Albania Reflections Nine (9) by Dr Lyndon Bouah

1. Introduction

Today the last round started at 2pm. Yesterday they also started at 2pm. A meditation conference has started today, and we needed to start early because there would be Enya type music from 7pm tonight. I will do a concluding article upon my return to SA later this week which will sum up the statistics. As we are travelling from 5h00am on Wednesday, I will only be able to engage with readers in the afternoon when we wait for our return flights at Istanbul airport. I wish to thank the various readers that have sent comments and advice.

2. SA at the Olympiads

Let us get back to the Nice and the FIDE Congress Resolution. The Fide Resolution simply reads 1974 (29.06): At the proposal of the Moroccan CF and 15 other federations, the Congress decided by 26:17 and 21 abstentions to suspend temporarily South Africa and Rhodesia. According to the SA ChessPlayer, July 1974 edition the countries in favour of suspension were Algeria, Argentina, British Virgin Islands, Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Morocco, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Salvador, Syria, Tunisia, USSR and Yugoslavia.

The countries against suspension were Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Finland, German Federated Republic, Iceland, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Rhodesia, South Africa, Surinam and Switzerland.

Those who abstained were Australia, Bahamas, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, England, Guatemala, Guernsey, Ireland, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Trinidad, USA, Venezuela, Wales and Zaire.

3. Analyzing the vote and its implications

The motion was proposed by Morocco, an African country. The support they received was from all over the world, and particularly the heavyweight Soviet Union. The motion was consistent with international politics at the time which was a contestation of the Cold War and in South Africa's case consistent with the views of governments around the world.

I further submit that the motion was consistent with the Olympic Charter. The Charter states: The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play and it recognizes that sport occurs within the framework of society. Sport organizations within the Olympic Movement shall have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which includes freely establishing and controlling rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organizations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied.

It concludes by stating that the enjoyment of rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex,

sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The situation in South Africa was tense at that time with Apartheid vigorously applied. Keene makes mention of the “Coloured player” Holmes. Gerald Holmes was an attorney from Elsies River who later became a judge of the Cape High Court in Cape Town. When he won the 1973 Natal Open it was reported that he received his prize outside the club house where he played because he was not allowed in at the prize giving despite playing in the same venue a few hours earlier. In South Africa at that time, you needed a permit to be in a white area after a certain time and if alcohol was being served which it was at the prize-giving, then you could not be part of the prize-giving even if you had won the event.

It is my opinion that Morocco with the support from the other countries simply applied the fundamental principles of Olympism. The world knew that South Africa did not allow black players of colour to represent South Africa, and the discrimination based on race was simply abhorrent and inconsistent with the principles of Olympism. It is difficult to be one family (Gens Una Sumus) when part of the family is oppressed and not allowed to participate freely in the affairs of its own country.

The spirit of Olympism was strong in South Africa. The vote in 1974 was an expression of world politics at the time as South Africa had already been suspended from the Olympic family at IOC level in 1963 for the same reasons that Morocco had expressed in its motion. The motion I believe was correct and led to the cessation of South Africa at Chess Olympiad participation until 1992.

I was also present as a player in Manila, Philippines in June 1992 when South Africa was readmitted to international chess after being banned in 1974 and formally expelled in 1977. South Africa was allowed back into FIDE officially on 22 June 1992.

It is truly wonderful that the world welcomed us back into international sport which South Africans love so much. Olympism is deeply ingrained within us as is evidenced by the Olympic Games held on Robben Island as described earlier and when the non-racial sport movement in South Africa hosted the SACOS Games which were also called the Olympics of the Oppressed in 1982 and 1988 in Cape Town.

We have learnt valuable lessons in human rights, dignity and respect for our fellow man. The South African Constitution is often quoted as an example of a world class constitution that enshrines the rights of individuals and groups.

The Olympic solidarity showed by many countries was welcomed and showed the true spirit of Olympism which all of us are so happy to embrace!

In 1992 South Africa made its debut in the Philippines and today some of those players are still competing. Dr. FM Deon Solomons, FM Charles de Villiers, IM Watu Kobese, IM David Gluckman, Advocate Dr. CM Lyndon Bouah and Advocate CM Maxwell Solomon still actively compete for their respective clubs.

At the Olympiad in Baku, Azerbaijan 2016, Grandmaster Kenneth Solomon and International Master Watu Kobese both entered the ranks of legends when both achieved the milestone of playing over 100 Olympiad games for South Africa. This is an achievement of the highest order and must be celebrated. IM Kobese is from Soweto, Johannesburg and GM Kenneth Solomon is from Mitchell’s Plain, Cape Town.

4. The definition of the core values of Olympism:

Excellence – excellence means doing the best we can be, on the field of play or in our professional life. The important thing is not winning but taking part, making progress and enjoying the healthy combination of body, will and mind.

Respect - this includes respect for yourself and your body, for other people, for rules and regulations, for sport and for the environment; and

Friendship – Friendship is at the heart of the Olympic Movement. It encourages us to see sport as an instrument for mutual understanding between individuals and between people all over the world.

5. Five Olympic educational themes need to be highlighted. These themes are:

Joy of effort – Young people develop and practice physical, behavioural and intellectual skills by challenging themselves and each other in physical activities, movement, games and sport.

Fair play – Fair play was originally a concept developed in sport, but it has since also been applied in many ways and contexts beyond the field of play. Learning fair play behaviour in sport can lead to the development and reinforcement of similar behaviours in one's everyday life.

Respect for others – when young people who live in a multicultural world learn to accept and respect diversity and practise personal peaceful behaviours, they promote peace and international understanding.

Pursuit of excellence - a focus on excellence can help young people to make positive, healthy choices, and strive to become the best that they can be in whatever they do.

Balance between body, will and mind – Learning takes place in the whole body, not just in the mind and physical literacy and learning through movement contribute to the development of both moral and intellectual learning.

Thank you to all of you that engaged with this aspect of Olympism.

6. History of Albania

Fan Noli played a significant role in the 20th century, advocating for Albanian independence and cultural revival, while also serving as Prime Minister in 1924 and later as the head of the Albanian Orthodox Church.

The interwar period in Albania was marked by persistent economic and social difficulties, political instability and foreign interventions. After World War I, Albania lacked an established government and internationally recognised borders, rendering it vulnerable to neighbouring entities such as Greece, Italy, and Yugoslavia, all of which sought to expand their influence. This led to political uncertainty, highlighted in 1918 when the Congress of Durrës sought Paris Peace Conference protection but was denied, further complicating Albania's position on the international stage. Territorial tensions escalated as Yugoslavia, particularly Serbia, sought control of northern Albania, while Greece aimed dominance in

southern Albania. The situation deteriorated in 1919 when the Serbs launched attacks on Albanian inhabitants, among others in Gusinje and Plav, resulting in massacres and large-scale displacement. Meanwhile, Italian influence continued to expand during this time, driven by economic interests and political ambitions.

Fan Noli, renowned for his idealism, became prime minister in 1924, with a vision to institute a Western-style constitutional government, abolish feudalism, counter Italian influence, and enhance critical sectors, including infrastructure, education and healthcare. He faced resistance from former allies, who had assisted in the removal of Zog from power, and struggled to secure foreign aid to implement his agenda. Noli's decision to establish diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, an adversary of the Serbian elite, ignited allegations of bolshevism from Belgrade. This in turn led to increased pressure from Italy and culminated in Zog's restoration to authority. In 1928, Zog transitioned Albania from a republic to a monarchy that garnered backing from Fascist Italy, with Zog assuming the title of King Zog I. Key constitutional changes dissolved the Senate and established a unicameral National Assembly while preserving Zog's authoritative powers.

In 1939, Italy under Benito Mussolini launched a military invasion of Albania, resulting in the exile of Zog and the creation of an Italian protectorate. As World War II progressed, Italy aimed to expand its territorial dominion in the Balkans, including territorial claims on regions of Greece (Chameria), Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo. These ambitions laid the foundation of Greater Albania, which aimed to unite all areas with Albanian-majority populations into a single country. In 1943, as Italy's control declined, Nazi Germany assumed control of Albania, subjecting Albanians to forced labour, economic exploitation and repression under German rule. The tide shifted in 1944 when Albanian partisan forces, under the leadership of Enver Hoxha and other communist leaders, successfully liberated Albania from German occupation.

Enver Hoxha was the founding leader of communist Albania and its ruler for over four decades, implementing a regime marked by authoritarianism and isolationism. The establishment of the People's Republic of Albania under the leadership of Enver Hoxha was a significant epoch in modern Albanian history. Hoxha's regime embraced Marxist–Leninist ideologies and implemented authoritarian policies, including prohibition of religious practices, severe restrictions on travel, and abolition of private property rights. It was also defined by a persistent pattern of purges, extensive repression, instances of betrayal, and hostility to external influences. Any form of opposition or resistance to his rule was met with expeditious and severe consequences, such as internal exile, extended imprisonment, and execution. The regime confronted a multitude of challenges, including widespread poverty, illiteracy, health crises and gender inequality. In response, Hoxha initiated a modernisation initiative aimed at attaining economic and social liberation and transforming Albania into an industrial society. The regime placed a high priority on the diversification of the economy through Soviet-style industrialisation, comprehensive infrastructure development such as the introduction of a transformative railway system, expansion of education and healthcare services, elimination of adult illiteracy, and targeted advancements in areas such as women's rights.

Bunkers in Albania were constructed to prevent potential external invasions. By 1983, approximately 173,371 bunkers were scattered throughout its territory.

Albania's diplomatic history under Hoxha was characterised by notable conflicts. Initially aligned with Yugoslavia as a satellite state, the relationship deteriorated as Yugoslavia aimed to incorporate Albania within its territory. Subsequently, Albania established relations with the Soviet Union and engaged trade agreements with other Eastern European countries, but experienced disagreements over Soviet policies, leading to strained ties with Moscow and diplomatic separation in 1961. Simultaneously, tensions with the West heightened due to Albania's refusal to hold free elections and allegations of Western support for anti-communist uprisings. Albania's enduring partnership was with China; it sided with Beijing during the Sino-Soviet conflict, resulting in severed ties with the Soviet Union and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact in response to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. But their relations stagnated in 1970, prompting both to reassess their commitment, and Albania actively reduced its dependence on China.

Under Hoxha's regime, Albania underwent a widespread campaign targeting religious clergy of various faiths, resulting in public persecution and executions, particularly targeting Muslims, Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox adherents. In 1946, religious estates underwent nationalisation, coinciding with the closure or transformation of religious institutions into various other purposes. This culminated in 1976, when Albania became the world's first constitutionally atheist state. Under this regime, citizens were forced to renounce their religious beliefs, adopt a secular way of life, and embrace socialist ideology.

7. Interesting Fun Facts about this event

7.1 In this event there were supposed to four sections. However, because the women teams were only four in the Over 50 section, they were merged with the Open Over 50.

7.2 The Open section in the Over- 65s were also merged into the Over 65 section. They needed 10 teams.

7.3 We are not allowed to take in watches or pens. One player received a default when it was discovered he was wearing a watch.

7.4 Players are searched before they go into the venue,

7.5 All games are subject to electronic scrutiny.

7.6 Random Searches were conducted. Andre Schutte was chosen from our team to be randomly searched at the end of his round.

7.7 We were the only team that gave small key rings with our SA flags to opposing teams.

7.8 We are playing underground below the reception area.

7.9 We are the only team from Africa.

7.10 Grandmasters don’t eat early at breakfast.

7.11 We met probably about 5 other South African linked players.

7.12 We were generally the only team that played in a team top.

7.13 We can easily qualify for best dressed team!

8. **Previous games**

Schutte,Andre (1810) - Goman,C (1691) [B07]
World Seniors Team (8), 27.04.2026
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Bd3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.c3 0–0 6.0–0 c5 7.d5 a6 8.c4 Nbd7 9.Nc3 Ne8 10.Bf4 Ra7 11.Re1 Ndf6 12.h3 Nc7 13.Bf1 Nce8 14.Qd2 b6 15.Rad1 Rb7 16.Bh6 Kh8 17.e5 Ng8 18.Bf4 Ra7 19.Bd3 Bb7 20.Ne4 dxe5 21.Bxe5 f6 22.Bc3 Bh6 23.Qc2 Qc7 24.Neg5 Bxg5 25.Nxg5 Ng7 26.Nxh7 Kxh7 27.Bxg6+ Kh8 28.Qe4 Nh6 29.Qh4 Ngf5 30.Bxf5 Kg7 31.Qg5+ Kh8 32.Qxh6+ Kg8 33.Qg6+ 1–0

9. **Results of Round Nine**

Spain beat SA 3 to 1. On board one IM LA Casa beat CM Lyndon in a positional battle. On Board two FM Bhawoodien lost to his opponent in a tactical melee when he essayed the Schielemann variation. On Board three Anton Goosen drew his game after pushing hard. On Board 4 Andre Schutte continued his fine form by scoring a draw in the last round and ending with 6/9. A great performance by Schutte, who also was our technical person, checking on everything related to the opposing teams!

