

Chess Review

REPORT FROM MAINLAND CHINA

Chess Recovers From The "Cultural Revolution"

BY XU JIALIANG
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When world chess champion Alexander Alekhine visited Shanghai, China, in January 1933, he was pleasantly surprised to discover his own portrait reproduced in a book which had been compiled by the noted Chinese player Xie Xiaxun. Serving today as the vice-president of the All-China Chess Federation, Xie personally presented a copy of his book to Alekhine as a keepsake.

Alekhine created a sensation in Chinese chess circles, dazzling his hosts with two simultaneous exhibitions — one in which he faced 47 local players and a second in which he faced 11 opponents while blindfolded. He won 40 games, drew four and lost three in the former match up and won two, drew three and lost six in the latter. [Editor's note: In *Les Cahiers de L'Echiquier Francais* of July–August 1933, the score of the blindfold exhibition is given as $+4-3=4$ in Alekhine's favor.]

Alekhine's visit came at a time when Western chess, which is very similar to the time-honored Chinese-rule chess, *xiangqi*, was reserved for a handful of intellectuals in the major cities — where foreign influence was keenly felt. Even after the founding of "New China" in 1949, the game did not spread until 1956, when chess — as well as *xiangqi* and *weiqi* (or go) — was officially sponsored as a competitive sport. Since that benchmark year, chess tournaments have been held regularly nationwide, except during the tumultuous, decade-long "Cultural Revolution," which began in 1966.

The "Cultural Revolution" seriously hindered chess activities as well as all other endeavors across the country. But chess in China did not take long to bounce back. Shortly after the "Cultural Revolution" ended, China competed in the second Asian Team Championship, which was held in New Zealand in 1977. It was the first time that China had ever competed in this continent-wide event, but she placed second, just behind The Philippines. The Chinese retained second place in both the third and fourth Asian Team Championships, played in Singapore in 1979 and in Hangzhou in 1981. Two years later, the Chinese took the team title in the fifth championship, which was held in New Delhi, India.

DEADLIER THAN THE MALE

So far, Chinese women players have done better than their male counterparts. The Chinese women's team shared fourth place with the West Ger-



PHOTOGRAPH BY J. M. TURNER

Call it *Hsiang ch'i* or *xiangqi* — but no matter how one spells the name of Chinese chess, it is, avers *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Chess*, "the most important regional variety of chess." In the above photograph of December 1985, men gather for a few games in Wuhan, the People's Republic of China. According to George Hagerman in "Chess East and West," *xiangqi* may have come to China at about the time that Western chess spread to Europe in the 8th century. The pronunciation of the name for Chinese chess is very close to those for the Vietnamese version (*Co Ngoui*) and the Japanese version (*Shogi*). Writes Mr. Hagerman: "There is one major difference between Chinese versions of chess and the Western game. The Chinese place the pieces on line-intersections of the chess board rather than, as do Westerners, in the spaces. With the Oriental playing from intersection to intersection and the Westerner playing from space to space, the old saw about 'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet' is literally true in chess." But the reader will see from the article elsewhere on this page that Western chess has made inroads into the China of the 1980s. While the chess pieces may never meet, the chess people are getting together.

mans at the 1984 Chess Olympiad in Thessaloniki, defeating such strong powers as Rumania and Hungary along the way. This was a step forward compared with the team's performance at the two previous Olympiads, where the women took a shared fifth place. Most recently, at the 1986 Dubai Olympiad, the ladies finished tied for third-fourth with Rumania, only one point behind second-place Hungary.

The Chinese women again distinguished themselves at the 1985 FIDE Zone 11 women's championship, in Chengdu in southwest China. An Yanfeng, Wu Minxi and Zhao Lan swept the top three places.

The women's team boasts two WGMs, 25-year-old Liu Shilan and 26-year-old Wu Minxi. Liu, from southwest China's Sichuan Province, is China's — and Asia's! — first-ever WGM. In 1979, she beat Dragana Vulovic of Yugoslavia to win the Pula Women's International in Belgrade. In 1980, Liu scored +7-1=3 to place third at the fourth international women's tournament in Hyeres, France.

Liu has twice drawn with the women's world champion, Soviet WGM Maya Chiburdanidze, in Olympiad competition. In 1981, she won the Asian zonal tournament in Baguio, The Philippines, by scoring 14 straight wins. This feat made Liu eligible to compete at the Tbilisi Interzonal in 1983. Her third-place finish qualified her for the candidates' matches and for the WGM title. Although she lost 3-6 to Soviet GM Nana Ioseliani in the candidates' matches, she is viewed by chess experts as a grave threat to any world-class contender.

The other WGM is from east China's picturesque Hangzhou. Wu Minxi learned chess from her father, a chess coach, when she was a young girl. At 13, she was sent for more systematic chess training to a local spare time sports school for youngsters. That was in 1974. By 1976, her painstaking study had earned Wu her first top honor — first place in a provincial tournament for juniors. She would go on to be chosen for the Chinese national team and to compete in every Olympiad since 1980.

In the final round of the women's interzonal at Zheleznovodsk in the Soviet Union, Wu humbled Soviet GM Nina Gurieli. She scored a total of 10½ points and finished as runner-up. With this result, Wu qualified for the candidates' matches and garnered the WGM title. In the interzonals, she defeated four of the six WGMs participating. Against her strong Soviet opponents, she had four wins and one loss. Her total score was +9-3=3.

CHINA'S MEN MAKE THEIR MARK

Now a word about the Chinese men's team. It was in 1978, two years after the end of the devastation of the "Cultural Revolution," that China again fielded men's teams in the world arena. At the 23rd Chess Olympiad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Chinese men overcame strong teams from Iceland and Austria, finishing in a tie for 18th place with Cuba, Finland and Holland. Not bad for a team which began as the 44th seed! Although the Chinese team's performance in the next few Olympiads did not match this one, the individual men — Liu Wenzhe, Qi Jingxuan, and Li Zunian — have all turned in fine results in various international competitions. However, at the 1986 Dubai Olym-

piad, the men achieved a major breakthrough by tying for 7th-12th, ahead of such perennial powers as West Germany and Yugoslavia.

The oldest of the three, Liu Wenzhe, is from Peking. In 1965, at age 25, Liu became the first Chinese player to defeat a grandmaster when he outplayed Nikolai Krogius, a member of a visiting Soviet team. He won three more games, drew two and lost two against the Soviets. Thirteen years later, Liu created another stir in the chess fraternity by upsetting Dutch GM Jan Donner in just 20 moves at the Olympiad in Buenos Aires. This was the first widely publicized win by an Asian over a Western grandmaster.

PIRC DEFENSE

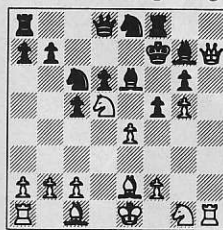
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W: IM Liu Wenzhe

B: GM Jan Donner

Buenos Aires Olympiad, 1978

1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 g6 4. Be2 Bg7 5. g4 h6 6. h3 c5 7. d5 0-0 8. h4 e6 9. g5 hxg5 10. hxg5 Ne8 11. Qd3 exd5 12. Nxd5 Nc6 13. Qg3 Be6 14. Qh4 f5 15. Qh7+ Kf7 (diagram) 16. Qxg6+!! Kxg6 17. Bh5+ Kh7 18. Bf7+ Bh6 19. g6+! Kg7 20. Bxh6+ , Black resigns



After 15. ... Kf7

Liu and his 20-year-old teammate, Liang Jinrong, earned their first IM norms the following year, each scoring 9½-4½ to share third place at the 1979 Coka International in Yugoslavia. They repeated this performance in a category four tournament in Malta in 1980 with a +7-2=5 outing, both thus earning their IM titles.

Qi Jingxuan from Shanghai is another of China's better-known players. In 1975, at age 29, he defeated GM Eugenio Torre in a match played between the Chinese team and a visiting team from The Philippines. Three years later, at the 1978 *Clarín* International in Buenos Aires, Qi outwitted Soviet GM Rafael Vaganian and Argentine GM Miguel Quinteros, and drew with other top grandmasters, including American Walter Browne. At the Vidmar Memorial in 1979, he upset several GMs — Vaganian, Quinteros, Svetozar Gligoric of Yugoslavia and Bent Larsen of Denmark. Qi finished first in the 1984 FIDE Zone 11 men's championship in Laoag, The Philippines.

SICILIAN DEFENSE

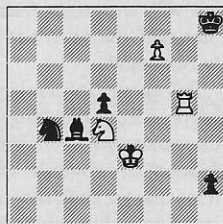
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W: IM Qi Jingxuan

B: GM Bent Larsen

5th Vidmar Memorial, 1979

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 d6 5. c4 g6 6. Nc3 Bg7 7. Be3 Nh6 8. h3 f5 9. exf5 Nxf5 10. Nxf5 Bxf5 11. Qd2 Qa5 12. Rc1 0-0 13. Be2 Rac8 14. 0-0 a6 15. Rfd1 Kh8 16. b3 Qa3 17. Bb6 Qb4 18. Be3 Rf7 19. Qb2 Be6 20. a3 Qa5 21. b4 Qf5 22. Qd2 Ne5 23. Nd5 b5 24. cxb5 Rxc1 25.



After 52. f7

Qxc1 axb5 26. Bxb5 Rf8 27. Qd2 Ra8 28. a4 Qe4 29. Nc7 Bxh3 30. Qd5 Qxd5 31. Nxd5 Bg4 32. f3 Bd7 33. Nb6 Bxb5 34. Nxa8 Bxa4 35. Rc1 Kg8 36. Nc7 Nd3 37. Rc4 Bb3 38. Re4 d5 39. Rxe7 Nxb4 40. Ne6 Bc3 41. Bd4 Bxd4 42. Nxd4 Bc4 43. g4 h6 44. Kf2 Bd3 45. Ke3 Bc4 46. f4 h5 47. f5 gxf5 48. gxf5 h4 49. f6 h3 50. Rg7+ Kh8 51. Rg5 h2 52. f7 (diagram) 52. ... Nc2+ 53. Kd2, Black resigns

Li Zunian, a 29-year-old from Shanghai, is noted for his combinative play. He twice outplayed Soviet GM Artur Yusupov, and he defeated several other GMs at the 1983 World Youth Team Championship in Mexico. Li finished second at the Laoag zonal.

The All-China Chess Federation was established in 1962 and has now grown to a membership of 5,000. Under government sponsorship, chess clubs and associations have been set up throughout the country to organize tournaments and other chess activities and to promote chess, especially among women and youth.

The Chinese national championship began officially in 1956. Annual team championships for both men and women were added in 1978. The national team is chosen from among the best players from various provinces and cities. And, beginning with that invitation to Alekhine in 1933, China has continued to invite chessplayers from around the world for exhibitions and friendly matches, both to challenge her players and to promote international chess friendship.

THE NINTH FILE

FOURTH SUPER K?

IMs Make Good Moves But Only GMs Make Good

BY DANNY KOPEC
International Master

When writing in the October 1985 *Chess Life* about my "preparations" to become an international master, I may have left an impression of being a typical laid-back Californian. "This lack of study," I said of my preparations, "does not overly concern me. I think of each game of chess as analogous to seeing the Grand Canyon for the first time. The magnitude of this glorious view is daunting in the same way as the immense number of possible opening variations. So, it seems ludicrous to devote all one's attention to a particular sequence of moves."

And it's true: I do sound like a surfer at Big Sur. Yet, surely, to become a grandmaster in chess (or in life) requires fighting spirit. Take the three Super Ks — Karpov, Korchnoi and Kasparov. They possess willpower and fighting spirit to the utmost. Of course, they have more than that. It may surprise the reader, but I believe that the *gestalt* of many chessplayers' styles is akin to their personalities. For example, Karpov's play is deceptive, subtle and persistent while simultaneously aggressive, cautious and pragmatic. Such appear to be his off-the-board attributes as well. Korchnoi's chess and personality are outspoken, boisterous,