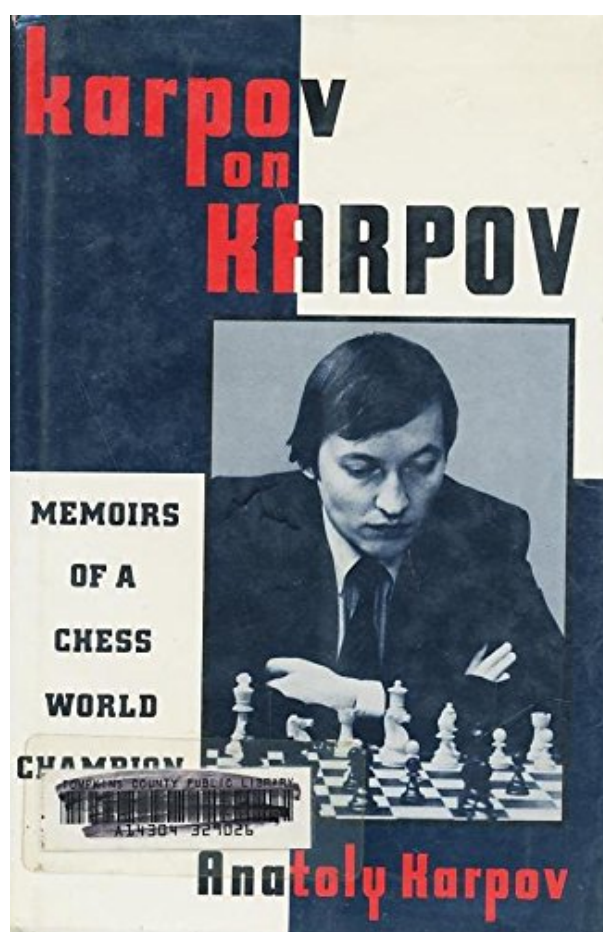
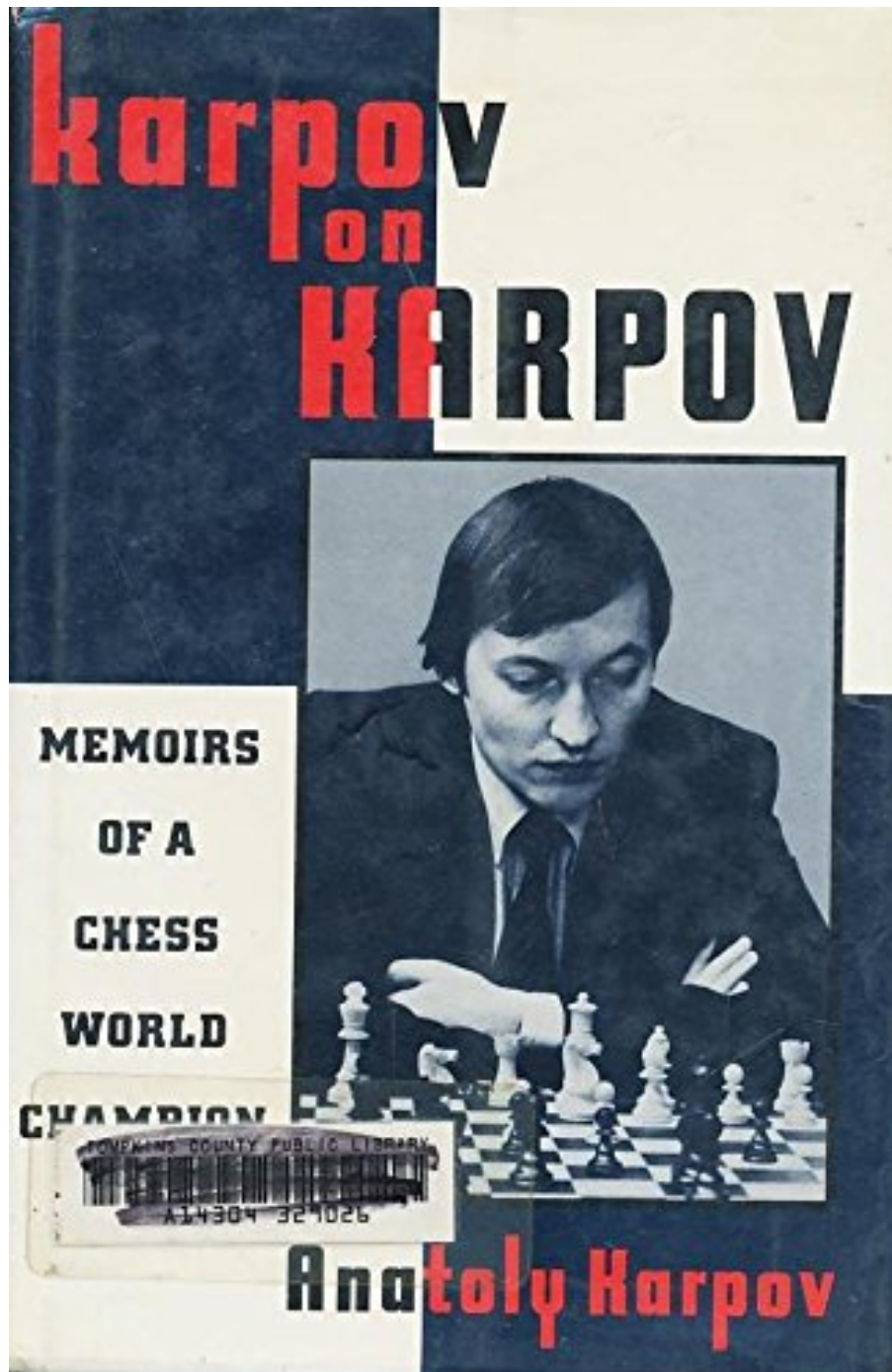


KARPOV ON KARPOV: MEMOIRS OF A CHESS WORLD CHAMPION BY ANATOLY KARPOV



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Karpov, the Russian who gained the title of world chess champion after American Bobby Fisher relinquished it in 1975, then 10 years later lost the crown to his fellow countryman Gary Kasparov, proves that chess is not a game. It is war, with psychological strategy as important as the moves made on the board: Karpov maintains that an expert does not play against the pieces, but against his opponent, and is guided by principles intrinsic to the game, "the internal laws by which the game lives." He studied with former champion Mikhail Botvinnick. Furiously competitive, Karpov regrets most that he never played Fisher, whom he admires, and is not at all gracious about his toughest opponents, Victor Korchnoi and Kasparov, claiming that the latter did not win, but that he himself lost. The former champion, who continues to play, ends on an upbeat note: "Now I am faced with a new ascent." Photos not seen by PW.

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- Will Hepfer, SUNY at Buffalo Libs.

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Most helpful customer reviews

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There goes the romance of chess.

By sergei kochkin

I happened to get a signed leather-bound first edition of this little work. If anything this book and the Spassky-Fisher work by Richard Roberts not to mention the most recent movie Pawn Sacrifice destroyed any romance I had for the world chess championship achievement. It does not sound like Karpov was having fun, but then who can have fun under the old Soviet system with petty communist bureaucrats controlling every move off the chessboard? In addition the mental strain of chess at this lofty level seems to also coincide with mental instability. Most of the book is complaining about the psychological even occult (parapsychology!) games grandmasters play. I found it all annoying to hear his bitching about Korchnoi and Kasparov. I was more intrigued with his perceptions of Fischer, which were complimentary. The tragedy of course is Karpov and Fischer never got to play for the world title because of Fischer's unreasonable demands, thus Karpov won by default (an empty achievement) and never realized his dream of ascending to the next chess level or at least finding out where he stood next to perhaps the greatest player in history (though I suspect that really was Paul Morphy). He could have been more generous in this memoir by publishing his top 25 games....and certainly none of his tens of thousands of draws. Never-the-less this memoir offers an intriguing peek into the lofty world of the super-minds of chess. Fortunately my chess computer does not play these dysfunctional games. It just plays excellent chess.

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Near Masterpiece

By Samuel Leyva

The first half of this book is startlingly well written, literary, and even sometimes quite humorous, as when Karpov recounts the story about his mother checking up on him after he had been forbidden to think about chess. As the book nears the present, however, Karpov loses the thread of his own story and begins to wander (some would put it stronger than that) in his analysis of Kasparov and their bitter rivalry. One wishes, therefore, that Karpov had waited til he was well into his 50's before attempting the sort thing he tries here; because his childhood is recalled with vivid insight and the point of view that emerges is astonishing: he just happened to find himself World Champion one day! On the other hand, I can easily imagine chess players not liking this book at all since it has no chess games in it; but that really doesn't matter if one is fascinated by the subject (as I am). I only mention the fact to warn people who might be expecting something other than what they will find here: an autobiography. That said, this is a very good book from the former World Champion which ends with him hopefully predicting his future re-claiming of the world title (the book came out in 1990). You can read that last part any way you like or ignore it, but there it is: Karpov is a romantic who had to somehow make his way through the demi-human universe of Soviet Chess. A number of fans will undoubtedly disagree with this assessment, but one can tell when someone is lying about the unacceptable deeds of their past: Karpov's memoir is, therefore, touching at times, as his telling of the events surrounding the aborted match with Fischer amply demonstrates.... I recomend this book to anyone who has a heart, and, wants to know more about the history of the royal game in our times.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

A wonderful insight

By Peter June

In his autobiography Karpov details everything from his early childhood to his rivalries with Korchnoi and Kasparov. The fluency of the book, however, is flawed and there is a virtual chasm between his childhood

and rest-of-life. That said, I think this is one of the best autobiographies I've ever read. Karpov tells about his spiritual approach to the game, his gentle and kind personality, and most importantly, his match with Korchnoi.

To be honest, I think that the description of the match with Korchnoi (actually all their matches) is one of the best passages in a book I've read yet. The absolutely intense labor, momentum of the match, and conspiracies surrounding all of his games are fascinating and intriguing. If you are going to buy a book on Karpov or any autobiography, but this one.

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