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# Votum (Vote)

Mattel, 1987

designed by Roland Siegers - translated by Pitt Crandlemire

A true-to-life game about election victories and majorities for 4 to 6 players

## **A CURIOSITY**

An united Europe - what opportunities this vision offers to the dyed-in-the-wool politician! No more small-minded, small state thinking, the wheelers and dealers will overcome all borders!

The unique game VOTUM allows you to play the exciting role of a party leader, who might belong to the generation of the grandsons of the present-day greats.

This game became possible through the untiring investigations of the intrepid Belgian Roland Siegers. He found its material in Brussels archives that are so secret that nobody knows of their existence except him.

In difficult competition with several news magazines, he has succeeded in editing the explosive material for this game exclusively, that could be held up as a mirror in reproach to the parties of the future.

## **1. WHAT IS IT ABOUT?**

Votum is a fast and talkative, sometimes loud and often clever game: it requires decisive bargaining, a little luck, and, above all, else the gift of negotiation.

Each player is responsible as the trustworthy chairman of a political party, whom he leads through three legislative sessions, that is, game rounds. During each session, five elections take place followed by the formation of the government.

The goal is to advance as far as possible in the parliament. Advancement comes, on the one hand, through luck (namely, your cards) and the way you use it, that is, playing the right cards at the right time, and, on the other hand, through skillful negotiation with your fellow players about posts and their related points.

Success is measured in points. Each player has a sixth of the game field (the plenary hall) in front of him, his points are marked in the track of his color. After 15 elections, the strongest party-chairman wins; that is, the one with the most points.

## **2. GAME MATERIAL, POLITICALLY NEUTRAL**

### **1 gameboard showing the plenary hall**

The gameboard shows the plenary hall. Each party has its own area there. But don't let there be any false conceptions; in the plenum, only the points are recorded. Events in the plenary hall are just a formality, true politicking takes place elsewhere.

### **18 scoring candidates from 6 parties**

The small game-figures are used for marking scores on the colored tracks on the gameboard.

For example, 1,230 points is indicated by a figure on the "1" space of the Thousands track, a figure on the "2" space of the Hundreds track, and a figure on the "3" space of the Tens track.

Each player starts the game with 1,110 points.

### **6 party cards**

Each player gets a party card, which indicates how many government and minister points he can pocket through his governmental responsibilities.

### **6 city cards**

BO = Bonn BR = Brussels L = London P = Paris R = Rome W = Vienna

These cards represent the election sites. The city cards are shuffled and placed face-down beside the gameboard. The first card is turned face-up to indicate where the election round will take place.

### **30 campaign cards**

These cards show the vote results of election campaigns according to the party secretary-general. Unfortunately, actual campaign successes may differ. As a result, the chairperson is always in doubt, should he should play a strong card for an election in Bonn, for example, if Rome might bring more votes? Who knows what will happen in the coming elections?

The number of the seats in parliament that an election campaign awards is determined by cross-referencing the row of the party color and the column with the name of the city in which the election is being held.

## **3. THE GAME BEGINS**

A trustworthy player is chosen in any manner to be the start player. He shuffles the 6 city cards and sets them face-down covers beside the gameboard. The top card is turned over; the first election will take place in this capital. Then the start player shuffles the 30 campaign cards and deals 5 to each player. Leftover cards (when playing with less than 6 players) are set aside.

### **3.1. GATHERING OF VOTES**

Once the site of the first election is known, the campaign cards are played. Beginning with the start player, everyone sets out one card face-up in front of himself. Thus, later players can see which cards were played by earlier players and possibly base their tactics on this information.

You get as many seats in parliament in this election round as indicated on the campaign card. The intersection of your row (the one with your party color) and the column (for the city where the election is taking place) shows the number of seats won.

### **3.2. NOW IT'S ALL ABOUT...A QUESTION OF POWER!**

All seats won in the election round are added up and it is then determined how many seats are needed to form the government: If a total of 100 seats were awarded, you need a simple majority of 51 seats, which is rounded up to 60; with 240, 121 would be needed, rounded up to 130.

If any party has all the required points by itself, it gets all 150 government and 210 minister points: These are marked on the appropriate tracks and the round ends.

If no single party has the required majority, however, (and that is usually the case) then a majority must be negotiated politically. Now things can get a little loud and personal, because the six ministerial posts must be negotiated in order to form a coalition government between the party leaders. A party can take on several posts. If several parties form a coalition that achieves the needed majority, i.e. they must first have agreed on who will hold which posts, then the government is formed.

Example:

In this case, the majority needed to form the government is 130. Gray, with 120 seats, opens the debate and asks Lilac (10 seats) to join him in a coalition. Lilac wants all the ministerial posts and Gray finds that to be too expensive. Gray then negotiates with Pink (30 seats) and agrees that Pink will get all the ministerial posts except for Minister of Culture and Minister of Labor. (Pink's power comes from the existing relationships and the art of negotiation.)

So, players wheel and deal for as long as it takes until two (or three or four) can agree on ministerial posts and a government is formed. The points are calculated (how? that is explained below!) and marked on the board, and the next election round begins.

### **3.3. NOW YOU POCKET POINTS:**

Government points are awarded in accordance with the seating strength of each party in the coalition. The party that has the most seats in this round is the strongest party. If several parties have the same number of seats, the one sitting closest to the start player's left is the strongest.

This is also true for determining second strongest party, etc.

Ministerial points are awarded according to the numbers indicated on the party card for each ministerial post. (Ministerial points for any one office may not be divided between several parties.)

Players can negotiate freely about who gets which ministerial post (and, thus, points), as you know.

The government and ministerial points indicated on the campaign card are added up and marked in the plenary hall, that is, the gameboard.

### **3.4. NEW ELECTION - NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

After the first election is finished, the new start player turns over the next city card and the second election round begins. The start player of each new round is the leader of the strongest party in the government after previous elections.

The next election takes place in the city indicated on the new city card and each party plays a campaign card, as before. They now have only 4 cards to choose from, however, since the card used in the first election round is no longer available. After the election, the government is formed as before.

After five election rounds have been held, the legislative session is finished.

### **3.5. THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

The city card still left after the fifth election is turned up and the first election of the second legislative session takes place there. The remaining city cards are shuffled and placed face-down beside the gameboard.

All 30 campaign cards are shuffled by the chairman of the strongest party of the last government and each player again gets 5 cards. The new legislative session is run the same as before, politics is always the same in principle.

Points achieved in the first legislative session are preserved and newly gained point are added to them.

## **4. BALANCING CAREERS**

After three legislative sessions (15 election rounds), one player will have won the most points through card play and dealmaking: He becomes honorary chairman of his party, with numerous well-endowed honorary offices and board-membership honors - and, of course, is also the winner of the game.

## **5. TWO IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS**

Two exceptional cases can appear during the negotiations for forming a government.

1. Only 2 parties have seats and they have the same number, the remaining parties have no seats:  
In this case, the player sitting closest to the start player's left gets 90 government and all 210 ministerial points. The other party gets only the remaining 60 government points.
2. Despite extensive negotiations, no coalition can be achieved between the players:  
In this case, a minority government is formed. The player who had the most seats in this round gets all 150 government points and then distributes the ministerial points as he sees fit to the remaining parties.