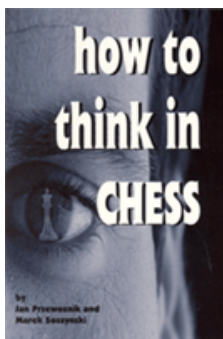




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



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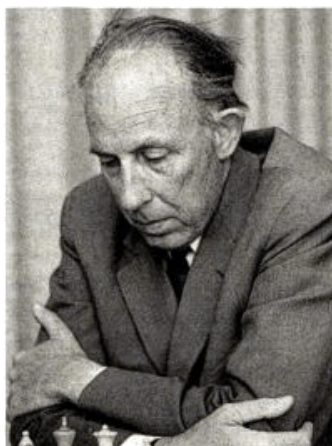


Some Stories from 1948

The death of the famous journalist Walter Cronkite on July 17 reminded me of a story that was told to me by the Dutch IM Nico Cortlever.

Cortlever was one of Max Euwe's assistants during the World Championship match-tournament of 1948, held in The Hague and Moscow.

For the Moscow part Euwe had agreed to provide reports for United Press International, which at that time and long afterwards was an important news agency. As he had obviously more pressing things on his mind than writing reports for the newspapers, Euwe passed on the job to Cortlever.



Nico Cortlever *Source: Arves*

Once Walter Cronkite, who at the time was the head of the Moscow bureau of *UPI*, came to visit the Dutch squad and told them that they were doing something wrong. When for instance Cortlever had written that Smyslov had sacrificed a pawn, he should have written instead that the flamboyant 27-year old Muscovite had sacrificed a pawn, to avoid repetition of the name Smyslov and provide additional information.

Among Dutch journalists, and probably elsewhere too, this quaint way of avoiding a harmless repetition is known as press agency language. The word flamboyant is also part of that language. It stands for red-haired.

I don't want to suggest that Cronkite had a quaint writing style. Probably he was just laying down the house rules.

Another story that Cortlever told me about that championship concerned Samuel Reshevsky. As it was known that Euwe would take his wife with him to Moscow, Reshevsky had demanded that the travelling costs of his wife, by boat from the U.S. to the Netherlands, should be paid by the Dutch organisers of the first part of the tournament, in The Hague.

That was agreed, but when Reshevsky arrived the organisers found that Mrs. Reshevsky's bill for drinks, tips and laundry had run up much higher than they had expected. This was annoying, especially because in fact she had not accompanied her husband at all, but had stayed at home.

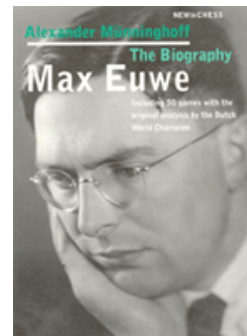
Reshevsky explained that this detail was beside the point. The organisers had promised to pay him the price of an extra trip from the U.S. to the Netherlands. If his wife would have come with him, she would necessarily have incurred these extra charges, so these should be paid also.

This argument was unanswerable, but as the Dutch organisers had very little money to spare, they conducted a strict investigation into the internal consistency of Mrs. Reshevsky's virtual bill. Had she not been over-tipping too generously? And these high laundry costs, couldn't she have worn her clothes a bit longer if she had really been on the boat?

I must say that I had some doubts about this story. As a Reshevsky story, it sounds almost too true-to-character to be really true. On the other hand, Cortlever was always the pinnacle of soberness, never embellishing a story for effect.

For Euwe, the championship was a disaster. Two years earlier in Groningen, he had been in a race for first place with Botvinnik, finally gaining second place a half-point behind Botvinnik, but 1½ points or

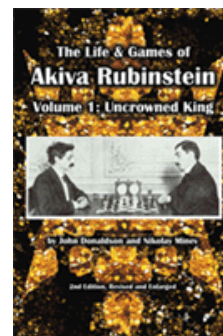
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more ahead of the rest of the field that included stars like Smyslov, Najdorf, Flohr, Boleslavsky and Szabo. At the World Championship in 1948, he scored only 4 points in 20 games.

One factor contributing to his troubles may have been the fact that Euwe, according to Cortlever, took mind-improving pills. Beware that this was in the good old days when no mere official would be so impudent to deny a chessmaster the right to fortify his body and mind in the way he deemed best.

Alas, there seemed to be no fortifying whatsoever. As Cortlever related, whatever it was that Euwe was taking, it had the effect to induce an almost euphoric and totally misplaced optimism.

Once, in The Hague, Euwe and his seconds were in a taxi on their way to the hotel after Euwe's game had been adjourned. Euwe was in a good mood, convinced that he had good chances to win the adjourned game. His seconds exchanged sad glances, as they had come already to the correct conclusion that Euwe's game was beyond saving.

It could not have been the game that is shown below, for there it is too obvious that Euwe was in a bad state at the adjournment. But in general this game indeed shows euphoric optimism.

Euwe had outplayed Smyslov and could have decided the game simply in an overwhelming attack. Instead he sacrificed a knight, without real need. But the sacrifice is correct and should have been winning, but then Euwe sacrificed his other knight, and after that he just doesn't have enough material left for the mating attack that had been there all the time, but which he squandered.

Such a pity. It could have been a great game.

Max Euwe – Vasily Smyslov

World Championship The Hague/Moscow, 4th round

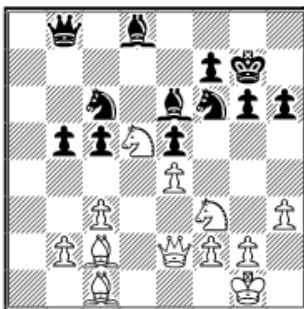
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After the famous game Fischer-Kholmov, Capablanca Memorial 1965, Kholmov's active move 16...c4 became popular, more or less putting the variation with 13.dxc5 out of business.

17.Nf3-g5 Be6-c8 18.Bc1-d2 Kg8-g7 19.Ra1-d1 h7-h6 20.Ng5-f3 Bc8-e6 21.a2-a4 Qc7-b8

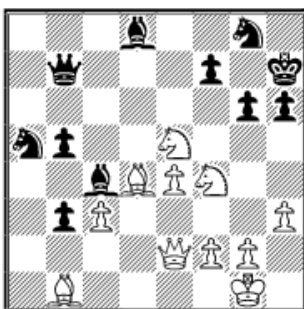
According to Euwe, Smyslov refrained from the more natural move 21...c4 because he feared, without good reason, the answer 22. Nd5.

22.Bd2-c1 Rd8xd1 23.Re1xd1 Rf8-d8 24.Rd1xd8 Be7xd8 25.a4xb5 a6xb5 26.Ne3-d5



Now this is quite strong. After 26...Nxd5 27.exd5 Bxd5 28.Bxh6+ or 26...Bxd5 27.exd5 Nxd5 28.Be4, White would have a clear advantage.

26...Nf6-g8 27.Bc1-e3 c5-c4 28.b2-b3 Nc6-a5 29.Nf3xe5 c4xb3 30.Bc2-b1 Qb8-b7 31.Be3-d4 Kg7-h7 32.Nd5-f4 Be6-c4



With all his pieces aiming at Black's king White should win without undue exertion. Here Smyslov expected the simple but deadly 33.Qg4,

when White will crash through by taking on g6. Euwe gave 33.Qg4 Nf6 34.Qg3 Nxe4 35.Qe3, and after Black retreats his knight or protects it with 35...f5, White wins with 36.Nexg6.

33.Ne5xg6

In his book about the tournament, Euwe wrote: "This is also good and in any case more attractive than the previous variation." That's right, but...

33...f7xg6 34.Nf4xg6

Too much of a good thing, wrote Euwe. The second sacrifice is unsound. After 34.Qg4, White's attack would decide quickly.

34...Kh7xg6 35.e4-e5+ Kg6-f7 36.Qe2-h5+ Kf7-f8 37.f2-f4

Euwe: "The sad acknowledgment that there is nothing to be had anymore. After 37.Bc5+ Be7 38.Qf5+ Ke8 39.Qg6+ there is the saving 39...Bf7." Yes, of course. This line suggest that during the game Euwe had forgotten about Black's Bc4, considering it to be just a big pawn.

37...Bd8-b6 38.Qh5-f5+ Kf8-e7 39.Qf5-h7+ Ke7-d8 40.Bd4xb6+ Qb7xb6+ 41.Kg1-h2 Qb6-e3 42.Qh7-f5 Na5-c6 0-1

This was Black's sealed move.

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