



Inside Chess

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Yasser Annotates:

Morozevich-Aleksandrov

FIDE World Cup
Shenyang 20002

It's not always a pleasure annotating a game of Alexander Morozevich. As one of the world's most dynamic players it is hard to even guess at what he may be thinking. Worse still is to make a judgment about his moves. You're just as likely to be wrong and guess that the culprit for his defeat was in fact the moment of a crowning glory that was messed up later... In the following game, he is at his enterprising best as he goes on a sacrificial rampage to begin the game. No one would envy being in Aleksandrov's shoes under such circumstances yet he prevailed with flying colors!

Morozevich (2756) - Aleksandrov (2591)

King's Gambit C37

FIDE World Cup Group A Shenyang CHN (2), August 2, 2000

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nf3 g5 4.d4!?

A romantic sacrifice typical for games played one hundred years ago. The Kieseritzky Gambit variation: 4.h4 g4 5.Ne5 d6 6.Nxg4 Nf6, is currently the theoretical rage with a surprising number of games between top players. The text virtually compels a piece sacrifice.

4...g4 5.Bxf4!?

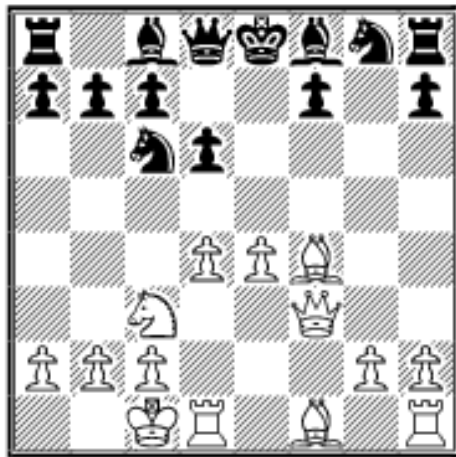
Rats! Five moves out of the opening and my theoretical knowledge is already exhausted. While an enterprising sacrifice:

White has tempi and the center for a piece, the defensive technique of modern players is about one hundred years of testing better than it was when the King's Gambit was in vogue. In any case: 5.Ne5 Qh4+ 6.g3 fxg3, isn't an attractive option for White.

5...gxf3 6.Qxf3 d6 7.Nc3

Nunn's Chess Openings (NCO) considers: 7.Bc4 Bg7 8.O-O as offering compensation. In that case, White immediately focuses against the f7-pawn aiming for a tactical knockout. The text is more positional as White seeks to complete his development followed by a tactical blow. But the tempi lost by this positional shuffle, will allow Black better defensive possibilities too.

7...Nc6 8.0-0-0



I assume this is all part of Morozevich's preparations, after all, Black's moves are easy to guess. Personally, I'd be somewhat dubious of the placement of White's King. After castling short, the Rook is nicely placed on the half-open f-file for ye old hack attack. The "plus" of being castled long is lost on me. Especially when considering

the diagonal c1-h6. For instance a move like ...Qd8-h4/f6 sets up ...Qh4/f6xf4 and ...Bf8-h6 trading pieces.

8...h5!?

Of course in such situations, everyone is anxious to develop and trade pieces as rapidly as possible. The text is resisted as "making too many pawn moves in the opening" is frowned upon. In this case the move has several points. Firstly, 9.h3? Bg4! 10.hxg4 hxg4 11.Qxg4 Nf6, doesn't stop Black's ...Bc8-g4 threat. Secondly, the move ...Bf8-h6, forcing future trades is now better supported. Finally, there are occasions where Black might find ...Rh8-h7 to have a defensive benefit. I'm reluctant to award the move an exclamation mark as the ramifications of: 9...Qh4, aren't that clear to me.

9.e5!?

Another in the series of tough calls. White wants to do his utmost to take advantage of his superior development, continuing with his sacrificial play. To this end a line like: 9.Bb5 Bg4 10.Qf2 Bxd1 11.Rxd1 a6 12.Ba4 b5 13.Bb3, is a nice way to go. But it's also a whole Rook! After, 13...Qd7, the proof is in the pudding and besides Nc3-d5, it's not obvious what White is supposed to do for an encore. The text is right in line with the idea of busting the game wide open to enhance the superior development. Black benefits too as the heightened clash allows him to challenge White's pieces and to offer some trades.

9...Bg4 10.Qe4 Bh6!

This one is easy enough to understand and I'm anxious to award someone for making a good move! It is obvious enough as Black seeks to complete his development while vacating the f8-square gives Black's King a side exit. Considerably weaker was: 10...Bxd1? 11.exd6+ Kd7 12.dxc7, when a subsequent Kc1xd1 will leave a material count of three pawns for a Rook, but Black's King would be swimming in dangerous currents.

11.Bxh6

Now: 11.exd6+ Kf8 12.dxc7 Qxc7 13.Bxh6+ Rxh6 14.Rd2 Re8, only helps Black complete his development, giving him a material advantage as well as a winning initiative.

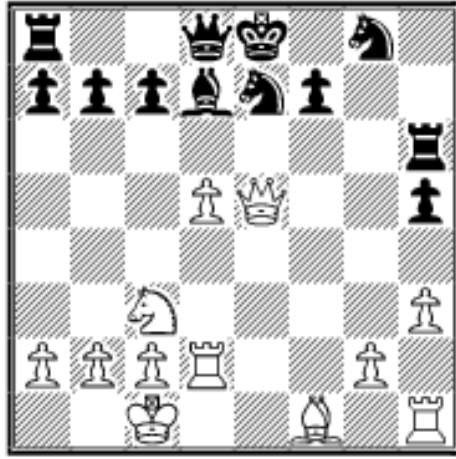
11...Rxh6 12.Rd2

An indication that White's earlier bravery isn't panning out. Besides acting to save the exchange, a line like: 12.Be2 Qg5+ 13.Kb1 0-0-0, would allow Black to happily complete his development. In that case, Black's material advantage should be enough for a win. Such a line is a further indication that long castling by White in the King's Gambit isn't quite so wonderful.

12...dxe5 13.h3

Trying to give the Bishop the boot to a less comfortable square. Clearly: 13.dxe5? Qg5 14.Nd5?? 0-0-0, would be a colossal failure for White. His center is eliminated; Black is fully developed and has seized the initiative.

13...Bd7 14.d5 Nce7 15.Qxe5



Once more it seems to me that Morozevich could easily have foreseen this position in his preparations and must have felt good about his prospects. Indeed it doesn't appear that Black's King is escaping to the Queenside any time soon. While White has open files for his Rooks and the possibility of clipping a second (h5) pawn.

Aleksandrov now rises to the challenges of the position.

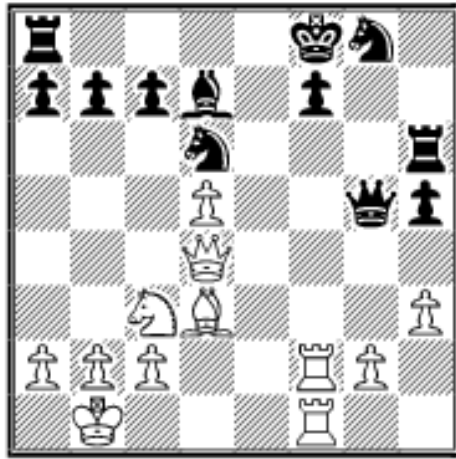
15...Kf8!!

I've always been partial to surprising King moves in the opening and at first sight, this one seems quite confounding. However, in a single stroke Black's position suddenly fits together. In the first place, potential incursions by Qe5-g7 are neatly stopped. The e7-Knight is no longer pinned and ideas like, ...Ne7-g6 and ...Qd8-h4 will allow Black to develop with tempi! Finally, the d7-Bishop, which is really desperate to prove its usefulness, has the possibility of ...Bd7-e8 covering the f7-pawn shield if needed. With this move, Black's game comes alive and now the onus is back on White to prove the soundness of his sacrifice.

16.Bd3 Nc8!?

Aleksandrov must have felt quite confident about his position as: 16...Ng6, developing with tempo is nearly impossible to resist. He may have reasoned that by 17.Bxg6 Rxg6 18.Qxh5 (18.Rf1!?), White wins a second pawn for his piece, improving his compensation. Still, in that case, I'd prefer Black's position. The idea behind the text is quite simple: the d6-square is an ideal blockading square for the Knight, which nicely covers the f7-pawn as well.

17.Rf1 Nd6 18.Rdf2 Qe7 19.Qd4 Qg5+ 20.Kb1



Once more it appears as if White isn't doing so badly. His pieces are nicely coordinating and the threat of Nc3-e4 might blow away the f7-shield causing Black to have a major accident.

20...Be8!

Another fine defensive move. The defensive minded:

20...Qg7 21.Qc5 Rc8 22.Qxa7 (20.Ne4), would gain a second pawn. With the text, Black offers nothing and once more asks White to prove his sacrifice.

21.Ne2

The search for compensation isn't easy. After: 21.Qc5 Qd8 (21...Qe7!? 22.Re2 Qd8) When White runs up against a brick wall. The text plots an invasion on the e6-square that is easily spotted.

21...b6! 22.Nf4 Bd7 23.Qc3!

Trying to make Black's consolidation task as awkward as possible. White will now win back some material but will have to trade Queens.

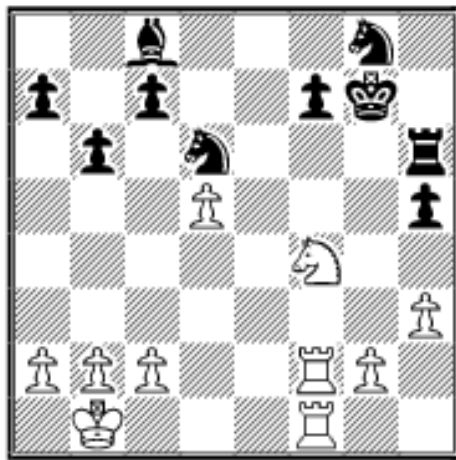
23...Rc8

Of course covering the c7-pawn by 23...Qd8?? 24.Ng6+, puts White right back into the game.

24.Ba6 Qg7!

This is the rub. White must allow the Queen trade as: 24.Qa3? Re8, allows Black to skip away and in time take over the game.

25.Qxg7+ Kxg7 26.Bxc8 Bxc8



Although the material is about even, in fact, Black has a significant advantage in the diagram. The key to the position is the effectiveness of the pieces. A cursory glance reveals that White's Rooks will not be effective on either the f-file or the e-file. With the Rooks neutralized, Black's pieces will be drawn to favorable outposts throughout

the board.

27.Rf3 Nf6 28.b3

Active play by: 28.Rd3? Nfe4, playing for the d2-fork will cost White material. The text is defensive in nature, as White wants to play c2-c4 so that the d5-pawn is protected. It's interesting to observe how quickly White is tied up.

28...Nfe4 29.Kb2 h4!

Not just threatening the d2-fork, the text cements control over the g3-square and keeps White's Kingside fixed on light squares.

30.Re1 a5!

Getting a further grip over the c5-square. Black is having an embarrassment of riches finding squares for his pieces.

31.c4 Rh8!?

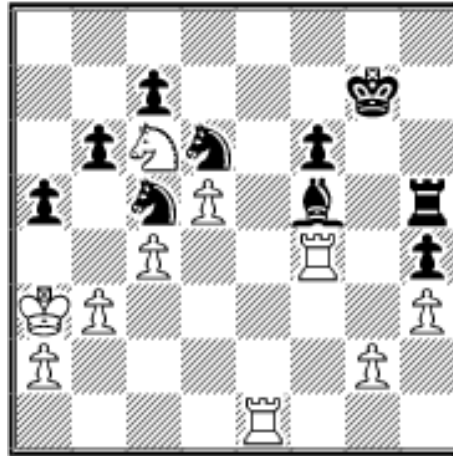
Black only needs to find a way to activate his Rook and the game is completely over. I must confess that: 31...f5, intending ...Kg7-f6 and then putting the Rook on the g-file would have been my choice. The text might be a bit more flexible.

32.Nd3!/? Rh5! 33.Rf4?!?

No one envies White's position and indeed it might be lost. That said, the best way for White to fight is to try in some measure to improve the role of the Rooks. That cannot happen as long as the e4-Knight lords over the position. A better chance was: 33.Nf2 f5 34.Nxe4 Nxe4 35.b4!/? axb4 36.Kb3, hoping to open some ranks

and files for the Rooks.

33...Bf5 34.Ne5 Nc5 35.Ka3 f6 36.Nc6



36...Be4!

The presence of the extra pair of minor pieces is too much as White's Rooks are further limited. The e4-Bishop is far to powerful and the game is nearing hopelessness as Black begins to press against the g2-pawn...

37.Re3 Rg5 38.Rxh4 Rg2

39.Rg4+ Rxg4 40.hxg4 Kg6

The trade of Rooks hasn't brought White any relief. It is remarkable to consider the plight of White's Rook. Now after: 41.Rh3 Kg5 42.Rh8 Kxg4 43.Rg8+ Kf3 44.Rg7 Na6, Black is likely to make a Queen of his f-pawn before White can disturb the Queenside.

41.Nd4 Kg5 42.Rg3 Bg6 43.Rg1 Be8

The winning plan is rather direct: capture the g4-pawn. Morozevich does his best to prevent this from happening, but the task is impossible. White's a3-King is far from the action.

44.Ne6+

Else, ...Be8-d7xg4 is too easy.

44...Nxe6 45.dxe6 Bc6 46.Kb2 Bf3 47.c5!

A desperate fling but a good one as White hopes to open some files for his Rook.

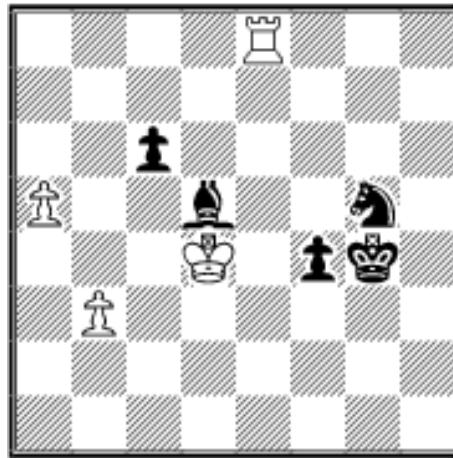
47...bxc5 48.e7 Kg6 49.Rc1 c4 50.e8Q+!

This is White's point. The a5-pawn has been isolated. If it can be won...

50...Nxe8 51.Rxc4 Kg5 52.a4 c6!?

I don't think I would have been so anxious to close the diagonal to the a8-square. Aleksandrov may have been concerned that: 52...Nd6 53.Rxc7 Kxg4 54.Ra7 Nb7 55.b4 axb4 56.Kb3, would allow too many pawns to be traded. Still, this line looks very strong for Black.

53.Kc3 Bd5 54.Rc5 Kxg4 55.Rxa5 f5 56.Ra8 Nd6 57.Rd8 Ne4+ 58.Kd4 Ng5 59.Re8 f4 60.a5



60...Ne6+!

The clincher as White's a-pawn isn't going anywhere.

61.Kd3 Nc5+ 62.Kc3 f3 0-1

An exemplary game of fine defense and excellent technique by Aleksandrov! Bravo! And an excellent explanation as to what

happened to Morozevich in the World Cup!

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