

The oldest candidate

LAS PALMAS, the first of the three Interzonal tournaments, showed just how random this present world championship cycle is going to be. The all-important top two spots were ultimately taken by Zoltan Ribli of Hungary and former world champion Vassily Smyslov of the USSR. Both now qualify for the Candidates matches. Smyslov's result was the sensation of the year, and he becomes, at 61, the oldest man ever to get this far in world title competition.

The surprises at Las Palmas were the poor form of favourites Timman and Psakhis, and the astonishing disappearing act of Russian Vladimir Tukmakov from a position of virtual certain qualification. For much of the way Tukmakov stood a point or more clear of the field, but dropped like a meteorite with a disastrous finish of two points from six games. Jan Timman's lacklustre performance was no less than tragic. If anyone deserves a place in the eight-man Candidates matches it is this talented Dutchman, until recently rated second in the world.

Final scores at Las Palmas were: 1, Ribli 9 points; 2, Smyslov 8½; 3, Suba (Rumania) 8; 4-5, Petrosian and Tukmakov (both USSR) 7½; 6-7, Larsen (Denmark) and Timman 6½; 8-10, Psakhis (USSR), Mestel (England) and Pinter (Hungary) 6; 11-13, Bouaziz (Tunisia), Karlsson (Sweden) and Sunye (Brazil) 5½; 14 Browne (USA) 3.

One could mistake the final placings for the initial draw-order, drawn out of a hat. Walter Browne, for example, would look less out of place in first rather than last. A contributing cause to the fluctuating of fortunes may well be the shortness of the event. In previous times only two Interzonals were held. They were massive, gruelling 18- or 19-player contests — but they certainly sorted the masters from the boys. Under the new system of three Interzonals, each with 14 players, anyone dropping behind must quickly catch up — and risk overpressing in the process.

This week's game features a brisk win from Las Palmas by another Soviet ex-world champion who fared well. At this rate the Russian selectors will be trying to get 71-year-old Mikhail Botvinnik into the Moscow Interzonal!

ENGLISH OPENING

T. PETROSIAN	L. PSAKHIS
1. c4	Nf6
2. Nc3	e6
3. Nf3	c5
4. g3	b6
5. e4	Bb7
6. Qe2	d6
7. d4	cxd4
8. Nxd4	g6?
<i>In these "hedgehog" systems the king's bishop ultimately belongs on this diagonal — but here the fianchetto is exposed as too slow. Correct is 8...Be7.</i>	
9. Bg2	a6
10. 0-0	Nbd7
11. Rd1	Qb8



Vassily Smyslov: back near the world championship at 61.

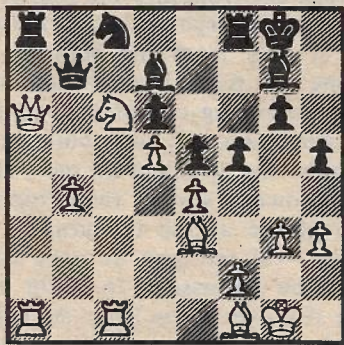
A standard idea to reinforce the d-pawn and remove the queen from a sensitive file. The trouble is that Black is still two moves away from castling, and Petrosian's next moves disrupts the opposing queenside.

12. a4!	Bg7
13. a5	0-0
14. axb6	Nxb6
15. Nb3	Ra7
16. Bf4	e5
17. Be3	Bc8
18. Na5	Ra8
19. Qd3	Be6
20. b3	Nc8
21. h3	h5
22. b4	

Black is methodically deprived of space. Note that 22...Qxb4 loses the queen to 23.Rdb1.

22. ...	Qc7
23. Nd5	Nxd5
24. cxd5	Bd7
25. Rdc1	Qb8
26. Nc6	Qb7
27. Bf1	f5
28. Qxa6!!	

PSAKHIS



PETROSIAN

A brilliant temporary queen sacrifice.

28. ...	Rxa6
29. Bxa6	Bxc6
<i>If 29...Qc7 30.Ne7 ch or 29...Qa8 30.Bxc8 Qxc8 31.Ne7 ch, White still recovers the queen.</i>	
30. Bxb7	Bxb7
31. Rc7	Rf7
32. Rac1	Ba6
33. b5!	Bxb5
34. Rxc8 ch	Kh7

and Black resigned

The endgame is lost.

MURRAY CHANDLER