

TALES OF THE ~~CRYPT~~ BARAD-DÛRCHES- #1 - 26 May 1972

This gory little number is TALES OF THE BARAD-DÛRCHES-TER #1. The purpose of T.B.D. is to chronicle the doings of postal Diplomacy's most repulsive spoil-sport, John J. Beshara, the self-proclaimed Messiah of the hobby. T.B.D. will appear whenever I get the urge. It is free to those who receive EREHWON, on request, and 10¢ an issue to others, except John Beshara. For him, T.B.D. is \$500 a copy. This is Pandemonium Publication #500, edited and published by Rod Walker, 4719 Felton St., San Diego CA 92116.

WHY THE NAME?

One of my press release characters, John B. Sauron, resides at the Barad-Dûrchester. The reason for this is that John Beshara resides at the "Dorchester Towers", which is a high-class tenement. In LOTR, of course, Barad-Dûr means "Dark Tower". All these interconnections make a very nice pun. Hence my 'zine concerned with the dark doings of Beshara refers to the abode of his counterpart in the Tolkien trilogy.

THE STRANGE CASE OF #1970E

Postal game #1970E was a game for beginners, novices to postal play, which was played out in the pages of GRAUSTARK. It was won by Italy under circumstances which were most peculiar. The original player for Italy was James Becker, a shadowy figure whose name pops up in the postal Diplomacy literature only in association with that of Chairman Beshara (more on this aspect later). For a few game-years Becker's name appears as the Italian player. Then Dick Miller shows up as a "temporary replacement" for Becker. Finally, in Winter 1909, when Italy is safely up to 15 units and is certain to win, Becker and Miller alike are replaced by...John Beshara. My, what an amazing coincidence!

When the game was completed, I refused to include it in my rating system. My argument was that the game was set up for novices, but was won by a replacement player who was by no means a novice. I must now confess that this was only part of the reason. The fact of the matter is, we have another "Eric Blake" affair on our hands.

Let John Beshara tell you about it himself. In a long letter to me, dated 18 June 1971, Beshara writes, "I was advising Becker in the game throughout and actually made the moves for him that are credited to Dick Miller (again forgetting it was a Beginner's Game). At the time I did not want to interject myself in another game and there was some possibility Miller would take it over while Becker was away, but Miller got busy and could not do so and I had promised Becker I'd help in that eventuality."

The levels of deception indicated here are interesting. First, in a reputed game among novices, one of the novices, and only one of them, is being advised by a highly experienced player of some skill. He alone has this great advantage over the others. Second, orders submitted under the name of Dick Miller were actually prepared by this same advisor. Third, once the position of Italy is virtually unbeatable, Becker is conveniently "out of town" and Miller is equally conveniently "too busy". So the advisor, John Beshara, takes over and coasts to victory. Shortly after the Beshara victory, Dick Miller is made a Director in the Diplomacy Association. If that constituted the pay-off, it was small potatoes.

In my opinion, this whole procedure has an "arranged" odor about it. At the least, it must be concluded that this "beginner's game" was that only for 6 of the players, while the 7th, in actuality or by proxy, was John Beshara.

A copy of this issue is going to all those maintaining rating lists. It constitutes a request that they consider deleting this game from their lists on the same grounds that the "Eric Blake" game was deleted.

The mysterious "James Becker" is an interesting factor in himself. He has never played in a game in which Richard Miller and John Beshara did not figure prominently. He has been in 4 postal games:

#1969BW. A "Beginner's Game" in GRAUSTARK. Beshara gamesmastered it, and Miller won it. Becker survived. So far, no problem.

1970C. A game in ATLANTIS. Becker played England. When he resigned, he was replaced by Dick Miller. Is it not odd that Miller was not too busy for this game, but was too busy to take over a 15-unit position in GRAUSTARK? Larry Peery, Russia, was doing very well in this game, up to 12 units in 1904. At about that time, Beshara wrote an "analysis" of the game in which he turned his acerbic pen on Larry and predicted he would not win. Shortly thereafter, Miller's England and France (played by Pete Comber, another New Yorker and friend of Beshara's) began to coordinate a highly effective attack on Russia, the playing style of which was very like John Beshara's. Knowing that Beshara helps Pete draw up his orders in other games, the expectation that he is doing so in 1970C, for the purpose of insuring that his anti-Peery "prediction" comes true, comes readily to mind.

#1970E, which we have already discussed.

#1970AG. This was a local game, for New Yorkers only, in GRAUSTARK. The real reason for the game I was told gloatingly by Beshara. In this regard, he wrote to me (19 May 1970): "In the next issue of GRAUSTARK, #210, Boardman will announce a new NYC game which he will Gamesmaster and in which I will play. This came about because Boardman announced it early this year, thinking it would be completed by the time I returned from my trip (or shortly thereafter). However, ^{Prosnitz} was the first person to apply to play and thereafter no [one] else here wanted to play in it with him. When I returned we decided the best thing to do was try to fill the game and get it over with, for I would not, of course, Gamesmaster a game Prosnitz was in." True to Beshara's word, every player on the board ganged up on Prosnitz, eliminated him, and then got out of Beshara's way while he picked up 16 units and a "win". I was kept apprised of the progress of all this by exulting telephone calls from Beshara. Austria and France, the key nations which attacked Prosnitz's Italy, were played by...you guessed it: Dick Miller and James Becker.

How convenient for John Beshara that these two are always there to do his bidding. How doubly convenient that 2/3 of the so-called "Board of Directors" of the "Diplomacy Association" are Beshara and his flunky, Miller. One wonders if he is any use, aside from insuring that every vote (if Beshara allows votes) will go Beshara's way. Oh, well, he was owed some sort of reward, I guess.

So much for the tangled webs woven by John Beshara. It is ironic to recall that this is the same person who has arrogated to himself the totalitarian control of the clandestine "Diplomacy Association". It is "Meester" Beshara who has the gall to preach honesty in Diplomacy, who pretends he is the champion of honest games, and who nearly has apoplexy when he thinks others are cheating. Disgusting.

A copy of this issue will also be sent to all players in 1970E who are still active in postal Diplomacy (except "Becker", Miller, and Beshara, of course; they already know what happened).