

# The mysterious AGVATO

Article by Fred Horn

**I**n 1974 the German firm ASS (Altenburger Stralsunder Spielkarten) published the game AGVATO, one of the games from a series of diverse games ranging from easy children's games to complicated abstract/strategic games. This game was invented by a Dutchman, a certain Mr. A.G. van Tol as can be stated by a small article published in the Dutch Children's Magazine "*Na Vijven*" (*After Five O'clock*):



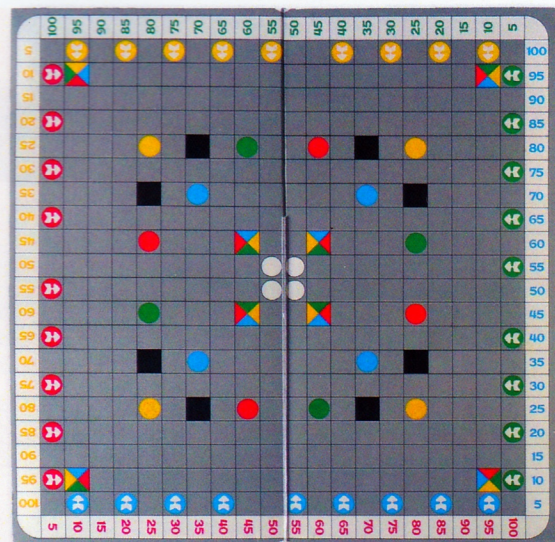
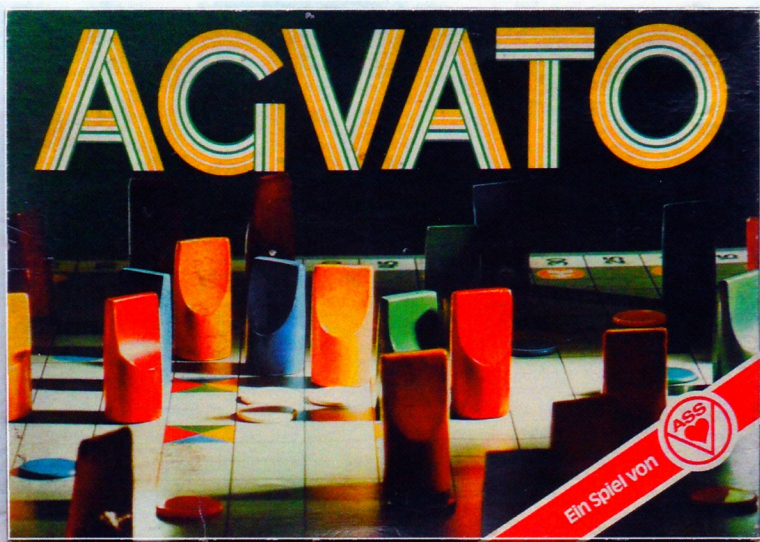
## Agvato

In het komende nummer hebben we een geweldige aanbieding voor u: een origineel bordspel, ontworpen door de Nederlandse ontwerper A.G. van Tol, voor een heel gereduceerde NaVijven-prijs.

Als u geïnteresseerd bent in spel(l)en – of indien u nog geen Sinterklaas-kadootje wist te bedenken – of voor het geval dat u gewoon voor de komende winteravonden gezellig een heel nieuw soort spel wilt gaan spelen: hebt u even geduld tot het komende nummer. Met 'Agvato'!

A first mystery is: *Who is this Mr. van Tol?* It was obvious he used his own name for the title of this game: A G va To! For a very long time in circles of game players—and collectors—no one had any idea who invented this game, up to that time when someone presented me copies of some pages out of this Dutch magazine where information on games could be found. Before it was thought to be a German invention from the firm ASS.





AGVATO game board

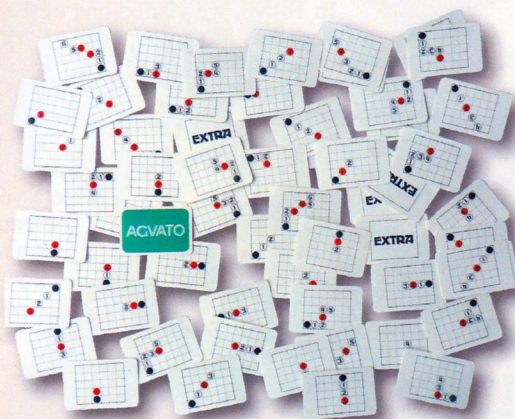
Back in early 2000 when I took a vacation to Germany, we passed by the town of Altenburg. While visiting this beautiful old town we ventured to the castle, home of the museum that houses the playing cards and games collection of the firm ASS. Once there, I tried, of course, to get more information from the staff about the history, publication, and inventors of their older games. Although the staff was very friendly and willing to help, no one could give me any facts concerning the firm's games from the seventies.

Later on, after finding a bit more information about the Dutch inventor I tried via phone and mail to get in contact with someone at ASS who might know more or was willing to search the files. Alas, nobody could (or was willing to) provide any answers nor certainly the address or phone number of this mysterious Mr. van Tol.

In Holland nowadays, hearing the name 'van Tol' in connection with games, one immediately thinks about Hans van Tol, the driving force behind the Dutch game publisher The Game Master B.V.. I asked him once if he had any family with the name A.G. van Tol who invented a game in the 1970s. He had no idea who the person was; certainly not a close related family member, and he also had never heard about or seen the game itself! Case closed—mystery of its origin unsolved!

But there is still another small mystery, something that the people from ASS could not even give any explanation of. Was it a production fault? Were the rules adapted?

In the games' first issue a die was included, and in such a way that its game tray had a special separate "inlay" section for it. In the later version the tray had been altered—no "inlay" area—and there is no record of a die in the rules.

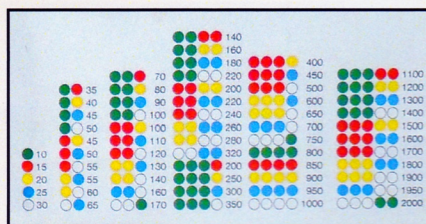


AGVATO cards display your pawn's route

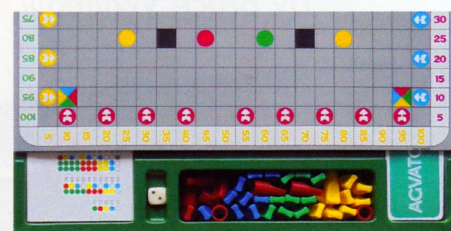
What could have happened? Was a die needed in the original rules from Mr. van Tol ... did ASS skip its use to save money but forgot about it in the publishing of the first release? Who knows? So this will stay a mystery as well!

I can really recommend this game as very entertaining, and easy to play with both young and old. If you can find a copy, buy it! The rules are easy because one moves their pawns over the board using cards describing the 'route'.

On the board, chips are placed and each player must collect his chips according to the given positions on the cards. This chart shows chip combinations and award points:



Points awarded by certain chip combinations



An "inlay" in the tray is shown above for a die



The die's "inlay" is missing in the later version

At the end (when all chips are captured) each player's points are counted:

| Spelers             | A | B | C | D |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|
| tijdens het spel:   |   |   |   |   |
| Slagpunten:         |   |   |   |   |
| Strafpunten (25)    |   |   |   |   |
| Slot                |   |   |   |   |
| Veroverde pionnen   |   |   |   |   |
| Eigen pionnen       |   |   |   |   |
| Kleuren combinaties |   |   |   |   |

During the Game:

- An enemy pawn that is captured gives the points of its color as documented on the edge of the board.
- When a card cannot be played, a penalty of 25 points occurs.
- At the end of the game all pawns on the board get their points as documented on the edge of the board.

AGPI