



No one likes censorship but sometimes it is necessary. And sometimes it can be very useful.

YOU CAN'T SAY THAT

by

CLEVE CARTMILL

ON A HIGH POLICY LEVEL, THERE WAS COMMUNICATION between governments. Derisive sounds tinged with desperation.

On lower levels, too, there was communication. A man in Peoria cabled a cousin somewhere in Eurasia that some bureau or other had refused the visa request. A loyal citizen of New Chicago sent, on the fifth of every month, a limp little heap of scurrilous prose to the Dictator of the Southern Democracies. A businessman from Africa insisted he'd been foisted on the trade of a boatload of plantain for six Alaskan ermines to be used for breeding purposes, for he discovered, upon arrival (or so he said) that all six were male. And Alaska answered, of course, that they had been swindled because he'd picked the plantain ripe.

All was not, nor could it be, calculating silence. But the internal snarls and battlings were muffled. There were bureaux to see to that. Nothing went from one bloc to another that might give aid and comfort to a potential enemy.

Every so often some good soul stood up and pointed to the

harvest of stagnation to come. His logic was always lucid. Everyone agreed in principle; or, that is to say, they conspired to pay no attention to him.

True, what he said would happen, would, in the long run, happen. But, as Lord Keynes remarked some five hundred years before, "In the long run, we shall all be dead." With the happy heritage of a thousand years spent in plundering the planet's various resources, physical, spiritual, and human, the statesmen could plead, as always, precedent and expediency.

Let the next generation, if any, find the solution.

The Bureau of International Censorship for the North American Land Mass had numerous departments in both its Eastern and Western Divisions. The most spastic department in the Western Division was the one controlling cables to and from, among other places, the Chinese Capital of Eurasia, the best current candidate for potential enemy.

Wayne Chambers was in charge of it. Had been, in fact, for the last two years, which spoke well for his nervous system.

The Monday morning when relations with Eurasia were at one of their periodic crests, he came to work feeling better than most of his office staff looked. He had spent the weekend in the sun, and he flashed smug smiles at the glum operators of coders, decoders, scramblers and typewriters. The majority returned pained smiles or pretended not to notice him.

There were more messages on his desk than usual. And on the top of the stack was the cryptic note: "Call FA about Lamb."

"Lamb?" he mused. It meant nothing to him. So he flipped on the intercom. "Fred? This is Wayne. What's this about Lamb?"

"Oh, morning, Wayne. Last Tuesday your office received a cable for transmission signed Lamb. I phoned about fifteen minutes ago, and your secretary checked it for me. Looks like you'd rejected it. I'd like to know your reason."

"I don't remember it offhand. I'll call you back after I look at it, Fred."

"That'll be fine."

Wayne tipped a switch for his secretary. "Shirley, you want to bring that Lamb thing in here?"

"Right away."

When she came in, he noticed that she did not have the Monday morning look. It was more the Saturday night look of a girl waiting for her date to arrive. Last year he had had a fast affair with her, which had been pleasant. And now he was able to look at her with almost paternal fondness.

"Thanks," he said, taking the form message. "That does it, kid."

He called Fred again. "I place this Lamb, now. It's not in clear text. I must have sent a routine reject notice out on it."

"Would you mind bringing it over to my office, Wayne?"

"Hell, Fred. I'm snowed under here."

"It won't take long."

Wayne looked at the work on his desk. "If you say so. I'll be right over, then."

He left the office and stepped onto the glidewalk that carried him along gently curved corridors and up one level to his chief's office. It said Mr. Samson on the door, but everyone called Mr. Samson either Fred or FA. This was because Mr. Samson was bald.

In the office, Wayne was introduced to an obviously infuriated gentleman with grey hair and pallid cheeks.

"How do you do, Doctor Weston?" Wayne acknowledged.

"Did you ever play chess, young man?" Dr. Weston said bitterly.

"I always thought it was a rather dull game," Wayne said. He knew, now, that this was another V.I.P. They didn't like to be edited or rejected according to the rules governing lesser breeds.

"Yes," Dr. Weston said, after a circumspect glance. "I can well believe that. And did you notice to whom the cable was addressed?"

"To a gentleman named Dr. Juan Quirito, in Santiago," Wayne said.

"Dr. Quirito," Dr. Weston said, almost dancing in fury now, "is one of the world's foremost chess masters. He

has won the Southern Democracies Tournament for three straight seasons."

Wayne realized that this was probably quite true.

"Mr. Lamb, myself, and several of the other outstanding chess experts on the planet are initiating a programme of exchanging chess problems for amusement and relaxation. And you have taken it upon yourself, young man, to sabotage what may be the first step in improving international relations since Censorship."

"This is a chess problem I take it?" Wayne said. He looked at the message. W: K-KB5; Q-QB3; R-QB8; Kt-K5; P-K3. B: K-Q4; Q-K7; P-Q3. W-M: 2. "Well, I didn't turn it over to the Chamber. I just sent out a request to the sender for clear text, but I didn't get an answer. That's the usual procedure."

"Let me see it," Dr. Weston said. "Here. Now. Look here. This message indicates the position of the pieces on the board. What can be plainer than that? It's perfectly clear. The King on the King's Bishop's fifth square; Queen on Queen's Bishop three; Rook, Queen's Bishop . . ."

"Ah, yes, I see," Wayne said somewhat dryly. "But I'm afraid I can't visualize a board like you do . . . If I may have the message, please? Thanks. Because I wouldn't know a Queen's Bishop from a landing field."

Dr. Weston puffed his pallid cheeks.

"Well," Fred said, from behind his streamlined desk, "Wayne, I guess you owe Dr. Weston, here, an apology. We'll be glad to send the problem right out, Dr. Weston."

"I'll have to check it with someone who knows chess," Wayne said. "I'm responsible for all messages that go through my department. But it won't take me very long to check it."

Dr. Weston said, gritting his teeth: "I'm one of the world's foremost authorities . . ."

"What Wayne meant, Dr. Weston: check with someone in his department. You see . . ."

Wayne looked at the doctor. He was boiling merrily.

"Well," Wayne said, "I'll leave you now, Fred. Sorry about the mix-up, doctor."

No one in Wayne's department admitted to playing chess, but Shirley suggested Larry, the Thinker, who worked in Foreign Publications.

Wayne, who made it a point to know a great number of people, knew the Thinker more or less well. So, after lunch, he rode the glidewalk over to the Kempton Memorial Building where the Thinker worked. At the door to the building, his body and badge were oscillographed and the results compared to a file of cross-presses from original records. Inside, he spoke a series of passwords into a series of armed microphones.

Although, as head of a department, he was entitled to restricted entry into the Kempton Memorial Building, he went there no more frequently than necessary. There was a special section of the building devoted to God-knew-what, and eyes of atomic guns waited ready to vapourize any unauthorized personnel who tried to enter it.

He found the Thinker on the fourth floor, alone in a cubby-hole, surrounded by heaps of magazines and other trivia.

The Thinker sat with his broad and graceful hands intermeshed, his head canted to the left. Wayne hated to wake him up.

“Larry?”

“Eh? Eh? Oh. 'Lo, Wayne, buddy-buddy.” The Thinker bent forward and said in a startlingly deep voice: “What can I do for you, buddy-buddy?”

“Do you play chess, Larry?”

“A little.”

Wayne handed the message form across a pile of Journals of Chinese Agriculture. “Is this thing okay?”

The Thinker scratched his left eyebrow, reading. “Well . . . It calls for White mating in two. This W-M: 2, here at the end. But it looks to me like White can mate in one: either Queen to Bishop six or Queen to Queen four. Which makes it a lousy problem: you're supposed to have only one possible answer.”

“Would most chess players be able to figure that out, Larry?”

"If they'd played more than three games."

"It's not something to puzzle an expert, then?"

"Checker expert, maybe. Possibly throw a Canasta man. But chess player, no."

"Thanks, Larry . . . I may be calling on you again."

"Any time, buddy-buddy."

Wayne went back to his office. He closed his eyes and blanked out the noise of busy machines.

So far, he had followed through a routine check. It was what his job called for. It wasn't routine any more. Not if the Thinker was right. For an expert wouldn't take one *more* move to mate than a neophyte. Unless, of course, the problem was not to find the simple solution. Damn it, he thought, I wish I knew more about chess. If Dr. Weston is a V.I.P., and he obviously is, it would be a fine kettle of fish to delay transmission of a message he's interested in on such skimpy evidence.

He punched for Shirley. "Send this out," he said, giving her the message form. "No, wait. Make this—here. Let me have it again." He took it back and drew a line through the W-M:2 and wrote above it, W-M: 1.

If it was a code key, they'd have fun with it now.

And then he tried to put it out of his mind, but it continued to annoy him.

Half an hour later he spoke to Shirley again. "Was that Lamb thing sent?"

"I don't know. I'll see."

"Don't file the form when it is. I want it back."

A few minutes later, Shirley came in. "Here 'tis. It's been processed."

"Thanks, Shirley."

He took it. It was getting a bit dog-eared. In sudden decision, he sight-beamed Santa Fe.

While he was waiting for his party, he tried to imagine why one Mr. Lamb didn't protest the reject on the cable—why, instead, one Dr. Weston, V.I.P., did.

"Hi, Pete, glad to see you again," he said into the image screen when he got his man.

Pete's twinkle-eyed face bobbed greeting. "It's been—oh, hell, I guess three months, eh? You look sunburned."

"Just a tan."

"You want something?"

Wayne looked at the message form again. "Here's the job. There's a man called Lamb in a town called Lincoln; ever hear of the town?"

"They once had an outlaw named Billy the Kid in jail there. It keeps the town on the map."

"Could one of your boys check on this Lamb? I hate like hell to ask you, Pete, but it's not the sort of thing I'd want to stick my neck out on by taking it through all sorts of channels."

"I'm kinda shorthanded."

"See what you can do, though, will you? I'd appreciate it. It's to clear my conscience, in a way."

"Husband?"

"No. Fortunately, no. Chess expert, I think."

"Chess expert, did you say?" Pete said. "Well, I'll see what I can do. In case I get it, how you want it?"

"Nonstop, diplomatic, sealed tube. To my apartment. Can do?"

"Right, Wayne. Hope to be up your way in a bit. See you then. I've got to click off. There's a tongue-flowered orchid growers' association or something clamouring at my door."

"Thanks, Pete. See you."

He turned once more to the accreting business on the desk.

Before he was finished with it, the quitting time chime sounded softly. He decided not to work late. He put a pile of messages into Operations pneumatic tube, another pile into Filing, and the remainder sat accusingly in the centre of his desk.

He went to the roof, entered a low-level airbus and paid his fare to the library.

Once there, his youth and good looks brought a great deal of fussing and running around from a woman whose youth and good looks had existed, if ever, far in the past. He presently found himself in a viewing-reading cubicle with a pile of books and a box of microfilm.

He put a chess game in the viewer, but he could make no sense out of the players' slow, deliberate moves. He looked over the books and selected an old one by a man named Capablanca.

He tried to tell himself that he'd been intending to learn to play chess for years.

He checked out the book and decided to walk home. Night had fallen, and a stroll in the park, which would take him to within a few hundred yards of his apartment house, would take the desk fatigue out of his body.

He liked the park; the rustling leaves, the lush night odours, the muted sounds of civilization—these were both restful and stimulating.

The path was pale from the far-off reflections of commercial light. Shrubs and plants to either side of the path were clumps of formless black.

The man who stopped him said: "Got a light?"

"Yeah, just a second."

When Wayne brought out his cigarette lighter, the man studied his face closely in the soft glare. The man's pupils were abnormally expanded, and Wayne frowned, trying to connect that with some significant fact.

"Whatcha got there?"

"A book on chess," Wayne said before he realized it was none of the man's business.

"Your name's Chambers, maybe?"

"Hey! What is this!"

"It's a little late to holler copper," said the man, hitting him in the mouth.

He went down. And two shadow figures joined his assailant. The three of them proceeded to kick and stomp his body. Lances of pain shot through injured muscles.

He tried to roll away, and they kicked him scientifically. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, for one of them giggled. Wayne lashed out with his feet, hit empty air. A foot caught him in the chest, and he concentrated on breathing, which was suddenly difficult.

One of the men obligingly kicked him between the eyes, and he forgot about trying to breathe.

Sensibly, he screamed, and the sound was rewarded by hurrying footsteps.

Each of the three assailants took a parting shot and left.

Someone was standing over him asking foolish questions.

He said: "Go away. I'm sick."

The voice said: "I'll go for a doctor."

Footsteps went away.

Wayne shook his head and got to his knees. He ran exploring hands over himself, but aside from being a solid mass of pain, aside from a broken rib or two, there seemed to be no vital damage.

He licked puffy lips and tasted salty blood.

Automatically he checked his personal possessions. He hadn't been robbed. He got to his feet groaning.

And he realized the Capablanca was gone.

He swore softly and viciously. Not because of the loss, though the book being old, would probably cost many times the amount of cash he had in his wallet; but at the idiocy of giving a man a brutal beating just in order to steal his book.

He shook his head to rid it of any annoying muzziness.

Then he remembered the first man's eyes. Large pupils. The fact finally clicked: Dope. That was it.

Some of the boys out for a night of innocent merriment. They had probably taken the book on a mad impulse. The motive for the beating, then, was merely exuberance: they had been feeling their oats. If someone hadn't come along, doubtless, they would have stomped him to death. But being none too brave under drugs, they had fled.

He was hurt and sore; he didn't want to think; all he wanted was a relaxing bath and medication for his wounds. He limped along the path to the street, along the street to his apartment. It hurt to breathe.

Inside the apartment, he studied his face in the mirror. It was lumpy and swollen and streaked with blood. Both eyes were black. He stripped and examined his body and found blackened bruised areas from his toes to his shoulders.

He soaked in hot water for an hour, and much of the ache drained out of his muscles. Infra-red baking relieved him still more, and after applying ointments, he felt pretty good. Except that it still hurt to breathe, and his mirror still said he looked like he'd gone three rounds with a pile driver.

He got into a robe and house boots. What he needed was a drink. He went to his liquor cabinet and was appalled at the inroads the last party had made on it. All he had left was about eight ounces of gin and two of vermouth. But that was just right for a big dry martini. So he stirred them together.

The first glass relaxed him.

And he started to get angry. What the hell kind of a police department let innocent citizens get beat up in a public park? He reached across to flip on the commercial screen and lodge a complaint.

Then it occurred to him that the boys in the park had known his name.

He stopped his hand in mid air.

Someone had hired three dope-happy thugs to kill him.

It was an unpleasant thought, and he poured himself another drink. They had been waiting not for just anyone, but for Wayne Chambers.

Then he did call the police.

"An attempt was made on my life this evening," he told them. He recounted the details, and they informed him to sit tight. A man would be right over.

Wayne did not go to work the next day.

The police had provided him with a bodyguard (no department head in the Censorship Bureau was going to be killed if they could help it) and their surgeon, who had looked him over and bandaged his chest tightly with yards of gauze, recommended a day in bed.

The next day, Wednesday, when he went to work, his chest still ached, and he felt acutely embarrassed because a plain-clothes man tagged behind him through the noisy office.

As yet he had not thought of any reason for the attempt on his life; and like the police, he was curious, but unlike the police, a little frightened.

He was scarcely settled at his desk when Shirley came in with an armload of work, and for the next two hours he lost himself in it.

Then Fred called, and Wayne knew that he was concerned.

A few minutes later, in Fred's office, Wayne found out why.

Wayne was no longer head of the Department of Cables, Western Division, Bureau of Censorship.

The order had come through only a few minutes before. From the main Eastern office. And there was nothing Fred could do about it but send back a strongly worded protest.

The reason, ostensibly, was a matter of very little importance that had occurred several months previously. But Wayne knew, and Fred knew, that it was only an excuse. If they had wanted his job over that, they would have had it long ago. It was because of something more recent; pressure from somewhere, conceivably from some irate V.I.P. V.I.P.'s were one of the occupational hazards.

Fred brought out a bottle from the desk, and sitting in his office, the two of them got slightly crooked and maudlin. "Damned filthy shame," Fred said every so often, and Wayne echoed the words. Until they knew, suddenly, that nothing more could be said, so they shook hands and Wayne went back and cleaned out his desk and bid Shirley a drunken and overly lighthearted good-bye. He noticed his bodyguard was already gone; doubtless the man had phoned his office when he heard the news, and they had decided, presumably, that the life of an ex-department head was of little consequence.

Outside, he stood on a pedestrian island and unconsciously read signs on the glidewalk. He picked one advertising sea foods and stepped onto it.

Afterward, he went home.

He slept for three hours, and when he awoke he sat on the bed with his head in his hands and asked himself: What does a man do without a job, without any prospect of a job, but with a hang-over and a growing sense of outrage?

"I have been most foully handled," he said aloud. And shook his head savagely. His mouth was dehydrated.

He got up and stretched and was still stiff and sore. He drank two glasses of water from the tap. He decided on a drink of something stronger, but the cabinet was empty. It was too much trouble to go out for a bottle. He didn't feel up to it.

He noticed that while he slept, or perhaps sometime in the morning, a sealed tube had fallen into the box from his pneumatic. He walked across, picked it up, tore it open.

It was from Santa Fe. From Pete. Information on Lamb, and he started to throw it in the incinerator because it was no longer any of his business. But, out of curiosity, he glanced at it first.

"Wayne, you sunburned so and so: Got a man down to Lincoln after all. This Lamb's been there a couple of years. Couldn't find out where he came from, before. No wife, no girl friends, no vices—excuse the redundancy—teetotaller. Plays chess like you said. Must have his money buried somewhere, because he's got it and it's not in the bank and he doesn't work. That's the size of it. Hope it helps. Give Shirley the best. Pete."

Wayne frowned. There was something to think about here, if he only felt like thinking. He went to his clothes hamper and brought out the bloody suit. The message form from Lamb was still there. He put it on the dresser and went about the business of fixing supper.

As pleasant odours came from the stove, he tried to get his thoughts in order. A fast cup of coffee helped.

It seemed obvious that someone didn't like the way he had run his department. Because of something he'd done recently.

So they hired three snowbirds to knock him off. That would be the easy and obvious way to get him out of the department. Failing in the attempt, they had exerted themselves a bit more and got his job. There were a thousand ways they could have done that. Influence to bear on any of a hundred officials . . . Fred's protest would be taken up, and eventually a hearing would be held, and he would find out the charges against him. But hell, Wayne thought, they can make a case against anyone who has to make as many decisions as I made. The real reason need never come out.

When supper was on the table he was good and mad.

He was beginning to suspect a chess problem could proliferate problems; one of them, at least, a highly personal one, involving, among other things, room, board, upkeep, and self-respect.

He didn't like to be had. He didn't like people trying to kill him. He didn't like being fired.

After he ate, he consulted the various directories in his apartment. He ran down the lists of Westons. He found one, Aloysius D., with a doctor's degree of sorts: veterinarian. But it didn't sound like his man.

He screened Fred at his home. Fred, when he answered, was somewhat red-eyed.

Fred had information on Weston. Laurence L. A big cheese. Executive v.p. of this; recording secretary of that; politically active. Fred put it this way: "Big enough to get your job, yes. And mine to boot." Wayne copied down Dr. Weston's home address, thanked Fred, and signed off.

Then he sat thinking. If Weston was a big shot: why was he playing for peanuts—and it would be peanuts if this was a conventional ring engaged in bootlegging information to the Southern Democracies. What was Weston's pitch? What did he expect to get out of it? Why should he be interested enough to get Wayne fired?

And what, in the first place, was wrong with the chess problem that would make someone try to kill him because he held up transmission of it and then tried to investigate?

He reached over and flicked the screen on once more. This time he called a friend of his in the Cryptoanalysis Department, the Black Chamber.

"George: I've got one for you."

"Shoot."

He explained the chess problem and, getting Lamb's message form, read off the text. "Can you look into it?"

"Read it again. I'll copy it down."

Having done that, George signed off, and fifteen minutes later he called back.

"It's a legitimate problem, Wayne. Perhaps the order of

pieces on the board represents a code: it's possible, but I don't have nearly enough characters to tell. If it is a code, it's probably a reference code of some sort, judging from its length. It would probably be a hell of a job to crack it. I can take it down and have some of the boys try, if you'll get me an authorization."

Wayne smiled wanly. "Noooo. I just wanted an opinion . . . I couldn't very well get an authorization. I don't work there any more. I stepped on one too many sets of toes."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Wayne."

"I was, too. It makes a man mad to be discriminated against for conscientiousness. I'll see you, George. Thanks."

More fact: it might be a code. If so, a good one. Since he had been reasonably certain it was, he was glad but not surprised to have his view substantiated. That was that. He wasn't interested in cracking it. The fact that it might be a code was the important thing. Now the problem was to find out who the people were behind it. And for whom they were working.

He screened Shirley. When she saw his face, she said: "I feel like hell about you being fired. What rotten luck. It's rough breaking in a new boss, and Johnson's got the department now, and you know how he is." Her eyes were serious, and her fingernails, coral-tipped, brushed at a sun-jewelled earring.

"Shirley, would you do something for me?"

"You know I would, Wayne."

"Listen, kid. Can you find out if there's been any more of those chess problems?"

"There was one yesterday. I remember, because you were home, and Johnson took it in to FA. FA said send it out, I think."

"Would you find out whom it was from and whom it was for? The same thing if any more come through?"

"Sure, Wayne."

"And would you send a request to the Eastern branch for information on chess problems they've transmitted? And then, just so I can be sure that the one I saw wasn't a freak,

will you take whatever texts you can find over to the Thinker—no, you'll have to phone them to him; you can't get in Kempton—and have him check the move requirements?"

"All right. And Wayne. For old time's sake, we might go dancing Saturday. It might be fun."

"That's a good idea, Shirley. But you'll phone me before?"

"As soon as I get anything. I'm going to miss you at work."

"Thanks, kid. Thanks a lot."

Before the next morning was halfway into the Heretofore, Wayne was a bundle of nervous energy. He paced the apartment restlessly, tried to read, tried watching commercial television. But he couldn't concentrate. Enforced idleness was terrifyingly different than vacation, and he missed the job acutely.

Two years ago he would have said he didn't give a damn about the job; if he held it, all right; if he lost it, all right. Three years ago he would have laughed ironically and said: "I work thirty hours a week paring the heart out of civilization." And four years ago he would have called a worker in Censorship an intellectual prostitute: a man of easily purchased principles.

But somehow in the last four years he had changed. It was a shift in viewpoint, and he realized, wryly, that some of his college friends would say he had sold out in return for a good job. But that would be superficial. The job had changed him, of course, but it had been change, not compromise.

Probably it was due in large measure to the fact that he now understood the men behind both internal and external Censorship. Honest men, doing only what seemed to them necessary. Our wheat production statistics would inflame the Asian masses to insane jealousy; accordingly, they must not know. The location of our underground steel factories, if known, would be pinpointed on foreign maps as high priority targets—for the if and when. And internally, people cannot incite citizens to sabotage and treason.

True, Censorship drove people farther apart, formed false

boundaries, made false hates. It grew from fear, it spawned fear. And from fear, antithought. If you start burning false ideas to save yourself from fear of them, you won't know when to stop until the human mind is ashes. There are better ways. Censorship chokes and throttles and defeats its purpose. But the solution is not to remove the symptom but to cure the disease.

There was an answer, somewhere, of how to get at the causes: selfishness, greed, suspicion, fear, intolerance. People did not have to be set one upon the other. There was no law to that effect. They could work together. And if they didn't, they would manage to eliminate the race entirely—not today, perhaps not tomorrow, but pretty soon. Because the doom was not immediate, it was easy to accept solutions that weren't solutions, solutions that brought nearer and nearer the day when it would be too late for solutions.

When the disease was cured, when the cause was removed, the symptom, the effect, would vanish. Until then, Censorship. Once the cure was effected, there would be no need for it, and it would vanish quite away.

Wayne looked at the reproduction of *Descent from the Cross* hanging above the artificial fireplace; he grinned weakly.

For a moment, his mind had engaged a problem; but now a statement had been given, and he was restless again.

He tried to work at the problem of the chess code again. But his thoughts were bleak. And he wondered suddenly why he should care at all. Was it worth the trouble? What difference did it make? The world was going to hell in a wheelbarrow, so why worry? Did it make any difference if W-M:2 meant the latitude of North America's atom bomb cache?

He decided it did; partly, it was an emotional choice, but partly, too, it was a decision between alternatives. The fact that he was alive made him a player; and as long as he was going to play, he had to choose sides. One side was always a little better. One side offered a little hope. And, too, it would help to postpone the inevitable. That was the whole point.

Put it off as long as possible, don't give the other side the final balance of power. Wait till tomorrow.

Damn, he thought.

He fixed a tasteless meal and ate it.

"I'll go off my nut sitting around here," he thought.

A little after one o'clock Shirley screened him.

After a bit of office chatter, she got around to the point. The chess problem day before yesterday had been from one William Langley to someone in Buenos Aires. And this morning Lamb had received a chess problem from Eurasia. The Thinker had pronounced the requirement on one problem two moves long; he thought the requirement on the other was one move short, but he'd have to think about it some more before he could be sure.

Wayne thanked her and blanked out the screen.

He began to feel excitement inside of him.

Two hours later Shirley screened him again.

Three problems had been sent from the East. From one man, Bert Weatherton. One to the West Europe bloc; two to the African bloc. And the Thinker would almost bet the requirement on the problem to Lamb was one move short.

Wayne thought about the information, and then he screened the library. A little cajolery got the librarian to check for him. Bert Weatherton was listed somewhere in a new edition of something as a chess expert. He had come upon the scene suddenly, for there were no previous listings on him. William Langley was in the same category. And Lamb had come to Lincoln only two years ago, Wayne remembered, according to Pete's letter.

There was a common pattern, and part of it, at least, made sense. Newly-arrived men smuggling information into foreign blocs. But there was, as yet, no indication of which one bloc was employing them; or why they should report, apparently, among themselves instead of to a central agency in the guilty bloc. If Eurasia were behind it, why was Lamb in correspondence with the Southern Democracies: or vice versa?

And of more immediate interest, what was Dr. Weston's connection with the operations? He didn't seem to fit.

Wayne got Dr. Weston's address. An interview was in order. But halfway to the door he stopped. He had discounted any more attempts on his life, since his firing would be assumed to terminate automatically his investigation into the chess code. But when he persisted, perhaps they would take another crack at him. For a moment he wanted to screen Fred and toss the whole mess in his lap; except he realized, almost instantly, that that course would jeopardize Fred's job and perhaps his life as well. And it was too soon to call in the police.

Wayne gritted his teeth. It was his baby.

Dr. Weston lived in the suburbs and had a butler. The butler was short and squat and red-faced and pleasant enough.

He said: "I'll announce you, sir, if you'll just come in."

The butler saw him seated in the living room off the hall, or it might have been a waiting room, especially installed for callers to cool their heels in. If that were its function, it was a cut above dentists' offices; there were no ancient issues of periodicals in evidence.

Wayne lit a cigarette and settled down.

A few minutes later the butler came back.

"If you'll tell me your business, sir?"

So Wayne said: "It's about Lamb's chess problem. Just tell him that."

"Very well. Won't you fix yourself a drink, sir? There's the material in that cabinet."

Wayne was surprised. He had not imagined Dr. Weston to be either a likeable or hospitable man. He looked around the room again. It was richly furnished, and Wayne realized that Dr. Weston probably had few callers. Not because he forbade them at the door; it would be unnecessary to. The imposing front, the vast sweep of lawn, would discourage anyone who did not have a valid reason. Petitioners would phone for appointments and be turned down then and there.

He walked to the liquor cabinet and wet three fingers. It was excellent bourbon.

The butler returned. "Dr. Weston wonders if you'd mind

waiting for a few minutes? Unless you're pressed for time, of course, in which event he will put aside his business and see you immediately."

"I'll wait," Wayne said. Again his idea of the man was changing.

And fifteen minutes later Dr. Weston came into the living room, or whatever it was, and extended his hand sociably.

"Oh, yes! I remember you, now. Bill said it was about a chess problem, but I didn't place the name until I saw the face. You're from Censorship, of course."

Wayne took the hand.

"Now what can I do for you, Mr.—ah—ah—oh, yes, Chambers, of course, Mr. Chambers?"

"I came about the chess problem from Lamb."

"Well, let's sit down and you can tell me all about it."

Wayne felt his face getting red. He sat down. "I'm afraid I wasn't too polite at our first meeting."

Dr. Weston smiled. "Yes, that's so. But I'm afraid I wasn't either, so that leaves us even. Perhaps you'll forgive me? Several days of little grievances building up, and then this Lamb matter, and I was rather out of patience. I was thinking about stupid bureaucracy and unnecessary censorship . . . But then, after it was all over, I realized my anger was uncalled for. After all, you had a job to do. You did it. You really deserve my apologies . . . Actually, you know, our interchange of chess problems won't start officially until next month. I'm rather glad Mr. Lamb was premature, for none of us had thought to notify Censorship. That situation has been corrected. I expect you'll get a regulation covering our group in a few days."

Wayne bent forward. If Dr. Weston were putting on an act, it was a beautiful one, indeed. Somehow he felt the man was sincere.

"I was discharged, or did you know?"

Dr. Weston seemed taken aback. "Discharged? No, I didn't know that, of course not, no. Surely it wasn't over that chess problem? Do you think I would . . . ? Please don't think I had anything to do with it, Mr. Chambers. I assure

you. I protested your refusal to transmit the problem. Mr. Lamb had asked me to. He seemed very concerned, and since I was interested in any step to further internationalism, naturally, I complied. But it went no further."

"Dr. Weston, will you look at this chess problem?" He handed the form across to him.

After a moment the doctor said, puzzled: "There's nothing wrong with it."

"Isn't it one move long on the solution?"

"Yes, but someone's changed that. The White-Mate: Two has been corrected to White-Mate: One."

"I changed it myself. Lamb wrote the White-Mate: Two."

Dr. Weston scratched his pallid cheek. "Yes . . . ?" He shrugged. "Well, a typographical error, undoubtedly." He paused a moment. "But come to think of it, this is an oddly easy problem to send to a chess expert, don't you think? No, you don't play chess, I remember."

Wayne knew, now, that the Doctor wasn't trying to conceal anything. He had been an innocent instrument through which Lamb had worked.

"But, of course," Dr. Weston was saying, "there's probably a simple explanation of all this. I'll tell you what. Why don't I screen Mr. Lamb right now? I'm sure he can clear it up, and you'll see the chess problem has nothing to do . . ."

Wayne checked a sharp protest. Most certainly he did not want the doctor to call Lamb. Not now, not since the doctor had proved himself to be no source of direct information.

"... With you being fired," Dr. Weston concluded.

"No, don't bother about calling him," Wayne said.

"Well, surely, if you have any suspicion, it's based on more than this?"

Wayne hesitated. "The day you came to Fred's—Mr. Samson's—office—that night, rather, I was followed from work and savagely beaten."

"Shameful! Shameful! The police . . .?"

"They couldn't do much after it was all over. Well, two

days later, yesterday, I was fired. On orders from the East. It would take a man of some influence to get that done."

"You flatter me," Dr. Weston said, catching the implication easily. "But I've assured you, I'm not the sort at all."

"I know that, now," Wayne said, "after talking to you. But that still leaves Lamb." He was in a difficult position. He wanted more information. To get it, he would have to substantiate his charge against Lamb more fully, and, at the same time, not mention the fact that all the other chess problems transmitted bore incorrect requirements for solution. Because if he told Dr. Weston that, he was afraid the doctor would call Lamb immediately for an explanation. "One thing more," he said. "I was beaten just after I'd checked a book on chess out of the library, and the book was stolen."

Dr. Weston's eyes narrowed. "I hardly see a connection. If these men were following you, how would they know you were going to check out a book just so they could steal it? I don't see the logic. It would seem to show the two incidents couldn't be connected."

That was the very point that had annoyed Wayne until he realized that the thugs had been hopped up and that probably one of them had taken the book just for the hell of it. Dr. Weston was no idiot. It would be necessary to tell him about the other messages, unless he would give information without requiring proof. "I'm afraid I never thought of that," he said.

"Young man, I don't think you're being logical enough to be able to play chess; perhaps it's just as well you never learned."

Wayne smiled thinly. "Perhaps you're right, doctor . . . I wonder, though, would you object to telling me a little something about Lamb? Just to satisfy my curiosity?"

For a moment the doctor seemed ready to refuse. Then he said: "No. I have no objection. He's a chess friend. He seems harmless to me. He *is* a lamb. Bleats at a harsh word. Quite timid. That's why it's so absurd, you suspecting him of costing you your job. I'm afraid I can't help you much. I

scarcely know him, aside from what I told you. But he's not your man."

Wayne saw the interview wasn't going to produce very much from now on. "Do you think he has enough influence to get me fired?"

"I think you're on the wrong track, Mr. Chambers. About your question. I really couldn't answer. It's not inconceivable, of course."

Wayne stood up. "I'm sorry to have intruded like this. You've been most considerate. I appreciate it."

"Come again," Dr. Weston said. "Come on a social call, won't you, when you're settled?" It was the thing Wayne had expected. The polite formula. Beneath the words, Wayne knew that he had succeeded in making Dr. Weston angry a second time.

"Well, thank you, doctor."

Outside he breathed a tired sigh. Dr. Weston was explained. And there was only one man left whose location he knew. Lamb. He was glad Dr. Weston hadn't insisted on a call to him. If Lamb had tried to kill Wayne once, Wayne didn't want Lamb alert and perhaps ready to try again.

Wayne wanted to surprise him.

Sunlight flashed clean and bright on the windows of the stratojet. Wayne watched the lazy world unroll below.

He was glad, now, that he had not called in the police before talking to Dr. Weston. It would have proved embarrassing. And probably the investigation would have ended there.

Now, racing toward Lamb, he felt confident. Dr. Weston had been a question mark. Lamb was almost a certainty. He was heartened by the doctor's description of the man. Wayne would be more than a match for him physically, if it should come to that. And since Lamb wasn't expecting him, there would be no danger from hired killers. It was safe to go it alone.

He got off at Santa Fe. He decided not to look up Pete until he was on his way back.

He hired an aircab, and it took more money than he could afford. But he wasn't worried about money. He'd have his job again, when the interview with Lamb proved successful.

As in the case of Dr. Weston, he wasn't sure yet what he was going to say. It would depend on the circumstances. Wait and see, and play by ear.

Once more he reviewed the case in his mind. A group of men. All sending secret information in the form of chess problems. All men of unknown antecedents, probably no more than two or three years in the country. Practically a classic case.

There was only one point he did not understand: why they corresponded, apparently, with all blocs instead of just the one they were working for. It didn't quite fit. For all the movements, countermovements, underground movements, international movements, that he had ever heard of, none lacked a sponsor. Each was under the tutelage of its bloc. The Southern Democracies—let's see, theirs was called Unity In Peace; the Dictator was the president of it. And so it went. The supernational angle he didn't get. But he would find out shortly.

The air in Lincoln was hot and dry. Wayne hired a ground car to take him to the address on the message form.

It was a small house. With a small yard. There was a half-hearted flower garden to the left of the walk.

Wayne knocked twice, and then Lamb came to the door. He was, indeed, a mouse of a man, with wrinkled, dry, and artificial-looking skin.

"May I come in?"

"I—I—ah—ah . . ."

Wayne practically forced his way into the front room.

"Your name's Lamb?" he said.

Lamb nodded his skinny neck.

Wayne had an insane desire to say: "Too late to holler copper," but instead he said: "My name is Wayne Chambers. I'm from the Western Division of the Censorship Bureau."

There was sudden fear in the little man's eyes, and Wayne

acted on instinct, pressing his initial advantage. He tried to make his voice sound tough and brutal.

"I know all about you," he said. "The game's over."

The little man's eyes darted wildly about the room, and then his hand dipped to the pocket of his jacket. His lips twisted into a snarl.

The hand came out of the pocket.

Wayne was terrified, and he stepped forward, throwing all of his weight into the punch. It landed loud and solidly, and the object in Lamb's hand skittered across the room. Wayne saw it out of the corner of his eye.

It was not a gun.

It looked more like a door knob. Certainly no weapon.

Lamb crumpled.

Wayne was shaking. The man hadn't, as Wayne had thought, tried to draw a gun. It may have been merely a nervous, surprised movement.

Wayne heard the breath hiss out of his lungs.

He was wrong. He had frightened an innocent man. And then assaulted him. His former certainty vanished. He saw all kinds of logical explanations for the chess problems.

Suppose Lamb was dead?

He imagined, in a sickening flash, the sort of testimony Dr. Weston would give at the trial. He recalled the force of the blow and tried to wish it back.

Wayne cursed himself blindly for an idiot. His smug conviction of a few minutes ago had evaporated. He was desperately frightened.

He bent to Lamb. Felt for his heart. The chest was all a flutter.

One heart was in good working order.

Two hearts were in good working order.

Three hearts were in good working order.

Four hearts were in good working order.

Wayne looked at the dry skin and thought of the numerous hearts. A man with that many hearts might be very old. Possibly two hundred years old. Possibly five hundred years old. It wasn't a question of simple addition. Each heart

needed to work only every fourth beat, except in times of stress, and a heart would probably last ten or twenty times as long that way.

This one, Wayne knew, wasn't human.

The conquest of a planet is, seemingly, a hardy undertaking. Territory must be scouted in advance. Plans laid carefully for several years. And even then, the logistic problems alone are immense. But if the planet is sufficiently disunited to offer very little resistance indeed, then the game is probably worth the candle.

But once the Earth was alive to the menace, the aliens wanted no part of it.

The statesmen took a great deal of credit for the speedy unification of the planet. It is altogether fitting and proper that they should do this. For they solved a great many problems almost over night. As soon as they realized the problems couldn't be postponed.

As usual, however, some people pointed out that the salvation was in consequence of past sins. They remarked that if there had been no censorship, Wayne Chambers would never have discovered the aliens in the first place. For they could have transmitted information among themselves with impunity.

But others pointed out that if it hadn't been for censorship, and the things it was a sign of, we would have met the aliens halfway—somewhere on the other side of Cassiopeia, say.

