The annotations to this game appear in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (№. 9, 1955).

The translation from the original Russian is by Douglas Griffin.

**Reshevsky (USA) – Botvinnik (USSR)**

1st round, 1st board, Match USSR v. USA, Moscow, 29.06.1955


**Botvinnik**: Thus, the Meran Variation. It is now recognised that the most dangerous continuation is 10.d5, but S. Reshevsky did not wish to renounce his favourite system.

10...cxd4 11.Nxb5 Nxe5

**Botvinnik**: This clever and reliable continuation was found 30 years ago by B. Sozin.

12.Nxe5 axb5

**Reshevsky**: Botvinnik’s choice of the 'Meran Variation', which he had employed many times, was not a surprise for me. In person, literally on the day before the game, I told Mr. Bisguier that Botvinnik would play the 'Meran' against me.

13.Qf3

**Botvinnik**: Grandmaster Ståhlberg’s move - Reshevsky likes to employ this system. Probably Reshevsky, analysing the 7th game of my match with D. Bronstein (World Championship, Moscow 1951), in which I played the ‘theoretical continuation 13...Bb4+, had found the possibility of strengthening White’s play and therefore he was also aiming at the Meran Variation... there followed, however, something of a surprise!

**Reshevsky**: In this way I played against Petrovs many years ago; this move is still considered the strongest for White.

13...Qa5+

**Reshevsky**: More often encountered is the continuation 13...Bb4+ 14.Ke2 Rb8 15.Qg3 Qd6 16.Nf3* Qxg3 17.hxg3 Bd6 18.Nxd4 Bd7 with a more active position for White. The move 13...Qa5+, chosen by Botvinnik, had already been employed and is quite acceptable.

(*Translator’s note: in the above-mentioned game v. Petrovs (Kemeri, 1937), Reshevsky had preferred 16.Nc6.)*

14.Ke2

14...Bd6

Reshevsky: But this is a new attempt, presenting White with some difficult problems.

15.Qc6+

Botvinnik: Thinking for around 40 minutes, Reshevsky chose a path leading to simplification and complete equalisation of the game; from the practical viewpoint, the desire to guarantee himself against any sort of ‘homework’ is of course quite understandable. In this way, however, it is impossible to count on refuting the new system!

Reshevsky: If 15.Bd2 Qa6 (not 15...b4 in view of 16.Nc4) 16.a4 (Translator’s note: an earlier training game Kan-Botvinnik (1954) had gone instead 16.Qc6+ Qxc6 17.Nxc6 b4 18.Bxb4 Bxb4 19.Nxb4 Rb8 20.Rac1 Bd7 21.a3 Ke7, etc.) 16...0–0 17.Bxb5 (in the case of 17.axb5 Qxa1 etc. Black obtains sufficient compensation for the queen), then 17...Bxe5! (Translator’s note: 17...Qb7 had been seen in the game Kamishov-Khasin, 17th USSR Championship Semi-final, Moscow 1949) 18.Bxa6 Bxa6+ 19.Ke1. Black has for the queen only bishop and knight, but White’s king is not castled and his king’s rook is temporarily inactive, and this gives Black a satisfactory game.

15...Ke7 16.Bd2

Botvinnik: Of course, not 16.Nxf7 in view of 16...Ra6. (Translator’s note: this had already occurred in a 1953 training game Kan-Botvinnik.)

Reshevsky: If 16.Nxf7, then 16...Kxf7 17.Qxd6 Rd8, and Black has an excellent position.

16...b4

Botvinnik: This position, amongst others, was examined by master I. Rabinovich in the tournament book of the 2nd Moscow International (1935). He pointed out that with 17.Nc4 White can refute Black’s entire plan on account of the inevitable exchange of the bishop at d6 and the capture of the b4–pawn with check... In this he overlooked the prosaic move 17...Qh5+ and

Since as previously 17.Nxf7 is impossible in view of 17...Ra6!, White already has no choice - he must exchange queens, which leads to an obviously level endgame.

17.Qxd6+

17...Kxd6 18.Nc4+ Kd7
   Botvinnik: The only retreat, but a good one. To White’s advantage was 18...Kd5 19.Nxa5 Rxa5 20.Bxb4 Ra4 21.a3 Ba6 22.Bxa6 Rxa6 23.Rc1!.  
   Reshevsky: After the move of the king to d5 - 18...Kd5 - 19.Nxa5 Rxa5 20.Bxb4 and then Rhc1 the black king would be subject to immediate attack.

19.Nxa5 Rxa5 20.Rc1
   Botvinnik: White does not hurry to regain the pawn and, first and foremost, unites the rooks. Also leading to a level endgame is 20.Bxb4 Re5+ (this check is the whole point; it is not difficult to note than in comparison with the endgame position that I. Rabinovich correctly assessed as favourable to White, Black has won 2 tempi) 21.Kd1 (or 21.Kd2 Ne4+) 21...Bb7 22.f3 Nd5 23.Bd2 Ne3+.

20...Ba6
   Reshevsky: It is essential to exchange one of the bishops.

   Botvinnik: The continuation 22...e5 23.f4 only played into White’s hands. But now Black has an ‘eternal’ knight at d5 and he has nothing to fear!
   Reshevsky: On 22...b3 there follows 23.a4.

23.Rxd4
   Botvinnik: Quite understandable. It was dangerous to leave Black with 2 strong pawns in the centre.

23...Rb8
   Reshevsky: Black was faced with a difficult defence in the case of 23...Rha8 24.Bxb4 Rxa2 25.Rxa2 Rxa2 26.Ba3 and then Ra4 with the threat of Ra7.
24. Kd3 h5

Botvinnik: A critical position. Black can have difficulties with the defence of the b4–pawn, if the white king penetrates to the square b3. Therefore the exchange of the b4–pawn for the pawn at a2 suggests itself: 24...Ra4 25.a3 Rba8 26.Kc2 bxa3 27.Rxa4 Rxa4 28.Rxa3 Rc4+. Thinking for more than half an hour, I reached the conclusion that White cannot bring the king to b3, and made the waiting move, not without its uses, in the text.

Reshevsky: If 24...b3, then 25.a4 Rc6 26.Rc4.

25. Kc4

Botvinnik: One should not be surprised by the fact that White made this tempting-looking, but evidently bad, move - every chessplayer, whatever their strength, can assess the position subjectively. But I was genuinely surprised when my opponent made this move almost without thinking! Meanwhile in this position there was much to think about: the black rook invades on the square c2 and the white pieces prove to be tied to the defence of the 2nd rank. The only correct continuation was the modest 25.Kc2! b3+ 26.Kb1 bxa2+ 27.Rxa2 Rx a2 28.Kxa2 Ra8+.

Reshevsky: Provoking and forcing Black to go in for complications. This move was risky, but I realised that sometimes it is necessary to decide on risk, in order to obtain winning chances.

25...b3

Reshevsky: Otherwise there follows 26.Kb3, and the black b-pawn will be doomed.

26. a4

Botvinnik: It is on this that White was counting - he obtains a passed pawn. This pawn, however, lacking the support of pieces, should not be dangerous. The initiative now passes to Black, and events develop by force.

26...Rc6+ 27.Kd3 Rc2 28.Rb1

Botvinnik: It is not difficult to notice that White is in a dangerous situation: his king’s rook must defend the b2–pawn, the bishop must defend the 2nd rank, while the king must protect the bishop.
Thus, only one of White's pieces (the rook at d4) can be active; thus, it is sufficient for Black to exchange it for the b8-rook, in order for White to be deprived of any counter-play!

28...Rbc8  
Botvinnik: Black loses valuable time and, evidently, lets slip his chances of winning. After 28...Rb6! White would have fallen into a difficult situation, for example: 29.Rc4 Rc6! (it was precisely this possibility that I did not see during the game) and now:
(a) 30.Rxc6 Kxc6 31.Rc1 Nb4+ 32.Ke3 Kd5 33.Rxc2 (also bad is 33.Rd1 Kc4 34.Bxb4 Kxb4 35.Rd4+ Ka5 36.Rd7 Rxb2 37.Rxf7 Rc2 38.Rxg7 Kxa4) 33...bxc2 34.Bc1 Ke4 35.a5 Kb3 36.Kd2 e5 with the possible continuation 37.h4 g6 38.g3 f6 39.f3 f5 40.Ke3 Ka2 41.Kd2 Kb1 with a difficult position for White.  
(b) 30.Rxc2 Rxc2 31.a5 Kc6, and White hardly has a good continuation.  
If White, saving himself from the threat of ...Rd6 followed by ...e6–e5 were, as in the game, to transfer the king to e1, then after 29.Ke2 Rd6 30.Ke1 Nb6! 31.Rxd6+ Kxd6 32.a5 Nd5 33.Kd1 g5 34.h3 f6 35.Ke1 Ke5 36.Rc1 Rxc1+ 37.Bxc1 Nb4 38.Ke2 Kb1 things are very difficult for White.

29.a5 R8c6  
Botvinnik: Clearly, insufficient for victory was 29...e5 (pointed out by V. Ragozin) in view of 30.Rxd5+ Ke6 31.Rb5 Rd8+ 32.Ke3 Rdxd2 33.Rxb3. Here White is forced to withdraw the king to e1.  
Reshevsky: If 29...e5, then 30.Ra4 (30.Rxd5+ Ke6 31.Rb5 Rd8+) 30...Ke6 31.Rc4+ Kb5 32.Rxc8 Rxc8 33.Ra1 together with the threat of Ra3.

30.Ke2  
Reshevsky: Black threatened the manoeuvre ...Rd6 and ...e6–e5.

30...Rd6 31.Ke1  
Botvinnik: Now there is not the move 31...Nb6 - Black wants for exactly one tempo, and White is out of danger.  
Reshevsky: If 31.Kd1?, then 31...e5 32.Rd3 Nc3+.
31...Nc7

Botvinnik: An oversight. Correct, of course, was 31...e5, since in the case of 32.Rd3 Nc7 (or 32...Nf4), as in the case of 32.Re4 f6, Black stands quite safely. I automatically played 31...Nc7, in order to force the exchange of rooks - see the note to White’s 28th move.


32.Rxd6+ Kxd6 33.Bc3

Botvinnik: This forced move, defending the b2–pawn, I had overlooked. Now Ra1–a3xb3 is threatened, and Black by all means ought to have replied 33...Nd5!, in order after 34.a6 (34.Bxg7 f6) 34...Kc7 35.Ra1 Kb8 36.Ra3 Nxc3 37.Rxb3+ Ka7 38.Rxc3 Rxb2 39.Rc7+ Kxa6 40.Rxf7 Rb7 to have every chance of making a draw.

33...f6

Botvinnik: A new and already decisive mistake. Now the b3–pawn is lost.

34.Ra1 Na6 35.Ra3

Reshevsky: Now, because of the undefended state of the b3–pawn, Black’s game is lost.

35...Kc7 36.Rxb3 Ne5

Botvinnik: More tenacious was 36...e5.


Botvinnik: Black resigned, not continuing to the adjournment. An interesting and instructive game. It clearly shows that it is necessary for me to improve in the accuracy of calculation of short, 2–move variations; my opponent, perhaps, would be helped by improving in the accuracy of his assessment of positions... A good game by Reshevsky!

Reshevsky: After 42.Rb3 Rc6 43.Rb5 Black proves practically to be in 'zugzwang'.