

Soviets Won't Budge—Boycott of Pasadena Chess Tourney Seems Certain

It appeared virtually certain Wednesday that the Soviets will boycott the semifinal tournament for world chess championship candidates scheduled to begin Friday in Pasadena.

"We are sticking to our previous position. We already categorically announced we will not go there," Nikolai Krogius, spokesman for the Soviet State Sports Committee, told Western reporters in Moscow.

Meantime, throwing the world championship competition into further disarray, the chess federation of the United Arab Emirates withdrew its invitation to hold the concurrent semifinal in Abu Dhabi.

The Soviets objected to selection of both cities on grounds that the World Chess Federation (FIDE) ignored the preference of players in violation of

federation rules. In addition, the Soviets complained that security is inadequate in Pasadena and diplomatic access is limited. They said Abu Dhabi is too hot.

Overruling the Soviets during a special meeting in Madrid last weekend, FIDE's executive council warned that the Soviets will forfeit both matches if their players do not appear.

In what was expected to be the most exciting match, Soviet defector Viktor Korchnoi, 52, now of Switzerland, was scheduled to play the Soviet Union's hottest new chess star, Gary Kasparov, 20, in Pasadena. The Soviet Union's Vasily Smyslov, 62, was to play Hungary's Zoltan Ribli, 32, in Abu Dhabi. The finalist would then have challenged Anatoly Karpov, 32, of the Soviet Union, who became world champion when Bobby

Fischer forfeited in 1975.

If the Soviets carry through with their boycott threat, however, the world championship cycle will be reduced to shambles. Karpov will undoubtedly refuse to defend his title against either Korchnoi or Ribli, if either man wins by default. Even more frustrating to the chess world, the validity of chess competition will be seriously diminished, since young Kasparov is widely expected to become the next world champion if he is allowed to play.

Local chess organizers announced that they were carrying on as planned. The match was scheduled to officially begin Saturday at 1 p.m., and, according to spokesman Lina Grumette, Gary Kasparov has until 2 o'clock sharp before a forfeit is formally declared.

—BELLA STUMBO