GAME 6 V. Kramnik – P. Leko

Vladimir Kramnik is the 19th FIDE World champion after the unification match against Veselin Topalov in 2006 and the PCA World champion in 2000 when he defeated Garry Kasparov. After the signing of the agreement in Prague in 2002, a qualifying match took place between Kramnik and Leko in 2004. The other match between Ruslan Ponomariov and Garry Kasparov didn't take place, just as the match Rustam Kasimdzhanov – Kasparov. For this reason, in 2005 a closed tournament was organized in San Luis – Argentina, won by Veselin Topalov.

Peter Leko is a challenger to the World crown, a Hungarian Grand Master, participating in 9 Olympiads with the Hungarian team.

During the whole match against Kramnik, Leko was leading the score until the last 14th game, see below. In this one, after choosing a passive variation in the Caro-Kann Defense, Black got into a very tight position and was deprived of any counterplay. Little by little, the position of the White pieces evolved statically and transformed into a winning endgame superbly concluded by the Russian Grand Master. Thus, he retained his PCA title and obtained the right to compete in the unification match of the two versions: FIDE and PCA.

1.e4 c6?

The question mark is entirely due to Leko's psychological decision. In the first five games with Black pieces, in response to 1.e2-e4, he chose 1...e7-e5 and achieved 3 points of 5 without any defeat. During the 6th game with Black (the 12th in the match), the Hungarian Grand Master, surprisingly, chose the first move c7-c6 and was content with a draw in an almost winning position. His decision to replay the Caro-Kann and the passive variation with the retreat of the bishop on "d7" is undoubtedly correlated to a lack of confidence, to the willingness to avoid taking any risk and ultimately to one EQ not too much high.

2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♟f5 4.h4 h6?

The first critical moment of the game. Above, the choice of the passive variation associated with this move has already been mentioned. Best: 4…h5, preventing 5.g2-g4 and the conquest of space. In the game, Black obtained a passive and badly placed bishop on "d7", which is even worse than choosing the French Defence!

5.g4 ♟d7 6.♞d2 c5 7.d:c5 e6?

The second crucial moment of the game. Leko missed an excellent opportunity to obtain a dynamic position that was providing equal chances: 7…♛c7! 8.f4 f6! 9.♛e2 f:e5 10.f:e5 e6 11.♞b3 a5!.

8.♞b3 ♟:c5 9.♞:c5 ♛a5+ 10.c3 ♛:c5 11.♞f3 ♝e7 12.♝d3 ♞bc6 13.♝e3 ♛a5 14.♛d2 ♝g6 15.♝d4 ♞:d4 (♛c7!?) **16.c:d4**
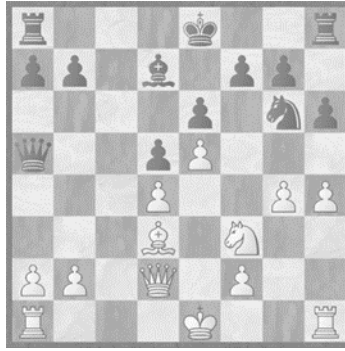
The third and final critical moment of this dramatic fight.

According to Dorfman, positions that cannot evolve statically sooner or later turn into losing! This is the concrete case of this game.

Black willingly went to a strategically difficult endgame, misjudging the situation that with fewer pieces will get closer to the draw they need to win the match. The keeping of queens was giving a survival chance. For example: 16…♕b6! 17. O-O–O ♝b5 with equal play.

16...♕:d2+? 17.♔:d2 ♞f4 18.♖ac1 h5?! (♞:d3) 19.♖hg1 ♝c6 20.g:h5 ♞:h5 21.b4 a6 22.a4! ♜d8

If Black accepts the "gift", then after: 22... ♝:a4 23. ♖c7 O-O 24. ♘g5 ♜ab8 25. ♖e7! he will be tied hand and foot!
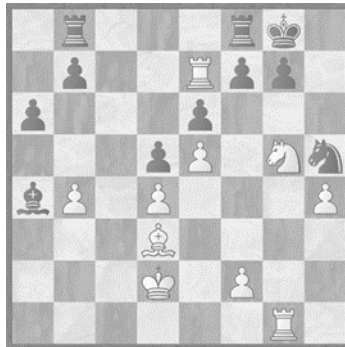
23.♘g5 ♝e8 24.b5!

White continues the strategy of "strangulation" of the rival. The idea of the move of the game is to create a second weakness in the opposing camp. Black loses this game because of the principle of two weaknesses. The end is near. Here are the latest moves:

24… ♞f4

If Black exchanges pawns on "b5" by 24...a:b5, after 25. ♗:b5! White's advantage is visible to the naked eye.

25.b6!

This move fixes the newly created weakness of "b7". The game ended after:

25… ♞:d3 26.♔:d3 ♜c8 27.♖:c8+ ♚:c8 28.♖c1+ ♝c6 29.♘:f7 ♜:h4 30.♘d6+ ♚d8 31.♖g1 ♜h3+ 32.♔e2 ♜a3 33.♖:g7 ♜:a4 34.f4 ♜a2+ 35.♔f3 ♜a3+ 36.♔g4 ♜d3 37.f5 ♜:d4+ 38.♔g5 e:f5 39.♔f6 ♜g4 40.♖c7 ♜h4 41.♘f7+

BLACK RESIGNS