

## SYSTEMS AND TECHNIQUES

**"FRODO, TAKE A LETTER . . ."****Play by Mail as an Enhancement of War of the Ring**

by David A. Smith

We rarely run PBM articles in *MOVES*. It's a fairly limited interest group which becomes further limited by the particular game being treated. Nevertheless, I like to run against my own prejudices (and yours) to keep myself fresh. In some respects it's surprising that so few (less than 5%) of the active gamers do play by mail. Consider how thin on the ground the US gaming population is and how vast the nation. Perhaps it's a matter of not being properly introduced and the trend away from formal written communication that keeps PBM participation so low — RAS

SPI's *War of the Ring* has already been the subject of a great deal of analysis and discussion. Smith's article in *MOVES* 39 dealt with strategy and tactics, and suggested Optional Rules to restore play-balance within the over-the-board framework. Crandall's piece in *MOVES* 40 underscored the distortions perfect intelligence placed upon the game.

*War of the Ring* will never be able to duplicate the action in the Tolkien's novels; it will never be possible for the Fellowship to achieve the grand strategic surprise it obtained in the book. However, it is possible to restore to the game the sense of uncertainty that so influenced the outcome.

One path toward limited intelligence leads, interestingly enough, through the morass of Play By Mail ("PBM"). For in a PBM game, a referee is introduced: the Gamesmaster.

Not only can the Gamesmaster regulate the information provided to each Player, thus producing limited intelligence, but the logistics of a PBM game require that Players write orders which are then executed, by the Gamesmaster, simultaneously and without on-the-spot correction by the Players. Thus PBM restores both Limited Intelligence and Command Control problems to the Players.

What follows is an attempt (1) to provide a workable PBM system; (2) to incorporate in this system limited intelligence procedures which more accurately reflect the real situation in Middle Earth; (3) to take advantage of the logistical requirements of PBM to implement a more accurate, more balanced command structure.

**Rules Changes**

**[1.0] Players; Optional Rules.** Four people are required: three Players and a Gamesmaster. The three-player Campaign Game with Optional Rules as outlined in *MOVES* 39 is the only format really

suited to these PBM rules. The PBM rules modify, supplement, and in some cases supersede, the over-the-board rules, as detailed below.

**[2.0] Sequence of Play.** Play consists of four basic segments. In the first three, Players communicate with the Gamesmaster and each other; each of these three segments is terminated by a mailing. At the conclusion of the first three segments, the Gamesmaster alone performs the fourth segment, which consists of implementing all orders written and updating all necessary game bookkeeping. Play then proceeds to the next turn.

The Gamesmaster is responsible for reconciling Escapes, Ring Phase results (including attempts to take off the Ring), and the allegiance of Gollum. All of these activities are performed by the gamesmaster at the beginning of the Game-Turn and the results are communicated to the Players as part of the Underlings Reports. Note that in order to perform any of these activities the Gamesmaster must be carrying out Orders written by the Players (see Section 8.0).

The PBM play sequence is as follows:

- A. INFORMATION PHASE
  1. Underlings Reports
  2. Events Cards
  3. Search Results; Ring Phase Results
  4. Rumors
- B. NEGOTIATION PHASE
- C. ORDERS PHASE
- D. RECONCILIATION PHASE (Gamesmaster only)

**[3.0] General Summary of Play.** In the Information Phase, the Gamesmaster mails to each of the Players a summary of the information available to that Player. On the basis of this information, Players communicate directly among themselves in the Negotiation Phase. At the conclusion of the Negotiation Phase, each Player mails his Orders to the Gamesmaster for the Game-Turn, in accordance with the rules for Orders. The Gamesmaster then carries out the Orders and resolves the action; and play proceeds to the next turn.

**[4.0] Variations From Standard SPI Three-Player Games.** In order to accommodate PBM, Command Control, and Limited Intelligence, the following aspects of the "standard" over-the-board three-player game have been either amended or changed:

**Movement.** Now governed by Orders; generally speaking, movement orders also determine potential combat which may occur.

**Search.** The procedure is somewhat different; also the information reported changes.

**Shadow Points.** Eliminated entirely as a concept and replaced with Command Points (a much broader method which applies to all Players, not just Sauron).

**Location.** Players no longer have perfect intelligence; information received may be approximate, incomplete, or false, depending upon the source and the method by which the information was obtained.

**New Characters.** Several characters omitted from the over-the-board game are restored in the PBM version.

**[5.0] New Terms.** Some of the new terms introduced later in these specifications are:

**Force.** A stack of Characters of Armies controlled by one Player. Generally there is no crossover: a stack containing both Armies and Characters is usually considered two Forces.

**Command Point.** Unit of Command Control; 100 per Player per Game-Turn.

**Movement Mode.** Describes type of activity a force is performing. Also usually indicates attitude toward potential combat.

**Spotting; Spotting Radius.** Refers to the ability of armies and characters to be aware of each other's presence. The Spotting Radius defines the maximum distance across which the Spotter can locate the force being Spotted. Varies with size (armies) and race of Spotter and target (characters).

**Rumor.** Information received from local peasantry. Not reliable, but occasionally accurate.

**[6.0] Information Phase.** In this Phase, the Gamesmaster reports to each of the Players and sets the Deadline for the receipt of Orders. The information is provided according to the following specifications.

**[6.1] Underlings Reports.** The results of all previous Orders are reported. The Gamesmaster reports the actual hexes traversed by any moving force, any information on Enemy forces which it gathered, and any conditional orders which were executed. If Combat took place, the Gamesmaster reports the number of Friendly and Enemy killed (but *not* the size of the Enemy force), and any changes as a result of combat (captures of Magic items, retreats, reduction of citadels). The Gamesmaster then provides a summary of the current position, strength and Movement Modes of all Friendly forces. The Gamesmaster also reports to the Players on the status of any Enemy Armies or Characters located by Friendly forces (see Case 6.1.2 below). Rumors (see Case 6.1.3) are reported to the Players. The Gamesmaster informs each Player of the Event Card he has drawn. The Player controlling the Ringbearer is informed of the results of the Ring Phase. The Dark Power and Saruman Players are informed of the results of Searches for the current turn and the Search card drawn for the next turn (see Case 6.3). The Gamesmaster also relays any information or objects he has been directed to give a Player by any other Player (see Case 7.0).

**[6.1.1] Results of Previous Orders; Status of Friendly Armies.** For each Friendly force, the

Gamesmaster reports the hexes it traversed, any changes in Movement Mode, and any additional information which may have been obtained by the force as it moved (e.g. combats which occurred). For each Friendly force, the Gamesmaster also reports the *exact* composition of any Enemy force in the same hex. (**Note:** This is the only time a Player will ever receive perfect information concerning an Enemy force.) Sauron is informed of the death of any Servant of Sauron (although *not* the hex occupied by that Servant).

[6.1.2] **Enemy Forces Spotted.** In the Tolkien novels, none of the participants had perfect information, and almost every major decision was made by the characters in light of information they *knew* was incomplete. In the PBM game, a Player has no knowledge of the location of Enemy forces (Characters and Armies) *unless* one of his own forces has approached close enough to the Enemy force to Spot it. Characters may Spot Armies or Characters; Armies may Spot only other Armies. Spotting is resolved independently of other units in the hex; thus a Player will frequently be informed of only some of the units actually present in a stack.

[6.1.2.1] **Armies.** A stack of combat units is classified for spotting purposes by its Size and its

Primary Race. The more Strength Points in a stack, the farther away it can be Spotted (for obvious reasons), as follows:

Strength Points in Stack	Size Reported	Spotting Radius
1-5	Very Small	1 hex
6-15	Small	1 hex
16-25	Medium	2 hexes
26-50	Large	2 hexes
51+	Very Large	3 hexes

For each Enemy force (for purposes of Spotting, anything that cannot be moved by the Player is considered Enemy), the Gamesmaster checks to see whether there are any Friendly Characters or Armies within the Spotting Radius of the Enemy force; if so, the Gamesmaster reports (1) the hex in which the Enemy is located; (2) the Size Reported; and (3) the Primary Race (the Race of beings which have the plurality of Strength Points in the stack). (Hand Orcs and Eye Orcs are considered two different Races for this purpose.) **Examples:** The following reports might be received: "A Small force of Hand Orcs in 2823, West Maps;" "A Very Large Force of Men of Gondor in 0725, East Map."

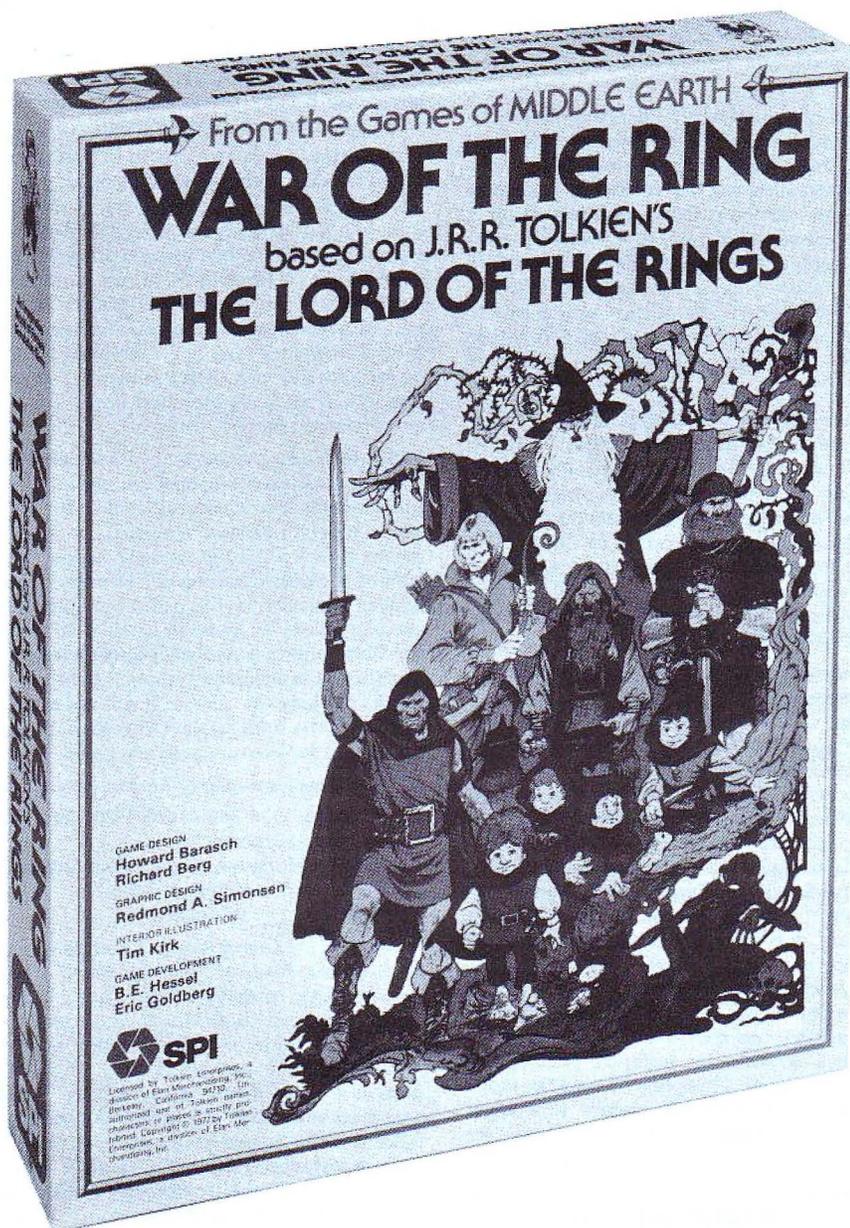
[6.1.2.2] **Characters.** Enemy Characters may only be Spotted by Friendly Characters (the idea is that the named Characters are unusual beings, different from the run-of-the-mill Dwarf or Orc; hence it requires a knowledgeable eye to recognize an important Dwarf from his fellows). Moreover, Characters have different affinities for recognizing other Characters, depending upon the Races involved. The Character Spotting Chart details at what range who can Spot whom. For each Friendly Character, the Gamesmaster checks to see if there are any Enemy Characters within the appropriate Spotting Radius (see the explanation given at the bottom of the chart for the procedure). For purposes of Spotting, any Captured Character is considered Friendly. If an Enemy Character is within the Spotting Radius, the Gamesmaster reports the hex location and Race (only) of the Spotted Characters. **Example:** Saruman and the Chief of the Dunlendings are in 2920 in Scout Mode (presumably lurking outside Lorien hoping the hobbits will pass by). Two hexes east of them in 3120 are Meriadoc and Peregrin, who have been captured by a small army of Eye Orcs and who are now accompanied by a Nazgul. In 3021 is Boromir, by himself, in Pursuit Mode (Pursuing Meriadoc and Peregrin); Gandalf is in 3322 in Ambush Mode (which renders him effectively invisible (see Case 8.1.5)). (In following this example, Players should consult the Character Spotting Chart (6.1.2.3) and verify the Spotting Radii.) From Saruman's point of view, Gandalf is not visible (he is in Ambush), Boromir is visible (2 hexes away; the Wizard-to-Man radius is 2), the Nazgul is visible (2 hexes; the radius is 6), as are the hobbits (2 hexes away; Wizard-to-Hobbit radius is 2). So the Gamesmaster informs Saruman that there is a Nazgul and some Hobbits (how many is not revealed, just that there are more than one) in 3320 and a Man in 3021. From Sauron's point of view, Saruman is in range (2 hexes; Nazgul-to-Wizard radius is 3), but Boromir and the Chief of the Dunlendings are out of range (2 vs. 1). Gandalf is in Ambush; so the Dark Power Player is informed only of the presence of a Wizard in 2920. From the point of view of the Fellowship Player, Gandalf can Spot Saruman, and Boromir can Spot the Chief of the Dunlendings. Gandalf can also Spot the Nazgul. So the Gamesmaster informs the Fellowship Player of a Wizard in 2920, a Man in 2920, and a Nazgul in 3320 (but *not* the hobbits in the same hex).

#### [6.1.2.3] Character Spotting Table.

Race of Spotter	Race of Enemy Being Spotted					
	Hobbits	Elves	Dwarves	Men	Orcs	Nazgul
Hobbits	2	0	1	1	2	0
Elves	2	2	2	2	3	1
Dwarves	0	0	1	1	2	1
Men	1	0	2	2	2	1
Orcs	0	0	1	1	2	1
Nazgul	1	0	2	1	2	4
Wizards	2	2	3	2	3	6

**Procedure:** Cross-index the Race of the Spotting Character (by row) with the column indicating the Race of the Character being Spotted. The resulting number is the radius in hexes (inclusive) inside which the Character is Spotted. **Example:** Elves can Spot Dwarves at a distance of up to two hexes, but Dwarves cannot Spot Elves unless in the same hex.

**Note:** For purposes of this rule, Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast, the Lord of the Nazgul, Elrond, Galadriel, and the Ringbearer (*if* he is



wearing the Ring) are considered Wizards. Other magicians are considered to belong to their Race, not to be Wizards. **Exception:** Because Aragorn's skill as a tracker and reader of bent twigs and other signs was famed throughout Middle-Earth, add one to Aragorn's Spotting Radius in any situation.

**[6.13] Rumors.** As important Characters come and go through Middle-Earth, their movements may be reported; the common folk, be they dwarves, elves, men or Orcs, note their passing. Especially in a time of tension, rumors multiply, and eventually make their way to the ears of the spies of the three Players. But Players must take the Rumors with a grain of salt; some may be honest mistakes, but others are lies planted by the Evil Eye to confuse. **Procedure:** During the Order Phase, each Player submits four Rumors of his own invention. The Gamesmaster then generates six (true) Rumors; then takes the eighteen Rumors thus created and sends six to each Player. (A Player may therefore get his own Rumor back.)

A Rumor is a sentence of the form "(Character) is in (Region)" for living characters, or "(Character) is dead" for dead ones. Any Character identified by a Character card may be the subject of a Rumor; Players may submit more than one Rumor about a particular Character if they wish. To generate the six true Rumors, the Gamesmaster shuffles the Character Cards (omitting the seven numbered Nazgul and Gothmog), deals out six, and reports their current position. All positions are reported as to Region only. For instance, the following Rumors are valid: "Frodo is in Lorein," "Saruman is in East Emnet," "Gandalf the Grey is dead."

**[6.2] Event Cards.** At the start of the game, each Player is given three Event Cards. At the beginning of each turn (including the first), the gamesmaster "deals" each Player an additional Event Card. Players may write Orders governing the play of Event Cards. If at the end of the Reconciliation Phase the Player has not reduced his total Event Cards to three, the Gamesmaster randomly discards one.

**[6.3] Searching.** At the beginning of any Game-Turn, the gamesmaster reports the results of any Searches Ordered in the previous Game-Turn. He also informs the Dark Power Player and Saruman Player which Search Card was drawn for them; this Search Card will determine the Search Orders written this Turn for implementation by the Gamesmaster prior to the next Game-Turn. **Procedure:** In the Information Phase, the Gamesmaster reports which Search Card was drawn, and lists all Regions on that Search Card. The Player controlling the Searching forces may then Order Searches of all or any of the eligible Regions (at a cost of two Command Points per Region with the exception of Mordor, which costs 5; see the Command Point Cost Table, Case 8.4). When both Saruman and Sauron control Nazul, both may independently Search; each pays the Command Point cost, and there may be two attempts at Capture.

During the Information Phase, the Gamesmaster reports the results of the Searches. For each Region, the Searching Players are informed of the hex location of any stack of Characters; if a 'C' result was obtained for any Character, the Race of that Character is also revealed. If Orcs were Searching, the appropriate Characters are considered Captured and Orcs placed on the map. Note that the *identity* of a Captured character is *not* revealed upon capture. In order to identify a Captured character, a Player must move one of his Characters into the same hex as the Captured characters; the identity of Hobbits, however, is not revealed until they are brought into direct contact with Saruman (wherever he may be), or brought to Barad-Dur.

**[7.0] Negotiation Phase.** In the Negotiation Phase, Players communicate directly amongst themselves. Anything may be discussed; information may be swapped, but the Players are under no obligation to tell each other the truth. Players may agree to consummate a trade; however, trades are handled through the Gamesmaster. Nothing promised by a Player is binding unless he writes an Order to the Gamesmaster directing that something happen: e.g., Saruman may promise Sauron an Event Card, but unless he writes an Order that says "Give Sauron Event Card So-and-So" no transaction takes place. Orders to the Gamesmaster concerning trades may *not* be conditional; you either decide to trust the Player you're dealing with or you don't. Characters and armies may be traded in this manner; allegiance immediately shifts to the new controlling Player, and may not shift back again without a subsequent trade. (However, the Fellowship Player and Sauron Player may not directly trade Characters or armies. Trading Nazul is a special case, since they are controlled, ultimately, by the Ring. Sauron may 'lend' Nazgul to Saruman by an Order to the Gamesmaster. The Nazgul are completely under the control of Saruman *unless* Sauron issues a countermanning Order to the Gamesmaster. The only way Saruman can gain 'irrevocable' control over Nazgul is to obtain the Ring; any Nazgul under the control of Saruman at the time he obtains the Ring come under his permanent control, and Sauron may not order them back.)

Players may also direct the Gamesmaster to reveal information to another Player via an Order. The Gamesmaster may not pass along false information; Orders directing him to do so are null and void (the presumption is that such information is physically passed via a messenger from the recipient who goes to the transmitter and sees with his own eyes). Information offered directly between players without the benefit of the Gamesmaster's seal of transmittal may be true or false (the assumption being that ambassadors are good liars).

**[8.0] Orders Phase.** On the basis of the information received in the Information Phase and the discussions during the Negotiation Phase, the Players then write their Orders for their forces. Each Player is limited to 100 Command Points per Game-Turn. Basically, in order to accomplish anything a Player must give an Order for it. Each Order expends Command Points, depending upon the type of order and the complexity of the accompanying description.

**[8.1] Movement.** In the PBM game, movement is simultaneous, rather than sequential. A Movement Phase is divided into Segments, each Segment corresponding roughly to one Movement Point's worth of time. Gamesmasters are urged to use their common sense when attempting to reconcile movement, as this movement schema is at best an approximation. Movement may result in a force being brought into the Spotting Radius of the identical hex as an Enemy force. The Movement Mode under which the force is moving characterizes the force's behavior if it comes within range of an Enemy force. Generally speaking, both Armies and Characters may be in any of the Movement Modes given below; and further, there is generally no crossover (Characters may not Ambush Armies, for instance, nor Armies Pursue Characters). Changing Movement mode during Movement does not require Movement Points (but does require Command Points; see Case 8.4).

**[8.1.1] March.** A force in March mode is heading directly in a given direction, along a given path of hexes, or toward a given hex. Any

Enemy forces which obstruct movement toward the objective (i.e., in the same hex) are attacked. A force in March Mode will fight until (a) the Enemy is no longer obstructing passage; or (b) it is eliminated. Of course, a Player may write conditional orders to prevent either of these extremes.

**[8.1.2] Scout.** A force in Scout mode is also moving toward a fixed objective or along a fixed path, but unlike March, a Scouting force will attempt to avoid combat. It will not voluntarily enter an Enemy hex; if its proposed next move would bring it into the same hex as an enemy force, it will either attempt to move into an adjacent hex consistent with its Order or stop and wait (expending movement points as it does so). A force in Scout Mode will retreat if attacked (subject, of course, to conditional orders).

**[8.1.3] Pursuit.** A force in Pursuit Mode is considered to be tracking an Enemy force with the objective of engaging and destroying it. During the first movement segment (when everyone else is moving), a Pursuing force waits (expending one Movement Point); then, commencing in every movement segment subsequent, it moves to the hex most nearly in a straight line with its target. The target must be in the Spotting Radius of the Pursuing Force for the Pursuit to change direction; if it is not, the Pursuing force continues in the same direction until it either respots its target or runs out of Movement Points. Vis-a-vis its target, a Pursuing Force is considered to be Marching (i.e., it will attempt to initiate combat to the death). Vis-a-vis any other Enemy force, it is considered to be scouting (unless otherwise ordered).

**[8.4] Flight.** (as in Flee, not as in Fly). A force in Flight Mode is trying at all costs to get away from something. It gets a one-step jump on the competition, but at a cost: any force in Flight Mode cannot change into any other mode during the current Game-Turn. A force in flight can move only in a dead straight line (in one of the eight basic compass directions); if its next move would carry it into an Enemy hex (any hex containing a force not under the Player's direct control is considered Enemy), it changes direction and Flees directly away from the (new) Enemy.

**[8.5] Ambush.** Ambush is a special mode. A force in Ambush Mode may not move; the minute it begins moving, it is considered to be in Pursuit Mode unless otherwise specified. A force which *begins* a Game-Turn in Ambush Mode, however, cannot be Spotted as long as it remains in Ambush Mode. Basically, a force lies in Ambush for a specific quarry as given in its original Order. At the first point in time that it Spots a target which qualifies, it immediately enters Pursuit mode and begins tracking the quarry. It will not cease tracking the quarry until (a) it is Ordered to do so; or (b) the quarry has been engaged and killed.

**[8.1.6] Some Examples of Movement Orders.**

"March 3320-3420-3420-3520 then Ambush any Hobbits."

"Scout along the Anduin, heading south."

"Pursue Characters in 2125."

"Flee back to Isengard."

**[8.2] How the Gamesmaster Resolves Movement.**

In Segment Zero of the Movement Phase, all units in Flight mode begin movement. In Segment 1, units in Scout and March mode begin movement, while units in Pursuit mode expend one movement point but stand still. In Segment 2, units in Pursuit mode begin tracking. Movement continues at a cost of one Movement point per segment until all forces have exhausted their Movement allowance. Once all Character and Army movement has been completed, Nazgul may be moved. Nazgul move directly to an object hex, which may be designated directly (e.g., hex 0507)

or indirectly (e.g., "to hex containing Ugluk"). Indirect movement may only be made to a hex with a Friendly force. This latter method is useful when one wishes to identify captured Characters. Once all Movement has been completed, the Gamesmaster resolves all combat which has arisen, according to the Movement Modes of the Combatants. Forces which began the Game-Turn in the same hex with Enemy forces may conduct attacks as provided in the rules (the typical case is besieging a Citadel).

**[8.2.1] Overruns.** There is one exception to the Movement process given above. If a force in March mode enters a hex with an Enemy army which it outnumbers by 6-1 or greater, the Enemy force is considered Overrun (i.e. destroyed), and the force in March mode may continue its movement. Overruns cost no additional Movement Points and are the only combat (except Personal Combat) which can take place during the Movement process. No units in a Citadel may be overrun.

**[8.3] Command Cost of Orders.** Every Order written costs Command Points, whether or not it is completely executed. See the Command Points Table (Case 8.4) for a summary of the Command Points cost of various Orders. Each Player is allocated 100 Command Points per Game-Turn (they may not be accumulated from Turn to Turn). Upon receipt of the Orders, the Gamesmaster determines how many command Points each one uses; any Orders (or parts of Orders) in excess of the 100 Command Point limit are disregarded, even if this changes or reverses the meaning of an Order.

The Command Point cost of any Order describes both the actions to be performed and the circumstances under which the action may be performed. Since many of the conditional Orders which a Player will wish to write cannot be described in shorthand, any English description is permissible. The Command Point Cost of any English description is one Command Point per word. Basically, Orders come in three types: (1) Standard Orders (to be carried out to the limits of the ability of the force to perform them); (2) Conditional Orders (to be carried out if the condition is satisfied at some point during the current Game-Turn); (3) 'Standing' Orders (Conditional Orders executed at any time—regardless of Game-Turn—the condition is satisfied. Please refer to the Command Points Table (Case 8.4) for specifics; it will also help in understanding the following examples.

**[8.3.1] Standard Orders.** Most Movement Orders will be Standard Orders: for example,

"March 0101-0102-0103-0203-0204" (Command Cost: 7 CP. two for the March order; five for the hex specifications.)

"Scout Edoras." (Command Cost: 7 CP. Two for the March order; five for the hex specifications.)

"Give the Elven Cloak to Sam." (Command cost: 6 CP (all for words).

**Note:** The stack designation does not count against the Command Point limit.

**[8.3.2] Conditional Orders.** The majority of Orders written will be conditional, since Players will be trying to get things done only if the situation is right. Conditional Orders will usually be combined with a Standard Order (e.g., "Do this unless this happens, in which case do that").

"Pursue Hobbits in 2815; if combat is obtained and Aragorn is present, Flee North."

(Command cost: 17 CP. Three for the Pursue; two for the conditional, one for the Flee command, and 11 for word descriptions.)

"Scout Edoras; If Edoras is achieved, enter March mode." (Command Cost: 12 CP. two each for the Scout, March and Conditional; six for descriptions.)

**[8.3.3] Standing Orders.** Unlike Conditional Orders and Standard Orders, which apply only to a single stack and only for a single Game-Turn, Standing Orders may be issued in more general form (e.g., "Attention All Orcs:") and may last for longer than one Game-Turn. As such, Standing Orders cost more Command Points to implement (see Command Points Table). Some reasonable Standing Orders are as follows:

"All Fellowship Characters: If any stack containing Frodo is involved in Personal Combat, all other characters in the stack fight before Frodo." (Command Cost: 26 CP. Five for the Standing Order, and 21 for words. Note that the Standing Order includes the first Conditional.)

"Frodo: Only don the Ring if (a) attacked; and (b) wounded." (Command cost: 14 CP. Five for the Standing Order, two for the second Conditional, seven for words. The (a) and (b) would not be in the Order as written; they were included to show both Conditionals.)

**Note:** In Standing Orders, unlike Standard Orders or Conditional Orders, the force designation *does* count against the Command Point allowance.

**[8.3.4] The Interrupt Order.** Even with the variety of Orders available to the Players, there will be situations which arise about which a Player will not want to decide beforehand. The Interrupt Order allows a Player to take direct control of a situation which is of immediate concern (e.g., in the novels, Sauron issued an Interrupt Order when Frodo put on the Ring at the Crack of Doom). Interrupt Orders are by definition Standing Orders; they cost 10 Command Points plus description cost. If an Interrupt Order is invoked (i.e., if the condition identified arises), the Gamesmaster immediately halts all other action. He writes to the Player whose Interrupt was triggered (and to none of the other Players), describing to that Player all information available to the party which triggered the Interrupt (e.g., if the Fellowship Player had ordered an Interrupt at any Attempt To Seize The Ring when Frodo was present, the Gamesmaster would inform the Fellowship Player of the Characters present in the hex where the Attempt is being made.) The Player may then submit Special Orders; a total of 25 Command Points is available. A further Interrupt may not be specified. The Gamesmaster then continues Play, in accordance with the Special Orders and the other Orders he has received in the normal Order Phase. An example of an Interrupt Order might be: "Interrupt if any Personal Combat is initiated in a hex containing Frodo." [Command Cost: 19 CP; ten for the Interrupt, nine for the words (I wouldn't count articles as words).]

**[8.4] Command Points Table**

Command	Command Points Requires
Play Event Card #x	1
Search (Region)	2/region
Search Mordor	5
Nazgul Flight (as in Fly)	4/Nazgul + D
March	2/Force + D
Ambush	4/Force + D
Flee	2/Force + D
Pursue	3/Force + D
Scout	2/Force + D
Attack (for non-moving forces only)	4/Force
Conditional	2/Force + D
Interrupt	10 + D
Standing	5 + D

The symbols "+ D" denote that the cost of describing the activity is added to the basic cost. Description costs are as follows:

Description Type	Command Points Required
Compass Direction	1
Hex-to-hex	1/hex
Other	1/word

The generations and dissemination of Rumors do not count against Command Points requirements. **Note:** All Command Points costs are cumulative.

**[8.5] Reconciling Orders.** It is entirely possible for Players to write a set of Orders which, when applied to the current situation, contradict one another. The Gamesmaster reconciles all potentially contradictory orders according to the following hierarchy:

- Interrupt Orders: top priority
- Standard Orders
- Conditional Orders
- Standing Orders

That is, if a Standing Order contradicts a Standard Order, the Standard Order governs. If two Orders of the same class contradict each other, the most recent (in terms of receipt by the Gamesmaster of listing on the Order sheet) controls.

**[9.0] New Characters.** Some new characters have been added, and these are listed in the box at the bottom of this page.

Radagast the Brown is a B Sorcerer; however he may never initiate combat (like Ferdinand the Bull, he just loved to smell the flowers). Grima Wormtongue has no morale, combat or magic ability; he is solely an observer. If Gandalf arrives at Edoras, Wormtongue must leave Rohan by the quickest possible route and not re-enter it. All

Character	Race	Allegiance	Start Hex
Radagast the Brown	Wizard	Hand	Isengard
Ugluk	Orc	Hand	Isengard
Grima Wormtongue	Man	Hand	Edoras
Lugdush	Orc	Hand	Isengard
Shagrat	Orc	Eye	Barad-Dur
Gorbag	Orc	Eye	Barad-Dur
Grishnakh	Orc	Eye	Barad-Dur
Ufthak	Orc	Eye	Barad-Dur

Orcs (Hand or Eye) created above have the following characteristics:

Combat Ability	3
Endurance	3
Ring Rating	1
Morale	Variable

To calculate the effect of an Orc leader upon Morale, the Gamesmaster rolls a die and subtracts 3 from the result. The resulting number is the Morale Rating of the Orc in question for that particular Game-Turn. It must be employed if the Orc was designated to lead an Orce force. (The reason for this rule is that although the Orcs could be fierce fighters when roused to a state of battle frenzy, they could also be immense cowards and were very much subject to the individual whims of their leaders.)

**[10.0] Gamesmaster "Common Sense."** The Gamesmaster is always entitled to use common sense in reconciling Orders, Movement, Combat or any other aspect of the Game. *The decisions of the Gamesmaster are final.*

The Gamesmaster must, in considering the implementation of a particular Order, decide only on the basis of the information available to the Players who issued the Order. If, for example, Sauron issued an Interrupt Order to be executed the moment Frodo enters Mordor, the Interrupt should be executed *only* at the first point that Sauron could know that Frodo was in Mordor.

**[11.0] Events Cards Changes.** Event Card #83 (Wormtongue Bémuses Theoden) may only be played if Wormtongue is at Edoras. Event Card #96 (Mind Battle) reduces Sauron's Command Point allowance to 85 for the current Game-Turn. Any orders using Command Points in excess of 85 are truncated and the Gamesmaster attempts to implement the truncated Order *as written*.

### Redesigner's and Players Notes

**Command Control.** Now at least, all Players are equal; the 100 Command Point bottleneck will squeeze equally, although it will have different effects upon each Player's strategy and tactics. The basic trade-off, obviously, will be between broad, general orders which will get forces moving but which may result in less-than-optimal or even counterproductive activity by a Player's forces, and detailed, specific Orders which will effectively immobilize the remaining Characters and Armies for lack of orders. This also leads to a natural balance: Sauron has the largest force but will be unable to manipulate with any deftness, while Saruman, with by far the smallest force, can at least direct it with his famous guile. Each Player will have a complex set of decisions; presumably in the early turns Players will be issuing Standing Orders and Interrupts, some of which will later turn out to be wasted. The Player who makes most effective use of his 100 Command Points per turn will win this game, almost regardless of which role he is playing.

**Limited Intelligence.** For the Saruman and Dark Power Players, the most important task is to locate the Ring, a task which is now harder than ever. For the Fellowship Player, the task will be to conceal that information while avoiding Ambush. All Players will be spending much of their energy attempting to locate the forces belonging to the other Players; the Fellowship Player in particular will have to keep his eyes open to avoid being

hit hard in Helm's Deep or Minas Tirith before he is ready.

**The Fellowship Player.** The Fellowship Player's basic strategy is still the same: to survive the assaults against him while maneuvering the Ringbearer to the Crack of Doom, but his *tactics* are now very different. Large stacks containing Characters of different races are now a liability. Moreover, since the Dark Power Player will not be able to see those little yellow pieces heading for Mordor, it becomes feasible to consider getting into Mordor over the impassable mountain hexes with Elven Rope. This procedure will take several turns, but there is no way the Dark Power Player can guard against it. If the Fellowship Player does try this maneuver, he should probably also send some other Characters into Shelob's Lair or the Black Gate as a diversion. Gandalf's increased visibility makes it likely that he should split away from the rest of the group at an early stage and head for Minas Tirith or Rohan to direct the military operations there. It even becomes a feasible strategy for Frodo and Sam to set off by themselves; hobbits are hard to spot, and there will be enough time to take a circuitous route. The Fellowship Player can even consider going the long way around, past Isengard, via Dol Amroth, then up to Mordor from the south and over the impassable hexes. It is a long route, but could possibly be kept concealed until the Ringbearer is actually at the Crack of Doom.

**The Dark Power Player.** Since the Dark Player can win a Military Victory by taking Minas Tirith plus either Helm's Deep or Dol Amroth, and since he is no longer incapable of mounting a sustained offensive, he should direct a lot of his energies in the first few turns to preparing the assault; Sauron could conceivably win a Military Victory before the Ringbearer ever gets inside Mordor. Once the offensives are rolling, Sauron should concentrate on weaving a net of Orc characters and Nazgul through which the Fellowship will have to slip to get into Mordor. (Building such a net inside Mordor is tacky, and counterproductive if the Dark Power Player is trying for a Military Victory.) The Dark Power Player should also enter into an alliance with Saruman as soon as possible. The two Players have a natural division of fronts, and it will be helpful to both to swap information. It will probably be necessary to lend Saruman a few Nazgul in order to obtain his cooperation; how many Nazgul and for how long will be the subject of intense negotiations.

**Saruman Player.** Saruman has the clearest objectives (at least for the short run): attack Helm's Deep with everything available, arrange an appropriate alliance with Sauron, and find the Ringbearer before Sauron does. Saruman must decide whether he will stay with his forces at Helm's Deep or head personally for Rauros and the area between Minas Tirith and Minas Morgul (where the Ringbearer is more likely to be). Once the Multicolored Wizard has obtained a good position, he should probably sink into Ambush mode, waiting for Hobbits. If Saruman

performs this maneuver early enough in the game, the Fellowship Player will not know where he vanished (and the Dark Power Player, who probably will know, is unlikely to leak this information). Saruman should also keep his lines of communication open with both Players; this greatest asset is his ability to spread information and the strategic position he and his forces occupy. It is even possible for Saruman to conclude a (secret) alliance with the Fellowship Player if Sauron's attacks are going too well. In fact, it is probably in Saruman's best interest to conclude alliances with *both* Players, if he can keep both of them convinced that he is honoring his alliances. Saruman has the least to work with, but the greatest flexibility; he can even win by preserving the balance of power.

**Final Comments.** With all these rules changes, the situation is much closer to that contemplated by Tolkien: the Ringbearer now has a real chance to get to the Crack of Doom, and he should have a good chance to win if he gets there. I therefore propose the following Additional Rule: no Nazgul may ever enter the Crack of Doom hex *unless* the Ringbearer enters it *wearing the Ring*. This rule will make it imperative for Sauron to deploy his forces outside Mordor and guard the entrances well; no longer will the game come down to a tag-team personal combat on Orodruin.

I began this exercise attempting to devise a feasible PBM system; the end result, however serendipitously, is a game wherein the Player's objectives are more closely aligned with Tolkien's mythical history and where there is much greater potential for intrigue and action. Not only that, but there is now a reason to reintroduce Radagast and Grima Wormtongue! ■ ■

### FEEDBACK RESULTS MOVES 42

Rank	Article	Rating
1.	Designer's Notes	6.70
2.	Forward Observer	6.43
3.	Tactics in The Next War	6.14
4.	Is There a Method Actor?	6.13
5.	A Game of Beaches	6.11
6.	Design & Development, Pt. 2	6.02
7.	Baltic Naval Scenario	5.87
8.	MOVES in English	5.79
9.	Playback	5.77
10.	Next War CRT	5.45
11.	Opening MOVES	5.37
12.	Next War Combat Strengths	5.06
13.	Air OB Analysis	5.03
14.	Helicopter OB Analysis	4.99
15.	Naval OB Analysis	4.96
	<b>This Issue Overall</b>	<b>5.82</b>