Albania Reflections Eight (8) by Dr Lyndon Bouah

1. Introduction

We are reaching the end of the event now. In this event I met many new players and also met up with old friends as well.

This reflection I dedicate to the late Stewart Reuben from England. Let me tell you a bit about Stewart. We need to go back to 1987.

In 1986 and 1987 devoured all the chess books at West End library. The local librarian decided to refer me to the Port Elizabeth Central Library. I had always driven past the library but never entered. With another intrepid chess player, Conrad Blignault, we took the requisite taxi to the library. This was of course an adventure on its own. As my high school, Bethelsdorp, was next to the Windvogel taxi rank we took a taxi to Norwich which was the central bus and taxi depot. The procedure stayed the same for many a week. After disembarking we then went to the local pie shop first to eat. Next to the pie shop was Fogarty's Books which was a veritable treasure trove of books. We then checked all the latest books.

Then we were off to the library. An imposing building it had prime space in the centre of town. A statue of Queen Victoria greeted us upon arrival. The entrance was on the side and sometimes the front door was open. We immediately headed for the chess section. We then discovered that they had about 50 new books that we had not read before. But another discovery intrigued us even more. The library subscribed to the British Chess Magazine (BCM). As the authors of the various articles invited readers to write to them we seized the opportunity and wrote to one author called Stewart Reuben. The correspondence from us was well received and this started a lifetime of friendship. I met Stewart for the first time in 1992 after corresponding for five years!

Stewart Reuben was very surprised when a group of chess players which included Ashley Schuller from Cape Town, Shane Bassett, Conrad Blignault and me started writing to him. We shared the details of our lives and he in turn told us about life in England and in Europe. I was the most conscientious and wrote to Stewart with analysis of my games. He then would play through the games and also propose different ideas and moves and comment on our positions. He sent video tapes and some books and other material that I absorbed. These comments assisted me greatly and today I realised he was my international chess coach.

In the September 1990 issue of the British Chess Magazine on page 446 in his monthly column, Stewart Reuben wrote the following about our correspondence:

"About two years ago a number of South African schoolboys started writing to me. They did so after seeing one of my articles in this magazine about how to improve your results without increasing your actual chess ability. The boys asked me to comment on their games. However weak I may be, their access to formal instruction is extremely limited. One told me had a published rating of 1382 (if Elo, about 100 BCF). I was quickly able to disabuse him of this idea. Relatively speaking in South Africa that might be accurate but internationally his games were more of a 2000 strength player. In fact I was able to send one of his combinations to Leonard Barden for consideration for publication in the London Evening Standard, where it duly appeared. Remembering my own pleasure at a similar age at having

a position published in a national journal, it gives me a warm glow that I was able to achieve this for the 14-year old so far away. (The player in question was Conrad Blignault and the position was from Blignault vs. Errol Ruiters EP Prestige 1988. LB)

It started out with two correspondents and then suddenly it was four. I was gripped by a sudden fear. Were my days going to be filled by letters to and from two teenagers intensely interested in politics, chess and music of which I have never heard- still less actually listened to? However I needn't have worried. In the main, they lost interest before me and their letters tailed off, so now I am in regular correspondence with only one of their number, Lyndon Bouah, who is probably the strongest player. Perhaps the others realised I just wasn't good enough to make constructive comments on a handful of games.

Normally the colour, race or religion of a fellow chess player isn't central to a relationship. In these cases, if nothing else, I was curious. In due course photographs answered the question. All four are "coloured.' What a terrible term and how much worse a political system which makes the matter important.

SA has two chess organisations. The South African Chess Federation is accused of being white-dominated and racist. The youngsters play under the banner of the SA Council on Sport which considers itself non-racist and is affiliated to FIDE.My reservation is that I doubt they have many white members. SACOS does not believe SA should be represented internationally as they consider it impossible to have normal sport in an abnormal society. Thus they do not want FIDE to permit SA to play in the Olympiads. All the boys were careful when they first wrote to impress on me the strength of their political feelings and how anti-apartheid they were. They feared that I would refuse to reply but I believe all youngsters are entitled to their youth and cannot be blamed for the political actions of their elders. But how can you expect a teenager not to be involved in such burning issues.

I hear the editor calling: what about the title and have you forgotten that this is chess magazine? Naturally the players are isolated. They cannot afford subscriptions to foreign magazines. Opportunities to play against strong players are extremely limited. There aren't many around and the cost of travel and accommodation is prohibitive. The common problem is alleviated by chess publication such as this one. It may not do the profitability of the BCM much good to know that it is stocked in a South African public library, but at least it is serving a useful social function...

The schoolteacher of these lads in SA has done an excellent job encouraging chess but this has had the effect that there are no school teams around that can give them a decent match...

My young correspondents teach chess to players weaker than themselves. You always learn a great deal when teaching. I don't do much chess tuition, so I haven't the full experience of helping somebody become a stronger player than me. Chess being so competitive, I wonder how people feel about that. The youngsters intend producing a chess magazine. They have been at it a year now and presumably have discovered that it is not as easy as it seems. Nonetheless this stimulates concrete analysis and it is better to have a definite objective when working at chess than just the airy- fairy idea that perhaps one day you make use of some study. I find it extremely hard to work at chess. It is far easier to do so as part of a cooperative. But even this has its negative side if members of your group are the only ones you compete against.

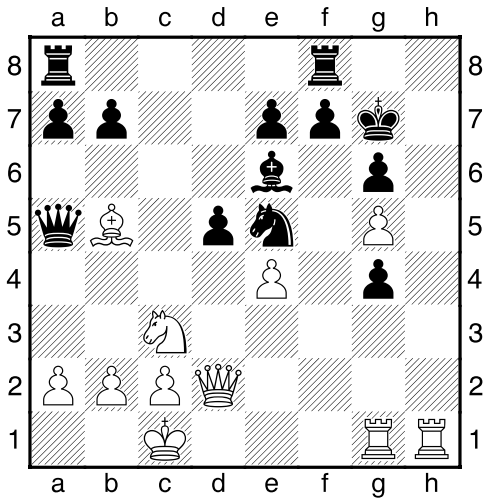
In the end, I doubt it is possible to sustain interest in the game if there is no prospect whatsoever of international contact. A player can only go so far before he hungers for opposition which will test him to the full" . end of Stewart Reuben article.
In July 2024 I met Stewart again at the FIDE World Senior Team Championships in Poland. We spent some time together as he was playing in the over -65 section. He passed away in February 2025. In his own way he did a lot for SA Chess and mentored many of us who crossed his path. he was a coach of mine who analysed all my games played in events in SA. Thank you, Stewart for your contribution to my and SA chess.

I also met up again with Professor Barry Hymer who is the Emeritus Professor of Psychology in Education at the University of Cumbria. He played many youth events in SA and informed us that he played Sa Schools in 1977 and 1978 as well. in 1982 he spent a year in the Eastern Cape and won the EP Open. We shared many stories. I thoroughly enjoyed his book written with Peter Wells called Chess Improvement.

Prof Hymer was recently the key note speaker at a Chess in Education conference in New York where Gary Kasparov also addressed the audience.

Hymer,B – Mortensen [D00]

Over 65, 26.04.2026
1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 g6 4.e3 Bg7 5.h4 Bf5 6.Be2 h5 7.Nf3 c6 8.Ng5 Nbd7 9.f3 Qa5 10.Qd2 Nf8 11.0–0–0 Ne6 12.Be5 0–0 13.Rdg1 Nxg5 14.hxg5 Nd7 15.Bxg7 Kxg7 16.e4 dxe4 17.fxe4 Be6 18.g4 hxg4 19.d5 cxd5 20.Bb5 Ne5 what did white now play?



21.Rh7+ 1–0 a delightful game!

We also spoke to Sam Millar from England. He played for Claremont Chess Club in the 1990's and remembered Steinitz and Bellville the clubs Andre and I play for.

I greeted Grandmaster Simen Agdestein from Norway who is the only chess Grandmaster to have also played football and chess for his country. In 2003 I invited him to SA and he came with his school team and played events across SA.

I then chatted with IM David Levy (81) from Scotland who is still doing pioneering work on computers. He recalled playing in the Twins event either in 77 or 78.

GM Sam Shabalov went with us on a tour and I had a chance to engage with him. He has won the USA Championship four times and the USA team has also won this event six out of the last seven attempts.

GM Artur Yusupov is also playing in the over 65 section. He was once No.3 in the world and wrote many great books with Dvoretsky.

So chess really does create new friends even if you are enemies on the board!

2.**SA at the Olympiads.**

The principles of Olympism as enunciated above carefully analyzed speaks to the preservation of dignity, that sport is a human right and that every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport without discrimination.

What was happening in the world in 1974? To understand why the Rhodesian issue was so important in 1974 one must go back to the 1972 Olympic Games. Sam Ramsamy in his book **"Reflections On a life in sport", (Greenhouse publishing 1974** on page 39) picks up the story: "*Arriving in Munich six days before the Olympics were due to start, I had found the Olympic community divided by the issue of Rhodesia. Many Western countries believed that the white ruled country, excluded from Mexico City in 1968 after its Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain, should be allowed back into the fold to compete in Munich; all the African countries vigorously disagreed.*

Avery Brundage, the 84-year-old American presiding over his last Olympics as president of the IOC, was determined the Western view would prevail and, much to our surprise, we discovered the Rhodesian team was settled in the Athletes Village. Dennis Brutus had arrived in Munich a few days earlier and the two of us participated in the African deliberations, arguing that re-admission would encourage the apartheid regime, and that the whites only team should be sent home. The SANROC voice was heard and various African administrators then stepped forward and indicated to Brundage that if the Rhodesians were allowed

to stay, all the African countries would withdraw from the games. The trump card however was the call by the African administrators to the Eastern Bloc countries to also boycott the games. Rhodesia was asked to leave before the opening ceremony.

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It is trite that apartheid was entrenched within South Africa. I am sure that I do not have to in this treatise set out the fact that discrimination was in fact national government policy and that the majority of South Africans did not have the ability to vote, to be elected freely and fairly and that discrimination was the order of the day in all its facets.

Irina Filitova and Appollon Davidson in the book **The Hidden Thread, (Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2013 on page 228)** notes that the new Soviet attitude towards South Africa emerged early in the Cold War. Already in 1950, long before South Africa broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Ivan I Potemkin, then deputy director of the institute of Ethnography of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, wrote 'through the Union of South Africa, the USA is trying to get control over Southern Africa with huge resources of very important strategic raw materials."

They state that the two main elements of Soviet policy toward South Africa, in effect its dual strategy, were weakening and isolating the apartheid regime on the one hand and supporting and strengthening its main opponents in the country, the ANC and SWAPO on the other.

Vladimir Shubin in his book "**ANC a view from Moscow**" in the second revised edition published by Mayibuye Books in 1999 has set out extensively the support the Soviet government gave to liberation movements in Africa. He notes for example that in 1973 the ANC received from Moscow $150 000 as assistance. Shubin's notes thus echoes those of Filatova and Davidson.

2. History of Albania

Ismail Qemali is regarded as the founding father of the modern Albanian nation.

Albania declared independence from the Ottoman Empire on 28 November 1912, accompanied by the establishment of the Senate and Government by the Assembly of Vlorë on 4 December 1912.[Its sovereignty was recognised by the Conference of London. On 29 July 1913, the Treaty of London delineated the borders of the country and its neighbours, leaving many Albanians outside Albania, predominantly partitioned between Montenegro, Serbia, and Greece.

Headquartered in Vlorë, the International Commission of Control was established on 15 October 1913 to take care of the administration of Albania until its own political institutions were in order. The International Gendarmerie was established as the Principality of Albania's first law enforcement agency. In November, the first gendarmerie members arrived in the country. Prince of Albania Wilhelm of Wied (Prince Vilhelm Vidi) was selected as the first prince of the principality. On 7 March, he arrived in the provisional capital of Durrës and began to organise his government, appointing Turhan Pasha Përmeti to form the first Albanian cabinet.

In November 1913, the Albanian pro-Ottoman forces had offered the throne of Albania to the Ottoman war minister of Albanian origin, Ahmed Izzet Pasha.[80] The pro-Ottoman peasants believed that the new regime was a tool of the six Christian Great Powers and local landowners, who owned half of the arable land.

In February 1914, the Autonomous Republic of Northern Epirus was proclaimed in Gjirokastër by the local Greek population against incorporation to Albania. This initiative was short-lived, and in 1921 the southern provinces were incorporated into the Albanian Principality. Meanwhile, the revolt of Albanian peasants against the new regime erupted under the leadership of the group of Muslim clerics gathered around Essad Pasha Toptani, who proclaimed himself the saviour of Albania and Islam. To gain the support of the Mirdita Catholic volunteers from northern Albania, Prince Wied appointed their leader, Prênk Bibë Doda, foreign minister of the Principality of Albania. In May and June 1914, the International Gendarmerie was joined by Isa Boletini and his men, mostly from Kosovo, and the rebels defeated northern Mirdita Catholics, capturing most of Central Albania by the end of August 1914. Prince Wied's regime collapsed, and he left the country on 3 September 1914.

3. Interesting Fun facts

Climate of Albania

Gjipe is located on the confluence of the Adriatic and Ionian Sea, on the Albanian Riviera.

The climate of Albania exhibits a distinguished level of variability and diversity due to the differences in latitude, longitude and altitude. Albania experiences a Mediterranean and Continental climate, characterised by the presence of four distinct seasons. According to the Köppen classification, Albania encompasses five primary climatic types, spanning from Mediterranean and subtropical in the western half to oceanic, continental and subarctic in the eastern half of the country. The coastal regions along the Adriatic and Ionian Seas in Albania are acknowledged as the warmest areas, while the northern and eastern regions encompassing the Albanian Alps and the Korab Mountains are recognised as the coldest areas in the country. Throughout the year, the average monthly temperatures fluctuate, ranging from −1 °C (30 °F) during the winter months to 21.8 °C (71.2 °F) in the summer months. Notably, the highest recorded temperature of 43.9 °C (111.0 °F) was observed in Kuçovë on 18 July 1973, while the lowest temperature of −29 °C (−20 °F) was recorded in Shtyllë, Librazhd on 9 January 2017.[

Albania receives most of the precipitation in winter months and less in summer months. The average precipitation is about 1,485 millimetres (58.5 inches). The mean annual precipitation ranges between 600 and 3,000 millimetres (24 and 118 inches) depending on geographical location. The northwestern and southeastern highlands receive the an intense amount of precipitation, whilst the northeastern and southwestern highlands as well as the Western Lowlands the more limited amount. The Albanian Alps in the far north of the country are considered to be among the most humid regions of Europe, receiving at least 3,100 mm (122.0 in) of rain annually. Four glaciers within these mountains were discovered at a relatively low altitude of 2,000 metres (6,600 ft), which is extremely rare for such a southerly latitude.

Biodiversity

The golden eagle is the national symbol and animal of Albania.

A biodiversity hotspot, Albania possesses an exceptionally rich and contrasting biodiversity on account of its geographical location at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea and the great diversity in its climatic, geological and hydrological conditions. Because of remoteness, the mountains and hills of Albania are endowed with forests, trees and grasses that are essential to the lives for a wide variety of animals, among others for two of the most endangered species of the country, the lynx and brown bear, as well as the wildcat, grey wolf, red fox, golden jackal, Egyptian vulture and golden eagle, the latter constituting the national animal of the country.

The estuaries, wetlands and lakes are extraordinarily important for the greater flamingo, pygmy cormorant and the extremely rare and perhaps the most iconic bird of the country, the dalmatian pelican. Of particular importance are the Mediterranean monk seal, loggerhead sea turtle and green sea turtle that use to nest on the country's coastal waters and shores.

In terms of phytogeography, Albania is part of the Boreal Kingdom and stretches specifically within the Illyrian province of the Circumboreal and Mediterranean Region. Its territory can be subdivided into four terrestrial ecoregions of the Palearctic realm namely

within the Illyrian deciduous forests, Balkan mixed forests, Pindus Mountains mixed forests and Dinaric Mountains mixed forests.

Approximately 3,500 different species of plants can be found in Albania which refers principally to a Mediterranean and Eurasian character. The country maintains a vibrant tradition of herbal and medicinal practices. At the minimum 300 plants growing locally are used in the preparation of herbs and medicines. The trees within the forests are primarily fir, oak, beech and pine.

4. <u>Games from the previous round</u>

Bouah,Lyndon (2071) − Rama,L (2196) [E91]

World Senior Team (7), 26.04.2026

1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4 0–0 6.Be2 Na6 7.0–0 e5 8.Re1 exd4 9.Nxd4 Nc5 10.Bf1 Re8 11.f3 c6 12.Be3 a5 13.Qd2 a4 14.Rad1 Qa5 15.Nc2 Bf8 16.Ra1 Be6 17.Rad1 Qa6 18.Nd5 Bxd5 19.cxd5 Qb6 20.Qb4 Qc7 21.Qc3 Nfd7 22.Nb4 Rac8 23.Rc1 Nb6 24.Red1 Bg7 25.Bd4 Bh6 26.Be3 Bxe3+ 27.Qxe3 f5 28.dxc6 bxc6 29.Na6 Nxa6 30.Bxa6 Rb8 31.Bb5 Nd5 32.Rxd5 1–0

Masha,R (1900) − Bhawoodien,S (2026) [C88]

World Senior Team (7), 26.04.2026

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0–0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0–0 8.c4 b4 9.h3 d6 10.d4 exd4 11.Nxd4 Nxd4 12.Qxd4 Nd7 13.Qd1 Bf6 14.a3 bxa3 15.Rxa3 Bb7 16.Bc2 Ne5 17.b3 Re8 18.Bf4 Ng6 19.Bg3 Qe7 20.f3 Be5 21.Bh2 Nf4 22.Bxf4 Bxf4 23.Ra5 d5 24.cxd5 Qg5 25.Qd3 Qg3 26.Kf1 Re5 27.Qd4 Rg5 28.Re2 Be5 29.Qf2 Qf4 30.b4 Rd8 31.g4 Rg6 32.Ra3 Rb6 33.Rb3 Bd6 34.e5 Bxe5 35.Qh4 Rxd5 36.Qxh7+ Kf8 37.Qh8+ Ke7 38.Qxg7 Re6 39.Rbe3 Bxg7 0–1

Cani,A (1868) − Schutte,A (1810) [B12]

world senior team (7), 26.04.2026

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Bd3 Bxd3 5.Qxd3 e6 6.Ne2 Nd7 7.0–0 c5 8.c3 Ne7 9.Bg5 Qb6 10.Nd2 cxd4 11.cxd4 Nc6 12.a3 Be7 13.Be3 0–0 14.b4 Rfc8 15.f4 f5 16.Nb3 Nd8 17.Rfc1 Nf7 18.Nc5 Nxc5 19.dxc5 Qc7 20.Qb5 Qc6 21.Qd3 g5 22.Nd4 Qd7 23.g3 gxf4 24.gxf4 Nh6 25.h3 Kh8 26.Ra2 Rg8+ 27.Kh2 Bh4 28.Rg1 Rxg1 29.Bxg1 Rg8 30.Rg2 Rxg2+ 31.Kxg2 Nf7 32.Nb5 a6 33.Nd6 Nd8 34.Bf2 Qg7+ 35.Kf1 Qh6 36.Qf3 Kg8 37.Bxh4 Qxh4 38.a4 Nc6 39.b5 Nd4 40.Qf2 Qxh3+ 41.Qg2+ Qxg2+ 42.Kxg2 axb5 43.axb5 Kf8 44.b6 Ke7 45.Nxb7 Nc6 46.Nd6 Kd7 47.Nb5 Kc8 48.Kg3 d4 49.Kh4 d3 50.Nd6+ Kb8 51.Nc4 Nd4 52.Nd2 Kb7 53.Kg5 Kc6 54.Kh6 Ne2 55.Nb3 Nxf4 56.Na5+ Kd7 57.c6+ Kc8 58.Nc4 Nd5 59.Nd6+ Kb8 60.c7+ Nxc7 61.bxc7+ Kxc7 62.Nc4 Kc6 63.Nb2 d2 64.Kg5 Kd5 65.Kf4 Kd4 66.Nd1 h5 67.Nf2 h4 68.Nd1 h3 69.Kg3 Kxe5 70.Kxh3 Ke4 71.Kg3 e5 72.Kf2 Kd3 73.Kf3 e4+ 74.Kf4 Ke2 75.Nc3+ Ke1 76.Kxf5 e3 77.Ke4 e2 78.Ke3 d1N+ 0–1

5. **Results of Round Eight**

SA beat Guernsy by 2.5 to 1.5. On board one CM Lyndon Bouah had his KID dismantled by his opponent. It was a 9. Bayonet variation. 2. On Board 2 FM Shabier Bhawoodien outplayed his opponent with the white pieces. 3. On Board 3 Anton Goosen drew his game against his CM opponent. They had mutual time trouble. 4. On Board four Andre Schutte continued his excellent form by sacrificing his knight on the kingside up a winning attack. This is the second match victory in a row and the third overall. We have now won 3 matches, lost 3 matches and drew 2.

