

OPENING SPEECH FROM ARKADIUSZ LANGER

I am very happy to be with you today in order to make on behalf of Commissioner Wojciechowski, a welcome speech, opening the virtual meeting between the Europchess club and our special and distinguished guest, the Polish chess champion Jan Krzysztof Duda.

Mr Duda, thank you very much for accepting the club invitation and for sharing with us your amazing chess experience. We are all awaiting with great interest to hear your chess stories and of course to play with you the simultaneous exhibition.

I know that this will be a great opportunity for my colleagues to test themselves against such a great Polish chess champion who recently beat the current World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen. We are sure we will benefit a lot from such unique experience that you have kindly agreed to share with us. Let me inform you that this event will be also a fantastic opportunity to promote chess, not only among EU staff, but also beyond, and we hope you will find it equally interesting from your personal and professional point of view.

Dear colleagues from the club, as you might already know, Mr Jan Krzysztof Duda is an extremely talented, dedicated and successful chess player since the age of 5. The list of his achievements is long and extremely impressive. In 2005 at the age of 7, he became International Champion of Germany and Czech Rep. In 2008, he won the World Youth Chess Championship in the under-10 category and as a result he was awarded the title of FIDE Master. Two years later, in 2012, he won the European Youth Chess Championship in the under-14 category and was awarded in the same year the title of International Master. In 2013 he was finally awarded FIDE Grandmaster title, when he was just 15.

Since that time, Mr Duda has participated in many various chess tournaments around the world. He played in Poland, Armenia, Russia, Germany, Norway, or Georgia, to name few, where he performed exceptionally well. He achieved very high or top positions in many of those tournaments playing against internationally distinguished chess players (!). For example, he beat twice the Chess World Champion, Magnus Carlsen in May and October 2020. Mr Duda is currently ranked no. 21 by the International Chess Federation and has a FIDE rating above 2700 points. Mr Duda, big congratulations from all of us for achieving so much within such a short period of time. Commissioner Wojciechowski is particularly proud that Poland has such a prominent young chess player. Let me stress that he wishes you all the best in your brilliantly developing chess career. We feel honoured to see you with us today.

Dear guests, dear colleagues, let me now introduce very briefly the Europchess. The Europchess, which organises this special event, is a chess club of the European Institutions. It is supported by the European Commission and it groups dedicated and talented members, who study and play chess regularly. Many of them play ranked chess. Let me underline that it

is already a tradition of the Club to invite once a year a famous grandmaster to give a lecture and play simultaneous exhibition with its Members ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. The idea behind is to promote, learn, and enjoy chess by drawing from the experience of the best chess players in the world. I am pretty sure that Mr Johannes Bertram, President of Europchess, will say more about it after my opening speech. Before I present a brief history of Polish chess, I would like to give my special thanks also to Frank Hoffmeister, Vice-president of Europchess, who has put a lot of effort to organise this event and offered me the opportunity to open it. Thank you very much for that Frank.

Concerning the history of Polish chess, I will try to be brief, although its history is long. The first known Polish chess player was duke Boleslaw III Wrymouth, who lived in the XI and XII centuries, and probably learnt chess from knights returning from Jerusalem ^{(iii)(iv)}. After him, many Polish kings, knights, noblemen and representatives of academia used to play chess ^(v). Many decided to incorporate a chessboard to their own coat of arms. ^(vi). In the XIV century playing chess against money became so popular that hazardous chess was even condemned by Polish laws in the XIV century ^(vii).

Chess was also adored by the Polish king Jan III Sobieski ^{(viii)(ix)}, the grandmaster of military strategy, who saved Vienna from the Ottoman empire in the brilliantly executed battle in 1683. Chess was also cherished in the Polish literature. In 1564, our famous poet Jan Kochanowski wrote a beautiful poem entitled "*Chess*", a very unique work in chess literature ^{(x)(xi)}. In the beginning of the XVII century the first Polish chess book explaining the rules, tactic and chess strategy was written by Jan Ostrorog. Unfortunately, the original manuscript and its copies were lost during the Second World War ^(xii).

Moving to more modern times, the first Polish chess clubs were established only around 1840. The first Polish elite player from the XIX century was Simon Winawer ^(xiii). He was top 10 player at that time ^(xiv). Another elite Polish player was Akiba Rubinstein ^(xv). Chessmetrics has him as the number 1 player in the world from 1912-14 ^(xvi). He is considered the best Polish chess player ever. And now we have the candidate who is on the path to challenge Mr Rubinstein's well established chess reputation.

After 1918, Poland was one of the founding fathers of FIDE, won chess Olympiad in 1930 and was 2nd in 1931, 1936 and 1939. As a result of the Second World War, many Polish top chess players did not return to Poland and stayed abroad. You might have heard about Mieczysław (Miguel) Najdorf ^(xvii) and his famous Najdorf Variation ^(xviii) or about Savielly Tartakower ^(xix), the captain and coach of the Polish chess team, who won the gold medal for Poland at the Hamburg Olympiad in 1930 ^(xx).

As you can imagine, after the end of the WWII, there was a crisis of chess in Poland. Some of the best players participating in the international tournaments decided to stay abroad ^(xxi), others lost their lives during the turbulent times of the 2WW ^(xxii). Also, during the Communism, talented chess players in Poland were blocked for years by Soviets, as they wanted to dominate this sport. In other words, the Polish chess was thrown under the geopolitical bus during that time.

Only in 1976 the first Polish chess player Mr Włodzimierz Schmidt ^(xxiii) got the title of grandmaster. He is also recognized as one of the best Polish chess player in the period between 1945 and the end of communism in Poland in 1989. In the new era, after 1989, Mr Radek Wojtaszek ^(xxiv) was recognized as a number 1 Polish player. Apart from being for years the Polish super Grandmaster, Mr Wojtaszek has also introduced modern ways of training drawing much from his work with Indian grandmaster and world chess champion Anand. He also shared those new methods of training with other players, including with our special guest, Mr Duda.

Dear guests, dear colleagues, it was my great pleasure to open this special event for you, which, I am sure, you will all enjoy and you will all vastly benefit from. Let me conclude by sharing with you two famous chess quotes, which I found both chess and life inspiring. The first one, which is universal, says *“Remember that every chess master was once a beginner”* ^(xxv). The second one is also worth to remember: *“Chess is rarely a game of ideal moves. Almost always, a player faces a series of difficult consequences, whichever move he makes.”* ^(xxvi). With this chess-life, life-chess inspiring accent, I would like to thank all of you for your kind attention and wish you great time, fantastic lecture and brilliant moves during the simuli.

Dzień dobry Państwu. Witam szczególnie naszych specjalnych gości, Pana Jana Krzysztofa Dudę, członków jego zespołu, a także kolegów i koleżanki z instytucji europejskich, którzy są członkami klubu Europchess, z inicjatywy którego odbywa się dzisiejsze spotkanie. Na wstępie chciałabym zaznaczyć, że jestem niezwykle zaszczycony tym, że mogę otworzyć w imieniu Pana Komisarza Wojciechowskiego oraz Europchess spotkanie z naszym specjalnym gościem, arcymistrzem szachowym, Panem Janem Krzysztofem Dudą.

Pragnę również Panu Dudzie bardzo podziękować w imieniu nas wszystkich, w tym Pana Komisarza Wojciechowskiego, za przyjęcie zaproszenia i zaszczylenie nas swoją obecnością. Serdecznie Pana wszyscy witamy.

Szanowni Państwo, dzisiejsze spotkanie z Panem Duda będzie składało się z dwóch części. W pierwszej części Pan Duda zrobi wykład dla członków klubu szachowego Instytucji Europejskich, w ramach którego podzieli się z nimi swoimi doświadczeniami ze swoich najciekawszych partii szachowych.

Natomiast w drugiej części spotkania przejdziemy od teorii do praktyki. Po wykładzie bowiem Pan Duda rozegra symultanę z dwudziestoma pięcioma członkami klubu, którzy będą mieli okazję rozegrać partie szachową z jednym z najmłodszych talentów szachowych na świecie, 23 letnim arcymistrzem, który pokonał w zeszłym roku dwukrotnie legendarnego mistrza świata w szachach Magnusa Carlsena.

Gwoli przypomnienia wypadałoby podkreślić, że Pan Duda gra w szachy z sukcesem od dzieciństwa. Jego przygoda z szachami, która przeistoczyła się w międzynarodowa karierę, rozpoczęła się gdy miał on 5 lat. W niedługim czasie zaczął on odnosić znaczące sukcesy zarówno na arenie krajowej jak i międzynarodowej, wygrywając i zajmując wysokie miejsca w szeregu turniejów rozgrywanych w Polsce i zagranicą. Na przykład, już w 2005 roku Pan Duda zdobył tytuł międzynarodowego mistrza Niemiec do lat 8. W 2008 roku zdobył tytuł mistrza

świata do 10 lat. Kolejny międzynarodowy sukces odniósł w 2009 roku kiedy to zdobył tytuł wicemistrza świata do 12 lat, a w 2011 tytuł wicemistrza Europy do lat 14.

W 2017 roku Pan Duda został pierwszym polskim juniorem, który przekroczył barierę 2700 punktów. Rok później zostaje wicemistrzem świata w szachach błyskawicznych przegrywając jedynie o pół punktu z samym Magnusem Carlsenem. W 2019 Pan Duda przekracza barierę 2800 punktów, a w roku 2020 podczas turnieju w Norwegii wygrywa już z mistrzem świata Carlsenem, przerywając jego serię 125 partii klasycznych bez porażki.

Szanowny Państwo, przed zakończeniem swojego wystąpienia chciałbym powiedzieć jeszcze kilka słów na temat klubu Europchess. Klub ten zrzesza pasjonatów szachów, pracowników instytucji europejskich. Członkowie klubu nie tylko regularnie się spotykają w celu podnoszenia swoich teoretycznych i praktycznych umiejętności.

Biorą oni również udział w turniejach szachowych, a także raz do roku organizują spotkania z szachistami światowego formatu w celu promocji szachów oraz podnoszenia swoich kwalifikacji. W tym roku przypada im zaszczyt spotkania oraz zagrania symultany z Panem Dudą. Zwracając się do Pana Dudy, raz jeszcze bardzo Panu dziękujemy za przyjęcie naszego zaproszenia. Jesteśmy pewni, że dzisiejsze spotkanie będzie bardzo intelektualnie stymulujące zarówno dla nas samych, jak i również - mamy taką nadzieję, - dla Pana.

W imieniu Pana Komisarza Wojciechowskiego, członków klubu Europchess, a także moim własnym, życzymy Panu kolejnych wielkich sukcesów na szachowej arenie międzynarodowej i mamy nadzieję, że dzisiejsze spotkanie nie będzie ostatnim, ale jednym z wielu, jakimi nas Pan zaszczyli w przyszłości.