

Korchnoi Year by Year

Volume II (1969-1980)

Hans Renette and Tibor Karolyi

Korchnoi Year by Year: Volume II (1969-1980)

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Front cover: Viktor Korchnoi on 15 November 1976 playing against Jan Timman. Portrait by Bert Verhoeff, National Archives, The Hague, ANeFo. Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Back cover: Left to right Lothar Schmid, Danny Hagler, Bozidar Kazic, Olga Kazic, Vera Hagler, Jimmy Carter (Governor of the State of Georgia), Viktor Korchnoi, Bella Korchnaya, Vyacheslav Osnos, official accompanying the group on their tour. Atlanta, Georgia, 29 January 1974. Photo by Jessie Sampley. From the Korchnoi family archive.

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*Dedicated to the memory of George Hollands (1984-2023), mad chess book collector, chess player and administrator, huge Korchnoi fan, partner to Chrissie and father to Alice.
Friend of chess book publishers everywhere. Taken from us far too soon.*

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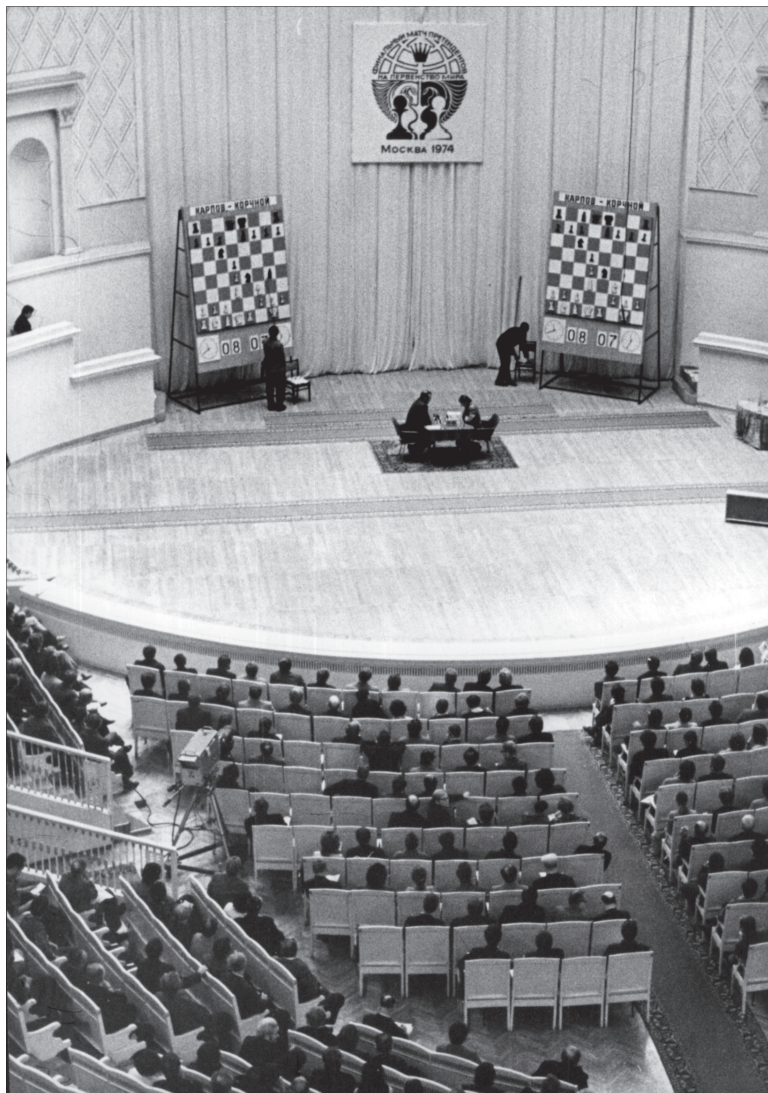
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Game	White	Black	Opening	Year
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314	Korchnoi	Gheorghiu	English Opening	1980
315	Polugaevsky	Korchnoi	Fragment	1980 (m/4)
316	Polugaevsky	Korchnoi	Queen's Indian Defence	1980 (m/8)
317	Polugaevsky	Korchnoi	English Opening	1980 (m/14)
318	Hübner	Korchnoi	Fragment	1980 (m/7)
319	Korchnoi	Hübner	Queen's Gambit Accepted	1981 (m/8)
320	Hübner	Korchnoi	Fragment	1981 (m/9)
321	Korchnoi	Hübner	Fragment	1981 (m/10)

exaggerated, but I did have the feeling that if it looked as though I would win the match, something would happen to me, like an accident in the street. Again, that may sound paranoid, but there is no clear difference between paranoia and real fear in Russia. [*Chess Life and Review*, January 1978, p. 11]

On 23 November, the closing ceremony concluded the match. Here, Korchnoi received 1,500 roubles for his efforts. Karpov won one thousand more.



Korchnoi playing Karpov at the candidates final, 1974



Being watched by Kasparov at the candidates final, 1974



Playing against Kasparov in a simul, 1975

that the Soviets now had their man on stage.

Kazic was then appointed as deputy arbiter and Euwe himself would preside at meetings of the Jury if they occurred. With all these draws, a long match was expected, especially as Karpov seemed to have run out of steam. Keene was a little less pessimistic for his boss: during the past few weeks he had survived three fully lost positions. However, Korchnoi's luck finally came to an end in game 27. Initially, Korchnoi could not complain about his position, and a draw seemed certain. However, it deteriorated and in time trouble he made a big mistake which led to the loss of a pawn under unfavourable circumstances. It took some effort to resign, as Korchnoi was not present and he relied on Keene to deliver the message. This was not allowed, so Stean went to his villa. Korchnoi made a written note to resign, but it came too late – hence Korchnoi lost this game on time. In hindsight, Korchnoi acknowledged that he should have played quieter moves in this phase of the match. Karpov had been prepared for a duel of at most twenty-four games and by now he was physically in bad shape. Thus, Korchnoi believed he should have adopted a wait and see strategy until his opponent truly cracked.

With Karpov leading 5–2, the situation now seemed desperate for the challenger. Russian radio programs were interrupted with a message saying something to the effect of “Dear comrades, we’ve got him.” With an apparently nearby

victory, a feast committee including Ivonin and Vitali Sevastianov (a former cosmonaut and the president of the chess federation) departed to the Philippines. However, Korchnoi decided to stand his ground as much as possible, and they were just in time in Baguio to watch Karpov lose game twenty-nine.

Not all was peaches and cream in Viktor's team. Filip, Kazic and Edmondson by chance encountered Korchnoi and his team in a French restaurant, where Stean told Edmondson about a shouting incident between Petra and Murey which lasted from midnight until 5 a.m.. Edmondson wrote: “The gist of his argument was that she had excessively harmed Viktor's cause by introducing politics, personalities and constant turmoil to an event which should have been focused solely on chess. It was Yasha's [Jacob's] unwavering view that Petra Leeuwerik had thereby cost Viktor Korchnoi the World Championship. Three days earlier, Yasha had forcefully voiced these opinions to Korchnoi and told him that either Petra had to leave or he (Yasha) intended to do so.” Murey didn't go so far as to actually leave, but for the first time in ages, he attended game 28 live in the playing hall, while Petra appeared banned. It was only after a few hours of play that Petra nevertheless came in, mainly to drop a mysterious white tablet in Korchnoi's orange juice.

Korchnoi was mostly invisible on the stage: after every move he withdrew to the dressing room. Karpov played the game insipidly.

Korchnoi, on the other hand, showed fine style but his adjourned move was weak. He sealed his move in an extremely complex 4-rooks endgame, but it was not the best – though the resources are hidden and tough to find. The team dedicated hours to the analysis of the position, not even stopping for breakfast or lunch. Keene didn't dare attend the start of the second session, but when he arrived an hour later he heard Korchnoi's typical laugh. Karpov had played too quickly (maybe thinking his position was gone), trying to exploit Korchnoi's time issues, and then did lose. Keene found Karpov's conduct here amazing as the position was unclear for him, not lost.

Game 287

A. Karpov – V. Korchnoi

World Championship Match (28),
Baguio City, 1978
Ruy Lopez (C82)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6
4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗xe4 6.d4 b5
7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.c3

Karpov doesn't want to get into a wild variation against an already prepared opponent. 9.♗bd2 ♘c5 10.c3 d4 was played a few more times by Korchnoi, but nobody repeated Zaitsev's imaginative 11.♗g5 piece sacrifice against him from game ten. It would be exciting to learn what Korchnoi planned to play against it, but on the other hand one can understand why Karpov was not curious to find out.

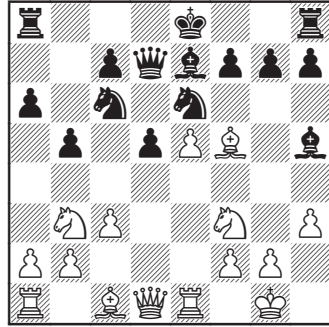
9...♗c5 10.♙c2 ♙g4 11.♖e1
♙e7 12.♗bd2 ♗d7 13.♗b3

Karpov plays a new move. He seeks to occupy the c5-square.

13...♘e6 14.h3

14.♗d3 ♙h5 15.♗fd4 ♙g6 will be played in Schmid-Korchnoi, London 1979.

14...♙h5 15.♙f5



15...♗cd8?!

Korchnoi wants to accomplish his aim on the queenside. They reached this position with a different move order in the game Larrain Cadaiz-Ujtumen 1966, where 15...♖d8 was played. 15...♙g6 16.♗fd4 is better than the game continuation, but Black's best is 15...0-0! 16.♗e2 (16.♙e3 ♙xf3!) 16...♙g6 17.g4, though White has a slight advantage.

16.♙e3?!

Karpov makes a reasonable move, but he misses the chance to gain a much larger advantage. White should act on the kingside at once with 16.h4!! . Then 16...c5 (on 16...♙g6 17.♙g4 is strong, or if 16...♙xf3 then 17.♗xf3 ♙xh4 18.♙e3 and Black's position is very passive, one would far prefer to play this as White) 17.g4 ♙g6 18.h5 ♙xf5 19.gxf5 ♗c7 20.♗c2.

16...a5 17.♙c5

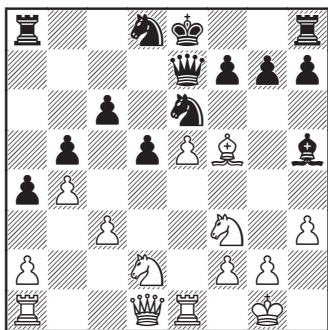
After 17.♖c5 ♕xc5 18.♕xc5 ♖g6 (18...g6 19.♕xe6 ♗xe6 20.♕e3 ♕xf3 21.♗xf3 c6 is playable for Black) 19.♕g4 h5 20.♕xe6 ♗xe6 21.♕e3 c5 the position is complex.

17...a4 18.♕xe7 ♗xe7 19.♗bd2

Tal and Kasparov call this move slackening, and Tal's next comment casts doubt upon it. After the preferable 19.♗bd4 ♗xd4 20.cxd4 ♕xf3 21.♗xf3 g6 22.♕d3 c6 White has a slight edge.

19...c6 20.b4

Karpov renders Black's queenside less flexible, but his own position also becomes a bit rigid. Tal: "Karpov did not evaluate his position optimistically." 20.♗c2 ♕g6 21.♗f1 0-0 would be balanced as well.



20...♗g5

Korchnoi looks to improve the d8-knight.

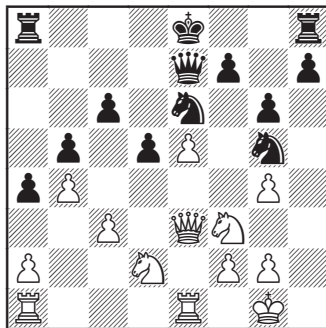
21.♗e2 g6 22.♕g4?!

The position is balanced after 22.♕d3 ♗de6 23.♗e3 ♕xf3 24.♗xf3 ♗xf3+ 25.♗xf3 0-0-0.

22...♕g4!

Korchnoi gets ready to open the h-file.

23.hxg4 ♗de6 24.♗e3



24...h5! 25.♗xg5

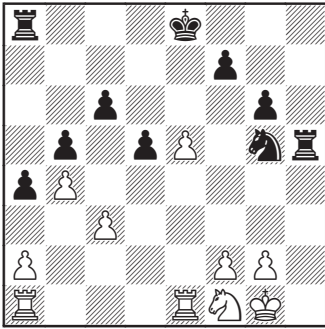
After 25.♗b6 ♖c8 26.gxh5 ♗xh5 27.♗ad1 ♖f8 Black would be better. On Tal's suggestion 25.♗h2 Black would gain a clear advantage with 25...hxg4 26.♗xg4 0-0-0!

25...♗xg5 26.♗xg5 ♗xg5 27.gxh5?!

One gets the feeling that Karpov had no appetite to play. It happened to Petrosian and Spassky as well after obtaining a strong lead in their world championship finals against each other (Petrosian in 1966 and Spassky in 1969). 27.f4! ♗e6 28.f5 ♗f4 (28...♗g7 – Tal: White “would be forced to make a material or positional concession.” However, after 29.♗f1 hxg4 30.fxg6 fxg6 31.♗f6 White had no problem at all. Or if 28...♗g5 29.♗f1 hxg4 30.fxg6 fxg6 31.♗f6 White holds easily) 29.♗f1 ♗e2+ (29...g5 30.♗f3) 30.♖f2 ♗xc3 31.fxg6 fxg6 32.♖e3 and White would not be worse because he is rather active.

27...♗xh5 28.♗f1

28.♗ad1 ♗e6 (after 28...♖e7 29.f3 ♗ah8 30.♖f2 Black would have some advantage) 29.g3 ♖e7 30.♖g2 ♗ah8 and White's position would be unpleasant after 31.♖f3 or 31.♗f3.



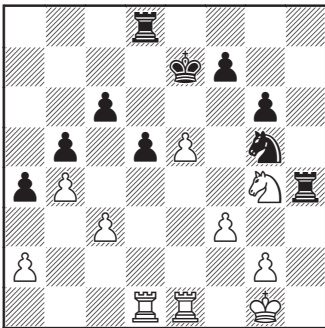
28...Rf4

Korchnoi wants to place his king on e7, but that costs him a tempo. After 28...0-0-0 29.f3 ♔c7 30.♖ad1 ♞e6 Black's position is somewhat preferable. Compared with the game, White would be unable to improve his knight at once, as on 31.♞h2 ♖f5 would be very strong.

29.♖ad1 ♔e7?! 30.f3 ♞e6
31.♞e3!

Karpov decreases his disadvantage by improving his knight.

31...♖d8 32.♞g4 ♞g5



33.♞e3

Karpov decides to mark time.

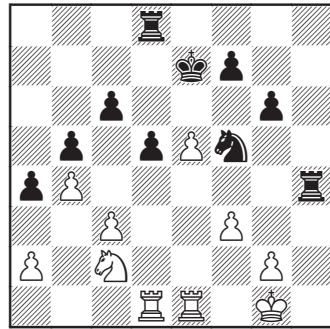
a) 33.a3 ♖dh8 (33...♞e4 34.♖d3) 34.♞f2 and White holds after 34...♞e4+ 35.fxe4 or 34...♞e6 35.♞e3.

b) Improving his king with 33.♞f2! looks preferable. 33...♞e4+

34.♞e3 ♞xc3 35.♖d4 and Black can't prevent White from having enough compensation for the material disadvantage, as on 35...♞xa2 36.♖a1 ♞c3 37.♖c1 or on 35...♞e4 36.♖c1 ♞g3 37.♖d2 can be played.

33...♞e6 34.♞g4 ♞g7 35.♞e3 ♞f5 36.♞c2?!

Karpov should keep marking time with 36.♞g4!. On 36.♞xf5+? gxf5 37.♖d4 f4 would win.



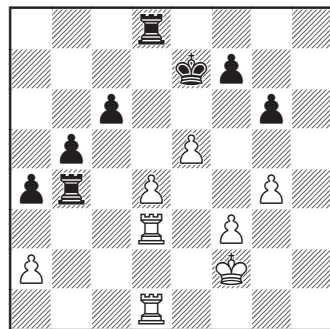
36...♖c4!

Korchnoi finds this precise move with little time left on the clock.

37.♖d3 d4

Korchnoi breaks up White's pawn chain with a temporary pawn sacrifice.

38.g4 ♞g7 39.♞xd4 ♞e6 40.♖ed1 ♞xd4 41.cxd4 ♖xb4 42.♞f2



42...c5!?

This is Korchnoi's sealed move, which gives him extremely good winning chances. Possibly, though, Black has an even better move: 42...♖b2+! 43.♖1d2

a) 43...♖xd2+ 44.♖xd2 ♔e6 45.♕e3 c5 46.f4 (46.dxc5 ♖xd2 47.♕xd2 ♕d5!)

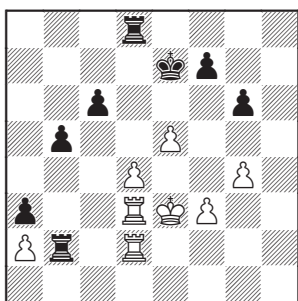
a1) 46...b4 47.f5+! (Kasparov misses this subtle check; 47.♕e4 f5+ and Black wins) 47...gxf5 48.gxf5+ ♕xf5 49.♖f2+ and White holds.

a2) 46...♖xd4 47.♖xd4 cxd4+ 48.♕e4! and White holds with Kasparov's brilliant move.

b) 43...a3!! . Commentators missed a hidden idea.

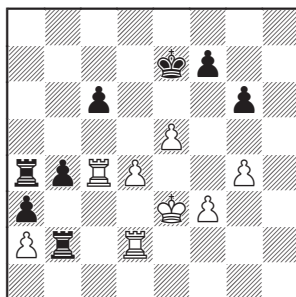
b1) 44.♖xb2 axb2 45.♖b3 ♖xd4 46.♖xb2 (after 46.♕e3 ♖d5 47.f4 g5 48.♖xb2 gxf4+ 49.♕xf4 ♕e6 Black is likely to win) 46...♕e6 47.♖c2 ♕d5 and Black wins.

b2) 44.♕e3



44...♖a8!! 45.♖c3 (45.f4 b4 46.f5 b3 wins for Black) 45...b4 46.♖c1 ♖a4!! This subtle move threatens b3 (46...♖a5 47.f4; 46...b3 47.axb3 ♖xb3+ 48.♕e4! and here one can see the point of placing the rook on a4, as with the rook on a4 Black wins by pushing the c-pawn) 47.♖c4

(47.f4 b3 48.axb3 ♖xb3+ 49.♕e4 c5 wins)



47...♖a5!! If the rook moves to another square on the file, Black could take the b2-rook. 48.♖c1 (48.f4 b3 wins) 48...b3 49.axb3 ♖xb3+ 50.♕e4 ♖b4 51.♖dc2 ♖aa4 52.♖xc6 ♖xd4+ 53.♕e3 ♖d5 54.♖c7+ ♕f8 and White would really struggle.

43.d5

Karpov and his team surely analysed this position deeply. Other moves do not save the game.

a) 43.dxc5 ♖xd3 44.♖xd3 ♖b2+ 45.♕e3 ♖xa2 46.c6 ♖c2 47.♖d5 ♖xc6 48.♖xb5 ♖a6 49.♖b2 a3 50.♖a2 g5 and Black wins as Tal pointed out.

b) 43.♕e3 c4 44.♖3d2 ♕e6

b1) 45.f4 ♕d5 46.♖h2 c3 47.♖c1 ♖b2 48.♖h7 b4 49.♖xf7 ♖h2 and Black wins after 50.f5 ♖h3+ 51.♕f4 gxf5 52.gxf5 b3

b2) 45.♕e4 f5+ 46.exf6 ♕xf6

b2.1) 47.♖h2 a3 48.♖h7 ♖e8+ 49.♕d5 ♕g5 50.♖a7 ♖b2 51.♖xa3 b4 52.f4+ (52.♖a5 c3) 52...♕xf4 53.♖f1+ ♕g5 and Black probably wins.

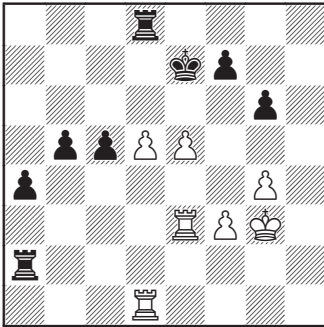
b2.2) 47.g5+ ♕xg5 48.♖g1+ ♕f6 49.♖dg2 ♖e8+ 50.♕f4 ♕e6 51.♖g5 ♕d7 52.a3 ♖b3 53.♖xg6 ♖d3! and Black may win.

43...♖b2+ 44.♕g3

If 44.♖1d2 ♜xd2+! (on 44...a3? 45.♜xb2 axb2 46.♞b3 ♜xd5 (46...b4 47.d6+) 47.♞xb5 ♜xe5 48.♞xb2 White would be safe) 45.♜xd2 b4 46.♚e3 a3 and Black wins.

44...♜xa2 45.♞e3!

Tal thinks that this move was a surprise for Korchnoi, as he used up half of his remaining 20 minutes.

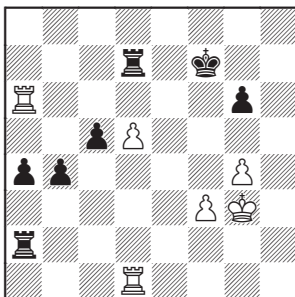


45...b4!

On 45...♞b2 46.e6 creates enough play to hold.

46.e6! ♞a3!

Korchnoi wins a vital tempo by offering to exchange rooks. If 46...b3?? 47.d6+ and White wins. If 46...fxe6? we illustrate how badly Korchnoi needs the extra tempo to win: 47.♞xe6+ ♚f7 48.♞a6 ♞d7 (White holds after 48...♞a3 49.♞e1 or 48...♚g8 49.♞a7 a3 50.♞e1)



49.g5!! a3 50.f4!! (50.♞h1? ♜xd5) 50...b3 (50...♞c2 51.♞h1) 51.♞h1!

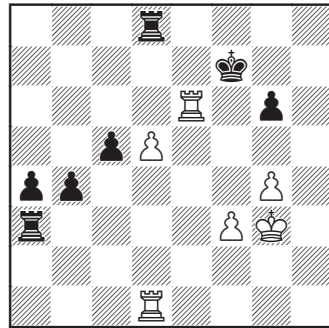
a) 51...♜xd5 52.♞h7+ ♚g8 (52...♚e8? 53.♞a8+) 53.♞b7 and White holds.

b) 51...♚g7 52.f5 (52.♞h6 also holds) 52...gxf5 53.g6 ♞d8 54.♞h7+ ♚g8 55.♞aa7 and White holds.

47.♞e2

47.♞xa3 bxa3 48.exf7 ♞b8 wins for Black, as Kasparov pointed out.

47...fxe6 48.♞xe6+ ♚f7



49.♞de1?

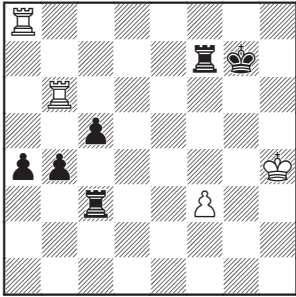
Karpov's position is very difficult, but this loses. It is worth quoting Korchnoi from *Anti-Chess*: "When I set off to the resumption, I was sure that with accurate play Karpov would be able to save the game. But in my time-trouble he continued playing at blitz speed and missed a certain draw." In this position White had chances, but in those days there were no decent computer chess programs.

a) 49.♞a6 ♞d7.

b) Lilienthal mentions the promising 49.g5!?

b1) 49...♞d7 50.♞c6 ♞c3 51.♞h1 ♜xd5 52.♞h7+ ♚g8 53.♞a7 ♞xg5+ 54.♚h4 ♞f5 55.♞xg6+ ♚f8 56.♞b6

♞f7 57. ♞a8+ (57. ♞xa4? ♞cxf3) 57...
 ♚g7



58. ♚g5!! ♞d7 59. ♞xa4 ♞xf3
 60. ♞a5! ♞c7 (60... ♞c3 61. ♞g6+ ♚f7
 62. ♞h6=) 61. ♞bb5 ♞c3 62. ♞a6 ♞g3+
 (62... ♞d3 63. ♞aa5) 63. ♚f4 ♞g1
 64. ♞a2 and White seems to hold.

b2) 49... ♞c3!

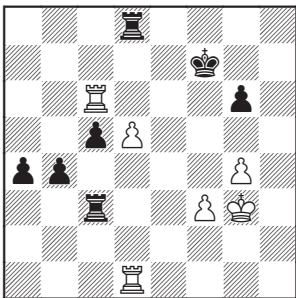
b2.1) 50. ♚g4 ♞c4+ 51. f4 ♞f8!!
 52. ♚g3 ♞e8 and Black wins.

b2.2) 50. ♞h1 ♞xd5 51. ♞f6+ ♚g7
 52. ♚g4 ♞f5 and Black wins.

b2.3) 50. ♞a6 a3 51. ♞e1 ♞d7
 52. ♞ee6 ♞d3 53. ♞xg6 ♞3xd5
 54. ♚g4 c4 and Black wins.

b2.4) 50. ♞de1 ♞d7 51. ♞f6+ ♚g7
 52. ♞ee6 b3 53. ♞xg6+ ♚f8 54. ♞b6 ♞d3
 and Black wins.

c) 49. ♞c6!! ♞c3 (49... ♞d7 50.g5)



50. ♞h1! ♚g7 51. ♞c7+ ♚f6
 52. ♞e1 ♞xd5 53. ♞c6+ ♚g7 54. ♞c7+

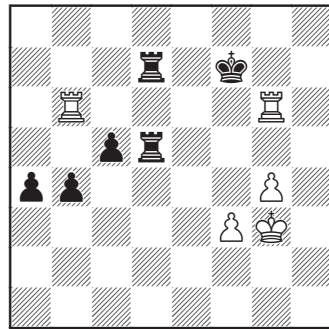
♚h6 55. ♞f7!! a3 56. ♚h4 a2 57. ♞ee7 ♞h5+
 58. gxf5 ♞c4+ 59. f4 ♞xf4+
 60. ♞xf4 g5+ 61. ♚g4 gxf4 62. ♞e6+ ♚g7
 63. ♞a6 b3 64. ♞a7+ and White holds.

49... ♞d7!

After this move, White's attack leads to nowhere. According to Lilienthal in *Sakkelet*, Karpov expected the capture 49... ♞xd5? . He was playing well to exploit Korchnoi's time pressure.

50. ♞e7+ ♚f8 (50... ♚f6 51. ♞1e6+ ♚g5
 52. ♞g7 wins as Filip pointed out) 51. ♞e8+ ♚g7 52. ♞1e7+ ♚h6
 53. ♚h4 (53. ♞f7 ♞ad3 54. ♚h4 g5+
 55. ♚g3 ♞d6 56. ♞h8+ ♚g6 57. ♞hh7
 and White holds according to Filip) 53... g5+
 54. ♚g3 ♞d6 55. ♞h8+ ♚g6 56. ♞hh7
 and Black holds.

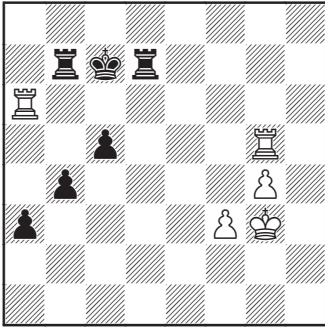
50. ♞b6 ♞d3 51. ♞ee6 ♞3xd5
 52. ♞xg6



52... a3

Pushing the pawn is an accomplishment.

53. ♞bf6+ ♚e7 54. ♞e6+ ♚f8
 55. ♞ef6+ ♚e7 56. ♞e6+ ♚d8
 57. ♞a6 ♞b7 58. ♞g8+ ♚c7 59. ♞g7+ ♞d7
 60. ♞g5



60...b3

Now it is all over for White.

61. ♖xc5+ ♔b8 0-1

Game 29 was postponed for several days. First, the electrical transformer outside the building exploded. Keene suspected no foul play as the generator was in bad shape. Korchnoi went to the seaside instead, but here he caught severe sunburn and later another head cold as well, so he needed to postpone the game once more. Back behind the board, Korchnoi looked like a “fluorescent carrot”, but his play was not affected and the game was adjourned with a small plus for him. Keene wrote: “The sealed move over which Korchnoi took thirty-six minutes and forty-five seconds. ... It was painful to watch his indecision on the stage. He thought for fifteen minutes, got up and hid in a corner of the stage (to circumvent prying eyes, I imagine). He then wrote down a sealed move, came back and sat slumped over the board. After a further ten minutes he crossed out his move and repeated the performance, finally sealing the text.”

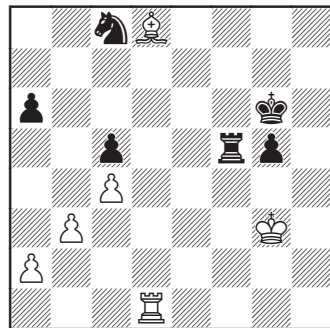
His move was not the best, but still kept an edge. When the game was resumed, Karpov again made the mistake of trying to exploit Korchnoi’s time trouble by blitzing. Again he blundered, and Korchnoi had thus nearly closed the gap: it was 5-4 in the champion’s favour. Afterwards, Korchnoi boasted of his fighting spirit: “Fischer respects me because of this. Everyone else he can intimidate with his own fighting spirit, but not me.”

Vasiukov arrived for this game. Korchnoi didn’t fear him – “he lacks talent” – but it was a fact he knew Korchnoi well, having worked for him in Sousse and the 1974 match.

Game 288

V. Korchnoi – A. Karpov

World Championship Match (29),
Baguio City, 1978



60.a4

Korchnoi pushes the a-pawn closer to promotion.

60...♔f7

Black could also move the rook along the f-file: 60...♖f7 61.a5 ♖f5 62.♖d7 (62.♙c7 ♘e7) 62...♖f7 and he holds.