

WARGAME FIRST REVIEW

Days of Ire: Budapest 1956	★★★★☆
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Period	Cold War	Publisher	Cloud Island
Conflict	Hungarian Revolution 1956	Designer	Mihaly Vincze David Turczi Katalin Nimmerfroh
Force Size	Abstract, asymmetric	Date	2016
Mvr Units	~ Squads	Grid Size	Topological, 11 locations
Turn Dur.	7 turns = 7 days	Map Size	Na, notionally the city centre
Players	1-4		

Introduction

Subject of the game	The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 with revolutionaries taking to the street and local militia backed by Soviet tanks trying to restore order
Scope	11 city centre locations important to the real-life fight
Presentation	Good quality thick card/board concertina map and counters. Nicely laid out rules in “modern” style with lots of use of icons. One page QRS that covers most things. 20pp set up and background guide, and then two 12pp books with the actual rules, one version for the solo/co-op game, one for the adversarial game
Components	~A2 map, 2 counter sheets, 101 counters, 135 cards. Rules as above inc 2pp Historical Notes, 10pp card explanations, no real designers notes
Designer's focus/objectives	Nothing explicitly stated, but one assumes an “edutainment” – primarily a fun game but learning something about the 1956 revolution along the way
Overall system description	Pandemic style mechanism. Each turn generates up to 4 new events which are placed on the board and the player(s) have to amass the right mix of resources and then move to an event location to deal with it. AI also controls placement of militia, snipers and tanks to stop you. Unlike Pandemic you have 2 agents in each location who can be activated and persist to help you in that location, or travel with you. The players get a total of 4 actions, not matter how many actual players (makes it real hard for a 4 player game!)
Real Battle Notes	Growing unrest escalated on 23 rd Oct and initially it looked like the revolutionaries were gaining the upper hand and there was a lull in fighting from 30 th October when it looked like they had succeeded til the Soviets moved in with Operation Whirlwind on 4 th November (the subject of the Nights of Fire sequel game, and other wargames).

The Game System

<p>Principal areas of reality represented in the game</p>	<p>The asymmetric nature of the fight</p> <p>The revolutionaries running around the city effectively firefight (if that is what happened, hard to tell without reading more than is in the notes)</p>
<p>Important abstractions</p>	<p>11 topological locations</p> <p>Simple combat model, no chance</p> <p>Pretty much everything</p>
<p>Intricacy of the system, and the mechanical ease of play</p>	<p>As mentioned very Pandemic like.</p> <p>Maximum of 10 cards in hand, which give special actions (eg heal, recover card, draw extra card, unlimited move) and/or resources: information, food, ammo, medical, Molotov, vehicle</p> <p>Player moves 1 step for free, then 1 per discard. Can generally only take action in location is in.</p> <p>AI moves militia only if adjacent, snipers move one step towards, tanks don't move.</p> <p>Combat for FF is simply match EN STR with own ammo pts.</p> <p>Combat for En is 2D6 roll \leq STR for one hit, sum of the die \leq STR for a second hit.</p> <p>Game is split into 3 phases, and cards and events get steadily worse. Discard event rule helps to move thru pile at roughly the right rate.</p> <p>Nice and simple morale and support tracks, latter effecting whether good/bad actions happen.</p> <p>Very easy to play, probably easier than Pandemic, maybe even easier than Thunderbirds.</p> <p>The PvP mode is written to keep the "event" driven nature of the main game, rather than making a PvP wargame. The Soviet player has a hand of Headline cards (to limit of support) which can be played as actions or taken as CP. CP is then spent in the Event Market on Event cards, or to move or reinforce tanks.</p>

Evaluation of the system's success at achieving the designer's goals and representing the real situation	<p>Very playable, but so Pandemic like and the chrome so light that I can't say I learnt anything about the battle. Could keep rules the same and it could be almost any urban revolution/riot, and could even be a more abstracted Pandemic style game (e.g. corporate hacking/espionage).</p> <p>Til I wrote these notes I'd even forgot that Buda is Puda-Pest, with different characters and a big river in the middle.</p> <p>The guide has lots of extra info about each card, but really needed to be on the cards. It may work better in the PvP game where there are News Headlines cards.</p>
Contributions to the wargaming state of the art	<p>Pandemic was 2008, 8 years before this – and guess that wasn't the first with that basic mechanism. Was this first use in a "conflict" game? The agents to be activated was a nice touch.</p>
Improvements?	<p>As above, more of the setting on the cards, and other touches to make it feel like it really is in Budapest.</p>

The Game in Play

Play time	<p>c. 2.5 hrs first play from first sight, would probably do in ~1.5 hrs afterwards.</p>
Player roles	<p>Solo/Co-Op: The Revolutionaries PvP: 1 player as Soviets/Authorities, rest as Revolutionaries</p>
Types of decisions required	<p>Mainly how to sequence your four actions to achieve your goals. Only goal that really counts is removing events – if you can otherwise protect yourself from the en/snipers/militia (eg by agents/location) then you can ignore them. I found though that I often didn't have the right resources to deal with any event, and limited ways to change them. Very game like and zero friction along the if I do A then B then C I can achieve X, but if I do D then E then F I can do Y.</p> <p>Must be a nightmare with 4 players and only 1 action each.</p>
Effects of the game system's mechanical requirements on the player's decision making	<p>All about how you spend the budget of 4 actions. One free move helps, as do tpt cards as you have to move around the map to kill events, so really it ends up being something like 1 or 2 move actions, 2 or 1 event actions and 1 housekeeping action.</p>
Evaluation of the player's experience	<p>Good, just like a mini-Pandemic game. Not sure its got much replay value though other than to win.</p>

Overall Evaluation

Does the game work? (Veracity)	Yep, very playable, very slick
Does it have real world validity?/Insights?	Not really, far too abstracted
Is it a good game?	Yep, very playable
Who would be most interested in the game?	Someone who likes Pandemic and history/wargames. Perhaps someone teaching/learning the history just to feel a bit immersed in it. Not a hard core wargame.
Is the game good value?	Yep, really well constructed and plays well. Worth the s/h price.

MECHANICS

Aspect	Mechanic
Activation/C&C	4 action points to spend
Movement	1 move (location to location) per AP, 1 free move, unlimited move with Tpt card.
Direct Fire	Just match en STR with ammo for own. No chance. 2D6 <= STR for en.
Damage	4 hits for characters, 1 for everything else.
Assault	NA
Indirect Fire	NA
Air Support	NA
Engineers	NA (although can build barricades)
CEMA	NA
Comms	None
UxV	NA
ISR	None
Morale	Morale track, increases with positive actions, eg blow up a tank, decreases with negative actions (eg Soviet tanks flood in). Game over if = 0.
Civilians	Players are effectively civilians, but no sense of any non-combatants
Subterranean	None
Urban Specifics	None
Other Notable	Support track, only effectively -2 to +2, but if positive helps to protect you from negative actions, but also vice-versa

[Per scenario/run through]

Date	12 Aug	Scenario	Solo "Zhukov" game with "first game" easing
Players	DB	Constraints	None

SET-UP

As per standard

HOW IT PLAYED

Played well, only took a couple of turns to get into the mechanics, then mostly running off of the QRS. Probably spent too much time killing tanks and militia when I should have been focussed on events, and also realising that the xEvents resource requirements were only going to get worse.

Didn't activate may agents, perhaps should have done more. Recover card from pile very useful to get specific resources.

Found I could get one agent with -3 defence, and one with inhibit tanks to act as my bodyguards and travel with me, but still ended up with 4 (out of 5) wounds.

Snipers tended to end up bunched which with an STR of 9 gives almost guaranteed 2 wounds. Many militia, particularly in HWPP and Szena at the edge of the board just built up as I was generally in the southern areas.

Only learnt towards the end to make sure I wasn't adjacent to any snipers at the end of a move.

RESULTS

Soviet win a 6 events on the board (need to be only 4 for Revolutionary win)

THOUGHTS (c.f. RL AND URBAN)

Really as above, nice fun game but could almost put any chrome on it you wanted, certainly in terms of unrest (rural or urban), and even non-military. Too abstracted to be anything other than light edutainment.

IMAGES



Initial Set-Up



End Turn 2



End Turn 4



End Turn 5



End Turn 6



End Turn 7 (ENDEX)