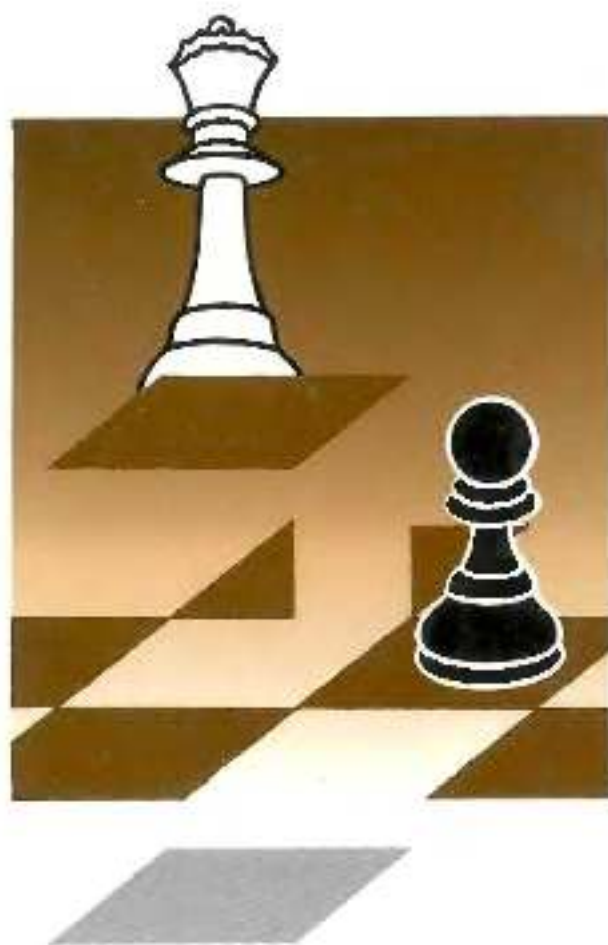


VASILY SMYSLOV

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Vasily Strayshin

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# SMYSLOV'S 125 SELECTED GAMES

By  
VASILY SMYSLOV  
*Ex-World Champion*

*Translated by*  
KENNETH P. NEAT

**CADOGAN CHESS**  
LONDON, NEW YORK

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First published 1983 by Pergamon Press  
First Cadogan Books edition 1994  
Reprinted 1994

This edition is a translation of  
"V Poiskakh Gamunoi" 1979 published  
by Fizkulturni Sport

### **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1-85744-028-5

Published by Cadogan Books plc, London House,  
Parkgate Road, London SW11 4NQ

Cover design by Brian Robins.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by BPC Wheatons, Exeter

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## Foreword to the English Edition

This book contains games from almost the whole of my career. But meanwhile my tournament appearances are continuing, and in 1982 I took part in some events of very high class.

One often hears it said that the competitive aspect of chess is becoming more and more important, and hence that youth must inevitably provide an advantage.

I do not wish to enter into a controversy on the theme of chess and age. I have frequently stated that I regard chess as an art form, where creativity prevails over other factors.

Instead of a preface I should like to offer the reader two games played by me in 1982. The first is from the Interzonal Tournament in Las Palmas, where I once more gained the right to participate in the World Championship Candidates event, and the second is from the International Grandmaster Tournament in Tilburg, where one of my opponents was Robert Hubner. Shortly after this we were paired together in the first Quarter-Final Candidates Match.

I hope that these games will be of some interest to the reader.

VASILY SMYSLOV

### *Bogoljubov Defence*

#### **Browne-Smyslov**

Las Palmas Interzonal, 1982

1 d4	Nf6
2 e4	e6
3 Nf3	Bb4+
4 Bd2	a5

This leads to more complicated play than the exchange on d2.

5 g3	d5
6 Bg2	dxo4

The start of an interesting plan involving piece play on the Q-side.

7 Qc2	Nc6
8 Qxc4	Qd5



Now 9 Qd3 would have been met by 9 ... 0-0 10 Nc3 Qh5 11 0-0 Rd8, with counterplay.

9 Qxd5	exd5
10 Nc3	Be6

A good move, strengthening Black's centre.

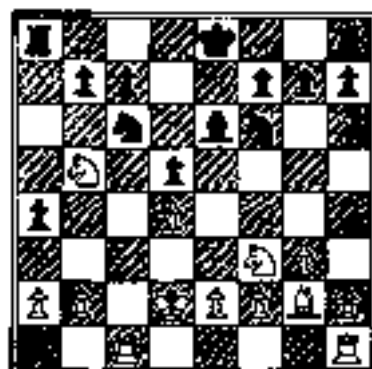
11 Re1	u4!
--------	-----

Now ... a3 is a possibility, while if White plays a2-a3, the b3 square is seriously weakened.

12 Nb5
--------

White tries to seize the initiative.

12 ...	Bxd2+
13 Kxd2	





13 ... Kd8!

A well-thought-out defensive plan.

14 Nc5 Ra5!

An unexpected reply. Now 15 Rxc6 can be met by 15 ... Rxb5 16 Rxc6 fxe6 17 Nf7+ Ke7 18 Nxb8 Rxb2+ 19 Kd3 Rxa2, when Black has two passed pawns for the piece, while the knight at h8 is out of play and may be lost.

15 Nxc6+ bxc6  
16 Nc3 Ke7

More accurate than 16 ... Kd7, when after 17 b3 axb3 18 axb3 Rb9 19 Na4 the b3 pawn is immune due to the fork 20 Nc5+.

17 Nd1 Kd6  
18 f3 c5

Black commences positive action. After the exchange of his doubled pawns his king comes into play.

19 fxc5+ Rxc5  
20 Rxc5 Kxc5  
21 Nc3 Kb4  
22 Re1 c5

Black intensifies the pressure on the Q-side. 22 ... d4 would have been weaker due to 23 a3 1. Kb3 24 Nb5.

23 e3 d4  
24 exd4 exd4  
25 a3+

This natural move avoids the loss of a pawn, but on the other hand the black king is able to invade the opposing position.

25 ... Kb3  
26 Nd1 Bc4

Now 27 ... Re8 is threatened.

27 Nf2 Nd5

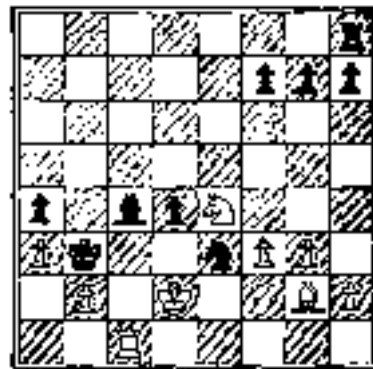
On 27 ... Re8 there could have followed 28 Bf1 Bxf1 29 Rxf1 Kxb2 30 Nd3+ Kxa3

31 Ra1+ Kb3 32 Rb1+, with counter-chances.

28 Ned

If 28 Bf1, then 28 ... Bxf1 29 Rxf1 Ne3!

28 ... Ne3



29 Nc5+ Ka2!

The king has penetrated deep into the enemy rear. 29 ... Kxb2 was much weaker in view of 30 Nxa4+, but now 30 Nxa4 is met by 30 ... Bh5, winning a piece.

30 Bh3 Bb3

The a4 pawn must be retained.

31 Bd7 Nc4+  
32 Kd3

Here White overstepped the time limit.

After 32 ... Ne5 · 33 Kxd4 Nxd7 34 Nxd7 Rd8 35 Rc7 Be6 Black wins a piece.

*Catalan Opening*

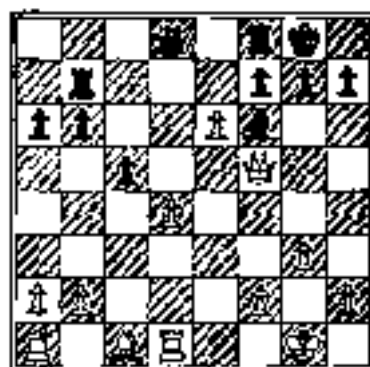
*Hübner-Smyslov*

Tilburg, 1982

1 d4 Nf6  
2 e4 e6  
3 g3 d5

4 Bg2	dxc4
5 Nf3	c5
6 Qa4+	Nbd7
7 Qxc4	a6
8 Qc2	b6

I have had this position several times, but only when playing White. It is useful for Black to oppose the g2 bishop with his bishop at b7, but 8 ... b5 is problematic in view of 9 Ne5 Nd5 10 Bxd5 exd5 11 Nxd7 Qxd7 12 dxc5 Qc6 13 b4, when White keeps his extra pawn.



9 Ne5	Nd5
10 Nc3	Bb7
11 Nxd5	exd5
12 0-0	Be7
13 Rd1	0-0
14 Qf5	

14 Nxd7 Qxd7 15 Qb3 is not dangerous for Black, in view of 15 ... Qe6 16 dxc5 Bxc5.

A more natural move for White is 14 Bf4, completing his development. The move in the game appears active, but Black has sufficient defensive resources.

14 ...	Nxe5
15 dxc5	Ra7
16 e6	

On 16 Qd3 there could have followed 16 ... Qc7, when 17 Bxd5 Bxd5 18 Qxd5 Rd8 19 Qb3 Rxd1+ 20 Qxd1 Qxc5 gives Black a comfortable game. After 16 e3 Black can gain sufficient counter-play by 16 ... g6 17 Qf4 f6 18 e6 Qc8.

16 ...	d4
17 Bxb7	Rxb7
18 e3	Bf6
19 exd4	

19 ...	Re7!
--------	------

A striking manoeuvre. Now 20 d5 fails to 20 ... fxc6, while after 20 exf7+ Rxf7 21 Qd3 Qxd4! 22 Qb3 c4 Black has active play.

20 Re3	fxe6
21 Qg4	h5!

In this way Black destroys the coordination of the enemy pieces, and obtains a strong passed pawn on the d-file.

22 Qxb5	
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Forced, since on 22 Qe4 there would have followed 22 ... cxd4 23 Bxd4 Rd7 24 Qxc6 - Kh8, when the white bishop is lost.

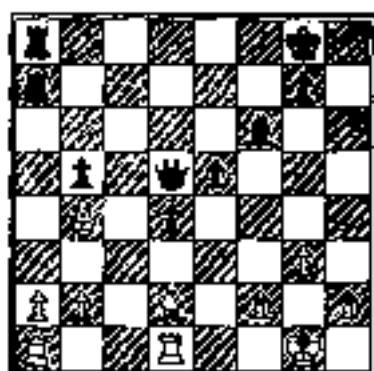
22 ...	cxd4
23 Qe2	Qd5!

Centralization is one of the basic principles of strategy. The queen occupies a splendid post at d5, and the a6 pawn is sacrificed for the initiative.

24 Qxa6	
---------	--

After 24 f3 e5 25 Bf2 Rc7 Black has a positional advantage.

24 ...	b5
25 Qa5	c5
26 Bd2	Ka8
27 Qb4	Keu7



For the sacrificed pawn Black has obtained an excellent position. He is threatening to win the game by 28 ... Ra4.

**28 Be1**

If 28 Rae1, then 28 ... Rxa2 29 Rc5 Qf3 20 Rde1 Qd3!, when 31 Rxb5 is dangerous in view of 31 ... Kh7 with a strong attack, while after 31 Be1 Ra1 Black has the better game.

28 ...	Rxa2
29 Rae1	R2a4
30 Qe5	Qxc5
31 Rae5	Ra1

Black has accurately worked out the consequences of the transition into the endgame, where his advantage is sufficient for a win. If now 32 Rxa1 Rxa1 33 Kf1, then 33 ... d3 34 Rd5 e4 35 f3 Bxb2 36 fxe4 Bc3, winning the bishop.

32 Rce1	Rxe1
33 Rxe1	e4!

This is the point of Black's plan. The central pawns at d4 and e4 dominate the position, and White is unable to organize a defence.

34 Kf1	Ra2
35 Rb1	Kf7
36 Bb4	Ra4

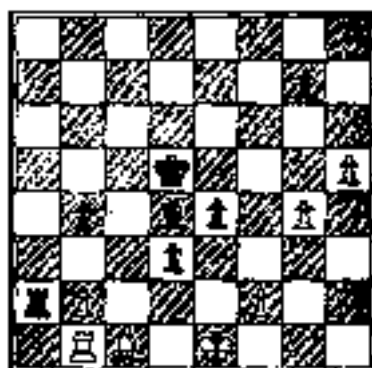
Not allowing the rook to be shut in by 37 Ba3.

37 Bd2	Ke6
38 h4	Kd5
39 Ke1	Ra2
40 h5	d3
41 Be1	Bd4
42 g4	b4

This last move was sealed by Black. It is readily apparent that White has no useful moves, for example:

(a) 43 Bd2 Bxb2 44 Bxb4 Bd4 45 Bf2 Bxf2+, and wins.

(b) 43 Kf1 Ra7 44 Be3 Bxe3 45 fxe3 Rf7+ 46 Kg2 Kc4 47 Rd1 Kh3 48 Rd2 Re7, and there is no defence against 49 ... Rc2.



43 g5	Ra8
44 Be3	Bxe3
45 fxe3	Rh8
46 Ra1	Rxb5
47 Ra7	g6

Only not 47 ... Rxc5? 48 Ra5+.

48 Ra6	Rh2
49 Rxc6	Re2+
50 Kd1	Bxe3
51 Rg8	Rg3
52 Kd2	Kc4

Threatening mate in two moves.

53 b3+	Kxb3
54 g6	Rg3+
55 Ka3	d2
56 Rd8	Kc2
57 Rc8+	Kd1

White resigns

## My Chess Career

*Harmonies of verse are mysterious secrets...*

A. N. Maikov

### First steps

Alekline's book *My Best Games* was my very first prize for winning a chess event. It was awarded to me by my Uncle, Kirill Osipovich Smyslov, a second category player, who gave me the odds of a rook. I was then seven years old (I was born on 24th March 1921 in Moscow), and some six months before this match my father had taught me to play chess.

Inside the book is the inscription: "To the winner of the match, to the future champion Vasya Smyslov, from Uncle. 29th May 1928".

Even today I still have this book, which is the only 'document' in the family archives indicating that I have been playing chess for more than half a century. During that time I have won a number of cups, prizes and medals, all of which are dear to me, of course, but the present from my Uncle occupies a special place among them. Alekline's excellent book joined my father's small but intelligently selected chess library, and together with the other books furthered the development of my chess views and inclinations. But more about that later, as first I should like to share with the reader certain recollections of my father.

My father, Vasily Osipovich Smyslov, was born in 1881 in Astrakhan. It would seem that from his childhood years, spent in the broad expanses of the Volga, he retained all his life a love for nature and an attraction

to art, especially music. He possessed quite a fair baritone singing voice.

In his youth my father lived in St Petersburg, and studied at the Institute of Technology, described by grandmaster Levenfish in his book *Selected Games and Reminiscences* as one of the best higher educational establishments of the time (he entered the Institute a few years later than my father). Later Levenfish, my senior partner and co-author (in 1957 we wrote a book on the theory of rook endings), recalled that my father had been a good chess player, and in his student years was already of first category strength.

On finishing at the institute, my father became an Economic Engineer, and worked in the 'Department for the Preparation of Securities'. Such an unromantic profession did not prevent him from retaining his attraction to chess and music. Once he even had an audition with Shalyapin, at which, according to family tradition, he won the praises of the great artist. But it would seem that my father shared the conviction of a certain group of people, traditional at that time (and not only then), that art, music or especially chess should not be the main occupation of a 'respectable' person. Nevertheless my father studied singing seriously, had regular lessons with a professor, took part in amateur concerts, and played the piano quite well. And although he did not become a well-known singer, he undoubtedly possessed a broad musical culture and a well-developed artistic taste.

As to what sort of a chess player he was, the reader can gain some impression from a game of his which I have kept, and which

I give below. The notes are by the winner, and I have not altered them in any way. My father's opponent was 20-year-old Alexander Alekhine, the future World Champion, and at that time already a well-known master.

English Opening

A. A. Alekhine-V. O. Smyslov

St Petersburg Chess Society Tournament, 1912

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 g3 Bc5 4 Bg2 Nc6 5 a3 a5 6 d3 0-0 7 Nb3 Ne7

With the aim of freeing his game by 8 ... d5.

8 Bg5 Ng6 9 Bxfg6 Qx16 10 Ne4 Qe7 11 Nxc5 Qxc5 12 Ng5 e6 13 Ne4 Qe7 14 c5 b6

Bringing the bishop into play.

15 b4

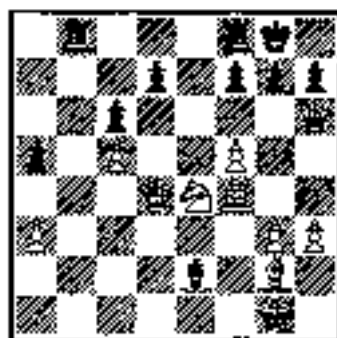
White declines the pawn sacrifice, not wishing to lose his outpost at d6.

15 ... bxc5 16 bxc5 Rb8 17 0-0 Qe6 18 d4 Bb6 19 dxc5 Nxc5 20 f4 Ng4 21 f5

Sacrificing the exchange, in the hope of obtaining a dangerous attack on the king.

21 ... Qh6 22 h3 Ne3 23 Qd4 Nxf1 24 Rxf1 Bxc7 25 Rf4

This is the point of the combination begun on move 21.



25 ... Rb3

Probably the best reply, giving Black strong counter-play. The variations 26 f6, 26 Qxd7 and 26 Rh4 all favour Black.

26 Kf2 Rd3 27 Qb2 Bd1 28 Qb1 Rd5 29 Nc3 Rd2+ 30 Kg1 Ne2 31 Qe1

A mistake. 31 Qe1 should have been played, when it is not easy for Black to win. But now he returns the exchange, wins the strong pawn at f5, denies the opponent any attack, and secures an ending with two extra pawns.

31 ... Rxcg2+ 32 Kxg2 Bxf5 33 g4 Be6 34 Kg3 Qg5 35 Qe3 h5 36 h4 Qg6 37 g5 Rb8 38 Rf3 Rb3 39 Qe1 Rg4 40 Re3 Qf5 41 Qg1

In the faint hope of Black blundering by 41 ... Qxc5? 42 Re8+.

41 ... Rxc3 White resigns.

I was born when my father was 40 years old. By that time, together with my mother Ekaterina Mikhailovna, he was living in Moscow, the department in which he worked having been moved there after the revolution.

Our family lived in a small flat in an old house, not far from my father's place of work, on the outskirts of the capital. The highlight of our every-day life was a "Schröder" piano, on which my father used to play. He began teaching me the piano and chess. My older brother, Nikolai, did not display any inclination for these pursuits. We went to the same school, and, despite our age difference of eighteen months, were in the same class. My brother was fascinated by technology, even built his own wireless sets, and was always fiddling about with components which were quite incomprehensible to me, with his soldering iron, and so on. It is true that he also loved music, and was able to draw and to play chess, but his main fascination was radio engineering. And later it was to become his profession.

In chess—and I immediately became carried away with it—for the next few years my father was to be my sole teacher and opponent.

From the very start he instilled in me a love for so-called 'simple' positions, with the participation of only a few pieces. It is they

that enable an inexperienced player not only to understand, but also to gain a deep 'feeling' for what each piece is capable of. Perhaps I rather overrate this factor, but even so I am inclined to think that it played an important role in my development as a chess player. Because to remember how the pieces move is not difficult, whereas to sense their peculiarities, their strength and importance in different situations on the board, the limits of their possibilities, what they 'like' and what they 'don't like', and how they behave in the various conflicts of their chess fate—to understand and 'feel' all this is much more difficult, and also much more important. Later, when a player grasps the technique of the game, and acquires the necessary knowledge—and this is accessible to anyone—such a 'mutual understanding' between him and the pieces under his control liberates his thoughts, enabling him to see that which often remains concealed to purely logical analysis. It is then that there manifests itself that innate ability of a player, which I call a sense of harmony.

A person's sense of harmony is endowed by nature. It remains with him for ever, and is a weapon he can use at all stages of the game, in the most complex situations on the board.

I do not know how justified and how universally suitable these ideas are, or to what extent my father was guided by them. Most probably, he was following a tried and tested teaching method—"from the simple to the complicated", and possibly Capablanca's recommendation to begin studying chess with the endgame. At that time Capablanca's book *Chess Fundamentals* was reprinted several times in a Russian translation.

For me these ideas proved to be both justified, and suitable. I am glad that I became a grandmaster during my father's lifetime (he died in 1943), and he could see that his efforts had not been in vain.

### The search for a style

My study of chess was accompanied by a strong attraction to music, and it was probably thanks to this that from childhood I became accustomed to thinking of chess as an art, and have never regarded it as anything else, for all the science and sport involved in it. And, moreover, an art which in some ways is much closer to music than it is customary to think. Perhaps chess and music are drawn together by laws of harmony and beauty which are difficult to formulate and difficult to grasp, or perhaps by something else. This philosophical aspect of the game is one which nowadays I think about particularly often.

I studied chess a lot in my childhood. I could sit at the board for eight hours, and sometimes even more. How I managed to find time for all this, I myself don't understand, because I was not particularly well organized. But I managed... Perhaps in one's youth the days seem longer?..

Up to the age of fourteen I studied chess only at home, and did not think of taking part in tournaments. But I passionately read chess books. Their authors became my main teachers, once I began playing on equal terms with my father (at first I used to be given a start—a queen, a rook, all the usual odds).

The first chess book that I read was Dufresne's self-tutor, published with Lasker's lectures *Common Sense in Chess* as an appendix. From it I became acquainted with the romantic games of the old masters and with the gambit style of play. These were the games of Morphy, Anderssen, Steinitz, Chigorin, Zukertort, Blackburne, Gunsberg, and other great players from the past. The impression made by them was stunning. A wealth of combinational ideas, a contempt for danger, the brilliance of swift attacks—and all this on the basis of exact strategical thought, almost always accessible and understandable.

Soon came the turn of other books, with games by other masters, full of deep and complex ideas. These were the games of Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine, Tarrasch, Rubinstein and Nimzowitsch. Among my favourite books, it will not be out of place to recall *My Best Games* by Alekhine, *Chess Fundamentals* by Capablanca, *Die Moderne Schachpartie* by Tarrasch, and Nimzowitsch's *My System*.

Of course, I have not listed all the books and magazines which I read then, in the early 1930s. There is no need to. My father's library contained everything, so to speak, of an everyday nature (I think that there were at least a hundred titles), and I made a thorough study of this library. Thus I as though traced the evolution of chess thought, and repeated its basic steps in my own development. I am convinced that any player with high ambitions should follow such a path. Despite the development of theory, there is much that remains secret and unexplored in chess. In order to attempt to step even a little further, you must first of all understand what is the limit reached by your predecessors.

In my opinion, the style of a player should not be formed under the influence of any single great master.

A strong impression was made on me by Tarrasch's *Die Moderne Schachpartie*. Although he was an outstanding player in his heyday, he was not one of that vanguard of chess thinkers, who blaze new trails and open new chess horizons. A popularizer of Steinitz's ideas, Tarrasch made them accessible to ordinary players. Thanks to him I was able to understand and evaluate at its true worth the importance of the theory of Steinitz, the first chess philosopher. I also gleaned many interesting ideas from the books of Nimzowitsch, Tarrasch's temperamental and talented opponent (especially splendid is *My System*). And, of course, first and foremost from the games of the great masters

Chigorin and Alekhine, who were able to reveal unusual concrete ideas in a position.

In general that period—the early and mid-1930s—was an extremely interesting one in chess history. Still in the memory were impressions of the historic Alekhine-Capablanca match of 1927, which excited the entire chess world, and I, who was then attempting to grasp the secrets of chess, pondered over their games, trying to penetrate into the deep ideas of these great masters. That was a time when arguments were raging on the ideological essence of chess, and when opening theory was being enriched by new discoveries.

In striving to absorb the entire 'aroma of the times', I did not seek individual moves, even though they might be beautiful or unexpected, but ideas and conceptions; I wanted to get to the heart of the matter, to grasp the logic of the development of events on the board, both in games by players from the past, and in the games of contemporary masters. Under the influence of these events, arguments, diametrically opposed opinions and theoretical discoveries, my playing style was formed, a style which many consider universal. The combination of opposing influences made it such, or, at any rate, saved it from being too one-sided.

In 1935 and 1936 my father and I were present at the Moscow International Tournaments. I was especially attracted by the play of Lasker and Capablanca, whose names, even in their lifetimes, were legendary. Capablanca's play was notable for its unique intuition, and for its easy and spontaneous manner. Lasker, in contrast, did not get up from the board, and fought with enormous energy in every game. The philosophy of the struggle was his basic creed.

In the summer of 1935 I first participated in an official chess event. Perhaps this is too grand an epithet for a tournament of unrated players, but it is undoubtedly a fair one. The tournament was held in the summer

chess club of the central Gorky park, and did not cause me much trouble, nor did two others which followed it. By the end of the summer I was already a third category player, and things might have gone further, had not... the summer ended. However, from then on there were no lengthy intervals between my appearances. In the autumn I joined the Moskvoretsky House of Pioneers. I again played successfully, and dreamed of reaching the greatest heights. I recall how in 1935, when Alekhine had lost his match to Euwe, a school friend asked me:

"Vasya, would you like to be Alekhine?"

"The vanquished—no!", was my childishly independent reply.

I think that determination and a definite goal are always needed in life, whereas independence comes with age... Especially since I had in mind then not the World Championship, but discovering the secret of chess, the secret of the victories by the great masters.

In the next year or two I reached first category status, which at that time was no mean achievement. The title of candidate master did not yet exist, and the strongest first category players were close to master standard, with many of them subsequently becoming well known masters.

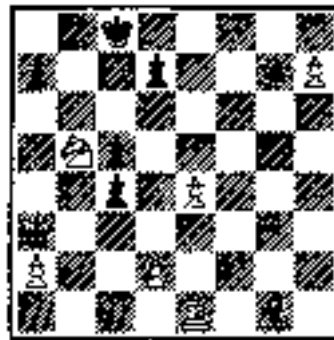
By that time my style of play had already been formed in general terms. My tastes, both chess and musical, had been inherited from my father. In music I am an admirer of the classics, especially vocal. I love classical opera and classical romance. In such music I see and feel the striving of the composer to express his idea in a single, unique form. Strict beauty and harmony, spontaneity and elegance, the faultless intuition of the artist, the absolute mastery of technique and therefore complete independence from it—this is my ideal. In chess I am also a staunch supporter of classical clarity of thought. The content of a game should be a search for

truth, and victory a demonstration of its rightness. No fantasy, however rich, no technique, however masterly, no penetration into the psychology of the opponent, however deep, can make a chess game a work of art, if these qualities do not lead to the main goal—the search for truth. Taken on their own, they merely point to the striking talent of their possessor, and nothing more.

This conviction, which was instilled in me from childhood, also predestined the early forming of my playing style. At the age of fifteen or sixteen I used to play exactly as I do now. Of course, with various reservations, and with allowances for age and experience, but in general terms just the same: in a chess game I always sought not only victory, but also the triumph of logic.

A considerable role in the forming of my style was played by an early attraction to study composition. I loved trying to solve studies, giving preference to positions which were close to practical play. What attracted me in studies was the striking and unexpected idea. I even tried composing studies myself, and my first compositions to appear in print relate to this time.

64, 1936



White to play and win

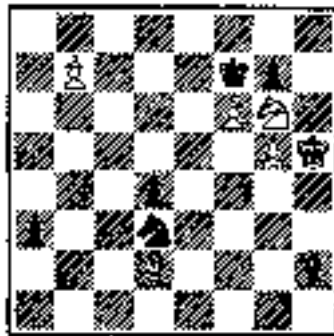
1 Nd6+ Kb8 2 Rb1+ Ka8 3 Ne8 Qg3+  
4 Ka4 Bd4 5 e5! Bxe5 (5... Qxe5 6  
h8=Q) 6 Nc7+, and wins.



"In this simple study the author has succeeded in expressing one of the typical problem ideas"—this was the assessment given by the newspaper.

*Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1937

Honorable mention



White to play and draw

1 Nf8+ Kg8.

If 1 ... Kf8, then 2 Ng6! Kg8 3 Ne7+ Kf7 4 f×g7 K×g7 5 Nf5+ and 6 N×d4.

2 f7+ Kh8 3 Kg6 a2 4 Kh7 a1=Q.

On 4 ... g6 there follows 5 Bf4 B×f4 6 N×g6+ K×f7 7 N×f4 a1=Q 8 g6+ Kc7 9 h8=Q.

5 g6.

Now White's knight and king are immured, and to draw it is sufficient for him to give up his bishop and h-pawn. In spite of his extra queen, Black is not able to prevent this. If 5 ... Nc5, then 6 Bf4!

5 ... Qh1!

The queen takes up an ambush position, so as to answer 6 Bb4+ with 6 ... Bd6 mate.

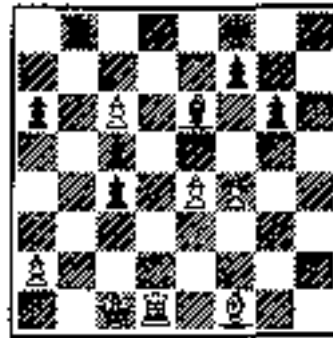
6 Bb4! Be5.

If 6 ... Kc7, then 7 Bg5+ Kd7 8 f8=QBd6+ 9 Kg8 B×f8 10 b8=Q.

7 b8=Q+ B×b8—stalemate!

The idea of the following study was provided by my own praxis. A similar position occurred in one of my games.

64, 1938



White to play and win

1 f5 g×f5 2 Bh3 Re8! 3 e×f5.

Not 3 e7 Be8 4 B×f5 Kc7 or 4 e×f5 f6, when Black draws.

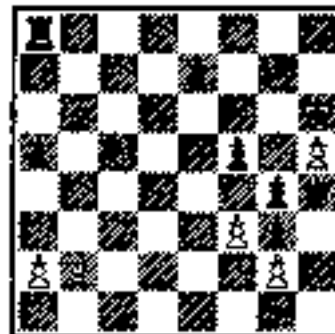
3 ... Be8 4 f6! B×h3 5 e7 a5 6 Rd8.

But not 6 a4 because of 6 ... Kg8 7 Rd8 Rf8 8 Kc2 Bg4 9 Kc3 Be6.

6 ... a4 7 Kb2 Be6 8 Kc2! (zugzwang!) 8 ... Bf5+ 9 Kc3 Be6 10 a3, and wins.

*Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1938

4th prize



White to play and draw

1 Bf6— e×f6 2 f4 Rh8+.

If 2 ... Rb8, then 3 Kg6 Rh2 4 h6 etc.

3 Kg7 R×h5 4 a4 Bg5+ 5 Kh8! Kh5 6 Kh7 Rg6 7 Kb8 Rh6— 8 Kg7 Rg6+ 9 Kh8 (9 Kh7 loses to 9 ... Rg5!) 9 ... Kh6—stalemate!

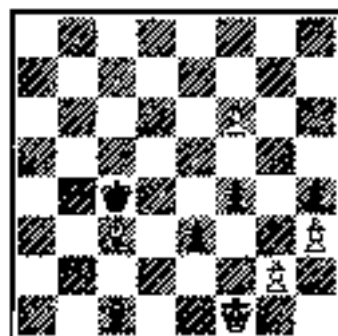
Black is unable to realize his big material

advantage. The 'fortress' theme has been accomplished in natural form.

I still retain my interest in studies. In April 1976, when participating in the USSR Team Championship in Tbilisi, I met the well known Georgian study composer Nadareishvili, and I again felt the urge to compose studies.

Soon I had composed two twin-studies, which I dedicated to Nadareishvili.

*Pravda*, 1976



White to play and win

**1 f7!**

White fails to win after 1 Bb4 Kd3 2 Ke1 (or 2 f7 Bd2) 2 ... f3 3 gxf3 e2 4 f7 Bf4, or 1 Be1 Kd3 2 Bxh4 Kd2 3 Be1 Kd1 4 f7 Bg3 5 Be3 Be5! etc.

1 ... Ba3 2 Bg7.

2 Bb2 would be a loss of time: 2 ... Bf8 3 Ke2 Kd5 4 Bf6 Ke6 5 Bxh4 Kxf7, with a draw.

2 ... f3! (preparing a stalemate trap) 3 gxf3.

3 f8 = Q fails to 3 ... Bxf8 4 Bxf8 e2+ 5 Kf2 fxf2.

3 ... Kd3 4 f8 = B!

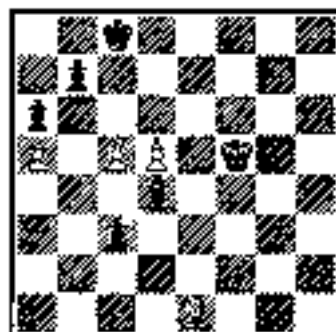
The hasty 4 f8 = Q e2+ 5 Kf2 (5 Ke1 Bxf8 6 Bxf8 Ke3, and the white pawns are captured) 5 ... Be5+! 6 Qxc5 e1 = Q+! 7 Kxe1 leads to stalemate.

4 ... e2-.

If 4 ... Be1, then 5 Bh6 Bd2 6 Kg2 Be1 7 Be5 e2 8 Bf2, and wins.

**5 Kf2 e1 = Q+!** 6 Kxe1 Ke3 7 f4! Kxf4 8 Kf2 Be1 9 Bb6+, and the battle of the three like-coloured bishops concludes in White's favour.

*Pravda*, 1976



White to play and draw

Here we see the device, very common in study composition, of change of goal.

**1 e6!**

Not 1 Ke6 e2 2 d6 e1 = Q 3 d7+ Ke7 4 Bg3+ Ke6 5 d8 = Q Qc4+ 6 Kf5 Qd5+, and Black wins.

1 ... e2.

If 1 ... bxc6, then 2 Ke6 cxd5 3 Kxd5 e2 4 Bb2 Bd2 5 Kc6.

**2 Bd2 Bb2 3 d6! bxc6 4 Ke6 e1 = Q 5 d7- Ke7! 6 Bf4+ Qxf4 7 d8- Q+Kxd8-** stalemate.

Or 4 ... e1 = B! 5 d7- Ke7 6 d8 = Q+ Kxd8 7 Kd6 e5 8 Kxc5 Ke7 9 Be1! Now the white king occupies e2, and the draw is obvious, since the two like-coloured bishops cannot catch White's bishop.

My fascination for studies proved highly beneficial; it assisted the development of my aesthetic understanding of chess, and improved my endgame play.

From my first tournament encounters I did not avoid going into the endgame, since I had a mastery of the technique of realizing an advantage. Therefore I did not complicate matters unnecessarily, and did not aim for

effects, but played, as they say, 'according to the position'. Having grasped its essence, I would seek the best move in conformity with my plan. And that is the way I play now.

But it is time to turn from words to action, and to show the reader one of my early games, in which there was both an attack, and an ending.

French Defence

Smyslov-Rudnev

*All-Union 1st Category Tournament  
Gorky, 1938*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 d×e4 4 N×e4 Nd7 5 Nf3 Ngf6 6 Bd3 N×e4 7 B×e4 Nf6 8 Bg5 Bc7 9 B×f6 B×f6.

"By this move Black gives up the battle for the e4 square. Now the strong position of the bishop at e4 hinders the development of his Q-side. Correct was 9 ... g×f6, so as to play ... f5 at a convenient moment" that was what I wrote in 1938, in my comments on this game for the newspaper 64. Apart from the last phrase, in which one hears the excessive categoricalness typical of youth, I would write exactly the same today. Of course, 9 ... g×f6, which spoils Black's pawn formation, has its drawbacks. But the opening variation chosen by Black, although it enables him to avoid weaknesses in his position, dooms him to a lengthy defence and holds no promise of active counter-play.



10 e3 Qd6 11 Qe2.

White prevents the freeing pawn advances ... e5 and, for the moment, ... e5, while simultaneously preparing Q-side castling.

11 ... 0-0 12 0-0-0. (See diagram previous column.)

The strategic essence of the position has taken shape, dictating an attack for White on the K-side, and for Black—a counter-attack on the Q-side. But Black is behind in development, and therefore his counter-play is delayed.

12 ... 5 13 Kd1 e×d4 14 N×d4 Qb6 15 f4 Bd7 16 Qe2.

Before beginning a pawn storm, White wishes to provoke a weakening of the black king's position. All in accordance with the laws of the chess classics!

16 ... b6 17 Nf3.

This move testifies to my circumspection. The direct continuation of the attack by 17 g4 Rf6 promises nothing after 18 g5 B×d4 19 R×d4 Q×d4, while complications set in after 18 Nb3 Bc6 19 h4 a5 20 g5 B×c3 21 b×c3 a4.

17 ... Bc6 18 B×c6 Q×c6 19 h4.

The offensive begins. The threat is 20 Ng5 g6 21 Ne4 Bc7 22 h5.

19 ... Rfd8 20 Rdf1 Qe4.

The counter-attack by ... b5 is clearly too late, so Black consistently continues to aim for exchanges and to go into an ending.

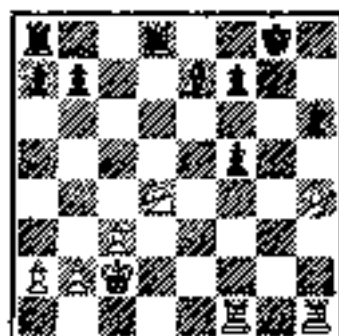
21 g4 Qd3.

Accepting the pawn sacrifice would have been extremely risky, for example: 21 ... Q×f4 22 g5 Bc7 23 Nc4 Qe3 24 Rf3 Qe5 25 g×h6, with a dangerous attack.

22 g5 Q×e2+ 23 K×e2 Bc7.

If 23 ... h×g5, then 24 h×g5 Bc7 25 Rh3 Bd6 (or 25 ... Bc3 26 b4 Bb6 27 Ne5, with the threat of 28 Nd7 R×d7 29 Rfh1) 26 f5 e×f5 27 Rfh1 Kf8 28 Nd4 g6 29 Ne6+!

24 g×h6 g×h6 25 f5 e×f5 26 Nd4.

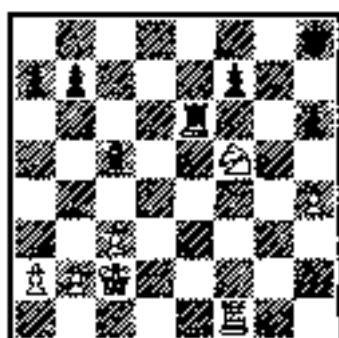


The attack has not brought White victory, but 'merely' a better ending, in which I was able to demonstrate quite good technique.

**26 ... Rd6 27 Nxf5 Rg6 28 Rhg1 - Kh8.**

On 28 ... Kf8 I had prepared a convincing refutation: 29 Rg7 Bxb4 30 Rh7 Kg8 31 Rxb6 Rxb6 32 Nxb6 - Kh7 33 Nxf7, and Black's king is so far from the Q-side that he is unable to set up a defence.

**29 Re1 h5 30 Rgf1 Ra8 31 Rxe6 Rxe6.**



Now the black rook is left alone, and will be tied to the defence of the weak K-side pawns, whereas all the white pieces are full of energy.

**32 b4 Bb6 33 Rd1 Rf6.**

The intrusion of the rook at d7 was threatened.

**34 Rd5 Bf2 35 b5.**

White has consolidated his gains. Against the massed offensive of all his forces on the Q-side, Black has no defence.

**35 ... b6 36 Kd3 a6 37 c4 R66 38 a4.**

First a phalanx of three white pawns

stormed the K-side, and now a similar phalanx attacks on the Q-side.

**38 ... Be1 39 b5 axb5 30 axb5 Re6 41 Rd6 Rxd6+ 42 Nxd6 Kg7.**

It is all over. After 42 ... f6 the finish would have been roughly the same: 43 Nf5 Kh7 c5 bxc5 45 b6 Ba5 46 b7 Bc7 47 Ke4, and White promotes first his b-pawn and then his h-pawn.

**43 c5 Resigns.**

**43 ... bxc5** is of course answered by 44 b6 Ba5 45 b7 Bc7 46 Ne8 !.

### Hard chess battles

My chess youth concluded at the same time that I finished middle school in 1938. Early in the year I became Youth Champion of the country, and the chief controller of the tournament, grandmaster Levenfish, ceremoniously awarded me my first real prize—an inscribed clock, which still, more than forty years later, continues to count out the time of my chess career. After the youth tournaments came others, now among adults. At the end of the year I shared first place in the Moscow Championship with the master Belavenets, and was awarded the master title.

Now came the time of severe tests in meetings with the best players, the time of fascinating battles in interesting and difficult events. In 1940 I took part in the 12th USSR Championship Final, which was held in Moscow, in the Grand Hall of the Conservatory. It was a very strong tournament. I did well, finishing third behind Bondarevsky and Lilienthal, with only half a point separating me from first place.

Here I met Botvinnik at the chess board for the first time. Our game was notable for its tense struggle, and ended in a draw. At that time I could not have guessed that this meeting would be the start of a rivalry lasting 100 games, which were played subsequently

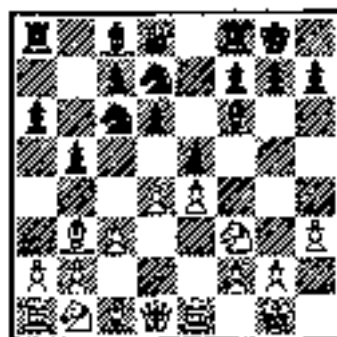
in various events and in three matches for the World Championship.

Soon a Match-Tournament was held in Moscow and Leningrad among six contenders for the title of absolute champion of the country. The tournament was held in four cycles, and I again took third place.

In accordance with the norms in existence, for these two successes I was awarded the title of USSR grandmaster, and thus at the age of twenty I became one of the strongest players in the Soviet Union. However, there is nothing surprising in this. The journey towards perfection is especially rapid in one's younger years, it proceeds in tireless searchings and battles, and continues as long as creative thought is still burning.

I combined the study of opening theory with research into new ideas. A big influence on me was made by Chigorin's games, and by his ideas in the Ruy Lopez. In the 1943 Moscow Championship, in a game with Yudovitch (White), I first employed a new system of play.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Nc7 10 d4 Bf6.



By pressurizing the d4 pawn, Black hinders the standard manoeuvre Nbd2-f1.

11 Bc3. Subsequently the strong retreat 11 a4! was found here.

11 ... Ne7 12 Nbd2 Bb7 13 Qc2 c5 14 dxc5 dxc5 15 Nb2 e4 16 Bc2 Ng6 17 Nf1

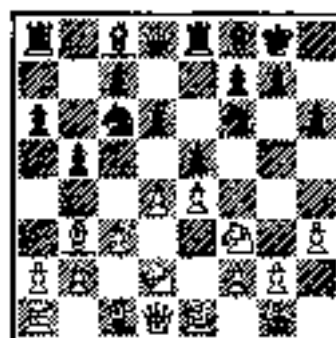
Qe7. From the opening Black has obtained an excellent position.

I frequently employed this system of development in subsequent appearances.

The Ruy Lopez occupied a constant place in my opening repertoire. In it is reflected the classical interpretation of the problem of the centre. The opening strategy of the pawn centre is the cornerstone laid by the masters of the past, in whose games the Ruy Lopez occupied an exceptional place. It is not worth listing the names of all the great masters who have made their contribution to the development of ideas in the Ruy Lopez. I will restrict myself merely to mentioning the World Champions: Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine.

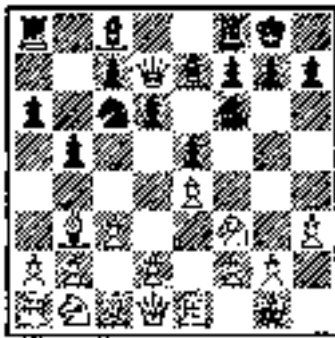
For me the Ruy Lopez has always remained a topical opening, and in it I have tried the most varied systems. Of the new ideas worked out by me, I will mention two.

Here is a system of defence which achieved recognition and bears my name: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 h6! 10 d4 Re8 11 Nbd2 Bf6 (Tal-Smyslov, Baku 1962).



This regrouping of the pieces earned the right to exist alongside Chigorin's classical plan of 9 ... Na5 10 Be2 e5 11 d4 Qe7.

Another system received its baptism of fire at the 1959 Candidates Tournament in Yugoslavia: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Qf7 (Keres-Smyslov).



10 d4 Re8. Now on 11 Ng5 there could have followed 11 ... Nd8. This is the point of 9 ... Qd7.

11 a4 Bb7, and Black achieved a good game.

I am a staunch supporter of the classical manner of play, and think that, for a deep understanding of chess, a knowledge of the chess classics is essential.

### The battle for the world championship

The first international tournament in which I participated was in Groningen (Holland) in 1946.

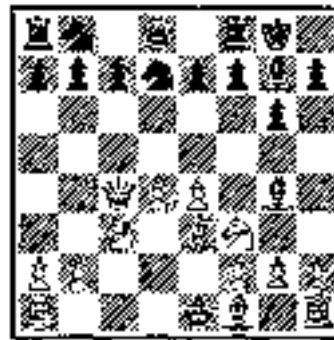
This event was of great importance: third place in the tournament (behind Botvinnik and Euwe) opened the way for my participation in the battle for the World Championship.

The International Chess Federation named six grandmasters who had the right to battle for the supreme title. One of those invited—the American grandmaster Fine at the last minute declined to participate, and in 1948 the Match-Tournament was held with five grandmasters competing: Ex-World Champion Luwe, Botvinnik, Keres, Reshevsky and Smyslov. It was staged in two towns—The Hague and Moscow.

I made thorough preparations for this highly important event.

In one of the variations of the Grünfeld Defence I worked out the following system of defence: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7

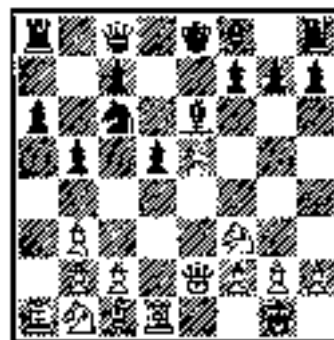
5 Qb3 dxc4 6 Qxc4 B-d7 7 e4 Bg4 8 Re3 Nfd7.



The point of the plan, involving the transfer of the king's knight to b6, and the development of the other knight at c6, lies in piece pressure on White's pawn centre.

I wasn't able immediately to uphold the correctness of my opening idea. Its first practical testing was a severe one: in the game against Botvinnik in Groningen I suffered a disappointment. But before the 1948 Match-Tournament I succeeded in improving the system, which subsequently received wide recognition and in opening theory was named after me. Typical of this system is my game from the Match-Tournament against Fuwe (No. 16), where in a lively piece battle the black knights got the better of the two white bishops.

In this same tournament, when preparing for a game with White against Euwe, I took note of the game Keres-Reshevsky, played somewhat earlier in the event.



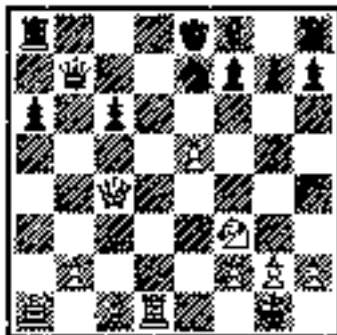
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6  
5 0-0 Nxe4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 dxe5 Be6  
9 Qe2 (this move was popular in the tournament) 9 ... Ne5 10 Rd1 Nxb3 11 axb3 Qe8  
(Reshevsky's move). (See diagram previous page.)

The game continued 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bb4 Bc5  
14 Nc3 g5 15 Bg3 Qb7! 16 Nxd5 0-0-0, and  
for the sacrificed pawn Black obtained an  
excellent position.

I was confident that Fowe, whose repertoire  
included the Open Variation of the Ruy  
Lopez, would employ Reshevsky's patent,  
and I prepared an innovation. And indeed,  
we reached the position in the diagram, when  
there followed 12 e4!

The idea of this move came to me very  
quickly. White, by sacrificing a pawn, aims  
to occupy the key square e4 with his queen.  
Analysis convinced me that after 12 ... dxe4  
13 bxe4 Bxe4 14 Qe4 it would not be easy  
for Black to complete his development.

That is what happened in the game, which  
continued 14 ... Ne7 15 Na3 e6 16 Nxe4  
bxe4 17 Qxe4 Qb7.



18 e6 f6 19 Rd7 Qb5 20 Qxb5 exb5 21  
Nd4 Re8 22 Be3 Ng6 23 Rxa6 Ne5 24 Rb7  
Bc5 25 Nf5 0-0 26 b3, and Black resigned.

Thus sometimes successful preparation for  
a game can ease the path to victory at the chess  
board.

The winner of the tournament, who also  
became World Champion, was Mikhail  
Botvinnik. I took second place. I was then  
27 years old, and the next ten years, from

1948 to 1958, were the period of my battle for  
the title of World Champion. These years  
demanded of me complete, and at times ex-  
cessive, spiritual and physical effort. Of  
course, anyone who sets himself the task of  
becoming the best player in the world, and  
who has the necessary qualities for this, has  
no right to expect an easy life! I think that  
that is how things are in other fields of human  
endeavour.

In order to achieve the cherished goal, I  
first had to earn the right to a match with  
World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik. The  
first barrier on the way to this was the 1950  
Candidates' Tournament in Budapest. In it  
victory was shared by Boleslavsky and Bron-  
stein, and, after an additional play-off be-  
tween them, the right to play a match for the  
World Championship went to Bronstein.

The Botvinnik-Bronstein match took place  
in 1951 in Moscow, and ended with a score  
of 12-12.

Third place in the Budapest Tournament  
gave me the automatic right to a place in the  
next Candidates' Tournament. In preparing  
for the new cycle of the battle for the World  
Championship, I devoted my main attention  
to theoretical preparation. I had to systemize  
my opening knowledge, and to find and analy-  
ze new continuations. Since the battle for the  
world crown lasts for years, such a race can-  
not even be called a marathon. Anyone who  
himself wishes, or is forced by circumstances,  
to cover this infinitely long distance with full  
intensity at each stage is not to be envied.

My performance in the 1953 Candidates  
Tournament in Zurich proved successful.  
I not only took first place, but also felt fine  
after the twenty-eight games. And yet I had  
to overcome such brilliant grandmasters as  
Paul Keres, Samuel Reshevsky, David Bron-  
stein, Max Fowe, Svetozar Gligoric, Miguel  
Najdorf, Isaak Boleslavsky, Efim Geller and  
Tigran Petrosian . . .

Botvinnik once said that a match for the

World Championship is a year of one's life, exclusively devoted to chess. At that time, of course, I could not have guessed that I would be faced with three matches, and all with Botvinnik. Time has given rise to two classic forms of chess event, the tournament and the match. It is in a match, a confrontation between two individuals, that exceptional will-to-win is required. Our 1954 match proved very characteristic in this respect.

In preparing for the meeting with Botvinnik, I studied his favourite schemes, as well as his methods of opening preparation.

Botvinnik used to prepare single-mindedly for a specific opponent. He openly spoke about this, and it was confirmed in practice.

No doubt the World Champion regarded such a method not only as correct, but also as the only one worthy of consideration.

My preparations for the match with Botvinnik reflected my fundamental views on chess. Of course, I took account of my opponent's individual chess nature and tastes, but nevertheless I did not limit myself to psychology alone, but studied all ramifications of the opening schemes, aiming for a broad and objective evaluation of the position. This difference in approach to the problem of opening preparation is curiously reflected in the fourteenth game of the match (No. 37).

Moscow, 1954	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Total
Botvinnik	1	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	12
Smyslov	0	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	$\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{2}{3}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	12

Moscow, 1957	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	Total
Botvinnik	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{2}{3}$	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{9}{2}$
Smyslov	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	0	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{3}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$12\frac{1}{2}$

As can be seen, the match began badly for me, as Botvinnik went into a  $3\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$  lead. Despite this unhappy start, I did not lose faith in my powers, proceeding from the firm conviction that one should be philosophical with regard both to failures, and to successes. Here I should like to recall the words of my singing teacher, K. V. Zlobin, who had enormous experience of life and a clear mind. He lived for 92 years, and loved to say: "Do what you are supposed to, and what will happen will happen". For my determination I was rewarded with three successive wins, and the battle flared up with new strength. The match ended in a 12-12 draw. In accord-

ance with the rules in existence, this result gave the advantage to the World Champion, who retained his title. In turn, the result convinced me that I was capable of winning the chess crown. But a new match for the World Championship demanded a new victory in the Candidates Tournament.

This tournament took place in Amsterdam in 1956. The battle became especially fierce in the second cycle, when three rounds from the finish Keres was level with me, with Geller and Bronstein half a point behind, and Spassky and Petrosian trailing by a further half point. In this sharp situation I won a very tense game against Bronstein, then drew with



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