

**Jan Timman**

# **The Unstoppable American**

**Bobby Fischer's Road to Reykjavik**

His Sensational Run to the 1972 World Chess Championship

**New In Chess 2021**

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# Preface

Erik Fokke and Peter Doggers came up with the idea for this book: an account of Bobby Fischer's road to the absolute top in the period preceding his great match against Boris Spassky in Reykjavik. Crucial were Fischer's sensational victory in the Interzonal Tournament in Palma de Mallorca and his subsequent defeats of Mark Taimanov, Bent Larsen and Tigran Petrosian in the Candidates Matches, now half a century ago. I have analysed all 43 games from these contests and selected 17 games from the period leading up to Palma. I have also described Fischer's uncertainty, which he only managed to overcome when he started playing in the Interzonal Tournament.

In the period of eighteen months described in this book, the unstoppable American scored 65 wins and 26 draws and suffered only four defeats. Added to this, he also achieved an incredible 40½ out of 44 score in two blitz tournaments.

For the game analyses, I have used the computer program Stockfish 12. It will be noticed that Fischer didn't play as perfectly as it was thought for a long time, but I would like to give two short comments here:

1. Fischer played for a win in almost every game, and this often involved consciously taking risks;
2. Fischer was prepared to enter into all kinds of different types of play, and he clearly had a better command of all these types of play than the other top players of his time.

The games from the Candidates Matches have received the most attention in this book; almost invariably, they were the richest ones in content.

*Jan Timman,  
Arnhem, April 2021*

## Prologue

Although much has been written about Bobby Fischer, there is still a lot of mystery left concerning the decisions he took in his life. His career followed an erratic course, however convincing his accomplishments were in general.

After the Candidates Tournament at Curaçao 1962, Fischer accused the Soviets of collusion. In his opinion, Efim Geller, Paul Keres and Tigran Petrosian had made prearranged draws to save their strength in this exhaustingly long tournament. Initially, the Soviets denied it, but several decades later, Yuri Averbakh, their delegation leader and second, admitted that there had been such an agreement.

Fischer found a receptive ear in FIDE: the Candidates Tournament was abolished, and it was replaced by matches. This was a concession from FIDE to Fischer, but he didn't do anything with it. He didn't show up in the following two cycles. His inactivity in the years after the disappointment in Curaçao was especially striking. He avoided the prestigious Piatigorsky Tournament in 1963, instead winning two opens with great ease. Next, he asked Frank Brady, his agent and later biographer, to generate funds for a match with Tigran Petrosian. Fischer trusted that he was capable of beating the then World Champion, who had recently overthrown Mikhail Botvinnik. Brady undertook some initiatives, but the plan soon stranded.

At the end of the year, Fischer achieved something that was unparalleled, winning all his eleven games in the U.S. National Championship. After that, the U.S. Chess Federation offered him \$1000 to take part in the Interzonal Tournament in Amsterdam. Fischer refused. 'I personally think that he would have refused even \$5000,' Brady writes. Probably he was right; he knew Fischer well. But let's limit ourselves to the \$1000. First prize in the Interzonal was a meagre \$200. From a practical viewpoint, it was more profitable for Fischer to make a tour of simultaneous exhibitions through the United States while the Interzonal was being played. There must have been a psychological aspect to his refusal as well. Fischer had won the Interzonal Tournament in Stockholm 1962 overwhelmingly, but this hadn't proved to be a guarantee for success in the next phase. He may have been plagued by a certain fear of failure.

He wasn't lacking any self-confidence as such. After his success in the U.S. Championship, Fischer made a new attempt to challenge Petrosian to

a match. This time there was a financial backer who made a sum of \$8500 available for the prize fund. To appease the Soviets, this challenge wasn't aimed solely at the World Champion; Fischer was also prepared to enter into combat with any of four other heavyweights from the Soviet realm. With hindsight, this was a rather naïve initiative. There wasn't any reason to expect that the Soviets would accept the challenge. The prize fund was high for those days, but in general there wasn't any interest in such things in Moscow.

On the eve of his second World Championship Match with Spassky in 1969, Petrosian gave the following comment:

'It sometimes seems to me that Fischer did not start the Amsterdam Interzonal tournament in 1964 and withdrew from the event in Sousse, because he was afraid of losing a match to one of the candidates. After all, then the halo of invincibility around "Bobby the genius" would be greatly tarnished and the practical American would no longer be able to dictate good financial conditions from the organisers of those tournaments who wanted to see him in the list of participants.'

In Volume 4 of *My Great Predecessors*, Kasparov cites this comment with approval. I think that Petrosian was partly right. In 1964, it was indeed conspicuous how forcedly Fischer was resisting participation in the World Championship cycle. I think that something else was going on in Sousse.

In the spring of 1967, Fischer won the prestigious tournament in Monte Carlo. After that, he travelled back to New York, where he was staying in a suite in the Tudor Hotel. Notably, he didn't have a permanent residence; he always seemed to prefer a restless existence to the comfort of civilian life. At that moment, Fischer hadn't yet decided whether he would play in the Interzonal Tournament in Sousse. Eventually, he came round. A determining factor in his choice was the influence of Ed Edmondson. The former Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force had become the Executive Director of the U.S. Chess Federation one year before. From that moment onwards, he acted as a kind of mentor for Fischer, and an advocate of his cause. Without Edmondson, Fischer would never have become World Champion.

In the summer, Fischer left for Yugoslavia to play a tournament in Skopje. He wasn't in top form, but eventually managed to win the event by a narrow margin. His victory over Ratmir Kholmov was important; however good Fischer's results had been, he hadn't been able to beat a Soviet grandmaster for years. After the tournament, he stayed in Belgrade for more than a month as Svetozar Gligoric's guest. He took his preparations for Sousse extremely seriously.

Fischer started the Interzonal full of ambition and won one game after the other. When he was on 7 out of 8, a spanner was thrown in the works. Ever since the start of the tournament, he had had problems with the organizers, who only spoke French. There were problems with the lighting, photographers were taking pictures with flashlights, the spectators were noisy – in short, the atmosphere was amateurish. At a certain moment, Fischer made a reasonable request that the organizers refused without giving any motivation. This was the signal for Fischer to leave Sousse. He checked into the Tunis Hilton but didn't stay there for long; he moved twice within 24 hours, first to the Tunisia Palace and then to the Majestic. He was desperately trying to shake off journalists all the time. The Tunisian master Ridha Belkadi managed to get in touch with him. Not only that – he managed to persuade Fischer to return to Sousse. By this time, Fischer had already lost one game by forfeit, against Aivars Gipslis. For his game with Samuel Reshevsky, he arrived in the tournament hall almost an hour late. It must have been a shocking experience for Reshevsky. Naturally, he had no longer reckoned with having to play a game on that day; he went down ingloriously against Fischer, who played with extreme motivation.

For a while it looked as if things would turn out alright. Even counting the forfeited game, Fischer was still on 8 out of 10. Who could stop him? There was a problem, however: Fischer wanted to play the game with Gipslis anyway. He argued that that game should never have been declared lost for him, since he had officially withdrawn from the tournament. Brady calls this a 'lucid' argument. But if that is so, you could just as well argue that Fischer didn't have any right to play on at all in the tournament. In any case, it was unfortunate for Fischer that he had forfeited against a Soviet player; another participant might possibly have been persuaded to play, but in such cases the Soviets were unyielding.

Of course, Fischer could have taken the defeat in his stride, as it would hardly have endangered his tournament victory. Would he have been able to carry off the world title in 1969? Brady thinks that probably Fischer could have beaten Petrosian. This may be correct, but there would have been another obstacle: he would have had to beat Spassky in the Candidates Matches, and that task would have been more difficult.

Petrosian's comment kept occupying my mind. I was curious to know Robert Hübner's opinion on this. The German grandmaster is one of the few players from the post-war generation still alive who have played Fischer. Also, he wrote an excellent book on the American, titled *Materialien zu Fischers Partien*. I met Hübner in Leiden in early 2020, on the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of the Leidsch Schaakgenootschap. He

wasn't able to share Petrosian's view, but he didn't fully reject it either. According to Hübner, Fischer was mainly insecure, and he had trouble taking decisions. This insecurity factor explains a lot of what happened in Fischer's career. There is a curious antithesis: Fischer operated very efficiently behind the board, but he was very insecure in real life.

Fischer played little in the period after the Sousse debacle. In 1968, he avoided the top tournaments and took part in tournaments with a modest field of participants in Netanya and Vinkovci, winning both events by a large margin. Things became quiet around him after Vinkovci, he only played one game during a period of eighteen months. He was negotiating for a match against Botvinnik – his old idea from five years back. Things looked promising: eighteen games would be played in Leiden, on the occasion of an earlier jubilee of the Leidsch Schaakgenootschap. I was quite excited at the time at the prospect of these two giants playing each other so close to the place where I lived. But even though everything seemed to be settled, the idea stranded. In the end, Fischer came up with the extra demand that the match had to be played for six won games, and draws would not be counted. This was a foretaste of the demands Fischer would later make as World Champion. The advantage of a match being played for won games is that the player who is leading cannot play for draws to win the match; he has to keep proving himself again and again. The disadvantage is obvious: the organizers will have no idea how long the match will be. This was an insurmountable stumbling block for the organizers in Leiden. They cancelled the match, and with that, Fischer's agenda was empty again.

In my secondary school years, there were two persons I looked upon more or less as idols: Bob Dylan and Bobby Fischer – in that order. In the summer of 1966, Dylan had a motorbike accident and withdrew from public life. 'I wanted to get out of the rat race,' he later wrote in his book *Chronicles*. I experienced this absence with mixed feelings of disappointment and mysterious tension. The album *John Wesley Harding* came out in the final days of 1967: the tension arc had been broken. Just over nine months later, Fischer withdrew from chess – 25 years old, just as Dylan had been. Did Fischer want to get out of the rat race too? It seemed like it. One year earlier, in Tunis, he had experienced for the umpteenth time how obtrusive journalists could be.

Above all, I felt Fischer's inactivity to be worrying. Would he ever come back to play chess again? I was certainly not the only one wondering about this.

50...♔g8!. This is the correct method. By means of a king triangulation, Black is going to orchestrate a curious zugzwang: 51.♖a8+ ♕h7 52.♖a7 ♔g7 53.f3 (the rook ending after 53.♙xg4 hxg4 54.♕f1 a3 is lost) 53...♗e3 54.♕h1 (or 54.♙e6 ♖g2+ 55.♕h1 ♖xg3 56.♖xf7+ ♕h6, and Black should be winning) 54...♕f8 55.♖a8+ ♕e7 56.♖a7+ ♕d6 57.♖xf7 a3, and eventually also here the a-pawn decides the issue.

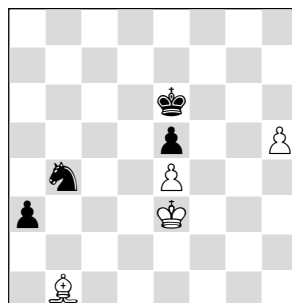
The interesting question is: would Fischer have found this winning path?

**49...♕xf7 50.♙c4+ ♕e7 51.♙xa2 a3 52.♕f3 ♗f6 53.♕e3 ♕d6 54.f4 ♗d7 55.♙b1**

Slightly more tenacious was 55.♙c4, but also here White doesn't have a chance after 55...♗c5 56.f5 ♕e7 57.fxg6 hxg6 58.g4 ♕f6; he will

always have to give his bishop for the a-pawn.

**55...♗c5 56.f5 ♗a6 57.g4 ♗b4 58.fxg6 hxg6 59.h5 gxh5 60.gxh5 ♕e6**



All is clear: Black's king keeps the white h-pawn in check before he proceeds to win the piece.

**61.♕d2 ♕f6 62.♕c3 a2 63.♙xa2 ♗xa2+ 64.♕b2 ♗b4 65.♕c3 ♗c6 66.♕c4 ♗d4 0-1**

**Match score:** Fischer 2, Petrosian 0.

There was a free day after the second round. On the night before, Miguel Najdorf invited Fischer and Hort to his suite in the 'Hotel Metropol'. The intention was to first analyse a little and then play blitz. The agreed time was ten o'clock; Fischer arrived seven minutes late. He was used to doing this when arriving for his games, to avoid most of the photographers, and apparently he stuck to this habit on informal evenings as well.

Najdorf was in an excellent mood; he had beaten Misha Tal on that day. He proudly demonstrated the game to the other two. On ChessBase, Hort wrote that Fischer knew the game by heart and proposed all kinds of improvements for both sides: 'During the analysis I realised that compared to Fischer I knew nothing about chess and Don Miguel knew very little,' he commented. That was rather too modest, since Hort had won a very good game against Polugaevsky on the previous day.

Najdorf was an excellent host. Fischer and Hort could order from room service what they wanted. Hort mainly drank whisky, while Fischer stuck to two litres of milk, partaking of two steaks to go with it. Then the blitz session began. Since they played according to the principle that the winner



remained seated, Fischer was playing almost continuously. They carried on until daybreak.

In Belgrade, the arrangement had been made that a Fiat was standing ready for the winner on first board, and a Moskvich for the winner on second board. This was a Russian car that had been brought on the market right after the war. As a vehicle, it was less well known than the Fiat, but it was well thought of. 'All I need is another half-point to win the Moskvich,' Fischer said after his second victory over Petrosian. Probably for that reason, he played a little timidly in the third game.

Game 3 King's Fianchetto

**Bobby Fischer**

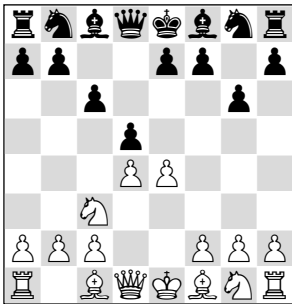
**Tigran Petrosian**

Belgrade USSR-World m 1970 (3)

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3**

Remarkable – this time Fischer rejects the Exchange Variation and heads for the main line.

**3...g6**



And Petrosian opts for a system that had been contrived by Gurgenzidze.

**4.e5**

'I think that this is a bad move,' Fischer remarks. Why did he choose it? He feared a novelty if he opted for 4.h3. There is also a psychological factor that may have played a role: in principle, Fischer would have been satisfied with a

draw, since he wanted to secure the Moskvich. By pushing the e-pawn, White obtains a spatial advantage, which is a good condition for avoiding the danger of losing. On the other hand, it seems to me that the open character of the play after 4.h3 suited Fischer better than closed play. This becomes visible further on in the game.

**4...♙g7 5.f4 h5 6.♘f3 ♙g4 7.h3 ♙xf3**  
**8.♗xf3 e6**

Certainly not 8...h4 in view of 9.f5 and Black gets trampled under foot.

**9.g3**

Fischer wants to thwart the further march of the h-pawn. Was this really necessary? Afterwards, strong grandmasters played 9.♙e3 h4 10.♙d3 here, to castle kingside next and aim for the c2-c4 push. It's not easy for Black to create counterplay.

**9...♗b6**

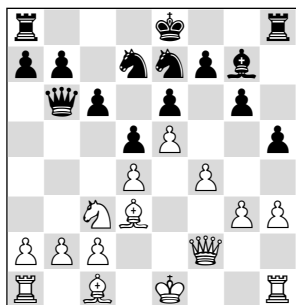
A strong move, preventing the development of the queen's bishop to e3.

**10.♗f2**

In Rozentalis-Klauser, Chiasso 1991, White protected the d-pawn with 10.♗d3. This move has the advantage that White can quickly

aim for queenside castling. After 10...♖e7 11.♙e3 ♘d7 12.0-0, White had the upper hand.

**10...♖e7 11.♙e3 ♘d7**



**12.♘e2**

Fischer gives this move a '?', commenting: 'Passive. 12.♙d2 with the intention of 13.0-0-0 was better and if 12...♗f5 13.♙xf5 followed by 14.0-0-0 etc. with a slight advantage.'

The computer assesses the position after 13...gxf5 14.0-0-0 0-0-0 as equal. Indeed, it's hard to imagine that White would be better after having lost the bishop pair.

Incidentally, 12.0-0 is probably White's best move, with the idea to first wait for 12...♗f5 before taking action with 13.♘e2. After 13...c5 14.c3, White is slightly better.

**12...0-0-0**

A difficult choice: Black could castle either side. Queenside castling is slightly dubious, since the black king is not entirely safe on the queenside. More reliable seems to be the alternative 12...c5. After 13.c3 f6 14.0-0, 14...0-0 leads to a playable position. White has no realistic attacking chances. It is striking that

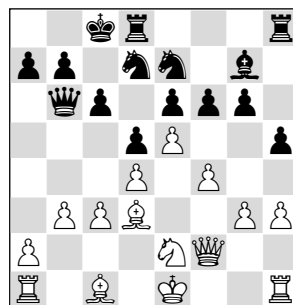
Petrosian often had an intuitive fear of kingside castling.

**13.c3**

Cautiously played. Stronger seemed to be 13.a4. After 13...f6 14.a5 ♖c7 15.0-0, Black doesn't have an easy task. However, it looks as if Fischer would prefer to castle queenside.

**13...f6 14.b3**

Fischer played this little move to bring his bishop to a3 when a black rook appears on f8. However, White should have acted more energetically in the struggle for the initiative. Stronger was 14.a4. Then White can meet 14...fxe5? with 15.a5! ♖c7 16.fxe5 ♗hf8 17.♗f4!, winning. Better is 14...a5, but after 15.0-0, White can look to the future with confidence.



**14...♗f5**

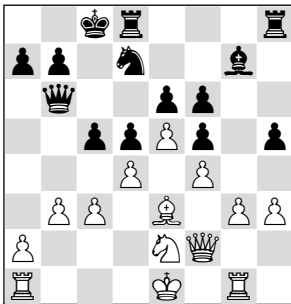
It is curious that both Fischer and Petrosian let this move pass by without comment. Black could have fought for the initiative with 14...fxe5. White's best reply is 15.fxe5 and now after 15...♗df8 the white queen doesn't have a good square, e.g. 16.♖g1! ♗f3 17.♙c2 c5 18.♙f4 ♖a5!? 19.b4 ♖a3 20.bxc5 ♘c6, with sharp play and mutual chances.

**15. ♖g1**

It looks like Fischer is still planning to castle queenside, if possible. After the game, he indicated that 15.0-0 would have been simpler. Indeed, this was the method to maintain some positional advantage. Play might have continued 15...fxe5 16. ♗xf5! gxf5 17.fxe5, and White is ready to fix the black h-pawn with 18.h4. Black can try 17...h4, but White is better after 18.gxh4 ♖df8 19. ♖h1.

**15...c5 16. ♗xf5**

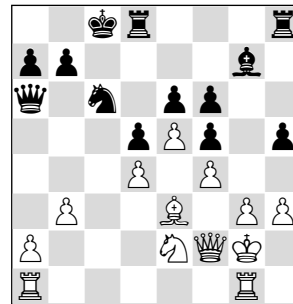
A concession, but the black knight was very strong. White could have postponed the exchange, but he would have been forced to exchange anyway after 16. ♖f1 ♖df8; 16...♖b8 came into consideration too.

**16...gxh4 17. ♗e3****17... ♖a6! 18. ♖f1 cxd4**

After the game, Petrosian rightly indicated 18...♖b8 as stronger. Here, both players assessed the position as equal. However, the computer thinks that Black has the advantage! Indeed, the second player can develop an initiative, e.g. 19. ♖g2 ♖c8 20. ♖gc1 h4, and things aren't easy for White.

**19.cxd4 ♖b8**

This was the idea behind the exchange on d4: Black is going to bring his knight round to c6. This plan is strategically sound, but at the same time a little slow.

**20. ♖g2 ♖c6****21. ♖c1**

Both players give a '!' to this knight move. Fischer notes that d3 is an ideal square for the knight. Yet, 21.h4 was an important alternative, to first restrict Black's counterplay on the king's wing.

**21... ♖d7**

Again, a slow move. Into consideration came 21...fxe5 22.fxe5 h4, to create play on the kingside. After 23.gxh4 ♗h6, Black has sufficient counterplay.

**22. ♖d2**

Now the knight is ready to jump to d3.

Fischer indicates that 22. ♖d1 was 'probably better', but after that move Black can organize strong play on the kingside with 22...h4 23.gxh4 ♗f8.

**22... ♖a5**

A good move from a practical viewpoint. After the exchange of

queens, Black hardly has anything to fear.

**23.** ♖xa5 ♜xa5 **24.** ♘d3 ♘c6

**25.** ♖ac1

Fischer indicates that 25. ♘c5 was better, and only after 25... ♖e7 to continue with 26. ♖ac1. However, here Black has the simple reply 26... b6, with equality.

**25...** ♖c7 **26.** ♖c3

White prepares to double his rooks on the c-file.

26.b4 would have been met by 26... b6 as well.

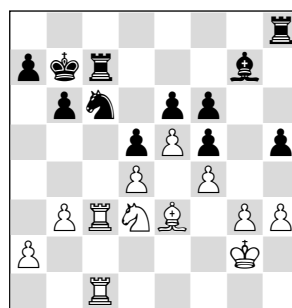
**26...** b6

A safe plan. Black vacates the b7-square for his king, and will then oppose the rooks on the c-file.

An alternative was 26... fxe5 27.fxe5 ♗f8, to bring the bishop into play.

If 28. ♘f4, 28... ♔d7 is an adequate defence.

**27.** ♖gc1 ♔b7



**28.** ♘b4

Fischer rejected 28.b4 on account of 28... a6 29.a4 ♖hc8, and now 30.a5 is strongly met by 30... ♘d8!. The black e-pawn is firmly protected, and White doesn't have a semblance of an advantage. The text move is the introduction to a large-scale exchange of pieces.

**28...** ♖hc8 **29.** ♖xc6 ♖xc6 **30.** ♖xc6 ♖xc6 **31.** ♘xc6 ♔xc6 **32.** ♔f3 ½-½

**Match score:** Fischer 2½, Petrosian 1½.

Not much happened in the fourth game. Fischer came up with a novelty in the Grünfeld Indian and easily obtained equality. The game seemed to be moving towards a quick draw, but then Fischer started playing inaccurately; eventually, he had to pull out all the stops to reach the safe haven of a draw.

This meant he had beaten Petrosian convincingly in the match, but it didn't help the Rest of the World team; they lost by the smallest possible margin.

Belgrade, USSR-Rest of the World 1970						
		1	2	3	4	
1	Fischer	1	1	½	½	3
2	Petrosian	0	0	½	½	1

During the closing banquet, Rosser Reeves, the chairman of the American Chess Foundation, launched the idea of a match between Spassky and

Fischer. In itself, this was a logical step after Fischer's convincing victory against Petrosian. Reeves put up \$25,000 in gold as prize money, 15,000 of which would go to the winner. The idea was that the match would take place in Moscow, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Euwe was in favour of the plan, but it was more difficult for Spassky. He elaborately explained how much respect he had for Fischer. This was a diplomatic move, but he could not go much further, however interesting he may have found the prospect of such a match. He realized all too well that the Soviet authorities would exercise a veto eventually, and so he said: 'Such external affairs are handled by the World Chess Federation, which sets up a definite system of competition on this account. Besides, it would be unfair to all of my countrymen who have fought so hard for such an opportunity.' With that, the plan was off.

From Belgrade, part of the players travelled to Herceg Novi on the Adriatic Coast to play a blitz tournament there. Fischer won the event with a phenomenal 19 out of 22 score, 4½ points ahead of Mikhail Tal.

Herceg Novi blitz 1970														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1	<b>Fischer</b>	*	2	1	2	1½	1½	2	2	1½	1½	2	2	19
2	<b>Tal</b>	0	*	2	1	0	2	1½	½	2	1½	2	2	14½
3	<b>Kortchnoi</b>	1	0	*	½	0	2	2	2	1	1½	2	2	14
4	<b>Petrosian</b>	0	1	1½	*	1	1	1½	1	1	1½	2	2	13½
5	<b>Bronstein</b>	½	2	2	1	*	½	½	1	½	1½	1½	2	13
6	<b>Hort</b>	½	0	0	½	1½	*	1	2	2	1	1	2	12
7	<b>Matulovic</b>	0	½	0	½	1½	1	*	½	2	2	1½	1	10½
8	<b>Smyslov</b>	0	1½	0	1	1	0	1½	*	½	1	1	2	9½
9	<b>Reshevsky</b>	½	0	1	1	1½	0	0	1½	*	½	1½	1	8½
10	<b>Uhlmann</b>	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	1	1½	*	0	2	8
11	<b>Ivkov</b>	0	0	0	0	½	1	½	1	½	2	*	2	7½
12	<b>Ostojic</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	*	2

It seemed as if this result would never be equalled. Seventeen years later, a blitz tournament was held in Brussels with an even slightly stronger field. The format was the same: a double-round twelve-player event. Garry Kasparov announced that he would win the tournament by a 2½ point margin, which was a relatively modest intention compared to Fischer's margin. The new World Champion didn't succeed: he made 17 out of 22; I had 15.

David Bronstein, who hadn't been present in Belgrade, did participate in Herceg Novi. He came fifth, half a point behind Petrosian. Bronstein later told about a conversation he had had with Fischer: 'Over dinner he began explaining to me why he wasn't going to take part in the FIDE World Championship. I listened carefully, not saying a word. Suddenly Bobby stopped and muttered in confusion: "Do you think I should play?" "Yes," was all I said. He became thoughtful and we didn't touch on this subject again.' Again, we can sense Fischer's uncertainty in this question. And there are also other interesting sides to Bronstein's story. Firstly, Bronstein had the reputation of being a 'motormouth' – he liked to expatiate on his subjects in long monologues. This time, he had been quiet, giving evidence of his enormous respect for Fischer. Even more interesting is the suggestion that there was apparently also another path for Fischer to the Interzonal tournament in Palma de Mallorca. The U.S. Championship was ranked as a qualification tournament, but Fischer hadn't played in it. Thus, he had cut himself off, since it wasn't possible to qualify on Elo rating in those days. Edmondson must have been lobbying extensively within FIDE to arrange an extra place for Fischer.

From Herceg Novi, the chess company travelled further north along the Adriatic Coast to the city of Rovinj, where the Tournament of Peace would take place. This was a five-yearly tradition – I won the tournament fifteen years later. In those old times, such tournaments often featured no less than eighteen participants. The first eleven rounds were going to be played in Rovinj, after which the event would move on to Zagreb. Fischer's closest rivals were Petrosian, Smyslov, Kortchnoi, Gligoric and Hort. The field also contained eight Yugoslavs. Fischer's list of demands had been extended – now it contained a total of 41 demands. These were all complied with, except one. What was this one single demand that was too much for the organizers? I haven't been able to find this out, but it may have been connected with the following anecdote.

Just before the first round started, Fischer asked the organizers to pay him an extra \$1000 on top of his starting fee. They didn't agree, and even contemplated replacing Fischer with the local player Srdjan Marangunic. The situation was saved by former Junior World Champion Bruno Parma, who was Fischer's opponent in the first round. He walked up to Fischer and said: 'You know, Bobby, the Russians will be very happy if you don't play.' 'OK, I'll play,' Fischer reacted. Here again we see this element of uncertainty. But not behind the board! He defeated Parma and won his next three games, too. Then the engine misfired: in the fifth round, he escaped with a draw against Ivkov, after having had a losing position for

a long time. After that, he won a good game against Uhlmann, but in the seventh round things nearly went wrong again versus Theodor Ghitescu. It has never been brought up before, but Fischer was demonstrably lost in this game, after having taken too much risk.

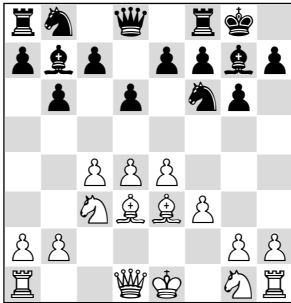
Game 4 King's Indian Defence

**Theodor Ghitescu**

**Bobby Fischer**

Rovinj/Zagreb 1970 (7)

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6  
5.f3 0-0 6.♙e3 b6 7.♙d3 ♙b7**



It is curious that Fischer opted for this method of combatting the Sämisch Variation. In those days, too, the double fianchetto didn't have a very good reputation, even though Tal and Stein also played it.

**8.♘ge2 c5 9.d5**

The right response; now the black queen's bishop will be biting on granite.

**9...e6 10.0-0 exd5 11.exd5**

White could also have aimed for a Benoni-type position by retaking with the c-pawn. Practice has borne out that this set-up gives White excellent chances of an advantage.

**11...♘bd7**



**12.♙g5**

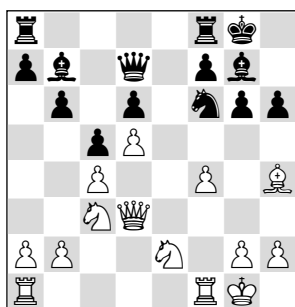
Ghitescu had also played this two months earlier against Sigurjonsson in Reykjavik. With this bishop move, White wants to obtain an initiative on the kingside. Fischer too had experience with this position; he'd had it with black against Jimenez in the Capablanca Memorial 1965, where he had played by telex from New York. Jimenez played 12.♚d2 and had some space advantage after 12...♘e5 13.♖ae1 ♗e8 14.b3, though Fischer didn't have any trouble winning the game later.

**12...h6**

Several months later, Tringov played 12...♚e7 against Spassky in Amsterdam. After 13.f4 h6 14.♙h4 a6 15.a4 ♖fe8 16.h3, White was better. For unclear reasons, Spassky agreed to a draw five moves later, still in a superior position.

**13.♙h4 ♘e5 14.f4 ♘xd3 15.♚xd3  
♚d7**

Sigurjonsson played 15...♔c8, but got into trouble after 16.♘g3. The text move is also not suited to solve the problems in the position. Curiously, 15...♖e7 was Black's best option. It doesn't look very logical to keep the queen under the pin, but White has no good way to exploit this. He does maintain a spatial preponderance, e.g. 16.♞a1 ♞ae8 17.h3 a6 18.a4 ♔c8, and now White can choose between 19.♖f3 and 19.♘d4, to bring the knight to c6.



**16. ♔xf6!**

In combination with the next move, this is a very strong plan with which Ghitescu exposes the drawbacks of Black's set-up.

**16... ♔xf6 17.f5**

Thus, White develops a dangerous initiative on the kingside. Black is feeling the lack of his queen's bishop in the defence.

**17...g5**

Black also had the option of sacrificing a pawn with 17...♔e5. If White had gone for the pawn, he would have lost the initiative. For this reason, a constructive move like 18.♞f3 would be stronger, to

prepare a doubling of rooks on the f-file; White has a large advantage.

**18. ♖h3**

White is going for the win of a pawn. This is a logical plan, with which White keeps his advantage. Probably, the alternative 18.♘g3 was even stronger. The white plan comes to light after 18...♞ae8 19.♘h5 ♔e5 20.♞a1 f6 21.g4!, and Black has absolutely no breaking moves. The situation is highly unpleasant for him, since he will have to sit and wait passively while White calmly improves his position.

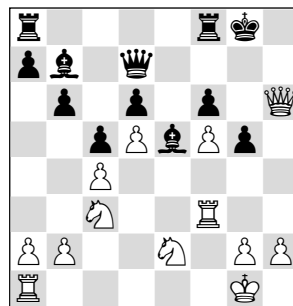
**18... ♔e5**

Fischer decides to sacrifice a pawn, hoping for active counterplay. The retreat 18...♔g7 had its downsides, for example: 19.♘e4 (19.f6 ♖xh3 20.gxh3 ♔h8 21.♘g3 or 21.h4 with an unpleasant position for Black; the prospect of having to play this position probably put Fischer off) 19...♞ae8 20.♘2g3 ♔d4+ 21.♖h1 f6 22.♞a1 ♞e7 (not 22...♔xb2 in view of 23.♖xh6) 23.b3, and this position too is unpleasant for Black.

**19. ♖xh6 f6**

Now Black has a strong bishop in any case.

**20. ♞f3**





With clear intentions; White wants to bring his rook to the h-file.

### 20... ♖h7

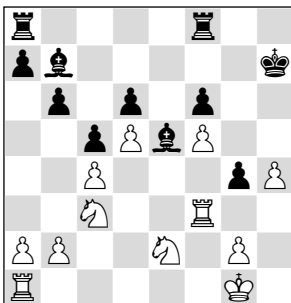
Understandably, Fischer forces a queen swap. He could have tried to activate his queen's bishop with 20... ♗a6 21.b3 b5, but then White has a strong strategic exchange sacrifice: 22.cxb5 ♗xb5 23.♘xb5 ♗xa1, and now the blow 24.♘xd6! – the knight is invulnerable, and he gets two pawns for the exchange. Another defensive measure was 20... ♖f7, but then after 21.♖h3 ♖h7 22.♗xh7+ ♗xh7 23.♖xh7 ♔xh7 24.♖f1, a two-rook endgame arises, making it harder for Black to develop an initiative.

### 21. ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 22.h4

A slightly aimless move. Much stronger was 22.♖e1, to be able to play the little supporting move b2-b3 without leaving the queen's knight caught in a pin.

### 22...g4

A sloppy move, which could have landed Black in great difficulties. Fischer could have obtained good compensation for the pawn with 22... ♗a6 23.b3 b5. It is very important to involve the queen's bishop in the game.



### 23. ♖d3

The exchange sacrifice 23.♖f4! would have been very strong. Black cannot accept the sacrifice, because he would be strategically losing. Also after 23... ♖g8 24.♖e4 ♖ae8 25.♖f1, White is winning.

### 23... ♖ae8 24. ♘g3

After this move, White loses control of the position. He could have maintained his advantage with 24.b3 ♗c8 25.♖f1.

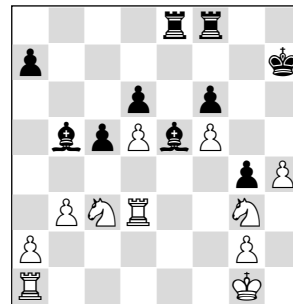
### 24... ♗a6

Finally – Black is going to free himself. From this moment onwards, after having taken over the initiative, Fischer finishes the game flawlessly.

### 25.b3 b5

Of course. Black manages to exploit the pin on the long diagonal after all.

### 26.cxb5 ♗xb5



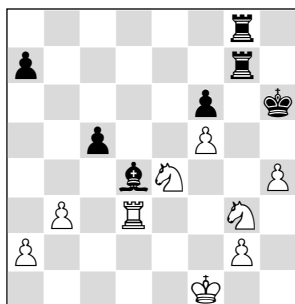
### 27. ♘xb5

We have seen this exchange sacrifice before, but this time it is born out of necessity. After other moves, the black bishop pair would have grown too strong.

### 27... ♗xa1 28. ♘xd6 ♗d4+ 29. ♔f1 ♖e5

Winning the d-pawn.

**30. ♖c4 ♜xd5 31. ♗e3 ♜d7 32. ♗xg4 ♜g7 33. ♗f2 ♜fg8 34. ♗fe4 ♖h6**



A quiet move, further increasing the pressure.

**35.h5**

After this nervous push, White is definitely lost. Now his knights are protecting each other, which means he is tied hand and foot.

As Marangunic already indicated at the time, 35. ♗e2 was the only

move, keeping drawing chances, for instance:

A) 35... ♜g4 36. ♜xd4! (less good is 36. ♗xd4 in view of 36... ♜xe4 37. ♗f3 ♜f4 38. ♜d5 ♜c8, and Black has winning chances) 36... cxd4 37. ♗xf6 ♜8g7 38. ♗xg4+ ♜xg4 39. g3 d3 40. ♗f4 ♜xg3 41. ♖e1, and White can just about hold;

B) 35... ♜e7! 36. ♗d2 ♜e5 37. ♗f3 ♜xf5 38. g3 ♜d5, and the situation isn't easy for White.

**35... ♜g4 36. ♖e2 ♗e5 37. ♖f2 ♜4g7 38. ♜f3 ♜g4 39. ♜d3 a6**

After repeating moves once, Fischer calmly steps up the pressure.

**40. ♜f3 ♗d4+ 41. ♖f1 ♗e5 42. ♖f2 a5** Curiously, White is in zugzwang here.

**43. a4 ♜d8 44. ♖e3 ♜b8 45. ♖f2 c4 46. bxc4 ♜b2+ 47. ♖f1 ♜b4**

White resigned.

Fischer must have felt tired. He lost in the next round, in a game that was played later. The reason was that Fischer was a member of the 'World Wide Church of God', who, like orthodox Jews, honoured the sabbath, and so he was not allowed to play chess on Saturdays.

Incidentally, there was a curious incident during this game, in which Vlatko Kovacevic was his opponent. Kortchnoi wrote the following in his autobiography: 'On a free day, Fischer played his postponed game against Kovacevic. It was played in a room adjacent to a café. Petrosian and his wife and I were sitting in that café, and we were following the course of the struggle from a distance. Kovacevic, who was Black, had managed to seize the initiative. To defend himself, Fischer set a cunning trap for his opponent. I took a closer look at the position. "How interesting!" I said out loud. "Now Fischer offers him the possibility to win the queen, but if Kovacevic takes it, he may even lose!" To my great surprise, Petrosian's wife announced that she was going to point out this ambush to Kovacevic. And indeed, that is what happened. While he was waiting for Fischer to move, Kovacevic started strolling around. She went up to him and "advised him".'

Interestingly, this account also appeared in a Yugoslav newspaper at the time, but in an anonymized version. Kortchnoi had insisted that his name wouldn't be mentioned in the story, fearing reprisals from the Petrosian couple. Later, Kovacevic confirmed that Rona Petrosian had talked to him, but he hadn't understood what she meant.

What would have happened if Kovacevic had fallen for the trap? The computer proves that also in that case he would have kept the advantage. However, what he did was much better.

Game 5 French Defence

**Bobby Fischer**

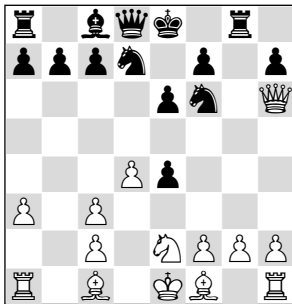
**Vlatko Kovacevic**

Rovinj/Zagreb 1970 (8)

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.a3  
♙xc3+ 5.bxc3 dxe4 6.♚g4 ♘f6  
7.♚xg7 ♗g8 8.♚h6 ♘bd7**

Two rounds earlier, Uhlmann had played 8...♗g6 here. That game continued as follows: 9.♚e3 ♘c6 10.♙b2 ♚d6 11.f3 exf3 12.♘xf3 ♙d7 13.0-0-0 0-0-0 14.c4 ♘g4 15.♚d2 f5 16.d5! ♘b8 17.h3 ♘f6 18.♘e5 ♘e4 19.♚d4 ♗g3 20.♘f7 ♚f4+ 21.♙b1 c5 22.♚e5!, and White won – a convincing victory by Fischer.

**9.♘e2**



**9...b6!**

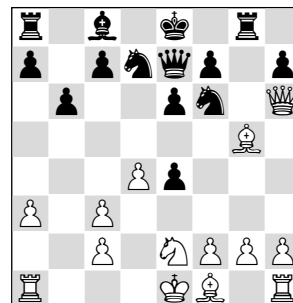
A novelty at the time. Kovacevic was excellently prepared. He knew Fischer's game against Robert Byrne

from the 1966 U.S. Championship, in which 9...c5 had been played. White has good chances of an opening advantage in that case. The game continued 10.♘g3 ♚c7, and now 11.♙d2. Instead of this move, 11.♚e3 would have offered White good chances of an opening advantage, since it is too risky for Black to exchange on d4 and then take on c2.

**10.♙g5**

A natural move, but 10.♘g3 was better, to guarantee the queen's retreat. There could have followed 10...♙b7 11.♙e2 ♚e7 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.a4 ♘d5, with sharp play and chances for both sides.

**10...♚e7!**



A subtle trap. Black waits with the development of his bishop to thwart White's mobilization.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Palma de Mallorca**

The road to Palma seemed to have been paved for Fischer. There was an obstacle, however: Fischer himself. A good two weeks before the start of the tournament, he informed Edmondson that he was forcing up his terms considerably. What it came down to was that he was asking for a lot more money than had been agreed upon. In fact, he made his participation uncertain by doing this, since it wasn't likely that the USCF could, or wanted to, generate a much larger fee. Again, this insecurity! It is possible that Fischer didn't like the idea that there were any restrictions to the conditions he could stipulate. This time, he wouldn't be able to put an extensive list of demands on the table.

Two days later, Edmondson sent back a long letter that started as follows: 'As I told you on the phone last night, your letter which arrived October 27 can only be described as heartbreaking.' Next, he emphasized the maximum sums Fischer could count on. The extra fee for the Interzonal Tournament was \$4000. That was four times the amount that had been offered to him six years earlier for the Interzonal in Amsterdam, and it was also almost three times the amount of the first prize in Palma.

The telephone conversation and the ensuing letter must have led Fischer's ambitions in the right direction again. He decided to play. After all, intensive preparations had been made already. The Texan chess player Kenneth Smith had collected all the available games by the participants in Palma of the preceding two years, and had classified them by opening. Larry Evans would function as Fischer's second, and Edmondson had the task to see to it that Fischer would be able to play in Palma without any disturbances.

The Interzonal Tournament had a strong field, with four Soviet representatives and practically the entire further world elite. Only Tal was absent. Play was for six places in the Candidates Matches; Petrosian and Kortchnoi had already qualified. Interestingly, both Fischer and Larsen predicted before the tournament that only two Soviet players would qualify, and this prediction came true.

Fischer arrived a few days before the start in Palma, and checked into the Jaime I hotel. The first time he was spotted, he was in the company of his old rival Reshevsky. The edges of their former controversy had been smoothed by now. Undoubtedly, this had to do with the fact that they were no longer rivals; by this time, Fischer had risen too high for

that. Fischer and Reshevsky's early walk was noticed in a curious way. For some time already, the Soviet chess federation had been regarding Fischer as a serious threat to their hegemony. For that reason, they regularly held meetings with top grandmasters to discuss Fischer as a person. They would be talking about all kinds of things, from Fischer's opening repertoire to his behaviour. All these conversations have been chronicled in the book *Russians versus Fischer*, and it is fascinating material. During one of the meetings, which specifically had the Palma Interzonal as its subject, Evgeny Vasiukov, one of the seconds in Palma, said the following:

'On the day following our arrival, Gufeld and I walked out of the hotel for a look around and to view the scenery. The first people we met were Fischer and Reshevsky. It turned out that they were not living far from us and had likewise decided to take a stroll. Fischer had a somewhat unusual appearance: he was carelessly dressed, unshaven, and badly needed a haircut. Only in the second half of the tournament did he acquire a well-groomed appearance. We exchanged a few words. Asked whether he would play in the tournament, Fischer answered: "Yes, of course".'

Vasiukov's question illustrates the mysterious haze that was hanging around Fischer. Apparently, the Soviets didn't know exactly what was going on behind the scenes. His remark about Fischer's haircut was striking. It was more than three years after the Summer of Love, and long hair was the most normal thing in the world. In one way or another, the Russians had trouble with the 1960s generation. When I played my first Olympiad in Skopje in 1972, my hair was hanging over my shoulders. Lev Polugaevsky approached our first board player Hein Donner with the question: 'Timman, is he a hippy?' Donner chuckled and answered in the negative.

'I've never been a hippy, but I'm an honorary hippy,' Dylan said during a concert in 1999. I could claim something similar, perhaps.

Of course, Fischer was even much less of a hippy than I was. It struck me that, apparently, he went to a hairdresser during the tournament. That is something I have never done. Perhaps Fischer did it at a point when his qualification was as good as secured. But the opposite might also have been the case. Halfway through the tournament, Fischer had a slight slump; perhaps, his visit to the hairdresser was a kind of ritual action to turn the tide.

The opening ceremony was held in the Ayuntamiento, the city hall. Fischer was absent, missing some wrangling that took place during the pairing. The Czechs and the Argentinians had been paired in the first round, but the Soviets had not: the pairing showed that Vasily Smyslov and Mark Taimanov would be facing up in the final round. This was

unacceptable for Vlastimil Hort and Oscar Panno, who had to play their fellow countrymen in the first round. A telephone call with FIDE President Euwe brought relief; after some shuffling with the rounds, the two Russians were scheduled to play each other earlier.

The playing hall was not a very distinguished one. Vasiukov said: ‘The tournament hall, called the “Auditorium”, was on the seventh floor of a nine-storey building. The hall was an elongated rectangle, with the audience seated in an elevated amphitheatre.’ Everything else was well arranged. The air circulation and lighting were good. In the corridor, there was a cafeteria where the refreshments for the players were made. Vasiukov didn’t omit to mention that Fischer was drinking huge amounts of milk, which is a detail we read about over and over again.

There was a slight annoyance right before the first round: an uncovered light bulb. This fault was soon remedied. Incidentally, Fischer had a formidable opponent in that first round: the 22-year-old Robert Hübner, the great hope of Western Europe.

There was a curious incident early in the game that has been described in detail by Hübner in the German magazine *Schach*. While he had sunk into deep thought, the Belgian grandmaster Alberic O’Kelly de Galway, who acted as the chief arbiter, appeared at the board and asked: ‘Would Mr Fischer like something to eat?’ In reply, the latter muttered under his breath: ‘Three ham sandwiches and three cheese sandwiches.’ O’Kelly asked whether he wanted something to drink with it. ‘Four glasses of orange juice,’ Fischer replied. Not much later, while Hübner was still thinking about the same move, the chief arbiter came over with a trolley on which the extensive assortment was displayed. After O’Kelly had served all the food and drink, he asked submissively: ‘Is everything to your liking, Mr. Fischer? Is there anything else we can do for you?’ Fischer mumbled something and started gobbling up the sandwiches. When finally Hübner had made his move, he saw that everything had been devoured.

So besides milk, Fischer also drank orange juice during games; apparently, moreover, he had been tremendously hungry. There can be no doubt that O’Kelly’s subservient helpfulness towards Fischer had a clear reason: the organizers wanted to cater to the whimsical American’s wishes as much as possible – they wanted at all cost to avoid a debacle as had occurred in Sousse.

Otherwise, Fischer played very strongly and also quickly – until the 32nd move, when he lost a piece in a favourable position by a concentration lapse. In the end he got three pawns for the piece, so he wasn’t in any danger of losing. A draw was agreed before the adjournment.

Game 20 Caro-Kann Defence

**Bobby Fischer**

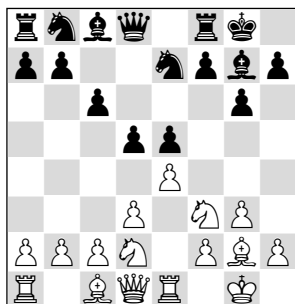
**Robert Hübner**

Palma de Mallorca 1970 (1)

**1.e4 c6 2.d3**

It is remarkable how restrained Fischer often reacted to the Caro-Kann. It should be noted that the fully-fledged attacker Velimirovic also played this move.

**2...d5 3.♘d2 g6 4.♗gf3 ♙g7 5.g3 e5  
6.♙g2 ♜e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♞e1**



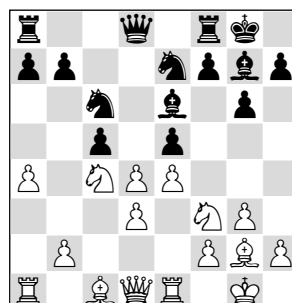
**8...d4**

Shortly before, in Siegen, Hort had played 8...♗d7 against Fischer, who reacted with 9.b3. But the double fianchetto is not very good. The reply 9...d4, also played by Hort, is stronger here. However, in reply to 10.♙b2 Black should continue simply 10...c5 (instead of Hort's move 10...b5). After 11.c3 ♜c6, Black can look to the future with confidence; he has an excellent King's Indian with reversed colours. Hübner rejected 8...♗d7, because he thought 9.c3 was a strong answer. This indeed looks better, since White gets much more influence in the centre. Eight years

later, Velimirovic played this way against Matulovic in Belgrade, and obtained an excellent victory.

**9.a4**

In Velimirovic-Ciric, Belgrade 1963, White attacked the centre directly with 9.c3, and after 9...c5 10.cxd4 cxd4 increased his range of influence on the queenside with 11.b4. Now, Black should have reacted with 11...♙e6, after which the position is approximately balanced, but he played 11...b5, surrendering several important squares. White continued with 12.♗b3 and later won the game. **9...c5 10.♗c4 ♜bc6 11.c3 ♙e6 12.cxd4**



**12...♙xc4**

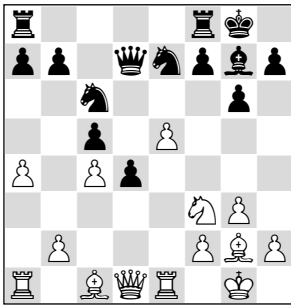
Strategically, this exchange is justified, but Black could have waited with it. After 12...cxd4, the play can develop as follows: 13.♙d2 ♜c8 (13...a5 came into consideration too) 14.b4 ♜d6 15.♗xd6 ♙xd6 16.♗g5 ♙d7 17.b5 ♜b4 18.♙b3 a5, with a tough fight and chances for both sides.

**13.dxc4 exd4**

In Strikovic-Gagunashvili, Benidorm 2007, there followed

13...cxd4 14.♔d2 a5 15.c5 b6 16.♖c1  
 ♗b8 17.♕f1 bxc5 18.♖xc5 ♗xb2  
 19.♗c1 ♗b6 20.♕b5 ♗d6 21.♗c4,  
 and White had strong pressure  
 in compensation for the pawn.  
 Probably, 15...♘b4 would have been  
 better, to keep the queenside closed.  
 Black can play his other knight to  
 c6, to support the knight on b4.  
 The text move leads to an entirely  
 different type of game, in which  
 White will have to take the  
 initiative on the other flank.

**14.e5 ♗d7**



**15.h4**

A thematic push.

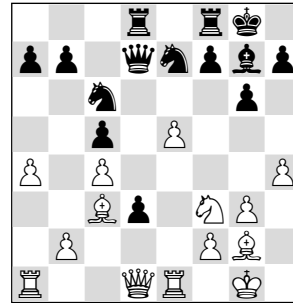
The alternative was 15.♕d2, but  
 probably Fischer wanted to reserve  
 the choice of square to develop the  
 bishop to.

**15...d3**

Hübner was afraid of a white  
 initiative on the kingside, and  
 for this reason sought direct  
 counterplay in the centre.  
 Probably, it would have been better  
 to try to maximally increase his  
 sphere of influence on the kingside  
 with 15...♖ae8. After 16.♕f4 h6, the  
 position is dynamically balanced.

**16.♕d2 ♖ad8 17.♕c3**

A natural move, but 17.♖a3 also  
 came into consideration, in order to  
 have the possibility of taking aim at  
 the black d-pawn.



**17...♘b4**

A sharp, somewhat risky sortie.  
 The alternative 17...♘f5 was to  
 be preferred, to keep sufficient  
 influence in the centre.

**18.♘d4**

Fischer rightly wants to aim for  
 the e5-e6 thrust, but it was more  
 accurate to do this with 18.♘g5,  
 since White doesn't have to fear  
 the knight invasion on c2. Black is  
 in trouble, as becomes clear in the  
 following lines:

A) 18...♘c2 19.e6 fxe6 20.♕xg7  
 ♗xg7 21.♘xe6+ ♗g8 22.♘xf8 ♗xf8  
 (after 22...♖xf8 23.♗d2 ♖f6 24.♖ad1  
 ♘xe1 25.♖xe1 ♖d6 26.b3, Black  
 will eventually lose his d-pawn,  
 for which he gets insufficient  
 compensation) 23.♗d2 ♘xa1  
 24.♖xa1 ♗d4 25.♖e1 ♘f5 26.♖e4  
 ♗d6 27.h5, and White has the  
 initiative;

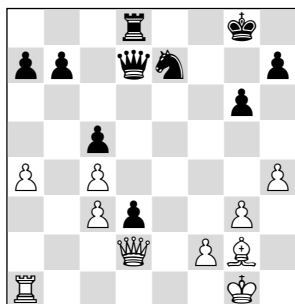
B) 18...♗c7 19.e6 f5 20.♘f7 ♘c2  
 21.♘xd8 ♖xd8 22.♗d2, and also  
 here White is better.

**18...♖fe8**



Giving White what he wants after all. Later, Hübner gave two stronger alternatives. First, the slightly surprising but strategically justified 18...♗ec6, with the intention to meet 19.♗xc6 with 19...bxc6. The doubled pawn is not weak, since Black controls a lot of important squares. The position is balanced. The restrained 18...♖c8 was another good possibility, to prevent the further march of the white e-pawn. There could have followed 19.♗d2 ♖fe8 20.h5, and now Black has the surprising finesse 20...♗a2!, yielding him equality.

**19.e6 fxe6 20.♗xe6 ♗xc3 21.bxc3 ♗c2 22.♗xd8 ♖xd8 23.♖d2 ♗xa1 24.♖xa1**



The complications are over, and White's advantage is beyond doubt. The black d-pawn cannot be maintained in the long run, and White's supremacy on the kingside is strong. In addition, the bishop is slightly stronger than the knight.

**24...♗g7 25.♖e1 ♗g8**

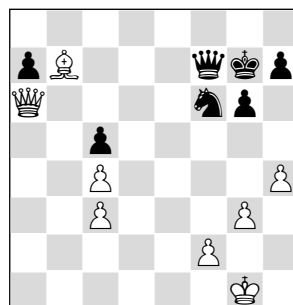
Black wants to manoeuvre his knight to f6, but this is time-consuming. Probably, 25...b6 was a slightly better defence. Hübner

feared 26.♗h3 during the game, but then 26...♗f5 is an adequate defence. The best way for White to continue his initiative is with 26.h5, and now the play can become sharp. After 26...♗g8 27.♖e5 ♖e8 28.♗d5 ♖g4, White has two options: 29.♗f1 (29.a5 ♖e7 (the alternative 29...♖e2 is dangerous, due to 30.♖f4) 30.axb6 axb6 31.♗f1 ♖xc4 32.♖xd3 ♖e6, and Black's position is tenable) 29...♗f6 30.h6+ ♗g8 31.♖xd3 ♗e4 32.♖c1 ♖f5, and Black has some compensation for the pawn.

**26.♗d5 ♖xa4 27.♖xd3 ♖e8 28.♖xe8 ♖xe8 29.♗xb7 ♗f6**

Hübner indicates that 29...♖e7 was stronger, to keep the white queen from d6. However, the difference with the text move is not large, since the white queen can penetrate by a roundabout route. After 30.♗f3 ♗f6 31.♖b1 ♖c7 32.♖b5, Black has the option of 32...a5, which gives him slightly better chances of counterplay in principle.

**30.♖d6 ♖d7 31.♖a6 ♖f7**



**32.♖xa7?**

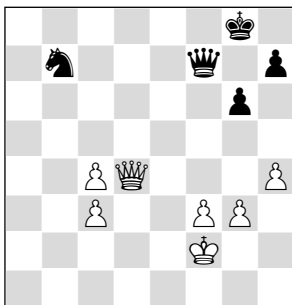
Until this moment Fischer had only used 70 minutes, and he also played the text move quickly.

Hübner wittily writes, ‘Fischer gobbled up the unprotected pawn just as quickly as he had done his sandwich.’ Perhaps Fischer played so quickly because Hübner was in serious time-trouble. Whatever the case may be, the text move is a curious mistake. White could have strengthened his position without any problem with 32.♙f3 or 32.♗g2. It’s hard to say how large White’s winning chances would have been in that case; Hübner doesn’t dare to give a decisive answer to this. In any case, it is clear that White can strengthen his position undisturbed, while Black has to watch passively.

**32...♗e4!**

Of course; Black wins the bishop. Fischer’s mistake is curious, especially because in general he had a clear preference for bishops above knights – and here in fact he just blunders his bishop.

**33.f3 ♖d6 34.♗xc5 ♜xb7 35.♗d4+ ♙g8 36.♙f2**



With three pawns for the piece, White is not in any danger of losing, but he doesn’t have any winning chances either.

**36...♗e7 37.♗d5+ ♙f8 38.h5 gxh5 39.♗xh5 ♜c5 40.♗d5 ♙g7 41.♗d4+ ♙f7 42.♗d5+ ♙g7 43.♗d4+ ♙f7 44.♗d5+ ½-½**

There was no post-mortem. As a rule, Fischer wasn’t willing to engage in one when the result of the game was disappointing for him.

**Standings (top):** Uhlmann, Minic, Matulovic, Ujtumen 1

In the second round, Fischer managed an important victory; he beat Smyslov with black in an excellent technical game.

Game 21 English Opening

**Vasily Smyslov**

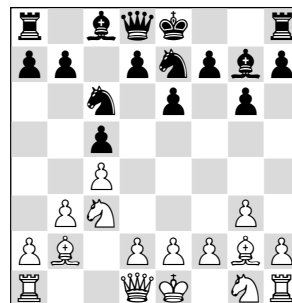
**Bobby Fischer**

Palma de Mallorca 1970 (2)

**1.c4 g6 2.♖c3 ♙g7 3.g3 c5 4.♙g2 ♜c6 5.b3**

The introduction to a rather laborious plan.

**5...e6 6.♙b2 ♜ge7**



**7.♜a4**

The same idea to exchange the bishops had also been tried by

Smyslov against Fischer a few months earlier, but with the added moves ♖g1-f3 for White and castles for Black (see Game No. 13). Also in that position, Black could simply have gone for the bishop trade, but he pushed his e-pawn, since under these circumstances White could not take on c5 as Black would then have pushed his e-pawn further, winning material.

**7... ♖xb2 8. ♗xb2 0-0 9.e3**

This mix of systems is more than the white position can bear.

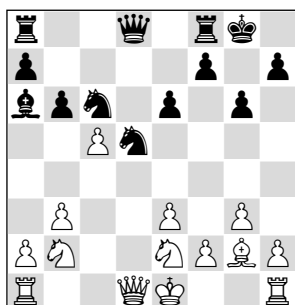
Necessary was 9. ♗f3 d5 10.cxd5 ♗xd5 11. ♗c4, although Black has excellent play after 11... ♖e7 followed by 12... ♗d8.

**9...d5 10.cxd5**

The alternative 10. ♗e2 was very unattractive in view of 10...d4, with a large preponderance in the centre.

**10... ♗xd5 11. ♗e2 b6 12.d4 ♖a6**

**13.dxc5**



**13... ♖f6**

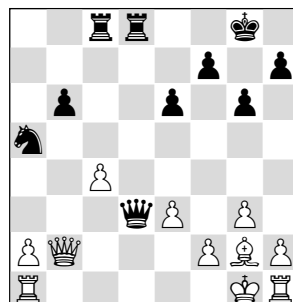
‘An excellent reply that Smyslov apparently had not taken into account,’ writes Kasparov. Still, the computer indicates two stronger moves for Black. First, 13... ♖e7, with the intention to take on c5

with the queen. White has no time to capture on b6 and has to castle. After 14.0-0 ♗ad8 15. ♖e1 ♖xc5, Black has a large advantage, since 16. ♗c1 doesn’t work on account of 16... ♖a3.

The computer thinks 13... ♗c8 is also strong, but this has no independent significance, since after 14.0-0 Black still continues with 14... ♖e7, and here he does not obtain as large an advantage as in the variation given earlier.

**14. ♗c4 ♗c3 15. ♗xc3 ♖xc3+ 16. ♔f1 ♗fd8 17. ♖c1 ♖xc4+ 18.bxc4 ♗d3+ 19. ♔g1 ♗ac8 20.cxb6 axb6 21. ♖b2 ♗a5**

Logical, but probably 21... ♖f5 was stronger, to play the knight to e5. From this central position, the knight can more easily be used for the attack. White should not allow this and should exchange on c6. There can follow 22. ♖xc6 ♗xc6 23. ♖e2 ♖e4 24.f3 ♖xc4 25. ♖xc4 ♗xc4 26. ♔g2 ♗d2+ 27. ♔h3 ♗c3 28. ♗hd1, and White has drawing chances.



**22.h4**

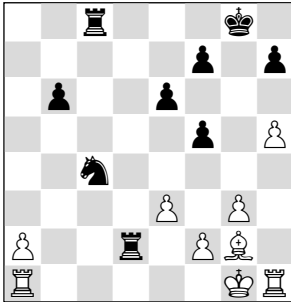
The best way to generate some counterplay. After 22. ♖xb6 ♗xc4

23. ♖b3 ♗d2 24. h3 ♘e5 25. ♙f1 ♜c2, White wouldn't have been able to disentangle. It is very hard to bring the king's rook into play.

**22... ♘xc4 23. ♖f6 ♗f5 24. ♖xf5 gxf5 25. h5!**

Kasparov disapproves of this thrust, but there is no reason for that. It's a good idea to bring the king's rook into play via h4.

**25... ♙d2**



**26. ♜c1**

Until this moment, Smyslov had defended excellently after his unsuccessful opening. However, the text move is the decisive mistake.

White shouldn't have left his a-pawn unprotected. He could have brought his last piece into play with the logical and consistent 26. ♜h4.

Here, Kasparov gives 26... ♜c5 27. ♙d4 ♜b2, concluding, 'White would have remained in a difficult position.'

However, things are not so bad.

Black keeps an edge after 28. h6 ♗f8 29. a4 ♘e5 30. e4 fxe4 31. ♙xe4 ♗e7, but it is insufficient to create any realistic winning chances.

**26... ♜c5!**

Unpinning the knight and preparing a winning liquidation.

26... ♜xa2 was less convincing, as after 27. ♜h4 b5 28. h6 ♗f8 29. e4 White has drawing chances.

**27. ♜h4 ♘e5!**

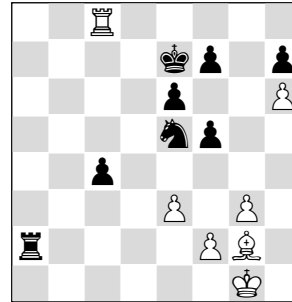
The point of the previous move.

Black obtains a very strong passed pawn.

**28. ♙xc5 bxc5 29. ♙a4 c4 30. h6**

Under these circumstances, this is a harmless demonstration.

**30... ♗f8 31. ♙a8+ ♗e7 32. ♜c8 ♜xa2**



Finally, Black has won the a-pawn after all. Fischer could be trusted to do the technical job.

**33. ♗f1 ♜c2 34. ♗g2 ♘g4 35. ♗g1 ♜xf2 36. ♗xc4 ♜f3 37. ♗g2 ♜xe3 38. ♜h8 ♘xh6 39. ♜xh7 ♘g4 40. ♗b5 ♜b3 41. ♗c6 ♜b2+ 42. ♗g1 ♘e5 43. ♗a8 ♜b8 44. ♗h1**

And White resigned at the same time.

This was Fischer's third win over Smyslov, after he had lost their first game in the Candidates Tournament in 1959. And in Buenos Aires, he had let him slip, as we have seen.

**Standings:**

Ujtumen 2

Fischer, Larsen, Uhlmann,

Mecking, Suttles 1½