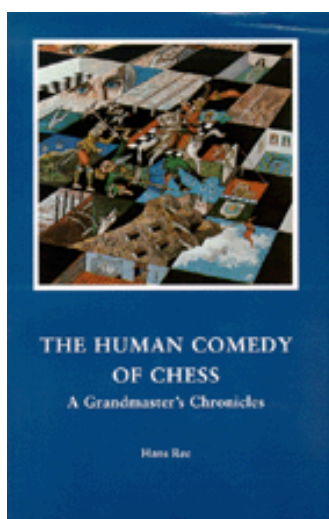




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree

*The Human Comedy
of Chess*

by Hans Ree

Sveshnikov's System

Viktor Kortchnoi told me once that when he prepared for his first match against Karpov in 1974, which was officially only a candidates match, but in fact would designate the next World Champion, he couldn't quite decide what to do against the Tarrasch variation of the French. After 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 everything seemed to give White a slight advantage.

Then he was called by one of his seconds, who said: "There is good news, Viktor Lvovich, I have found the solution. A little Bishop move will solve all problems: 3...Be7 is the right move."

The next day another second called: "I have good news, for in the French a little Bishop move..." Kortchnoi interrupted him: "Yes, I know already, 3...Be7 will do it." But here he was wrong, because the other second had found that 3...Be7 was a serious mistake and that in fact 3...Bd7 was the solution to all Black's problems.

One is reminded of the French nobleman who on his sickbed was surrounded by quarreling doctors who disagreed about the nature of his ailment. The nobleman spoke: "Gentlemen, I will bring you to a consensus," then turned over in his bed and died.

Kortchnoi ignored his quarreling seconds, but not to turn over and die. He decided to play the normal 3...c5 and accept the small disadvantage of the isolated pawn. This move served him well; all seven games of the match with this variation were drawn.

By the way, the search goes on and in the latest issue of *New in Chess* there is an article by Jeroen Bosch in praise of another little move, 3...h6, though Bosch doesn't really claim it to be the solution to all Black's problems.

The problem of finding Black's best third move against the Tarrasch variation is small fare compared to the big question: what is the best move in the initial position? Pragmatists shrug and call it a matter of taste, but systematic thinkers feel honor-bound to tackle the question.

In 1999 Hans Berliner published his book *The System* in which he claimed that 1. d4 is the only right move, giving White an opening advantage that with correct play by both sides would develop into a decisive advantage in the middle game. Berliner admitted that there were a few openings that he hadn't refuted yet with



concrete variations, such as the Nimzo-Indian, but this would be only a matter of time.

But it turns out that just like Kortchnoi's seconds in 1974, the system builders can also come with impeccable logic to completely opposite conclusions. In the January issue of the German magazine *Schach* there is a long and interesting article by Evgeny Sveshnikov with the proud title *My System*. According to Sveshnikov 1. d4 is a mistake and 1. e4 is the only right move.

Maybe not a winning move, because Black has one - and only one - correct defense: 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 (according to Sveshnikov 3. Bb5 is stronger) 3...cxd4 4. Nxd4 e5. We will see later why he has given up on his original Sveshnikov variation that goes 4...Nf6 5. Nc3 e5.

According to Sveshnikov's system a popular defense like the Petrov, which goes 1. e4 e5 (a small mistake) 2. Nf3 Nf6 (a serious mistake), is just wrong, a losing opening.

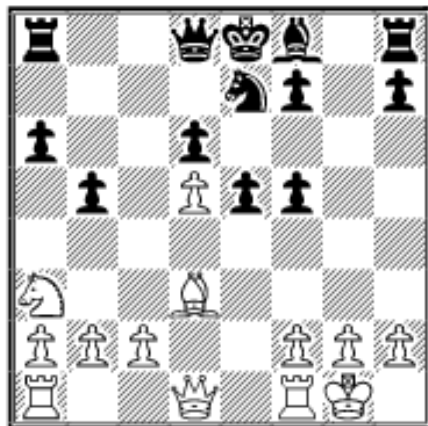
Sveshnikov mentions a long talk he had in 1995 with Botvinnik. Botvinnik thought that the problem of chess was not completely solvable. In fact that was the reason why he worked on computer chess. As most non-trivial problems in life are not completely solvable, because of a lack of full information, chess could be used as a model for such problems.

Sveshnikov told Botvinnik that he considered chess as an unambiguously solvable mathematical problem and that therefore in every position there must be a best move. Botvinnik listened to him for an hour, not interrupting and only muttering at regular intervals always the same objection: "But it is not a completely solvable problem."

Though Botvinnik was not convinced of the universal power of Sveshnikov's system, his nephew Igor, who had witnessed this exchange of ideas, was quite stunned that his uncle, the great Mikhail Moiseevich, had listened for such a long time to another chessplayer.

When Sveshnikov introduced his variation in the sixties, top players were skeptical. First, Black weakens his d5-square and later can be forced to play the ugly g7xf6, making a mess of Black's whole pawn structure. No wonder that positional players were convinced that this must be totally wrong. Of course eventually the dynamic possibilities of the structure became clear to all.

It is rather ironic that nowadays, when everybody plays the Sveshnikov, the inventor himself has become convinced that it is not correct. He finds a clear advantage for White in the line 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Bg5 a6 8. Na3 b5 10. Bxf6 gxf6 10. Nd5 f5 (10...Bg7, nowadays quite popular, is even worse according to Sveshnikov) 11. Bd3 Be6 12. 0-0 Bxd5 13. exd5 Ne7



And here, according to Sveshnikov, White has a clear advantage.

So now he plays the line with the immediate 4...e5, after which White cannot reach the diagrammed position.

His new version is often jokingly called the Kalashnikov or seriously the Neo-Sveshnikov and modestly, by Sveshnikov himself, the Labourdonnais variation.

For Black he claims good drawing chances in this line and this shows how close he is to claiming a win for White in the initial position. Only good drawing chances for Black, if he chooses the one correct defense of all the openings in the books. And that when White hasn't even played the best moves, for Sveshnikov thinks that 3. d4 is only correct after Black's mistake 2...d6 and that after the right move 2...Nc6 White should play 3. Bb5.

Lately many players seem to have come to the same conclusion, but according to Sveshnikov they play the correct 3. Bb5 with the wrong intention, aiming for an early Bxc6, instead of the correct c2-c3 followed by d2-d4.

The other popular way by which White nowadays avoids the Sveshnikov variation, old or neo, with 1. e4 c5. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3, holds no danger to Sveshnikov and as an illustration he gives a fine game that he played recently. Whatever one thinks of the dogmatic certitude of his statements, it cannot be denied that he is a great and creative opening inventor.

Philippe – Sveshnikov Cap d'Agde 2003

1. e2-e4 c7-c5 2. Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3. Nb1-c3 e7-e5

Sveshnikov considers 3. Nc3 a dubious move that would be justified after 3...Nf6 4. Bb5

4. Bf1-c4 Bf8-e7

Everybody plays the stereotyped 3...d6, but after serious study Sveshnikov found that that was wrong.

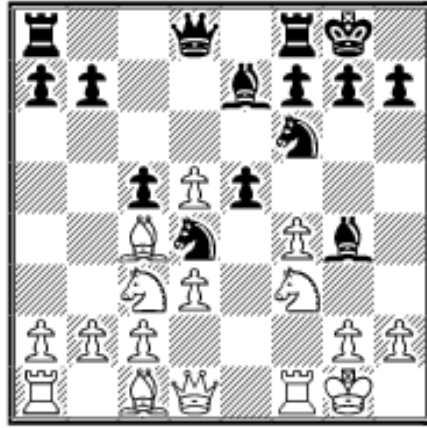
5. d2-d3 Ng8-f6 6. Nf3-g5 0-0 7. f2-f4 d7-d5

That's the reason why he avoided 3...d6

8. e4xd5 Nc6-d4 9. 0-0 Bc8-g4 10. Ng5-f3

Now Black has an easy game. Sveshnikov mentions 10. Qd2, after which he

recommends 10...exf4 11. Rxf4 Bh5 12. Rf1 Qb8, and also the very interesting 10. Qe1 Nxc2 11. Qh4 which leads to the following position:



He writes: "I have analysed these variations in depth and after serious considerations decided not to show them now. After all, I would like to score a few points with my gambit. Let the imitators strain their own heads at this point. If someone will accept the challenge against me...?" The actual game proceeded after 10. Nf3:

10...Be7-d6 11. f4xe5 Bd6xe5 12. Bc1-g5 Nd4xf3+ 13. g2xf3 Bg4-h3 14. Rf1-e1 Be5-d4+ 15. Kg1-h1 Nf6-g4 16. Qd1-d2 Qd8xg5 17. Qd2xg5 Ng4-f2+ 18. Kh1-g1 Nf2xd3+ 19. Kg1-h1 Nd3-f2+ 20. Kh1-g1 Nf2-e4+

He has a draw in hand but looks for more.

21. Qg5-e3 Ne4-d2 22. Bc4-b5 a7-a6 23. Bb5-d3 Ra8-e8 24. Kg1-f2 Re8xe3 25. Re1xe3 Rf8-e8 26. Nc3-d1 c5-c4 27. Bd3-e2 f7-f5

Here Sveshnikov indicates that after 27...b5 28. Ke1 Bxe3 29. Nxe3 Rxe3 30. Kd2 Re5 Black would have excellent winning chances. The move played gives him only a small advantage and as this column is about openings and not about Rook endings we will not plagiarise his notes anymore.

28. c2-c3 Bd4-c5 29. Kf2-e1 Bc5xe3 30. Nd1xe3 f5-f4 31. Ke1xd2 f4xe3+ 32. Kd2-e1 b7-b5 33. Be2-f1 Bh3xf1 34. Ke1xf1 Re8-e5 35. Kf1-e2 Re5xd5 36. Ke2xe3 Rd5-h5 37. Ra1-h1 Kg8-f7 38. Ke3-f4 Kf7-f6 39. h2-h3 Rh5-f5+ 40. Kf4-g3 Rf5-g5+ 41. Kg3-f2 Rg5-d5 42. Kf2-e2 Kf6-f5 43. h3-h4 Rd5-d6 44. a2-a3 Rd6-h6 45. Ke2-f2 g7-g5 46. Kf2-g3 g5xh4+ 47. Kg3-h3 Rh6-d6 48. Rh1-h2 Kf5-f4 49. Rh2-f2 Kf4-e3 50. Rf2-f1 Ke3-e2 51. Rf1-b1 Ke2xf3 52. a3-a4 Kf3-e2 53. a4xb5 a6xb5 54. Kh3xh4 Rd6-d1 White resigned.



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