

Glasnost[©]

A game of coups and countercoups
in a totalitarian regime



for 4-12 players (playing time 45 minutes)

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Nova Suecia Games
<http://www.novasuecia.se>
Version 2.2

1. Introduction

Party members! Our Motherland is torn apart by crises which call for immediate and determined policies. The Party trusts you to put the common good above your own interests to resolve the crises. Beware, our intelligence warns that there are subversive elements among us who want to overthrow our glorious system.

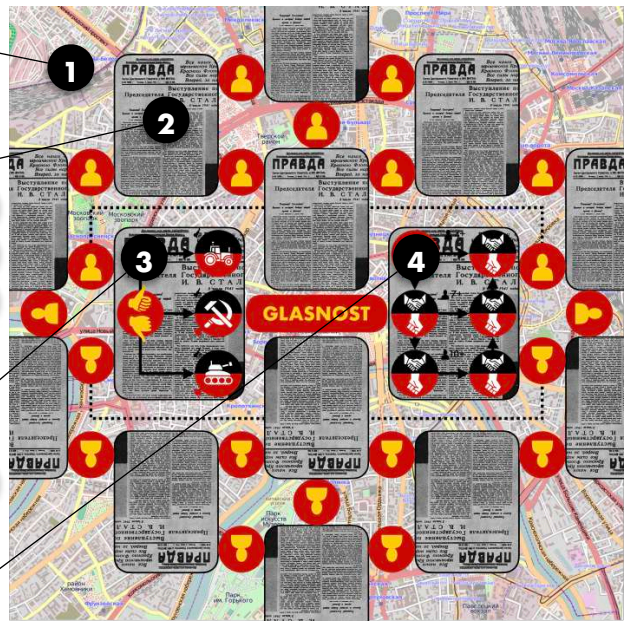
2. Components

★ 1 game board **1** depicting the Kremlin with 3 types of spaces:

★ 12 crisis spaces **2** for the 12 crisis cards and 12 crisis tokens

★ 1 policy space for the 3 policy tokens **3**

★ 1 coup space for the 5 coup tokens **4**



★ 12 party member cards, each with a set of 5 seat tokens



★ 12 pairs of yes/no cards



★ 14 objective cards



★ 3 pairs of reform/repression coup cards



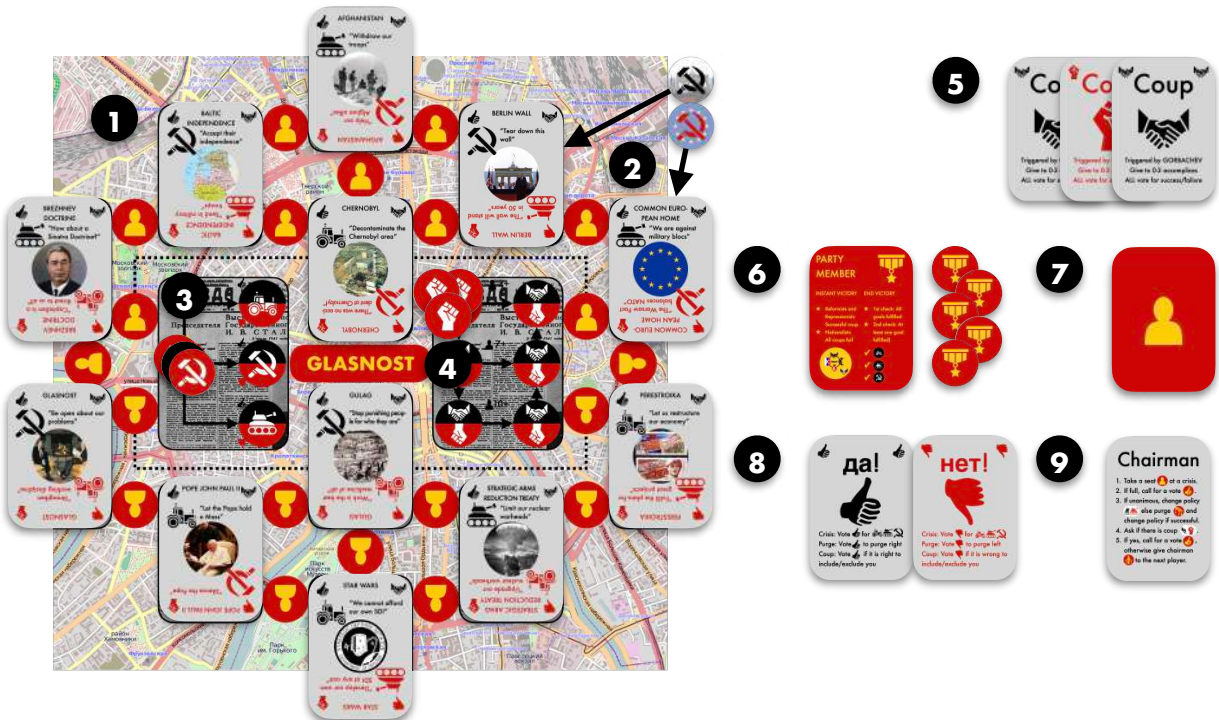
★ 1 chairman card



"If you kept the small rules, you could break the big ones."
— George Orwell, 1984

3. Setup







1. Place the game board on the table.
2. Shuffle the 12 crisis cards and draw 1 card for each of the 12 crisis spaces. Place the matching crisis tokens beneath each.
3. Place the 3 policy tokens in the leftmost policy space circle.
4. Place 1 coup tokens in the upper left coup space circle. For 7-9 players, place 3 coup tokens there, and for 10-12 players, place all 5 coup tokens there. Remove any unused coup tokens.
5. Place the 6 coup cards next to the board.
6. Give each player 1 party member card and its 5 seat tokens.
7. Sort out the objective cards Gorbachev and Kryuchkov. Shuffle the remaining objective cards and draw as many as the player count less two **without looking at them**. Remove the remaining cards **without looking at them**. Shuffle Gorbachev, Kryuchkov and the drawn objective cards. Deal 1 to each player.
8. Give each player 1 Yes card and 1 No card.
9. The player who last read 1984 starts and takes the chairman.



4. Game Objective


Glasnost presents the players with two objectives. Collectively, the players take turns to **vote** for **policies** for the twelve **crises** that the Soviet Union faces. Privately, each player belongs to a secret **faction** and has a set of secret **objectives** as stated on the objective card. A player wins either an **instant victory** if the members of the faction correctly identify each other in a coup or an **end game victory** if the policies voted for correspond to the objectives.

- ★ A **crisis** is an event that calls for one of two possible **policies**.
- ★ A **policy** is a combination of **Reform** / **Repress** and **Economy** / **Military** / **Security**, e.g. "We must reform the Economy".

POLICY	Reform	Repress
Economy		
Military		
Security		


"Power is not a means; it is an end"
 — George Orwell, 1984




A Yes vote  resolves the crisis with Reform .


In this case, Security  is reformed.





A No vote  resolves the crisis with Repression .

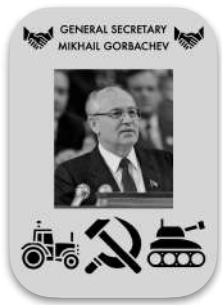
In this case, Military  is repressed.

- ★ A **faction** is either a **Reformist** , a **Repressionist**  or a **Nationalist** .
- ★ An **objective** is to fulfil two or three **policies**.

Gorbachev is a Reformist 

Kryuchkov is a Repressionist 

Yeltsin is a Nationalist 



His objective is to reform Economy, Military and Security

His objective is to repress Economy, Military and Security


His objective is to repress Economy and Reform Security

"If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself."
 — George Orwell, 1984

5. Game Overview

A turn consists of a number of phases and checks. First, a player takes a **seat** around a **crisis** (5.1). If the crisis is full, the players around the crisis **vote** for a **policy** (5.2). If the vote is unanimous, the Soviet Union policy is **changed** accordingly (5.3), otherwise the voting players undertake a **purge** (5.4) among themselves. Finally, Gorbachev and Kryuchkov may reveal themselves and perform a **coup** (5.5). The game may **end** after a coup (6.1) or if a player is unable to place a seat token (6.2).

5.1 Take a seat around a crisis

Place a **seat token** face up (without an "X") in any **seat** . The seat token gives you one **vote** for each of its adjacent **crises**. Each seat is adjacent to two crises and each crisis has three seats.

You may not place a seat token on a seat if

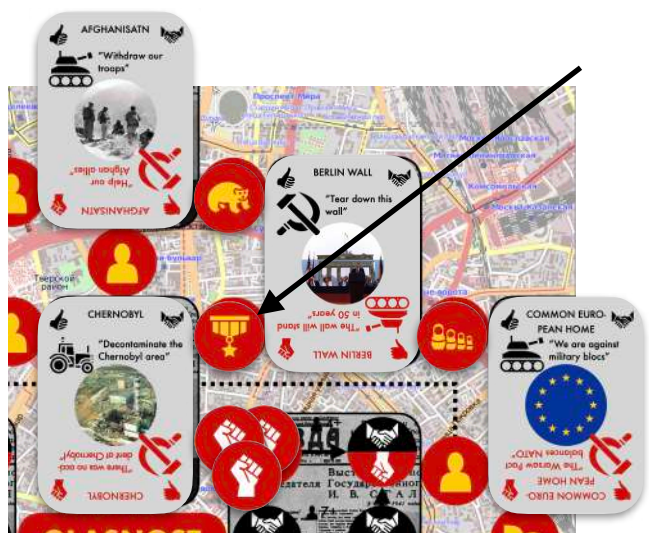
- ★ there is a face up seat token there
- ★ you have a face up seat token at any of its two adjacent crises
- ★ both its adjacent crises are voted for (i.e. flipped face down)

There are two pairs of seats connected by dotted lines, which are adjacent only to one crisis. If you place a seat token in such a circle, also place a second seat token in its connected circle. Thus, each set gives you a vote at two crises.

If you run out of seat tokens, take an unused party member card and use its set of seat tokens. If you cannot place a seat token, see 6. End of Game.

Example: "Medal" player places a seat token adjacent to the Berlin Wall crisis and the Chernobyl crisis. The Berlin Wall crisis is now full and a vote will be held (see example below).

"We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it."
— George Orwell, 1984



5.2 Vote for a policy

If there are seat tokens on all three seats of a crisis, the three players owning the seat tokens are eligible to **vote** for a **policy**.

Each player around the crisis secretly selects one of their vote cards to vote either **"Yes"** 👍 if they vote for the Reform policy or **"No"** 👎 if they vote for the Repress policy. Give the selected vote cards to a player not participating in the vote and have him or her to first shuffle them and then reveal them so that it is **not known** who voted for what.

★ If the vote is **unanimous**, return the vote cards to the players and change the policy according to rule 5.3.



★ If the vote is **not unanimous**, reshuffle the vote cards together with the player's remaining vote cards before returning them (to preserve the voting secrecy) and purge the dissident according to rule 5.4.



"The best books are those that tell you what you know already."

— George Orwell, 1984

Example: The "Medal" player argues in favor of the Reform Security policy (but secretly selects her "No" vote card in favor of the Repress Military policy). The revealed votes are two "Yes" and one "No". A purge follows.

5.3 Change the policy

Flip the crisis card and place its crisis token on top with the vote result face up. Then move (or flip) a policy token in the policy area according to the vote result. Note that one present vote is enough to overturn any past votes – the Party simply ignores the past.



Example: Assuming that all players had voted yes, the Berlin Wall crisis is flipped with its crisis token (Reform face) on top and the Security policy token is moved to the Security policy space (also Reform face up).

"Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right."

— George Orwell, 1984

5.4 Purge the dissident

If the vote is not unanimous, undertake a purge among the voters.

Each of the three players secretly selects one of their vote cards to either purge the fellow voter to the left (the red card 🖐️) or the fellow voter to the right (the black card 👍). Reveal the selected vote cards simultaneously so that it is **known** who purged whom.

- ★ If one player is purged by the other two, flip his or her seat token face down (with an "X") flip the crisis card and change the policy according to the **majority vote** (see 5.3 Change the Policy). Note that it does not matter who actually was the dissident – the Party simply assumes that the purge is correct. (If the seat token was on a connected seat, flip both seat tokens.)
- ★ If the players purge each other, flip the crisis card but leave the crisis token beneath it and do not change the policy. End the turn – the party simply hushes down the crisis.



Example: The "Medal" player convinces the "Bear" player that it was the "Doll" player on his left who voted "No". Thus, the "Doll" player gets two purges and must flip her seat token. The policy changes to the majority's vote "Reform Security".



*"Does Big Brother exist like you or me?"
'You do not exist.'
— George Orwell, 1984*

5.5 Check for coups

If the vote or the purge ended with a policy change, ask if Gorbachev or Kryuchkov wants to reveal themselves and perform a coup. If it was reform policy, ask Gorbachev first, and if it was a repression policy, ask Kryuchkov first. If it was inconclusive (the vote was not unanimous and nobody was purged), there is no coup.

To perform a coup, Gorbachev/Kryuchkov gives coup cards to the

*"We do not merely destroy our enemies; we change them."
— George Orwell, 1984*

0-3 players he believes are in his faction. Then **all** players secretly select one vote card to vote either **"Yes"** 👍 if the coup succeeds or **"No"** 🖐️ if the coup fails.

VOTE	Is the coup of your color?	
Are you in the coup?	Yes	No
Yes		
No		

Give the selected vote cards to Gorbachev/Kryuchkov and have him or her shuffle and reveal them.

- ★ If **all** votes are **"Yes"** , the coup succeeds and the game ends with 6.1 Instant victory.
- ★ If **any** vote is **"No"** , the coup fails. Flip and move a coup token to an empty coup space so that it shows which faction that failed. Note that some coup spaces are used only for higher player counts 10+. Each faction has 1/2/3 coup attempts (4-6/7-9/10-12 players) If a coup fails with no coup tokens left, the game ends with 6.1 Instant victory.

If the game does not end, collect all vote cards and shuffle them before returning them (to preserve the vote secrecy).

Example: Following a reform policy change, Gorbachev is asked if he wants to perform a coup and the "Bear" player reveals himself. He thinks the "Medal" player and the "Satellite" player are Reformists and give them coup cards. All players, including those not in the coup, select vote cards and give them to Gorbachev, who shuffles and reveal them.



The "Satellite" player is a Reformist and in the coup while the "Flag" player is a Repressionist and not in the coup so they both vote "Yes". However, the "Medal" player is a Nationalist and in the coup while the "Doll" player is a Reformist and not in the coup so they both vote "No". Thus, the coup fails and a coup token is moves to the 4+ coup space with the reform face up to show that Gorbachev has used one coup attempt. Kryuchkov is now asked if he wants to attempt a coup.



5.6 Next player

Chairman

1. Take a seat  of a crisis.
2. If full, call for a vote .
3. If unanimous, change policy .
4. If  else purge  and change policy if successful.
4. Ask if there is a coup .
5. If yes, call for a vote  otherwise give chairman  to the next player.

When the turn is completed, give the chairman card to the next player in clockwise order.

“The clocks were striking thirteen.”

— George Orwell, 1984

6. End of Game

The game may end either through an instant victory (6.1) or an end game victory (6.2).

6.1 Instant victory

If a **coup succeeds**, the Soviet Union has overcome the fragmentation and all members of the successful faction share the victory. If a **coup fails** and there are no coup tokens left to move, the Soviet Union falls and all members of the Nationalists win.

Example: Continuing the previous example, Kryuchkov attempts a coup but also fails. Since the only coup token in a 5 player game has been moved already, the game ends. The “Medal” player (Yeltsin) is a Nationalist and wins!

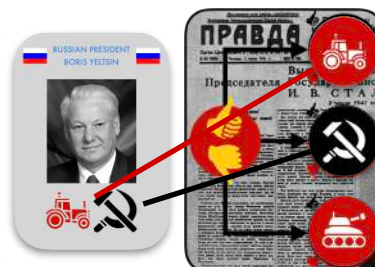


6.2 End game victory

If you are unable to place seat token, the game ends. This happens when there is no face up crisis left to place a seat token at (either because all seats are full or because you already have a seat token there). The immediate crises have been resolved but the future of the Soviet Union remains uncertain.

All players reveal their objective cards and compare their objectives with the policies in the policy area. The players whose objectives correspond with the policies share the victory. If there is no winner, the players with at least one corresponding objective share the victory.

Example: Continuing the previous example, Kryuchkov does not attempt a coup. The “Medal player” (Yeltsin) has no legal seats. The game ends and he wins since the final policies are “Repress Economy” and “Reform Security”.



7. Strategic Advice

Players are free to talk to each other, openly or in private, as long as they never reveal their objective cards. Just remember to title each other "Comrade".

This may help you to take the right decisions in Votes, Purges and Coups. But beware, you cannot trust anybody and anything you say may be used against you.

"But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought."

— George Orwell, 1984

Depending on your objective, you should adopt different strategies:

Gorbachev/ Kryuchkov

Place tokens on seats where you may vote for all three policies of your color. Remember that if all your policies are voted for, you will win and don't have to risk a coup. If not, identify the players who have voted against your color and exclude them from the coup. If the coup fails anyway, there is likely a Nationalist among you. If you think you know who, try again. If not, stay cool because the Nationalist needs policies of both colors to win and may eventually be revealed by their votes.

Reformer or Represser

Place tokens on seats where you may vote for at least one, preferably both, the policies of the colors you need to win. Remember that if both policies get your color, you will win and may vote for the other color of the third policy to confuse your opponents. If not, vote instead consistently to gain the trust of Gorbachev/Kryuchkov and get included in a coup.

Nationalist

Place tokens on seats where you may vote for at least one, preferably two, of the policies of the colors you need to win. However, remember that only Nationalists win with different colors so try to stick to one color only in the initial votes so that the other players will not realize that you are a Nationalist. Ideally, you want to vote in crises with one Reform player and one Repression player and purge one of them when the vote is dissented to sow confusion and fail coups.

8. Historical Notes

The Soviet Union was formed in 1922 under the leadership of Lenin as the world's first socialist state. His successor Stalin started a policy of industrialization and collectivization that led to an economic growth at the expense of famine and oppression. He also authorized the Great Purge 1936-1938, killing an estimated 700 000 "internal enemies", and expanded the Gulag, through which as many as 14 million prisoners may have passed.

At the outbreak of World War II, the weakened Red Army was initially unable to withstand the German invaders. However, after a casualty count of around 27 million people, Germany was defeated and the Soviet Union emerged even stronger afterwards with expanded borders and hegemony in Eastern Europe. This led to a Cold War against the United States. The two superpowers fought several wars by proxy by supporting governments and movements across the world.

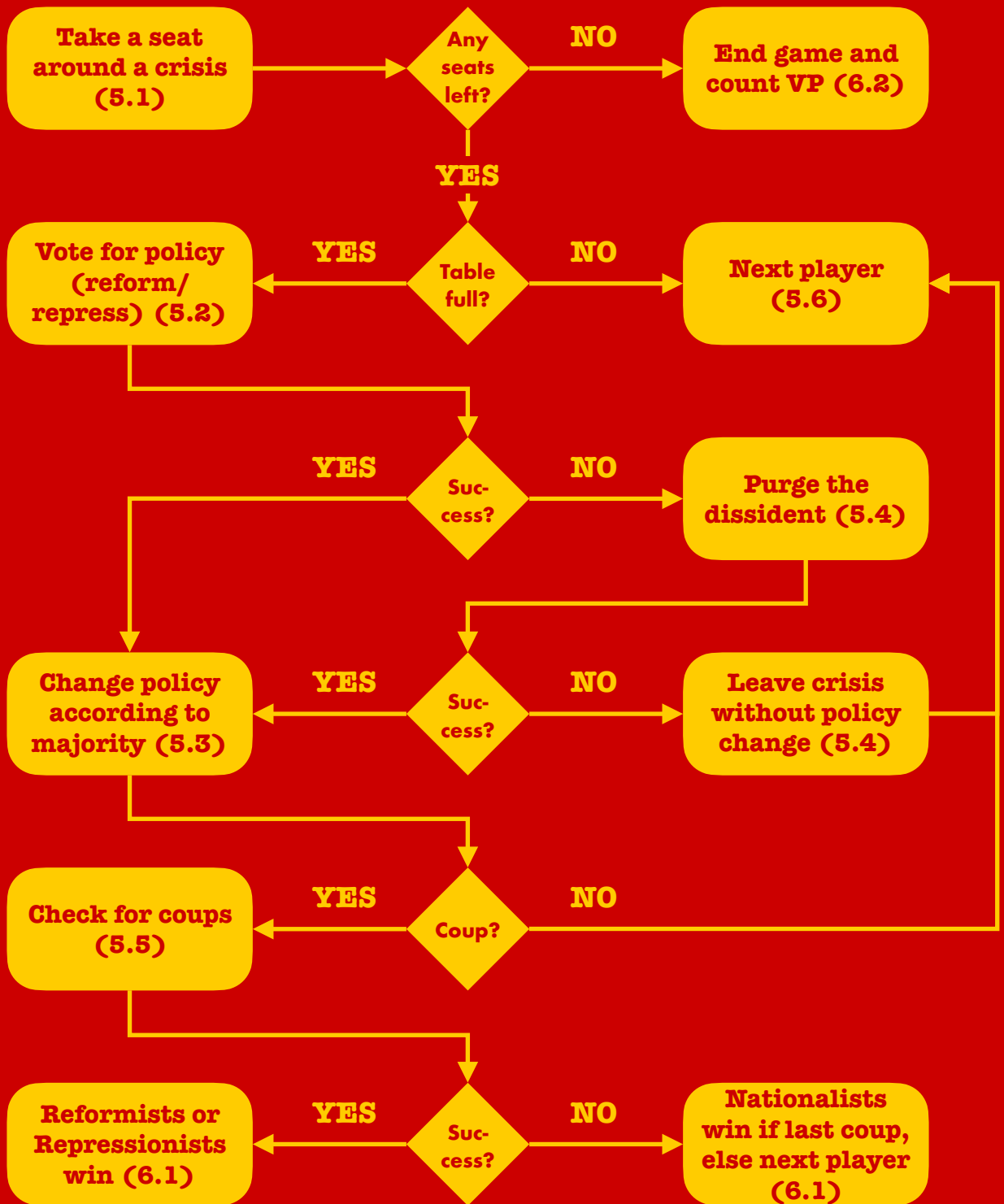
The Soviet Union produced many significant social and technological achievements and took an early lead in the space race with the first satellite in 1957 and the first human spaceflight in 1961. Nevertheless, this could not prevent an era of stagnation with adverse economic, political, and social effects.

In an attempt to turn the tide, Gorbachev launched a number of reforms in the 1980s, including perestroika (restructuring of the political and economical system) and glasnost (openness and transparency). Whether this came to late to save the Soviet Union or even triggered its fall is still an open question but the Revolutions of 1989 ended the hegemony in Eastern Europe and the national republics within the Soviet Union itself began to break away from the motherland.

This led to an attempted coup in 1991 by hardline members of the Communist Party led by KGB Chairman Kryuchkov. However, it met with wide-spread resistance, not least from the Russian President, Yeltsin, and collapsed within two days. With this, the power shifted from Gorbachev towards the republics. A few months later, the Soviet Union was dissolved.

"Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them."

— George Orwell, 1984



Credits

Game design:	Nicholas Hjelmberg
Artwork:	Nicholas Hjelmberg
Production:	The Game Crafter
Game testers:	Stockholm Board Game Design Meetup
Special thanks:	My wife Su-San Oh for having to listen to my endless historical and game-technical considerations
