

# Story of an Accusation



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# Foreword

Following the death of Boris Schapiro in 2002, Master Point Press decided to publish a revised edition of *The Great Bridge Scandal*, which presents the case against Reese and Schapiro. To balance the scales of justice we offer this new edition of Reese's own account, with some important additional material.

*Story of an Accusation* was written as the 'trial' progressed. Early chapters describe the intense rivalries in competitive bridge, events at Buenos Aires and reaction in London. The proceedings at the inquiry contain some extraordinary twists and turns, not previously made public. Was it all just an American 'scare'? What induced the British officials to testify against their countrymen? Exactly where did the truth lie? These are some of the fascinating questions which you will seek to answer for yourself.

# Acknowledgements

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# Preface

This is a personal story, not a legal document. It has been written from the standpoint of innocence, because Boris Schapiro and I were innocent. But I have not set out to prove a case or to play down the evidence that was given against us. Whatever the verdict of the Inquiry, no reader will mistake the force with which the case was presented.

I say 'whatever the verdict', because one quality this book must necessarily possess is suspense. I began to write it soon after the Inquiry started, and from then on the narrative has kept pace with the 'trial'. This preface was written long before its close.

Non-players will see that the technical evidence, apart from a few hands that are an integral part of the story, is reserved for an Appendix. There I assume that the reader has some knowledge of the tournament game.

No doubt the British Bridge League, which arranged for the Inquiry, will express the thanks of all players to the members of the court who served such an unexpectedly long stint. As for Boris and myself, how could we ever have imagined that we would receive such wonderful support from Mr Tim Holland and the directors of Crockford's., or that we would be defended by so fine an advocate as Mr Leonard Caplan, QC? Even so, we could not have carried on throughout this long year without the encouragement and goodwill of our expert witnesses and of a host of friends, both known and unknown.

My secretary, Marjorie Hiron, made a number of good suggestions for the book and surprisingly injected a certain amount of 'acid'; as though it were needed.

Terence Reese



*Reese and Schapiro playing in the open room against Belladonna and Avarelli of Italy. Swimer is in the 'captain's chair' on Reese's right.*



*Reese about to lead against Avarelli and Belladonna. Butler (wearing glasses) is behind Avarelli. Dimmie Fleming is taking notes for BRIDGE Magazine, but Kempson decided not to publish any deals.*



# Obiter Dicta

(L.f. *obiter* by the way + *dictum* a thing said)

It is an unfortunate fact that the most frequent way in which bridge reaches the headlines of the daily press is through scandalous behaviour of one sort or another.

Of all such cases, one stands head and shoulders above the rest, the accusations made against Terence Reese & Boris Schapiro at the 1965 World Bridge Championships.

*Story of an Accusation* is Reese's account of events before, during and after the event.

\* \* \*

Writing in the May 1965 issue of BRIDGE MAGAZINE, Ewart Kempson reported as follows:

Our World Championship team of Mr M J Flint, Mr M Harrison-Gray, Mr Kenneth Konstam, Mr T Reese, Mr A Rose and Mr B Schapiro will have no difficulty in finishing second and may well win the world title in Buenos Aires this month. The South American team is likely to finish at the foot once again, but have a fair chance of entrusting the wooden spoon to North America. Italy will naturally start favourites, but my money goes on the British team. If they can all be induced to play CAB or Acol, my book would make them five to four on.'

I don't know if Kempson was taking a sly dig at the Little Major, but there were no dramatic system changes and Great Britain was heading for second place when the 1965 Championships became a cause célèbre that has intrigued the bridge world ever since.

One month later Kempson's Editorial ran as follows:

Heartiest congratulations to Italy on her seventh successive victory in the World Championship, a magnificent achievement which is unlikely ever to be equalled.

The Italians had already won the title when incidents – which have been reported on radio and in newspapers throughout the world – led to an unhappy ending to the 1965 championship in Buenos Aires.

The two British players accused of cheating returned to England under this horrible, black cloud ... and alone. All the other players who took part in the championship went on to Rio de Janeiro for a holiday tournament.

I cannot believe that Mr Reese and Mr Schapiro were guilty of using private finger signals in Buenos Aires, and I hope an appeal will be lodged and that they will be exonerated.

Mrs A L Fleming's daily reports from Buenos Aires were to have been published in this issue; in the circumstances I shall not publish anything on the 1965 World Championship. The sooner this contest is abandoned, the better it will be for the game.

Fortunately, the World Championships were not abandoned, and it was soon announced that a formal enquiry would be held into the accusations.

Meanwhile, *The Bridge World*, in its July 1965 issue, went into print.

\* \* \*

## The scandal in Buenos Aires

ITALY'S seventh successive victory in the World Championships at Buenos Aires – a triumph of no little magnitude – was overshadowed, hence to some degree spoiled, by the unprecedented, shocking 'cheating' charges against Britain's Reese and Schapiro. Not since the Culbertson-Lenz match of the early 1930s did news media throughout the world give such extraordinary coverage to contract bridge, and it was sad indeed that the reason for this splurge was what it was.

On my return from Argentina in New York I found a folder crammed with requests – often demands – from readers for a complete airing of the charges and evidence against the British pair. Evidently, the world's bridge-playing community gave priority to the shocking news rather than to the Italian performance – however magnificent and unblemished that performance was.

So, bowing to demands, I will defer my own technical coverage of the matches in order to present all the details of the scandal.

### Chronology of events

The first encounter between Great Britain and the United States took place on Monday, May 17. Almost immediately, B Jay Becker of the US noticed something that surprised and disturbed him: Reese and Schapiro, his opponents in that session, were holding their cards in strange and ever-changing ways. It was the changes that were so arresting – and, later, so significant. Almost all bridge players, and especially experts, are creatures of habit. If they hold a hand of 13 cards in a certain way, that is the way they hold all hands. They do not project two fingers around one hand and three or four fingers around another.

Vaguely suspicious, but by no means convinced, that 'something was going on', Becker simply observed the changing finger patterns during the rest of the session. Conviction grew, and when the session was over he confided his suspicions to partner Dorothy Hayden (and to her alone), under a pledge of absolute secrecy. It was one thing to harbour suspicions and quite a different thing to broadcast them – and Becker is a cautious man, not one to 'run off at the mouth'.

On Tuesday, May 18, Becker and Mrs Hayden, who had time off in the US match against Argentina, sat in the pit and watched Reese and Schapiro play against an Italian pair. There was nothing unusual in such a visit; members of one team frequently watched – 'cased' – the performance of pairs, especially outstanding pairs, they would come up against later.

After this period of observation Dorothy Hayden was in full agreement with Becker that something was going on between Reese and Schapiro.

The matter had now entered an extremely serious phase – but a phase that was equally delicate and difficult. Suspicion, even conviction, about a 'code' was not enough; proof had to be adduced. And the only way to gather proof was by deciphering the code, assuming that it existed. Becker and Mrs Hayden had no idea what the changing finger-patterns might mean.

After secret discussion they decided to enlist another observer who would then also become an adviser. They chose their close mutual friend Alan Truscott for this twin role, exacting a pledge of secrecy from him too. Aside from friendship and trustworthiness, Truscott, bridge editor of *The New York Times*, was a sound choice because until recently he had been a British citizen, and, further, Secretary of the British Bridge League. Truscott, shocked and incredulous, nevertheless agreed to become a bridge detective. He watched Reese and Schapiro in their next session. Yes, he confided to Becker and Mrs Hayden, he was convinced that something very bad was in progress.

Thus reinforced, Becker and Mrs Hayden saw that continuance of secrecy and discretion could amount to treason. They went to their team captain, John Gerber, and gave him their findings.

On Friday afternoon, May 21, Gerber, Truscott, Becker and Mrs Hayden, the latter two having another session off, sat in the pit and watched Reese and Schapiro in a match against Argentina. They also watched switches of British partnerships in the day's other sessions, and thereby collected damning evidence of both a positive and a negative nature. When the suspected partnership was in operation, the strange and ever-changing finger patterns persisted. When Reese played with Flint, and Schapiro with Konstam, there was nothing strange in the manner of card-holding – no changes from board to board. This, all agreed, was of the highest significance. It was perfectly obvious that the other members of the British team (Harrison-Gray, Rose, Konstam and Flint) were beyond reproach.

Still, with all the 'observation' in the world, positive and negative, there could be no proof of cheating by Schapiro and Reese unless their code – now an established fact in the minds of the four observers – could be broken. At that point a blank wall was still standing.

A note is necessary here. It will be asked: 'Why, since Britain was over 100 IMPs ahead of Argentina, would any British partnership risk the use of a code of signals?'

It must be borne in mind that rules had been laid down by the World Bridge Federation to apply to a possible three-way tie. In that event the team with the lowest quotient would be dropped, and the other two teams would engage in a play-off. It had become clear that Argentina would be beaten all around, but the margins of victory could be vital.

After the last session on Friday, or, to be more exact, at about three o'clock Saturday morning, Becker, Mrs Hayden and Truscott, carrying hand records of Friday's British-Argentina boards, held a bull session in a restaurant. Each had an individual list of the number of fingers exposed by Reese or Schapiro throughout a session. What was or could be the references of fingers to card-holdings?

On examination of the records, no correlation could be found as to the distribution of the hands nor to high cards or point-count. These were dead ends. The inquiry was getting nowhere.

Then came the break, the light. A memory gnawed at Dorothy Hayden's consciousness. In a deal she had played earlier – in the session when she had been alerted by Becker – she recalled the odd sight of one finger of Reese's hand across his cards, and she recalled also that he had turned up with the singleton ace of hearts. She racked her brain further. Yes, there had been another one-finger display, and that time too the hand had contained a singleton heart. Could that possibly be the code?

Electrified, the trio applied their 'lists of fingers' to the specific heart holdings of each hand. On board so-and-so Schapiro had shown three fingers. How many hearts did the record show? Three. On board such-and-such, Reese had exposed four fingers. How many hearts had he held? Four. And so forth and so on right down the line of boards.\* Coincidence became a practical impossibility; the precise correlation became proof to within all but an unimaginable degree of error.

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\*A 'complication' will have struck all readers: how could six, seven or even eight hearts be indicated? Simple. At times fingers were held in touching positions; at other times they were spread apart. Thus, two, three or four touching fingers meant two, three or four hearts; for a greater number of hearts add the digit three to the number of spread fingers, so that two became five, three became six, and so on. Suits of nine or more cards could reasonably be expected to take care of themselves.

Before noon on Saturday, Gerber was informed that the code had been broken. He did some independent cross-checking and hand analysis, and action could no longer be delayed: the World Championship was nearing its conclusion.

Gerber could do little on his own. He conferred privately with Robin MacNab, President of the American Contract Bridge League, and with Waldemar von Zedtwitz, both members of the Executive Committee of the World Bridge Federation, under the auspices of which the championships was being conducted. The evidence supplied by Truscott, Becker and Mrs Hayden and by Gerber's own notes was meticulously sifted, not only as to the correlation of fingers to hearts but by analysis of unusual bidding or defensive play on certain boards.

It was decided that the British captain, Ralph Swimer, had to be informed. His sense of shock was indescribable, pitiable. He was also incredulous – at first. But he listened, and he looked at the evidence, and he then called in Sir Geoffrey Butler, President of the British Bridge League, a member of the WBF's Executive Committee, and Chairman of its Appeals Committee.

Before I go further, I must pay due homage to the conduct of these British gentlemen, Swimer and Butler. Shocked, dismayed, perhaps even feeling besmirched, they carried on with dignity and honour. They offered to become observers themselves. And did so later that day. First they watched Reese and Schapiro with other partners. There were no irregularities, none whatsoever. Then in a following session Swimer deliberately put Reese and Schapiro back together. Swimer and Butler took their own notes, later did their own cross-checking of fingers to hearts. Von Zedtwitz acted as an independent observer.

Butler called a meeting of his Appeals Committee and invited Swimer, Gerber and Truscott to be present. The evidence was again gone over and discussed at length. Reese and Schapiro were sent for, informed of the charges and the evidence, and were given the chance to speak for themselves. Both denied the accusations – but not, according to all accounts, with vehemence. Schapiro said almost nothing; Reese spoke generally of the impossibility of 'proving innocence'.

Now a meeting of the Executive Committee of the WBF was called. President Charles J Solomon, Honorary President General Alfred M Gruenther, Robin MacNab, Waldemar von Zedtwitz (all of the United States), Carlo O Perroux of Italy, Johannes Hammerich of Venezuela, and Alfredo M Lahougio of Argentina were present at this meeting, which lasted for many hours on Sunday. Either at this meeting or at the earlier meeting of the Appeals Committee British captain Swimer expressed himself as '110 percent sure' of Reese and Schapiro's guilt. I cannot give a direct quotation as to Butler's views, but he was widely quoted in American newspapers and news magazines as having said that the case was 'well documented'.

Swimer announced that he was conceding (his word, I believe, though 'forfeiting' would seem to have been more appropriate) all of his team's matches. Britain had already lost by a huge score to Italy, had beaten Argentina decisively, and was leading in the match against the United States.

### A wrap-up

My subtitle, wrap-up, is not apt to be definitive – this case, I imagine, will not be wrapped up for a long, long time.

However, at the moment there are other facets that I believe will interest readers.

One of the points that has, I imagine, perplexed the bridge-playing public is the special importance of the heart suit in a code of signalling. Life, in its extraordinary spread on this scandal, observed (not too knowledgeably): 'There is nothing special about the heart suit; exact knowledge about any of the four suits would be equally invaluable to an expert. This, of course, is not quite true. Granting the high value of knowledge concerning any suit, the fact remains that knowledge concerning hearts lends extra advantage. This, of course, stems from the fact that it is normally, usually most expensive to 'lose' the major suit, which can so easily occur if weakish hearts must be shown or indicated in the face of an opposing bid. There is considerably less danger in losing a minor suit.

Suppose, for example, that East bids One Spade and South holds:

♠ x x  
♥ A Q x x  
♦ A x x  
♣ K x x x

Suppose further that the vulnerability is unfavourable for South. A double of the One Spade is obviously fraught with risk, but on the other hand a pass can be equally costly. Irrespective of the high cards that may or may not be present in North's hand, a double by South patently becomes very much safer if he knows just one thing: that his partner has five cards or even four in the heart suit himself. Complete safety is of course out of the question, but far smaller 'edges' than this can be of inestimable value in any card game.

On defence, knowledge of partner's length in any suit conveys an advantage that is equally obvious. As a hypothetical case, take this bidding:

West	North	East	South
–	–	–	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Suppose West holds this sort of hand:

♠ A 2  
♥ A 8 5 3  
♦ Q 6 4  
♣ Q 7 3 2

Normally West has a highly unenviable guess as to the opening lead. Most experts would, I imagine, choose a low club, possibly a low diamond. However, if West knows that his partner has a doubleton heart, the underlead of West's ace stands out like a beacon. There is no chance of running up against a singleton king in South or North – the other adversary would have to hold an unbid six cards in the suit. Thus the chance of being able to give East a heart ruff would be excellent, and myriad other 'situations' would stem from such knowledge.

The question will naturally – very naturally – be asked. What formal disposition was made of this case by the World Bridge Federation?

The answer is short and simple. No disposition. It was merely announced that the record would be turned over to the British Bridge League for its deliberations – in my view, a fantastic decision.

\* \* \*

The same July 1965 issue of *The Bridge World* also contained the following article:

## The case against Reese and Schapiro

*THE Bridge World* presents, without prejudice, some of the hands being considered by the British Bridge League as collateral, not principal, evidence in conjunction with the charges against Reese and Schapiro.

*The Bridge World* makes no specific representations or comments concerning these hands – all judgements are left to the reader. We offer only one generality: a single deal, or two or three, can never be conclusive. The crucial question is whether or not there is a 'pattern'.

### Great Britain vs United States

#### *Deal 30. Love All; Dealer East*

East passes, South bids One Club and West holds:

♠ 10 9 5 3  
♥ K J 10 8 6  
♦ 9 4  
♣ 6 5

Reese bid 1NT, which was explained as a two-way bid introduced by the English expert Nico Gardener. In this style One No-trump can be either a natural, strong, balanced hand, or a weak hand which offers some distributional salvation when doubled.

The complete deal was:

♠	A K 8 6 4		♠	Q J 7
♥	9		♥	Q 7 4 2
♦	K Q J 10 2		♦	7 6 3
♣	J 8		♣	K 10 4
♠	10 9 5 3	N W E S	♠	2
♥	K J 10 8 6		♥	A 5 3
♦	9 4		♦	A 8 5
♣	6 5		♣	A Q 9 7 3 2

The full auction was:

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
<i>Reese</i>	<i>Becker</i>	<i>Schapiro</i>	<i>Hayden</i>
–	–	Pass	1♣
1NT	Double	Pass	Pass
2♦	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	5♣
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

In the other room the British North/South bid Six Diamonds and made Seven. In this room South made Six Clubs.

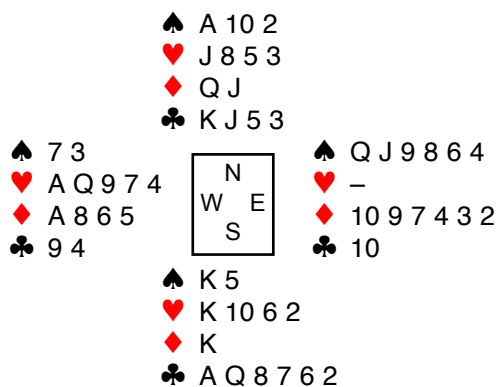
**Deal 50. North/South Game; Dealer East**

East opened Three Spades. South held:

♠	K 5
♥	K 10 6 2
♦	K
♣	A Q 8 7 6 2

Reese, South, doubled, and Schapiro bid Four Hearts. The entire deal was:





West doubled Four Hearts and beat it one trick.

The contract and result were the same in the other room after a slightly different auction. Erdos, South, passed Three Spades, and bid Four Hearts when his partner made a balancing double.

### Great Britain vs Italy

*Deal 25. East/West Game; Dealer North*

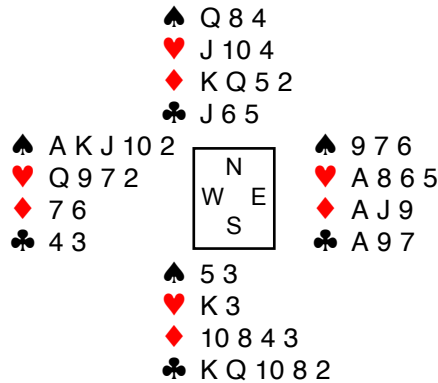
North passed and the bidding by East/West went:

<b>West</b>	<b>East</b>
	1♣
1♠	1NT
2NT	

What should East bid now with:

♠ 9 7 6
♥ A 8 6 5
♦ A J 9
♣ A 9 7

Schapiro, East, bid Three Hearts, and the complete deal was:



Three Hearts was raised to Four Hearts, and the contract failed after a club lead. Declarer won the opening lead and attacked trumps. When South won the second round of trumps he cashed a club trick and shifted to a diamond, after which the defence was sure to make one trick in each suit.

The Italians reached Four Hearts from the other side of the table after the following Little Roman Club auction:

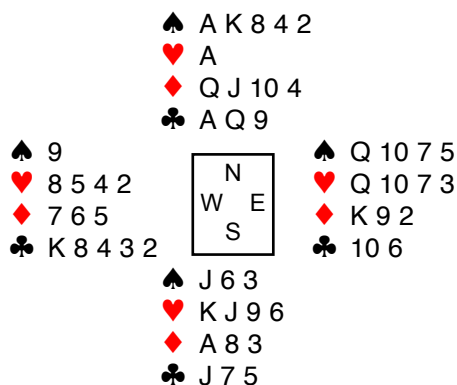
West	East
–	1♣
1♥	2♥
2♠	2NT
3♥	4♣
4♥	Pass

South had doubled Four Clubs, but North led the diamond king, and Pabis-Ticci, sitting East, established the diamond jack for a club discard from dummy and made his contract. 12 IMPs to Italy.

East/West were vulnerable and did not bid. North opened with One Spade in third seat and South responded 1NT. What should North bid, holding:



Schapiro's bid was 3NT. The complete deal was:



West led a club and eleven tricks were made. The Italian North/South got to Six Spades, down one against a heart lead. (Six Spades could have been made had declarer known the location of a few cards.)

**Deal 54. East/West Game; Dealer East**

The Neapolitan bidding went:

North	South
<i>Forquet</i>	<i>Garozzo</i>
–	1♣
1♥	1NT
2♣	2♦
3NT	Pass

The One Heart response showed at least 6 points and not more than one ace or two kings in top cards. The no-trump rebid showed 18–20 points and Two Clubs was Stayman.

With no natural suit bid, West had a wide choice of leads from:



Reese led the heart six and the complete deal was:

	♠ J 10 8 6	
	♥ A 3 2	
	♦ Q 9 5 2	
	♣ J 2	
♠ A 9 7 5	N W   E S	♠ Q 3
♥ 10 8 6		♥ K Q 9 7 4
♦ 8 7 3		♦ J 10 6
♣ Q 9 8		♣ 10 6 5
	♠ K 4 2	
	♥ J 5	
	♦ A K 4	
	♣ A K 7 4 3	

Garozzo, declarer, ducked hearts twice, and won the third round with dummy's ace. He ran the spade jack, which was permitted to hold. Next he made the unusual play of running the club jack, judging that the hearts were on his right and that East must be kept out of the lead. West won the queen of clubs and returned a club. South made nine tricks when both minor suits broke.

When the British played in 3NT, Avarelli, West, led the spade five, and declarer had no difficulty in making the contract with an overtrick via the normal lead of a low club toward the J-2 in dummy.

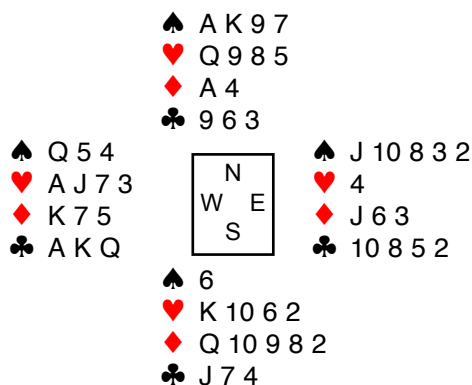
#### ***Deal 127. North/South Game***

The bidding proceeded:

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
<i>Reese</i>	<i>Forquet</i>	<i>Schapiro</i>	<i>Garozzo</i>
—	—	—	Pass
1♣	Double	1♥	2♦
2NT	Pass	3♣	All Pass

Three Clubs was down one, and Italy gained 5 IMPs when the Italian East/West bid and made Two Spades.

The complete deal was:



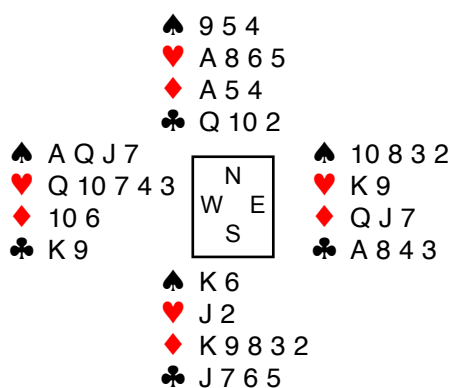
### Great Britain vs Argentina

*Deal 30. Love All; Dealer East*

West opens One Spade in third position, is raised to Three Spades and continues to Four Spades. North has to lead from:



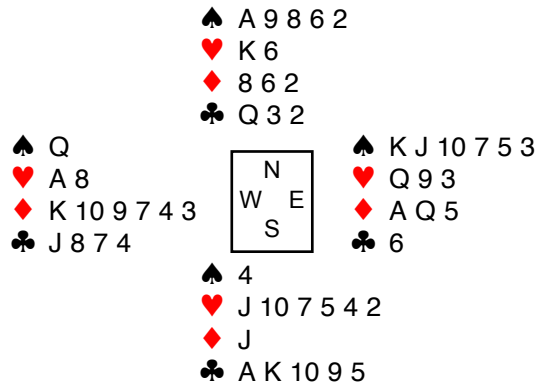
Schapiro led the heart five, and the complete deal was:



West took the jack with the queen and returned a heart. North put up the ace and played a third heart. Dummy's spade deuce was overruffed by the six, and South put North in with a diamond for a fourth heart lead. South got another overruff, followed by the diamond king, for down two.

The British bidding was the same, but the Argentine North led a trump. Ten tricks were made and Britain gained 11 IMPs.

**Deal 68. Love All; Dealer West**



The bidding went as follows in one room:

West	North	East	South
	<i>Reese</i>		<i>Schapiro</i>
Pass	Pass	1♠	2♥
3♦	3♥	3♠	4♣
Double	4♥	Double	All Pass

The spade opening lead was won with the ace and a low trump was led from dummy. East played low and the ten forced the ace. A diamond was returned to the ace, and East led the spade king. South ruffed with the heart jack and led to the heart king. He entered his hand with a club and ran the club nine successfully, thus making the doubled contract for a score of 790 points.

The British West was permitted to play in Three Diamonds and made eleven tricks after the lead of the heart king. Britain gained 14 IMPs on the board.

\* \* \*

THE appearance of these articles was like a red rag to a bull to Kempson, and this was part of his Editorial of September 1965:

Most of the world's magazines have followed the example set in *BRIDGE Magazine* – the oldest of them all – of delaying comment on the Buenos Aires affair until a verdict is reached and announced.

That, I would have thought, was the only fair thing to do, for the World Bridge Federation went into the case and then came out of it by a side door, perhaps rightly, without making an announcement.

*The Bridge World*, alone as far as I know among the bridge magazines of the world, saw fit to publish in its July issue two articles on the affair. The first, entitled *The Scandal in Buenos Aires*, was written By Mr A Moyses, Jr, the Editor.

Referring to the passing of the alleged incidents to Mr Swimer, the British captain, and to Mr Butler, the chairman of the BBL, Mr Moyses had this to say: 'Before I go further I must pay due homage to the conduct of these British gentlemen, Swimer and Butler. Shocked, dismayed, perhaps even feeling besmirched, they carried on with dignity and honour.'

We make a soft woollen cloth in Yorkshire. It is known as flannel.

The second article, presented by *The Bridge World*, was entitled 'The Case Against Reese and Schapiro'.

Although I have no intention of making any comment on the affair until a verdict is announced, I am strongly opposed to presenting a case against anybody without giving him the opportunity to defend himself. I was, therefore, more than willing to publish the article by Mr Reese which appears in this issue. It is his answer to *The Bridge World's* case against him.

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## For or against

ONE of the minor amusements of the 1930s was to read the chauvinistic writings of one C G Grey, editor of the *Aeroplane*. 'I have always held,' he wrote once, 'that in the Spanish conflict we should be strictly neutral, with a natural bias in favour of General Franco.' I sent the cutting to 'This England' in the *New Statesman* and won the weekly prize. The incident came back to me when I read A Moyses, Jr in the *American Bridge World* on the subject of the 'affair'. He headed his piece, frankly enough, 'The Case against Reese and Schapiro', but went on to say: 'The *Bridge World* presents, without prejudice, some of the hands being considered by the British Bridge League as collateral, not principal, evidence in connection with the charges against Reese and Schapiro.'