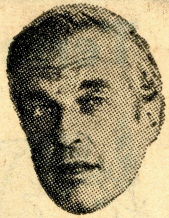


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A New Idol, Bobby Fischer



Arthur Hoppe

BOBBY FISCHER'S tactics at the World Chess Championship in Iceland have won him the undying admiration of thousands of Americans — all of them, as it so happens, officials of the U.S. State Department.

"Now, there's a chap who really knows how to deal with the Russians!" said young Under-Assistant Associate Secretary Bagworth at the Department's regular Tuesday High Level Policy Determination & Two Martini Lunch Session.

"I'll have to admit that on several occasions he had that Boris Spassky climbing the wall," grudgingly conceded portly Homer T. Pettibone, the distinguished Deputy Under-Secretary for Negotiations, White Papers & Bar Chits. "But I'm not sure he can hold a candle to us."

"Look at his record, sir," exclaimed young Bagworth. "First, he announces he can outmaneuver Spassky face-to-face across the table with one hand tied behind his back. And when the challenge is accepted, he managed to delay selection of a site for the meeting for a good six months."

"You're forgetting, Bagworth," replied Pettibone proudly, "that we did better than that when it came to picking a spot for the SALT talks."

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I DIDN'T mean to tarnish the Department's image," said Bagworth apologetically. "But you must agree that when it came down to stalling on conditions for the meeting, Fischer showed true genius — the lighting, the table, the . . ."

"Hold on there, Bagworth," said Pettibone, stiffly. "Perhaps you're too young to remember the negotiations we held on the shape of the table at the Paris Peace Talks. It was one of the greatest triumphs in negotiating in the Department's annals."

"Oh, I fully concur, sir," said Bagworth. "But look at the fuss Fischer put up not only over the table, but the chairs. He finally flew his own in from New York."

Pettibone frowned thoughtfully. "Yes, you might draw up a White Paper on that, Bagworth. A full study on the necessary shape of the chairs might be helpful in our future dealings with the Soviet bloc."

"And then when it was all set, he announced he wouldn't come because there wasn't enough in it for him."

"Tut, tut, Bagworth. That's been Department policy for years."

"But he forced the British to sweeten the pot, as it were, sir, and . . ."

"I hope you're not suggesting we ever turn to the British for help," said Pettibone scowling. "Have you forgotten the War of 1812 already?"

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NO, SIR, but you can't overlook his accomplishments. First, he so insults Spassky by his delays that Spassky threatens to withdraw. Then he finally shows up, holds one public session and withdraws himself. Next he doesn't show up at all. Then he demands a private session in another room and forces Spassky to withdraw on the 41st move. After that . . .

"Please, Bagworth. When you've been with the Department as long as I have, you'll realize this is all old hat."

"Perhaps so sir. But I can't help feeling we could use a man like that at the Paris Peace Talks."

"Really, Bagworth. Your ignorance is appalling."

"Beg pardon, sir?"

"Where," said Pettibone, downing his second martini, "do you think Fischer has been training these past three years?"