

Max Euwe & Jan Timman

Fischer World Champion!

**The Acclaimed Classic about the 1972
Fischer-Spassky World Championship Match**

Third Edition 2009 New in Chess Alkmaar

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Our greatest knight by Garry Kasparov

There are few names in the history of sport that have transcended the earthly title of world champion and become legend. Fewer still have achieved this while active, or while still living for that matter. Bobby Fischer was a member of this select group. He possessed an aura beyond chess and personality, beyond even his status as a symbol of Cold War confrontation.

The closest I ever came to Fischer (no, we never met) was writing extensively on his games and career several years ago. The fourth volume of the *My Great Predecessors* series is dedicated to the stars of the West and it is dominated by Fischer, who is present on over half of its pages. Working on it gave me a deep appreciation of the depth and quality of his contributions.

It is not unreasonable to wonder how an ancient board game launched a brash and largely unschooled American to such heights. Obviously we must begin with Fischer's unprecedented sporting successes, as well known as they may be. First the prodigy – the youngest US champion and youngest Grandmaster ever. Then the star, winning top events with record scores. Finally the world champion, demolishing every foe in his path with impossible ease until taking the crown from Boris Spassky in Reykjavik in 1972.

Then we come to Fischer's uncompromising approach, which had an even greater impact on the chess world than his results. Today we have books and databases full of his games, but the best annotations cannot transmit the pressure his opponents must have felt at the board. Over and over in Fischer's games you see the strongest players in the world crack, often making mistakes you wouldn't believe them capable of making – against anyone but Fischer. He would play down to bare kings, leaving his opponents slumped exhausted in their chairs as he offered to post-mortem with them. Despite his short reign, he dominated his era to such a degree that it will always bear his name.

Contrary to popular belief – even in the chess world where anything more than a dozen years is ancient history – chess was not alien in Fischer's birthplace. America had hosted many important chess events, including the first official world championship match in 1886. Prior to World War II, the USA had won gold at four consecutive Olympiads. Still, while America was hardly a chess wasteland when Fischer came of age, to reach such heights so quickly without any formal training required a gift from the gods.

I was under Fischer's influence myself as a youth, if mostly indirectly. My early coaches, including Alexander Shakarov, were quick to advocate Fischer's reper-

toire and games. Future Baku GM Elmar Magerramov, who was a fellow student of Privorotsky at the Pioneer Palace, modelled much of his repertoire on Fischer's, from the Benoni to the Poisoned Pawn, and he shared his enthusiasms with me.

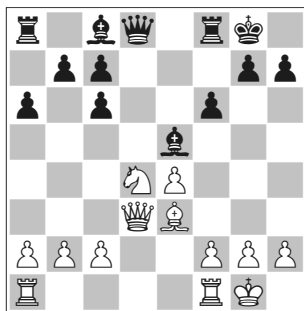
At Shakarov's recommendation I took up Fischer's Exchange Ruy Lopez. Games like Fischer-Unzicker, Siegen 1970, were very impressive examples for an aspiring Grandmaster.

RL 8.14 – C69

Fischer-Unzicker

Siegen Olympiad 1970

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙xc6 dxc6 5.0-0 f6 6.d4 exd4 7.♗xd4 ♗e7 8.♙e3 ♗g6 9.♗d2 ♙d6 10.♗c4 0-0 11.♚d3 ♗e5 12.♗xe5 ♙xe5



13.f4! ♙d6 14.f5!

Restricting the bishops à la the famous Lasker-Capablanca, St. Petersburg 1914. Then the right exchanges, the e5 break, and as if by magic (with only a little help from his weary opponent), a winning endgame. The logic and iron consistency of Fischer's positional play were without equal.

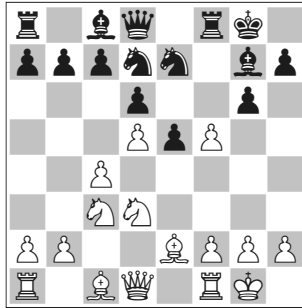
I really began to study Fischer when in 1975 Botvinnik told me to work on the King's Indian. I played over the games from the 1961 Reshevsky-Fischer match, among others.

KI 1.2.3 – E90

Reshevsky-Fischer

Los Angeles 1961 (11th match game)

1.c4 ♗f6 2.d4 g6 3.♗c3 ♙g7 4.e4 0-0 5.♙e2 d6 6.♗f3 e5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.d5 ♗e7 9.♗e1 ♗d7 10.♗d3 f5 11.exf5



Here, in the main line of the King's Indian, he recaptured on f5 with the knight,

11...♞xf5,

giving up the e4 square to gain play with ...♞d4. Fischer repeated this experiment against Gligoric a month later in Bled and they drew a spectacular game. Active piece play – this attracted me more than the blocked centre after the usual ...gxf5, f4, ...e4 lines.

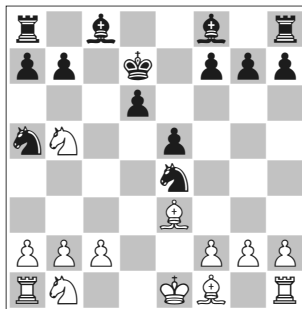
As much work as Fischer did in dozens of openings he was more focused on finding improvements in main lines than on sweeping new concepts. His encyclopaedic knowledge famously included Russian sources he often knew better than his Soviet opponents.

SI 39.7.5 – B44

Fischer-Taimanov

Vancouver 1971 (2nd match game)

1.e4 c5 2.♞f3 ♞c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 e6 5.♞b5 d6 6.♞f4 e5 7.♞e3 ♞f6 8.♞g5 ♖a5+ 9.♞d2 ♞xe4 10.♞xa5 ♞xa5 11.♞e3 ♔d7



In this position from his 1971 match against Taimanov he played a novelty,

12.♞1c3!

in an important line of the Sicilian, his opponent's specialty. It turned out that this strong positional pawn sacrifice had been suggested in a 1969 monograph by my future trainer, Alexander Nikitin!

Fischer's legacy extends well beyond the 64 squares. Throughout his career he was, in the excellent phrase of Spassky's, 'the honorary chairman of our trade union'. He believed our game and its players deserved far better treatment than it received, and he got results. His demands, often criticized as outrageous at the time, led to better conditions and prizes for all.

Fischer's disappearance in 1972 was a missed opportunity for the sport of chess, of course, and not just on the business side. It's fair to say that among all the hypothetical matches that could have been played but weren't, Fischer-Karpov is number one on the wish list. (Though I confess a sentimental choice for a rematch with Kramnik.) The unstoppable mental force of Fischer as the veteran against the leader of the new generation, the psychologically immovable object of Karpov.

I have taken some criticism for suggesting in my book on Fischer that Karpov had far better chances than were given him at the time, and that recognizing this may have contributed to Fischer's default and departure. Bobby would have been the favourite in 1975, without a doubt, but could he have watched Karpov's devastation of Spassky in the Candidates semi-final without at least some trepidation?

But let us not get too caught up in fantasy. We can either thank Fischer for what he gave, or curse him for what he failed to give, and I much prefer the former. Bobby Fischer created a global boom and single-handedly dragged chess into the professional era we live in today. Chess has lost its greatest knight.

Garry Kasparov
Moscow 2008

Preface

When I had returned from the zonal tournament in Finland, intending to continue my analysis of the games, the editor-in-chief of *Schaakbulletin*, Wim Andriessen had a pleasant surprise for me. He had just bought a house in the Dutch town of Wageningen, but since he was not yet ready to move into it, he offered to fix up a study there that I could use to continue my work.

So on Wednesday, August 16th, I set off for Wageningen with my own chess board and two sets of chess pieces carved from the finest timber – a chess analyst's tools should be of the highest possible standard. It quickly became clear to me that Andriessen had made a terrific buy. The old mansion had been owned by a cabinetmaker, who had decorated all the rooms in beautiful style. Through the stained-glass windows I could look out onto a wild, romantic garden, intersected by the totally overgrown remains of the old town wall of Wageningen and bounded in the back by the old town moat, now little more than a wide stream.

Not surprisingly, it proved to be the perfect environment to give me the necessary inspiration to pursue my difficult analytical labour. The only problem was that, at times, the inspiration threatened to overwhelm me by drowning me in a flood of variations. I hope this is not too noticeable when you read this book. My analyses took about a month to complete, although I must confess that I took the weekends off. Prior to this I had always been in a position, for instance in my column in *Schaakbulletin*, to choose the games I wanted to analyse myself. This was obviously impossible now, but I did not really mind too much because of one lucky circumstance: whenever Spassky and Fischer meet they seem to bounce ideas off each other and provide mutual inspiration, making nearly every game of theirs interesting. This is best illustrated, I think, by Games 10 and 19. There were dull games as well, of course, pretty boring games to analyse – and I have taken the liberty to make fairly short work of them.

Apart from the help I got from the newspapers and the Russian chess journal 64, there are two people I would like to thank in particular for the concrete assistance they gave me in my work: grandmasters Ulf Andersson and Jan Hein Donner.

Jan Timman
Amsterdam 1972

Preface to the English edition

For this English edition, I have stuck as closely to the original as possible. I have only made changes where they were strictly necessary, for instance in the end-game of the second game, and in the final position of the last game. I have also eliminated two incorrect conclusions in game analyses.

Jan Timman
Amsterdam 2002

Preface to the third English edition

For this third English edition, roughly one year after Fischer's death, we have included two articles about his legacy by Garry Kasparov and myself, both of which appeared earlier in *New In Chess* no. 2, 2008.

Moreover, a few corrections have been made in the sixth, tenth, thirteenth and nineteenth games of the match, where analyses by Kasparov have provided a few new conclusions.

Jan Timman
Arnhem 2009

A tense prelude by Max Euwe

The battle for the world chess title has been extraordinarily enervating, but the run-up to the championship was an equally nail-biting affair. At the same time, there is a big difference between the two, because where the former was enervating in the pleasant sense of the word, the latter was decidedly unpleasant. Every chess fan has probably enjoyed the games, most of which were beautiful, but I doubt whether anyone enjoyed the preliminaries. *A qui la faute?* Who was responsible? Fischer, the Soviet chess federation, the American chess federation, FIDE? We all carry some of the blame, but thanks to the press, especially the less chess-conscious press, everything was blown out of proportion or misrepresented to such an extent that not only the match itself but the entire run-up to it became a world affair.

This may sound a bit harsh towards our friends in the press, but if you have a look at, for instance, *Het Parool* of August 2nd 1972, you will understand what I mean. I will quote some extracts from this article, in which some remarkable contradictions were gleaned from other newspapers.

‘The World Champion, relaxed and healthy.’

‘Spassky looked pale and tired.’

‘The World Champion, punctual as always, played his move and left the stage immediately, leaving a nervously waiting multitude behind.’

‘The World Champion, punctual as always, played his move and wandered about the stage for a while before disappearing from view, looking for a glass of water.’

And there are more of such fantasies. Then there are observations like ‘Spassky deliberately copies his opponent’s moves to irritate him,’ which anybody with any knowledge of chess will surely find ridiculous.

At the same time, it was these, and similar reports, that captivated people from far beyond the usual chess circles, which is why I deliberately chose the words ‘thanks to’ just now. For these reports have brought the game of chess into the public eye to a far larger extent than would otherwise have happened.

The whole wretched business – for that it surely was – had already started during the matches that Fischer would emerge from as challenger. First Fischer-Taimanov: ‘Fischer wants to play in a separate room’; ‘The match will start two days late’ – these partly true, partly spurious reports immediately led to fierce objections from the Soviets, with threats along the lines of ‘we will withdraw all our players from the Candidates’ matches. But Fischer did not want to play in a sepa-

rate room at all, and the request for a two-day delay had come from Taimanov. So that was the end of that. Fischer defeated Taimanov convincingly, thereby qualifying for the semi-final. Fortunately, the two semi-finals were contested amongst 'brothers'. In Denver between Fischer and Larsen, West against West, and in Moscow between Petrosian and Kortchnoi, East against East.

But in the final of the Candidates' tournament between Fischer and Petrosian, the differences of opinion flared up again. Where would this last preliminary stage of the world championship have to be played? There were three bids: Belgrade, Athens and Buenos Aires. The Soviet Union wanted Athens, America went for Buenos Aires. There was no room for compromise. During the FIDE Congress in Vancouver (September 1971) the matter was finally settled by drawing lots. It was to be Buenos Aires. The match there took its course almost entirely without incident, and after a hesitant start Fischer scored a number of resounding victories to claim the right to challenge the World Champion. The Candidates' matches were of some importance for FIDE, insofar as both the negotiations for the matches and the matches themselves gave them some idea of which of the current regulations might need expanding or improving with regard to the upcoming battle for the world championship.

The main consideration in this case was the conditions that any bids to organise the match would have to meet in order to be allowed to compete in the spectacular contest of who was going to stage the Spassky-Fischer showdown. The regulations did give the organisers something to go by, but not enough. Article 7, section 7, of the 'Regulations for the World Championship for Men' starts by offering the possibility of staging the match in two parts, the first leg in the home country of the challenger, the second leg in the Champion's country. The Vancouver Congress had decided to interpret this article to mean that this arrangement would only apply if both parties agreed. This meant that neither player could unilaterally demand the arrangement to be put into effect. The relevant section continues as follows: 'If the two federations agree to organise the match in a different manner, this will have to be accepted.'

It is a pity that the Vancouver Congress failed to reach agreement on the interpretation of this sentence, since the phrase 'this will have to be accepted' is extremely vague. After consulting with my closest colleagues we decided on the interpretation that any agreement between the federations would have to be accepted by FIDE, not by the players, because then what follows would not fit.

The most difficult hurdle was still to come: 'If the players find it impossible to reach an agreement, the match shall be played in a neutral country.' The choice of country would then be left to the FIDE Congress, or, between Congresses, to the FIDE President. We will return to this phrase below. The rest of Article 7 is of mi-

nor importance, but maybe it would be useful to establish here that in several places the text is not only vague but also incorrect. The first paragraph, for instance, says something about 'the last twelve games and possible extra games'. But a match for the world championship never consists of more than twenty-four games.

Generally speaking, however, the provisions imposed virtually no limits as to which chess federations could make a bid for the match. It could even be a different body (e.g. state, private person), but only if the chess federation of the country in question supported the bid. This is why one single country entered no fewer than four bids for the Spassky-Fischer match.

The players would be allowed to choose between the bids, with the obvious result that the prize-fund on offer would be an important, if not decisive, factor. Where the prize-fund was concerned, the Candidates' matches had given us some useful experience. As noted above, there had been three bids for staging the Petrosian-Fischer match. What wasn't mentioned was that the Argentinian bid had come about in a rather curious way. The prize-fund originally on offer had been three thousand dollars. But when it transpired that Athens and Belgrade were putting up around ten thousand dollars, Buenos Aires suddenly made a fresh offer of twelve thousand dollars. For this world championship match we would have to see to it that this kind of bidding war was prevented, which meant that the offers would have to be kept secret, at least until the closing date.

A circular dated October 22nd, 1971, that was sent to all associated federations set out the conditions that all bids for staging the Spassky-Fischer match would have to meet in order to be taken into consideration.

The closing date was fixed for January 1st, 1972, and it was explicitly stated that neither new bids, nor any material changes in an already existing bid would be allowed after this date. In a separate attachment, all conditions were accurately set out in order to prevent all misunderstanding. The attachment contained the following details regarding the material conditions:

a. The total prize-fund and the currency in which it will be paid.

The President has determined that this fund shall be divided between the players as follows: five-eighths for the winner and three-eighths for the loser.

b. What expenses the players will receive (travelling expenses, hotel, allowances, etc.).

c. How many attendants (including seconds) each player will be allowed to bring with him, whose expenses are to be wholly or partly met by the organisation.

d. What expenses these attendants will receive (travelling expenses, hotel, allowances, etc.).

A brief sketch of the course of the match

- by Jan Timman

In the Preface I briefly mentioned that Spassky and Fischer somehow inspire one another. Spassky plays an opaque kind of game, whereas Fischer's playing style is crystal-clear and easier to fathom.

The main similarity between them is that both are proponents of real fighting chess. This is why we were all looking forward to a series of interesting games of high quality, in contrast to the previous world championship, which featured Petrosian, the worst drawing master in the business.

This explains Spassky's delight at the prospect of meeting Fischer, while Fischer, in the well-known interview with Ralph Ginsberg in 1964, had already included Spassky in his list of top ten chess players of all time, a list in which players like Botvinnik, Bronstein, Rubinstein, Pillsbury, Maroczy and Euwe were conspicuously absent.

Both before and after the match, Fischer openly acknowledged Spassky as the second-best player of his time. So you would be excused to think that in this duel he was going to go for it hammer and tongs.

As I started studying the games systematically, I was amazed to find that the first nine games are totally devoid of the whole idea of fighting chess. It is only afterwards that a surplus of fighting spirit comes to the fore. Maybe this unexpected development was the result of the turbulent imbroglios at the beginning.

When Fischer rather thoughtlessly captured on h2 with the bishop on move 28 of Game 1, he probably did so out of irritation – irritation because he felt spied upon by a camera. 'In the past four years of my match career I have never allowed any filming or photographs during the games,' he said himself in a long letter to chief arbiter Lothar Schmid with reference to the conflict caused by the film cameras during Game 2.

There's also something to be said for the opinion that he played that fatal bishop move out of a feeling of superiority: the idea that he could afford to do anything. But I don't believe that it was the main reason for playing it at that particular point, although he certainly starting giving in to feelings of superiority at a later stage.

His refusal to even play Game 2 was even more difficult to explain initially. Now that it's all over and done with, however, we can conclude that it was really all about the cameras and not, for instance, about being too scared of Spassky.

What happened after this particular conflict had been solved was even more remarkable. Spassky, probably completely off balance, certainly played the third

game at a level that wouldn't have been out of place for an average international master.

Donner and Langeweg are of the opinion that he should never have played this game, and that he should have returned the point he was awarded by default in the same fashion. It is quite possible that this would have given him a psychological boost.

The fact remains that he looked quite shaken during the next few games, only scoring the odd hard-fought draw, as in, for instance, Game 7. He had not only lost all his previous flair, but also made two bad blunders – in Games 5 and 8.

The short draw in Game 9 was the start of a new phase in the duel. When the moves of Game 10 arrived in Finland, where a zonal tournament was taking place at the same time, our mood there reached an unprecedented climax. We started analysing with great fervour, buoyed up by the general feeling that Spassky was finally fighting back and showing his true face.

This game is undoubtedly a high point, a jewel full of undiscovered riches to be mined. It is true that Spassky lost the game, but I believe it restored his spirit and gave him the fortitude to turn the rest of the match into a thrilling and fascinating contest.

For three games he kept it up. In Game 11 he even beat Fischer, raising a new question in the match: How was Fischer going to handle this defeat?

His loss against Petrosian in their second match game had left him quite shaken. And before that, in the 1970 Interzonal, when he lost to Larsen, it had also taken him a few rounds to bounce back. But both there and against Petrosian he recovered from his setback and went on to win every game thereafter. The way he played Game 13 seemed a clear indication that history was going to repeat itself. Fischer seemed to me to be pretty shaken, and his play lacked its characteristic purpose and solidity, just as after his defeats in the two games just mentioned.

Strangely enough, Spassky failed to exploit this. The hesitancy of his play hit a new low when he blundered away the draw on move 69 in Game 13.

How could this have happened?

There are two, partly overlapping, explanations.

In the first place, Spassky was too preoccupied with the idea that Fischer was likely to be affected by his loss. During his match preparation, his trainers had gone too far in deluding him in this respect. Eventually the tension got to him, especially when he realised during this disastrous 13th game that it was really happening.

Secondly, Fischer has hypnotic powers. This idea gained some popularity at this stage of the match. I regard this as a very important point that cannot be simply tossed aside. In his *Izbrannie Partii 1926-1945*, Botvinnik describes the moment in a

game (Nottingham 1936) when Alekhine surprised him with an unexpected power move: how he kept circling the table for 20 minutes, the entire time Botvinnik needed to find a reply. Alekhine's behaviour exerted a strong psychological pressure that Botvinnik felt he had to overcome.

Fischer, too, possesses the power of 'psychological pressure'.

It would not be too far-fetched to compare Euwe's repeated blunders in his match against Alekhine with the blunders Spassky made against Fischer.

In his book **My 60 Memorable Games**, Fischer describes on several occasions how, after playing a move, he fixes his opponent with a searching and penetrating stare. But Fischer does more than just stare at his opponent: the whole of his behaviour creates the enormous pressure that Spassky had to endure.

This brings me to the critical point: this behaviour was an expression of the superiority I referred to above. I believe that Fischer felt so exceedingly superior that he met even clear mistakes by Spassky with superficial play.

He didn't actually go so far as to blunder, but I still think that he can do far better. What I mean is that if there is a return match and if Spassky is more concentrated and avoids the blunders, Fischer will show a lot more drive.

He didn't show much of it in the next seven, or actually eight games. To everyone's amazement, his will to win seemed to have totally disappeared. He allowed Spassky to make the play. And not really, I think, to suggest that he could draw whenever he wanted, regardless of what Spassky did, because in Game 14 the win was only a matter of technique for Spassky, and Fischer had to defend some pretty precarious positions in a number of other games.

But he managed to dodge the danger each time, and each of the seven draws must be regarded as a logical and just result. Spassky, after all, had failed to recover from the series of blows he had suffered. Besides, he played so listlessly in the last game that you nearly felt he was trying to lose on purpose. Fischer would have been quite happy to seize his title with another two draws.

The end of the match was, as Donner put it in the Dutch daily **De Tijd**, as badly marred as the beginning. Spassky rang in to resign the game, handing over the world title by telephone. No one was happy with this. Was it his revenge for what Fischer had done during the first few days?

I prefer to leave this question unanswered, just like so many other things that will probably never be cleared up.

There still seems to be a possibility of a return match. If it does take place, more light will perhaps be shed on several interesting aspects of this occasion.

Game 1

July 11

White: **Boris Spassky**

Black: **Robert Fischer**

Nimzo-Indian Defence

NIC key: NI 2.4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5

4.♘c3

It is a well-known fact that Fischer has a dislike for the Orthodox Queen's Gambit (4...♙e7), so one would expect him to choose either 4...♙b4 or 4...c5 here. He successfully adopted the latter move in his match against Petrosian. Against Spassky he is probably wary of the variation 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4, as in the 5th match game Spassky-Petrosian in 1969.

4...♙b4 5.e3

So Spassky opts for the Nimzo-Indian after all. The true Ragozin Defence arises after 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙g5. An interesting game Portisch-Fischer, Bled 1961, continued 6...h6 7.♙h4 (7.♙xf6 is clearer) 7...c5 8.e3 ♘c6 9.♙b5 ♗a5 10.♙xc6+ bxc6 11.♙xf6 ♙xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♗xc3+ 13.♘d2 gxf6 14.♖c1 ♗d3 with a difficult game.

5...0-0 6.♙d3 c5 7.0-0 ♘c6

8.a3 ♙a5

This line is not often seen nowadays; it is considered somewhat inferior.

9.♘e2

It seems obvious that Spassky refrains from the strongest theoretical contin-

uation (9.cxd5) because, unlike Fischer, he has not prepared for it. After 9.cxd5 exd5 10.dxc5 ♙xc3 11.bxc3 ♙g4 12.c4! Black may have intended 12...d4 or 12...♘e5 13.cxd5 ♙xf3 14.gxf3 ♗xd5 15.♙e2 ♗xc5, with interesting play.



9...dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♙b6

Dubious, in my opinion, since White can now develop his queen's bishop with tempo. Two alternatives are:

1) 10...♗e7 11.dxc5 ♗xc5 12.♙a2 ♖d8 13.♗a4 b5 14.♗h4 b4 15.♙d2, followed by 16.♖fc1, with advantage for White;

2) 10...cxd4(!) 11.exd4 h6 12.♙f4 a6 13.♖c1 ♘e7 14.♙a2 ♙d7 15.♙e5 ♘ed5, with excellent play for Black in

Petrosian-Tolush, Tbilisi 1951. White should try 12.♖d3, followed by 13.♗d1, which is the usual approach in the nearly identical position with the knight on a4 instead of on e2. The knight could possibly be taken to f4 later.

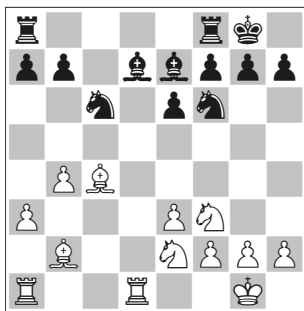
11.dxc5 ♖xd1

This immediate queen swap is necessary, as 11...♙xc5 12.♖c2!, followed by 13.b4 and 14.♙b2, offers White good attacking chances.

12.♖xd1 ♙xc5 13.b4 ♙e7

14.♙b2 ♙d7

This is a novelty compared to 14...b6, as played in Spassky-Krogius, 25th USSR Championship, Riga 1958. After 15.♗f4 ♙b7 16.♗g5! White had a large advantage because of the continuous threat of a sacrifice on e6.



The text does indeed lend extra protection to this square, but I believe it is still insufficient for equality.

15.♗ac1

A routine move. At this point 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 achieves nothing, since White can't take the bishop because the ♗a1 is hanging. So Spassky removes it first.

However, he could have caused his opponent far more problems with 15.e4! After 15...♗fd8 16.e5 ♗e8 17.♗g3 Black's position is cramped and the white knight is threatening to invade on c5 or d6. Black's best reply is 17...♗ac8 18.♗ac1 ♗b8, which White will meet with 19.b5 to prevent 19...♙a4.

Moreover, the attempt to stop the advance of the white e-pawn with 15...e5 doesn't give Black satisfactory play either: 16.♗xe5 ♗xe5 17.♙xe5 ♙a4 18.♗e1! ♗xe4 19.♗d4 ♗d6 20.♙d5, and White exerts tremendous pressure, which will yield him at least a pawn.

We can conclude from these variations that White's 9th move was by no means the introduction to a drawn position. Spassky probably missed the superior 15.e4 because at that point he was content with a draw.

15...♗fd8

In this way Black simply maintains the balance. He plans to swap all four rooks along the d-file after 16...♙e8.

16.♗ed4 ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♙a4

18.♙b3 ♙xb3 19.♗xb3 ♗xd1+

20.♗xd1 ♗c8

Preventing 21.♗a5 b6 22.♗c6. A draw is very likely now, and there were even vague messages coming in from Reykjavik that the draw had already been agreed.

21.♙f1 ♙f8 22.♙e2 ♗e4

Threatening 23...♗c2+ and forcing a rook swap.

23.♗c1 ♗xc1 24.♙xc1

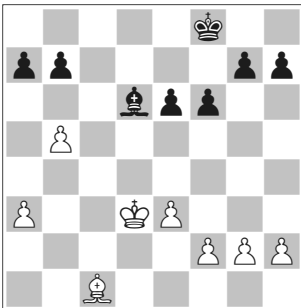


24...f6

A move that is not easy to understand, but which obviously spoils nothing yet. Easier would have been 24...♔e8, when Black can fix his queenside pawns on light squares if he wishes, e.g. 25.♘a5 ♘d6 26.♙d3 ♙d7 27.e4 b5, etc.

25.♘a5 ♘d6 26.♙d3 ♙d8
27.♘c4 ♙c7 28.♗xd6 ♙xd6
29.b5

Preventing Black from getting the better bishop with 29...b5. If White had played 29.♙c4 with the same objective, the pawn snatch which now follows would indeed have been justified. After the text this capture is a curious bloomer, incompatible with the reality of high-level chess.

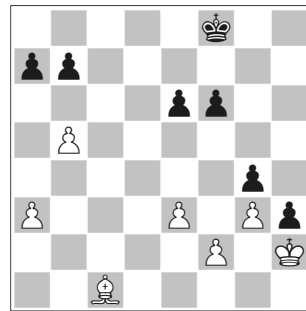


29...♙xh2?

It is almost certain that this move is based on a miscalculation. All other moves lead to a draw. It is nevertheless strange that Fischer takes the poisoned pawn, considering that it is the only variation in the position requiring calculation – for which Fischer had ample time.

30.g3 h5 31.♙e2 h4

Later another method, offering drawing chances, was found: 31...g5 32.♙f3 g4+ 33.♙g2 h4 34.♙xh2 h3



analysis diagram

The black h3 pawn is so strong that White's king is tied to it for the foreseeable future. So White will either have to tackle the black king with his bishop alone, or to hand the task of guarding Black's passed pawn to the bishop. It turns out that only the second method yields White just the tempo needed for the win: 35.f3 f5 36.e4 ♙e7 37.♙e3 a6 38.bxa6 bxa6 39.exf5 exf5 40.fxg4 fxg4 41.♙g1 ♙e6 42.♙f1 ♙d5 43.♙g1 ♙c4 (or 43...♙e4 44.♙e2, and the black king will inexorably be pushed back). De-

Photo Gallery



July 11, 1972. Following months of frantic negotiations and prolonged uncertainty, Bobby Fischer arrives at Laugersdahlöll to play the first match game.

As was wont for Soviet chess champions, Boris Spassky, a lone wolf by nature, came to Reykjavik surrounded by a vast team of various experts. Here he is talking to his second Yefim Geller (far left) and grandmaster-cum-psychologist Nikolay Krogius.

