

2003-11-18

## Our Prehistory

“All has occurred before“, to quote rabbi Ben Akiba in Karl Gutzkow’s *Uriel Acosta* (1846). First plans to create a universal chess bibliography already evolved 16 years ago, namely during a discussion between the French collector Jean Mennerat and Rob Verhoeven from the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (The Hague). Some time later Rob Verhoeven and Ken Whyld developed a more extensive concept of a CHESS RESEARCH SOCIETY, which should include the bibliographical aspect. Jean Mennerat, Rob Verhoeven and Ken Whyld surely recognized the enormous extent of this project, as shows their interesting correspondence from the years 1987-1991 (see below).

Putting these concepts to practice proved impossible at that time, at least the Initiative Group Königstein could be based on them. (Thanks to Egbert Meissenburg for this hint.)

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DOCTEUR JEAN MENNERAT  
COULANS SUR LISON  
25330 AMANCEY

Coulans 22.11.1987

. Robert Verhoeven  
Koninklijke Bibliotheek

Dear Mr. Verhoeven,

I was very happy to meet you at Den Hague and at Gouda last month. I enjoyed very much my stay in your nice country and, unless something unforeseen happens, I will go to next auction at Gouda ( March 1988 ? ).


Concerning the scheme of nomenclature for classification and catalogue of a chess library it gave me food for thought ! And up to now, I not took a definite position on the matter. I only venture to draw your attention to the following points :

- All sorts of periodicals and magazines should be put apart.
- What do you mean with « Textbooks » in « Introduction » ?
- Endgames should be divided in theoretical and practical.
- In « Practice » : Biographies ( including collections of games by individual players ) should be separate from collections of games ( collections of all sort ).
- Fairy Chess at my point of view is not orthodox chess and should be included in « unorthodox chess ». It is the most « played » of unorthodox chess, but it is only unorthodox chess.

Should the occasion arrive, I should be glad to get some of the books ( tournaments and others ) you have to sell..

With my best wishes:

Yours sincerely,



P.S. Would you be so kind to give me information about the following problem :

A german bookseller has sold to me some time ago : Klinke : Das schwarze Schnittpunktgefüge ( Chemnitz 1924 ).

Pages III to VI were missing and also the one of a german collector.

Could you say me if the copy at Kon. Bibliotheek has also the same pages missing ?

\_ Letter from J. Mennerat to R. Verhoeven (11/22/1987)

# KB

17 DEC. 1987

## Koninklijke Bibliotheek

Mr J. Mennerat  
Coulans sur lison  
25330 Amancey  
France

datum 14-12-1987      ons nummer      uw brief      doorkiesnummer  
onderwerp

Dear Mr Mennerat:

Thank you for your letter of November 22nd.

I enjoyed very much your company during your recent stay in Holland, especially your views concerning an eventual magazine for chess book collectors (and others as well). Last week I had a conversation with Jürgen Stigter - I think you will know him - about this subject, and he is also very interested. I mentioned our idea to organize a congress or something similar and he thought that perhaps some sponsoring would be possible; publishers and book dealers, who will have profit through such an initiative, might be interested, so he thought. I think that we first have to make a profile of ourselves and decide on what we want and what we do not want.

To start with I prefer to stick with literature only, and history if it concerns literature. Otherwise the material will be endangered in pure quality. Literature is so large on itself, that it will be hard enough to cover that item in a satisfactory way!

One of the first items to be discussed should be the standardization for computer input. When all kind of collectors are going to put their collections into a computer just like that, with their private programs, it will not be possible to exchange valuable information afterwards.

Last week I received a letter from an English chess enthousiast, who had sigbed a contract with a publisher (specialized in bibliographies). He wanted to produce a 'world chess bibliography', mainly after 'Betts', so after 1968 and after 1966 for the USSR. He had 2000 titles ... So I have advised him to restrict himself to English language publications only (he was not aware of all kinds of tournament bulletins!).

I simply told him that it is not a 'one man's job' and that it would be better to coordinate with 'us' and consider the possibility to publish separate volumes on various countries. At least there will be some extra time, and specialists can be contacted.

If an organization like mentioned above would have existed, probably the publisher would have come to 'us'. This English young man thought that he could be ready in June .... 1988. I wished him luck with his health! He now will have a second conversation with his publisher to discuss my idea.

Concerning the classification of chess literature:

- It is not possible to put all sorts of magazines and periodicals in one

Prins Willem Alexanderhof 5, 2595 BE 's-Gravenhage, Telefoon 070-140911, Telex 31500

Postadres: Postbus 90407, 2509 LK 's-Gravenhage

Verzoeken bij beantwoording datum, nummer en onderwerp te vermelden.

section, simply because they cover different subjects. A Fairy chess magazine cannot <sup>be</sup> put in the same section as an magazine on openings. However, it will be possible to print out a list of this so called 'form' (of publication).

- Introductions are beginners books, dealing with the first principles only (how to move etc.). Textbooks are books on instruction dealing with all phases of the game, including first principles. The first section in Theory contains books not dealing with first principles, or only very briefly (main part for advanced play).

- Endgames theoretical and practical. You are invited to make the separation! In literature the two come together, besides what was practical in earlier times is now theory, and theory we meet in practice. But I am very curious about your opinion. Experts I consulted agree with me so far and they assisted in making the classification on Endgames.

- Practice is now called Games. Players'. So far I can see Biographies (including collections of games by individual players) are fully separated from other collections of games. Perhaps the text is not clear enough.

- Fairy Chess. You are quite right, Fairy Chess is not orthodox chess. But I do not see how it can be included in Orthodox Chess. As you well know, Fairy Chess is being treated in problem magazines as a regular item and is <sup>being</sup> considered as a part of 'Compositions'.

By the way: I changed also 'Problems. Fairy Chess' in: Compositions. Under 'Studies' I made a 'See Endgames' reference. And in Endgames I made a reference 'see also Compositions'.

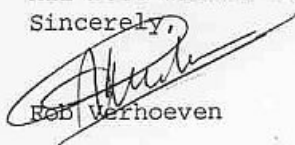
If I make a list of chess books I am going to sell, you will be the first to receive it. (I checked of course my Euwe books on the openings, but the vols. you are looking for I do not have, unfortunately).

Enclosed please find the xeroxes concerning the Klinke book.

As you can see, our copy does not miss the mentioned pages III to VI, as suggested by the German dealer. Perhaps there is a misunderstanding about the pages, but counting should start (as in our copy) with the so-called French title. The title page itself is than III. Anyway, it seems quite simple to me: your copy is incomplete if the preface is missing.

All best wishes for Christmas and a happy 1988!

Sincerely,



Rob Verhoeven



# KB

15 JUL 1988

## Koninklijke Bibliotheek

Mr J. Mennerat  
Coulans sur Lison  
25330 Amancey  
France

11 July 1988

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onderwerp			


Dear Mr Mennerat:

- Thank you for your letter of July 4th.  
I just want to say that Whyld and I have a large chess research society in mind, including bibliography, so not just a bibliographic society.

If I am correct you have my list of matters to be discussed?!  
Further, the first step we have to make, is draw up the articles and the principles of the society. I prefer to do this in a small select group. Later on we can send the text in draft form to colleagues, for comment. The next step would be to organize a congress.

The Alekhine MS: I really hope you are able to do something. Please let me know if you have success.

Hartelijke groeten en tot ziens,

  
Rob Verhoeven

Letter from R. Verhoeven to J. Mennerat (07/11/1988)

Moorland House  
Caistor  
Lincolnshire  
LN7 6SF

Dear Mr Verhoeven,

How do we take the idea further ? I suggest that we need to find the views of many of the leading people who could be expected to be interested in taking part. Names cram into my mind, and I append a first list. We need to avoid being narrow, such as confining ourselves to just history, or computers, or bibliography, for example. We should address ourselves to all who are seeking to widen knowledge on any aspect of chess.

It would be useful to be able to discuss this further at the Dresden meeting. At the moment my plan is to go from there to The Hague (after a week-end visiting a friend in Copenhagen), arriving on the evening of 6th September and leaving on the night boat from Rotterdam on 8th. We can have further discussion in detail then.

Thank you for payment for the book I sent to you. I suppose that must mean that the package arrived safely at the library ?

Best wishes,

Ken Wray

Becker (USA); Bijl (Neth); Blommers (Neth); Brandreth (USA); Cafferty (UK); Calve (Spain); Chicco (Italy); Diggie (UK); Eales (UK); Ehn (Austria); Erlandsson (Sweden); Fairbairn (UK); Foldeak (Hungary); Fox (UK); Gaige (USA); Gizycki (Poland); Grammel (BDR); Harvey (UK); Hildebrand (Sweden); Jellis (UK); Kalendovsky (Czech); Keats (UK); James (UK); Lamford (UK); Levy (UK); Littorin (Sweden); Lulis (UK); van Manen (Australia); Mark (UK); McCrary (USA); Meadley (Australia); Meissenburg (BDR); Mennerat (France); Moran (Spain); Myers (USA); O'Fee (UK); Pandit (India); Petzold (DDR); Povarov (USSR); Rather (USA); Romanov (USSR); Sanvito (Italy); Schiller (BDR); Schmid (BDR); Skinner (UK); Skoff (USA); Spitzenberger (Austria); Walsh (Ireland); Williams (UK); Winter (Switz). That's 50 names, to kick off, plus ourselves.

Ankurbaleh (USSR)	Sofia (USSR)	Yugoslavia?
Stigter (Neth)	Hühner? (BSE)	South America
Hooper (U.S.)	Barren (Arg)	Chilean Pl
		Melbourne Ldn (Wester?)

P.S. New print of Companion just out.  
Enclosed list is points still outstanding.

## CHESS RESEARCH SOCIETY

The above is the possible name of a new body which aims to:-

- 1) strengthen ties and promote co-operation, liaison, and communication between those engaged in chess research
- 2) help researchers to locate sources of help
- 3) to publish findings, in particular those unlikely to be published elsewhere
- 4) expand chess knowledge.

It is envisaged that the Society will attract those who need a firm bibliographical basis for their work. It will supplement rather than clash with bodies like the CCI or ICCA.

In principle the language used is English, but it is envisaged that papers might be published in original language as well as English, where desirable.

The cost to members is intended to be modest, reflecting the fact that in many cases there will be difficulty with currency transmission.

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The above could be handed out to potential members. We have to become more clear about other matters.

- 1) Do we envisage, one day, being able to link with Chess Base and other bodies, eventually offering a huge package accomodating various data suppliers who could charge according to the usage of their own data ?
- 2) Meanwhile, what do we publish ?
- 3) Who will do what ?
- 4) I envisage two kinds of subscription. A small one for those truly engaged in chess work, and who could be expected to work towards our aims. A large one for those who want to see the results but make no commitment to the Society.
- 5) We should produce something we can send to prospective members. It has to be more informative than the top of this sheet, saying what the member would get, and what it would demand of him/her.

KW 15 ix 88



Dear Ken:

I prefer the aims as formulated in my letter of 26 April 1988.

These points are more concrete. The main idea for me remains: to organize chess knowledge and get the facts right.

First of all we must develop a structure (board, co-operators and contributors) and give it body (right people, links to firms/sponsors).

The basis for all research are the existing sources, so the society should aim for controlling and indexing them. We must make definitions and standards. I consider that as an absolute necessity.

An illustrative example: 'Quotes & Queries' and *Chess Notes* deal with a variety of subjects, but lack an indexing system, so a lot of valuable information is lost again for researchers 'outside' (and even many inside!). We need the sources to be able to produce, and we need to know about the results to make progress.

In my view the main points for discussion are:

1. Sources/Mean

- a) Bibliographic control of existent sources
- b) Bibliographic control of new publications
- c) Subject classification and indexing

2. People

- a) Organizing and structuring of contacts
- b) Grouping of specialism(s)
- c) Exchange/sharing/contribution of information
- d) Congress

3. Productions

- a) Bibliography of chess literature (including articles)
- b) Creating a data base on chess subjects/facts
- c) Standardizations for retrieval and indexing (Bureau)
- d) Publishing a periodical

4. External services

- a) Expertise
- b) Information services (press and other media)
- c) Delivery on disk
- d) Online?!

5. Financing

- a) Subscriptions (publications!?)
- b) Fees
- c) Commercial relations (publishers!?)



We should install a board *ad interim*, combining theorists and practitioners. [Littorin (Sweden) and Averbakh?]

Once we have a working scheme looking for who is doing what, the best choices will come up spontaneously. The ones who are going to produce something can earn their membership automatically. The pure consumers should pay the bill.

After this board has been installed we could produce something we can send around, and preferably not too long afterwards a pilot issue of our new periodical. The content of the periodical should be clear. (I would like to see a list of new publications in it [point 1b])

Further:

- The first approach towards potential members should be in private letters, I think, asking for comments and willingness to co-operate. That is in line with the option of a board *ad interim*. Depending the results we could advertise.
- Communication language is English and original languages can be used, but I feel that authors should provide the translation into English as well.
- Interests in all fields, but we must try to circle around what we could consider to be of importance for chess research (to avoid the term scientific).  
We must formulate some guidelines concerning this point.
- No affiliation with (the present) FIDE.

If we do not look at possible results of our whole initiative, Ken, I really feel that we can always start with a small élite group, sharing a data base, thus establishing an authority in itself.

Best regards,

Rob

KB

18 FEB 1991

## Koninklijke Bibliotheek

Dr J. Mennerat  
Coulans sur Lison  
25330 Amancey  
France

11 Feb 1991

Dear Mr Mennerat:

It seems we have lost contact somehow. I hope you are in good shape and enjoy a good health.

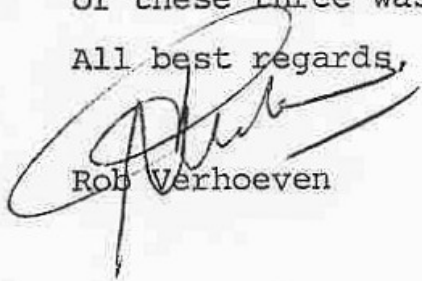
At the end of 1990 I made some contact with Dr Thomsen (Germany), a member of the Chess Collectors International, who has great interest in chess history (apart from collecting chessmen).

I told him about our still haunting idea of the Chess Research Society. His idea is to organize a meeting with chess historians (including Ken Whyld, Yuri Averbakh, Isaac Linder, etc.). But since then I haven't heard anything.

I wonder if you are able to shed some light on the following:

Anti-Lucretius, of M. de Polignac, seems to have three <sup>Paris</sup> 1749 editions (or more?). Do you know which of these three was the first? Publishers were:

All best regards,

  
Rob Verhoeven

- Le Mercier  
- Desaint & Saillant  
- Coignard (this ed.  
is not in our cat.  
of the Bibliothèque  
National)

Prins Willem Alexanderhof 5, 2595 BE 's-Gravenhage, Telefoon 070-140911

Sincere thanks to our collector's friend Dr Jean Mennerat, Amancey (France) for handing over these papers and for his permission to publication.