

CHESS BARBS

WHEN RUSSIAN HOPES SOARED

by Jude Acers
(US senior master)

Commentary and "lecture notes" by international grandmaster Lev Polugaevsky, translated from "64", No. 32, Aug. 11-17, 1972, pp. 9-10.

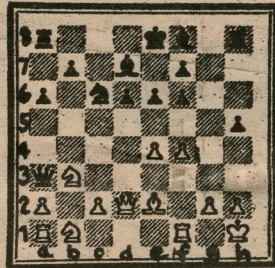
At last the long-awaited victory, the importance of which would be hard to overestimate. At the most critical moment of the match Spassky shows his courage and strength of mind. Personally, the favorable outcome of the eleventh game raised my hopes that the world champion would take command of himself, restore his former confidence and put him in good spirits. This is not to say that success in just one game will turn the match around 180 degrees. But I do think that Spassky has now found it within his power to begin dictating his will.

This game is remarkable because it marks the first instance during the match that an opening variation has been repeated. Until now both grandmasters have seemingly felt one another out in variegated channels of opening theory. The underlying tactic of maneuver has apparently been designed to avoid surprises in the initial stage of the game. This time, however, two fundamentally opposing opinions clashed over one of the most disputed variations in the Sicilian Defense, and the combatants resolved to argue the issue once again in order to defend their

respective points of view.

White: Robert Fischer. Black: Boris Spassky. World Championship, Match Game No. 11. Reykjavik, Iceland, August 6, 1972. Sicilian Defense

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cd
4 Nd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6



Position after 14 Nbl1

7 f4 Qb6 8 Qd2 Qb2(A) 9 Nb3(B) Qa3 10 Bf6(C) gf 11 Be2 h5(D) 12 0-0 Nc6 13 Khl(E) Bd7(F) 14 Nbl1(G) Qb4 15 Qe3(H) d5 16 ed Ne7 17 c4(I) Nf5 18 Qd3 h4(J) 19 Bg4(K) Nd6(L) 20 Nid2 f5 21 a3 Qb6(M) 22 c5 Qb5 23 Qc3(N) fg 24 a4 h3(O) 25 ab hgch 26 Kg2 Rh3 27 Qf6 Nf5 28 c6 Bc8 29 de fe 30 Rfel Be7 31 Re6 Black resigns.

(A) The final word has yet to be spoken regarding this opening system. Those who relish sharp positions play it for both White and Black. "Defenders" say thanks for the QNP, while "attackers" are just as happy to sacrifice it. As

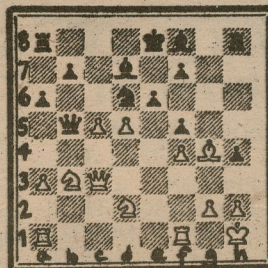
an old "Sicilian" veteran who has witnessed many a Sicilian storm, I confess that I have always looked upon 7...Qb6 with some trepidation. To me, it seems foolish to force the lone queen into the enemy camp to take on the whole White army. But this is already a matter of taste. It is quite another matter to prove the strength or weakness of Black's seventh move. This game will undoubtedly play a definite role in the evolution of the variation.

(B) The consequences of the frequently met 9 Rbl are unclear. Fischer is well acquainted with the ins and outs of this line, so Spassky quite understandably prefers the less well analyzed text move.

(C) Up to the tenth move an exact copy of the seventh game. There White played 10 Bd3, which led to complications favoring Black. But now the twin paths part, Spassky adopting another, highly promising looking plan. White exchanges his bishop to shatter Black's king-side pawns. In such positions the black king usually remains in the center of the board, which by itself signifies plenty of trouble.

(D) He must not allow the blockading maneuver 12 Bh5. Also, the push 12 f5 needs to be met by 12...Bh6.

(E) A necessary precaution.



Position after 23 Qc3.

Black often bases his counterplay on the diagonal g1-a7. Therefore, White vacates his king in advance for a safer place.

(F) Fischer makes the most obvious moves, not even suspecting the clever snare lying in wait for him.

(G) This paradoxical retreat by the knight suddenly confronts Black with the difficult problem of how to save his wayward queen. Fischer's uncertain replies indicate that he was taken unaware.

(H) White threatens to slam the trap closed with 16 a3 Qa4 17 Nc3. Sensing the ground going out from under him, Fischer makes an impulsive move in hopes of confusing his opponent, but he only gets in deeper than ever. Of course, it is still too early to pass final judgment on Black's entire opening strategy, but the impression gained is that Spassky has convincingly won the theoretical argument. Now it is Fischer's turn either to rehabilitate the whole line for Black or to abandon his favorite variation.

(I) Simplest, accentuating the total absurdity of Black's venture. The king position has been hopelessly weakened, and White has only to prepare the decisive blow.

(J) If 18...ed, then 19 Nc3! Qc4 20 Qd2, with a fierce attack. Fischer can only hope for an accident: 19...Ng3ch 20 hg hgch 21 Kgl Bc5ch. But Black's minor annoyances are easily handled by White. Naturally, no satisfactory defense for Black is about to be found. Nonetheless, 18...Rc8 should be tried.

(K) Eliminating the threat of 19...Ng3ch.

(L) Equivalent to resignation. The black knight cuts off the queen's last escape route. Better is 19...Nh6 in any event.

(M) Or 21...Qa4 22 Nc5.

(N) Now on 23...Rg8 White continues 24 Nd4 Bg7 (24...Qa4 25 Bdl) 25 Nb5 Bc3 26 Nc3.

(O) Nothing comes of 24...Qe2 because of 25 Rael. It is all over now and time to give up, but the American grandmaster caused general surprise by prolonging the struggle senselessly. Fighting to the finish is a desirable attribute, but world championship matches have yet to require winning with a queen ahead. One must know how to lose with dignity. The final moves of the game can only elicit a smile...