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The accession of Germany and the Soviet Union to FIDE

_ Stefan Löffler and Frank Hoffmeister

Frank Hoffmeister, President of the CH&LS Association, retraced the history of German and USSR membership of FIDE.

Two countries with a tumultuous history in the 20th century, a tumult that is reflected in their relations with FIDE.

Here is an extract from the presentation text for the General Meeting on 13 and 14 September 2024.

The first lecture on Saturday was given by Prof. Frank Hoffmeister on the three accessions of the German Chess Federation to FIDE: as “Deutscher Schachbund”, delayed in 1926 after the foundation of FIDE because of the First World War, a second time in 1938 as the Greater German Chess Federation whose automatic succession to the DSB was contested in FIDE because of the Aryan Paragraph, and a third time in 1950 with two federations (one in West-Germany after hesitant denazification and one in East-Germany after Soviet take-over).

The second part of the presentation was the admission of the Soviet Union, which only took place in 1947. Hoffmeister showed that the driving motivation was to establish the regime-loyal Botvinnik as world champion. This may also explain that the “Winterthur 6” (i.e. Botvinnik, Smyslov, Keres, Reshevsky, Fine and Euwe, who had been nominated by the FIDE congress) agreed in September 1946 not to play in Prague, where Najdorf won. Despite the earlier agreement that the winner of the Prague agreement would have the right to participate in the next world championship match, the FIDE congress in The Hague in summer 1947 decided otherwise. This decision also paved the way to Soviet accession at the very congress and the promise to hold the championship in 1948 in The Hague and Moscow. As Botvinnik won the tournament in due course, the plan was very successful and constituted the start of Soviet domination of the World Chess Federation. Stefan Löffler added to the topic from an Austrian perspective, underlining the need of the Austrian Federation to accommodate both American and Soviet presence in the country until 1955.

Frank Hoffmaister: The accession of Germany and the Soviet Union to FIDE

THE ACCESSION OF GERMANY AND THE SOVIET UNION TO FIDE

TWO POLITICAL TEST CASES FOR THE WORLD CHESS FEDERATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

- German and Russian players are part of the world elite (Chigorin, Lasker, Tarrasch) around 1900
- The last „big“ international tournaments before the first world war are staged in St. Petersburg and Mannheim 1914
- However, both Germany and the Soviet Union are absent at the foundation of FIDE in Paris 1924
- How come? And how did politics influence their later accession?

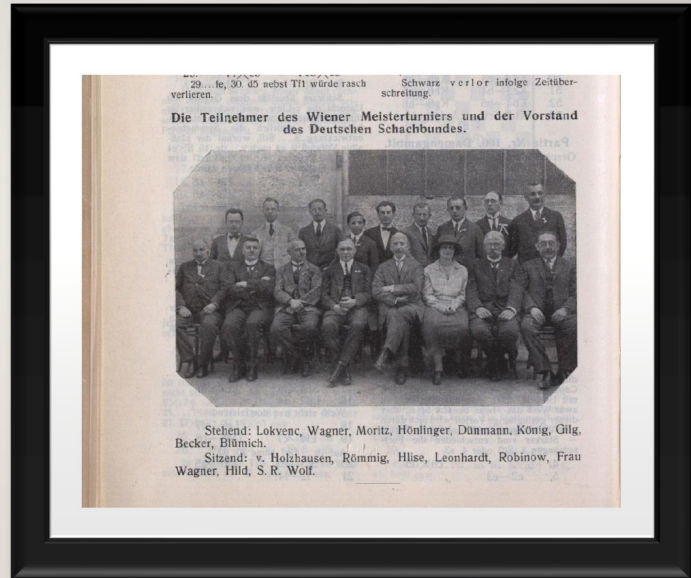
II. THE THREE ACCESSIONS OF GERMANY

- Absence of Germany in 1924
- No invitation, probably because of political reservations
- Similar to non-invitation of German chess players to the 1919 and 1922 London tournaments



DSB ACCESSION IN 1926

- Participation of President Robinow and Treasurer Römmig to the Zurich congress 1925
- DSB congress in Breslau 1925 authorizes the board to implement FIDE membership (Congress book, p. 10)
- Accession of the DSB to FIDE in 1926



HAMBURG OLYMPIAD 1930

- 3rd Olympiad staged in Hamburg upon invitation of Robinow (DSB President and President of the Hamburg Chess club)
- Splendid and expensive event, adds to the reputation of DSB in FIDE
- Polish team wins (Frydman, Tartakower, Rubinstein, Makarczyk, Przepiórka)



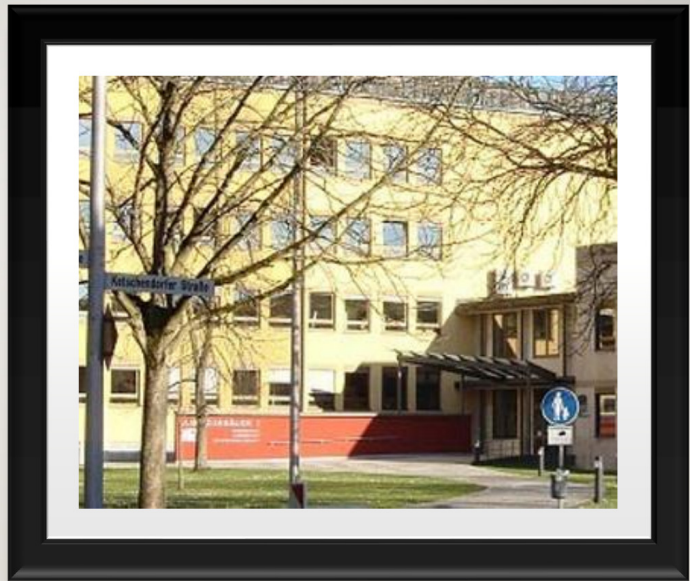
THE FORCIBLE TAKEOVER OF THE DSB BY THE „GROSSDEUTSCHER SCHACHBUND“ (GSB) 1933

- In December 1931, the GSB is founded in Berlin next to the DSB. It wants to promote the ethno-national approach (“völkisch”) and to be open for Germans abroad
- After the Nazi takeover of the German State in January/March 1933, the “GSB” secretary-General Pruske asks the DSB board to resign. President and VP step back
- Remaining DSB board asks the Saxonian regional federation leader Hammer, a fervent Nazi, to act as interim DSB President
- Reichsminister Goebbels appoints Otto Zander as new President of “merged” German chess in July 1933



UNCLEAR SITUATION IN FIDE

- Bad Pyrmont DSB congress 1933 ratifies forcible takeover, but DSB continues to exist legally until November 1934 (AG Coburg)
- GSB inquires whether it is a member of FIDE
- Discussion in FIDE congress Warsaw 1935



FIDE CONGRESS WARSAW 1935 (10 YES, 5 ABS, 2 NO)

"L'Assemblée Générale prend en considération la requête du GDSB. Elle apprécie la bonne volonté du GDSB de vouloir se présenter éventuellement comme membre de la FIDE; elle regrette que provisoirement cette éventualité ne paraisse pas réalisable par suite de l'introduction dans ses statuts d'éléments qui n'ont pas trait au jeu d'échecs; ces éléments sont jugés opposés au caractère et aux Statuts de la FIDE.

L'Assemblée Générale regrette par conséquent que le GDSB se trouve dans l'impossibilité de s'occuper des intérêts de la FIDE, mais elle apprécie ses efforts pour le développement du jeu dans le domaine international.

Le GDSB s'est engagé formellement à ce que le paragraphe incriminé de ses statuts soit supprimé pour toutes les équipes (l'équipe allemande incluse) lors des tournois proposés pour 1936, ainsi que pour l'organisation de tout autre tournoi par équipes du GDSB et de ses divisions contre les équipes d'une fédération étrangère.

Dans l'expectative de l'exécution effective de cet engagement de la part du GDSB, l'Assemblée Générale de la FIDE laisse à ses fédérations affiliées toute liberté de s'inscrire au tournoi des nations du GDSB 1936."

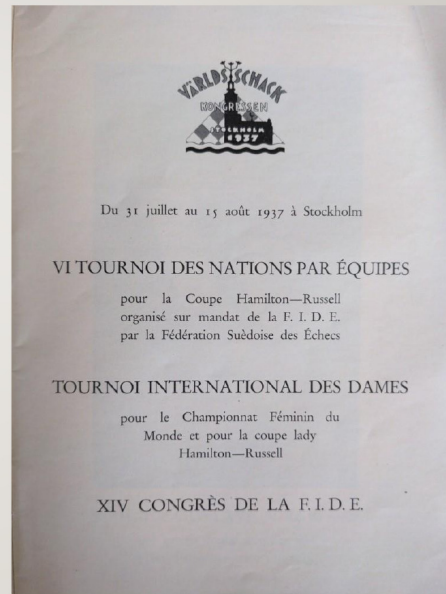
THE 1936 MUNICH CHESS TOURNAMENT

- 21 participating teams
- Germany participates with "young generation", trained by Alekhine and Bogoljubow
- Hungary wins (with Maroczy, Steiner brothers, Barca, Szabo)



FIDE CONGRESS STOCKHOLM 1937

- Rediscussion of the GSB membership
- Before the congress, Hungary apparently wants to propose re-admission, but Nordic Federation opposes
- According to Swedish chess magazine Tfs, the Nordic Federations and Hungary suggests to the congress that the President looks into German re-admission



FIDE CONGRESSES PARIS 1938 AND BUENOS AIRES 1939

- Only six delegations attend the congress in Paris 1938
- According to German sources FIDE accepts GSB as member
- According to Willy Iclicki's golden book: „At the request of Hungary, France, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Italy, Argentina and Great Britain agreed to reconsider the membership of the GSB“.
- Only the full congress in Buenos Aires 1939 confirmed the full participation of GSB, among many other new members (Reasons for policy change?)

BUENOS AIRES OLYMPIAD 1939

- German team with two Austrians (Eliskases, Becker) wins with 36 points
- Many players did not return home afterwards (most famous Najdorf)
- GSB organises European championships in occupied territories 1941-43, but dissolves de facto 1944/1945



Alemania: L. Engels, E. Eliskases, H. Reinhardt, Srta. Friedl Rinder, A. Becker y P. Michel

THE THIRD ADMISSION IN 1950

- Political partition of Germany leads to new structures
- 1946: *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Schachverbände* under Richard Czaya and Alfred Brinckmann in the three western zones
- 1946: *Sektion Schach of the Deutsche Sportausschuss* in the eastern zone (1958 foundation of the DSV)
- 1946-1953: Still pan-German tournaments (last championship in Leipzig 1953).



ADMISSION TO FIDE JULY 1950

- Readmission discussed in Paris congress 1949
- Swiss Federation (Voellmy) raises issue of denazification in the Western zones; USSR (Ragozin) considers that „purification“ had taken place in the eastern zone, but agrees that readmission should be deferred
- Souther German/Swiss chess contest end of 1949 with direct exchanges between Voellmy and Storck (future Vice-President DSB) to remove doubts about Nazi influence in West German Chess Federation
- Copenhagen congress 1950 admits both DSB (upon recommendation of the USA and Canada) and the Sektion Schach of the Deutscher Sportausschuss (upon recommendation of the Soviet Union)
- Afterwards Olympiads in Munich 1958 and Leipzig 1960, followed by Siegen 1970

UNIFICATION OF DSB AND DSV 1990

- Glasnost in GDR leads to election of Dr. Michael Schmidt (Dresden) as new President
- Quick preparation of unification at congress of Leipzig September 1990
- Membership of DSB in FIDE continues until today (and FIDE establishes senior WCh upon proposal by DSB President Egon Ditt)



III. THE SOVIET ACCESSION TO FIDE

- St. Petersburg 1914: early support for a World Chess Federation from the board of the All-Russian Chess Federation (Saburoff and Maljatin) at an exchange with DSB (Gebhardt and Robinow)
- Ideas to found an association based on masters also discussed at Mannheim 1914 (Lasker in favor)
- Soviet take-over leads to a provisional end. New Soviets focus on worker's association and avoids contact to „bourgeois“ FIDE (decision of 1925)
- Opening under Krylenko and the rise of Botvinnik (Moscow tournaments 1925, 1935, 1936)

STOCKHOLM CONGRESS 1937: FIDE WISHES TO ORGANISE THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

- Euwe, (WCh 1935), open to transfer organisation to FIDE.
- FIDE Congress 1937 discusses Dutch proposal that AVRO 1938 could become a candidates tournament; however, FIDE nominates Czech player Salo Flohr as FIDE challenger despite disappointing result in Nottingham 1936.
- Euwe then loses to Alekhine the return match (December 1937), and Alekhine does not intend to involve FIDE in his next match.



THE CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT AVRO 1938

- AVRO 1938 announces that winner should be able to challenge Alekhine
- Keres (Estonia), Fine (USA) and Botvinnik (SU) fight for first rank
- Keres and Fine win the tournament
- Botvinnik tries to convince Soviet bureaucracy to support a match, but Krylenko becomes victim of Stalin's purges (July 1938)



FIDE CONGRESS WINTERTHUR 1946

- FIDE President Rueb suggests a modus for selecting the candidate: the six strongest pre-war players (Botvinnik, Smyslov, Keres, Euwe, Fine, Reshevsky) plus the two winners for the post-war tournaments in Groningen and Prague
- SU and US not present but accept the proposal by September 1946



THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE WINTERTHUR SIX OF 19 SEPTEMBER 1946

- Botvinnik wins Groningen in August 1946 ahead of Euwe, but lost to Najdorf
- The Winterthur Six (Botvinnik, Smyslov, Keres, Fine, Euwe, Reshevsky) agree at the margins of a Soviet-American match to play a four-rounds round robin.
- No mention of the additional winner of Prague! Instead, joint boycott of December 1946 tournament!
- SU withdraws support for 1947 WCh, if it is not located entirely in Moscow



FIDE CONGRESS 1947 IN THE HAGUE

- 15th Soviet Championship in spring 1947 (Keres wins ahead of Boleslavsky and Smyslov)
- Botvinnik is absent, criticising the lack of progress in negotiating the WCh
- Stalin authorises a Soviet delegation to participate in the Hague for August 1947 to negotiate accession and the WCh match
- Congress declares Euwe as champion after Alekhine's death, but has difficulties to nominate a future challenger, Vice-President Rogard insists on waiting for the Soviet delegation



SOVIET ACCESSION

- Delegation leader Ragozin (here against Flohr, Moscow 1936) declares accession of the Soviet Union to FIDE
- The Soviet chess federation is ready to pay 2/3 of the WCh tournament, which can be played in Moscow and The Hague
- Participants are the “Winterthur Six” only.
- Botvinnik succeeds in eliminating Najdorf.



THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT 1948

- Botvinnik’s strongest opponent thus remained Paul Keres (winner of AVRO 1938 and Soviet Champion 1947).
- However, very bad result from Keres (1-4). This decided about the title.



START OF SOVIET DOMINATION OVER FIDE

- Soviet accession 1947 yields the title for Botvinnik 1948 and starts a long series of Soviet chess champions. Moreover, Soviet Union dominates almost all FIDE Olympiads until 1990.
- Important Moscow 1948 tournament even recorded in a stamp.
- Soviet influence also over FIDE leadership (Campomanes), followed by Russian Presidents Ilyumshinov, Dvorkovich).



IV. CONCLUSION

- Three accessions of Germany (1925, 1938, 1950) closely mirror world politics
- Soviet accession 1947 is part of a Botvinnik inspired plan to bring the individual world chess crown to the Soviet Union
- German participation was fruitful in organisational terms, whereas Soviet participation led to a domination of the Soviet Union over international chess.

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