

# Starting over

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FEBRUARY 15, 1985, will go down as one of the most scandalous days in chess history. It was on that Friday, at a press conference in Moscow, that the president of the World Chess Federation (Fide), Florencio Campomanes, annulled the world title fight between Soviets Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov. Although defending champion Karpov was leading by five wins to three, he was rumoured to be on the verge of a mental breakdown after five months of play. After losing two games in succession — numbers 47 and 48 — the Karpov camp in desperation called up Campomanes. He immediately flew to the Soviet capital, and called the meeting that made international headlines that evening.

At the press conference Campomanes announced he was terminating the match forthwith, and that a rematch with a limit of 24 games would begin on September 1. He cited fatigue on all concerned with the contest, which has broken all endurance records, as the reason. But in the audience a fit and robust-looking Kasparov was fuming. Then Karpov dramatically burst into the hall, saying he wanted to continue the match. "As we Russians say, rumours of my death are somewhat exaggerated," he said. Kasparov took the microphone and shouted: "They are trying to deprive me of my chances. The champion says he feels 'unwell' but he is still here. I want to play with no time-outs and no intervals. With every delay Karpov's chances improve."

On the podium Campomanes, who admits he is a close friend of Karpov's, seemed lost for words. The press conference, one of the most chaotic seen in Moscow for many years, was adjourned for an hour while the two players and the Fide president met for consultation. Afterwards Campomanes announced that Karpov accepted the ruling, and Kasparov "would abide by it". Challenger Kasparov remained bitter. Referring to Karpov he said: "I don't know if he is talking sincerely about his desire to play, but this [the press conference] reminds me strongly of a well rehearsed spectacle in which everyone knows his own role."

The clash between Karpov and Kasparov, which started on September 10 last year, has certainly been memorable — if not in the way expected. Expert commentators had unanimously predicted much carnage as the two outstanding grandmasters fought to be the first player to win six games. But after only nine games, the 33-year-old Karpov was already four-nil ahead. Fighting for survival, the 21-year-old Kasparov dug in with draws — a policy his opponent did not apparently object to. A long and tedious series of 17 draws saw public interest plummet, and the players booed by spectators. But, even though he lost game 27, Kasparov had achieved his aim — proving his disastrous start had been a freak accident.

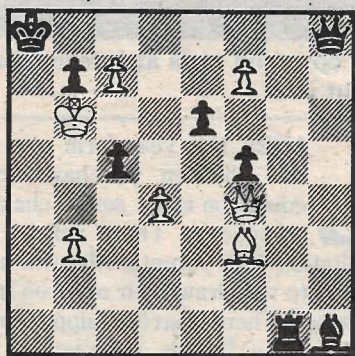
Kasparov's win in game 32 was a landmark — the first time he had ever beaten his great rival. Another series of 14 draws followed until the two sensational victories in games 47 and 48 occurred. This remarkable comeback ranks in itself as a magnificent sporting achievement, the more so considering that since game 27 Kasparov had played with a



knife at his throat, unable to afford a single mistake.

That the contest should have been called off at this stage, against Kasparov's wishes, is bizarre — especially considering that the unlimited games format was Karpov's own idea. Karpov's insistence that he wished to continue should be taken with some caution; if it was not a purely face-saving device he may well have meant "continue after a few months' rest". The champion, who won the title by default from Bobby Fischer in 1975 after a squabble over match rules, should have resigned the competition gracefully if unable to play on.

In spite of the furore, however, the net outcome has not been a disaster for Kasparov. From an apparently hopeless situation he has lived to fight another day, and must surely start the September match strong favourite. Even at the end of Moscow he remained five wins to three down, and the ultimate outcome of that contest must still have been in doubt. Moreover, Campomanes's decision was not without any justification — world championship matches are intended to be partly tests of stamina, but over five months? At least if Garry crushes Karpov in the 24-game contest, the champion may not even want to claim the instant rematch he is entitled to under present Fide rules.



White to play and mate in two moves against any Black defence.

This problem is the first stage of the Annual Lloyds Bank British Problem Solving Championship, which is also open to New Zealanders. Successful entrants from this stage qualify for a more advanced postal phase, the top scorers of which are eligible to compete in the London final in January 1986. There is also a £50 prize for the best overseas entry. To compete in the event, solve this problem and send in your solution (key move only) to: Public Relations, Lloyds Bank Plc, 71 Lombard St, London EC3P 3BS, mentioning the *Listener* as the source. ■