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**Once Over Lighty
by DAVE LEWD**

Don't turn that page!

Come back here. You might learn something you didn't know before.

Not that the information contained herein is worth knowing, but then again you might pick up something which will help you to become (1) the life of the party, or (2) a brilliant conversationalist well versed on life in Siberia.

It's a matter of record that American free enterprise has failed to turn out chess players as good as those produced under Soviet communism.

Now that's a nasty thing to say on Thanksgiving morn, I know, but please don't view this statement with alarm. The situation isn't that discouraging. America's chess players, outnumbered by the Soviets by better than 30-1, aren't discouraged, so why should you.

Or why should Truman, Marshall, et.al., be for that matter. I'm certainly not discouraged. I'm very optimistic about the whole thing.

AMERICAN CHESS ACE ISN'T DISCOURAGED EITHER

One of America's better manipulators of kings, queens and aces ... ; whoops, wrong game, is Olaf Ulvestad. He isn't discouraged either. "I wouldn't change the American system for anything," he declares. He confidently predicts that "we'll, catch up with the Russians if we organize and support the chess talent we have."

Ulvestad has had more than a fleeting glimpse of the ability of the Russian chess masters. He journeyed with nine American teammates to Moscow in 1946 for an international match . . . which the Soviets won 12 1/2 to 7 1/2 in 20 games.

He also closely followed the championship matches last summer in England when Mickhal Botvinnik took the world title back to the U.S.S.R.

Ulvestad, incidentally, is rated the third best player in this country.

He reports that chess players are treated as conquering heroes in Russia and reveals that the government subsidizes, trains and honors championship players so that their profession is one of the most desirable behind the iron curtain.

"That's why they have the world's best players," Olaf says "In no other country can a man take the same amount of time to concentrate on chess and still maintain a proper economic standard for himself and his family. In Russia a crack chess player is a prosperous and famous man."

RUSSIANS WANT TO SHOW HOW SMART THEY ARE

Ulvestad subscribes to the idea that Russia encourages chess because it wants to impress the world with the mental abilities of its people. In Russia, 3,000,000 persons belong to organized chess clubs. A comparable figure in the United States is 100,000. More than 600,000 Soviets compete annually in tournaments of one kind or another.

Major tournaments in Russia are always held before packed houses and hundreds of fans are turned away. A chess match there is comparable to a championship boxing match in this country.

Behind the players on the stage is a big screen with giant chess boards and huge figurines. Attendants move the figurines each time a play is made. The crowd cheers loudly for brilliant plays while newsreel cameras record the action and photographers flash their lights. "It is all very impressive," Ulvestad says.

Ulvestad also reports that the top 20 Russian players each year are given leaves of absence just to study the game. Whenever a Russian competes in the world championships, a body of 15 to 20 advisors travel with him to analyze the board and render advice during recesses.

Chess also is a regular subject in Russian schools. Should we sit idly by and let Russia control the world . . . of chess? No, we say! Go out and buy yourself a chess board. I've already got mine.