



Chess Paradise

In his latest book, *The Reliable Past*, which was reviewed recently for ChessCafe.com by Taylor Kingston, Genna Sosonko quotes a Russian militia report from the times that the Soviet Union still existed: “Citizen A.S. Lutikov in a state of extreme alcoholic intoxication was found dragging on his back another citizen, who was later found to be M.N. Tal.”

Yes, one can easily imagine the scene, for these two eminent grandmasters had a way with the bottle. I remember Tal crawling on hands and feet in a hotel room in Sukhumi in 1972, looking for a bottle of cognac that his wife supposedly had hidden somewhere, while she together with a girlfriend had jumped on his back to stop him. This was rather similar to the situation with Lutikov, only the rider had become horse.

I had to laugh about the militia report and there are many more things in this book that can provoke laughter. For example, the extreme measures Eduard Gufeld might take when he was in danger of losing a game. Sosonko tells us that once, when Gufeld immediately before the resumption of an adjourned game realized that he had sealed a losing move, he snatched the envelope from the hands of the arbiter and swallowed the piece of paper on which he had written the fatal sealed move.

And later, when he had already emigrated to the United States, Gufeld managed to save a seemingly hopeless position in time trouble by pressing the button of the fire alarm on the wall, just above the head of his opponent, who understandably lost his nerve and the game.

With all its wealth of funny anecdotes it is nevertheless a melancholy book, for just as Sosonko's earlier book, *Russian Silhouettes*, it describes a vanished world and the fate of older chessmasters who, with the disappearance of the typical chess culture of the Soviet Union, lost the foundations of their existence.

Sosonko writes: “Playing chess when you are elderly resembles the cruel custom in ancient times when slaves on galleys had their thumbs cut off; it was still possible to row, but not to throw a lance.”

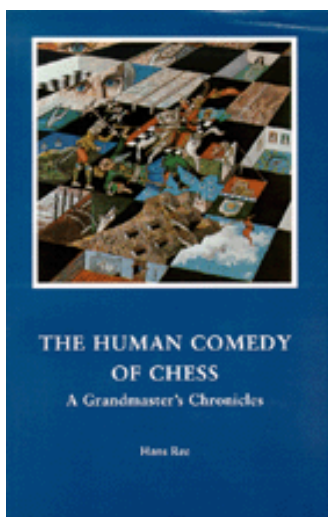
And at another occasion: “In ancient Persia one of the severest forms of punishment used to be imprisonment and the death penalty a few years later. This is the path that is followed by practically every chess professional.”

COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree

The Human Comedy of Chess



by Hans Ree



Sosonko himself has escaped this fate, for his gifts as a writer and teacher enable him to play now only occasionally. His view of the common path of the chess professional is bleak, but it must be said that playing chess for him was never an undivided pleasure, even when he was at the top of his powers as an active player. As he himself remarked, often during or just before an important tournament, he tended to fall ill.

Playing chess may be hard and cruel, but not playing chess anymore is also tough. One of the chapters, simply named *The Club*, is about the Central Chessclub on Moscow's Gogol Boulevard; for the young Genna Sosonko, who lived in Leningrad, this was chess paradise.

The train from Leningrad to Moscow, then the subway and the last station of the ride, Kropotkinskaya. Snow on the benches of the boulevard. The crowded cloakroom, a last cigarette and then the arbiter punches the clock: "Moscow. Gogol Boulevard. The Club. The wonderful January of 1961."

In 1988 Sosonko returned to the club, accompanying young Jeroen Piket. In the Grandmaster Room Botvinnik lectured and suddenly Viktor Baturinsky came in, who was once the feared leader of Soviet chess. He saw Sosonko, disappeared immediately and they heard him say in the corridor: "What's the world coming to, next year we'll be allowing Korchnoi to come to Moscow..."

This of course can be seen as a triumph for Sosonko, who at the time of his emigration in 1972 fully expected never to return to his native country, but again his pleasure is mixed with melancholia. A few years later, after the collapse of Communism, large parts of the club had to be let to parapsychologists, little shops, and a restaurant.

Sosonko knows very well why he left the Soviet Union, but as he writes in his preface, "only after I put my seal on the past did I realise the difference between what I tried to run away from and what I regretted having left behind."

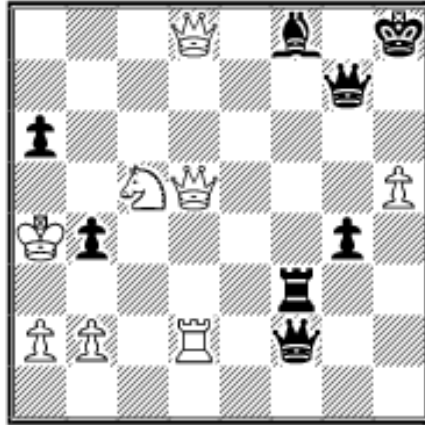
The book has no game scores or diagrams, which may be regretted by some. But then, it would have been a different book from the beautiful personal memoir that it is, when technical chess matters would have fit in with the flow of the stories.

But for the inveterate lovers of the pieces and the board, here is a game that might illustrate the wild adventures of Anatoly Lutikov, with whom this article started.

In his youth Lutikov had great admiration for the dashing attacks of Alexander Kazimyrich Tolush, who used to accompany his blitz games with shouts like: "Forward Kazimyrich!" Lutikov took over this expression during his adult years and the rather chaotic diagram shows that not only he, but also his opponent had followed Tolush's noble maxim.

***Anatoly Lutikov - Bukhuti Gurgenidze
Sverdlovsk sf ch-SU, 1957***

1.d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2.c2-c4 g7-g6 3.Nb1-c3 Bf8-g7 4.e2-e4 d7-d6 5.f2-f3 c7-c6 6.Bc1-g5 a7-a6 7.Qd1-d2 b7-b5 8.0-0-0 0-0 9.g2-g4 Qd8-a5 10.Kc1-b1 Rf8-e8 11.h2-h4 h7-h5 12.Bg5xf6 e7xf6 13.g4xh5 b5-b4 14.Nc3-e2 Qa5xh5 15.Ne2-g3 Qh5-h6 16.f3-f4 d6-d5 17.e4-e5 c6-c5 18.c4xd5 c5xd4 19.e5-e6 f7xe6 20.Bf1-c4 e6-e5 21.Ng1-e2 Bc8-g4 22.d5-d6+ Kg8-h8 23.h4-h5 g6-g5 24.f4xe5 f6-f5 25.Ne2xd4 Re8xe5 26.Qd2-g2 Ra8-a7 27.Rd1-d2 Ra7-d7 28.Nd4-c6 Nb8xc6 29.Qg2xc6 f5-f4 30.Ng3-e4 Bg4-f5 31.Bc4-d3 Bg7-f8 32.Rh1-d1 g5-g4 33.Bd3-c2 f4-f3 34.Rd2-d5 Qh6-f4 35.Rd5xe5 Qf4xe5 36.Qc6-a8 Qe5-g7 37.Ne4-c5 Bf5xc2+ 38.Kb1xc2 Qg7-h7+ 39.Rd1-d3 Rd7-f7 40.d6-d7 f3-f2 41.d7-d8Q f2-f1Q 42.Qa8-d5 Qf1-f2+ 43.Kc2-b3 Qh7-g7 44.Rd3-d2 Rf7-f3+ 45.Kb3-a4



45...Qg7xb2 46.Rd2xb2 Rf3-a3+ 47.Ka4xb4 Qf2xb2+ 48.Qd5-b3 Ra3xb3+ 49.a2xb3 Qb2-f2 50.Kb4-a4 g4-g3 White resigned.

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