

Soviet Chess 1917-1991

Andrew Soltis

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Soviet Chess 1917–1991

ALSO BY ANDY SOLTIS

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(McFarland, 1993)

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Preface

Like any chess player who began taking the game seriously before 1991, I was intrigued by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It was a distant, mysterious and very closed world which somehow had discovered methods of thinking about chess that seemed to exist nowhere else.

After becoming an international grandmaster — and one who occasionally met Soviet players over the board — I wanted to know more about my opponents. And as someone who began reading Russian chess magazines as a high school student, this was a book I had been meaning to write for 35 years.

Excellent books on Soviet chess have been written before but they were devoted primarily either to the politics or to the chess. I wanted to write a book analyzing the Soviet achievement, with ample games and biographical detail, while recognizing that the chess could never be separated from politics in the USSR. The two were intimately intertwined, like sickle and hammer.

I had to set some limits on what could be a sprawling, impossible narrative. I decided to focus on players who lived and competed in the USSR from 1917 to 1991 — excluding masters from the “Soviet bloc” of Eastern Europe, or of the Baltic states before they were absorbed by Stalin in 1940.

The post-Soviet careers of men such as Alexander Alekhine, Yefim Bogolyubov, Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi are considered when they affected Soviet chess.

I have tried to choose representative games that are little known in the West. Perhaps fewer than half of the games, game fragments and problems in the first 10 chapters have been published outside the Soviet Union.

The notes are mine except where indicated. In some cases I included original notes to indicate the annotator’s thinking at the time of play, such as Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky’s splendid account of his dramatic defeat of José Capablanca at Moscow 1925.

Inevitably I have relied to a great extent on Russian sources, which were particularly good in the period 1985–1995. During the *perestroika* era Soviet magazines such as *Shakhmaty v SSSR* and *64* printed a remarkable amount of valuable, long-suppressed material about the past, even excerpts from Fyodor Bohatyrchuk’s controversial memoirs.

Some aspects of Soviet chess would be impossible to examine without such sources. For example, the Great Terror could not be done justice without Sergei Grodzensky’s articles in *64*.

In the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union some excellent books were published — in particular the chess encyclopedia edited by Anatoly Karpov, the biographies of Alekhine by Alexander Shaburov (1992) and of Vladimir Alatortsev by Isaac and Vladimir Linder (1994) and *Russians Against Fischer* (1994). Sadly, the Soviet chess publishing houses that once turned out editions of

100,000 copies now print only a few thousand.

A tour of the Chess Museum at the Central Chess Club, conducted by Yuri Aver-

bakh, was invaluable. The Cleveland Public Library, Hanon Russell and Jerome Bibuld were generous with help in obtaining photographs.

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Introduction

What Made Soviet Chess?

In a free government the Russian might appear with equal advantages in the military department; intelligent, active, reflecting and endowed with a spirit of calculation; he might succeed in every pursuit. At present he excels only at chess. — “The Critical Review,” June 1792

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics dominated the chess world for decades — men’s, women’s, team, student, and postal competitions. They had, as R.G. Wade observed, the most successful sports machine the world has seen. Yet this was a nation laid waste by civil war and epidemic disease in 1917–1921, weakened by periodic food shortages that lasted into the 1980s, and devastated by the cultural revolution of 1928–1931, the counterrevolution that followed, the Great Terror of the late 1930s and other ideological ordeals. And then came World War II.

The people of the Soviet Union were largely illiterate in 1917; an educated class developed only with great difficulty in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. As late as 1970 only 5.5 percent of the Soviet citizenry had received any education beyond the high school level, and only half beyond the seventh grade.

Yet the Soviets’ accomplishments in chess were immense. They vastly expanded the horizons of chess theory — virtually inventing the King’s Indian Defense and major lines of the Sicilian, for example, and creating a dynamic new style that changed thinking about material, the initiative and middlegame strategy. Yet this happened in a nation whose schools stressed memory and conformity, whose society discouraged en-

terprise and whose economy could not make a decent pair of shoes or tube of toothpaste.

None of the explanations offered by the Soviets or their envious Western contemporaries about how they did it manages to tell more than a fraction of the story. It is true the Soviets created an excellent training program for young players. But this system arose in the *final* years of the USSR. The celebrated Botvinnik School opened in 1963 and closed a year later — and was not on firm footing until 1976. The comparable Petrosian and Smyslov schools began in 1977 and 1978 respectively. The Soviets developed a wonderful network of junior events — but this, again, was a product of the 1970s, a reaction to the traumatic experience of Bobby Fischer. The Soviets did not begin an annual junior championship until 1959, 13 years after the United States began theirs. The Soviet masters were the first government-paid chess professionals. But the monthly stipends, comparable to the salary of a well-paid engineer, were established around 1950, when the Soviet Union was already enjoying its golden age.

Schools, stipends, Pioneer Palaces and junior events were among many factors that made Soviet chess what it was. But perhaps the biggest factor was salesmanship: chess was promoted on an enormous scale and

trumpeted in the press, the movies, and in spectacles such as giant simultaneous exhibitions and living chess displays.

Since tsarist days chess was simply more socially acceptable than in many advanced countries. As a result, Soviet promotion developed a huge talent pool. Asked how the Soviets managed their success, Anatoly Karpov remarked, "It's simply because we have such a lot of people playing chess."

The Soviet chess tradition began at an early age. Andrei Sokolov, who nearly reached a world championship match in the 1980s, learned the moves at six, as did Alexander Chernin, Smbat Lputian, Sergey Smagin and other grandmasters of his generation. Yevgeny Sveshnikov was already a third category player at seven. Yury Balashov learned the moves at four and recalled: "Already then, as much as I can recall, I was certain I would play chess my entire life."

Another major factor was that chess was a safe, relatively well-paid and intellectually rewarding way of life in the USSR. In every society there are people who enjoy thinking. But in many countries, those people flow naturally into careers that essentially did not exist in the Soviet Union, such as business or law. Or they entered careers such as government service, which could be dangerous in the USSR, and in the 1930s even fatal. Or they were barred from access to higher learning in fields because of anti-Semitism or Party policy favoring the children of peasants and workers. Or they found that their academic choice was not ideologically sound. As late as the 1980s a promising player like Jaan Ehvest gave up on his interest in psychology when he learned that Marxism took a dim view of Sigmund Freud.

The Great Terror helped chess in other ways. It enhanced the traditional paranoia of Russians — and this became one of the "special features," as GM Valery Salov put it, that helped chess players excel. "This may sound strange," Salov said in a 1991 *New in Chess* interview, "but probably this habit of

always looking for enemies, this persecution mania, is not so bad when you're playing chess."

This book is an attempt to explain how Soviet chess evolved during the tumultuous decades of 1917 to 1991. Inevitably, I have had to rely to a large extent on Soviet sources. This has its pitfalls. First, Russians have always been among the world's most accomplished liars, particularly about matters relating to the government. "In no other state do political words stand in such contrast to reality as in Russia," Count Mikhail Speransky, a 19th century reformer said. Second, in the Soviet era, providing an inaccurate, flawed or downright wrong impression was elevated to an art form. "Propaganda" was a positive word, and chess, like propaganda, became an instrument of state policy. Even in the final decade of the Soviet Union, "there was no line between chess and politics," Karpov said. "They were one and the same." Finally, there are differing accounts from objective observers of even some basic facts. For example, the fate of Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky.

The death of the old Bolshevik who guided chess in the first postrevolutionary years has been told dozens of times. The memoirs, magazines, encyclopedias — all describe how his life was snuffed out by a Nazi bomb on Lake Ladoga as he tried to flee Leningrad in the early months of World War II. But one extensive Western source, *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, says simply that Ilyin-Genevsky "was arrested by the secret police during the purges and died in prison in 1941."

Some of the facts of what happened during the three quarters of a century of Soviet chess will have to be sorted out in the 21st century. But the achievement of the Soviet players — in the face of extreme hardships and isolation, contending with a government that often seemed filled with fanatics, scoundrels and incompetents — cannot be denied.

1

Up from a Basement

Russia is not a land where revolutions break out. Besides who on earth would make a revolution in Russia? Perhaps Herr Trotsky from the Cafe Central?— Austria's foreign minister in March 1917, joking about Leon Trotsky, who was spending most of his time playing chess at the celebrated Vienna cafe.

In late 1918 Alexander Fyodorovich Ilyin-Genevsky was a 24-year-old Bolshevik officer with a soft voice, sparkling blue eyes and a nervous tick — the result of World War I shellshock that wiped out much of his memory and required him to learn all over again how the chess pieces moved. Ilyin-Genevsky was charming, cultured and a devout revolutionary since he and other chess-playing radicals were expelled from secondary school. He eventually became a master and champion of Geneva, his home in exile. But he returned to Russia, fought in Tsar Nicholas II's army and was still recovering from his wounds — and playing in a tournament at the St. Petersburg Chess Assembly — in February 1917 when the Tsar abdicated. The rosy-cheeked, clean-shaven soldier quickly withdrew to join the frenetic Bolshevik movement that astonished the world by seizing power in November.

After serving as administrator of the pivotal Petrograd military district in the early days of the revolution, Ilyin-Genevsky went to Moscow in December 1918 during the bloody crackdown against anti-Bolsheviks known as the Red Terror. But Ilyin-Genevsky also had a personal priority: to search for evidence that chess was still being played in Moscow, a city that seemed on the verge of collapse. Streetcars no longer worked, elec-

tric power failed daily, and cultural life had nearly been extinguished. (Of 143 pre-revolution movie theaters, none remained.)

But there was at least a trace of the once celebrated Moscow Chess Circle: about a dozen frustrated players met from time to time in G.D. Berman's basement at 23 Prechistensky Boulevard. It was there, in July 1919, on what is now Gogolevsky Boulevard, a block from Arbat Square and a short distance from the Kremlin, that one of the first postrevolutionary chess events of consequence took place: a match between Ilyin-Genevsky and one of the few Russian masters who remained within Soviet borders, Nikolai Grigoriev.

Games were played by candlelight, when Berman's poor quality candles were available. When they were not, the board was moved to a stairway near a large window and "when the light through this window failed we were in a real mess," with the match continuing as a virtual blindfold contest, Ilyin-Genevsky recalled in his memoirs. Berman came to their rescue when he "magnificently sacrificed" a box of matches — "a very valuable thing in those days!" — so that one player would hold a burning match until his opponent moved. This continued until a point in one game when the players realized *both* kings were in check. It was abandoned as a draw.

Grigoriev was a tall, 23-year-old mathematics teacher with jet-black hair, piercing eyes and “thin, soulful facial features like a Romantic French poet,” according to Vasily Panov, who met him as a boy. During the civil war then raging in the countryside and the economic devastation called “war communism,” Grigoriev spent much of his time playing casual games with his close friend Alexander Alekhine. He surprised many spectators by holding his world-class sparring partner even. Grigoriev had a major flaw — time trouble. But since virtually no one had a chess clock in the Moscow of 1919, he was more than Ilyin-Genevsky’s equal and he won their match 5–0, with three draws. Here is how it began:

C68 Ruy Lopez

Match, first game, Moscow, June 1919

white Nikolai Grigoriev,

black Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 Nc3 Bc5

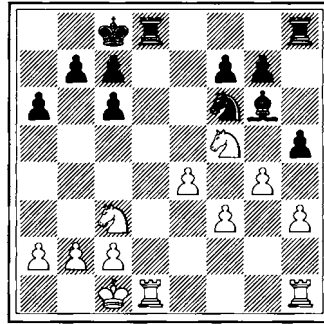
More solid is 5 ... f6 since now White could play 6 Nxe5! favorably, e.g., 6 ... Qd4 7 Nd3 or 6 ... Qg5 7 d4 Qxg2 8 Qf3.

6 d3 Qd6 7 Be3! Bg4 8 h3 Bh5 9 Bxc5 Qxc5 10 g4! Bg6 11 d4 exd4 12 Qxd4

Endgame play was Grigoriev’s strong suit.

12 ... Qxd4 13 Nxd4 Nf6 14 0–0–0 0–0–0 15 f3 h5? 16 Nf5! (see diagram)

Black has three unpleasant choices in dealing with his kingside pawns: he can lose one of them (17 Nxe7), he can permit them to be doubled (Ne7xg6), or he can allow the g-pawn to become a crucial weakness, as the game shows.



After 16 Nf5

16 ... Bxf5 17 gxf5! h4 18 Rhg1 Rdg8 19 Rg2 Nh5 20 Ne2 Rh6 21 Rdg1 Kd7 22 Kd2 g6 23 Ke3 Ke7 24 fxg6 Rhxg6 25 Rxg6 Rxc6 26 Rxc6 fxg6 27 Nf4!

The exchange of his passive rooks for White’s active rooks should have helped Black. But it leads to a lost king-and-pawn endgame — against the player who would become perhaps the finest composer of king-and-pawn endgames of all time.

Grigoriev’s studies, even with only three pawns and two kings on the board, were so elaborate that they baffled masters. He once wrote an article about his compositions entitled “Studies That Can Not Be Solved.”

27 ... Nxf4 28 Kxf4 Kf6 29 Kg4 c5

Rather than go down to 29 ... g5 30 e5+, Black banks on a tactical trick.

30 Kxh4 c4 31 f4 b5 32 Kg4 b4 33 h4 a5 34 c3!

Black threatened to create a winning passed pawn with 34 ... a4 followed by 35 ... b3 36 axb3 c3! 37 bxc3 a3 (and if 35 c3, then 35 ... a3!).

34 ... a4 35 a3! 1–0

The playing conditions in Berman’s basement were aided by the late Moscow sunset and relatively mild summer weather. But in the winter, when no firewood could

be found, the players who gathered in the subfreezing basement sat in heavy outdoor coats and galoshes. When noses, hands and feet started freezing, Ilyin-Genevsky wrote, the players “had to dance the polka-mazurka with their feet under the table in order not to go stiff with cold while thinking about the next move.”

Civil War

Chess in Soviet Russia, like life in general, was in turmoil. White Guards, the anti-Bolshevik troops, controlled much of the countryside, from General Anton Denikin in the south to General Nikolai Yudenich in the northwest. The Czech Legion, an army of former POWs trying to get home by marching *east*, shared much of Siberia with anti-Bolshevik Admiral Alexander Kolchak, who had marched within 400 miles of Moscow by May 1919. A Polish army took advantage of the chaos and invaded the Ukraine in 1920 hoping to establish a new country.

Disease was rampant and food scarce. Panov, who would become one of the finest Russian chess authors, recalled how one day during the hunger of 1918 and 1919 his mother brought home dog meat for dinner: it was selling for one third of the price of horsemeat and the Panov family consumed it “with great pleasure.” As a teacher in an anti-illiteracy program called *likbez*, Panov’s mother was able to bring home a “luxurious honorarium” once a month — several pieces of black bread and herring. The Panovs were among the fortunate: In Nizhny Novgorod, one of the largest Russian cities east of Moscow, future master Pyotr Dubinin found himself, at age 14, having to feed his family after his father died of hunger and exhaustion in 1921.

Other households were broken up by the dislocation of the Civil War. The best player in Nizhny Novgorod, Apollon Viakirev, had been drafted into the tsarist army

at the start of World War I and was not demobilized until 1922, eight years later. Eight-year-old Rashid Nezhmetdinov, born to a Tatar peasant family, was placed in a children’s home during “the year of hunger,” 1921. Vladimir Alatortsev’s father was a Petrograd veterinarian who joined the Red Army after the Revolution and sent his family to the countryside. When a former official in the district militia formed a 50,000-man army of peasants and Red Army deserters in 1919, the area southeast of Moscow was cut off until late 1921, during which Alatortsev’s mother died of typhus.

Altogether, an estimated 14 million perished from disease or from civil war violence.

In Petrograd, the capital that Nicholas II renamed because “St. Petersburg” sounded too German, chess had lost three of its pillars: P.P. Saburov, the son of a legislator and one of the organizers of the great St. Petersburg 1914 tournament, after allowing his home to be a center of anti-Bolshevik activity in 1917, in 1918 made it one of the few places in the city left to play chess. But like so many others, he abandoned his homeland in mid-1918.

His colleague, Julius Sossnitsky, a secondhand book dealer, had saved the Petrograd Chess Society’s library after Red Guards took over their quarters and vandalized the sets (“with practically all the knights missing,” Alekhine said). But Sossnitsky became another victim of typhus, in February 1919. Boris Malyutin, who wrote for the leftwing newspaper of the Constitutional Democrats (*Cadets*) and also helped create an All-Russia Chess Union, died in 1920 in Rostov-on-Don.

Several prominent players, like Grigory Levenfish, had played no chess at all since World War I began. During his student days, the Polish-born Levenfish discovered St. Petersburg’s chess haunts — virtually all of them old, smoky cafes, like the Dominik (founded 1841) and its rival, the Reiter Cafe,

located at the corner of Nevsky Prospekt and Sadovoy.

All these “chess oases,” he later recalled, including the Pechkin coffeehouse at Theater (later Revolution) Square in Moscow and the Warsaw Cafe in Kiev, were “liquidated” by the Great War.

Postrevolutionary Losses

Among the strong players lost by Russia during World War I, the Revolution and its aftermath, were these:

Aron Nimzovich (1886–1935) of Riga, who played in the last All-Russian tournament before the war, settled in Denmark and never played in the Soviet Union.

Ossip Bernstein (1882–1962), a Moscow lawyer and one of the dozen top players in the world, fled with his family to Odessa where they escaped on a British freighter in 1919 and started a new life in Paris.

Akiba Rubinstein (1882–1961), the greatest Polish player ever, Alexander Flamberg (1880–1926), who finished second in the 1912 All-Russian tournament at St. Petersburg, Georg Salwe (1862–1920), who won the Russian Championship in 1905–1906, and Dawid Przepiorka (1880–1940) all lived in Poland after it became independent.

Moizhem Lowtzky (1881–1940) a Kiev master, fled to Poland after the war and died there after the Nazi invasion.

Semyon Alapin (1856–1923), one of the strongest Russian players from 1880 on and one of the most important opening theoreticians of all time, left Russia for Germany, as did Bernhard Gregory (1885–?), one of the strongest Baltic players before World War I.

Yevgeny Znosko-Borovsky (1884–1954) was master strength, had written three well-received books and took third place behind Rubinstein and Alapin in the Fifth All-

Russian Championship. Wounded on the Austrian front in World War I, he emigrated to France after the Revolution.

A.A. Chepurinov (1871–1942) and Kazimierz Makarczyk (1901–1972) played in a first-category Petrograd tournament in 1918. Makarczyk settled in Poland and Chepurinov eventually became champion of Finland in 1929. Ilyin-Genevsky recalled how Chepurinov, “a tall, graceful man,” once came up to a board where two men were playing at the St. Petersburg Chess Academy. “And with hardly a glance at their play he said, ‘Here there is a mate in seven.’ I was simply shattered. ‘There is a real chessplayer for you,’ I thought.”

Iosif Tsukerman (later Cukierman) won the Second Moscow Championship, 1920–1921 and later drew a match with Ilyin-Genevsky, but emigrated to Paris.

Of the 18 players who competed in the All-Russian Tournament of 1913–1914, only six remained in Russia after 1920.

Young Alekhine

By far the strongest player remaining in Russia in 1919 was 26-year-old Alexander Alexandrovich Alekhine, the son of a well-to-do landowner and Duma member and a textile heiress. Young Alekhine had had a series of adventures since being arrested at Mannheim 1914, including making his way back to Russia, being wounded twice and earning three medals as a Red Cross worker.

Alekhine (who pronounced his name Al-yek-in, not the more common Al-yoke-in) was in Moscow during the February 1917 revolution that overthrew the tsar and had played in a few of the first postrevolutionary events. He won a three-man tournament in Moscow in 1918, for example, ahead of Abram Rabinovich and Vladimir Nenarokov, with games like this:

B72 Sicilian Defense**Moscow, 1918****white** Alexander Alekhine,
black Vladimir Nenarokov

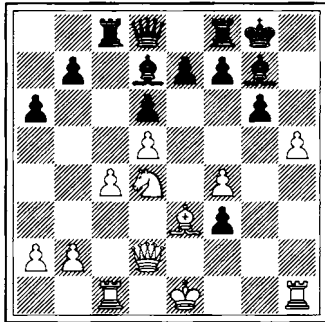
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6
5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be2 Nf6 7 h4 d6 8 Be2 h5
9 f3 Bd7

Black should prepare ...d5 by castling.

10 Qd2 a6? 11 Nd5!

This threatens 12 Nxc6 and 13 Bb6 and triggers a favorable exchange of pieces.

11 ... Nxd5 12 exd5 Ne5 13 c4 Rc8
14 Rcl 0-0 15 g4! hxg4 16 f4! Nf3+
17 Bxf3 gx3 18 h5



After 18 h5

18 ... Bg4 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 Qh2 Qd7

Black should at least try 20 ... Bh5
21 Ne6 Qa5+.

21 Qh7+ Kf7 22 Rh6 Rh8 23 Qxg6+
Kg8 24 Ne6 Bxc6 25 Bd4! 1-0

Alekhine eventually left Moscow's ruined economy in search of income as a chess-player in the Ukraine, although it remained a battleground for Bolshevik and White forces, as well as Polish, Magyar and Czech armies, into 1920. In April 1919, for example, the Red Army reoccupied Odessa and an estimated 1,300 suspected traitors to Marxism

were executed over the next four months. Alekhine nearly became one of them.

Shortly after Commissar of War Leon Trotsky's troops arrived, Alekhine was arrested by agents of the Cheka, the newly created Soviet secret police (which later became the KGB), and interrogated in a three-story building on Ekaterinskaya Square. No documents about the case survive. But biographer Yury Shaburov concluded that Alekhine was charged with anti-Soviet activity, stemming from the all-to-familiar "anonymous accusation" lodged by someone jealous of his chess talent, perhaps an unhappy former opponent. Reuben Fine said Alekhine told him nearly two decades later that the specific charge was passing on secret information.

There have been various accounts of how Alekhine escaped a firing squad. According to one fanciful version he was saved by Trotsky, who, unfortunately for the story, was nowhere near Odessa at the time. The most credible explanation may be Fyodor Bohatyrchuk's. The grandson of a priest and a strong amateur player, Bohatyrchuk recalled how an Odessa master and accomplished problem composer named Yakov Vilner told him he saved Alekhine's life. Vilner learned of the military tribunal's death sentence "literally a few hours before it was to be carried out" and he "quickly sent a telegram" to the chairman of the Ukrainian Council of People's Commissars. Luckily, the chairman had heard of Alekhine and ordered him freed that night, Bohatyrchuk wrote in his memoirs.

Alekhine was not alone in facing death in 1919. Alexander Evenson was a master Alekhine often played and who had finished ahead of him and Emanuel Lasker in a 1914 blitz tournament in St. Petersburg. As a 27-year-old lawyer, Evenson was appointed an investigating judge of a Revolutionary Tribunal, the special court that tried counter-revolutionaries during the Civil War. But when Denikin's anti-Bolshevik forces returned to Kiev, Evenson was arrested and shot.

A third master, Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky, was in the Siberian city of Omsk when he was arrested by White forces under Kolchak. His crime: carrying a photograph showing him apparently seated with P. Voinkov, a Ural revolutionary leader. Duz-Khotimirsky, who lived long enough to play both Mikhail Tchigorin and David Bronstein, liked to recall how he was questioned by a judge from the Czech Legion, which had seized Omsk in June 1918. The judge turned out to be Karel Treybal, a Czech master who recognized the Ukrainian's name and ordered him freed.

While he had enemies, Alekhine also had his protectors among the authorities, the *vlasti*, of the new regime. Shortly after his escape from the firing squad Alekhine was given a government job, with the Odessa Regional Executive Committee. He left Odessa in July, a few weeks before Denikin retook the city. After trying to organize a tournament in Kharkov, where his brother Alexey lived, Alekhine reached Moscow. He considered a new career, taking acting lessons at the First State School of Cinematography, while playing in the first championship of Soviet Moscow. The tournament — held at Berman's house, of course — attracted the best of the depleted ranks of Moscow's players but Alekhine had an easy time. He won all 11 games and finished three points ahead of his nearest rival, Nikolai Grekov.

C41 Philidor's Defense
Moscow Championship, 1919-1920
white Boris Lyubimov,
black Alexander Alekhine

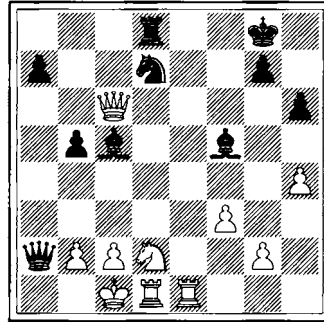
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Nf6 4 dxe5 Nxe4
 5 Bc4 c6 6 exd6 Bxd6 7 Be3 0–0
 8 Nbd2 Nc5

White has good development after 8 ... Nxd2 9 Qxd2 and 10 0–0–0.

9 Ng5! Qe7 10 Qh5 h6 11 h4 Nbd7
 12 Qg6 Nf6 13 0–0–0 b5!

Black has no time to allow 14 Bd4 and Bxf6 or 14 Rdel.

14 Bxc5 Bxc5 15 Bxf7+ Rxf7 16 Rhe1
 Qf8 17 Nxf7 Qxf7 18 Qg3 Bg4 19 f3
 Bf5 20 Qe5 Nd7 21 Qc7 Qxa2 22 Qxc6
 Rd8



After
 22 ... Rd8

23 Nb3 Ba3! 24 Qc3 Bxc2! 25 Kxc2
 Bxb2!

Now 25 Qxb2 Rc8+ or 25 Qc6 Bf6+ lose immediately and 25 Qa5 Rc8+ takes longer.

26 Nc1 Bxc3+ 27 Nxa2 Bxe1 28 Rxe1 a5
 0–1

But a plan to create an Alekhine “Chess Academy” failed, as did so many other business ventures that winter, and after a bout with typhus, Alekhine landed a 4,800-ruble-a-year job as an investigator for *Centrorosysk*, a government agency that located relatives who had disappeared during the Revolution and Civil War.

Vera Zubarev, wife of master Nikolai Zubarev, recalled how in those difficult days Alekhine would drop by their home on Moscow's Granovsky Street now and again; he “always pulled a piece of candy out of his pocket, unwrapped it and drank bitter tea with it. It was an attempt to preserve his mind — the important apparatus for future chess battles,” she said. “A mind without chess is not a mind!”

Vsevobuch

Fortune suddenly smiled on Russian chessplayers in early 1920 when Ilyin-Genevsky was appointed commissar of a military training program officially called the General Reservists' Organization but generally known by its acronym, VSEVOBUCH.

When Nikolai Podvoisky, VSEVOBUCH's head, proposed holding a sports olympiad that autumn, Ilyin-Genevsky suggested that an "All-Russian Chess Olympiad" be held at the same time. After all, he argued, chess can, "even to a greater degree than sports, develop boldness, inventiveness, will power and something that sports cannot develop, strategic ability." Chess would also be a powerful weapon in the *likbez* effort, he argued — and it's also a cheap form of entertainment.

Ilyin-Genevsky, described by Pyotr Romanovsky as "a cheerful person, a great optimist," was the brother of a celebrated officer in the new Soviet navy, who took the Dostoyevskian pseudonym Raskolnikov and had served under Podvoisky on the Military Revolutionary Committee that seized power in October 1917. Armed with this connection and a pristine reputation as a revolutionary, Ilyin-Genevsky managed to convince Podvoisky and VSEVOBUCH's Moscow chief, a strong checker player named Vasily Russo, to authorize several steps. Among them were setting the precedent of government support of chess, with an initial outlay estimated by Alekhine at 100,000 rubles for the Olympiad, and beginning the first Soviet chess column, written by Ilyin-Genevsky, in the VSEVOBUCH newspaper, *To the New Army*. The first issues reported chess news that had occurred since the war but which had not reached Russia yet, such as the Berlin 1918 tournament and the 1918 Akiba Rubinstein-Karl Schlechter match. The columns also included mate-in-three problems contributed by unlikely composers, such as Romanovsky, Grigoriev and even Alekhine.

The VSEVOBUCH also opened the first post-Revolution chess club in what Alekhine called "a splendid six-room apartment" with two balconies on the third floor of the VSEVOBUCH military sports club. It was located on Kamergersky Lane, near Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater — and happened to be one of the few heated buildings in 1920 Moscow. Alekhine helped open it by giving a 38-board simultaneous exhibition on May 23, 1920.

The crowning achievement was organizing the Olympiad — in effect, the first Soviet Chess Championship — in Moscow beginning October 1, 1920, along with an All-Union Chess Congress, or *Syezhd*, to discuss the future of Soviet chess. With virtually no information about the fate of the best players of tsarist Russia, Ilyin-Genevsky had taken on a formidable task, "a sort of military mobilization of chessplayers." The deputy director of VSEVOBUCH sent a telegram to all its regional offices ordering them to publicize the event widely and to notify the chief directorate in Moscow by September 15 of any worthy players in their area.

Personal invitations went to Akiba Rubinstein, Ossip Bernstein, Yefim Bogolyubov and Alexey Selesniev — apparently unaware that all four masters were well beyond Soviet borders by 1920. Other former residents of Moscow and Petrograd had fled the major cities for what was considered the safety of rural Russia and the provinces. Nikolai Potemkin, who held the highest nonmaster title — first category player, perhaps a 2100-plus rating today — left Moscow for Azerbaijan where he would be the strongest player for several years. Abram Rabinovich "was unexpectedly found in Minsk" and Muscovite Dimtri Pavlov turned up in the Gomel region of southeastern Byelorussia.

On the way to work one day Bohatyrchuk, a Kiev doctor, discovered there was a poster on one of the city's major streets announcing that he had been invited to Moscow. He was told to report to the local office

of the Committee of Physical Culture and Sport — later known simply as Goskomsport or Sports Committee — to receive 15,000 rubles in expense money. But Bohatyrchuk was just recovering from typhus and feared that while he was away Kiev would change hands for the *tenth* time of the civil war and he wouldn't be able to return. He stayed home.

Another master, Andrei Smorodsky, a military worker, could not be coaxed from his new home in Tbilisi. Others who failed to make it to the tournament included Boris Verlinsky, Stepan Levitsky, Sergey Freiman, Grekov, Nenarokov and Duz-Khotimirsky. Alekhine has claimed that only 16 of the 30 players who had been invited showed up in Moscow to compete for the three prizes.

Moscow 1920

By arranging vacation time for those who did play and promising that their jobs would still be available when they returned home, Ilyin-Genesky was able despite the no-shows to assemble a reasonably solid field that included Alekhine and Grigoriev of Moscow, Petrograders Levenfish, Romanovsky, Arvid Kubbel, and Ilya Rabinovich, and Abram Rabinovich of Vilnius.

C48 Four Knights Game

All-Russian Olympiad, Moscow, 1920

white Arvid Kubbel,

black Nikolai Grigoriev

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 Bb5 Nd4 5 Nxe5?

Rubinstein's 4 ... Nd4 was fairly new and this capture was not discredited until about 1925. After 5 Ba4 c6 6 0–0 d6 we have Zubarev–Grigoriev, Moscow Championship match 1923, which ended in a colorful perpetual check:

7 Nxd4 exd4 8 Ne2 Nxe4 9 Re1 d5

10 d3 Nc5 11 Nxd4+ Ne6 12 Qh5 g6 13 Rxe6+! Bxe6 14 Qe5 Rg8 15 Nxc6! Qd7 16 Nd4 Qxa4 17 Nxe6 f6 18 Nc7+ Kd7 19 Qxd5+ Kxc7 20 Qxg8 Qxc2 21 Bf4+ Kb6 22 Be3+ Ka6 23 Rcl Qxd3 24 Qe6+ b6 25 g3 f5 26 Rc8? Rxc8 27 Qxc8+ Kb5 28 Qe8+ Ka6.

5 ... Qe7 6 Nf3 Nxb5 7 Nxb5 Qxe4+ 8 Qe2 Qxe2+ 9 Kxe2 Nd5 10 Re1 f6!

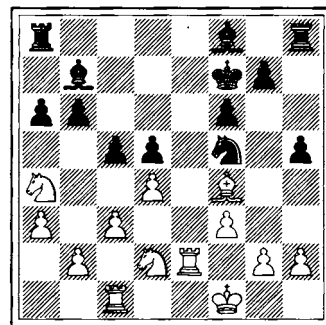
Arvid Kubbel was the oldest and best tournament player of three celebrated Kubbel brothers. Yevgeny, the youngest, liked to compose mate-in-two problems. Leonid, the tall, thickset, blond middle brother became one of the most famous study composers of all time. Arvid, one of the first Soviet masters, had more than 500 of his own problems and studies published.

He had faith in this line, which he used to beat Tselikov in this tournament after 10 ... a6 11 Kf1+ Be7 12 Nbd4 d6 13 c4 Nf6 14 b3 c5? 15 Ne2 0–0 16 Nf4 Re8 17 Bb2 b5 18 Bxf6 and 19 Nd5.

11 d3 Kf7 12 Bd2 a6 13 Nc3 Nb4! 14 Racl b6

Grigoriev's better king placement leaves him with an easily covered weakness at c7 and the advantages of an outpost at e5 and the two bishops.

15 a3 Nc6 16 Bf4 d6 17 Kf1 Ne5 18 Nd2 Bb7 19 Re2 h5 20 d4 Ng6 21 Be3 Nh4 22 f3 d5 23 Bf4 c5!? 24 Na4 Nf5 25 c3?



After 25 c3

Black was better after 25 dxc5 bxc5 or 25 Nxb6 Nxd4 but this is a blunder, cutting off the knight's retreat.

25 ... g5 26 Be3 Bc6 0-1

On 27 Nxb6 Rb8 28 dxc5 Black has 28 ... Nxe3+ 29 Rxe3 Bxc5.

The out-of-towners slept in a VSEVOBUCH dorm, on "hard cots in cold barracks." Still, it was a national championship, with the rare title of *maestro* for the winner. (A second, amateur tournament drew 27 players, who were asked to bring their own sets and clocks, and played in the evenings when the top section was finished.) Alekhine's only serious rival was Levenfish, a 31-year-old master who had made his international debut at Carlsbad 1911. Levenfish, the head of a Petrograd chemical lab, arrived late and out of practice and promptly lost his first two games in winning positions against Romanovsky and Ilya Rabinovich. Nevertheless Levenfish had a chance to turn the tournament into a race in the sixth round:

C40 Queen's Gambit Declined
All-Russian Olympiad, Moscow, 1920
white Alexander Alekhine,
black Grigory Levenfish

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 e6 4 e3 Nc6
 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 Bd3 Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 b3
 cxd4 9 exd4 b6 10 Bb2 Ba6!

A more aggressive strategy directed against White's soon-to-be hanging pawns than 10 ... Nb4 and 11...Bb7.

11 Re1 dxc4 12 bxc4 Rc8 13 Nb5

Later at Pistyay 1922, Alekhine, playing Black, faced Ernst Grünfeld's improvement, 13 Qa4!, based on 13 ... Nxd4? 14 Rad1! with advantage (14 ... Nxf3+ 15 gx3 Bb7 16 Bxh7+). Now Black creates a target on b5.

13 ... Bxb5! 14 cxb5 Nb4 15 Ne5!

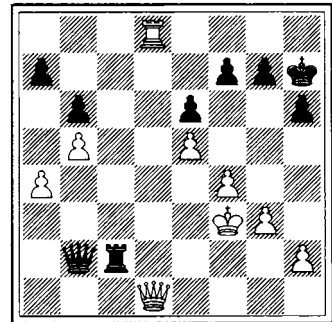
Otherwise Black obtains the edge after 15 Bb1 Qe8 16 Qe2 a6 17 a3 Nbd5 18 bxa6 Qa4!. After 15 Ne5 Black should stand well with 15 ... Bd6!, e.g., 16 Ba3 Bxe5 17 Bxb4 Qxd4 or 17 Rxe5 Nxd3.

15 ... Nd7 16 Re3! Nxd3 17 Rxd3 Nxe5
 18 dxe5 Qe8 19 Qb3 Rd8 20 Rad1 Rxd3
 21 Rxd3 Bc5 22 g3 h6 23 a4 Qa8!
 24 Bd4 Rc8 25 f3 Qb8! 26 f4 Qc7!

The heavy piece endgame is very favorable because of White's weaknesses. But 26 ... Qa8 27 Bxc5 Rxc5 28 Qd1 Qe4 allows White to escape with 29 Qd8+ Kh7 30 Qd3!.

27 Bxc5 Qxc5+ 28 Kg2 Qc1 29 Qd1
 Rc2+ 30 Kf3 Qb2 31 Rd8+ Kh7

After
 31 ... Kh7



32 Kg4 Rxh2?

Black misses a wonderful resource in 32 ... h5+! (33 Kg5 f6+) 33 Kxh5 Rxh2+ 34 Kg4 Qg2 and now 35 Rd7 loses to 35 ... Rh6! and the improvement of 35 Qd3+ g6 36 Rd7 allows 36 ... Kh6! 37 Rxf7 Rh4+! 38 Kxh4 Qh2+ 39 Kg4 Qh5 mate.

33 Qd3+ g6

34 Rd7! Kg7

35 Rxf7+! Draw

Perpetual queen checks follow at d7 and d8.

First Soviet Championship, Moscow, October 4–24, 1920

	A	R	L	R	G	K	R	B	D	I	Z	P	T	M	P	G	<i>Score</i>
1. Alekhine	X	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	12–3
2. Romanovsky	½	X	1	0	½	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	11–4
3. Levenfish	½	0	X	0	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	10–5
4. I. Rabinovich	0	1	1	X	0	0	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	9½–5½
5–7. Grigoriev	0	½	0	1	X	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	8½–6½
5–7. A. Kubbel	0	0	0	1	0	X	0	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	8½–6½
5–7. A. Rabinovich	0	0	½	1	0	1	X	½	½	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	8½–6½
8. Blumenfeld	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	X	½	0	0	1	0	1	½	½	8–7
9–10. Daniuszewski	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	½	X	0	½	½	0	1	½	1	7–8
9–10. Ilyin-Genevsky	½	0	0	½	1	0	0	1	1	X	0	½	1	0	½	1	7–8
11–12. Zubarev	½	0	0	0	1	½	1	1	½	1	X	0	0	0	1	0	6½–8½
11–12. N. Pavlov	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	X	1	½	1	1	6½–8½
13. Tselikov	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	X	0	0	1	5½–9½
14. Mund	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	½	1	X	½	0	4½–10½
15. D. Pavlov	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	1	½	X	½	4–11
16. Golubev	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	0	0	1	½	X	3–12

By this time Ilyin-Genevsky had weathered one crisis: the players, outraged over the tournament conditions, had announced they would go on strike. A chief complaint was the food. Alexander Sergeev recalled them as “scanty Red Army rations.” The first course was usually herring head soup. The second, herring tails. “Where the middle of the herrings went we never succeeded in establishing,” Levenfish wrote in his memoirs. The players threatened in a petition to go home if matters were not improved quickly. Alekhine, whose vote carried the greatest weight, did not sign but made clear he wouldn’t compete “against hungry opponents.” Ilyin-Genevsky convinced the mutineers to finish the tournament after promising to pay the 15,000 rubles expense money, to increase the bread and cheese (“a great delicacy in those days”) rations and provide cigarettes. Levenfish said it still was not enough but “the insufficient calories were compensated by youthful ardor and love of chess.”

Another key game was the following:

B16 Caro-Kann Defense
All-Russian Olympiad, Moscow, 1920
white Pyotr Romanovsky,
black Grigory Levenfish

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 d×e4 4 N×e4 Nf6
 5 N×f6+ g×f6 6 Be3 Bf5 7 Bd3 Bg6
 8 Ne2 Na6 9 B×a6?

White abandons his plan of queenside castling too early: 11 Qd2 or 11 c3, to stop ... Nb4 was better.

9 ... Qa5+ 10 Qd2 Q×a6 11 0–0 e6
 12 Ng3 0–0–0 13 Qc3 h5 14 Rfe1 Qa4!
 15 Re2 h4 16 Nf1 Qb5! 17 Qe1

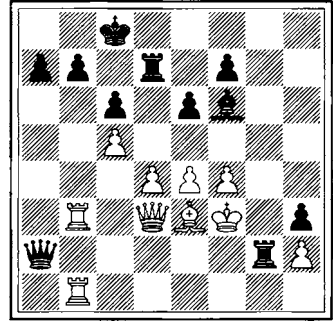
Not 17 Rd2 or 17 Re1 because of 17 ... Bb4.

17 ... h3 18 g3 Bh5 19 Rd2 Q×b2 20 c4
 Qa3 21 c5 Bg6 22 Qe2 Be4 23 f3 Bd5
 24 Rb2 Bg7 25 Rab1 Rd7 26 Nd2! f5!

Black avoids the complications of 26 ... B×a2 27 Ne4 B×b1 28 R×b1 followed by Nd6+. Now White aims for Nc4 by protecting the e3-bishop but this gives Black kingside play.

27 Kf2 f4! 28 g×f4 Bf6 29 Ne4 B×e4
 30 f×e4 Rg8 31 Rb3! Rg2+ 32 Kf3 Qa5
 33 Qd3 Q×a2

After
 33 ... Q×a2



Levenfish claimed a win after 33 ... Qd8! 34 Qa6! Qg8, e.g., 35 Q×c6+ Kd8! (not 35 ... b×c6 36 Rb8+ and mates) or 35 e5 Qg4+ 36 Ke4 Qg6+ 37 Kf3 R×h2 or 37...Q×b1.

While Romanovsky was thinking, Levenfish took a walk about the hall, Alekhine looked at his position “and then, having caught up with me [Levenfish], said, ‘Aha, preparing mate on g2!’”

The threat is 34 ... Rg3+! 35 h×g3 Qg2+ 36 Kg4 Rd8! 37 Bg1 Rg8+ 38 Kh5 Rh8+ 39 Kg4 Rh4 mate.

34 e5 Rg3+??

Black has three wins: 34 ... Rd8, threatening the sacrifice on g3, or with 34 ... R×h2 or even 34 ... Bh4.

“But hypnotized by Alekhine’s words, I approached the board and instantly sacrificed a rook, not even writing down the move!” Levenfish recalled.

35 h×g3 Qg2+ 36 Kg4 Rd8 37 Qh7!

This was the point of 34 e5. Black can win the Q but must allow an invasion of rooks that threaten mate on the b-file.

37 ... Rh8 38 Qxh8+ Bxh8 39 Rxb7
Qe2+ 40 Kh4 Qa6 41 Rb8+ Kc7 42 Bd2
1–0

Alekhine wrote that the players had been promised a first prize of an ivory Chinese set. But the organizers improvised instead with belongings of émigrés confiscated from pawn shops: Alekhine, who placed first by a full point, selected “some bulky vase” apparently impressed by the weight. He and Romanovsky also received certificates made from poor-quality drawing paper, and he seemed most impressed by the “apple cakes made of genuine white flour” that were served at the final ceremony. Paper was scarce and no tournament book was published.

Thanks to Russo, Alekhine had gotten a job as a translator for the Comintern (Communist International) where he met his second wife, Anneliese Ruegg, a Swiss journalist who arrived in Russia during the Moscow tournament. His future was also influenced by a second Cheka investigation. This case was opened against Alekhine on November 20, based on an anonymous telegram from Odessa that alleged he had received 100,000 rubles from Denikin’s agents.

Alekhine was interrogated again, on February 21, 1921, and, in a rarity for those times, managed to convince the Chekists that he was guiltless, according to files unearthed by Shaburov.

A month later, March 15, Alekhine’s marriage to Ruegg was registered. Five weeks after that — while his rival José Raúl Capablanca was celebrating his capture of the world championship from Emanuel Lasker in a match half a world away in Cuba — Alekhine received permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to leave for Latvia. Karl Radek, a high-ranking Comintern official, gave permission, explaining: “Though Alekhine is a counter-revolutionary, in chess he’s a genius. This gift can only be developed beyond the borders of Russia.”

Before he left, Alekhine made a major impression on the first generation of Soviet masters. Panov, who grew up in Kaluga, southwest of Moscow, and moved to the big city as a teenager during World War I, was 14 when his grandfather brought him to the VSEVOBUCH club, then a “large, semidark, unheated room.” Near the window Panov noticed a “tall, thin, blond man in a fur jacket” analyzing the games of the LaBourdonnaise–MacDonnell match. It was his only encounter with Alekhine, who was remarried and abroad by May, never to return to his homeland.

2

Chess to the Workers

Moscow wasn't built immediately.— Russian proverb

Before 1917, as Russia seemed to totter between industrial capitalism, Marxism, liberal democracy and despotism, one fact of chess life remained: the intense rivalry between the two cities that accounted for three-quarters of the nation's strongest players.

In tsarist days the lines were sharply drawn. The Muscovites were led by Alekhine, Ossip Bernstein and lesser masters such as Vladimir Nenarokov, who twice was city champion before the war. They vied for national supremacy with the St. Petersburg players, from Mikhail Tchigorin and Emanuel Schiffers of the 1880s to Grigory Levenfish and Pyotr Romanovsky on the eve of the Revolution. And they competed to see which city would dominate in "Soviet Russia," the nation's new name until 1924. After Moscow held its first postrevolutionary championship in the winter of 1919-1920, Petrograd followed with its own, won by Ilya Rabinovich with a 10-1 score. Rabinovich (born 1891) was a chubby and bald positional player who deeply influenced a young Mikhail Botvinnik in the next decade.

Moscow's selection as the site of the 1920 Olympiad and the opening of the Kamerger-sky Lane club gave it an edge in attracting players. For example, Boris Verlinsky, who had played dozens of games with Alekhine proved to be "one of the most creatively interesting Soviet masters," Panov recalled, and became a worthy rival of Nenarokov and Grigoriev.

The early 1920s were Grigoriev's prime. He finished second, behind Iosif Tsukerman in the 1920-1921 city championship, then won the tournament the next three times, while playing a major administrative role in running Moscow chess. Panov said that despite his large theoretical knowledge, deep positional understanding and "filigree-like handling of the ending," Grigoriev never reached his potential in chess: he lacked both the competitive fire and any semblance of practicality. He once thought 40 minutes on his first move because he could not decide which pawn to advance. Grigoriev was also generous with his time away from the board. Alexander Kotov, 18 years younger, recalled how Moscow juniors could call up Grigoriev at any time of day and ask his help in analyzing an adjourned game. The only price was you might have to examine one of his endgames, Kotov added. Another friend, Yakov Rokhlin, said Grigoriev was ready to sacrifice all for the game "rest, time, health." A typical game of his from this period:

C11 French Defense

Moscow, 1922

white Vladimir Nenarokov,

black Nikolai Grigoriev

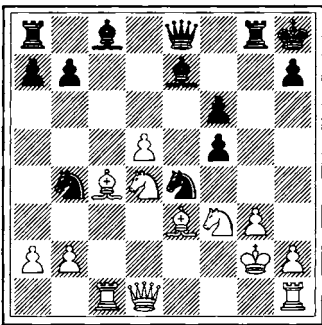
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7
5 f4 c5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 g3 cxd4 8 Ne2!?
Bb4+ 9 Kf2

An original idea: White avoids piece exchanges in order to ensure an outpost for his knight

9 ... Nc5 10 Nexd4 Ne4+ 11 Kg2 0–0
12 c3 Be7 13 Bd3 f5 14 exf6 gxf6 15
Be3 Kh8 16 Rcl

Black threatens to advance his e-pawn while White prepares his own c3–c4 and f4–f5 breaks.

16 ... Qe8 17 c4 Rg8 18 f5 exf5 19 cxd5
Nb4 20 Bc4



After 20 Bc4

20 ... f4! 21 Bxf4 Bh3+

Since 22 Kxh3 Nf2+ costs the Q, White is forced onto a fatal diagonal.

22 Kg1 Bc5 23 Qel Rg4 24 Qe3

The threat was 24 ... Rxf4 25 gx f4 Qg6+.

24 ... Qg6 25 a3 N×g3! 26 h×g3 R×g3+
27 Kf2 B×d4? 28 Q×d4 Rxf3+! 0–1

Premature because of 29 Kxf3 Qg2+ 30 Ke3 Re8+ 31 Be5!.

The Muscovites got their chess information chiefly from Grigoriev, whose influential column in *Izvestia* began on October 29, 1922, and was the first to appear in a major Soviet publication. But the Petrograd players upstaged Moscow with a chess-only publication, the *Listok* (Leaflet) of the

Petrograd Commune Chess Circle. It came about when Romanovsky discovered that the head of the Commune, a certain A. Badev, was a chess fan who could supply the essential paper. The *Listok* began as a one-page summary of chess news — how a Tchigorin chess circle had been formed in Omsk and a tournament with nine players was held in Kursk — with a circulation of about 200. Among the first games to appear in it was this:

C41 Philidor's Defense
Petrograd, 1921
white Pyotr Romanovsky,
black Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nc3 Nbd7
5 Bc4 Be7 6 0–0 0–0 7 Be3 c6 8 Bb3 b5
9 d5

White closes the center to gain a queen-side majority of pawns.

9 ... c5 10 Nxb5 Nxe4 11 Nd2 a6 12 Na3
Nxd2 13 Qxd2 f5 14 f3 Kh8 15 Nc4 a5

This stops Na5–c6 but Black should be thinking about the other wing, such as with 15 ... g5, preparing 16 ... e4 17 fxe4 f4. If White tries 16 g4 Black can continue 16 ... f4 17 Bf2 e4 18 fxe4 Bf6 and ... Ne5.

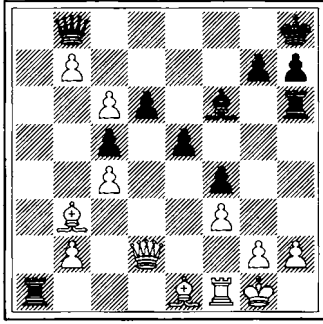
16 a4 f4? 17 Bf2 Rf6 18 Be1 Rh6 19
Nxa5 Qe8 20 Nc6 Bf6 21 c4 Nb6? 22
a5 Bd7 23 axb6!

An easy sacrifice to evaluate. White obtains two connected passed pawns deep in Black territory.

23 ... Rxa1 24 b7 Bxc6 25 dxc6 Qb8
(see diagram)

Black seems to be solidifying with ... Bd8.

After
25 ... Qb8



26 Qa5! Rxa5 27 Bxa5 e4

Or 27 ... Bd8 28 Bxd8 Qxd8 29 Ra1
and 30 Ra8.

28 Ra1 Bd4+ 29 Kf1 Rxb2 30 Bc7! exf3
31 gxf3 Rf2+ 32 Kg1 Rxb2+ 33 Kh1
Rb1+ 34 Rxb1 Qxc7 35 Ba4 1-0

And 35 ... Qb8 36 c7 would be the finish. Only 34 issues of the leaflet appeared, with a peak circulation of about 500, before it was replaced in April 1921 by *Shakhmatny Listok* (Chess Leaflet), the first sports publication in Soviet Russia.

On Vladimir Prospekt

But remnants of tsarist chess, like remnants of prerevolutionary elegance, survived. While the Muscovites had relied on Berman's basement during the harsh years of 1918–1919, what was left of the former Chess Assembly managed to live on in Petrograd at Samuil Vainshtein's apartment. And when the Muscovites were acquiring the VSEVOBUCH club, their northern rivals rented several rooms for a substantial fee on the second floor of the Vladimir Gambling Club on Vladimir Prospekt, near the city's grand promenade, the Nevsky Prospekt.

Yakov Rokhlin, who later became a celebrated trainer and postal master, recalled there were still traces of the building's tsarist glory when he visited it as a 17-year-old on a rainy April day in 1922. He was brought

to the club by Boris Koyalovich, the head of a math department at a leading institute and the last of the Tchigorin era of St. Petersburg amateurs. Professor Koyalovich, former honorary chairman of the Assembly, flashed an Assembly membership card when they were stopped by the gambling club's liveried doorkeeper, and a thrilled Rokhlin spent the evening taking a board in a Levenfish simul. By drawing his game, he earned back his entrance fee for the evening. The Vladimir club soon became the unofficial home for players such as Romanovsky, Levenfish, Ivan Golubev, and Leonid Kubbel.

Further evidence that Russian chess was reviving was the organization of what Grigoriev called the "long-awaited" Moscow–Petrograd match. The first two versions of this battle for national bragging rights were held in 1911 and 1912, won by the northerners, 6–3 and 5½–4½. In August 1922 the Muscovites sent 11 players to Petrograd for the first Soviet edition of the match, establishing a double-round format that continued throughout the history of the USSR.

The Moscow team lost the first round 5–6 but turned the tables with a 9–2 victory in the second round. The Muscovites selected their board order by secret ballot and chose their only master, Duz-Khotimirsky, for board one. "Duz," an orphan who grew up reading Jean Dufresne's primer, was a sharp tactician who first gained attention by winning the Kiev championship in 1900. Kotov recalled him as "a chess fantasist, capable of losing to a beginner, but tomorrow crushing a world champion." He was the hero of the match, winning both games from Levenfish:

C77 Ruy Lopez

Moscow–Petrograd match, 1922

white Grigory Levenfish,

black Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
5 Qe2 Be7 6 c3 d6 7 d3!?

If White plays Qe2 he should try the more ambitious 7 d4.

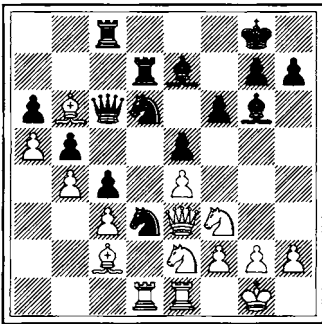
7 ... 0–0 8 0–0 Bd7 9 Re1 Ne8 10 Bb3 Na5 11 Bc2 c5 12 d4 Qc7 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 b3 b5 15 Bb2

After a cautious treatment of the center, White has adopted a plan (dxc5 followed by Nd2–f1–e3 with the idea of Nd5) popularized a decade later by Vsevolod Rauzer.

15 ... f6 16 Nbd2 Rd8 17 Nf1 Be6 18 Ne3 Qc6 19 Rab1 c4 20 b4 Nb7 21 a4 Nc7 22 a5 Nd6 23 Nf1

Losing the thread. With 23 Nh4 g6 (23 ... Nxe4? 24 Nef5!) 24 Ng4 and Bc1 White retains good chances.

23 ... Rd7 24 Rbd1 Rfd8 25 Ng3 Bf7 26 Bc1 Ne6 27 Be3 Bg6 28 Bb6? Nf4 29 Qe3 Rc8 30 Ne2 Nd3!



After
30 ... Nd3

A strong idea which opens up the c-file and c4 particularly for Black's pieces.

31 Bxd3 cxd3 32 Qxd3 Bxe4 33 Qd2 Rb7 34 Qa2+ Nc4 35 Nd2 Bxg2 36 Nxc4 bxc4 37 Bc5 Bd5 38 Bxe7 Rxe7 39 Ng3 Rd7 40 Nf5 Bf3 41 Rd6 Qb7

Of course, 41 ... Rxd6?? 42 Ne7+.

42 Qa4 Bh1! 43 Kf1 Qg2+ 44 Ke2 Qf3+ 45 Kd2

Or 45 Kf1 Bg2+ 46 Kgl Bh3 and wins.

45 ... Rxd6+ 46 Nxd6 Qd3+ 47 Kc1 Qxc3+ 0–1

It was a time of sharp inflation. A postage stamp that cost 45 kopecks in 1920 cost 5,000 two years later. Chess sets, books and especially clocks skyrocketed in price, and in many areas could not be had for any amount. It was considered a minor coup when Moscow players were able to send Lenin a special clock, table, and a set “symbolically reflecting the struggle of labor with capital” in November, 1922, on the fifth anniversary of the Revolution. Lenin was often described as about second category strength — perhaps 1900 according to the Elo rating system — and the table and clock were preserved in the Lenin Museum near Red Square for more than 50 years.

But it had become clear in Soviet Russia that money and material possessions were not nearly so important as power. And there were different kinds of power: Ilyin-Genevsky, who was known among amateurs by the nickname “president,” had authority, the power to make some decisions. But many players, like Alekhine, thought his power came from connections, *sviazi*, such as to his influential brother. Ilyin-Genevsky also knew how to use the traditional quid-pro-quo that the Russians call *blat*. But after Ilyin-Genevsky, who spoke several languages fluently, was given a diplomatic post as Soviet consul in Libau, Latvia, the Muscovites lacked even the *blat* to obtain firewood for their clubs. And with the civil war and threat of foreign invasion over, VSEVOBUCH had been eliminated.

New ideas of opening theory were reaching Moscow, particularly in the Indian systems to meet 1 d4. A spirited example is in the following game.

E61 King's Indian Defense
Moscow, 1923
white Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky,
black Nikolai Grigoriev

1 d4 Nf6 2 e3 d6 3 c4 Nbd7 4 Nc3 e5
 5 Bd3 g6 6 Nge2 Bg7 7 f4 0-0 8 0-0
 Qe7 9 Ng3 Nb6 10 h3 Be6 11 d5 Bc8
 12 f5 e4!

Gaining e5 for his pieces but provoking a promising exchange sacrifice.

13 Ncxe4 Nxe4 14 Nxe4 Bxf5 15 Rxf5!
 gx f5 16 Ng3 Be5 17 Nxf5 Qf6 18 Qh5
 Rfe8 19 Bd2

White can fuel the attack with Rf1 and Bel-h4.

19 ... Kf8! 20 Rf1 Qg6 21 Qh4 Bf6
 22 Qf2 Nd7 23 Bb1 Qh5 24 Nd4

The initiative remains strong (25 Bf5 Ne5 26 Bg4 or 26 Be6 is threatened).

24 ... Ke7 25 Bf5 Ne5 26 Be6 Bg5
 27 g4!?

Making a faulty evaluation. Better was 27 Nf5+ with good winning chances.

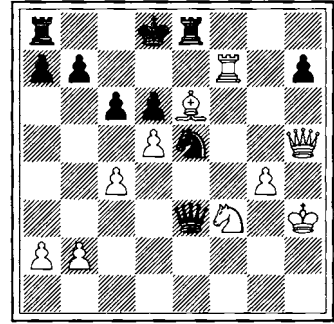
27 ... Qxh3 28 Qxf7+ Kd8!

After 28 ... Rxf7 29 Rxf7+ Kd8 30 Rd7+ Kc8 31 Re7+ White has perpetual check — and that may be the best Black can get.

29 Qh5 Bxe3+ 30 Bxe3 Qxe3+ 31 Kg2 c6

Not 31 ... Qxd4 32 Qg5+ and mates.

32 Rf7! Qd2+ 33 Kh3 Qe3+ 34 Kg2 Qd2+ 35 Kh3 Qe3+ 36 Nf3?



After 36 Nf3

A second misevaluation. Now a perpetual check draw was the best “Duz” could get, but he ends up playing until mate.

36 ... Re7 37 Rf8+ Kc7 38 Rxa8 Qxf3+
 39 Kh2 Qe2+ 40 Kh3 Nf3! 41 Rc8+ Kb6
 42 c5+ Kb5 43 a4+ Kb4 44 g5 Qh2+
 45 Kg4 Ne5+ 46 Kf5 Qxh5 47 cxd6
 Ng6 48 Ke4 Qe2+ 49 Kd4 Nh4 50 dxe7
 Nf3 mate

The most painful blow to the Muscovites came in the spring of 1923 when Ilyin-Genevsky moved again — and took up permanent residence in the home of their northern rivals. At the same time the Petrograders, led by Vainshtein, Levenfish and Golubev, were taking the lead in recreating the All-Russia Chess Union. This was a tsarist-era organization, formed in April, 1914, at the St. Petersburg Chess Assembly, whose official publication only managed to appear twice, five weeks before World War I began and then on February 15, 1917, two weeks before riots convulsed Petrograd. (It was also known as the All-Russia Chess Society, allegedly because the tsar’s internal affairs ministry objected to anything named “union” as being politically dangerous.)

At a meeting in Petrograd in July 1923, the organizers claimed that 32 chess groups around the country, with 1,159 players, were affiliated with the union. The union won official recognition — but not support — when the Ministry of Internal Affairs approved its constitution. And it organized an

All-Russian Tournament that was later recognized as the Second Soviet Championship. This time three of the strongest players who failed to play at Moscow, 1920—Bohatyrchuk, Nenarokov and Duz-Khotimirsky—competed. The quality of play had risen.

B03 Alekhine's Defense
Second Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1923
white Nikolai Grigoriev,
black Yakov Vilner

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 c4 Nb6 4 d4 d6
 5 exd6 exd6 6 Be3

More familiar is 6 Nc3 Nc6 7 Bd3 Be7 8 Be3 0–0 9 Nge2, although 9 ... Nb4 should equalize with ease.

6 ... Be7 7 Bd3 0–0 8 Ne2 N8d7?! 9 a4!

The threat to win the knight (10 a5) gains too much space and should have been met by 9 ... a5.

9 ... Nf6 10 a5 Nbd7 11 Nd2 Re8 12 h3 d5 13 c5 Bf8 14 Qc2 g6 15 b4 Bg7 16 0–0 Nf8 17 b5 Nh5 18 Nf3 Ne6 19 g4!

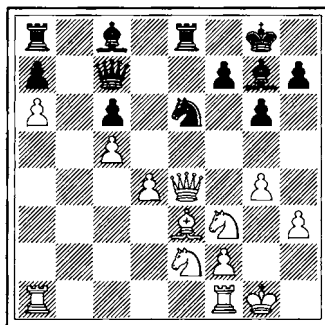
White can take liberties with such an edge in maneuvering space.

19 ... Nf6 20 Nc3 c6 21 a6 Qc7 22 bxc6

Here 22 axb7 and 23 bxc6 seems more natural but White tries to keep Black's minor pieces bottled up—and provokes an unsound sacrifice.

22 ... bxc6 23 Ne2 Ne4? 24 Bxe4 dxe4 25 Qxe4! (see diagram)

25 ... Bxa6 26 Rxa6! Nxd4 27 Qxe8+ Rxe8 28 Nxd4 Bxd4 29 Bxd4 h5 30 g5 Qc8 31 Rxa7 Qxh3 32 Nh2



After
 25 Qxe4

There is no attack or perpetual check and Black must worry about his own king (Rf8 and Ra8 or Rb1–b7xf7).

32 ... h4 33 Rf8 Qd3 34 Ra8 Kf8 35 Bf6 Qb3 36 Ng4 Qe6 37 Rxe8+ Kxe8 38 Ne5 1–0

Romanovsky scored 10–2 and won first prize—four 10-ruble notes. His best game was:

B02 Alekhine's Defense
Second Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1923
white Pyotr Romanovsky,
black Yakov Vilner

1 e4 Nf6 2 d3?! d5

The text leads into an inferior French Defense in which Black lacks enough pressure on d4 to distract White.

3 e5 Nfd7 4 f4 e6 5 Nf3 Be7 6 d4 c5 7 c3 Nc6 8 Be2 Qb6 9 0–0 f6 10 Kh1 0–0 11 b3 a5? 12 Ba3 Re8 13 Bd3! f5 14 g4!

Now 14 ... g6 15 gxh5 gxh5 would leave White with an irresistible attack after 16 Rg1+ Kh8 17 Ng5 Bxg5 18 Rxg5 cxd4 19 Qh5.

14 ... Nf8 15 gxh5 exf5 16 c4

White could obtain a nice position by leaving the center intact and assaulting the

Second Soviet Championship, Petrograd, July 8–24, 1923

	R	L	B	D	N	K	I	R	G	Z	V	Vy	L	Score
1. Romanovsky	X	0	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	10–2
2. Levenfish	1	X	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	9–3
3–5. Bohatyrychuk	0	½	X	½	1	0	1	0	½	1	1	1	1	7½–4½
3–5. Duz-Khotimirsky	0	0	½	X	1	½	1	½	1	0	1	1	1	7½–4½
3–5. Nenarokov	½	1	0	0	X	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	7½–4½
6. A. Kubbel	0	0	1	½	1	X	0	1	0	1	0	1	½	6–6
7–8. Ilyin-Genevsky	½	0	0	0	½	1	X	1	½	0	½	½	1	5½–6½
7–8. I. Rabinovich	0	0	1	½	0	0	0	X	1	1	1	1	0	5½–6½
9. Grigoriev	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	0	X	1	1	½	½	5–7
10. Zubarev	0	½	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	X	½	1	0	4–8
11–13. Vilner	0	½	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	X	0	1	3½–8½
11–13. Vygodchikov	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	0	1	X	½	3½–8½
11–13. Lebedev	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	1	0	½	X	3½–8½

g-file but prefers the more aggressive text, which involves a pawn sacrifice.

16 ... Be6 17 cxd5 Bxd5 18 Nc3 Bxf3+
19 Qxf3 Nxd4 20 Nd5 Qd8

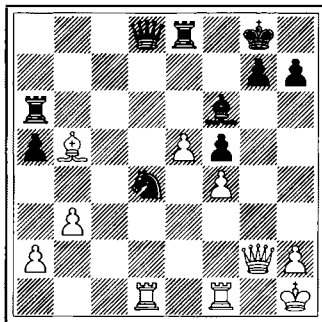
Not 20 ... Nxf3 21 Nxb6, losing at least the exchange.

21 Qg2 b5 22 Rad1 Ra6 23 Nf6+ Bxf6
24 Bxc5!

A little finesse based on 24 ... Be7 25 Bxd4 Qxd4? 26 Bc4+ and 27 Rxd4. Here 25 ... Rg6 would have given Black chances.

24 ... Nfe6? 25 Bxd4 Nxd4 26 Bxb5!

After
26 Bxb5



White emerges at least the exchange ahead (26 ... Rae6 27 Bxe8).

26 ... Nxb5 27 Rxd8 Rxd8 28 Qb7! Nc7
29 Qxc7 1–0

At the same time a “Tournament of Cities” was conducted, with 36 participants divided into three preliminary groups. In the finals, Alexander Sergeev, a Moscow engineer, scored 5–1, a half point ahead of Verlinsky. Sergeev satisfied the first requirement for the title of *maestro*, which Nenarokov also earned in the top section. (The title of Soviet master was not created until 1925, when a set of ground rules were established by the new Higher Council of Physical Culture).

Levenfish later gave the harsh, semi-official verdict on the All-Russia Chess Union: “Unfortunately it used the bourgeois German chess union as a model although it was clear in the new circumstances that new forms were needed.” The Muscovites had an alternative to the Petrograd-run Union — complete government sponsorship of chess.

At the end of 1922 a group of leading players, under the apparent initiative of Grigoriev, sent an unsigned letter to Education

Commissar Anatoly Lunacharsky saying “we would like to create an Institute of Chess Art” and seeking grant money. When that failed, they succeeded in convincing the Moscow City Council to add chess sections to the network of trade unions, *profsoyuzy*. The Muscovites also wanted a national structure, to be formed at a third All-Union *syezhd* in August, 1924, in Petrograd.

Enter Lasker

The one major accomplishment of the All-Russia Chess Union was that of convincing Emanuel Lasker to visit the two rival cities in February 1924. The former world champion’s arrival at Petrograd’s Moscow Station, greeted by a delegation of prominent players and academicians, was hailed as the breaking of a capitalist boycott.

B86 Sicilian Defense
Exhibition game, Moscow,
February 8, 1924
white Abram Rabinovich,
black Emanuel Lasker

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4

Briefly popular about this time was an early Be2 and 0–0 by White. Here are two illustrative games from the Fifth Soviet Championship:

Romanovsky–Rokhlin, 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Be2 d6 5 0–0 e6 6 b3 Be7 7 Bb2 0–0 8 d4 cxd4 9 Nxd4 a6 10 Kh1 Bd7 11 f4 Qa5 12 Bf3 Rac8 13 Nce2 d5 14 e5 Ne4 15 Bxe4 dxe4 16 Ng3 Nxd4 17 Bxd4 Rfd8 18 c3! Ba3 19 b4 Qd5 20 Qg4 Kh8 21 Bb6 Rg8 22 Rad1 Qb5 23 Nxe4! Qxb6 24 Rxd7 Qc6 25 Ng5 Qxd7 26 Qh5 h6 27 Nxf7+ Kh7 28 Ng5+! Kh8 29 Qg6! 1–0

Sergeyev–Nenarokov, 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 Be2 Nf6 5 0–0 d5! 6 exd5 Nxd5 7 Nxd5 Qxd5 8 b3 Be7 9 Bb2 Bf6

10 c3!? b6 11 Bc4 Qd7 12 d4 cxd4 13 cxd4 0–0 14 Ne5 Nxe5 15 dxe5 Be7 16 Qg4 Bb7 17 Rfd1 Qc6 18 Bd3 Rac8 19 Racl Qe8 20 a4 Rxc1 21 Bxc1 Qb8 22 Qh3 g6 23 Qg3 Rd8 24 Re1 Qc7 25 Bb2 Bb4! 26 Rcl Qd7 27 Rd1 Qd5 28 Qg4 h5! 0–1

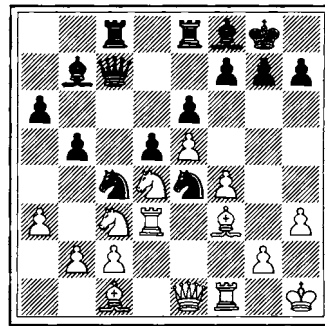
3 ... cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Be2 d6 7 0–0 Be7 8 Be3 0–0 9 f4 Qc7 10 Qel a6 11 h3?

Unnecessary and costly in a tempo-sensitive variation like this.

11 ... Na5 12 Rd1 Nc4 13 Bcl b5 14 a3 Bb7 15 Bf3 Rac8 16 Kh1 Rfe8 17 Qg3 Bf8 18 Rd3

White has lost the initiative and is trying to avoid Black tactics, like the threatened 18 ... Nxa3.

18 ... d5! 19 e5 Ne4 20 Qel?



After 20 Qel

White’s last try was 20 Bxe4 dxe4 21 Rdd1 Nxa3 22 f5.

20 ... Nxa3! 21 Nxe4 dxe4 22 Bxe4 Nxc2 23 Nxc2 Qxc2 24 Re3 Bxe4 25 Rxe4 Red8 26 Re2 Qd3 27 Re3 Qd5 28 Qe2 Rc4 29 Kh2 Qc6 0–1

It is lost after 30 Qel Bb4 or 30 Bd2 Rc2.

Besides exhibition games with Romanovsky (who scored a loss and a draw), Nenarokov (a draw), Grigoriev (a loss) and an

unfinished game with Levenfish, Lasker registered a total of 81 wins, 29 draws and 6 losses in simultaneous displays. All the best amateurs took boards in the simuls, and only the strongest such as Rokhlin managed to beat the former world champion, which makes Lasker's result exemplary.

Mikhail Botvinnik recalled how, shortly after turning 13, he managed to play in one of the simuls but Lasker moved so slowly "that I left the hall after 15 moves because it was already time for a schoolboy to be asleep." Lasker then headed west to Germany and reached New York in time for the great international tournament in March. But he sent a letter to *Izvestia* thanking his hosts: "For the rest of my life the nine days I spent here will remain with me the clear impression of something big, gratifying and strong."

Here is another good game from the period:

B68 Ruy Lopez
Moscow Championship, 1924
white Nikolai Zubarev,
black Boris Verlinsky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 Nc3 f6 6 d3

White chooses a semi-closed center attacking plan featuring the advance of his kingside pawns and the virtual surrender of d4.

6 ... Bd6 7 Be3 Ne7 8 Ne2 c5 9 0-0

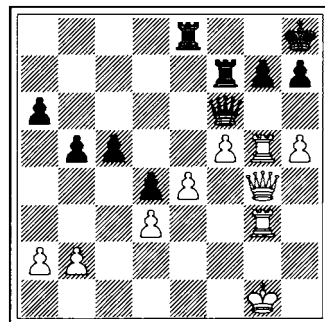
Romanovsky tried 9 Ng3 Be6 10 c3 against Botvinnik at Moscow 1935 and lost an instructive game in which White had no counterplay while Black prepared ... f5.

9 ... 0-0 10 Nd2 Nc6 11 f4 Bg4 12 f5 b5 13 h3 Bh5 14 g4 Bf7 15 Rf2 Nd4 16 Rg2 Be7 17 h4 c4 18 Bxd4!

Played in the Tchigorin style: knights are preferable to bishops here, and Black must be concerned about both the opening of the g-file and of Nf4-e6.

18 ... exd4 19 Nf3 c5 20 g5 cxd3 21 exd3 Bd6 22 Qd2 Bh5 23 Rf1 Kh8 24 Nf4 Bxf4 25 Qxf4 Bxf3 26 Rxf3 Qe7 27 h5 fxg5 28 Rxg5 Rae8 29 Rfg3 Rf7 30 Qg4 Qf6

After
30 ... Qf6



31 h6! Qxh6 32 Rh3 Qf6 33 Qh5 h6 34 Rg6 Qe7

Or 34 ... Qe5 35 Rxh6+ gxh6 36 Qxf7 and wins.

35 f6 Qf8 36 fxg7+ Rxg7 37 Qxh6+ Kg8 38 Qh7+! Kf7 39 Rf3+ 1-0

To open the third *syezhd* the organizers arranged the kind of showpiece that Soviet chess quickly embraced: a giant "living chess" game, held on the vast square outside the Winter Palace. Romanovsky commanded sailors dressed in traditional white blouses while Ilya Rabinovich served as general for black-clad soldiers. More than 5,000 spectators attended, including 16-year-old Dmitry Rovner, a future master who recalled how the titanic battle and "colorful spectacle" prompted him to start taking chess seriously and playing at a union club on Leningrad's Fontanka.

C56 Two Knights Defense
Living chess exhibition, Petrograd,
July 20, 1924
white Soviet Navy (Romanovsky),
black Red Army (I. Rabinovich)

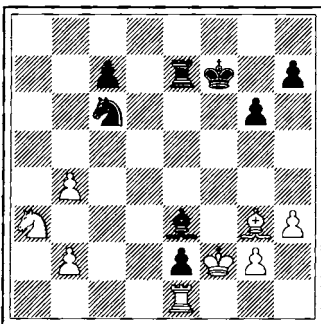
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d4 exd4
 5 0–0 Nxe4 6 Re1 d5 7 Bxd5 Qxd5
 8 Nc3 Qd8 9 Nxe4 Be7 10 Qd3

In this offshoot of the Anti–Max Lange Attack White should try 10 Bg5 to avoid getting the worst of it.

10 ... 0–0 11 Neg5 g6 12 Bf4 Bf6 13 Qc4
 Bg4 14 h3 Bxf3 15 Nxf3 Qd7 16 Rad1
 Rfe8 17 Rxe8+ Rxe8 18 Be3 Qe6!
 19 Qxe6 fxe6

The point: 20 Nxd4 loses to 20 ...
 Rd8 21 c3 e5.

20 Bf4 e5 21 Re1 Kf7 22 Bg3 Re7 23 a3
 e4 24 Nd2 e3 25 fxe3 dxe3 26 Nc4 e2?
 27 c3! Bg5 28 a4 a6 29 Kf2 b5 30 axb5
 axb5 31 Na3 b4 32 cxb4? Be3+!



After
 32 ... Be3+

Winning material since 33 Kf3 allows
 33 ... Nd4+ 34 Kg4 h5+ 35 Kh4 Nf5
 mate.

33 Kxe2 Bf4+ 34 Kf3 Ne5+ 35 Kxf4
 Nd3+ 36 Kg5 Nxe1 37 Nb5 Nd3
 38 Bxc7 Kg7 39 Kg4 Re4+ 40 Kf3 Rxb4
 41 Ke3 Rxb2 42 Nd4 Nb4 43 Be5+ Kf7
 44 Ne2

The liquidation of the queenside pawns leaves Black with good chances to convert his Exchange edge.

44 ... Nd5+ 45 Kf3 Rb3+ 46 Kf2 Nf6
 47 g3 Ne4+ 48 Kg2 Re3 49 Nd4 Rd3
 50 Nf3 Ke6 51 Bg7 Kd5 52 g4 Ra3
 53 h4 Ra2+ 54 Kh3 Nd2?

Better chances were offered by 54 ...
 Rf2. Now White can exchange off the final pawns.

55 Nxd2! Rxd2 56 h5 Ke4 57 hxg6 hxg6
 58 Kh4 Rd5 59 Bh6 Kf3 60 Bc1 Rd4
 61 Kg5 Rxc4+ 62 Kf6 Rc4 63 Bh6 Kg4

After 63 ... Rc6+ 64 Kg5 and Bg7–f6
 the draw is clear.

64 Kxc6 Rc6+ 65 Kg7 Kf5 66 Be3 Draw

Before the *syezhd* began August 20, a member of the Union, B.N. Demchinsky, wrote a brochure protesting the way the Muscovites and the trade unions were transforming chess from a game of kings into something quite different; but it was too late. The 160 delegates who gathered at the former Hunting Club on Exaltation Street were dominated by representatives of organizations such as the Red Army, the workers chess circles, and the Higher Central Council of Trade Unions, known as VTsSPS. But the person who counted the most was a bald, 39-year-old former schoolteacher who was on vacation at the time.

“Take Chess to the Workers!”

Nikolai Vasilyevich Krylenko was a lawyer by training and had been a Bolshevik by conviction since age 17. First arrested in 1907, he had been entrusted by Lenin with smuggling literature into Russia and revolutionaries in and out before World War I.

After the tsar's fall he served on the Military Revolutionary Committee, with Ilyin-Genevsky, and in November 1917 was ordered to the general staff headquarters at Mogilev to replace General N.N. Dukhonin, who had refused to open peace negotiations with the Germans. In a sweeping promotion, Krylenko went from ensign, the lowest commissioned rank, to Supreme Commander in Chief of the world's largest army. (Sixty years later an annual Krylenko Memorial team tournament was begun at the Mogilev Pioneer Palace for players under 18.)

Krylenko was thickset and stocky with a firm handshake, unswerving devotion to the Party, and a genuine interest in chess. He had played with Lenin himself as well as with other Communist luminaries such as Mikhail Frunze, Mikhail Kalinin and Valerian Kuibyshev. A former secretary of Krylenko, Nikolai Zhukov, recalled how once Krylenko and Lenin were relaxing in a small town near Moscow when they decided to play a few games. But Lenin set three conditions: no taking moves back, no getting upset by the loser, and no exulting by the winner. Krylenko had the edge in the first game but eventually lost and became angry. "What's with you, Nikolai Vasilyevich?" Lenin teased. "You're breaking the agreement?"

For decades Soviet writers celebrated Krylenko's taking command of chess at the third *syezhd* with an impassioned call to arms. But in 1996 Yakov Rokhlin, who had been present, wrote that Krylenko was actually on vacation at the end of August and sent his plan for a new politically oriented chess organization in a letter read to the delegates. Nevertheless, Krylenko's message must have seemed like a godsend to them: One of the most powerful figures in the country wanted to promote chess. Krylenko's message was simple. As he later put it later

during the government's titanic drive towards industrialization: "We must organize shock brigades of chessplayers and begin immediately a five-year plan for chess."

It was Krylenko's plan to sell chess to the government as an ideologically safe form of relaxation. C.H.O'D. Alexander, British champion and also a top cryptographer during the height of the cold war, wrote that, for the Soviets, "chess was a dialectical game illustrating, in its resolution of conflicts, Marxist modes of thought. By encouraging independent thinking, chess could also be seen as antireligious." Rokhlin hailed chess as "a true weapon and a living piece of propaganda against religious delusions." Also, as historian D.B. Richards pointed out, chess can be enjoyed by both sexes and all ages and does not depend on good weather. Alexander added that it is "as safe from 'dangerous thoughts' as any intellectual activity can be." And it is nearly as inexpensive a form of entertainment as that other great Russian pastime, mushroom-picking.

Even without Krylenko's appeal, the delegates were ready to tie their fortunes to the government. Rokhlin, a delegate, said "after a lively debate" it was decided to cut off money for the All-Russia Chess Union and create instead a new mechanism, the All-Union Chess Section, as a unit of the Higher Council of Physical Culture. Krylenko was unanimously chosen as chairman, and a new publication, simply called *64*, would become its official organ, with Krylenko as its editor. *Listok* was taken from the Petrograders and placed under Ilyin-Genevsky's authority.

The *syezhd* also embraced the kind of revolutionary slogans typical of the era: "Chess is an instrument of intellectual culture!" "Chess must be a feature of every club and every peasant reading room!" And "Take chess to the workers!"

3

Big Chess

If you want to be respected by others the great thing is to respect yourself. Only by that, only by self-respect will you compel others to respect you.—Fyodor Dostoyevsky

When Nikolai Krylenko promised “chess to the masses” he had in mind huge events, chess spectacles on a grand scale, such as 50- and 100-board team matches and super-large individual tournaments. But the Chess Section chairman also wanted what Russians call “big chess”—the expensive, elitist tournaments that were not necessarily in accord with Marxist-Leninism but that would establish the Soviet Union as an international cultural power. In the first few years of running Soviet chess he pursued both goals, with mixed results.

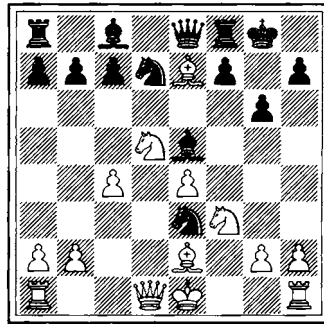
Many of the largest mass-chess events were organized by the major trade unions and the umbrella VTSPS, which held an All-Union Workers competition in 1924 and continued it annually for 47 years. At first the VTSPS tournament attracted obscure amateurs, such as the first winner, I. Friedberg of Kharkov. But within a few years it was one of the strongest events in the country with hundreds of thousands of amateurs competing in factories and trade union clubs. Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky won it in 1927, a half point ahead of Nikolai Grigoriev and a point and a half in front of Nikolai Zubarev. A sprightly example of this factory chess is the following game:

E76 King’s Indian Defense
Tournament of Workers’ Circles, 1925
white Smyshlyayev, *black* Anokhin

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
 5 f4 0-0 6 Nf3 Nbd7?! 7 Be2 e5

A better way of stopping e4–e5 was 7 ... c5, since 8 e5 Ng4 leaves White’s center in peril.

8 fxe5 dxe5 9 dxe5 Ng4 10 Bg5 Qe8
 11 Nd5 Bxe5 12 Be7 Ne3?



After
 12 ... Ne3

Better was the 12 ... c6 Exchange sacrifice.

13 Nxe5! Nxd1 14 Nxd7 Bxd7 15 Nf6+
 Kg7 16 Nxe8+ Rfxe8 17 Bc5!

Trapping the knight (17 ... Nxb2
 18 Bd4+)

17 ... Ne3 18 Bxe3 Rxe4 19 Rd1 1-0

The two leading cities were caught up in mass-chess rivalry. Moscow organized a

950-player tournament in 1926, the same year that the newly renamed city of Leningrad topped them with a 1,300-player event. Leningrad's House of Labor offered chess studies, including courses on openings by Grigory Levenfish, on the middlegame by Pyotr Romanovsky, on the endgame by Ilya Rabinovich, on composing by Leonid Kubel, on chess history by Professor Koyalovich and on how to study by Yakov Rokhlin. Moscow hurried to offer a rival program. The third *syezd* had authorized five tournaments, including a Red Army Championship that was the beginning of a vast program of military events that pumped armed services money into chess. An excellent Central Army Chess Club opened in Moscow in 1963 and attracted several players whose appearance in uniform it was hard to imagine, including Anatoly Karpov and Rafael Vaganian.

The first army championship was a modest affair with only four of the 15 players holding first category status. The best game was:

C13 French Defense

First Red Army Championship, 1924
white K. Baranov, *black* Dobropistsev

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7
 5 e5 Nfd7 6 h4 h6 7 Be3! c5 8 Qg4

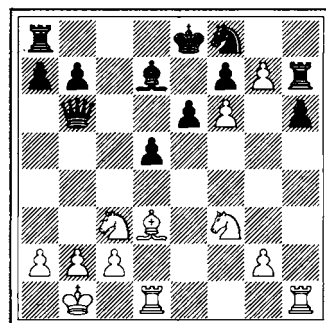
The advance of the h-pawns allows White to exploit the weakness at g7 before Black can develop.

The insufficiency of 8 ... Kf8 was shown by Pyotr Dubinin against Ilya Rabinovich in the Ninth Soviet Championship after 9 Nf3 Nc6 10 0-0-0 cxd4? 11 Bxd4 Qa5 12 Rh3! Nc5 13 Rg3 g6 14 Qf4 Ke8 15 Nd2 Bd7 16 a3 Rc8 17 Bxc5 Qxc5 18 Nb3 Qb6 19 Rf3.

8 ... g6 9 Nf3 Nc6 10 Bd3 cxd4 11 Bxd4 Nxd4 12 Qxd4 Bc5? 13 Qg4 Qb6 14 0-0-0! Bxf2 15 Kb1 Nf8

Black safeguards against Bxg6 and dreams of queenside castling.

16 Qf4! Bd7 17 Qf6 Rh7? 18 h5 Bc5
 19 hxg6 Be7 20 g7! Bxf6 21 exf6 1-0



After 21 exf6

Russian chess publishing was beginning to emerge from a dark age. In 1922 Grigoriev lamented in *Izvestia* that he could not recommend any new books — because none had been published. So he suggested his readers hunt down copies of Emanuel Schiffers' *Self Teacher*, published in 1906 and last reprinted in 1919, and Alexey Goncharov's 1914 primer. But with government backing, paper slowly became available, if chiefly for translations of foreign books. Russians were able to read Savielly Tartakower's *Hypermodern Game* in late 1924 and a Siegbert Tarrasch book on the Queen's Gambit Declined in 1925. Levenfish's *Chessplayer's First Book* appeared in spring 1925.

Meanwhile in 1922, Nikolai Grekov, a professional translator, began *Shakhmaty* (Chess). This was the fourth Russian language magazine by that name to appear in 32 years — and the only private chess magazine to survive for long in the Soviet era. Grekov, a chess historian and former Moscow champion, was a link with the past and a reminder that chess was not invented in 1917. Grekov could recall asking Simon Winawer, the great Polish player of the 1870s and 80s, for lessons. "I'd give you lessons with pleasure," Winawer told him. "But unfortunately, young man, my home does not have a chess set."

Working from his Moscow apartment, Grekov handled the editorial duties and his wife the technical tasks in bringing out a monthly magazine of high quality. Grekov convinced top foreign players — including Alexander Alekhine, Akiba Rubinstein, Tartakower, Rudolph Spielmann, Richard Réti and Aron Nimzovich — to contribute annotated games and articles. He also got top-notch Russian composers to edit the specialized departments: the Platov brothers on studies and Lazar Zalkind and Leonid Isaev on endgames. With the runaway inflation of War Communism still rampant, the first issues of *Shakhmaty* cost the fantastic sum of 2.5 million rubles each. But with the introduction of a harder ruble and the return to a quasicapitalist economy under the New Economic Policy (NEP), the price dropped to an affordable 50 kopecks.

Prodigals

The promise of “big chess” — and the stabilization brought by the NEP — stemmed the hemorrhaging of strong players. Krylenko even reversed the flow: the Chess Section induced two self-imposed exiles who had become strong international players to return home. When Mannheim 1914 was interrupted by the opening salvos of World War I, the fighting caught several Russians behind German lines. Some were interned, as enemies of the kaiser, at Triberg in the Black Forest. But over the next few years most managed to come home. Romanovsky, freed by the Germans because of heart problems, Fyodor Bohatyrchuk, Nikolai Rudnev of Kharkov, Ilya Rabinovich, Boris Malyutin, even Alekhine, had managed to return to Russia. But not Yefim Bogolyubov or Alexey Selesniev.

The eternally optimistic Bogolyubov was the more talented of the two. A former Kiev theology student who seemed headed for the priesthood, “Bogo” had become in-

toxicated with chess while in college. He reached national prominence when he placed second, in a 20-man field, at the All-Russian Tournament at Vilna, 1912. But at Triberg, Bogolyubov “concluded a separate peace,” as Vasily Panov put it, and married the daughter of a local teacher in 1920. The Soviets later noted he “became a chess professional,” something their players steadfastly denied they were until the late 1980s. Bogolyubov was chubby and goodnatured, with thinning, blondish hair, and earned a German nickname, “Döppelbauer,” meaning doubled pawn, for his girth. Besides chess, beer and bridge, Bogo had no interests, and Panov said he lived the comfortable life of a well-fed hamster.

The second prodigal, Selesniev, was the well-educated son of wealthy Moscow merchants, an excellent pianist and linguist, and a graduate of Moscow University’s law faculty. Bohatyrchuk said he resembled the clever Prince Mishkin from Dostoyevsky’s novel *The Idiot*. Selesniev had made a small reputation as an endgame composer but gained his *maestro* title only after competing in German events following the Great War. In 1923 he had a fine fourth place result in the strongest tournament of the year, at Mährisch Ostrau.

It’s not fully clear how Krylenko convinced them, but after he sent Bogolyubov, then 35, and Selesniev, 36, invitations to the Third Soviet Championship in the summer of 1924, they agreed to take part. Selesniev was impressive in several games:

A53 Old Indian Defense
Third Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1924
white Alexey Selesniev,
black Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 d6 3 c4 Nbd7 4 Nc3 e5
 5 e4 Be7 6 Be2 0–0 7 0–0 Re8 8 Be3
 Ng4 9 Bd2 Nf8

This stodgy, old form of the opening, which aims at iron reinforcement of e5, reflected Tchigorin's lingering influence.

10 h3 Nf6 11 Qc2 Ng6 12 Rad1 c6 13 Rfel Qc7 14 Bf1 h6

Black lacks a plan. The modern treatment calls for queenside play with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.

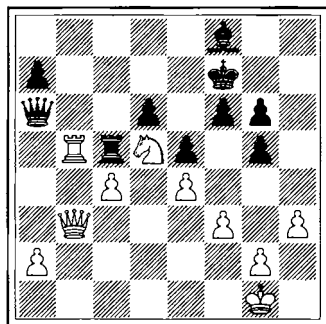
15 Ne2 Be6 16 Ng3 Rad8 17 Bc3 Nh7 18 Nf5 Bf8 19 Ne3 Ng5 20 N×g5 h×g5 21 d5!

White will obtain either an outpost at d5 (21 ... c×d5 22 N×d5 B×d5 23 R×d5) or queenside pawn targets.

21 ... Bc8 22 d×c6 b×c6 23 Qa4 Qb7 24 Be2! Be6 25 Ba5! Rd7 26 Rd2 f6 27 Bh5 Bf7 28 Red1 c5

Otherwise White breaks through the d-file with 29 c5.

29 f3 Nf4 30 B×f7+ K×f7 31 b4 Ne6 32 Rd5 Rc8 33 b×c5 N×c5 34 Qa3 g6 35 Bb4 Rdc7 36 R1d2 Rc6 37 B×c5 R×c5 38 Rb2 Qd7 39 Rb4 R8c7 40 Qb3 Qc6 41 Rb5 Qa6 42 Rd×c5 R×c5 43 Nd5



After 43 Nd5

With a fine series of "creeping" moves Selesniev is on the verge of cashing in with Rb7+. After 43 ... R×b5 44 c×b5 Qa5 White wins with 45 Nf4+ Kg7 46 Ne6+.

43 ... f5 44 Rb7+ Ke6 45 Nc7+ R×c7 46 R×c7 Kf6 47 Qb7 Q×b7 48 R×b7 d5 49 c×d5 Bc5+ 50 Kf1 g4 51 h×g4 f×g4 52 Ke2 g×f3+ 53 g×f3 1-0

Selesniev's final score of plus-two left him trailing the players in his age bracket — Romanovsky, Bohatyrchuk, Levenfish and I. Rabinovich and, most of all, Bogolyubov.

Romanovsky, who finished a distant second, played a match with Bogolyubov that year with stakes of 500 rubles for the winner and 250 for the loser. Romanovsky managed to draw two of the first six games and was crushed 5-1 with six draws:

D30 Queen's Gambit Declined

Match, Leningrad, 1925

white Yefim Bogolyubov,

black Pyotr Romanovsky

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 d4 d5 3 c4 c6 4 e3 e6 5 Nbd2

In the year after the Meran International popularized a sharp variation (5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 d×c4 7 B×c4 b5) this was a typically quiet, Bogo-like evasion.

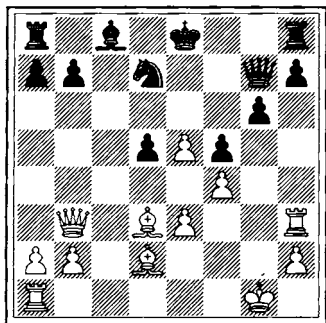
5 ... Ne4 6 Bd3 f5 7 Ne5 Qh4 8 0-0 N×d2?

Black should play the immediate 8 ... Bd6 since opening the position with 9 B×e4 f×e4 10 f3 was nothing to fear because of 10 ... B×e5 11 d×e5 Nd7 (12 f×e4 N×e5 13 Rf4 Qg5).

9 B×d2 Bd6 10 f4 g6

This ugly move is a way of avoiding 10 ... Nd7 11 c×d5 e×d5? 12 B×f5 or 11 ... c×d5 12 Qa4.

11 Rf3! Qe7 12 Rh3 Qg7 13 g4! Nd7 14 g×f5 e×f5 15 c×d5 c×d5 16 Qb3 B×e5 17 d×e5!



After 17 dxe5

Black is way behind in development and riddled with dark-square holes. Now 17 ... Nb6 allows 18 Bb5+ Bd7 19 e6! and Bc3.

17 ... Qf7 18 Bb4 Qe6 19 Rcl Kf7
20 Rc7! Kg7 21 Qc3 a6 22 Bd6 h5
23 Rg3 Kh6 24 Qc1 Nf6 25 Re7 1–0

The Master in the Tolstovka

In February, 1925, a Central Chess Club was opened in Leningrad and by the summer there were 223 chess circles, with 7,090 players, registered in the city's factories. But the heart of chess there always seemed to be wherever Pyotr Arsenievich Romanovsky was playing. He would often hold court at a workers club on Herzen Street, near the Nevsky Prospekt, regaling his young listeners with stories of chess in the Tchigorin era. Yakov Rokhlin recalled Romanovsky, a highly educated amateur musician and poet, as a figure out of a Chernyshevsky story. He was an "energetic figure in a *tolstovka*," the rustic, long-belted Russian shirt, "with an unchanging cigaret in his lips."

To others, the hawk-faced Romanovsky (born 1892) seemed somewhat unearthly and distant, always addressing people, even children, with the formal Russian form of "you." But to his students Romanovsky was a deity and his influence was measured in decades.

"You youngsters fear losing too much. Because of that at some moment you'll lose the habit of winning," he liked to say. One

of his students, Dmitry Rovner, said "these words had a magical effect on one who generally wasn't too trusting of authority, Alexander Tolush." It was Tolush (born 1910) who eventually adopted Romanovsky's love of combinations and tactics and passed it on to *his* students, principally Boris Spassky.

Romanovsky, who at 25 was already an experienced international player when the Revolution began, worked as a state bank inspector and was raising a family of daughters at the same time he was entering the busiest period of his chess career. Despite continuing problems with his heart he played in 18 tournaments and more than 250 serious games during 1924–1929.

A06 Nimzovich Attack Fourth Soviet Championship, Leningrad, 1925 *white* Pyotr Romanovsky, *black* Kutuzov

1 Nf3 d5 2 b3 Nf6 3 Bb2 e6 4 e3 c5
5 Bb5+ Bd7 6 Nc3

Rokhlin met Romanovsky in 1922 when he began to visit the Vladimir Prospekt gambling club and recalled him as an unswerving Romantic. But others said Romanovsky was greatly impressed by Réti and Alekhine, who played with him at Mannheim, 1914, and had begun a different kind of post-World War I revolution, Hypermodernism in chess.

Here Romanovsky is adopting a typical Hypermodern weapon but misplaces a knight. Better was 6 Bxd7+ Nbx d7 7 d3 followed by Nbd2 and e3–e4.

6 ... a6 7 Bxd7+ Nbx d7 8 Ne2 Bd6
9 0–0 0–0

"White has achieved nothing and Black has a territorial advantage," Romanovsky wrote in his game collection. Most promising here was 10 c4.

10 Ng3 Qc7 11 Qe2 Rac8? 12 c4 Rfd8

Black is playing without a plan. Romanovsky notes that his opponent could have broken with his pawns on the queenside (...b7-b5) or center (...e6-e5) or worked with his pieces to neutralize the b2-bishop with ...Ne5xf3+ and ...Be5.

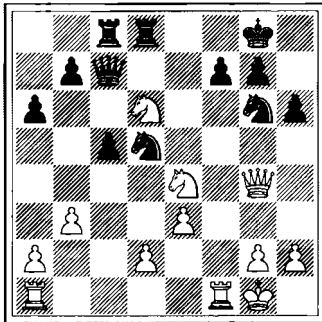
13 cxd5 Nxd5? 14 Ng5!

Black should have allowed 13 ... exd5 14 Nf5 Bf8. Now White expands sharply on the kingside (14 ... Be5 15 Bxe5 Nxe5 15 f4 as in the game).

14 ... h6 15 N5e4 Be5 16 Bxe5 Qxe5 17 f4 Qc7 18 f5 exf5

The Tchigorin-inspired Romanovsky said he intended to meet 18 ... e5 with 19 f6 N7xf6 20 Nxf6+ Nxf6 21 Rxf6! gxf6 22 Nf5 Kf8 23 Qg4 and now 23 ... Ra8 24 Rf1 or 23 ... Rxd2 24 Qg7+ Ke8 25 Qg8+ Kd7 26 Qxf7+ Kc6 27 Ne7+ Kb5 28 Qc4+ Kb6 29 Qe6+ and wins.

19 Nxf5 Nf8 20 Qg4 Ng6 21 Nfd6!



After 21 Nfd6

Hitting at c8 and f7 and guaranteeing the win of the exchange (21 ... Rxd6 22 Nxd6 Qxd6?? 23 Qxc8+).

21 ... Ne5 22 Qf5 Rxd6 23 Nxd6 Rd8 24 Qxe5 Qxd6 25 Qxd6 Rxd6 26 Rac1 b6 27 d4 cxd4 28 exd4 Nb4 29 Rc8+ Kh7 30 a3 Nc6 31 Rxf7 Nxd4 32 Rcc7 Ne6 33 Rfd7 1-0

The Romanovskys lived on Vasilievsky Island, on the other side of the Neva River from the Winter Palace, which Peter the Great had intended as the city's academic center. Their home became a de facto club for Leningrad's teenagers, such as Grigory Ravinsky from Leningrad's School No. 23, Vitaly Chekhover from No. 5, Gyorgy Lisitsyn from No. 40, and, the most talented of the lot, Pavel Ostrovsky of No. 15. Vladimir Alatortsev, the champion of School No. 111 on Nevsky Prospekt, had fond memories of group sessions in which Romanovsky imparted his love of chess. Romanovsky had also acquired a small dacha on Krestovsky Island, relatively far from the center of the city, and each summer his young students would flock to it, riding on bicycles, bringing sugar as a gift and enjoying fresh buns and tea from a samovar on the veranda.

One student, Oleg Riss, said Romanovsky relied on an enormous memory and could demonstrate games from Cambridge Springs 1904 or San Sebastian 1911 without recourse to notes. When examining how Amos Burn, in a routine queenside opening at Hastings 1895, recaptured on d5 with a bishop from a8 rather than a pawn from e6, Romanovsky told his brood, "This was an important moment in the development of chess theory." His was the voice of authority.

"Who Is This Krylenko?"

The next generation of Leningraders had also begun to learn how to use the power of *sviazi*. On July 2, 1925, Rokhlin, who had been entrusted with the role of secretary of the Fourth Soviet Championship, went to the House of Scientists on the Neva embankment to ask permission to use the building, the former residence of an uncle of the tsar. When the house director reacted coldly to his request, Rokhlin showed him a letter.

Fourth Soviet Championship, Leningrad, August 11–September 6, 1925

	B	L	R	V	D	G	I	Ro	Ra	S	V	Z	K	S	G	K	S	N	F	K	<i>Score</i>	
1. Bogolyubov	X	½	1	0	1	½	½	1	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	14–5
2. Levenfish	½	X	0	0	1	½	0	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13–6
3. I. Rabinovich	0	1	X	0	0	0	½	1	1	½	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12½–6½
4. Verlinsky	1	1	1	X	½	½	1	1	½	1	0	½	½	1	0	0	1	0	½	1	1	12–7
5. Duz-Khotimirsky	0	0	1	½	X	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	0	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	11½–7½
6–8. Gotthilf	½	½	1	½	½	X	0	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	1	11–8
6–8. Ilyin-Genevsky	½	1	½	0	½	1	X	0	0	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	11–8
6–8. Romanovsky	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	X	1	1	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	½	0	1	1	11–8
9–10. A. Rabinovich	0	1	0	½	0	1	1	0	X	1	0	0	0	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	10–9
9–10. Sergejev	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	0	X	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	10–9
11–13. Vilner	1	0	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	0	X	½	0	½	1	1	0	1	0	½	1	9½–9½
11–13. Zubarev	0	½	0	½	½	0	1	1	1	½	½	X	0	½	0	½	½	1	½	1	1	9½–9½
11–13. Kubbel	½	0	1	½	1	0	0	0	1	½	1	1	X	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	9½–9½
14. Selesniev	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	9–10
15. Grigoriev	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	1	½	X	0	1	0	1	1	1	8–11
16. Kaspersky	0	0	0	1	1	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	1	X	0	½	1	½	1	7–12
17. Sozin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	½	0	1	X	1	½	1	1	6½–12½
18. Nenarokov	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	0	X	1	½	1	6–13
19. Freiman	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	½	0	1	½	½	½	0	0	½	0	X	0	1	5–14
20. Kutuzov	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	X	4–15

“Who is this Krylenko?” the director demanded.

“How can you not know the Chairman of the State Committee of Justice?” Rokhlin replied.

After a quick metamorphosis, the director asked, “How many rooms do you need?”

Rokhlin, who was strong enough to draw a match that year with Ilyin–Genevsky, realized “the endgame was won” — and said he needed the entire building. Levenfish was impressed with the playing conditions for the Fourth Championship: “Bright halls with windows leading out to the Neva, clean air, silence — for making the quiet course of chess thinking possible.” Bogolyubov, then at the peak of his strength, won again. But this time he lost two games and only finished a point ahead of Levenfish.

Vladimir Pyast, a poet, journalist and translator of Cervantes and other European writers, wrote in the Leningrad newspaper *Krasnaya Gazeta* that the tournament revealed a decline in Bogo’s play and called Verlinsky “the moral winner of the tournament.” According to Rokhlin, Bogolyubov sued for defamation but the case was “categorically rejected.” Nikolai Sakharov, writing in 1994, gave a different version, saying it was Bogolyubov who insulted Pyast — who then sued and won a court censure of Bogo. The Soviet champion sought the legal intervention of Krylenko but the prosecutor regarded the issue as a personal matter, Sakharov said. Pyast’s opinion of Verlinsky and Bogo was undoubtedly influenced by the brilliancy prize game:

E38 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Fourth Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1925
white Boris Verlinsky,
black Yefim Bogolyubov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5
 5 e3

It would take another ten years before the benefits of 5 dxc5! were known.

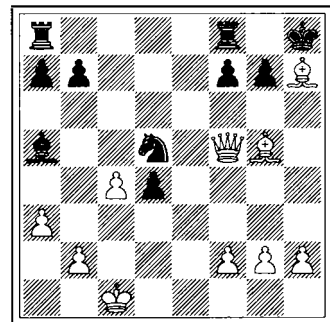
5 ... Nc6 6 Nf3 d6 7 Bd2 0–0 8 a3 Ba5
 9 Bd3 cxd4 10 exd4 e5 11 dxe5 dxe5
 12 0–0–0!

If Bogolyubov had one psychological weakness it was overoptimism, which lures him into a risky material grab.

12 ... Bg4 13 Bg5 Nd4 14 Nxd4 Bxd1
 15 Rxd1 Qxd4? 16 Nd5!

Black might have counted on 16 Bxh7+ Nxh7 17 Rxd4 exd4 when Black has more than enough compensation for the queen. Now he has to surrender material (16 ... Qg4 17 Bxf6 gxf6?? 18 Nxf6+). Not nearly as bad was 15 ... exd4 16 Ne4 Kh8 or 16 Nd5 Nx d5 17 Bxd8 Rfxd8 18 cxd5? Rac8.

16 ... Nx d5 17 Bxh7+ Kh8 18 Rxd4 exd4
 19 Qf5!



After 19 Qf5

White threatens the knight (not 19 cxd5 Rac8) as well as the king (20 Qh3 and discovered check).

19 ... Bd8 20 f4 Bxg5 21 fxg5! Ne7
 22 Qh3 Rfd8 23 Bd3+ Kg8 24 Qh7+ Kf8
 25 Qh8+ Ng8 26 Bh7 Ke7 27 Qxg7

The knight is stalemated and White can win slowly by advancing his h-pawn or quickly by 28 g6.

27 ... Rd6 28 B×g8 1–0

Krylenko decided it was time to measure what he had accomplished since the third *syezd* against the international standard: the grandmasters of the West. The Chess Section announced that Ilya Rabinovich would go to Baden-Baden in April as the first Soviet player to compete abroad. Even though it was a “bourgeois tournament,” the Chess Section explained that Rabinovich would be gathering information on Western chess, like Comintern reconnaissance of Western decadence.

In announcing Rabinovich’s assignment, *Shakhmatny Listok*, No. 5, 1925, also criticized Bogolyubov for accepting an invitation to Baden-Baden without clearing it with the *vlasti*. “The Chess Section considers it necessary to announce that it does not consider him its representative” and his conduct could only be explained by being uninformed about its policy, the magazine intoned.

Rabinovich, a quiet, mustached figure who looked very much the professor, was “the absolute antipode of Romanovsky” at the board, according to Rovner. Rabinovich hated to give up material and when he lost a game it was usually due to “a fireworks display of a combination, a cascade of sacrifices,” he recalled. Nevertheless, Rabinovich, who had never finished higher than third in a Soviet championship, placed a creditable seventh in Baden-Baden. Mikhail Botvinnik recalled that when Rabinovich returned home and visited the new Leningrad club “he was met by an ovation.”

D63 Queen’s Gambit Declined
Baden-Baden International, 1925
white Ilya Rabinovich,
black Yefim Bogolyubov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 d5 4 Nc3 a6
 5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 0–0 7 Rc1 Nbd7 8 c5 c6
 9 b4 Nh5 10 B×e7 Q×e7 11 Be2 Nhf6
 12 0–0 e5 13 a4 Ne4

This seems to equalize but White has a clever idea.

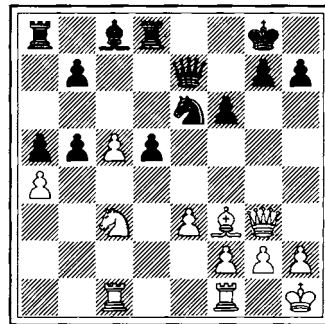
14 d×e5 N×e5 15 Qd4! N×f3+ 16 B×f3
 Ng5 17 Kh1!?

White is willing to play a good-knight-versus-bad-bishop middlegame (17 ... N×f3).

17 ... Ne6 18 Qe5 f6 19 Qg3 a5? 20 b5
 Rd8

Black tries to exploit the queen’s absence and prepares 21 ... N×c5.

21 Ne2 c×b5 22 Nc3!



After 22 Nc3

Black may have appreciated that 21 ... N×c5 22 Nd4 involved some difficulties but he must have overlooked the strength of the text. Now 22 ... Nc7 23 a×b5 and Rfd1, b5–b6 leaves him with a poor game.

22 ... Q×c5? 23 N×d5 Qd6? 24 Q×d6
 R×d6 25 Ne7+ Kf8 26 N×c8 Rd2
 27 a×b5 a4 28 Nb6 Rad8 29 N×a4 1–0

Valerian Yeremeyev, secretary of the Chess Section, called the Rabinovich trip “a preliminary testing of our strength” and his finish ahead of Western stars such as Ernst Grünfeld, Nimzovich and Réti “confirmed” the decision to go ahead with the first Soviet international tournament. In other words: big chess.

Moscow, 1925

Krylenko secured a bankroll of 30,000 rubles specially approved by the Council of Peoples Commissars, then the ruling Soviet governmental body, for the world's first state-sponsored chess tournament. The eight top finishers of the Fourth Championship, plus Bohatyrchuk and Nikolai Zubarev, were invited to compete against 11 foreign guests, led by world champion José Capablanca. This was a period in which Western experts in engineering, science, and other fields were welcomed by the Soviet government and when contact with foreigners did not have the dangerous, if not fatal, taint that it would ten years later. Whatever fear there was lay on the other side: The Western press had described visiting Russia as so risky that Grünfeld arrived with a large cache of canned goods because, Yeremeyev said, he was afraid of starving.

Diplomatic relations had been established by then with major European countries but even the absence of official ties to the United States did not keep Krylenko from inviting the American champion, Frank Marshall. Yet Alekhine was not invited because, as the Chess Section explained a year later, he was considered "alien and hostile to Soviet power." Krylenko made the welcoming speech, November 9, at the overflowing Blue Hall of the House of Unions, just steps away from Red Square. Spectators stood on chairs to catch a glimpse of Capablanca, Emanuel Lasker and other stars. Clocks were started at 3:30 P.M. the next day in the Fountain Room of the House of Soviets, in what later became the restaurant of the Metropole Hotel.

Tickets went on sale each morning but disappeared, despite their high cost, within an hour. Reserved seats were set aside for leading musicians, poets like Vladimir Mayakovsky, actresses, commissars — and, according to Levenfish, many of the 1925 version of the New Russians, the ones who benefited from the slight shift back towards capital-

ism. "Among the public could be seen many NEPites dressed in their best bib and tucker, who didn't understand a thing about chess but considered it essential to appear in such a trendy and busy gathering," he wrote.

Lasker and Capablanca were paired on the first day but their game was a tepid, 29-move draw. The focus of attention fell on other players, such as Zubarev. The 31-year-old Muscovite, bald since an early age, was a key member of Krylenko's Chess Section and was instrumental in setting up the Soviet system of titles. At the board "he personified common sense," a cold-blooded rationalist, with high-arching, skeptical eyebrows who seemed in sharp contrast with the impractical Grigoriev, Panov recalled. Zubarev followed opening theory rigidly and sought conservative, clear-cut, low-risk plans — but was often helpless when positions became murky or the opening was new to him.

E21 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Moscow International, 1925
white Ilya Rabinovich,
black Nikolai Zubarev

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qb3 c5
5 Nf3 b6 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Qxc3 Ne4 8 Qc2
Bb7 9 Bf4 0-0 10 e3 d5

This opening was misunderstood by the older masters. Black should build his center on dark squares (...d6).

11 Bd3 Nd7 12 0-0 Qe7 13 Ne5 Nxe5
14 dxe5!

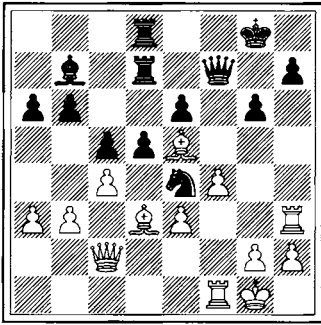
Threatening the knight with 15 f3 Ng5 16 h4.

14 ... f6 15 exf6 Nxf6 16 Be5 Qf7 17 f4!
Ne4 18 Rf3 Rad8 19 Rg3! g6

Not 19 ... Nxc3 20 Bxh7+ Kh8 21 hxg3 followed by Kf2, Rh1 and death by

discovered check on the h-file. But now Rabinovich can exploit the long diagonal leading to h8 with Ba1/Qb2.

20 Rh3 Rd7 21 b3! Rfd8 22 Rf1 a6?



After
22 ... a6

23 Ba1! Kf8 24 cxd5 exd5 25 f5 g5
26 Rh6 Rd6 27 Re6! Qg8 28 Qb2 Rxe6
29 fxex6+ Ke8 30 Rf7 Nd6 31 Bxh7 1–0

Estimates of the number of fans who got inside the House of Soviets range up to 50,000 over the course of the tournament. The disappointed gathered outside on Theater Square for news, and the horse militia had to be called out to control crowds. The officers could be heard shouting “Citizens! It was a draw! A draw! Disperse!” Inside the Fountain Hall, the crunch of more than 1,000 spectators in an area that usually accommodated 200 tested the endurance of the players. The central fountain made matters worse, Levenfish recalled, because it “created the climate of the humid tropics. Capablanca, used to the heat of Havana, told me he wouldn’t object if the players decided to play in bathing suits.”

Some foreigners did not seem to mind the fishbowl atmosphere. Lasker was outplayed in a rook-and-pawn endgame against Levenfish but registered one of his best results in finishing second. On the other hand, Carlos Torre collapsed after losing a fourth brilliancy prize game to Romanovsky, and scored only one win in his remaining eight games. Romanovsky’s most impressive game almost did not occur:

E23 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Moscow International, 1925
white Ilya Rabinovich,
black Pyotr Romanovsky

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qb3 c5
5 dxc5 Nc6 6 Bd2?! Bxc5

Romanovsky, suffering “serious indisposition,” said he had to be convinced by friends to show up for the game and arrived 75 minutes late. He played his opening moves instantly since he had only 45 minutes to reach the first time control at move 30.

7 e3 0–0 8 Nf3 d5 9 0–0–0

This was the point of White’s passive-looking sixth move and is the only attempt at an edge (9 cxd5 exd5 10 Be2 d4 equalizes).

9 ... dxc4 10 Qxc4 Qe7 11 Bd3

Rabinovich had been “strolling about the hall,” expecting to win the point on forfeit when Romanovsky showed up. Normally a “very calm, even tempered” person, he became agitated and began to play nervously, Romanovsky recalled.

White’s 11th move forced Black to pause in thought for the first time and he almost played 11 ... e5 before noticing the strength of 12 Ng5.

11 ... Nb4 12 Bb1 b6 13 Qh4 Ba6 14 e4 Nd3+?

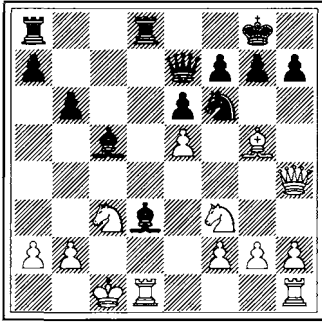
“A natural but nervous decision,” wrote Romanovsky, who said he played the entire game in a state of feverish agitation. The simple 14 ... e5, and if 15 Bg5, then 15 ... h6 was better.

15 Bxd3 Bxd3 16 Bg5!

Now 17 e5 and 17 Rxd3 are both threatened, and Ne5–g4 looms in the background.

16 ... Rfd8 17 e5?

After 17 e5



20 Qa4 b5

Objectively speaking, 20 ... Rxd2 was best (21 Rxd2 Qxc3+ 22 Kd1 Bxb2 23 Qd4 Qxd4 24 Nxd4 Bc3 but 21 Kxd2 is not clear), Romanovsky recalled. After the tricky pawn move White can not play 21 Qxb5 Rb8! 22 Qxc5 Bxb2 mate but can continue to fight after 21 Qb3. White completely forgets about the previous threat.

Rabinovich told Romanovsky after the game he expected nothing less than resignation here — not thinking for a moment that in four moves it would be his time to concede. Much better is 17 Ne5, threatening to land on c6 or g4 or pick off the d3-bishop. Then 17 ... Be2 18 Nxe2 Qc7! 19 Nc4 Bxf2 20 Qxf2 Nxe4 fails neatly to 21 Rxd8+ Rxd8 22 Qf4! Qxc4+ 23 Nc3.

Romanovsky wrote that he would probably have played 17 ... Bxe4, hoping for 18 Rxd8+ Rxd8 19 Nxe4 Qc7, which would “pose new problems” such as 20 Nxf6+ gxf6 21 Bxf6 Bxf2+ 22 Qc4 Qxc4+ 23 Nxc4 Rc8 24 b3 b5. But the intended line loses simply to 19 Qxe4 Nxe4 20 Bxe7.

17 ... Ba3!

Now 18 bxa3 Qxa3+ 19 Kd2 loses to 19 ... Ba6+ 20 Kc2 Rdc8, threatening 21 ... Qxa2+.

18 exf6

Had White turned to defense with 18 Qa4 Rac8 19 Qxa3 chances would have been roughly even. But now the main point of 17 ... Ba3 becomes clear.

18 ... Qc5 19 Bd2 Bg6!

The threat is 19 ... Qf5 and mate on c2. White was also short of time now and rejected 20 g4 because of 20 ... Qb4.

21 Qxa3? Qf5! 0–1

On 22 Qb3 Rac8 mate follows on b1.

Bohatyrchuk noticed that the foreigners, and even Bogolyubov and Selesniev, dressed much better than the other players who had lived in Russia since the Revolution. Spielmann, “an elegant Viennese,” arrived in Moscow with a trunk so full of suits that a Russian customs agent concluded he must be a speculator and imposed such a fee that “his hair stood on end” until the tournament committee rescued him, Bohatyrchuk wrote.

It was during the tournament that Bohatyrchuk had “an experience that opened my eyes decisively.” The doctor, who was becoming a respected radiologist and had become a master in the third USSR Championship two years before, had promised his wife a fur wrap. But despite the NEP, the wares available in Soviet stores were poor in quality and “astronomical” in price. Bohatyrchuk decided to try to buy one privately. He saw an ad in a newspaper and showed up at the designated address — only to discover “I’d fallen into a GPU ambush,” referring to the Cheka’s successor agency and its efforts to trap black marketeers in sting operations.

Bohatyrchuk was questioned and released several hours later, arriving 20 minutes late for his game and so infuriated he won quickly.

C12 French Defense
Moscow International, 1925
white Fyodor Bohatyrchuk,
black Nikolai Zubarev

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4
 5 e5 h6 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Ne4 8 Qg4
 Kf8 9 Bd3

Stronger is 9 h4 which enables White to fuel the attack with Rh3–g3 and avoid the endgame that follows.

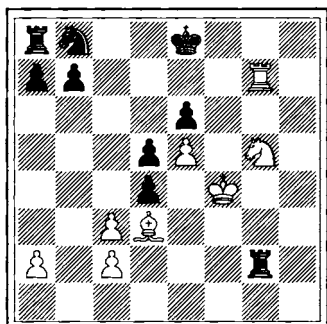
9 ... Nxd2 10 Kxd2 Qg5+ 11 Qxg5 hxg5
 12 f4 gxg4 13 Rf1

This opens the f-file since 13 ... g5 14 Nf3 Rg8 15 h4 or 13 ... Ke7 14 Nh3 would be even riskier for Black. But Black should be able to equalize with 13 ... Nc6! 14 Rxf4 Bd7 and ...Ke7.

13 ... c5? 14 Rxf4 Bd7 15 Nh3 Ke7
 16 Rhf1 Be8 17 Ng5!

A forcing (17 ... Rf8 18 Bg6) sacrificial line based on Black's failure to develop his queenside.

17 ... Rxh2 18 Rxf7+! Bxf7 19 Rxf7+ Ke8
 20 Rxg7 Rxg2+ 21 Ke3 cxd4+ 22 Kf4!



After 22 Kf4

Black does not get a moment's rest, since 23 Bg6+ Kd8 24 Nxe6+ and mate is threatened. He might have tested Bohatyrchuk with 22 ... Rxg5 (not 22 ... Rf2+ 23 Kg3) 23 Kxg5 dxc3 but then either 24 Rg8+ or 24 Kf6 appear to win.

22 ... Rxg5 23 Kxg5 Nd7? 24 Bg6+ 1-0

Despite games like this the center of attention clearly fell on the dashing world champion. Capablanca was a hero, and not only to the autograph-seekers. According to Levenfish, Capa was particularly successful with the ladies of Moscow. About him "more than one novella could be written in the style of the Decameron," Levenfish wrote. Capablanca began the tournament tired. He gave a 15-board simul, allowing a draw and two losses on November 7, and a grueling 7½ hour, 30-board simul (one loss, 11 draws) the day before the first round. Although heavily favored to win the tournament, Capablanca started slowly and did not register a victory until the fourth round. Ilyin-Genevsky recalled how just sitting down opposite the legendary Cuban in the seventh round made him "the hero of the day":

"First of all, they seat you at a luxurious gilded silk chair in a special place, where only Capablanca plays," he wrote. "You share the center of the public's attention ... and your game is demonstrated on huge diagram boards in all the rooms of the tournament site. However, I'm a chessplayer who knows the smell of gunsmoke too well for circumstances to influence my play in any way. I see before me only a chessboard and the placement of pieces, which poses new problems that need to be solved."

B25 Sicilian Defense
Moscow International, 1925
white José Capablanca,
black Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7
 5 Nge2 d6 6 d3 Nf6 7 0-0 0-0 8 h3 a6?
 9 Be3 Bd7 10 Qd2 Re8 11 Nd1 Rc8?

The Closed Sicilian usually gives Black good counterplay but here his delay in attacking along the a1–g7 line with ... b7–b5–b4 hands White an effortless initiative.

12 c3 Qa5 13 g4

“Sometimes Capablanca plunges deeply into thought,” Ilyin-Genevsky wrote. “Then I raise my head and begin to scrutinize him. He is truly goodlooking.... Indeed, his eyes burn with some kind of internal fire. But on the board there is a genuine storm. Capablanca tries to attack me on the kingside as I prepare threats on the queenside.”

13 ... Red8 14 f4 Be8 15 g5 Nd7 16 f5 b5
17 Nf4 b4 18 f6!

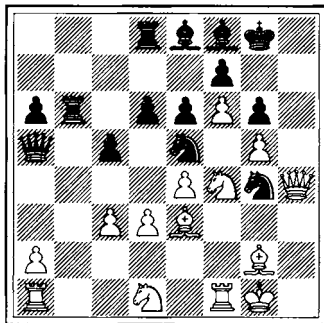
Based on 18 ... e×f6 19 Nd5! f×g5
20 B×g5 with a winning attack.

18 ... Bf8 19 Nf2 b×c3 20 b×c3 e6 21 h4
Rb8 22 h5 Rb6 23 h×g6 h×g6 24 Nd1!

Veniamin Sozin, an accountant who had just earned the master title, praised this move which defends c3 and clears the queen's path to the kingside. Mate on h7 or h8 with a queen and rook seems inevitable.

24 ... Nde5 25 Qf2! Ng4 26 Qh4 Nce5

Sozin pointed out that 26 ... N×e3 27 Rf3 Ng4! 28 Rh3 Nh6 fails but the simple 27 N×e3 Ne5 28 Nc4! N×c4 29 Rf3 wins for White (29 ... Q×c3 30 Rh3 Q×a1+ 31 Kh2).



After
26 ... Nce5

27 d4?

A Leningrad amateur named Baskov later found 27 Bf3, threatening Kg2/Rh1, *e.g.*,

27 ... N×e3 28 N×e3 N×f3+ 29 R×f3
Q×c3 30 Rh3! or 28 ... Rb2 29 Ne2! N×d3
30 Rf2! N×f2 31 K×f2 and Rh1.

27 ... N×e3 28 N×e3 Q×c3 29 d×e5
Q×e3+ 30 Kh1?

The debate over whether 30 Kh2 wins (as Capablanca said immediately after the game), merely draws, or loses has raged for more than sixty years: The key line, 30 ... Rb2 31 Rael Qc3, favors Black but in 1971 Igor Zaitsev found an improvement in 31 Rad!, leaving matters unclear.

30 ... d×e5

“Finally the position sharpens to an extraordinary degree,” Ilyin-Genevsky wrote. “It's clear the game will be decided in a few moves. I await the decisive combination from his side. And now he begins it.”

31 Rf3

“I played like a lunatic,” Capablanca said of this game. Even here 31 N×g6 might have avoided loss. “This combination wasn't unexpected,” Ilyin-Genevsky wrote. “I saw that it contained serious mating threats but at the same time I saw that by sacrificing the queen at the decisive moment I not only avoid mate but obtain an exceptionally threatening position myself with strong passed pawns.” His opponent kept thinking “for so long I began to think. Have I erred? I stubbornly think about every move and can't understand what Capablanca is calculating. Here is the culminating point of the combination. I sacrifice the queen.”

31 ... e×f4! 32 R×e3 f×e3

With the White K at h2, he could play 33 Rh1 and win.

Capablanca quickly took the queen “as if fully according to his plans but then

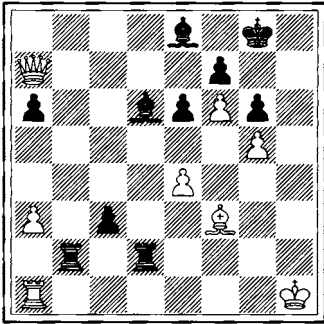
plunges deeply into thought, as if surprised,” Black wrote.

“Apparently the position was unexpected. This gives me strength.”

33 Qe1 Rb2 34 Qxe3 Rdd2

“I plant my rooks on his second rank and although I have to give up one of my passed pawns, the second decisively heads for queening. Now Capablanca disappears for a long time after every move, as if the fate of the game has stopped being of interest to him.”

35 Bf3 c4! 36 a3 Bd6 37 Qa7 c3!



After
37 ... c3

“Finally my pawn reaches the third rank. Capablanca, having again disappeared somewhere, suddenly appears and, turning over his king, he gives me his hand,” Ilyin-Genevsky wrote. “Some kind of rustle passes about the crowd who followed this game intensely. They already knew Capablanca was worse but hoped for something which would unexpectedly appear before everyone. You know he is the greatest chessplayer and perhaps he sees something that no one else notices. However, this expectation doesn’t pan out. Capablanca resigns. David defeated Goliath.”

Chess Fever

The Civil War robbed Ilyin-Genevsky of his best years but this game established

his reputation as a Bolshevik cultural icon. It also fueled Moscow’s fascination with the tournament, which was summed up in the catch phrase: “chess fever.” Mens’ ties, cufflinks, shirts, or any article of clothing, in fact, that had a chess design was suddenly fashionable. Vsevolod Pudovkin, a young filmmaker who would become one of the Soviet Union’s best in a few years, captured the mood in a silent Sovkino movie *Chess Fever*. Pudovkin used footage of the masters at the board, interspersed with scenes with actors — and Capablanca, who played a featured role as himself. The movie inspired Mayakovsky to add chess scenes to two of his movie scenarios. A. Shadrin, then a student but later an accomplished engineer, recalled in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (Chess in the USSR) how postage stamps commemorating the tournament were issued and he and other collectors tried to have them canceled at a booth at the tournament site. Everyone, it seemed, tried to take part in one of the many simulms given by the invited players. Shadrin, a first-category player, managed to beat Torre, Savielly Tartakower and Duz-Khotimirsky but lost to Rubinstein.

It is hard to overestimate the impact of “the fever” on the younger players, whose influence on Soviet chess lasted into the 1980s. Among those who said the tournament helped make them chessplayers were Ilya Kan, 16-years-old, who said “it never occurred to me” that he would be playing in the next Moscow International ten years later, Sergei Belavenets, a 14-year-old first-category player who was brought by his uncle from Smolensk, Alexander Chistyakov, 11-years-old, who was particularly impressed by a large photo of Ilyin-Genevsky published after the Capablanca game, Igor Bondarevsky, who at 12, barely knew the moves at the time but was champion of Rostov-on-Don four years later, and 11-year-old Viktor Baturinsky. There was also intense competition among the city’s teenagers

to capture a job as a demonstration board operator, and among the winners was 17-year-old Nikolai Riumin, who was usually assigned to Torre's games. It was not just the tournament that inspired the young Soviets but also side events, such as Capablanca's exhibitions. Nineteen-year-old Vasily Panov beat the world champion in a simul he gave for 30 first-category players at the Dinamo sports society club. Belavenets was allowed to play several casual games with Torre in the tournament site lobby and acquitted himself well.

Komsomolskaya Pravda, the official organ of the Komsomol, or Young Communist League, began publishing in May, 1925, and used the "chess fever" to promote the first mass youth tournament, in Moscow a year later. Among the more than 1,000 contestants was Olga Rubtsova, who won the schoolgirl event and a quarter century later became the first Soviet to win the world women's championship.

When Capablanca asked to use a free day, November 20, to perform a simul in Leningrad, Rokhlin found he could get Capa not only a fat honorarium but also a private railroad car, with enough expense money to buy both seats for him in a double on the celebrated midnight train from Moscow. "Chess fever had apparently even reached Leningrad," Rokhlin recalled. Chess was played "in the lanes of the Summer Garden and the parapets of the Fontanka embankment," he said, and when Leningrad's *Novaya Vechernaya Gazeta* organized a poll of readers to predict the tournament winner, more than 3,000 people wrote in. (Most guessed wrong, picking Capablanca or Lasker.)

When Capablanca began his 30-board display at 3 P.M. a large crowd of Leningrad's writers, actors, and teachers were in attendance at the Philharmonic Hall. In six hours he conceded eight draws, including one to Irina Tikhomirova, the 1925 Soviet women's champion, as well as four losses. But the

greatest attention was given to Capa's loss to a slightly nearsighted 14-year-old student, Mikhail Botvinnik. Writer Leonid Zorin recalled seeing the "slim teenager in a brand new *kosovorot*" — a Russian shirt, in this case brown, with collar fastening at side — "bought specially by his considerate mother" for this occasion. Rokhlin said that when he returned to his Hotel European the Cuban learned that Botvinnik, like most of his opponents that night, were first-category players. "You're joking? In Cuba he could receive the master title right now," he quoted Capa as saying. Botvinnik later ridiculed this version, saying the Cuban was "very angry" after he resigned "and threw the pieces off the board."

The world champion had not recovered by the next day when he played one of the worst games of his career:

D00 Colle System
Moscow International, 1925
white José Capablanca,
black Boris Verlinsky

1 d4 d5 2 e3 Nf6 3 Bd3 c5 4 c3 Nc6
 5 dxc5?

This surrender of the center is quickly punished.

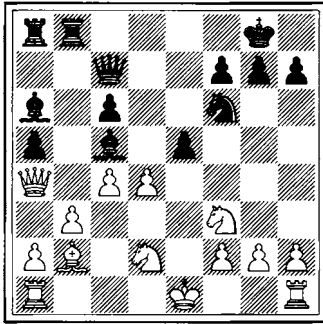
5 ... a5 6 Nd2 e5 7 Bb5 Bxc5 8 Ngf3
 Qc7 9 Qa4? 0-0 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 b3 Ba6
 12 Bb2 d4!

Boris Markovich Verlinsky, at 37, was at the peak of his career and four years later would become the first "Soviet Grandmaster." He was virtually deaf due to illness "and spoke, if it could be called that, with a hoarse whisper," and followed conversations by reading lips, Panov said. "But despite his deafness he was a passionate lover of music" who never seemed to miss a major Moscow concert and even learned to play the violin.

First Moscow International, November 10–December 8, 1925

	B	L	C	M	To	Ta	Re	Ro	G	I	B	R	S	V	L	R	Y	G	S	D	Z	Score
1. Bogolyubov	X	½	0	½	1	1	0	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	15½–4½
2. Lasker	½	X	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	14–6
3. Capablanca	1	½	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	13½–6½
4. Marshall	½	0	0	X	0	½	1	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	½	0	1	1	12½–7½
5–6. Torre	0	1	½	1	X	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	12–8
5–6. Tartakower	0	½	0	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	12–8
7–8. Réti	1	½	½	0	½	0	X	1	0	1	1	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	11½–8½
7–8. Romanovsky	½	0	½	0	1	½	0	X	1	0	½	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	11½–8½
9–10. Grünfeld	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	X	1	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	10½–9½
9–10. Ilyin–Genevsky	0	0	1	1	½	½	0	1	0	X	½	½	1	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	10½–9½
11. Bohatyrchuk	½	0	0	0	1	½	0	½	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	10–10
12–14. Rubinstein	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	1	1	½	0	X	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	9½–10½
12–14. Spielmann	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	1	½	0	½	1	X	0	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	9½–10½
12–14. Verlinsky	0	0	1	0	0	0	½	0	½	1	½	1	1	X	1	½	0	½	1	1	0	9½–10½
15. Levenfish	0	1	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	1	½	0	0	0	X	1	1	½	½	1	½	9–11
16. I. Rabinovich	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	X	1	1	½	1	1	8½–11½
17. Yates	0	0	0	½	1	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	1	0	0	X	½	1	0	1	7–13
18–19. Gotthilf	0	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	X	1	0	½	6½–13½
18–19. Sämisch	0	½	0	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	X	1	0	6½–13½
20. Duz–Khotimirsky	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	X	1	6–14
21. Zubarev	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	1	0	X	4½–15½

Verlinsky was a tactical player, who relished traps, defended well and avoided opening theory. Capablanca chose perhaps the worst possible strategy against him.



After
14 exd4

13 c4 Rfb8 14 exd4

Here 14 ... Bb5! could have won quickly. Verlinsky played 14 ... exd4 15 Nxd4 Qe5+ 16 Kf1 Bxd4 which was good enough and finally convinced Capa to resign on the 60th move.

Yevgeny Znosko-Borovsky, by then firmly established in Paris as a leading critic of Soviet chess, had predicted in an emigrant newspaper that the tournament would be a one-sided flop: "The disparity in strengths is too great and the competition will hardly be interesting." He was wrong — thanks to Bogolyubov. Bogo lost to Capablanca and Réti but allowed only five draws and won 13 games, six of them against the foreigners. He outran the field by a point and a half. But it was the first time the other Soviets had played in such a strong event and it showed. Each of them won at least one game from the foreigners but only Bogolyubov and Ilyin-Genevsky (four wins, four draws, three losses) scored better than 50 percent. The overall score was: Foreigners 43 wins, Soviets 27 wins, and 40 draws.

Several of the foreigners — Sämisch, Torre, Réti and Spielmann — stopped in Leningrad on their way home to give simulms. Torre was fond of a five-sided red star he acquired in Moscow and he wore it on his

lapel when he gave a 21-board simul on December 17, 1925, at the same Philharmonic Hall as the Capablanca exhibition. Torre only scored 50 percent: His opponents included future masters such as Ravinsky, Chekhover, Alexander Budo and Yuri Myasoyedov.

The same night Réti gave a blindfold simul at the Philharmonic Hall before the city's cultural elite. He was given a choice of 30 amateurs of various strengths or 16 stronger opponents, most of them first-category. He chose the latter and registered a minor triumph. Seated in a soft-chair on the stage with his back to his opponents, he won eight games, drew five and suffered only three losses.

Réti's ease in handling the simul was particularly impressive. After the first four hours he took a 10 minute break and when he returned to the stage, at the request of the audience, he repeated the moves of every game without mistake. "The rapture of the spectators couldn't be contained," Rokhlin recalled.

But the bottom line of Moscow, 1925, for Krylenko was obvious: The Soviets who reached mastery before the Revolution — with the obvious exception of Bogolyubov — were no match for the foreigners. It would be ten years before he arranged for another expensive showcase of his players. And Bogolyubov would not be one of them.

Bogo managed to get permission to visit Triberg in late 1926, after winning a small tournament in Berlin, and sent a telegram to Krylenko on December 6, 1926. Bogolyubov explained that writing the two-volume tournament book of the Moscow event had cost him "tens of thousands of rubles" and he was in debt. He could not play in Europe as he wished, because of politics. The Soviets blamed the Italian government for not granting him and Verlinsky visas to play at Meran 1926, one of the major events of the year.

These were “obstacles ... which would if they were to continue be ruinous for my family,” Bogolyubov wrote from Triberg. He said he could not ask for a Chess Section subsidy since the Soviet Union was “a poor

country” and he ended the letter expressing hope for “the further flourishing of chess in the USSR.” Yefim Bogolyubov had switched countries again: The man who was by far the Soviet Union’s best player had defected.

4

Tough Examiners

Good and bad fortune travel in the same sledge— Russian proverb

Yefim Bogolyubov quickly became a new phenomenon — a “renegade” and “unperson,” someone who was hardly mentioned after his defection. When Yakov Rokhlin wrote an article in 1928 about Soviet chess since the Revolution he gave great attention to Moscow 1925 — without ever mentioning the name of the tournament winner. This was a practice that would become a tradition as other players disappeared from the pages of Soviet chess history, including Fyodor Bohatyrchuk after World War II and Viktor Korchnoi after 1976.

With the loss of their last grandmaster-quality player, the focus of Soviet chess from 1926 to 1931 fell on Nikolai Krylenko. He held several portfolios but somehow also had time for chess: Krylenko was the Russian Federation’s chief public prosecutor and in 1928–1931 orchestrated the first of the infamous political show trials. He was also chairman of the Society of Proletarian Tourism and Excursion — with the quixotic goal of trying to promote vacation travel in the Soviet Union, at a time when much of the world considered it to be a ravaged former war zone.

Krylenko was an oddly imposing figure, almost always dressed in a semimilitary jacket and boots, who tried to conceal his shortness by standing during meetings. His face had sharp features; he was bald with “an unnaturally large forehead” and his eyes

were described as penetrating by some, and squinty by others. John Reed, in *Ten Days That Shook the World*, said he was “always smiling, with his violent gestures and tumbling speech.” People reacted to Krylenko immediately — either with love or fear, or as Mikhail Botvinnik said, both. A British diplomat was harsher, calling him an “epileptic degenerate” and “the most repulsive type I came across in all my dealings with the Bolsheviks.”

Krylenko had a restless energy for whatever he was doing, whether it was hunting game, reading Homer in Greek, or mountain climbing, which he most enjoyed on an exploration of the Pamirs, the remote range in Tadzhikistan where the Soviet, Chinese, Afghan and Indian borders met. While he was never more than first-category strength at chess Krylenko earned a master of sport title in 1935 for mountaineering. One of his games from that period:

D46 Queen’s Gambit Declined Moscow, 1935

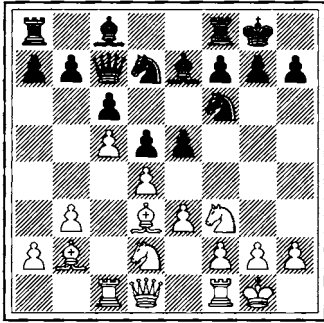
white Nikolai Krylenko,
black Serebryakov

1 d4 d5 2 Nd2 Nf6 3 c4 c6 4 Ngf3 e6
5 e3 Be7 6 Bd3 Nbd7 7 b3 0–0 8 0–0
Qc7

Black’s devotion to promoting ...e5

backfires. Another doomed version was Botvinnik–Y. Polyak, Leningrad, 1934, which went 8 ... Bb4? 9 Bb2 Qe7 10 a3 Bd6 11 Qc2 dxc4 12 bxc4 e5 and then 13 Rfe1 Re8 14 Ne4 Nxe4 15 Bxe4 g6 16 Qc3! f5 17 Bc2 e4 18 c5! and wins.

9 Bb2 Bd6 10 c5! Be7 11 Rcl e5?



After
11 ... e5

Black does not want to allow e3–e4 but this ends up weakening his own pawn structure too much.

12 dxe5 Ng4 13 e6! fxe6 14 h3 Ngf6 15 Ng5 Nxc5

Or 15 ... Ne5 16 Bxh7+ Nxh7 17 Nxh7 Kxh7 18 Qh5+ and 19 Bxe5.

16 Bxf6 Rxf6 17 Bxh7+ Kf8 18 Qh5

There is no adequate defense to the threat of Bg6 and Qh8 mate.

18 ... Bd6 19 Bg6 Ke7 20 Qh7 R×g6 21 Q×g6 Kf8 22 Nh7+ Ke7 23 Q×g7+ 1–0

The head of the All-Union Chess Section was also very emotional and a fanatic Communist. His daughter, Marina Krylenko-Simonian, recalled once when he and a mountaineering team were exhausted and caught in a dreadful snowstorm at an altitude of nearly 18,000 feet. Krylenko vowed to go on. Asked where he got his strength, he responded like a Marxist caricature: “Imagine that in front of us lie a chain of

White Guards. The Communists and Kom-somols are on the attack. If they overcome this line, the enemy is forced back. If they don’t, everyone perishes. Think of this constantly and you will always have the strength to overcome the next obstacle.”

When readers of *Shakhmatny Listok* objected to the slogans and heavy-handed ideology, Krylenko replied icily: Chess had “lost its apolitical character” and only “our enemies” believed the game could be beyond politics. “Chess for chess’s sake” made as little sense, he said, as art for art’s sake.

Toleration of political diversity — even among chess players — began to disappear in the late 1920s. During Moscow 1925 several of the Soviet players were given a battery of psychological tests to investigate chess skill. Bohatyrchuk was struck by one of the questions, which asked which was his *least* favorite book. He replied *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx. Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky merely shot him a quizzical glance when he heard the answer.

But within a few years even tournament and match results were weighed for their political significance. At first, Alexander Alekhine’s defeat of José Capablanca in the 1927 world championship match was hailed by the Soviets. Pyotr Romanovsky wrote in *Listok* that it opened a new vista in chess history, “blinding with bursts of sunlight.” But in issue No. 6 of 1928, Krylenko called Alekhine an enemy of the people because of his anti-Soviet comments in Paris. “Who is not with us, even to a small degree, is against us,” he wrote. A resigned Romanovsky confided to his student Vladimir Alatortsev that with the *vlasti* searching for enemies in the economy and on the farms, it was inevitable they would search for them in chess as well. “Alas, we don’t have the strength to turn the wheel of history,” he said.

Krylenko had pushed chess beyond Moscow and Leningrad, into regions of Russia and the republics that had only recently become part of the Soviet Union. The

Grigory Levenfish, who was working at a glassworks in the Georgian city of Borzhomi in 1926, began a chess column in *Zarya Vostok* (Dawn of the East). Levenfish's articles caught the attention of several young players, including 16-year-old Genrikh Kasparian. That March the first attempt at mass-chess in Georgia was made in Tbilisi and more than 500 players showed up, far exceeding expectations. Kasparian won and later became the first Armenian master. Winning the 1931 Tbilisi Championship gave Kasparian the right to play in the semifinals of the Seventh Soviet Championship, which he won with a full point ahead of Botvinnik. Here is an example of his style:

A15 English Opening
Seventh Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1931
white Georgy Lisitsyn,
black Genrikh Kasparian

1 Nf3

Georgy Lisitsyn, who earned the master title in this tournament, was a thin, balding and good-natured player with more than a little resemblance to Lenin. As soon as the first move of a game was made he became deadly serious, and if he had White, that move was 1 Nf3.

His friend Alexey Sokolsky recalled how before every game Lisitsyn carefully considered all the other moves "and each time, for different reasons, came to one and the same conclusion — against the given opponent, 1 Nf3 was the best way to start the game."

1 ... Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 b3 Bg7 4 Bb2 0–0
 5 g3 d6 6 Bg2 Bd7 7 0–0 Qc8 8 Re1 Bh3
 9 Bh1 e5 10 Nc3 Bh6!

Now 11 d4 is met by 11 ... e4 12 Nd2 e3!.

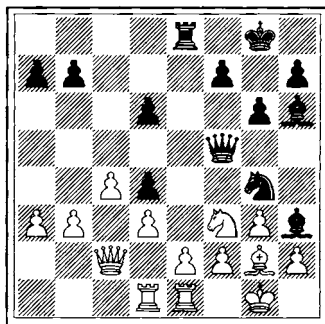
11 d3 Nc6 12 a3 Qd7 13 Qc2 Rae8
 14 Rad1 Qf5?

Botvinnik criticized this risky but unsound try in the tournament book, offering the stronger 14 ... Ng4 and ... f5–f4.

15 Nd5 Ng4 16 Nxc7 Nd4

Black saw that 16 ... Ne3 is refuted by 17 Qc1!. But after the text White can play 17 Qc3 since 17 ... Ne3 could have been met coolly by 18 Nxd4!, e.g., 17 ... Qxf2+ 18 Kxf2 Ng4+ loses to 19 Kf3!.

17 Bxd4? exd4 18 Nxe8 Rxe8 19 Bg2



After 19 Bg2

19 ... Nxf2!! 20 Nh4

Black has a winning attack after 20 Kxf2 Be3+ 21 Kf1 h5!, e.g., 22 Ra1 h4 22 Re1 h×g3 23 h×g3 Qg4 or 22 c5 h4 23 c×d6 h×g3 24 h×g3 Rc8 25 Qb2 Qg4.

20 ... Qg4 21 Bf3

Lisitsyn could never conceal his joy when winning or his agony when losing. Rovner recalled how his ears turned red when he had a lost position like this and "he could barely contain his tears." He loses, for example, on 21 Kxf2 Be3+ 22 Kf1 to 22 ... Re6 and ... Rf6+.

21 ... Qe6 22 Rf1 Nxd1 23 Rxd1 Qe3+
 24 Kh1 Qf2 25 Rg1 g5! 26 Qc1 Re6
 27 Ng2 g4 28 Rf1 and 0–1 before 28 ...
 g×f3 could be played.

Victor Goglidze, a teenage friend of Kasparian's from the Tbilisi chess club,

became the first Georgian master when he defeated Vladimir Nenarokov in a match. And when Boris Kostić, the globe-trotting Serbian master, arrived in Tbilisi after a lecture-simul tour of Siberia in 1926, he gave a 30-board exhibition. Kostić was surprised to lose six games and draw four, one of his worst results ever.

Three years after the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic was formed in 1920, two Baku brothers, Vladimir and Mikhail Makogonov, won the capital's championship. For Mikhail, who began playing in the Cafe Phenomenon as a 15-year-old in 1919, it was the first tournament in a career of nearly fifty years. He had a clean, positional style reminiscent of Akiba Rubinstein and lived long enough to give lessons in the Caro-Kann to a 13-year-old Garry Kasparov. The players in the first Baku Championship had to bring their own sets and competed without clocks for three prizes: a dozen toilet soaps (then a very valuable item), a vase and a coffeepot. The Makogonovs were given first choice and they both began looking at the soap when the third-place winner whispered "Boys, leave me the soap, OK?" They agreed. Vladimir got the vase and Mikhail took the coffeepot.

Chess lagged in the Urals, despite Duz-Khotimirsky's presence in Ekaterinberg, where he won the city's first championship in 1921. The first Urals district championship was held in the city, renamed Sverdlovsk, in 1925, but only six players showed up to take part. Yet within a few years a 456-board match between trade union members and academics was held in the Sverdlovsk railroad workers club with estimates of more than 2,000 spectators. By 1927 organized chess had spread to even more remote regions. Shatranj had been the preferred game in Uzbekistan for centuries, and the first major tournament using the Western rules of chess was not held until 1924. The first Central-Asian individual tournament was won in 1927 by Nikolai Rudniev, then

living in Samarkand, and Sergei von Freiman, an "un-baron-like" baron, in Levenfish's words.

Chess was being written about for the first time in some languages. In 1929 M. Yaumi's *Chess* became first chess book in Tatar, with 3,000 copies published in Kazan. There followed the first-ever chess books in Armenian (1930), Uzbek (1934), Chuvash (1936) and Yakutsk (1939). This helped escalate the number of registered Soviet players, from 24,000 in 1924 to 140,000 in 1928 and more than a million within another decade.

Beyond Maestro

There was competition among the republics to have a player earn the title of "master of sport of the USSR" which had been created in 1925 to replace *maestro* and was part of a system of awarding titles in various sports created by the Chess Section's parent body, the All-Union Council for Physical Culture. *Maestro* was not the only classification the Chess Section retained. But the strengths of the various categories are hard to evaluate because a first-category player of the 1920s was considerably stronger than a first-category in the 1970s. After the Elo system was introduced internationally in 1970, a third-category player was comparable to a 1600–1800 player. A second-category player was roughly 1800 to 2000 and a first category was about 2000–2200.

In the 1920s, third-category players were strong enough to win championships of cities and the new master title was comparable in stature to grandmaster today. The Chess Section stipulated that to earn the title a player must (a) score 50 percent in a Soviet Championship, or (b) win a match from a master, or (c) draw two matches with masters, or (d) win a tournament with at least three masters competing. But players outside Moscow or Leningrad often waited

for years to play in a title qualifying event because of the scarcity in finding other masters to “examine” them. Kasparyan did not get a chance until 1936, when Armenian officials appealed to Krylenko to arrange a match for the Caucasian champion. Vitaly Chekhover was sent to Yerevan from Leningrad to be his “examiner.” After 10 games of the best-of-16 match Kasparyan led by three points but Chekhover rallied in the 12th and 13th games. The match rules required Kasparyan to win by two points, so with the score standing 8½–7½ the organizers cabled Moscow for instructions and were told the match could continue until the next victory. After a three-day break the 17th game was held and won by Kasparyan, giving him the title and a congratulatory telegram from Krylenko.

Nenarokov, then a moustachioed resident of Ashkhabad, proved to be another tough examiner even though he celebrated his fiftieth birthday in 1930. He had gone to Tbilisi the previous year and denied Nikolai Sorokin the title by a score of 4–3 with three draws. Goglidze was better prepared and he earned the title by beating Nenarokov 6–3, with three draws.

C02 French Defense
Master-title match, Tbilisi, 1930
white Vladimir Nenarokov,
black Viktor Goglidze

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 Qb6
 5 Bd3 cxd4 6 0–0 Nc6 7 a3 a5 8 Re1

Aron Nimzovich and later Paul Keres enjoyed success with this gambit.

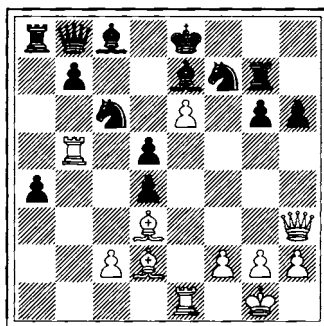
8 ... Bc5 9 Ng5 h6 10 Qh5 Nd8 11 Nd2
 Ne7 12 Nb3 Nec6 13 Bd2 Be7 14 Nf3

Also attractive is 14 Nh7 and Qg4 with the idea of sacrificing on g6 as soon as Black plays ...g6.

14 ... a4 15 Nc1 g6 16 Qh3 Qxb2 17 Ne2
 Qb6 18 Rab1 Qa7 19 Nf4 Bxa3 20 Ng5
 Be7 21 Nxf7

Now or never. If the knight retreats Black wins with his queenside pawns.

21 ... Nxf7 22 Nxe6 Rg8 23 Rb5 Qb8
 24 Ng7+! Rxc7 25 e6



After 25 e6

25 ... a3? 26 exf7+ Kxf7 27 Qf3+ Kg8
 28 Qxd5+ Kh7 29 Qh5! Ra4

This stop 30 Qxh6+ Kg8 31 Bc4+ and mates but that was not the only threat.

30 Bxh6 Kg8 31 Bxg6 Be6! 32 Bxg7
 Kxc7 33 Rxe6 Qh8 34 Rxe7+!

Not 34 Qxh8+ Kxh8 because then the a-pawn becomes a factor, e.g., 35 Re1 Bb4 36 Ra1 Bc3.

34 ... Nxe7 35 Qe5+ Kxc6 36 Qxh8 a2
 37 Qe8+ Kf6 38 Rb6+ 1–0

It was in the 1920s that Soviet women’s chess was born. In the early days of the USSR there was no clear separation between the sexes: There were just very few women players. Nina Bluket, a biologist who once beat Krylenko in a tournament game, recalled visiting a Moscow club in 1921 and being welcomed by “surprise.” She explained: “To see a woman who was interested in chess was, at that time, too unusual.” Women-only tournaments were not held until the

last half of the 1920s. During the fifth *syezd*, held in Moscow in October, 1927, a 15-player national women's championship was planned. The organizers set aside three seeds each for Moscow and Leningrad women and one for each of the republics. But outside the big cities there was very little women's chess, and the tournament eventually began with six Muscovites, four Leningraders and only one outsider, N. Semevskaya from Vitebsk. Olga Rubtsova, then 18, won the title of first Soviet Women's Champion by a half point over her main rival, thanks to the following game:

A60 Modern Benoni Defense
First Soviet Women's Championship,
Moscow, 1927
white Olga Rubtsova,
black Lidiya Ageyeva

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 exd5
 5 cxd5 b5 6 Nc3!?

"The tournament situation required" White to play for complications, the winner wrote.

6 ... b4 7 Nb1 Bb7 8 Bg5 Qb6

The queen turns out to be misplaced on f6 but 8 ... Be7 allows 9 d6.

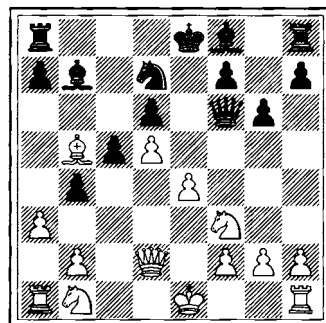
9 Bxf6 Qxf6 10 Qd2 d6?

Also poor is 10 ... Qg6 11 Ng5 h6 12 Nh3 Qe4 13 Nf4 as Rubtsova pointed out. Best was 10 ... g6 and then 11 e4 Bh6 (12 Qxh6 Qxb2) 12 Qc2 0-0 and 13 ... d6 with counterplay.

11 e4 Nd7 12 Bb5! g6 13 a3! (see diagram)

Black must now direct pressure at b2 with 13 ... Bg7 or her opening is a failure.

After 13 a3



13 ... Bh6 14 Qc2 a6? 15 Bxd7+ Kxd7
 16 axb4 Rac8 17 0-0 cxb4 18 Qa4+ Ke7
 19 Qxb4 Rc7? 20 e5! 1-0

An indication of the enhanced prestige of chess was the venue of the fifth *syezd*—the Hall of Columns of the House of Unions, one of the most eminent locations in the Soviet Union. It was, for example, where Lenin lay in state after his death in 1924. The Hall of Columns would be used for only the most important chess events, such as the 1933 Flohr–Botvinnik match, the third Moscow International of 1936 and the first Karpov–Kasparov world championship match.

Another tradition was also born about this time, the last-minute manipulation of spots in the Soviet Championship. At a plenum of the Chess Section on September 15, 1927, Rokhlin learned that Mikhail Botvinnik, a fellow Leningrader, was only second on the waiting list, behind a Muscovite, Vsevolod Rauzer. Rokhlin, who earned his own invitation by drawing a match with Ilyin-Genevsky, told the plenum he was willing to step aside to give up his place for Botvinnik. But Grigoriev and Vasily Russo said if a vacancy arose it should go to Rudniev, as winner of the Central Asia tournament. A long argument ensued and when it came to a vote only the Ukrainian delegate, Alexey Alekhine, brother of the world champion, backed Rokhlin. But afterward Krylenko took Rokhlin aside and said everything would be cleared up. In the end, Botvinnik, Rokhlin and Rauzer all played.

Fifth Soviet Championship, Moscow, September 26–October 25, 1927

	B	R	D	M	B	M	N	G	I	P	R	F	S	P	V	R	S	K	R	S	K	<i>Score</i>
1–2. Bohatyrchuk	X	0	1	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	14½–5½
1–2. Romanovsky	1	X	0	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	14½–5½
3–4. Duz-Khotimirsky	0	1	X	1	½	0	1	½	0	0	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	13–7
3–4. Model	0	½	0	X	1	0	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	13–7
5–6. Botvinnik	0	½	½	0	X	1	½	1	1	1	1	0	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	12½–7½
5–6. V. Makogonov	0	½	1	1	0	X	½	1	1	½	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	12½–7½
7. Nenarokov	0	0	0	1	½	½	X	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	0	1	0	½	½	½	1	11–9
8. Grigoriev	½	1	½	0	0	0	0	X	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	0	1	10½–9½
9. Ilyin-Genevsky	½	0	1	½	0	0	0	½	X	½	½	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	½	1	1	10–10
10–12. Pavlov-Pianov	0	½	1	0	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	0	0	1	1	1	½	0	½	½	9½–10½
10–12. I. Rabinovich	½	1	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	0	½	1	1	0	½	½	9½–10½
10–12. Freiman	½	0	0	0	1	1	½	1	0	0	0	X	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	½	9½–10½
13. Sergeyev	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	½	0	X	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	9–11
14. Perfiliev	0	0	0	0	½	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	X	1	½	0	1	1	½	1	8½–11½
15–17. Vilner	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	½	0	X	0	½	0	1	1	1	8–12
15–17. Rokhlin	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	1	0	½	1	X	½	½	1	0	1	8–12
15–17. Selesniev	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	0	1	0	0	1	½	1	½	½	X	½	½	½	0	8–12
18–19. Kasparsky	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	1	½	0	0	0	0	1	½	½	X	0	1	½	7½–12½
18–19. Rauzer	½	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	X	1	0	7½–12½
20. Smorodsky	½	0	0	1	½	0	½	1	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	1	½	0	0	X	0	7–13
21. Kholodkevich	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	0	0	1	½	1	1	X	6½–13½

The tournament was Bohatyrchuk's great success. He took five points from the six other top placers and tied with Romanovsky, a point and a half ahead of the rest of the field. Only a sloppy showing against the tailenders kept Bohatyrchuk from recording a Bogolyubov-like result. Bohatyrchuk's games vanished from Soviet chess history for political reasons but he should be remembered for commanding performances like this:

D17 French Defense
Fifth Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1927
white Fyodor Bohatyrchuk,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5
 5 Qg4 Kf8?

This was one of the first times Botvinnik played the Winawer Variation and he misses a common Winawer theme, 5 ... Ne7! and then 6 Qxg7 Rg8 7 Qh6 cxd4 with fine chances.

6 Nf3 cxd4 7 Nxd4 Qa5 8 Bd2 Nc6
 9 a3

Threatening to win a piece with the unpinning Nb3.

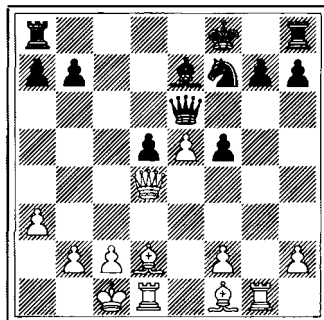
9 ... f5 10 Qf4 Nxd4 11 Qxd4 Bc5
 12 Qf4 Qd8 13 Na4 Be7 14 g4! Nh6
 15 Rg1 Nf7?

Black is drifting so quickly into a lost position that he might have tried to complicate matters, such as with 15 ... Bd7 16 Nc3 d4 or 16 ... g5.

16 gxf5 exf5 17 Qd4! Be6 18 Nc5 Qb6
 19 Nxe6+ Qxe6 20 0-0-0! (see diagram)

This dooms the d-pawn and forces an ending in which White's bishops dominate.

After 20
 0-0-0



20 ... Qxe5 21 Qxe5 Nxe5 22 Bc3 d4
 23 Bxd4 Bf6 24 Bg2 g6 25 Bxb7 Rb8
 26 Bh1 Kg7 27 Bxa7 Rbc8 28 b3 Rhe8
 29 Bd4 Re7 30 Kb1 Ng4 31 Bxf6+ Kxf6
 32 Rd2 Rce8 33 Bc6 Re2 34 Rxe2 Rxe2
 35 a4 Ke5 36 Rd1 Nxf2 37 Rd5+ Ke6
 38 Rd8 Ne4 39 a5 f4 40 Bxe4 1-0

White wins the queening race after 40 ... Rxe4 41 Re8+ and Rxe4.

Bohatyrchuk's medical practice demanded much of his time and, since he could get away from Kiev only once a year, the tie for first place was not broken in a playoff. Chess had prestige in the Soviet Union of the 1920s, but not enough compensation to convince many players to devote their lives to it. In short, chess was not worth the sacrifice — as the case of Alexander Sergeyev also showed. Bogolyubov had predicted a great future for Sergeyev after he won the 1925 Moscow Championship without a loss. Vasily Panov praised Sergeyev's solid style, mixing exact calculation, a high degree of technique and fine positional maneuvering. But Sergeyev gave up chess to pursue a more promising academic career, first as a senior lecturer at the Moscow Energy Institute, then as a higher education administrator, and he eventually was decorated with an Order of Lenin.

Master X

Then there was the remarkable case of Master "X." At the end of 1929 the Lenin-

grad newspaper *Smyena* reported that an unidentified reader had challenged 10 of the city's best players to a simultaneous match. The moves would be called into the newspaper, which would print X's moves and then the reply of each of his opponents. The identity of the incognito challenger would be revealed only if he lost three games.

Nine of the city's masters and strongest first-category players took boards, and the tenth was taken over by a food workers club. Among those who played were Ilyin-Genevsky, Botvinnik, Vyacheslav Ragozin, Leonid Kubbel, and Rokhlin.

After the opening moves it became stunningly apparent the mystery man had the edge on several boards. Who was he? When someone suggested that X might be master Abram Model, the idea was quickly rejected. After all, Model was taking part in *Smyena's* running analysis of the games as they were played. And, as someone else joked, if he really was X, "Model would lose eight of the 10."

As it turned out, X *was* Model — and he won seven of the games and drew three. Model was also a strong tournament competitor who had tied for third in the Fifth Championship, behind two other amateurs, radiologist Bohatyrychuk and bank worker Romanovsky. A typical example of his relentless positional style:

D43 Queen's Gambit Declined
Leningrad Championship, 1928
white Abram Model,
black Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky

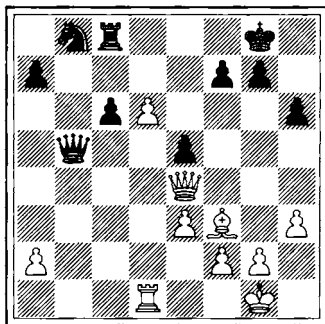
1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 Bg5 d5 4 c4 h6
 5 Bxf6 Qxf6 6 Nc3 c6 7 e3 Nd7 8 Bd3

Tigran Petrosian later championed this quiet system, which delays e3–e4 until after castling.

8 ... Bb4 9 Qb3 Ba5 10 0–0–0 11 Rad1
 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Bc7 13 Qc2 e5 14 d5 Nb6
 15 Ne4!

This was the move Black underestimated (and not 15 Bb3 cxd5). Now 15 ... Qe7 16 d6 or 15 ... Qd8 16 dxc6 and 15 ... Qg6 16 d6 Bd8 17 Nxe5 lose material.

15 ... Qf5 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 Bd3 Qe6
 18 Nc5 Qe7 19 Be4! Bd6 20 b4 Bg4
 21 h3 Bxf3 22 Bxf3 Rac8 23 Rd2! Bxc5
 24 bxc5 Nd7 25 Rd6 Nb8 26 Qc4 Rfd8
 27 Rfd1 Rxd6 28 cxd6 Qb7 29 Qe4 Qb5



After
 29 ... Qb5

30 Qf5 Rd8 31 Be4 g6 32 Qf6 Rd7
 33 Rb1! 1–0

But, as fellow Leningrader Dmitry Rovner put it, Model "to his misfortune was talented not only in chess but in mathematics, in music, in writing poetry." Model liked to compose witty couplets on topical interest, and could even make too-serious youngsters like Mischa Botvinnik "laugh himself silly," Rovner said. But, Rovner added, everything came too easily to Model and he never found the reason to work hard at chess. He became a master after the Fifth Championship but eight years later became one of the few Soviet masters to have the title taken away, due to indifferent results.

Among the other might-have-beens of early Soviet chess were:

Alexander Budo, who was one of the strongest Leningrad players of the 1930s but devoted himself to work as head of planning at a big construction organization. Solomon Gotthilf, who at age 19, tied for third in the 1922 Leningrad Championship and won a 1925 Leningrad tournament ahead of Carlos

Torre. But Gotthilf (1903–1967) was a key “financial worker” who was preoccupied with “production matters,” according to *Shakhmatny Bulletin*. Benjamin Blumenfeld, a lawyer, who wrote well-received books on the 1929 Alekhine–Bogolyubov match, combinations and endgames. Well read and witty, he was “nervous, always hurrying,” according to his student Alexander Chistyakov and rarely had time for tournaments. Blumenfeld eventually wrote a dissertation on the psychology of chess, which he defended at age 62, a year before he died.

The Great Change

Krylenko’s greatest accomplishment was the gradual improvement of Soviet chess during the very period, 1929–1935, when the country was undergoing painful upheaval. Tens of millions of Soviet citizens suffered the brutal changes wrought by the first five-year economic plan, Stalin’s 1928–1931 cultural revolution against the intelligentsia and his counter-revolution of 1931–1936. Universities and their curricula were turned upside down. Experimental ideas were hailed and then denounced as un-Marxist. Even Einstein’s theory of relativity was scoffed at.

Massive famine required the imposing of food rationing from 1931 to 1934 as well as the reintroduction of internal passports to sharply reduce travel and keep peasants from fleeing to the big cities. The farms were collectivized and the *kulaks*, or more successful farmers, were “liquidated” at enormous loss of life, estimated at more than 14 million people. “How long are you going to go on killing your people,” Lady Astor asked Stalin in 1931. “As long as it takes,” the Party general secretary replied.

Yet at the same time, the lives of most chess players seemed, if anything, to improve. Masters received more of the scarce

rewards of celebrity. Their photos even appeared on postcards that were sold at kiosks for 50 kopecks. Botvinnik recalled that the 1932 Leningrad Championship became famous for the simple fact that “for the first time, the participants were given time off from their work.” Tournament rounds got major event status and no longer had to be held on weekends. This was a significant change from only a few years before when Levenfish had to pass up two straight Soviet championships and had to go through great difficulty just to arrange for three days off to play in a Moscow–Leningrad match.

Perhaps the most important impact on chess life was the purging of the trade unions. During the late 1920s both the unions and the government-based Chess Section vied for overall control of chess. The unions held more tournaments as late as 1927. But after 1930 union chess came under Krylenko’s purview.

One relatively minor change was the altering of the format for the Sixth Championship, held in September 1929 in Odessa. The 36 players were divided into four preliminary round-robins and only the top three in each section advanced. This meant several veterans were eliminated after a little more than a week: Nenarokov, Model, Vilner, Sorokin, Rudniev, even Selesniev. The surviving 12 players then met in two six-player round-robins, and the youngsters who did well in the first section stumbled. Botvinnik, who led his preliminary section 7–1, found himself in a resignable position after 13 moves against Izmailov (1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 d5 4 Bg5 Nbd7 5 Nc3 c6 6 e3 Qa5 7 Qc2 Bb4 8 Nd2 0–0 9 Be2 b6 10 0–0 Bxc3 11 bxc3 Ba6 12 Bf4 Rac8 13 Bd6 c5 14 Bxf8). The Makogonov brothers scored 1½–3½ each. Rokhlin was 1–4 and finished last in his section. Verlinsky, by contrast, registered his greatest result at age 41:

C12 French Defense
Semifinals, Sixth Soviet Championship,
Odessa, 1929
white Nikolai Grigoriev,
black Boris Verlinsky

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4
 5 exd5

The McCutcheon Variation enjoyed its Soviet heyday in this period but after the text 5 ... exd5 should equalize. There were many games played in the main line of 5 e5 h6 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Ne4 8 Qg4 g6 9 Bd3 Nxd2 10 Kxd2 c5.

For example, Belavenets–Chistyakov, Kiev 1938, went 11 Nf3 Nc6 12 Rhb1 Qc7 13 Qh4 Bd7 14 Qf6 Rg8 15 h4 Rc8 16 h5? and then 16 ... gxh5 17 Qxh6 cxd4 18 cxd4 Nxd4! 19 Nxd4 Qc3+ 20 Ke3 Rc4! 21 Qf4 (21 Ne2 Re4+ 22 Kf3 Qxe5) Rg4 22 Ne2 Re4+! 0–1.

5 ... Qxd5 6 Bxf6 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 gxf6
 8 Qd2 Nd7 9 Nf3

More vigorous is 9 c4! Qe4+ 10 Ne2.

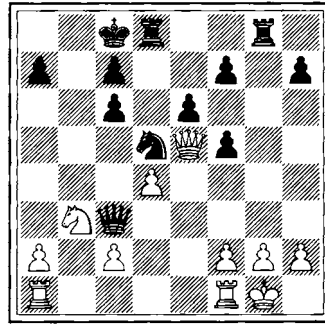
9 ... Nb6 10 Be2 Bd7 11 0–0 Rg8 12 Qf4
 f5

Black's pressure against g2 and the weakness of c3 (13 Qxc7 Rc8) are enough to equalize. But White suddenly goes downhill.

13 Ne1?! 0–0–0 14 Bf3 Qa5 15 Nd3 Qxc3
 16 Nc5 Bc6! 17 Bxc6 bxc6 18 Nb3? Nd5
 19 Qe5 (see diagram)

19 ... Qf3 20 g3 Nf4! 0–1

In the three-player, double-round finals the two older players, Verlinsky and Freiman, allowed Ilya Kan only one draw in four games:



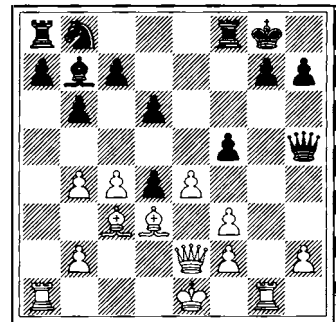
After 19 Qe5

E11 Bogo-Indian Defense
Finals, Sixth Soviet Championship,
Odessa, 1929
white Sergei Freiman, *black* Ilya Kan

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 d4 Bb4+ 4 Nbd2 b6
 5 e3 Bb7 6 Bd3 Ne4 7 a3 Nxd2 8 axb4!
 Nxf3+ 9 gx f3 Qh4 10 Bd2 f5 11 Qe2
 Qh5 12 e4 0–0 13 Bc3 d6

A better defense may be offered by 13 ... Nc6 14 d5 Ne7 and ... Ng6.

14 d5 exd5 15 Rg1! d4!



After 15 ... d4

Finesse and counter-finesse: White wanted to force 15 ... g6 16 exf5 or 15 ... Rf7 16 exf7 followed by Qe8+ or Qe6.

16 Bxd4 Rf7 17 exf5 Nc6 18 Bc3 Qxh2
 19 0–0–0 Ne5 20 Be4 Bxe4 21 fxe4 Qf4+
 22 Kb1 Re8 23 Rg3

The opening complications are finally over and White has a variety of good plans, involving Rdg1 followed by f2–f3 and Qh2 or Bd2.

23 ... Nd7 24 Rdg1 Qxe4+? 25 Qxe4
Rxe4 26 R×g7+ Kf8 27 R×f7+ K×f7
28 Rg7+ Ke8 29 f6

The h-pawn is not running away:
29 ... h5 30 Rh7 h4? 31 f7+ Kf8 32 Bd2
or 31 ... Kd8 32 Rh8+

29 ... Rxc4 30 Re7+ Kd8 31 R×h7 Ke8
32 f7+ Kd8 33 Bf6+ Kc8 34 Rh8+ 1-0

Verlinsky's two wins from Freiman gave him the championship and the title of "Soviet Grandmaster," which had been created two years earlier. (It was abolished in 1931 and not revived until Botvinnik received it in 1935).

The new championship format was considered cumbersome and clumsy, and authorities returned to the old round-robin format — which went basically unchanged for the next 38 years.

Trade Union Chess

None of the major cities had a top-quality chess club until the Leningrad City Council approved one in the late 1920s, first in the former Polish House at No. 42 Liteiny Prospekt and later, in 1936, just off Nevsky Prospekt at No. 25 Zhelyabova. Instead of clubs, it was the trade unions or *profsoyuzy* that held center stage. In the major cities, each union had its own club, team and stars. Duz-Khotimirsky would always be identified with the railroad workers and their "Lokotomiv" sports society. Romanovsky led the white collar workers, Levenfish the chemists, Botvinnik the metal workers, and Ilya Rabinovich the educators.

On Leningrad's Leontievsky Lane, near the Nikitsky Gate, an old private residence with a classical portico and Greek columns, had become the House of Education Workers, known simply as *Rabpros*. Alexander Chistyakov, a pianist and chess author, re-

called playing his first tournament game there in 1931 and meeting future masters such as Viktor Liublinsky and Yevgeny Zagoryansky. The union-based clubs were often run by amateurs whose enthusiasm made up for lack of chess knowledge. The *Rabpros* chess section, for example, was run by Dimitry Kropotov, a player of about second-category strength who was fond of starting games as Black with 1 ... f6 followed by ...e6, ...Ne7, ...g6 and ...Bg7 regardless what White did.

The trade union tournaments commanded respect. Ilyin-Genevsky's victory in the 1927 VTSPS Championship was one of his finest results. The pride of the food workers, Vyacheslav Ragozin, only scored 6-5 in the tournament, his first serious event. But he was strong enough to win an "international workers' tournament" in Berlin, with a 8½-½ score, later in the year.

The tall, quiet Ragozin was a late bloomer who led a difficult early life. He played behind Yuri Myasoedov on his Leningrad school team and regularly finished behind other junior stars in the city, such as Chekhover and Grigory Ravinsky. After graduation he could not pass a college entrance exam but with the help of a chess club official got his first job. Unfortunately, he had to take two jobs to make ends meet. Ragozin was working a day shift at a tobacco factory and a night shift as a candymaker when he was badly injured in an accident that left his palm scarred and his arm disfigured. Botvinnik, who first met Ragozin in a union team match in 1926, described him as "a man of few words" and striking appearance. Ragozin's long ears, long face and "coarse facial features" struck him. It was "as if Mother Nature began to shape his physiognomy but was interrupted by something and didn't finish the job," Botvinnik wrote.

At the chess board Ragozin was transformed into a sparkling tactician with a flair for combinations. Botvinnik was fascinated

when at a tournament in Odessa in 1929 he saw Ragozin sacrifice a rook for five pawns against Nenarokov — who managed to draw only with difficulty. Botvinnik concluded there were different values for pieces, the nominal value and the value based on the position. “Ragozin with great speed and ease oriented himself to this ‘market value’ of the pieces,” he wrote.

D36 Queen’s Gambit Declined
VTsSPS Championship, Moscow, 1928
white Solomon Rozental,
black Vyacheslav Ragozin

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 Bf5 4 Nc3

The only way to punish Black’s tricky third move is 4 cxd5.

4 ... e6 5 Bg5 c6 6 e3 Nbd7 7 cxd5
 exd5 8 Bd3 Bxd3 9 Qxd3 Be7 10 0–0
 0–0 11 Nd2 Re8 12 Rfe1

In a somewhat lifeless Exchange Variation position White clears f1 for a knight and prepares e3–e4. But 12 Rael was better.

12 ... Nf8 13 Nf1 Ne6 14 Bxf6 Bxf6
 15 f4

Consistent but highly risky in view of the dark-square weaknesses he creates.

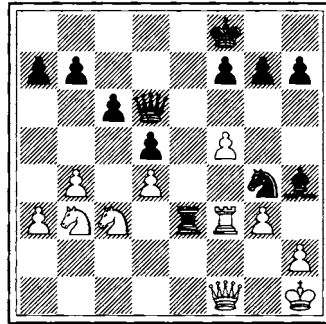
15 ... Qb6 16 f5 Nf8 17 Re2 Re7 18 Kh1
 Rae8 19 Rd1 Qa5 20 a3 Nd7 21 b4 Qc7
 22 Rde1 Kf8!

This prepares ...Qd6, to prevent e3–e4. The immediate 22 ... Qd6 23 e4 dxe4 24 Nxe4 Qxd4 walks into 25 Nxf6+ Qxf6 26 Qxd7! Rxe2 27 Qxe8+ and mates.

23 Nd2 Qd6 24 Nb3 Bh4! 25 Rf1 Nf6
 26 Rf3

Or 26 g3 Bxg3! and 26 h3 Nh5 with a strong attack in either case.

26 ... Ng4 27 g3 Rxe3! 28 Rxe3 Rxe3
 29 Qf1



After 29 Qf1

The endgame after 29 Rxe3 Nf2+ is an easy win for Black.

29 ... Bxg3! 30 Rxe3

Not 30 Rxg3 Rxg3 31 hxg3 Qh6+ 32 Kg2 Ne3+ or 30 hxg3 Qh6+ and mates.

30 ... Nxe3 31 Qh3! Qf4! 32 hxg3 Qf3+
 33 Kg1 Ng4

One of the White knights must fall.

34 Nxd5 cxd5 35 Nc5 Qf2+ 36 Kh1
 Qxf5 37 Qg2 b6 38 Na6 Ne3 39 Qe2
 Qh3+ 40 Qh2

This loses immediately but 40 Kgl
 Qxg3+ 41 Kh1 Ng4 is no better.

40 ... Qf1+ 41 Qgl Qf3+ 42 Kh2 Qh5
 mate

The trade unions reinforced mass-chess. By the 1930s every *profsoyuz* in Leningrad had a team with 28 registered players. On Sundays intraunion matches of as many as 60 boards were regularly held. Matches on 100 boards pitted major universities with scientific institutes. Individual factories had their own clubs. Moscow’s massive Likachov Motor Works eventually had 26 different

sports clubs, but the chess club, with a membership that eventually reached 800, was the largest.

The goal was to cultivate an army of talent. Writing in the fifth issue of *Listok* in 1927 Daniil Gessen declared: “We don’t need a Capablanca but Capablanca We’re not nurturing a world champion; not individuality but masses.”

The most important question to Krylenko was when the next generation, the first *Soviet* generation, of players would arrive. The changing of the guard was taking place in Moscow but slowly. The older masters — Grigoriev, Verlinsky, Blumenfeld and Abram Rabinovich — and the better first-category players — including Grekov and Ilya Maizelis, a prolific writer — were beginning their decline.

The youngsters included Abram Polyak, an engineer who would marry a women’s world champion and whose daughter would become a championship candidate, and Nicolas Rossolimo. The Kiev-born Rossolimo, who had been weakened by a childhood bout with polio, was a friend of Nikolai Riumin, and they often played at the home of Stanislav Strumilin, an avid amateur and an economist credited with helping create the first five-year economic plan. But Rossolimo was lost to Soviet chess when he emigrated to France in 1929. He eventually worked as a New York City cabdriver at the same time that he was one of the leading Western grandmasters during the early Cold War.

The most talented young Moscovites — 19-year-old Kan, 20-year-old Riumin and 22-year-old Vasily Panov — showed off their talent in the 1928 city championship. Riumin scored 5½ points in his first six rounds and did not lose a game until the 13th. But somehow the older players held on. When Riumin suddenly lost four in a row, Verlinsky kept winning with openings that had been discredited even in Tchigorin’s day.

D31 Queen’s Gambit Declined
Moscow Championship, 1928
white Ilya Kan, *black* Boris Verlinsky

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 Nd7 4 Nc3 c6
 5 e4 dxe4 6 Nxe4 Ngf6 7 Nxf6+ Nxf6
 8 Bd3 Be7

Black avoids ...Bb4+ and Bd2/... Bxd2+, which Tchigorin remained faithful to despite the trading of the better of his two bishops. Compare with Alatorstev–Zamikhovsky, Seventh Soviet Championship, Moscow 1931: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 Be7 7 e4 dxe4 8 Nxe4 Nxe4 9 Bxe4 Nf6 10 Bc2! 0–0 11 Qd3 Qa5+ 12 Bd2 Bb4 13 0–0–0! Bxd2+ 14 Rxd2.

White had a winning attack after 14 ... b5 15 c5 Qxa2 16 Ne5 g6 17 h4 Nd5 18 Bb1 Qa4 19 Qg3 Qa5 20 h5 and play ended with 20 ... Qc7 21 Rd3 Ne7 22 hxg6 fxg6 23 N×g6! Q×g3 24 Nxe7+ Kf7 25 R×h7+ Qg7 26 Rf3+ Kxe7 27 R×g7+ 1–0.

9 0–0 0–0 10 b3 b6 11 Bb2 Bb7 12 Qe2 Qc7 13 Ne5

White walks into a lost position with perfectly reasonable moves. Here 13 Rad1 and Bb1 looks better.

13 ... Rad8 14 Rad1 c5 15 d×c5 B×c5 16 Ng4?

This is the natural way to exploit the opening of the b2–g7 diagonal and Kan may already have been calculating sacrifices, *e.g.*, 16 ... Ne8 17 Nh6+ Kh8 (17 ... gxh6 18 Qg4+) 18 Qh5

16 ... N×g4 17 Q×g4 f5!

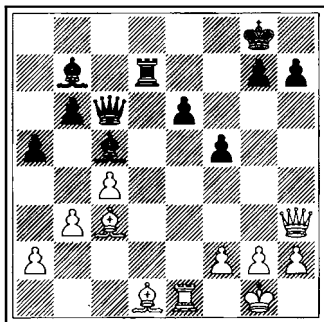
Now g2 and d2 are more vulnerable than g7 or h7, *e.g.*, 18 Qe2?? Qc6.

Moscow Championship, 1928

	V	N	B	S	Z	P	G	R	P	K	S	K	I	Gr	Ge	Ma	Mu	T	Score
1. Verlinsky	X	1	0	1	1	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	13½–3½
2. Nenarokov	0	X	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	12½–4½
3–4. Bernstein	1	0	X	1	½	0	1	0	0	0	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11–6
3–4. Sergeyev	0	1	0	X	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	11–6
5–6. Zubarev	0	0	½	½	X	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	½	1	1	10½–6½
5–6. Panov	0	0	1	0	1	X	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	10½–6½
7–8. Grigoriev	½	½	0	1	0	0	X	1	1	½	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	1	10–7
7–8. Riumin	1	0	1	½	0	1	0	X	½	1	1	½	1	0	½	1	1	0	10–7
9. Polyak	0	0	1	½	0	0	0	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	0	1	9–8
10. Kan	0	0	1	0	1	0	½	0	½	X	1	1	½	0	1	1	1	0	8½–8½
11–12. Slonim	0	1	½	½	0	1	½	0	0	0	X	½	0	0	½	1	½	1	7–10
11–12. Kholodkevich	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	7–10
13. Iglitsky	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	½	1	½	X	1	½	0	0	1	6½–10½
14. Grekov	1	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	1	1	0	0	X	0	½	0	0	6–11
15–16. Geiler	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	X	0	1	1	5½–11½
15–16. Maizelis	0	1	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	1	X	1	0	5½–11½
17. Mudrov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	1	1	0	0	X	1	5–12
18. Tselikov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	X	4–13

Rosenkrantz withdrew after four games.

18 Qh3 Rd7! 19 Bc2 Rfd8 20 Rxd7 Rxd7
21 Bc3 a5 22 Re1 Qc6 23 Bd1?



After 23 Bd1

Black was preparing to penetrate with the rook at d2 after ...Bb4 or ...Bd4.

23 ... Rd3! 24 Bf3 Qd7 25 Be5 Rd2
26 Rf1 Rxf2! 27 Rxf2 Qd2 0-1

Verlinsky took first place with a 13½-4½ score with the youngsters well behind.

Panov, who tied for fifth, won the city championship the next year by starting off with 11 straight wins and finishing a point ahead of Riumin. The event, held in modest quarters at Sofik, later the Central House of Art Workers, attracted spectators that included poet Susanna Mar and playwright V. Volkenshtein — which must have impressed Panov, who eventually wrote plays and poetry and had his first chess book, *Ataka* (Attack), published two years later. But Panov was upset that his new title of Moscow champion did not carry with it the status of master. This showed, he said, “how imperfect the qualification system was then.”

“I was 22 and very impressionable. As champion of Moscow I had a moral right” to the master title. So he challenged Grigoriev to a master-match in November and December with the understanding that the title of city champion was at stake. But the older generation had a few surprises for the younger in closed, cramped positions.

C41 Philidor's Defense
Match, fifth game, Moscow, 1929
white Vasily Panov,
black Nikolai Grigoriev

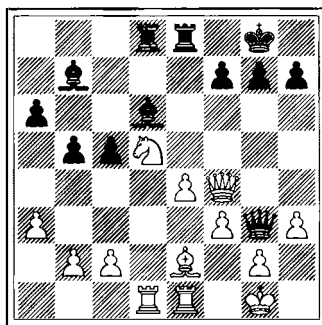
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nc3 Nbd7
5 Be2 Be7 6 h3

Black's cramped opening can not be punished with such quiet play.

6 ... c6 7 Be3 Qc7 8 Qd2 0-0 9 0-0 Re8
10 Rad1 Bf8 11 Rfe1 a6 12 a3 b5 13 Nh2
Bb7 14 f3 Rad8 15 Nf1 exd4! 16 Bxd4
c5!

Forceful play by Grigoriev who also beat Goglidze and Mikhail Makogonov in matches. Now 17 Bf2 b4 18 axb4 cxb4 19 Na2 d5 surrenders the initiative.

17 Bxf6 Nxf6 18 Ne3 d5! 19 Ncxd5 Nxd5
20 Nxd5 Qg3 21 Qf4 Bd6!



After
21 ... Bd6

Many years later Panov heard a grand-master complain of being out of form. “I was out of form my entire life!” he replied. However, he clearly overlooked the strength of this move when he allowed 18 ... d5. Now 22 Qxg3 Bxg3 23 Rf1 kills the kingside attack but loses a piece to 23 ... Bxd5.

22 Qg4 Bxd5 23 exd5 Qh2+ 24 Kf2 h5
25 Qh4 Bf4 0-1

Grigoriev won the match 6-3 with three draws, and took the Moscow title for

the fourth time. A disappointed Panov watched as other young masters — Kan, Riumin, Sergei Belavenets and Mikhail Udovich — passed him by and became masters. But Alekhine, who never lost his intense interest in his old country, mentioned Panov as he noted in the Czech newspaper *Narodni Listy* that “the level of modern Russian players has risen.”

Levenfish, meanwhile, had returned to Leningrad to find a new generation there: Botvinnik, Alatortsev, Andrei Batuyev, Lisitsyn, Ravinsky, Ragozin, Chekhover and Lenya Savitsky. Savitzky had a prodigious memory — he committed Alekhine’s *My Best Games* to memory — and might have been a great talent. But he died of an incurable heart

ailment just at the dawn of his strength in 1934. Savitsky was not the only tragic case among the Leningrad youngsters. “Perhaps the most gifted,” Levenfish wrote, was the multitalented Pavel Ostrovsky. He simultaneously attended the Leningrad Conservatory and the physics-mathematics department of Leningrad University. Great success was predicted for Ostrovsky in both math and music and he was soon a master — and considered on a par with Botvinnik. “His fate was tragic,” Levenfish said. On July 3, 1929, Pavlusha Ostrovsky drowned while swimming near Krestovsky island. He was buried at Novodevichy Monastery next to the grave of Tchigorin.

5

The New Soviet Man

In time to come, I tell them, we'll be equal to anyone living now. If cripples, then, no matter, we will have just been run over by "New Man" in the wagon of his "Plan."— Boris Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago*

The most important figure in the middle decades of Soviet chess seemed like an unlikely cultural hero in the land of Lenin and Stalin: Mikhail Moiseyevich Botvinnik was the son of well-to-do Jewish parents who were bourgeois enough to employ a cook and a maid in their large, seven-room apartment in an elevator building on Leningrad's most fashionable street, Nevsky Prospekt.

Botvinnik's father, a dental technician from a small Byelorussian town near Minsk, moved to St. Petersburg where he met Botvinnik's mother, a dentist and radical who was exiled to Siberia for two years after the failed Revolution of 1905. Two of Botvinnik's four uncles and an aunt left for America before World War I, but his parents remained and lived in relative luxury until Botvinnik's father left the family for a noblewoman. After that Botvinnik lived with his mother and brother in much more modest Nevsky quarters, at No. 85 in a communal flat, sharing a 10-meter-long room with seven families.

"Mischa" discovered chess at 12, and lied about his age a year later to get into the St. Petersburg Assembly, which was limited to players 16 and older. "My parents were categorically against my playing chess," Botvinnik recalled in his memoirs. But he progressed quickly, going from third category to

first in two years, and was soon among the best players in the city.

C29 Vienna Game
Leningrad Championship,
semifinals, 1926
white Abram Rabinovich,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 f4 d5 4 fxe5 Nxe4
5 Nf3 Bb4

This is usually delayed until after White advances his d-pawn, *e.g.*, 5 ... Bg4 6 Be2 Nc6 7 d4 Bb4. Then 8 Qd3 Bf5 9 Qe3 was played in Polyak–David, Moscow Championship, 1922.

After Black went pawn grabbing with 9 ... Ba5?! 10 0–0 Nxc3? 11 bxc3 Bxc2 White had a fierce attack with 12 Ba3 Ne7 13 Ng5 Bg6 14 e6 f6 15 Nf7! and won after 15 ... Bxf7 16 exf7+ Kxf7 17 Bg4 Re8 18 Be6+ Kg6 (18 ... Kf8 19 Rxf6+ mates) 19 Qg3+ Kh6 20 Rxf6+! 1–0.

6 Qe2 Bxc3 7 bxc3

More in keeping with White's sixth move was 7 dxc3 and 0–0–0.

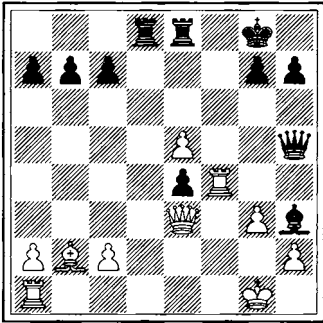
7 ... 0–0 8 Qe3 f6 9 d4?

Here the consistent idea was 9 c4 and Bb2. White's idea of playing Bd3 loses too much time.

9 ... fxe5 10 Bd3 exd4 11 cxd4 Re8
12 Ne5 Qh4+ 13 g3 Qh5 14 0-0 Nc6
15 Bxe4?

Leading to a quick finish thanks to White's vulnerable light squares and first rank. Better was 15 Nxc6 and 16 Ba3.

15 ... dxe4 16 Bb2 Bxe5 17 dxe5 Bh3
18 Rf4 Rad8!



After
18 ... Rad8

19 Re1 Rd1 20 Rxe4 Rf8! 21 Qb3+ Kh8
22 Qc4

This was the only way to avoid ...Rf1+ mating but ...

22 ... Qf3 0-1

From his early years in chess, Botvinnik had a reputation for being strong-willed, independent and difficult to get along with. "At the time everyone in Leningrad was a pupil of Romanovsky," he recalled. "But I did not go to that club, for which Romanovsky took a dislike to me." The older generation was jealous of him, Botvinnik wrote. In fact, Romanovsky did not think much of Botvinnik, saying: "He combines weakly, plays boringly and waits for opponents' mistakes." Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky showed his feelings towards the youngster in the Eighth Soviet Championship when he played out a king and rook versus king and rook

endgame and let it be known he wanted to torture Botvinnik until the 150th move. Only the intervention of the tournament committee ended the game as a draw at move 102.

Botvinnik's real teachers were not the masters he sometimes cited — Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky, Abram Model and Ilya Rabinovich — but books, which were inexpensive but often hard to come by. At 13 he acquired his first book, a bound volume of Mikhail Tchigorin's *Shakhmatny Listok* for 1876–7. José Capablanca's games were specially influential, and Botvinnik, a hater of blitz chess, envied his quick sight while developing a phenomenal positional instinct that rivaled the Cuban's.

"A Soviet Alekhine"

Botvinnik (born August 17, 1911) got his first taste of international chess at 15. In the fall of 1926 the Swedish Chess Union, taking what was considered in Russia to be a political risk, invited a Leningrad team to play a double-round, 12-board match with a Stockholm contingent on the ninth anniversary of the October Revolution. This was a major event: Aside from Rabinovich's appearance at Baden-Baden and Bogolyubov's 1925–1926 tournaments, no Soviet player had competed abroad. Yakov Rokhlin carefully got the required paperwork approvals and put together a team headed by Ilyin-Genevsky. He telegraphed the Swedes that everything was set.

But two or three days before the match was scheduled to begin, a "stunned" Rokhlin was told that no passports would be available for the team without special instructions from Moscow. He rushed to see Ilyin-Genevsky, who used his *sviazi*. Ilyin-Genevsky took Rokhlin to the Smolny Institute, the Communist headquarters on the far side of the city near the Okhta Bridge, to see Sergei Kirov, the powerful Leningrad Party boss.

Kirov greeted them “warmly” and listened to them for about 10 minutes, Rokhlin recalled. Early the next morning Rokhlin got a knock on his apartment door from a uniformed officer who told him to come quickly to the Party executive committee office, where he was given 12 passports.

The Soviet team was greeted in Stockholm by the city’s mayor on November 2 and Arvid Kubbel thanked the hosts in fluent Swedish. The teams were relatively balanced: The Leningraders were missing some of their best players, including Levenfish and Romanovsky, while their opposition was virtually the Swedish national team. On fifth board two future champions battled it out — Botvinnik and 22-year-old Gosta Stoltz. Botvinnik scored a win and a draw.

The hero of the team was Model. After the first round ended in a 6–6 tie, the Leningraders were leading 6–5 with only his game left. Model twice offered a draw but his opponent only had eyes for the crystal vase winner’s prize. Finally Model sacrificed his queen dramatically to force a draw and secure victory for the team by 12½–11½. Ludwig Collijn, president of the Swedish Chess Federation, congratulated the Leningraders and called Botvinnik “a future Soviet Alekhine.” The young student acquired two Western goods on the trip: a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, which became a Botvinnik trademark, and a Borsalino hat, which did not. The trip also made a lasting impression: When Boris Gulko and his wife applied for exit visas nearly 55 years later, Botvinnik said he “told them that I, too, could have remained in Stockholm in 1926. But,” Botvinnik added, “I didn’t and it did not turn out badly.”

In the Fifth Soviet Championship, held in 1927, 16-year-old Botvinnik tied for fifth place with an elusive strategic style. His firm personality and rigid views were also becoming known. Two years later, when Botvinnik qualified for another Soviet Championship semifinals, Nikolai Grigoriev acted on behalf

of the tournament organizers when he proposed that Ilyin–Genevsky be seeded into it. All the other, roughly 40 semifinalists agreed to admit the by-then almost legendary founder of Soviet chess — except for 18-year-old Botvinnik, who said rules were rules. Ilyin–Genevsky immediately left the tournament site.

One of his best games from the 1927 tournament was lost for years until found in Botvinnik’s papers and published in 64 in 1990:

E18 Queen’s Indian Defense
Fifth Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1927
white Vladimir Makogonov,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 b6 4 g3 Bb7
 5 Bg2 Be7 6 0–0 0–0 7 Nc3 Ne4 8 Qc2
 Nxc3 9 Qxc3 f5

Botvinnik was under the Dutch Defense influence of Model. He got a poor game against Freiman later in the tournament after 10 Rdl Bf6 11 Qe3 Qe8 12 Bd2 d6 13 Bc3 Nd7 14 Rd2 Be4 15 Ng5 Bxg2 16 Kxg2 Bxg5 17 Qxg5 Nf6? 18 f3! and lost.

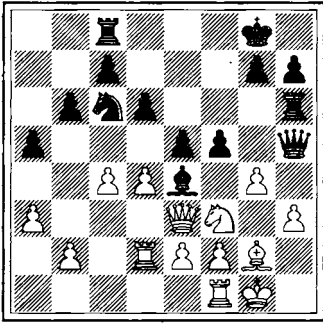
10 Be3 Bf6 11 Rad1 Qe8 12 Qc1 Nc6
 13 Bf4

Makogonov played indecisively, wrote Botvinnik, who recommended 14 d5 Ne7 15 dxe6.

13 ... Rc8 14 Bg5 d6 15 Bxf6?! Rxf6
 16 Qc3 Qh5 17 Qa3 Rh6 18 h3 a5 19 Rd2
 Nb4! 20 Qb3 Be4! 21 a3 Nc6 22 Qe3

“Late!” Botvinnik wrote of the intended Qg5 defense. He added that after 22 ... e5 Black can meet 23 Qg5 with 23 ... Qxg5 24 Nxg5 Bxg2 25 Kxg2 Nxd4.

22 ... e5 23 g4?



After 23 g4

A final oversight. White would get a bad game with 23 d×e5 N×e5 24 Rcl Rf8, threatening 25 ... B×f3 26 e×f3 f4 27 g×f4 Rg6.

23 ... f×g4 24 Q×e4 g×h3! 0–1

White had counted on 24 ... g×f3 25 Q×f3 but after the text he can not allow 25 Bh1 h2+ or other moves which permit ...f×g2.

Botvinnik had a mixture of supreme self-confidence, willingness to inflict severe self-criticism, and enormous pride in his games. In 1988 a future grandmaster, Jeroen Piket, visited Moscow's Central Chess Club and analyzed some positions in the celebrated grandmaster room with the retired world champion. Botvinnik expressed surprise that the young Dutchman had not studied his obscure early games: "I have the impression that you do not know of my game with Yuriev from the Championship of the Union of Metallurgists in 1927."

**D60 Queen's Gambit Declined
Metallurgists' Tradeunion
Championship, Leningrad, 1927–1928**
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Boris Yuriev

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 d5 4 Bg5 Be7
5 e3 0–0 6 Nc3 Nbd7 7 Bd3

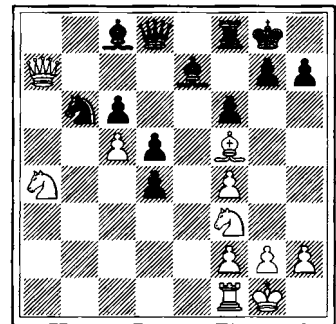
While virtually everyone else adopted pass-moves such as 7 Rcl, Botvinnik con-

tinued to play 7 Bd3 d×c4 8 B×c4 c5. Yuriev picks a defense, 7 ... a6, which became briefly popular because of the Capablanca–Alekhine match — but against 7 Rcl. For the first time in his long career, Botvinnik had worked out an opening line in advance:

7 ... a6 8 c5! c6 9 b4 a5 10 a3 a×b4
11 a×b4 R×a1 12 Q×a1 b6 13 Bf4!

Yuriev, a factory engineer, was a strong amateur who scored 2–0 in the Stockholm match but later gave up chess for a career that led to an Order of Lenin. Here he gets a cramped position thanks to Botvinnik's careful control of open lines.

13 ... b×c5 14 b×c5 Nh5 15 Qa7! N×f4
16 e×f4 f6 17 0–0 e5 18 Bf5! e×d4
19 Na4 Nb6!?

After
19 ... Nb6

White's positional play was based on 19 ... N×c5 20 B×c8 N×a4 21 Be6+, winning a piece. This game was published in *Leningradskaya Pravda* in 1928 and promptly forgotten. When Ilya Kan unwittingly repeated the moves in the 14th Soviet Championship 17 years later, Botvinnik played 20 B×c8 and won that game too.

20 c×b6 B×f5 21 N×d4 Bd7 22 f5 Qc8
23 Ne6 B×e6 24 Q×e7 B×f5 25 b7 Qb8
26 Nc5 Rf7

Or 26 ... Re8 27 Q×e8+! Q×e8
28 Na6.

27 Qe2 Kf8 28 Qa6 Re7 29 Qa8 Re8
30 Qxb8 Rxb8 31 Ra1 1-0

Botvinnik's memoirs cultivated a myth about life as a Soviet player that was later repeated by his rivals, students and successors, including David Bronstein, Viktor Korchnoi, Anatoly Karpov, Garry Kasparov and Gata Kamsky. The story they each told runs something like this: As a young player I was surrounded by enemies. People in high places were always trying to block my career. Only through a miraculous set of circumstances was I able to achieve the success I richly deserved.

In fact, Botvinnik was the first Soviet master to receive the benefits of a grateful government. During the cultural revolution, universities were open to the proletarians and peasants and admission for the children of the relatively well-off was severely limited. Yet Botvinnik obtained an excellent higher education and was one of the few Soviet players to have a serious academic career. Also, few young players were allowed to compete in adult Soviet events — even as late as the 1970s. But Botvinnik managed. Also, Botvinnik did not seem to suffer from the anti-Semitism that took a huge toll on many Jews. On the contrary, Botvinnik prospered: Once he was established as the leading Soviet player he had the authority — and *sviazi* — to travel, obtain scarce goods and otherwise enjoy a lifestyle other Soviet citizens could only dream of.

The Rival

If there was a threat to Botvinnik it was Nikolai Nikolayevich Riumin, the idol of the young players of Moscow — and a favorite of Krylenko's. Riumin (born September 5, 1908) made a striking impression: Tall, thin, slightly stooped with round shoulders and unusually long, slender arms. To some, "Kolya" Riumin resembled the poet Maxim

Gorky. He had a deep voice, thick eyebrows and jet-black hair "always tumbling down his forehead and Mongol-like cheekbones," as Alexander Kotov put it.

Riumin learned the moves at age 16 and became a first-category player within three years. Botvinnik called him a "very pleasant" person who "loved chess passionately." By the time Riumin was 20 he had finished second in the Moscow championship and soon supplanted Kan and Vasily Panov as the most promising youngster of the city. His style was tactical, original and often dramatic:

E21 Nimzo-Indian Defense Moscow Championship, 1930 white B. Popov, black Nikolai Riumin

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qb3 c5
5 Nf3

The Nimzo-Indian was very young in 1930 and the defects of trying to maintain the center were not clear. Here 5 ... Ne4 equalizes quickly.

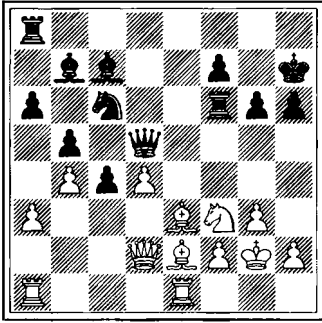
5 ... Nc6 6 e3 0-0 7 Be2 b6 8 0-0 Bb7
9 Nb5 d5! 10 a3 Ba5 11 Rd1 a6 12 cxd5
exd5 13 Nc3 c4 14 Qc2 b5 15 b4 Bc7
16 e4

White has drifted into a bad position and faced a strong attack after ...Re8 and ...Ne4.

16 ... dxe4 17 Nxe4 Nxe4 18 Qxe4 Re8
19 Qc2 Qd6 20 g3 Qd5 21 Be3 h6
22 Qd2 Re6 23 Re1 Rf6! 24 Kg2 Kh7
25 Qc2+ g6 26 Qd2? (see diagram)

Once he obtained the initiative, Riumin was deadly. "Attack was his poetry," Udovich wrote.

26 ... Rxf3!! 27 Bxf3 Qxf3+! 28 Kxf3
Nxd4+ 29 Kg4 Bc8+ 30 Kh4 Nf3 mate



After 26 Qd2

Kan, a positional stylist, said his friend played a completely different game of chess from the one he did. Once they gave a joint simultaneous exhibition, alternating moves. In the one game they lost, Kan played Bf1–c4 early on. When Riumin arrived at the board he did not like the move and played Bc4–f1. On the next turn, Kan played Bf1–c4 — and they never recovered from the loss of time.

The contrast between Riumin and Grigoriev was sharply drawn when they played a 1931 match that gave Riumin the master title. Grigoriev was “always outwardly calm and self-restrained, foppishly dressed, pedantically thorough,” spectator Udovich recalled. Even when his flag was hanging and several moves remained before the time control, he “painstakingly wrote the score in full notation.” This was “the complete opposite of the simply dressed, nervous, shaggy Nikolai Nikolaevich,” who played the most startling moves almost sheepishly. “Sitting at the board he loved to draw his hands into the sleeves of his jacket,” Udovich wrote. “At the moment when a move had to be made, his hand appeared, thin fingers firmly grasped some piece or pawn and carefully transferred it on the board.” Riumin won the match 6–1 with one draw. A year later *Shakhmaty v SSSR* called him “undoubtedly the strongest player in Moscow.”

While Botvinnik was a lone wolf in Leningrad, Riumin had a father figure in Benjamin Blumenfeld and chess brothers such as Udovich, Zhenya Zagoryansky and Alexander Chistyakov. They would get to-

gether at Moscow’s only summer chess club, in Gorky Park and argue about the finer points of the new and controversial King’s Indian Defense, testing it in dozens of blitz games. Riumin and Udovich would claim Black’s chances were good, while the others would favor White. Lawyer Blumenfeld, a passionate lover of chess analysis, would moderate. “It was his profession: to unearth the truth,” Udovich said. Among the moderator’s games is this one:

B17 Caro-Kann Defense

Tournament of Masters, Moscow, 1930

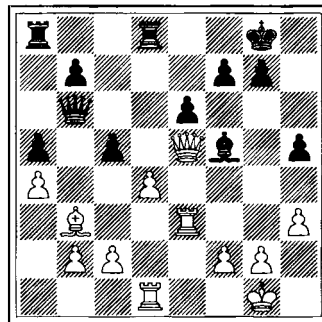
white Boris Verlinsky,

black Boris Blumenfeld

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7
5 Nf3 Ngf6 6 Nxf6+ Nxf6 7 Bc4 Bf5
8 Ne5 e6 9 0–0 Nd7 10 Bf4 Nxe5
11 Bxe5 Bd6

Simplifying based on 12 Bxg7 Rg8
13 Be5 Bxe5 14 dxe5 Bh3.

12 Qe2 Bxe5 13 Qxe5 0–0 14 Bb3 Qb6
15 Rfe1 Rfc8 16 Rad1 a5! 17 a4 Rd8
18 h3 h5 19 Re3? c5



After 19 ... c5

White’s center and queenside disintegrates and he gambles on a mating attack.

20 Rg3 g6 21 d5 Rac8 22 Bc4 Qb4
23 b3 Bxc2 24 Rc1 exd5 25 Rxc2 dxc4
26 Qxh5 Qe1+ 27 Kh2 cxb3 28 Re2 Qal
29 Re5 Rd6

This stops 30 R×g6+ and quickly ends the game.

**30 R×c5 Rcd8 31 Qh6 b2 32 Rh5 b1(Q)
33 Qh7+ Kf8 34 Rf3 Qg7 0–1**

The Gorky Park group would also argue about the sharp opening lines Blumenfeld originated, such as in the Meran and Benoni Defenses or Scotch Game. Then Blumenfeld would announce “Time for the oars!” and walk with them to his rowboat, at the Moscow River edge of the park and row off, telling stories about Aron Nimzovich, his former roommate, or his meetings with Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine.

Showdown

The inevitable clash between the young stars of Moscow and Leningrad came in the Seventh Soviet Championship set for October 10–November 11, 1931. Nikolai Krylenko continued to tinker with the Championship format. For the first time there were no “personal invitations” to players based on title or past results. Everyone had to qualify through a series of preliminary events held at the beginning of the year in Moscow, Leningrad and the republics. The 500 who competed were whittled down to 80, who played in 10 round-robin semifinals, with the top two in each advancing to the finals in Moscow. Among those who failed to make it that far were Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky, Grigoriev, Arvid Kubbel, Sergei Freiman and Blumenfeld.

But Riumin was added to the list of finalists at the last minute. And on the eve of the tournament, the names of two veterans, Solomon Gotthilf and Romanovsky, were suddenly dropped. Gotthilf, who had won a Leningrad masters tournament the previous year, was removed by the Chess Section for committing “an anti-Bolshevik act.” His crime was “opposition to the group,” a clumsy phrase which in this case

meant expressing the wish to live in a separate apartment and not in a dormitory like the rest of the finalists. Romanovsky, meanwhile, was indignant at the change in the list of participants — and the adding of someone to the tournament who had not qualified from the semifinals. So he returned his player’s document in protest. As punishment he was banned from the championship for a year. Romanovsky denied any wrongdoing but expressed his feeling of hopelessness by quoting the punchline to an old Russian joke, “Try to prove you’re not a camel.”

The finals was held simultaneously in Moscow with a Women’s Championship (won by Rubtsova), an Army tournament and a VTsSPS team tournament with 39 six-man teams (won by Leningrad electricians). About 450 players competed in the various events from morning to evening in the House of Unions and Polytechnic Museum. The finals regimen was grueling: 17 games in 17 days. Botvinnik lost in the first round to Ilyin-Genevsky and then in the seventh to Veniamin Sozin. Riumin held the lead most of the way, with sparkling games like this from the third round:

**D05 Queen’s Pawn Game
Seventh Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1931
white Nikolai Sorokin,
black Nikolai Riumin**

**1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 e3 c5 4 Bd3 Nc6
5 c3 Qc7 6 Nbd2 b6 7 Qe2 c×d4 8 e×d4
Nd5**

This move order for Black, threatening ...Nf4, became popular in the 1930s.

**9 g3 Be7 10 Nc4 Bb7 11 0–0 h5?! 12 Be4!
Nf6 13 Bf4 d6 14 Ng5!**

White’s sacrificial ideas such as Bg6 or d4–d5 give him the initiative and prompt Black’s 16th move.

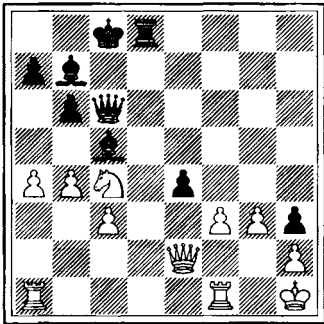
14 ... Nxe4 15 Nxe4 0–0–0 16 a4 g5!
17 Nxg5 e5 18 dxe5 Nxe5

Now 19 Nxe5 dxe5 20 Bxe5? Qc6 loses and 20 Be3 Rdg8 is risky.

19 Bxe5 dxe5 20 Nxf7 Qc6

The point of Black's play: he can force the opening of either the h-file (after ...h4) or the dangerous long diagonal (after f3/...e4).

21 f3 Bc5+ 22 Kg2 h4 23 Nxd8 h3+
24 Kh1 Rxd8 25 b4 e4!!?



After
25 ... e4

In postmortem analysis Riumin liked to quote matter-of-factly, "That which we know is limited. That which we don't is infinite." The postmortem for this game seemed to show an unending series of tactical problems for White — but he should still have won.

26 bxc5 Qxc5 27 Nd2

For example, with 27 fxe4 Black would have to prove his rook sacrifice was sound.

27 ... exf3 28 Nxf3 Rf8 29 Rf2

And here 29 Rael, with a threat to trade queens, was necessary. Black, with astonishing insouciance, now takes time to improve his king position.

29 ... a5 30 Rd1 Kb8 31 Re1 Ka7
32 Qe3 Re8!

On 33 Qxc5 Rxe1+ or 33 Qxe8 Qxf2 White is lost.

33 Qd2 Rd8! 34 Qe2 Rd3! 35 c4 Qd4
36 Qf1 Bc6 37 Re7+

Even at this point White had excellent chances — by pushing his g-pawn.

37 ... Kb8 38 Re8+ Ka7 39 Re7+ Kb8
40 g4? Rxf3! 41 Re8+ Ka7 42 Re7+ Ka6
43 c5+

Or 43 Rxf3 Bxf3+ 44 Qxf3 Qa1+ and mates.

43 ... Rd3+ 44 Kg1 Qxg4+ 45 Rg2
Qxg2+ 46 Qxg2 hxg2 0–1

"One of the most thrilling games in the history of chess," Kan wrote.

Botvinnik, however, had regained his balance and allowed only one draw in seven games to move into contention. With three rounds to go Riumin had 11½ points to Botvinnik's 11, followed by Bohatyrychuk, at a distant 8½. The race for first prize between two new names evoked extraordinary fan interest. A daily bulletin with a circulation of 10,000 appeared 20 times and copies quickly disappeared. Botvinnik later wrote a tournament book, the first for a Soviet Championship, with a press run of 6,200.

The Botvinnik–Riumin showdown in the 15th round, on the evening of November 9, was a turning point in Soviet chess. The winner would be the unofficial leader of the new generation, the most likely candidate for full government support in the international arena. "Already at the start of the round the entrance to the hall was closed to spectators," the tournament book said. And it seemed to Botvinnik that every player in Moscow, including hundreds who gathered in the foyer and outside the overflowing Polytechnic, was rooting for his opponent.

Botvinnik, pale and trying to act calm, revealed his inner tension with frequent glances at the clock and extremely slow moving of the pieces. Riumin's face "burned with a feverish flush" and he often had to write down his moves very carefully because his hands trembled, then he would jump up from the table and walk off stage.

D45 Queen's Gambit Declined Seventh Soviet Championship,

Moscow, 1931

white Mikhail Botvinnik,

black Nikolai Riumin

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bd3
Nbd7 6 0-0 Bd6 7 Nbd2 e5 8 e4!

This resembles the 33rd game of the first Karpov-Kasparov world championship match, which began 1 Nf3 d5 2 d4 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 c6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Qc2 Bd6 7 e4 and now 7 ... e5! 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 exd5 exd4 10 Nxd4 0-0 11 Be2 Nb6 and 12 ... Nbx d5 equalized.

8 ... 0-0 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 exd5 exd4

On the eve of the round, Riumin's friends urged him to play quietly. "You know you are playing Black," Zubarev told him. "And the tournament situation is such that Botvinnik must strive for complications." But as Udovich, another supporter, put it, "That wasn't in his character. Kolya didn't like to wait and maneuver." Yet maintaining symmetry is highly risky when you are Black.

11 Ne4 Nxe4 12 Bxe4 Nc5

A minor error which allows White to seize the initiative. After 12 ... Nf6 13 Bg5 Be7 Black should equalize (14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Nxd4 Qb6 with excellent play).

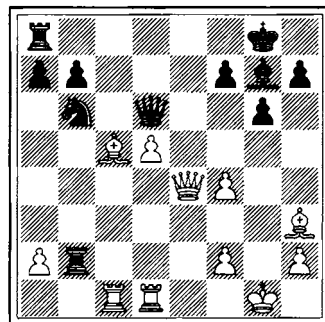
13 Bc2 Bg4 14 Qxd4 Bxf3 15 gxf3 Re8
16 Rd1 Re2

Panov called Riumin the first Soviet master of counterattack and here he conjures up enough tactics to confuse Botvinnik.

17 Bf5 g6 18 Bh3 Nd7! 19 Be3! Be5
20 Qc4 Rxb2

Here 21 d6! should have won but in mutual time trouble White allows his pawn to be blockaded.

21 Rac1? Nb6 22 Qe4 Qd6? 23 f4 Bg7
24 Bc5!



After 24 Bc5

Now Black's failure to play 22 ... Bd6 costs him the game.

24 ... Qd8 25 Be7 Qe8 26 d6 Qb5
27 d7 Nxd7 28 Bxd7 Qb6 29 Qe3 Qxe3
30 fxe3 Rxa2 31 Bc8 h5 32 Rd8+ Kh7
and 1-0

As Riumin stopped the clock, Botvinnik recalled hearing a familiar voice asking why Black had lost. "What time trouble!" Krylenko exclaimed from the audience. Botvinnik turned towards the Chess Section chairman. "Our eyes met"—and Krylenko turned his back and left the hall.

In the final two rounds Botvinnik scored a point and a half while a reeling Riumin managed only a half point. It was from this moment, Levenfish noted, "that the Botvinnik era, in essence, began."

The tournament also served to display the talent of other young players. Five of them earned the master title, including Vladimir

Seventh Soviet Championship, Moscow, October 10–November 11, 1931

	B	R	A	B	V	U	K	M	R	I	K	L	S	Z	G	S	B	K	<i>Score</i>
1. Botvinnik	X	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	13½–3½
2. Riumin	0	X	½	1	1	½	½	½	0	1	0	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	11½–5½
3–6. Alatortsev	0	½	X	0	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	0	1	1	1	½	1	0	10–7
3–6. Bohatyrchuk	½	0	1	X	0	0	½	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	10–7
3–6. Verlinsky	0	0	½	1	X	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	½	½	1	1	½	10–7
3–6. Udovich	0	½	0	1	0	X	1	1	0	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	10–7
7. Kan	0	½	½	½	1	0	X	0	½	1	1	0	½	½	1	1	½	1	9½–7½
8–9. Mazel	0	½	0	1	0	0	1	X	1	1	1	½	0	0	½	1	½	1	9–8
8–9. Rauzer	0	1	½	½	0	1	½	0	X	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	9–8
10–12. Ilyin-Genevsky	1	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	1	X	0	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	8½–8½
10–12. Kirillov	0	1	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	X	1	½	1	0	½	1	1	8½–8½
10–12. Lisitsyn	½	0	1	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	0	X	0	0	1	1	½	0	8½–8½
13. Sorokin	0	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	0	0	½	1	X	1	½	0	0	½	7–10
14. Zamikhovsky	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	0	0	1	0	X	½	1	1	1	6½–10½
15. Goglidze	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	½	½	X	0	1	1	6–11
16. Sozin	1	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	0	1	X	0	½	5½–11½
17–18. Budo	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	1	0	0	1	X	½	5–12
17–18. Kasparyan	0	0	1	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	½	X	5–12

Alatortsev, a combination-loving disciple of Romanovsky's. Alatortsev won his final three games en route to third place and convinced some observers that Botvinnik was not really the chess version of a New Soviet Man. Samuil Vainstein, in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, drew a curious comparison with Botvinnik, whose style was formed "exclusively under the influence of Western Europeans," like Capablanca, Euwe and Rubinstein. But Alatortsev, "on the other hand, is a brilliant representative of the Soviet chess style."

Leningrad's Blessing

Two years later the presidium of the Leningrad City Council agreed to turn over the former Markhlevsky House of Education on Liteiny Prospekt for a new club. From a storeroom of the tsars' Peterhof Palace the club received a set of "beautiful, old furniture" and it became the "first chess club in the country with a government financial base," said Rokhlin. He served as its first director, until his wife, a ballet soloist, had a chance to join the Bolshoi in Moscow, and Rokhlin turned over responsibilities to Ilyin-Genevsky.

Meanwhile, preparations for the first Soviet Championship in the city since 1925 were moving quickly. Alatortsev and 24-year-old Vsevolod Rauzer, who had just tied for first in the Ukrainian Championship, were invited at the very last minute when the Chess Section decided to increase the number of players from 18 to 20. The tournament was held at the Central House of Physical Culture on Khalturin Street in the shadow of the Hermitage. The tournament featured an odd time control—36 moves in two hours and 15 minutes—and a strong field. Only Nikolai Sorokin lacked the master title and he received it as a result of this tournament.

D05 Queen Pawn's Game Eighth Soviet Championship, Leningrad, 1933 *white* Nikolai Sorokin, *black* Sergei Freiman

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 e6 4 Bd3 Nbd7
5 Nbd2 Be7 6 0-0 0-0 7 b3 a5 8 Bb2
a4 9 c4 c5 10 Qc2 Qc7 11 Ne5

Sorokin, who grew up in Kiev, was the strongest player in Tbilisi and had won the championship of both Georgia and Transcaucasia. He chose direct attacking formations, like the Colle System, and often had excellent results.

11 ... a3? 12 Bc3 cxd4 13 exd4 dxc4
14 bxc4 b6 15 Rael Bb7

Black's eighth, ninth and 11th moves do not fit together well and he pins his hopes on pressure against the hanging pawns.

16 f4 Rfe8 17 Re3 Nf8 18 Rh3 g6
19 Ndf3 N8d7 20 Nxd7 Nxd7 21 Ne5
Nxe5?! 22 fxe5 Bf8 23 Qd2 Red8
24 Rf4!

Black has safeguarded g7 but there is no piece left to defend h7.

24 ... Bg7 25 Rfh4 h5 26 Rg3 Ba6
27 R×h5! B×c4 28 B×g6! f×g6 29 R×g6

The threat is Qh6-h7+ followed by Rf6+ or Bb4(+).

29 ... Rf8 30 h3 Rf1+ 31 Kh2 Rf5
32 Rh4 Kf8 33 Bb4+ Ke8 34 Bd6 Qf7
35 Rhg4 Ra7 36 Qb4! (*see diagram*)

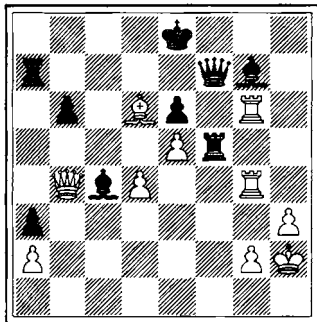
The queen comes in through the rear door (36 ... b5 37 Qc5).

36 ... Bxa2 37 Qb5+ Qd7 38 R×g7!! 1-0

On 38 ... Qxb5 mate follows 39 Rxa7.

Eighth Soviet Championship, Leningrad, August 16–September 9, 1933

	B	A	Le	Li	R	R	C	B	K	Ro	Ri	V	U	Sa	So	G	F	Z	D	K	Score
1. Botvinnik	X	1	1	1	½	1	½	0	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	14–5
2. Alatortsev	0	X	½	0	½	0	½	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13–6
3–5. Levenfish	0	½	X	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	0	1	½	½	0	12–7
3–5. Lisitsyn	0	1	½	X	½	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	12–7
3–5. I. Rabinovich	½	½	0	½	X	0	½	1	1	½	0	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	12–7
6. Rauzer	0	1	1	0	1	X	½	½	0	1	½	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	11½–7½
7. Chekover	½	½	0	0	½	½	X	1	1	1	1	0	½	0	1	1	0	1	1	½	11–8
8. Bohatyrychuk	1	0	0	0	0	½	0	X	1	0	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	10½–8½
9. Kan	½	½	0	1	0	1	0	0	X	1	1	0	½	½	0	1	0	1	1	1	10–9
10–11. Romanovsky	½	1	0	1	½	0	0	1	0	X	½	½	½	½	0	0	1	½	1	1	9½–9½
10–11. Riumin	1	0	0	1	1	½	0	½	0	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	9½–9½
12–13. Verlinsky	0	0	½	0	1	0	1	0	1	½	0	X	1	0	½	1	0	½	1	1	9–10
12–13. Udovich	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	9–10
14. Savitsky	0	0	0	1	½	0	1	0	½	½	½	1	0	X	1	1	1	½	0	0	8½–10½
15. Sorokin	0	0	½	0	0	1	0	½	1	1	½	½	½	0	X	0	1	0	½	½	7½–11½
16–17. Goglidze	½	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	0	1	X	1	½	½	0	7–12
16–17. Freiman	0	0	0	½	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	X	0	½	1	7–12
18. Zubarev	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	1	½	1	X	0	1	6½–12½
19. Duz-Khotimirsky	½	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	½	½	1	X	½	5½–13½
20. Kirillov	0	0	1	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	1	0	0	½	X	5–14



After 36 Qb4

Levenfish started with 8–4 but fell victim to time pressure. Botvinnik, who turned 22 on the second day of the tournament, won one of his greatest games, a 29-move crush of Rauzer with the Black pieces that earned him the brilliancy prize. Always self-critical, he exclaimed to Romanovsky, “Finally I played a game I liked!” Alatortsev, meanwhile, played perhaps *his* finest game:

E17 Queen’s Indian Defense
Eighth Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1933
white Vladimir Alatortsev,
black Viktor Goglidze

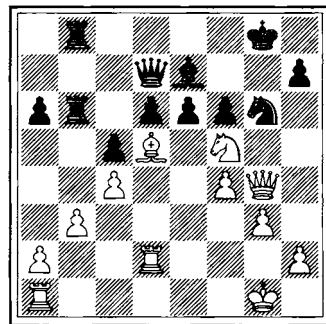
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 Bb7
 5 Bg2 Be7 6 0–0 0–0 7 Qc2 c5 8 dxc5
 bxc5 9 Nc3 d6 10 Rd1 Qc8? 11 Bg5 Rd8
 12 Nb5!

The problems with Black’s 10th move become apparent: the intended defense of d6, 12 ... Qc6, allows 13 a4! a6 14 Nh4! d5 15 cxd5 exd5 16 Nf5 Bf8 17 Bxf6!, Then 17 ... Qxf6 18 Nc7 Ra7 19 Nxd5 or 17 ... gxf6 18 Nc3 Qe6 19 Ne3! and wins.

12... a6 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Nc3 Nd7 15 e4
 Rb8 16 Qe2 Bc6 17 Rd2 Rb6 18 Nh4
 Qb7?

Black is seduced by the plan of pressure along the b-file and could be punished immediately by 19 Nd5. He should have brought his knight to f8 last move so he could meet 18 Nh4 with 18 ... Ng6.

19 f4 Rb8 20 b3 Qc8 21 Nd5! Bxd5
 22 exd5 Nf8 23 Nf5 Qd7 24 dxe6 fxe6
 25 Qg4+ Ng6 26 Bd5!!



After 26 Bd5

The bishop can not be taken because 27 Nh6+ would win the queen, and 26 ... Kf7 27 Bxe6+! Qxe6 28 Nh6+ does the same.

26 ... Kf8 27 Nxe7 Kxe7 28 Re1! e5
 29 f5 Nf8 30 Qg7+ Ke8 31 Qxf6 Qe7
 32 Qh8! Qg5 33 Rf2 a5

Black has no useful moves.

34 f6! R8b7 35 f7+ Ke7 36 Qg8 Qh6
 37 Bxb7 and Black resigned shortly.

But Alatortsev scored only two and a half points in seven games with the Leningraders and had begun a long career of losing to Botvinnik, who took first prize by one point. Botvinnik recalled that during the last round several of the young players gathered around B.P. Posern, a top Party official in Leningrad and aide to Sergei Kirov, and asked for help in playing foreign opponents. “Now this has some point to it,” Posern said approvingly. “We will back you.” This was particularly significant because in 1934 the Communist Party Central Committee was reorganized, ostensibly for the purpose of making it a more efficient policy-making body. One result was that cultural affairs — which included chess and sports — came under the authority of the same officials responsible for propaganda and, in some cases,

ideology. Chess was being more tightly intertwined with Communism.

Contacts with the West were increasing. In March and April 1932 a national “workers team” from Germany played matches with Soviet trade union teams in Moscow, Leningrad, Tula and other cities. Telegraph matches between Leningrad and workers’ chess clubs in various countries, including Austria, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland were held that year. But Krylenko apparently still harbored some doubts about exposing his players to capitalism. According to Bohatyrchuk, a Soviet team, with him as a member, was organized to compete in the world chess federation’s (FIDE) Olympiad in Folkestone in 1933. But this decision to challenge “bourgeois chess” was canceled without explanation.

Botvinnik versus Flohr

There was, however, another way of showing that — in chess, at least — the Soviets had fulfilled Stalin’s slogan “to catch up with the West and surpass it.” Krylenko authorized Ilyin-Genevsky, then counselor at the Soviet embassy in Prague, to open negotiations with Czech star Salo Flohr for a match with Botvinnik in the Soviet Union. Flohr, born in a Galician town that became part of the Ukraine after World War II, was at the peak of his career and a legitimate world-championship challenger. A match between Botvinnik and the brilliant, diminutive positional player would be a cultural showcase for the USSR. Botvinnik claimed that the Muscovite members of Higher Soviet of Physical Culture tried to kill the match on the grounds that Flohr would win easily. But Krylenko was adamant.

Krylenko put the players up at the National Hotel in Moscow and gave them *carte blanche* at the hotel restaurant. He obtained the Hall of Columns in the House of Unions for the games, with 15 demonstration boards

set up in the side rooms around it. Botvinnik studied 110 of Flohr’s games and concluded that the Czech had drastically altered his style in the previous three years, from seeking combinations to favoring endgames. “I personally prefer to sacrifice other player’s pawns,” Flohr admitted — prompting Romanovsky to describe him in print as a super-cautious player. Flohr replied in 64, saying he was simply undergoing the “unavoidable process” that all young players go through on the way to chess maturity. For example, he said the sixth game of the match would have been routinely given up as a draw twenty to twenty-five years earlier.

E38 Nimzo-Indian Defense Match, sixth game, Moscow, 1933 *white* Salo Flohr, *black* Mikhail Botvinnik

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5
5 dxc5 Na6

A now-discredited line that has been replaced with the elastic 5 ... 0–0. Then 6 Nf3 can be met by 6 ... Na6! and Black will control e4 since f2–f3 is not an option.

6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Qxc3 Nxc5 8 f3! d6 9 e4
e5 10 Be3 Qc7 11 Ne2 Be6 12 Qc2!

Improving on the then-book 12 Ng3 by clearing c3 for the knight’s route to d5.

12 ... 0–0 13 Nc3 Rfc8 14 Be2 a6 15 Rcl
Ncd7 16 Qd2! Qb8! 17 Nd5 Bxd5
18 cxd5 Rxc1+ 19 Qxc1 Qd8 20 0–0 Rc8
21 Qd2 Qc7 22 Rcl Qxc1+ 23 Qxc1
Rxc1+ 24 Bxc1 Kf8

Botvinnik admitted later he did not see how he could lose this endgame and “carelessly I even offered Flohr a draw.” But White has a solid edge thanks to the bishops “and, most important of all, a safe position” — that is, one he could play without the slightest risk of losing.

25 Kf2 Ke7 26 Be3 Kd8 27 Ke1 Kc7
28 Kd2 Nc5 29 b4 Ncd7 30 g3 Nb6
31 Kc2 Nbd7?

Botvinnik said later he missed the freeing idea of 31 ... Na4! 32 Kb3 b5. Flohr said the same idea deserved attention at move 29.

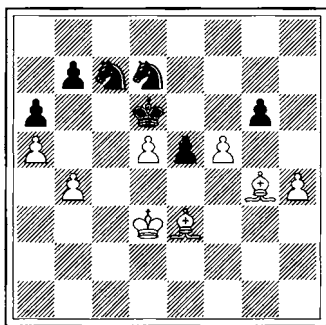
32 a4! Nb6 33 a5 Ncd7 34 Bc1 Kd8
35 Bb2 Ne8 36 Kd2 Nc7 37 Ke3 Ke7
38 Bf1 Nb5 39 h4 Nc7 40 Bh3 Ne8
41 f4 f6 42 Bf5! g6 43 Bh3

White has a variety of winning plans including f5xg6 and the creation of a passed h-pawn. Black needs to meet f5 with ...g6-g5 and can not afford 43 ... Ng7 44 f5 g5 45 hxg5 fxg5 46 f6+! Nxf6 47 Bc8. Note also that on fxe5 Black cannot retake with his knight because of Bc8!.

43 ... h6 44 Bc1 Ng7 45 fxe5! dxe5
46 Kf3 h5 47 Be3 Kd6 48 Bh6 Ne8
49 g4 hxg4+ 50 Bxg4 Nc7

The knight never belonged here. With 50 ... Ke7 Black has chances (51 Be3 Nd6 52 Bc5? Nxc5 53 bxc5 Nc4).

51 Be3 Nb5 52 Ke2 Nc7 53 Kd3 f5
54 exf5



After 54 exf5

Black was in Zugzwang last move but he could have won a tempo and eased his defense by inserting 54 ... Nf6 here before 55 ... gxf5. The rest is lost:

54 ... gxf5 55 Bxf5 Nxd5 56 Bd2 N7f6
57 Kc4 Kc6 58 Bg6 b5+ 59 Kd3 Ne7
60 Be4+!

The second sealed move of the game and a killer: 60 ... Kd6 allows 61 Bb7 while 60 ... Kc7 is met strongly by 61 Bg5. Flohr, who Botvinnik said bore a strong stylistic resemblance to Tigran Petrosian and Anatoly Karpov, considered this the best end-game he ever played.

60 ... Ned5 61 Bg5 Nh5 62 Bf3 Ng3
63 Bd2! Kd6 64 Bg4 Nf6 65 Bc8 Kc6
66 Be1 e4+ 67 Kd4 Ngh5 68 Bf5 Kd6
69 Bd2 1-0

More than fifty years later a Russian computer analysis indicated Botvinnik had become one of the world's top players as early as 1930, when only Alekhine and Nimzovich were his superiors. By 1933 Botvinnik was the strongest player in the world, and Flohr only number six, this analysis claimed. Nevertheless, in 1933 Flohr believed Botvinnik was just "a pleasant youth who from the very beginning was convinced that the match would be lost." The Russian seemed to be living up to that prognosis as he trailed by two points when the match shifted to Leningrad. "The chess commentators 'buried' me and made Flohr out to be a genius," Botvinnik recalled in his memoirs.

But the mood swiftly changed in the Bolshoi Hall of the Leningrad Conservatory, where Botvinnik's close friend, Grigory Goldberg, ran the second half of the match. "Grisha" Goldberg, a head taller and three years older than Botvinnik, was a talented amateur as well as a first-category player in table tennis, which was just catching on in the Soviet Union. Most of all Goldberg had *sviazi* that enabled him to become a big-time organizer, and Botvinnik's comeback in Leningrad rivaled Moscow 1925 in the amount of public attention it received.

**Botvinnik–Flohr Match,
Moscow–Leningrad, November 28–December 19, 1933**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Botvinnik	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	½	6–6
Flohr	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	0	0	½	½	6–6

When Botvinnik won the ninth game there was “a thunderous ovation which lasted 15 minutes, marked by roars of “Botvinnik!” and “Flohr!” The Czech lost again in the 10th, “one of the weakest games of my chess career,” he wrote. “I can’t give any explanation of my level of play in that game.” But later Botvinnik’s bitter rival, David Bronstein, wondered why Flohr, who so rarely lost, had collapsed: “There must have been a reason for this and there was! Goldberg’s help was instrumental in finding a shop where Flohr could ‘buy’ a beautiful fur coat very cheaply!” Already speculation about the throwing of big games was common in the Soviet Union.

The 11th game was drawn and the 12th was agreed drawn in advance, at Flohr’s suggestion, according to Botvinnik. So the match ended in a tie — an acceptable result and a fine example of “big chess.” Krylenko arranged for a book on the match, written by Botvinnik, to be published one month after the final game; “unheard-of speed,” Botvinnik said.

Krylenko also organized a Botvinnik–Riumin exhibition game on December 18, 1932, with the moves reported on radio, accompanied by commentary from Grigoriev. In between moves Moscow stage actors read chess-themed works, such as a part of Ilf and Petrov’s *The Twelve Chairs* and a poem called “Chess” by Alexander Bezymensky.

The Chess Section staged another show after Alatortsev and Grigory Lisitsyn tied for first in the 1933–34 Leningrad Championship. The co-champions played a “living chess” game on May 1, 1934, before 3,000 fans on the square outside St. Isaac’s Cathed-

ral. The pieces were played by smiling young girls, and “the intoxicating smell of the first petals interfered with concentration,” Alatortsev said, leading to a draw by agreement.

Chess on Parade

That year’s Moscow–Leningrad match was played on 220 boards of chess and checkers. Two months later the majority of the Moscow team appeared in a huge “physical culture parade” on Red Square. Led by standard-bearer Zubarev, the players marched in white tennis outfits with berets of blue and red. As result, each group of 16 looked like a chessboard. But an NKVD worker panicked when he realized the colors were *also* the blue, white and red of the tsar’s flag. People were shot for lesser mistakes. Fortunately, Stalin, standing in the reviewing stand, waved his approval.

Meanwhile, a broader test of Soviet progress loomed in the visit in the summer of 1934 by another world class player, Max Euwe of the Netherlands, and his second Hans Kmoch. Euwe, who had just tied for second at a strong tournament in Zürich, was preparing for his world championship match with Alekhine in 1935. Euwe and Kmoch made a sweeping tour of the Soviet Union. They arrived in Moscow as Krylenko’s guest, visited Sevastopol and the Yalta resort on the Black Sea, and toured Odessa. Then they traveled to Leningrad for a 12-player international, organized by Ivan Golubev under the auspices of the Leningrad *profsoyuz*y. The event was known simply as

“The Tournament of Masters with the participation of Euwe.”

Euwe felt that with a somewhat weaker field than Zürich he would be happy with a 7–4 score. Actually he was lucky to make 50 percent. He beat Kan nicely in the first round but only won one additional game, against Vitaly Chekhover. Riumin crushed Euwe in one of his finest games and Rabinovich also won from him.

Euwe noticed some characteristics of his hosts that distinguished them from the Europeans he usually faced: Soviets placed a high value on getting an edge out of the opening and were good tacticians. Also, they had unusually high reserves of energy and “they don’t make short draws.” Characteristic of his tough games was:

E17 Queen’s Indian Defense
Leningrad International, 1934
white Max Euwe,
black Vladimir Alatorstsev

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 Bb7
 5 Bg2 Be7 6 0–0 0–0 7 b3 d6 8 Bb2
 Nbd7 9 Re1 Rb8

Both players are well aware of the nuances of the Queen’s Indian: White avoids Nc3, which justifies ...Ne4, and Black, with his last “very strong move” in Euwe’s words, protects his bishop against tactical tricks involving Qc2 and Ng5.

10 Nc3 Ne4 11 Qc2 Nxc3 12 Bxc3 Bf6
 13 Rad1 Qe7 14 e4 e5?! 15 Bh3!

White threatens Bxd7. Black’s reply might have horrified Siegbert Tarrasch: He gives up the center and the two-bishops and accepts a backward pawn on what soon becomes an open file.

15 ... exd4 16 Nxd4 Bxd4! 17 Bxd4 Ne5
 18 Bg2 f6 19 f4 Nf7 20 Re3 Rfe8
 21 Rdel c5! 22 Bb2 Qd7 23 h3 Re7

White’s e4-pawn will become as weak as the d6-pawn, a dynamic balance increasingly common in Soviet games of the 1930s. Euwe said he should now have continued 24 Qc3 and g3–g4–g5, targeting f6 and g7.

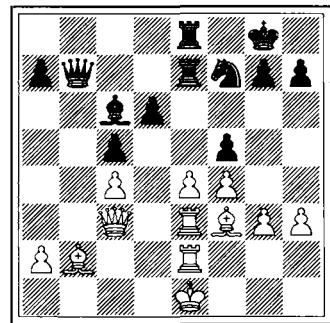
24 Kh2? Rbe8 25 Qc3 Qc7 26 Bf3

Here 26 g4 allowed 26 ... d5!. White tries to find the safest spot for his king before proceeding.

26 ... Bc6 27 Qd3 Qb7 28 Kg1 Qa8
 29 Kf2 Qb7 30 R1e2 Qa8 31 Ke1 Qb7
 32 Kd2 b5 33 Ke1

Correct was 33 Kc1 despite the possible open b-file.

33 ... bxc4 34 bxc4 f5! 35 Qc3



After 35 Qc3

The problem with White’s king is shown by 35 exf5 Bxf3 36 Rxe7 Rxe7 37 Rxe7 Qxe7+. Now Black gets the upper hand

35 ... Qb4! 36 Qxb4 cxb4 37 e5 Bxf3
 38 Rxf3 dxe5 39 Rfe3 e4 40 g4 Nh6!
 41 gx f5 Nxf5 42 Rb3 e3?

Just as the tide had begun to turn Black gives up a pawn too early. After 42 ... a5 43 a3 Rb7 he has real winning chances.

43 Rxb4 Rd8 44 Be5! Red7 45 Rb1 Rd3
 46 Reb2 Rd2 47 Rb8 Rxb8 48 Rxb8+
 Kf7 49 Rb2 Rxb2 50 Bxb2 Ke6 51 Ba3
 a6 52 Bc5 Nh4? 53 Bxe3 Draw

**“Tournament of Masters with the Participation of Euwe,”
Leningrad, August 17–September 1, 1934**

	B	Ro	Ri	Ra	K	E	K	U	A	Li	Le	C	Score
1. Botvinnik	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	7½–3½
2–3. Romanovsky	½	X	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	7–4
2–3. Riumin	½	½	X	1	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	1	7–4
4. I. Rabinovich	0	1	0	X	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	6½–4½
5. Kan	½	½	½	½	X	0	1	½	½	1	½	½	6–5
6. Euwe	½	½	0	0	1	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	5½–5½
7–8. Kmoch	0	0	1	½	0	½	X	1	0	1	1	0	5–6
7–8. Udovich	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	X	1	½	½	1	5–6
9–10. Alatorsev	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	0	X	½	1	0	4½–6½
9–10. Lisitsyn	1	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	X	½	1	4½–6½
11. Levenfish	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	X	½	4–7
12. Chekhover	0	0	0	½	½	0	1	0	1	0	½	X	3½–7½

Black still had winning chances after 52 ... Nd6! according to Euwe.

The tournament drew an estimated 20,000 spectators to the Concert Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic. It was also regarded as a second international test, after the Flohr match, for Botvinnik, who sometimes seemed to think he was indestructible. In one tournament, possibly this one, he fell ill with a fever of over 102 degrees and was diagnosed with a parathyroid disease. But Botvinnik refused to drop out. “It’s an infectious disease!” said his friend, Viktor Malkin, a doctor. “No one got sick,” Botvinnik shrugged. After Kmoch lost to him in this tournament the visiting Austrian wrote “Botvinnik sees everything—and then a little bit more.” Even on his off days he had staying power:

**E35 Queen’s Indian Defense
Leningrad, 1934
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Vitaly Chekhover**

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 b6 3 d4 Bb7 4 Qc2 d5
5 Bg5 e6 6 cxd5 exd5 7 e3 Be7 8 Bd3
h6 9 Bf4 0–0 10 Ng2 c5 11 a3 Nc6

12 h3 cxd4 13 exd4 Bd6 14 Bxd6 Qxd6
15 0–0 Rac8 16 Bf5! Rce8 17 Rad1 Re7
18 Qd2 Na5

This maneuver—to e3 as it turns out—looks impressive but the solid 18 ... Rfe8 is more promising.

19 Ng3! Nc4 20 Qc1 Ne3 21 fxe3 Qxg3
22 Rf3 Qb8 23 Bb1 Ne4 24 Bxe4 dxe4
25 Rf5! Rd8 26 Qd2 Qc8?

Black should insist on advancing his f-pawn with 27 ... Bc8 and 28 ... f5.

27 Qf2 Qc4 28 Qf4 Bc8 29 Re5 Rxe5
30 Qxe5 f5 31 Qe7 Rd7 32 Qe8+ Kh7
33 Rcl! Rd6 34 Na2 Bd7

Botvinnik now begins to “swim” and does little with his advantage of piece activity until he decides to push the d-pawn.

35 Qf8? Qe6 36 Nc3? Be8 37 Ne2 Qd7
38 Kh2 Rf6! 39 Qb4 Qd5 40 Qd2 Rc6
41 Nc3 Qb3 42 d5 Rg6 43 Qf2 Bd7
44 Rd1 Qc4 45 Qf4 Qc8 46 Rd4 b5
47 Rd2 a5 48 Ne2 Qc5 49 d6?

White makes a serious error (better was 49 Ng3) and the initiative passes to Black.

49 ... b4 50 a×b4 a×b4 51 Kh1 Rf6
52 Kh2 Rg6 53 Kh1 Rf6 54 Kh2 g5!
55 Qg3 Rf7

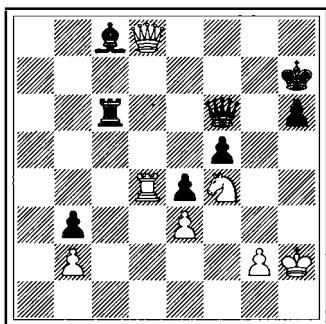
Chekhover, a professional pianist, had a reputation for sacrificial attacks and witty songs, which he sang to other players after rounds. Kotov quoted him as claiming that when it was his turn to move he started by trying to figure out “which piece he could put en prise!” “If he couldn’t see a way of losing his queen or his rook he would go from there and only when he could see no advantageous way of giving up material did he start examining quiet moves,” Kotov wrote. Here, he prepares a relatively quiet but effective 56 ... Bc6, followed by 57 ... f4! 58 e×f4 e3 with a winning attack.

56 h4! Rg7 57 Nd4! g×h4?! 58 Q×h4
Q×d6+ 59 Kg1 Qg6?

Black might have seen that 59 ... Rg4! is met by 60 N×f5! leading to a draw but now he gets the worst of it even though a pawn ahead.

60 Qf2 Bc8 61 Ne2! Rd7 62 Nf4! Qf7
63 Qe1 Rc7 64 Nd5 Rc5 65 Nf4 Rc6?
66 Qh4! Qa7 67 Kh2 Qf7 68 Rd4 b3
69 Qd8! Qf6

After
69 ... Qf6



The threat of Rb4–b8 forces this bad endgame. Later in his career Chekover lost

a dead-drawn endgame, king, rook and five pawns each in a symmetrical structure, to Andrei Batuyev. This mortified him so much he stopped playing for months and transformed himself into an endgame connoisseur, who liked to spend days trying to find a flaw in a Grigoriev study.

70 Q×f6 R×f6 71 Rb4! Rc6 72 R×b3
Ba6 73 Kg3 Rc2 74 Rb6 Bf1 75 Rb7+
Kg8 76 Kh4! Be2 77 Ne6 Rd2 78 b4
Rb2 79 Kg3 Ba6 80 Rb6 Bf1 81 Kf4

On 81 ... Rf2+ 82 Ke5 White threatens a mating attack after Kf6.

81 ... Bc4 82 Nd4 Rf2+ 83 Kg3 Rf1
84 Rc6 f4+ 85 e×f4 Bd3 86 R×h6 Rb1
87 Nf5 Rxb4 88 Ne3 1–0

Black’s bishop and blockaded pawn play no role as White wins with 89 f5 followed by Kf4 and g4–g5.

Euwe was impressed: In an interview in *Krasny Sport* (Red Sport) he said “These excellent players, like Romanovsky, Riumin, Alatorsev, Rabinovich must be in the international ranks of the same class as Bernstein, Ståhlberg, Eliskses, and others. However, Botvinnik must be placed somewhat higher, that is, in the top ten of the world’s chess-players.” Euwe later elaborated on what he called five characteristics of the Russian style:

- (1) placing a high priority on seizing the initiative,
- (2) an impressive “fighting spirit” that rejected so-called grandmaster draws,
- (3) defending by way of counterattack,
- (4) extensive opening preparation, and
- (5) the absence of “superficial” judgments in evaluating a position based on material; he cited in particular the “Russian exchange sacrifice.”

These were the basic theoretical weapons of the group of players who would soon gain a name: the Soviet School of Chess.

6

International Moscow

The second Moscow tournament ... showed that in the struggle to realize Stalin's slogan — "catch up and surpass" — we are quickly approaching our target. — Ilya Rabinovich in the tournament book

"Mass-chess" continued to expand with staggering numbers. In the 1935 trade union championship, 106 *profsoyuzy*— with a remarkable 700,000 players — took part. The ranks of registered players, which primarily meant serious amateurs, had grown to 150,000 in 1929. By 1934 it had passed the 500,000 mark, a figure that was almost certainly as great as the total for the rest of the world. Perhaps half the world's chessplayers were citizens of the USSR.

Nikolai Krylenko decided it was time to try "big chess" again and he chose the vehicle: a huge 20-player Second Moscow International. The tournament needed world class foreigners to gain credibility, and accomplished that with acceptances from José Capablanca, Emanuel Lasker, Salo Flohr, Gideon Ståhlberg, Andor Liliental and Rudolf Spielmann. (Max Euwe had also been invited but could not get leave from his school duties.) Liliental (the Russian spelling) was a Moscow-born Hungarian who was invited primarily because of a spectacular win from Capablanca at Hastings 1934-35. Mikhail Botvinnik made his international debut at that Hastings tournament and he labeled his own tie for fifth place "my fiasco." But he got an invitation to the Moscow international to redeem himself. Pyotr Romanovsky, Victor Goglidze and Ilya Kan were also seeded and the Chess Section announced

that the Ninth Soviet Championship would serve as a qualification event to choose the eight other Soviets.

The Ninth Championship began in December 1934 in a Leningrad club that proved too small, and later rounds were shifted to the House of Scientists. The 20 players included nine Leningraders and Muscovites, plus one each from a variety of other cities including Baku, Kiev, Gorky, Minsk and even Alma-Ata, the distant Kazakh capital. The competition for the International invitations was an incentive for sharp play and only 33 percent of the games were drawn. A clear link had been established between success in the Soviet championship and invitations to "big chess."

Vladimir Alatortsev, one of the Championship favorites, won his first four games and held the lead as late as the ninth round. But his limited opening repertoire and time pressure addiction took their toll, and he scored only 3½-6½ in the final half of the tournament. Grigory Levenfish said "the old-timers were in excellent form" in this Championship and he was in first place going into the final round. But Levenfish drew with Vasily Panov on the final day while Ilya Rabinovich beat Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky to move into a tie. A key game was the following:

D66 Queen's Gambit Declined
Ninth Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1934–35
white Grigory Levenfish,
black Ilya Kan

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7
 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Nf3 0–0 7 Rcl c6 8 Bd3
 dxc4 9 Bxc4 a6 10 a4 b5 11 Bd3 Bb7
 12 0–0

White keeps an edge now after 12 ... h6 13 Bxf6 and Ne4, or after 12 ... Re8 13 Qe2 and Rfd1.

12 ... b4? 13 Ne4 Nxe4 14 Bxe7 Qxe7

Had Black inserted 12 ... h6 13 Bh4 and then played 13 ... b4 the advanced 14 Ne4 would have been punished by 14 ... Nxe4 15 Bxe7 Nxf2! but as the game goes (without ...h6) 14 ... Nxf2 is punished by 15 Bxh7+! Now Black's queenside pawn

15 Bxe4 Rac8 16 Nd2! e5 17 Qc2 Nf6
 18 Bf3 Rfd8 19 dxe5 Qxe5 20 Nc4?

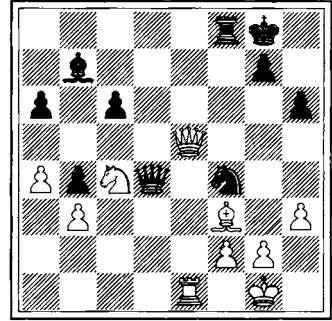
But here 20 Nb3 and Nc5 is much stronger.

20 ... Qc5 21 e4 Rd4 22 e5 Ne8 23 Rfe1
 Rcd8 24 e6 fxe6 25 Rxe6 Nc7 26 Re5
 Nd5!

"Strongest," wrote Levenfish who pointed out 26 ... Qa7 27 Na5 Rd2 28 Qc4+ Kh8 29 Nxb7! was worse.

27 h3 Rf4 28 b3 Rdf8 29 Qd2 h6
 30 Rce1 Rd4 31 Qc2 Rdf4 32 Qg6 R4f6
 33 Qh5 Qd4 34 Re8 Nf4 35 Rxf8+ Rxf8
 36 Qe5! (see diagram)

White stops 36 ... Nxb3+ (37 gxh3 Qxe5 38 Nxe5 wins a piece) and invites Black into a bad endgame.



After 36 Qe5

36 ... Qc3! 37 Nd6! Nxb3+ 38 Kh2 Ng5!

Another forced reply: 39 Nxb7 is met by 39 ... Rxf3!

39 Bg4! Qxe5+ 40 Rxe5 Ba8 41 f4! Rxf4
 42 Bf5!

"Here is the key to the entire combination," Levenfish wrote. "Threatened is mate and the loss of the a8-bishop." He adds that the best defense, 42 ... g6, fails to 43 Re8+ Kg7 44 Rxa8 gxf5 45 Rxa6 with a long, main variation that runs 45 ... c5 46 a5 Ne4 47 Ra7+ Kf6 48 Ne8+ Ke6 49 a6 Rf1 50 Rh7 Ral 51 a7 Ke5 52 Re7+ Kf4 53 Nc7! Nf2! 54 Nd5+ Kg5 55 Rg7+! and mates (55 ... Kh4 56 g3+ and 57 Nf4).

42 ... Rxf5? 43 Nxf5 Kf7 44 Nd6+ 1–0

The International organizers vowed not to repeat the space crunch of 1925 and decided even the august Hall of Columns would not be large enough to meet the demand for 60,000 tickets over the course of the tournament. They decided to ask for the high-ceilinged Museum of Fine Arts, later renamed the Pushkin, a few blocks southwest of the Kremlin. It was three times larger than the Hall of Columns and was the largest Soviet museum after the Hermitage.

Holding rounds in halls adorned by Rubens and Rembrandts would add a unique flavor to a chess tournament. But the

museum director was appalled by “such a ‘profanation’ of the cathedral of art,” Levenfish wrote. The director declared the chess-players would get inside the museum “only over his dead body.” That was a condition Krylenko could easily have satisfied. Since the Civil War he had interpreted Soviet law to suit Kremlin policy on numerous occasions in his role as prosecutor. For example, when it was pointed out that the death sentence given to a disobedient admiral violated the new ban on capital punishment, Krylenko found a distinction: “Admiral Shchastny is not being executed. He is being shot.” Once Krylenko became involved in the matter of the tournament site, he “quickly convinced” the museum director to allow chess on Volkhonka Street, Levenfish wrote, and the director “soon became an ardent chess fan.”

Moscow 1935

Capablanca again gave simultaneous exhibitions just before the tournament. Against Leningrad’s first-category players he scored 10 wins, 11 losses and nine draws. But he registered only seven wins, nine draws and 14 losses against a comparable field in Moscow. Considering that in other European simuls earlier that year, at Manchester, Paris, Prague, Berlin, Warsaw and elsewhere, he lost only 12 and drew 39 out of 251 games, this was a surprising showing.

Capa had hoped the Moscow exhibition, at the Press House on Nikitsky Boulevard, would be finished in four hours but he was still hard at work in the early morning because his opponents included future masters such as Alexander Kotov, Yevgeny Zagoryansky, Alexander Chistyakov, and Abram Polyak — and even the “black colonel” of Soviet chess in the 1970s, Viktor Baturinsky. In contrast, Vera Menchik gave a ten-board simul against the strongest Soviet women and allowed only one draw — an in-

dication of how far women’s chess had to go in the USSR.

The tournament had a festive opening ceremony on February 14 at the players’ National Hotel, a showcase built in 1903 overlooking Red Square. The next day more than 4,000 fans showed up for the first round, along with 23 foreign and 180 Soviet journalists. An army of the ticketless gathered in the garden outside, giving headaches to the militia who tried to control them.

The first round had two sensations. The first was Botvinnik’s 12-move win over Spielmann using the Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann. The second was Capablanca’s loss on time in a hopeless position after only 29 moves against the Moscow champion:

E37 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Second Moscow International, 1935
white Nikolai Riumin,
black José Capablanca

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5
 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 c5 8 dxc5
 Nc6 9 e3 Qa5+ 10 Bd2 Qxc5? 11 b4 Qe7
 12 Bc1!**

Black’s failure to insert 10 ... Nxd2 allows White to improve over 12 Nf3? Nxd2 13 Qxd2 dxc4 with equality (Alatortsev–Ragozin, Ninth Soviet Championship, 1934)

**12 ... a5 13 b5 Ne5 14 Bb2 Ng4 15 Nh3
 Qh4**

Trying for complications since 15 ... Ngf6 16 cxd5 exd5 17 Nf4 favors White clearly.

16 g3 Qh6 17 Qe2!

If White can unravel his pieces (and avoid tricks like 17 Bg2? Nexf2! 18 Nxf2 Nxe3) he should have a major advantage.

17 ... Ngf6 18 Nf4 0-0 19 Bg2 dxc4
20 Qxc4 Nd6 21 Qd3 Rd8 22 Rd1 Nfe8
23 0-0 a4

At this point Capablanca had only two minutes left to Riumin's 25.

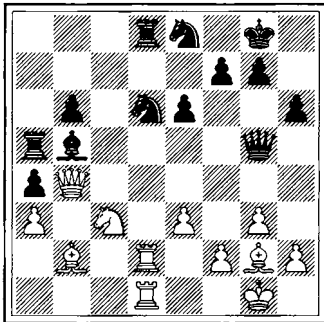
24 Ne2! Bd7 25 Nc3 Ra5?

A strange lapse by the former world champion. Instead of keeping his rooks connected, so he can relieve the d-file pin (25 ... Rac8), Black eyes the b-pawn.

26 Qd4 Qg5 27 Qb4 b6

The last chance was to admit error with 27 ... Raa8 since White would be taking risks with 28 Rxd6 Nxd6 29 Qxd6 Bxb5.

28 Rd2! Bxb5 29 Rfd1 h6



After 29 ... h6

Black's flag fell as he made his last move but he would have been lost anyway after 30 Ne4 Nxe4 31 Rxd8 Nc5 32 Bf1! Bc6 33 Qxb6.

Riumin won his first three games, while Alatorsev lost his first three, having been outplayed on the queenside each time. Romanovsky, who had been the strongest player in the country from Bogolyubov's departure to Botvinnik's maturing in 1929, was not a factor. He said he was allowed to play on the condition that he maintain "a strict medical regimen in connection with progressive heart disease. In a series of games I had to play at

half strength." But Vyacheslav Ragozin was clearly a contender for a prize. He won a stunning game in the second round from Liliental, sacrificing one exchange at move 27 and the other at 31. He also missed a golden opportunity against Capablanca, according to David Bronstein, when he adjourned with a winning position but tried to "combine supper with analysis" during the one-hour break before resumption.

Botvinnik set a scintillating pace, allowing only one draw in the first seven rounds. His win over Vitaly Chekhover featured knight sacrifices at moves 22 and 24 followed by an exchange sacrifice at move 32 and a forced mate in 11 moves. Botvinnik said he was accused by some "specialists" of preparing the game in advance. In most other games he overwhelmed his opponents, such as the first world women's champion. Menchik, who was recognized as Czech through her father, did not speak Czech but Russian. She had been born in Moscow, played her first chess in school there and emigrated to England in 1921.

A34 English Opening
Second Moscow International, 1935
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Vera Menchik

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 c5 3 Nf3 d5 4 cxd5
Nxd5 5 e4 Nb4 6 Bc4 e6 7 0-0 N8c6
8 d3 Be7 9 a3 Na6 10 Be3 Nab8 11 Rcl
0-0

Thanks to Black's peripatetic knights White can get the better endgame after the theoretically best 12 d4 cxd4 13 Nxd4 Nxd4 14 Bxd4 Nc6 15 Be3 Qxd1 16 Rfxd1. Botvinnik takes the more practical route of keeping more on the board against a weaker opponent.

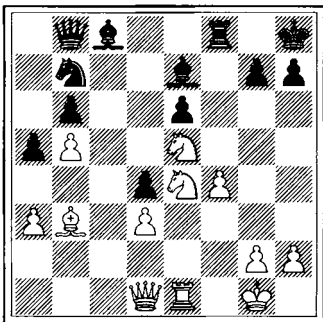
12 Qd2 Nd4 13 Bxd4 cxd4 14 Ne2 Nc6
15 b4 a6 16 Bb3 Qd6!

White threatened 17 Ba4, which can now be met by 17 ... b5.

17 Ne1 Kh8 18 f4 f6 19 Nf3 Bd7 20 Ng3 Rac8 21 Rfe1 a5?

Black should prepare for e4–e5, e.g., 21 ... Qb8, with the idea of ...Qa7, and if 22 e5 then 22 ... f5.

22 e5! Qb8 23 exf6 Rxf6 24 b5 Nd8 25 Rxc8 Bxc8 26 Ne5! b6 27 Qc1 Rf8 28 Ne4 Nb7 29 Qd1!



After 29 Qd1

The queen is transferred to h5 and neither pawn can be taken (e.g., 29 ... Rxf4 30 Qh5 Kg8 31 Nc6 Qc7 32 Qe8+ Bf8 33 Nxd4, winning the e-pawn).

29 ... Bf6 30 Qh5 Bxe5 31 fxe5 h6 32 Bc4 Qc7 33 Ng5 Nc5 34 Nf3 Rd8 35 Qg4 Qd7 36 Nh4!

White can win now with Ng6+, followed by h2–h4–h5 and invasion on the f-file. But a blunder ends the game.

36 ... Kg8? 37 Nf5! Bb7 38 Nxh6+ 1–0

Because of 38 ... Kh7 39 Nf7! Qxf7 40 Qh4+.

By the final rounds, the tournament site had become a magnet for VIPs, such as Maxim Litvinov, the commissar of foreign affairs, poet Boris Pasternak, Komsomol Central Committee secretary Alexander Kosarev and, of course, Krylenko, who be-

came a member of the presidium of the All-Union Central Executive Committee, the forerunner of the Supreme Soviet, in 1935. For a wider audience there were evening and night radio reports on the tournament, including broadcasts in Italian, Dutch, Finnish, Swedish and five other foreign languages. Among the little-noticed spectators who attended regularly was a tall, thin, red-haired 14-year-old named Vasily Smyslov, who was particularly interested in Capablanca's games — and who became champion of Moscow three years later.

Botvinnik recognized the failings of his friend Ragozin, including his "gentle nature" and casual work habits. "Well, why beat about the bush, he was a little lazy," Botvinnik wrote in his memoirs. But Ragozin was clearly having his best result ever in Moscow. His 6–2 result against the guests won a prize for top score against the foreigners. In addition to his brilliancy against Liliental, he also crushed Ståhlberg in 26 moves, outplayed Spielmann in 39 and won the following:

D48 Slav Defense
Second Moscow International, 1935
white Vyacheslav Ragozin,
black Vasja Pirc

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Nc3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 a6 9 e4 b4?

This move of Pirc's in the Meran Variation was tested three times in the tournament — earning a win in the second round, a draw in the ninth and a loss in this 16th round game, as its faults became clear.

The first test, Chekhover–Pirc, went 10 Ne2? c5 11 e5 Nd5 12 0–0 Bb7 13 Ng3 cxd4 14 Ne4 h6! 15 Bd2 g5 and Black won.

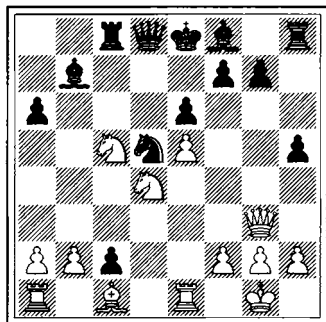
10 Na4 c5 11 e5 Nd5 12 0–0 cxd4 13 Re1 Bb7

Test No. 2, Ragozin–Levenfish, went 13 ... Nc5 14 Bg5! Qa5 and White got the upper hand after 15 Nxc5 Bxc5 16 Rc1!.

14 Nxd4 Nc5 15 Bc2 Rc8 16 Qg4 h5
17 Qg3 b3!

Black desperately tries to complicate (18 Bxb3 Qa5! or 18 axb3 Nb4!).

18 Nxc5! bxc2



After 18 bxc2

Unclear now is 19 Nxb7 Qb6 20 Nd6+ Bxd6 21 Qxg7 because of 21 ... Bb4! 22 Qxh8+ Kd7.

19 Ndxe6! Qa5

Of course not 19 ... fxe6 20 Qe6+ and mates.

20 b4! Qxb4 21 Ba3 h4

Or 21 ... Qb6 22 Nxg7+ Kd8 23 Nxb7+ Qxb7 24 Bxf8 Rxf8 25 e6 Qc7 26 Qg5+.

22 Qh3 Qb5 23 Nd4! Bxc5

The queen had no escape: 23 ... Qb6 24 Qd7 mate.

24 Nxb5 axb5 25 Bxc5 Rxc5 26 e6! f6
27 Qf5 1-0

The other Soviet players ran into trouble towards the end. Levenfish's downfall

came in the 14th round when he was in clear third place but miscalculated against Chekhover and lost. He never recovered and ended in a tie for sixth.

Fyodor Bohatyrchuk, meanwhile, played the unwanted — and potentially dangerous — role of spoiler. He had drawn with Lasker and Capablanca and, in the seventh round, had a key game with another contender for first prize, Flohr. In a double-edged adjourned position Bohatyrchuk was “advised” to ask Capablanca if the position could be won. Capa said it could not and noted that there was a risk of losing. But Bohatyrchuk ignored the advice, missed drawing lines on the 54th, 55th and 58th moves and lost. This had a major impact on the scoretable because of this game in the 15th round:

C49 Four Knights Game
Second Moscow International, 1935
white Fyodor Bohatyrchuk,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5
Bb4 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 d6 7 Bg5 Bxc3
8 bxc3 Qe7 9 Re1 a6

Instead of Johannes Metger's ...Nd8-e6, Botvinnik tries a new idea, to exchange off the white-squared bishop before White can provide an escape route with d3-d4. White has better chances for an edge with 10 Bxc6! and 11 Nd2

10 Bc4 Na5 11 Nd2 h6 12 Bh4 Be6
13 Bb3! Nxb3 14 axb3 g5!

“Daring but completely correct,” Bohatyrchuk wrote in the tournament book. “Black’s only chance consists of kingside play” and the g-pawn should advance before d3-d4 or the Nf1-e3-d5 maneuver.

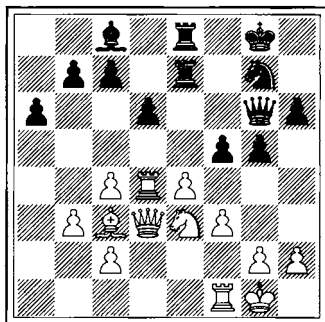
15 Bg3 Ne8 16 d4 f6 17 Nf1 Ng7 18 c4
Rad8 19 Ne3 Qf7 20 Re2! Qg6 21 f3
Rd7?

Second Moscow International, February 15–March 15, 1935

	B	F	L	C	S	K	Le	Li	Ra	Ro	A	G	Ra	Ri	L	B	S	P	C	M	Score
1–2. Borvinnik	X	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	0	1	½	1	1	13–6
1–2. Flohr	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	13–6
3. Lasker	½	½	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	12½–6½
4. Capablanca	½	½	0	X	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	1	1	12–7
5. Spielmann	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	0	1	1	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	11–8
6–7. Kan	1	½	0	0	½	X	½	0	1	0	½	½	1	1	0	1	1	½	½	1	10½–8½
6–7. Levenfish	0	½	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	½	0	1	10½–8½
8–10. Liliental	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	X	0	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	0	1	1	½	10–9
8–10. Ragozin	0	½	½	0	1	0	½	1	X	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	10–9
8–10. Romanovsky	0	0	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	X	½	½	1	0	½	½	1	0	1	1	10–9
11–14. Alatortsev	½	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	½	X	0	0	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	9½–9½
11–14. Goglidze	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	X	½	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	9½–9½
11–14. I. Rabinovich	½	0	½	½	1	0	1	1	½	0	1	½	X	0	0	½	0	½	1	1	9½–9½
11–14. Riumin	0	½	½	1	½	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	1	X	0	1	1	1	½	1	9½–9½
15. Lisitsyn	½	0	½	0	½	1	0	½	½	½	0	½	1	1	X	0	½	½	½	1	9–10
16–17. Bohatyrchuk	1	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	X	½	½	0	½	8–11
16–17. Ståhlberg	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	1	0	0	½	1	1	0	½	½	X	½	1	1	8–11
18. Pirc	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	X	1	1	7½–11½
19. Chekhover	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	0	0	X	1	5½–13½
20. Menchik	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	X	1½–17½

Beginning a bad plan, involving ...e×d4 and ...f5. Bohatyrchuk suggested 21 ... Nh5 22 Rd2 Rde8! (not 22 ... Nf4 23 d×e5 f×e5 24 c5!) as solid waiting tactics.

22 Rd2 e×d4 23 R×d4 Re7 24 Be1! f5
25 Bc3 Rfe8 26 Qd3 Bc8 27 Rf1



After 27 Rf1

In the first issue of the tournament bulletins, Bohatyrchuk, age 42, said he could not agree with the conventional wisdom, which described the event in magazine articles as “a struggle between two generations.” The ability to play and play well can be preserved to old age, he said, and he demonstrated it in this game.

27 ... f×e4? 28 R×e4 R×e4 29 f×e4 Q×e4
30 Nd5!

Black had missed this strong move (31 Nf6+) which soon decides the game. Now 30 ... Nh5 costs material to 31 Re1!

30 ... Q×d3 31 Nf6+ Kf7 32 c×d3 Rd8

Avoiding the loss of a piece with 32 ... Re2 33 Nh5+ Nf5 and now 34 Ng3 Rc2 35 N×f5 B×f5 36 R×f5+ Ke6 37 Rf6+ Ke7 38 Ba1! Rc1+ 39 Rf1.

33 Nd5+ Nf5

Or 33 ... Rd8 34 Ne7+ and 35 Rf7.

34 g4 Re8 35 g×f5 Re2 36 Rf3 Rc2
37 Be1 g4 38 Rf1 1-0

Botvinnik’s fans greeted this with “deathly silence,” said Leonid Zorin, later a prominent screenwriter. The loss allowed Flohr to slip into a first-place tie. If Flohr beat Alatortsev on the final day while Botvinnik drew with Rabinovich, the Czech would capture first prize and deeply disappoint the *vlasti*. Botvinnik, in his memoirs, gives a remarkable account of the machinations behind the final result:

Krylenko came to Botvinnik’s hotel room and said: “What would you say if Rabinovich were to lose to you?” Botvinnik replied that if he realized that was happening he’d blunder away a piece and resign “on the spot.” “Krylenko looked at me with obvious friendliness,” he wrote, and asked what they should do. Botvinnik replied that Flohr might suggest that both his game with Alatortsev and Botvinnik-Rabinovich be agreed drawn in advance. Just at that moment Samuil Vainshtein, an arbiter at all major Moscow events from 1924 to 1938, entered the room. Vainshtein said that Flohr had made precisely that proposal. But Alatortsev, who was fighting for more than a share of tenth place, refused.

When the round began Botvinnik offered a draw, against Krylenko’s orders, and Rabinovich accepted. “Honorable Flohr” then made a draw even though Alatortsev had gotten the worst of it. (Botvinnik’s being outraged by the idea of a prearranged loss but welcoming two prearranged draws indicates a certain casualness in ethical standards that was emerging in Soviet chess.) Meanwhile, Kan had a lost adjourned position against Ståhlberg but “at this moment the god Bacchus came ‘to help’ the heavy-drinking Swedish grandmaster,” according to historians Vladimir and Isaak Linder. The Swede blundered away the game, giving Kan a tie with Levenfish for sixth place.

Krylenko had to be happy with the closing ceremony, and not just because Sergei Prokoviev performed a new composition on

the piano: Botvinnik had tied for first in the strongest tournament of 1935. Overall, the Soviets won 26, lost 25 and drew 45 games with the foreign invitees, a clear improvement over 1925. It had been expensive — hard currency prizes of \$400 to Flohr, \$250 to Lasker, \$150 for Capablanca and \$100 for Spielmann — but worth it.

Botvinnik received both the Soviet grandmaster title and another unique prize. The Minister of Heavy Industry, Grigory Ordzhonikidze, gave him a car — perhaps the first private automobile given anyone in the country and the equivalent in the 1930s Soviet Union to awarding someone an airplane today. Capablanca spoke highly of the 23-year-old engineering student. “I am sure that Botvinnik, for example, would win a match from Euwe,” he said. He added that he “would not be surprised” if in three or four years there were other Soviets in Botvinnik’s class.

The lasting benefits of the tournament included the tournament bulletin, which appeared 25 times and became the basis for 64, the “world’s first chess-checker newspaper.” It began publishing on July 5, 1935, and soon had a circulation of 20,000. Also, Flohr, Lasker and Liliental eventually decided to remain in Moscow, decisions that gave the Soviets a huge propaganda victory and may have spared the foreigners death at the hands of the Nazis. Both Flohr and Liliental cemented their ties to their new homeland by marrying Russians. Liliental noticed a “very beautiful woman in the front row of spectators” during one round and told organizers, “If you don’t introduce me to her, I’ll leave the tournament.” The tall blond chess fan named Yevgenya Mikhailovna became his wife of fifty years. For Lasker, the decision was prompted by the Nazi seizure of his Berlin home, Thyrow farm and bank account. When asked to join the Moscow Academy of Science to work on mathematics he readily accepted.

To take advantage of the presence of so many strong players, Grigory Goldberg

and other organizers worked out a simul-and-lecture tour that took Lasker, Romanovsky, Gotthilf, Lisitsyn, Chekhover and Goldberg himself from Moscow to Gorky and then on a Saratov-Stalingrad-Mineralnye Vody-Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi route that finally left them at Kiev. In the Ukrainian capital Lasker was asked by the vice chairman of the republic’s council of commissars about his impressions. The often-blunt Lasker said there were many things he liked about the USSR but one he did not understand: why words do not have the same meaning they have in the rest of the world. For example, he said, when the “hot” water tap in his room yields only cold water — or when the “chicken” on the menu turns out to be pork.

Rules and Title Inflation

In 1936 a new body, the All-Union Committee for Physical Culture and Sport, was created and attached to the Council of Ministers. *Goskomsport* or Sports Committee, as it became known, became the parent organization of Krylenko’s Chess Section. But authority over chess remained in the Chess Section — as long as there was a Krylenko. The Chess Section issued a sweeping set of rules, regulations and categories called the Uniform Chess Codex. It established order in the ranks, from the lowest, fifth category (later abolished) on up. To reach each next level a player had to achieve a performance norm in a tournament of at least 10 games. Tournaments also received gradings. But the Codex rules were often complex. For example:

“If a first-category player wins 70 percent of his games in a tournament whose coefficient is 1, he gets one master point for his feat. When he gets two such points he becomes a Candidate for Master. If he then wins a match against a Master, or wins a stipulated number of points in a tournament of Masters, a commission considers his games

and passes judgment.... Only if he has both high quality and high achievements can he become a Master of the USSR.”

The Chess Section also expressed concern over inflation of the title, since 21 new master titles had been awarded from 1929 through 1933. A review was ordered of all players under age 50 who no longer deserved the title and in an unprecedented decision, 12 were deprived of it: Konstantin Vygodchikov, Gotthilf, Pyotr Izmailov, Vladimir Kirillov, Arvid Kubbel, Mikhail Makogonov, Abram Model, Yakov Rokhlin, Alexander Sergeyev, Nikolai Sorokin, Vladislav Silich and Solomon Rozental. Eventually Kirillov, Rokhlin, Silich and Sorokin made the master norm and again got the title.

Under the stricter Codex rules, no new masters were created in 1935 and only one, Genrikh Kasparian, appeared in 1936. The mid-1930s also saw the premature end to other bright careers. Riumin, who suffered from tuberculosis since a child, was “a terrible smoker,” according to Panov, and his health was in sharp decline by 1937. His swan song was winning the 1935 Moscow Championship, held in a private residence on Strastny (later Pushkin) Square a few weeks after the International. One of his last games:

C05 French Defense

Match-tournament, Moscow, 1938

white Nikolai Riumin,

black Vladimir Alatorstev

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7
5 f4 c5 6 Ngf3 cxd4 7 Nb3

White's treatment of the opening (instead of 6 c3) is rarely seen. He avoids 7 Nxd4? because of 7 ... Nxe5! 8 fxe5 Qh4+.

7 ... Nc6 8 Bd3 f5?!

A better way of dealing with the d3-bishop is 8 ... Nc5 and ... Nxd3. Now White can open the g-file.

9 0-0 Nc5 10 Nbxd4 Ne4

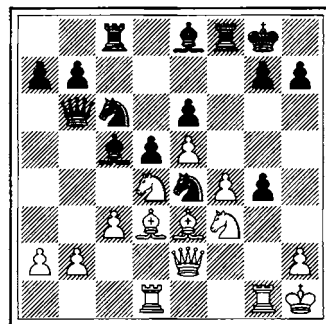
This is one benefit of Black's eighth move but his inability to play ... f6 later on gives White a free hand in the center.

11 Be3 Bc5 12 c3 0-0 13 Qe2 Bd7
14 Rad1 Rc8 15 Kh1!

White prepares g2-g4. Riumin believed Black needed direct counterplay, such as opening the c-file with ... Bxd4.

15 ... Qb6? 16 Rg1 Be8 17 g4 f×g4?

After
17 ... f×g4



Better was 17 ... Bg6. Did Black really think White would fall for 18 R×g4 Bh5?

18 Ng5! Bxd4 19 cxd4 N×g5 20 Q×g4!
Qd8 21 f×g5 Qd7 22 B×h7+! K×h7
23 g6+ Kg8 24 Qh5

Riumin had calculated that 24 ... Rf5 loses to 25 Qh7+ Kf8 26 Qh8+ Ke7 and now 27 Bg5+! R×g5 28 Q×g7+ Kd8 29 Qf6+ Qe7 30 R×g5.

24 ... B×g6 25 R×g6 Rf7 26 Rdg1 Ne7
27 Rh6 1-0

Rauzer to Play and Win

Another tragic career belonged to Vsevolod Alfredovich Rauzer, one of the

strangest and most creative players of the 20th century. Rauzer (born 1908) had his first problem published by Grigoriev in *Izvestia* when he was 15. After moving to Kiev he gained national attention at age 20, when he wrote an article for *Shakhmatny Listok* on the difficult endgame of king, bishop and wrong-colored rook pawn versus king.

To Rauzer's astonishment he was attacked in print by Alexey Troitsky, who had achieved world-class status as a composer before World War I. Troitsky wrote that Rauzer was wrong not just in his conclusions but in his assertion that the endgame had not been analyzed in detail before. For months afterward a deeply distraught Rauzer analyzed the ending with Alexander Konstantinopolsky, an 18-year-old Kiev player, to verify his conclusions. Eventually Rauzer admitted that he had not been aware such analysts as Johann Berger, Richard Teichman, Josef Kling and Bernhard Horwitz had investigated the endgame before him. But he stood by his findings. Troitsky eventually replied in another article of *Shakhmatny Listok* that year — headlined "Rauzer's Analysis Is Correct!"

Rauzer was, in a word, strange. He was grey-eyed, light-haired, with a high forehead — and so pale he was "almost an albino" according to writer Yefim Lazarev. Rauzer worked as a messenger for a state financial department and seemed to be unable to deal with many problems of everyday life. He was absent-minded and careless but monomaniacal about chess. "Everything else — food, sleep, personal contact with people, literature, and so on — he considered unnecessary," Konstantinopolsky wrote.

Rauzer often said he got up at 6 A.M. and analyzed at a board until night with short breaks for snacks. "Unfortunately," he sighed, "I can't make myself work on theory more than 16 hours a day. My head can't bear it."

E37 Nimzo-Indian Defense

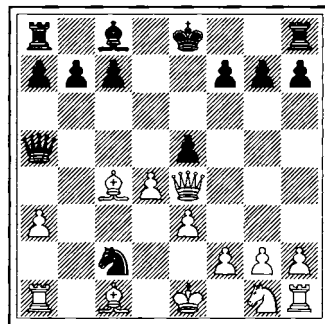
Kiev, 1932

white Vsevolod Rauzer,
black Alexander Konstantinopolsky

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5
5 a3

As in life, Rauzer went his own way in the opening. He had taught himself the moves from a Dufresne textbook at age 10, then studied Lasker's games, followed by Siegbert Tarrasch's, and became a devout classicist. In a 1934 article in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* he rejected the idea that Tarrasch would not understand this era. "On the contrary, our epoch does not understand or appreciate Tarrasch," as evidenced by its abandoning classical principles for tactics, he wrote. But Rauzer had no appreciation at all for certain modern openings. He did not like a fianchettoed KB for either player — unless it gave you a good chance of winning the enemy's QR. And he tried to refute the Nimzo-Indian Defense because he considered ...Bxc3 simply antipositional.

5 ... Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 Nc6 8 e3
e5 9 cxd5 Qxd5 10 Bc4 Qa5+ 11 b4
Nxb4 12 Qxe4 Nc2+



After
12 ...Nc2+

This position had already been deeply analyzed to the conclusion that Black stands well because of 13 Kd1 Nxa1 14 Bb2 Qa4+. But in Rauzer's long days he found that the White king would be perfectly safe at f3.

13 Ke2! Qe1+ 14 Kf3 Nxa1 15 Bb2

Rauzer had analyzed 15 Qxe5+ but at the board he saw that 15 ... Be6 16 Bxe6 could be met by 16 ... 0-0! with a strong counterattack.

15 ... 0-0 16 Qxe5? Qd1+! 17 Ne2 Qxh1
18 d5 f6

White now saw that 19 Qe7, threatening 20 d6+, allows 19 ... Bh3! and Black wins. So he had to try to use his last trump, the d-pawn.

19 Qh5 Qb1 20 Nf4 Bf5! 21 Bxa1 Be4+
22 Kg3 Qxa1 23 d6+ Kh8 24 f3 Qe5!
25 Qxe5 fxe5 26 Ne6 cxd6 27 Nxf8
Rxf8 28 fxe4 Rc8 29 Bd5 b5 30 Kg4 g6
0-1

But Rauzer could not accept the idea that a move like 5 a3, “in the style of Tarasch,” could be bad. Returning to his analysis he discovered a remarkable improvement: The real error was 16 Qxe5, which should have been replaced by 16 Kg3!!, threatening 17 Nf3 Qxh1 18 Ng5 and wins, or 17 h3 followed by 18 Kh2. More than sixty years later his discovery inspired a new generation; Atalik–Sax, Maróczy Memorial 1997, for instance, went 16 Kg3 Kh8 (an improvement by Jan Timman) 17 dxe5! Be6 18 Nf3! Qxh1 19 Ng5 g6 20 Nxf7+! Rxf7 21 Bxe6 and White won.

At a time when virtually all the top players lived in Moscow or Leningrad, Rauzer remained in a one-room flat on Engels Street in Kiev that he shared with his mother, Varvara Grigorievna. It became a de facto club for young players who would play for hours until Varvara announced “Vova, it’s time to stop banging!” Konstantinopolsky recalled: “We usually played under very modest conditions. Chess clocks were few.” When they had blitz tournaments, someone often kept tempo, counting “One, two, three,

four, five, six, six, six!” at which point the player on move had to act immediately or forfeit.

“Move! Defend Yourself!”

Rauzer discovered some important end-game ideas, particularly in rook and rook pawn versus rook. But it was in the opening that he stood out, with analyses that sometimes lasted 25 moves. At first a 1 d4 player, he carefully reviewed his games in the Seventh Soviet Championship, “where I played a painful series of draws,” and came to the conclusion that 1 d4 was an error punishable by 1 ... d5!. Instead, he tried to show that 1 e4 was best. Rauzer determined to refute the Sicilian Defense and prove that the French was not quite sound. In doing so, he became the No. 1 opening theoretician in the Soviet Union.

C17 French Defense Eighth Soviet Championship, Leningrad, 1933 *white* Vsevolod Rauzer, *black* Vladimir Alatorsev

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3
cxd4? 6 axb4 dxc3 7 Nf3!

The “book” move of 1933 was 7 bxc3, which led to an excellent game for Black after 7 ... Qc7! as in a then-famous game, Lasker–Maróczy, New York 1924. In this game Rauzer showed that 5 a3 was not the error some called it — and, instead, he gave 3 ... Bb4 a question mark.

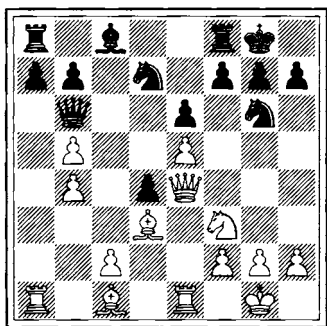
Grabbing the pawn with 7 ... cxb2 8 Bxb2 Nc6 is risky and the definitive verdict on the gambit did not come until Bannik–Tolush, semifinals 31st Soviet Championship, Moscow 1963: 9 b5 Nce7 10 Bd3 Nh6 11 Qd2 Bd7 12 h4! Nc8 13 Rh3 Nb6 14 Rg3 Nc4 15 Bxc4 dxc4 16 Nd4! Qxh4 17 0-0-0 Rd8 18 Ba3! Ng8 19 Qb4 Ne7

20 Nf3 a5 21 Qc5 b6 22 Qxb6 Qf4+
23 Kb1 0–0 24 Bxe7 Rb8 25 Qd4 Rxb5+
26 Ka1 Qf5 27 Qg4 1–0.

7 ... Qc7 8 Qd4 Ne7 9 Bd3 Nd7 10 0–0
Nc6 11 Qxc3 Qb6

Black wanted to play 11 ... Ndxe5 but saw it loses a piece to 12 b5. It is not clear how much of the opening was prepared in advance but people who knew Rauzer said they saw much of him later in Semyon Furman, who also prepared elaborate systems with White — but to prove the strength of 1 d4, not 1 e4.

12 b5 d4 13 Qe1! Ne7 14 Qe4 Ng6 15 Re1
0–0 16 b4!



After 16 b4

This stops 16 ... Nc5 and dooms the d4-pawn.

16 ... Rd8 17 Bb2 f5 18 exf6 Nxf6
19 Bxd4!

Since 19 ... Nxe4 20 Bxb6 costs material, the game is virtually over.

19 ... Qc7 20 Qe3 Nd5 21 Qg5 Nxb4
22 Bxg6 hxg6 23 b6! Qd7 24 Rxa7
Nxc2

Or 24 ... Rxa7 25 bxa7 and the a-pawn queens.

25 Rd1! Rb8 26 Rd2 Qe8 27 Be5 1–0

Rauzer's feeling was that after 1 e4 White should announce, "Move! Defend yourself!" He found new strategies in the Ruy Lopez and Four Knights Game. He originated 6 Bg5 in the Sicilian Defense to avoid the then-popular Dragon move order (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 and then 6 Be2 g6). When Black found the superior 2 ... d6/5 ...g6 order he came up with the attacking plan of 0–0–0 in connecting with f2–f3 and h2–h4–h5. In fact, he became obsessed with trying to prove that 1 e4 always gets White an advantage — if not more.

Rauzer finished in the top ten places in four of his six USSR finals despite often strange behavior, at and away from the board. Botvinnik recalled how he tried to inspire Rauzer to play well against Botvinnik's rival Riumin at the end of the Seventh Championship. "Rauzer suddenly declared 'I can't play chess well. I have irregular facial features!'" In the 1935 RSFSR Championship in Gorky, Rauzer lost a game with White and became so upset he said he could not come to dinner and arranged to have caviar sent to his hotel room. When he was not at breakfast or lunch the next day, trainer Andrei Batuyev found Rauzer in bed, having studied all night, surrounded by tossed chess pieces and an untouched caviar sandwich: "A complete mess," Batuyev said. But what an innovator at the board:

C79 Ruy Lopez
Eighth Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1933
white Vsevolod Rauzer,
black Leonid Savitzky

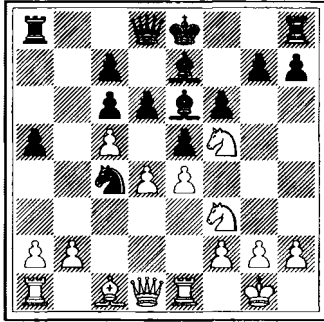
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4
Nf6 5 0–0 d6 6 Bxc6+ bxc6 7 d4 Nd7
8 Na3!

White threatens to throttle Black on the queenside with Na5. Note that 8 ... a5 9 Nc4 Ba6 allows a strong sacrifice in 10 Nxa5! Bxf1 11 Nxc6.

8 ... f6 9 Nc4 a5 10 Re1 Nb6 11 Ne3 Be7
12 c4!

White prepares to break open the carefully crafted Black pawn with 13 c5.

12 ... Be6 13 c5 Nc4 14 Nf5!



After 14 Nf5

White sacrifices a pawn to create threats, including 15 b3.

14 ... Bxf5 15 exf5 dxc5 16 Qa4 Qd5
17 dxe5 fxe5 18 b3 Nb6 19 Qg4 0-0
20 Bb2 Bd6 21 Nxe5

White's opening strategy is a huge success and he threatens 22 Rad1 as well as 23 Nxc6.

21 ... Bxe5 22 Rxe5 Qd2 23 Re2 Qd7
24 Rael Rf7 25 Re6 Nd5 26 Qe4 Raf8
27 g4! Nf6 28 Qc4 Qd5 29 h3 a4

Desperation.

30 Qxa4 Qd3 31 R6e3 Qd2 32 Bc3 Qd7
33 Bxf6 Rxf6 34 Qc4+ Kh8 35 Qxc5
h5 36 Re7 Qd2 37 Qe3 Qxa2 38 Qg5
R6f7 39 Rxf7 1-0.

After moving to Leningrad in 1934, Rauzer reached his brief peak. His best result came in the 1936 All-Union Tournament of Young Masters, when he tied for first with Chekhover. Typically, Rauzer was outraged when Levenfish wrote in 64 that he had turned from a talented master into "a dry

dogmatic" due to his strong opening opinions. Rauzer replied that what the tournament really showed was his skill in the mid-game — thanks to having read Tarrasch's *The Modern Game of Chess*. His great regret may have been that in early 1934 his letter to Tarrasch's Munich home, laying out his thoughts about classicism, was never answered. Tarrasch died on February 13.

Rauzer's own health, and psychiatric problems worsened in the late 1930s and he did not play after 1937. In late 1940 he entered a psychiatric hospital and died some time in 1941, perhaps, as Botvinnik wrote, during the blockade of Leningrad.

Moscow 1936

Botvinnik claimed credit for proposing the Third Moscow International. He wrote Krylenko in early 1936 saying that the previous Moscow tournament included strong grandmasters but also "weak masters" and a better test would be a match-tournament of a small group of foreigners and an equal number of Soviets. Krylenko had Botvinnik talk to Kosarev of Komsomol to get approval for what would be another very expensive project.

Before play began on May 14, Botvinnik arranged to prepare with Ragozin, at a retreat at Zacherenye, near the river Luga, west of Leningrad. There they exercised, analyzed, played training games and engaged in the other activities that would later be called Botvinnik's training method. One day the two men were late for dinner after a long walk. To get back quickly Ragozin suggested the shortest way — climbing over a hill of roughly 30 yards tall, Botvinnik recalled. They virtually had to crawl to the top, shifting from tree to tree. "From then on I knew for certain why Ragozin didn't seek the easy way at the chessboard," Botvinnik wrote.

One of their practice games was also

one of Ragozin's finest victories. But for years it remained a secret of Botvinnik's training camp:

B84 Sicilian Defense
Training match, Zacherenye, 1936
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Vyacheslav Ragozin

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
5 Nc3 d6 6 Be2 a6

Alatortsev had reached this position via the Najdorf Variation move order and his game with Kopaev from the 1936 VTSSPS Championship shows a similar attacking plan: 7 0–0 Qc7 8 a4 b6 9 f4 Nbd7 10 Bf3 Bb7 11 g4 Nc5 12 Qe2 Be7 13 Qg2 0–0 14 g5.

Black was on the defensive after 14 ... Ne8 15 Be3 e5 16 Nde2 Bc6 17 f5 Bd8 18 Qg4 Qd7 19 b3 b5 20 axb5 axb5 21 Rxa8 Bxa8 22 Bxc5 dxc5 23 Rd1.

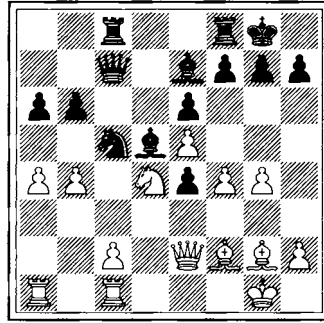
Black liquidated the queenside with 23 ... Nd6 24 Nxb5 Qxb5 25 Rxd6 c4 26 Kg2 Kh8 27 Qh5 Be7 28 Rd1 cx b3 29 cx b3 Qxb3 but White won brilliantly: 30 Rd7 Bd8 31 f6 Qe6 32 g6! h6 33 Qxh6+! gxh6 34 g7+ Kg8 35 gx f8(Q)+ Kxf8 36 Rxd8+ Qe8 37 Rxe8+ 1–0.

7 Be3 Qc7 8 a4 b6 9 f4 Bb7 10 Bf3
Nbd7 11 Qe2 Be7 12 0–0 0–0 13 g4 d5!

The prewar games of the Soviets showed the strength of ...d5 as an answer to g2–g4. Now 14 exd5 exd5 15 Nf5 Rfe8 is fine for Black.

14 e5 Ne4 15 Nxe4 dx e4 16 Bg2 Bd5
17 Rfc1 Rac8 18 Bf2 Nc5 19 b4? (*see diagram*)

White's attack is dead so he pins his hopes on the alternate plans of advancing on the queenside (c2–c4) or winning the e4-pawn. Here 19 Re1 Qd7 20 b3 would have



After 19 b4

been more solid but allows Black to seize the initiative with 20 ... f6.

19 ... Nd3!! 20 cx d3 Qxc1+ 21 Rxc1
Rxc1+ 22 Bf1 Rfc8! 23 Qb2

Not 23 dx e4 because of 23 ... Bc4. Botvinnik recalled he was "so shaken" by the sacrifice of queen and knight for two rooks that he got upset and quickly lost. Black is threatening to double on the seventh or eighth ranks.

23 ... ex d3 24 b5 ax b5 25 ax b5 Rd!

Black anticipates the 26 Nc6 threat. Botvinnik notes that the rook is unassailable on d1 and ...Rcc1 or ...Ra8–a1 can not be stopped.

26 Nc6 Bf8 27 Bxb6 d2! 28 Qc2 Bf3
0–1

Black queens the d-pawn after 29 ... Rxf1+.

Capablanca agreed to play in the Third Moscow International after being promised a \$500 honorarium, \$200 in travel expenses and the use of an ermine coat. (The previous year he was also given the use of an American car, a Lincoln, for sightseeing.) Flohr, Lasker and Liliental also agreed to repeat. The organizers tried to add an American but both Sammy Reshevsky and Reuben Fine refused invitations because the first United States Championship tournament

would end two days after the first round in Moscow. So Erich Eliskases, the strongest Austrian, was named instead.

The identity of the Soviet invitees set off a small storm of controversy. In a January 2, 1936, article in the newspaper *K Industrializatsii* (Towards Industrialization) Botvinnik said the likely group would be him, Riumin, Alatortsev and Levenfish. But when the number of Soviets was increased from four to five, Alatortsev was omitted from the list — while Botvinnik's friend Ragozin, and Kan, the lucky last-round opponent of Stahlberg the previous year, were added. Alatortsev wrote a February 17 letter to the Leningrad district council of physical culture saying he had not been told why he was left out and asking them to protest. But he was ignored. Alatortsev, who was trying to succeed Riumin as Botvinnik's chief rival, believed Botvinnik was dodging his requests for a match. Later he asked Krylenko what had happened to keep him out of Moscow 1936. Alatortsev's wife recalled the conversation:

"Botvinnik said he'd refuse to take part if you play," Krylenko said.

"Tell him I'll lose to him," Alatortsev replied.

"No, no. He won't play," Krylenko said firmly.

When Capa heard of this he told Alatortsev. "Don't worry, I won't let him win first prize." Bohatyrchuk, meanwhile, believed *he* was not invited because of his "chronic" habit of beating Botvinnik.

The tournament was held in the Hall of Columns of the House of Unions, because the museum was not available. The scheduled was "very harsh" according to Levenfish: Play ran from 3:30 p.m. to 8:30, followed by a break and then a second 20-moves-in-one-hour session. "The seven-hour burden was too great and the one-hour break only made the situation worse" because players spent their rest time analyzing, he said. Lasker managed to share second place be-

hind Capablanca after the first cycle, but could not keep up with this regimen and finished without a prize for the first time in his career.

Botvinnik kept pace with Capablanca until the seventh round when he tried to grind the Cuban down in the same kind of Maróczy Bind middlegame that earned Botvinnik the first brilliancy prize in the third round. But grabbing a pawn at the 28th move created complications. Time pressure cost Botvinnik the advantage at move 39 and another blunder the next move cost him the game.

After the first half of the tournament, Capa was running away with 6½ points out of 9, followed by Botvinnik, Lasker and Ragozin at 5, and Kan and Levenfish at 4½. Among the tournament's shortest games was:

E07 Catalan Opening
Third Moscow International, 1936
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Emanuel Lasker

1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 e6 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 Be7
5 0-0 0-0 6 d4 Nbd7 7 Nc3 dxc4 8 e4 c6

Lasker avoids the complications of 8 ... c5 9 d5 exd5 10 e5! and prepares 9 ... b5.

9 a4 a5

This small loss of time allows White to use the c4 square. Better was 9 ... b6 10 Qe2 Ba6, said Botvinnik. who gave: 11 b3 Bb4! 12 Bb2 c5 13 bxc4 cxd4 14 Nxd4 Bxc3 15 Bxc3 Rc8 16 Nb5 Bxb5 17 axb5 Qc7 18 e5 Qxc4 with an even endgame.

10 Qe2 Nb6 11 Rd1 Bb4 12 Ne5 Qe7
13 Be3 Bd7 14 Nxc4 Nxc4 15 Qxc4 b5
16 Qe2 Rab8?

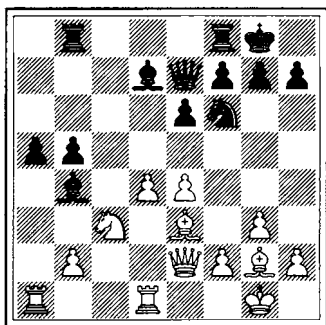
A bigger and this time fatal mistake. Black needed the counterplay on the b-file

Third Moscow International, May 14–June 8, 1936

	C		B		F		L		R		L		K		L		R		E		<i>Score</i>
1. Capablanca	X	X	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	13–5
2. Botvinnik	0	½	X	X	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	12–6
3. Flohr	½	½	½	0	X	X	½	1	0	½	½	1	0	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	9½–8½
4. Liliental	0	½	0	½	½	0	X	X	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	9–9
5. Ragozin	0	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	X	X	1	½	0	½	1	½	½	½	½	0	8½–9½
6. Lasker	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	X	X	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	8–10
7–10. Kan	½	0	0	0	1	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	X	X	½	½	0	½	½	½	7½–10½
7–10. Levenfish	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	X	X	½	0	1	0	7½–10½
7–10. Riumin	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	½	½	1	X	X	½	½	7½–10½
7–10. Eliskases	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	X	X	7½–10½

from 16 ... b×a4 17 N×a4 Rfb8 although, as Botvinnik showed, White's edge is clear after 18 Rdc1 and Nc5.

17 a×b5 c×b5



After
17 ... c×b5

18 e5 Ne8 19 d5! e×d5

Also lost is 19 ... B×c3 20 d6 Qd8 21 b×c3 because of the strong passed pawn.

20 N×d5 Q×e5 21 N×b4 1-0

This was one of Lasker's worst defeats (21 ... a×b4 22 R×d7). If he had saved a piece with 20 ... Qe6 21 N×b4 a×b4, then 22 Bc5 would have won.

Riumin lost both games to Botvinnik and only won twice, against Kan and Levenfish. Mikhail Udovich, in charge of the press room, was Riumin's unofficial trainer and agonized over his nervous play and frequent blunders in the fifth hour of play. Levenfish managed to beat Flohr nicely in a game that might have won the prize for best ending — if Levenfish had not won it for a game with Liliental. But Levenfish, the second-oldest player in the tournament, also lost five games and finished with only a point and a half in his final five games.

Every round was sold out and VIPs often had to use their *sviazi* for tickets. Prokofiev found himself attending several rounds, explaining he was "used to performing as an artist but now I'm a spectator." David Oistrakh, a first-category player who once beat Lasker in a simul, was another regular at

both Moscow internationals. The organizers put up a stand in the foyer of the Hall of Columns and in first day they sold 300 Russian-language copies of Capablanca's *Primer*. More than 1,000 were sold in the course of the tournament. After rounds the players gathered at the National Hotel for gossip and belated postmortems. One night Troitsky, who had come from Leningrad, showed off his analysis of the complex end-game of two knights versus pawn. After explaining in depth to Capablanca what he had discovered, the Cuban announced he "now understood everything." Troitsky then gave him an example to solve and "to the pleasure of those present, the ex-champion got confused by the fifth move."

Going into the final round Capablanca led Botvinnik by half a point and no one else was close. Capablanca, who had vowed to keep Botvinnik from winning, realized that the Russian's last opponent, Levenfish, had no chance for a prize. He diplomatically told Levenfish he understood his situation was difficult because his countrymen "crave your defeat." Levenfish replied that throwing the game would be unsportsmanlike. "Don't worry," Capa replied. "I'll come to your rescue and beat Eliskases." He did, while Levenfish managed to step back from the edge of defeat.

B72 Sicilian Defense

Third Moscow International, 1936

white Grigory Levenfish,

black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 c×d4 4 N×d4 Nf6
5 Nc3 g6 6 Be2 Bg7 7 Be3 Nc6 8 Nb3
Be6 9 f4 0-0 10 g4 d5

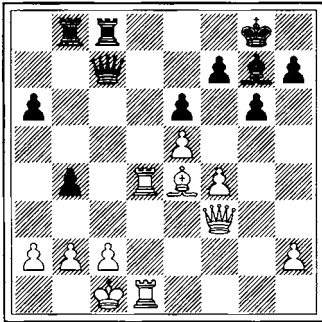
Kan had tried 10 g4, the idea of a Moscow amateur, P. Rabinovich, earlier in the tournament against Botvinnik and obtained a fine game after 10 ... Na5 11 g5 Ne8 12 Qd2 Rc8 13 Bd4 Nc4 14 B×c4 R×c4 15 0-0-0.

Botvinnik's reply is sharper and led to a celebrated perpetual check draw with Alekhine two months later at Nottingham: 11 f5 Bc8 12 e×d5 Nb4 13 d6 Q×d6! 14 Bc5 Qf4 15 Rf1 Q×h2 16 B×b4 N×g4! 17 B×g4 Qg3+.

11 e5? d4! 12 N×d4 N×d4 13 B×d4 N×g4!

The point: 14 B×g4 B×g4 15 Q×g4 Q×d4 favors Black hugely. Now 14 Bg1 and a quick endgame might be best. Levenfish confessed he played "nervously and unevenly" in this tournament.

14 Qd3 a6 15 0–0–0 Nh6 16 Bf3 Qc7 17 Nd5 B×d5 18 B×d5 Nf5 19 Bc3 e6 20 Be4 Rfc8 21 Qf3 Rab8 22 Rd2 b5 23 Rhd1 b4 24 Bd4 N×d4 25 R×d4



After
25 R×d4

"A draw would not suit either opponent," Levenfish wrote, despite the bishops-of-opposite-color. White's f4-pawn looks like the board's weakest pawn now but Levenfish finds enough counterplay.

25 ... Rd8 26 Rd6! Bf8! 27 R×a6 R×d1+ 28 K×d1

White is in trouble after 28 Q×d1 Bh6! 29 Qd2 Qc4 or 28 Qf3 Q×e5.

28 ... Rd8+ 29 Bd3 Qc5 30 Ke2 Qd4 31 Rc6?

White's hopes lie in his fast a-pawn after 31 b3 Bh6 32 Rc6!, e.g., 32 ... Q×f4

33 Q×f4 B×f4 34 Rc4 B×e5 35 R×b4 B×h2 36 a4.

31 ... Q×b2 32 Rc7 Qd4 33 Qe3 Bh6 34 Kf3 Qd5+ 35 Qe4 Qd4 36 Qe3 Qa1 37 Rc4 Bf8 38 Qb6 Qd1+ 39 Kg2 Qd2+

One final trick: 40 Kg3 loses to 40 ... R×d3+. Botvinnik claimed that Levenfish spread the rumor before the game that he was pressured to throw the game. Prokofiev, "a hot-tempered person," who was Capablanca's friend, "severed all relations with me" but soon realized the claim was a lie, Botvinnik said.

40 Qf2 Q×f2+ 41 K×f2 Ra8 42 Rc7! R×a2 43 Kf3 b3 44 c×b3 R×h2 45 Bb5 Rh3+ 46 Kg2 draw.

There are no chances after 47 Be8.

As a consolation to finishing second, Botvinnik was two and a half points ahead of Flohr, who had been considered his superior three years before and his equal a year before. All doors were open to him, and in July Krylenko arranged, with calls to head of state Mikhail Kalinin and others, for Botvinnik to be allowed to play in Nottingham, England, under extraordinary conditions: Even his wife of two years, Gayanne Ananov, a strikingly attractive Kirov Ballet dancer, was allowed to accompany him. This was despite the extreme Soviet fear of contamination with foreigners and of families defecting as a unit.

Botvinnik's victory at Nottingham was another propaganda coup, trumpeted on the front page of *Pravda*. An honor guard and large contingent of students welcomed Botvinnik home when he arrived at Moscow's Byelorussky Station. As D.B. Richards put it, Nottingham was "the first triumph of the USSR in international cultural competition." Lasker, who considered himself a representative of the Soviet Union, tied for seventh at Nottingham in his last tournament. He

returned home to his Moscow apartment near Nogin Square but the following August, when he asked his wife Martha what she wanted for her birthday, she said “a trip to America.” They left in October, never to return.

Neither did Capablanca. After the 1936 tournament he assured Rokhlin that he had lost the 1927 match to Alekhine due to “frivolous thinking” but would take a rematch more seriously. He said he would like to play it in the Soviet Union with a prize fund and expenses of \$25,000 and asked Rokhlin to pass on the request to Krylenko. “The permanent head of the Soviet chess movement”—as he was described in the Moscow 1935 tournament book—liked the idea. But since the Soviets were no longer talking to Alekhine, it was rejected. Capablanca made one last trip to Leningrad, before leaving for Nottingham, and extracted a bit of revenge by winning a game from Ilyin-Genevsky in an exhibition game on June 13:

A34 Queen’s Indian Defense
Consultation game, Leningrad, 1936
white Ilyin-Genevsky
 and I. Rabinovich,
black José Capablanca

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 b6 3 g3 Bb7 4 Bg2 c5
 5 0–0 cxd4 6 Nxd4 Bxg2 7 Kxg2 d5
 8 c4! Qd7

Up to now the game followed a Capablanca–Alekhine match game. Black loses time but White fails to exploit the loss.

9 cxd5 Nxd5 10 e4 Nc7 11 Nc3

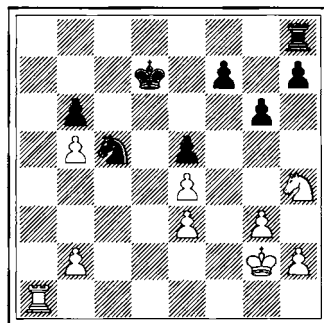
Capablanca said Black’s next move should have been stopped by 11 Bf4.

11 ... e5 12 Nf5 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 Nba6
 14 Be3 Rd8 15 Rxd8+ Kxd8 16 a4! Kd7!

Black prepares to jettison a pawn to

avoid a bad game (16 ... g6? 17 Bg5+ and 18 Ne3).

17 Nb5 g6 18 Nh4 Bc5 19 Nxa7? Bxe3
 20 fxe3 Nc5! 21 Nb5 Nxb5 22 axb5



After 22 axb5

The White allies counted on 22 ...
 Nxe4 23 Ra7+ Ke6 24 Rb7.

22 ... Ke6! 23 Kf3 Rd8 24 b4 Nb3
 25 Ra7?

Capablanca showed after the game that 25 Ra6 Nd2+ 26 Ke2 Rd6 or 26 Kg4 Rb8 offered Black winning chances but the text is worse.

25 ... Nd2+ 26 Kg2 Nxe4 27 Nf3 Rd5!
 28 Ra8 Rxb5 29 Re8+ Kf6 30 g4 Ng5
 31 Nxg5 Kxg5 32 Kg3 Kf6 33 Rh8 Kg7
 34 Re8 h6 35 h4 Kf6 36 Rc8 Rxb4
 37 Rc6+ Kg7 38 g5 h5! 39 Rc8 Rg4+
 40 Kh3 Re4 41 Rc3 b5 0–1

Capablanca toured the south, playing chess and tennis in Kiev, then visited Dnepropetrovsk, Odessa and Kharkov. Capablanca’s first-ever flight was from Kiev to Dnepropetrovsk, according to Yermeyev, who said Capa was so concerned about going up in a one-engine plane that he made out his will and left it with the airport superintendent.

Before heading West, Capablanca had one last chance to see how much the Soviets had improved since 1925: Among his opponents in the Kiev simul was a 12-year-old student, David Bronstein, who drew.

7

The Terror

We are an exception among people. We belong to those who are not an integral part of humanity but exist to teach the world some type of great lesson. — Pyotr Chaadeyev, celebrated 19th century scientist who was declared insane for describing Russia as backward

Fyodor Bohatyrchuk was en route to the Ninth Soviet Championship in Leningrad in December 1934, when a distraught fellow passenger burst into his railway car and exclaimed: “Have you heard? Kirov has been killed. Now it begins.” Sergei Kirov, First Secretary of the Leningrad Communist Party, had been murdered at Smolny, where eight years before Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky and Yakov Rokhlin convinced him to provide the visas for the Leningrad–Stockholm match.

The assassination of the man considered Stalin’s chief deputy and heir was a thunderbolt. It set off an unprecedented epidemic of fear and suspicion that poisoned every aspect of Soviet life, including chess. Everyone had to prove their loyalty, and when the tournament began, all the finalists signed an open letter proclaiming that Kirov was “an excellent comrade and friend of physical culturalists and chessplayers.”

Bohatyrchuk was stunned to learn that a young Party member, not a reactionary, was being blamed for Kirov’s murder. By the time he reached Leningrad, newspapers were filled with dark reports of a “Trotskyite-Zinovievite conspiracy,” and waves of arrests followed. The Ukrainian soon read that 300 White Guards who were being held in prison on various charges had been shot.

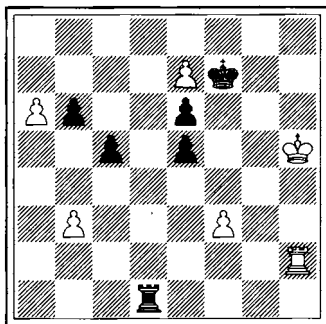
There had been hints of the Great Terror, as it became known, since the late 1920s when Nikolai Krylenko carried out the first show trials with thuggish bravado. Krylenko targeted the alleged “wreckers” and saboteurs who were said to be the real reason for the failure of the Soviet economy. But among Krylenko’s first — and least likely — victims was Soviet chess composition.

Problem and endgame composing revived after the Revolution when *Izvestia* conducted a mate-in-two contest in 1923. A large number of entrants took part, including Arvid Kubbel, who placed second. One of the two judges was Lazar Borisovich Zalkind, a celebrated problemist, born in Kharkov in 1886.

Zalkind was 17 when the first of his more than 600 compositions appeared in Emanuel Schiffers’ column in *Niva*. At the same time Zalkind became active in the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, siding with the majority faction, which took the name Bolshevik, in their split with the minority Mensheviks. After the fall of the tsar, in February 1917 he joined the Mensheviks but gave up politics for good after the October Revolution. Meanwhile, he became a prominent economist and headed the statistics department in a government trade office from 1925 to 1930. Zalkind’s

fame as a problemist grew simultaneously and in 1927 he was named chairman of the All-Union Association of Chess Problem and Study Lovers, which had about 250 members at its peak. Among his works:

Leonid Zalkind
White to play and win.



Shakhmaty, 1927, second prize

Solution: 1 a7 Ra1 2 e8(Q)+ Kxe8 3 Kg4 Kd7 (or 3 ... Kf7) 4 Rh1! (not 4 Rh8? Rg1+) Ra2 5 Rh8 Rxa7 6 Rh7+ and wins. But not 3 Kg6? Ke7 4 Rh1 Ra2! 5 Rh8 Rg2+ 6 Kh6! Rh2+ 7 Kg7 Rg2+! and draws.

This was a golden age of chess composition in the Soviet Union, and Zalkind was at its forefront. In 1929–1930 a four-mover competition was organized by the Association in honor of his twenty-fifth year of creativity. But it was never finished. In August 1930 Zalkind was arrested during a roundup of Mensheviks charged with worming their way into influential posts as part of an anti-Bolshevik plot. The Mensheviks came to trial in March 1931 in the October Hall of the House of Unions where, ironically, Moscow’s chess composers had first gathered at an organizational meeting several years before. Krylenko personally handled the prosecution of Zalkind, declaring “the need to isolate him for the longest period is completely proven to me.” In April Zalkind was sentenced to eight years in prison. He was denounced in 64 as “renegade and traitor

to the working class” and separately in a joint letter by three leading composers, Alexander Herbstman, Yevgeny Umnov and N.V. Proskurnin. The Association was liquidated and Krylenko replaced it with a Composition Commission headed by someone who knew little about chess.

Article 58

Kirov’s death — now believed to have been orchestrated by Stalin — unleashed a broad attack on anyone suspected of collaborating with the West, sabotaging the country or violating Article 58, which was vague enough to include anything that could be considered “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.”

When he returned to Kiev after the Ninth Soviet Championship, Bohatyrchuk learned the NKVD, the successor of the OGPU and Cheka, had arrested the secretary of the local chess section. The suspect was a father of five children who had no political interests and, as far as Bohatyrchuk knew, no interests besides chess. He decided “to take the bull by the horns” and went to Moscow to ask Krylenko’s help. Bohatyrchuk wrote in his memoirs. Krylenko’s reputation by then was terrifying. “It is not enough to execute the guilty,” he once said. “Shooting some of the innocent will impress the masses more.” The People’s Commissar of Justice greeted Bohatyrchuk in his modest apartment, listened and made a phone call to the Ukrainian NKVD head. But it was too late: the chess section secretary had just confessed to his crime, Krylenko said, pronouncing “confessed” with the knowing hint of one aware of how such confessions were achieved.

Bohatyrchuk never learned what the unfortunate secretary’s crime was but thanks to Krylenko’s intervention he was freed in two years. Others in comparable positions

were less fortunate, regardless of their politics. For example, Konstantin Shukevich-Tretyakov was an ardent Bolshevik, even naming his daughter “Revolution.” He was a Byelorussian delegate and a member of the plenum at the third *syezd* in 1924 and was a major chess organizer in Byelorussia in the 1930s. An example of his skill in a consultation game is the following:

C13 French Defense
Consultation game, Minsk, 1924
white Bogolyubov
 and Shukevich-Tretyakov,
black Hausberg and Kaspersky

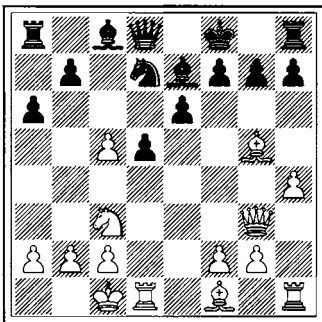
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7
 5 e5 Nfd7 6 h4 a6

The Alekhine-Chatard gambit remained popular through the 1930s, *e.g.*, 6 ... f6 7 Bd3 c5 8 Qh5+ Kf8 and now Panov-Udovich, 10th Soviet Championship, went 9 Nxd5 fxg5 10 Rh3 g4 11 Nf4 Nxe5 12 dxe5 gxh3 13 Bxh7 Rxb7! 14 Qxh7 h2 and wins.

7 Qg4 Kf8 8 Nf3 c5 9 0–0–0 Nc6
 10 dxc5!

Liquidating the center only succeeds if White intends to sacrifice on d5.

10 ... Ndxe5 11 Nxe5 Nxe5 12 Qg3 Nd7



After
 12 ... Nd7

On 12 ... Nc6 would have prepared the d5-capture with 13 Bc4.

13 Nxd5! exd5 14 Rxd5 f6

Or 14 ... Bxg5 15 hxg5 Qe8 16 Bc4 followed by f2–f4 and Re1, and 15Qa5 16 Qd6+ Kg8 17 c6 and wins, as Grodzensky pointed out.

15 Bf4 Bxc5 16 Bc4!

Not falling for 16 Rxc5 Nxc5 17 Bd6+ Kf7 18 Bxc5 after which 17 ... Be6 allows Black to continue.

16 ... Be7 17 Re1 g6 18 Bd6 Bxd6
 19 Qxd6+ Kg7 20 Re7+ Qxe7 21 Qxe7+
 Kh6 22 g4 1–0

But Shukevich-Tretyakov was arrested at the height of the Terror, on August 18, 1938, for alleged counterrevolutionary activity that was not detailed. Sentenced to five years at a corrective labor camp, he died in Sevastopol on January 10, 1942. His name was “rehabilitated,” like thousands of other victims of the Terror, after Nikita Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin in 1956.

Even sixty years later the fate of some victims of the Terror remains a mystery. For example, Mikhail Shebarshin, was a Leningrad rival of Botvinnik’s with a sharp, combinational style. He was one of the few players to master blindfold play and gave a 10-board séance in 1926, winning eight and drawing two, against teams of consulting opponents. Shebarshin scored 12–1 in the 1926 Leningrad Championship Semifinals. That should have been enough to win but he finished a half point behind Botvinnik, who took 97 moves to beat him. Later, Botvinnik and Pyotr Romanovsky were on the jury that awarded Shebarshin a beauty prize for the following game, played in a tournament in which Shebarshin finished second, behind Pyotr Izmailov:

D67 Queen's Gambit Declined
First RSFSR Championship,
Moscow, 1928
white Mikhail Shebarshin,
black Alexey Sokolsky

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 d4 d5 4 Bg5 Nbd7
 5 e3 Be7 6 Rc1 c6 7 Nf3 0-0 8 Bd3

The “battle of the tempo” encouraged pass-moves such as 8 a3, *e.g.*, 8 ... a6 9 cxd5! cxd5 10 Bd3 b5 11 0-0 Bb7 12 a4 b4 13 Nbl Re8 14 Nbd2 Qa5? 15 Nb3! Qxa4? 16 Rc7 Rab8 17 Ne5 Nf8 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Qh5 Ng6 20 Nd7! Qxb3 21 Nxf6+ gxf6 22 Rxf7! Re7 23 Qxh7 mate, Duz-Khotimirsky–Kotov, Semifinals, 11th Soviet Championship, Kiev 1938.

8 ... dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nd5 10 Bxe7 Qxe7
 11 0-0 N5b6 12 Bb3 e5 13 Ne4!

José Capablanca has been wrongly credited with inventing this move against Ilya Kan at Moscow 1935 — seven years after the present game. It prepares an annoying Nfg5.

13 ... h6 14 Ng3 Kh8 15 Qd3 exd4
 16 exd4

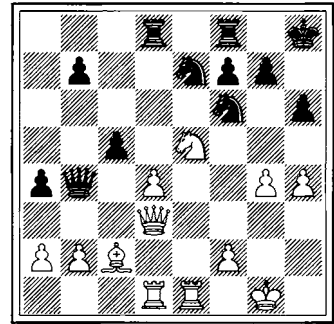
The Capablanca–Kan game went 16 Bc2 Nf6 17 e4 g6 18 Qxd4 with a clear edge. Shebarshin prefers to exploit the e-file.

16 ... Nf6 17 Rfe1 Qd6 18 Ne5 Nbd5
 19 Qf3 Be6 20 Nf5 Bxf5 21 Qxf5 Rad8
 22 Rcd1 Qb4?

Black is in trouble after failing to play 22 ... g6 and 23 ... Kg7.

23 g4! a5 24 h4 a4 25 Bc2 Ne7 26 Qd3
 c5 (*see diagram*)

Here Romanovsky pointed out that White could also win with 27 g5! Rxd4



After 26 ... c5

28 gxf6 Rxd3 (28 ... Ng6 29 Nxf7+ Rxf7
 30 Re8+ Rf8 31 fxg7+) 29 fxe7 Re8
 30 Bxd3 Qxh4 31 Bg6! Qg5+ 32 Kf1.

27 a3! Qxb2

Black is also lost after 27 ... Qa5 28 g5
 or 27 ... Qxd4 28 Qe2.

28 Nc4 Qb5 29 g5 Rxd4 30 gxf6! Ng6
 31 Nd6! Qd7

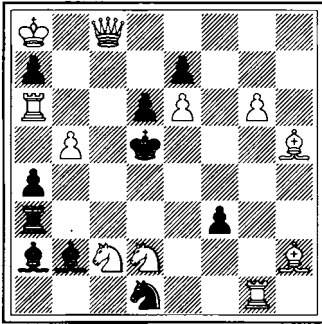
Or 31 ... Rxd3 32 Nxb5 and 31 ...
 Qxd3 32 Rxd3, keeping the extra piece.

32 fxg7+ Kxg7 33 Nf5+ 1-0

But the name of Shebarshin, a math teacher, disappeared from the chess press after the 1930 *Rabpros* Championship. He was charged with “attempting to organize a counterrevolutionary mutiny.” Shebarshin vanished into a prison camp, where he was known to play chess and even to be regarded as camp champion. His ultimate fate is unknown.

Another example is Mikhail Barulin, a chemist, strong amateur, and composer of more than 250 problems. When the title of “Master of Sport in Chess Composition” was created in 1934, the 37-year-old Barulin was among the first to be honored with it. He edited the problem section in both *64* and *Shakhmaty v SSSR* in the 1930s and organized a Chess Assembly that brought chesslovers to his home.

Mikhail Barulin
White to mate in two.



Shakhmatny Listok, 1927, second prize

Barulin called this theme a “white combination” and it was regarded as one of his major contributions to composing. There are false leads in 1 Bg4? Rc3! (since 2 Rg5 is not possible) and 1 Rg4? Bc3 (since there is no 2 Bxf3).

Solution: 1 Ra5!, threatening 2 b6 mate, e.g., 1 ... Rc3 2 Rg5; 1 ... Bc3 2 Bxf3.

But Barulin was arrested on November 13, 1941, apparently on grounds that he made an anti-Soviet joke, according to Sergei Grodzensky, who detailed the fate of the Terror’s victims in a trailblazing series of *glasnost*-era articles for 64. After a lengthy investigation the state prosecutor’s office closed the case against Barulin in July 1943 “for insufficient evidence.” It was too late: Mikhail Mikhailovich Barulin had died in prison two months earlier.

But at least in prison there was a chance for survival. Kazan-born Pyotr Izmailov, who won the first Russian Federation championship at age 21 in 1928, died before a firing squad in April 1937. Izmailov, later of Tomsk, was another talented player who lacked the advantage of living in Moscow or Leningrad and had a more promising career outside chess. As an engineer-geophysicist, he often went on field trips in the taiga, leaving him less and less time for chess.

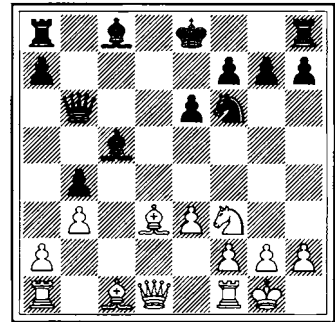
After qualifying for the finals of the Sixth Soviet Championship, Izmailov’s leave from teaching expired and he had to return to Tomsk.

D46 Semi-Slav Defense
Russian Federation Championship,
1928

white Pyotr Izmailov,
black Mikhail Shebarshin

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 d5 4 Nc3 c6
 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 Be7 7 0–0 dxc4 8 Bxc4
 b5 9 Bd3 b4 10 Ne4 c5 11 dxc5 Nxc5
 12 Nxc5 Bxc5 13 b3 Qb6

After
 13 ... Qb6



After the Meran Variation (6 ... dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5) was introduced in 1924 players experimented with a variety of similar move orders for Black. But here his delay in castling proves costly.

14 Bb2 Bb7 15 Rc1 Rd8 16 Qe2 Bxf3

It was too late for 16 ... 0–0 because of 17 Ng5 or 17 Bxf6.

17 gxf3 Rd5 18 f4! Ke7 19 Bc4 Rd7
 20 Qc2 Rc8 21 Rfd1 Rxd1+ 22 Rxd1 h6?

This saves the h7-pawn from the Bxf6+ threat. Black had to stop f4–f5 or simplify with ...Rd8.

23 f5! exf5 24 Qxf5 Qc6 25 Bb5! Qe6
 26 Bxf6+ gxf6

27 Rd7+ Kf8 28 Rxf7+! Kxf7

Or 28 ... Qxf7 29 Qxc8+ Kg7
30 Qxc5 Qg6+ 31 Kf1! Qb1+ 32 Kg2 avoids
perpetual check and wins.

29 Bc4 Rg8+ 30 Kf1 Qxc4+ 31 bxc4 Rg5
32 Qd7+ Kg6 33 f4 Rf5 34 Qe8+ Kg7
35 Qe6! 1-0

The game is over after 35 ... Kg6
36 Qg8+ Kh5 37 h3.

Five months after his final tournament, in April 1936, Izmailov was arrested for plotting with other “Trotskyite Fascists” to kill Stalin. He was convicted after a 20-minute “trial.” His wife was sentenced to eight years at the harsh camp at Kolyma because she was “a member of the family of a traitor.” Izmailov’s rehabilitation in 1957 was “due to the absence of a crime,” documents showed.

Denunciation

Titles and past accomplishments seemed to offer minor protection as the momentum of the Terror demanded more victims. In the summer of 1937 Bohatyrchuk was accused by three strong players, Abram Polyak, Alexander Konstantinopolsky and Iosif Pogrebissky, of pocketing money intended for chess, he recalled. The charges, in a *Kommunist* newspaper article, alleged that he diverted expense money intended for Lasker and Capablanca during their Kiev visits and for construction of a Kiev chess club.

Bohatyrchuk called the charges “balderdash” and wrote that he refuted them when interrogated by the NKVD. But then the investigation turned to what the interrogator called Bohatyrchuk’s dubious political record: “Let’s take for example, your win from Botvinnik in the ’35 tournament,” he said. “We all know that you had a poor place in the tournament and that you knew the huge

significance for the prestige of the USSR that Botvinnik’s receiving of sole first prize would have. And despite this you applied all powers to win the game.”

In his memoirs, the Ukrainian recalled his reply, “I am first of all a sportsman, and not a politician and therefore I’m interested in play, not points.” He buttressed his case by noting how Krylenko, in the tournament book, praised the good sportsmanship of the Soviets which was illustrated by the defeat of Botvinnik by both Bohatyrchuk and Ilya Kan. This apparently convinced the NKVD officer and Bohatyrchuk was allowed to leave.

But after a group of radiologists who worked with him were arrested that fall, Bohatyrchuk and his wife arranged a warning signal: If the NKVD came for him when he was not home, his wife would hang flowers in a pot on their balcony. Bohatyrchuk did not breathe easier until the next year but even then he felt under suspicion. When he declined an invitation, as the token “oldtimer” in a young masters tournament, because he was too busy, the director of his institute of experimental biology and pathology warned him that this would be viewed by the Party as a refusal “to work with the young.” Even this could be considered a violation of Article 58. Bohatyrchuk reluctantly played and finished second in what turned out to be his final tournament in the Soviet Union.

“Terribly Dangerous”

Botvinnik alone among chess players seemed above suspicion. He said later he had been a confirmed Communist since age 9 and grew to be a warm supporter of Comrade Stalin, who in 1934 was named by the Party “the greatest man of all nations and ages.” Viktor Malkin, a longtime friend, said Botvinnik even changed the way he annotated games because of Stalin. At first Botvinnik thought Siegbert Tarrasch’s elaborate

notes were the ideal. But then, “having heard Stalin’s speeches, his clearcut, condensed formulations, he understood that commentators should be laconic.”

Even after the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, Botvinnik apologized for Stalin, saying in one of his last articles that many people were arrested in the early 1930s for the good reason that they were thought to have property that might help prepare the national defense.

Yet considering his mother had been a Menshevik, even Botvinnik was not entirely immune. After his victory at Nottingham, 1936, Botvinnik’s Russian-born aunt sent him a congratulatory postcard from America. “I, of course, did not reply,” he wrote. “At that time it was terribly dangerous.” Botvinnik surely would have known that his former teenage rival, Nikolai Salmin, had just disappeared. Salmin had been 19 when he played with 15-year-old Botvinnik in the 1926 Stockholm–Leningrad match and had become one of Leningrad’s strongest first-category players in the 1930s, while working as a book illustrator. But Salmin was arrested on May 17, 1936, for reasons that remain obscure, and was soon shot, only to be “rehabilitated” just as mysteriously during the Khrushchev “thaw” in 1963.

In 1938 Botvinnik’s father-in-law was arrested but not, according to one account, until after Botvinnik had left for the AVRO tournament so he would not be upset. Two years after that, in 1940, Botvinnik was admitted to the Communist Party, a rare privilege.

Chess helped take attention away from the Terror. Bohatyrchuk believed the Moscow Internationals of 1935 and 1936 were held to divert attention from the growing number of people who disappeared. Chess also proved an invaluable companion to some victims. Sergei Romanovich, a young Muscovite contemporary of Vasily Smyslov and Vladimir Simagin, recalled how he and his ill father were taken by a five-man NKVD

team to the Lubyanka prison “one terrible night in 1937.” He eventually spent about two months in another Moscow prison. Playing chess — with pieces made of bread-crumbs and tooth powder — saved him from despair and feeling of hopelessness, he recalled.

Some camps of the *gulag* allowed inmates to take part in tournaments. After the general easing of restrictions following Stalin’s death in 1953, team matches between different camp sections were allowed at Vorkuta, north of the Arctic Circle. One of the stronger Vorkuta inmates was Dmitry Lozhenitsyn, a surgeon convicted in 1937 of “ties with world bourgeoisie.” His crime was playing postal chess with a former school friend, the son of a Belgian diplomat who had returned to Belgium.

The momentum of the Terror was unstoppable, and individuals throughout the Soviet power structure fell victim, including many who touched the lives of chess-players. Karl Radek, the Comintern official who authorized Alekhine’s departure, died in 1939. Grigory Ordzhonikidze, who awarded Botvinnik his car, perished in 1937. Kosarev, the Komosomol official who helped arrange the Moscow, 1936, tournament was liquidated in 1939.

As the demand for new convictions grew, grounds for condemnation were reduced to the ridiculous — and the motives of the accusers became baser. One of the strongest Leningrad amateurs, Georgy Schneiderman-Stepanov, apparently died because of his surname — and because of a jealous chess rival.

The sad-eyed, red-cheeked friend of Vitaly Chekhover and Alexander Tolush was one of the most talented Leningrad youngsters on the eve of World War II. After winning an all-union first category tournament in 1938 he received the new title of candidate master, then fulfilled the master norm in 1940. Here is one of Schneiderman-Stepanov’s most impressive games:

D02 Réti Opening
Leningrad Champion, 1939
white Georgy Lisitsyn,
black Georgy Schneiderman-Stepanov
 (notes by Schneiderman-Stepanov)

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 Nc6 3 d4 d5 4 Bg2 Bf5
 5 c4 e6 6 Qa4

The queen stands poorly here. Better was the simple 6 0–0.

6 ... Qd7 7 0–0 Be7 8 Nc3 0–0 9 Bf4
 Ne4 10 Racl Rad8

Defending the queen and threatening to take the d4-pawn after an exchange of knights.

11 cxd5 exd5 12 Qb5?

Overlooking the basic Black threat. Necessary was 12 Rfd1, defending the d4-pawn.

12 ... g5! 13 Nxe4

On 13 Be3 there would follow 13 ... g4 14 Nd2 Nxc3 15 Rxc3 Nxd4 16 Qxd7 Nxe2+.

13 ... dxe4 14 Nxe5 Nxd4 15 Qxb7

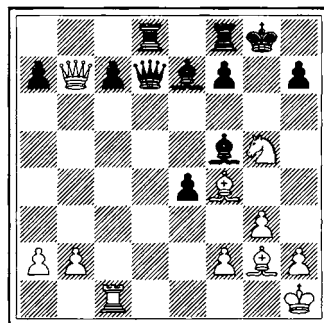
No better is 15 Qc4 b5. Black also has a winning position after 15 Qxd7 Nxe2+ 16 Kh1 Rxd7 17 Rcl Nxf4 18 gx f4 Bxg5 19 fxg5 Re8. With the sacrifice of the exchange, White tries to muddy the game but it leads to an unexpectedly quick finish.

15 ... Nxe2+ 16 Kh1 Nxc1 17 Rxc1 (see diagram)

17 ... Bxg5! 18 Bxg5 Qd1+ 19 Bf1

Not 19 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 20 Bf1 Bh3 and wins.

After 17 Rxc1



19 ... Qf3+ 20 Kg1 Rd1 21 Qb5

A “dying” trap. If Black thoughtlessly plays 21 ... Bh3, threatening mate on g2, then follows 22 Rxd1 Qxd1 23 Bh6 Qxf1+ 24 Qxf1 Bxf1 25 Bxf8 with a draw.

21 ... e3 22 Bxe3 Be4 23 Qg5+ Kh8
 24 Qe5+ f6 25 Qxe4 Rxf1+ 0–1

He grew up with his mother’s name, Stepanov, after his parents’ marriage broke up when he was a child. But in 1937, when he was 30, Stepanov added his father’s name, Schneiderman, and this may have sealed his fate.

Schneiderman-Stepanov had a 3–3 score at the Soviet Championship semifinals at Rostov-on-Don in 1941 when World War II began for the Soviets. A short time later someone accused him of treason. That alone might have been enough to condemn him, but it was also discovered that there was a German general named Schneiderman. After Schneiderman-Stepanov was arrested, the NKVD questioned several of his acquaintances including Pyotr Romanovsky. The interrogator waved a piece of paper with a damning accusation, according to Grodzensky.

“Pyotr Arsenyevich noticed the signature was the same one he saw many times on scoresheets,” said Grodzensky, who did not say whose. Within weeks Georgy Schneiderman-Stepanov was shot on suspicion of being a German spy.

Arrested

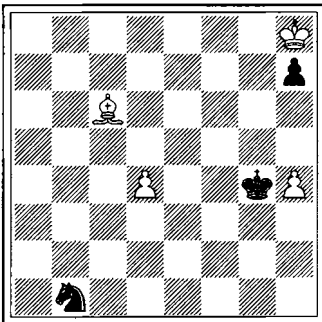
Soviet magazines as late as 1987 would detail Lenin's love for chess, including his fondness for a prize-winning 1909 study by Vasily and Mikhail Platov. Vasily Platov (1881–1952) stopped composing in the 1930s and became a composition judge and columnist. But the fate of his younger brother was unknown for decades.

Mikhail, born in 1883, earned an engineering degree from Riga Polytechnic Institute and was head engineer in a Serpukhov factory in 1937. In early October he was at a plant planning meeting and made an uncomplimentary remark about Stalin, according to details unearthed by Grodzensky. On the night of October 3 he was arrested and sentenced shortly afterward to ten years in prison.

Mikhail Platov continued to send letters to his brother as late as 1938. In one from the Kargopolsky camp in the far northern Arkhangelsk Oblast, he expressed hope that he would be freed soon, since "in the course of my entire life I was far from politics." He composed even in his final months and sent his brother a white-to-play-and-win he composed based on a game played in the camp.

Here's one of his more impressive creations, dedicated to Alexey Troitsky:

Mikhail Platov
White to play and win.



Shakhmaty, 1925

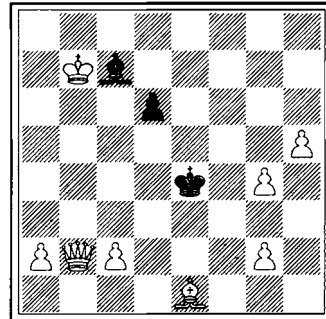
Solution: 1 d5! Nd2! 2 h5! K×h5 (2 ... Ne4 3 h6 Kg5 4 K×h7 Nd6 5 Bd7 Nf7 6 Be6 N×h6 7 d6 Kf6 8 d7) 3 d6 Nc4 4 Be8+! Kh6! 5 d7 Ne5 6 d8(R)!, avoiding stalemate and winning.

While Shebarshin, Schneiderman-Stepanov and Izmailov were written out of the pages of Soviet chess history, it was a much more difficult task to forget the fate of Platov — and of Arvid Kubbel. Arvid composed hundreds of problems, principally three-movers, and had demonstrated his practical skill since the 1920 Olympiad. Yet his brother Leonid made no mention of him in a book about Soviet composers, and Umnov described him only as Leonid's brother in *Chess Studies of the 20th Century*.

It is still not known why an apolitical accountant like Kubbel was picked up at his home on the evening of November 21, 1937, and taken away by the NKVD. According to a nephew, Arvid Kubbel's only crime consisted of the publication of several of his studies in a German magazine, *Die Schwalbe*. But Grodzensky suspects the reason was a false accusation — or "still simpler, the local organs didn't fulfill the 'plan' in liquidating counterrevolutionaries."

One of Kubbel's last compositions won an international competition for four-movers run by 64:

Arvid Kubbel
White to mate in four.



64, 1936

Solution: 1 Qb5.

Kubbel's wife learned in January, 1938, that he had been sentenced to ten years in the Far East "without right of correspondence," meaning he could not be contacted. After Kubbel was rehabilitated in 1958 his family was told he died of nephritis, date unknown. But the public could not be told, so for another thirty years the fiction was maintained that Arvid Kubbel died in the Nazi attack on Leningrad.

Despite the horrors of the *gulag*, some victims managed to survive their sentence. Zalkind was due to be released from a Ural political prison in 1938. But that August a new accusation resulted in an additional five-year term, ordered by a three-member Special Conference (OSO), to be served at a corrective labor camp, where conditions were far worse. Zalkind was finally freed in 1943 only to learn that his 18-year-old son Boris had just died on the Byelorussian front. Barred by OSO from leaving the area, Komsomolsk-on-Amur, and weakened by his ordeal, Zalkind died of a heart attack on June 25, 1945.

Yet one of the lessons that could be learned from the Terror — and was passed on to the next generation — was that chess was relatively safe. There was nothing inherently deviationist in a board game. The *vlasti* never understood chess people but, as Alexey Suetin later pointed out, regarded them as socially harmless. This helped turn chess into a haven for the intellectually curious, something that was much safer than studying, say, economics or even biology. The chessplayers who were swept up in the massive purges were often victims of their own political naïveté, including the strongest victim, Vladimir Petrov.

The son of Russian craftsmen in Riga, Petrov became one of the best players in Latvia once it became independent in 1920. He studied law at Latvian University and took a job in the Riga bureau of marriage registration while developing his sharp tac-

tical skill. He was a dazzling talent. He won the first Latvian Championship by two points in 1926. After Latvia joined FIDE, the new world chess federation, Petrov played on all eight national teams that competed in Olympiads, scoring 61 percent in 119 games, including three times on first board. Latvia placed sixth in 1931 and seventh in 1939 when Petrov scored 71 percent on top board. He narrowly lost a match to Rudolph Spielmann by 3½–4½ in 1934, then, after improving his openings, scored the success of his life at Kemeru 1937, where he tied for first with Salo Flohr and Sammy Reshevsky, ahead of Alexander Alekhine and Paul Keres.

After Latvia's independence ended in the summer of 1940 Petrov played in six Soviet events, registering a 9–10 score in his first Soviet Championship in September, 1940.

D70 Grünfeld Defense
12th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1940
white Vladimir Petrov,
black Mark Stolberg
 (Notes by Petrov except
 for comments in parentheses)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 Bg7
 5 Nc3!

The d5-pawn is attacked three times and Black must defend it or give up the center. The bishop's diagonal is closed by 5 ... e6. And if 5 ... c6 then Black must give up on the more energetic ...c7–c5. In this manner the earlier development of the bishop on g2 is fully justified.

5 ... e6

(Modern theory regards White's move order as a mistake that can be punished by 5 ... dxc4!, e.g., 6 Qa4+ Nfd7 7 e3 0–0 8 Qxc4 c5!)

6 Nf3 0–0 7 0–0 b6 8 Ne5 Bb7 9 Qa4
 c6

A bitter necessity, since 9 ... c5 leads to the loss of a pawn after 10 dxc5 bxc5 11 Rd1 etc.

10 Rd1 Ne8!

The best move in this difficult position. Black wants to transfer the knight to d6 and force a liquidation of the pawn tension in the center. White faces a dilemma: to retreat the knight, giving Black a chance of easy equality, or enter a sharper, somewhat riskier position with more initiative. White chooses the latter.

11 b4

White's plan is to create play on the dark squares after the forced exchange of his opponent's dark-squared bishop.

11 ... Nd6 12 c5 Bxe5 13 dxe5 Nc4 14 Bh6 Nb2 15 Qb3 Nxd1 16 Nxd1!

On 16 Rxd1 Black can play 16 ... Nd7 and White's c3-knight can not reach the kingside. And on 16 Rxd1 Nd7 17 Bxf8 Qxf8 18 cxb6 axb6 19 f4 c5! Black has a good game.

16 ... Re8 17 Ne3 f5

The only move, otherwise Black quickly perishes under a mating attack. For example, 17 ... Nd7 18 Ng4 followed by Qe3, Bg5, etc.

18 exf6 Qxf6 19 Rd1! Nd7 20 Ng4 Qe7 21 h4 Ba6

Black's position is very difficult since he has no counterplay. He can not, for example, play 21 ... bxc5 22 bxc5 Nxc5? because of 23 Qb2, or 21 ... e5 22 Bg5 Qe6 23 Bh3. With the text Black tries to get the bishop into play.

22 Qb2!

Defending the a2-pawn and occupying the important a1–h8 diagonal.

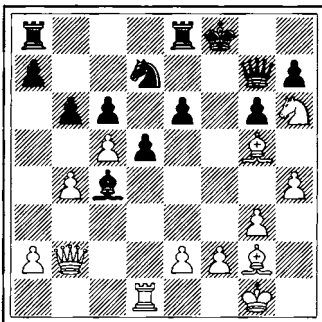
22 ... Bc4

Leading to a quick catastrophe is 22 ... e5 23 Rxd5 cxd5 24 Bxd5+ Kh8 25 Bg5 Qg7 26 c6.

23 Bg5 Qg7 24 Nh6+ Kh8 25 Nf7+ Kg8 26 Nh6+

White repeats move to gain time.

26 ... Kf8?



After
26 ... Kf8

Leads to a quick loss. Strangely, Black is not satisfied with a draw in this position. However, on 26 ... Kh8 White would continue 27 Nf7+ Kg8 28 Qxg7+ Kxg7 29 Nd6, winning the exchange. If 29 ... Bxe2 30 Re1 Bg4, then 31 cxb6 axb6 32 b5! with better play for White.

27 Rd4!!

Black did not count on this deadly move. On the retreat of the queen — to a3, c1, d2 — there was sufficient defense to checks on the f-file by ...Ne5 or ...Qe5.

27 ... e5

The only defense.

28 Qd2!!

Blow for blow!. The threat is Rf4+ and on 28 ... exd4 there decides 29 Qf4+ Nf6 30 Bxf6 Qd7 31 Bxd4+ Ke7 32 Qf6 mate.

28 ... Rec8

If 28 ... Re6 29 Rxc4 dxc4 30 Qc3 b5 31 Bxc6 and Black's position is hopeless.

29 Rxc4 dxc4 30 Qd6+ Ke8 31 Qe6+ Kf8 32 Be7+ 1-0

Petrov had a 4-2 score at the Rostov-on-Don semifinals when war broke out. Because of his knowledge of English, Latvian, French and German, he was sent to Moscow to work for the TASS news agency. He finished second in the winter 1941 Moscow Championship, played at Sverdlovsk 1942 — then disappeared.

Nearly half a century later it was revealed that Petrov had been arrested on August 31, 1942, for violating Article 58. Alfred Mirek, who spent two weeks in a Lubyanka cell with him in September, 1942, said Petrov seemed to take the interrogation casually, even when it dealt with dangerous subjects such as his contact with foreigners. The interrogator seemed particularly interested in his chess visits to Argentina and Mexico. When told not to hide anything, Petrov replied, "Why should I hide?" — thinking he was dealing with an overzealous government worker following up on an idle accusation. Petrov was sentenced by OSO to ten years in a corrective labor camp. When he never responded to his wife's letters, she was told in 1946 that he was not allowed to correspond, and later that he died en route to a camp. After the first articles about Petrov's plight were published in 1989, the KGB, a later successor to the NKVD, acknowledged that Petrov died at Kotlas on August 26, 1943, of an inflammation of the lungs.

Considering the treatment of Petrov and others who had had contact with foreigners, the survival of Andor Liliental and Salo Flohr caused wonder. Liliental recalled later that "many people were surprised" that he and Flohr were *not* arrested. Perhaps Liliental's total ignorance of matters political saved him. During Moscow 1935 one of Krylenko's assistants asked him if he would like to go see Lenin on the free day. Liliental did not realize this meant a visit to the hallowed mausoleum and innocently said to Flohr, "Salo, did you also get an invitation to this reception with Lenin?"

There was one other victim, and in the peculiar Stalinist manner his fate was revealed to Soviet players by the October issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR* in 1937. Actually, there were two October issues: The first contained photographs of Stalin and Lenin on the first page, and an article, "The Holiday of Workers of the Whole World," written by Krylenko, with his photograph. But not many people saw this. A second October issue appeared two months later, this time with only a photo of Stalin on the first page, and no trace of Krylenko.

Krylenko had been active in chess through early 1937 and managed a creditable eighth place in the All-Union Courtworkers and Prosecutors Championship in February and March, behind the winner, Ilya Kan, followed by Benjamin Blumenfeld second, Fyodor Fogelevich third and Viktor Baturinsky fourth. But at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet in 1937 a Stalin deputy, Dzhabar Bagirov, launched an attack on Krylenko. The state prosecutor was too preoccupied with sport — meaning chess, Bagirov said. Krylenko was soon arrested and convicted in a trial that lasted no more than 20 minutes. Among his crimes was said to be the poisoning of Soviet chess. The Chess Section called for "cleansing and purging the chess organizations of class enemies" and recommended ideological awareness study for all players third category and above.

In 1988, *Shakhmaty v SSSR* gave a hint of Krylenko's downfall. A party worker recalled how in November, 1937, Krylenko, drinking heavily, with "eyes empty and glassy" would sit in his office with "bottles everywhere, playing chess." As often happened, Stalin called to cheer Krylenko up — the day before he was arrested. His sister,

Elena, who had married the American writer Max Eastman and emigrated to the United States, reacted to Krylenko's arrest stoically: "I suppose chessplaying is now considered wrecking the government." The founder of the All-Union Chess Section died in prison on July 29, 1938.

8

Palaces, Twins and Absolute Champions

Sports is the new opiate of the masses. — Robert G. Kaiser

One of the myths of Soviet chess is that its success was built from kindergarten up, with an extensive program of junior tournaments and youth training sessions begun shortly after the Revolution. In fact, the first All-Union Youth Championship was not held until 1934 — when the Soviets were probably as strong as any country in the world. By the time the Youth Championship was an annual event, in 1959, Soviet chess was about to begin its decline.

The first junior event was, typically, a mass event, with more than 100,000 chess and checker players competing to select 20 teams to take part in a final event at the Bolshoi Hall of the Moscow Conservatory during the January school break. Each team had two chess and two checker players, and a Leningrad squad won. There was no separation based on age group or gender, and in fact, the Smolensk team was led by a 13-year-old girl, Lina Sokhor.

Soviet Junior Champions

1934	Anfir Shlopak	1971	Alexander Panchenko
1936	Raul Renter	1972	Alexander Kochiev
1938	Vasily Smyslov	1973	Anatoly Machulsky
1945	Tigran Petrosian, Yuri Vasilchuk and Aron Reshko	1974	Leonid Zaid
1946	Petrosian	1975	Evgeny Vladimirov
1947	Viktor Korchnoi	1976	Garry Kasparov and Zurab Sturua
1948	Korchnoi and Ivo Nei	1977	Kasparov
1959	Alexander Tomson	1978	Zurab Azmaiparashvili
1960	Anatolijs Smits	1979	Boris Kantzler, Alexander Khuzman and Valery Salov
1961	Alexander Zakharov	1980	Jaan Ehvest
1962	Alexander Shashin	1981	Alexander Goldin and Andrei Sokolov
1963	L. Adzhemian and Levon Grigorian	1982a	Alexander Khalifman
1964	Albert Kapengut and D. Ussakovsky	1982b	Rustam Dautov
1965	Mikhail Mukhin	1984	Khalifman
1966	V. Lilein	1985	Boris Gelfand
1967	M. Lebovich and Rafael Vaganian	1986	Darus Ruzhiale
1968	Vaganian, Oleg Romanishin and Mikhail Umansky.	1987	Gata Kamsky
1969	Alexander Belyavsky	1988	Mikhail Ulybin and Kamsky
1970	Ivars Kivlans	1989	Sergei Tiviakov
		1990	Boris Alterman

Few of the top placers in the team event or a concurrent 20-player individual tournament were well known. Anfir Shlopak from Yuriev-Polsky, a town northeast of Moscow, beat a future master, Viktor Liublinsky, in the final round to win first prize. But in the 1938 junior event, two promising Moscow youngsters won their age groups: Vasily Smyslov, who received a chess clock prize from arbiter Grigory Levenfish, and Yuri Averbakh, who was best in the under-16 category.

The late 1930s also saw the opening of the great Pioneer Palaces and Houses that would contribute so many young grandmasters to Soviet chess' golden age. These centers, for Young Pioneers aged 9 to 14, offered a smorgasbord of sports, games and other forms of entertainment, in an atmosphere that mixed Boy Scouts with adolescent Marxism.

The central Palace in Moscow, built in 1962 on Lenin Hills, offered chess along with 161 other activities. The Leningrad House of Pioneers' chess section had more impressive quarters. The Leningraders played in the tsar's study in the Anichkov Palace, a stately creation of the celebrated 18th century architect Rastelli on the Nevsky Prospekt. The expansion of Pioneer membership was dramatic: There were 1.635 million Pioneers in 1928 but 11 million by 1939.

For serious chess students, the training was intense. Vladimir Zak, who headed the chess section at the Leningrad Palace for more than a quarter century, told his youngsters to spend 12 to 16 *hours* analyzing each of their games. In *Roads to Perfection* he urged five steps:

- (1) Play over the game quickly, in 15 or 20 minutes, "to awaken your thoughts."
- (2) Play it over in the course of an hour to "synthesize the key moments."
- (3) Analyze the key moments in detail over three to four hours.
- (4) Analyze the opening for three to four hours.

- (5) Play the game over once more and write annotations, taking four to five hours.

The Twins

It was a middle generation of players born between 1910 and 1920 that emerged in the last prewar years. Among the first to witness the changing of the guard was Reuben Fine of New York, who played in two Soviet internationals in March, 1937. Fine won both events and described his opponents as having the same general style "based primarily on tactical surprises.... Strategically, they were frequently highly unsound." In the Leningrad event he scored 4–1 against veterans such as Grigory Levenfish, Ilya Rabinovich and Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky. In Moscow, Fine also won, with a 5–2 score ahead of 27-year-old Ilya Kan, 23-year-old Igor Bondarevsky and two 26-year-olds known as the "Smolensk twins"—Sergei Belavenets and Mikhail Udovich.

The twins had been close friends since they met in a 1925 school match when the short, blond Belavenets was already a first-category player. In their first game he refuted Udovich's King's Gambit, then suggested they analyze endgames at his home the next day. Over the next few years the two boys played hundreds of casual games and studied with Belavenets' uncle, former master Konstantin Vygodchikov.

Udovich progressed faster, becoming a master in 1931, two years before his friend. Both moved to Moscow for higher education, Udovich to study journalism and Belavenets to enter an engineering school, where he drew a highly-praised design for a collective farm. As usual when players moved to the capital, their play quickly improved and they shared fifth place in the strong city championship of 1930 shortly after they arrived.

Belavenets, who had what Alexander Kotov called "radiant eyes and a child's

smile,” was a chess anomaly, a player capable of the deepest calculation but one whose highest priority was clarity. Once, after he overcame desperate time trouble to defeat Alexander Chistyakov, Belavenets showed off a series of headspinning combinations he passed up. Neither spectator Kotov nor Chistyakov had seen any of the ideas. When Kotov asked why he rejected the tactics, Belavenets replied, “What for? This was simpler and faster.” Even admirers said his games resembled more a stark engineering blueprint than a scenic painting:

C71 Ruy Lopez
Moscow Championship, 1937-8
white Mikhail Udovich,
black Sergei Belavenets

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 d6
 5 c4 Bd7 6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4 g6 8 Nc3
 Bg7**

Black’s system, in place of 5 ... Bg4!, which fights for control of d4, got a bad reputation after the Boleslavsky–Fine Radio Match game of 1945, which went 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 0–0 Ne7? 11 c5! with advantage to White.

9 Be3 Nge7 10 0–0 0–0 11 Nd5?

Vasily Panov, still trying for the master title, met the twins in the 1934 Moscow Championship and noticed they were both maneuverers “but with the difference that Belavenets was mainly a strategist and Udovich a tactician.” Here White needed to preserve the center. On 11 Bc2 Black equalizes with 11 ... Ne5 13 b3 f5!, but 10 Rcl! keeps an edge.

11 ... Nxd4 12 Bxd7 c5! 13 Bh3

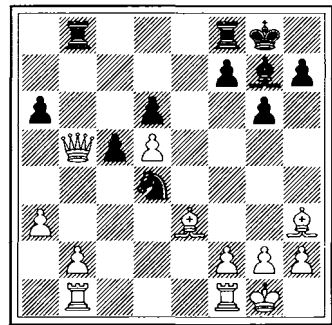
Another error. White saw that 13 Nxe7+ Qxe7 loses the e-pawn but should have kept his bishop on the more valuable diagonal

with 13 Ba4, e.g., 13 ... Nxd5 14 exd5 Rb8 15 Bxd4! Bxd4 16 Rbl with only a slight disadvantage.

**13 ... Nxd5 14 exd5 b5 15 Qd3 Rb8
 16 Rbl Qa5 17 a3**

White’s ultimately fatal error is refusing to make an exchange on d4 at some point, e.g., 17 Bxd4 Bxd4 18 b4 bxc4? 19 Qxd4! or 18 ... Qxa2 19 cxb5 axb5 20 bxc5 dxc5 21 Rxb5.

17 ... bxc4 18 Qxc4 Qb5 19 Qxb5



After 19 Qxb5

The endgame was unavoidable because 19 Qc1 or 18 Rfcl allows 19 ... Ne2+.

19 ... Rxb5! 20 Rfd1 Rb3!

Black’s decision to use the b-file, rather than connect his pawns with 19 ... axb5, is typical of the approach of the younger Soviets of the 1930s. His last move kills the counterplay chances offered after 20 ... Rfb8 21 Bxd4! Bxd4 22 b4, e.g., 22 ... a5 23 Bd7! R5b7 24 Bc6 or 22 ... Bc3 23 Bg4 cxb4 24 Be2 Ra5 25 axb4 with drawing chances thanks to the bishops of opposite color.

21 Kf1 Rfb8 22 Bf4 Bf8 23 Bd2

Or 23 Rd2 Rxa3.

23 ... Nb5 24 Bg4 Bg7!

Tenth Soviet Championship, Tbilisi, April 12–May 14, 1937

	L	K	R	M	B	G	L	R	U	A	B	R	K	L	P	B	I	C	K	E	Score
1. Levenfish	X	½	0	1	0	1	1	1	½	1	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	12½–6½
2–3. Konstantinopolsky	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	12–7
2–3. Ragozin	1	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	0	0	1	½	1	1	12–7
4. V. Makogonov	0	½	½	X	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	0	0	½	0	1	1	11½–7½
5–7. Belavenets	1	½	½	0	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	1	1	0	1	11–8
5–7. Goglidze	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	11–8
5–7. Lisitsyn	0	½	0	0	0	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	11–8
8. Rauzer	0	1	½	0	½	0	½	X	½	1	0	½	½	1	1	1	0	1	1	½	10½–8½
9. Udovich	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	X	0	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	0	½	10–9
10–12. Alatortsev	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	1	X	1	½	½	½	0	1	½	1	1	1	9½–9½
10–12. Bondarevsky	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	1	0	0	X	½	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	9½–9½
10–12. I. Rabinovich	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	1	1	½	½	1	9½–9½
13. Kan	1	0	½	0	1	½	0	½	0	½	1	0	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	9–10
14. Liliental	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	1	0	½	½	8½–10½
15. Panov	0	0	1	1	½	½	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	½	X	1	½	0	0	1	8–11
16–18. Budo	½	0	1	1	½	1	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	X	0	1	½	½	7½–11½
16–18. Ilyin-Genevsky	0	½	0	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	X	1	½	½	7½–11½
16–18. Chekhover	0	½	½	1	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	1	1	0	0	X	½	1	7½–11½
19. Kasparyan	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	1	0	0	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	X	½	7–12
20. Ebralidze	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	X	5–14

Carefully controlling events and not hurrying with ...Rxb2 or ...Nxa3, compared with 24 ... Nxa3 25 Ra1 Nc4 26 Rxa6 with better chances for White than in the game. It is easy to appreciate why Fine, in *Izvestia*, praised Belavenets as solidier than his rivals. It is also understandable, considering the times, why Belavenets wrote an indignant letter denying that his style was in any way different. "Even on the chessboard, deviationism was considered highly dangerous," Fine concluded.

25 Bf4 Bxb2 26 a4 Nc3 27 Bxd6 R8b4 0-1

"Mik-Mik" — as Udovich was known because his patronymic was Mikhailovich — "was an exceptionally sly, crafty tournament psychologist" who liked to lure opponents into concealed traps and jumped into complex tactical situations, Kotov said. The twins' career path continued to intersect as they worked together on 64 and *Shakhmaty v SSSR* and in the Moscow Pioneer Palace, where they helped train the next generation of first-category players, which included Averbakh, Oleg Moiseev and Yakov Estrin.

In April and May, 1937, the 10th Soviet Championship was held in the Rustaveli Theater in Tbilisi before adoring Georgian fans who closely followed the games of the local favorites, Viktor Goglidze and Archil Ebralidze. It was only the second time the tournament had been held outside Moscow or Leningrad — and the next time would not be until the 21st Championship in 1954. Belavenets finished in a tie for fifth, a half point ahead of Vsevolod Rauzer and a point ahead of Udovich.

Conspicuously missing was Mikhail Botvinnik. The 25-year-old graduate student was defending his engineering thesis and preparing himself for a career without chess. Throughout his life Botvinnik displayed an ability to throw all his energies into his current interest, whether it was chess,

engineering or computer science, to the exclusion of everything else. Leonid Zorin, the playwright and Botvinnik admirer, called this Botvinnik's "love of straight lines" — adding "Euclid must be closer to him than Lobachevsky." With Botvinnik absent, Grigory Levenfish earned his second title by winning his final two games and slipping past Vyacheslav Ragozin and a championship newcomer, Alexander Konstantinopolsky of Kiev. Ragozin's reward was to be sent to the strong Semmering-Baden International that fall, where he finished well behind Paul Keres, Fine, Capablanca and Sammy Reshevsky. Ragozin reported to Boris Podtserov, a Soviet diplomat and chess fan from Leningrad, that "Botvinnik is a head above" anyone he faced in the Austrian resort.

Botvinnik versus Levenfish

Four days after Semmering ended, Levenfish began a match with Botvinnik because, in the latter's words, "it was necessary to determine who was the strongest Soviet player." According to Levenfish and other sources, it was Botvinnik who challenged him. Botvinnik gives a different account, saying Ilyin-Genevsky rebuked him for passing up the 10th Championship, and Nikolai Krylenko said he would take up his absence with the Party's Central Committee. It was Krylenko who announced there would be a match for the championship, with the title going to the first player to win six games, draws not counting.

The tall, sharp-tongued, Levenfish clearly resented the man 22 years younger who had supplanted him as the best Leningrad player and who could get along much better with the *vlasti*. (Botvinnik claimed that Levenfish had bet that he, Botvinnik, would finish no higher than fourth at Nottingham). Levenfish acknowledged Botvinnik's "indisputable" superiority in the opening and in maneuvering middlegames. But

despite their previous record — two Botvinnik wins and three draws — Levenfish felt he had good chances in tactical positions and the endgame.

Levenfish managed to get two months off to prepare, with Belavenets as his trainer. He had an adventure en route to Moscow for the first game when he lost his money and internal passport. Without a passport he could not even stay in a hotel. By chance Levenfish met a *militsia* (police) chief, a chess fan who helped him get a new passport quickly.

Botvinnik won the first game convincingly. Levenfish responded with what he called one of the best games of his career.

D94 Slav Defense

Match, Moscow-Leningrad, 1937

white Mikhail Botvinnik,

black Grigory Levenfish

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e3 g6 5 Nf3 Bg7 6 Bd3 0–0 7 0–0 e6

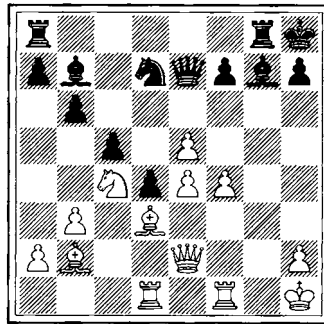
Later in the match Levenfish switched to 7 ... b6 and Botvinnik won the eighth game nicely after obtaining an edge with 8 b3 Bb7 9 Ba3 Re8 10 Rcl e6 11 Qe2 Nbd7 12 Rfd1 Qb8 13 h3 a6 14 Bb2.

But Levenfish improved in the 10th game with 8 ... c5! and had a winning game after 9 dxc5? Ne4! 10 Bxe4! dxe4 11 Qxd8 Rxd8 12 Nd4 bxc5 13 Nde2 Bg4 14 f3? exf3 15 gxf3 Bh3 16 Re1 Nc6 17 Ba3 Nb4! 18 Rab1 Bh6! 19 f4 Nc2.

8 b3 Nbd7 9 Qe2 Re8 10 Bb2 b6 11 Rad1 Bb7 12 Ne5 Nxe5 13 dxe5 Nd7 14 f4 Qe7 15 cxd5 exd5 16 e4!

White acts before Black can get ...f6 in.

16 ... d4 17 Nb1 c5 18 Nd2 g5! 19 g3 gx f4 20 gx f4 Kh8 21 Nc4 Rg8 22 Kh1



After 22 Kh1

22 ... f6! 23 Nd6 fx e5!

White is clearly better after 23 ... Bc6 24 Bc4 Rgf8 25 Qh5 or Nf5.

24 Nxb7 ex f4! 25 e5! Bxe5

White's 25th was intended to discourage Black from occupying e5 with a knight (25 ... Nxe5 26 Qe4!). Now 26 Rxf4 Nf6 is bad and 26 Qe4 Nf6 or 26 Bf5 Rae8, followed by ...Nf6 is nothing much.

26 b4 Nf6 27 Qf3 Ng4 28 Rd2 Rab8 29 Be4 d3! 30 Qxd3?

Levenfish said this was forced since 30 Bxe5+ Nxe5 31 Qf2 Rxb7 costs a piece. But Belavenets and Udovich later claimed 30 Rg1! should equalize (30 ... Bxb2 31 Rxb2 Ne5 32 Qxf4! c4 33 Rbg2 c3 34 Bxh7!).

30 ... Rxb7 31 Bxb7 Qxb7+ 32 Qf3 Qxf3+ 33 Rxf3 Bxb2 34 Rxb2 Ne5

"Here is the soul of the combination!" Levenfish wrote, citing 35 Rxf4 Nd3 36 Rbf2 cxb4!. Also lost is 35 Rc3 c4 36 Re2 Nd3 37 Rxc4 f3 38 Rd2 f2 39 Rd1 Ne1!.

35 Rf1 Nd3? 36 Rg2?

A double lapse: 35 ... c4 36 b5 Rg5 and ...Kg7 was necessary because after 35 ... Nd3 White could have saved the game with 36 Rc2 Nxb4 37 Rd2, e.g., 37 ... c4

38 Rxf4 c3 39 Rd7 c2 40 Rc4. But Botvinnik's final error leads to a neat finish.

36 ... c4 37 Rc2 b5 38 a3 f3! 39 Rd2 Rg2! 40 R×g2 f×g2+ 41 K×g2 c3 42 Kf3

Black sealed **42 ... c2** and **White resigned** in view of 43 Ke3 cl(Q) 44 R×cl N×cl 45 Kd2 Na2 46 Kc2 Kg7 47 Kb2 N×b4.

Botvinnik said he underestimated Levenfish and played the match badly. But after trailing 2–1 he won three games in a row and was on the verge of clinching victory. The tide turned again and Levenfish scored three wins in the next four games, leaving the match tied 5–5 after 13 games.

The key game was the 13th when Botvinnik, adjourned in a bad position, called arbiter Nikolai Grigoriev to resign. But Grigoriev was “Krylenko’s righthand man” according to Botvinnik — and someone who wanted a clear No. 1 Soviet player. He offered to analyze the game before resumption. Grigoriev justified this breach of ethics by noting that Levenfish had several analysts helping *him*. Botvinnik lost anyway and the match ended in a draw. Levenfish kept his title.

The Telephone Right

Levenfish fully expected to be given a reward for proving his equality to Botvinnik. If Botvinnik deserved the invitation to Nottingham and Ragozin got Semmering, why did Levenfish not receive the next plum, an invitation to the all-star AVRO international in the Netherlands in 1938? But Botvinnik went instead. Levenfish had a prickly reputation and his relations with the Chess Section were never particularly good. (He was one of the few top players to be denied a stipend when they were introduced.) Levenfish later said his failure to go to AVRO was the “spiritual knockout” that effectively ended his career.

Before Botvinnik went to Holland he exercised his *telefonnoye pravo* (telephone right), the ability to call up a high-ranking official to ask a favor. Knowing the right people — or just knowing their telephone number — was an enormous power in a nation where public phone directories were virtually unknown. But throughout his later career Botvinnik showed he knew the right numbers. In this case he arranged to have his wife accompany him to AVRO by calling up the assistant to Nikolai Bulganin, then chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars and eventually premier. Viktor Korchnoi later claimed it was “a well-known fact” that Botvinnik wrote the Central Committee to say that Levenfish, who grew up under Nicholas II, should not represent the Soviet Union in such a prestigious event. Botvinnik’s nephew Igor acknowledged that his uncle wrote to the Central Committee and Vyacheslav Molotov, Stalin’s most powerful deputy, “when he considered it to be in the interests of chess.”

It was during this era that Soviet chauvinism spread to chess, particularly in the names of openings. Take, for example, the “Panov Defense.” To other eyes, this stodgy opening was the same one that Alexander Alekhine had experimented with in the 1920s and was generally called the “Benoni Defense.” But after the following game was published in 64 in March, 1937, the opening’s authorship was attributed to Vasily Panov. For decades, other Benoni variations were described with the vague term “Indian Defense” because the Soviet authorities regarded Benoni (“son of sorrow”) as a forbidden religious term.

A44 Benoni Defense
“Tournament with Participation
of Fine,” Moscow, 1937
white Vladimir Alatorsev,
black Vasily Panov

1 d4 c5 2 d5 e5 3 e4 d6 4 Ne2

Moscow Championship, 1938

	B	S	L	V	Y	P	U	K	Z	Kg	Kt	C	M	S	B	M	S	F	Score
1-2. Belavenets	X	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	12½-4½
1-2. Smyslov	½	X	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	0	1	12½-4½
3. Liliental	½	0	X	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	12-5
4-7. Vaksberg	0	0	0	X	1	0	½	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10½-6½
4-7. Yeltsov	1	0	½	0	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	1	½	10½-6½
4-7. Panov	0	0	0	1	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	10½-6½
4-7. Udovich	½	0	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	10½-6½'
8. Kamyshev	0	1	½	1	0	0	0	X	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	10-7
9-11. Zubarev	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	1	X	½	0	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	8½-8½
9-11. S. Kogan	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	X	0	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	8½-8½
9-11. Kots	0	½	½	1	0	½	0	0	1	1	X	½	½	1	½	0	1	½	8½-8½
12. Chistyakov	½	½	½	0	0	1	0	0	½	0	½	X	1	1	0	1	½	1	8-9
13. Molchadsky	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	0	X	1	½	1	½	½	7½-9½
14. Slonim	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	1	0	0	0	0	X	1	½	1	½	6½-10½
15-16. Baturinsky	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	X	0	1	½	4½-12½
15-16. Marsky	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	0	0	½	1	X	½	½	4½-12½
17. Sergeyev	0	1	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	X	1	4-13
18. Fridshtein	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	X	3½-13½

A more flexible development is 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Be7 6 Bd3 0-0 7 Nge2. Podolny-Panov, Moscow Championship, 1939, went 7 ... Ne8 8 Ng3 Bg5 9 0-0 g6 10 a3 Nd7 11 Rb1 Ng7 12 Nb5! Be7 13 f4 with good play.

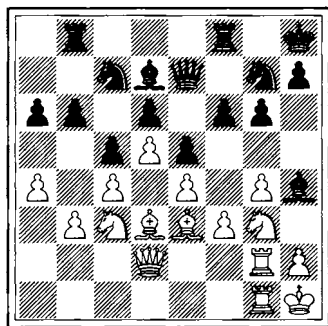
But after 13 ... a6 14 Nc3 exf4 15 Bxf4 Ne5 16 Bxe5 dxe5 17 b4 cxb4 18 axb4 a5 Black had good play on the dark squares and he held the edge after 19 bxa5 Rxa5 20 Qc2 Bc5+ 21 Kh1 Qh4 22 Nce2 b6 23 Ng1 Qe7 24 Nf3 f5 25 Ral Rxa1 26 Rxa1 f4 27 Nf1 g5! 28 Qb2 g4.

Panov finished off neatly: 29 Nxe5 Nh5 30 Nc6 Qh4 31 Ra7 Rf6 32 Ne7+ Kf8 33 Nxc8 Ng3+ 34 Nxc3 Qxh2+! 0-1

4 ... Nf6 5 f3 Be7 6 c4 0-0 7 Be3 Ne8 8 Qd2 Na6 9 Nbc3 Nc7 10 g4 Bh4+!

A key point of Black's system was to try to exchange off the dark-squared bishop (...Bg5) and if that is prevented, to block the h-pawn.

11 Ng3 Bd7 12 Bd3 g6 13 0-0 Ng7 14 Kh1 b6 15 Rg1 Qe7 16 Rg2 Kh8 17 Rag1 a6 18 a4 Rab8 19 b3 f6?



After 19 ... f6

Panov joked that the secret of his opening was simple: "If White does nothing, Black does nothing. A draw results." Actually, White's effort to wait and take preventive measures against ...f7-f5 should have encouraged Black to play for ...b6-b5.

20 Nge2!

Before 19 ... f6, Black could have met f3-f4 with ...exf4 and ...Bf6. Now as White prepares a strong f-pawn push, he must do more than nothing.

20 ... b5 21 axb5 axb5 22 f4 b4 23 Nd1 exf4 24 Nxf4 Kg8 25 Qe2 Ra8 26 Bc1 Bg5 27 Rf1 Bc8!

This frees d7 for a knight maneuver to e5.

28 Bb2 Na6! 29 Qf2! Nb8 30 h4 Bxf4 31 Qxf4 Nd7 32 Bb1 Ne5 33 Ne3 Bd7 34 Rgf2 Rf7 35 Qg3

White could have sealed the kingside and virtually assured a draw with 35 h5 g5 but played 35 Qg3 with the 36 h5 g5 37 h6 trick in mind.

35 ... h6! 36 Qf4 Kh7 37 Bc1 Ra1 38 Rb2 h5!

"Not fearing 39 Nc2," Panov wrote, "because of 39 ... Ra7 40 Qh6+ Kg8 and White has nothing."

39 gxh5 Nxc5 40 Qf2 Kg8!

Bad was 40 ... Nxc4 41 Nxc4 Rxb1 42 Rxb1 Qxe4+ 43 Kh2 Qxb1 because of 44 Nxd6. The point of Black's king move is soon apparent.

41 Bc2 Rh7 42 Rb1 Rxb1 43 Bxb1 g5! 44 Rg1 Ng7 45 Ng2 Ng4 46 Qb2 Nh5 47 Re1 gxh4 48 e5 h3! 0-1

"The final blow. After 49 Bxh7+ Qxh7 the Black pawn advances to queen by force," he wrote, meaning 50 Ne3 Qe4+ 51 Kgl h2+ or 50 e6 Ng3+.

Over the next 20 years the Soviets discovered a proprietary interest in several other openings, including the Ufimtsev Defense — which included variations known everywhere

else in the world as the Pirc and Robatsch Defenses, the “Volga Gambit” which was really the Benko Gambit and various lesser lines named after Soviet players, famous and obscure. Even 1 b4 was claimed as a Russian invention, attributed to both Alexey Sokolsky and Nikolai Bugayev (1837–1903) because Bugayev beat Wilhelm Steinitz with it in a simultaneous exhibition in 1896.

Breakthrough

Panov managed a creditable tie for fourth in the 1938 Moscow Championship, which turned out to be a breakthrough tournament for the new generation. Udovich, 19-year-old Alexander Yeltsov, and Boris Vaksberg were in contention for first prize, which seemed destined to belong to Belavenets. Going into the final round the Smolensk graduate led Andor Liliental by a half point but they agreed to a draw. That allowed 17-year-old Vasily Smyslov to jump into a tie with Belavenets for the championship title.

The future world champion grew up in a chess family. Smyslov registered his first chess success at seven when he won a copy of Alekhine’s best games (dedicated “to future world champion Vasya Smyslov”) from his uncle, Kiril, an aviation factory engineer and second-category player who at first gave Vasily rook odds. Smyslov’s father, also a Vasily, was a first-category player who once defeated Alekhine in a tournament game. The father instilled in Vasily Vasilyevich a love of music and “so-called ‘simple’ positions” with only a few pieces on the board. This gave Smyslov a deep sense of “feeling” for the different pieces, “what they ‘like,’ what they ‘don’t like’” he said later.

But until he was 14 Smyslov never considered playing outside his home, a small flat outside Moscow dominated by a piano and his father’s library of at least 100 chess

books. His first tournament was a summer event at the Gorky Park chess club (“a genuine chess Eldorado,” Mikhail Beilin said). Smyslov usually appeared in the park in a white shirt accompanied by his father,. His teenage colleagues there included Vladimir Simagin, Averbakh, Vaksberg and Georgy “Bazyá” Dzagurov.

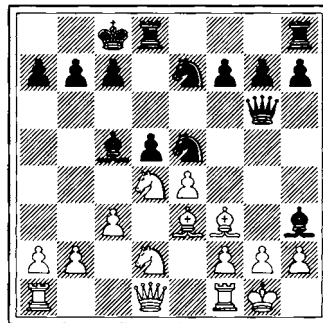
In the fall of 1935 Smyslov joined the Moskvoretzky House of Pioneers and soon had one of his first endgame compositions published in 64. The playing style of “the tall, fiery-red-haired, mopheaded, freckled young fellow,” as he was described, mixed classical principles, tactical acuity and endgame precision.

C45 Scotch Game
Moscow Championship, 1938
white Viktor Baturinsky,
black Vasily Smyslov

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4

Since ...Ne5 is a useful move, 7 Be2 d5 8 0–0 later became popular.

7 ... Ne5 8 Be2 d5 9 Nd2 Qg6 10 0–0 Bh3! 11 Bf3 0–0–0!



After 11
... 0–0–0

White should try to cut his losses with 12 Kh1 or 12 Bf4.

12 Nf5 dxe4 13 Nxe7+ Bxe7 14 Bxe4 f5 15 Bf3 Rd3! 16 Kh1 f4!

Now 17 Bxf4 Rxf3 is crushing.

17 Be4 Bxg2+ 18 Bxg2 fxe3 19 Be4

On 19 fxe3 Rhd8 20 Rf2 Nc4.

19 ... Rxd2 20 Bxg6 Rxd1 21 Bf5+ Rd7
22 fxe3 Kd8

Smyslov handles the technical stage of converting his slight material edge masterfully.

23 Bxd7 Kxd7 24 Rad1+ Ke6 25 h3 h5!
26 b3 g5 27 e4 g4 28 hxg4 hxg4+
29 Kg2 Rh3 30 c4 Nf3 31 Rh1 Nh4+
32 Kf2 g3+ 33 Ke2 Rxb1 34 Rxb1g2 0-1

Simagin, two years older than Smyslov, was the most original of the young Muscovites. He had a difficult childhood after his father died, and grew up in a one-room Moscow apartment with his mother and two brothers on October 25 Street. Throughout his life Simagin seemed to be constantly complaining about his poor health, bad eyesight and related problems, such as agoraphobia. His friend Chistyakov recalled how Simagin, when he was a strong master, once had to drop out of a Kharkov tournament because he went walking on one of the city's largest streets and his fear of open spaces put him in a hospital.

Simagin was typical of the new generation of teenagers who grew up in an atmosphere of "Botvinnik worship" and cut their tactical teeth in the new Pioneer palaces. But Simagin stood out with his knack for finding new ideas in sharp openings with the Black pieces. With White he tended towards positional, fianchetto-based treatments of 1 d4 positions. However, on the other side of the board Simagin, like Ragozin, strove to find sacrifices, particularly of the exchange:

C46 Three Knights Defense
Match, Moscow, 1939
white Viktor Liublinsky,
black Vladimir Simagin

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 d6 4 d4 exd4
5 Nxd4 g6 6 Be3

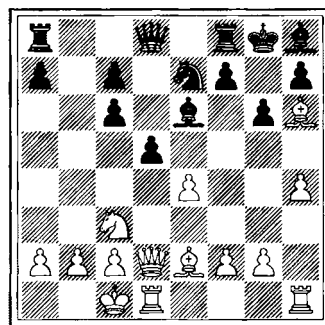
The position now takes on the character of a Dragon Sicilian but with a Black pawn on c7 rather than e7. White would do better with 6 Bb5 with a Ruy Lopez-like position following 6 ... Bd7 7 Bxc6 bxc6 8 0-0.

6 ... Bg7 7 Be2 Nge7 8 Qd2

Since the e2-bishop plays little role, 7 Qd2! and 8 0-0-0 was better.

8 ... 0-0 9 h4 d5! 10 Nxc6 bxc6
11 0-0-0 Be6 12 Bh6? Bh8!

After
12 ... Bh8



White was so certain he was forcing a trade of bishops he apparently did not consider 12 Bd4! for long. Simagin based the soundness of his sacrifice on the use of the dark squares, b-file and mobile pawn center.

13 Bxf8 Qxf8 14 a3?

The attack is relentless after this. Better was 14 Na4 although Black stands well after 14 ... Nc8.

14 ... Rb8 15 Bd3 c5! 16 e×d5

Black threatened 16 ... c4 17 Be2 d4 18 Na4 c3, followed by invasion of the castled position.

16 ... N×d5 17 Na4 Bd7! 18 Qa5 B×a4 19 Q×a4 Qh6+!

Not allowing the king to escape to d2. Now on 20 Kb1?? Nc3+ or 20 Rd2 B×b2+ White loses his queen.

20 f4 N×f4 21 Rd2 B×b2+ 22 Kd1 Bc3 23 Rf2 Rb1 mate

The next new star to emerge in 1939 was a short, intense son of a Tula cabinet-maker whose pronounced eyebrows made him look like a sleepless owl. Alexander Kotov's first love was checkers, which he played on a handmade, violet-inked board, and this helped develop his extraordinary skill in visualization and calculation. Years later he said his early attraction to checkers explained "why in 1927, when my schoolmate Lesha Lazarev showed me how the knight and rook move, I became champion of the city within months."

Kotov seemed no more talented than others of his generation, like Nikolai Riumin or perhaps even the Smolensk twins. But he had a drive and what Viktor Malkin called "a huge, fanatic ability to work" that more than compensated. This was illustrated by a story about his friendly rivalry with the noted pianist Yakov Flier. Kotov and Flier talked about having a mini-Olympics in which they would play one another at the various games they loved, including tennis, dominos, the card game Preference, billiards, and so on.

"Why don't we include chess?" the future Moscow Conservatory professor asked.

"Because then we should include piano," Flier's strong suit, was Kotov's reply.

"Good!" said Flier. "If you play Bee-

thoven's Moonlight Sonata for me, then I'll consider you the winner."

Kotov, who did not know a note of music, sat at a piano and studied. After six months he came to Flier's apartment and performed the first part of the famous piece of music. Decades later, when the Soviet grandmasters were in training, they would often spend the evening rest hours in self-entertainment: Smyslov would sing in his mellow baritone, Mark Taimanov would perform a piano solo — and Kotov would repeat his single musical accomplishment.

Battle on the Moika

Kotov, like his rivals, improved sharply after moving to Moscow, where he studied engineering. In the capital he met Riumin, who constantly criticized his play for being too much engineer and not enough artist. Kotov also asked the advice of Pyotr Romanovsky, who convinced him to study a match of *ideas*— so Kotov examined the 1893 Tarasch–Tchigorin match in depth. In 1938 he became one of the first players to earn the new candidate master title, followed quickly by master.

Kotov was disappointed to learn he had been dropped, at the last minute, from the list of invitees to a Moscow–Leningrad training tournament in early 1939 that featured the visiting United States champion, Sammy Reshevsky. But he qualified for the 11th Soviet Championship. Zubarev, who carried considerable authority as a Krylenko deputy, touted him as one of several young players to watch — along with Chistyakov, Alexander Tolush, Iosif Pogrebissky, and Pyotr Dubinin, the massive, 300-pound weightlifter from Gorky dubbed "the Volga Hercules." But Kotov, who showed he was more than just a calculating machine, battled Botvinnik for the lead.

D58 Queen's Gambit Declined
11th Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1939
white Alexander Kotov,
black Vladimir Makogonov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Bg5 Be7
 5 e3 h6 6 Bh4 0-0 7 Nf3 b6 8 Qc2 c5
 9 cxd5 exd5

Later in the tournament Igor Bondarevsky, who had analyzed this system with Makogonov extensively, found an improvement against Kotov by reducing material with 9 ... Nxd5 10 Bxe7 Qxe7 11 Nxd5 exd5 12 dxc5 bxc5. However, the hanging pawns Black gets in the game are perfectly sound.

10 dxc5 bxc5 11 Be2 Be6 12 0-0 Nbd7
 13 Rfd1 Qb6 14 b3 Rac8 15 e4! d4
 16 Na4 Qb7 17 Nd2

White has fixed the hanging pawns on dark squares and can operate with a variety of plans including kingside attack with f2-f4, Bd3 and Rf1.

17 ... Nb6 18 Nb2 Rfe8 19 h3?! Bd6!
 20 Bxf6 gxf6 21 Re1 Kh8 22 Ndc4 Nxc4
 23 Nxc4

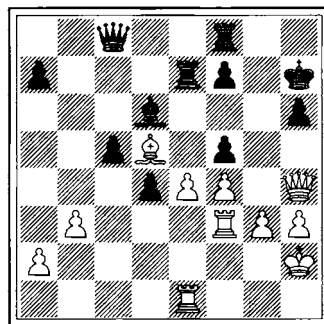
Makogonov, "a thick-set, stout, sober-minded man with an unhurried method of approach," according to Panov, was at the peak of his career. His was a positional style, strongly recalling the young Botvinnik, but he "didn't like puzzling, double-edged positions." Here, for example, he fails to find 23 ... Bb8 24 Bg4 Rg8 which would have given Black good attacking chances.

23 ... Bxc4? 24 Bxc4 Rg8 25 Qe2 Rg6
 26 Kh1 Rcg8 27 Qh5!

Black's exchange of his other bishop has killed the attack: 27 ... Rxcg2?? 28 Qxh6

mate or 27 ... f5 28 Bd5! or 27 ... Kh7
 28 Qf5! Kh8 29 Rad1 Rxcg2? 30 Qxf6+.

27 ... Qe7 28 Rad1 Qf8 29 g3 Kg7
 30 Rd3 Rg5 31 Qh4 Re5 32 f4 Re7
 33 Rf3 Qe8 34 Bd5 Rf8 35 Qg4+ Kh7
 36 Qf5+ Kg7 37 Qg4+ Kh7 38 Kh2 Qc8
 39 Qh4 f5



After 39 ... f5

After carefully building an impregnable kingside White was ready to finish off with 40 Qf6! Qd7 41 e5, e.g., 41 ... Rg8 42 e6! fxg6 43 Rxe6! or 41 ... Bc7 42 Bc4! and Bd3. Kotov chooses a sharper but riskier way.

40 e5 f6 41 e6 Qe8 42 Bc4 Kg7 43 g4
 fxg4 44 Rg1! Kh8 45 Bd3 h5

Black can not play 45 ... f5 because of this elegant variation cited by Kotov: 46 hxg4 Rxe6 (else Bxf5 or gxf5) 47 gxf5 Ref6 48 Rh3! (threatening Qxh6+!) Qe7 and now 49 Rg4! Qh7 50 Rg6 Rxcg6 51 fxg6 Qg7 52 Qxh6+ Qxh6 53 Rxcg6+ Kg7 54 Rh7+ Kf6 55 Kg3 and 56 g7.

In the last line, Kotov also notes that 49 ... Re8 or other moves allow a mate in eight beginning with 50 Qxh6+!

46 Rxcg4 Rxe6 47 Rg6 Re2+!? 48 Kg3!
 Re7 49 Rh6+ Kg8 50 Kf2 1-0

Moscow's avid chess audience quickly noticed that Kotov trailed Botvinnik by only a half point going into the 14th round, with four games to go. It was another historic

Eleventh Soviet Championship, Leningrad, April 15–May 16, 1939

	B	K	B	M	C	B	L	D	L	Rg	P	Rb	K	U	P	T	C	R	Score
1. Botvinnik	X	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	½	12½–4½
2. Kotov	0	X	½	1	0	½	1	1	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	½	11½–5½
3. Belavenets	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	0	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	11–6
4–5. V. Makogonov	½	0	½	X	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	10½–6½
4–5. Chekhover	½	1	0	0	X	1	½	½	½	0	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	10½–6½
6. Bondarevsky	½	½	½	½	0	X	0	½	0	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	10–7
7. Lisitsyn	½	0	0	½	½	1	X	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	9–8
8–10. Dubinin	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	0	1	½	1	½	8½–8½
8–10. Levenfish	½	1	0	0	½	1	0	½	X	1	½	1	½	0	0	0	1	1	8½–8½
8–10. Ragozin	½	0	0	½	1	0	1	½	0	X	1	0	½	0	1	1	½	1	8½–8½
11–12. Panov	0	½	1	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	X	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	8–9
11–12. I. Rabinovich	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	X	1	½	0	1	½	1	8–9
13–14. Kan	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	1	0	X	½	1	1	½	1	7½–9½
13–14. Udovich	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	X	0	0	0	½	7½–9½
15–16. Pogrebissky	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	1	0	½	1	0	1	X	0	1	1	6½–10½
15–16. Tolush	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	1	0	½	0	0	1	1	X	0	1	6½–10½
17. Chistyakov	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	1	0	1	X	0	5–12
18. Romanovsky	½	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	X	3½–13½

Romanovsky forfeited to Belavenets, Bondarevsky and Levenfish after falling ill.

moment, the first challenge to Botvinnik's supremacy from the younger generation, and it reminded many of the game with another young Muscovite, Riumin, eight years before. The 4,000 tickets evaporated quickly so the organizers placed a huge demonstration board against the side of the building, alongside the Moika River that snakes its way through Leningrad. The tournament book recalled: "Both banks were filled with spectators. Traffic was suspended. The evening was unusually fine; chess enthusiasts stood beneath the open sky for many hours, following the game with spellbound attention."

Once again Botvinnik demonstrated the rare ability that he, Lasker and a few other men in chess history have had: to concentrate his energies to the maximum when necessary and win the biggest games.

E33 Nimzo-Indian Defense
11th Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1939
white Alexander Kotov,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 Nc6

A variety of Nimzo-Indian ideas were tried over the next decade with mixed results. For example, 4 ... d6 5 Nf3 Nbd7 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Qxc3 a5 8 b3 b6 worked well in Chekhover-Sokolsky, Leningrad 1947: 9 g3 Bb7 10 Bg2 0-0 11 0-0 Qe7 12 Bb2 Ne4 13 Qc2 f5 14 Rfel Rae8 15 Nd2 Qf7 16 b4 e5 17 d5 Nxd2 18 Qxd2 f4.

Black won with 19 e4 f3 20 Bh1 Qh5 21 Bc1 h6 22 Qd1 Re7 23 Be3 Bc8 24 Rcl Ref7 25 c5 Nf6 26 cxd6 Ng4 27 h4 g5 28 Rxc7 Rxc7 29 dxc7 gxh4 30 Bxf3 hxg3 31 Qe2 Qh2+ 32 Kf1 gxf2 33 Bxf2 Ba6 0-1

5 Nf3 d5 6 e3 0-0 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Qxc3 Bd7 9 b3 a5 10 Bd3

This is the first of a series of inaccuracies that throws Kotov off balance. He should have continued naturally with 10 Bb2 so that he can play 10 ... a4 11 b4 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Na7 (intending 13 Ne5 Bb5) 13 d5!.

10 ... a4 11 Nd2 Re8 12 0-0 e5 13 dxe5

"A characteristic decision by Kotov who preferred open positions," Botvinnik wrote. But 13 Bb2, not fearing 13 ... e4, was superior.

Botvinnik once explained Kotov's up-and-down results by quoting Yefim Geller, who said that when a player is not in a good mood and loses "it means his technique is not on a high level." Kotov could not gain the necessary experience in Tula and by the time he reached Moscow it was too late, Botvinnik concluded. When Kotov was inspired he could create on the highest level — but there were other days, like this one.

13 ... Nxe5 14 Bb2 axb3 15 Nxb3? Ne4 16 Qc2 Nxc4 17 Bxc4 dxc4 18 Qxc4 Qg5!

Threatening both 19 ... Bb5 and 19 ... Bh3, and preparing to meet 19 Qc2 with 19 ... Ba4 followed by ... Ra6!-g6.

19 f4 Qg6 20 Rfd1

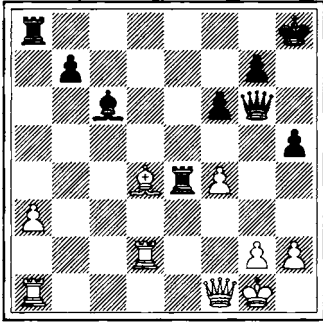
In the tournament book Botvinnik expressed annoyance at finding that Belavenets had claimed in 64 that White was in fine shape after 20 Qxc7 Bh3 21 Qc2 Rac8 22 Qe2. But Botvinnik, who believed he was winning after 19 ... Qg6, pointed out 22 ... Nd6!, e.g., 23 Nd4 Rxe3 24 Qf2 Ne4 25 f5 Qg4 or 23 Racl Nxe3 24 Rxc8+ Nxc8 25 Qd2 Rd3.

20 ... Nd6 21 Qd3 Bf5 22 Qc3 Be4 23 Rd2 Bc6 24 Qd3 Nf5 25 Be5

"How else to defend against 25 ... Be4

26 Qc3 Nh4 than to give up the e-pawn?" Botvinnik wrote.

25 ... f6 26 Bxc7 Rxe3 27 Qc4+ Kh8
28 Bb6 R3e8 29 Qf1 h5! 30 Nd4 Nxd4
31 Bxd4 Re4



After 31
... Re4

The threats (like 32 ... Ra4) now mount so swiftly that White seeks refuge in a pawn-down, bishop-of-opposite-color ending.

32 Re1 Rxe1 33 Qxe1 Rxa3 34 Kh1 Ra8

Both players were in intense time pressure and this explains why moves such as 34 ... Rf3! were missed. The game is decided by a Kotov blunder.

35 Re2 Kh7 36 h3 Re8 37 Qf2? Qxg2+!
38 Qxg2 Rxe2 0–1

Kotov managed to hold onto second place and became the third player, after Botvinnik and Levenfish, to earn the Soviet grandmaster title. Botvinnik, meanwhile, was granted 1,000 rubles by the Council of People's Commissars, an extraordinary reward. Botvinnik then trounced Ragozin in a training match held in May, 1940, in Leningrad, winning five games and drawing seven.

By the next Soviet Championship, held September 5 to October 3, 1940, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact had transformed the map of Europe. Several strong Baltic players, including Vladas Mikenas, Alexander

Koblents, Vladimir Petrov — and one great one, Paul Keres — became Soviet citizens. It was natural for Oistrakh, a professor at the Moscow Conservatory, to serve as an arbiter when the tournament began in the conservatory's Bolshoi Hall. Oistrakh and the fans expected to see a race for first prize between Keres, the co-winner of AVRO 1938, and the perennial Championship favorite, Botvinnik. Since AVRO had been widely called a qualification event to select a challenger to world champion Alekhine, Botvinnik saw the 12th Championship as the tournament that would decide which of them would represent the Soviet Union in the inevitable fight for the world title. But as he mildly put it in his memoirs: "The tournament failed to give an answer."

In the first round Botvinnik was beaten by Bondarevsky, a 27-year-old doctor's son from the industrial town of Rostov-on-Don whose dashing, combinational style Fine characterized simply as: "Victory or death." Once, after Bondarevsky won a sparkling 26-move Dutch Defense from Kotov with a queen sacrifice, a master criticized his lack of development: Black's QR and QB never moved. "You can't give such odds," the higher-rated spectator said. "You're right," Bondarevsky replied, "Yet this incorrect play resulted in a correct mate!"

E29 Nimzo-Indian Defense
12th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1940
white Igor Bondarevsky,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3 Bxc3+
5 bxc3 c5 6 e3 0–0

Bondarevsky had a game with Tolush in a Moscow tournament of candidate masters (playing *hors concours*) this year that went 6 ... Qa5 7 Bd2 Ne4 8 Bd3 Nxd2 9 Qxd2 d6 10 f4.

White's strong attack grew: 10 ... Nd7

11 Nf3 Nb6 12 0-0 Bd7 13 Ng5 cxd4
14 exd4 Na4 15 f5 Qxc3 16 Qxc3 Nxc3
17 Nxf7! Kxf7 18 fxe6+ Ke7 19 exd7 Raf8
20 Racl Rxf1+ 21 Bxf1 Na4 22 c5! dxc5
23 Bb5 1-0.

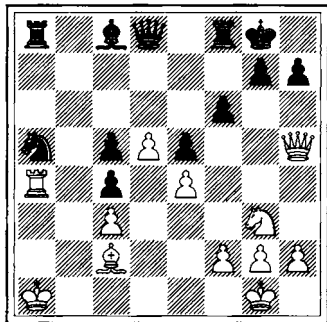
7 Bd3 Nc6 8 Ne2 d6 9 e4 e5 10 d5 Na5
11 0-0 a6 12 Ng3 b5 13 cxb5 c4 14 Bc2
axb5 15 a4!

Instead of kingside adventure (15 f4 Ng4) White takes aim at the clumsily placed a5-knight and weak queenside pawns.

15 ... bxa4 16 Rxa4 Nd7?

Wrong knight. With 16 ... Bd7 17 Ra3 Nb7 Black avoids the queenside pin but 18 Rxa8 and 19 Bg5 still favors White.

17 Be3 Nc5 18 Bxc5! dxc5 19 Qh5 f6
20 Rfal



After 20 Rfal

One of the c-pawns is bound to fall after Black extricates his knight from a5.

20 ... Bd7 21 R4a3 Qb6 22 Qd1 Ra7
23 Nf1! Rfa8 24 Ne3 Kf8

Untangling Black's pieces is difficult: 24 ... Bb5 25 Qb1 Ra6 prepares to break the pin with 26 ... Nb7. But White wins material with 26 Ba4. If Black does nothing, White can increase the pressure with either R1a2 and Qal or Qf1 followed by Bd1-e2.

25 R1a2 Ra6 26 h3 Qd8

White threatened 27 Rxa5 Rxa5 28 Nxc4. On 26 ... Qb7 White has 27 Qal Qb5 28 Ba4, winning.

27 Nxc4 Bb5 28 Nxa5 Rxa5 29 Qal Rxa3 30 Rxa3 Rxa3 31 Qxa3 Qc7 32 Qa8+ Kf7 33 Bd1!

With a protected passed pawn White has several winning ideas, including 34 Bh5+ g6 35 Qh8!.

33 ... Kg6 34 Bg4 Bd7 35 d6! Qxd6 36 Qd8 Qd2 37 Qxd7 Qe1+ 38 Kh2 1-0

The tournament also featured new faces such as Mark Stolberg, 18, and Eduard Gerstenfeld, who had twice won the Polish championship by age 22. Gerstenfeld, of Lvov, played in Soviet events after Poland was carved up in 1939. He earned his Master of Sport title in the championship semifinals and might have proven a great talent but died in 1943.

Botvinnik was already beginning to worry that a new generation would surpass him before he was ready to challenge Alekhine for the world championship. During the tournament he noticed that Smyslov sometimes stepped behind curtains when his opponent was thinking to chat with wallboard boys of his own age group, his *sverstniki*. Botvinnik was upset when chief judge Fyodor Fogelevich told him some of the wallboard boys were candidate masters and none less than first-category players. "Players should not leave the stage and demonstration board helpers should not approach players!" Botvinnik sternly replied.

Bondarevsky was among the leaders throughout: Although he would be a factor in Soviet chess for another thirty years, this was his high point. But fortune ran out when Bondarevsky allowed Liliental to play what the latter called the finest game of his career in the 19th and final round.

Twelfth Soviet Championship, Moscow, September 5–October 3, 1940

	B	L	S	K	B	B	V	D	M	P	L	R	K	M	P	S	G	K	L	R	Score
1–2. Bondarevsky	X	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	13½–5½
1–2. Lilienthal	1	X	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	13½–5½
3. Smyslov	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	0	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	13–6
4. Keres	0	½	½	X	½	½	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	0	12–7
5–6. Boleslavsky	½	½	½	½	X	0	½	0	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	0	1	1	½	11½–7½
5–6. Botvinnik	0	0	½	½	1	X	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	0	1	1	½	½	1	1	11½–7½
7–9. Veresov	0	0	0	1	½	0	X	1	0	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	10½–8½
7–9. Dubinin	0	0	½	0	1	½	0	X	1	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	0	½	10½–8½
7–9. V. Makogonov	½	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	X	0	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	10½–8½
10. Petrov	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	X	1	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	9–10
11–12. Lisitsyn	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	X	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	½	1	8½–10½
11–12. Ragozin	1	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	1	X	1	½	0	0	½	1	½	1	8½–10½
13–16. Konstantinopolsky	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	1	0	0	X	½	1	0	½	0	½	1	8–11
13–16. Mikenas	0	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	1	0	0	0	1	½	8–11
13–16. Panov	½	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	½	½	1	1	0	0	X	½	0	1	½	½	8–11
13–16. Stolberg	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	1	1	1	½	X	1	1	½	½	8–11
17. Gerstenfeld	0	½	0	0	1	½	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	1	0	X	0	½	1	7–12
18–19. Kotov	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	X	1	½	6½–12½
18–19. Levenfish	½	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	X	½	6½–12½
20. Rudakovsky	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	5½–13½

C10 French Defense
12th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1940
white Andor Liliental,
black Igor Bondarevsky

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4??

A psychological choice with a double edge: Liliental trailed Bondarevsky by a half point and wanted a sharp, closed position where a White initiative would last. Bondarevsky denies him that ("For White to take first place, it was sufficient to make a draw," he wrote) but adopts a passive system that was not at all in his style.

Three years before in the Fine international the game between these players followed theory with 3 ... Nf6 4 Bg5 Bb4 5 e5 h6 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Ne4 8 Qg4 g6 9 h4 c5 10 Bd3 Nxd2 11 Kxd2 Nc6 12 Rh3 cxd4 13 cxd4.

But now 13 ... Qb6 14 Nf3 Bd7 15 Qf4 0-0-0 16 g4? Qb4+ 17 Ke2 f6! 18 a3 Qc3 19 Rb1 g5! 20 Qd2 Nxd4+ 21 Nxd4 Qxd4 22 exf6 Qxg4+ 23 Rf3 d4 0-1.

4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Nf3 Be7 6 Bd3 Ngf6 7 Nxf6+ Bxf6 8 0-0 c5 9 c3 cxd4 10 cxd4 0-0 11 Qc2 g6 12 Bf4 Nb6 13 Bc7! Qe7 14 Be4

Having rejected queenside castling and accepted an isolated d-pawn, White concluded that he had no attack but chances for a better endgame. Black accepts a bad bishop because it is the easiest way to untangle his queenside.

14 ... Nd5 15 Bxd5! exd5 16 Be5 Bf5?

Bondarevsky blamed this move, saying 16 ... Bxe5 17 Nxe5 f6 18 Nf3 Bg4 or 17 dxe5 Bg4 would have led to a quick draw.

17 Bxf6 Qxf6 18 Qb3 Be4 19 Ne5 Qb6 20 Qxb6 axb6 21 Rfcl

Not 21 Nd7 Rfd8 22 Nxb6 because 22 ... Ra6 traps the knight.

21 ... Rfc8 22 a3 Bf5 23 g4! Be6 24 h3 f6 25 Nd3 g5

Trading rooks leaves the knight dominant (25 ... Rxc1+ 26 Rxc1 Rc8 27 Rxc8+ Bxc8 28 Nf4!). But restricting the knight's movements creates a target on g5.

26 f3 Kf7 27 Kf2 Ke7(?)

In the tournament book, Bondarevsky considered this to be his second mistake. He should trade rooks (27 ... Rxc1 28 Rxc1 Rc8) before bringing his king forward.

28 Ke3 Kd6(?)

But Liliental said this was "the decisive mistake," saying Black had to try for kingside pawn exchanges with 28 ... h5. Nikolai Krogius, a grandmaster and psychologist of the postwar generation, agreed with the technical criticism but said Bondarevsky blundered earlier with his choice of a quiet, unfamiliar opening. He cited this as an example of how *not* to play for a draw.

29 Rxc8! Rxc8 30 h4! h6

White's rook invades now but 30 ... gxh4 31 Rh1 f5 32 g5! was worse.

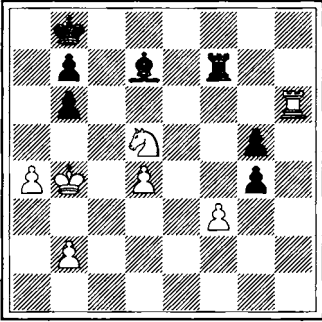
31 hxg5 hxg5 32 Rh1 Re8 33 Kd2 Bd7 34 Rh6 Rf8

"Of course on f8 the rook's position is far from best but what can Black do? On 34 ... Ke6 there follows 35 f4 Rg8 36 f5+ Kf7 37 Nb4, strengthening the pressure," the winner wrote.

35 Ne1 Kc7 36 Nc2 Rf7 37 Ne3 Be6 38 Kc3 Kd6 39 Kb4 Bd7 40 Nf5+ Kc7

Black must (a) keep the enemy king off b5, (b) protect the d5-pawn, and (c) avoid a further rook incursion. He would like to play 40 ... Bxf5 41 gxf5 Kc6 but would then run into Zugzwang after 42 a4! Rf8 43 Rh7 Rd8 44 Rf7 Rd6 45 b3 b5 46 a5 b6 47 a6.

41 a4 Be6 42 Ng3 Bd7 43 Nh5! f5
44 Nf6! fxg4 45 Nxd5+ Kb8



After
45 ... Kb8

Sometimes championships are won by non-brilliances. White made the practical decision of sealing this move rather than commit himself to the mating idea of 46 Rh8+ Ka7 47 Nc7 b5 48 a5 b6 49 a6 — which would have been met by 49 ... Bc6!.

“The game probably would have continued in the following manner: 50 Rc8 gxf3 51 d5 Bxd5 52 Nxd5 Kxa6! and White is deprived of his hopes of catching the championship leader,” Liliental wrote.

46 fxg4! Bxg4 47 Nxb6 Rf2 48 b3 Bd1
49 d5 Kc7 50 a5 Rd2 51 Rh7+ Kb8
52 d6!

Now 52 ... Rxd6 53 Rh8+ and mate on c8 or a8.

52 ... Rd4+ 53 Kc5 Rh4 54 d7! Kc7
55 d8(Q)+ Kxd8 56 Rd7+ 1–0

Liliental also beat Kotov in 25 moves in this tournament and outplayed Botvinnik on both wings to win in 43 moves. But he said the game with Bondarevsky meant

more to him than his celebrated queen sacrifice against Capablanca six years before.

Liliental was an unlikely co-champion: His Hungarian father, an electrician who once finished second in a Moscow–St. Petersburg auto race, and his opera singer mother were living in Moscow when Liliental was born. But two years later he and his mother were visiting relatives in Budapest when World War I broke out. His mother lost her voice and turned Andor over to an orphanage. Liliental apprenticed as a tailor at 15 but was soon spending his days playing chess in celebrated cafés like the Central in Vienna, the König in Berlin and the Régence in Paris. Since he was married to a Russian, the choice of a homeland on the eve of another world war was easy and he obtained Soviet citizenship in 1939.

Absolutely Champion

The last great prewar event was the “Absolute Championship” in March–April, 1941. In the tournament book Botvinnik acknowledged that there had been ties for the national championship before, in 1927 and 1934, that had not been broken. But he added that the 12th Championship showed that “reforming” the title was a matter “of urgency.” In his memoirs Botvinnik conceded that he was the one who stressed the urgency in a December, 1940, letter to Vladimir Snegiryov, an “ugly ... slovenly-dressed” figure who had assumed a key role in the sports hierarchy after the death of Krylenko. Botvinnik said he wrote that it was “ironic” that the national championship was to be decided by a Liliental–Bondarevsky playoff match and Snegiryov “understood my hint.” (Korchnoi has claimed there is a letter, apparently this one, in KGB files in which Botvinnik said a new championship must be held because people like Bondarevsky and Liliental should not represent the Soviet Union.)

**Absolute Soviet Championship, Leningrad-Moscow,
March 23–April 29, 1941**

	B	K	S	B	L	B	Score
1. Botvinnik	X X	1 ½	1 ½	1 ½	1 ½	0 1	13½–6½
	X X	½ ½	1 ½	1 ½	0 1	½ 1	
2. Keres	0 ½	X X	1 1	½ 0	0 1	1 ½	11–9
	½ ½	X X	0 ½	½ ½	½ 1	1 ½	
3. Smyslov	0 ½	0 0	X X	½ 1	½ 1	½ ½	10–10
	0 ½	1 ½	X X	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	
4. Boleslavsky	0 ½	½ 1	½ 0	X X	1 1	½ 0	9–11
	0 ½	½ ½	½ 0	X X	½ 1	0 ½	
5. Liliental	0 ½	1 0	½ 0	0 0	X X	1 ½	8½–11½
	1 0	½ 0	½ ½	½ 0	X X	1 1	
6. Bondarevsky	1 0	0 ½	½ ½	½ 1	0 ½	X X	8–12
	½ 0	0 ½	½ ½	1 ½	0 0	X X	

Six players were designated for invitations — Bondarevsky and Liliental as the previous winners, Botvinnik and Keres as the only acknowledged world-class Soviets, and two newcomers, Smyslov and Isaac Boleslavsky, who had won the Ukrainian Championship three times in a row, starting in 1938 when he was 19. The players were to meet each other four times, the first two times in the Conference Hall of the Tauride Palace in Leningrad. This was another building closely associated with the Revolution, since it was where the Petrograd Soviet was formed in January 1917 on the eve of the tsar's fall and where the Bolsheviks often gathered during the year.

The Absolute Championship was an unusually lavish event considering no foreign players were invited to be impressed. Levenfish, Ragozin and Ilyin-Genevsky conducted analysis for spectators by way of earphones. Botvinnik was an “involuntary listener” when he went to the restroom in the second round and heard analyses of various games, including his own King's Indian Defense with Liliental. At another point Levenfish triggered laughter when he told listeners a certain

move could not be played (“Of course, this move is clearly idiotic”)—just before it was made on the board.

Keres was plagued by the inconsistency that would dog his career. He won his first two games in excellent fashion, then suffered a disastrous loss with White, running headlong into a prepared Botvinnik variation that gave Black a winning position after 14 moves. Keres maintained himself in second place, at least a point behind Botvinnik and a point ahead of the rest, through the middle rounds and displayed his positional superiority over the young Soviets:

**E02 Catalan Opening
Absolute Championship,
Leningrad-Moscow, 1941
white Paul Keres,
black Igor Bondarevsky**

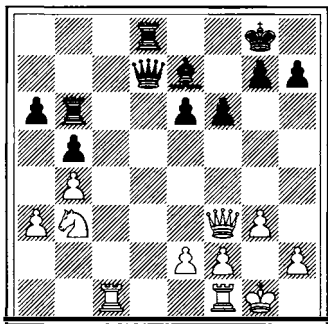
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 dxc4
5 Qa4+ Nbd7 6 Nf3 a6 7 Nc3

This blocks the queen's retreat from c4 to c2 and allows Black to equalize.

7 ... Rb8 8 Qxc4 b5 9 Qd3 Bb7 10 0–0
c5 11 a3 cxd4 12 Qxd4 Bc5 13 Qh4 Nd5
14 Bg5 f6 15 Bd2 Nxc3 16 Bxc3 0–0
17 Rad1 Qe7 18 Qh5 Nb6 19 b4 Bd6

This invites Nd2–e4. Botvinnik, in the tournament book, said 19 ... Na4 was a simple defense (20 Bxf6 Rxf6 21 bxc5 Rf5).

20 Nd2! Bxg2 21 Kxg2 Qb7+ 22 Kg1
Qc6? 23 Bd4 Be7 24 Rcl Qd7 25 Bxb6!
Rxb6 26 Nb3 Rd8? 27 Qf3!



After 27 Qf3

Black missed his chance to contest the c-file with 26 ... Rc8 and now White stops 27 ... Rc6. Black's faulty solution is to seek safety in the endgame.

27 ... Qd5 28 Qxd5 Rxd5 29 Rc7 Kf7

30 Rfc1 Rbd6 31 Kg2 Rd7 32 R1c6 Rxc7
33 Rxc7 Rd6 34 Na5!

The threat of Nc6 wins the a6-pawn at least.

34 ... Ke8 35 Nc6 Rd7 36 Rc8+ Kf7
37 Ra8 Rd6 38 Rxa6 Bf8 39 Kf3 Kg6
40 Nb8 Rd1 41 Rxc6 Ra1 (sealed) 1–0

But Keres lost the next round to Smyslov and never came within one and a half points of Botvinnik after that.

Botvinnik won the minimatch with each of his five opponents. By the time the tournament shifted to the Hall of Columns of House of Unions, in Moscow, the major unresolved question was who would come closest to the winner. Keres scored two wins, a loss and a draw with Smyslov and this helped him into second place. Smyslov received the Soviet grandmaster title as consolation.

The June, 1941, issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR* was dedicated to the tournament. Few readers were surprised when there was no July issue. In fact, the next issue did not appear until May 1945 for reasons that no one needed to explain.

9

Barbarossa

The enemy is at the gate!— Message on gigantic posters that appeared in Leningrad in August, 1941

The finals for the 13th Soviet Championship was set for the fall of 1941 with all the “Absolute” players, plus Alexander Kotov and Grigory Levenfish, seeded into it. The remaining invitations were to be determined in four 11-player round-robins. One of these semifinals, held at a tobacco factory’s chess club at Rostov-on-Don, was finishing up in June 1941 with Vasily Panov leading, and with good results registered by the young tactician Mark Stolberg as well as David Bronstein, Ilya Rabinovich and Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky. The first champion of Soviet Latvia, Alexander Koblents, scored one of the shortest victories of the tournament:

A09 Réti Opening
Semifinals, 13th Soviet Championship,
Rostov-on-Don, 1941
white Lev Kaiev,
black Alexander Koblents

1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 d4 3 b4 f6 4 Bb2 e5
5 Qb3 c5 6 bxc5 Nc6 7 d3 Bxc5 8 g3
Qe7!

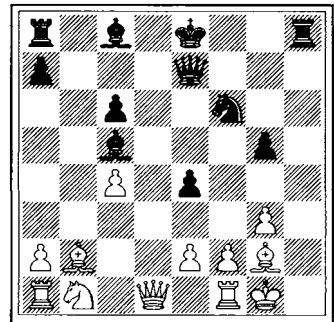
Now that his center is secure, Black plays for ...e5-e4.

9 Bg2 f5 10 0-0 e4 11 Nfd2 Nf6 12 Qd1
h5!

White has little defensive strength on the kingside (13 h4 e3) so he plays to open the center.

13 Nb3 h4 14 dxe4 hxg3 15 hxg3 fxg4
16 Nxd4 g5! 17 Nxc6 bxc6

After 17
... bxc6



Threatening ...Qh7, e.g., 18 Re1 Qh7
19 Bxf6 Qh2+ 20 Kf1 Bh3 and wins.

18 Qa4 Bd7 19 e3 Qh7 20 Re1 Qh2+
21 Kf1 0-0

Now 22 ... Bh3 and 22 ... Ng4 are threatened.

22 Bxf6 Rxf6 23 Nc3 Bh3 0-1

But on the Sunday afternoon of the ninth round, Ilyin-Genevsky’s agitated wife suddenly rushed into the tournament hall and whispered to Abram Model: “On the

radio they announced the Germans have attacked the Soviet Union.”

“I tried as much as I could to calm her and asked her not to tell anything to anyone,” Model recalled. But despite rules about silence there are no secrets this big in chess tournaments. “Within a few minutes all the participants were well informed,” Model said. Thoughts quickly turned to matters much more serious than chess. Nikolai Golovko, a Rostov doctor and strong amateur player, was leaving the hall when he met Sergei Belavenets. “I have a feeling I won’t return from this war,” Belavenets said.

He did not return. Neither did Stolberg or Lev Kaiev, who died in the fighting, or the Ilyin-Genevskys, who would both be dead within three months as Operation Barbarossa, Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, unfolded.

Yet there was still a 10th round on the semifinals schedule. A hurried call to Moscow brought back an order to keep the tournament going. But by the next day, June 23, several of the players were being ordered to induction centers and others headed home.

All over the Soviet Union, people were trying to get back to relatives by the fastest means. On June 25, Yuri Karakhan, an international arbiter who used to play chess with family friend Vladimir Mayakovsky, found himself sharing a train car from Sochi to Moscow with Evgeny Petrov, one of the authors of *The 12 Chairs*. It turned out Petrov was a chess lover and he and Karakhan played several games, with even results, that night — and concluded the war would, of course, end quickly in victory for the Red Army.

A general mobilization of the Soviet armed forces was ordered, with all men born from 1905 to 1918 obligated to serve. Within weeks several strong players were in uniform including Grigory Goldberg, who became a navy captain. Ten days after Genrikh Kasparyan left the Rostov tournament he was with the 47th Army and spent the next year on the Crimean front in some of the heav-

iest fighting. Vakhtang Karseladze, who became a celebrated teacher in Georgia, fought as an antitank gunner.

Others joined volunteer defense units, including Viktor Korchnoi’s father, who died on Lake Ladoga east of Leningrad in November, 1941. Alexander Tolush, exempt from duty because of serious problems with the blood vessels in his leg, managed to earn the rank of lieutenant as a volunteer. Dmitry Rovner, an engineer and budding master, built bomb- and gas-shelters in Leningrad during the early days of the war, later joined the army, was wounded in 1942 near Belgorod, north of Kharkov, and ended the war as a sergeant.

Soviet chess ground quickly to a halt. On July 5, a sign was posted on the office door of 64 that read “Editorial board no longer working. Everyone gone to the front.” Vladimir German, who had been appointed chief editor of a merged 64 and *Shakhtmaty v SSSR* after Krylenko’s fall, was called up, eventually put in charge of a platoon of intelligence officers, and earned 13 medals before the war’s end. Belavenets, who ran the magazine’s games section, headed a unit of minesetters. 64 was not revived until another July 5 — 27 years later.

In the rush, several people were unaware they were heading into what would soon be a war zone. By September 1 the first bombs were falling on Leningrad and 300,000 German troops, aided by their Finnish allies, had sealed off all land exits. Ilyin-Genevsky was on a barge — bearing Red Cross flags, according to Levenfish — on Lake Ladoga when Nazi bombers attacked. The former revolutionary firebrand, commissar and diplomat died on September 3, 1941, the only person on the barge killed in the raid.

“Hedgehogs” and Air Raids

Moscow also took on a siege mentality. Streets were dark at sundown and the Metro

stopped working at 7 P.M. Preparations for the inevitable invasion were everywhere. Store windows were sandbagged and barricades set up with "hedgehogs," antitank devices made of barbed wire entangled with iron bars. Food lines were long. Yet, incredibly, the annual city chess championship began on schedule in November.

Vladimir Alatortsev, director of the Moscow Chess Club, was intent on organizing a double-round tournament, with eight players, to show that life would go on despite the war—and that Nazi propaganda about chaos and panic in the capital was a lie. The first round was held in the club's quarters on Markhlevsky Street, an invaluable venue because it had an air-raid shelter in the basement. Several leading players were unavailable but Alatortsev managed to enlist Panov, Nikolai Zubarev, Yevgeny Zagoryansky and the ill-fated Vladimir Petrov.

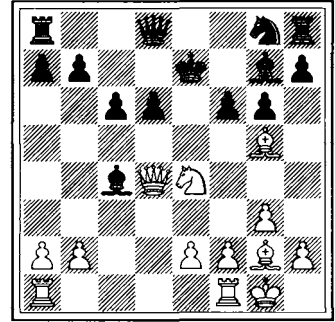
Artist Leonid Shcherbakov, a first-category player, had been excused from army duty because of poor health and was working as a house painter at the Bolshoi Theater when he discovered he had been invited to the tournament of his lifetime. "The air raid alarms, the bombings, the curfew, the evacuation and suddenly—the Moscow Championship. It was hard to believe," he recalled. Among the games that have been preserved is the following:

A26 English Opening
Moscow Championship, 1941
white Isaak Maisel,
black Vladimir Alatortsev

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3 g6 4 d4 exd4
 5 Nxd4 Bg7 6 Nc2 d6 7 g3 Ne5 8 Ne3
 Be6 9 Bg2 c6? 10 Ne4!

Black apparently counted on meeting this with 10 ... d5 11 cxd5 cxd5 but now saw 11 Qa4+! (11 ... Bd7 12 Nd6+ Kf8 13 Qa3 or 11 ... Nc6 12 Nc5).

10 ... Ke7 11 0-0! Nxc4 12 Nxc4 Bxc4
 13 Bg5+ f6 14 Qd4!



After 14 Qd4

This regains a pawn while keeping a clear positional edge.

14 ... Bd5 15 Bf4 Bxe4 16 Qxe4+ Kf7
 17 Qb4 Qb6 18 Qxd6 Rd8 19 Qa3 Ne7
 20 e4 f5 21 e5 Rhe8 22 Rfe1 Nd5 23 Bg5
 Rc8 24 Qd6 Ne7 25 Bf1!

The threat of Bc4+ is decisive.

25 ... Rcd8 26 Bc4+ Kf8 27 Qe6 Nd5
 28 Bxd8 Qxd8 29 Qd6+ Qxd6 30 exd6
 Nb6 31 Rxe8+ Kxe8 32 Re1+ Kd8
 33 Bg8 h6 34 b3 Bf8 35 Re6 g5 36 Rf6
 Nd7 37 Rg6 f4 38 gxf4 gxf4 39 Bf7 b5
 40 Rg8 c5 41 Be6 1-0.

The tournament had to be moved to various locations, including the House of Writers, the editorial office of *Vechernaya Moskva* (Evening Moscow) and the Central House of Artworkers, with rounds scheduled when the players were available. The spectators were usually school children: there were few other Muscovites with free time. The players got used to the whine of sirens as well as the roar of anti-aircraft guns and the possibility of a sudden blackout order. Players with good positions were always worried, Panov wrote, because at any moment an air raid could force a brief intermission that would allow a hard pressed opponent to analyze the position in his head. Here is a case in point:

Moscow Championship, November 1941–January 8, 1942

	M	Pe	Pa	A	Za	Zu	S	L	Score
1. Maisel	X X	0 1	0 1	1 0	½ 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	10½–3½
2. Petrov	1 0	X X	½ 1	1 0	1 ½	½ 1	1 1	1 0	9½–4½
3. Panov	1 0	½ 0	X X	0 0	1 ½	1 1	1 1	1 1	9–5
4. Alatorsev	0 1	0 1	1 1	X X	½ 0	1 0	1 0	1 1	8½–5½
5. Zagoryansky	½ 0	0 ½	0 ½	½ 1	X X	0 ½	0 1	1 1	6½–7½
6. Zubarev	0 0	½ 0	0 0	0 1	1 ½	X X	1 0	1 1	6–8
7. Shcherbakov	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 1	1 0	0 1	X X	½ 1	4½–9½
8. Latsis	0 0	0 1	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	½ 0	X X	1½–12½

B10 Caro-Kann Defense
Moscow Championship, 1941
white Vasily Panov,
black Nikolai Zubarev

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 dxe4 4 Nxe4
 Nf6 5 Ng3

Black's chances after 5 Nxf6+ gxf6
 6 d4 Bg4 7 Be2 Qc7 8 c3 Nd7 are illus-
 trated by games like Levenfish-Konstan-
 tinopolsky, VTSSPS Team Championship,
 1947: 9 Qa4 e6 10 Bd2 Rg8 11 0–0–0 Bf5
 12 Rdel Rg4! 13 h3 Re4 14 Qb3 0–0–0
 15 Be3 c5! 16 Nd2 cxd4 17 Nxe4 Bxe4
 18 Bd2 Nc5 and Black wins (19 Qd1 dxc3
 20 bxc3 Qb6). The game ended with
 19 Qb4 Nd3+ 20 Bxd3 Bxb4 21 Rxe4 dxc3
 22 Bxc3 Rxd3 23 Rxb4 Rxc3+ 0–1

5 ... c5 6 Bc4 e6 7 0–0 Be7 8 Re1 0–0
 9 b3

White avoids the simplifying 9 d4 cxd4
 10 Nxd4 Nc6.

9 ... Nc6 10 Bb2 Qc7 11 Qe2 Qf4?
 12 Rad1 Rd8 13 Be5!

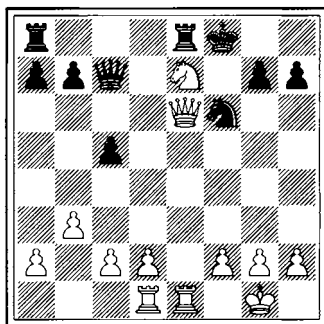
This punishes Black for his failure to
 develop (11 ... b6) and sets up f7 as a tacti-
 cal target. Zubarev said in the postmortem

that he had seen the next sacrifice but thought
 it was unsound.

13 ... Nxe5 14 Nxe5 Bd7 15 Nxf7! Kxf7
 16 Bxe6+ Kf8 17 Nf5!

Now 18 g3 Qc7 (or 18 ... Qg5)
 19 Nxe7 is threatened and the bishop has no
 escape (17 ... Bd6 18 g3).

17 ... Bxe6 18 Qxe6 Re8 19 Nxe7 Qc7



After 19
 ... Qc7

White saves his trapped knight with:

20 Nd5 Qd8 21 Nf4! Qd4 22 Qf5 Rxe1+
 23 Rxe1 Qxd2 24 Qxc5+ Kg8 25 Nd3

Zubarev, two pawns down, played on
 another 23 moves perhaps, as Panov sus-
 pected, because he was hoping for another
 air raid.

The tournament ended January 8, 1942,

when Petrov's loss to Alatorsev allowed master Isaak Maisel, a Red Army lieutenant, to clinch first place. It was called the first major chess tournament to be played during a war. Maisel accepted congratulations — and immediately left for the front.

Despite a 10 P.M. to 5 A.M. curfew, and the requirement that anyone without a job put in eight hours a day digging ditches or other volunteer work, a Leningrad championship was also held. It was organized by Model in December, 1941, with rounds held in city hospitals. The players welcomed the opportunity to take advantage of hospital food, which was actually better than most anything available under the severe rationing. It even included sugar with tea and kasha. One round was conducted under kerosene lamps in the foyer of a military-medical academy. The head of surgery, international arbiter L. Shapiro, noticed how frail Ilya Rabinovich and Samuil Vainstein looked. "Unfortunately a doctor's intuition didn't deceive me," he recalled. Rabinovich was soon dead of exhaustion and Vainstein of starvation.

Quickly, the list of casualties grew. Alexey Troitzky, one of the greatest endgame composers of all time, died in Leningrad in August, 1942. Chess historian Mikhail Kogan had died there four months earlier. Smyslov's friend Bazya Dzagurov was killed as a volunteer at the front in October, 1941. Other fatalities in the war's first year were: Leonid Kubbel (of dysentery in Leningrad), Vladimir Snegiryov of the Sports Committee; Fyodor Fogelevich, a fixture in the Leningrad championship and chief arbiter at the Absolute Championship; Vladimir Silich, three-time winner of the Byelorussian Championship, and Kaiev, the champion of Bashkiria.

Children, the elderly and the ill were being evacuated to the east — if they were fortunate. Nikolai Riumin, fatally ill, reached Omsk, where he died at 34. He was lecturing on chess at a Pioneer Palace, still on duty

"like a soldier at his military post," until the very end, Udovich said. Grigory Levenfish's family was evacuated to the Urals and he followed them, luckily catching the last train east before the railroad link from Leningrad was cut. He spent the winter of 1941-42 in the Urals, where temperatures reached minus 61° F. Levenfish walked miles in the snow to catch an eastbound train and virtually begged his way aboard. When he reached Kuibishev he looked up Andor Liliental, who had managed to escape the war zone. Liliental did not recognize Levenfish and "shrank back in fear" when he saw the cold, dirty and wet grandmaster. After two weeks in a rest home Levenfish got a job as an engineer and did not see Leningrad again until 1946.

Death Sentence

The fate of Leningrad appeared sealed on the night of September 8, 1941, when waves of German incendiary bombs rained down on the Badayev food warehouses in the southwest sector of the city. A four-acre fire destroyed the wooden repository that held the bulk of the city's food. Faced with a sentence of death by starvation, officials ordered the evacuation of thousands of children, including four-year-old Boris Spassky, who reached Perm with his older brother. "Fortunately our train wasn't bombed," he recalled more than half a century later.

Ilya Rabinovich, a math docent, could have been evacuated from the city on the Neva with others in his technological institute. He refused, saying "I was champion of Leningrad 11 times and can't leave my native city at this difficult time." He volunteered for radio work, both as a chess commentator and, using his accentless German, to give propaganda speeches directed at the invaders. When Lake Ladoga froze, he was among the ailing residents who were evacuated by trucks that carefully navigated the

ice. Rabinovich, the first Soviet player to compete in an international tournament, managed to reach the city of Kirov before he died, on April 23, 1942.

Ivanovo, a major city northeast of Moscow, received many of the Leningrad casualties and evacuees and in January, 1942, Nikolai Ovechkin, a future master and international arbiter, watched as a special troop train pulled in. He met the train's leader, "a young-looking man in a leather coat"—who turned out to be Model. Among those being evacuated by train was Vitaly Chekhover, suffering badly from dystrophy. He was rushed to a hospital where he began to recover quickly. By March Chekhover was strong enough to give a 25-board simultaneous for Young Pioneers, followed by an eight-board clock simul against Ivanovo's best players in which he allowed only one draw.

"Why Has Fate Spared Me?"

During the terrible winter of 1941-42, starvation and exhaustion haunted the streets of Leningrad. More than 50,000 died in December, and during the next two months the deaths averaged 4,000 a day. An up-and-coming Party official, Alexey Kosygin, was put in charge of moving a quarter of the city's population east over the frozen Lake Ladoga. Between January 12 and April 12, 539,400 people were evacuated that way, Kosygin reported.

But nothing was known of the grand old man of Leningrad chess, Pyotr Romanovsky. For a while his four daughters had been seen walking across the city to the Sports Committee kitchen for soup and the 4½ ounces of bread allowed each resident a day. But eventually the girls were too exhausted to leave their dacha on Krestovsky Island, where the Romanovskys subsisted on "soup" made from potato peels. When a rescue party canvassing the island reached the house in early 1942 there was almost

nothing in it but books and notepaper. The furniture had been used for firewood. The only person alive was the 49-year-old Romanovsky, half conscious, fully dressed including coat and hat, and sitting with a pen in hand. Next to him was a notebook in which he recorded in tiny script what had befallen the Romanovskys:

"In the course of 20 days a stern reality has extinguished my entire family," he wrote on the first page, dated January 31. It went on: "January 6, 1942, Asya, 56, died. January 10, Svetlana, 17. January 14, Anya, 5. January 22, Rogned. January 26, Kira."

"Why do I live and why has fate spared me?" he wrote. "The only possible way to continue to live is to work." And so Romanovsky had begun work on a collection of his best games, eventually compiling dozens of pages of minutely handwritten notes. Every so often he had gotten up to check on the verandah where the frozen bodies of his daughters and housekeeper lay. Only when he lost consciousness were rescuers able to part him from his family. Romanovsky was evacuated over the Ladoga ice road and put on a train headed east. Alatorstev, his old student, found him on a train at Alexandrov and got him into a local hospital, where he lay on the verge of death.

After four days Romanovsky regained consciousness, embraced Alatorstev—and immediately asked "Where's my suitcase?" Alatorstev arranged a search for the suitcase, which contained his cherished notebooks and had Romanovsky transferred to a government sanatorium at Ivanovo in May. There the nation's first Honored Master of Sport in chess slowly recovered—and returned to work. By the end of the year he had recovered enough to write a series of articles for *Vechernaya Moskva*, on the evolution of chess since Hastings 1895.

Alatorstev also helped evacuate Georgy Lisitsyn and Grigory Ravinsky to safety. But as the reality of the war sunk in, he turned to the question of how to use chessplayers

on the homefront. Alatorsev contacted a friend of his, Boris Veinstein, who talked the matter over with Zubarev and Udovich. Then Veinstein used his *sviazi*—as head of planning for the NKVD—and his own *telefonnoye pravo*.

Veinstein called Rozalia Zemlyachka, vice chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, and made the case that chess was a form of culture desperately needed in hospitals, military schools and points where army units were being formed. "We can give simul and lectures, discussions of chess of special interest to wounded soldiers and officers," Veinstein recalled. Zemlyachka replied "laconically" that she "understood and supported" the proposal, passed it on to V. V. Snegov, the Sports Committee chairman, and within a short time the All-Union Chess Section was revived, with Veinstein as its head.

Homefront Heroes

A "brigade" of Moscow chess teachers was created, including Alatorsev, Panov — who had been shoveling sand over burning bombs among other duties — Udovich, Zubarev, and Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky. The brigade logged more than 2,400 visits to hospitals, aerodromes and army bases. Alatorsev understood what it meant for morale. When 21-year-old Yuri Averbakh expressed surprise at how Alatorsev only drew a game, with a Hero of the Soviet Union, during a 1943 simul at the Central Aviation Hospital, Alatorsev explained: "Your task is not to beat everyone but to strengthen interest in chess!"

Another contributor to the homefront war effort turned out to be Alexander Kotov who was made a chief engineer and was busy trying to create a breech-loading, rather than the slower muzzle-loading, mortar. Many problems emerged. Only after a break of a year and a half did Kotov return to chess for

the 1942 Moscow Championship, dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution.

Several players competed in uniform at the event, held in the October Hall of the House of Unions during an optimistic period since the Red Army had just launched a powerful new attack on November 19. Alatorsev, the frustrated organizer, struggled with shortages and was seen, hitting himself on the head, half in jest about the poor lighting and rations: "There isn't enough phosphorous and they don't give out sugar! How can you play chess in such conditions?"

D55 Queen's Gambit Declined **Moscow Championship, 1942** *white* Alexander Kotov, *black* Aramanovich

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Bg5 Be7
5 e3 0-0 6 Nf3 Ne4 7 Bxe7 Qxe7 8 Rcl
c6 9 Bd3 Nxc3

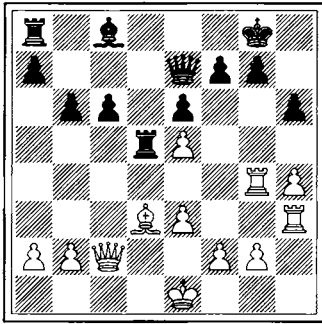
In another of his best games, against Nestler at Venice, 1950, Kotov showed that the stonewall attacking plan of 9 ... f5 10 0-0 Nd7 11 Qe2 Rf6 12 Nd2 Rh6 is bankrupted by 13 Bxe4! fxe4 14 f3 with a strong initiative in the center.

10 Rxc3 dxc4 11 Rxc4

The point of this recapture is to swing the rook to the kingside after ...e6-e5/dxe5 or Ne5!Nxe5, and in the meantime to exert pressure along the c-file.

11 ... Nd7 12 Qc2 h6 13 Ne5! Nxe5
14 dxe5 b6 15 Rg4! Rd8 16 h4 Rd5
17 Rh3! (see diagram)

Clever use of the rooks. Now 17 ... Rxe5 allows 18 Rhg3 f5 19 Rxc7+ Qxc7 20 Rxc7+ and Qxc6.



After 17 Rh3

17 ... h5 18 Rg5 Qb4+ 19 Ke2 a5 20 a3
Qc5 21 Qxc5! bxc5 22 Rhg3 g6 23 Bxg6!

Despite the trade of queens, White has a mating attack that wins the bishop back in seven moves.

23 ... f×g6 24 R×g6+ Kh7! 25 Rg7+ Kh8
26 Rg8+ Kh7 27 R3g7+ Kh6 28 Kf3!

Avoiding ...Ba6 with check. Now
28 ... Bb7 loses to 29 Rg6+ Kh7 30 R8g7+
and 31 R×b7.

28 ... Rb8 29 Rc7 R×b2 30 Rc×c8 Rb6
31 Rc7 R×e5 32 e4 c4 33 Kf4 Rc5 34 f3
Rb1 35 Rgg7 Re1 36 g4! h×g4 37 f×g4
Rf1+ 38 Ke3 c3 39 Rh7+ Kg6 40 Rcg7+
Kf6 41 Rgf7+ 1–0

Kotov earned a different reward when his mortar was tested on a proving ground in front of Party officials, Defense Ministry brass and top engineers, and passed muster. The young engineer received the Order of Lenin at a Kremlin ceremony for his new weapon in early 1944.

Meanwhile, losses at the front continued to mount. Two promising young candidate masters from Moscow, Boris Vaksberg and Benjamin Levin, died in fighting in the Ukraine. A little over a year after winning the Moscow championship, Isaak Maisel died in 1943, as did Mikhail Makogonov, older of the two Baku masters. And after a German attack near Novgorod was repulsed on March 7, 1942, one of the victims was identi-

fied by his wristwatch. It was engraved: "To Sergei Belavenets — Champion of Moscow 1937–38."

Belavenets was 32. Mark Stolberg was only 20 when he died. The thin and lanky Rostov native, with thick horn-rimmed glasses, had become a master at 17 and was regarded as having a tremendous future. Among Stolberg's letters that reached home was one dated August 28, 1941, in which he asked his younger sister for a copy of the Alekhine–Bogolyubov world championship games. "I'm not up to chess here," he wrote in October. "But now and then I look through *Moscow International Tournament 1935*," which a fellow soldier had. Stolberg died at the front, near Novorossisk, on May 16, 1943. David Bronstein, who succeeded Stolberg as the youngest Soviet master, later called him "the Tal of our generation" because of games like this:

E20 Nimzo–Indian Defense
Spartak Team Championship, 1938
white Mark Stolberg,
black Nogovitsyn

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 d5
5 Qa4+?!

Stolberg was not long on theory and "wasn't afraid to experiment at the board," said Vladimir Zak, the veteran trainer. The consistent move is 5 a3 but Stolberg wanted to discourage ...c5 even at a loss of time.

5 ... Nc6 6 a3 B×c3+ 7 b×c3 Bd7 8 c×d5
exd5 9 Qc2 0–0 10 e3 Qe7

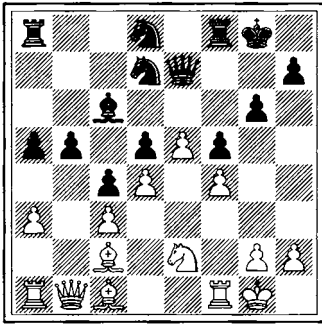
Black should at least equalize with
10 ... Na5 and 11 ... c5.

11 Bd3 Nd8 12 Ne2 c5 13 0–0 c4? 14 Bf5
Bc6 15 Qb1 b5 16 Ng3 Re8 17 Bc2 a5
18 e4

Zak, who said Garry Kasparov reminded a lot of players of Stolberg, pointed

out that 18 ... dxe4 should be met by 19 Bg5!, e.g., 19 ... h6 20 Nf5 Qe6 21 Bxf6 Qxf6 22 fxe4 Qg5 23 Rf3.

18 ... g6 19 e5 Nd7 20 f4 f5 21 Ne2 Rf8



After 21
... Rf8

22 g4! f×g4 23 Ng3 Ne6 24 B×g6! h×g6
25 Q×g6+ Kh8 26 Qh6+ Kg8 27 f5

This clears the way for his bishop and KR.

27 ... Nd8 28 Rf4 Qg7 29 Qh5 Qh7
30 R×g4+ Kh8 31 Bh6 Rg8 32 R×g8+
Q×g8 33 f6 Qe6 34 Bg5+ 1-0

Mate follows 35 Qg6+.

Bohatyrchuk's Odyssey

The war changed the lives of several masters in ways no one who could have expected. When Kiev fell on September 19, 1941, Fyodor Bohatyrchuk once again found himself in a captive city. What he did as a member of the city council before the Red Army returned in November 1943 remains a point of controversy more than half century later. Was he a life-saver or a collaborator? Boris Spassky, in a 1997 lecture, recalled that he met Bohatyrchuk in 1967 and said that during the occupation of Kiev "he saved hundreds of people." But Spassky added that when he showed Botvinnik a postcard he received in 1970 from Bohatyrchuk, Botvinnik said: "I would personally hang this man in the center of the city."

Bohatyrchuk feared he would be charged with collaborating with the Nazis. He fled to the West with the retreating German forces and later joined Lt. Gen. Andrei Vlassov, a captured Russian commander who organized a "Russian Army of Liberation" that was used by the Germans for propaganda. Kiev admirers such as Bronstein were stunned by Bohatyrchuk's betrayal of the homeland. Bohatyrchuk eventually played in a "championship" of occupied Poland. His roommate during the tournament was a familiar face: Yefim Bogolyubov, who had become a frequent participant in Nazi show tournaments. Vlassov and Bohatyrchuk fled Prague in the final days of the war when it became clear the Americans would allow the Red Army to capture the Czech capital. Vlassov surrendered to United States forces but was sent back to Moscow, where he was hanged in 1946. Bohatyrchuk managed to reach Canada, where he lived another forty years as a doctor in Ottawa.

Bogolyubov also played a role in bringing another master through the lines. Alexey Selesniev, his old internment camp colleague, had played little chess since his heyday in the 1920s. He was living in Stalino (now Donetsk), when it was overrun by the Nazis. Bogolyubov, who had not seen Selesniev in 17 years, apparently managed to get him transferred to Triberg, where they had spent the previous world war. Selesniev eventually reached Bordeaux, France, where he died, virtually forgotten, at age 79 in 1967.

Much had happened to Salo Flohr since he reached agreement in 1938 with Alexander Alekhine to play a world championship match. The September, 1938, Munich meeting between Hitler and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain killed prospects for the match and forced Flohr to think about a new country. He was in London when war broke out but reached Moscow in 1942 and, as he put it, "the Soviet government showed me high trust: In the very height of the war I was granted Soviet

Moscow Championship, 1943

	B	S	A	L	U	A	M	S	T	Rv	Rg	K	Z	L	P	K	K	Score
1. Botvinnik	X	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13½–2½
2. Smyslov	1	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	11½–4½
3–4. Alatorsev	½	½	X	0	1	0	1	1	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	11–5
3–4. Lisitsyn	0	½	1	X	½	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	½	11–5
5. Udovich	½	½	0	½	X	0	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	0	1	1	1	10–6
6. Averbakh	½	½	1	1	1	X	1	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	0	½	1	9½–6½
7. Mikenas	0	½	0	1	½	0	X	0	0	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	9–7
8. Simagin	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	X	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	8–8
9. Tolush	0	0	½	0	0	1	1	1	X	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	7½–8½
10–13. Ravinsky	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	0	1	X	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	6½–9½
10–13. Ragozin	0	½	1	0	0	½	0	1	1	1	X	0	0	0	1	½	0	6½–9½
10–13. Khachaturov	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	1	1	X	1	1	½	0	1	6½–9½
10–13. Zhivtsov	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	1	0	1	0	X	1	1	½	½	6½–9½
14. Liublinsky	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	0	1	0	0	X	0	0	½	6–10
15. Panov	0	0	0	½	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	1	X	½	1	5½–10½
16. Kotov	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	1	½	X	0	4–12
17. Korchmar	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	0	1	X	3½–12½

Korchmar forfeited to Botvinnik, Alatorsev, Udovich, Mikenas, Tolush, Ravinsky and Panov.

citizenship by decision of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet." Flohr ended up working for VOKS, the agency charged with cultural links with foreign countries, gave hospital simuls, and played in wartime tournaments in Baku and Kiev. But his sharp fall from being a world championship candidate was evident when he challenged the strongest Baku player to a training match and lost 7½–4½. Had the Flohr–Makogonov match been played in peacetime it would have been recognized as a spectacular upset.

E09 Catalan Opening

Match, Baku, 1942

white Salo Flohr,

black Vladimir Makogonov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 c6
5 Nd2

Concern about ... dxc4 led some players to adopt this move, or 5 Qc2, e.g., 5 ... Nbd7 6 Nf3 Bd6 7 0–0 Ne4 8 Nc3 and now Dubinin–Novotelnov, RSFSR Championship 1949, went 8 ... f5 9 Rb1! 0–0 10 b4 a6 11 a4 Qf6? 12 b5 axb5 13 axb5 e5? 14 bxc6 bxc6 15 cxd5 Nxc3 16 Qxc3 e4 17 dxc6 exf3 18 Qxf3! Rb8 19 Bg5!! Rxb1 20 Rxb1 Qxd4 21 cxd7 Bxd7 22 Qb3+ Kh8 23 Rdl Qc5 24 Qd3 1–0

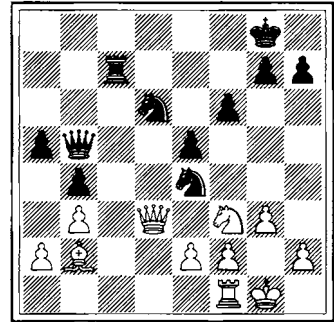
5 ... Nbd7 6 Ngf3 Be7 7 0–0 0–0 8 b3 b6 9 Bb2 Bb7 10 Qc2 c5 11 Rac1 Rc8 12 Qb1 Rc7 13 Rfd1 dxc4 14 Nxc4 b5 15 Ne3?

White's knights get him the worst of a symmetrical pawn structure. He should watch e4 with 15 Ncd2.

15 ... Be4 16 Qa1 Qc8 17 dxc5 Bxc5 18 Nd4 Bxg2 19 Nxg2 Qb7 20 Ne1 e5 21 Ndf3? Ne4! 22 Nd3 f6!

Black's pawns sharply reduce the range of White's three minor pieces.

23 Nxc5 Ndxc5 24 Qb1 a5 25 Ba3 b4
26 Bb2 Qb6 27 Rf1 Rfc8 28 Rc4 Nd6
29 Rc2 Nce4! 30 Rxc7 Rxc7 31 Qd3 Qb5



After 31
... Qb5

Black is winning after 34 Qxb5 Nxb5
35 Rcl (otherwise 35 ... Rc2) Rxc1+ 36 Bxc1
Nbc3

32 Qd1 Rc5! 33 a3 Rd5 34 Qc2 Qc5
35 Qc1 Nc3! 36 Bxc3 bxc3 37 Ne1 Rd2
38 Nd3 Qd4 39 b4 Rxe2 40 Qb1 Rd2
41 Nc5 Qc4 42 Nb3 Rb2 43 Qd1 Rxb3
44 Qxd6 c2 45 Qd7 h6 0–1

Another player who escaped the decimation of Soviet chess ranks was Mikhail Botvinnik. Like his future rival Bronstein, Botvinnik received a "white ticket" exempting him from military duty because of poor eyesight. In the early days of the war the Absolute Champion was living in Leningrad with seconds Vyacheslav Ragozin and Yakov Rokhlin in a Kirov Ballet dormitory, thanks to his wife's work. When he wrote Moscow asking about the timing of his evacuation, "I received the answer: Wait."

Other cultural stars were leaving against their wishes. In October 1941 Dmitry Shostakovich, polishing up his Seventh ("Lenin-grad") Symphony, was reluctantly evacuated to Kuibyshev, the same month that Anna Akhmatova was convinced to leave for Tashkent. More than 200,000 children had been evacuated in the early months of the War. But chessplayers were not a high priority.

"I understood that masters of sport

weren't evacuated but sent to the front," Botvinnik recalled. But for once his wife had greater *sviazi* and arranged to take five members of her family to Perm, where the Kirov was being relocated and where there was engineering work for Botvinnik. His brother saw the Botvinniks leave by train on August 19, 1941, two days before the rail line was severed by the Nazis. Within days, his brother was dead. In Perm the Botvinniks slept on hay-on-metal beds and lived on sparse rations. Botvinnik resumed tournament play at Sverdlovsk in May and later in December in the 1943 Moscow championship, where he lost to defending champion Smyslov. Among the VIP spectators who saw Smyslov win the tournament were Sergei Prokofiev, Alexander Goldenveiser, and a magically recovered Pyotr Romanovsky. One of the stars of the tournament was a graduate of a Moscow Pioneer House who would receive the master title the next year with games like this:

E03 Catalan Opening
Moscow, 1943
white Vladas Mikenas,
black Yuri Averbakh

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 dxc4
 5 Qa4+ Nbd7 6 Nd2 c6 7 Qxc4 e5
 8 Ngf3 Nb6 9 Qd3 exd4 10 0-0 Be7
 11 Nxd4 0-0 12 N2b3 Re8 13 Qc2 Nbd5
 14 a3 Qb6 15 e4 Nc7 16 Be3 Ng4
 17 Bd2 a5 18 h3 a4!

"Miki" Mikenas had beaten Botvinnik in a Leningrad 1940 tournament and had wins to his credit over Alekhine, Flohr and Ståhlberg in the 1930s. Here he walks into a forcing and very strong exchange sacrifice.

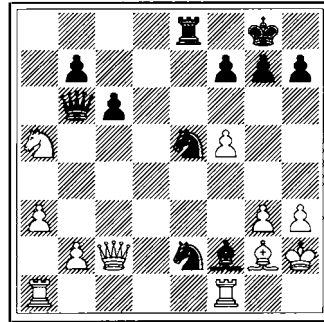
19 Ba5 Rxa5 20 Nxa5 Ne5 21 Qc3 Bc5
 22 Nf5

Not 22 Rad1 Bxd4 23 Rxd4 Nb5.

22 ... Nb5 23 Qc2 Bxf5 24 exf5 Nd4
 25 Qxa4

The only way to retain his material (25 Qd2 Ndf3+).

25 ... Ne2+ 26 Kh2 Bxf2 27 Qc2



After 27 Qc2

27 ... Ng4+! 28 hxg4 Qe3 29 Rxf2
 Qxg3+ 30 Kh1 Qh4+! 31 Bh3 Qxf2 0-1

With 32 ... Ng3 Black will either mate or win the queen.

Ragozin, by then a lieutenant, had been transferred to the Urals, and enjoyed some of his best results during the war. He registered a 9-1 first place at Sverdlovsk in April, 1942, and a tie for first in the 1943 Moscow tournament. The Sverdlovsk tournament had virtually no spectators but all the tickets had been sold — because a scarce bread roll was included in the ticket price. Another solid tournament — perhaps the strongest anywhere in 1942 — was held at Kuibyshev in July and August and was won by 23-year-old Boleslavsky, ahead of Smyslov, Liliental, Mikenas and Sokolsky.

C30 Queen's Gambit Declined
Sverdlovsk, 1943
white Ilya Kan, *black* Vasily Smyslov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 d5 4 Nc3 Be7
 5 e3 0-0 6 b3 Ne4

"Laskerizing" the position with this move, Black tried to exploit White's sixth

move. Now 7 Nxe4 dxe4 8 Nd2 f5 9 Bb2 c5 10 dxc5 Na6 would give Black a fine game.

7 Bb2 Bb4 8 Qc2 Nxc3

But it becomes apparent that Smyslov's intent was to simplify, not sharpen the position with 8 ... c5. This leaves him with a solid but sterile position.

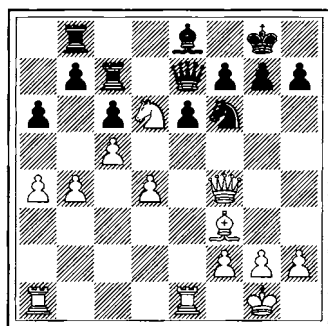
9 Bxc3 Bxc3+ 10 Qxc3 Nd7 11 Bd3 Re8
12 0-0 c6 13 e4 Nf8

Passive. Kan recommended 13 ... dxe4 14 Bxe4 Nf6 or 14 ... Qf6.

14 Rfe1 Bd7 15 b4 Re7 16 a4 Rc8 17 c5!

Preparing to seal the center (18 e5) and open the queenside at will.

17 ... dxe4 18 Bxe4 Be8 19 Ne5 Nd7
20 Nc4 Nf6 21 Nd6 Rb8 22 Bf3 Rc7
23 Qe3 Qe7 24 Qf4 a6



After 24 ... a6

Facing zero counterplay, White goes for the king.

25 g4! h6 26 h4 Nh7 27 Be4 Nf8 28 Ra3
Rd8 29 g5 h5 30 Bf3 g6 31 Ne4

Threatening 32 Nf6+ Kh8 33 Qe5 followed by a crushing discovered check.

31 ... e5 32 Nf6+ Kh8 33 Rxe5 Ne6
34 Qe3 1-0

Later in the year, the 17th Leningrad Championship was held despite the continuing blockade. Not a single master could be found, except Vasily Sokov, who held the title not in chess but in checkers. The tournament had been scheduled to be played over two weeks in the Sports Committee office at 22 Khalturin Street — until a bomb landed on it. The event eventually lasted from June 20 to August 15 and would have lasted much longer if the players responded to every air raid. Sokov, a candidate master in chess, finished second, behind Fyodor Sklyarov, chief doctor at a clinic. This was Sokov's last tournament: He died at Narva the next year.

C19 French Defense Leningrad Championship, 1943 white Vasily Sokov, black L. Shapiro

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3
Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7

The alternative, 6 ... Qc7 and then 7 Nf3 Ne7 8 Be2 Nbc6, did not catch on until after the war. Sharp play follows 9 0-0 f6 10 exf6 gxf6 11 c4 Bd7 12 dxc5 0-0-0 13 Bb2 d4!.

In Rovner-Bondarevsky, Moscow 1946, White's knight sacrifice failed: 14 Nxd4 Be8 15 c3 e5 16 Bg4+ Kb8 17 Bf3 exd4 18 cxd4 Nf5 19 d5 Ne5 20 Be4 Bg6 21 Qc2 Rhg8! 22 Bxe5 Qxe5 23 Rab1 Nd4 24 Qb2 Ne2+! 0-1

7 Nf3 Nbc6 8 Bd3 Qa5 9 Bd2

Botvinnik later showed that 9 Qd2 c4 10 Be2 Qa4! blockaded the queenside nicely. Now 9 ... Bd7 can be met by 10 dxc5!

9 ... c4 10 Be2 Qa4 11 0-0 0-0 12 Ne1
Bd7 13 f4 f5

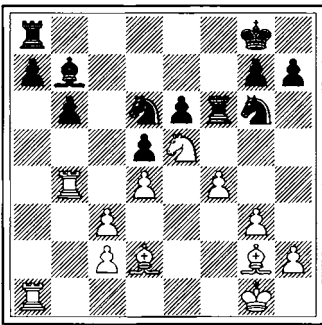
Botvinnik had registered a number of impressive victories with Black's ...c4! ...Qa4

plan, but with his king castled on the other wing. Here Black anticipates 14 g4.

14 e×f6 R×f6 15 Nf3 Ng6 16 g3! Nce7
17 Re1 Nf5 18 Bf1! Re8 19 Bg2 Bc8
20 Ne5 b6 21 Rb1 Bb7?

Black may have seen the trick threat of 22 Rb4 Q×a3 23 N×g6 R×g6 24 B×d5 but overlooked another pin device that exposes his queenside.

22 Rb4 Q×a3 23 N×c4! Qa6 24 Ne5 Nd6
25 Qa1 Q×a1 26 R×a1 Ra8



After 26
... Ra8

27 c4! Ne4 28 B×e4 d×e4 29 c5 N×e5
30 d×e5 Black forfeited

Every strong player who survived the War seemed to have a remarkable story to tell. Ratmir Kholmov was 16 and had already been champion of Arkhangel for a year when the Nazis began to bombard the city, not far from the Arctic Circle. Muscular and stocky, he had worked on a codfishing trawler, then as a riveter and firestoker. After the strategically placed Arkhangel was heavily damaged, Kholmov was sent to Vladivostok in the distant Far East, and sailed to the West Coast of the United States. At one point his assignment to one ship was changed — and the ship sank without him.

Kholmov sailed home on an oil tanker that became stuck on a reef during a heavy storm, not far from Japanese ships. As the water rose below decks and the boilers threatened to explode, Kholmov and other sailors

raced about the ship and closed a key valve just in time. After other adventures he reached Vladivostok and then Arkhangel, became so ill en route that he temporarily lost his voice and ended the war with a disability discharge.

Alexander Chistyakov, meanwhile, fought with a sapper battalion at the Crimean city of Simferopol, then helped build bridges and set mines in the Ukraine. Throughout the war he carried a pocket set and celluloid pieces that he had bought in Leningrad. In the same way, Pyotr Dubinin, drafted four months after the Rostov semifinals, carried a chess book in his knapsack as he fought all over the Western front. Dubinin earned decorations for personally capturing German soldiers and suffered frostbite of both legs. Just as his battalion was about to seize the Baltic port of Koenigsberg in February, 1945, he received an invitation to the 14th Soviet Championship semifinals. He refused. In the fighting he suffered heavy shellshock and was finally demobilized with the rank of deputy battalion commander.

Other Soviet players who fought and survived the war include the following.

Iosif Pogrebissky, a Kiev master, spoke ten languages and wrote books on subjects from mechanics to Leibniz, joined the cavalry corps. He fought from Stalingrad to Berlin, earning six medals, five decorations and the rank of major.

Abram Khasin, a Kiev colleague of Bronstein's, lost both legs at Stalingrad, yet lived to become an international master and postal grandmaster.

Oleg Moiseev was not yet 18 when he was called up for army duty in January 1943. He was wounded near Smolensk that December, operated on in a makeshift field hospital and spent seven months recovering. He went on to become a postal grandmaster and in 1952 tied for seventh in a Soviet Championship.

Vasily Byvshev, heavily wounded in October 1941 defending Moscow, played in

several Soviet Championship finals, became a prominent trainer in Leningrad and lived until 1998.

Vladimir Goldin, a platoon commander, was wounded at Stalingrad. He won the Armenian Championship in 1969.

Yakov Neishtadt, severely wounded as commander of a rifle platoon, later became a well known writer.

Nikolai Aratovsky, Saratov champion at 18, commanded an antitank battery and was badly wounded.

Pavel Kondratiev served on a torpedo boat during the war, became a master at age 26 in 1950 and died in 1984 just before his student, Irina Levitina, played Maya Chiburdanidze for the women's world's championship.

Isaac Lipnitsky served at Stalingrad and won four military orders.

Gavril Veresov, a Byelorussian master credited by the Soviets with the 1 d4 d5 2 Nc3 opening, rose from private to captain and was wounded.

Viktor Vasiliev of Leningrad was rejected by the army because of poor eyesight but served as a volunteer and lost a hand, foot and some fingers on the other hand due to frostbite. He was considered to be of grandmaster strength but died in 1950 of tuberculosis exacerbated by war wounds.

Several players missed their prime playing years because of the war but had brief opportunities to shine during the 1943 and 1944 tournaments.

A04 King's Indian Reversed

Kuibyshev, 1943

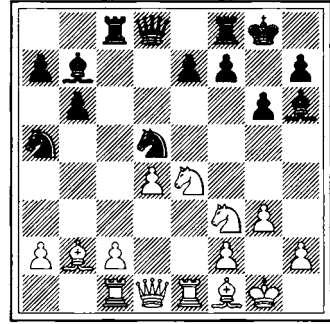
white Alexander Konstantinopolsky,

black Grigory Levenfish

1 Nf3 d5 2 d3 Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7
5 Nbd2 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 e4 Nc6 8 exd5
Nxd5 9 Nb3 b6 10 Re1 Bb7 11 d4!

Otherwise Black secures the superior center with 11e5

11 ... c4 12 Nbd2 c3 13 Ne4 cxb2
14 Bxb2 Na5 15 Bf1 Rc8 16 Rcl Bh6?



After 16
... Bh6

Black should restrain the White pawns with 16 ... Nc4 and 17 ... b5.

17 c4! Bxc1 18 Qxc1 Kg7

White's main threat with 19 Qh6 Nf6 20 Nfg5 or 20 Nxf6+ exf6 21 d5.

19 Ne5 Nf6 20 d5 h5 21 Qf4 Kh7
22 Nxf6+ exf6 23 Nd7!

This wins the queen by creating a mate threat on g7.

23 ... Qxd7 24 Qxf6 Rg8 25 Re7 Qxe7
26 Qxe7 Rg7 27 Qf6 Rcg8 28 Bd3 Bc8
29 Qg5 f5 30 Be2!

There is no defense to 31 Bxh5.

30 ... Nb7 31 Bxh5 Rc7 32 Be5 Rd7
33 Bf3 Rgg7 34 d6 1-0

The war lasted 1,418 days for the Soviets but by 1944 it was clear the end was coming. The 18th Leningrad Championship began with the city blockaded, but ended after the siege had been lifted. Romanovsky, by then virtually a new man, finished third in a strong training tournament in Moscow. While recovering at the Ivanovo sanatorium he met the woman who became his second wife and the mother of his second family of children. She helped give him the strength to live another twenty years.

C64 Ruy Lopez
Training Tournament of Masters,
Moscow, 1944
white Grigory Ravinsky,
black Pyotr Romanovsky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Bc5 4 0–0
 Nd4 5 Nxd4 Bxd4 6 c3 Bb6 7 d4 Qe7?
 8 f4!

This gambit idea exploits Black's lack of development and avoidance of 7 ... c6 8 Ba4 d6.

8 ... exd4 9 Kh1 dxc3 10 e5! c6

Black must complicate since 10 ... Nh6 11 f5 is horrible

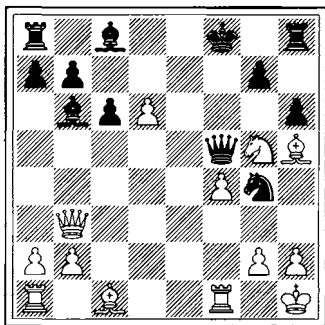
11 Bc4 Qc5 12 Qb3 d5! 13 exd6 Nf6
 14 Bxf7+?

Better was 14 Re1+ since 14 ... Kf8 15 Be3 Qxd6 16 Nxc3 is very dangerous.

14 ... Kf8 15 Nxc3 Ng4 16 Ne4

The other method of avoiding smothered (16 ... Qg1+) mate was 16 h3 but then 16 ... Nf2+ and 17 ... Qf5, threatens the f7-bishop and a sacrifice on h3.

16 ... Qf5 17 Ng5 h6! 18 Bh5!!



After 18 Bh5

White sees through 18 Be6?? hxg5! and 18 Ne6+ Kxf7 19 Nc7+ Be6. He sets a trap of his own: 18 Bh5 Nf2+ 19 Rxf2 Bxf2 20 Bg4!

18 ... hxg5 19 Bxg4 Qxg4 20 fxg5+ Bf5

Now 21 g6! would have drawn (21 ... Qxg6 22 Qf3).

21 Qf3? Qxf3 22 Rxf3 g6 23 g4 Re8

“What a metamorphosis!” Romanovsky wrote. Even on the superior 24 h3 Re1+ 25 Kh2 Black wins with 25 ... Re2+ 26 Kg3 Bg1!

24 gxf5 Re1+ 25 Kg2 Rg1 mate

In February and March, 1944, a new series of semifinals for the 13th Soviet Championship was held in Baku, Omsk and Moscow. The Baku tournament was evidence to Panov that the war was approaching an end. The players were given good rooms and “for the first time since the beginning of the war I could take a hot bath daily.” Food was not rationed at the tournament. “But the catch was you had to pay for three meals a day at commercial prices” of 80 rubles a day—while the players were given only an inflated 30 rubles a day to live on, Panov wrote. He tried to make up the difference by selling his copy of Rabinovich’s endgame manual “but it still wasn’t enough!” Finally he and the other players presented their plight to the organizers, who came up with a solution: they would be sold one pack of scarce cigarettes a day at the “usual” rate, and the difference between that and the real market price was so hugely in their favor that “the budget was balanced.”

Panov’s guess was right: the tide was quickly turning. By July the Soviets had retaken Lvov and Vilnius and much of the Ukraine. The massive counterattack in the south, codenamed Bagratian after the Georgian hero-general of the Napoleonic wars, was timed to start on June 22, exactly three years since Barbarossa was launched, and 16 days after D-Day on the Western Front.

The 13th Championship finals began

May 21 in the October Hall at the House of Unions with 15 qualifiers, plus the seeded Botvinnik and Smyslov. Sports Committee's Snegov opened the tournament saying: "Only in the Soviet Union could such a major chess competition be carried on despite the difficulties of wartime." It seemed like a rebirth of big chess, with even a daily bulletin published. The writer Ilya Ehrenberg wrote his best wishes to the players in the first issue. On the June 12 free day all the players promoted chess in hospitals and factories. A week later Botvinnik gave a 25-board simul for wounded front-line soldiers in a hospital run by Golovko. Three days later Oistrakh accomplished a double feat at another military hospital, giving a violin concert, then a simultaneous exhibition — allowing only two draws in 14 games.

Lieutenant Tolush, one of several masters freed from volunteer duty thanks to Alatorsev, had been pulled back from the front and achieved something remarkable in the tournament: he checkmated Botvinnik using a 19th century opening.

C22 Center Game
13th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1944
white Alexander Tolush,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 Qxd4 Nc6 4 Qe3 Bb4+

Botvinnik had developed a reputation for vulnerability in certain double-e-pawn openings, after losing an Evans Gambit Declined to Kan.

5 Nc3 Nge7?! 6 Bd2 0-0 7 0-0-0 d6 8 Qg3 Kh8 9 f4 f5

Black's avoidance of the main line (5 ... Nf6) has left him with an inferior center and this attempt to put pressure on e4 is his best chance to equalize.

10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 Qe8 12 Nf3 f4! 13 Qf2

Black gets his pawn back after 13 Bxf4 Bxc3 14 bxc3 Qf7.

13 ... Bg4 14 Re1 Rd8 15 Bd3 Qh5 16 Be4 Ba5 17 h3 Bf5 18 Rhf1 Bb6 19 Qe2 Be6 20 a3 a6

Black has a fine game but allows his opponent to come up with the game's first plan.

21 Bd3 Ba7 22 Ne4 Nd5 23 g4! Qe8 24 Neg5 Bg8 25 Qe4 Ne3 26 e6 Rxd3

Rather than win the exchange at the risk of his h-pawn, Black sacrifices the exchange to kill the attack.

27 Qxd3 h6 28 Nf7+ Bxf7 29 exf7 Qxf7 30 Bxe3 Bxe3+ 31 Kb1 Rd8 32 Qc3 Qd5 33 h4 Qe4 34 h5 Rd5?

Black's forces are concentrated but he should have stopped White's next two moves, which give Tolush's rooks the file he needs.

35 g5! hxg5 36 h6 Qg6 37 hxg7+ Qxg7 38 Rh1+ Kg8 39 Qc4 Qf7 40 Qb3 Nd8 41 Rh5! Qxh5 42 Qxd5+ Nf7 43 Qe4

Tolush had whispered his slogan, "Forward, Kazimirich!" as he tightened the net around the Black king. Botvinnik, in severe time pressure, rushed to make the control at move 56.

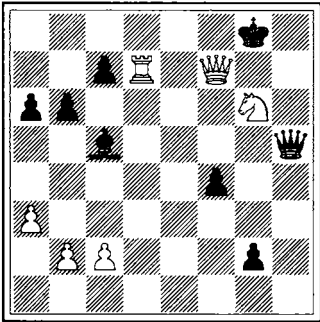
43 ... Kf8 44 Rd1 g4 45 Ne1 Nd6 46 Qe6 g3 47 Rd5 Qf7 48 Qh6+ Qg7 49 Qh4 Nf7 50 Ng2! Qg6 51 Rd7 Kg8 52 Qe7 b6 53 Nh4 Qh5 54 Qf6 Bc5 55 Ng6 g2 56 Qxf7 mate (*see diagram*)

"You're mated, Mikhail Moiseyevich!" Tolush announced loudly.

As the course of war became sure,

Thirteenth Soviet Championship, Moscow, May 21–June 17, 1944

	B	S	B	F	Ma	Mi	T	V	L	S	K	L	R	K	B	A	R	<i>Score</i>
1. Botvinnik	X	1	1	1	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	0	1	1	12½–3½
2. Smyslov	0	X	0	½	1	1	1	1	0	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	1	10½–5½
3. Boleslavsky	0	1	X	½	½	½	1	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	10–6
4. Flohr	0	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	9½–6½
5–6. V. Makogonov	½	0	½	½	X	½	0	0	0	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	9–7
5–6. Mikenas	0	0	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	9–7
7. Tolush	1	0	0	0	1	0	X	1	½	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	8½–7½
8–10. Veresov	0	0	½	½	1	½	0	X	½	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	½	7½–8½
8–10. Liliental	0	1	0	½	1	1	½	½	X	½	0	½	0	1	0	½	½	7½–8½
8–10. Sokolsky	½	½	1	½	0	0	0	0	½	X	½	1	0	1	1	1	0	7½–8½
11–14. Kotov	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	1	1	½	X	½	1	0	1	1	0	7–9
11–14. Lisitsyn	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	½	0	½	X	½	0	½	1	1	7–9
11–14. Ragozin	½	0	½	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	½	X	1	0	½	1	7–9
11–14. Khavin	0	½	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	X	1	1	½	7–9
15. Bronstein	1	½	½	0	½	0	1	0	1	0	0	½	1	0	X	0	½	6½–9½
16. Alatortsev	0	½	½	½	0	1	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	1	X	1	5½–10½
17. Ravinsky	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	1	1	0	0	½	½	0	X	4½–11½



After 56
Qxf7 mate

masters of sport felt completely protected, and Botvinnik was able to return to Moscow. While awaiting a new apartment he spent time in the cold National Hotel, where the players stayed during Moscow 1935. Botvinnik's wife was transferred from Lenin-grad's Kirov to the capital's Bolshoi ballet company with the help of a Molotov aide. Botvinnik found that Lieutenant Ragozin was an adjutant to Moscow's military commandant, a first-category player. Ragozin was able to get coupons to treat Botvinnik to lunch at the Aragvi restaurant in the heart of Moscow, where the Absolute Champion enjoyed a meat cutlet. It was "a major achievement and I looked with gratitude at my comrade," Botvinnik recalled.

By September 1944 Russian troops had retaken Tallin, occupied Sofia and swept into Yugoslavia. One of the strongest tournaments held anywhere during the war took place that month in Ivanovo. It was won by Kotov and Ragozin, ahead of Liliental, Simagin, Averbakh, Panov and Batuyev, and produced some sparkling games that have been almost forgotten:

C90 Ruy Lopez

Ivanovo, 1944

white Alexander Kotov,

black Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 Na5
9 Bc2 c5 10 d3

This passive system can pack a punch

if Black rushes to play ...d5. After 10 ... 0-0 11 Nbd2 Nc6 12 Qe2 Re8 13 Nf1 d5 14 exd5 Nxd5 we reach Ilyin-Genevsky-Botvinnik, Seventh Soviet Championship.

Play continued 15 Bd2 Bf8 16 Ng3 Bb7 17 a4 b4 18 Ng5! h6 19 N5e4 g6 20 Qf3! f5 21 Nxf5 gxf5 22 Qxf5 Bg7 23 Nxc5 Bc8 24 Qg6 Nce7 25 Qh5 Nf5 26 d4! Rf8 27 dxe5 bxc3 28 bxc3 Qe7 29 e6 Qxc5 30 Bxf5 Qe7 31 Bxh6 Rxf5 32 Qxf5 Bxh6 33 Qxd5 Bb7 34 Qd7 Bg5 35 Rab1 Bc8 36 Qc6 1-0.

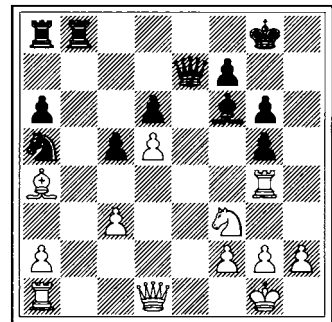
10 ... Be6 11 Nbd2 0-0 12 Nf1 Qc7
13 Bg5 Rfb8 14 Ne3 b4 15 d4 h6 16 dxe5

Rauzer had introduced a new central plan in the 1930s involving dxe5, instead of d4-d5, followed by Nf5. Here 16 ... dxe5 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 Nd5 Bxd5 19 Qxd5?? Rd8 fails so White should continue 17 Bh4 and perhaps Bg3.

16 ... hxg5? 17 exf6 Bxf6 18 Nd5! Bxd5
19 exd5! g6

Black's 16th move was designed to put pressure on c3 but now he sees the danger of Qd3.

20 Re4 bxc3 21 bxc3 Re8? 22 Rg4 Qe7
23 Ba4! Reb8



After 23
... Reb8

24 Qd2 Qb7 25 Nxg5 Bxg5 26 Rxg5
Qb2 27 Qe1 Ra7 28 h4!

This pawn must win but the way it happens is cute.

28 ... Nc4 29 h5 Ne5 30 h×g6 f6 31 Rg3
Re7 32 Qd1 Kg7 33 Bc2

Preparing 34 Rb1 and Qh5.

33 ... Rbe8 34 Rb1 Q×a2 35 Qh5 Rh8
36 Qh7+! R×h7 37 g×h7+ Ng6 38 B×g6
1–0

For many players, chess was their closest companion until the very end of the war. Alexander Koblents found himself in Tbilisi in spring 1945 but discovered the chess club was virtually empty. Everyone seemed to be outside enjoying a fine Georgian day. Just before he left the club Koblents noticed a thin man in uniform, leaning over a board

in the corner of the room. “This is our fanatic,” a club worker said softly, “Away from the front, Genrikh Moiseyevich spends every free minute at the board.” Koblents realized the solitary analyst was Genrikh Kasparyan, whom he had not seen since that June Sunday in Rostov nearly four years before.

By the time the 14th Soviet Championship opened, on June 1, 1945, World War II had been over for the Soviet Union for nearly a month. An estimated twenty million citizens of the USSR perished. Boris Veinstein, looking back at the end of his life, knew how he would liked to be remembered: for the relatively few chessmasters who died. “There was no other field of culture where personnel were so preserved!” he said.

10

Joining the World

When we Soviet masters take part in tournaments and study the game, we know that this is a socially useful, cultural activity and that we are bringing benefit to the Soviet state. And when we compete in international tournaments and defend the honor of our country, we recognize our duty before the Soviet people, before the Bolshevik party and the great cause of Lenin and Stalin. — Mikhail Botvinnik, 1949

Until September, 1945, the true strength of the Soviet players was one of the best-kept secrets of the chess world. Only a few masters had competed in foreign tournaments for individuals and the All-Union Chess Section virtually ignored the biennial Olympiad tournaments and the world chess federation (FIDE), which had been formed in 1924, the same year as the section. Western publications occasionally took notice of some massive Soviet event, usually won by an obscure master with a seemingly unpronounceable name. But a 1932 poll of 5,000 fans, conducted by *Wiener Schachzeitung*, to determine the world's top players, found no Soviets named in the top 12. By the 1940s very few games had been published outside the Soviet Union of, for example, Alexander Kotov or Isaac Boleslavsky — although they were already among the top 10 players in the world.

This isolation changed radically within days of the end of World War II with the shocking result of the “match of the century,” as the United States–USSR radio match was called. Years before the American magazine *Chess Review* proposed a match, pitting the Soviets against the U.S. team that had won four straight Olympiads. But the war intervened and efforts were revived only after Nikolai Romanov was named chairman of the Sports Committee in March 1945.

Arrangements for a match in September 1945 quickly fell into place and the two sides agreed that ten players from each team would play two games each, with moves transmitted by radio. Nikolai Zubarev and members of the United States and British embassies would head a judges' panel to enforce the rules in Moscow, while a member of the Soviet consulate in New York joined the panel on the other side of the Atlantic. The games began at 5 P.M. in Moscow but 10 A.M. in New York — and dragged on because of transmission errors in virtually every game as well as other delays. Igor Bondarevsky said it took 10 minutes for a full move to be sent back and forth, adding more than six hours to the length of a 40-move game. With a time control at move 32, eight of the games from the second round had to be adjourned. But the outcome was clear early on:

D28 Queen's Gambit Accepted
U.S.–USSR Radio Match,
fourth board, 1945
white Salo Flohr, black I.A. Horowitz

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

“Already on the second move the opponent presents a small surprise,” Flohr wrote.

U.S.–USSR Radio Match, September 1–4, 1945

Board	Soviets	Soviet			Americans	U.S.		
		Rd1	Rd2	Total		Rd1	Rd2	Total
1.	Mikhail Botvinnik	1	1	2	Arnold Denker	0	0	0
2.	Vasily Smyslov	1	1	2	Samuel Reshevsky	0	0	0
3.	Isaac Boleslavsky	½	1	1½	Reuben Fine	½	0	½
4.	Salo Flohr	1	0	1	I.A. Horowitz	0	1	1
5.	Alexander Kotov	1	1	2	Isaac Kashdan	0	0	0
6.	Igor Bondarevsky	0	½	½	Herman Steiner	1	½	1½
7.	Andor Liliental	½	½	1	Albert Pinkus	½	½	1
8.	Vyacheslav Ragozin	1	1	2	Herbert Seidman	0	0	0
9.	Vladimir Makogonov	1	½	1½	Abraham Kupchik	0	½	½
10.	David Bronstein	1	1	2	Anthony Santasiere	0	0	0
	<i>Team</i>	8	7½	15½	<i>Team</i>	2	2½	4½

“I expected a Slav or a Nimzo-Indian, but I myself readily accept the Queen’s Gambit. Does this mean I. Horowitz decided to beat me with my own weapons?”

3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0–0 a6
7 Qe2 Nc6 8 Rd1 b5 9 dxc5 Qc7 10 Bd3

Here 10 ... Nb4 would have restored Black’s chance for equality.

10 ... Bxc5? 11 a4 b4

Flohr recalled that he had played hundreds of games with masters, grandmasters and world champions, many of them deciding first places. But he never felt the tension in a game as much as this one since as a “young Soviet citizen, I had been entrusted with defending the honor of the Soviet chess movement.” What worried him was why Horowitz, “a good theoretician,” had adopted 11 ... b4, a move condemned since Flohr lost with it against Alekhine at Bled 1931. Clearly the *Chess Review* editor had an improvement. (Flohr did not mention that the alternative, 11 ... bxa4, had been discredited

since he adopted it in his match with Botvinnik 12 years before.)

12 Nbd2 0–0 13 b3

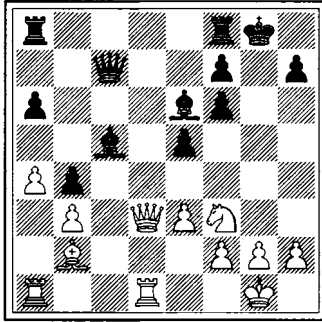
Alekhine played 13 Nb3 Be7 14 e4 Nd7 15 Be3 and obtained a clear edge after 15 ... Nde5 16 Nxe5 Nxe5 17 Racl Qb8 18 Bc5. Flohr suspected Horowitz intended to diverge with 13 ... Bd6 so he varied first.

13 ... Ne5 14 Ne4 Nxd3

“Other moves are hardly better,” Flohr noted, adding that the d3-bishop would have been a dangerous attacking weapon. But 14 ... Nxe4 15 Bxe4 Rb8 (15 ... Bb7 16 Bxb7 costs a piece) 16 Bb2 Nxf3+ 17 Qxf3 Bb7 is much safer.

15 Nxf6+ gxf6 16 Qxd3 e5 17 Bb2 Be6?
(see diagram)

“Playing 17 Bb2 I almost didn’t allow the thought that Horowitz would reply with the mistaken 17 ... Be6” instead of 17 ... Qe7, he wrote.



After 17
... Be6

18 Bxe5! fxe5 19 Ng5 Kg7

Worse was 19 ... Rfc8 20 Qxh7+ Kf8
21 Nxe6+ fxe6 22 Rd7.

20 Qxh7+ Kf6 21 Ne4+ Ke7 22 Qh4+ f6
23 Rdcl

Winning back the piece and virtually
ending the game.

23 ... Rac8 24 Rxc5 Qb8 25 f4 Rxc5
26 Nxc5 Qb6 27 Nxe6 Qxe3+ 28 Kh1
Kxe6 29 fxe5 fxe5 30 Qg4+ Rf5
31 Qg6+ Rf6 32 Qe8+ Kf5 33 Rf1+ 1-0

The match ended in a rout, 15½-4½,
and the Kremlin was pleased. "Unofficially
we had passed on to us Stalin's words," Bot-
vinnik wrote: "Well done, boys."

The result was confirmed a year later in
a face-to-face match in Moscow between the
two teams with Max Euwe serving as arbiter.
The 1,500 tickets for seats at the Hall of
Columns were sold out in 20 minutes, Fine
wrote.

The Americans were stronger this time
and Arnold Denker was quoted as saying,
"Speaking honestly, we thought the result
would be between 11-9 in favor of the So-
viet team and 10½-9½ in our favor." The
Soviet players continued to play training
games as late as the night before the first
round:

C81 Ruy Lopez
Training game, Moscow, 1946
white Paul Keres,
black David Bronstein

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
5 0-0 Nxe4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 dxe5
Be6 9 Qe2

The rest of the world discovered the
Keres Variation, 9 Qe2, two years later when
Keres revealed it at the world championship
match-tournament.

9 ... Be7 10 c4?

But by then Keres had concluded that
10 Rd1, threatening 11 c4, was superior to
this sacrifice. The text is based on 10 ...
dxc4? 11 Rd1! and the pin created after
10 ... bxc4 11 Ba4.

10 ... bxc4 11 Ba4 Bd7 12 e6

This game remained a secret for some
time and Keres cited only one example of
the 10 c4 line, a 1954 Soviet game that
turned in Black's favor after 12 Nc3 Nc5, in
his celebrated analysis of the Ruy Lopez.

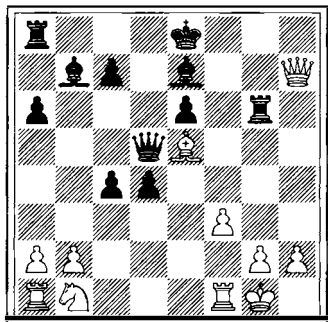
12 ... fxe6 13 Bxc6 Bxc6 14 Ne5 Bb7
15 Qh5+ g6 16 Nxg6 Nf6 17 Qh3 Rg8
18 Ne5 d4 19 f3 Qd5 20 Bf4 Nd7

Now 21 Nxd7 and 22 Nd2 should be
tried.

21 Qh5+ Rg6 22 Qxh7 Nxe5 23 Bxe5
(see diagram)

23 ... Rxc2+! 24 Kxc2 Qxe5 25 Qg6+
Kd7 26 Nd2 Qh8! 27 Kh1 Rg8 28 Qc2
Qh3 29 Rf2 Bd5

Black's material deficit is slight and he
threatens to break through at f3 with
...Bg5xd2, ...d3 or ...Bh4. For example,
30 Rg1 Rxc2 31 Kxc1 d3 and 32 ... Bc5.



After 23 Bxe5

30 Ne4 Bh4 31 Rff1 d3 32 Qd2 Rg4!
 33 Rf2 Bxf2 34 Qxf2 Qxf3+! 35 Qxf3
 Bxe4 36 Qxe4 Rxe4 37 Rd1 Re2 0–1

That same night Romanov and Mikhailov, the powerful First Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee, met the players at their Hotel Moskva headquarters. According to Botvinnik, Mikhailov virtually ordered the players to win by a bigger margin than the previous year. Some of his teammates were “dumbfounded, some pale with fear,” he wrote. Botvinnik said he replied that a win and a draw from each player, and a final score of 15–5 would be honorable — an attitude that clearly did not please the Komsomol leader. Botvinnik covered himself by giving his team an “imposing” pep talk, according to Bronstein. He said Botvinnik looked directly at him when he said, “I hope everyone understands the crucial nature of this match and no one plays the reckless King’s Gambit” — a Bronstein favorite.

Botvinnik turned out to be optimistic: After winning the first round 7–3, the Soviet team ran into grave difficulties in the second and managed only a 12½–7½ victory overall. Some of Botvinnik’s colleagues were surprised when he adjourned with Reshevsky. “I understand he plays well but he can’t consider everyone else idiots,” Simagin exclaimed. “There’s a dead draw on the board and he adjourns.” But Botvinnik won with study-like precision.

Nevertheless, the matches with the Americans were an international cultural

coup and confirmed the Kremlin wisdom of finally making contact with the West. Also in 1946, Vyacheslav Ragozin, who earned the Soviet grandmaster title by beating Igor Bondarevsky in a match, traveled with Georgy Lisitsyn to Helsinki and they took the top two places in an international tournament. Great attention was also paid to a Moscow–Prague “Match of Friendship” conducted in the Czech capital on March 2–13 and in Moscow, May 11–21 — and won by the Muscovites 51½–20½. In another radio match, in June 1946, the Soviets crushed the British 18–6, followed by an over-the-board match in London that ended 15–5.

E94 King’s Indian Defense
Great Britain–USSR Match,
Ninth Board, London, 1947
white Gerald Abrahams,
black David Bronstein

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
 5 d4 0–0 6 Be2 Nbd7 7 0–0 e5 8 Bg5 h6
 9 Be3 c6 10 h3 Re8 11 d5 c5 12 Qd2 Kh7
 13 g4

This stops ...Nh5, preparing ...Nf4 and ...f7–f5, but makes a major kingside commitment, in place of a b2–b4 plan.

13 ... Ng8 14 Kh2 Nf8 15 Bd3 Kh8
 16 Rg1 Nh7 17 Rg2 Bd7 18 Ne2 Qf6

Black sows some confusion before White can reorganize his forces with Ng3, Rh1, Kg1 and h3–h4–h5.

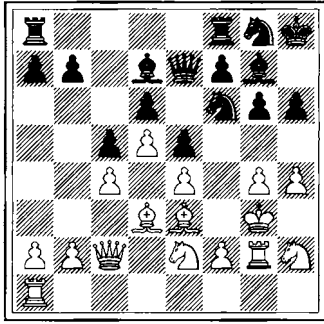
19 Kg3 Rf8 20 h4 Qe7 21 Qc2 Nhf6
 22 Nh2 (*see diagram*)

Black strikes first.

22 ... N×g4! 23 N×g4 f5 24 N×e5

The knight must be returned since 24 Nh2 f4+ 25 Bxf4 allows 25 ... Nf6 26 f3 Nh5+ 27 Kf2 exf4 and ...Q×h4+.

After 22 Nh2



24 ... dxe5! 25 f4 Nf6 26 Rh1

This leads to disaster but 26 fxe5 Qxe5+ 27 Bf4 Nh5+ was hardly better.

26 ... fxe4 27 Bxe4 Nxe4+ 28 Qxe4 exf4+ 29 Kf3 Qxe4+ 30 Kxe4 Rae8+ 31 Kd3 Bf5+ 32 Kd2 fxe3+ 0-1

These steps were seen by the West as a Soviet overture, presaging a Russian challenge for the world championship. But among the *vlasti*, the Soviet attitude was much more complex. Alexander Alekhine's title had remained on Botvinnik's mind since 1936. Two years later, after discussing a possible match with the champion at AVRO, he reported to Nikolai Bulganin and soon had the firm backing of the government. Vyacheslav Molotov later told him in a telegram: "If you decide to challenge chessplayer Alekhine to a match we wish you complete success. The rest can be easily guaranteed." Negotiations were conducted secretly and became generally known only in 1945.

There was reason to think an Alekhine-Botvinnik match was possible. Even during the Terror, Alekhine wrote Soviet authorities about reconciliation. Historian Isaak Linder obtained a copy of a September 1, 1936, letter to 64 in which Alekhine wrote of returning to the Soviet Union and expressed hopes that his "mistakes of the past" would not stop him. Among the mistakes was his "incorrect and tendentious interpretation of facts" in articles about Soviet

chess, Alekhine wrote. Stalin may have had a fondness for Alekhine. A year before Alekhine had written a congratulatory letter to the Chess Section on the 18th anniversary of the Revolution. Krylenko wrote a confidential memo to Stalin opposing its publication in *Izvestia*, arguing Alekhine was a "renegade and White Guard" and adding that "no amount of talent can save Alekhine from deserved contempt with which all in the USSR regard him." But Stalin overruled Krylenko and the Alekhine letter was printed.

Botvinnik versus Veinstein

The war interrupted the match plans and Botvinnik began pressing the issue again as the tide began to turn in favor of the Allies. But a reluctant Boris Veinstein stood in the way, as Botvinnik discovered over dinner at the home of the Chess Section head late in the war. "I told him that this match was impossible," Veinstein recalled, because Alekhine was a war criminal — not to the Soviet Union but to France. Alekhine had been an officer in the French army reserve before the surrender, then collaborated as a "cultural assistant" with Hans Frank, "one of the most bloodthirsty Hitlerite executioners," he said. Botvinnik shrugged this off as "immaterial."

Botvinnik and Veinstein (1907–1993) clearly did not like one another. Like Botvinnik, the tall, lean, former math student from Odessa was a man of many interests, including horse racing, music and the games of Emanuel Lasker, and he eventually defended his dissertation in economics. But the two men had gotten off to a bad start because of a trivial matter, a dispute over a 1929 game they played that was adjudicated by Veinstein's friend, Fyodor Duz-Khotimirsky.

There was another reason for Botvinnik to see Veinstein as "an evil genius." Veinstein had risen to a key position in the

NKVD. Lavrenti Beria, the secret police's boss, once told him "Veinstein! You are a good worker. But if you had spent about six years in the camps you would be doing even better!" Botvinnik, who had *sviazi* to high-ranking members of the Party, must have seen Veinstein as a well-connected member of the hoodlum elite that had humbled the Party during the Terror. Veinstein, in an interview shortly before his death, acknowledged he used his NKVD connections to verify that an Alekhine-Botvinnik match was impossible. He said Lt. Gen. Stepan Mamulov, a Beria aide, told him that if Alekhine came to the Soviet Union to play he would be arrested and turned over to the French government. Veinstein said Alekhine "naively" believed the British, who hoped to sponsor the championship match, would eliminate other problems, such as Western efforts to organize an international boycott, under FIDE auspices, of Alekhine.

Botvinnik remained in playing form through training games with Ragozin, most of which remained secret until after Botvinnik had retired in 1970. The following is a training game played in May, 1945:

D14 Slav Defense

Training Game, Moscow, 1945

white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Vyacheslav Ragozin

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 cxd5 cxd5
5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bf4 Bf5 7 e3 Qb6

"Ragozin always instinctively knew when I intended to adopt a new move and always strove to prevent this!" Botvinnik wrote in the mammoth, three-volume collection of his games. Botvinnik wanted to test 7 ... e6 8 Bb5, which he had prepared, but decided to save it. It turns out he did not use it until 1961 when it proved a useful weapon in the second Mikhail Tal match.

8 Bb5 Bg4 9 Qb3 Bxf3 10 gxf3 e6
11 Rc1 Rc8

Black has been consistent (stopping Ne5 at moves 9 and 10) and it is White's turn to show he has an edge. He decides to keep his king in the center and target b7.

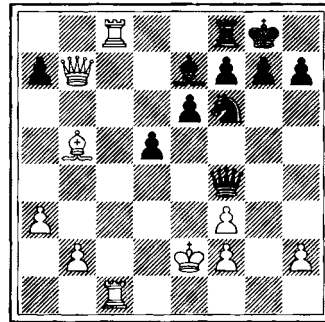
12 Na4! Qa5+ 13 Ke2 Bb4 14 Bd3! 0-0

If Black is going to sacrifice the b7-pawn, then 14 ... Nh5 was better.

15 a3 Be7 16 Qxb7! Qxa4 17 Bb5
Nxd4+!?

Black has no compensation after 17 ... Qb3 18 Bxc6.

18 exd4 Qxd4 19 Rxc8 Qxf4 20 Rhc1!



After 20 Rhc1

"All this was forced for both sides. Unfortunately for Black his bishop hangs," Botvinnik wrote. Ragozin's next move leads to a lost endgame but 20 ... Bd6 21 Rxf8+ Bxf8 22 Rc8, threatening Qb8, would lose faster.

20 ... Bd8 21 Qb8 Nh5 22 Qxf4 Nxf4+
23 Kf1 Bb6 24 b4! d4 25 a4 Nd5
26 Rxf8+ Kxf8 27 Rc8+ Ke7 28 a5

Now 28 ... Bd8 29 Ra8 is convincing.

28 ... Bc7 29 Bc6 Nxb4 30 Rxc7+ Kd6
31 Rd7+ Kxc6 32 Rxa7 Kb5 33 Rxf7
Kxa5 34 Rg7 Nd5 35 Ke2

Eliminating the last hope of 35 Rxh7 Kb4 36 Ke2 Kc3.

35 ... Nf4+ 36 Kd2 Kb4 37 R×h7 Kc4
38 h4 Kd5 39 h5 Ke5 40 Rh8 1–0

Veinstein said the emotional issue came up at a Chess Section meeting at the very end of war, attended by several key figures in postwar chess, including Kotov, Vasily Smyslov, Bronstein, and Ragozin. His account in *Shakhmatny Vestnik* in 1993 differs sharply from Botvinnik's, who indicated the meeting was called to decide on whether Veinstein should be removed from the Chess Section. According to Veinstein, when Botvinnik raised the match issue, Veinstein replied, "Mikhail Moiseyevich, I am a non-Party man and you are a Communist, and we both are Jews. But I don't understand how you can shake a hand that is up to its elbow in the blood of Communists and Jews!"

Botvinnik coolly replied that if the match did not take place, Euwe would be named champion by FIDE in place of a boycotted Alekhine. Then, he said, Euwe would be challenged by Sammy Reshevsky and "the title of world champion would sail away from us to America." Veinstein countered that a better way of dealing with the world championship was a match-tournament, composed of the seven surviving AVRO players, minus Alekhine, plus Smyslov. Veinstein also raised the stakes by saying that if the match was approved by the Chess Section "it will mean that I am not its chairman" and he would resign. With him abstaining, the committee voted 5–4 in an open ballot against the match. Kotov and even Botvinnik's alter ego Ragozin were in the majority, he wrote.

Then, according to Veinstein, someone present, perhaps Lev Abramov, a rising figure in the chess bureaucracy, turned to Kotov and said, "But Sasha, you know there was a meeting of the Party bureau and we decided the match would take place.' Kotov muttered, 'I didn't know about this.... It's necessary to re-vote.'" "We re-voted and this time all the members of the Party raised

their hands 'as necessary,'" and the proposed match went to a higher level, Veinstein recalled. A formal challenge to Alekhine was issued February 4. The match was to be held in late 1946 or early 1947, with the Soviets putting up the prize money.

Viktor Malkin, a Botvinnik confidant, wrote that Botvinnik sealed Veinstein's ouster with the help of Molotov. This added fuel to the suspicion that Soviet chess was becoming part of an overall Party versus secret police competition in Stalin's final days.

Post-Alekhine

Alekhine's sudden death on March 26, 1946, destroyed Botvinnik's plans and created a volatile uncertainty. There had never been a vacant world championship since Wilhelm Steinitz formalized the title in 1886. A group of Americans offered to sponsor a six-player match-tournament, with Botvinnik and two other Soviet players, for the championship in Los Angeles. Nevertheless, much of the chess world thought the best chance of clarifying the situation lay in the first major postwar tournament, scheduled for August-September, 1946, in Groningen, the Netherlands. But in Soviet eyes Groningen was a device to promote Euwe's chances for being named champion by acclamation.

Five Soviet players were sent to the Dutch tournament with the unstated mission of stopping Euwe. Botvinnik took the lead and held it until the 14th round, then lost to Kotov and Abraham Yanofsky of Canada. Here are Botvinnik's comments on the first loss:

E20 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Groningen International, 1946
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Alexander Kotov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3 B×c3+
5 b×c3 d5

Hardly the strongest but Black apparently had prepared for the system 4 e3 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3. Therefore White decides on an unproven continuation.

6 cxd5 exd5 7 Bg5

In the following years it was asserted that in this variation White's bishop is located best on c1! Now Black equalizes easily.

7 ... c5 8 f3

Avoiding 8 e3 Qa5 followed by ...Ne4. (To which Taimanov added: 9 Ne2 Ne4 10 Bf4 cxd4 11 exd4 0–0.)

8 ...h6 9 Bxf6

Or 9 Bh4 Qa5 10 Qd2 Nbd7 11 e3 b6 and ...Ba6 gives White no advantage.

9 ... Qxf6 10 e3 0–0 11 Ne2 Re8 12 Kf2

Preparing an unsuccessful transfer of the knight to f4. On 12 Qd2 Black could reply 12 ... Nd7. (Then 13 Nf4?? Qxf4.)

12 ... Qe7 13 Qd2 Nd7 14 Nf4

At this moment in the tournament struggle I had 1½ points of 13 and already lost the feeling of danger. After this move neither the position of the knight nor the e3-pawn is guaranteed. Correct was 14 g3 with the possible transfer of the knight to f1. White's position would have been sufficiently solid.

14 ... Nf6 15 Bd3 Bd7 16 h3

White could still have strengthened the knight by 16 h4! and h4–h5. But he fancied that he had to prepare g2–g4–g5. The immediate 16 g4 Bxg4 17 fxg4 Nxg4+ was, of course, dangerous.

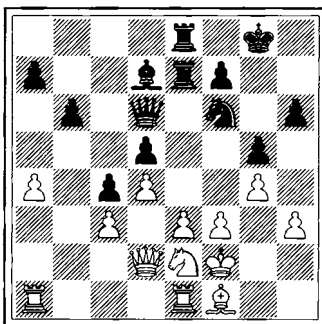
16 ... Qd6 17 Rhb1

White can not find the correct plan! Now 17 h4 was necessary. The rook should temporarily remain on h1 to protect h2.

17 ... b6 18 Bf1 Re7 19 a4 Rae8 20 Rel c4!

The decisive move which was fully unexpected by White. The retreat of the knight to d3 is excluded and an unavoidable ...g5 is threatened.

21 g4 g5! 22 Ne2



After 22 Ne2

There's no salvation in 22 Ng2 Qh2 either.

22 ... Rxe3!

Exactly calculated. After 23 Qxe3 Qh2+ 24 Bg2 Rxe3 25 Kxe3 Qxg2 26 Rh1 Ne4! Black remains with a material edge.

23 Ng3

Or 23 Ng1 Ne4+! 24 fxg4 Qg3 mate.

23 ... Qxg3+! 24 Kxg3 Ne4+ 0–1

Going into the final round Botvinnik led by a half point with a difficult game left against Miguel Najdorf. Euwe faced Kotov, who was pressured by members of the Soviet delegation to avoid risk and play for a draw that would guarantee Botvinnik at least

a tie for first. “No, I want to beat Max Euwe,” he insisted — and did. As a result, Botvinnik’s loss to Najdorf had no effect and Euwe had to be content with second place. From the Soviet perspective, the bottom line was clear: Groningen denied Euwe the opportunity to claim superiority over Botvinnik.

The Keres Mystery

One conspicuous absence at Groningen was Paul Keres, who had been personally invited but seemed to have disappeared from chess. The mystery of Keres takes on an added element because of his four losses to Botvinnik in the World Championship match-tournament of 1948 and persistent speculation that he had been forced to help Botvinnik to the title. Here is what is known:

Keres was in Estonia when it was overrun by German troops in the opening weeks of the war. He played in tournaments organized under the authority of the Nazis in Munich, Prague, Poznań and Salzburg. In late 1944 he returned from Sweden to liberated Tallin and won a tournament of Baltic players with a score of 10 wins and one draw in Riga, followed by the Estonian (open) Championship, which had attracted Kotov, Alexander Tolush, Flohr and Andor Liliental. But he played in only minor events before the 1946 matches with the United States and Britain and no major tournament until 1947.

Veinstein recalled shortly before his death that he had arrived in Estonia in September, 1944, to examine military construction and met immediately with the Estonia NKVD chief, who asked him to decide whether Keres could play in the next Soviet Championship. Veinstein refused to make a decision but said it was inappropriate for players living in territory occupied by the enemy during the war to play in the first postwar Championship. (Huge numbers of Soviet citizens were uprooted after the war and

transferred to remote areas, apparently due to xenophobia over their contact with the Nazis.)

Historian Valter Heuer wrote that Keres was interrogated by the NKVD in September, 1944. There have been reports that an arrest order for Keres and other leading Estonians had been issued but Veinstein said he would have known it if so — and there was not. Veinstein indicated that, in his view, Keres deserved a term in the *gulag*. Keres “hobnobbed with Alekhine” during the war and such collaboration with the enemy was normally punishable by 25 years, he said. Also, an August 31, 1946, memo to the Central Committee raised questions about whether Keres should be included in any world championship because of “seriously compromising material from the security organs about his collaboration with Germans in the period of German occupation of Estonia and his ties with active participants of the bourgeois-nationalist underground.” But a note to the memo said Nikolai Karotamm, the First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party Central Committee, would vouch for Keres.

During the winter of 1944–45 Keres wrote to the Sports Committee but never got a reply, Heuer said. He also wrote “Comrade V.M. Molotov, Moscow, Kremlin” on April 7, 1945, seeking help in becoming “a full-fledged member of the Soviet chess family again.” Veinstein found that effort ludicrously futile because of the Molotov-Botvinnik connection. More important, according to Heuer, was the role of Karotamm, who became Keres’ “faithful admirer and defender” after a three-hour talk requested by Keres. In any event, Heuer, who investigated the Keres question for years, uncovered no proof that he was forced to lose to Botvinnik in 1948. (And Korchnoi, who was more than critical of Botvinnik, has said that the Soviet Champion was powerful enough to have Keres executed — but he did not “touch Keres with a single finger.”)

Keres was deeply disappointed when he was not allowed to go to Groningen. Heuer recalled how Keres learned the news from a TASS dispatch and, without a word, scribbled the Estonian word for “devil” over and over on it. Had he played, he would have been a favorite — and a first place by Keres might have played a decisive role in FIDE’s decision a year later. Certainly Keres’s skill showed no hint of decline in the immediate postwar years and he won the Georgia (open) Championship of 1946 by allowing only two draws in 19 games — one of them to candidate master Tigran Petrosian.

B00 Nimzovich Defense
Georgian (open) Championship, 1946
white Paul Keres,
black Vladas Mikenas

1 d4 Nc6 2 e4 e5 3 dxe5 Nxe5 4 Nc3
 Bc5 5 f4 Ng6 6 Nf3 d6 7 Bc4 Be6 8 Qe2
 Bxc4 9 Qxc4 Qd7 10 f5!

This ensures a space edge for White.

10 ... N6e7 11 Bg5 f6 12 Bf4 Nc6
 13 0–0–0 0–0–0 14 g4 g5 15 Bg3! h5
 16 h3 Qh7 17 Rh2! Be3+ 18 Kb1 h4

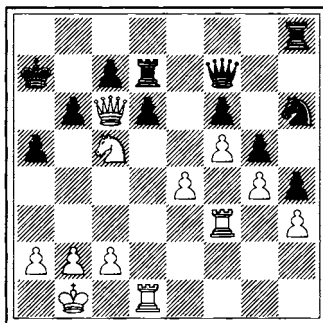
This and his next move leaves Black with no kingside play or queenside defense, but White was about to take over with Nd5.

19 Bf2 Bxf2 20 Rxf2 Rd7 21 Nd4 Nxd4
 22 Qxd4 b6

Or 22 ... Kb8 23 Nb5 and 22 ... a6?
 23 Qa7.

23 Nd5 Qf7 24 Qa4 Kb7 25 Rf3 Nh6
 26 Nb4 a5 27 Qc6+ Kb8 28 Na6+ Ka7
 29 Nc5! 1–0 (*see diagram*)

Black is mated after 29 ... bxc5
 30 Ra3.



After 29
 ... Resigns

If there were any secret terms to Keres’ eventual return to the good graces of Sports Committee it was his relinquishing of any right to challenge Alekhine on the basis of AVRO 1938. Keres may also have agreed to help Botvinnik: The *Chess Herald* in 1994 printed Sports Committee documents found by Yuri Shaburov in the national archives, which detailed “Preparations for the 1946 World Championship.” According to one proposed schedule, Botvinnik was to play a confidential training match with Keres in May and June, 1946, before his match with Alekhine began August 12. This was regarded by the committee as not leaving Botvinnik enough time, so a second schedule was suggested in which Botvinnik played in a Moscow International in May, then the matches with British and U.S. teams, followed by a Keres match in the fall and the Alekhine match starting February 3, 1947.

Caviar and Chocolate

Sports Committee documents also showed that Botvinnik’s supporters were asking for a considerable budget, including accommodations for Botvinnik and Ragozin at the Sosny resort for three weeks, \$200 in foreign currency to buy chess materials, and the use of a chauffeured car “in good condition.” Botvinnik’s “personal needs” included a larger apartment, an allowance, authorized leave from his engineering work and for his wife from the Bolshoi,

accommodation for his mother in the Kremlin Hospital, and increased food rations including 2 kilograms of butter, 1.5 kg of caviar, 5 kg of fruit and 2 kg of chocolate. For the trip to a Western match site Botvinnik needed several items of clothing including a fur coat for his wife and four summer shirts for himself.

But once Alekhine was dead, there was no longer a reason for these items — or for a Keres–Botvinnik match. The Soviets needed Keres, instead, to fill out a world championship match-tournament. In any event, Keres was allowed to play in stronger events in 1947, and won two of them, the 15th Soviet Championship and a tournament at Pärnu in honor of the All-Union Day of Athletes. Heuer wrote that some unidentified participants in the Championship objected to the presence of a fascist sympathizer but their protests were quashed by Party officials.

D38 Queen's Gambit Declined
15th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1947
white Vladimir Makogonov,
black Paul Keres

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 d5 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 Bb4
 5 Qa4+ Nc6 6 a3

This long-discarded line has been replaced by more promising ideas such as 6 Bg5 or 6 cxd5.

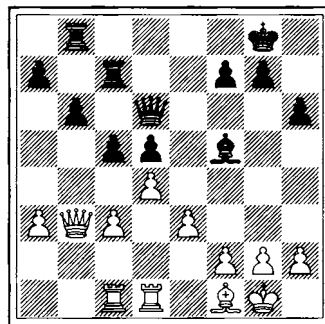
6 ... Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 Bd7 8 cxd5 exd5
 9 Bg5 h6 10 Bxf6 Qxf6 11 Qb3 Qd6
 12 e3 Bf5!

This way of stopping Bd3 is based on 13 Qxb7 Rb8 14 Qa6 0–0 15 Be2 Rb2 16 0–0 Rfb8 with excellent pressure for a pawn. White is slipping into a bad position and he should liquidate the center with 13 c4.

13 Be2? 0–0 14 0–0 b6 15 Nd2 Na5
 16 Qa2 c5 17 Nb3?

The inevitability of the advance of Black's queenside majority makes e3–e4 a priority for White. After the game 17 Bf3 followed by putting rooks at d1 and e1 was recommended.

17 ... Nxb3 18 Qxb3 Rac8 19 Racl Rc7
 20 Rfd1 Rfc8 21 Ba6 Rb8 22 Bf1



After 22 Bf1

22 ... c4! 23 Qb2 b5 24 Rel a5 25 f3 Re7
 26 Ral g5! 27 e4

If Black had created a fortress with ...Bg6 and ...f7–f5, there would have been no stopping the creation of a passed and winning queenside pawn.

27 ... dxe4 28 a4! b4!

Avoiding 28 ... exf3 29 Rxe7 Qxe7
 30 axb5 with counterplay.

29 fxe4 Rxe4 30 Rxe4 Bxe4 31 Bxc4
 Rc8 32 Qe2 Bg6 33 Bd3 Bxd3 34 Qxd3
 Rxc3 35 Qe4 b3 36 Rf1 Qe6! 37 Qxe6
 fxe6 38 Rb1 Kf7 39 Kf2 Rc2+ 40 Kf3
 b2 41 h3 Ke7 42 g4 Kd6 43 Ke4 Rh2!

Zugzwang decides (44 K-moves Rxb3+).

44 d5 exd5+ 45 Kd4 Rg2! 46 Kc3 Kc5
 47 Rf1 d4+ 48 Kb3 Rf2 49 Rel d3
 50 Ka2 Kc4 51 Re8 d2 0–1

But Botvinnik won the biggest event of the year, a Tchigorin Memorial with 16

Fifteenth Soviet Championship, Leningrad, February 2–March 8, 1947

	K	B	B	S	T	B	L	F	R	K	L	M	K	Uf	Ud	Al	Ar	G	D	K	<i>Score</i>
1. Keres	X	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	0	14–5
2. Boleslavsky	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	13–6
3–4. Bondarevsky	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	0	12–7
3–4. Smyslov	0	½	½	X	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	½	½	½	12–7
5. Tolush	0	0	½	0	X	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	11½–7½
6. Bronstein	½	½	½	½	½	X	0	½	½	0	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	11–8
7–8. Liliental	½	½	½	0	0	1	X	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	10½–8½
7–8. Flohr	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	0	0	½	1	0	1	1	1	10½–8½
9. Ragozin	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	X	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	10–9
10–12. Kasparyan	0	½	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	X	1	½	0	1	1	½	1	0	1	1	9–10
10–12. Levenfish	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	0	9–10
10–12. Makogonov	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	0	1	½	1	½	1	9–10
13–15. Kan	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	X	0	½	0	1	½	0	½	8–11
13–15. Ufimtsev	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	1	0	0	½	½	1	X	½	0	½	½	½	1	8–11
13–15. Udovich	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	1	½	½	X	0	0	½	½	1	8–11
16. Alartortsev	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	0	1	1	1	X	1	½	0	½	7½–11½
17–18. Aronin	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	X	½	0	1	7–12
17–18. Goldenov	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	1	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	0	7–12
19–20. Dubinin	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	0	X	½	6½–12½
19–20. Klaman	1	0	1	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	0	0	½	0	1	½	X	6½–12½

non-Western players, held at Moscow's Central Home of the Soviet Army.

Malkin believed the secret to Botvinnik's success with Keres dated from this tournament and Botvinnik's appreciation of psychology. "He understood earlier than others that a chess game doesn't end when the clocks are stopped," Malkin wrote.

A95 Dutch Defense
Tchigorin Memorial, Moscow, 1947
white Paul Keres,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 d4 e6 2 Nf3 f5 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 Be7
5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d5 7 Nc3 c6

A popular plan before the war was 8 Bf4 Qe8 9 c5 seeking a queenside bind. Kan-Konstantinopolsky, Leningrad 1936, went 9 ... Ne4 10 Qc2 Nd7 11 Ne5 Bf6 and Black obtained a fine game after 12 Nxe4 fxe4 13 Rad1 Nxe5 14 dxe5 g5! 15 Be3 Bxe5 16 Bxg5 Qg6 17 Be3 Bg7 18 Qb3 e5.

Black won a nice game after 19 f3 exf3 20 exf3 Rf7 21 Qa3 Be6 22 Rf2 a6 23 Qa4 Raf8 24 Bc1 d4 25 Rdf1 Bd5 26 b4 h5 27 Qd1 h4 28 g4 Bc4 29 Re1 Bd5 30 Ref1 Bc4 31 Re1 e4!! 32 Rxe4 Qxe4! 33 fxe4 Rxf2 34 e5 Bxe5 35 Qe1 h3! 36 Qxf2 Bxh2+! 37 Kxh2 Rxf2 38 Kxh3 d3 0-1.

8 Rb1 Kh8 9 cxd5

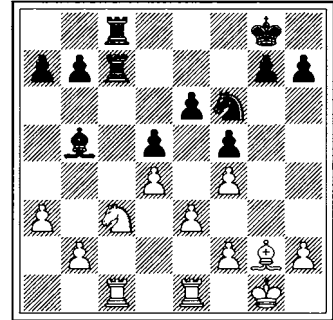
Inconsistent with his last move but if White had continued with the idea of b2-b4-b5 he would have allowed Black to play 9 b4 dxc4! 10 Ne5 Nd5.

9 ... cxd5! 10 Bf4 Nc6 11 Ne5 Bd7
12 Rc1 Rc8 13 Qd3 Nh5 14 Bd2 Bd6
15 Nxc6 Bxc6

Black has equalized piece play and now

demonstrates that the "bad" c6-bishop is a minor liability, even in an endgame.

16 Qf3 Qe8 17 Qd3 Nf6 18 a3 Rc7
19 Bg5 Ng4 20 Qd2 Nf6 21 Bf4 Qd7
22 Bxd6 Qxd6 23 Qf4 Qxf4! 24 gxf4
Rfc8 25 e3? Bb5! 26 Rfe1 Kg8



After 26
 ... Kg8

Black's rooks and e4 outpost for the knight more than compensate for any weak squares (27 Bf1 Bxf1 28 Kxf1 Ne4 29 Na2 Rc2!). White has to be careful.

27 f3 Bc4 28 Bf1 Ne8 29 Bxc4

White's pawns turn out to be the weaker ones after 29 e4 Nf6!.

29 ... Rxc4 30 Kf2 Nd6 31 Ke2 b5!
32 Kd3 b4 33 Na2

Botvinnik indicated White was losing even after 33 Ne2 bxa3 34 bxa3 Rxc1 35 Nxc1 Rb8!.

33 ... bxa3 34 bxa3 Ra4 35 Rxc8+ Nxc8
36 Nc3 Rxa3 37 Kc2 Nd6 38 Rb1 Kf7
39 Rb4 Ra1 40 Kd3 Ra3 41 Kc2 Ra1
42 Kd3 Re1!

Would Botvinnik have become world champion in the post-adjournment era? When faster time controls sharply reduced the chances for home analysis after 1980, a key weapon of Botvinnik's was virtually retired.

Tchigorin Memorial, Moscow, November 25–December 23, 1947

	B	R	B	S	Ko	Ke	N	P	T	G	B	Kh	Ko	P	S	T	<i>Score</i>
1. Botvinnik	X	1	½	½	½	1	1	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	11–4
2. Ragozin	0	X	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	10½–4½
3–4. Boleslavsky	½	1	X	½	½	0	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	10–5
3–4. Smyslov	½	½	½	X	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	10–5
5. Kotov	½	½	½	1	X	0	1	½	½	1	0	½	½	1	1	1	9½–5½
6–7. Keres	0	0	1	½	1	X	0	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	9–6
6–7. Novotelnov	0	½	½	½	0	1	X	½	0	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	9–6
8. Pachman	1	½	½	0	½	½	½	X	0	1	½	1	0	½	1	1	8½–6½
9. Trifunović	½	0	0	½	½	½	1	1	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	8–7
10. Gligorić	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	1	7½–7½
11. Bondarevsky	½	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	½	X	0	½	1	0	1	6½–8½
12. Kholmov	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	½	0	1	X	½	1	½	1	5½–9½
13. Kottnauer	0	½	½	0	½	0	0	1	½	0	½	½	X	0	½	½	5–10
14–15. Plater	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	1	X	½	½	4–11
14–15. Sokolsky	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	½	½	X	½	4–11
16. Tsvetkov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	2–13

Here he found the superior alternative to 42 ... Rh1 43 Ra4 R×h2 44 R×a7+ Kf6 45 Ra6! or 42 ... Rf1 43 Ra4 Nc8 44 Nb5 R×f3 45 Ra6.

43 Ra4 Nc4 44 R×a7+ Kg6 45 e4 Re3+ 46 Kc2 R×f3 47 e×f5+ K×f5 48 R×g7 Rf2+ 49 Kb3 Rb2+ 50 Ka4 R×h2 51 Rf7+ Kg6 52 Rf8 Nd6

Black's two-pawn edge by move 60 needs only minor care to convert to victory.

53 Nb5 Nf5! 54 Nc7 Re2 55 Ne8 N×d4 56 Rf6+ Kh5 57 Rf7 Nf5 58 R×h7+ Kg4 59 Rd7 K×f4 60 Nc7 Ke5 61 Kb4 Rc2 62 Kb3 Nd4+ 63 Kb4 Rc4+ 64 Ka5 Nf5 65 Kb6 d4

Black's only concern was a knight sacrifice for the two pawns. Keres plays on until a second adjournment:

66 Na6 Nd6 67 Nc5 Kd5 68 Nd3 e5 69 Rh7 Rc6+ 70 Ka5 Nc4+ 71 Kb5 Rb6+ 72 Ka4 Nb2+ 73 Ka5 Nc4+ 74 Ka4 Rb8 75 Nb4+ Ke6 76 Nc6 Nb2+ 77 Ka3 Nc4+ 78 Ka4 Rb1 79 Rh6+ Kf5 80 Nb4 (sealed) 0-1

By beating Keres with Black, Botvinnik broke his spirit, Malkin concluded. Botvinnik indicated he agreed when he wrote, "This game had not only sporting but also psychological significance." Lev Polugayevsky, who was 12 when this game was played, concluded that Keres was psychologically scarred for life by another loss, against Botvinnik's prepared Nimzo-Indian Defense at the 1941 Absolute Championship. This is what inspired Polugayevsky to become obsessed with opening preparations. Heuer also concluded that after the 1941 game, Keres had a "Botvinnik complex."

Botvinnik's other wins at the Tchigorin Memorial were not as impressive. One such was this against the new RSFSR champion:

D74 Grünfeld Defense
Tchigorin Memorial, Moscow, 1947
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Nikolai Novotelnov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nf3 Bg7 4 g3 0-0 5 Bg2 d5 6 c×d5 N×d5 7 0-0 c5 8 e4 Nb6

Botvinnik and Abramov, in the section of the Yugoslav *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* that covers these lines, said that Black should pressure the center with 8 ... Nf6.

9 d5 e6 10 Bg5 f6 11 Be3 Na6 12 Nc3 Nc4

"A correct plan," Botvinnik wrote in his three-volume game collection, explaining that Black should avoid ...e×d5 and play instead ...e5 and ...Nd6 in preparation for ...f5.

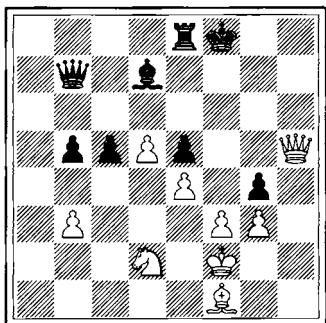
13 Bc1 e5! 14 Nb5! Bd7 15 a4 Qb6 16 b3 Na5 17 Re1 Nb4 18 Na3 a6 19 Be3? Qd6 20 Nd2 b5 21 Bf1

Both players miss some sharper ideas (20 ... f5! by Black and 21 a×b5 a×b5 22 Qe2! by White) and now Black begins kingside operations.

21 ... f5! 22 f3 f4 23 Bf2 f×g3 24 h×g3 Bh6! 25 Be3 B×e3+ 26 R×e3 Qb6 27 Kf2 Nb7 28 Nc2 N×c2 29 Q×c2 g5 30 Qc3 Qf6 31 a×b5 a×b5 32 R×a8 R×a8 33 Re1 h5? 34 Ra1 Re8 35 Ra7 Qb6 36 R×b7!

A strong sacrifice which exposes Black's kingside weakness and gives Botvinnik an opportunity to study the situation further after adjourning at move 40.

36 ... Q×b7 37 Qe3! g4! 38 Qg5+ Kf8 39 Qf6+ Kg8 40 Qg6+ Kf8 41 Qf6+ Kg8 42 Qg6+ Kf8 43 Q×h5



After 43
Qxh5

In home analysis Botvinnik concluded that now 43 ... Qa7 44 Bxb5! c4+ 45 Ke2 would win (45 ... Bxb5 46 Qh8+ and 47 Qh7+) and 43 ... c4! 44 Qh6+ Kf7 45 bxc4 Qa7+ 46 Kg2 bxc4 offered only “problematic” chances for a draw.

43 ... Ra8 44 Qh8+ Kf7 45 Qh7+ Kf8
46 Qh8+ Kf7 47 Qh7+ Kf8 48 Bxb5?

“This ‘brilliant’ move, as is evident from the following, leads only to a draw,” Botvinnik wrote, adding that there were good winning chances in 48 Qh6+ Kf7 49 fxg4! Ra2 50 g5!! Rxd2+ 51 Ke3 and 52 g6+ or 50 ... Qa6 51 Qxa6 Rxa6 52 Nf3.

48 ... Qxb5! 49 Qh8+ Kf7 50 Qxa8
Qd3 51 Qa5 Bb5?

Black played this instantly, in the mistaken attempt to exploit White’s time trouble. He could have drawn easily with 51 ... Qd4+! 52 Ke2 gxh3+ 53 Kxf3 Qd3+ 54 Kf2 Bg4!.

52 Qc7+! Ke8

Or 52 ... Kf8 53 Qxc5+ and Qe3, or 52 ... Kg8 53 Qc8+ Kh7 54 Qf5+ and wins.

53 Qxe5+ Kd7 54 Qf5+ Ke8 55 Qh5+
1–0

Despite his nebulous situation, Keres was present at the extraordinary meeting at the VOKS office in Moscow after the 1946 United States–USSR match at which Botvinnik, Euwe, Reshevsky and Smyslov tried to work out an agreement for a match-tournament. (Stalin himself signed the “strictly secret” order authorizing Sports Committee to invite Euwe to Moscow.) After considerable back-and-forth, the players agreed to split the tournament between Moscow and The Hague. But Romanov, who also attended, said he could not commit his government to the arrangement and proposed to let it remain an unsigned “gentlemen’s agreement” until approval came through. Botvinnik said he waited for months for approval, then called Romanov in December 1946 and was told “we have to repudiate the agreement” because his superiors wanted the entire match in Moscow.

Botvinnik claimed he then decided to give up chess in disgust. He did refuse to play in the 17th Soviet Championship but by the spring Ragozin told him there had been another policy shift among the *vlasti*: the gentlemen’s agreement was now acceptable. An order from Stalin on March 19, 1947, authorized a three-man delegation to visit the Netherlands to arrange the match-tournament and bring the USSR into the FIDE family of federations. But there was one final bit of intrigue.

World Champion for a Day

On the eve of Moscow 1925, the Soviets were invited to join FIDE but refused because, as Rokhlin put it, the Chess Section “stood quite firmly on the platform of class warfare” and could not be part of a politically neutral organization. That was to change at the 1947 FIDE Congress at The Hague. But even at the last moment, according to Soviet accounts, the Dutch were pushing Euwe’s claim. The Soviet delegation

of Dmitry Postnikov, a top Party official, Ragozin and M.M. Udovich headed for the Netherlands with their proposal for a six-player world championship match-tournament — and an offer of \$11,100 to finance it.

But their flight from Berlin was delayed by the political turmoil over the divided Germany. After many adventures, the Soviets reached The Hague after the Dutch proposal to name Euwe champion had already been accepted. But Ragozin, “an excellent diplomat” according to Abramov, gave a long speech describing the cultural mission of chess, of how the game brings the peoples of the world together — and of the virtues of a unifying match-tournament.

When objections to the cost were raised, Postnikov replied “We will give the money.” The Dutch, who had earlier offered to finance an Euwe-Reshevsky match, agreed instead to pay for the first two rounds of the match-tournament, split between The Hague and Moscow.

In later years Euwe liked to joke about the rapid turn of events. When he learned in 1972 that Salo Flohr was writing an article on the history of the world championship, Euwe told him: “Don’t forget I was world champion twice — from 1935 to 1937, and for one day in 1947.”

Reuben Fine’s refusal of his invitation reduced the field of the match-tournament to five players: Botvinnik, Euwe, Reshevsky, Keres, and Smyslov, whose entry was criticized in the West as being a reach. Prizes ranged from \$1,000 to \$5,000 with traveling expenses and a \$250 honorarium (although Reshevsky demanded and apparently got \$2,000).

Botvinnik later claimed that Keres was regarded by the Sports Committee as the favorite. But the Estonian got off to a middling start while Botvinnik seized a lead he held throughout. The Russian allowed only one draw, to Smyslov, in the first cycle of play and led Reshevsky by a point and Keres by a point and a half. Botvinnik was the

only player to do better than 50 percent in the second cycle before the tournament left The Hague.

Botvinnik indicated how seriously the Kremlin took the championship when he described an incident that occurred shortly after arriving home in Moscow. He was ordered to a meeting at the Party Central Committee where he met the new Sports Committee chairman, Lt. Gen. Arkady Apollonov. They were called into the office of Andrei Zhdanov, who was waiting with former defense minister Kliment Voroshilov. Zhdanov was the powerful Leningrad Party leader who succeeded Kirov and was widely regarded as Stalin’s successor. It was to him that Romanov and other officials had sent reports on the world championship problems in 1946. Zhdanov got to the point quickly, asking if Reshevsky would win the title. “Reshevsky may become world champion,” Botvinnik replied. Then after a theatrical pause he added, “But this would indicate that nowadays there are no strong players in the world.” The tension relaxed as Botvinnik enumerated Reshevsky’s faults.

In his diary, Botvinnik had described Reshevsky’s strength as calculation, his willingness “to play any position at any moment” and his skill in endgames with pieces. But he also noted his oversights in time trouble and “a relatively weak positional feeling.” It was important to convince Zhdanov because he was also the Party Central Committee official responsible for propaganda and culture — and this included chess. He wished Botvinnik success and the meeting was over.

But Botvinnik suffered a surprise loss — with White against Reshevsky — a few days later, and shook hands with him after resigning at move 42. The next day, April 19, he was summoned to Sports Committee headquarters by Apollonov, and asked “Mikhail Moiseyevich, how can you, a Communist, congratulate an American on winning a game with a Soviet player? And in a time

when the battle is being conducted against kowtowing to the West.” Botvinnik felt protected enough to reply sharply: “You invited me for this, Arkady Nikolayevich? Excuse me, but I have to prepare for my next game.” With that he left — and phoned one of the Central Committee secretaries he knew to make sure this did not happen again.

On the day after that came this game:

C08 French Defense
World Championship
Match-Tournament, Moscow, 1948
white Paul Keres,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 Nd2 c5 4 exd5 exd5
 5 Ngf3 a6

This was virtually a novelty at the time although Botvinnik labeled it “doubtful.” Keres had won a celebrated game against Capablanca at AVRO after 5 ... Nc6 6 Bb5 (by transposition). Botvinnik had prepared his own answer, 6 ... cxd4 7 0–0 Bd6 8 Nb3 Nge7 9 Nbxd4 h6 which he used in a 1941 training game with Ragozin.

That game went 10 Be3 0–0 11 Qd2 Bg4 12 Be2 Rc8 13 Rad1 Bb8 14 h3 Bh5 15 Nxc6? bxc6 16 g4? Bg6 17 Ba6 and Black sprang the trap with 17 ... Qd6! 18 Rfe1 Be4 19 Qe2 Ng6 20 Kf1 (or 20 Bxc8 Nh4 and wins) Rce8 21 Ng1 f5 22 gxf5 Nh4 23 Qg4 Nxf5 24 f3 and White resigned before Black could play 24 ... Bxf3 25 Nxf3 Nxe3+.

6 dxc5 Bxc5 7 Nb3 Ba7 8 Bg5

Conspiracy theorists have suggested that the “real” Keres was not allowed to emerge until the end of the tournament, when he played 3 Nc3 against Botvinnik’s French and won. Here he acts a bit too aggressively and has to defend next move against the threat of 9 ... Bxf2+. More promising is 8 Bd3.

8 ... Nf6 9 Nfd4 0–0 10 Be2 Qd6
 11 0–0 Ne4 12 Be3 Nc6 13 Nxc6?

Did Keres simplify here in the mistaken belief he could meet 13 ... Bxe3 with 14 Qxd5 (missing 14 ... Nxf2! 15 Rxf2? Qxc6)? Botvinnik easily parries the attack on h7 he drums up.

13 ... Bxe3 14 fxe3 bxc6 15 Bd3 Nf6
 16 Qel Ng4! 17 Qh4 f5 18 Rf4 Ne5

Black meets the threat of R×g4 and avoids 18 ... Nxe3 19 Rel.

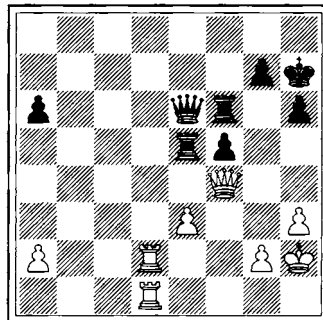
19 Qg3 Ra7 20 Raf1 Raf7 21 Nd4 Nxd3
 22 cxd3 c5 23 Nf3 Qb6 24 Rh4 h6
 25 Ne5

“I was afraid of 25 Qe5!,” wrote Botvinnik, who was entering time pressure.

25 ... Rf6 26 d4 cxd4 27 Rxd4 Qxb2
 28 Rxd5 Be6 29 Rd4 Kh7 30 Nd7

White admits the attack is dead and that 30 h4 Qxa2 31 Rcl Qa5 offered less chance of a draw.

30 ... Bxd7 31 Rxd7 Rg6 32 Qf2 Qe5
 33 Rd4 Rb8 34 Qf4 Qe6! 35 Rd2 Rb5
 36 h3 Re5 37 Kh2 Rf6 38 Rfd1



After 38 Rfd1

Botvinnik suggested White’s efforts to make up for Botvinnik’s tournament lead explain his carelessness here: overlooking Black’s next move and perhaps hoping for 38 ... Rxe3 39 Rd6.

**World Championship Tournament, The Hague–Moscow,
March 2–May 18, 1948**

	B	S	K	R	E	<i>Score</i>
1. Botvinnik	X X X X X	½ ½ 1 ½ ½	1 1 1 1 0	1 ½ 0 1 1	1 ½ 1 ½ ½	14–6
2. Smyslov	½ ½ 0 ½ ½	X X X X X	0 0 ½ 1 ½	½ ½ 1 ½ ½	1 1 0 1 1	11–9
3–4. Keres	0 0 0 0 1	1 1 ½ 0 ½	X X X X X	0 ½ 1 0 ½	1 ½ 1 1 1	10½–9½
3–4. Reshevsky	0 ½ 1 0 0	½ ½ 0 ½ ½	1 ½ 0 1 ½	X X X X X	1 ½ ½ 1 1	10½–9½
5. Euwe	0 ½ 0 ½ ½	0 0 1 0 0	0 ½ 0 0 0	0 ½ ½ 0 0	X X X X X	4–16

38 ... Re4! 39 Qb8 Rxe3 40 Rd8 Qe5+
41 Qxe5 Rxe5 42 R1d2 g5 43 g4?! Rf7
44 R8d7 Kg7 45 gxf5 Rxf5 46 a3 Rf2+
47 Kg3 Rxd2 48 Rxd2 Rc7 49 Rd4!

Botvinnik wrote that he would have had better chances by keeping queens on the board before adjournment at move 40 but forced a trade for psychological reasons. Keres' play in the rook ending has been a series of traps (49 ... Rc3+ 50 Kg4 Rxa3 51 Rd7+ Kf8 52 Rh7 with a likely draw) that are not enough. In the next session he misses a strong drawing chance in 53 Rd5!

49 ... Rc6 50 a4 Kg6 51 h4 Kh5
52 hxg5 hxg5 53 Rd3? Rc4 54 Ra3 a5
55 Kh3 Rb4 56 Kg3 Rf4 57 Ra1 Rg4+
58 Kh3 Rb4 59 Ra3 Kg6 60 Kg3 Kf5
61 Kf3 Ke5 62 Kg3 Rd4 63 Ra1 Kd5
64 Rb1 Rb4!

Avoiding another trap (64 ... Rxa4
65 Rb5+ Kc4 66 Rxg5 Ra2 67 Kf3 Kb4
68 Ke3 Rc2 69 Rg8 with a likely draw).

65 Rf1 Ke4! 66 Re1+ Kd4 67 Kh2 Rxa4
68 Rg1 Rc4 69 Rxg5 a4 70 Kg2 Kc3
71 Kf3 a3 72 Ra5 Kb3 0–1

Black's king and pawn are unstoppable after 73 ... Rb4.

Despite his world-class stature since the Flohr match 15 years before, Botvinnik was still something of an enigma to the West. Savielly Tartakower, who played him at both Nottingham and Groningen, described Botvinnik as "dark-complexioned and thin, not prone to laugh but only smiles modestly at times" — and known to colleagues as "Comrade Mischa." Tartakower wrote that Botvinnik's enormous will power allowed him "to fence himself off during tournaments and matches from anything that could affect his concentration. At such time he becomes very sparing of words, gestures, and actions, stops reading the newspapers, and even forbids his wife to do any shopping." Ragozin told Alexander Koblents that Botvinnik tried to avoid any "new impression" and preserve his "nervous energy" by walking to the tournament site, taking the same route each day.

The suspicion that Keres was actually much better than Botvinnik flies in the face of his showing against others of their generation: Against Smyslov he was +1 in 40 games, against Bronstein -1 in 27 and against Kotov +1 in 13, or a total of +1 in 80 games. In his 15 other games with Botvinnik, Keres

scored only two wins, and lost four times. In fact, the big surprise of the tournament was Smyslov finishing second, as Tartakower put it, “to everyone’s amazement.”

Botvinnik’s preparation was superb for the tournament of his life. When he crushed Euwe with White in a Meran Variation he used a new move he had been waiting seven years to use. It was appropriate that the former world champion accepted the draw offer that made Botvinnik champion on May 9. It was “Victory Day,” a celebration of the German surrender in World War II that remained a major holiday even after the Soviet Union ceased to exist. Two thousand fans were present at the Hall of Columns when Botvinnik was crowned the sixth official world champion. His success was not a personal one, Ragozin wrote in *Pravda*. It was “a victory of our socialist culture.”

Botvinnik’s Challengers

A pre-Elo form of rankings, proposed by the Moscow master and mathematician A. Khachaturov, concluded that during the period of 1947–1949 the pecking order of Soviet players was: (No. 1) Botvinnik, (2) Smyslov, (3) Bronstein, (4) Boleslavsky, (5) Kotov, (6) Keres, (7) Flohr, (8) Liliental, (9) Bondarevsky, (10) Averbakh, (11) Tolush and (12) Semyon Furman.

Furman was a Leningrad opening theoretician with a devotion to finding an edge for White in every 1 d4 opening. “Furman turned an ostensibly minor whim — the right to move first — into a weapon of astounding force,” said Anatoly Karpov, who later became his prize pupil. When he was only a candidate master in 1947, Furman decided to analyze every known opening in detail, one by one. Mikhail Beilink asked Furman what he did when he was finished. “I began all over again!” Furman replied — and he was serious. Furman eventually qualified for 13 Championship finals. He finished

third in the 16th Championship with games like this:

E15 Queen’s Indian Defense
16th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1948
white Semyon Furman,
black Paul Keres

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 Ba6

Panov gave this “doubtful experiment” a question mark. The idea of Nimzovich’s did not gain respectability until the 1960s when the plan of ...c6 followed by a quick ...b5 or ...d5 was junked.

5 Qa4 c6 6 Nc3 d5 7 cxd5 exd5 8 Ne5! Bb7

Black is already under pressure (8 ... Qc7 9 Bf4 or 8 ... Qc8 9 Bg5 and 10 Rcl).

9 Bg5 Be7 10 Bg2 0–0 11 0–0 h6 12 Bxf6! Bxf6 13 f4 a5

Panov said 13 ... b5 and 14 ... Na6 was a better way of completing Black’s development.

14 Rad1 Qc8 15 e4! b5 16 Qc2 Na6 17 Rcl! Nc7 18 Rfd1 Qe6 19 Nxd5! Nxd5 20 exd5 cxd5 21 Qc7 Ra7 22 Qc5

White forces the win of the first pawn.

22 ... Ra6 23 Qxb5 Rb6 24 Qe2 Be7 25 Rc2 Rd8 26 Qh5 Bd6 27 Bh3 Qf6? 28 Ng4?

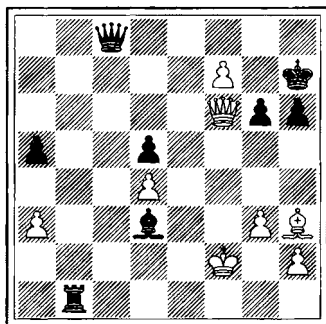
White could have destroyed resistance with 28 Nd7!, e.g., 28 ... Rxd7 29 Bxd7 Qe7 30 Ba4! Qe3+ 31 Kg2.

28 ... Qe7 29 Re2 Qf8 30 Ne5 Ba6 31 Rf2 Bb5 32 Rcl Bb8 33 Rfc2 g6

34 Qh4 Kg7 35 a3 Bxe5 36 fxe5 Bd3
37 Rc6.

Better than 37 Rc8 g5! and leading to a fine combination.

37 ... Rxb2 38 Qf6+ Kg8 39 e6! Rdb8
40 Rc8! Rxc8 41 Rxc8 Rb1+ 42 Kf2
Qxc8 43 exf7+ Kh7



After 43
... Kh7

Now 44 ... Qc2+ is threatened and
44 Bxc8 is met by 44 ... Rf1+.

44 f8(N)+! Kg8 45 Be6+ Qxe6 46 Qxe6+
Kxf8 47 Qxd5 Bf5 48 Qxa5 Kf7 49 a4
Ke6 50 Qe5+ Kd7 51 g4! Rb2+ 52 Kg3
Rb3+ 53 Kf4

There was still hope: 53 Kh4?? g5+. If
Furman had only been able to play as well
with Black as he did with White he would
have been a world championship contender.

53 ... Be6 54 Qg7+ Kd6 55 Qf8+ Kd7
56 Qxh6 1-0

At the same time that the match-tournament was resolving the question of a champion, preparations were under way to choose his first challenger. The first Interzonal, held at Saltsjöbaden, a resort town near Stockholm in July and August, 1948, ended in another Soviet triumph: David Bronstein came first by a point and three of his countrymen finished in the next four places.

Bronstein, born 29 days after Lenin died in 1924, was just entering his prime

after a precocious, difficult youth. He was nicknamed "malyutka," or "baby," because of his size when he began playing at 12 at the Kiev Pioneer Palace. Not all players were allowed into Pioneer classes but Bronstein was accepted in 1936 after passing a kind of entrance quiz. Alexander Konstantinopolsky, who became one of the leading Soviet trainers, asked Bronstein what book he had read and he replied Sozin's *What Everyone Should Know About the Endgame*. So Konstantinopolsky tested him in a random king-and-pawn versus king position and when Bronstein passed the opposition test he was accepted. "I tried very, very hard," Bronstein recalled. "I even held my breath, and the spectators surrounding us in a thick ring seemed to do the same."

Bronstein was the youngest master, perhaps in the world, when at age 17 he fled Kiev, with only the clothes on his back, in the opening weeks of the war. He spent the war giving exhibitions in hospitals, playing in the few tournaments available, hitchhiking on military trucks to get around and mourning the loss of contemporaries. When his family returned to the Ukraine there was nothing left in their home, presumably looted by the Germans. "My generation perished and I have felt a vacuum around me all my life," he said in a 1995 interview.

Bronstein's approach to chess was diametrically different from Botvinnik's. He emphasized improvisation, imagination and surprise, while Botvinnik threw himself into preparation and mastering a routine. Flohr recalled how he and Liliental had prepared a variation of the Open Defense Ruy Lopez and in the 1944 Soviet Championship Bronstein promptly "fell into it." But the young master thought a long time and came up with an inspired 15th move that gave him the edge. "How did you see such a move?" Flohr asked him afterward. "Very simple," Bronstein said, smiling. "I understood this was home 'prep' and there must be a hole. So I found the hole."

First Interzonal, Saltsjöbaden, July 15–August 15, 1948

	B	S	B	K	L	B	F	N	S	T	B	G	P	R	Y	T	P	Sto	Ste	L	Score
1. Bronstein	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	13½–5½
2. Szabó	0	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	0	12½–6½
3. Boleslavsky	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	12–7
4. Kotov	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	11½–7½
5. Liliental	½	0	½	½	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	11–8
6–9. Bondarevsky	½	½	½	½	0	X	1	½	½	0	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	½	1	1	10½–8½
6–9. Flohr	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	10½–8½
6–9. Najdorf	½	0	1	½	0	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	10½–8½
6–9. Ståhlberg	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	0	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	10½–8½
10. Trifunović	½	0	0	½	½	1	½	0	1	X	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	10–9
11–13. Böök	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	X	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	9½–9½
11–13. Gligorić	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	0	0	½	1	X	½	½	1	1	1	½	0	1	9½–9½
11–13. Pirc	0	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	X	0	1	0	½	1	½	½	9½–9½
14–15. Ragozin	0	0	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	X	0	0	½	0	½	1	8½–10½
14–15. Yanofsky	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	1	X	0	½	½	½	1	8½–10½
16. Tartakower	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	X	0	½	½	½	8–11
17. Pachman	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	1	X	1	½	1	7½–11½
18. Stoltz	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	X	½	½	6½–12½
19. Steiner	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	5½–13½
20. Lundin	0	1	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	X	4½–14½

This approach was also illustrated in one of Bronstein's greatest games, at the Budapest 1950, Candidates tournament when he walked into an elaborate Slav Defense line that Kotov had prepared with his trainer Vladimir Simagin. After 17 moves the board showed a position that Kotov and Simagin had summed up in their notebook as "Black has good chances." Bronstein instantly found the refutation. It turned out that Kotov had placed too much trust in Simagin, who had originated so many other good ideas. On the other hand, Simagin was reluctant to dispute the conclusion of the world-class Kotov. Two heads are better than one, Kotov said, but in this case it was not two heads but half of one.

And when Bronstein faced another improviser over the board, this was the result:

D45 Queen's Gambit Declined
16th Soviet Championship, 1948

white Alexander Tolush,
black David Bronstein

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6
5 e3 Nbd7 6 Qc2 Bd6 7 Bd2 0-0 8 e4?

White mixes two systems, the one Gösta Stoltz popularized with 7 e4 and the more aggressive one based on queenside castling. After 8 0-0-0 Black can meet 8 ... Qe7 with a strong 9 e4! dxe4 10 Nxe4 Nxe4 11 Qxe4 e5 12 Bg5 as Taimanov later showed (12 ... f6 13 Bd3).

8 ... Nxe4 9 Nxe4 dxe4 10 Qxe4 e5
11 0-0-0

After 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Be2 Re8 Black stands excellently.

11 ... Nf6 12 Qc2 e4 13 Ng5?! Bf5
14 Be3 b5!

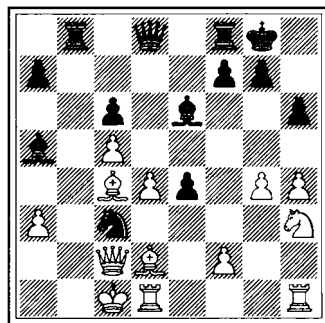
When Hans Kmoch annotated this game for *Chess Review*, this move, which wins

control of d5, reminded him of two previous games of his — when Alexander Alekhine beat him at Kecskemét 1927 and when Akiba Rubinstein defeated him at Semmering 1926.

15 c5 Bc7 16 h4 h6 17 Nh3 Nd5 18 a3
b4

Now 19 a4 Rb8 and 20 ... b3, or the immediate 19 ... b3 20 Qxb3 Rb8 were not to Tolush's tactical taste.

19 Be2 bxa3 20 bxa3 Rb8 21 g4 Be6
22 Bd2 Ba5 23 Bc4 Nc3!



After 23
... Nc3

Crushing. As the game goes White cannot allow ... Bxc4-d3 and the result is a king-hunt that ends around f1.

24 Bxc3 Bxc4 25 Bxa5 Qxa5 26 Qxc4
Qxa3+ 27 Kd2 Rb2+ 28 Ke1 Qf3 29 Rh2
e3 30 Qd3

White had to meet the threat of 30 ... exf2+ 31 Nxf2 Re8+ 32 Kf1 Rxf2+ and now he can reply 31 Kf1.

30 ... Re8 31 Nf4?! exf2+ 32 Kf1 Qxf4
33 Rh3 Re1+ 34 Rxe1 exf2(Q)+ 35 Kxe1
Qf2+ 36 Kd1 Qg1+ 0-1

Flohr called him "our little Reshevsky," and not just because of their physical resemblance and addiction to time trouble. The Kiev that Bronstein grew up in was a hotbed of tacticians and he was eventually

recognized as the sharpest tactical mind in the world. Smyslov said when playing Bronstein “one always has to expect the unexpected.” And Veinstein said the depth of a Bronstein combination is “like an iceberg, hidden, nine-tenths under water.” Bronstein had a touch of the Romantic in him. When historian Isaak Linder asked several top Soviet grandmasters which game made a particularly strong impression on them, virtually all mentioned a game played in the last thirty years. But Bronstein cited the 21st game of the first MacDonnell–LaBourdonnais match.

Veinstein had already assumed the role of protector and friend since Bronstein’s own father was in a *gulag*. He arranged to have Bronstein transferred in 1944 from Stalingrad, where the 19-year-old had been helping to build the Red October steel factory, spending his nights sleeping on the floor of an office and writing out notes on the King’s Gambit. Veinstein brought him to Moscow where he could work at the chess club of Dinamo, the NKVD’s sports society. Veinstein was chairman of the club and knew that only in Moscow could Bronstein realize his potential.

Bronstein later suspected Botvinnik had already foreseen that potential and tried to block his rise: Bronstein earned the right to the Soviet grandmaster title but the granting of it was inexplicably delayed until after he won the 16th Soviet Championship, he noted. Also, Bronstein was left off a preliminary list of possible Soviet entrants for Saltsjöbaden submitted by the Soviet Federation to FIDE. “It was apparent that someone with power in the high echelon of bureaucrats liked neither my character nor my style of play,” he wrote. Nevertheless, Bronstein played in and won the interzonal, his first foreign tournament. It was marred only when a deranged anti-Soviet Lithuanian émigré shouted “murderer” and tried to assault Bronstein midway through the final round.

Aside from Veinstein, the closest person in chess to Bronstein was Isaac Boleslavsky, who had few friends but made an effort to meet the 15-year-old when Boleslavsky was the 20-year-old Ukrainian champion. Boleslavsky, a genial, balding bear-like figure, had been something of a surprise to the West when he was invited to the 1941 Absolute Championship but then disappeared from view during the war. He established his international reputation by winning his minimatch with Fine in the 1945 radio match, finishing in a tie for sixth at Groningen 1946 and for third at the Tchigorin Memorial, and then coming clear third at Saltsjöbaden.

Boleslavsky brought to the board new or under-appreciated weapons, particularly with 1 e4 as White and in the Sicilian and King’s Indian Defenses as Black. Sozin’s 6 Bc4 in the Sicilian was revived because of the following game: Bronstein recalled how, before it began, Boleslavsky told him “he was going to use this Italian style move and even explained how he was going to push his pawns forward and on which square he intended to sacrifice his knight and this is exactly what happened...!”

B88 Sicilian Defense
17th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1949
white Isaac Boleslavsky,
black Lev Aronin

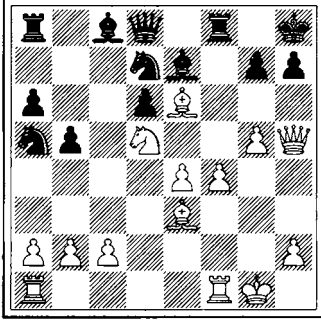
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nx d4
 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Bc4 e6 7 0–0 Be7 8 Be3
 0–0 9 Bb3 a6 10 f4 Na5 11 Qf3 Qc7

The new energy injected by Bronstein, Boleslavsky and others into the openings reduced the margin of error that White and Black had. Here Black’s delay in ...b7–b5 leaves White with a dangerous free hand.

12 g4! b5 13 g5 Nd7?

Another error. Better was 13 ... Ne8 14 f5 Nxb3, although 15 cxb3! and Racl would give White a nice initiative.

14 Nxe6! fxe6 15 Bxe6+ Kh8 16 Nd5 Qd8 17 Qh5



After 17 Qh5

The immediate threat is 18 Bxd7 followed by 19 g6 h6 20 f5 and a mating sacrifice on h6. Boleslavsky gave one example of how play can continue: 17 ... Qe8 18 g6! Nf6 (18 ... Qxg6+ 19 Qxg6 hxg6 20 Nxe7 threatening Nxc8 or Nxg6+) 19 Nxf6 Qxg6+ 20 Qxg6 hxg6 21 Nd5! Bf6 22 Bxc8 Raxc8 23 e5! dxe5 24 fxe5 Bxe5 25 Ne7! Rxf1+ 26 Rxf1 Re8 27 Nxg6+ Kh7 28 Nxe5 and wins.

17 ... Nc5 18 Bxc8 Rxc8 19 f5 Bxg5

Also lost is 19 ... Kg8 20 g6 h6 21 Bxh6.

20 Bxg5 Qe8 21 Qxe8 Rfxe8 22 f6 Nd7

Or 22 ... gxh6 23 Bxf6+ Kg8 24 b4 and wins.

23 f7 Rxe4 24 Nb6! Nf8 25 Nxc8 Rg4+ 26 Kh1 Rxc5 27 Nxh6 g6 28 Rael Rd5 29 Re8 Kg7 30 Rd8 Re5 31 Ne8+ Kh6 32 Nf6 1-0

"Of all the players in the world today, Boleslavsky is perhaps the most feared attacker against the Sicilian Defense," Lajos Steiner said after meeting him at Saltsjö-

baden. One day Steiner chatted with Bronstein while they waited for their opponents to move. Steiner asked about his position. "I have a satisfactory game in a Sicilian Defense. But," he added, "I am not Boleslavsky!" By 1948 they were inseparable, the 24-year-old Bronstein and 29-year-old Boleslavsky, both prematurely bald.

Both men were a product of the generation deeply influenced by the Terror and the beginning of the Cold War. This was a time when Vladimir German, a second-category player with *sviazi*, was ousted as head of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. He had been named to the post "to strengthen the politically immature" staff after the arrest of Krylenko. But German was suddenly replaced by Ragozin — because he had run an article about American Paul Morphy just as relations with the United States began to chill. Even Grigory Levenfish fell under suspicion because of Soviet xenophobia. He went to England as a reserve for the 1947 match but seemed too friendly with Paul List, a Russian émigré who had drawn a match with him in 1910. As a result, Levenfish was banned from foreign travel for a year.

Afraid of Real Life

Steiner said Boleslavsky "looks like a sage ... an Eastern Noble, hands clasped together, a wise, frank look on his face." But Boleslavsky's daughter, Tatiana, revealed her father's other side: "reserved, unsociable, mistrustful ... not a happy person." He was scarred early when a dissertation he had written on the Russian writer Shchedrin (Mikhail Saltykov) failed to have a political content and received a low mark: it did not quote Marxist-Leninism dogma.

So Boleslavsky retreated into chess, which became for him an apolitical outlet for his great mind. He could control what he knew in chess, and take part in the kind of scientific discovery — in the King's

Indian, for example — that Soviet intellectuals could not achieve in other fields. Boleslavsky was informed on a wide range of other subjects, “a living library,” but discouraged attempts at conversation. “He allowed very few into his own inner world,” Tatiana said. “My father was afraid of real life and its surprises.”

But at the board, Boleslavsky became a passionate, courageous pathfinder. Andrei Batuyev, a multitabled Leningrader also known as a naturalist and choirsinger, recalled how in a game they played in 1939, Boleslavsky “was literally seized by fever. He was completely absorbed by chess emotions and could not control the trembling of his hands and body.” In that game, an ...e×f6 Caro-Kann, Boleslavsky overthrew the conventional wisdom that White’s best plan was to create a passed pawn from his queenside majority. Instead, he created a kingside mating attack.

Alexey Suetin credited Boleslavsky with popularizing pawn sacrifices for the initiative and with revealing the dynamic power behind a backward d6-pawn in the Sicilian Defense. He breathed life into a variety of underappreciated openings:

B58 Sicilian Defense

Kuibyshev, 1943

white Grigory Levenfish,

black Isaac Boleslavsky

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 c×d4 4 N×d4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Be2 e5

This is one of the first example’s of Boleslavsky’s variation. It is similar to the Najdorf Defense but with a different use of the a-pawn, e.g., 7 Nb3 Be7 8 Be3 0–0 9 g4! a5! 10 g5 (10 a4 Nb4) Ne8 11 Nd5 (or 11 h4 a4 12 Nd2 a3! 13 b3 Nb4 14 Nc4 d5 as pointed out by Suetin) B×g5 12 Bb6 Qd7 13 Rg1 f6! 14 Bg4 Qf7 with double-edged play as in Vinogradov–Boleslavsky, Sverdlovsk 1943.

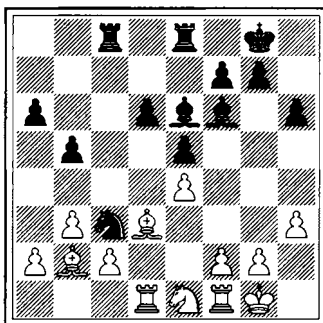
7 Nf3 h6 8 0–0 Be7 9 Be3 0–0 10 Qd2 Be6 11 Rad1 Re8 12 h3 Rc8

White has succeeded in stopping ...d5 but lacks a plan. The Sicilian Defense had a way of making the older masters look silly as the next few moves show.

13 Nh2 Na5 14 Qe1 Nc4 15 Bc1 a6 16 Nf3? Qa5 17 Bd3 b5 18 b3 Na3! 19 Nd5?

The endgame favors Black considerably thanks to Black’s 21st move.

19 ... Q×e1 20 N×f6+ B×f6 21 N×e1 Nb1! 22 Bb2 Nc3



After 22
... Nc3

White is worse but not clearly losing after 23 B×c3.

23 Ra1 d5! 24 f3 d4 25 a4 Bd7! 26 a×b5 B×b5 27 g3

Black’s winning ideas included ...Bg5 and ...Ne2+–f4.

27 ... B×d3 28 c×d3 Re6 29 f4 Rb8 30 B×c3

Desperation. The b3-pawn could not be held.

30 ... d×c3 31 f×e5 B×e5 32 Nf3 B×g3 33 Nd4 Rd6 34 Nf5 R×d3 35 R×a6 R×b3 36 Rc6 Rb2! 37 Ne7+ Kh7 38 R×f7 Rd1+ 0–1

Chess attracted other bright minds because there were few alternative careers. Neishtadt graduated from the Moscow University law faculty in 1951 but soon went to work as a chess trainer. "With my last name the chance of finding work as a jurist was approximately zero," he wrote in 1993. Another handicap that drove people into chess was family background. Yevgeny Zagoryansky, the author of the Morphy article that got German into trouble, was by birth a prince, whose family owned a village outside Moscow but lost it all after 1917. Bronstein said Zagoryansky could not attend college because of his family history "and sometimes had to work as a ditch digger." Stipends for players — aside from Botvinnik — were just beginning after the war. But they were only for the strongest. Simagin did not reach the Soviet Championship finals until 1951 and was a metalworker in a factory for a long time, thinking that he could not feed a family as a chessplayer. And virtually no one outside the big cities could expect to earn a living.

How much talent was wasted this way is illustrated by the career of Rashid Nezhmetdinov of Kazan. One day in 1923, while playing hide-and-seek on the stairway of the Tartar city's House of Soviets, the 11-year-old Nezhmetdinov found a piece of paper "with drawing and signs completely incomprehensible to me" and took it home. He did not understand Russian well then but with difficulty figured out the clipping was a chess column from *Smyena*. This led him to the local club and within four years he had won the first Kazan Pioneer championship with a 15–0 score. He surprised himself in January, 1928, when he learned the rules of checkers and won the Kazan checkers championship a month later and by June was checker champion of PAPO, the District of Autonomic Republics and Oblasts.

Nezhmetdinov alternated between the two games and clearly had enormous talent for both. He liked to solve Kubbel studies

in his head but rarely had a chance to play chess against anyone better than first-category. Finally in 1948 word came from Moscow that he could play a master-title match with Georgy Lisitsyn. Nezhmetdinov studied the Leningrader's games for three months — then received a telegram shortly before the match began notifying him that his opponent had been changed to Vladas Mikenas. He only drew the match 4–4 with six draws but demonstrated extraordinary imagination:

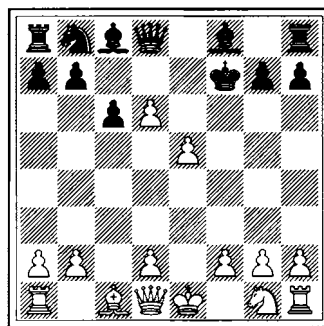
B02 Alekhine's Defense
Match for Master Title, 11th game,
Kazan, 1948
white Rashid Nezhmetdinov,
black Vladas Mikenas

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 c4 Nb6 4 c5 Nd5
 5 Bc4 e6 6 Nc3 d6

In the first game of the match Mikenas grabbed the gambit pawn with 6 ... Nxc3 7 bxc3 Qh4 8 Qe2 Bxc5 9 Nh3 but blundered with 9 ... f6? and lost immediately: 10 exf6 Qxf6 11 Qh5+ Qg6 12 Qxc5 Qxg2 13 Rg1 Qxh3 14 Rxc7 Nc6 15 Be2! e5 16 Bg4 Qh4 17 Qd5! and Black resigned because of 17 ... Qf6 18 Bh5+ or 17 ... Rf8 18 Bxd7+.

7 Nxd5 exd5 8 Bxd5 c6 9 Bxf7+! Kxf7
 10 cxd6

After 10 cxd6



For his bishop White has three connected pawns and a lasting initiative. In the

third match game Mikenas blockaded with 10 ... Be6 and after 11 f4? Bxd6! 12 exd6 Re8 13 Kf2 Qxd6 Black was clearly better. But after the game 11 Nh3 was found to give White good chances, so Mikenas tries to improve first.

10 ... Qe8! 11 Qe2 c5 12 Nf3 Bxd6! 13 Ng5+

Black is on top after 13 exd6 Qxe2+ 14 Kxe2 Re8+ 15 Kd1 Bg4.

13 ... Kg6 14 Qd3+ Kxg5 15 Qxd6 Qd8?

Kotov and Udovich used the position after 15 Qxd6 to illustrate the new vitality of *The Soviet School of Chess* in the book of that name. Black's last move is a blunder and he would have stood well after 15 ... Nc6 16 d4+ Kh5 17 Qxc5 Qe7!.

16 d4+ Kf5 17 g4+! Ke4 18 Qxc5

The threats of f3+ and 0–0 produces a Morphy-like finish, e.g., 18 ... Qxd4 19 f3+ Kd3 20 Qa3+ Kc4 21 Qb3+ Kc5 22 Be3.

18 ... Rf8 19 0–0 Kf3?! 20 h3 b6 21 Qc3+ Ke4 22 Qc4! 1–0

Despite his enormous gift Nezhmetdinov did not become a master until he won the RSFSR Championship in 1950, a few months after he earned the master title in checkers by winning a Soviet checker championship semifinals. It was not until February, 1954, that he got his big break and was summoned to Moscow. There, along with Furman and Ratmir Kholmov, he was prepared by Boleslavsky and Bronstein for an international tournament in Bucharest. Nezhmetdinov won the brilliancy prize, finished second and earned the IM title. He eventually played five times in the Soviet Championship finals and achieved a remarkable score against world champions: 6–5 with nine draws.

Boleslavsky had the talent to become world champion but did not want to make the necessary move to Moscow or Leningrad and take part “in the inevitable intrigues that went on behind the scenes in the chess world,” his daughter said. Instead, he moved to Minsk in 1950, at a time when Byelorussia had very few players of stature. But in Minsk there was an apartment for him. It was four rooms, a total of 80 square meters — but large by Soviet standards, particularly when millions of Soviets were living in communal homes or makeshift housing. The official “sanitary norm” said every Soviet citizen should have nine square meters, the equivalent of a 10-foot-by-10-foot room. But even in the 1970s, after Nikita Khrushchev's building boom, the national average was just over seven square meters.

First Candidate

Boleslavsky's moment for greatness came at the first Candidates tournament, Budapest 1950. Fine and Euwe declined invitations and Reshevsky could not get State Department permission to go to Hungary during this tense period of the Cold War. In their absence, it was virtually certain that the tournament winner would be one of the seven Soviets invited. Boleslavsky led the field by a full point with two rounds to go, thanks to his innovative handling of the openings.

E93 King's Indian Defense Candidates Tournament, Budapest, 1950 white László Szabó, black Isaac Boleslavsky

**1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 g6 3 Nf3 Bg7 4 d4 0–0
5 e4 d6 6 Be2 e5 7 d5 Nh5 8 Ng1 Nd7!**

Theoreticians would later declare that White must play g2–g3 in such positions to

keep Black's knight out of f4 after ...Nh5. Szabó may have been counting on 8 ... Nf4 9 Bf1! and 10 g3 — and did not believe Black could simply ignore the threat of 9 Bxh5.

9 Bxh5 gxh5 10 Qxh5 Nc5 11 Nf3 f5!

Thematic and much stronger than 11 ... Nd3+ 12 Ke2 Nxc1+ 13 Rxc1 (13 ... f5 14 Ng5).

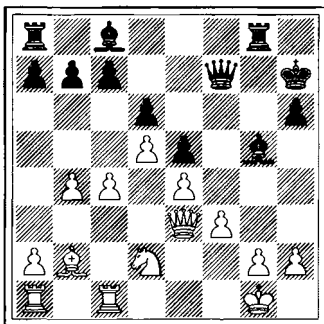
12 0-0 f4! 13 b4 Nd7 14 Bb2 Qe7 15 Ng5?

White loses the game around here. Despite Black's vast edge in kingside space he could still have gotten a good position with 14 Ng5, or here with 15 Nd2. But he overlooks that...

15 ... Nf6 16 Qh4 h6 17 Nf3

...his planned 17 Ne6 Bxe6 18 dxe6 Qxe6 19 Nd5 would give Black superior chances with 19 ... Rf7 20 Nxf6+ Rxf6 21 Racl f3!.

17 ... Qf7 18 Nd2 Ng4 19 f3 Ne3 20 Rfc1 Kh7 21 Nd1 Bf6 22 Qf2 Rg8! 23 Nxe3 fxe3 24 Qxe3 Bg5



After 24
... Bg5

The second pawn sacrifice is only temporary and White soon gives back both pawns to get queens off the board.

25 Qe2 Bxd2 26 Qxd2 Bh3! 27 g3 Qxf3 28 Rc3 Qxe4 29 c5 Rg7 30 Qc2 Qxc2

31 Rxc2 Rf8 32 Rf2 Rgf7 33 Rxf7+ Rxf7 34 cxd6 cxd6 35 Rel Rf3 36 Bc1 Rd3

This dooms the d5-pawn and leaves White with a lost game, despite bishops of opposite color, when the game was adjourned at move 45.

37 Be3 a6 38 Kf2 Rxd5 39 Rcl Kg6 40 Rc7 Rb5 41 Rc4 Be6 42 Rh4 h5 43 a4 Rd5 44 h3 Bd7! 45 a5 Rd3 46 Ke2 (sealed) 0-1

Controversy arose among the Soviet delegation at Budapest when Kotov charged that Veinstein, Bronstein's second, had come to the tournament "to distribute points among the Jews," according to Vladimir and Isaak Linder. Kotov said Viktor Goglidze, head of the delegation, was helping Veinstein in this. Kotov thought it suspicious that Flohr lost to Bronstein and Liliental allowed the young star to draw with him in a better position. He complained to the ambassador. Veinstein denied he was arranging for Bronstein to win the tournament and pointed out that Keres, who was clearly not Jewish, lost the crucial last round game that enabled Bronstein to catch up to Boleslavsky and tie for first prize.

But the tournament's finish was not without intrigue. The semiofficial version, as offered by Neishtadt, was: "The careful Boleslavsky preferred not to take risks." The truth is that Boleslavsky was convinced to give Bronstein a chance. Boleslavsky later told Albert Kapengut that Bronstein asked for a chance to catch up. Bronstein gave a slightly different version, saying that "after a talk with Boris Veinstein" Boleslavsky "decided to slow down to allow me to tie for first place." In any event, Boleslavsky was in sole first place from the eighth round to the 17th and penultimate round. But he drew his last two games without a fight — against Kotov in 21 moves and with White against Gideon Ståhlberg in 16 — after agreeing to a

First Candidates Tournament, Budapest, April 4–May 20, 1950

	Bo	Br	S	K	N	K	S	F	L	S	<i>Score</i>
1–2. Boleslavsky	X X	½ ½	1 ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ ½	1 1	½ 1	½ 1	12–6
1–2. Bronstein	½ ½	X X	0 1	½ 1	1 1	1 ½	0 1	½ 1	½ ½	1 ½	12–6
3. Smyslov	0 ½	1 0	X X	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	0 1	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	10–8
4. Keres	½ ½	½ 0	½ ½	X X	½ ½	1 0	1 ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	9½–8½
5. Najdorf	½ ½	0 0	0 ½	½ ½	X X	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 1	½ 1	9–9
6. Kotov	0 ½	0 ½	½ 0	0 1	½ ½	X X	½ 1	1 ½	1 0	1 0	8½–9½
7. Ståhlberg	½ ½	1 0	1 0	0 ½	½ ½	½ 0	X X	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	8–10
8–10. Flohr	0 0	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	X X	½ ½	0 1	7–11
8–10. Liliental	½ 0	½ ½	½ 0	½ ½	0 0	0 1	½ ½	½ ½	X X	1 0	7–11
8–10. Szabó	½ 0	0 ½	½ ½	½ 0	½ 0	0 1	½ ½	1 0	1 0	X X	7–11

quick draw with White against Bronstein in a game that looks like prepared analysis. In the final two rounds Bronstein beat Ståhlberg and won one of his greatest games ever, against Keres.

Veinstein's plan was to arrange a match-tournament with Botvinnik, Boleslavsky and Bronstein for the world championship, according to Bronstein. Since FIDE's control of the title was fairly new and all three players were Soviet citizens, the plan had some credibility. But it was remarkably naive to think that Botvinnik would agree to face two opponents, moreover, two close friends, in such an adventure. Instead, Bronstein and Boleslavsky had to play a match for the right to challenge Botvinnik. According to Bronstein, FIDE fulfilled such a secondary role that the Soviets did not report the result of the best-of-12 game playoff for "more than 20 days."

The playoff match was held in Moscow at the Central Chess Club of the Railroad Workers, with no prize money and no bitterness between the two players. It "seems to have been the only occasion in the history of chess contests when players exchanged bouquets of bright flowers before the first move of the first game," Bronstein wrote. He won that game and took a two-point lead after seven games. But Boleslavsky came back to tie the match after the allotted 12 games, forcing them to play two additional tie-breakers. Both men missed golden opportunities in the 13th game:

**E68 King's Indian Defense
Candidates Playoff Match,
13th game, Moscow, 1950
white David Bronstein,
black Isaac Boleslavsky**

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 d6 3 Nc3 e5 4 Nf3 Nbd7
5 g3 g6 6 Bg2 Bg7 7 0-0 0-0 8 e4 Re8
9 Be3 Ng4 10 Bg5 f6 11 Bd2 Nh6 12 h3
Nf7 13 Be3 Nf8 14 Qd2 Ne6 15 d5 Nf8
16 Rael?! c5! 17 a3 Bd7 18 b4?

This advance would have worked well at move 16 but here it could have been punished by 18 ... c×b4 19 a×b4 Qc8.

18 ... Qc8 19 b×c5 d×c5 20 Kh2 Nd6
21 Qd3 Qc7 22 Nd2 f5 23 f4 h5 24 Kh1
Nh7 25 Nb5? B×b5! 26 c×b5 c4 27 Qc2
c3 28 e×f5 g×f5

Black begins to weaken. Much stronger would have been 27 ... h4 or, a move later, 28 ... e×f4 29 g×f4 N×f5 30 Ne4 Nf6.

29 Nf3 e4 30 Nd4 Nf8 31 a4 Rac8
32 Rc1 Qf7 33 Rfd1 Bf6 34 Qb3 Kh8
35 Bf1 Rc7 36 Be2 Qg6 37 Rg1 Rec8
38 Qd1 Qf7 39 Qb3 Qg7 40 Nc2 Nc4?

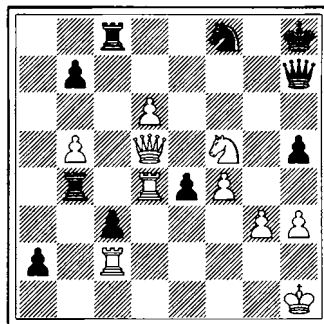
Black wanted to keep the initiative and avoid 40 ... Nd7 41 g4 but that could have been met by 41 ... h×g4 42 h×g4 f×g4 43 B×g4 Qh6+ 44 Kg2 Rg8 or 43 R×g4 Qh6+ 44 Kg2 Nc5! 45 B×c5 Rh7.

41 B×c4 R×c4 42 d6 a5 43 Ba7?

White wants to clear e3 but he would probably have been winning after 43 Bb6! Nd7 44 B×a5 b6 45 Bb4.

43 ... Qh7 44 Ne3 Rb4 45 Qd5 R×a4
46 Rc2 Rb4 47 N×f5 a4 48 Rd1 a3
49 Bd4 B×d4 50 R×d4 a2!

After 50 ... a2



White sees that 51 R×a2? loses to 51 ... c2! and that Black escapes with a draw after 51 Q×a2 Q×f5 52 R×b4 Q×h3+.

51 Qe5+ Kg8 52 Rxb4?? a1(Q)+ 53 Kh2
Qd1 54 Rg2 c2 55 Ne7+

Now with the simple 55 ... Kf7 Black remains a full queen — or two — ahead.

55 ... Qxe7?? 56 dxe7 c1(Q) 57 exf8(Q)+
Rxf8 58 Qg5+ Draw.

Veinstein wrote “It is difficult now to imagine the nervous tension which must have prevailed” in the 14th and final game. It turned out to be a disaster for Boleslavsky because of his opponent’s surprise eighth move.

C15 French Defense
Candidates Playoff Match, 14th game,
Moscow, 1950
white Isaac Boleslavsky,
black David Bronstein

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bd2 dxe4
5 Qg4 Qxd4!

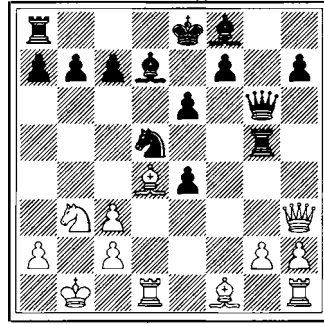
The usual move was 5 ... Nf6 6 Qxg7
Rg8 and the text was considered much too risky. In the 12th game Bronstein had avoided pawn-grabbing entirely by playing 4 ... c5 5 a3 Bxc3 6 Bxc3 Nf6.

6 0–0–0 Nf6 7 Qxg7 Rg8 8 Qh6 Bf8!
9 Qh4 Rg4 10 Qh3 Qxf2

Here 11 Be3 can be met by 11 ... Qf5 or even 11 ... Qh4 12 Qxh4 Rxb4 13 Bg5 Bh6. It soon becomes clear White has compensation for one pawn at best, but hardly for two.

11 Nb5 Na6 12 Kb1 Bd7 13 Be3 Qf5
14 Nd4 Qg6 15 Nb3 Nb4 16 Ne2 Nfd5!
17 Nc3 Nxc3+ 18 bxc3 Nd5 19 Bd4 Rg5!
(see diagram)

With a threat of 20 ... e5 that triggers desperation.



After 19
... Rg5

20 g4 e5 21 Bf2 Bxg4 22 Rxd5 Bxg4
23 Bxh3 Rd8 24 Rxd8+ Kxd8 25 Rd1+
Bd6 26 Be3 f5 27 Nc5 f4 28 Ne6+ Ke7
29 Bxa7 Rh5

White stopped the clocks and shook his opponent’s hand. “I wish you success in the match,” he said. Boleslavsky was actually relieved at not having to play Botvinnik, wrote Bronstein. Bronstein had not been considered for the World Championship match-tournament two years earlier but had just achieved a rise as meteoric as Mikhail Tal’s in 1957–1960 or Garry Kasparov’s in 1981–1984.

Botvinnik versus Bronstein

The 1949 FIDE General Assembly at Paris had decided, “The right to organize a world championship competition is, in the first instance the right of the federation of the champion’s country.” This had the effect of turning over control of FIDE’s most important event to the Sports Committee for 20 years. An official “honorarium” of \$5,000 for the winner and \$3,000 for the loser was decided by FIDE but implementing such details was left to the match organizers. In fact, the prizes were paid in rubles and were worth a fraction of what FIDE announced.

The first FIDE World Championship match pitted two men with sharply different experiences under Soviet power. Botvinnik remained a faithful Stalinist. One of his

prized mementos was an order signed by Stalin himself granting Botvinnik 250 liters of gas for his new car despite the postwar rationing. “What centralization!” Botvinnik wrote admiringly in his last magazine article. Even then he disputed reports that the Terror had claimed tens of millions of victims. “There were camps, of course, but many returned from the camps, very many, including some of my friends,” he wrote. Only after the so-called Doctor’s Plot in 1952 — when the *vlasti* insinuated that Jewish doctors were trying to kill Party leaders — did Botvinnik seem to have any doubts about the wisdom of Comrade Stalin.

Bronstein, on the other hand, was the son of a flour-mill manager and former Party member who was arrested on New Year’s Eve 1937 as an “enemy of the people.” When his father reappeared from an Arctic Circle *gulag* in 1944 it was because he was suffering from exhaustion and serious illness. According to the Bronstein family, David’s father was able to reach Moscow by bribing a police chief with 100 pounds of flour in return for an internal passport without the stamp of a political prisoner. Forbidden to set foot in Moscow, he nevertheless attended the match, sitting in one of the first rows of the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall despite the prospect that he might be spotted by secret police General Viktor Abakumov, sitting nearby.

But the portrayal of the 1951 match as pitting Bolshevik versus victim is misleading. Abakumov, who was shot in 1954 after Beria’s failed coup, was not Bronstein’s enemy, Malkin suggested. In fact, the secret police head had asked Veinstein to introduce him to Bronstein, the star of Dinamo, during the match. Viktor Malkin rooted for Bronstein and agreed with the claim that Party leaders wanted the champion to retain his title. “There truly was interest in Botvinnik’s victory in the higher echelons of authority,” he wrote. “But I know that there were influential powers interested in the other outcome.”

When Malkin was asked if Botvinnik had used his ties to Molotov to influence the outcome of the match, Malkin was firm. Botvinnik could use his *sviazi* to promote the Alekhine match or make arrangements for a foreign trip but not for something like this, he said. “Don’t forget, Mikhail Moiseyevich is a very proud man,” Malkin added. (Viktor Korchnoi has said that when the *vlasti* tried to show that prominent Jews supported the Doctor’s Plot investigation, Bronstein signed a letter of support, but Botvinnik refused.)

“*Shame!*”

Botvinnik later claimed the challenger acted “outrageously” during the match and he considered Bronstein one of his prime enemies, along with Grigory Levenfish and Veinstein. He saw a conspiracy against him: Chess literature was still relatively scarce in the Soviet Union and when Apollonov would not allow Botvinnik to examine the Sports Committee library, the champion was “struck dumb.” But then Botvinnik realized Apollonov was also a member of Dinamo and was trying to help the challenger.

Once again Botvinnik practiced with secret games, this time with Smyslov. He looked out of form:

**B24 Sicilian Defense
Training Game, 1951
white Vasily Smyslov,
black Mikhail Botvinnik**

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7
5 d3 e6

This game convinced Botvinnik that 5 ... e6 was not the best weapon against Smyslov’s Closed Sicilian — and this information played a crucial role in the next world championship match.

Smyslov had a good record against 5 ... d6 which he sometimes answered with 6 f4 Nf6 7 Nf3 0–0 8 0–0. His game with Ilivitsky from the 20th USSR Championship, Moscow, 1952, went 8 ... Ne8 9 h3 Nc7 10 Be3 b6 11 Qd2 Bb7 12 f5! d5 13 Bh6 dxe4 14 Nxe4 Nd4 15 Nh4 Bxe4 16 Bxe4 Bxh6 17 Qxh6 Qd6 18 Kh2! Rae8 19 fxg6 fxg6 20 Nxg6! Nf3+ 21 Rxf3 Rxf3 22 Nxe7+ and wins.

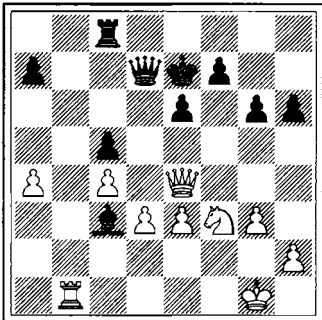
6 Be3 d6 7 Qd2 Bd7 8 Nf3 Nd4 9 0–0 h6 10 Ne2!

Botvinnik has taken too much time avoiding Bh6 and preventing d3–d4. Smyslov grabs the initiative.

10 ... Nxe2+ 11 Qxe2 Bxb2 12 Rb1 Bg7 13 Rxb7 Bc6 14 Rb3 Ne7 15 Qd2 Kf8 16 e5! Nd5 17 c4! Nxe3 18 fxex3 Rc8 19 Nh4

Black's king must move again because of the threats of 20 Ng6+ and 20 Bxc6 Rxc6 21 Rb7.

19 ... Ke7 20 Qf2 Rhf8 21 Bxc6 Rxc6 22 Rb7+ Rc7 23 Qf3 Rxb7 24 Qxb7+ Qd7 25 exd6+ Kxd6 26 Rb1 Rc8 27 Qe4 Ke7 28 a4 Bc3 29 Nf3



After 29 Nf3

Black seems to have survived a crisis. Now 29 ... Qd6 fails to 30 Rb7+ Rc7 31 Rxc7+ and 32 Qh4+.

29 ... Rc7 30 Ne5 Qd6 31 d4! Bxd4

Sadly Black sees that 31 ... cxd4 allows 32 Qf4!.

32 exd4 Qxd4+ 33 Qxd4 cxd4 34 Rcl Kd6 35 Nd3 e5 36 c5+ Ke6 37 a5 e4 38 Nb4 d3 39 c6 d2 40 Rdl e3 41 Kf1 1–0

The champion was also annoyed by Bronstein's penchant for arguing over pre-match details. Svetozar Gligorić recalled how Botvinnik, ever suspicious, proposed that two adjournment envelopes be used to prevent a match arbiter favorable to one player from changing a sealed move. Bronstein agreed — but only after a month of elaborate critiquing of “every possible consequence” that increasingly disturbed Botvinnik, Gligorić said. Bronstein carried on psychological warfare at every turn, even using Botvinnik's favorite Dutch Defense in the first game. Tigran Petrosian, 21 at the time, recalled how this choice of opening “surprised the entire chess world.”

In later years Botvinnik did not even want Bronstein's name to be mentioned in his presence, according to Malkin. He suspected, for example, that Bronstein orchestrated a scandal in the ninth match game when the challenger ended up making a move on the board, instead of sealing it as he should have. When Bronstein protested that the secrecy of the move had been violated, Dinamo members shouted “Shame!” from the audience, he wrote. But Botvinnik said Gideon Ståhlberg, the deputy arbiter, showed that rules were being followed. He also claimed the audience broke out into applause every time the challenger “sacrificed anything or won anything.” Even Bronstein's habits like getting up from the board after every move or drinking his tea by holding the cup with both hands seemed to upset him.

Bronstein drew first blood:

A43 Nimzo-Indian Defense
World Champion Match,
Fifth Game, Moscow, 1951
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black David Bronstein

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0
 5 Bd3 c5 6 Nf3 b6 7 0-0 Bb7 8 Na4
 cxd4 9 a3 Be7 10 exd4 Qc7 11 b4

Liliental wrote that many of the fans were well aware the game was following Alartortsev-Lisitsyn, 10th Soviet Championship, 1937 — but Botvinnik apparently forgot about it and spent five to ten minutes on the clearly best 11th move and fell into time trouble. Bronstein considered this comment “naive” because Botvinnik must have been thinking about his improvement over Alartortsev’s 13th move.

Actually, it was Bronstein who was notorious for quixotic time expenditures. Once when a Sports Committee chairman attended a Soviet Championship he saw Bronstein spend a long time on his first move. The chairman asked Nikolai Zubarev if there had been any training effort by the players before the tournament. Assured there had been, he asked, “So in one month Bronstein couldn’t prepare one move?” Flohr once offered him advice: “David, If you want to think so much about the first move, then come to the tournament an hour before the round.” But Bronstein replied, “No. I love to play when the clock is running.”

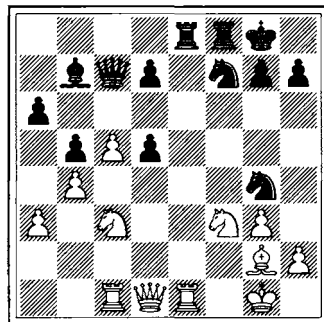
11 ... Ng4 12 g3 f5 13 Nc3!

Better than 13 Nel as in the Alartortsev game or 13 Rel f4! 14 Bxf4 Rxf4! which had proven strong in a game in the 19th Soviet Championship.

13 ... a6 14 Rel Nc6 15 Bf1 Nd8 16 Bf4 Bd6 17 Bxd6 Qxd6 18 Bg2 Nf7 19 c5 Qc7 20 Rcl

Both players agreed 20 Na4 was better and would have given White a strong game after 20 ... b5 21 Nb6 Rae8 22 d5!

20 ... Rae8 21 Na4 b5 22 Nc3 f4! 23 d5 fxg3 24 fxg3?! exd5



After 24
... exd5

Bronstein explained his opponent’s 24th move by citing this key variation 25 Nxd5 Qc6 26 Ne7+ Rxe7 27 Rxe7 Ng5 28 Qb3+ Kh8 29 Qc3 Qh6 and now, since he had not played 24 hxg3, White has 30 h4!

But here, with only 15 minutes left to reach move 40, he backed off. This vacillation allows Black to turn the game around by exchanges of heavy material.

25 Qd4 Nf6 26 Nh4 Re5! 27 Rxe5 Qxe5 28 Qxe5 Nxe5 29 Nf5 Nc4 30 Rd1 Kh8!

Now it is too late to play 31 Nxd5 (which would have drawn last move) because of 31 ... Bxd5 32 Bxd5 Nxd5 33 Rxd5 g6 34 Nd6 Ne3 or 34 Rxd7 gxh5 35 c6 Ne5 36 Rc7 Rf7. The unlikely d-pawn wins the game.

31 Rel Nxa3 32 Nd6 Bc6 33 Ra1 Nc2 34 Rxa6 d4! 35 Ncxb5 Bxg2 36 Kxg2 Ng4 37 Nf5 d3 38 Rd6 Rxf5 39 Rxd3 Nce3+ 0-1

Veinstein claimed that Botvinnik threatened not to play the match if Veinstein served as Bronstein’s second. When Zubarev told him of this, “I understood that Botvinnik was simply a little afraid of Bronstein”

and was looking for an excuse to refuse to play, Veinstein said. So he agreed to be replaced by Konstantinopolsky.

It turned into an exceptionally even match, as close as any FIDE held. Neither player ever led by more than one point in the best-of-24 game series. William Winter, the British master, reported there was a constant chatter from spectators in the Tchaikovsky Hall “but one that Soviet players have become used to.” Nevertheless Botvinnik had to personally call for silence during the complex endgame of game 18. The champion said the biggest surprise of the match was why Bronstein “did not beat his out-of-practice opponent” who had not played in three years. He might have added that the 13-year difference in their ages should also have shown up in the scoretable. Botvinnik’s longest absence from competition coincided with the finest period of Bronstein’s career. On the other hand, Bronstein claims it was in this period that “Botvinnik considered himself the best player of all time!”

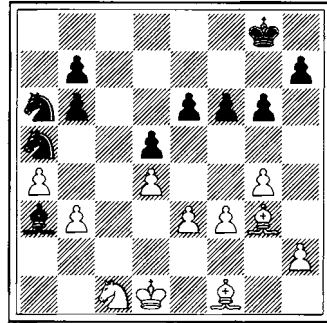
The 23rd Game

Whatever the case, the challenger was leading by a point with two games to go. Malkin recalls trying to congratulate him after his crushing victory in the 22nd game. But Bronstein said, “Vitya, if these two games had to be played by, let’s say, Tolush or Bondarevsky they would win the match. But I won’t.” It was a strange comment considering how he lost the game. Mikhail Beilin noted that if Bronstein had an Achilles Heel it lay in boring positions, where you needed to press and squeeze to win, or parry and dodge to draw.

Bronstein himself has given a variety of vague explanations of the match, including, “I must have had no real ambition to win.” Tom Furstenberg, a longtime friend and coauthor of Bronstein’s game collection, said Bronstein was upset on the day of the 23d

game when he asked his fiancée, Lydia Bogdanova, if she would like him to be world champion. She replied, “I really don’t care.”

Botvinnik–Bronstein World Championship, 1951, 23rd game



After 35 Kd1

“Here it would have been sufficient for Black to play 35 ... Kf7 and White has no advantage,” wrote Botvinnik. But the champion “as in many other games of the match” was in time pressure and this inspired Bronstein’s bid to win the pawn by grabbing the b-pawn. Bronstein called it simply “the worst mistake of the entire match.”

35 ... Bxc1? 36 Kxc1 Nxb3+

The meaninglessness of the extra pawn and power of Botvinnik’s bishops began to take a toll on Bronstein’s concentration:

37 Kc2 Na5 38 Kc3 Kf7 39 e4 f5?

Bronstein had more than 10 minutes when he played this move. He commented years later that he had “no desire to analyze this tragic endgame (but) I believe that even now the position is a draw” without ...f6–f5.

40 gxf5 gxf5 41 Bd3 Kg6

The position was adjourned after 41 ... Kg6 and the entire press room was

World Championship Match, Moscow, March 15–May 11, 1951

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Botvinnik	½	½	½	½	0	1	1	½	½	½	0	1	
Bronstein	½	½	½	½	1	0	0	½	½	½	1	0	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Botvinnik	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	½	0	0	1	½	12–12
Bronstein	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	½	1	1	0	½	12–12

convinced Botvinnik had sealed 42 Bb1, which was later found to be the most accurate. Bronstein, increasingly depressed, was receiving phone calls from “everyone possible” but nothing helped, he said. Botvinnik had a simple plan: post bishops on d6 and b1, exchange pawns on d5 and then win the d-pawn with Ba2 at the right moment.

42 Bd6 Nc6 43 Bb1 Kf6?

But Veinstein had correctly suspected Botvinnik had sealed 42 Bd6 — not necessarily the best, but a psychologically good move because it was a surprise. He wrote that Bronstein hardly considered it.

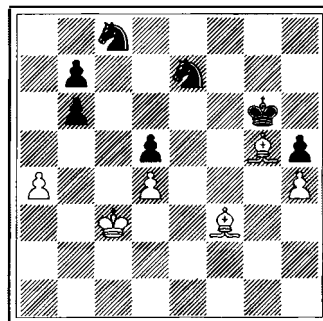
But Bronstein said he had found an antidote for 42 Bd6 — 42 ... Nc6 43 Bb1 Na7! so that 44 exd5 exd5 45 Ba2 b5 would hold. Yet when he came to the board to resume play at move 42, “I was astounded on seeing the bishop on d6” — and he rushed into another line, forgetting about 43 ... Na7!. After that he “completely lost heart.”

44 Bg3!

“This striking move was found after a sleepless night at 8 A.M.,” Botvinnik wrote. The key point is that 44 ... Nab4 allows 45 Be5+ followed by 46 Bd6 Na6 47 exd5 exd5 48 Ba2. He had to break off his feverish analysis of 44 Bg3 at one point because of heart palpitations.

44 ... fxe4 45 fxe4 h6 46 Bf4 h5 47 exd5

exd5 48 h4! Nab8 49 Bg5+ Kf7 50 Bf5 Na7 51 Bf4 Nbc6 52 Bd3 Nc8 53 Be2 Kg6 54 Bd3+ Kf6 55 Be2 Kg6 56 Bf3 N6e7 57 Bg5!



After 57 Bg5

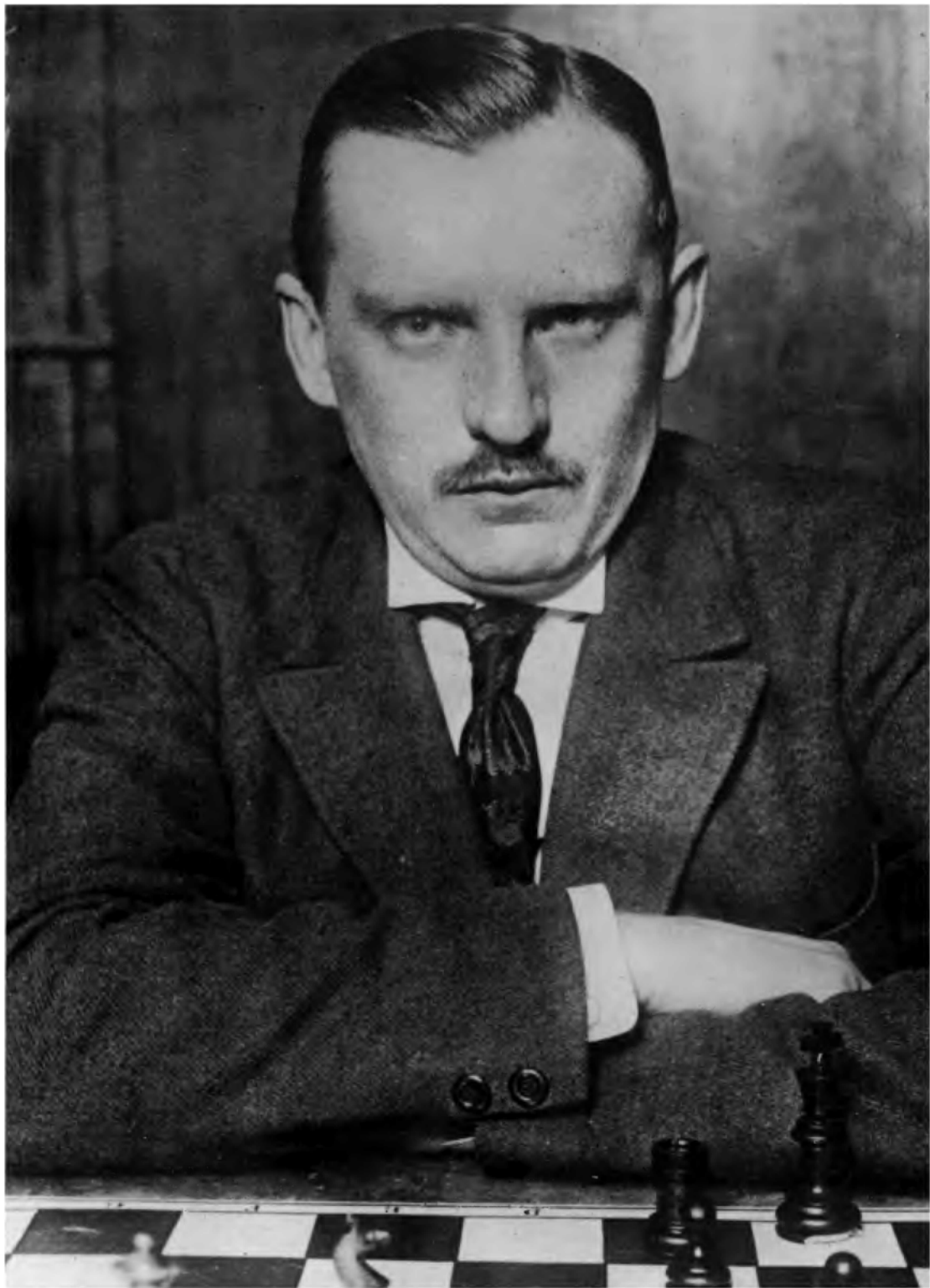
At this point the press room was receiving a call every 15 seconds asking for news. Keres, Tolush, Flohr, Kotov, Bondarevsky and Averbakh had been analyzing frantically as Bronstein’s position collapsed. They waited about 40 minutes for a move. “Then came the stunning news — Bronstein had resigned,” Winter wrote. Veinstein said many spectators thought that when the players shook hands it was because they had agreed on a draw. Kotov wanted to know why Black had not played 57 ... Nc6 58 Bxd5 Nd6 and Bronstein, “the picture of absolute dejection,” apparently had not considered it much. “For the first time Konstantinopolsky was looking quite angry with his young protégé.” Bronstein later credited Smyslov with finding the win: 59 Bf3 Kf5 60 Bc1! so that after 60 ... b5 61 Bxc6 bxc6 White’s a-pawn promotes.

There was still a final game for Bronstein and a chance to win the match with the white pieces, as he had won the playoff from Boleslavsky with Black. Botvinnik was “a complete bundle of nerves” before the game and even tried to have it played in a private room away from public, according to Winter. But Bronstein was “unrecognizable,” avoiding the complications of Botvinnik’s Semi-Slav variation and allowing the champion to equalize fully by the 16th move. Botvinnik had the better position when he offered a draw six moves later, ending the match in a 12–12 tie. Under FIDE rules, used for the first time, the champion retained his title.

Supporters of Bronstein have repeatedly claimed that he was forced to throw the 23rd game. In *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, Bronstein left the matter vague, saying, “The only

thing that I am prepared to say about this controversy is that I was subjected to strong psychological pressure from various sources and it was entirely up to me to yield to that pressure or not. Let’s leave it at that.” But his collaborator Furstenberg said that “after endless conversations” with Bronstein he was convinced Bronstein tried to win the match “right up to the very last game.” In fact, had Bronstein wanted to lose or draw the match there was a simpler way than throwing the 23rd game: When he was trailing 10½–9½ he could have played to draw, not win, the 21st and 22d games.

In the end, Bronstein’s claims that, on some subconscious level, he did not want to be world champion are a poor explanation for one of the most famous defeats in the history of chess.

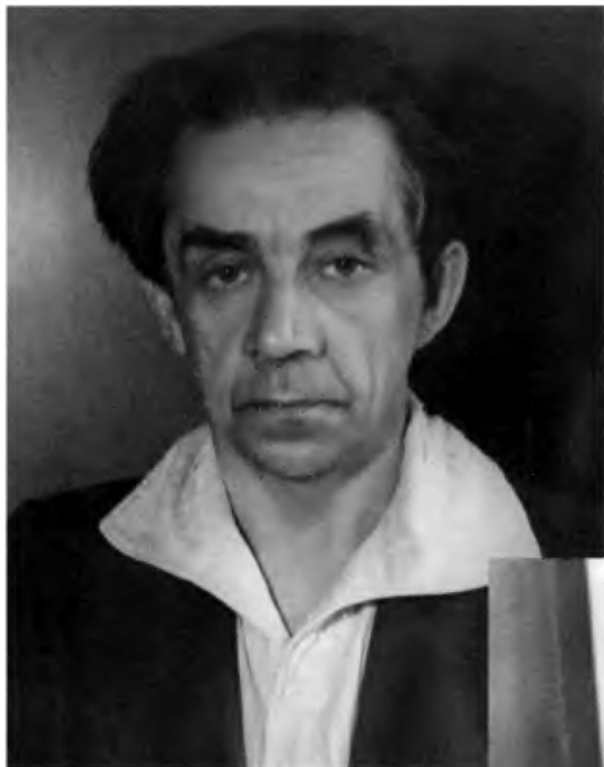


Future world champion Alexander Alekhine won the first Soviet Championship — and was twice interrogated by the Cheka about counter-revolutionary activity — before leaving Russia in 1921.



А. ДУБНИЦКИЙ
И. А. РУБИНSTEIN

И. БОГОМОЛОВ
А. БОГОМОЛОВ



Above, left: Pyotr Romanovsky overcame poor health to emerge as the best Soviet player between 1926 and the emergence of Mikhail Botvinnik in 1931. He miraculously survived the World War II siege and inspired generations of Leningrad youngsters. *Right:* Vyacheslav Ragozin remained a factory worker even after revealing his sacrificial genius at Moscow 1935. Despite world-class ability he devoted himself to being Botvinnik's second and representing Soviet chess abroad (both photographs courtesy of the Russell Collection).

Opposite: Yefim Bogolyubov (left), playing Akiba Rubinstein in the first government-sponsored international tournament, Moscow 1925. "Bogo," a beer-loving former theology student from Kiev, defected a year later (courtesy of the John G. White Collection, Cleveland Public Library).





Above: Tall, thin and redheaded Vasily Smyslov was one of the first success stories of Soviet junior tournaments and — quietly — one of the few religious chess masters. His surprising second-place finish at the 1948 World Championship Match-Tournament was a prelude to winning the title in 1957 (photographs on both pages courtesy of the Russell Collection).

Opposite: Igor Bondarevsky had one great result, in the 1940 Soviet Championship, before becoming trainer to Keres, Geller, Smyslov and Spassky.



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Top: The Soviet elite of the late 1930s (left to right): Grigory Levenfish, Paul Keres, Mikhail Botvinnik, and Alexander Kotov. Botvinnik despised Levenfish, repeatedly humbled Keres and beat Kotov in the 1939 Soviet Championship. **Bottom:** Alexander Kotov's career appeared over before he won the 1952 Interzonal. Politically connected, he enjoyed a second career as an author, television show host and arbiter (both photographs courtesy of the Russell Collection).



Top: Alexander Konstantinopolsky, five-time champion of Kiev, author and postal player, was a trainer of Soviet women players (courtesy of the Russell Collection). ***Bottom:*** Nona Gaprindashvili, a Georgian who dominated women's chess from 1962 to the 1980s, was the first woman International Grandmaster (courtesy of the John G. White Collection, Cleveland Public Library).



8

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ШАХМАТНО
ОБОЗРЕНИЕ

Апрель 1986



Even in the era of *glasnost* the ghost of Lenin was never far from Soviet publications, such as *64*, which rivaled *Shakhmaty v SSSR* as the leading chess publication.

Right: Star-crossed Leonid Stein earned the Master title only at age 24 and nearly gave up chess for a job as a metal worker, yet he won two of the strongest Soviet-era tournaments — only to die of a heart attack at age 38 (courtesy of the John G. White Collection, Cleveland Public Library).



Left: Had Isaac Boleslavsky included politically correct quotations in his college dissertation, he might have been a literature professor. Instead, he turned to chess, becoming one of the world's elite players in the 1940s. "My father was afraid of real life and its surprises," his daughter said (courtesy of the Russell Collection).

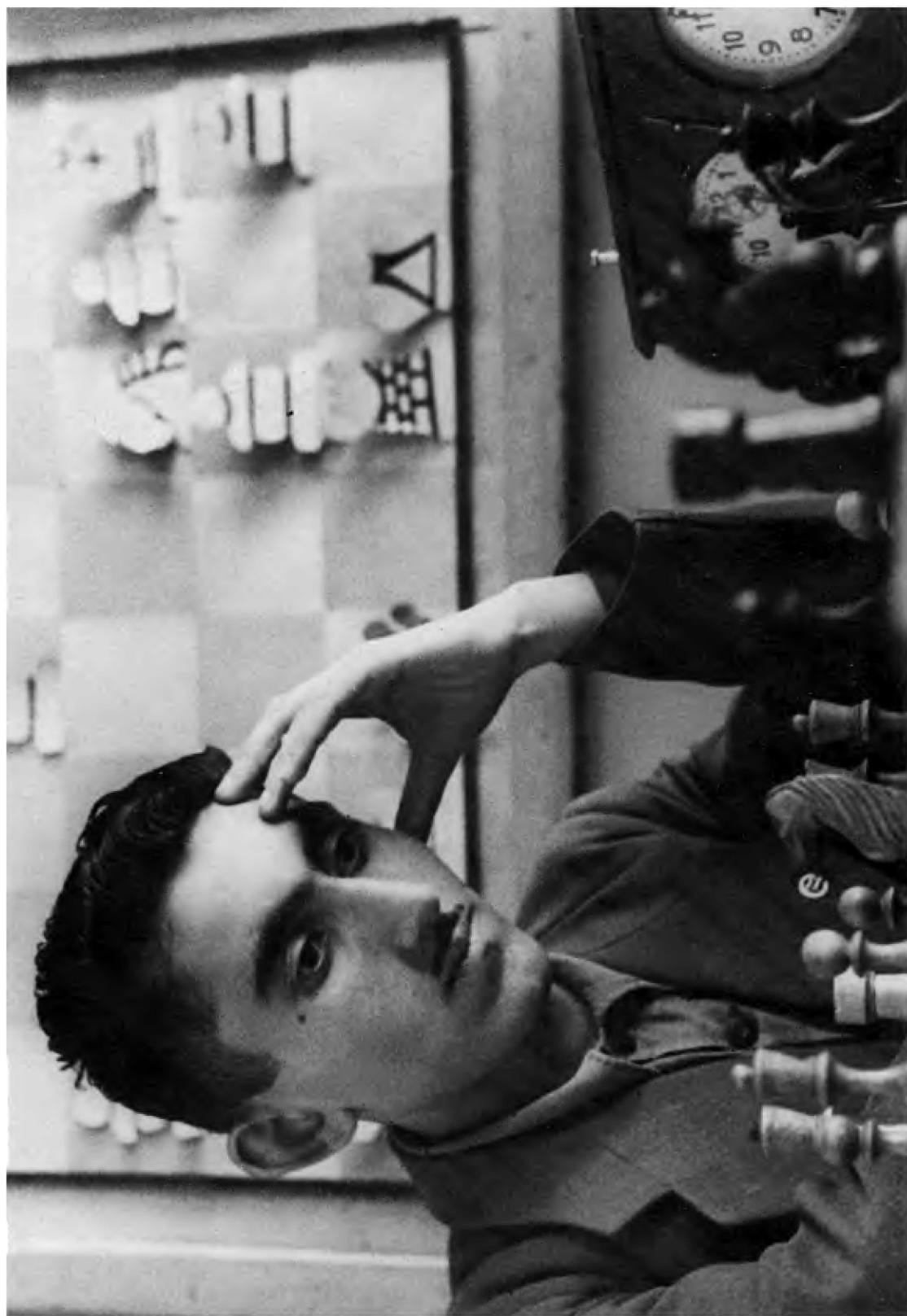






Top: Mikhail Botvinnik and Salo Flohr (right), who met in a high-profile 1933 match, relax with American player Mona Karff (left) and Mrs. Botvinnik (ballerina Gayana Davidovna) during the 1949/1950 Moscow women's world championship tournament. *Bottom:* Mikhail Botvinnik (right) faces Vasily Smyslov in a key game from the 1948 World Championship Match-Tournament at the august Hall of Columns in the House of Unions, Moscow. They finished first and second respectively (courtesy of the Russell Collection).

Opposite: Yuri Averbakh, dubbed the *otlichnik* (star student) of the Soviet Chess School, was a top player in the 1950s, a respected editor from the 1960s on, a well-known author, and a key figure in the Soviet chess federation and FIDE (courtesy of the John G. White Collection, Cleveland Public Library).



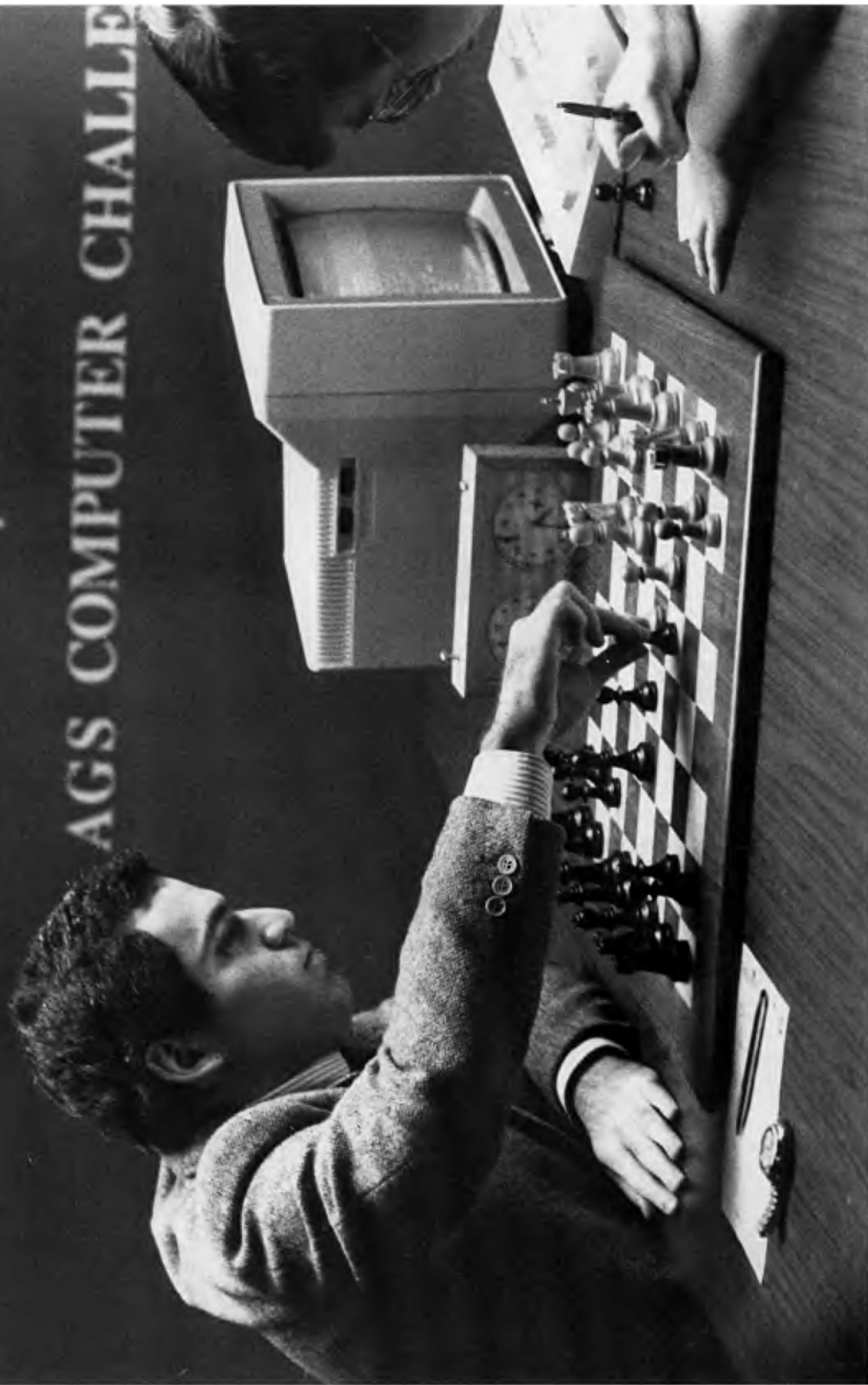


Top, left: David Bronstein was helping to rebuild a Stalingrad steel factory by day and studying the King's Gambit by night when Boris Veinstein found him a career in Moscow. Six years later he drew a World Championship match with Botvinnik that has prompted decades of conspiracy theories (courtesy of the Russell Collection). *Right:* Mark Taimanov had two careers, as a celebrated pianist and as a world-class chess player. But his 0-6 rout at the hands of Bobby Fischer in 1971 led to what he called a "civil execution" at the hands of Soviet authorities (courtesy of the John G. White Collection, Cleveland Public Library). *Above:* Viktor Korchnoi (left) celebrating his 65th birthday with Roman Dzindzhikhashvili and Petra Leeuwerick. Korchnoi, the best-known Soviet defector, was one of several to reach their peak after leaving (courtesy of Jerome Bibuld).

Opposite: At 16 Tigran Petrosian, the partly deaf son of an illiterate caretaker, won the Georgian Championship and launched a brilliant career. He won two world championship matches and became the equivalent of a Soviet chess millionaire (courtesy of the Russell Collection).

presents

AGS COMPUTER CHALLENGE





Above: Avid fans follow blitz moves of Boris Spassky (left) and his frequent rival — and fellow future world champion — Mikhail Tal.

Opposite: Garry Kasparov playing the computer Deep Thought in New York in 1989. Kasparov burst onto the international stage when he easily won a major tournament at age 15. With extraordinary political acumen and connections that rivaled Karpov's he became one of the longest reigning world champions (courtesy of the *New York Post*).



Anatoly Karpov during a New York simultaneous exhibition after his victory at Montreal 1979. Revered by the Soviet press and reviled as “the viper” by jealous competitors, Karpov restored the reputation of Soviet chess in the post-Fischer era (courtesy of the *New York Post*).

11

Golden Age

Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you — Nikita Khrushchev to Western diplomats, 1956

The 1950s were truly the golden age of Soviet chess: The years of isolation were over and players from the USSR entered — and dominated — every major competition.

The Soviets took the top four places in the 1952 Interzonal, the top five in the 1953 candidates tournament, three of the top four in the 1955 Interzonal and six of the seven at the 1956 candidates tournament. The world women's championship was held by three women, all Soviets, during the decade. The new world student team championship was won by the Soviets four of the first five times they played in it. After winning their first Olympiad team tournament by a mere point and a half, the USSR team scored 76 percent in the finals of the next four such events, finishing first by an average of 5½ points.

When FIDE created the International Grandmaster title in 1950, 11 of the 27 members of the first grandmaster class were Soviets — and most of the non-Soviets on the list were virtually retired from chess (Ossip Bernstein, Oldřich Duras, Ernst Grünfeld, Fritz Sämisch, Géza Maróczy, Akiba Rubinstein, Savielly Tartakower, Boris Kostić and Milan Vidmar among them). In the absence of an international rating system, it can be argued that at least 12 of the world's top 15 players from 1950 to 1955 lived in the Soviet Union. The Central Committee's resolution of 1948 — demanding that Soviets

must be No. 1 in sports — had been realized at least in chess, if nowhere else. When Lev Abramov was asked what happened during his 11 years as head of the Chess Section of Sports Committee, he replied: "I'm proud that nothing happened. Soviets players were always first."

The finals of the Soviet Championship was often the strongest tournament held anywhere in a given year. The 18th Championship, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Tchigorin's birth, November 12, 1950, had a stronger field than the important foreign postwar invitationals, such as those at Venice, Amsterdam and Mar del Plata. Among the 18th Championship's minus scores were Igor Bondarevsky, Tigran Petrosian and Yuri Averbakh while at the other end of the scoretable there were equally surprising names, such as Lev Aronin.

B51 Sicilian Defense
18th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1950
white Isaac Boleslavsky,
black Lev Aronin

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+

The check and the related 2 ... Nc6 3 Bb5 had been tested by opening theoreticians Alexey Sokolsky and Vladimir Simagin in the postwar years with mixed results.

Simagin–Benko, Moscow–Budapest match, 1949, showed this was not the same as a Ruy Lopez: 2 ... Nc6 3 Bb5 a6! 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 h3 e5 6 0–0 f6 7 d3 Be6 8 a4 Qd7 9 a5 0–0–0 10 b3 g5 11 Na3 h5 12 Nc4 Qg7 13 Be3 g4 14 Nh4 gxh3 15 g3! Be7 16 Kh2 Rf8 17 Rg1 Kb8 18 Nf5 Bxf5 19 exf5 Qg4 20 Qxg4! hxg4 21 f3! and White won.

Another version was Boleslavsky–Ravinsky, VTSSPS Championship, Leningrad 1949: 2 ... d6 3 Bb5+ Bd7 4 Bxd7+ Qxd7 5 0–0 e5? 6 c3 Nc6 7 d4 Rd8 8 b4! cxb4 9 cxb4 Nxb4 10 Nc3 Nf6 11 Qb3 Nc6 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 Rdl with a terrific initiative.

3 ... Nc6 4 0–0 Bg4 5 c3 Nf6 6 Rel a6 7 Bxc6+ bxc6 8 d3

Aronin expressed the Classical view of the opening when he wrote “Since Black has the two bishops, White avoids the opening of play by way of 8 d4.” He now rejects a good plan involving 8 ... e5 in favor of ...e7–e6 and ...d6–d5.

8 ... e6 9 Nbd2 Nd7 10 Qa4 Qb6 11 h3 Bh5 12 Nh2

White frees his kingside pawns to advance. But 12 e5 (and if 12 ... Bxf3 13 Nxf3 d5 14 c4!) was more thematic and would have stopped Black’s next idea.

12 ... Be7 13 Nc4 Qb5 14 Qc2 d5 15 Ne3 c4! 16 dxc4 dxc4

This amounts to a sound pawn sacrifice that should have been rejected by way of 17 b3 (and 17 ... cxb3 18 axb3 Nc5 19 b4 Nd3 20 Rf1 Nxc1 21 Rfxcl Bg6 22 Nf3), according to Aronin.

17 g4? Bg6 18 Nf3 h5! 19 Nd4 Qb7 20 Nxc4 hxg4 21 hxg4 c5 22 Nb3

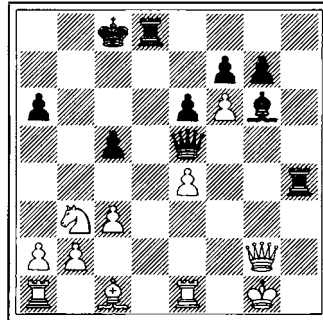
“There was no other retreat, since on 21 Nf3 there would follow 21 ... Nf6, and after 21 Nf5 exf5 the recapture 22 exf5 was impossible in view of mate on h1,” wrote Aronin.

Now 22 ... Rh4 23 f3 allows White to solidify his kingside.

22 ... Qc7! 23 f4 Rh4 24 Qg2 Nf6 25 Ne5 0–0–0 26 g5!

Otherwise 26 ... Bd6 and Black’s attack is overwhelming. Now 26 ... Nd7 27 Nxc6 hxg6 28 Be3 consolidates, so Black sacrifices again.

26 ... Bd6! 27 gxh6 Bxe5 28 fxe5 Qxe5



After 28
... Qxe5

Here 29 Qf2! would force Black to seek solace in perpetual check (29 ... Rdh8 30 Qxc5+ Qxc5+ 31 Nxc5 Rh1+ 32 Kf2 R8h2+ 33 Kg3 Rh3+) but Boleslavsky figured his position deserved more.

29 Nd2 Bh5!

White underestimated the threat of 30 ... Rg4, since 30 Nf3 can be met by 30 ... Bxf3 31 Qxf3 gxh6, threatening ...Rg8+.

30 Nc4 Qc7 31 fxg7?! Rg4 32 Qxg4 Bxg4 33 e5 f5! 34 Bg5 Qxg7! 35 Nb6+ Kc7 36 Bxd8+ Kxd8 37 Kf2 Qg5 38 Na8! Qf4+ 0–1

Aronin, one of the first players to earn

the International Master title, was a trained meteorologist and strong amateur who was reaching his peak at age 30. The proto-rating list of late 1949, based on events over the previous three years, placed Aronin only in 26th place among Soviet players. But Aronin shared the lead going into the final round of the 18th Championship. A half point behind was Isaac Lipnitsky, a 27-year-old Ukrainian theoretician and professional teacher. Had either man won the 18th Championship they might have gotten crucial backing from the *vlasti* and the permission to play abroad that made all the difference for Soviet players in the 1950s.

But Paul Keres moved ahead on the final day to win his second Soviet title, while Aronin and Lipnitsky tied for second place with Alexander Tolush. The key games that doomed Aronin's chances were losses to Smyslov in the ninth round and the following:

B66 Sicilian Defense
18th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1950

white Paul Keres, *black* Lev Aronin

1 e4 c5 2 Ne2

Keres toyed with this transpositional device, intending to meet 2 ... d6 with 3 g3.

2 ... Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Qd2 a6 8 0-0-0 h6 9 Bf4

"Bad, of course, is 9 Bh4, because of 9 ... Nxe4!," Keres wrote, not suspecting that 10 Qf4 would become a controversial variation for the rest of the decade. After the text Black must meet the threat of 10 Nxc6 and 11 Bxd6.

9 ... Bd7 10 Nxc6 Bxc6 11 f3 d5 12 Qe1

This was considered a major improve-

ment over 12 e5?, as Viktor Liublinsky had played against Aronin in the 17th Championship, which leads to a Black edge after 12 ... Nd7 13 Ne2 Qc7. It was presumed to create major problems for Black along the d-file.

12 ... Bb4 13 a3 Bxc3?

"On 13 ... Ba5 there could follow 14 exd5 Nxd5 15 b4! with numerous tactical threats," Keres wrote. Simagin later found the flaw in this analysis: 15 ... Nxf4! 16 Rxd8+ Bxd8 gives Black excellent compensation, e.g., 17 Ne2? Nxe2+ 18 Bxe2 0-0 19 Kbl Bf6 as in Estrin-Simagin, Ragozin Memorial Correspondence Tournament, 1963-64.

After the text, White's superiority is unquestioned.

14 Qxc3 0-0 15 Be5

Forcing, but perhaps not as promising as 15 h4.

15 ... Nd7 16 Bd6 Re8 17 e5 Rc8 18 Qe3 Bb5

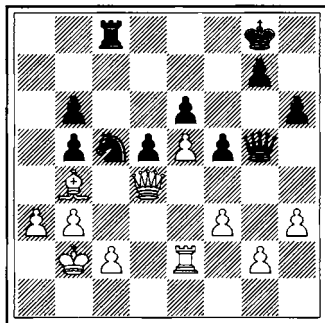
This weakening of the queenside pawns ruins, rather than helps, Black's attacking chances and 18 ... Qa5 was better.

19 Bxb5 axb5 20 Rd4 Qb6 21 Rd3 Qa6 22 Rhd1 Rc6 23 Rc3! Rec8 24 Rxc6 Qxc6 25 Rd2 b6 26 b3 f5 27 Kb2 Nc5 28 h3 Nb7 29 Bb4 Nc5 30 Qd4 Qe8 31 Re2 Qh5 32 Re3 Qg5 33 Re2 (*see diagram*)

White's advantage is magnified by having two winning ideas, either a trade of queens into a favorable ending or a kingside attack with g2-g4. Here 33 Qd2 followed by maneuvering the bishop to d4 was better because Black now misses an opportunity that would at least have drawn and might

Eighteenth Soviet Championship, Moscow, November 10–December 12, 1950

	K	A	L	T	K	S	A	B	G	F	M	B	P	A	B	S	L	S	<i>Score</i>
1. Keres	X	1	½	½	½	½	0	1	1	1	1	½	0	1	1	½	1	½	11½–5½
2–4. Aronin	0	X	0	1	1	0	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	11–6
2–4. Lipnitsky	½	1	X	½	0	1	0	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	0	1	1	11–6
2–4. Tolush	½	0	½	X	1	½	1	½	0	1	1	½	0	1	½	1	1	1	11–6
5–6. Konstantinopolsky	½	0	1	0	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	10–7
5–6. Smyslov	½	1	0	½	½	X	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	½	0	1	1	1	10–7
7–10. Alatorsev	1	½	1	0	½	½	X	0	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	0	9–8
7–10. Boleslavsky	0	0	½	½	0	1	1	X	1	1	½	0	½	1	½	½	½	½	9–8
7–10. Geller	0	1	0	1	½	½	½	0	X	0	½	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	9–8
7–10. Flohr	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	1	X	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	9–8
11. Mikenas	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	0	X	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	8½–8½
12–13. Bondarevsky	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	1	0	0	1	X	0	1	½	1	½	½	8–9
12–13. Petrosian	1	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	1	X	0	1	0	1	½	8–9
14. Averbakh	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	1	X	½	1	1	1	7–10
15–16. Borisenko	0	½	0	½	½	1	0	½	1	0	0	½	0	½	X	0	½	1	6½–10½
15–16. Suetin	½	0	1	0	0	0	½	½	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	X	0	1	6½–10½
17–18. Liublinsky	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	½	1	X	½	4–13
17–18. Sokolsky	½	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	½	X	4–13



After 33 Re2

have won the tournament: 33 ... Qc1+!
34 Kxc1 Nxb3+ or 34 Ka2 Na6! 35 Bc3 b4
36 Bb2 (36 axb4 Ra8) Rxc2. Keres said he
saw the check but overlooked 34 ... Na6.

33 ... Qg3? 34 Be1 Qg5 35 Bd2 Qg3?

And this loses the b-pawn and forces
Black into a desperate kingside raid. Keres
said 35 ... Qe7 36 Qb4 Qd7 would lead
him to turn attention to the kingside with
37 g4.

36 Qb4 Qh2 37 Qxb5 Qg1 38 Be3 Qd1
39 Rd2 Qe1 40 Qe2 Qg3 41 Bd4 g5
42 a4 Kf7 43 Rd1

Carefully avoiding 43 a5 bxa5 44 Qb5
Qe1 and other lines that give Black chances.

43 ... h5 44 a5 g4 45 hxg4 fxg4
46 axb6 gxg4 47 Rf1! Ke7 48 Rxf3 Qg4
49 Bxc5+ Rxc5 50 Qf2 Rb5 51 Rf7+ Ke8
52 Rf8+ 1-0

For the next Soviet Championship
finals, in November and December, 1951,
the organizers secured the Hall of Columns,
whose stage was decorated with yellow and
white chrysanthemums and a velvet curtain.
The elaborate qualification system to reach
it included a "candidate tournament" from
which the top scoring candidate masters ad-
vanced to meet masters seeded in the quar-
ter-finals. The quarter-finals winners were
joined by seeded grandmasters and some
masters in four 20-player semifinals.

Since only Botvinnik and Keres were
seeded into the finals, the qualification sys-
tem produced some surprises. Candidate
Master Evgeny Terpugov had operated a
demonstration board six months earlier in
the Botvinnik–Bronstein world champion-
ship match — but found himself playing in
the championship finals. He finished last
but managed to defeat Kotov and should
have won a brilliancy prize against one of
the members the new generation:

A43 Benoni Defense
19th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1951
white Evgeny Terpugov,
black Yefim Geller

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 d5 d6 4 Nc3 g6
5 e4 Bg7 6 Be2 0-0 7 Bg5 Nbd7 8 Qd2
Qa5 9 0-0 Re8 10 Bh6 Bh8 11 Ng5!

Black's last two moves avoided the trade
of his bishop but left him vulnerable to
f2-f4, e4-e5 and an attack on f7.

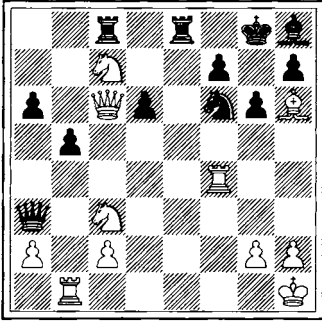
11 ... a6 12 f4 Qb4 13 Kh1! Qxb2
14 Rab1 Qa3 15 e5 dxe5 16 d6!

Now 16 ... exd6 17 Bc4 fatally exposes
f7. Terpugov analyzed 16 ... e6 17 fxg5
Nxe5 18 Rf4, threatening either Ra4 or
Rbf1, and found White was winning even
after the best line, 18 ... Qa5 19 Rbf1 Ned7
because of 19 Rxf6! Nxf6 20 Rxf6! Bxf6
21 Nce4 Qd8 22 Qf4.

16 ... exf4 17 Rxf4 c4 18 Bxc4 Ne5
19 Qe2!

Based on 19 ... Qxc3 20 Qxe5 or
19 ... e6 20 Qxe5 Nd5 21 Qxh8+! Kxh8
22 Rxf7 Qxc3 23 Rbf1 and wins.

19 ... Nxc4 20 Qxc4 Be6!? 21 Nxe6 b5
22 Qc6 Rac8 23 Nc7 exd6 (*see diagram*)



After 23
... e×d6

Having played the game of his life so far, White could have finished off with 24 N3d5! N×d5 25 Q×d5 R×c7 26 Rbf1 and 27 R×f7. He misses a second chance for this combination at move 25 and the result is a dramatic turn of events.

24 Rf3? Qa5 25 Q×a6?? Q×c7 26 N×b5 Q×c2 27 Rbf1 Qe2 28 a4 Rc2 29 Rg1 Ng4 30 Bf4 Nf2+ 31 R×f2 Q×f2 32 Bg3 Qe3 33 N×d6 Q×g1+! 0–1

It is mate after 34 K×g1 Bd4+ 35 Kf1 Rcl+.

The Accidental Grandmaster

The Championship finalists were the survivors of the vast and exhausting Soviet system of finding talented players. It has been argued that the system was a typical case of Soviet overkill — that the youngsters with potential talent would have found chess anyway, that chess did not have to find them. But Yefim Petrovich Geller came to the game through a lucky accident.

Born in Odessa, March 8, 1925, Geller felt the tug of chess from his father, who had studied with Boris Verlinsky, and from the publicity of Moscow 1935 — “a second chess epidemic,” as Geller put it. But the stocky, bull-necked youth with a sailor’s build did not appreciate organized chess until 1938. That year he went with friends to the Odessa Pioneers Palace, the former residence

of a Count Varontov, to join its soccer section. The boys found the section was already filled, and as Geller began to leave he passed by a room and noticed an adult and some youths inside engaged in a lively analysis of the Botvinnik–Alekhine game from AVRO 1938. The 13-year-old Geller joined in the discussions and was invited to enroll in the Palace chess section, where he quickly became a third-category player. Geller studied Aron Nimzovich’s *Chess Praxis* and the games of Botvinnik and Alekhine and, based on his study of the Keres–Botvinnik crush from the Absolute Championship, he won his first game from a master, Samuil Zhukovitsky, at age 15.

But the war robbed Geller of his chess youth and he was only a candidate master in 1949 when he had to choose between playing, as a reserve, on the Odessa team in the Soviet Basketball Championship or trying his chances in the chess Championship semifinals. He chose chess, qualified for the first of his 23 Championship finals and played his first grandmaster, Keres, in the first round. Geller finished impressively in a tie for third prize, behind Smyslov and Bronstein.

Geller had all the natural gifts to reach a world championship match as well as insights into the new currents of opening theory. “Before Geller we did not understand the King’s Indian Defense,” Botvinnik said, in rare praise. But Geller was also prone to blunders and lacked the drive and phenomenal capacity for hard work of a Botvinnik. *Shakhmaty v SSSR* also accused Geller of character flaws, such as being “conceited” and “disdainful” towards colleagues.

Geller admitted that his lack of respect for Western players cost him when he eventually played abroad. More than any other member of the 1950s generation, he seemed to play the role of Cold Warrior. Geller’s name was attached to propaganda such as: “Our sun is the Soviet state.... We have created for us conditions for the flowering of

science and culture such as are not enjoyed by any other country.” In a comparable vein, the first version of Kotov and Udovich’s *Sovietskaya Shakhmatnaya Shkola* (The Soviet Chess School) appeared in 1951 and said that in contrast with the USSR, “In the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie, physical education, including sport, is one of the means of preparing cannot fodder for aggressive wars, a means of increasing the exploitation of workers and of dulling their consciousness.”

The 19th Championship was exceptionally hard fought: every player lost at least two games and only 36 percent of the games were drawn. Geller lost to Smyslov in the first round and Keres in the fourth, but still managed to seize a share of first place, with Botvinnik, by the 11th round. The world champion had begun the tournament in strong form, as illustrated by what was called the “25th game of the 1951 world championship match.”

D44 Queen’s Gambit Declined
19th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1951
white David Bronstein,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6
 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5
 9 exf6

This avoids the gambit possibilities of 9 Nxg5 hxg5 10 Bxg5 and offers a pawn sacrifice of White’s own. Botvinnik had played 5 ... dxc4 in the 24th game of the 1951 match but Bronstein avoided the theoretical debate by way of 6 a4.

9 ... gxh4 10 Ne5 Qxf6 11 g3 Nd7
 12 Qe2!

But Bronstein had prepared this new idea, to castle queenside quickly, in place of

Ludek Pachman’s 12 f4, which allows Black an easy endgame after 12 ... Bb7 13 Bg2 Nxe5 14 dxe5 Qd8! and then 15 Qf3 Qd3.

12 ... Nxe5 13 dxe5 Qe7 14 Bg2 Bb7
 15 0–0–0 Bg7

Botvinnik said he rejected 15 ... Rd8 because of 16 Ne4 Rd5 17 Nd6+ and 18 Bxd5 and decided to castle for once in this line on the kingside.

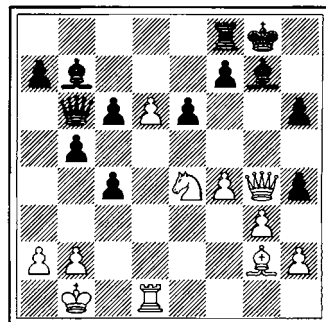
16 f4 0–0 17 Rd6 Rad8 18 Rhd1 Rxd6

If Black avoids this capture, White will build pressure with Ne4–c5. If White decides to trade all four rooks, his pressure evaporates (19 Rxd6 Rd8 20 Qd2 Rxd6 21 exd6 Qd8 22 d7 b4).

19 exd6 Qd8 20 Ne4 Qa5

This stops 21 Nc5 because of 21 ... Qxa2! 22 Nxb7 Qa1+ 23 Kd2 Qa6! 24 Nc5 Qa5+ 25 Ke3 Qb6! or 25 Kc2 Qb4. It forces the king to b1, relinquishing control of the key d1 and d2 squares, according to Botvinnik.

21 Kbl Qb6 22 Qg4?



After 22 Qg4

Boleslavsky called this a “tactical oversight” and said the key line was 22 d7 Rd8 23 f5! c5! 24 Nd6 Bxg2 25 fx6! (“Here is where the dog is buried,” Botvinnik wrote) fx6 26 Qxe6+ Kh7 after which White can

draw by perpetual check but no more. Botvinnik cited the dangerous line 27 Re1 Rf8! 28 Ne8 Rf1! 29 Qxb6 Rxe1+ 30 Kc2 axb6 31 d8(Q) Re2+ 32 Kd1 Bf3, not mentioning 31 N×g7! Re2+ 32 Kc1 Re1+ drawing, as pointed out by Boleslavsky.

22 ... f5 23 Qg6 c5!

Accepting the sacrifice would give White a crushing attack after 24 B×e4. But now 24 N×c5 Q×c5 25 B×b7 fails to 25 ... Qf2 and b2 cannot be defended.

24 g4! B×e4 25 B×e4 f×e4 26 g5 h×g5 27 f×g5 Qd8 28 Q×e6+ Kh8 29 Qg4! Qe8 30 g6 Bh6

“The only, but sufficient defense,” Botvinnik wrote. The rest of the game was prolonged by time pressure but, as the winner said, a piece is a piece.

31 Q×h4 Kg7 32 d7 Qd8 33 Q×e4 Bg5 34 a4 Qe7 35 Qg4 Qf6 36 Ka2 b4? 37 Rg1 b3+ 38 Ka3 Be3 39 Qh5!

Last trap: 39 ... Rh8 allows 40 d8(Q)! R×d8 41 Qh7+ Kf8 42 g7+ or 40 ... Q×d5 41 Qe5+ and 42 Q×e3.

39 ... Bh6 40 Q×c5? Rd8? 41 Rd1? K×g6 42 Qg1+ Kh7 43 Kb4 Rb8+ 44 Kc5 Be3+! 45 Q×e3 Qb6+ 46 K×c4 Q×e3 47 d8(Q) R×d8 48 R×d8 Qe6+ 49 Rd5 a5 50 h4 and 0–1

The Soviet Championships of the 1950s featured other memorable battles involving players little known outside the borders of the USSR. Vasily Byvshev, who later helped train Alexander Khalifman and Irina Levitina, never finished higher than a tie for 10th in a Soviet finals but he collaborated on one of the battle royales of the 19th Championship.

E23 Nimzo-Indian Defense
19th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1951
white Alexander Tolush,
black Vasily Byvshev

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0–0
 5 a3 B×c3+ 6 b×c3 Re8 7 Bd3 e5 8 Ne2
 e4 9 Bb1 b6 10 Ng3!

Black’s opening plan is based on preserving control of e4 and the innocuous 10 0–0 Ba6 11 Ba2 could have been met by 11 ... c6 and ...d7–d5. After 10 Ng3, however, White can meet 10 ... Ba6 with 11 f3! B×c4 12 f×e4 d6 13 Qf3 with a fine game.

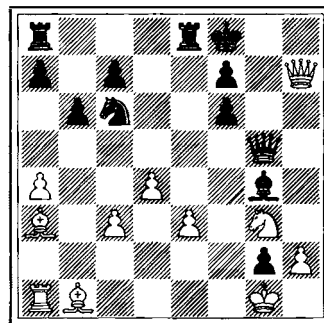
10 ... Nc6 11 f3! e×f3 12 0–0!!!

Mark Taimanov and Salo Flohr, in the tournament book, called this characteristic of Tolush’s sharp style but added that White gets a clear edge by way of 12 Q×f3 Ba6 13 e4 B×c4 14 Kf2 (however not 13 0–0 B×c4 14 Rf2 d5).

12 ... f×g2 13 Rf2 d5 14 c×d5 Bg4!

Mindful of his opponent’s reputation, Byvshev allows no chance of 14 ... Q×d5 15 R×f6! g×f6 16 Nh5. Black defends excellently.

15 Qd3 Q×d5 16 a4 Qg5! 17 R×f6 g×f6
 18 Q×h7+ Kf8 19 Ba3+



After 19 Ba3+

This is what Tolush had in mind with his 16th move: 19 ... Ne7 20 Be4! Rad8 21 Bc6 Bd7 22 Bxg2 or 21 ... Qg7 22 Qh4 Kg8 23 Bxe8 Rxe8 24 Bxe7 Rxe7 25 h3 favors White.

19 ... Nb4!! 20 Be4

On 20 Bxb4+ c5 Black suddenly takes over the attack with ... Qxe3+.

20 ... Qxe3+ 21 Kxg2 Qd2+ 22 Kf1 Qf4+ 23 Kg2 Qd2+ 24 Kf1 Qf4+ 25 Kg1 Qe3+ 26 Kg2 Qd2+

Black did not have enough time to realize he could claim a draw by repetition — or to consider strong alternatives such as 22 ... Qxc3 (and 24 ... Qxc3).

27 Kh1! Qxc3 28 Bxb4+ Qxb4 29 Rf1

White, also short of time, avoids the draw (29 Bxa8 Re1+) and plays for mate (29 ... Ke7 30 Qh4).

29 ... Rad8 30 Qh8+ Ke7 31 Qxf6+ Kd7 32 Qc6+ Ke7 33 Bf5 Bxf5?!

A horrendous blunder. Taimanov and Flohr said Black's chances are as good as White's after 33 ... Qxd4! 34 Qxc7+ Rd7! 35 Bxd7 Qxd7 36 Qe5+ Qe6 37 Qg5+ Kf8 or 34 Re1+ Kf8 35 Qh6+ Qg7 36 Rxe8+ Rxe8 37 Qxg7+ Kxg7 38 Bxg4 Rel+ 39 Kg2 Ral.

34 Nxf5+ Kf8 35 Qh6+ Kg8 36 Qg7 mate

Forward, Kazimirich!

It was a fitting finish for Alexander Kazimirovich Tolush, who reveled in his reputation as “a specialist in g7,” the square on which he liked to mate his opponents.

Boris Spassky, who was trained by him for eight formative years, wrote that to understand Tolush you had to see him playing poker, one of his many games. But Tolush would bet on anything, even on which street-car would reach a station first. It was “Kazimirich,” as he was often called, who cured Spassky of his positional dryness and faith in the strategic rules of Nimzovich. In casual games, and sometimes in clocked chess, Tolush would say to himself, “Forward, Kazimirich!” in a rich baritone as he played some devastating move. In serious games, he would sit holding his large head, with thinning hair and bushy eyebrows, in two hands propped up in front of him, with two fingers holding an ever-present cigarette.

Another admirer, Andrei Batuyev, recalled one of Tolush's game from a Leningrad Championship. A crowd had already formed behind the barrier at Tolush's table after his first sacrifice. His opponent's king found refuge on the queenside — so Tolush sacrificed two more pieces:

“A wall of fans, following the duel, grew catastrophically upward. What kept the top tier of spectators intact remains a mystery. Clutching one another by the shoulder, the fans hung in the air in defiance of the laws of physics. Thinking Tolush's opponent was done for, someone shouted ‘Forward, Kazimirovich!’ But ... Tolush's opponent defended expertly. He returned two pieces and his king strove for a safe haven. At that moment, Tolush's flag fell and the judge forfeited him. What? ‘Unfair!’ ‘Let them play it out!’ Suddenly the living wall staggered and the fans literally held in the air began to fall to the floor with a crash. Somehow, in the turmoil, it didn't become a brawl. Such were the passions stirred by Tolush's courageous play!”

The 19th Championship had been designated as a “zonal” event, and under the new FIDE format, was to select players for the 1952 Interzonal tournament. Smyslov, who was seeded, and Botvinnik, who of course

Nineteenth Soviet Championship, Moscow, November 11–December 14, 1951

	K	G	P	S	B	A	B	T	A	F	K	B	K	S	L	M	N	T	<i>Score</i>
1. Keres	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	0	½	0	1	1	1	1	1	12–5
2–3. Geller	0	X	½	0	1	½	0	1	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	11½–5½
2–3. Petrosian	½	½	X	1	½	½	½	1	0	½	0	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	11½–5½
4. Smyslov	0	1	0	X	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	0	1	11–6
5. Botvinnik	½	0	½	0	X	½	1	½	1	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	10–7
6–8. Averbakh	½	½	½	1	½	X	0	0	1	½	½	1	½	½	0	½	1	1	9½–7½
6–8. Bronstein	½	1	½	0	0	1	X	1	0	½	1	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	9½–7½
6–8. Taimanov	0	0	0	0	½	1	0	X	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	9½–7½
9–10. Aronin	0	0	1	½	0	0	1	½	X	1	1	0	½	½	1	½	1	½	9–8
9–10. Flohr	½	1	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	0	1	9–8
11. Kopilov	1	0	1	0	1	½	0	0	0	½	X	1	0	1	1	0	1	½	8½–8½
12–13. Bondarevsky	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	1	½	0	X	½	½	0	1	1	1	8–9
12–13. Kotov	1	0	0	½	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	X	½	0	½	1	0	8–9
14. Simagin	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	½	1	1	1	7½–9½
15–16. Lipnitsky	0	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	0	1	1	½	X	½	½	1	6½–10½
15–16. Moiseev	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	1	0	½	0	½	X	1	1	6½–10½
17. Novotelnov	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	½	0	X	½	3–14
18. Terpigov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	0	0	0	½	X	2½–14½

was not seeking a spot in the Interzonal, fought Geller for the Championship lead until this 12th round game:

A85 Dutch Indian Defense
19th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1951
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Nikolai Kopilov

1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6

The Indian (...Bg7) version of the Dutch was a specialty of Leningrad players at the time. Botvinnik tries for e2–e4 and Black is willing to mix it up tactically to stop him.

4 Nc3 Bg7 5 Bg5 Nc6 6 Qd2 d5! 7 Bxf6 Bxf6 8 Nxd5 Bxd4 9 Nxc7+!

Black is better after 9 c3 Bg7 10 Rd1 e6. Now, however, 9 ... Qxc7 10 Bxc6+ favors White.

9 ... Kf7! 10 Nf3

White can not accept the sacrifice with 10 Nxa8 Bxf2+! 11 Kd1 because of 11 ... Qxd2+ 12 Kxd2 Rd8+ 13 Kc3 Bd4+ 14 Kb3 Be6+ 15 c4 Na5+ 16 Kc2 Nxc4. After 10 Nf3 Black can equalize with 10 ... Bxf2+ 11 Kxf2 Qxc7 — but he gives the world champion a chance to sharpen play.

10 ... Bxb2!? 11 Rb1 Qxd2+ 12 Nxd2 Bc3 13 Rb3?

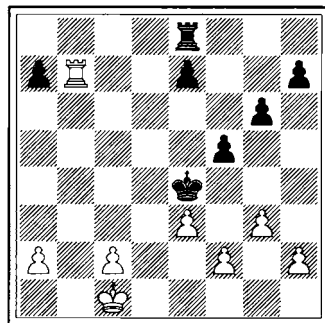
In his notes Kopilov said White had *three* more promising continuations, 13 Bxc6 bxc6 14 Nxa8 Rd8 15 Rd1 or 13 Nxa8 Rd8 14 Rd1 Be6 15 Nc7 or just 13 Nxa8 Rd8 14 0–0 Rxd2 15 Nc7 Rxe2 16 Nd5.

13 ... Bxd2+ 14 Kxd2 Be6 15 Nxe6?

White's last winning chance lay in 15

Nxa8 Bxb3 16 axb3 Rxa8 17 Bxc6 with the better of the resulting rook endgame.

15 ... Kxe6 16 Rxb7 Rhd8+ 17 Kc1 Nd4 18 Re1 Rac8 19 Rb2 Rc5! 20 e3 Nb5 21 Rd1 Rdc8 22 Rd5! Rxd5 23 Bxd5+ Kxd5 24 Rxb5+ Ke4! 25 Rb7 Re8!



After 25
... Re8

Black's rampaging king is worth two pawns, Kopilov said, adding that it was time for White to defend with 26 Kd2 Kf3 27 Kel after which 27 ... Rc8 28 Rxe7 Rxc2 29 Rxa7 Rxf2 30 Rxh7 Rxa2 31 h4 Kxe3 draws.

26 Rxa7? Kf3 27 a4 Kxf2 28 a5 g5 29 a6 Kxe3 30 Rd7 e5 31 a7 Ra8 32 Rxh7 f4 33 gxh4 gxh4 34 Kd1 f3 35 c4

Or 35 Kel Rg8 36 Kf1 Rd8 and wins.

35 ... Rd8+ 36 Kc2 f2 37 Rf7 Ra8 0–1

Going into final round Keres had 11 points, ahead of Geller, Smyslov and Petrosian who were tied with 10½. Yevgeny Zagoryansky caught the drama of the 2,000 spectators trying to squeeze past guards into the House of Unions, making it resemble "a besieged fortress whose defenders were hardpressed repulsing onslaught after onslaught." Petrosian seized the initiative from Terpugov in the fifth hour of play and won, edging ahead of Smyslov who only drew with Aronin. Geller joined Petrosian temporarily in first place by swindling Nikolai Novotelnov. But Keres won one of his

finest games against Taimanov to clinch first prize.

Had the 18th Championship been named the “zonal,” Aronin would have been on the list of five Soviet players that Moscow sent FIDE as their representatives in the second Interzonal, held at Stockholm-Saltsjöbaden, September 9–October 21, 1952. He was replaced by Alexander Kotov, the only member of the delegation who had played at the previous Interzonal. At 39 Kotov was the senior member of the group and was regarded as well past the prime he showed at Groningen 1946. Yet he astonished fans with his greatest success, a victory comparable to later performances by Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. Kotov won his first eight games and scored 9½ points out of 10. By tournament’s end he had allowed only three draws to the 16 non–Soviet players.

E59 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Interzonal, Stockholm-Saltsjöbaden,
1952

white Alexander Kotov,
black Alexander Matanović

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5
5 Bd3

Later in the decade 5 Ne2 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 a3 Be7 8 c5 became popular. Black scored victories such as Ragozin–Cherepkov, Leningrad 1957: 8 ... b6 9 b4 bxc5 10 dxc5 e5 11 f4 Nc6 12 Qa4 Bd7 13 b5 Rc8! 14 fxe5 Nxe5 15 Qd4 0–0! 16 Qxe5 Bxc5 17 Bg5 Re8 18 Bxf6 gxf6 19 Qf4 Be3 20 Qg3+ Kh8 21 Nxd5 Qa5+ 22 Nb4 Bxb5 23 h4 Qd8 24 Rd1 Rcl!! 25 Nxc1 Bd2+ 26 Kf2 Qd4+ 0–1

5 ... d5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 0–0–0 8 a3 Bxc3
9 bxc3

Now 9 ... Qc7 allows White to liquidate his center with 10 cxd5 exd5 11 c4 dxc4 12 Bxc4. The danger to Black was

revealed by Dzhanoev–Litvinov, USSR Team Championship, 1958: 12 ... Rd8? 13 Ng5! Ne5 14 dxe5! Rxd1 15 Rxd1 Bg4 16 exf6!! and now 16 ... Bxd1 17 Bxf7+ Kh8 18 fxg7+ Kxg7 19 Ne6+ or, as the game went, 16 ... Qe5 17 Nxf7 Qxa1 18 Nh6+ Kf8 19 fxg7+ Kxg7 20 Nxc4 Qc3 21 e4! Qxc4 22 Rd7+ and wins.

9 ... dxc4 10 Bxc4 Qc7

Dozens, if not hundreds, of master games began with these ten, usually quickly played, moves in the years 1950 to 1954. No fewer than nine alternatives were tried for White at move 11 and Kotov’s choice is a gambit sideline.

11 a4 Rd8 12 Ba3! cxd4

But the offer should be declined, such as by way of 12 ... b6 13 Be2 Bb7 14 Qc2 Na5.

13 cxd4 Nxd4 14 Nxd4 Qxc4 15 Be7!

The point of White’s sacrifice: 15 ... Re8 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 Qg4+ Kh8 18 Qh4 or 17 Rcl and 18 Nb5 gives excellent compensation.

15 ... Rd5 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 Qf3!

The key to this move is that 17 ... f5 can be met by 18 Qg3+ and 19 f4 with a strong attack, while 17 ... Kg7 invites 18 Qg4+ Kh8 19 Qf4 Kg7?? 20 Nf5+.

17 ... Bd7 18 Qxf6 Qc7 19 Rab1!

Another exact move, provoking a weakness at c6.

19 ... b6 20 Nf3 Qd8 21 Qf4 Rc8 22 e4
Ra5 23 Ne5? f6!

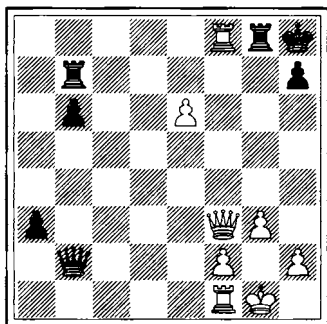
White’s slip (23 Rfd1 first, then 24 Ne5

wins) allows Black to fight back. Now 24 Ng4 e5! 25 Nxf6+? Kf7 turns the tables.

24 Nxd7 Qxd7 25 Qxf6 Rf8 26 Qh6 Rxa4 27 Rb3 Qe7 28 Rg3+ Kh8 29 e5 Rh4 30 Qc1! Rhf4

Black cannot allow the f-pawn to advance.

31 Rc3 a5 32 Rc7 Qb4 33 Qe3 a4 34 g3 R4f7 35 Rc6 Rb7 36 Rxe6 a3 37 Rf6 Ra8 38 e6! Qb2 39 Qf3 Rg8 40 Rf8!



After 40 Rf8

Kotov recalled Alekhine's complaint that often an opponent keeps you from demonstrating the depth of your combination. Here on 40 ... Rbg7! White could have reeled off a gem of calculation: 41 Rd1! a2 (or 41 ... Rxf8 42 Qxf8+ and 43 e7!) 42 e7 a1(Q)! 43 e8(Q) Qaa2 44 Rd8 Qab3 45 Qa8 Q2a2 and now with four queens and four rooks on the board they disappear quickly with 46 R×g8+ Q×g8 47 Q×a2 or 46 ... R×g8 47 Qe5 mate.

Black cheats Kotov by allowing an immediate win.

40 ... Ra7? 41 R×g8+ K×g8 42 Qd5! 1-0

At the end of his career Kotov said there were four highlights of his life — when he was honored in the Kremlin for the mine he invented, when his first play was performed on stage, when he was named chief arbiter of an Interzonal and when he beat Gedeon Barcza in the 19th round at Stockholm. That

game clinched first prize and within five minutes he had received a congratulatory telegram from *Pravda*.

The Dvornik's Son

While Kotov was scoring 82.5 percent against the Interzonal field, Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian was quietly moving through the scoretable, picking up points where he could. Four years younger than his friend Geller, Petrosian had advanced quickly. His Armenian father was an illiterate *dvornik*, a caretaker at the Tbilisi officers' home, who had fled from Turkey in 1904. Tigran, born June 17, 1929, grew up during the lean war years. He was short, dark-complexioned and deaf but had what Arthur Bisguier called "a wonderfully expressive, plastic face." Petrosian was fond of a variety of games, including a backgammon-like Armenian game called *Nardy*, which he played from age 5.

Petrosian demonstrated his vast natural talent in the fall of 1942 when, as a 13-year-old first-category player, he drew with Flohr in a simul. That year he made friends with David Bronstein, an "emaciated and pale" boy dressed in a cotton jacket whom he met in a Tbilisi park. The two became sparring partners. Petrosian also recalled how he "gave his breakfast money" to get a copy of Ilya Maizelis' textbook in a bookshop and eventually memorized the entire contents of Nimzovich's *Chess Praxis*. From Archil Ebralidze, the prewar Tbilisi champion who had an austere positional style, he learned to appreciate the Caro-Kann Defense and the games of José Capablanca.

Petrosian's credo became: "Logic!" He eventually earned a master's degree with a thesis on logic in chess. "I deeply believe that in chess, even though it is only a game, there is nothing accidental," he liked to say. After his parents died, Petrosian moved the 110 miles to Yerevan. By age 17 he had defeated Genrikh Kasparyan in a match for the

Armenian Championship. Even then his play was criticized as too conservative — too many Catalans, no King's Gambits. On the 1949 ranking list, he was tied for 39th place. But moving to Moscow in 1950 had the usual, huge impact. Thanks to the Spartak sports society, Petrosian obtained a modest salary and an apartment by age 21. He also acquired Liliental as his trainer and developed a style that even allowed him to make sacrifices — when they were logical.

D38 Queen's Gambit Declined
Interzonal, Stockholm, 1952
white Tigran Petrosian,
black Ludek Pachman

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5
 5 Nc3

The Exchange Variation was Petrosian's weapon of the moment and he later won a nice game in the tournament from Gösta Stoltz after 5 ... Be7 6 Qc2 Nbd7 7 Bf4 c6 8 e3 Nf8 9 Bd3 Ne6 10 Be5 g6 11 h3 Bd6 12 0–0–0 0–0–0 13 Kb1 Ng7 14 g4 Nfe8 15 Rdgl f6 16 Bxd6 Nxd6 17 Ne2! f5 18 g5 Ne4 19 Nf4 Ne6 20 h4.

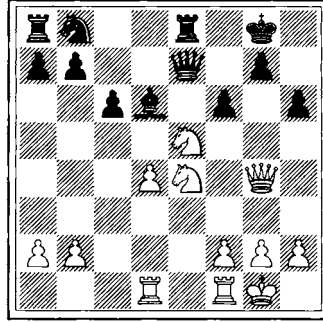
5 ... Bb4 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 8 e3
 0–0 9 Be2

Black has transposed into a Ragozin Variation and White responded with modest development, avoiding the more aggressive (and more promising) lines with 8 Rcl 0–0 9 a3.

9 ... c6 10 0–0 Bg4 11 Ne5 Bxe2 12 Qxe2
 Qe7 13 Rad1 Re8 14 Qg4 Bd6 15 e4!

White's deceptively quiet treatment reveals its strength here. Now 15 ... Bxe5 16 dxe5 d4! was best, *e.g.*, 17 Rxd4 Qxe5 18 Rfd1 Na6.

15 ... dxe4? 16 Nxe4 f6



After 16 ... f6

Black could not play 16 ... Bxe5
 17 dxe5 Qxe5 18 Nd6 Rf8 19 Rfe1.

17 f4! Bc7 18 Ng3! fxe5 19 Nf5 Qf6
 20 dxe5 h5 21 Qxh5 Qf7 22 Qg4 Re6
 23 Rf3 Rg6

Black did not want to allow 24 Rg3
 but this sacrifice of the exchange leads into
 a lost endgame.

24 Qxg6! Qxg6 25 Ne7+ Kf7 26 Nxg6
 Kxg6 27 g4 Na6 28 Rd7 Rd8 29 f5+
 Kg5 30 Rxg7+ Kh4 31 e6 Bb6+ 32 Kf1
 Rd1+ 33 Ke2 Rd5 34 f6 Re5+ 35 Kf1
 Nc5 36 Rf5! 1–0

Another showcase for Soviet chess came earlier in August 1952 when Moscow finally sent a team to a FIDE Olympiad, at Helsinki, where Soviet athletes were also taking part in their first Olympic Games. In the West there was some debate over whether the end of this isolation was part of an overall Kremlin peace initiative. But within the Soviet chess hierarchy there was a different, much more discreet debate, about the composition of that first chess Olympiad team — and it remained a point of controversy for forty years:

Botvinnik said he was reluctant to take part in the grueling Olympic schedule — but also was shocked when he discovered the other members of the team were trying to dump him. The world champion had played uninspired chess at the Budapest 1952

international and speculation arose about his decline as he entered his 40s. When the other top Soviet players and their trainers met at the Voronovo rest home near Moscow for a pre-Olympiad training camp, Botvinnik appeared out of shape. The team was summoned to Moscow where the deputy chairman of the Chess Section interviewed members about their expectations.

Botvinnik wrote that he was asked if he could guarantee winning the first board prize. He suspected Keres had given just such assurances in order to replace him. The next day Botvinnik confronted Smyslov about being part of what he considered a conspiracy to keep him from the national team. Smyslov, in a June 1993 *New in Chess* interview, denied being part of a plot. He said he was the one who challenged Botvinnik, saying that as world champion — and “as a member of the Communist Party” — he must have known about the intriguing that was going on. Only Boleslavsky spoke in defense of Botvinnik, the champion recalled, and Botvinnik was replaced on the team by Geller.

That did not seem to affect the Soviets in the preliminary section at Helsinki as they rolled through with a score of 23½–4½. But the team drew three of their matches in the finals and only edged the second-place Argentines by a point and a half. Keres, who scored only plus-one in 12 games, was a major disappointment as Botvinnik’s replacement on top board, where Miguel Najdorf was scoring 12½ points out of 16. Smyslov (10½ of 13) was impressive on second board.

D67 Queen’s Gambit Declined

Olympiad, Helsinki, 1952

white Vasily Smyslov,

black Braslav Rabar (Yugoslavia)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7
5 e3 0–0 6 Rcl Nbd7 7 Nf3 c6 8 Bd3
dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nd5 10 Bxe7 Qxe7 11 Ne4
N5f6 12 Ng3 e5

White’s microscopic advantage in the 12 ... Qb4+ 13 Qd2 endgame, which failed to mean much in the Alekhine–Capablanca match, apparently frightened Black.

13 0–0 g6

But Black is just as apprehensive about the middlegame after 13 ... exd4! 14 Nf5 Qd8 15 N3xd4, even though 15 ... Ne5 16 Bb3 Bxf5 17 Nxf5 g6 had been regarded as equal since the 1930s.

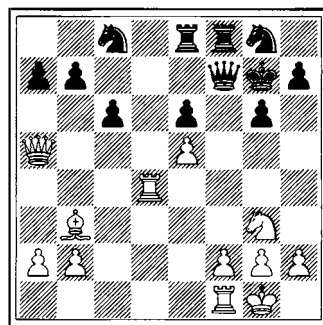
14 Bb3 exd4

This exchange would have made more sense on the previous move, when 14 Qxd4 could have been met by 14 ... Nb6. Smyslov demonstrates the difference.

15 Qxd4! Nb6 16 Qh4 Kg7 17 e4 Ng8
18 Qf4 Be6 19 Nd4

Now 19 ... Bxb3? allows 20 Ndf5+ and 19 ... Bd7 20 Rfel sets up another sacrifice (21 Ndf5+ gxf5 22 Nh5+ Kh8 23 Qg3 f6 24 exf5). As so often happened in Smyslov’s games, an opponent is forced by tactics to make the first of several positional concessions.

19 ... Rae8 20 Nxe6+ fxe6 21 Qe5+ Qf6
22 Qa5! Nc8 23 e5 Qf4 24 Rc4 Qf7
25 Rd4



After 25 Rd4

25 ... b6 26 Qd2 c5 27 Rd7 Re7 28 Rfd1
b5 29 Ne4! Nb6

Played to meet 30 Ng5 with 30 ...
Rxd7. On 29 ... c4 White would have won
with 30 Ng5 Qf5 31 Bc2! Qxe5 32 Rel.

30 Rd6 c4 31 Bc2 h6 32 Qd4 Nd5
33 Rxd5! 1–0

The Soviets emerged in the 1950s as a powerhouse of team chess in part because they had so much experience with it. In 1952 the VTSSPS Championship became a new event, eventually named the USSR Cup. The 1952 version, in Odessa, featured eight-man, two-woman teams representing the various sports societies and was won by *Iskra* (The Spark — the name of one of Lenin's prerevolutionary newspapers), lead by Tolush, Vasily Panov, M. M. Udovich, and Grigory Goldberg. Subsequent versions were won by *Spartak*, with Petrosian, Ratmir Kholmov, Semyon Furman and Vladimir Simagin, in 1954; by the student society *Burevestnik*, with Smyslov, Mikhail Tal and Lev Polugayevsky, in 1961; by *Trud*, with Botvinnik, Averbakh and Kotov, in 1964; and by the Armed Forces, headed by Geller, Evgeny Vasiukov and Eduard Gufeld, in 1966.

More important was the republic team championship, known as the Spartakiad of Peoples, which was held on an irregular basis from 1948 on. The format changed regularly — from 11-player teams, including one woman and one reserve player, to other combinations that eventually added junior and schoolgirl boards. Moscow (Smyslov, Liliental, Flohr) won the first Spartakiad in 1948, followed by the Russian Federation (Boleslavsky, Suetin, Leonid Shamkovich) in 1951, Leningrad (Furman, Korchnoi, Byvshev) in 1953, the Russian Federation (Anatoly Lutikov, Polugayevsky, Shamkovich, Rashid Nezhmetdinov) again in 1955, and Moscow (Bronstein, Petrosian, Averbakh) again in 1958.

Botvinnik's Revenge

Botvinnik enjoyed some revenge on his rivals in fall 1952 at the 20th Soviet Championship. But it began as a spotlight performance for his former student, Mark Taimanov. The introduction of Taimanov (born February 7, 1926) to chess was nearly as accidental as Geller's. "From my childhood years I have been a faithful servant to two masters," music and chess, he liked to say. At 10 Taimanov was enrolled in a piano class when a Leningrad movie company needed someone to star as a violin prodigy in a film, *Beethoven Concert*. The youngster spent a year studying the new instrument and performed so credibly that years later he was paid an indirect compliment by Isaac Stern. While on a Soviet tour, the great violinist met Taimanov, then a noted piano performer, and remarked that none of the young violinists he had seen in the USSR even knew "how to hold the violin properly."

"Only once I saw a violinist who did it, in the film 'Beethoven Concert,'" Stern said.

"That was no violinist, that was me!" Taimanov replied.

The movie won a prize in 1937 at an international film festival and "quite unexpectedly I became a famous film star," Taimanov recalled. Just at that time the Leningrad Pioneer Palace was established and Taimanov, as an honored guest, was invited to join any of the activities sections. He signed up for chess and began studying, first with Sokolsky, then with Grigory Levenfish and finally, after two years, with someone new to chess teaching, Botvinnik.

Botvinnik took a critical view of his students. Much later he warned Kasparov that he must learn to think before moving. "If you go on like this you'll become a Taimanov or Larsen," Botvinnik recalled telling him. But within two years Taimanov was a first-category player and Leningrad schoolboy champion. He also pursued his

musical career at the Leningrad Conservatory and when the War began was evacuated with other student musicians to Tashkent for the duration. He did not become a master until age 20 but was an international master at 24 and grandmaster at 26. By 1950 Taimanov was ranked 13th in the Soviet Union, ahead of Ragozin and Vladimir Makogonov. Earlier in 1952 he won a new event, the World Championship of Students.

In the fourth round of the 20th Championship, former student met former teacher:

E40 Nimzo-Indian Defense
20th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1952
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Mark Taimanov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 Nc6
 5 Ne2 d5

Botvinnik faced Sokolsky's 5 ... e5 in the 13th Championship but obtained a clear edge after 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Nxc3 exd4 8 exd4 d5 9 c5!. Taimanov introduced 5 ... d5 in the 19th Championship and showed that 6 a3 Be7! was OK for Black after 7 Ng3 h5 or 7 Nf4 dxc4 8 Bxc4 e5.

6 a3 Be7 7 cxd5 exd5 8 g3

In their playoff match Botvinnik found the far superior 8 Nf4 0-0 9 Be2! Bf5 10 g4!. Black equalizes easily now.

8 ... 0-0 9 Bg2 Na5! 10 0-0 c6 11 Na4 b6 12 Nac3 Ba6 13 Rb1 Rc8 14 Qc2 Bd6 15 b4! Nb7 16 e4! dxe4 17 Nxe4 Rfe8 18 Bg5 Be7 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Rfd1 Nd6 21 Nxf6+ Qxf6 22 Nc3 Bc4 23 Qd2

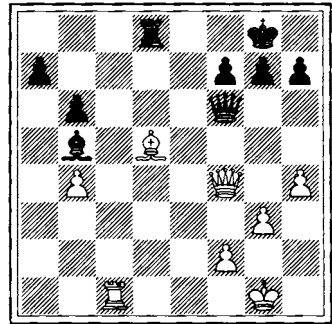
Just as White has overcome his sloppy opening, he gets the worst of it. Better was 23 Ne4 Nxe4 24 Bxe4 Bd5 25 f3! but Botvinnik may have convinced himself he deserved more.

23 ... Nb5! 24 Ne4 Qg6 25 a4 Rxe4!

This ensures a Black advantage (26 Bxe4 Qxe4 27 Re1 Nxd4! or 27 axb5 Bd5). Taimanov, in his tournament book notes, said Botvinnik had refused a draw at move 22. Botvinnik in his memoirs said that at some point before move 30 he offered a draw which Taimanov accepted. According to Botvinnik this meant they would formalize the agreement when they reached the minimum of 30 moves, that were now required in Soviet Championships. Whatever the case, Botvinnik felt betrayed when the game went on.

26 axb5 Re2 27 Qf4 Bxb5 28 Bf3 Re7
 29 h4 Rd8 30 Rcd1 Red7 31 d5! cxd5
 32 Rxd5 Rxd5 33 Bxd5 Qf6!

After 33
 ... Qf6



Now 34 Qxf6 is just a pawn-down endgame. But White would have excellent counterplay after 34 Qc7! Be8 (not 34 ... Rxd5 35 Qb8+ Rd8 36 Rc8) 35 Re1 Kf8 36 Re5 as Taimanov pointed out.

34 Rc7? Qxf4 35 gxf4 Be8 36 Bc4 Kf8
 37 b5 Rd4 38 Kg2 Rxf4 39 Kg3 Rf5
 40 Rxa7 Bxb5 41 Ra8+ Ke7 42 Ra7+ Bd7
 43 Rb7 b5 44 Bd3 Rc5 45 Bxh7 g6
 46 Bg8 Rd5 47 h5 Rg5+ 48 Kf4 Rxb5
 49 Ke4 Rf5 50 f4 Kd6 0-1

Boleslavsky held sole first place as late as round seven, with a half point ahead of the pack. But Taimanov began to pile up points. He introduced a new weapon against

the King's Indian Defense against Aronin in the eighth round (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0–0 6 Be2 e5 7 0–0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Ne1) with the idea of posting the knight at d3 and a bishop at e3, while supporting the kingside with f2–f3 and preparing queenside attack with c4–c5. Aronin was positionally routed by the 26th move. Bronstein faced the same system two rounds later and criticized Taimanov's plan in the tournament book — but lost in 41 moves and blamed his lack of nerve.

Taimanov's surprising spurt convinced even Simagin to avoid an opening dispute. Simagin began with 1 b3!?, a move virtually unknown in 1952, and lost in 49 moves. By the 14th round Taimanov had a two-point lead, then slackened off the pace. On the final day he lost to Geller in 70 moves while Botvinnik won a remarkable endgame with rooks-and-bishops-of-opposite colors. When Taimanov returned to the playing hall — and saw Suetin's king was about to be mated in the center of the board — he exclaimed "It's a fraud!," according to Botvinnik.

In the six-game playoff that followed, Botvinnik felt he was "obligated" to win because of the double-cross he believed Taimanov pulled off in their earlier game. The world champion won two and drew two of the first four games and won 3½–2½. Under rules then in effect, Taimanov was not even seeded into the next Championship finals and had to start over in the semifinals.

FIDE took an apprehensive view of the lineup for the second Candidates tournament, which was to begin August 28, 1953, in Neuhausen, Switzerland, and switch to Zürich on September 13 for another five-plus weeks. Seeded were the five top finishers from the Budapest 1950 Candidates tournament and the five from the Stockholm Interzonal — making it nine Soviets out of 10 players. To create a more "international character," FIDE therefore added Svetozar Gligorić of Yugoslavia, Gideon Ståhlberg of Sweden and László Szabó of Hungary, who

had tied with Averbakh at the Interzonal but finished behind him on tiebreaks. Also, Sammy Reshevsky and Max Euwe, who had not played at Budapest, were convinced to come to Switzerland to make it a 15-player, double-round event.

Based on Stockholm, Kotov should have been considered a favorite. But Mikhail Beilin, a member of the Soviet delegation, felt Kotov had no aspirations in Switzerland beyond the gold watch he received for the brilliancy prize. The other way Kotov distinguished himself was with his addiction to a daily routine. At the closing ceremony, the most an arbiter could say of Kotov was that "in 28 rounds he ate exactly 28 ham sandwiches."

Neuhausen–Zürich was a tournament of phenomenal games. Asked later which were the finest victories of their careers, Bronstein cited one from this tournament — versus Reshevsky on the Black side of a King's Indian — and Kotov mentioned another, his queen sacrifice against Averbakh. But despite the occasional flash of genius, the players were relatively conservative. Petrosian, for example, drew 18 of his 28 games. Only Smyslov seemed to have the desire to challenge Botvinnik.

Second Challenger

Vasily Smyslov seemed to alternate throughout his career between periods of ambition and of lassitude. In the 1950 Candidates he finished third, and was depressed with the recognition that he had lost ground since 1941, when he was recognized as the number two Soviet player. At that point Smyslov applied for a position as a singer for the Bolshoi but had second thoughts. The 30-round marathon in Switzerland proved to be Smyslov's hour of triumph — and Kotov's turn to play spoiler once again. Kotov beat Smyslov in the 21st round, leaving the latter tied with Reshevsky, with Bronstein a

half point behind. But, as at Groningen seven years before, Kotov undid the damage two rounds later by winning a drawn knight-ending from Reshevsky. This tournament was the closest Reshevsky came to reaching a world championship match but his bid was virtually ended by another loss:

**A17 English Opening
Candidates Tournament,
Neuhausen-Zürich, 1953**
white Vasily Smyslov,
black Sammy Reshevsky

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 Bb4 4 g3 b6
5 Bg2 Bb7 6 0-0 0-0 7 Qb3

Smyslov's frequently adopted quiet variations — in an era of Sicilian and King's Indian defenses. But no less an authority than Svetozar Gligorić said that of his generation, Smyslov “invented the greatest number of basic new ideas” in the Ruy Lopez, French, Caro-Kann, Slav, Nimzo-Indian and Grünfeld defenses and the English. With this original plan he obtains a small but lingering edge.

7 ... Bxc3 8 Qxc3 d6 9 b3 Qe7 10 Bb2
c5 11 d4 Nbd7 12 Rad1 Be4

Nowadays 12 ... Ne4 and ...Ndf6, with or without ...f7-f5, might be given preference but Reshevsky wanted to take the sting out of d4-d5.

13 dxc5! Nxc5

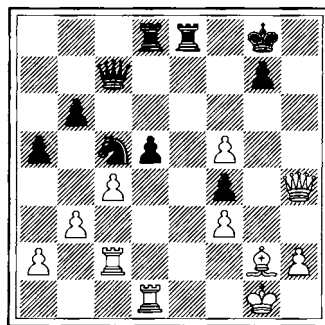
White has a freer position but fewer targets after 13 ... dxc5 14 Qe3.

14 Qe3 e5! 15 Bh3 a5 16 Nh4 Rfe8 17 f3
Bg6 18 Rd2 Rad8 19 Rfd1 Qc7 20 Nxc6
hxg6 21 Bg2 Nh5 22 Qc3 Nf6

Najdorf blamed Black's slow deterioration now on his mistaken belief that Black's

position was impregnable. Bronstein, on the other hand, suspected Reshevsky avoided the active 22 ... f5 because he wanted to delay it until White has played e2-e4 and Black could “muddy the waters when the time control was nearer” — in other words, when Black had better swindling chances.

23 e4! Nh5 24 Qe3 Nf6 25 Bh3 Nh7
26 Re2 Nf6 27 Rf1 Nh5 28 Bg2 Qe7
29 Bc1 Qc7 30 Rd1 Kh7 31 Qf2 Nf6
32 Be3 Nh5 33 Rc2 f5? 34 exf5 gxf5
35 g4! Nf4 36 Bxf4 exf4 37 Qh4+ Kg8
38 gxf5 d5!



After 38 ... d5

A well-timed bid for counterplay.

39 cxd5 Qe5 40 R2d2

Trap: 40 Rc4 Qe3+ 41 Kh1 Nd3.

40 ... Rd6 41 Rd4 Qe3+?

Black miscalculated this position four moves before and should have continued 41 ... Qxf5 42 Qxf4 Rxd5! or 42 Rxf4 Qc2, according to Najdorf.

42 Kh1 Re5 43 Qxf4 Qxf4 44 Rxf4 Re2

The rest is routine for Smyslov. Black apparently missed the strength of 44 ... Rxd5 45 Rxd5 Rxd5 46 Bf1! Rd1 47 Kgl Ra1 48 f6 and wins.

45 Rg4 Kf8 46 Rg6 Nb7 47 Re6! Rxa2
48 f4 Rb2 49 R1e1 Rxe6 50 dxe6! Nd6

Second Candidates Tournament, Neuhausen-Zürich, August 28–October 24, 1953

	S	B	K	R	P	G	N	K	T	A	B	S	G	E	S	Score
1. Smyslov	X X	½ ½	1 1	½ 1	½ ½	1 1	½ ½	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	1 1	1 ½	18–10
2–4. Bronstein	½ ½	X X	1 ½	1 1	½ ½	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 1	1 ½	1 ½	½ ½	16–12
2–4. Keres	0 0	0 ½	X X	½ ½	½ 1	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	1 1	1 ½	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	16–12
2–4. Reshevsky	½ 0	0 0	½ ½	X X	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 0	½ ½	½ 1	½ 1	1 ½	½ 1	1 1	1 ½	16–12
5. Petrosian	½ ½	½ ½	½ 0	½ ½	X X	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	0 0	½ ½	½ ½	1 1	½ 1	1 ½	1 1	15–13
6–7. Geller	0 0	½ 1	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	X X	1 1	½ 0	0 1	½ ½	0 1	1 ½	½ 1	0 1	½ ½	14½–13½
6–7. Najdorf	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	0 0	X X	1 ½	1 1	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	1 1	14½–13½
8–9. Kotov	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	0 1	½ ½	½ 1	0 ½	X X	1 0	1 ½	0 0	1 0	1 ½	0 ½	0 1	14–14
8–9. Taimanov	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 1	1 0	0 ½	0 1	X X	1 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ 0	0 ½	1 1	14–14
10–11. Averbakh	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	0 ½	0 1	X X	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	1 1	0 0	13½–14½
10–11. Boleslavsky	½ ½	½ ½	0 0	½ 0	½ ½	1 0	½ ½	1 1	½ ½	½ ½	X X	½ 0	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	13½–14½
12. Szabó	½ ½	1 0	0 ½	0 ½	0 0	0 ½	½ ½	0 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	X X	1 ½	½ ½	1 ½	13–15
13. Gligorić	0 ½	0 ½	½ 0	½ 0	½ 0	½ 0	½ ½	0 ½	½ 1	1 ½	½ ½	0 ½	X X	½ 1	1 1	12½–15½
14. Euwe	0 0	½ ½	½ ½	0 0	0 ½	1 0	1 ½	1 ½	1 ½	0 0	½ 0	½ ½	½ 0	X X	1 ½	11½–16½
15. Ståhlberg	0 ½	½ ½	0 0	0 ½	0 0	½ ½	0 0	1 0	0 0	1 1	½ ½	0 ½	0 0	0 ½	X X	8–20

51 e7+ Kf7 52 Bd5+ Ke8 53 Bc6+ Kf7
54 e8(Q)+ Nxe8 55 Bxe8+ Kf6 56 Bg6
1-0

Against the six non-Soviet invitees, the top five Soviets scored 24 wins, 33 draws — and only three losses.

Even Botvinnik later acknowledged that from 1953 to 1958 Smyslov was “indisputably the strongest tournament fighter. His talent was universal.” Smyslov was a unique figure. As a baptized Russian Orthodox Christian, he was one of few very strong chess players to be deeply religious. After *glasnost*, he said it was religion that led him to a feeling of “harmony,” a key word in his vocabulary, and kept him from accepting invitations to join the Communist Party. Smyslov also believed in predestination (“I think that people who become world champion have been born world champions”) and the predictions of Nostradamus, and even believed that Enrico Caruso, his idol, appeared to him in one of his dreams and corrected his singing style.

Smyslov was one of the tallest of grandmasters, with glasses thicker than Botvinnik’s and a slow-moving gate that exuded dignity and calm — a direct contrast with the excitable, combative previous challenger, Bronstein. But while Smyslov seemed to avoid political intrigues he could not avoid their consequences. On the eve of the 1953 Candidates tournament he was abruptly told by telephone that the Sports Committee had ordered Simagin to replace Vladimir Alartortsev, his second since 1946. “It was so sudden I didn’t know what to say,” he told the heartbroken Alartortsev. Simagin had been Kotov’s trainer for years but they broke bitterly after the previous Candidates tournament. Kotov recalled how Simagin, “with angry eyes through his thick glasses,” would often shout “I am not your servant!”

None of the Candidates were available for the 21st Soviet Championship, held in early 1954 in Kiev, just over half a century

since Tchigorin won the Third All-Russian tournament there. Three of the semifinals sections were filled with older players whose careers began before the War — indicating that a talent gap might lay ahead in the 1960s. But in the fourth semifinal, at Vilnius, Kholmov, who had only tied for seventh in the previous semifinals, won ahead of a strong field that included three future grandmasters under age 32, Viktor Korchnoi, Suetin and Shamkovich.

Yuri Lvovich Averbakh started the finals slowly with four draws, including a narrow fourth-round escape from Kholmov. But he won the next three games to join a tie for first with Furman, who then fell out of contention with three straight losses. Averbakh, meanwhile, won some of the finest games of his career with a crisp positional style and deadly endgame accuracy.

D71 Grünfeld Defense

21st Soviet Championship, Kiev, 1954

white Yuri Averbakh,

black Georgy Ilivitsky

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 d5
5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e4 Nb4

This relatively new system had been tried by Averbakh himself, with play continuing 7 a3 N4c6 8 d5 Nd4 9 Nc3 c5! for example.

7 d5! 0-0

After this, Black is trying to reach the equality of symmetry, rather than of “equal chances.” Better was 7 ... c6 8 a3 Qa5!, so that 9 Nc3 cxd5 10 exd5? Bf5 favors Black.

8 a3 Na6 9 Ne2 e6 10 0-0 c6 11 Nbc3
cxd5 12 exd5 exd5 13 Nxd5 Nc6 14 Nec3

Black has eliminated the enemy center but not the d5-knight that ensures a White advantage.

14 ... Nc7 15 Nxc7 Qxc7 16 Nd5 Qd8
17 h4

This follows a game from the 1948 Najdorf-Fine match, which continued 17 ... Be6 18 Bg5 Qc8 with chances for both sides.

17 ... h6 18 Bf4! Bf5

Or 18 ... Be6 19 Nc7 and 18 ... Bxb2 19 Bxh6 with a White edge in either case. Faced with the prospect of b2–b4 and steadily mounting pressure, Black flares out on the kingside.

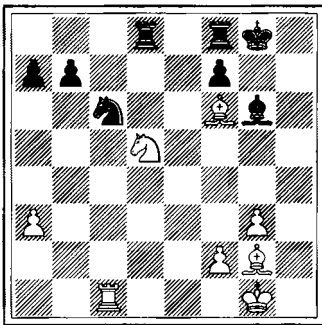
19 Rcl g5!? 20 hxg5 hxg5 21 Qh5! Bg6
22 Qxg5 Qxg5

The middlegame of 22 ... Bxb2 23 Qh6! Bg7 24 Qh3 is more dangerous.

23 Bxg5 Bxb2 24 Bf6!

“It’s curious,” Averbakh wrote, “that this continuation of the attack appears to be not the only one. Also possible is 24 Rc4 Bd3 25 Rh4 Bxf1 26 Kxf1, also with strong threats.”

24 ... Bxc1 25 Rxc1 Rad8!



After 25
... Rad8

Black intends to beat off the attack with ...Rd6xf6.

26 f4! Rd6 27 Kf2?

Correct was 27 g4, to drive the bishop out of play. Black now misses a better chance for survival with 27 ... Rfd8! 28 Rh1 Rxf6 or 28 Bxd8 Rxd8 29 g4 Bd3 30 Ke3 Ba6.

27 ... Rxf6 28 Nxf6+ Kg7 29 Bxc6 Rc8
30 Ne8+ Kf8 31 f5!

Black had counted on 29 ... Rc8 but now saw that 31 ... Rxc6 32 Rxc6 bxc6 33 fxg6 Kxe8 loses to 34 g7. Since 31 ... Bxf5 32 Nd6 is also lost, the game ended with:

31 ... Bh7 32 g4! bxc6

Or 32 ... Rxc6 33 Rxc6 bxc6 34 Nf6 Kg7 35 Nxh7 Kxh7 36 g5! and the pawn ending is lost (36 ... Kg7 37 Ke3 Kf8 38 Kd4 Ke7 39 Kc5 Kd7 40 a4 a5 41 g6 etc., as cited by Averbakh in the tournament book).

33 Nd6 Rc7 34 f6! c5? 35 Rel 1–0

Black was also lost on 34 ... Rd7 35 Rxc6 Rd8 36 Rc8.

Averbakh (born February 8, 1922) grew up a “fatalist,” having seen most of his friends, like Mark Stolberg, killed during the War. He said this gave him peace of mind, realizing that major events in his life could not be controlled. Among such events was the brief arrest in 1937 of his father, who worked in a factory that exported wool and fell under suspicion for having contact with foreigners. Averbakh’s fatalism allowed him to accept Soviet life as it was and, as he later acknowledged, he did not question the system until “very decent people” he knew “started to disappear.”

Beilin called him “a genuine *otlichnik* of the Soviet chess school” meaning an excellent pupil who always gets the highest grades. Averbakh grew up near Moscow’s Old Arbat and regularly visited the Pioneer

Palace on Stopany street, northeast of the city's center. In its chess section, run by Fyodor Fogelevich, Averbakh met other promising first-category players like Kotov and Tolush. In 1939 Kotov began organizing tournaments in which the starting point of each game was an equal endgame and this began Averbakh's love affair with endings. He also attended the prestigious Bauman technical school and his three favorite subjects — engineering, chess and volleyball — competed for his time for years. From 1945 to 1950, chess was restricted to his vacations.

Averbakh, Petrosian, Geller and Taimanov represented the new wave that seemed ready to replace everyone — everyone but Botvinnik. Almost all the other players of the 1930s and 1940s were playing in their last Championships. One of the semifinals of the 21st Championship had been limited to seven veteran players fighting for four spots in the finals. Two of those who did not make it were Flohr and Ilya Kan. Liliental, who barely qualified, looked unprepared for modern openings in the finals.

B67 Sicilian Defense

21st Soviet Championship, Kiev, 1954

white Andor Liliental,

black Tigran Petrosian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Qd2 a6 8 0-0-0 Bd7 9 Be2

This tournament tested Black's relatively new method of handling the Richter-Rauzer with 8 ... Bd7, particularly with 9 f4 h6 10 Bh4 Nxe4 11 Qe1! Nf6 12 Nf5. Now 9 ... b5 10 a3 Rc8 offers White good chances after 11 f4 and Rhe1.

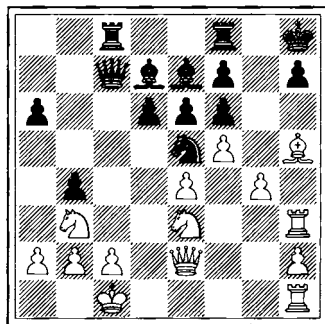
9 ... Be7?! 10 Nb3 b5 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Bh5! Ne5 13 f4 Nc4 14 Qe2

White is excellently placed for king-side attack.

14 ... Rc8 15 Rd3 0-0! 16 Rh3 Kh8

Petrosian, the connoisseur of anticipation, smells the idea of Qg4+ and Bg6! before the spectators have even a hint of it. Now 17 f5!, threatening 18 Bg6 would be thematic, e.g., 17 ... Ne5 18 Nd4 with 19 Bxf7! in mind.

17 g4? b4 18 Nd1 Qc7 19 f5 Ne5 20 Ne3



After 20 Ne3

20 ... Bb5 21 Qd2 Bd3! 22 Kbl Bxe4 23 Rc1 d5 24 Nd4 Bc5! 25 g5! fxg5 26 fxe6

A last trap: 26 ... Bxd4? 27 Qxd4 fxe6 28 Ng4 Rf5 29 Bg6!

26 ... f5! 27 Be2 Rce8 28 Rf1 f4 29 Ng4 Bg2 30 Nxe5 Qxe5 31 Nf3 Qg7

White can safely resign.

32 Rh5 Bxf1 33 Bxf1 Rxe6 34 Rxe5 Qf6 35 Rxd5 Rd6 36 Rxd6 Qxd6 37 Qxd6 Bxd6 38 Bxa6 Re8 39 Kcl Kg7 40 Kd2 Kf6 41 Bb7 Re3 42 Bc6 Be5 43 c3 (sealed) 0-1

Averbakh's victory over Anatoly Bannik, a frequent champion of the Ukraine, in the 18th round gave him an insurmountable point-and-a-half lead. Not since the depleted war years, when strong resistance to a frontrunner was sparse, had someone dominated the Championship. Here is a comparison of previous winners:

Champ.	Year	Winner	Score	Percentage
13th	1944	Botvinnik	12½–3½	78.1
14th	1945	Botvinnik	15–2	88.2
15th	1947	Keres	14–5	73.7
16th	1948	Bronstein/Kotov	12–6	66.6
17th	1949	Smyslov/Bronstein	13–6	68.4
18th	1950	Keres	11½–5½	67.6
19th	1951	Keres	12–5	70.6
20th	1952	Botvinnik/Taimanov	13½–5½	71.1
21st	1954	Averbakh	14½–4½	76.3

When Averbakh considered becoming a chess professional, his family was opposed, noting that a monthly Sports Committee stipend was then less than what an engineer earned. But after becoming a Candidate in 1953, “there was no going back,” he recalled. Even some rivals were happy for Averbakh after his fifth-place finish in the 1952 Interzonal. Tolush had thought he, not Averbakh, would get the final Soviet spot in the Interzonal. But the Sports Committee gave Averbakh the trip documents, with Tolush’s name crossed out, and Averbakh’s written in. On his way back to Moscow from Sweden, Averbakh stopped in Leningrad — and found Tolush waiting at the airport to congratulate him.

Three Rubles a Day

The financial rewards of chess were improving over what they had been in 1937, when Reuben Fine noted that one of the few perks of the players was that they could eat at a factory for a ruble and a half, compared with the outrageous 40 to 50 rubles that tourist hotels charged. By 1949 the Soviets had established a system of monthly stipends, ranging from 60 to 300 rubles a month, for top players. A ruble was worth roughly 20 cents on the black market but the stipends were good salaries by Soviet standards. An

average worker earned 120 to 150 rubles a month in the 1950s.

There were very few cash prizes in Soviet events. Winning usually meant a symbolic reward, such as a medal, a metal cup or a title. But in addition to the stipend, players could count on a daily allowance for expenses during tournaments. Suetin, a Spartak colleague and later a trainer of Petrosian, recalled a popular joke of the era. “Question: What supports the Soviet school of chess? Answer: The food coupons” — an allowance of two and a half to three rubles for each day a top player was in a tournament. But often this did not seem enough. Once, when Bronstein and Smyslov agreed to a draw in 12 moves, a tournament official complained they were being paid to play fighting chess, Bronstein replied: “Do you really believe that I will attack Smyslov for three rubles a day?”

It was during this period that true chess professionalism came to the Soviet Union. Until then, top players had to have another career-of-record, something he had qualified for in the university. But Suetin recalled: “A chessplayer who achieved the master title could hardly leave chess, even if he really wanted to concentrate on a ‘diploma career.’” If he did, he would be pressured to play in local team events, “defending the honor of his institution, region, city, sports society” — in other words, in less prestigious

events. Nevertheless, a remarkably high level of play occurred at the lower levels, even if the only reward was three rubles a day:

**B95 Sicilian Defense
Semifinals, Soviet Team
Championship, Gorky, 1954**
*white Soloviev,
black Vladimir Simagin*

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Bc4 Be7 8 Bb3 0-0
9 f4 Nc6!

White is mixing two anti-Najdorf systems, Bc4 and Bg5, which work well against 6 ... Nbd7 but poorly here. Now 10 0-0? is met by 10 ... Qb6.

10 Nf3 h6 11 Bh4 d5!

Simagin planned to meet 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 exd5 exd5 14 Bxd5 with 14 ... Re8+ 15 Kf1 Qc7 or 15...Qb6. The text leads to a different kind of pawn sacrifice.

12 e5 Ne4 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 Nxe4 dxe4
15 Nd2 b5

The e4-pawn was doomed (15 ... e3 16 Nc4 b5 17 Nd6 and Qf3) and Simagin hurries to make the most of his queenside initiative. Now 16 Nxe4? allows 16 ... Qb4+ 17 Nd2 Qxf4. Black is better after 16 0-0 Rd8 17 Qe2 Nd4 18 Qxe4 Bb7 19 Qe3 Nf5 or 16 c3 e3 17 Ne4 Bb7 18 Nd6 Nxe5! 19 Nxb7 Qxb7 20 fxe5 Qxg2.

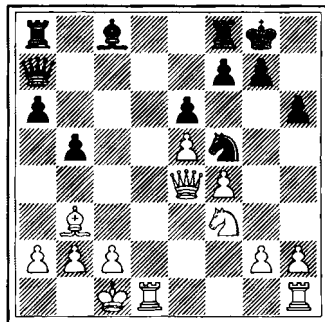
16 Qe2 Nd4 17 Qxe4 Qa7! 18 Nf3 Nf5
19 0-0-0 (*see diagram*)

Black has targets, White does not.

19 ... a5 20 a3 Bb7 21 Qe2 a4 22 Ba2
Rfc8 23 Rd2

Simagin noted that 23 Rd7 lost to 23 ... Bxf3!.

After 19 0-0-0



23 ... b4! 24 cxb4 a3 25 b3 Qb6 26 c4
Qxb4 27 Rc2?

Shortens the game but 27 Rd3 Bd5! was also lost.

27 ... Bxf3 28 Qd2 Qxd2+ 29 Rxd2 Bc6
30 Re1 h5 31 g3 Rab8 32 Kc2 Kf8
33 Kc3 Ke7 34 b4 Rc7 35 Bb3 Bd5
36 Ra2 Rd8 37 b5 Bxc4! 38 b6 Rc6
39 Bxc4 Rd4 0-1

By 1954 the *vlasti* were warm supporters of the FIDE world championship system. It had replaced, as Levenfish wrote, the old system in which title matches depended “not on the actual rights of the candidates but on the material claims and money reserves of them and their supporters.” For example, he wrote, Frank Marshall and David Janowski could challenge Emanuel Lasker but Akiba Rubinstein could not. Levenfish did not have to mention that Marshall was an American and Janowski a Frenchman — while the more deserving Rubinstein was a Polish subject of the tsar.

Levenfish also noted that by 1954 the FIDE system had produced two hard-fought matches, unlike the often one-sided title defenses of the past. Botvinnik’s second match began in March, 1954, with him winning the first, second and fourth games. But Smyslov regained his composure, sought double-edged positions and won the seventh, ninth, tenth and eleventh.

Petrosian felt Smyslov erred then by failing to realize the crisis was over and he

could return to his solid roots. “But to the end of the match Smyslov aimed to sow the wind and he reaped the whirlwind,” Petrosian wrote. The initiative shifted back and forth. Smyslov later said the game that gave him the greatest esthetic pleasure in his entire career was the 14th of the match. But Botvinnik later saw treachery, since in the 14th game Smyslov quickly innovated in an opening Botvinnik had never tried before. He accused his second, Kan, of disclosing his opening preparation to the enemy camp.

Even though Smyslov publicly denied this, Botvinnik never took back his accusation. He was by nature suspicious: Even after he retired from chess, Botvinnik claimed, for example, that Boris Veinstein, who left the secret police in 1946, was trying to get him into trouble three decades later by reporting to the KGB that Botvinnik had mentioned a game by the defector Korchnoi in a book on the Grünfeld Defense. On another occasion Botvinnik, his second Averbakh and Estrin were in a car returning from a match game. Averbakh got out when he neared his home, saying, “I’ll go the rest of the way on foot.” Botvinnik watched him leave and grimly added, “Well, it’s all clear. He left to show Smyslov our analysis.”

Nevertheless, in 1954 Botvinnik demonstrated again his unparalleled ability to overcome defeat. Three times in the Bronstein match he came back from a loss to win the next game. Botvinnik did it again three times in the 1957 and 1958 matches with Smyslov and four times against Mikhail Tal in 1961. He did it in the 12th and 15th games in 1954:

B25 Sicilian Defense
World Championship Match,
15th game, Moscow, 1954
white Vasily Smyslov,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7
 5 d3 d6 6 Nge2 e5

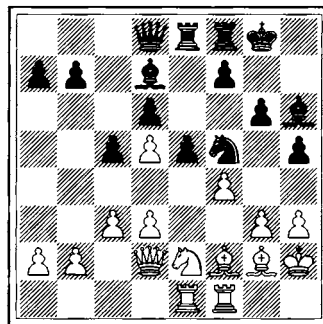
Botvinnik already knew the failings of the “book” ...e6 and ...Nd4/ ...Qa5 from his 1951 training game with Smyslov. In the 13th game Botvinnik revealed one of his new weapons, 5 ... b6, and it prompted Smyslov to launch an unsound attack (6 Nge2 d6 7 0–0 Bb7 8 f4 f5 9 g4?! f×g4 10 f5 Qd7) that lost in 41 moves.

Botvinnik adopts here the kind of pawn structure Aron Nimzovich had success with in the 1920s. Since 7 0–0 Nge7 8 f4 0–0 and ...f5 leads to little, White tries another tack. He spent 44 minutes on his next two moves.

7 Nd5 Nge7 8 c3? N×d5 9 e×d5 Ne7
 10 0–0 0–0 11 f4 Bd7 12 h3 Qc7 13 Be3
 Rae8 14 Qd2 Nf5 15 Bf2 h5 16 Rael?!

Smyslov has handled the opening routinely (better was 14 Bf2 and 16 g4) and slides into a bad game.

16 ... Qd8! 17 Kh2 Bh6



After 17
 ... Bh6

Here White switches to a blockade strategy, recognizing his plan has failed. Waiting moves fail, such as 18 Qc2 e×f4 19 N×f4 h4. The best aggressive try, 18 g4 h×g4 19 h×g4, would allow 19 ... Nh4 20 g5 N×g2 21 K×g2 e×f4! 22 g×h6 Qg5+ 23 Kh2 Q×h6+ 24 Kg1 Qg5+ 25 Kh2 Kg7! as Botvinnik pointed out.

18 h4 Qf6! 19 Be4 e×f4 20 N×f4 N×h4
 21 Be3 Nf5 22 B×f5

White loses material after 22 N×h5 g×h5 23 B×f5 B×e3 24 R×e3 Qg5!. After the text Black is safe because 22 B×f5 Q×f5 23 Ne6 can be met by 23 ... B×e3! 24 Q×e3 Qxd5.

22 ... Q×f5 23 Qg2 Qg4 24 Qe2 Q×e2+ 25 R×e2 Re5 26 Re1 Rfe8 27 Bf2 h4! 28 R×e5 R×e5 29 d4 h×g3+ 30 K×g3 Rg5+ 31 Kh2 Rf5 32 Be3 c×d4 33 c×d4 Kh7 34 Rf2 g5 35 Ne2 R×f2+ 36 B×f2 f5 0–1

Botvinnik was quick to spot the flaws in his rivals: “Vasily Vasilevich (why hide it) was rather lazy.” But he conceded that the younger man had more staying power. Botvinnik had kept in shape by rowing a canoe just as Keres enjoyed his passion for tennis. This helped them remain competitive into their 50s, unlike the sedentary Boleslavsky, Liliental and Flohr. But eventually the age difference caught up with Botvinnik and in the last five games of the 1954 match, Smyslov won twice to tie the score. But not more: Again, Botvinnik retained his title in a drawn 12–12 match.

Duel in Manhattan

Team chess, which emphasized the numerical superiority of the Soviet grandmasters, became particularly important as they began to compete internationally. Savielly Tartakower had said after the 1945 and 1946 United States–USSR matches that the only worthy opponent for the Soviets was “the rest of the world.” But as the Cold War deepened, the symbolic significance of a Soviet–American match dwarfed the chess importance attached to it by mere players, and there were repeated attempts to arrange a rematch on a large number of boards. (The Americans, who did so badly on 10 boards in 1945–6, managed to draw on four boards with the Soviets at the finals of the Helsinki Olympiad in 1952.)

An eight-board match was scheduled for New York in mid–July, 1953, “but in the language of chess it was adjourned,” as team trainer Bondarevsky put it. After lengthy arrangements, the Soviet team — captained by Ragozin, and with Borvinnik, Keres, Smyslov, Boleslavsky, Kotov, Geller, Taimanov and Tolush, plus reserves Petrosian and Averbakh — got only as far as Cherbourg, France, where they were to board the *Queen Elizabeth*. Before they departed, the match was suddenly canceled because the State Department refused to relax travel restrictions on the guests and refused to allow them to travel from Manhattan to Glen Cove, Long Island, before the match. Moscow sent a telegram to Harold Phillips saying the State Department restriction violated “all the rules of international hospitality and civility.” But intense discussions led nowhere. The Soviet delegation returned home, extending instead an invitation to the Americans to play in the USSR.

Phillips, a grandfather-figure of United States chess who had counted Wilhelm Steinitz among his friends, told Moscow that the Americans wanted to be hosts before they would be guests. In a telephone call he offered to clear the way with Washington for a match in New York in 1954. The State Department agreed to widen the “forbidden zone” to 25 miles, allowing the Soviets to visit Glen Cove, and the match was on again. The 14-member Soviet delegation finally arrived in New York in June, 1954, after a Moscow–Leningrad–Helsinki–Stockholm–Glasgow trip that was plagued by delays and the requirement that they travel on Aeroflot to save money. Keres, whose hobby was studying train, plane and ship schedules, was often exasperated by these circuitous routes and once, after spending several hours in Copenhagen on a trip from Moscow to Frankfurt, exclaimed, “You couldn’t think up a worse route!” Because of his interest, Keres eventually became an unofficial travel advisor to the Sports Committee.

In New York there was a minor incident when a customs agent tried to get the Soviet delegation to pay duty on *palekh* lacquer boxes and other gifts for the United States team but the Soviets finally arrived, exhausted, in Glen Cove. Bronstein, who had inexplicably replaced Botvinnik on the Soviet roster, took a long walk, then slept 15 straight hours. When members of the visiting team were asked why Botvinnik did not play, they said they did not know. Did you not ask? “If we did, *we* might not be here,” one player replied. The *New York Times* listed the members of the delegation including two names whose position “was not clear” — a not-too-subtle hint at the Soviet policy of assigning KGB agents to every major chess group traveling abroad.

Bernard Baruch, one of the world’s best-known capitalists, showed up for the first round, at the Roosevelt Hotel, on June 16, and witnessed a crushing 6–2 United States defeat. I.A. Horowitz was lost against Geller by move 22 and Larry Evans against Taimanov by 19. The Americans’ day was brightened only by Donald Byrne’s 59-move win over Averbakh. The Americans did better in the final three rounds, but still lost twice by 5–3 scores; they managed to draw 4–4 in the final round because Keres, Averbakh and Taimanov lost to Max Pavey, Donald Byrne and Evans respectively. Bondarevsky credited the youth of the Soviets with victory: The average age was 32. But he criticized the “poor form” of one of the new generation, Averbakh, who lost 3–1 to Byrne, and said Taimanov deserved to lose to Evans for “superficial play.”

D42 Queen’s Gambit Declined
USSR–United States Match,
fourth round, New York, 1954
white Yuri Averbakh,
black Donald Byrne

1 c4 e6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 c5
 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e3 Nc6 7 Bd3 Be7 8 0–0

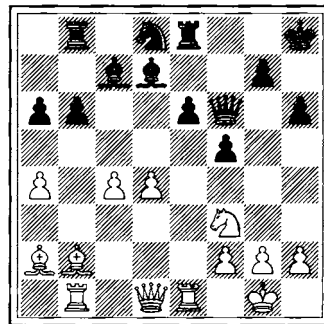
0–0 9 a3 cxd4 10 exd4 Nxc3 11 bxc3
 Qa5

Black solves the problem of the impending attack on h7 with his queen — but this is sending a battleship to solve a problem worthy of a PT boat. With 11 ... b6 Black stands well (12 Qc2 g6 13 Bh6 Re8 and ...Bf6).

12 Qc2 Qh5 13 Rb1 Bd6 14 Rb5! f5
 15 Re1 a6 16 Rb6 Bc7 17 Rb1 Rb8 18 a4
 Bd7 19 Be2 Qg6 20 Bc4

White carefully brings pressure on e6 and b7.

20 ... Kh8 21 Ba2 h6 22 Ba3 Rfe8
 23 Qd1 Qf6 24 c4 Nd8 25 Bb2 b6



After 25
 ... b6

Bondarevsky said Byrne had counted on 26 d5 e5 27 a5 Nf7 28 axb6 Bxb6 when the passed White pawns can be blocked. But Averbakh, seeing the same line, failed to find 28 d6! which gives White an edge (28 ... Bxd6 29 c5! bxc5 30 Bxf7 or 28 ... Nxd6 29 Bxe5 or 28 ... Qxd6 29 axb6 Bxb6 30 Nxe5 and wins). So he went into an attractive but second-best plan.

26 Ne5 Bxe5 27 Rxe5?! Nf7 28 Re1 Qg6
 29 f3 b5 30 axb5 axb5 31 c5 Ng5 32 Bc1
 b4 33 h4! Nh3+ 34 Kh2 f4

Black had appreciated how bad 33 ... Nf7 34 Bf4 was so he allowed his knight to be trapped. “Surprisingly, White doesn’t find

USSR–U.S. Match, New York, June 16–23, 1954

Board	USSR	Rounds				Total	U.S.	Rounds				Total
		1	2	3	4			1	2	3	4	
1.	Smyslov	½	½	½	½	2	Reshevsky	½	½	½	½	2
2.	Bronstein	1	1	1	1	4	Denker	0	0	0	0	0
3.	Keres	1	1	1	0	3	Pavey	0	0	0	1	1
4.	Averbakh	0	1	0	0	1	D. Byrne	1	0	1	1	3
5.	Geller	1	½	½	1	3	Horowitz	0	½	½	0	1
6.	Kotov	1	½	½	½	2½	R. Byrne	0	½	½	½	1½
7.	Petrosian	½	½	1	1	3	Bisguier	½	½	0	0	1
8.	Taimanov	1	0	½	0	1½	Evans	0	1	½	1	2½
	<i>Team</i>	6	5	5	4	20	<i>Team</i>	2	3	3	4	12

Dake replaced Denker in Round 1; Kevitz replaced Pavey in Round 3

the simple move 35 g4!," Bondarevsky wrote, after which 36 Kxh3 wins easily (also good is 35 ... Nf2 36 Qd2 Nd3 37 Re4 Bb5 38 Rb3).

35 gxh3?? Qg3+ 36 Kh1 Qxh3+ 37 Kg1 Qg3+ 38 Kh1 Qh3+ 39 Kg1 Qg3+ 40 Kh1 Qxh4+ 41 Kg1 Qg3+ 42 Kg1 Qh3+ 43 Kg1 Qg3+ 44 Kh1 Qh4+ 45 Kg1 e5

After analyzing the adjourned position, Black finds a convincing line. Now 46 d5 e4! 47 fxe4 Qg3+ 48 Kh1 Bg4 or 46 Rxe5 Rxe5 47 dxe5 Qg3+ 48 Kh1 Bc6 49 Rb3 Qh4+ 50 Kg1 Rd8 are lost (51 Qf1 is met by 51 ... Qg3+ 52 Kh1 Bb5).

46 Rb2 exd4 47 Re4 Rxe4 48 fxe4 Bh3 49 Bc4 Qg3+ 50 Kh1 Bg4 51 Qf1 Bf3+ 52 Rg2 b3! 53 Bb2 Ra8 54 c6 Bxe4 55 c7 Rc8 56 Qe2 f3 0–1

Chess Review had predicted a 20–12 Soviet victory, which turned out to be correct. Averbakh reflected the official view, in *Shakhmaty za 1954* (Chess for 1954) that the absence of government support played a role in the United States defeat. He added that while Reshevsky was receiving a \$500 a

month stipend from a patron, Nicolas Rossolimo had to work as a dishwasher and in other odd jobs. The New York visit ended with a final party at the Roosevelt Hotel, at which Taimanov performed on the piano, and another at the Soviet United Nations mission, where Paul Robeson sang, and Taimanov accompanied Smyslov at the piano.

On the way home, July 3–5, the Soviets played a 10-board match in London against the British, crushing them 10–0 in the first round and 8½–1½ in the second. This was even worse than the 18–6 radio match defeat of the British in 1946 and the 15–5 rematch of 1947. Finally, on July 9 and 12 the USSR team easily won a double-round match with Swedish players, scoring 6–2 and 7–1. Averbakh redeemed himself in England, winning both games.

D19 Slav Defense
USSR–Great Britain Match,
London, 1954
white Yuri Averbakh,
black Jonathan Penrose

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 Bxc4 Bb4 8 0–0 0–0 9 Qe2 Nbd7 10 e4 Bg6 11 Bd3 c5?

A bad innovation. Smyslov had equalized easily against Reshevsky a few weeks earlier with 11 ... h6 12 Rd1 Qe7 13 e5 Nd5. Also played is 11 ... Bh5.

12 e5! cxd4

Not 12 ... Nd5 13 Nxd5 exd5 14 Bxg6 hxg6 15 Ng5 with threats of Qf3-h3 and e5-e6.

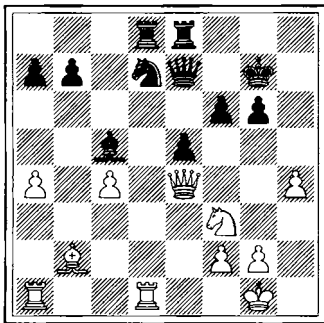
13 exf6 dxc3 14 Bxg6 hxg6 15 fxg7 Kxg7

Here Bondarevsky found a surer path in 16 bxc3 Bxc3 17 Ra3!, e.g., 17 ... Bf6 18 Qd2, preparing Rd3 or Qh6+.

16 Rd1 Qe7

Black's last chance was 16 ... Qc7 after which 17 Qb5 Bd6 18 Qd3 c2! gives White nothing as Smyslov showed (19 Rd2 Ne5).

17 bxc3 Bc5 18 c4! Rad8 19 Bb2+ f6
20 Qe4 Rfe8 21 h4 e5



After 21 ... e5

On 21 ... Nf8 22 g4! White is also winning.

22 h5! Nf8 23 Nh4 Rxd1+ 24 Rxd1 f5
25 Qf4 Qf6 26 Qg3 Bd4? 27 Rxd4! f4

Or 27 ... exd4 28 Bxd4 Qxd4
29 Nf5+.

28 Rxf4! 1–0

Geller said the team received so many presents on their way home that Taimanov “solved his excess baggage problem” only by

throwing away a box and stuffing gift set pieces “into the deep pockets of his overcoat.” But Taimanov began losing pieces en route, leading colleagues to joke that he should resign because he dropped a pawn in Montevideo, a rook in Rio de Janeiro and a queen in Paris.

The second Olympiad the Soviets took part in, at Amsterdam, September 4–25, 1954, was not nearly as closely fought as Helsinki 1952. Keres scored a remarkable 13 wins and one draw on fourth board and the team's only losses were one by Geller and two by Kotov, both reserves. The team finished seven points ahead of Argentina. Other Soviet matches conducted during this era were won against

Austria, October 1953, 17½–2½

Argentina, March 1954, 20½–11½

Uruguay, April 1954, 19½–½ (a draw given up by Kotov in the first round)

France, April 1954, 15–1

Hungary, May 1955, 20–12

West Germany, July–August 1960, 51–13

Netherlands, July 1962, 8½–3½

The 22nd Soviet Championship in February and March 1955 ended in a tie between Smyslov and Geller. When Geller won the bitterly fought playoff, Vasily Panov was besieged by Smyslov's devoted fans who wanted to know how was it possible for their man to lose: Was he in poor form, or did he underestimate his opponent or what? Finally Panov replied, “In my opinion Smyslov lost”—and then he paused; “Well!? Well!?” the fans asked—“because Geller played better than Smyslov.”

D78 Grünfeld Defense
22nd Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1955
white Yefim Geller,
black Vladimir Simagin

1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 0–0 Bg7
5 c4 c6

More popular among the Soviets was an early exchange on c4. For example, 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Nf3 0-0 and then 5 g3 d5 6 Bg2 dxc4.

A good, early example of this was Levenfish–Aronin, 16th Soviet Championship, Moscow 1948, which continued 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Nb4 9 Ne5 e6! 10 dxe6 Bxe6 11 Bxb7 Rb8 12 Bg2 Nfd5 13 Nxd5 Bxe5.

Black had excellent play and won: 14 Bf4 Bxb2 15 Nxc7 Bf5 16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 Bxb8 Nc3! 18 Qxd8 Nxe2+ 19 Kh1 Rxd8 20 Bc7 Rc8 21 Rael Rxc7 22 Rxe2 c3 23 g4 Bd3 0-1.

6 d4 0-0 7 Ne5 dxc4!

Black needs to break in the center, *e.g.*, 8 Na3 Ng4 9 Naxc4 Nxe5 10 Nxe5 c5 as Simagin intended. On 7 b3 Black also has 7 ... cxc4 8 bxc4 c5.

8 Nxc4 Be6 9 Qd3 Na6 10 Rd1 Qc8?

Black misses his chance for 10 ... Nb4 11 Qc3 c5! (12 Bxb7 Rb8 13 Bg2 Nfd5) and Geller presses him into a poor middlegame.

11 e4 Rd8 12 Qe2 Nc7 13 Nc3 Bh3 14 Bh1 Ng4 15 d5! Nb5

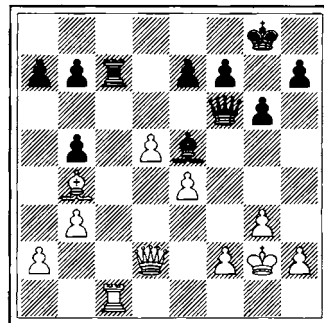
Black is clearly worse after 15 ... Bxc3 16 bxc3 cxd5 17 exd5 Nb5 18 Bb2 or 15 ... cxd5 16 exd5 Ne8 17 Ne4.

16 Nxb5 cxb5 17 Ne3 Nxe3 18 Bxe3 Qc4 19 Qd2 Rdc8 20 Rdc1 Qa4 21 Bc5! Rc7 22 b3 Qa6 23 Bb4! Rac8 24 Rxc7 Rxc7 25 Re1 Be5 26 Bg2 Bxg2 27 Kxg2 Qf6 28 Rc1! (*see diagram*)

White has strong winning chances in the endgame because of his better pawns and bishop (in view of f2–f4).

28 ... Rxc1+ 29 Qxc1 g5 30 h4!

Geller, a fierce tactician, also developed one of the finest winning techniques among



After 28 Rc1

the Soviets. Here he avoids 30 Qc8+ Kg7 31 Qxb7 g4 32 Qxb5 Qf3+ and offers to go into 30 h4 gxh4 31 Qc8+ Kg7 32 Qg4+ and 33 f4.

30 ... h6 31 hxg5 hxg5 32 Bd2 Qg6 33 Qc8+ Kg7 34 Qg4! f6 35 Bb4 Kf8 36 f3 Qe8 37 Qe6 Qd8 38 f4! gxf4 39 gxf4 Bd6

Or 39 ... Bxf4? 40 Qxf6+ and 39 ... Bd4 40 e5 fxe5 41 fxe5 Qe8 42 d6.

40 Bxd6 exd6 41 Kf3 Kg7 42 Kg4! b4 (sealed) 1-0

Simagin recognized the hopelessness of 43 Kf5 a5 44 e5 dxe5 45 fxe5 fxe5 46 Qxe5+ Kh7 47 d6.

The real surprise of the tournament was Georgy Ilivitsky, a 33-year-old Ural mountain engineer who broke the Moscow–Leningrad stranglehold on top places by tying for third prize with Botvinnik, Petrosian and 18-year-old Boris Spassky. Smyslov led by a point with four rounds to go but suffered two surprises. One of them was:

A02 Bird's Opening
22nd Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1955
white Vasily Smyslov,
black Georgy Ilivitsky

1 f4!? d5 2 Nf3 g6 3 e3 Bg7 4 Be2 Nf6 5 0-0 0-0 6 Qe1 c5 7 d3 Nc6 8 c3 Bg4 9 Nbd2

Twenty Second Soviet Championship, Moscow, February 11–March 15, 1955

	G	S	B	I	P	S	K	T	M	A	F	K	B	F	A	L	K	S	K	S	Score
1–2. Geller	X	0	1	½	½	0	½	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	12–7
1–2. Smyslov	1	X	1	0	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	12–7
3–6. Botvinnik	0	0	X	½	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	11½–7½
3–6. Ilivitsky	½	1	½	X	½	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	11½–7½
3–6. Petrosian	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	11½–7½
3–6. Spassky	1	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	1	0	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	11½–7½
7–8. Keres	½	0	1	0	½	½	X	1	0	½	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	11–8
7–8. Taimanov	1	½	½	1	0	0	0	X	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	½	11–8
9. Mikenas	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	0	X	½	½	1	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	10½–8½
10–11. Antoshin	1	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	X	1	0	1	½	½	0	1	1	½	1	10–9
10–11. Furman	0	½	0	0	½	1	1	½	½	0	X	1	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	1	10–9
12. Kotov	0	½	0	½	½	1	½	0	0	1	0	X	1	½	0	1	1	½	1	½	9½–9½
13–14. Borisenko	1	0	½	½	½	1	0	½	1	0	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	9–10
13–14. Flohr	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	1	½	0	½	1	½	9–10
15–16. Averbakh	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	8½–10½
15–16. Lisitsyn	0	1	½	½	½	½	0	0	0	1	½	0	½	½	½	X	½	0	1	1	8½–10½
17. Kan	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	0	0	1	0	½	1	½	½	X	0	1	½	7–12
18. Simagin	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	X	1	0	6½–12½
19. Korchnoi	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	0	X	1	6–13
20. Shcherbakov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	1	0	X	3½–15½

Geller beat Smyslov 4–3 in playoff

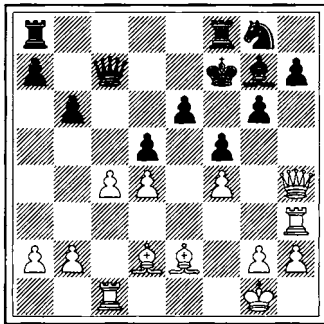
Smyslov adopts a reversed form of a Dutch Defense line that Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky had success with thirty years before.

9 ... Qc7 10 Nb3 b6 11 d4! cxd4 12 exd4 Ne4 13 Be3 Bxf3 14 Rxf3 f5! 15 Rh3

There is no real kingside attack now that f4–f5 is stopped and White should have considered the immediate 15 Rcl.

15 ... e6 16 Rcl Ne7 17 Qh4 Kf7! 18 Nd2 Nxd2 19 Bxd2 Ng8 20 c4!

White avoids 20 Qxh7 Nf6 21 Qh4 Rh8 which favors Black (22 Qg3 Ne4 23 Qe3 Rxf3 24 gxf3 Rh8, as Viktor Liublinsky wrote in the tournament book).



After 20 c4

But now 20 ... Bxd4+ 21 Kh1 Bg7 22 cxd5 favors White, as does 21 ... Bxb2 22 Qxh7+ Bg7 23 Bc3 Nf6 24 Bxf6 Kxf6 25 Rh6!

20 ... Rac8 21 cxd5?? Qxc1!+

White apparently counted on 21 ... Bxd4+ 22 Kf1 Qxc1+ 23 Bxc1 Rxc1+ after which he has 24 Bd1 Rxd1+ 25 Ke2. Now White emerges with roughly equal material—but badly misplaced pieces.

22 Bxc1 Rxc1+ 23 Kf2 Bxd4+ 24 Kf3 exd5 25 Qxh7+ Bg7 26 Rg3 Ne7 27 Rxg6!?

Semi-desperation, in view of the 27 ... Rh8 threat.

27 ... Nxg6 28 Qh5 Bxb2 29 Bd3 Kg7 30 g3

Or 30 Bxf5 Rxf5 and 31 ... Nh4+. Now Black consolidates easily against the outgunned queen.

30 ... Rc3 31 Ke2 Rc6 32 h4 Re8+ 33 Kf1 Re3 34 Qxf5 Ne7 35 Qh7+ Kf8 36 g4 Bg7 37 Kf2 d4 38 g5 Rc3 39 Be2 Rc5 40 h5 Rf5 41 h6 Rxf4+ 42 Ke1 Be5 43 Kd1 and 0–1

A few months later Ilivitsky, one of the strongest amateurs the Soviet Union ever produced, came agonizingly close to qualifying for a Candidates Tournament. But he made a fatal error in a winning position against Carlos Guimard at the Göteborg Interzonal in September 1955 and ended the tournament in a tie for ninth place. Ilivitsky returned home to Sverdlovsk and his machine factory, played less and less chess (“but always fought for the honor of his factory,” a magazine noted). He eventually retired on a pension of barely 100 rubles a month, struggled with ill health—and in the final days of the Soviet Union, took his own life on November 28, 1989.

A return match with the Americans was held on June 29–July 7, 1955, in Moscow. It resulted in a 25–7 rout. One of the remarkable results of the visit was a photograph taken at Spaso House, the United States ambassador’s residence, on July 4th during an Independence Day reception for the American team and the Kremlin leadership. The photo shows more than a dozen people but three stand out: Reshevsky in the center, with Nikolai Bulganin leaning affectionately on one shoulder and Nikita Khrushchev smiling on his other side.

Despite their run of success in FIDE events, the Soviets had become unhappy with

many decisions taken by the world organization. For example, at Göteborg there were three vacancies when Reshevsky, Evans and Abraham Yanofsky of Canada declined their invitations. Kotov — just three years from his record result at Stockholm — sought one of the vacancies. A hastily organized meeting voted 14–12 to add Kotov, Vasja Pirc and Julio Bolbochán. But according to Soviet accounts, FIDE president Folke Rogard discovered that two delegates, from Luxembourg and Saarland, were stuck in an elevator during the vote. When they arrived, they voted “no” and Rogard cast the deciding vote against enlarging the tournament. It was Kotov’s last chance at the world championship.

One of the heroes of Göteborg was Spassky, who also won the World Junior Championship held in Antwerp in July 1955 and scored 7½–½ on second board, behind Taimanov, on the gold-medal-winning Soviet team in the World Student Team Championship, held in Lyons in May. Spassky demonstrated an enterprising style both in the 22nd Championship, where he beat Averbakh in 29 moves with the King’s Gambit, and in the 23rd, where he tied for first prize with Averbakh and Taimanov. The first tournament also revealed new rivalries that were forming in the next generation — such as:

B95 Sicilian Defense
22nd Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1955
white Boris Spassky,
black Tigran Petrosian

1 e5 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 Qf3

“Deserving serious attention is 7 f4, a move worked out by the Leningrad players,” Suetin wrote. He cited a recent game that had gone 7 ... Qb6 8 Qd2 Qxb2 9 Nb3 Nc6 10 Bd3 d5!? 11 Bxf6 gxf6 “with

very sharp play.” The key point of this early Poisoned Pawn Variation is that Rb1 can be met by ...Qxc3 and ...Bb4.

7 ... h6 8 Bh4 Nbd7

Soviets had been analyzing the Najdorf Variation for 20 years. An early example, Rauzer–Nenarokov, Leningrad 1936, went 7 ... Nbd7 8 0–0–0 Qa5 9 Qg3 h6 10 Be3 b5 11 f3 Bb7 and now 12 Bxb5? axb5 13 Ndxb5 Rc8 14 Nxd6+ Bxd6 15 Qxd6 Rc6 16 Qg3 g6 17 Kb1 0–0! 18 Bxh6 Ra8 19 a3 Rb6 0–1.

9 0–0–0 Ne5! 10 Qe2

On 10 Qh3 the queen is badly placed: 10 ... Ng6 11 Bg3 Bd7 12 f3 b5 13 Be1 e5 and Black is better, as a later Soviet game showed.

10 ... g5! 11 Bg3 Bd7 12 h4 Rg8 13 hxg5
hxg5 14 Nf3 Qc7 15 Qe3 Be7 16 Be2 b5

Black cannot castle because of 17 Qa7!.

17 a3 Rb8 18 Nd4

But here he misses 18 Qd4!, to break the e5-blockade and force 18 ... Nxf3 or 18 ... Nfg4 19 Nxe5 Nxe5 20 Rh7.

18 ... Qc5! 19 b4 Qc7 20 Bxe5? dxe5
21 Nb3 Rc8 22 Rd3 g4 23 Kb1 Bc6 24 f3
g3! 25 Qh6!

White complicates to avoid getting the worst of it and now it is Petrosian’s turn to overestimate his chances.

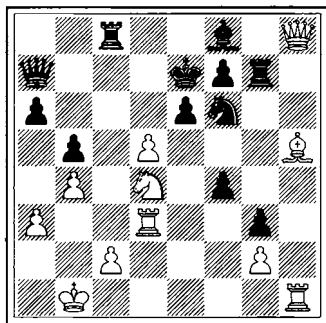
25 ... Nd7 26 Qh7 Nf6 27 Qh6 Qa7
28 Bd1 Nd7 29 Qh7 Rg6? 30 Qh8+ Bf8
31 f4!

The move Black most wanted to prevent. Now e6 and f7 become targets.

31 ... e×f4 32 Bh5 Rg7 33 Nd4 Ke7!
34 Nd5+! B×d5

Not 34 ... e×d5 35 Nf5+ and White wins.

35 e×d5 Nf6



After 35
... Nf6

Now 36 d×e6 f×e6 37 Re1 should win but the text is also adequate.

36 Re1 e5 37 Nc6+??

Time trouble causes Spassky to miss 37 Nf5+ Kd7 38 N×g7 B×b4 39 Qh6 and wins.

37 ... R×c6 38 d×c6 Qc7! 39 Bf3 Rh7
40 Q×h7 N×h7 41 Rd7+ Q×d7 42 c×d7
Bg7! draw

“Home analysis showed that in connection with ...f7–f5 and ...e5–e4 Black has sufficient compensation,” Suetin wrote.

The Youngest

No one seemed to better represent the youth movement of the Soviet School of chess than Boris Vasilevich Spassky (born January 30, 1937)— who later denied that a Soviet School existed. Spassky was always being described in this era as “the youngest.” He was the youngest first category player at 10, the youngest candidate master at 13, the youngest master and then the world’s youngest grandmaster.

Spassky seemed tailor-made for hero status in the Soviet Union. He was young, handsome with Van Cliburn–like looks, and athletic. He could high jump 5 feet 11½ inches, or more than an inch above his own height. He was the son of a Leningrad construction engineer and a mother who taught first through fourth grades. No mention was made of one grandfather who was an Orthodox priest. Spassky was another survivor of the war that would never be forgotten. When he returned to Leningrad in 1946 he began to visit the chess pavilion at the Central Park, spending the entire day there, 11 A.M. to 11 P.M. “The club was only open during the summer, and it was a tragedy for me when it closed down in September,” he later recalled. “It was like death with no chess.”

In November 1946 his mother sent Spassky to the Leningrad Pioneer Palace dressed in her military boots that almost reached his stomach. He quickly made an impression on trainer Vladimir Zak and Levenfish even though he played “like an old man, very positional and solid,” Spassky recalled. In school he gave up on math and switched to journalism because it was easier—even though switching majors was difficult for noncelebrities. “It’s in my nature to be a Russian bear,” he liked to joke. “Someone who is very calm and lazy and finds it an effort to spend the time to stand up.” But since age 6 when his parents divorced Spassky had regarded himself as head of his family, with two younger siblings. At the urging of Levenfish, who still commanded respect, Spassky began receiving a stipend of 120 rubles a month from age 10 and became the family breadwinner. He studied first under Bondarevsky (“I was a rough diamond and Bondarevsky polished it”) and then Tolush.

But Spassky seemed doomed to a Dostoyevskian life of self-doubts. He experienced great successes and exhilaration, and sudden reverses, “self-flagellation” and deep depression as Lev Polugayevsky put it.

Korchnoi said Spassky's early successes left him "helpless" when fate turned against him — whereas Korchnoi felt he had been tempered by overcoming many early obstacles. In any event, Spassky did enjoy great success — and some luck — in the 23rd Championship, before he fell apart in the three-man playoff, won by Taimanov.

A13 English Opening
23rd Championship, Moscow, 1956
white Yuri Averbakh,
black Boris Spassky

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 e3 Be7
 5 b3 0–0 6 Bb2 dxc4?! 7 bxc4 c5 8 Be2
 Nc6 9 0–0 b6 10 d3! Bb7 11 Ne1! Qc7
 12 f4 Rfd8 13 Bf3 Rd7

White has exploited Black's premature exchange in the center and avoided giving him counterplay with 10 d4 cxd4. Annotator Simagin said the time was ripe for a wing attack, with 14 g4! Rad8 15 g5 Ne8 16 Qe2.

14 Qe2 Rad8 15 a3?! a6 16 Rb1 Ne8
 17 Ba1 Ba8 18 Ne4 Qa7 19 g4

Finally — but the delay has given Black time to begin queenside operations.

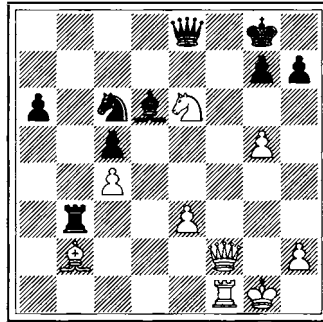
19 ... b5! 20 g5 bxc4 21 dxc4 Nd6!
 22 Nxd6 Rxd6 23 Qb2

It was time to acknowledge the attack was over and turn to defense with 23 Bc3!

23 ... Bf8 24 Ng2 Na5 25 Qc3 Bxf3
 26 Rxf3 Qa8! 27 Rbf1 Rd1 28 R3f2 Nc6
 29 f5!

And now there was no choice but to complicate since 29 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 30 Rf1 Rd7 and 31 ... Qd8 favored Black clearly. After the text Black could maintain his edge with 29 ... Rxf1+ 30 Rxf1 exf5 31 Rxf5 Ne7 32 Rf1 Qe4, as Simagin pointed out.

29 ... R8d3 30 Qc2 Qd8 31 fxe6 Rxf1+
 32 Rxf1 fxe6 33 Qf2! Qe8 34 Nf4 Rxa3
 35 Bb2 Rb3 36 Nxe6! Bd6



After 36
 ... Bd6

The tide has turned again and White can seal the point, despite fierce time trouble, with 37 Nxc7 followed by Nf5. But:

37 Nxc7 Bxh2+ 38 Kxh2?? Qb8+ 39 Kgl
 Rxb2 40 Qf7+ Kh8 41 Rf2?

He could still draw the 41 Qe8+ endgame.

41 ... Qg3+ 0–1

Filling the Information Vacuum

Information in the Soviet Union was often distributed according to rank. Only those in a need-to-know category, for example, had access to general interest Western publications, such as *Time* magazine or the *New York Herald Tribune*. But in specialized areas such as science and chess, the absence of a give-and-take of theoretical information could have obvious and serious consequences.

It was with this in mind that *Shakhmatny Bulletin* (Chess Bulletin) first appeared in 1955. It was a monthly, edited until 1962 by Ragozin and then by Averbakh, for a very elite audience. The circulation grew slowly, from 1,000 in 1955 to 9,000 in 1965 and eventually to 28,000. Every month in its 30

or so pages *Shakhmatny Bulletin* would analyze openings and difficult endgames in articles often written by grandmasters. This would be followed by roughly 200 unannotated games from recent Soviet and foreign tournaments, along with some vintage tournaments of the past. Meanwhile, *Shakhmaty v SSSR* had a circulation of at least 30,000, and *Shakhmaty*, published from Riga in both Russian and Latvian editions, had a combined circulation of 12,500. But this accounted for the lion's share of the chess information available to a nation of more than two million serious players.

There were still other events to demonstrate Soviet strength. The European Team Championship was held for the first time in 1957 and ended in a 41–19 Soviet score and victory by seven points ahead of the Yugoslavs. The Soviets also played hosts for the 1956 Olympiad, held on 68 tables at Moscow's Central House of the Soviet Army beginning August 31, 1956. The hosts were pleased with the turnout: 34 national teams competed, including, for the first time, squads from India, Iran, Mongolia, Puerto Rico and the Philippines — but no American team for the second straight Olympiad. The Soviet loss to Hungary in the fourth round was a harbinger of the bitter rivalry that was to take place between the two teams in Olympiads over three decades.

But the USSR team won the next seven matches and took the gold medals by 4½ points. Bronstein scored nine wins and four draws on fourth board. Recalling Botvinnik's warning about the King's Gambit in 1946, he asked and got permission from the rest of the team, before adopting a bishop sacrifice on the eighth move of his game with Ernst Rojahn of Norway. It was almost certainly unsound but Rojahn erred and Bronstein won in 38 moves.

The choice of opening proved decisive in another game as the Soviets crushed Czechoslovakia 3½–½.

D35 Queen's Gambit Declined
Olympiad, Moscow, 1956
white Vasily Smyslov,
black Ludek Pachman

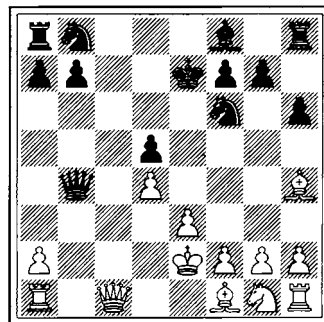
1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 d4 d5 4 cxd5 exd5
5 Bg5 c6 6 e3 h6 7 Bh4 Bf5 8 Qf3! Qb6!

Pachman, the leading non-Soviet opening theoretician, challenges his opponent to punish him for seizing the key diagonal before 8 Bd3 can be played. Black has a bad endgame after 8 ... Bg6 9 Bxf6 Qxf6 10 Qxf6.

9 Qxf5 Qxb2 10 Qc8+ Ke7

In unfamiliar territory Smyslov rejected 11 Nd1 Qb4+! 12 Ke2 g5 (13 a3 Qb5+ 14 Ke1 Qa5+). He also calculated 11 Rb1 Qxc3+ 12 Kd1 but saw that Black was safe after 12 ... g5 13 Qxb7+ Nbd7 14 Qxa8 Ne4 15 Nf3 gxh4. However, later analysis showed that 13 Bg3! Ne4 14 Nf3 was better, e.g., 14 ... Bg7 15 Rxb7+ Kf6 16 Be5+ Kg6 17 Nh4+! gxh4 18 Qe6+!.

11 Nxd5+ cxd5 12 Qcl Qb4+ 13 Ke2!



After 13 Ke2

There was no advantage in the endgame after 13 Qd2 Qxd2+ 14 Kxd2 g5 15 Bg3 Ne4+. After 13 Ke2 Black should continue 13 ... g5! since 14 Rb1 Qa5 15 Rxb7+ Nbd7 leaves Black threatening 16 ... Qa6+ as well as the bishop. Also 14 Bg3 Ne4 15 f3 Qb5+ 16 Ke1 Qb4+ 17 Kd1 Nc3+ 18 Kc2 Nd7 is highly unclear.

13 ... Qb5+?! 14 Kf3! Qd7 15 Bxf6+!
Kxf6 16 g3

White's king will be safer after 16 ... Nc6 17 Bh3 Qe7 18 Qb1 but after 18 ... g6 Black still has survival chances. Pachman, who often played poorly when he left his prepared analysis, is quickly lost.

16 ... Qf5+? 17 Kg2 Bd6 18 Qd1! g6
19 Bd3 Qe6 20 Rb1

So that 20 ... b6 loses a pawn to 21 Qf3+ Kg7 22 Rb5!.

20 ... Nc6 21 Rxb7 Rab8 22 Rxb8 Rxb8
23 Ne2 Kg7 24 Qa4 Ne7 25 Rb1

Careful to the end, Smyslov avoids 25 Qxa7 Rb2, which grants Black counterplay.

25 ... Rxb1 26 Bxb1 Bb8 27 Bc2 h5
28 Qb5 Bc7 29 h4 a6 30 Qb7 1–0

The winning team put the Hamilton-Russell Cup on display at the Central Chess Club, the most prestigious club in the country. It had been opened earlier in August—after several top players wrote Khrushchev that they did not have a good place to play—in a three-story, 130-year-old private residence at 14 Gogolevsky Boulevard. Viktor Baturinsky, who later became the club's powerful director, called it "our Pentagon," stocked with a 10,000-volume library and an index card system with 100,000 cards detailing changes in opening theory. Beginning in 1958 the club also published a high-quality bulletin. More than 400 issues appeared over the next forty years.

In recognition of another national asset, the trainers and seconds who had become a must for top Soviet players, the Kremlin authorized a new title. In March 1956 the Council of Ministers, a large body that served as the Kremlin's unwieldy cabinet, created the Honored Trainer of the Soviet Union.

Only 30 men were awarded the title through 1991. Among them: Pyotr Romanovsky, Alexander Konstantinopolsky, Zak, Viktor Kart (whose students included Oleg Romanishin and Alexander Belyavsky), Semyon Furman, Rashid Nezhmetdinov, many time student-team captain Anatoly Bykhovsky, Igor Zaitsev and Alexander Nikitin.

Sorcerer from Riga

Each Soviet Championship seemed to introduce a new young star and in the 24th, in January–February, 1957, it was Mikhail Nekhemyevich Tal (born November 9, 1936), of Latvia. Tal appeared to be another erratic youngster with a sacrificial style that could win or lose any game. His tie for fifth place had been one of the major surprises of the 23rd Championship. But skeptics were gratified when Tal began the Tbilisi semifinals of the 24th with only 5½ points out of 12, leaving him with little chance of muscling past rivals like Polugayevsky and Nikolai Krogius; but the Latvian scored six points in his last seven games to qualify. Coming on the heels of Botvinnik's scientific approach to training and the propaganda about "the Soviet School," Tal jolted chess with games like this:

A78 Modern Benoni Defense
24th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1957
white Bukhuti Gurgendize,
black Mikhail Tal

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5
5 cxd5 d6 6 Nf3 g6 7 e4 Bg7 8 Be2 0–0
9 0–0 Re8

This was already a fairly well-known position, e.g., Averbakh–Tolush, Gagra 1953, went 10 Qc2 a6 11 a4 Nbd7 12 Bf4 Qc7 13 Nd2 Ne5 14 h3 Nfd7? and now 15 Be3 f6 16 f4 Nf7 17 Bf2 f5? 18 exf5! Bxc3 19 fxg6

hxg6 20 bxc3 Rxe2 21 Qxg6+ Kf8 22 Rael
Rxe1 23 Rxe1 Nb6 24 Re8+! Kxe8
25 Qg8+ 1-0 (in view of 25 ... Ke7 26 Bh4+
and mates).

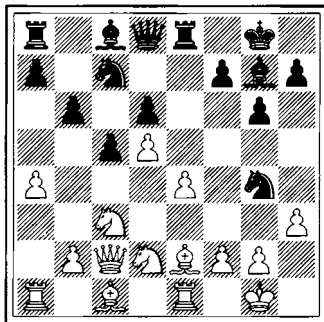
10 Nd2 Na6 11 Re1

The rook is misplaced here and both
11 f3 and 11 f4 served White better in later
games.

11 ... Nc7 12 a4 b6

Now 13 h3 keeps a small edge for White,
e.g., 13 ... Rb8 14 Bb5! Re7 15 Bc6.

13 Qc2 Ng4! 14 h3?



After 14 h3

14 ... Nx f2!! 15 Kx f2 Qh4+ 16 Kf1 Bd4
17 Nd1 Qxh3

The point: the queen penetrates since
18 gxh3 Bxh3 is mate. Black can open lines
for his rooks with ... f7-f5.

18 Bf3 Qh2 19 Ne3 f5! 20 Ndc4 fx e4
21 Bxe4 Ba6

With threats of both 22 ... Rxe4
23 Qxe4 Re8 and 22 ... Bxc4+ 23 Nxc4
Rf8+ 24 Bf3 Rxf3+.

22 Bf3 Re5 23 Ra3 Rae8 24 Bd2 Nxd5!
25 Bxd5+ Rxd5 26 Ke2

Or 26 Re2 Qh1+ 27 Kf2 Bxc4
28 Qxc4 Rf8+ 29 Kg3 Be5+ and 26 Rd3
Rf5+ 27 Ke2 Qh5+.

26 ... Bxe3 27 Rxe3 Bxc4+ 0-1

Tal, even more than the imperious Bot-
vinnik or bizarre Rauzer, stood apart from
his contemporaries. As a child he was short,
sickly and suffered from a congenitally de-
formed right hand of only three fingers. But
he had what Botvinnik called "a demonic,
Mephistophelian expression" and haunting
eyes which convinced opponents he could
hypnotize them. In fact, Tal's weapons were
hardly a matter of parapsychology: He won
with a quicksilver calculating ability, a huge
memory and an appreciation for a much
sharper way to win a game.

Tal did everything quickly. He spoke
fast and computed square roots in his head.
Tal had learned to read at 3 and later could
finish thick novels in a few hours. When
shown quiz positions, which grandmasters
normally solved in 12 to 20 seconds and
first-category players in 5 to 15 minutes, Tal
took five or six seconds, Viktor Malkin said.
Writer Viktor Vasiliev said Tal lost interest
in mathematics when a teacher accused him
of cheating because he solved a difficult prob-
lem without pencil and paper. Malkin once
asked, "Mikhail Nekhemyevich, how many
moves do you suppose it takes for four knights
to mate a king?" Tal immediately replied
"14." Malkin had no doubt he was right. Yet
he was also supremely impractical, forever
losing important documents such as passports
and airplane tickets, and, of course, mere
money. Tal took little care of his health. He
drank and smoked to excess. Averbakh, his
one-time second, said: "Tal never grew up.
He was always a child. He burned his can-
dle from both sides."

There were two sharply divided opin-
ions of Tal. During the FIDE Congress at
Dubrovnik in 1958 the Soviets tried to in-
crease their number of spots in the Candi-
dates tournament from five to six. Folke
Rogard turned to Vladimir Alatorsev and
said, "I would understand the need to dis-
cuss the question if another Morphy had

Twenty-Fourth Soviet Championship, Moscow, January 20–February 22, 1957

	T	B	K	S	T	Kh	Ko	P	B	A	T	F	B	K	N	A	S	M	A	K	G	T	Score
1. Tal	X	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	0	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	14–7
2–3. Bronstein	0	X	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	13½–7½
2–3. Keres	0	½	X	0	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	13½–7½
4–5. Spassky	½	1	1	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	0	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	13–8
4–5. Tolush	0	1	0	½	X	0	½	0	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	0	1	1	1	½	1	13–8
6. Kholmov	½	½	½	½	1	X	½	1	½	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	12½–8½
7–8. Korchnoi	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	0	½	½	½	½	1	0	1	0	½	1	1	1	12–9
7–8. Petrosian	0	½	½	½	1	0	½	X	½	½	1	0	0	1	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	12–9
9. Boleslavsky	1	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	11½–9½
10–11. Aronin	½	0	½	½	0	1	1	½	½	X	½	1	0	0	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	0	11–10
10–11. Taimanov	0	½	½	½	0	1	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	0	11–10
12. Furman	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	1	½	0	½	X	1	½	½	1	1	0	½	1	0	½	10–11
13–15. Bannik	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	0	X	1	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	9½–11½
13–15. Klaman	0	0	½	1	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	½	0	X	1	0	½	1	1	½	1	½	9½–11½
13–15. Nezhmetdinov	1	0	½	1	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	X	1	1	0	0	0	1	½	9½–11½
16. Antoshin	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	0	½	½	0	0	½	1	0	X	0	1	1	½	1	½	9–12
17. Stolyar	½	0	½	0	1	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	1	X	½	½	1	½	½	8½–12½
18. Mikenas	½	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	0	½	1	1	0	1	0	½	X	0	0	1	0	8–13
19–22. Aronson	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	1	0	½	1	X	1	1	½	7½–13½
19–22. Khasin	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	1	½	0	1	0	X	0	1	7½–13½
19–22. Gurgenzidze	0	1	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	X	1	7½–13½
19–22. Tarasov	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	0	X	7½–13½

appeared.” Alatorsev, president of Soviet Chess Federation which represented the Soviets in FIDE, said one had — Tal. On the other hand, Tal’s rivals heaped doubt on the soundness of his play. Taimanov said that if Tal won three straight Soviet Championships he would give up chess. The other grandmasters saw how often his sacrifices were refuted in postmortems. But Tal never cared to be World Postmortem Champion.

He won his first four games in the 24th championship and took a point-and-a-half lead — which he quickly lost. Tal did not return to the lead until the 17th round, but kept it until the end. On the final day he, Tolush and Bronstein were tied at 13–7, with Bronstein playing white against Kholmov and Tal playing white against Tolush. Tolush’s one real goal in chess, knowing he would never challenge Botvinnik, was to be Soviet Champion. The 46-year-old grandmaster had already won 10 games, including dispatching his next-to-last opponent in 10 moves. He was the heavy favorite on the final day and was being photographed and congratulated before the clocks were started. But, he told well-wishers, “It’s early.”

E81 King’s Indian Defense
24th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1957
white Mikhail Tal,
black Alexander Tolush

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 d4 Bg7 5 f3

Tal had only played this sharp variation a few times before but here he announces his aggressive intentions. That morning his trainer, Alexander Koblents, told him that if he saw no more than a draw, then a tie for second prize was not so bad. After all, 21-year-olds do not win Soviet Championships, Koblents counseled. But Tal, who was born the year Tolush first won the RSFSR Championship, saw it differently: “I’m receiving odds of 25 years.”

5 ... e5 6 Nge2 Nbd7 7 Bg5 c6 8 Qd2 0–0 9 d5 c5?

Black sees he can engineer ...b7–b5, even at the cost of a pawn. Tolush’s longtime Leningrad colleague, Dmitry Rovner, recalled how “before a particularly crucial, most important game, he would say to himself ‘I need a draw and therefore I will be careful, avoid risk and achieve my goal.’ But play begins and he forgot everything!”

But Tolush would have done better with 9 ... cxd5 and then 10 ... a6/11 ... b5, even though this leaves White with good queenside chances.

10 g4! a6 11 Ng3 Re8 12 h4 Qa5 13 Bh6 Nf8 14 h5 Qc7 15 Bd3 b5 16 0–0–0! bxc4 17 Bb1! Bh8 18 Rdg1 Rb8 19 Nf5! N6d7 20 Bg5

Tal vividly recalled the course of the game, describing how Tolush adjusted his tie before touching a piece, how he slowly wrote down his moves and sat with a pack of his favorite Kazbek cigarettes by his side. It must have pained Tolush to realize *he* might be getting mated in the vicinity of g7, *e.g.*, 21 Ne7+ Kg7 22 h6 mate. Here 20 ... gxf5 21 gxf5 f6 22 Bxf6+ was one of the losing alternatives.

20 ... Bg7 21 Nxc7 Kxc7 22 Bh6+ Kg8 23 f4! exf4 24 Qxf4 Qd8!

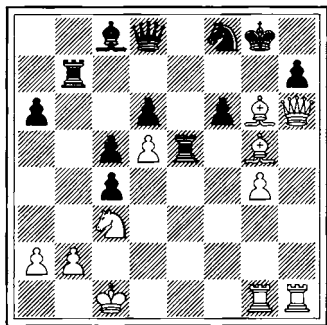
Tal thought Black lost this game because he failed to go on the defensive when he had to, but here he finds the best shot. Now 25 Qxd6 Rb6 26 Qh2 g5! turns the tables.

25 hxg6 Nxc6 26 Qh2 Nde5 27 Bf4? Nf8?

Tal said his stolid opponent’s expression did not change throughout the game but here he might have felt his heart skip: Black

misses the move that could have brought him at least a share of the title: 27 ... Nxf4!
28 Qxh7+ Kf8 29 Qh6+ Ke7 30 Qxf4 Kd7
with chances for both sides.

28 Qh6 Neg6 29 Bg5 f6 30 e5!! Rxe5
31 Bxg6 Rb7



After 31
... Rb7

For once in a Soviet Championship silence reigned, as if the audience held its breath, Salo Flohr wrote.

32 Ne4! fxg5 33 Rf1! Rxe4 34 Bxe4

Threatening 35 Rxf8+ Qxf8 36 Bxh7+. On a nearby board the initiative from Bronstein's pawn sacrifice had petered out against Kholmov's staunch defense and a draw was inevitable.

34 ... Rg7 35 Rf6 Bxg4 36 Rhf1 Nd7
37 Rxd6 Qe7 38 Rxa6 Kh8 39 Bxh7!
Nb8 40 Bf5+ Kg8 41 Be6+ Bxe6
42 Rxe6

"With olympian calmness Alexander Kazimirovich stopped the clocks and congratulated me on the championship title," Tal wrote. Keres and Bronstein were among the first to add their congratulations to Tal, who had become not only national champion but the 19th Soviet grandmaster. Only after an hour of animated interviews with reporters did Tal notice Tolush, who had fallen to fifth place, slowly walking to the exit, deep in thought.

Botvinnik-Smyslov: Rounds II and III

A month later the second Smyslov-Botvinnik world championship match opened in Moscow at the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, the same site as the previous two matches. Smyslov had accomplished what no one else could: he won two Candidates tournaments. While Smyslov rambled through the Amsterdam 1956, Candidates, Botvinnik tried to keep in shape through secret training matches. He selected Averbakh as a sparring partner. But like many others, Averbakh found the champion "a very difficult man to be with — if you were a good listener, then everything was OK."

Botvinnik summoned Averbakh to Nikolina Gora, the nest of elite dachas for celebrated authors, diplomats and other VIPs located about 20 miles southwest of Moscow. They played training games — but with a radio turned on so Botvinnik could get used to the noise of the concert hall. "Visualize this picture," Averbakh recalled. "We're sitting at the board, thinking about moves, the chess clocks ticking rhythmically but from a black plate hanging on the wall comes a flow of information about labor achievements of the collective farmers near Moscow — about the laying in of hay, the milk yield and ... the then fashionable square-cluster method of farm production. After five hours of play with this accompaniment I felt I was completely out of my mind."

The two men also conducted training games in summer 1956 before the Moscow Olympiad and in January 1957. Among the games published years later was:

E29 Nimzo-Indian Defense Training Match, 1956 *white* Mikhail Botvinnik, *black* Yuri Averbakh

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0
5 Bd3 c5 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 Nc6 8 e4

An experimental gambit Botvinnik considered using against Smyslov — until he saw László Szabó use the same idea in the Alekhine Memorial tournament later in 1956.

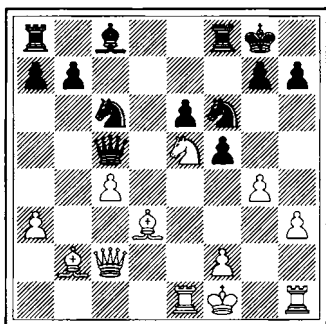
8 ... cxd4 9 cxd4 Nxd4 10 e5 Qa5+ 11 Kf1 Ne8

Not 11 ... Qxe5 12 Bb2 and White wins a piece with threats of 13 Nf3 or 13 Bxd4/14 Bxh7+.

In the Smyslov game, he played 11 ... Ne8 and after 12 Bd2 Qd8 13 Bb4 d6 14 Bxh7+ Kxh7 15 Qxd4 a5 16 Bc3 Black got a fine game with 16 ... f6.

In the *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* section he edited, Botvinnik made no mention of this game's 12 Bb2.

12 Bb2 Nc6 13 Nf3 f5 14 Qc2 d6 15 Re1 dxe5 16 Nxe5 Nf6 17 h3 Qc5 18 g4!



After 18 g4

It suddenly appears that White is better developed than Black and directing an attack at f5 and g7 (18 ... b6 19 Rg1 Bb7 20 gxf5 exf5 21 Nd7).

18 ... Ne4 19 Nxc6 Qxc6 20 Rg1!

Botvinnik recalled this attack on g7 was not hard to figure out — since he had used it in a similar position twenty-five years before against Myasoyedov (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qb3 c5 5 dxc5 Nc6 6 Nf3 Ne4 7 Bd2 Nxc5 8 Qc2 f5 9 a3 Bxc3 10 Bxc3 0–0 11 b4 Ne4 12 Bb2 b6 13 g4 Nxf2! 14 Kxf2 fxg4 15 Rg1 and after a “headspinning game” a draw was agreed).

20 ... Rf7 21 Re3 Qc5 22 gxf5 exf5 23 Bxe4 fxe4 24 Qc3 1–0

In view of 24 ... Qe7 25 Reg3 and wins.

But Averbakh felt this training was too much, too late, and that it left the 45-year-old champion too tired to play Smyslov. Again Botvinnik's stamina gave out in a long match. It was sufficient for a stretch of three to four weeks but after that, Botvinnik tended to tire. Tied after seven games, the match swung in the challenger's favor after this game:

D79 Grünfeld Defense
World Championship Match,
 17th game, Moscow, 1957
white Mikhail Botvinnik,
black Vasily Smyslov

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 c4 c6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d4 0–0 6 Nc3 d5 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 Ne5 b6 9 Bg5 Bb7 10 Bxf6

White rids himself of the dark-squared bishop in preparation for solidifying his center with f2–f4 and e2–e3.

10 ... Bxf6 11 0–0 e6 12 f4 Bg7 13 Rcl f6 14 Nf3 Nc6 15 e3 Qd7 16 Qe2

Afterwards 16 Rf2, followed by Bf1 to watch c4, was recommended.

16 ... Na5! 17 h4 Nc4 18 Bh3 Nd6 19 Kh2 a5 20 Rfel?! b5 21 Nd1 b4 22 Nf2 Ba6 23 Qdl Rfc8 24 Rxc8+

Botvinnik continues to avoid kingside chances (24 g4).

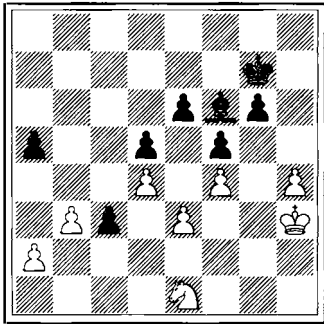
24 ... Rxc8 25 Bf1 Bxf1 26 Rxf1 Qc6 27 Nd3 Qc2+?

For once, Smyslov's endgame instincts fail him: 27 ... Ne4 was better.

World Championship Match, Moscow, March 5–April 27, 1957

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Botvinnik	0	½	½	1	1	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	
Smyslov	1	½	½	0	0	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Botvinnik	1	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½			9½–12½
Smyslov	0	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½			12½–9½

28 Qxc2 Rxc2+ 29 Rf2 Rxf2+ 30 Nxf2 Nc4 31 Nd1 Kf7 32 b3? Nd6 33 Kg2 h5! 34 Kh3 Ne4 35 g4? hxg4+ 36 Kxg4 f5+ 37 Kh3 Bf6 38 Ne1 Kg7 39 Nd3 Nc3! 40 Nxc3 bxc3 41 Ne1



After 41 Ne1

The general consensus about the adjourned position was: a likely draw, but White can make Black sweat. Botvinnik studied the position extensively but found no strong line of play. He called the match arbiters and offered a draw — and was stunned when Smyslov refused.

It had never occurred to him that *Black* could try to win. In fact, White should have tried to force a draw with 41 b4!

41 ... Kh6 42 Nc2 Be7 43 Kg3 Kh5 44 Kf3

On this or the previous move, a2–a3 was recommended by Romanovsky and other commentators but Smyslov found improvements for Black. Botvinnik is counting on setting up an impregnable fortress that he can defend even after losing the h-pawn.

44 ... Kxh4 45 Ne1 g5 46 fxg5 Kxg5 47 Nc2 Bd6 48 Ne1 Kh4!

Grisha Goldberg acknowledged later that Botvinnik had underestimated this maneuver. The king threatens to reach f1 after which White finds himself in Zugzwang.

49 Nc2 Kh3 50 Na1 Kh2 51 Kf2 Bg3+ 52 Kf3 Bh4! 53 Nc2 Kgl 54 Ke2 Kg2 55 Na1 Be7 56 Nc2 Kg3 57 Ne1 Bd8 58 Nc2 Bf6

Another Zugzwang: A knight move will allow ...f4.

59 a3 Be7 60 b4?

The losing move, according to Goldberg. He pointed out a study-like drawing line: 60 a4! Kg4 61 Na1 Ba3 62 Nc2 Bd6 63 Na1 Be7 (having lost a move) 64 Nc2 Bf6 65 b4! axb4 66 Nxb4 f4 67 exf4 Bxd4 68 Nc6! Bc5 69 Nd8! Bb6 70 Nxe6 Kf5 71 Ng7+! Ke4! 72 Ne8!!, intending 73 Nd6+ Kxf4 74 Kd3.

But Smyslov claimed Black is winning in another long line: 60 ... Bd6 61 Ne1 e5 62 dxe5 Bxe5 63 Kd3 d4! 64 exd4 Bd6 65 Nc2 f4 66 Kxc3 f3 67 Ne3 f2 68 Kd3 Kf3 69 Nf1 Bf4 70 d5 Kg2 71 Ke2 Kgl and wins.

60 ... a4 61 Ne1 Bg5 62 Nc2 Bf6 63 Kd3 Kf2 64 Na1 Bd8 65 Nc2 Bg5!

Zugzwang again.

World Championship Match, Moscow, March 4–May 8, 1958

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Smyslov	0	0	0	½	1	0	½	½	½	½	1	0	
Botvinnik	1	1	1	½	0	1	½	½	½		0	1	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Smyslov	½	0	1	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	½		10½–12½
Botvinnik	½	1	0	½	½	1	0	½	½	0	½		12½–10½

**66 b5 Bd8 67 Nb4 Bb6 68 Nc2 Ba5
69 Nb4 Ke1! 0–1**

The matter becomes clear after 70 Kxc3 Ke2 or 70 Nc2+ Kd1 71 Na1 Kc1.

When Smyslov took the 20th game as well he held a three-point lead with four games to go. Botvinnik virtually conceded. Smyslov became the seventh official world champion on April 27, 1957.

Smyslov reigned for one year and 11 days. Botvinnik attributed his own comeback in the rematch to his surprise adoption of the Caro-Kann Defense (“The effect was shattering”), which gave him a three-point lead after three games. Smyslov “won” the rest of the match games 10½–9½. “But what use was that?” Botvinnik asked.

**B19 Caro-Kann Defense
World Championship Rematch,
third game, Moscow, 1958
white Vasily Smyslov,
black Mikhail Botvinnik**

**1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5
5 Ng3 Bg6 6 h4 h6 7 Nf3 Nd7 8 Bd3**

There was a debate at this time over whether inserting 8 h5 Bh7 before 9 Bd3 was a plus or a minus for White. Few people today deny it is a plus.

**8 ... Bxd3 9 Qxd3 Qc7 10 Bd2 Ngf6
11 0–0–0 e6 12 Kb1 0–0–0 13 c4 c5
14 Bc3 cxd4 15 Nxd4 a6 16 Qe2**

Spassky tried to improve in his first world championship match with 16 Nf3, so that 16 ... Nc5 17 Qxd8+ and 18 Rxd8+ will be followed by 19 Ne5, with advantage. But Black equalizes with 16 ... Bc5! 17 Qe2 Bd6.

**16 ... Bd6 17 Ne4 Nxe4 18 Qxe4 Nf6
19 Qe2 Rd7**

Botvinnik wrote that he had prepared this move to prevent the Nf3–e5 maneuver, since 20 Nf3 Rhd8 21 Ne5? Bxe5 loses a piece. He may have had this position in mind when he commented in his memoirs that Smyslov’s strength “showed itself especially when he was faced with a prepared variation.” Then he would sink into thought for an hour, “his cheeks in his hands,” ears turning red, and “find the refutation!”

20 Rc1! Qc5 21 Nb3 Qf5+ 22 Rc2

Black took away Nf3–e5 but not the second plan, of advancing the c-pawn, which Smyslov seizes.

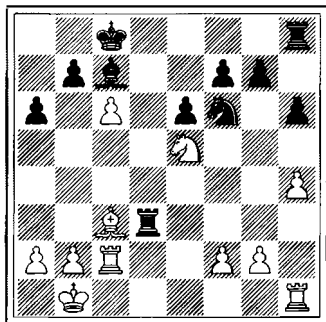
22 ... Bc7 23 c5 Rd5 24 c6 Bb6! 25 Nd2!

By threatening 26 Nc4 Bc7 27 Ne3, and offering Black the poor option of 25 ... Qxf2 26 Nc4 Rhd8 27 a4!, White coaxes Black into simplification that should have equalized.

**25 ... Qd3 26 Nc4 Bc7 27 Qxd3 Rxd3
28 Ne5??**

Twenty-Fifth Soviet Championship, Riga, January 12–February 14, 1958

	T	P	B	A	P	S	Ge	Gu	B	Ko	Kr	Ko	T	S	G	B	F	T	B	Score
1. Tal	X	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	0	0	½	1	1	½	1	0	1	1	1	12½–5½
2. Petrosian	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	12–6
3. Bronstein	½	½	X	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	1	11½–6½
4. Averbakh	0	½	½	X	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	½	½	1	11–7
5–6. Polugayevsky	½	½	0	0	X	0	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	10½–7½
5–6. Spassky	0	½	1	½	1	X	0	0	½	½	1	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	10½–7½
7–8. Geller	0	½	½	½	0	1	X	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	10–8
7–8. Gurgenzidze	0	½	½	0	½	1	½	X	½	0	½	½	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	10–8
9–11. Boleslavsky	1	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	9½–8½
9–11. Korchnoi	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	0	X	1	½	0	½	½	0	½	0	1	9½–8½
9–11. Krogus	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	1	0	X	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	9½–8½
12–13. Kotov	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	0	X	0	1	½	1	½	1	1	9–9
12–13. Taimanov	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	0	½	1	0	1	X	0	1	1	0	0	1	9–9
14. Suetin	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	X	1	½	1	1	0	8–10
15. Gipslis	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	0	X	1	0	1	½	7½–10½
16. Bannik	1	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	0	½	0	X	1	½	1	7–11
17. Furman	0	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	0	1	0	X	0	½	6–12
18–19. Tolush	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	½	1	X	0	4–14
18–19. Borisenko	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	0	1	½	0	½	1	X	4–14



After 28 Ne5

Botvinnik was mildly shocked. "There are almost no similar mistakes in the tournament games of Smyslov," he wrote. In his notes he concluded Smyslov had seen few winning chances in 28 $c \times b7 + K \times b7$ 29 $Be5 B \times e5$ 30 $N \times e5 Rd5$ 31 $f4 Nd7!$ 32 $Rhcl N \times e5$ 33 $Rc7 + Kb6$ 34 $f \times e5 Rf8$ 35 $b4 Kb5!$ Then, with 10 minutes to play 13 moves, the defending champion simply made a horrendous decision.

28 ... $R \times c3!$ 29 $c \times b7 + K \times b7$ 30 $R \times c3 B \times e5$ 31 $Rb3 + Ka7$ 32 $Rcl Rb8!$ 33 $R \times b8 K \times b8$ 34 $Rc4 Nd5$ 35 $Kc2 h5$ 36 $b4 Kb7$ 37 $Kb3 Bd6$ 38 $a3 Bc7$ 39 $Rc2 Bb6$ 40 $Kc4 Nf4!$ 41 $g3 Nh3$ (s) 42 $f3 Ng1$ 43 $f4 Nf3$ 44 $a4 Nd4$ 45 $Rd2 Nf5$ 46 $a5 Be3$ 47 $Rd8$

"Of course not 47 $Rd7 + Kc6$ 48 $R \times f7 Nd6 +$ " the winner wrote. But White had better chances in 48 $Kb3$ in the game.

47 ... $Bf2$ 48 $b5 Kc7$ 49 $Rg8 a \times b5 +$ 50 $K \times b5 B \times g3$ 51 $a6 Bf2$ 52 $Ka5 g6$ 53 $Ra8 Be1 +$ 54 $Kb5 Nd6 +$ 55 $Ka4 Nc8$

Black also wins by giving up a piece with 55 ... $B \times h4$ 56 $a7 Bf2$ and ... $B \times a7$ but Botvinnik wants to box in White's rook and passed pawn.

56 $Kb5 Bf2$ 57 $Ka5 Ba7$ 58 $Kb5 f6!$ 59 $Kb4 e5$ 60 $f \times e5 f \times e5$ 61 $Kc3 Bb8$ 62 $Kd3 Nb6$ 63 $a7 N \times a8$ 64 $a \times b8(Q) + K \times b8$ 65 $Ke4 Nb6$ 66 $K \times e5 Nd7 + 0-1$

Meanwhile, another three-year FIDE cycle had begun with the 25th Championship, held in Riga for the first time, beginning January 12, 1958. This seemed like a tournament anyone could win, and at various times Spassky, Petrosian and Geller held the lead. Tal appeared sluggish, losing to Boleslavsky, to his nemesis Korchnoi and even to Bannik. Geller, who was convinced Tal's victory the year before was due to the aging of the pretournament favorites such as Keres and Bronstein, thought he was winning his 14th round game with Tal. But when he rejected a trade of queens into a drawish endgame, it turned out Geller had blundered. It cost him a spot in the next Interzonal and he did not reach the Candidates level again until he was 37.

Tal proceeded to score six points out of seven, setting up a dramatic final round game with Spassky. He had 11½ points, tied with Petrosian, a half point ahead of Bronstein, and a point in front of Spassky and Averbakh. In the crucial game, Tal blundered on move 31 and Spassky adjourned with excellent winning chances in a queen-and-rook ending. But Spassky analyzed until the last minute before resumption and came to the board "very disheveled and fatigued," he recalled. After missing a forced win at move 58 Spassky did not realize how precarious his position was and "like a very stubborn mule" refused a draw offer. When Tal's king suddenly joined the counterattack, Spassky was forced to resign on move 73. He left the tournament hall, began walking and "cried like a child."

Spassky disclosed in a 1997 interview that on his way home he met David Ginzburg, a checker master, journalist and *gulag* survivor, who comforted him with a prediction: "Borya, why are you crying? I'll tell you what will happen. Misha will go and win the Interzonal. Then he'll win the Candidates tournament. After that he'll have a match with Botvinnik. He'll win from Botvinnik. Then there'll be a return match. He'll

lose to Botvinnik. But you will still play and play and achieve everything you want.”

The surprise finish of the tournament meant Bronstein, Petrosian, Averbakh and a now-two-time Soviet Champion Tal were seeded into the next Interzonal, in Portorož, Yugoslavia, in August and September. Averbakh said Tal had an operation two weeks before the tournament “and he was too weak to even carry his luggage, which I did.” But Averbakh was alone in a poll conducted by the newspaper *Borba* to predict that Tal would win the 21-player event. The Latvian started slowly and was only plus-2 after eight rounds. But again he finished powerfully to take clear first place.

It was at Portorož that the first cracks appeared in the Soviet hegemony over the world championship cycle. Petrosian was the only other Soviet to qualify from it for the 1959 Candidates tournament. Perhaps the biggest failure was Bronstein. In three interzonals he lost only one game, but it came in the final round at Portorož to the Filipino Rodolfo Cardoso and it cost him a chance to advance to his fourth Candidates.

Despite his infuriating lack of ambition, Petrosian was beginning to distance himself from rivals Geller and Smyslov. After the 1953 Candidates tournament he told Beilin that his life would be calmer and less demanding because of his result: “It’s better to be fifth,” he said. This policy of avoiding loss cost him first place in the 25th Soviet Championship and he was leading at Portorož until losing to Bent Larsen of Denmark. Then he “retired into his shell,” in Vasiliev’s words, and drew his last four games. At the 13th Olympiad, at Munich in September and October, 1958, he tied for his board prize with a terrific 80.8 percent score — but Soviets were expected to do that well as second reserve.

Finally Petrosian won something, the Soviet national title, on his eighth try:

**E92 King’s Indian Defense
26th Soviet Championship,
Tbilisi, 1959**

**white Tigran Petrosian,
black Jacob Yukhtman**

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
5 Be2 0–0**

Averbakh had developed his own anti-King’s Indian Defense system, with 6 Bg5 and then 6 ... c5 7 d5. On 7 ... a6 8 a4 e6 (or 8 ... Qa5 9 Bd2! e5? 10 g4!) he was able to use his edge in space with 9 Qd2 Qa5 10 Ra3! exd5 11 exd5 Nbd7 12 Nf3 Nb6 13 0–0 Bg4 14 Qf4.

Averbakh–Fuchs, Dresden 1956, continued 14 ... Bxf3 15 Qxf3 Nfd7 16 Ne4 Nc8 17 Qh3! Qc7 18 Qh4 Re8 19 Rh3 h5 20 Ng3 Nf8 21 Bxh5! Bxb2 22 Nf5! gxh5 23 Bf6 Ng6 24 Qg5 Ne7 25 Nh6+ Kf8 26 Bxb2 1–0.

6 Nf3 e5 7 d5

Partial to closed positions, Petrosian liked 7 d5 followed by Bg5 in order to stop Black from reacting ...N-moves/...f7–f5.

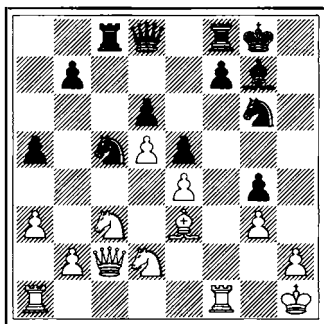
Another theme was illustrated by the first game he used this system, Petrosian–Nikolayevsky, Kiev seminals of the 25th Soviet Championship. After 7 ... c5?! 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bd2 Ne8 10 h4! f5 11 h5 the weakening of Black’s 8th move was exposed. White soon owned the light squares (11 ... g5 12 exf5 Bxf5 13 Be3 a6 14 Nd2 Kh8 15 Nde4 Nf6 16 Bd3) and he won the game with a king march, on light squares, that ended with “60 Ke6 Resigns.”

When Petrosian faced his own weapon, versus Boris de Grieff at Portorož, he played 7 ... Nbd7 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bh4 a6 10 0–0 Qe8, freeing his knight for ... Nh5–f4. After 11 Ne1 he equalized with 11 ... Nxe4 12 Nxe4 f5 13 Nc3 g5 14 Bg3 f4.

7 ... Na6 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bh4 g5 10 Bg3
Nh5 11 Nd2 Nf4 12 0-0 Nc5 13 Bg4! a5
14 f3! Ncd3

A pointless invasion since White will be able to obtain dominance on the light squares with Bxf4, and if ...Nxf4, then g2-g3. Black needs ...c7-c6 to prevent being overrun on the queenside.

15 Qc2 c6 16 Kh1 h5 17 Bxc8 Rxc8 18 a3
cxd5 19 cxd5 Nc5 20 Bf2 g4? 21 g3 Ng6
22 fxg4 hxg4 23 Be3



After 23 Be3

Viktor Korchnoi might have been thinking of a position like this when he said: "It seems that one has to be a masochist to play the King's Indian. Sooner or later, I believe, sociologists will prove that the invention of this defense was motivated by the Stalinist massacres."

Black becomes desperate before White is allowed to choose between exploiting the weak g-pawn or the queenside (with a3-a4, Nc4 and Nb5).

23 ... b5? 24 Nxb5 Qb6 25 a4 Qa6
26 Nc4 f5 27 Rxf5 Rxf5 28 exf5 Qb7!?
29 Qg2! Nb3 30 N4xd6 Qd7 31 Rf1 1-0

The critics were at least partially right: Tal was lucky towards the end of the two-month Candidates tournament that traveled from Bled to Zagreb to Belgrade in fall, 1959. Smyslov was a piece up against him with two moves to go before time control when he missed three winning lines and drew.

Smyslov was a piece up the next time they met, when he blundered on the 37th move and again on the 40th, and lost.

Bobby Fischer missed several strong lines in the penultimate round, at moves 13, 14, 15 and 17 and finally on the 22d and gave Tal the clinching point. In fact, Fischer claimed he had winning positions in all four games with Tal and lost all four of them. Keres' play was good enough to win any of the three previous Candidates tournaments but once again his inability to win the crucial games failed him.

Match of the Century

Over the succeeding quarter century there would be four events hailed as the "match of the century" and the first Botvinnik-Tal match was the first. It created "a great boom" in the Soviet Union, according to Anatoly Karpov, who was eight years old when it inspired him to take the game seriously. Tal helped fuel the excitement by announcing, months in advance, that his first move as White would be 1 e4.

Tickets for the match sold for five rubles at a time when a good apartment could be rented for 10 rubles a month. The fans were carried away by each twist and turn: When Tal, leading by a point, offered a knight sacrifice on the 21st move of the sixth game, the audience rippled with excitement. Goldberg, seeing the fans' impact on Botvinnik, pleaded with arbiter Gideon Ståhlberg to establish quiet — or move the game to another room. Botvinnik blundered on the 25th move and lost, and his shaken condition seemed to carry over into the next game, when he suffered his third loss of the match.

Tal might have effectively ended the match had he found the right rook to go to c8 on the 34th move of the eighth game. But his blunder turned a win into a loss, and Botvinnik won again in the ninth game. Trailing by one point, this was the closest the

World Championship Match, Moscow, March 15–May 7, 1960

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Botvinnik	0	½	½	½	½	0	0	1	1	½	0	½	
Tal	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	0	0	½	1	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Botvinnik	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½				8½–12½
Tal	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½				12½–8½

champion came. There were moments when he was painfully vulnerable:

B18 Caro-Kann Defense
World Championship Match,
17th game, Moscow, 1960
white Mikhail Tal,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5
 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Nle2 Nf6 8 Nf4
 Bd6 9 N×g6 h×g6 10 Bg5 Nbd7 11 0–0
 Qa5 12 f4?!

This was the type of move that horrified classical players — Botvinnik included. White creates a bad bishop to avoid retreat or the equal endgame of 12 Qd2.

12 ... 0–0–0 13 a3 Qc7 14 b4 Nb6 15 Be2
 Be7 16 Qd3 Nfd5?

Tal's mistakes in this match were due to the fact he was Tal. But why the tactically alert Botvinnik slid into an inferior position and missed favorable lines such as 16 ... c5! 17 c3 c4 or 17 b×c5 Rxd4! is a mystery (18 c×b6 Rxd3 19 b×c7 Bc5+).

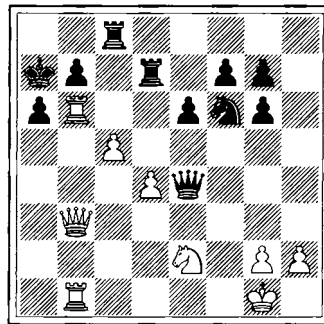
17 B×e7 Q×e7 18 c4 Nf6 19 Rab1 Qd7
 20 Rbd1 Kb8 21 Qb3 Qc7 22 a4 Rh4
 23 a5 Nc8 24 Qe3 Ne7 25 Qe5! Rhh8
 26 b5 c×b5 27 Q×b5

Now with 27 ... Nc6 Black still has fine chances.

27 ... a6? 28 Qb2 Rd7 29 c5 Ka8 30 Bf3
 Nc6

Black loses in lines such as 30 ... Q×a5
 31 c6 b×c6 32 Ra1.

31 B×c6 Q×c6 32 Rf3 Qa4 33 Rfd3 Rc8
 34 Rb1 Q×a5 35 Rb3 Qc7 36 Qa3 Ka7
 37 Rb6 Q×f4 38 Ne2 Qe4 39 Qb3



After 39 Qb3

On the verge of the time control Black should play 39 ... Ka8, followed by ... Ng4, ... Nd5 or ... Qd5. White must avoid 40 c6 R×c6! 41 R×b7 because of 41 ... Rcl+! 42 N×cl Qel mate or 42 Kf2 R×b7 43 Q×b7+ Q×b7 44 R×b7 K×b7 45 N×cl Kc6.

Flohr called Black's next move "the worst mistake of Botvinnik's career." Instead of a possible 9–8, the score became 10–7.

39 ... Qd5?? 40 R×a6+ Kb8

Or 40 ... b×a6 41 Qb6+ Ka8
 42 Q×a6+ and mates.

41 Qa4 1-0

The threat is mate in three (42 Ra8+) and Black is lost after 41 ... Re7 42 Qa5.

Tal won the 11th, 17th and 19th games and inexplicably missed a rook sacrifice in the 12th game that would also have won. When Botvinnik, trailing 8-12, showed up on May 7 for the 21st game without his tra-

ditional thermos, almost everyone could see what was coming. He offered a draw on the 17th move and Tal had become the youngest world champion in history.

The ceremonial coronation took place three days later to the strains of the hymn of the Soviet Union. It was the end of an era — but which?

12

Invisible Crisis

By 1960 Vasily Panov, graying and 54, had been semiretired from competitive chess for years and was nurturing a new reputation as a highly successful author and journalist whose writings appeared in publications based from Moscow to Irkutsk (Siberia), Dushanbe (Tadzhikistan) and Kishinyov (Moldavia). On January 7, 1960, Panov gained more attention than he ever achieved as a player by delivering a biting attack in *Izvestia* on a government initiative of which virtually no one in the West was aware.

“DON’T MANUFACTURE WUNDERKINDER,” the headline of Panov’s article warned. He was responding to an alarm sounded by the Union of Sports Societies which called for the immediate recruitment of 3,300 boys and girls for new chess training schools and a massive program to prepare young minds for mastery. This was a typical Soviet approach, a crash program like those that made the nation competitive in a few choice areas, such as ice hockey, classical music and long-range missiles. This time the crash program was being described as essential to meet the crisis in Soviet chess. “What crisis?” many readers must have wondered. After all, the ranks of Soviet players had continued to expand geometrically. They had grown from 150,000 registered players in 1929 to 500,000 in 1934, and then, despite the war, to one million in 1951. The number would soon reach three million.

More than 150 players held the Soviet master title and new masters were being created at an unprecedented rate of twenty a

year. The World Championship had become virtually a family possession, passed from one Soviet generation to another, and a USSR invitee became the prohibitive favorite in virtually any international tournament. Yet there was a noticeable drop in the quality of player being produced. In 1955, Boris Spassky won the World Junior Championship, but in the next two World Juniors, the Soviet entrants finished fourth and tied for eighth place, respectively. After Bulgaria won the World Student Olympiad in 1959, the presidium of the Soviet Chess Federation looked for a scapegoat and blamed the chess sections of the Pioneer Houses and the student-oriented Burevestnik sports society. When the Soviets lost 3–1 to the Americans in their individual match at the next Student Olympiad and finished second, before an embarrassed crowd in Leningrad, the humiliation was nearly complete.

In Stalin’s days, the call for a junior chess crash program would have been interpreted as an order. But Panov replied: “All this is sheer nonsense.” Chess should be played for enjoyment, not with the sole goal of mastery, he wrote. Panov argued that children should be given the opportunity — not the assignment — to study chess. The talented ones will emerge on their own and they can be given special attention when they announce their presence with good results. Panov wondered about the damage to the nation’s future physicians, engineers and architects of having “to cram and pass exams

on chess opening variations or rook endings along with exams in other subjects.” Panov had avoided the ideological wars for years but knew enough to include a quotation from Lenin to buttress his argument. He found one that had rarely been seen in a Soviet chess publication: “Do not forget that chess after all is a recreation and not an occupation.”

Panov’s long article, in a newspaper that was often only a few pages in length, was “a genuine bomb,” Yuri Averbakh recalled. Several prominent figures in Soviet chess teaching — Pyotr Romanovsky, Grigory Ravinsky, Yakov Rokhlin, Grisha Goldberg and “M-M” Udovich — were called on to critique it. But none pointed out what Averbakh has said was the real reason for the Soviet decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s: World War II. Players born after Spassky (1937) and before Anatoly Karpov (1951) grew up deeply affected by the war and its shortages, “distinguished by weak health and unstable nervous system,” Averbakh wrote. What the *vlasti* were panicking over was a “missing generation” that would have reached its prime in the 1960s — no matter how many training schools were ordered — had it not been for the war.

Nevertheless, to outsiders Soviet chess appeared to be in fine shape as the 1960s began because the generation born in the late 1920s and early 1930s was just reaching its peak. For example, 31-year-old Tigran Petrosian dominated the 28th Championship, in January–February, 1961, so clearly that he led by a point and a half with two rounds to go. His handling of closed positions continued to mystify opponents.

E70 King’s Indian Defense
28th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1961
white Tigran Petrosian,
black Eduard Gufeld

1 c4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e4 0–0
 5 Bg5

The King’s Indian move order was still being explored and 4 ... 0–0, rather than 4 ... d6, was found to lead to attractive complications for Black such as 5 e5 Ne8 and ...d6/...c5 or 5 f3 c5! 6 dxc6 b6.

But 4 ... 0–0 makes 5 Bg5 more effective since 5 ... h6 6 Be3! and f2–f3 gives White a favorable Sämisch Variation. On the other hand, 4 ... d6 5 Bg5 can be met by 5 ... h6 since 6 Be3 invites 6 ... Ng4 and 6 Bh4 allows 6 ... c5 7 d5 Qa5 8 Bd3 Nxe4! 9 Bxe4 Bxc3+.

5 ... d6 6 Qd2 c5 7 d5 Qa5

Petrosian made the interesting comment that after 7 ... e6 8 dxe6 Bxe6 White would have good chances on the kingside after Bd3, Nge2 and 0–0 — not mentioning the weakness of the d6-pawn.

8 Bd3 a6 9 Nge2 e5?

Like Alexander Tolush in the last-round game with Mikhail Tal four years before, Gufeld overestimates the counterplay coming from the flanking ...b7–b5 and ...f7–f5 thrusts. Petrosian considered the 9 ... b5 10 cxb5 Nbd7 gambit as promising and also noted that Black had drawing chances after 10 ... axb5 11 Bxb5 Nxe4 12 Nxe4 Qxb5 13 Bxe7 Re8 14 Nx d6 Qxb2 15 Qxb2 Bxb2.

10 0–0 Nbd7 11 a3 Nh5 12 f3! Bf6

Black reorganizes his kingside because White has anticipated 12 ... f5 with 13 exf5 gxf5 14 Qc2!, winning control of the light squares, if not a pawn.

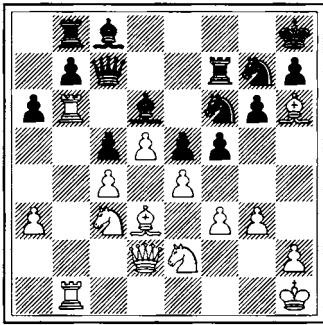
13 Bh6 Ng7 14 g3 Rb8 15 Kh1 Qc7

Here 15 ... b5 16 cxb5 axb5 would have been met strongly by 17 b4! cxb4 18 axb4 (18 ... Qxb4?? 19 Be3 and Rhb1). He now prepares to open the queenside on

his own terms while Black tries to reinforce support of ...f7–f5.

16 b3! Be7 17 Rab1 Kh8 18 Rb2 Nf6
19 b4 Ng8 20 Be3 f5 21 bxc5 dxc5
22 Rfb1 Nf6 23 Rb6 Bd6 24 Bh6 Rf7

White intended to meet 24 ... fxe4 with 25 Nxe4 Nxe4 26 Bxe4 Rf7 27 g4! “after which Black would be between two fires” — the queenside pressure and the danger of h2–h4–h5 on the kingside. Black’s next move, in place of the temporizing 25 ... Nd7, leads to disaster.



After 24
... Rf7

25 Ng1 f4? 26 gxf4 Nd7 27 fxe5! Bxe5

“Black counted on this since 27 ... Nxb6 28 exd6 Qxd6 29 e5 was clearly bad,” Petrosian wrote. He added that after 27 ... Bxe5 Black would answer a rook retreat with 29 ... Nh5! with excellent play on the dark squares.

But how could that be true if Black had played the opening so poorly, he wondered? Logically, there must be a flaw.

28 Re6!

This stops 28 ... Nh5 by way of 29 Re8+ and sets up a strong sacrifice, 28 ... Nf8 29 Rxe5!. The rest is desperation, ended only when Black stops to count the pieces.

28 ... b5 29 cxb5 c4 30 Rc6! Qd8
31 Bxc4 Qh4 32 Rcl Nh5 33 Bg5 Ng3+

34 Kg2 Nxe4 35 Nxe4 Qxh2+ 36 Kf1
Rxf3+ 37 Nxf3 Qh1+ 38 Kf2 1–0

A second major development of the early 1960s was the emergence of Viktor Lvovich Korchnoi, who had been approaching stardom in the finals since 1952 but did not sparkle until he won the 27th Championship. Korchnoi was born July 23, 1931, in Leningrad and grew up in a 13-room communal flat shared with 10 other families. While Spassky was being evacuated to the east during the first months of World War II, Korchnoi was packed off with other children on a train headed southwest, towards the advancing German troops. His mother, thinking his convoy would be bombed as some were, pulled him off the train, and Korchnoi spent the siege in Leningrad. He believed that he survived the war only because so many members of his family died — and left their ration cards.

At 13 Korchnoi joined the Leningrad Pioneer Palace where chess, piano and “elocution” competed for his time. He eventually became another student of Vladimir Zak, who joined the Palace in 1945 and headed its chess section for a quarter century. Zak recalled the difference between his two greatest pupils. Spassky, six years younger than Korchnoi, quickly graduated from third category to second, then to first. “His games stood out with their simplicity and elegance,” Zak wrote. “Mistakes and blunders were the rare exception.” But Korchnoi was still a third-category player at 14. “Interesting insights alternated with gross blunders,” Zak recalled. Korchnoi began his sharp climb in the late teenage years and at 20 succeeded Petrosian as the youngest Soviet master. Vladimir Alatortsev, analyzing the mature Korchnoi more than a decade later cited his self-confidence as a major strength. Korchnoi “trusts only his own conclusions,” he said.

Alatortsev also concluded Korchnoi was naturally shy — a remarkable insight

considering that even by 1960 he had a reputation for outrageous comments. After the Soviet team had clinched victory at the 1960 Olympiad at Leipzig, Botvinnik broke his Spartan regimen. In front of the rest of the team, he invited Korchnoi to join him in some brandy. It's good stuff, Botvinnik said — Armenian, "like your wife." Korchnoi replied, "No, it's an old cognac — like your wife." Eventually Korchnoi apologized and later told the story about himself. He also recalled how when he was an unknown youngster in 1950 Tolush offered help, saying he could make him a master in two years. Korchnoi refused, thinking, "I'll manage without him."

Despite his prickly personality Korchnoi was asked by both Botvinnik and Mikhail Tal, through their seconds, to help them in the 1961 return match. He refused, since he did not want to be considered a member of anyone's team when he made his own bid for the world championship. Like many Russians, Korchnoi was tribal: He regarded the people he met as being on one person's team or another; they were either friends or enemies. Otherwise, Korchnoi was hard to categorize. He loved cats, reading Sherlock Holmes stories and running the mile. At the board he played the role of provocateur. Korchnoi often encouraged his opponents to attack and sacrifice so he could counterattack, and his style was likened most often to Emanuel Lasker — and to Botvinnik.

B30 Sicilian Defense
28th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1961
white Eduard Gufeld,
black Viktor Korchnoi

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Qb6 4 Qe2 e6
 5 0-0 Nf6 6 e5 Nd5

Typically, Korchnoi invites 7 c4! Nf4
 8 Qe4 Ng6 9 h4 which would have given

White a slight edge. But it also makes major commitments in the center and kingside that Black could exploit if the initiative waned.

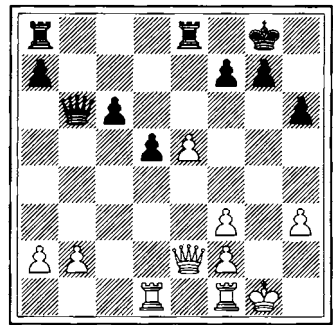
7 Nc3 Be7! 8 Nxd5 exd5 9 d4 cxd4
 10 Bg5? Bxg5 11 Nxg5 h6!

And here he is inviting the unsound
 12 Nx7 Kxf7 13 Qf3+ Ke7 14 Qxd5 Kd8.

12 Nf3 0-0 13 Rad1 Re8 14 c3 d6!

Switching to counterattack and avoiding 14 ... dxc3 15 Rxd5 cxb2 16 Bd3! d6
 17 Rxd6 Be6 18 Qe4, which favors White.

15 cxd4 Bg4 16 Bxc6 bxc6 17 h3 Bxf3
 18 gx3 dxe5 19 dxe5



After 19 dxe5

19 ... Qb4! 20 Qe3 Re6! 21 f4 f6 22 Kh1
 Rf8 23 b3 fxe5 24 fxe5 Rf4!

Black wins either the e-pawn (25 ...
 Re4), f-pawn or h-pawn now, thanks to a
 clever regrouping.

25 f3 Qf8! 26 Rde1 Qf5 27 Kh2 d4
 28 Qe2 Rh4 29 Qg2 Rg6 0-1

By winning his final four games in
 the 28th Championship Korchnoi jumped
 from a tie for 4th–7th to clear second place
 and clinched his first invitation to an inter-
 zonal. But as the pendulum was bring-
 ing Korchnoi to the top, his fellow Lenin-
 grader suffered another disaster in the final
 round.

Twenty Eighth Soviet Championship, Moscow, January 11–February 11, 1961

	P	K	G	St	Sm	Sp	A	P	S	T	F	Bo	Br	G	L	C	T	B	K	B	Score
1. Petrosian	X	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	13½–5½
2. Korchnoi	0	X	½	½	0	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	13–6
3–4. Geller	½	½	X	0	1	½	½	1	1	1	0	½	0	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	12–7
3–4. Stein	1	½	1	X	½	1	½	0	0	½	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	12–7
5–6. Smyslov	0	1	0	½	X	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	11–8
5–6. Spassky	½	0	½	0	½	X	1	0	0	½	1	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	1	11–8
7–8. Averbakh	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	0	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	10½–8½
7–8. Polugayevsky	0	0	0	1	½	1	½	X	0	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	10½–8½
9–10. Simagin	½	½	0	1	0	1	1	1	X	½	½	½	0	½	0	1	0	1	½	½	10–9
9–10. Taimanov	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	X	1	1	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	½	10–9
11. Furman	0	0	1	1	½	0	0	½	½	0	X	1	½	1	½	½	1	0	½	1	9½–9½
12–13. Boleslavsky	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	X	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	9–10
12–13. Bronstein	½	0	1	0	½	0	½	½	1	0	½	1	X	0	½	1	½	0	1	½	9–10
14. Gufeld	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	1	0	½	1	X	½	1	0	½	1	½	8–11
15–16. Lutikov	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	0	½	½	½	½	X	0	½	½	1	1	7½–11½
15–16. Cherepkov	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	0	1	X	1	1	0	½	7½–11½
17. Tarasov	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	0	0	½	½	1	½	0	X	0	0	½	7–12
18–19. Borisenko	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	0	1	½	½	0	1	X	½	0	6½–12½
18–19. Khasin	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	0	1	1	½	X	½	6½–12½
20. Bannik	½	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	½	X	6–13

C64 Ruy Lopez
28th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1961
white Leonid Stein,
black Boris Spassky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6
 5 d4 exd4 6 e5 Ne4 7 0-0 d5 8 exd6 0-0
 9 dxc7 Qf6!

This was a little-known improvement over 9 ... Qxc7 10 cxd4 Bd6 11 Nc3, which offers Black scant compensation for a pawn.

10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 cxd4 Bd6 12 Re1!

And this was Stein's improvement over 12 Nc3 Bf5 13 Be3 Bxc7 14 Rcl, as played in a 1954-56 postal game, which would have allowed Black to obtain strong chances, very much in Spassky's style, after 14 ... Nxc3 15 bxc3 Be4!.

12 ... Bf5 13 Nc3 Rfe8 14 Nxe4 Bxe4
 15 Bg5!

Forcing a liquidation into a very favorable endgame (not 15 ... Qg6 16 Bd8!). Spassky and Stein went into the game tied for fourth place and the final interzonal spot. Only the winner would go to Stockholm.

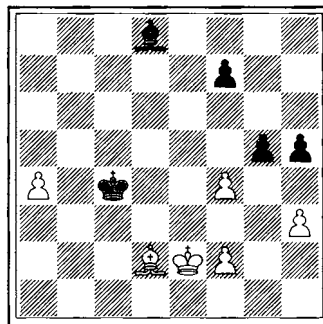
15 ... Bxf3 16 Rxe8+ Rxe8 17 Qxf3!
 Qxf3 18 gxf3 Bxc7 19 Rcl Bb6 20 Rxc6
 Bxd4 21 Be3! Bxb2 22 Bxa7 Re1+
 23 Kg2 Kf8 24 Rc7 Ke8 25 Be3 Rd1
 26 a4 Bd4!

The rook endgame might be drawn but White correctly guesses the bishop endgame is won.

27 Bg5! h6 28 Bc1 Bb6 29 Rc2 Rd5
 30 Rb2 Bc7 31 Be3 Kd7 32 Rb5 Rd3

33 Rb4 h5! 34 Rd4+ Rxd4 35 Bxd4 g6
 36 Bc3 Kc6 37 h3 Kd5 38 Kf1 Kc4
 39 Bd2 Bd8 40 Ke2 g5 41 f4!

After 41 f4



Black sealed 41 ... g4, but before resumption he notified the arbiters that he was giving up. This shocked some of the spectators — as well as a few of Spassky's grandmaster colleagues — and fostered the idea that Spassky had resigned in a drawn position. The key variation begins 42 hxg4 hxg4 43 a5 Kd5! and now 44 Kd3 f5 45 a6 Kc6 46 Be3 Ba5! with a defense (47 Kc4 Be1! 48 a7 Kb7 49 Kd5 g3 50 fxcg3 Bxc3 and 51 ... Bxf4!

Actually, Spassky had seen a winning line: 44 a6 Kc6 45 f5! after which the g4 pawn falls (since ... Kb6 is met by Ba5+!) and was certain Stein had found it in home analysis, too. But in fact, the ending was much harder than he knew.

Spassky was undergoing an emotional crisis in which his first marriage collapsed and he broke painfully away from Tolush. "Two divorces — it's like taking part in one war!" Spassky said. Tolush had been his trainer for ten years and, with no children of his own, treated Spassky as a son. After Spassky lost a highly publicized game to the American William Lombardy on first board in the 1960 Student Olympiad he was left off the 1961 team and was eventually suspended from foreign travel three times. He was replaced at the last minute as a Soviet invitee to Hastings 1962-63 — a typical Sports Committee humiliation.

“My nervous energy was completely destroyed for three years,” Spassky said of this period. Recalling how much promise he had shown by reaching the Candidates Tournament as a teenager, the chessplaying writer Evgeny Ilyin composed a poem about him that ended: “a sad couplet breaks the heart: In life you’re 18 only once.”

Rematch

Another blow to youth was struck in early 1961 by 49-year-old Botvinnik. Mikhail Tal could not take the possibility of a world championship rematch seriously. “Never!” he said when Alexander Koblents brought the subject up. While Koblents was offering to bet 12 bottles of Armenian cognac that there would indeed be a rematch, Botvinnik was well into his preparations. He had begun arming himself for it the day after their first match ended in May 1960 and he issued an official challenge on September 1, 1960.

One explanation of what happened next came from Lev Abramov, the new power in Soviet chess. In 1959 the responsibilities of the Chess Section of Sports Committee had been taken over by the Soviet Chess Federation and Abramov served as its vice chairman from 1961 to 1966. Abramov wrote in the Soviet chess yearbook of 1961 that when the two world championship combatants reflected on their first match, Tal concluded that he won because that was the best Botvinnik could play. But a more realistic Botvinnik concluded he had lost due to time pressure and fifth-hour fatigue.

Botvinnik was right: he was much better prepared than his opponent for the rematch and Tal found himself in positions not to his taste, such as in closed Caro-Kanns and strategically complex Nimzo-Indian middlegames.

**B12 Caro-Kann Defense
World Championship Match,
10th game, Moscow, 1961
white Mikhail Tal,
black Mikhail Botvinnik**

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 h4!?

This may have been the most bizarre weapon ever prepared for a World Championship match. White’s plan is to advance his kingside pawns en masse to harass the bishop as Philidor had done nearly 200 years before. In the 14th game Botvinnik tried 4 ... h5 and White complicated with 5 Ne2 e6 6 Ng3 g6 7 Nxf5 gxf5 8 c4 c5! 9 cxd5 Qxd5 10 Nc3!.

4 ... h6 5 g4 Bd7 6 h5 c5 7 c3

“Tal has apparently forgotten that pieces also play in chess,” Tolush said in the press room. But in a later game, the 18th, Tal obtained another terrible position with 6 c3 c5 7 Bg2 e6 8 Ne2 Bb5! 9 Na3 Bxe2 10 Qxe2 cxd4 11 cxd4 Bxa3 12 bxa3 Nc6 13 Be3 Qa5+ 14 Kf1.

7 ... Nc6 8 Bh3?

White’s opening was roundly condemned by his colleagues — save for Bronstein. Later at Bled 1961, Tal showed that White’s mistake was not in pushing the pawns but in stopping too soon: He obtained a nice game after 7 ... e6 8 f4! Qb6 9 Nf3 Nc6 10 Na3 cxd4 11 cxd4 0–0–0 12 Nc2 followed by Rb1 and b2–b4.

8 ... e6 9 Be3 Qb6 10 Qb3

When Tal offered a trade of queens, it was a bad sign. Here he admits he has little compensation after 10 Ne2 Qxb2 and that Black will obtain a clear advantage in the endgame that follows.

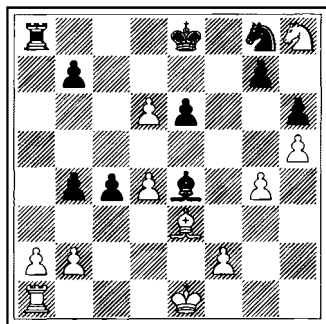
World Championship Match, Moscow, March 15–May 12, 1961

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Tal	0	1	0	½	½	½	0	1	0	0	0	1	
Botvinnik	1	0	1	½	½	½	1	0	1	1	1	0	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Tal	0	½	0	½	1	0	1	½	0				8–13
Botvinnik	1	½	1	½	0	1	0	½	1				13–8

10 ... cxd4 11 Qxb6 axb6 12 cxd4 Na5!
13 Nc3 b5 14 Bf1 b4 15 Nb5 Kd8 16 Nf3
Nc4!

Better than 16 ... Nb3 17 Rb1 Rxa2
after which Tal obtains counterchances with
18 Nd6 Bxd6 19 exd6 and Ne5. Tal is
forced to gamble now:

17 Bxc4 dxc4 18 Nd6 Bxd6 19 exd6 Bc6
20 Ne5! Bxh1 21 Nxf7+ Ke8 22 Nxh8
Be4!



After 22
... Be4

Now, for example, 23 Ng6 is met by
23 ... b3 24 a3 c3! and wins.

23 d5! exd5 24 Bd4 Nf6 25 Ke2 Kd7
26 Nf7 Ke6 27 Ne5 Kxd6 28 f3 Bh7

Despite the bishops of opposite color
Black has strong winning chances. White now
tries to liquidate Black's kingside pawns.

29 g5! hxg5 30 h6 gxh6 31 Nf7 Ke6
32 Nxh6 Ng8 33 Ng4 Bf5 34 Ne3 Bg6

35 Ng4 Bf5 36 Ne3 Bg6 37 Ng4 Kd6
38 Ne5 Bf5

Botvinnik noted that the g5-pawn was
not important and the key to the endgame
was advancing the Black pawns at the right
point. Once the game was adjourned, Black
figured out how to do that.

39 Nf7+ Kd7 40 Nxg5 Ne7 41 f4 Nc6
42 Nf3 Kd6 0–1

Tal trailed by only one point after eight
games — then dropped three games in a row.
The old Tal returned once more, in a bril-
liant victory in the 12th game, but Tal played
most of the remaining games without ener-
gy and lost 10–5 with six draws. As Bot-
vinnik left the Estrada Theater after the final
game, a vast crowd waited outside on Ber-
senyevsky embankment to see the restored
champion. Friends offered to carry him out
to avoid the crush. “No, No, I’m not a pa-
triarch, you know,” he said. But a radio
commentator, Vadim Sinyavsky, called him
“The Patriarch” half in jest and the nick-
name soon stuck.

In tribute, Botvinnik was awarded the
Order of the Red Banner by an up-and-
coming Party functionary named Leonid
Brezhnev. Brezhnev, then president of the
Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, turned
out to be a Botvinnik fan. “I was rooting for
you, my son for Tal,” the future Party gen-
eral secretary confided.

Botvinnik summed up the match by

writing that “Tal could not cope with the tension.” But the question remains whether Tal was healthy enough to play at all. The Latvian had serious kidney problems throughout his life. Koblents said he suffered a mild heart attack two weeks before the match — yet smoked 50 to 60 cigarettes a day during it. Asked in 1988 if there was anything in his life, he’d like to do over, Tal replied: “Well, maybe, I would have postponed my return match with Botvinnik.” In fact, Nikolai Romanov notified Botvinnik before the rematch that it would be postponed a month for Tal to recover. But when Botvinnik demanded a doctor’s certificate as proof, Tal refused, and the match started on schedule, Botvinnik wrote. (Three pages earlier in his memoirs, Botvinnik attacked the FIDE decision to eliminate the champion’s right to a return match after 1962, saying it was unfair for a champion to lose his title if “he falls seriously ill during a match.”)

Spassky and Fischer, Pre-Reykjavik

Boris Spassky began his comeback by winning the 29th Championship, held in November–December, 1961, in Baku, leading virtually from the start and scoring 72.5 percent. He followed this by going undefeated and scoring 78.7 percent on third board in the 1962 Olympiad at the Bulgarian resort of Varna on the Black Sea. The Soviets repeated as gold medalists and won a satisfying 2½–1½ victory over the Americans. The keys to that match were Botvinnik’s rescue of a seemingly hopeless adjournment against Bobby Fischer, and this game:

E81 King’s Indian Defense Olympiad, Varna, 1962

white Boris Spassky, *black* Larry Evans

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
5 f3 c6 6 Be3 a6 7 Qd2 b5

This defense, devised by Robert Byrne, prepares to break White’s pawn phalanx with ...bxc4 and ...d6–d5. But it was very new and poorly understood at the time.

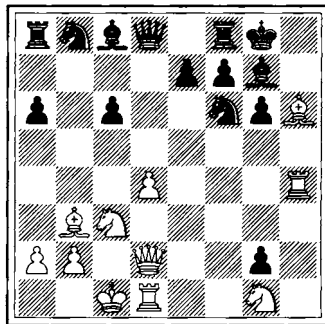
8 0–0–0! bxc4?! 9 Bxc4 0–0?

Black should have left his king in the center and attacked the target White provided by 8 ... Qa5 and ...Nbd7–b6. For example, an earlier Soviet game had gone 8 ... Qa5 9 Kbl Nbd7 10 Bh6 Bxh6! 11 Qxh6 e5 12 d5 b4 13 Nce2 cxd5 14 cxd5 Ke7! and Black was secure.

10 h4 d5 11 Bb3 dxe4 12 h5! exf3

White is willing to sacrifice all *four* kingside pawns to open the h-file (12 ... N×h5 13 g4 Nf6 14 Qh2! exf3 15 Ne4 Nbd7 16 g5 Nh5 17 Ng3).

13 h×g6 h×g6 14 Bh6! f×g2 15 Rh4



After 15 Rh4

Now 15 ... Bh8, *à la* Simagin, would lose to 16 Q×g2 Bf5 17 Nf3 followed by tripling on the h-file.

15 ... Ng4 16 B×g7 K×g7 17 Q×g2 Nh6
18 Nf3 Nf5 19 Rh2 Qd6 20 Ne5 Nd7
21 Ne4 Qc7 22 Rdh1 Rg8

Mate by rook checks was threatened and 22 ... Nf6 23 B×f7! is no defense (24 Q×g6+).

23 Rh7+ Kf8 24 R×f7+ Ke8 25 Q×g6!
N×e5 26 Rf8+! 1–0

Victories over American players always received considerable attention in the Soviet media. Politics was never far from chess, particularly in this tense period of the Cold War. Articles about chess in Cuba, “the island of freedom,” began appearing in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, and Salo Flohr followed the party line when he wrote in 1962 how “Lasker died in poverty in the richest capitalist country, the United States.”

A new tradition, with obvious political overtones, began in 1962 when Spassky, Lev Polugayevsky and Vasily Smyslov were sent to the first Capablanca Memorial in Havana. Soviet players became fixtures, adding considerable prestige to Cuba’s most important event, which was later held in other cities including Cienfuegos and Camagüey. Their results:

-
- 1962 : Spassky and Polugayevsky tied for second and Smyslov fourth.
 1963 : Korchnoi first, Yefim Geller and Tal tied for second.
 1964 : Smyslov tied for first, Mark Taimanov third.
 1965 : Smyslov first, Geller tied for second (with Bobby Fischer, whose moves were transmitted by telephone from New York), Ratmir Kholmov fifth.
 1967 : Taimanov second behind Bent Larsen, Smyslov third and Polugayevsky fourth.
 1968 : Kholmov first, Alexey Suetin and Leonid Stein tied for second.
 1969 : Korchnoi, Suetin tied for first.
 1971 : Geller second behind Vlastimil Hort.
 1972 : Anatoly Lein first, Igor Platonov second.
 1973 : Smyslov first, Gennady Kuzmin tied for third.
 1974 : Eduard Gufeld second, behind Ulf Andersson. Evgeny Vasiukov tied for third.
 1975 : Yuri Balashov and Vasiukov tie for second behind Andersson.
 1976 : Boris Gulko first, Yuri Razuvaev tied for second.
 1977 : Oleg Romanishin tied for first.
 1979 : Evgeny Sveshnikov first.
 1980 : Razuvaev second in one of two sections.
 1981 : Vitaly Tsheshkovsky first, Adrian Mikhalchishin and Alexander Chernin tied for second.
 1983 : Lev Psakhis first.
 1984 : Georgy Agzamov tied for third in one of two sections.
 1985 : Gufeld tied for first in one section, Anatoly Vaiser tied for first in the other.
 1986 : Evgeny Pigusov tied for first in one section, Evgeny Vladimirov third in the other.
 1987 : Gennady Zaichik tied for second in one section. Nino Gurieli first in women’s section.
 1988 : Alexander Panchenko first.
 1989 : Viktor Moskalenko tied for third in top section.
 1990 : Vadim Ruban tied for fifth in top section.
 1991 : Mikhail Ulybin first.
-

But the attention of the chess world shifted in 1962 away from Soviet players — for the first time in 17 years — to Bobby Fischer. The American became an obsession for the Sports Committee after winning the

Stockholm Interzonal in February–March, 1962, by 2½ points, with a 79.5 percent score that was just shy of Alexander Kotov’s record of 82.5 percent in 1952. Fischer was not new to the Russians. They got their first

Fifth Candidates Tournament, Curaçao, May 2–June 26, 1962

	P	G	K	F	K	B	F	T	<i>Score</i>
1. Petrosian	X X	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	1 1	17½–10½
	X X	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 1	1 ½	1 ½	½ 1	
2–3. Geller	½ ½	X X	½ ½	1 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	½ 1	17–11
	½ ½	X X	½ ½	½ 0	1 ½	½ 1	1 ½	1 1	
2–3. Keres	½ ½	½ ½	X X	0 ½	½ ½	1 1	½ 1	1 ½	17–11
	½ ½	½ ½	X X	1 ½	1 ½	1 0	1 ½	1 1	
4. Fischer	½ 0	0 0	1 ½	X X	0 1	0 1	1 ½	½ 1	14–14
	½ ½	½ 1	0 ½	X X	0 ½	½ 1	1 ½	½ 1	
5. Korchnoi	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 0	X X	½ ½	1 1	1 0	13½–14½
	0 0	0 ½	0 ½	1 ½	X X	½ 0	1 1	½ 1	
6. Benko	½ ½	½ ½	0 0	1 0	½ ½	X X	0 1	1 0	12–16
	0 ½	½ 0	0 1	½ 0	½ 1	X X	1 ½	½ 1	
7–8. Filip	½ 0	½ 0	½ 0	0 ½	0 0	1 0	X X	0 1	7–11
	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 ½	0 0	0 ½	X X	½ 1	
7–8. Tal	0 0	½ 0	0 ½	½ 0	0 1	0 1	1 0	X X	7–11
	½ 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	½ 0	½ 0	0 ½	X X	

Tal withdrew and lost one game on forfeit to each player

view of him when the 15-year-old United States Champion visited Moscow in 1958. Fischer's mother, a Moscow-trained nurse, had written Nikita Khrushchev in 1957 asking for an invitation to a world youth and student festival. By the time her request was considered, the festival was over, but Bobby and his sister Joan were invited to Moscow the next year.

The young Brooklynite quickly made himself at home: He ensconced himself at a table in the august grandmaster room of the Central Chess Club, playing hundreds of speed games and refusing to go sightseeing. "Aunt Shura" Korolyova, who helped run the club, recalled Fischer as friendly and sympathetic — despite "impudently draping his leg on the table." Anatoly Lutikov and Alexander Nikitin arrived to stop Fischer's winning streak but also lost. Finally Petrosian, perhaps the best speed player in the country, was "summoned" to Gogolevsky Boulevard to "cope" with the American, and did so, Petrosian recalled.

Spassky also met Fischer at the time and was impressed with his highly un-Soviet candor. "He liked to say openly what he was thinking," the Leningrader recalled. Eventually Fischer's trip was shortened after Bobby became "rude to his interpreter," according to a Soviet account, and he went home bearing a teenager's grudge against his hosts. But Alatorsev was stunned at his talent. "Here is a future world champion," he told his wife. "Prepare for Fischer!" he wrote in *Vechernaya Moskva*. Fischer spoke Russian well enough to become friends with several Soviet grandmasters. But by 1962 he was already becoming a fanatic anti-Communist and bitter critic of what he called Soviet deceit. Three months after Stockholm, Fischer finished a disappointing fourth at the Candidates Tournament on the Caribbean island of Curaçao. To Fischer, the difference between the two tournaments was clear: In Stockholm there were plenty of non-Soviets to keep the tournament honest.

But in Curaçao, Petrosian, Paul Keres and Yefim Geller averaged only 19 moves in the games they played with one another, all drawn, of course. They averaged 39.5 moves for each game against the rest of the field.

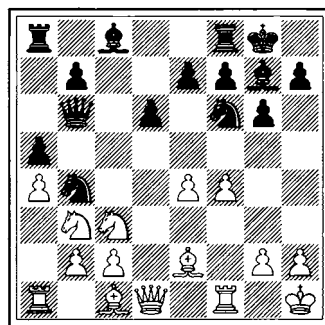
Sammy Reshevsky had previously criticized what he called the Soviet "team effort" but Fischer went further. "The Russians Have Fixed World Chess," was the title of an article he wrote in an August 1962 issue of *Sports Illustrated*. He vowed he would never play in another Candidates Tournament because the system assures "there will always be a Russian world champion." Korchnoi later claimed that "everything was arranged by Petrosian" at Curaçao. It was the Armenian who first convinced Geller to draw all their games and then went to Keres with Geller to invite him into their conspiracy, Korchnoi said. The result was that the three men saved a lot of energy and avoided having to think in eight games apiece. While Petrosian took only 48 hours and 40 minutes for his 27 games, Korchnoi spent 72 hours and 10 minutes. One of his sharper games came at Fischer's expense:

B09 Pirc Defense

Candidates Tournament, Curaçao, 1962
white Bobby Fischer,
black Viktor Korchnoi

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 f4 Bg7
 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 c5 7 dxc5 Qa5 8 0-0
 Qxc5+ 9 Kh1 Nc6 10 Nd2 a5! 11 Nb3
 Qb6 12 a4 Nb4

After 12
 ... Nb4



Having transposed into a typical Dragon Sicilian position, and facing counterplay from ...Be6 (and ...Nxc2!) Fischer blunders.

13 g4? Bxg4! 14 Bxg4 Nxg4 15 Qxg4 Nxc2

Black gets a rook and at least two pawns for the two minor pieces. His knight would escape after 16 Qd1 Qxb3 17 Ra3 because of 17 ... Qc4!

16 Nb5 Nxa1 17 Nxa1 Qc6! 18 f5 Qc4 19 Qf3 Qxa4 20 Nc7 Qxa1

With three extra pawns and the exchange, Black should win against routine play (21 Nxa8 Rxa8 22 fxg6 fxg6 23 Qf7+ Kh8 24 Qxe7 Qa4!). Fischer correctly seeks further complications, but misses the more demanding 21 Nxa8 Rxa8 22 e5! Qa4!

21 Nd5? Rae8 22 Bg5 Qxb2 23 Bxe7 Be5!

The threat of mate on h2 allows Black to return the exchange under winning circumstances.

24 Rf2 Qc1+ 25 Rf1 Qh6 26 h3 gx f5 27 Bxf8 Rxf8 28 Ne7+ Kh8 29 Nxf5 Qe6 30 Rg1 a4 31 Rg4 Qb3 32 Qf1 a3 0–1

With five rounds to go at Curaçao, Petrosian, Geller and Keres were tied. The Armenian made a perceptive prediction: the challenger would be the one who did not lose in the final five rounds. What made that remarkable was that Petrosian drew all five games — and still won the tournament by a half point.

Once again Keres lost a crucial game, to Pal Benko in the 27th round. It was Keres's fourth and last time to finish second in a Candidates Tournament. To Korchnoi,

the Estonian's big mistake was joining with Petrosian and Geller — not because it was wrong to form a team, but because it was the wrong team. Keres should have sought "a separate alliance" with another player in the tournament, according to Korchnoi.

Over the years the Soviets became so adept at prearranged draws, negotiated last rounds and thrown games that the line was often blurred between ethical lapses and outright cheating. For example, at Bucharest 1953, Spassky, on his first foreign trip, upset Smyslov while Petrosian beat Tolush. As a result, a non-Soviet, László Szabó, was in first place after seven rounds. Spassky recalled how a telegram from Moscow arrived: "Stop the disgrace, begin to make draws among yourselves!" As a result he got easy draws from Petrosian and Isaac Boleslavsky and thanks "to a Kremlin order, I became an International Master."

Mark Taimanov and Korchnoi agreed in advance to draw their game at Hastings 1955–56, but instead of an obviously bloodless battle they composed a slashing 21-move draw ending in a knight sacrifice and perpetual check.

"To become chess champion of the USSR 'honestly' means to accomplish a great feat," Korchnoi said of the 27th Championship. Going into the final round he had 13 points, a half point ahead of Geller and Petrosian. Geller and Petrosian won easily and finished with 13½. One of the key games was:

A48 Queen's Pawn Game
27th Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1960
white Tigran Petrosian,
black Nikolai Krogius

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Bg5 Bg7 4 Nbd2 d5 5 e3 0–0 6 Bd3 Nbd7 7 c3 Re8 8 Bf4 Nh5 9 Bg5 Nh6 10 Qb3 c6 11 0–0 e5 12 e4 exd4 13 cxd4 dx e4 14 Nxe4 Qb6 15 Nd6 Re6 16 Nxc8 Rxc8 17 Bc4 Re7

18 Qa3 Ree8 19 Bd2 Bf8 20 Qa4 Qc7
 21 Qb3 Nb6 22 Ba5 Ne4 23 Rac1 Nd6
 24 Bd3 Bg7 25 h4 Rcd8 26 h5 d×h5?
 27 Rc5 Ne4 28 R×h5 B×d4 29 Rh4 Nc5
 30 B×h7+ Kg7 31 Qb4 Bf6 32 Qg4+ Kf8
 33 Bb4 Rd5 34 Rh5 Nd7 35 Qg8+ Ke7
 36 Re1+ Ne5 37 Qg3! Kd8 38 N×e5
 Rd×e5 39 Rh×e5 B×e5 40 Qh4+ Kc8
 41 Bf5+ Kb8 42 B×c5 1–0

According to Korchnoi: Bronstein later admitted he threw his game to Geller because he saw “how unscrupulously and crudely” Krogius was losing to Petrosian and he could not allow Petrosian to become sole champion. Korchnoi fought back from a bad position against Suetin. Korchnoi has said that when he offered a draw, Suetin asked Geller and Petrosian for their opinions, then refused the draw and lost. Korchnoi took clear first place with 14 points.

Keres did manage to win a post-Candidates match with Geller to determine second place, something FIDE insisted on. If Botvinnik, as he had hinted, refused to defend his title in 1963, there would be a world championship match after all: Petrosian against the Curaçao runner up.

Counting Extra Pawns

Petrosian presented Botvinnik with an opponent who made no pretense that the two were carrying on the heritage of Mikhail Tchigorin, as Botvinnik claimed. The Armenian recalled once how an exasperated Vladimir Simagin asked him: “Tigran, tell me how you manage in every tournament to beat all the outsiders? I can’t. I’ll lose to one and make two or three draws.” Petrosian quietly replied, “Volodya, I don’t win from them, they lose to me. It’s all very simple. I establish a position and wait until *Tchigorinsky* thoughts take flight. Then all that’s left is to count the extra pawns.”

Harry Golombek, the veteran World

Championship match judge, said the players were “icily polite towards each other” during the 1963 match. Their only contact was a perfunctory shake of hands. Petrosian regarded Botvinnik as “a big egotist” who had managed to overwhelm his opponents at the very start of the 1954, 1958 and 1961 matches with terrific preparation. Petrosian anticipated this by preparing two sets of his own openings, one to be used if the match proceeded quietly, the other in case he needed to overcome a Botvinnik lead. He spent the winter of 1962–63 with his books, scores of Botvinnik games, a billiard table and his skis — then stopped all chess in the three weeks before the match so he would be fresh. He relied on Isaac Boleslavsky while Botvinnik for once refused to arrange for a second.

The match was again held at the Estrada Theater, a former club for state ministers, in a huge, imposing building on the Bersenyevesky Embankment looking out on the Moscow River. Spectators could not help remembering the building’s dark history: It was built in 1931 as a 5,000-flat dormitory for top-ranking government officials — the vast majority of whom disappeared during the Terror, when prison vans from the Lubyanka crossed the river to make arrests. In between match play-days, the theater was used for variety shows, with acrobats, magicians and even a parrot who escaped during an act and found refuge in the rafters. Botvinnik became enraged at one point, Golombek said, because he thought someone in the crowd was imitating bird calls to irritate him.

After 14 games the match was tied: Petrosian needed 5½ points in the remaining 10 to win. He did it in eight, thanks to Botvinnik’s inability to grasp his “inexplicable style.” When Petrosian won the 18th game, from an adjourned position with roughly equal chances, it was clear that lack of energy had doomed the 51-year-old champion. Petrosian thought stamina and “many errors in the endgame” cost his opponent the match.

World Championship Match, Moscow, March 23–May 20, 1963

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Botvinnik	1	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	
Petrosian	0	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
Botvinnik	½	1	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½			9½–12½
Petrosian	½	0	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	½			12½–9½

E19 Queen's Indian Defense
World Championship Match,
19th game, Moscow, 1963
white Tigran Petrosian,
black Mikhail Botvinnik

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 Bb7
 5 Bg2 Be7 6 0–0 0–0 7 d4 Ne4 8 Qc2
 Nxc3 9 Qxc3 f5 10 b3 Bf6 11 Bb2 d6
 12 Rad1 Nd7 13 Ne1

This retreat is actually an aggressive move, rejecting the aggressive-looking but drawish 13 Ng5 Bxg2 14 Nxe6 Qe7 15 Nxf8 Bxf1 16 Nxd7 Bxe2.

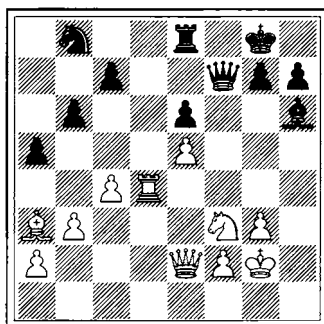
13 ... Bxg2 14 Nxg2 Bg5 15 Qc2 Bh6
 16 e4 f4 17 Ne1 Qe7?! 18 e5!

White soon has a winning position through relatively innocuous moves (21 Kg2!, 24 Rd4!)

18 ... dxe5 19 dxe5 Rad8 20 Qe2 Qg5
 21 Kg2! a5 22 Nf3 Qh5 23 Ba3 Rfe8
 24 Rd4! Nb8 25 Rfd1 Rxd4 26 Rxd4
 fxg3 27 hxg3 Qf7 (see diagram)

28 Qe4! g6 29 Qb7

While this leads to a winning endgame, it is hard to imagine Petrosian's rivals, such as Spassky or Korchnoi, preferring this queen move to 29 Qh4. Petrosian said he rejected it because of 29 ... Kg7, overlooking 30 Rd1! followed by 31 Rh1.



After 27
 ... Qf7

29 ... Bg7 30 c5 bxc5 31 Bxc5 Nd7
 32 Qxc7 Nxe5 33 Qxf7+ Nxf7 34 Ra4
 Bc3 35 Rc4? Bf6 36 Bb6 Ra8 37 Ra4
 Bc3 38 Bd4 Bb4 39 a3 Bd6 40 b4 Bc7
 41 Bc3

Here the position was adjourned and the analysts realized that White had missed chances (35 Bd4) to end matters quickly. Now Petrosian can maximize his chances by putting his queenside pawns on light squares and bringing his rook to the d-file and knight to e4.

41 ... Kf8 42 b5 Ke8 43 Rc4 Kd7 44 a4
 Rc8 45 Nd2! Nd6 46 Rd4 Ke7 47 Rd3
 Nb7 48 Ne4 e5 49 Bb2! Bb6 50 Ba3+
 Ke6 51 Ng5+ Kf5 52 Nxh7 e4 53 g4+?

Both players were tired: here 53 Rd5+ Ke6 54 Rg5 Kf7 55 Rg4 and Ng5+ would win faster.

53 ... Kf4! 54 Rd7 Rc7 55 Rxc7 Bxc7
 56 Nf6 Bd8?

And here 56 ... Bd6 57 Bc1+ Ke5 should likely have drawn.

57 Nd7 Kxg4 58 b6 Bg5 59 Nc5 Nxc5
60 Bxc5 Bf4 61 b7 Bb8 62 Be3 g5
63 Bd2 Kf5 64 Kh3 Bd6 65 Bxa5 g4+
66 Kg2 1-0

Reading Botvinnik's air of resignation, Petrosian offered a draw after nine moves of the 22nd game, a slight breach in etiquette. The Patriarch paused before extending his hand at 5:06 P.M., May 20. Hundreds of fans swept onto the stage, brushing past Petrosian's bodyguard and separating the new champion from his wife Rona and Boleslavsky. When the new champion finally got home, a party was under way and Petrosian played a record, Wagner's prelude to *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. The last guest did not leave until 3 A.M.

When he returned in triumph to Armenia, it was virtually a national holiday. Iser Kuperman, a world class checker player from Kiev who knew the Petrosians, recalled the celebration: More than 100,000 people filled a huge square in Yerevan to greet the new champion and his wife. People hugged and kissed one another. After a huge ovation, Petrosian and Rona "noticed some strange activity in the sea of people in front of them." They witnessed a vast collecting of money — everyone present chipped in 10 rubles. For half an hour the collection boxes were passed until more than million rubles were collected for the new world champion. Petrosian, the *dvornik's* son who had been poor since childhood even by Soviet standards, burst into tears.

His second, Boleslavsky, like other members of the generation that emerged just before World War II, was winding down his competitive career. Boleslavsky continued to play in Byelorussian and team events, but little else. One of his last great games was played against one of the few strong members of the "missing generation," Vlad-

imir Savon, who was born in 1940 and reached his prime about 1971 when he won a Soviet Championship.

B15 Caro-Kann Defense
Burevestnik Sports Society
Championship, Minsk, 1963
white Isaac Boleslavsky,
black Vladimir Savon

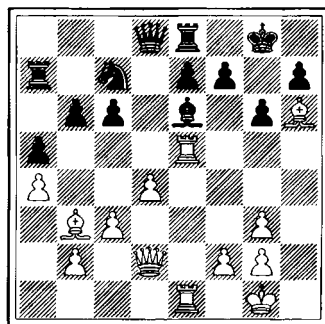
1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 g6?!
5 Bc4 Bg7 6 Nf3 Nh6 7 0-0 0-0 8 Re1
Nd7

The chief problem with Black's system is that it leaves at least one minor piece — either the c8-bishop or h6-knight — without a good square.

9 Bg5 Nb6 10 Bb3 Nf5 11 c3 Nd5 12 Ng3
Re8 13 Qd2 a5 14 a4 Nxc3 15 hxc3 Bf5
16 Re2! b6 17 Rael Ra7 18 Ne5

The minor-piece problem is over but both f7 and e7 and even c6 are weak. Now 18 ... Qc8 is met by 19 c4 Nb4 20 c5.

18 ... Bxe5 19 Rxe5 Be6 20 Bh6 Nc7



After 20
... Nc7

21 Rxe6! fxe6 22 Rxe6!! Nd5

Or 22 ... Nxe6 23 Qe3 and wins (23... Qd6 24 Bxe6+ Kh8 25 Bf4, winning the Q or mating).

23 Qf4! Qb8

And here 23 ... Nxf4 24 Rxc6+ Kh8 25 Bg7 was mate.

24 Qe4 Kh8 25 Bxd5 cxd5 26 Qxd5 Rd8
27 Qe4 Rdd7 28 d5! 1–0

Also adjusting to postcompetitive life was Kotov. He shared third place, with Semyon Furman and Stein, at the 1960 Soviet Championship semifinals in Odessa. But he declined to take part in a playoff to determine who would reach the finals because, he said, that was for the next generation. Too old to return to engineering after his long chess sojourn and lacking the temperament to make a good trainer, Kotov began serving as a judge and later became chief arbiter at major events such as the Alekhine Memorial in 1971, the 1973 Leningrad Interzonal and the 1974 Nice Olympiad. Kotov also turned to writing and produced his memoirs and a two-volume *Chess Legacy of Alekhine* as well as a screenplay about the prodigal son of Soviet chess. After Mosfilm, the state movie production company, turned down his first bid to film Alekhine's life, Kotov transformed his 16-page scenario into a novel, *White and Black*, which later became a stage play. "My entire conscious life was connected to constructing and combining, whether it was arranging pieces on the board, actors on a stage, or components of an engineering project," Kotov wrote.

When Soviet television finally discovered chess, Kotov joined his former student, Averbakh, on "Chess School," a regular program organized by Averbakh from 1969 on. Averbakh had also learned how to thrive once his playing career was ending. Since he spoke English he was a valuable ambassador of Soviet chess — after Stalin died and Soviet xenophobia ebbed. Averbakh became one of the very few Soviets to play on six continents. He also served at various times, as a trainer for Tal, Petrosian and Smyslov, second to various other grandmasters and an experienced arbiter and editor. He headed *Shakhmatnaya Moskva* from 1958 to 1962, then *Shakhmaty v SSSR* from 1962 (and eventually the post-Soviet *Shakhmatny Vestnik* and *Shakhmaty v Rossii*).

Shakhmaty v SSSR, which cost less than five rubles a year, remained in the 1960s the most important Soviet chess publication. But it continued to be heavily laced with propaganda, at the expense of chess. The April 1964 issue, for example, featured an article about the role chess played in Lenin's Siberian exile, followed by items about chess publishing in Russia, the new membership of the magazine's editorial board, a preview of the upcoming Interzonal in Amsterdam and of chess life in Latvia. No chess moves appeared before the game section, which started on page 5. Not until page 20 did readers learn that Pytor Romanovsky had died, at 71. Foreign news, even about Tal's score of 12½–½ in a Reykjavik, Iceland, international, was reserved for the final pages of the magazine — after the section on checkers.

Champagne Risks

The breadth of Soviet talent that emerged in the 1950s was so great that many worthy players, such as Evgeny Vasiukov, failed to join the world-class club, and others, such as Lev Polugayevsky, never reached the world championship level. Polugayevsky, tall with a large nose and high forehead that made him vulnerable to caricatures as a stork-like figure, tended to fade into the background behind others who, as Spassky said, did not understand chess as well as he did.

Polugayevsky (born November 20, 1934) enjoyed 15 years beginning about 1966 as one of the world's top 10 players and did not reach his peak until his late 40s, an age when Petrosian, Spassky and Tal were in decline. A tireless analyst, he developed an obsession with the Sicilian Defense, in particular his own line in the 6 Bg5 Najdorf Variation. His notebooks were filled with new ideas in the King's Indian and Queen's Gambit but most of all it was the Sicilian that gave

Polugayevsky his chess voice. Perhaps the greatest compliment paid to Polugayevsky came at the Palma Interzonal of 1970 when Fischer had White against him and avoided 1 e4 in favor of 1 c4.

But he lacked something. Some said it was an absence of the killer instinct, which allowed opponents to escape from lost positions too often. Others said it was a failure of self confidence. Polugayevsky seemed to calculate too much, when a Smyslov or Petrosian would rely on their judgment. Polugayevsky tried to remove the element of risk as much as possible, by preparing openings in advance to an extent that even Botvinnik might have blanched at. But despite some brilliant successes — games won with analysis prepared 30 moves deep — chess could never be that riskless. As the Russians put it, *Kto ne riskuyet, tot ne pyot shampanskoye*: He who does not risk, does not drink champagne.

With Black, Polugayevsky was forced to find daring counterattacks because he feared the advantage of White's first move. And with White he often avoided tactical crises, until his opponent forced him. Then he could fight as well as any of his rivals:

E92 King's Indian Defense
Soviet Team Championship, 1962
white Lev Polugayevsky,
black Yefim Geller

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 g6 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4 Bg7 6 Nf3 e5 7 Be2 0-0 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bh4 Qc7

Black avoids 9 ... g5 and 10 ... Nh5 in favor of another way of breaking the pin.

10 Nd2 Nh7 11 f3 a6 12 a3 f5 13 b4 Nd7 14 Rb1 b6 15 Qa4! Bf6 16 Bf2 Bd8 17 0-0 Ndf6 18 Qc6!

Now 18 ... Qxc6 19 dxc6 and Nd5 gives White a huge endgame edge.

18 ... Rb8 19 Qxc7 Bxc7 20 Rb2 Ng5 21 h4 Nf7 22 Rfb1 Ra8 23 Bd1! Bd8 24 a4 Nh5 25 g3 f4 26 g4 Ng3 27 a5!

A two-pawn sacrifice, confidently played by White whose rooks will control the only open file and whose bishops will control the board's two best diagonals.

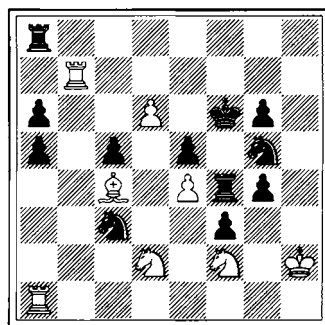
27 ... cxb4 28 Rxb4 bxa5 29 R4b2 Bxh4 30 Ba4! Ng5 31 Kg2?

Polugayevsky is the first to blink. By trying to avoid the complications of 31 Bc6 Nh3+ 32 Kg2 Nxf2 (33 Bxa8! h5 34 Na4!) he gives Geller chances.

31 ... Bxg4! 32 fxg4 f3+ 33 Kh2 Ne2 34 Nd1!

Black is back in the game after 34 Nxe2 Bxf2 35 Ng3 Rf4 or 34 Bxh4 Nxc3.

34 ... Bxf2 35 Nxf2 Nc3 36 Ra1 Rf4 37 c5! dxc5 38 Rb6? Kg7 39 d6 h5! 40 Rb7+ Kf6 41 Bb3 hxg4 42 Bc4



After 42 Bc4

White's failure to cut off the king (38 Rb7) has given Black chances to mate or get mated. Now 42 ... Ncxe4 43 Rf7+! Nxf7 44 Ndxe4+ Kg7 45 Rb1 could lose. But 42 ... Rh8+ might have won (43 Kgl g3 or 43 Kg3 Ncxe4+).

42 ... Ngxe4 43 Rf7+ Kg5 44 Nh3+! gxh3 45 Nxf3+ Kh6 46 Nxe5 Nf6! 47 Rg1 Rb8!

White might still win (after 47 ... g5 or 47 ... Rg8) with 48 Rg3.

48 R×g6+ Kh5 49 Rf×f6 Rb2+ 50 Kh1 Rb1+ 51 Kh2 Rb2+ Draw

One event that always received great attention was the Soviet Championship. Although it no longer automatically attracted all the best players, it remained the strongest annual event in the world. Ratmir Kholmov took part in 17 Championship finals but was little known outside his country despite a career record of an even score with Korchnoi in 20 games, with Bronstein in 17 and Keres in eight — as well as a plus-two score against Geller and plus-one with Petrosian. Kholmov's record against world-class foreigners was better: his combined score against Fischer, Szabó, Lajos Portisch, Robert Hübner and Vlastimil Hort was eight wins, nine draws and three losses. He finally tied for first in a Soviet Championship in 1963.

C94 Ruy Lopez

32d Soviet Championship, Kiev, 1964

white Yuri Sakharov,

black Ratmir Kholmov

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6

Kholmov first gained widespread attention in the last round of the 17th Championship when he deprived Geller of first prize by beating him with the Bird's Defense in a game that went 3 ... Nd4 4 N×d4 e×d4 5 0–0 c6 6 Bc4 Nf6 7 Qe2 d6 8 e5?! d×e5 9 Q×e5+ Be7 10 Re1 b5! 11 Bb3 a5 12 a4 Ra7! 13 a×b5 0–0!, threatening 14 ... Bd6 15 Qe2 Re8 16 Qd1 R×e1+ 17 Q×e1 Re7 18 Qd1 Qe8.

4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0–0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0–0 9 h3 Nb8 10 d4 Nbd7 11 Nh4

This gambit against the Breyer Variation was a fad circa 1962 to 1966.

11 ... N×e4 12 Nf5 Ndf6 13 Qf3 Bb7 14 Bc2 Nc5 15 Qg3 Ne6 16 d×e5 d×e5 17 R×e5

Kholmov had a sports-oriented nickname, "the center defensemen," the most difficult opponent for a pressing chess forward. From here on he demonstrates his opportunistic solidity.

17 ... Bd6 18 N×d6 c×d6 19 Re1 d5 20 Be3 Re8 21 Rd1!

Stopping ...d4 and trying to complete development and exploit his two-bishop advantage.

21 ... Qe7 22 Nd2 b4 23 Racl b×c3 24 b×c3 Rac8 25 Bf5 Rcd8 26 Rb1 Bc8 27 Qh4 h6 28 Rb6?

White could have reached a better endgame with 28 Qb4 Q×b4 29 R×b4 Nc5 30 Bc2! but Black improves with 29 ... d4 30 c×d4 N×d4!.

28 ... Qc7! 29 B×e6

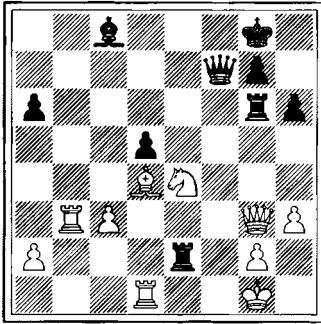
The tide is turning. White avoids 29 B×h6? Q×b6 as well as 29 Qb4 d4 and 29 Rb3 Nc5!.

29 ... f×e6 30 Rb3 Qf7 31 f4 e5 32 Bb6 Rd6 33 f×e5 R×e5 34 Bd4 Re2! 35 Qg3 Ne4!

Now on 36 Qd3 Black has 36 ... R×g2+! 37 K×g2 Rg6+ 38 Kh1 Rg3 which must win after 39 N×e4 R×d3 40 Nf6+ Q×f6 41 B×f6 R×d1+ 42 Kh2 Rd2+ 43 Kg3 g×f6 44 Rb8 R×a2.

36 N×e4 Rg6! (*see diagram*)

Here 37 Rf1 loses to 37 ... Qe8 38 B×g7?! Q×e4! or 38 Rb8 Q×e4! 39 R×c8+ Kh7 40 Q×g6+ Q×g6 41 Bf2 R×a2.



After 36
... Rg6

37 Rb8 d×e4! 38 R×b8+ Kh7 39 Qb8

Another cute finish was 39 Rc7 R×g2+!
40 Kh1 R2×g3 41 R×f7 R×h3 mate.

39 ... Re×g2+ 40 Kh1 Rh2+! 41 Q×h2

White had overlooked 41 K×h2 Q×a2+
and mates.

41 ... Qf3+ 0-1

Zonal

For the first time since the FIDE qualification system was created in 1947, a special non-Soviet Championship zonal tournament was held, running February 18–March 10, 1964, in Moscow, with four Interzonal spots up for grabs. Korchnoi later claimed Smyslov used “his friends” with access to the *vlasti*, possibly culture minister Pyotr Demichev, to get himself one of the four seeds without having to play in the zonal. The other seven zonal players were outraged and considered conducting a strike—à la Moscow 1920. But Spassky would not take part and the plot collapsed, Korchnoi said. Other accounts say merely that Smyslov declined his invitation on grounds that he would be invited to the Amsterdam Interzonal as a former world champion.

Spassky’s comeback since 1962 seemed to have stalled when he found himself a half point out of last place as late as the eighth

of the 14 rounds of the zonal. But Spassky scored 4–1 in the final rounds to qualify for his World Championship cycle since 1956. His rally began with this game, a far cry from his King’s Gambits and another illustration of his universal style:

A26 English Opening Zonal Tournament, Moscow, 1964 white Boris Spassky, black Ratmir Kholmov

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 d6 3 g3 Nc6 4 Bg2 g6
5 Nf3 Bg7 6 0-0 Nge7 7 Rb1 0-0

With Black’s e7-knight at f6 we have a familiar English position. Then 8 b4 a6 9 d3 Re8 10 e4! would transpose into Bondarevsky–Karasev, 31st Championship semifinals, Kharkov 1963: 10 ... Bg4 11 h3 B×f3 12 Q×f3 Nd4 13 Qe3 b5 14 f4 e×f4? 15 Q×d4! N×e4 16 Q×g7+! K×g7 17 N×e4 f5 18 Bb2+ Kf7 19 Nf6 Re2 20 Bd5+! Kg7 21 Nh5+ Kf8 22 Bg7+ Ke7 23 Bf6+ 1-0.

8 d3 h6 9 b4 f5 10 b5 Nb8

This retreat indicates Black has misplayed the opening. With a more accurate move order the superior d8 square would have been available (7 ... Be6 8 d3 h6 9 b4 Qd7 10 b5 Nd8). The result is loss of a tempo or two, a relatively minor concession in such a closed position.

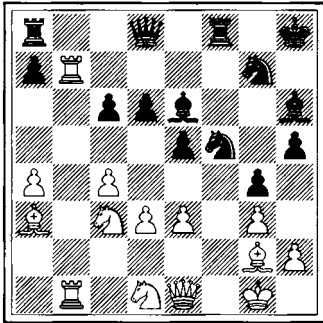
11 Nd2 Nd7 12 a4 Nf6 13 e3 c6 14 b×c6
b×c6 15 Ba3 Ne8 16 Rb3!

Preparing to double on the open file but also protecting the knight and aiming for f2–f4!, sealing the other wing.

16 ... f4 17 Nde4 g5 18 Re1 Rf7 19 Bf3
Rf8 20 Bg2 Be6 21 Rb7 Bc8 22 Rb3 Be6
23 Qe2 Kh8 24 Re1 Nf5 25 Rb7 Bc8
26 R7b3 g4! 27 Qd2 f×g3

After several moves of maneuvering Black commits himself on the kingside but 27 ... f3 was more consistent.

28 f×g3 h5 29 Nd1 Bh6 30 Qe1 Be6
31 Rb7 Neg7 32 Nec3!



After 32 Nec3

Now the c6-pawn is hanging and 32 ... Bd7 33 e4! costs a pawn. White is preparing a strong advance of his d-pawn.

32 ... Ne7 33 d4! e×d4 34 e×d4 Nef5
35 d5 c×d5 36 N×d5! B×d5 37 B×d5 Nd4
38 Qe7 Qa5?

As bad as the endgame might appear (38 ... Q×e7 39 R×e7 N7f5 40 Rd7 Rae8 but 40 B×a8 N×e7 41 B×d6!) it was better than what happens now.

39 Bb4! Q×a4 40 Q×d6 Ndf5 41 Qg6
Qe8 42 Q×e8 Rf×e8 43 Bc3 h4 44 Rf7!
1–0

Spassky's comeback continued at the Amsterdam Interzonal in May and June 1964 when he tied for first with Smyslov, Tal and Larsen. Spassky followed this by winning a very strong Belgrade international, dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of the city's liberation from the Nazis, a point and a half ahead of Korchnoi and Borislav Ivkov. While Petrosian believed he had played the best chess of his own career during the period from 1958 to 1963, before becoming champion, Spassky believed he was the best player in the world by 1964 and continued to be until early 1971.

Spassky's fate seemed to be working at odds with Korchnoi, who tied for next-to-last place in the zonal. But 1965 was a very good year for both men. Korchnoi won the 32nd Soviet Championship by two full points, the biggest margin since Botvinnik in 1945. The impact of the "missing generation" was seen in the average age of the Championship finalists, 36½. The youngest player was Tal, who was 28 and clearly tired, as he confessed to Koblents. Korchnoi followed this triumph by winning an Asztalos Memorial Tournament in Gyula, Hungary, by the astonishing score of 14½–½, five and a half points in front of his nearest rival.

But Korchnoi's most satisfying results must have been winning an international in Petrosian's Yerevan, a point ahead of the world champion, followed by taking both games from Petrosian on top board in the annual Moscow–Leningrad match. The two men had become intense enemies. Korchnoi later lambasted Petrosian and his wife in his memoirs. He wrote, for example, that Petrosian used his influence to take away Korchnoi's invitation to the Piatigorsky Cup in Los Angeles in 1963 — and the third air ticket sent by the Americans was used by Petrosian's wife, Rona.

C83 Ruy Lopez
Moscow-Leningrad Match, 1965
white Tigran Petrosian,
black Viktor Korchnoi

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
5 0–0 N×e4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 d×e5
Be6 9 c3 Be7

Korchnoi had had good results with this line, including two wins from Tal. Early at Curaçao, when Tal seemed relatively healthy, he tried 10 Be3 0–0 11 Nbd2 Qd7 12 Nd4? but Korchnoi refuted the gambit by 12 ... N×d2 13 Q×d2 N×e5 14 f4 Nc4 15 B×c4 d×c4 16 f5 Bd5. After 17 f6 B×f6 18 R×f6?! g×f6 19 Bg5 Qg4! he won easily.

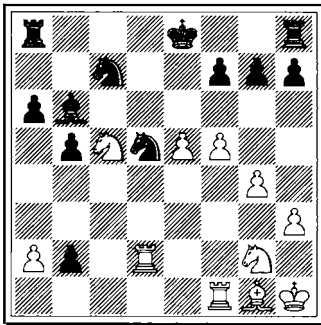
10 Bf4? Nc5 11 Bc2 Bg4 12 h3 Bh5
13 Qe2 Ne6 14 Bh2 Bc5 15 Nbd2 Ne7
16 Rad1 Qc8 17 Nb3 Bb6 18 Kh1 c5
19 g4 Bg6 20 Nh4 Bxc2 21 Qxc2 Qc6

Both sides are mobilizing their pawn majorities but Black, who has a clear edge, is there first with a threat of 22 ... d4+ and 23 ... d3!

22 f4 d4+ 23 Qg2 Qxg2+ 24 Nxg2 dxc3
25 f5!

Avoiding 25 bxc3 c4 26 Nd4 Nxd4
27 cxd4 Nd5, which favors Black.

25 ... Nc7 26 Bg1! Ned5 27 Nxc5 cxb2
28 Rd2



After 28 Rd2

28 ... 0–0–0! 29 Ne4 Bxg1 30 Kxg1 Nb6
31 Nd6+ Rxd6 32 exd6 Nc4 33 d7+! Kd8
34 Rd3 Na8! 35 Nf4 Nab6 36 Rfd1 b4?

A slip that allows White to recoup with
37 Rd4! a5 38 Nd5 Nxd5 39 Rxc4 — or
more after 37 ... Na3? 38 Rxb4 b1(Q)
39 Rdx1 Nxb1 40 Rxb6.

37 Nd5? Nxd5 38 Rxd5 Ne3 39 R5d3
Nxd1 40 Rxd1 Kc7 41 Rb1 Kxd7
42 Rxb2 a5 43 a3 bxa3 44 Ra2 Kc6
45 Rxa3 Ra8 46 Kf2 a4 47 Ke2 Kb5
48 Kd2 Kb4 49 Ra1 a3 0–1

Petrosian later said the losses to Korchnoi “forced me ... to pull myself together for the coming title match.” He added:

“Unfortunately these games had a bad effect on Korchnoi. They gave him a wrong impression of his ability.”

Massaging the Bureaucracy

I do not rule Russia. Ten thousand clerks do. — Nicholas I

By the 1960s a generation of Soviet citizens had grown up that had no memory of the Terror or the brutal economic changes of the 1930s. Many had mastered the art of manipulating the system, evading restrictions, appealing the decisions of one layer of the bureaucracy to another. Despite the many obstacles, International Master Albert Kapengut had amassed more than 500 foreign chess books, for example. The way he tried to fight induction into the army is indicative. According to Kapengut: In summer 1963, when he was Byelorussian Champion, he was taking college entrance exams and, at the same time, was needed to play on a junior board for the Republic’s team in the Spartakiad of Peoples. To postpone his exams, a chess club director transferred his academic documents from day session to evening. But this made him eligible for the army draft. Kapengut appealed to the chairman of the Byelorussian Sports Committee, who tried to block his induction. But the chess coach of the Byelorussia Military District, a master who had the curious distinction of once playing tennis with Capablanca, fought to get Kapengut drafted. Eventually the Byelorussia Party Central Committee took up the question, called Moscow and was told that Kapengut should be called up.

Yet Kapengut was able to fight the ruling by going to the Minsk army induction office and arguing that he was back in the day session. “Witnesses were called in, and I was officially warned that if I did not report the following day, my case would be referred to the prosecutor’s office!” Kapengut was still not done: After he was inducted and

sent to a border post he managed to be freed to play in a Riga tournament. There he spoke to Koblents who recommended he write to Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, a much-celebrated World War II hero — and a devoted chessplayer. Malinovsky ordered Kapengut transferred to the Baltic Military District to “provide him with creative conditions.” Kapengut said this was the first time that a defense minister transferred a private from one area to another for such a reason. After he was on the winning team in the 1964 Student Olympiad, Malinovsky sent him a camera, with an engraved inscription, as a gift.

The year 1965 brought the end of FIDE’s Candidates Tournaments and a switch to a series of knockout matches. The Soviets had dominated the five Candidates Tournaments but matches could be a different matter.

Botvinnik pulled a mild surprise. *Shakhmaty v SSSR* felt sufficiently sure that he would meet Smyslov in the first elimination round of the Candidates that it ran a page-long profile of the pairing, including their past record, 25–21 with 46 draws, in Botvinnik’s favor. But on March 13, Botvinnik, still smarting over FIDE’s elimination of the champion’s right to a return match, declined his invitation.

That left Keres-versus-Spassky as the most interesting first-round Candidates pairing. The veteran took an early lead but lost three games in a row. Sloppiness towards the end of the match gave Keres chances but Spassky, leading 5–4, advanced by winning the tenth game with Black.

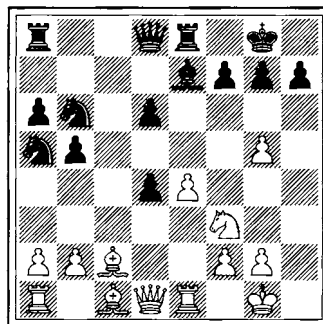
Soviet analysts have often commented that some players needed reasons to hate their opponents, in order to play at their best. This may have been true of Botvinnik in the 1950s, Alekhine in the 1920s and 30s, Korchnoi in the 1970s and Garry Kasparov in the 1980s. But Spassky and Keres fell into a different category, players who wanted to like their opponents. They spent their free time together during the match, and in the

semifinals, Spassky played dominoes, cards and checkers with his next opponent, Geller. “A pleasant man and an unpleasant opponent,” Geller said of Spassky, after losing 5½–2½.

Meanwhile, Tal overcame Larsen in the last game of their semifinals match. That meant the Latvian would face Spassky in the finals, fighting for the right to play Petrosian. The greatest difference between the Candidates finalists was their flexibility: Tal was always Tal, the prisoner of his remarkable style. But Spassky had learned how to change match strategy to suit an opponent. Against Geller, he fought for the initiative, “because Geller himself likes so much to have an active position,” he said.

C92 Ruy Lopez
Candidates Match, Semifinals,
Riga, 1965
white Boris Spassky, *black* Yefim Geller

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
 5 0–0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0–0 8 c3 d6
 9 h3 Nd7 10 d4 Nb6 11 Nbd2 Bf6 12 Nf1
 Re8 13 N1h2 e×d4 14 c×d4 Na5 15 Bc2
 c5 16 Ng4 B×g4 17 h×g4 c×d4 18 g5 Be7



After 18
 ... Be7

Taimanov noted a few years later in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* that Geller had become more strategy-minded. “It’s most curious that now he sees more ‘for himself’ but overlooks shots ‘for the opponent’ from time to time,” he wrote.

19 e5! Bf8? 20 B×h7+! K×h7 21 g6+

Now 21 ... f×g6 22 Ng5+ Kg8 23 Qf3 with threats of Qh3–h7 mate and Qf7+×g6 are crushing, e.g., 23 ... Qd7 24 e6.

21 ... Kg8 22 Ng5 f×g6 23 Qf3 Q×g5 24 B×g5 d×e5 25 Racl Ra7 26 Qd3 Re6 27 f4! Nac4 28 f×e5 N×e5 29 Q×d4

With only two pieces for the queen and his best form of resistance — the center pawns — dissolved, Black goes through the motions before resigning.

29 ... Rd7 30 Qe4 Be7 31 Be3 Nbc4 32 Rcd1 R×d1 33 R×d1 N×b2 34 Qd5! Kf7 35 Rb1 Nbc4 36 Bf2 g5 37 Rel Bf6 38 Kf1 Nb2 39 Re3 N2c4 40 Re2 Nd6 41 Bd4 Ndc4 42 g4 Ke7 43 Bc5+ Kf7 44 Qb7+ 1–0

Against Tal, Spassky said, “I would really have liked to play open games.” But he decided to “restrain myself and use waiting tactics: draw, draw, and draw again, reserving my final kick for the end of the match when I was gaining in strength and Tal was becoming weaker.” By adopting the Marshall Gambit against Tal’s Ruy Lopez, he reached middlegames where Black could compete for the initiative and still have excellent drawing chances. “The terrible Tal weapon — the opening move 1 e4 — was rendered harmless,” Averbakh said. In fact, Tal lost three games with White. Petrosian, who had already started preparations with Boleslavsky for the championship match, showed up at Tbilisi to watch the Candidates finals. When the trend was clear he returned to Moscow to find all available Spassky games.

Spassky Versus Petrosian

Viktor Malkin said Spassky made “a subtle psychological move” by avoiding giving Petrosian any extra incentive in the championship match. The challenger agreed to all of Petrosian’s proposed conditions for

the match, casually signing the agreement “on the windowsill of the Sofia Restaurant!”

Spassky seemed to be able to afford concessions. Keres, Bent Larsen, Tal, Smyslov, Svetozar Gligorić, Sammy Reshevsky and Miguel Najdorf all predicted a Spassky victory. Of the top players surveyed by the newspaper *Trud*, only Ståhlberg believed in Petrosian’s chances. But the Champion indicated in a postmatch interview that Spassky’s mistake was overconfidence. He noted that the challenger took time to play at Hastings 10 weeks before the match, apparently believing his candidates victories meant “his lucky star” would guarantee victory.

When Kasparov, preparing to play “Iron Tigran” in a tournament 17 years later, asked Spassky what to do, Spassky said direct threats were pointless. Petrosian “has splendid tactical vision,” he said. Spassky had learned the dangers of mixing it up in the tenth game in 1966 when the challenger, trailing by a point, adopted a King’s Indian Defense for the first time and lost a brilliancy. “There was deafening applause for some minutes after this and quite a determined attempt on the part of a knot of Armenian supporters of the World Champion to invade the stage,” Golombek recalled. “Only one aged Armenian succeeded in escaping the attendants and reaching the stage, where he clasped Petrosian by the hand.”

Malkin later disclosed that Petrosian weakened in midmatch and a physician diagnosed the onset of depression so serious that the Champion was ordered to take a time out. Spassky managed to tie the score with five games to go and seemed sure of victory. According to Gligorić, the challenger gained 15 pounds during the match, while the Champion lost 15 pounds. But Petrosian won the 20th and 22nd games and obtained the necessary 12 points to clinch at least a tie. He lost the 23rd but drew the 24th, thereby becoming the first defending champion to actually win a title match since Alekhine in 1934.

World Championship Match, Moscow, April 11–June 9, 1966

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Petrosian	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	
Spassky	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
Petrosian	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	1	0	½	12½–11½
Spassky	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	0	1	½	11½–12½

Electronic Calculator Stein

The year 1966 ended the same way 1965 did, with Leonid Stein winning the Soviet Championship. His games during the mid-1960s were dazzling, as in the following. It was played when Polugayevsky was leading the tournament 8–2 and only Stein, a half point back, was in a position to catch him:

A56 Czech Benoni Defense 33rd Soviet Championship, Tallin, 1965 white Lev Polugayevsky, black Leonid Stein

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e5 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4
Be7 6 Bd3 0–0 7 Nf3 Ne8 8 h3 Nd7 9 a3
g6 10 Bh6 Ng7 11 g4

The solid Czech Benoni was enjoying a spurt of popularity at the time. White tries to keep control of the kingside here while preparing a later attack and perhaps a later Ne2–g3–Nf5 sacrifice.

11 ... Nf6 12 Ne2 Kh8 13 Ng3 Ng8
14 Be3 a6

Black continues the waiting game: White wanted to exploit the light squares à la Petrosian after 14 ... f5 15 gxf5 gxf5 16 exf5 Nxf5 17 Nxf5 Bxf5 18 Bxf5 Rxf5 19 Nd2 and Ne4. Black may be willing to open things up on the kingside only after White commits himself on the other wing (after 15 b4 cxb4 16 axb4 f5, for example).

15 Qc2 b5 16 b3 Bd7 17 Ke2! Rb8
18 Rhg1 Qe8 19 Rab1 Bd8 20 Nd2 Bh4!

Black jumps at the opportunity to rid himself of the bad bishop.

21 Rbf1 Qe7 22 Nf3 Bxg3 23 fxg3!
bxc4? 24 bxc4 f5 25 Nh2!

Thanks to Black's premature opening of the queenside, White switches plans on the other wing, adopting a blockade strategy to restrict Black's knights.

25 ... Qe8 26 Rb1 Nf6 27 Rxb8 Qxb8
28 Rb1 Qc8 29 Qb2! fxg4?

The tide is turning thanks to Black's wasting opportunities (29 ... fxe4 30 Bc2 h5 or just 29 ... h5).

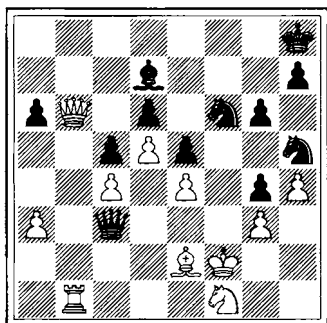
30 h4 Ngh5 31 Nf1 Ng8 32 Qb6 Rf6!

Now with 33 Qb8! White penetrates powerfully. Instead, he forces the win of the exchange or d6-pawn.

33 Bg5? Qf8! 34 Bxf6+ Qxf6 35 Kel
Qf3 36 Be2 Qc3+ 37 Kf2 Ngf6 (*see dia-gram*)

Black rejects the tacit draw offer (37 ... Qd4+ 38 Kel Qc3+)—but gives White reason to play for more, with 38 Qd8+ Be8 39 Qe7! (39 ... Nxe4+ 40 Kg2 or 39 ... Qd4+ 40 Ne3).

After 37
... Ngf6



38 Kg2 Qc2! 39 Rb2?

A final error: Anything might happen after 39 Qd8+ Be8 40 Rb8! Qxe2+ 41 Kg1 Qxc4 42 Qxd6 Qd4+ 43 Kg2 Qxe4+ 44 Kh2 — and Black might have to escape with a perpetual check (41 ... Qxe4 42 Qe7 Qd4+). Now Black pieces swarm.

39 ... Qxe4+ 40 Kg1 Qd4+ 41 Kg2 Bf5!
42 Nd2 Qe3 43 Qd8+ Ng8 44 Bf1 Qxg3+
45 Kh1 Qf2 46 Bg2 Nf4 0-1

Stein had the talent to be a world champion but he also had extraordinary ill luck. Like Spassky and Korchnoi, his life was scarred by the war. He was born November 12, 1934, in Kamenets-Podolsky, a provincial capital that was one of the first Ukrainian cities overrun by the Nazis. Stein's family was evacuated to Uzbekistan, near Tashkent, but his father died of typhoid in 1942 at age 36. Stein's mother, a cafeteria worker, later relocated the family to Lvov, where Leonid grew up tall, very thin and sickly.

Stein, who grew up on Alekhine's games, was another late developer, not reaching master level until 24 and not playing a grandmaster until 27. When he served as a teenage wallboard boy, he always tried to handle a game played by Vyacheslav Ragozin, Simagin, Vadas Mikénas or some other tactician. Trainer Yuri Sakharov suggested he also handle Flohr, Lev Aronin and Alexander Konstantinopolsky games but Stein found them boring.

He was a quick study — “electronic calculator Stein” as the magazines called him — and often took only 15 or 20 minutes for an entire game. Viktor Kart, the respected Lvov Pioneer Palace teacher, said Stein seemed like a “clairvoyant” who saw everything quickly and casually and “when he began to show off the variations he saw, it seemed the board shook.” But Stein could also be frivolous and emotional and after he managed only an even score on the Ukrainian sixth board at the 1951 USSR Junior Team Championship, he was criticized by Yevgeny Zagoryansky in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. On every team there is one player who brings the team down, he wrote, and Stein “having gotten a good position in the opening then played 60 moves an hour and naturally lost all games with experienced opponents.”

Stein was a discipline problem. He won the Armed Forces Championship in 1955 — but his superiors cited him for failing to salute or shave properly. In 1958 Stein was barred from the Ukrainian Championship finals on orders of Sports Committee for breaking “sporting regimen” — playing cards during his free hours in the semifinals. He decided then to give up chess and took a job as a metalworker. But Stein changed his mind when he was invited at the last minute to the 1959 Ukrainian Championship; he finished third. There was also a furious debate in the presidium of the Chess Federation about letting him into that year's Soviet Championship but he was kept out.

Stein's tie for third at the 28th Championship was a major surprise and even afterwards there were doubts that he would be allowed to compete at the Stockholm Interzonal. *Literaturnaya Gazyeta*, the bellwether magazine that reflected which way the *vlasti* were leaning, ran an article after the 28th Championship wondering why “young Stein” would be going to Stockholm but not Spassky — who was in fact two years younger. Stein's friend, Eduard Gufeld, saw this as a hint that he should step aside, as Pal Benko

did for Fischer in 1970, and as did Gennady Kuzmin, who suddenly developed an illness in 1976 so that Smyslov could replace him at the Biel Interzonal. Tal, Korchnoi and others signed a joint letter supporting Stein's right to play in the Interzonal. But a nervous Stein was still asking, "Will I be playing in Stockholm or not?" even as he boarded the plane to Sweden. Only when their Aeroflot jet took off did a member of the Soviet delegation joke: "Stein's chances of playing in the Interzonal have soared to an unprecedented height!"

D40 Queen's Gambit Declined
Interzonal, Stockholm, 1962
white Arthur Bisguier,
black Leonid Stein

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6
 5 e3

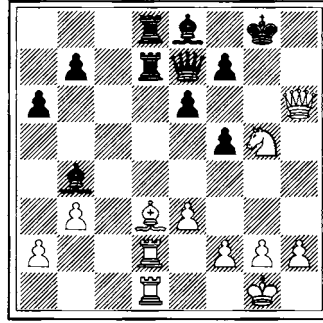
Steering out of a sharp and relatively new line into familiar territory.

5 ... d5 6 Nc3 Nc6 7 Be2 Bd6 8 0–0 0–0
 9 b3 a6 10 Bb2 Nxd4 11 Qxd4 Qc7
 12 Qh4 dxc4 13 Bxc4 Rd8 14 Rfd1 Bd7
 15 Rac1 Bc6 16 Bd3 Qe7 17 Ne2! h6
 18 Nd4 Be8 19 Rc2 Ba3 20 Ba1 Rd7
 21 Nf3 Rad8 22 Rcd2?

White overestimates his position, which is merely good after 22 Ne5 Rd5 23 Bd4 Bd6 24 f4. He tempts Black into trying to exploit the d-file pin.

22 ... Bb4! 23 Bxf6 gxf6 24 Qxh6 f5
 25 Ng5

Spectators were certain Black was in trouble but in fact Black has the edge. One indication is 25 Ne5 Bxd2! 26 Nxd7 Bxd7 27 Rxd2 Bb5! or 26 Rxd2 Rd5 27 Ng4 Rxd3! 28 Nf6+ Qxf6 29 Qxf6 Rxd2.



After 25 Ng5

25 ... Bc3! 26 h4?

This allows Black's intended 26 ... Qf6!, after which the game quickly turns in Black's favor. It was not until after lengthy analysis that it was discovered White must try 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qh6+ and if 27 ... Bg7, then 28 Qh4.

Then 28 ... Qa3 would threaten 29 ... Rxd3 but would be met by 29 h3 Bc3 30 Qh6+ Kg8 or 30 ... Bg7 with a likely draw (not 30 ... Ke7? 31 Nh7, threatening Qf8 mate).

Best for Black was 28 ... Qc5 after which 29 h3? Qc3! wins but 29 Qg3! should draw.

26 ... Qf6! 27 Qh7+ Kf8 28 Qh5 Qh8!
 29 Nh7+ Kg8 30 Qg5+ Qg7!

Not 30 ... Kxh7? 31 Bxf5+!

31 Rc2 Qxg5 32 Nxg5 Rxd3 0–1

Stein tied for sixth place at Stockholm but fell victim of a FIDE rule that limited Candidates Tournaments to no more than five players from one country. The "five Russians rule" was not dropped by FIDE until 1965.

At the next Interzonal, at Sousse, Tunisia, in 1967, Stein tied for the final candidates spot with Reshevsky and Hort. The trio had to play a double-round playoff tournament. Stein began with the handicap of bad tiebreaks. He led Reshevsky by a half point with two rounds to go. But he refused

a draw to Hort and lost. Reshevsky qualified on tiebreaks by drawing all eight games — and Leonid Stein was unlucky again.

Meanwhile, the Soviets suffered more than one embarrassment at Havana 1966, a FIDE Olympiad hosted by chess fan Fidel Castro at lavish Cuban expense. First there was the one-sided battle between Tal and a fellow bar patron in a Havana night spot that ended with the former World Champion knocked unconscious. Tal and Korchnoi had gone out to drink rum shortly after they arrived, according to Korchnoi. The Latvian was dancing with a woman when Korchnoi suddenly heard the woman's cry and a dull thud. Tal collapsed, having been hit in the forehead with a Coke bottle by a jealous boyfriend. He was hospitalized and released after missing four games. Yet Tal pulled off another of his magical recoveries and scored 11 wins and two draws in the rest of the tournament. Perhaps his most difficult game came in the first round of the finals:

A30 English Opening
Olympiad, Havana, 1966
white Vlastimil Hort,
black Mikhail Tal

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 Nc3 e6 4 g3 b6
 5 Bg2 Bb7 6 0-0 Be7 7 d4 cxd4
 8 Nxd4?!

Only 8 Qxd4 offers White a chance for an edge (8 ... Nc6 9 Qf4 0-0 10 e4!).

8 ... Bxg2 9 Kxg2 Qc8 10 Qd3 Nc6
 11 Nxc6 Qxc6+ 12 e4 0-0 13 Bd2 Rac8
 14 b3 Rfd8 15 Qf3 a6 16 Rfe1 d6 17 Rac1
 Qb7

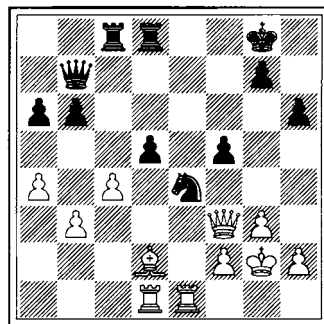
This is the type of position that was considered very nice for White in the 1930s — and when Botvinnik lost a similar one to Capablanca at Moscow 1936 it was considered almost a swindle by Black. But by the 1960s Black's counterchances (...b6-b5 and

...d6-d5) had turned theory around and this was regarded as quite even.

18 Qe2 Rb8 19 a4 Rbc8 20 Bf4 h6
 21 Rcd1 d5! 22 exd5 Bb4 23 Bd2?

After this Black is better. White should play 23 Be5 so that 23 ... exd5 24 Bxf6 gxf6 25 Nxd5! favors him slightly and 23 ... Nxd5 24 Qf3 f6 25 Bd4 Nf4+! 26 gxf3 Qxf3+ 27 Kxf3 Rxd4! is an even endgame. Black must venture into 23 ... Nd7 24 Qf3 b5! if he wants more.

23 ... exd5 24 Qf3 Bxc3 25 Bxc3 Ne4!
 26 Bd2 f5!



After 26 ... f5

27 cxd5 Rxd5 28 Be3 Rc3 29 Rxd5
 Qxd5 30 Rd1 Qe6 31 Rd8+ Kh7 32 Rf8
 Nf6

It is the weakness of the queenside pawns that favors Black.

33 b4 Rb3 34 a5 bxa5 35 bxa5 Ra3
 36 Ra8 Nd5! 37 Rf8 f4!

Now 38 gxf4 Nxe3+ 39 fxe3 Rxe3
 40 Qd1 Qe4+ 41 Kf2 Rd3 wins.

38 Rxf4 Nxf4+ 39 Qxf4 Rxa5 40 h4
 Qd5+ 0-1

Korchnoi did not mention the bar incident in his first book, *Chess Is My Life*. Later, however, he described it as a key turning point since the *vlasti* never forgave either of

International Tournament of the Central Chess Club, Moscow, May 21–June 18, 1967

	S	B	G	S	T	B	P	S	G	K	N	P	Gh	Gl	B	P	U	F	<i>Total</i>
1. Stein	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	1	½	1	1	11–6
2–5. Bobotsov	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	10–7
2–5. Gipslis	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	10–7
2–5. Smyslov	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	0	1	½	10–7
2–5. Tal	½	½	½	½	X	1	0	½	½	0	½	1	½	½	1	½	1	1	10–7
6–8. Bronstein	½	½	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	9½–7½
6–8. Portisch	0	½	½	0	1	½	X	1	0	1	½	1	0	½	1	1	½	½	9½–7½
6–8. Spassky	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	X	0	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	9½–7½
9–12. Geller	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	X	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	8½–8½
9–12. Keres	0	½	½	½	1	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	8½–8½
9–12. Najdorf	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	X	0	½	½	½	1	½	½	8½–8½
9–12. Petrosian	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	1	X	1	0	½	1	½	½	8½–8½
13. Gheorghiu	1	0	0	0	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	8–9
14. Gligorić	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	X	½	½	½	1	7½–9½
15–18. Bilek	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	6–11
15–18. Pachman	½	½	½	1	½	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	6–11
15–18. Uhlmann	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	1	6–11
15–18. Filip	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	X	6–11

them again, even though Tal was a former World Champion and Korchnoi had just joined the Communist Party. Tal soon found it impossible to get foreign invitations, he said. In fact, the Soviet team for the next Olympiad had gathered with their luggage at Skatertovo airport in October 1968 for the flight to Lugano, Switzerland, when Tal suddenly realized he was being punished. According to Korchnoi, the vice chairman of Sports Committee was saying good-bye to the group when he turned to Tal and in a “peaceful” tone said: “And you, Mikhail Nekhemyevich, can return to Riga. Smyslov is already in Lugano. He will replace you.”

The Flower and Pride of the Soviet People

The other embarrassment of Havana 1966 arose after it was noticed that the U.S.–USSR match was scheduled for a Saturday afternoon, November 5. Fischer had made clear he could not compete on Saturdays before sundown for religious reasons. The Americans asked that Fischer’s game with Petrosian be delayed two hours. The Cuban hosts, delighted that an American chess team had broken the cultural boycott of the Communist island, had previously agreed to satisfy Fischer’s requirements. But when the day of the match approached, the Soviet team held a meeting to decide whether to comply with the American request.

Two sharply different Soviet accounts of what transpired have been given, one by Korchnoi, the other by Alexey Serov, a Central Committee official (and former KGB subcolonel, according to Korchnoi). Serov, the head of the delegation, said there was no reason to delay the Fischer–Petrosian game since the Danes had refused to postpone an earlier Larsen–Fischer game and the Americans ended up playing the match with a substitute for Fischer. Serov said the United

States team was making an unfair “demand”—and if they refused to play, let them.

Korchnoi wrote that Serov knew little about chess and another member of the delegation, trainer Boleslavsky, did not interfere (“He was silent his entire life”). That left Igor Bondarevsky, the team coach and Serov’s chief adviser, to take center stage. Bondarevsky followed the “Molotov–Vishinsky principles in negotiations with foreigners” that is, “Since we, the Soviet Union, are stronger than anyone in the world, we don’t accept conditions—we impose them!” In the meeting Korchnoi spoke in favor of compromise while Bondarevsky, backed by Serov was opposed—and nobody else objected. “The flower and pride of the Soviet people—Petrosian, Spassky, Tal, Stein, Polugayevsky—sat huddled together, their eyes looking at the floor,” Korchnoi wrote.

The Americans stood firm, failed to appear at the scheduled time and were forfeited 4–0. Eventually the Sports Committee ordered the team to reverse itself and agree to play the match more than a week later. Serov said the match was played only after the Americans wrote an apology to the tournament arbitration committee. The match was an anticlimax. The Soviets won 2½–1½, thanks to the fact that Spassky, Petrosian’s replacement, rescued a lost position against Fischer, and to Tal’s victory over Robert Byrne. The Soviets rolled on to the gold medals five points ahead of the silver medal United States. Since they had entered their first Olympiad in 1952, the Soviets had lost only 20 games—and two matches—while winning 356 games and agreeing to 208 draws.

A55 Old Indian Defense Olympiad, Havana, 1966 *white* Viktor Korchnoi, *black* Dolfi Drimer (Rumania)

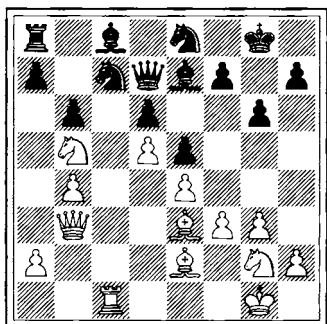
1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 c6 3 e4 e5 4 Nf3 d6
5 d4 Nbd7 6 Be2 Be7 7 0–0 0–0 8 Be3
Re8 9 d5 Nf8

This passive strategy is what discredited the Old Indian in the 1930s Better is 9 ... Bf8 followed by ...Nc5/...a5.

10 Ne1 N6d7 11 g3 cxd5 12 cxd5 Nc5
13 Ng2 Nfd7?

Better was 14 ... Bg5 or 14 ... a5.

14 b4 Na6 15 Rb1 g6 16 Nb5 b6 17 Rcl
Bb7 18 Qa4 Nf6 19 f3 Qd7 20 Qa3 Rec8
21 Rxc8+ Bxc8 22 Rcl Ne8 23 Qb3 Nac7



After 23
... Nac7

24 a4! Qd8 25 a5 Nxb5 26 Bxb5 bxa5
27 Bc6! Rb8 28 b5

A paralyzing position. Black must surrender material (28 ... a6 29 Ba7).

28 ... Rb6 29 Qc3 Bd7 30 Bxd7 Qxd7
31 Bxb6 axb6 32 Qc6 Qd8 33 Qb7 Bf8
34 Rc8 Qg5 35 h4! 1–0

Korchnoi later claimed that Tal got back into the good graces of the *vlasti* only after beginning to work with Anatoly Karpov in the 1970s. For lesser players, a pattern of more public discipline had been established. For example, Geller was accused of being “conceited” and having a “disdainful” attitude to colleagues in a 1961 article in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. In 1963 the Federation presidium criticized student team leader Bondarevsky and trainer Nikitin for poor preparation after the Soviets finished fourth on tie breaks at the Student Olympiad at Budva, Yugo-

slavia. Bondarevsky replied that five of the six players got sick and, if the system of preparing the students was so bad, why was it not noticed when Tal and Spassky were on the team?

Later in 1963 an editorial criticized Jacob Yukhtman and Vladimir Shishkin for “not occupying themselves with socially useful work” and added that Yuri Nikolayevsky was disqualified from the Ukrainian Championship for a year and Anatoly Ufimtsev from a Kazakhstan tournament for “breaking sporting regimen.” Panov later criticized players who lost interest after a poor start in a tournament and cited how in the 1967 RSFSR Championship the defending champion, Vladimir Sergievsky, played with so little interest he “put into disarray the whole tournament” and was disqualified from tournament play for a year. Eduard Mnatsakanian was criticized for “hooliganist” actions that “disgrace the high title of master,” he added. And so on.

But as the 1960s headed towards their end, the absence of the “missing generation” born during the War years seemed to have been obscured. The Soviet student team, with new faces such as Vladimir Tukmakov, Kuzmin and Boris Gulko, won the World Student Olympiad at Harrachov, Czechoslovakia in July 1967 by two points. There was no Soviet entrant for the 1967 World Junior because, for the first time in several years, politics overtly interfered. The Soviets and their Eastern Bloc allies boycotted the tournament, held in Jerusalem, to protest the Six-Day War.

The Soviets held their own showcase event in Moscow, May 21–June 18, 1967, dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. No Westerners were invited — except for Najdorf of Argentina, a Russian-speaking former Pole. The attempt by Benko, a Hungarian defector, was naturally rejected — as well as a rumored effort by Fischer.

An unprecedented 2,000 ruble first prize

was offered in what turned out to be Stein's finest moment. In an 18-player tournament with surprisingly few great games, he produced sparkling wins over Gligorić, Keres and Wolfgang Uhlmann — taking only 35 minutes to beat the latter. Aivars Gipslis of Latvia, the surprise third-place finisher from

the 34th Soviet Championship, tied for second.

The Soviets took nine of the top 12 places. Who needed a “missing generation” when the USSR could produce tournaments so strong that the world champion managed only an even score?

13

Fischer Fear

You're all Russians to me.— Bobby Fischer, after Paul Keres told him he could not defeat “all four Russians” at Bled 1961 because Tal was a Latvian, Petrosian was an Armenian, Geller was a Ukrainian and Keres was an Estonian

The seventh Interzonal tournament, at Sousse, Tunis, in October–November, 1967, was the first major chess event in Africa and the most controversial of FIDE’s world championship qualifying events. There were disputes about pairings, the absence of free days and the rescheduling of Sammy Reshevsky’s games to accommodate his religious beliefs. The arguments almost obscured the tight competition for the six Candidates Tournament invitations — which inevitably led to another round of complaints, about how the “five Russians rule” had discriminated against the Soviets. But in the end, Sousse 1967 was remembered only for Bobby Fischer’s mid-tournament walkout in a scheduling dispute.

Fischer had become almost a mystical figure by the mid–1960s, a player capable of staggering success — such as winning a United States Championship 11–0 — as well as self-defeating obstinacy. No one was sure which Fischer would show up at the board. But in the Soviet Union he was viewed reluctantly as the most serious threat to the two decades of hegemony over world chess since the 1945 U.S.–USSR radio match. The American’s noisy departure from Sousse, when his score of seven wins and three draws led the field, must have cheered Sports Committee, which monitored his actions closely. Fischer’s with-

drawal from the 1967–1969 championship cycle meant his chance to become World Champion would have to wait until 1972 at the earliest. Nevertheless, the Fischer headlines obscured the worst Soviet showing in an Interzonal up till then.

Another Westerner, Bent Larsen of Denmark, won Sousse 1967 by a point and a half. Two Soviet players, Yefim Geller and Viktor Korchnoi, managed to tie with Svetozar Gligorić for second place and qualified for the Candidates matches. But Leonid Stein lost four games — as many as he lost in all his other tournaments in 1967 and 1968 combined. The fourth Soviet entrant at Sousse, Aivars Gipslis, only tied for 13th place — the first negative score by a Soviet in an Interzonal since Vyacheslav Ragozin at Stockholm 1948.

Stein’s loss to Fischer was wiped out when the American withdrew. But Stein’s bad luck returned in other games:

A43 Pirc-Benoni Defense

Sousse Interzonal, 1967

white Bent Larsen, *black* Leonid Stein

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 g6 3 d4 Bg7 4 d5 d6 5 Be2 Nf6 6 Nc3 0–0 7 0–0 Bg4 8 Bg5 Nbd7? 9 Nd2! Bxe2 10 Qxe2 Re8 11 f4 h6 12 Bh4 Qb6 13 Nc4 Qa6 14 e5!

White's initiative must be stopped by a sacrifice. Black cannot allow e5–e6.

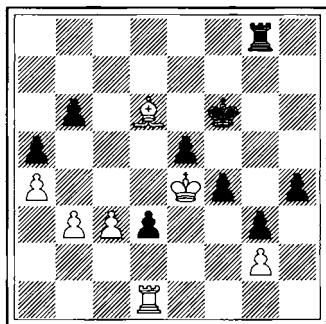
14 ... d×e5 15 f×e5 N×e5 16 N×e5 Q×e2
17 N×e2 N×d5 18 Bg3 Ne3 19 Rf3 Nf5

Or 19 ... N×c2 20 Rcl. Black gets only two pawns for his piece now and White's technical problems should be minor.

20 Re1! Rad8 21 Nc3 Rd2 22 Rf2 Red8
23 Bf4? R×f2 24 K×f2 g5 25 Bcl Nd4
26 Nf3 g4! 27 N×d4 c×d4 28 Ne2 e5
29 c3 d3 30 Rd1 f5 31 Ng3?

White has made a mess of his piece-up endgame and should have returned material with 32 Be3 f4 33 N×f4 to retain his last winning chances.

31 ... Kh7 32 h3 f4 33 Ne4 g3+ 34 Kf3
Kg6 35 b3 Bf8 36 a4 Kf5 37 Bb2 a5
38 Bcl h5 39 Bd2 Be7 40 h4 Rd7 41 Rf1?
Rd8 42 Rd1 b6 43 Bcl Bc5 44 Bb2 Be7
45 Nd2 B×h4 46 Ba3 Bf6 47 Ne4 h4
48 Bd6 Rg8 49 N×f6 K×f6 50 Ke4



After 50 Ke4

After a remarkable comeback, Black will have at least equal chances, and perhaps more, after 50 ... Kg5, threatening ...Kg4. But his next move, a blunder, leads to quick collapse.

50 ... Ke6?? 51 Bc7 f3 52 K×f3 Rc8
53 B×b6 R×c3 54 B×a5 R×b3 55 Bd2
Kd5 56 Rh1 Rb8 57 Ke3 Rf8 58 a5 Rf4
59 a6 Ra4 60 a7 1–0

Slowly, players in and out of the Soviet Union began to wonder: Had something gone wrong with Soviet chess? Wolfgang Heidenfeld, in the *British Chess Magazine*, pointed out a sharp increase of non-Soviet winners in foreign internationals. In 1967, he noted, there had been 10 such tournaments in which top Soviet grandmasters played but failed to win — compared with only two each in 1964 and 1962. At the 1968 World Student Olympiad in Ybbs, Austria, the Soviets narrowly qualified for the top finals section — thanks to luck and adjournment analysis by trainer Isaac Boleslavsky that averted a disastrous loss to the Israelis in the preliminaries. In the finals the team only tied with the West Germans for the gold medals.

The Soviet Championship, meanwhile, took on the air of a veterans tournament. In the 33rd Championship the contestants included 45-year-old Semyon Furman (tied for fourth place) and 49-year-old Paul Keres (sixth). To energize the 35th Soviet Championship, held in December, 1967, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution, the Soviet Federation introduced a fairly radical idea. For the first time, the tournament used the Swiss System, a format virtually unknown east of the Oder-Neisse line. Tigran Petrosian, for example, did not play in his first Swiss tournament until Lone Pine 1976.

The 35th Championship was a 13-round event at Kharkov with a huge field of 130 players. Because so many of the older masters refused to play in a Swiss style tournament, it was a good opportunity for several members of the generation born after World War II. Mikhail Shteinberg and Vladimir Tukmakov tied for eighth, Lev Alburt was a half point back of them, followed a half point further back by Gennady Kuzmin, Gennady Sosonko and Vitaly Tseshkovsky. Mikhail Tal and Lev Polugayevsky shared first place but Kuzmin was in contention until losing his final two games.

A56 Benoni Defense
35th Soviet Championship,
Kharkov, 1967
white Gennady Kuzmin,
black Mark Dvoretzky

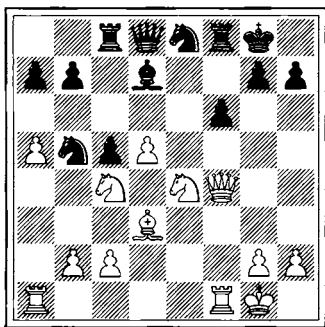
1 d4 c5 2 d5 e5 3 Nc3 d6 4 e4 Be7 5 Be2
 Bg5 6 Nf3 Bxc1 7 Qxc1 Nf6 8 Nd2 0–0
 9 a4 Nbd7 10 0–0 Ne8 11 a5 Nc7 12 Nc4
 Nf6?

Black needs a knight to control e5 and prevent the liquidation that follows. Better was 12 ... Qe7, perhaps followed by ...a6 and ...Nb5.

13 f4! exf4 14 Qxf4 Nfe8 15 e5 dxe5
 16 Qxe5 f6 17 Qf4! Bd7

Not 17 ... Nxd5 18 Nxd5 Qxd5
 19 Nb6 threatening 20 Bc4.

18 Bd3 Nb5 19 Ne4 Rc8



After 19
 ... Rc8

20 d6! f5 21 Ne5

Black's vulnerability on the a2–g8 diagonal decides.

21 ... Nbxd6 22 Nxd6 Nxd6 23 Bc4+
 Nxc4 24 Qxc4+ Kh8 25 Rad1! Rc7
 26 Nf7+ Rxf7 27 Qxf7 1–0

And yet despite all the problems with Soviet chess there was this perplexing fact: The number of masters of the sport was skyrocketing. In some earlier years, as late as

1948, not a single new master was created. The title then seemed almost as rare as the newly created FIDE titles of International Grandmaster and International Master. There were just over fifty Soviet masters on the eve of World War II, and 104 by 1955. But 269 players held the master title by 1964 and more than 400 a few years later. Dozens of new masters were being created annually in the 1960s — 44 new ones in 1966 alone. Yet the number of grandmasters remained modest, rising from 12 in 1950 to 16 in 1955, 19 in 1959, 24 in 1964 and 32 in 1969.

If the number of grandmasters was the more accurate barometer of Soviet chess, then somehow the master title was being cheapened. One explanation was that candidate masters always seemed to win qualification matches for the title. They did it in 12 of 13 matches in 1969, for example, as Lev Abramov pointed out. Unlike the national championship, which helped determine who played abroad, there was no compelling reason for a master to play at his best in a qualification match. Once again, the lack of incentive in Soviet society was taking a toll.

In *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, a member of the Higher Qualification Commission, B. Berkin, found another reason for the master boom: There were more and more “weak” tournaments which could create master norms, and a sharp decrease in “strong” tournaments, in which at least 10 masters competed, such as republic championships. Berkin concluded that nearly half the norms being made in the 1960s resulted in “weak” masters, that is, players who had at least two bad results soon after making their norm. Since “weak” masters would beget more weak masters, this was producing a “crisis in the qualification system” despite efforts to toughen the norms.

But for the established grandmasters, the times were good. At the 1968 Olympiad in Lugano, Switzerland, the Soviets won by 8½ points — and could have padded the margin had they not drawn quickly in the final round. The team took four board-prizes:

Tigran Petrosian scored 10½–1½ on first, Viktor Korchnoi was 11–2 on third, Polugayevsky was 10½–2½ on fifth; and Vasily Smyslov was 11–1 on sixth. Boris Spassky and Yefim Geller, who merely scored 71.4 percent and 79.2 percent, were the only ones not to win their board prizes.

E21 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Olympiad, Lugano, 1968
white László Szabó,
black Viktor Korchnoi

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 0–0
 5 Bg5 c5 6 Rcl

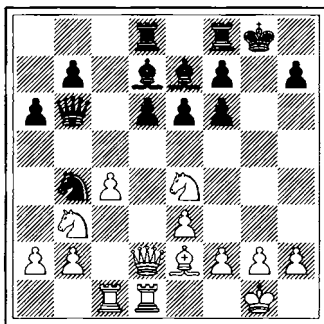
This was praised at the time as an improvement over 6 d5 but today 6 e3 is regarded as a better bid for advantage.

6 ... cxd4 7 Nxd4 Nc6 8 e3 a6 9 Be2
 Be7 10 0–0 d6 11 Qd2 Qb6 12 Rfd1 Bd7
 13 Nb3 Rad8

Now with 14 e4! White has a favorable version of the Maróczy Bind. But White plays to win the d6-pawn.

14 Bxf6 gxh6 15 Ne4? Nb4!

After 15
 ... Nb4



Another surprise Korchnoi counterattack. White sees that 16 Qc3 Nxa2 17 Nxf6+ loses to 17 ... Kh8! 18 Nxd7+ Nxc3 19 Nxb6 Nxe2+ 20 Kf1 Nxc1. He should switch to defense with 16 Qd4, e.g., 16 ... Qxd4 17 Rxd4 Nxa2 18 Ral Nb4 19 c5!.

16 Nxd6? Nxa2 17 c5 Qxb3 18 Bc4 Nxc1!

The point: Black gets more than enough for the queen.

19 Bxb3 Nxb3 20 Qc3 Nxc5! 21 Qxc5
 Ba4!

The knight at d6 is in trouble (22 Rd4 Bxd6 23 Rxd6 Rc8) so White gives up another pawn so that his queen can defend c1 at a3.

22 b3 Bxb3 23 Rd3 Bd5! 24 e4 Bxe4!
 0–1

Materially, the grandmasters were living relatively well — for Soviet citizens. At a time when the national average salary was still in the 120 to 150 rubles a month range, Spassky received 160 in his stipend. This was officially dispensed for his work as a trainer in his sports society, Trud. But Spassky's duties, like those of other Soviet grandmasters, were nominal. The unstated premise of the stipend, whether channeled through Sports Committee or a sports society, was that it was for *not* working — but rather for future over-the-board results. Officially, chess could not be a profession in the land of peasants and workers, so Polugayevsky was identified as an engineer, Geller as an economist, Korchnoi as a historian, Igor Bondarevsky as an “engineer-economist” and Spassky — who wrote virtually nothing — as a journalist. Good money could be earned from clubs and sports societies or by writing. Simultaneous exhibitions at home were worth about 20 rubles during the 1960s. Petrosian said he earned more “when I was a journalist” than when he got the extra stipend for being World Champion.

Mikhail Tal, a superb writer, had his Riga-based magazine *Shakhmaty* and the Daugava sports society as revenue sources. Even when playing badly, he earned his salary by beating the weaker opponents. In the 1968

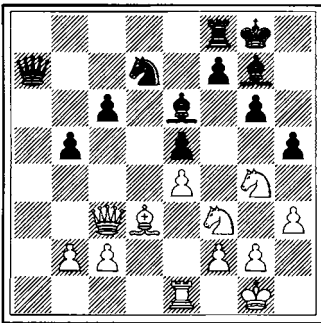
Soviet Team Cup, Tal lost his first two games, to Igor Zaitsev and David Bronstein, and took a grand total of 86 moves to draw his five games with Stein, Polugayevsky, Geller, Keres and Kholmov. But he enjoyed himself with games like:

A48 Pirc Defense
Soviet Team Cup, Riga, 1968
white Vlasdas Mikenas,
black Mikhail Tal

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Bg5 Bg7 4 Nbd2
 0–0 5 e4 d6 6 Bd3 c6 7 0–0 Qc7 8 Re1
 e5 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 Nc4 b5!

White may have counted on 10 ... Nbd7 or 10 ... Re8, defending the e5-pawn but encouraging 11 Bf1 and Qd6. Tal's move is based on 11 Ncxe5 Re8 12 Bf4 Nh5, winning material.

11 Bxf6 Bxf6 12 Ne3 a6 13 a4 Ra7!
 14 Qd2 Be6 15 h3 Nd7 16 Ng4 Bg7
 17 axb5 axb5 18 Rxa7 Qxa7 19 Qc3 h5!



After 19
 ... h5

Black shows that White has one bad piece (20 Ngxe5? Nxe5 21 Nxe5 b4 22 Nxc6 Bxc3 and wins) and this is enough to lose the game.

20 Ne3 Qc5! 21 Ng5 Qxc3 22 bxc3 Ba2!
 23 Ra1 Ra8

Black walks into this pin in order to keep his winning chances. He prepares ...Bh6 and ...Ra3 followed by ...Nc5.

24 Nd1 Ra3 25 Nf3 Nc5 26 Nb2 f6
 27 Kf1? Nxe4!

This decides quickly (28 Bxe4 Bc4+ or 28 Nc4 Ra6!).

28 c4 Nd6 29 cxb5 cxb5 30 Nd2 e4!
 31 Nxe4 Nxe4 32 Bb5 f5 33 Rxa2 Nd2+!
 0–1

Foreign trips were the real plums even though the Sports Committee took a large share of winnings. The prizes that Soviet grandmasters brought home had to be converted to rubles but in this case they were “certificate rubles,” which could be used in special hard currency stores. The stores had low prices and *defisitny* goods that were not available elsewhere. Because of this extraordinary advantage, certificate rubles could be traded 8-to-1 on the black market for other rubles. A player who brought home only \$100 had thus earned a fortune in a country where it cost five kopecks to ride the Metro and where two-bedroom flats could be rented for as little as nine rubles a month (provided you had the *blat* to obtain the apartment in the first place).

Korchnoi began getting foreign assignments in 1954, the same time his stipend began. When he was told he was going to the Bucharest International that year he was given the special “equipment” payment that players got so that they could dress better — or as he put it, to conceal the lower level of life in the USSR. The 120-ruble annual allowance was more than enough to get a good suit at GUM, the celebrated department store on Red Square, and Korchnoi rushed to do so. Also, by going abroad a Soviet player could buy foreign goods that would invariably be worth much more at home. Anatoly Karpov later quoted Korchnoi as saying that the stature of a grandmaster was decided by the amount of their luggage.

But navigating through the byzantine Soviet hierarchy had changed quite a bit since

Alexander Ilyin-Genevsky went to see Sergei Kirov at Smolny forty years before. According to Korchnoi, grandmaster trips abroad began with a recommendation by the Chess Federation. The name of a player selected would be sent to the Party unit of his sports society for approval, then to the “exit commission” of the district Party office where the player lived. Then the documents, along with 12 photos, would be sent on to Moscow to the First (KGB) Department of Sports Committee and the Party Central Committee’s own exit commission. In some cases, such as the decision to allow pianist Svyatoslav Richter to perform in the West, the final decision was made by the Politburo.

Disappointments were common. Beilin recalled once having to tell Paul Keres that higher authorities had canceled his planned trip to Australia. Keres took it good-naturedly: “I’ve already seen so much in life!” Korchnoi, who said he joined the Communist Party to get more foreign trips, recalled how he was personally invited to a Zagreb International in 1965. But the Soviet Federation decided to send him to a small tournament in Hungary instead. When Korchnoi objected, he was told by a Comrade Kazansky, “You understand that Soviet tanks rolled into Budapest (in 1956). You, as champion of the country, are commissioned, figuratively speaking, to cover up with your body the holes made by them.” Korchnoi refused — and went to neither tournament.

If there was a secret veto along the line, it would be impossible to know where. Korchnoi said he once chased after the Oktyaber District Party secretary for a year to find out why he was kept from a trip, but she managed to avoid him. Figuring out where the real power in the hierarchy lay was an ongoing guessing game for Soviet players. According to Iser Kuperman, the checker champion, the power behind the throne in the 1960s was — Rona Petrosian.

Shakhmaty v SSSR wrote in 1990 that

Kuperman’s name was written out of Soviet checker history at the end of the 1970s after he was forced out of the Soviet Union. In the memoirs he wrote in the West, Kuperman made various accusations against chess bureaucrats. But he also described Petrosian’s wife as “a dictator” of the chess federation in the 1960s.

In his memoirs, which were published in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* in 1990, Kuperman claimed, for example, that he overheard a 1965 phone call in which Rona told Abramov which players to send to which tournaments that year. (Friends of the Petrosians disputed Kuperman’s accusations and Abramov denied even speaking to Rona Petrosian after 1962.)

The World Champion was devoted to the slightly older former English teacher whom he first met during the 18th Soviet Championship in 1950. For *Tigranchik*, as Rona called him, she was “a faithful wife, trainer, mother, lover, chief adviser, psychologically and organizationally leading his play,” Kuperman said. With her help, Petrosian enjoyed an excellent five-room apartment in the center of Moscow, a car and a chauffeur paid by Spartak, he wrote.

In lesser events Petrosian could reveal a sharper, more playful side:

B82 Sicilian Defense
Spartakiad, Moscow, 1967
white Tigran Petrosian,
black Vladimir Danov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
 5 Nc3 a6 6 f4

Open Sicilians as White were a rarity for Petrosian and he usually handled them positionally. For example, in a 1962 USSR–Holland team match against Jan Donner he destroyed Black’s queenside with 6 Be2 e5 7 Nb3 Qc7 8 a4 b6 9 0–0 Bb7 10 f3 Be7

11 Be3 0–0 12 Qd2 Nc6? 13 Rfc1 Nb4 14 a5!
bxa5 15 Na4.

White had a winning endgame after
15 ... Nc6 16 Nb6 Rab8 17 Nd5! Nxd5
18 exd5 Nd4 19 Nxd4 exd4 20 Bxd4 Bxd5
21 Qxa5 Qxa5 22 Rxa5 Bb7 23 Bd3 Bd8
24 Ra3.

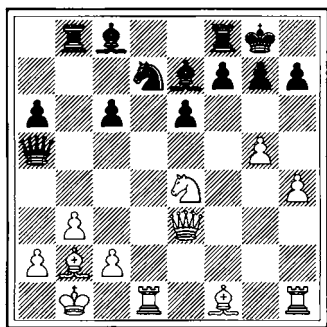
6 ... e6 7 Qf3 Qc7 8 g4 Nc6 9 Nxc6
bxc6 10 g5 Nd7 11 b3!

White solidifies his future king position and aims at g7.

11 ... Be7 12 h4 d5 13 Bb2 Qa5 14 0–0–0
0–0 15 Kbl Rb8? 16 f5!

Flohr said it was unfair to claim, as some critics did, that Petrosian “only likes other people’s pawns.” Here he makes a sound pawn sacrifice.

16 ... dxe4 17 Nxe4 Qxf5 18 Qe3 Qa5



After 18
... Qa5

White was preparing to take apart the kingside with Bd3 and h4–h5.

19 Nf6+! Bxf6

Or 19 ... gxf6 20 gxf6 Bxf6 21 Qg3+
Kh8 22 Bxf6+ Nxf6 23 Qxb8.

20 gxf6 Qh5 21 Bd3 e5 22 Rdgl 1–0

If Black defends g7 with 22 ... g6 he loses the queen to 23 Rg5 Qh6 24 R×g6+.

Petrosian used his authority in early 1968

to revive 64, which had been moribund since July 1941. After long discussion, the Sports Committee passed the matter to the Party Central Committee and its propaganda section, which had matters of culture, chess included, in its domain. Despite its notorious stinginess with releasing paper for printing, the Central Committee approved Petrosian’s project and 64 reappeared in July 1968 with regular sections on checkers as well as chess and with a huge circulation of 100,000, more than triple that of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*.

Botvinnik warned in a lecture that Petrosian might soon join him as an ex-champion because he was spreading himself too thin with his 64 duties and because he was not getting opening ideas from his best sources — meaning from Geller, Tal, Korchnoi and Stein. Spassky, meanwhile, was moving effortlessly through the 1968 candidates matches. In the first round he eliminated Geller in the resort town of Sukhumi by 5½–2½. In the second round Spassky crushed Larsen, again by 5½–2½. Meanwhile, Korchnoi disposed of Reshevsky, and Tal got past Gligorić, so those two rivals met in a semi-finals match in June and July at the Central Club of the Soviet Army in Moscow. Korchnoi became suspicious when Tal’s personal doctor, a rarity in the Soviet Union, sat through every game. He suspected Tal was taking drugs and that the doctor, who rarely took his eyes off his patient, was influencing him from his seat close to the stage. The chief arbiter, German Fridstein, agreed to have the doctor moved several rows back.

Tal, the heavy underdog because of his horrible record with Korchnoi, had a won king-and-pawn endgame by move 27 in the first game but only drew. After Korchnoi could not get anything out of the white pieces, Tal obtained a won game after 22 moves in the third game. But a series of second- and third-best moves produced another draw. Following the old adage that the player who missed a win loses the next game, Tal lost the next two.

E53 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Candidates semifinals, fourth game,
Moscow, 1968
white Viktor Korchnoi,
black Mikhail Tal

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 d4 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5
 5 e3 0-0 6 Bd3 d5 7 0-0 Nbd7 8 cxd5
 exd5 9 Qb3 Nb6 10 Ne2!

This embarrasses the b4-bishop with a threat of ll a3 and earns White a significant edge.

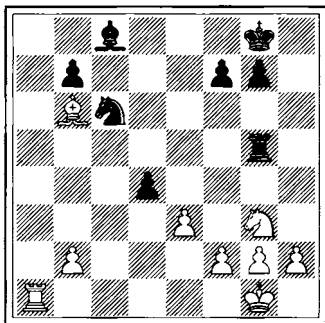
10 ... a5 11 dxc5 Nbd7?! 12 Qc2 Nxc5
 13 Bxh7+! Nxh7 14 a3 Na6 15 axb4 Nxb4
 16 Qb3 Ng5 17 Nxc5 Qxc5 18 Bd2 Nc6
 19 Bc3 Rd8 20 Qb5 Rd6 21 Bxa5?

White has excellent winning chances despite the bishops of opposite color if he can win the d-pawn with 21 Nf4 and Rad1. Black now gets a chance for another Tal-finish.

21 ... Rg6 22 Ng3

Or 22 Nf4 Bh3!

22 ... d4! 23 Qxc5 Rxc5 24 Bb6? Rxa1
 25 Rxa1



After 25 Rxa1

Black has a golden opportunity for 25 ... d3! because 26 Ra8 allows 26 ... d2!. Better is 26 Rd1 Rb5 27 Bd4 Nxd4 28 exd4 Rxb2, e.g., 29 Rxd3? Rb1+ 30 Nf1 Bd7.

25 ... dxe3? 26 Ra8 Ne7 27 fxe3

Did Tal incorrectly count on 27 Bd8? Rd5! ? Now the threat of 28 Bd8 leads to a won endgame.

27 ... Rd5 28 b4! Rd1+ 29 Kf2 Rd2+
 30 Ke1 Rxc2 31 Bc5 Kh7 32 Bxe7 Bd7
 33 Rd8 Bc6 34 Rd2 Rg1+ 35 Ke2 Rb1
 36 Kd3 Kg6 37 Kd4 f6 38 Kc5 1-0

Despite some tense moments, Korchnoi won the match by a point. Petrosian damned Korchnoi with faint praise, saying that while playing "below his strength" he still deserved the 5½-4½ victory "because he erred less."

The Candidates finals was held at the Palace of Culture in Kiev, September 6-26, and strained relations between the two Leningraders. One day Korchnoi was in the Moskva Restaurant when Spassky entered, greeted him and sat at his table, *Shakhmaty v SSSR* said. Korchnoi, who seemed to play at full strength only when he could despise his opponent, silently got up and took his bowl of borscht to a different table. It did not matter. Spassky won his third straight victory by three points. Korchnoi saw the dark hand of Petrosian in the decision to keep his second, Furman, from joining him for the match. But Spassky felt he was playing better than three years before because he was stronger both physically and financially. Spassky thought he lost the 1966 world championship match because he was exhausted by the Candidates series and was "poverty stricken." But after winning \$5,000 at the Piatigorsky Cup in Santa Monica, 1966, he had money to pay for trainers for the next championship.

Before 1968 ended a great tradition appeared to have been killed off by civic pride. The annual double-round Moscow-Leningrad match, held on 40 boards in Moscow, was tied 39½-39½ with one adjourned game, Lyavdansky-Volovich, left to decide

the result. The Leningraders had the winning chances in an extremely difficult queen-and-pawn versus queen ending.

Rather than play the game out, a special grandmaster commission was impaneled and it adjudicated the game as a draw. This outraged the Leningraders who countered with analysis by Georgy Lisitsyn claiming there was a win. Counter-analysis from Moscow followed. The dispute raged for years. In 1971 Nikolai Novotelnov wrote in

Shakhmatny Bulletin that, as a Leningrad master, he regretfully had to admit there was no clear win. “Not in vain it is said, ‘You are my friend, but the truth is dearer to me’,” Novotelnov wrote. Later the Soviet computer KAISSA found there was a win after all. By then relations were irreparable and the annual tradition seemed to be dead.

Here are the results of the Moscow-Leningrad matches, 1922–1968 (in parentheses are number of boards):

1922	(11— all men)	Moscow	14–8
1926	(22 — including 2 women each)	Moscow	23½–20½
1927	(29 — 3 women)	Leningrad	31½–25½
1930	(15 — 2 women)	Moscow	18–12
1937	(23 — 3 women)	Leningrad	25–21
1941	(10— all men, single round)	Moscow	7–3
1958	(40— 5 women)	Tie	40–40
1959	(10— no women)	Tie	10–10
1960a	(40— 5 women)	Leningrad	46–34
1960b	(40— 5 women)	Leningrad	40½–39½
1962	(40— 5 women)	Moscow	40½–39½
1965	(40— 5 women)	Moscow	40½–39½
1967	(18 — 8 juniors)	Moscow	25½–10½
1968	(40— 5 women)	Tie	40–40

There was a notable midtournament death in 1968. At an international tournament at Kislovodsk, Vladimir Simagin told his friend Yakov Estrin he needed a doctor. But Simagin soon felt better and began preparing for his game the next day with Geller, the tournament’s leader and eventual winner. The game was never played: Simagin died of a heart attack, at age 48.

While FIDE was moving towards adopting the Elo rating system, the Soviet Federation issued its own ranking list in 1969, based on 1966–1968 results with an emphasis on “official competitions for world and Soviet titles.” Petrosian and Spassky were, naturally, numbers 1 and 2, followed by Korchnoi and then Mikhail Botvinnik, who was still in excellent shape at age 58. The list continued with Tal, Stein, Geller, Polugayevsky, Smyslov, Bronstein, Taimanov.

Then, 10th-ranked, came Alexander Zaitsev, who would achieve the best result of his life later that year by tying with Polugayevsky in the 36th Soviet Championship in the Kazakh capital of Alma Ata.

Zaitsev was the unlikeliest of grandmasters, a truly modest and innocent figure who lived as far from the centers of USSR chess as a Soviet player could. He resided in the Pacific coast city of Vladivostok and was the only chess master in the vast Soviet Far East. Zaitsev did not begin to play until he was 14 and, with no strong players within several hundred miles, was only a first category player at 18. Despite a fulltime job, Zaitsev regularly spent eight to 14 hours a day on chess, recording his progress in notebooks. It was not until he won a tournament of the best Siberian and Far East players in 1958 that Moscow took notice and

arranged a master-match for Zaitsev. To the surprise of many, he won, beating Estrin 3½–2½.

Zaitsev was a speedy player who calculated quickly and often took less than half the time of his opponent. Here is an example of his tactical skill:

B37 Sicilian Defense

Moscow-RSFSR Match, Moscow, 1964

white Lev Aronin,

black Alexander Zaitsev

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6
5 c4 Bg7 6 Nc2 d6 7 Be2 Nh6 8 g4 f5

An attempt to defang the Maróczy Bind similar to ideas tried by Simagin in the 1950s. It's an improvement over 8 ... f6? 9 h4 0–0 10 h5 g5 which proved disastrous in Suetin–Simagin, Tula 1950:

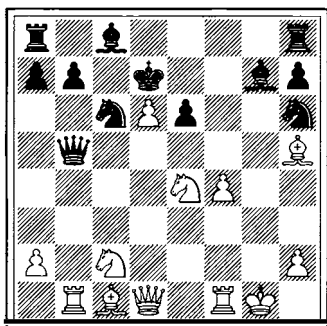
11 Nc3 e6 12 Rg1 Nf7 13 Be3 b6
14 Qd2 Bb7 15 0–0–0 Qe7 16 f4 gxf4
17 Bxf4 Rfd8 18 h6! Bf8 19 g5 fxg5
20 R×g5+! N×g5 21 B×g5 Qf7 22 Rg1 Qg6
23 Be3 1–0.

9 g×f5 g×f5 10 Bh5+ Kd7! 11 Nc3 Qa5

This gets Black into trouble and he later recommended 11 ... Kc7 and 12 ... fxe4.

12 Bd2 Qe5 13 f4 Qf6 14 0–0! fxe4
15 Nxe4 Qxb2 16 Bc1! Qb6+ 17 c5 Qb5
18 cxd6 e6 19 Rb1

After 19 Rb1



“Chess is still an interesting game,” Aronin remarked as he made this move.

19 ... Qd5

“Not so much interesting as funny,” Zaitsev replied. He avoids 19 ... Q×b1 20 Nc5+ Kd8 21 d7 Kc7 22 N×e6+ mating.

Here both players saw 20 Bf3 Q×d1 21 R×d1 b6 22 Bb2 B×b2 23 R×b2 Rf8 and considered it fine for Black, overlooking the deadly impact of 24 Nd4!.

20 f5? Q×e4! 21 f×e6+ Q×e6 22 Rf7+!
N×f7 23 Bg4 Re8 24 Bf4 Nfe5?

This, instead of 24 ... Be5, allows White to continue the fight.

25 B×e6+ R×e6 26 Nb4!

The attack is alive again (26 ... R×d6 27 Qa4).

26 ... Rg6+ 27 Bg3 b6 28 N×c6 N×c6
29 Qd5 Bd4+ 30 Kg2 Bb7 31 Rf1?

White still had chances after 31 Re1! after which Black intended 31 ... R×g3+ 32 h×g3 Rf8 33 Kh3 Rf6 “and a new game is ahead.”

31 ... Bf6 32 Qf7+ Ne7+ 33 Rf3 Bd5!!
0–1

White saw 34 Q×h7 Rh8.

Zaitsev was Asia's first grandmaster and had the work habits and natural ability to reach the highest level. But he suffered from an inflamed leg since he was three and later from heart pain. His biographers, B. N. Arkhangelsky and R. I. Kimelfeld, said Zaitsev kept putting off an operation on his leg because it would interfere with his tournaments. When he failed to win a better position in the last round of the 1971 Championship semifinals at Perm, he had time for the operation. But being quiet and modest he did not try to get into a clinic in Moscow or Leningrad. “Sasha didn't like to ask,” his

biographers wrote. The lengthy operation had rarely been performed in Vladivostok and it left him hemorrhaging. Zaitsev spent his final night in a hospital television room watching a version of his favorite book, *Crime and Punishment*, with four other patients. The soft-spoken grandmaster did not try to disturb the other viewers by asking them to turn down the sound as he lay dying of a blood clot. He was 38.

Rematch

After dispatching Korchnoi in the Candidates finals, Boris Spassky had amassed a considerable record in the two cycles. In six qualifying matches he won 22 games, drew 27 and lost only five. Only in the 1966 World Championship match had he failed to figure out his opponent. Spassky later recalled how during the first Petrosian match he met Botvinnik on the street one day. “Boris Vasilevich, do you always guess Petrosian’s moves?” the former champion asked. “Not always,” Spassky replied. Botvinnik walked on and Spassky realized why Botvinnik had lost the title. In 1963, *he* had not been able to guess all of Petrosian’s moves either.

For his second championship match, “I turned into a real hermit,” Spassky recalled. He took over a dacha in Dubna, a scientists’ village more than an hour’s drive north from Moscow, and eventually came to dislike having to turn from the fresh air of the country to that of the stuffy match site. In Dubna he spent three months in training with his seconds, Bondarevsky and Nikolai Krogius. The son of a candidate master and army colonel, Krogius had grown up in Leningrad as a rival of Spassky, Korchnoi and Lutikov. He won the Russian Federation championship in 1952 at age 22 — but did not make International Master for another 11 years after that. As with many players little known in the West,

Krogius’s positional style could be impressive:

C19 French Defense
Spartakiad of Peoples, Moscow, 1967
white Eduard Gufeld,
black Nikolai Krogius

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3
 B×c3+ 6 b×c3 Qc7 7 Nf3 Ne7 8 a4 b6
 9 Bb5+

A finesse to discourage Black from playing ...Ba6.

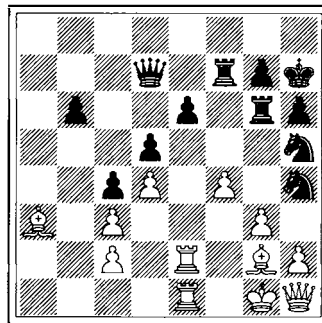
9 ... Bd7 10 Bd3 Nbc6 11 0–0 h6 12 Re1
 Na5 13 Nd2 0–0 14 Qg4 f5 15 e×f6
 R×f6 16 Nf3 Raf8 17 Ne5 c4 18 Bf1
 Nac6 19 N×d7 Q×d7 20 Ba3

White’s position looks more impressive than it is because he never gets his f1-bishop to attack e6 and the a3-bishop remains out of play.

20 ... R8f7 21 Re2 Nf5 22 g3 Kh7 23 f4
 Rg6 24 Qh5 Nce7 25 a5 Ng8 26 a×b6
 a×b6 27 Rae1? Nf6 28 Qf3 Nh4!

Now 29 Qe3? Ng4 30 Qc1 Nf3+ or
 29 Qf2?? Ng4.

29 Qh1 Nh5 30 Bg2



After 30 Bg2

A rare kingside situation — which allows Black to sacrifice on one wing and penetrate on the other.

30 ... Nxf4 31 gxf4 Rxf4 32 Rf1 Rfg4
33 Rff2 Qa1!

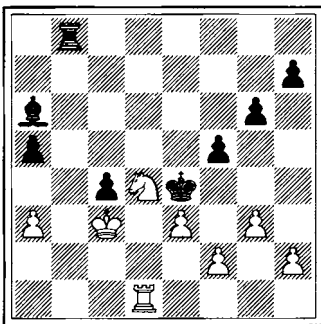
White's rooks do not defend the first rank now (34 Bb4 R×g2+ 35 R×g2 Qa1+).

34 Be7 R×g2+ 35 Q×g2 N×g2 36 R×g2
Qa1+ 37 Kf2 Q×c3 0-1

The World Championship match began in Moscow on April 14 with a crushing win by Petrosian with Black. But challenger Spassky scored wins in the fourth, fifth and eighth games. He enjoyed a two-point lead when the strain began to take a toll on him. Petrosian showed up to resign the adjourned eighth game and appeared totally relaxed while the chain-smoking Spassky seemed drained. When Spassky offered a draw in a winning position in the next game Petrosian realized the initiative was his. He won the 10th and 11th games and the match was even again.

Bondarevsky asked Malkin to find a doctor for Spassky, who was no longer able to work with his trainer. But here Petrosian made what Krogius called a crucial error. The champion believed the groggy Spassky would collapse on his own in the middle stretch of the match, games 13 to 17. Both sides considered the adjourned 14th game crucial:

Petrosian-Spassky



After 43 ... Ke4
World Championship Match, Moscow,
1969, 14th game

Spassky, unlike Botvinnik, hated adjournments ("They get on your nerves"). But when he and his seconds reached Dubna the mood was good, Krogius recalled, because the position appeared even. When they sat down to analyze, however, there was a minor crisis — incredibly, no one on the Spassky team had written down the position of the White rook. If they called Moscow, they'd be laughed at for such a transparent joke. But the seconds eventually got the correct position from a friendly sports commentator, analyzed enough to conclude the game was a draw and allowed Spassky to go to sleep.

Krogius recalled how Bondarevsky slowly pulled one of his favorite Kazbek cigarettes from the pack to signify it was time to stop analyzing and start smoking. Suddenly, Krogius spotted 44 f3+! K×e3 (44 ... Ke5?? 45 Nc6+) 45 Rd2!, threatening mate. The unlit cigarette fell to the floor. The two seconds spent much of the night trying to find an escape and wondering what to tell Spassky when he awoke. They decided on a two-pronged strategy — trying to convince him that Petrosian and his second Boleslavsky would not find 45 Rd2!, while showing him the best defense in case they had.

Just before they left for the playing hall the next day Spassky had a confidence crisis. "Do you really think that f3+ wasn't sealed?" he asked. "I think so," replied Krogius. "And you, Father," Spassky said turning to Bondarevsky. "I'm sure of that, Borya," the 56-year-old Honored Trainer of the Soviet Union replied. Spassky even asked his wife Larisa and she confirmed the seconds' view. But at that moment their driver arrived. When asked the same question, he said, "Of course, Boris Vasilevich, it could be sealed."

Of course, play proceeded with that very move:

44 f3+! K×e3 45 Rd2! Rb3+ 46 N×b3
c×b3 47 Rd7?!

World Championship Match, Moscow, April 4–June 17, 1969

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>
Petrosian	1	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	1	1	½
Spassky	0	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	0	0	½
	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Total</i>
Petrosian	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	1	0	½	½	10½–12½
Spassky	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	0	1	½	½	12½–10½

Better was 47 f4! but White is still winning.

47 ... h5 48 Ra7 Bf1! 49 f4 h4! 50 g×h4

Or 50 R×a5 h3 with a danger of ... Kf2–g1×h2. Petrosian blamed his failure to win the game on an “inexplicable nervous collapse.” He soon misses a final chance in 52 Ra8 f4 53 Re8+ Kf3 54 Re6!.

50 ... K×f4 51 R×a5 Ke4 52 K×b3? f4 53 Rg5 f3 54 R×g6 Bh3! 55 Rg1 f2 56 Rcl Draw

To Spassky this escape was just like his failure to win the ninth game and he knew it would have an impact on the rest of the match. He won with White in the 17th and 19th games. Petrosian cut his lead to a point by winning the 20th but Spassky won the 21st. The 22nd was a tepid draw, leaving the score 12–10 in the challenger’s favor. At 11:30 A.M. on June 17 — Petrosian’s 40th birthday — Spassky called arbiter O’Kelly and said “I sealed 41 c6 in the 23rd game and propose a draw.” O’Kelly relayed the message to Petrosian — who said he accepted even though he had been ready to resign without resuming.

Recalling Botvinnik’s question three years before, Spassky summed up the match: This time, “I guessed everything.”

The Spassky Era

The new champion was unmistakably a member of the generation that came to adulthood during the period of relative thaw in the Cold War and the denunciation of Stalinism. Unlike many of his rivals, Spassky avoided political games to ingratiate himself with the Sports Committee and the *vlasti*. David Bronstein remembered Spassky’s independent nature as far back as 1960 when they arrived in Argentina for a Mar del Plata International. After a night’s hotel stay, Bronstein told the young grandmaster they had to pay a courtesy call at the Soviet embassy, to make their arrival known and get the recommendations of the local Soviet representatives. Spassky refused: “David Ionovich, you go, but I won’t. I belong to a different generation to which these rules don’t apply.”

Spassky was a natural actor who was famous for mimicking establishment figures such as Averbakh, Bondarevsky, and particularly Botvinnik. Malkin was shocked when he heard Spassky, in the offices of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, even dare to imitate Lenin. Spassky repeated phrases with a Leninesque guttural inflection, such as “Workers of all nations, unite!” — then added “But unite for what?” This brought his laughing audience to tears, until they nervously realized that even when cults of personality were being denounced, Lenin remained an icon.

As World Champion — and the man voted by Soviet sportswriters as Sportsman

of 1969 — Spassky was thrust into various official duties he did not want and had the right to sit on various high-level committees he had little respect for. Once when he was present at a Chess Federation meeting, someone proposed reducing or even cutting off the monthly stipends to Salo Flohr and Andor Liliental because they had not played in so long. Spassky, who had been silent up to then, suddenly spoke up: “How can we treat chess veterans so cynically?” At another time, he appeared before an exit commission considering foreign trips and was asked if he knew the name of the chairman of the Supreme Soviet. Spassky’s reply, “No, I don’t know,” caused a commotion. The senior commission member tried to humiliate him but Spassky interrupted him by saying, “Comrade, do you know the name of the chess champion of Moscow?” That defused the situation — while making his point that both men knew what they needed to know. This led Spassky to conclude: “The best organization for chess is anarchy.”

Like Petrosian and Botvinnik before him, Spassky did not perform impressively in tournaments while champion. But when he won he made it look effortless.

D34 Queen’s Gambit Declined
Olympiad, Siegen, 1970
white Boris Spassky,
black Abraham Yanofsky

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5
 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0–0
 0–0 9 Be3

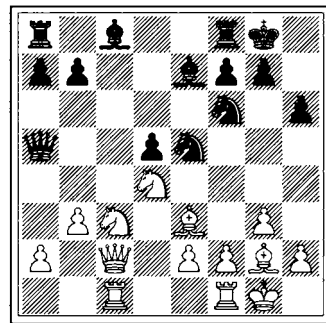
For years the Tarrasch Defense had been under a cloud because of 9 Bg5 Be6 10 dxc5 Bxc5 11 Rcl. For example, Liliental–Bezurov, Moscow Championship 1939, went 11 ... Be7?! 12 Nd4 h6 13 Bf4 Rc8 14 Nxc6 fxe6 15 Bh3! Kf7 16 e4! d4 17 Bxe6+! Kxe6 18 Qb3+ Kd7 19 Qxb7+ Rc7 20 Bxc7 1–0.

But the Tarrasch Defense was Spassky’s

surprise weapon in the 1969 Petrosian match, when he showed that 9 Bg5 could be met by 9 ... cxd4 10 Nxd4 h6 11 Be3 Bg4 with excellent play (12 Nb3 Be6 13 Nc5 d4). Black’s move order in this game leaves him a vital tempo behind and he should have played 9 ... Ng4 10 Bf4 Be6

9 ... cxd4 10 Nxd4 h6?! 11 Rcl Na5?!
 12 b3 Nc6 13 Qd3! Ne5 14 Qc2 Qa5

After 14
 ... Qa5



15 Ncb5! Bd7 16 Qc7! Qxc7

Of course not 16 ... Qxa2 17 Ra1. White wins a pawn now with virtually no Black compensation.

17 Nxc7 Rad8 18 Nxd5 Nxd5 19 Bxd5
 Bh3 20 Bg2 Bxg2 21 Kxg2 Ng4 22 Nf5!
 Nxe3+ 23 Nxe3 Rd2 24 Rc2 Rxc2
 25 Nxc2 Rd8 26 Kf3 Rd2 27 Rcl Bf6
 28 Nb4 a5 29 Rc2!

White handles the technical stage expertly.

29 ... Rd7 30 Rc8+ Kh7 31 Nd3 b6
 32 Rc6 Rb7 33 Nf4 b5 34 Nd5 Bd8
 35 e4! Rb8 36 e5 Kg8 37 Ke4 Kf8 38 f4
 Ke8 39 f5 Kd7 40 Ra6 a4 41 e6+ Ke8
 42 Ra7 1–0

When the Soviets tried to get various artistic and cultural stars in the early 1970s to write a joint letter to the White House to protest the alleged mistreatment of Angela Davis, Spassky said he wanted to know the

particulars in the case first. He was not asked to sign letters after that. Botvinnik also declined to sign the Davis protest, saying he was not in the habit of corresponding with Richard Nixon.

Runup to Reykjavik

The tragedy of Spassky's brief reign was that it came just as Bobby Fischer returned to chess. Tal conceded in a 1988 interview that Fischer was "absolutely the best player" in the world by the time of the Soussé Interzonal — but the American soon began another of his strange absences from competition. Officially, the Soviets considered Fischer overrated. Botvinnik, in his memoirs, said that if Fischer were not an American but a Dane or a Pole, "he would not be considered a genius." Geller, in a 1962 book of his games, offered boilerplate Marxism to explain why the American would never become World Champion. "Growing up in Brooklyn, a well-known center of drug addicts and thugs, young Bobby from youth learned the 'local wisdom' — by any means to get rich, to get as many dollars as possible." Success in chess, Geller said, awaited only those players of deep morality and high intellect who were "free from the flaws and evils rotting through the capitalist system."

At the Stockholm 1962 Interzonal, Fischer, in broken Russian, challenged Geller to speed chess. But Geller told him to play Stein instead. Fischer insisted on playing for 10 crowns a game, then lost the first two. Four years later at a Havana Olympiad reception attended by Fidel Castro, Stein asked Fischer to resume the blitz series. "Why blitz? Why not a real match?" Fischer replied. "You're the champion of the USSR, I'm the champion of the USA." They agreed on a format of six wins, draws not counting, the same as the Botvinnik–Levenfish match. Cuban federation president Luis Barreras brought Bobby to Castro, and Bobby asked

the Cuban president to organize the match in his country. "I'm not opposed. I will guarantee all conditions. But when do you want to play?" Castro said.

"Immediately after the Olympiad!" Fischer said. "Immediately?" said Stein. The Olympiad ended November 20 and Stein could not pass up the Soviet Championship — a zonal — the next month. "Only now," Fischer insisted, and the idea died.

But concern about Fischer's increasing ability remained throughout the 1960s. Vladimir Alatortsev sought objective evaluations of the American from leading players. Boleslavsky praised his "excellent chess memory." Korchnoi said Bobby's greatest strength was "versatility. His style harmoniously unites the striving for initiative with respect for material."

Despite the Soviet accounts of the Fischer–Stein talks, it is hard to imagine the Sports Committee allowing any of their frontline grandmasters to face Fischer in a high-profile match. But this did not apply to patriarchs. Mikhail Botvinnik still carried considerable authority and in 1969 he convinced higher-ups to allow negotiations with Fischer for an exhibition match. It would have been the first match between a top Soviet and a top Western player since Botvinnik–Flohr in 1933 and Botvinnik may have seen it as a way of capping his playing career. He and Fischer tentatively agreed to play in Leiden, the Netherlands, in April, 1970. Botvinnik said he convinced Fischer to limit the match to 18 games. In September, 1969, he and Spassky spent about 20 days in the Black Sea health resort of Pit-sunda studying Fischer's games.

To Spassky it was clear the Patriarch did not have a chance but every day Botvinnik would analyze at the board from 7 A.M. on. Spassky, who genuinely liked Botvinnik, recalled how one day Botvinnik's mood brightened. "Do you know who Fischer reminds me of? He reminds me of the young Smyslov," Botvinnik said. "He needed to

find some sort of analogy,” Spassky recalled. But plans for the match crashed against the familiar Fischer obstinacy. The American insisted on his then-favorite format — six victories, draws not counting. When the Soviets refused to bend, the Fischer–Botvinnik match was abandoned.

Meanwhile, the mood was brightening at the Soviet Federation, which had a new chairman, Dimitry Postnikov, a deputy director-general of TASS. The Soviet student team, which had struggled the previous two years, won at the 1969 Student Olympiad at Dresden, East Germany, by five and a half points. Midway through the August 1–17 team tournament, the World Junior began in Stockholm. Anatoly Karpov ended the 14-year Soviet drought, winning the 11-round finals by a huge three points. Perhaps most important of all, Fischer had declined to play in the 1969 United States Championship — a zonal tournament — and would therefore not be seeded into the next Interzonal, set for November 9–December 13, 1970, in Palma de Mallorca.

Before Palma stood a much more prestigious event, another “match of the century.” This was a four-round affair, proposed by the Yugoslav Chess Federation, that would pit ten Soviet grandmasters against 10 players from “the Rest of the World.” The Soviets had agreed in principle to the match at the 1969 FIDE Congress but wanted it split, with half the games played in Moscow and the other half in Belgrade. The Yugoslavs held firm and eventually hosted the entire March 29–April 5, 1970, event. It cost more than \$100,000, an unheard-of amount at the time.

Postnikov and Abramov were captain and vice-captain of the Soviet team, which took the event with extreme seriousness. Each player received a file — in some cases weighing more than a pound — about his likely “World” opponent. They trained at the Ozyory rest home in the Moscow woodlands and left for Belgrade “in full combat

readiness,” Tal said. Egos were inevitably bruised. Botvinnik, playing in what turned out to be his next-to-last event, figured he deserved fourth board — and was surprised to find himself on eighth. Korchnoi felt that there were so many arguments among the Soviets that the “World” had an edge — because they had never played on the same team together. “Half of our players wouldn’t talk with the other,” said Spassky, who hated being the leader of the team. “It was disgusting for me to play,” he said.

Fischer, who had played only one game, in a New York club match, since the Vinkovci International in September, 1968, unexpectedly agreed to captain Max Euwe’s request to join the “World.” But he set 23 conditions for his participation. At one of the prematch deliberations, an exasperated Abramov blurted out, “May I, in the name of the Soviet team, ask just one question — to Fischer’s 1,000 questions.”

The aging of the Soviet Old Guard was evident. The average team age was 43, more than four years older than the “World.” But the old-timers — Keres, Smyslov, Geller and Taimanov — scored 10½–5½ and provided more than half the winning team’s points. Korchnoi, who scored 1½–2½ against Lajos Portisch of Hungary, said, “This was the best moment for the Soviet team. I do not think it would be this strong five years from now.” On the lower boards age was not a major factor:

**B50 Sicilian Defense
USSR versus Rest of the World,
Belgrade, 1970**

white Paul Keres, *black* Borislav Ivkov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 Bg4

Black appeared unsettled by White’s third move, since 3 ... Nc6 4 d4 would enable Keres to avoid systems with ... Nbd7 that Ivkov liked.

USSR versus Rest of the World, Belgrade, March 29–April 5, 1970

Board	Soviets	Rounds					Score	World	Rounds					Score
		1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5	
1.	Spassky	½	1	0	0	1½	1½	Larsen	½	0	1	1	2½	
2.	Petrosian	0	0	½	½	1	1	Fischer	1	1	½	½	3	
3.	Korchnoi	½	½	0	½	1½	1½	Portisch	½	½	1	½	2½	
4.	Polugayevsky	1	½	½	½	1½	1½	Hort	1	½	½	½	2½	
5.	Geller	1	½	½	½	2½	2½	Glorigić	0	½	½	½	1½	
6.	Smyslov	½	1	0	1	2½	2½	Reshevsky	½	0	1	0	1½	
7.	Taimanov	1	1	½	0	2½	2½	Uhlmann	0	0	½	1	1½	
8.	Botvinnik	1	½	½	½	2½	2½	Matulović	0	½	½	½	1½	
9.	Tal	½	0	1	½	2	2	Najdorf	½	1	0	½	2	
10.	Keres	½	1	½	1	3	3	Ivko	½	0	½	0	1	
	<i>Team total</i>	<i>5½</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>20½</i>	<i>20½</i>	<i>Team total</i>	<i>4½</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>19½</i>	

Stein replaced Spassky in Round 4.

F. Olafsson replaced Reshevsky in Round 4.

4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 Nc6 6 g3 g6 7 Bg2 Bg7 8 0–0 h5?

This attack has not the slightest chance of success after Black has exchanged off his light-squared bishop, and at best he can only create some dark-square problems for White. Better was 8 ... Nf6 or 8 ... e6/ ... Nge7, Keres said.

9 d3 h4 10 g4 e5 11 Nd5 Nce7 12 Rb1!

Black is discouraged from castling queenside now because of b2–b4.

12 ... Nxd5 13 exd5 a5 14 c3 Ne7 15 Qe2!

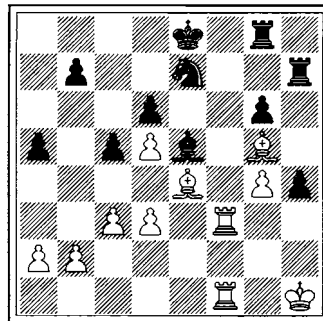
White avoids 15 Bg5 f6! 16 Bxf6 0–0 which would ease Black's game at the cost of only a pawn.

15 ... f5 16 f4 fxg4 17 Qxg4 Qd7 18 fxe5 Bxe5

White could have played a strong Qe6 on the last move or again now. He has a

choice of winning plans. The badly placed e7-knight is enough to lose the game for Black.

19 Bg5 Qxg4 20 hxg4 Rh7 21 Be4 Kd7 22 Rf3 Rg8 23 Rbf1 Ke8 24 Kh1!



After 24 Kh1

Exact play. White deprives Black of the tactical idea 24 ... Nf5 (25 gxh5 gxh5) or of a subsequent capture on d4 with check.

24 ... h3 25 Rd1! Kd7 26 d4 cxd4 27 cxd4 Bh8 28 Kh2!

“Nothing comes from 28 Rdf1 Bxd4 29 Rf7 because of 29 ... Rgg7. Therefore, White waits until his opponent brings a

rook to c8," Keres wrote in the neatly produced Soviet book of the match.

28 ... Rc8 29 Rdf1! Bxd4 30 Rf7 Be5+
31 Kh1 Rxf7 32 Rxf7 Rc4 33 Bxg6 Rd4
34 Rxe7+ Kc8 35 Bf5+ Kb8 36 Re8+ Ka7
37 Be3 1-0

Korchnoi had predicted a Soviet victory by seven points and Tal said the margin would be five, so the closeness of the final score was a surprise.

When limited to four-board matches the Soviet superiority shrank. Five months later they managed only a one-point margin over Hungary at the Siegen Olympiad. The Soviet highlight of the tournament was Spassky's splendid victory over Fischer in a dramatic Grünfeld Defense. The first person to congratulate the World Champion was the Soviet Ambassador to West Germany — who embraced and kissed Spassky.

Also at Siegen, Euwe replaced the retiring Folke Rogard as FIDE president. The world federation had been criticized both for being pro-Soviet and for being anti-Soviet. Moscow was unhappy when FIDE rejected proposals to add a second Soviet team to the Olympiad, or to allow the Soviets to bypass the preliminaries in recognition of their nine straight victories in the finals. The Soviets also complained that their more than 30 grandmasters had to compete for four Interzonal spots from their Zone 4. They pointed out there was one Interzonal spot available in each of Zones 6, 7, 9 and 10 — even though only one grandmaster existed in each of those zones.

At the previous FIDE Congress, at Lugano 1968, the Soviets had proposed replacing the championship cycle with a double-round tournament consisting of four Soviets, five Europeans, and one player each from the United States, Canada and Latin America. Two additional spots would go to the losers of the 1969 World Championship and the 1968 Candidates finals. This could actually

reduce the number of Soviet players, Boris Rodionov, then a FIDE vice president, argued. But by a vote of 20–18 the proposal was voted down.

On the other hand, Moscow had to be pleased when FIDE refused to expand the 24-player field of the Palma de Mallorca Interzonal to include Fischer. Instead, it allowed the United States Federation to substitute Fischer for Pal Benko, one of the three American qualifiers from their 1969 zonal. Fischer might not have to wait for 1975 after all.

The Soviet delegation that arrived in Palma was huge for the time. Polugayevsky came with Boleslavsky as his second, Geller with Eduard Gufeld, Mark Taimanov with Vasiukov, and Smyslov with Keres. When tournament director Alberic O'Kelly suggested a switching of two rounds to accommodate Fischer's religious strictures, the Soviets objected strongly. But a repeat of Sousse was avoided and Fischer slowly began piling up the points. In the second round he beat Smyslov with Black and ended the tournament with 3½ points against the four Soviets. Geller dealt a virtual death-blow to Smyslov's chances of qualifying in the 16th round. At 49 his world championship aspirations seemed over.

The rest of the players seemed to be going through the motions: more than half the non-Fischer games were drawn. Taimanov benefited from a bit of luck when Larsen blundered horribly against him in a simple rook-and-pawn versus rook endgame. But he also had bad days.

E70 King's Indian Defense

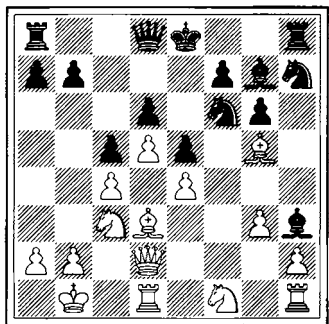
Interzonal, Palma de Mallorca, 1970

white Mark Taimanov,
black Borislav Ivkov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
5 Nge2 e5 6 d5 c5 7 Ng3 h5 8 Bd3

White should take time for 8 h4 and Bg5. Black now seizes kingside light-squares.

8 ... h4 9 Nf1 Nh5 10 g3 Nf6! 11 Bg5
h×g3 12 f×g3 Bh3 13 Qd2 Nbd7
14 0–0–0 Nf8 15 Kb1 N8h7



After 15
... N8h7

16 Bh6 Kf8 17 B×g7+ K×g7 18 Ne3 Ng4
19 Bf1 Qg5! 20 N×g4 B×g4 21 Be2 Q×d2
22 R×d2 Bh3

White seems bewildered by Black's wing strategy and soon watches his center undermined by ...b5.

23 Rg1 Nf6 24 Kc2 a6 25 a3 Bd7 26 h4
b5! 27 c×b5 a×b5 28 B×b5 B×b5
29 N×b5 N×e4 30 Re2 Rhb8 31 R×e4
R×b5 32 a4 Rb7 33 Ra1 f5 34 Rc4 Kf6
35 g4 e4 36 h5 R8b8 37 Rb1 g×h5
38 g×f5 K×f5 39 a5 Ke5 40 a6 K×d5!
41 a×b7 K×c4 42 Rd1 R×b7 43 R×d6 Rh7
44 b3+ Kb5 45 Re6 h4 46 R×e4 h3 0–1

Fischer won the tournament by 3½ points ahead of Larsen, Geller and Robert Hübner of West Germany. Since Petrosian and Korchnoi were seeded into the Candidates matches on the basis of the previous cycle, that left two more spots up for grabs in Palma. On the eve of the final round, four players with 12½ points had slim chances of catching Taimanov and Wolfgang Uhlmann of East Germany, who each had 13. Uhlmann qualified by winning a nice game—and Taimanov did it with a suspicious one.

Taimanov had qualified for the Interzonal by winning perhaps the finest game of his career, in the last round of the 37th Soviet Championship against Anatoly Lutikov.

But his last round game at Palma was quite a different matter. His opponent, Milan Matulović, arrived 15 minutes late, spent several minutes glancing through the tournament bulletin and had a lost endgame by the 25th move. Matulović only took 64 minutes to play 41 moves — while Taimanov took 68 minutes. Korchnoi explained the mystery later when he exclaimed, “Why, the whole chess world knows that Taimanov bought a point from Matulović for \$400 in the Interzonal.” Considering that a tie for fifth place was only worth about \$500 in prize money, this indicates someone else's money may have been lavished on the Yugoslav grandmaster.

The day after the final round, December 13, the drawing for Candidates pairings was made: Fischer faced Taimanov in the quarter finals and became an overwhelming favorite in his first Candidates match. Nevertheless the head of the Mallorca delegation, Anatoly Golubev, gave an uncompromising interview in 64 in which he called Fischer “unintellectual, lopsidedly developed and uncommunicative” and said the American was promoting the “intellectual hippiness that is, like a malignant growth, spreading in the chess world.” Golubev even quoted Vasiukov as saying that Fischer's play at Palma was “substantially inferior to his usual level” (!).

Old Baggage

At year's end the 38th Soviet Championship was held at Riga with a less than impressive field of only nine grandmasters and over-the-hill veterans. The first-time participants included teenagers like Karpov and Rafael Vaganian — but also players in their 30s such as masters Oleg Dementiev and Vladimir Karasev who had never been able to reach the finals during a more competitive era. Alexander Koblents, commenting on the tournament, recalled Botvinnik's

observation that when the Soviets made their big advance in the 1920s to 1950s they were not just players but theoreticians. The Soviets of the 1960s are "sitting on old baggage," living on their laurels with few new ideas and only very minor theoretical novelties, Botvinnik warned. One of the finest games featured a 45-year-old beating a 48-year-old:

E32 Nimzo-Indian Defense
38th Soviet Championship, Riga, 1970
white Yuri Averbakh,
black Ratmir Kholmov

1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 d4 Bb4 4 Qc2 d6
 5 Nf3 c5 6 dxc5? dxc5 7 e3 Nc6 8 Bd3
 0-0 9 0-0 Bxc3! 10 Qxc3 e5!

Black has equalized (11 Nxe5? Nxe5
 12 Qxe3 Qxd3) and now wins control of e4.

11 Nd2 Qe7 12 Ne4 Bf5! 13 Nxf6+ Qxf6
 14 Be2?!

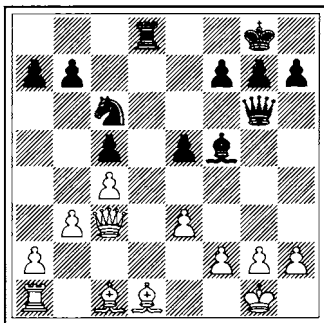
Kholmov wrote that 14 e4 Bd7 15 f4
 was better since "White shouldn't lose just
 because of the weakness of d4."

14 ... Rad8 15 b3 Qg6 16 Rd1

Now 16 Bb2 would be met by 16 ...
 Bh3 17 Bf3 Rd3 and White stands badly after
 18 Qc2 e4 19 Bxe4 Qxe4 20 gxh3 Rfd8
 and 21 ... R8d6 or 21 ... Qf3.

16 ... Rxd1+ 17 Bxd1 Rd8

After 17
 ... Rd8



Now 18 Bd2 loses to 18 ... Rd3 19 Qcl
 Bh3 20 g3 (or 20 Bf3 e4) Nd4! 21 f3 (or
 21 exd4 Qe4) Rxe3! 22 Bxe3 Qd3. But his
 best defense was 18 Bb2 Bh3 19 Bf3 Rd3
 20 Qe1 although Black is winning after
 20 ... e4.

18 Ba3? Bh3 19 g3

Now 19 Bf3 e4 20 Bxe4 Qxe4 21 gxh3
 Ne5 wins for Black, e.g., 22 Bxc5 Nf3+
 23 Kf1 Rd2!.

19 ... Rd3 20 Qc2 Qe4 21 f3 Rxd1+! 0-1

It is mate after 22 Qxd1 Qxe3+ 23 Kh1
 Qf2.

Korchnoi won the tournament easily
 and the Sports Committee could also be
 gratified by the continued progress of the
 next generation: Vladimir Tukmakov was
 second, Yuri Balashov was fourth and Kar-
 pov tied for fifth, despite in his first 11 games
 drawing 10 and losing one. Tukmakov had
 become a master in 1962 when he was 16 —
 a feat accomplished only three times before,
 by Botvinnik, Bronstein and Spassky. His
 second place in the Championship gave him
 the Soviet grandmaster title.

The time trouble battle of the tourna-
 ment was:

D83 Grünfeld Defense
38th Soviet Championship, Riga, 1970
white Vladimir Tukmakov,
black Mark Tseitlin

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7
 5 Bf4 0-0 6 e3 c5 7 dxc5 Qa5 8 Rc1 Be6

At the time, "book" recommended 8 ...
 dxc4 or 8 ... Rd8.

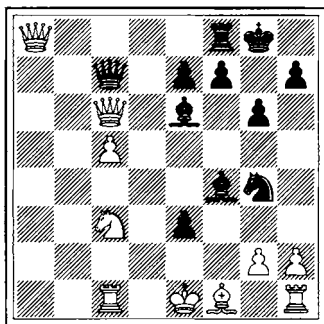
9 Nd4 Nc6 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Qa4 Qxc5
 12 b4 Qb6 13 c5 Qd8 14 Be5 Bh6!
 15 Qxc6 a5 16 a3 axb4 17 axb4 Ng4
 18 Bc7 Qc8 19 b5 d4 20 b6 dxe3?

Thirty-Eighth Soviet Championship, Riga, November 25–December 28, 1970

	K	T	S	B	G	K	S	A	P	B	D	L	D	K	A	Z	V	M	K	P	T	M	Score	
1. Korchnoi	X	0	½	1	1	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	16–5	
2. Tukmakov	1	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	14½–6½	
3. Stein	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	14–7	
4. Balashov	0	½	½	X	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	12½–8½	
5–7. Gipslis	0	½	½	1	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	½	1	12–9	
5–7. Karpov	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	12–9	
5–7. Savon	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	12–9	
8–9. Averbakh	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	0	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	11–10	
8–9. Podgaets	0	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	0	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	11–10	
10–12. Bagirov	½	½	0	1	½	0	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	1	½	1	0	0	0	1	1	½	10½–10½	
10–12. Dementiev	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	0	X	½	½	1	0	0	½	0	1	1	½	½	10½–10½	
10–12. Liberzon	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	X	0	½	1	0	1	½	1	½	1	½	10½–10½	
13–14. Doroshkevich	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	½	1	X	½	1	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	10–11	
13–14. Kholmov	½	0	½	0	½	½	1	1	0	0	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	10–11	
15–16. Antoshin	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	0	½	X	0	0	½	1	½	½	½	9½–11½	
15–16. I. Zaitsev	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	0	1	1	0	½	1	X	½	0	1	1	½	1	9½–11½	
17–18. Vaganian	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	½	X	1	0	½	½	1	9–12	
17–18. Mikenas	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	1	0	X	1	0	0	1	9–12	
19. Karasev	½	½	0	0	1	½	0	½	½	1	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	0	X	½	1	1	8½–12½	
20. Platonov	0	0	1	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	1	½	X	1	1	7½–13½	
21. Ma. Tseitlin	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	1	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	1	0	0	X	0	6–15	
22. Moiseev	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	X	5½–15½

Black misses a fine chance in 20 ... Bd7
21 Qe4 dxe3! 22 b7 exf2+ 23 Ke2 Qxc7
or 21 Qf3 Ra3 22 Nd5 Re8. He may have
felt that after the text White would con-
tinue 21 fxe3 Bxe3.

21 f4! Bxf4 22 b7 Qxc7 23 bxa8(Q)



After 23 bxa8

23 ... Bg3+ 24 h×g3 Q×g3+ 25 Kd1 Bb3+
26 Rc2 e2+ 27 B×e2!

Not 27 N×e2 Qd3+ 28 Ke1 Q×c2.

27 ... Q×c3 28 B×g4 B×c2+?

Black still had some prospects after
28 ... Q×c2+ 29 Ke1 Qc1+ 30 Kf2 Q×h1.

29 Ke2 Bd3+ 30 Kf2 Qd4+ 31 Kf3 h5
32 Q×f8+

Tal's comment was: "Unlike his oppo-
nent, Tukmakov doesn't see complications
as an end in themselves. He could play
32 Bc8 remaining a queen up for two pawns
but instead sees a winning liquidation."

32 ... K×f8 33 Qa8+ Kg7 34 Qa1! Be4+
35 Kg3 Q×a1 36 R×a1 h×g4 and Black
forfeited.

Soviet chess literature remained inex-
pensive, when it was available. At the Sports
Book store on Sretenka in Moscow, M.M.
Udovich's *King's Indian Defense* sold for 73
kopecks and Alexander Kotov's *Secrets of
Chess Thought* for 68 kopecks. The Central

Chess Club was offering bulletins of the
37th Soviet Championship for one ruble or
of the first Spassky–Petrosian match for 80
kopecks. A new book, *Third Time on the
Throne*, in Georgian about Women's World
Champion Nona Gaprindashvili, cost only
35 kopecks.

The Talent Drought

The biggest steps taken by Soviet chess
authorities in the 1960s were in promoting
youth chess. The talent drought that first
aroused concern around 1959 or 1960 had
continued. There was a sense that the old
methods were not working. Spassky was
quoted as telling the Federation presidium
that parents just were not encouraging their
children to play chess any more. A *Shakh-
maty v SSSR* article noted that 200 young-
sters signed up for the annual tournament of
the Leningrad Pioneer Palace — where 500
to 600 competed not long before. And when
the Lokomotiv sports society was designated
to create a "Boris Spassky School" for young
talent it never got off the ground.

Other youngsters with topnotch prepa-
ration did not seem to handle the spotlight
and expectation of success. Vaganian of Ar-
menia spent 20 days working with Geller
before the 1971 World Junior in Athens but
only tied for fourth place. He admitted the
pressure got to him. "In other, stronger
tournaments I played more calmly and had
better results because nothing was demanded
of me," Vaganian told an interviewer.

Two new approaches were developed
in the decade. Botvinnik's friend Grisha
Goldberg, who ran the chess program in the
Trud sports society, suggested operating a
Trud junior program throughout the RSFSR.
Together Botvinnik and Goldberg devel-
oped what was called the Botvinnik School,
essentially a correspondence course in which
promising youngsters discussed their progress
with the former World Champion and his

helpers and then met two or three times a year during school breaks. But the program ran into problems that were both bureaucratic and ideological, since the program was fundamentally elitist. In the initial 1963 class, the Botvinnik School enrolled students such as Karpov, Balashov and Naum Rashkovsky — and soon went out of business.

Goldberg revived the school in 1969 and arranged for a select group of students to meet near Moscow in February and May and then at the “Eaglet” Pioneer camp on the Black Sea in the summer. Despite Botvinnik’s authority and Goldberg’s *sviazi* there was a huge amount of red tape to overcome. For example, the format of three sessions a year had to be approved by the Komsomol Central Committee, the Sports Committee and the All-Union Council of Sports Societies. Still, it was a low-budget operation with no salary allotted for Botvinnik, just expenses. The school did not earn official sanction until August, 1976. By then the format called for 11 to 18 student’s being accepted each year. At a typical school session a student would demonstrate four of his or her games, which would then be critiqued by the class. This would be followed by practice games. In the next decade the Botvinnik School would graduate such future stars as Artur Yusupov, Lev Psakhis, Andrei Sokolov, Jaan Ehvest and Garry Kasparov, who attended for five years.

The other major step to develop young players began with a call to arms in the Pioneer newspaper *Pioneerskaya Pravda*, on September 28, 1968, signed by five World Champions — Petrosian, Botvinnik, Tal, Smyslov and Gaprindashvili. It urged the creation of an annual *Belaya Ladya* tournament, using a term that can mean “White Rook” or “White Ship,” a Pioneer symbol. Begun in 1968, *Belaya Ladya* was a tournament whose format changed over the years. The usual rules called for teams of four boys and one girl attending third to fifth or seventh grades, who would compete in a series

of elimination events from September to May at the school, city, region, *oblast* and then republic level. The finals pitted the Moscow, Leningrad and republic championship teams. It was, Averbakh later recalled, just the kind of program that Panov had recommended in 1960. But strong state support of the Botvinnik School would have been even better.

To test young masters, the Sports Committee also approved the “Sochi Experiment,” which paired seven grandmasters against eight young masters in a Scheveningen-style tournament at the Black Sea resort city. Overall, the grandmasters scored 5½–4½ and won a prize offered by the Komsomol Central Committee. But they encountered rough going. While Tal scored 10½–3½, Korchnoi was 6–8 and Anatoly Lutikov scored 5–9. Among the youngsters, Gennady Kuzmin’s 9½–4½ was followed by Tukmakov with 9–5, Viktor Kupreichik with 7½–6½, Mikhail Podgaets with 7–7, Vitaly Tseshkovsky with 5–9, and Boris Gulko with 4½–9½.

B44 Sicilian Defense

Sochi, 1970

white Alexey Suetin,

black Gennady Kuzmin

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6
5 Nb5 d6 6 c4 Nf6 7 Nlc3 a6 8 Na3 Be7
9 Be2 0–0 10 0–0 b6

The strength of Black’s “hedgehog” setup against the Maróczy Bind was appreciated only in the early 1970s. This is the type of position that had been considered clearly superior for White around 1950.

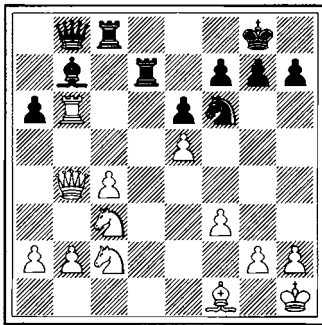
11 Be3 Bb7 12 f3 Ne5 13 Qb3 Ned7
14 Rfd1

Black’s position can not be overrun, *e.g.*,
14 Na4 Rb8 15 Bxb6 Nxb6 16 Qxb6 Qxb6+
17 Nxb6 Bxe4, as Suetin pointed out.

14 ... Qb8 15 Rd2 Re8 16 Kh1 Bd8!
17 Rad1 Bc7 18 Bg1! Re7 19 Bf1 Qa7
20 Nc2 Rae8

Black hints at a ...d5 pawn sacrifice. Suetin said he saw that 21 a4 threatening 22 a5 led to an advantage (21 ... Qb8 22 Qa3 and b2–b4)—and also acknowledged that he found nothing solid in calculating the exchange sacrifice he chose instead. But he considered it a training tournament, so...

21 Rxd6 Bxd6 22 Rxd6 Qb8 23 Qb4 Rc8
24 Bxb6 Nxb6 25 Rxb6 Rd7 26 e5?



After 26 e5

White had counted on this move when he chose the sacrifice and concluded he was in good shape after 26 ... Nh5 27 Rd6! Qc7 28 c5 or 26 ... Ne8 27 f4.

26 ... Qxe5! 27 Rxb7 Rd2!

Suetin said he had calculated 28 Nd5 Rxc2 29 Ne7+ Kh8 30 Nxc8 but only now he noticed 30 ... Rc1! 31 Qf8+ Ng8! and Black is the one who mates. The oversight is fatal.

28 Qb3 h5 29 Ne4 Nxe4 30 fx4 Qf4!
31 Ne3 Rcd8 32 Qc3

Suetin pointed out “the triumph of the heavy pieces” after 32 h3 Rf2 33 Kg1 Rdd2, threatening 34 ... Rxf1+ and mates.

32 ... Qf2 33 h3 h4 34 Kh2 Qf4+ 35 Kg1
R8d3! 36 Rb8+ Kh7 37 Qa5 f5! 0–1

Or 38 Bxd3 Qxe3+ 39 Kh2 Qf4+ and mates.

The year 1971 brought further reason for optimism about the future of Soviet chess. Another Alekhine Memorial was held in Moscow during November and December and was won by Stein, then at the height of his powers, and Karpov, who would clearly be a player of the 1970s. Vladimir Savon won the 39th Soviet Championship in a major upset, ahead of Smyslov, Tal, Karpov, Balashov, Stein, Bronstein, Polugayevsky and Taimanov. It was the only major success for Savon, who never approached world class level.

Juggernaut

But 1971 was Bobby Fischer’s year. Korchnoi said, in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, that the 28-year-old American and Petrosian had the best chances of becoming Spassky’s challenger. Petrosian held to the official line that Fischer’s score at Palma was not justified by his play but acknowledged the American had good chances of qualifying for the title match — along with Larsen, Geller and Korchnoi. None of the Soviet grandmasters expressed much confidence in Taimanov’s chances in the first-round Candidates match. Taimanov himself predicted victory because Fischer was only a “computer” — but the Soviet press did not print his boasts, Korchnoi said.

Taimanov wanted Tal and Vasiukov as his trainers. But Botvinnik warned Taimanov that Tal and he were “given to Bohemianism and the atmosphere before the match may be insufficiently ascetic for you.” Instead, the former Champion suggested Balashov, who had written a dissertation on Fischer at the Institute of Physical Culture. Botvinnik also offered his own file on Fischer, which he had prepared for the aborted 1970 match: “Fischer does not like pawn chains. He needs ‘room’ for his pieces,” Botvinnik

advised. “He likes ‘long’ moves with his queen” and “He likes to transfer his rooks via the third rank,” and so on. At Botvinnik’s suggestion, Taimanov played an unusual series of training games with Balashov and Vasiukov, who were consulting in a separate room and allowed to use reference books. In return, Taimanov had an extra hour (3½ hours to play 40 moves). Taimanov said his score of one win, one loss and some draws was “not so bad!” His team analyzed more than 500 Fischer games and concluded Fischer could be beaten tactically.

Fischer’s unprecedented 6–0 victory was a thunderbolt. The ever-suspicious Botvinnik, who had invested some of his ego in Taimanov’s chances, had his own explanation, according to Yakov Estrin. Botvinnik was certain that after the score reached 3–0 Taimanov decided the cause was lost so he bet against himself with bookmakers. The games tell a different story.

D80 Grünfeld Defense
Candidates Quarterfinals Match,
fifth game, Vancouver, 1971
white Mark Taimanov,
black Bobby Fischer

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Bg5 Ne4
 5 Bh4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 dxc4 7 e3 Be6 8 Rb1
 b6 9 Be2 Bh6? 10 Nf3 c6 11 Ne5 Bg7
 12 f4 Bd5 13 0–0

White’s center assures him some superiority (13 ... b5 14 Bf3 f5 15 Qe2 and 16 e4).

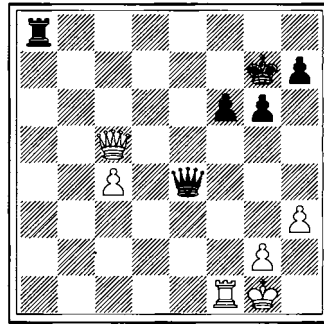
13 ... Nd7 14 Nxc4 0–0 15 a4 c5 16 Ne5
 Nxe5 17 dxe5! f6 18 Rb2! Be6 19 Rd2
 Qc7 20 Bg4! Qc8! 21 Bf3 Rb8

Taimanov said it was not until “many years later” that he realized this was the critical stage of the game. With 22 Rff2! he would have had strong winning chances.

22 Qe2? Rd8 23 Rfd1 Rxd2 24 Qxd2
 Qe8 25 exf6 exf6 26 Qd6 Rc8 27 a5 Bf8
 28 Qd2 Be7 29 Bd5 Qf7 30 Bxe6 Qxe6
 31 Qd7 Kf7! 32 Qxa7 bxa5 33 e4

Based on 33 ... Qxe4 34 Re1.

33 ... Qc6! 34 Rd7 Qxe4 35 h3 a4
 36 Bf2 Kf8 37 c4 a3! 38 Qxa3 Ra8
 39 Qb2 Ke8 40 Qb5 Kf8 41 Rd1 Qxf4
 42 Bxc5 Bxc5 43 Qxc5+ Kg7 44 Rf1 Qe4



After 44
 ... Qe4

After a long series of what Taimanov called “almost only moves” by Black that he awarded six exclamation points to, a drawish position is reached. He concluded that Fischer was sacrificing the f-pawn because he wanted to counterattack with 45 Qc7+ Kh6 46 Rxf6 Ra2, after which the draw becomes clear following 47 Qf4+ Qxf4 48 Rxf4 Rc2.

“Well, at least I shall have the moral satisfaction of being a pawn up,” he concluded.

45 Qc7+ Kh6 46 Rxf6?? Qd4+

“I’m sorry,” Fischer said.

47 Rf2 Ra1+ 0–1

In a match postmortem conducted by the Federation’s Coaches’ Council on June 7, the shutout was called “the biggest setback in the history of Soviet chess.” Taimanov acknowledged the match was the most important of his life and indicated he could not

handle the pressure. “I was aware of a sense of mission,” he said. “This probably was the main mistake.” But pressure did not explain why, as Viktor Baturinsky pointed out, he blundered away a rook on the third move of resumption of the fifth game. “Even first-category players write down their analysis of adjourned games,” Baturinsky said acidly.

Baturinsky denied the hearing was “a show trial.” But of the 15 people, most of them grandmasters, present, few jumped to Taimanov’s defense. Keres said Taimanov was let down by “his friends” who belittled Fischer’s talent. When Baturinsky suggested a physician should have been included in the delegation, Spassky interjected, “A sexologist.” Spassky added: “When we have all lost to Fischer, will all of us be dragged on the carpet?” Petrosian replied: “Yes, but not here.”

Taimanov later claimed, “Party bosses ... reckoned that the reasons for this unprecedented result were not so much to do with chess as with politics” and they decided he had to be punished. When he returned to Moscow’s Sheremetyevo airport his bags were checked by customs — a routine procedure but one grandmasters had come to consider an indignity for cultural heroes. The agents found a copy of *The First Circle* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn — a banned work known to Russians only by way of *samizdat*. He was also carrying undeclared foreign currency, 1,100 Dutch guilders that Euwe had asked him to pass on to Salo Flohr as his fee for writing for the Dutch press.

Taimanov said that, as a result, “I suddenly found myself the target of devastating criticism from all quarters: from the party’s Central Committee to my own party cell.” He could not perform as a pianist, lost the title of Honored Master of Sport, could not get articles printed and suffered “dire financial consequences.” Taimanov said at a Sports Committee meeting the angry chairman, Sergei Pavlov, tried to take away his grandmaster title. In another era, Taimanov’s punishment might have been much more severe.

But this was common for the time. International master Albert Kapengut had been banned from foreign travel for a year after he brought back a copy of *Doctor Zhivago* from Sweden when he played at the 1966 World Student Olympiad at Örebro. To Taimanov his punishment was a “genuine civil execution.” At least his longtime friend, the musician Mstislav Rostropovich, could joke about it. “Did you hear that Solzhenitsyn is in trouble?” Rostropovich said. “They found Taimanov’s *Nimzo-Indian Defense* in his belongings!”

Another of the Soviets was guaranteed to reach the second Candidates round because Korchnoi and Geller met in a quarterfinals match held in Moscow beginning May 13. Geller’s string of Candidates failures continued. After tying the match in the fourth game he lost three of the next four and was eliminated 5½–2½. Geller, the feared attacker, was unrecognizable in the final game:

B85 Sicilian Defense
Candidates Quarterfinals,
eighth game, Moscow, 1971
white Yefim Geller,
black Viktor Korchnoi

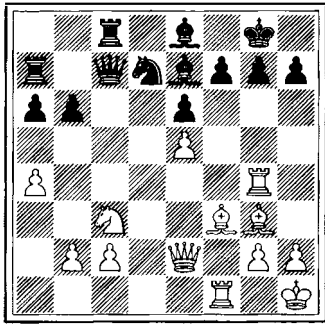
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be2 e6 7 0–0 Be7 8 f4 0–0
 9 Kh1 Nc6 10 Be3 Qc7 11 a4 Bd7 12 Nb3
 b6 13 Bf3 Rfd8 14 Qe2 Be8 15 Bf2 Rdc8
 16 Bg3 Nd7 17 Rad1 Bf6?

Provocation can carry a penalty and here Black falls into a cramped position with few pieces to defend the kingside.

18 e5! dxe5 19 fxe5 Be7 20 Nd4! Nxd4
 21 Rxd4 Ra7 22 Rg4 (*see diagram*)

22 ... h5! 23 Re4 g6 24 h3?

White’s position requires him to act quickly before his weak pawns tell. He undoubtedly calculated 24 Bxh5 gxh5 but



After 22 Rg4

underestimated 25 Rf6!!, e.g., 25 ... Bxf6
26 exf6 Qc5 27 Rg4+! Kh8 28 Qd2 Qf8
29 Bd6! and wins. The best defense is 25 ...
Qc5! 26 Rg4+! hxg4 27 Qxg4+ Kh7!
28 Ne4 Nxf6 29 exf6 Bf8.

24 ... Bf8 25 Bh2 Bg7 26 Re3 Nc5
27 Qe1?

Another retreat. White still had a chance for 27 Bxh5! after which Black should reply 27 ... Nxa4 with a slight edge for White.

Korchnoi devoted more than a page of his memoirs to the match but said only that Geller “could not bring” his initiative to a “successful conclusion” in this game.

27 ... Bc6 28 Bxc6 Qxc6 29 Qh4 Rd7
30 Ref3 b5 31 axb5 axb5 32 b4? Nd3!
33 Ne4 Qxc2 34 Nf6+?

Short of time, White misses a final chance: On 34 Nd6! he wins following 34 ... Rf8 35 Qd4!. Black keeps his edge with 34 ... Rc4!.

34 ... Bxf6 35 exf6 Rd5! 36 Re3 Qc4
37 Qg3 h4 0–1 (time)

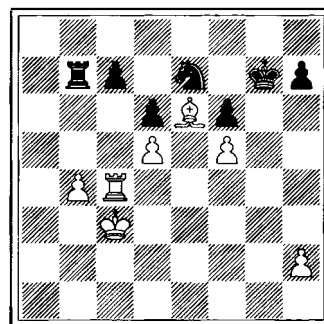
Taimanov’s disgrace was partly relieved when Fischer met Bent Larsen in the semifinals and won 6–0. Only a year before Larsen could rightly claim he had had better results than Fischer and belonged ahead of him on the “World” team. But that was before Fischer had begun his streak, which stood at 13

straight wins after the Taimanov affair. Spassky predicted, “Larsen won’t win a single game” — but must have been surprised he did not draw one either.

Meanwhile, Korchnoi faced Petrosian in the other semifinals. It had been twenty-five years since they first met in the Soviet Youth Championship and Petrosian held a one-point edge overall. He wrote that Korchnoi missed chances in the first half of the match but after the Leningrader failed to win the fourth game, “his chances fell sharply.” Karpov, who was close to Petrosian, saw a more sinister cause of the outcome. He claimed that before the match the Sports Committee asked both players which of them could beat Fischer. Petrosian said he could but Korchnoi said no one could. So, Karpov claimed, Korchnoi agreed to throw the semifinals match in return for three major international invitations — “a truly royal present to a Soviet chessplayer in those days.” (The Candidates prize funds were notoriously low — only 150 rubles for Korchnoi’s quarterfinals match, with 90-percent going to the winner.)

The first eight games of the Korchnoi–Petrosian match were drawn, fueling suspicion that it was being stage-managed. Korchnoi agreed that the turning point came when Petrosian drew a lost position in the fourth game.

Korchnoi–Petrosian



After 40 ... Kg7!

Candidates semifinals, fourth game, 1971

Here the position was adjourned with strong winning chances for White. Alexey Suetin, Petrosian's second, wrote that Black's defense depended on king activity. Overnight Petrosian worked out an elaborate defense in the key line:

41 Rg4+ Kh6! 42 Re4 Ra7 43 Kc4 Ra1
44 Kb5 Ra7 45 h3 Ra1 46 h4 Ra7 47 Bd7
Nxd5 48 Kc6 Nb6! (48 ... Nc3? 49 Rc4
loses) 49 Be6 d5! 50 Bxd5 Nxd5 51 Kxd5
Kh5! and now 52 Kc6 Ra4!! 53 Kxc7 h6!
and the threat of 54 ... Rxb4!, creating a
stalemate, must draw.

When the game was resumed play went as follows:

41 Rh4 Ra7 42 Kb3 Ra1 43 Rc4 Ra7
44 b5 Rb7 45 Ka4 Ra7+ 46 Kb4 Kh6
47 h3

(Or 47 b6 cxb6 48 Kb5 Ra1 49 Kxb6
Rd1! and 49 Rc7 Ra5+ 50 Kxb6 Nxd5+!)
and a draw was agreed after another 18
moves.

Petrosian broke through and won the ninth game. Immediately after the tenth and clinching game was drawn, he was handed a typed envelope, addressed to "the winner of the match." A trainer and candidate master, Vyacheslav Chebanenko from Kishinyov, the Moldavian capital, had found a surprising improvement for Black in one of the Fischer-Taimanov games. Chebanenko thought it might be used against the American in the Petrosian-Fischer finals. "Careful verifying" showed Chebanenko's pawn sacrifice led to advantage in all lines, Petrosian wrote.

When negotiations for the Candidates finals began, Petrosian took the choice of venue very seriously. He did not want to play in Buenos Aires, which Fischer wanted because the Argentines offered the most money, \$7,500 for the winner and \$4,500 for the loser. When Greek officials offered an alternative, Petrosian was eager to consider it. Since he spoke little English "and I doubt if Fischer is able to conduct a conversation on

a serious theme in Russian," Petrosian was glad that Gligorić offered to play middleman in a New York-Belgrade-Moscow conference call to discuss sites. Fischer pointed out during the call that when the United States team went to Moscow in 1955 they lost quickly, but in the other match, in 1954, the Soviets had a tougher time on U.S. soil. But Petrosian said: "Why should I go meet him in his hemisphere?" However, at a FIDE Congress, Buenos Aires was selected in a drawing of lots.

Petrosian, who had a fine sense of humor, laughed when he recalled how he and Korchnoi went to the Sports Committee and heard Sergei Pavlov ask the two to work together to defeat Fischer. According to Spassky, Korchnoi replied: "Comrade Pavlov when I see what abominable, loathsome moves Petrosian makes, I don't want to be his second!"

Fischer's streak continued in the first game:

B44 Sicilian Defense
Candidates finals match, first game,
Buenos Aires, 1971
white Bobby Fischer,
black Tigran Petrosian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6
5 Nb5 d6 6 Bf4 e5 7 Be3 Nf6 8 Bg5 Be6
9 N1c3 a6 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Na3 d5!

This was Chebanenko's idea, based on an old gambit idea in the Pelikán Variation (without the extra ...Be6). Taimanov had played 11 ... Nd4 12 Nc4 f5 and lost.

12 exd5 Bxa3 13 bxa3 Qa5 14 Qd2 0-0-0
15 Bc4? Rhg8 16 Rd1 Bf5?

Based on Chebanenko, Petrosian had seen the position up to 16 Rd1 and concluded 16 ... Rxc2! was strong. "Why I didn't play ... Rxc2 I simply can't answer," he said later. But this was only the first of several

missed opportunities (such as 17 ... e4!) that cost Black the game.

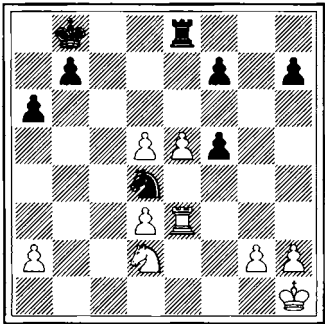
17 Bd3 Bxd3? 18 Qxd3 Nd4 19 0–0 Kb8
20 Kh1! Qxa3

Kholmov said 20 ... f5 21 f4 f6 was better than grabbing this worthless pawn, e.g., 22 fxe5 fxe5 23 Rfe1 Rc8 24 Rxe5 Qxc3 25 Qxc3 Rxc3 26 Rxd4 Rxc2 27 g3 Rxa2 28 d6 Rc8!.

21 f4 Rc8 22 Ne4 Qxd3 23 cxd3 Rc2
24 Rd2 Rxd2 25 Nxd2 f5!

Black keeps the f-file closed and avoids 25 ... Rd8 26 fxe5 fxe5 27 Rxf7 Rxd5 28 Rxh7 which is hopeless.

26 fxe5 Re8 27 Re1 Nc2 28 Re2 Nd4
29 Re3!



After 29 Re3

White appreciates he has strong winning chances and rejects the tacit draw offer.

29 ... Nc2 30 Rh3 Rxe5 31 Nf3 Rxd5
32 Rxh7 Rxd3?! 33 h4 Ne3? 34 Rxf7
Rd1+? 35 Kh2 Ra1? 36 h5 f4? 37 Rxf4
Rxa2 38 Re4 Nxc2 39 Kg3 Ra5 40 Ne5
1–0

But Petrosian tied the score in the second game and kept matters even after five rounds. Up to that point, Botvinnik said, the American had been outplayed. But in the next four games Petrosian “slipped to the level of Taimanov and Larsen” and this mag-

ically transformed Fischer “into a genius,” he wrote sarcastically in 64. Bondarevsky complained that Fischer’s calculating ability was limited to “counting variations.” But Kotov wryly added that Fischer was also good at counting points: “At least he has become highly expert at counting up to six!”

The match ended October 26, with a 6½–2½ Fischer victory. He had broken the 21-year Soviet monopoly on the world championship and its challengers. To the rest of the world, the next six months appeared to be a war of nerves between Fischer on one hand, the Soviets on the other, with FIDE somewhere in between in the arguments over the championship site and prize fund. But in the Soviet Union there was an impending sense of doom.

Yuri Averbakh had been reluctantly drafted to become chairman of the Soviet Chess Federation. There had been four federation heads in the 1960s — Alatorsev, then Rodionov (1962–1968), Serov (1968–1969) and Postnikov (1969–1972). Averbakh said he was tapped for the job because no one else seemed willing to take responsibility for the loss of the world championship. “There were not many candidates for this dangerous position,” he said.

Even before the 1969 World Championship match was over, Korchnoi was predicting Spassky’s defeat. He told Yugoslav chess journalist Dimitrije Bjelica: “Spassky will lose the title in three years, no matter who he plays against, because he is too lazy for chess.” Nevertheless, on January 4, 1972, Pavlov told Culture Minister Pyotr Demichev that Camp Spassky had begun five months of work at a dacha near Moscow with Bondarevsky, Geller, Krogus, and Ivo Nei as the champion’s main trainers. Four former champions, Botvinnik, Petrosian, Tal and Smyslov, had been enlisted to form an unprecedented “consultative council” to advise him.

But the last line of defense against Fischer was poisoned by years of propaganda

and by Spassky's cavalier attitude. Some of his aides acted as if Fischer would not be a worthy opponent. A condescending Bondarevsky said he saw "nothing extraordinary" in Fischer's intuition or in his combinations. The challenger's plans were not particularly deep but "transparent," he said. Nevertheless, Bondarevsky also did not want to be blamed in case the worst occurred and he left camp in February because Spassky did not seem to take the preparations seriously.

Karpov, assigned to the dacha briefly, was shocked by Spassky's "pathological laziness," which he believed Bondarevsky encouraged in order to keep the Champion from going stale. This was an old argument that had pitted Botvinnik, the apostle of preparation, against Grigory Levenfish, who argued that too much preparation robbed a player of improvisation and creativity. But what he saw appalled Karpov: "Usually the morning began after breakfast with Spassky enthusiastically telling some episode of Greek mythology which he liked a lot and had read before bed. Then there was tennis. Then something else. He was up to anything but not chess. At the time he professed the 'theory' of the clear mind: that is, if the mind is clear, your powers will be fresh," Karpov said. Victor Ivonin, vice chairman of the Sports Committee, told Baturinsky that he once visited the dacha and found the champion more interested in his copy of *Playboy* and getting something to drink. And Nei's chief responsibility seemed to be serving as Spassky's tennis partner.

But others had advice. Tal wrote a detailed analysis of Fischer, suggesting, for example, that anything could be played against Fischer's 1 e4 "with the exception of 1 ... e5." Fischer played 1 e4 five times and Spassky, rejecting Tal's advice in favor of Smyslov's, allowed him to play the Ruy Lopez twice and the result was one Fischer win and one draw. Alatorsev even asked the Physiology Department of the Soviet Academy of Sci-

ences to explore whether a concentration of vitamin B in Spassky's bloodstream would help his play. Petrosian warned against giving in to even minor Fischer demands. Had Fischer refused to play under FIDE's rules, the world federation would probably have gone ahead with a backup, championship match — Spassky–Petrosian, Round III.

But a last minute doubling of the prize fund lured Fischer to Iceland. Then when the American lost the first game and failed to show up for the second in a dispute over television cameras, it appeared the match was over. Karpov later said the forfeiture was "a stroke of genius" from which "philosopher" Spassky did not recover for 10 games.

Spassky, in a 1997 *Shakhmaty v Rossii* interview, revealed that he was under intense pressure to bolt Reykjavik at that point. Before the third game he spoke for half an hour with Pavlov, "who demanded that I issue an ultimatum that neither Fischer nor the organizers nor even the FIDE president, Max Euwe, could accept." That would have ended the match. "The whole conversation consisted of an unending exchange of two phrases: 'Boris Vasileyvich, you must issue the ultimatum!' 'Sergei Pavlovich, I'm going to play the match!' After this conversation I lay in bed for three hours, shaken.... I saved Fischer by playing the third game. In essence I signed the capitulation of the whole match."

Petrosian felt Spassky's agreement to go ahead and play the third game in a sealed room helped tip the match. In his own post-mortem, Spassky concluded that he blundered in the third game when Fischer began complaining about noise. He said that if he had refused to play on and forfeited the game, it would have placed Fischer in a "terrible psychological position." Spassky was certain he would have won the match then.

But he was outplayed as White in the third game and by the time he recovered his composure Fischer led by three points. A long series of draws followed until:

World Championship Match, Reykjavik, July 11–September 1, 1972

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Spassky	1	1	0	½	0	0	½	0	½	0	1
Fischer	0	0	1	½	1	1	½	1	½	1	0
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Total
Spassky	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	8½–12½
Fischer	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	12½–8½

Fischer lost the second game on forfeit.

B46 Sicilian Defense
World Championship Match,
21st game, Reykjavik, 1972
white Boris Spassky,
black Bobby Fischer

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6
 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bd3 d5 8 exd5
 exd5! 9 0–0 Bd6 10 Nxc6? bxc6 11 Bd4
 0–0 12 Qf3 Be6 13 Rfel c5!

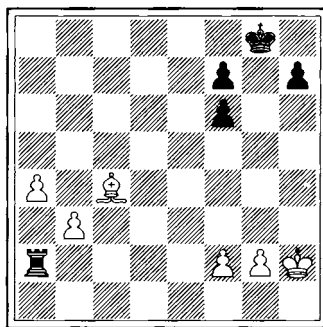
As in a comparable version of the Scotch Game, Black's two bishops will outweigh his weak pawns in the endgame.

14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6 16 Rad1
 Rfd8 17 Be2! Rab8 18 b3 c4 19 Nxd5!

A sound exchange sacrifice which should have drawn.

19 ... Bxd5 20 Rxd5 Bxh2+ 21 Kxh2
 Rxd5 22 Bxc4 Rd2! 23 Bxa6 Rxc2
 24 Re2 Rxe2 25 Bxe2 Rd8 26 a4! Rd2
 27 Bc4 Ra2 (*see diagram*)

Black's rook is tied to the queenside (27 ... Rxf2? 28 a5!) and White can draw if he frees his king from the defense of the kingside pawns, such as by playing Kf3 with pawns at g3 and f4. He can only lose if Black's king invades the kingside.



After 27
 ... Ra2

28 Kg3 Kf8 29 Kf3 Ke7 30 g4? f5!
 31 gxf5 f6 32 Bg8 h6 33 Kg3 Kd6
 34 Kf3? Ra1 35 Kg2 Ke5 36 Be6 Kf4!
 37 Bd7 Rb1 38 Be6 Rb2 39 Bc4 Ra2
 40 Be6 h5 41 Bd7? 0–1

White resigned this adjourned position when he saw 41 ... Kg4, intending ...h4-h3+.

News of Spassky's defeat was treated in typical Soviet manner. The first inside page of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, usually reserved for congratulatory editorials, was devoted to an unsigned article that spoke of the "war of nerves" before the match and wondered why Spassky had not made so many crude errors in the two Petrosian matches as he had in the one Fischer match. It also recalled how Fischer had scorned Petrosian's drawish play but then made a series of draws when he held the lead against Spassky. Only in the last of the 19 paragraphs did the readers learn

that Spassky had lost, by 12½–8½. Tal later summed up: “There was no Spassky in this match.”

Postmortem

Everyone seemed to have an explanation for Spassky’s loss in the discussions that followed. Geller blamed psychology. “We failed to prepare Spassky for a grueling fight and failed to impress it upon him that he had to counter Fischer’s antics in some way,” he told a Sports Committee postmortem session. He added somewhat darkly: “We suspect information leakage occurred during the match.” Korchnoi also suggested American eavesdropping. But he, Tal and Boleslavsky were alone in the postmortem in praising Fischer. Botvinnik, who did not attend the meeting, later told Garry Kasparov that Spassky threw the match for \$100,000—and it galled him to think that Spassky earned

more for the loss than Botvinnik did for all his victories.

In summing up, Ivonin said Fischer was “fanatically devoted to chess.” He added: “The same cannot be said of Spassky.” The Champion was overconfident, poorly prepared and lacking the necessary backup including a delegation head, an interpreter and a physician. Ivonin also admitted, “we made a mistake in backing Euwe” for FIDE president because “he was not impartial.” The postmortem ended with Boris Rodionov blaming the defeated champion’s failure to summon up Marxist spirit: “Spassky forgot that he is a sportsman but—in a red T-shirt!”

Viktor Baturinsky did not say much at the meeting but later he recalled seeing Interior Minister N.A. Shchelokov during the Karpov–Korchnoi Candidates finals in 1974. “How come you yielded the crown to an American?” Shchelokov said. “If I had my way I would have had everyone arrested who was in Reykjavik with Spassky.”

14

After Reykjavik

Against a jackhammer there is no resource—except another jackhammer—Russian proverb

Reykjavik was only the first of a series of traumatic experiences that rocked Soviet chess in the 1970s and saw the USSR lose four world-class players and several other grandmasters to defection, emigration or premature death. But it almost did not seem to matter to the Sports Committee. What did matter—and to people in the Soviet hierarchy far above the Sports Committee—was regaining the world championship. To that end a tremendous amount of time, energy, and scarce resources were thrown into what was a virtual “hero project,” one of the massive efforts such as the much celebrated building of the hydroelectric dam at Bratsk in Siberia. And while the effort might have a Bratsk-like cast of thousands, this was not mass-chess. Instead of creating “many Capablanca” as in the 1920s, the goal half a century later was to develop a single player with a single purpose, to beat Robert James Fischer.

One of the first rebuilding steps taken was an overhaul of the Soviet Championship, whose prestige had fallen sharply in the late 1960s. Under a format introduced in 1973, a new finals section, called the Highest League, was held with only a few players seeded—world championship candidates and Interzonal qualifiers. The other spots went to the winners of four semifinal events.

“Surprisingly, and contrary to many predictions, all the invited players decided

to participate,” Paul Keres wrote of the 41st Championship, which earned Category 13 (average rating of 2550+) status. In reality, several of the players protested about having to play in a letter to the Sports Committee—a rare show of unity, Korchnoi said. Participation was virtually compulsory after a stern Sports Committee denunciation in early 1973 of the prevalence of “colorless” grandmaster draws and lazy players, mentioning Boris Spassky, Tigran Petrosian and Mark Taimanov by name. It complained that members of the national team rarely took part any more in the championships of cities, republics, sports societies or even the Soviet Championship—and this would have to change.

To sweeten the pot, the Championship first prize was raised from 300 to 400 rubles. But prize money could not be discussed publicly, and some of a winner’s share was often siphoned off mysteriously in the petty corruption that became endemic in the Brezhnev years. (For example, Korchnoi said he received only 225 of the 300 rubles he was due for winning the 1962 Championship.)

Junior chess got another shot in the arm with the creation of the All-Union Pioneer Palace tournament, for a prize awarded by *Pioneerskaya Pravda*. This event pitted teams, often of six boys and one girl, from Pioneer palaces where they had been prepared by trainers such as M.M. Udovich in Moscow,

Alexander Konstantinopolsky in Kiev, Archil Ebralidze and Vakhtang Karseladze in Tbilisi, Vladimir Zak in Leningrad and Viktor Kart in Lvov. In the finals, each surviving team would be joined by a grandmaster-captain who grew up in their Palace. The grandmasters would give clock simultaneous exhibitions against each of the other teams. The points scored by each grandmaster and by his team against the other grandmasters would be added to determine a final score and decide the prize winners.

The first finals, held at the Central Chess Club in 1973, was dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Pioneers. Vasily Smyslov, grandmaster-captain of the Moscow Palace, scored 3½ points in six games with the Leningrad pioneers, drawing with Alexander Kochiev and Alex Yermolinsky on the top two boards. But the Moscow team only scored 1½ points against the Leningrad captain, Spassky. So the combined Muscovite score was only 5 points in 12 games. But Moscow did much better than the Leningraders against teams from Kiev and Tbilisi and won the first Pioneer Palace tournament by 2½ points. The best score by a grandmaster was turned in by neither Smyslov nor Spassky, but by Mikhail Tal of Riga (25½–4½). Anatoly Karpov, leading the Chelyabinsk team, lost to Valery Chekhov, the only master among the pioneers, and a little-known Leningrader named Sochagin. “Sometimes the question occurred to me: who is testing whom?” Tal joked about the grandmaster results.

C83 Ruy Lopez

Pioneer Palace Tournament, 1973

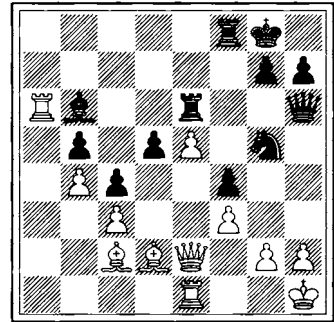
white Anatoly Karpov,

black Valery Chekhov

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
5 0–0 Nxe4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 dxe5
Be6 9 c3 Be7 10 Nbd2 0–0 11 Bc2 f5
12 Nb3 Qd7 13 Nbd4 Nxd4 14 Nxd5 c5
15 Nxe6 Qxe6 16 f3 Ng5

This had been played in Chekov’s first-round victory over Boris Spassky, which went 17 Bxg5 Bxg5 18 f4 Be7 19 Qe2 Rad8 20 Rad1 c4 and ...Bc5+, despite the bishops of opposite color. Spassky should have continued 19 a4, according to Suetin.

17 Re1 Rad8 18 Qe2 c4 19 Kh1 f4! 20 b3
Bc5 21 Bd2 Rde8 22 a4 Qh6! 23 axb5
axb5 24 b4 Bb6 25 Ra6 Re6



After 25
... Re6

White now sees the threat of 26 ... Qxh2+! and mates which cannot be averted without loss of material (26 h3 Nxh3).

26 Rxb6 Rxb6 27 Qf2 Ra6 28 g3 fxg3
29 Qxg3 Ne4! 30 Bxh6 Nxg3+ 31 hxg3
gxh6 32 f4 Ra3

The endgame is won because the c3-pawn falls (33 Re3 d4).

33 e6 Rxc3 34 Bd1 Rxg3 35 e7 Re8 36 f5
Rg5 37 f6 Kf7 38 Rf1 d4 39 Bf3 Rf5 0–1

But Karpov had already passed a more rigorous exam by then. Mikhail Botvinnik recalled that he met the “frail” 13-year-old in winter 1964 when he gave a clock simul in Moscow against juniors. Karpov’s play was not impressive, but then neither had Spassky’s been when Botvinnik first faced him in a Leningrad simul many years before. “The boy doesn’t have a clue about chess, and there’s no future at all for him in this profession,” Karpov was fond of quoting Botvinnik as saying after their first

meeting. Karpov, however, had already reached first category status at age nine and candidate master at 11, more than a year earlier than Spassky had achieved, and was clearly one of the strongest players to emerge since Leonid Stein and Lev Polugayevsky in the late 1950s. Yet he claimed to have taken the game lightly until he became the youngest Soviet master at 15 and “I finally decided to take chess seriously.”

Any doubts that Karpov was the Number 1 Soviet junior were erased when he won a three-player tournament, at the Leningrad Pioneer Palace, to determine who would represent the country at the 1969 World Junior. Mikhail Shteinberg of Kharkov, a star of the open 35th Soviet Championship, scored only 4½–7½ and Rafael Vaganian, the most promising Armenian since Tigran Petrosian, was 6–6. Karpov won with 7½–4½.

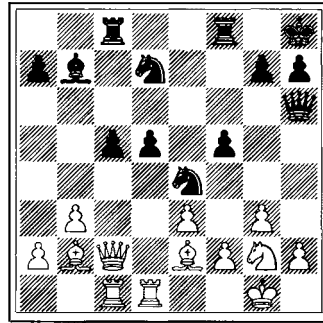
E53 Nimzo-Indian Defense
World Junior Qualifier,
Leningrad, 1969
white Rafael Vaganian,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0–0
 5 Nf3 c5 6 Be2 d5 7 0–0 Nbd7 8 cxd5
 exd5 9 Qb3 Bxc3 10 Qxc3 Ne4 11 Qc2
 b6 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 b3 Bb7 14 Bb2 Rc8
 15 Rfd1

White begins to slide into a poor position with this stereotyped way of dealing with the hanging Black pawns. Here 15 Nd2, to oust the knight, or, later 17 b4 cxb4 18 Qa4, were recommended.

15 ... Qe7 16 Rac1 f5 17 Ne1? Qh4 18 g3
 Qh6 19 Ng2 Kh8 (see diagram)

White has stopped ...f4 but now realizes that 20 ... d4 21 exd4 cxd4 22 Qd3 Nxf2! is threatened, ensuring a strong Black attack.



After 19
 ... Kh8

20 Qd3 Rce8 21 f3 Ng5 22 Nf4 d4!
 23 h4

Or 23 exd4 Rxe2! 24 Qxe2 Nxf3+ with a crushing attack (25 Kf1 Nxf2+ 26 Kf2 Nf6 27 d5 Re8).

23 ... Bxf3! 24 exd4 Nh3+! 25 Nxf3
 Bxe2 26 Qd2 Re3 27 Kh2 Nf6 28 Nf4
 Ng4+ 29 Kg2 Bf3+ 30 Kgl Bxd1 0–1

Karpov at 18 weighed only 110 pounds on a 5-foot-7 frame that seemed dominated by his watery, protruding green eyes. He already had been assigned Semyon Furman, one of the nation's top trainers. According to Kotov, Karpov often said “We won” after a victory, not “I won.” Karpov studied economics for a year at Moscow State University, the nation's most distinguished college, then switched to Leningrad, in part to be closer to Furman. He was widely perceived as the favorite of the *vlasti* and a propagandist's dream: an ethnic Russian from a working class, Urals mountain background who grew up in a five-room communal apartment with four other families. Karpov also seemed symptomatic of the get-ahead generation born after the War. He left the Trud sports society to join the more affluent Armed Forces Club, which had the unofficial backing of Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky. Karpov was also named to the 200-plus-member Central Committee of Komsomol, the organization that had become the main avenue for recruitment into the Party.

But in the age of *glasnost*, Karpov gave a vastly different picture. He described how his father, the head engineer at a factory, became the target of an anonymous denunciation in the final days of Stalin's life. The KGB ransacked their apartment in Zlatoust, 850 miles from Moscow, but for some reason his father was not arrested. Karpov recalled how his mother quit her job as a factory economist to raise him and sister Larisa. "I knew deprivation from an early age. It had many faces — in food, clothing, domestic items, everything." But since everyone else seemed to be in the same boat, they did not realize how bad off they were, Karpov wrote. He also disclosed that he was christened as a child when a virulent form of whooping cough threatened to kill him.

In the Botvinnik tradition, Karpov described his ascent as a struggle with enemies, seen and unseen. There was "an unbelievable behind-the-scenes battle" over his getting Furman as a second. "Prominent chess authorities tried to block me," he wrote. Karpov said Spassky was "the first to see me as a truly dangerous opponent" and took advantage of his authority to keep him from an international tournament, he wrote. Another invitation, to Caracas 1970, remained in bureaucratic limbo until Venezuela's president called Premier Alexey Kosygin to ask that the World Junior Champion be allowed to go. Karpov hinted at corruption when he recalled receiving a "master's stipend of 100 rubles, 92 of which actually ended up in my hands." The stipend grew to 140 rubles two years later when he became a grandmaster and then to 200 two years later as a member of the national team.

By the time he was 23 Karpov had played more than 600 tournament games. By comparison, Mikhail Botvinnik was 35 — and Mikhail Tal was an ex-World Champion — when they played their 600th games. For the 1969 World Junior Tournament he received heavy training, including daily gymnastics, rowing, table tennis, badminton and

living in Stockholm-like weather near Leningrad. Karpov was an investment in the future, a potential anti-Fischer weapon in 1978, if not 1975 when the American was first due to defend his title. The Soviets used their investment to the fullest: Even when Karpov was a world class player in 1972 he was assigned to the Soviet student team. The team easily won the World Student Olympiad at Graz, Austria; with Yuri Balashov, Vladimir Tukmakov, and Vaganian in addition to Karpov it was one of the strongest student teams ever assembled. Three months later Karpov played on the national Olympic team, which had a clearly tougher time, winning the gold medals at the FIDE Olympiad at Skopje by only 1½ points ahead of Hungary, to whom they lost in the first round of the finals.

Karpov's enormous skill was obvious but hard to define. He had a remarkable ability to find good moves instantly and better moves with ease. He did not spend much time trying to find double-exclamation point moves when single-exclamation point moves would win 98 percent of his games. At a five-minute tournament in Moscow in early 1972 he tied for first with Tukmakov with a score of 24–8, ahead of Korchnoi and Rattmir Kholmov at 20½, Evgeny Vasiukov at 19½, Eduard Gufeld 18, Tal 17½, Stein 17, David Bronstein 16, and so on. For years Tal, Bronstein and Vasiukov had been counted, along with Petrosian, as the best blitz players in the country.

Finding Fischer's Challenger

With a new president in Max Euwe, FIDE had taken several new steps at its 1971 Congress at Vancouver, including revised rules for Candidates matches and the groundwork for another USSR versus Rest of the World match, tentatively set for the Netherlands in 1973. (The match did not happen for another 13 years). Another FIDE

innovation was holding two Interzonals instead of one to accommodate the large number of qualified contenders for the world championship. The Soviets had favored changes that would reflect the fact that 15 of the world's top-rated players — as shown by the newly adopted Elo rating system — were Soviet citizens. Thanks to the adding of a second tournament, there would be 12 Interzonal seeds from the Soviets' Zone Four, not just four.

The first Interzonal was held in June in the Derzhinsky Culture Hall in Leningrad, with Alexander Kotov serving as chief arbiter. There were 18 invitees but the six Soviets were rated in the top 11. But Tal, rated first at 2655, had a disastrous start, earning only one draw in the first four games.

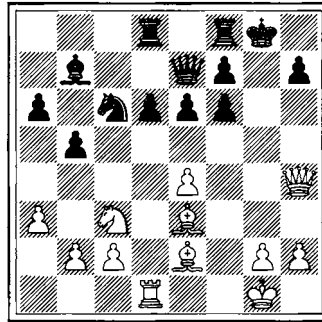
B43 Sicilian Defense
Interzonal, Leningrad, 1973
white Mikhail Tal,
black Robert Hübner

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6
 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 Be2 b5 7 a3 Bb7 8 f4 Nc6
 9 Be3 Nxd4 10 Qxd4 Ne7 11 Rd1 Rd8
 12 0–0 Nc6 13 Qd2 Be7 14 Qe1

On the previous move Tal rejected 13 Qb6 because his poor start required more than a marginal endgame. But here he avoids the promising 14 Nd5! exd5 15 exd5 0–0 16 d6 or 15 ... Bf6 16 dxc6 dxc6 17 Qb4 or 15 ... Qd6 16 dxc6 Qxd2 17 Rxd2. Tal said he saw all this but had already planned the coming sacrifice.

14 ... d6 15 f5 0–0 16 f6! Bxf6 17 Rxf6
 gx6 18 Qh4 Qe7 (see diagram)

Tal had already written 19 Bh6, threatening Qg3+–g7 mate, on his scoresheet. He did not intend to spend much time on the consequences of the forced 19 ... Kh8 20 Rd3 f5 and then 21 Qxe7 Nxe7 22 Bxf8 Rxf8 23 Rxd6, threatening 24 Rd7.



After 18
... Qe7

“But to my woe I suddenly noticed 23 ... Nc8!” and became upset, he wrote. Later he thought White could get an edge with 24 Rd7 Bxe4 25 Nxe4 fxe4 26 Kf2 but it's unclear after 26 ... Nb6 and ... Na4. In any event, Tal convinced himself he had to continue the attack.

19 Rd3 f5!

“I'm afraid to admit but it seems I was enticed by the cheap trap 19 ... Kh8?? 20 Bd4! Nxd4 21 Rh3,” Tal explained. Now Black can sacrifice his queen to end the attack.

20 Bg5 f6 21 Bh6 fxe4! 22 Rg3+ Kh8
 23 Bg7+ Qxg7 24 Rxg7 Kxg7 25 Nxe4
 Ne5 26 Ng3 Ng6?! 27 Qd4 Kh8 28 Nh5

White, whose winning chances now lie on the queenside, should try 28 Qb6! Rd7 29 a4 or 29 c4, Tal said.

28 ... Ne5 29 Qh4??

“In the fifth hour of play I lost all orientation to the position and, speaking candidly, at this moment I was thinking only of a draw after 29 ... Ng6 30 Qd4 Ne5,” he said.

29 ... Rd7! 30 Nxf6 Rg7

Now Tal, who intended 31 Ng4, saw 31 ... Bxg2! 32 Kxg2 Nxg4 33 Bxg4 Rxg4+. Also bad is 31 g3 Rgf7 32 Ne4

Rf1+!. In fact, White's last chance was 30 Qd4.

31 Qh6 R×g2+ 32 Kf1 Rf7 33 Bh5 Ng4
34 B×g4 R×g4 0–1

Tal's lifestyle, mixing chronic poor health, fine Scotch and the chain-smoking of Benson & Hedges, was beginning to catch up with him. "To the doctors it had been obvious for a long time that Tal could not last much longer," Viktor Malkin later wrote. "But a miracle occurred"—Tal lived for nearly two more decades. "His saving medicine was chess!" Malkin concluded. Tal was not the only one who appeared sluggish at the start of the Leningrad Interzonal. Tukmakov, the promising Ukrainian, did even worse — one draw in the first six rounds. Taimanov, now restored to a semblance of respectability, did not win a game until the 13th round.

The real battle for the three Candidates spots featured Korchnoi, Karpov, Bent Larsen and the American grandmaster Robert Byrne. Korchnoi held a one-point lead from round nine to 11, then lost a time pressure battle with Josip Rukavina and finished in a tie with Karpov, who piled up points with relentlessly methodical play.

A32 English Opening
Interzonal, Leningrad, 1973
white Josip Rukavina,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 c5 4 d4 c×d4
5 N×d4 Bb4

Avoiding doubled pawns with 6 Nb5 was in fashion, e.g., 6 ... 0–0 7 a3 B×c3+ 8 N×c3 d5 9 Bg5 h6 10 B×f6 Q×f6 11 e3 Rd8 12 c×d5 e×d5 with play such as 13 N×d5 Qe5 14 Bc4 Nc6.

A rare case of a gross Tal blunder occurred in Olafsson–Tal, Moscow 1971, after 13 Qd4! Qg5 14 h4 Qf5 15 Bd3 Qe6

16 0–0–0 Nc6 17 Qf4 d4! 18 e×d4 R×d4
19 Qc7 Bd7 20 Rhe1 Qf6 21 Re4 Rc??
22 Q×c8+! 1–0

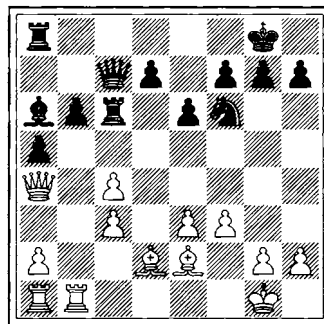
6 Nc2? B×c3+ 7 b×c3 Qa5 8 Nb4

An artificial way of defending the doubled pawns. Better was 8 Qd3 Nc6 9 Bf4.

8 ... 0–0 9 e3 b6 10 Be2 Bb7 11 0–0 Rc8
12 f3 Nc6 13 Qb3 Qe5! 14 N×c6

Black, who threatened 14 ... Na5, wins one of the doubled pawns by force now.

14 ... R×c6 15 Bd2 Qc7 16 Qa4 a5
17 Rfb1 Ba6



After 17
... Ba6

Now 18 Qb3 Rb8 only delays material loss.

18 Rb2 B×c4 19 B×c4 R×c4 20 Qb5 Rc6
21 e4 d6 22 Qg5 Nd7!

Botvinnik said Karpov had no rival "in the skill of placing pieces on the board. His pieces are usually invulnerable while the pieces of his opponent are usually subject to continuous pressure." He added that Petrosian did this too, but then waited for events to happen. Karpov's style was better because he played actively, he said.

23 Qe7 Ne5! 24 Q×c7 R×c7 25 Rb5

And Spassky called Karpov a collector, either of stamps or small advantages like his extra pawn here (25 R×b6? Nc4).

Match-Tournament of National Teams, Moscow, April 24–30, 1973

<i>National Team No. 1</i>	<i>Team No. 1</i>		<i>Youth</i>		<i>Team No. 2</i>		<i>Total</i>
1. Spassky	—	—	0	½	½	½	1½–2½
2. Petrosian	—	—	½	1	½	½	2½–1½
3. Tal	—	—	0	0	1	½	1½–2½
4. Korchnoi	—	—	1	0	½	0	1½–2½
5. Smyslov/Averbakh	—	—	0	1	½	0	1½–2½
6. Geller	—	—	1	½	1	½	3–1
7. Polugayevsky	—	—	1	1	½	½	3–1
8. Stein	—	—	1	1	½	½	3–1
9. Keres	—	—	½	½	1	1	3–1
10. Savon	—	—	½	1	1	½	3–1
			12–8		11½–8½		23½–16½

Youth Team

1. Karpov	1	½	—	—	1	½	3–1
2. Tukmakov	½	0	—	—	½	½	1½–2½
3. Balashov	1	1	—	—	0	1	3–1
4. Kuzmin	0	1	—	—	1	0	2–2
5. Vaganian	1	0	—	—	½	½	2–2
6. Mukhin	0	½	—	—	½	½	1½–2½
7. Podgaets	0	0	—	—	½	½	1–3
8. Svshnikov	0	0	—	—	1	½	1½–2½
9. Dvoretzky	½	½	—	—	½	½	2–2
10. Gulko	½	0	—	—	½	0	1–3
	8–12				10½–9½		18½–21½

National Team No. 2

1. Taimanov	½	½	0	½	—	—	1½–2½
2. Vasiukov	½	½	½	½	—	—	2–2
3. Bronstein	0	½	1	0	—	—	1½–2½
4. Furman	½	1	0	1	—	—	2½–1½
5. Lein	½	1	½	½	—	—	2½–1½
6. Kholmov	0	½	½	½	—	—	1½–2½
7. Krogus	½	½	½	½	—	—	2–2
8. Gufeld	½	½	0	½	—	—	1½–2½
9. Shamkovich	0	0	½	½	—	—	1–3
10. Bagirov	0	½	½	1	—	—	2–2
	8½–11½		9½–10½				18–22

25 ... Nc4 26 Bc1 Rac8 27 Rab1 Rc5
 28 Kf1 Kf8 29 Ke2 Ke7 30 R5b3 Kd7
 31 a4 Kc7 32 Bf4 Kb7 33 Be3 R5c6
 34 Bd4 f6 35 Rd1 Rd8 36 f4 d5! 37 Bf2
 Rcd6 38 Bc5 Rc6

Not 38 ... R6d7 39 Rdb1.

39 Bf2 Rdd6! 40 e×d5 R×d5 41 R×d5
 e×d5 42 Rb5 Re6+ 43 Kd3 Kc6 44 g3
 Re7! 45 Rb1 Rb7 46 Rb5 Nd6 47 Rb2 b5
 48 a×b5+ R×b5 49 Re2 and 0–1

Still, Karpov was not widely viewed as an immediate threat to Fischer. During the Interzonal the players were asked who they thought would be the 1975 challenger. Rukavina said Portisch or Spassky. Filipino Eugenio Torre — Fischer's friend — said Spassky, as did Ivan Radulov of Bulgaria. And Taimanov said simply: "Not me."

On the morning of July 4, a week after the final Interzonal round, Karpov and nine other members of the national team gathered at a Moscow airport preparing to take off for the European Team Championship at Bath, which was to begin two days later. From there team members Stein, Petrosian and Polugayevsky were to head for the second Interzonal, in the Brazilian city of Petropolis. But Stein never made it to the airport. He suffered a heart attack in his Hotel Rossiya room and died several hours later. Stein was known to be a heavy smoker and drinker, and Fischer believed it was the incessant smoking that killed him. "I once timed how long his inhaling lasted, 31 seconds!" he said. Another, widely rumored explanation was that Stein died because he violated medical instructions and drank alcohol after being inoculated for Brazil. But according to sources close to Stein, he died after a night of high living followed by a fatally mistaken doctor's injection at the hotel.

His demise at 38 — younger than Kotov when he won the 1952 Interzonal — was a stunning blow. Even Fischer, who had

virtually disappeared from chess after Reykjavik, telegraphed Moscow to say he was "shaken by the premature death" of Stein. Among active players, he was rated No. 9 in the world. Beginning with the Alekhine Memorial in 1971, Stein had scored 39 wins, 57 draws and only four losses in his final 100 games. His last game was played April 29 in a three-team match-tournament against a Chelyabinsk youngster who would soon become a grandmaster.

B22 Sicilian Defense
Match-Tournament of National Teams,
Moscow, 1973
white Evgeny Sveshnikov,
black Leonid Stein

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5

Sveshnikov helped pioneer 2 c3 in the 1970s, one of the few major Soviet contributions to opening theory in the decade. An example of his success was Sveshnikov–Rashkovsky, Sochi 1976, which went 2 ... Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 c×d4 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 c×d4 d6 7 Bc4 e6 8 0–0 Be7 9 Qe2 0–0 10 Nc3!? N×c3 11 b×c3 d5? 12 Bd3 Na5 13 h4! B×h4 14 g3 Be7 15 Kg2 f6 16 e×f6 B×f6 17 Rh1 g6 18 Ne5 B×e5 19 d×e5 Rf7 20 Qg4 Nc6 21 B×g6! h×g6 22 Q×g6+ Rg7 23 Qh5 Qf8 24 Rh4 Ne7 25 Ba3! 1–0

3 e×d5 Q×d5 4 d4 e6 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bd3 Nf6 7 0–0 Be7 8 Bg5?!

When Black delays ...c×d4, White usually replies 8 c4 or 8 Qe2. The text is either an unsound gambit — or an oversight.

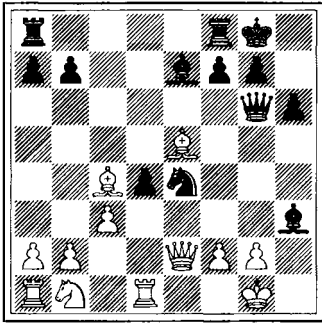
8 ... c×d4 9 Qe2

White gets some compensation this way (but not after 9 c×d4 N×d4 10 N×d4 Q×g5!).

9 ... h6 10 Bh4 0–0 11 Rd1 e5! 12 Bc4 Qd6 13 h3 Bf5 14 Bg3 Ne4 15 Bh2 Qg6!

This attack on g2 ends the White initiative and simplifies into a pawn-up middle-game.

16 Nxe5 Nxe5 17 Bxe5 Bxh3



After 17 ...
Bxh3

White seems to have chances after 18 f3 Ng5 19 cxd4.

18 f3 dxc3! 19 Nxc3

The key to Black's combination is 19 fxe4 Bg4 20 Qc2 Bxd1 21 Qxd1 Qb6+ 22 Bd4 cxb2! 23 Bxb6 bxa1(Q) 24 Bd4 Rad8! and wins.

19 ... Bc5+ 20 Bd4 Nxc3 21 bxc3 Rac8 22 g4 h5 23 Bd3 Qg5

Black wins a second pawn and seals White's fate.

24 Kh2 hxg4 25 Qe5 Qxe5 26 Bxe5 Rfe8 27 Bf5 Rc6 28 f4 Rh6 29 Bd7 Bf2! 0–1

White averts 30 ... Bf1 mate only by 30 Rd6, after which 30 ... Rxd6 31 Bxd6 Rd8 or just 30 ... g6 wins.

Karpov turned out to be the star of the match-tournament, one of several new competitions intended to bring back the intensity of the 1950s Soviet events. The event was a double-round affair involving three teams — "USSR I" led by Spassky, Petrosian, Tal, Korchnoi, Smyslov, Geller, Polugayevsky and Stein, "USSR II" headed by Taimanov, Vasiukov, Bronstein, Furman, Kro-

gius, Gufeld, Kholmov and Anatoly Lein, and "Youth," featuring Karpov, Tukmakov, Balashov, Gennady Kuzmin, Mark Dvoretzky and Boris Gulko. Karpov won both mini-matches on first board and his team edged USSR II for second place, five points behind USSR I.

The experience of the older generation proved invaluable in games like the following:

E52 Nimzo-Indian Defense
Match-Tournament of National Teams,
Moscow, 1973
white David Bronstein,
black Yuri Balashov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 Bd3 d5 6 Nf3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 a6 8 0–0 b5 9 Be2 0–0?! 10 a4!

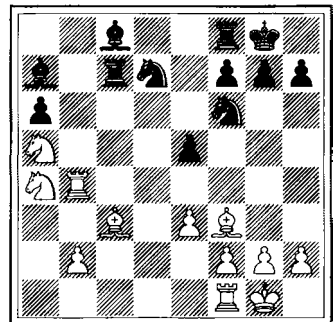
Black was apparently confused by White's bishop retreat (instead of 9 Bb3) and should have tried 9 ... cxd4 so that 10 Qxd4 could be answered by 10 ... Nc6.

10 ... cxd4 11 Qxd4! Qxd4 12 Nxd4 bxa4 13 Bf3

Averbakh praised his old colleague for realizing that Black's queenside would be harder to defend with queens off the board.

13 ... Ra7 14 Rxa4 Bc5 15 Nb3 Bb6 16 Rb4! Nbd7 17 Bd2 Rc7 18 Na4 Ba7 19 Bc3 e5 20 Na5

After 20 Na5



Black must mobilize his c8-bishop and d7-knight.

20 ... Re8 21 Rd1 e4 22 Be2 Ne5 23 Nb6 Bf5 24 Nd5! Nxd5 25 Rxd5 Rc5?

Overlooking a last-rank trick. But even after 25 ... f6 Black has a dismal position.

26 Rxe5! R8xe5 27 Bxe5 Rxa5

Or 27 ... Rxe5 28 Nc6.

28 Bd4! Bc5 29 Rb8+ Bf8 30 g4! Be6 31 b4 Ra2 32 Bc5 h6 33 Kf1 Ra1+ 34 Kg2 Ra2 35 Bf1 1-0

Bronstein replaced Stein at Petropolis and missed a spot in the Candidates matches by one point. Once again he played some remarkable games but lost to a tail-ender, Shimon Kagan of Israel. Still, Bronstein finished well ahead of Paul Keres, who scored 8–9. It was the final world championship event for both veterans. Petropolis shaped up as Polugayevsky's greatest result since he was tied with Portisch for the lead with five rounds to go. But Enrique Mecking, a Brazilian national hero, scored 4–1 in the stretch. That forced Polugayevsky to meet Geller and Portisch in a playoff for the last two Candidates seeds.

Geller's perfectionism cost him dearly at the Portorož playoff. "Before the start of the tournament we agreed — in no case to think more than 25 minutes over a move," Geller's second, Gufeld, said. But over the course of the event Geller sank deeply into thought and spent five hours for just four moves. "He was always a fighter," biographer Yakov Damsky wrote. "But he can't play rationally." Geller was virtually doomed in the first round when he walked straight into one of Polugayevsky's prepared Sicilian Defense analyses. Portisch won the playoff by two points, and Polugayevsky nosed out Geller.

Polugayevsky and Karpov were paired in the first round of the Candidates matches and appeared evenly matched. After three draws, Polugayevsky had the upper hand in the fourth and fifth games. But he became nervous, began playing third-best moves and only scored a half point from those two games. Karpov wrote that when he knew he was in bad shape in the fifth game he relaxed and played calmly — and this triggered a panic of self-doubt in his opponent. Polugayevsky searched and searched for some saving resource for Karpov that did not exist and by the time he finished calculating his winning chances were over. "He was a pitiful sight to behold," Karpov wrote. He won the match 5½–2½.

Shakhmaty v SSSR called it the triumph of "healthy practicality," while Petrosian's victory over Portisch was headlined as "the success of a strategy of prevention." Portisch had scored four wins and eight draws in their previous games but Petrosian took a quick two-point lead and eventually won. Korchnoi took the unusual step of playing a training match abroad with a foreigner — beating West German Robert Hübner 4½–3½ in Solingen — before eliminating Mecking. And Spassky had an easy time with Byrne. That set up an all-Soviet semifinals round — the last time this would occur. The pairings ensured a bit of drama since Petrosian faced his longtime rival Korchnoi while Spassky had to contend with Karpov, a player 14 years his junior who appeared to be his Party-endorsed replacement.

Spassky was just recovering from a severe post-Reykjavik depression which he said lasted for more than a year. Sports Committee barred him from tournaments for nine months when he returned from Iceland. "This was a particularly strong blow since every chessplayer after losing a match strives for revenge in some tournament," he later recalled. Also, Spassky's grandmaster stipend was cut off: after all, he had the \$93,750 loser's share from Reykjavik. Friends

Forty-First Soviet Championship, Highest League, Moscow, October 2–26, 1973

	S	Ka	Ko	Ku	Pe	Po	Ge	Gr	K	S	Tai	Tal	R	T	A	Sm	Sv	B	Score
1. Spassky	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	11½–5½
2–6. Karpov	½	X	1	1	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	10½–6½
2–6. Korchnoi	½	0	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	10½–6½
2–6. Kuzmin	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	1	½	10½–6½
2–6. Petrosian	½	1	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	10½–6½
2–6. Polugayevsky	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	10½–6½
7–8. Geller	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	1	½	0	½	½	0	½	1	1	0	8½–8½
7–8. Grigorian	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	1	½	1	½	1	½	0	0	½	8½–8½
9–12. Keres	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	8–9
9–12. Savon	1	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	8–9
9–12. Taimanov	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	X	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	8–9
9–12. Tal	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	0	1	½	0	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	8–9
13–14. Rashkovsky	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	7½–9½
13–14. Tukmakov	0	½	0	0	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	7½–9½
15–16. Averkin	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	½	0	1	7–10
15–16. Smyslov	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	7–10
17. Sveshnikov	0	½	0	0	0	½	0	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	X	0	6½–10½
18. Belyavsky	0	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	1	X	4½–12½

Savon lost on forfeit to Grigorian

deserted him because he was “a millionaire among the poor,” as he put it, with a Volvo. Spassky spent virtually all the money in four years at a time in the USSR when “a house could be bought for \$50,” he said.

In early 1973 the Central Chess Club conducted a scientific study of grandmaster physiology. Karpov refused to take EEGs, saying he did not want his brain activity studied. But Spassky agreed and researchers found that even when he was clearly calm, with a pulse of 60 beats a minute, the EEG indicated he was experiencing great stress. But his depression appeared to be over by October 1973 when the revised Soviet Championship opened in Moscow. Spassky registered one loss and eight draws against the nine players who followed him in the cross-table. But he allowed only one draw against the bottom eight.

B96 Sicilian Defense
41st Soviet Championship,
Highest League, Moscow, 1973
white Boris Spassky,
black Vladimir Tukmakov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Nbd7 8 Qf3 Qc7
 9 0-0-0 b5 10 Bd3 Bb7 11 Rhe1 Qb6

This was the move that surprised Geller at the Interzonal playoff and provoked the unsound 12 Nxe6? after 90 minutes thought.

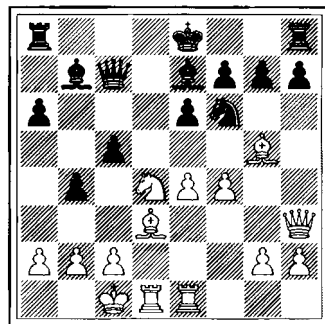
12 Nb3 b4 13 Na4 Qc7!

Black avoids 13 ... Qc6 14 Na5 Qxa4
 15 Nxb7 Rb8 16 Bc4! with the idea of
 17 e5.

14 Nd4 Be7 15 Qh3 Nc5 16 Nxc5 dxc5
(see diagram)

17 Nxe6! fxe6 18 Bc4! Rd8

Black had better defensive chances with
 18 ... Bc8.



After 16
 ... dxc5

19 Qxe6 Rxd1+ 20 Rxd1 Rf8 21 Bxf6
 Rxf6 22 Qg8+ Bf8 23 g3 Bc8 24 e5 Rb6
 25 Qxh7

Despite his 17th move Spassky appeared to be playing more conservatively in this game (12 Nb3) and here he avoids the prettier 25 Rd8+! Kxd8 26 Qxf8+ Kd7 27 Qxg7+ Kc6 28 Bd5+ or 27 ... Kd8 28 Qg8+, 29 Qxh7+, 30 Qh8+, 31 f5.

25 ... Be6 26 Qg6+ Qf7 27 Qe4! Qc7
 28 h4 Bxc4 29 Qxc4 Qc6 30 b3 g6
 31 Qe2 Qe6 32 h5 Rb7 33 Qe4 Rg7
 34 hxg6 Qxg6 35 f5 1-0

Thirteen of the 18 players in the second Championship section, called the First League, had played in previous Championship finals — including veterans Bronstein, Semyon Furman and Vasiukov and youngsters Vaganian and Balashov. Another event, the *Otborochny*, or qualifying tournament, permitted young players to advance to the next year's Championship.

Thanks to Fischer's demands the Candidates matches were governed by two formats, based on total games *or* wins. Thus, Spassky-Byrne could have been a best-of-16-game match. But it ended after only six games, when Spassky achieved the necessary third victory. In the semifinals, the new rules said four wins would clinch victory, but it was a best-of-20 if not.

After he had left Russia, Spassky evaluated the strengths of the man he met in the semifinals. Karpov (1) had “a special talent

for dominating piece play, especially when the pawn structure is fixed,” (2) had “a tremendous sense of danger,” seeing threats several moves ahead, and (3) was “a very clever psychologist” who sensed when an opponent was confident or lacked confidence. “A very experienced crocodile,” Spassky concluded. Botvinnik said Spassky lost the semifinals because he was not up to a tough struggle and preferred a battle “with little bloodshed.” Actually, Spassky seemed well-prepared with new opening ideas, including a theoretical novelty on the ninth move as Black in a Scheveningen Sicilian that won the first game for him.

But Karpov then steered away from complications that might favor his more experienced opponent. For example, in the seventh game after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6!? he avoided the 4 e4 dxe4 5 Nxe4 Bb4+ 6 Bd2 Qxd4 gambit in favor of the low-risk 4 e3 f5 5 f4.

Karpov took the lead in this game:

B18 Caro-Kann Defense
Semifinals Candidates Match,
Moscow, 1974
white Boris Spassky,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5
 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 Nf3 Nd7 7 Bd3

The Caro-Kann was a surprise since Karpov had not played it in years. Spassky got very little from his quiet line, involving kingside castling in the second game, which was drawn in 17 moves.

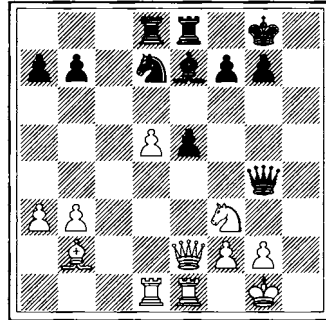
7 ... e6 8 0–0 Ngf6 9 c4 Bd6 10 b3 0–0
 11 Bb2 Qc7 12 Bxg6 hxg6 13 Qe2 Rfe8
 14 Ne4 Nxe4 15 Qxe4 Be7

Black keeps g5 in view but Botvinnik suggested 15 ... e5 16 c5 Be7! was a more accurate way of equalizing. Karpov may have had the complicating plan of ...Qa5–f5/...g5 in mind already.

16 Rad1 Rad8 17 Rfe1 Qa5 18 a3 Qf5
 19 Qe2 g5!

Black suddenly holds an initiative and does not fear 20 d5 exd5 21 Nd4 Qe4.

20 h3 g4 21 hxg4 Qxg4 22 d5 cxd5
 23 cxd5 e5!!



After 23
 ... e5

Botvinnik awarded Black’s move two exclamation points, perhaps because it lured Spassky into unsound winning attempts. He cited 24 Qb5 Bc5 25 Nxe5 Nxe5 26 Bxe5 Bxf2+ 27 Kxf2 Rxe5 28 Rxe5 Qf4+ as one way of reaching equality and added that the alternative 24 Nxe5 Qxe2 25 Rxe2 Bd6 26 Rde1 Nxe5 27 Bxe5 Bxa3 would favor Black.

24 d6 Bf6 25 Nd2

White still thinks the d6-pawn is a source of endgame strength rather than weakness and he avoids 25 Qb5 e4 26 Nh2 Qe6 27 Bxf6 Nxf6 28 Qxb7 Rd7 29 Qc6 Red8, which Botvinnik believed was probably enough for a draw.

25 ... Qxe2 26 Rxe2 Rc8! 27 Ne4 Bd8
 28 g4 f6 29 Kg2 Kf7 30 Rc1 Bb6
 31 Rec2

The c-file “only has defensive significance” and the White rook cannot penetrate, Botvinnik said.

31 ... Rxc2 32 Rxc2 Ke6 33 a4 a5 34 Ba3
 Rb8! 35 Rc4 Bd4 36 f4!

The point of Black's 34th was 36 Rc7 b5! with excellent winning chances. White plays for f5+.

36 ... g6 37 Ng3 e×f4 38 R×d4 f×g3
39 K×g3 Rc8 40 Rd3 g5 41 Bb2 b6
42 Bd4 Rc6 43 Bc3 Rc5

The d-pawn will fall but not immediately (43 ... R×d6 44 R×d6+ K×d6 45 b4! and draws).

44 Kg2 Rc8 45 Kg3 Ne5 46 B×e5 f×e5
47 b4?

Botvinnik called this a mistake in home analysis — the kind of lapse he considered unconscionable. It is based on 47 ... a×b4 48 d7! Rd8 49 Rb3 R×d7 50 R×b4 with enough rook activity to guarantee a draw.

47 ... e4!

But this attack on the rook changes matters: 48 Rb3 K×d6 49 b×a5 b×a5 50 Kf2 Kd5 51 Ke3 Rc5 52 Ra3 Ke5 53 Rb3 Rd5! 54 Rc3 Rd3+ with a won king-and-pawn endgame.

Botvinnik noted that White could have avoided all this with 47 Kf3! (instead of 47 b4) and then 47 ... Rd8 48 b4!, with a draw.

48 Rd4 Ke5 49 Rd1 a×b4 50 Rb1 Rc3+
51 Kf2 Rd3 52 d7 R×d7 53 R×b4 Rd6
54 Ke3 Rd3+ 55 Ke2 Ra3 0–1

Meanwhile, the other semifinals ended abruptly in Odessa when Petrosian said he was too ill to continue after falling behind 3½–1½ against Korchnoi. Both players lodged complaints about their opponent's conduct. Korchnoi later claimed Petrosian even asked the Party Central Committee to annul the match score but was refused. Petrosian was in dreadful shape, even getting mated on the 36th move of the first game.

The match was a sharp reversal of their 1971 semifinals and signaled the beginning of Korchnoi's rise. The players who had tried to block Fischer in 1971 and 1972 — Taimanov, Larsen, Spassky and Petrosian — never fully recovered from the experience.

Fellini and Pelmyeni

The best-of-24-game Candidates finals turned out to be the most important chess event held in the Soviet Union during the 1970s because of its impact on the two players and everyone associated with them. In recognition of its significance, the match was held in three venues, including the Hall of Columns, which had never been used for a Candidates match.

The match pitted the 23-year-old Karpov, seconded by veterans Geller and Furman and, it was said, unofficially by Petrosian as penance for losing to Korchnoi. On the other hand was Korchnoi, whose four Soviet Championship victories was a postwar record. But at 43 even Korchnoi must have been surprised at how far he had gone. "I think my time has passed," Korchnoi told the Latvian *Shakhmaty* in early 1973. "Nowadays I play too unevenly to hope for something big."

His team was somewhat less prestigious than Karpov's: International Masters Roman Dzhindzhikashvili and Vyacheslav Osnos and others including Rudolf Zagainov, a psychologist. Keres also offered to help Korchnoi. But even on the verge of the world title, Korchnoi was still too cowed by the Estonian's reputation and he declined his help. Both teams were also given a car to use — a rare luxury. Korchnoi felt that as a representative of the intelligentsia and of cosmopolitan Leningrad, he was being portrayed to the public as the enemy. Perhaps this explains his bravado in prematch interviews when he claimed he would win by the 17th game, an astonishing boast. He also

said that in terms of opening knowledge he was “superior to Karpov, Polugayevsky and Spassky together!” But later he said it was “not surprising” that Karpov was stronger in the opening because “I was essentially alone.”

Korchnoi’s relations with Karpov soured after a dispute over the match conditions. Karpov said he agreed to a compromise, under which the games would be played in Leningrad, as Korchnoi wanted, starting at 5 P.M. as Karpov wanted. But he claims that after he told Sports Committee chairman Sergei Pavlov of the agreement and gotten approval, Korchnoi called him and said he had changed his mind and would only play at 4 P.M. “Then our agreement doesn’t exist,” Karpov replied. “You could say that,” Korchnoi answered, according to Karpov. Pavlov ended up scheduling the games for 5 P.M. in Moscow. Korchnoi, who seemed to be collecting enemies, accused Averbakh of “treachery” by siding with Karpov.

In the era of *glasnost*, Karpov said he liked early Beatles music and preferred 19th century Russian writers over the Soviets. But during the 1970s he played the political game of his time, telling interviewers on the eve of his most important match what they wanted to hear. Asked what his favorite dish was, Karpov — who celebrated his first victory in the 1990 world championship match with sushi — gave a Party-approved answer: “Siberian pelmyeni.” Asked which was their favorite movie, Korchnoi named *Nights of Cabiria* by Federico Fellini. Karpov named the super-patriotic Russian World War II story *Liberation*. Later, when he was asked privately if he had actually seen the five-part film, Karpov replied, “What? Do you think I’m out of my mind?”

A Moscow computer considered the strong and weak points of the two players and concluded that Karpov would win by five wins to two. But it turned out to be the longest and closest Candidates finals. Spassky had beaten Tal and Korchnoi in 1965 and

1968 by three points, the same margin by which Korchnoi would beat Spassky in 1977 and Hübner in 1980 (if two unfinished games were called forfeits). Fischer (against Petrosian in 1971) and Kasparov (against Smyslov in 1983) won by four points. Only one of the other finals lasted more than 13 games — but Karpov–Korchnoi went the full 24.

In the second game Korchnoi used the Dragon Sicilian, which had served him well against Geller. But it blew up in the face of Karpov’s prepared analysis. Karpov’s lead grew to two points when Korchnoi took all but 10 minutes for the first 14 fairly standard moves of a Petroff Defense. Kotov said this perfectionism of Korchnoi, seeking truth at any cost, was the decisive error. Korchnoi admitted he escaped loss “only by a miracle” in the third, seventh and eighth games. After Karpov won the 17th game, the match bore all the resemblance of a rout.

E04 Catalan Opening
Candidates Finals, 17th game,
Moscow, 1974
white Viktor Korchnoi,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 dxc4
5 Nf3 c5 6 0–0 Nc6 7 Qa4 Bd7 8 Qxc4
cxd4 9 Nxd4 Rc8

Korchnoi’s account is he played his favorite Catalan but atypically offered a pawn. When Karpov did not try to hold onto the pawn and did it without thinking, Korchnoi concluded it could not be because of pre-match preparation but because of betrayal by his seconds.

10 Nc3 Qa5 11 Rd1 Be7 12 Nb3! Qc7
13 Nb5 Qb8 14 Nc5?

Because of the apparent betrayal, “I let slip a big positional advantage and the game became level,” Korchnoi claimed. Better was 13 Bf4 e5 14 Bg5, e.g., 14 ... Be6 15 Qa4 0–0 16 Bxf6 Bxf6 17 Nc5.

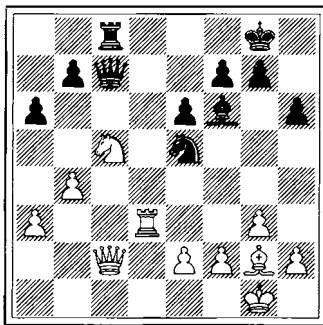
Final Candidates Match, Moscow, September 16–November 22, 1974

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Karpov	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	
Korchnoi	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Karpov	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	12½–11½
Korchnoi	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	11½–12½

14 ... a6! 15 Nxd7 Nxd7 16 Nc3 Nde5
17 Qa4 0–0 18 Bf4 Qa7 19 Bxe5 Nxe5
20 Qe4 Nc6 21 Rd7 Bf6 22 Rad1 Qb6

White's position looks more impressive than it is and the position is quite even because of his vulnerable queenside.

23 Qc2 Na5 24 R1d3 h6 25 a3 Rc7
26 b4 Rxd7 27 Rxd7 Rc8! 28 Rd3 Nc4
29 Ne4 Qc7 30 Nc5? Ne5!



After 30
... Ne5

31 Rd2?

White is clearly losing after this attempt to get out of the pin but 31 Rc3 b6! 32 Bb7 Rd8 33 Nxe6 Nf3+ 34 Bxf3 Qxc3 is also bad.

31 ... b6 32 f4 bxc5 33 fxе5 Qxe5
34 Bb7 Rc7 35 Qe4 Qa1+ 36 Kg2 Qxa3
37 bxc5 Rxc5 38 Rd3 Qa5 39 Qf3 Qb6
40 Rd7 Rf5 41 Qg4 Qf2+ 42 Kh3 g6! 0–1

But Karpov suddenly began to weaken.

He lost the 79–move 19th game, partly blaming his seconds. Then he was crushed in the opening of the 21st. With three games to go and trailing by only one point, Korchnoi clearly held the initiative. Yet the older man also showed the strain, drawing the next two games in 30 and 29 moves, and conceding the match in the 24th game with a draw in a lost position. Korchnoi later claimed that if he had tied the match in the final days a brick would have “accidentally” fallen on his head. But years later Zagainov asked him why “you stopped struggling” in the final three games in 1974. Zagainov wondered if it was lack of strength or motivation? He said Korchnoi replied, “Probably one or the other.”

The Soviet team went through the 21st Olympiad, at Nice, France, June 6–30, without a defeat. Petrosian was particularly impressive on third board with 11 wins and three draws.

A31 English Opening
Olympiad, Nice, 1974
white Tigran Petrosian,
black Walter Browne (United States)

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 c5 3 Nf3 g6 4 e4 Nc6
5 d4 cxd4 6 Nxd4 Nxd4 7 Qxd4 d6
8 Be2 Bg7 9 0–0 0–0 10 Qe3 Be6 11 Bd2
Qb6 12 b3 Qxe3 13 Bxe3 Bd7?!

Petrosian was superb in positions regarded as theoretically equal, like this one.

Black passes up a more active plan (...Nd7–c5) and soon finds himself biding time.

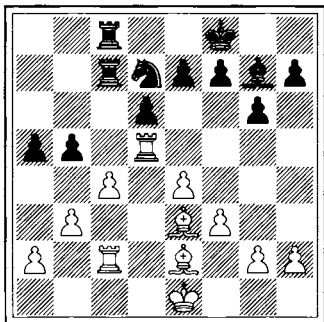
14 Rac1 Rfc8 15 Rfd1 Bc6 16 f3 a5
17 Kf2 Nd7 18 Rc2 Rc7 19 R1d2

White envisions an exchange of all four rooks, after which his king may reach the a5-pawn quickly.

19 ... Rac8 20 Kf1 Kf8 21 Ke1 b5?

Black tries to force matters (22 c×b5 B×e4) when he should sit on the position. Now the queenside pawns become weak.

22 Nd5! B×d5 23 R×d5



After 23
R×d5

23 ... b×c4 24 R×a5! c3

Or 24 ... c×b3?? 25 R×c7 R×c7
26 Ra8+ and wins.

25 b4 Rb8 26 a3 e6 27 Bd3 Ne5 28 Ke2
Nc6 29 Ra6 Ke7 30 b5 Nd4+ 31 B×d4
B×d4 32 a4 Rcb7 33 Bc4! f5 34 Kd3 Be5
35 h3 Kf6 36 a5!

Black cannot allow 37 b6.

36 ... R×b5 37 B×b5 R×b5 38 Ra2 d5
39 exf5 K×f5 40 Rb6 Rc5 41 a6 Rc7 and
1–0

Before the year ended the younger generation had made a good account of itself in the Highest League of the 42d Champion-

ship. Alexander Belyavsky twice held clear first place, only to lose to one of the veteran grandmasters. But he held on to tie Tal for first prize. Vaganian and Polugaevsky tied for third, while Oleg Romanishin, Lev Alburt and Mark Dvoretzky tied for fifth.

B98 Sicilian Defense
42nd Soviet Championship,
Leningrad, 1974
white Victor Kupreichik,
black Alexander Belyavsky

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 c×d4 4 N×d4 Nf6
5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Be7 8 Qf3 Qc7
9 0–0–0 Nbd7 10 Qg3 h6 11 Bh4 g5!
12 f×g5 Nh5

A major improvement over 12 ... Rg8
13 Be2 Ne5 14 Nf3, which had been popular in the 1960s.

13 Qe3 Qc5! 14 Kb1 h×g5 15 Bf2 Ne5
16 Qd2 Qc7 17 Nf3

White eliminates the strong knight and develops pressure against g5 in exchange for giving away an outpost at f4.

17 ... N×f3 18 g×f3 Bd7 19 Rg1 0–0–0
20 Be3 f6 21 Qf2 Nf4

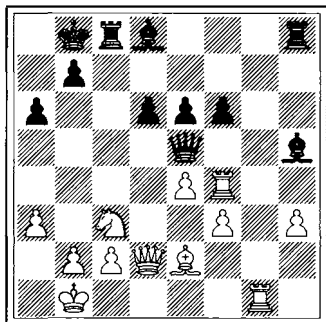
Black fights for dark squares by offering an exchange (22 Bb6 R×h2 23 Q×h2 Q×b6) or, as the game goes, a pawn.

22 B×f4?! g×f4 23 Rg4 Qc5 24 Qd2 Qe5
25 h3 Be8! 26 R×f4 Bh5 27 Be2 Kb8
28 Rg1 Rc8 29 a3 Bd8! (see diagram)

Black's use of the bishops is impressive (30 ... Bb6).

30 Qc1 Bb6 31 Rf1 Bd4 32 Bd3 B×c3
33 b×c3 R×c3 34 Rh4 Qg5 35 Qe1 Qc5
36 Qc1 Rc8 37 Qb2 Rc6 38 e5?! a5

After 29 ...
Bd8



Black ignores the 39 R×h5 threat because he has 39 ... Rb6.

39 Ka2 Rb6 40 Qc1 Qd5+ 41 Ka1 Q×e5
42 Ka2 Qd5+ 43 Ka1 Bf7! 44 Rh7 e5
45 R×f7 Q×f7 46 h4 Qe8 47 Rh1 Qa4
48 Ka2 Rbb3! 0-1

Despite grumbling, the new format did seem to have sharpened play. In the 1973 Championship only 35.3 percent of the games ended in a decision. This grew to 47.5 percent in 1974 and 55 percent in 1975 before dropping to 52.9 percent in 1976. There was tinkering with the rules for the rest of the decade such as altering the format of the *Orborochmy* and reducing the number of First League players who were seeded into the following year's First League. Until the final days of the Soviet Union the idea persisted that all the problems with the Championship would disappear if only the right format was found.

Showdown

At the 1974 FIDE Congress at Nice, Max Euwe narrowly saved his job in an election challenge from Narciso Rabell Mendez of Puerto Rico. Euwe had been expected to be a crucial figure in a new war of nerves with Fischer concerning the 1975 world championship match. In fact, no direct confrontation occurred because Fischer isolated himself from FIDE in a dispute over match rules. The 1971 FIDE Congress had approved a

major change. Instead of limiting the match to 24 games, as in all title matches since 1951, FIDE agreed with Fischer's initial proposal that the winner be the player who first won six games, with draws not counting. But by 1974 the American had changed his plan to ten wins. And since there could be no tie match if draws did not count, Fischer wanted a provision that would give him the kind of insurance that had retained the title for Botvinnik in 1951 and 1954. Fischer insisted that a champion would remain champion if the match was tied at nine wins apiece.

Even without the Soviets, there was sharp division in FIDE over Fischer's formula. Some member federations felt a champion traditionally had some privileges in his match defense. But others said the ten-wins rule would turn the match into a marathon and the 9-9 provision was nothing more than a way of enabling Fischer to keep his title by winning nine games while his challenger was required to win ten. At Nice the delegates approved the ten-win formula — but also limited the match to 36 games in case no one had reached ten wins by that point. Fischer was outraged and threatened to boycott the 1975 match.

For the first time, the collapse of FIDE seemed a real possibility, particularly after an extraordinary general assembly was held in Bergen aan Zee, the Netherlands, on March 18-20, 1975, to review the Nice decisions. The vote was close: the delegates agreed by 37-33 to accept Fischer's proposal for a match of unlimited length, ten wins deciding. But by 35 to 32 they rejected the 9-9 tie match provision. According to members of the USCF's policy board, the American federation was considering withdrawing from FIDE and believed at least 30 friendly countries would follow suit. The Soviets, who had been sharply critical of Euwe in the preceding months, now recognized they had a vested interest in the once-bourgeois FIDE.

After Fischer told the USCF he would not defend his title under the Bergen rules there was no further word from him. He became the first World Champion to lose his title by forfeit. Karpov received a gold medal, symbolizing the world championship, from Euwe in an April 24 ceremony at the Hall of Columns.

“Propaganda” had a positive meaning in the Soviet lexicon, and the government’s propaganda machine heavily promoted the new champion. A Leningrad documentary studio made a film, *Anatoly Karpov*. Karpov’s picture appeared dozens of times in the chess press during 1974 and 1975, including seven times in a single issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. A Botvinnik book about Karpov’s candidates matches was rushed into print. But many fans agreed with Spassky’s private assessment that had the match taken place Fischer would have won “by a small margin.” Even Petrosian told a Riga University gathering, “Speaking honestly, up to the start of the match I considered Fischer’s chances were greater.”

In another era, the Soviets might have ignored the public relations consequences of the bloodless recapture of the world championship. But Karpov, the most politically astute World Champion since Botvinnik, moved quickly to certify his claim as the best active player in the world. His victory in June at Portorož-Ljubljana was the first time a reigning champion had alone won a major international tournament in 41 years. In the first round Karpov crushed Portisch, his chief rival, in 32 moves and had an easy time with the rest of the field:

B79 Sicilian Defense

Portorož-Ljubljana International, 1975

white Anatoly Karpov,

black Silvino García

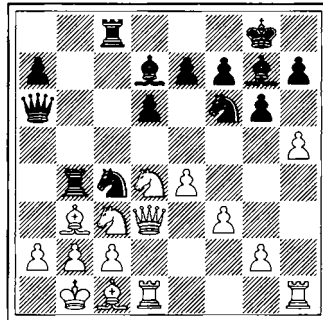
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6
5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4 0–0 8 Bb3
d6 9 f3 Bd7 10 Qd2 Qa5 11 h4 Rfc8

This was a highly analyzed line at the time, *e.g.*, 12 g4 Ne5 13 h5 and now 13 ... Rc4!? was played in A. Zaitsev–Estrin, Lenin Memorial correspondence, 1970–3: 14 0–0?! Rac8 15 h×g6 h×g6 16 g5 Nh5 17 Nde2 Be6 18 Nd4 Rxd4! 19 Bxd4 Nc4 20 Bxc4 Bxd4+ 21 Qxd4 Q×g5+ 22 Kf2 Rxc4 and Black soon had a winning attack.

12 0–0–0 Ne5 13 Kb1

Characteristically, Karpov safeguards his king position rather than leap into the highly analyzed 13 h5.

13 ... b5 14 Nc×b5! Qa6 15 Nc3 Nc4
16 Qd3! Rab8 17 Bcl Rb4 18 h5!



After 18 h5

White’s extra pawn is not as significant as the breathing spell he has earned before Black can resume his attack with ...a5–a4. White strikes first (18 ... N×h5 19 Nd5).

18 ... Qb7 19 h×g6 h×g6 20 Bh6 B×h6
21 R×h6 Kg7 22 Rdh1 Qb6 23 Nde2!

White counters 23 ... Na3+ 24 b×a3
Rxd4 and threatens Nd5 before or after Nf4.

23 ... e6 24 g4 Kf8 25 Rh8+ Ke7
26 Rxc8 Ne5 27 Qd1 Bxc8 28 g5 Nfd7
29 a3! Rxb3 30 cxb3 Nxf3 31 Nf4!

The threats of 32 Nfd5+ and 32 Qxf3 clear the way for another combinational idea.

31 ... Qf2 32 N×g6+! f×g6 33 Rh7+ Kd8
34 Q×d6 Qd4 35 Qe7+ 1–0

Exit Korchnoi

Spassky, out of the limelight, managed to keep up a friendly correspondence with Fischer — something that could have been an act of treason forty years earlier. According to Spassky, Fischer had drummed up interest in a “world championship rematch” during his travels to the Philippines and Japan in 1973 and 1974, with promises of a significant prize fund. But, Spassky later charged, the Soviet Federation “concealed from me” Fischer’s official invitation to a rematch until after Spassky had virtually severed relations with the *vlasti*.

At Solingen 1974 Spassky learned that when a West German chess official wrote the Sports Committee about inviting him to the tournament, the official was told Spassky was ill. After seeing some other documents, “I understood that my final war with Sports Committee was beginning,” he recalled.

He had more success with higher authorities: Spassky planned to marry Marina Shcherbacheva, whom he met while she was working at the French embassy in Moscow. But there had been a Soviet law since 1947 barring marriage with foreigners and there was also the ticklish problem that Marina was born to parents who fled Russia after the Revolution. Yet Spassky got permission from both Leonid Brezhnev and French Premier Giscard d’Estaing for the marriage, and the newlyweds moved to France in summer 1976. Spassky was the second major Soviet loss, following Stein’s death.

The third casualty was Paul Keres, who died of a heart attack on June 5, 1975, in Helsinki, on his way home from winning a tournament in Vancouver. Keres was still one of the world’s premier players, having won an international tournament in Tallinn, a point ahead of Spassky and Fridrik Olafsson, in March.

The fourth casualty turned out to be Korchnoi, who was still smarting from the Candidates finals. In December 1974 Korchnoi vented his feelings in an interview with Božidar Kažić, who had been a finals match arbiter. In the interview, which appeared in the Yugoslav newspaper *Politika* in a toned-down form, Korchnoi said Karpov had not shown any superiority over his Candidates opponents. Worse, Korchnoi said Fischer’s match demands were justified. This made Karpov appear to be an unqualified usurper — an unforgivable claim considering the expense the Soviets had swallowed to put their best young player on Fischer’s level. Even ten years later, in the early days of *glasnost*, Garry Kasparov took care not to attack Karpov directly when he made his first controversial interview in a foreign publication, *Der Spiegel*.

According to Korchnoi, he was dressed down in Ivonin’s Sports Committee office on January 20, 1975, and punished with a one-year ban on international play and a reduction of his monthly stipend from 300 to 200 rubles. He said Keres and Ivo Nei were sharply rebuked in March when Korchnoi was invited to the Tallinn International despite the ban. Help came from an unexpected source: Karpov. Korchnoi said his Candidates finals opponent took steps to restore him to respectability. “I must say I appreciated that, without forgetting that he needed me, too,” Korchnoi wrote. “His only claim to fame was that he had beaten Spassky and me.”

Karpov blamed much of Korchnoi’s Sports Committee troubles — including an attempt to strip him of the grandmaster title — on Petrosian. When the one-year period was over, Korchnoi was back in good graces and invited to another Alekhine Memorial International in Moscow. He finished in a tie for third after a victory over Petrosian emotionally “galvanized” him to

Alekhine Memorial International, Moscow, October 14–November 3, 1975

	G	S	V	Ko	Kh	H	P	B	T	F	B	G	L	P	S	B	Score
1. Geller	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	10½–4½
2. Spassky	0	X	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	10–5
3–5. Vaganian	½	0	X	1	0	0	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	9½–5½
3–5. Korchnoi	0	½	0	X	1	½	1	0	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	9½–5½
3–5. Kholmov	½	½	1	0	X	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	9½–5½
6–7. Hort	½	½	1	½	0	X	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	1	9–6
6–7. Petrosian	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	1	9–6
8–9. Belyavsky	0	0	0	1	0	1	½	X	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	½	8½–6½
8–9. Tal	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	0	½	1	1	½	1	1	8½–6½
10. Forintos	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	1	X	½	½	½	0	1	1	7–8
11. Byrne	½	0	0	1	½	½	0	0	½	½	X	½	½	0	½	1	6–9
12–13. S. García	½	½	½	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	X	½	1	½	½	5½–9½
12–13. Lengyel	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	X	1	½	0	5½–9½
14. Planinc	0	0	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	0	0	X	0	1	5–10
15. Stean	½	0	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	1	X	0	4–11
16. Böhm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	0	1	X	3–12

finish with 4½ points out of 5. He also was invited to foreign events, such as Hastings 1975–76 and Amsterdam 1976, and it appeared he had weathered the *Politika* crisis just as Taimanov had the Fischer shutout.

But Korchnoi already planned a major step. He wrote to Josif Broz Tito, the aging Yugoslav leader, asking for help — perhaps to allow him to emigrate to Yugoslavia — but got no answer. Korchnoi also began to sever ties with colleagues who might be punished if he defected. Yet Korchnoi insisted he remained a loyal Soviet citizen during this period with no political animus. His problems with the *vlasti* were not ideological but stemmed from their support of Karpov, he claimed. “I am no dissident,” he said in 1977. “I simply wanted to play chess.” Spassky, following their estrangement, said that during his Soviet years, “Korchnoi was a typical collaborator, an opportunist.”

The tournament also revealed the shortcomings of the next generation. Two players who turned 50 earlier in the year, Yefim Geller and Ratmir Kholmov, were particularly impressive against opponents half their age:

A33 English Opening
Alekhine Memorial, Moscow, 1975
white Alexander Belyavsky,
black Yefim Geller

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 cxd4
 5 Nxd4 e6 6 g3 Qb6

Anatoly Lutikov, in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, noted that Geller had been playing this rare variation for at least 20 years, since his game with Taimanov in the 22nd Soviet Championship.

7 Nb3 Ne5 8 e4 Bb4 9 Qe2 0–0

Stronger than 9 ... a5 as played in the Taimanov game (which could have been strongly met by 10 f4 a4? 11 Be3 or 10 ...

Ng6 11 e5 a4 12 Nd2). With the text Black prepares ...d5 or ...Qc6.

10 f4 Nc6 11 e5 Ne8 12 Bd2 f6

White’s aggressive plan of queenside castling had been tried by Portisch against Korchnoi in the USSR–World match five years before, with 12 Bd2 being given an exclamation point. That game went 13 c5 Qd8 14 a3 Bxc3 15 Bxc3 fxe5 16 Bxe5 and Black got into trouble with 16 ... b6? 17 Bg2 Nxe5? because he counted only on 18 Qxe5 and overlooked 18 Bxa8!.

But Geller had prepared an improvement for Black, 13 c5 Qc7 and then 14 Nb5 Bxd2+ 15 Qxd2 Qb8.

13 exf6 Nxf6 14 Bg2 d5! 15 0–0–0 a5
 16 cxd5?

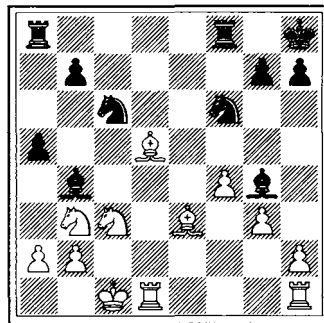
White pursues a dangerous policy. He could have tried 15 c5 and kingside castling (15 ... Bxc5? 16 Na4). Here he goes pawn grabbing in place of the solid 16 Be3.

16 ... exd5 17 Bxd5+ Kh8!

Black prepares 18 ... a4 and 18 ... Bg4, followed by ...Rae8.

18 Qe3 Qxe3 19 Bxe3 Bg4

After 19 ...
 Bg4



Black has a strong attack, illustrated by the threat of ...a4–a3 and the variation 20 Rd2 Bxc3 21 bxc3 Nxd5 22 Rxd5 Bf3.

20 Rdf1 a4 21 Na1 a3 22 Bb3 Na5
23 Nc2 Nxb3+ 24 axb3 a2! 25 Na1 Rac8

White cannot put up a defense on the c-file.

26 Bd4 Rfd8 27 Bxf6 gxf6 28 h3 Rxc3+!
0–1

It is mate after 29 bxc3 Ba3+ Kc2 Bf5+.

The other 50-year-old outplayed his young rival in the fifth hour of play.

A29 English Opening
Alekhine Memorial, Moscow, 1975
white Ratmir Kholmov,
black Rafael Vaganian

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 g3 Bb4
5 Bg2 0–0 6 0–0 e4 7 Ne1 Re8 8 Nc2
Bxc3 9 dxc3 h6 10 Ne3 d6 11 f4

This variation had been tested a lot in the mid-1970s, with White trying 11 Qc2 and 11 Nd5 without much success. Kholmov tries a new idea, preparing a general kingside advance that he said was justified by the new weakness at h6.

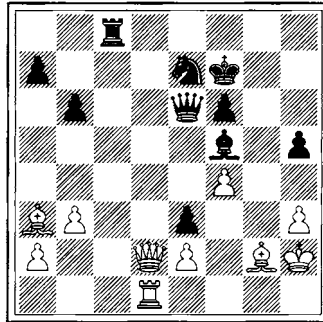
11 ... Ne7 12 h3 Nf5 13 g4? Nxe3
14 Bxe3 h5!

White could have maintained his phalanx of pawns had he played the more accurate 13 Nxf5 and 14 g4.

15 g5 Nh7 16 c5 dxc5 17 Bxc5 Bf5
18 Qc2 Qd5 19 Be3 Qe6 20 Kh2 Nf8
21 Rfd1 Rad8 22 b3 b6 23 Rxd8 Rxd8
24 Rd1 Re8

“Vaganian overestimated his position,” Kholmov wrote. “I expected that he would play 24 ... Rd7 or 24 ... Rd6 or even 24 ... Rxd1 and 25 ... Qd7. His move, giving up the only open file, was a pleasant surprise for me.”

25 c4 f6 26 Qc3 Ng6 27 gxf6 gxf6 28 c5
Ne7 29 cxb6 cxb6 30 Bcl! Rc8 31 Qd2
Kf7 32 Ba3 e3?



After 32
... e3

Black was holding on with 32 ... Ng6 but now his position crumbles after four nice White moves.

33 Qd4! Rc2 34 Bf3! Nc6

Now it becomes clear that 34 ... Bxh3 loses to 35 Bxe7 and that 34 ... Rxa2 fails to 35 Bxe7 Qxe7 36 Qd5+ Qe6 37 Qb7+ Qe7 38 Bxh5+ Kf8 39 Rd8+!

After the game Vaganian said he expected White to play 35 Qa1 here.

35 Qa4! Rd2 36 Rg1! Ne7 37 Qxa7 Rd7
38 Qa8! Ng6 39 Bxh5 Qe4? 40 Qf8+
Ke6 41 Qg8+ Rf7 42 Bxg6 Qxf4+
43 Rg3 1–0

Korchnoi said the final blow came shortly before his defection when he was barred from speaking in public. Until then, Korchnoi enjoyed the grandmasters’ “unparalleled right of uncensored speech on radio and TV.” True, the grandmasters were free to speak only about chess, but still it was an extraordinary freedom. “I love to speak before an auditorium. But at that time at the end of my speeches there were people from the appropriate organizations and they began challenges ... and demands of explanation of what I said and why,” he told Zagainov. “I knew that when they deprived me of words, ... there was nothing for me to do

here." Korchnoi also cited a new July, 1976, Soviet law that required players to turn over more of their foreign winnings to the Federation.

While in Amsterdam Korchnoi gave another dangerous interview, to Agence France-Presse, in which he denounced the Soviet decision to boycott the 1976 Olympiad in Haifa and the machinations over whether to play in an "anti-Israel Olympiad" that Libya was organizing in a purely political manner. Also, Korchnoi boldly said he intended to leave the Soviet Union but had not decided whether to do it "legally" — by emigration — "or illegally." If he had returned home after that, who knew when he would ever go abroad again. On July 25, 1976, during the Biel Interzonal, Victor Baturinsky was returning to his hotel after a walk when he found a group of Soviet grandmasters in a lively discussion that ended as soon as he arrived. The delegation doctor, however, recommended that Baturinsky take a sedative. Only then did he learn Korchnoi had applied for asylum that day at a police station in Amsterdam. The Dutch government refused to grant asylum on political grounds, but gave him a residency permit on "humanitarian grounds." Korchnoi recalled that the first cable he received was from Fischer, saying something like "My congratulations on your correct move."

Members of the Soviet intelligentsia had defected before but perhaps none was as well known in the Soviet Union as Korchnoi. His disappearance seemed to fit in with a stifling of the intellectual elite. In the previous two years Mikhail Baryshnikov defected and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Joseph Brodsky and Andrei Sinyavsky had been exiled. The TASS news agency blamed Korchnoi's defection on "wounded vanity." But more of an answer was needed.

Once again the answer took the form of a joint letter of denunciation. Tatiana Boleslavskaya remembered the morning a telegram arrived from Baturinsky, asking her

father to sign the letter. "I recall how my father, in a state of great anxiety, rushed around the flat.... It was quite obvious that this letter was an absurdity. But there had been hundreds, if not thousands, of such absurdities in our life," she recalled. But not signing "would signify openly opposing the system and would mean being finally discarded from chess life." In the end, only Spassky, Bronstein, Karpov and Botvinnik did not sign. "Spassky is a real friend," Korchnoi said not long after. Botvinnik's excuse was that he never signed collective letters. Karpov sent a separate, milder letter to *Sovietsky Sport* saying he could not understand why anyone would leave the Soviet Union.

A year later Boleslavsky was dead at 57, having been released prematurely from a hospital while suffering from pneumonia and a broken leg. He died of pulmonary thrombosis twenty minutes after returning home, his daughter recalled. No chess official from Moscow attended the funeral.

The Karpov Generation

Despite all the losses, there was new talent to at least partially replace some of the departed greats. The flow of talent continued thanks to the established Soviet chess tradition, which now included the *Belaya Ladya* and Pioneer tournaments — and the miserable career alternatives. Mark Dvoretzky, who became an international master at 28 in 1975, did not realize while he worked at the Institute of Physical Culture in Moscow that chess "was a very good profession." Only when he could not get a good job in his chosen field of economics — because he was Jewish — did he become a chess professional, he said.

Dvoretzky tied for fifth in the 1974 Soviet Championship but gave up competition in part because of the difficulties encountered in getting permission to play abroad. Even though he eventually became the 35th

highest rated player in the world the Muscovite realized he would never reach the Candidates level. So Dvoretzky decided to become a trainer and eventually coached such players as Artur Yusupov, Sergey Dolmatov, Nana Alexandria, and Alexey Dreyev. “You know the saying ‘It’s better to be first in the village than second in Rome?’” he explained with a laugh.

B31 Sicilian Defense

USSR–Yugoslavia Match, Tallin, 1977

white Mark Dvoretzky,

black Radoslav Simić

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 Qe2 g6
5 Nc3

Preparing 6 e5 and improving over Fischer’s risky 5 e5 Nd5 6 Qc4.

5 ... Bg7 6 e5 Ng4 7 Bxc6 dxc6 8 h3
Nh6 9 g4!

Black can approach equality with 9 Ne4 b6 10 Nf6+ Kf8! 11 Ne4 Nf5 followed by ...h7–h5 and ...Kg8–h7, as Dvoretzky pointed out.

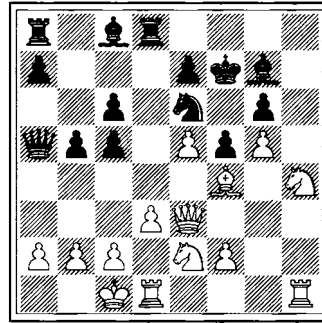
9 ... 0–0 10 d3 f5 11 g5 Nf7 12 Bf4 Qa5
13 Qe3!

Another nice move that parries 13 ... Qb4. Black should play ...Be6–d5xf3 now.

13 ... Nd8? 14 h4! Ne6 15 0–0–0 b5
16 h5 Rd8 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 Nh4 Kf7
19 Ne2! (see diagram)

Black cannot avoid a decisive sacrifice on g6 now, e.g., 19 ... Rh8 20 N×g6! R×h1 21 R×h1 K×g6 22 Qh3.

19 ... Q×a2 20 N×g6! K×g6 21 Qf3 Kf7
22 Rh7! Qa1+ 23 Kd2 Qa5+ 24 c3 Ke8
25 Q×c6+ Bd7 26 Qh1! Rdc8



After 19 Ne2

Black could not stop both threats, 27 Qh5+ and 27 R×g7.

27 R×g7 N×g7 28 Qh8+ Kf7 29 g6+ Ke6
30 Q×g7 Be8 31 Qg8+ Kd7 32 g7 Kc7
33 Qd5 Bc6 34 Q×c5 Kb7 35 e6! Qa2
36 Q×e7+ Ka6 37 Nd4! Q×b2+ 38 Nc2
Bd5 39 Ra1+ Ba2 40 Qb4! 1–0.

On the other hand, Lev Albur, born in 1946, a year earlier than Dvoretzky, was torn by his dislike of the Soviet political system and his “sweet life” as a chess master. Albur, whose mother was an engineer and whose father headed a factory planning section, was a member of the new postwar middle class. Between 1965 and 1977, the number of university-trained engineers went from 1.6 million to 4.1 million while the number of economists tripled, from 300,000 to 900,000. A belated kind of middle-class living emerged. Over the same 12-year period, the percentage of Soviet families with television sets jumped from 32 to 86; of refrigerators, from 17 to 87. The Soviet diet had improved so much since World War II that Russian children often were two or three inches taller than their parents. Albur did not earn the grandmaster title until 1977 but was clearly another stifled talent. One of his last Soviet games:

A04 Réti Opening

Otborochny Qualifying Tournament,

Beltsy, 1977

white Lev Gutman, *black* Lev Albur

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 c5 3 Bg2 Nc6 4 d4 c×d4
5 N×d4 e5 6 Nb3 d5 7 Bg5 Be6 8 Nc3?

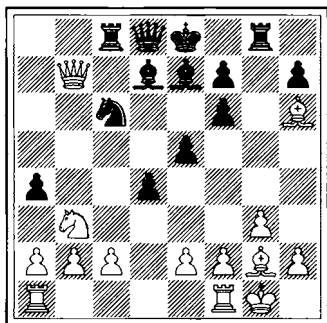
This way of pressuring d5 was White's intent after avoiding 6 Nxc6 but it turns out to be fine for Black.

8 ... d4 9 Ne4 Be7 10 Nxf6+ gxf6!
11 Bh6 Rg8 12 0-0 a5! 13 Qd3 a4 14 Qb5

White is also in trouble after 14 Qxh7 Kd7!, with threats on both wings (15 ... Rh8).

14 ... Bd7! 15 Qxb7 Rc8

Black could win the queen with 15 ... Ra7 16 Qxc6 Bxc6 17 Bxc6+ Rd7 and then 18 Bxa4 Rg6. But the text is more accurate.



After 15 ...
Rc8

16 Nc1 Na5 17 Qa6 Rg6!

Now 18 Bd2 Nc4 is horrible so White decides to give up material.

18 Nd3 f5 19 Qa7 Rxh6 20 Nxe5 Bc5
21 Qxd7+ Qxd7 22 Nxd7 Kxd7 23 Rad1
Ke7 24 b4 Bxb4 25 Rxd4 Rc4 26 Rfd1
Rd6! 27 Rxd6 Bxd6 28 Rd5 Nc6 29 e3
Rxc2 30 Rxf5 Rc1+ 31 Bf1 a3 0-1

Alburt earned three times more from simultaneous exhibitions and other chess work than the typical engineer. But, he recalled, he hated communism and refused an offer of help from the KGB in exchange for informing on people he knew who wanted to emigrate to Israel. Alburt said he felt no discrimination and only after much soul-

searching reached a decision to defect to the West in 1978. By 1985 he was a two-time United States Champion.

Other players reaching their peak years had professional complaints. Vaganian, who got his first taste of international chess as a 14-year-old wallboard boy at the Yerevan 1965, International, said there were few mentors for the new generation. "There is a great shortage of top trainers in our country. Apart from Furman, the best players are all interested in playing," he said. The chronic Soviet economic problems also had an impact. In the July 1975 issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, the director of Moscow's Sports Book store complained that the demand for chess literature continued to rise while the press runs declined. *Journey in the Chess Kingdom*, a splendid introductory book by Yuri Averbakh and Mikhail Beilin, was supposed to be issued in a run of 200,000 copies. But only half that number were printed, director S. Inikhov said.

There never seemed to be enough paper in the country with the world's largest timber reserves. Even Muscovites had their requests for books denied, Inikhov said. He gave this breakdown of books from the main Soviet chess publishing house:

1970: 10 books published with a total press run of 515,000

1971: 11 books published with a total run of 560,000

1972: 10 books published with a total run of 545,000

But—

1973: four books published with a total run of 225,000

1974: six books published with a total run of 280,000

Yet there was reason to be cautiously optimistic about the future. Valery Chekhov of Moscow won the 1975 World Junior by a half point ahead of Larry Christiansen of

the United States. In the key game Chekhov saved a possibly lost queen-versus-two-rooks endgame and drew with Christiansen in 69 moves, thanks to superior adjournment analysis, a traditional Soviet strength.

Evgeny Sveshnikov twice won the Soviet Young Masters tournament, a new annual event designed to identify promising talent. Boris Gulko, only a candidate master in 1974, made an enormous leap forward. Gulko nearly won the 1975 Soviet Championship and then exceeded the grandmaster norm by a point and a half as he won then 13th Capablanca Memorial in Cienfuegos, Cuba. Oleg Romanishin, the 1972–73 European Junior Champion, had an elusive style that made him capable of beating anyone on a given day. The one game that Tigran Petrosian lost en route to first place in the 43rd Soviet Championship was against him:

A17 English Opening
43rd Soviet Championship,
Yerevan, 1975
white Oleg Romanishin,
black Tigran Petrosian

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 e4 Bb7
 5 Bd3

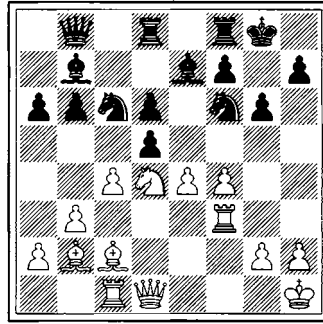
Romanishin was earning a reputation for offbeat openings but this is a perfectly good way of defending the e-pawn. Now 5 ... d5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 e5 Ne4 8 Bc2 works well for White.

5 ... d6 6 Bc2 c5 7 d4 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Be7
 9 0–0 0–0 10 b3 Nc6 11 Bb2 a6 12 Kh1
 Qc7 13 f4 Rad8 14 Rcl Qb8?

Black should play for simplification with 14Nxd4 and 15 ... Qc5.

15 Rf3 g6? 16 Nd5! exd5 (see diagram)

17 exd5!?



After 16
 ... exd5

As Romanishin showed later 17 Nf5!?

might win, e.g., 17 ... gxf5 18 exd5 Rfe8
 19 Rg3+ Kh8 20 dx6 Bxc6 21 Bxf5 Rg8
 22 Qh5 Rg7 23 Rxc7! Nxc5 24 Rxc7+.
 But 17 ... dxe4 18 Nxe7+ Nxe7 19 Qd4
 d5 is unclear.

17 ... Nxd4 18 Qxd4 Rde8 19 f5 Bd8
 20 Qh4 Re5! 21 Qh6 Qc7?

After 21 ... Ng4! 22 Qf4 Nf6 White
 cannot strengthen his attack.

22 Rg3! Bc8 23 Bxe5 dxe5 24 fxg6 fxg6
 25 Bxg6! Ng4 26 Bh5 Rf6 27 Qd2 Rf4
 28 d6!

Avoiding a last trap: 28 h3 Bg5!.

28 ... Qg7 29 d7 Bb7 30 Qxf4! 1–0

The rest would have been 30 ... exf4
 31 Rxc4 Bg5 32 Rdl and the advance of
 the d-pawn wins.

*“The World Championship
 of Chess Professionals”*

One remarkable intrigue during this period was the secret contact between Karpov and Fischer to discuss the world championship match the chess world wanted. The same day that Korchnoi was defecting in Amsterdam, Karpov met Fischer in Tokyo, in a meeting arranged by Filipino chess

official Florencio Campomanes, who was trying to orchestrate such a match.

According to various Soviet sources: Karpov was on his way home after an Asian tour when he accepted a dinner invitation from the president of the Japanese chess federation. During the meal he suddenly saw Fischer. They launched into discussion of what had happened in the previous year and a half. According to Baturinsky, Fischer asked if Karpov really meant it when he said he wanted to play a match. Karpov said what he had in mind was an unofficial match.

Fischer said he was willing to begin a match within three or four months. But Karpov said he needed to get approval and could not play for at least a year. Fischer insisted on the 9–9 tie and the 10-win rules — and estimated the match could take about half a year. According to *Sports Illustrated*, the two men even discussed chess, examining a Capablanca game on a pocket set during one break. They parted with the general agreement that a match should somehow be played. Before the talks broke up, the two champions allowed one of their hosts to take their photo, which was soon sold to Agence France-Presse. That abruptly ended the secrecy of the negotiations. Botvinnik was so shocked that he asked Karpov, “Are you sure that it was Fischer and not his double?”

After Karpov reported on his meeting with Fischer the matter quickly reached the Party Central Committee. But the Sports Committee flexed its muscles. An August 11, 1976, memo from Pavlov to the Central Committee opposed any unofficial Fischer–Karpov match, saying that if it were held in 1976 or 1977 it would upset the next official championship cycle. On October 1, 1976 Karpov presented his case to Pavlov. Karpov argued that (a) an unofficial match would keep Fischer out of the next championship cycle, (b) Fischer usually played poorly after a long layoff, and (c) the match would counter claims that Karpov was a paper champion.

But Pavlov responded with an official *nyet* in an October 20, 1976, letter. Pavlov passed on word that if negotiations resumed, the Soviet side would drag them out with conditions unacceptable to Fischer. According to Averbakh, the ultimate decision to reject a Fischer–Karpov match was signed by the aging chief Soviet ideologist Mikhail Suslov, known as “the Gray Cardinal of the Kremlin.” The match was dead, despite another Karpov–Fischer meeting in Cordoba, Spain, and the efforts of others. In December 1976 Campomanes relayed a letter from Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos to Brezhnev offering to host a Fischer–Karpov match at the end of 1977. Once again, *nyet*.

Fischer met with Karpov one more time, in 1977 in Washington, but without a breakthrough. Karpov said he could not get Fischer to compromise, even on the name he insisted on — “The Match for the World Championship of Chess Professionals.” Nevertheless, Karpov renewed his appeal to Pavlov, this time saying he would like to play Fischer after the scheduled 1978 FIDE match. This time Suslov approved — but the contact with Fischer was lost. A further detail comes from Averbakh, who said USCF executive director Ed Edmondson met secretly with Karpov and FIDE officials in Caracas in 1977. Karpov told Edmondson the Soviets would only agree to a match limited to 24 or 30 games. He also said he might accept a six-win match if guaranteed the right to a rematch, *à la* Botvinnik. This was an acceptable compromise to Edmondson, Averbakh said, but not to Euwe. In any event, there was no significant Soviet contact with Fischer after 1977.

The Fischer affair had one further twist. Master Alexander Nikitin had been part of Karpov’s extensive training team for the 1975 world championship match. Shortly after the Tokyo photo appeared, the 41-year-old Nikitin reported it to the Sports Committee. Karpov said Nikitin “kept a dossier” to inform his superiors of the World

Champion's apparent betrayal. But after appearing caught off guard by Nikitin's report, the Sports Committee seemed to ignore it, in Nikitin's view. He suspected that while the Fischer contacts were news to the committee and to the Soviet Chess Federation, Karpov had acted with the approval of superior *vlasti*. (Alburt later said Yevgeny Tyazhelnikov, first secretary of the Komсомol Central Committee, had made Karpov independent of the Federation and the Sports Committee. Tyazhelnikov, a former Chelyabinsk Party official, later headed the Central

Committee's propaganda department.) In any event, Nikitin was dismissed as a trainer of the national team at the end of 1976 for "amoral conduct," on Karpov's orders, Nikitin said. But Nikitin said Botvinnik and Petrosian came to his defense. This support enabled him to continue his work with a student he had begun to coach in 1975 — Garry Kasparov. Nikitin said his "war" with Karpov began in 1977 and reached its success when he helped dethrone him eight years later.

15

Target: Korchnoi

Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev are together on a train when it abruptly stops. Minutes go by until Stalin issues an order, "Shoot the crew and get a new one." The train does not move. Minutes later Khrushchev issues an order, "Rehabilitate the first crew and have them start up again." Again, no movement. Then it's Brezhnev's turn: "Close the shades and pretend we're moving," he orders.— Popular joke of the 1970s

No World Champion had taken a clear first place in an international tournament since Alexander Alekhine but Anatoly Karpov did it nine times from early 1975 to early 1978. No Soviet player had ever been this active abroad. Even other top grandmasters rarely got to play in more than two foreign invitationals in a year. Mikhail Tal, for example, played in one each in 1976, 1977 and 1978. Clearly, Karpov had been placed in a special class. During his foreign campaign Karpov also shared one first prize, at Bugojno 1978, and placed second in another, Manila 1976 — for an overall international record of 64 wins, 57 draws and three losses. In fact, Karpov's worst showing came at a Leningrad International in 1977 when he lost two games and only shared fourth. Even his archrival Garry Kasparov conceded: "Not since Alekhine had the chess world seen such a triumphal march from one victory to the next."

Karpov also took part in a blitz of simuls, television appearances, press conferences and lectures to reinforce his claim to being a legitimate successor to Fischer. For example, the September, 1976, issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR* described 12 days the new champion spent in Siberia and the Soviet Far East in June, from Krasnoyarsk to Div-

nogorsk to Bratsk to Yakutsk and eventually Kamchatka on the Pacific. Along the way he played a 17-year-old candidate master who would be Soviet Champion in four years. Usually it is the upsets of champions by young players that appear in print. But not this time:

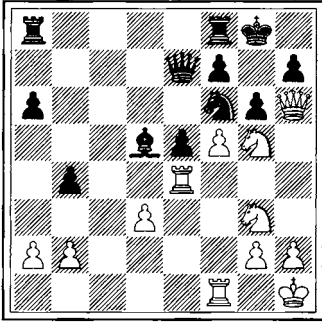
**B93 Sicilian Defense
Simultaneous Exhibition,
Krasnoyarsk, 1976
white Anatoly Karpov,
black Lev Psakhis**

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
5 Nc3 a6 6 f4 Qc7 7 Bd3 g6 8 Nf3 Nbd7
9 0-0 Bg7 10 Qe1 e5 11 Qh4 0-0 12 Kh1
b5 13 f5 Bb7 14 Bh6 b4 15 Ne2 Bxh6?

Risky: Black bets he can break in the center with ...d5xe4 before White can reinforce the attack on h7.

16 Qxh6 d5 17 Ng5 Qd6 18 Ng3 Qe7
19 Rae1 Nc5 20 exd5 Nxd3 21 cxd3 Bxd5
22 Re4! (see diagram)

Black loses the bet. On 22 ... Bxe4
23 N3xe4 White wins (23 ... Rfc8 24 fxg6).



After 22 Re4

22 ... Qb7 23 Rh4! B×g2+ 24 Kg1 B×f1
25 K×f1 Rfc8 26 N3e4 Qb6 27 Ne6!

The threat of mate on g7 as well as 28 N×f6+ prompts Black into a bid for perpetual check that costs him virtually his entire army.

27 ... Rc1+ 28 Ke2 Rc2+ 29 Kd1 Qg1+
30 K×c2 Rc8+ 31 Kb3 Qd1+ 32 K×b4
Rb8+ 33 Ka3 Rb3+!? 34 a×b3 Qa1+
35 Kb4 Nd5+ 36 Kc5 Qa5+ 37 Kd6
Qb6+ 38 K×e5 Qb8+ 39 K×d5 Qb7+
40 Ke5 Qb8+ 41 Kf6! 1–0

But while he was enjoying his greatest success, Karpov was the prisoner of propaganda. Hardly a month went by without a photograph, interview or annotated game of Karpov's in one of the main chess magazines or general media. Typical of the overdone praise was a paen to Karpov written by Vitaly Sevastianov for *Izvestia*. Sevastianov, a cosmonaut who twice had been honored as a Hero of the Soviet Union, was known to chessplayers chiefly for collaborating aboard Soyuz-9 in a consultation game against a team of two players on the ground. The "Cosmos-Earth" game, played during four orbits of the earth on June 9, 1970, ended in a 35-move draw. After being appointed chairman of the Soviet Chess Federation in 1977, Sevastianov was increasingly viewed as a cheerleader for Karpov. In early 1979 he wrote in *Izvestia*: "Perhaps someone will find the portrait too idealized and won-

der 'Doesn't Karpov have any failings?' Probably, like any normal person. But for some reason I haven't tried to find them."

Exodus

The Soviets began losing players in a new way during the 1970s with the enormous wave of Jewish emigration. The Brezhnev Kremlin, pursuing a policy of detente and unable to deal in non-Stalinist ways with a determined minority, allowed more than 100,000 Jews to leave the USSR from 1971 to 1974. By the time the flow was reduced to a trickle in 1982 more than a quarter of a million Jews had found new homes abroad. The chess players who were allowed to emigrate seemed to fit into low-priority categories. They were either too young (10-year-old Maxim Dlugy in 1976) or inexperienced (Yakov Murey in 1977) to be appreciated by the Sports Committee. Or they were considered over the hill.

But in general, the émigrés played much better abroad than they had in the Soviet Union. Roman Dzhindzhikashvili had yet to earn the grandmaster title when he emigrated in 1977 but soon became one of the world's 20 highest rated players. Vladimir Liberzon, a garden variety grandmaster and participant in three Soviet Championship finals, arrived in Israel in 1973, and qualified for the next Interzonal at age 39. Leonid Shamkovich's greatest accomplishment was twice winning the Russian Federation Championship in the 1950s. He emigrated in 1974 when he was 50, and "from the viewpoint of many of my contemporaries and friends, it was a completely mindless step," he recalled. But he was concerned by a dramatic rise in anti-Semitism in the early 1970s and decided to leave. Shamkovich immediately became one of the strongest United States players, along with his friend Anatoly Lein, who was allowed to leave at age 45.

Other émigrés of the era were these:

- Alla Kushnir, three time challenger for the world's women's championship, who emigrated to Israel in 1973.

- Dimitry Gurevich, who emigrated to the United States in 1980 and became a grandmaster in 1983.

- Lev Gutman, born in Riga, who emigrated to Israel in 1980 and became a grandmaster six years later.

- Trainer Boris Kogan, who emigrated to the United States in 1979 and quickly qualified for the U.S. Championship.

- Alexander Herbstman, one of the finest Soviet endgame composers, who emigrated — at age 80 — to Sweden in 1980.

- Sergei Kudrin, born in Novosibirsk, who emigrated to the United States in 1978 at age 18 when he was not yet a master; he earned the grandmaster title in 1984.

- Jacob Yuchtman, with plus scores against Polugayevsky and Vasiukov, who emigrated in 1972.

The exodus was puzzling to many other players. When Gennady Sosonko, a 29-year-old from Siberia, moved to the Netherlands in 1972, Igor Ivanov was stunned. "I said to myself 'Why would he leave such a wonderful country? What is he looking for?'" Ivanov recalled. Ivanov was one of the very few players to defeat Karpov in a Soviet event in the 1970s and had a promising future. *But before the decade was over he had defected in Canada, en route from the World Student Olympiad.*

The Boycott

There was also the continuing embarrassment of Viktor Korchnoi. The defector said he was not surprised ("I expected it") when the Soviet Chess Federation began to reject invitations for their players to tournaments in which Korchnoi was playing. "The Soviets give the organizers ... a choice: the Russians or Korchnoi. So no Korchnoi!"

he said. He added that the boycott had been sanctioned at the highest levels of the Kremlin, "installed by the Politburo." At first the Soviets denied there was a boycott but later defended it as a proper response to what they called Korchnoi's provocative antics at the board and anti-Soviet activities away from it. They might also have wondered why the West was so eager to denounce boycotts in the 1970s but so ready to institute their own of Alexander Alekhine in 1946.

Korchnoi initially shrugged off the boycott, explaining that he only needed three or four tournaments a year anyway because he was going to be busy with Candidates matches. The Soviet Chess Federation tried to head off the political nightmare of a Karpov-Korchnoi match when it appealed to FIDE to exclude the defector from the next world championship cycle. Moscow argued that Korchnoi no longer represented his former federation and, since FIDE was an alliance of federations, not individuals, he had no standing. But FIDE refused and Korchnoi, as a 1974 Candidates finalist, was seeded into the first round of the next cycle.

That cycle was in full swing when the Biel Interzonal, July 11 to August 7, 1976, turned out to be another relative disappointment. Bent Larsen lost two games but finished in clear first place. Tigran Petrosian and Mikhail Tal rebounded from their failure in the previous cycle, by finishing a half point back of the Dane, in a tie with Lajos Portisch. But Vasily Smyslov was out of contention, in a tie for fifth place. Further down the scoretable was Yefim Geller, who tied for ninth, and Boris Gulko, who had a minus score.

The three-way tie between Tal, Portisch and Petrosian for the two Candidates seeds forced a double-round playoff in Varese, Italy, in October. It looked like Curaçao all over again as the two Soviets drew their games in 20, 18, 18 and 17 moves. Korchnoi saw this as evidence of Tal's acquiescence to Petrosian's pull. "One starts selling his soul

Forty-Fourth Soviet Championship, Highest League, Moscow, November 26–December 24, 1976

	K	B	Pe	Po	D	S	T	G	R	S	G	V	G	R	T	Z	T	K	<i>Score</i>
1. Karpov	X	1	½	½	1	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	12–5
2. Balashov	0	X	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	11–6
3–4. Petrosian	½	½	X	½	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	½	½	1	1	10½–6½
3–4. Polugayevsky	½	0	½	X	½	1	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	½	1	10½–6½
5. Dorfman	0	½	½	½	X	½	½	0	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	½	0	1	9½–7½
6–7. Smyslov	½	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	1	½	½	1	0	9–8
6–7. Tal	½	½	1	½	½	½	X	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	1	9–8
8–10. Geller	1	½	½	½	1	½	½	X	0	0	½	1	1	½	0	½	½	0	8½–8½
8–10. Romanishin	½	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	X	1	0	½	1	½	0	1	0	1	8½–8½
8–10. Sveshnikov	½	0	0	½	1	½	½	1	0	X	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	0	8½–8½
11. Gulko	0	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	1	½	X	½	0	½	1	1	1	1	8–9
12–13. Vaganian	0	½	1	½	0	1	½	0	½	½	½	X	½	0	1	0	½	½	7½–9½
12–13. Grigorian	0	½	½	0	½	0	1	0	0	0	1	½	X	½	½	1	½	1	7½–9½
14–15. Rashkovsky	½	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	1	½	X	1	0	½	½	7–10
14–15. Taimanov	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	1	1	½	0	0	½	0	X	1	½	0	7–10
16–17. Zakharov	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	1	0	1	0	X	0	1	6½–10½
16–17. Tseshkovsky	0	0	0	½	1	0	0	½	1	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	X	0	6½–10½
18. Kupreichik	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	½	0	½	1	0	1	X	6–10

by bits and pieces until it's all gone," he said of the Latvian. There were only two decisive games in the playoff and this is the one that doomed Tal:

B97 Sicilian Defense
Interzonal Playoff, Varese, 1976
white Mikhail Tal,
black Lajos Portisch

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6 8 Qd2
 Qxb2 9 Nb3 Qa3 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Be2
 Nc6 12 0-0 Bd7 13 f5 Ne5 14 fxe6 fxe6
 15 Bh5+ Kd8!

Portisch knew enough about Tal to avoid 15 ... Ke7 16 Rxf6! Kxf6? 17 Rf1+ Kg7 18 Qg5+ Ng6 19 Qf6+ Kh6 20 Bxg6, e.g., 20 ... Bg7 21 Qh4+ Kxg6 22 Qg4+ Kh6 23 Rf3 and wins.

But after 15 ... Kd8 16 Rxf6 Black solves his opening problems with 16 ... Rc8 17 Ne2 Nc4.

16 Rab1 Rc8 17 Ne2! Be7 18 Nf4 Kc7
 19 Be2 Kb8 20 Na5?

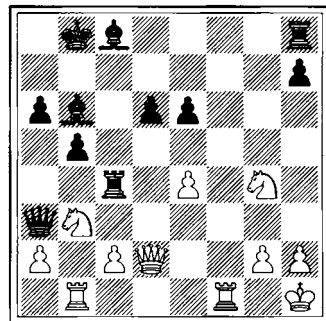
Here and on the previous move White missed the stronger, and more consistent, Nd4. For example, 20 Nd4 Qxa2? walks into 21 Qb4, threatening mate and 22 Ra1. White has the edge in the endgame that follows 20 ... Qc3 21 Qxc3 Rxc3 22 Nfxe6.

20 ... b5! 21 Nb3 Bd8! 22 Kh1 Bb6
 23 Nh5 Rc7 24 Nxf6 Bc8 25 Ng4 Nc4
 26 Bxc4 Rxc4 (see diagram)

Tal pointed out that 27 Rf7 Qxa2 28 Ra1 Qxc2 29 Qxd6+ Bc7 30 Rxc7 Rxc7 31 Rcl loses to 31 ... Rd8!. But 27 Ne3! should have held, 27 ... Rc7 28 c4! or 27 ... Rxe4 28 Qc3.

27 Nf6? Qb4! 28 Qd1 Qc3! 29 Rcl h5
 30 Rf3 Qe5 31 Qd2 Ka8 32 Rd1 Bc7

After 26
 ... Rxc4



Now ...d5, threatening ...Qxh2 mate, will win.

33 Na5 d5 34 g3 Bxa5 35 Qxa5 Rxc2
 36 Qb6 Qb2 37 Qg1 dxe4 38 Nxe4 Bb7
 39 Re3 Rf8 40 a4 Qe5! 0-1

Now that Karpov was established as World Champion, private criticism of the hero effort grew louder. Botvinnik wondered if too many resources had been devoted to one man. David Bronstein was described as contemptuous of the new champion. "Karpov is the typical sportsman-academic: memory plus technique minus fantasy, minus risk," he was quoted as saying. Botvinnik eventually broke openly with his former student and blasted him in the Russian émigré magazine *Seven Days*: "When he became World Champion he pressed all creative chess-players in the Soviet Union into his service. When a master became known for his ideas about a certain opening he was brought to Moscow and instructed to do some research on that opening for Karpov ... in the utmost secrecy." Korchnoi said Karpov enlisted the skills "of dozens of people around him. Not only chessplayers, but scientists, psychologists, magicians, doctors and so on."

But his results spoke for themselves. Karpov won the Highest League of the 44th Soviet Championship, held at the end of 1976, ahead of several veterans. The new generation was limited to one sparkling result—Yuri Balashov's silver prize—and a few other modest successes, such as Josif

Dorfman's placing fifth and Oleg Romanishin, Evgeny Sveshnikov and Gulko finding themselves in the middle of the scoretable. During the mid-1970s this group of grandmasters, plus Vitaly Tseshkovsky, Yuri Razuvaev, Lev Alburt and Viktor Kupreichik, jockeyed for position as leading members of the Karpov generation. Their most impressive victories were against one another:

A13 English Opening
Highest League, 44th Soviet
Championship, Moscow, 1976
white Josif Dorfman,
black Viktor Kupreichik

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 a6

This preparation for 4 ... b5 was one of several original ideas of Romanishin, *e.g.*, 4 Bg2 b5 5 Nd4 d5! 6 cxb5 axb5 7 Nxb5 c6 8 N5c3 c5 9 0-0 Nc6 with Blumenfeld Gambit-like compensation (Alburt-Romanishin, Highest League, 42nd Championship).

Dorfman's reply, 4 d3, is designed to meet 4 ... b5 with 5 e4! and 6 e5.

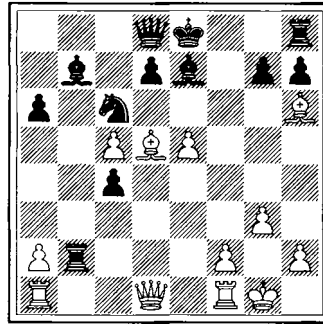
4 d3 c5 5 Bg2 Nc6 6 0-0 Rb8? 7 d4! b5
 8 Bf4 Rb6 9 Nc3 bxc4 10 e4!

White finds the right way to exploit his lead in development (not 10 d5 Nb4 11 Ne5 exd5 12 a3 d6 13 Nxf7 Kxf7 14 axb4 d4!).

10 ... Bb7 11 e5 Nd5 12 Nxd5 exd5
 13 dxc5 Rxb2 14 Ng5 Be7 15 Nxf7! Kxf7
 16 Bxd5+ Ke8 17 Bh6! (*see diagram*)

Of course, 17 ... gxh6?? allows mate but even 17 ... g6 18 e6 is lost. Kupreichik, more at home when on the attack, surrenders material.

17 ... Qa5 18 Bxg7 Rd2 19 Qh5+ Kd8
 20 Bxc6 Bxc6 21 Bxh8 Qxc5 22 Qf7!



After 17 Bh6

This stops the threatened 22 ... Qd5 counterattack and quickly consolidates White's edge.

22 ... Kc7 23 Rab1 c3 24 Qb3! Bb5
 25 a4 c2 26 axb5! cxb1(Q) 27 Qxb1 Qd4
 28 e6!

So that 28 ... Qxh8 29 Qc1+ wins.

28 ... Qd5 29 Be5+ Kd8 30 bxa6 Bc5
 31 Bf6+ Kc7 32 Qb7+!

"The simplest," Dorfman wrote. "Finding himself in deep time trouble my opponent continued resistance out of inertia."

32 ... Qxb7 33 axb7 dxe6 34 Rb1 Kb8
 35 Be5+ Bd6 36 Bxd6+ Rxd6 37 Rb5
 Rd3 38 Kg2 Rc3 39 h4 Rd3 40 f4 Re3
 41 Rb6 Re1 42 Kf2 Re4 43 h5 e5 44 Re6
 Rb4 45 Re8+ Kxb7 46 Rxe5 1-0

Albert Kapengut, perhaps the best Byelorussian player of the 1970s, found the Soviet Federation to be neglectful of many strong, young players. Kapengut said he qualified for the International Master title in 1971-2 but the Federation did not even send FIDE an application for it. "Many guys of my generation lost the best years of their lives through lack of tournaments," he said. Even Vladimir Savon, who won the 1971 Soviet Championship, "was unable to make a career." He also cited Mikhail Mukhin, a talented master from distant Alma Ata who

had won the Soviet Junior Championship in 1965: Mukhin failed to make the Interzonal because of “two let us say questionable games in the closing rounds of the 1972 USSR Championship” and that helped kill his career, Kapengut said.

But it was becoming clear that aside from Karpov, the Soviet players born in the 1950s — like many of the Soviet writers, artists, musicians and other cultural stars of what was known as the Brezhnev “era of stagnation” — were not world-class. All other USSR representatives in the next two Candidates cycles turned out to be players born before World War II. This was ominous because even though Fischer was no longer a factor, there was a danger of something even worse than an American World Champion: Korchnoi’s becoming World Champion. The hero project that had helped Karpov to the title in 1975 had to be kept in place for at least six more years to prevent a Soviet defector from winning the biggest prize in chess.

That nightmare scenario began to take shape in March, 1977, when Korchnoi met Petrosian for the third time in a Candidates match and defeated him 6½–5½ at Il Ciocco, Italy. Petrosian was fired as editor of *64* in July and his loss to Korchnoi was regarded as at least a contributing factor. Korchnoi then crushed Polugayvesky 8½–4½ in the semifinals in July–August 1977 at Evian, France. Korchnoi’s team by then included Raymond Keene and Michael Stean of England and former Soviet Yaacov Murey of Israel. But also as controversial as Korchnoi himself was his secretary, Petra Leeuwerik of Switzerland. Leeuwerik, who did not know Korchnoi until his defection, had a personal reason to detest the Soviet Union. She said she had been arrested in 1948 at Linz, Austria, then behind the Iron Curtain, and served eight years at the Vorkuta *gulag* for alleged anti-Soviet terrorism. Col. Viktor Baturinsky said she “spied for America.”

Baturinsky, a frequent member of Soviet chess delegations in the 1970s, had emerged as the most powerful man in Soviet chess after Reykjavik. He had been director of the Central Chess Club since 1970, vice chairman of the Soviet Federation since 1974 and head of the Chess Section of the Sports Committee since 1971. Burly, with thick glasses and a cigar always in hand, Baturinsky was called “the black colonel” — usually behind his back — because of his role as a Stalinist prosecutor. “I was no Soviet black colonel,” he insisted. “I am a bull colonel. I like to horse around.”

The ghost of Fischer had one impact on the cycle. Spassky was seeded into the Candidates as a substitute after Fischer refused to accept his spot. Spassky reached the semifinals and eliminated Portisch 8½–6½ in Geneva during July and August 1977. But he was no longer the brilliant match player of 1965–1969, and managed to eliminate Portisch only by winning two of the final three games. This meant Spassky would face Korchnoi in the Candidates finals, a repeat of 1968.

After Korchnoi arrived in Belgrade, he dropped his claim to being apolitical. “I must beat Spassky to reach Karpov. This is a political task,” he told the prematch press conference. His opinion of Spassky also switched. In his 1977 memoirs Korchnoi said Spassky had once been “an average member of Soviet society — featureless, unreasoning, submissive” but then “gradually turned into a dissident.” But by Belgrade his attitude had turned once again. Spassky, who dodged questions of whether he would ever live again in his homeland, seemed to sigh when he said, “After you play a match with Viktor you cannot be friendly anymore.” Since Korchnoi was not yet a Swiss citizen, only one flag — the red one with sickle and hammer — was allowed at the board, and according to some reports Spassky nudged it playfully towards Korchnoi once or twice during the match. Korchnoi, who believed

Tal was drugged in their 1968 match, said he was sure Spassky played the 1977 match “under hypnosis.” For whatever reasons, Spassky seemed woozy as he trailed by four points in the first eight games.

C18 French Defense
Candidates Finals Match,
second game, Belgrade, 1977
white Boris Spassky,
black Viktor Korchnoi

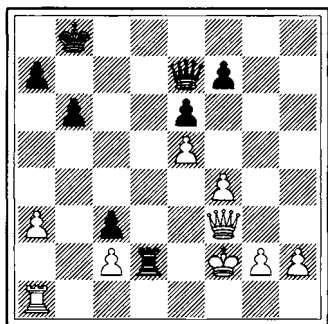
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3
 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 cxd4 8 Qxg7
 Rg8 9 Qxh7 Qc7 10 Ne2 Nbc6 11 f4 Bd7
 12 Qd3 dxc3 13 Be3

A risky opening choice.

13 ... d4! 14 Bf2 0–0–0 15 Nxd4 Nxd4
 16 Qxd4 b6 17 Bh4 Bb5 18 Qe4 Bxf1
 19 Rxf1!

Optimistic. White can force perpetual check with 19 Qa8+ Kd7 20 0–0–0+ Nd5 21 Rxd5+!—especially since 19 ... Qb8 20 Qxb8+ Kxb8 favors White after 21 Bxe7.

19 ... Rd5! 20 Bxe7 Qxe7 21 Rf3 Kb8
 22 Kf1 Rd2 23 Rf2 Rgd8 24 Qf3 Rxf2+
 25 Kxf2 Rd2+



After 25
 ... Rd2+

Now 26 Kf1 Qc5 27 Rd1 Rxc2 wins for Black, e.g., 28 Rd7 Qc4+ 29 Kg1 Rcl+ 30 Rd1 Qd4+!

26 Kg3 Qd8! 27 Qe4 Qg8+ 28 Kh3 Qh8+
 29 Kg3 Qg7+ 30 Kh3 Rd8!

The way Black’s rook switches back and forth is entertaining.

31 g4 Rh8+ 32 Kg3 Qh6 33 Qg2 Qh4+
 34 Kf3 Rd8! 35 Qg3 Qe7 36 g5?

A blunder. White prolongs the game with 36 Rel.

36 ... Rd2 37 Kg4 Qb7! 38 Qxc3 Rg2+
 39 Kh3 Rf2 40 Kg4 Qe4! 0–1

The bitterness of the former friends broke out into the open in the tenth game when Spassky spent most of the time backstage. Publicly, he explained that the light at the board was bothering his eyes, and he preferred to study a demonstration board. But privately Spassky told Korchnoi’s team the first five rows of the hall were packed with “your people.” They stared at Spassky so intensely that “his head refused to work in the third hour,” according to Rudolf Zagainov.

Korchnoi claimed that examining the demo board meant Spassky was illegally using a second board, a unique interpretation of FIDE rules. While Korchnoi was convincing the Yugoslav arbiters to move the demo board away, Spassky won his first game of the match, the 11th. Spassky then threatened to forfeit the 12th game if the board was not returned. The president of FIDE, Max Euwe, arrived to try to calm the situation and convinced both players to continue with the 12th game with a visible demo board. But after Korchnoi lost the 12th and 13th games he threatened to withdraw from the match. His team also suspected that some kind of harmful rays were being flashed at Korchnoi. Nevertheless, Korchnoi played and lost the 14th, leaving Spassky within a point of tying the match. But after two draws, Korchnoi rallied and won the 17th and 18th and won by 10½–7½.

The Fischer Effect

When bids for the 1978 world championship match were opened a few months later, the numbers confirmed what the top grandmasters suspected since 1972: Fischer had changed the economics of chess. The American showed that the game's market value was much higher than anyone had dreamed. The Cold War had divided the chess world into two artificial markets, one in the West with few top players, and one in the East with virtually nonexistent prizes. Unlike Fischer, the Soviets demanded no big appearance fees and did not try to force up prize schedules when they played abroad. Chess had become vastly underpriced, a buyer's market.

When international chess and Soviet players converged, in the world championship cycle, the result from 1951 to 1969 was the spectacle of two Soviet players competing for minuscule rewards. The winner regularly received 2,000 rubles, the loser got 1,200, and 200 rubles were subtracted from each in taxes. That was a fraction, in hard currency, of what José Capablanca and Emanuel Lasker had played for in 1921.

After Fischer, the size of Candidates prize funds jumped, even in all-Soviet matches. There was only 150 rubles at stake in the 1971 Geller-Korchnoi match. But in the 1974 matches, Karpov received 1,200, 1,500 and 2,000 rubles for his three victories. Still, there was a long way to go: Robert Byrne got more than all three Karpov prizes put together for losing to Spassky. But the numbers continued to escalate, particularly in non-FIDE events. A few months after the Reykjavik match, the strongest tournament of 1972 was held in San Antonio, sponsored by a fried chicken franchiser, with what seemed at the time like a remarkable prize fund. Karpov and Petrosian took home \$2,333 each as their share for tying with Portisch for first prize. After a record 22 grandmasters went to remote Lone Pine,

California, in 1975 for an open tournament offering \$12,500 in prizes, the Soviets recognized a new source of hard currency.

The Sports Committee began sending more and more Soviet players to claim their share. Petrosian won Lone Pine 1976 ahead of Smyslov. Petrosian earned \$8,650 in two visits to the Sierra Mountain open, while Balashov took home \$9,690 and Polugayevsky received \$5,700. The Sports Committee regularly authorized two players a year to play in the tournament and in 1977 both tied for first, Balashov and Nona Gaprindashvili. Gaprindashvili also became the first woman to earn a norm for the "men's" grandmaster title. It had never happened before because virtually all the world's top women players since World War II had been Soviets and Soviet women generally played in women-only events where the grandmaster title was not at stake. The game that gave Gaprindashvili the norm was:

B33 Sicilian Defense

Statham International, Lone Pine, 1977

white Nona Gaprindashvili,

black Jack Peters

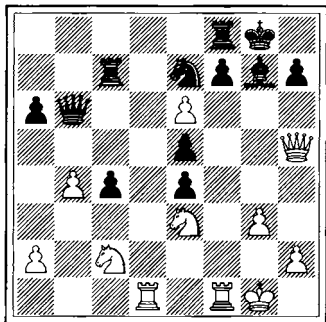
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bf4 e5 8 Bg5 a6
9 Na3 b5 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Nd5 f5 12 g3

This temporary sacrifice was a rarely played alternative to 12 exf5, 12 Bd3 or 12 Qd3 at the time.

12 ... fxe4 13 Bg2 Be6 14 Bxe4 Bg7
15 Qh5 Rc8 16 0-0 Ne7 17 Rad1 Rc5!
18 Ne3 d5 19 b4 Rc7

Black has almost equalized but this is inexact. After 19 ... Rc8 White could not play 20 c4 bxc4 21 Naxc4 because of 21 ... Qc7! Now Black's center collapses.

20 c4! bxc4 21 f4! Qb8 22 f5 Qb6
23 Nac2 dxe4 24 fxe6 0-0



After 24
... 0–0

After 24 ... Q×e6 White has 25 R×f7!
Q×f7 26 Rd8+ K×d8 27 Q×f7 Bh6
28 Ng4 and wins.

25 e×f7+ Kh8 26 Kg2! Qe6 27 Qh3!
Q×h3+ 28 K×h3 Nc6 29 Rd6 Nb8 30 a4
Rfc8 31 Re6 Bf8 32 Re8 Nd7 33 Nd5
Rc6 34 Ne7 Rh6+ 35 Kg2 Rc7 36 Rd1
Rf6 37 Nd5 Rd6 38 Nce3 c3 39 Rc1
Rcc6 40 b5 a×b5 41 a×b5 Rc5 42 b6
Rb5

Black prepares to sacrifice the exchange for the b-pawn. Poor was 42 ... Rc×d5
43 N×d5 R×d5 44 R×c3.

43 R×c3 Kg7 44 Nf5+ K×f7 45 N×d6+
B×d6 46 Rd8 Rb2+ 47 Kf1 Ke6 48 Nc7+
Ke7 49 Rh8 Nf8 50 Rc6 Ba3 51 Nd5+
Kf7 52 Rc7+ Ke6 53 Ra7 K×d5

The game could only be prolonged by
53 ... Bc5 54 Ra5 Bd6.

54 R×a3 Ne6 55 R×h7 Ng5 56 Ra5+ Ke6
57 Rh6+ Kf5 58 Rh5 Kg6 59 R×g5!+
K×g5 60 R×e5+ Kg4 61 R×e4+ Kf3
62 Rf4+ Ke3 63 Rf6 Ke4 64 h4 1–0

Women's Chess

Natalya Konopleva, who earned the women's grandmaster title, concluded the Soviets had gone through four stages in the development of women's chess:

Formation (1927–1949): Women's chess was largely an afterthought, with money directed instead to "big chess" events, like Moscow 1935 and 1936. The national women's championship was a low-profile event, with qualification tournaments and finals conducted without a break. "In the first championships three rounds were generally played in two days, with a shortened time control, and then the press accused women of poor play," Konopleva wrote. Not surprisingly, the first Soviet champion was only a second-category player when she won the title.

Development (1950–1961): Beginning around 1950, women's chess was taken more seriously, particularly in Leningrad. A top trainer, Alexander Konstantinopolsky, devoted himself to women's chess from 1954 to 1976 and helped a generally older generation of women, in their late 40s (Ludmilla Rudenko, Elizaveta Bykova, Olga Rubtsova), to dominate Soviet events and eventually the world women's championship.

Qualitative Leap (1962–1977): The crushing of Bykova in 1962 by 21-year-old Gaprindashvili symbolized the beginning of a period of younger women with a sharper, more aggressive and technically more skillful style. Gaprindashvili was also the first of the Georgian women who held the women's world championship for more than twenty years.

Chiburdanidze Era (1978–1991): Maya Chiburdanidze, 17, took the women's title in 1978 in what Konopleva called a "palace coup." Younger women received greater encouragement and even Chiburdanidze's national record was broken when Svetlana Matveyeva won the Soviet championship at age 15 in 1984. But the appearance of the Polgar sisters of Hungary and the losses of the 1980s — the emigration of Alla Kushnir and Anna Akhsharumova and the defection of Elena Akhmilovskaya — undermined the Soviet hegemony of women's chess.

K versus K in the Tropics

Preparations for the 1978 world championship match began with another dispute over venue. Several cities, none Soviet, offered to host the match, so the players listed their preferences. Korchnoi put Graz, Austria, as his number 1, then Baguio City, the Philippines, as number 2. Karpov listed Hamburg, West Germany, as his first choice, gave no second choice and put Baguio City as number 3. According to Karpov, the Soviets were convinced there was no possibility of Korchnoi's naming the Philippines, while Korchnoi "was absolutely convinced that I would not want to travel to that distant tropical island country." But because Baguio, which offered a huge \$585,750, was the only name in common on the two lists, it was chosen by Euwe. Karpov's one bargaining victory was a considerable one: FIDE reestablished the right of a defeated champion to a return match. After much haggling and a 10-page legal opinion, FIDE compromised on another touchy issue and ordered that no flags appear on the playing table at Baguio City, and that only the FIDE, Soviet and Philippine flags be placed on the playing stage.

The Soviets did not want to repeat the mistakes of Reykjavik: Baturinsky headed a 14-member Soviet delegation that included a physician, a cook, two "specialists in biological processes," perhaps to make sure Karpov's food was properly prepared, and someone identified as "psychological consultant," Dr. Vladimir Zoukhar. More pertinent to Karpov were his seconds, Balashov, Igor Zaitsev and Tal — although Karpov recalled in his memoirs that "Tal was always very distant from me." Tal joked about his role, saying he agreed to help Karpov "for one vital reason: if Korchnoi had won, chess would have been prohibited in the USSR."

The match began uneventfully with seven draws but the skirmishing continued on a different level. After the second game the Korchnoi delegation — supposedly with

tongue in cheek — complained that the delivery of Karpov's daily yogurt violated a FIDE rule against communicating with the players. Animosity and paranoia quickly escalated. Leeuwerick said Korchnoi's team was using a Geiger counter and would "have the game stopped at once" if the mysterious rays allegedly used at Belgrade reappeared. When Karpov, who held what was believed to be a near-winning position at adjournment of the seventh game, offered a draw immediately on resumption, Korchnoi was not relieved — he became suspicious. "One of our rooms was bugged and there was a little spy-hole through which we could be watched," he concluded.

The widespread Soviet belief in parapsychology fueled another sideshow issue. In their 1974 match, Karpov felt that Korchnoi's aide Zagainov was trying to hypnotize him from his seat in the audience. According to Korchnoi, Karpov responded by bringing a more experienced psychologist to the match. Karpov's man did not disturb Korchnoi so much as he neutralized Zagainov, Korchnoi said of this "obscure psychological struggle."

This was repeated at Baguio: Karpov wrote that Korchnoi had brought "a number of peculiar helpers — psychologists, parapsychologists or whatever they call them." He said Korchnoi's team did not succeed in influencing his thinking but it made Korchnoi feel more confident. So the Soviets countered with Zoukhar, identified as the director of the Central Laboratory for Psychology in Moscow. After Zoukhar took a seat in the audience, Karpov said he never felt the "obtrusive presence" of the other team. To the Korchnoi camp, Zoukhar was staring at the challenger just as Spassky felt he had been stared at in Belgrade. Of course, Soviet players had been stared at before — and by their opponents. Everyone knew the story of Pal Benko's being so upset by Tal's stare that he wore dark glasses to the board. ("I never felt hypnotized," Botvinnik joked

about Tal's stare, "probably because I'm near-sighted.")

Nevertheless, Zoukhar became the villain of the 1978 match. For the fifth game Leeuwerick's 18-year-old daughter and her boyfriend took seats on both sides of Zoukhar to harass him. Other members of the Korchnoi delegation began to stare at the parapsychologist. Karpov complained that a "hysterical" Leeuwerick had injected politics into the match by offering Zoukhar a copy of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*. Leeuwerick, meanwhile, accused the match officials of being pro-Soviet and said Korchnoi did not understand when he was being disturbed by Zoukhar. A few days later she reversed direction and said Korchnoi was convinced neither Zoukhar nor their own, newly arrived parapsychologist, Vladimir Berginer, "can have any effect upon a player during a game." But a few weeks later the Korchnoi side had changed again. Leeuwerick sat next to Zoukhar in one game and allegedly tickled and kicked him and did not leave until Valery Krylov, Karpov's physical trainer, sat in her lap.

Eventually the match jury agreed Korchnoi had been upset and ruled that if it became necessary the match could be moved to a sealed room or an offending spectator could be ejected. Before the eighth game Korchnoi offered to shake hands, as the players had done off and on in earlier games. But Karpov angrily replied, "Never!"

C80 Ruy Lopez

World Championship Match,
eighth game, Baguio City, 1978

white Anatoly Karpov,

black Viktor Korchnoi

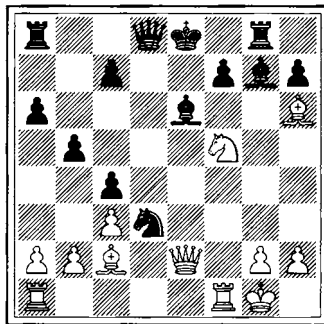
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
5 0-0 Nxe4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 dxe5
Be6 9 Nbd2 Nc5 10 c3 g6?!

Black compromises the kingside to put pressure on e5.

11 Qe2 Bg7 12 Nd4! Nxe5

Black has little choice since 12 ... Ne7 13 f4 Qd7, to stop the f-pawn, gets him into a bind after 14 Bc2 0-0 15 b4.

13 f4 Nc4 14 f5 gxf5 15 Nxf5 Rg8
16 Nxc4 dxc4 17 Bc2 Nd3? 18 Bh6!



After 18 Bh6

Black must have missed this when he made his last two moves. He had better chances of survival with 17 ... Qd5 so that he could meet 18 N×g7+ R×g7 19 Bh6 with 19 ... Rg6.

18Bf8 19 Rad1 Qd5 20 B×d3 c×d3
21 R×d3 Qc6 22 B×f8

There are various wins against 22 ... K×f8 23 Nd4 and 22 ... R×f8 23 Ng7+. Larsen commented: "When you see how much enthusiasm many chess players show while working on positions like this you may get the terrible idea that necrophilia is natural."

22 ... Qb6+ 23 Kh1 K×f8 24 Qf3 Re8?
25 Nh6 Rg7 26 Rd7!

A chance for the neat 26 ... B×d7
27 Q×f7+! and mate next.

26 ... Rb8 27 N×f7 B×d7 28 Nd8+! 1-0

The circus continued: Match organizer Florencio Campomanes reported to the match jury that a leading Filipino psychology

professor felt the best thing would be for Korchnoi to “have himself hypnotized by a friendly psychologist to help him relax.” Just as Keene was making peace with Baturinsky, Korchnoi said the solution was a one-way mirror that would allow spectators to see the stage but not vice versa — and said he would not continue the match without it. He dropped the threat the next day. But two members of an Indian sect, Ananda Marga, began appearing as Korchnoi supporters. They were out of jail on bail while they appealed their conviction of stabbing an Indian diplomat.

The rhetoric escalated to absurd heights. In his book on the match, Karpov wrote: “The reader probably does not know of Korchnoi’s strange habit of attaching himself at night to a heating battery. Someone once told him that his abnormal malice could be explained by his whole body being overcharged with static electricity.” So he hooked himself to discharge it, Karpov claimed. Korchnoi, meanwhile, said that Karpov suffered from low blood pressure and by the end of the match his reading “was down to 30 over 60. In an amateur boxing match, such an encounter would have been stopped in view of the danger to the health of one of the contestants.” (An ironic comment, considering what lay ahead in February 1985.)

Karpov enlarged his lead to 4–2 and would have clinched victory after 22 games had the match been conducted under the old best-of-24-game format. But the Fischer six-wins rule was in effect. After the 27th game Karpov suddenly weakened, just as he had in the 1974 finals. He managed only a half point in the next four games. The grueling losses lasted 61, 79 and 71 moves. Karpov had not lost in successive rounds since a 1967 tournament.

**D36 Queen’s Gambit Declined
World Championship Match,
31st game, Baguio City, 1978**

white Viktor Korchnoi,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5
5 Bg5 Be7 6 e3 0–0 7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 Nf3
Re8 9 Qc2 c6 10 0–0 Nf8 11 Bxf6 Bxf6
12 b4 Bg4 13 Nd2 Rc8 14 Bf5! Bxf5
15 Qxf5

Instead of sharp lines, Korchnoi wanted a small edge in a familiar opening that he could nurse into adjournment. After Reshevsky had won an instructive game at Sousse 1967 with this line, an improvement was found (15 ... Qd7) but it commits Black to a defensive endgame.

15 ... Qd7 16 Qxd7 Nxd7 17 a4 Be7
18 Rfb1 Nf6 19 a5! a6 20 Na4 Bf8 21 Nc5
Re7! 22 Kf1 Ne8 23 Ke2 Nd6 24 Kd3
Rce8 25 Re1 g6 26 Re2 f6

Black plays passively when 26 ... f5 showed more promise, *e.g.*, 27 f3 Bh6 28 Rael Bg5. White now begins a series of relatively noncommittal moves and Karpov, taking less than 10 minutes on moves 31 to 40, just passes.

27 Rael Bh6 28 Ndb3 Bf8 29 Nd2 Bh6
30 h3 Kf7 31 g4 Bf8 32 f3 Rd8 33 Ndb3
Nb5 34 Rf1 Bh6 35 f4 Bf8 36 Nd2 Nd6
37 Rfel h6 38 Rf1 Rb8 39 Ra1 Rbe8
40 Rael Rb8 41 e4!

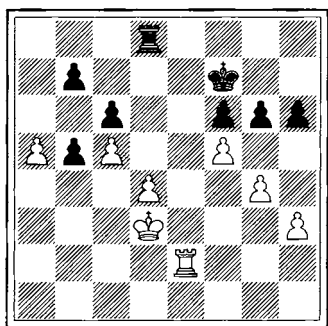
Botvinnik would have been horrified to change the pawn structure just before adjournment. Worse, White allows a trade of the minor pieces into what seems to be a drawish rook endgame.

41 ... dxe4+ 42 Ndxe4 Nb5! 43 Nc3!
Rxe2 44 Rxe2 Bxc5 45 bxc5 Rd8 46
Nxb5 axb5 47 f5 (*see diagram*)

But this adjourned position offers White good chances of breaking through via f×g6+, d4–d5 or a5–a6.

World Championship Match, Baguio City, July 18–October 18, 1978

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Karpov	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	0
Korchnoi	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	1
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Karpov	1	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	0	½
Korchnoi	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	1	½
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	Score
Karpov	½	½	½	½	1	0	0	½	0	1	6–5
Korchnoi	½	½	½	½	0	1	1	½	1	0	5–6



After 47 f5

47 ... gxf5 48 gxf5 Rg8 49 Kc3 Re8?

Black misplaces his rook and assures White of a breakthrough. Larsen wondered if White's 49th move was a bluff because 49 ... Rg3+ appeared to draw, *e.g.*, 50 Kb4 Rd3 51 Re4 Rd1! 52 a6 bxa6 53 Ka5 Ra1+ 54 Kb6 b4.

50 Rd2 Re4 51 Kb4 Ke8 52 a6! bxa6 53 Ka5 Kd7 54 Kb6! b4 55 d5! cxd5 56 Rxd5+ Kc8 57 Rd3!

Sealing Black's fate. The rook stops ...b3 and will threaten a last rank mate at g3.

57 ... a5 58 Rg3 b3 59 Kc6! Kb8 60 Rxb3+ Ka7 61 Rb7+ Ka6 62 Rb6+ Ka7 63 Kb5 a4 64 Rxf6 Rf4 65 Rxh6 a3

66 Ra6+ Kb8 67 Rxa3 Rxf5 68 Rg3 Rf6 69 Rg8+ Kc7 70 Rg7+ Kc8 71 Rh7 1–0

With the match tied 5–5 after 31 games, another loss meant sudden death for either player. "The next game decides, it's like a lottery," the challenger said. Nikolai Krogius credited Sevastianov with the "original move" of taking Karpov to a basketball game in Manila to relax him. Korchnoi told *L'Express* that he and his seconds prepared his opening for the 32d game "for several days." When Karpov replied quickly, Korchnoi once again saw a conspiracy: "There was a leak. Too much money was circulating. I know who had been bought but I don't want to say."

Nevertheless Karpov took 75 minutes on his first 17 moves while Korchnoi took a half hour more. Karpov broke the closed center open at move 25 and began a decisive march of a passed b-pawn at move 39. Korchnoi sealed his 41st move but did not resume. Once again, Karpov had come back at the very end.

Even the man who became his nemesis recognized the significance of Karpov's 6–5 victory. "It finally erased the memory of Reykjavik and restored the prestige of Soviet chess," Kasparov wrote. Karpov said he gave his \$350,000 prize to the Sports Committee to refurbish the Central Chess Club. He

also sent a much-publicized telegram to “Comrade Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev” saying the match ended “in our victory.” Brezhnev congratulated him on his “far-from-easy match.” Korchnoi sued to overturn the match result and it took three years before a Swiss court rejected the suit.

Team Setback

But 1978 saw a series of Soviet failures, minor and major. It began in January when Sergei Dolmatov finished only second, behind John Van der Wiel of the Netherlands,

in the European Junior Championship. The Soviets were no longer shocked by setbacks in junior chess, but not in their long suit, team chess. The student team tournament, renamed the First World Youth Team Championship, was held in Mexico City, August 20–September 7, with a solid Soviet squad of grandmasters Alexander Belyavsky, Alexander Kochiev, Adrian Mikhalkhishin and three promising international masters. They kept pace with the English through five rounds but lost to them 3–1. Needing a solid victory in the final round, the Soviets managed only four draws with the Americans and finished second by one point. It was their first setback since 1963.

Soviets in the World Student and Youth Team Championships, 1954–1985

<i>Year</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Winning margin</i>	<i>Soviet team</i>
1954	Oslo	(2nd place)	Antoshin, Korchnoi, Krogius, Moiseev, Nikitin
1955	Lyons	8 points	Antoshin, Nikitin, Spassky, Suetin, Taimanov, Vasiukov
1956	Uppsala	5 points	Antoshin, Korchnoi, Lutikov, Polugayevsky, Tal, Vasiukov
1957	Reykjavik	6½ points	Gipslis, Gurgenedze, Nikitin, Polugayevsky, Spassky, Tal
1958	Golden Sands	2½ points	Gipslis, Gurgenedze, Nikitin, Nikolayevsky, Spassky, Tal
1959	Budapest	(2nd place)	Gipslis, Gurgenedze, Liberzon, Nikitin, Nikolayevsky, Volovich
1960	Leningrad	(2nd place)	Gurgenedze, Klovans, Nikitin, Nikolayevsky, Savon, Spassky
1961	Helsinki	5 points	Bagirov, Gufeld, Kuindzhi, Khodos, Stein
1962	Marianske Lazne	4½ points	Bagirov, Gufeld, Khodos, Savon, Spassky, Tomson
1963	Budva	(tied for 3rd place)	Bagirov, Bebchuk, Khodos, Korzin, Mnatsakanian, Pelts
1964	Krakow	2 points	Anoshin, Kapengut, Khodos, Mnatsakanian, Pelts, Savon
1965	Sinaia	1 point	Anoshin, Kapengut, Khodos, Mnatsakanian, Savon, Shipov

1966	Erebro	5½ points	Bukhman, Gulko, Kapengut, Kuzmin, Savon, Tukmakov
1967	Harrachov	2 points	Faibisovich, Gulko, Kuzmin, Podgaets, Savon, Tukmakov
1968	Ybbs	tie for first	Dzhindzhikashvili, Kapengut, Kupreichik, Kuzmin, Podgaets, Tukmakov
1969	Dresden	5½ points	Averkin, Georgadze, Kupreichik, Podgaets, Tseshkovsky, Tukmakov
1970	Haifa	(did not participate)	
1971	Mayagüez	8 points	Balashov, Karpov, Kuzmin, Podgaets, Razuvaev, Tukmakov
1972	Graz	9 points	Anikaev, Balashov, Karpov, Podgaets, Tukmakov, Vaganian
1974	Teeside	4 points	Balashov, Belyavsky, Kupreichik, Palatnik, Romanishin, Vaganian
1976	Caracas	7½ points	Belyavsky, Chekhov, Palatnik, Romanishin, Sveshnikov, Vaganian
1977	Mexico City	2½ points	Belyavsky, Dorfman, Makarichev, Mikhailchishin, Romanishin, Vaganian
1978	Mexico City	second place	Belyavsky, Gavrikov, A. Ivanov, Kochiev, Mikhailchishin, Panchenko
1980	Mexico City	4½ points	Dolmatov, I. Ivanov, Kengis, Kochiev, Mikhailchishin, Yusupov
1981	Graz	2 points	Dolmatov, Kasparov, Kochiev, Psakhis, Vladimirov, Yusupov
1983	Chicago	6 points	Azmaiparashvili, Dolmatov, Ehlvest, Lputian, Psakhis, Yusupov
1985	Mendoza	4 points	Azmaiparashvili, Chernin, Novikov, Rozen-talis, Sokolov, Yusupov

This reverse came two months before a more glaring second place finish, one point behind Hungary, at the FIDE Olympiad at Buenos Aires, October 25–November 12, 1978. On the bottom two boards, reserves Romanishin and Vaganian scored 6½–3½. While those were good scores they were far from the board prizes and well below what the Soviets had been able to muster in the past. The Soviet team was held to a tie with the English, the Swedes and Israel, and lost to West Germany.

The decline in Soviet teams had been

barely detectable up to then. In terms of performance rating, Soviet players had registered the best overall result in the first six Olympiads the USSR played in (Smyslov's 2671 performance at Helsinki 1952; Keres' 2751 at Amsterdam 1954; Bronstein's 2647 at Moscow 1956; Tal's 2667 at Munich 1958; Petrosian's 2651 and 2685 at Leipzig 1960, and Varna 1962). But Lajos Portisch had the best performance at Tel Aviv 1964 and Bobby Fischer was tops at Havana 1966. There was a Soviet comeback in the next four Olympiads (Petrosian's 2762 at Lugano

1968; Spassky's 2665 at Siegen 1970, Tal's 2759 at Skopje 1972, and Karpov's 2761 at Nice 1974). But in three of the next four events, non-Soviets had the top performances — Korchnoi at Buenos Aires 1978, Ljubomir Ljubojević at Lucerne 1982, and Jonathan Nunn at Thessaloniki 1984.

The exception in this lean latter period was the year 1980. First the Soviets managed to win the European Team Championship at Skara even though neither Tal, Karpov nor Petrosian won a game. At the Olympiad at Malta, held November 20–December 8, the Soviets got off to a bad start by beating Venezuela, which finished 28th, only by 2½–1½. The Hungarian team took the lead but the Soviets gained 2½ points on them in the late rounds. The last game of the tournament to finish was Karpov's 56-move victory over the Danish first board. It allowed the Soviets to tie for first place and take the gold medals on a tiny tie-break edge. Karpov's 9–3 and Garry Kasparov's 9½–2½ as second reserve were best on the team.

A Subtle Boycott

The Soviets had become careful about risking their prestige abroad. Karpov agreed to play in the strongest event of the decade, Montreal 1979, but it could not be called a "world championship tournament." Its title was the "Man and His World Chess Challenge Cup." The Montreal organizers freely acknowledged they did not invite Korchnoi because they wanted the strongest possible event and only by cooperating with the boycott could they get Karpov, Spassky and Tal to play. Yet ten years before, when the Soviets tried to keep Czech defector Ludek Pachman from playing in European events, West German tournament organizers refused to go along and succeeded in undermining that boycott.

Karpov and Tal — who together swept Spassky 4–0 — tied for first in Montreal. Kar-

pov's losses, particularly with White, had become rarities and the sensation of the tournament was this game with the last-place finisher:

B01 Center Counter Defense

Montreal, 1979

white Anatoly Karpov,

black Bent Larsen

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Bd2 Bg4 6 Be2 Bxe2 7 Ncxe2

The c3-knight is usually misplaced in the Center Counter and this quiet treatment of the opening ensures a small edge in a Caro-Kann-like position.

7 ... Qb6 8 Nf3 Nbd7 9 0–0 e6 10 c4 Be7

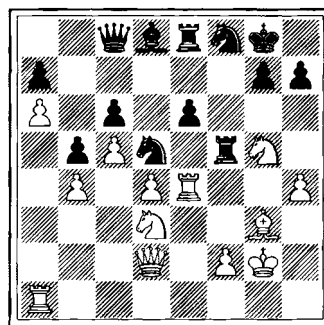
Even Larsen regarded ...Qxb2 as too risky, since Rb1 and Rxb7 would follow.

11 b4! 0–0 12 a4 c6 13 Qc2 Qc7 14 Rfe1 b6 15 a5 Rfb8 16 a6 b5! 17 c5 Nd5 18 Nc1 Re8 19 Nd3 Rad8 20 g3 Bf6 21 Re4 Nf8

Black has one excellent piece, the d5-knight, and targets at d4 and b4, to make up for his space deficit. But Karpov was an expert in exploiting such positions.

22 h4 Rd7 23 Kg2 Red8 24 g4 Re8 25 g5 Bd8 26 Nfe5 Rde7 27 Bf4 Qc8 28 Bg3 f6! 29 Nf3 Rf7 30 Qd2 f×g5 31 N×g5? Rf5

After 31
... Rf5



Montreal 1979, April 10–May 7, 1979

	K		T		P		L		S		T		Ho		Hü		K		L		<i>Score</i>
1–2. Karpov	X	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	0	12–6
1–2. Tal	½	½	X	X	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	12–6
3. Portisch	½	½	½	0	X	X	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	10½–7½
4. Ljubojević	0	0	½	½	½	½	X	X	½	0	½	½	1	1	½	½	1	0	1	1	9–9
5–6. Spassky	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	1	X	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	0	1	8½–9½
5–6. Timman	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	X	½	1	½	½	½	0	1	½	8½–9½
7–9. Hort	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	X	X	½	½	½	½	1	1	8–10
7–9. Hübner	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	X	X	1	0	1	½	8–10
7–9. Kavalek	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	0	1	X	X	0	1	8–10
10. Larsen	½	1	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	0	0	½	0	0	0	½	1	0	X	X	5½–12½

32 Ra3 Ng6 33 Nf3 Ref8 34 Nfe5 Nxe5
35 Rxe5 Rf3 36 Ra1? Bxh4!

Oversight: 37 Bxh4 allows 37 ... Rxd3
38 Qxd3? Nf4+. No better is while 37 Rxd5
exd5 38 Bxh4 Qh3+.

37 Qe2 Bxg3 38 fxg3 Qd7 39 Qxf3 Rxf3
40 Kxf3 Nxb4!

This (41 Nxb4 Qxd4) seals matters.

41 Rd1 Qxd4 42 Re4 Qd5 43 Nf2 Qh5+
44 Kg2 Nd5 45 Rxe6 h6 46 Rd3 Kh7
47 Rf3 b4!

Based on 48 Rxc6 Ne3+! 49 Rxe3
Qd5+. White's desperate bid for counterplay
to stop the b-pawn only shortens the game.

48 g4 Qg5 49 Kg3 Qc1 50 Nh3 Qc4
51 g5 h5! 52 Re8 h4+ 53 Kg2 b3 54 Rb8
Qe2+ 55 Nf2 Ne3+ 0-1

Asked which top players were missing from Montreal, Karpov named Fischer, Mecking, Petrosian, Polugayevsky — and Korchnoi. He said his decision to avoid the defector was personal: "Korchnoi has attempted to use every appearance in a tournament for all sorts of political pronouncements and creating scandals. I love playing chess but not in that sort of hostile atmosphere."

But some effort was made to orchestrate the boycott discreetly. Tournament director Isaac Kashdan sent a December 13, 1978, cable to Baturinsky asking if two or more Soviets would play at Lone Pine 1979. The Soviet Federation replied January 12 that Romanishin and Tsheskovsky would be going. But on February 8 the Soviets asked for a full list of invitees. Kashdan replied blandly that Lone Pine was an open tournament, with no one invited or barred. Nothing further was heard from Moscow until March 20, five days before the first round,

when Kashdan received this message: "Please urgently cable if Grandmaster Korchnoi playing Tournament Lone Pine. Regards USSR Chess Federation." This was the first mention of Korchnoi in their correspondence. Kashdan replied affirmatively the next day and the Soviets canceled immediately without giving a reason.

There was a sequel: The next year Korchnoi was occupied with a Candidates match so Yefim Geller and Balashov played in Lone Pine. But for the 1981 tournament Korchnoi worked out a plan to arrive at the Sierra town without notice. "They had no escape," he said of the two Soviet players, Romanishin and Artur Yusupov, when they discovered Korchnoi had been added to the crosstable at the last moment. The two Soviet players found themselves trapped in the remote town, situated between Death Valley and Mount Whitney, with no scheduled bus to arrive for four days. They called Moscow for directions and were told to go ahead with the tournament. The Lone Pine organizers tried to avert a confrontation but after six rounds there was no way to avoid pairing Korchnoi with Yusupov. Korchnoi registered a symbolic victory over the boycott:

D11 Slav Defense
Lone Pine, 1981
white Viktor Korchnoi,
black Artur Yusupov

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 Bg4 5 h3
Bxf3 6 Qxf3 e6 7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 Nc3 g6
9 0-0 Bg7 10 Rd1 0-0 11 Qe2 Qc7 12 Bd2

With the two-bishop advantage, White poses a psychological question for his 21-year-old opponent: Should Black open the center with ...e5, or wait for White's e3-e4 or b2-b4-b5?

12 ... Rad8 13 Racl Qb8 14 Be1 Rfe8
15 Qc2 Rc8 16 b4! e5 17 dxe5 Nxe5
18 cxd5 Nxd5 19 Be2!

White prepares f2–f4. Should Black simplify or allow an isolated d5-pawn?

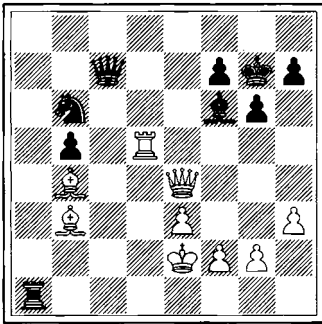
19 ... Nxb4 20 Qb3 Nd5 21 Nxd5 cxd5
22 Qxd5 Rxc1 23 Rxc1 Rc8 24 Rd1 Nc6
25 Bc4 Qc7 26 Qe4

A fine centralizing move that anticipates
26 ... Rd8.

26 ... Ne5 27 Bb3 b5 28 Qd5 a6 29 a4!
Bf6 30 Qe4 Nc4 31 axb5 axb5 32 Rd5
Ra8 33 Kf1!

Avoiding 33 Rxb5 Ra1! 34 Bxc4 Rxe1+,
which should draw.

33 ... Ra1? 34 Ke2! Kg7 35 Bb4! Nb6



After 35
... Nb6

36 Rd6 Rc1 37 Rxf6! Kxf6 38 Qd4+ Kg5

Or 38 ... Qe5 39 Be7+.

39 Be7+! Qxe7 40 Qf4+ 1–0

White mates in three with 40 ... Kh5
41 g4+ Kh4 42 g5+.

The next world championship cycle continued with Tal winning the Riga 1979 Interzonal, two and a half points ahead of Polugayevsky, who became Tal's opponent in the first round of the next Candidates cycle. Kapengut, who had played a training match with Tal, suggested to Tal's wife that they add a talented 16-year-old, Kasparov, to Tal's camp as a sparring partner. "God

forbid! Mischa can't stand young talent!" she said. But the two men later played a secret, unfinished match in preparation for his match with Polugayevsky.

B19 Caro-Kann Defense
Training Match, Baku, 1980
white Mikhail Tal,
black Garry Kasparov

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4
Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 h4 h6 7 Nf3 Nd7 8 h5
Bh7 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 Qc7 11 Bd2
Ngf6 12 Qe2 e6 13 Ne5 c5 14 Nxd7
Qxd7 15 dxc5 Bxc5 16 0–0–0 Qa4
17 Bc3 Rc8

Black avoids 17 ... Qxa2?? 18 Qb5+
as well as 17 ... Be7 18 Kbl Qc6 19 Rhel 0–0
20 Bxf6 Bxf6 21 Ne4 which is doubled-
edged.

18 Bxf6 gxf6 19 Kb1 Be7 20 Rd3 Rg8
21 Rhd1 f5!

Black has excellent play and can connect
his rooks via ...Rg4–c4. Tal's tactical
antenna pick up the wrong signals.

22 Nxf5? exf5 23 Rel

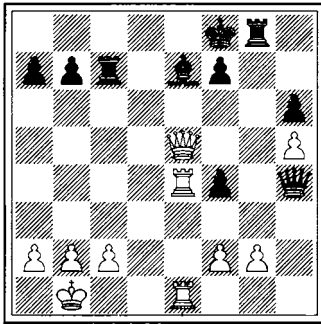
The unsoundness of the sacrifice is also
shown by 23 Re3 Rc7 24 Ra3 Qe4
(25 Qxe4 fxe4 26 Rxa7 f5 and wins). After
23 Rel White may have counted on 23 ...
Rc7 24 Qd2, threatening Rd8 mate and
Qxh6.

23 ... Qh4! 24 Re3 Rc7 25 Qb5+ Kf8
26 Qe5 f4! 27 Re4 (*see diagram*)

Black can defend with 27 ... Rd7 but
forcing a favorable endgame is better.

27 ... Rc5! 28 Qxe7+ Qxe7 29 Rxe7
R×g2 30 Rxb7

White is also in poor shape after 30 b4
Rb5 31 Rc7 R×b4+ 32 Kc1 f3.



After 27 Re4

30 ... R×f2 31 a4 f3 32 Re4? Rf5 33 Rb5
R×b5 34 a×b5 Re2 35 Rf4 f2 36 Ka2
R×c2

Nothing can stop the march of Black's
king now.

37 Kb3 Re2 38 Kc3 Ke7 39 b4 Ke6
40 Kd3 Rb2 0-1

Polugayevsky won the first two games of the best-of-ten quarter-finals with Tal and eliminated him by 5½-2½. Korchnoi advanced to meet Polugayevsky in the semi-finals after another bitter match with Petrosian, in Velden. During the match Korchnoi said he feared for his life and asked for bulletproof glass between him and spectators. Petrosian accused arbiter Harry Golombek of bias and said the Englishman upset him by searching his belongings in an antechamber where he rested. Despite the rhetoric, Korchnoi's superiority over his old enemy was now obvious. Petrosian's defeat left only one Soviet in the Candidates cycle, the first time that had happened at the semi-finals stage.

Both semifinal matches were held in August 1980. Polugayevsky put up a much better fight than three years before and the match was tied after 12 games.

Knowledge of the habits of the Soviet delegation turned out to be a key to the decisive game:

A34 English Opening
Candidates Semifinals, 14th game,
Buenos Aires, 1980
white Lev Polugayevsky,
black Viktor Korchnoi

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 c5

Surprising Polugayevsky was difficult. His longtime second, Vladimir Bagirov, once recalled the first day he spent analyzing with him: They began at 10 A.M. and stopped at 6 P.M., when Polugayevsky said, "I have to apologize for working so little today."

But Korchnoi's seconds Michael Stean and Yasser Seirawan had spent the night before this game to find something new, and for the first time in the match Korchnoi avoided 2 ... e6.

3 Nc3 d5 4 c×d5 N×d5 5 e4 Nb4 6 Bc4

This variation, known since the 1930s, gained considerable attention after Tal won a game at the Riga 1979 Interzonal over Polugayevsky with 6 ... Be6 7 B×e6 Nd3+ 8 Kf1 f×e6 9 Ng5 Qb6. White tried 10 Qe2? and had a bad game after 10 ... c4! 11 b3 h6 12 Nf3 Nc6 13 b×c4 0-0-0.

6 ... Nd3+ 7 Ke2 Nf4+ 8 Kf1 Ne6

This is what Korchnoi's team had prepared: This knight has made six of Black's eight moves but has extracted two concessions, loss of castling and a backward d2-pawn. For many years, only one game was cited in the opening books, Averbakh-Bondarevsky, Moscow 1946, which continued 9 Ne5 Qd4 10 Qa4+. Team Korchnoi had improvements.

But on the morning of the day this game was played Emanuel Sztejn, Korchnoi's press attaché, picked up a copy of the leading Argentine newspaper *Clarín* and discovered that Portisch had just used the same opening against Robert Hübner in the other

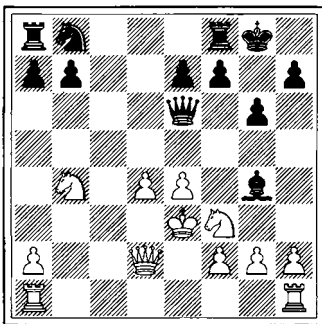
semifinals, in Italy. That game was drawn but Larsen suggested an improvement for White. Result: “near-panic” in the Korchnoi hotel room. Had the Soviets seen Clarin? Sztein took Korchnoi for a walk and told him it was not likely that Alexey Serov, the head of the Soviet delegation, would part with hard currency to buy a newspaper. “As for the embassy, they won’t send the papers until tomorrow. After all it’s Sunday,” he said. So Korchnoi felt confident enough to go ahead with his prepared line.

9 b4 cxb4 10 Nd5 g6 11 Bb2 Bg7 12 Bxg7 Nxc7 13 Nxb4 0–0 14 d4?! Bg4 15 Ke2?

Polugayevsky unknowingly followed Hübner until here. The German played 15 Qd2 Bxf3 16 gxf3 Nc6 17 Nxc6 bxc6 18 f4 e6.

15 ... Qd6 16 Qd2 Ne6 17 Bxe6 Qxe6 18 Ke3

Black is also better after 18 Qd3 f5 19 e5 a5 20 Nc2 Nc6 and ... Rad8. Polugayevsky intended 19 Ne5 and had prepared to meet 18 ... Nd7 with 19 Ng5 Qf6 20 h4! followed by 21 Nd5 or 21 f3.



After 18 Ke3

Tal’s second Koblenz expressed a common view when he said Polugayevsky never got close to the world championship because he could not deal with the higher level of pressure in the Candidates cycle. Here, however, he makes a bold decision which puts his king in the center of the board.

18 ... f5! 19 Qd3

Not 19 Ne5 Nd7 20 f3 Nxe5 21 dxe5 fxe4 22 fxg4 Rad8 and ... Qb6+.

19 ... fxe4! 20 Qxe4 Qxe4+ 21 Kxe4 Nd7 22 Rhc1 Rf5!

Black has a strong attack despite the absence of queens.

23 Rc7 Nf6+ 24 Kd3 a5 25 Nc2 Nd5 26 Rxb7 Nf4+ 27 Ke4 Nxc2 28 Ne5 Rf4+ 29 Kd5 Bf5!

Black wins material and Polugayevsky plays it out until time control.

30 Rc7 Rd8+ 31 Kc5 Bxc2 32 Nc6 Re8 33 Nxe7+ Kf8 34 Nc6 Rf5+ 35 Ne5 Nf4 36 Rxc7 Kg8 37 Rd7 Nd3+ 38 Kb6 Nxe5 39 dxe5 Rxe5 40 Rcl Rf6+ 41 Ka7 Rxf2 0–1

With this victory Korchnoi and his team advanced to meet Hübner in the Candidates finals. That best-of-16 match ended when the German, trailing 4½–3½ with two games adjourned, abruptly conceded. Once again the Soviet Chess Federation’s worst enemy was the official world championship challenger. Spassky later found it easy to explain Korchnoi’s startling success at age 49. “The thing is he always worked on chess more than everyone,” he said in a 1997 *Shakhmaty v Rossii* interview. “When he lived in the USSR I called him a Hero of Socialist Labor”—a top civilian award. “But when he remained in the West I began to call him a Hero of Capitalist Labor!”

Korchnoi later maintained that the Soviets “control FIDE.” But the Soviet Federation had serious problems with the new FIDE president, Fridrik Olafsson, who succeeded Max Euwe when Euwe declined to run again for the post in 1978. Olafsson soon took up the plight of Korchnoi’s family. Since 1977

the challenger had repeatedly called for Soviet authorities to allow his wife and son Igor to emigrate to Israel. He even wrote to Brezhnev but, "The only reply is that my Soviet citizenship has been revoked and that I am making anti-Soviet remarks," he said. In November 1979 Korchnoi's son was arrested on draft evasion charges and was sentenced to two and a half years in prison. As the September 1981 starting date of the world championship match approached, Bela Korchnoi remained in Leningrad while her son was in a Urals labor camp.

Meanwhile, there was another problem: Boris Gulko and his wife, Anna Akhsharumova, the 1976 Soviet Women's Champion, applied for emigration to Israel in December, 1978. Gulko, the German-born son of a Red Army instructor, had become a grandmaster only in 1976. But he had registered a string of recent successes, including first place at Cienfuegos 1976, playing for the winning Burevestnik team in the 1976 Soviet Team Championship and tying for first in the 45th Soviet Championship in 1977. He was given special attention, such as having his opinion on the 45th Championship lead the top of the first page of *Shakhmaty v SSSR* in February 1978, and cowriting the article on the special FIDE Zonal tournament held in Lvov in April. Gulko, who looked several years older than he was, missed a chance for his second Interzonal and only tied for seventh at Lvov (well below Balashov and Vaganian, who finished first and second). But he managed to win some impressive games:

A68 Modern Benoni Defense

FIDE Zonal, Lvov, 1978

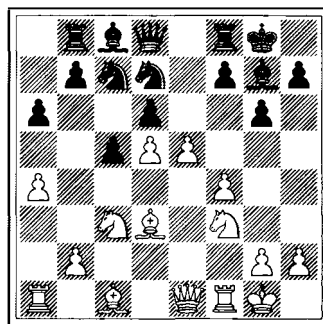
white Boris Gulko,

black Vladimir Savon

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 d5 exd5
5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+ Nfd7
9 a4 0-0 10 Nf3 Na6?!

Black could anticipate e4-e5 with ...Nf6 and ...Bg4 but prefers to prepare ...b7-b5.

11 0-0 Nc7 12 Bd3 a6 13 Qe1 Rb8 14 e5!



After 14 e5

"It's not hard to guess I was a 'student' of Tal's," Gulko later told 64. "His creativity had a strong influence on the first period of my chess career. I don't know whether it was positive or negative but it seemed to me abnormal to win a game without sacrificing."

Here he avoids the positional 14 a5 b5 15 axb6 in favor of kingside complications.

14 ... Nb6 15 f5! dxex5 16 fxg6 fxg6

Black has better survival chances after 16 ... hxg6 17 Ng5 f6, e.g., 18 Qe4 fxg5 19 Rxf8+ Kxf8 20 Qxg6 Qf6.

17 Bg5 Qd6 18 Qh4

Black should play 18 ... Nbxd5 19 Bc4 Be6, although White has excellent play after 20 Rad1 Qc6 21 Bh6. But he decides to capture with the other knight and retain control of c4.

18 ... Ncxd5? 19 Rad1! c4 20 Nxd5

This was criticized after the game and 20 Be4! Qc5+ 21 Kh1 recommended, e.g., 21 ... Be6 22 Be3! and 23 Ng5.

20 ... cxd3

Black realizes that 20 ... Qxd5 21 Bxg6 Qc5+ 22 Kh1 hxg6 loses to 23 Be7 and 24 Ng5. But 20 ... Nxd5 should hold.

21 Ne7+ Kh8 22 Nxe5! Bf5

Or 22 ... Rxf1+ 22 Rxf1 Bxe5 23 Bf6 and mates.

23 Rxf5! Bxe5 24 Rxe5! Rf7 and 1–0

Shortly before he applied for emigration, Gulko's stock began to plummet. His minus score on the 1978 Olympic team was cited as one reason for the failure to win gold medals. Gulko was not even allowed to continue to play after five games in Buenos Aires, perhaps because he was spotted by KGB agents attached to the team at a bookstore examining works of Solzhenitsyn and was followed to a movie theater where a film forbidden in the USSR was shown. After they applied for exit papers, the name of Gulko and Akhsharumov disappeared from the Soviet rating list and their financial resources dried up. Lev Khariton, who translated Fischer's *My Sixty Memorable Games* for a Russian edition before himself emigrating, later said Gulko was the best known of the Soviet citizens denied the opportunity to emigrate. Or, as the joke went, Gulko was the best chessplayer among the "refuseniks" and the most experienced refusenik among the chessplayers.

Gulko suspected the authorities dug in their heels because of a worsening international climate — the Iranian hostage crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan — as well as the Soviets' unwillingness to allow a strong grandmaster to emigrate and become another second to Korchnoi. His application came during a sharp reduction in Jewish emigration: 51,320 Soviet Jews were allowed to leave the USSR in 1979 but only 2,670 in 1982. It was not surprising that the Gulkos faced a hard line during a period when Anatoly Shcharansky was being tried

for "anti-Soviet agitation" and KGB chief Yuri Andropov was moving to crush the dissident movement.

Gulko did not play in another major tournament until June 1981, when he won the Moscow Championship, an open event, ahead of 12 grandmasters. The result went unnoticed in the Moscow press but appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* after Gulko made a brief but startling speech at the tournament prize-giving ceremony at the Central Chess Club. While embarrassed — as well as sympathetic — players listened, Gulko announced he had written a letter to FIDE demanding that it help Korchnoi's family to emigrate.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Federation bitterly opposed Olafsson's decision to delay the 1981 world championship match a month so he could apply pressure on behalf of Korchnoi's family. Nothing was resolved at a FIDE Congress in Atlanta. At one point, according to Golombek, Olafsson had to ask Sevastianov, the Soviet delegate, "to refrain from being insolent." After another dispute about the playing site, Korchnoi's first choice — Merano, Italy — was selected by a drawing of lots.

Like a Cook with a Potato

It did not help. Korchnoi managed only a half point in the first four games of his second world championship match. He grimly told a member of his team: "I brought eight suits with me. Maybe you won't see all of them." Even Korchnoi's seconds were mystified by his play. Michael Stean told *Sports Illustrated*, "If he were a horse, he'd be dope-tested." Korchnoi later offered a characteristic explanation: More than 40 "specialists" had arrived in Merano "without having to submit to a customs search," he said. They brought "eight large cartons of secret equipment" that were kept in a nearby villa where no one else, "not even Karpov's

wife,” was allowed to be near. After the match, he said, the equipment was removed at night by trucks. The chairman of the match organizing committee said the Soviet delegation was only checking the noise, radiation, water and climate. (A 1999 book claimed KGB archives showed 18 “operations officers” had been working to ensure Korchnoi’s defeat in 1978.)

Victoria Shepherd, the Ananda Marga member who earned a brief moment of celebrity status at Baguio in 1978, had another explanation for his bad start. Shepherd arrived in Merano to improve Korchnoi’s concentration through meditation. But the challenger lost two games right afterwards because, she said, “the meditation he was doing made him too calm, too relaxed.”

D54 Queen’s Gambit Declined
World Championship Match,
ninth game, Merano, 1981
white Viktor Korchnoi,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 c4 e6 2 Nc3 d5 3 d4 Be7 4 Nf3 Nf6
 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 0-0 7 Rc1 dxc4

Karpov said this theoretical novelty, in what seems like a familiar position, showed the Merano match was creative. Giving up the center is usually punished by 8 e4. But here that could be met by 8 ... Nxe4!

8 e3 c5 9 Bxc4 cxd4 10 exd4 Nc6 11 0-0
 Nh5

This ensures a trade of bishops that frees Black’s game and is better than 11 ... Nd5 12 Bg3. White’s problem is that the liquidation of his one weakness with d4-d5 will increase chances of a draw, something Korchnoi could not afford.

12 Bxe7 Nxe7 13 Bb3 Nf6 14 Ne5 Bd7
 15 Qe2 Rc8 16 Ne4? Nxe4 17 Qxe4 Bc6!

Exchanges of minor pieces generally help Black because they make the isolated d-pawn more of a target.

18 Nxc6 Rxc6 19 Rc3 Qd6 20 g3 Rd8
 21 Rd1 Rb6! 22 Qe1 Qd7 23 Rcd3

The tide is shifting inexorably to Black, and the tactics tend to help him, e.g., 23 Rc5 Rd6 24 Rdcl Nc6 25 Ba4 is met by 25 ... Nxd4! 26 Bxd7 Nf3+ 27 Kf1 Nxe1 28 Bxe6 Nd3.

23 ... Rd6 24 Qe4 Qc6! 25 Qf4 Nd5
 26 Qd2 Qb6 27 Bxd5

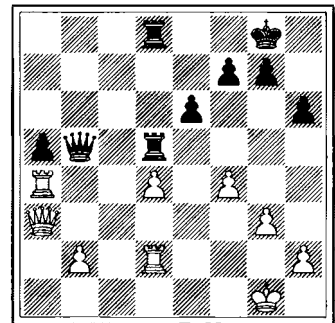
A major concession but White had to do something about 27 ... Nb4.

27 ... Rxd5 28 Rb3 Qc6 29 Qc3 Qd7
 30 f4 b6 31 Rb4 b5!

Black threatens 32 ... a5, winning the d-pawn.

32 a4 bxa4 33 Qa3 a5 34 Rxa4 Qb5
 35 Rd2

After 35 Rd2



35 ... e5!

Karpov said he also concerned alternatives such as 35 ... Rc8 and 35 ... g5 but he was influenced by “the geometry of the position” and calculated the e-pawn move until he found the justification at move 37.

36 fxe5 Rxe5 37 Qa1 Qe8! 38 dxe5

World Championship Match, Merano, October 1–November 18, 1981

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Karpov	1	1	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	½
Korchnoi	0	0	½	0	½	1	½	½	0	½
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Score	
Karpov	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	1	6–2	
Korchnoi	½	½	1	0	½	½	½	0	2–6	

Virtual surrender. Black threatened 38 ... Re1+ as well as 38 ... Re2 and 38 ... Re4.

38 ... Rxd2 39 Rxa5 Qc6 40 Ra8+ Kh7 41 Qb1+ g6 42 Qf1 Qc5+ 43 Kh1 Qd5+ 0–1

And 44 Kgl Rd1 (not 44 ... Qxa8 45 Qxf7+).

Unlike their first two matches, there was no Korchnoi comeback in 1981. Karpov's 6–2 (*i.e.*, 11–7) victory was the quickest in a world championship match in sixty years. *Shakhmaty v SSSR's* first inside page showed another exchange of telegrams between Karpov and Brezhnev ("Much-honored Leonid Ilych! I am glad to report that your order has been fulfilled") along with an announcement that Karpov had been given the Order of Lenin.

At the closing press conference, Korchnoi used a Russian expression to sum up the match: "He coped with me like a cook with a potato." But he refused to admit Karpov played well. "He played feebly ... badly in Baguio and no better here." Korchnoi insisted "strange forces" were at work in Merano and said there was "no doubt" that Karpov's yogurt was drugged. "This match was a great achievement of Soviet chemistry," he said.

Karpov's Heirs

In May 1981 Karpov was 30, the age often cited as a chessplayer's peak. No one knew whether he could sustain his seven-year streak of successes or would fade slowly the way Spassky, Petrosian and Tal had. Preparing for the post-Karpov generation proceeded on several levels.

Petrosian began his own Botvinnik-like school in 1977: sixteen promising youngsters, from 13 cities, who did homework under his tutelage and then met for 10 days at a Spartak camp. Smyslov headed his own school in 1978 and by 1980 its students included a host of future grandmasters: Evgeny Bareev, Alexey Dreyev, Valery Salov, Sergei Tiviakov and Ildar Ibragimov.

The *Belaya Ladya* program proved to be an excellent way of identifying talent. Salov, from Leningrad School No. 1, was first recognized for his endgame skill in the 1973 championship at Izmail in Moldavia, when he was only 9 and the youngest player in the finals. The other major youth program, the Pioneer palace competition, was attracting nearly 1,000 teams. Kasparov recalled that the beginning of "big chess" for him was in 1974 when at the beginning of the finals match, Tal shook hands with all his opponents, including the 10-year-old Pioneer from Baku. "In what other competition do kids compete on even terms with the strongest players in the world?"

Taimanov, a Leningrad Palace graduate, said of the finals.

By the end of the 1970s the most promising crop of young Soviets since the 1950s was emerging. Among them were Yusupov, Dolmatov and Jaan Ehlevest. In August 1980, while Kasparov was winning the World Junior (under 20) in Dortmund, Salov won the World Cadet (under 16) Championship at Le Havre.

B33 Sicilian Defense
World Cadet Championship,
Le Havre, 1980
white Piotr Staniszewski,
black Valery Salov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 c4 Qa5+

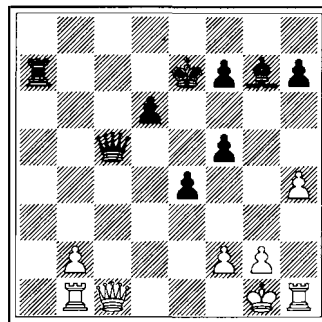
This was played in the next to last round and both players were prepared for an extremely sharp and heavily analyzed opening.

13 Kf1 Bxd5 14 exd5 Nd4 15 cxb5 axb5 16 Nc2 Nxc2 17 Qxc2 e4 18 Qc6+ Ke7 19 Bxb5 Ra7 20 a4

This variation gained notoriety after the game Ivanović–Sveshnikov, Yugoslavia–USSR match, 1976, when Black won a remarkable game after 20 Qe8+ Kf6 21 g4 Re7 22 Qb8 Ke5!.

20 ... Bg7 21 Qc1 Rb8 22 Rb1 Rxb5! 23 axb5 Qxb5+ 24 Kg1 Qxd5 25 h4 Qc5!
(see diagram)

Black makes the first improvement, over Torre–Quinteros, Amsterdam 1977, when White obtained the edge after 25 ... Be5 26 Rh3 f4 27 Ra3! Rd7 28 b4. He offers a queen trade that would benefit his pawns and well-placed king. White should play 26 Qf4.



After 25
 ... Qc5

26 Qxc5 dxc5 27 Rh3 Rb7 28 Rc1?

Too slow. White needs to activate his king, even at the cost of the b-pawn.

28 ... Bd4 29 b3 f4! 30 Kf1 f5 31 Rc2 Ra7 32 Ke2 Ra1 33 Rd2 Rg1 34 Rh2 Bc3

White is playing virtually a rook down and now reaches a lost rook-and-pawn endgame. Of course, 35 Rc2 or 35 Rd5 allow mate on e1.

35 Rd1 f3+ 36 gxf3 exf3+ 37 Kd3 Rxd1+ 38 Kxc3 Rf1 39 Kc4 Kd6 40 h5 h6 41 Kc3 Ke5 42 Kc4 Rc1+ 43 Kd3 Rb1 44 Kc3 Rg1! 45 Kc4 Rg2 46 Rh1 Rxf2 47 Kxc5 Rb2 48 b4 f2 49 b5 Kf4 50 b6 Kg3 0–1

Further evidence that a new generation had arrived was provided in another match-tournament of eight-player national teams. It was in honor of the 26th Communist Party *syezd* and was held in Moscow in the huge Red Army athletic hall. As expected the “First Team” won — led by Karpov and three former world champions, Petrosian, Tal and, in one of his final Soviet events, Boris Spassky. Their team scored 28½–19½. But a “Second Team” that included several members of the Karpov generation, including Tseshkovsky, Romanishin, Gennady Kuzmin and Viktor Kupreichik, finished a distant fourth, with 21–27. The battle for second place was waged between the “Grandmasters

of the Older Generation” (Smyslov, Bronstein, Taimanov, Vasiukov, and Averbakh) and the “Youth Team” (Yusupov, Dolmatov, Smbat Lputian, Maya Chiburdanidze and the two cochampions of the Soviet Union for 1981, Kasparov and Lev Psakhis). “Youth,” with 23½–24½, finished a half point ahead of age. In the key match between the two, the youngsters won 6½–1½:

A04 Réti Opening

Match-Tournament of National Teams,
Moscow, 1981

white Mark Taimanov,
black Lev Psakhis

1 Nf3 c5 2 b3 b6 3 Bb2 Bb7 4 e3 Nf6
5 d4 g6 6 Be2 Bg7 7 0–0 0–0 8 c4 e6
9 dxc5 bxc5 10 Nc3 Qe7 11 Qd2 Rd8
12 Rfd1 d5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 Rac1

White has adopted an orthodox setup to squeeze the hanging pawns but underestimates Black’s resources.

14 ... Bh6! 15 Na4 Ne4 16 Qc2 Nd7 17 b4 d4!

Not 17 ... cx b4 18 Qc7 Rab8 19 Bd4! Rdc8 20 Qa5 with strong queenside pressure in exchange for a pawn.

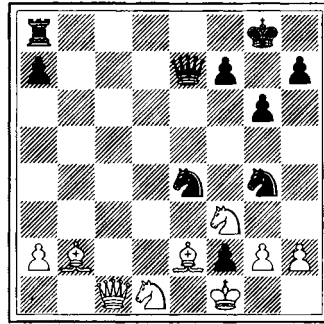
18 bxc5 dxe3 19 c6 exf2+ 20 Kf1 Bxc6!

Black avoids 20 ... Rac8 21 cxb7! Rxc2 22 Rxc2.

21 Qxc6 Bxc1 22 Qxc1 Ndf6 23 Nc3 Rxd1+ 24 Nxd1 Ng4! (see diagram)

Anatoly Vaiser, a Siberian master, found that even on the best defense, 25 Bd4! Re8! (threatening ... Ng3+) 26 Qb2!, Black would still have a dangerous attack after 26 ... Nxh2+ 27 Nxh2 Ng3+ 28 Kxf2 Nxe2.

25 Qf4? Re8!



After 24
... Ng4

The threat of 26 ... Ng3+ wins: 26 Qxg4 Ng3+ 27 Kxf2 Nh1+! 28 Kgl Qxe2 29 Qd4 Qe1+!

26 Ne5 Qf6! 27 g3 Nxh2+! 28 Kg2 Qxf4 29 gx f4 Rd8!

Now 30 Nd3 loses to 30 ... f1(Q)+ 31 Bxf1 Nxf1 32 Kxf1 Rxd3 and 30 Nc3 to 30 ... Rd2 31 Bcl f1(Q)+.

30 Nxf2 Rd2 31 Nxe4 Rxe2+! 32 Nf2 Rxb2 33 Nd3 Rxa2 34 Kxh2 a5 35 Kg3 a4 0–1

The team tournament was more impressive than a high-profile grandmaster tournament in Moscow around the same time, won by Karpov without a loss. Only 30 of those 91 games ended decisively. While many fans were evaluating Kasparov’s progress, the major surprise of the tournament was the man who shared second prize with him and Polugayevsky. The 60-year-old Smyslov still had the ability to make world-class opponents look a bit foolish.

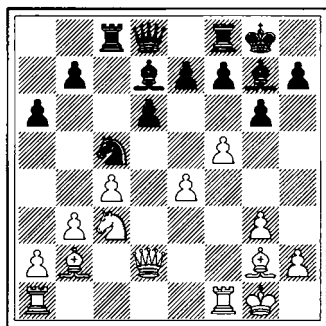
A39 English Opening Moscow International, 1981

white, Vasily Smyslov,
black Jan Timman

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 c5 4 Bg2 cxd4
5 Nx d4 Bg7 6 c4 Nc6 7 Nc3 Nx d4
8 Qxd4 0–0 9 0–0 d6 10 Qd3 Bf5 11 e4
Be6 12 b3 a6 13 Bb2 Nd7 14 Qd2 Nc5
15 f4! Rc8

“Black underestimates the danger,” Smyslov wrote in 64. “It was necessary to take steps against the further advance of the f-pawn,” that is 15 ... f5 16 e×f5 B×f5. As the game goes, White’s 17th move “apparently slipped past Timman’s field of vision,” he wrote.

16 f5 Bd7



After 16
... Bd7

17 f6! e×f6

Worse is 17 ... B×f6 18 R×f6! e×f6 19 Nd5 followed by N×f6+ or B×f6/Ne7+.

18 Nd5 f5 19 e×f5 B×f5 20 B×g7 K×g7 21 Qd4+ f6 22 g4! Be6 23 N×f6 R×f6

The other alternative, to 23 ... Kh6 24 g5+ K×g5 25 Qf4 mate, was resignation.

24 g5 Bf5 25 Rad1! b5 26 c×b5 a×b5 27 g×f6+ Q×f6 28 Q×f6+ K×f6 29 R×d6+ Ne6 30 Rb6 Rc5 31 Re1 1-0

As the 1970s gave way to the 1980s there was a sharp increase in chess publishing. In 1978 only 20 chess books, in various languages of the USSR, appeared with a total circulation of 1.3 million. But the figures grew: to 35 books and 1.85 million in 1979; 43 books and 2.8 million in 1980; 40 books and 3.36 million in 1981. For decades no book had exceeded the print run of 240,000 copies of Panov’s 1964 *First Book of a Chessplayer*. But this was soon topped by 300,000 copies of the Karpov–Gik *Chess Kaleidoscope*.

Also, Soviet television had discovered chess and vice versa. The first chess program appeared in 1956, a report on the 23d Soviet Championship that was broadcast from a Leningrad studio. There were also special broadcasts from Riga on the 25th Soviet Championship, and later from the Botvinnik–Tal matches, with commentary by Averbakh and Alexander Kotov, and from the Botvinnik–Petrosian match, led by Kotov. David Bronstein helped organize a monthly 1967 series called “Four Knights’ Club” which dealt with chess history. Most impressive of all was “Chess School,” a weekly 30-minute program that began airing on national television. It set off a small chess boom and ran until 1988.

Kotov taped his last “Chess School” on December 13, 1981, before leaving for Brussels. His old friend Alberic O’Kelly de Galway had sent him an invitation, a *priglasheniye*, to visit Belgium. An invitation was essential to obtaining the necessary paperwork to convince an exit commission. But on October 3, O’Kelly died suddenly. Kotov apparently agonized over whether he should go ahead with the trip and risk the consequences of O’Kelly’s demise becoming known. But a *priglasheniye* was a *priglasheniye*, something you did not pass up lightly. Kotov went west, told no one in authority, came home — and died of a heart attack on January 7. When Smyslov was told what happened, he did not seem surprised. The former World Champion pointed to the sky with a finger and whispered, “O’Kelly invited him....”

The Soviet team that won the Lucerne Olympiad in 1982 had only two players, Polugayevsky and Tal, over the age of 31. Kasparov, with a 8½–2½ score on second board, Belyavsky, who was 7–3 on fourth and Artur Yusupov, 8–2 as second reserve, were the top scorers of the team. Belyavsky, who won a strong international at Sarajevo earlier in the year, helped in the crucial match:

B97 Sicilian Defense
Olympiad, Lucerne, 1982
white Alexander Belyavsky,
black Josef Pinter

1 e5 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6 8 Qd2 Qxb2
 9 Nb3

Belyavsky had used this trappy alternative to 9 Rb1 against Stean in a game that ended abruptly after 9 ... Nbd7 10 Bd3 b5 11 0–0 Nc5?? 12 Nxc5 dxc5 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Rab1 Qa3 15 Nxb5! 1–0 (in view of 15 ... axb5 16 Bxb5+ Ke7 17 Rfd1, threatening mate on d6 and d8).

9 ... Nc6 10 Bd3 Be7 11 0–0 Qa3 12 Rael
 h6 13 Bh4 Qb4 14 Bf2

White has two basic ideas, the trapping of the queen (15 a3! Qxa3 16 Ral Qb4 17 Ra4) and the e4–e5 advance.

14 ... Na5 15 a3! Nxb3 16 cxb3 Qa5!
 17 b4 Qd8 18 e5 dxe5 19 fxe5 Nd5
 20 Ne4 0–0 21 Bb1!

Preparing a Qh7 mate threat.

21 ... Bd7 22 Qc2 Rc8 23 Bc5 g6 24 Qd2
 Kg7?

White has good compensation but here both sides begin to go astray. Black should insert ... Bxc5+ before moving his king, because now 25 Nd6! would have given White a clear advantage.

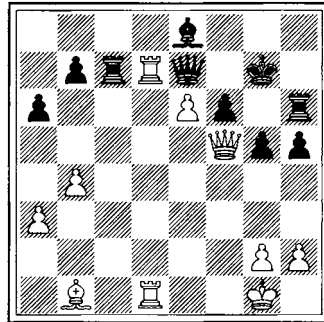
25 Bxe7? Qxe7 26 Rf3 Bb5 27 Nf6 Rh8?

Despite Black's weaknesses he could have replied 27 ... Rfd8!, after which White has nothing better than perpetual check with 28 Qh6+! Kxh6 29 Rh3+.

28 Nxd5 exd5 29 e6! f6?

After this (instead of 29 ... f5!) Black is fatally compromised on the light squares.

30 Rg3 g5 31 Qxd5 Be8 32 Qf5 Rc4
 33 Rf3 h5 34 Rd1! Rh6 35 Rfd3 Rc7
 36 Rd7!



After 36 Rd7

Anyway. Black cannot both defend g6 and prevent the new d-pawn from queen-ing.

36 ... Bxd7 37 exd7 Qd8 38 Qe6 Rh8
 39 Qe4! Rh6 40 Qe8 Rh8 41 Qg6+ Kf8
 42 Ba2 1–0

There was also a major shakeup at the Sports Committee. Baturinsky was out, and Nikolai Krogius was in. Krogius, who defended his doctoral dissertation in 1980, had had relatively little chess contact for years. But, he recalled, on New Year's Eve, 1980, he was unexpectedly offered the job of heading a newly created Chess Department of the Sports Committee. Iser Kuperman, the checker champion, said Baturinsky's fall came when he offended Petrosian by failing to put him on the 1980 Olympic team. Petrosian, "who knew many of Baturinsky's dark tricks, reported some of them to the Party Central Committee," and despite support by Karpov and others, he was ousted, Kuperman wrote.

The Sports Committee also got an infusion of authority when the Party Central Committee and the government Council of Ministers issued a September 11, 1981, resolution calling for "mass development of

physical culture and sport.” A year later, *Shakhmaty v SSSR* noted that there were 83 million Soviet citizens engaged in more than 70 forms of sport: 6.8 million were involved in light athletics, 5.69 million in volleyball, 4.715 million in skiing, 4.5 million in soccer, 3.94 million in basketball—and then came 3.6 million in chess. In Moscow alone 71,178 people “regularly take part,” it was reported, in competitive chess, compared with 32,437 in Leningrad. There were 48 Soviet grandmasters, 49 international masters, and 700 masters. In the year prior to the report, nearly 200,000 new people had become involved in chess, 14,500 new judges and arbiters were trained and 200 new clubs opened, the magazine claimed.

But something else was happening, something undetectable in statistics and Party decrees. Soviet superiority had been so obvious since 1952 that by the 1970s the leading players began to identify more and more with the opponents they met in Hastings, New York and Amsterdam. They were all, after all, *international* grandmasters. As Spassky later put it, Fischer was not just a foreigner, he was “the chairman of our *prof-soyuz!*” And when Soviet players realized they had more in common with foreigners than with Sports Committee, subversive ideas were bound to grow. Perhaps, they wondered, the chessplayers of the world should unite.

16

Scandals

Two bears will not get along in one den. — Russian proverb

The Soviet Union's final decade began with widespread food shortages, a continuing crackdown on dissidents and a sharp economic decline that mystified the aging Kremlin veterans who had lead the country since World War II. Yet chess in the USSR was riding its last great wave of success — marred only by a series of off-the-board embarrassments. In 1983 to 1985 there was a disastrous showdown with FIDE, the humiliating end of the Korchnoi boycott and the calamitous finish of the most controversial world championship match ever — leaving masters, fans, organizers and publications divided into two bitterly rival camps.

The first scandal unfolded in December 1982 at the Soviet Women's Championship, usually an event that got attention only because of the Sports Committee's efforts to give men's and women's events equal media treatment. In the key game of the Tallinn tournament, Nana Ioseliani, a 20-year-old women's grandmaster from Tbilisi, lost on time against Anna Akhsharumova, giving the latter a one-point lead.

D36 Queen's Gambit Declined Soviet Women's Championship, Tallinn, 1982

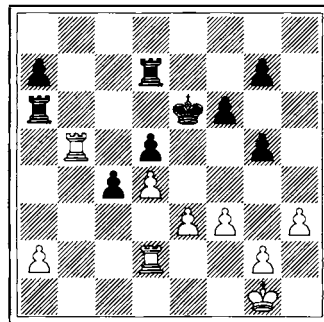
white Anna Akhsharumova,
black Nana Ioseliani

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 cxd5 exd5
5 Bf4 Nf6 6 e3 c6 7 Qc2 0-0 8 Nf3

Nbd7 9 h3 Re8 10 Bd3 Nf8 11 0-0 Bd6
12 Bxd6 Qxd6 13 Rab1 Ng6 14 b4 Bd7
15 Rfc1 Rac8 16 Qb3 Qe7 17 b5 Ne4
18 bxc6 bxc6 19 Qb4 Nd6 20 Ne2 Qf6
21 Bxg6! hxg6 22 Ne5

This ensures textbook minority-attack pressure against the Black pawns.

22 ... Re7 23 Nf4 Bf5 24 Rb2 Rec7
25 Qa5 Qe7 26 Qa6! g5 27 Nfd3 Nc4
28 Rb3 Nxe5 29 Nxe5 c5 30 Qa3 f6
31 Nf3 c4 32 Qxe7 Rxe7 33 Rb5 Rd7
34 Nd2 Rc6 35 f3 Bd3 36 Nb1 Bxb1
37 Rcxb1 Kf7 38 Rd1 Ra6 39 Rd2 Ke6
Black forfeits



After 39
... Ke6

But Ioseliani complained the next day that both clocks were running when her flag fell. An appeals court, the All-Union Board of Chess Arbiters, was convened in Moscow and made a curious ruling. Although the clock was 500 miles away, the appeals board decided the forfeit was improper and the game had to be continued from 39 ... Ke6.

Akhsharumova stood her ground citing the Soviet Codex, which said appeals must be made immediately, not a day after a game is over. She refused to resume play. As a result, it was Akhsharumova who was forfeited. Ioseliani won the tournament — and the clock incident was the subject of disparaging comments in the West. As usual, the incident was described obliquely in the Soviet media. *Shakhmaty v SSSR* noted mildly: “The tournament was well organized.... Unfortunately the team of judges (chief judge K. Zvorikina) made a series of errors, complicating the normal course of the competition.”

Another black eye came at what should have been a showcase event, one of the three 1982 Interzonals. For the first time an Interzonal was held in Moscow, at the 13-story Central House of Tourism that had been built for the 1980 Olympic Games. Yaacov Murey, then representing Israel, had qualified for the Interzonal stage and asked to be seeded into the one in his former hometown. He got his wish — over the objections of Viktor Baturinsky.

But Murey was not welcome. The organizers reluctantly permitted an Israeli flag to appear on his board, but always placed Murey in a back row on the playing stage. He was shocked to find that even David Bronstein refused to make contact with him. Bronstein had courageously refused to sign the joint letter denouncing Korchnoi six years before. But Murey, who had once served as his second, heard Bronstein say: “I won’t speak further with you!” The ugly mood worsened after Boris Gulko was arrested when he appeared outside the playing hall, holding a sign that read “Let us go to Israel.” He was roughed up and the tournament was abruptly moved from central Moscow to the Sport Hotel, nearly ten miles away, where security was heightened. Gulko tried to visit the new site and was interrogated again. Even Mikhail Botvinnik and Mark Taimanov could not get past security. It was simply a disgrace.

Garik

The Moscow tournament was the last Soviet chance to redeem the Interzonal stage of the 1981–1984 world championship cycle. In the two other Interzonals, only one Soviet player, 61-year-old Vasily Smyslov, qualified for the 1983 Candidates matches. Nikolai Krogius said one of the Interzonals, at Toluca, Mexico, was a “fiasco.” He criticized Artur Yusupov’s “irrational” use of the clock and the poor preparation of other Soviet players. But at Moscow 19-year-old Garry Kasparov and 28-year-old Alexander Belyavsky finished first and second and helped allay concerns about the future.

Kasparov was seven when two pivotal events in his life occurred: The first was the death of his father, Kim Moiseyevich Veinstein. From then on Kasparov relied on his mother, Klara, an electronics engineer who headed an institute laboratory until she devoted herself to “Garik’s” career. Also when he was seven, Kasparov’s young neighbor Rostik Korsunsky brought him to the Baku Pioneer Palace. The Palace had produced some strong players, such as Vladimir Bagirov and Tatiana Zatulovskaya, but no great ones in its 33 years, and Kasparov was quickly recognized as a player of extraordinary potential.

Klara Kasparova was more than a dotting mother. She was her son’s principle adviser long after he had won the world championship. She recalled that Garik was able to run the 100 meters in 12 seconds and was such a good swimmer he considered it as a career. She also indicated how much he was programmed for success. “Since he was nine there has not been a day for him without a schedule,” Klara said. At the legal minimum age of 12, the boy adopted a Russified version of his grandparents’ name, Kasparyan, and the name Kasparov immediately began to appear in chess magazines. Trainer Alexander Nikitin noticed him at the 1973 All-Union Youth Team Championship and

helped get him into the latest incarnation of Mikhail Botvinnik's school. The Patriarch was impressed with Kasparov's speed of calculation but noted he was a "very excitable boy. I had to insist he think before making a move." He added: "Every top-class chess-player has to know how to restrain himself, but he is bursting with energy."

B85 Sicilian Defense
Armenia-Azerbaijan Team Match,
Baku, 1973
white Elmar Magerramov,
black Garry Kasparov

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 e6 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 d4 cxd4
 5 Nx d4 d6 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Be2 a6 8 f4 Be7
 9 0-0 Bd7 10 Nb3 b5 11 Bf3 Qc7 12 a3

White has lost the battle of the opening by avoiding 10 a4 and misplacing his bishop (11 Bd3!). Kasparov delays castling and handles the queenside attack expertly.

12 ... Rb8 13 Qe1 a5 14 Qg3 a4! 15 Nd4
 Nxd4 16 Bxd4 b4 17 axb4 Rxb4 18 Ne2
 0-0

Vladimir Zak, who knew the predilection of young players to miss the right plan in the early middlegame, was greatly impressed by the sophistication of the 10-year-old Kasparov in this game.

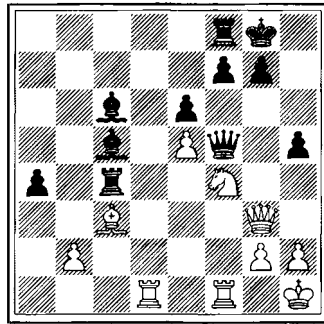
19 Bc3 Rc4 20 e5

There was no good defense of the e4-pawn.

20 ... dxe5 21 fxe5 Nd5 22 Bxd5 Qc5+
 23 Kh1 Qxd5 24 Nf4 Qe4 25 Rael

Zak pointed out that 25 Racl Rfc8 and 26 ... a3 was also bad.

25 ... Qxc2 26 Re2 Qf5 27 Ref2 Bc5
 28 Rd2 Bc6 29 Rdd1 h5!!



After 29
 ... h5

Having tied up White's pieces, Black sees that the advance of the h-pawn decides matters: 30 Nd3 h4! 31 Qe1 h3! or 31 Rxf5 hxg3 32 Rff1 Rh4 33 Nx c5 R xh2+ 34 Kgl R xg2+.

30 h3 h4! 31 Qh2 Qg5 32 Nd3 Bd4
 33 Rf4 Rd8 34 Rdf1 Rd7 35 Be1 Bxe5
 0-1

Kasparov was at least 2100 strength by the time he was 11 and his Baku team, captained by Bagirov, played in the Pioneer Palace team tournament finals. There he beat Yuri Averbakh, drew with Gennady Kuzmin and lost to Mikhail Tal, Taimanov and Lev Polugayevsky. Two years later Kasparov won the 1976 USSR Junior Championship ahead of older players of promise, such as Yusupov.

Kasparov qualified for the Soviet Championship finals at age 15, and five months later made a spectacular international debut at Banja Luka 1979. He was invited to the tournament with Botvinnik's help and justified the Patriarch's faith by finishing two points ahead of a grandmaster field. Only Boris Spassky's showing at Bucharest 1953 when he too was 16 and Bobby Fischer's qualifying for a Candidates tournament at 15 were comparable. At 18 Kasparov became the youngest ever Soviet Champion, breaking Botvinnik's record by two years. In his autobiography and in interviews Kasparov told a by-now familiar story of being a talented young player surrounded by jealous rivals and bureaucrats who tried to halt his progress.

“We’ve got one World Champion,” he quoted Krogius as telling him. “We don’t need another one.”

But the critical events of Soviet chess in the 1980s had at least two realities: a Kasparov version and a Karpov version. Where the truth lay was often impossible to tell. Karpov wrote of Kasparov: “I know of no other grandmaster in our country, or the world, who has received such all encompassing, massive support from the authorities.” He noted that when Kasparov was only 13 he was assigned Alexander Shakarov as trainer, paid for by the Azerbaijan Sports Committee, and began receiving a monthly stipend. (Nikitin said it was Botvinnik who managed to get his student a 100-ruble stipend.) Kasparov had two full-time trainers a year later and even Klara was put on the state payroll the next year, Karpov said. In addition, Kasparov became a member of the Communist Party at the minimum age, 18. As late as 1986, Kasparov thought it important enough to mention being a “member of the Azerbaijan Komsomol Central Committee” among his few non-chess biographical details.

Kasparov seemed to have extraordinary *sviazi*. He charged that all top Soviet grandmasters were “obliged” to share their ideas with Karpov before the 1981 world championship match — but somehow Kasparov was able to refuse with impunity. In 1981 when Kasparov brought back a banned Vladimir Nabokov book from Sweden, a KGB colonel, Viktor Litvinov, was assigned to investigate but eventually became close to the Kasparovs, according to a 1993 *Ogonyok* article. The article said Litvinov headed the Azerbaijan KGB section responsible for sports and the Kasparovs came to regard him as their pipeline to Geidar Aliyev, the powerful Azerbaijan Party leader.

In the first round of the 1983 Candidates matches, Kasparov — by four wins, four draws and a loss — eliminated Belyavsky. Belyavsky kept the match tied after four

rounds and trailed by one point after seven. But then, as so often happened in the Candidates, one of the contenders — he — fell apart. In winning the fifth game, Kasparov took 50 minutes for 38 moves while Belyavsky took 149. By the final game Belyavsky, who had been considered a potential rival of Karpov’s only a few years before, was reduced to floundering helplessness.

**A43 Benoni Defense
Quarterfinal Candidates Match,
ninth game, Moscow, 1983
white Garry Kasparov,
black Alexander Belyavsky**

**1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 d5 d6 4 Nc3 g6
5 e4 Bg7 6 Bb5+ Bd7 7 a4**

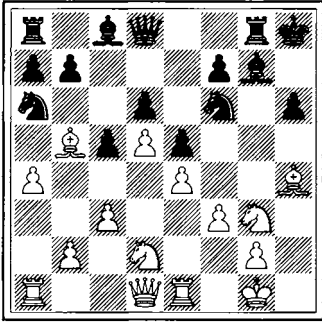
Kasparov was fond of Bb5+ in Benoni-like positions as a means of misplacing Black’s minor pieces. At Lucerne 1980, the game Kasparov–Nunn went 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+ Nfd7 (8 ... Bd7 or 8 ... Nbd7 allow 9 e5!) 9 a4 Na6 10 Nf3 Nb4 11 0–0 a6? 12 Bxd7+! Bxd7 13 f5! 0–0 14 Bg5 f6 15 Bf4 gx f5? 16 Bxd6 Bxa4 17 Rxa4 Qxd6 18 Nh4! fxe4 19 Nf5 Qd7 20 Nxe4 Kh8 21 Nxc5 1–0

**7 ... 0–0 8 0–0 Na6 9 Re1 Nb4 10 h3!
e6 11 Bf4 e5 12 Bg5 Bc8 13 Nd2 h6
14 Bh4 g5 15 Bg3 g4?**

Black pins his hopes on opening the g-file but 15 ... h5 16 Be2 g4 offered stronger counterchances.

**16 hxg4 Nxg4 17 f3 Nf6 18 Bh4! Kh8
19 Ne2! Rg8 20 c3 Na6 21 Ng3 (see dia-
gram)**

Kasparov demonstrated exceptional skill at an early in age in handling structurally superior positions like this. For example, in his 1990 match with Karpov, Kasparov



After 21 Ng3

introduced a new idea in what had previously been considered a sharp variation of the Ruy Lopez — after a simple f2–f3 move, Karpov had no counterplay and was soon lost. Here Kasparov decides the game by engineering Nf5.

21 ... Qf8 22 Ndf1 Nh7 23 Ne3 Bf6
24 Bxf6+ Nxf6 25 Ngf5 Nh5 26 Kf2!
Nf4 27 g3 Nh3+ 28 Ke2 Bxf5 29 Nxf5
R×g3?

Despair in the face of Rh1 and Qd2.

30 N×g3 Qg7 31 Rg1 Rg8 32 Qd2 1–0.

Meanwhile, Zoltán Ribli of Hungary and the remarkably resilient Viktor Korchnoi also advanced to the Candidates semi-finals. In the strangest quarter-finals match, Smyslov managed to stay even with Robert Hübner after the scheduled 14 games, and FIDE had agreed to decide the winner of such a tied match by the spin of a roulette wheel (!). Smyslov picked red and when a three came up, he advanced to meet Ribli.

But at this point another key figure entered the picture: Florencio Campomanes. He had visited Moscow in 1956 as captain and board-two player on the first Philippine team to compete in an Olympiad. Before the 1982 Olympiad in Lucerne, Campomanes made clear he would challenge Fridrik Olafsson's reelection as FIDE president. V.A. Ivonin, Sports Committee vice chairman, held a meeting with Krogius, representing the Chess Department, Yuri Averbakh, rep-

resenting the Soviet Chess Federation, Baturinsky and Karpov to discuss the election. The chessplayers were told that the Federation would support a third candidate, Božidar Kažić of socialist Yugoslavia, who was regarded as a dark horse.

Karpov proposed that the Federation throw its support to Olafsson once Kažić was eliminated. Only Baturinsky wanted Campomanes and the matter "seemed clear," Averbakh recalled. But before the delegation left for Lucerne new instructions came from higher up. The Soviet Federation ended up supporting Campomanes, who had been a guest of honor at the 1979 Spartakiad of Peoples and the 1980 Olympic Games, and not Olafsson, who had campaigned for the release of Korchnoi's family. With Soviet bloc support, Campomanes won on the second ballot in Lucerne.

The Campomanes Factor

For the first few months the Soviets got along well with the new FIDE president. But in March 1983 Campomanes severely reprimanded the Soviet Federation for violating "the moral principles of FIDE" in continuing the Korchnoi boycott at Wijk aan Zee 1983. Matters got much worse on June 1 when Campomanes awarded the semifinal Candidates matches to the United Emirates and United States chess federations on the grounds that FIDE's mission calls for "the diffusion — I repeat diffusion — and development of chess among all nations."

Organizers in Pasadena, California, had offered \$50,000 to host the best-of-12-game Kasparov–Korchnoi match. But to the Soviets, holding the match in America after the United States boycott of the 1980 Olympics was intolerable. Publicly they charged that Kasparov's security could not be assured in Pasadena. Kasparov later said it was the KGB that made the decision to take a hard line. Karpov suspected the decision

to boycott the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles had already been made. Behind the scenes the Soviets pressured Campomanes to back off. But he refused and the issue became public in *Sovietsky Sport*, the Sports Committee's official voice, on June 28. Averbakh, the Federation vice chairman, found himself in the awkward position of learning of the Federation's protest to Campomanes only when *Sovietsky Sport* asked him to comment on it.

The Soviets buttressed their argument by complaining that Campomanes had broken FIDE rules since neither Korchnoi nor Kasparov had listed California among their site preferences. For once, Korchnoi and his former countrymen were in agreement. (Another issue was resolved when Bela and Igor Korchnoi were finally granted visas in June and the Korchnois were united in July, ending seven years of bitter conflict since his defection.)

On July 12 as positions were hardening, Campomanes flew to Moscow for an angry meeting attended by Sports Committee officials, Kasparov, Karpov, Smyslov and Federation head Vitaly Sevastianov that left both sides upset. Campomanes said his hosts had misread the FIDE rules, which said the wishes of the players were important in championship matches, but not in semifinal Candidates matches. The Soviets held firm on the security issue. One media report claimed Kasparov asked for personal guarantees of his safety from either the governor of California or the mayor of Pasadena. No one cited the case of Soviet swimmer Vladimir Salnikov who had recently broken his own 800-meter record not far from Pasadena under similar security conditions.

The Soviets offered a compromise, accepting Abu Dhabi for the Smyslov match but shifting Kasparov-Korchnoi to Rotterdam. Campomanes rejected that and there was nothing more to be said. Korchnoi flew to California. On August 6 he sat down facing a board and an empty chair, played 1 d4

and won the semifinals on forfeit. Smyslov was also forfeited in the Ribli match, technically for failing to respond to FIDE. *Shakhmaty v SSSR* denounced Campomanes for acting "illegally" and said the Pasadena forfeiture was "an unworthy farce."

The Soviet hard line held — at least temporarily. Kasparov said he was told to "calm down" by the Central Committee member in charge of propaganda and sport. "You're still young and can afford to wait three years," the official, Boris Stukhalin, said. If it came to a crunch, Stukhalin said, the Soviets would break with FIDE, allow Korchnoi to become FIDE champion and run their own "world championship" match in which Karpov faced a Soviet challenger. Karpov, who said he was under "terrible pressure" to go along, was quoted by TASS as saying he would not play the winner of a Korchnoi-Ribli finals.

But within weeks the situation changed drastically. Perhaps it was the realization of how valuable membership in FIDE had been. An "astonished" Korchnoi said at the time: "By withdrawing from the world championship cycle they cast a shadow over Karpov's title, damage the career of Kasparov and risk their prestige in the chess world."

Or was the change in Soviet policy a matter of *sviazi*? Kasparov saw the dispute as a way for Karpov's allies to block him. He said when he appealed to Aliyev, the Azerbaijani leader pounded a table, insisting "the match must be played" and promising "anything, all the leverage" needed to arrange it. Kasparov even appealed to Yuri Andropov, who had succeeded Brezhnev after the Party general secretary's death on November 10, 1982. "He said that chess should be played nevertheless," Kasparov said in a televised debate with Karpov in 1994. Another explanation comes from Averbakh, who said the internal battle pitted the Party, and in particular Mikhail Zimianin, a former *Pravda* editor and propaganda chief who supported Karpov, against Aliyev and the Council of

Ministers, which backed Kasparov. Aliyev was stronger than Zimianin, Averbakh said.

In any event, Kasparov met Korchnoi during a speed tournament at Herceg Novi, Yugoslavia, in August, and after Korchnoi conferred with Campomanes, the two grandmasters signed a neutral statement on September 16 calling for their match to go forward. Korchnoi later told *64* he agreed to cooperate because he was profoundly anti-Karpov at the time “and Kasparov seemed my only ally.” The FIDE agreed to reschedule both semifinal matches in London. A FIDE Congress at Manila passed a motion praising the “sportsmanship” of Korchnoi and Ribli for accepting the changes. The motion added, that “in the spirit of reconciliation the General Assembly urges that all boycotts, especially that of Mr. Korchnoi, should be lifted forthwith.”

Ending the boycott after seven years was one of the prices the Sports Committee paid for the Pasadena fiasco — along with apologizing to Campomanes and paying a fine, believed to be more than \$200,000. Since chess was one of the few ways that the Sports Committee brought in foreign currency, this was a disaster of the highest order. One of the little-noticed consequences of the showdown had considerable later impact: an expansion of a FIDE president’s authority during world championship matches.

When the matches finally began, Smyslov proceeded to stun Ribli, winning three games and losing one, with seven draws.

E14 Queen’s Indian Defense
Candidates Semifinals, first game,
London, 1983
white Vasily Smyslov,
black Zoltan Ribli

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 b6 4 e3 Bb7
 5 Bd3 d5 6 b3 Be7 7 0–0 0–0 8 Bb2 c5
 9 Qe2 cxd4 10 exd4 Nc6 11 Nbd2 Rc8
 12 Rac1 Re8 13 Rfd1 Bf8 14 h3 g6
 15 Qe3

White anticipates ...Nh5–f4 and watches c5.

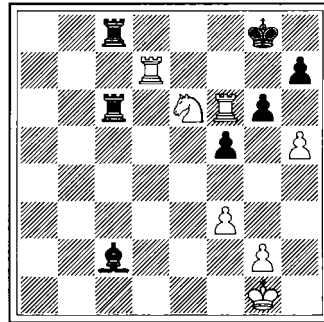
15 ... Bg7 16 Ne5 dxc4 17 bxc4 Ne7!
 18 Ndf3 Nf5 19 Bxf5!? exf5 20 Qa3 Bh6!
 21 Ral a5 22 d5 Ne4

Black had taken nearly two hours to reach a solid position in which White’s hanging pawns can be blockaded (...Bf8, ...Nc5). Smyslov complicates.

23 d6!? Bf8 24 Qb3 a4 25 Qxa4 Bxd6
 26 Qd7 Qc7 27 Qxc7 Rxc7 28 Bd4 Nc5?

Black had refused a draw offer at move 26 and becomes victimized by time trouble while trying to win an unwinnable endgame.

29 Rab1 f6 30 Bxc5! Bxc5 31 Nd7 Re2
 32 Nd4! Rxa2 33 Nxc5 bxc5 34 Ne6 Re7
 35 Rb6 Ra8 36 Nxc5 Be4 37 Rxf6 Rc7
 38 Ne6 Rxc4 39 Rd7! Rc6 40 f3 Bc2
 41 h4 Rac8? 42 h5!



After 42 h5

White has a mating attack after 42 ... gxf5 43 f4! (stopping ... f4) followed by Rg7+ and Rh6. Similarly, 42 ... Bb3 43 Rg7+ Kh8 44 Rff7 Bxe6 45 Rxf7+ Kg8 46 Rfg7+ Kg8 47 h6!.

42 ... f4! 43 h6 Bf5 44 Rg7+ Kh8 45 Rff7
 g5 46 Nd4 Rc1+ 47 Kh2 Bg6 48 Rf6
 R1c5 49 Rd7 Rg8?

Black needs counterplay, such as 49 ... Bh5 and ...g4.

50 Re7 Ra5 51 Nc6 Ra6 52 Ree6 Bh5
53 Ne5

Black is also losing after 53 ... Rxe6
54 Rxe6 Re8 55 Rf6!

53 ... Ra7 54 Rf5 Rb7 55 Rd6 Ra7
56 Rb6 Re7 57 Rbf6 Ree8 58 Nc4 g4
59 Ne5!

The bishop is trapped now. Black's last
hope was 59 R×h5?? g3+! 60 Kh3 Re1.

59 ... g×f3 60 R×h5 R×g2+ 61 Kh3 Rg3+
62 Kh4 f2 63 R×f4 Rg1 64 Rhf5 Rh1+
65 Kg3 1-0

The Korchnoi–Kasparov match bore a
strong resemblance to another semifinals —
Spassky–Karpov —10 years before. In both
cases the older man won the first game with
Black and kept the match close after six
games. But Korchnoi began to weaken and
lost 4–1 with six draws. At least Korchnoi
could claim one success: a few months later
he played at a non-boycotted Wijk aan Zee
and tied for first with Belyavsky.

Early in the Pasadena crisis Kasparov
came to Karpov for help just as Korchnoi
had in 1975. Kasparov discussed the crisis at
Karpov's home on Vspolny Lane, inside
Moscow's Garden Ring. But London was
the beginning of their falling out. While
observing the match, Karpov was made to
understand that Kasparov "couldn't play
normally in my presence," the Champion
said. Kasparov later said the incident has to
be considered "in the context" of the time.
It was the beginning of a feud that would
dwarf those of Botvinnik and Boris Vein-
stein or Tigran Petrosian and Korchnoi.

Children of Change

Meanwhile, a "Kasparov generation"
was emerging. The Soviet student team of

Yusupov, Lev Psakhis, Sergei Dolmatov,
Zurab Azmaiparashvili, Smbat Lputian and
Jaan Ehlevest easily won the 1983 World
Youth Team Championship. A key game
from their 3–1 defeat of England:

C88 Ruy Lopez
World Youth Team Championship,
Chicago, 1983
white Lev Psakhis,
black Mark Hebden

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6
5 0–0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0–0 8 a4 Bb7
9 d3 d6 10 Nc3 Na5 11 Ba2 b4 12 Ne2 c5

Spassky and Geller had tried 12 ... b3!?
13 c×b3 c5 in this position, after which
White should avoid ... Nc6–b4 with 14 b4!
c×b4 15 Ng3.

13 c3 c4! 14 Ng3 c×d3 15 Q×d3 b3 16 Bb1
Re8 17 Nf5 Bf8

If Black tries to prevent Bg5×f6, grant-
ing White iron control of d5, he must allow
a dangerous 17 ... h6 18 B×h6 sacrifice.

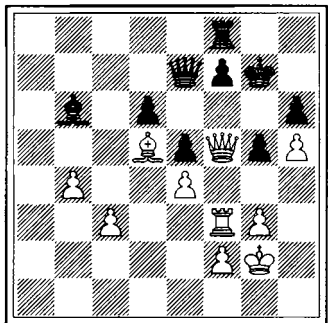
18 Bg5! h6 19 B×f6 Q×f6 20 Ne3 Qd8
21 Nd2 Bc6 22 Nd5 Be7? 23 Ra3! Bg5
24 N×b3 N×b3 25 R×b3 B×a4 26 Rb6
Rb8

Black should have captured on d5 ear-
lier and now sees that he cannot save the
a-pawn (26 ... Bb5 27 c4 Ba4 28 Qa3).

27 Q×a6 R×b6 28 N×b6 Bc6 29 Ba2 Qc7
30 Nd5 B×d5 31 B×d5 Rb8 32 Qe2 Bd8
33 g3

White prepares for adjournment, where
the Soviet edge in analysis had proven so
crucial in previous team tournaments.

33 ... Qe7 34 h4 Bb6 35 Rd1 Ba7 36 b4
Qc7 37 Rd3 g6 38 Qg4 Kg7 39 Rf3 Rf8
40 h5 g5 41 Qf5 Qe7 42 Kg2 Bb6



After 42
... Bb6

White now reveals a dramatic winning plan: with all Black's pieces tied to defense except his dark-squared bishop, he is vulnerable to a raid, on light squares with White's king.

43 Kf1! Ba7 44 Ke2 Bb6 45 Kd3 Ba7
46 Kc4 Qc7+ 47 Kb3 Qe7 48 g4! Bb6
49 Kc4 Ba7 50 Kb5!!

Psakhis "has an exact feeling for the king," Yuri Razuvaev once said in evaluating the younger generation. Here his sense of the danger and benefits of an advanced king is decisive. The checks end after 50 ... Rb8+ 51 Ka6! Rb6+ 52 Ka5.

50 ... Qe8+ 51 Bc6 Qd8 52 Kc4 Qe7
53 Qd7!

The endgame is lost thanks to the more advanced king.

53 ... Qe6 54 Qxe6 fxe6 55 Rxf8 Kxf8
56 Kb5 Ke7 57 Ka6 Bxf2 58 c4 Kd8
59 Kb7 Be1 60 b5 Bf2 61 b6 Bd4 62 Ba4
d5

Otherwise 63 Kc6.

63 cxd5 exd5 64 exd5 e4 65 Kc6 Kc8
66 d6 e3 67 Bb5 Bf6 68 Ba6+ Kb8
69 Kd7 1–0

After 69 ... e2 70 Bxe2 Kb7 White wins quickly with 71 Bf3+ Kxb6 72 Ke8.

The new generation was beginning to appear in Soviet Championships but that did not still criticism of the tournament format, which clearly had failed to bring back the intense spirit of the 1950s. The First League of the 49th Championship, held in September–October, 1981, in Volgodonsk, was composed of 18 qualifiers from the new semifinal system. Four of them advanced to the Highest League, and the next eight were seeded into the next year's semifinals. But, as senior trainer Oleg Stetsko pointed out in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, the players realized they did not need even a 50 percent score to reach the semifinals again — and they might reach the Highest League with as little as plus-2 or plus-3. As a result two thirds of the Volgodonsk games were drawn. Three first-round games were drawn within 20 minutes, Stetsko noted. "Chessplayers know how to count," he concluded.

Nevertheless, the preliminaries produced a youthful 49th Championship in which Tseshkovsky, at 39, was the oldest player, and first prize was shared by Kasparov and Psakhis. Karpov returned to win the 50th Championship. But virtually all the top players refused invitations to the 51st. In their absence, the winner was 21-year-old Andrei Sokolov, the son of an Army officer from Vorkuta, above the Arctic Circle. Sokolov went undefeated among other new names such as second-placer Konstantin Lerner and third-placer Vyacheslav Eingorn.

A46 Queen's Pawn's Game
51st Soviet Championship, Lvov, 1984
white Konstantin Lerner,
black Valery Chekhov

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 Bg5 c5 4 e3 Be7
5 Nbd2 0–0 6 Bd3 b6 7 Qe2 cxd4
8 exd4 Nd5 9 h4!

White is willing to allow a fork on f4 in order to open the h-file.

USSR versus Rest of the World, London, June 24–29, 1984

Board	Soviets	Rounds				Score	World	Rounds				Score
		1	2	3	4			1	2	3	4	
1.	Karpov	1	½	½	½	2½	Andersson	0	½	½	½	1½
2.	Kasparov	½	½	½	1	2½	Timman	½	½	½	0	1½
3.	Polugayevsky	½	0	½	½	1½	Korchnoi	½	1	½	½	2½
4.	Smyslov	0	1	½	½	2	Ljubojević	1	0	½	½	2
5.	Vaganian	½	½	½	0	1½	Ribli	½	½	½	1	2½
6.	Belyavsky	1	1	½	1	3½	Seirawan	0	0	½	0	½
7.	Tal	½	½	1	½	2½	Nunn	½	½	0	½	1½
8.	Razuvaev	½	½	½	½	2	Hübner	½	½	½	½	2
9.	Yusupov	½	½	½	0	1½	Miles	½	½	½	1	2½
10.	Sokolov	0	1	½	0	1½	Torre	1	0	½	1	2½
	<i>Team total</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5½</i>	<i>4½</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Team total</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4½</i>	<i>5½</i>	<i>19</i>

Tukmakov replaced Smyslov in Round 2 and 3 and Polugayevsky in Round 4. Romanishin replaced Tal in Round 2, Yusupov in Round 4 and Sokolov in Round 4. Larsen replaced Seirawan in Round 3 and 4. Chandler replaced Torre in Round 3 and Nunn in Round 4.

9 ... f5 10 c4! B×g5 11 h×g5 Nf4 12 Qf1
Nc6 13 0–0–0 b5 14 c5 Ba6 15 g3 N×d3+
16 Q×d3 Qa5 17 Qb3

This invites an exchange of queens but even without his light-squared bishop White has a strong attack.

17 ... Qa4 18 Rh4! Q×b3 19 N×b3 Bb7
20 d5 Nd8 21 c6! (see diagram)

White keeps the b7–f3 diagonal closed.

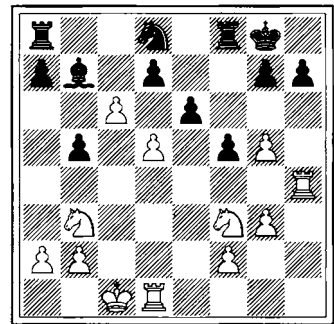
21 ... Rc8 22 Kb1 d×c6 23 Rdh1 c×d5
24 R×h7

Threatening 25 Ne5 and 26 Rh8 mate.

24 ... Nf7 25 g6 Nh6 26 R1×h6 g×h6
27 R×b7 f4 28 Ne5 Rf5 29 Ng4 1–0

After a 16-year interlude, tempers apparently had sufficiently cooled to resume the double-round Moscow–Leningrad matches.

After 21 c6



Host Moscow won, 43–37, in November, 1984, but Leningrad won by 44–36 the following May and by 42½–37½ in Moscow in November, 1986.

The end of the Korchnoi boycott removed a major obstacle to a second USSR versus Rest of the World match, and it was finally held in London in June, 1984. The four-round, ten-board contest showed how much had changed since Belgrade 1970. Bent Larsen was the only member of both World teams. Their pairings appeared lopsided: Karpov was rated 70 points ahead of

Sweden's Ulf Andersson on board one and Kasparov was 100 points ahead of Jan Timman of the Netherlands on board two. But overall, the teams were close in rating and the 21–19 Soviet victory was earned with difficulty.

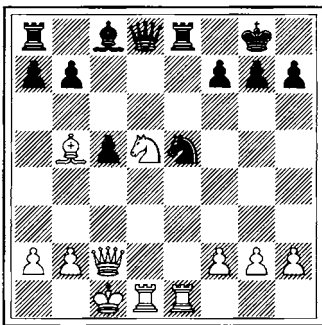
The hero for the Soviets was clearly Belyavsky who won three games. The rest of the team scored only five wins, while suffering six losses.

D24 Queen's Gambit Accepted
USSR versus Rest of the World,
London, 1984
white Alexander Belyavsky,
black Yasser Seirawan

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 c5
 5 d5 e6 6 e4 exd5 7 e5 Nfd7 8 Bg5 Be7
 9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 Nxd5 Qd8 11 Bxc4 0–0
 12 Qc2 Re8? 13 0–0–0!

A dangerous gambit that exposes Black's laggard development.

13 ... Nxe5 14 Rhe1! Nbc6 15 Nxe5 Nxe5
 16 Bb5



After 16 Bb5

Black must lose material. All this had happened in a Leningrad game, Salov–Radulov, earlier in the year and ended in a quick victory for White: 16 ... Bg4 17 Bxe8 Bxd1 18 Rxd1 c4 19 Qf5 Qxe8 20 Nc7 g6 21 Qf6 Nd3+ 22 Rxd3 Qc8 23 Re3! 1–0

16 ... Re6 17 Nf4 Qf6 18 Qd2! g6
 19 Qd8+ Kg7 20 Nxe6+ Bxe6

Or 20 ... fxe6 21 Qc7+ Nf7 22 Be8. Black keeps the game going only with a few easily handled mating threats.

21 Qxa8 Bxa2 22 Qd8 Qf5 23 Bd3 Qf4+
 24 Rd2 Nc6 25 Qe8 Be6 26 Re4 Qxh2
 27 Rxe6! fxe6 28 Qxe6 Nd4?

Losing immediately but 28 ... Qg1+ 29 Rd1 Qxg2 30 Be4 Qg5+ 31 Kbl or 29 ... Qxf2 30 Rf1 Qd4 31 Rf7+ are also hopeless.

29 Qe7+ Kh6 30 Qf8+ 1–0

Because of 31 Qxc5+.

Spassky was not selected for the Soviet team. His deteriorating relations with the Soviets headed for a denouement when the Sports Committee failed to pay his travel expenses to the 1982 Toluca Interzonal. Spassky then lost his stipend after placing first ahead of Karpov at Linares 1983, and was barred from playing for the RSFSR in the Spartakiad, he said. Spassky made the break official when he played for France at the 1984 Olympiad, at Thessaloniki, Greece. He went undefeated in 14 games and his team finished in a tie for sixth, France's best result ever in an Olympiad.

But the Soviets, even without Karpov and Kasparov due to their world championship marathon, still won the gold medals by four points. The other glaring absence at Thessaloniki was Tigran Petrosian, who had developed cancer. Kasparov said Petrosian refused to believe his case was terminal and wanted to travel to London for the World match. But the ninth champion of the world died in Moscow on August 13.

Another "Match of the Century"

Kasparov first played Smyslov in 1975 when Smyslov was giving a simultaneous for Baku schoolboys and beat "Garik" with Black

in 30 moves. When they next met, in the 1981 national team tournament, Kasparov won both games convincingly. The 42-year age difference proved a decisive factor when they met again in March, 1984, in the Candidates finals. Kasparov won the match without a loss. As a result, he had scored 12 wins, two losses and 19 draws in his three Candidates matches. This was impressive when compared with Karpov's 10 wins, three losses and 30 draws in Candidates year 1974. But it was not better than Spassky's 11 wins, two losses and 13 draws in 1968 or Fischer's streak in 1971. Kasparov jumped ahead of Karpov on the January, 1984, FIDE rating list and won the chess Oscar, as world's best player, for the previous year. Karpov had been at the top of the Elo list for eight years, ever since Fischer was removed for inactivity.

Naturally the 1984 world championship was hailed as yet another "match of the century." But only one bid to host it, from the Soviet Federation, was submitted to FIDE. Botvinnik said the contrast in style of Kasparov and Karpov was rivaled only by two other 20th century matches, Alekhine-Capablanca and Tal-Botvinnik. But he added that Karpov's "play is already showing signs of stagnation."

How the Two K's Compared by Rating

		KARPOV	KASPAROV
July	1981	2700	2630
January	1982	2720	2640
July	1982	2700	2675
January	1983	2710	2690
July	1983	2710	2690
January	1984	2700	2710
July	1984	2705	2715
January	1985	2705	2715
July	1985	2700	2720
January	1986	2705	2740

The two Ks eventually headed the Elo list for more than a decade but time took its toll on the ranks of other Soviet players. In

early 1984, for example, two foreigners — Korchnoi and Ljubojević — were rated numbers three and four, and only four other Soviet players were in the world's top 15.

The expectation that the heavily favored Kasparov would replace Karpov drew 500 journalists from 27 countries to the Hall of Columns for the opening game on September 19, 1984. But many left after two weeks, convinced they had seen the shortest match in world championship history: Karpov led by a shocking four wins to none after nine games. The surprise was so great that rumors circulated that Kasparov was throwing the match. Karpov said the game that made the score 5-0 was "undoubtedly the most exact and deep":

D55 Queen's Gambit Declined World Championship Match, 27th game, Moscow, 1984 *white* Anatoly Karpov, *black* Garry Kasparov

1 Nf3 d5 2 d4 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 Be7
5 Bg5 h6 6 Bxf6 Bxf6 7 e3 0-0 8 Qc2 c5
9 dxc5 dxc4

The match was a debate over the Tartakower-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation (5 ... h6 6 Bh4 b6) as the Soviets called it and the anti-Tartakower (6 Bxf6). Altogether there were 14 games in the match involving these lines. In the second match Kasparov improved with the equalizing 8 ... Na6! and the debate ended.

10 Bxc4 Qa5 11 0-0 Bxc3 12 Qxc3 Qxc3
13 bxc3 Nd7 14 c6 bxc6 15 Rab1 Nb6
16 Be2 c5 17 Rfc1!

Few of Karpov's rivals would choose this exact move instead of the routine 17 Rfd1 (or 17 Ne5 which allows Black to continue 17 ... Bb7 18 Nd7 Rfc8! 19 Nxb6 axb6 20 Rxb6 Rxa2). White avoids trades along the d-file. After the text Black should play 17 ... Bd7

but then 18 Kf1 Rf8 19 Rb3 maintains a White edge.

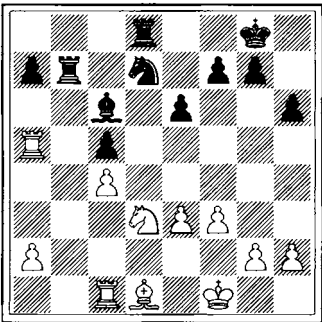
17 ... Bb7? 18 Kf1 Bd5 19 Rb5! Nd7

Geller pointed out that the strength of White's 17th move is revealed here: 19 ... Bxa2 allows 20 c4, trapping the bishop. White can now obtain an ideal position for his rook at a5.

20 Ra5 Rfb8 21 c4 Bc6 22 Ne1!

Botvinnik noted that Karpov's style "consists of making his position impregnable while attacking his opponent's pieces. He probably doesn't understand himself how he does it." Here White renders the open b-file useless (22 ... Rb2 23 Nd3).

22 ... Rb4 23 Bd1! Rb7 24 f3 Rd8 25 Nd3



After 25 Nd3

Despite the activity of Black's pieces he is losing the c-pawn without compensation. Kasparov later said, in apparent exasperation, "Karpov's style is something that is taking energy from his opponent. You can't explain it."

25 ... g5 26 Bb3 Kf8 27 Nxc5 Nxc5 28 Rxc5 Rd6 29 Ke2 Ke7 30 Rd1 Rxd1 31 Kxd1 Kd6 32 Ra5 f5 33 Ke2 h5 34 e4

White takes advantage of Black's bid for activity by trading the e-pawn for Black's g-pawn.

34 ... fxe4 35 fxe4 Bxe4 36 Rxc5 Bf5 37 Ke3 h4 38 Kd4 e5+ 39 Kc3 Bb1 40 a3 Re7 41 Rg4!

This strong sealed move wins another pawn, e.g., 41 ... e4 42 Bd1 Rf7 43 Kd4 Rf2 44 c5+ Ke7 and now 45 Bb3 Rd2+ 46 Kc3 Rd3+ 47 Kb2 e3 48 Ba4.

41 ... h3 42 g3! Re8 43 Rg7! Rf8 44 Rxa7 Rf2 45 Kb4 Rxb2 46 c5+ Kc6 47 Ba4+ Kd5 48 Rd7+ Ke4 49 c6 Rb2+ 50 Ka5!

This threatens 51 c7 and frees his rook to return to stop Black's h-pawn.

50 ... Rb8 51 c7 Rc8 52 Kb6 Ke3 53 Bc6 h2 54 g4 Rh8 55 Rd1 Ba2 56 Re1+ Kf4 57 Re4+ Kg3 58 Rxe5 Kxg4 59 Re2 1-0

On 59 ... Bc4 60 Rxb2 White has an easy win.

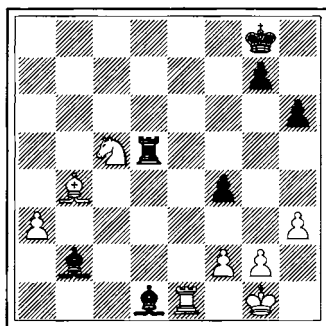
Kasparov later said the match had three stages: In the first "I was nervous and made many mistakes" and Karpov exploited his vast edge in experience. The second stage was a long series of draws, interrupted only by Kasparov's first victory in game 32, played December 12. The challenger believed Karpov was not willing to take risks after the first phase because he was really competing with the ghost of Fischer and wanted to win the match 6-0. Finally there was Karpov's collapse, or in Kasparov's view, his own comeback, which he later called "my greatest achievement in chess."

But the long middle period was extremely embarrassing to FIDE. At one stretch the match went 50 days without a victory. There were also a series of official and unofficial time-outs. Chess was only played on 58 of the match's 159 days, and the match overall was twice as long as any previous championship. Nearly ten years later, during an extraordinary televised debate, Karpov blamed the deadlock on his opponent

who “protracted the match with short draws.” Kasparov replied: “Well if you can’t win one game in months what I am to do?”

The magazine *Die Schachwoche* illustrated the state of the match in its January 31, 1985, issue with a cartoon showing two corpses at the board. But by then two new factors emerged: First, Karpov was weakening. He saved the adjourned 40th game on January 10 only with brilliant home analysis. He also missed the kind of forced win in the next game that he normally would have found:

Karpov–Kasparov
White to play



41st game, Moscow, 1985

Kasparov, adopting the Petroff Defense for the first time in his career, has just erred in time trouble with 30 ... f4?. Karpov continued:

31 a4! Rd4 32 a5 Rxb4 33 Rxd1?

In the press room, Josif Dorfman, one of Kasparov’s seconds, was waiting for 33 a6!, after which the four-month struggle would have been virtually over. The a-pawn wins in variations such as 33 ... Ba4 34 a7 Bc6 35 Re6 Bd5 36 Rd6 and 33 ... Bb3 34 Nxb3 Ra4! 35 Nc5 Ra5 36 Re4! Kf7 37 Ra4! Rxa4 38 Nxa4 Bd4 39 Nc3! Play continued:

33 ... Bd4 34 Ne6 Ba7

and after White passed up another attractive idea (35 N×g7 Rb2 36 Nf5 B×f2+ 37 Kf1) the game dragged on until move 71, having lasted eight hours and 25 minutes.

The second of the two new factors was Campomanes, who became convinced the match must end. Seeking a solution “acceptable to all parties” he proposed that play continue for only eight more games. If there was no decision by then, Campomanes wanted to start a new match in September under the pre-Fischer, best-of-24-game format. Kasparov saw this as unfair because he would need to win five times in eight games. Karpov, on the other hand, objected because Kasparov could wipe out his five losses just by making another eight draws. But at least the two men were talking about a way out of the mess, Campomanes felt.

Matters began to change rapidly on January 30 when Kasparov won his second game. The next day the Sports Committee expressed concern about the health of the players. Campomanes tried to arrange a meeting of both players late on the night of February 1. Alexander Roshal, a press attaché at the 1978 and 1981 world championship matches who was closely allied to Karpov, said later “almost everyone” else in Karpov’s camp was opposed to an early end of the match. But Karpov came to the Campomanes meeting and accepted the eight-more-games proposal, according to Alfred Kinzel, head of the match appeals committee. Kasparov did not come but his representative, Yuri Mamedov, did at 1:30 A.M. According to Kinzel, Mamedov was “surprised” at the terms of the proposal but said he would bring them to Kasparov.

Campomanes left Moscow later on February 2 and was not present when Kasparov made a counteroffer the next day to terminate the match immediately. “If the rules are being changed anyway, then why do we need to play extra games?” he proposed. Later Kasparov seemed to retreat, saying it was never his *suggestion* to end the

match, he was just reacting to Campomanes. Kasparov said Svetozar Gligorić, a member of the FIDE team, promised to get Karpov's response by the next day. But when that did not happen and the next game was postponed, Kasparov concluded "they" were trying to "entangle me in a web of negotiations" while Karpov recovered his health. A technical time out on February 4 was called to allow for the change of venue to the Sport Hotel. Neither the players nor the FIDE leadership wanted to move but Gligorić said all other all possibilities were exhausted by then.

Meanwhile, Karpov made a counter-offer, saying the match should not be terminated but suspended and resumed later with the score 5–2. Kinzel, as Campomanes' deputy, had long meetings with both players and said he tried to reach the president to tell him of the "changed situation." Gligorić later noted that had Karpov simply agreed at this point to Kasparov's plan the result would be the same situation as occurred a week later "but with all the parties concerned in happy agreement. It could have happened and I am very sorry it did not."

Kasparov gives a different account, claiming both Gligorić and Kinzel urged him to accept another Karpov proposal under which Kasparov would acknowledge losing the match. A new match would begin in September with the score at 0–0 but if Kasparov won by less than four points he would keep his title only until January 1. Averbakh later revealed that about this time Baturinsky told him "doctors thought that Karpov could not play on because of health problems." But the crucial event came on the board on February 8th and 9th:

C42 Petroff Defense
World Championship Match,
48th game, Moscow, 1985
white Garry Kasparov,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3

Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 0–0 Be7 8 c4
 Nf6 9 Nc3 0–0 10 h3 dxc4

It is not clear how Black drifted into a bad middlegame since his moves appear solid. The older 10 ... Nb4 11 Be2 c5 and later in the game 13 ... c5 were suggested as improvements.

11 Bxc4 Na5 12 Bd3 Be6 13 Re1 Nc6
 14 a3 a6 15 Bf4 Qd7 16 Ne5! Nxe5
 17 dxe5

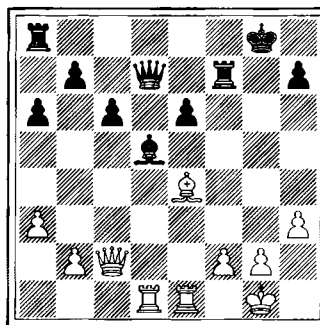
This change in the pawn structure gives White a powerful position for his heavy pieces.

17 ... Nd5 18 Nxd5 Bxd5 19 Qc2! g6
 20 Rad1 c6 21 Bh6

White could isolate a pawn on d5 with 21 Bc4 but he has a stronger plan on the kingside.

21 ... Rfd8 22 e6! fxe6 23 Bxg6 Bf8
 24 Bxf8 Rxf8 25 Be4 Rf7

Now Black is clearly losing, whereas 25 ... Kh8 offers an endgame that may be holdable after 26 Qc3+ Qg7 27 Bxd5 exd5 28 Re7 Qxc3 29 bxc3 Rae8.



After 25
 ... Rf7

26 Re3 Rg7 27 Rdd3! Rf8 28 Rg3

White's threat of Bxh7+ wins at least a pawn.

28 ... Kh8 29 Qc3 Rf7 30 Rde3 Kg8
 31 Qe5 Qc7 32 R×g7+ R×g7 33 B×d5
 Q×e5 34 B×e6+ Q×e6 35 R×e6 Rd7
 36 b4 Kf7 37 Re3 Rd1+ 38 Kh2 Rcl!
 39 g4 b5 40 f4 c5

Here the game was adjourned and continued the next day for another 27 moves largely through inertia.

41 b×c5 R×c5 42 Rd3! Ke7 43 Kg3 a5
 44 Kf3 b4 45 a×b4 a×b4 46 Ke4 Rb5
 47 Rb3 Rb8 48 Kd5 Kf6

This is the firmest resistance, compared with 48 ... h5 49 Kc5 h×g4 50 h×g4 Rg8 51 g5 Ke6 52 R×b4.

49 Kc5 Re8 50 R×b4 Re3 51 h4 Rh3
 52 h5 Rh4 53 f5?! Rh1 54 Kd5 Rd1+
 55 Rd4 Re1 56 Kd6 Re8?

White would have had a harder time finding the win after 56 ... Rg1. But Averbakh and Taimanov found one in 57 Kd7 Kf7 58 Kd8 Rg2 59 h6 Kf8 60 Kc7! Kf7 61 Rd7+ Kg8 62 Rg7+ Kh8 63 Re7! Kg8 64 Kd7! R×g4 65 Ke6 Kf8 66 Ra7 Re4+ 67 Kf6 Re8 68 R×h7 Kg8 69 Re7.

57 Kd7 Rg8 58 h6 Kf7 59 Rc4 Kf6
 60 Re4 Kf7 61 Kd6 Kf6 62 Re6+ Kf7
 63 Re7+ Kf6 64 Rg7! Rd8+ 65 Kc5 Rd5+!

Played out to the bitterest of ends.

66 Kc4 Rd4+ 67 Kc3 1-0

The 48th game had a dramatic impact on attitudes. Kasparov still trailed, by 5-3, but for the first time since September he entertained real chances of winning. To people outside chess, it was confusing. Why would someone losing 5-3 refuse offers to start a new match? But to the chess world it seemed like a familiar situation: it was like a game in which one player had been lost since the

very opening and on the verge of checkmate in the hopeless middlegame. But suddenly he sees his opponent making a series of third-best moves. His position is still objectively lost — but if offered a draw he knows in his heart he should refuse. It was this altered situation that doomed all efforts to reach the settlement “acceptable to all parties.”

On February 9, the same day that Karpov resigned the 48th game, Kinzel reached Campomanes, who was “surprised and delighted” to hear that Kasparov, as well as Karpov, was talking about terminating the match. He returned to Moscow two days later. By then Kasparov had taken his own time-out, fueling speculation that an agreement was in the works. Several ideas were considered during February 11-14, including a Campomanes plan to limit the match to 60 games, according to Kasparov. This meant the challenger could win the match by registering three victories in the next 12 games. The 49th game had been rescheduled for February 13 but this time Campomanes called a time-out. Such postponements had been called in previous FIDE matches, such as in the Korchnoi-Spassky crisis in 1977, when Euwe stepped in. But this was different: only one game had been played in two weeks.

Kasparov says that about this time he called Pyotr Demichev, who was head of the match organizing committee as well as culture minister. Demichev told him that — based on expert authority — it was clear that Kasparov had missed chances in game 48 and this showed that he, too, was tired.

All this was happening behind closed doors but the Soviet Chess Federation took a formal step when Sevastianov requested a three-month suspension because of concern over “the health status of the players.” Baturinsky later pointed out that such suspensions had been foreseen by Fischer when he made his match demands in 1974-75. Campomanes resisted suspension, saying it was clearly more favorable to Karpov than some

World Championship Match, Moscow, September 19, 1984–February 15, 1985

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Karpov	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	
Kasparov	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	½	½	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Karpov	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	
Kasparov	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	
	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	
Karpov	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	
Kasparov	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	
	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	<i>Total</i>
Karpov	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	5–3
Kasparov	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	3–5

kind of termination. On February 14 Campomanes met Kasparov at his hotel and when the challenger denied he was tired, he showed him the Sevastianov letter. Kasparov said he insisted the match should either continue or Karpov should quit. But Campomanes said cryptically there was a third way in which “I myself take the decision.” The president told Mamedov later that night that he would announce the end of the match the next day, Kasparov said.

February 15 began at 9 A.M. for Karpov, who spoke by phone with Campomanes. The president indicated he was about to end the match. Karpov objected but Campomanes replied that if Karpov refused to end the match he should be ready to play the 49th game at 5 P.M. What the two men, who had become friends, said then is not clear but Karpov apparently believed he had worked out an acceptable arrangement with Campomanes. He recalled later that he was on his way to his dacha outside Moscow when he heard from a friend via a car phone that Campomanes was about to make an announcement. The champion had the car

turn around and head back to the hotel but he arrived after Campomanes’ press conference was beginning. Campomanes, citing the health of the players, announced he was using his authority as president to terminate the match and order a new, best-of-24-game match to begin in September. Karpov, on the dais, seemed surprised. He asked arbiter Averbakh, “Yuri Lvovich, what is he saying? We agreed on completely different conditions.”

When Campomanes was finished Karpov asked to speak, saying he was ready to continue the match, but not until Monday—because of all the “emotional disturbance,” he told Campomanes privately. “I must tell you, as we Russians say, the rumors of my death were a bit exaggerated,” he told the astonished audience. Then it was Kasparov’s turn to object, although he suspected the whole event was being stage managed for the benefit of the media. Campomanes, meanwhile, indicated it was Kasparov who was play-acting. He said he looked at Kasparov when he announced the termination and “he wasn’t disappointed at all.”

Campomanes then met with the two players behind the hotel stage for two hours — their first meeting together in days — and asked them to sign a formal agreement ending the match. Karpov asked for another technical time-out but Campomanes, recognizing he had a weapon, told him the only alternative was continuing the match at 5 P.M. Karpov later said he was “incredibly stupid” to sign the agreement, and Kasparov said the Champion did it only at Sevastianov’s urging. Kasparov did not sign. But Campomanes claimed he “expressed agreement in the presence of witnesses.”

An immediate and international uproar ensued. Botvinnik said that until then the only reason for halting a chess competition was a world war. On February 19, Karpov issued a public appeal to revive the match. Two days later Lim Kok Ann of FIDE asked the Soviet Federation if it would be willing to resume the match. But on February 25 Gligorić told FIDE officials that he had managed to reach Mamedov, who said, “Kasparov does not want to continue the match. Kasparov accepts the decision of the FIDE President to consider the match ended.”

Kasparov said he went along with the termination because by the time everything would have been ready to resume the match, Karpov would have had the break he wanted. In any event, the match was over and in May the FIDE hierarchy endorsed the Campomanes decision.

One remarkable aspect was the widespread Soviet belief that someone in the Kremlin hierarchy actually made the decision to terminate — or at least deeply influenced the decision. Campomanes helped fuel the speculation when, asked by Roshal in a *64* interview, hinted he had been urged to end the match. Asked who made the recommendation, Campomanes replied, “You can guess yourself.” Kasparov, in *Unlimited Challenge* and elsewhere, claimed “the entire bureaucratic apparatus” was on Karpov’s side.

But he declined to make a specific charge of political intervention.

Karpov, meanwhile, said the decision reached the highest of the *vlasti*. He said the match situation was complicated by Konstantin Chernenko’s being “in a condition of clinical death.” (Andropov’s successor as Party General Secretary died less than a month after the press conference.) As a result, Aliyev was the “man in charge of sports and culture ... nobody could go higher.” He added, “I am completely sure that Aliyev was involved and Kasparov had a direct connection to Aliyev in those days.”

Another explanation came from Lev Alburt, a strong Kasparov supporter but also a student of Kremlinology. Alburt said Karpov’s contacts reached no higher than the propaganda department of the Central Committee, which was above the Sports Committee but well below the Politburo. Kasparov’s *sviazi*, on the other hand, “stretch so much higher than Karpov’s that he could have had the World Champion shot.” But Alburt believed that Aliyev washed his hands of the “propaganda disaster” match when it was moved to the Sport Hotel and that left control of the match in the hands of the Sports Committee, where Karpov prevailed.

What really happened may never be known because, as Karpov said, everyone involved “knows only their side.... There exists only separate documents.”

Der Spiegel

On April 25, 1985, two months after the termination, the new Party General Secretary, Mikhail Gorbachev, outlined his economic reforms to the Central Committee. Two months later he endorsed openness in discussing national problems, using a term that Lenin had used 23 times in his career: *glasnost*. Few Soviets immediately sensed the historic shift in Soviet policy. Even Kasparov, who benefited hugely from *glasnost*

during the turbulent final Soviet years, chose a relatively safe — and foreign — forum to denounce the termination of the match.

In an interview with the German publication *Der Spiegel* that appeared June 3, 1985, he said, “At the moment there is no World Champion.” But he praised Karpov’s play, directed his attack on Campomanes and only insinuated at wrongdoing. Later in Yugoslavia he criticized people “closely connected with Karpov,” naming second Yuri Balashov, Roshal, Sevastianov, Baturinsky, Polugayevsky and Krogius — “just a group of people who defend their interest.” Throughout the rest of the decade Kasparov revealed a well-tuned instinct for knowing the limits of what he could say and do. He often quoted Vladimir Vysotsky, the bard of the late-Brezhnev era, who was often critical in his satirical poetry but managed to skirt the edges of dissidence. Vysotsky’s targets included both Bobby Fischer and aspects of Soviet life — never the system itself.

In his autobiographies Kasparov claimed the Soviet Federation tried to disqualify him from playing the second Karpov match. But Gorbachev’s closest aide, new Politburo member Alexander Yakovlev, had replaced Stukalin as head of the propagand department and he insisted “the match must take place.” Kasparov offered no evidence, saying official records “seem to have vanished into thin air.” He also said the Soviet Federation tried to ban him from international chess for two years but he beat back the attack with Aliyev’s help.

Politics was evident in other events of 1985: The Soviet Federation boycotted the World under-16 (Cadet) Championship because it was held in Petach Tikva, Israel. Also, another USSR-U.S. match was in the works and was tentatively scheduled for January, 1986. But the Soviets objected to the presence of Alburt on the opposing team. Even though Alburt was the reigning United States champion, his appearance in a high-profile match would draw unwanted attention to his

defection. The match was rescheduled for later in 1986, then canceled by the Soviets on March 27.

Before Karpov–Kasparov, Round II, another chess spectacle, reminiscent of the 1920s, was staged. At the Red Army sports arena in Moscow a 1,000-board simul was given by 38 grandmasters, led by Karpov, Tal and Smyslov, and assorted masters. The masters won by 830–144, with some games never finished. Several of the amateurs were foreigners, and *Shakhmaty v SSSR* noted how Karpov drew with 15-year-old Mirjana Marić of Belgrade, who had won the girl’s cadet championship. But the magazine did not mention that Marić’s victory came in the tournament in Israel.

Kasparov held the emotional initiative when the second match began on September 3 in Moscow. The changed tone was apparent when the newly appointed foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, shook his hand but not Karpov’s. Interest remained high and tickets for good seats at Tchaikovsky Hall were being scalped for 15 rubles. The challenger drew first blood by winning the opening game but was outplayed in the fourth and fifth. Averbakh later said Karpov did not realize the education process that was going on, that during the first match “Kasparov grew up from a boy to a completely grown man.” Had he understood this, Karpov would have won the second match, Averbakh concluded.

Kasparov said the “long and difficult process” continued well into round two. By this time he knew how to defend himself but not how to beat Karpov. “For this I had to play more than 60 games,” he said. Kasparov won the 11th, 16th and 19th games, with the 16th being one of the finest ever played in a world championship. But Karpov’s victory in the 22nd game and narrow escape from defeat in the fifth hour of the 23d set up a do-or-die finale. Kasparov led 12–11, meaning Karpov could retain his title by tying the match with a victory.

World Championship Match, Moscow, September 3–November 9, 1985

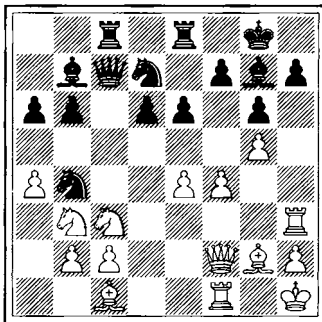
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Karpov	0	½	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	
Kasparov	1	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
Karpov	½	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	½	0	11–13
Kasparov	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	0	½	1	13–11

B85 Sicilian Defense
World Championship Match,
24th game, Moscow, 1985
white Anatoly Karpov,
black Garry Kasparov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6
 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be2 e6 7 0–0 Be7 8 f4 0–0
 9 Kh1 Qc7 10 a4 Nc6 11 Be3 Re8 12 Bf3
 Rb8 13 Qd2 Bd7 14 Nb3

White maintains material and tension
 as long as possible, avoiding 14 Qf2 Nxd4
 15 Bxd4 e5.

14 ... b6 15 g4! Bc8 16 g5 Nd7 17 Qf2
 Bf8 18 Bg2 Bb7 19 Rad1 g6 20 Bcl Rbc8
 21 Rd3 Nb4 22 Rh3 Bg7



After 22
 ... Bg7

Karpov called this the first critical point
 in the game because he passed up 23 f5
 exf5 24 exf5. Then on 24 ... Ne5 25 Qh4
 Qc4! 26 Rf4! (better than 26 Qxh7+) White
 is winning, e.g., 26 ... Nf3 27 Rhxf3 or
 26 ... Ned3 27 Rxc4 Re1+ 28 Qxel Bxg2+

29 Kgl or 26 ... Bxg2+ 27 Kxg2 Qc6+
 28 Kgl gxf5 29 Nd4!. However, he pointed
 out that 24 ... Bxg2+ 25 Kxg2 Qb7+
 26 Kgl Rc4! 27 fxg6! Rg4+! leads to an
 apparent defense despite White's extra pawns
 following 28 Rg3 Rxg3+ 29 hxg3! Ne5
 30 gxh7+ Kh8.

The analysis is important because two
 years later Kasparov publicly called on Kar-
 pov to prove his claims. In a letter to 64, he
 said Karpov "more than once ... declared
 that you could easily have won" the 24th
 game in 1985 "which would have changed
 the course of chess history." Kasparov also
 invited him to submit analysis on any of their
 96 match games played up to then. This
 would enliven Soviet chess magazine pub-
 lishing which "is losing it prominent posi-
 tion."

Karpov declined, saying he was too
 busy. He added that he had good practical
 chances of winning the 24th game but made
 no mention of claiming an easy win.

23 Be3 Re7!

Black prepares to seal the kingside with
 ...f5, now that f4–f5 is too late.

24 Kgl Rce8 25 Rdl f5 26 gx6 Nxf6
 27 Rg3?

This aggressive move made Kasparov
 champion. After the game the immediate
 27 Bxb6! Qb8 28 a5 was recommended

(27 ... Ng4 28 Bxc7 Nxf2 29 Bxd6). Later on a plane trip to Lucerne, Kasparov showed Karpov “completely head-spinning variations, convincing me that Black could hold the position,” Karpov recalled.

27 ... Rf7! 28 Bxb6 Qb8 29 Be3 Nh5
30 Rg4 Nf6 31 Rh4

Objectively, a bad move—but 31 Rg3 would allow Kasparov to play 31 ... Nh5 32 Rg4 Nf6 33 Rg3 and become the first man to become World Champion by three-time repetition.

31 ... g5! 32 fxg5 Ng4 33 Qd2 Nxe3

34 Qxe3 Nxc2 35 Qb6 Ba8!

Karpov becomes desperate now, seeing that 36 Qxb8 Rxb8 37 Rd2 Ne3! offers no chances. He might have held with 37 Bh3 but a draw was as good as a win for Black.

36 Rxd6 Rb7 37 Qxa6 Rxb3 38 Rxe6 Rxb2 39 Qc4 Kh8 40 e5 Qa7+ 41 Kh1 Bxg2+ 42 Kxg2 Nd4+ 0–1

The two men had spent 325 hours together at the board in 72 world championship games when Karpov’s reign ended at 9:56 P.M., November 9, 1985. “Karpov is a whole epoch of chess,” Kasparov said.

17

Endgame

If you feed the people revolutionary slogans they will listen today, they will listen tomorrow, they will listen the day after tomorrow. But on the fourth day they will say, "To hell with you."—Nikita Khrushchev

The only constant in the final five years of the Soviet Union was change. But unlike the profound upheavals of the past — such as the cultural revolution and the Terror more than half century before — this time the professional lives of chessplayers were directly and quickly affected. The changes altered the way Soviet players trained, traveled, talked and, of course, thought.

Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy permitted, for example, the first open discussion of the Sports Committee blunders and of the financial shortchanging of chess players. It allowed two factions, one largely pro-Karpov, the other pro-Kasparov, to openly fight for control of Soviet chess. It was a time of swiftly changing alliances and attitudes. Garry Kasparov concluded that Gorbachev's *perestroika* "allowed me to win the competition for the world crown." But he also conceded he could not have become champion "without the support of influential Party leaders." As soon as he became champion Kasparov began separating himself from Soviet chess tradition. In contrast with his mentor Botvinnik, who conducted more than 150 secret training games with at least seven sparring partners, Kasparov proceeded to play — and win — high-profile exhibition matches with two leading Europeans, Jan Timman and Tony Miles, in

December, 1985, and May, 1986, respectively.

Because of the time it took for the first two K-K matches to end and FIDE's adoption of a two-year championship cycle, the rules called for a Karpov-Kasparov rematch to begin by February 10, 1986. The third match had a particular meaning to Soviet players because it was expected to determine the composition of the next Chess Federation presidium. Elections to it should have been held before the second match but because of the uncertainty of how long Kasparov would be champion, they were delayed until after K-K Round III.

Kasparov, understandably, was in no hurry to risk a title that had taken him 72 games to win. In a December 27, 1985 interview with TASS he said it was "nonsense" to play Karpov so soon and strongly indicated he would not play a rematch at any time. When threatened with being dethroned, *à la* Fischer, Kasparov backed down "to avoid any more damage to chess."

Swept up into the tempo of change, Kasparov felt secure enough to endorse an anti-Campomanes campaign in the 1986 FIDE elections, placing himself at odds with the Soviet Federation. But his candidate, Lincoln Lucena, withdrew when he realized he did not have enough support, lacking

particularly the pivotal Soviet Federation's vote.

When bids were opened for K-K III the Federation offered only slightly more than half the prize fund that London did. But FIDE agreed to divide the 24 games between the two sites. For the first time, a World Championship match between two Soviet players began abroad, in London, on July 28, 1986. It was a nervous affair: Kasparov missed an easy endgame combination and only drew the second game. Then Karpov, for years one of the world's fastest players, forfeited with 10 moves to make in the eighth game.

Kasparov held only a one-point lead when the match switched to Leningrad, where a living chess game, performed by ballet dancers at the Kirov Theater, kicked off the second half of the match. He promptly won the next two games in which he held White. "The match situation became catastrophic," Karpov said later. But Kasparov's three-point lead evaporated when Karpov won the 17th, 18th and 19th games, a Championship feat exceeded only by Emanuel Lasker and Johannes Zukertort.

E13 Nimzo-Indian Defense
World Championship Match,
18th game, Leningrad, 1996
white Garry Kasparov,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 Nc3 Bb4
 5 Bg5 Bb7 6 e3 h6 7 Bh4 Bxc3+

Kasparov had shown his expertise as White in this line in the 1985 Timman match. One game went 7 ... g5 8 Bg3 Ne4 9 Qc2 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 d6 11 Bd3 f5 and now 12 d5 Nc5 13 h4 g4 14 Nd4 Qf6 15 0–0 Nxd3 16 Qxd3 e5 17 Nxf5 Bc8 18 Nd4! with a fine game.

8 bxc3 d6 9 Nd2 g5 10 Bg3 Qe7 11 a4 a5
 12 h4 Rg8 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 Qb3 Na6
 15 Rb1 Kf8 16 Qd1! Bc6 17 Rh2!

Kasparov knows where the enemy king will be now. But he had taken an hour and 34 minutes to find moves to discourage ...0–0–0.

17 ... Kg7 18 c5! bxc5 19 Bb5 Nb8
 20 dxc5 d5 21 Be5 Kf8 22 Rh6 Ne8
 23 Qh5 f6 24 Rh7 Ng7 25 Qf3 Kf7
 26 Qh5+

"Karpov's strongest point, and maybe his weakest point is that he doesn't look for the best move," Kasparov once said. "He plays 40 good moves. Usually this is enough to beat his opponent but it's not enough to beat me."

Yet Kasparov could beat himself: Here he left himself with eight minutes to play 14 moves in a very difficult position. But he could have forced a draw — and Karpov certainly would have, if he had been the one with a two-point lead.

26 ... Kf8 27 Qf3 Kf7 28 Rh6 Ne8
 29 e4?

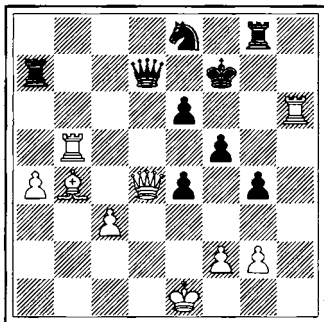
Kasparov's decision to play for a win might have been vindicated by 29 c4, after which 29 ... Bxb5 30 cxd5! exd5 31 Qxd5+ wins and 29 ... Nd7 30 Bxc6 Nxe5 31 Qh5+. Even on 29 ... g4! 30 Rh7+ Rg7 31 Rxc7+ Nxc7 32 Qf4 he keeps a good edge.

29 ... g4! 30 Qf4 Bxb5 31 Rxb5 Nd7
 32 Bxc7 Nxc5

Karpov, with 18 minutes left, avoids the dangers of 32 ... e5 (praised in the press room) and 32 ... Nxc7, both of which leave White with a large edge after 33 Rh7+ Rg7 34 Rxc7+.

33 Qe3 Nxe4 34 Nxe4 dxe4 35 Bxa5 f5
 36 Bb4 Qd7 37 Qd4 Ra7

After 37
... Ra7



With three minutes to reach move 40, Kasparov has his choice of winning moves, but 38 Bc5 — or a move later — is best.

38 Rh7+? Ng7 39 a5? Kg6! 40 Qxd7 Rxd7
41 Rh4

The position has been altered magically and Black has all the winning chances.

41 ... Rgd8 42 c4 Rd1+ 43 Ke2 Rcl
44 a6

Kasparov must have had a blind spot in this game on the c5 square. Here 44 Bc5! and Be3 would create counterplay, in connection with Rh6+ and Rb7, as Mikhail Gurevich pointed out.

44 ... Rc2+ 45 Ke1 Ra2 46 Rb6 Rd3!
47 c5 Ra1+ 48 Ke2 Ra2+ 49 Ke1 g3
50 fxg3 Rxg3 51 Kf1 Rg×g2 52 Be1 Rgc2

Black plays to win the pinned bishop.

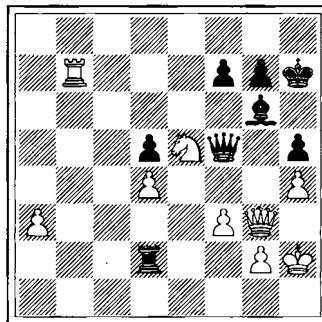
53 c6 Ra1 54 Rh3 f4 55 Rb4 Kf5
56 Rb5+ e5 57 Ra5 Rd1 58 a7? e3! 0-1

Black mates after 59 Rf3 Nh5 60 a8(Q)
Ng3+ 61 Rxg3 Rf2+.

But then, with the match suddenly tied and Kasparov reeling, Karpov took a time out. The 20th game was played five days later — and by then Kasparov had recovered. Karpov drew the 20th game with Black in 21 moves and agreed to a draw on the 45th move of the 21st when Kasparov found a way

to give up a piece for all Karpov's dangerous pawns. Then:

Kasparov–Karpov World Championship Match, 22d game, Leningrad, 1986



White to play

In this adjourned position the spectators considered lines such as 41 Rb4 f6 42 N×g6 Q×g6 with good drawing chances for Black. But Kasparov, after apparently changing his mind and crossing out his first choice, sealed the stunning

41 Nd7!!

Play continued

41 ... Rxd4 42 Nf8+ Kh6 43 Rb4!

and it was clear that even though Black queens first he is lost after 43 ... Rxb4 44 axb4 d4 45 b5 d3 46 b6 d2 47 b7 d1(Q) 48 b8(Q) Qd2 49 N×g6 Q×g6 50 Qh8+. Karpov resigned after

43 ... Rc4 44 Rxc4 dxc4 45 Qd6 c3
46 Qd4 1-0.

The crisis was over. The match ended October 9 in another Kasparov victory, by 12½–11½.

Kasparov's championship status was now assured — at least for a year — so the plenum of the Soviet Federation finally began

World Championship Match, London-Leningrad, July 28–October 9, 1986

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Kasparov	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	
Karpov	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
Kasparov	½	1	½	1	0	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	12½–11½
Karpov	½	0	½	0	1	1	1	½	½	0	½	½	11½–12½

October 25. Vitaly Sevastianov was demoted to the title of honorary chairman and was replaced by Alexander Chikvaizde, a Communist Party Central Committee member.

Ogonyok

Immediately after the match Kasparov attributed the three straight losses to his overconfidence and to Karpov's fighting qualities. Unlike their second match, Karpov was ready for a tough battle this time, he said. But Kasparov later revealed there was "a clash" after the 19th game and two of his seconds left his camp. He accused one of them, Evgeny Vladimirov, of copying his opening analysis and giving it to Karpov. The charges were not immediately backed up and many observers agreed with András Adorján, who had been a Kasparov second in the first match. Adorján defended Vladimirov and said Kasparov's charges revealed "the World Champion's moral crisis — one in which he was driven by his own delusions of infallibility, fostered by bootlickers."

But in late 1993, the muck-raking magazine *Ogonyok* provided an explanation of the three 1986 losses that pointed in the direction of another Kasparov second. *Ogonyok's* article was based on what it said were KGB documents and an interview with KGB Colonel Viktor Petrovich Litvinov, the long-time friend of the Kasparovs. Litvinov, whom Kasparov identified as "one of my assistants,"

said he had seen files in Moscow that showed that Kasparov's doctor called the KGB every night during the first Karpov match to report what Kasparov had to say to him that day. Litvinov said he was told by the head of the KGB's ideological section that "the World Champion is a political figure" and Kasparov was not up to the title.

There was much more and it read like a spy novel: *Ogonyok* alleged that Josif Dorfman had, for a fee of 150 to 200 rubles a game, leaked to Karpov's side opening information, adjournment analysis and the intention to call time-outs during the early part of the first match. *Ogonyok* also said that an old friend of Dorfman's, Alexander Feldman, was working with Karpov and agreed in March, 1985, to pay him 100,000 rubles for his collaboration during the second match. Dorfman was allegedly given 7,000 rubles on June 1 after providing information about openings and about the Kasparov team, *Ogonyok* said. When Dorfman demanded the 100,000 rubles in advance, problems arose and they broke off contact. But on August 27, Dorfman gave Feldman the text of two training games he played with Kasparov. When the second match began Dorfman could not leave the Kasparov compound or take phone calls and key information was obtained through an elderly housemaid.

Ogonyok claimed the double-dealing continued up to the fourth K-K match. By June, 1987, Feldman had come to see Kasparov and told him he had broken relations

with Karpov because Karpov failed to pay him 24,000 rubles he owed him and live up to other promises. On June 16, 1987, Litvinov and Kasparov interrogated Dorfman based on information from Feldman, and Dorfman “confessed,” the magazine claimed. Was *Ogonyok*’s story true? Karpov, asked for a short evaluation of the *Ogonyok* charges, said his reply would not be printable. He noted that the source of all information was Litvinov — who may have composed the “useless scraps of paper” in his free time to show his usefulness to Kasparov. Also, Karpov noted that in one of the games, apparently the 18th, he had a lost position early on, something that “would never have happened had I known my opponent’s analysis.”

When Dorfman, who was living in France by the time article appeared, was asked about it, he replied that *Ogonyok* was trying to smear all of Kasparov’s seconds. And Kasparov, in the 1990 version of his autobiography — written well after Dorfman allegedly “confessed” — seemed to dismiss the charges. He wrote that the “main purpose” of Feldman’s allegations was to “deprive me of one of my assistants.” Since no criminal trial was held to clear the air, the full story of the *Ogonyok* affair remains one of the last tantalizing mysteries of Soviet chess.

Glasnost

By the end of 1986 the speed of reform had accelerated: Gorbachev embraced the idea of a market economy in September and gave human rights advocate Andrei Sakharov his freedom from the closed city of Nizhny Novgorod. At the same time, *glasnost* was seeping into chess publications — and creating the first semblance of a free press in the chess media since the Revolution: *64* published a list of FIDE ratings that included both Viktor Korchnoi and Lev Alburt, and noted that Boris Spassky was playing for France. This is all the more surprising be-

cause *64* was edited by Karpov, with Nikolai Krogius and Victor Baturinsky among others. The magazine was perceived by many as speaking for the Soviet chess establishment, albeit one that was beginning to openly question the Brezhnev era — while *Shakhmaty v SSSR* was seen as pro-Kasparov and the voice of more rapid reform.

Vitaly Tseshkovsky, winner of the 53d Soviet Championship, joined the critics by saying the Championship was being undermined by the Elo rating system. Top players did not want to risk their points against underrated opponents in the *Otborochny*, First League and Highest League, he said. In fact, only one player who competed on the 1984 team that defeated the Rest-of-the-World took part in the 53d finals. The following game helped decide the race for first prize:

A30 English Opening 53rd Soviet Championship, Highest League, Kiev, 1986 *white* Konstantin Lerner, *black* Vitaly Tseshkovsky

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 g3 b6 4 Bg2 Bb7
5 0-0 g6 6 d3 Bg7 7 e4 0-0 8 Nc3 d6
9 Nh4 Nc6 10 f4 a6 11 a4 Rb8 12 Be3 e6
13 Bf2? Ne8 14 Nf3 Nd4 15 h3 f5

Black has a plan (supporting ...b5 or, as the game goes, ...d5); White does not.

16 exf5 gxf5 17 Re1 Nc7! 18 Bxd4 cxd4
19 Nb1 e5! 20 Nbd2 exf4! 21 gxf4 Qf6

Black needs to open the center to exploit his edge on dark squares.

22 Qe2 Rfe8 23 Qf2 Ne6 24 Qg3 Nc5
25 Ng5 Re3! 26 Rxe3 dxe3 27 Bxb7

Or 27 Qxe3 Qxb2 28 Rb1 Bd4! with advantage to Black.

Fifty-Third Soviet Championship, Highest League, Kiev, April 2–28, 1986

	T	M	E	L	B	G	B	R	Y	G	D	K	L	B	A	Y	S	D	<i>Score</i>
1. Tseshkovsky	X	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	½	0	1	½	1	1	11–6
2–7. Malanyuk	½	X	1	0	½	½	1	1	½	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	0	1	10–7
2–7. Eingorn	½	0	X	½	½	1	0	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	½	½	½	½	10–7
2–7. Lerner	0	1	½	X	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	0	10–7
2–7. Balashov	½	½	½	½	X	1	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	10–7
2–7. Gavrikov	½	½	0	½	0	X	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	½	0	1	½	1	10–7
2–7. Bareev	0	0	1	½	½	0	X	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	1	10–7
8. Rashkovsky	½	0	0	½	½	½	1	X	0	½	1	½	0	½	1	½	1	1	9–8
9–10. Yudasin	½	½	½	0	1	0	0	1	X	½	½	½	1	½	0	½	1	½	8½–8½
9–10. M. Gurevich	½	1	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	X	½	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	8½–8½
11–12. Dolmatov	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	8–9
11–12. Khalifman	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	1	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	1	8–9
13–14. Lputian	½	0	½	0	½	0	0	1	0	1	½	½	X	1	1	½	½	0	7½–9½
13–14. Belyavsky	1	½	0	½	0	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	0	X	½	1	1	1	7½–9½
15. Azmaiparashvili	0	½	½	0	½	1	1	0	1	0	½	½	0	½	X	½	½	0	7–10
16–18. Yakovich	½	0	½	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	X	1	0	6–11
16–18. Smagin	0	1	½	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	0	½	0	X	1	6–11
16–18. Dvoiris	0	0	½	1	½	0	0	0	½	0	½	0	1	0	1	1	0	X	6–11

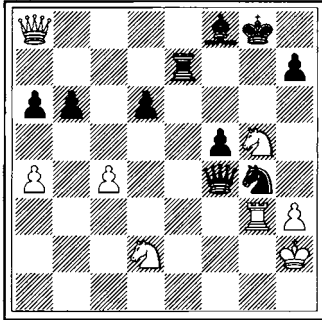
27 ... Rxb7 28 Qxe3 Qxb2 29 Qe8+ Bf8
30 Rd1 Re7

Stronger was 30 ... Qc2! 31 Qe2 Re7.

31 Qa8 Qd4+ 32 Kh1 Nxd3 33 Rg1?

White misses 33 Ngf3!

33 ... Nf2+ 34 Kh2 Qxf4+ 35 Rg3 Ng4+!



After 35
... Ng4+

36 h×g4 Re2+ 37 Kh3 f×g4+ 38 Kh4
Rh2+ 39 Nh3 R×h3+ 40 R×h3 g×h3+
41 K×h3 Q×d2 0–1

The tournament, held in Kiev April 2–28, brought more bad news when it was discovered the 18 players might have been exposed to the aftereffects of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. Karpov and Kasparov later announced they were donating their 1986 World Championship prizes to a Chernobyl relief fund. And one other embarrassment ended in May, 1986, when the Gulkos were allowed to emigrate, after seven years and three hunger strikes.

Glasnost also relaxed the restriction on discussions of money. It had been taboo for decades to talk in print about the prizes or salaries of Soviet athletes or the financing of teams. But *Shakhmaty v SSSR* and *64* began to reveal how the Sports Committee and other authorities had shortchanged chess. Evgeny Sveshnikov described, for example, the clumsy situation in 1985 when the Sports Committee authorized him and Nana Ioseliani to play in Brazil. The tournament

organizers had promised them free round-trip tickets on Varig from Frankfurt to Rio and hard currency for their expenses to reach Frankfurt.

But Soviet officials, trying to obtain as many dollars as possible, bought cheaper tickets with rubles to make the entire trip on Aeroflot — from Moscow to Shannon to Havana to Lima and then to Rio. The return trip was nearly as circuitous: Rio–Buenos Aires–Dakar–Budapest–Moscow. This became a minor scandal in Brazil because a Soviet athletic team had done something similar on a previous trip. The Brazilians eventually decided on a minor punishment — giving Sveshnikov and Ioseliani their travel compensation in Brazilian cruzeiros, not dollars.

Nevertheless there were limits to *glasnost*, at least in 1986. Georgy Agzamov, the first grandmaster to emerge from Central Asia, fell to his death, 10 days before his 32nd birthday, during a Sevastopol tournament in August, 1986. But *Shakhmaty v SSSR* reported only that he “tragically perished” and similar cryptic explanations were still being used in the press two years later.

The Ninth Spartakiad of Peoples was held in Minsk in July, 1986, with a new format: No players over 25 were allowed on the five-man, three-woman teams. Despite the limitation, the lineups of grandmaster-level talent were impressive. This is how the last major graduating class of the Soviet school of chess looked:

Ukraine: Vasily Ivanchuk, Igor Novikov, Alexander Shneider, Alexander Khuzman
RSFSR: Evgeny Pigusov, Alexey Dreyev, Alexander Goldin

Leningrad: Alexander Khalifman, Vladimir Epishin

Moscow: Andrei Sokolov, Evgeny Bারেev, Yuri Dokhoian, Igor Glek

Lithuania: Eduard Rozentalis

Georgia: G. Georgadze, Mikhail Kra-senkov

Byelorussia: Rustam Dautov, Boris Gelfand, Ilya Smirin

Armenia: Artashes Minasian

Uzbekistan: Grigory Serper

Estonia: Jaan Ehlvest, Lembit Oll

Latvia: Alexander Shabalov

Azerbaijan: Vladimir Akopian

In one of the key matches, this game was played:

B35 Sicilian Defense
Ninth Spartakiad of Peoples,
Minsk, 1986

white Vasily Ivanchuk,
black Evgeny Pigusov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nx d4 g6
5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4 0–0 8 Bb3
d6 9 f3 Bd7 10 Qd2 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5
12 h4 a5 13 a3

This had been considered second- if not fourth-best, after 13 a4, 13 h5 and even 13 Nd5. But White has a different idea.

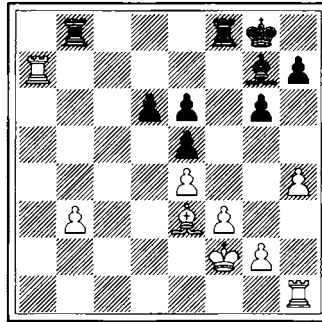
13 ... e5 14 Be3 b4 15 Nd5 a4 16 Bc4
bxa3 17 Rxa3 Rb8 18 b3!

Ivanchuk demonstrates a flexible style: Until now the game appeared to be a race of two wing attacks, but to avoid the dangers of exchanging off his kingside defenders after 13 ... b4 14 Nd5, Black accepted a backward d6-pawn. White now rigorously focuses on d5.

18 ... axb3 19 cxb3 Nx d5 20 Bxd5 Be6
21 Kf2! Bxd5 22 Qxd5 Qe7 23 Ra7 Qe6
24 Qxe6 fxe6 (see diagram)

Black appears to be equalizing (25 Rb1 d5).

25 Rd1! Rf7 26 Rxd6! Rxa7 27 Bxa7
Rxb3 28 Rxe6 Rb2+ 29 Kg3 Kf7 30 Rc6
Rb7 31 Be3 Bf6 32 Bh6!



After 24
... fxe6

White stops ...h5 and prepares a winning plan of Kg4 and h4–h5. The young Ukrainian appreciates how many pawns he can afford to exchange.

32 ... Ra7 33 Kg4 Rb7 34 g3 Be7 35 Rc8
Bf6 36 h5! Rb3 37 Rc7+ Kg8 38 hxg6
hxg6 39 Bd2 Rb6 40 Bc3 Re6 41 f4! Kf8
42 Rc5 exf4 43 Bxf6 Rxf6 44 gxf4 Re6
45 e5 Re7 46 Rc6 1–0

Meanwhile the next cycle of the world championship was well under way. The FIDE returned to a modified Candidates tournament format at Montpellier 1985, with the top eight players advancing to matches. Spassky, now clearly representing France, exacted a bit of revenge at Montpellier by beating two of the Soviet qualifiers, Rafael Vaganian and a new face, Andrei Sokolov. But Spassky and Timman were the only non-Soviets to finish in the top nine.

Artur Yusupov, who tied for first at Montpellier, had been appearing in Soviet magazines since 1967 when a photo of the intense, blond, 6-year-old fourth-category player from the Moscow Pioneer Palace appeared in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. Yusupov met Jan Timman in a semifinals Candidates match in Tilburg in January, 1986. The 25-year-old Muscovite trailed after four games but scored 4½ points out of the next five. His trainer, Mark Dvoretsky, considered Yusupov to be basically a strong-willed strategist, and in contrast to his other student, Sergei Dolmatov, an impulsive “natural tactician.” But in the Timman match

Yusupov became a murderous attacker. His last two victories were among the most brutal ever in the Candidates matches:

D86 Grünfeld Defense
Candidates Semifinals Match,
9th game, Tilburg, 1986
white Artur Yusupov,
black Jan Timman

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5
5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 b6 8 Qf3
0-0 9 Ne2

In the seventh game Yusupov declined the exchange sacrifice by 9 e5 Ba6 10 Bd5! c6 11 Bb3 and developed an overwhelming attack after 11 ... Qc7 12 h4! c5 13 h5 and won after 13 ... cxd4 14 cxd4 gxh5? 15 R×h5 Bb7 16 Qd3 Rd8 17 Q×h7+ Kf8 18 Ne2! Rxd4 19 Bh6 1-0.

Here Yusupov assumes Black has an improvement so he is the first to diverge.

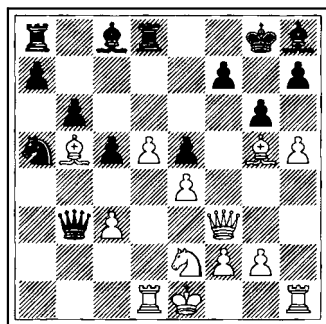
9 ... Nc6 10 h4! Na5 11 Bd3 e5 12 Ba3
Re8 13 h5 Qd7 14 Rd1! Qa4?

Suicidal pawn grabbing.

15 Bc1 c5 16 d5 Q×a2 17 Bh6!

White avoids h×g6 so as not to allow the defense of ...f×g6 and ...Rf8. Here 17 ... B×h6 would be met by 18 h×g6!

17 ... Bh8 18 Bb5 Rd8 19 Bg5 Qb3



After 19
... Qb3

Black offers an exchange sacrifice (20 B×d8 Q×b5) that brings his queen to the defense.

20 h×g6! f×g6 21 R×h7! K×h7 22 Qf7+
Bg7 23 Bf6 Rg8 24 Be8! 1-0

Soviet grandmasters had complained for years that chess was becoming too arithmetic and less artistic — but got little sympathy in an international tournament circuit dominated by ratings and title norms. The Soviet Federation reluctantly accepted the Elo system in 1970 but a year later the FIDE Congress at Vancouver rejected a Soviet proposal for a rotating trophy for most brilliant games. So, in 1984 the Soviet Federation started their own system of “laureate” prizes, for the best games, books and even for best work of a second. Sokolov, who said “my basic textbook” when growing up was a collection of Alekhine games, won the prize for best game of 1985 for his victory over Korchnoi at Montpellier.

Sokolov went on to crush Vaganian (four wins, four draws, no losses) in the Candidates semifinals. He met Yusupov in the best-of-14-game Candidates finals in Riga, beginning September 1. It was hard fought: Nine games were adjourned and there were games lasting 72, 67, 69 and 51 moves. Sokolov trailed 4-6 and appeared beaten when he turned the match around and scored 3½-½, beginning with this game:

C19 French Defense
Candidates Finals Match,
11th game, Riga, 1986
white Andrei Sokolov,
black Artur Yusupov

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Ne7 5 a3
B×c3+ 6 b×c3 c5 7 Nf3 Qa5

Yusupov tried 7 ... b6 in the first and third games and won both. The first featured a remarkable maneuver: 8 Bb5+ Bd7

9 Bd3 Ba4 10 h4 h6 11 h5 Nc6 12 Rh4 c4
13 Be2 and now 13 ... Kd7! 14 Be3 Qg8!
and 15 ... Qh7 tied White to the defense of
c2 while Black prepared to open the king-
side.

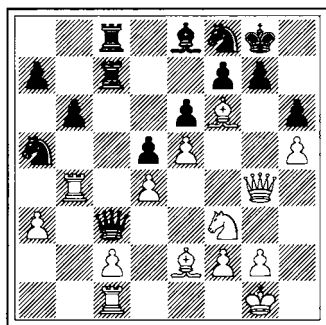
8 Bd2 Nc6 9 Be2 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa4
11 Be3 b6 12 Qd3 Na5?

Considering the match situation, 12 ...
Nb4, forcing a trade of queens (13 Qb5+),
was better.

13 Nd2 Bd7 14 0–0 Rc8 15 Rfc1 0–0
16 Rab1 Nc4 17 Rb3 Rc7 18 Nf3 Rfc8

If Black had any fears of the middle-
game he would have eliminated the e3-
bishop by now.

19 Bg5! Ng6 20 h4 Na5? 21 Rb4 Qc6
22 h5 Nf8 23 Qe3! Be8 24 Bf6! h6
25 Qf4 Qc3 26 Qg4



After 26 Qg4

White must win material here since
26 ... g6 27 Qf4 Kh7 allows 28 Ng5+! Kg8
29 Ne4! or 28 ... h×g5 29 h×g6+ f×g6
30 Qh2+ and mates.

26 ... Ng6 27 h×g6 f×g6 28 Bh4 Q×a3
29 Rbb1 Bf7 30 Rd1

Black has good compensation and could
have met 30 Bd3 with 30 ... Q×d3! 31 c×d3
R×c1+ 32 R×c1 R×c1+ 33 Kh2 g5 followed
by ... Nb3 and the quick advance of the a-
pawn.

30 ... g5 31 B×g5! h×g5 32 N×g5 Qe7
33 Bd3 R×c2!?

There was nothing better.

34 B×c2 R×c2 35 Rbc1 Rc6 36 R×c6
N×c6 37 Rd3 Bg6 38 Rc3 Nd8 39 Rc8
Bf7 40 f4?

On the last move of a time blitz, White
misses the immediate win, 40 Qh4 Bg6
41 Nf3!. But Black did not resume the ad-
journing game.

40 ... Qd7 41 Ra8 1–0

Mikhail Botvinnik celebrated his 75th
birthday in 1986. His long-awaited computer
program still showed no sign of becoming
the world championship contender he had
promised. But he did manage to reorganize
his school again, this time as the Botvinnik-
Kasparov school, and with a crop of young-
sters that included future grandmasters
Grigory Serper, Boris Alterman and Vladi-
mir Akopian. During the spring holidays
the Patriarch gathered his students at the
Pestovo Hotel near Moscow and explained
he did not want the method of preparation
that had made the Soviets dominant to dis-
appear. Both World Champions offered in-
sights. For example, Botvinnik told them:
“Knowing how to manage time should be
intuitive.” Kasparov’s advice was equally
practical. “If you’re afraid of the move a4–a5,
don’t play the Benoni,” he said.

Dubai

A new crisis was averted at the FIDE
Olympiad in Dubai in November, 1986.
Both the American and Hungarian teams
had a half point lead over the Soviets before
the eighth round when Kasparov lost to
Yasser Seirawan and the Soviets suffered their
first team loss to the Americans since the

1960 Student Olympiad. Kasparov redeemed himself by finishing with the top performance rating of the tournament, 2753. But Yusupov was the only other Soviet player to win a board prize. Yefim Geller later defended the team in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, saying it was unfair to criticize Kasparov for having one of the three seconds, Alexander Nikitin, all to himself. Another source of criticism was the addition of Tshchkovsky to the team. Although he was national champion he scored only 2½–2½:

C61 Ruy Lopez
Olympiad, Dubai, 1986
white Krum Georgiev,
black Vitaly Tshchkovsky

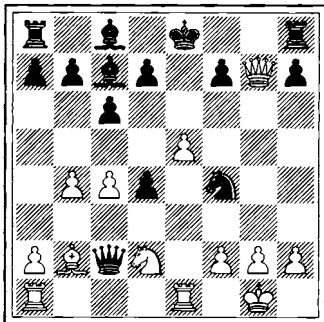
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Ba4 Bc5
5 b4 Bb6

Declining the 5 ... B×b4 6 N×d4 e×d4
7 0–0 or 6 c3 N×f3+ 7 Q×f3 gambit. Black
took an hour over his first five moves.

5 ... Bb6 6 0–0 N×f3+ 7 Q×f3 Qf6
8 Qg3 Ne7 9 Bb2 Ng6 10 c4!

Preparing to seize the center with 11 c5
and 12 d4.

10 ... Nf4 11 Re1 c6 12 d4! Bc7 13 Nd2
Qg6 14 Bc2 e×d4 15 e5! Q×c2 16 Q×g7



After 16 Q×g7

Black preferred this to the bad endgame of 15 ... Q×g3 16 h×g3. Now White's secondary threat is Ne4–d6+.

16 ... Rf8 17 Ne4! Ne6 18 Qf6! d5

Or 18 ... B×e5 19 Q×e5 Q×b2 20 Qf6
d6 21 N×d6+ Kd7 22 N×f7 and wins.

19 e×d6 Bd8 20 Qf5 Rg8 21 Nf6+ B×f6
22 Q×c2

With two minor pieces for a queen,
Black could resign.

22 ... Bd7 23 Rad1 0–0–0 24 Bc1 Rg6
25 Rd3 Rdg8 26 Rg3 h5 27 Qf5 h4
28 R×g6 R×g6 29 h3 b6 30 Qf3 a6
31 Re4 Nd8 32 Bb2 c5 33 Re7! 1–0

In the 10th round Spain beat England 3½–½ after apparently being prepared by the Soviet delegation. Nevertheless, on the eve of the final round the United States team led with 36½ points, followed by the USSR with 36 and England 35½. It was looking like a disaster for a team composed of, as Krogus put it, “the first five players in the world plus the USSR Champion.” Kasparov thought the situation posed a personal threat to him. “There was no doubt that losing the Olympiad would bring recriminations to me for being too busy dabbling in politics to uphold the honor of Soviet sport,” he wrote. But on the final day the Americans only drew with Bulgaria, while the Soviets and the English won 4–0. The Americans suspected the Soviet victory, over Poland, was arranged but nothing was proven. Nikitin underlined the extraordinary political importance of the Soviet comeback, saying it was a feat “of state significance.”

Superfinal

One strong player had not been able to take part in the new World Championship cycle — Karpov, who had been preoccupied with Kasparov. So, according to an agreement worked out with Kasparov before London, FIDE created a new event, a Candidates

“superfinal” to decide who would challenge Kasparov in late 1987. The best-of-14-game match was another first, since it involved two Soviet players but was held in Western Europe, in Linares, Spain. Karpov’s Caro-Kann Defense proved a mystery to the 23-year-old Sokolov and he won the match with four wins, seven draws and no losses.

Karpov’s rating fluctuated over the final Soviet years — and reached the highest levels of his career until then. Kasparov’s rating just kept going up:

		KARPOV	KASPAROV
July	1986	2705	2740
January	1987	2710	2735
July	1987	2700	2740
January	1988	2715	2750
July	1988	2725	2760
January	1989	2750	2775
July	1989	2755	2775

Five cities bid to host the fourth K-K match, but this time FIDE decided to go with the highest bidder, Sevilla, Spain. While preparations were proceeding, the next championship cycle began badly. In the first Interzonal, at Subotica, Tal missed qualifying by a half point while Vasily Smyslov and Alexander Chernin were not even close. In the other two Interzonals, Valery Salov tied for first in Szirak, Hungary, and Jaan Ehlevst qualified at Zagreb by tying for second behind Korchnoi. Belyavsky missed by a point at Szirak, and Polugayevsky and Eingorn tied for eighth at Zagreb. Kasparov later blamed the setbacks on “some internal problems” that the Sports Committee and the Soviet Federation ignored. “We were strong but the resources were used especially for Karpov and to a lesser extent for me. We had a very strong team for Karpov and a smaller one for me and nothing else!” In fact, the chess establishment was being torn in two directions. You could be for Kasparov or you could be for Karpov.

Yet while the top players saw Soviet chess driven by factionalism, they found common cause with foreigners. On February 14, 1987, several of the world’s top grandmasters met in Brussels to organize the Grandmasters Association and selected Kasparov as president and Karpov as vice president. It was an extraordinary step: a kind of international trade union, composed of elite players seeking to become the first chess millionaires — led by two Soviet citizens. And it appeared headed for direct confrontation with FIDE, an organization with a history of close ties to Soviet chess. The GMA board began their ambitious program by calling for changes in tournament conditions and endorsing a \$2.4 million World Cup that dwarfed any previous series of regularly scheduled tournaments. The GMA — and not the Soviet Federation or the Sports Committee — would decide which of their players would compete in the world’s top chess events.

The Soviet Federation was divided over the merits of such an elitist group, which was originally to have only the world’s highest rated players as its voting members. At a meeting of the Federation presidium on April 4, Kasparov sharply disagreed with Krogus in an open discussion of the future of chess, cash prizes and professionalism. Within two months 30 Soviet grandmasters had joined the GMA and in two more years virtually every Soviet grandmaster was a member.

Another high-profile team event, the “TV Match of Generations” was held in May at the Ostankino television center, north of Moscow. Three teams, one limited to players under 27, another to those 40 and over, and a third in the middle, competed on eight boards with a time limit of 45 minutes for the entire game. Nearly all the top players except Karpov took part. The youth team scored 20½ points, the middle group 17½ and the older generation only 10. The middle group’s strength was on the three

lowest boards where Viktor Kupreichik, Mikhail Gurevich and Oleg Romanishin scored 2½–1½ each.

A17 English Opening
TV Match of Generations,
Moscow, 1987
white Mikhail Gurevich,
black Ratmir Kholmov

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2
 0–0 5 a3 Bxc3 6 Qxc3 b6 7 g3 Bb7
 8 Bg2 d6

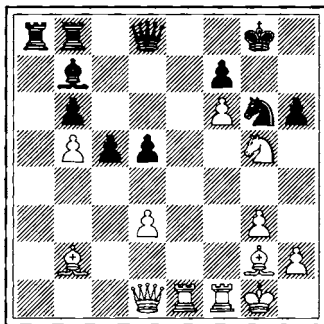
It is not clear how Black should use his center pawns, since White also has promising chances after 8 ... d5 or with a later ...c7–c5.

9 0–0 Nbd7 10 b4 a5 11 Bb2 Qe7 12 d3
 axb4 13 axb4 c5 14 Qb3 Bc6 15 e4! Rfb8
 16 b5

White announces he is turning his attention to the kingside.

16 ... Bb7 17 Nh4 Qd8 18 Rael Nf8 19 f4
 Ng6 20 Nf3 d5? 21 cxd5 exd5 22 e5 Ne8
 23 f5! Ne7 24 f6 gxf6 25 exf6 Ng6
 26 Ng5 Nd6 27 Qd1! h6

After 27 ... h6



Otherwise 28 Qh5 wins.

28 Ne6! fxe6 29 Qg4 Kh7 30 f7

White threatens 31 f8(Q) Nxf8 32 Qg7
 mate.

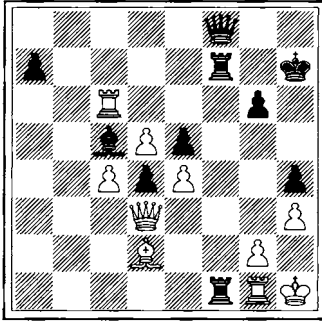
30 ... d4 31 Bc1 Bc8 32 Qh5 Qf8 33 Rf6
 Qg7 34 Rxc6! 1–0

While the nation's top players were gathered in the capital, Botvinnik chaired a meeting of them at the Spartak Chess Club. The Federation came under blistering criticism for everything from the poor progress in book publishing to declining influence in FIDE. Even Kasparov and Karpov seemed to agree: something had gone dreadfully wrong with Soviet chess. A resolution, unanimously approved, read: "The structure of the whole chess movement in the country has aged and needs fundamental changes." It called for the creation of an organization of Soviet grandmasters, a GMA-like union. Three months later Kasparov told *Moskovskiy Novosti* that the new group had enlisted 52 members, meaning virtually all the active grandmasters in the Soviet Union.

Round Four

The final step in the 1985–1987 World Championship cycle began in Sevilla on October 12, 1987, and turned out to be the closest of the Kasparov–Karpov matches. After Kasparov's string of successes he seemed invulnerable. Miguel Najdorf, a perennial at world championship matches, passed along Bobby Fischer's prediction: "Karpov will play better but Kasparov will win."

Neither player ever led by more than a point. After Karpov tied the score in the 16th game, six draws followed. Everything was decided in the final two games in mid-December. The 23rd game, Karpov's last with White, was adjourned with a slight edge for him. By move 50 Kasparov made an astonishing decision, considering the match situation. The position appeared headed for another draw, which would give Kasparov strong chances of keeping his title. But he thought he saw a forced win:



Black (Kasparov) to move

Here 50 ... Bb4 was recommended, so that Black could continue 51 Bxb4 R×g1+ 52 K×g1 Q×b4 or 51 Bg5 Be1!, with the initiative. However, Karpov felt he could maintain pressure with 51 Ra6!. Play continued:

50 ... R7f3?? 51 g×f3 R×f3 52 Rc7+ Kh8 53 Bh6!

The ...R7f3 sacrifice had been in both players minds since adjournment and, according to Gufeld, Kasparov had analyzed this very position before the game — then stiffened in shock when he realized he had fallen into it. Both players stopped recording moves as the game blitzed to a conclusion:

53 ... R×d3 54 B×f8 R×h3+ 55 Kg2 Rg3+ 56 Kh2 R×g1 57 B×c5 d3 1–0

Both players said they could not concentrate during the match. Kasparov said it was because of “the psychological division inside of me” because he did not want to play the match in the first place. His loss put him in the same position as Karpov in their second match, having to win the 24th game with White to keep his title. Just as Karpov played much more sharply — more Kasparov-like — in 1985, Kasparov adopted a wait-and-see, almost Karpovian style in the final game of their fourth match. David Bronstein called this “the only right decision” — despite his experience when he was in the

same situation in 1951. But the strategy appeared to surprise Karpov.

A17 Réti Opening
World Championship Match,
24th game, Sevilla, 1987
white Garry Kasparov,
black Anatoly Karpov

1 c4 e6 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 d5 4 b3 Be7
 5 Bg2 0–0 6 0–0 b6 7 Bb2 Bb7 8 e3
 Nbd7 9 Nc3 Ne4 10 Ne2 a5 11 d3 Bf6!

Karpov had taken an hour to Kasparov’s 20 minutes in search of ways to simplify.

12 Qc2 B×b2 13 Q×b2 Nd6 14 c×d5
 B×d5 15 d4 c5 16 Rfd1 Rc8 17 Nf4 B×f3
 18 B×f3 Qe7 19 Racl

If he had not needed a win so urgently, White might have considered 19 Nh5, threatening 20 d×c5, and obtaining a sure but not necessarily convertible edge after 19 ... Nf6 20 d×c5 and 21 N×f6+.

19 ... Rfd8 20 d×c5 N×c5 21 b4 a×b4
 22 Q×b4 Qa7 23 a3 Nf5?!

Black was equal after 23 ... Ne8, Karpov wrote.

24 Rb1 R×d1+ 25 R×d1 Qc7 26 Nd3 h6
 27 Rc1 Ne7 28 Qb5 Nf5 29 a4 Nd6
 30 Qb1 Qa7 31 Ne5 N×a4?

“Typical time trouble sloppiness,” Karpov said. Black could safely take with the queen.

32 R×c8+ N×c8 33 Qd1?

White would almost certainly win after 33 Qb5!, and then 33 ... Nd6 34 Qc6 or 33 ... Kf8 34 Nc6 Qa8 35 Qd3. Also strong is 33 Bh5! Kasparov had eight minutes to reach move 40, Karpov only one.

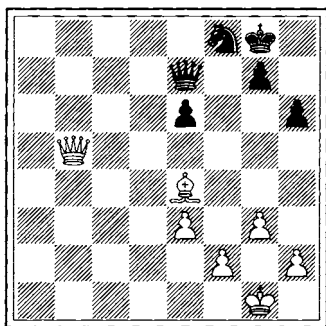
World Championship Match, Sevilla, October 12–December 19, 1987

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Kasparov	½	0	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	
Karpov	½	1	½	0	1	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Kasparov	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	12–12
Karpov	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	12–12

33 ... Ne7?

Too late Karpov realized that 33 ... Nc5! could have been played because after 34 Qd8+ and 35 Qxc8 he can regain his piece and draw with 35 ... Qa1+ and 36 ... Qxe5. This fatal error reminded him of one other mistake—when he missed 33 a6 in the 41st game in January, 1985.

34 Qd8+ Kh7 35 Nxf7 Ng6 36 Qe8 Qe7
37 Qxa4 Qxf7 38 Be4 Kg8 39 Qb5 Nf8
40 Qxb6 Qf6 41 Qb5 Qe7



After 41
... Qe7

White has excellent winning chances in the adjourned position — and Kasparov's team clearly out-analyzed their opposite numbers that night. Black's next few moves, putting his pawns on the same color square as White's bishop, surprised many of his fans.

42 Kg2 g6? 43 Qa5 Qg7 44 Qc5 Qf7
45 h4 h5?

"I couldn't believe my eyes," Kasparov

said afterward. He said this was the moment when he knew he would keep his title.

46 Qc6 Qe7 47 Bd3 Qf7 48 Qd6! Kg7
49 e4 Kg8 50 Bc4 Kg7 51 Qe5+ Kg8

"Why did I chose to place the pawns at g6 and h5? The thing is that with such a pawn structure we considered a queen trade, 51 ... Qf6 52 Qxf6+ Kxf6 and ...e5, as safe for Black," Karpov wrote. "However, at the board at resumption I discovered that it would be impossible to save that ending," he said. Black is doomed to passivity.

52 Qd6 Kg7 53 Bb5 Kg8 54 Bc6 Qa7
55 Qb4 Qc7 56 Qb7 Qd8 57 e5! Qa5
58 Be8 Qc5 59 Qf7+ Kh8 60 Ba4! Qd5+
61 Kh2 Qc5 62 Bb3 Qc8 63 Bd1 Qc5
64 Kg2 1–0

Black saw Bf3–e4xg6 and did not place any faith in White falling into the stalemate trap of 64 ... Qd5+ 65 Bf3 Qc5 66 Be4 Qa3 67 Bxg6?? Nxg6 68 Qxg6 Qf3+!!

The victory tied the match and saved Kasparov's title. Mikhail Podgaets, Karpov's second, later saw a divine hand. "God punished him twice, no three times," Podgaets said: Karpov could not defeat Kasparov when he led 5–0 in the first match, when he won three games in a row in the third match or when the score was 12–11 in Sevilla. But Karpov had learned not to show his disappointment. He "always conceals his feelings,

from everyone,” Podgaets said. “I don’t think there is a person with whom he’s fully open.”

“Unite” No More

By late 1987 public debate had become virtually a new form of Soviet entertainment, and one of the popular new Moscow pastimes was to walk along the old Arbat pedestrian street and listen to various arguments about politics, history, even religion. Kasparov’s financial dealings inevitably became a point of controversy in the chess press. The World Champion told *Shakhmaty* that the Sports Committee took 80 percent of the prize money from Sevilla. He later said it took a “special government decree” from Nikolai Ryzhkov, chairman of the Council of Ministers, to make sure the Sports Committee got the bulk of the money. He and Karpov received 137,000 Swiss francs each, from the total prize fund of 2,280,000.

Kasparov also became the first Soviet sportsman to appear in Western advertising and received a fee, which he had to split 50-50 with the Sports Committee, for a commercial for Schweppes that appeared on Spanish television. He said the government took all the money he earned for allowing his name to be used in a computer ad. “In contrast to writers and musicians who perform abroad, sportsmen are in a different situation,” Kasparov said, noting that Soviet hockey players “earned millions” in Canada but gave the money to the Sports Committee. That comment triggered a response in *Sovietsky Sport* from pole vaulter Sergei Bubka who charged that Kasparov was the most favored of all Soviet sportsmen and had no reason to complain. Kasparov acknowledged that his monthly stipend of 300 rubles had been recently increased to 400 and that it was not a real salary since he did nothing specifically to earn it. But 400 rubles was hardly comparable to the prizes

now available to chessplayers in the age of *perestroika*.

State support of amateur chess — which had always been described in glowing terms — also came under fire. The October, 1987, issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR* pointed out how poorly financed Moscow’s park clubs were. Gorky Park, the country’s best known, had two chess clubs but one had been closed on the grounds that one was enough. Sokolniki Park had one of the oldest chess clubs in the capital and for years had been the host of the traditional *Vechnaya Moskva* blitz tournament, won by Tal 10 times. But the Sokolniki club was regarded by the authorities as a money loser that cost the park administration 16,000 rubles a year.

Propaganda continued to appear in the media, including an article on chess in Nicaragua, then flirting with Moscow, in the December, 1987, *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. But in the next issue readers could notice a remarkable omission: The slogan “Workers of all nations, unite!” disappeared from the magazine. In the same issue, Vladimir Nabokov’s chess novella, *Luzin’s Defense*, was excerpted. When it ran a 2,000-word excerpt of his memoirs in August, 1986, *64* had become the first Soviet publication of any kind to print works of the reviled émigré author. Nabokov, an avid amateur chess player, was widely read underground but had been dismissed as a practitioner of “literary snobbism” after he left his homeland in 1919.

Cyber-Gap

The stark disparity between consumer goods available in the Soviet Union and abroad had been obvious for decades but it had made little impact on such a low-tech enterprise as chess. This changed during the 1980s when computers gradually became indispensable among top players. The gap in both hardware and chess software was a mild surprise since as late as the 1950s there was

nearly as much computer chess research in the USSR as in the United States. By 1956 a Soviet program could solve two-move problems faster than most humans. A 1966–67 match between Stanford University and the Institute of Theoretical and Experimental Physics ended in two wins for the Soviet team and two draws. The computer KAISSA, introduced in 1971, first played outside the USSR in 1974 when it won first World Computer Championship in Stockholm.

But computer time became increasingly hard to obtain in the Soviet Union during the 1970s. Progress in computer chess programming shriveled up, and even Botvinnik, who had extensive resources, died before his long-awaited program saw the light of day. At the same time Soviet consumers were left out of the personal computer revolution. By 1982 there were 400 times as many computers per capita in the United States than there were in the USSR.

“Do Children Need a Chess Computer?” an article in *64* asked in February, 1984. It answered affirmatively, noting that machines were found to be excellent sparring partners and teaching devices at the Moscow Pioneer Palace. But obtaining them was expensive and the article expressed hopes that in the near future each sports school would have their own microcomputers — manufactured in East Germany.

Soviet readers also needed a foreign source if they wanted to read Kasparov’s *Child of Change*, a searing indictment of Soviet chess politics in general and Campomanes in particular — laced with lavish self-praise. The book was published abroad in English and five other languages but not in Russian. Nevertheless, Baturinsky attacked it in *Sovietsky Sport* on January 28, 1988, and sued Kasparov (unsuccessfully). The book was not published in the USSR until 1989.

The FIDE returned to a full system of Candidates matches in 1988 beginning with a first round in St. John, New Brunswick. The surprise early victim was Andrei Sokolov

who was forced into a fast-speed playoff with Kevin Spraggett of Canada. Their match was still tied after extra games limited to one hour and then 30 minutes. Finally, Spraggett won Sokolov’s queen with a knight fork in a 15-minute game. It was the beginning of a sharp decline for the 1987 super-finalist.

Also in St. John, Tal won a “world blitz championship” in a strong field that included Kasparov, who was eliminated by Kiril Georgiev of Bulgaria. In the key game, Kasparov’s queen, bishop and king stalemated Georgiev’s lone king. In the final three pairings of the knockout event Tal scored 9–1 and defeated world championship candidates Jesús Nogueiras, Yusupov and Vaganian. The Vaganian–Tal match was closer than the score indicated. Trailing 0–2, the Armenian missed a Tal-like opportunity to make the best-of-six-games finals a fight:

**A13 English Opening
World Blitz Championship,
Saint John, 1988
white Mikhail Tal,
black Rafael Vaganian**

**1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 dxc4
5 Qa4+ Nbd7 6 Qxc4 c5 7 Qb3 Bd6
8 d3 Rb8 9 a4 b6 10 Na3 a6 11 Nd2! 0–0
12 0–0 Bb7 13 Bxb7 Rxb7 14 Nac4 Bc7?**

A typical speed game blunder that costs the exchange. But Tal grossly underestimates Black’s counterplay now.

**15 Na5! Rb8 16 Nc6 Qe8 17 Nxb8 Nxb8
18 Nc4 Nc6 19 Be3?! Nd5 20 Rfd1? f5!**

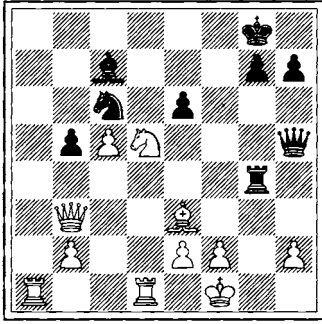
Here 21 f4, stopping ...f5–f4, was risky in view of 21 ... Nxe3 22 Nxe3 Nd4 with strong counterplay.

**21 d4 f4 22 gx f4 Qh5 23 dxc5 b5
24 axb5 axb5 25 Nb6 Rxf4! 26 Nxd5?
Rg4+ 27 Kf1**

Fifty-Fifth Soviet Championship, July 25–August 19, 1988

	Kas	Kar	Y	S	E	I	Y	B	E	Sm	G	So	V	K	S	G	M	K	<i>Score</i>
1–2. Kasparov	X	½	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	11½–5½
1–2. Karpov	½	X	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	1	11½–5½
3–4. Yusupov	½	0	X	1	½	0	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	1	10–7
3–4. Salov	0	½	0	X	½	½	0	1	½	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	½	10–7
5–6. Eingorn	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	9½–7½
5–6. Ivanchuk	0	½	1	½	½	X	½	1	0	0	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	9½–7½
7. Yudasin	0	½	½	1	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	9–8
8. Belyavsky	½	½	½	0	0	0	½	X	½	½	0	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	8½–8½
9–13. Ehlvest	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	X	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	½	½	8–9
9–13. Smyslov	½	½	0	0	1	1	0	½	1	X	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	8–9
9–13. Gavrikov	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	8–9
9–13. Sokolov	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	0	1	½	8–9
9–13. Vaganian	½	½	½	0	0	½	½	0	1	½	½	½	X	½	½	1	½	½	8–9
14. Khalifman	½	½	½	0	½	0	½	0	1	½	½	½	½	X	½	½	½	½	7½–9½
15–16. Smirin	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	1	½	½	½	½	X	0	1	½	7–10
15–16. M. Gurevich	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	1	X	½	½	7–10
17–18. Malanyuk	½	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	0	½	X	½	6–11
17–18. Kharitonov	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	X	6–11

After 27 Kf1



Here 27 ... Rg1+! 28 Kxg1 Qxh2+ mates.

27 ... Qxh2? 28 Ke1 Ba5+ 29 Rxa5 Nxa5
30 Nf6+! Kf7 31 Rd7+! Kxf6 32 Qc3+
Qe5 33 Bd4 Rxd4 34 Qxd4 Qxd4
35 Rxd4 Nb3 36 c6! 1-0

The FIDE support of Active Chess (25 minutes a game) was a highly controversial topic at the time. Grandmasters who feared the creation of new “active grandmaster” titles wanted to know why the Soviet Federation was backing FIDE. Yusupov in the June 1988 *Shakhmaty v SSSR* charged that it was yet another case in which the Krogius-led Chess Department of the Sports Committee made decisions “without preliminary discussion in the Federation, without consultation of the leading players and trainers.” Yusupov went on to describe the “disastrous” plight of many clubs, the lack of trained organizers and trainers and other failures of the Sports Committee. In a stunning indictment he concluded: “At one time the Soviet school of chess dominated but now chess in the West is developing faster and more successfully than we are. In the amount of competitions, literature, equipment (for example, electronic demonstration boards), computers... — in all these areas, we’re far behind.... The difficulties experienced by our national team in the last Olympiad and the failure of Soviet grandmasters in Interzonal tournaments and recent candidates matches are not at all an accident.”

In the 55th Soviet Championship, which began in July in Moscow, an ill Tal withdrew when his second-round opponent, Yusupov, would not play their game in a hotel room. The tournament featured the 130th Karpov–Kasparov game, a draw, and the two enemies eventually tied for first prize. The authority of Botvinnik as honorary chief arbiter could not keep the two Ks from an argument on how to resolve the tie and a playoff match was “postponed” until December, and never played. They split the first prize, which had escalated sharply to 7,500 rubles.

While Karpov, Kasparov, Sokolov, Salov, Ehlvest, Belyavsky, Vaganian, Tal and Yusupov were playing in the GMA’s first World Cup tournaments, the leadership of the Chess Federation was ousted. Chikvaidze was removed and Sevastianov was reinstalled. Leonid Abalkin, an economist credited with some of Gorbachev’s economic reforms, was named to the new presidium and promised Botvinnik in an open letter that the new Federation would be less subservient to the Sports Committee.

Defections

At year’s end, the Soviets won the Olympiad at Thessaloniki easily, six points ahead of England. Kasparov had a 2877 performance, while Karpov registered the tournament’s second-best, at 2800. But Hungary won the Women’s Olympiad by a half point, thanks to 12 wins and only one draw by Judit Polgar. Perhaps more distressing was the news that Elena Akhmilovskaya, the 31-year-old former world women’s championship challenger, had eloped with the captain of the United States men’s team and secretly fled the tournament.

Sovietsky Sport published a remarkable January 3, 1989, letter signed by the leading Soviet women players, Maya Chiburdanidze,

Nana Ioseliani, Nona Gaprindashvili, Ketevan Arakhamia, and their trainers. “In due time the Soviet press will report that Grandmaster Elena Akhmilovskaya deserted the Soviet women’s team in the final rounds of the Thessaloniki Olympiad and ran off with American international master John Donaldson. Not so long ago, we dare suggest, a similar incident would have warranted denunciations and total character assassination. All the athlete’s shortcomings would be mortal sins. Fortunately that is not done today. We strongly believe this to be a triumph of *perestroika*.”

But the letter denounced the “absurd rumor” that the real reason Akhmilovskaya left was because of intolerable living conditions in Georgia, where she lived for seven years. It noted that since her divorce two years before she had been offered her choice of three flats, turned them down and finally accepted a two-room, 48-square meter apartment.

Less than three months later a more serious loss occurred when 14-year-old Gata Kamsky defected. The Kamsky family would have loved a two-room apartment. Instead, they shared a large communal flat on Fontanka in Leningrad. Gennady Nesis, a prominent trainer, recalled how the family used old boots that served as “frontier posts” to distinguish the Kamskys’ territory in the apartment from that of the other families in it.

Gata’s talent for the game was obvious early and he quickly convinced Vladimir Zak, who called him “my little grandmaster” when the boy was still a second-category player. Zak and the Kamsky family soon separated. But Gata continued to improve quickly, “not by days,” Nesis said, “but by hours.” As a 12-year-old who looked two years younger, he created a sensation when he won an adult Swiss tournament in Estonia and then the Soviet under-18 championship ahead of older players like Alexei Shirov.

D97 Grünfeld Defense
Soviet Junior Championship,
Ivano-Frankovsk, 1988
white Alexey Shirov,
black Gata Kamsky

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7
 5 Qb3 dxc4 6 Qxc4 0–0 7 e4 a6 8 Qb3
 b5 9 e5 Nfd7

Kamsky continued to use this risky variation in the FIDE world championship match in 1996. Karpov played 10 e6 fx6 11 Qxe6+ Kh8 12 Qe4 but after 12 ... Nb6 13 Qh4 Nc6 14 Bd3 Rxf3! Black had a strong counterattack.

10 h4 c5 11 e6 c4 12 Qc2 Nb6

White has the initiative after 12 ... fx6 13 h5. Now Black wins control of the g6–c2 diagonal.

13 exf7+ Rxf7 14 Be3 Bf5 15 Qd2 Nc6
 16 h5 Nd5 17 Ng5 Rf8 18 hxg6 hxg6
 19 g4? Nxe3 20 fxe3 e5!

Black opens either the kingside (...Qxg5) or center (...exd4).

21 Bg2 Nb4 22 gxh5 Qxg5 23 Bxa8 Nd3+
 24 Kd1 Rxa8 25 Qh2?

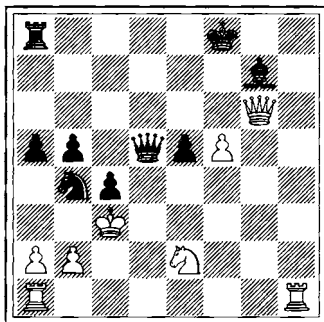
In the face of excellent Black compensation for the exchange, White bets everything on a mating attack.

25 ... Qxe3 26 Qh7+ Kf8 27 Qxg6 Qxd4
 28 Ne2 Qd5 29 Kc2 Nb4+ 30 Kc3 a5!
(see diagram)

Two mates are threatened and White’s king ends up smothered.

31 Rad1 Qf3+ 32 Kd2 Rd8+ 33 Kc1 Qe3+
 0–1

After 30 ... a5



But after conflicts with Soviet officials, Kamsky's father, Rustam, developed a "permanent opposition to anyone, who in the opinion of Rustam Gatovich, stands or stood in their way to the chess crown," Nesis wrote. When the 1989 New York Open was winding up on March 28, 1989, Rustam called Alexander Roshal to say the father and son had sought political refugee status. Roshal said Rustam told him they had planned the defection for half a year.

The tempo of change speeded up in 1988, in chess and elsewhere. Deputy head of state Pyotr Demichev, who had awarded Kasparov an Order of Lenin in 1987, was among the Brezhnevites ousted in a Gorbachev coup in the Central Committee in September 1988. But Gorbachev's standing with the people was beginning to fall and when elections to a new body, the Congress of People's Deputies, were held in May, 1989, Andrei Sakharov and Boris Yeltsin were named the top deputies in a poll — while Gorbachev was 17th.

By that time plans for another USSR versus Rest of the World match — scheduled for March, 1989, in Belgium — collapsed. There was also another overhaul of the Soviet Championship format. This time, the First League was dropped and the Moscow, Leningrad and RSFSR championships became semifinal qualifying events once again. Just before end of 1989 the Soviet Federation was reconstituted once more and Sevastianov was ousted again. Kasparov's Union of Soviet Chess Players had established it-

self as a rival of the Federation. But Karpov led a Soviet team that won the World Team Championship in Lucerne, in November, 1989 — without Kasparov.

Karpov finished second at Linares 1989 behind a new star, 19-year-old Vasily Ivanchuk. Born in a small, western Ukrainian town, Ivanchuk had no regular trainer as a youth and was a genuine surprise when he began to win junior events in 1985 and 1986. After winning the New York Open in 1988, Ivanchuk quickly joined the world elite, even though the best result he had ever achieved in a Soviet Championship was a tie for fifth place. The connection between the Championship and foreign invitations had been broken.

C61 Ruy Lopez
Linares, 1989
white Nigel Short,
black Vasily Ivanchuk

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4
exd4 5 Bc4

Bird's Defense had two modern renaissances, one in the late 1980s in connection with ...Bc5, and another forty years before when the Leningraders Alexander Tolush, Lisitsyn and Goldberg showed Black's resources with an early ...d5.

A stunning example of Black's attacking resources was shown in Uitumen-Lein, Sochi 1965: 5 0-0 c6 6 Bc4 Nf6 7 Re1 d6 8 c3 Ng4 9 h3 Ne5 10 Bf1 d3! 11 f4 Qb6+ 12 Kh1 h5! and Black's attack won after 13 fxex5 Bg4! 14 Qb3 Qf2! 15 Qxb7 Rd8 16 Rd1 Bxd1 17 Qxc6+ Ke7 18 Qc7+ Rd7 19 exd6+ Kf6! 20 e5+ Kxe5!

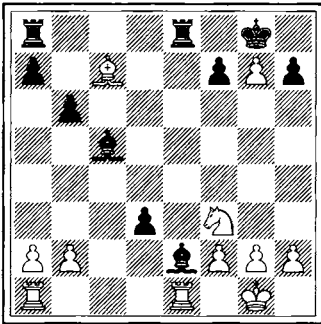
5 ... Nf6 6 Qe2 Bc5 7 e5 0-0! 8 0-0 d5!
9 exf6 dxc4

After 10 fxg7 Re8 11 Qxc4 Bd6 Black has a strong kingside initiative.

10 Qh5 b6 11 f×g7 Re8 12 d3 c×d3
13 c×d3 Ba6 14 Qf3 Qe7 15 Bf4 Qe2!

The trade of queens wins the d3-pawn and makes Black's d4-pawn and the e-file the major factors of the endgame.

16 Nd2 Q×f3 17 N×f3 B×d3 18 Rfe1 Be2
19 B×c7 d3!



After 19
... d3

20 a3 a5 21 Bf4 Re4 22 Bd2 Rae8 23 Bc3
a4! 24 Ng5 Rc4 25 Rad1 Rc8! 26 Ra1
Rd8

White can not stop ...d2 for long.

27 Nf3 R×c3! 28 b×c3 d2 29 R×e2
d1(Q)+ 30 R×d1 R×d1+ 31 Ne1

Black has an easy win after 31 Re1 R×e1+
32 N×e1 B×a3.

31 ... Rc1 32 Re4 f5! 33 Re8+ K×g7
34 Kf1 R×c3 35 Ke2 R×a3 36 Nd3 Ra2+
37 Kf3 Ra3 38 Rd8 Rc3 39 Kf4 a3!
40 Rd7+ Kf8 41 Ne5 a2 42 K×f5 a1(Q)
43 Rd8+ Kg7 44 Rd7+ Kg8 0–1

Travel restrictions continued to be reduced for all top players. In December, 1988, Kasparov led a team of Soviet players to a charity benefit match in Madrid. But as Alexey Suetin reported in *Pravda*, neither the Sports Committee nor the Soviet Federation approved the visit. They had gone under the authority of the State Committee of Science and Technology.

In the following summer, the staggering number of 90 Soviets played at Berlin 1989. At the GMA's qualifying tournament for the next World Cup, held in Palma de Mallorca in December, 1989, there were 184 players from 27 countries — but by far the largest contingent were the 63 Soviets. It was at the GMA meeting in Palma that Kasparov began his split with the Association leadership that would lead to its collapse.

By 1989 Soviet players had become regulars at virtually every major money event. That summer Mikhail Gurevich won the 1989 World Open on tie breaks, while Ivanchuk and Lev Polugayevsky won the Biel Invitational. Alexander Khalifman won the 1990 New York Open and wrote in *64* about the problems of having to find a way of paying 1800 rubles for a round trip ticket. Some Soviets in the tournament were members of the official delegation and stayed at the Penta Hotel tournament site but Khalifman stayed in New Jersey with Alex Yermolinsky, who had left Leningrad the previous year and would become one of the most successful United States players in the 1990s. Kamsky, denounced as a renegade a year previously, was praised in the Soviet media for his play in the tournament and finished in a tie for second place with Leonid Yudasin, Vladimir Epishin and Helgi Olafsson.

Normally a game like the following — young Soviet beats former U.S. Champion — would be a major event in Soviet chess publications. But in 1990 it was hardly mentioned:

B90 Sicilian Defense
New York Open, 1990
white Alexander Khalifman,
black Robert Byrne

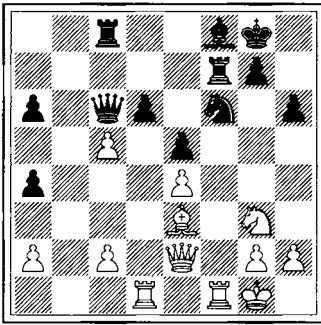
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 c×d4 4 N×d4 Nf6
5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e5 7 Nf3 Be7 8 Bc4 0–0
9 0–0 Nc6 10 Qe2 Na5 11 Bd5

The use of d5 is what made 6 Be3, Byrne's own pet line, moderately popular since the mid-1970s.

11 ... Be6 12 Rad1 Qc7 13 Bxe6 fxe6
14 Ng5 Qc8 15 f4? exf4 16 Bxf4 Nc4!
17 Na4!

White must play b2-b3 if he wants equality.

17 ... b5 18 b3 h6 19 Nf3 bxa4 20 bxc4
e5 21 Bc1 Qc5+? 22 Be3 Qc6 23 Nh4!
Rf7 24 Nf5 Bf8 25 Ng3 Rc8 26 c5!



After 26 c5

After Qc4 Black's king position is vulnerable to Nh5.

26 ... dxc5 27 Qc4 Qb5 28 Qe6 Re8
29 Qf5 Rd7 30 Nh5 Rf7 31 Qg6! Re6
32 Bxh6 Qe8 33 Rxf6! 1-0

The opportunity for foreign tournaments exposed the sharp difference in financial rewards of being a trainer and being a player. The ranks of people who became trainers — who formerly could not hope to go abroad — began to diminish sharply. Yet travelers often ended up spending much of their time as merchants, buying foreign goods they could sell back home in order to make a profit on the trip. Sveshnikov pointed out in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* how several Soviet players were sent to the Belgrade GMA Open in 1988 under the auspices of a *profsoyuz* sports society who insisted they turn over any prizes they won. Sveshnikov said he

would do that only if he was assigned future chess work from the union and they compensated him for three tournaments he played for them at his own expense. After Sveshnikov won a prize, the union threatened to take him to court.

Also at Belgrade, Igor Naumkin, a talented young Muscovite, took Sveshnikov's advice and refused to give his prize to the Sports Committee. Naumkin argued that he traveled on a free ticket from the GMA, received no stipend, had never been sent abroad at its expense — in other words had not been helped by the Sports Committee. The Soviet Federation directed a committee to decide whether to discipline Naumkin in March, 1989, Sveshnikov wrote. Suetin, a committee member, said since "we gave" in the past, Naumkin had to do same. Others said the young master had been brought up by the Soviet state, therefore he owed the state. Because of his defense of Naumkin, the committee even considered censuring Sveshnikov. In the end, the committee failed to reach a verdict but the Federation presidium decided to disqualify Naumkin from major events for two years. Yet the Federation was in such an unsettled state that Naumkin just ignored the order and played in a series of international tournaments and a Moscow-Leningrad match. Sveshnikov added that the GMA assembly in May announced it was ready to defend the interests of its members against FIDE — and national federations.

Sergei Dolmatov set a precedent in May, 1989, when he became the first Soviet sportsman to legally earn dollars in the USSR — the \$20,000 first prize at the GMA qualifier tournament for the next World Cup. Nick deFirmian of the United States was the only non-Soviet to advance in the GMA event. Just as FIDE limited the number of Soviet Candidates in the World Championship cycles of the 1950s and 1960s, the GMA did the same with World Cup participants. The final qualifying event for the second Cup

resulted in eight Soviets in the top 12 places. But three of the Soviets — Boris Gelfand, Ivanchuk and Lev Polugayevsky — were replaced on the roster for the second Cup with non-Soviets.

The second World Cup was never finished and the GMA was a shell of an organization after 1991. But the Moscow event, held at the Izmailovsky Hotel complex in the northeastern section of the city, showed that many young Soviets had reached parity with Western grandmasters. Soviet players had won the World Junior in 1975 (Valery Chekhov), 1977 (Yusupov), 1978 (Dolmatov), 1980 (Kasparov), and 1982 (Sokolov). But they did not win it again until Vladimir Akopian did in 1991— while new stars, such as Viswanathan Anand of India, Joel Lautier of France and Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria, emerged abroad. But the Moscow World Cup qualifier revealed a wealth of talent that would emerge in the 1990s and continue Russian domination of chess in the post-Soviet years. Karpov said if they had the opportunity to play internationally three or four times a year there would be 20 to 25 more Soviet grandmasters.

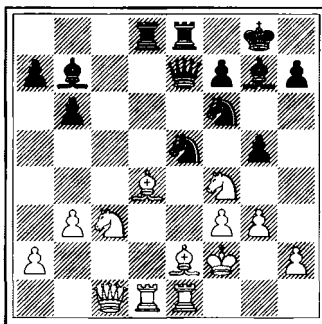
Among those who soon earned the title was the 1988 world under-18 champion, Shirov:

E81 King's Indian Defense
GMA World Cup Qualifier,
Moscow, 1989
white Florin Gheorgiu,
black Alexey Shirov

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
 5 f3 0–0 6 Be3 c5 7 Nge2?! Nc6 8 Qd2
 b6 9 Rd1 e6! 10 g3 Ba6 11 b3 Re8
 12 Kf2? d5!

White's extravagant moves can be punished only by opening the center, e.g., 13 dxc5 dxe4 with complications, or 13 cxd5 exd5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 exd5 Bxe2 16 Bxe2 Nxd4 17 Bc4 b5.

13 e5 cxd4 14 Bxd4 Nd7 15 cxd5 Ncxe5
 16 Nf4 Bb7 17 Be2 exd5 18 Nfxd5 Nf6
 19 Nf4 Qe7 20 Rhe1 Rad8 21 Qcl g5!



After 21
 ... g5

Black's power is superbly centralized. Now 22 Nh3 g4! takes the kingside apart.

22 Bb5 Rxd4! 23 Rxd4 Nfg4+! 24 Kf1

A virtual resignation but 24 fxg4 Nxg4+ 25 Kf1 Nxh2+ or 24 Kg2 Bxf3+ 25 Kgl Ba8 are also lost.

24 ... Nxh2+ 25 Kg2 Nhxf3 26 Nfd5
 Nxnd4 27 Bxe8 Qe6 28 Qe3 Nc2 0–1

Belatedly the Soviets tried to harness their enormous theoretical resources for commercial use. It must have been aggravating to see their fellow socialists of Yugoslavia create the *Chess Informant* in 1966 in one of the great coups of chess publishing. By 1988 Soviet players were the number one Informant customers, buying 7,000 copies of each new issue. In 1988 the Central Chess Club hooked up with an Italian publishing firm to begin what turned out to be a short-lived series of publications with the name *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. The TASS news agency began its own chess publication, *Shakhmatny Globus*, about international and Soviet chess news in 1988 but it also failed.

Soviet chess continued to attract bright minds because it remained a good profession. By the late 1980s, Jaan Ehlevest had become the best Estonian player since Paul Keres. But Ehlevest acknowledged he

concentrated on chess after discovering that his first choice for a career — psychology — was not a viable alternative in a country that ridiculed many of the precepts of Sigmund Freud. Sergei Tiviakov, a graduate of the Smyslov School, gave up plans to become a doctor after his chess career took off with a good result at the Moscow World Cup Qualifier.

The Soviet Championship no longer carried the cachet that led to opportunities to play abroad but it remained a solid event: the 57th Championship held in Leningrad in 1990 had an average rating of 2578, placing it on par with a strong international tournament. But the big names, aside from Alexander Belyavsky, who tied for first with Leonid Yudasin, Evgeny Bareev and Alexey Vyzhmanavin, ignored it. Only seven of the 14 players were grandmasters.

By the time the Berlin Wall came down in November, 1989, there were few restrictions left to prevent a new wave of emigrations. The case of Lev Psakhis was not unusual. Psakhis, national co-champion of 1980 and 1981, lived in the closed Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk. “I was the first who left it for about 10 years,” he recalled. “I prepared for a heavy struggle but all of a sudden everything turned out to be not so terrible.” The local emigration authority only said, “Lev Borisovich, then who will play chess for Krasnoyarsk?” Psakhis emigrated to Israel in 1990, complaining of problems with Krogus, whom he sarcastically called “the big friend of chessplayers.” The same year Irina Levitina, who had reached a world women’s championship match in 1984, emigrated and eventually settled in the United States, where she was best known as a bridge player. Meanwhile, Mikhail Gurevich was playing as a representative of Belgium; Khalifman, of Germany, and Viktor Gavrikov, of Switzerland.

Leningrader Valery Salov “simply left,” as he put it, for Spain in 1991. “Even bread can’t be bought without a line” in the So-

viet Union, he complained. “I’m convinced that money in our country has for a long time had no significance. Everything is decided by power only. If you have it, you have everything.” And Viktor Korchnoi, whose Soviet citizenship was returned to him in 1989, showed no interest in visiting his homeland.

Round Five

The two contestants in the World Championship match of 1990 seemed to bear no resemblance to the men who first crossed swords six years before. They had, each in their own way, been carried along by the reforms wrought by Gorbachev:

Kasparov had resigned from the Communist Party and was deputy chairman of a new political party, Democratic Russia. Karpov was a member of the new parliament, the Congress of People’s Deputies, and was described as somewhat more reformist than Gorbachev. Kasparov had opened a Garry Kasparov Chess Academy in Murcia, Spain, and had helped create what was called the first private shareholding company since the Revolution. Karpov enlisted Ron Henley, an American grandmaster — and American Stock Exchange trader, as a second. Kasparov trained for the Karpov match on Martha’s Vineyard. Karpov lectured at Harvard’s Russian Research Center. (Asked at Harvard in early 1990 if there was anything he regretted doing during the bad old days of Brezhnev, Karpov deflected the question by saying, “I’m very glad I wasn’t much involved in politics.”)

Kasparov’s abrasive manner had turned many of his admirers into detractors. Boris Spassky spoke of his “Bolshevik,” whoever-is-not-for-me-is-against-me attitude. Botvinnik later said, “If I had to choose between Karpov the Champion and Kasparov the Champion I would prefer to remain alone on a desert island.” Yet during the 1990

World Championship Match, New York–Lyons, October 8–December 31, 1990

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Kasparov	½	1	½	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	
Karpov	½	0	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Score
Kasparov	½	½	½	1	0	1	½	1	½	½	0	½	12½–11½
Karpov	½	½	½	0	1	0	½	0	½	½	1	½	11½–12½

World Championship match, divided between New York and Lyons, France, the contestants together postmortemed some games and appeared to be friendlier than they had been in seven years. Kasparov insisted: "I am talking chess with the No. 2 player in the world. I wouldn't go to a restaurant with him but who else can I really talk with about these games?" Asked whether he would have dinner with Kasparov, Karpov replied he often went without eating.

The games, particularly in the first half, were among the finest fighting examples of the K–K marathon.

E94 King's Indian Defense
World Championship Match,
third game, New York, 1990
white Anatoly Karpov,
black Garry Kasparov

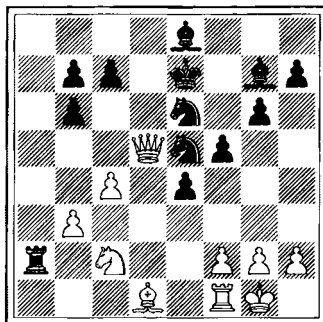
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
 5 Nf3 0–0 6 Be2 e5 7 Be3 Qe7 8 dxe5
 dxe5 9 Nd5 Qd8! 10 Bc5 Nxe4

This was a recently discovered and sound exchange sacrifice (not 10 ... Re8? 11 Be7).

11 Be7 Qd7 12 Bxf8 Kxf8 13 Qc2 Nc5
 14 Rd1 Nc6 15 0–0 Ne6! 16 Nb6

White allows a queen sacrifice to prevent Black from gaining a clear edge with ...Ncd4.

16 ... axb6 17 Rxd7 Bxd7 18 Qd2 Be8
 19 b3 e4 20 Nel f5 21 Bd1 Ne5 22 Nc2!?
 Rxa2 23 Qd5 Ke7



After 23
 ... Ke7

An astonishing position for a world championship match. Karpov finds a way to return material (and not by 24 Qxb7 Bc6 25 Qc8 Ra8).

24 Nb4! c6 25 Qxe6+ Kxe6 26 Nxa2
 Nf7 27 Be2 Nd6 28 Nb4 Bc3 29 Nc2 f4
 30 Rd1 h5 31 f3 e3 32 g3 g5 33 Bd3 h4
 34 Kf1 c5 35 Ke2 b5 36 cxb5 Nxb5?
 37 Bc4+ Ke7 38 Rd5!

White, who appeared lost three moves ago, suddenly has good chances in a highly double-edged position.

38 ... Bf6 39 Rxc5 Nc3+ 40 Kf1 Bg6
 41 Nel Kd6 42 Ra5 fxg3 43 hxg3 hxg3
 44 Ng2 b5! 45 Ra6+ Ke7 46 Ra7+ Ke8
 47 Ra8+ Bd8

White must part with the bishop

because of 48 Be2 Bf5 and ... Bh3, or 48 Be6 e2+.

48 N×e3! b×c4 49 N×c4 g4 50 Kg2 Ne2
51 Ne5 g×f3+ 52 K×f3 g2! 53 R×d8+!
Draw

The match was tied 1–1 with 10 draws and only Karpov showed up for a press conference when the New York half of the match ended. But in France, Kasparov took a two-point lead and won his most convincing victory over his rival since the second match.

The End

There was already another World Championship cycle but by the time it ended the Soviet Union had become history. At the massive, Swiss System Manila Interzonal in June–July, 1990, Soviet players finished all over the crosstable. Salov withdrew after seven rounds and Smyslov and Vaganian finished in a tie for lowly 48th place. But Gelfand and Ivanchuk tied for first and Yudasin, Dolmatov and Dreyev tied for fifth. In between were Khalifman, Shirov, Ehlvest and Mikhail Gurevich (tied for 12th), Smbat Lputian and Sokolov (tied for 29th).

Of the seven first-round Candidates matches two were all–Soviet — Ivanchuk crushing Yudasin 4½–½ and Yusupov ousting Dolmatov in tiebreaking games. Dreyev was soundly beaten by Anand but Gelfand won over Predrag Nikolić. Two more Soviets fell in the quarter–finals when Short beat Gelfand and Yusupov narrowly got by Ivanchuk. The only other Soviet survivor was Karpov, who defeated Anand.

By then, the Soviet Union was in its worst turmoil since 1917. The Latvian magazine *Shakhmaty*, which had appeared twice a month since 1959, ceased publication along with all other Latvian magazines, due to paper shortages. Gorbachev's struggle to preserve control of a movement he had cre-

ated triggered new crises. Kasparov complained of the lack of governmental support: "At the moment chess is out in Russia." And in the August, 1991, *New in Chess*, even Botvinnik — who had once belittled Fischer — was pessimistic. "Nowadays there no longer is a big difference between the chessplayers in the West and the chessplayers of the Soviet Union," he said.

That month Botvinnik celebrated his 80th birthday. Gorbachev sent the Patriarch a congratulatory telegram on August 17 — and it may have been Gorbachev's last telegram before he was arrested in the amateurish coup staged by Kremlin traditionalists. Kasparov proved far more perceptive than many Western analysts when he predicted in mid-coup, on CNN, that the coup would not last more than a few days. "The Soviet empire is dead," he said.

There was one last Soviet chess landmark, the 58th and final Soviet Championship. For only the second time, it was a Swiss System tournament. Few top players took part and it was won by two young non–Russian international masters. Artashes Minasyan of Armenia exceeded the grandmaster norm by two points and Elmar Magerramov of Baku exceeded it by a point and a half. The field of 64 players had several untitled players, including a promising teenager from Tuapse who tied for 15th place, Vladimir Kramnik:

D31 Queen's Gambit Declined
58th Soviet Championship,
Moscow, 1991
white Valery Neferov,
black Vladimir Kramnik

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 e6 4 Nc3 d×c4
5 a4 Bb4 6 e3 b5 7 Bd2 a5 8 a×b5 B×c3
9 B×c3 c×b5 10 b3 Bb7 11 b×c4 b4

The point of Black's opening: his passed queenside pawns may balance White's center.

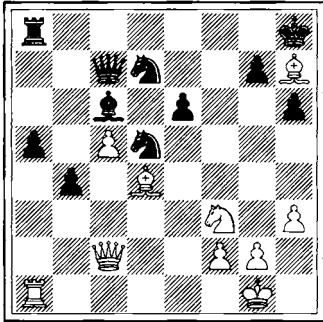
12 Bb2 Nf6 13 Bd3 Nbd7 14 Qc2 0–0
15 0–0 Qc7 16 e4 e5 17 Rfe1 Rfe8 18 c5
e×d4 19 B×d4 h6!

An improvement, after 42 years, over Kan–Simagin, Moscow 1949, which had gone 19 ... Ng4 20 Bc4 Nde5 21 N×e5 N×e5 22 Bd5 with advantage to White. Now White should consider an immediate 21 e5 Nd5 22 e6.

20 h3 Bc6 21 e5 Nd5 22 e6!

Black has a clear edge if he is allowed to play 22 ... Nf8.

22 ... R×e6 23 R×e6 f×e6 24 Bh7+
Kh8



After 24
... Kh8

White's initiative will die without a sacrifice (25 Qg6? e5 or 25 Nh4 Nf8).

25 B×g7+ K×g7 26 Qg6+ Kh8 27 Q×h6
Nf8 28 Bf5+ Nh7 29 B×h7 Q×h7
30 Q×e6 Ne7 31 Ne5 Qg7 32 g4 Bd5?

This works because of White's faulty 36th move but 32 ... Be8 33 Rd1 a4 was much better.

33 Q×e7 Q×e7 34 Ng6+ Kh7 35 N×e7
Be4 36 Re1?

Since Rb1 is impossible, White can not hold up the pawns with his rook, e.g., 36 Ra2 b3 37 Rb2 a3. But 36 f3! Bc2! 37 Nd5 would have sharply reduced Black's chances to 37 ... b3 38 Nc3 b2 39 Ra2.

36 ... a4! 37 c6 a3 38 c7 b3 39 c8(Q)
R×c8 40 N×c8 b2 0–1.

The 11-round Swiss ended November 13. A week later, in one final bit of irony, Kasparov received an annual award from an American organization, the Center for Security Policy. He took the occasion to praise President Harry Truman's containment policy, which "halted communism," and President Ronald Reagan's star wars program, which "fatally wounded it." On January 1, 1992 the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist.

Epilogue

After the breakup of the USSR, Russia retained most of its top names, while Ivanchuk played for Ukraine, Gelfand for Belarus and other strong grandmasters represented the other former Soviet republics. Some adopted new countries. Belyavsky played for Slovenia, for example, and Mikhail Krasenkov represented Poland. Yusupov, recovered from a near-fatal attack by burglars in his Moscow apartment, played for Germany. (Another victim of Russia's new crime wave, Grandmaster Igor Platonov, was murdered when he surprised thieves in his apartment in November 1994.)

After the disastrous 1991 currency reform and other economic problems, *Shakhmatny Bulletin* and *Shakhmaty v SSSR* merged into *Shakhmatny Vestnik* (Chess Herald), which soon failed. Roshal's *64* also briefly collapsed but later resumed its competition with Yuri Averbakh's *Shakhmaty v Rossii* (Chess in Russia).

Mikhail Botvinnik died May 5, 1995, outliving Mikhail Tal and Boris Veinstein by three years. Yakov Rokhlin died in 1996 and Lev Polugayevsky lost a two-year battle with a brain tumor and died in Paris in 1995.

The former Soviet Chess Federation

broke into two factions, which bitterly fought over who would represent Russian players — and who would own the Central Chess Club. Nine chess schools collapsed from lack of government support.

Kramnik, who became one of the world's top three players by the late 1990s, said in October, 1997, that Russian chess was running “on old reserves”— the players developed in the Soviet years.

Evgeny Vasiukov seemed to agree when he said, also in 1997: “Now all the structure is destroyed and I fear that we will gradually have to give up our position. Kasparov's declaration that chess was never as popular as it is today summons a smile from the older generation.”

The Soviets' string of three straight Correspondence Olympiad championships had ended when the British won the 1982–1987 tournament. But the Soviets won the next one, which did not end until 1995. “The Final Victory of Socialism,” *Shakhmaty v Rossii* called it.

The remainder of the 1990s was a series of shocks to the chess establishment of which the Soviets had been a central pillar. Kasparov broke from FIDE and, with the help of a Wall Street lawyer, created a Professional Chess Association that held non-FIDE World Championship matches in 1993 and 1995. Karpov won a hastily-organized substitute FIDE championship match from Jan Timman in 1993 to regain what became a deeply disputed title. He defended it successfully against Kamsky in Elista, the capital of the Russian region of Kalmykia, in 1996.

Although FIDE politics was increasingly dominated by the Third World, the most solid voting bloc in the 1990s consisted of the former Soviet states. And while the FIDE presidency could only be held by representatives of neutral countries during the Cold War, Campomanes' unlikely successor in 1995 was Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, the millionaire Kamlyk president. Ilyumzhinov's most

radical idea was to replace the Interzonal–Candidates–title match format for the World Championship to a single, massive knockout tournament. Karpov won the first version of the controversial new format in 1998. The second version was held in the fall of 1999 in that bastion of capitalist excess, Las Vegas.

The qualifiers included names from the controversial recent past of the USSR — Viktor Korchnoi, Boris Gulko and Gata Kamsky, as well as several émigrés (Sergei Kudrin, Alex Yermolinsky, Dmitry Gurevich, Lev Psakhis). In a tournament of surprises, perhaps the biggest was Alexander Khalifman, rated 45th in the tournament, who had returned home and represented Russia.

D39 Queen's Gambit Declined

white Alexander Khalifman,

black Judit Polgar

FIDE World Championship,

Las Vegas, 1999

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 d4 d5 4 Nc3 dxc4
5 e4 Bb4 6 Bg5 c5 7 Bxc4 cxd4 8 Nxd4
Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 Qa5 10 Bb5+ Bd7 11 Bxf6!

The Soviets had revived the Vienna Variation in the 1980s. Now 11 ... Qxc3+?
12 Kf1 gxf6 13 Rcl loses.

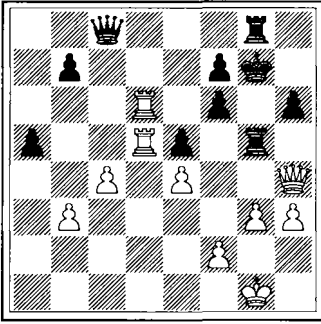
11 ... gxf6 12 Qb3 a6 13 Be2 Nc6 14 0–0
Qc7 15 Rab1 Na5 16 Qa3 Rc8 17 c4!
Qc5! 18 Qc3 e5 19 Nb3! Nxb3 20 axb3
a5 21 Rfd1 Be6 22 h3!

With 23 Bg4 in mind.

22 ... 0–0 23 Qg3+ Kh8 24 Qh4 Qe7
25 Bg4! Rg8

White gets control of the d-file now
but 25 ... Rcd8 26 Rd5! Bxd5?? allows
27 Bf5 and mates.

26 Rd3 Rg5 27 Bxe6 Qxe6 28 Rbd1 Rcg8
29 Rd6 Qc8 30 g3 Kg7 31 R1d5 h6



After 31
... h6

32 Rxe5!

Now 32 ... fxe5 33 Qxh6 is mate and
32 ... Rxe5 33 Qxf6+ is hopeless.

32 ... Rd8 33 Red5 Rxd6 34 Rxd6 Rg6
35 Qf4 a4 36 bxa4 Qxc4 37 Rd8! Qc3
38 Kg2 Qb4 39 Ra8! h5 40 Qb8! Qxe4+
41 Kh2 Rg5 42 Qh8+ Kg6 43 Rg8+ Kf5
44 Qh7+ 1-0

Khalifman sailed through the event and defeated Vladimir Akopian in the finals to win the FIDE Championship that had been held by seven Soviet predecessors. In a bit of irony, he readily acknowledged that he was not a professional player. His new project was creating a Grandmaster Chess School in St. Petersburg, a step toward restoring the glory that was Soviet chess.

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Batuyev, Andrei (bah-TOO-yeff)
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Soviet Dominance of FIDE, July 1, 1991

The final FIDE rating list issued during the Soviet era, dated July 1, 1991, showed that Soviet players accounted for 55 percent of the players in the elite 2600-and-over

category and 50 percent of those 2550 and above, and were dominant in other categories as well.

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>2600+</i>	<i>2550+</i>	<i>2500+</i>	<i>2450+</i>	<i>2400+</i>	<i>2350+</i>	<i>2300+</i>
U.S.S.R.	790	20	46	96	178	336	511	659
England	195	5	6	14	22	31	51	90
U.S.A.	394	2	12	20	46	66	100	186
Yugoslavia	1,043	2	7	19	49	116	236	498
Germany	1,027	2	5	15	33	82	185	427
Hungary	508	1	4	8	16	39	84	177
Netherlands	136	1	2	5	12	28	58	87
India	108	1	2	2	3	6	15	36
Sweden	147	1	1	4	9	18	36	69
Denmark	127	1	1	3	6	15	26	55
Czechoslovakia	274	0	3	5	14	27	70	133
France	221	0	3	3	11	23	38	71

Soviet Championship Summaries

Soviet Champions, 1920–1991

No.	Year	Winner
1	1920	Alekhine
2	1923	Romanovsky
3	1924	Bogolyubov
4	1925	Bogolyubov
5	1927	Bohatychuk, Romanovsky
6	1929	Verlinsky
7	1931	Botvinnik
8	1933	Botvinnik
9	1935	Levenfish, I. Rabinovich
10	1937	Levenfish
11	1939	Botvinnik
12	1940	Bondarevsky, Liliental
13	1944	Botvinnik
14	1945	Botvinnik
15	1947	Keres
16	1948	Bronstein, Kotov
17	1949	Bronstein, Smyslov
18	1950	Keres
19	1951	Keres
20	1952	Botvinnik (in playoff)
21	1954	Averbakh
22	1955	Geller (in playoff)
23	1956	Taimanov (in playoff)
24	1957	Tal
25	1958	Tal
26	1959	Petrosian
27	1960	Korchnoi
28	1961	Petrosian
29	1961	Spassky
30	1962	Korchnoi
31	1963	Stein (in playoff)
32	1964-5	Korchnoi
33	1965	Stein
34	1966-7	Stein
35	1967	Polugayevsky, Tal
36	1968-9	Polugayevsky (in playoff)
37	1969	Petrosian (in playoff)
38	1970	Korchnoi
39	1971	Savon
40	1972	Tal
41	1973	Spassky
42	1974	Belyavsky, Tal
43	1975	Petrosian
44	1976	Karpov
45	1977	Dorfman, Gulko
46	1978	Tal, Tseshkovsky
47	1979	Geller
48	1980-1	Belyavsky, Psakhis
49	1981	Kasparov, Psakhis
50	1982	Karpov
51	1984	Sokolov
52	1985	M. Gurevich
53	1986	Tseshkovsky
54	1987	Belyavsky
55	1988	Karpov, Kasparov
56	1989	Vaganian
57	1990	Belyavsky, Yudasin, Bareev, Vyzhmanavin
58	1991	Magerramov, Minasian

*Most Championship First Places
(includes the 1941 Absolute)*

(1) Botvinnik	7
(2) Tal	6
(3-5) Belyavsky, Korchnoi, Petrosian	4
(6-8) Karpov, Keres, Stein	3
(9-16) Bogolyubov, Bronstein, Kasparov, Levenfish, Polugayevsky, Psakhis, Romanovsky, Tseshkovsky	2

Most Championship Participations

(1-2) Geller, Taimanov	23
(3-5) Bronstein, Polugayevsky, Tal	20
(6) Smyslov	19
(7-10) Balashov, Kholmov, Korchnoi, Petrosian	16
(11) Averbakh	15
(12-14) Belyavsky, Keres, Tukmakov	14
(15) Furman	13
(16-18) Boleslavsky, Levenfish, Vaganian	12
(19-20) Botvinnik, Spassky	11

Most Points Scored

(1) Taimanov	242½
(2) Geller	235
(3) Polugayevsky	217
(4) Tal	214½
(5) Bronstein	210
(6) Smyslov	200½
(7) Korchnoi	186
(8) Petrosian	177
(9) Kholmov	173½
(10) Averbakh	152½
(11) Balashov	150
(12) Keres	144½
(13) Botvinnik	142½
(14) Spassky	130½
(15) Botvinnik	129
(16) Boleslavsky	126½
(17) Tukmakov	126
(18-19) Belyavsky, Levenfish	118

*Highest Winning Percentage
(150 or more games)*

(1) Botvinnik	69.2%
(2) Stein	63.4
(3-4) Petrosian, Spassky	63.0
(5) Korchnoi	61.2
(6) Polugayevsky	60.9
(7) Tal	60.8
(8) Keres	59.4
(9) Boleslavsky	58.2
(10) Smyslov	57.5

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