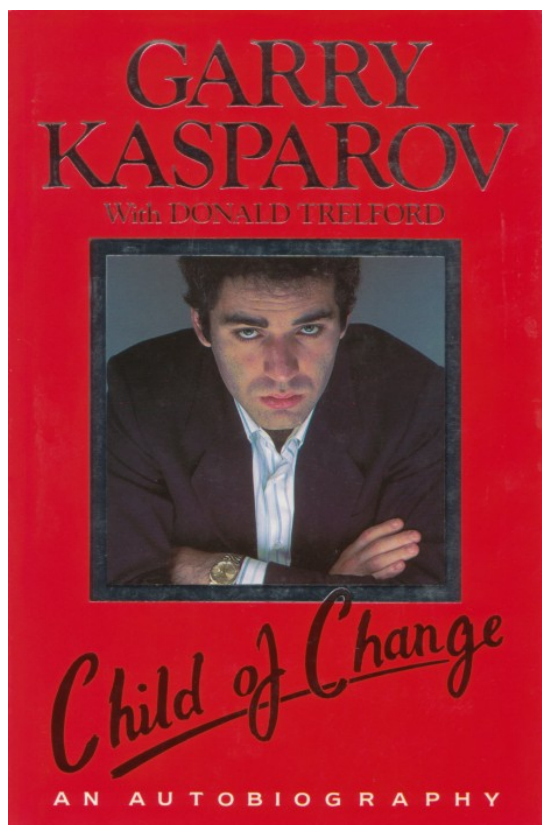


Kasparov's *Child of Change*

Edward Winter

(1987)



Child of Change by Garry Kasparov with Donald Trelford (published by Hutchinson) is, technically, a highly professional piece of work which is sure to be a best-seller. 'Never before has a Soviet superstar spoken so frankly and openly about his life and ideas ...', says the dust-jacket. The book is everything one has come to expect of Kasparov: passionate, supercharged and challenging, yet immature, speculative and deceptive.

For some reason journalists have always refrained from asking him awkward questions. Interviewers bounteously purvey opportunities for him to attack his supposed enemies, and Kasparov can deliver a headline-snatching diatribe at the drop of a leading question. But his squalls are those of a man unaccustomed to being contradicted and unaware that 'freedom of expression' involves the responsibility of trying to get things right. Before examining in detail Kasparov's new book, it is worthwhile looking at an extract from a typical interview. It appeared on page 38 of *Le Figaro* of 28 April 1987:

Question: Who would you not like to see act as chief arbiter and members of the appeals jury in your forthcoming World Championship match?

Kasparov: I don't have any personal enemies, but I do not approve of people who compromise themselves. Since childhood I have always been hostile to any kind of Fascism. I would therefore like to have persons above reproach, without criminal ties with FIDE's Fascist method of operating. This kind of Fascism is unacceptable. A human being is born with his own brain and heart, and he has to be entitled to freedom of expression, in the democratic way. Human rights have to be respected.

Question: Aren't you afraid that the "forces" which you often criticize may be used against you in one way or another?

Kasparov: What forces? They are like zombies, ghosts, or ogres in fairy tales. They have gone away for good, like witches on their flying broomsticks. This is 1987, not 1985. Everything that Mikhail Gorbachov has been saying is what I've been doing for the past two years already. No matter how much some might regret the past, it's gone forever. These people are clinging to their old privileges, but they don't measure up in front of a chessboard.'

Instead of pressing Kasparov to explain words like 'criminal', 'corruption' and 'Fascist', journalists nod and publish. It makes good copy. If Kasparov were asked to identify the members of the oft-mentioned 'international mafia', it would spoil all the fun.

After getting away with such interviews for years, Kasparov could hardly be expected to produce a dialectical autobiography. Despite its repeated use of the word 'truth', *Child of Change* is the careless and untrustworthy book that all the cosily venomous interviews presaged. Kasparov refuses, or is unable, to supply evidence, and bases his assertions on malevolent guesswork; as early as page 3 he describes the 'day of shame in the history of chess' (15 February 1985, Termination Day):

'There was an unscheduled and unexplained delay. At one point on the video, which I often play back to myself, there is a revealing camera shot of a Soviet official peeping through the curtains to check that I really was there in the audience, for this meant they had to change their plans and announce something different from what they had intended to say.'

The obvious questions here are how Kasparov knows what this peeper was doing and thinking, and what evidence he has for the change-of-plan charge. Although this anonymous figure behind the curtains could just have been counting heads for lunch, he manages to obsess Kasparov, who goes over the same ground again on page 134:

'There is a video of all this, made by the American network ABC, who gave me a copy. I look at it whenever I feel the need to get fired up again about Campo and the others who have tried to get in my way. The cameras were rolling as soon as I arrived, before the press conference itself. It recorded the chaos caused by my arrival, including a most revealing shot of someone peeping through the curtains to make sure, when the bad news reached them, that I was really there.'

A subsidiary point here: how strange that Kasparov, whose book evinces a loathing for everything Campomanes says and does, still has to resort to artificial anger-inspiring stimulants such as an old VCR. A bonus when he feels 'the need to get fired up' is the availability of a freeze-frame function on his video recorder: 'Every time I freeze Campo's face on the screen at that moment, his expression that of a hunted ferret, ...' (page 3). After such disclosures it will be no surprise if Reuben Fine rushes out a new edition of *The Psychology of the Chess Player*.

The book contains a hundred and one pieces of truculence and vituperation. A typical piece of 'reasoning' is on page 202, concerning the 16th game of the third Karpov match:

'As I made the killing pawn-thrust against his king at move 41, I caught sight of Karpov's tall blonde girl friend, Natasha, hurrying out of the hall. It was rumoured that he had promised to marry her when he regained the world title, which may have accounted for her sudden departure when once again she saw the prospect of wedlock receding. They have since got married, which may suggest that they are tired of waiting.'

Leaving aside the question of the real move (his 41st was not a pawn thrust), one notes Kasparov's reliance on rumours, and the illogicality of his have-it-both-ways final sentence. It is just one of countless instances of barrel-scraping. Throughout the book, he displays an unpleasant liking for infantile name-calling. For example, by page 213 the 'hunted ferret' is smiling 'like a cunning Cheshire cat'. (Incidentally, on page 135 Kasparov even argues that running the World Championship is what the FIDE President 'mainly exists to do'. Hardly.)

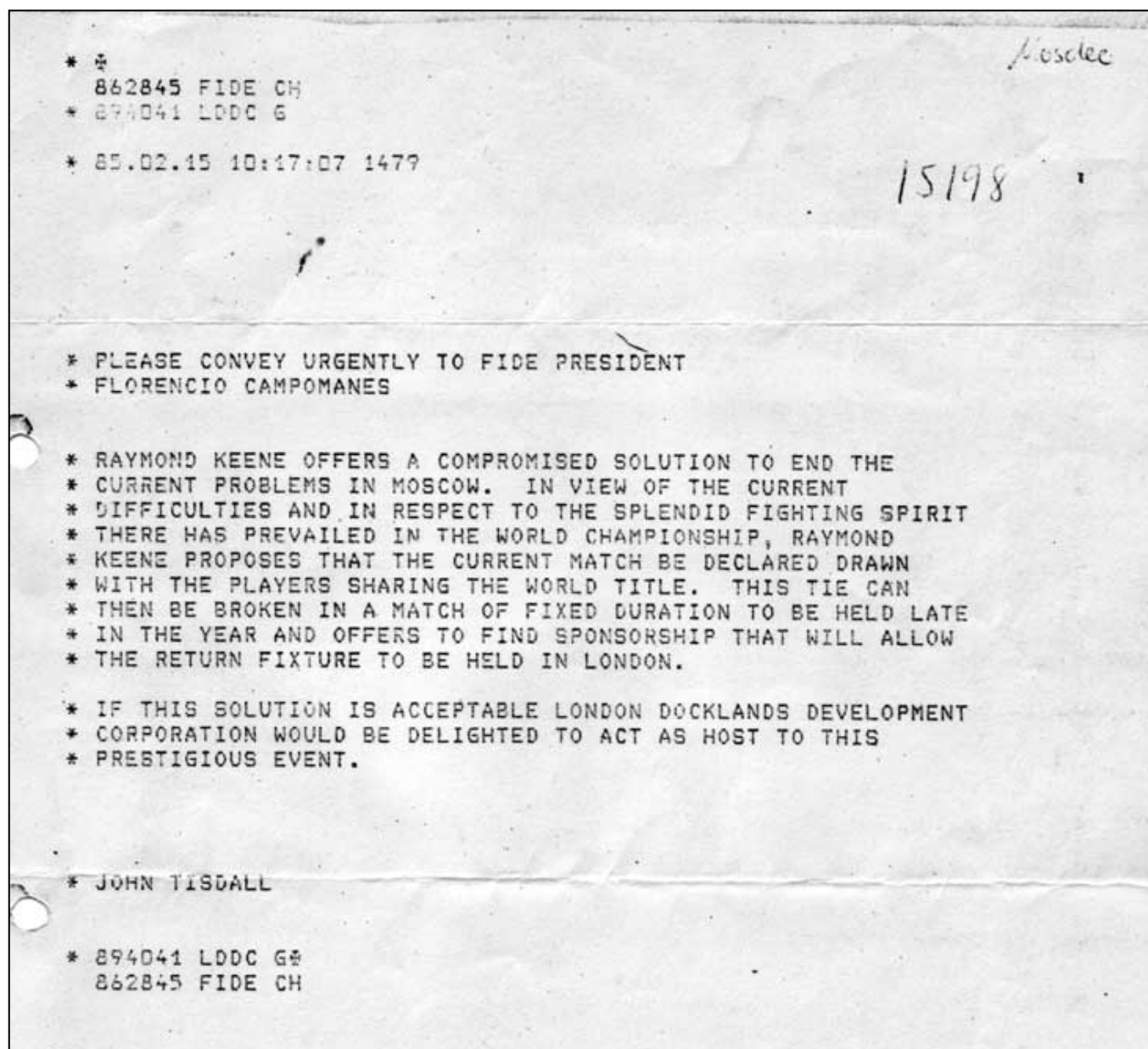
Kasparov's technique is to attack so hard that defence will not be necessary. Whether through foolishness or naivety, he seems unaware that his harangues about the need for truth and sincerity in the chess world will cut little ice so long as he attacks unscrupulously and undiscerningly (the old 'Campomanes' gold mine in South Africa' accusation,

now refuted, has been quietly buried without an apology) and as long as he continues his political and literary associations with individuals (one individual in particular) whose untruths can be, and have been, repeatedly proved as a matter of public record.

The greatest gulp and guffaw provided by the book comes on page 125, when Kasparov comments regarding the Termination:

'The final truth about this match, I believe, is as Grandmaster Keene reported it.'

Having said something nice about Grandmaster Keene, he proceeds (as on many occasions in the book) to quote Grandmaster Keene saying something nice about him. Naturally, there is not a word about Grandmaster Keene's telex to Campomanes advocating termination, or all the concomitant falsehoods and inconsistencies (such as those which have been documented in *Chess Notes*). That is the other side of Kasparov's technique: no sense of obligation to mention, let alone try to refute, awkward facts. To give just one more example: during the 1986 FIDE presidential campaign, the FIDE Facts sheets played a vital role in destroying the credibility of the challengers Keene/Lucena, by accurate and fair quotation of their own words. Kasparov, of course, does not dare attempt a rebuttal of the arguments, and makes do, on page 212 with a vague, unsubstantiated reference to the distribution of 'material about Lucena in a form that was virtually unreadable'. (On the same page we see with what good grace Kasparov accepted three gold medals at the Dubai Olympiad: 'As my medals were presented to me they felt like pieces of tin rattling round the neck of a dog.')



His treatment of the Termination episode contains little in the way of facts ('The full story may never be known, because there were many conversations in which I never took part – from which, in fact, I was carefully excluded – and which the participants will doubtless want to keep secret ... I set out my own theories below.' – page 127). And that is what they are: theories or slanted conjecture. His views on Karpov's state of health towards the end of the match are peculiar and self-contradictory. On page 124 he rejects the claim that Karpov was sick, emphasizing the quality of game 48 and on page 143 he writes: 'The people around him [Karpov] attributed my late victories to the fact that he was so exhausted, but Karpov knew better. He knew it was my chess that was beating him.' But on page 125 Kasparov states that his opponent 'had exhausted his strength', and on page 130 says that 'Karpov was in no state to go on without the serious risk of defeat'. One can appreciate Kasparov's quandary; going too far down the 'Karpov ill' road would devalue his own achievement of winning games 47 and 48. Despite that, Kasparov confirms that he himself was the one to call a time-out on 11 February 'because I needed it ... after all the excitement, I needed time to draw breath' (pages 131-132), although it is hard to understand why if he really thought his opponent was 'in no state to go on'.

Kasparov confirms his earlier declarations that 'I would have been ready for an end to the match right at the start of the negotiations – if they had accepted me as an equal partner and had offered me acceptable terms' (page 128), but later approvingly quotes Raymond Keene's statement that 'no decision was necessary, since the match was proceeding according to regulations and these should have been allowed to run their course' (page 155). On page 133, he writes: 'I assumed the original FIDE proposal – to stop now and start afresh in September – was what we were talking about. In a way this wasn't so bad for me. I was sure I would win the second match. I had become much wiser than at the beginning of this one. And to start playing again at nil-nil was better than five-three against.' Isn't that what happened?

The crucial discrepancy or misunderstanding is again shown to have occurred in the early-February meeting between Kasparov and Kinzel, who have given divergent accounts of the circumstances in which Kasparov stated he would accept immediate termination of the match. Borrowing Timman's comment (without acknowledgement), Kasparov writes (page 129): 'Because I offer a draw at five-two it doesn't mean that Karpov can accept it later when the score becomes five-three.' One could retort that Karpov didn't 'accept it', but the central point here is that a willingness at five-two to entertain the possibility of termination can hardly be transferred into outright rejection of the principle just because one further game has gone in his favour. Kasparov says that his statement to Kinzel was 'a tactical mistake' (page 128) and reveals (page 130) his 'entirely reasonable' counter-proposals to Kinzel for stopping the match: 'Karpov should renounce his world title, and he should declare that he was at the end of his physical resources.' Campomanes has been much criticized for judging health questions without consulting a doctor. Whom did Kasparov consult?

It is now established that when Kinzel wanted to telephone Campomanes in Dubai he used Gligori• as an interpreter since he had no common language with the FIDE President. At first, it will be recalled, the Keene/Goodman/Batsford movement falsely claimed that Karpov, or Karpov's camp, had made the call. Although Kasparov (page 131) accepts that it was Gligori• who telephoned, he remarks that an arbiter should not have 'initiated moves' of this kind. For that argument to have any weight it is necessary to conceal the fact that Gligori• acted as an interpreter. Kasparov conceals it.

On Termination Day, however, few knew that all these discussions had been going on for over two weeks. In particular, hardly anyone was aware of the Kinzel-Kasparov negotiations. This promoted the widespread impression that Campomanes' decision was 'arbitrary', and the FIDE President did little to help quell suspicions. Neither the question of whether Campomanes was right or wrong to stop the match (our own agnosticism has never been firmer) nor the repeated falsehoods written by his opponents in their press monopoly outlets can alter the fact that Termination Day in Moscow was a shambles for which Campomanes must take full blame.

Page 135 records the scene *after* Campomanes' press conference announcement that a new match would start from scratch in September 1985:

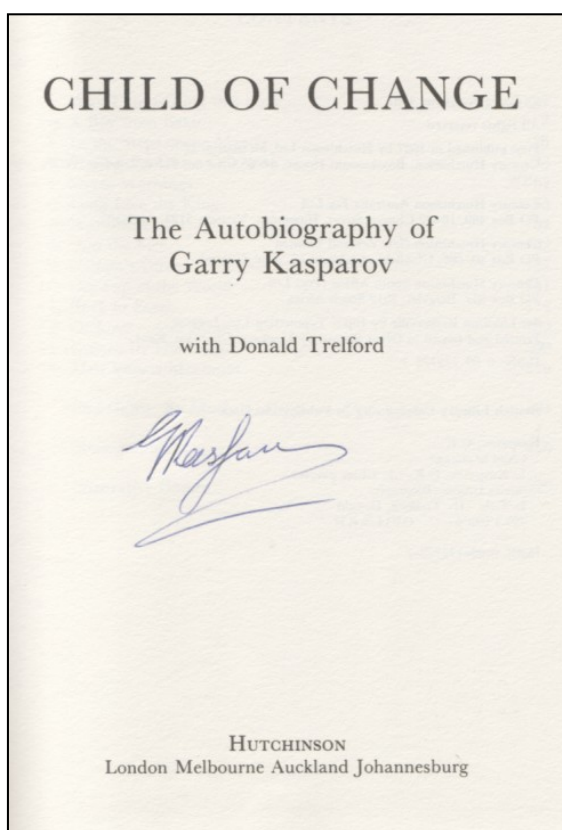
'There was a great deal of shuffling and noise in the audience at this news. The video tape shows my trainers and myself talking and laughing among ourselves.'

The question here is why it does not show Kasparov red with rage. Only later, when Karpov joined Campomanes on

the platform, did Kasparov show anger, claiming that the occasion was being stage-managed.

At the subsequent private meeting, Kasparov reports (page 142), 'Karpov didn't want to sign' a document agreeing to stop the match, but was persuaded to do so by Sevastyanov (or Sevestyanov, as the book spells his name). Back in front of the cameras, Campomanes announced that Karpov 'accepted' the termination decision (while Kasparov 'abided' by it). Kasparov quotes this on page 143, yet by page 147 and page 148 there is a distortion even less subtle than most of the others in this sorry book: he misquotes Campomanes as having said on that occasion that 'Karpov *supports* the decision'. Thus Kasparov replaces 'accepts' (a word whose connotations are neutral or, even, imply reluctance) by 'supports' (a word which indicates positive agreement, and therefore more useful for Kasparov's side of the story). 'But remember: Karpov supported it [the decision]', he emphasizes on page 149, compounding the error.

Kasparov's account does not dispute – but nor does it acknowledge – that Campomanes rejected the USSR Chess Federation's request (dated 13 February) for a *suspension* of the match, and also dismissed the ridiculous termination conditions apparently suggested at one stage by Karpov (pages 128-129). Yet Kasparov still says (page 149) that 'the match was ended artificially totally in accordance with Karpov's wishes'.



Here is a further piece of distortion from Kasparov, where, for once (page 149), he refers to documentary evidence, Karpov's letter to Campomanes (dated 19 February 1985):

'In his letter to Campomanes, Karpov says something that is certainly true: "... he [Kasparov] is displeased because he was *intentionally* [my italics] deprived of the right to compete for the world title." He couldn't have put it better.'

The reader is thus given to understand that Karpov was agreeing with the validity of Kasparov's grievance. But what Karpov really wrote to the FIDE President was rather different:

'As you know on February 15 1985 both the players have expressed their strong wish and ability to continue playing till the final result provided for in the regulations approved by the FIDE Congress. For me, personally, this possibility is necessary in order to once again prove my adherence [*sic*] to the principles of sports competition over the chessboard. The challenger has his own arguments: he is complaining of being deliberately deprived of his right to compete for the highest title.'

Source: photocopy of Karpov's letter, which appeared as Annex 10 (4) to the FIDE Circular Letter of 11 March 1985. Conclusion: Kasparov has taken the phrase out of context *and* altered the wording according to his own exigencies.

Other points, briefly. The autobiography wastes considerable space on general historical snippets which will be familiar to almost everybody. Even Pillsbury's list of memorized words is re-served (page 82), as is the untrue statement (page 108) that Capablanca fell asleep during the 1927 match with Alekhine. A rare spelling, or proof-reading, error: the author of *The Queen's Gambit* was Walter Tevis, not Trevis (page 50), while on page 124 the title of Karpov's *Learn from Your Defeats* book is given incorrectly. The absence of an index is a serious omission.

Some of the early chapters of *Child of Change* are interesting, and there is a rich selection of old photographs from the family album. No doubt a paperback edition will appear in due course, but if Kasparov really wishes to continue beating the *glasnost*/truth drum, this book will need to be rewritten from cover to cover.

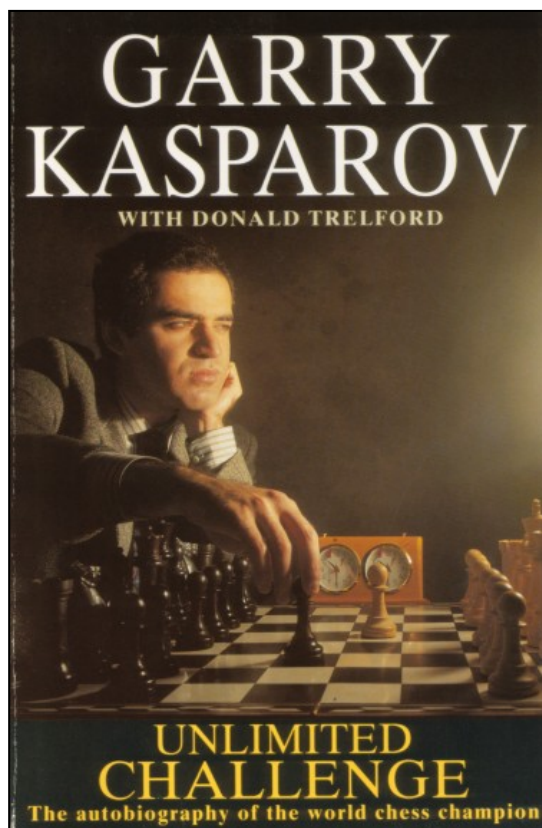
Afterword

This review was published in 1987 (C.N. 1491) and may be read in conjunction with our more general article on the [Termination](#). When the review was published on pages 220-226 of *Chess Explorations* we added two endnotes (on pages 270-271). The first concerned the telephone call received by Campomanes:

Attempting in the February 1988 *Chess Life* (page 34) to account for his claim that the call to Campomanes had been from Karpov's camp, Raymond Keene took advantage of a handy misquotation of that claim (by David Goodman, his brother-in-law) and defended the deformed version rather than his actual original words. (C.N. 1568)

Equally guileful (bearing in mind that for several years Kasparov's associates refused to acknowledge that Gligori•, and not Karpov's camp, had made the call) is the subsequent comment by Kasparov on page 122 of *Unlimited Challenge*: 'Gligori• could not deny that it was he who made the call because this can be confirmed by independent witnesses.'

A point from C.N. 1348 may also be noted here. Kasparov declared in the *Sunday Times* magazine of 10 August 1986: 'I am a quiet, simple person. I accept everything: I think that whatever happens is always for the best.'



The text of the second endnote was as follows:

In an interview with Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam published in the 1/1990 issue of *New in Chess* Kasparov was asked (page 49): ‘You just mentioned Donald Trelford, the ghost-writer of your controversial autobiography *Child of Change*. What are your views on this now?’ Kasparov replied:

‘I have now finished my [emphatically] real autobiography, written by me, in Russian, and it is called *Unlimited Challenge*. It is based on *Child of Change*, but about 90% is new stuff ... This is the real Kasparov, without any English editors. I deserved the critical reception of *Child of Change*. I was too light-hearted, I did it just in between, which was very bad. I think that from a historical point of view the book was absolutely right, but the way it was presented was very bad. That was a mistake, which we can rectify. But the idea of the book I’m going to defend till the end.’

The new book to which Kasparov was referring in his interview was *Bezlimitny Poyedinok* (Moscow, 1989). In late 1990 *Unlimited Challenge* (‘The autobiography of Garry Kasparov with Donald Trelford’) was published by Fontana/Collins and described as a ‘revised and updated edition’ of *Child of Change*. In the introduction (page 5) Kasparov wrote, ‘What is the use in simply calling someone a coward, spy, mafioso or bribe-taker? Far more important for the reader are the documents, the facts, logic and a clear-cut argument.’ The book fell way short of these laudable sentiments.

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