declare just before you smash him, earning you the hatred of his new allies. Second, he may declare the same way you intend to, and you'll have antagonized or eliminated an ally. You also cannot hold any population centers you take from Dunlend unless the Free let you hold them.

So if attacking anyone early on is a bad idea, what do you do with those armies? How can you afford them? There is no easy answer. I see two possibilities besides an immediate assault against your neighbors (addressed above). First, you can raise your taxes, with the obvious results and consequences. This will ease the pressure on your economy while you decide which side to support. The other possibility is to disband most of the troops and then massively raise them again shortly before you declare.

The option of disbanding troops requires careful play. First, do not tell anyone that you've done this, unless you want to encourage an attack. Second, do not disband everything! Keep "shadow" armies moving around on your map, and keep some of your men-at-arms to inflate the apparent size of these armies. This is the tactic I used in game 190, disbanding all but the heavy calvary and a few hundred heavy infantry and men-at-arms (saving some 13,000 gold per turn for a total of 78,000 gold by the time I declared... money I was able to pour into camps and characters). Though the savings are considerable, a word for the wise: This particular tack is extremely dangerous. It leaves you wide open for an

assault by either side, and requires a turn or two to "gear up" before you pick a side. Whatever you decide to do to deal with your armies, be careful! You cannot repulse an assault from either side without taking massive damage, so keep your ear to the ground and stay on good terms with your neighbors.

Diplomatic Conclusions: Make no mistake--your survival as a neutral depends upon your diplomatic skills, not upon any level of brilliant strategy play. Your sole goal diplomatically should be to keep Rhudaur intact, and avoid getting dragged into the conflict between Angmar and the Free until you are ready to declare. Keep silent on your intentions until your mind is made up. Be friendly and helpful to those around you--both the Free and the Witch-king--until you declare. If you get dragged in early (before you are ready), things will not go nearly as well.

A couple of general pointers: First, the instant a non-Rhudaorian army appears upon any of your population centers, you must pick a side and declare immediately, preferably against the cretin who marched on you. Make it clear to both sides (in a friendly way) that you will declare if marched on, that you know what you're doing (if you don't, learn fast), and that you don't intend to make them wait "forever" while you make up your mind. You should declare by turn 10 regardless, but circumstances can easily hasten the need for your decision.

Second, you must declare before the Witch-king is beaten, whichever side you choose. If you join the Free, you must join in (don't try it alone) before he is broken to get a share of the spoils. If you join the Dark Servants, you must declare before the Free take any of the Witch-king major towns, and intervene in a massive assault against the Free home areas (and send the Witch-king support in Angmar). This requires careful timing to decide when you "must" declare. If the Witch-king is fighting in Arthedain, you still have time. If Free armies are pouring into Angmar without equally strong Witch-king armies to fight them (don't forget dragons!) it's definitely time.

Third, don't get greedy. Don't pick a side because of bribes... it'll come back to haunt you.

Tactical and Strategic Moves:

Neutral Rhudaur: Obviously while you're still neutral, there is very little to worry about militarily except not scaring either side by moving your armies around too much. Create and train characters, particularly command/agents, downgrade some relations, and throw a few camps in the hills. If you're preparing to join the Free, throw some camps out west. If you're preparing to join the Dark Servants, send an emissary to Mordor to throw camps there where they'll be safe. (Don't try putting camps in the Misty Mountains until after you declare). Either way you plan to declare, consider fortifying your major towns. Definitely raise troops shortly before you leap into the war, you'll need them!

Dark Servants Rhudaur: It goes without saying that you should immediately try to sway Dunlend to your side. If he has joined the Free already (or does so later), divert an army to try to knock him out of the war as he has a sole major town within easy reach. You'll need to raise troops at both major towns and at least one of your towns every turn, as well as recruiting some dragons. One force should be sent to smash Imladris and de-fang the Noldo while everything else gets hurled against Arthedain. Intercept, delay, and destroy the enemy armies before they reach Rhudaur or you're doomed. Work closely with the Witch-king and pray he is competent, for you will become the main Free target the instant you declare. Unlike the Witch-king, your major towns are

easily reachable and lightly fortified. If you and the Witch-king are good, you may be able to hold Arthedain, Cardolan, Noldo, and the Dwarves at bay for some time. Concentrate on wiping out Arthedain, for unless you can eliminate one of your foes (or the Free screw up) you're trying to cheat fate. Keep waves of armies pouring out of Rhudaur, and remember that the longer you hold out, the longer you prevent the Free in the west from assisting North Gondor, the Woodmen, and the Sinda. Naturally you'll want to set up a retreat of some kind in Mordor on the side while the war rages...

Free Peoples' Rhudaur: First, unless you are prepared to turn a good portion of your realm into cannon fodder, do not fight the Witch-king alone. (For that matter, don't declare Free until you have direct military support in Angmar.) Your first goal should be to capture 1907 and 1906, and burn 2006. The fortifications at 1907 and 1906 will shield and delay Witch-king armies attempting to attack Rhudaur. Do not capture or hold any Witch-king population centers in the mountains. Burn them and remove the fortifications. Anything left in the mountains will eventually be turned into a forward base for the Dark Servants, once their emissaries are good enough to influence them away. Then you'll have to go back to burn them like you should have in the first place.

A Free Rhudaur needs to destroy the Witch-king (and any Dark Servants Dunlend) as quickly as possible so that it may begin pouring military support into Mirkwood and North Gondor for use against the Dark Servants coming out of Mordor. You cannot afford to crush the Witch-king and become complacent any more than Arthedain, Cardolan, or the Noldo can, or the Free will lose. Set up a base in Mirkwood or North Gondor and begin raising forces close to the front.

Finally, you will need to think about improving your relations with the Noldo, Arthedain, and Cardolan or your forces will get in each other's way. Additionally, improving relations with the Noldo will release the Noldo to march across Rhudaur out of Imladris without getting stuck in your fortifications, increasing the pressure on the Witch-king.

"So we are agreed?" asked Broggha.

Arfanhil nodded. "Yes. I'll give the necessary instructions." Arfanhil left.

Broggha rose and walked to the northwest window. He was silent for a moment, staring first north, then west. shaking his head, he muttered softly to himself. "May we live to see the dawn..."

Press Release

GSI is pleased to announce that it plans to begin playtesting its newest Middle-earth PBM scenario, Middle-earth PBM Fourth Age, circa 1000, on April 1, 1996 (our 15th year anniversary!).

GSI is now accepting inquiries with regard to players (former and current) that are interested in playing in one of the playtest games. GSI plans on running at least two games via email (1-week turnaround), starting as soon after 4/1/96 as possible. All players will need to be able to accept our PDF (Adobe Acrobat) files in order to participate. Contact our office via email if you are not already receiving ME-PBM via email or have any questions in this regard.

The Middle-earth PBM Fourth Age, circa 1000 scenario will offer players some very interesting and much-requested options. The premise is that the Reunited Kingdom (the realm established by King Elessar at the end of the Third Age) has split into the "Twin Kingdoms" - a North Kingdom and a South Kingdom (see sample timeline at end). Other fledgling Mannish nations (realms) are on the rise to contest the power and rule of these kingdoms, and isolated pockets of Elves and Dwarves (Free Peoples), and even enclaves of Orcs and Trolls (Dark Servants) could come forth to challenge the 1000 year rule of Men. Most Mannish nations (including the Kingdoms) will want to consider themselves Neutral at game start, but they are free to select any allegiance at the start that they wish.

Thus, the game will allow for two players to each independently control one of the two Twin Kingdoms, and 23 other players to assume control of unspecified nations/realms. The 23 players would be allowed to define most aspects of their nations (including the nation's name and desired special nation abilities), population centers, armies and characters - including selection of their homeland on the map. The two Kingdoms will be more restrictive in their setup, but some freedom will also be allowed in their respective setups. Players will have points to spend toward the design of the various aspects of their nations, with unused points being added as gold to their starting reserves.

Magic will be somewhat less restrictive than found in the first two scenarios. Because the presence of Sauron, Gandalf, Elrond, etc. effectively justified this restriction in the first two scenarios, and there is no such presence in the Fourth Age, then it seems reasonable that more magic would be used. This will be particularly important since all artifact numbers will be scrambled (differently for each game) and players will know few, if any, of those numbers at game start. Only artifact research will reveal this information. Some new artifacts will be present also as the One Ring and other artifacts were lost to Middle-earth after the Third Age.

Another important restriction of the first two scenarios will be eliminated in this scenario - namely, that no nation of the same allegiance was able to militarily attack each other. Because the presence of Sauron, Gandalf, Elrond, etc. effectively justified this restriction in the first two scenarios, and there is no such presence in the Fourth Age, then it seems reasonable to allow players the same latitude that today's nations share in this regard.

Furthermore, since the allegiance (Good, Evil, Neutral) of today's nations is typically dependent on one's perspective and the leader at the time, it seems reasonable to allow the Twin Kingdoms the same flexibility and allow them to choose a course of Good or Evil as well. In such a context, the Free Peoples are viewed more as peoples that wish to see the return to the days prior to the dawning of the Fourth Age (where Men were simply one race (among many) occupying Middle-earth), and the Dark Servants as those wishing to see complete domination (Mannish or otherwise) - preferably by their own nation!

The goal of the game (victory conditions for game end) will also be different from the first two scenarios - without the One Ring and with no clearly defined allegiances, this also makes sense. The goal of the 23 nations will be to see to the weakening of the two major powers - the Twin Kingdoms - and see that their allegiance emerges above all others. This goal will be complicated by the fact that many nations will need the help of the Twin Kingdoms (who uniquely will be able to build roads, manipulate the market, etc.) in order to ensure that their allegiance gains the upper hand...at the right time. Thus the immediate demise of the Twin Kingdoms will not always be desired. The goal of the Twin Kingdoms will be to survive - the longer they do so, the greater their

chances for victory. Thus, the victory points for the Twin Kingdoms (if they remain Neutral) will be determined by the number of turns they survive, rather than the conventional method, which will apply to all other nations and a Twin Kingdom that chooses an allegiance. In any case, all games will end on turn 52 if they do not end sooner! Furthermore, the Neutral allegiance will now be able to win the game too!

Players should be aware that these games will be playtest games and as such are not open to game reviews for general publication (magazines, email, etc.).

- F.A. 1 The Eldar begin to depart
- F.A. 2-32 The Eldar abandon the Tower Hills and the surrounding locales
- F.A. 6 Shire is made a Free Land, under protection of the Northern Sceptre
- F.A. 6 Rebuilding of Annúminas
- F.A. 63 King of Rohan passes away
- F.A. 100 Moria still abandoned
- F.A. 120 King Elessar (Aragorn II) passes away
- F.A. 300-500 The Men of the West establish major overland trade links with the East
- F.A. 400-450 Relmether (H-17) rises in economic power
- F.A. 432-864 Last Eldar migration through Lindon. Avari supplant the Eldar
- F.A. 440 Relerindú is declared a Free Port and the chief trading center
- F.A. 700 Nûriags sack Relerindú (?)
- F.A. 701-712 The First River War. The Variag-Nûriag-Nurniag alliance conquers the Chey lands and all of eastern Rhûn
- F.A. 750 The Lords of Umbar declare the waters off the Harad Coast as the Umbarean Sea. The kingdom of Gondor faces an economic crisis
- F.A. 752-775 The Sail War. The Kingdom of Gondor struggles against the Umbareans. The Haradrim side with both. Gondor prevails, but the conflict divides the North and South Kingdom
- F.A. 783-800 The Second River War. The Variag-Nûriag-Nurniag alliance is abandoned as civil war rages across central Endor.
- F.A. 800-1000 Great mannish migrations create turmoil throughout Endor
- F.A. 1000 The Men of Enedhiath, Minhiriath, and Eregion declare themselves independent
- F.A. 1001-1020 Arthedain is reestablished as the North Kingdom disintegrates. Shire is still Free Land

(CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

Some game needs for those who are looking for a new adventure--we currently have a 1650 grudge game looking for a Free People team to fill it out. If those with the Light in their heart are interested, let us know. We are also filling all email games in both 1650 and 2950, so those of you looking for fast paced action can sign up. Finally, we have a 1650 3 week game which is about half filled and a new 2950 3 week game which is filling. This is right up the alley for those players desiring a slower pace. So get those new requests in!

That's it for this month--we'll see you in thirty!

Stuart

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #45 - The Dark Servants: #14, #17 & #19

The heat from Mt. Doom was oppressive and seemed to actively pursue Shoglic as he made his way to the Crack of Doom. In his sweating palm he held the one item that everyone in Middle-earth wanted, in one form or another. He was here to return the One Ring to his Master, Sauron. Once the Lidless Eye had the ring, no one could stand before him. It was a moment that Shoglic anticipated with great fervor.

The Crack of Doom appeared in front of him, smoke rising in the orange haze cast by the molten rock of the Crack. The walls seemed to pulse with anticipation, as if they knew what it was that Shoglic held. Approaching the Crack, Shoglic knelt and held up the Ring in both hands.

"Master," shouted Shoglic, "I have here that which you most desire. I return it to you so that your glory may reign over the land forevermore. In your Dark Name I hand over the Ring so that You will be the supreme power in Middle-earth. Take this gift from this humble messenger."

Suddenly the Ring disappeared from Shoglic's hands and a keening howl was heard through the chamber. There was a great roar and the mountain shook to its very core. The land for miles around trembled as great fissures divided the plains and dark thunderclouds approached. Great fires leaped from the summit, lightning crackled through the skies, and heavy rains fell. Suddenly the minions of the Dark Lord cried in ecstasy as their Master began his rule in earnest! Final Standings are as follows:

#14 Cloud Lord: 2500

#17 Quiet Avenger: 2183

#19 Long Rider: 1942

Top Free Peoples - #1 Woodmen: 1533

Special Note: This game lasted for 92 turns! Good play, guys!

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Ulric/Cloud Lord: 231

Highest Net Commander Rank - Ulric/Cloud Lord: 190

Highest Net Mage Rank - Durbek Htron/Quiet Avenger: 197

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Alwyn/Cloud Lord: 120

Highest Net Agent - Qt Ont/Ice King: 151

Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 11924

Most Artifacts - Ice King: 29

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 68

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #170 - The Dark Servants: #22, #14 & #20

Haruth Ramam stood before the gathered Council and smiled. Here were all of the Servants who ruled in Sauron's name, and he was supreme among them. His advisors had doubted the decision to throw their lot in with the Dark Lord, but now they sang his praises. He looked at Jí Indûr and at Úrzahil, the two Dark Servants who had contributed most to the victory. They were among the original Nazgûl, given power and command by Sauron himself. But it was Haruth who now ruled them. Haruth, who, without Nazgûl powers, had risen to ascendancy and now was the dominant force in Middle-earth. Life was ironic, but Haruth was not one to question its outcome--especially when he was on top. Final Standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith: 1833

#14 Cloud Lord: 1783

#20 Dark Lieutenants: 1608

Top Free People: #23 Dunlendings: 1267

(continued)

The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Klavs Von Dûm/Cloud Lord: 209

Highest Net Commander Rank - Klavs Von Dûm/Cloud Lord: 177

Highest Net Mage Rank - Mûrazôr/Witch-King: 131

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Muranog/Dark Lieutenants: 115

Highest Net Agent - Gontran/Cloud Lord: 139

Most Mithril - Dark Lieutenants: 2064

Most Artifacts - Cloud Lord: 27

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 59

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #189 - The Dark Servants: #17, #19 & #18

Báin I ran, his pumping legs and laboring lungs fighting to keep his body moving. Sparing a glance behind him, he saw Adûnaphel, leader of the Dark Servants, leading the riders who chased after him. The sibilant whisper she issued to those who rode with her carried to Báin's ears: "Bring him, but bring him alive."

A break in the hills appeared before him. If he could make it to that pass, he would be able to lose his pursuers in the catacombs his brethren forged beneath the hills. Suddenly, a troop broke from the defile. Báin's heart sank, for at the head of the riders was Úvatha, the second of the Nazgûl, and Ren the Unclean, the third. It did not bode well. Báin slowed and then stopped, pulling a dagger from his belt. He had only one clear choice; to be held by the Nazgûl was not an option. Kneeling in the dirt, he offered his prayers to Aulë as he prepared to meet his maker. Final Standings are as follows:

#17 Quiet Avenger: 1825

#19 Cloud Lord: 1792

#18 Dark Lieutenants: 1550

Top Free Peoples: #8 Dwarves: 825

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Dendra Dwar/Dog Lord: 200

Highest Net Commander Rank - Bulrakur/Dog Lord: 143

Highest Net Mage Rank - Morlammen/Long Rider: 159

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Nealan/Long Rider: 116

Highest Net Agent - Din Ohtar/Long Rider: 163

Most Mithril - Dwarves: 572

Most Artifacts - Long Rider: 20

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 26

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #192 - The Dark Servants: #22, #23 & #25

Hallas stood before the dais, his hands and feet shackled in heavy iron. On the dais sat Haruth Ramam, Enion and Ovatha II, the leaders of the Dark Servant coalition. The irony was not lost on the Cardolan leader. Those who now controlled his fate started neutral in this conflict, and could have been recruited to their cause. It was not to be.

Haruth spoke to Hallas. "For your crimes against our Lord, your lands are forfeit, your people are to be made slaves for our leaders, and you shall be made an example, so that other 'brave souls' will know exactly what will happen should they decide to rebel against us. Know, Hallas, that you shall die an extremely painful, extremely long death, with no respite, no hope and no mercy." With that, the leader of the dreaded Haradwaith smiled malevolently and nodded to his executioner. Final Standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith: 1800

#23 Dunlendings: 1700

#25 Easterlings: 1467

Top Free People: #5 Cardolan: 1267

(continued)

The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 228
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 120
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 180
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants Roheryn/Haradwaith: 88
Highest Net Agent - Reaver of Souls/Ice King : 120
Most Mithril - Dog Lord: 330
Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 17
Most Kills - Long Rider: 8
Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #193 - The Dark Servants: #19, #17 & #21

An ear splitting howl rose from the dungeon, one that was as balm to the ears of Úvatha. The thorn in his side had finally been removed, and he planned on doubling the pain he received. Elrond and Enion, those two leaders who held him from his prize, were now being attended to by, among others, Din Ohtar. Din was very good at his work, as evidenced by the shrieks coming from under the Keep.

Addnaphel sat lazily on a chair, loosely holding a goblet of wine, while Angamaitë threw a dagger at the back of a chair. They were given instructions to wait in Úvatha's audience chamber for a message from their Master. Úvatha was anticipating this moment with great enthusiasm. To be the first among the Servants at the end of the war--it's what they all worked for and what only he achieved. Suddenly there was a great shadow, a dank chill filled the room, and a sussurating, cracked voice emanated from the dais at the front of the hall.

"Come, my children, and let us begin our celebration . . . "

Final Standings are as follows:

#19 Long Rider: 2083
#17 Quiet Avenger: 1967
#21 Corsairs: 1875
Top Free Peoples: #10: Noldo Elves: 850

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Malezar/Quiet Avenger: 182
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 152
Highest Net Mage Rank - Kaygan/Blind Sorcerer: 165
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Frans/Long Rider: 113
Highest Net Agent - Kenji/Cloud Lord: 137
Most Mithril - Dwarves: 1230
Most Artifacts - Quiet Avenger: 19
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 15
Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #220 - The Free Peoples: #7, #21 & #22

The Free Peoples, led by Celdrahil, Angamaitë and Haruth Ramam, have finally cleansed the land from the blight of Sauron. The Lidless Eye watches no more in Middle-earth, his sight blinded by the Light and the will of the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. These proud nations now begin the process of rebuilding the land in their image. Final Standings are as follows:

#7 Southern Gondor: 1800
#21 Corsairs: 1450
#22 Haradwaith: 1284
Top Dark Servant: #14 Cloud Lord: 600

(continued)

The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 244
Highest Net Commander Rank - Ashdurbuk Zalg/Witch-King: 101
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 180
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Turin/Southern Gondor: 83
Highest Net Agent - Din Ohtar/Long Rider: 104
Most Mithril - Southern Gondor/Haradwaith: 180
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 25
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 5
Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

Game #7 - The Free Peoples: #4, #9 & #10

Aragorn, Galadriel and Elrond met in a small glade of woods near the Rangers' homeland. They had driven most of the Forces of Sauron from the world and all that was left was to insure that the Lidless Eye would never return. Standing together, they bowed their heads and started an ancient chant, one not heard for Ages. They had one purpose here today--bring back the Light of Illuin and Ormal, so that the song of Eru could continue without pause or discord from Sauron.

They fought bravely and valiantly against the Dark Servants, forcing their enemies to turn tail and flee into the farthest reaches of the land. Sauron was not so easily driven out, though, and they came upon this plan to bring the Light to every corner of Middle-earth. When done, they would be free, truly Free from Sauron's taint. All they had to do was sing . . .

Final Standings are as follows:

#4 Dúnadan Rangers: 2400
#9 Sinda Elves: 2150
#10 Noldo Elves: 1800
Top Dark Servant: #25 Khand Easterlings: 1425

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Ringlin/Silvan Elves: 236
Highest Net Commander Rank - Meneldir II/Dúnadan Rangers: 162
Highest Net Mage Rank - Ringlin/Silvan Elves: 236
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Shampoo/Silvan Elves: 127
Highest Net Agent - Danite/Noldo Elves: 112
Most Mithril - Dúnadan Rangers: 926
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 31
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 7
Congratulations to the Free Peoples!