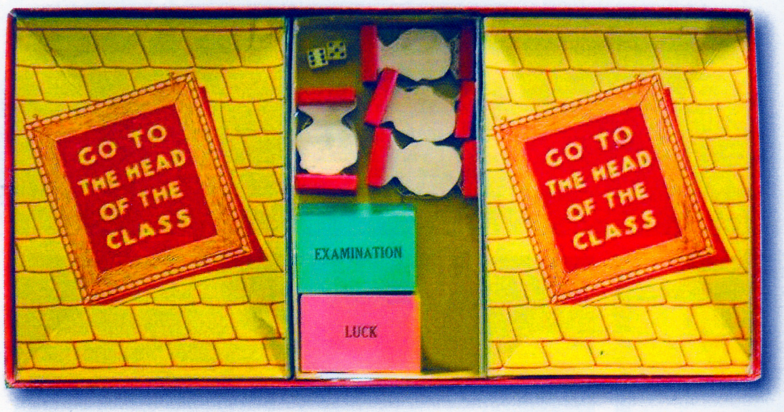
The amazing story of a well-known Milton-Bradley game during wartime in Holland

HERSENGYMNASTIEK & FAMILIE QUIZ

Article by Fred Horn

On *Wikipedia* the following can be found about a well-known quiz game (in the USA):

GO TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS:
a roll-and-move board game published originally by the Chad Valley Co. Ltd. in 1936. It was later published by Milton Bradley (now owned by Hasbro). GO TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS was last produced by Winning Moves USA in 2013.



The game board was designed to look like a top view of a school classroom with the teacher's blackboard at one end. Original tokens were cardboard images of adult and children affixed to wooden or plastic bases. Players advanced to the "head of the class" by moving tokens from desk to desk as a result of answering questions correctly. The game also includes random "chance cards" that add or subtract positions without involving a question, such as *"Put away that peashooter and go back 3 desks"* or *"For good penmanship, advance two desks."*

*But it is **not** the American licensed and produced game that is the subject of this article. Although the game had been published in many countries around the world, the story of its Dutch adventures is well worth telling!*

No record could be found how it ended up in Holland. Was there a licensing agreement from the Chad Valley Co. Ltd, or did the Dutch publisher (Multicolor out of the small town of Deventer) in 1940 take the game and design without permission from the English firm? We do not know because all of those files and archives are missing or got thrown away.

What we do know is that the game appeared in Holland and named after a famous radio show called *Hersengymnastiek* (Brain gymnastics) which also was the inspiration for other versions like an 'electro-game' from an unknown firm from 1941, and the Jumbo version from 1946 just after the war—when the show began airing again after being held from production during the war:

For these games, the title was taken from the famous words of the presenter: "*Hoe is de stand, Mieke*?" (*What is the score, Mieke*?) instead of the name of the show!



Hoe is de stand Mieke?

The show which aired from 1938 up to 1992 for the AVRO (the broadcasting society) was co-presented by Mieke Melchior who held the score and was the inspiration for the name of these two games.

Thus, just before or in the first year (1940) of the occupation of Holland by the Germans, the firm Multicolor from Deventer published a copy version of the Chad Valley game, which was reviewed in the newspaper *De Tijd* from January 11, 1941:

Wie is de beste leerling?

Hersengymnastiek, een aardig spel voor jong en oud

De Multicolor N.V. te Deventer, fabriek van Meta-spelen, heeft een spel in omloop gebracht, dat werd samengesteld door G. Josselin de Jong en onder den naam „Hersengymnastiek" werd uitgegeven. Dit spel heeft vooral voor ouderen een bijzondere bekoring. Twee tot acht spelers kunnen eraan deelnemen. Zij zijn de leerlingen, die op de schoolbanken worden geplaatst en daar van hun kennis blijk moeten geven. Zij worden daar behandeld als gewone schoolkinderen en krijgen aldus ook de gebruikelijke goed- en afkeuringen. Wie de vragen, door den onderwijzer gesteld, naar behooren weet te beantwoorden, blijkt een goed leerling te zijn en wordt aan het eind van het schooljaar verhoogd naar een volgende klas. Tot zoover is natuurlijk de kennis der leerlingen van het grootste belang, maar ook de dobbelsteenen spelen hun rol in dit spel, zoodat de altijd verrassende geluksfactor niet vergeten is. Het spel wordt er des te aantrekkelijker door.

Who is the best student?

Hersengymnastiek, a nice game for young and old

The Multicolor N.V. from Deventer, manufacturer of Meta-games, has released a game that was created by G. Josselin de Jong and published under the name "HERSENGYMNASTIEK." This game holds a particular appeal, especially for seniors. Two to eight players can participate. They are the students who are placed at the school desks and from there have to demonstrate their knowledge. They are treated there as normal schoolchildren and will thus receive the usual approvals and disapprovals. Anyone who can answer the questions posed by the teacher, sufficiently proves to be a good student, and is promoted at the end of the school year to the next class. To this extent, the knowledge of the student is thus far of the greater importance, but the dice also play their tole in this game, which means that the random factor is not forgotten. This makes the game all the more attractive.

De Tijd newspaper translation

When we look at the game board (here shown with Dutch text) that was also in the Chad Valley version, we really see a classroom:



HERSENGYMNASTIEK game board

The compiler of the questions, G. de Josselin de Jong, was, during the war, head of the Dutch Broadcasting, now operated by the Germans. After the war he was brought before the 'Gooische Oorlogstribunaal' and was accused of being a member of the NSB (the Dutch Nazi party) and for spreading war propaganda, for which he was also responsible in his daily job. He was declared guilty and banned from taking part in publications and thus not able to make further questions for the game. Also his name was removed from the rule book!



This small booklet containing the rules and questions came in different colors and also had adapted covers. First, in the 1940 edition without a K-number; then after 1941 with the K-number: K744, indicating the printer: drukkerij Borst from Deventer; and after 1947 again without a number. >>



As can be seen on the backside of the red cover, one could also order follow-up booklets (in total three, named AANVULLING here but published as VERZAMELING) with new questions.

Again G. de Josselin de Jong's name was removed after the war which is clear in the two (below) examples from my collection in the Spellenlab in Bruges of the TWEEDE VERZAMELING (second collection):

Enlarged view of the back of the rules book



also other ads on back



During the war the questions were sometimes aimed too much towards Nazi-friendly ideas like a *Great Germany*, and theories about race, as well as about the enemies from abroad.

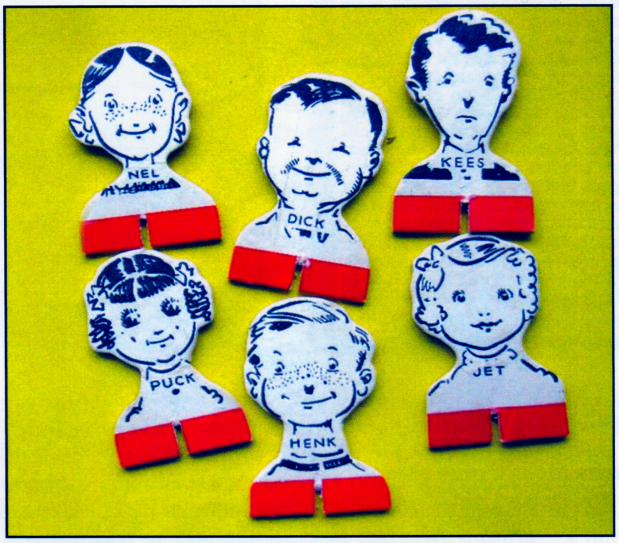
Adolf Hitler was a "World leader" and Winston Churchill the devil himself!

This changed completely with the issues after the war; concluded from the then included questions about the newspapers *Het Parool* and *Trouw*, which were illegal during the war.

One of the most striking, but also terrible displeasing features, is the removal of two of the pupils from the original English game. There had been 8 children used as pawns—as such mentioned in the rules. In the Dutch version only 6 children (3 boys and 3 girls) are included in the box, although as can be seen on the first (white) cover, 2-8 players are given.



On the cover after the war 2-7 players are noted which allows for 6 players plus a game leader who is responsible for the questions.



Shown here are the faces of the 8 original pupils; and here in the Dutch version Sissy and Liz were not welcome anymore because of their Jewish looks.

In Holland the glasses they were wearing were known as "Jodenbrilletje" (small Yiddish glasses). Thus to stay out of trouble from the new German authority (but maybe because of de Josselin de Jong's Nazi sympathy we do not know) these two pawns were not included in the game.

The former EXAMINATION and LUCK cards from GO TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS became in the Dutch version EXAMEN and GEDRAG because the term GEDRAG was normally used in Holland for "behavior" and as such with the other term VLIJT (diligence)—part of getting a score on your school report.



The first color used for the lid of the game box was red; this was in 1940. Later this color changed during the war years. The 1942 publication is shown with a black lid and the one from 1943 is blue in color. After the war the cover reverted back to red.

Here are the known different executions of the cover; again it is noticable on the sticker that Mr. de Josselin de Jong's name had been removed in 1947 and changed to: 'Copyright Multicolor N.V. – Deventer.'



1940



1942



1943



1947

In the last part of the 1950s Multicolor tried to bring the game to market again under a new name:

FAMILIE QUIZ

This time the questions contained in the 142 pages of the booklet for FAMILIE QUIZ (Family Quiz) were compiled by a certain Jan Boots of whom we don't know more except his name. Not only were the questions new but also the text on the two sets of 20 EMANEN and GEDRAG cards were fresh.

Curiously the board from the former publication was reused as can be concluded from the still identical text on the school blackboards.

The dating was determined by interpreting question cards that provided clues about the possible date of the answer. But different from the situation in the USA, this version is very rare, so we can assume that it was not a big seller! And as far as we know, this was Multicolor's last published game.

I visited the publishing firm Multicolor in Deventer in the 1980s, but nobody there could at that time even remember the publication of their games and even worse they told me that after some changes of addresses all of the archives had been thrown away.

However in my collection there are a lot more games from this firm from the war years and just thereafter which will be subject of a follow-up article.

AGPI

