

In from the cold

GRANDMASTER defections were less fashionable back in 1976 when the outstanding Soviet player Viktor Korchnoi requested political asylum after winning the IBM tournament in Holland. It was an unpredictable step from an unpredictable man, for he had to leave behind a wife and son in Leningrad. Korchnoi claimed, at the time, that the Soviet authorities were hampering his chess career. He was soon to discover that, as a new-found "traitor", he was still not immune from the wrath of his former homeland. Although Fide, the World Chess Federation, refused a Soviet request that Korchnoi be expelled from the world championship cycle then in progress, a more subtle shut-out began. Before sending its players to tournaments abroad, Moscow would vet the list of participants. If Korchnoi's name featured then the tournament invitation would be declined — an "unofficial" and highly effective boycott. Organisers effectively had to choose between one defector and two or three top Soviets, and usually the loner missed out.

It was a boycott which has only just been lifted, as attested by Korchnoi's participation in this year's Wijk aan Zee tournament (appropriately in Holland) along with two official Soviet representatives. Fittingly the 52-year-old exile tied for first place with former countryman Alexander Belyavsky, far ahead of the field. Viktor's next major event will probably be the London Phillips and Drew Kings in April, where Russian world champion Anatoly Karpov is also due to play. Two years ago Karpov played in this same event while Korchnoi stood outside waving placards, so it would seem our grandmaster is well and truly coming in from the cold. The sudden softening of Soviet hearts is undoubtedly linked to the recent Korchnoi-Kasparov Candidates match. In a curious reversal of roles, Korchnoi magnanimously agreed to play the brilliant Soviet prodigy after Kasparov was theoretically defaulted by Fide! Another contributing factor could perhaps be that former public prosecutor V. D. Baturinsky has since retired as head of the Soviet Federation. Baturinsky certainly hasn't forgotten the headaches of 1976; in his memoirs he relates that the Soviet players at Biel in 1976 advised him to take a tranquilliser before they told him the news they had just heard — that Korchnoi had defected.

In many ways things have come right for the colourful and sometimes outspoken Viktor Korchnoi. He is comfortably settled in Switzerland, his family were ultimately allowed to emigrate to the West, and now the boycott is over. Yet he never quite fulfilled the burning desire that prompted him to leave in the first place — the will to be world champion. His mighty clash with Karpov at the "Battle of Baguio" in 1978 was close, very close, but in the "Massacre in Merano" three years later, age — and the boycott — had taken their toll. No grandmaster can

maintain peak form if he is constantly excluded from top-level tournaments, and it was depressing to see such a world-class player as Viktor often playing in mediocre contests. Hopefully it's a spectacle we have seen the last of. Here is one of his most incisive victories from Wijk aan Zee, which I will report more fully next week.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENCE

V. KORCHNOI	A. MILES
1. d4	Nf6
2. c4	e6
3. Nc3	Bb4
4. e3	c5
5. Ne2	cxd4
6. exd4	O-O
7. a3	Be7
8. d5	exd5
9. cxd5	Re8
10. d6!?	Bf8
11. g3	Qb6?

11...Re6 might be a safer way to round up the precocious d-pawn. As the game goes Black's tangled pieces give White good compensation for the material, and Miles soon feels like refunding the pawn.

12. Bg2	Bxd6
13. Be3	Qa6
14. O-O	Be5
15. Nf4	d5

On 15...d6, 16.Ncd5 carries the unpleasant threat of a knight fork on c7.

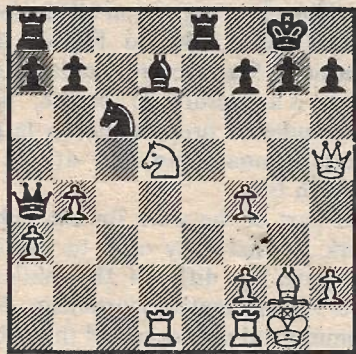
16. Ncxd5	Nc6
17. Nxf6 ch	Bxf6
18. Nd5	Be5
19. Qh5	Qa4
20. Bf4!	

Stopping Black's intended 20...Qg4, and if 20...Bxf4 21.gxf4! is similar to the game continuation.

20. ...	Bd7
21. b3	Qa5

White adds a rook on the seventh to his kingside pressure after 21...Qxb3 22.Rab1 Qxa3 23.Rxb7.

22. b4	Qa4
23. Rad1	Bxf4
24. gxf4!	



A surprising way to recapture, which enhances the attack. Korchnoi now has possibilities of transferring a rook to g3, or even pushing the f-pawn itself to f5 and f6.

24. ...	Rad8
25. Rd3	Kh8
26. Nc7	Re7
27. Qc5!	

A sudden change of tack to win material. Miles cannot cope with all the threats, eg 27...b6 28.Bxc6.

27. ...	Re2
28. Rxd7	Resigns

On 28...Rxd7 29.Qf8 is checkmate.

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