

Georg Mohr and Ana Velimirovic - Zorica

Forgotten Genius

**The Life and Games of
Grandmaster**

Dragoljub Velimirovic

Vol. 1

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Key to symbols

!	a good move	±	White has a serious advantage
?	a weak move	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!!	an excellent move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
??	a blunder	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
!?	an interesting move	→	with an attack
?!	a dubious move	↑	with initiative
□	only move	↔	with counterplay
=	equality	Δ	with the idea of
∞	unclear position	⊃	better is
≡	with compensation for the sacrificed material	N	novelty
±	White stands slightly better	+	check
∓	Black stands slightly better	#	mate

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Intro

Drasko!

Two years ago, when we agreed with Thinkers Publishing House on a series of books under the title "Forgotten Genius", my first two book heroes were immediately decided. The book about Albin Planinc, my Slovenian compatriot, opened the series, which we are now continuing with this book about the Serbian Grandmaster, Drasko Velimirovic, the famous "Gazda (Boss)", a hero who in one way or another shaped the chess career and destiny of all chess players who grew up in the spaces of the former Yugoslavia.

Of course, there is much more to tell about Velimirovic and his career. The "Boss" was respected in the wider world, as you will see in the book, in many places and at many times much more than at home, where beams were thrown under his feet and many obstacles were placed on his way to the top. Serious, principled, honest to the extreme with himself and with others, he endured all this, got angry, jumped, leaped, swallowed the injustices that often left him far behind, returned, rose like a phoenix and climbed again and again to the top, upsetting to the extreme those responsible, especially those who did not like him.

But no one could take away Drasko's career. His games, his tournament victories, his theoretical innovations. His coaching work and many Grandmasters, some of whom admit to being his direct successors. They are, or rather, they wish they were. And his stories, anecdotes, another part of Drasko's chess history that should not be ignored under any circumstances.

Drasko also had a certain influence on me, at that time a young promising master from the chess province of Slovenia. How I devoured the variants of his attack, how I delighted in the glorious victories and sacrifices on the white squares in the center! I called him "Mr. f5", and that's what we called him in my chess club, ZSK Maribor. The reason is not hard to guess: Drasko's knight sacrifices on the f5-square were legendary and remain so to this day. Growing up playing chess, I quickly realized that Drasko was much more than just "Velimirovic's attack".

His contribution to the King's Indian, Benoni, Dragon Sicilian and many other openings is immeasurable. In many openings he rewrote the theory – often he even started writing it.

When I got to know Drasko personally over the years, there was a gap between us. In terms of generation - Drasko belonged to at least two generations of older chess players; in terms of quality - I would never have dared to think that I could be his equal, even though we both held the same Grandmaster title. But you know, dear readers, how it is. There are grandmasters and Grandmasters, and Drasko undoubtedly belonged to the group of those who are written large, with a capital initial.



Georg Mohr

But enough of that. Years have passed, almost a decade since Drasko's death. I have been wondering why no one has written a book about such a giant. I guess we will not just forget him? Deep inside I had long had the desire to write such a book, and when we came to an agreement with Thinkers Publishing House, I was very, very happy and even more grateful for the opportunity that presented itself.

I did not know my co-author – Drasko's daughter, Ana - at that time. When I somehow found her and asked her if she had anything in Drasko's estate that I could use in the book, I was shocked and stood there with my mouth open. Ana not only had a wonderful collection of photos, cartoons, and other wonderful materials, but also kept a collection of Drasko's games in the drawer. The "Boss" commented on most of them himself, explained this and that in many places, showed us how his attack was born, how the ideas developed in many variations. He described to us, as if in passing, many adventures explaining some postiopec, some event that so readily shows the cruel history in its own light and through the eyes of those who write it.

The decision was simple: I asked Ana if she wanted to write the book with me. She gladly agreed and told me that the book about her father is also her

long-cherished wish, a kind of debt to Drasko, who left her such beautiful memories. Our wonderful journey together began, with the final result that you are reading now. Today, I know that without Ana's help this book would not have existed. Or rather, if I had decided to write it, it would have been only a pale imitation of it. So once again, thank you, dear Ana!

I sincerely hope that you, dear readers, will enjoy the wonderful masterpieces you will find in this book. In addition to the authors, some of Drasko's contemporaries were also involved in the writing, and they immediately responded with pride and love to the request to keep the memory of the Serbian genius alive. I would like to thank all those who participated in this project. To the Grandmasters who wrote down their own memories of Drasko, which you will find in this book in special "boxes". To the contemporaries, friends, and comrades-in-arms of "Boss" who remember this or that anecdote, this or that event, this or that memory. I sincerely hope that this book will ensure that we do not forget the Serbian chess autodidact, one of the greatest chess players, theoreticians and coaches the world has ever known.

Almost last, but not least, I would like to thank the contributors (you will find their names in the colophon) who have invested too many hours of their free time in this project. And finally, although perhaps they should be at the top, the members of my family who have so patiently endured my escapes to the great chess masters of the world.

Georg Mohr, Maribor, July 2023

My father

For years Drasko selected the games with which he wanted to show his development as a chess player in a career that lasted more than sixty years. He collected 316 games, the first from the Youth Championship of Yugoslavia in Radovljica in 1958 and the last from 2010. In his material, besides chess comments, he went into the reasons and history of some moves, but also explained various circumstances and obstacles he encountered on his way. Unfortunately, he never got around to publishing this material.



Ana Velimirovic - Zorica

In March 2021, Grandmaster Mohr contacted me because he wanted to write a book about Drasko. I liked this idea very much, and since I myself had written the above-mentioned material of Drasko, we came up with the idea of writing a book together, which will be a mixture of the way Mr. Mohr saw Drasko as a chess player and as a human being, my memories of Drasko, and parts from Drasko's unpublished material. Mr. Mohr is responsible for the selection of games and the chess part, and some of the selected games come from my father's archives, where his comments were published in whole or in part. In the texts of the book we have combined my memories of my father's stories, old newspaper archives with his interviews, my mother's story, stories of colleagues and friends of Drasko, radio and TV programmes where he was a guest, statements of chess players about him and data from the material for his book, which was never published.

Drasko lived from chess, but also for chess. I remember that it happened that he woke up in the middle of the night and got up to write down an idea, then went back to sleep, and later analyzed this idea for days afterwards. He was very fond of chess, but he was equally fond of me and my mother. He was always gentle and full of love for us, and he only showed aggression when he was sitting in front of

the chessboard, never outside of it. He was honest, principled, and courageous; he didn't fit the mold, and therefore he wasn't always understood. He left a strong impression in everything he did, and we miss him greatly. This book is my way of thanking him for his years of love and support. He was a great support for me.

Drasko not only made a great contribution to Yugoslav and world chess, but he was also a very witty man who liked to make jokes, both at his own expense and at the expense of others, and he was also widely known for his humorous stories and pranks. All who knew Drasko agreed that the book about him would be very incomplete if at least some of his anecdotes and funny stories weren't published in it. He was known for entertaining the players (and other guests) at various tournaments with stories, in the evenings, when the day's games were over and the tension had died down a bit. It was funniest at the team competitions, where a large number of players, and therefore listeners, would gather in the evening. People were laughing, Drasko was talking, jumping, gesticulating, imitating the heroes of this and that story. Even foreigners listened to him, even if they didn't understand the Serbian language!

But beware, Drasko never told any of his stories twice in the same way, each new version was slightly different. The real goal was always the same: to entertain the listeners. In the end, only those who were directly involved in the story knew what really happened in those stories and which version was complete or the most accurate.

In time, Drasko became famous for his stories. When he was invited for interviews in his old age, especially on radio or television, he was always asked to tell an anecdote. He gladly accepted, and so his stories travelled all over the country.

Drasko usually told stories, but listened less. The reason for this is probably obvious: he had problems with his hearing, which made it difficult for him to participate in dialogues. Thus, storytelling remained his way of not remaining isolated in society.

These stories remained in the memory of his colleagues and friends, and Grandmasters Slavisa Brenjo and Aleksandar Kovacevic helped us remember some of them. In addition to anecdotes, they also shared other memories of Drasko with me, for which I am especially grateful.

I would also like to thank Drasko's other students who remembered how they hung out and worked with Drasko (Sanja Vuksanovic, Goran Kosanovic, Aleksandar Indić), as well as everyone who was involved in our little project in any way... I also owe special thanks to Vladica Andrejic, FIDE master and professor at the Faculty of Mathematics in Belgrade, editor of the site "Perpetual Chess" (<http://www.perpetualcheck.com/>), who helped me a lot with various chess data.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother Mirjana, who helped me with her memories, and my husband Bojan, who gave me immeasurable help and support in writing the book.

Working with Mr. Mohr was a wonderful experience that I will remember all my life. I owe him a great debt of gratitude for helping me revive and share my father's memories.

Ana Velimirovic-Zorica, June 2023

Birth, war, family

Dragoljub Drasko Velimirovic was born on May 12, 1942, amidst the turmoil of war in the small village of Mionica near the Serbian town of Valjevo. He had a difficult childhood, partly because of the war and partly because he was without a father as a young child.

Filip Velimirovic, Drasko's father, is a descendant of the famous Serbian Velimirovic family. His uncle was **Nikolaj Velimirovic**, bishop of Ohrid and Zicki, theologian and nationalist ideologue. Nikolaj was a very educated man who studied theology and received his doctorate in Bern, studied philosophy in Oxford, and graduated from the Sorbonne in Paris. During the war, the Nazis arrested him, first imprisoning him in monasteries and finally taking him to the Dachau camp. In late 1944, he was pardoned and released. Nikolaj returned to Yugoslavia, where he found no common language with the new communist government and eventually fled to the United States. The Serbian Orthodox Church did not begin to recognize Nikolaj's work until decades later, canonizing him in 2003. Since then, he has been celebrated as Bishop Nikolaj Zicke the Saint. Coincidentally, Drasko was among the last living male heirs of Nikolaj in the entire Velimirovic family. A coincidence that would haunt Drasko's life for many years to come.



Little Drasko, 1943.

Filip Velimirovic did not have much to do with the Church. He came from a respectable bourgeois family and. He trained as a surveyor in Zagreb, loved football, and also played for the Zagreb football club Gradjanski, with whom he won

the title of national champion. A love that, with his genes, he will also pass on to his son - until the age of ten, Drasko only saw one football... When he returned to Serbia, it quickly became clear where his family came from. At first he was transferred to work in Mionica, but shortly after the war began he was arrested by the Gestapo and taken to the Mauthausen camp, where he was executed in early 1943.

A few years earlier, in the late 1930s, Filip met Jovanka Petrovic, a young, aspiring lawyer and excellent chess player, won her heart, married her and moved with her to Mionica. But Jovanka was left alone with the child a month after the birth of her son.

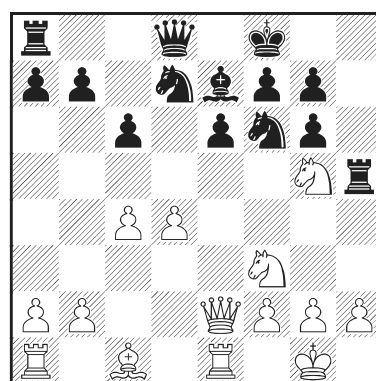
Jovanka Velimirovic did not have such a famous family background, but chess blood flowed through her veins. She played excellent chess and was one of the best Yugoslav chess players of the pre-war period - at the 1939 National Championship in Zagreb she shared first place with Lidija Timofejeva. The two drew and won all their remaining games! Jovanka was the best in the country, but not the champion in her family! Her brother **Vojislav Petrovic** was a participant in the first Yugoslav Championship in 1935 in Belgrade (won by Vasja Pirc), and Petrovic's game against Ozren Nedeljkovic won the second prize for beauty! No wonder - Vojislav was a relentless attacker and looked for a checkmate in practically every position. Later, Jovanka also played chess in the same way. Drasko Velimirovic undoubtedly inherited his chess genes from his mother's side of the family!

Petrovic : Nedeljkovic

Belgrade 1935

Ozren Nedeljkovic (1903-1984) was a Serbian master, one of the strongest chess players in the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia. He achieved some good results in the national championships, which also secured him a place in the Olympic team at the 3rd (unofficial) Chess Olympiad in Munich in 1936. There he played excellent chess and won the gold medal on the second reserve board. Nedeljkovic continued to play chess after the war, but in the late

1950s he slowly ended his career and moved into chess journalism, closely following Drasko's career.



Black's idea is clear: after ...hg6 the h-file remains open for a rook. But White was ready:

14.g4! ♖g4 15.♘f7!

A combination that breaks the fortifications around the black king. Precise calculation followed:

15...♚c7

Or 15...♙f7 16.♚e6 ♙f8 17.♚g4+-

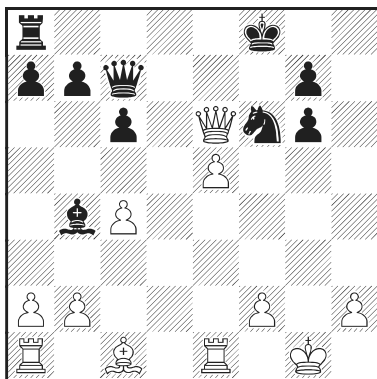
16.♚e6 ♘df6

Or 16...♙b4 17.♘7g5 ♘df6 18.♙f4 ♚e7 19.a3!

17.♘7e5 ♘e5 18.♘e5 ♚e5

A last desperate attempt at complications.

19.de5 ♙b4



20.ef6! ♙e1 21.♙f4! ♙f2 22.♚h1 ♚f7 23.fg7 ♚g8 24.♚f7 ♙f7 25.♚f1 ♙b6 26.♙h6 1:0.

The game of chess also cost Vojislav Petrovic his life. During during World War II he was among the Partisans¹, which the Germans knew. When the Belgrade chess players organized two tournaments at the end of 1943, the fanatical chess lover Vojislav also signed up to participate. The Germans waited for the tournament to end, came to the closing ceremony, arrested Vojislav, and shot him the following year. According to later research, he was the last victim of the Nazi authorities among the chessplayers of Belgrade!

Shortly after the war began, Jovanka went underground. She was trained as a lawyer, but did not want to work in an occupied country. She secretly helped the partisans and defeated poverty with her son on her arm. After liberation, she immediately joined various humanitarian organizations and helped rebuild the country from morning to night. Since there was no one to take care of Drasko, she placed him in the care of various orphanages. Drasko spent some time in one such home in Apatin, but when an allied plane accidentally crashed into the home, the surviving children were quickly taken to neighboring Coka. Jovanka returned to her profession as a lawyer in 1947 when the State

¹ "Partizans" refers to partisan fighters, particularly those associated with the communist resistance movement during World War II in Yugoslavia. Partisans were guerrilla forces led by the Yugoslav Communist Party under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. They fought against Axis occupation forces and collaborated with Allies to liberate Yugoslavia. The term "Partizani" is commonly associated with the anti-fascist resistance movement and the struggle for Yugoslav liberation during the war.

authorities sent her to Sarajevo. Soon after, she took Drasko back. At last they lived together as mother and son, although they still had to endure difficult trials for several years.

Jovanka was constantly transferred from job to job, from city to city. The communist authorities quickly learned of her connection to the Velimirovic family. They did not trust her; in the persecution that prevailed in those years, she was interrogated often and quite cruelly. Drasko recalled that time as follows:

“The OZNA (State Security Service) interrogated my mother frequently until the mid-1950s. As a rule, they took her to the police station, where they interrogated her all night and demanded that she confess to having had contacts with Nikolai or his like-minded people. I was on my own in those moments; I was not even ten years old and did not understand anything. In addition, my mother hid the truth about my family connection to Nikolai from me for a long time; she wanted to protect me at all costs. As a precaution, she did not call me Dragoljub, but Drasko - Dragoljub was the name of the Chetnik² leader Dragoljub ,Draza‘ Mihajlovic, and as such completely inappropriate. Why Drasko? Because the name Drasko is not known in Serbia, but it is a popular Montenegrin name. That’s why I was so excited: in 1952, a comic



Jovanka and Drasko, 1943.

strip appeared in Politika Zabavnik entitled “Experiences of little Rasko, a chess lover,” drawn by the wonderful Milorad Dobric. And Rasko rhymed with Drasko...

The name Drasko stayed with me for the rest of my life, and I am also known in the wider chess world as Drasko Velimirovic.”

Jovanka and Drasko eventually settled in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the town of Dobož. Drasko, who had already changed schools several times, finally found his surroundings, his football team, his peace. At home, he was often alone, as his mother worked all the time:

“I had no toys, but in an old closet I found a chess set, and the black and white pieces

² "Cetnics", a term used to describe various Serbian nationalist and royalist paramilitary groups that have existed throughout different periods of history. The term originally emerged during World War II, when Chetnik forces fought against Axis occupation forces and communist Partisans in Yugoslavia.

became my toys, my friends in my lonely hours. I did not know the rules of the game yet, but I soon asked my mother to explain them to me. A new world opened up to me that I never left."

Jovanka did not give up chess. In the post-war years she regularly participated in national championships and achieved excellent results. She was considered the third best chess player in the country, after the legendary Verica Nedeljkovic and Milunka Lazarevic, who were also among the best in the world. Jovanka played aggressive chess, sharp positions, she liked to combine very much and very rarely played draws. She later transferred this style of play to her son - Drasko was a perfect male copy of his mother and he never managed to "shake off" her teachings.

Jovanka also took her son to the championships. Drasko followed the games with great interest and socialized with friendly aunts who were happy to show him a game or explain a move.

In 1953, the organizers of the women's Championship in Opatija also held a strong men's tournament. There Drasko saw the Grandmasters of the royal game for the first time. He collected autographs and dreamed of one day participating in a big tournament himself. But learning was difficult, there was no literature, and his mother did not have much time. The only book, the famous Andric's *Chess - the game of millions*, was for some time his only window into the world of chess. Nevertheless, he was making progress.



Memories of Viktor Zaljevski

I met Engineer Zaljevski in 1954 in Dobož when my mother and I moved into a one-room apartment and the Zaljevskis (father, mother and two young sons) were already living there. Like my mother, father Viktor Zaljevski was obsessed with chess. At first they played every evening with my mother, while later I had the honor of challenging Viktor myself. I called him Ingo, and soon all of Dobož called him that.

Anyway, I got my first systematic chess knowledge from Ingo. We played hundreds of games, in which I learned the basics of many openings that Ingo knew very well. I played these openings for many years! I also learned endgames from Ingo. I remember one night when we fought a rook against a knight, without pawns. It was impossible to convince me that it was a draw, and Ingo jumped back and forth with his



"You're really stupid, I guess it's better that I lose the duel than Katarina!"

knight tirelessly all night long. Before morning I woke up my mother and in a panic asked her to help me. *"It's a draw, let me sleep!"* she grumbled...

I diligently wrote down Ingo's lessons, there were six big volumes, but later, to my great regret, I lost them somewhere.

But Ing knew no mercy for me in the matches. He was an excellent chess player, one of the best, if not the best in Dobož, in those years the second chess city in BiH (after Sarajevo). Many later masters came from here, and the club was also very active, mainly due to Ing's great enthusiasm. Ing was officially transferred to Kragujevac in 1957

and I never saw him again. But I still remember very well the event from 1955. At that time, I was selected and invited to Belgrade to play a friendly match with the pioneering star of that time, Katarina Jovanovic (later a famous grandmaster). When we were invited to Radio Belgrade after the match (I lost 1.5 :

2.5), they asked me about my greatest chess success. *"Oh, that's easy,"* I answered quickly. *"A few days ago, I finally managed to draw with Ing, engineer Viktor Zaljevski!"*

My response elicited bursts of laughter. Nobody knew who I was talking about. And I can only hope that your book will right this wrong!

Drasko Velimirovic for the book Chess on Cetinje (Vesko Pejovic, 1996)

After the defeat in the match with Katarina Jovanovic, Drasko's friends made fun of him, saying how he could lose to a girl. *"You're really stupid, I guess it's better that I lose the duel than Katarina!"*

From that time Drasko remembers two simultaneous displays, where he played against famous representatives Borislav Ivkov and Alexander Matanovic. He lost both games, however.

“Ivkvov praised me after the game, encouraged me and advised me to study hard. That was the beginning of a wonderful friendship - Bora and I have remained friends decades after that first simultaneous. Quite differently, Matanovic replied haughtily. “Tell me, Jovanka, does your boy train anything else besides chess?” he asked his mother after the game. “He trains, yes, he likes soccer.” “Then he should stay right there, because he has no ear for chess,” the famous Grandmaster concluded the conversation.

It probably goes without saying that Drasko and Matanovic never got along very well. Their relationship did not start well and more or less stayed that way.

Drasko made his first official appearance in 1956, when he participated in the youth Championship of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first significant successes came two years later, when he first became Bosnian youth champion and later champion of Dobo, crowning the year with a victory in the semi-finals of the Bosnian Championship.

In 1958, he and Jovanka moved to Serbia, and finally in 1960 to Belgrade.

1958 - 1960

Drasko introduces himself

Drasko started playing chess relatively late, so he had not yet fully developed his potential in youth competitions. Nevertheless, he won the republic youth championships with ease and made it to the national (Yugoslav) youth championship three times, where he gradually improved his results. In 1958 in Radovljica he was not yet at the top, but he directly influenced the fight for first place and for the first time presented himself in his characteristic attacking form. In 1959 he finished third in Bled and a year later second in Pristina. In all three national championships in which Drasko participated, first place was taken by the then outstanding **Bruno Parma**, who also became the World Youth Champion in 1961. Otherwise, too, the competition at these championships was excellent and full of future grandmasters: let us just mention the best Croatian juniors, Vlado Kovacevic and Ivan Nemet.



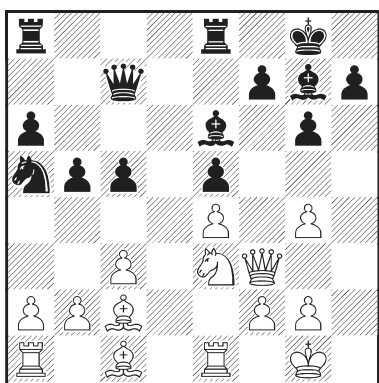
National Youth Championship, Bled 1959, Drasko in the middle of the front row.

Even as a young man, Drasko crystallized his recognizable style of play: a maximally active and aggressive approach, a selection of very sharp variations, and an uncompromising fight to the end, regardless of the opponent's name. Like a magnet, he was attracted to the white squares in the center and on the wings: d5, f5, e6, b5, f7, g6, h7, on which he was to sacrifice countless pieces later in his career, and on similar sacrifices he also built the theory of variations later named after him.

For the first time, Drasko, seemingly out of necessity and unprompted, hit f5 as a 16-year-old boy.

Velimirovic : Radonjic

Radovljica 1958



The position in the diagram is quite simple, classical even. White is systematically fighting for the white squares and after 20.♘d5 ♕d5 21.ed5, or first 20.g5 and ♘d5 on the next move, White has a clear advantage.

But young Drasko was not interested in such positional battles. Even then, his interest was primarily aimed at the opponent's king...

20.♘f5!?

A risky move, which of course nullifies White's advantage if Black plays correctly.

20...f6?

Black gets scared and prefers to play without the black-squared bishop rather than accept complications, which in a way is already a surrender. 20...gf5 would have been better when White is faced with a difficult choice. After 21.ef5, Black defends with an awkward 21...e4! while taking advantage of a possible pin on the e-file. For example: 22.♕e4 ♕d5! Better is 22.♕f4 ef3 23.♕c7 ♕d5 24.♕a5 fg2, with great complications when the computer leads most variations to a draw!

In his commentary, Velimirovic revealed that he would have chosen 21.gf5 and after 21...♕c8 22.f6. Now he saw correctly that after 22...♕f8 a fearsome attack follows.

However, the computer warns us about 22...♖e6! and after 23.fg7 ♖g6 24.b3, when White dominates the

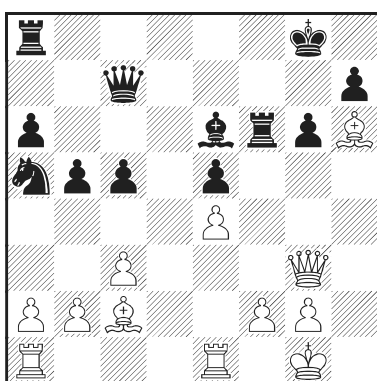
black squares, since his bishop has no opponent.

Now everything was quite simple:

21. ♖g7 ♔g7 22. g5!

The black-squared bishop enters the game.

22... ♖f8 23. g6 ♖f6 24. ♗h6 ♔f7 25. ♕g3 ♔g8



Already at the age of 16, Drasko showed that he would be a great striker. The sudden shift of play to the other wing is a characteristic move that great strikers master to perfection!

26. a4! b a4

In his analysis (from 1958!) Velimirovic showed how he would continue after 26... ♖e8: 27. ab5 ab5 28. ♕d3 (Also possible is 28. ♖a5 ♕a5 29. ♕e5 ♖f7 30. ♕c5 (There is nothing else attractive. 30. ♗b3 was advocated by the young hot-blooded attacker: 30... ♕b6 31. ♗d5 c4! (But this was ignored by Velimirovic, who only wanted the attractive 31... ♕c7 32. ♕e6! ♖e6 33. ♗e6 ♕e5 34. ♖d1!)) After 31... c4 White has

enough compensation for the pawn, but no more.) 30... ♕a7 31. ♕d4 or 31. ♗e3 and White is better.)

26... b4 27. cb4 cb4 28. ♖ac1 ♗c4 is also bad!? 29. ♗d1 ♖c6 30. ♗g4!± (Velimirovic)

27. ♖a4 ♗b3 28. ♗b3 ♖b3 29. ♕d3

Bad black squares, bad white squares, dominance of open and half-open files. It was only a matter of time before Black's position collapsed.

29... ♕f7 30. ♖d1

Black is practically stalemated (the threat is 31. ♕d8!), so he decided to shorten his suffering. The game in which young Drasko made his first serious appearance! **1:0.**

Despite everything, his worst rival in his youthful years was the Slovenian, Parma. Although they got on well and amicably, their games were always dramatic, uncompromising and tense to the last moves. It was especially dramatic in 1958, when they met in the last round and Parma needed a draw to win the title. Drasko completely outplayed him, and then, realizing that a win would take first place away from him, he offered a draw in a completely won position! "Let us face it, he deserved it!"

The Slovenian gratefully accepted the gift, but for the next two years he was the one who prevented

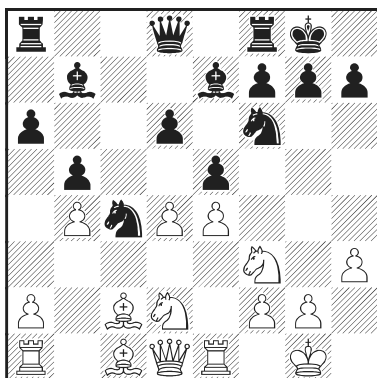
Drasko from getting on the international stage (Parma also won the Championship in 1959 and 1960, when

Drasko finished just below the top both times).

Velimirovic : Parma

Radovljica 1958

Bruno Parma (b. 1942) is a great name in Slovenian and Yugoslav chess. He was a peer of Drasko, only a few months older than him, and always one of his fiercest competitors. Admittedly, not in the 1960s, when Parma entered the big chess scene by winning the junior world title and quickly winning the grandmaster title, rising to the national team and winning no less than six (!) Olympic medals with it. But in the 1970s, when Drasko finally overcame his obstacles and made his way to the best, and Parma's power slowly began to wane. The two future grandmasters had great respect for each other even as teenagers, and it remained that way in the decades that followed, until Drasko's death.



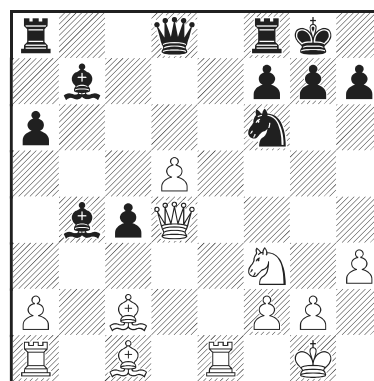
14...d5!?

All or nothing! Both opponents wanted

to win with all their might. No wonder, since they were only 16 years old. Parma, already a star of the Slovenian chess scene and one of the favorites for the Championship, probably did not even know Drasko, the representative of the "chess province" Bosnia and Herzegovina, let alone consider him a serious opponent...

15.ed5 ed4 16.♘c4 bc4 17.♚d4 ♙b4

After 17...♙d5 the game would be balanced. If the young Slovenian had known what was coming, he certainly would not have challenged Drasko tactically!

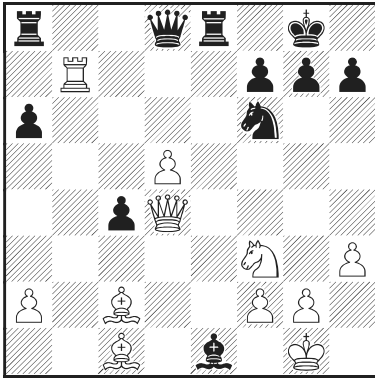


18.♖b1! ♙e1 19.♖b7

White has sacrificed an exchange, and in turn all his pieces are positioned offensively and aimed at the black king. Soon there will be a storm:

19...♖e8

“After 19...♗a5 20.♕g5 White would attack similarly to the game.” (Velimirovic)



20.d6!

“Worse is 20.♕g5? ♖d5! 21.♕f6 ♗b7 22.♗g4 ♕f2 23.♖h1 g6 24.♗g5, when Black is saved by 24...♗c6! and White can not build a checkmate attack.” (Velimirovic)

20...♗c8 21.♕g5?

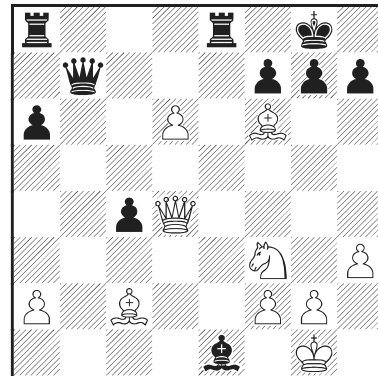
Maximum risk! We can imagine why given the situation: Drasko is no longer in the fight for the top spots, whereas Parma needs a draw to win the title. After 21.♖c7 ♗e6 22.♖c4 White would have more than enough compensation for the exchange.

21...♗b7

Black takes what White offers.

Drasko noted 21...♖e2 22.♖c7 ♗e6 23.♘e1 as worse. For example: 23...♖e1 24.♖h2 ♖ad8 25.♕f6 ♗f6 26.♗f6 g6 27.d7 ♖f8 28.♕h7 ♖e2, with an equal game, according to engine analysis.

22.♕f6



22...gf6?

A catastrophic mistake that could have cost Parma the title! Drasko believed that it was lost in all variations and stated in his analysis:

22...♗c6 23.♗h4 ♕f2 24.♖f2 ♗b6 25.♕d4, or

22...♖e6 23.♕h7 ♖h7 (23...♖f8 24.♕g7 ♖e8 25.♕f5 ♕b4 26.♕e6 fe6 27.♗f6 ♕d6 28.♗e6 ♗e7 (28...♕e7 29.♘e5) 29.♗g8 ♖d7 30.♗a8 ♗g7 31.♗b7 ♕c7 32.♗d5 ♕d6 33.♘d4) 24.♗h4 ♖g6 (24...♖g8 25.♘g5) 25.♗g5 ♖h7 26.♗g7#.

The ruthless computer disagrees. After 22...♖e6 23.♕h7 ♖h7 24.♗h4 ♖g8 25.♘g5 Black defends with the simple 25...♕f2! but also has the defense of 22...♖e2, with a direct attack on f2, when 23.♕h7 ♖h8! and Black is better off. For example: 24.♖f1 ♕f2 25.♗g4 g6 26.♕f5 ♖g8! 27.♗f4 ♖g7 28.♖e2 ♗b2 and Black is already attacking!

After 22...gf6 Black is lost, which Drasko saw and demonstrated convincingly in his analysis. At this point,

however, Drasko “took pity” on Parma and offered a draw ½!

The analysis is simple: 23. ♖g4 ♔h8 (23... ♕f8 24. ♗h7.) 24. ♖f5 ♗f2 25. ♔h1+–.

A year later, Drasko presented himself for the first time behind the **Benoni**,

an opening that was to become his life-long companion and a kind of trademark. The Benoni opening was still in its infancy at the time, but Velimirovic proved convincingly that he had studied it carefully and already understood all the basic ideas associated with it. He was just 17 years-years-old!

Ljubisavljevic : Velimirovic

Benoni A65

Belgrade 1959

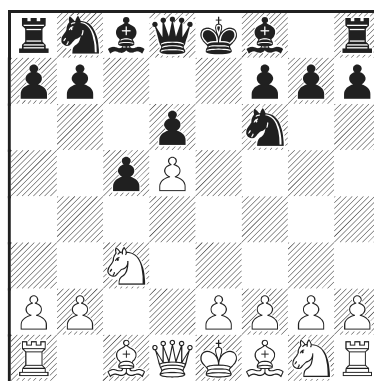
Zivojin Ljubisavljevic (b. 1941) is a dazzling figure in Yugoslav chess. The very talented young man was only a year older than Drasko, but did not manage to develop his full potential. However, he remained faithful to chess until the end and spent most of his career wandering around Italy and related chess countries. From tournament to tournament, a true chess professional. He played interesting chess, full of tricks and, like the young Viswanathan Anand, he made his moves at lightning speed, practically without thinking. I remember one of our games in the Yugoslav league, when I was pressed on time three times (!) and my opponent needed only fifteen minutes in total. Because of his chess style he was nicknamed “Zika Tal”, by which he was known to chess players all over Europe.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5

“The Benoni Defense has occupied a place of honor in my repertoire

throughout my career. In the following game I will try to give my view of this fantastic opening. By the way, this was my first tournament game in which I used the Benoni Defense!” (Velimirovic)

3.d5 e6 4. ♘c3 ed5 5.cd5 d6



“This is a basic position in the Benoni. The position is determined by a heterogeneous pawn setup: White has the advantage of the pawn in the center, Black on the queenside. This fact directs the plans of both players: White will want to activate the pawns in



Drasko, 1959.

the center, with the main idea e2-e4-e5! In addition, White has a strong c4-square where he wants to place his knight, which would only further support the penetration of the white pawn to e5, press the black d6-pawn and also target the queenside.

Black must first prevent the penetration of the white e-pawn, or at least limit its power. At the same time, he himself must prepare a queenside game involving the penetration of the b-pawn, which directly threatens White in the center. Black also has in hand the powerful square e5, a powerful dark square that controls the important long diagonal a1-h8. This gives Black an additional chance to gain a space advantage on the queenside by forcing the c-pawn (...c5-c4) and additional play in the center via the new strong square c5, where Black will primarily want to place the knight. White, on the other hand, will

first limit Black's b-pawn penetrations with the characteristic a2-a4.

So both opponents have clear strategic goals. Practice has shown that before they can be executed, patient prophylactic maneuvers are necessary to distract the opponent from executing their plan: White with the penetration of the central pawns and Black with the penetration of the queenside pawns.

In all my games these plans, as well as the preparatory maneuvers, are very clearly expressed." (Velimirovic)

6.e4 g6 7.♘d3 ♗g7 8.♞ge2

Today White prefers to develop the knight on f3 immediately or first 8.h3, which prevents a possible pin after 8.♞f3 ♗g4.

8...0-0 9.♗g5

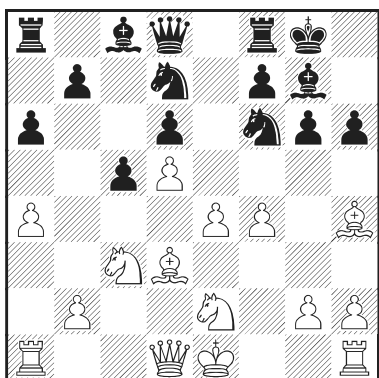
"This classic "anti-Benoni" move provokes the black pawns on the kingside. White exerts unpleasant pressure along the diagonal h4-d8, which Black can only get rid of with the help of the move ...h7-h6 and if necessary ...g6-g5. This gets rid of the pin, but weakens the pawns. A sharp position develops, in which Black has to find his way in combined play on both wings. However, the move ♗g5 does not fit with the knight on e2, because the knight on e2 does not participate

in the struggle for the square c4.”
(Velimirovic)

9...♘bd7 10.f4?! a6

10...♙c7! 11.0-0 c4 12.♙c2 ♘g4.

11.a4 h6 12.♙h4



12...g5!

An unusual idea for the Benoni defense, somewhat in the style of the popular Najdorf variation. Drasko also suggested 12...♙b6!? or 12...♙a5 13.0-0 c4 14.♙c2 ♘g4 when Black already has the initiative. For example: 15.♙d2 ♖e8 16.h3 ♙c5 (or 16...♙b4) etc.

13.fg5 ♘g4 14.♙d2 ♘de5! 15.h3

15.0-0 is worse (and 15.♙c2? ♘c4 completely bad) when Black is already better: 15...♘d3 (or even 15...c4!? 16.♙c2 ♙b6 17.♙h1 ♙e3!? 18.♙e3 ♘e3 19.♖fc1 ♘d3 20.♙d3 cd3) 16.♙d3 hg5 17.♙g3 c4! (Velimirovic)

15...hg5 16.♙g3

After 16.♙g5 ♘d3 17.♙d3 ♙g5 18.hg4 ♙g4 Black is better.

16...♘d3

Drasko also analyzed 16...c4 17.♙c2 ♘h6, when White does not need to castle and still has some advantage after 18.h4.

17.♙d3 ♘e5 18.♙e5

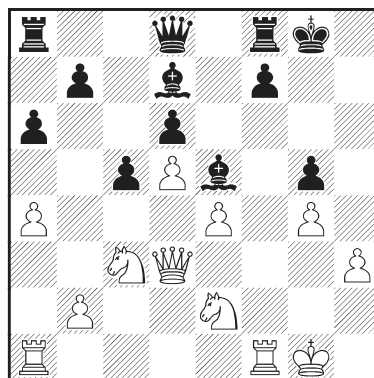
Positional surrender, but Black already has a big advantage. For example, 18.♙b1 f5 or 18.♙c2 ♘c4 etc.

18...♙e5 19.g4

White wants to block the game on the kingside, perhaps hoping one day to set up a knight on f5, but also hoping Black can't break through on the queenside.

19...♙d7 20.0-0

White was faced with a difficult choice. With 20.a5 he would have mitigated the consequences of the move ...b7-b5, but after 20...♙f6! he will remain uncastled. Drasko gave the variation: 21.♖f1 ♙h6 22.♖f3 ♙h4 23.♙f1 ♖ab8, when Black fires on both wings.



20...b5!

Black takes advantage of White's unfavorably placed pieces, open diagonals

and files. Drasko felt the best moves in Benoni ,on his fingertips‘ already at the age of seventeen...

21. ♖c2

Of course, taking the pawn does not work out: 21.ab5 ab5 22.♘b5 (22. ♖a8 ♖a8 23.♘b5 ♖a6 24.♘ec3 ♖b8 (24...♙c3? 25.♖c3 ♙b5 26.♖f6!) 25.♖f3 f6-+) 22...♖a1 23.♖a1 ♖b6.

21...♙g7 22.♙g2 ♖b8

Even better is 22...♖e7! (Velimirovic) and if 23.♘g3 ♙g3 24.♙g3 b4 25.♘d1 ♖e5 and Black is practically winning.

23.a5?

Closing the game on the queenside is a sign of defeat. After 23.ab5 ab5 24.♘g3! (24.♖a7!? - Velimirovic) White can still offer resistance.

Now everything is going according to plan:

23...b4 24.♘a4?

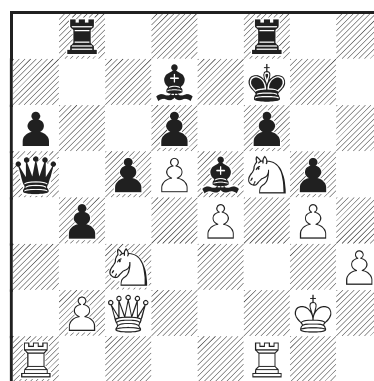
Missing the pawn hanging? But even after 24.♘d1 ♖h8 White would be beyond help, because he would have too many weaknesses, and Black's bishop would completely control the position on the board.

24...♖a5 25.♘g3 f6

White has no compensation for the pawn.

26.♘f5 ♙f7 27.♘c3

This move gives Black another attractive finish:



27...bc3! 28.♖a5 ♖b2 29.♖b2

Or 29.♖c1 ♖fb8 30.♖a6 ♖c2 31.♖c2 ♖b2 32.♖a2 ♙a4!-+

29...cb2 30.♖a6 ♖b8 31.♖b1 ♙f5 32.ef5 c4 33.♖a7 ♙g8 34.♖c7 c3 35.♙f3 ♖a8 0:1.

To his apprenticeship and youth Drasko said goodbye ambivalently: happily, because he remembered that the milieu in which he grew up was by no means easy, let alone self-evident; on the other hand with bitterness, because he was convinced that he deserved at least a youth championship title.

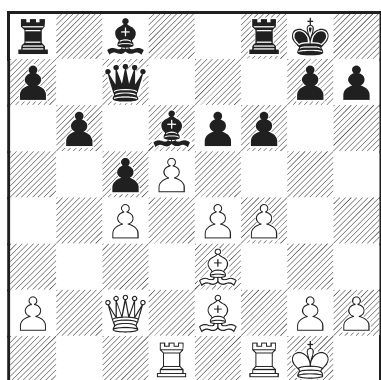
“Especially the one in Pristina, 1960, where I had a lot of bad luck. I finished the tournament in second place, just half a point behind Bruno Parma. But I was the best: in our head-to-head game I reached a completely winning position, squandered it, and gave Parma the tournament and the path to the World Junior Championship. You know how it goes: Parma became world junior champion, the door to international tournaments opened for him, and in two or three years

he became a grandmaster and a member of the national team. If I had won the Championship in Pristina, the history of

Yugoslav chess would have been written very differently,” Drasko emphasized years later in numerous interviews.

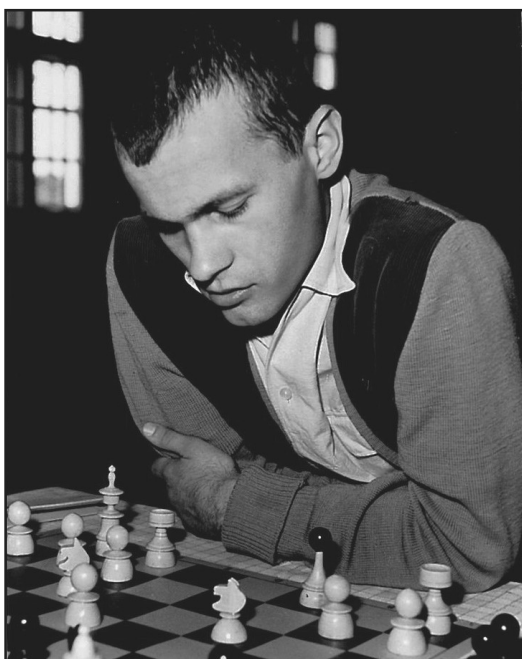
Velimirovic : Perencevic

Pristina 1960



17.e5!

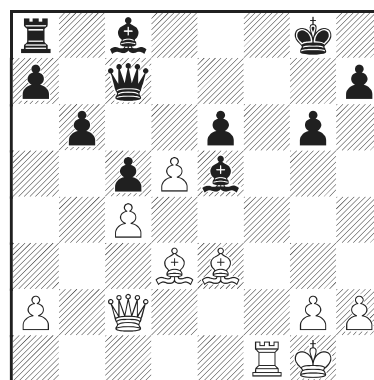
White no longer counts the pawns. Only one thing is important: opening files and diagonals against the black king.



Drasko, 1960.

17...fe5 18.fe5 ♖f1 19.♗f1 ♕e5 20.♕d3! g6

After 20...h6 (or first 20...♕h2 21.♖h1) of course there is 21.♕h7 ♖h8 22.♗f8 checkmate!



21.♕g6! hg6 22.♖g6 ♕g7

22...♖g7 23.♗e8 ♖h7 24.♗f7.

23.♗e8 ♖h7 24.♗f4 +- ♖f4 25.♕f4 ed5 26.♗h5 1:0.

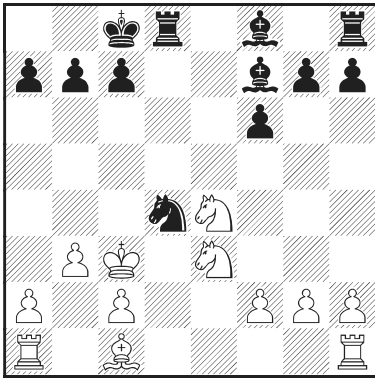
The next game sees the fall of the future international master, **Stanko Kosanski** from Zagreb, a kind of Croatian “Zika Tal”, a boy from the people. The game is not particularly high-quality, as White played badly, but there’s an interesting endgame picture that reminds us of the days of chess romance, when Paul Morphy, Adolf Anderssen and similar kings ruled...

Kosanski : Velimirovic

Two Knights Defense C55

Pristina 1960

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. Nc3 Ne4
 5. Nxe4 d5 6. d4?! dc4! 7. Ne5 Qd4! 8. Qd4
 Nd4 9. Qd1 f6 10. Nc4 g4 11. Qd2 o-o-o
 12. Ne3 Bh5 13. Qc3 Bf7 14. b3?

**14...f5!**

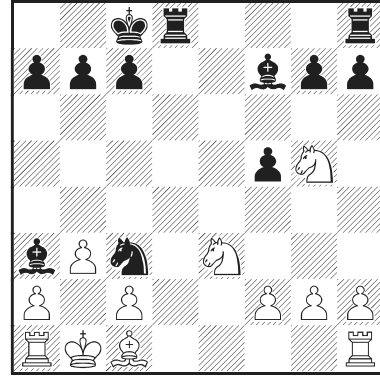
The game comes from one of Drasko's old, dusty notebooks. Some of them were an important source of games from Velimirovic's first years in chess, which cannot be found in chess literature or in the chess databases. The signs for the evaluation of individual moves are, of course, from the young Drasko.

Kosanski gave up the game at this point, but let us see how it would have turned out if he withdrew the attacked knight!

**15. Ng5 Nb5 16. Qb2 Ba3 17. Qb1 Nc3
 checkmate! o:1.**

The final position definitely deserves a diagram!

(see diagram next column)



In 1960 there was another turning point in Drasko's life: he and his mother moved to Belgrade. The **Nedeljkovic** family, **Verica** and **Srecko**, both excellent chess players and good friends of Jovanka, visited them often. New horizons opened up for Drasko. He joined the Partizan chess club and also played chess in the neighboring club, Slavija. In many free games he strengthened his self-confidence, and realized that he was undoubtedly one of the best young players in Yugoslavia and that the result in Pristina was not a coincidence.

“On the contrary! Parma and I were the best, but a combination of circumstances decided that he would be the champion. This also opened the door to the great world of chess for the Slovenian, a door that remained closed to me for another decade. But that was not Parma's fault: we remained good friends until our chess retirement.”

1961 - 1962

Attack on the giants

After the end of his apprenticeship and youth, Drasko was waiting for the next big step: breaking into the ranks of the best. In Belgrade, where he moved with his mother, he found the conditions for an appropriate chess development: the capital of Yugoslavia was at that time one of the most important chess centers in the world, with a dense concentration of masters and grandmasters, with many chess clubs, tournaments, chess events; in short, with a chess milieu appropriate to the capital of the world's second chess power. Drasko's path was anything but paved: the newcomer from Bosnia and Herzegovina had to work hard for every little favor and also had to prove this countless times at the chessboard.

He finished high school in Belgrade. Even in this area, Drasko was a unique phenomenon: he attended four years of high school in four different cities! He graduated from today's prestigious First high school in Belgrade and immediately enrolled at the University. Where else but law - his mother was his role model, far from only in chess! But his serious studies did not last too long. After only a few months, Drasko had a fight with one of the leading professors. In his seminar assignment, Velimirovic did not want to glorify the Yugoslav legal system, which could not possibly work in the hard socialist-communist country at the time.

“My mother was a prominent lawyer, but she never wanted to join the Union of Communists, the only political party allowed in the country at the time and led by Josip Broz Tito. Moreover, even thinking, let alone acting, differently was strictly forbidden! Despite this, my mother and I talked a lot, but when, in my last year of high school, a classmate got us some American movies that were banned at the time, I realized that there are more legal systems in the world, not just “Tito's”, as we were taught and as they demanded that we also repeat. In the seminar assignment, I wrote exactly this: there are several legal systems in the world, etc. The professor called me into his office:

“Drasko, this will have to be crossed out!”

“Not even in my dreams,” I replied. “I wrote what I believe in!”

The professor did not give in: *“Such words, even if they were true, were written several years too early! Cross it out!”*

“I will not!”

“Right! Then get out of my office! Do you think I’ll risk prison for a hothead like yours!”

Fortunately, I was left with chess and an understanding mother...”



Chess Beethoven

The year 1961 is remembered by Drasko for another tragic event that was to have a significant impact on his entire life and chess career.

“I was still in high school when, during a boisterous rave, I received a blow to my nose. The blow was violent, my nose was broken, and I was covered in blood and almost unconscious. Since my mother wasn’t in the Communist Party, the principal wouldn’t call an ambulance for me. So I went to the hospital alone by streetcar, bloody and completely confused. When the doctors saw me, I ended up on the operating table in a few minutes. But, without anesthesia! I was violently grabbed by four giants, and the doctor successfully operated and repaired my nose. You can imagine what I went through. After the surgery, I was given streptomycin to prevent infection. Only later did it become known that treatment with streptomycin can lead to hearing

damage in certain cases. The consequences? Repaired nose, but lost hearing!



Drasko Velimirovic - Chess Beethoven.

When, after some time, I was called up for a medical examination for the army, the army doctors began to treat me with streptomycin again - they wanted to train me for military service. And when they noticed that my hearing was getting worse, they continued

with some experiments until they finally released me from the draft in 1966. Over time, my hearing partially recovered, but I never heard well again, and in old age, almost not at all.

Hearing loss has caused me many headaches in my life. In communication, in chess, when sometimes I didn't even hear draw offers and I probably came across as arrogant if I didn't answer. Also in various interviews, especially live interviews, sometimes I didn't hear a question or misunderstood it and answered something completely

different. Above all, I never learned languages because of my hearing loss. Even with Russian, which we learned in school at that time, I had problems: I just couldn't hear their soft characters.

Despite the fact that I could not hear well, I communicated with chess players from abroad in all possible ways, including pantomime if necessary. Later, however, when I was a bit older, I was forced to turn down any invitation from abroad unless one of my colleagues who understood Serbian was invited with me."

As an introduction to Drasko's Belgrade chess days, let us look at a game against **Nikola Karakljajic** (1926 - 2008), an extremely interesting man and a Belgrade legend of sorts. Karakljajic was marked by two great loves: music and chess. In music he became a legend: as the head of the most popular radio programs in the 1960s, it was he who introduced Belgrade and even Yugoslavia to rock music. Many musicians, especially stars from the Yugoslav region, considered Karakljajic their spiritual father and the main person responsible for the explosion of the famous "Yugo pop rock" in the 1970s and 1980s.

Karakljajic also left a strong mark on chess. He was considered an extremely talented chess player, although he did not have time to devote himself

entirely to chess. He participated in ten national championships, winning one in 1955, and his victory in the national championship paved the way for him to join the national team, with which he won a silver medal at the 1956 Moscow Olympiad.

Nikola Karakljajic was a very talented tactician who enriched many attacking systems with many ideas, and in chess opening theory he is considered a kind of spiritual father of the Belgrade Gambit: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.d4 ed4 5. ♗d5!?

Let us take a look at the game in which Drasko takes us into the world of the King's Indian Defense, alongside the Benoni his other great love in closed systems.

Karakljajic : Velimirovic

King's Indian Defense E75

Belgrade 1961

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6

Velimirovic usually moved immediately to the Benoni with 3...e6. This time he opts for a King's Indian setup and keeps the option to move to the Benoni, which will happen in the game.

4.♘c3 g6 5.e4 ♕g7 6.♖f3

The move sequence chosen by Black leaves the door open to White for many variations.

While after 3...e6 4.♘c3 ed5 he would have had to take with the c-pawn (5.cd5), at this point he has the option of taking a different path. After 6.♕d3 o-o 7.h3 (an already known move against a possible ...♕g4) 7...e6 8.♖f3 ed5 White can take with either the c-pawn or the e-pawn: 9.ed5!? and if 9...♖e8 10.♕e3 ♕h6 11.o-o!, then after 11...♕e3 12.fe3 ♖e3 13.♙d2 ♖e8 14.♙h6 there is a strong, almost decisive attack. If Black does not capture the e3-pawn, White will simply increase the pressure on the f-file.

6...o-o 7.♕e2

After this less ambitious buildup by White, Black can transpose to the Benoni without worry.

7...e6 8.♕g5

One of White's many options.

8...h6!

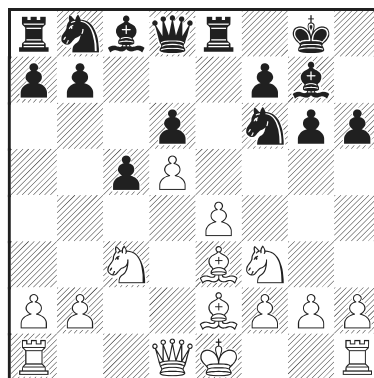
It is best for Black not to allow a possible ♙d2-♕g5 battery when ...h6 would then be impossible. Now White had to decide immediately: either go with the bishop to h4, or stay on the c1-h6 diagonal, which Karakljajic chose.

9.♕e3 ed5 10.cd5

One last chance to escape the Benoni. After 10.ed5 Black would have many options and the best practical results after 10...♖g4!? and if 11.♕d2 ♖d7 and with a knight on e5, but after 11.♕f4 he would choose between 11...g5 or even 11...♕c3.

10...♖e8

In front of us is the classic Benoni, in which Black goes for rapid development. To begin with, Black threatens the e4-pawn, which White should best defend with 11.♖d2. The queenside defence offers Black new tempo moves:

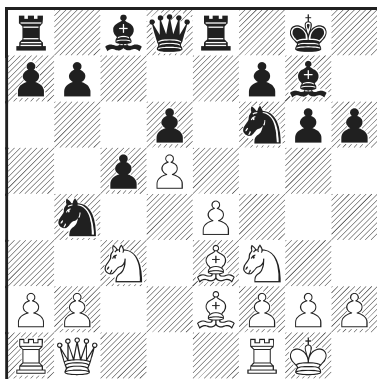


11.♙c2?! ♖a6! 12.o-o

12.a3 only serves as a new weakening,

and capturing the knight with 12. ♖a6 would be bad, since Black gets a bishop pair and strong pressure on the b-file in exchange for the broken pawn structure.

12... ♞b4 13. ♚b1



13... ♞e4!?

Typical Drasko, who just couldn't help himself when faced with similar challenges. Another possibility was 13... ♞g4 and after the bishop's retreat immediately 14... ♜f5, with a strong initiative. White would have to work hard to survive.

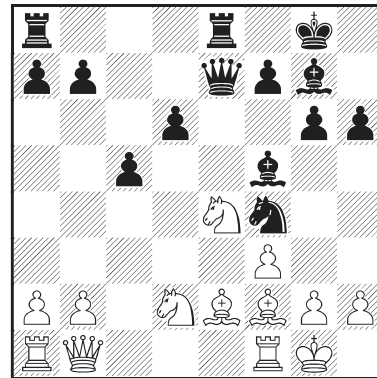
The piece sacrifice on e4 is also justified positionally and tactically - Black's pin along the b1-h7 diagonal and the e-file looks intimidating.

14. ♞e4 ♜f5 15. ♞fd2 ♚e7

The computer suggests the immediate 15... ♞d5 as better, when Black captures White's black-squared bishop, holds the pin, and already has an advantage with the pawns in the center. After 16.g4 ♞e3 17.fe3 ♜e4 18. ♞e4 d5! the e3-pawn would also fall and things

would be even harder for White than in the game.

16.f3 ♞d5 17. ♜f2 ♞f4



18. ♜d3?

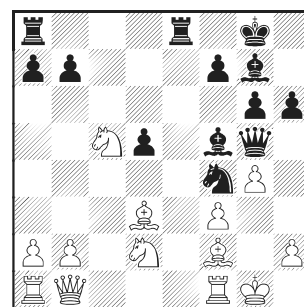
A crucial mistake! The only move was 18. ♜b5, with terrible complications after 18...d5! 19. ♜c5 ♚c5 20. ♞c5 ♜d4 21. ♚h1 ♜b1, when the computer still struggles to assess the situation!

18...d5 19. ♞c5

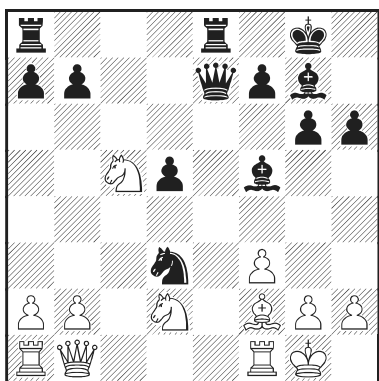
If 19. ♜c5 ♚e5. Karakljajic probably overlooked Black's 20th move:

19... ♞d3

19... ♚g5 looks even more attractive as after 20.g4



20... ♜e2! when all complications end in Black's favor. But Black also wins this way:



20. ♘d3 ♚e2 21. ♖e1 ♚d2 22. ♖d1 ♚e2
23. ♘f4 ♙b1 24. ♘e2 ♖e2 25. ♖ab1 ♖c8

Black is a pawn up and could also choose a technically winning end-game, but Velimirovic carried on in style, energetic to the end!

26. ♖d5 ♖cc2 27. ♖f1 ♙b2 28. ♖d8 ♚h7
29. ♖d7 ♖b5 30. ♖a7 ♖f2 0:1.

First time abroad

Drasko was drawing more and more attention with his attractive chess, and at the end of 1961 the dignitaries of the Yugoslav Chess Federation decided to give him his first chance on the international stage. The traditional Christmas and New Year tournament in Hastings was a good choice. Of course, Drasko could not yet participate in the main tournament, where World Champion Mihail Botvinnik excelled that year (Botvinnik 8, Gligoric 6.5, Flohr 5.5...), but he got a chance at the reserve tournament, the so-called “B” tournament, where the winner won a ticket to the main event the next year. A remarkable motive, with prizes in foreign currency, which meant an unimaginable sum in Yugoslavia in 1961. Yugoslavia sent a large team to Hastings: besides Svetozar Gligoric in the main tournament, there were two players in the reserve tournament:

Drasko, and Drazen Marovic, a talented master from Croatia in the “B” tournament, and the blind master, Ivan Baretic, in the third (“C”) tournament. The Yugoslav delegation did not travel to Hastings together, but Drasko remembered forever the trip to his first international tournament:

“At that time, the biggest Yugoslav travel agency “Putnik” sold me a train ticket with the last section Folkstone - Hastings, a route that did not exist! I was very poor and found myself in the middle of a foreign country, without a pound in my pocket, without a valid ticket and without the slightest idea how to get to Hastings. Tired from the long journey, helpless with anger, I went to the police and suggested that I sleep in jail (!) and the next morning we would see what and how. The famous English policemen were a bit puzzled by the proposal and they quickly found a woman who spoke Russian so we could somehow communicate. I



Drazen Marovic. The friendship did not start well.

understood a little Russian, but not a word of English. They found a solution, and I finally got to Hastings on time.”

Despite all the complications, Drasko played perfect chess and was always in the top group or even alone in the lead. Before the last round he was caught by Marovic and the Polish master Manfred Mannke (who tragically died in a traffic accident a few months later), both of whom had already been beaten by Velimirovic! Nevertheless, before the last round, the emboldened masters approached Drasko with an “interesting” proposal: *“Listen, since we are playing each other in the last round, we are willing to draw if you also agree to a draw.”* All three of us share the first place and we can hope that the organizer will invite all three of us to the main tournament next year!”

Drasko just looked at them in disbelief. He had, at least on paper, a much

easier opponent waiting for him, plus he believed he deserved first place the most, since he had beaten them both. *“I will play,”* he replied without thinking.

Nevertheless, Marovic and Mannke played a draw, but Drasko cut himself on his own sharpness and anger, and disappointingly, lost the game and dropped from the top to the “close” third place. This is how he remembered his first international tournament:

“In the last game I refused the deal, although I felt uncomfortable. My competitors were playing each other, I was waiting for a game against the last-placed, local chess player, in which I was the big favorite. The dishonorable bid upset me so much that I overlooked the queen in the opening and quickly lost the game. My competitors then happily drew...”

Marovic wrote in his report from the tournament for *Sahovski glasnik* that his first place was fully deserved, that he did not appreciate Mannke too much, and that the most disappointed is certainly Velimirovic, who threatened even his third place with a bad ending. Not a word about his calculating morals...

For me, a draw is not a result at all. If the game develops normally, I never think about a draw, I always think about playing to win. I blame all chess players who play chess to make draw and thus degrade this ancient game! (Velimirovic)

Velimirovic : Marovic

Caro-Kann B12

Hastings 1961/62

1.e4 c6

Grandmaster **Drazen Marovic** (b. 1938) is undoubtedly a big name in Croatian (formerly Yugoslav) chess. Although he learned chess quite late, only at the age of 16, he quickly distinguished himself with results that paved his way to the national team, and later even more with his coaching activities (he was head coach of many chess players, clubs, and even national teams; we need only mention junior World Champions Bojan Kurajica and Mohammed Al-Modiahki, and the Croatian national team) and even more with his writing about chess. For many years he was the editor of the legendary Zagreb magazine *Sahovski glasnik*, and along the way he also wrote many books, many of which became world bestsellers.

The chess “academic” Marovic had mixed feelings about Velimirovic’s chess. As a chess journalist, he was forced to write a lot about Drasko: from euphoric notes to those that sidelined Drasko and his sacrifices. Marovic was particularly hurt by the defeats in their games, where, apparently under the influence of heated emotions, he often completely misjudged the positions... Marovic was a pronounced positional player and the Caro-Kann was an opening that suited his style of play very well.

2.d4 d5 3.e5

Even then, the advance variation was considered a strong continuation, which suited the hot-blooded Velimirovic. A clash of concepts!

3...♗f5 4.h4

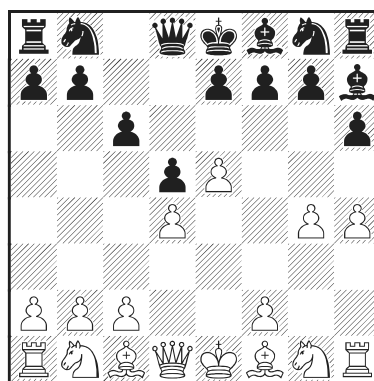
A move that is back in vogue more than sixty years after our game.

4...h6

Today, Black usually chooses 4...h5 when an interesting strategic/tactical battle ensues after 5.c4.

5.g4 ♗h7?

(Too) passive! 5...♗d7 is much better, especially because of the following move:



6.e6!

Yes, of course! White sacrifices the pawn and blocks Black on the kingside. Black will spend a lot of time developing the pieces, especially the bishop on f8 and rook on h8, while White can