

Foreword

November 28, 2007 is a day that I will remember fondly for the rest of my time on this earth. It was the day I won my final round game at the under-12 World Youth Chess Championship in Antalya, Turkey, securing the gold medal. Every moment from the second I woke up to the instant I went to sleep on that day is seared into my mind, but one episode stands out among the others.

After my opponent – Ivan Bukavshin, who would go on to become one of Russia’s strongest young grandmasters before tragically succumbing to a premature death in January 2016 – extended his hand in resignation, I could barely contain my excitement. I wanted to jump on every table, yell in unbridled excitement, hug everything that resembled a human being. Upon exiting the tournament hall, I was met by my mother and my coach, GM Alexander (Sasha) Kalinin, who was helping me at the tournament and whose book you now hold in your hands. After the obligatory embraces and words of congratulations, Sasha and I made eye contact. Following every previous game – win, lose or draw – we had made it a ritual to return to my hotel room and briefly analyse the game before going out to dinner. The dilemma here was obvious: every part of my brain wanted to jump on the bed and celebrate. I had just won the World Youth, who cares about analysing the game?!

But you can probably guess what happened. The three of us returned to my room, my mother took out her phone to text the good news to friends and relatives (most of whom, including my math teacher, were wide awake despite the ungodly hour), and Sasha and I set up the pieces. Then, we analysed my game just like we had analysed the 10 previous ones, concentrating on my inaccuracies and delving deep into the complex opening. Only after we finished our ritual did the bed-jumping begin!

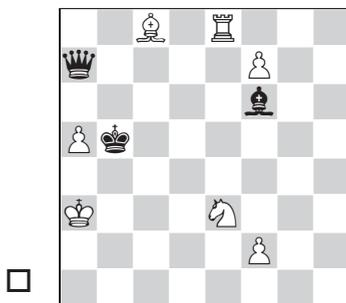
As this episode demonstrates, Alexander Kalinin is a consummate chess professional. Do not be fooled by his (relatively) modest rating or his fairly unknown status in the western chess community: his chess understanding, coupled with his ability to verbalize this understanding in eloquent and concise fashion, is virtually unequalled in the chess world. I worked with Sasha for approximately 4 years, from early 2005 to late 2008, and during this time I grew immeasurably both as a chess player and as a human being. On my ChessBase screen, I still have a database

called ‘Kalinin Lessons’ that I consult very frequently. In this database are more than 500 instructive games that we went over during our lessons; more than half of them are underrated treasures from obscure Soviet tournaments. You will find many of those games in this volume.

Most importantly, Sasha is perfectly in tune with the strengths, tendencies, and weaknesses of the modern generation, as well as the general direction in which the chess world is heading (think chess computers, and how our own thinking has changed as a result). His approach to chess pedagogy is grounded in a classic understanding of the game, but he does not cling to outmoded chess concepts in a kind of misguided Luddism that has become fashionable with some coaches nowadays. Rather, he seamlessly interweaves his chess philosophy with an acute understanding of what modern chess players struggle with and what they must do in order to improve.

But you should not take my word for it; turn the page, and see for yourself! The thoughts and positions laid out in this work are pure gold; I firmly believe that a close reading of the wisdom contained within this volume will immensely benefit a chess player of virtually any strength. This is not just another entry into the ever-growing mass of chess literature. It tackles a litany of crucial themes that one simply has to master in order to become a serious chess player. Both chess players and chess teachers will find this work a treasure trove.

Before I sign off and hand over the reins to Sasha, I will share one more episode from my collaboration with Kalinin that I remember very fondly. In August 2006, Sasha came to the United States to train with me for a month. One evening, my parents’ close friends came over for dinner. I knew that a long conversation on non-chess themes was forthcoming. Sasha knew this as well, and just before we came downstairs, he set up the following position, which you will find on page 64 of this book:



Kalinin's Study (Magadanskaya Pravda 1985)

I ruminated over this position all dinner long, casting furtive smiles Kalinin's way as I began to work out the main line. When I finally came up with the solution – in between mouthfuls of salad – I flashed a big grin that surprised everyone at the table. So many years later, I still remember this moment (and Kalinin's visit as a whole) with more than a measure of fondness. Reading this book has allowed me the rare pleasure of reliving some of my experiences, and it will allow you, dear reader, to broaden your perspective and improve your understanding of our beloved game in a way that you never thought possible. Happy reading!

GM Daniel Naroditsky
San Francisco, California
November 22, 2016



Alexander Kalinin (left) and the author of the Foreword, Daniel Naroditsky, around the time of the World Youth.

INTRODUCTION

How to train the masters of the future

Dedicated to my chess teacher

‘Everything is new that has been long forgotten.’ Today’s young players, growing up with the computer, know little of the methods of improvement used in the 20th century, and regard them as hopelessly outdated. But it is within these methods, in which is concentrated the precious experience of past generations of masters and trainers, that the secrets of the development of chess creativity resides.

There is no question that in our computerised age, a mass of possibilities have opened up before chess lovers! With the aid of the internet, despite being located thousands of kilometres away, we can follow live all the significant tournaments of the day, can try to guess the grandmasters’ moves, and have the benefit of expert commentary. Such ‘live’ participation in strong tournaments has long been considered a highly effective method of training. We can play against opponents from all round the world, at different time controls, not only solving concrete chess tasks, but also interacting with players from other countries. We have at our disposal computer courses in different aspects of the game, whilst powerful playing programs are there to correct our mistakes and suggest improvements in our games and analyses. Those wishing to study endgames can make use of the famous Nalimov tablebases. One can go on indefinitely, listing the benefits of technical progress. Instead, we will limit ourselves to acknowledging openly that the use of the computer has significantly enlarged and deepened our understanding of the ancient game.

However, this process also has its negative side. It is obvious that ‘artificial intelligence’ is having an effect on the way people think. Many treat the computer as an all-seeing guru, which can give reliable answers to any question. As a result, we have gradually stopped thinking and analysing for ourselves, preferring most of the time to accept as gospel the computer’s recommendations. But the most effective way of learning is, and always has been, personal interaction. Humans think in general terms, and find it hard to learn from a computer, which speaks only in the language of bare variations. Everything we see on the computer – lines of variations from Houdini or Rybka, mathematically confirmed variations on Nalimov, etc – is just information, which needs to be translated into

the language of emotions and pictures, and built into a logical whole. Only in this way can we take what we have seen and use it in practice, making it a part of ourselves. But to achieve such a level of work with information it is essential to learn a great deal and develop within oneself the habit of using one's own brain.

In the summer of 2008, I was witness to a conversation between the young American player Daniel Naroditsky (with whom I worked at that time) and Yuri Sergeevich Razuvaev, which took place at the former Central Chess Club on Gogolevsky Bulvar in Moscow. The famous grandmaster and trainer expressed a deep thought: 'An intelligent book helps one to understand chess better. One can learn tactics just from a computer, but to develop understanding, one needs contact, whether by reading or listening. Every phrase can be key to understanding a position. You, Dan, need now to learn to understand chess, which requires contact with good books.'

I should also mention the nowadays widespread habit of computer analysis, which is seen as an apparently easy way to find the truth in any position. One needs to be very careful with such 'analysis', because such non-systematic work militates against the formation of the single most important quality in a chess player, namely independent thinking.

In trying to balance the computer thinking with the human decision-making process, I consider it important to explain to our rising generation how their predecessors in the pre-computer era discovered the secrets of chess. In thinking about the sources of the growth of knowledge and strength among young players of that seemingly far-off era, I identified the following directions of independent work, which retain their universal significance today:

- 1) Forming a relationship with chess as an art;
- 2) Perfecting analytical mastery, which allows one to study critically your own play and the games of others;
- 3) Study of the classical heritage;
- 4) Drawing the lessons from interaction with one's competitors and with more experienced players.

The attempt to reveal the above areas is the main aim of the present book. I decided to show the process of study from inside, i.e. from the pupil's viewpoint. I hope the reader will find it interesting to see how concrete knowledge influences the overall 'world view' of a young player and helps

him to take decisions at the board. It is clear that I, the author, could only draw such psychological lessons from my own experience and also from those competitors whom I know especially well. I covered the period from the start of my serious study of chess, until the point when I fulfilled the USSR Master of Sport title norms. This also underlines the aim of the book, which is to provide advice to players seeking to achieve the master title. I began serious chess study at the age of seven, and became a master only at the age of 21, after my army service. Why did it take me so long to achieve the title? By delving into this book, the reader will be able to see the mistakes I made on my way and, I hope, will be able to draw useful lessons for themselves.

A few words about the structure of the book. Its first part ('General questions of chess pedagogy') consists of a short survey of the development of chess pedagogy and acquaints the reader with some general principles and methods of training. This also covers the currently important topic of the interaction of man and computer.

The second part ('How a chess player develops') illustrates the influence of the classical methods of improvement on a young player's development. As I have already said, the role of 'raw youth' will be taken by the author himself. Here I will also give portraits of my mentors and speak about the methods they used in their work. The main source of material in the second part is taken from my own youthful games and analyses and also the games of my contemporaries, many of whom went on to become well-known players. These examples will acquaint the reader with the real picture of how young players think and react during tournament battles, how they acquire and use important information, converting it into forms which they find useful.

The main content of the book comprises material which has not been published elsewhere before. Well-known examples have been used only where they are indispensable in illustrating the way a certain decision is taken with the help of the relevant thought process. The author's task in selecting material has been an extremely responsible one, since the majority of positions are taken from the games of players who were only just setting out on their journey to chess mastery. Therefore, firstly I have used only those games which I recall as especially striking, hoping that they will also provoke an emotional response in the reader. Secondly, tactical examples have been computer-checked (one cannot avoid this – it is a mark of the times!). A portion of the examples failed to survive this process, but the remainder are presented to the reader. In each case, it will be made clear what the human player himself found and what are the

suggestions of the computer. A large number of the diagrams in the text are accompanied by questions, which allows them to be used as exercises for independent solving.

The author also hopes that seeing so many interesting ideas in the games of 'ordinary' players will help the reader to develop belief in his own creative possibilities!

Alexander Kalinin
Moscow, March 2017

PART 2

How chess players are formed

My chess childhood occurred at the end of the 1970s and early 80s, a rich period for the development of children's and junior chess in the Soviet Union. Every major town had chess sections at the Pioneer Palaces, where the children were coached by experienced masters. The growing need for qualified trainers led to Grigory Goldberg establishing a chess specialisation at the main state university for physical culture and youth activities. Television started showing 'The Chess School', which had a number of programmes aimed at beginners, qualified players and even schoolchildren. In the traditional schoolchildren's national event 'The White Guard' some 1 million (!) children took part.

From such a vast number of children it was easy to pick out the most promising for further training at specialised sports schools. In Moscow, for example, a special chess section was opened at sports school no.9, to which many talented pupils were invited. Following the example of Botvinnik, the ex-World Champions Vasily Smyslov and Tigran Petrosian both opened their own chess schools. The idea of bringing together junior talents with top players was promoted by the tournament sponsored by the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, in which children obtained the opportunity to play against well-known GMs in clock simulms. Periodically, events were organised along the Scheveningen system, 'youngsters versus masters', where the young players could get essential experience of facing masters in one-to-one games. Thus, I managed to be at all the main student events. My experiences at these will be discussed in the second half of the book. I hope that Russia will soon be able to establish these various forms of junior event, which so recommended themselves in the former USSR.

As already pointed out in the Introduction, among the many methods of improving the mastery of young players, I would single out four main directions for independent work:

1. Forming a relationship to chess as an art.
2. Analytical work (annotating one's own games and those of masters; independent analysis of the typical positions arising at different stages of the game).
3. Study of the classical heritage.
4. Creative relations with one's competitors and with more experienced players.

Below I try to reveal as much as possible the contents of the areas listed above.

CHAPTER 5

Analytical exercises

‘Independent thoughts arise only out of independently acquired knowledge.’

Konstantin Ushinsky

One of the best ways of realising the principles of active participation in training sessions is to develop in young players the habit of independent analytical work. Annotating their own games is an excellent way to develop this habit, starting from the attainment of third category level.

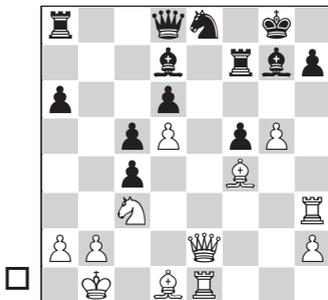
When dealing with groups of second category players, in giving homework, one can already start setting them the task of annotating master games, and then comparing their notes with those published by the masters themselves.

In this respect I was lucky – my father and my first trainer both independently of each other were devoted to the method of independent analysis as a tool of self-improvement. A conscientiously performed analysis helps to develop in the pupil independent thinking, objectivity, the ability to draw logical conclusions and to support them.

The following example discusses how the trainer can help to support the pupil’s interest in analysis.

Vladimir Kalinin
Alexander Kalinin

Vatutinki 1977 (variation from game)



A training game between my father and myself could have reached this position. I, then a nine-year-old third category player, was Black and declined to take the white pawn on c4 (...b5xc4 – this move has already been made in the diagram), fearing the white rook sacrifice on h7. To defend h7, I chose the passive ...g7-f8 (instead of ...b5xc4) and later lost. But let us check the consequences of the rook sacrifice.

What happens after the rook sacrifice on h7? Support your answer with variations.

CHAPTER 6

The classical heritage

'In general, it is useful for a chess player to have a good memory, because often he will not need to find the best move himself, but can choose something from the store in his memory. But every memory has its limit.' – Viktor Kortchnoi

Studying the play of masters is an indispensable component of improvement. But whilst the play of contemporary grandmasters is a living thing in which young players have considerable interest, the games of the kings of past generations are something with which the majority of young players have a fairly lukewarm relationship. Thirty or so years ago, when I was growing up, children, when ignoring the classics, often justified this by claiming that the older generations of masters did not play as well as modern GMs and the opening variations met with in their games were hopelessly old-fashioned.

In this regard, I remember a speech by Tigran Petrosian, at the jubilee evening of the Polytechnics Museum in 1979. By tradition, the master finished his appearance by taking questions, and my father asked the ex-World Champion: 'How should a young player perfect his strategic mastery?' The ninth World Champion's answer was highly instructive and has subsequently been quoted in many different sources. Tigran Vartanovich recommended studying the classical heritage of the great players, precisely because there was a considerable gulf in class between them and their opponents. Imagine, for example, that Alekhine is playing Tartakower. Alekhine comes up with a strategic plan and is able to carry it out to the letter, as Tartakower does not sense the danger and fails to prevent his opponent's ideas. Thanks to this, the entire plan is laid out like a model before the reader. On the other hand, in games of the modern-day top players, it is much harder to follow a clear plan in pure form, as their opponents know very well what is threatened (thanks to having seen the classical games!) and take steps to prevent the opponent's ideas.

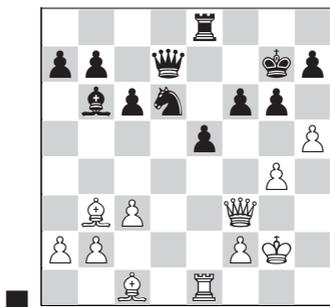
Studying the classics can happen in two forms. Firstly, by playing through the game and the accompanying annotations, we can try to find our own improvements on the play and notes. In this way, we improve our analytical abilities. With this aim, it is useful to work in the manner of Nimzowitsch, playing one side in the game and trying to guess the player's moves. Secondly, we can take into our arsenal surprising strategic ideas

and plans, many of which have become typical in our day. In this way, we enrich our understanding of the game and enlarge our baggage of typical ideas.

I will offer a couple of simple, but memorable fragments, in which I managed to find corrections to the conclusions of annotators.

Isaak Boleslavsky
Vladimir Makogonov

Moscow ch-URS 1940 (14)



In time-trouble, the game ended quickly:

34...gxh5? 35.♙h6+! ♜g6 36.gxh5+!
And Black resigned.

In his book *Grandmaster Boleslavsky*, Alexey Suetin wrote: 'There is only one correct defence. Thus, it seems that 34...♜f8 was simple and natural, but then there follows the combinative blow 35.♜xe5! fxe5 36.h6+! winning. Also insufficient is 34...g5? 35.h6+ ♜g6 36.♞h3!. Only by playing 34...♞e7 can Black retain a sufficiently solid position.'

What happens after 34...♞e7 ?

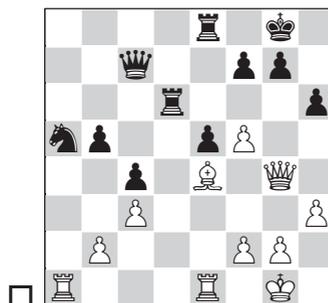
The move 34...♞e7 is refuted with the help of a simple combination: 35.hxg6 hxg6 (or 35...♜xg6 36.♜h1

♜h8 37.♙h6) 36.♙h6+! ♜xh6 37.♜h1+ ♜g7 38.♞h3 ♜f7 39.♞h7+ ♜f8 40.♞xg6 (with the threat of 41.♜h8+! ♜xh8 42.♞g8#) 40...♞d7 41.♜h7, and White wins.

I was proud of this discovery and, in my youthful way, jumped to a categorical conclusion about the impossibility of defending the black position. Nowadays, I see that by means of 34...♜f7! Black can defend his vulnerable points and retain approximate equality.

Isaak Boleslavsky
Alexander Kotov

Moscow 1944 (4)



How should White develop his initiative? Give some possible variations.

In the game there followed **30.♜ad1!**

CHAPTER 8

Lessons at the chessboard

'I personally did not have a mentor or trainer in the sense that people mean the term today. Even so, I had many teachers – books and magazines, and my contemporaries and masters of the older generation, my opponents at the board. I decided what to take from each and what was not worth bothering with. And I became independent.'

Mikhail Botvinnik

This chapter is devoted to the precious lessons I learned directly at the chessboard. And we are not talking only about games against masters, but also ones against my contemporaries, from whom I learnt a great deal.

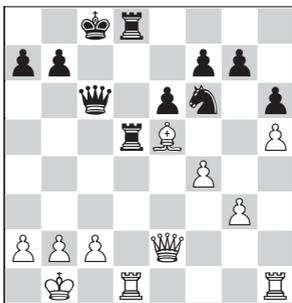
The finals of the 'White Rook' events, in which schoolchildren up to the seventh grade took part, were always a great holiday and a valuable source of instruction. I played in two such tournaments, representing the 22nd Moscow school.

The first game of mine to be published was from the first of these tournaments, although it was not exactly in a starring role!

Alexander Kalinin

Vitya Ivanov

Pervomaisk 1981



The magazine 64 gave the following commentary to this fragment: 'One is struck by one particular weakness of the youngsters, on

which their trainers need to work. This is the tendency to play quickly moves that seem natural and strike them as obvious. But one of the most important components of mastery is the ability to critically assess just such apparently obvious moves. This position was reached in the game between Sasha Kalinin (Moscow) and Vitya Ivanov (Chirchik). The chances are roughly equal. White should continue 23. ♖he1, but Sasha decided to 'spoil' Black's pawn structure and played 23. ♗xf6?.

Now 23... ♗d2! wins at once, but... Vitya immediately recaptured – 23... gxf6?, and later even lost.'

Strangely, my second published game was played in my second White Rook final in the match between Moscow and Leningrad. It appeared in *Shakmaty v SSSR* with short, but generous notes by IM Yudovich senior.

Ruy Lopez

Alexander Kalinin

M. Elkin

Sheki 1982

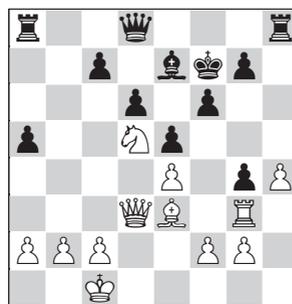
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 d6 5.♗xc6+

It was my father who recommended that I employ this exchange against the Deferred Steinitz Defence.

It was prepared and analysed, including the novelty at move 14, employed in this game.

5...bxc6 6.d4 f6 7.♗e3 ♘e7 8.♘c3 ♘g6 9.♖d3 ♗e7 10.0-0-0 ♗e6 11.h4 h5 12.d5

My father's interest in this position begun with a lovely game he won in a friendly match against his regular opponent, an amateur from Zvenigorod. The game Kalinin (sr)-Sheremtievsky (Zvenigorod 1962) saw events develop as follows: 12...♗d7 13.dxc6 ♗xc6 14.♘d5 a5 15.♖h3 (Black tries to counter the striking white rook manoeuvre along the third rank by bringing his bishop to g4) 15...♗d7 16.♖g3 ♗g4 17.♘h2! (the exchange sacrifice aims to weaken a complex of light squares in the opponent's camp) 17...♗xd1 18.♖xg6 ♔f7 19.♖g3 ♗g4 20.♘xg4 hxg4



Analysis diagram

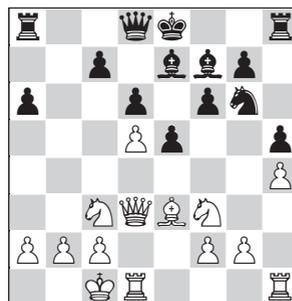
White to move. What would you play?

21.♘xc7! (the start of a nice combination, carried out from start to finish on the light squares) 21...♖xc7 22.♗d5+ ♔g6 23.♖xg4+ ♔h5 24.♖f7+ ♔xg4 25.♗g6+ ♔xh4 26.f3!, and Black resigned – he has no defence against the two mating threats on the f2- and g4-squares.

12...cxd5 13.exd5

White usually takes with the knight. The text is tied up with the development of the queen to d3 and White's subsequent play.

13...♗f7



14.g4!?

Novelty! This unexpected breakthrough on the kingside

CHAPTER 9

The fight against weaknesses

‘By means of chess, I developed my character.’ – Alexander Alekhine

During my time at school and the first year of university, I did not manage to get a master norm, and there were many reasons for this. I was insufficiently self-critical, my work was not systematic enough and my sporting qualities left something to be desired. I could see my weaknesses but did not undertake systematic work to eliminate them. In my case, it was army service which rescued me and developed my character, even though I served in relatively decent conditions in a sports outfit. I had little tournament practice, in two years playing only in two Moscow armed forces championships and a few team matches. But in compensation, I had time to think and could, as it were, look at my chess career from the side.

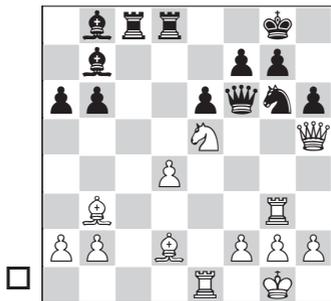
In the Moscow armed forces championship of 1987, I took first place, but no masters were playing in the event. The following year, with two masters among the field, I occupied only fifth place. The quality of my play in this latter event was poor. In the absence of practice, all my weaknesses came to the surface and seemed especially obvious. My play was dry and lacking in imagination. For the first time in my life, I thoroughly and self-critically annotated all of the games from this event. I did the analysis blindfold, because in the conditions of army service it was impossible to work at the board itself. But every cloud has a silver lining – blindfold analysis proved to be an excellent method of training for my poor calculation of variations. It was then that I decided to fight systematically against my weaknesses and become a master.

After demobilisation, I returned to study at the university and re-establishing contact with Zlotnik helped me greatly in strengthening myself psychologically. I fought against my main weakness, the dryness of my play, in a well-established and old-fashioned manner. Without further ado, I followed the advice of Kotov, who faced a similar problem in his own day.

Reading once again his books *Think Like a Grandmaster* and *Play Like a Grandmaster* (which I had been familiar with since childhood), I began training my calculation technique and annotating the games of masters notable for their dynamic and sharp styles of play, then comparing my

analysis with that of the players themselves or other authorities. All the work of preparing such training exercises was undertaken by my father, and I had only to devote all my energy to penetrating their secrets. I also occupied myself with a study of the subject of sacrifices for the initiative, using Spielmann's *The Art of Sacrifice* and Shamkovich's *Sacrifices in Chess*.

By way of a curiosity, here is one inaccuracy found in published analysis.



What would you play?

This position was cited by Kotov in one of his books, as an example of unsystematic thinking (with White jumping from one move to another in his calculations) and the importance of first delineating all the candidate moves, which should be considered during one's calculations. I had tried to solve this position as a ten year old, but got hopelessly confused. So, a new try! First, according to Kotov, we should identify the candidate moves. It is clear that White must proceed energetically, because by playing ...♙b7-d5, Black will consolidate to a large degree. Therefore the moves identified were 1.♘xf7, 1.♘xg6, 1.♙xg6, 1.♙xh6 and 1.♘g4. I started by looking at 1.♘xf7, because the blow against f7 seemed

the most logical in a position with an IQP, especially with the crossfire of white pieces against e6. I was greatly surprised when I realised that, in fact, there was nothing to calculate! The simple and short variation 1.♘xf7! ♙xg3 (or 1...♙xf7 2.♙xe6) 2.♘xh6+ ♙f8 3.hxg3 leaves no doubt as to White's victory. I was even more surprised when I realised that the move 1.♘xf7! was not even considered in the book! Kotov does not give the names of the players in this game and it is not in the databases. Only recently did I see the game in the book by Levenfish on the IX USSR Championship: it is the game Riumin-Belavienets (Leningrad 1938). The analysis in Kotov's book just quotes that by Levenfish. However, despite this work to make my style more active, the results were not obvious in my first event after leaving the army. At the all-union junior tournament in Kramatorsk (1989) I played for the Moscow team. Of course, it was interesting to test myself in a tournament where the first board line-up was fantastic (Ivanchuk, Gelfand, Dreev, Shirov, Akopian, Bologan, etc.), but even on my fifth board there was a solid set of opponents (I will mention only