



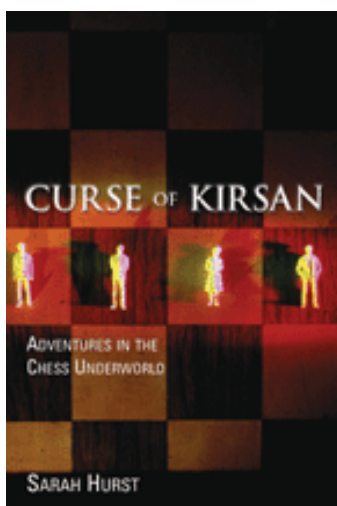
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From the Archives

Hosted by
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Curse of Kirsan
by Sarah Hurst

From the Archives...

Since it came online over eight 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.

Watch for an item to be posted online at least once each week, usually on Thursday or Friday. We will update the [ChessCafe](#) home page whenever there has been a "new" item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

The following is an excerpt from an unpublished manuscript by Hans Kmoch (1894-1973). Kmoch's career as a player, journalist, and arbiter brought him into contact with some of the greatest players of all time. We extend our thanks to Burt Hochberg, who owns the manuscript, for allowing us to publish this excerpt, which he has edited especially for [ChessCafe](#).

Grandmasters I Have Known

by Hans Kmoch

Yefim Dimitrievich Bogolyubov (1889-1952)

“Are you happy” Bogolyubov asked in German, using the familiar ‘du’ for “you.” Normally, adults use the familiar form only when addressing children, relatives, intimates, and, for example, brother officers in the army’s lower ranks. In other situations, use of the familiar ‘du’ requires some sort of mutual consent. For Bogolyubov, it was simply the way he addressed younger colleagues, and he didn’t care whether they responded with the formal ‘Sie’ or the familiar ‘du’.

“Are you happy?” he asked the much younger Reuben Fine during the tournament at Zandvoort in 1936. Fine’s excellent score (he went on to win the tournament) gave him good reason to be happy, and, having a good command

of German, he thought that was the point of Bogolyubov's question. Bogolyubov, however, was not referring to the tournament but was perpetrating another of his thoughtless "jokes:" he was asking whether Fine was pleased about the disaster that had just befallen the German Zeppelin 'Hindenburg' in New Jersey. Fine, a Jew, was certainly no friend of Nazi Germany, but the sheer crassness of Bogolyubov's question left him speechless.

Bogolyubov also managed to embarrass the organizing committee of this Dutch tournament. At the start of the competition, the organizers had marked each player's place with his name and national flag. In 1936, Germany had two national anthems and two flags, the Nazi party being represented by the "'Horst Wessel Lied'" and the swastika. When Bogolyubov complained that the swastika was missing, the embarrassed committee, to avoid adding it, decided to display no flags at all.

Years earlier, I once saw him showing a game in which he had obtained a great advantage against Tarrasch. The German grandmaster, according to some accounts, became suddenly ill during that game and thought he was dying. In fact, he died not long afterward. Bogolyubov took pride in that encounter: "the game that killed Dr. Tarrasch."

In 1934, during Bogolyubov's second match against Alekhine, the game scheduled at Bayreuth coincided with some Nazi party convention there. Uniformed Nazis were everywhere, including the dining room where Bogolyubov, Nimzovitch, and I were seated at a small table. Though Nimzovitch was proud of his 'Yiddishkeit' (Jewishness), the sight of all those Nazi uniforms must have been very unsettling. Bogolyubov was so insensitive to the situation that he casually teased Nimzovitch by recommending the pork chops.

Though such anecdotes show Bogolyubov in an unfavorable light, they permit us to understand his personality better. He was a friendly man, simple in his manner of talking and joking, simple in his optimism and his somewhat excessive professional pride, simple even in his vices, especially his exaggerated fondness for food (a favorite delicacy was frankfurters with potato salad). Very plump and very good-natured – though boorish when joking – Bogolyubov was much more amiable than his compatriot Alekhine. He reminded me of the bear that slapped at a fly on his sleeping master's head, killing fly and man together. As for his style of play, Nimzovitch's word for it was "brutal."

I first met this brutal bear at the Vienna tournament of 1922, then again at Baden-Baden, Breslau, and Moscow, all in 1925. It was in Moscow, where we met socially several times, at the apartment of Ilyin-Zhenevsky that I got to know him well.

The Russian words bogo lyubov may be translated as "beloved of God." It is equivalent to the Greek Theophil, the Latin Amadeus, and the German Gottlieb. For his name to be pronounced correctly in English, it is best spelled Yefim

Dimitrievich Bogolyubov. When he became a citizen of Germany, he adopted the spelling Ewfim Dimitrijewitsch Bogoljubow to facilitate pronunciation in German.

Bogolyubov, born April 1, 1889, near Kiev, was one of the Russian participants in the ill-fated chess congress at Mannheim in 1914. When World War I broke out and the congress had to be suspended, the Russian participants (a group in itself sufficient for a respectable tournament) were interned in Germany. In addition to Bogolyubov, there were Alekhine, Flamberg, Malyutin, Ilya Rabinovich, Selezniev, and Weinstein. Alexander Flamberg, who had some remarkable success in Russia before 1914, died young in 1926. Ossip Weinstein (sometimes spelled Wainstein, Vainstein, or Vainshtein) later became the editor of the Soviet Russian chess magazine *Shakhmatny Listok*. He was a civilian casualty of the German bombardment of Leningrad during World War II. Malyutin disappeared from the chess scene. The others became more or less famous in international competition. Alekhine soon returned to Russia in exchange for a German internee, and the others also eventually left. But Bogolyubov remained in Germany after the war. He settled in Triberg, the town in which he had been confined, where he acquired a house and a wife and became a citizen of his new homeland.

I met Bogolyubov many times after 1925, and also did some writing for him. Though he paid me well, our arrangement was quite informal. Whenever he had some cash he could spare, he would put a few bills in my hand and say “Just take it.” That was the extent of our bookkeeping.

But Bogolyubov was almost always short of cash. Unlike Alekhine, he needed little money for himself, but he worked hard to support his wife, two daughters, and mother-in-law – not to mention his house, the roof of which seemed to be suffering from some incurable disease and needed a constant supply of ready cash to pay for repairs. For a while Bogolyubov had a secretary, generally known only as Lotte, who was also something like his business agent. She was so good at her job that she intimidated the officials of chess clubs and organizations who had to deal with her, and Bogolyubov was soon forced to end the arrangement.

By way of recreation during tournaments Bogolyubov liked to play bridge, as did Alekhine, Colle, Maróczy, Vidmar, Tinsley (the chess reporter for the London Times), and myself. Even though we played for low stakes, Bogolyubov could rarely pay when he lost. He couldn't collect when he won either, since there was always some little debt to be straightened out. But he always paid eventually.

I remember one of those bridge games for an incident that was very characteristic of him. Tinsley, Bogolyubov's partner, spoke only English, but during the bidding he tried to use the few German words he could muster because Bogolyubov's bridge vocabulary in English was limited to two words: “nobbit” (no bid) and “rabber” (rubber).

Tinsley (North) bid one spade (“‘ein Pik’,” he announced in impeccable German), East passed, and Bogolyubov (South) jumped to three spades (“‘drei Pik’”). West passed, and Tinsley, naturally, went to four spades. But instead of pronouncing ‘vier’ (“four”) correctly as “fear,” he said “veer,” which is the pronunciation of the German ‘wir’ (“we”). He also mistakenly assumed that the plural of ‘Pik’ took the common German plural ending ‘-en’.

Bogolyubov reacted as if he’d just heard the most wonderful joke. “‘Wir piken’,” which is what Tinsley had said, means “We are stuck (to something).” Laughing uncontrollably as he showed his totally worthless hand, Bogolyubov trumpeted (in German, of course), “I have absolutely nothing! I only wanted to hear him say ‘wir piken’!”

At the tournament at San Remo in 1930, Bogolyubov was accompanied by his wife and their two daughters, who appeared to be ten or twelve years old. They were three comely people, models of clean appearance and simple, immaculate dress. The children, though well behaved and obedient, were also ready for any mischief that might present itself. A lovely family! I understood perfectly why the grandmaster worked so hard.

The years 1925 through 1928 marked the crest of Bogolyubov’s career. When he played his two matches against Alekhine, in 1929 and 1934, his strength was already beginning to wane slightly. But even when he was at his best, he was never as good as Alekhine. His tragedy is that he never accepted that fact.

In the 1934 match he thought he had solved the puzzle: Alekhine was hypnotizing him! So he armed himself with dark eyeglasses. The glasses helped only for a game or two, but then they became annoying – to Bogolyubov. Next he decided that Alekhine’s drinking was what accounted for the difference. So during the next three games, which were played in Mannheim, Bogolyubov stopped giving Alekhine odds of hard liquor. Alekhine’s practice at that time was to have a few quick drinks at the bar during each game, and in Mannheim Bogolyubov matched him drink for drink. Amazingly, it worked, but again only for a game or two. Bogolyubov lost this match, as he had lost the first one in 1929, without ever figuring out why.

The last time I met Bogolyubov was during his participation in the 1938 tournament in Noordwijk, Holland. Although he was then 49 years old and no longer able to contend with the leaders of the younger chess generation, he continued playing in one tournament after another to provide for his family.

His final tournament was Belgrade 1952, where he could hardly hold his own. Soon afterward he fell seriously ill, and on June 18, in Triberg, he died. A young Yugoslav physician who had attended that tournament told me some time later in New York that it was obvious at Belgrade that Bogolyubov was terminally ill. The doctor thought it was liver cancer. If that is true, Bogolyubov met the same fate as his famous compatriot Chigorin, who played in Karlsbad 1907 while suffering from advanced cancer and died early in 1908.



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