



COLUMNISTS

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, **ChessCafe.com** has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

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Dutch Treat by Hans Ree

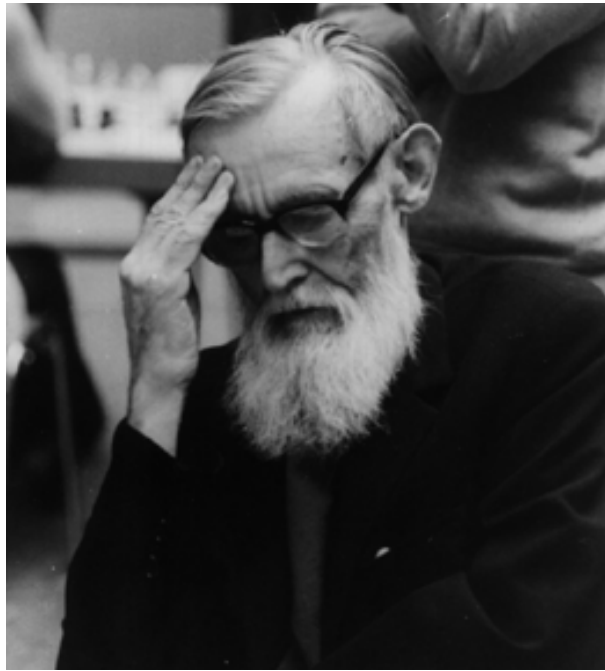
Emil Joseph Diemer

Those who think that all chessplayers are mad, will not change their opinion after studying the life of Emil Joseph Diemer. Diemer was born in 1908 in the German town Radolfzell, in Baden. Already at a young age he was a passionate chessplayer, but it was not until 1932 that he had a game published. Until 1956 his greatest success was a first place in the blitz championship of Baden. In his best period he could be considered a mediocre master.

Very strong Diemer certainly was not. Nevertheless, in the fifties and sixties he had a flock of disciples in Germany and also in the Netherlands. He was the prophet of relentless aggression in chess. “Play the Blackmar- Diemer gambit and mate will come by itself!” he wrote. “The Blackmar gambit changes the whole man!” In this he was completely serious. In 1996 the German Manfred Mädler Verlag published a biography of Diemer, written by one of his most faithful followers, Georg Studier: *Emil Joseph Diemer: Ein Leben für das Schach im Spiegel der Zeiten* (A life for chess in the mirror of time). The biography has 280 pages. Some world champions are still waiting for such homage.

Studier has great admiration and sympathy for Diemer. He calls him a man of unusual genius. Diemer’s simul tours are described as triumphal processions.

Still the book has not become a hagiography, because there was too much in Diemer's life which is repulsive and which Studier couldn't and wouldn't suppress.



Emil Joseph Diemer

In 1931 Diemer was out of work. He had been fired from a small job at a publisher's house. He was not fit for a job. Like many other malcontents he became a member of the NSDAP, the German Nazi party, and was thrown out of the house by his father the same day.

Diemer was never well able to take care of himself, but as a Nazi it was easier than before. Not that he had become a party member out of opportunism. He was a fanatic, in everything he did. He was a relentless agitator for the party in the years that the Nazi's romantically called the "Kampfzeit," the years of struggle before they took power. Diemer made new friends and now it was possible for him to become a professional chessplayer. He became the "chess reporter of the Great German Reich," was present at all important international chess events and sang the praise of "Kampfschach," chess as a struggle, in the Nazi newspapers and magazines. He did not earn much money and even then he was dependent, as he would be till the end of his life, on admirers to support him in his penury.

After the war it became more difficult. Diemer wrote in countless little magazines and papers, sold chess books, gave simulcs, but often he was hungry. He was simply not strong enough to be a chess professional. And in 1953 he lost an important part of his small income because he was expelled from the German chess federation. In a rabid press campaign Diemer had accused officials of the federation of homosexuality and corruption of innocent youth. For Diemer, who later told his biographer Studier that he had never physically loved a woman, homosexuality was a great and threatening evil. He did not only abstain from love but also from drinking and smoking. He played chess.

Success he had not, but there were disciples who wrote passionate polemics about the merits of the Blackmar-Diemer gambit, **1 d4 d5 2 e4 dxe4 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 f3**. For one year, from 1955 till 1956, Diemer published his own magazine, *Blackmar-Gemeinde* (Blackmar-Community), which he had to close down when his creditors became too impatient. Everyone of importance in the chess world was bombarded by Diemer with letters that contained endless analyses of his gambit. He found recognition, even in the Netherlands, where the company Ten Have published Diemer's German-language book *Vom ersten Zug an auf Matt* (From the first move going for mate).

It was in the Netherlands that Diemer in 1956 finally became successful in chess. He won the Reserves Group of the Hoogovens tournament and later the Open Championship of the Netherlands. In the same year he played in the Swiss Championship (after being banned from the German federation he had become a member of a Swiss club) and shared second place.

These successes were not to be repeated. After a disappointing tournament in England, Diemer discovered in a German women's magazine the cause of his bad score. Biorhythm. After that his chess friends were bombarded with biorhythmical calculations and graphs. Furthermore, Diemer discovered Nostradamus, the famous 16th century French clairvoyant. In a period of 25 years he sent about ten thousand letters on Nostradamus. They contained calculations hard to follow for the outsider. By means of a simple system, a=1, b=2 etc, he had cracked the code of the great clairvoyant. Even well-meaning friends found it strange that the code would be hidden in the German translation, instead of the original French text.

Nostradamus was to dominate Diemer's life, even more so than chess. On the streets he accosted unsuspecting pedestrians. He disturbed a funeral by shouting: "A living one is buried here!" He lamented that the river Rhine would run dry and that nuclear bombs would fall on Heidelberg. The authorities of town and province loathed the ringing of the phone, in fear that it might be Diemer, announcing the apocalypse.

In 1965 he was committed to a psychiatric clinic. The director found that chess was too much of a strain for Diemer's nerves and he was not permitted to play anymore. But six years later a miracle happened. In 1971 a young admirer brought about the cancellation of both the clinic's interdiction and the expulsion from the German chess federation. Diemer could become a member of a German chess club again and his young admirer had seen to it that he got first board on the team. Diemer was given the new dentures that had been promised to him in 1952 by a rich admirer. He was playing again and his board was always surrounded by young disciples who were delighted by his attacking style.

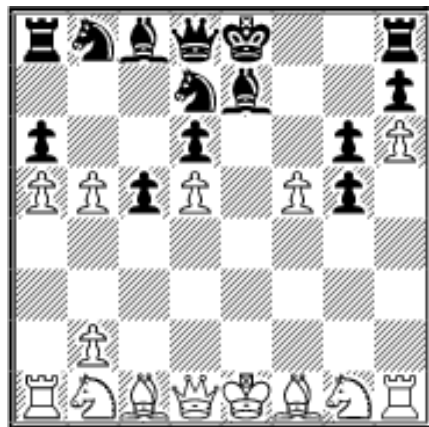
His strength in chess had suffered, but he did not mind. One day he might become the best player in the world, he said, but more important to him was the Nobel Prize that he expected for his investigations on Nostradamus' works.

He died in 1990. He had not played chess during his last five years. In Fussbach, the site of his clinic, the villagers had seen him stumbling through the streets, tall and thin, with prophet's beard and half-blind, and they had respected Diemer, because they had heard by rumor that this man once had been a great chessplayer, maybe the greatest of all.

That he was certainly not, but a remarkable player he was, with his glaring one-sidedness, always looking for the attack and for nothing else. Here is Diemer's last tournament game, played in 1984. Studier gives it in his book "without distracting commentary" and he is right to do so, because one should not clinically dissect an amazing game like this.

Diemer – Heiling

1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 f2-f3 d7-d6 3 e2-e4 g7-g6 4 g2-g4 Bf8-g7 5 g4-g5 Nf6-d7 6 f3-f4 c7-c5 7 d4-d5 b7-b5 8 c2-c3 a7-a6 9 h2-h4 Nd7-b6 10 h4-h5 e7-e6 11 h5-h6 Bg7-f8 12 a2-a4 e6xd5 13 a4-a5 Nb6-d7 14 e4xd5 Bf8-e7 15 c2-c4 f7-f6 16 c4xb5 f6xg5 17 f4-f5



Seventeen pawn moves in a row, probably a world record.

17...g6xf5 18.Qd1-h5+ Ke8-f8 19 Ng1-f3 Rh8-g8 20 b5-b6 Bc8-b7 21 Nb1-c3 Nd7-f6 22 Nf3xg5 Nf6xh5 23 Ng5-e6+ Kf8-e8 24 Ne6xd8 Nh5-g3 25 Nd6xb7 Ng3xh1 26. Bc1-f4 Rg8-g6 27 0-0-0 Nh1-f2 28 Rd1-e1 Ke8-d7 29 Nc3-b5 Nf2-e4 30 Re1xe4 Rg6-g1 31 Re4-e1 Rg1xf1 32 Re1xf1 a6xb5 33 Rf1-g1 Kd7-c8 34 Nb7xd6+ Be7xd6 35 Bf4xd6 Nb8-d7 36 Rg1-g8+ Kc8-b7 37 Rg8-g7 Kb7-c8 38 Rg7xh7 Ra8xa5 39 b6-b7+ Kc8xb7 40 Rh7xd7+ Kb7-c8 41 h6-h7 Ra5-a1+ 42.Kc1-c2 Kc8xd7 43 h7-h8Q Kd7xd6 44 Qh8-d8+ Kd6-e5 45 d5-d6 1-0

This column first appeared in the Dutch newspaper *NRC-Handelsblad* on Saturday, November 30, 1996. Copyright 1996 Hans Ree, All Rights Reserved.

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