

Richard Shorman

Chess

Bill Noble of Concord, a USCF Class A junior player with a rating of 1972, was so impressed by Botvinnik's win over Chekhover in the unannotated "Weltgeschichte des Schachs" collection that he wrote independent notes to the game.

For better perspective Noble's own analysis has been correlated and matched here with commentary by Botvinnik, Chernev and Reinfeld.

White: Mikhail Botvinnik. Black: Vitaly Chekhover.
Moscow International Tournament, 1935.

Reti Opening

1 N-KB3	P-Q4	23 PxP	N-1-Q2(l)
2 P-B4	P-K3	24 NxP!!(m)	KxN
3 P-QN3	N-KB3	25 P-N6ch!	K-N1(n)
4 B-N2	B-K2	26 QxPch	K-R1
5 P-K3	O-O	27 Q-R3ch	K-N1
6 B-K2	P-B3(a)	28 B-B5!(o)	N-B1
7 O-O	QN-Q2	29 B-K6ch!	NxB
8 N-B3	P-QR3	30 QxNch	K-R1
9 N-Q4!(b)	PxP(c)	31 Q-R3ch	K-N1
10 PxP!	N-B4(d)	32 RxN!(p)	BxR
11 P-B4!(e)	Q-B2	33 Q-R7ch	K-B1
12 N-B3	R-Q1	34 R-K1	B-K4(q)
13 Q-B2	N-4-Q2(f)	35 Q-R8ch!	K-K2
14 P-Q4(g)	P-B4	36 QxPch	K-Q3
15 N-K5	P-QN3	37 QxBch	K-Q2
16 B-Q3	PxP	38 Q-B5ch	K-B3
17 PxP	B-N2	39 P-Q5ch	K B4
18 Q-K2	N-B1	40 B-R3ch	KxP
19 N-Q1(h)	R-R2(i)	41 Q-K4ch	K-B6
20 N-B2	Q-N1	42 B-N4ch	K-N7
21 N-R3	P-R3(j)	43 Q-N1mate	
22 N-N5!!(k)	PxN		

(a) This solid system has the drawback of being somewhat passive. "A more vigorous defense was 6. . . P-B4 7 0-0 N-B3 8 P-Q3 P-QN3, followed by 9 . . . B-N2 and 10 . . . R-B1" — Irving Chernev, "The Russians Play Chess," New York, 1964, pg. 59.

(b) Now Black cannot follow through with 9. . . P-QN4, and if he tries 9. . . P-K4 (9. . . P-B4 10 N-B2 and 11 B-B3, with pressure against Black's QP), then White has 10 N-B5. "If Black drives the knight away with 9. . . P-B4, then 10 N-B3 P-QN3 11 PxP KPxB 12 P-Q4" — Mikhail Botvinnik, "Shakhmatnoe tvorchestvo Botvinnika," vol. 1, Moscow, 1965, pg. 406.

(c) Hoping for 10 BxP P-B4 11 N-moves P-QN4, with good counterplay. "But 9. . . P-B4 followed by the fianchetto of the QB would still give a playable game" — Fred Reinfeld, "Botvinnik the Invincible," Philadelphia, 1946, pg. 46.

(d) Better might be 10. . . P-B4. "This deplorable superficial move deprives Black of any hope of equalizing" — Reinfeld.

(e) White starts maneuvering toward Black's king and prevents 11. . . P-K4. "White has achieved pawn superiority in the center and Black's obvious intent to play P-K4 is never realized" — Botvinnik.

(f) He can do nothing but wait. "The fight to enforce. . . P-K4 continues" — Chernev.

(g) Establishing an outpost for his knight on K5. "This ends the argument" — Chernev.

(h) Another of White's pieces starts toward Black's kingside. "A deceptive move which Black does not sufficiently appreciate" — Botvinnik.

(i) "A useful defensive move if he had followed it up properly" — Reinfeld. "Now Black has a lost game. . . Essential is 19. . . N-N3, preventing 20 N-B2" — Botvinnik.

(j) "Stopping" 22 N-N5. "It would be too severe to call this move a blunder, for only a player of the greatest imaginative power could have foreseen what follows." — Reinfeld.

(k) As Bobby Fischer once said, "Tactics flow from a positionally superior game." "Anyway! White's attack flows automatically" — Botvinnik.

(l) The point being that 22. . . N-3-Q2 fails against 24 NxP P-N3 25 BxP! NxB 26 QxP. Black probably expected 24 NxN RxN! 25 PxN BxBP 26 Q-R5 Q-Q3! with defensive chances. "An attempt to save the piece would be futile, e.g., 23. . . N-3-R2 24 NxP NxP (if 24. . . BxNP 25 BxNch! NxB 26 QxP wins) 25 Q-R5 N-4-R2 (if 25. . . N-1-B2 26 P-Q5! with a winning attack) 26 P-Q5! PxP (or 26 . . . B-B4ch 27 K-R1 B-R1 28 BxP!) 27 N-R6ch K-R1 28 Q-B7 N-B3 29 Q-N8ch!! NxQ 30 N-B7mate! (Yudovich in the Tournament Book). Or 23. . . N-3-Q2 24 NxP P-N3 25 P-Q5! winning quickly" — Reinfeld.

(m) Black must take this knight, too, because of the threat of 25 QxP; or if 24. . . N-B1, then 25 PxN wins neatly. "Here it was possible to win without any excitement by 24 NxN RxN (24. . . NxN 25 RxN KxR 26 Q-R5ch K-B1 27 Q-R8ch K-B7 28 P-N6ch K-B3 29 Q-B4mate) 25 PxN BxBP 26 RxB PxR 27 Q-N4ch and Black's position is hopeless" — Botvinnik.

(n) And not 25. . . K-K1 26 QxP N-B1 27 Q-B7ch K-Q2 28 B-B5ch K-B2 29 QxBch, etc. "Alternative moves are nicely refuted by Yudovich as follows, I 25. . . K-K1 26 QxP N-B1 27 Q-B7ch K-Q2 28 B-R3 R-K1 29 RxN! PxR 30 P-N7, etc. II 25. . . K-B1 26 QxP N-K4 27 RxNch! PxR 28 Q-R3 B-N5 (if 28. . . K-refuted by Yudovich as follows, I 25 . . . K-K1 26 QxP N-B1 27 K1 29 B-B5 or 28 . . . B-B4 29 PxB B-B1 30 Q-R4) 29 R-K1! B-B1 (if 29 . . . BxP 30 Q-R6ch K-K1 31 PxN BxR 32 B-B5) 30 Q-R6ch K-K1 31 PxN BxR (if 31 . . . RxB 32 P-N7 RxP 33 PxPch BxR 34 PxR) 32 Q-R8ch K-Q2 33 Q-N7ch K-B3 34 QxPch K-B2 35 P-K6, etc." — Reinfeld.

(o) Threatening 29 B-R6ch and a quick mate. "If 28 . . . B-Q3 29 B-K6ch K-B1 30 Q-R8ch K-K2 31 QxPch KxB 32 Q-B7mate (elegant!) or 28. . . B-N5 29 B-K6ch! K-B1 30 BxN and White wins as he pleases" — Reinfeld.

(p) Eliminating Black's last defense. "Now the game must end in a mating finale" — Botvinnik.

(q) There is nothing else. "His last hope is 35 RxB QxR 36 PxQ R-Q8ch 37 K-B2 R-Q7ch and 38. . . RxB, although even then White's pawns would decide the issue" — Reinfeld.