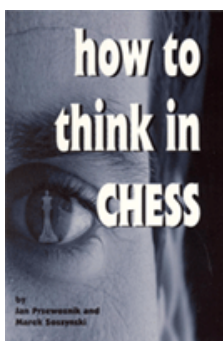




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



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Former Chess Paradise

During the heydays of Yugoslav chess I often compared it to an empire where the sun never sets. As in the Spanish, British or American empire there was always a place with daylight, in the former Yugoslavia there was always or nearly always an international tournament going on and often several at the same time.

There is a story about two concurrent tournaments in two nearby Yugoslav towns which I will call A and B, because I have forgotten their real names.

The foreign masters and grandmasters who had been invited for the tournament in A were pleasantly surprised when already at the airport they were welcomed by the organisers. They didn't know that these were the organisers from town B, who abducted them to their own tournament. Wonderful times, when organisers were scheming and fighting for chess masters.

Usually the foreigners were hardly aware in which of the constituent republics they were playing. Belgrade was Serbia, Zagreb was Croatia, that was the extent of most of the visitors' knowledge. I think that also for the Yugoslavs themselves this wasn't so important an issue as it has become later.

At the European Team Championship in the Hungarian city Debrecen in 1992 the "Yugoslav" team – Yugoslavia consisting then only of Serbia and Montenegro – was expelled from the tournament after the first round, purportedly to comply with a UN resolution. In that first round Yugoslavia, still in favor, had beaten Czechoslovakia, another country that was soon to be broken up, though peacefully.

One of the teams in Debrecen that had urged for the boycott of Yugoslavia was, not surprisingly, that of Croatia. But at the time I heard that after the removal of the Yugoslav team, players from Croatia and Serbia joined each other at the bar, where they gloomily discussed the political situation. Orders from above had forbidden them to play against each other, but drinking together was still possible.

Of course during the Yugoslav wars chess life there was badly hurt. Afterwards it more or less recovered, though its former glory has not yet been renewed.

In 2006 the two strongest candidates to organise the Olympiad in 2010 were Budva in Montenegro and the Siberian oil town Khanty-Mansyisk. Budva is an attractive town at the Adriatic coast with a beautiful old center. In Khanty-Mansyisk it can be very cold.

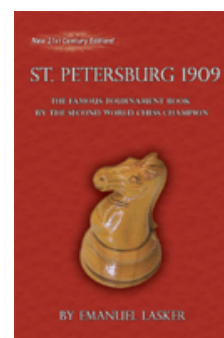
Ilyumzhinov, who should have been neutral, called Khanty-Mansyisk "our city" when he was explaining its victory in the bidding process. Apart from his use of the term "our city," no further explanation for that victory would have been necessary.

Recently Budva had a consolation prize, the organisation of the individual European Championship.

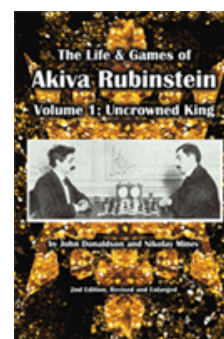
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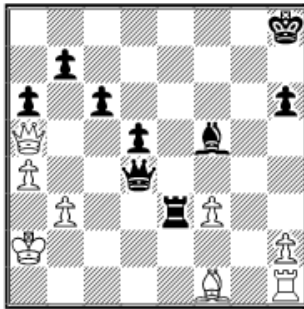
As it became clear about halfway through the tournament that Sergei Tiviakov, champion of 2008, would not retain his title, I was hoping that he would pass on the baton to another Dutchman, Ivan Sokolov, who had been among the leaders from the start.

In fact Sokolov finished in first place, but together with ten other players. In the tiebreaks he was eliminated by the Georgian Baadur Jobava, who beat him in both rapid games.

The final four in Budva were Jobava and the Russians Ernesto Inarkiev, Vladimir Malakhov and Evgeny Tomashevsky. The occasional reports about the death of Russian chess seem very much exaggerated.

The final of the tiebreaks between Malakhov and Tomashevsky was lost by Malakhov in the most pitiful way that can be imagined. After two rapid games the score was 1-1. Then came the deciding game, armageddon as they call it nowadays. White got 5 minutes, Black 4 minutes, with a draw counting as a victory for Black.

Needing only a draw to become European champion, Malakhov obtained a winning position.



Here there is a forced mate starting with 48...Bb1+, but Malakhov blundered his rook with **48...Re1** and resigned after **40.Qxe1 Bg6 50.Qa1**.



*(l-r) Jobava (bronze), Tomashevsky (gold) and Malakhov (silver)
Photo by Nebojsa Baralic at ChessBase.com*

In a photo of the prize-giving ceremony, Malakhov holds his silver trophy with a faint smile on his face. No tears were dropping on his face, but his heart must have been weeping.

Dutch patriots could be happy with the fact that apart from Ivan Sokolov, Friso Nijboer also qualified for the World Cup competition, that is to be held in Khanty-Mansyisk in November and December this year. On the other hand, qualification had been expected of Tiviakov and Loek van Wely and hoped for Jan Timman and Erwin l'Ami, but these four only shared 50th place with a host of other players, scoring a decent but unproductive 6½ out of 11.

The most spectacular Dutch game of the event was played by Nijboer.

1.e2-e4 c7-c5 2.Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3.d2-d4 c5xd4 4.Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5.Nb1-c3 d7-d6 6.Bc1-g5 e7-e6 7.Qd1-d2 a7-a6 8.0-0 Bc8-d7 9.f2-f4 b7-b5 10.Bg5xf6 g7xf6 11.Nd4xc6 Bd7xc6 12.Qd2-e1 Bf8-e7 13.Bf1-d3 Qd8-b6 14.Kc1-b1 Qb6-c5 15.f4-f5 b5-b4 16.Nc3-e2 a6-a5 17.f5xe6 f7xe6 18.Ne2-f4 Qc5-e5

A well-known position where up till now everybody had played 19.Rf1. Among them was Nijboer himself, who had this in Nijboer-Acs, Corus B 2003, a game he won.

19.Qe1-f2 a5-a4 20.Bd3-c4 Bc6xe4 21.Rh1-e1 b4-b3

To each his own attack. Now White should have tempered Black's initiative by sacrificing an exchange with 22.axb3 axb3 23.Rxe4 Qxe4 24.Bxb3, after which his own attack would become quite strong.

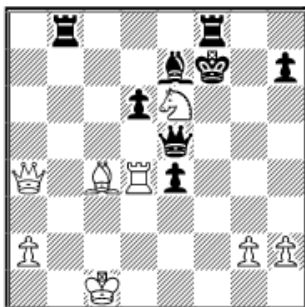
22.Rd1-d4 b3xc2+ 23.Kb1-c1 f6-f5 24.Nf4xe6 a4-a3 25.Re1xe4 a3xb2+ 26.Kc1xc2 b2-b1Q+ 27.Kc2xb1 Ra8-b8+ 28.Kb1-c1 f5xe4 29.Qf2-c2 Rh8-f8

Black's attack was the more dangerous one, but here he should have played 29...Rc8.

30.Qc2-a4+

For now White could have forced a draw with 30.Ng7+ Qxg7 (after 30...Kd8 31.Ne6+ Black should repeat moves) 31.Qa4+ (only now) when White gives a perpetual.

30...Ke8-f7



White might have overestimated his chances in this position. He can give a discovered check in many ways, but none will give him a decent position. On the other hand Black is threatening to strengthen his own attack decisively with 31...Rfc8.

31.Ne6xf8+ Kf7xf8

White has regained his exchange, but his king is helpless.

32.Qa4-a7 Qe5-f4+ 33.Rd4-d2 Rb8-c8 34.Qa7-d4 Be7-f6 35.Qd4-d5 Qf4-f1+ 0-1

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