

Paul Keres

**Match Tournament
for the World Chess Championship
The Hague - Moscow 1948**

75th Anniversary Edition

Edited and revised by
Douglas Griffin and Igor Žvegljć



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FROM THE AUTHOR

This book is dedicated to the match-tournament of 1948, which gave rise to the first Soviet World Champion – Mikhail Botvinnik. The main content of the book is the detailed analysis of the fifty games played in this event. Detailed commentary to the games has been written for a very wide circle of qualified chessplayers, in which connection particular attention has been paid to the accessibility of the presentation and the appearance in the games of important turning points. The criticism of the mistakes committed by the participants could seem at times to be overly severe, but represents the fruits of painstaking analysis and should bring benefit to chessplayers who wish to draw the necessary theoretical and practical conclusions from the games of the match-tournament.

In covering the openings, particular attention has been given to an explanation of the fundamental ideas characterising the various systems of opening development, promoting an understanding too of the following phase of the game – the middlegame. Similarly, in the middlegame I have also aimed as far as possible to avoid the dry listing of variations, replacing these with an explanation of the characteristic ideas hidden in each position, which will undoubtedly promote the assimilation of the material and increase its instructiveness. In the endgames (admittedly few in number) the plan of play has – correctly, as it seems to me – usually been explained in advance, prior to giving the actual continuation in the game. In this way the reader has the possibility of comparing the events in the game with other paths, which could or should have occurred in the developing play.

It is very difficult, and often impossible, to claim absolute accuracy in chess analysis, but at any rate, I have endeavoured to fulfil my work with the maximum thoroughness.

P. Keres



Paul Keres

Directive from Stalin – as reproduced in 64 – Shakhmatnoye obozrenie (№ 5, 1998). The missive appears on the headed paper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party

of the USSR, under the names of Zhdanov, Molotov, Aleksandrov, Suslov, Romanov & Chadaev, with Stalin's signature prominent at the bottom.

Продолжение всех стран, сославшись! СТРОГО СЕКРЕТНО

Всесоюзная Коммунистическая Партия (большевиков). ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ КОМИТЕТ

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19.И. 1947 г.

Выписка из протокола № 57 заседания Политбюро ЦК от _____ 194__ г.

Решение от 19 марта 1947г.

101.- Вопрос Всесоюзного Комитета по делам физической культуры и спорта при Совете Министров СССР.
(С-т от 14.3.47г., пр.Б 299п.347-го)

1. Разрешить Всесоюзному Комитету по делам физической культуры и спорта при Совете Министров СССР принять предложение Международной Шахматной Федерации (СИДЕ) и направить руководству Федерации соответствующее заявление о присоединении к СИДЕ Всесоюзной Шахматной Секции.
2. Разрешить Всесоюзному Комитету направить на очередной Конгресс СИДЕ в июле-августе с.г. в Голландию делегацию Всесоюзной Шахматной Секции в составе 3-х человек, уполномочив ее вести переговоры о том, чтобы предполагаемый СИДЕ международный шахматный турнир в начале 1948г. был проведен в СССР.
3. Разрешить Всесоюзному Комитету принять участие в организации и проведении турнира на первенство мира по шахматам.
4. Принять предложение Всесоюзного Комитета об участии в турнире на первенство мира по шахматам гроссмейстеров СССР Ботвинника М.М., Кереса П.П. и Смыслова В.В.

 СЕКРЕТАРЬ *И. Сталин*

6-ав.

Подавать возврату не может, чем в 7-дневный срок по 2-ю час. Особого Сектора Ц. Асс. ПБ ЦК от 6.V.47 г., пр. № 100, п. 5.

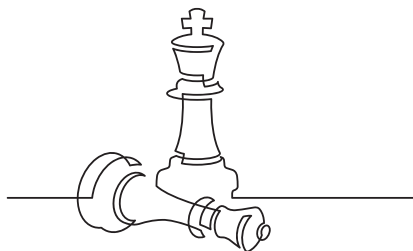
STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Extract from the minutes of meeting № 57 of the Politbureau of the TsK VKP(b).

Decision of 19th March 1947

1. Allow the All-Union Committee on Physical Culture & Sport under the Council of Ministers of the USSR to accept the proposal of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) and to send to the leadership of the federation a corresponding application for the accession of the All-Union Chess Section to FIDE.
2. Allow the All-Union Committee to send to the next FIDE Congress (in July–August of this year, in the Netherlands) a delegation of three people from the All-Union Chess Section, encouraging them to carry out discussions on holding FIDE's proposed tournament at the beginning of 1948 in the USSR.
3. Allow the All-Union Committee to take part in the organisation and holding of a tournament of the World chess Championship.
4. Accept the proposal of the All-Union Committee regarding the participation in the tournament for the world chess championship of the USSR grandmasters M. M. Botvinnik, P. P. Keres and V. V. Smyslov.

(signed) J. Stalin



From *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (№ 10, 1947), the editorial article *XVIII kongress FIDE*, which appeared on the opening two pages of this issue of the magazine. The piece deals mainly with matters related to the organisation of the World Championship, but it also contains a number of other points of interest – highlighting some the issues and uncertainties of the time – and it is reproduced here in full.

18th FIDE Congress

In August of this year the XVIII Congress of the International Chess Federation – FIDE – was held in The Hague. This congress has particular significance due to the fact that for the first time the Soviet chess organisation took part in its work.

The history of FIDE is, in brief, as follows. FIDE was created in Paris in 1924 and set itself the task of uniting national chess unions, the unification of the rules of play, and so on. Subsequently FIDE tried to engage in the regularisation of questions associated with the world chess championship.

The praesidium of FIDE had its seat in The Hague. After the occupation of the Netherlands by the Germans at the beginning of the war, FIDE ceased to exist. Between 1924 and 1939 there were sixteen FIDE congresses; the 17th congress of FIDE, which had revived itself after the war, was held in Switzerland in 1946.

During all this time FIDE was not able to gain the necessary authority, since it practically never saw its decisions through to their conclusion. FIDE congresses were of a consultative nature and were not binding on anyone or anything. To take for example the international rules of play – this has been discussed many times in congresses, but nothing has yet been approved or put into practice. On the question of the organisation of the World Championship, FIDE's authority has been recognised by no-one.

Perhaps the only serious achievement of the old FIDE was the international team tourna-



The drawing of lots, which took place in the Town Hall in The Hague's Javastraat, 2nd March, 1948.

(Photo: J. D. Noske, via www.nationaalarchief.nl.)

The drawing of lots took place. My forecast began to be realised. Keres was to be free for six days running; on the seventh day he was to play with black against me in the last round of the Hague half. If I could manage to defeat him on that day the forecast would be accurate.

All were agreed that since Fine was not present and the number of games had been

reduced, we should play five cycles. Thus, in Moscow there would be three (and not two) cycles of the match-tournament.

(Translator's note: Botvinnik then goes on to describe the course of the rounds played in the Hague. He points out that while play began in the Dierentuin, adjourned sessions were held in The Hague Chess Club.)



30th March, 1948 – the players are seen prior to departing the Netherlands on what proved to be an epic journey to Moscow.
(Photo: J. D. Noske, via www.nationaalarchief.nl)

We travelled to Moscow by train. In Berlin Postnikov, Keres, Reshevsky and Bondarevsky (Keres' second) left us – they were travelling to Moscow by plane. Reshevsky was in a hurry as he could not travel either on a Friday or Saturday, while Keres wanted to spend some time in Tallinn.

After a day in Berlin we continued. Euwe was accompanied by a whole cohort of his compatriots – two were his seconds and two were Reshevsky's (Reshevsky had evidently "ceded" the place of his two seconds to Dutchmen), Dr Euwe's wife and daughter, and others. We arrived at the Polish frontier, at Rzepin. For some reason it took a very long time to check our passports. Finally a frontier

guard appeared to say that the Soviet chess-players could proceed, but the Dutch were to return to Berlin for Polish transit visas... What a business! It turns out that in Berlin, in the turmoil they had forgotten to pick up transit visas for the Dutch – there was no Polish consulate in The Hague.

So once again a catastrophe was looming. What guarantee was there that the Dutch would turn east again instead of returning west with Euwe? Of course Euwe, as a true sportsman, was ready to play the event out to the end (although he only had $1\frac{1}{2}$ points out of 8), but if a dispute should arise (from Berlin onwards he was considered to be our guest, and we were obliged to get him to Moscow) –

could not the Dutch Chess Union use this as an excuse to call him back from the tournament? Would we then manage to complete the match-tournament and would the new champion be recognised by the chess world?

No, it was necessary for us all to travel on together. I explained the situation to Mikhail Mikhailovich Vagapov (deputy leader of the delegation) – he resolutely supported me – and we went to have talks with the frontier officials. They just waved their hands – the law is the law.

“May we phone through to Warsaw?”

“To Warsaw, no, but to Berlin – please, go ahead.”

We telephoned the deputy Soviet political adviser in Berlin. He understood everything; he would speak to Warsaw, and asked us to call him back in about twenty minutes. We went to the man in charge of the train and asked him to hold it back. “As a rule, I don’t have the right to do that. But the passengers are happy that they are travelling in the company of chessplayers. But will you stand up for me in Moscow?” Thus, the train did not depart. We telephone Berlin again.

“Everything is in order. The Polish Interior Ministry has sent orders to the frontier.”

We wait, but no orders arrive. We phone Berlin again. The deputy political adviser is surprised, and asks us to call back a little later. Half an hour later he advises us that he has spoken with the Minister of Internal Affairs – an order will be sent to the frontier. Wait!

We wait for a long time, but nothing happens. We phone Berlin again. The deputy commissar promises to call Warsaw again. A little while later we learn from him that the officer of President Berut¹⁹ is now fully aware of the facts, and that this time there would be no slip-up.

The chief of the train was already in despair, and the passengers were by now angry. In those days, passengers had to change trains in Brest²⁰, and it became clear that the Brest

– Moscow train would not wait for us, as we were more than five hours late! But then the frontier official decided that the Dutch could cross Poland, and we could proceed. However, I asked the chief of the train to wait a moment, phoned Berlin again, thanked the deputy political adviser and asked him speak to Warsaw so that our train could travel through Poland at the maximum permissible speed (it was already quite out of schedule!).

We finally pulled out after a delay of five hours and twenty minutes. All stops were reduced to a minimum; we went through Minsk Mazowiecki without stopping. By the time we arrived in Brest our lateness had been reduced to two hours. The Moscow train was waiting for us...

In Brest a fresh trial awaited us. The customs officials were checking Euwe’s luggage and found some thick exercise books. “What is this?” It turned out that the writing was in Dutch – it was Euwe’s secret opening analyses. As these could not be checked in Brest (where the customs officials did not know Dutch), according to the rules they could have been taken from Dr Euwe and sent to Moscow for further study.

The situation was not getting any better. Vagapov and I tried to talk the customs officials round, but they refused, themselves understanding the fateful consequences that this could have; they had already telephoned Minsk and were awaiting permission to make an exception to the rules.

Then came a refusal: “Inform Comrade Botvinnik that Soviet laws are binding on everyone...” What were we to do? “Let us go to the Party office, from there we can contact Moscow direct on the official government line; there is a car waiting outside the station here”. We were hurrying down the staircase when a very loud cry of “come back!” came from above. We climb back up the stairs, and learn that Minsk themselves have asked Moscow, and that permission had been obtained! Now we hurried to the train.

The train pulled out of the station and I go to the restaurant car. A distraught Euwe is sit-

ting at a table. I tell him that everything is in order, and the Doctor shakes me by the hand for a long time. “But can I be certain that there is nothing in your notebooks which might be harmful to Soviet state?” Euwe solemnly holds up two fingers, as a sign of making an oath.

“But are your variations not directed against Soviet chessplayers?” There is general laughter. Yes, now the Moscow half of the match-tournament has been secured, and I can go to bed.

After our arrival we had a few days’ rest. Walking one morning I took a walk with my daughter along Prospekt Mira. When I got home there was a call from the Sports Committee: “Go at once to the Party Central Com-

mittee. They are waiting for you”. I reported to the Central Committee; an attendant directs me into an office. In the corridor I meet a smart, middle-aged man. “Why are you late” – he asks abruptly, military-style. I guess that this is the new chairman of the Committee of Physical Culture & Sport, Colonel-General Appolonov. We sit in the reception room. About fifteen minutes later Voroshilov²¹ goes past us into the office (at that time he was in charge of Physical Culture & Sport in the Council of Ministers – before we set off for The Hague he had received the chessplayers in the Kremlin). Soon we were called in. It was the office of A. Zhdanov. Zhdanov was walking about, the rest of were seated. One felt that the atmosphere was tense.



A. A. Zhdanov, pictured in Leningrad – where he was the local Party boss – during the Second World War.

(Photo: V. Temin, via <https://mamm-mdf.ru/>)

Playing Schedule of the Match-Tournament

(The games appear in the same order in the book)

		<i>In The Hague</i>	13 th	12 th	23. Keres-Smyslov, 24. Botvinnik-Euwe
1 st March	- Opening of the match-tournament and drawing of lots		15 th	13 th	25. Smyslov-Botvinnik, 26. Reshevsky-Keres
		<i>First Cycle</i>	18 th	14 th	27. Botvinnik-Reshevsky, 28. Euwe-Smyslov
2 nd March	1 st round	1. Euwe-Keres, 2. Smyslov-Reshevsky	20 th	15 th	29. Reshevsky-Euwe, 30. Keres-Botvinnik
4 th	2 nd	3. Keres-Smyslov, 4. Botvinnik-Euwe			
8 th	3 rd	5. Smyslov-Botvinnik, 6. Reshevsky-Keres	<i>Fourth Cycle</i>		
9 th	4 th	7. Botvinnik-Reshevsky, 8. Euwe-Smyslov	22 nd April	16 th round	31. Keres-Euwe, 32. Reshevsky-Smyslov
11 th	5 th	9. Reshevsky-Euwe, 10. Keres-Botvinnik	25 th	17 th	33. Smyslov-Keres, 34. Euwe-Botvinnik
		<i>Second Cycle</i>	27 th	18 th	35. Botvinnik-Smyslov, 36. Keres-Reshevsky
15 th March	6 th round	11. Keres-Euwe, 12. Reshevsky-Smyslov	3 rd May	19 th	37. Reshevsky-Botvinnik, 38. Smyslov-Euwe
16 th	7 th	13. Smyslov-Keres, 14. Euwe-Botvinnik	4 th	20 th	39. Euwe-Reshevsky, 40. Botvinnik-Keres
18 th	8 th	15. Botvinnik-Smyslov, 16. Keres-Reshevsky	<i>Fifth Cycle</i>		
23 rd	9 th	17. Reshevsky-Botvinnik, 18. Smyslov-Euwe	6 th May	21 st round	41. Euwe-Keres, 42. Smyslov-Reshevsky
25 th	10 th	19. Euwe-Reshevsky, 20. Botvinnik-Keres	9 th	22 nd	43. Keres-Smyslov, 44. Botvinnik-Euwe
Adjournment days: 3 rd , 6 th , 10 th , 13 th , 17 th , 20 th , 24 th & 27 th March			11 th	23 rd	45. Smyslov-Botvinnik, 46. Reshevsky-Keres
Free days: 5 th , 7 th , 12 th , 14 th , 19 th , 21 st , 22 nd & 26 th March.			13 th	24 th	47. Botvinnik-Reshevsky, 48. Euwe-Smyslov
			16 th	25 th	49. Reshevsky-Euwe, 50. Keres-Botvinnik
		<i>In Moscow</i>	Adjournment days: 12 th , 14 th , 16 th , 19 th , 21 st , 23 rd , 26 th & 28 th April; 5 th , 7 th , 10 th , 12 th , 14 th & 17 th May.		
10 th April	- Opening of the second half of the match-tournament		Free days: 17 th , 24 th , 29 th & 30 th April; 1 st , 2 nd , 8 th & 15 th May.		
		<i>Third Cycle</i>	18 th May - Closing of the match-tournament.		
11 th April	11 th round	21. Euwe-Keres, 22. Smyslov-Reshevsky			

1st CYCLE

1st round

Euwe 0 : 1 Keres

Smyslov 1/2 : 1/2 Reshevsky

Free - Botvinnik

In the game Euwe – Keres White achieved a significant advantage going into the middle-game, but at the decisive moment he failed to find the correct plan and lost all of his superiority. Continuing “from inertia” to play for the win, Euwe did not pay the necessary attention to a little combination by the opponent in the centre, and his king came under an annihilating attack. In time trouble Black missed a win, but also after the continuation chosen by him White (minus a piece) was left without hopes. After the resumption the ex-

World Champion recorded his first zero.

With Black against Smyslov, Reshevsky played the Chigorin Defence to the Spanish Game. However, he chose a variation rejected by theory and obtained a cramped position. With an unjustified exchange in the centre Reshevsky presented the opponent with the possibility of beginning a very strong attack on the king with 25. ♖d5!, but Smyslov failed to notice this possibility and continued to play without a proper plan. As a result Black quickly achieved equality and even slightly the better prospects. However, taking account of approaching time trouble, he chose a simplifying variation, after which the opponents soon agreed on a draw.

Standings after the 1st round: Keres 1/1; Reshevsky & Smyslov ½/1; Euwe 0/1; Botvinnik 0/0.



The game Euwe v. Keres from the 1st round.
(Photo: J. D. Noske, via www.nationaalarchief.nl)

Euwe - Keres

The Hague, 2nd & 3rd March 1948

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6

The “Improved Steinitz Defence” undoubtedly gives Black a somewhat more cramped game than the usual 4...♘f6. However, it leads to positions much less studied by theory and therefore leaves significantly more room for various sorts of new tries. Regarding the viability of the defence with the move 4...d6, the fact that it was often employed by World Champions Capablanca and Alekhine, achieving very good results with Black, speaks eloquently. In the match-tournament the defence 4...d6 was also adopted in many games, and Black can be quite satisfied with the results achieved in the opening.

5.c3

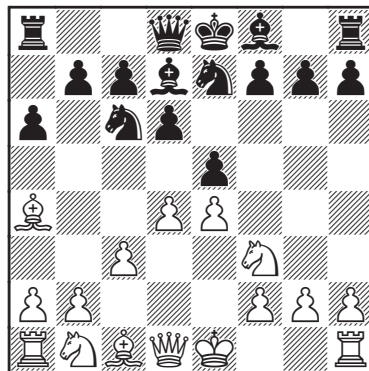
Euwe made this move without thinking and, since he invariably employed it also in later games, one may conclude that he evidently considers this move to be the best for White. However, at such an early stage of the game, to qualify any move as “best” is almost impossible. Clearly, the choice of one or another system of development depends primarily on the taste and style of each chessplayer.

All the same, practical tournament experience rather supports the opinion that the best chances of obtaining an opening advantage for White are given by the sharp 5.♙xc6+ bxc6 6.d4 etc. In this case Black is admittedly presented with the advantage of the two bishops, but in compensation for this White has the better development and good attacking chances.

5...♙d7

Very interesting variations arise after the move 5...f5, which was preferred by Capablanca. It is examined in detail in the commentary to the game Euwe - Keres from the 11th round (№ 21).

6.d4 ♘ge7



This interesting move is very old. It was often employed by World Champion Steinitz, while missing out the normal intermediate move 3...a6 (4.♙a4). With the move in the text Black intends to post the knight on g6 for the defence of the square e5 and to take control, in some cases, of the important square f4.

The negative sides of the move are the loss of time associated with such a development of the knight, and in particular the weakening of the central square d5, at which a white knight will be aimed.

Although the move in the text is censured by many theoreticians, and although in the match-tournament Black did not achieve particular success with it, all the same I think that 6...♘ge7 together with 6...♘f6 represent rather promising systems of defence for Black. If on the other hand Black prefers, for example, 6...g6 7.0–0 ♙g7 then after the simple exchange 8.dxe5 he has to deal with more unpleasant problems than in the game.

The move 6...♘f6 leads to the so-called Kecs-kemét Variation.

7.♙b3

In view of the coming reinforcement of the square e5 with the move ...♘g6 the white bishop lacks prospects on a4, and therefore its transfer onto the diagonal a2-g8 is quite justified. Moreover, here this is carried out with the gain of a tempo, since Black is forced to play 7...h6 to repulse the threat of 8.♘g5.

7...h6 8.♘bd2

The expediency of this move is determined by whether or not White subsequently fears the advance ...g5.

In the game Ahues - Rubinstein (San Remo, 1930) White continued 8.♙e3 and after 8...g5 sacrificed a piece: 9.♙xg5 hxg5 10.♖xg5 d5 11.exd5 ♗a5. In later analysis it was established that White could have achieved an advantage, playing (instead of 12.dxe5, as occurred in the game) 12.d6! ♜xb3 13.♞xb3 ♗d5 14.♗xf7 ♘xf7 15.dxc7 and then 16.♞xd5+. However, this whole variation is by no means convincing, since firstly, White as a result of the manoeuvre ♙e3-g5 lost an important tempo, which he could have used for development (for example, by 8.0-0) and secondly, instead of 8...g5 Black should have continued 8...♗g6. In this case the position of the bishop at e3 would have proved to be unsuccessful, since it impedes the transfer of the white knight to d5 via e3.

Also without danger for Black is Smyslov's idea 8.♗h4, since on this Black can reply 8...♗c8 (8...♗a5 9.♙c2 g5 10.♗f5 ♗xf5 11.exf5 ♞f6) 9.♗f5 (9.♞h5 ♞e7) 9...g6, in both cases with fairly good play.

(Translator's note: In the light of these comments it is interesting to note that Keres faced the move 8.♗h4 in a game v. Geller (18th USSR Championship, Moscow 1950), in which he continued 8...♗c8 9.♗f5 g6 10.♗g3 ♙g7, etc.; he went on to win a game that later became fairly well-known.

Nevertheless, Keres himself subsequently employed the continuation 8.♗h4 in a game v. Arulaid (Pärnu, 1955), where Black continued instead 8...♗a5 9.♙c2 g5 10.♗f5 ♗xf5 11.exf5 ♞f6.)

8...♗g6

Here Black could play 8...g5, since the sacrifice at g5 is now impossible. However, in my opinion, the principal defect of the move ...g5 consists not in the fact that it presents the opponent with the possibility of sacrificing at g5, but that it weakens Black's position without giving real counter-chances. White could reply, for example, 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♗c4,

achieving a positional advantage in the case of 10...♙g7 11.♗e3, as after 11...♗g6 12.h4 g4 13.h5! From this it follows that White should by no means fear the advance ...g5, and in this case his move 8.♗bd2 may be recognised as perfectly good.

9.♗c4 ♙e7

Nothing is given by 9...♗h4, since White, as well as other possibilities, has the simple reply 10.♗e3 Black ought not to be thinking here of attack while he has still not completed piece development.

10.0-0 0-0 11.♗e3 ♙f6

With this move Black intends to exert pressure on the opponent's central pawns, but on the other hand his bishop is exposed to the attack ♗d5 with various tactical threats.

Better, evidently, was 11...♞e8, so as on 12.♗d5 (In the game David Bronstein - Paul Keres (USSR (ch) Moscow, 1948) White continued 12.♞e1 ♙f8 13.♙c2, but after 13...♗h4 14.♗xh4 ♞xh4 he did not achieve a significant advantage.) to reply 12...♙f8;

Also possible was 11...♗h4 12.♗xh4 ♙xh4, since the continuation 13.f4 exf4 14.♞xf4 ♙g5 followed by 15...♗e7 is satisfactory for Black.

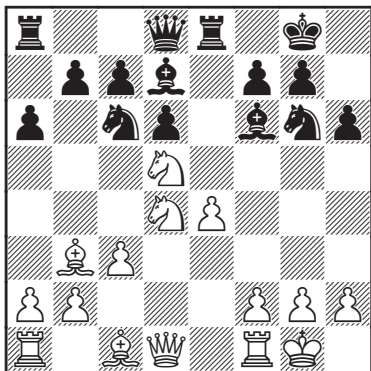
12.♗d5 exd4

In the 11th-round game Smyslov - Reshevsky (№ 22) Black played the weaker 12...♞e8 and after 13.dxe5! proved to be faced with great difficulties. The move in the text is stronger and forces White to take with the knight, since on 13.cxd4, 13...♙g4 is highly unpleasant.

On the immediate 12...♙g4 there would have followed 13.h3 ♙xf3 14.♞xf3, and 14...exd4 is not dangerous in view of 15.♙xh6

13.♗xd4 ♞e8

With the exchange of central pawns Black has somewhat relieved his cramped situation, although White retains some advantage in space. The move in the text forces the opponent to think about the defence of the e4-pawn.



14. ♖xf6+

This move, which was not provoked by any genuine necessity, is not the best, since thanks to it Black frees his game still further. Moreover, the position is simplified and White is left with fewer chances of attack.

Undoubtedly more interesting was 14. ♕c2, retaining the tension, although in this case too White does not have a palpable advantage. Black would have continued, for example, 14... ♖xd4 15. cxd4 ♕b5 16. ♖e1 c5 and, attacking White's centre, would have obtained counter-play.

The move 14. ♖e1 also has its shortcomings: Black continues 14... ♖a5 15. ♕c2 c6 16. ♖xf6+ ♗xf6, and now White cannot carry out the necessary advance f4.

With the continuation in the game White, already renouncing any great pretensions, at least secures himself the advantage of the two bishops and some initiative.

14... ♗xf6 15. f3

White at first holds back from active intentions associated with the advance f4, since the preparatory move 15. ♕c2 is already doubtful in view of the pawn sacrifice 15... d5!, for instance: 16. ♖xc6 bxc6 17. exd5 cxd5 18. ♗xd5 ♕c6 with dangerous counter-play.

In addition, on 15. ♕c2 possible, as indicated at the 14th move, is 15... ♖xd4 16. cxd4 ♕b5 17. ♖e1 c5.

15... ♖f4

This thrust admittedly creates the threat of ... ♖xd4 and ... ♗xd4+, but after it has been defended against it becomes clear that Black has spent the time to no purpose, thereby obtaining the worse position.

Black ought to continue 15... ♖ad8, so as on 16. ♕e3 to reply 16... ♖a5 17. ♕c2 c5 with good counter-play.

16. ♖xc6

White could not develop his pieces in the normal way.

On 16. ♕e3 there would have followed 16... ♖a5 17. ♕c2 ♗g5 18. ♗d2 ♖c4 with an excellent game for Black. The exchange chosen by White is also not good, since Black gains the possibility of reinforcing the important central squares.

But after the simple 16. ♖h1 it would not have been easy for Black to justify the expediency of the move of the knight to f4.

16... ♕xc6?

Black unaccountably lets slip the good reply 16... bxc6, with which the b-file was opened for attack, while the white bishop after 17. ♕e3 c5 is deprived of a powerful stance at d4. In this case Black, probably, would have achieved a level game.

Now, however, White gains the possibility of developing his pieces without hindrance, and he can begin a dangerous attack on the king's flank.

17. ♕e3 ♖ad8 18. ♗d2 ♖g6

The sorry result of Black's unfortunate 15th move: the knight is forced to withdraw, and Black's position remains very passive.

No better was the retreat 18... ♖e6 in view of 19. ♖ae1, and it would have been more difficult for Black to prevent f3–f4 than it was in the game.

In what follows Black has to play very carefully so as not to immediately end up in a clearly lost position.

19. ♕d4 ♗e7

However, 16...♖a4 (also deserving attention is 16...♖c7 17.♖fd1 ♗c8) 17.♙a1 ♘c5 still gave the possibility of a tenacious defence.

With the move in the text Black is thinking of ...♗c5, but he completely overlooks the reply 17.c5.

(Translator's note: Botvinnik suggests instead the defence 16...♖c8, with the possible continuation 17.♖fd1 ♗c7 (18.♗xd6 ♗xd6 19.♖xd6 ♘e8 20.♖d4 ♖ec7).)

17.c5!

White naturally exploits the chance to open new lines with gain of tempo. Black falls under a mating attack.

17...dxc5 18.♖xc5 ♗f4?

Black could still have offered some resistance with the move 18...♗d8, since in the endgame resulting after 19.♗xd8+ ♖xd8 20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♘h5 ♖d2 he has counter-play of sorts, while on 19.♗e3 there could follow 19...♘bd7, and Black's defensive resources are still not exhausted.

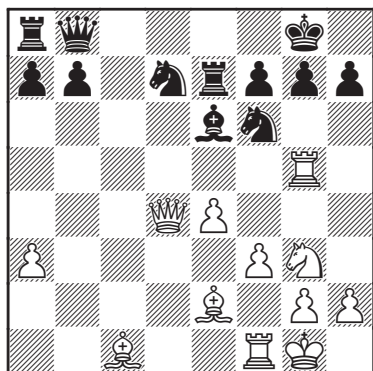
Now, however, Black loses by force.

19.♙c1 ♗b8

Or 19...♖d7 20.♗b4 ♗b8 21.♙b5 ♖d8 22.♙g5, and Black can resign.

20.♖g5 ♘bd7

The move in the text (20...♘bd7) loses immediately, but the continuation 20...♘e8 21.♘h5 f6 22.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 23.♗xf6 could have done no more than delay the result, without changing it.



21.♖xg7+!

This pretty rook sacrifice leads to victory in the quickest way. The black king cannot subsequently escape from the mating net.

21...♙xg7 22.♘h5+ ♙g6

Or 22...♙h8 23.♙g5; or 22...♙f8 23.♘xf6, and Black is defenceless.

23.♗e3

Black resigned.

23.f4 is also winning, but the move in the text leads more quickly to the goal.

This was undoubtedly my weakest game in the match-tournament. Botvinnik, on the other hand, energetically exploited the chances presented to him and convincingly demonstrated the strength of the two bishops in an open position.

3rd CYCLE

11th round

Euwe 0 : 1 Keres

Smyslov 1 : 0 Reshevsky

Free - Botvinnik

The encounter Euwe - Keres (a Spanish) proceeded extremely sharply from the first moves, in particular after Black sacrificed a pawn. Euwe, in accordance with theory, assessed the variation adopted by Black as being in White's favour. However, after several inaccuracies committed by him, Black obtained a strong attack. By the sacrifice of a piece on the 19th move he destroyed the enemy king's position, and in view of inevitable material loss Euwe resigned on the 26th move.

Smyslov and Reshevsky also played a Spanish game, in which connection Reshevsky attempted to improve the system of play employed by Black in the game Euwe - Keres (№ 1). This, however, he failed to do, and White quickly achieved a significant material advantage. After some inaccuracies on the

part of Black, on the 26th move Smyslov unexpectedly offered an exchange of queens, which secured him the win of a pawn and a favourable endgame. Reshevsky defended tenaciously, but he was forced to resign on

the 52nd move.

Standings after the 11th round: Botvinnik 6/8; Keres & Smyslov 5/9; Reshevsky 4½/9; Euwe 1½/9.



The scene in the Hall of Columns in Moscow's House of Unions during the 11th round, the first to be played in the Soviet capital.

№ 21

Euwe - Keres

Moscow, 11th April 1948

**1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6
5.c3**

This position was obtained in game No 1, where Black continued 5...♙d7 6.d4 ♗ge7 etc. Since both then, and also in the game against Reshevsky (№ 19) Euwe obtained a good game and probably had fundamental trust in this variation before the present game, Black decided to choose another continuation.

C 74

5...f5

A sharp move, introduced into practice twenty years ago by Capablanca. Usually such an early attacking attempt on Black's part proves to be doubtful, but here, after the continuation 5.c3 which is of no use for the development of the white pieces, this move gives Black quite good chances; M. I. Chigorin also paid attention to it in his time.

6.exf5

Theory considers this reply to be the best.

If immediately 6.d4, then 6...fxe4 7.♗g5 exd4 with good play for Black. Instead of 7.♗g5 White can also sacrifice the knight - 7.♗xe5,

19. ♖a3!

Euwe correctly assesses the situation: he temporarily sacrifices a pawn, thereby freeing himself from Black's unpleasant pressure.

In fact, White did not have a great choice of moves, since 19. 0–0 ♖c2 20. ♕d1 ♖xb2 loses a pawn, while 19. ♕d1 does not threaten anything; Black would have continued 19... ♖a6, and it is not apparent how White can free his game in the near future.

19... ♕xb2

Black has nothing better than to accept the offered pawn, since White threatened 20. ♖d2 followed by ♖hc1, and Black would additionally have to reckon with the threat of ♕d1. Black still cannot develop the b8-knight in view of ♕b5.

19... e6 20. dxe6 fxe6 21. 0–0 hardly gives Black chances of an advantage.

20. ♖xb2 ♖xa3 21. ♖d2

This move too is sufficient.

Evidently simpler is 21. ♕d1, not permitting Black to consolidate the position of his knight on c5. If 21... ♖c3, then 22. ♖d2; if instead 21... ♖c5, then 22. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 23. ♖xb3 ♖xb3 24. ♕xb3, and Black can hardly obtain a promising attack. (Translator's note: Smyslov later took issue with this analysis, considering that after 24... ♖c1+ 25. ♕d1 ♖d7 "Black retains an undisputed advantage".) Finally, 21... ♖e5 22. ♖xb3 ♖xf3+ 23. ♖e2 ♖xb3 24. ♕xb3 ♖e5 25. ♖b1 leads to a position in which the attack and the advantage of the two bishops compensated White with interest for the sacrificed pawn.

After the move in the text Black secures the outpost on c5 for his knight, which somewhat complicates White's defence.

21... ♖a6 22. ♖hb1 ♖ac5 23. ♕d4

White again chooses a more difficult defence, in which it is easier to commit a mistake

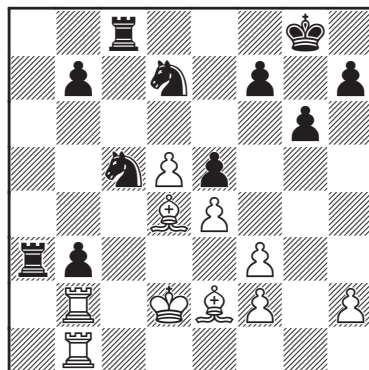
Probably simpler is 23. ♕d1 ♖a2 24. ♖xa2 bxa2 25. ♖a1 ♖a8 26. ♖c3, and sooner or later White wins the dangerous a2-pawn.

(Translator's note: Smyslov continues: 26... e6 27. dxe6 fxe6 28. ♕c2 b6 "and if 29. ♖b2, then 29... ♖e5, and Black retains an advantage in position.")

Besides this, White also had another defence, evidently also securing him sufficient counter-chances, that is 23. ♕b5. If now, according to Smyslov's intention, 23... ♖e5, then 24. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 25. ♖xb3 ♖xf3+ 26. ♖e3, and 26... ♖xb5 27. ♖xa3 ♖xb1 28. ♖xf3*, as well as 26... ♖c3+ 27. ♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 28. ♕d3! lead to an endgame in which White, with attentive play, should achieve a draw. (*Translator's note: Here Smyslov considers that after 23. ♕b5 ♖e5 24. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 25. ♖xb3 ♖xf3+ 26. ♖e3 ♖xb5 27. ♖xa3 ♖xb1 28. ♖xf3 f6 29. ♖c3 h5 30. ♖c7 ♖f8 Black retains an extra pawn with chances of winning.")

23... e5

Black must act energetically, since 24. ♕b5 was now threatened.



24. dxe6?

This exchange, with which White voluntarily renounces the strong passed d5-pawn, again complicates his defence, although perhaps it does not yet lead to a clearly lost position.

Also unfavourable is 24. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 25. ♕d1 ♖a2 26. ♖xa2 bxa2 27. ♖a1 ♖a8 28. ♖c3, since in the resultant endgame Black has excellent winning chances. However, White had two continuations securing him a satisfactory defence, that is to withdraw to e3 or to c3.

The continuation 24. ♕e3 again creates the

threat 25.♟b5, since the d7–knight is deprived of the d5–square. If, according to Smyslov, 24...f5, then 25.exf5 gxf5 26.d6!, and the white bishops suddenly become very active, threatening a dangerous attack with, besides ♟c4+, the move ♞g1+, for instance. Here it is difficult to suppose that Black will manage to realise his extra pawn.

The move 24.♟c3 is possible since on 24...♞a4 there follows 25.♟b4. Smyslov intended to continue 24...♞b6 with the threat of 25...♞ba4, but in this case too White evidently has a sufficient defence, that is: 25.♟b4 ♞a2 26.♞e1!, and it is doubtful that Black could successfully strengthen his attack; if 26...♞ba4, then 27.♞xa2 bxa2 28.♞a1, and the a–pawn falls; if instead 26...♞xb2 27.♞xb2 ♞ba4, then 28.♞b1, and again it is difficult for Black to strengthen his position.

(Translator's note: Smyslov's later assessment of the situation differed sharply from that of Keres. On 24.♟e3 he indicates the line 24...f5 25.exf5 gxf5 26.f4 exf4 27.♟xf4 ♞a4 28.♟e3 (28.♟h6 ♞f7) 28...f4, when "Black has all his pieces in play, while the white rooks are tied down by the blockade of the enemy pawn". As concerns the situation after 24.♟e3 f5 25.exf5 gxf5 26.d6, he indicates that after the simple 26...f4 27.♟c4+ ♞g7 28.♟xc5 ♞xc5 "White has been forced to part with his "pride" – the dark-squared bishop. On 29.♟xb3 Black replies 29...♞c6, gaining White's d–pawn in return." Smyslov also analyses 24.♟c3; he considers that this too fails to give White full equality, analysing 24...f5 25.exf5 gxf5 26.♟b5 b6, when Black retains the extra pawn, for instance after 27.♟xd7 ♞xd7 28.♞xb3 ♞xb3 29.♞xb3 ♞c5.)

24...♞xe6 25.♟e3 ♞dc5 26.♟xc5?

The advantage of the two bishops represents White's only compensation for the sacrificed pawn, and only thanks to this can White hope to re-establish the material balance. Therefore the voluntary renouncing of the advantage of the two bishops represents a decisive mistake, after which Black obtains a winning position. The seemingly weak b3–pawn now

decides the outcome of the game.

In the opinion of some commentators, White's position was already as good as lost, but the situation is by no means so simple. White could have continued very strongly neither 26.♟c4! with the threats of 27.♟xe6 or 27.♟xb3. In reply to this 26...♞a4 27.♟xe6 or 26...♞d8+ 27.♟d5 does not bring Black a promising attack. Therefore only 26.♟c4 ♞xe4+ 27.fxe4 ♞xc4 merits attention; however on this there follows 28.♞d3 ♞b4 29.f3, and very probably the threat of 30.♞c3 ♞b5 31.♞c4 gives White sufficient chances of a successful defence. (Translator's note: Here too Smyslov disagrees, analysing 26.♟c4(?) ♞xe4+ 27.fxe4 ♞xc4 28.♞d3 ♞b4 29.f3 f5! 30.♞c3 ♞b5 31.exf5 gxf5 32.♞xb3 ♞axb3+ 33.♞xb3 ♞xb3+ 34.♞xb3 f4 35.♟d2 ♞f7 followed by the transfer of the king to f5, "and this endgame is won for Black with no more difficulty than the one that occurs in the game after the move 26.♟xc5")

After White misses this last chance, Smyslov flawlessly realises his advantage.

26...♞xc5 27.♞c3

In the case of 27.♟c4 winning most simply is 27...♞a4 28.♞xb3 ♞a2+, while on 27.♟d1 Black gains a winning position with 27...♞d8+; The idea of the move 27.♞c3 consists in continuing, on 27...♞a4+ or 27...♞xe4+, 28.♞b4, but after the simple reply by Black 27...♞a4 this move proves to be no more than a loss of time. Better was immediately 27.♞e3, but in this case Black continues 27...♞d8 28.♟c4 ♞g7, and White cannot strengthen his position, since on 29.♞e2 there follows 29...♞a4

27...♞a4 28.♞d2 ♞g7

Black does not hurry to force play on the queen's flank, since all the same White cannot attack the b3–pawn a further time. After the move in the text Black threatens, on subsequent passive play by White, to strengthen his positional advantage still further by blocking the weak f4– and e5– squares. White is thus forced to play actively.

29.♞e3 ♞d8 30.♞c1

On 30.♙d1 there follows 30...♖a3, while 30.♖d1 ♗xd1 31.♙xd1 ♕f6 also leaves White in a helpless situation, since 32.♕d2 will not do on account of 32...♖a2

30...b6 31.♙c4 ♖da8

Also winning is 31...g5 followed by ...♕f6. White already has no defence.

32.♙d5

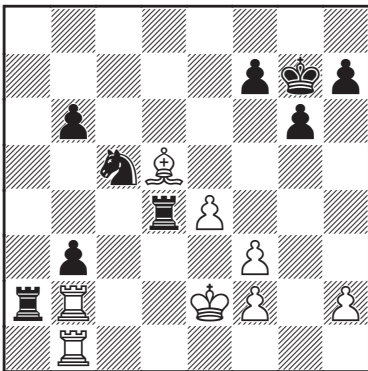
But not 32.♙xb3 in view of 32...♖b4 33.♖c3 ♖a3 winning a piece.

32...♖a2 33.♖cb1 ♖8a4 34.♕d2

This presents Black with the possibility of a win, but nor did the somewhat better move 34.f4 allow White to escape defeat. Now a pretty finale follows.

34...♖d4+ 35.♕e2

Or 35.♕c3 ♗xd5 36.exd5 ♖a4+ with a winning pawn endgame, while in the case of 35.♕e3 ♖d3+ 36.♕e2 ♗xb2+ 37.♖xb2 g5 the manoeuvre of the black king ...♕f6-e5-d4 wins easily.



35...♖a4! 36.♖xa2 bxa2 37.♖a1

Or 37.♙xa2 ♖c3+ 38.♕e3 ♖a4 39.♙b3 ♖a3, and Black wins a piece.

37...♖c3+ 38.♕e3

Nor does 38.♕e1 save White in view of 38...♖b4 39.♙xa2 ♖a4 winning a piece.

38...♖d1

White resigned.

25th round

Reshevsky 1 : 0 Euwe

Keres 1 : 0 Botvinnik

Free - Smyslov

The first two places in the match-tournament had already been determined; the very last round decided the fate of 3rd and 4th place.

In the game Reshevsky - Euwe, which begun with the Queen's Gambit, White chose a modest variation and did not achieve any advantage at all from the opening, but in the middlegame he all the same managed to seize the initiative and to pose some more or less difficult problems for the opponent. Euwe solved them satisfactorily, but on the 19th move, without any justification, he went over to the attack and, as a result of this, obtained a clearly lost position. There followed a series of inaccuracies on both sides, as a result of which Black, it is true, lost two pawns, but gained a powerful attack. However, this new crisis in the game also failed to resolve itself in Euwe's favour. Instead of energetically conducting the attack, he lost several valuable tempi, was himself subjected to an attack and resigned on the 36th move.

The game Keres - Botvinnik proceeded no less interestingly. In the French Defence White chose an extremely sharp variation, offering a sacrifice of two pawns. Black declined the sacrifice, but despite this the play continued to have a sharp character. So as to open lines and to hold the black king in the centre, White sacrificed the d-pawn and obtained a dangerous attack, to repulse which Black had to return the pawn. There resulted a position in which Black could probably have forced a draw, but he chose a riskier continuation, associated with the extended advance of his e-pawn. The defence of this pawn caused Black a lot of problems, and ultimately he decided to resort to the sacrifice of the exchange. But this did not save the situation. White won the exchange, and then also the e-pawn, which decided the outcome of the game.



Шахматы в СССР

ОРГАН ВЕСЕЛОГО
КОМИТЕТА ПО ДЕЛАМ
ФИЗИЧЕСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ
И СПОРТА ПРИ СОВЕТЕ
МИНИСТРОВ СССР

№ 6 Июнь
1948 г.
XXV год издания

ПОБЕДА СОВЕТСКОЙ ШАХМАТНОЙ ШКОЛЫ

Где тыщты девятисот европ. войны война в мире...
Где тыщты девятисот европ. войны война в мире...
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Они показали и уверенность сделать вывод с тем, что...
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It contains passages such as the following:

Botvinnik, Smyslov and Keres competed in this tournament not simply as brilliant masters of chess art, defending their personal sporting glory and their creative and theoretical opinions, but as representatives of the advanced chess school in the world. They continually sensed the powerful support of the entire country, and this support was a continual source of the inspiration necessary for the successful conduct of the chess struggle.

The victory of the Soviet chess school is expressed not only in the sporting results of the match-tournament. In all countries the games of each of our three grandmasters demonstrated many-sided, original play, combining rich creative fantasy and bold flights of imagination with excellent theoretical preparation. The combination of advanced science with creative practice, characteristic of the style of Soviet man in labour and in science, as well as in art and in sport, finds its clearest expression in chess.¹

There is little doubt that Botvinnik was their preferred champion. Prior to the match-tournament, Botvinnik himself saw Keres as his main rival. See, for instance, Botvinnik's introductory comments to his encounter with Keres from the Chigorin Memorial tournament (held in Moscow at the end of 1947):

It was very important, on the eve of the event in The Hague, to achieve success in this game. In so doing, my chances would be increased in the coming match-tournament, in which my main rival could only be the winner of the great tournaments in Semmering-Baden (1937) and Holland (1938).²

The Dutch grandmaster and writer Genna Sosonko relates that a contemporary poem published in the periodical *Sovietsky Sport* describes the "fearsome Russian trio" travelling to Holland (though of course, Keres was no Russian), and later, when the event moved to Moscow, a further piece of verse contained the following lines:

*But for now all the applause
From the world is for one great man
Who is leading with few flaws
As he should, and as he can³.*

The above-mentioned editorial in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* contains the further passage:

Millions of Soviet people greeted Botvinnik's victory with deep satisfaction. In Botvinnik they welcome a true patriot of the Motherland, one educated by the Lenin Komsomol and the Bolshevik party...

The sporting and creative results of the tournament speak of the fact that Botvinnik's victory was perfectly natural. They permit one to conclude with certainty that the world has gained a worthy and recognised champion⁴.

Similar statements would of course have been completely impossible had the match-tournament been won by Keres. This, together the fact the Keres lost four out of the five games against Botvinnik, has led many to suggest that pressure must have been applied to the Estonian. Many articles have been written on this subject. Botvinnik himself was unequivocal: "I never intrigued against him. I consider it

beneath the dignity of a chessplayer. I fought my battles with him on the chessboard.⁵ Of course, it is impossible to prove the absence of such a conspiracy, and as such, the rumours will likely persist. The interested reader is referred to an exhaustive research carried out a couple of decades ago and published on the chesscafe.com website⁶.

In the year 2000 Vasily Smyslov, by then the last surviving participant from the match-tournament, gave an interview to the Russian magazine "64", in which the match-tournament was discussed. His words are worth reproducing in full.

I will try to give my, naturally, subjective, impressions. The main favourite of the match-tournament of 1948, Mikhail Botvinnik, was already at that time a very experienced tournament and match fighter. He had an impressive list of victories. His play was characterised by universal mastery. There was nothing peculiar about the fact that Botvinnik could by his own efforts crush his rivals. However, one cannot forget the political circumstances of that time - revolution in China, tension in Europe. The American grandmaster Sammy Reshevsky, possessing remarkable strength and talent, was aiming at world domination. The USA was not up to this - there chess had never gained particular prestige; great chessplayers there died in oblivion. But for the USSR, to cede the highest title would have been a waste. On the other hand, Botvinnik had already reached 36 years of age, and although at that time one was considered at this age to be at the apogee of one's strength, all the same there was no guarantee that he would withstand such a prolonged and difficult marathon. On this basis, all sorts of speculation has unfolded.

Now about Keres. Before the start of the Second World War he was an obvious candidate for the world crown, having had some outstanding achievements. But his *i Shakhmaty v SSSR* (№ 6, 1948), p. 121 *ii Botvinnik, M. M. Analyticheskie i Kriticheskie Raboty, 1942-56 (Fizkultura i Sport, 1985), p. 148. iii Sosonko, G. B. Russian Silhouettes (2nd Edition, New*