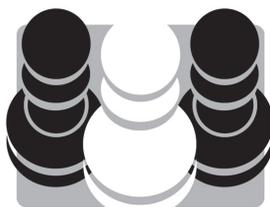


The Soviet Chess Primer

By

Ilya Maizelis



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Foreword by Mark Dvoretsky

I didn't take up chess until rather late. At the Palace of Young Pioneers I joined the chess section in the fifth or sixth class. In those days the Soviet grading system included a Fifth and a Fourth Category. I managed to attain those categories in no time, but afterwards there was a halt in my progress. It was for that reason that I took the 1960 edition of Maizelis's *Chess* with me on summer holiday, intending to study it thoroughly.

It was an interesting and pleasant read. Large format, large diagrams, a wealth of striking examples. In both content and presentation, this was a very "tasty" book! I particularly liked the short section entitled "Entertainment Pages" with which nearly every chapter concluded. It contained amusing puzzles with witty, well-written captions. Interpolations like this embellish a book and make the material easier to absorb. When studying a serious subject it sometimes helps to divert yourself a little, to read something for pleasure, without at the same time straying too far from the main topic. After all, these "Entertainment Pages" consist of chess material with illuminating ideas, albeit conveyed in a different and lighter form. Many of the examples stuck in my memory; I even placed them in my card-index for later use.

Having studied the *Chess* book, I scored 10 out of 10 in my next tournament – more than fulfilling the norm for the Third Category. After that, I made it to the Second with a score of 10 out of 11, then progressed to First Category within a short interval.

Regrettably I was not personally acquainted with Ilya Lvovich Maizelis (1894-1978), but it is obvious he possessed a high level of culture. Though not exceptionally strong as a practical player, he was an excellent analyst; he made a study of pawn endgames and the "rook versus pawns" ending (about which he wrote a short book). Ilya Lvovich associated with several illustrious chessplayers, for example with Lasker in the pre-war years when the second World Champion was resident in Moscow. He even translated Lasker's famous *Manual of Chess* into Russian, as well as the story *How Victor Became a Chess Master*. In the pages of Maizelis's book you can find quite a few "traces" of the author's association with great players.

Chess is a teaching manual with an excellent selection of material convincingly presented, and a bright outward design. At the same time it is more than just a textbook. It is a story of chess as a whole, and thus its title wholly fits its content. Of course, this is not a book for the very young (writers for *them* go about it differently), but it will be very interesting and useful for schoolchildren and adults alike.

Maizelis lived in the Soviet era, and naturally he could not help incorporating certain ideological clichés into his text. This sprinkling of ideology is none too obtrusive, however, and is not experienced as an eyesore.

A notable fact is that many of my acquaintances – strong adult players – have wanted to acquire Maizelis's *Chess*. The book is very dear to me too; now and again I open it and read through a few pages afresh. Incidentally, the copy that I studied as a child was "borrowed" by someone long ago, and it wasn't possible to find another one in a shop and buy it. Then, in the seventies, I was in Sweden with the "Burevestnik" team, and we visited a chess bookshop there. Some Russian language publications were in stock, and Maizelis's book was among them. I bought it at once – money was no object! But afterwards the same thing happened to this copy: someone took it to read and didn't bring it back, so I had to look for it all over again... I now have my third or fourth copy in my library.

I am glad that Maizelis's remarkable work has finally been re-issued and will be available to many lovers of chess. It will, I hope, be both useful and pleasurable to acquaint yourselves with it.

Mark Dvoretsky

Chapter 5

Combination

1. COMBINATIVE MOTIFS AND IDEAS

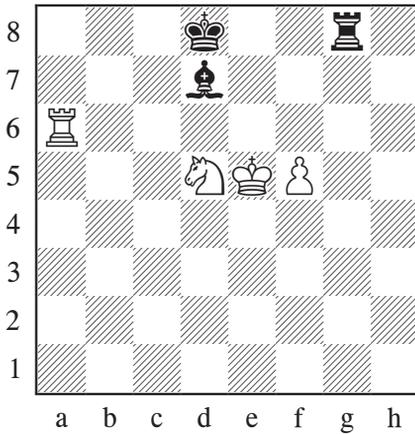
We already know that a *combination* is the name given to the concerted action of some pieces which takes the form of a *forced variation involving the sacrifice of material* – as a result of which a player counts on obtaining benefits of some kind. The purpose of a combination may be to give mate or to win material, or sometimes it may be to save the player from defeat by bringing about perpetual check or stalemate. But then again, a combination may also pursue such aims as breaking up your opponent's pawn formation, or seizing some good squares or lines for your pieces, or exchanging your opponent's active pieces off, and so forth. In these latter cases, with the aid of the combination, you are acquiring what are known as positional assets – that is, an advantage in the placing of your pieces.

The most characteristic things about a combination are the forced nature of the moves that constitute it and also, in most cases, their unexpectedness (sacrifice!) – which strikes us most forcefully (and also finds its explanation) in the culminating point, the climax which defines the *essence* of the combination.

Even though a combination follows logically from the position on the board, the unconventional nature of some of the moves (material sacrifice) disrupts, so to speak, the normal flow of the game, and abruptly steers it into a new channel (like a jump or an explosion). The result is a different correlation of forces on the chessboard and a completely new setting for the struggle.

In the positions given below, try to find the combination for yourself each time, before reading on.

265

*White to move***1. ♖a8†**

With a dual attack (check and skewer) against Black's king and rook.

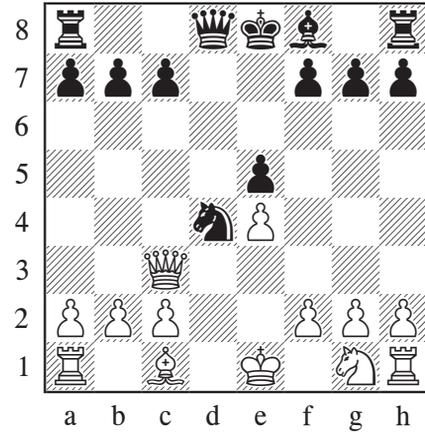
1... ♗c8

White now temporarily sacrifices the exchange:

2. ♖xc8†! ♔xc8 3. ♘e7†

A new and this time decisive dual attack. The rook check was a preparatory move, the exchange sacrifice was the *climax* of the combination; its idea consisted in drawing the king onto an unpropitious square exposed to the dual attack from the knight. As the result of this combination all Black's pieces are eliminated, and further resistance on his part is senseless.

266

*Black to move***1... ♗b4!**

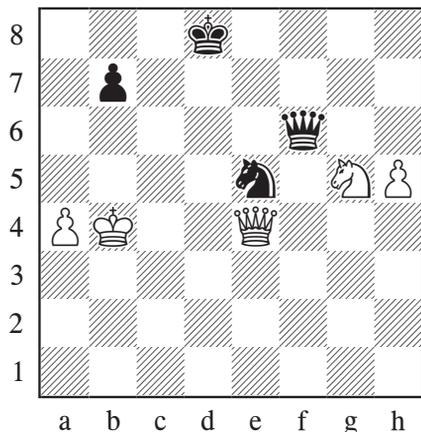
Black wins the queen for a minor piece, since capturing the bishop is met by:

2. ♕xb4 ♘xc2†

A combination is not possible in every position. In various examples, the basis of the combination – the *motif* which suggests its very possibility – is the location of some enemy pieces in a straight line (a diagonal in this last example), in other words a motif of a purely geometric type.

Drawing the hostile pieces onto squares exposed to a knight's fork constitutes the idea of the following combinations.

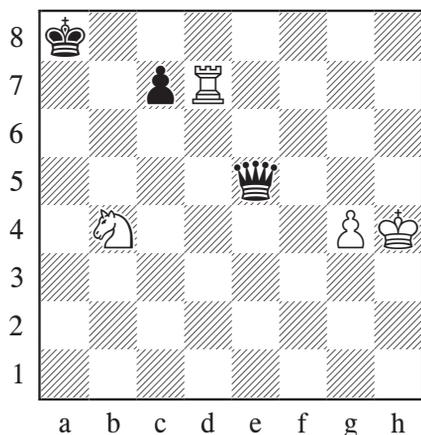
267

*White to move***1. ♖xe5!**

With this capture which simultaneously defends his own knight, White wins a piece. White will immediately regain his queen with a check on f7:

1... ♖xe5 2. ♖f7†

268

*White to move*

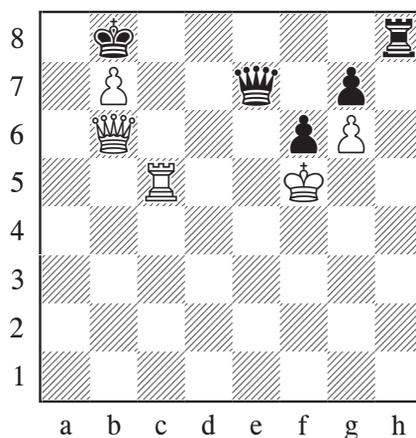
Here the king is drawn onto the fatal square by means of a rook sacrifice:

1. ♖d8† ♔b7 2. ♖b8† ♔xb8 3. ♖c6†

Winning the queen.

The combination in Position 269 is a good deal more complex. In this case, the device of drawing the king onto a specific square enables a decisive dual attack that is performed by a pawn promotion.

269

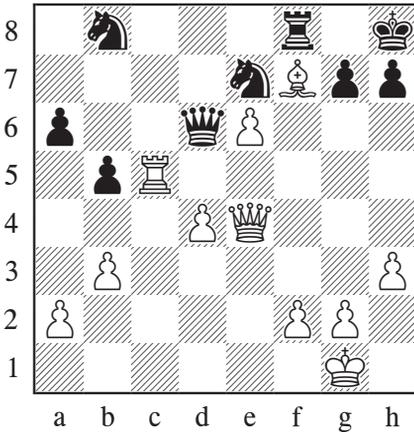
*White to move***1. ♖c8† ♖xc8 2. ♖a7†!! ♔xa7 3. bxc8=♖†!**

White wins back the queen and emerges with an extra piece. This clearly brings out the meaning of a combination – a tactical stroke that uses time economically and is crushing in its effect. If White failed to find it, his own king could easily fall victim to an attack by the opponent's major pieces.

The cramped position of the enemy forces is another factor that often gives rise to combinations. All the forms of cramping that we examined earlier – cutting squares off, obstructing lines of action, proximity to the edge of the board – can serve as the themes of combinations.

270

Sebestyén – Füstér, Budapest 1950

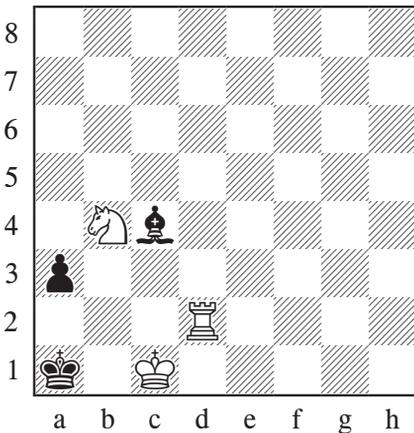


White mates in 2 moves

The idea of White's combination is a queen sacrifice to open up a file against the black king, whose mobility is extremely restricted:

1. ♖xh7†! ♔xh7 2. ♜h5#

271

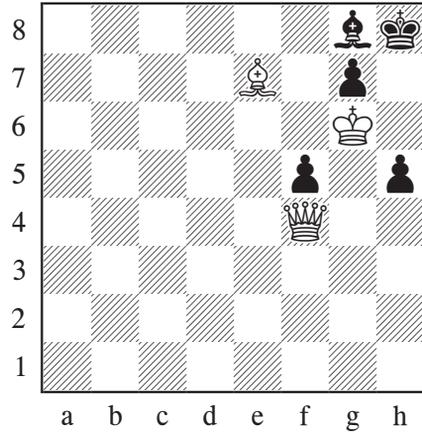


White mates in 2 moves

White compels Black to place an obstruction on the a2-square and follows with mate:

1. ♜a2†! ♔xa2 2. ♘c2#

272

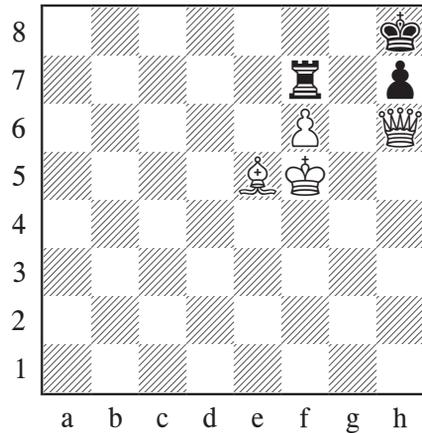


White mates in 2 moves

White forces the key diagonal open:

1. ♕h6†! ♗xh6 2. ♘f6#

273

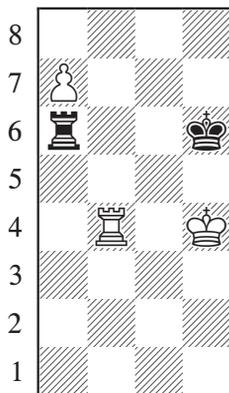


White mates in 2 moves

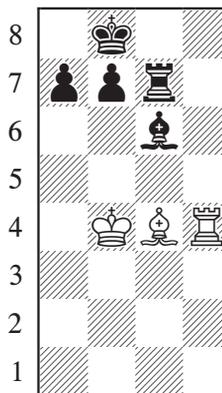
White again forces open the key diagonal, this time by sacrificing his queen to divert the rook:

1. ♕f8†! ♜xf8 2. f7#

274

*White wins*

275

*White draws*

By diverting the black rook in Position 274, White allows his pawn to be promoted:

1. ♖b6† ♜xb6 2. a8=♚

Winning.

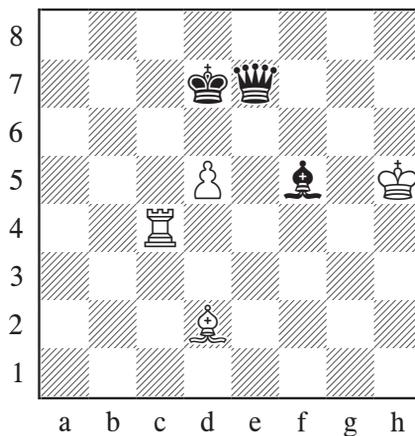
White ingeniously achieves a draw in Position 275 by sacrificing his bishop:

1. ♖d8† ♜c8 2. ♖xc8† ♜xc8 3. ♙a6!!

It makes no difference whether Black takes the bishop at once or only after ♙xb7; either way he is unable to win, as the bishop on c6 cannot control the a1-square (see Diagram 64 on page 43).

Sometimes the cramping of your own king's mobility can be utilized as the theme of a combination to save you from loss.

276

*White draws*

1. ♖c7† ♜xc7 2. d6† ♜xd6

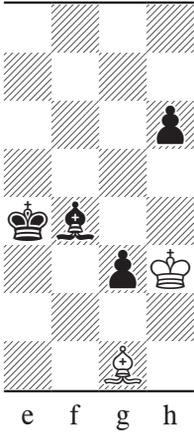
If 2... ♜xd6, then 3. ♙b4†.

3. ♙f4! ♜xf4

Stalemate!

FIND THE SOLUTION

13



14

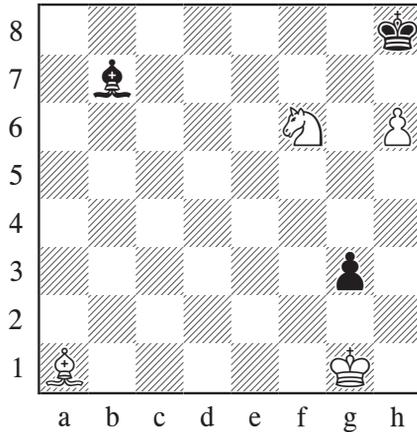
Different means to identical ends



White draws in both 13 and 14

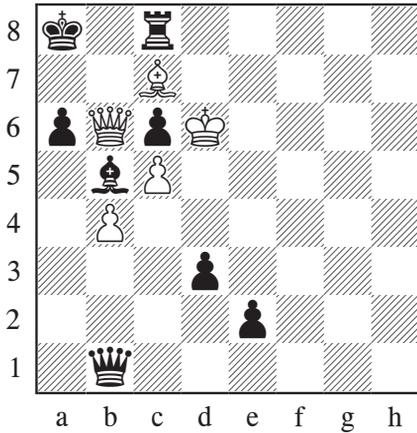
15

Not a “four-mover”, and not a “six-mover” either!



“How many moves does White need, to give mate from this position?”
 “It looks like four: 1. ♖b2, 2. ♖a3, 3. ♖f8, 4. ♖g7#. Black can’t do anything to stop it, can he?”
 “Aha, Black isn’t that helpless. On 1. ♖b2, he plays 1... ♖h1! 2. ♖a3 g2, and he’s stalemated.”
 “You’re right. To let Black out of the stalemate, White needs another two moves: 3. ♖h2 g1=♙† 4. ♖xg1. So it’s mate in *six* moves!”
 “You were being too hasty before, now you’re taking too long. It’s actually mate in five moves! Try and find it.”

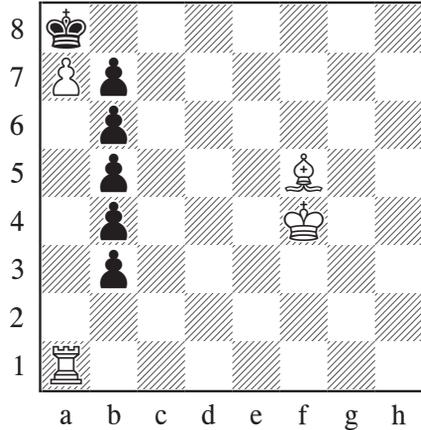
16
An unusual case



White to move

FUN EXERCISES

18
Going up in the lift



Mate in 6 moves

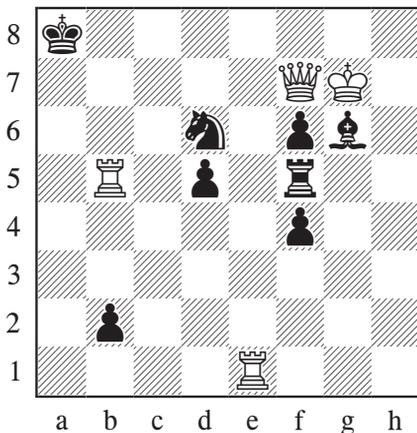
“I can’t see you saving this game,” said the player with Black. “I’m a rook up already, and I’m going to get a second queen for good measure.”

“You’re celebrating your victory too soon,” came the unexpected retort. “*I’m* the one who’s going to save the game, and *you* definitely won’t manage to.”

Indeed White won by spectacular means.

Just switch on the mechanism, and the rest follows easily.

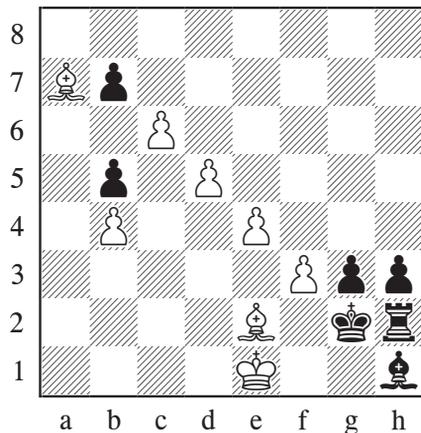
17
Relatively simple



Mate in 2 moves

19

Coming down the escalator



Mate in 5 moves

Although it’s a moving staircase, you still have to walk down slowly from step to step, to avoid a stoppage (stalemate!).