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The Longest Game

The Five Kasparov - Karpov Matches for the
World Chess Championship

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Foreword

In many sports, we have seen famous duels between two eternal rivals who made the achievements of all their colleague players look pale in comparison: Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal in tennis, Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus in golf, Alain Prost and Ayrton Senna in the Formula 1 racing. But never was a man-to-man fight so penetrating, so thoroughly gripping, as the one between the chess champions Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov. In a period of six years, they played five World Championship matches against each other. All in all, they sat opposite each other for four full months; making 5540 moves in 144 games. By rights, this can be called the longest game that was ever played.

The idea to write a book about these five matches came from Allard Hoogland, the publisher of *New In Chess*. He wasn't only interested in the games, but also in the backgrounds, the politics, and the personal peculiarities of the two K's. 'Money, madness, brilliancies and blunders', as he put it.

Initially, I felt a certain amount of scepticism. Kasparov himself had written extensively about the matches – what was there to be added? But, after a study of his three thick books, *Kasparov on Modern Chess* parts two, three and four, I found Hoogland's idea to be viable. And not just because it seemed strange that the entire story of the matches had never been told in a single volume before.

Kasparov often used quotations without adding his own assessments. And, of course, his stories are based on his own viewpoints. There was enough room for other stories and anecdotes. In his analyses, Kasparov often loses his way in a forest of variations. A slightly lighter form of annotations might make the games more accessible. Another advantage is that all the material is now presented in a single volume. And there was yet another consideration: since the appearance of Kasparov's books, computers had become much stronger. Part of his analyses would not hold out against the new cybernetic findings. I realize that this is a self-repeating mechanism; my own findings are also doomed to require corrections after an x-amount of years.

With 50 annotated games and 17 fragments, I have tried to bring these five matches back to life. Thus, I have created a reader as well as an instruction book, since there is still a lot to be learned from the games of this epic battle.

Jan Timman,
Arnhem, November 2018

Introduction

In chess, a match is the purest trial of strength. There are no third parties, and the amount of white and black games is always equal. Therefore, it is not surprising that chess has a long tradition of matches for the highest crown. In the beginning, there wasn't an official world title at stake. In the first half of the 19th century, the Frenchman Louis-Charles Mahé de la Bourdonnais and the Irishman Alexander McDonnell fought each other in a contest held over six matches at the Westminster Chess Club in London; they were considered the strongest players of their time. All these matches were played at short intervals in 1834. De la Bourdonnais won four of them, McDonnell one, and the final match was never finished. In total, they played 85 games against each other.

It was only in 1886 that the first official World Championship match was played. Wilhelm Steinitz defeated Johannes Zukertort in a 24-game contest that was held in New York, Saint Louis and New Orleans. This 24-game format was to become the standard much later, after the Second World War. At the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, a different format was often chosen. There was no coordinating organization like FIDE back then, which meant that the world champions and their challengers had a free hand to arrange their matches and choose the format.

Steinitz-Lasker in 1894 was the first match where a player had to win 10 games to gain the title. It was precisely this format that Bobby Fischer wanted to use roughly 80 years later in his match against Anatoly Karpov. Fischer argued that this would prevent the eventuality that one of the players would sustain his lead in the match by playing for draws. The obvious drawback of Fischer's proposal was that matches could be drawn out for many months. In the days of Steinitz and Lasker, this danger didn't exist. Emanuel Lasker defeated one rival after the other in less than 20 games, in matches where the victor had to win 8 or 10 games. Remarkably, the Capablanca-Alekhine match was scheduled for 6 won games – and it was exactly this match that took much longer than Lasker's matches. This format was employed three times in the 1970s and 1980s, as a direct consequence of Fischer's proposal. In fact, FIDE was responsive to the argument that a player who was leading in the match would start playing too cautiously.

World championship matches can have so much impact that they sometimes mark the end of an era. José Raul Capablanca took Lasker's place, and in turn he was dethroned by Alexander Alekhine; three chess Caesars, each with their own era. In recent times, the same has happened: Magnus Carlsen put an end to the Anand era. But things can go differently, too. Fischer managed to put an end to the era of Boris Spassky, but at the same time he also put an end to his own era, since he stopped playing after winning the title. The case of Mikhail Botvinnik was more complicated. He remained in the saddle for fifteen years, playing six matches with four different opponents. Tigran Petrosian dethroned him for good, but David Bronstein and Mikhail Tal didn't manage this. And neither did Vasily Smyslov, actually, but I hesitate to mention his name in this context.

Botvinnik and Smyslov played three World Championship matches in the 1950s. The first ended drawn (12-12), the next was won by Smyslov, and in the third match, Botvinnik recaptured his title. In fact, we could say that there were two chess Caesars ruling in those years. They played 69 games for the highest honour in four years; Smyslov won 18 of them and Botvinnik 17. The other 34 games ended in draws. It didn't seem probable that such a protracted titanic struggle would ever be repeated in chess history. And yet, this is exactly what happened three decades later.

The road to the top

Neither Anatoly Karpov nor Garry Kasparov experienced any kind of setbacks on their road to the top. Both of them succeeded in their first attempt to cover the long road through the Interzonal tournament and the Candidates Matches. Before, only Tal had shown such a meteoric rise. Petrosian and Spassky had risen to the top level slowly. Fischer belonged to the world's top at a very young age, but he only became Champion ten years after his appearance in the Candidates tournament at Curaçao. Karpov was 20 when he gained access to the world elite. In 1971, the year when Fischer celebrated his great triumphs in the Candidates Matches, Karpov won his first top tournament. In the Alekhine Memorial in Moscow, he came shared first with Leonid Stein, ahead of four former World Champions: Smyslov, Petrosian, Tal and Spassky. At the time of his World Championship match with Spassky, Fischer must have sensed that Karpov could be his challenger in the next cycle.

Karpov made no mistakes in the Interzonal tournament in Leningrad 1973. He raged through the event with an iron hand, winning when necessary and making draws if there was nothing more to be gained. In the Candidates Matches, Karpov had one difficult moment: he lost the

first game with white against Spassky. But he recovered, and eventually won the match convincingly. Now the Final match against Kortchnoi was scheduled. Karpov said later that at that point, he was already gearing up for the World Championship match against Fischer; Kortchnoi would be an easy hurdle to take. However, the match against Fischer never took place, and this was a huge disappointment for Karpov. He had wanted to learn from Fischer, just as Kasparov would later learn valuable lessons from him. For seven years, Karpov was condemned to playing matches with Kortchnoi. After he had disposed of the latter once and for all in 1981, it was clear that he would be facing a younger challenger in the next cycle.

For a short time, I hoped to be that challenger myself. I had won great tournaments ahead of Karpov and Kortchnoi, and had reached second place on the Elo rating list, ahead of Kasparov and Kortchnoi. But in 1982, many things went wrong for me. Tortured by sleeping problems, I failed miserably at the Interzonal tournament in Las Palmas. On the other hand, 1982 was the year of Kasparov's breakthrough. He won the traditional top tournament in Bugojno overwhelmingly. The Interzonal tournament in Moscow went less smoothly for him. FIDE had determined that there would be three Interzonal tournaments with two qualifying places each, instead of two tournaments with three places each. This put extra pressure on the favourites. Kasparov started with 5½ points out of 8 games. In the 9th round, he was paired with black against Ulf Andersson, who had the same score. It transpired that 1982 was an excellent year for the Swedish strategist as well. He managed to outplay Kasparov completely in their game. The latter saved himself by a draw offer, inspired by desperation. In itself, there was no reason at all for Andersson to even consider accepting this offer. He was running no risk whatsoever, and he had different ways to liquidate into a technically winning endgame. However, the tension must have been too much for him, and he accepted the offer. After that, Kasparov made no mistakes in the concluding phase of the tournament.

In hindsight, Kasparov didn't seem to experience any difficulties in the Candidates matches. Yet, there were several awkward moments that had nothing to do with his chess-technical qualities. Due to a conflict between FIDE and the Soviet chess federation, Kasparov ran the risk of losing his match with Kortchnoi by forfeit. FIDE chairman Florencio Campomanes had allotted the match to Pasadena, which was the place where Fischer was living as a recluse at the time. The Soviets insisted that the match be played in Rotterdam. Kasparov didn't show up, and initially Kortchnoi was declared the winner. Eventually, the match did take place – in London, several months later. It turned out not to be a walkover for Kasparov. He

lost the first game with white. There are parallels with Karpov's opening loss against Spassky, but the difference was that Kasparov didn't manage to recover as fast as Karpov had. He failed to get the match in his grip, until in the 6th game Kortchnoi grossly overplayed his hand in a superior position. Now, the deadlock was overcome, and Kasparov convincingly took control and won the match.

On the January 1984 rating list, Kasparov was leading with 2710 Elo, and Karpov had 10 points less. In this Orwell and Murakami year, these two top players started a series of matches that would grow to be even more epic than the struggle between Botvinnik and Smyslov. In a six-year time span, they played five matches, totalling 144 games – almost doubling that earlier clash of titans (and also much more than the total number of games between De la Bourdonnais and McDonnell). And here also, the score remained almost equal: 21 victories for Kasparov, 19 for Karpov. Before the fifth and last match, in 1990, Kasparov announced that he would destroy his rival; he wanted to end the Karpov era once and for all. He didn't succeed – in the end he only managed to win by a one-point margin.

Curiously, it was Nigel Short who ended the Karpov era. In 1992, the Englishman defeated the Russian in the semifinal of the Candidates matches. Thus, Karpov was eliminated and couldn't play a sixth match against Kasparov. But he could still be regarded as the second player in the world. We can say that the absolute hegemony of the two K's lasted more than a decade; they were the two strongest players in the world from 1983 to 1994. One year later, this second position was taken over by Viswanathan Anand.

Botvinnik's comment on the eve of the first Karpov-Kasparov match is interesting. In an interview with Alexander Münnighoff for *New In Chess*, he said the following: 'The match between Karpov and Kasparov will distinguish itself from the usual title fights. I think that, from a creative point of view, this will be the third top match in this century. The first was Alekhine-Capablanca in 1927. The second was the two matches between Tal and me in 1960/61. And Karpov-Kasparov will be the third high point – since it will not actually be about the question who is the strongest. This match will be creative especially because it will be a clash between two fundamentally different approaches to chess.' Next, Botvinnik explains that Karpov is the practitioner, and Kasparov the researcher. It is curious that he doesn't mention the greatest match of the previous century: Spassky-Fischer. However, he wasn't talking about aspects like the Cold War on the chessboard, or the lonely warrior fighting against an entire realm. Botvinnik was only talking about the clash of styles: the strategist versus the attacker, the practical player versus the

more scientifically oriented player. And here we see something curious: he – Botvinnik – was the only strategist who was a researcher at the same time. Alekhine and Kasparov were attackers and researchers, while Capablanca and Karpov were strategists and practical players.

Naturally, Botvinnik could not have foreseen that four more matches would follow. And in fact, the first match wasn't the most interesting one. The first part of this match was rather one-sided – Karpov was vastly superior. Kasparov was receiving some instructive chess lessons from Karpov. This is how many experts summarized the events, and Karpov agreed. The second part of the match was characterized by a huge number of bloodless draws. For Karpov, this was the third match that was played according to the Capablanca-Alekhine format, i.e. for 6 won games. In Baguio City 1978, he had needed 32 games to defeat Kortchnoi – two less than Alekhine in his match with Capablanca. In the second match, in Merano 1981, Karpov had followed Lasker's example; he had finished the job in under 20 games. The general expectation was that the first match between Karpov and Kasparov in Moscow would be a long one. But when Karpov was already leading 4-0 after nine games, the end seemed to be near. However, at that moment, an effect occurred that Fischer had pointed out: playing with the aim of consolidating a lead will not bring you success. Nevertheless, this was just what Karpov did, and the result was that after five months – with 48 games played – the match was stopped with the score being 5-3 in Karpov's favour. The last two games had been won by Kasparov, but even in those, there was no question of a clash between styles; Karpov was just exhausted, and he played without his customary accuracy. FIDE decided to avoid the disaster scenario of endless matches in the future, and the next four matches were traditionally played over 24 games.

The second match in Moscow, and the third in London and Leningrad, did follow Botvinnik's criteria. The number of sharp struggles, both in a strategic and a combinatory sense, was enormous. In an interview before the second match, Spassky said that Karpov should actually be paying a thousand dollars for every post-mortem with Kasparov. This was clearly a reaction to the general notion that Karpov was supposed to be the tutor. By the way, Spassky certainly didn't mean that he considered Kasparov to be the better player. On the contrary, he thought that Karpov was stronger. But his words followed naturally from Botvinnik's theory: Karpov, the strategist and practical player, could learn a lot from the dynamic style and the systematic preparation of his 12-year-younger rival.

The fourth match, in Seville 1987, was somewhat disappointing from a creative point of view. A lot of energy had been demanded from the two

giants: four long matches in as many years. It was actually miraculous that the match could take place at all, due to an administrative aberration by the FIDE board. In hindsight, we can be grateful for this – with this match, the epic clash of titans was stretched out even further.

The fifth and final match in New York and Lyon in 1990 was probably the best of them all. Even though Karpov was already approaching forty, he had not lost much of his strength, while Kasparov was at the height of his powers. Especially the first half of the match in New York showed an explosion of new ideas. This fifth match was much more interesting than Kasparov's later matches against Anand and Kramnik, and it also outshines Carlsen's (shorter) World Championship matches against Anand and Sergey Karjakin in quality.

CATHERINE JAEG



CATHERINE JAEG



British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher conducted the drawing of lots for the first game.

CHAPTER 3

London/Leningrad 1986

Karpov and Kasparov played their first 75 games in Moscow. After Kasparov had become the World Champion, the stage was moved to other cities. Only one more game between them would take place in Moscow: in 1988, during the 55th USSR Championship. It ended in a draw.

First the stage was moved to London, where the first half of the revenge match would take place. However, before that, several strange things happened. On 5 December, less than a month after the second match, Karpov claimed his right to a revenge match. That was to be expected: he had made a strong point for this at the termination of the first match. Only it was curious that the start date was set at 10 February. Right before Christmas, Kasparov was going to play a 6-game match with me in Hilversum. After that, there remained less than two months until the start of the new match.

No world champion before Kasparov had ever been treated with so little respect. It looks like Campomanes had made this decision all by himself. At the time, the FIDE board was completely in his power. His fellow managers were a group of vassals he could manipulate like marionettes.

For one reason or other, Campomanes had conceived the idea to rush through the World Championship cycle as quickly as possible. The Candidates matches, for instance, were planned to take place in early January. For me, this was a very tight schedule. The Candidates tournament had finished in early November; after that, I had played a playoff match against Tal. After my match with Kasparov, there was hardly any time left for preparation. I managed to postpone my match against Jussupow for two weeks, but it didn't help; I went down without a chance.

The match in Hilversum was very worthwhile. There was also a lot of interest in it. It was unique that a fresh world champion came out for a free match with a direct rival. Thousands of people came to the playing venue in the KRO television studio every day. Outside the building there were often long queues of people waiting to be let in. Such interest in chess hadn't been seen in the Netherlands since the times of Euwe.

All the games were interesting. Kasparov won 4-2, but I was the first to beat the new World Champion in a game.

After the match, there was a press conference at Schiphol Airport. At that occasion, Kasparov made it known that he would prefer to see

Campomanes disappear as FIDE President. He proposed a new candidate for the presidency: the Brazilian Lincoln Lucena, who had witnessed the latest match in Moscow as a journalist. Keene was to become his secretary-general. Furthermore, Kasparov announced that he refused categorically to play a revenge match.

Also at Schiphol, Rolf Littorin, the chairman of the recently founded European Chess Union, made a speech. The eloquent Swede sided with Kasparov's refusal, and was supported in this by a number of leading grandmasters, like Larsen, Ljubojevic, Najdorf, Seirawan and me. What we didn't know was that Kasparov had signed a document earlier that year in which Karpov's right to a revenge match had been laid down. That made this refusal curious, to say the least. Later, Kasparov tried to justify his behaviour by claiming that he'd had no choice: he had been forced to sign those documents. But of course, this was not the way of the world. He would have done better to demand a postponement of the match – he would have had more chance of success than I had with my match versus Jussupow.

Meanwhile, the bids for the revenge match had come in. London had 600,000 pounds at its disposal, or 1.8 million Swiss francs. The pound was very high at the time. Leningrad had made a bid of 1 million Swiss francs. Representatives of the English Chess Federation immediately contacted the Soviets to make sure that the first half of the match would be played in London.

Just before New Year's Eve, before their efforts had resulted in anything, Campomanes came with another strange action. In an interview with Associated Press, he threatened to deprive Kasparov of his title if the latter didn't agree to a revenge match before 7 January. Nobody was served with this deadline. It was clear that Campomanes wanted to throw his weight about, and was giving his rancour free rein. The deadline passed and nothing happened. That was no surprise. Campomanes had acted against FIDE regulations: a player could not be disqualified until two weeks after the match had been assigned. Until that time, he could say what he wanted.

The sole result of Campomanes' erratic behaviour was that now the match definitely had to be postponed until a later date. English officials approached their Soviet colleagues again. Surprisingly, Karpov and Kasparov also entered into consultation with each other. In *Kasparov on Modern Chess*, part three (page 14), Kasparov tells something about their conversations. When he proposed to organize a three-way match between the winner of the Candidates matches and the two of them, Karpov reacted as follows:

‘What right do you have to suggest this? The world championship title – is it your own personal property? It’s the property of FIDE. You can only take up your position – that’s all. And in general I don’t see that there is anything to be discussed, because here is a document stating that in the event of Kasparov defeating the world champion he is obliged to play a return match. Here is his signature. What is there to talk about?’

An informative passage; Karpov shows himself to be a law-abiding man, while Kasparov considered that the World Champion and his challenger could decide for themselves what they would do. The conversation can be seen as a precursor of the events seven years later, when Kasparov and Short decided to organize their match outside FIDE.

Nevertheless, the two K’s quickly reached an agreement on the revenge match and issued a statement, which was approved by the Soviet Chess Federation. Then, they travelled to Lucerne to talk with Campomanes at the FIDE headquarters. This led to a press statement by FIDE that dictated that the match would start in London between 28 July and 4 August, and that the second half would be held in Leningrad. It was also suggested that it would be preferable to organize the entire match in London, but that never became a serious option. In the Circular Letter of FIDE, Campomanes made a curious claim, namely that Kasparov had never said that he wouldn’t play the return match, and that the journalists had misunderstood him. This was a blatant misrepresentation of things, as there were tape recordings on which Kasparov said exactly that.

Also curious was how the two K’s spent their free time in Lucerne. In Kasparov’s words: ‘We spent all our free time playing cards together...’ As if they hadn’t spent enough time opposite each other at the chessboard! I myself have played many Candidates matches, nine in total. In those years, I have frittered away a lot of time in all kinds of dubious bars, but it never entered my head to entice my opponent into playing a game of cards. I wonder what Botvinnik thought of his pupil’s behaviour – a true researcher spends his time in a different way.

In the months before the match, Karpov played two tournaments. He won the first SWIFT tournament in Brussels overwhelmingly. In the much stronger tournament in Bugojno, he also eventually managed to achieve first place, but there his play was less impressive than in Brussels.

Kasparov played much less; he restricted himself to a match with Anthony Miles, which took place in Basel. He won by a large margin, 5.5-0.5, but in spite of this, his play wasn’t very convincing. In the first game, he let a superior position slip and landed in a precarious position. In mutual time trouble, Miles lost control of the game. The second game

was won by Kasparov after Miles had several times avoided a draw by perpetual check. And in the final game, Kasparov, playing Black, came up with a highly dubious novelty that could have led to a loss.

It was clear that a lack of practical experience had been playing tricks on Kasparov. I wondered if this would prove to be a handicap against Karpov. I put this question to Spassky in Bugojno. The former World Champion opined that Kasparov might have trouble with this during the first three to five games, but not after that. Then Spassky said something very interesting: he regarded Kasparov as the favourite, not because he was the better player, but because he had learned well how to combat Karpov. Chess-technically, he thought Karpov was still the stronger of the two. This view intrigued me; I had never thought about a World Championship match in that way. It seems to me now that Spassky was right.

In the summer, shortly before the match, Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, visited the United Kingdom. He had brought a special chess set as a present for Margaret Thatcher. The pieces were designed in white and blue. Thatcher was pleased with the set – blue is the colour of the Conservative Party. Shevardnadze's gift was clear evidence of the huge status of chess; it played a role in diplomatic associations.

Nevertheless, it hadn't been so easy to gather together the money for the match. The GLC (Greater London Council) was the main sponsor. This municipal institution had already sponsored four tournaments in London. And now, tons of public money were reserved for the match. How was this possible? In *The Centenary Match*, Keene and Goodman attribute this to the 'far sighted vision' of the chairman of the GLC Arts and Recreation committees. People outside the chess world opined that this 'visionary' was squandering public money. The fact that the match had been split up meant that not more than 300,000 pounds had to be put on the table.

However, there was a problem: the GLC was disbanded on 1 April. Its duties were taken over by the London Residuary Body. The directors of this new institution didn't want to get their fingers burnt on the question of whether those hundreds of thousands of pounds had been spent well – they left the decision to the government.

Those were stressful days for the officials of the English Federation. There was quite a bit of lobbying going on in the early days of April. As it turned out, a number of heavyweights in the government were favourably disposed towards chess, and the green light was given for spending the money. This was according to expectations; Thatcher was going to open the match in person. Further sponsoring was modest. The insurance company Save & Prosper put up 10,000 pounds for the best game, British

Airways arranged the flight tickets, and a champagne company offered a thousand bottles. The latter must have been Keene's work; he is a great lover of champagne.

For Kasparov, it was the first time that he was going to earn a large sum in western currency. He decided to make a generous gesture: he put all his prize money at the disposal of the Chernobyl Relief Fund. In late April, a terrible nuclear disaster had taken place there. If he won the prize for the best game, that money would also go to Ukraine. Only the champagne bottles stayed in London; there was nothing to celebrate in the Chernobyl disaster area.

Karpov, of course, did have experience with World Championship matches in the West. He must have been slightly unhappy with Kasparov's charitable deed. It would be awkward for him to keep the prize money under these circumstances. Reluctantly, he followed Kasparov's example, after deliberating on it for two weeks.

Campomanes, on the other hand, wanted to keep the money that was reserved for FIDE – no charity! One year earlier, it had been established that FIDE would receive a percentage of the prize money for every draw; a substantial amount, which would then be added to the CACDEC fund. It was an election year; Campomanes was determined to use the fund to win the favour of the delegates of chess development countries. However, the English were not prepared to oblige the chairman of FIDE that easily. As Keene and Goodman wrote, 'In the course of another dispute with the organisers over payments to FIDE, Campomanes actually threatened to take down Save & Prosper's nameboard with his bare hands. The sign, sandwiched between the legs of the table on the stage, was immediately nailed down by the organisers, who affixed another similar sign on the back of the table to prevent Campomanes' turning the table around.' Campomanes could be a quick-tempered fellow. To think that Save & Prosper only sponsored a prize that FIDE could lay no claim to! Incidentally, Campomanes was not the only one who was impervious to charity. The Soviet authorities also turned out to have other plans for the prize fund. About this, Kasparov wrote in *Kasparov on Modern Chess*, part three (page 111):

'We were presented with the following chain of logical deduction. Since the USSR Council of Ministers had decreed that there should be a prize of 72,000 roubles for the Moscow matches, there was no reason to revise this figure for a return match. As the match had been divided into two halves, the same must be done with the prize money: 36,000 roubles in Leningrad and 36,000 (this time in foreign currency roubles) in London. From this it followed that Kasparov and Karpov could dispose only of this sum. In

other words, out of the 691,000 Swiss francs, which at the official rate of exchange was then 290,000 foreign currency roubles (paid to us by the London organisers in the ratio of five eighths to the winner and three eighths to the loser), the USSR Sports Committee paid into the Chernobyl fund only “our” 36,000 foreign currency roubles! There is an obvious difference between 290,000 and 36,000, but still more obvious in this case was the difference between human morality and bureaucratic morality.’ It’s safe to say that this act by the communist leaders was testimony to their blatant cynicism.

Curiously, Kasparov had two delegation leaders: the head of the Azerbaijan department of Intourist, Syavush Eganov, and, as a deputy, a KGB-man called Victor Litvinov. His seconds were Alexander Nikitin, Iosip Dorfman, Evgeny Vladimirov, and Georgy Timoshenko. The latter would only join the team in London. Timoshenko had asked to be appointed head second. When this request was denied, he was only available for half of the match. However, this did not weaken Kasparov’s team. In Leningrad, Mikhail Gurevich and Elmar Magerramov reinforced the team.

Karpov did not have a clear delegation leader, but he did have a press attaché: the Yugoslav Dmitri Bjelica. That was a strange choice, as Bjelica was known as a gutter journalist who wrote books that were full of printing errors and plagiarisms. As seconds, Karpov had Igor Zaitsev, Sergei Makarychev and Valery Salov. In Leningrad, they would be joined by Alexander Beliavsky. Lothar Schmid would be the chief arbiter; Campomanes had been unable to do anything about that this time.

The match was played in the Grand Ballroom of the Park Lane Hotel, where the opening would also take place. The Ballroom was situated under ground level; during the war, it had been assigned as the alternative location for the Parliament in case Westminster was bombed. As a playing venue, it had a disadvantage: the rumbling of an underground train could be heard every five minutes, as the Piccadilly line was very close. For the opening, the Ballroom was transformed into a gigantic chessboard, bordered by two rooks: the Tower of London and St Basil’s Cathedral (situated on Red Square). The players had adapted their attire to the surroundings: Karpov wore white, Kasparov black. Thatcher was dressed in a ‘black two-piece with matching black and white blouse’.

There were around 500 guests, all of them appropriately dressed in white or black. Among them were also Tim Rice and the actress Elaine Paige. Rice had written the musical *Chess*, which had opened two months earlier in the Prince Edward Theatre. Paige played a starring role in the musical. Chess played an important role at the time, not only in politics,

but also in cultural life. Incidentally, the musical accompaniment during the opening consisted of a fanfare performed by a band called The Coldstream Guards – slightly less prominent.

In her speech Thatcher said: ‘... Chess is rather like mathematics (...) You need to learn it young to get used to it and get it into your bloodstream.’ There was also the inevitable comparison with politics. For chess as well as politics, three characteristics were of cardinal importance, Thatcher claimed: ‘precision of thought, imagination and being in good physical shape’. And there was also a difference: ‘Chess is limited in time – we deal in unfinished business.’ You could also say that in politics the rules are not fixed.

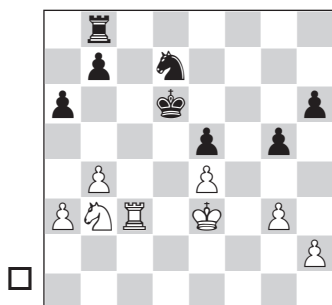
After all the speeches had finished, Thatcher joined Kasparov and Karpov on the stage for the drawing of lots for the first game. First, she pulled a handle in the Tower, after which two envelopes appeared. After the players had chosen an envelope, Thatcher announced that Karpov would be White on the next day. The match could start.

Before the beginning of the first game, four television crews and dozens of photographers were present – many more than in Moscow, where two state television crews and a handful of photographers were at the ready. However, there had been more spectators in Moscow. As an estimate, there were around 1000 persons walking around in the Grand Ballroom on the day of the first game. Approximately half of them had bought a ticket, the other half consisted mainly of journalists. A novelty in London was that electronic demonstration boards were used for the first time.

There was a lot of attention for the match in the press. Here is a citation from one of the newspapers: ‘This is war! There were no boxing gloves in sight, but that could not disguise the fact that this was a two-man war.’ Granted, this was a tabloid article. But the respectable weekly *The Spectator* also came with a sharp observation: ‘If looks could kill, one of the greatest world title battles in chess history would have ended before it started yesterday.’ Such reports were doubtlessly fed by Kasparov’s fierce appearance, but also by his enunciation during the press conference: ‘I’ll kill him.’ The journalists that were present probably didn’t know about the peaceful card games in a hotel room in Lucerne.

In the first game, Kasparov opted for the Grünfeld Indian, which was the opening he had wanted to play in the final game of the previous match. Curiously, Karpov didn’t achieve anything, and a draw was agreed in an equal ending after 21 moves. The second game was a fiercer fight. Kasparov again played the Nimzo-Indian with 4.♘f3 and obtained an advantage. Right before the time control, he got the chance for a winning strike.

Garry Kasparov 2740
Anatoly Karpov 2705
 London/Leningrad Wch m 1986 (2)



White has an advantage, but because of the scarce material, it shouldn't be very hard for Black to hold. Curiously, almost all experts thought at the time that White was winning here.

33. ♖a5

Best. Now, the black rook has to stay on b8.

33... g4

Kasparov gives the text move an '!' Indeed, it is a good idea for Black to gain space on the kingside, since at a certain moment he will be able to put his rook on f8. Possibly, 33... h5 was even more accurate, so as after 34. ♖c2, to continue with 34... h4. Black would even create a little more counterplay in that case. The text move, however, is good enough.

34. ♖c2 h5 35. ♖c1

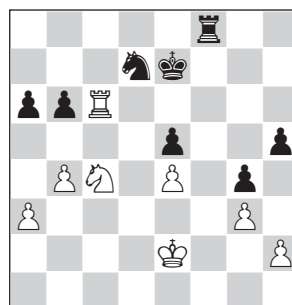
White's strategy becomes clear: he tries to put Black into zugzwang.

35... b6

An unnecessary concession, which makes the defence more difficult.

There was nothing against 35... ♖e6, as Black does not have to fear the rook's penetration on c6. After 36. ♖c7 ♖f8 37. ♖e2 ♖f3, he has sufficient counterplay.

36. ♖c6+ ♖e7 37. ♖c4 ♖f8 38. ♖e2



38... ♖f3?

With two minutes left on the clock, Karpov commits a horrible blunder, which, strangely enough, wasn't noticed at the time. Dorfman, for example, didn't disapprove of the move in his comments for *New In Chess*. There were two ways to hold the position:

The most accurate was 38... b5, e.g. 39. ♖e3 ♖f6 40. ♖f5+ ♖d7 41. ♖c5 ♖e8, and White has no good way to make progress.

Also, 38... ♖f6 was still barely possible. After 39. ♖c8 (promising appears to be 39. ♖c7 ♖d8 40. ♖a7, as most commentators indicated at the time. However, Black has the surprising defence 40... ♖c8!, with the idea to surround the white rook. After 41. ♖a8+ ♖b8 42. ♖xe5 ♖e6, a draw is inevitable), 39... ♖e6 40. ♖a8 (or 40. ♖e3 ♖f6) 40... ♖c6 41. ♖d3 b5 42. ♖e3 ♖e6 43. ♖f5 ♖f6 44. ♖h8 ♖g5, again White cannot

make progress. The problem is that he cannot involve his king in the play.

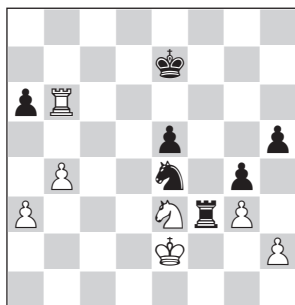
39. ♖e3?

And Kasparov doesn't take advantage of the move! He had 4 minutes left on the clock, which in itself should be enough to spot that 39. ♖c7 wins immediately. Black has absolutely no defence to the double threat of 40. ♗xe5/40. ♗xb6 and 40. ♖xd7+. This trick is quite simple, but probably Kasparov had planned up front to transfer his knight to one of the vacant squares d5 or f5.

39... ♗f6

Now, Black can take a deep breath. He gives up his queenside pawns in exchange for counterplay in the centre.

40. ♖xb6 ♗xe4



41. ♖xa6

Kasparov played this move on the board before the adjournment. The alternative 41. ♗d5+ was not sufficient for a win either. After 41... ♗d7 42. ♖xa6 ♗c3+! 43. ♗xc3 ♖xc3, Kasparov and Tal rightly conclude that the rook ending is a draw, e.g. 44. a4 ♖c2+ 45. ♗d3 ♖xh2

46. a5 ♖h3 47. ♖h6 ♖xg3+ 48. ♗c4 ♖g1, and Black's g-pawn is strong enough.

41... ♖f2+

The sealed move. Most experts still thought that White was winning, but deeper analysis bore out that Black has just enough counterplay.

42. ♗d3 ♗d6 43. ♖a7+ ♗e6 44. ♖h7 e4+

In his comments, Kasparov calls this a 'second rate move', but it is the first choice of the computer. So, Karpov and his team had analysed well. Kasparov's analysis was mainly based on the line 44... ♖xh2 45. ♖h6+ ♗d7 46. ♗xg4 e4+ 47. ♗c3 ♖h3 48. ♗f6+ ♗c7 49. ♗xh5 ♗f5, when Black's e-pawn saves the day for him.

45. ♗c3

Kasparov suggests that 45. ♗d4 gave better chances to win, but after 45... ♖d2+ 46. ♗c5 ♖d3 (also, 46... ♗f5 47. ♗xf5 ♗xf5 48. b5 ♖xh2 is sufficient for the draw) 47. ♖h6+ ♗d7 48. ♗c4 ♗xc4 49. ♗xc4, Black doesn't take the a-pawn, but instead plays 49... ♖d1! 50. ♖xh5 ♗d6, with an immediate draw. White cannot stop the e-pawn, and has to settle for a move repetition after 51. ♖h8 ♗d7.

45... ♗b5+ 46. ♗c4 ♗xa3+

Now that White no longer has a pawn front on the queenside, all his winning chances are gone.

47. ♗d4 ♖xh2 48. ♖h6+ ♗d7 49. ♗d5 h4 50. ♖xh4 ♖xh4 51. gxh4 g3 52. ♗f4 ♗c2+ 1/2-1/2

Although there was not too much going on for the greater part of this game, Karpov must have experienced it as a narrow escape nevertheless. He would have gone down if Kasparov had been a little more alert at the crucial moment. Kasparov wrote: 'I think that games such as this one had a definite effect: they induced Karpov to play more energetically.' Probably this observation is correct, but not much of this could be seen in the 3rd game. Karpov avoided the theoretical discussion in the Grünfeld, opting for the Fianchetto Variation. As a rule, he played this line when he was not too ambitious. Kasparov built up a solid position and managed to stay afloat without any trouble.

In the 4th game, Kasparov again went for the Nimzo-Indian with 4.♘f3. This time, Karpov was well-prepared, but he played inaccurately in the early middlegame. As a result, Kasparov took the initiative, won a pawn, and did an excellent job in the technical phase. A model game.

Nimzo-Indian Defence

Garry Kasparov 2740

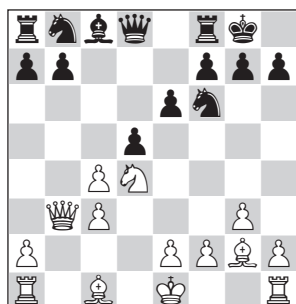
Anatoly Karpov 2705

London/Leningrad Wch m 1986 (4)

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♘f3
c5 5.g3 cxd4 6.♘xd4 0-0 7.♙g2 d5
8.♗b3**

These days 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♗b3 is more popular.

8...♙xc3+ 9.bxc3



9...♘c6

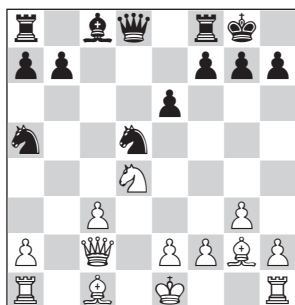
Karpov made this move immediately. Indeed, this is probably the best solution to the problems in Black's position, seeing that Kramnik played the same

move against Nakamura a quarter of a century later.

The alternative 9...e5 is not bad either. After 10.♘b5 dxc4 11.♗a3 (Sosonko tried 11.♗xc4 against me in Tilburg 1981; after 11...a6 12.♘c7 b5 13.♗c5 ♘bd7 14.♗a3 ♗xc7! 15.♙xa8 ♘b6, Black had good compensation for the exchange) 11...♘c6 12.♙e3, now 12...♙g4 is probably Black's best move. He has just enough counterplay.

10.cxd5 ♘a5!

The point of the previous move. Black doesn't have to recapture on d5 immediately. Instead, he starts a fight for control of the c4-square. Curiously, someone in the commentary room also suggested the text move. But Tony Miles, who was the commentator on that day, rejected the suggestion, calling it illogical. Right at that moment, Karpov's move appeared on the electronic board. Being a commentator can be a tough job!

11. ♖c2 ♜xd5**12. ♖d3**

A principled move. White consistently fights for the control of c4. In Nakamura-Kramnik, Dortmund 2011, White played 12.0-0. After 12...♗c7 13.♙e1 ♕d7 14.e4 ♜b6, the position was balanced.

12... ♕d7

Kasparov gives this developing move a '?'. This is probably exaggerated, as White cannot obtain a large advantage by pushing his c-pawn. However, it is true that the principled 12...♗c7, to prevent the march of the c-pawn, is stronger. White then has the following options:

A) 13.0-0 ♕d7 14.e4 (from a positional point of view, 14.♕xd5 exd5 15.♜b3 is safer, with equal play) 14...♜b6 15.f4, and now 15...♙fd8 would lead to an advantage for Black (in Kasparov-Suba, Dubai 1986, 15...e5 occurred, after which 16.♜f5 would have offered White good play);

B) 13.♜b5 was Kasparov's original intention, and it is also White's best continuation. After 13...♗c6 14.0-0

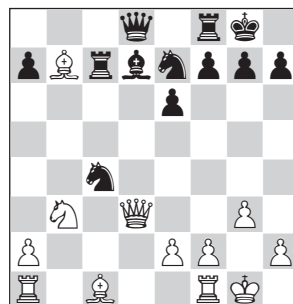
♕d7 15.a4 a6 16.e4! axb5 17.exd5 ♗c4!, the position is balanced.

13.c4 ♜e7

White obtains an advantageous position after this passive retreat. Better was 13...♜b6, to force White to push his c-pawn further. After 14.c5 ♜bc4 15.0-0 ♗c7 (if 15...♙c8, White's best way to maintain his advantage is 16.♙b1) 16.♜b3 ♙ad8 17.♗c3 e5, Black can hold.

14.0-0 ♙c8 15.♜b3

The alternative 15.♕f4 was also good. After 15...e5 16.♕xe5 ♜xc4 17.♕f4 ♜g6 18.♕xb7 ♜xf4 19.gxf4 ♙c7, White has the advantage, although Black has some compensation for the pawn.

15... ♜xc4 16.♕xb7 ♙c7**17. ♕a6!**

Strongly played. White doesn't have to keep his bishop on the long diagonal. He can strengthen his initiative by attacking the knight.

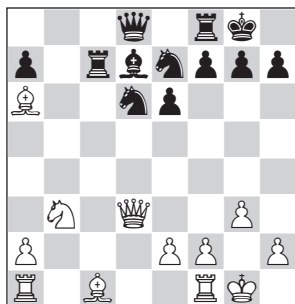
17... ♜e5 18. ♗e3

The start of an interesting triangulation manoeuvre by the queen.

18... ♜c4 19. ♗e4 ♜d6

Black didn't have to move the knight. The alternative was 19...♜f5,

but then White also keeps strong pressure after 20. ♖f4 ♜c6 21. ♖b4. **20. ♖d3!**



The triangulation is completed, and the pressure increased.

20... ♜c6

A difficult choice. The alternative was 20... ♖c8, whereupon White maintains his advantage by 21. ♖a3 ♖xa6 22. ♖xa6 ♜c4 23. ♖c5 ♜b6 24. ♖fd1.

21. ♖a3 ♖c8 22. ♖xc8 ♜dxc8

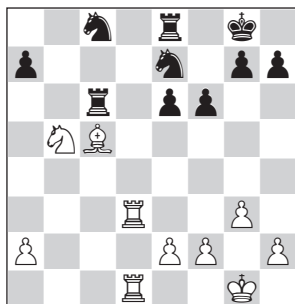
23. ♖fd1

Forcing a queen exchange. In the endgame, White's initiative continues unabated.

23... ♖xd3 24. ♖xd3 ♖e8 25. ♖ad1 f6

Black could have put up a better defence with 25... ♜d5, e.g. 26. e4 ♜f6 27. f3 ♜b6, and it's not easy for White to break through.

26. ♜d4 ♖b6 27. ♖c5 ♖a6 28. ♜b5 ♖c6



29. ♖xe7!

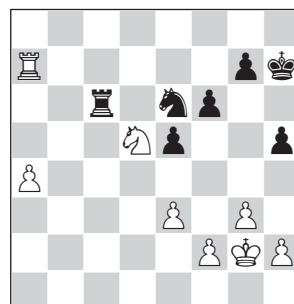
Karpov must have underestimated this trade. White wins a pawn by force.

29... ♜xe7 30. ♖d7 ♜g6

The alternative was 30... ♜d5. Also then, White is winning after 31. e4 ♜b6 32. ♖xa7 ♖c5 33. ♖b1 ♖d8 34. a4 e5 (or 34... ♖d7 35. ♖xd7 ♜xd7 36. a5 ♜b8 37. ♜d4, and wins) 35. a5 ♜c4, and now 36. ♖g2 is the most accurate.

31. ♖xa7 ♜f8 32. a4 ♖b8 33. e3 h5

34. ♖g2 e5 35. ♖d3 ♜h7 36. ♖c3 ♖bc8 37. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 38. ♜c7 ♖e6 39. ♜d5



39... ♜h6

Time trouble; Karpov had less than a minute left. With more time, he would doubtlessly have found the better defence 39... ♜c5. After 40. a5 ♖d6 41. ♜b4 ♜d3 42. ♖a6! ♖d7 43. ♖b6, White eventually gets a winning rook ending.

40. a5 e4

Here, the game was adjourned.

41. a6

The sealed move. Karpov resigned without further play. He wasn't even interested in seeing the sealed move, as there are also other ways to win for White.