

Soviet collapse now a game

□ 'Moscow! Auction!' game invented by U.S. high school teacher

By KELLY P. KISSEL
of the Associated Press

SMETHPORT, Pa. (AP) — Psst. Wanna good deal on the Kremlin? For a few million rubles, it's yours.

KGB Headquarters, the Bolshoi Theatre and Gorky Park are available, too.

Those landmarks of the late Soviet Union, and more, will be yours for the right price in Moscow! Auction!, a board game invented by Ross Porter, a high school teacher and auctioneer.

An educational tool he researched more than a year ago turned out to be prophetic.

"I wasn't doing research to do a game to sell, I was doing research to do a game for my students," said Porter, who teaches political science, world history and geography at Smethport Area High School, about 10 miles south of the New York state line in north-central Pennsylvania.

"The game went on the assumption that the Communist government would fail," Porter said.

His hunch was right on the ruble.

The game's genesis was Porter's trip to the Soviet Union in 1990 with some students. He found the government then "a house of cards," he said. Seeking to illustrate what might happen, he developed the game.

His students were playing the game by March this year. "Sometime by the end of the month," Porter said, "it was so popular from a game point of view that I decided to produce it."

The game retails for \$28.50 and is for sale in East Coast college bookstores and by mail order from Porter's home. He hopes to find a distributor next year.

The Kremlin dominates the center of the 19-by-19-inch game board, encircled by headquarters of the Tass news agency, St. Basil's Cathedral and the GUM department store. The outer ring has KGB headquarters, an airport and the fanciful Capitalism Cafe — decorated with a C resembling half the McDonald's arch.

The game pieces include a white airplane and a red car. Players rotate roles as capitalist and KGB.



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Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, waving goodbye above, and empire founder Vladimir Lenin, right, had no way of knowing that by Christmas 1991, their beloved Soviet Union would be nothing more than an American board game.



Capitalist bidders move around the board by the airplane. If KGB agents, traveling by car or subway, arrive at the auction before it ends, the spy agency gets the commission.

Escape cards can save commissions. Black market items are the wild cards. One card reads: "Visit a Lenin Monument. Lose a turn for being a hypocrite."

Another says: "You are chased by a butcher for taking photos of food lines. Sell photos to US magazine for 2 Million Rubles."

One depicting Russian President Boris Yeltsin on a

military tank during the failed August coup attempt says: "Stand up for Democracy. Earn 2 extra turns & the leadership of the Russian people."

The game logo is takeoff on the hammer and sickle, with an auctioneer's gavel crossing a broken sickle blade.

Key phrases are in both English and Russian, but one phrase on the game's logo and on all the property cards is in Russian only.

"It was the translator's choice of words," Porter said. "The party's over. The party's liquidated."

Which is the game objective.