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Foreword by Andrey Filatov

I met Mikhail Shereshevsky 30 years ago, when I went to the chess section at the institute of physical culture in the Belarusian capital, Minsk. Mikhail Israelevich, himself a strong practical player (several times a prize-winner in the championships of Belarussia and the USSR Armed Forces, and a member of the republic's team) was a very authoritative trainer. His best pupils, Alexey Alexandrov, Elena Zayats and Ilakha Kadimova, won gold and other medals in the European and world junior championships, and in all, Shereshevsky prepared seven GMs, and that in the days when the title was really hard to gain!

His wonderful books, *Mastering the Endgame* and *Endgame Strategy*, from the 21st century viewpoint, are considered classics, and it is no accident that World Champion Magnus Carlsen rates these books very highly, almost 30 years after their initial publication. It is a shame that another of his books, *The Soviet Chess Conveyor*, which became a bestseller in the West in the 1990s, has never been published in a Russian edition. But now this omission will in some form be rectified: in his new work, Mikhail Israelevich has included selected fragments from both *The Soviet Chess Conveyor* and *Endgame Strategy* – incidentally, after thorough revision and checking with powerful modern chess engines.

In the 1990s, Mikhail Shereshevsky practically abandoned chess and went into business. But chess never leaves one, as I know myself, and some years later the well-known trainer again started helping talented young players. Thus, in 2012, I organised the World Championship match between Boris Gelfand (my friend since we were youths) and Vishy Anand in Moscow, and then the Alekhine Memorial, whilst in 2014 I was chosen as President of the Russian Chess Federation (RCF) and, slightly later, as a Vice-President of FIDE.

The key word on which I stood in the RCF elections was 'popularisation'. My key task was to restore the popularity of chess, and the interest in it, which for a long time had lapsed. So as to achieve this intention, I worked out a range of programmes and projects. One of the most important outcomes of our work was the establishment of a chess section at the children's educational centre 'Sirius' in Sochi. The opening ceremony, in the presence of Russian President Vladimir Putin, underlined that our country always helps chess and is a chess country...

The chess section is run by 14th World Champion Vladimir Kramnik: despite the fact that he is still active in tournaments and is one of the strongest players in the world, Vladimir gives his time and energy to helping future champions. I suggested that Shereshevsky join the trainers committee, and he has done his work splendidly. He has found his place among a team of like-minded individuals, established good administrative relations with the Sirius team and, most of all, has ensured high-quality training for the most talented young players in the country. In any event, we have been delighted with the results achieved by Sirius pupils in recent years in the world and European junior championships!

In his latest work, Mikhail Shereshevsky outlines his many years of training experience and reveals the secrets of his methods. I am convinced that this work will be of great benefit to trainers and young players, aiming at the highest possible results.

Andrey Filatov,
President of the Russian Chess Federation

Introduction

This book presents the view on chess training of a specialist who gave up his work in 1992 and remains interested in it still today.

The idea of this book came from a conversation with, and belongs to, Mark Glukhovsky. We had friendly relations when he was chief editor of 64 and head of 'Chess TV', and I gave chess lessons on TV at his request. This was my first return to active chess. A word about myself.

I began training work in 1975, in Minsk, when I was a master player. I conducted lessons with groups of different standards. There were groups of novices, of third-category players, and candidate masters. Every piece of work had its specifics, but soon I became trainer of the Belarusian junior team and ceased working with beginners and third-category players. I became interested in methods of working with first-category players and candidate masters and soon realised that there was no such methodology. GMs and masters in those days worked in whatever way they could. Mostly, it was from books and in groups, using trial and error. I was an exception.



Mikhail Shereshevsky

My first trainer, Abo Israelevich Shagalovich, at the Minsk Pioneer Palace developed a whole generation of players, who made up the Belarusian team: Kupreichik, Kapengut, Dydysenko, Mochalov, Litvinov, Archakov. He was a talented, educated man, a master, a strong practical player, but by today's standards an amateur. He loved chess and could convey this love to his pupils, but he lacked any sort of professional methodology.

As a student, and short of money in those days, I used to make a bit of cash on the side by working at the Pioneer Palace and used to go along to Shagalovich's lessons, so as to learn about teaching beginners and third-category players. Several of his monologues and talks I can still remember almost by heart. On the demo board, he put up a game from a match against the youth team of Molodechko, in which the Minsk pioneer Fima Revzin had missed mate in two and failed to win the game. Shagalovich's monologue went as follows:

– In this position, Fima missed mate in two! How could this happen? Because he has started playing handball!! (It should be said that Abo Israelevich greatly disliked it when pupils began combining chess with the study of some other activity. It usually ended badly for chess.) Of course, it all looks good when the athlete shines at the sports stadium. But what difference does it make how fast an athlete can run 100 metres, 10 seconds, or 11 or 12? So what, you can sit in an aeroplane and cover thousands of metres in a few seconds! And I heard on the radio that Muhammad Ali, who used to be called Cassius Clay, will soon be punching out the lights of his countryman...

The children all shouted out 'Joe Frazier!'

– Correct, Joe Frazier! And did you know that the first chairman of the Soviet Chess Federation, Nikolay Vasilievich Krylenko, was also chairman of the Soviet People's Commissars (Actually, he was a member of Sovnarkom, but not its chairman – MS). And just what do you think Cassius Clay can become? President of the scumbags party, that's about all! I'd like to remind you that our great chief, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, was a strong chess player, somewhere around first-category strength. And you know, he despised players like Fima Revzin. He called them 'creeping empiricists', that is, the sort who just float around on the surface of things.

All this was delivered in an absolutely serious tone and my main task at such moments was not to giggle or fall off the chair, laughing, even though I was behind everyone and the pupils could not see me. Later, I looked in some philosophical dictionary and found that a group of oppositionists, who, in Lenin's opinion, did not go into the essence of phenomena, was indeed branded 'creeping empiricists' by him.

But to return to the issue of methodology for educating first-category players and candidate masters. My next trainer was Isaak Efremovich Boleslavsky. This was superclass! A world-class GM, trainer of the Soviet national team and of world champions. Everyone who was fortunate enough to work with him on the Belarusian team could learn an enormous amount. But there was no system! We just studied openings and their connection with the middlegame, and also analysed games we had played.

Of course, Boleslavsky's understanding of the game was colossal, he had unique analytical ability, and sharp combinational vision. But those with ears had to listen. Nobody gave you knowledge in a pre-digested form, you had to chew it over yourself. We did not study the endgame as a specialised area at all, only via the analysis of games or adjournments. There were various ineffective methodological treatises around, some by trainers, some not, but none produced any effective results. In general, each trainer had to think and invent his own methods.

It is important to note that most of the time one was not working with the likes of Gelfand or Ivanchuk, players of such enormous talent that even the most ham-fisted trainer would find it hard to spoil them. Instead, one was working with players of some definite chess ability, uncovering which was, however, not quite so self-evident, and who needed a correct system of education and training.

I should also say that the rate of improvement of a young player goes in fits and starts, rather than as a smooth and regular progression. Here it is perfectly in place to recall the laws of dialectics, regarding the transformation of the quantity of correctly planned and rationally executed work into quality. *Correctly planned and rationally executed work* is by its nature of high quality, but the leap always happens unexpectedly. Very often, players who first look like 'ugly duckings' turn into 'white swans' and become comparable with, if not surpass, their peers. The simple process of developing one's organism and forming one's personality happens at different speeds for different people.

Thus, we are coming to the most important thing. The trainer should prepare his work and start training. But how? For the majority of trainers at that time, the process of training consisted just of studying openings, analysing contemporary opening theory, and analysing games played. Indeed, that was what we did with Boleslavsky, but just on an exceptionally high level. Things like the classics, endgame theory, the technique of calculating variations, special exercises designed to eliminate weaknesses – these were subjects we did not even discuss.

The connection between the opening and the middlegame is undoubtedly a subject that must be studied, and this is something that lasts a whole lifetime. A player can emerge with a good position from the opening and then start to misplay it, so that the profit from good opening preparation is wasted. The quality of opening preparation is very important at a very high level, when the other important qualities of a player have already been established – just like the serve in tennis. But first, one must learn to play, and this means training correctly. In Soviet

chess literature, the process of calculating variations had been covered by Alexander Kotov in his classic book *Think Like a Grandmaster* and in his autobiographical book. We will come to this subject in this book too. But the credit for developing a method of using special training exercises to eliminate this or that weakness in a student's play belongs to Honoured Trainer of the USSR, Mark Dvoretzky.

The results of Dvoretzky's methods are well-known. They say there are no accidents in history. I am convinced that neither Yusupov, Dolmatov nor many of his other pupils would have achieved what they did in chess, had they not happened to come across Dvoretzky when they did, and the exception of Valery Chekhov just proves my point, although, of course, it is not actually possible to prove it. In addition, I would add that Dvoretzky managed to observe his pupils at tournaments and diagnose their character flaws, and help eliminate these too, in his exercises. This is the highest level of training expertise. I was lucky that in my time I met Dvoretzky at a First League tournament of the USSR Championship and he invited me to be his second. Discussions with him were of enormous benefit to me. I became acquainted with his methods, which he later wrote about in many books. My book *Endgame Strategy* would have been impossible without my association with this remarkable trainer.

But let us return to the subject of my own methods of study for trainers everywhere. Dvoretzky got to take players who were already Soviet masters, whereas most trainers have to work with players of first-category or candidate master strength, who still have some way to go to achieve master strength. In addition, Dvoretzky could limit himself to working with no more than three pupils at a time, at his home, and in convenient conditions, whereas a children's trainer has to work with several groups at once, with at least six per group. Then they have to deal with trainers' committees, a lot of unnecessary bureaucracy, report-writing, etc. Not much time was left for creative preparation work.

I established my system, with which I prepared three USSR junior champions for boys and girls, and who later became winners and prizewinners at world and European championships. These were Alexey Alexandrov, Elena Zayats and Ilakha Kadimova. All soon became grandmasters, as did four of my other pupils. I would remind you that in those days, there were no USSR, world or European U-8, U-10, U-12, etc. championships as there are now; then it was just under-20 and a cadet championship for U-16s. And all of my pupils came to be as 'green' first-category players or candidate masters.



Kramatorsk 1989. The Belarusian team performed extremely successfully at the All-Union Youth Games, the girls taking second place, the boys third.

Seated: G.Sagalchik, B.Gelfand, E.Gerasimovich, Y.Levitan, E.Zayats, I.Smirin.

Standing: V.Atlas, A.Alexandrov and trainers: A.Kapengut, M.Shereshevsky, E.Mochalov, E.Raisky.

The perfecting of a chess player consists of several aspects, the main ones being theory, practice and training exercises. The term 'theory' is somewhat wider than merely openings. As well as the construction of an opening repertoire, it involves a knowledge of the classics, the study of 'intelligent' books and tournament books, the study of the principles of playing the endgame, and the memorising of standard theoretical positions and a great variety of positional and tactical devices in the middlegame, the analysis of one's games, and a great deal more. With practice, it is significantly simpler. To improve, a player must play, in the main tournament games at a slow, 'classical' time-limit. Rapid and blitz can also be used for training and for the development of specific skills.

Training exercises are a type of work on chess which depends especially on the trainer. Whereas when teaching 'theory', one can introduce the subject in class and then give pupils individual homework, training exercises are in many cases simply impossible without the trainer. Often one needs to play out positions with a fixed time limit, against the trainer.

When one begins work with a young first-category player or candidate master, of between 10-14 years of age, one is dealing with someone whose style has not yet been developed. He has a great deal still to learn. As a

rule, within a few lessons, one needs to carry out a chess diagnosis. In my day, this was definitely the case. Nowadays, when I get to the Russian junior championship, it seems to me that things have not changed for the better. Since you are often unclear about the youngster's style or preferences, trying to guess whether he will be comfortable with this or that opening is pointless and just a waste of time.

The opening repertoire of such a young player needs to fulfil the following conditions:

- 1) It should be solid, with a firm positional basis; active, but not too aggressive.
- 2) It should not include flawed or unsound openings, which, as the player advances and starts meeting stronger opponents, will sooner or later be more or less refuted. They lead to significantly inferior positions and give the opponent odds at the start of the game. I have in mind such openings as, against 1.e4, Alekhine's Defence, the Scandinavian, Philidor, etc. Although there is a temptation to use such openings to achieve short-term successes against weaker opponents, sooner or later the player ends up 'bankrupt' and has to master a new opening from scratch.
- 3) The opening should not involve avoiding a whole raft of opening 'tabiyas'. Thus, I would not advise a young player to open 1.♘f3, 2.g3, 3.♙g2, 4.0-0, 5.d3, 6.♗bd2, 7.e4 for his entire life, or 1.♘f3, 2.c4, 3.g3, 4.♙g2, 5.0-0. His strategic thinking will be too limited and will not develop widely enough. His games will lead to an excessively narrow range of positions, in terms of strategic content. If you are going to play closed openings, then it is better to play 1.d4, 2.c4 and preferably 3.♘c3, not 3.♘f3.
- 4) Most important of all: the repertoire should be such that one does not need to pay any great attention to it more than once or twice a year, other than via analysing the games played.

Once your students have become masters or grandmasters, their chess style and tastes will be fully formed and then they can completely overhaul their opening repertoires, if they so wish. But whether you teach them to play the Spanish, Sicilian, Caro-Kann or French is of no great significance. The important thing is to establish a sound positional basis. First, the player should learn to play the game in all its many aspects, and approach the opening stage rationally, not primitively.

In my day, active trainers did not share the secrets of their working methods that much. But very few did anything except concentrate mainly on openings, the connection between opening and middlegame and the analysis of games. One could read a little about this only in a

handful of articles in various periodicals, whereas I do not remember any whole books devoted to this, and I have read or glanced at at least 95% of the chess literature published in the Soviet Union. Dvoretsky's books only appeared later. Discussions between trainers took place at various competitions and at the sessions of chess schools. I have great memories of discussions I had at junior events with a great trainer, who established his own methodology of training in Russia, Grandmaster Alexander Nikolaevich Panchenko, and the philosopher-researcher in chess from Moldova, Vyacheslav Andreevich Chebanenko. Alas, both are no longer with us. Happy memories!

I took part in the work of the chess schools of the sports clubs Burevestnik and Lokomotiv, where I did some interesting work under the supervision of Mark Dvoretsky, but this was more in the nature of occasional episodes, rather than permanent practice.

In 1990, I accepted an offer from the Bulgarian federation and went to work for two years in Sofia. One of the main reasons was my desire to move my family away from Minsk, because in 1986, there occurred the tragedy at Chernobyl, and it was impossible for mere mortals to understand the scale of the risk from radiation. In Bulgaria at this time, they were undergoing their own 'perestroika', and two years later the Soviet Union collapsed. The 1990s were years of rapid economic changes, and chess work ceased to pay, either in Bulgaria or Belarus. In 1994, an IM with a GM norm, I played my last tournament game and decided to stop working in chess. At the suggestion of the Bulgarian Federation chairman Mikhail Iliev, I was trainer and selector of the national team for the 2001 European Championship, and a year later I did the same at the last chess Olympiad won by Russia, but to this day, I have not returned to individual chess training.

In 1992, I wrote a book in which I set out my methods: how to take a player of first-category or candidate master strength and turn him into a master of grandmaster? In the book, I described what steps I took and in what order. Because at that time authors hardly got paid anything in Russia, whilst Western publishers paid only a miserly percentage royalty on sales, I decided to publish the book in English and Spanish, at my own expense. (Pergamon Press for *Endgame Strategy* transferred to the Soviet authors' agency a low sum, out of which I received about £400 per annum – this was a significant amount in the USSR, but ridiculously little in Bulgaria by 1993.) The book was translated into Spanish by candidate master Anatoly Timofeevich Bondar, now alas deceased, and

the English translation was by Evgeny Ermenkov. In Spanish the title equates to *The Methodology for Developing a Chess Player*, and in English *The Soviet Chess Conveyor*. Ermenkov convinced me that at the sight of the word 'Methodology', the average English reader would immediately start to doze off, and that it was essential to invent something catchier to the English ear.

It seems to me that the essence of the methodology set out in this 20-year old book remains current and relevant today. The concrete details, on the other hand, have been changed by the advent of the computer. In the first part of this new book, I present an extract from *The Soviet Chess Conveyor*, which deals with the construction of an opening repertoire and the study of the classics. The second part of the book is a concentrated version of *Endgame Strategy*, the accent of which, with a revised analysis of the material and many new examples, is on the study of the main principles of playing complicated practical endgames. The third part of the book presents the author's views on the enormous changes which have occurred in the chess world and chess training, over the past decades.

In conclusion, I should like to point out that chess is many-sided and one can invent new lessons on various strategic, tactical, theoretical and practical matters, almost without end. One can take the old Soviet programme, originally created by V. E. Golenishev, as revised and updated by Victor Ivanov and the brilliant journalist Ilya Odessky, and base lessons on that, or on any other book. Definite benefits there will almost certainly be, but serious progress – unlikely.

A good coach should outline a vector of work that includes a number of important components, and ensure that the student does not deviate far from it. And at the moment when these components, each of which implies a large and purposeful amount of work, has been fulfilled, assimilated and united together, there should be a sharp jump in the chess player's quality of play.

Unfortunately, more often we have to observe serious imbalances in the chess education of young talents, but we'll talk about this in more detail in the third part of the book.

Mikhail Shereshevsky
December 2017

PART I

The Soviet Chess Conveyor

The book *The Soviet Chess Conveyor* was written in 1992 and did not appear in Russian. In that book, I tried to explain the steps a player should take, so as over the course of 2-3 years to move from being first-category/candidate master to master/grandmaster.

A quarter of a century later, it seems to me that the methodology described has not lost its relevance. Rather the opposite. The old Soviet chess trainer school has disappeared and the new one which has replaced it does not always manage to divine the right direction for its work and to lead its pupils along that path, gradually working to eliminate this or that weakness in the player. There is so much information around these days that one frequently loses sight of the wood, because of the trees.

The fragment of this book offered below has been reworked and revised. In the section on studying the classics, to abbreviate the material, I have included my lecture, delivered at the Dvoretzky-Yusupov school and published in one of the volumes of the series *School of future grandmasters*.

CHAPTER 1

Constructing an opening repertoire

A player's opening repertoire can be of different kinds, not just in terms of the specific openings included, but also the general approach to the playing of the opening phase. I should like to explain my concept. Let us assume that a player is starting with 1.e4. His opponent replies 1...c5. Now, if White wants to fight for an opening advantage, then he should continue 2.♘f3 and 3.d4. In addition, I think he should be principled, so against the Najdorf he should play 6.♙g5, against the Dragon the Yugoslav Attack, etc.

If a player does not do this, his analytical work will lose an element of creativity and he may turn into an experienced player without any reliable opening weapons.

I have a great deal of experience of the old Soviet Union and I well remember the desire of many trainers to achieve immediate successes at the level even of the kindergarten. It was essential to win team championships of the region, city, republic, country, etc. This was the minimum one had to do to ensure oneself a comfortable life, a pay rise, enhanced status, etc., as a trainer.

Quite recently, as well as the World Cadet Championships U-16 and the World Junior U-20, they have started running such championships for

all age groups. And if one of your pupils won the USSR Championship for his age group (it doesn't matter whether it is under-10, 12, 14, 16, 18 or 20), then he – and you, his trainer – would get the right to play in the World Championship, and would be guaranteed an interesting and profitable foreign trip. A good result for his pupil in the World Championship would earn the trainer the title of 'Honoured Trainer' and a consequent increase in salary.

Naturally, results took on an enormous importance and it was no good talking about 'long-term' opening preparation. It was essential to pay attention to the results of each game and to win at all costs, and so the student's opening repertoire would tend to be built around superficial, 'trappy' schemes.

At first, this would often be productive, but later on, as the student and his opponents became stronger, such naïve opening schemes would tend to boomerang and the player's repertoire would become a liability. Meanwhile, the trainer would by then be concerned with establishing new talents, with the same sort of 'rapid success' repertoire. The student, by then typically around candidate

master strength, would often be left to struggle with his inadequate opening repertoire by himself. He would only have a chance if he learnt to think critically and to analyse positions objectively. Usually, he would have serious difficulties with abandoning all he had learnt before and starting again from scratch. Only a few players have the ability to deal with this.

Now let us return to the move 1.e4 and the Sicilian Defence. I should emphasise once again that I think playing open and semi-open positions is a principled thing. Why? The answer is very simple and lies in the fundamentals of chess. The move 1.e4 is only the first step towards developing the pieces, only the preliminary to an early conflict in most openings. Suppose White wants to play quietly and slowly in some sort of sharp Sicilian variation. Such an approach can only work against an inexperienced and poorly-prepared opponent. Otherwise, White can gradually lose the initiative. The titanic battles between Kasparov and Karpov are a classic example. The great master of ‘slow’ Sicilians, Karpov (remember his match against Polugaevsky in 1974, for example) could not win a single game with 1.e4 in the second match, and, starting with the third match, completely gave up opening 1.e4.

On the other hand, players who open 1.e4 and adopt a principled

approach of going down the most active main lines (and, in addition to the Sicilian, there is the Spanish, with such sharp lines as the Marshall and Schliemann, the Open Variation, plus such closed defences as the French, Caro-Kann and a wide variety of other lines) can hope to win many games straight out of the opening. Playing against such players is a challenge and is extremely difficult. The problems faced by Black after 1.e4 are much more concrete and require important and responsible decisions at an early stage of the game, compared with closed systems. In his day, the 11th World Champion, Bobby Fischer, demonstrated the great effectiveness of 1.e4.

But of course, such an approach has its minuses. Such players spent much of their time playing deeply ‘in the opponent’s territory’. The opponent may have a prepared novelty in some or other sharp variation, and you have to solve the resulting problems over the board, with the clock ticking, and in the great majority of cases, there is no way back. In addition, one must constantly follow with great attention the enormous amount of chess information, as you cannot afford to miss an important novelty in any sharp variation. I will offer a few examples, but the number of examples which could be shown to illustrate this principle is almost infinite.

CHAPTER 5

The problem of exchanges

With limited material on the board, the problem of exchanges assumes primary importance. Whereas in the opening or middlegame, the consequences of a misguided exchange can often be corrected later – in the endgame, such a mistake can be fatal.

Of course, in the majority of cases, an experienced player can easily tell which exchanges are favourable to him. But there often arise situations where an exchange which seems tempting on general considerations turns out to be stereotyped and not in accordance with the requirements of the position, whilst an at first sight paradoxical exchange turns out to be the correct decision.

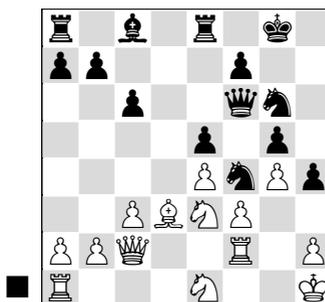
Simplification of the position is often the best way to realise a material or positional advantage. The outcome of the game depends to a considerable extent on a player's ability to cope correctly with the problem of exchanges, be it a timely simplification of the position or, on the contrary, deciding to maintain the tension.

The diagram position is far from being an endgame. Black has more space, the better bishop and an 'eternal' knight on f4.

Harry Kline

José Raul Capablanca

New York 1913



Even so, in the game there followed **23...♗xd3!**

Capablanca gives up his wonderful knight for White's bad bishop, demonstrating a subtle understanding of the position. Evidently there is some truth in the old chess joke that 'the worst bishop is better than the best knight'. The knight on f4 occupies a wonderful square, of course, but how can we get real benefit from it? White's bishop is bad, but it cements the white kingside and has reasonable prospects of play on the queenside. Black aims to take the game into an ending, where his bishop will prove stronger than White's knight.

24.♗xd3 ♕e6 25.♞d1 ♞ed8 26.b3 ♗f4 27.♗g2?!

A strange move. More natural is 27.♗f5 or 27.♗xf4.

27...♖xd3 28.♗xd3 ♗xd3 29.♔xd3
♗d8

Possibly White had counted on
29...♗xg4 30.♖xh4 gxh4?! 31.♗g2,
although even here, after 30...♗h3!
Black's chances are clearly superior.
But Capablanca chooses a quieter
way to strengthen his position:

30.♗e2 h3! 31.♖e3 a5

Black creates some weaknesses on
the queenside. The advantage of his
bishop over the knight is obvious.

32.♗f1 a4 33.c4

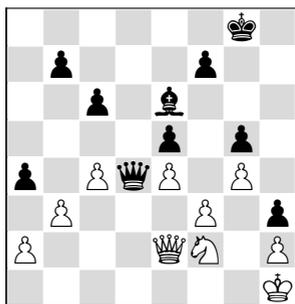
Now the d4-square is weakened,
but 33.bxa4 is even worse because of
33...♗f4!, followed by ...♗a8.

33...♗d4 34.♖c2 ♗d7 35.♖e3 ♗d8

36.♗d1 ♗xd1+ 37.♖xd1

After 37.♗xd1 the reply 37...♗d4 is
again very strong.

37...♗d4 38.♖f2



38...b5 39.cxb5 axb3! 40.axb3 ♗xb3

41.♖xh3 ♗d1

The black passed b-pawn and the
weakness of the white kingside
decide the outcome of the game.

42.♗f1 cxb5 43.♖g2 b4 44.♗b5 b3

45.♗e8+ ♖g7 46.♗e7 b2 47.♖xg5
♗b3

White's threats are easily repulsed
and the black pawn is queening.

48.♖xf7 ♗xf7 49.♗g5+ ♖f8

50.♗h6+ ♖e7 51.♗g5+ ♖e8

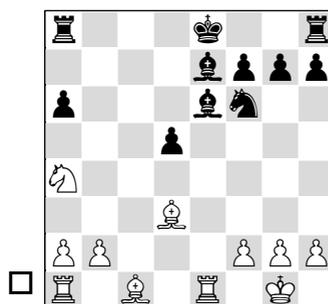
The checks are over and White
resigned.

It is interesting that in his book
My Chess Career, Capablanca does
not even comment on the move
23...♖xd3!. For him, such a plan was
a natural decision.

Robert James Fischer

Tigran Petrosian

Buenos Aires 1971



The game is approaching an
endgame. White's pieces are better
mobilised and there is no obvious
compensation for Black's weak
pawns on a6 and d5. It suits White
to exchange dark-squared bishops,
after which the squares d4 and c5
become real weaknesses.

15.♗e3 0-0

If 15...♖d7, Black would have to
reckon with White becoming active
on the kingside, e.g. 15...♖d7 16.f4
g6 17.♗d4 0-0 18.f5!? gxf5 19.♗xf5
with the better game.

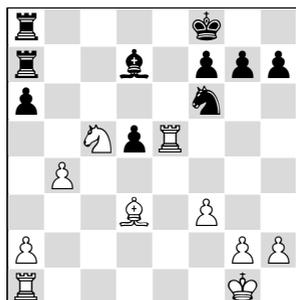
16.♗c5 ♗fe8 17.♗xe7 ♗xe7 18.b4!

Not allowing the freeing advance
...a6-a5, after which there would
now follow b4-b5.

18...♟f8 19.♞c5 ♙c8 20.f3

Taking the e4-square from the enemy knight and preparing to centralise the king.

20...♞ea7 21.♞e5 ♙d7



22.♞xd7+

Fischer played this move very quickly. White gives his beautiful knight for Black's passive bishop. Why? The fact is that the enemy bishop threatened to come to b5 and become active, whilst preventing this with a2-a4 would allow ...♙c6. In addition, after the exchange, White seizes the c-file.

22...♞xd7 23.♞c1 ♞d6 24.♞c7 ♞d7 25.♞e2 g6 26.♟f2!

Now there is no need to hurry.

26...h5 27.f4 h4

Leading to further weaknesses.

28.♟f3! f5 29.♟e3 d4+ 30.♟d2 ♞b6

31.♞ee7 ♞d5 32.♞f7+ ♟e8 33.♞b7 ♞xb4 34.♙c4

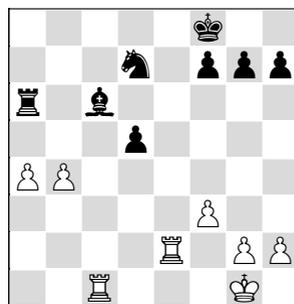
It was also possible to play 34.♞h7 immediately. Black resigned.

Many years later, already in the computer era, the position in the first diagram was analysed by Sarhan Guliev, in his interesting book *Winning Chess Manoeuvres*,

published by New in Chess (2015). Here is his note to Fischer's 22.♞xd7!?:

«Highly characteristic of Fischer. He happily parts with his good knight, exchanging it for the bad bishop, and reaches a position of another type. If White had played 22.a4 (so as to prevent 22...♙b5), Black would have replied 22...♙c6, preparing ♞f6-d7.» (Polugaevsky) Now Guliev:

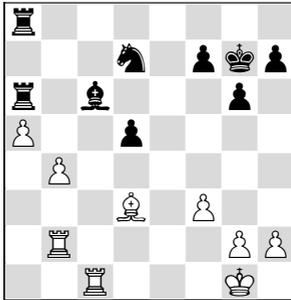
«Polugaevsky wrote his comments immediately after the game and all of the experts who have commented on the game since have been in agreement with Lev Abramovich. That is, they have said it is sad to part with the lovely knight on c5, but it is necessary. The arguments are all the same. But this is not true. At least, not quite true. In the variation 22.a4 ♙c6 23.♞e2 ♞d7 White has a combination: 24.♞xa6! ♞xa6 25.♙xa6 ♞xa6 and now he plays the quiet move 26.♞c1!!



analysis diagram

with the unstoppable threat of b4-b5 (26...♙xa4 27.♞c8#). And if 23...g6 (stopping mate) 24.♞c1 ♞d7,

then 25.a5, and it is hard to see what Black's next move will be. On 25...♗g7, for example, there is the decisive 26.♘xa6 ♖xa6 27.♞b2!



analysis diagram

with good winning chances for White. So this means that the capture on d7 was not necessary. The reason for playing it is somewhat different. *The point is to see the exchange on d7 in the first place.* That is, overcome one's natural reluctance to exchange off the lovely knight, include this exchange in one's list of candidate moves, give it due attention, and finally, decide to play it, after calculating concrete variations.»

I decided to put the key point in Guliev's comments in italics. The beautiful variations and subtle white manoeuvres based on the tactical blow ♘c5xa6 were found with the aid of the computer. In a practical game, with a normal, classical time-limit, only grandmasters of extra class would be capable of finding the combination of moves 22.a4! and 23.♞e2!.

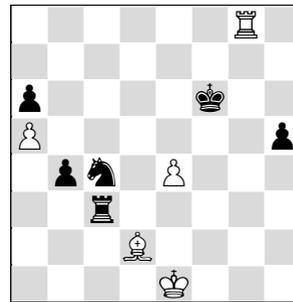
But the aim of the book *Endgame Strategy* is to explain to the

reader the principles for playing complicated practical endgames, the logic of taking decisions, and using one technical device or another in a practical game between grandmasters or masters. In other words, to see the exchange on d7 in the first place.

So that the reader should not get the impression that the move ♘c5xd7 should lead to the simplest possible win in every situation, we will examine the following example.

Yuri Balashov Manuel Rivas Pastor

Minsk 1982



Black's position is winning, Not only has he an extra pawn, but also an overwhelming superiority in piece activity, largely thanks to the superiority of the ♘c4 over White's ♗d2. After the natural 49...♞b3!, with the threat of 50...♞b1+ and 51...♞b2, White could resign with a clear conscience.

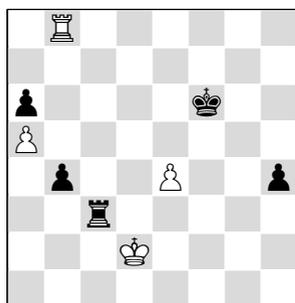
Instead of this, there followed 49...♘xd2?!

This move does not throw away the win, but it requires accurate play from Black, since rook endings are well-known for their drawing tendencies. This is a chance for the weaker side.

50. ♖xd2 ♜a3?!

This and the following moves testify to a lack of understanding of the position, largely due to an absence of knowledge of positions where the weaker side's rook fights successfully against two enemy rook's pawns. In this case, the exchange of a beautiful knight for a bad bishop, and the following moves, results not in amazement and acceptance, but merely in a shake of the head.

We would point out that after 50...h4 51. ♜b8 Black has a lovely tactical trick:



analysis diagram

51...h3 52. ♜xb4 ♜c1!!, and if 53. ♖xc1 h2 54.e5+, then 54...♖g5, winning. In the position of the last diagram, only a draw results from 51...♜b3 52. ♖c2 ♜a3 53. ♜b6+! (as Nesterov showed, bad is 53. ♜xb4? h3; material is equal, but White must resign). For example, 53...♖g5

54. ♜xa6 h3 55. ♜a8 ♖f4 56. ♜f8+ ♖g3 57. ♜g8+ ♖f2 58. ♜f8+ ♖g2 59. ♜g8+ ♖h1 60.e5 ♜xa5 61.e6 ♜e5 62. ♜e8 etc.

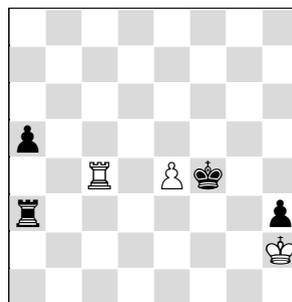
51. ♜b8 ♜xa5?

A win results from 51...h4! 52. ♜xb4 h3 53. ♜b1 h2 54. ♜h1 ♖e5 55. ♖e2 ♖f4! etc.

52. ♜xb4 ♖e5

Continuing the same tactics. Not only does Black not prevent the white king going to h2, he even encourages it to do so. After 52...♜e5!, Black would retain winning chances, although a detailed analysis of this line is outside our scope. Let us see what happened in the game.

53. ♖e3 ♜a3+ 54. ♖f2 h4 55. ♖g2 h3+ 56. ♖h2 ♖f4 57. ♜c4 a5



58.e5+!

In such positions, so as not to give the opponent winning chances, the easiest thing for the weaker side to do is to jettison his own pawn and fasten onto the opposing a-pawn.

58...♖xe5 59. ♜c5+! ♖d4 60. ♜f5

The position is a theoretical draw. There followed:

60...a4 61. ♜f4+ ♖e3 62. ♜g4 ♖e2 63. ♜e4+ ♖f3 64. ♜c4 ♖e2 65. ♜e4+