

Where East meets West

REGULAR READERS of this column will by now be aware that the Soviet Union has the strongest players in the world, England is probably the most prolific chess book publisher, and West Germany stages the top professional teams league. Guessing which country holds the most international tournaments, however, may prove more difficult. A quick glance at the latest *Informator*, the six-monthly journal published in Belgrade, reveals all: the country is Yugoslavia. This is certainly not because *Informator*, an international book with a 30,000 circulation each issue (impressive by chess standards), covers local events more fully. On the list of tournaments used in calculating the latest Fide rating list, Yugoslavia boasts some 24 events (many of grandmaster status) plus six women's tournaments. The next highest figure of 16 tournaments comes, surprisingly, from the USA, while New Zealand lists only the last national championship from Dunedin.

Evidently Yugoslavia benefits from its unique political position between East and West. Moscow-style state backing is available on one hand, while foreign players find it easier to compete for financial and visa reasons. The recent heavy devaluations of the dinar have caused some difficulties for Westerners, but in many competitions (such as Niksic) prizes are paid in American dollars anyway. Equally the Yugoslav masters enjoy a privileged middle position, with wide freedom to attend overseas tournaments, combining, in many cases, with a regular club contract. 28-year-old Grandmaster Slavoljub Marjanovic, who kindly entertained me and Western colleagues during a recent tournament in his home town of Nis, is perhaps a typical example. Having recently completed his compulsory year in the army, Marjanovic is now employed by the Nis club as trainer. For a few hours' coaching with club members each evening, Slavoljub receives a flat for himself and family and a reasonable salary. Not bad when one considers the usual Yugoslav working hours of 6.30am to 2.30pm, and there is also time off for tournaments.

The tournament in Nis that I played in proved exciting to the finish, with a six-way tie for first conceivable going into the final round. Ultimately only two emerged, Ventsislav Inkirov from Bulgaria and Bosko Abramovic. International Master Abramovic finished strongly, defeating leading rival Wlodzimierz Schmidt in a tremendous penultimate-round clash.

BENONI DEFENCE

W. SCHMIDT (Poland)	B. ABRAMOVIC (Yugoslavia)
1. d4	Nf6
2. c4	e6
3. Nf3	c5

4. d5	e×d5
5. c×d5	d6
6. Nc3	g6
7. Bf4	a6
8. a4	Bg7
9. e4	Bg4
10. Be2	B×f3
11. B×f3	0-0
12. 0-0	Qe7!?
13. Re1	Nbd7
14. a5	Ne5
15. Be2	Rfb8
16. Qc2	b5
17. a×b6	R×b6
18. Ra2	Ne8

Anticipating White's piling up on the a6 pawn with his rooks; now the weakness can be reinforced with ... Nc7.

19. Be3	g5
<i>To stop 20.f4.</i>	
20. Rea1	Nc7
21. Qd2?	

Correct was 21.Na4 with advantage, as 21...Rb4 would lose to 22.N×c5 d×c5 23.B×c5.

21. ...	h6
22. Na4	Rb3!
23. B×c5	d×c5
24. d6	Qd8
25. Qd1	Rb4
26. d×c7	Q×c7
27. Qd5	Rd8
28. Q×c5	Qb8!

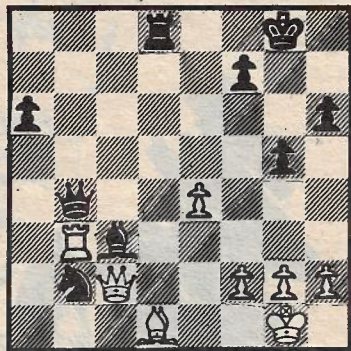
Rather unluckily for Schmidt, his enterprising combination has rebounded. Although White has won a pawn, Black's centralised pieces give more than sufficient compensation. Now 29.B×a6 allows 29...Ng4.

29. Qc2	Rbd4
30. Rd1	R×d1 ch
31. B×d1	

Experienced players will immediately recognise the momentary weakness on White's back rank and start searching for combinative possibilities to exploit it. Abramovic begins by threatening to fork a queen and rook.

31. ...	Nd3
32. Ra3	Qb4
<i>Threat: back-rank mate by 33...Qe1.</i>	
33. Nc3	N×b2
34. Rb3	B×c3!

The crowd thought it was all over. 34.R×b4 R×d1 ch 35.Q×d1 N×d1 seems forced, when Black wins easily with his two pieces and passed a-pawn against the rook.



35. Bh5!
An inspired last-ditch try which only just fails. Now Black's queen is really attacked.

35. ...	Qa5
36. R×c3	
<i>To meet 36...Qal ch with 37.Qcl, and 36...Na4 with 37.Re3.</i>	

36. ... Nd1!
But there are no more tricks after this. If rook moves Black mates with 37...Qe1, and 37.B×d1 Q×c3! is convincing.

37. Resigns

MURRAY CHANDLER