

The First "Protest" Game BOERENSCHROOM

Article by Fred Horn

It has now become rather 'normal' to give authorities a reply on all kinds of their actions. And sometimes—mostly published and printed in paper form—it can be the subject for a game.

Under that circumstance, that sort of publication becomes part of the Protest action and attempts to interest more people for the "thing" the protest is against.

Making fun out of public figures and "Rulers of the State" like Kings, Ministers, etc. can be found on,

mostly Goose-like games from the 17th- and 18th-Century but these were not Protest games.

Early in the 19th Century a game was launched in Holland that had all the features for what we call today "protesting against the authorities." The name of the game: BOERENSCHROOM



N.B. In fact BOERENSCHROOM (Peasant's diffidence) is very difficult to translate in English in just 'one word.' Also 'hesitation' or 'shyness' are partly useful.—F.H.



Minister Jean Henri Apollonius
April 30, 1767-April 12, 1828

In Holland we have a saying:

*"Nothing is certain
except Death and Taxes."*



Out of the Napoleonic period the Dutch government started with a new organization: De Rijksbelastingdienst (Governmental Tax Service) and especially both peasants and farmers had to deal with some old tax forms: 'Verponding'; 'Geslacht'; 'Gemaal' respectively for: Ground; Animals; Mills.

Though we do not know the author, BOERENSCHROOM was invented around 1840 and inspired by the suffering of the peasants in the province of Noord-Holland because of a bad harvest and plant diseases.

N.B. The same happened in Ireland at that time with much more suffering for the population. Hunger, epidemic diseases, and death were the consequences and there followed an immense exodus of Irish people to the United States.

In Holland, landowners (lessors) as well as the government wanted their money and did not have any consideration with the peasants who couldn't pay the lease. Also the new tax system of Minister Apollonius was created.

Because of the lack of income, protest against this situation, where the peasants took the 'toll,' was huge and widespread. The result...the publishing of a game!

One of the oldest examples (1874) of the game from the 19th Century that has survived (*can be seen on the opposite page*). (Collection Museum Lakenhal Leiden -nr. 5824-)

The game mechanism is comparable to the older game of BELL AND HAMMER or one can better say this game inspired the inventor of BOERENSCHROOM.

Both are auction-type games where various cards are sold in an auction to the highest bidder (who, later in the game, hopes to get more money than he originally invested in the earlier auction).

In BOERENSCHROOM not only are diverse cards auctioned by raised bids, but the two Peasant Cards are auctioned by reduction (sold by Dutch auction!—*a type of auction also called a descending price auction in which an auctioneer starts with a very high price, incrementally lowering the price until someone places a bid*), because the owners of these two cards must pay during the rest of the game.



Also different is the use of two special six-sided dice.

One die has an 'S' and includes the numbers 4, 5, and 6 along with two blank sides.



Another shows a 'B' and the numbers 1, 2, and 3 with two blank sides.



In Holland the game has been on the market from the year 1840 well into the 1980s when a facsimile version was published.



What need? Dice emergency? Come on! I'll make them myself in a few minutes

Game Rules Translation

Art. 1. Before starting the game each player puts 15 to 20 coins into the pool/stock.

Art. 2. Six cards, in numeral order, are sold by auction to the highest bidder and the revenue of this is put into the pool; while the seventh and eighth card are auctioned off to the lowest bidder who is paid out of the pool.

NB. Who buys the 'Ontvanger' (Tax taker), is not allowed to take a Peasant card, but otherwise each player can buy or ask for as many cards as they want.

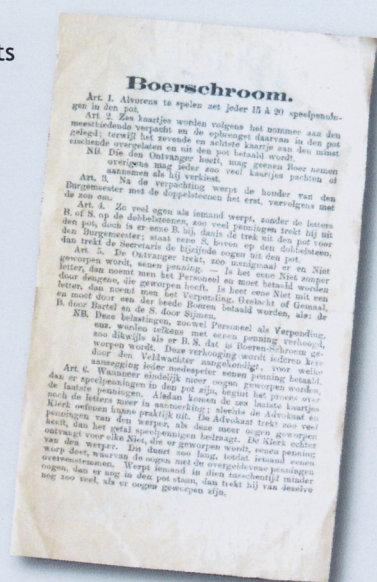
Art. 3. After the auction the owner of the 'Burgemeester' (Mayor) rolls the dice first. Next, continue with the direction of the Sun.

Art. 4. As many 'eyes' as one rolls without the letters B or S showing, that's how many coins are taken out of the pool. But if a B is rolled then the holder of the Mayor card now draws from the pool. If there is an S on top of the die then the 'Secretaris' (Secretary) pulls the corresponding 'eyes' out of the pot.

Art. 5. The 'Ontvanger' takes out of the pool 1 (one) coin each time a 'Blank' has been thrown. If it is a 'Blank' without a letter then it is called 'Personeel' and the player who has rolled must pay. A 'Blank' with a letter is called "Verponding," "Geslacht," or "Gemaal" and then one of the two Peasants has to pay—when B, Bartel must pay, and when S, Simon has to pay.

NB. These taxes, "Personeel" as well as "Verponding," etc. are increased each time by 1 (one) coin when B. S. (that is BOERENSCHROOM) is thrown. This increase is announced each time by the "Veldwachter," and he gets 1 coin from each of the other players.

Art. 6. When, in the end, more 'eyes' are thrown than what's in the pool, the process concerning the last coins begins. Then neither the last six cards nor the letters are eligible any more; only the "Advocaat" and the "Klerk" are now 'in business.' The "Advocaat" gets from the throwing player the amount of coins that is the difference between his thrown 'eyes' and the number of coins in the pool. The "Klerk" instead gets one coin each time a "Blank" has been rolled by the throwing player. This goes on until one of the players throws the same amount of 'eyes' as there are coins in the pool. If anyone in his turn rolls less 'eyes' than the amount of coins in the pool, then he takes that number of coins out of the pool.

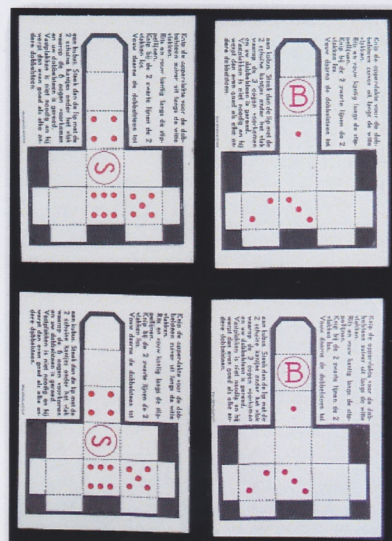


The game rules in Dutch

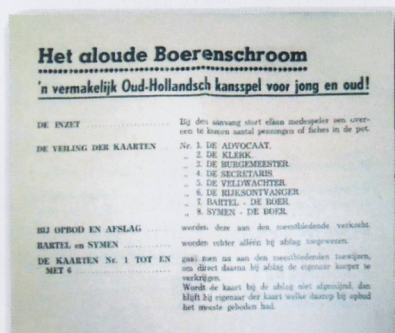
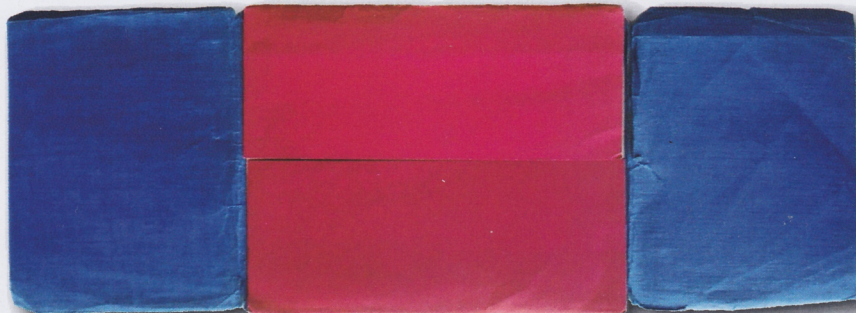
From my own collection, now in the Vlaams Spellenarchief in Brugge, Belgium, here is a version published during WWII by the firm Gebroeders Koster. Because of the shortage of material no box was used and the cards are stored in a paper coverage. Also, the dice are not included, but it was possible to buy them separately.



Still you had to "make them yourself!" out of cardboard.



The game was sold in this paper along with its contents of the eight cards and an information-sheet:



The best-known version in collector circles is the version of BOERENSCHROOM in a wooden box from the end of the 19th Century.



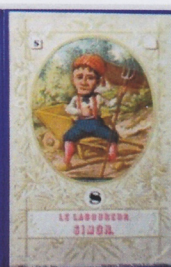
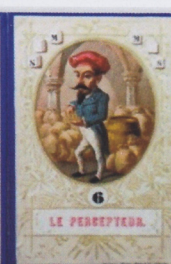
OTHER PUBLICATIONS

This typical Dutch game was thought to have only been published in Holland. But while visiting my French friend Michel Boutin I became aware of a French version published in the last part of the 19th Century.



JEU DU PERCEPTEUR or *LES CAUCHEMARS DU LABOUREUR* is a banking derived from the WHITEHORSE (BELL AND HAMMER) game. It includes eight cards and eight special single-sided dice. This game is of Dutch origin—BOERENSCHOOM—and evokes the difficulties encountered by peasants in paying Appellus taxes after the bad harvest around 1840 (Thanks to Fred Horn). The game is previously published by A. Lion

Jeu du Percepteur,
coffret 27 x 21 cm
(Tax collector game,
box 8.25 x 10.5 in.)



Photos source:
www.jeuxanciensdecollection.com/pages/Les_jeux_de_plateau-4708901

In this French version there is a major difference in the use of dice.

The two special die used in the Dutch game are gone and the manufacturers resorted to the amount of dice (8) used in BELL AND HAMMER.

Here each die has only one side with a number or letter. All of the five other sides are 'blank.' The letters used are an 'M' and an 'S' from the two French peasants Martin and Simon.

The difference in play is not known because rules for the French version are missing.

AGPI