

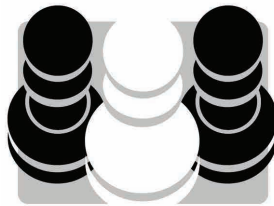
Chess Classics

The Nemesis

Geller's Greatest Games

By

Efim Geller



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Publisher's Preface

This book is the first in which all Efim Geller's annotations of his own games have been published together in English. Previous books have revealed some of his work, but Russian Chess House went to the trouble of gathering all his annotated games from two Russian-language books plus many different magazines. *The Nemesis* is an English translation of their work.

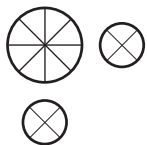
We chose the title *The Nemesis* to reflect Geller's remarkable head-to-head record against elite players – he had a lifetime plus score against World Champions collectively, including individual plus scores against Botvinnik and Fischer. Against the mighty Botvinnik it was four wins and just one defeat, while there cannot be many who were capable of beating Bobby Fischer three games in a row.

When the topic of 'the best player never to be World Champion' is raised, Korchnoi and Keres are often mentioned, but Geller deserves to be on the shortlist. Among his many achievements, he won two Soviet Championships, seven Olympiad team gold medals and three Olympiad golds for individual performance. So what kept him from winning the highest title in chess? Jacob Aagaard's foreword, titled *Dogged Determination*, provides some hints about Geller's strengths and weaknesses. Geller had abundant tournament successes but fewer match victories. Perhaps Geller's emotive nature failed him when under the greatest pressure. Or maybe he was simply unlucky? When Petrosian dethroned Botvinnik in 1963, he qualified for the match by finishing just half a point ahead of Geller and Keres in the 1962 Curacao Candidates tournament. Would Geller (or Keres) also have defeated the ageing Botvinnik? Quite possibly, but I am straying into alternative history, so I shall return to more solid ground.

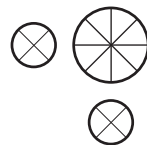
Even in our computer era, Geller's handling of the opening is worthy of close attention, particularly in the Sicilian and King's Indian Defences. Many plans which modern grandmasters learn as standard were first developed by Geller. Other Soviet players were quick to appreciate Geller's erudition, and he was employed as a coach by World Champions Boris Spassky and Anatoly Karpov.

We at Quality Chess believe that publishing all of Geller's annotations in English is a valuable contribution to chess literature, so we hope readers enjoy this latest addition to our Classics series.

John Shaw
Glasgow, July 2019



ALL À LA MUNCHAUSEN



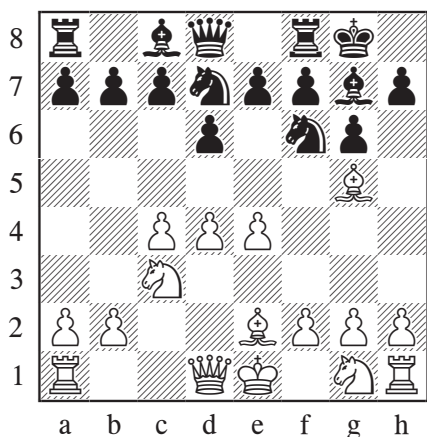
GAME 65

Jan Adamski – Efim Geller

Olympiad, Lugano 1968, *King's Indian Defence*

There is hardly anyone in the world who has believed the fascinating but implausible tales of the famous Baron Munchausen – in particular, the one where the baron shoots his ramrod from his gun and spears seven partridges at one go. I was no exception – until, with a single shot, I “killed” three opponents. The moves to “finish them off” were the only ones I had to think about when sitting at the board; the fate of the games had been settled by the study of one interesting variation. And this study had begun in 1967 at the Sousse Interzonal Tournament, during my game with Samuel Reshevsky.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0–0 6.♙g5 ♗bd7



Quite a rare continuation in the Averbakh System. Theory considers it passive – because White is safe from a knight appearing on c6 and

from pressure against d4 – and recommends 7.f4. But 7.♗d2, as in the game, is more popular; it leads to a well-known position that often arises (with moves transposed) from the 6...c6 variation.

7.♗d2 e5 8.♗f3 c6!

More precise than the immediate 8...exd4 9.♗xd4 ♗c5 on account of 10.f3. White then gains some advantage, as 10...♖e8 can be met by 11.0–0–0.

9.0–0

It was worth considering 9.dxe5 or 9.0–0–0 ♗a5 10.♗b1 ♖e8, with approximate equality.

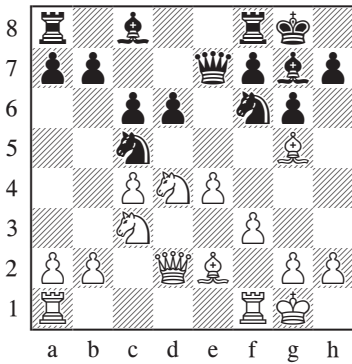
9...exd4 10.♗xd4

After 10.♗xd4 Black would seize the initiative: 10...h6 (but not 10...♗c5, in view of 11.e5) 11.♙h4 g5 12.♙g3 ♗d5! 13.♗d2 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♗c5

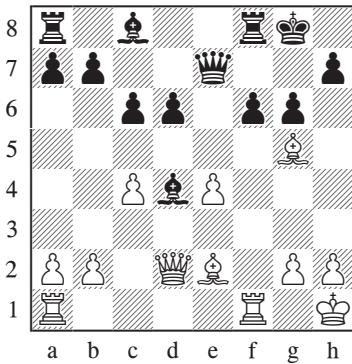
10...♗c5 11.f3

This permits the explosion of the bomb that I had *not* set off in the aforementioned game with Reshevsky. In that game, I had reached the same position as after White's tenth move here – except that since White had taken two moves to place his bishop on g5 (♙c1–e3–g5), Black had been able to make one move extra: ...♗e7. In actual fact that extra move proved unwanted, because with the queen on e7, the combination that occurs in the present game does not work. For example: 11...♗c5

(the move numbers, of course, are one higher than in Adamski – Geller) 12.f3



12...♖fxe4? 13.♗xe4! (not 13.fxe4 ♕xd4† 14.♕h1 ♘xc3) 13...♗xe4 14.fxe4 ♕xd4† 15.♕h1; and now Black loses a piece after 15...♞xe4 16.♞f4, or the exchange after: 15...f6

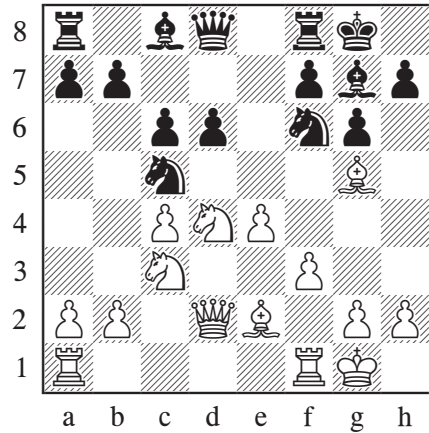


16.♕h6 (In the latter case, by continuing 16...c5, Black obtains quite good compensation; but an improvement for White is 16.♞xd4 fxe4 17.♞xf8† ♞xf8 18.c5!. Before that, however, Black has at his disposal the queen sacrifice 15...♞e5 16.♕f6 ♞xf6 17.♞xf6 ♕xf6, promising him a sound position.)

I remember how upset I was after working all this out, and how I even wasted some time pondering whether I couldn't somehow "lose" a tempo returning the queen to d8 and preserving the combinative theme.

Then at home, I established exactly when the combination works and when it does not...

Instead of 11.f3 as in the present game, the right line for White was demonstrated by Polugaevsky in his game with me in the 1970 IBM tournament: 11.♞f4 (11.♕f3 would be very passive) 11...♞e7 (this thematic move is now appropriate) 12.♞ad1 ♗cxe4 13.♗xe4 ♞xe4 14.♞xd6, with somewhat the pleasanter position.

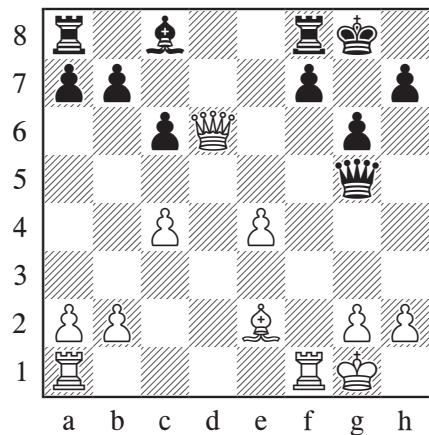


11...♗fxe4! 12.♗xe4 ♗xe4 13.fxe4 ♕xd4†

Now if 14.♕h1, Black has the simple reply 14...♞b6. This is why the queen needed to be on its starting square!

14.♞xd4 ♞xg5 15.♞xd6

White has preserved material equality, but his position is lost, as the pawn on e4 is doomed.



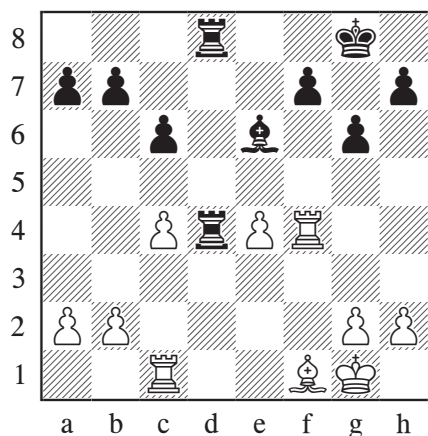
15...♖e3†

An even more precise move is 15...♖d8, as played by Bacrot against Agdestein in 2013! In the database there are more than thirty cases of players falling into the trap.

16.♟f2 ♘e6

The pin against the rook on f2 allows Black to take his time over capturing on e4; he can complete his development first. The exchange of queens merely delays the pawn's fate.

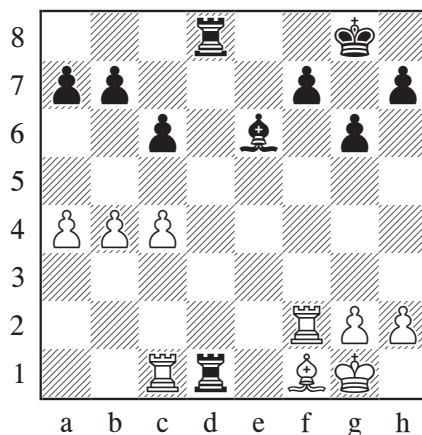
17.♖f4 ♗xf4 18.♟xf4 ♖ad8 19.♘f1 ♗d4
20.♟c1 ♟fd8



21.♟f2

Otherwise Black would win the pawn anyway with 21...♘f5 or 21...f5.

21...♖xe4 22.b4 ♖ed4 23.a4 ♖d1

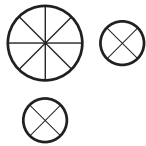


The exchange of one pair of rooks exposes the weakness of all White's queenside pawns.

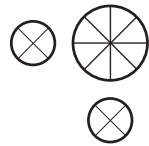
24.♟fc2 ♖8d2 25.a5 ♔f8 26.b5 c5 27.♟xd2
♟xc1 28.♔f2 ♔e7
0-1

This occurred in the 9th round of Final Group A in the Olympiad. In round 11 we played the Danish team. My opponent Holm made his first eleven moves quite confidently, but on move twelve he had a think, and then, evidently remembering something, he shook his head and... stopped the clock. The point is that the position on the board was the same as in the Adamski – Geller game!

The “profits” from my thoughts during the Reshevsky game did not end there. Just after the Olympiad, I went to Gori for the tournament in memory of Vakhtang Karseladze. Clearly not all chessplayers were in possession of the Olympiad games as yet, and in my game with Chikovani the same story repeated itself for a third time!



KNIGHTS ATTACKING THE KING



GAME 95

Efim Geller – Anatoly Karpov

USSR Championship, Moscow 1976, *French Defence*

This game began with an interesting psychological duel before we even sat down at the board. The point is that not long before, I had been Anatoly Karpov's second in his World Championship Candidates final match with Korchnoi, and had taken part in his preparation for the match with Fischer that never was – so naturally I knew the World Champion's opening repertoire. It was evidently for that reason that in our game Karpov decided to depart from his accustomed schemes. He expected me to play 3.♘d2, which is the move I most often choose. I understood his reasoning... Moreover at that time Karpov had no experience of the variation that occurred, whereas to me the position *was* familiar, as the reader will see.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘b4 4.e5 ♗d7

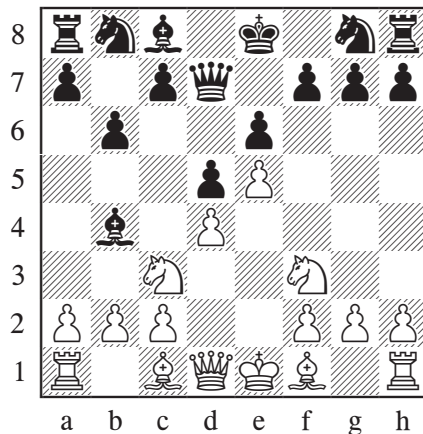
The idea of this move, and the essence of Black's entire variation, are elucidated in the notes to Game 40 against Tigran Petrosian.

5.♘f3

Other possibilities are 5.♘h3 or 5.♘e2, followed by bringing the knight to f4, and also the approved 5.a3 – which immediately clarifies the situation and is considered by theory to give White the better game after 5...♙xc3† 6.bxc3 b6 7.♖g4 f5 8.♖g3 ♘a6 9.♘a6 ♘xa6 10.♘e2. But I wanted to go down a less investigated path, one where I did nonetheless have some experience (that same Game 40) – and where White in any

case continues his development without loss of time.

5...b6



6.♘d2!

The move seen more often in practice is 6.♘d3. However, in the first place, the light-squared bishop will be exchanged off all the same; secondly, with the move in the game White pursues his tactics of deploying his forces at full speed; and thirdly, he plans a blow to Black's centre and frees the c1-square for a rook.

6...♘a6

After this the play takes a different course from the aforementioned game with Petrosian, in which 6...♘f8 occurred.

7.♘xa6 ♘xa6 8.0–0

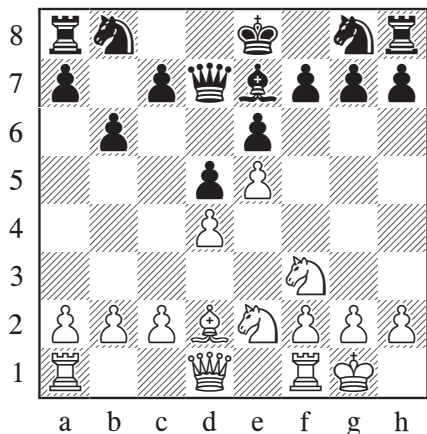
White could also play 8.♖e2, but he reserves the e2-square for the execution of a different plan.

8...♟b8

A loss of time, though one which could remain unpunished if White didn't succeed in opening up the game. It was worth considering 8...♙xc3 9.♙xc3 ♟e7, to ensure kingside castling.

9.♟e2 ♙e7?

After this, the black king will not find a safe refuge. It was essential to play 9...♙xd2 10.♖xd2 ♟e7.



10.♖c1

Threatening to open the game after c2-c4; if this happens, White's lead in development should tell.

10...b5 11.♟f4 h5

Otherwise developing the kingside is impossible, given that 11...♟h6 loses to 12.♟h5 (and if 12...♟f5 then 13.g4).

12.b3

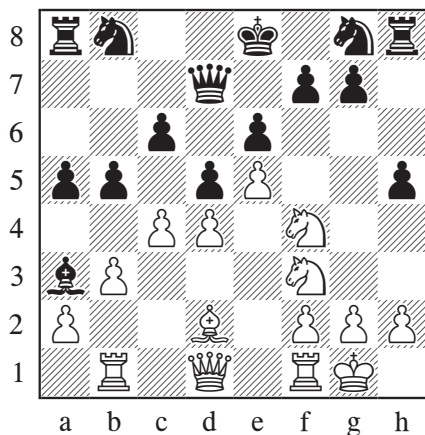
Here 12.a4!? is even stronger. White answers 12...bxa4 with 13.c4!, while after 12...a6 13.axb5 axb5 14.♖a1 he breaks through on the queenside.

12...♙a3 13.♖b1 a5?!

In this way Black avoids getting his bishop trapped by 14.b4. Nevertheless 13...♙e7 was more tenacious.

14.c4! c6

In the event of 14...bxc4 15.bxc4 dxc4 16.d5 exd5 17.e6 fxe6 18.♟e5, all White's forces would descend on the black king.



15.c5

White's chance to open lines will not go away, as Black will be forced to open some himself in order to rescue his bishop.

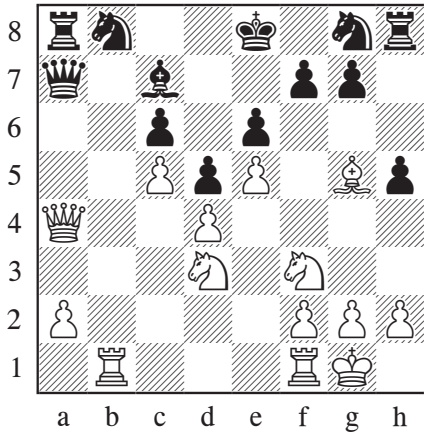
15...♙b4 16.♙c1 a4 17.♟d3

Clearing the road to the kingside for White's bishop. However, a more forthright line was 17.a3! ♙a5 18.bxa4 bxa4 19.♖xa4 ♖a7, and now 20.♙d2 ♙c7 21.♖xb8♠! ♖xb8 22.♖xc6† ♟f8 23.♟g5.

But then a similar idea is implemented in the game, just a few moves later.

17...♙a5 18.bxa4 bxa4 19.♖xa4 ♖a7 20.♙g5 ♙c7

After 20...♖a6 21.♖b3 ♟e7 22.♖fb1 ♟d7 23.♖a3, the threat of 24.♟b4 cannot be parried.



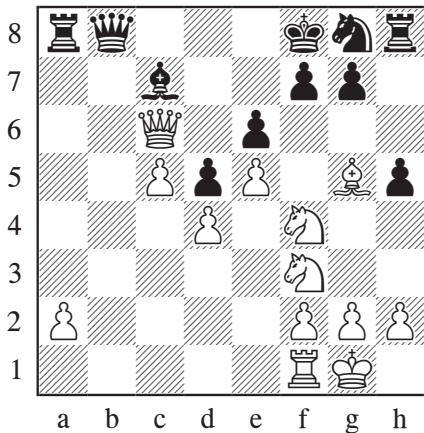
21. ♖xb8†!

Proceeding to a direct attack on the king which is stuck in the centre.

21... ♗xb8

After 21... ♗xb8 22. ♖xc6† Black loses at once.

22. ♖xc6† ♔f8 23. ♗f4

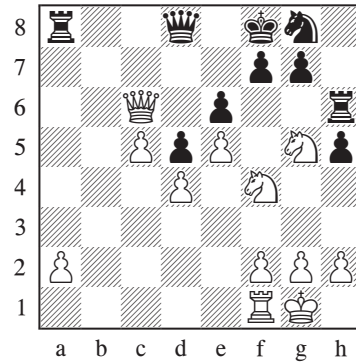


23... ♖a7

Or 23... ♗e7 24. ♗xe7† ♔xe7 25. ♗g5 ♖h6 26. ♗xf7 ♔xf7 27. ♖d7† ♔g8 28. ♗xe6 ♖xe6 29. ♖xe6† ♔h8 30. ♖xd5, and for the piece White already has five pawns as well as an enduring attack.

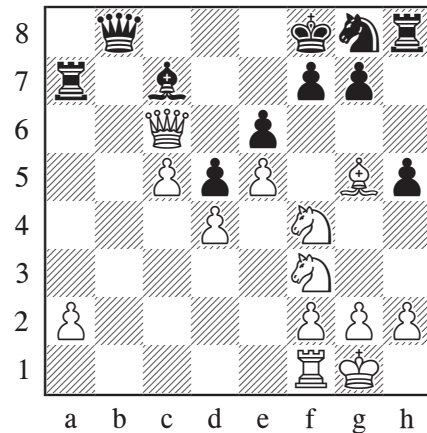
In this variation 28... ♗xe5! rescues Black. White should prepare the decisive blows by means of 26. ♖e1!.

Against Kasparov's suggestion of 23... ♗d8, White has the dazzling: 24. ♗xd8 ♖xd8 25. ♗g5 ♖b6



26. ♗g6†!! ♖xg6 27. ♗h7† ♔e7 28. ♖b1 ♖a7 29. ♖d6†!! ♖xd6 30. exd6† ♔d7 31. ♖b8 ♔c6 32. ♗f8! ♖b7 33. ♖c8† ♔b5 34. c6 (Sorokhtin)

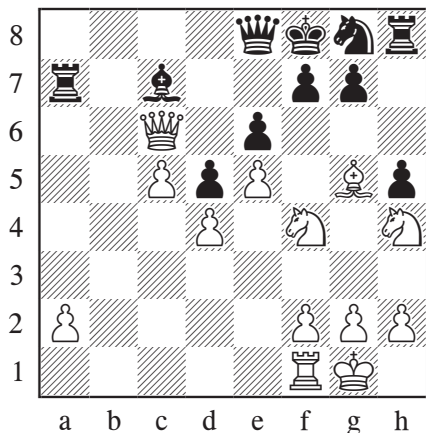
With the move played, Black frees his queen from its function of guarding the bishop.



24. ♗h4!

This threatens 25. ♗hg6† ffg6 26. ♗xe6† ♔f7 27. ♖d7† with mate in two moves, or 25. ♗xe6† fxe6 26. ♗g6† ♔f7 27. ♗xh8† ♔f8 28. ♖xe6 – again with a quick mate. But Black brings his queen across to defend the vulnerable points g6 and e6, and at the same time seemingly forces a queen exchange.

24...♙e8



25.♙xe6!

It turns out that defending with the queen was insufficient after all!

25...fxe6 26.♘fg6† ♙xg6

This would be forced anyway after 26...♙f7 27.♘h8† ♙f8 28.♘4g6†.

27.♘xg6† ♙e8 28.♘h8

White's large material plus guarantees him victory.

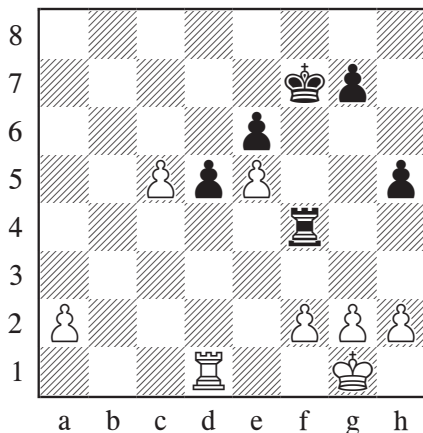
28...♙a4 29.♞d1 ♘e7 30.♙xe7 ♙xe7 31.♘g6† ♙f7 32.♘f4

Perhaps the goal could be reached more quickly by 32.♘h4!? ♙xe5 33.♘f3 ♙f6 34.h4 ♙xa2 35.♙f1. Although this reduces White's material advantage to one pawn, Black has nothing with which to resist the impending march of the c-pawn.

32...♙xe5 33.dxe5

After 33.♘e6? ♙xe6 34.dxe5 ♙xe5 White might not win...

33...♙xf4



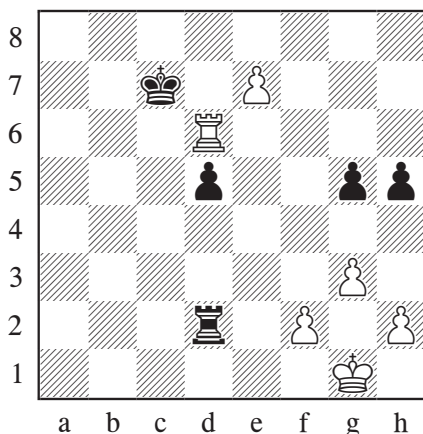
34.♞c1! ♙e8 35.c6 ♙d8 36.c7† ♙c8

Now White is playing not only with extra pawns but also with an "extra king".

37.g3 ♙a4

Or 37...♙f5 38.f4 g5 39.a4! gxf4 40.a5 fxg3 41.a6 gxh2† 42.♙h1 ♙f2 43.♙a1, and the pawn costs Black his rook.

38.♞c6 ♙xa2 39.♙xe6 g5 40.♞d6 ♞d2 41.e6 ♙xc7 42.e7



Black resigned; on 42...♞e2, White plays 43.♞xd5 ♙xe7 44.♙xg5.

1-0