



Roel's Gambit

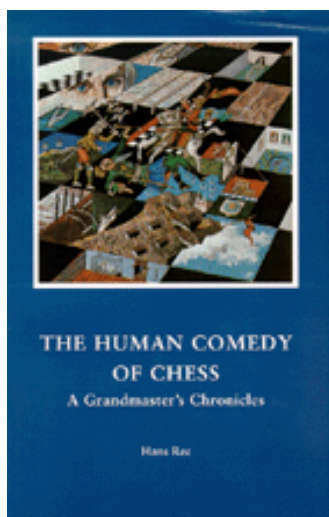
In the chess shop I asked for the recently published book about the Sicilian with 2. a3 and the bookseller said: "Ah, the Van Duijn gambit." In a way he was better informed than the author, grandmaster Alexei Bezgodov, for in his book *Challenging the Sicilian with 2. a3!*? he shows no sign that he is aware of Van Duijn's existence.

COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree

The Human Comedy of Chess



by Hans Ree

In the Netherlands Roel van Duijn is well-known, not as a chessplayer, but as a politician. In 1965 he was one of the founders of the Provo movement, a playful and vaguely anarchist group that was to gain a seat in the Amsterdam City Council with the slogan "Vote Provo for better weather." Later he founded the Orange Freestate and the Goblin Party and nowadays he is active for the Green Party. In different groups and political parties he always remained a gentle and inventive radical.

I can vouch for his early interest in the Sicilian with 2. a3, for in the 60s I played a chess match with him. Roel had already reached some national prominence. I was only a chessplayer. He lived with a beautiful girlfriend in the heart of Amsterdam, I lived with my parents in a suburb. To make up for my arrears in life I could beat Roel in the match.

It seems that in the Soviet Union there was often mention of a Russian inventor named Popov to whom mankind was supposed to owe the radio, the electric light and many other conveniences. In chess it was the same. In the West we had our Tartakower variation of the Queen's Gambit, but in the Soviet Union this was called the Bondarevsky-Makogonov variation. We had our Pirc opening, they had the Ufimzev opening, and so on.

Bezgodov does not suggest at all that he invented the variation with 2. a3 or that it should be called after him, but nevertheless I fear that the connection of Van Duijn's name with the gambit, which is firmly established in the Netherlands and in Germany, is now in danger in the English-speaking part of the world.

Roel himself had noticed that too. He had bought Bezgodov's book and told me that he had studied it on his way home on his bicycle and noticed some grave lacunae, especially when it came to mentioning his name.

No wonder that Amsterdam cyclists are feared as dangerous desperadoes. But apart from his risky behaviour in traffic, he was right: "Doesn't Bezgodov know my games, from the junior championship of The Hague in 1958 till now? Or my

articles in *Schakend Nederland* and *Schaaknieuws*?" Apparently not.

White's second move 2. a3 is of course not yet a gambit, but the preparation for it. After 1. e4 c5 2. a3 Nc6 (or 2...e6) White plays 3. b4 and if Black accepts the pawn sacrifice White gets good chances. White's problems are connected with other variations.

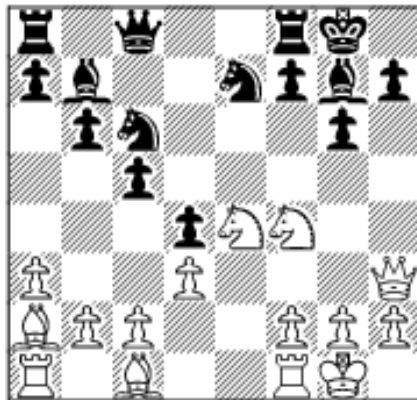
In blitz games with Roel I almost invariably played 2...g6. He thinks this is Black's best move and Bezgodov has a high opinion of it also. Just as in the variations where Black accepts the pawn sacrifice, the way these two experts continue White's play is quite different.

Here are two of my blitz games with Roel. I wouldn't have remembered them, but he published them (only the opening moves) in his article in *Schaaknieuws* in 1994.

Van Duijn-Ree

1. e4 c5 2. a3 g6 3. Bc4 Bg7 4. Nc3 Nc6 5. Nge2 e6 6. 0-0 Nge7 7. Ba2 d5 8. exd5 exd5 9. Nf4 d4? A question mark from Roel, but he is too severe.

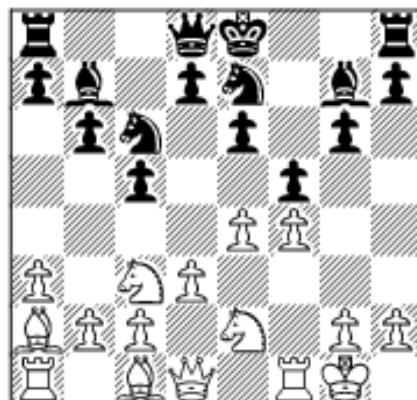
10. Ne4 0-0 11. d3 b6 12. Qf3 Bb7 13. Qh3 Qc8? Question mark from me. After 13...Ne5 Black is OK.



14. Ne6 White won the exchange and the game. One tends to overlook the power of Ba2, well-hidden in a distant corner.

In a later game I played more ambitiously as Black:

7...b6 8. d3 Bb7 9. f4 f5



10. Ng3 Nd4 11. Nce2 h5 followed by h5-h4-h3 and eventually Black won.

In *Schaaknieuws* Roel suggested 10. e5 as an improvement, writing that 10...g5? (his question mark) would be answered by 11. d4, but I don't see why this would be so good for White. Another suggested improvement for White was 9. Be3, though after 9...d5 Black has quite a decent game.

In general I find it difficult to judge the worth

of his manoeuvre Bf1-c4-a2. When Black plays e6, White's bishop bites on granite, but on the other hand, Black would like to play with his d-pawn or f-pawn or even with both, and if he does so White's bishop becomes active again.

Bezgodov has a completely different way of handling White's position. One of his main lines is 1. e4 c5 2. a3 g6 3. b4 Bg7 4. Nc3 d6 5. g3, when we get a rather normal Closed Sicilian with an early b4, which is probably not bad. Bezgodov claims a small advantage for White, but I see no reason why this would be better for White than the usual lines of the Closed Sicilian.

What to do then? Those who cannot reconcile themselves to the sober insight that Black should be able to reach equality after 2. a3, might try 1. e4 c5 2. a3 g6 3. h4 and hope that after the natural 3...h5 the insertion of these pawn moves might help White, though I don't think it does.

Bezgodov is so enthusiastic about 2. a3 that he makes it appear as if the move guarantees an advantage for White in every variation. It must be said that he backs up his opinions with highly interesting variations. Roel van Duijn is more moderate. In 1994 he wrote: "2. a3, such a goblin-like little move, is an important and still too much neglected challenge to the Sicilian." That's about right, I think.

As an illustration of Bezgodov's aggressive style, here is an excerpt of one of his analyses.

1. e2•e4 c7•c5 2. a2•a3 e7•e6 3. b2•b4 c5xb4 4. a3xb4 Bf8xb4 5. Bc1•b2 Van Duijn always played 5. c3 followed by 6. d4, which seems quite promising also. Bezgodov rejected this positional line in favor of a direct attack, his trademark throughout the book.

5...Ng8•f6 6. e4•e5 Nf6•d5 7. c2•c4 Nd5•b6 8. Ra1•a3 A nice exchange sacrifice. If Black accepts with 8...Bxa3 Bezgodov wants to play 9. Bxa3 d5 10. Nc3 a6 11. Qg4.

8...0•0 This is asking for trouble, though Bezgodov calls the move logical.

9. Ra3•g3 Kg8•h8 10. Bf1•d3 h7•h6 There was already a threat of 11. Rxg7 Kxg7 12. Qg4+ Kh8 13. Qh5

11. Qd1•g4 Rf8•g8 12. Rg3•h3 Bb4•e7 13. Qg4•e4 g7•g6 14. Qe4•e3 Be7•g5 15. f2•f4 Bg5•h4+ 16. g2•g3 Bh4•e7 17. Rh3xh6+ Kh8•g7



The opening analysis could end here, for White is clearly better, but Bezgodov likes to analyse till mate and here he does it with a beautiful rook sacrifice.

18. h2•h4 Kg7xh6 19. f4•f5+ Kh6•g7 20. f5•f6+ Be7xf6 21. e5xf6+ Kg7•f8 22. Qe3•h6+ Kf8•e8 23. h4•h5 g6xh5 24. Rh1xh5 d7•d5 25. Qh6•g7 Another beautiful move. After 25...Rxc7 White wins by 26. fxg7 Kd7 27. Rh8

25...Ke8•d7 26. Qg7xf7+ Kd7•c6 27. Ng1•f3 Nb6xc4 28. Bd3xc4 d5xc4 29. Nf3•e5+ Kc6•b6 30. Ne5xc4+ Kb6•c6 31. Qf7•h7 Nb8•d7 32. Qh7•e4+ Kc6•c7 33. Qe4•f4+ e6•e5 34. Bb2xe5+ Nd7xe5 35. Qf4xe5+ Kc7•d7 36. Rh5•h7+ Kd7•c6 37. f6•f7 And here Bezgodov's opening analysis ends. White wins.


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