

Nuke Risk

I was thinking miscellaneous thoughts when the words “Irkutsk” and “Yakutsk” popped into my mind. Ah! Christmas 1964 saw me, my brother Raybo and cousin Gorpf playing Risk, the board game where you can conquer the world from Greenland in theory but in *realpolitik* whoever controls the Middle East controls the world. As so often happens, the rule sheet had long since been lost (now kids, this is pre-Internet, so you can’t just look up rules). We agreed on a few basics and began rolling the dice. You keep rolling until you lose a battle; then you regroup. If you manage to defeat the enemy, you place one of your armies there as an *occupying army*.

Our rules worked OK, except ALL of the countries began accumulating armies – we had forgotten some feature, and soon we had 27 armies fighting against 36, and had to write IOU’s (just like a modern government) in order to keep rolling. It seemed the game would go on for eternity! Then one of us had a bright idea – *Nuke Risk!* Each invader and defender rolls just once to win a country. You don’t put an occupying army in the defeated country – the radiation would kill them! So we rolled dice for about fifteen minutes, until the board was blank *and we had NO winner*.

Mind you, this is 1964, when Kennedy and Khrushchev had recently been playing Nuke Risk, but they wisely kept their nukes in the holster.

Irkutsk and Yakutsk? They are two cities in, basically, Siberia. The makers of Risk divided the world into 42 countries, some of which were amalgamations like “Northern Europe.” But by far the most fascinating thing was that there is *no Russia in Risk!* The largest nation in the area is called... (drum roll) *Ukraine*. It occupies the Moscow area and many points eastward. Ukraine is placed in Southern Europe (where indeed, millions of displaced Ukrainians live today). Small wonder Putin hates us! If he grew up on Risk, he would think "USSR, Soviet Union, Rossia,

Ukraine, eh... all same thing". And all by himself he figured out that Nuke Risk is the game to play today.