

# Chess Masters battle at Hastings

Photographs by PETER KEEN

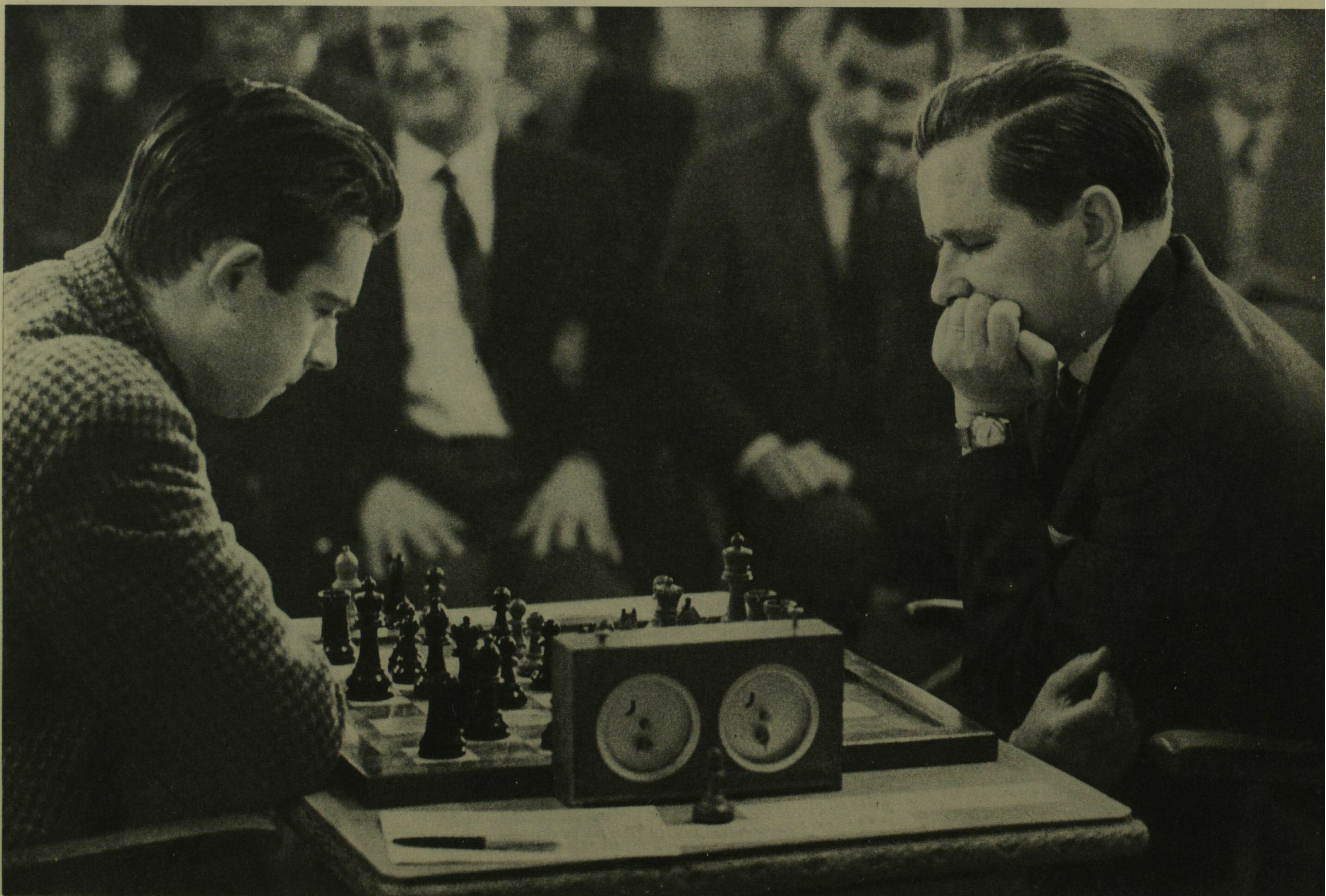
Hundreds of enthusiasts last week converged on Hastings for the 40th annual Chess Congress, where 200 players from 13 countries were competing for a £50 first prize. It is a constant surprise to the outsider how this quiet seaside gathering manages to attract the chess masters of the world. Compared to the huge Continental tournaments, where cash prizes soar into thousands of pounds, Hastings is humble indeed: the prizes are minimal, and the organisation less than perfect—for example, there is not one illuminated chess board, just a scribbled blackboard in the foyer on the Sun Lounge. Yet the saying goes that no good chess player should die without competing at Hastings.

Certainly the Hastings Chess Club officials back in 1896 could have had little idea that their Congress would one day attract masters like Tchigorin from Russia, Tarrasch from Germany, Albin from the U.S.A., Janowsky from France, and a score of others. Perhaps the turning-point came in 1919, when the star of the splendid Victory Congress was the nonchalant Capablanca. He would stroll to the board, move a piece without bothering to sit down, and then quickly return to conversation with his friends. Chess at Hastings suddenly hit the headlines, and nowadays there are hundreds of players who have specially moved to the town just to be close to its ever-open Chess Club.

This year saw some formidable players competing in the Premier Class—Nona Gaprindashvili and Paul Keres from the U.S.S.R., our own Peter Lee, Denis Mardle, Owen Hindle and Norman Littlewood, the Brazilian Antonio Rocha, Pflieger from Germany, Gligoric from Yugoslavia and Florin Gheorghiu from Rumania. An unusual feature of Hastings during the 10-day Congress is that all competitors in each Class play against each other in a "points" system—a quieter, if just as determined, annual Battle of Hastings as ever was fought back in 1066.



Deep concentration at the Premier Challengers' table at the 40th International Chess Congress.



Paul Keres, another Russian Grand Master, battles with Britain's Owen Hindle.