

Communist Monopoly

The first board game Ross Porter designed was called Geo Obsession. His friends liked it, but every time they played it ended with total nuclear destruction of the planet. His second game made all the players global aliens, and the rules encouraged cheating. But he's worked out all the bugs for his fourth, called Moscow! Auction!, the first of his creations to be mass produced.

The game is a sort of reverse Monopoly, in which players have to sell off all the state-owned property in Moscow while being chased by the KGB. "History caught up with me," Porter said, reflecting that he had been playing the game since March, after which the Soviet Union began moving toward privatization, a free-market economy and eventual dissolution.

On a leave of absence from 20 years of teaching Central European History and Global Studies at Smethport Area High School in Pennsylvania, Porter traveled to Moscow to find out who owned all the mansions and factories before the Bolsheviks nationalized them after the Revolution. He also took photos of the landmarks depicted on the game's 39 Property Auction Brochure Cards, including Gorbachev's house, Ehrman's Vodka Factory and the Lenin Funeral Train (noted as perfect for theme park development).

A winner is determined when the Old Communist Bank goes broke. Cash is easy to keep track of, since the only currency is 1 million ruble notes that can be accumulated by finding a clean toilet or an elevator that works. It can also be confiscated for sneak visits to Lenin's Tomb.

Porter is hawking his game until Christmas for \$26.50 at a Carousel Center kiosk near Eddie Bauer's, and the game can be ordered on Master Charge or VISA by calling (800) 828-4525.

CENTER STAGE

Forget Boardwalk, I'll buy the Kremlin

By Jeff Stage
Staff writer

Ross Porter saw it all coming. Back in 1990, Ross could have told you those USSR Olympic pins would be out of date by the time the next Olympics rolls around next year.

Porter, a 42-year-old history teacher from Smethport, Pa. — that's in northwest Pennsylvania — guessed so well that he melded his knowledge of Russian history and politics into a game his students could play.

After some variations, he expanded on the idea and developed a board game called Moscow! Auction!

Porter, who was in town just before Christmas hawking his game at Carousel Center, says it's kind of a reverse version of Monopoly.

"Players play with rubles until someone breaks the old Communist bank (by transferring money to the new democratic bank," said Porter.

Places like the Kremlin and vodka factories go up for sale. Players are sometimes chased by the KGB.

Porter, who's visited the Soviet Union twice, also took the photographs and drew the artwork for the game, which is being manufactured by Drescher Box Co. of Buffalo.

Porter hopes to get national and international syndication by showing his game at the 1992 Canadian Toy Show and International Toy Show in New York City.

Those who want to play before that, though, can buy copies for \$28.50 by calling (800) 828-4525.