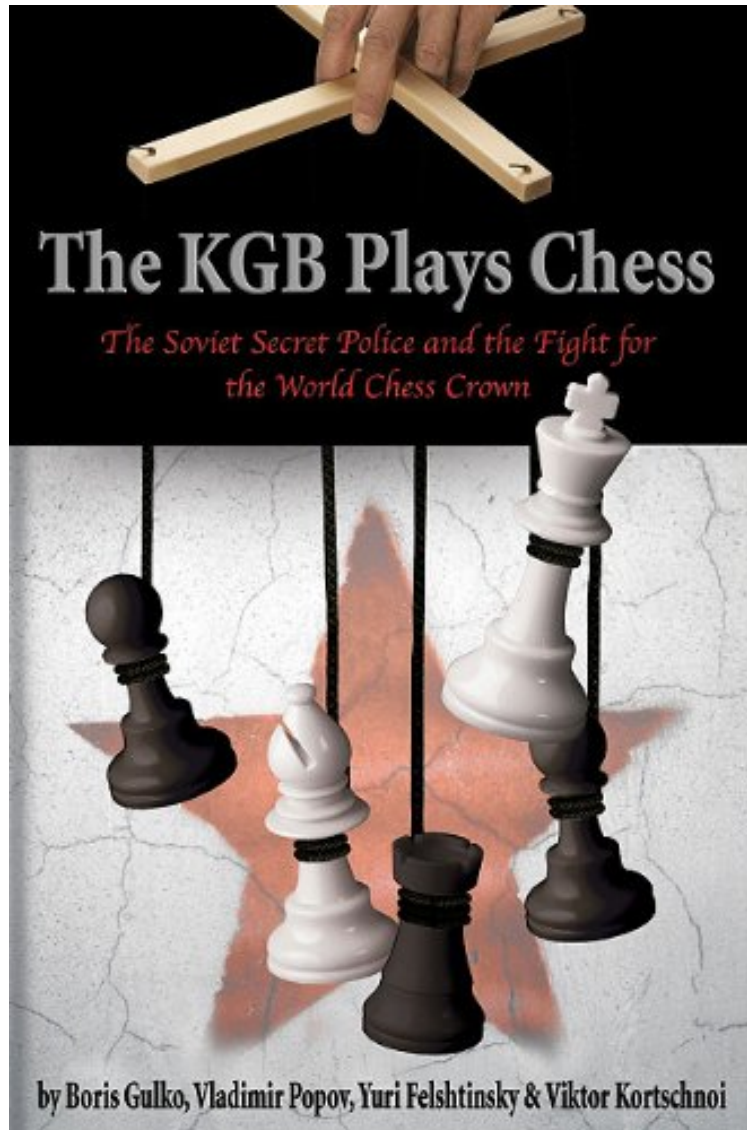


(Mobile library) The KGB Plays Chess: The Soviet Secret Police and the Fight for the World Chess Crown

The KGB Plays Chess: The Soviet Secret Police and the Fight for the World Chess Crown

Boris Gulko, Yuri Felshtinsky, Vladimir Popov, Viktor Kortschnoi
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Boris Gulko, Yuri Felshtinsky, Vladimir Popov, Viktor Kortschnoi : The KGB Plays Chess: The Soviet Secret Police and the Fight for the World Chess Crown before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The KGB Plays Chess: The Soviet Secret Police and the Fight for the World Chess Crown:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Revelatory but disjointed By Tom Monk I have been a huge chess fan

for decades, but I never realized the lengths to which the KGB would go to keep Soviets players, particularly Karpov, at the top of the international chess heap. In the US, the actions taken by the Soviet KGB in this book would be harassment and beyond criminal. In the USSR, they seem to be just another day under that totalitarian regime. Because the book has several authors contributing to the narrative, we readers are required to read the same basic facts several times relayed from slightly different points of view. I would have preferred one extended, well thought out piece, rather than the disjointed and repetitive nature of this book. Still, the book is worth reading, if for no other reason than for those of us lucky enough to live in the West to appreciate how fortunate we have been and how brave one must be to stand up to a seemingly all powerful government willing to do anything to keep you under its thumb.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. Back in the USSR (You don't know how lucky you are)By RuminatorMore of an expose' - a historical glimpse at the machinations of the KGB. Not a chess book, but does clarify the impact the KGB had on the lives of chess players, plus other sports figures in the USSR during the 60's, 70's, and 80's. Written by a man who experienced first hand the hard reality of life under Russian Communism. A book of hard truths that is at times difficult to read since it is so far removed from the American experience. A must read for any budding leftists.¹⁹ of 23 people found the following review helpful. Interesting read ... but the tell all are mostly names not recognizedBy IgfeldI've always had a great deal of respect for Boris Gulko and recognized his plight for freedom from the former Soviet Union as one of chess's bravest battles. The central theme of this book is the battle of Gulko and his wife to emigrate from the Soviet Union (starting in the late 70s and finally ending 7 years later) to Israel. The book is broken into five distinct sections written by a collection of authors with the recognizable chess players Boris Gulko and Victor Korchnoi. The relatively short introduction by Gulko is a bit of a spoiler for the rest of the book on the devious nature of the KGB in the Soviet era. I didn't mind so much but it did steal the relatively little thunder that Popov (the ex-KGB agent) had in the form of chess secrets. The second section written by Popov and a Russian historian was a really a general treatment of the KGB in sports (that happened to include chess). Those interested in the politics of the Olympics would find this section interesting. The chess content was about twenty five percent of this section and a bit disappointing (as a percentage) considering the name of the book includes KGB and chess and not the KGB and sports in general. This chapter emphasized what many already knew about Karpov's involvement with the iron fist of the Soviets and his deliberate use of anyone and anything to maintain his World Crown. Popov named a few grandmasters as working for the KGB but backed up little of it with any real involvement of those GMs. It's easy to say that someone is an agent, but how about giving some examples of how they are complicit with some underhanded activity? This certainly was true for Karpov, but he was really the only example in the book of how a GM worked actively with the KGB. This clearly was disappointing that other GMs were not "outed" for their involvement (if they truly were). Also, a ton of names are named as being part of the KGB but my guess is that for most people, these are just name after name and nothing else. Also, the politics of the KGB was incredibly difficult to go through in the mechanical way the text was presented. This section was at best a two star quality. The highlight of the book was the section by Gulko which chronicled his life during the seven years of "captivity" in Moscow. Although it's not clear what is historic revision because he now has the perspective from a KGB officer, the material is still very engaging and entertaining. With that said, he really doesn't present anything really that new or not presented in other places. This section definitely pulls the overall book from 1 to 2 stars to 3 stars. The end of the book was concluded with an afterword by Victor Korchnoi that has almost no real value relative to the theme of the book. Korchnoi could have commented on why he didn't insist that the emigration of Gulko be included as part of the deal to reschedule the candidates match with Kasparov. But in typical Korchnoi fashion, it seemed to be all about him. Gulko did mention that Korchnoi could have included him in the deal and regretted that Korchnoi was "too polite" to include him in his negotiations with the Soviets and FIDE. In any case, although Korchnoi was definitely intimidated during his championship and as a result of the influence of the KGB on FIDE, it would have been a major upset for Korchnoi to win. At least one surprising claim was made by Popov on the possible actions that the KGB was willing to take in the Korchnoi-Karpov match(es). In any case, it's hard to make Korchnoi look victimized when he is essentially married to another woman while his (now) estranged Soviet wife is held in the USSR. Finally, a letter from Popov at the end of the book was completely out of left field and added very little additional content (or value). I also wonder how much you can trust someone who has come from "the other side" as a reliable source. Consider the cycling world where whistle blowers were guys that basically had no future because they were caught cheating and at the time denied the allegations. Basically, there was no independent source for the claims made by Popov. This doesn't mean that his information isn't true, but it certainly is limited by his perspective and his ability to recall all the details. He never really says what he learned first hand and what was learned from others second hand. This definitely takes away from the overall validation of the source material. Overall, this is an interesting read for a relatively modest cost (from my perspective). I very much enjoyed books by Sosonko such as Smart Chip from St Petersburg (this book is in the same vein). This doesn't have nearly the same content level in terms of interesting material though. What I liked the best was to see the events through Boris Gulko's eyes and quite frankly wouldn't have cared if the whole book was written by Gulko (with more detail) and no perspective from the KGB agent. This is how little value the input about the KGB was in this book. Finally, at the risk of roiling the world, this book really cements how untrustworthy Karpov really is.

He used every advantage to win and keep the title and literally sold his soul to the KGB devil (claim of the book, not mine). This has been a reoccurring theme in quite a few books but somehow Karpov seems to land in great places including getting the nomination for the FIDE president. The last election was truly a low point for world-wide chess when you have two candidates that you wouldn't trust running a weekend swiss tournament. Perhaps Karpov has turned a new leaf, but he still collaborates on terrible books (Find the Right Plan, Batsford) where he is unlikely to have written even a single word (other than final edits). What will it take to really paint this (non)champion in the light he deserves. I am only glad that Gulko never buckled and backed Karpov as FIDE president. It goes without saying that Karpov's influence could have had Gulko out in the first few months after his initial petition to emigrate (just my opinion and not necessarily the opinion of the author).

The KGB Plays Chess is a unique book. For the first time it opens to us some of the most secret pages of the history of chess. The battles about which you will read in this book are not between chess masters sitting at the chess board, but between the powerful Soviet secret police, known as the KGB, on the one hand, and several brave individuals, on the other. Their names are famous in the chess world: Viktor Kortschnoi, Boris Spasski, Boris Gulko and Garry Kasparov became subjects of constant pressure, blackmail and persecution in the USSR. Their victories at the chess board were achieved despite this victimization. Unlike some books, this story has two perspectives. The victim and the persecutor, the hunted and the hunter, all describe in their own words the very same events. One side is represented by the famous Russian chess players Viktor Kortschnoi and Boris Gulko. For many years they fought against a powerful system, and at the end they were triumphant. The Soviet Union collapsed and they got what they were fighting for: their freedom. Former KGB Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Popov, who left Russia in 1996 and now lives in Canada, was one of those who had worked all his life for the KGB and was responsible for the sport sector of the USSR. It is only now for the first time that he has decided to tell the reader his story of the KGBs involvement in Soviet Sports. This is his first book, and it is not only full of sensations, but it also dares to name names of secret KGB agents previously known only as famous chess masters, sportsmen or sport officials. Just a few short years ago a book like this would have been unimaginable. Read this book. It is not only about chess. It is about glorious victory of the great chess masters over the forces of darkness.

About the Author Having grown in Moscow, Gulko graduated from Moscow State University. In 1975, Gulko became an international master and a professional chess player, and in 1976, a grandmaster. Gulko was USSR chess champion in 1977 and twice champion of Moscow. For seven years, from 1979 to 1986, Gulko was a refusenik. After a difficult struggle, which included three hunger strikes and a month of daily demonstrations and arrests, Gulko and his family emigrated to the United States. Gulko won the US chess championship in 1994 and 1999. Born in 1947 in Moscow, from 1972-1991 Popov worked in the KGB, ultimately attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. His work in the KGB included overseeing various aspects of Soviet sports, including chess. In 1996, he immigrated to Canada, where he lives at the present time. Yuri Felshtinsky was born in Moscow in 1956. In 1978, he immigrated to the United States and received a Ph.D. in history in 1988. Felshtinsky has compiled, edited, and annotated several dozen volumes of archival documents in Russian history. His books include *The Bolsheviks and the Left SRs* (1985); *Towards a History of Our Isolation* (1988); *The Failure of the World Revolution* (1991); *Lenin and His Comrades* (2010); *Blowing up Russia* (with Alexander Litvinenko, 2007); *The Corporation: Russia and the KGB in the Age of President Putin* (with Vladimir Pribylovsky, 2008).