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KORTSCHNOJ'S RESOLUTELY ADVANCING THE KINGSIDE PAWNS I



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Introduction

To a certain extent, this article is related to that about the creative dialogue between generations separated by many dozens of years. There we examine three crushing wins of almost veteran Carlos Garcia Palermo, against opponents with about one third of his age! We will go even deeper now. The central game of the present article, Caruana - Kortschnoj, features the victory of a living legend only weeks before turning 80 against a rising star, which barely has a quarter of his opponent's age!

What makes the aforementioned game so remarkable is the somewhat unexpected approach of both opponents. Caruana chose a solid and rather passive opening setup with White, something we would rather expect from a well-aged player. At the same time, Kortschnoj displayed huge energy and will of play, burning bridges behind him strategically by taking on queenside weaknesses and launching a massive pawn attack with his kingside pawns, before even completing his development!

However, the theme of difference of age occupies a secondary place in this article. It is true that most of his opponents from the games below are younger or much younger, but sometimes this may not be relevant for our main subject of discussion. We will focus on this dynamic approach

based on launching forward the pawns which are supposed to defend the own king, which seems to have been a favourite method of Kortschnoj throughout his carrier.

I remember having read the following aphorism by Kortschnoj: "In order to break the rules one should know them by heart!" This casts some light only about part of the mystery, though. In order to understand better how come one could win (with black in this case) in such a devastating way, despite obvious white mistakes, I invite you to a journey into the past. We will examine some games in which the advance of the f- and g-pawns is involved, but we will see our hero on both sides of the matter: successful attacker, or spoiler of a premature or insufficiently prepared operation of the kind, but also failing to carry out his plan until the logical end.

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to be a witness to the following game:

Kortschnoj - Gashimov

Reggio Emilia 2007/2008

The evening before, Gashimov could be heard in the hotel's lobby announcing that he would play the Benoni against Kortschnoj, relying on the fact that the veteran could be easier caught on the wrong foot in unbalanced positions. I had several doubts about his exaggerated optimism. His verdict may well apply against the veteran prototype, but would you really consider Kortschnoj as one? Secondly, it does not make any sense to plan that you would play the Benoni against Kortschnoj. He could start the game with 1.d4, but, equally probable, with 1.c4, 1.♘f3 and in some extreme cases with 1.e4.

1.♘f3

Kortschnoj never had a high opinion about the Benoni Defence (he once stated that it is almost as bad as the King's Indian), for which reason I suspect that it was some other opening that he wanted to avoid when playing his first move. Be it as it may, Gashimov's ambitions were instantly reduced to nothing.

1...♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♚b6!?

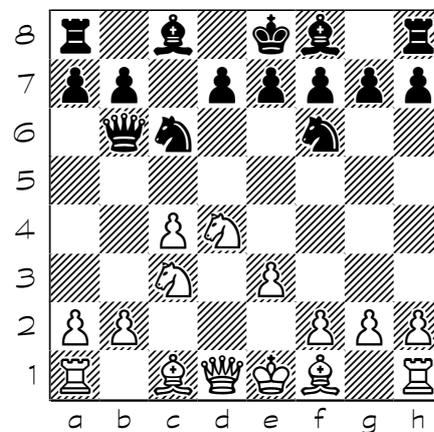
Two days earlier, Gashimov played 5...e6 6.g3 ♚b6 against me and experienced some problems after 7.♘db5. During our post mortem, he stated that 5...♚b6 is the correct move order. 6.♘db5 would make less sense in this case, because the d6-square has

not been weakened, while after 6.♘b3 e6 Black would have transposed to what is considered an entirely viable line.

Could Gashimov have expected that he would have the occasion of testing this idea?

6.e3!?

It appears that Kortschnoj cannot be tricked that easily. He surely foresaw what his opponent had in mind and gives play an entirely different character. Black will need proving the utility of having developed the queen so early.



Looking at the game now, I find a deep reason behind each of the moves from the range 6th to 8th. While the game was being played and I was once and again popping by, my superficial perception was quite different, though. I felt like if Kortschnoj would sort of admit "Well,