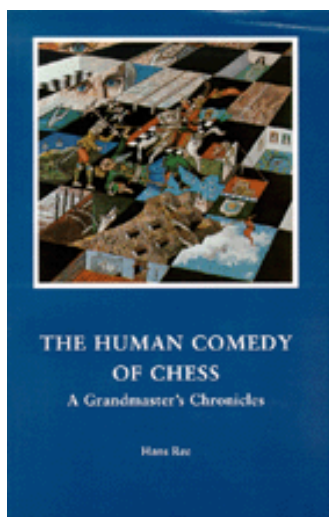




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree

*The Human Comedy
of Chess*

by Hans Ree

Cuban Memories

This time there is no chess at the Olympic Games, which is all to the good, because chessplayers don't really belong there. Four years ago in Sydney Anand and Shirov played two rapid games, but I don't think they took it very seriously. After a long and tiring voyage Shirov went from the Sydney airport right to the playing hall where after taking a short nap he managed to draw both games. They could take their fee and return home, true to the noble Olympic motto that says that taking part is more important than winning.

In a way chess was represented at the games in Athens, because a Cuban building in the Olympic Village was covered with enormous photo's showing Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara at the chessboard. The IOC demanded that these photos should be removed, as political propaganda is not allowed in the village, but the Cubans refused, claiming that they were just sport photos, celebrating fair and peaceful competition in the spirit of the olympic movement. I do not know the outcome of this conflict.

Che Guevara was a strong player, but Fidel Castro shares with him only the love for the game, not the expertise. The late Czech grandmaster Ludek Pachman, who visited Cuba often, has been quoted thus: "I have often seen Fidel at the chessboard, but I have always avoided playing him. Already his second or third move was completely anecdotal and I considered it an impossible task to lose against him. Others however have managed to do so."

In *New in Chess Yearbook 70* Genna Sosonko mentions an opening variation that is known in Cuban government circles as Fidel's Attack: 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Bd6. Indeed a rather anecdotal move, to use Pachman's expression. Objectively it should be called Fidel's Defense, but that wouldn't have a revolutionary ring.

In the East German tournament book of the 1966 Olympiad in Havana there are several photos of Castro, one of them while he is playing against world champion Petrosian in a simul. The caption says: "The number one of the Cuban ministers in fair competition with the number one of chess." As Pachman would have predicted, losing to Castro proved an impossible task; this game was drawn.

Guevara didn't appear at the Olympiad because he was in Bolivia, where he would be killed the next year. I wonder if his expertise in chess was connected with his general unbending way of thinking. He was the most radical of the Cuban revolutionaries, extolling hate as a revolutionary virtue. "What should be done with the traitor? The traitor should be executed after a short and fair trial." This is logic

as clear as that of Capablanca's.

In the book of the Olympiad I also see a photo of me at the swimming pool of the Havana Libre hotel, the former Hilton. It really was a luxurious and pleasant Olympiad, however with a snag for the Dutch team.

At that time the Olympiads were not played with the Swiss system, but with preliminary groups from which two teams qualified for the Final A. In our group the Netherlands were ousted by Hungary, obviously the strongest team of the group, and Cuba, which performed surprisingly well.

How did they do it? We were enlightened when members of the teams of Venezuela and Hungary told us that they had been approached by Cuban officials who had asked to help the Cuban team by losing heavily or - in the case of Hungary - granting a friendly 2-2 score. These two teams had firmly refused, but what about the three bottom teams, who made zero points out of 12 games against Cuba? They had done better against mighty Hungary, scoring 2 points out of 12.

Pachman admitted having acted as an interpreter for the attempted deal with Hungary, after having gotten a promise from the president of the Dutch Chess Federation that we wouldn't make it an issue while we were still in Cuba.

Our team captain Hans Bouwmeester would have been hesitant to do so anyway, because an official from the Dutch embassy had warned him against it, saying that the Cuban chess fans were so enthusiastic about their Olympiad that anyone who would spoil the fun with vile accusations would probably find a rattlesnake in his bed.

If I remember well, there was a political schism at our embassy. The ambassador had some sympathy for the social achievements of the Cuban revolution, but his second in command was all against it, complaining that the price of pumpkins had doubled and that black people were now giving orders to whites. With such criticism the revolution might certainly seem attractive, but I don't really know what my opinion was at the time.

I do know which scene I remember most vividly from this Olympiad. It had nothing to do with the game Fischer-Spassky, which understandably attracted excited crowds, but it was Viktor Kortchnoi, embracing a big column with both arms in the playing hall. He had to support himself, weak with roaring laughter about the absurd developments in his game against the Bulgarian Georgi Tringov during the time scramble before the adjournment. This is indeed a game to remember.

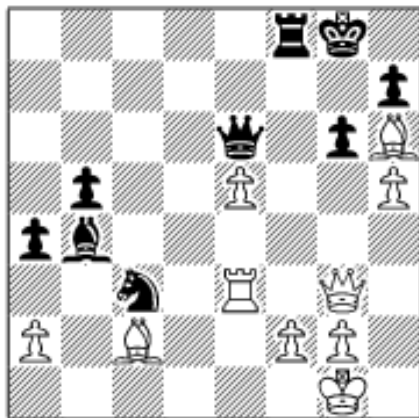
Tringov • Kortchnoi, Havana Olympiad 1966

**1.e2•e4 e7•e5 2.Ng1•f3 Nb8•c6 3.Bf1•b5 a7•a6 4.Bb5•a4 Ng8•f6 5.0•0 Nf6xe4
6.d2•d4 b7•b5 7.Ba4•b3 d7•d5 8.d4xe5 Bc8•e6 9.c2•c3 Bf8•e7 10.Bb3•c2 Qd8
•d7 11.Qd1•e2 0•0 12.Rf1•d1 Ne4•c5 13.Nf3•d4 Nc6xd4 14.c3xd4 Nc5•b7
15.Nb1•c3 f7•f6 16.Qe2•h5 f6•f5 17.Bc1•g5 Ra8•c8 18.Nc3•e2 c7•c5 19.d4xc5**

Be7xc5 20.Ra1•c1 Nb7•a5 21.Ne2•f4 Na5•c4 22.Rd1•e1 Bc5•b4 23.Re1•e2 d5 •d4 24.Rc1•d1 Nc4xb2 25.Nf4xe6 Qd7xe6 26.Bc2•b3 Nb2•c4 27.Rd1xd4 f5•f4

This move is difficult to understand. Black not only sacrifices a pawn, but he also gives the white bishop a good attacking diagonal versus h7.

28.Rd4xf4 Rf8xf4 29.Bg5xf4 a6•a5 30.h2•h4 a5•a4 31.Bb3•c2 g7•g6 32.Qh5•f3 Rc8•f8 33.Qf3•g3 Nc4•b6 34.h4•h5 Nb6•d5 35.Bf4•h6 Nd5•c3 36.Re2•e3



36...Qe6xa2 Black is dead lost and he can only grab some material and pray for the best.

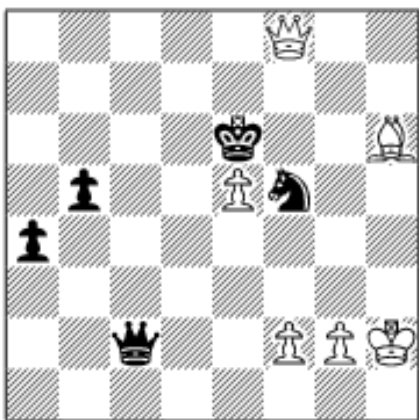
37.h5xg6 Qa2xc2 38.g6xh7+ Kg8•f7 Now 39. e6+ mates in a few moves and after the second-best move 39. Qf3+ my computer evaluates White's position as +12.66, which translates to an advantage of queen and piece.

39.Re3•f3+ Kf7•e6 40.Rf3xf8 He blunders a queen, but it shouldn't really make a difference.

40...Nc3•e2+ 41.Kg1•h2 They had made the time control but they didn't know this and went on playing blitz.

41...Ne2xg3 42.h7•h8Q Eagerly replacing his missing Queen he blunders a Rook. After 42. Rf6+ or 42. Re8+ White would still be winning.

42...Bb4xf8 43.Qh8xf8 Ng3•f5



I think that around here they came to their senses and realised that more than 40 moves had been made. The position is quite unclear now and after adjournment the game proceeded normally and quite interestingly.

44.Qf8•f6+ Ke6•d5 45.Qf6•f7+ Kd5xe5 46.Qf7•e8+ Ke5•f6 47.Bh6•f8 Qc2•c7+ 48.g2 •g3 Nf5•d4 49.Qe8•e4 Nd4•e6 50.Qe4•f3+ Kf6•g6 51.Qf3•d3+ Kg6•f6 52.Bf8•d6 Qc7•c4 53.Qd3•f3+ Kf6•g6 54.g3•g4 Ne6•g7 55.Bd6 •e5 Kg6•h7 56.Qf3•g3 Qc4•e6 57.f2•f4 b5•b4

58.f4•f5 Qe6•h6+ 59.Kh2•g2 Qh6•d2+ 60.Kg2•h3 Qd2•h6+ 61.Kh3•g2 Qh6 •d2+ 62.Kg2•h3 Qd2•h6+ Draw

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