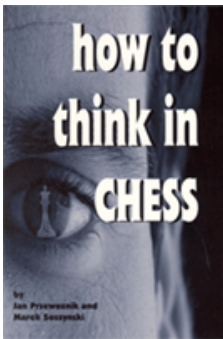




COLUMNISTS

*Dutch Treat*

Hans Ree



**CHESSTHEATRE**

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Café Odessa

“To dream of playing chess denotes stagnation of business, dull companions and poor health.”

This I found on a website devoted to the interpretation of dreams. I don’t believe it. There is no dictionary of dream symbols that can explain every man’s dreams in one big sweep. It’s always personal and the only one who can at least vaguely interpret a dream is the dreamer himself.

But even if you don’t believe the voodoo, you can’t help but take it half-seriously for a brief moment. As when I read a horoscope – a Virgo does not believe in astrology – and against all my stubborn convictions I still wonder if this chance meeting that will change my life – if only till the next magazine’s instalment – will really occur.

And so I wondered briefly if it could really be a bad sign that I had two chess dreams recently. I used to dream often about chess, but not anymore. But then there were two vivid chess dreams, one shortly after the other.

I dreamed that I had to give a lecture in Moscow on the history of world championship matches. I was nervous, because I expected a highly knowledgeable audience, but it turned out well.

I could tell the Moscow chessplayers two things that they did not know. One was that Tigran Petrosian had prepared for his match against Mikhail Botvinnik in 1963, when Petrosian would become World Champion, by playing blitz games against all comers in the Moscow chess café Odessa. The other interesting fact I had discovered for the Moscow chessplayers’ enlightenment was that in all world championship matches the leaner guy had prevailed against the fat one.

After waking up, against my sober judgement I still wondered if there was any literal truth in my dream, so I did a Google search on Café Odessa in Moscow. Did it really exist? The only thing I found was a Café Moscow in Odessa. It was described as a Rock Café and chess was not mentioned.

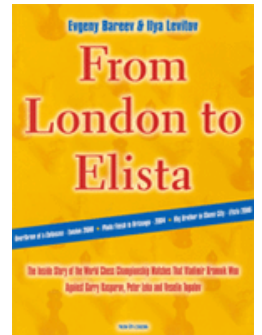
But if I will ever have the pleasure of visiting Odessa, a beautiful city with a rich history, I will certainly check out Café Moscow to see if there is any connection with Petrosian, to vindicate my dream.

And what about the victory of the lean man over the fat man? There is certainly something to it. From the fine book [From London to Elista](#), by Evgeny Bareev and Ilya Levitov, we learn that Vladimir Kramnik’s seconds gained confidence when they found in 2000, before his match against Kasparov, that he had lost weight. A sign of impending victory, they thought, and they proved to be right.

But it is not an iron law. One contrary example is the first World Championship match in 1886 between Steinitz and Zukertort, where chubby Steinitz convincingly beat lean Zukertort.

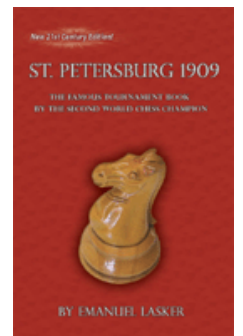
Nevertheless I studied the videos of the press conferences of Anand and Kramnik to see if my dream could have given me privileged information about the outcome of their match.

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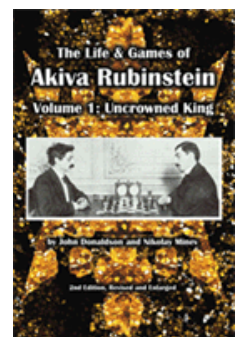
[From London to Elista](#)

by Evgeny Bareev & Ilya Levitov



[St. Petersburg 1909](#)

by Emanuel Lasker



[The Life & Games of Akiva Rubinstein](#)

by John Donaldson & Nikolay Mineev

Who was the fattest, the man bound to lose? Neither of them can be called fat, but I thought that Anand's body was slightly the more rotund. Still he won.

Soon afterwards I dreamt that I was one of the opponents of a master who gave a simul. In my dream I knew that I was a grandmaster myself, so that I should easily beat him.

However, the position on my board was completely unfamiliar to me. I could not remember having played that way. What had happened? Apparently many moves had been played without me being conscious of them.

I looked at my scoresheet. The moves were there and the handwriting was familiar, it was that of Tim Krabbé. Had he taken over for a while?



*Manuel Aaron*

*Photo: [ChessBase](#)*

I complained to the simul giver that I could not remember having made the moves that had wrecked my position. He turned out to be the Indian master Manuel Aaron.

He smiled friendly and said that it was a very bad sign that I at my comparatively young age was not able to remember the moves that I had just made. He himself was born in 1930 and he had no trouble remembering chess moves at all.

Of course I checked this too after waking up. My dream proved to be not too far from reality. Manuel Aaron was born in 1935 and according to Wikipedia he is still in fine shape.

But why did he figure in my dream? I played him once, in the Indian city Bangalore in 1981, and I had not spent much thought on him since.

I am not interested in interpreting dreams. Like most people I have a feeling that dreams can sometimes tell you things about yourself that you do not know consciously, but what these are you cannot formulate. If you could, they would not have been subconscious in the first place. Dream books, Freudian or otherwise, cannot help.

Interpretation is fruitless, but I like to try to find a genesis of my dreams, though this may be a wild goose chase. Why Manuel Aaron?

I think it must have a connection with his game against Max Euwe in the Olympiad in Leipzig in 1960. India was by far not the chess power that it is now and Aaron was completely unknown to us at the time. I was sixteen-years old when I read about that game in a newspaper and I was shocked that our Dutch hero Euwe was beaten by an unknown Indian. Euwe himself may have been shocked also, for he kept playing on for ten moves when he was a rook down.

Almost half a century later Manuel Aaron appeared in my dream, beating me in a simul. Somehow during all these years he must have been present in a back room of my mind as a scourge of Dutch chess.

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