

As I will not be seeking re-election this year, I trust Council will allow me to first make some general comments on the status and role of the ECF Delegate, before moving on to the events of the last 12 months. When I applied for the post, some years ago, it was strongly emphasised by the Board at that time that, if elected, under no circumstances was I to ask to be reimbursed for any expenses. This is despite the fact that, with the possible exception of President, the Delegate's post is by far the most financially onerous one – often requiring international travel, hotel accommodation and other costs. Among the world's major chess federations, the ECF is uniquely parsimonious in this respect – a fact which reflects very badly on us. While one can hope to be comprehensively represented on the international stage without contributing a single penny in support - in the real world, you tend get what you pay for. I would strongly recommend that, in future, the ECF allocates up to 2,000 pounds per annum out of its budget, for Delegate's expenses.

Given the apparent unattractiveness of this post, one may wonder why there is a fiercely contested election this year. While not wishing to comment on the merits or otherwise of the various candidates, suffice it to say that temptations abound in the field of international chess politics. At the crude end of the spectrum, whether true or exaggerated, the widespread assumption among delegates in FIDE Presidential Election years is that delegates accept bribes to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars. At best, the assumption illustrates the FIDE General Assembly's corrupted ethos. That ethos was on full display in the 2014 General Assembly. While I would not expect any of the three ECF candidates to succumb to such base skullduggery, the Federation must be ever vigilant to temptations that give a personal advantage to delegates in exchange for supporting the FIDE policy over the ECF's policy. While everyone knows that pocketing an envelope stuffed with used banknotes is profoundly wrong, self-interested arguments can easily be used to justify personal advancement in FIDE commissions and arbiter appointments. Danger bells should start ringing the moment we hear phrases from a commissioner or arbiter such as "I dislike Kirsan as much as the next person, but we have tried the hard line and it didn't work". It is a very slippery slope indeed and can lead to the sort of serial junketing at the expense of ECF independence. The vast machinery of patronage is one of the main reasons that Ilyumzhinov keeps being re-elected. It is the most obvious way to understand why Ilyumzhinov was supported by nearly all of South America, half of North America, Africa and Asia. This method of taking control of federations by stealth is absolutely routine.

2013-14 has been a particularly difficult time for me personally, not least because I was fully aware, at the time of the previous AGM that the soon-to-be-elected Andrew Paulson had deceived the membership about his political sympathies and was totally unsuitable to be ECF President. As Delegate, I knew full-well that I would become the main obstacle to his vaulting ambitions, which were clearly on the much larger international stage, and not domestic. Not only was the newly elected ECF President not neutral politically, as he claimed, but he had even drafted and signed an undisclosed, unethical business deal between himself and Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, in which the FIDE President took 51% of the commercial rights of the main FIDE events. According to the terms of the undisclosed Memorandum that he and Ilyumzhinov denied becoming operative, Paulson was effectively

his employee on a generous 240,000 euro per annum salary. For reasons I still do not fully understand, Paulson had, in August 2013, verbally informed me about this in outline, although, unfortunately, I was not to get hold of a copy of the actual agreement until several months later.

Detailing all Paulson's sly moves to undermine my position would consume too much time, but suffice it say that the switch from holding Skype conference calls to physical meetings in his flat was just one of them. While I fully accept that the ECF ought to meet physically occasionally, doing so squanders time and is very expensive for the ECF – not to mention individuals who live in different countries.

Exposing Paulson (firstly in a rather weak article in the Sunday Times, but later, more thoroughly on the Internet) came at considerable cost to myself. Not only did I have to cope with threats of litigation from the ECF President – which caused anxiety and repeated insomnia – but I also had to endure a confidence vote (as if allowing Kirsan's Trojan horse to become President had been my fault). I received only two votes in my favour (although none against) – which was barely a ringing endorsement. For your information, one of the three candidates for Delegate this year wrote a spirited letter of support for Paulson to the ECF Board – despite the overwhelming evidence against him. Bizarrely and most improbably that same candidate would later claim credit for having persuaded him to resign.

The FIDE and ECU Presidential Elections were the main issues of concern for this year. In the former, the ECF correctly supported Garry Kasparov – a moral imperative – over the 18-year incumbent Ilyumzhinov. In the latter (which I will deal with first) we had a choice between Silvio Danailov and Zurab Azmaiparashvili, – both flawed candidates. We chose the incumbent on the grounds that he did not have the challenger's checkered history. He also addressed the Board and Council members positively at a dinner hosted at Simpsons in-the-Strand, commendably answering various questions about his Presidency. It might be added he was the pro-Kasparov candidate. While I still maintain that Danailov was the better choice (although he lost decisively), it is fair to say that he came with considerable baggage and that supporting him was by no means a question of life and death .

It was a totally different matter, however, as regards the FIDE Presidential Election. I have already written extensively about the events in Tromso elsewhere (New In Chess, issue 6, 2014) and do not propose to do so again. To touch upon just a few issues though, the elections were marred by a grotesquely biased and politicised Electoral Commission which handed over all 14 disputed votes (a possible swing of 28) to Ilyumzhinov. Russian diplomatic intervention in this election was immense and was responsible for a large number of votes changing hands particularly in the last two months. Kasparov did reasonably well in Africa but the greatest shock was the abject capitulation of many of the important European federations, leaving the perception of financial gain or personal advancement of Delegates– sometimes against the will of their memberships. The ECF must have a trustworthy Delegate and it must never surrender. Kirsan will be challenged again in 4 years time.

Had Kasparov won, FIDE dues (worth several thousand pound per annum to the ECF) would have been cancelled immediately. Rex Sinquefield, Garry's Treasurer and the richest man in

the state of the Missouri, personally guaranteed to transfer 10 million dollars into FIDE accounts. Instead, to laughter and applause the General Assembly was treated to Kirsan's ridiculous promise of "\$20 million today!". We are still waiting for the first cent of that. We may as well wait for Godot. Incidentally I was also appointed, by Kirsan, as the Director of a half-million dollar fund for Africa. I am not expecting to be busy any time soon.

One issue to watch out for is Kirsan administration's attempt to undermine the authority of national federations by bypassing them completely. Of particular concern are FIDE Academies which, as things stand, have the power to send juniors to various international without the approval of the national federations. It should be no surprise that a former university friend of Kirsan Ilyumzhinov should be behind exactly such a proposal in England. If you think I am paranoid about infiltration, wake up. It has happened before and will continue to happen unless we prevent it.

Nigel Short.