

**GARRY  
KASPAROV  
ON MY GREAT  
PREDECESSORS  
PART IV**



**POPULAR CHESS**

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## Introduction

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# Stars of the West

The lives and games of ten chess kings of the past, from Steinitz to Spassky, have already been described, and now it is the turn of the eleventh – the phenomenal Fischer, who in the early 1970s succeeded on his own in smashing the Soviet chess machine. Before him, unsuccessful attempts had been made to do this by other bright stars from the West – Reshevsky, Najdorf, Larsen... Narrative logic – or perhaps Caissa herself – suggested the solution of devoting an individual volume to all these outstanding players.

It stands to reason that Fischer did not emerge out of nothing. Not without reason was he called the best pupil of the Soviet Chess School, the flourishing of which led to the rapid development of the game in the mid-20th century, but with even more foundation he can be regarded as the successor to the great traditions of American chess, stemming from the legendary Morphy. Over the period of more than a hundred years separating their world triumphs, an almost continuous rise in the popularity of chess in America has been observed.

It was here that Steinitz accomplished his unparalleled feats, playing five matches for the world championship between 1886 and 1894, and more important – expounding in his *International Chess Magazine* (1885-91) and his fundamental work *Modern Chess Instructor* (1889) the teachings of the new, positional school. At the end of the 19th century this wave swept Pillsbury towards the top, followed in the early 20th century by Marshall. America became a serious chess centre and it was no accident that Lasker lived here for several years, publishing his famous *Lasker's Chess Magazine* (1904-09), just as it was no accident that the genius Capablanca appeared and grew up here, settling for a long time in New York.

While the First World War was raging in Europe, in America tournament life continued, and imperceptibly, little-by-little, the foundation for a new breakthrough was laid. In the 1920s this process was accelerated by the sensational exhibitions of the child prodigy Sammy Reshevsky, a tour by Alekhine, the challenger to the chess

throne, and especially the grandiose New York tournaments (1924 and 1927). And, as a result, in the early 1930s there appeared a whole group of strong masters – Kashdan, Horowitz, Steiner, Dake, Denker and others, to say nothing of the stars of world magnitude – Reshevsky and Fine (to whom one of the sections in this book is also devoted). Together with the veteran Marshall, the Americans won four successive Olympiads at that time.

Meanwhile, behind the ‘iron curtain’ in the USSR, where chess enjoyed state and political support, the chess machine that after the Second World War was for a long time to conquer the whole world was rapidly gathering speed. The first direct confrontation, the USSR-USA radio match on ten boards (1945) ended in a crushing defeat for the Olympiad champions.

‘What has happened to American chess?’ wrote Arnold Denker at that time. ‘Is it possible that the country which produced the brilliant Marshall, the resourceful Reshevsky and the encyclopaedic Fine has gone back as much as the Russian trouncing would indicate? About 1932 this country had fifteen or twenty very talented young masters. What has happened to all these budding stars? Is it possible that so much talent can have dwindled away disappointingly in a few years? The answer to the second question is a clear and unequivocal “Yes!” Why? Because professional chess requires a player’s full time, and yet it does not assure him anywhere near an adequate income.

Chess is a full time job, and we must treat it as such if we are to hold our own in world competition. The sooner the American chess public realizes this, the sooner we will regain our prestige as the leading nation in the world of chess.’

Alas, the American chess public was in no hurry to understand this – judging at least by the fact that Fine was *forced* to withdraw from the world championship match-tournament (1948). After this Reshevsky remained practically alone against the Soviet cohort (subsequently his experience came in very useful to Fischer). Until the end of the 1950s he was the undisputed No.1 in the West, although in the USA a new group of talented players had grown up: Evans, the Byrne brothers, Bisguier, Lombardy...

The only player who could contest Reshevsky’s leadership was the Argentine grandmaster Miguel Najdorf. The point is that in the post-war era another super-power was created on the chess map – Argentina, where many masters stayed on and settled after the Olympiad in Buenos Aires (1939). The strongest of them was Najdorf, who was the same age as Reshevsky and was also born in Poland, but left it 20 years later.

These two – the modest, religious Reshevsky, and the cheerful, sociable Najdorf – introduced western colour into top-ranking chess, which was dominated by representatives of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries. Strictly speaking, both of them were amateurs, since they earned a living not from chess (it seems to me that the 1961 Reshevsky-Fischer match deserves to be called ‘the last

amateur against the first professional'). But the strength and natural talent of both were so great, that even when they were nearly 60 years old they were among the ten best grandmasters selected for the Rest of the World team in the 'Match of the Century' (1970).

Worthy successors to the mighty veterans of the West appeared only in the late 1950s to early 1960s. The first to announce himself was the young Bobby Fischer, and then came the Dane Bent Larsen. Larsen's tournament successes and his fresh, inventive play from 1964 to 1970 enabled him even to take from Fischer his 'lawful' first board in the aforementioned 'Match of the Century'. At that time only these two posed a

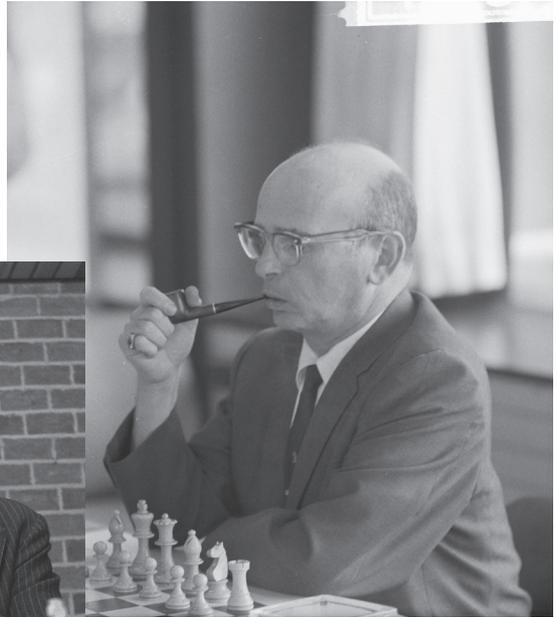
threat to the Soviet hegemony. However, soon Fischer brilliantly showed that it was he who was destined to become the new world champion. His revolutionary breakthrough and tragic departure from chess are the main topic of this book.

Garry Kasparov,  
November 2004

*I should like to express my thanks to chess collector Hanon Russell, journalists Sergey Voronkov and Michael Greengard, grandmaster Vladimir Belov and international master Maxim Notkin, and honoured USSR trainers Alexander Nikitin and Mark Dvoretsky for their help in preparing the manuscript for publication.*



*Top right:* Reshevsky at the Amsterdam Interzonal, 1964



*Above:* Najdorf at Amsterdam, 1973

*Right:* Larsen faces Portisch in the Candidates quarter-final, Rotterdam 1977



white pieces! True, when towards the finish the ‘infallible prescription’ was used by Benko and Olafsson, disaster awaited them. As will be evident, it was not only a matter of the competent choice of opening...

Even so, the start went well for Fischer. In the 4th round he crushed Gligoric in spectacular fashion, gaining revenge for Zürich. In the introduction to this game Evans writes: ‘During the mid-fifties, Gligoric, Reshevsky, and Najdorf were considered the strongest non-Soviet Grandmasters. Within a few years Fischer managed to surpass them. However, in so doing, he succeeded in beating Gligoric only once – up to 1966.’

### Game 56

#### R.Fischer-S.Gligoric

Candidates Tournament,  
Yugoslavia 1959, 4th round  
*Sicilian Defence B57*

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6  
5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♖c4

‘Fischer’s universal weapon against nearly all forms of the Sicilian Defence.’ (Gligoric)

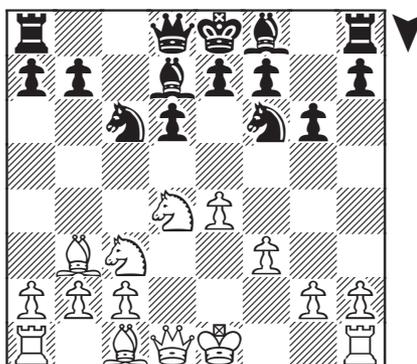
6...♗d7

6...e6 (*Game No.51*) or 6...♞b6 (*Game No.57*) is better, but Black wants to fianchetto his king’s bishop and transpose into one of the varieties of the Dragon Variation. The immediate 6...g6?! is not good on account of 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 8 e5! (Gligoric) 8...♘d7 (8...dxe5? 9 ♖xf7+) 9 exd6 exd6 10 0-0 ♘e5 11 ♖e2 ♖e6 12 ♗e1 with the initiative for White.

7 ♖b3

Bobby is aiming to take play into ‘his’ set-up, although since the time of the old game Vidmar-Bernstein (San Sebastian 1911) 7 0-0 g6 8 ♘xc6 was considered more unpleasant for Black, for example: 8...♖xc6 (8...bxc6 9 f4! A.Sokolov-Sax, Brussels 1988) 9 ♖g5 ♖g7 10 ♘d5! (Fischer) 10...♖xd5 11 exd5 0-0 12 ♗e1 ♗c8 13 ♖b3 ♗d7 14 c3 ♗c7 15 h3 ♗fc8 16 ♗d3 ♖f8 17 ♗ad1 ♘g8 18 ♗e2 ♖f6, gradually neutralising the opponent’s pressure (Razuvaev-Makarychev, Tbilisi 1973).

7...g6 8 f3



8...♘a5?!

Another attempt to confuse the young grandmaster. ‘Releasing the central tension this way is wrong,’ Fischer rightly thinks. ‘Correct is 8...♘xd4 9 ♗xd4 ♖g7, but after 10 ♖g5! White still keeps control.’

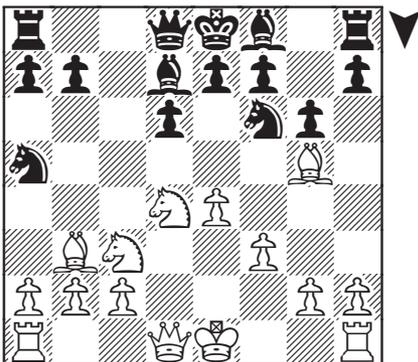
Indeed, after 10...0-0 11 0-0-0 h6 12 ♖h4 ♖c6 13 ♗e3! he has an unpleasant initiative: 13...♘d7 14 ♗xd6!? g5 15 ♗g6! e6 16 ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 17 ♖f2 a5 18 a4 ♗f6 19 ♖b1 b6 20 h4 ♘c5 (Tal-Stein, 37th USSR Championship, Moscow 1969)

and after a highly interesting battle this game ended a draw.

Therefore Black must play more energetically – 10...♖a5! 11 ♔d2 ♜c8! (but not 11...0-0 12 0-0-0 ♙e6 13 ♘d5! ♚xd2+ 14 ♜xd2 ♙xd5 15 exd5... 1-0 Korchnoi-Panno, Havana 1969) 12 0-0-0! (nothing is achieved with the timid 12 0-0 ♙e6 13 ♙h6 ♙xh6 14 ♚xh6 ♚h5 with equality, Renet-Korchnoi, Switzerland 1995) 12...♜xc3! 13 bxc3 0-0 14 ♖b1 ♜e8 15 ♙h6 ♙xh6 16 ♚xh6 ♚xc3 17 ♚d2 ♚c7 (De Firmian-Makarychev, Oslo 1984), or 13...♘xe4!? 14 fxe4 ♙xc3 15 ♙xf7+ ♚xf7 16 ♚d5+ ♚xd5 17 exd5 ♙b5 and Black has reasonable compensation for the exchange.

### 9 ♙g5!

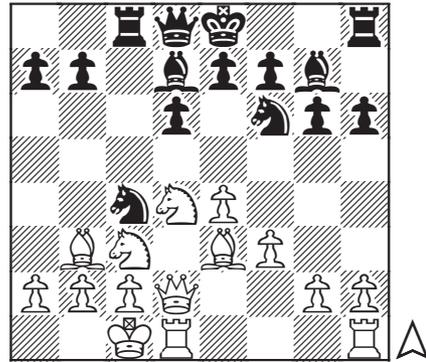
By creating the threat of ♙xf6, Bobby disrupts Black's idea, which comprised 9 ♙e3 ♜c8 10 ♚d2 ♘c4 11 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 12 0-0-0 ♙g7, and 13 ♙h6? fails to 13...♜xd4. True, 13 ♖b1! (13 ♘b3 is unclear, Fischer-Zuckerman, New York 1966/67) 13...0-0 14 g4 could have led to a modern Dragon *tabiya*, advantageous to White (it need hardly be said that the theory of this variation was still in a rudimentary state at that time).



### 9...♙g7 10 ♚d2 h6

The opinions of the two players on this move make interesting reading. 'Black cannot allow the exchange of his king's bishop.' (Gligoric). 'A concession. But on 10...0-0 11 ♙h6 followed by h2-h4-h5 produces a strong and almost mechanical attack.' (Fischer)

### 11 ♙e3 ♜c8 12 0-0-0 ♘c4



### 13 ♚e2!?

What he won't do for the sake of his favourite light-squared bishop! 'A totally new idea at the time. 13 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 14 g4 was the usual, and good, procedure. The text permits Black to capture what was considered, then, (*and also now* – G.K.) to be the more important of the white bishops.' (Fischer)

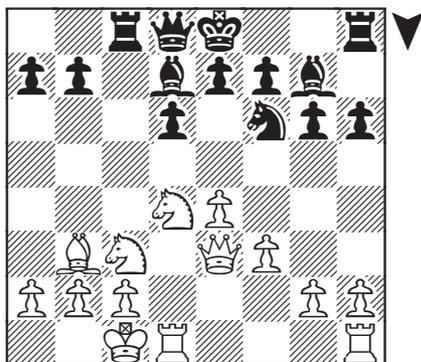
In Gligoric's opinion, the queen move deserves even an exclamation mark for its originality: 'White retains his b3-bishop, which is useful not only for attack, but also for the defence of its own king.' Incidentally, the same can be said about the bishop at g7... However, an original move is not necessarily the strongest and no one has rescinded the traditional methods of playing against

the Dragon: after 13 ♗xc4! ♖xc4 14 g4 h5 15 h3 White's prospects are much better than in the game.

The purely practical value of the move is another matter: Black is now forced to solve new, highly unexpected problems at the board.

**13...♗xe3 14 ♖xe3**

The evaluation of any position after this exchange depends primarily on the efficiency of the opposite-coloured bishops at b3 and g7, fulfilling key functions both in defence, and in the creation of an attack.



**14...0-0**

A natural but somewhat straightforward move: by immediately determining the position of his king, Black presents the opponent with the clear plan of a pawn storm. He should first have activated his queen:

1) 14...♖a5 (a recommendation by Kotov, with the idea of 15 g4? ♖g5!) 15 ♗b1 ♖c5 16 ♖d3 a6 with equality, or 15 f4! 0-0 16 h3 e6 and 'Black's two bishops may offset the weakness of the d-pawn.' (Fischer);

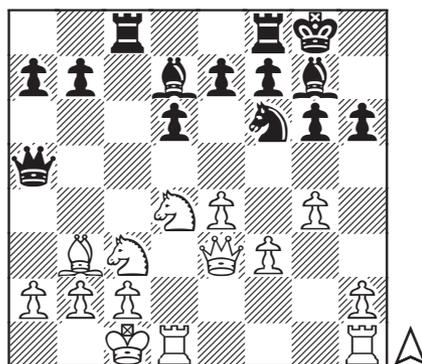
2) 14...♖b6! (with the threat of ...e7-e5) 15 ♖d2 ♖c5 16 f4 (16 g4 before Black castles does not achieve anything), and now not 16...h5? 17 ♗f3 ♗h6 18 e5! (Fischer-Merini, Mar del Plata 1960), but Fischer's suggestion of 16...b5 or 16...0-0 with a good game for Black.

**15 g4**

15 h4 h5!

**15...♖a5**

Fischer does not comment on this move, whereas Gligoric recommends 15...♖b6! with the threat of ...e7-e5. In the opinion of Hübner, this is much stronger: White is forced to waste a tempo on 16 ♖d2 (16 ♖he1 ♖c5, renewing the threat of ...e7-e5), and after 16...♖c5 17 h4 e6 18 ♗de2 ♖fd8 19 g5 (19 ♖xd6? ♖e3+ and ...♖xf3) 19...hxg5 20 hxg5 ♗h5 Black has nothing to fear (21 ♖xd6?! ♖xg5+).



**16 h4!**

According to Gligoric, he overrated his position, forgetting about the threat of a pawn attack, and was hoping only for 16 ♗d5?! ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♗a4 (here, however, it seems to me that 17...♖fe8 18 ♖he1 ♖c5! 19 c3 b5 20 ♗c2 a5 etc. is even better). To all appearances, the

Yugoslav grandmaster was unable to find his way in the unusual situation: he was accustomed to operating in well-tested set-ups.

### 16...e6

Black restricts the bishop at b3 and the knight at c3, at the cost of weakening his d6-pawn. According to Fischer, 16... h5 17 g5 ♖e8 18 f4 and f4-f5 'gives White a strong game,' but Hübner thinks that after 18...♙g4 19 ♖d5 ♗d8 20 ♗d2 e6 21 ♖c3 ♗a5 Black still has an entirely satisfactory position. However, here Fischer is right: after 20 f5! ♙xd1 21 ♗xd1 ♙xd4 22 ♗xd4 ♙h7 23 ♖f4 e5 24 fxe6 White's attack is decisive.

### 17 ♖de2!

Not 17 g5 hxg5 18 hxg5 ♖h5 19 f4 ♗c5 with the threat of ...e6-e5 – Fischer.

### 17...♗c6?

17...♖e8! (avoiding the opening of lines on the kingside) was essential: 18 f4 (18 g5 h5) 18...♗c5! 19 ♗xc5 (after 19 ♗d3 b5! Black's counterattack looks stronger) 19...♗xc5 with approximate equality (Hübner).

### 18 g5 hxg5

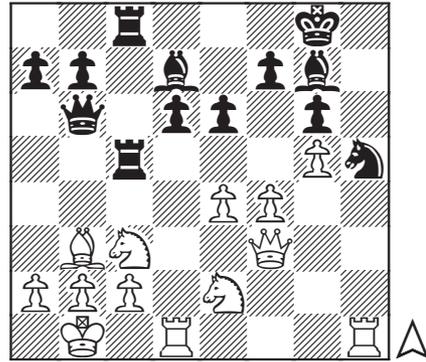
Forced, alas: 18...♖h5 19 gxh6 ♙f6(h8) 20 f4 etc. is too dangerous.

### 19 hxg5 ♖h5 20 f4 ♗fc8 21 ♙b1

An important preparatory move. Both 21 ♙a4? ♗xc3 (Gligoric) and 21 f5? exf5 22 ♖d5 ♗xa2 (Fischer) are bad for White.

### 21...♗b6 22 ♗f3 ♗c5

The threat of f4-f5 would appear to have been parried. The critical moment of the game has been reached.



### 23 ♗d3!?

Fischer, and after him Gligoric, attaches an exclamation mark to this move and writes: 'Several Yugoslav chess journalists scurried toward the analysis room, where Matanovic was explaining the game on a demonstration board. Apparently the feeling was that I had just blundered. The more obvious 23 f5 looks good, but Black still has defensive resources with 23...exf5 24 ♗xh5 (if 24 ♖d5 ♗d8 25 exf5 ♙xf5 26 ♗xh5? ♗xc2! wins for Black) 24...gxh5 25 ♖f4 ♗xc3 26 bxc3 ♗xc3 27 ♗xh5 ♗xb3+ 28 cxb3 ♗e3 etc.' In my opinion, 28...♙c6! 29 ♖d5 ♙xd5 30 ♗xd5 ♗f2 is even better.

However, as Hübner points out, instead of 25 ♖f4? White has the much stronger 25 ♗xh5! (but not 25 g6?! ♙e6! 26 ♖a4 ♗b4 27 ♖xc5 ♗xc5) 25...♙e6 26 ♙xe6 fxe6 27 ♗g6! ♗c7 28 ♗h1! ♗e7 (28...♗f7? loses to 29 ♗h8+) 29 ♖f4 ♗e8 30 ♗h7+ ♙f8 31 ♗h6! ♙xh6 32 ♗xh6+ ♙e7 (32...♙g8 33 ♖h5) 33 ♗xe6+, when the queen and knight make short work of the black king (I would mention that after 33...♙f8 White wins most quickly by 34 ♗h6+).

‘Fischer’s treatment of this position is characteristic,’ thinks Hübner. ‘His feeling for the initiative did not betray him, when he was pondering upon the move 23 f5. But because even his calculating skills failed to bring clarity to the incalculable mess of variations, which this sacrifice would have resulted in, he preferred a safe move, as he did not like giving material on a speculative basis. However, he underestimates the defensive resources of the second player after the text-move. As will be shown in the following note, Black can obtain sufficient counterplay... Therefore, the move 23 ♖d3 does not deserve an exclamation but a question mark.’

And yet Fischer’s intuition did not betray him! The b3-bishop has been removed from the board, but the bishop at g7 has remained, helping Black to set up a defence. Instead of 27...♙c7? he should play 27...♙e5! 28 ♗f4 d5!, for example:

1) 29 ♗d3 (29 ♗h5 ♙c7 30 exd5 ♙f7!) 29...♙f8 30 exd5 (30 ♗xd5 ♙c6 with equality) 30...♙e3 31 ♗a4 ♙d6 32 dxe6 ♙xe6;

2) 29 ♙h1 ♙f8! 30 exf5 (30 ♗h5 ♙c7 31 exf5 ♙f7!) 30...exf5 31 ♙xb6 axb6 32 ♗g6+ ♙f7 33 ♗xe5+ ♙xe5 34 ♗xd5 ♙g8 with a draw in the ending, or 31 ♙h7 ♙ce8 32 ♗g6+ ♙f7 33 ♗xe5+ ♙xe5 34 ♙f1 ♙e6 etc.;

3) 29 ♙a1 ♙f8 30 exd5 exd5 31 ♙h7 ♙ce8 32 ♗g6+ (32 a3!?) 32...♙f7 33 ♗xe5+ ♙xe5 34 ♙h5+ ♙f8 35 ♙h2 d4! 36 ♗b1 ♙c5.

In all these sharp variations, forcing play does not bring White any obvious

benefits, and so Fischer justifiably chose a safer move.

### 23...♙xc3?

A fatal error – exchanging the main defender of the king, which is all the more strange, in that Gligoric realised perfectly well just how ruinous it could be (cf. the note to Black’s 10th move). But what should Black play?

If 23...♙5c6 (23...♙8c6? 24 ♗a4) there could have followed 24 e5 d5 25 f5! (Gligoric), or 24 f5!? exf5 25 ♙xh5! gxh5 26 exf5 (Fischer) 26...♙xc3 27 ♗xc3 ♙xc3 28 ♙d5! ♙f8 29 bxc3 ♙c6 30 ♙d3 and wins. And after 23...♙f8 White decides matters with 24 f5! exf5 25 ♗d5 ♙d8 (if 25...fxe4, then 26 ♙xe4 ♙f5 27 ♙xf5, winning a piece) 26 ♙xh5! gxh5 (or 26...♙xd5 27 ♙xd5 gxh5 28 exf5) 27 ♗f6+ ♙g7 28 ♙h3 (Fischer).

It only remains to seek counterplay by sacrificing the d6-pawn. This plan, but in an inaccurate formulation, was hit upon by Gligoric, who suggested 23...♙e8(?) with the idea of 24 ♙xd6(?) ♙xd6 25 ♙xd6 ♙xc3 with equality (26 bxc3?! ♙c6, or 26 ♗xc3 ♗xf4), but this is bad because of 24 f5!, when White wins.

Therefore the only continuation was 23...♙b5!, to break up the linkage of the knights at c3 and e2, which cements together White’s position, and to exchange queens. For example: 24 ♙xd6 ♙xd6 25 ♙xd6 ♙xc3 26 ♗xc3 ♗xf4, or 24 ♗xb5 ♙xb5 25 ♙xb5 (25 c4? ♙xc4 26 f5 ♙e5 27 f6 ♙xe4 28 ♗c3 ♙e3) 25...♙xb5 26 ♙xd6 ♙b4! 27 c4 b5! 28 cxb5 ♙xe4 29 ♗c3 ♙b4 and Black is close to equality (pointed out by Hübner).

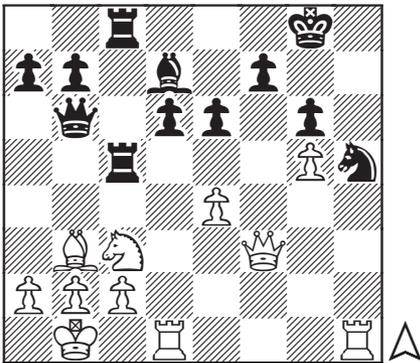
In my view, instead of 26 ♖xd6 White has the stronger 26 c3! ♜d8 27 ♙c2 ♜c5 28 ♜df1, and although there is still all to play for, he retains some initiative thanks to the greater potential of his bishop. But with the disappearance of its opponent – the bishop at g7, Black's position quickly collapses, the decisive role in this being played precisely by the bishop at b3.

**24 ♜xc3**

Of course, not 24 bxc3? ♙b5.

**24... ♙xf4 25 ♜f3! ♙h5**

If 25...e5 both 26 ♘d5 (Gligoric) and 26 ♙e2! (Fischer) are sufficient.



**26 ♜xh5!**

The same combination as in the game with Larsen (*Game No.52*). 'I've made this sacrifice so often, I feel like applying for a patent!' (Fischer)

**26...gxh5 27 ♜xh5**

The computer's direct pressure on f7 would have been even more quickly decisive – 27 ♜f1!, and if 27...♙e8, then 28 ♙xe6! ♜8c7 29 g6! But for a human it is natural to try and create threats on the h-file.

**27...♙e8**

'If 27...♜a5, with the idea of ...♜d4 or ...♜e3, the intermediate move 28 e5! would have won most quickly.' (Gligoric). It would also not have helped to play 27...♜xc3 28 g6! ♜f2 29 bxc3, or 27...♙f8 28 ♜h8+ ♙e7 29 ♜f6+ ♙f8 (29...♙e8 30 ♜h1 ♙b5 31 ♙xe6! Fischer) 30 ♜f1 ♙e8 31 ♙xe6 and wins.

**28 ♜h6**

28 ♜h1 ♙f8 29 ♙xe6! ♙e7 30 ♙xc8 ♜xc3 31 g6! ♜xc8 32 ♜g5+ etc. would also have won.

**28...♜xc3 29 bxc3**

Not 29 ♜h1?! ♜d4 (Fischer), but there was another possibility: 29 g6 ♜g3 30 ♜h7+ ♙f8 31 ♜h8+ ♙e7 32 ♜h4+ ♙d7 33 ♜xg3 fxg6 34 ♙xe6+! ♙xe6 35 ♜g4+ and ♜xc8 (Gligoric), or 32...f6 33 ♜xg3 ♙d7 34 ♜h2.

**29...♜xc3**

After the more tenacious 29...♜e3 (with the idea of 30 ♙xe6 ♜c5) White would have won most quickly by 30 ♜h1! ♜xc3 31 g6 ♜g7 32 ♜h2! (pointed out by both Bronstein and Gligoric) 32...♜f6 33 g7 ♜xg7 34 ♜g1, or 32...♜e5 33 ♜h7+ ♙f8 34 ♜g1! ♜g7 35 ♙xe6!

**30 g6! fxg6 31 ♜h1 ♜d4 32 ♜h7+ 1-0**

32 ♙xe6+ (Fischer) would have mated two moves more quickly – this bishop deserved the right to land the decisive blow!

It is hard to believe what happened next: after losing to Olafsson and Tal, Fischer held his ground with difficulty against Smyslov and then again suffered two knock-outs – against Keres and Petrosian. Even in his worst nightmares he could not have foreseen that he