

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Nights of Fire	★★★1/2☆
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Period	1956 Hungarian Uprising	Publisher	Mighty Boards
Conflict/Battle	Budapest, November 1956	Designer	Brian Train and David Turczi
Force Size	Corps vs insurgents	Date	2019
Mvr Units	Abstract, ~= Bde for Soviets	Grid Size	Area, ~500m
DOWNness	2DOWN for Soviets	Map Size	Central city area c.4 x 4 areas, 15 areas, ~10km x 15km
Players	1 or 2	Turn Dur.	8 hours
Player Roles	Cmdr of Soviet Corps Leader of insurgents	Playing Time	~2 hrs on first time

Introduction

Subject of the game	1956 Hungarian Uprising in Budapest
Scope	The second part of the uprising when after the initial uprising in Oct 1956 the Soviets decided to crush the ongoing revolution. Initial uprising dealt with by Days of Ire.
Components	c.A1 map. 28pp booklet (20pp rules, 3pp history, 3pp designer's notes, 20 blocks, ~83 cards. 2 x 2 sided QRS.
Presentation	Good: Looks nice. Bad: Very hard to remember which are armed insurgents and which are locals (cf civilians). Soviet division sector labelling could be clearer. Most of rules OK but let down by some quite confused terms and phrasing (e.g. "previous", "unit", "insurgent", where commas do or don't do etc.
Designer's focus/objectives	"A militarised Eurogame". "Not numbers heavy". In order to make interesting given the lopsided nature has hidden insurgents, no soviet co-operation, time pressure.
Overall system description	Soviets have 3 divisions, each of 3 units, each div with its own TAOR it can leave, and which gradually replaces garrisons in each area and kills insurgents. The Soviet action choices are defined by tactics cards. The Insurgents have mobile and fixed units, and a draw of cards defines what they can do and how many actions they'll have each turn. Players alternate actions. Insurgent units have 2 steps, Soviets can only be temporarily deactivated.
Real Battle Notes	It took the Russians 100 hours (10 turns) to secure the city. The Insurgents had around 15,000 people, 5,000 of whom had been involved in the October uprising and were the most effective. The Soviets had a steamroller approach, reducing resistance by bombardment. A lot of collateral damage, sp from arty. Despite that Insurgents fought for every foot.

The Game System

Principal areas of reality represented in the game	The asymmetric combat. The Russian steam-roller.
Important abstractions	Only two types of Soviet unit, fixed or mobile. No explicit fires.
Types of decisions required	(Solo game – Insurgents) How to spend each turns points. Whether to prioritise defence (barricades) or attacks, and if attacks whether to be safe but rare (ambush, counter-attack) or dangerous but plentiful (attack). How to deploy units to minimise losses (1 per area) but to have attack units in place. Whether to take out Soviet tanks (which kill in short term) or Garrisons (which provide better long term benefits). When to bring in reinforcements – at cost of actions.
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	The 12 cards have values 1-3. Only 8 cards once morale drops. Actions cost 1 to 3. Icons on cards and units required for some actions.
Likes/Good Elements (inc ease of play; really good below)	<p>A bit fiddly at the start but reasonably into it after a few turns, and would have been easier with some clearer writing/graphics.</p> <p>The basic card/action mechanism works really well, lots of good choice.</p> <p>Simple combat, very deterministic, no dice roll.</p> <p>Headline cards to give a bit of narrative sense and to guide/constrain the Soviet player so not too free.</p>
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	<p>Superb AI, using the 5 cards and then the 1-6 numbers for dice throws and reducing the selection.</p> <p>Good blend of wargame and Eurogame – Days of Ire is far more Eurogame.</p>
Deficiencies	<p>There are no UTZs, its all just the same level of urban.</p> <p>Arty seems to have been a major factor but totally abstracted into the single combat unit.</p>
Improvements? (beyond fixing above)	Not really.
Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals and representing the real situation	<p>Works really well as an edutainment wargame/Eurogame hybrid.</p> <p>Gives a sense of the real situation at first play and with no deep knowledge of what happened – need to read up a bit more.</p>

Overall Evaluation

Does the game work? (Veracity)	Yes, pretty smooth, and smoother still if a few things a bit clearer
Evaluation of the player's experience	A good game, full engaged esp with alternate actions. Sensible decisions and able to develop strategies.
Replay value	Medium high even in Solo mode trying to find the best strategy.

	Could readily reskin to almost any similar battle, real or imagined (eg vs Aliens, Zombies, Red Invasion etc). Time for a Monopoly style franchise!
Does it have real world validity?/Insights?	Probably not beyond edutainment.
Is it a good game?	Yes
Who would be most interested in the game?	Anyone interested in the uprising or in uprisings in general, or broader insurgencies/asymmetric combat. Simple enough for those of a more historical/socialist bent.
Is the game good value?	£45-£55, definitely

MECHANICS (relative to Urban/PhD)

(include Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play)

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	12 card hand with have values 1-3. Only 8 cards once morale drops. Actions cost 1 to 3. Icons on cards and units required for some actions. Soviets (solo mode) by random choice of 5 task cards, change each turn. No co-operation between Soviet divisions or change TAOR.
Comms	None
UxV	None
CEMA	None
Other ISR	Blocks are masked at start and only shown when action or scouted. Reset each turn. No dummies.
Movement	1 area per pt.
Damage	2 steps for insurgents. Soviets only go to inactive and auto-recover at end of turn.
Direct Fire	Only assault.
Assault	Automatic win if made. Base 1 step, but can get 2-5 steps depending on local assets etc. En can counter-attack. Soviets have "readiness" track, 1-7, and roles < readiness against open attacks.
Indirect Fire	None
IEDs	None
Morale	Morale track for Insurgents, cards drop from 12 to 8 at around 66%. Prestige track for Soviets, typ start at 25, reduce mainly by Insurgent victories, only checked at the end.
Victory Condition	Insurgent morale at 0 or all armed insurgents killed. Preferable for Insurgents to surrender before this. Final victory is based on adjusted Soviet prestige track.
UTZs	None
Building Damage	None
Civilians	10 civilian counters to get off board (single action) to safety at start. 33% of Insurgents are armed civilians. Soviets can arrest civilians.
Subterranean	None
Other Urban Specifics/Notable	None

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	10 Oct 23	Scenario	Solo basic game
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

- T1: got loads of Divs out for little damage
- T2: got rest of locals out, only 2 arrested, but then huge Sov onslaught killed 9 insurgents, mainly due to high Readiness
- T3: far more tactical, trying to disable tanks, making counter attacks, moving ambush teams,
- T4: down to 8 cards. Starting to plan barricades based on Soviet cards due. Save ambushes for end?
- T5: brought in some more Molotov bombers, but heavy Sov action almost halved remaining forces, insurgents without barricades are sitting ducks. Down to Morale of 6 and only 4 insurgents on board, 5 in reserve. Could keep Assault out.
- T6: Assault 1st card! Saved by night! But got Hunt, 2 of 4 reinforcements killed instantly. Left with 4 armed insurgents (1 Molotov, 2 counter attack), 2 locals, but morale at 1 so surrender, night of 5/6 Nov.

RESULTS

Sov Prestige of 1, so just missed by 1 a Revolutionary victory, and within the range of the historic result.

THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN, only for subsequent plays)

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