



SKITTLES ROOM



Geller's Nightmare

by Marius Ceteras & Olimpiu G. Urcan

The name of Efim Petrovich Geller is celebrated by any individual of decent chess strength and interest. A legend of the chess world, Geller participated six times in the Candidate Matches between 1953 and 1975. An accomplished theoretician who greatly influenced many lines in the King's Indian and Sicilian, Geller remained in the imagery of our chess community as the nightmare of many world champions. The gamescores of his sensational victories over Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Spassky or Fischer took countless trips around the world at that time and still do even today. Thus one should hardly be amazed if Kasparov in his *My Chess Predecessors* dedicated to him an entire chapter of 34 pages entitled "Petrovich – Threat to the Champions."

It is less known that Geller had, like all mortals, his own nightmares. And one of them was generated by Bela Soos, a Romanian chess player. We confess we knew little of Soos ourselves, until two years ago when we discovered some of his games in older issues of *Revista Romana de Sah*. One of Romania's top players since the 1950s, Soos has been practically erased from the history of Romanian chess as a result of his decision to emigrate to Germany in the early 1970s. During the Cold War era in most of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, immigration was regarded by the Party officials and its repressive mechanisms as an act of treason and any infidel's name was simply thrown out of history books. And so it happened to Soos, whose name did not appear in any chess productions following his leave. The Communist censorship did a professional job, one might say.

Unfortunately, not even after 1989, the year that brought a change of regimes, no one rushed to repair the injustice done to Soos. This is the main reason why we decided to search for the address of Soos in Germany. After much digging, we were successful and we sent a letter to the old city of Frankfurt kindly asking Soos to send us his comments to his game against Geller played during the Varna Olympiad in 1962. Great was our elation when Soos, now an old man in his 80s, responded with a poignant letter in which it was very apparent that his heart was still beating for a country that had forgotten him.

The game in question created a sensation at the time and is still a magnificent game.

B. Soos – E. Geller [E76]

Varna Olympiad, 1962

Notes by Bela Soos

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f4 Alekhine's Attack leads to very sharp play **5...c5 6.d5 0-0 7.Nf3 a6 8.a4 e6 9.Be2 exd5 10.exd5 a5** I had no previous knowledge of such a move. It must have been a Geller novelty since he was playing for a win. Up to that point he had collected no less than 8 points out of 8 games! **11.0-0 Na6** Now I understood Black's intentions. Geller plans Nb4, Bf5 and Re8 with a fantastic game for Black **12.Bd3** The only move that gives White good play. **12...Nb4 13.Bb1 Re8**



14.f5! gxf5 15.Nh4 Ne4 If 15...Ng4 then 16.Nxf5! (16.g3 is also advantageous for White) 16...Bxf5 17.Bxf5 Bd4+ 18.Kh1 Nf2+ 19.Rxf2 Bxf2 20.Qg4+ Kh8 21.Bg5! Rg8 22.Bxd8 (Ceteras: Simpler is 22.Qh3! with decisive advantage) 22...Rxc8 23.Bf6+ Rg7 24.Nb5 Kg8 25.Nxd6 with good chances for a win because of the d5-pawn **16.Nxe4 fxe4 16...Qxh4 17.Bg5 Qg4 18.Qxg4 fxg4 19.Nxd6 Re2 20.Nxc8 Rxc8 21.Bf5 Rce8 22.d6** with difficult problems for Black. **17.Qh5 Qe7**



18.Ra3! f5 19.Rg3! Yuri Averbach wrote in *Shahmaty v SSSR* that the maneuver Ra3! followed by Rg3! was a revolution in this system. **19...Rf8 20.Bh6 Rf7 21.Rxf5! Bxf5 22.Nxf5 Qe5 22...Rxf5** is met by **23.Qxf5 Rf8 24.Qe6+!** and wins **23.Bxg7** Geller resigned. **23...Qxf5** fails to the obvious **24.Nf6+**.

Such a win over Geller contributed to an historic result for the Romanian team at that time; it scored 2-2 against the strong team from the former Soviet Union. Having had the personal satisfaction of having played an excellent game against a world class player and contributing to a good team result, Soos did not expect to meet again with such a joy any time soon. However in 1964, only two years later, the same players met again over the board in the same city of Varna during an international tournament. It was, as someone once put it, *déjà vu* all over again – the same satisfaction in the same place for Soos, the same nightmare in the same place for Geller.

B. Soos – E. Geller [A36]

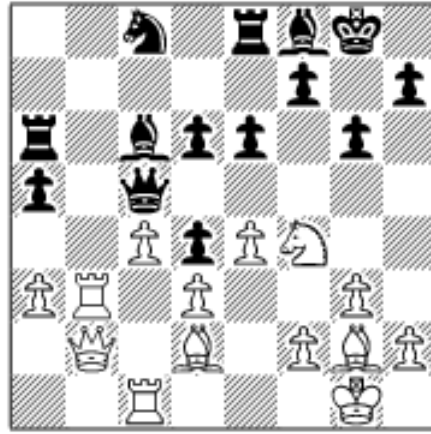
Varna, 1964

Notes by Urcan

1.c4 c5 2.g3 g6 3.Bg2 Bg7 4.Nc3 Nc6 5.a3 e6 6.e4 Nge7 7.Nge2 0–0 8.0–0 b6 9.Rb1 Bb7 10.b4 d6 11.d3 Qd7 12.Be3 Nd4 13.Qd2 Rfe8 14.Bh6 Bh8 15.Nxd4 cxd4 16.Ne2 a5?!



17.bxa5! An inspired decision to become active on the queenside by using the b-file. From such a perspective **16...a5** reveals itself as a strategic error. **17...bxa5 18.Rb6 Nc8 19.Rb5 Qc7 20.Rfb1 Bc6 21.R5b3 Qa7 22.Qb2 Qc5** Here Black proposed a draw which was refused by White. **23.Bd2 Bg7 24.Nf4 Bf8 25.Rc1** Preparing the little gem that follows. **25...Ra6**



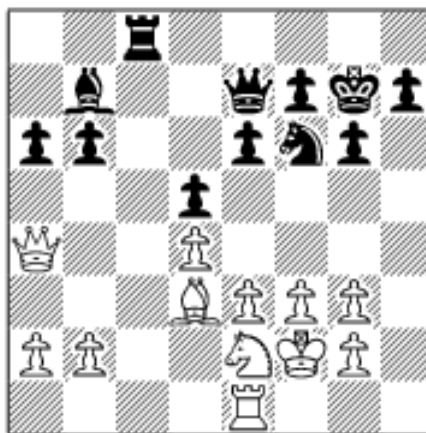
26.Nd5! This triggers a series of small tactics that will gradually increase White's advantage. **26...Bxd5** Not **26...exd5** **27.cxd5** **Qa7** **28.dxc6** with an overwhelming position for White. **27.cxd5** **Qa7** **28.dxe6** **fxe6** **29.Rb7** **Rb6** An attempt to liquidate White's disturbing pressure on the b-file. **30.Qxb6!** **Qxb6** **31.Rxb6** **Nxb6** **32.Bxa5** **Nd7** **33.Bb4** **Nc5** **34.Bf1** **Rb8** **35.Kg2** **Na6?** Perhaps Black has more useful moves than this one, however the a-pawn along with the diminished prospects of the Bf8 and the Bishop pair should be sufficient for White to go in for a favorable endgame. **36.Bxd6!** A last tactic that puts the finishing touch on White's winning endgame. **36...Bxd6** **37.Rc6** **Bxa3** **38.Rxa6** **Rb3** **39.Rxe6** and after couple of more moves Black resigned.

Considering the nature of such encounters, it was hardly a surprise when Geller, during the International Tournament at Skopje in 1967, had a much more peaceful outlook against Soos, even if he had the white pieces. His moves show nothing of a man who might be inspired by a dream, rather they show a man trying to avoid the recurrence of a disturbing nightmare.

E. Geller – B. Soos [D13]

Skopje, 1967

1.Nf3 **d5** **2.c4** **c6** **3.d4** **Nf6** **4.cxd5** **exd5** **5.Nc3** **Nc6** **6.Bf4** **e6** **7.e3** **Bd6** **8.Bg3** **0-0** **9.Bd3** **b6** **10.Rc1** **Bb7** **11.0-0** **Bxg3** **12.hxg3** **Qe7** **13.Re1** **Rfc8** **14.Bb1** **Na5** **15.Ne5** **Nc4** **16.Nxc4** **Rxc4** **17.Bd3** **Rc7** **18.Qa4** **a6** **19.Ne2** **Rcc8** **20.f3** **g6** **21.Kf2** **Kg7** **22.Rxc8** **Rxc8**



**23.Rc1 Rxc1 24.Nxc1 Qc7 25.Ne2 a5 26.Qb3 Bc6 27.Qc3 Qd6 28.a3 Kg8
29.Qc1 Kg7 30.Nf4 Bd7 31.Qc3 Bc6 32.Be2 Kg8 33.Nd3 Nd7 34.b4 axb4
35.axb4 Kf8 36.Nf4 Nf6 37.g4 h6 38.Nd3 Nd7 1/2-1/2**

The words sent by Bela Soos in his letter to us were written in a language in which he hadn't written for almost thirty years. Nevertheless, his emotions easily surfaced and his joy of being remembered by people from his native land was evident. Equally evident was this old man's joy when he reminisced how he was Geller's nemesis when he was in his prime. Should any of Bela's grandchildren develop an interest in the game of chess, their grandfather would have a great chess tale in store for them...

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