

## *Interview with Garry Kasparov*

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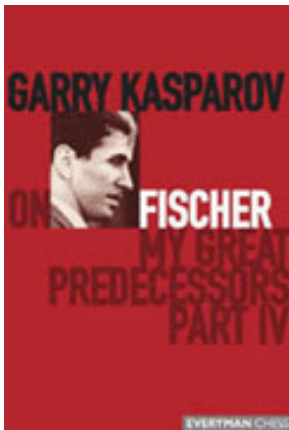
Hanon W. Russell

*One of the most anticipated publishing events of the year is the release of the new book by Garry Kasparov. Published by Everyman Chess, it is the fourth of a planned six-volume series and it is entitled Garry Kasparov on My Great Predecessors.*

*On December 9, we had the opportunity to interview him in New York City. Accompanied by Mark Donlan and Carsten Hansen, we arrived at 11 a.m. We were greeted by Kasparov and his agent, Owen Williams.*

*During the interview, Garry was animated and focused, discussing his new book with vigor and intensity, pouring his energy into the discussion as if he were doing battle - and winning - against a rival over the board.*

*An audio file of this interview is also available for your enjoyment. It is an mp3 file and, because it is so large (approximately 60 meg) it may take a few minutes initially to open. The interview lasted about an hour. To hear the audio file, click [here](#).*



**Hanon Russell:** It is Thursday December 9, 2004, we are in New York City and we are meeting with Garry Kasparov, whose fourth volume of his *My Great Predecessors* series has just appeared. And Garry we want to thank you for joining us and talking to us about your new and eagerly awaited fourth volume of this series, dealing mainly with Bobby Fischer. We were just about to discuss... how long did this book take to write?

**Garry Kasparov:** Volume four and five were not even planned because after I changed my original plans from three volumes to five volumes I thought that volume three would deal with Petrosian, Spassky, and Fischer and it seemed to me that it was all in good shape and when volume one and two were published, I think we had once a discussion and I had promised five volumes and volume four would be on Karpov and Kortchnoi and stories of the 70s, and volume five my matches with Karpov.



Now it all stood this way throughout the most part of 2004. I didn't have any plans to alter the composition of volume three. Not, of course, of writing volume four at all, but, as it happens in life very often it was all accidental. I was approached by Jon Levitt who said maybe we would do something on the Internet, just to have a web-site dedicated entirely to the *My Great Predecessors* series. Just to encourage people to send letters; and I know you also had some criticism. The idea was to receive a lot of information, including critical remarks to help me with a better vision of the construction of *My Great Predecessors* series.

And one of the first letters, a big letter, was a very serious blow to the whole concept, was a letter from Ray Keene, who was talking about *My Great Predecessors'* bigger mission. Not having Samuel Reshevsky and it was a long, long letter which apart from some other things accused me of following the footsteps of Soviet propaganda and diminishing Reshevsky's role in the history of chess.

**HR:** When did you get that letter?

**GK:** I think it was late May, early June.



**HR:** Of this year?

**GK:** Of this year, yes, and it was one of the first big publications on chesschamps.com. So I read the letter, but it was not just this letter, I didn't want to assign all the credit to the letter because at that time we already had a major problem with the composition of volume three. It was at the final stage and we knew that it was growing too big. So there were two elements that we had to deal with. Fischer was getting out of control, we already had Spassky and Petrosian, then we had the other players like Polugaevsky, Portisch, Gligoric, Stein, which also grew very big and then Larsen. And then when we dealt with Fischer, Plisetsky told me, "Garry the book would be too big." I said, "So be it. We had no other choice."

And then after receiving this letter from Ray Keene, I had a second thought and I discussed it with Plisetsky, and then we called our publisher and said, "What if we tried to split it, if we do volume four separately?" And it will be only Fischer, we add Reshevsky, we put Larsen there, and then I had an idea: maybe I'll add Najdorf. Eventually I ended up adding Reuben Fine as well, because we just decided that it should be on all Western players; the best of the West.

That was just before the Petrosian Memorial in Moscow; early June. They accepted, they eventually liked the idea because they said, "Great, it will be one book on Fischer." That's what they liked the most about the concept.

**HR:** From a marketing standpoint it is better.

**GK:** Exactly, the said the best thing about it would be the book on Fischer, "When can you deliver the book? Because it makes sense for us if the book is available before Christmas." And I said, "Wow." Now we are in the middle of June, I played in the Petrosian Memorial. That's over and we are at the end of June.

**HR:** Now you have to play blitz as an author.

**GK:** Yeah, blitz and ... So we have to do Reshevsky. Then we had to do Najdorf. Then we had to finish Fischer, which was about we were half-way through probably by that time.

**HR:** Well I know you were working on Fischer in the middle of 2003 when we spoke.

**GK:** Yeah, I know, but it was at different stages. Everything had to be polished for the book and we were taking it so seriously that we checked all the lines with different computers, so we didn't want to be subject to the same criticism as with volume one and partially in volume two.



Also, it all should be balanced, because when you look at the size of Reshevsky, you understand that you have to enlarge Larsen. So you have to add a little bit just to keep all players balanced. So I had been working day and night in early July on Reshevsky. So I had about forty games and I had to look through all these games, I had to pick out the best games, and I just recognized that there are some good things that I can add to the book. It's not only about Reshevsky's role as the leading Western player, but also certain historical elements that are not yet well publicized; that Reshevsky made a record of playing eleven world champions.

**HR:** I saw that.

**GK:** Yeah, eleven world champions; not Steinitz, not Kasparov – the only ones. So with Najdorf it was a little bit more difficult because he also claimed he played all the world champions but Steinitz. But we couldn't find evidence of him playing Lasker and even not officially playing Alekhine.

**HR:** Oh, really.

**GK:** Yeah. There are anecdotes, the problem with Najdorf -- there are many anecdotes and it's very difficult now to distinguish between anecdotes and history. But, no matter what, he met Lasker as well; he met twelve champions as Reshevsky. So those two legendary figures; and interesting nice stories that are all very opposite; they played the matches; so I already saw that it's an intrigue, it makes the book more exciting.

**HR:** You spend almost 200 pages before you get to Fischer.

**GK:** Absolutely.

**HR:** 100 of those approximately are on Reshevsky and then the rest...

**GK:** Yeah, Najdorf, Larsen and then we had all of that. It's a complex

work... you want to read through, you want to find the best games, you want to make a nice composition of the book. It should be all connected. So you want to add elements that will create the best image of the person you are talking to and you're presenting to the audience. And I hope I did it. There are always contradictions, but I just also discovered something interesting about Reshevsky's role in world chess in the late 40s and early 50s.

But when we did everything, then I got another letter, "It's amazing you don't have Reuben Fine in the book." We are already running into September and the publisher is getting crazy because we keep sending Ken Neat [the translator] material. The book is translated by portions and we still have to polish Fischer just to make sure it's all OK. Then it should be all integrated because we changed the numbers of the games and we also don't want some stories to contradict each other.

**HR:** To be coherent.



**GK:** Yes, it should be coherent and then, where is Reuben Fine? I need, not a clue, but I need just something. What I should say about Reuben Fine: great player, but I need a fact. Reshevsky played all the champions, Najdorf was a very flamboyant figure, and Reshevsky threatened Soviet domination, but what about Reuben Fine? Bingo, I found it. I just look at his results; the only player in history who had a positive score against the world champions.

**HR:** Ah-hah.

**GK:** The only one. Stein we actually checked, I think Stein had, but we found one game with Petrosian that he lost, so he had an even score. And we are talking about number of games, not one-two-three. Reuben Fine played 25 games with five world champions and had a score of +3; which is amazing. +1 against Botvinnik, +1 against Alekhine, +1 against Lasker (only one game), and even score with Euwe and Capablanca. This is something that makes it more exciting for the audience because there is a fact. There's something they can rely on.

**HR:** Well, he also belongs in a discussion of Western chess of that period.

**GK:** Absolutely, but it's much better that it's... It's not because he won the AVRO tournament or he was invited to, and then eventually declined, an invitation to play... It just shows that he was a real force in the world of

chess. So he won all three games he played against world champions, so we included them. I wish I could enlarge it, but it's...we were rushing. I would say that we spent 100 days in composing volume four.

**HR:** That's actually remarkable.

**GK:** That's quite an accomplishment.

**HR:** That's playing blitz as an author.

**GK:** Yes, it's in blitz and probably we had half of Larsen ready and probably two-thirds of Fischer. So two-thirds of volume four was composed and we made it clear within 100 days. And I like the book because it was a little rushing, but they're great stories and eventually thanks to Ray Keene's letter now we actually split volume three and four and there's a special book on Fischer and the best of the west.

**HR:** Well, I think this book works real well. I'd like to talk a little bit about Reshevsky before everybody wants to hear about Fischer. You may recall, and I think it was your first meeting with Reshevsky, we accidentally met each other in Palma.



**GK:** Palma, '89.

**HR:** Exactly, the GMA tournament. I was with Reshevsky and helping him get food and just deal with everything. And I don't know if you remember what happened: he immediately said to you, "May I speak with you in private." And then you and he went off for 15-20 minutes, no entourage, no one else, just you and Reshevsky. And you came back and I was impressed in the few minutes before you had this private discussion, and I mentioned it

to several people, you treated him very respectfully. It was 1989, he was an old man. Had you met him before that time?

**GK:** No.

**HR:** So that was your first time?

**GK:** First time.

**HR:** I was impressed. Here was Garry Kasparov, world champion, crushing opponents left and right, and Sam Reshevsky, all 5'2" of him, bumps into him and it was like you stopped everything. I was impressed with the respect you showed him.

**GK:** Yeah, but I learned it from my early days. Chess history and ... it's a coherent part of our heritage and we have to respect it. It's paying respect to great players of the past. The greatest names, it's also paying respect to the game of chess. So it's as though without Reshevsky the game of chess would be less than it is now.

**HR:** Fischer gave his opinion in the article he wrote for *Chessworld* that in the mid-50s Reshevsky could have been world champion if he had the opportunity. What do you think of that?

**GK:** I spent time in the book contemplating that and, as you could find out, I spent a lot time and many pages in describing Zurich '53, which could be the day of Reshevsky's triumph because there were still accusations and some stories about Soviet players being forced to lose to Smyslov and Bronstein indicated that it could be the case. In fact when I spoke to Bronstein, because I called Bronstein, and I asked him a few questions about 1953, and he was evasive. He didn't want to talk about this unfortunate situation. Then I just changed the subject and I asked him about Reshevsky and I said, "Now, I looked at the Reshevsky game with Kotov and Reshevsky was winning, but then you know the game was adjourned and why Reshevsky didn't want to make a draw and he was still pushing to win and eventually lost." He said, "Because that was Reshevsky." And I said, "You mean he was trying to win this endgame?" And he said, "Yes." "You mean he was trying to beat Smyslov with Black." He said, "Yes, why?" "Because Reshevsky played for a win," I said, "Even with Black?" He said "No, even if he played with blue." That's the way he played.



**HR:** He was a fighter.

**GK:** He was a fighter, that's the way he played. And I don't think that Reshevsky was dominant. I don't think he was stronger than Smyslov or Botvinnik, but he was a decent opponent. He was the only player who could resist the domination of the Soviet Chess School. And in 1953 he was posing a real threat. When you analyze this tournament in 1953, probably it was

a matter of luck, because there were these two crucial games with Kotov and Geller, where Reshevsky could make two out of two and lead the tournament. Eventually he made only half a point. And so those two crucial games, before his game with Smyslov, I think they decided the fate of Reshevsky as the potential challenger. But, his fighting skills could be only admired.

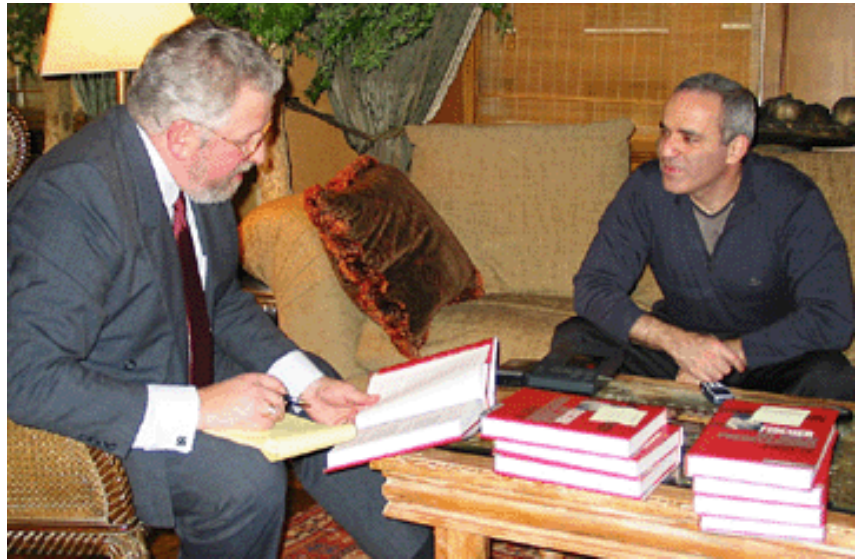
And incidentally, I discovered talking to other players and chess journalists that most of us have very little information about the events of the past. So, what people remember about 1953 – Smyslov won convincingly, two points ahead of Reshevsky, Keres, and Bronstein. Now, when I ask people whether Smyslov's domination was ever in danger, they say "Come on, he won handily." Six rounds before the end of the tournament he had an even score with Reshevsky. So that's what stands in our memories. That we know the result and very often we don't pay any attention to the question of the tightness in the key events in the history of chess.

**HR:** So you think maybe Reshevsky is very close but not quite...

**GK:** I think I tried to explain in the book that he was missing some elements. But Reshevsky's role is an integrated part of our chess heritage. He paved the way for Fischer. I think it's somewhere in the book, let me just find out...

**HR:** Here's the end of Reshevsky, right here.

**GK:** I couldn't say it better than I put it in the book.



**HR:** OK. You say on page 114, “But Reshevsky’s uncompromising nature, his boundless belief in his own powers, his inexhaustible thirst for a fight, his deep penetration into the secrets of the position, were revived in their own way in Robert Fischer. To these very valuable qualities of his great American predecessor, Fischer added fanatical hard work together with analytical revelations, in the end creating an all-conquering titan, which even the bastions of the Soviet chess fortress could not withstand.” So he paved the way for Fischer...

**GK:** People always say it’s an exaggeration; that Kasparov is making assumptions, but I always want to see chess history as a very coherent story. So I always look for connections. Sometimes maybe I make it up, but I believe it works because I can see some elements in the game of chess that help me to come up with these revelations and assumptions.

**HR:** You paint a picture of Larsen that’s almost tragic.

**GK:** I think it was.

**HR:** I don’t think most chess players perceive him as a tragic figure.

**GK:** How many players remember if you just keep asking them that Larsen was a dominant figure in the world of chess by the late 60s? That he won about five international tournaments in a row, which was the record before I won a greater number in the 90s. So, the man was winning tournaments and he lost to only two players. I mean he couldn’t beat Spassky; he was too strong to beat. And then eventually he was crushed by Fischer. But the man was really a dominant force.

**HR:** And you think the overall result is a tragic figure?



**GK:** I think it's a tragic figure because the man after his match with Fischer was a different player and he never recovered. He was still displaying a great strength, but he never recovered.

**HR:** Most of our readers and listeners, of course, want to know what Garry Kasparov thinks about Bobby Fischer. I spent a long time with this book and it struck me... I was impressed by the fact that,

perhaps I'm wrong, but out of everything that has ever been written about Bobby Fischer, and there are tens of thousands of pages, you are the first one to say: Look, he was a very good chess player, he was an excellent grandmaster, but the Fischer legend doesn't start until the Match of the Century. There's a line of demarcation.

**GK:** Absolutely.

**HR:** And I think the perception, particularly from American chess players, is not going to agree with that. They're going to say, "Bobby Fischer, look what he did at Stockholm." Of course, they forget what happened in Curaçao. But tell us a little bit about how you came to the conclusion that... basically you segment Fischer's career into two parts, before and after the Match of the Century, if you're talking about Fischer the legend. How did you come to determine that there should be a frontier here?

**GK:** I know that many of my assumptions in the book will be argued and some of them fiercely because I understand that speaking about Fischer and presenting my views on Fischer can backfire. [People may disagree with Garry Kasparov] trying to ruin, not to ruin the legend, but to...

**HR:** Diminish?

**GK:** ...diminish the legend, yes, or to demystify the legend, because I want to look at the quality of the games. My goal that I stated from day one, from volume one, is to analyze the contribution. Fischer's contribution was immense, just look at the size of Fischer. It's not because of Fischer's legend, it's because I looked at the games and I have to present Fischer's contribution to the game of chess in its entirety.

For the man who played quite a few games compared to other great players and had a very short period on top, just 3 years versus Karpov's 25 years, for instance, or Botvinnik's 25 years, even 30 years. So that's quite a book, so it's more than 50 games and there's nothing to do with the legend, it's pure detraction of his contributions of Fischer's input into the development

of the game of chess, but on the other side I have to clean up this field and just not to talk about Fischer as a legend and I have to analyze his own improvement as a chess player. So here was the most powerful chess machine... ever seen in chess in early 70s, from 1970-1972, so how did he manage to play magnificent chess, all-powerful chess, destroying all the best in the world quite handily.

**HR:** I understand that, but...

**GK:** And I analyzed the segments.

**HR:** But you draw a line...

**GK:** I analyzed the segments and, yes, it was a chess prodigy. No doubt about it, he had a unique talent, we could see. He qualified for the interzonal at age 15, a phenomenal accomplishment, but at the end of the day Spassky, he also played in the interzonal at age 18, and he qualified from the Soviet national championship which was, with all respect to the American championship, was a different kind of animal. So Spassky's results as a teenager were at least as impressive as Fischer's. So, so far we didn't have anything that should say, that was a legend, because we had Spassky showing similar results and probably even more sophisticated chess. Fischer was probably a bit younger, but there's not yet enough rust to make a conclusion it's a legend.



Stockholm, great, but Stockholm [sighs] in my view, and I have very high standards, so for me to evaluate it's not enough to be bound by the public conviction that something is great or not. I have to look at the core of his performance. He beat many weak players in Stockholm. He used to doing it because he played U.S. championship and the only way to win was to crush weaker opponents. For Petrosian and Geller it was a different ball game. They used to play in the Soviet championship where they couldn't win so many games and it was all about qualifying, it's about making enough draws, not losing – winning enough games to be on top. So they had a different agenda in Stockholm. They had no idea that they had to win so many games. For them it was about qualification. The real fight started at Curaçao and Fischer was absolutely helpless.

At age 19 he was helpless, he couldn't even compete with them. So that's why we have to conclude that he was not ready to oppose them and without really presenting a real threat; because Curaçao was a disaster and Fischer recognized it. The good thing about Fischer is that he always recognized that he was weak enough. That's why he went away and he was re-evaluating. So he just recognized that his blitzkrieg didn't work. He was not good enough to challenge Petrosian and other leading Soviet players. So he needed more time to re-evaluate his performance and come back with new

ammunition and new ideas.

**HR:** He does that and the first real indication that he may be a threat is Tunis, Sousse.

**GK:** No, no, I think Santa Monica.

**HR:** You think Santa Monica? He doesn't win Santa Monica.



**GK:** He doesn't win Santa Monica, but...

**HR:** He has a very bad first half.

**GK:** Exactly, in Santa Monica he had a very bad first half, but he managed to recover and then he managed to win many games in a row. This time not beating weak opponents – beating the leading players, except Spassky, of course. But still posing a real threat, not yet ready, but we are getting close to

the legend.

**HR:** So you think this is a big step in his development.

**GK:** I would say that the big steps in his development, if I look at the milestones, of course it's qualifying for the interzonal in 1958, second I think is the Reshevsky match in '61. That was the first signal to the Soviets that Fischer's for real. Reshevsky was 50, but Reshevsky was Reshevsky, and we better remember that Reshevsky was a dangerous opponent for anyone, including Botvinnik. So playing the match with Reshevsky on the level, it was a level playing field, Fischer proved himself as a big player in the eyes of the Soviets. And the match with Reshevsky helped propel him to the success of 1962 in Stockholm... And then Bled, by the way it was Bled. So I would say Reshevsky match and then Bled, because in Bled he was second, but beating Tal, beating Petrosian, that was a real story. That was the combination, the Reshevsky match and Bled.

Stockholm, I don't think it had any effect and then after Curaçao his stock price went down and then Santa Monica... Santa Monica was something quite important because he managed to recover after a disastrous start, and then Tunis.

**HR:** Let's talk about Sousse for a little bit. You have a suggestion in your discussion of Sousse that I don't really understand and basically you say – look Fischer was really afraid of playing Spassky at this period... He was

afraid of Spassky, he thought Spassky was better and would beat him, so the withdrawal from Sousse really is a way of him avoiding Spassky, but if that's true why did he play in Sousse to begin with?

**GK:** I don't think anything is that simple with Fischer; we can't find a rational explanation, why he played there and then withdrew. I think there were some fears back in his mind, subconscious fears that he was able to suppress before the beginning of the tournament and then out of all these scandals I think they could sway his mind. I don't have any rational explanation. If you have I would be delighted to that and include it in the revised edition. I looked in many publications, I never found anything plausible. Why did Fischer withdraw from Sousse? So I have to look for, not for an excuse, but for an explanation that could sound as a plausible explanation.

**HR:** Well you make the interesting point that he could have proceeded even with the default losses and won the tournament.

**GK:** Absolutely, but I don't think Fischer had any doubt in his mind that he would qualify. I think there was something else that was torturing his mind... that actually made him very uncomfortable. Looking around I didn't find any...



**HR:** Of course it's close, he keeps changing his mind; he goes, he leaves, he comes back. Reshevsky told me privately how stunned he was to see Fischer walk in with just a few minutes left on his clock and then Reshevsky plays weakly.

**GK:** I think Fischer had no doubt that he was too strong for the rest of the opposition in the interzonal and he would be there, and looking at the composition of 1967-1968 candidate cycle, I think there is little doubt we would see Spassky-Fischer.

**HR:** But Fischer would have known that Spassky... because he had already played the title match in '66, but Spassky was in the matches already...

**GK:** I know, but it was a very delicate balance. So, I think that Fischer at one point convinced himself, he could take on Spassky and then suddenly he got scared. He was not ready to win and I think for Fischer what was important was to have absolute confidence that he was going to dominate. He always had the problem of switching on. But the moment the machine was switched on, he was unstoppable. I think he needed some more time and that's what he bought for himself in the late '60s, to mature himself as this chess titan. Probably he sensed it better than anyone else.

**HR:** So you used this same theme to explain why he plays board two...

**GK:** No, no, there it is absolutely clear. I think, In Belgrade, I have no doubt about it that this time Fischer really had in mind that he would face Spassky and he didn't want any more negatives, because he wasn't sure he was going to beat Spassky. Spassky was quite a powerful force at that time and he knew Spassky would be far more persistent playing Fischer than Larsen. In Belgrade I would be adamant supporting this version.

**HR:** There was, of course, that one magnificent game that Spassky crushed Larsen...

**GK:** But then Spassky lost game three. He did play well, but Fischer had to recover his own confidence. Let's not forget he didn't play any real chess and for him the match with Petrosian was a big boost. So the answer... Fischer legend starts from beating Petrosian, that's the real moment, that's a turning point. That's where he got extra confidence, beating Petrosian in two first games in the match added what was missing – extra confidence and then Fischer could actually put together all these unique qualities and to become invincible.

**HR:** Well, he then proceeds of course finally to play in Palma and we know what happened to Taimanov and Larsen and eventually Petrosian, but let's talk a little bit about Fischer-Karpov. You make a suggestion that is a very clear and obvious suggestion that will take most people by surprise – that Karpov in 1975 would have been an extremely difficult opponent for Fischer to beat.



**GK:** Yes.

**HR:** You go on to say Fischer would have been certainly comfortable against someone like Petrosian...

**GK:** Spassky...

**HR:** Spassky, Korchnoi, but not Karpov. Karpov had really at that point in his career started to ascend about 1972, '71...

**GK:** '71, yes.

**HR:** But he hadn't had years and years of experience at that level. He had a tremendously difficult match with Korchnoi in '74...

**GK:** Yes, but...

**HR:** He only beat Korchnoi 3-2.

**GK:** Yeah, but it was 3-0 after game 17, he got tired, but he was...

**HR:** We'll see that pattern again later with you.

**GK:** Absolutely, now he was tired. This is an important thing. That's why Fischer insisted on a very long match, because he knew his only real advantage over Karpov was Karpov's delicate fabric.

**HR:** You really think that was the reason or...

**GK:** I think it's all... Fischer felt very uncomfortable by seeing Karpov's ascending and I don't think the match with Korchnoi had any real impact on Fischer, because Karpov was stronger. And I even know from players like Razuvaev about Karpov, that the moment Karpov will learn that Korchnoi beat Petrosian, he stopped working hard, because he was afraid of Petrosian but he didn't have the same fear by playing Korchnoi. And Karpov in '74 was stronger. He had a much better team, he was well-prepared. He played very quickly; Korchnoi was in regular time trouble. And I think it's...we can be mistaken by 3-2, but Karpov was, at that time was stronger. In fact, in Baguio, Korchnoi had his peak, that's where Korchnoi was a real threat to Karpov. In '74 I think Karpov was stronger, but what put Fischer on alert was the Karpov-Spassky match.

**HR:** You think that was it?

**GK:** Karpov beat Spassky very convincingly, after losing game one, and in good style. In the next ten games he crushed Spassky 4-0. 4-0 and Spassky played better than Reykjavik, no blunders, no nervous reactions. Spassky fought hard and he lost 4-0 in ten games. And the quality of this match was phenomenal. I already analyzed these games for volume five – Karpov. And, just to give you an example, I have only one, maybe 1½, one segment of games from Karpov-Korchnoi match, because I don't see that the match had any real contribution to the game of chess. I have 7 out of 11 from Spassky-Karpov match.



**HR:** That many.

**GK:** Because I'm dealing with quality. With new concepts and I think this match had a very negative effect on Fischer, because he saw it. He saw that Spassky was beaten, in fact, more convincingly than in Reykjavik. At a time when he played better chess and he was in better shape; and the way Karpov beat him caused a lot of trouble I think for Fischer's psyche, because the

confidence he obtained by beating Petrosian in 1970 suddenly evaporated. He had to deal with a player he never met before, who didn't make the same mistakes that other players did. So Karpov's playing style was very different. He was more stubborn, it was very steady, Karpov played very quickly at that time. He was a very quick, probably quicker than Fischer. And Fischer always had extra time on his clock playing Petrosian, Spassky and it added confidence for him. For Fischer confidence is a buzz-word. That's the most important thing about his playing advantages. If he's confident, he's unstoppable. But the moment his confidence is shaken he's very vulnerable. So with Karpov I think his confidence was really shaken, unless he could survive long enough for Karpov to get tired. And I think he didn't like what he saw by analyzing Karpov's games. The way Karpov played; the pace of his play; the opening preparation; the defense skills. Karpov was very stubborn defending bad positions. So the resistance Fischer was going to face in the match with Karpov was unheard by his standards. He was dominant by beating players of older generation. He never had a chance of facing someone who started sort of a new chapter in the history of chess.

**HR:** It's my opinion and I told you this several times, I don't think Fischer would ever agree to play again after Reykjavik.

**GK:** Yeah, and I got a story in the book, and I think it's the first time it's published, it's what Campomanes told me, because I interviewed Campomanes, about 1976-77, the matches...

**HR:** But I think Botvinnik is right. You quote him as saying that Fischer would come up with something else.

**GK:** But that's what happened in 1977 in Washington when the Philippine embassy was opened especially for them signing this and the vice-consul was typing the agreement and Fischer came up with a condition, or pre-condition, that was absolutely unacceptable for Karpov; insisting to call the match a professional world championship. It was unacceptable and Fischer knew it, if Karpov even with all the backing he obtained in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, he couldn't accept the word professional.

**HR:** Why?

**GK:** It was a very delicate negotiation there and Karpov was presenting this match as the only way to prove that he was the best player – obviously Karpov wanted to make money, but I think he believed he had a good chance of beating Fischer, because Fischer didn't have any real chess practice.



But, for Fischer any word professional was a matter of stubborn stupidity. Because if he could beat Karpov that would be it, so with 'professional' without 'professional', so it was bound... playing Karpov and beating Karpov in a match would ruin FIDE. So Fischer could single-handedly ruin FIDE and just start a new era in chess if he agreed to play the match. And according to Campomanes, according to Karpov, I couldn't find out Fischer's opinion, everything was ready. Karpov was ready to sign the contract to play the match outside of FIDE in 1977.

**HR:** But for that one word...

**GK:** Yes, but it was Fischer who insisted on introducing this word, when the contract was agreed upon and virtually signed. So, I think that Fischer always was uncomfortable in facing Karpov and it's a great pity, because I think their match in '75 could be a great boost for the game of chess. Phenomenal...

**HR:** That's absolutely true. By '76 or '77 Fischer would not have been playing for five years...

**GK:** Yeah, every year, in fact every six months, would be devastating for Fischer's playing abilities. But in '75 we could have a unique match with two players of that strength, reaching their heights, face each other; so '75 could have had a major, major effect in the future development of the game of chess.

**HR:** I assume, although you don't really say so in the book, if you believe Karpov was perhaps a favorite to win in '75, after '75 he beats Fischer then in '77...

**GK:** I think what actually happened that Fischer was out of the game of chess, which was very tragic, and Karpov couldn't actually realize his potential. What's interesting is that Karpov's real, and I will deal with it in volume five, when you look at Karpov's heights, the peaks, one was '74-'75, just before he was playing Fischer, next one was after he lost to me in '86, '85-'86. When you see Karpov ascending again that was probably period of

'86-'87, quality-wise and then another one was, the last one was '94-'95. But it's amazing that he didn't make any progress because he didn't play Fischer. So he had no opposition to realize his potential.

**HR:** Except he did embark on a very determined effort to show people, he played in every major tournament he could.



**GK:** Absolutely, he played, but still it was not enough for him. He won most of the tournaments, because he was better than his opposition. But it was not enough for him to realize his potential; so he was displaying it only. In '84 in this unlimited match and he was playing quite well and then in '86-'87... so I think only in our matches actually inspired Karpov to realize most of his potential. But in '74-'75, I mean, he could become a much stronger player after a match with Fischer even if he had lost the match.

But I think the match, my scenario, and I will try to deal with this scenario in volume five, I think it would be all about Fischer's surviving the first 10-15 games. If Fischer could have survived 10-15 games without being too far behind Karpov then he would probably be on the winning side because Karpov wouldn't last that long. So he would be losing energy and Fischer could play a much longer match. But the first ten games would be, in '75, crucial for Fischer because the amount of Karpov's preparation, Karpov's playing style, and Fischer's lack of confidence, which was consistent in all events even including Reykjavik, that could have a very negative effect on Fischer.

**HR:** Except, you proved also, in similar circumstances, that Karpov could eventually be worn down.

**GK:** Yes, absolutely, but...

**HR:** We won't talk about that match now...

**GK:** In '75 Karpov was younger and I think it was sort of a different momentum, because Karpov was the underdog in the public mind and Fischer was a big favorite, which I don't think was a correct betting line. In '84 Karpov was a big favorite; he had to win, at least in the eyes of Soviet officials. So I was in a slightly better position because, even losing the match, I still have all my life in front of me. For Fischer-Karpov that would be a reversed picture and that would put extra pressure on Fischer. So the fact is that in '75 all the different elements, both chess and political, would constitute more burden on Fischer's shoulders.

**HR:** Probably, yeah.

**GK:** Even that fact that Fischer used to create this tense atmosphere, for Karpov. He was always shielded by Soviet officials from this criticism. For Spassky it was big disaster to win game two, just to get a point for game two. As I said, for Karpov that would be a nice gift, he would go to bed and then dictating the story, how I won game two.

**HR:** After the forfeit in game two everyone said, well Fischer will walk out of Iceland and I said, he wins now no matter what, if he loses to Spassky he says, how can you give the world champion two points...

**GK:** Absolutely.

**HR:** And if he beats Spassky he says, I gave the world champion two points.

**GK:** Fischer knew Spassky's delicacy, it's the way Spassky treated his opponents – he was a gentleman. And Fischer knew that this hoopla, this chaos, this atmosphere, close to a nervous breakdown, that was too much for him. Fischer would have also learned that for Karpov that would be thrilling. Karpov could only thrive in this atmosphere. So what, big deal, he wants to... self-destruction. So Karpov has a very different approach to all these psychological games that Fischer played, partially because he couldn't avoid them, partially because he thought about having an impression on his opponent. For Karpov it would backfire.



**HR:** Interesting, just a couple of other things, Garry. First of all, you make the interesting comment... I remember when Fischer won the first game against Spassky in '92, and everybody's going "Oh, my word, Fischer has returned. Look at this game." And you say very directly, everyone was impressed, not me. Spassky mistakes on move this that and the other, he played weakly, Fischer played well to take advantage of it, but this is not the second coming of Christ, or whatever. This is a grandmaster taking advantage of errors of another grandmaster and that's an interesting point because I think most people also forget that early in the match Spassky also took a lead.

**GK:** Yes.

**HR:** Briefly, but he did take the lead. And I think it was clear then that we were not seeing the Fischer of 1972. You have, however a remark...

**GK:** In fact, we saw the Fischer of 1972, but it was '92. We saw Fischer...

**HR:** He hadn't developed...

**GK:** It was the old edition...

**HR:** You have a remark on page 474 by Krylov that they diagnosed or were fairly certain that Fischer was a schizophrenic and I find that remarkable, not because Fischer's behavior has been good, but that, and maybe this was a product of the Soviet system, where they attempted to make an analysis of someone based on reports. An analysis like that is sophisticated and complex and usually can only be done if you spend time with the person.

**GK:** Yes, I think you're right. That was analysis made based on reports, but that shows the atmosphere before the match in 1975. And you have to give readers a better idea about the environment of the match that was aborted. I think that the Soviets and Karpov, no doubt, Karpov would have benefited tremendously from unlimited support from Soviet officials on all levels: chess, psychological, political, intelligence, whatever. I think they were preparing for a big psychological war on Fischer and that's a part of the report. Obviously, we know...but I'm sure there are more reports and Fischer could have faced a very different scenario of the behavior of the Soviets as he saw in Reykjavik, because in Reykjavik, Spassky didn't want to go that far. Spassky wanted the match to be a gentlemanly match, a chess match. Spassky had an idea that Fischer deserved to play the match and unless he beats Fischer in a fair competition he didn't deserve the title.

Karpov would have a totally different approach. He would act as a good soldier in the army of the Soviets that had one task, to retake the title, the chess crown from an American. And this forces...these little bits of information that I threw in the book, in my view, could help you reconstruct the atmosphere. So to feel what was the game plan of the Soviets and Karpov's team.

**HR:** But you could almost argue that putting a thought like that into Karpov's head is one way of... maybe he doesn't prepare as well.



**GK:** No, I think Karpov has a unique ability of just totally shielding himself from this piece of information. He would be immune, that's not him. Fischer's schizophrenic, great, it means he's weaker. But it doesn't effect Karpov's preparation for the games. So Karpov is as solid as ice. He has his target, his goal; it's his challenge to accomplish it. Just don't forget he's a soldier, maybe a high ranking officer, of the army.

His obligation is to crush Fischer at the chess board. And if Fischer is weak psychologically there are other soldiers to deal with that. It will only help him to accomplish his goal.

**HR:** We know what happened to Fischer. He plays and wins in Reykjavik, nothing, anything, no more playing until that one match in '92. What in your opinion is the legacy of Bobby Fischer?

**GK:** The legacy is one of the greatest contributions to the game of chess. So, undoubtedly, without Fischer chess would be different and it's more... I mean we could say this about any champion or any great player, but for Fischer it's more meaningful than for anyone else. Because we know that for modern chessplayers 1972 – it's a turning point. Chess with Fischer, chess without Fischer, chess with Fischer's impact, chess with Fischer's games, a little bit less attention paid to the games, more to the overall image that he had created. But I think that his legacy, it's that chess missed the greatest opportunity in its history that we may never recover to move into the mainstream. Fischer, it's like two sides of one coin, it's the greatest opportunity and the greatest failure in one. And that would be the legacy unfortunately. And I'm not happy to pronounce it. I'm happier, I'm much happier in analyzing the games and saying that's great, that's great, that's what's important, that's how Fischer's approach helped us to shape a new modern chess. But still we can't escape from dealing with this current unfortunate situation, which is the logical continuation of his demise as the personality from 1972. So Fischer symbolizes the greatest, happiest moment in the history of chess and the greatest failure of chess accomplishing what it deserved.

**HR:** Very interesting. One more question, please, off topic, but it's December 9 of 2004, do you expect to play Kasimdzhanov soon? What can you tell us?

**GK:** I have more faith in Turkish Federation than in these mysterious people from Dubai.

**HR:** I understand that the talks have been cancelled with Dubai.

**GK:** I met some people in Turkey in September and that's why I wrote the letter to FIDE General Assembly, which was rejected outright without even explaining to the delegates what it was all about.

Because I knew from the beginning that Dubai negotiation was not serious. I heard a lot of stories from Ilyumzhinov about Dubai from the end of August and I made very clear to him that I wouldn't move anywhere; I wouldn't



sign any paper unless I see bank guarantees. The problem is that he had been talking to many people telling them different stories and always saying it's all...everything is under control, while I knew that there was no sign of bank guarantees and I was getting very nervous because I already lost a number of options.

First of all, I'm not playing in Wijk aan Zee and I feel really bad about it. That it's...I mean we live in a world where FIDE carries no responsibility for ruining big chess events and the plans of the leading players. They had been waiting for October 15, but as you know only a few days ago FIDE technically announced that there would be no match in January. And I couldn't play in Wijk aan Zee which was my clear intention and I had a contract agreed upon with organizers providing FIDE, before October 15 cancelled the match or moves the match to another date. So I told FIDE officials that I had this problem as with Ponomarev they paid attention to that. I think now with the match shifted to Turkey, not the match, the organizational hassle is shifted to Turkish Federation and I know they have some support, significant support from the government. I think we have a good chance, but dealing with FIDE I don't want to give you any optimistic scenario before money is provided in escrow account and then we know that the dates are solid and safe. I'm in trouble now because they insist on me giving the dates and I'm trying just to figure out at what time they will have to back up these dates with financial guarantees. Because the dates now, the only acceptable dates for both sides is the end of April the beginning of May.

**HR:** This is for a match in Turkey?

**GK:** Yeah, for a match in Turkey and those are the premises that Turkish Federation is operating within.

**HR:** If they can't do it though, for whatever reason, it seems to me that puts you in a very difficult position. You've got Kramnik who has gotten by Leko and...

**GK:** Look, I have a very philosophical attitude now. If it happens great, I hope I can play and win and to retain whatever title whatever it's for, just to get a title. I think it's more difficult to win Russian Championship than this FIDE title. But it doesn't mean I'm diminishing Kasimdzhanov's strength. We are in a situation that to play the match is a bigger challenge than to win the match, because so much energy is being wasted in the process of expectations. And I wish I could concentrate on the match, prepare for the match and try to show my best. I'm sure Kasimdzhanov is also dreaming about the match, he said a few times, and I'm very grateful, that unlike Ponomarev he's not hiding out and not playing games.



**HR:** A big mistake by Ponomarev.

**GK:** Yes, of course. But I think it's a good statement, he said it's my dream, I want to play Kasparov. So this time we don't have anyone to blame but FIDE. The failure to organize that match, it would constitute a failure of FIDE around world championship matches even in the situation when the arrangements are quite simple and elementary. If it didn't happen, if it doesn't happen, if at one point we've dealt with this situation where it's just all these deadlines expired. Look, I have other things to do in my life. But I would be delighted to play the match and I would be delighted to see any form of reunification. I also have very little faith because as long as we have Ilyumzhinov on one side and Kramnik on the other side, I don't think we have any realistic hopes for a unified title.

**HR:** Well, thank you for your opinion and thank for spending time with us, Garry.

**GK:** Thank you, thank you Hanon.

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