

Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships

Volume I (1920-1937)

Sergey Voronkov

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Foreword to the English Edition: Chess in the Context of Time

Sergey Voronkov edited the Russian edition of *My Great Predecessors*; maybe that's what gave him the idea of creating his own huge project, *Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships*. I wanted to show the historical development of modern chess through analyzing the games of world champions and those who got close to their level. He is trying to write the history of the Soviet chess school through the prism of the Soviet championships.

Over the years that have passed since his first book, *David Janowski* (with Dmitry Plisetsky, published in Russian in 1987), Sergey has grown into a top Russian chess historian. Small wonder: he worked with Yuri Lvovich Averbakh for a number of years and classes him as his teacher. And then Sergey gained experience of chess analysis when working with David Bronstein on their book *Secret Notes*.

As in his other books, *Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships* is based on documents: periodicals, tournament bulletins, games collections, eyewitness accounts... And, as a classic said, "analysis of what's happening in the world based on documentary evidence is a thousand times more demonstrative than any dramatization of this world."

Another attractive feature of this book is the great game selection. I know from experience how difficult and laborious this task is: to choose, out of hundreds of worthy games, the most wholesome and beautiful, the most important for each championship, and to demonstrate the development of chess as a whole. In this sense, the idea of combining "masterpieces" with "dramas" was very clever, allowing him to include a number of historically valuable games that influenced the course of tournaments in crucial ways.

Most of the games were annotated by the players themselves. On the one hand, this makes the author's job easier, but on the other hand, it becomes more challenging ethically. There are quite a few erroneous lines and evaluations in the original annotations, which necessitates computer evaluation. But if we point out all the errors and inaccuracies, this might ruin the notes themselves and give readers the wrong idea about the masters' playing strength and analytical skills. These days, you immediately get to see any error on the screen, but back then, the analysis of a game required blood, sweat and tears... And what to do with the opening recommendations, oftentimes very obsolete? To throw them away entirely is to break the linkage of time, to dilute the development of opening thought, deprive it of its roots, and devalue the work of our predecessors. But if we don't challenge the

archaic recommendations at all, the opening part of the games will become essentially useless for modern players...

It's hard to find the right balance between the analytical facts and historical truth. The author was helped by chess master Dmitry Plisetsky, who helped me to write *My Great Predecessors*. So, you can be sure that the chess part of Sergey's book is high-quality as well.

Trying to shoulder alone such a burden as the history of the Soviet chess school is a heroic act. Sergey has already published three volumes in Russian that encompass 20 championships (1920–1953). 38 more are ahead... Will he manage to complete his project? Each championship requires meticulous work. I can only imagine how many tons of chess and literary “ore” the author had to dig through, how much information he had to interpret and structure to create a seamless picture of the first ten championships! Despite its academic adherence to documents, this book virtually resembles a novel: with a mystery plot, protagonists and supporting cast, sudden denouements and even “author's digressions” – or, to be exact, introductions to the championships themselves, which constitute important parts of this book as well. These introductions, with wide and precise strokes, paint the portrait of the initial post-revolutionary era, heroic and horrific at the same time. I've always said that chess is a microcosm of society. Showing chess in the context of time is what makes this book valuable even beyond the purely analytical point of view.

Garry Kasparov
New York, July 2020

A Chess Feast During the Plague

All-Russian Chess Olympiad: Moscow, 4th – 24th October 1920

“Let’s light the lamps, let’s pour the drinks,
Let’s drown our sorrows in the kegs,
Let’s feast, and dance, and do all things
To praise the kingdom of the Plague”
Alexander Pushkin, *Feast During the Plague*

Just like any truly great undertaking – and the Soviet Chess Championships are a phenomenon of planetary scale – this one owes its existence to a random, almost trifling coincidence. Had the Leninist revolutionary Ilyin-Zhenevsky not been a passionate chess fan, who knows how many years would have passed before the Bolsheviks took note of the “royal game”. Really, can you call that anything but a miracle? The Russian Civil War is still raging in the outskirts of the country, devastation and hunger are rampant, conspiracies abound, the Red Terror is in full swing – and then, suddenly, there’s an All-Russian Chess Olympiad! How could such a thing have happened in 1920?

Oh, this was such an unbelievable chain of coincidences that it might really make you believe in an old adage: any random occurrence is actually a manifestation of some unknown pattern. It all began when Alexander Fyodorovich Ilyin-Zhenevsky... well, we can let him speak for himself. He described it so vividly in his book *Memoirs of a Soviet Master* that it would be a crime to retell it in my own words. Alexander Alekhine, Fyodor Bogatyrchuk, Grigory Levenfish also gave such great descriptions of the era that I should perhaps refrain from speaking at all, unless absolutely necessary, and let the participants and witnesses of those events tell us about the time and themselves.

Mobilization

Ilyin-Zhenevsky: “In early 1920, I got a job in the head office of the Vsevobuch (*VSEobschee VOennoe OBUCHenie*, *Universal Military Training*)³ and was soon promoted to commissar. I worked together with great physical education specialists to develop pre-prescription training programs for workers, and I suggested including chess training in these programs... The

³ Henceforth, all italic text in this book, including game annotations, is mine unless otherwise stated (S.V.)

main value of sports, they said, was that it developed qualities that were very important for a soldier. I thought that this was true for chess as well. Chess training often develops the same qualities in people as any other sport training – bravery, resourcefulness, composure, willpower – and also, unlike sport, it develops strategic skills. My suggestion was accepted and approved by the chairman of Vsevobuch, Comrade N. I. Podvoisky. Soon after, all regional Vsevobuch heads received a decree to cultivate chess and organize chess circles...” (From the book *Memoirs of a Soviet Master*.⁴)

Alekhine: “The Moscow chess players, moving from place to place, from one flat to another, with their entire library and equipment, despite the fuel crisis and many other insurmountable obstacles, managed to survive until 1919, and then, one of the most influential members of the Soviet government appeared on the horizon. And even though he was the brother of the even more famous Raskolnikov, the leader of the sailors, he had a different pseudonym, Ilyin-Zhenevsky (from the city of Geneva). He was a decent player and a fervent chess enthusiast, and his authority, both as Raskolnikov’s brother and his position as the Vsevobuch head commissar, was instrumental in making the Red government drastically change its attitude towards the ‘royal game’. In their eyes, chess turned from “bourgeois leisure” into a “high and useful art that develops the intellectual strength of the growing generation” (a quote from the resolution of the Moscow region Vsevobuch officials’ convention, which took place in April 1920). Because of this change of stance, Moscow chess players were suddenly treated to a real cornucopia. Above all, they were allocated excellent six-room premises in the Vsevobuch Central Military Sport Club; the Moscow Chess Club was officially turned into a “department” of that institution. Also, they received funding of 100,000 rubles (which had a purchasing power of 1 million rubles now!) to organize serious tournaments. And, finally and most importantly, they got to organize the “All-Russian Chess Olympiad”, which was held in October 1920.” (From the book *Chess Life in Soviet Russia* by A. von Alekhine, originally published in the German language in Berlin, 1921.)

Ilyin-Zhenevsky’s authority was so great that chess players referred to him as “our president”. The Leningrad master **Andrei Batuev** was a schoolboy back then and first saw Alexander Fyodorovich later, but he may as well have been referring to the 26 year-old Vsevobuch commissar:

⁴ The full bibliography is included at the end of the book.

“He was an incredibly handsome and unique man, with blue eyes, delicate, a girl-like blush and curly auburn hair. He was shell-shocked in the war and made funny grimaces, turning his head to the side and smacking his trembling lips. Interestingly enough, Ilyin-Zhenevsky lost his memory after a contusion, and he had to relearn chess from scratch.” (*Neva* No. 9, 1984)⁵



Alexander Ilyin-Zhenevsky. “He was a decent player and a fervent chess enthusiast, and his authority, both as Raskolnikov’s brother and his position as the Vsevoluch head commissar, was instrumental in making the Red government drastically change its attitude towards the ‘royal game’.” (Alekhine.) From the author’s archive (64, No. 7, 1924).

Ilyin-Zhenevsky: “In spring 1920, talks started among Vsevoluch officials to organize an All-Russian Sports Olympiad in the autumn. I used that occasion to propose holding a chess tournament along with the sports competition, as was done at the Stockholm Olympics in 1912. My proposal was accepted, and I immediately assembled an organizing committee, which included N. D. Grigoriev, N. I. Grekov, A. A. Alekhine and me. The sports olympiad never materialized, but the chess event, which was named “All-Russian Chess Olympiad” and included the Russian SFSR championship (back then, the Russian SFSR was synonymous with the USSR), still took place...

The most daunting task for the organizing committee was to find all the strongest Russian chess

players and transport them to Moscow. The information we had was woefully inadequate. We had to use the Vsevoluch system to initiate a military mobilization of chess players, if you could call it that. As an example, I’ll quote a telegram that was sent to all Vsevoluch regional district departments:

Chess tournament to take place in Moscow on 1st October. I order you to notify the district about the upcoming tournament. Accommodation and food

⁵ All small-font insertions, including the ones in quotes, are mine unless otherwise stated (S.V.)

provided by Moscow. No later than on 15th September, send to the Vsevobuch Head Office in Moscow the information on players willing to take part: first name, last name, work address, job, how indispensable to the job, birth year, chess experience, name of chess club, which tournaments played in, which places taken, need for accommodation in Moscow. The tournament participants will be notified by telegraph. 17th August 1920, No. 648/1516.

Deputy Head of the Vsevobuch

Concurrently with this telegram, the organizers sent a list of the strongest Russian players to be personally invited to the Russian SFSR championship. You can see how woefully inadequate the information available to the organizing committee was at the time by the fact that personal invitations were also sent to Rubinstein, Bernstein, Bogoljubov and Selezniev, who lived outside Russia.”

Bogatyrchuk: “In early autumn, I was told that there was a poster on one of the houses on Khreshchatyk⁶, telling me to immediately come to the local Physical Education Department to discuss my participation in the Soviet Russian chess championship. Of course, I was very excited and immediately ran to the address written on the poster. The representative told me that a tournament of the country’s best chess players was going to be held in Moscow in October, and I was personally invited. “Alekhine is going to take part in the tournament,” he added.

The representative told me that he was authorized to offer me 15,000 rubles to cover my travel expenses. Accommodation in Moscow would be funded by the Physical Education Department, separately from that sum. I could leave a large part of that sum to my family. All in all, the offer was very tempting from any point of view – especially the opportunity to play chess again. I agreed, received the money and went home to tell my wife the news ...

But the closer I got to home, the weaker my enthusiasm became. I had overlooked a very important consideration: could I be sure that while I was away, the current authorities of Kiev wouldn’t be overthrown (*Bogatyrchuk recalled that during the years of the Russian Civil War, power in Kiev changed ten times!*), cutting me off from my family and my favorite job?

When I told all that to my wife, she had another objection: she said that I hadn’t recovered from typhus yet, and it would be too difficult for me to withstand the strain of travel and tournament play. We weighed all the pros and cons for a long time and ultimately decided not to take the risk. My wife

⁶ The main street in Kiev

So, What's Next?

Romanovsky: “After the tournaments, we held a one-day conference, essentially discussing one question: the future of the Soviet chess movement and forms of organization most suitable for its further development.

The delegation from Petrograd, headed by the well-known chess promoter S. Vainstein (by the way, he was the board secretary of the pre-revolutionary All-Russian Chess Union), proposed creating a new All-Russian Union, basing its charter on that of the old All-Russian Chess Union.

A. Alekhine and A. Ilyin-Zhenevsky spoke up against this proposal. In particular, the future world champion took a principled stance: he said outright that the future existence of chess is only possible if state organizations take care of it and govern it (*highlighted by me – S.V.*).

Ilyin-Zhenevsky said that the Chess Union format was likely unacceptable – the Union would be incapable of supporting the mass chess movement, which needs vast funding.

The conference didn't adopt any special resolutions. However, Ilyin-Zhenevsky gave a valuable instruction in his speech: to create chess magazines in Russia. At the time, he'd already organized the first chess column in the Vseobuch magazine, *K Novoi Armii* [*For a New Army*'].” (*Shakhmaty v SSSR*, No. 6, 1957.)

The Ruins of Former Greatness

“Unfortunately, the plans to publish a tournament book fell through because of the paper shortage in Russia,” Alekhine wrote, and then explained ironically, “because only works that further Communist propaganda, directly or indirectly, can count on being printed: the state has a monopoly on paper.” And so, out of 120 games played at the Olympiad, only 50 survived (including 12 in Alekhine's notes found in Alexander Kotov's archive – see my new book on Alekhine in Russian published in Moscow in 2020 *The Russian Sphinx* for details). I wonder where the tournament scoresheets went, one of which (the game Pavlov-Pianov – Alekhine) is now in my archive. They couldn't just throw them all away, could they?! And if one of the tournament's organizers had the game sheets, why couldn't they just print all the games a year later in the *Listok Petrogubkommuny*, or later still, in the *Shakhmaty* or *Shakhmatny Listok* magazines?

We can only speculate how many original ideas, tactical fireworks and subtle endgames were lost forever. For despite the Spartan conditions, the players, according to Romanovsky, pulled all the stops: “I remember we went

on strike at the Moscow Olympiad in 1920 because of a lack of cheese and cigarettes, we wore torn boots and ran to the market to exchange bread for cigarettes, but we played making a real effort, with fervor and zeal, fought each other with great excitement and energy.” (*Shakhmatny Listok*, June 1928.)

Alekhine’s Hint

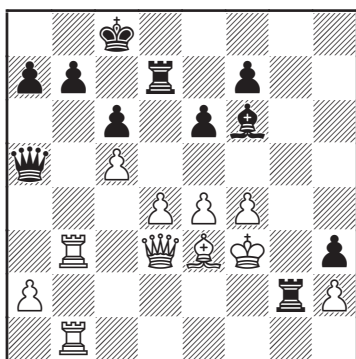
Let’s begin with the most dramatic game of the entire Olympiad. It was played at the very start, but its result ultimately determined the final standings and brought the master’s title to Peter Romanovsky. Still, years later, he would write, “This accidental victory did not make me happy. I realized that this tournament would be a hard test for me.”

No. 1

Romanovsky – Levenfish

Moscow 1920, round 1

Annotated by G. Levenfish

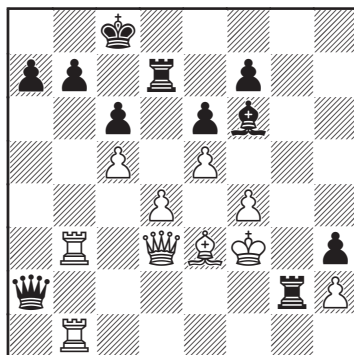


33...♖xa2. 33...♖d8 34.♖a6!
 ♖g8 35.e5 (35.♖xc6+ ♔d8!) 35...
 ♖g4+ 36.♔e4 ♖g6+ 37.♔f3 ♖xh2
 or 37...♖xb1 won as well.

While my opponent thought over his move, I took a walk. Alekhine walked around the hall, too. He looked at my game, and then, walking beside me, said, “Aha, so you’re preparing mate on g2!”

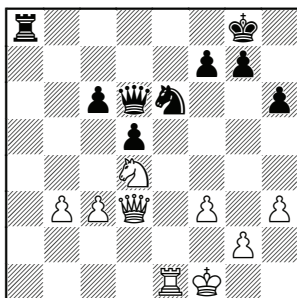
34.e5. Romanovsky clearly saw the rook sacrifice. For instance, 34.♖a3 is met with 34...♖g3+ 35.hxg3 ♖g2+ 36.♔g4 ♖d8 37.♔g1 ♖h8 38.♖xa7 ♖h4# (37.f5 ♖g8+ 38.♔g5 ♔xg5 39.♖f3 ♔e3+ would only prolong the struggle). The game move prevents this combination.

Black could win in numerous ways now. The simplest one was 34...♖d8, again threatening ♖g3+, or 34...♔h4, or 34...♖xh2, without any fancy stuff. But, hypnotized by Alekhine’s words, I came to the board and immediately sacrificed the rook, without even writing the move down!



34...♖g3+?? 35.hxg3 (35. ♖xg3?? ♕g2#) 35...♗g2+ 36.♖g4. I didn't expect this move at all. Curiously, Lasker suffered from a similar hallucination in the game against Bernstein at the St. Petersburg 1914 international tournament.

Indeed, it's very similar. Here's the position in the game Bernstein – Lasker after 35.♞e2-d4.



35...♗h2? “A hallucination,” wrote Tarrasch. “Black thought that he could checkmate his opponent on move 38 by moving the queen to g1, but missed the fact that the white king could escape to g3. After 36.♞xe6 ♖a2 37.♖e2 ♖a1+ 38.♖f2 fxe6 39.♗g6! ♗c7 40.♗xe6+ ♖h8 black was down a pawn and ultimately lost.

36...♖d8 37.♗h7! (That's why white played 34.e5) **37... ♖h8 38.♗xh8+ ♕xh8 39.♖xb7 ♗e2+ 40.♖h4 ♗a6 41.♖b8+ ♖c7 42.♕d2.** Black resigned.

I was punished for my complacency. Because of this game, I finished third in the tournament, while Romanovsky took second place.

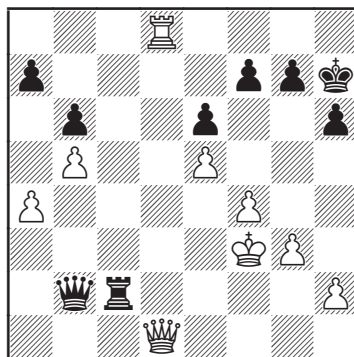
A Double Mistake

In the aforementioned episode, Levenfish was absolutely right. We can't say the same about his game with Alekhine, though, where, as Grigory Yakovlevich would say later, he missed an opportunity to checkmate the eventual winner.

No. 2

Alekhine – Levenfish

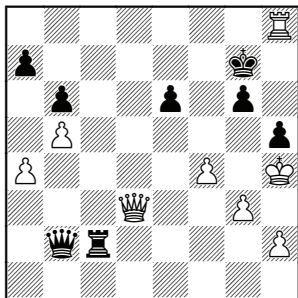
Moscow 1920, round 6⁸



32.♖g4!! “The only path to a draw,” Alekhine exclaims. “If white first plays 32.♗d3+ g6 and only then 33.♖g4, there's 33...f5+ 34.exf6 h5+, winning.” Kotov, in *Alexander Alekhine*, explains how exactly Black would win: “After the only move 35.♖h4! (35.♖g5 ♖c5+), black won with the following: 35... ♗xf6+ 36.♖h3 ♗b2! 37.♖h4! ♖h6! 38.♖h8+! ♖g7!”

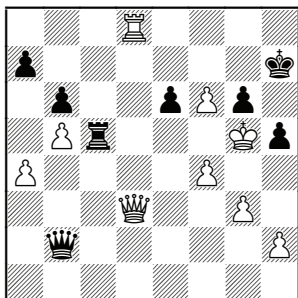
⁸ If the annotation's author is not stated, the games were annotated by me (S.V.).

You'll probably laugh, but... this is wrong! Don't believe me?



It's enough to extend this line with five exclamation marks by just one more move, 39.♔d8!, and the draw becomes obvious: 39...♖c8 40.♗g8+ ♕h7 41.♔xc8 ♔xh2+ 42.♕g5 ♔xg3+ 43.♕f6 ♔xf4+ 44.♕e7 ♔h4+ or 39...♔f6+ 40.♔xf6+ ♕xf6 41.♗f8+ ♕e7 42.♗a8 ♗xh2+ 43.♕g5 ♗g2 44.♗xa7+ etc.

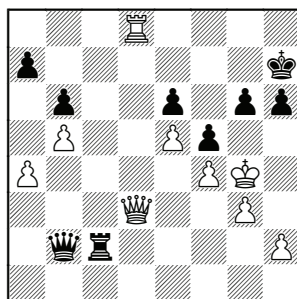
Whereas the bracketed move 35.♕g5, which, after the “deadly” 35...♖c5+ should be eschewed in horror, actually wins:



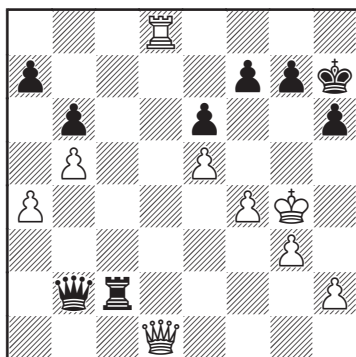
36.f5 ♗xf5+ 37.♔xf5!! (obviously not 37.♕h4 ♔xh2#) 37...gxh5 38.♗d7+ ♕g8 39.♕g6!, and black can only save himself from mate by sacrificing his queen! (I was very

proud of my findings until I learned that L. Veretnov, a coach from Krasnoyarsk, had already found these lines in 2002.)

What's even more amazing, Alekhine's line is doubly wrong. First of all, as we have just seen, it was losing, rather than winning. Secondly, after 32.♔d3+ g6 33.♕g4 f5+, Levenfish showed a simple path to the draw in the *Listok Petrogubkommuny*:



34.♕f3! ♖c3 35.♗d7+ ♕h8 36.♗d8+ with perpetual check. However, he too thought that 34.exf6 lost to 34...h5+.

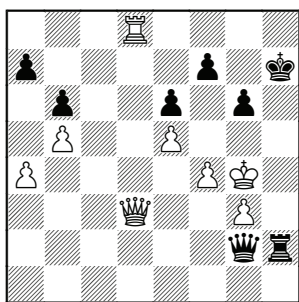


32...♗xh2. “A pity!” Levenfish laments in *Selected Games and*

Memories. “By playing 32...h5+! 33.♔xh5 (33.♔g5 f6+) 33...♖xh2+ 34.♔g4 ♖g2 35.♗d3+ (if 35.♗d7, then 35...♗h6!) 35...g6 36.♗d7 (or 36.♔g5 ♔g7 37.♗d7 ♗h5+ 38.♔g4 ♗h4+!, mating) 36...♔h6! 37.♗xf7 ♗h4+! 38.♔xh4 ♗h2+ 39.♔g4 ♗h5#, black finishes this battle in style.”

It looks pretty indeed. But why then did Alekhine, who after 32...g6 showed the line 33.♗h8+!! ♔xh8 34.♗d8+ ♔h7 35.♗e7! with a draw, have only this to say about the pawn check?: “If 32...h5+, then white can simply play 33.♔xh5!” Did he make a mistake again?

No, this time, his analysis was spot on.



In Levenfish’s line above it turns out that white is not forced to play 36.♗d7? (36.♗f8? ♗h3+ 37.♔f3 ♗g2 38.♗xf7+ ♔h6 39.♔e4 ♗xg3 is bad as well). The bracketed 36.♔g5! ♔g7 actually leads to a draw: instead of 37.♗d7?, there’s 37.♗a3! ♗h5+ 38.♔g4 ♗e2+ (or 38...♔h7 39.♗h8+! ♔xh8 40.♗f8+ ♔h7 41.♗xf7+ ♔h6

42.♗f8+) 39.♗f3 ♗h2 40.♗a3 with repetition.

33.♗d3+ g6 34.♗d7! ♔g7 (34...♗h4+? 35.♔f3!) 35.♗xf7+. Draw.

Dedicated to Grigoriev

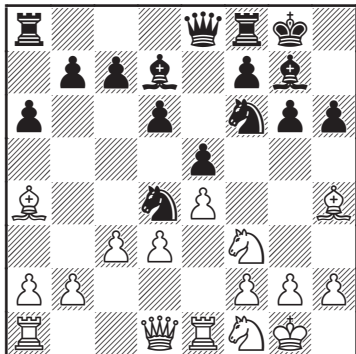
Alekhine got into trouble several times at this tournament, but always found a way to extricate himself. He was especially proud of his game against Ilyin-Zhenevsky, which was among the handful that he included in the book *Chess Life in Soviet Russia*; here, his annotations have been taken from that book and supplemented with short comments made by Alekhine in post-mortem analysis and first published by Kotov. Ilyin-Zhenevsky’s annotations are taken from the *Listok Petrogubkommuny* and his book *Memoirs of a Soviet Master*.

No. 3. Ruy Lopez C77
Ilyin-Zhenevsky – Alekhine
 Moscow 1920, round 7
 Annotated by A. Alekhine
 and A. Ilyin-Zhenevsky

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 g6 7.0-0 ♙g7 8.♗e1 0-0 9.♙g5 h6 10.♙h4 ♙d7 11.♘bd2 ♗e8. This plan, with the subsequent bishop and knight trade, is not too sound, because the trades don’t improve black’s position (IZh).

Fritz proposes 11...g5 12.♖g3 g4 13.♘h4 ♘h5.

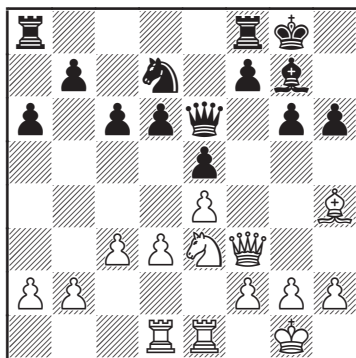
12.♘f1 ♘d4. It was better to prepare the break f7-f5 with 12...♘h7 (A).



After Alekhine made his move, he excitedly jumped up and went for a walk. I soon saw him with a group of players, and he was hotly explaining something to them. Everyone else was excited too. "Piece! Piece!" was the only thing I heard. Some players approached the board, looked at the position and walked away. "Am I losing a piece?" I thought. However, no matter how hard I looked, I saw nothing of the sort. Then everything quietened down. Romanovsky, smiling, approached my board. "What's the matter? What's happening?" I asked him. "Nothing," he said. "A false alarm. Alekhine thought he'd blundered a piece." Soon, Alekhine calmed down and returned to his seat as well (IZh).

13.♙xd7 ♘xf3+ 14.♙xf3 ♘xd7 (this trade is more beneficial for

white – A) 15.♘e3 c6 16.♖ad1 ♙e6.



17.g4! Preventing f7-f5. After 17...♙xa2, white could play 18.♘c4 with various strong threats (A).

17...♙f6! Black should go for further trades to hinder the development of the opponent's initiative (A).

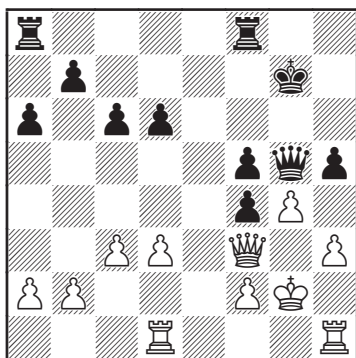
18.♙xf6 ♙xf6 19.♙g3 ♘c5 20.♘g2 ♘e6 21.♖f1 ♘f4. Or else f2-f4 – IZh.

22.♘xf4 exf4 23.♙f3. It was better to trade queens. Now black gets a better game, because the f4 square becomes a weakness in white's position (A).

23...♙g7 24.♙g2 h5 25.h3 (of course, not 25.gxh5 due to 25...♖h8 – A) 25...♙g5. This maneuver leads to nothing. It was better to play 25...♖h8 and then ♖ae8-e5 (A).

26.♖h1 f5. It was necessary to play 26...♖ae8 27.♖dg1 d5, and white likely wouldn't get enough counterplay (A).

27.exf5 gxf5.

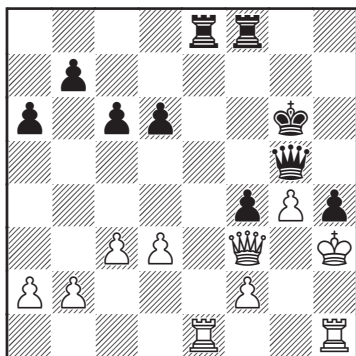


28.♖dg1! (the saving move – A) 28...fxg4 29.hxg4 h4. Ilyin-Zhenevsky assigns a question mark to this move: “It was necessary to play 29...hxg4, agreeing to a draw: 30.♙f1 gxf3 (Kotov’s move 30...g3 is bad: 31.♖h5 ♜g6 32.♖h4! with an advantage for white) 31.♖xg5+ ♙f6 32.♖gh5 ♖ae8 33.♖h6+”.

The computer proposes preparing the pawn push with 29...♖h8.

30.♙h3! ♖ae8 31.♖e1 ♙g6. Hoping for 32.d4 ♜d5! 33.♜d3+ ♙g5 34.c4 ♖e3+!! 35.♜xe3 ♜xh1+, and black should win. But white can play simpler and stronger.

31...♖e5 was more cautious, seizing the open file (A).



32.♖e2! Now, white gets there faster than his opponent (A).

However, his opponent accords the move a question mark: “White should have played 32.♖e4, and if 32...d5, then 33.♖e2 with the subsequent ♖he1, with good winning chances for white.” Curiously, the computer agrees: 33...a5 34.♖he1 ♖xe2 35.♜xe2 ♜f6 36.♜e7 or 33...♖g8 34.♖he1 ♙f7 35.d4 ♜f6 36.♖e5 ♖xe5 37.♖xe5 etc.

32...♖xe2 33.♜xe2 ♜e5! Were the black pawn already on d5, this equalizing move would have been impossible (IZh).

34.♖e1 ♖e8 35.♜e4+ ♜xe4 (35...♙g5? 36.♜h7! ♜xe1 37.♜g7# IZh) 36.♖xe4. After I made that move, the bell rang, announcing the break (not after 38.f3, as Kotov wrote). I wanted to wait until Alekhine sealed his move, but he thought so intensely and for so long that I ultimately left alone. I was in a great mood. I had no doubt that my position was won. Indeed, if Alekhine exchanges rooks, I have a clearly won pawn ending. And if he plays 36...♖f8, I give a check on e6, and then capture the d6 pawn. Alekhine seemingly can’t save the game after that.

What was Alekhine doing after I was gone? I’ll tell you what I heard from Grigoriev. Alekhine sat at the board for about an hour, then sealed his move and left. Shortly before the break’s end, he returned to the club, happy and beaming. When he met Grigoriev, he handed him a full

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