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Foreword

Modern chess is going through difficult times; it is in the throes of professionalization in which the game, in all its many facets, will have to adapt to a professional world.

What we need now is a body of truly professional chess players who are aware of their duties and responsibilities towards their fellow-players. What we need is new organizers, able to set up professional tournaments with due regard to the interests of chess players, the public and the press. And finally, for a truly professional approach to chess events, we need professional arbiters.

It is unfortunate that for many years (indeed, decades) chess was under a permanent ideological cloud. This was largely the result of the overall dominance of Soviet chess players. The ruling Soviet bodies used chess as an ideological weapon in their struggle against the West. International discord and internal squabbling within FIDE were further negative influences on world chess events.

In any case the politicization of the chess world always prevented its representatives from making the correct business decisions for radically widening its appeal. And it is here that Dirk Jan's work in the past several years has been of the utmost importance. I regard Dirk Jan as one of the few professional chess observers capable of providing news and summaries sufficiently honestly and impartially to allow both chess specialists and chess amateurs to find out what is really going on. He observes and reports without fear or favour and steers clear of political bias, limiting himself to factual, blow-by-blow accounts of chess events.

I believe that the format of lengthy interviews as adopted by New In Chess constituted a serious step in the right direction. It provides well-known chess players with a platform to air their feelings, and helps interested readers to draw their own conclusions, while taking account of the players' view on what is happening in the chess world.

I cannot stress enough that this approach is exactly what we need at the moment. Too often we run up against points of view, with authors prejudging events and making it impossible for their readers to discern the wheat of today's realities between the political chaff.

I gave my first long interview to New In Chess in 1989, when I met Dirk Jan after the tournament in Tilburg. Since then we have had several long and sincere talks, which I invariably enjoy.

I hope that the long series of interviews which you will find in this book will help you better to realize the complicated and often conflicting processes which

chess has been going through lately. After reading the different points of view, you will be able to form your own picture of what is going on.

I firmly believe that this is Dirk Jan's greatest service to chess. Maybe he, too, had pressure put on him by different people from different sides. But having taken a sober and unbiased look at things – as a journalist should – he was able to come up with a strictly factual account, thus proving that he is rightly considered to be one of the finest chess journalists of the day. Professional chess has an awful lot to thank him for.

I hope that when reading the book, you will not only agree with me on this and enjoy it, but that you will also come away with a clearer idea of the direction chess has been moving into over the last few years.

Moscow, September 1994
Garry Kasparov

Note to the 2015 edition

Finding Bobby Fischer appeared in 1994, two years after my meeting with Bobby Fischer in Sveti Stefan, where the reclusive American resurfaced from his ‘wilder ness years’ for a controversial second match against Boris Spassky. The book was well received and second-hand copies became sought after when it was no longer available. I am happy that my first interview collection has finally been reprinted. Apart from a number of minor corrections, additional footnotes and a different photo selection, this reprint is identical to the original edition.

The Hague, June 2015
Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

Mikhail Botvinnik

Brussels, August 1991

'This may not sound modest, but the first three volumes of my collected games are required reading'

Few of this century's chess authors have been as influential as Mikhail Botvinnik. Generations of Soviet chess players devoured his books and top grandmasters like Ivanchuk, Kasparov and Timman have often expressed their indebtedness to the former World Champion's writings. From the very first 'Check Your Library' columns in New In Chess Botvinnik has been an ever-present guest on these pages, but so far we did not have the opportunity to ask the main founder of the Soviet chess school about his own literary tastes and preferences. During the Candidates' matches in Brussels the Patriarch satisfied our curiosity and talked freely about the books that influenced him, the books every serious chess student should read and the revolutionary impact his new chess program will have on chess literature.

Which were the chess books you grew up with?

'There was not much choice. After the Russian Revolution in 1917 there was civil war in Soviet Russia and times were not so easy. There weren't any new books being published. My first chess book I got from one of my chess friends in October 1923. A bound volume of Chigorin's Shakhmatny Listok, containing the years 1876 to 1877. In December of that same year the publication started of a series of small books on opening theory written by Grekov and Nenarokov. Grekov was the publisher of the chess magazine Shakhmatny and Nenarokov was a strong chess master. In 1924 the first comprehensive book on opening theory was published. But by that time I was already a strong player and did not have much use of this, because I knew more variations than there were in this book.'

'These years also saw the publication of three books by World Champion Capablanca. The first one was the Russian translation of Chess Fundamentals. For me this was the most important book. The second one was a textbook written by Capablanca, but as with Grekov's and Nenarokov's book it wasn't of any use to me as I had already passed that stage. And thirdly his My Chess Career, which contained the earliest games of Capablanca. He wrote this book before the First World War to show the chess world that he was entitled to play a match against Lasker. Other

books that were important for my development were the translation of Tartakower's *Die Hypermoderne Schachpartie* and two books by Tarrasch *300 Games* and another games collection with many games by famous players, some of which also appeared in the first book. These were really good books with deep analyses. Tarrasch's way of analysing had a strong influence on me and I took over his style. He explained a lot, gave many variations and analysed deeply. When I wrote my first chess book on the USSR championship in 1931, I adapted his style. Many words, many general ideas, deep analyses, and lots of advice to the readers.

'A few years later I met Capablanca personally and I saw how he wrote his analyses to his games. He made very brief comments, only pointing out the crucial moments and the essential variations. Capablanca's point of view was that he only wanted to show the reader in which direction he should think himself. After I had seen this I began to write in the same manner. What other books should I mention? Around this time Emanuel Lasker's *Lehrbuch des Schachspiels* was published in the Soviet Union. I didn't like this book very much. And in the twenties the publishers of the magazine *Shakhmatny Listok*¹⁰ also produced chess books and on their list was Bogoljubow's book on the Queen's Gambit, a book that impressed me a lot. What else? In 1926 a match was played between teams from Leningrad and Stockholm. At that time I had been playing chess for three years and I played on fifth board. The president of the Swedish Chess Association was Ludvig Collijn, who published the well-known *Lärobook*. Collijn was not a strong chess player and could never have written such a book. In fact this book had been written by three famous chess players. Rubinstein, Réti and Spielmann. Collijn gave this book to me and to all the other Soviet players as a present. This book meant a lot to me.'

'The first book in which I was involved as co-author was the book written by Romanovsky and Levenfish on the match Alekhine Capablanca in Buenos Aires in 1927. For this book they asked me to comment on four games from this match. After the match Alekhine wrote his analyses of all the games of the match. It was a great honour for me to find that in these four games that I analysed I had made no mistakes. I was only sixteen years old, but already a strong chess player. (With undisguised irony) Unfortunately the rest of the games which had been analysed by Romanovsky and Levenfish were full of mistakes.'

When did it become easier to get chess books in the Soviet Union?

'In the thirties it became easier when the Soviet Union started to publish more chess books. Our own books and translations of foreign books. But right now it's very difficult to publish any chess books in the Soviet Union, because there is a great shortage of paper. And chess books should not be very expensive. Most of

¹⁰ A Leningrad magazine that ran from 1922 to 1931 and which should not be confused with the magazine mentioned earlier in which Chigorin wrote.

the paper is used up by gutter press and other trivial publications that make easy money. (Not hiding his contempt) At that time we didn't have this competition which was created by perestroika.'

I was very surprised to read that only one month after you played a match against Flohr in 1933, your book on the match was published.

'That's right. I can explain you why. All chess players, all masters were against this match. The Chairman of the Chess Section was Krylenko and he was a great chess enthusiast. The chess players told him that Botvinnik would lose this match for sure, but Krylenko had faith in me and believed that I had a chance. He accepted Flohr's proposal to play this match and organized it. The first part took place in Moscow and the second half in Leningrad. In Moscow I played badly, but in Leningrad Flohr played badly. Krylenko was happy that he had not been wrong and that the match was tied and he asked me if I could immediately write the analyses of this match. I was young, but I remembered all that had been going on in the games and in ten days I wrote all the analyses. Thanks to Krylenko's directives the book was published within a month's time. Perhaps this was the first Soviet chess book to be printed on good paper.'

You have often stressed the importance of Chigorin's heritage for your development as a chess player.

'That's right. In the magazines of Chigorin I found a lot of analyses that greatly impressed me. From these magazines I learned how the top players in the previous century played. I was very lucky, because nowadays the young masters no longer know how they used to play in the old days. In 1936 I read a collection of 75 games of Lasker. It had not been published in Russian and I read it in German. This book also made a deep impression. (Again with typical Botvinnik irony) And then I wrote my own books. I wrote many books. The last and maybe the best books were my collected games in four volumes. The first three volumes contain 380 games and the fourth volume is a collection of the articles I wrote. Very good analysis. I'm very proud of these books. And Ivanchuk fully agrees on this (laughs). He studied them.'

He's not the only one. Your writings had a strong influence on many strong players, like Timman, Kasparov...

'Not on everyone. Those who like to read analyses and like to analyse themselves, for these players these books are very useful. (Sarcastically) But these are not the real professionals I'm afraid. The real professionals are too strong to bother with such books.'

Can you become World Champion or a very strong player without thoroughly analysing your games and publishing them?

'For example, Petrosian was such a champion. And Spassky too. Karpov didn't publish too much. Initially Kasparov used to, but not anymore.'

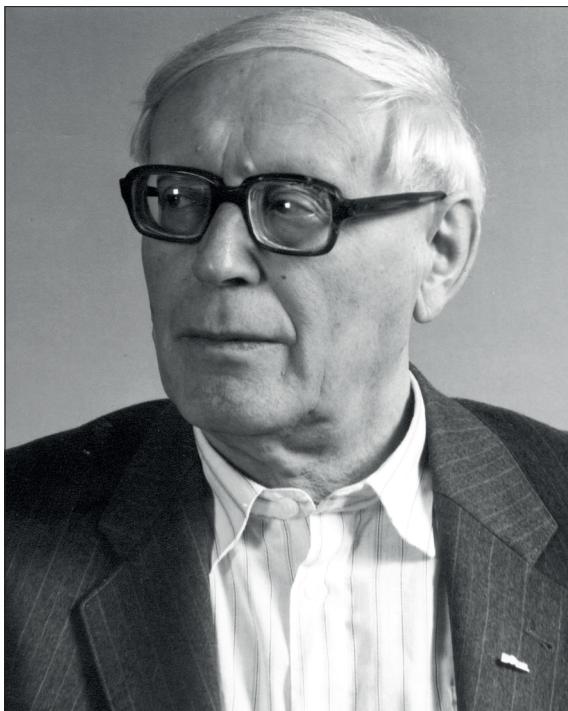
You think that he should write again?
‘If he wants to raise his level in chess, yes.’

So far you haven’t mentioned the books of Alekhine.

‘The books of Alekhine were not published in the Soviet Union until later, because he was an emigrant. For a long time his books were not available in the Soviet Union. What is more, when Romanovsky and Levenfish wrote their book about the match Alekhine-Capablanca in 1927, Krylenko asked Ilyin-Genevsky to contribute a special preface in order to explain to the readers why the Soviet Union published the games of this match between Capablanca and a Soviet emigrant. Ilyin-Genevsky wrote that Alekhine was an enemy of the Soviet Union, but that in politics he was only a midget. However, in chess he was a giant. And therefore the Soviet chess players had to know his games. Later on some of Alekhine’s books were published, like the Russian translation of *My Best Games*. And after that all his other books.’

When you wrote about the Soviet school of chess you did include Alekhine.

‘Yes, I did. The name of Alekhine means a lot in chess. In the years before the Revolution we had four top players in Russia. Alekhine, Bogoljubow, Rubinstein and Nimzowitsch. Alekhine was the strongest of these four players. In Soviet Russia Alekhine was very popular. And he appreciated this very much. He always carefully studied Soviet chess magazines. He really read everything that was published in the Soviet Union as I realized when I met him in Nottingham in 1936. He also studied the bulletins from the major Soviet tournaments. Apart from the game scores these bulletins also contained games comments. Alekhine studied them all. When we met again in Amsterdam in 1938, at the Wereld AVRO Schaaktoernooi (Not without pride pronounced in perfect Dutch), he immediately came up to me and very excitedly explained that he had studied an analysis by Smyslov in one of the Soviet magazines and had found a mistake. At that time Smyslov was only seventeen years



JORIS VAN VELZEN

Mikhail Botvinnik: ‘Karpov didn’t publish too much.

Initially Kasparov used to, but not anymore.’

old and had just won the championship of Moscow. He had published one of his games with comments and Alekhine had found a mistake in it. Such an exchange of ideas between Alekhine and Soviet chess players was permanently going on.'

To Western readers this idea of the Soviet school of chess has always sounded a bit like propaganda.

'(Starts laughing) There's nothing wrong with propaganda when it's propaganda for chess. Any other kind of propaganda I never made. I believe that Karpov and Kasparov deny the existence of the Soviet Chess School, but it exists nevertheless and you cannot ignore it. The idea of the Soviet chess school is based on two factors. First of all, from 1924 onwards chess was supported by the government. This support didn't come out of the blue. Benjamin Franklin already wrote an essay called *Morals of Chess* in which he wrote that chess helped to mould one's personality. After the Revolution one of the first goals of the government was to raise the cultural and educational level of the people. Chess should help in accomplishing this goal. As a result chess became very popular.'

'The second factor I am to blame for myself, I think. I started to study chess as a science and created a system that described how a chess player should prepare for a chess competition. The first time I put this system into practice was before my match with Flohr. I convincingly showed the importance of my system. I collected one hundred games by Flohr and by the time I played him I knew him very well. I elaborated the theory of this system for several years. In 1939 these ideas had been worked out sufficiently well and I published my findings in the tournament book of the Soviet Championship of 1939. In the following years I continued to work with this method. In the period between 1941 and 1948 I demonstrated the great merits of this method. My colleagues who played with me were forced to use this method as well, if they wanted to be successful. And indeed, many grandmasters were successful with this method, particularly grandmasters like Boleslavsky and Geller. You may safely say that they all used this method in one way or another. This resulted in the Soviet Chess School. So, no propaganda at all. That is simply how it was.'

'But today's grandmasters no longer work or analyse that much. They play a lot. Nowadays there no longer is a big difference between the chess players in the West and the chess players in the Soviet Union. But young players who are starting out and are trying to reach the top, they still use this method. For example Ivanchuk, Shirov and Kramnik. But once they've become strong grandmasters they have no time and it's Soviet Chess School bye bye (laughs). Well, what can you do?'

What will be the influence of the computer on chess literature?

'For the moment none. Now the computer is a source of information, but nothing more. But in the future the situation will change. I hope that in a few months our chess program will be ready that was developed by my mathematicians in the Botvinnik laboratory. This is the only program in the world that

doesn't use brute force. Instead of using brute force our program "thinks" in a similar manner as a chess master thinks. Deep Thought analyses one hundred and fifty million positions in three minutes. They are working on a program that will look at two billion positions in three minutes. However, my program looks only at twenty or thirty positions, just as a chess master would do. This allows the computer to show the player with whom it is playing everything it's been analysing, because it only looks at a limited number of possibilities. Thus the opponent of the computer can learn to play chess while playing the computer. I hope that this program will be further improved in the future and that the computer will be able to make analyses. When that happens no one will publish analyses anymore without consulting the computer. This will drastically change chess literature.'

Which books would you select if you were to recommend five chess books to a young and talented player of let's say sixteen years old?

'A chess player cannot play chess if he hasn't read Capablanca's textbook. Furthermore I think, although this may not sound modest, that the first three volumes of my collected games are required reading. Then, Alekhine's Best Games. As for the endgame, I would recommend grandmaster Fine's book Basic Chess Endings, although I don't know if it's still available. It was written fifty years ago, but I think that it's still a very good book. Averbakh published many volumes on the endgame, but they are very difficult to understand for young players. Fine's book is not so elaborate but he explains very well how to play the endgame. What else? They should study Fischer's games. Let me see, who else would be offended if I didn't name him? The other day Smyslov finished a book with 320 collected games that contains deep analysis. We're looking for paper to publish it. I have not read Kasparov's books, so I cannot include them in my list.'

You didn't read Kasparov's books? Why didn't you?

'Because when they were published I was not playing chess anymore. He wrote very elaborate analyses like Tarrasch did and I didn't like that.'

Weren't you curious to see what you're pupil had written?

'I looked at the games he played for the World Championship. Without great pleasure. The games of the Quarter Finals here are more interesting, even though they contain mistakes because of time-trouble. It's not possible to make sixty moves in six hours. Two time-troubles in one session is too much. It has a damaging influence on the level of the games. Capablanca was in favour of quicker time-schedules, because he thought very quickly. But he proposed to increase the playing speed from fifteen moves in one hour to sixteen. And no more. On only one occasion did I play a faster time-limit. In Nottingham, where we played eighteen moves in one hour. I was young then and managed quite well.'

Bilbes of the Best

You say that you didn't watch Kasparov's matches with pleasure. Because of chess reasons or because of personal reasons?

'Only chess. I'm very objective in my assessments. I did like the first two Karpov-Kasparov matches. But the matches in Seville and in New York and Lyon were not interesting.'

Garry Kasparov

Linares, March 1993

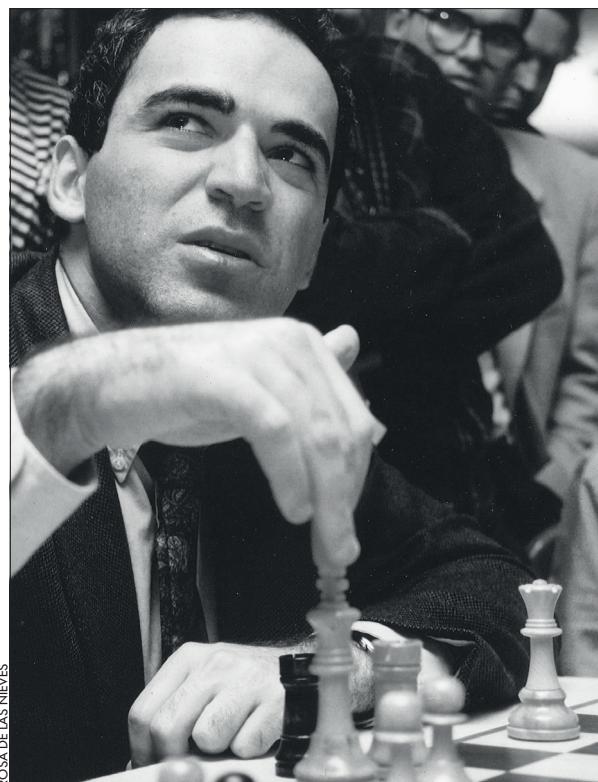
'I'm not going to compromise'

On the final day of the annual elite gathering in Linares, Garry Kasparov expressed his views on the creation of the Professional Chess Association and the impact he expects it to have on the chess world. Fully confident the World Champion summed up the ingredients that to his mind begged for some pretty good cooking. One week before the new bids for the World Championship match between Kasparov and his challenger Nigel Short were to be opened in London, the eager chef de cuisine still cherished good hopes on a settlement between FIDE and the PCA.

*What were your thoughts or feelings when Nigel Short phoned you?*³⁶

'I didn't really expect it. I had my own thoughts on how to deal with the situation. I had no doubt that the World Championship cycle in this format doesn't work and that the system was doomed. Obviously, after my match with Nigel (Short) I was going to do something drastic. No doubt about that. I mean, you cannot go on with all this nonsense. With FIDE taking all decisions. Maybe theoretically FIDE could be reorganized. But FIDE was spoiled by having too much power. They had unlimited power. It was not a body used to fighting for survival. They used to get a World Championship match and took the money out of it. They're too lazy and too fat. Before this they were very bad, they represented evil. Now they are simply inefficient. Campomanes did nothing specifically wrong this time. It's just the inefficiency of the whole body. Even if they are trying to be very polite and cooperative. They cannot raise money. And if they cannot raise money why do we need them? They can bring no money for the professional circuit. So, we need something else. I am not going to raise money for the World Championship again. I made that mistake once. That should be done by Campomanes. And this should be done on a professional basis. Not a bit here and a bit there. It should be done regularly and it should work.'

³⁶ Short phoned Kasparov suggesting to play their World Championship match outside FIDE, which would lead to the creation of the Professional Chess Association (PCA).



ROSA DE LAS NIEVES

Garry Kasparov: 'I hope that FIDE has enough common sense to recognize that it's time to make a deal. To get some financial settlements and to go out.'

managers like IMG you cannot move. I will not lie and don't say that I didn't have any dealings with them already.'

You had already been playing with some ideas?

'You need somebody to do it professionally. I can play chess professionally, but the players cannot participate in the organization. We can definitely dominate the decisions they take and we will probably have the seal of approval, but we should not be involved more. There should be a commercial arm. I think there will be problems as to what this commercial arm can do. I think that Nigel definitely has his own ideas. But here I have very strong ideas too, and I am not going to compromise. I see clearly that the differences will come up and we'll have problems to deal with. But whatever happens, I said "yes" to Nigel to bring my own agenda that I had had in mind for many years. I think that now is a good chance. Within five days we will know whether we'll have to do it separately or whether we can find some compromises. But no compromises on the idea as a whole.'

'Thinking about this I came to my own conclusions and suddenly when Nigel called I thought, "Hey, we can use this match as a vehicle to promote all these ideas." Because we will definitely have a venue, we'll have the English-speaking press behind us, and the fact that I have Nigel with me will definitely reduce the criticism of western players.

'Probably we have different motivations for this decision. There are great differences in our positions. Difference number one is that I believe that for Nigel it is one shot. For me it is not one shot. I want to professionalize the chess world. The second difference is that I think that Nigel is highly suspicious about managers in general. I think that without professional

You mean with FIDE or with FIDE and the GMA or...

'No, the GMA is not a player anymore in the situation. I mean that I am not going to compromise on the whole idea that the World Championship cycle, the professional World Championship, will be played outside of FIDE. You can like it or dislike it, you can say whatever you want, but there's only one World Champion. It doesn't matter how many titles you provide. Five, six, ten. As long as I am the strongest player and as long as that is recognized by the public, and as long as the money is here, who cares? As for the players, whatever their doubts, they will go for the best deal. Imagine the worst comes to the worst. There is no agreement, no compromise and FIDE runs its own cycle. What do you think the best players will do? You have one cycle where Garry Kasparov is World Champion and there is a prize-fund of a couple of million bucks. And you have another cycle where the prize-fund will be ten times less. You have any doubts what Anand will do? And Ivanchuk, Kramnik and the others? It happens automatically. I want ideology outside of chess. I want professional rules, commercial validity. And I hope that FIDE has enough common sense to recognize that it's time to make a deal. To get some financial settlements and to go out.'

When I saw you on German television after your exhibition match with Hübner and you were speaking so negatively about the sponsor appeal of a match between you and either Timman or Short I thought, 'What is he trying to do? To get a prize-fund as low as possible to indirectly kill the GMA who depend on their percentage and to play a really big match against Anand afterwards?'

'No, listen. I made some bold statements, because I just believed that unfortunately this match does not have big value. I thought that I would win the match and definitely knew what would be my agenda after the match. To start a new professional cycle. Now I think this match can help us to start a peaceful transition. If Campomanes has enough sense to understand that there's no way back. FIDE cannot run it. Full stop. If you want to have Timman and Karpov play your World Championship you will destroy your organization totally. If you want to see reality you have to negotiate, to get your money. But no influence. That's what I wanted from the GMA and that's what Bessel Kok rejected in 1989. To offer FIDE a financial deal, but no power.'

So, this match still doesn't have too much chess importance, but is mainly a vehicle to...

'Yes, absolutely. I did not, I do not and I will not have any doubts that I'll win the match. My target is not to retain the title, but to play great games and win convincingly. All conditions are very good to create great attention. I am playing a foreigner, not a compatriot, and we'll play in an English-speaking country. To succeed we need a huge audience. Ten times more than now. This audience has no idea about FIDE, the GMA. Maybe they heard about Kasparov, Fischer, maybe Karpov. Probably they mix up Kasparov and Karpov. Their knowledge of chess is very limited. They will buy the story you sell to them. That's why you need a new

deal. That's why you need IMG. That's why you need TV. You need all these guys to set up the commercial arm. Who'll say, "We'll sell the story." That's what was done with tennis and golf. Chances we'll succeed in chess are fifty-fifty. If I believe I have a fifty per cent chance, I think I have to go for it.'

Do you think these chances can be negatively influenced by circumstances such as Short first calling you names and then embracing you, his dealing the GMA, the organization of which he was president, a lethal blow? There are people who see immoral aspects in this.

'From my point of view I feel very strongly about immorality. I didn't do anything that could be considered immoral towards any of my allies. I did everything in public, I explained all the reasons for my acts. As to what Nigel said about me... Well, when I was in England I got the same question. "Do you feel chess is like boxing now, where people make statements to raise interest?" And I said, "Yes, Nigel is doing a great job. He is making the match much more exciting for the public." I think that for the public I am talking, the millions of people, such things are irrelevant. They have no idea what happened in the past of chess. Unfortunately, chess history belongs to a very limited group of people. You know, I know, chess fans know, but we want to reach millions of houses. For them it will be a fresh start, a new beginning.'

Is the atmosphere where newspapers rejoice in abuse and insults an atmosphere the chess world should look forward to?

'I think Nigel had some problems in the beginning. He didn't know how to define himself as a challenger. Because (laughs) his score against me is minus-ten. Or minus nine, I don't remember exactly. A very very bad score. Obviously he was trying to get equal by finding some wrongdoings in Kasparov's career. Outside of chess. I don't blame him for this. I just think it was silly, it was stupid. I could have reacted strongly. I didn't. Because I didn't think it was relevant.'

When I spoke to Nigel Short before I came here I was surprised to learn that apart from Anand he had not spoken to any of the other players. Have you spoken to the others. I mean, is it relevant to you what they think?

'I don't think it is relevant what they think about it, if the money is behind us. At the same time I believe it's necessary to talk to them. I was a little bit upset that Nigel didn't speak to the players. With many players he had better relations than I have. I spoke to some players here. Maybe apart from definitely Karpov, Kamsky and Timman, I spoke to anybody else here. I think I got their understanding. They listened, even Ivanchuk, and they understand that if it's a good arrangement, they will like it. They're not going to do anything about it. But the idea they like very much. They'll go for the best deal. They have much less to lose. I have a lot to lose, because I am changing the rules basically against my interests.'

Do you feel isolated in these matters? You try to get things done and the others just sit and wait?
‘I have been World Champion for almost seven years. I learned a lesson. The World Champion will always be isolated. This is a rule. And if you want to be the greatest you will be twice isolated (laughs).’

You hope to set up a new qualification system starting with the next cycle. Will this wreck the Biel Interzonal?

‘It could take place in Biel also. I prefer a smooth transition. I hate wars. They are not very constructive. Now we have a chance to bring big money. If we’re obliged to fight there is no problem. I feel very confident now. As a chess player and as someone who brings this new concept.’

What does the creation of the PCA mean for your International Chess Union?

‘I can’t say now. Maybe we have to amalgamate it with the PCA. Maybe there is a way to amalgamate it with the GMA. There may be a solution. I don’t know right now. But we’re definitely going to do something. I mean, we have many ingredients now for good cooking. But much depends on our quality as cooks.’

But I take it that you will be the chef de cuisine?

‘(Broad smile) Yes, this result in Linares gives me some authority to be chef de cuisine³⁷.’

37 Kasparov won the 1993 Linares tournament with a 10/13 score.