

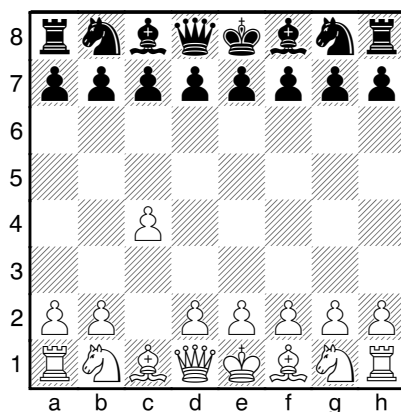
(The annotations to this game, by M. N. Tal, are from '64' (№ 30, 1972). The translation from the original Russian is by Douglas Griffin.)

Prior to the start of the match, speaking of the participants, all of the commentators without exception noted that one of the shortcomings of the Challenger is his limited opening repertoire; this is especially noticeable in his play with White. It is absolutely clear that like Spassky, Fischer had carried out a lot of work before the match for the World Championship and that this could naturally lead to the most unexpected results. One of these 'results' was the first move of Fischer in the 6th game of the match.

Fischer – Spassky

6th match-game, World Championship, Reykjavík, 23rd July 1972

1.c4



It seems that Fischer was employing this move for the second time in his tournament practice.* He played this way for the first time v. Polugaevsky in the last Interzonal tournament. But that game was played in the middle of the tournament, when the tournament situation was already fairly sharp. But as a rule, Fischer avoid the move of the king's pawn only in games that do not have sporting significance. Thus, in all three Candidates' matches Fischer invariably opened the game with the move of the king's pawn. (*Translator's note: Technically, it was the third occasion. Fischer played 1.c4 against Panno in the last round at Palma de Mallorca; his opponent, however, refused to play and Fischer was awarded the game by default.)

1...e6

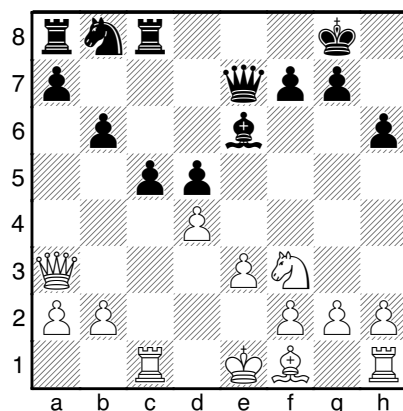
Unfortunately, it is not known to us how much time Spassky thought over this move, and whether Fischer's twist was a surprise for him. Reasoning logically, after the opening success in the preceding, fourth, game, where the World Champion managed to achieve an advantage in the Challenger's favourite opening - the Sicilian Defence - theoretically, one could have expected this.

The move, and more exactly the system of defence chosen by Spassky, could in no way have been a surprise for Fischer. It is sufficient to say that this system of defence had been employed by Spassky in two matches for the World Championship, and clearly, when Fischer intended to play 1.c4, the possibility the opponent's use of the Tartakower-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation should have been considered by him virtually before anything else.

2.Nf3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 b6 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Bxe7 Qxe7
10.Nxd5 exd5 11.Rc1 Be6 12.Qa4

All of these are sufficiently well known moves, which require commentary, perhaps, only in opening reference books.

12...c5 13.Qa3 Rc8



14.Bb5

The American grandmaster, as usual, is up to date with the latest theoretical information. In this way S. Furman played against E. Geller in one of the Army tournaments. White provokes the advance of the a-pawn, considering that this pawn can later prove to be vulnerable.

14...a6

(*Translator's note:* The following year, at the AVRO tournament in Hilversum, Geller introduced the important novelty 14...Qb7! in a game against Jan Timman. The point of this move is that after 15.dxc5 (otherwise Black plays 15...c4 followed by ...a7-a6, ...b6-b5, etc.) 15...bxc5 16.Rxc5? (White should instead prefer the meek retreat 16.Be2) 16...Rxc5 17.Qxc5 Black does not continue with the prosaic 17...a6 followed by 18...Qxb2, but instead plays 17...Na6!. After 18.Bxa6 (18.Qc6 Qxc6 19.Bxc6 Rb8!) 18...Qxa6 the white king is stranded in the centre. Timman could find no satisfactory way out of the situation, and after his crushing defeat in this game, the move 14.Bb5 quickly disappeared from practice.)

15.dxc5 bxc5 16.0-0 Ra7

Geller also played this way in the above-mentioned game. Another possibility was 16...Qb7 with the transfer of the queen to b6. In this way Black rids himself of the pin which (at any rate in this game) caused him no little trouble.

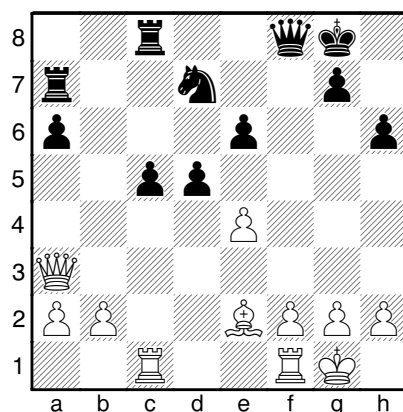
17.Be2 Nd7

Hardly the clearest continuation. The most cautious, it seems, was 17...Qf8, not permitting the following leap by the knight. In the Furman-Geller game already known to us, Black continued 17...a5, but after 18.Rc3! Nd7 19.Rfc1 White managed to maintain an advantage. Also deserving consideration is the suggestion of T. Petrosian, 17...c4. The weakening of the d4-square does not play too great a role, since after 18.Qxe7 Rxe7 19.Nd4 there can follow 19...Nc6.

18.Nd4 Qf8

In all probability, Spassky had under-estimated the strength of White's 20th move. In my view, it was worth preferring 18...Nf6. In this case the capture at e6 promises White little, while in reply to 19.Nb3 Black can modestly continue 19...Nd7, although after 20.Rc3 White's position is the more pleasant.

19.Nxe6 fxe6 20.e4!



Only with great qualification can this be called a pawn sacrifice. It is clear that after 20...dxe4 one of the pawns on the e-file (if not both) will be picked off fairly quickly. White wants to liquidate the tension in the centre, in order to then occupy himself without hindrance on an attack on the sector of the board that has caught his eye.

20...d4

Unfortunately, Spassky falls in with the opponent's desires. Here Black could continue 20...Nf6 or even 20...c4, after which Black's position appears dangerous, but it is difficult to find anything real. Possible, for example, is such a variation: 20...c4 21.Qh3 Qf7 22.Bg4 Re8 23.exd5 exd5 24.Rfe1. Now after 24...Ne5 25.Bh5 g6 26.Qg3 Rae7 27.f4 Nd3 28.Rxe7 Rxe7 29.Bxg6 Qxf4 30.Bf7+! Kxf7 31.Rf1 Qxf1+ 32.Kxf1 Re1+ 33.Qxe1 Nxe1 34.Kxe1 there arises a pawn endgame

favourable to White. This variation is not forced, however. Instead of 27...Nd3 Black could play 27...Kh7. While still earlier 24...Rxe1+ 25.Rxe1 Nf8 retains a sufficiently solid position.

Instead now the position takes on an all the more technical character and is all the more in keeping with Fischer's standard - the better position without counter-play for the opponent. Perhaps, all chess players love such situations. But Fischer loves them in particular.

21.f4 Qe7 22.e5

First of all White fixes the weak pawn at e6. Black's passed pawn is altogether inoffensive, while White's bishop is noticeably stronger than the enemy knight. White has in prospect an attack on the king's flank.

22...Rb8

On the immediate 22...Nb6, very unpleasant is the reply 23.f5, and 23...exf5 is impossible in view of 24.Qb3+.

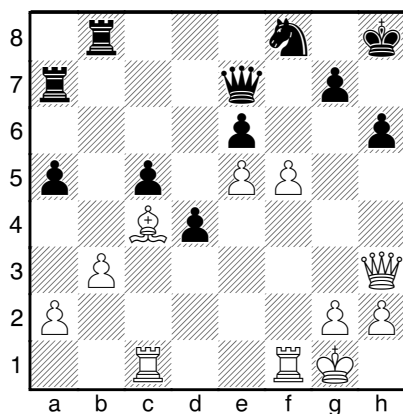
23.Bc4 Kh8

Black's position is probably lost. On the desperate attempt to free himself - 23...Nb6 - White, in all probability, would not have continued 'spectacularly' - 24.Qxc5 Nxc4 25.Qxc4 Rxb2 26.Qxd4 (or 26.f5 Qg5 with counter-play) 26...Rab7 (losing is 26...Rxa2 27.f5! Rd7 28.f6!), after which hopes appear for Black. Instead he would have continued quietly, 24.Qb3!, picking up the e6-pawn.

24.Qh3 Nf8

Perhaps it was all the same worth taking with the rook at b2...

25.b3 a5 26.f5!



Black does not manage to create counter-play. The concluding part of the game may serve as a textbook example of an attack on the king. White's further play is simple, logical and not in need

of detailed commentary.

26...exf5 27.Rxf5 Nh7 28.Rcf1

White sidesteps the trap 28.Rf7? - 28...Ng5.

28...Qd8 29.Qg3 Re7 30.h4

Essentially taking the final square from the knight.

30...Rbb7 31.e6

The *dénouement* is close. Under the cover of the e6-pawn White can re-organise as he wishes, unhurriedly taking aim at the most vulnerable spot in Black's position - the square h7.

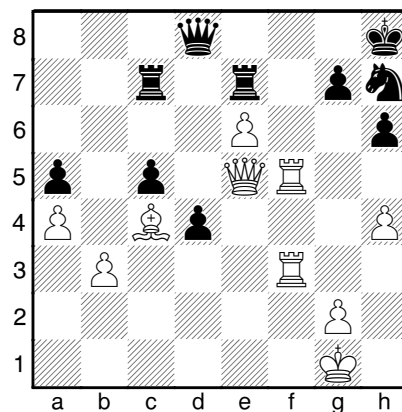
31...Rbc7 32.Qe5 Qe8 33.a4

To some extent characteristic of Fischer. He does not even leave Black with a possibility such as ...a5-a4. Admittedly, in the present situation this would not have brought much.

33...Qd8 34.R1f2

White need not hurry...

34...Qe8 35.R2f3 Qd8



36.Bd3

The bishop has done enough work on the diagonal a2-g8 and moves to a new stance. Naturally, 36.Rf7 also won.

36...Qe8 37.Qe4 Nf6 38.Rxf6 gxf6 39.Rxf6 Kg8 40.Bc4 Kh8 41.Qf4

Black resigned.