

Soviet Politics



A mud throwing roleplaying game by Remko van der Pluijm

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First things first: the Ronnies as a basis for this game

This game is developed with the Ronnies in mind. The Ronnies is a contest, introduced by Ron Edwards, developer of Sorcerer, between any contestants who have developed a 24 hour RPG. This RPG will be an entry to the November Ronnies.

To be eligible for contest, one must use only two of the following four words: **DRAGON, MUD, GUN** and **SOVIET**. For this entry, I've chosen to use Mud and Soviet. It's not allowed to use the other two words in any form. So, this RPG will refrain itself from using the words dragon and gun.

It's a 24 hour game

The game has to be developed in 24 hours. It is an alpha-stage draft and not a complete publishing. The development of this game will continue after receiving feedback on the Forge.

I hope you'll enjoy reading and perhaps playing this game. Feedback is always welcome by mailing to remkop@gmail.com.

Introduction: a struggle for power

Moscow, 19xx

Welcome, comrades. You are chosen by the people of the Soviet Republic to bring your country the best in your respective Ministries. You are encouraged to make sure of it that your fellow comrades will do their utmost best to ensure the success of the Soviet Republic. It is quite possible you will have some difficulties during your period. Don't let this get you stranded. Will you keep your good name in the process? Or are you disgusted by the public and the Council of Ministers? I hope you know we cannot use anymore mistakes now.

I hope my faith in you isn't misplaced.

Yours,

xxxxx

President of the Soviet Republic

Players have made it in some of the important seats in the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Republic. However, except for the President (whom is also the chairman of the Council of Ministers), they want to get an even better position. With better status, they will have the possibility to take on more difficult problems, giving them even more influence.

And of course, there is the KGB. You don't want to upset them, do you? There could be the possibility that you will get assassinated by the silent blade of the KGB.

A little part of how to play

Players take turns and choose which scene they want to play. Different scenes will have different effects on gameplay. Each scene will either be framed by the player or by the President, depending on the type of scene. Every player wants to become the President of the Soviet Republic eventually. How? By some ordinary mud throwing: trying to impress the council by putting the other department's (or the President's) actions into a negative view.

Will you be the one eating the mud? Or will you be the one using it to expand your influence in the Council? Will you freely let a conflict escalate in order to win it? It's all up to you.

Beginning and prerequisites

To play this game, you'll need fiches in six colors, preferably white, red, black, yellow, green and blue. They have to be of the same size and weight. You should have about 20 chips of each color. I suggest you use poker chips or something like that. Also, let all players have a piece of paper and a pencil to make notice of important events. You will use these events later in the game. Last, but not least, you will need a sack (preferably red and certainly not transparent) to put the coins in. It is a part of the resolution mechanic.

Beginning

At the start of the game, put in one of the white, red, black, yellow and blue chips in the sack. Each player takes one chip blind from the sack. The color of the chip indicates the starting Department (and status) of the character.

Statuses

1. Black: Head of the KGB. He's actually no minister, but perhaps one of the most important seats, because he has control over life and death.
2. Yellow = Minister of Agriculture. This department has the lowest influence. Still, he's the one taking care of the bread on the table in the morning, so he does have some influence.
3. Blue = Minister of Internal Affairs and Finance. He decides about the money investment. Money is power.
4. Red = Minister of Defense. This is an important Ministry, especially because of the Iron Curtain still hanging around in this time.
5. White = President. The seat of the president may be the highest possible, but it doesn't mean it's the most comfortable.

At the start of the game, all the players get four chips of their own color and two green chips.

The number standing before the department is its status. It determines the number of chips which may be played during a conflict. This status stays the same during the whole game.

Playing this game: types of scenes

The game is played in turns. At the start of each players' turn, the player decides what type of scene he wants to start. Depending on the type of scene, the President or the player itself frames the scene.¹

There are five types of scenes.

1. Conflict scene: The player will get a conflict regarding his department to solve. When he is successful, the player will have more influence and more respect, allowing him to solve bigger problems.
2. Mud throwing scene: The player will compete with another player for a department or for the seat of President. With this scene, one can change of department.
3. Assassination scene: Another player can be murdered. This type of scene is only available to the Head of the KGB.
4. Punishment scene: This type of scene is only available for the president and is his only way to earn chips.
5. Bribing scene: This will allow a player to bargain for another department or 'sell' his own department to gain more chips.

The President may only choose between a Punishment scene and a Bribing scene.

Conflict scene

The purpose of a conflict scene is to earn more chips. This is a scene against the President. The moment a player asks for a conflict scene, the President frames a scene in which a conflict for the department of the player occurs. The player chooses the degree of difficulty for this conflict. This degree of difficulty determines how much fiches the President may use during the conflict.

There are three different degrees of difficulty:

1. Easy: less or equal to the status of the player.
2. Moderate: one higher than the status of the player.
3. Hard: more than one higher than the status of the player.

The President gains two chips for an easy, three for a moderate and four for a hard conflict the player initiates.

Note that the President is always free to choose which exact number of chips he uses, e.g. when the Minister of Agriculture is asking for a high scene, the President may choose to use any number of fiches ranging from 4 to the total of chips he has.

¹ In this game, there is no real Gamemaster. Instead, some of the task of the Gamemaster are performed by the President.

For each fiche the player or the President wants to spend they will have to narrate some events or situations by which the task becomes easier or harder, respectively.

Example:

Josef is the Minister of Defense. He asks for an easy conflict scene. The President frames the scene:

President: There is a bit of unrest in the Czech Republic. In Prague, people are demonstrating and they demand better conditions at the war factories.

Josef: The Minister of Defense flies to the city of Prague to look at the situation.

President: When coming there, Josef sees a large group of rebels waiting for the plane to land (shoves one chip forward).

Josef: I order the military convoy, which flies with me, to give a warning shot (also shoves a chip forward).

President: The rebels are quickly fleeing from the landing site. When Josef is landed, the representative of the work force is there to greet him. "Quite an entrance. Is this the way you think you can suppress us (shoves his second chip forward)?"

Josef: "When the people would simply listen to me, I wouldn't have to use such a force, now would I (shoves his second chip forward)?"

President: "Perhaps". After you have joined the representative to a restaurant, things aren't going quite well. The representative asks for another night to sleep about it. When you are in the hotel, you see a dozen of workers standing in front of the hotel, asking for your head (shoves his third chip forward).

This continues until both parties are done with their bid. The not active players have to agree with the used arguments indeed being valuable. The minister or head of the KGB has a maximum number of usable fiches equal to their status.

Mud throwing scene

The mud throwing scene is the only way one of the ministers can get a higher position. To do this, a player starts a conflict with another player. He frames a scene within the Parliament.

There is no maximum for both players to the number of chips which may be used, but the player must 'throw some mud', in other words tell something about the other minister which brings him into disgrace. Based on the arguments the player uses, he may use a number of chips.

1. When a player tells something which he has made up himself, he may use one chip.
2. When a player tells something based on one of the events which

happened during a conflict, he may use two chips.

3. When a player tells something based on an accusation made during a previous mud throwing scene and makes it even worse, he may use three chips.

There is no limit to the number of arguments used by the player. The head of the KGB may not start this type of scene. Alternatively, he may start an assassination scene.

Example of a mud throwing scene

Josef and Svetlana are ministers of Defense and Agriculture, respectively. Svetlana wants the position of Defense for herself. Therefore, she starts a mud throwing scene. Josef has eight coins, Svetlana nine.

Svetlana: When Svetlana and Josef are standing before the President at the Parliament, she answers the question why she brought in a vote of no-confidence versus Josef. "Josef willingly suppressed the work force, the power of our Republic. He is clearly bribed by the head of production (shoves two chips forward because of using an argument based on an event)."

Josef: "But mister President. Isn't it clear that Svetlana is trying to get towards your position? I've served you for a long time now and I've never betrayed you. How could I do something like that (shoves three chips forward because another player accused Svetlana of betrayal)?"

This continues until both parties are done with their bid. The not active players have to agree with the used arguments indeed being valuable.

Assassination scene

During an assassination scene (which may only be used by the head of the KGB) the head of the KGB gets a minister murdered in order to take the seat himself. As with the previous scenes, players describe more and less favorable conditions in order to play out chips. There is no maximum to the number of used chips. The main difference with the above scenes is the 'Green fiche' mechanic (see: 'Green Fiche'), which differs from the mud throwing scene.

The murder must be done in a sneaky way, e.g. poison. Firearms are not allowed during description.

Punishment scene

The presidential way of gaining chips, the president is capable of throw a lot of mud towards the ministers. When the president is accused of something, he can simply shove it towards a minister to save his skin.

In the punishment scene, the president frames a scene in which the

president is accused of something and why the minister should pay for it. This time, the president may use up to a number of fiches equal to his status score (which is five) and the opposing minister may do the same. But, when the minister describes a way in which other departments are also accused, the other departments may contribute to the defending minister. The minister may only add one ministry in this way.

Bribing scene

The bribing scene works completely different from the other scenes. When a bribing scene is initiated, the player states whether he will bid on another minister's department or he will be bribed by another player. Player must be able to pay the bid they make. So, no one may bid to drive up the price.

Bribing

When the player will bribe himself, he will bid coins on another player's department. This bid has a minimum of two times the status or eight, whichever is lower. Players have three bids to get an agreement with each other. The final decision is on the department of the player whose department is bid on.

Being bribed

When a player is being bribed, all players (including the current player) may bid coins on the department, with a minimum equal to the status of the department or four, whichever is higher. This time, the current player must accept the bid of the highest player, but he may bid himself also, thus ensuring a higher minimum bid.

Resolution

Soviet Politics uses the following resolution mechanic: Put all used coins into the sack. The current player takes, one by one, fiches from the sack. When two fiches of the same color has been drawn, the person to whom the color belongs is the winner of the conflict. The person who has won the conflict narrates the ending of the scene in which he or she is successful.

When a green fiche is picked, the stakes are heightened. See also 'green fiche'.

Bribing resolution

The bribing resolution is already explained: the player with the highest bid has bribed the player whose department has been bribed.

Resolution consequences

When the consequence of the resolution is determined using the guidelines below, the player exchanges the fiches he has won with the reserve for fiches of his own color. Green fiches are never exchanged for fiches of your own color. When the description says 'used fiches', it means the fiches used by the players during the conflict.

Conflict scenes

With conflict scenes, all the used coins will go to the winner of the conflict.

Mud throwing scene

If the challenged player wins, he will get all the used fiches.

If the challenger wins, the status of both players becomes exchanged. This could be handled in two ways: either exchange all the fiches with the reserve for the new color or describe which colors now correspond with the respective departments. The fiches are divided evenly, regardless of the bids of both players. Any odds are given to the loser of the conflict. Green colored fiches are going to the winner.

Assassination scene

If the person who was to be murdered wins the conflict, he will get all the used fiches.

If the murderer wins, the owner of the department dies. He gives all fiches to the bank and earns all used fiches. The murdered person becomes head of the KGB, the murderer becomes owner of the department.

Punishment scene

If the person to be punished wins the conflict and no other minister has contributed to the scene, the person who was to be punished gets all

fiches.

If the person to be punished wins the conflict and another minister has contributed to the scene, divide the fiches evenly between the two winners, odds going to the contributing minister.

Bribing scene

The person who is successfully bribed gets the highest bid in fiches. Both the players exchange their statuses.

Increasing the stakes: usage of green fiches

Green fiches are an increment of the stakes: something bad happened to the conflict there. When a player wants to use a green fiche, he will have to describe in which way the scene is escalating. Both players can use two green fiches per turn.

Effects of a green fiche during a conflict scene and punishment scene

When a green fiche has been drawn during a conflict scene, both players have to double their total bid. When a player cannot pay, he has automatically lost the conflict. The winning player gets all the fiches of the losing player; the losing player gets three fiches from the reserve.

Effects of a green fiche during a mud throwing scene

Within a mud throwing scene, the fiche represents the President getting irritated with the situation. When a green fiche is taken, the President gets to decide which person is the winner of the conflict. Of course, both players are entitled to a last plea to convince the President.

Effects of a green fiche during an assassination scene

Only the head of the KGB may use a green fiche within an assassination scene. When the green fiche is drawn, regardless of the moment, the head of the KGB succeeds in the murder. Both players gain their used fiches back after the murdered player has thrown away his other fiches. When the murdered player has less than three fiches, the player takes coins from the reserve until he again has three fiches.

Effects of a green fiche during a bribing scene

A green fiche counts as three normal fiches during a bribing scene.

The Endgame and Presidential acknowledgement

Every time a president is the winner of a mud throwing scene or a bribing scene, this is noted. The moment that all players have won this at least once, the ending game begins. All players will use fiches according to the number of times they have survived the mud throwing scene or bribing scene. Half of the number of green fiches is exchanged to the players' color of fiches, rounded up. The other half of the green fiches are also bid.

The player of whom the first two fiches are drawn wins the game. When two green fiches are the first, no one wins and the current president narrates how the Soviet Republic is doomed because of its conflicts. Otherwise, the winning player is entitled to describe the epilogue. It is encouraged to the players to use the words, written down because of the conflicts, to give the epilogue a personal feeling.

Designer's notes

When I saw the words mud and soviet, I really wanted to use the combination of the two. I'm not really interested in war games, but however, I began to think about how the Soviet was structured. First, I wanted to create an intensive game about the murdering of people during an execution. One of the players would have the bullet, but who would that be? Could you live with the thoughts?

On that moment, I simply couldn't bring in the mud part. From those thoughts, I went on towards politics. Hmm... why would I not use mud throwing as in the proverb? By then, my thought about the execution was far off. Now to think of a mechanic in which it you could use comments to do two things: both give color to the story and decide how important one thinks something is.

That way I came with the resolution mechanic of taking a fiche from a sack.

I'm certainly enthusiastic about the game, although playtesting will have to judge whether the game is balanced or needs some fine-tuning (which probably is the fact). Still, I think I did a pretty good job with this first RPG design.