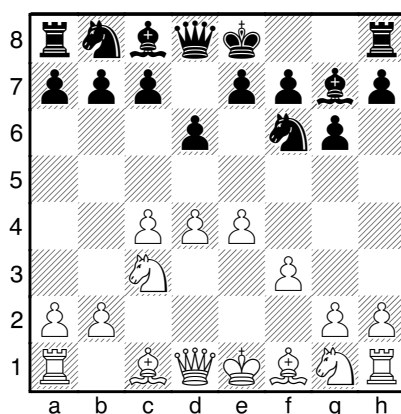


(The annotations to this game, by M. M. Botvinnik, are from *Analyticheskie i kriticheskie raboty 1957–70* (Fizkultura i Sport, 1986). The translation from the original Russian is by Douglas Griffin.)

Botvinnik – Larsen

5th round, Quadrangular match-tournament, Leiden, 25th April 1970

1.c4 g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.d4 d6 4.e4 Nf6 5.f3



With the move-order chosen by Black I, as a rule, employed the Sämisch System, considering this reinforcement of the occupied centre to be the most unpleasant for the opponent.

5...0–0

Black should not have hurried to castle. If, say, the game had continued 5...c6 6.Be3 a6 7.Qd2 b5, then 8.0–0–0 is doubtful for White.

Black would have continued not 8...Qa5, after which White achieves some advantage: 9.e5 (the variation 9.Kb1 Nbd7 10.Bh6 Bxh6 11.Qxh6 Bb7 12.Qd2 0–0–0 13.d5 b4 14.Nce2 cxd5 15.cxd5 Qb6, as shown by the game Gheorghiu-R. Byrne, 1968, leads to a level game) 9...dxe5 (on 9...Nfd7 there follows 10.exd6 exd6 11.Ne4, while on 9...b4, not 10.exf6 bxc3 11.fxg7 cxd2+ 12.Bxd2 Qxd2+ 13.Rxd2 Rg8 with equality, but 10.Nb1 dxe5 11.dxe5, and the e5–pawn is inviolable on account of the mate at d8, while if 11...Nfd7, then 12.f4) 10.dxe5 Nfd7 11.f4 0–0 12.Nf3 Nb6 13.Qf2 N8d7 14.Nd4.

The correct reply for Black is 8...Be6!! For example: 9.Bh6 Bxh6 10.Qxh6 Qa5!! 11.d5 (11.e5 b4!) 11...Bd7 12.Kb1 b4 13.Nce2 cxd5 14.cxd5 Ba4 15.Rc1 Nbd7 16.Nd4 Qb6 or 9.e5 dxe5 10.dxe5 Qxd2+ 11.Rxd2 Nfd7 12.f4 g5.

Of course, Bent could not know all of these variations, which were kept in my notebook.

6.Be3 a6

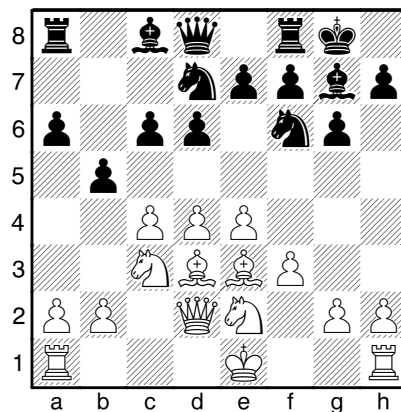
The idea of carrying out at an early stage of the game the counter-blow ...b7–b5 (instead of the previously almost standard move ...e7–e5) was demonstrated in the 1950s by Taimanov, Petrosian & Smyslov (the last-named, for instance, in Game № 258 where he, incidentally, held back from castling for a long time).

7.Qd2 c6 8.Bd3

Due to Black's premature castling, it was now possible to play 8.0–0–0. For example: 8...b5 9.Bh6 Qa5 (9...Be6 10.h4*) 10.h4 b4 11.Nb1 and then h4–h5 with an attack. (*Translator's note:* This occurred in the game Averbakh-Petrosian (Moscow Sporting Societies' Team Championship 1961), in which Black suffered a crushing defeat.)

However, on this occasion I did not want a sharp game, and I gave preference to the quiet continuation 8.Bd3.

8...b5 9.Nge2 Nbd7



10.0–0

Essentially, in the present game Larsen refuted this move, which was a consequence of good theoretical preparation. Therefore, subsequently White's investigations were associated with the continuation 10.Rc1. For example: 10...e5 11.d5 b4 12.Nd1 c5 13.g4 h5 14.Nf2 with the better prospects (Petrosian-Gligoric, 1972).

When, however, Black has knowingly renounced the plan employed by Larsen (as in, for example, the game Spassky-Penrose, 1970*, where in the position in the diagram Black had not castled, but on the other hand his bishop stood at b7), White could quietly continue 10.0–0, since the move ...Ra8–b8 already lacks point. (*Translator's note:* In fact, the game Spassky-Penrose took place in the tournament at Palma de Mallorca at the end of 1969, a few months prior to the present encounter.)

10...Rb8!

It will soon be readily seen that the black rook is optimally placed here. However, also played is 10...bxc4 11.Bxc4 Nb6 or even 11...d5.

11.cxb5

Also possible is 11.Bh6.

11...axb5 12.b4 Nb6

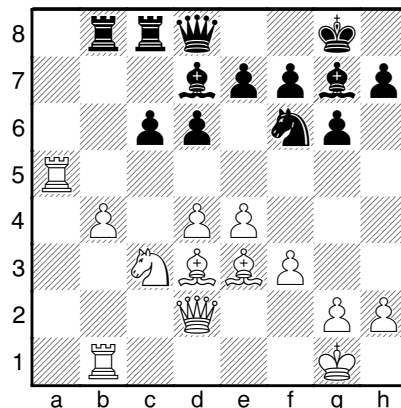
Already Black threatens after 13...Be6 to occupy the c4-square, and this forces White to undertake urgent measures.

13.a4 bxa4 14.Nxa4 Nxa4 15.Rxa4 Bd7

The fact that the whole time Black is creating some sort of annoying threats (now, for instance, 16...c5) speaks of the fact that he has excellently solved the problems of the opening.

16.Ra5 Qb6 17.Rb1 Rfc8 18.Nc3 Qd8

The queen had politely given way to the rook, and now it returns home, in order to remove from the agenda White's pawn break d4-d5 (with gain of tempo).



How should one assess the position that has been created? On the one hand, White has more space and the open rook's file, on which, however, nothing significant can be achieved. On the other hand, he must the whole time concern himself with the b4-pawn. In sum, as it is customary to say, a position of dynamic equilibrium has been created.

19.Qa2 Be6 20.Qa3 d5

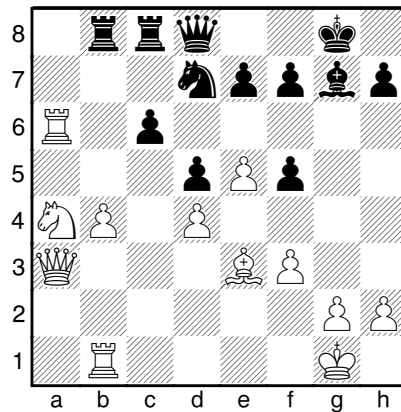
The pluses and minuses of this advance are obvious: the possible occupation of the c4-square, but the long-term exclusion from play of the g7-bishop. The latter is perhaps more significant.

21.e5 Nd7 22.Na4 Bf5

Consistently played. Black eliminates a defender of the c4-square, while the doubling of his

pawns also suits him; the black pawn at f5 will prevent a possible pawn offensive by White on the king's flank.

23.Bxf5 gxf5 24.Ra6



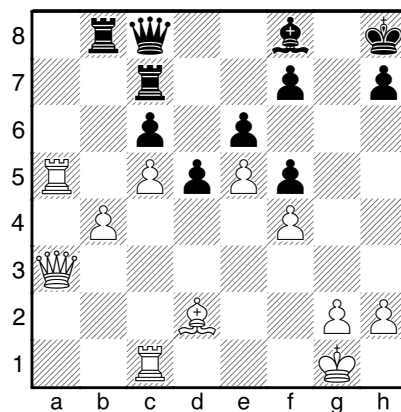
24...Rc7

Sharper was the continuation 24...Nb6 25.Nc5 (after 25.Nxb6 Rxb6 White has no possibilities at all for active play) 25...Nc4 26.Qd3 e6. Larsen prefers to exchange the knight on the c5-square, but this worsens Black's position.

25.Rc1 Qc8 26.Ra5 e6 27.Bd2 Bf8 28.f4 Kh8 29.Nc5

Already now Black cannot transfer his knight to c4. In the case of 29...Nb6 30.Na6 Nc4 31.Rxc4 dxc4 32.Nxb8 (32...Qxb8 33.Ra8) he loses. However, after the exchange of knights the white pawn at c5 will limit the activity of the enemy pieces.

29...Nxc5 30.dxc5!



Probably, my opponent under-estimated this move. Now Black's heavy pieces remain passive

(the b-file is closed) and the c6-pawn is weak, while in an endgame the threat of b4–b5, with the creation of a passed c-pawn, will be highly unpleasant.

30...Qd8 31.Qd3 Qd7 32.Rca1 Rcb7 33.Ra8

It is useful to exchange one pair of rooks, which fundamentally eliminates the potential threat of an exchange sacrifice at b4, after which Black's pieces could have become active.

33...Qc8 34.Rxb8 Qxb8 35.Qa3 Kg8 36.Qa4 Qc7 37.Ra3

With this move White seemingly hints that he can transfer the rook to the king's flank.

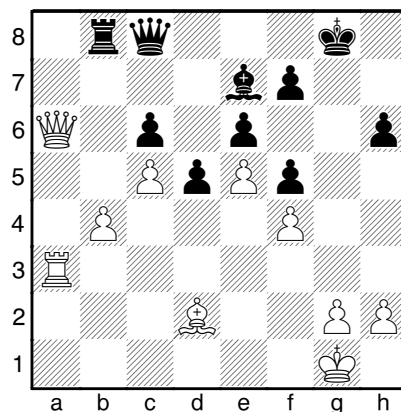
37...h6 38.Qa8 Rb8 39.Qa5

Naturally, it would have been tempting to begin an attack on the somewhat compromised position of the black king. However, I acted 'in the Capablanca style' and, renouncing unclear complications, aimed at the exchange of queens, after which White will have a clear advantage in the endgame.

39...Qc8 40.Qa6 Be7

Larsen probably feared that as a result of home analysis I would all the same have given preference to the attack on the king's flank. Therefore he clearly wanted, on 41.Qe2, to retain the possibility of the reply 41...Ra8. As however concerns the endgame, then evidently it suited Black.

However, objectively, 40...Qc7 was perhaps stronger.



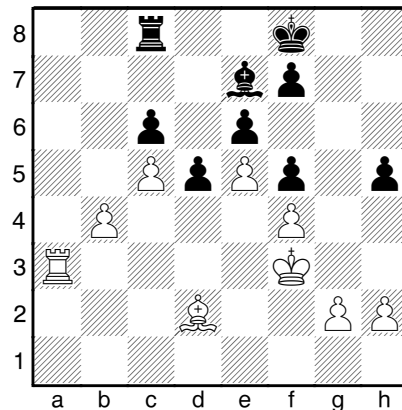
41.Qxc8+ Rxc8

Paradoxically, in a conversation with Spassky Larsen assessed the endgame as follows: "I am probably a little bit better, and if by king gets to the centre, then I will seek winning chances".

42.Kf2 Kf8 43.Kf3 h5

Not wishing to permit the break g2–g4, Larsen makes an incautious move, which weakens the h-pawn and gives White new chances.

White's positional advantage is obvious: he holds a lot of space, which guarantees him freedom of manoeuvre, the black c- and h-pawns are in need of defence, while the threat of the break b4–b5 with the creation of a passed white c-pawn is very weighty.



44.Ke2! Kg7

Otherwise 45.Rh3. Now Black's king and bishop must keep watch on the king's flank.

45.Be1 Kg6 46.Ra7 Bd8 47.Bc3 h4 48.Kd3 h3

Probably, Larsen feared the transfer of White's king to a4 followed by the break b4–b5. In this case he wanted to gain counter-play, for which he sacrifices a pawn, believing that the doubled h-pawns will be of insignificant value.

The following, however, refutes Black's calculations.

49.gxh3 Bh4 50.Ke2

Now White refrains from the transfer of the king to the queen's wing for the sake of attempts to exploit the passed h-pawns.

50...Bd8 51.Kf3 Bh4 52.Kg2 Rd8

Larsen strives to sharpen the situation, provoking White into playing 53.Rc7. Then there would have followed 53...Ra8 or 53...d4 54.Bd2 Ra8.

53.Kf3 Rc8 54.Ke2 Bd8

Black was almost in *zugzwang*. On 54...f6 there could follow 55.Re7 fxe5 56.Rxe6+. The retreat of the bishop prevents the possibility of such a breakthrough, but the white h-pawn becomes highly mobile.

Therefore 54...Kg7 was more circumspect.

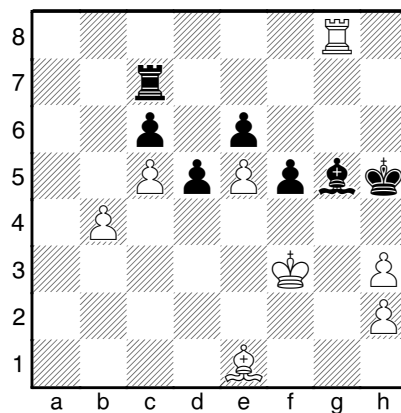
55. Be1 f6

Black strives to activate his bishop or obtain another passed pawn, and in so doing rids himself of the doubled pawns. However it is more significant that now on the 6th rank he will have another weak pawn, at e6.

56. Kf3 fxe5 57. fxe5 Rc7

Additionally, it has become clear that the situation of the black king has become less secure after the opening of the 7th rank. Black closes it, but with one rook, he cannot block two ranks.

58. Ra8 Bg5 59. Rg8+ Kh5



60. h4!

The h-pawn finally advances. It is invulnerable: 60...Bxh4? 61. Rh8+.

60... Bh6 61. Rh8 Kg6

62. Bd2 was threatened.

62. h5+!

Once again the pawn cannot be touched (62...Kxh5 63. Bd2), in connection with which Black's situation worsens catastrophically.

62... Kg7 63. Ra8

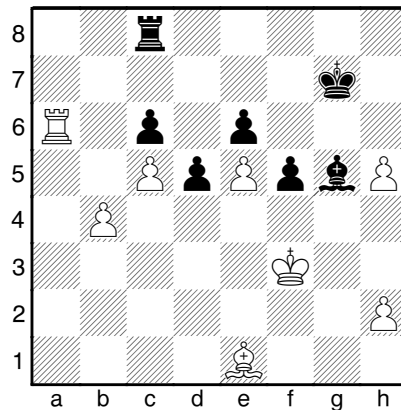
In order not to cede operational freedom to the opponent's rook.

63... Bg5 64. Ra6

With a distant eye on the e6-pawn.

64... Rc8

Finally the time has come for decisive action.



65.b5!

A move leading to victory. For both sides, three passed pawns are created (a rare case), but the white ones are further advanced and therefore more dangerous. Moreover, the black pieces are occupying poor positions.

65...cxb5 66.Rxe6 Bc1

67.Rg6+ was threatened.

67.Bb4 d4 68.Rg6+ Kh7 69.Rd6 Bb2 70.Rd7+ Kg8

After 70...Kh6 71.Bd2+ Kxh5 72.Rd6 Rh8 73.c6 the passed c-pawn soon becomes a queen, since the black rook is occupied with defending the king against mate. But also now the white pawns cannot be held back.

71.e6 Bc3 72.e7 Re8 73.Rd8 Kf7 74.Rxe8 Kxe8 75.c6

Black resigned. The present endgame too I conducted according to Capablanca's method, of which we spoke in the commentary to game № 73. Thus concluded the last tournament game that I won in my chess career.