

Jacob Aagaard & John Shaw (Editors)

Updated
and
revised

Experts vs. the Sicilian



QUALITY CHESS



Experts vs. the Sicilian

2nd edition

Edited by: Jacob Aagaard & John Shaw

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List of symbols

†	Check
!	A strong move
!!	A brilliant move
!?	An interesting move
?!	A dubious move
?	A mistake
??	A blunder
+-	White has a winning position
±	White is better
±	White is slightly better
=	The position is equal
∞	The position is unclear
∞	Compensation for the sacrificed material
∓	Black is slightly better
∓	Black is better
-+	Black has a winning position
1-0	White won
½-½	The game was drawn
0-1	Black won
(x)	x th match game
corr.	Correspondence game

Preface

GM John Nunn had a lot of success with his trilogy *Beating the Sicilian 1, 2 and 3*. Others have tried to follow suit, but none with the same success. (The latest being Nigel Davies with *Taming the Sicilian*, where the White repertoire was based on g3-lines against almost everything.)

It was with this knowledge that Ari Ziegler and Jacob Aagaard discussed the idea of a repertoire book against the Sicilian in 2003, while developing the idea of a new chess publishing company. The discussions (leading to this book) ended with the idea of contacting strong players who had specialist knowledge in the lines in question. It was our conviction that this would give the reader the best possible insight into the finer points of a particular line. As experienced players and opening book writers we know that important finesses are missed if you do not:

1. Use a lot of time analysing the games, instead of just believing the players' own analysis.
2. Have prior knowledge of the system.

It is obviously not easy to get many busy chess players to deliver up-to-date material all at the same time. However it was also not as difficult as we feared. Alexander Raetsky and Peter Wells were playing tournaments at the time of the deadline, but still managed to deliver with only a week's delay. And this despite serious computer problems for both!

It has been interesting to learn how differently some very strong players view opening theory, and see how this has made itself apparent in their contributions. At one extreme there is Viktor Gavrikov with his dense theoretical style, at the other Peter Heine Nielsen with his ideas-based approach. This is not a matter of playing strength or necessarily style of play. These two GMs are the two highest rated players contributing to this book, and are both renowned theoreticians. For this reason we decided that it did not make any sense to make huge changes to the style chosen by the different contributors. Clearly a lot of general editing has been done, but we made no particular effort to limit the diversity of the book's authors.

We hope you will find this book enlightening and entertaining.

Glasgow, October 2nd 2004

Jacob Aagaard

John Shaw

Foreword to the revised 2006 edition

As we wanted to re-typeset to a bigger format when we had to reprint this book, we decided to insert the corrections of both language and chess moves we had encountered since the book was first published. In essence, the book is the same as the 2004 edition, but a lot of minor changes and a few updates will hopefully make it an improved edition.

The updates compared to the first edition do not only include improvements for White, but also for Black. We have tried to present the reader with an honest picture of the development of the lines over the last two years, but not upheld ourselves to the obligations of delivering a bullet proof repertoire. We found this approach the most honest and hopefully the readers will do so too.

In that connection we would like to thank Mikhail Golubev for revising his chapter on the Dragon.

Glasgow, June 1st 2006

Jacob Aagaard

John Shaw

The writers

Grandmaster Thomas Luther vs. the Najdorf
37-year-old Thomas Luther from Erfurt in Germany (where Martin Luther went to university) is twice German champion and a regular member of his country's Olympiad team, including 2000 when they were close to winning the tournament, but in the end had to settle for silver medals.

Although this is Thomas' first contribution to a chess book, his 20 years of playing 6.♗g5 against the Najdorf at a high level cannot but impress.

Grandmaster Mikhail Golubev vs. the Dragon

Mikhail Golubev is a strong 36-year-old grandmaster from Ukraine who mainly considers himself a journalist. He is known as a diligent chess writer and the author of some well-received opening books.

Mikhail contributes often to *New In Chess Yearbook* with theoretical surveys, and mainly on the Sicilian Dragon. In recent years a great number of books on the Dragon have been published, but none caught the attention of the editors of this book as Golubev's small book, *Easy Guide to the Dragon*.

We are very happy that Mikhail accepted our invitation to contribute to this book.

International Master Jacob Aagaard vs. the Sveshnikov & several minor lines

Jacob Aagaard is 32 years old, born in Denmark, but resident in Glasgow, Scotland. His best results are his two GM-norms, both attained in 2004. Jacob has written many chess books. Especially close to heart is the Excelling at Chess series of 5 books, from which the first, *Excelling at Chess*, won book of the year at chesscafe.com, while the final two received even better reviews.

Jacob is also the author of *Easy Guide to the Sveshnikov* (Everyman Chess 2000).

Grandmaster Peter Wells vs. the Classical Sicilian

Peter Wells is 41 years old and has for many years been one of the best players in England. During his work for this book he found time to take second place in the British Championship. At the publication date of this book Peter will represent England at the Olympiad.

Peter's participation is a real scoop for this book. His reputation as a chess opening author is unchallenged. Kasparov, with his usual diplomacy, said about Peter's book on the Semi-Slav, that he could not understand how such a weak player could write such a great book. His recent book on the Trompowsky (Batsford 2003) was called "the finest opening book I've ever seen" by IM Jeremy Silman, and received universal acclaim as well as a nomination for book of the year at www.chesscafe.com.

In 1998 Peter wrote *The Complete Richter-Rauzer* together with Viacheslav Osnos. He plays the Classical Sicilian often and with good results.

Grandmaster Sune Berg Hansen vs. the Taimanov and the Kan

Sune Berg Hansen is 35 years old and has been one of Denmark's strongest grandmasters for many years. He has competed in several Olympiads and once in the World Championship. He is well known in Denmark for the high quality of his chess annotations, and as the daily chess and poker columnist for the large newspaper Politiken. His article in this book is his first larger contribution to a chess book. His great knowledge of opening theory will become apparent to anyone who reads his work in this book.

Grandmaster Peter Heine Nielsen vs. the Accelerated Dragon

Peter Heine Nielsen is 33 years old and currently Scandinavia's number one. Peter has won many international tournaments, ahead of such players as Ivanchuk, Short, Svidler and Beliavsky. He also won a bronze medal at the 1994 Olympiad in Moscow.

Peter co-authored the book *The Sicilian Accelerated Dragon* in 1998 with fellow Dane Carsten Hansen. They are currently contemplating an updated edition.

Grandmaster Viktor Gavrikov vs. the Scheveningen

Viktor Gavrikov is 47 years old and famous on the tournament circuit for his vast knowledge of opening theory. As a player he has competed at the highest level for many years, and won games against players such as Karpov, Beliavsky, van Wely, Lautier, Andersson and Adams. Currently he contributes theoretical articles to ChessBase Magazine and is working on a book on the middlegame.

Viktor has played the Keres Attack with both colours, but does not consider himself a true expert. However his contribution to this book suggests otherwise.

International Master Jan Pinski vs. the Kalashnikov

Jan Pinski is a 27-year-old journalist, currently working hard on uncovering corruption in his native Poland, as well as on his next chess book. Jan has written a number of chess books, the first being *The Kalashnikov Sicilian* with Jacob Aagaard. In an e-mail to the editors Jan states, "It is incredible that I played this line for so long without being punished!"

Grandmaster Alexander Raetsky vs. the Four Knights.

44-year old Alexander Raetsky very recently made his first grandmaster norm after 9, 10 and 11 rounds of the Biel Open 2004, but was unfortunately given one and not three norms for the effort. He has for a long time been one of the best players in his home region of Voronezh in Russia, where for the last five years he has organized one of the largest open tournaments in the world.

Alexander is also the author of several chess books, most often with his close friend Maxim Chetverik, as well as a contributor to New In Chess Yearbook. Among his books is *Meeting 1.e4*, which is a repertoire book with the main line being the Four Knights Sicilian, an opening he has played regularly since.

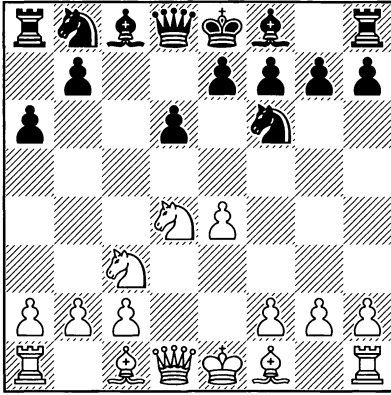
Alexander was finally awarded the grandmaster title in 2005 after making the final norm in Cappelle le Grande, France, where you should be able to find him each year.

Grandmaster John Shaw vs. several minor lines.

John Shaw from Scotland has represented his country in many international team tournaments, including Olympiads. He has written two opening books for Everyman Chess and was awarded the grandmaster title in 2006.

The Najdorf

- By Thomas Luther



The Najdorf System is one of the most popular systems of the Sicilian Defence. It arises after the moves 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6. The Argentine Grandmaster M. Najdorf played it for the first time in a tournament game in the 40s.

Nowadays it is seen in every level of tournament. Many World Champions, including Fischer and Kasparov, used it as their main defence against 1.e2-e4. In many variations an uncompromising battle arises where every move has great importance. It is a very practical choice if Black wants to play for a win from the very beginning of the game. In our times many moves from the older games belong only to history, because strong computer programs show that they are incorrect. Nevertheless, in some lines White just crushes Black's set-up. I will give some examples where I show the reader some basic ideas (for example the ♗c3-d5 sacrifice), and I try to show the connection of different variations and the tricks of move orders.

This book recommends 6.♗g5. I have played this move for nearly 20 years now and I have won many games with it. There are relatively few recent games in the 6.♗g5 line, because 6.♗e3 is more popular right now. However when

comparing the results of these two variations we see that 6.♗g5 is doing fine.

There are some specialists in this line and I have annotated some of their best games. Among many others I want to mention GMs Short, Timman, Kotronias and Sulskis for their great efforts.

The most important lines are the Poisoned Pawn variation (6...e6 7.f4 ♖b6), which is the most critical line and the main line (6...e6 7.f4 ♗bd7 8. ♖f3 ♗c7 9. 0-0-0 ♗e7) and now 10. ♗d3. These two lines dominate at the moment in tournament practice. Other formerly well-known lines, like the Polugayevsky Variation (6...e6 7.f4 b5), are rarely met nowadays.

I have checked most variations given in this chapter with my computer. But soft- and hardware are developing fast, and sooner or later improvements will be found. If you are uncertain about a position after reading this book I truly advise you to check it with your computer.

In the beginning I will give some sidelines. Each of them is dangerous if White does not know what to do. I start with 6...♗bd7 (the usual move which is played in almost all other games here is 6...e6). Black's idea is to avoid getting double pawns on the f-line, and maybe later there could be an e7-e5 in one move. In most of the games Black just plays e7-e6 on the next move and the game transposes to another line. Really not recommendable is this idea in connection with 7...♖b6. Black is just too far behind in development to do so. The following game is a perfect example of how White should deal with this plan.

Game 1
Stripunsky - Granda Zuniga
New York 1998

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗g5 ♗bd7

6...h6 7.♗xf6!

7.f4 ♖b6?!

7...e6 is of course the move, transposing to 6...e6 7.f4 ♗bd7.

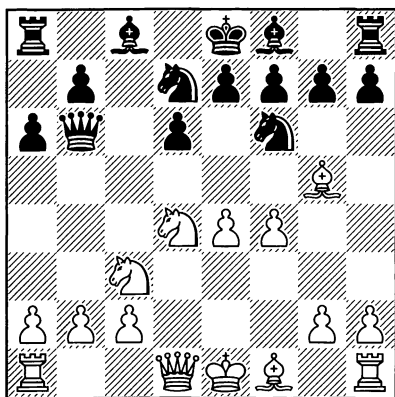
7...h6? 8.♙xf6 ♘xf6 9.e5 dxe5 10.fxe5 ♘d5 11.e6±

7...b5? also does not really work. After 8.♙xf6 ♘xf6 9.e5 b4 10.♘cb5! – Nunn. White has a strong position. Here are some lines:

10...♘e4 11.e6 ♗b6 12.exf7† ♘d8 13.♗f3 d5 14.0–0–0, axb5?! 15.♗xe4!+-

10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♙g4 (Nunn gives 11...axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.♗f3 ♙d7 14.♘e6+-) 12.♗d3± axb5 13.exf6 exf6 14.♗e4† ♗e7 15.♙xb5† ♙d7 16.♙xd7† ♘d7 17.♘e6!!+-

Let's return to 7... ♗b6?! .



8.♗d2 ♗xb2

Otherwise Black's play does not make a lot of sense.

9.♗b1 ♗a3 10.♙xf6!

White uses his lead in development by this immediate action.

10...gxf6

Forced. 10...♘xf6 11.e5 ♘g4 12.♘d5 is pretty hopeless for Black. 12...♗c5 (12...♗a7 13.♗b3 ♗xa2 14.♗c3 ♙d7 15.♗c7+- or 12...♗b8 13.♘c6 ♗xa2 14.♗d1±) 13.♘b3 ♗c6 14.♘a5 ♗c5 Now the weaker player could have won if he played 15.♘xb7+-, but respect for the grandmaster made him repeat moves, Bindrich - Zagrebely, Dresden 2000.

11.♘d5 ♗b8

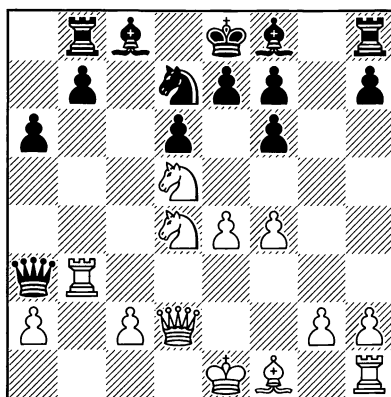
Other moves are no better, or maybe even worse.

11...♗xa2 12.♗b4 ♘d8 (12...b5 13.♘c7†

♘d8 was Zunker - Holfelder, Bruchkoebel 2002. Now 14.♘xa8 ♙b7 15.♙c4! wins.) 13.♗b3 ♗a1† 14.♘f2 e6 15.♗b1 ♗a2 16.♙c4 a5 17.♗c3 ♘c5 18.♘c6† bxc6 19.♗xf6† ♘e8 20.♘c7† ♘d7 21.♗xf7† ♙e7 22.♙xa2 1–0 Garbarino - Sabas, Buenos Aires 1982.

11...♗c5 12.♘b3 ♗c6 13.♘a5 ♗c5 14.♘xb7 ♗b8 15.♘xc5 ♗xb1† 16.♘f2 ♘xc5 17.♗a5+- 12.♗b3!

White needs to bring his pieces into action. Worse was 12.♘c7† ♘d8 13.♘xa6 bxa6 14.♘c6† ♘c7 15.♘xb8 ♘xb8 16.♙c4 ♘c6.



12...♗a4

After this there is not a lot to talk about. White is simply much better.

12...♗c5 13.♗c3 ♗a7 14.♙xa6!+- does not work, but 12...♗xa2!+ has been suggested, and is in fact the only way for Black to play on. Still, analysis assisted by a computer indicates that White has the advantage. 13.♙c4! is of course the move. Now we have:

a) 13...♗a1†? This only helps White. 14.♘f2 ♗xh1 White now has a winning combination with 15.♘c7† ♘d8 16.♗a5! b6 17.♘de6† fxe6 18.♘xe6† ♘e8 19.♗h5 mate.

b) 13...♘c5? 14.♗xb7! (14.0–0!? ♘xb3 15.♙xb3 ♗a3 16.♗f3, is also tempting, but winning the queen is more convincing.) 14...♗b1† 15.♗xb1 ♗xb1† 16.♘e2 ♗xh1 17.♗a5+-

c) 13...e6 14.♘c7† ♘d8 15.♗c3! (15.0–0 ♗a4! and it is not possible to find more than

equality for White. This shows the old truth that an advanced soldier behind enemy lines can do a lot of damage.) 15...♖c5 16.♜xb7 ♜b1† 17.♜xb1 ♜xb1† 18.♙e2 ♜xh1 19.♞a5 ♙d7 20.♗cb5! and the White attack crashes through.

d) 13...♞a4 14.♞c3 ♗c5 15.♗b6 ♞a2 16.0-0 ♗xe4 17.♞e1 ♗c5 18.♞b4 and the black queen is trapped.

13.♗xa6! e5!?

13...bxa6 14.♞c3!+ - Vitolinsh - Arakas, USSR 1978.

13...♞xa2 14.♞c3 e6 15.♗c7† ♙d8 16.♗c4 is of course not playable for Black. There is nothing that justifies the weakening of the king's position.

14.♞b4 ♞xa2

14...♞a5 15.♗b3 looks good for White. 15...♞xa2 16.♗b5 with a crushing attack.

15.♗b3 bxa6? 16.♞c3! 1-0

Black resigned. His queen is trapped after 16...♞a8 17.0-0 a5 18.♞b5 a4 19.♗c7† ♙d8 20.♗c1.

Another old sideline is 7...♗c6. It came to popularity after GM Shabalov played it. Funnily it was also GM Shabalov who started crushing this line.

Black wants to achieve a Rauzer-like set-up and make use of White's early f2-f4. In fact the early f4 gives White the chance to kick Black's knight on f6 with e4-e5. Since White has better development the tactics should go fine for him, and they do so. In the game below GM Adams shows fine technique and gains a great advantage. Only a silly blunder, which had nothing to do with the opening, cost him half a point.

Game 2

Adams - Anand

Linares 1997

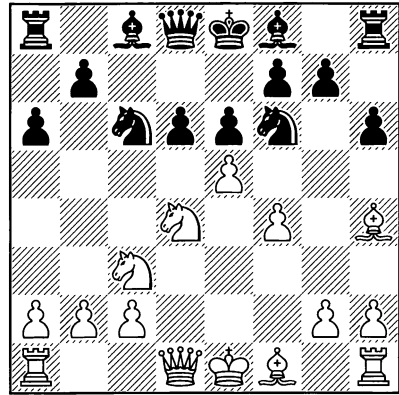
1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗c6

Usually in the Najdorf the ♗b8 is going to d7, compared to the Rauzer where Black sets up with, d6, ♗f6 and ♗c6.

8.e5!

Here Black wants to make use of the early f2-f4, so after the "normal" Rauzer move 8.♞d2 h6 9.♗h4 (9.♗xf6 ♞xf6 is not attractive for White either) 9...♗xe4 is very strong. But this is not a Rauzer, but a Najdorf, where White is prepared for an early e4-e5.

8...h6 9.♗h4



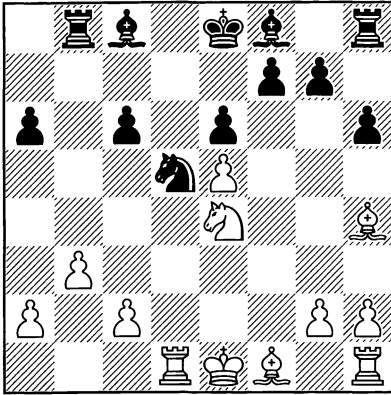
9...dxe5

9...♗xd4 keeps the pawn structure on the queenside intact, but Black has to commit his kingside with g7-g5. 10.♞xd4 (10.exf6?? falls into a nice trap: 10...♗f5! This was discovered by Adorjan. 11.fxg7 ♞xh4† 12.g3 ♗xg3 13.gxh8=♞ ♗e4† and notwithstanding his two queens, the white king will soon be checkmated.) 10...dxe5 11.♞xd8† ♙xd8 12.fxe5 g5 13.♗g3! ♗d7 14.0-0-0 ♗g7 15.♗e2 (for some reason this natural move is not in Kosten's book *Easy Guide to the Najdorf*) 15...♙e7 16.♗h5! (f7 is the weakest point in Black's territory) 16...♞f8 (16...♗xe5 does not work here. 17.♞he1 f6 18.♗xe5 fxe5 19.♞f1! ♗f6 20.♗e4 ♞f8 21.♞f2! and White is clearly better.) 17.♗e4 ♗xe5 18.♞he1 f5 19.♗c3 f4 20.♗f2 b6 21.♗xb6 ♗b7 22.♗c5† ♙f6 23.♞xe5 1-0 Luther - Senff, Cappelle la Grande 2001.

10.♗xc6 ♞xd1† 11.♞xd1 bxc6 12.fxe5 ♗d5

Also possible is 12...♗d7!? but Black still has a passive position. 13.♗e4 g5 14.♗g3 ♗g7 15.♗d6† ♙e7 16.♗c4 a5 17.h4. This is a very strong move: White wants to weaken the

g5-pawn and trade his passive rook. Now it is difficult for Black to develop his last pieces, as can be seen by the following lines: 17...a4 (17...♙a6 18.♘xa5 ♜hc8 19.♙xa6 ♜xa6 20.♘c4 ♜xa2 21.hxg5 hxg5 22.♞h5 ♞h8 23.♞xg5±) 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.♞xh8 ♙xh8 20.♙e2± 13.♘e4 ♞b8 14.b3



14.c4?! allows a tricky piece sacrifice: 14...♞xb2! 15.cxd5 ♙b4† 16.♘d2 exd5† 14...♙e7

14...g5?!. Making the check on b4 happen is not worth weakening the structure. 15.♙g3 ♙b4† 16.♙e2! and by threatening c2-c4 White obtained a big advantage in Brodsky - Rechel, Groningen 1993.

15.♙g3!

This move certainly secures an advantage for White. Black has too little space for his pieces. This is more important than just the usual good/bad bishop stuff. Worse is 15.♙xe7 ♙xe7, and with a weak pawn on e5, White can never be better.

15...0-0 16.♙e2

16.c4?!. White should be careful with pawn moves: 16...♘b4 17.♞d2 ♞d8 with counterplay. 16...a5

16...♘e3 hunting the g2-pawn is not good for Black: 17.♞d2 ♘g2† 18.♙f2 ♘h4 19.♘f6†! Without this move White would have nothing. 19...gxf6 20.♙xh4 ♙c5† 21.♙f3 fxe5 22.♙f6 and after ♙d3 and ♞g2 White has a dangerous attack.

17.c4 ♘b4 18.♞d2!

It is important to protect the a-pawn since it keeps Black's knight out of the game. Huzman gives: 18.0-0 ♘xa2 19.♞a1 ♘b4 20.♞xa5 ♘c2 and Black has good counterplay against the b3-pawn.

18...♞d8 19.♞f1!

Another brilliant move by Adams. The king stays in the centre to cover the important squares.

19...♞xd2 20.♙xd2 ♘a6

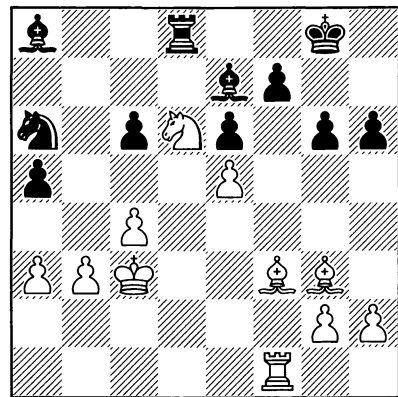
20...♘a2 Now this is different. The white king dominates the knight on b4 after: 21.♞a1 ♘b4 22.♞xa5 the position is ±.

21.♙h5

Forcing Black to weaken the kingside structure.

21...g6 22.♙f3 ♙b7 23.♙c3 ♞d8 24.♘d6 ♙a8 25.a3??

This spoils all the previous achievements. After protecting the knight on d6 once more, White's victory would have been only a question of time. 25.♞d1! was the right move.



25...f5!

Now Black has counterplay.

26.b4 g5 27.h3 ♙f8 28.c5 ♞b8

28...♙g7 29.♘c4 does not change much.

29.♙h5

29.♞a1 with the idea 30.♘c4 was recommended after the game.

29...♘c7 30.♙f3 ♘a6 31.♙h5 ♘c7 32.♙f3 ½-½

White could have played on, but probably he was frustrated with his 25th move.

Now we turn to the above-mentioned game from GM Shabalov. Instead of heading for an ending, as in the previous game, Black can burn his bridges and crack White's centre with 9...g5.

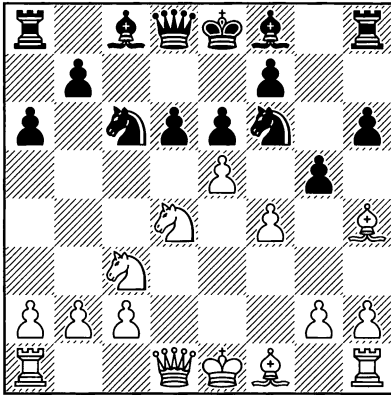
White has to play carefully and have some theoretical knowledge about the position. With the right move order White can prevent Black building up a strong centre. He has to take the d5 knight *before* he takes the one on c6. As soon as White castles the black king be under a strong attack.

Game 3

Shabalov - Browne

Las Vegas 1997

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 a6 6.♟g5 e6 7.f4 ♟c6 8.e5! h6 9.♟h4 g5



Black acts concretely against White's centre and the game becomes very tactical. Since White has better development, tactics should work in his favour.

10.fxg5 ♟d5

10...♟h7 Knights need to be placed in the centre! 11.♟xc6 bxc6 12.exd6 with advantage for White.

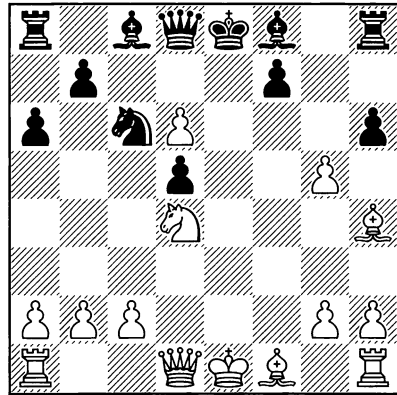
Of course not 10...hxg5?? 11.♟xc6 bxc6 12.♟xg5 and Black loses a piece.

11.♟xd5

It is important to take first on d5 and later on c6, so that Black does not have the option to take with a later c-pawn on d5.

11...exd5 12.exd6

The best. Other moves like e5-e6 have been tried, but without much success.



12...♟xd6

12...♟xd6 13.♟xc6 bxc6 14.♟d4 White plays this move because he wants to protect his bishop on h4 and then play g5-g6. 14...♟e7† 15.♟e2 ♟e5 16.♟a4 ♟b8 17.g6 (when White achieves this Black is usually busted) 17...♟d6 (17...♟b4†. This was once recommended as equalising, but I think White is still better. 18.♟xb4 ♟xb4 19.gxf7† ♟xf7 20.0-0† ♟g7 21.♟f2 ♟xb2 22.♟d3 After lots of exchanges Black still has problems, his pieces are not coordinated. A possible line could be: 22...♟f8 23.♟ae1 ♟c3 24.♟e7† ♟g8 25.♟c5 ♟xf1† 26.♟xf1 ♟g4 27.♟c7 ♟xa2 28.♟xc6 ♟d1 29.♟e3 ♟a3 30.♟xa6 ♟xa6 31.♟xa6 ♟xc2 32.♟xh6 and good technique should bring White the full point.) 18.gxf7† ♟f8 19.♟f2 ♟xb2 20.0-0 ♟h7 21.♟h1 ♟xf7 22.♟d4 With a decisive attack in McDonald - Danner, Budapest 1996.

Instead of 16...♟b8, there is also the option of 16...♟d6. This is met by a surprisingly strong move:

17.♟g3! Now we have the following options:

a) 17...♙g3† 18.hxg3 ♖xg3† 19.♔f1 Both c6 and h6 are hanging, besides Black's king is in danger. White is clearly better.

b) 17...♙d7 18.gxh6 with advantage for White, was Luther's recommendation. In practice another move turned out to be quite poisonous. 18.♖h4 ♖b8 19.0-0 ♙g3 (19...♗xb2 20.g6 fxg6 21.♙xe5 ♖xe5 22.♙xa6±) 20.hxg3 ♖e5 (20...♖c5+ is the only move according to Fritz, but White has a sensational attack after 21.♔h2! ♖xc2 [21...♖e3 22.♗ae1 ♖xg5 is objectively better, but the endgame after 23.♙g4† ♔d8 24.♙xd7 ♖xh4† 25.gxh4 ♔xd7 26.♗xf7† ♔d6± is still a pawn up for White - not a bad result of the opening!]) 22.♗ae1 and Black has no defence: 22...♙e6 23.gxh6 ♔d7 24.♙g4 f5 25.♖f6+) 21.g6! fxg6 (Black has various chances to go into endgames as this one: 21...♖e3† 22.♔h2 0-0 23.♗xf7 ♗xf7 24.gxf7† ♔xf7 25.♗f1† ♔g8 26.♗f6 ♖g5 27.b3 Objectively Black is just lost, but in practice he might score between 10 and 20%.) 22.♗ae1± The outcome of the opening is clearly in White's favour. Without having sacrificed anything she has a strong attack against the completely naked black king, and many weak black pawns to attack. Dworakowska - Areshchenko, Gibraltar, 2005.

c) 17...0-0!? is an interesting attempt of improving. White should probably play 18.gxh6 (18.0-0-0 ♖b8 does not seem appealing.) 18...♙g3† 19.hxg3 ♖xg3† 20.♔f1 ♙f5 21.♖d4 Now Black played 21...♗ae8?, which should have lost in one move to 22.♙g4!!, in Dworakowska - Calotescu, Gothenburg 2005. Better is 21...♔h7 when White is better after for example 22.♙d3 ♙xd3† 23.♖xd3† ♖xd3† 24.cxd3±.

13.♖e2†

The point of White's play. White gets the clearly better game now.

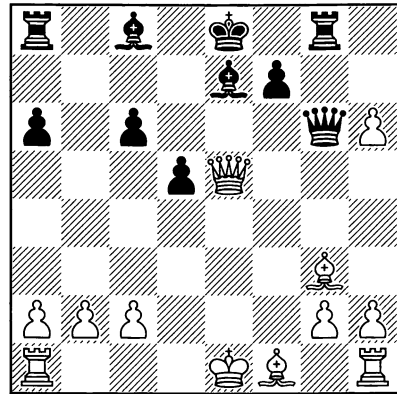
13...♙e7 14.♔xc6

Of course not 14.0-0-0?? ♖f4†+.

14...bxc6 15.♙g3! ♖g6

15...♖b4† 16.c3 and, thanks to ♖e2, the b2-pawn is protected.

16.♖e5! ♗g8 17.gxh6!



Finally! White secures his extra pawn.

17...♖xc2

17...♙f5!? 18.♙e2! ♙xc2 19.0-0 and with his king in the centre Black is helpless against all the threats.

17...♖xh6 With this move Black is just accepting to play a pawn down. 18.♙f4 ♖g6 (18...♖e6 19.♖xe6 ♙xe6 20.g3 was seen in Luther -Abreu, Havana 2001. Black had no compensation for the pawn.) 19.0-0-0± With a safe king and an extra pawn White has a clear advantage.

18.♙e2 ♗g5

Desperation! 18...♖g6 19.♙h4! is very uncomfortable for Black.

19.♖h8†! ♔d7 20.♖c3+

This finishes all Black's hopes.

20...♖xc3†

20...♖e4 21.0-0 ♖xe2 22.♗ae1 and the various threats cannot be parried anymore.

21.bxc3 ♙f6 22.0-0

After this move everything is clear. The passed pawn on h6 decides the game.

22...♙xc3 23.♗xf7† ♔e6 24.♗af1 ♙d7 25.♙h4 ♗g6 26.♙h5

1-0

Now after 26...♗xh6 27.♙g4† White wins a piece, so Black resigned.

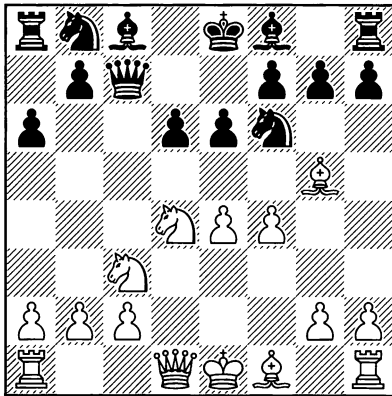
The early ♖c7 is another sideline. Black wants to play b7-b5 without allowing e4-e5. If White

does not react to this plan and slowly develops, Black will kick White's knight on c3 by playing b7-b5-b4. Black is doing fine if White has to move this knight to e2 or a4. There are many tactical lines but I cannot recommend them. Basically, if White gets the chance to take on f6 and Black has to recapture with the g-pawn White should do it. The arising position is more common in the Rauzer Defence, so I advise the reader to study this chapter as well.

Game 4
Khalifman - Lautier
 Moscow 2001

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♖c7

With this move Black wants to trick White in his set-up. If he goes for ♗d1-f3 and castling queenside Black quickly plays b7-b5-b4. Since at this early stage of the game there is no ♘d5 - sac possible the c3-knight has to be moved backwards, which is a big concession.



8.♙xf6

On the other hand there is the chance to break Black's pawn chain, since Black has not played either ♗b8-d7 or ♙f8-e7. In my opinion, this is the most principled way to treat the ♖c7-line.

8.♖f3 is often played in this position. 8...b5 (Black decides not to enter one of the main lines by playing 8...♗bd7 or ♙e7.) 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.e5 d5 (10...♙b7 11.♖h5 with the idea of ♗d4xe6

and White is better here.) 11.exf6 b4 12.♗xd5 exd5 13.0-0-0 ♙b7 and, after studying this position for some time, I came to the conclusion that White should not risk this piece sacrifice.

8...gxf6 9.♖d2

9.♙e2 is another way of setting up the pieces for White. Generally I do not think the white king belongs on the kingside. 9...♗c6 10.♗b3 b5 11.0-0 ♙b7 and Black will castle queenside and aim for the standard break d6-d5.

9...b5

Pushing the b-pawn is in the spirit of the variation. The drawback is that the black king will never find a safe spot on the queenside.

9...♗c6 10.0-0-0 ♙d7 11.♗b1 h5 12.♙c4 0-0-0 13.♗xc6 ♖xc6 14.♙b3 ♗b8 15.♗hf1± was seen in Topalov - Anand, Dortmund 1997.

10.♙d3

10.a3 ♙b7 11.♙e2 with the idea of castling kingside is another option, but Black can even stop this plan by playing ♖c7-b6.

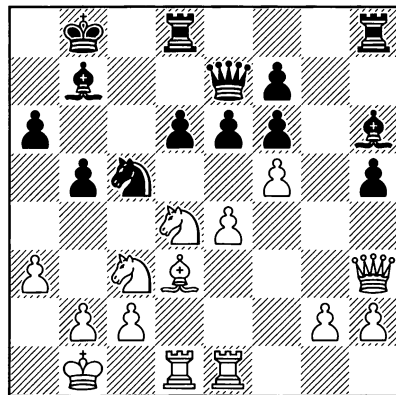
10...♙b7 11.0-0-0 ♗d7

Black cleverly keeps the knight because it will be strongly placed on c5. After 11...♗c6 12.♗xc6 White is better.

12.♗he1 0-0-0 13.f5 ♗c5 14.a3

White has to secure the c3-square for his knight.

14...♗b8 15.♗b1 h5 16.♖e3 ♙h6 17.♖h3 ♖e7



18.♖f3

½-½

Here the players agreed a draw. In my opinion White could have continued the game. Instead of 18. ♖f3 I prefer:

a) 18. b4 OK, it is not everybody's taste to open one's king, but getting rid of the c5 knight is worth it. 18... ♗xd3 19. ♖xd3 ♖de8 20. ♖ed1 with pressure. Or:

b) 18. ♗e2 Hitting on h5. 18... e5 (18... ♗xe4? 19. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 20. ♗f3 and White wins) 19. ♗b3 ♗xe4 20. ♗d5 ♗xd5 21. ♖xd5 and White has good compensation. He has play on the light squares and against Black's king.

Great players have their own openings is an old saying which is difficult to fulfil in our time, since most of the sensible (and even most of the stupid) moves from the starting position have been played already. However GM Polugayevsky invented 7...b5, played it and published a lot of analysis on it, so this system took his name: the Polugayevsky Variation. The idea is to kick the c3 knight as early as possible. White is forced to take counter measures and the game develops in a very tactical way. What was a tremendous workload back in the 70s and 80s can now be done quickly with a computer program. Nevertheless the work of GM Polugayevsky will always be remembered.

Game 5

Leko - Ghaem Maghami

Yerevan 2001

1. e4 c5 2. ♗f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♗c3 a6 6. ♗g5 e6 7. f4 b5

This is the aggressive move that was played and analysed deeply by the Russian GM Lev Polugayevsky.

8. e5

The only way to deal with b7-b5 successfully. Otherwise Black just manages to kick White's knight with b5-b4.

8... dxe5

8... h6? (this move does not promise Black much here) 9. ♗h4 g5 10. fxe5 ♗h7 11. ♖h5 hxe5 12. ♗g3 ♗g7 13. 0-0-0 and White had

a big advantage in Kasparov - Ehlvest, Baku 1978.

9. fxe5 ♖c7

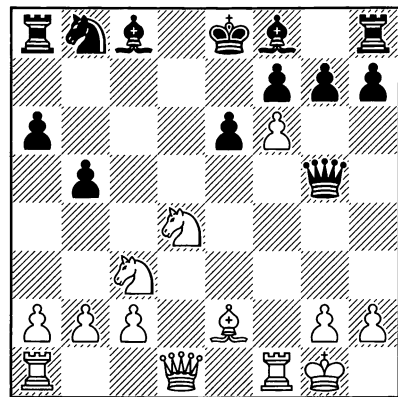
The idea behind Black's play. He does not lose material, but White gains a lot of time.

10. exf6

There is also 10. ♖e2 but it is not in the spirit of White's set-up.

10... ♖e5† 11. ♗e2 ♖xg5 12. 0-0

12. ♖d3 is considered as the main alternative here. Bringing the white king out of the line of fire is, in my opinion, the better option.



12... ♖a7

Black's defence is based on this idea: the rook goes to d7.

12... ♖e5 was for a long time considered the main line, but is now less popular in practice. It is considered in the next game.

Not the natural 12... ♗b7? 13. ♗f3 when Black's position cannot be saved:

a) 13... ♗xf3 14. ♖xf3 ♖a7 (14... ♗c5 15. ♖xa8 as in Bisset - Martinez, e-mail 1994 offers Black no compensation) 15. ♖ad1 ♖e5 16. ♖fe1 ♖xf6 17. ♖g3 ♗d7 18. ♗d5 ♖d8 19. ♗c6 and White wins.

b) 13... ♖e3† 14. ♗h1 ♗xf3 15. ♖xf3 ♖e5 16. ♖d2! ♗d6 17. g4 b4 18. ♗f5!! After this Black is done for. 18... ♗c7 19. ♖e1 ♖xh2† 20. ♖xh2 ♗xh2 21. fxe7 ♖g8 22. ♗d5 ♗d7 23. ♗xh2 ♗d8 24. ♗de7 1-0, Stripunsky - Jaracz, Poland 1995.

c) 13... ♖a7 14. ♗xe6!! An absolute stunner.

14...fxe6 (14...♖e3† 15.♔h1 fxe6 16.fxg7! and it is the end of the world) 15.f7† ♕e7 16.♚d4 The key move. At best Black will be an exchange down with a ruined position. 16...♔xf7 17.♙xb7† ♕e8 18.♗e4 ♖xb7 19.♗xg5 ♗d7 20.♚e5 1–0, Kaehmann - Hamburg, Ruhrgebiet 1999.

13.♚d3 ♗d7 14.♗e4 ♚e5

14...♚d5?! is worse than the text. The game Sulskis – Stoczek, Isle of Man 2002 went as follows: 15.c3 ♗c6 16.♗xc6 ♚xc6 17.♚e3 ♙b7 18.♙f3 and Black still could not free his position from White's attack.

15.♗f3!

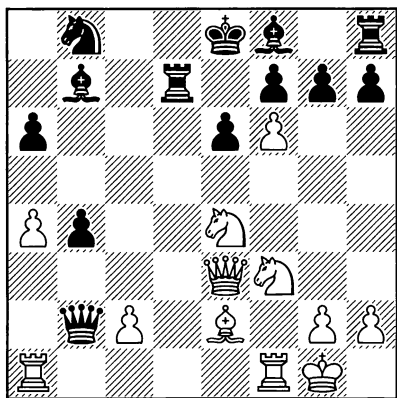
15.c3?! ♙b7 16.♙f3 ♙xe4 17.♙xe4 gxf6 and White does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

15...♚xb2

As in many tactical lines Black is forced to take some material.

After 15...♚c7 16.♚e3 ♙b7 17.c4 ♙xe4 18.♚xe4 gxf6 19.cxb5 ♚b6† 20.♔h1 axb5 21.a4!. White simply has a great attack for no risk at all. The game Vasquez – Arancibia, Maipu 2003 was soon 1–0.

16.♚e3 ♙b7 17.a4 b4



After 17...♚b4 Black could not solve all his problems following 18.c4 ♙xe4 19.♚xe4 ♚c5† 20.♔h1 b4 21.♚f4 ♙d6 (a serious commitment, but 21...♗c6 22.♗ad1 ♚f5 23.♚e3 ♖xd1 24.♖xd1 ♚xf6 25.♚b6 is no fun either) 22.fxg7 ♖g8 23.♚h6 ♙e5 24.♚xh7 ♖xg7 25.♚h8† and

soon 1–0 in Rodriguez Cespedes - Stangl, Biel 1988.

17...♙xe4 does not solve Black's problems. 18.♚xe4 ♙c5† 19.♔h1 gxf6 20.axb5 and White wins back the material and keeps a clear advantage.

18.♖ab1

18.c3 This move is an old recommendation. The text is better. 18...♙xe4 19.♚xe4 gxf6 and the best White can get is a repetition by following Black's queen with his rooks.

18...♚xc2

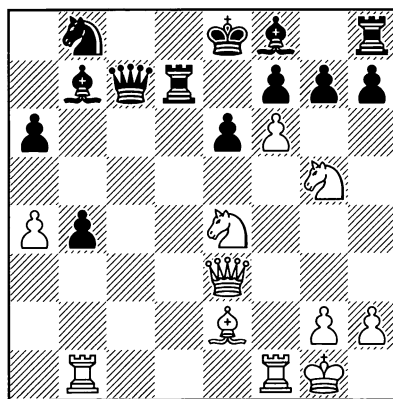
18...♚a3 19.c3 Only now does White play this move. Black cannot finish his development and is in trouble.

19.♗fg5! ♚c7

Black is in serious trouble as any computer shows. Nowadays any program can analyse this tactical position far better than any human.

19...h6!? does not help either. 20.♖bc1 ♚xc1 21.♖xc1 hxg5 22.♚g3 ♗c6 23.♙xa6 and White wins.

19...g6 20.♖fc1 ♚a2 21.♙c4 and White wins again...



20.♖xb4!

Opening up the position, after this blow there is no longer a defence.

20...♙xe4 21.♗xe4 ♙xb4

Allowing a nice finish.

22.fxg7 ♖g8 23.♗f6† ♔d8 24.♗xg8 ♙c5 25.♗f6! ♙xe3† 26.♔h1 ♔c8 27.♗xd7

1–0

In the next game we shall continue analysing the Polugayevsky Variation. Compared to a line like 7...Nbd7 it might seem less relevant. But first of all many club players really like to play this way, as there is something macho about it. Secondly, the knowledge necessary for playing an opening is not necessarily always centered around the critical lines.

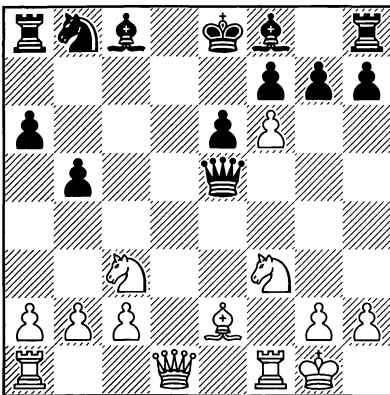
Game 6

Wosch - Nordin

e-mail 2001

Sometimes a relatively weak player (here 2000 elo) plays at the level of a grandmaster for the entire length of a game. This is the case with this wonderful game. Some might think that this is because of computer assistance, as it is an e-mail game, but looking this game over with my own computer does not suggest this at all. On the contrary!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 b5 8.e5 dxe5 9.fxg5 ♖c7 10.exf6 ♖e5† 11.♗e2 ♖xg5 12.0-0 ♖e5 13.♗f3



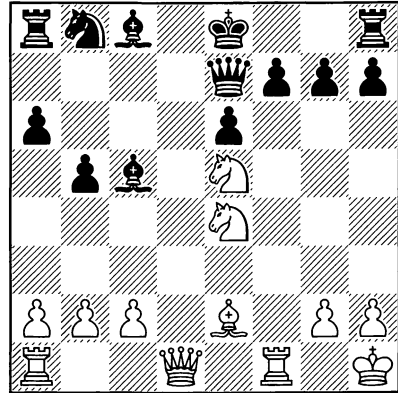
13...♗c5†

13...♖xf6 14.♗e4 ♖xb2 15.♗fg5 and, with most of his pieces in the starting position, Black is helpless against White's various threats.

13...♖e3† 14.♗h1 ♗d7 15.♗e1 ♖a7 16.fxg7 ♗xg7 17.♖d6 was played in a blindfold rapid game between Leko and Ivanchuk. It seems that White still has some pressure here.

14.♗h1 ♖xf6 15.♗e4 ♖e7 16.♗e5!

The most dangerous. 16.♗fg5 f5! has proven to be nothing. 17.♗h5† g6 18.♗xh7 ♗f7! and Black was OK in several games.



16...f5?

Now this does not work. 16...0-0 is the only move. Now White should play 17.♗xf7! and then we have:

a) 17...♗c6? 18.♗h5!± is not good for Black. I have analysed the following line 18...♗d4 19.c3 ♗e5 20.♖g4! with a winning attack. 20...♗d7 21.♗h6† ♗h8 22.♗f7 ♗xf7 23.♗xf7† ♗g8 24.♗h6† ♗h8 25.♗g5 g6 26.♗f1! ♗f8 27.♗hf7† ♗g8 28.♖h4 and Black has no defence.

b) 17...♗b7!± is an alternative. 18.♗d3. Nunn's suggestion. (18.♗xc5 ♖xc5 19.♖d6 ♖xd6 20.♗d6 ♗xf1† 21.♗xf1 ♗d5= was played in Bartoli - Innorta, e-mail 1998) 18...♗xf7 19.♗xf7 ♖xf7 (19...♗xf7 20.♖h5†±) 20.♗xc5 ♗d5 21.♗e4 ♖g6 22.♖e2 and I think White has good chances for achieving an advantage here. He has ideas of ♗e4-c3 and a2-a4, creating further weaknesses in the Black camp.

c) 17...♗xf7 18.♗xf7 ♗xf7 19.♗h5† ♗g8 (19...g6 20.♗xc5 ♗a7 21.♗e4 ♗g7 22.♗f3 ♗d7 23.♖e1± Kover - De Almeida, corr. 1980.) 20.♗xc5 Now we have the following options:

c1) 20...♖xc5 21.♖d8† 1-0. Lukas - Feist, corr. 1997. Black probably overlooked 21...♖f8 22.♗f7†!+.

c2) 20...♗c6 21.♖f3 ♗d7 22.♗xd7 ♖xd7 23.♗d1± Schneider - Riedmueller, corr. 1996.

c3) 20...♠d7? 21.♠xe6!± Beliavsky - Polugaevsky, Moscow 1979.

c4) 20...♠a7 21.♠d3! A new idea, but not a very surprising one, as the alternatives are less encouraging. (21.♠e4 ♠d7 22.♠e2 ♠c6 23.c3 ♠e5 24.♠f1 ♠b7= Denaro - Bosco, corr. 1990, and 21.♠d4 ♠c7! 22.♠e4 ♠xc2 23.♠f1 ♠d7!± Mauro - Soranzo, corr. 1990.) 21...♠c6 22.♠f3 ♠d4 (22...♠b7? 23.♠g1! ♠a8 24.♠c5±) And now White has many ways to proceed. 23.♠e4± is probably easiest. Of course Black can fight for a draw in such an endgame, he is only slightly worse, but certainly White would accept this position from the opening.

17.♠h5† g6 18.♠xg6 hxg6 19.♠xg6† ♠f8 20.♠xc5 ♠h6!

The alternatives are not cheerful. 20...♠g7 is met strongly with 21.♠xe6†! ♠xe6 (No better fate is to be found after 21...♠xg6 22.♠f4†! [22.♠xf5?! ♠xf5 23.♠d3† ♠xe6 24.♠e1† ♠f7 25.♠xe7† ♠xe7 26.♠e4† ♠e6 27.♠xa8±] 22...♠g7 [22...♠h6 23.♠h5†+] 23.♠f3!). This manoeuvre is not that easy to find, but very logical. Black has no way to bring his pieces to the defence of the king. 23...♠e5 [23...♠d7 24.♠d3 ♠c6 25.♠c3 ♠d7 26.♠f3+] 24.♠g3† ♠f6 25.♠f3 ♠h6 26.♠h5† ♠e6 [26...♠xh5 27.♠xh5 and Black has no way to survive the attack] 27.♠d1 and the black king cannot escape.) 22.♠xf5 ♠h4 (22...♠xf5 23.♠xf5 ♠h4 24.♠d6! transposes) 23.♠d6 ♠xf5 24.♠xf5 ♠e8 25.♠af1 ♠a7 26.♠f5f4 ♠d8 27.♠c5 ♠c7 28.♠h5 1-0. Uboldi - Lalanne, San Antonio de Padua 2001.

20...♠xc5 21.♠d8† ♠g7 22.♠g5 with a winning attack. A crucial line is 22...♠xh2† 23.♠xh2 ♠e5† 24.♠g1 ♠f6 25.♠g3 ♠xg6 26.♠c3†+.

21.♠h5

Probably the best move.

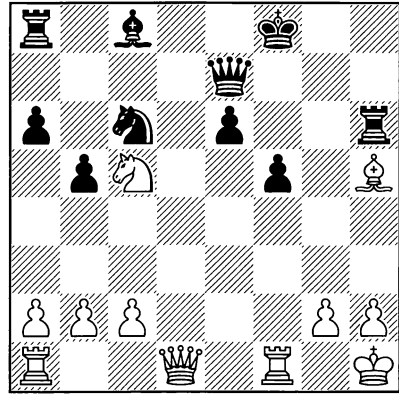
21.♠g4!? ♠xc5 22.♠g5 ♠xg6 23.♠xg6 ♠a7∞

21.♠xe6† ♠xe6 22.♠xf5 ♠f7 looks unclear to me.

21...♠c6!

21...♠xc5? 22.♠d8† ♠g7 23.♠f3 ♠xh5 24.♠g3† ♠f7 25.♠g8† ♠e7 26.♠g7† ♠f6 (26...♠d6 27.♠f8† ♠d5 28.♠d1† and White

wins the queen.) 27.♠f7† ♠e5 28.♠g3† ♠d5 29.♠d1† and it is all over.



22.b4!

This move makes a lot of sense: White sacrifices his extra pawn to derail the knight. If this or the alternative 22.♠e4!? is stronger I do not know. The position needs a lot of independent analysis before anything can be said with certainty. I have tried to give some variations here that I believe are critical, however they cannot be said to be conclusive in any way.

22...♠b7 (22...e5!? is the computer's first choice, but after 23.g4!? [Seems strange, but it works!] 23...♠d4 24.♠d2 ♠g7 25.c3 ♠b7 26.♠ae1! White has a very strong attack) 23.♠g4!? ♠d4 (23...♠d8 24.♠g3 ♠e5 25.♠f4 ♠g7 26.♠ae1 ♠xh5 27.♠xe5 ♠h6 28.♠fe1±) This position is probably critical. I have tried to outline the possibilities here, but cannot give full conclusions.

a) 24.♠ad1!? ♠xc2 25.♠d3 ♠h7 (25...♠d5 26.♠g3 ♠h7 27.♠g5 ♠d7 28.♠h3! ♠h7 29.♠g6 ♠xg6 30.♠xg6 ♠xg6 31.♠xg6±) 26.♠g5 ♠g8 27.♠h4 ♠g7 28.♠g3 ♠f8=

b) 24.c3? ♠c2 25.♠ad1 ♠e3 26.♠f4 ♠xh5 27.♠xe3 ♠h4+

c) 24.♠g3! ♠f6 25.♠f4 e5 26.♠f2± The following analysis might be correct, but chances are that they are a bit too long to be bulletproof. 26...f4 27.c3 ♠e6 28.♠ad1 ♠d8 29.♠b6 ♠xd1 30.♠xd1 ♠xg2† Far from the only option here. 31.♠xg2 ♠xh2† 32.♠g1!? (32.♠xh2 ♠h4†=)

32...♞d2 33.♙b3 ♖h4 34.♞f3 ♗h3 35.♗b8†
 ♘e7 36.♗b7† ♘f8 37.♘e2 ♗g4† 38.♘f2 ♗h4†
 39.♘f1 ♞xb2 40.♞d3± Of course all of this is
 not that clear, and improvements can probably
 be found for both players.

22...♘xb4?

After this I cannot find a good position
 anywhere for Black. 22...a5! looks stronger.
 23.♙f3 ♗c7 24.h3 axb4 25.♗d2 ♞g6 (25...♘g7
 26.c3 looks dangerous) 26.♘d3±
 23.♙f3 ♗c7 24.h3 ♘c6 25.a4! bxa4

Also after 25...b4 26.♗d2 Black has no easy
 choice. 26...♞g6 (26...♘g7 27.c3±) 27.♘d3
 ♙b7 28.♘xb4±

26.♗d2 ♘g7

It is close to being over for Black. The
 following line clearly shows the potential in
 White's position. 26...♞g6 27.♙h5 ♞g7 28.♗h6
 ♗e7 29.♞ae1! ♘g8 30.♘xe6 ♙xe6 31.♞xe6+-
 27.♞xa4 e5

27...♞a7 28.♞h4! loses for Black as well, but it
 might have taken a few extra moves. 28...♞xh4
 29.♗g5† ♘f7 30.♗xh4 and the black king is
 simply too fragile. One line could be 30...♘e5
 31.♗h7† ♘f8 32.♗h6† ♘e7 33.♗g5† ♘f8
 34.♗f6† ♘f7 35.♘xe6† ♙xe6 36.♗xe6 ♗xc2
 37.♙d5+-.

28.♞h4 ♞g6

28...♞xh4 29.♗g5† ♘f8 30.♗f6†! ♗f7
 31.♗xh4 and everything is going wrong for
 Black.

29.♙h5

Black resigned. Probably a bit early, but after
 29...♗d6 30.♘d3 ♗f6 31.♙xg6 ♗xh4 32.♙xf5
 White has a very strong attack and an extra
 pawn.

1-0

For a long time the set-up with 10.g4 was
 considered as the main variation against the main
 line with 7...♙e7. There is still nothing wrong
 with it and maybe it will once again become
 the main line in the future. However, right now
 10.♙d3 enjoys greater popularity. This will be
 discussed in another game. Most of the games
 in the 10.g4 line are very old. When 13.f5 was
 discovered for many years the line saw a revival

and much analysis was published. Seeing it from
 today's point of view I have to say that the line
 still has lots of resources for both sides.

Game 7

Luther - Efimenko

Ohrid 2001

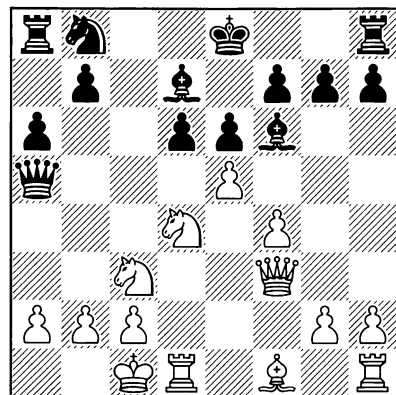
In this game I give a summary of older lines,
 which have gone out of fashion. Like anything
 old, there may one day be a revival.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3
 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♙e7

7...♙d7 is an interesting concept. Black wants
 to put his knight on c6, after which the position
 has a more Rauzer-like character. 8.♗e2 White
 takes the chance to place the queen on e2. In
 the Rauzer the queen is less efficient on d2.
 8...♘c6 9.0-0-0 ♘xd4 (9...♗c7 10.♙xf6 gxf6
 11.♘b1 gives White a typical position where he
 is slightly better) 10.♞xd4 ♗a5 (10...♗b6 This
 does not give Black equality either. 11.♗d2 ♙c6
 This was played in Najditsch – Nakamura, Wijk
 aan Zee 2004. Now 12.♙xf6 gxf6 13.♙c4!± and
 a future f4-f5 will cause Black a lot of problems.)
 11.♗d2 ♙c6 12.f5 e5 13.♙xf6 exd4 14.♙xd4 b5
 15.♗e3 with a big advantage for White in Lastin
 – Cvitan, Moscow 2001.

8.♗f3 ♗c7

8...♗a5?! This line has recently been refuted
 by Radjabov. 9.0-0-0 ♙d7 10.♙xf6! (the older
 move 10.e5 does not give White anything)
 10...♙xf6 11.e5!



Now the threat of ♖xb7 causes Black trouble. 11...dxe5 12.fxe5 ♔g5† 13.♗b1 ♘c6 14.♘e4 ♘xe5 15.♘d6† ♗e7 16.♖b3 ♖a4? (16...♗hb8!?) 17.♖b6 ♗hc8 18.♘xc8† and in the game Radjabov – Dominguez, Tripoli (2) 2004, White won within a few moves.

“14...♖xe5?! only opens up Black’s king. 15.♘f5 exf5 16.♘g5 ♖e7 17.♔c4!” These were Thomas’ words and moves in the first edition. Dominguez later recommended snapping the e-pawn with the queen in *Chess Informant*, claiming an edge for Black, ignoring Thomas’ idea on the 17th move. Practice has shown that White is slightly better after: 17...♖xg5! (17...♘e5 18.♔xf7† and Black is in trouble. 17...0–0 18.♖h5 h6 19.♘xf7! is even worse.) 18.♗he1† (18.♔xf7† ♗xf7 19.♗xd7† ♘e7! and Black defends) 18...♔e6 (18...♗d8 19.♖d5 ♘b8 20.♖xb7 and White wins) 19.♔xe6 0–0! (There is no choice. Black would face a lot of suffering in the endgame after 19...fxe6 20.♗xe6† ♗f8 [20...♘e7 21.♗de1±] 21.♗d7 ♗e8 [21...♘e7 22.♗xe7 ♖xe7 23.♗xe7 ♗xe7 24.♖xb7† ♗f6 25.c4±] 22.h4 ♗xe6 23.hxg5 ♗e1† 24.♗d1 ♗xd1† 25.♖xd1†) 20.♖xf5 (20.♔xf5!±) 20...♖xf5 21.♔xf5± White is a little better in the endgame, as he is better developed and has bishop against knight. This is maybe not enough to win objectively, but as far as the opening goes, it has been a disaster for Black. This position holds no chances for a win, and the draw is not as close as it would have been if he had played a passive variation of the Petroff. 21...♗fe8 So far went Aagaard - Schacher, Arco 2005. Now I prefer 22.♔e4!±.

It should be mentioned that after the alternative 16...♖f6 White again should reply 17.♔c4! (nr. 6 on Fritz 8’s list of recommendations). Black should transpose by taking the knight. Alternatives such as 17...♘e5 are met very violently indeed. 18.♔xf7†! ♖xf7 (18...♔xf7 19.♗he1† ♘e5 20.♗xd7!±) 19.♖xb7 ♔c6 20.♘xf7± White has an extra pawn in the endgame.

9.0–0–0 ♘bd7

9...0–0 is an old sideline. Now White should play 10.g4. (This move seems to me more in the spirit of the position. 10.♔d3 ♘c6 11.♘xc6

bxc6 12.♖g3 was played in Unzicker – Fischer, Buenos Aires 1960, after 12...e5 Black could have achieved a nice game.) 10...♘c6 11.♔h4! (of course White keeps this bishop now) 11...♘xd4 12.♗xd4 b5 13.g5 and White later won, Hector – Evertsson, Stockholm 1999.

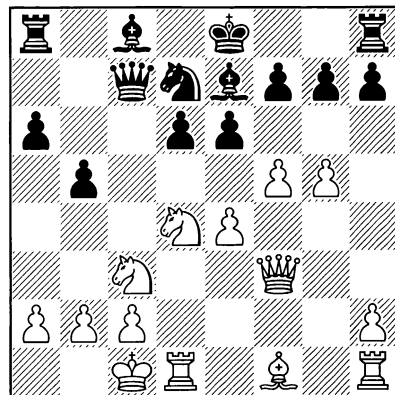
10.g4 b5 11.♔xf6 ♘xf6

11...♔xf6 12.g5 (12.♔xb5 0–0 [12...axb5? is wrong. 13.♘dx5 ♖b8 14.♘d6† ♗f8 15.e5 and White is winning.] 13.♔xd7 ♔xd7 Black has fine compensation for the pawn.) 12...♔xd4 (12...♔e7 transposes to the main line) 13.♗xd4 0–0 14.♔h3. White was better in Luther – Ardeleanu, Linares 1998.

11...gxf6 is another option here. Since White has played g2–g4 it is not so easy for him to attack e6. 12.f5 ♘e5 13.♖g3 (this is better than the more common 13.♖h3) 13...♔d7 14.♔h3 ♘c6 15.♘xc6 ♔xc6 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.g5 and White was much better in Guseinov – Makoll, Turkey 2004.

12.g5 ♘d7 13.f5

Here many moves have been tried. For example: a2–a3, ♔f1–h3, h2–h4, etc. I think only the text offers White attacking chances.

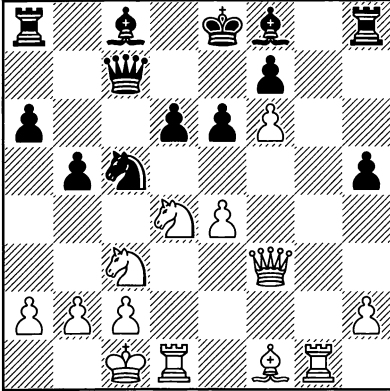


13...♘c5

13...♔xg5† Taking this pawn is the principled reaction. 14.♗b1 ♘e5 15.♖h5 ♔f6! (This move is better than the more common moves 15...♖e7 and 15...♖d8: 15...♖d8 16.h4! ♔f6 17.fxe6 0–0 18.♔h3. White was better in Luther – Vink, Wijk aan Zee 2001.) 16.♘xe6 (16.fxe6

Leaving the bishop c8 alive later causes White some problems. 16...g6 17.♘d5 ♖d8 18.exf7† (♙xf7 and suddenly White's queen is in trouble.) 16...♙xe6 17.fxe6 and the position needs further investigation.

14.f6 gxf6 15.gxf6 ♙f8 16.♙g1 h5



17.♙e1!

This move was found by GM Peter Enders. While working on the Fritz opening book I entered this move as a recommendation for the computer program. Anyway, some time later I had the chance to play this move in a tournament game.

17.a3 is another possible move, but I prefer the text.

17.♙g7 This funny exchange sacrifice was played a couple of times in the late 80s and early 90s. White had some nice victories but today's computer analysis proved it is incorrect.

17...♙d7

17...b4 does not work here. 18.♘d5! This is the main idea behind 17.♙e1.

17...♙b7?! 18.♙h3 0-0-0 19.♘d5 with a strong initiative.

18.♙b1

A useful waiting move. White wants to see where Black's king is going before committing himself to one specific line of action.

18...0-0-0?!

This must be wrong since now White is in control of the game. 18...b4 was called for. 19.♘ce2. There is no need for ♘d5 here as

Black cannot bring his bishop to b7 anymore. White is better.

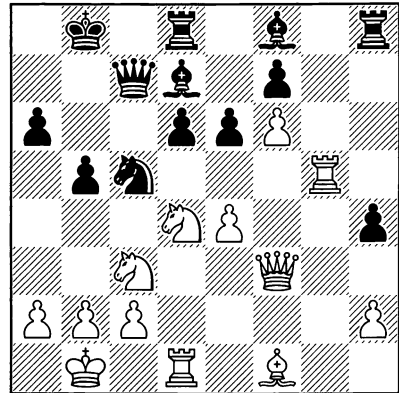
19.♙g5

Not every game is won by a great attack. White just wants to collect the h-pawn.

19...h4 20.♙d1!?

The rook has done its job on e1 and now defending the ♘d4 is necessary to avoid counterplay.

20...♙b8



21.a3±

Taking the last resource (b5-b4) out of Black's play.

21...♙b6 22.♙h5!

Finally the h-pawn is lost.

22...♙h6

Black wants to bring his passive bishop into the game, but there is no way it will reach a comfortable square.

23.♙xh4 ♙g5 24.♙g4 ♙h4?!

This is not leading anywhere. 24...♙h6 was better.

25.♙g2

Preparing e4-e5.

25...♙a7 26.♙g7 ♙df8 27.e5!

Now it comes. Black is lost.

27...d5 28.♙f4

The conclusion comes from the other side. ♙h4 is trapped.

28...♘a4 29.♘a2!

Preventing any counterplay!

29...♙h5 30.♙f3 ♙hh8 31.♙e2 ♙a5

The last try.

32.♖g4 ♗e1 33.♘b3

Finally Black's bishop is lost.

1-0

Recently a friend asked me what I recommend against the Gelfand-line. I was surprised but I knew which line he meant. GM Boris Gelfand has played many famous games with the Najdorf Defence and his usual set-up against 6.♗g5 involves not developing the ♗f8, but looking for a quick mobilisation of his queenside pieces. The move 11...♗b6 became popular after he used it against GM Shabalov. We will look at this game now.

Game 8

Shabalov - Gelfand

Bermuda 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♘bd7 8.♗f3 ♗c7 9.0-0 b5

Black plays without ♗f8-e7 and focuses on quick development of the queenside.

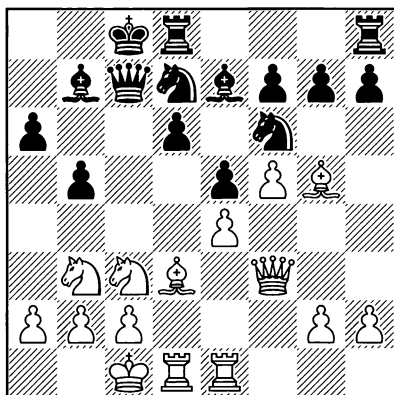
10.♗d3 ♗b7

10...b4 11.♘d5 exd5 12.♖he1 leads to a previously mentioned game.

11.♖he1 ♗b6

For 11...♗e7 see Kotronias - Lesiege.

11...0-0-0 This has been played a few times. I think the black king is misplaced. Black's position is losing all its dynamics. 12.f5 e5 13.♘b3 ♗e7



14.a4! Exactly in this moment White weakens all the light squares in Black's territory. 14...b4 15.♗xf6! ♘xf6 16.♘d5 White dominates the position. 16...♘xd5 17.exd5 a5 18.♖e4 ♘b8 19.♖c4 ♗b6 20.♗e4 with a clear advantage for White in Kotronias – Jobava, Batumi 2002. On 20...♖c8 then 21.♖c6 is a standard exchange sacrifice. 21...♗xc6 22.dxc6 ♖hd8 23.♘b1 d5 24.♗xd5 and Black will not find happiness in this game.

12.♘d5

If White wants to prove something in this position he has to jump forward. Any retreat, such as ♘d4-b3, gives Black an easy life.

12...♗xd4

12...exd5 13.♘c6! This jump from the knight causes Black a lot of trouble. 13...♗xc6 14.exd5† ♗e7 15.dxc6 ♘c5 16.♗xf6 gxf6 17.♗f5± Chiburdanidze-Dvoiry, Tallinn 1980.

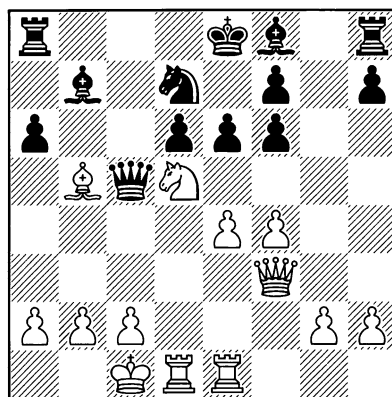
13.♗xf6

13.♘c7† ♘d8 14.♘xa8 ♗xa8 15.♗xb5∞ Hauchard-Beran, Paris 1990. This line needs to be analysed before any conclusions can be drawn.

13...gxf6

13...♗c5 14.♗h4 ♖c8 15.♘b1± Chumfwa-Hailu, Abuja 2003.

14.♗xb5 ♗c5



15.b4!?

Thomas wrote: "Here Shabalov goes wrong. White wins the queen, but in return Black gets three minor pieces and lots of good squares."

But two years down the line this might need to be reconsidered. Though it is in practice more comfortable to have the minor pieces, this might be White's best shot for an advantage.

Another line has developed rapidly after first being suggested in this chapter: 15. ♖xf6† ♘d8 (15... ♗e7 was played after the book came out in English. 16. ♗xd7 ♗g7 17. ♘h5 ♗xb2† 18. ♗xb2 ♗xd7 19. ♗e3 (19. ♗a1!?) 19... ♗hc8 20. ♗c3 ♗xc3† 21. ♗xc3 ♗xc3 22. ♗xc3 ♗c8† 23. ♗d3 f5 24. exf5 exf5 Now instead of 25. ♘g3, as in Ibraev – Kulaots, Calvia (ol) 2004, 25. ♗d2!± would leave Black a pawn down as 25... ♗e4† 26. ♗d4 ♗xc2 27. ♘f6† ♗e7 28. ♘xh7 is much better for White, and 26... ♗xc2? loses a piece to 27. ♘f6† and 28. ♘xe4.) 16. ♘xd7 (16. ♗xd7 ♗e7 17. ♗b3 ♗xf6 18. ♗xe6 fxe6 19. ♗xb7 ♗c8 20. c3∞) 16... ♗xb5 17. ♘xf8 (17. ♗c3 does not offer anything after 17... ♗xd7 18. ♗xh8 ♗h5) 17... ♗xf8 (17... ♗e7? 18. ♘xe6 fxe6 19. ♗g3± Hanssen - Velden, corr 2000.) 18. ♗a3 (18. ♗xd6† is also possible, but the text is better. 18... ♗c7 19. ♗ed1 ♗ad8 20. ♗c3† ♗c6 21. e5) 18... ♗e8 19. ♗xd6 ♗c8 And now:

Thomas suggested: 20. b3 with three pawns for the bishop, White keeps an advantage. In the coming endgame he plays c2-c4 and places his king on c3.

In practice two other moves have been tried:

20. ♗e3 ♗c6 (20... ♗g8? 21. ♗c3 ♗c6 22. f5+- Kosten-Kr. Georgiev, Saint Affrique 2005.) 21. ♗d2 ♗e7 22. ♗b4† ♗f6 and it is dubious if there is any advantage. Maybe the perpetual is the correct choice.)

20. c3 ♗c6 21. ♗b4 a5! 22. ♗xa5 (22. ♗d4 f6?) 22... ♗a8 23. ♗g5 f6∞ Nakamura-Gelfand, Biel 2005.

It does not seem that the optimism from the first edition was justified. Black is ok in practice so far.

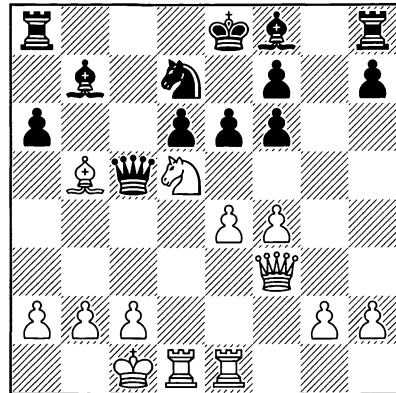
15... ♗xb5 16. ♘c7† ♗e7

16... ♗d8 17. ♘xb5 axb5 18. ♗h5± Janetschek-Wallner, Austria 1992.

17. ♘xb5 axb5 18. ♗h5

This might be the mistake that gets White into trouble.

18. ♗d3 ♗a6 19. ♗xb5 ♗b6 is slightly better for Black according to Gelfand. But this seems to be more of an emotional evaluation. 20. ♗d3 ♗h6 21. g3 ♗a8 (21... ♗a6 22. ♗f3 ♗c8 23. ♗h5 ♗f8 24. a3 ♗e8 25. ♗d2 ♗c3 26. ♗b2 ♗bc6 27. a4 ♘b6 28. ♗a1 ♗c7 29. a5 ♘c8 30. ♗a3 ♗xa3 31. ♗xa3 ♗c4 32. ♗b3 (32. f5+-) ½-½ Mnatsakanian-Georgiev, Yerevan 1982) 22. a3 e5 (22... ♗f8!?) 23. ♗e3 ♗a6 24. ♗c3 e5 25. ♗f3±) 23. ♗f3 f5 24. ♗h5 ♗g7 ½-½ Nataf - Lalic, Salou 2004. Here a bit of extra analysis by one editor, Jacob Aagaard, suggests that there is still something to play for: 25. ♗xh7 ♗f6 26. ♗d3 (26. fxe5!?) was Nataf's other suggestion, but it probably does not give a chance for an advantage.) 26... ♗ba6 27. ♗xf5 ♗xa3 28. ♗xa3 ♗xa3 29. ♗d2! (29. ♗b2 ♗f3 30. ♗a2 ♗f2 - Nataf) 29... exf4 30. e5 dxe5 31. ♗xf4 (31. gx4 ♗f3 32. ♗e3 ♗f2† 33. ♗e2 ♗f3 34. c4 ♗d8∞) 31... ♗f3 32. ♗c4 and White has a small advantage.



18... ♗xa2

18... ♗c6 is a much safer reply.

19. ♗xb5 ♗h6 20. e5 fxe5?

Better was 20... ♗c8, which secures Black a big advantage. 21. exd6† ♗d8 22. ♗d3 ♗xf4† 23. ♗b1 ♗cx2 24. ♗xc2 ♗xc2 25. ♗xc2 ♗xg2 black is winning.

21. ♗xb7 ♗xf4† 22. ♗b1 ♗ha8 23. g3 ♗2a7 24. ♗c6 ♗a6 25. ♗c3

I have the impression that White should not have lost this position. On the other hand he certainly has no advantage either.

25...♙h6 26.♞e4 d5 27.♞h4 d4 28.♞b2
 ♙g5 29.♞xh7 ♘f6 30.h4 ♘d5 31.♞d3 ♙d2
 32.♞xd2 ♘c3† 33.♙c1 ♞a1† 34.♞xa1 ♞xa1†
 35.♙b2 ♞b1† 36.♙a3 e4 37.♞f2 e3 38.♞xf7†
 ♙d6 39.♞d7† ♙c6 40.♞c7† ♙d5 41.♞cd7†
 ♙e4 42.♞de7 ♙f3 43.♞xe6 ♙e2 44.♞d7 ♙d2!

A nice manoeuvre: Black's king joins the mating attack.

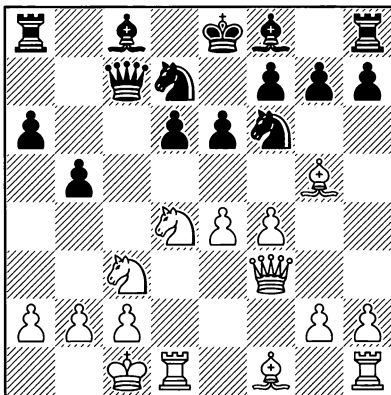
45.♞xe3 ♙xe3 46.♞f7 ♘d5 47.b5 ♙d2
 0-1

The sacrifice on b5 is a well-known idea in the Najdorf. Instead of developing the bishop from f1 White immediately sacs it for two pawns. The lead in development and the possible capture of a third pawn (usually the one on d6) makes it possible. Here this sacrifice is connected with e4-e5 after which many tactical lines arise. I think there is plenty of scope for improvements in this line. However even the typical endings in this line (queenside passed pawns for White vs. a piece, or passed pawn + rook vs. 2 minor pieces) are not clear. I can only give the reader a brief summary of this line. I recommend further study before trying it in a tournament game.

Game 9

Timman - Gelfand
 Wijk aan Zee 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♘bd7 8.♞f3 ♞c7
 9.0-0-0 b5



Black plays without ♙f8-e7 and focuses on quick development of the queenside.

10.♙xb5

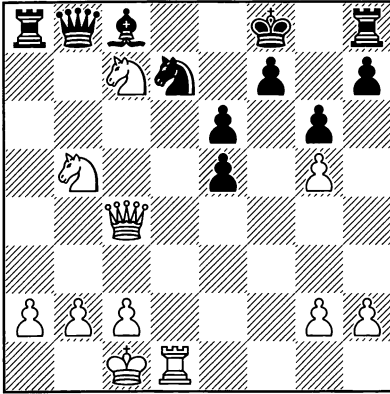
This move was for a long time considered the main reply to Black's set-up.

10.e5 The most forcing reply. Unfortunately, nowadays most of these purely tactical lines have been analysed till the end. This line is a forced draw, where neither side can avoid it. 10...♙b7 11.♞h3 dxe5 12.♘xe6! fxe6 13.♞xe6† ♙e7 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♙e2 h5 16.♘d5 ♙xd5 17.♞xd5 ♘c5 (17...♘b6 18.♙xh5† ♞xh5 19.♞g8†=) 18.♞f5 ♞c6 19.♞g6† ♙f8 20.♞hd1 ♞e8 21.♞f5 ♞c8 22.♞g6 ♞e6 23.♙xh5 ♞g8 24.♞d8† ♞xd8 Draw agreed in van der Wiel - Kasparov, Amsterdam 1991. 24...♞xd8 25.♞xd8† ♙xd8 26.♞e8† ♙g7 27.♞g6†= is the perpetual behind the draw.

10.♙xf6 ♘xf6 (10...gxf6 11.f5 gives White a good game) 11.e5 ♙b7 12.♞e3 (This is a recent discovery from GM J.Hector. 12.♞h3 dxe5 13.♘cb5 ♞b6 [13...axb5? 14.♙xb5† ♙e7 15.fxe5 ♘d5 16.♞h4† f6 17.exf6† gxf6 18.♞he1 e5 19.♘f5† ♙f7 20.♙c4 and White wins his material back and gains a winning advantage.] 14.fxe5 ♘e4 Black has fine compensation for his sacrificed pawn. For example 15.♙c4 ♘f2! 16.♞b3 0-0-0 (16...♞d8!? also looked good enough) 17.♘d6† ♞xd6 18.exd6 ♞xb3 19.♘xb3 ♘xh1 20.♘c5 ♙xg2 21.♙xe6† ♙d8 22.♙xf7g6 23.♙b1 ♙c6 24.♘e6† ♙d7 25.♘c5† ♙d8 26.♘e6† 1/2-1/2 Carlsen - Gelfand, Biel 2005) 12...dxe5 13.♘cb5 ♞b6 14.fxe5 ♘d5 15.♞g3 0-0-0? (15...axb5 reminds me of the old saying "A sacrifice can only be refuted by accepting it." 16.♙xb5† ♙d8 17.a4 [17.c4 This wins back the piece, but Black has easy play afterwards. 17...♞xa2 18.cxd5 ♙xd5 19.♙b1 ♙c5 20.♘b3 ♞xb2† 21.♙xb2 ♞xb5] 17...♙c8 18.♞hf1 White has some play here, but I recommend that the reader checks this position with his computer before testing it over the board.) 16.♘a3 ♙xa3 17.♞xa3 ♘b4 18.♙c4 ♞xd4 19.♞xd4 ♞xd4 20.♞xb4 ♞d8 21.♞c3 ♞xc3 22.bxc3 White is better, Hector - Van der Stricht, Plovdiv 2003.

10...axb5 11.♘dx5 ♞b8 12.e5 ♞a5

12...♙b7? For a long time this was considered to be a good alternative to the main line, but recent computer analysis showed that White gets a decisive advantage. 13.♚e2 dxe5 14.♚c4 ♙e7 15.♘c7† ♘f8 16.♞xd7 ♘xd7 17.♞d1 ♙xg5 18.fxg5 ♙c8 19.♘3b5 g6 So far everything was played in Kengis - Dvoiryys, USSR 1982.



Now White should play 20.♞f1 ♘g8 21.♘d6! and the computers show that White has a clear advantage. The mating threat after ♘xf7 forces Black to make a serious concession. 21...♞xa2 22.♚xa2 ♚xc7 23.♘xf7 ♘c5 24.♘h6† ♘g7 25.♞f7† ♚xf7 26.♘xf7 ♘xf7 27.♚a7† ♘d7 28.c4 Black lacks coordination and is helpless against the advance of White's pawns.

13.♞f6 gxf6

13...♞xb5 14.♘b5 ♚xb5 15.♚c3+-

14.♙h6!

Rather funny, the bishop sacs itself.

14...♙xh6 15.♘d6† ♘e7 16.♘b1

There was the threat of ♘d7-e5.

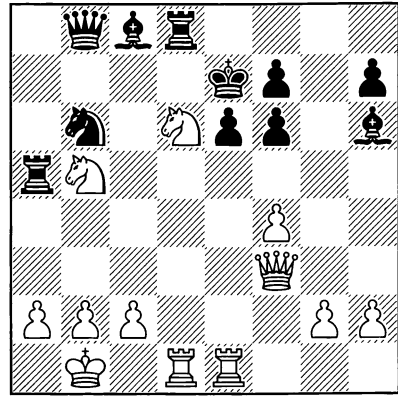
16...♞d8

16...♙b6!? 17.♘cb5 ♞xb5 18.♘xb5 ♙xf4 19.♚c3 ♘d7 20.♚a3† ♘e8 21.♘d6† ♙xd6 22.♞xd6 ♞g8 23.g3 ♞g5 24.♞hd1 This position requires further investigation, but I think White has the better play here.

17.♞he1 ♘b6

17...♙g7 18.♚c6 and, thanks to the threats of ♘xf7 and ♘xc8 followed by ♘d5†, White wins material.

18.♘cb5



18...♞xb5

This move does not seem to be the best.

18...♞d7 19.♚c6 ♘f8 20.♘xc8 ♞xd1† 21.♞xd1 ♘xc8 22.♞d8† ♘g7 23.♚e8 ♘g6 24.f5† ♘xf5 25.♘d4† ♘e4 26.♚xf7. White is winning.

Half a year later Gelfand played 18...♙a6 19.♚c3 (19.♘f5† leads to a draw. 19...♘f8 20.♚c3! A forced move again, as is the whole line actually! 20...♞xb5 21.♚xf6 ♞xb2†! This surprising capture saves the day for Black. 22.♚xb2 ♘d5 23.♞xd5! Another forced blow continues the series. 23...♞xb2† 24.♘xb2 ♙g7†! This check secures Black the draw. 25.♘g7 ♞xd5 26.♘xe6† fxe6 27.♞xe6 ½-½ Lutz – Gelfand, Dortmund 2002.) 19...♞xb5 20.♘b5 ♙xb5 21.♚b4† ♞d6 22.♚xb5 ♙xf4 So far as in Kantsler – Kuporosov, Sochi 1979. Now White should have played 23.a4 ♚c7 24.♞xd6 It is not easy to assess this position, but the passers on the queenside should give White better chances.

19.♘b5 ♞xd1†?

19...♘c4 forces a difficult ending. I recommend that the reader study this kind of ending before testing it over the board. 20.♚b3 ♘d2† 21.♞xd2 ♞xd2 22.♚b4† ♞d6 23.g3! Winning a tempo. 23...♙d7 24.♞xd6† ♚xd6 25.♘d6 ♘xd6 26.♞d1†! ♘c7 27.♞f1 After stopping e6-e5 for some time, White shall advance his queenside pawns. I cannot come up

with a final conclusion, but my feeling is that White's position is fine.

20.♞xd1 ♕xf4 21.g3

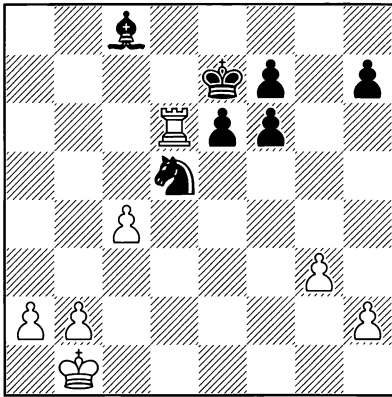
Again we see the same kind of ending arising: rook + 3 passed pawns vs. 2 minor pieces + a central passed pawn.

21...♗e5 22.♞a3† ♖e8 23.♗d6†!

It is very much in White's favour here to exchange pieces.

23...♗xd6 24.♞xd6 ♞xd6 25.♞xd6 ♗d5 26.c4 ♖e7??

A horrible blunder by Gelfand, but even after other moves White keeps an advantage. Once the queens are exchanged White can safely advance his queenside pawns.



27.♞c6+ ♗b7 28.cxd5 ♗xc6 29.dxc6 ♖d6 30.g4

The pawn ending is an easy win.

1-0

Thanks to the following game the move 10.♗d3 enjoyed a revival. GM Kotronias played a great novelty after which Black faces a very difficult defence. In many variations White has long lasting compensation due to the unfortunately placed black pieces. This game is a nice example to study when White is ready to sacrifice his c3 knight on d5. It is very important that the bishop on f8 remains weak and does not enter the game.

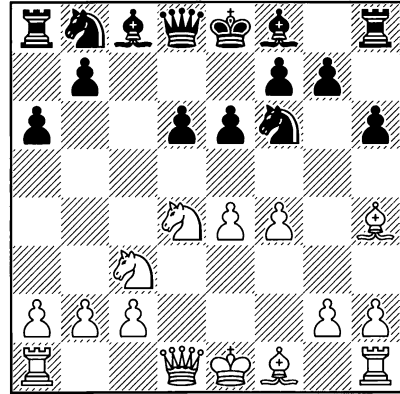
Game 10

Kotronias - Lesiege

Montreal 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗bd7

7...h6?! From today's knowledge I can say that Black should not play h7-h6 at any stage of this opening. 8.♗h4. Now there are two main lines:



a) 8...♗e7 9.♞f3 ♞c7 (9...g5 Black wants to fight for the e5-square. But even if he manages to place one of his knights there it is not clear if he has achieved much. 10.fxg5 ♗fd7 11.♗xe6! White is going for a direct refutation. 11...fxe6 12.♞h5† ♖f8 13.♗b5! This was first seen in the 50s. The most famous game is Gligoric - Fischer, Portoroz 1958. Much has been written about this game and finally computer analysis proved that White is winning here. In the original game the American future World Champion saved the draw. A recent example shows how dangerous Black's position is: 13...♞h7 14.0-0† ♖g8 15.g6 ♞g7 16.♞f7 ♗xh4 17.♞xh6 ♞xf7 18.gxf7† ♖xf7 19.♞f1† ♗f6 20.e5 dxе5 21.♗e4 axb5 22.♞h7† ♖f8 23.♞h8† ♖e7 24.♞h7† ♖f8 25.♗xf6 ♞b6†?? [25...♞xf6 26.♞h8† ♖f7 27.♞xf6† ♗xf6 28.♞xc8 ♗fd7± and the fight continues] 26.♖h1 ♗xf6 27.♞xf6† ♖e8 28.♞f7 1-0 Naiditsch - Enders, Höckendorf 2004.) 10.0-0-0 ♗bd7 11.♗d3 g5 (The same idea as mentioned above. At least Black is not getting checkmated immediately. 11...b5? This runs

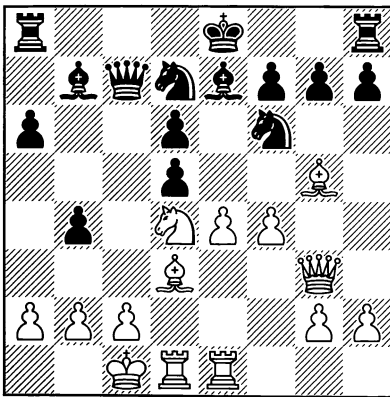
into a direct refutation. 12.e5 ♖b7 13.♗xe6 fxe6 14.♙g6† Here is the difference from positions without h6 and ♖h4 included: White has this check. 14...♗f8 15.exf6 ♙xf3 [15...♙xf6 16.♚h3 Black has too many weaknesses and no compensation for them in return] 16.fxe7† ♗g8 17.gxf3 with a big material advantage.) 12.fg5 ♗e5 13.♚e2 ♗fg4 14.♗f3 ♗xf3 15.♚xf3 hfg5 (15...♗e5 16.♚h5 ♗g6 17.♙g3 hfg5 18.♚f3 ♙d7 White is better, but Black can definitely play this position. Luther – Ginsburg, Germany 2004.) 16.♙g3 ♗e5 17.♙xe5 dxe5 18.♚df1! ♚h7 19.h4! White's attack is coming too fast for Black to set up a defence. Luther – Ott, Höckendorf 2004.

b) 8...♗bd7 9.♚f3 e5 A relatively new and surprising idea. 10.♗f5 (10.fxe5? This is the wrong reaction. 10...♗e5 11.♚d1 ♙e7 12.♙e2 ♗xe4 13.♙xe7 ♗xc3 14.♙xd8 ♗xd1 15.♙c7 ♗xb2 16.♙xd6 ♗bc4 with a decisive advantage for Black in Radjabov – Dominguez, Tripoli 2004.) 10...exf4 11.♚xf4 g5 12.♗xd6† ♙xd6 13.♚xd6 gxh4 14.e5 ♚e7 15.♚xe7† ♗xe7 16.exf6† The tactics are finished and White has a better ending.

8.♚f3 ♚c7 9.0–0–0 b5 10.♙d3 ♙b7

10...b4 11.♗d5 exd5 12.♚he1 with transposition to the lines mentioned below.

11.♚he1 ♙e7 12.♚g3 b4 13.♗d5 exd5



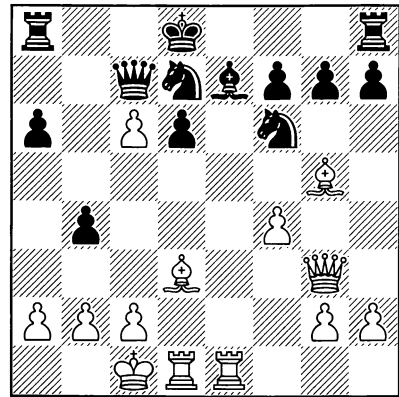
14.exd5!

This game of Kotronias changed the evaluation of the line. Before it the theory was 14.e5 dxe5

15.fxe5 ♗h5 16.♚h4 ♙xg5† 17.♚xg5 g6 18.e6 ♗c5 19.exf7† ♗xf7 20.♚f1† ♗g8 21.♗f5 ♗e6 22.♗h6† with a perpetual, Luther – Nielsen, Malmö 2002. There were many other lines analysed and games played, but theoretically they belong to the past.

14...♗d8 15.♗c6† ♙xc6 16.dxc6

Black has a large choice. Most of the variations I give below I analysed with my computer. Since soft- and hardware develop fast and this is a highly tactical position, I recommend that the reader check his favourite lines. I have played this position twice (vs. GMs Shneider and Dvoiry) and I think that in practice the piece sacrifice is fully justified.



16...♗c5

[We have added quite of bit of analysis to this move for this edition – the editors.]

16...♗b6?! 17.♙h4 ♙g8 18.♚f3? d5 19.g4 ♚xc6 lead to a victory for Black in the Internet blitz game Luther - Belov, 2004, played after the first edition of this book was published. However, White can play a lot stronger as an afternoon's analysis proves.

After 18.♚d2! there does not seem to be an adequate defence for Black.

a) 18...♚a7 is as always met with a strong sacrifice. 19.♙xh7! (19.♚de2 ♗bd5 is less promising) 19...♚h8 20.♚xg7 ♚xh7 21.♚xf6 ♗c8 22.♚xe7! This wins the queen, but the main point is probably that a lot of pawns follow. 22...♚xe7(22...♗xe7? 23.♚xd6† ♗c8 24.♚d7+)

23.♞xd6† ♖e8 24.♞d8† ♖xd8 25.♞d4† ♖e8
26.♙xe7 ♞xe7 27.f5! f6 28.♞xf6 though this is
by no means a trivial win, White will have four
to five pawns against the three black pieces and
should be able to secure the full point.

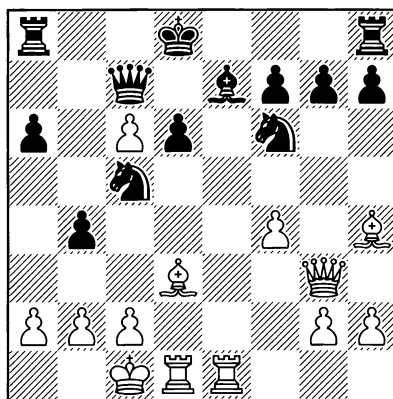
b) 18...d5 19.♙xh7 ♞h8 20.♞de2 ♖e4
(20...♖c8 loses out right to 21.♞xg7 ♞xf4†
22.♖b1 ♞xh7 23.♞xe7!! ♖xe7 24.♞f8† ♖c7
25.♞xa8+-) 21.♙xe7† ♖xe7 22.♙xe4 dx4
23.♞xg7 ♖d6 24.♞e4+ gives White a strong
attack and eventually four to five pawns for the
piece.

c) 18...♖bd5 Here White has several
promising continuations, but I quite like the
direct 19.♙xf6! ♖xf6 (19...♙xf6 20.♙xh7
♞h8 21.♞xd5 ♞xh7 22.♞d3 ♞h8 23.♞xd6†
♖c8 24.♞e4 gives White a winning attack.)
20.♞de2 d5 (Black has nothing better than
to give up the queen. After 20...♙f8 21.♞g5
♞xc6 22.♞a5† ♞c7 23.♞e8†! it is lost under
worse circumstances, and; 20...♞e8 is met with
21.♞xg7 ♞xc6 22.♞xf7 ♞d5 23.♞e6!+-). In the
long run there is no defence against ♞xf6 with
a winning endgame.) 21.♞xe7 ♞xe7 22.♞xe7
♖xe7 23.f5 ♞gc8 24.♞e5† ♖f8 25.♞d6† with
excellent winning chances.

16...♞xc6! The most principled reply. Black
eliminates the dangerous passer. 17.♙xf6
leaves Black with a difficult choice. 17...♖xf6
(17...♙xf6 18.♙e4 ♞a4 Black has no big
choice here. [The alternative 18...♞c8 19.♙xa8
♞xa8 20.♞xd6 ♞e8 21.♞xd7† ♖xd7 22.♞d3†
♖c7 23.♞c4† ♖b6 24.♞xb4† ♖c7 25.♞c5†
♖b7 26.♞d5† allows White an instant win]
19.♙xa8 ♞xa2 20.♞xd6 ♞xb2† 21.♖d1 ♞b1†
22.♖e2 ♞xc2† 23.♖f1! [23.♖f3??. In my
game against Dvoirys I chose the wrong square
for the king. Now Black could save the game.
23...♞e8 24.♞xe8† ♖xe8 25.♙c6 ♖f8! 26.♙xd7
♖e7 27.♞xf6 gxf6 28.♙g4 b3 29.♞e1† ♖f8
30.♞a5= Luther – Dvoirys, Austria 2003.]
23...♞c4† 24.♞d3 ♞e8 25.♞ed1 ♞e7?! 26.♞f3
and White is winning. After the first edition
was published another opinion on this position
was voiced: 25...♖c7 26.♙d5 ♞b5 27.♖g1± -
I. Rogers and Z. Zhao.) 18.♞xg7 ♞g8 19.♞xf7
♞e8 20.♞c4 (20.♞b3?!. This move is weaker

than the text, but White is still better, Luther
- Shneider, Istanbul 2003.) 20...♞c8 21.♞xb4
♞c6 22.g3 and White is clearly better. Besides
the three pawns he has for the knight, Black's
king is in extreme danger. Later this was
improved upon: 18...♞e8! 19.♞xf7 (19.♞xe7
♖xe7 20.♞e1† ♖d7 21.♞xf7† ♖c8 22.♞e6
♞xe6 23.♞xe6† ♖c7 24.♞xf6 ♞c5∞ - Palliser)
19...♞a7 20.♞xe7 ♞axe7 21.♞xf6 ♖c7 22.♞d4
♞b6 23.♞xb6† ♖xb6 24.♖d2 The question
is if White is better in this endgame. The fact
that he lost it has little to do with the actual
evaluation. Navara - Shirov, Prague (blitz)
2005.

16...h6 This move also does not change
the evaluation of the position, White picks
up another pawn in compensation for the
sacrificed knight and is continuing the attack.
17.♙h4 g5 18.fxg5 hxg5 19.♞xg5 ♖c5 20.♙f5
White is clearly better here.
17.♙h4!



17...♙f8

This makes it easier for White. More trouble
is:

17...g6 18.f5 This line does not change the
final conclusion either: White keeps attacking.

17...♞g8 18.♙c4!? ♖fe4 (18...♖ce4 19.♞f3
and White controls the game) 19.♞g4 ♙f6 A
typical computer move, as my friend Jacob
Aagaard pointed out.

a) White has easier play after: 19...♙xh4
20.♞xh4† ♖f6 (20...♞e7? 21.♞xd6† Losing

d6 is bad news for Black. White is winning.)
21.g4 ♖c8 22.g5 and White is overrunning
Black's strongholds.

b) 19...♖a7 20.♗d5 ♗xh4 21.♞xh4† ♖f6
22.♗f3 with the already mentioned idea of
g2-g4-g5. 20.♗d5 ♗xh4 21.♞xh4† ♖f6 22.g4
again with initiative.

However, just as the book was finished
and ready to go into print a new masterpiece
of invention was revealed by our Greek hero
Kotronias:

18.♗xh7!! This very surprising move does not
tempt the computers, but all will become clear
soon enough. 18...♞h8 19.♞xg7 ♞xh7 20.♞xf6
♞xh4 (20...♗xf6?? 21.♗xf6† ♖c8 22.♞e8† is
bad style) 21.♞xf7 ♞h8 (21...♗g4 22.♗d5! with
the idea of 23.♞h5 and Black has no defence)
22.♞e5 ♖a4 23.♞e6 ♖c5 (the computer move
does not really work here: 23...♖b6 24.♗de1
♖c8 25.♞g7 ♞e8 26.f5 ♞xc6 27.f6±) 24.♞e5
♖a4 25.♞e3 ♞a7 (Black cannot pretend to
repeat the line, as after 25...♖c5 26.♗de1 he
has nothing better than 26...♞xc6± with a bad
endgame. 26...♞e8 27.♞xe7!+) 26.♗de1 ♞e8
(A possible alternative is 26...♞xc6 27.♞xe7
♞xe7 28.♞xe7† ♖c8 29.h4± but White
certainly still has all the chances, and should
not be unhappy about reaching this kind of
position.) 27.f5 ♞xc6 28.f6 ♞xg2? After this
the white attack wins without any problems.
(28...♖c5 29.fxe7† ♖c8 and 28...♞c7 29.♞1e2
are probably both only slightly better for
White and certainly what Black should have
opted for.) 29.fxe7† ♖d7 30.♞g3 ♞a8 31.♞g6
♖c5 32.♗d1 ♖b7 33.♞e6† ♖c7 34.♞g4 a5
35.♞c4† 1-0 Kotronias - Shneider, Korinthos
2004.

18.♗c4

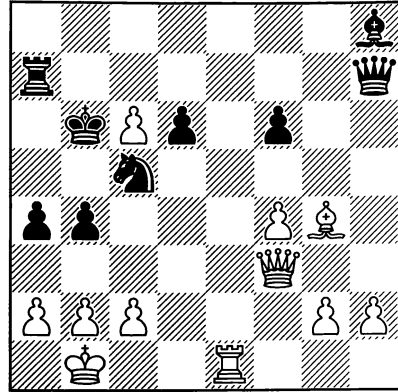
It is this kind of position White is basically
aiming for. Sooner or later he will take on f6
and ruin Black's pawn structure. The f8-bishop
will be locked in and White penetrates Black's
position via the e-line. The main game is a
perfect example of transferring White's strategy
into a win.

18...♖a7 19.♗d5 a5 20.♞e3 ♞c8 21.♗de1 ♞f5
22.♗f6† gxf6 23.♞e8† ♖c7 24.♞f3

White has no direct threats, but he controls
the game. Black suffers from the lack of
coordination between his pieces.

24...h5 25.♖b1 ♗g7?

Making White's task easy, but staying passive
is not what one wants to do in Black's position.
26.♞xh8 ♗xh8 27.♗xf7 ♖b6 28.♗xh5 a4
29.♗g4 ♞h7



30.c7!

This pawn has done its job. Now White opens
the lines to the black king.

30...♞xc7 31.♞d5 f5 32.♞xd6† ♖c6 33.♞d8†
♞c7 34.♞xh8 fxf4 35.♞d4 ♖b5 36.b3! axb3
37.axb3 ♞d6 38.♞c4† ♖a5 39.♞e5

Still Black is completely tied up.

39...♞d1† 40.♖a2 ♞d6 41.♗d5 ♞c7 42.f5
♖b6 43.♞xb4† ♖a7 44.♞d4

A great game!

1-0

Many players consider the Poisoned Pawn
variation as the main reply against the ♗g5
system. White has no good way to avoid losing
the b2-pawn so he is committed to attacking
Black at all costs. In a possible arising ending
White would not only be a pawn down but also
have a weak pawn structure on the queenside.
On the other hand White gets a large advantage
in development and the threats can be really
dangerous. In this game GM Short came very
close to beating the World Champion.

Game 11

Short - Kasparov
Riga 1995

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3
a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♖b6

7...h6 8.♗h4 ♗b6 The combination of these two lines is not recommendable for Black. 9.a3! with the idea of ♗f2. Of course 9...♗xb2? 10.♘a4 wins the queen.

8.♗d2

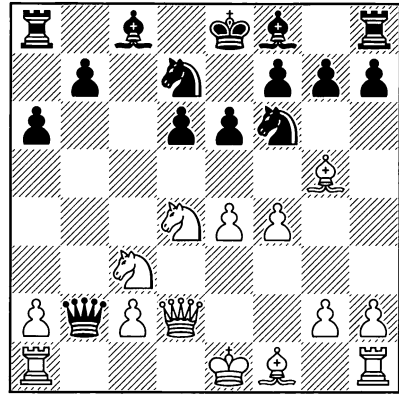
The only reasonable way to play the position.

8.a3 is just a tricky sideline. 8...♘c6 9.♘b3 ♗e3† (9...♗e7 10.♗f3 h6 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6 12.0-0-0 ♗c7 13.h4 ♗d7 14.g4 0-0-0 15.♗g2 ♖b8 16.g5 ♗e7 17.♗e3 ♗c8 was played in Luther - Dominguez, Havana 2001. The position is unclear.) 10.♗e2 ♗xe2† After exchanging queens Black has no problems at all.

8.♘b3 ♗e7 (8...♗e3† 9.♗e2 ♗xe2† is a very sound continuation for Black. I think the only reason why it is played so rarely is that the usual Najdorf player does not want to enter an even ending, but instead prefers to attack.) 9.♗f3 ♘bd7 10.0-0-0 ♗c7 11.♗d3 b5 Black has reached his normal set-up, but White's knight is no longer on d4 but on b3, so all the nice tactics do not work anymore. 12.a3 White would rather avoid this move but after 12.♗he1 b4 White has to remove the knight and Black gets very comfortable play. 12...♗b8! Black's attack comes faster now.

8...♗xb2

8...♘c6 This sideline has been seen often in tournament games recently. Black decides not to take on b2 but transfers the game into a Rauzer-like set-up. 9.♗xf6! (Only with this move can White fight for an advantage. This capture is a standard reply if Black has to take back with the pawn. Instead 9.0-0-0 ♗xd4 10.♗xd4 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♗d7 with an even ending.) 9...gxf6 10.♘b3 ♗d7 11.♗e2 h5 If Black does not play this move White will place his bishop on h5. 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 13.♖b1 ♖b8 14.h4! A strong idea. White fixes h5 as a weakness and prepares to bring the h1 rook into the game. 14...♘a5 15.♗h3 ♗c8 16.♘xa5 ♗xa5 17.♗d3 with advantage for White in Sulskis - Loginov, Vilnius 1997.

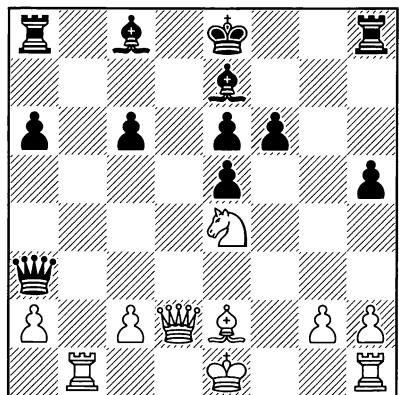


9.♘b3

9.♗b1 This move leads in many lines to a forced draw. 9...♗a3 10.f5 ♘c6 11.fxe6 fxe6 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.e5 (13.♗e2 This is a famous drawing line which has been seen many times in tournament games: 13...♗e7 14.0-0-0 15.♗b3 ♗c5† 16.♗e3 ♗e5 17.♗d4 ♗a5 18.♗b6=) 13...dxe5 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♘e4 And now:

a) 15...♗e7 This move was thought to bring only trouble. On his DVD Kasparov called it refuted, though this is probably an exaggeration.

16.♗e2 h5

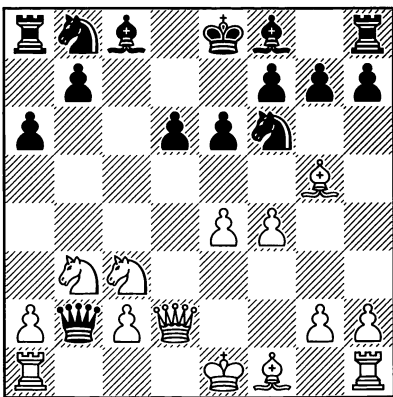


17.♗f1! f5 18.♗f3 ♗xa2 19.♗fb3! A great idea of the White player! Black's queen is cut off for a long time; meanwhile White focuses on Black's king.

a1) 19...fxe4 20.♖c3 ♘d8 (20...0-0 21.♖a1 ♘b4 22.♖xb4 ♖d5 23.♙h5 looks promising for White.) 21.♖xc6† ♘d7 22.♖xe4 ♔f7 (22...♖a5† 23.♔f1 0-0† 24.♖f3 ♘f6 25.♘d3 ♔f7 26.♖b7 and White's attack continues) 23.♔f1 Further analysis is required but I have great faith in White's position, Gubajdullin – Biriukov, St Petersburg 2003.

a2) Later practice has shown that this impression was overly optimistic. Black can for example play: 19...♖a4 20.♘d6† (20.♖b8 ♖xb8 21.♖xb8 0-0 22.♘d6 ♖a1† 23.♔f2 ♖h1!→) 20...♘xd6 21.♖xd6 ♖a5†! 22.♔f1 ♖a7! 23.♖b8 (23.♖b6 ♔f7 (23...♖d5 24.♖b8 ♖d7 25.♖xe5 0-0 26.♖f4 ♖g7 27.♙h5 a5 28.♖b3 ♘a6† 29.♔g1 e5 30.♖h4) 24.c4 (24.♖xc6 ♖d5 25.♖xd5 exd5 26.♖b8 a5 27.♖bxc8 ♖xc8 28.♖xc8 a4) 24...♔f6 25.♖xc6 ♖g7) 23...♔f7 24.♖xc6 ♖c7 25.♖d6 ♖d7 26.♖c6 ♖c7 27.♖a4 ♖d4 28.♖a3 h4 29.h3 ♖g8 30.♖f3 ♖f4 0-1 Vasquez – Kosteniuk, Internet 2004.

b) 15...♖xa2! 16.♖d1 ♘e7 17.♘e2 0-0 18.0-0 ♖a7 19.♖f3 ♔h8 20.♖g3 ♖d7 21.♖h6 ♖f7 22.♖h5 ♖xd1† 23.♘xd1 ♖a5 24.♔f1 ♖d8 25.♖xf7 ♖xd1† and soon the game ended in a perpetual, Vallejo Pons – Kasparov, Moscow 2004.



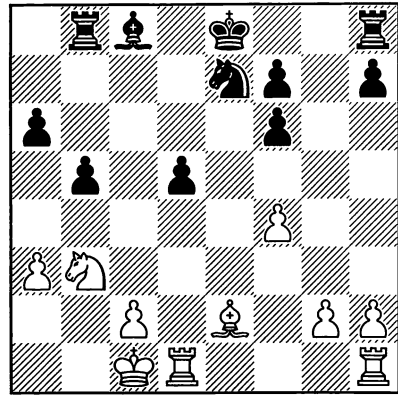
9...♖a3

9...♘bd7 10.♙xf6 gxf6 (10...♘xf6? 11.a4 traps Black's queen) 11.♘e2 leads to the main line.

9...♘c6 This move disappeared from tournament practice because it leads to a better ending for White. 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.♘a4 ♖a3 12.♘b6 ♖b8 13.♘c4 ♖a4 14.a3! (14.♔f2 This is an old line, but after 14...♘e7 15.♘xd6† ♔f8 White has nothing.) 14...b5 15.♘xd6† ♘xd6 16.♖xd6 ♖xe4† 17.♘e2 ♖d5 There is nothing better than this.

a) 17...♖xg2? 18.0-0-0 ♘b7 19.♖d7† ♔f8 20.♖d6† ♔e8 21.♙h5 leads to a winning position for White.

b) 17...♘b7 This move does not solve Black's problems either. 18.♘c5 (18.0-0-0 ♖d8 and Black is doing fine) 18...♖d4 19.♖d1 ♖xd6 20.♖xd6 ♘d8 21.♘xb7 ♘xb7 22.♖xa6 with a better ending for White. 18.♖xd5 exd5 19.0-0-0 ♘e7 (19...♘e6 20.g4 f5 21.♖he1 ♘e7 22.♘d3 ♔f8 [22...♖b6 23.gxf5 (23.♖d2 ♔d8 24.gxf5 ♘c8 25.♖de2) 23...♘c8] 23.gxf5 ♘xf5 24.♖e5 ♘e7 25.♘c5 ♖b6 26.f5 ♖c6 27.♘xe6† fxe6 28.fxe6 ♔e8 ½-½ Rogers - Van der Sterren, Hertogenbosch 1999).



Now White can try either 20.♘f3 or 20.♖he1. Let us look at 20.♖he1 first:

a) 20...0-0 21.♘xb5 was played in Kotronias – Ftacnik, Pula 1997, White is better. (21.♘f3 ♘e6 leads to the above mentioned line).

b) 20...♖b6 This reply saves Black. 21.♘f3 ♖e6 22.♘d4 ♖xe1 23.♖xe1 ♔d8= After exchanging one pair of rooks, Black has equality.

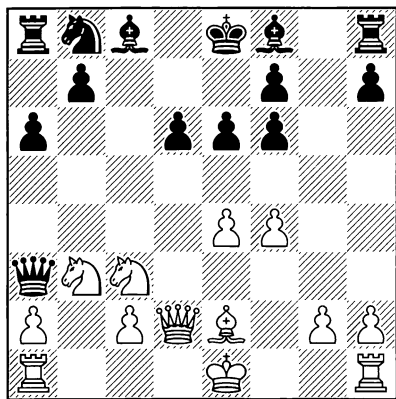
After 20.♘f3 the normal reply is 20...♘e6 and only now 21.♖he1 0-0! (21...♖g8 22.♘d4 ♖b6

23.f5 gives White a pleasant advantage). Now 22.g4! is best. Other moves promise less:

a) 22.♖c5 ♖b6 23.♗d7 ♗xd7 24.♞xe7 ♗e6 25.♗xd5 ♗xd5 26.♞xd5 ♞c8 with equality.

b) 22.♗d4 ♖b6 23.g4 f5 24.gxf5 ♖xf5 25.♗xf5 ♗xf5 26.♞xd5 ♗e6 and again the game is even.

c) After 22.g4! play can continue 22...f5 23.gxf5 ♖xf5 24.♗xd5 ♖be8! (24...♖b6? Despite the reduced material it is not too late for Black to blunder. 25.♖c5! ♗c8 26.♗b3!± with much better play for White) 25.♗b7?! (25.♗xe6 ♞xe6 ½–½ Adams – Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee (3) 1994) 25...♗c8 (25...♖b8? 26.♖c5!± and 25...♗xb3 26.cxb3 ♞xe1 27.♞xe1 ♖d6± To win this position with White requires good technique, but defending Black's side is no fun either.) 26.♗xc8 ♞xc8 27.♞e5 ♖h4 28.♞g5† ♖h8 29.♞d6 and White keeps some advantage. 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♗e2



11...h5

11...♖c6 This is another standard reply. Black wants to bring his rook to c8 as quickly as possible. 12.0–0 ♗d7 (12...♗g7?! 13.♞f3 0–0. Black has chosen a very dangerous set-up. White's pieces will target Black's king very rapidly. 14.♖h1 ♞d8 15.♞g3 d5 16.exd5 f5 17.♞d1 ♞f8 18.d6 ♖h8 19.♖a4 with a large advantage in Kasimdzhanov – Polgar, Moscow 2002.) 13.♖h1 ♞c8 (13...h5 14.♖d1 ♞c8 15.♖e3 ♞b4 16.c3 ♞xe4 17.♖c4 ♖d8 18.♖d4 h4 19.♗f3 ♞h7 20.♖b6 ♞c5 21.♖xd7 ♖xd7

22.♖ab1 h3 23.g3 ♞c7 24.f5 This was played in Kotronias – Sasikiran, Moscow 2004. For the two sacrificed pawns White has a strong initiative. Black's pieces are bad placed, especially his king and queen. White managed to win this game later, but it requires more analysis to come to a final conclusion about the position.) 14.♗h5?! (Too early, White should wait with this move until Black has played ♗f8–e7. Better is 14.♞f3 to protect c3 and prepare some action on the kingside. 14.♞ad1 ♗e7 15.♗h5 ♞f8 16.♞f3 ♖d8 17.♞d3 ♞c7 18.♖b1 ♞a4 19.♖c3 ♞a3 20.♖b1 ♞a4 21.♖c3 ♞a3 was played in Luther – Georgiev, France 2003. All White's pieces are in good positions, but Black is rather solid too.) 14...♗g7! 15.♞f3 0–0 Now this is a good idea. The h5-bishop is misplaced and slows down White's attack. 16.♞af1 ♖a5 17.f5 ♖c4 18.♞f4 ♖e5 and Black was better in Kasimdzhanov – Sadvakasov, Skanderborg 2003

11...♗g7 Black should not play this move so early. The bishop on g7 can be attacked later by ♞g3. 12.0–0 ♞b4 13.♞f3! ♖d7 14.♞d1 ♞b6† 15.♖h1 ♞c7 16.♞g3 ♗f8 17.♗h5 ♖c5 18.♖xc5 ♞xc5 19.e5! After this standard move White gets a great attack. 19...♞a5 20.♞e2 dxe5 21.♗xf7† ♖xf7 22.♞h5† ♖e7 23.♖e4! After bringing the knight into the attack Black is defenceless. 23...♗d7 24.♞h4 exf4 25.♞xf6† ♖e8 26.♞g7 1–0 Hamdouchi – Bologan, Belfort 2002.

12.0–0

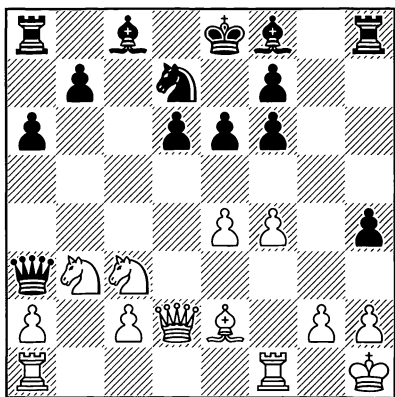
12.h4?! Stopping Black's h-pawn so drastically is not a recommendable idea. 12...♖c6 13.0–0 ♗d7 14.♖d1 ♗e7 15.♖h2 ♞b4 16.♞e3 ♗d8! A typical manoeuvre to bring back Black's queen. 17.♞d3 ♖a5 18.a3 ♞b5 19.♞d2 ♖xb3 and Black had a large advantage in Luther – Sutovsky, New York 1998.

12...♖d7 13.♖h1

A useful practical move. 13.f5 is more direct. 13...♗e7 (13...♖c5 14.♖h1 ♗d7?! I think this is the reason for Black's problems. It is better to try Be7 here. 15.♖ab1 b5 Black's king should not be safe in the centre, and Kotronias shows a way to prove it. 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.e5!± with an attack in Kotronias – Ilincic, Yerevan 2000.) 14.♞d4 b5 15.♞f3 ♗b7 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♞h3 h4

18.♙g4 ♘f7 19.♘d5 White had a big attack in Guseinov - Villavicencio Martinez, Stockholm 2002

13...h4!



It is very useful for Black to advance his h-pawn in this early stage of the game, because otherwise later White might have had the opportunity to place his rook on h3.

13...b6 A dubious move. Now the black queen is getting in trouble. 14.♖d4! ♘c5 What else? 15.♗xf6 ♖h7 16.f5 ♙e7 17.♗d4 ♙b7 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.♖ab1! with a strong attack for White in Sulskis – Sutovsky, Koszalin 1998.

14.h3

Forced. After: 14.♙g4 h3! 15.♙xh3 ♖xh3! Yes of course! With an open king White will have a lot of trouble in the future. 16.gxh3 b5∞ and Black is doing very well.

14...♙e7!

14...b6 15.♖ad1 (15.♗d4 was much better here. The lines are similar to the above-mentioned game Sulskis-Sutovsky.) 15...♙b7 16.f5 ♖c8 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.♗d4 (18.♖e3 ♗b4! causes White trouble) 18...♙e7 19.♙g4 ♘c5 20.♖f3 ♘xb3 21.cxb3 ♗c5 22.♙xe6 ♗xd4 23.♖xd4 ♖c5 24.♘d5 and White was better in Luther – Kasimdzhanov, Essen 2002.

15.♖ad1 b6 16.♗e3

It is difficult to decide where to put White's queen. In this position the e3 square seems to be the right one. 16.♗d4!? ♘c5 (16...♙b7? 17.♘b1! ♗xa2 18.♘1d2!±) 17.e5 dxe5 18.fxe5

f5 with an unclear game. Anyway, Black is a pawn up so White has to prove something.

16...♙b7 17.f5

17.♖d4? ♖c8 and the threat of ...♗b2 was very unpleasant for White in the game Wells - Zhang Zhong, Szeged 1997.

17...♖c8 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.♙g4!

Finally White has managed to target Black's weakest spot: the e6-pawn!

19...♗b2

19...♗b4 This move does not greatly change the outcome of the variation. It just shows once again how strong White's attack is once he has access to the black king. 20.♖d3 f5 21.exf5 ♘e5 22.f6 ♘xg4 23.♗xe6 ♘xf6 24.♖e3! Bringing the rook to the e-line causes great problems for the coordination between Black's pieces. 24...♖h7 (24...♘g8 25.♘d5 wins instantly for White) 25.♗xf6 ♘d8 26.♖xe7 ♖xe7 27.♖e1 d5 28.a3! Now Black loses material. 28...♗xa3 29.♘b1 ♗b4 30.c3 and White is winning.

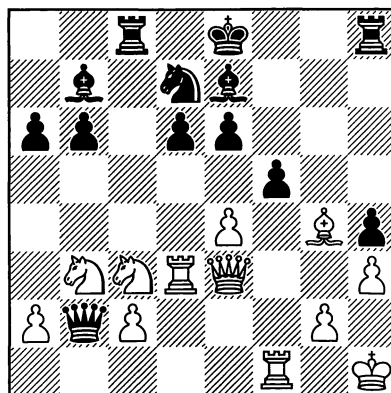
19...♘f7? 20.♘d5± does not look great for Black either.

19...♘c5 This does not help Black either, as any computer can show. 20.♖f3 f5 21.exf5 ♙xf3 22.gxf3 ♖c6 23.f6! ♙xf6 24.♙xe6 and White has a clear advantage.

20.♖d3!

The standard reply.

20...f5!



21.♖b1?

Here Nigel Short went wrong. But back

in 1995 chess was a different game than it is nowadays. Today we can all check these lines with our computers and find out how White is winning in this position. 21.exf5! This is the way! 21...d5 22.f6! ♖xc2 (22...dxc4 23.♗xe6 dxf6 24.♞e3 is very similar to an above mentioned line. White also has a very strong attack here) 23.f7†! This unpleasant check disturbs all Black's coordination. 23...dxf7 (23...cxf8 24.♙e2 dxd3 25.d4+- and 23...cxd7 24.♙xe6† cxc7 25.d5† ♙xd5 26.♞c3†+-) 24.♞f2 The point. Black's queen is trapped. 24...♗xd3 25.♗xd3 d5 26.♗d4 dxc4 27.hxc4 cxd7 28.♞f7 e5 29.♗xb6 ♞b8 30.d5† dxc5 31.♗xc5 ♞he8 32.d5 1-0 Luther – Quezada, Merida 2003.

21...♗xb1†

21...♗xc2? 22.♙d1 f4 23.♗f3 d5 24.♙xc2 dxf3 25.gxf3 ♙f6 26.d5! bxa5 27.♞xb7 ♞xc3 28.♙a4† cxf8 29.♞xd6± would have given White a very pleasant advantage.

22.dxb1 fxg4 23.hxc4 h3?!

Probably this spoils Black's advantage. Other possibilities were 23...♞xc2 and 23...d5 with complicated play. However all my computer programs favour Black.

24.♞c3?!

24.gxh3! was a good try to win the game. 24...d5 (24...♞xc2 25.♞c3! ♞xa2 26.♞c7± ♙xe4† 27.♗xe4 ♞xh3† 28.cg1 ♞xb3 29.d2 ♞xd2 30.♞c8† cxf7 31.♗h7† cxf6 32.♗h6† c5 33.♗xd2 and White has winning chances) 25.♞c3 dxc4 26.♗xb6 ♞xc3 27.dxc3 ♞xh3† 28.cg2 ♞xc3 29.♗xb7 and White is better here.

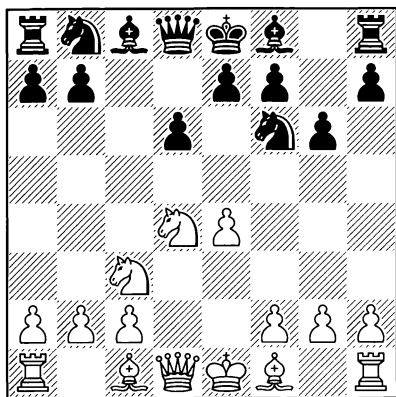
24...hxc2† 25.cxc2 ♞g8 26.♞xc8† ♙xc8 27.cfl ♞xc4 28.d1d2 e5! 29.♗c3! ♙b7 30.♗c7

And in this still very complicated position the players agreed a draw.

½-½

The Dragon

- By Mikhail Golubev



Shortly before this chapter was completed, an almost anonymous e-mail appeared in my mailbox. The sender proclaimed that *The Dragon is refuted*, and attempted to prove it. As this issue seems to be of interest to many, I decided to discuss both the Dragon and its refutation in this introduction.

The Sicilian Dragon is defined by the sequence 1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.fxd4 f6 5.c3 g6. It is virtually the only system I play with both colours (and inevitably more often with Black). Being more or less unable to propose a complete antidote to any of my pet systems, I consider the Sicilian Dragon to be an exception. This opening is one of the few whose theoretical side attracts me more (meaning: to search for the best moves for both colours) than its practical side. It is hard to explain why. Perhaps it is because the basic conflict is outlined very nicely. With 5...g6 Black builds up an inferior pawn structure with the hopelessly weakened d5-square. (Certainly the Dragon structure is less reliable for Black than that of the Scheveningen. Once, many years ago at a juniors training session, I tried to discuss this with Boris Gelfand, but only half seriously). Simultaneously, however, Black also develops his kingside bishop as aggressively as

possible. If White does not attempt to exploit the disadvantages of his opponent's set-up in the most principled way, then the activity of the dark bishop can easily turn into a more important factor than the pawn structure.

As practice has showed, White's only critical reply to the Dragon starts with the moves 6.fxe3 g7 7.f3, followed by 8.f2 and then queenside castling. This paradoxically places the white king on the more dangerous side of the board: in the sphere of influence of both the Dragon bishop and Black's queenside rook, which is destined to emerge on the semi-open c-file sooner or later.

Paradoxical, yes, but there is simply no other way for White to meet Black's initial strategic threats. 7.f3, which both prevents ...g4 and removes the pressure on the e4-pawn, would leave White without a clear plan if played together with kingside castling.

Black as a rule answers with 7...0-0 8.f2 d2 c6, or 7...c6 8.f2 0-0, which is of course the same thing (the only really important sideline is 7...c6 8.f2 d7). The most common approach is now to try to use all possible tactical tricks to open lines on the queenside and bring displeasure to the white monarch. At White's disposal we have the logical schematic attack on the kingside with h4, g4, h5, etc. As in every opening where both sides have clear aims and targets, the Dragon is strategically simple, but tactically very complex. *What* is strictly defined. Only *How* is a real question. Under such circumstances, ambitious amateurs can have a real chance to beat lazy professionals, which they use from time to time!

The current state of affairs is that Black experiences difficulties after both of White's main moves: 9.0-0 and 9.c4 (stopping 9...d5 entirely).

To choose 9.0-0 as the main recommendation was not difficult. Firstly, I consider it to be at least no weaker than 9.c4. And secondly, 9.0-0 is slightly easier to prepare and play, as the amount of accumulated material and the number of sensible answers for Black is somewhat lower.

The two sharp lines 9...♗d7?! and 9...♖xd4 10.♗xd4 ♘e6 both see Black attacking in the usual Dragon spirit. But both are in fact dubious, especially the first, while the latter allows White to use positional means to fight for an advantage if he wishes.

9...d5! is, in my view, Black's best move. However, this allows White to exploit his pluses strategically. Extraordinary attention to the safety of his king is usually not required. White has several popular options here (Dvoiry's move 10.♙e1! is still interesting) but I will concentrate on the main line 10.exd5 ♖xd5 11.♖xc6 bxc6 12.♗d4!.

It is true that lately the claims of the "refutation" of the Dragon were more often related to White's particular findings in the sharpest sub-lines of the 9.♗c4-system. However, a simple example (which should remove unrealistic expectations of this chapter) is the line 9.0-0-0 ♖xd4 10.♗xd4 ♙a5 11.♗c4! ♗e6 12.♗b3, which is a part of the repertoire. This old and now rare deviation from the main lines is also an integral part of the 9.♗c4 system, where it arises after 9...♖xd4 10.♗xd4 ♗e6 11.♗b3, represents approximately 3% of the mass of material related to 9.♗c4.

It makes no practical sense to speak about a *guaranteed win* in this somewhat better strategic position with its almost never-ending possible continuations. Very little in chess can be fully proved or refuted. All theory is based on evaluation, comparison, probability and similar uncertainties. The task for a serious player preparing a specific line for White is to find reasons and variations that will convince himself that he will be able to get an advantage. Only someone located above will really know if it will be sufficient to win or not.

With Black we usually aim at convincing ourselves that we can achieve clear equality with our openings. And if we do not succeed, we switch to other lines that we hope are better. I believe it was this and not a *refutation*, which caused such giants as Alexander Khalifman and Kiril Georgiev to abandon the Dragon. One way or another, I limited the aim of my work to prove

at least a small advantage for White in the most critical lines. And this can still only be achieved as a wish, as no writings on the opening can ever claim to be free from vulnerable assessments.

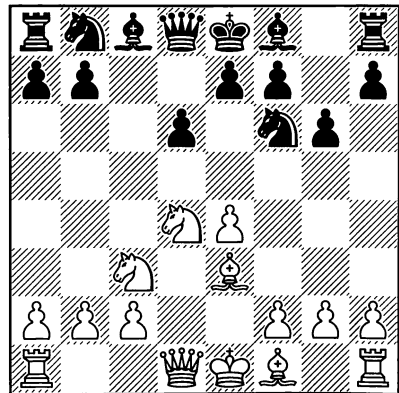
The accuracy of the data here obviously has its natural limitations. I have sometimes changed the original move order of the specified games. And for accuracy on the origins of the novelties, I refer the readers to their electronic databases. The recent CD by Dorian Rogozenko B75-B79 is, by the way, absolutely wonderful. It is the first commercial Dragon database that I not only merged with my own, but also tend to use separately.

Finally a few words of thanks: I am grateful to Emil Wellner for sending me his interesting analyses, as well as to Ilia Balinov, Erik van den Doel, Jonathan Rowson, and Bogdan Lalic who agreed to answer questions regarding their games. My friend, International Master Carmen Voicu, helped me significantly in analysing a couple of tricky variations, and for that I am grateful.

Now to the games.

Game 12
Palac - Lalic
Pula 2000

- 1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6
- 5.♖c3 g6 6.♗e3



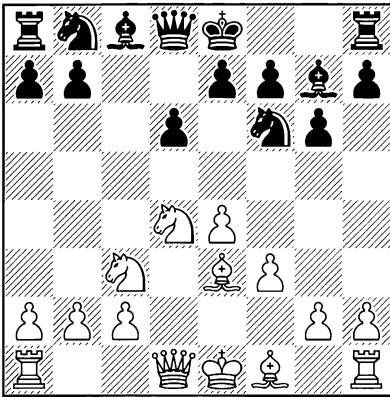
6...♗g4?? now loses to 7.♗b5+!, so there is no reason to begin with 6.f3.

6...♗g7

6...♗c6 has virtually no independent significance. 7.f3, and now 7...♗g7 is the most normal, and 7...♗d7 will transpose to the early ...♗d7 after 8.♖d2 ♜c8 9.0-0-0 ♗g7, a main sideline for Black in the Rauzer Attack, which will be considered below in the note to Black's 8th move.

An unusual move order from Kasparov - Georgiev, Sarajevo 2000, is related with another topic - the early ...a6. After 5...a6 6.♗e3 ♘bd7 7.f3 g6 (which is equivalent to 5...g6 6.♗e3 ♘bd7 7.f3 a6) 8.♖d2 b5?! (8...♗g7 transposes to the 6...♗g7 7.f3 a6 lines), White of course played 9.a4! bxa4 (9...b4 10.♘d5!) 10.♘xa4! ♗g7 Later Kasparov proposed 11.c4! with advantage, as the most precise.

7.f3!



Rauzer's concept, which time has proved to be the best. White controls both e4 and g4 and the f6-knight now becomes a passive, defensive piece. At the same time f3 builds the basis for a future attack with g2-g4 and h2-h4-h5.

7...♗c6

7...0-0 makes no difference if Black wishes to play the main lines with 8.♖d2 ♗c6. An independent line for Black after 7...0-0 8.♖d2 is 8...d5?! 9.e5 ♗e8 (9...♘fd7 10.f4 should give White some advantage after all reasonable moves, e.g. 10...♗b6 11.♗e2!? ♗c6 12.0-0-0, etc.) 10.f4 f6. Now 11.0-0-0 fxe5 12.fxe5 ♗c6 13.♘f3 ♗g4 14.♘d5 is a very common recommendation,

but 14...e6!± gives Black chances to survive in a slightly worse endgame. So I would rather advise White to deviate with 11.♘f3, and if 11...fxe5 then 12.♘xe5! as in Gufeld-Zimin, USSR 1958.

More grounded is another sideline with 7...a6 (a hybrid between the Dragon and the Najdorf). The disadvantage of the ...a6, ...b5, ...b4 plan in the Dragon is evident: it does not really help Black to gain control over the d5-square. Still 7...a6 was tested by some of the greatest chess players ever. But, starting from the 70s, the line began to be forgotten. Yet recently it has begun to reappear occasionally at grandmaster level. Here I recommend 8.♖d2 (the immediate 8.♗c4!? is a decent alternative) 8...♘bd7!. The early ...a6 can only be justified with play in the spirit of the Najdorf. (The hasty 8...b5 is considered to be insufficient in view of 9.a4 b4 10.♘a2 a5 11.♗b5+ ♗d7 12.c3 bxc3 13.♘xc3.

After 8...0-0?! 9.0-0-0! followed by h4 White has great chances of developing a crushing attack on the kingside. He scores over 80% from this position! An illustrative line is 9...b5 10.h4 h5 11.g4! e5?! 12.♘b3 hxg4 13.♗g5, etc.

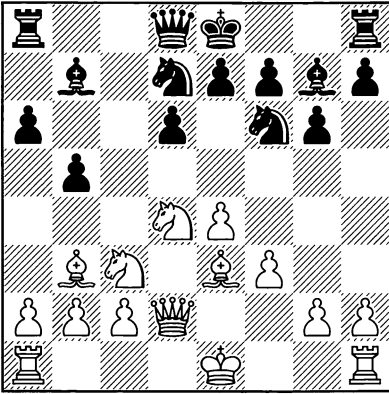
It is important to note that 8...♗c6?! in conjunction with ...a6 is always dubious, and rather devalues the ...b5 idea. In the normal ...♗c6 lines Black plays ...a6 only somewhere around move 14, which is usually a sign that he has run out of constructive ideas in the position.) 9.♗c4!?. Several old sources, for example Geller in *ECO* in 1984, gave a clear preference to this move, while in other lines the bishop remains passive. And now:

a) 9...h5 prevents 10.♗h6, but White's position becomes pleasant. Amongst other ideas he can consider castling kingside.

b) After 9...♗c5 10.♗h6!? might be recommended.

c) 9...♖c7 10.♗b3! b5 (or 10...0-0 11.h4!? with prospects for an attack, Bilek - Simagin, Budapest 1961, and 10...h6 11.0-0-0 ♗b6? 12.e5!± Karjakin - Romero Holmes, Pamplona 2003, with the idea 12...dxe5 13.♘db5 axb5 14.♘xb5 ♖d7 15.♖b4) 11.0-0-0 ♗b7 12.♗h6 ♗xh6 (or 12...0-0 13.h4!) 13.♖xh6 with initiative, Torre - Fuller, Australia 1975.

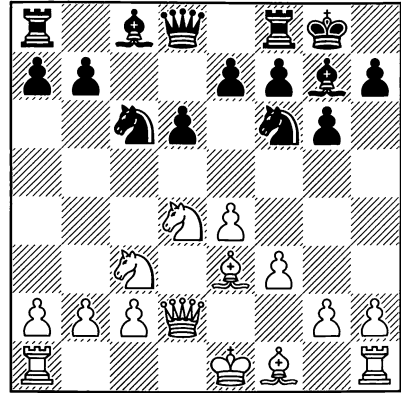
d) 9...b5 10.♖b3 ♖b7



This move transposes to a position which often arises via 8.♖c4. (On 10...♗c5 then 11.♗d5! is funny, but 11.♗h6! seems to be more solid. 10...h5?! 11.a4 is clearly better for White, as is probably also 10...0-0?! 11.a4! with the ideas 11...b4 12.♗d5 and 11...bxa4 12.♗c6 ♖e8 13.♗xa4 ♖b7 14.e5!.) 11.♗h6! (evaluated as strongest by Botvinnik, who also faced 11.0-0-0 over the board) 11...0-0. "Dangerous" according to Botvinnik. (Krutikhin - Botvinnik, Moscow Spartakiad 1963, continued 11...♗xh6 12.♖xh6 ♗c5 13.0-0-0 ♗xb3† 14.cxb3! ♖b6 15.♗b1 0-0-0 16.b4! and White created some pressure. After this experience of struggling for half a point against his not too famous opponent, the 6th World Champion simply stopped playing the Dragon) 12.♗xg7 ♗xg7. Approximate, overoptimistic analysis may continue 13.0-0-0 b4 (13...♗c5 14.e5!? dxe5 15.♗f5† ♗h8 16.♖h6 gxf5 17.♗xd8 ♗xd8 18.♖e3) 14.♗a4 (if 14.♗d5 ♗xd5 15.♗xd5 ♗xd5 16.exd5, then Black has 16...♖a5!) 14...♖b8 15.h4! (15.♖xb4 ♗xe4∞, followed by 16...♖a8 and 17...e5) 15...e5?! 16.♗e2 ♖a5 17.h5! ♗c6 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.♖xd6 ♗xa4 20.♖e7† ♗h8 21.♗xa4 ♖fe8 22.♖f7 ♖f8 23.♖xh7†! ♗xh7 24.♗xd7+ -

The conclusion is that in the lines with 7...a6 Black has little influence in the centre, and is therefore somewhat worse. ♗h6 is, as a rule, an important resource for White. When Black

castles kingside White usually should begin his kingside attack with h4! rather than g4.
8.♖d2 0-0



If Black likes the idea of 8...0-0 9.0-0-0 ♗d7, then 8...♗d7 9.0-0-0 ♖c8! looks a significantly more flexible move order. The point is that in reply to g4 Black gets the additional possibility of an early ...h5! (GM Sergei Tiviakov's speciality), urging White to close the kingside by g5 (h3? will lose a pawn after ...hxg4). Still, after g5 Black will be forced to retreat a knight to h7 (e8 is still occupied by the king!) where it will become extremely passive. White can then develop an initiative with f3-f4-f5!. Let us consider all of this with more details.

I suggest 10.g4! (White can also use the waiting plan with ♗b1, ♗e2). Now 10...0-0 of course transposes to 8...0-0. Instead Black may play 10...h5 at once, or wait for h4 with 10...♗e5. After the first of these White scores extremely well, while the latter seems to be more critical. This is because in positions where the kingside is closed ...♗e5 can be more useful for Black than h4 for White. Thus:

a) 10...h5 11.g5 ♗h7 12.f4 (after 12.♗b1 0-0, then Xie Jun's suggestion 13.♗b3! allows quite a typical reply for these lines 13...♗xc3!?. If White wishes to delay f4 then 12.♗e2 is reasonable.) 12...0-0 (12...♗f8? 13.f5 Untested is 12...♗g4!?) 13.♗e2 (also of interest is 13.f5!?) and 13...♗e5 14.♗e2 ♖e8 shifts to Yagupov - Motylev below. If Black instead plays 13...♖a5

14.♖b1 gxf5, then both 15.♗xc6!? bxc6 16.♗d5 ♖d8 17.♗f4 ♖b8 18.b3 fxe4 19.♗xh5 ♗g4 20.♗e2 ♗xh5 21.♗xh5 Coleman, and 15.♗xf5!? ♗xf5 16.exf5 ♖xf5 17.♗d3 ♖a5 18.♗d5!? ♖xd2 19.♖xd2 e6 20.♗f4 h4 21.g6 with initiative for the pawn, Coleman - De Holanda, corr. 2000 are promising for White. Imprecise is 13.♖b1 ♗g4! 14.♗e2 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.♖xd4 e5! - Xie Jun) 13...♖e8 (or 13...♖a5 14.♖b1 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xd4 16.♖xd4 ♗e6 17.f5! Jandek - Binas, corr. 1998-2000) and now White should probably play 14.f5!? (why not?) 14...♗e5 (or 14...♖a5!? 15.♖b1 and then for example 15...♗xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.♖xd4 ♖c5 18.♖d2 ♖e5 19.♖hf1± Reichardt - Berclaz, corr. 1998-9) 15.♖hf1 with pressure after 15...♖h8 16.♗d5 Yagupov - Motylev, Russian Ch 1998, or 15...a6 16.♖f2!? b5 17.♖fd1 - Coleman.

b) 10...♗e5 11.h4 h5!? (after the rare 11...b5 the principled move is in many ways 12.♗cxb5. Then: 12...0-0 13.h5 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♗xg4 Mestel - Christiansen, Hastings 1978/9, and now 15.♗e2 ♗xe4 16.♖e1! Nunn.) 12.g5 ♗h7 13.♖b1!? 0-0 (13...♗f8 14.f4 or 14.♗e2!? ♗e6 15.♗xe6 ♗xe6 16.♗d4 0-0 17.♗d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 ♗c4 19.♖b4! Istratescu - Gelashvili, Kallithea 2002) 14.♗e2 ♗c4 15.♗xc4 ♖xc4 16.♖d3 ♖c8 (Zuidema - Bilek, Havana (Ol) 1966) 17.f4!± Matulovic.

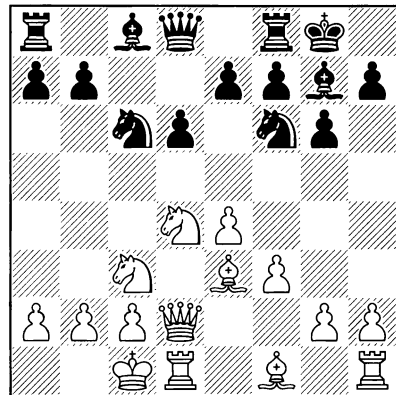
Before going on with 8...0-0 it is useful to observe a recent trend: in a number of games Black tried to combine an early ...♗d7 with an early ...h5, without even waiting for White's g4 or h4 (e.g. 8...h5, or 8...♗d7 and 9...h5). I always used to think that such ideas are unsound for Black, because White will quickly play h3!? (and develop the f1-bishop, if necessary), intending g4. If Black then allows g4 the pawn will create colossal strategic pressure on the f6-knight, which Black can hardly survive. So, after h3 Black's only logical continuation will be ...h4 (forgetting completely all ideas involving castling, as then the h4 pawn will be doomed), followed by moves like ...♗h5 or ...♖h5.

The move order nuance is that 8...♗d7 9.0-0 h5 allows White to develop his bishop to c4 (which is promising here and not really transposing to the 8...0-0 9.♗c4 labyrinth),

while in the line which we just considered above, i.e. 8...♗d7 9.0-0 ♖c8, the main move 10.g4 prevents Black from the ...h7-h5-h4 advance, while 10.♖b1 allows it. Black's entire concept looks so strategically unsound to me that I will refrain from further details. Normally, if Black plays with the king in the centre, he should collapse quite quickly.

9.0-0-0

"Strong and safe", comments GM Boris Alterman, one of the greatest experts in the Dragon, who amazingly has a negative score against White's queenside castling. Alternative 9.♗c4 prevents 9...d5 completely, but gives Black some time to prepare his actions, and is therefore much more complicated.



9...♗d7!:

"Fundamentally unsound" - FM Stefan Sieveres, "a flagrant error" - IM Attila Schneider.

Now I partly agree with these strong statements. The second player takes great risks with this move, while White faces no pressure and can calmly start his kingside assault, as no adequate counter-plan for Black can be seen. Even the common but rather innocent idea from the 9.♗c4 line: ...♖c8, ...♗e5 and ...♗c4 looks senseless here, as Black will lose two tempi in comparison with the sharp positions after 9.♗c4.

As usual in the Dragon, the advance...b7-b5-b4 sends a rather pleasant invitation to the white

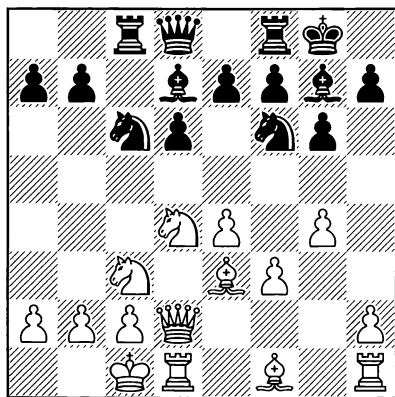
knight to visit d5. From another point of view, 9...♗d7 is in some ways the most complex of the available moves for a very simple reason: Black does not exchange pieces! This factor alone cannot change the assessment of the line, but (with the exception of the very top level of chess) it significantly improves the practical chances for an ambitious Black player. In the last decade theory has begun to develop intensively in this line. White has started to learn how to avoid the opponent's tricks, and Black's choice of playable looking lines has gradually narrowed.

The system with 9...♗d7 is highly transpositional, so here the first player should definitely know the evaluation of at least 3-4 key positions (both promising and unpromising). Such knowledge will be essential for navigating during a practical game. Before we dive into variations, I should also note that the value of the developing move ♗e2 is often underestimated. In fact e2 is a very good square for the bishop! Thus, the continuation of Svidler-Golubev, Baden-Baden 2002: 9.♗c4 ♗d7 10.0-0-0 ♖e5 11.♗e2!?, where a top 10 regular puts his bishop on e2 even with the loss of a tempo, should at least make us think.

10.g4!?

We will concentrate on this, the most popular continuation.

10...♗c8



10...♖e5 11.h4 as a rule transposes after 11...♗c8. The most common option to

do without.. ♗c8 is 11...b5 (11...♗a5 can be answered by ♖b3 at some point, or by 12.♗b1 ♗f8 13.♗e2!, Grischuk - Soloviov, Russian Ch 1999, which is akin to Maciej's important game below. On 13...b5 Grischuk recommended 14.♖cxb5 ♗d8 15.h5. Too risky, perhaps, is 11...h5 12.♗e2! or 12.gxh5 ♖xh5 13.♗g1). After 11...b5, the line goes on with 12.h5 (12.♖d5 is also good) b4 (12...♖xf3 13.♖xf3 ♗xg4 is hardly sound after 14.♗e2!?) 13.♖d5 ♖xd5 (13...e6 14.♖xf6 ♗xf6± and now maybe 15.♗e2 - but not 15.♗g5? ♖d3!?) 14.exd5 ♗a5 15.♗b1 ♗xd5 16.hxg6 (16.♖f5!?) is another dangerous move for Black which GM Vladimir Chuchelov and I analysed some 10 years ago. But now I am not quite sure about 16...♗xd2 17.♖xe7 ♖h8 18.♗xd2 ♗fe8 19.h6 ♗f8! 20.♖d5 ♖xf3 21.♗xb4 ♗xg4 with the idea 22.♖c7 ♗e4!) 16...fxg6 17.♗h2 with a very strong White initiative: 17...h6 (both 17...h5 and 17...♗f7 can be answered in the same way) 18.♗e2!± Bologan-Fedorov, Elista (Ol) 1998.

10...♗a5 and now 11.♖b3! ♗c7 12.g5 ♖h5 13.♗e2! ♗c8 14.♖d5 ♗d8 15.f4 e6 16.♖c3 ♖b4 17.♗b1! Nevostrujev - Soloviov, Samara 2000. Instead 11.♗c4! transposes to the 9.♗c4 ♗a5 system.

11.h4

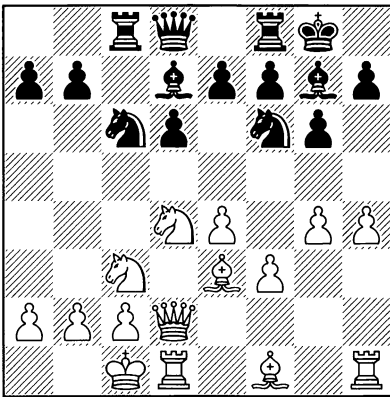
A very common move. Also interesting is: 11.♗b1! (11.♗e2! ♖e5 12.♗b1 just transposes) 11...♖e5 12.♗e2. This is the pet line of GM Oleg Korneev, which has been used by him at least four times. Virtually Black's only sensible reply is 12...b5! (discouraging is 12...h5! 13.h3! or 13.gxh5 ♖xh5 14.f4 ♖c4 15.♗xc4 ♗xc4 16.f5 Korneev - Belezky, Lorca 2001, or 12...a6 13.h4 h5 14.gxh5! ♖xh5 15.♗hg1 with initiative. And after 12...♗a5, then 13.h4 is good, and even better is 13.♖b3! ♗c7 14.g5 ♖h5 15.♖d5 ♗d8 16.♗xa7 Korneev - Getta, San Sebastian 2000). Now White can consider:

a) 13.♖dxb5 was tested in the stem game Korneev - Fedorov, Krasnodar 1998: 13...♗xb5 (worse is 13...♖c4! 14.♗xc4 ♗xc4 and now maybe 15.e5!?) 14.♖xb5 ♗b8 (14...a6!?) Fedorov) 15.c4 (brave is 15.♗xa7!?) 15...a6 16.♖d4 ♗c7 17.♗c1. Here Black could prevent the c4-c5

advance with 17...♖fd7! and if 18.♗b3, then 18...♗c5! with compensation - Fedorov.

b) 13.♗cxb5!? was tried by Korneev recently. It seems that 13...♗xb5 14.♗xb5!? is the idea. Instead, Korneev - Carlsen, Reykjavik 2004, continued with 13...a6 14.♗c3 ♗c4 15.♗xc4 ♗xc4 when Black had no real compensation. 16.♗de2!± could be a move here.

c) 13.h4!? makes sense as well. 13...b4 (on 13...♗c4?! follows 14.♗xc4 bxc4 15.h5±. 13...♗a5!? is considered in Macieja's line below) 14.♗d5 ♗xd5 15.exd5 ♗a5 (15...♗c4?! 16.♗xc4 ♗xc4 17.h5±), and now untested is 16.h5! with the idea 16...♗xd5 17.♗f5!. This is probably stronger than 16.♗b3 ♗c7 17.h5, which transposes to the variation with 15...b4, deviating from the main game.



11...♗e5

The main alternative is 11...h5. Now 12.♗d5!? is perhaps the most dangerous move for Black. I remember analysing it for a really long time in the army, fourteen years ago. Since then no really important games have been played with it. The most significant of the lines, already published by me in Correspondence Chess Informant and New In Chess, are:

a) 12...hxg4 13.h5 (much stronger might be 13.♗xf6†!? ♗xf6 14.♗xc6!, or 13.♗xc6!? followed by 14.♗xf6† ♗xf6 15.h5 after any Black recapture) 13...♗xd5 (13...♗xh5!? and now after both 14.♗f5 Schneider & Sapi and 14.♗xc6 bxc6 15.♗f4!? not everyone would

be convinced about White's chances) 14.exd5 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 Hazai - Bilek, Budapest 1981. Now 15...♗xd4!? 16.♗xd4 ♗b6 and Black is hardly much worse. However those 13th move alternatives need to be investigated in practice.

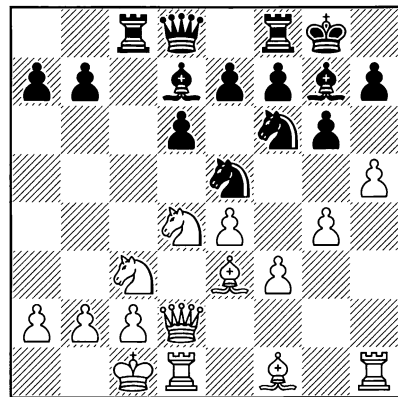
b) 12...♗xd5 13.exd5 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 and now 15...♗a5 16.gxh5 ♗xa2 17.h6 f6 18.♗d3± or 15...hxg4 16.fxg4!.

c) 12...♗xd4 13.♗xd4 e5 (13...hxg4 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.h5 g5 16.f4!?, less clear is 16.e5 dxe5 17.♗xf6† exf6 18.♗xd7 ♗xd7 19.♗xd7 gxf3 and the black pawns are at least frightening) 14.♗e3 ♗xd5 (Shianovsky-Geller, Kiev 1957) 15.♗xd5! hxg4 16.h5 and I evaluated this in White's favour.

After 11...♗a5?! then 12.♗b3!? looks unpleasant for Black.

12.h5

Again, the dominating choice in practice. And again, not necessarily the best.



The position after 12.♗b1 is known since Boleslavsky-Geller, Zurich Ct 1953. I suggest White to avoid it: 12...h5! seems to be playable for Black.

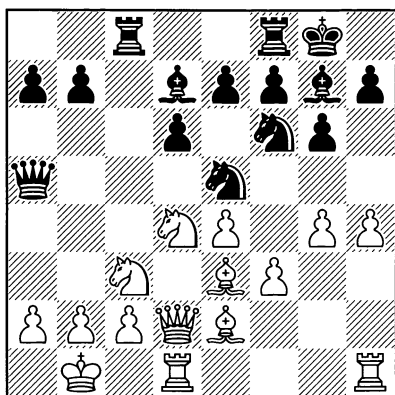
Better is 12.♗e2!? and now:

a) 12...h5 is very risky here: 13.♗dg1!? (recommended by Schneider & Sapi) 13...♗c4 (13...b5 14.gxh5 b4 15.♗d5 ±) 14.♗xc4 ♗xc4 and now, probably, 15.♗f5!? with an attack.

b) 12...b5!? 13.♗b1 (13.h5 ♗a5 is the Smeets - Carlsen game, see 12.h5 ♗a5 13.♗e2) and we

are back in Korneev's line, which after 13...♞a5 in its turn transposes to 12...♞a5 below.

c) 12...♞a5 13.♔b1!



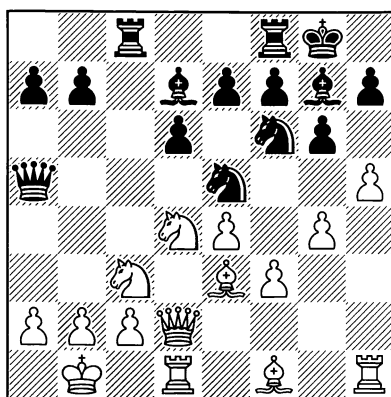
This is one of these important positions, which can be found at the crossroads between a lot of lines. It first appeared in Macieja - Grabarczuk, Sopot 1997. Black faces problems here: 13...b5 is critical, but it gives White a maximum of possibilities: He can grab the b5-pawn, or choose between three other lines represented in the games Smeets - Carlsen, Lau - Tiviakov and Palac - Lalic. (13...♞xc3 14.♞xc3 ♞xc3 15.bxc3 ♞c8 is a typical Dragon endgame, where Black's compensation for the exchange is insufficient. To feel really confident after the ...♞xc3 sacrifice, Black should ensure himself of either an extra pawn on the kingside, or the preservation of the queens on the board. Now 16.♔b2!± was Sutovsky - Hodgson, Oxford 1998.) 14.♔b3! (14.h5!± transposes to Smeets - Carlsen - see this game below) 14...♞c7. Here a line is 15.g5 (15.h5!± transposes directly to the main game) 15...♔h5 (15...b4? loses a piece after 16.♔b5 ♞xb5 17.gxf6+- Lau - Tiviakov, Montecatini Terme 1994) 16.♔d5 ♞d8, followed by the principled 17.♞xa7!± ♔c4 18.♞xc4 bxc4 19.♞b6 ♞e8 20.♔d4. White has an extra pawn, but unfortunately I am afraid to recommend such a greedy choice to White. The position is complex and some global investigation is required.

12...♞a5!

12...♔xf3 13.♔xf3 ♞xg4 is considered to be insufficient: 14.♞e2 (I like this more than 14.h6) 14...♞xh5 and now the simplest is probably 15.♔d4 ♞xe2 16.♔dxe2! (16.♞xe2 ♞xc3 17.bxc3 ♔xe4 18.♞h6 Sermek - Kovacevic, Belgrade 1989 allows 18...♔xc3!) 16...h5 (or 16...♔g4 17.♞d4 ♔e5 18.♞e3±) 17.♞xa7!± Hanison - Betts, corr. 2000.

13.♔b3!±

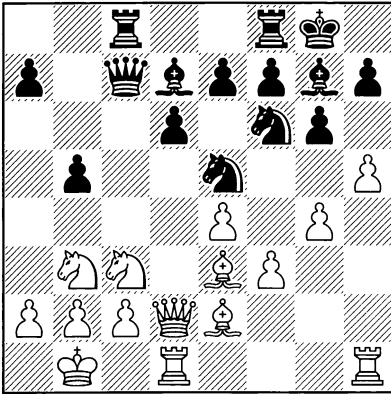
13.♔b1!±, which is the most played move here, is basically what Black hopes for in the entire 9...♞d7-system.



Now comes 13...♔xf3! (according to Ward, this is a more accurate introduction than 13...♞xc3) 14.♔xf3 ♞xc3 (or 14...♞xg4 first) 15.♞xc3 ♞xc3 16.bxc3 ♞xg4 17.♞g2 ♔xe4 with fine compensation for the rook, which is confirmed by a few dozen games, starting with Sandor - Aagaard, Hamburg 1993.

Fresh is 13.♞e2!± b5 (13...♞xc3 fails to impress. 14.♞xc3 ♞xa2 and now 15.♞a3, or the more ambitious 15.♞b3!± ♞a1† 16.♔d2 ♞a5† 17.♞c3!) and now 14.♔b1!± (if 14.♔b3 then 14...♞c7 transposes to Palac - Lalic, while Black's additional possibility is 14...♞a6) 14...♞xc3 (14...b4 15.♔d5 ♔xd5 16.exd5 with the idea 16...♞xd5 17.♔f5!± is something we have already seen in Korneev's line. Or 14...♔c4?! 15.♞xc4 bxc4± 16.♔d5!±) 15.♞xc3 ♞xc3 (15...b4± is the big optimist's choice) 16.bxc3 ♞c8. This was Smeets - Carlsen, Corus-C 2004. Again this is one of these

endgames where Black's compensation for the exchange is rather vague. The game continued 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.♖b2 a5 19.♙h6 ♙h8 and here Rogozenko gives 20.♖b1!±. 13...♗c7 14.♙e2 b5 15.♖b1!



The position after 15.♖b1 is quite complex, but White seems to have good chances. (Still, we remember the promising early deviations: 13.♙e2, 12.♙e2 and Korneev's 11.♖b1 ♖e5 12.♙e2). Now 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.g5 is already quite a threat, which would be seen after moves like 15...a6?.

15...♖c4!?

Another direction is 15...b4 16.♖d5 ♖xd5 17.exd5 and now Black must make a difficult choice:

a) 17...f5 weakens the kingside: 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♙h6 f4!? 20.♖d4!? ♗c5 21.♗e1 with a dangerous initiative, Fressinet - Polzin, Bundesliga 2001/2.

b) 17...a5 18.♖d4! (the tempting 18.♙h6?! does not work well: 18...♙xh6 19.♗xh6 ♗xc2† 20.♖a1 ♗xe2!! and now 21.hxg6 ♗xd1† 22.♖d1 fxg6 with excellent compensation, Short - Bu Xiangzhi, Taiyuan 2004, or 21.♖d4 ♖xg4! 22.fxg4 and there is not only 22...♗e5 23.hxg6 ♗g7 24.gxh7† ♖h8∞ Sax - Cebalo, Croatia 2002, but also 22...♗e4! - Cebalo) 18...♖c4 (18...a4 19.♙h6±) 19.♙xc4 ♗xc4 20.hxg6 (less clear is 20.♙h6 ♙xd4 21.♙xf8!± and now 21...♙f6, or even 21...♙c3) 20...fxg6 21.♗h2. In Hautot - Goormachtigh, Belgium

2003/4, Black should now have played 21...h6!, when I can suggest 22.b3!? ♗xd5 23.♖f5! with advantage for White, rather than 22.♙xh6 ♙xd4 23.b3!? ♗c3 24.♖xd4 ♗xd4 25.♙e3 ♗g7 26.♙d4 ♖f6 27.g5 ♙f5!.

c) 17...♖c4?! 18.♙xc4 ♗xc4 19.♙d4±

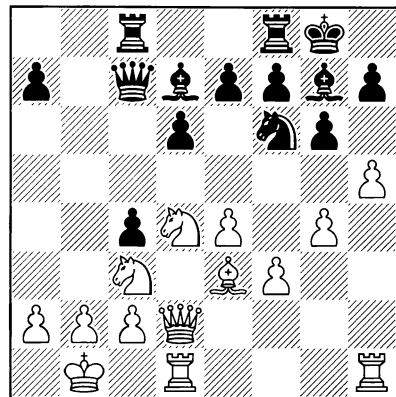
d) 17...♖f8 18.♖h2 as in Tomescu - Piva, Porto San Giorgio 2003, may look reasonable, but here Black has 18...♖c4! (instead of the game's 18...a5?) 19.♙xc4 ♗xc4 when he is alive, because the h2-square is no longer available for the white queen. e.g. 20.hxg6 (20.♖dh1 g5 21.♙xg5 a5! 20.♗f2 ♙e5!?) 20...fxg6 21.♖dh1 (21.♖hh1 ♙e5) 21...♖f8! 22.♖xh7 ♖xf3! and now 23.♖xg7† only gives a draw.

But, instead of all this, 18.♖d4!± preserving the initiative looks interesting.

16.♙xc4 bxc4

16...♗xc4?! looks terribly bad for Black: it can be punished by 17.e5 or 17.♙h6.

17.♖d4



In the line 9.♙c4 ♗a5 10.0-0-0 ♙d7 11.♙b3 ♖fc8, when White follows with h4, g4, h5 and Black responds with ...♖e5, ...b5, ...♖c4, a quite similar position often arises, which is difficult for Black. Here he can attack b2 faster, but it hardly improves his chances.

17...♗b7

17...♖b8 would normally transpose.

18.♗h2!±

18.♖a1!? ♖b8 19.♖b1 is probably a more suitable method to protect b2. After that

Black's prospects for counterplay would have been limited.

At the same time, 18.♙h6! ♖b8 19.b3 looks a more concrete decision. Of course, b3 is (hypothetically) vulnerable, but White's attack appears to be faster.

18...♖b8 19.♙c1 h6!?

Prophylactic against the possible 20.hxg6 and 21.♘d5. White's bishop is busy defending b2, so the h6-pawn is untouchable for the moment.

20.hxg6 fxg6 21.b3

Attacking h6. 21.♙e2! was safer.

21...cxb3 22.axb3 ♖fc8!?

22...g5! with double-edged play.

23.♖d3!?

23.♙xh6! is of course tempting, but it is surprisingly hard to make it work. Still, it seems that White is better after 23...♖xc3 24.♙xg7 ♗xg7 25.♙h6† ♗f7 26.g5 ♘e8 27.♖h4! e5 28.♙h7† ♗f8 29.♖dh1!, which is inevitably followed by 30.♙xg6 exd4 31.♖h8† ♗e7 32.♖xe8†.

23...h5?

23...e5? is refuted by 24.♙xh6!, but 23...g5! was called for, even more evidently than one move earlier.

24.gxh5 ♘xh5

24...e5 25.h6!±

25.♙g2!±

Black's king has become too vulnerable. Though the following was not free from inaccuracies, White got to the enemy monarch in the end.

25...♙e8 26.♖xh5 ♙xd4 27.♖xd4 ♖xc3 28.♙b2 ♖xc2 29.♙xc2 gxh5 30.♙g2† ♗f8 31.♖b4 ♙b5 32.♙g6 e6 33.♙h6† ♗e7 34.♖d4 ♙e2 35.e5! ♙xf3 36.♙g7† ♗e8 37.♙g8† ♗e7 38.♙g7† ♗e8 39.♙g8† ♗e7 40.exd6† ♗d7 41.♙f7† ♗d8 42.♙f8† ♗d7 43.♙e7† ♗c6 44.♖c4† ♗b5 45.d7

1-0



Game 13

Golubev – Poliantsev

Mariupol 1990

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♗f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♙d2 ♗c6 9.0-0-0

Black's ideal plan after 9.0-0-0 includes the exchange on d4, ...♙a5 and ...♙e6, taking control of many squares. Fortunately for White he is able to prevent the execution of this plan in its pure form. Now we will start considering Black's options one after another.

9...♘xd4

The immediate 9...♙a5 is very rare. Then 10.♙c4! requires knowledge of 9.♙c4 to which it transposes, and 10.♗b1 should suit White if he intends to meet 9...♘xd4 10.♙xd4 ♙xa5 in the same way. The most radical reaction, however, is 10.♗b3!? ♙c7 and now 11.h4 or 11.g4 ♙e6 12.g5 ♗d7 13.h4 a5 14.♗b5 ♙c8 15.♗b1 with advantage, Smirin - V. Alterman, Haifa 1993.

10.♙xd4

By far Black's most popular move here is 10...♙e6. It will be covered separately in the next game.

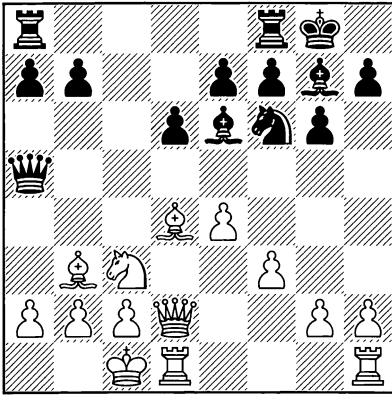
10...♙a5!?

The main idea behind this queen move (used by Geller and other strong players in the 50s) is, of course, 11...♙e6!. For example, after 11.g4 it will transpose to the main line of the 9.g4 line, which is acceptable for Black. 11.h4 also allows 11...♙e6, but there is a fresh idea: 12.♙g5!?. Yemelin - Kalashnikov, St Petersburg 2000, should, at least, be mentioned. Usually, White chooses between two other promising, but very different, options.

11.♙c4

Improving the position of the only relatively passive piece. A reasonable alternative is 11.♗b1!?, which can lead to tense play after 11...e5 (not 11...♙e6? 12.♘d5) 12. ♙e3 ♙e6. e.g. 13.a3 ♖fc8! 14. ♙e2 ♖c6 and after 15.♗b5, 15...♙a4! was found by Wellner. Instead White can consider 15.g4 ♖ac8 16.♘d5.

11...♙e6 12.♙b3!



An important part of White's concept. In contrast 12...e6 would significantly improve Black's influence in the centre.

In this position Black has tried four main plans: a quick ...b5-b4 (without exchanging on b3), 12...xb3 and 13...f8 (trying to prepare...e5 and ...d5), 12...f8 and ...b5-b4 (usually with the inclusion of ...xb3 at some early point), and finally, the less forcing ...f8 and ...c6 (which also normally involves...xb3). None of these plans has been found to be satisfactory by Black players. Before entering into greater detail it is important to note that White should not be afraid to capture on b3 with his c-pawn (which in fact will remain his main option even if Black will allow him to play b1 first). There is no way for Black to exchange major pieces without serious concessions, and middlegame factors are of most importance. The capture cxb3 ensures a safe position for the white king, and Black's pawns majority in the centre, as well as his kingside, becomes a target of White's long-term pressure.

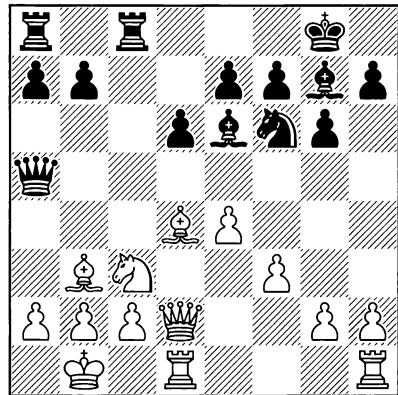
12...f8

12...xb3 13.cxb3 f8 14.b1 d7 is the oldest of Black's ideas. After 15.g4 ad8 White has usually tried the prophylactic 16.e2, which works well against 16...e5? 17.e3 d5 18.g5+-. As 16...a6!? is not entirely clear to me, I will follow Boleslavsky's main recommendation: 16.h4!? e5 17.e3 d5 18.exd5 d5 19.d5

xd2 20.exd2 f8 21.f8 22.c1! with a better endgame (Goglidze - Toprover, Tbilisi 1955).

After 12...b5 13.b1 b4 14.d5 xd5 15.exd5 b5 White's best, according to Rogozenko, seems to be 16.d3! xd3 (after 16...b7 17.he1 a5 18.a4 ab8 19.g4 f8 20.f2 White is clearly better - Gufeld) 17.xd3 f8! (17...a5? 18.a4! Gufeld) 18.e1 (here 18.a4?! allows 18...d5! 19.xg7 b6!) 18...c7 19.c a5 20.cxb4 axb4 21.dd1 with a better endgame in Motylev-Felgaer, Linares 2001.

13.b1



13...xb3

Or 13...b5 14.he1! xb3 (14...b4 15.d5! xd5 16.exd5 c7 17.a4! with a clearly superior position, Bagirov - Gufeld, Leningrad 1960. 14...ab8 15.e5!±) 15.cxb3. Now:

a) Black has never tried 15...c6. One of the interesting options for White here is 16.f6 17.d5 xd2 18.xd2 g7 19.c1.

b) Another waiting move is 15...ab8!?. Emil Wellner analysed 16.e5 dx5 17.xe5 e6! 18.b5 (18.e2?! d8! 19.xb5 xb5 20.b5 e5! Wellner, and now 21.xe5 e8 with the idea 22.e7 f6! 23.e2 a6!, or 21.c3 xd1† 22.c2 b6 23.xd1 d5!) 18...xd2 19.xd2 d5 20.xa7 c7 21.xd5 exd5 22.e3± with a sharp endgame. White's less obliging options are 16.f6 and 16.a3!?.

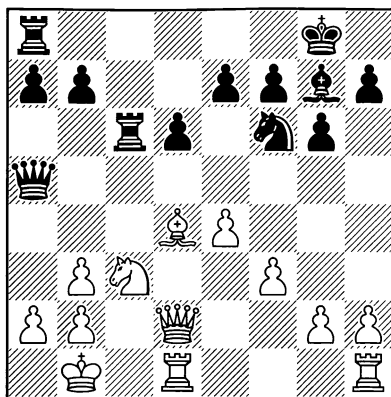
c) 15...b4 16.♟xf6! (16.♞d5 ♞xd5 17.♟xg7 is not a precise move order as it allows an intermediate 17...♞e3!) 16...bxc3 17.♟xc3 ♟xc3 (17...♟xc3? is refuted nicely by 18.♟e2!! ♟c5 19.b4+-) 18.bxc3 ♟xc3 (18...♟xc3 19.♟xc3 ♟xc3 20.♟c1 can lead to the same) 19.♟e3 ♟ac8 (Black is also suffering after 19...♟c5 20.♟xa5 ♟xa5 21.♟c3 or 21.♟c1) 20.♟xc3 ♟xc3 (or 20...♟xc3 21.♞b2 ♟c5 22.♟xa5 ♟xa5 23.♟c1±) 21.♟xc3 ♟xc3 22.♟c1 ♟xc1† 23.♞xc1. The arising pawn endgame will be in White's favour - his queenside majority offers prospects of sacrificing a pawn there, distracting Black's king from the kingside, and to win the black pawns then. Black, however, can build up some kind of fortress by keeping his f-pawn on f7 and placing his e-pawn on e6. This will prevent immediate access to the black pawns for the white king. Dutch IMs Karel van der Weide and Jeroen Bosch filled eight pages of *New In Chess Magazine* 1998/4 with extensive analysis proving White wins even in this case. They showed that every pawn move on the kingside is extremely sensitive. The authors' main line goes: 23...♞f8 (Not 23...g5 24.♞b2 and the white king reaches a6) 24.♞c2 (24.b4 ♞e8 25.b5 ♞d7 26.♞c2, proposed by Shereshevsky & Slutsky, allows Black to escape after 26...d5! - Van der Tak.) 24...♞e8 25.♞c3 ♞d7 26.♞c4 ♞c6 27.h4! (not 27.b4 g5!) 27...h6 28.b4 e6 29.a4 ♞b6 30.f4! (not 30.g4? g5) 30...♞c6 31.g4 ♞b6 32.f5. White will advance his pawns to f6, b5 and a5, then he will push e4-e5, which after ...d5 will allow him to move the king via c5 and d6 to Black's f7-pawn, and promote his f6-pawn. In his turn, Black will get time to promote his d5-pawn to a queen, but will end up in a losing queen endgame in various versions. So the endgame is probably winning for White, but playing against a prepared "masochist" who also has some two or three hundred Elo points less than you, it makes some sense to deviate earlier.

13...♟c4 is a rare idea. White is usually advised to play 14.h4 b5 15.h5 e5 (or 15...b4 16.♞d5 ♞xd5 17.♟xg7 ♟xb3 18.cxb3 ♞c3† 19.bxc3 bxc3 20.♟xc3 ♟xc3 21.♟xc3 ♟xc3

22.♟c1 with an advantage in the endgame, Ribli - Velimirovic, Pula 1971) 16.♟e3 b4 17.♞e2 ♟xb3 18.cxb3 ♟c6 19.hxg6 fxg6 20.♟g5!? with better chances, as in Nikitin - Ignatiev, Moscow 1963.

13...♟c6!? must be compared with 13...♟xb3 14.axb3 ♟c6. Now: 14.g4 b5!? (14...♟xb3 transposes to 13...♟xb3) 15.♞d5 (after 15.♟xf6 ♟xf6 16.♞d5 ♟xd2 17.♟xd2 Black has 17...♟h4!, but interesting is 15.g5!?) 15...♟xd2 16.♟xd2 ♟xd5 17.exd5 with a slight advantage. 14.cxb3 ♟c6

14...b5 15.♟he1! was already considered above.



15.g4

15.h4 allows 15...h5!?

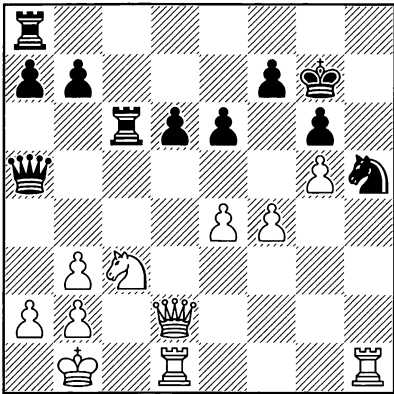
15...e6

After 15...♟ac8 16.h4 h5!? and now possible are both 17.gxh5!? and 17.g5 ♞e8 18.♟xg7 ♞xg7 19.f4 (Winants - Sosonko, Dutch Cht 1992), where White's chances are at least slightly better.

16.h4 h6

Or 16...b5 17.a3! (It makes sense for White to prevent 17...b4 and keep his knight on c3.) 17...♟ac8 (not good for Black are both 17...h5 18.♟xf6! ♟xf6 19.♞d5, and 17...b4 18.♞a2!, winning a pawn) 18.h5 e5 (Gruenfeld - Ma. Tseitlin, Israel (ch) 1990) and here 19.♟e3 looks clearly better for White.

17.g5!? hxg5 18.hxg5 ♞h5 19.♟xg7 ♞xg7 20.f4



Black's previous play is not too bad, but for the reasons described in the note after 12.♙b3, White's chances can be preferred.

20...♙ac8

20...b5? gives White promising attacking possibilities such as 21.♙d4† ♘g8 22.♙xh5 gxh5 23.g6!?.

21.♙h3!?

21.♙df1, preparing f4-f5, was also possible as after 21...♘g3 White has 22.♙h2!.

Also interesting is the immediate 21.f5!? exf5 22.♙d4† ♙e5 23.exf5 ♙xd4 24.♙xd4 with an initiative in the endgame.

21...♙c5

Here 21...b5 deserves attention. Then White could preserve some advantage by 22.a3!? ♙b6 (22...b4 23.♘a2!) 23.b4 with the idea 23...a5 24.bxa5 ♙xa5 25.f5.

22.♙d3 b5

This leads to a sharp endgame, which is objectively better for White. 23.♙xd6 was not a direct threat, but after passive Black moves White could have improved his position by 23.f5 or 23.♙d4.

23.♙xd6 ♙xd6 24.♙xd6 ♙xd6 25.♙xd6 ♘xf4

25...b4 26.♘e2±

26.♘b5 ♙c5?

The best chance was 26...a5!. Then 27.♙d7 ♘h3! 28.♘d6 ♙f8 looks unconvincing for White as his g5-pawn falls. Better is 27.♘d4,

and if 27...♙h8 then 28.a4 with the ideas: 28...♘h3? 29.♘xe6†! fxe6 30.♙d7† ♘g8 31.♙d8† ♘g7 32.♙xh8 ♘xh8 33.b4+- And 28...♙h5 29.b4!.

27.♘xa7 ♙xg5 28.b4

White's b-pawn is too dangerous.

28...♙e5

Or 28...♙g1† 29.♘c2 g5 30.b5 g4 31.b6 g3 32.b7 g2 33.b8=♙ ♙c1† 34.♘xc1 g1=♙† 35.♘c2 and White wins.

29.b5 ♙xe4 30.b6 ♘d5 31.b7 ♙b4 32.♙d7 ♘f6 33.♙c7 ♘d5 34.♘c6! ♙b6 35.♙d7 And Black resigned.

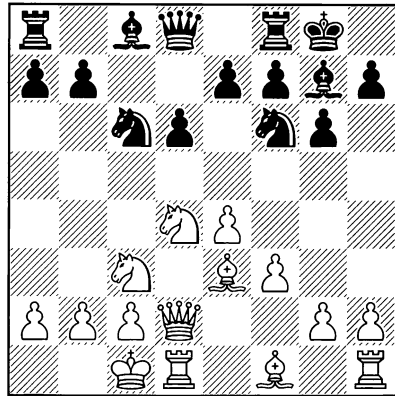
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Game 14

Van der Wiel - Sax

Plovdiv 1983

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♙d2 0-0 9.0-0-0



9...♘xd4

The immediate 9...♙e6!? has very rarely been used by grandmasters in recent years. It is playable to some extent, so we should consider it.

Black's first problem is 10.♘b1 when 10...♘xd4 just transposes to 9...♘xd4, and it is unlikely that his life is easier in lines such as 10...♙c8 11.♘xe6 (or 11.h4!? ♙a5 12.♘xe6 fxe6 13.♙c4 ♘f7 14.♙b3 ♘e5 and now

possibly 15.♖e2!? ♖h5 16.♖h3 ♖xc3 17.♙d2) 11...fxe6 12.♙c4 ♗d7 13.♙b3 ♖e5 14.♗e2!, Matanovic - Larsen, Portoroz (iz) 1958.

10.♖xe6 fxe6 is Black's second problem. His e6-pawn covers d5, but appears to be a weakness itself. Now 11.♙c4 ♗c8! 12.♙b3 ♖a5 may be dubious for Black, but it is at least complicated. 11.h4 is uncommon and Black can answer with 11...♖e5!. 11.g4 (which transposes to the 9.g4 line) weakens f3 and is therefore rather illogical. White's bishop pair is strong, so 11.♙h6!? may not seem logical either. Still, it is not at all easy for Black to develop counterplay:

11...♙xh6 12.♗xh6 ♖e5 13.♙b5 ♖c8?! fails to 14.♗h3! ♖f7 15.f4± Akopian - Alterman, USSR 1986.

Or 11...♖e5 12.♙xg7 ♖xg7 13.f4!.

After 11...♖c8 12.♙c4 ♗d7 13.♙b3 Black may be can try to improve on Geller's line 13...♖a5?! 14.♙xg7 ♖xb3† 15.axb3 ♖xg7 16.e5±, by 13...♖h5, which still looks slightly dubious.

Keeping 11.♙h6 in mind, I also recommend 11.g3!?. This is the kind of move which is rarely seen in the Rauzer Attack, but is interesting here as White prepares ♙h3. Black's possibilities are:

a) 11...♗a5 12.♙c4!

b) 11...♖e8!? 12.f4 ♖c8! (if 12...♖c7 13.h4!) 13.♖b1 (Here 13.h4 ♖b4! 14.♙h3 ♖f7 gives Black counterplay, but the alternative which I like is 13.♙h3! ♖c7 14.♖e2. 13.♙c4!? can also be considered.) 13...♖a5 (13...♗a5 14.♖b5!?) 14.♙h3 ♖xc3 (not 14...♗d7? 15.♗d5!) 15.♙xe6† ♖h8 16.bxc3 ♖c7 17.♙b3 ♖b5 and Black's piece play gives him some compensation, Oll - Fedorov, St Petersburg 1996.

c) 11...♖c8 12.♙h3 ♖f7 13.♖e2 ♗c7 14.♖b1 with clearly better prospects for White, Stillger - Farago, Budapest 1996.

d) 11...♗c8 12.♙h3 ♖e5 13.♗e2! ♖c4 14.♙d4 with advantage, Sonnberger - Stanojevic, Goetzis 1997.

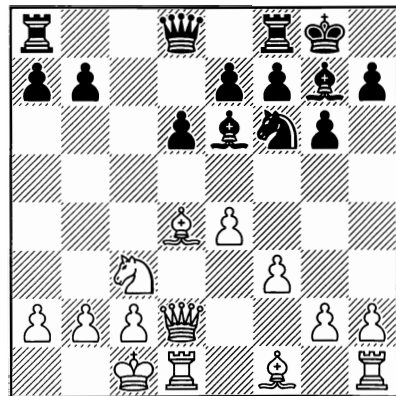
e) 11...♖d7 12.♙h3!? ♖xf3 13.♙xe6† ♖h8 14.♖hf1±

f) 11...♗d7 12.♙h3 ♖e5 13.♗e2! b5 14.f4

♖c4 15.e5 ♖e8 16.♙d4 with strong pressure, Romero Holmes - Martin Gonzalez, Linares 1990.

g) 11...♖e5 (in some ways this is a principled move) 12.f4! ♖eg4 13.♙g1 (13.♙d4 e5! and the queen sacrifice 14.fxe5?! ♙h6 15.♗xh6 ♖xh6 16.exf6 exf6 17.♙c4† ♖g7 is dubious: Black will transfer his knight to e5) 13...♖c8 (insufficient is 13...♗a5 14.♙c4! Grabarczyk - Jedryczka, Plock rpd 1994 and 13...♗c7 14.♗e2!? a6 15.♙h3 h5 16.♙g2! e5?! 17.h3 ♖h6 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.g4 Pletanek - Jerabek, corr. 1999) 14.♖b1!? (14.♗e2 ♖xc3!? 15.bxc3 ♗a5 with some compensation, Traub - Bakalarz, Germany 1998. 14.♙g2 ♗a5!? 15.♖b1 ♖c4) 14...b5 (or 14...♗a5 15.h3 ♖h6 16.♖d5!) 15.♖xb5 ♖xe4 16.♗e2 ♖gf6 17.♙h3!? ♗d7 18.♙d4 (18.♖d4?! ♖b8!) 18...a6 and now the simple 19.♙xf6 with the idea 19...♙xf6 20.♖d4! is very good for White. On the whole, the entire position after 10.♖xe6 fxe6 favours White, but the play is rather strategic in these lines.

10.♙xd4 ♙e6



A sharp but somewhat unreliable system, which is Black's second most popular option after 9.0-0-0.

11.♖b1!

The only advisable alternative to this main move is Timman's 11.♖d5!?, and further lines often can merge with ones which arise after 11.♖b1! ♗c7 12.♖d5!?. It is easy to see a

common idea between 11.♔b1 and 11.♘d5 - both these moves prevent 11...♚a5.

11...♚c7!

Being unable to place his queen on a5 at once (11...♚a5? 12.♘d5±), Black prepares 12...♟fc8 and then 13...♚a5 - even with a loss of tempo. Not an especially impressive concept, but activating the queen is vital for Black. After other moves he scores terribly:

11...♔h8?! is a move which is hard to take seriously. 12.h4 ♚a5 13.g4 ♟fc8 14.a3 (planning 15.h5 and 16.h6) 14...h5 15.gxh5 ♘xh5 16.♚h6†! ♔g8 17.♙xg7 ♘xg7 18.h5 followed by 19.♘d5 with a decisive attack.

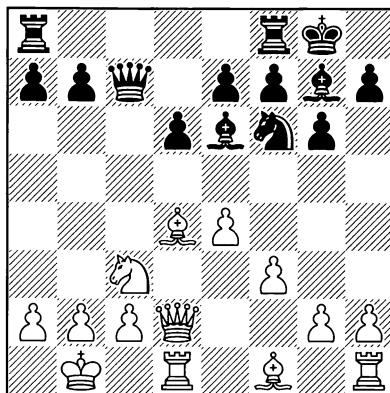
11...♚b8?! does not help Black to activate his pieces. 12.h4 ♟c8 13.h5 b5 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.g4 (it is not necessary for White to accept the pawn sacrifice) 15...b4 16.♘d5 ♙xd5 17.exd5 a5 18.g5 ♘h5 19.♙xg7 ♔xg7 20.♙h3 ♟c4 21.♙g4± Golubev - Glienke, Le Touquet 1995.

11...♚d7? 12.♙b5! ♚c7 13.♙a4 followed by 14.♙b3 and White is better.

11...♘d7 12.♙xg7 ♔xg7 (Konstantinopolsky - Lisitsyn, Leningrad 1935) can be met by 13.♘d5!? preventing 13...♚a5.

11...♟c8 is a natural move, but it does not help Black to develop counterplay. 12.g4 (or 12.h4 h5 13.♙e2!?, preparing 14.g4, Arakhamia - Matveeva, Jakarta 1993) 12...♟c4 (12...♘d7 13.♙xg7 ♔xg7 14.♘d5!? ♘e5 15.♙e2 with better chances, Golubev - Matveeva, Groningen 1993) 13.h4 ♙xf1 14.♟hxf1 (Pachman - Golombek, Venice 1950) 14...♟c4 15.♚d3 with initiative.

11...a6 just wastes time, as 12...b5 and 13...b4 is not a serious idea - White can play ♘d5 even without invitation. e.g. 12.h4 (12.g4 is of course also possible) 12...h5 (12...b5 13.h5 b4 14.♘d5, White is better, Geller - Horowitz, USA-USSR (3) 1954) 13.♘d5 ♙xd5 14.exd5 Bronstein - Denker, USA-USSR (2) 1954, and White is clearly better: 14...♚d7 (with the idea of 15...♚f5) is refuted by 15.g4! hxg4 16.h5 with a crushing attack. We now return to 11...♚c7.



12.h4

This very direct attempt (White plans to open the h-file quickly) is my main suggestion for White. After other moves Black faces problems as well. One of these is the positional 12.♘d5!? ♙xd5 13.exd5 ♟c8 14.♟c1! (defending against 14...♘d5!). This slightly releases White's pressure, but also keeps Black's queen passive. 14...a6 15.g4 e6 looks more or less playable for Black here.

12...♟fc8

12...h5 cannot stop White's initiative. 13.g4 (13.♙e2 ♟fc8 14.g4 transposes) 13...♟fc8 (highly unpleasant for Black is 13...hxg4?! 14.h5!). Then 14...gxh5 15.♚g5! ♟fc8 16.♙d3! gave White a dominating position in Blodstein - Serper, USSR 1982), and here:

a) 14.gxh5 provokes the sacrifice 14...♚a5, but I do not see any real danger for White after 15.hxg6!?. Otherwise, 14...♘xh5 15.♙xg7 ♔xg7 16.♙g1! ♚a5 17.♙g5 ♟c5 18.♚d4† f6 19.b4! ♚b6 20.♘a4!± Mannion - Pert, Hastings 1994/5.

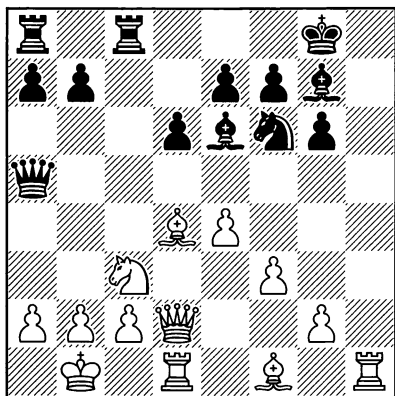
b) 14.♙e2!? ♚a5 (14...hxg4 favours White. 15.h5 gxh5 16.fxg4 ♚a5 17.a3!, Mochalov - Roizman, Minsk 1981). Now 15.g5 as in Dominguez - Kudrin, Buenos Aires 2003 does not look like a critical test for Black, but 15.♚g5!? is interesting: 15...b5 16.♘d5 ♙xd5 (or 16...♘d5 17.exd5 f6 18.♚xg6 ♙xd5 19.b3!?) 17.exd5. It is not clear how Black can get sufficient counterplay now. Dominguez gives 17...♚a4 18.♚d2 with a

slight advantage to White. In my view, 18.c3 b4 19.c4!?, and 18.b3!?: ♖b4 19.gxh5 ♘xh5 20.♙xg7 ♗xg7 21.♙d3 also look better for White.

13.h5! ♖a5

13...♘xh5? loses by force after 14.♙xg7 ♗xg7 15.g4 ♘f6 16.♖h6† ♗g8 17.e5 dxe5 18.g5 ♘h5 19.♙d3+- Evans - Zuckerman, USA Championship (New York) 1967.

14.hxg6 hxg6



The relatively little studied alternative 14...fxg6 gives Black more prospects to survive White's kingside assault, but at the same time it worsens the pawn structure. 15.a3 (the immediate 15.♙xf6 as usual fails to 15...♗xc3!). Now the important difference with 14...hxg6 is that there White's 16. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 17.♘d5 is not a threat because Black has 16...♖xd2 17.♘xf6† ♗g7! 18.♗xd2 ♗xf6. But here Black cannot leave the h7-pawn unprotected. He is forced to take on f6 with the e-pawn, creating an isolani on d6. There is no sensible way for Black to avoid White's exchange operation, and it is for White to decide whether he wants to torment Black in an endgame, or to develop an initiative in some different way. Now we consider:

a) 15...♙f7 16.♙xf6± or 16.g4!?, where Black hardly has anything better than 16...♗ab8.

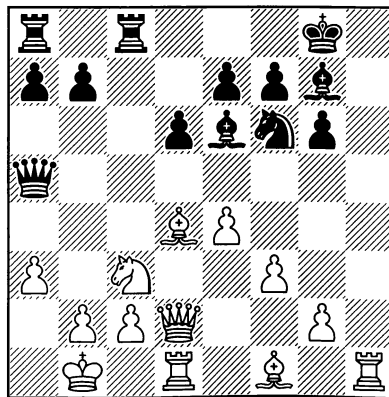
b) 15...♗c6 gives White such additional possibilities as 16.♘d5!?: and 16.♙b5!?: ♗xc3?! 17.a4! ♘xe4 18.♖e1!± Ghysens - Koller, corr. 1990.

c) By playing 15...♙c4 Black is aspiring

to obtain a tenable endgame. 16.♙xf6 ♙xf6 17.♖h6 ♙xc3!= or 17.♙xc4† ♗xc4 18.♘d5 ♖xd2 19.♘xf6† exf6 20.♗xd2 ♗d8, as in Cichy - Bauer, Bundesliga 1983/4 playoff, may not look too convincing, and White can try 16.♖e1!?: instead, and if 16...♙xf1, then 17.♖xf1.

d) After 15...♗ab8, 16.g4!?: can be recommended for White if he wishes to play for an attack. 16...b5 (Black creates a threat of 16...b4. The passive 16...♙f7 17.g5! ♘h5 18.♙xg7 ♘xg7 19.♖h2! ♘h5 20.♘d5 ♙xd5 21.exd5 ♗f8 22.♙h3 results in a clearly better position for White, Ivanovic - Kudrin, Lone Pine 1981) 17.♖g5! (probably White also can allow ...b4 in the lines 17.g5± b4?! 18.♘b5! and 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♘d5± b4 19.axb4!?: ♖a4 20.b5) 17...♖c7 (After 17...♙f7 18.♘d5 the continuation 18...♖d8 19.♖h4! h6 20.g5 hxg5 21.♖xg5± gives us an idea why g4 can be more useful here than ♙d3. Also difficult for Black is 18...♙xd5 19.♙xf6, where he cannot allow the white queen to emerge on d5 with check: 19...♗c5 20.exd5± Lukin - Cebalo, Biel 2004) 18.e5. Now Black's only chance appears to be 18...♘e4!?: 19.fxe4 dxe5. After the retreat of the bishop from d4, Black will play 20...b4 with an attack. It is a big question whether it gives him sufficient compensation, but White also has 20.♙d3!?: exd4 (20...b4 21.♘d5!) 21.♘d5 ♙xd5 22.♖xd5† e6 23.♖xe6† ♖f7 24.♖xf7† ♗xf7 25.♗xh7 with an extra pawn and winning chances, Sebag - Pogonina, Elista 2004.

15.a3



Black's main idea was not 15...♞xc3, which is not killing unless White plays 15.♙xf6?, but rather 15...b5!

15...♞ab8

15...♙c4 is a rare move. (*Updated coverage of it is the main change in this chapter in comparison with the 2004 edition of the book - MG, 2006*).

Now:

a) 16.♙xc4 ♞xc4 and here 17.♙xf6 gives White a small plus, while 17.♞c1!? e6 18.g4 ♞ac8! transposes to the 15...♞ab8 16.♙d3 ♙c4 line.

b) 16.♞h3 ♙f1 (16...b5?! 17.♙xc4 and now 17...bxc4 18.♞dh1 ♞ab8 occurred in Short - Velimirovic, Banja Luka 1985. Here, in contrast to variations which arise in the line 15...♞ab8 16.♙d3 ♙c4, White has time for 19.♙c1! ♞b7 20.g4! ♞cb8 21.♞h2, winning by direct attack - Velimirovic. Also insufficient is 17...♞xc4 18.♞dh1!, planning 19.♙xf6!, and if 18...e5 then 19.♙e3 threatening 20.♙h6!, Van der Wiel - Van de Mortel, Wijk aan Zee 1996.) 17.♞xf1 ♞c4 18.♞d3! (18.♞fh1 ♞ac8 Without ...b5 this position offers Black more hope. 19.♙xf6 ♙xf6! 20.♞h7 and now, as pointed out by "TopNotch" on the Chesspublishing.com forum, Black has 20...♞xc3! 21.♞h6 ♞e5 22.f4 ♞h3!! reaching an acceptable endgame) 18...♞ac8 19.♙xf6 ♙xf6 20.♙d5 (Gutman) and here 20...♙xb2(!), "Top Notch", probably allows Black to reach equality in the long, crazy lines.

c) Kosteniuk-Pogonina, Samara 2005, saw 16.g4!? ♙f1 17.♞dxf1 ♞c4 18.♙e3 ♞ac8 19.♙h6 ♙h8 20.♙d5 ♞d8 21.♙e3 ♞4c5 22.♞h3! ♞b5 (after 22...♞b6 White prevents ...♙xe4 by 23.c4!) and now two atypical moves: 23.♙d1! ♞a5 24.♞d3! gave White the advantage.

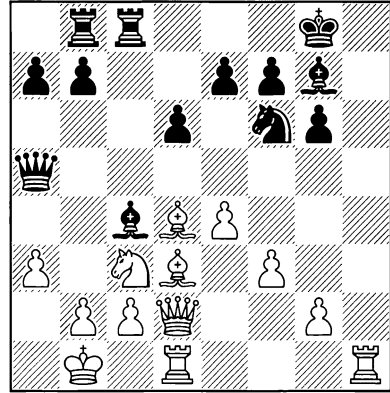
16.♙d3!

Van der Wiel's important invention. 16.g4 is less dangerous for Black.

16...b5

After this programmed move Black faces problems. The waiting 16...a6 can be met best by 17.♞h4! b5 18.♞g5 and here 18...♞c5 19.♙xc5 dxc5 seems to be totally incorrect: 20.♞xc5 ♙d7 21.♞b4 ♞c7 (In the case of 17.♞h2?! the white rook would be hanging now.) 22.♙d5 ♙xd5 23.exd5+- Bley - Jackwertch, corr. 1998.

16...♙c4 is often considered to be Black's most realistic chance for acceptable play. The choice between White's main answers is difficult, so we will consider the most important ones:



a) 17.♙e3!? is the move that I analysed in *New In Chess Yearbook 11* (1989). As of now, Black is alive here:

a1) 17...b5? 18.♙h6 ♙h8 19.♙f8! is losing for Black: 19...♙h5 20.♞xh5 ♙xc3 (20...gxh5 21.♙xe7+- Allemann - Loetscher, Switzerland 2003) 21.♞h6!+- was pointed out by Olthof.

a2) After 17...♙e8? 18.♙xc4 ♞xc4 19.♙d5 ♞b5 20.b3! e6, White obtains a big advantage by 21.♙h6! exd5 22.♙xg7 ♙xg7 23.exd5!

a3) An important line is 17...♙d7!? 18.♙xc4 ♞xc4 (18...♙xc3? 19.♙d4!!) 19.♙d5 ♞xd2 (19...♞b5? 20.b3+- Black loses material) 20.♞xd2 ♞e8 (20...e6? 21.b3!) 21.♙xa7 b6 (This was my main suggestion for Black in 1989.) 22.♞d3 ♞a4 (22...♞c6 23.♞hd1 ♙f8?! 24.♞b3 ♞a8 25.♙xb6! ♞xa7 26.♙xd7† ♞xd7 27.♞b8† wins for White. 23...♙f8 gives more chances but is still insufficient.) 23.♙xb6 e6 24.♙c7 exd5 25.♞xd5 ♙e5 26.♙xd6 ♙c4. Despite White's four pawns for a piece his advantage is not easy to prove (Cordovil - Lecroq, 14th corr. Wch 1994-2000).

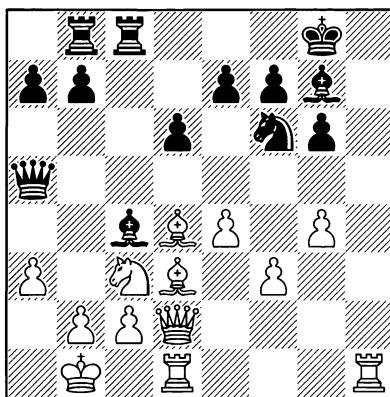
a4) 17...♙xd3!? 18.cxd3 (less ambitious, but interesting is 18.♞xd3!? b5 19.♙a2 Mousessian - Burne, e-mail 2002) 18...b5 is an interesting line. It may look dubious, even disastrous for Black, but he needs just one move (...b4) to develop serious play, and a forced win for White

on the kingside has not been found. 19.♔h6 ♕h8 20.♖d5 (Or: 20.♕g5 ♕g7 21.d4 b4 22.♗a2 ♜a4 with counterplay, Ward. Then 23.♗xb4 a5 24.♕xf6 axb4! 25.♕xg7 bxa3! results in an inevitable draw after, e.g. 26.d5!? f6!. Also not dangerous for Black is 21.e5 b4! 22.axb4 ♜xe5 or 20.e5 b4 and 20.♕f8 ♗h5!). This was discussed on the ChessPublishing.com forum with an acceptable verdict for Black: 21.♕xe7 ♕xc3 22.bxc3 b4!?, or 21.♞xh5 ♕xc3! 22.bxc3 ♜xc3 23.♞xc3 ♞xc3.) 20...♗d8 21.♕g5 (21.♗xf6† ♕xf6 22.♕g5 can hardly give White a significant advantage.) 21...♗xd5, and now 22.♞xh8† ♗xh8 23.♞h1† ♗g7 24.exd5 transposes to the game Van der Wiel - Zult, Leeuwarden 2001, where Black could save himself by 24...♜c7! =, with the idea 25.♕xe7! ♞h8.

b) 17.♞h2 (17.♞h4 or 17.♞h3 lead to similar play - in the latter case Black obtains the additional resource ...♕e6 at some point.) 17...b5 18.♞dh1 (18.♞g5 e5!) 18...e5! (18...b4?! 19.♕xc4 and now 19...♞xc4? loses to 20.♕xf6! ♕xf6 21.♗d5 ♕b2 22.♞h8†, and 19...bxc3 20.♕xc3 ♜xa3 21.♕b3 ♞xb3 22.cxb3 ♞xb3 23.g4 favours White, Perez - Cabrera, Villa Clara 1998.) 19.♕e3 b4 20.♗d1 (unimpressive but 20.♗a2 ♕xa2† 21.♗xa2 allows 21...♞c3!) 20...♕xd3 21.cxd3 with unclear play after 21...♜a4!? De la Riva - Molander, Andorra 2001, or 21...♞b5 22.axb4 ♞xb4.

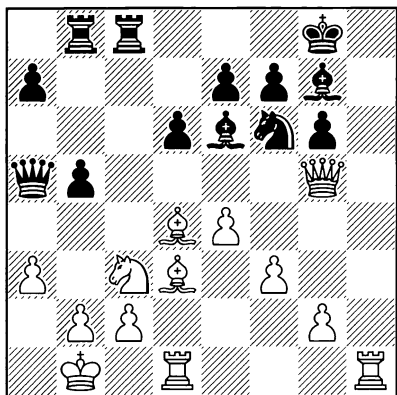
c) 17.♕xc4 ♞xc4 18.♜c1!? (instead, 18.♕xf6 ♕xf6 19.♗d5 ♜xd2 20.♞xd2!± gives White slight pressure in the ending, Marjanovic - Messing, Bela Crkva 1984) 18...e6 (18...♞bc8? 19.♗d5! ♞xc2 20.♗xe7† ♗f8 21.♜f4+-, 18...e5? 19.♕e3 and White dominates.) 19.g4 ♞bc8! (Not 19...b5?! 20.g5 ♗h5 21.♕xg7 and now 21...♗xg7 22.♞xh5! gxh5 23.♜xf4! with a decisive attack, Bennedik - Demian, corr. 2002. Nor 21...♗xg7 22.♜f4 b4 23.♜xd6! ♞cc8 24.♞d5! ♜c7 25.♜xc7 ♞xc7 26.♞b5± - Bennedik.) 20.g5 ♗h5 21.♕xg7 ♗xg7 22.♞xd6, and here 22...♕xc3! (instead of 22...♜e5?! 23.♜d2± Parligras - Cebalo, Nova Gorica 2004) 23.bxc3 ♗g3, suggested by Ivan Markovic in *Chess Informant*, leaves White with only a small advantage. Black's main idea is 24.♞e1 ♗e2! 25.♞xe2 ♜b5†.

d) 17.g4



17...b5 (Black gets ready to attack by 18...e5 and 19...b4) 18.♕xc4! is, taking into account the absence of a forced win in other lines, my main recommendation for White. Now 18...♞xc4 19.♕xf6 ♕xf6 20.♗d5 ♜xd2 21.♞xd2 ♗g7 22.♞dh2 ♞g8 23.♞h7† ♗f8 24.♗xf6 exf6 leads Black to a difficult endgame. 25.♞h8!? was played in A. Ivanov - Vigorito, Las Vegas 1997.

So, he plays 18...bxc4 and the arising position is quite complex. Black, using his major pieces, is able to create some threats against White's a3 and b2-pawns. However, these threats are parried easily, and White's evident positional pluses on three quarters of the board (the c- to h-files) should ensure his advantage. 19.♗a1!? (19.♗a2 is of course also possible: 19...♞a6 20.g5!? ♞a6 21.♜c1 ♗h5 22.♗d5 ♞b7 23.♕xg7 ♗xg7 24.♜e3 Olthof, or 19...♞b7 20.♞h3!? ♞cb8 21.♞b1 e6 22.g5 ♗h5 23.♕xg7 ♗xg7 24.♜xd6 Mishkovski - Niemand, corr. 1987. Now 24...♜xg5 25.♜h2.) 19...♞c6 (after 19...♞b7, 20.g5!? ♗h5 21.♕xg7 ♗xg7 22.♜d4† ♗g8 23.♗d5, De Sousa - Molander, Budapest 1999, preserves White's initiative, but also possible is 20.♞h3 ♞cb8 21.♞b1). Now 20.♗d5?! ♜xd2 21.♗xe7† ♗f8 22.♗xc6 may appear interesting, but it allows Black to equalise by 22...♜xc2!? 23.♗xb8 ♜b3!. Therefore White should not hurry. After, e.g. 20.♞h3 ♞a6 21.♜c1!? it is difficult to propose any sensible idea for Black. 17.♞g5!



17...♙c7?!

This is bad, but in the more than 20 years since the game was played Black has not succeeded in finding a reliable antidote to Van der Wiel's idea.

17...d5?! can be refuted in three ways. The most direct of them is 18.♘xd5 ♕xd5 19.exd5 b4 20.♗xg6! f×g6 (20...b×a3 21.♞h7!+- Turunen - Pyhala, Espoo 1984) 21.♝xg6 ♜a4 22.♗xf6 exf6 23.♞h7 and wins - Olthof.

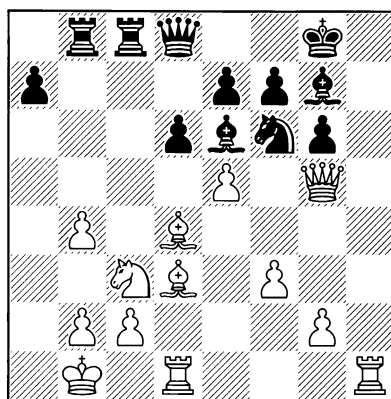
17...♗c4? 18.♗xc4! ♝xc4 19.♘d5 ♜d8 20.♞h4 is just hopeless for Black.

Typically for the lines with the bishop on e6, 17...a6 should be met by 18.♞h4!?. The same advice can be given regarding another waiting move: 17...♞b7.

17...♝c3!?! 18.♗xc3 ♜a4 is an exchange sacrifice that does not solve Black's problems, but can be dangerous in practice. So I would ask the reader to pay special attention here. The following variations are given by Nisipeanu and Stoica in Informant 90: 19.♞h4!?! b4 20.♗xb4 (not 20.axb4?! ♘h7 21.♞xh7 ♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♜a3!+, but possible is 20.e5!?! ♘d5 21.♗d2 a5 22.♗xg6! ♘c3† 23.♗xc3 bxc3 24.♞dh1 ♝xb2† 25.♘c1+-) 20...♘h7 (also insufficient is 20...♝b4 21.axb4 ♜a2† 22.♘c1) 21.♞xh7! ♘h7 22.♞h4! (an important check) 22...♘g8 23.♝xe7 ♗f8 (the line 23...a5 24.♜a7! ♝xb4 25.♜a8†! explains White's 22nd move) 24.♝g5 ♗g7 25.f4! with an obvious advantage.

If Black gives away a rook: 17...♝c5 18.♗xc5 b4, White needs to make just one precise move, 19.♗e3!+-. Then after 19...d5 there are many ways, including 20.♘a2!?! b×a3 21.b3 ♜a4 22.♘c1 which is totally convincing.

17...♝d8!?! was recommended by Chris Ward in his book *Winning with the Sicilian Dragon 2*. There he considers only 18.♗xa7? as an illustrative line. Perhaps the critical continuation is 18.e5 b4 (18...d×e5?! 19.♗xe5+- with the idea 20.♗xg6), where 19.exf6 exf6 is unclear, but 19.axb4 is stronger.

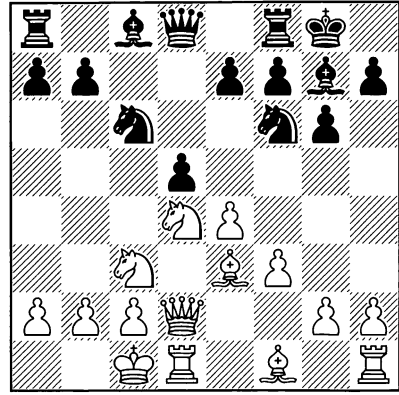
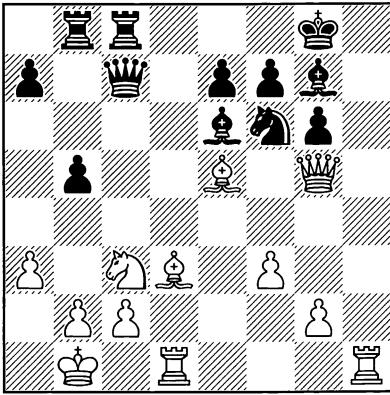


Then:

a) 19...d×e5 20.♗xe5 ♝xb4 21.♗a6! (21.♗xg6?! ♝xb2† 22.♘xb2 ♜b6† 23.♘c1 f×g6 gives Black compensation.) 21...♝xb2† (21...♜a5 22.♗xc8 ♘d7 is refuted by 23.♞xd7! ♗d7 24.f4! ♗xc8 25.♝xe7+-) 21...♜b6 22.♗xc8 ♗xc8 23.♘c1!?!±) 22.♘c1! (even stronger than 22.♘xb2 ♜b6† 23.♗b5) 22...♜b6 23.♗xc8 ♗xc8 and White should win after 24.♜d2! or 24.♗d4!.

b) 19...♝xb4 20.exf6 exf6 21.♜e3!?! and despite the fact that Black is very active, it is not clear how he can obtain sufficient compensation. 21...♝cb8 (21...♞xd4 22.♝xd4 f5 23.♜a4! and 21...♜a5 22.♘e4!) 22.♘e2!?! ♜a5 23.♘c1

17...♘h7? 18.♞xh7 ♗xd4 19.♞h6 b4 20.♞h1 ♜e5 21.f4 results in a decisive material advantage for White.
18.e5! d×e5 19.♗xe5



White is objectively winning, but he must find a few more good moves.

19...♖c5

19...♖b6 20.♗xg6! fxg6 21.♗xg6 (White is threatening the killing 22.♖h7) 21...♜e8 (21...♗f7 allows the thematic 22.♖h8†! ♜xh8 23.♗xf7) 22.♞d6!! exd6 23.♗xe6† ♜f8 24.♗xg7† ♜xg7 25.♗g4† and the game is over - Van der Wiel.

20.f4! ♖b7

20...♖b6 does not change much. 21.♗xg6 (or 21.♖h4 ♗d7 22.♞dh1 Gutman & Reschke, or 21.b4 ♖c6 Bennedik - Kreiling, Steinbach 1998, when White wins with 22.f5 - Olthof, but not 21.♖h6? ♜g4!.) 21...fxg6 22.♗xg6 ♜e8 (22...♗f7 23.♖h8†!) 23.♗h7† ♜f8 24.♖h5 and White wins easily, e.g. 24...♖c4 25.♗xg7† ♜xg7 26.♗g5 ♜f5 27.g4 ♞d6 28.♞e1.

21.♗xg6! fxg6

21...b4 22.♖h7!

22.♗xg6 ♗f7

There was no other defence against 23.♖h7, but now...

23.♖h8†! 1-0

One of the greatest ever Dragon games - especially from White's point of view!

Game 15

Ehlvest - Marin

Calcutta 1997

1.♜f3 c5 2.e4 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♜xd4 ♜f6 5.♜c3 g6 6.f3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 ♜c6 8.♗d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 d5!

Konstantinovsky's move, which in fact is a pawn sacrifice. Nowadays White accepts the offer rather rarely. His choice is still not narrow, but I will consider here only White's main continuation, which was entered into practice by Suetin in 1955.

10.exd5 ♜xd5

Unsuccessful is 10...♜b4?!, which can be answered by 11.♗c4 ♜fxd5 12.♜de2±.

11.♜xc6 bxc6 12.♗d4!

White encourages Black either to exchange the dark squared bishops, or to close the a1-h8 diagonal.

12...e5

The modest alternatives to this move attracted little attention before the 90s. We will consider them in the next two games. By playing 12...e5 Black preserves the Dragon (or, as some say, "Gufeld's") bishop, and hopes to fight for the initiative. From another point of view 12...e5 weakens Black's pawn structure even more - the d6 square becomes quite sensitive now.

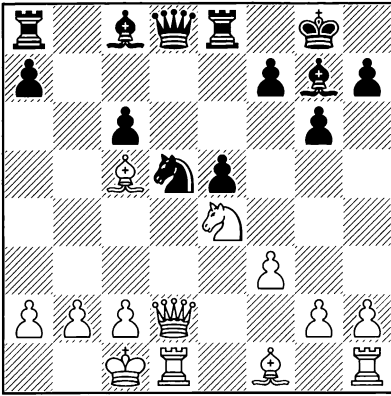
13.♗c5 ♗e6

Black supports the d5 knight, which is the key detail in his set-up.

After 13...♖b8?! the simplest is 14.♗c4! with an advantage (14.♜xd5 cxd5 15.♗xd5 ♗f6! is more complex). An even more dubious idea is 13...e4?! when White can play 14.♜xe4! (14.fx4?! ♜xc3 15.♗xd8 ♗h6† 16.♗d2 ♗xd2† 17.♗xd2 ♜xe4 18.♗xf8 ♜xd2±) 14...f5 15.♜c3±.

13...♖e8!? is the only real alternative to the

main line. White can fight for an advantage in three ways. The current main lines after both 14.♔c4!? (which is rare) and 14.♖xd5 result in slightly worse endgames for Black. I will consider 14.♗e4, which is the most principled.



Now 14...♗e6 (which may be best) just transposes to the 13...♗e6 line, and thereafter 13...♗e8 just loses its point.

We will consider two other moves here:

a) 14...f5?! 15.♗d6! ♗f8!. For a long time this was considered as equalising. In 1993 Beliavsky introduced 16.♗b5!, which was only the first step in the right direction. After 16...♗d7 (forced), White's strong and mysterious novelty 17.♗a4! (which was found by Deep Blue's support team according to De Firmian, or found by GM Lembit Oll according to other sources, and was played by "Leon" (Shirov) at Internet Chess Club), was finally revealed only in De Firmian-Ernst, Stockholm 2002. Black's position becomes strategically dubious even in the case of the strongest 17...e4! (Or: 17...♗b8 18.c4!, transposing to Misailovic - Jovicic, Tivat tt 1995, 18...♗b6 19.♗xb6! ♗xb6 20.♗b3! and Black will get no real compensation for either pawn or exchange. 17...♗h4 was mistakenly suggested in *New In Chess* 8/1995 as winning for Black. White plays 18.♗b3! and now 18...♗h6 19.♗e3 or 18...♗xd6 19.♗xd6 ♗ad8 20.♗he1 ♗xh2?! 21.♗xe5! ♗xe5 22.♗h1 ♗g3 23.♗h3. If 17...♗e6, then Rogozenko suggests

18.c4 ♗f6 19.♗b7!? but the immediate 18.♗b7 may be stronger: 18...♗h4 and now, perhaps, 19.♗a5!).

After 17...e4, amongst White's various promising options there is 18.fxe4!? (not too bad for Black is 18.♗b3 ♗xd6 19.♗xd5†!? cxd5 20.♗xd5† ♗e6 21.♗xd6 ♗g5† 22.f4 ♗xg2± De Firmian -Ernst, Stockholm 2002) 18...fxe4 19.♗b3 (19.c4 transposes to Sutovsky - Alterman, Rishon Le Zion 1994. It continued 19...e3 20.♗xe3± and White preserves his extra pawn in all variations, but 19...♗xd6! would be less clear. e.g. 20.♗xd6 e3 21.♗e2 ♗a5!? with the idea 22.♗b3 ♗c3) 19...♗xd6 20.♗xd6 and White's positional advantage seems to be quite certain to me, also in the case of 20...e3 21.♗e2.

b) 14...♗c7!? is a little studied move which I tried against Alexei Shirov in the Bundesliga. Black's specific idea now is to ensure an early ...♗d8. 15.♗d6 looks unclear when the black pawn is still on f7, while after either 15.♗c4 or 15.g4 Black can transpose to acceptable lines by 15...♗e6. I will consider two options for White:

b1) 15.♗d6!? is a tricky transpositional attempt to avoid the stuff with ...♗d8 and ...f5 entirely. Then:

b11) 15...♗d8!? (back!) 16.♗a3!? (claiming that the bishop is placed better on a3 rather than c5. Instead 16.♗b5!? cxb5 17.♗xd5 ♗f5! 18.♗xb5 ♗xe4 19.fxe4 ♗g5† 20.♗b1 ♗xg2, as in the computer game Arena - Hagrid, perso. wanadoo.fr/lefouduroi 2002, looks playable for Black.) 16...♗b6!? 17.h4 (17.♗c5 ♗c7 returns us to the beginning) 17...♗b8 18.h5 ♗f8 19.hxg6. In the notes for *New In Chess* 19...fxg6 undeservedly escaped my attention, but 20.♗c4 ♗xa3 21.♗b3! gives White interesting compensation.

b12) 15...♗b6 16.h4 (16.♗c5 ♗c7 leads to a repetition) and after 16...♗d8?! (16...f5?! 17.♗c5! and 18.♗d6. 16...♗e3?! 17.♗c5 ♗xf1 18.♗hxf1!? with advantage), 17.♗e7! (the main idea behind 15.♗d6) 17...♗d7 18.♗c5! destroys Black's scheme. So 16...h6!? is preferable, hoping to transfer to the 13...♗e6 main line.

But more principled is 16...♟f6!. This move (which escaped my attention until it was played by Polzin) allowed Black to equalise in the game Shirov-Polzin, Bundesliga 2004/5.

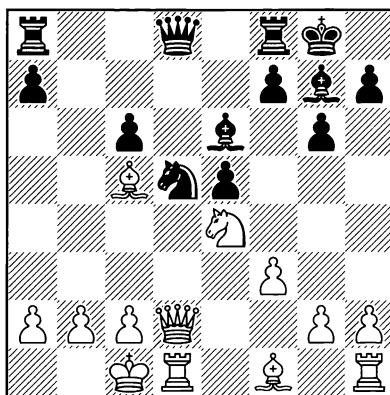
b2) 15.h4! The most direct. 15...♞d8 (After 15...♙f5 then 16.♟d6 ♞d8 17.♟xf5 gxf5 can give Black some chances. So White can try 16.h5!?. 15...♙e6?! transposes to a bad position from the 13...♙e6 line where of course White plays 16.h5!±. 15...f5?! 16.♟d6 will be followed by ♟xc8 and ♙c4!. 15...h6!? just transposes to the main line after 16.g4 ♙e6) 16.h5 (16.♙c4!? has the idea 16...♙e6 17.♟g5!, so Black can play 16...f5 17.♟c3 ♙e6 18.h5 which transposes to 16.h5 f5 17.♟c3!?) 16...f5 (16...♙f5!? 17.hxg6! ffg6 18.♙c4) and now 17.♟g5 allows 17...h6!, which looks OK for Black. White must decide between three other quite promising continuations. Both 17.♟c3! ♙e6 18.♙c4! and 17.hxg6! fxe4! 18.fxe4! ♙e6! 19.exd5 cxd5 20.♙a3!?. Shirov - Golubev, Bundesliga 2001/2, leave Black with certain counterchances. White's choice should probably be 17.h6!?, which I totally missed in my *New In Chess Yearbook 65* analysis. This was tried by Andrei Volokitin in a blitz game against me. 17...♙h8 (17...fxe4!? 18.hxg7 exf3 gives Black some chances, but basically I do not trust his devastated position. 17...♙f8?! 18.♟f6†± does not work.) 18.♟g5! ♙f6 19.♙c4! ♞b8. Now Volokitin - Golubev, ACP Internet Blitz 2004, continued 20.♙b3?? when I could have played 20...♞xb3 and 21...♟f4±.

Instead, White must take care of his wonderful bishops: thanks to them, Black is almost paralysed. One idea is 20.a4!?. (Not necessarily the best, but 20.♞he1 and 20.♟b1 both allow the remarkable 20...♞b5!?. 21.♙a3 ♞a5 22.♙b4 ♞a4, and 20.g4 ffg4 looks unclear.) 20...♞b7 (20...♞b7 21.b3 or after 20...f4 21.♞xd5†!?. probably only gives a draw - but 21.♟e4 is good) 21.♞he1 ♞b8 22.b3 with pressure.

It is time now to return to 13...♙e6.

14.♙xf8? ♞xf8 is premature because of the threat 15...♙h6! (which also works in case of 15.♟e4? ♙h6! 16.♟g5 f6) and Black has fantastic counterplay.

14.♟e4!



The complex position which arises after 14.♟e4 has been explored quite intensively (636 games in Dorian Rogozenko's recent Dragon CD database certainly means something). In short, White's basic plan involves ♙c4 and the advance of his kingside pawns. Fortunately for the first player Black's most aggressive ideas, linked with ...f5, do not seem to work well against White's strongest moves: White's only potentially vulnerable point is b2, which can be covered easily even if Black manages to attack it. It is not clear how Black can gain sufficient counterplay to fully compensate for his long-term problems with the pawn structure.

14...♞e8

Among the alternatives, only one (14...♞b8) has been tried by Black often. Here are all of them:

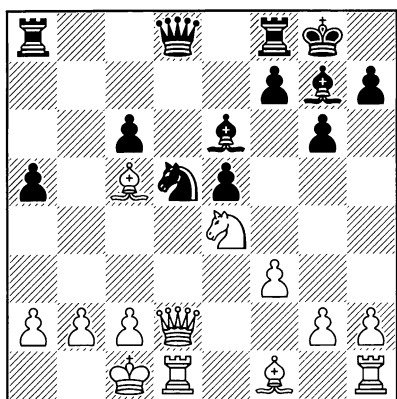
Black of course would have preferred to put his rook on d8 instead of e8, but after the preparatory 14...♞c7 White takes the exchange: 15.♙xf8! ♞xf8 (15...♙xf8 16.♙c4 ♞b8 transposes to 14...♞b8 15.♙c4! ♞c7) 16.♙c4 with advantage, e.g. 16...♞b8 17.g4 ♞b6 and now 18.b3!, rather than 18.c3 ♟xc3! with the idea 19.♙xe6? ♟xe4 20.♙xf7† ♟h8! 21.fxe4 ♙h6+.

After 14...♞b8 White can play 15.c4!?. or 15.♙xf8!?. (After 15.h4 ♞d8 possible is 16.♙c4 with an already mentioned idea 16...♞c7 17.♟g5!, while 16.h5 f5 17.♟g5 e4 looks

unclear to me.) 15...♖xf8 16.♗a5! (the optimal square for the queen) 16...♞b8 (or: 16...♘e3 17.♙e1!, 16...♗h6† 17.♚b1 ♕e3 18.♕c4±) 17.♕c4 ♗e7! (17...f5?! 18.♘c5 or 18.♘g5 e4 19.♘xe6!? ♕xb2† 20.♘d2 ♗h6† 21.f4+-) A. Ivanov - Ashley, Philadelphia 1997. After the 'normal' moves such as 18.h4 Black hardly has full compensation.

Another rare idea is 14...a5, when White has several promising options, the simplest of them being 15.♕c4.

Yurtaev's dangerous 14...♞b8!?



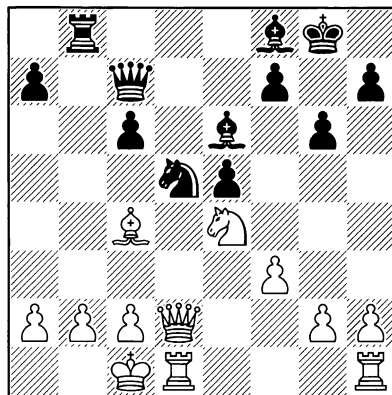
almost certainly should be answered by 15.♕c4! (15.c4 is another serious move, but the sacrificial 15...♗c7! has not been refuted so far). After 15.♕c4! Black has tried various options, but none of them have proved to be satisfactory:

a) 15...♞e8 16.h4 (16.♕xa7!?) 16...a5 (16...f5 is, quite typically, answered not by 17.♘d6? ♕f8!, but by 17.♘g5! e4 18.c3 which seems to favour White. After 17...♗h6, ...f6 is no longer possible and the pin does not trouble White much. After 16...h6 17.g4! f5?! 18.gxf5 gxf5, 19.♘d6 is already possible, but stronger is 19.♞hg1 fxe4 20.♗xh6 ♞b7 21.♞g6! and now 21...♕f5 22.♞xg7† ♞xg7 23.♗xc6± Zapolskis - Hosruashvili, Leningrad B 1989. Instead, 21...♗f6?! 22.♞xf6 ♕xh6† 23.♞xh6 exf3 24.♞xe6! ♞xe6 25.♞xd5! cxd5 26.♕xd5 + works nicely for White).

After 16...a5, 17.h5!? f5 (analysed by

Veselovsky) is rather unclear. Possible is 17.♕b3!? (Popovic - Sax, Subotica IZ 1987), when 17...f5 is answered by 18.♘g5. Also, both 17.g4 and 17.a4 look good when the almost forced 17...h6 can hardly justify Black's previous moves.

b) 15...♗c7 must be answered by 16.♕xf8! ♕xf8.



17.♚b1 (Even more principled is 17.♕xd5!? cxd5 18.♘f6† ♘h8 19.♘xd5 and White should be better in further complications.) 17...♗b6 (17...a5!? 18.♕b3 ♗b7 is a better chance for Black, but still hardly sufficient after 19.c4!?) 18.♕b3 a5 19.c4! ♘e3 20.c5! ♕xc5 21.♘xc5 (21.♞xe6!? ♕d4! 22.♕b3!) 21...♗xc5 22.♞c1 ♕f5† 23.♚a1 ♗d4 24.♗xd4! (less clear is 24.♗xa5 ♘c2†) 24...exd4 25.g4 (25.♞xc6 ♞xb3!) 25...♕d3 26.♞xc6 ♕e2 27.♞hc1± ♕xf3 28.♞c8† ♞xc8 29.♞xc8† ♘g7 30.♞c7 ♕xg4 31.♞xf7† ♘h6 32.♞f4! (with the idea 32...d3 33.♞e4!) and White was winning in the brilliantly played game Popovic - Smirin, Moscow 1989.

c) After 15...a5!? White has usually opted for 16.♕b3!? (16.a4 ♗c7!? 17.♕xf8 ♕xf8, possibly offers slightly more hope for Black than the similar line with 15...♗c7) 16...♞e8 17.h4, transposing to the Popovic - Sax game.

d) After 15...♚h8 16.h4 (White can also consider taking on f8 or a7, or try 16.♘g5!? because 16...♗h6 now fails to 17.♘xf7†), Black's idea is 16...f5 17.♘g5 ♕g8. Still, 18.h5 e4 (18...♕f6? 19.♘xh7 ♘xh7 20.hxg6† ♘xg6

21. ♖h6† ♘f7 22. ♖h5! occurred in Sigurjonsson - Kudrin, Gausdal (1983) 19. ♖d4 e3 20. ♖xg7† ♘xg7 21. ♖d4† ♖f6 22. h6† ♘h8 and now 23. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 24. f4! looks very unpleasant for Black: 24... ♖xd4 25. ♖xd4 ♖b7 26. ♖e1 ♖e8 27. ♖e2 ♖b7 28. ♘d1 ♘g8 29. b3 ♘f8 30. ♖d3 ♖e4 31. ♖c3 ♘g8 32. ♘e1 ♖d5 33. ♖d3 ♘f8 34. c4 ♖g8 35. ♖c2 c5 36. ♖d6 ♖c8 37. ♘e2 ♘e8 38. ♖c3+- and White finally collected the e3-pawn in Sammalvuo - Rajlich, Paks 2001.

e) 15...h6 hardly makes much sense: 16.g4 (16. ♖xf8!?, 16. ♖xa7!?) 16... ♖e8 (16...f5 17. gxf5 with the idea 17...gxf5 18. ♖hg1 ♘h8 19. ♖g6!) 17.h4 transposes to 15... ♖e8 16.h4 h6 17.g4.

f) 15... ♖c8?! is awkward: 16. ♖a3! (16. ♖xf8!?) ♖xf8 17. ♖a5 was the original move order in A. Ivanov - Ashley game - see 14... ♖b8. 16.h4 ♖d8 17.h5 ♘f4 18. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 19. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 20. ♖xe6 ♘xe6 21. hxg6 fxg6!±. Also possible is 16. ♖a5!?) 16... ♖d8 17. ♖a5 with pressure for White, Atlas - Yuneev, Podolsk 1990.

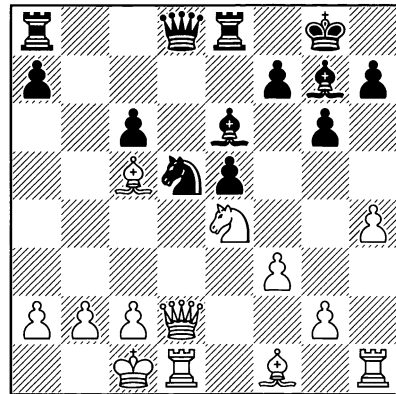
g) 15...f5! is a desperate attempt to get practical chances. Now 16. ♘g5 (16. ♖xf8! is another option) 16...e4 (after 16... ♖h6 17.h4 ♖f7 the strongest is probably 18. ♖he1!± - Tiviakov) 17. ♖b3 ♖f6 (if 17...e3! the simplest is 18. ♖xe3!) 18.c3 (but not 18. ♖d4? e3! 19. ♖xe3 ♘xe3 20. ♖xf6 ♖xf6! 21. ♖xe6† ♖xe6 22. ♘xe6 ♖xb2† = Perunovic - Dimitrijevic, Serbia (ch) 2002) 18... ♖xb3 (the move order 18...e3 19. ♖xe3 ♖xb3 allows 20. ♖d4!) 19. axb3 e3 20. ♖xe3 ♘xe3 21. ♖xe3 ♖xb3 22. ♖d7 is a position which I considered in the 1991 *New In Chess* article. Then, and now, I cannot see real compensation for Black. 22...c5, threatening 23... ♖a6, is answered by 23. ♖xa7!.

After the immediate 14...f5! White has usually played 15. ♘g5 ♖h6 16.h4, which is OK, but 15. ♖xf8 followed by 16. ♘g5 is even stronger.

We now return to 14... ♖e8.

15.h4!

Both 15.c4 and 15. ♖c4 allow Black to regroup with 15... ♖c7!. The main aim of 15.h4! is to prevent 15... ♖c7!., which can be answered with 16.h5! ♖ad8 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.g3± Nikulishin - Haba, Voronezh 1981.



15...h6

The most popular move which can again be considered as a concession. Black agrees to forget about ...f5. The alternatives are:

15... ♘f6!., unfortunately for Black, simply loses material after 16. ♖xd8 ♖exd8 17. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 18. ♖e7 ♘xe4 19. ♖xd8 ♖h6† 20. ♖g5!±.

15...f5! 16. ♘g5! ♖h6 (16... ♖f6 17. ♘xe6 ♖xe6 18. ♖c4!) is an interesting line. Black is quite active, but his position is too weakened by the pawn advances. 17. ♖c4 (17.c4 is safe and ensures transition to a rather pleasant endgame) 17... ♖f6 (If 17... ♘c7 then a nice idea is 18. ♖d7! Baier - Nicholls, corr. 2000. Now could come 18... ♖xd7 19. ♖xd7 ♖ac8 20. ♖xh7! ♖xg5† 21. hxg5 ♖xc4 22. ♖e7! and White is better.) 18. ♘b1! ♖ad8 (Sulypa-Golubev, Donetsk (zt) 1998) and here I suggest that White takes on a7: 19. ♖xa7! which can be assessed as ±, although untested.

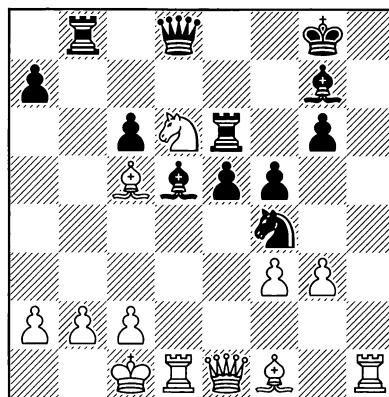
15... ♖b8! can be answered by 16.g4! (or 16. ♖c4! transposing to 14... ♖b8 15. ♖c4 ♖e8 16.h4) 16...f5 (a logical, but insufficient continuation) 17.gxf5 gxf5 18. ♘d6! (also good is 18. ♘g5 e4 19. ♖d4 e3 20. ♖g2! ♘f4 21. ♘xe6!, initially suggested by R.Schwarz) 18... ♖f8 (18... ♖f8 is refuted by 19.c4! ♖xd6 20. ♖g1† ♘h8! 21. ♖h6 ♖b7 22. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 23. ♖xd5! in accordance with Muchnik's analysis) 19. ♘c4! with strong pressure, Timman - Miles, Bad Lauterberg 1977.

15...a5 16.♔c4 (16.h5 ♖b4!?) with the idea 17.a3? ♕h6! is given by Tiviakov. The possible improvement for White is instead 16.g4! with the idea 16...♖f4 17.♗e1 ♕d5 18.h5) 16...h5! (Ljubojevic's move. If 16...a4!?, White has 17.h5! f5 18.♖d6 ♖e7 19.hxg6 hxg6 20.♗g5!, but 16...h6 17.g4 a4!?) makes some sense). As Black can aspire to reach the position after 16...h5 in two possible ways (also via 15...h5), it deserves double attention: 17.a4 (17.g4!?, as in A. Sokolov - Ljubojevic, Belfort 1988, is not so clear after 17...♖f4!) 17...♗c7 (17...♖f4?! 18.♗xd8! ♖axd8 19.♗xd8 ♗xd8 20.♕xe6 ♖xe6 21.♕b6! with a serious advantage in the endgame, Kudrin - Golubev, Moscow 1995) 18.g4! ♖f4 19.♕xe6 ♗xe6 and now maybe 20.♗d7!? ♗xd7 21.♗d7 hxg4 22.fxg4 f5 23.gxf5 gxf5. Black's connected pawns may become dangerous, but after 24.♖g3!? ♖f6 25.♕e3 I would prefer White.

15...h5 is "my edition" of Ljubojevic's idea. Now 16.♔c4 ♖f4 17.♗xd8 ♗exd8 18.♕xe6 ♖xe6 (Howell - Golubev, Biel Open 1993) 19.♕e7! ♗xd1† 20.♗xd1 ♖f4 21.♖f6† ♕xf6 22.♕xf6 ♖xg2 leads Black to a dubious but quite puzzling endgame. The most direct 16.g4! may well be the best: 16...♖f4 (16...hxg4 17.h5 with an attack, Korneev - Susnik, Kranj 2004) and for example 17.♗e1! (Kutuzovic - Baric, Pula open 1998) 17...♕d5 18.c4 (another move is 18.gxh5) 18...♗c7 19.♕d6 ♗b6 20.gxh5 ♕xe4 21.fxe4 ♖xh5 22.c5 ♗b7 23.♕e2 with the idea 23...♖f4 24.h5 does not look nice for Black. So 16.g4 is interesting after both 15...a5 and 15...h5.

15...♖f4! is Sergei Tiviakov's move, which was topical in the 90s. White is certainly slightly better after 16.g3, but I have decided to recommend 16.♗e1!?, which is more fun - and possibly also the strongest. 16...♕d5 (16...♗c7?! 17.h5!± is given by Rogozenko, whose main explanatory line goes 17...♖xh5 18.g4 ♖f4 19.♗h4 h5 20.gxh5 ♖xh5 21.♗g5 ♖ad8 22.♗xh5 ♗xd1† 23.♖xd1 ♗d8† 24.♕d3 gxh5 25.♗xh5 ♖e7 26.♗h4 ♖f8 27.♖f6!+-.) Now 17.h5! brought some fantastic results for White in recent correspondence games.

The main direction seems to be 17...f5 (17...♖xh5?! 18.g4! or 18.c4 ♕h6† 19.♕e3! ♕xe3† 20.♗xe3 ♗a5 21.cxd5 cxd5 22.♗d2!) 18.hxg6 hxg6 (18...fxe4 didn't serve Black well in Chopin - Hanen, corr. French Ch 2003, after 19.fxe4 ♗g5 20.♕e3 ♕xa2 21.gxh7† ♖h8 22.g3 ♖ed8 23.♗xd8† ♗xd8 24.b3 ♗g6 25.♗a5 ♖e6 26.♔c4 ♗xg3 27.♖e1 ♖f8 28.♖b2 with advantage to White.) 19.♖d6 ♖e6 20.g3 ♖b8! (20...♕xf3 21.gxf4 ♕xh1 22.♖xf5! ♕d5 23.♖xg7 ♖xg7 24.c4 and White wins - Rogozenko. Also not good is 20...♖h5?! 21.♖xf5 ♗g5† 22.♖e3 ♗xg3 23.♖xd5 cxd5 24.♗e3 ♖f4 25.♕b5 Haugen - Taylor, corr. 2002).



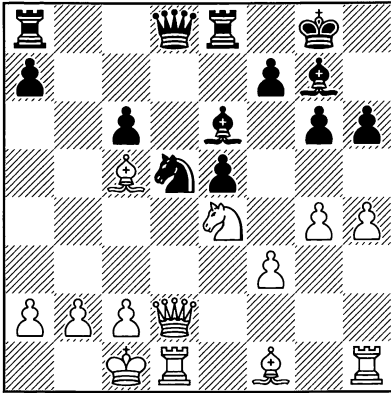
In this position Black's pieces are active, which gives him many chances. At the same time, White's king seems to feel safer than Black's, so the prospects of the first player can be preferred.

The main potential problem for Black is the emergence of White's bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal after the probable elimination of the black light-squared bishop. Play can continue 21.♖e4! fxe4 (Hardly sufficient is 21...♖h5 and now 22.g4 or 22.♕h3 ♖e8 23.♕xf5! - Haugen.) 22.fxe4 ♖e8! (22...♖h5 23.exd5 e4 24.c3 cxd5 25.♔c4! ♖f6 and now 26.♗e3 or 26.g4!?), and here the prophylactic 23.b3! can be suggested for White (who has at least five or six other possibilities to consider). 23...♖e6 (or 23...♗g5 24.♕e3! with the idea 24...♕xe4?! 25.♔c4† ♕d5 26.♗xd5) 24.♕e3 ♖d4 25.exd5 cxd5 26.♗xd4!?

exd4 27.♖d2. White plans to continue 28.♗d3 with a lasting positional advantage.

Finally we can go on with 15...h6.

16.g4



16...♖c7

The alternatives are:

16...♖b8?! 17.g5! h5 18.♗c4 and 18...♖c7 19.♗d6 wins an exchange for White. After 16...a5 17.g5 h5, then 18.a4 (with a probable transfer to our featured game after 18...♖c7 19.♗c4 ♖ed8 20.♖f2) is more precise in Z. Almasi's opinion than 18.♗c4 which allows 18...a4!?

16...f5?! 17.gxf5 gxf5 18.♗d6 followed by 19.♖hg1 is much better for White. 16...♗f4!?, planning 17...♗d5 is Black's serious alternative. There are other moves, but most often White answers with 17.♖c3. After 17...♗d5 (worse is 17...♖c7?! 18.♗d6! or 17...♗d5 18.♖a3! with pressure), White faces an important choice: 18.g5 h5! 19.♖a3 ♖c7 20.♗f6† ♗xf6 21.gxf6 ♖ad8 22.♗e7 ♖d7 23.♖h2 ♖dx7!? 24.fxe7 ♖xe7!, Demetrio - Donnelly, corr. 2001 was examined in great detail in issue 78 of Internet Magazine *Correspondence Chess News*, with the verdict of acceptable for Black. 18.h5! f5 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.♗d6 ♖e6! 21.♖g1 ♖f6 22.♖a3 ♖d8 23.♗b7!? ♖d7 24.♗a5 ♖e8 25.c4 ♗e6 26.♗xc6 ♖xd1† 27.♗xd1 (Van Kempen - Gupta, corr. 1991) is too complex and risky to be suggested for White, even if he is better here. So I leave it as it is, and go on with 18.♖a3! ♖c7 (Black has nothing better). Now I propose

19.h5!?, when 19...g5 transposes to Psakhis - Vasiukov, Vilnius (USSR Ch) 1980, which is known to be good for White. So, 19...gxf5 (A cooperative line is 19...♗xe4?! 20.fxe4 g5 21.♗c4 ♗f8 22.♗xf8 ♖xf8 23.♖d6!±, collecting a pawn. After 19...f5 20.gxf5 gxf5 21.♗d6 ♖f8 22.♖g1 ♗h8 White can try 23.♗c4!?) 20.gxf5 ♗h8 21.♗d6!? (the alternative is 21.♖g1 ♗f8! 22.♗f6 ♗xc5 23.♖xc5) 21...♖ed8 22.♗f5 ♗f6! 23.♗a6!? with somewhat better chances. Note that 23.c4?! ♗e6 24.♗d6? fails to 24...♗xf5! 25.♗xc7 ♗e2†! 26.♗xe2 ♗g5†.

17.g5!

Another way to fix the kingside pawns: 17.h5 g5, now occurs rarely. 18.♗c4 ♖ed8 19.♖f2 a5 20.a4 ♖ab8 21.♖d2 f5 gave Black reasonable counterplay in Ye Jiangchuan - Zhu Chen, Beijing 1997.

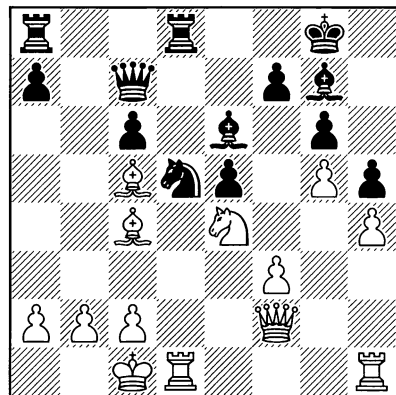
17...h5 18.♗c4!

18.♗d6 ♖b6 19.♗c5 is the typical way to make a draw against a stronger opponent.

18...♖ed8

Or 18...♖ad8 19.♖f2!, and Black's rook on e8 is not so useful, while White attacks the a7-pawn already.

19.♖f2!



The critical position for 16...h6 (which, at least statistically, is the main line of the entire 9.0-0-0 Dragon). White plans to develop his h1 rook, and improve his position step by step: ♗a3, with a possible invasion of the knight on c5, is one typical method. Experience shows

that it is extremely difficult for Black to hold the position by passive defence. Instead, his only constructive idea is ... f4 , which can be played at once or in the next few moves (after d2 and hd1 it would be too late). Then ... f4 is followed by a strategic struggle, where the availability of squares on the d-file for the opponent's pieces is especially important. Black has more weaknesses than White, which ensures an edge for the first player.

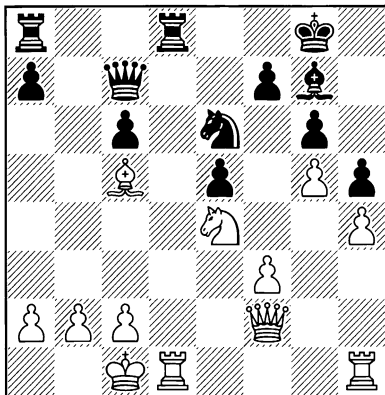
19...a5

Provoking a4, which will give Black some attacking chances if White later plays carelessly. At the same time ...a5 allows White to fix this pawn on a dark square, weakens the b6-square and restricts the possibilities of the black queen. The alternatives are:

19... d7 20. d2 ad8 21. hd1 and there is no obvious continuation of Black's plan (Popovic - Georgiev, Vrsac 1987). If 21... f4 (21...a5 22.a4 f4 ? 23. b6), then 22. xe6 !

19... b7 20. he1 !? f4 (20... h7 ?! 21.b3 c7 22.a4 f5 23. a3 with pressure, Lupulescu - Golubev, Bucharest 2003. White's main ideas are b2 and c5 , and 23... b6 24. d6 c8 is answered not by 25. xf7 ?! b7 , but by 25. c5 !) 21. xe6 xe6 22. d6 d7 (22... d4 ? 23.f4!) 23. d2 !? ad8 24. ed1 ± is akin to the 19... f4 line.

19... f4 !? 20. xe6 xe6 is important.



Not so convincing now is 21. d6 !? b6 !, aiming for 22.c3 d7 23. d2 ad8 24. hd1 xf2

25. xf2 f5! 26.gxf6 f8 ! 27. fd2 h6 Gyimesi - Schutt, corr. 1997. I vote for 21. xd8 †!? xd8 22. d1 (not 22. xa7 ? a8 with the idea 23. b6 b7 ! 24.a3 b8 -+) 22... xd1 † (22... d5 ?! 23. xa7) 23. xd1 ± and it is not easy for Black to solve his problems. For example, 23... a5 24.a3 xc5 25. xc5 xc5 26. xc5 f6 27. e6 ! fxg5 28.hxg5 h4 29. e2 e4 30.fxe4 xb2 31.a4± Korneev - Komljenovic, Alcobendas 1994. 20.a4 b7 21. he1 !?

Apart from this move of Ehlvest, reasonable also is 21.b3!?, preparing 21... f4 22. xe6 xe6 23. xd8 † xd8 24. b6 ! as in Z.Almasi - Watson, Bundesliga 1994/5.

The continuation 21. d2 f4 ! 22. xe6 xe6 23. d6 (23. xd8 † xd8 24. b6 ?? d8) 23... d4 24. hd1 xd6 ! 25. xd6 b4 26. e4 b8 27.c3 b3 † 28. c2 xa4 29. d8 † xd8 30. xd8 † h7 31. b1 a1 † with a draw in Palac - Kolev, Skopje 2002, illustrates what should be avoided. 21... ab8

After the immediate 21... f4 22. xe6 xe6 White has 23. d6 !? d7 (23... d4 24.f4! or 23...c5 24. xc5 !) 24. g3 !

22.b3

22. b3 !? (Ehlvest) is the typical alternative for White.

22... f4

Two possible waiting moves are 22... h8 (Marin) and 22... h7 . In either case quite a logical continuation seems to be 23. d2 (22. a3 is also an option) 23... f4 24. xe6 xe6 25. d6 !?. Now either version of Black's exchange sacrifice (25... xd6 or 25... d4) would hardly work well for him, while after 25... bc8 White will at least have 26. c5 ! with a positional advantage. 23. xe6 xe6 24. f6 †!

Such an exchange of the knight for the bishop is always a major decision for White. Even if he wins the e5-pawn (which is usually the aim of f6 †), Black can sometimes organize counterplay, using his queen and knight duo. But, importantly, here the black queen cannot be activated easily.

Also possible is 24. d6 !?. 24... xf6 25.gxf6 d5

25...♞xd1† 26.♞xd1 ♞e8 27.♞e3!? and White is better.

26.♙d6 ♞d8?!

Both players mentioned 26...♞c8!? 27.♙xe5 c5 in their annotations. I believe Black cannot get full compensation after 28.♞xd5 ♞xd5 29.c4 ♞b7 30.♞e3.

27.♙xe5!

Better than 27.♞xd5 cxd5 28.♙xe5 d4!.

27...♞b4 28.♞xd5 cxd5 29.♙b2!

29.♞d2 ♞xh4 30.♞xa5 d4!? gives Black counter chances.

29...d4

After 29...♞f4† 30.♞d2! ♞xh4 31.♞xa5 (± Ehlvest), 31...d4? is impossible because of 32.♞xe6 fxe6 33.♞xd8†. Marin decides to advance the d-pawn immediately, but faces another problem:

30.♞xe6!

Instead 30.♞d2 ♙h7 31.♞xb4 axb4 32.♞e5 g5 33.hxg5 ♙g6 gives Black counterplay (Marin). 30...fxe6 31.♞g3!

Now Black cannot defend his g6-pawn with the king because of 32.♞c7†, so White wins it, obtaining a technically won position.

31...♙f8

If 31...♙h8?! 32.♙b1 ♞b7 33.♞xg6 ♞h7 34.♞g3! ♞c8 35.♞g5! ♞xc2† 36.♙a2 ♞h7 37.♙xd4 followed by ♞xa5 with an easy win. 32.♙b1 ♞b7!

Not 32...d3? 33.♞c7 dxc2† 34.♙a2! c1♙† 35.♙b1 and Black can resign.

33.♞xg6 ♞f7 34.♙a3† ♙e8 35.♞h6

Also possible was 35.♞g5 (Ehlvest) 35...♞d5 36.♞f4 ♙d7 37.♙e7, etc.

35...e5

Hardly better is 35...d3 36.cxd3 e5 (or 36...♞xd3 37.♙e7! ♞d1† 38.♙b2 ♞g1 and now 39.♙c3!?, avoiding the checks) 37.♙c2, etc. 36.♞g5! ♞d5 37.♞f5! ♙d8 38.f4 d3?

Black could have continued his unpromising defence by 38...exf4 39.♙e7† ♙c7 40.♞xf4†, etc.

39.cxd3 ♞d4?

The final blunder in time trouble.

40.♙e7† ♙c7 41.♞xe5†

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Game 16

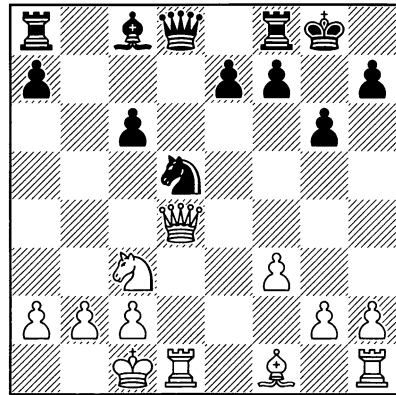
Balinov - Velickovic

Vienna 1998

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♞d2 ♗c6 9.0-0 d5 10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♙d4 ♙xd4

This is less ambitious in comparison with 12...e5. Now Black is essentially fighting only for a draw.

13.♞xd4



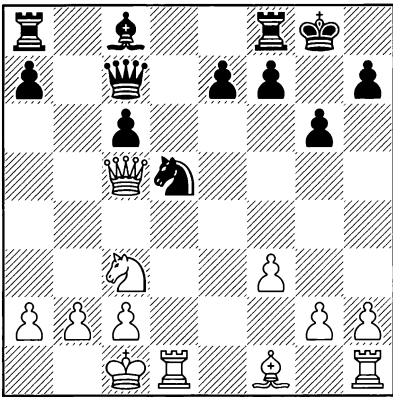
13...♞c7

This move of Hodgson is stronger than 13...♞b6 14.♗a4!. This practically wins a tempo for White because c3 is not an optimal square for his knight. 14...♞a5 (14...♞xd4 15.♞xd4 is just what White wants) 15.b3!± ♙f5 (15...♞b8 16.♞c5!, forcing the exchange of queens was Suetin - Vasiukov, Voroshilovgrad 1955; 15...♙e6 16.♞e5!) 16.♞c5 (a serious, but much more complicated alternative, is 16.g4 with the idea 16...♙xc2 17.♞d2) 16...♞xc5 17.♗xc5 ♗c3 (or 17...♗e3 18.♞e1 and Black is suffering) 18.♞e1! (not 18.♞d4! ♞fd8, and after 19.♞xd8† ♞xd8 20.g4 ♞d5! Black is fine) 18...♗xa2† 19.♙b2 ♗b4. Here I had the "pleasure" to meet the novelty 20.♙c4! over the board. (20.♞xe7! ♞fe8!, Korneev - Summercale, Groningen 1995, with the idea of 21.♞b7 ♗d5 22.♙c4? ♙c8! and White's rook is trapped.) 20...♞fe8 21.g4! Here we play for two results, and a zero for White is not among them:

21...♙c8 (similarly discouraging is 21...♙xc2 22.♜a6! -Van der Wiel. 22...♜d3† 23.♙xc2 ♜xe1† 24.♞xe1 where Black must follow with 24...♞ac8 and await his fate) 22.♞e5!?, etc. Van der Wiel - Golubev, Germany 1999.

14.♞c5

I cannot expect that every reader will have time to study two or more complex directions in full detail. So this move, as a result of a hard and uncertain choice, is my main recommendation for White.



14.♙c4, twice used by Shirov against Fedorov, is no weaker but more complex. Then 14...♜b6 is Black's most popular move, when White can fight for the initiative in various ways. Shirov played 15.♙e2! (15.♙b3 c5!), trying to underline the drawbacks of Black's passive knight retreat. Alternatively, White can allow ...♜xc4, because such an exchange cannot be called a strategic achievement for Black. Instead of 14...♜b6, Black can play actively with 14...e5!? 15.♞d2 (after 15.♞c5?! ♜xc3, 16.♞xc3 is no longer possible) 15...♙e6. Here 16.♜e4 ♞ad8! (after 16...♞ab8 17.h4 Black has more problems) 17.♜c5! looks slightly better for White.

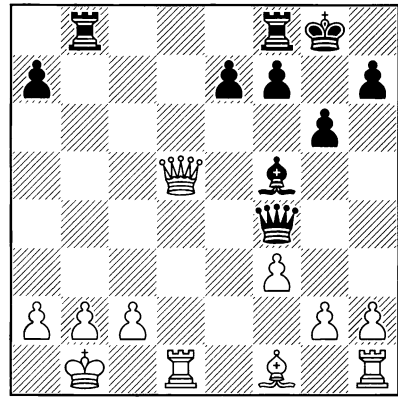
White's reasonable options also include the rare moves 14.h4 and 14.g3!.

14...♜xc3

The principled alternative is 14...♞f4†. Kiril Georgiev successfully used this move against Almasi in 1996, but did not repeat it against

Morozevich in 2000. 15.♜b1 ♙f5. Now White can obtain a relatively small advantage in two ways: 16.♙d3 ♜xc3† (16...♜e3!? 17.g3 ♞xf3 18.♙e2 ♙xc2† 19.♜c1! ♙xd1, and now possibly 20.♞xd1!? ♞f2 21.♞f1 ♞xh2 22.♞xe3 with an initiative.) 17.♞xc3, and 16.♜e2!.

He can also take on d5, which involves some risk but seems to be the most principled: 16.♜xd5 cxd5 17.♞xd5 (not 17.♞xe7? ♙xc2† 18.♜xc2 ♞a4† 19.♜d2 ♞ac8! 20.♙d3 ♞a5† 21.♜e2 ♞fe8+ Alterman) 17...♞ab8 and here:



a) 18.♞d4? is refuted by 18...♙xc2! (Alterman) 19.♜xc2 ♞fc8† 20.♜b1 ♞c1†.

b) After 18.♞d4! Black gets good play by 18...♞c7 or 18...♞e3 - Alterman.

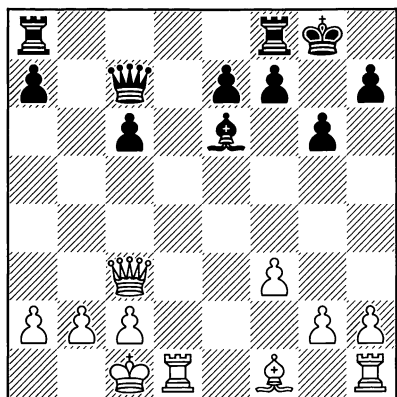
c) 18.♙c4 ♞c7! (18...♙e6?! 19.♞d4 ♞xd4 20.♞xd4 ♞b4 21.b3 ♙xc4 is refuted by 22.a3!± Balje - Nagley, corr. 1999) 19.♙b3 (19.b3?? ♙e6) 19...♞bd8!, and here a draw was agreed in Z. Almasi - Georgiev, Cacak 1996. White could fight for something by 20.♞b5 ♞xd1† (20...♞xh2 21.g4 ♙c8 22.♞de1!?) 21.♞xd1 ♞xh2 22.g4!?, but it looks rather double-edged.

d) I do not see a convincing way for Black to obtain full compensation after 18.b3!.

e) Worthy of attention is 18.♞d2!?. For example, 18...♞e5 (An alternative is 18...♞a4 19.♙d3 ♞fd8 20.♞he1 ♙xd3 21.cxd3 when it is not so easy for White to convert his extra pawn.) 19.b3 ♞fd8 (19...a5 20.g4! ♙e6 21.f4 followed by 22.f5!.) 20.♞xd8† ♞xd8 21.♞xd8† ♜g7 and now not 22.♙d3 ♞a5! but 22.♞d1!.

The presence of bishops improves Black's chances in such endgames, but White's extra pawn is still an extra pawn.

15. ♖xc3 ♙e6



16. h4!?

White is aiming to create weaknesses in Black's kingside.

16... ♗fd8

16... ♙xa2?! 17. b3 a5 18. h5! favours White. For example 18... g5 19. h6 e5 20. ♙c4 and after 20... a4 21. ♗d7! ♖xd7 22. ♖xe5 Black is mated on g7.

17. ♙d3 c5 18. h5 ♖f4† 19. ♔b1 ♖d4 20. hxc6 hxc6 21. ♖a5!

Black's king is potentially vulnerable and White rightly avoids the exchange of queens. With the same idea, weaker would be 21. ♖e1 (Kurnosov - Solovjov, St Petersburg 2004) because of 21... ♗ab8 22. b3 c4!.

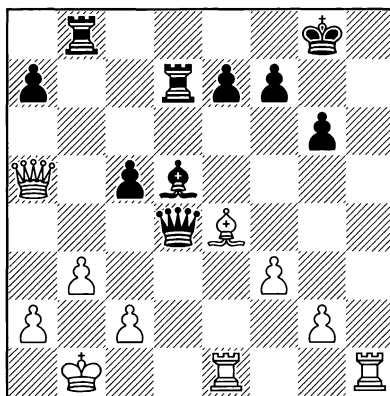
21... ♗ab8

Not 21... ♖b4? 22. ♖c7!. 21... ♗d7 22. ♗de1 could transpose to the game after 22... ♗b8 23. b3.

22. b3 ♗d7!

It is hard to propose a better move: 22... c4? 23. ♙e2 Or: 22... ♗d6? 23. ♖xa7. In the game Black wishes to exchange queens by 23... ♖b4. 23. ♗de1! ♙d5!

23... ♖b4 loses a pawn after 24. ♖xb4 cxb4 25. ♙g6!, as well as 23... c4 24. ♙xc4! ♙xc4 (24... ♖xc4? 25. ♖e5) 25. ♗e4. 24. ♙e4!



24... e6

The alternative 24... ♗bd8!? 25. ♙xd5 ♖xd5 would hardly resolve all Black's problems: 26. ♗d1! ♖g5 (or 26... ♖xd1† 27. ♗xd1 ♗xd1† 28. ♔b2, winning one of Black's pawns) 27. ♗xd7 (rather than 27. ♖xd8† ♗xd8 28. ♗xd8† ♔g7 29. g4 c4!?) 27... ♗xd7 28. ♖a6!?, and it seems that after 28... ♗d8 (28... e5!?) 29. ♖xa7 ♖xg2 30. ♗e1 ♖xf3 31. ♖xc5 e6 32. a4 White's pawns should be faster. e.g. 32... ♗d5 33. ♖c7 ♖f2 34. ♗h1 ♔g7 35. ♖c3†! ♖d4 36. ♖xd4† ♗xd4 37. a5 f5 38. ♔b2, etc.

25. ♙xd5 exd5

Better than 25... ♖xd5?! 26. ♗e4± (or 26. ♗d1!?), or 25... ♗xd5! 26. ♖xa7.

26. ♗d1!

White removes his rook from one of the open files that he controlled – it is more important to disturb Black's centralised queen! 26. ♗h3 would have been premature as 26... ♖b4! forces a queen exchange.

26... ♖b4 27. ♖a6!

Black should have been able to defend the endgame after 27. ♖xb4 cxb4!, but not 27... ♗xb4 28. c4 d4 29. ♗he1!.

27... ♖b6?

Only here does Black go clearly wrong.

27... ♔g7? loses to 28. ♗h7†! ♔xh7 29. ♖f6.

After 27... ♖c3 White wins the pawn by 28. ♖c6 c4 29. ♗xd5. The continuation 27... ♖f4 28. ♗h3! (28. ♖c6 ♖d6 29. ♖xd6 ♗xd6 30. c4±) 28... c4 29. ♗dh1 ♖d4 30. ♖c6 ♗bd8 allows Black to maintain the material balance, but having

passive rooks and an unsafe king his chances for survival are uncertain.

28. ♖a4!

A kind of fork: the d7 rook is attacked and White gains time to transfer his queen to the kingside.

28... ♗d8

Otherwise 29. ♖h4 would have been decisive.

29. ♖f4!

With two threats: 30. ♖h6 and 30. ♖h2. White's attack seems to be unstoppable.

29... ♖b4 30. ♖e5

Even simpler was 30. ♖h6! ♖f6 31. ♖de1!+-.

30... f6 31. ♖e6† ♔g7 32. ♖h3!

Black could continue his suffering for a few more moves, but he blundered his rook by

32... ♖g8?!

and immediately resigned. Still, the game was very well played until Black's understandable mistake on the 27th move. It gives us an example of White's optimal strategy in positions with Black's weakened queenside pawn structure: to open a second front on the kingside, in accordance with the "Principle of two weaknesses".

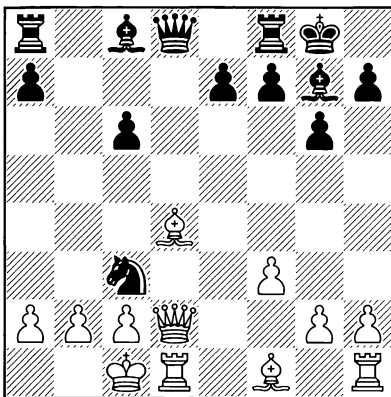
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Game 17

Rowson - Mah

Birmingham 1999

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 g6 6. ♗e3 ♗g7 7. f3 0-0 8. ♖d2 ♘c6 9. 0-0 d5 10. exd5 ♘xd5 11. ♘xc6 bxc6 12. ♗d4 ♘xc3!?



This move is linked with a similar concept to 12... ♗xd4: Black limits his ambitions and goes for exchanges, aiming to defend a slightly worse position.

13. ♖xc3 ♗h6†!

13... ♗xd4?! 14. ♖xd4 ♖b6 and now 15. h4!?

is the most direct. 15... ♗e6 (15... h5 16. ♖e4 ♗e6 17. g4 ♗d5 18. ♖e3 hxg4 19. h5 with an attack, Brkic - Baric, Bizovac 2003.) 16. h5 ♖fd8 17. ♖dh4!?

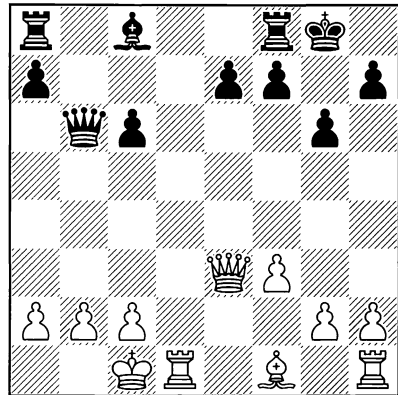
(17. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 18. hxg6 forcing the weakening 18... fxg6 is also interesting.) 17... g5 18. h6 f6 19. ♖e4 with a dangerous initiative, Linford - Pym, England 2003.

14. ♗e3

14. ♔b1?? loses the bishop after 14... e5!.

14... ♗xe3† 15. ♖xe3 ♖b6!

The best chance.



Worse is 15... ♖a5?! 16. ♗c4 with a strategically dominant position: 16... ♗a6 17. ♗b3! e6 (17... c5 fails to 18. ♖d5, Alterman & Vaisman) 18. ♖d6 c5 19. ♖e1!?

(I. Almasi's suggestion, which forces an exchange of queens. Also good is 19. ♖e5 ♖ad8 20. ♖hd1 ♖c7, Isupov - Maksimenko, Vladivostok 1995. Now 21. ♖xe6! ♖xd1† 22. ♔xd1 is recommended by Olthof.) 19... ♖xe1† 20. ♖xe1 ♗b7 21. ♖d7!?

and it is hard for Black to save his pawns.

Similarly unadvisable for Black is 15... ♖c7?! 16. ♗c4! and now, for example, 16... ♖b8 17. h4!?

♖b6 18. ♖c3. Here Black is a tempo down compared to the normal lines. 18... ♖b4 (or 18... ♗a6 19. ♗b3! c5 20. h5 c4 21. hxg6 ♖xg6

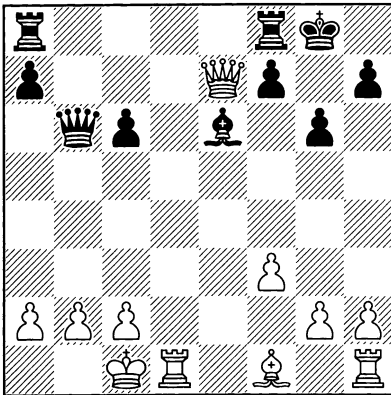
22.♙xc4 ♜f8 23.♙d3 with an extra pawn) 19.♞xb4 ♞xb4 20.b3, and in this endgame Black will suffer greatly.

The idea of offering a pawn sacrifice by 15...♞b6 attracted attention in 1990, after Boris Alterman employed it in a game against Sergei Tiviakov. This stem game was followed by active discussion. Later, Kasparov's win with White over Topalov in 1995 delivered a psychological blow to the supporters of this line. The objective theoretical evaluation of the line is similar to that of 12...♙xd4: a slight advantage and almost no risk for the first player.

16.♞xe7!

Accepting the offer. Black now obtains a slight initiative, which does not fully compensate for the pawn. Less principled is 16.♞c3!? ♙e6 17.h4 ♜fd8 18.♙d3 with a small plus, when 18...♞e3† 19.♙b1 c5 20.h5 ♞d4, which transposes to Balinov - Velickovic, does not look like Black's best choice. 16.♞xb6 axb6 (Tiviakov - Alterman, Sochi 1990) 17.♙c4!? b5 18.♙b3 c5 19.♙d5 ♞a7 is acceptable for Black according to Alterman & Vaisman.

16...♙e6!



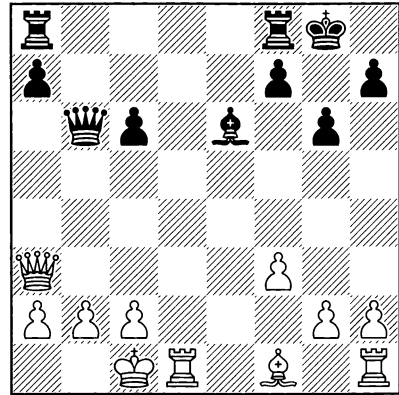
16...♞b8 puts little pressure on White. 17.♞f6 ♙e6 (If 17...♞f2? 18.♞d4! forces an exchange of queens, and 17...♙f5 is parried by 18.♙d3!.) 18.♞c3! ♜fd8 19.♙xd8† ♞xd8 20.♙d3 (20.h4!?) 20...♞f2 21.♞d2 ♞d4 22.♞d1 ♞d7 (not 22...♙xa2? 23.♙e4! and White is winning) 23.a3. Here the draw was agreed in Brod - Bonstingl,

Gamlitz 1998. Perhaps White was worried that Black would be able to claim compensation after 23...♞d5, but the continuation 24.h4 ♞a2 25.♞c3 clearly favours White.

After 16...♙e6 Black's main threat is 17...♞e3†! with a guaranteed draw following 18.♙d2 (18.♙b1?? ♙xa2†) 18...♞e1†.

17.♞a3!

The most solid continuation.



17...♜fd8

The alternatives include:

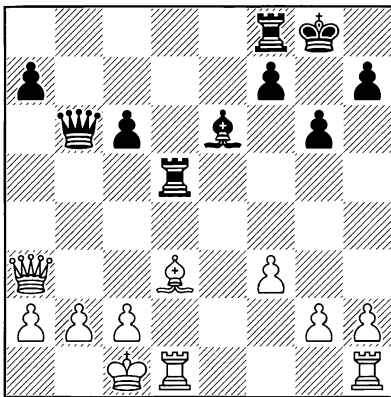
17...♞ab8 can be answered well by 18.♙d3.

17...a5 18.♙d3 ♞b4 19.♙e4 (Not 19.♞xb4 axb4 20.a3 bxa3 21.b3 c5, preparing ...c4.) 19...♞xa3 20.bxa3 ♞a6 (Schneider recommended 20...♞ab8 21.♙xc6 ♙xa2 22.♙e4! ♜f8 but after 23.♙d2! Black has no compensation) 21.♞d6 ♞c8 22.♞hd1. White is likely to exchange bishops by 23.♙d5 on the next move, and Black's life will be hard. GM Tolnai tried to defend the Black side as many as three times, and his two draws with one loss looks like quite a good result.

17...♞f2, and after 18.h4!? ♜fd8 19.♙d3 ♞xg2 20.h5 ♞xf3! Black probably should be able to defend his king in further complications. Instead, 18.♞a5, taking control of d8, is a common move for White. After 18...♞ab8 (18...♙f5!? 19.♞d2 ♞c5 20.♙d3! (Pupo considers 20.♞c3 ♞xc3 21.bxc3 ♙e6 22.c4±, which does not look like a winning endgame) 20...♜fd8 21.♙b1 ♙xd3 22.cxd3 and Black has problems) White

as a rule has opted for 19.h4. Here it seems that Black has to play 19...♙f5!. White's advantage does not look impressive here. 20.♖d2 ♗c5 and Black's very strong threat now is 21...♙xb2!. But 19.h4 is not necessarily best. One alternative is 19.b3!? and after 19...♗e3†! 20.♗b2 followed by ♗c3, and 19...♙f5 20.♖d2 ♗c5 21.♙c4 Black does not have full compensation.

17...♞ad8!? (initially suggested by Kasparov) may be slightly more precise than moving the other rook. 18.♙d3 ♞d5 (According to Tiviakov, insufficient is 18...♗f2 19.♞d2 ♗e3. White can continue with 20.♞hd1.) and we come to a very important position.



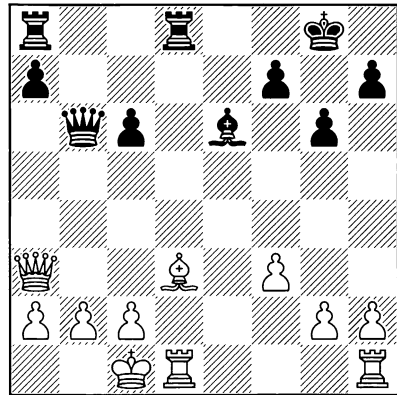
a) 19.♗c3 ♞c5 20.♗f6 ♙xa2 looks playable for Black: 21.h4 (or 21.♞he1 ♙d5, planning 22...♞a5, Pelletier - Berndt, Germany Bundesliga 1999) 21...♞b8! (after 21...♞a5 White can try 22.b3!?) 22.h5 (22.♞he1!? can lead to a total mess, e.g. 22...♗a5 23.h5 ♞xh5 24.b3 ♞c5 25.♗a1) and 22...♞xh5! equalizes.

b) 19.b3 ♞fd8 will be considered via the move order 17...♞fd8.

c) I suggest 19.♞he1 ♞a5 20.♗c3 ♞xa2 21.b3 ♞a5! 22.♗b2! (Rogozenko), with a slight advantage. Note that 21...♗a5?! 22.♗xa5 ♞xa5 and now, according to Rogozenko 23.♗b2 gives an unpleasant endgame for Black. 23...♞h5 24.h3 a5 and now 25.♞e4 ♞d8, Kasimdzhanov - Alterman, Bad Wiessee 1997 where White has 26.♞de1!? – Rogozenko, or perhaps even better is 25.♙e4!.

18.♙d3

After 18.♙a6!? (Kasparov - Topalov, Amsterdam 1995) Black can try 18...♞ab8!? 19.♞he1 ♞d5 20.♞xd5 cxd5! or 18...♞d5!? 19.♞xd5 cxd5!.



18...♞d5

After 18...c5, 19.♙e2!? transposes to the Kasparov - Topalov game, which continued 19...c4 20.f4! ♞d4 21.♞xd4 ♗xd4 22.g3±. Instead, 19.h4 c4 20.♙e4 ♞ac8 21.h5 (Arnold - Bozinovic, Vienna 2003) 21...f5!? is complex and, most likely, not bad for Black.

19.♞he1!?

White proceeds by analogy with the Kasimdzhanov - Alterman game.

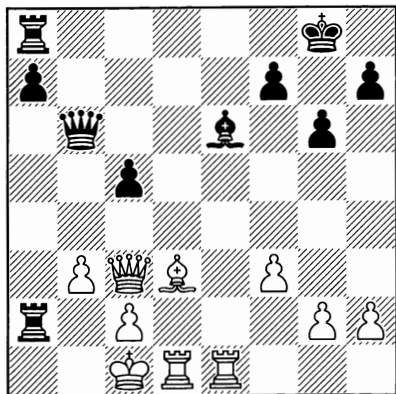
Other approaches are:

a) 19.♗c3 ♞c5 20.♗f6 ♙xa2 21.♞he1 ♗a5!? and Black is probably alive. After 21...♙d5?! the small difference with the Pelletier - Berndt game allows White to win a crucial tempo: 22.♞e7 ♞a5 23.b3 ♗b4 24.♞de1! ♞f8 25.♞e8! with advantage, Flores - Ballesteros, corr. 1997.

b) 19.b3 ♞ad8 20.♞he1 a5 (maybe Black could try 20...♙f5!?) 21.♗e7 ♞d7 (or 21...a4 22.♞xe6 fxe6 23.♗xe6† ♗g7 24.♗e7† ♗h6 25.♞e1) 22.♗f6 a4 23.♞e4 axb3 24.axb3 and White's chances are preferable, Furlan - Gomboc, Ljubljana 1998.

c) Curious is also 19.♞de1!? (as in Van den Doel-Zomer, Vlissingen 2002).

19...♞a5 20.♗c3 ♞xa2 21.b3 c5?



A careless move, which will be refuted neatly. Akin to Kasimdzhanov - Alterman is 21...♚a5?! 22.♜xa5 ♞xa5 23.♞b2 with an initiative in the endgame.

Better is 21...♞a5 22.♞b2 with a slight advantage for White. If 22...♞b8 (threatening to win by 23...♞c5!), then 23.♞xe6! (not 23.♞xg6? ♞c5 24.♜d3 ♞d5!) 23...fxe6, and here

24.♞c4 ♞d5 25.♞xd5 cxd5 26.♞a1± preserves White's pluses, while one may also consider 24.♞xg6 ♞d5! (24...hxg6?? 25.♞d7 e5 26.♜d3!) 25.♞d3!?.

22.♞xe6!!

Here this sacrifice allows White to use the awkward position of the black rook. 22...♜xe6

After 22...fxe6?! 23.♞c4 White completely dominates.

23.♞c4 ♜c6?

23...♜c8 was the only way to avoid the immediate loss: 24.♞b1 ♞a6 25.♞xa6 (25.♞e1!? with the threat 26.♞e7 can be inserted) 25...♜xa6 26.♜xc5 ♜e2 27.♜d5 ♞c8 28.♞d2 with a healthy extra pawn for White.

23...♜b6? would save a rook, but lose the king: 24.♞xf7†! ♞xf7 25.♞d7† ♞e6 26.♜g7 ♞a1† 27.♞b2.

24.♞d5! ♞a6 25.♞xa8 ♞a1† 26.♞d2

Certainly not 26.♞b2?? ♜a3 mate.

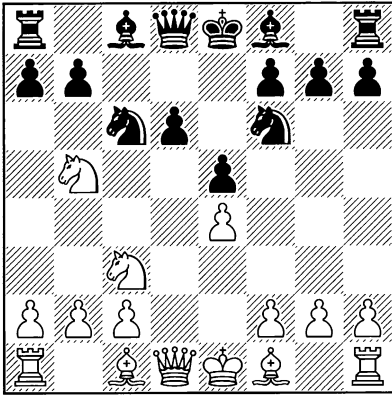
26...♜d6† 27.♜d3 ♜f4† 28.♞e2

and Black admitted defeat.

1-0

The Sveshnikov

- By Jacob Aagaard



Note to the updated edition: In the almost two years since the first edition came out, the line I suggested has been tried out at the highest level and discussed in many sources, mainly Rogozenko's sublime *The Sveshnikov Reloaded*. Though my belief that White has an advantage in the main line does not seem to have been confirmed, this line still holds great practical value.

At top level there has been a heavy shift towards 9.♟d5 instead of exchanging on f6, where Black is ever so slightly worse, but suffering quite a bit. This is possible to make quite a number of people depart from playing the Sveshnikov in the future.

Below I have added a few updates to the original chapter, but in essence left it as it was.

It is almost impossible to describe the huge changes the Sveshnikov has undergone since I wrote a small book on it for Cadogan in the late 90s. A great contribution to this opening has been delivered by players such as Kramnik, Leko, Kasparov and Shirov, as well as lesser known grandmasters, but still experts on the opening in their own right, like Rogozenko (who published a CD for Chessbase with the opening, as well as writing various articles for different magazines),

Yakovich (who wrote a book on the opening for Gambit, which is great despite some flaws), McShane, and the latest addition, the world's youngest grandmaster, Magnus Carlsen. To give a strong recommendation against an opening that is favoured by such a group of outstanding grandmasters is by no means easy. Still it is possible to give some useful practical advice on where to look for an advantage and some indication of where the most recent successful assaults on this solid defence have been made.

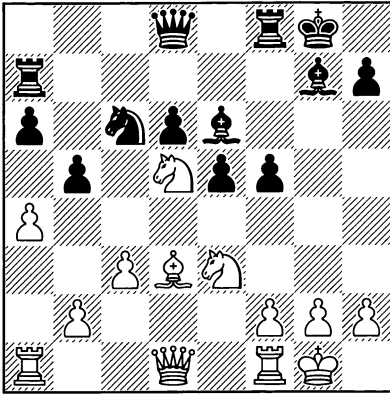
The main line I have chosen against the Sveshnikov (11.c3 and 12.exf5) is in many ways the most practical, as well as being objectively a strong line, as it does not allow Black to choose between two main lines, as he can against 11.♟d3. The main game, Hector – Carlsen, clearly proves that Black needs to find a different way to treat this position, as the very simple harmonious set-up demonstrated by the Swedish grandmaster brought the Norwegian boy wonder real troubles. The solution chosen by Carlsen was a desperate bishop sacrifice, which ultimately brought him the draw, but white's play could be improved.

After 1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 e5 6.♟db5 d6 we have the standard position of the Sveshnikov Sicilian. Here the main choice for a long time has been 7.♟g5 a6 8.♟a3 b5 when White can either choose 9.♟d5 or the sharper move, creating weaknesses on the Black kingside: 9.♟xf6 gxf6 10.♟d5 f5

In this position Black could also play 10...♟g7 with the idea of ♟c6-e7, but if White answers 11.c3 then Black cannot avoid transposition, as his only fully playable move is 11...f5.

Now after 11.c3 ♟g7 12.exf5 ♟xf5 13.♟c2 Black can choose between different ways to play this position. There is 13...♟e6 with the idea of a quick ♟c6-e7 to exchange a knight on d5. White will in this case play 14.g3!, a move made main line. The idea is to recapture with the bishop instead of the knight on d5, as the exchange of bishops would favour White; partly because it eliminates the bishop pair, but also because of light squared weaknesses in the Black camp, and because the white knight would do little good on d5.

Usually these days Black does not play this but 13...0-0 14.♖ce3 ♘e6. Here 14...♙g6! is an interesting alternative, popularised by Leko and not so easy to meet. The main point is 15.h4 ♘e4! when Black has provoked White into weakening his kingside. However, the main line is still 14...♘e6, when I suggest following continuation: 15.♙d3 f5 16.0-0 ♝a7 17.a4!



Theory does not consider this troublesome for Black – yet. However, once the gravity of the Hector game becomes apparent, Black players will most likely look elsewhere for satisfaction. Here there are many choices, as considered below.

Those are the main lines and recommendations chosen for this book. However, we will start with a line that is not considered a main line at all, but is still seen in tournament practice from time to time. Here Black rejects 8...b5, the move that changes this from the Lasker-Larsen variation to the Sveshnikov.

Game 18

Yemelin – Kharlov
St Petersburg 1998

1.e4 c5 2.♖c3 ♖c6 3.♖ge2 ♖f6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♖xd4 e5 6.♖db5 d6 7.♙g5 a6 8.♖a3 ♘e6

This is the Lasker/Larsen/Pelikan-variation – or at least these are some of its many names. This line had disappeared from practice some time ago, but Kharlov has tried to revive it,

and thereby challenged his strong opponents to show why it is untenable.

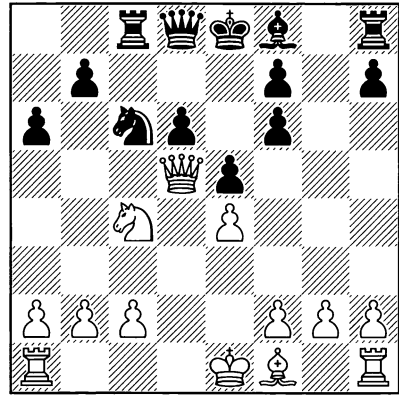
9.♖c4 ♝c8

9...♙e7 10.♙xf6±

10.♖d5 ♙xd5 11.♙xf6!

This point is what gives White the advantage. Now the light squares are too weak to be justified by a fleeting initiative.

11...gxf6 12.♝xd5



12...♖d4

Maybe the best of Black's rather sad list of choices.

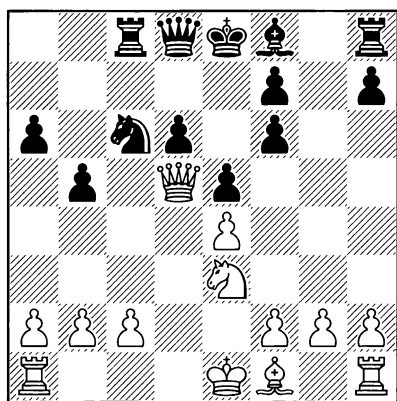
12...♖b4 leads to a position with opposite coloured bishops where Black can only hope for a draw, but will certainly lose more than one game in ten, which is where the 45% score which is the minimum any acceptable Black opening can offer a player slips out of sight. 13.♝d2 d5 14.exd5 ♖xc2† (14...♝xd5 15.♝xd5 ♖xd5 16.0-0-0± is simply more comfortable for White. Black can often reach this kind of endgame right from the opening, 16...♖b4 17.c3 ♖c6 18.♙d3 ♘c5 19.♙e4 ♝c7 20.♖d6† ♙xd6 21.♝xd6 ♖e7 22.♝d3 b5 23.♖b1 h6 24.♝hd1± Kurnosov - Zhang Pengxiang, Cappelle la Grande 2002.) 15.♝xc2 ♙b4† 16.♖d1 and now:

a) 16...b5 17.♝e4! The logical thing is to get out of the pin. 17...bxc4 18.♙xc4 ♝b6 19.♖e2! (This move makes most sense to me. The king will find safety on the kingside and the rooks get connected. 19.♝c1 ♙d6 (19...♙c5 was played

in Matulovic - Simic, Yugoslavia 1980. Now strongest was 20.♞f5 ♘e7 21.♙b3±) 20.♞c2 ♘e7 21.♘e2± Schandorff - Morovic Fernandez, Copenhagen 1982.) 19...♙d6 (19...♙c5 20.b3 ♙xf2 is possible, and probably best answered by 21.♙xa6± when White's advantage is beyond question. However the tempting 21.♞f5? did not work because of 21...♞xc4! 22.bxc4 ♞b2† 23.♘f3 ♙d4 24.♞c8† ♘e7 25.♞c7† ♘f8 26.♞c8† and White has no more than a draw, ½–½ Filipenko - Sveshnikov, USSR 1980.) 20.b3 (20.♙b3 ♘e7 21.♞hc1 ♞c5 22.♞xc5 ♞xc5 23.♙d1 ♞b5† 24.♘f3 ♞c5 25.g3± Bhend - Svedenborg, Lugano (ol) 1968) 20...♞g8 21.♞ac1 ♘e7 22.g4 h5 23.h3 hxg4 24.hxg4 ♞g5 25.♙d3 ♞cg8 26.♞c6 ♞b8 27.♞h4+ - Yastreb - Moskovets, Alushta 2002. White is winning here. Black has no counterplay and is simply a pawn down for nothing.

b) 16...♞xd5† 17.♘c1 Black cannot regain his piece as is seen in the following brilliant example. 17...b5 (17...0–0 18.a3 and White has won this position in several games, one of them being Anka - Tomcsanyi, Hungary 1998) 18.a3 ♙e7 19.♙d6† ♘d7 20.♙xc8 ♞xc8 21.♙xb5† ♞xb5 22.♙d1† ♙d6 23.♙xd6† ♘xd6 24.♞xc8 ♞f1† 25.♘c2 ♞xa1 26.♞xa6†+- Berndt - Thiel, Germany 1998.

Another attempt is 12...b5 13.♙e3.



Now Black has tried:

a) 13...♙h6? does not work because of the following tactical solution. 14.♙f5! ♙b4

15.♙xd6† ♘d7 (15...♘e7 16.♞xf7† ♘xd6 17.♙d1†+-) 16.♞xf7† Only one of several winning moves. 16...♘c6 (16...♘xd6 17.♙d1†+-) 17.♞b7† ♘c5 (17...♘xd6 18.♙d1†+-) 18.♙d1 ♙xc2† 19.♘e2 ♙d4† 20.♞xd4! exd4 21.♞d5† ♘b6 (21...♘b4 22.♞b3†+-) 22.♙xc8† ♞xc8 23.♞xd4† ♘a5 24.♘f3 and White went on to win in Smagin - Kharlov, Cheliabinsk 1991.

13...♙e7 14.♞d3 (14.♞b7 ♞a5† 15.c3 ♞c7 16.b4 ♞xb7 17.bxa5 ♙h6 18.♙g4 ♙g7 19.a4± Murey - Jamieson, Luzern 1982.) 14...♙h6 (14...♞c6 15.♙e2 h5 16.0–0 ♙h6 17.♙d5 ♙xd5 18.♞xd5 ♞xc2 19.♙xh5± Smirnov - Pilavov, Alushta 2001.) 15.♙e2 ♙xe3 16.fxe3± Korneev - Hernandez Montalvo, Padron 2002.

b) 12...f5! is the newest attempt in this position. After 13.0–0–0 b5 14.♙e3 ♙h6 15.♘b1 White is simply better. 15...♙xe3 16.fxe3 fxe4 17.♞xe4 ♞c7 18.g3! A nice move that exploits the weak structure. 18...♙e7 19.♙h3 ♙d8 20.♞g4 ♞g8 21.♞h5± Al Sayed - Sveshnikov, Dubai 2004.

13.♙d3

13.0–0–0!? with the idea of ♞xd4! has also been played, but the text move simply assures the edge without any problems.

13...♞e7 14.♞a5 ♞xc4!

This does not work tactically for many reasons.

14...d5 does not promise Black any happiness. 15.♙b6 ♞c5 16.♞xc5 ♞xc5 17.c3! As so often in this line Black's sick structure is so important that White only focuses on containment of the black forces. 17...dxe4 18.♙xe4 ♙c6 19.0–0–0± ♙h6† 20.♘b1 ♞b5 21.♙c4 0–0 22.♙d6 ♞b6 23.♙f5 1–0 Balinov - Hausrath, Budapest 1999.

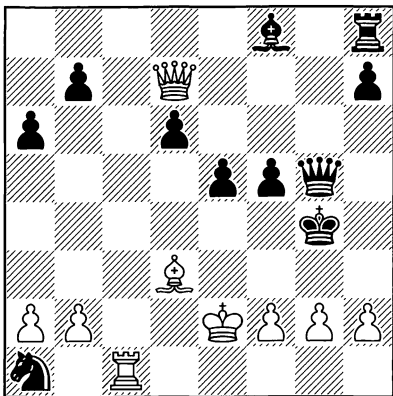
14...♞c5 15.♞d2 ♞c7 16.c3 ♙e6 17.♙e3 ♙h6 18.0–0± Varavin - Kharlov, Elista 1994.

15.♙xc4 ♙xc2† 16.♘e2 ♙xa1 17.♞c1!!!

Was this direct assault on the king something Kharlov had overlooked in his home analysis? My computer still has problems finding it, 6 years of technological advance after the game. Even after this move it takes time for the machine to see that something is terribly wrong.

17...♙h6

What else? 17...f5 18.exf5 ♖g5 is the best option for Black according to the computer. But with some human assistance, it is possible for the machine to find the following nice winning attack. 19.♙b5† ♗e7 20.♚c7† ♗f6 21.♚d8† ♗xf5 22.♙d3† ♗g4 23.♚d7† f5 (23...♗h5 24.♚xf7† ♗h6 25.♚e6† ♗h5 26.♙c4+-) And now a move that takes only a few seconds for the machine to find.



24.h4!! ♗xh4 25.♙h1† ♗g4 26.♙xf5† ♚xf5 27.f3† ♗g5 28.♙h5† ♗xh5 29.♚xf5† ♗h6 30.♚f6† ♗h5 31.g4 mate. To a human this line might seem rather fanciful, but to the machine it is pure logic.

18.♙xf7† ♗xf7 19.♙c7 ♙d8?!

Slightly better was 19...♙e8 20.♙xe7† ♙xe7 21.♙c3 ♙f8 22.b4 ♙d7 23.♙xa1 d5 24.exd5 ♙xd5± - Yemelin.

20.♙d5† ♗f8 21.♙xe7 ♗xe7 22.♙xb7† ♙d7 23.♙c8+- d5 24.♙g8! ♙f8 25.exd5 ♗e8 26.♙e6† ♙e7 27.♙xa6 ♙xd5 28.♙c6† ♙d7 29.♙c1 ♗b3 30.axb3 ♗f8 31.b4 ♙d4 32.♙c8† ♗f7 33.b5 ♙b4 34.b3 h5 35.g3 ♙d6 36.♙d7† ♙e7 37.♙c6 ♙d8 38.♙d5† ♗e8 39.♙d6 ♙d4 40.♙e6† 1-0

From this we will move to the main line, and only after going through it in two games will we pay attention to the sidelines.

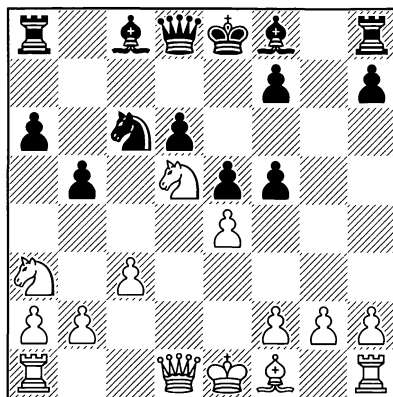
In this first game with the main line I have given the most important options until

20.♙xf5!?, which I do not consider critical at all. I just liked the game and would rather include a few more moves than have one game going on for 8 pages or so.

Game 19
Zelcic – Zelenika
Pula 1999

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 e5 6.♗db5 d6 7.♙g5 a6 8.♗a3 b5 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♗d5 f5

10...♙g7 11.c3f5 is nothing but a transposition of moves after 12.exf5. Note that Black cannot play his standard idea of 11...♗e7?! here, as White gets the advantage with 12.♗xe7 ♙xe7 13.♗c2± when Black cannot play his regular push on the kingside because of a simple double threat: 13...f5?! 14.exf5 ♙xf5? 15.♙f3+- 11.c3



11...♙g7

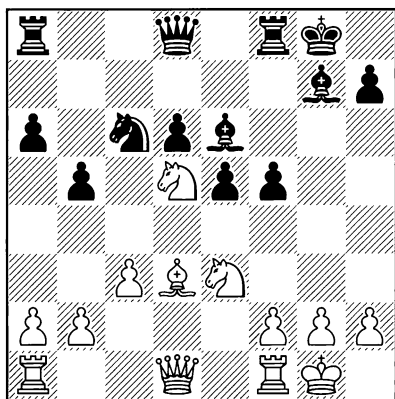
11...fxe4? is known to be a mistake as Black is in trouble after 12.♙xb5 axb5 13.♗xb5 The main points are: 13...♙a4 (13...♙a7 14.♗xa7 ♗xa7 15.♙a4+-) 14.♗bc7† ♗d7 15.♙g4+- 12.exf5 ♙xf5 13.♗c2 0-0 14.♗ce3

14...♙g6!?! is maybe a move for the future. 15.a4!?! This move apparently ignores the fragile placement of the bishop on g6. However the usual (15.h4 is not that convincing. 15...♙e4! is Leko's idea, after which Black apparently is doing OK.) 15...b4 (15...bxa4 is probably best answered with

16.h4! ♔e4 17.♖xa4. The point behind 15.a4, at least when I played it. 17...♙xd5 18.♗xd5 ♖e7 19.♙c4±) 16.♗xb4! Obviously White does not want to accept a strong knight on d4. 16...♗xb4 17.cxb4 e4! (17...f5!? is the way forward for Black. Previously I recommended 18.♙c4 ♖h8 19.♙d5 for White, but a lower league Danish game questioned this optimism. For now let's say that the ball is in White's court.) 18.♖d2! f5 19.♗d5 ♖h8 20.♙e2 ♙f7 21.0-0± and Black has no other path forward than to enter a horrible position with opposite coloured bishops. Baklan - Lobron, Germany 2001.

14...♙e6 15.♙d3 f5 16.0-0

16.♙c2 was for some time considered the way to play this line, but Black eventually came up with a forced draw with 16...f4 17.♖h5 ♖f7 18.♙xh7† ♖f8 19.♙f5 ♖e8! (19...♖xf5? 20.♗xf5 ♙xd5 21.♙d1!+- Arnason - Birnboim, Beer-Sheva 1987. The draw after 19...♖e8 was actually given by Arnason, but it took some time before it was played in tournament games.) 20.♙xe6 ♖xe6 21.♖g4 ♖h6! 22.♗f5 (22.♗c2?! e4, the same goes for 22.0-0?! e4!) 22...♖e6 23.♗fe3=.



16...♙a7

This move seems logical and has been played many times at the top level. However it is far from the only move.

16...♖b8 17.♖h5 ♖d7 18.♙ad1 ♖h8 19.♙c2 b4∞ was played in David - Manor, Bikurei Haitim 1997. [2006 - 19...♖be8 20.♙ad1 and

White has promising play according to Dorian Rogozenko. Dorian clearly favours 17.♖h5.]

I think White gets the advantage after 17.♙c2! when the move ...♖b8 has done very little for Black, while White has ideas of ♖h5 and ♙b3, both with advantage for White. Thanks to Thomas Luther for this advice.

16...♖e7? loses in a very famous way to 17.♗xe7† ♖xe7 18.♙xf5! ♙xf5 19.♗xf5 ♖xf5 20.♖d5†+-.

16...♖h8! has been played several times, and is bound to become more popular if the attack on the 16...♖a7 line by De Firmian and Hector continues to be successful. However White seems to be able to create real problems for Black in this line as well, though the last word is far, far away (no, not in that sci-fi movie!). 17.♖h5 Now Black has two choices, neither of them fully satisfactory.

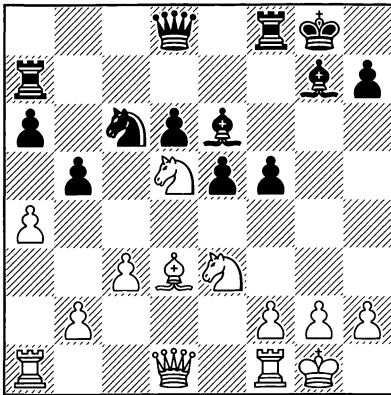
17...♙f7 18.♖h3 e4 19.♙c2 ♖e5 This was the way Illescas Cordoba played with Black against Judit Polgar. Now Polgar blundered with 20.f3?! after which Black had a strong manoeuvre in ♖g5† followed by ♖d2 with good play. Instead White should play 20.♙fd1 ♙xd5 [2006 - 20...♖g5?! 21.♖xf5 ♖f3†! 22.♖h1! ♖h4 seemed to equalise in Elburg - Knebel, corr. 2004] 21.♙xd5 ♖f6 22.♙ad1 ♙ad8 23.f4!. Probably preparation from Topalov and his coach. After this there are many ways for White to create real problems for Black. 23...exf3 24.♗xf5 fxg2 25.♖xg2 (an interesting alternative was 25.♙d2! ♖g8 26.♖xg2 ♖g6 27.♖f1±) 25...♖g8 26.♖h1 (It seems that it was possible to play 26.♙xd6! ♙xd6 27.♙xd6 ♖f7 28.♗g3 ♖c4 29.♖e4 ♙e5 30.♖h6 ♖g7 31.♖g2± when White has good chances.) 26...♙f8 27.♖h3 ♖g6 28.♗d4 (28.♙d4! is very good for White according to Fritz.) 28...♙e8 29.♖h5 ♖g7 30.♖g1 ♖f7 31.♖f5 ♖b7† 32.♖f3 ♖xf3† 33.♗xf3 ♙e6 34.♗d4 ♖f6 35.♗f5 ♖c7 36.♗e3 ♗f4 37.♖h4 ♖cf7 38.♙b3 ♖g7 39.♖hg4 ♖xg4 ½-½ Topalov - Leko, Monte Carlo 2003.

17...e4 18.♙c2 ♖e7 19.♙ad1 ♖c8 20.f3 (20.♖h3 ♗xd5 [20...♗g6 21.♙xe4!±] 21.♗xd5 ♖e8!± would lead nowhere...) 20...♙f7 21.♖h3 ♗xd5 22.♗xd5 b4! Now instead of 23.fxe4 as in Anand - Topalov, Sofia 2004, White could

have claimed a clear advantage with 23. ♖xf5!±

Better is the sad 22... ♗xd5 23. ♖xd5 ♖b6† 24. ♖h1 ♖e3 as advised by Rogozenko. 25. fxe4 ♖xh3 26. gxh3 fxe4 27. ♖xf8† ♖xf8 28. ♗xe4 ♗e5 29. ♖g2± The endgame here looks like an easy draw. Still Black has a few problems. His queenside pawns are slightly weaker and h7 is a potential target. Till something better is found, this at least should make the variation unattractive for Black players, who will draw 19 and lose 1 game from this position. But at high level I think we will see a revival of 16... ♖h8.

16...e4 is discussed in Game No. 21 below.
17.a4!



17. ♖h5 ♖af7 has been played many times. The conclusion is that Black is doing fine, so there is no real reason to go further down this dead-end road.

I think that 17.a4 was actually an idea of co-author Golubev.

17... ♗e7

This move does not seem to offer Black enough compensation for the pawn. However the alternatives are also not recommendable. 17... bxa4 18. ♖xa4 a5± Rogozenko. 19. ♖h5 e4 20. ♗f4 ♗f7 21. ♗c4 ♗xc4 22. ♗xc4 ♖d7 23. ♖fa1± 1-0 Kolcak-Kucinskas, e-mail 2002.

17... b4 also does not seem to be very promising. 18. cxb4 (18. ♖h5 e4 19. ♗f4 ♗f7 20. ♗c4± - Golubev) 18... f4 (18... ♗d4!? is unclear according to Golubev. However this seems a bit superficial. 18... e4 19. ♗f4 ♗f7 20. ♗c4± Pedersen - Aagaard,

Aarhus 1999 is my own sad experience with this position.) 19. ♖h5 ♖f7 (19... ♗h8 20. ♗f5 ♖xf5 21. ♗xf5 ♗xd5 22. ♖fd1 ♗xb4 23. ♖ac1 ♗f6 24. ♗xd6!, Areshchenko - Holmsten, Cappelle la Grande 2003) 20. ♗xh7† ♖f8 21. ♗f5 ♖xf5 22. ♗xf5 ♗xd5 23. b5± Vallejo Pons - Shirov, France 2002.

17... f4 18. ♖h5 ♗h8 (18... ♖ff7 19. ♗xh7†! ♖f8 20. ♗f5!± - Golubev) 19. ♗xh7† ♖xh7 20. ♖g6†+- 17... e4 18. ♗f4 ♗f7 19. axb5±
18. ♗xe7†

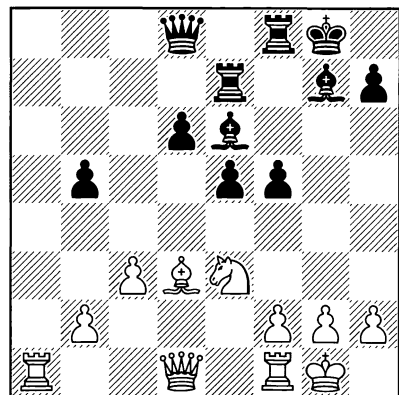
White has two alternatives, one cautious, and one wild and hot headed:

18. ♗c2!? ♗xd5 19. ♗xd5 bxa4 20. ♖xa4± is certainly possible. Now after 20... ♖h8 21. ♖d2 a5 22. ♖d1 ♖b7 23. b3 ♗d7 24. ♖a2 ♖b5 25. c4 ♖c5 26. ♗c3? Black was OK in Wedberg - Von Bahr, Stockholm 1999, but instead White could have played 26. ♗e3 ♖f6 27. ♖da1±.

18. axb5!? ♗xd5 (18... f4?! 19. ♗xe7† ♖xe7 20. ♖h5+- Golubev-Horvath, Scuol 2001) 19. ♗c4! (inferior is 19. ♗xf5?! ♖xf5! 20. ♗xf5 a5!! 21. c4 ♗f4 22. ♗xd6 ♗f8 23. c5 [23. ♗e4 ♖h4†] 23... ♖d7! - Nijboer) 19... ♗f4 20. ♗xe6† ♗xe6 21. ♖d5± Topalov - Leko, Monte Carlo 2004.
18... ♖xe7

18... ♖xe7? 19. axb5 axb5 20. ♖xa7 ♖xa7 21. ♗xb5 Why not? In Navara - Hansen, Bled 2002. White also achieved a good game with 21. ♗c2, but this is more convincing. 21... ♖c5 22. ♗a4 f4 (22... d5 23. b4 ♖d6 24. ♗b3±) 23. ♗b3!±

19. axb5 axb5



20. ♖xf5!?

In the next game we shall look at the critical 20. ♖xb5, but here we shall investigate a few side options. 20. ♖a6 d5 does not give White anything besides the option to transpose again with 21. ♖xb5!. The following examples should make this clear:

21. ♖h5 e4 22. ♖xb5 f4 23. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 24. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 25. ♖xd5 ♖b8 26. ♖c4 ♖h8 27. ♖xf4 ♖ee8 28. b3 ♖xc3= Nilsson - Binelli, Corr. 1998.

21. ♖xe6!? ♖xe6 22. ♖xf5 e4?! 23. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 24. ♖xb5± Zelic-Sermek, Belisce 1999.

After 21. ♖c2 . ♖c8 22. ♖a8 ♖d7 23. ♖b4 e4 24. ♖e2 ♖b7 25. ♖a5 d4 26. cxd4 Black has no problems. ½-½, Anand - Kasparov, Moscow 2004. Though improvements on White's play have been suggested, they do not include any chance of an advantage.

20. ♖c2 ♖h8! also fails to impress. 21. ♖a6 (21. ♖b3 f4! 22. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 23. ♖d5 f3!) 21... e4 22. ♖d5 (22. ♖xd6 ♖b8!?) 22... ♖ee8 ♖ Rogozenko.

20... ♖xf5

20... ♖xf5? does not work because of 21. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 22. ♖d5 ♖ef7 23. ♖a8+- and White wins the queen.

21. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 22. ♖f3 ♖d7

Black should defend with the bishop close to his king, as the pin is uncomfortable after 22... ♖c8? 23. ♖d5 ♖h8 24. ♖a8±. [2006 – this is less obvious to me now]

23. ♖a8 ♖f8 24. ♖fa1 ♖f7 25. ♖e3!?

With this move White simply gets out of the open file. The grandmaster might have known that 25. ♖b8!? ♖e6 (25... ♖g6 26. ♖d5 ♖f5 27. f3± Rogozenko.) 26. ♖g3 probably leads to draw after 26... ♖g7 27. ♖f3 ♖f7 28. ♖g3±= as shown by Rogozenko.

25. ♖1a7?! is a very bad idea. 25... ♖xa7 26. ♖xa7 ♖xa7 27. ♖d5 ♖g7 28. f4 ♖f6 29. fxe5 ♖ dxe5 ♖ It is difficult to evaluate how much worse White is in this endgame, but the main point is that he went on to lose it in the game David - Yakovich, St Vincent 2000.

25... ♖e6 26. ♖b8 ♖d5 27. ♖g5 ♖g6 28. h4 ♖c5 29. ♖g3

Obviously Black is not seriously worse here.

However it is of little theoretical importance.

29... e4 30. ♖a5 ♖f5 31. b4 ♖d5?

Black should not insist on protecting the b-pawn with the queen. Now White had a very strong continuation.

32. ♖e3?

32. ♖xb5! Of course either rook can capture here. 32... ♖xb5 33. ♖xb5 ♖xb5 34. c4! ♖xb4 35. h5±

32... ♖h5 33. ♖f4 ♖f5 34. ♖c1!?

34. ♖e3=

34... ♖h5!?

Very strong was 34... ♖d3! ♖.

35. ♖a1!?

35. ♖axb5 ♖xb5 36. ♖xb5 ♖xb5 37. c4± was still good for White.

35... ♖e6 36. ♖e3 ♖g6 37. ♖f1?

37. ♖h2 ♖g4 38. ♖g3 with some chances for a draw.

37... ♖f3!?

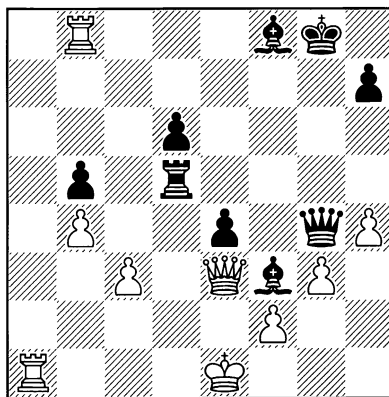
37... ♖g4! was very strong here.

38. g3!?

38. gxf3 was stronger, as Black cannot win. 38... exf3 39. ♖d4 ♖g2 ♖ 40. ♖e1 ♖e5 ♖ 41. ♖d1 ♖f1 ♖ 42. ♖c2 ♖xa1 43. ♖g4 ♖f7 44. ♖xf3 ♖e6 45. ♖g4 ♖f7 46. ♖f3 ♖= 38... ♖g4 39. ♖e1 ♖d5??

Deep in time trouble Black goes in for the kill, but leaves his own king without a defence. White now wins in style.

Best was improving the king's safety with 39... ♖g7! 40. ♖d4 ♖g6 41. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 42. ♖a6 ♖f6 43. ♖xd6 ♖.



40.♞xf8†!

Now White wins.

40...♞xf8 41.♞h6† ♞f7 42.♞a7† ♞e8 43.♞a8† ♞f7 44.♞f8† ♞e7 45.♞f6† ♞d7 46.♞d8† ♞c6 47.♞a8† ♞c7 48.♞f7† 1-0

In the next game we shall see my main recommendation. The Swedish grandmaster delivers a great concept in the opening to shake the Norwegian wonderboy. The line is based on an idea of Nick De Firmian.

Game 20

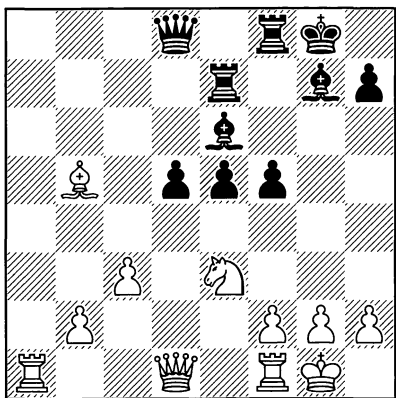
Hector – Carlsen

Malmö 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 e5 6.♟db5 d6 7.♟g5 a6 8.♟a3 b5 9.♟xf6 gxf6 10.♟d5 f5 11.c3 ♟g7 12.exf5 ♟xf5 13.♟c2 0-0 14.♟ce3 ♟e6 15.♟d3 f5 16.0-0 ♞a7 17.a4 ♟e7 18.♟xe7† ♞xe7 19.axb5 axb5 20.♟xb5

This should be the real test of Black's pawn sacrifice. However the pawn cannot be accepted without a valid idea to follow. And that idea should probably be to triple the heavy pieces on the a-file and invade Black's position on the 8th rank to force exchanges.

20...d5



21.♞a6!

White is preparing the best formation of the heavy pieces: ♞a6, ♞a4 and ♞a1. Furthermore, the rook is well placed for several tactics

involving ♞xe6, and this is very unpleasant for Black. Still, it is worthwhile to take a look at the alternatives provided by this position:

a) 21.♞a4!? is the most promising of the alternatives, even though I do not think it should be really dangerous for Black. 21...f4 22.♟c2 ♞ef7 (22...f3?! Generally Black should not make such rash decisions concerning the attack. Now he has lost a lot of flexibility and it is much easier for White to defend the kingside, and thereby also to operate freely on the queenside. 23.g3 ♞b7 24.♟b4 ♞g5 25.♞fd1± Here I have great doubt about the compensation for the pawn. Yefremov - Gilbert, Corr. 1998.) 23.♞fd1 ♞g5 24.♟c6 e4 25.♞b5 e3 26.f3 (Maybe it is possible to improve here with 26.♟xd5!?) which of course seems very greedy, but it is not so easy to refute. Black has no easy way to crash through on the kingside. A possible line could be something like 26...exf2† 27.♞xf2 f3 28.g3 ♞h5 29.h4 ♟e5 30.♞g1! ♞h8 31.♟e3±) 26...♞h8 27.♞a5 ♞h4 28.♞e2 ♞b8 29.♞b5 ♞xb5 30.♟xb5 ♞b7 ½-½ Szczepankiewicz - Kruse, e-mail 2000.

b) 21.♟c6 is not dangerous for Black. After 21...d4 22.♞a8 ♞d6 23.♞a6 he can play 23...♞d8 when White has nothing more than a repetition of moves, or even go for a better game with 23...♞h8 24.cxd4 exd4 25.♟c2 ♞c5 26.b4 ♞c3 27.♟b5 ♟b3 28.♟d3 ♞c7 29.♞a3 ♞b2 which was altogether bad news for White in Smirnov - Sitnikov, Russia 2001.

c) 21.♟c2 is also feeble. The best White can hope for is probably the drawish line chosen by Kramnik. Jelen's idea seems to be risk free for Black, but certainly dangerous for White. 21...♞b7 22.♟c6 ♞b6! (22...♞xb2 23.♞a8 ♞d6 24.♞a6 ♞c5 25.♟b4 ♞xc3 26.♟xd5 ♞xb4 27.♟xe6† 1/2-1/2. Svidler - Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1999) 23.♟b4 d4 24.♞a7 e4♞ Skytte - Jelen, Budapest 1999. 21...♞h8!?

Rogozenko writes that this is clearly the best move. He has no faith in 21...f4 because of the obvious exchange sacrifice 22.♞xe6! ♞xe6 23.♟xd5 (To me it actually make sense to investigate 23.♟xd5!?) as well. The best is probably the computer's suggestion 23...♞h8

[23...f3 24.g3 ♖b8 25.c4±] 24.♞e1 e4∞)
 23...♞xd5 24.♘xd5 Now the best option is
 24...♔h8! (24...f3?! 25.♞e1 fxg2 26.♗d3 ♞d8
 27.♗e4± Van Kempen - Arduman, e-mail
 2000.) 25.f3± Rogozenko. Staudler - Hohm,
 Corr. 1999. Also worth looking at is 25.b4!?! e4
 26.c4 e3 27.♞e1 ♗d4 28.♔f1 and White looks
 better here, doesn't he?

All of the above is leftovers from the first
 edition. As so often theory was overtaken by
 practice, here with the game Anand – Leko,
 Wijk aan Zee 2005:

21...f4!?

In the first edition of this book I refused to
 take this move seriously, and I am still not too
 impressed with it. I think one important thing
 to remember is that Peter Leko has no problems
 going into a difficult position straight from the
 opening, as long as it is a pure technical position,
 and that he feels confident he can draw it. To
 believe that the problem itself therefore solves
 all Black's problems because Anand chose not
 to test Leko's technique seems to be leaping to
 conclusions as far as I go.

About the objective evaluation of the move
 I do not think that I can say it better than
 grandmaster Dorian Rogozenko does in his
 forthcoming masterpiece *The Sveshnikov
 Reloaded*: "Leko allowed the exchange sac on e6,
 while Anand didn't go for it. They both certainly
 analysed the position and must have come to
 the conclusion that the endgame arising after
 22.♞xe6 ♞xe6 23.♞xd5 ♞xd5 24.♘xd5 should
 be a draw. It is difficult to prove it with analysis,
 but I guess that one can trust the conclusion of
 such top players. I can only add that Black must
 continue 24...e4 in order to avoid the blockade
 on the light squares, although it is clear that
 only White can play for a win anyway.

However, in our computer era I might sound
 ridiculous to some people by evaluating such an
 endgame as "slightly better for White". On the
 top level they prefer to say "this is a draw". In
 any case I will stay where I am by affirming that
 after 25.♞e1 White can play on without any
 risk, while Black must work for the draw.

Anand's cool decision to retreat the knight to

c2 is a typical approach for modern chess. White
 believes that in spite of opponent's initiative, he
 will be able to defend the position and convert
 his extra pawn. It is very likely that in the near
 future such an approach will be considered
 correct, but in the present game White failed
 to prove it and he missed opponent's attacking
 ideas. In principle this is the main difference
 between 22.♞xe6 and 22.♘c2. While Anand's
 decision is more ambitious and possibly even
 stronger, at the same time the price for possible
 mistakes is much higher."

Norwegian GM Leif Erland Johannessen
 defended the Black side of the endgame twice
 in 2005:

a) 24...♔h8 25.f3 (25.♞e1!?! e4 26.b4 might
 be a better try for an advantage) 25...e4 26.fxe4
 ♞xe4 27.b4 ♞d8 28.♗d3 ♞e3 29.♘xe3 fxe3
 30.♗e2 ♗xc3 and Black drew in Agdestein -
 Johannessen, Sandnes 2005.

b) 24...e4 25.g3 f3 26.b4 ♔h8 27.♞d1 ♗h6
 28.c4 e3 29.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 30.♘xe3 (30.♔f1±)
 30...♞xe3 31.♗c6 ♞c3 32.♗d5 ♞b3 33.b5 ♞b2
 34.♞f1 f2+ 35.♔g2 ♔g7 36.h4 h6 37.♗f3 ♞c8
 38.♗c6 ♞f8 39.♗d5 ♞f6 40.♗f3 ♞c2 41.♞xf2
 ♞xc4 42.♞b2 ♞b6 43.♔h2 ♞c5 44.♗e2 ♔f6
 45.♔h3 ♞c3 46.♗f1 ♔g7 47.♔h2 h5 48.♗h3
 ♞d3 49.♗g2 ♞c3 50.♗f1 ½-½ De Firmian -
 Johannessen, Sweden 2005.

22.♘c2!?

Maybe this move should not be completely
 rejected just because of its poor performance in
 this game.

22...♗c8

22...f3!?! was suggested by Nigel Short in his
 column. Now after 23.♘b4 fxg2 then 24.♔xg2
 quite surprisingly seems to be ok, and it seems
 as if White can play for an advantage this way.
 24...♞c8 (24...d4 25.♞xe6 ♞xe6 26.♗c4 ♞ff6
 27.cxd4 ♔h8 28.♗xe6 ♞xe6 29.dxe5 ♞g5†
 30.♔h1 ♗xe5 31.♞f3 and White has some
 advantage, though again it is not quite clear that
 it will be enough to win.) 25.♘xd5! (25.♞c6? is
 bad because of 25...♗h3† 26.♔h1 ♞f5! when
 the Black initiative is very strong. White can
 probably play better than 27.♞xd5†?! ♔h8
 28.♗d3 ♞h5-+ but it gives a good illustration

of the perils White are facing.) 25...♔h3†
 26.♖h1 ♜ef7 27.♞g1 ♞c5 28.♞a5 ♞xf2 29.♞e2
 and it seems to be that White is better, but the
 position is of course very hard to evaluate.
 23.♞a8 ♞d6 24.♘b4

This move feels strange. White is moving
 away from the kingside and thereby rapidly
 inspiring his own defeat. 24.♞e1!? is a kind of
 non-move, which simply improves the position
 a little bit, while hanging on to the pawn. Fritz 8
 gives the following to be the main line: 24...♙b7
 25.♞xf8† ♙xf8 26.♙f1 ♙g7. Black of course has
 compensation here, but it seems to me that the
 danger for him of being a pawn down is greater
 than White's perils.

24...♙b7 25.♞a7 d4

White is already drifting into problems, and
 now with his next move he loses the game.

26.♙a6??

26.♞h5 was better according to Rogozenko.
 After 26...♙f3 27.♞xf3 ♞xa7 28.♙d3 White
 has obvious compensation. Still I would prefer
 Black.

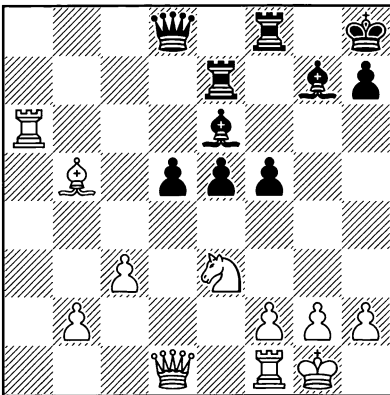
26...♙g2!! 27.♙c4†

Anand allegedly missed that after 27.♞b3†
 ♙d5 28.♘xd5 ♞xa7 there was no benefit to be
 had from the discovered check; but 27...♖h8
 would also have won.

27.♞xe7 ♞g6!-+ is another important point.

27...♖h8 28.♞a6 ♞c5 29.♖xg2 f3† 30.♖h1
 ♞xc4 31.♞c6 ♞b5 32.♞d6 e4 33.♞xd4 ♙xd4
 34.♞xd4† ♞e5

Black went on to win the endgame.



22.♞a4!

An idea by the American grandmaster living
 in Denmark, Nick De Firmian. No other move
 seems to give White a position he can really feel
 good about playing.

22.♘c2?! ♞b8 23.♞e2 f4 24.f3 ♙c8 has given
 Black a good game on several occasions. It is a
 dead end we do not have to go down.

22.♞h5?! f4 23.♘g4 ♞b8 is also nothing.
 Hodova - Priborsky, Plzen 2003.

22.f4?! is, according to Rogozenko, "the most
 logical move, even if Black wins an exchange by
 force after that." I do not understand the logic
 that encourages advancing pawns in front of
 your own king and losing material in the process.
 This is at least not the classical way to view
 such situations. Rogozenko of course has good
 reasons for his assessment (...f4 was coming),
 however I think the balance is tipping in the
 wrong direction. Now after 22...d4 23.cxd4
 exf4 24.♞xf4 ♙c8 25.♞a3 ♙h6 26.♞f3 f4 27.♘c2
 ♙g4 the game was very complicated in Hector -
 Rogozenko, Gothenburg 2004. However, I do not
 think that the first player should be very happy
 about the outcome of the opening. Eventually
 Black managed to win this game, though this
 was hardly the only possible outcome.

22...f4

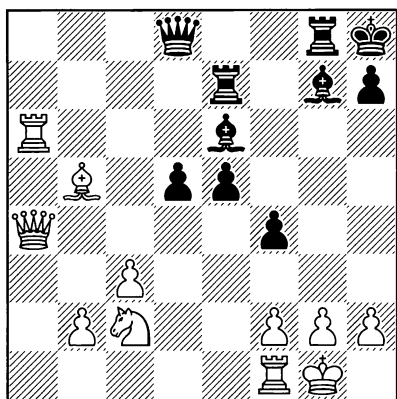
Obviously this was what Hector feared in his
 game above against Rogozenko. However, it is
 clearly the lesser of two evils, as Black has no easy
 way to break through White's defences.

23.♘c2 ♞g8

This is the first new move of the game. In the
 stem game of 22.♞a4 Black chose a less natural,
 but still somewhat logical move 23...♙f5 which
 tries to provoke the white knight into occupying
 an unwanted square. However, Black also loses
 important time and White should be able to
 gain an advantage. 24.♘b4? (I am beginning to
 grow a general feeling about this position that
 says that White should keep this knight on c2
 in close to all positions, as to be able to play
 ♘e1 after having developed the rook. 24.♞d1!?
 might still pose Black with problems. 24...♙g4
 25.♞d2 [25.f3?! ♙c8! 26.♞a8 ♞b6† is a definite
 road to compensation.] 25...♞ef7 would now not

transpose to the game, as White has 26.♔c6 with a definite advantage. So this slight change of move order might help White to retain an advantage.) 24...♞ef7 25.♞d1 ♞g5 26.♖xd5 ♙g4 (26...e4!? 27.♙f1 e3 28.♗h1±) And now I would suggest following Fritz 8 which gives 27.♞d3! (And not 27.♞d2?! ♙f3 28.♙f1 e4 De Firmian - Svensson, Gothenburg 2004, which eventually ended in a draw, where White was the one defending.) 27...♙f5 28.♞d2 f3 29.♖e3± The position is still very complicated, but Black's attack is still restrained and it seems likely that White will be able to benefit from his extra pawns. [2006 - Dorian Rogozenko proves in his book that 27.♞d3 is not as good as I had imagined, as after 27...♙e2 28.f3 ♞h4 29.♞d1 ♙xd1 30.♞xd1 e4! Black has a definite initiative. After 31.b4 ♞f5 32.fxe4 ♞h5 White is already struggling.]

23...♙c8 24.♞a8 ♞e6 25.♞a1 ♞h6 26.♞b4 ♞h4 27.h3 ♞g6 28.♙d7! ♙xd7 29.♞xf8† ♙xf8 30.♞xf8† ♞g8 31.♞d6 ♞xg2†! with a draw by perpetual check was the correspondence game Teichmann-Marotta, 2003. But after 26.♖e1± I prefer the White pieces.



24.♞a1±

Once it has been established how White should organise his pieces this move becomes very logical. White needs to bring the rook into play for many reasons, but the urgency is because he needs to play ♖e1 very soon to protect g2, the soft spot in his position.

The computers love for 24.♖b4?! is completely

unjustified. The knight has to go to e1 to protect the king. 24...♙f8! gives Black good play. Now White should take the draw promised to him in the tactical lines, or everything might soon be very bad. 25.♖c6 (25.g3? fxg3 26.hxg3 ♞eg7!! 27.♞xe6? ♞h4+!) 25...♞xg2† 26.♗h1 ♙g4!! (26...♞e8 27.♙e2 ♞eg7 28.♖xe5±) 27.♗xg2 (27.♖xd8 ♙f3 28.h3!-) 27...♞g7 28.♖xd8 (28.f3?? ♙h3+!! 29.♗f2 ♞h4† 30.♗e2 ♙xf1† 31.♗xf1 ♞xh2 32.♗e1 ♞g2 33.♙f1 ♞d2+!) 28...♙d1† 29.♗h3 ♙g4†=

24.♞d1!? is the only natural alternative to the text move, and could be used as a surprise move against someone who thinks the position after 24.Ra1 is playable. However, I have a feeling that well informed Black players will tend to avoid this in the future, once it has been tested a few times at the top level.

24...♙c8

Maybe a new idea can be conceived here for Black. However I cannot see that Black gains anything with 24...f3 25.g3 ♙c8 26.♞a8±. 25.♞a8 ♙f8

Black is getting ready to create threats against g2. However they are not strong enough and they come too late.

26.♙f1

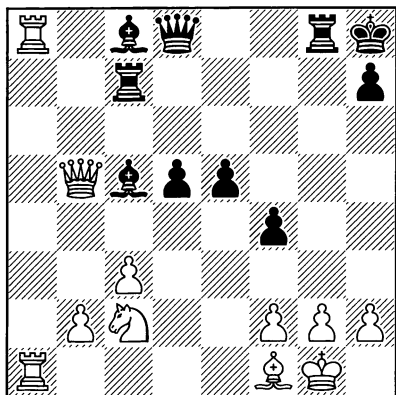
This seems to favour White, but it all becomes very complicated now. Strong was the direct 26.♙c6! and now it seems to be difficult for Black to defend against threats like Qb5 and ♞d1. The important thing for White is that ♖e1 will protect the kingside almost single-handed. 26...♞c7 (26...♞eg7 27.♖e1 or 26...♞xg2† 27.♗xg2 ♞g7† 28.♗h1 ♙g4 29.♖e1+) 27.♞d1 ♞g5 28.♖e1±

26...♞eg7 27.♞c6 ♞c7

The only move.

28.♞b5 ♙c5?!

The young Norwegian is desperately looking for counterplay, however he would have been better off asking White to prove his advantage after 28...♞cg7?! 29.♞d1 ♞c7! This is not so clear, as after 30.♞xd5 ♙d7 Black will win the exchange with ...Bc6 and the endgame is not that bad for him. Maybe 29.c4!? would be stronger?



29.b4 ♖xf2!?

Carlsen goes into these tactics searching for some action, as he is likely just to be run over after 29...♗f8 30.c4±. It is always possible to dismiss such desperate measures after the game, especially armed with thorough computer analysis. However from a practical point of view this was obviously the right decision, as Black gained a lot of ground in the remaining part of the game, and should have played on when it finished.

30.♖xf2 ♖xc3 31.♗e1

Not the only choice, but certainly one that makes sense.

31...f3!?

Again complicating matters. Black opens files and gains time at the cost of yet another pawn.

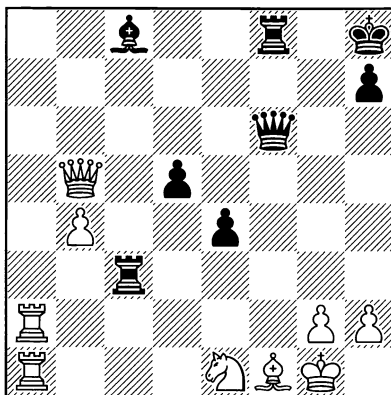
32.♗xf3?

Probably king safety was more important than anything else in this position. After 32.♖g1! it is not easy to see how Black would be able to attack White's king. 32...♖h4 (32...e4 33.♖8a2 and what now?) 33.♖h1 Here I cannot work out a method to create a successful attack against White's king. 33...♖f2 (33...♖e3 34.♖xc8 ♖xc8 35.♗xf3 ♖e4 36.♖d7 ♖f8 37.♖a7 ♖g6 38.♖xd5+-) 34.♖8a2 ♖d4 35.♖a4 ♗h3 36.♖d1+-. All of this is of course still very complicated, and all the conclusions should be seen as temporary. Still, I feel that White should be successful.

32...e4 33.♗e1 ♖f6† 34.♖g1 ♖f8 35.♖8a2

35.♗f3? is the computer's favourite move for some time. A human would hardly consider this,

and after 35...exf3 36.♖xd5 ♖c2!± it all turns out to be horrible, as it should be. However, as we shall see, the idea is not at all stupid.



35...♖a3?

This was the apparently brilliant idea conceived by Carlsen. The rook cannot be accepted of course, because of ♖f2†. However, White still has a chance to make his extra piece count, by returning it if nothing else. Therefore a simpler method of play, achieving instant repetition of moves, was preferable.

35...♖d4† 36.♖h1 ♗d7 37.♖a6 ♗c8 38.♖e2 ♗g4=

Note that 35...♗d7 36.♖e2 ♗g4? would not work because of 37.♖f2!±. However, 36...♖d4† would still draw.

36.♖e2?

This should probably have been punished by a strong tactical resource. However with little time on the clock it is hard to find the right path through such a tactical maze.

36.g3 ♗a6 37.♖xa6 ♖d4† 38.♖h1 ♖xa6 39.♗xa6 ♖xb4 and White is maybe on the way to being worse.

36.♗f3! was the best move. After 36...♖xa2 37.♖xa2 exf3 38.♖f2! Black still has not solved his problems. Actually there is no way for him to save both the d5-pawn and the f3-pawn, so a sad defensive task awaits him in a 3 pawns vs. 2 pawns endgame.

36...♖b6† 37.♖h1 ♖f6 38.♖g1 ♖d4† ½-½

A draw was agreed. However in this position it was Black's turn to play on.

39.♔h1 could be answered strongly with 39...♙g4! and now White seems to be worse:

40.♖b5 ♖xa2! (40...♗xa1 41.♖xa1 ♖xa1 42.h3 ♖xe1 43.hxg4 ♗exf1† 44.♔h2 ♖d1 45.♗d7 and White should be able to deliver perpetual check) 41.♖xa2 ♗d1 42.h3 ♗xe1 43.♔g1 (43.♔h2 ♗xf1 44.♗xf1 ♖xf1 45.hxg4 d4→) 43...♙d7 44.♗e2 ♗xb4→

40.♗f3 ♖axf3! 41.♖a8 ♖xa8 42.♖xa8† ♔g7 and White is definitely in trouble. 43.♗e1 ♗f2 44.♗a1† ♗f6 45.♙b5 d4†

However, Black was short of time and a draw seemed to be a good outcome from such a bad experience in the opening.

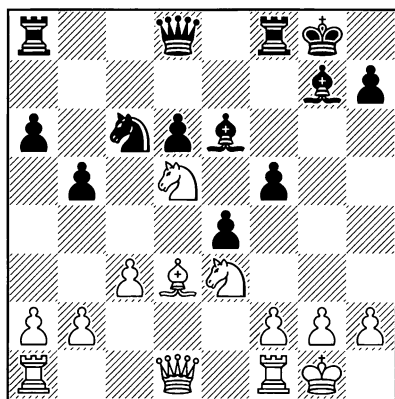
In the next game we shall investigate a minor sideline that offers little hope for Black. In fact the analysis goes in the direction of a clear edge for White in the opening, so it is probably not here that the future lies for Black. Still, it is wise for White to know this line in case it should come up in a real game. Not everything is easy to find over the board.

Game 21

Rivas Romero - Sarlat

Corr. 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♔c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 e5 6.♗db5 d6 7.♙g5 a6 8.♗a3 b5 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♗d5 ♙g7 11.c3 f5 12.exf5 ♙xf5 13.♗c2 ♙e6 14.♗ce3 0-0 15.♙d3 f5 16.0-0 e4



One commentator writes that Black has scored well with this approach recently. I do not know where he has been looking, as to me it seems that Black is actually not doing very well in this line.

17.♗f4

Obviously 17.♙c2? f4 18.♙xe4 fxe3 19.♗h5 exf2† 20.♔h1 ♗f7† spells disaster. Bestagno-Kuntz, Cagnes 1989.

17...♙f7

The alternatives are: 17...♙d7!? 18.♙c2 ♙e5 19.♗ed5 ♔h8 20.♗h5 ♖g8 21.f3± with better play for White in Burnoiu - Veneteanu, Curtea de Arges 2002.

17...♗d7 18.♙c2 ♗e5 19.♗xe6 was played in Rogovoi - Nikolaev, St Petersburg 1998.

However, stronger seems to be 19.♗ed5!? ♖ae8 20.♗xe6 ♖xe6 21.a4.

18.♙c2 ♙e5

18...♗d7 19.♙b3 ♖ad8 20.♙xf7† ♗xf7 21.♗d5 ♗xd5 22.♗exd5± Mamedov - Djafarli, Baku 2002.

19.♗fd5

19.g3 ♙xf4 20.gxf4 ♗f6 is even according to Van Wely/Cifuentes.

19...♗g5

19...f4? 20.♗g4 ♙g6 21.♖e1 e3 22.fxe3 ♙xc2 23.♗xc2 ♗g5 24.♗xe5 ♗xe5 25.♔h1±

19...♗h4 20.g3 ♗h3 (20...♗g5 21.f4 exf3 22.♗xf3 ♙h5 and now 23.♗f2 was played in Palecha - Mihajlichenko, Evpatoria 2001. Instead 23.♗g2!± would have been very strong.) 21.f4 ♙g7 22.♗c7 (22.♙b3 ♔h8 23.♗c7 ♙h5 24.♗d2± Lantini - Frilli, Arco 1999.) 22...♖ad8 23.♙b3 d5 24.♙xd5 ♔h8 25.♗e2 ♖d7 26.♙xf7 ♖xc7 27.♙b3 ♗d4 28.cxd4 1-0 Collazo - Bianchi, e-mail 1999.

19...♙e6 20.f4 exf3 21.♗xf3± f4? 22.♗e4 ♖a7 23.♗xf4+ Grabarczyk - Rydzik, Zakopane 2000.

20.f4 exf3 21.♖xf3?!

Probably stronger is 21.♗xf3 when after 21...♙h5 22.♗h3 f4 Anand - Kramnik, Linares 1998 23.♗c7! is very strong. (23.♗f5 ♔h8 24.♗h4 ♖a7 25.♗f3 ♙xf3 26.♗xf3± Longson - Son, Istanbul 1998.) 23...fxe3 24.♗xa8 ♖xf1†

25.♞xf1± was played in Karasek - Underwood, e-mail 2001. White is clearly better, maybe even winning. Also tried has been: 23...♞ac8 24.♖e6 ♞h6 25.♖xf8 fxe3 26.♞f5 ♖xh2† 27.♖h1 ♖e5 Now White should choose 28.♞h3! (28.♞xh7† ♞xh7 29.♖xh7 ♖g7 30.g4= and a draw was agreed in Nilsson - Patrici, corr. 1998.) 28...♞xf8 29.♞xf8† ♖xf8 30.♖d1 - Rogozenko. The question here is not if White has the advantage, but of how large it is. It is likely that it is already decisive actually.

21...♖h5

Van Wely analyses 21...f4 and comes to the conclusion that 22.h4! gives White an advantage. 22...♞d8 23.♖xf4! ♞xh4 24.♞h3! ♞xf4 25.♖xh7† ♖g7 26.♖f5† ♖f6 27.♞h4!+- 22.♖c7 ♖f4

This does not seem necessary, but Black still should not be worse.

23.♞d5† ♖h8

23...♖f7 24.♞xc6 ♖xe3† 25.♖h1+-

24.♞xf4

This is, of course, the correct bishop to eliminate.

24...♞xf4 25.♞e1

Also possible was 25.♖xf5!? ♖e7 26.♞xd6 ♞xd6 27.♖xd6 ♞a7 28.♖e6 ♞f6=.

25...♖e5

Surely an improvement over 25...♞ac8??

26.♖e6 ♞h4 27.g3 ♞g8 28.♖xf5+- Topalov - Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

26.♞d4!

Necessary. White cannot accept the rook, as Black would naturally ignore the knight on a8 and instead go for the king. 26.♖xa8? ♞g8!! 27.♞xg8† (Or 27.g3 ♞xg3† 28.hxg3 ♞xg3† 29.♖f1 (29.♖g2 ♖f3) 29...♞f4† 30.♖g1 ♖f3†+- with a winning attack.) 27...♞xg8 28.♖xf5 ♞h4 29.♞f1 ♞g5+-, Van Wely.

26...♞xd4

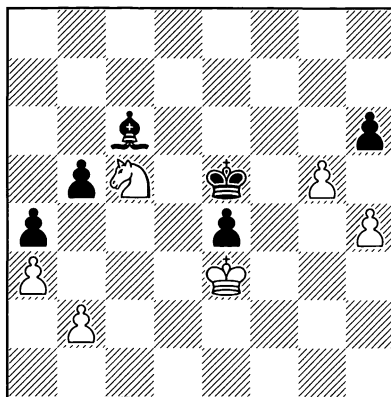
Now there follows a series of forced moves that leads to an endgame that Black plays quite badly. Of course, we can all have bad days, but it must feel terrible when you play correspondence chess and have so many of them in the same game.

27.cxd4 ♞ac8 28.♖e6 ♞fe8 29.dxe5 ♞xc2

30.♖xc2 ♞xe6 31.♖d4 ♞xe5 32.♞xe5 dxe5 33.♖xf5

This should be a draw, but realistically only White can win.

33...♖g6 34.♖d6 ♖g7 35.♖b7 ♖f7 36.a3 ♖d5 37.♖c5 a5 38.♖d7 e4 39.♖f2 ♖c6 40.♖c5 ♖f6 41.♖e3 ♖e5 42.g4 h6 43.h4 a4 44.g5



44...h5?

As I said, Black's play has not been great. One move that was hard to understand was 43...a4, but that was hardly the only mysterious move. Now he chooses to keep the h-pawn on the board. All endgame experts agree that when you try to defend, you aim for the exchange of pawns. Here Black could probably have held a draw with 44...hxg5 45.hxg5 ♖f5 46.♖d4 ♖xg5 (46...e3!? is perhaps even better.) 47.♖xe4† ♖f4 48.♖c3 ♖d7 49.♖c5 ♖e3 50.♖xb5 ♖d2 51.♖c3 ♖c2 and, with only one pawn remaining, White should not be able to win this endgame.

45.g6 ♖f6 46.♖xe4† ♖xg6 47.♖f4 ♖f7 48.♖g3 ♖g6 49.♖e5

Now Black can no longer save the game. The two weaknesses and the bad bishop seal his fate.

49...♖e8 50.♖e2 ♖f7 51.♖f4† ♖g7 52.♖e6† ♖g6 53.♖d4 ♖c4 54.♖e6 ♖f1 55.♖f4† ♖h6 56.♖f6 ♖c4 57.♖e6 ♖f1 58.♖d4

1-0

Finally, I will end this chapter with what I believe will be a main line in the Sveshnikov

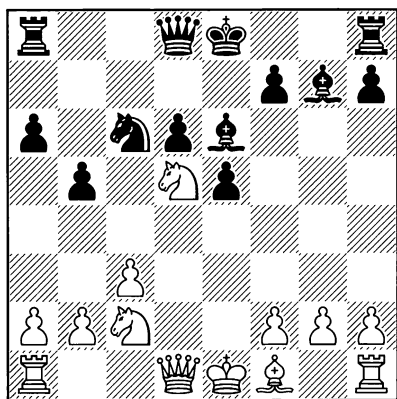
Sicilian in the future. An under-rated player delivers a performance with White of which he can be truly proud. He defeats one of Israel's younger stars in a convincing manner.

Game 22

Jenni - Avrukh

Bled (ol) 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♙g5 a6 8.♘a3 b5
9.♙xf6 ♗xf6 10.♘d5 ♜5 11.exf5 ♙xf5 12.c3
♙g7 13.♘c2 ♙e6!?



The main idea here is to play ♘c6-e7xd5 and liquidate White's pressure. The immediate 13...♘e7?! was refuted by Ivanchuk with 14.♙d3! and White has a clear plus.

I think 13...♙e6 is the move Black players will be playing in the future. They have not played it a lot for the last few years, but it offers a relatively safe position with good counter chances. I still prefer to be White, but in such a reliable opening as the Sveshnikov it would be too much to hope for to prove an easy advantage for White in every line. That I have come as close as I have is pure luck, and was not something I thought possible in advance.

14.g3!

This was played by Anand a long time ago, but Short made it popular with some good games, including a win against Kramnik.

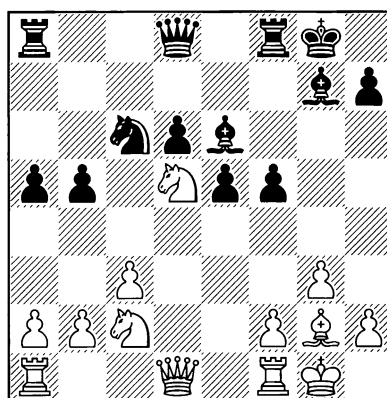
The key idea is that if Black exchanges on d5 then White would like to recapture with the bishop. The plan is that if White ends up with knight vs. bishop, then d5 and f5 are likely to be rather weak squares.

14...0-0 15.♙g2 a5

This is clearly the main line. Other moves have been played, but I would not recommend anyone outside the world's top 50 players to try to memorise the differences between 15...♙b8 and 15...a5. The main point for White is that the same set-up is recommended against both options.

16.0-0 ♜5

This specific line can of course be prepared to a great extent, but many different moves are possible all the time, and it is therefore more important to grasp the essentials of the position. I would not like to claim mastery of the position, but I think that I can give a few hints and ideas. First of all, I recommend placing the queen in the centre, and out of the way of the rooks. I dislike 17.♙h5 as I do not see a fair argument for attacking f5 already, and I dislike 17.♙d2 as this should be the place of a rook, not the queen. [2006 - I still like my recommendation quite a lot, but maybe 17.♙h5!? is better than I thought.]



17.♙e2! ♙b8 18.♙ad1

18.♙f1 is slightly more popular, but honestly I prefer this one. Now an early ...e5-e4 can be met by f2-f3 with much greater strength.

18...♖d7

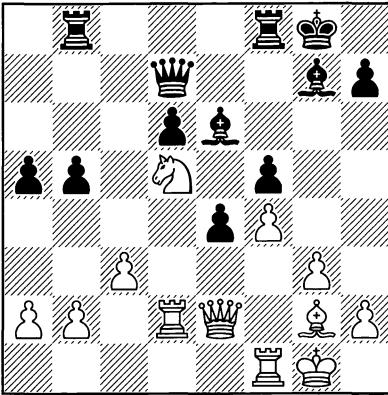
18...e4 19.f3!±

19.f4!± e4

19...♗h8!± 20.♗ce3 b4 looks like a sensible plan, but with the help of my computer I managed to find an idea that I believe is unpleasant for Black. 21.fxe5!± (21.♗h1 bxc3 22.bxc3 ♗e7∞ Resika - Sallai, Budapest 2003.) 21...♗xe5 22.♗c4!± The following line shows how it is possible for Black to end up with a weaker pawn structure, where the weaknesses are on the light squares, which should be very unpleasant. 22...bxc3 23.bxc3 ♖fd8 24.♗de3 ♗xc3 25.♖xd6 ♗xc4 26.♗xc4 ♗e7 27.♖e6 ♗c5† 28.♗h1 ♗d4 29.♖e5 ♗b4 30.♗d3± 20.♗ce3 ♗e7

Black needs to fight for the centre. 20...b4 is strongly met with 21.g4! bxc3 22.bxc3 fxg4 23.♗xe4±.

21.♖d2 ♗xd5 22.♗xd5



22...♗f7

22...b4! with the idea of 23.c4 b3 24.a3∞ is probably the way to play Black's position. Right here is probably the most difficult place to prove an advantage for White. I have looked at natural moves such as 24...♖fe8 25.♖fd1 ♗a7† 26.♗h1 ♗c5 27.♗e3 ♖bc8 and now I can only manage to prove a draw for White. 28.♗h3! (28.♖xd6? ♗xc4 29.♗xc4 ♗xc4 30.♗h5 ♗f7!± because of the weakness of the b2-pawn.) 28...♗xc4 29.♗xc4 ♗xc4 30.♗xf5 ♗xe2 31.♖xe2 ♖c2 32.♖xe4! ♖xe4 33.♗xe4 ♖xb2 34.♖xd6 and

White will be able to scrape the draw without any problems. However, this is far from an advantage for White.

23.♖fd1 ♖fc8 24.♗e3!±±

I really think that this is the way forward. 24.g4 fxg4 25.♗xe4 ♗h8 was unclear in Gruenfeld - Sutovsky, Israel 1996.

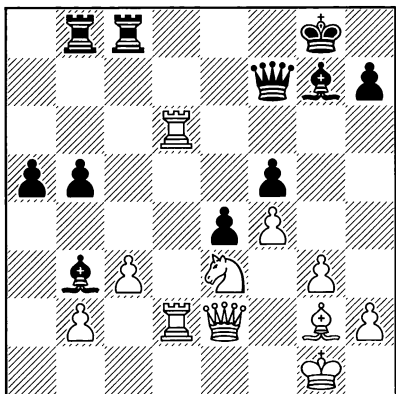
24...♗xa2

Dorian Rogozenko in his book *The Sveshnikov Reloaded* gives 24...b4! as an improvement for Black. This is undoubtedly correct, but it does not change the overall evaluation of the variation as being unclear with practical chances for both sides. The right way for White to continue seems to be 25.cxb4 ♖xb4 26.♖xd6 ♗f8 27.♖d2!± Dorian only considers 27.♖d8, which seems to be slightly weaker. But then, we are analysing the theory on move 27 by now! 27...♗xa2 28.g4! ♗b3 29.♖e1 Both sides has made some progress here and the position holds mutual peril. Even the computer engines seems to disagree about the evaluation. One possible way for everything to go wrong for Black is 29...♗c5 30.♗h1 ♗xe3 31.♗xe3 ♗c2 32.gxf5 ♖xb2 33.♖g1! and White is left with a winning attack.

25.♖xd6 ♗b3

25...♗e6 is better according to Rogozenko. The position appears to be double-edged still. Fritz 8 now suggests 26.g4 ♗f8 27.♖a6 with mutual chances. Only the future will be able to tell us more about this position. We can only toy with variations like 27...b4 28.♖xa5 bxc3 (28...♗c5 29.♗h1 favours White.) 29.bxc3 ♖c5 30.♖xc5 ♗xc5 31.♗h1 fxg4 32.f5! ♗xf5 33.♗xf5 ♗xf5 34.♗xe4 and here the presence of opposite coloured bishops is a feature of danger for the Black king. In this position, and others like it, it is plausible that Black will be able to make a draw, but it is White who is setting up all the threats on the 7th rank and it is Black who will be sweating. From the pragmatic standpoint of creating an opening repertoire against such a solid opening as the Sveshnikov, I think this is quite an acceptable achievement.

26.♖d2



26...b4?

This allows White to enter the 7th rank, a very careless admission. It was necessary to return the bishop in advance and start to protect the coming weaknesses in advance with 26...♙e6 27.♙h3! (27.g4?! ♙f8!∞ 28.♙xe6?! ♖xe6 29.gxf5 ♖h6⌘) and now we have:

a) 27...♙e8 28.♙xe6 ♖xe6 29.♙xf5 ♖b6 (29...♖f6?! 30.♙d7! ♙bd8 (30...h6 31.♖h5!+- will come and Black will not be able to defend his king. Probably it will transpose.) 31.♙d5! ♖f8 32.♖h5 h6 33.♖g6 ♙xd7 34.♙f6† ♖xf6 35.♖xe8† ♙f8 36.♖xd7+-) 30.♙g2 (30.♙h1 ♙bd8 31.♙xd8 ♙xd8 32.♙xe4 ♖e6 33.♖f3 ♙h8∞) 30...♙bd8 31.♙d5± ♙xd5 32.♙xd5 ♖d6 33.♖h5 ♙f8 34.♙xh7± e3? 35.♖f5†+-

b) 27...♙f8! Overprotecting f5. 28.♙c2 b4 29.cxb4 axb4 30.♙d4 ♙c4 31.♖f2± 27.♙d7

White is better.

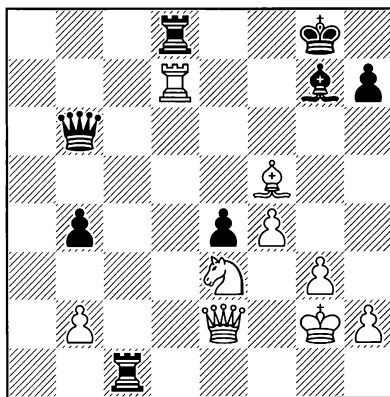
27...♖f8 28.cxb4!?

It is possible to understand this move, but not to fully approve of it.

28.c4!± would quickly have made Black's position fall to pieces, as ♙a2 is out of play.

One critical line is 28...a4! but analysis suggests that this is not dangerous (28...♙c5 29.♙h3 ♙a4 30.♙d5 and White wins. Probably White was afraid of the a-pawn) 29.♙h3! a3 (29...♙c5 30.♖h5 ♖e8 31.♖h4 a3 32.♙xf5+- and there is no defence against the attack.) 30.bxa3 bxa3 31.♙xf5+-.

28...axb4 29.♙h3 ♙e6 30.♙d6 ♖f7 31.♙xe6 ♖xe6 32.♙xf5 ♙c1† 33.♙g2 ♖b6 34.♙d7 ♙d8



35.♖h5 ♖f6?

35...♙xd7 was the only move. However, after 36.♖e8† ♙f8 37.♙e6†! ♖xe6 38.♖xe6† ♙f7 39.♖xe4+- it is hard to believe that Black would survive.

36.♙d5

One of many winning moves.

36...♖xb2† 37.♙h3 ♙xd7 38.♖xh7†

38.♙e6†! ♙f8 39.♙xd7+- was definitely easier.

38...♙f8 39.♙xd7 ♙c5

39...♙h1 40.♙g4 ♙xh2 41.♖f5† was still winning.

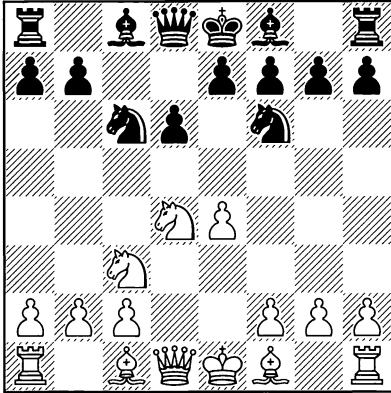
40.♖g6 ♙d4 41.♙e6

1-0

The Classical

-By Peter Wells

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6
5.♗c3 ♗c6



The Classical Variation of the Sicilian has one powerful and enduring appeal. Black's development is faster and healthier than in several other Sicilians, and this tends to afford some protection from the blustery winds of theoretical change. Of course fashion still takes its toll, but a certain stability over time can be expected here.

6.♙g5

The Richter-Rauzer is the most respected antidote, and also combines aggression – early pressure on d6 in particular which often obliges Black to accept doubled f-pawns – with a degree of solidity missing from, for example, the main lines of 6.♙c4. One fundamental decision White has is where to play his f-pawn. Throughout - Games 3-5 - I have opted for f4 based systems, in spite of a current surge of fashion for f3 followed by a kingside pawn storm. I strongly suspect that these will better stand the test of time, and that the strategic ideas are also easier to explain and to grasp. It also seemed important to create an internally consistent repertoire – it is easier to get a feel for playing these positions if 'mix and match' is kept to a minimum.

Having co-authored a rather substantial work on the Richter-Rauzer in 1998, three main questions sprang to mind as I embarked on the project of constructing a repertoire for White that is effective, efficient and internally coherent.

1) How much have the fundamentals of the theory changed in 6 years?

2) How, even allowing for the advantages of the repertoire format, will it be possible to be able to condense such a chunk of theory into a neatly proportioned chapter?

3) Lastly, even though my previous work took a 'neutral' perspective, a certain emotional attachment to the Black cause was inevitable, and although I have played both sides, my ailing memory has rendered outings with 1.e4 something of a treat. How would I feel advocating the White side, trying to do damage to the Classical Sicilian?

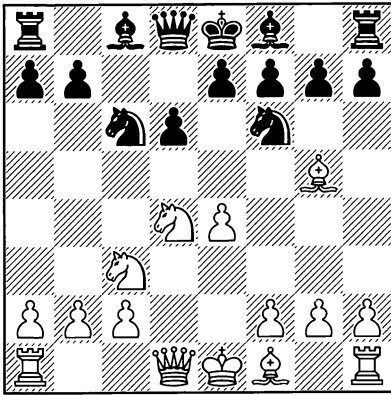
Well, the reader will ultimately have to judge how I have risen to the task. The answer to question 1 varies greatly with different lines – the system with 7...a6 and 8...h6 covered in Game 24 has been entirely transformed by a new and dangerous attacking idea. By contrast, the changes to theory in Games 25-27 are essentially those of detail.

Never forget either, fashion in opening theory moves in mysterious ways. This we shall witness right here in game 23. After 6...♙d7 I sense a drift from 7.♙e2 towards the more voluminous theory of 7.♙d2. I see no reason – let's keep things simple!

Game 23

Kotronias – Schwartz
Philadelphia 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6
5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♙g5



6...♙d7

The most frequently encountered, but by no means the only alternative to the main line 6...e6 of Games 24-27. The others I would like to consider in approximately ascending order of importance:

a) 6...g6?! has a dubious reputation and this is pretty well deserved. In fact after 7.♙xf6 exf6 Black's hopes of dynamic play to compensate his structural damage are not completely without foundation, but with careful handling should be insufficient. For example, 8.♙c4 ♙g7 9.♘db5 0-0 10.♙xd6 and now:

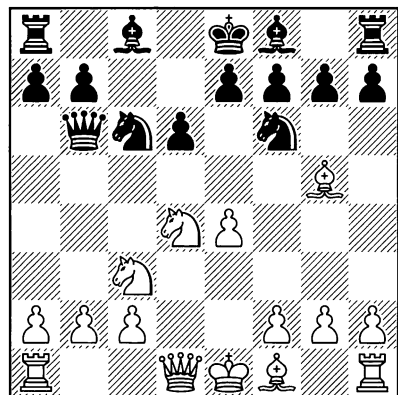
a1) 10...f5 11.0-0-0 ♙g5† 12.f4 ♙h6 13.♗b1 fxe4 14.♘xe4 ♙g4 15.♙de1 ♙ad8 16.♘f6† ♗h8 17.♘xg4 ♙h4 18.♙c7 ♙xg4 19.♘d6 with a clear plus in Goloshchapov - Chernikov, Moscow 2002.

a2) 10...♙a5!? 11.♙c7 ♙b4 12.♙b3 f5 13.0-0-0 fxe4 14.♘d6 also looks good for White, since the complications arising from 14...♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♙xc3 16.♘xf7 ♗g7? (16...♙a1† 17.♗d2 ♙d4† 18.♗e1 ♙b4† 19.♗f1 ♗g7 20.♘g5† ♙e7 is better but still unpleasant for the defender) 17.♘g5† ♗h6 18.♙xh7† ♗xg5 19.h4† ♗f6 20.♙d6† ♗e5 21.♙g7† and wins.

b) 6...♙a5 is well met by 7.♙b5!. (In my view this is considerably stronger than the also popular 7.♙xf6 gxf6 8.♘b3 ♙g5! for one good reason. White's pieces ensure that Black's queen will not become active by crudely but effectively blocking off the more enticing squares.) 7...♙d7 8.♘b3 ♙b6 (Or 8...♙d8 9.♙xf6 [9.f4!])

9...gxf6 10.♙h5 ♙g8 11.g3 ♙g5 12.♙e2 a6 13.♙d3 e6 14.f4 ♙g7 15.♙h5 ♙b6 16.0-0-0 0-0-0 17.♗b1 ♗b8 18.♙h4 when White has a pleasant version of a structure which will become very familiar - Topalov - Corral Blanco, Spain 2000.) 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♘d5 ♙d8 11.0-0 (also 11.♙h5 e6 12.♘e3 a6 13.♙e2 ♙c7 14.0-0-0 ♙e7 15.♗b1 0-0-0 16.f4 ♙f8 17.♙d3 ♗b8 18.♙hd1 ♙c8 19.a3 left Black passive in S. Nikolic - Gufeld, Kislovodsk 1968. With this characteristic Rauzer doubled f-pawn structure the knight on e3 is rather well placed for restraining any counterplay.) 11...♙g7 12.c3 0-0 13.♙h5 a6 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.♘e3 c5 16.♙ad1 ♙b8 17.♙d3 h6 18.♙fd1 ♙b7 19.♘xc5! with decisive advantage in Korneev - Lopez Guerrero, Malaga 2001. This time the quality of the knight on e3 rather speaks for itself!

c) 6...♙b6!? In common with other versions of this early queen sortie, this has enjoyed a good deal of popularity in the last few years. Clearly it raises a number of transpositional issues, especially as I am keen to avoid those main lines of the 7...♙e7 Rauzer (see games 26-27) in which White plays an early ♘b3. These could easily be reached here by 7.♘b3 e6 8.♙d2 ♙e7 9.0-0-0 0-0 etc. A bit undecided how best to combat this move, I will mention two possibilities, the first ambitious and relatively unexplored, the second positional, but hopefully retaining some bite, and shifting the battleground to a critical structure which will recur throughout the chapter:



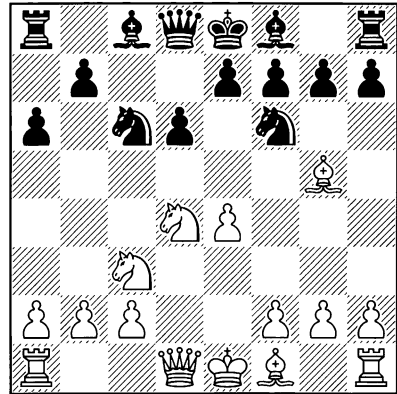
c1) 7.♙e3!? still seems to me to be interesting six years on, but it has not really found very many takers, despite further endorsement from *NCO!* Critical can only be 7...♞xb2 (not 7...♘g4 8.♗d5 ♘xe3 9.fxe3 ♞a5† 10.b4! winning material, while 7...♞c7 8.♗d5 looks nice for White. 7...a6 cannot be a major test either. White had a pleasant position after 8.♞d2 ♗xd4 9.♙xd4 ♞c6 10.♙d3 e5 11.♙e3 ♙e6 12.f4 exf4 13.♙d4 ♙e7 14.♞xf4 0-0 15.0-0-0 ♞ac8 16.♞hf1 ♗d7 17.♗d5 ♙d8 18.c3 in Ivanchuk - Miroshnichenko, Antalya 2004) 8.♗d5 ♞b4 9.♙d2 ♞c5! (9...♗e4? 10.a3 is a catastrophe for Black, which recently befell so high-powered a victim as the young Georgian star Baadur Jobava. At least he had the good grace to resign forthwith!) 10.♙e2! (10.♙e3 repeats, while 10.♗c7† ♗d8 11.♗xa8 ♘g4 gives Black excellent compensation since 12.♞e2 loses to the acutely embarrassing 12...♗d4 13.♞d3 ♗e5!) 10...♞b6 11.♞b1 ♞d8! (an improvement over 11...♗e5? 14.♙e3 ♞a5 15.♞b3 g6 16.♞a3 ♞d8 17.♙xa7 ♗ed7 18.f4! Balashov - Petrienko, Voronezh, 1987) and now I think the simple 12.♗d5 ♗xd5 13.exd5 ♗e5 14.0-0 offers good compensation since Black has no straightforward means of developing. This still awaits a practical test, although to be fair it has been Black as much as White who has steered clear of it.

c2) 7.♗b3 e6 8.♙xf6!? Before Black can play ...♙e7. I have to confess, I am not convinced that these positions should give White a theoretical plus and hence here and later in the book I shall always try to offer an alternative. However, it is invaluable to learn how to handle the structure with the doubled f-pawns and, in addition, White's position does seem easier to handle in practice. 8...gxf6 9.♞d2 a6 10.0-0-0 ♙d7 11.f4 0-0-0 12.♗b1 ♗b8 13.♙e2 h5!? There is plenty of scope here for move order flexibility. However, I suspect that it is a good sound instinct to answer ♙e2 thus. One example of omitting this precaution - 13...♙e7 14.♙h5 ♙e8 15.♞he1 ♞c8 16.♗d5! exd5 17.exd5 ♗e5 18.fxe5 fxe5 19.♞f1 f6 20.♙xe8 ♞hx8 21.♞d3 with a great superiority on the

light squares. Nataf - Thorhallsson, Reykjavik (rapid) 2003. See also the superb game Almasi - Damjanovic, given under the note 'a' to Black's 7th in game 26.

14.♞hf1 ♙e7 15.♞f3 ♞dg8 16.♙f1 ♞g4 17.a3 ♙c8 18.♗a4! ♞c7 19.♞f2 b5 20.♗c3! Instructive, both how White forces this weakness, and the ferocity of the attack, which he builds thereafter. 20...♞a7 21.♞e1 ♞hg8 22.a4 b4 23.♗a2 a5 24.♙b5 ♙b7 25.♙xc6 ♙xc6 26.♗xa5! A nice combination which strips Black's king bare. 26...♞xa5 27.♗xb4 ♗b7 28.♞b3 ♞xa4 29.♗xc6† ♗xc6 30.♞c3† ♗d7 31.♞b7† ♗e8 32.♞c8† ♙d8 33.b3 1-0 Alekseev - Kiselev, Tula 2002.

d) 6...a6

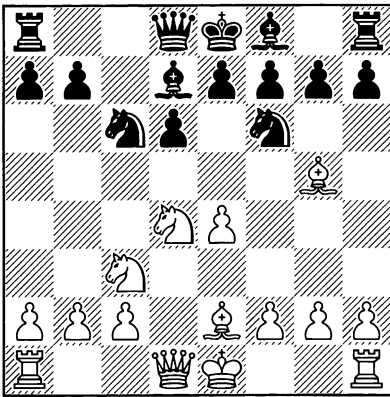


is by no means bad, but since Black is often liable to meet 7.♞d2 with 7...e6 it has no independent significance in the majority of cases. However Black does have a distinctive idea, albeit a rather inferior one, in 7...♗xd4. This makes a certain sense when White has already played 7.♞d2. Indeed just such logic underlies the preference for 7.♙e2!? in the main game. However, after 8.♞xd4 the follow-up 8...e5 cannot be recommended. As usual the price to pay for this weakening of d5 is especially high in the Rauzer, and the inconvenience to White's queen is scarcely significant in lines like 9.♞a4†! ♙d7 10.♙xf6!? gxf6 (10...♙xf6?! allows the shot 11.♙b5! ♞d8 12.♙xd7† ♞xd7 13.♞b3 ♙e7 14.♗d5

♙d8 15.0-0 0-0 16.♞fd1 and White has one of those examples of minor piece superiority which are normally only seen in textbooks. (Kotronias - Kovalev, Debrecen, 1992.) 11.♞b3 b5 12.♙e2. White will follow up with ♘d5 with a safe plus.

7.♙e2!?

Exceptionally, since Black cannot switch to ...e6 without complication (see 'c' below), there is mileage here to the idea of castling short with ♙xf6, ♘f5 and ♘d5 in the air. This plan is no longer high fashion, but still seems to me to have a lot of bite.



7...a6

Four alternatives, one rather questionable, two of great importance, plus one that appears to be a slightly inferior way of trying to reach positions that could be arrived at a good deal less painlessly!

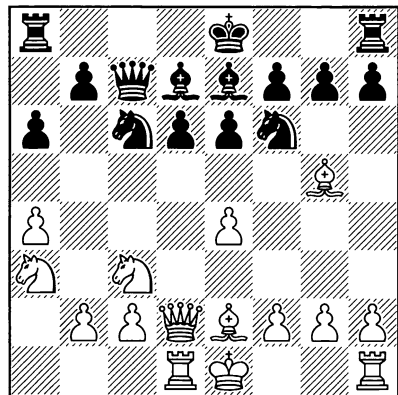
a) 7...♞b6 is rather poorly timed as White has 8.♘db5! ♜c8 9.0-0 a6 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.♘d5 ♞d8 12.♘bc3 e6 13.♘e3. Again one of the virtues of the move ♘d5 is that even if the knight is forced to retreat, this is rather a good square. 13...b5 14.a4 b4 15.♘a2 ♞b6 16.c3 a5 17.♘c4 ♞c5 18.♘c1! with strong pressure against d6. Vogt - Mascarin, Polanica Zdroj 1977.

b) 7...♞c8 is probably just an attempt to reach the critical positions considered under 'd' below. It is just worth mentioning because after 8.0-0 ♘xd4 9.♞xd4 ♞a5. I rather suspect that as well as 10.♙xf6 gxf6 11.a4 returning to line 'd',

White can also consider 10.♙e3!? ♙c6 and then some solid move like 11.♞ad1, when the black pieces somehow look a bit wayward.

c) 7...e6!?! is rather a plausible response to a developing move which in general terms may be viewed as rather modest. It has moreover been greatly strengthened in recent times by the discovery that there may be a nasty surprise in store for White if he simply tries to head for the classic 'Rauzer structure' with the doubled f-pawns. After 8.♙xf6!?, a young Dutchman overturned the previously unquestioned verdict of theory by playing 8...♞xf6! and after 9.♘db5, far from the promised '±' White was confronted with 9...0-0-0! in D. Mastrovasilis – Berkvens, Patras 2001, and shied away from 10.♘xd6† ♘b8 11.♘c4 ♙c5 12.0-0 ♘e5!, which indeed would promise Black excellent compensation on the dark squares. Of course after others 9.♘b5 makes little sense and Black was quickly better. It is often the hallmark of a good novelty that it seems startlingly obvious in retrospect!

Therefore White needs to look elsewhere. Quiet moves like 8.0-0 or even 8.♞d2 are unobjectionable, but 8.♘db5!?! seems more promising. E.g. 8...♞b8 9.a4! a6 10.♘a3 ♞c7 11.♞d2! (Less common, but more incisive than the routine 11.0-0. White should force the issue by piling immediate pressure on d6.) 11...♙e7 12.♞d1! and now:

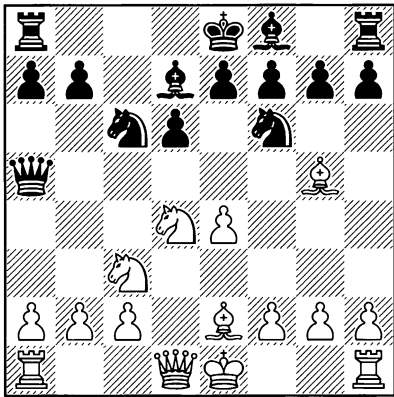


c1) 12...♞d8 is natural but a bit passive. White can exploit the weakness of b6 with gain

of time by 13.♘c4 ♘c8 14.♙e3! ♚b8 15.♘b6! ♘d7 16.0-0 0-0 17.f4 ♘c5 18.♙f3 with a modest but pleasant initiative in Spassky - Hort, Moscow 1971.

c2) 12...♘e5!? played in Lautier – Milov Cap d'Agde 2002 is a more active defence inviting serious complications. After 13.f4 ♘g6, instead of the slightly lackadaisical 14.0-0 White should have played 14.♘c4! d5! (All but forced. Not 14...0-0? 15.e5 dxe5 16.♙xf6+-, while 14...♙c6 15.♙xf6 gxf6 16.f5! is also very unpleasant.) 15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 exd5 17.♘e3!? (Wells – better I think than 17.♚xd5 ♙c6 18.♘d6† ♙xd6 19.♚xd6 ♚xd6 20.♙xd6 f6! 21.f5 ♘e7! 22.♙f4 ♘xf5 when Black is quite OK.) 17...♙xg5 18.fxg5 ♙e6 19.0-0 with an unusual position and structure, but I think slightly better chances.

d) 7...♚a5!? is arguably the single greatest challenge to White's set-up.



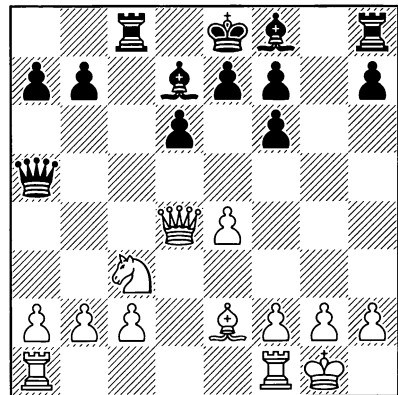
With 7.♙e2 already on the board, the antidote which was so effective against the premature 6...♚a5 makes little sense here, and this helps to ensure that Black's queen will enjoy some role along the 4th rank – perhaps with the move ...♚g5, or else utilising the fact that a well-timed exchange on d4 can be followed up with the tempo gaining...♚c5. Best in my view is 8.♙xf6 gxf6 9.0-0! (9.♘b3 ♚g5 is quite playable for Black) and now Black has tried several moves:

d1) 9...0-0-0? cuts off the queen's retreat and causes her severe discomfort after 10.♘d5 e6

11.♘b3! ♚a4 12.♘c3 ♚b4 13.♙b5 d5 14.a3 ♚d6 15.exd5 ♘e5 16.♙xd7† ♚xd7 17.dxe6 ♚xe6 18.♚h5 with obvious advantage in G. Shahade - Thorhallsson, Elbow Beach Club 2001.

d2) 9...♙g8 10.♘d5! (a key move, and also the main response to 'neutral' Black options on move 9) 10...♙h3 11.♙f3 ♘e5 12.♘e3! (12.♘f4 ♙d7 achieves little, and is usually only used for purposes of repetition) 12...♙h6! (of course 12...♙d7 is rather pliant, and White has a clear plan in 13.♙h5! e6 14.f4 ♘c6 15.f5 with a dangerous initiative in Romero Holmes – Cifuentes Parada, El Vendrell 1996) 13.♘df5 ♙xe3 14.♘xe3 ♚d2! (safer than 14...0-0-0 15.♘h1 ♙d7 16.♘d5 ♙de8 17.a4 f5 18.b4 ♚d8 19.exf5 ♙xf5 20.a5 Borriess – Sherzer, Santiago 1990, when it is White's queenside play which looks much the more serious.) 15.♘h1 ♚xd1 16.♙xd1 ♙d7 17.f4 ♘c6!? (If 17...♘g4 18.♙xg4! ♙xg4 19.f5, Black can extricate his bishop by means of 19...♙e2 20.♙f2 ♙b5, but the white knight on d5 will still be a fine piece securing some advantage.) 18.♘d5 ♙c8 19.c3 and although the players agreed a draw here in Ebeling - Krogius, Jyvaskyla 1991, Black is rather short on counterplay.

d3) 9...♘xd4 10.♚xd4 ♙c8 (But not 10...♚c5? 11.♚xc5 dxc5 12.♘b5! Short – Anand, Amsterdam 1992)



when White has to choose between two interesting options:

d31) 11.♘d5 An interesting pawn sacrifice courtesy of *Beating the Sicilian 2*, which initially breathed life back into the then ailing 9.0-0. In general White was able to generate substantial play for a pawn, but the defender eventually found an antidote in the form of 11...♖c5 (The move-order 11...a6, as once played by Dreev, now seems inaccurate because of 12.♗a7! as in Dembo - An. Stojanovic, Turkey 2006. 12...♖c7 or 12...♗b4 are both strongly met by 13.♘d5, while 12...♙c6 allows White's positional dream-move: 13.♙b5!) 12.♗d2 (12.♗xc5?! ♝xc5 leads to an ending in which the bishop pair is likely to really come into its own) 12...♖xc2 13.♗e3 ♙h6! (13...♖c5 14.♗b3! ♙g7 15.♗xb7 e6 16.♙b5! ♗xb5 17.♗xc8! is an elegant trick which Vassilios Kotronias has had the opportunity to reveal twice!) 14.♗xh6 ♖xe2 15.♗g7 ♜f8 16.♙ac1 ♝xc1 17.♙xc1 ♙c6 18.♘c7† ♘d7 19.♗xf8 ♗xe4 20.♗g7 ♘xc7 and Black's queen will return to g6, and White will be hard pressed to avert an ending in which his opponent enjoys ample compensation for the exchange.

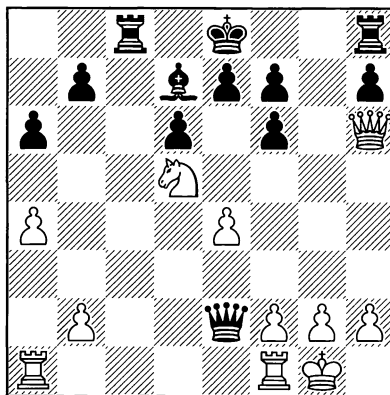
d32) 11.a4! This now appears the more promising. If Black does not prevent it then there is a very simple but rather effective positional idea of exchanging light-squared bishops on b5. If he does then the pawn sacrifice is enhanced. 11...♖c5 12.♗d2 and again a choice:

d321) 12...♙g7 13.♙b5 f5 14.♘d5! ♙xb5 15.axb5 fxe4 16.♗g5 ♙f6 17.♘xf6† exf6 18.♗xf6 ♗e5 19.♗xe5† dxe5 20.♙xa7± Hracek - Heberla, Czech 2004.

d322) 12...h5 13.♙b5 ♙h6 14.♗d3 e6 15.e5! clearing the e4-square was no less unpleasant for Black in Gallagher - Weindl, Switzerland 2004.

d323) 12...a6!? At this point I wrote in 1998 "the interpolation of a4 and ...a6 benefits White here in view of the weakened b6-square." Good authorial waffle, but I had no idea of quite what specific importance this would turn out to be!

In fact, in the case analogous with the 'refutation' of 11.♘d5 given above (see e31) the difference is probably decisive, although so far as I can see this has not yet been mentioned in the literature. After 13.♘d5! ♖xc2 14.♗e3 ♙h6 15.♗xh6 ♗xe2



16.♗g7?! is no more promising than it was above, but there is an additional possibility: 16.♘b6! ♝c7 (Perhaps Black should try 16...♙d8!? with the idea that 17.♗g7 ♜f8 18.♘xd7 can now be met by 18...♘xd7 – ed.) 17.♗g7! ♜f8 18.♘xd7! (At this moment when Black must recapture with the rook. The king should be kept in the centre, and weakening the back rank wins time too.) 18...♙xd7 19.♙ac1 ♙d8 20.♗xh7! (preventing ...♗xe4 which would grant the black queen a route back to g6 and effective defence) and White threatens to double on the c-file, while Black will have great difficulty playing with any pieces other than the queen. If this holds up, it should make a major contribution to bolstering the reputation of 7.♙e2.

8.♙xf6 gxf6 9.♘f5!

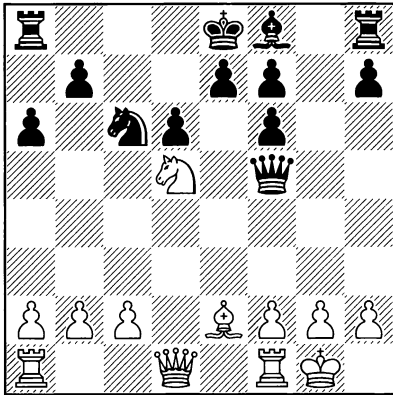
Exploiting the absence of the move ...e6, this at the same time prepares an interesting pawn sacrifice, as we shall see.

9...♗a5

Extraordinarily, Black's main alternative here is the 'un-developing move' 9...♙c8!? Somehow, even if the move makes sense, White can take some encouragement from the fact that his opponent is that desperate to remove the knight from f5. After 10.a4 e6 11.♘e3 b6 12.0-0 ♙b7 White has a choice of decent plans. 13.♗d2, followed by ♙ad1 and ♘c4, or perhaps even more simply as in Stefansson - Zubarev, Las Vegas (Wch) 1999, just 13.♘h1! ♙e7 14.f4. Now Black did himself no favours by 14...0-0?

since the attack almost plays itself and after 15.♙c4 ♘h8 16.♖h5 ♜e8 17.f5 ♘e5 18.♙b3 granting the e4 square with 18...d5? was already the last straw. 19.exd5 ♙c5 20.♞ae1 ♞g8 21.♘e4 ♙xe3 22.♘xf6 1-0. It seems unlikely that the time consuming 9...♙c8 will solve Black's problems. After all, as I have said before, the knight is a good piece on e3!

10.0-0 ♙xf5 11.exf5 ♖xf5 12.♘d5



12...♘d8

Of course Black has to deal with ♘c7† and the alternative 12...♞b8 also scarcely leaves castling realistically on the agenda. One very powerful attacker then built White's initiative effectively with 13.♙g4 ♖g6 14.♙h5 ♖g7 15.♞e1 ♞g8 16.g3 f5 17.c3 ♘d7 18.b4! e6 19.♘f4 ♙e7 20.a4 ♙f6 21.b5 in Vitolinsh - Grokhotov, USSR (ch) 1975.

13.♙g4 ♖g6 14.♙h5 ♖g7 15.♞e1 e6 16.♘f4 ♘d7 17.c4!

There is no set formula for handling the White side here. His strengths are his opponent's lack of effective development and his own active minor pieces. Given the positional costs of the move ...e5, the knight also enjoys a de facto outpost on f4. Still, as in the example in the note above, it is a queenside pawn storm that gives this initiative its extra bite.

17...♞d8 18.b4 ♖g5?!

It is not easy to give Black good advice here, although he might have preferred the immediate 18...♘e5. What is certain is that this 'changing

of the f7 guard' is not viable, as Kotronias' excellent combination shows.

19.g3 ♘e5 20.♙xf7! ♘xf7 21.♘xe6 ♖f5 22.♖a4† ♘c8 23.b5!

The hallmark of a strong attacking player. White is in no hurry to recoup his material, but rather uses the powerful position of his knight on e6 to spearhead a direct onslaught.

23...♘e5

Or 23...♘g5 24.♘xg5 fxg5 25.bxa6 ♘c7 26.♞ab1 b6 27.♖b3 ♖a5 28.♖f3! and White invades decisively.

24.bxa6! ♖xe6 25.axb7† ♘c7

25...♘xb7 is met simply with 26.♞eb1† ♘c8 27.♖a7 mating.

26.♖a5† ♘d7 27.♖xd8† ♘xd8 28.b8=♖† ♖c8 29.♞ab1 ♘d7 30.♖a7?!

30.♞e8†!

30...h5 31.♞b7 ♞h7 32.♞eb1 h4 and Black decided he had had enough, as 33.♖a5† ♘e8 34.♖f5 is crushing.

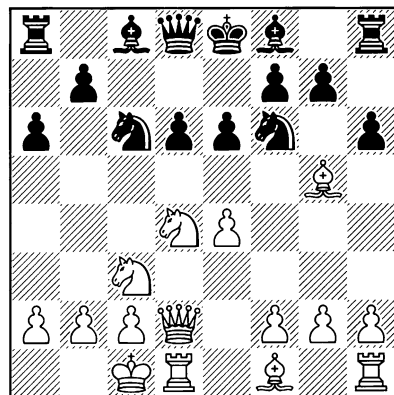
1-0

Vintage Kotronias, in his element in such attacking positions. White's compensation in any case looks very believable, and my hunch is there will not be too many takers for the cause of 7...a6.

Game 24

Balashov – Makarov
Smolensk 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♖d2 a6 8.0-0 h6



9. ♖xc6!?

From the author's standpoint, this has been a very tough decision. At the time when *The Complete Richter-Rauzer* came out (1998) I would have had no hesitation at all in building a repertoire around the flexible and far from innocuous retreat 9. ♖e3. Indeed, at that stage, the line to be recommended here was little more than a mildly eccentric backwater. Now it is the height of fashion! I have to admit that there is still a part of me that rebels against this exchange on c6. Indeed there should be! It strengthens Black's centre, enables him to effect the move ... d5 under unusually secure circumstances, and opens the b-file for action that potentially could leave the white king most uncomfortable.

So what can White boast in return? Well, let us note first that the b-file problems are for the moment likely to be largely academic. Not only is the b8 square well covered, this is unlikely to change for a long time since the f4 bishop is pretty difficult to dislodge. In fact this is a great piece – White enjoys a qualitative lead in development as well as a quantitative one. The question is: Can Black neutralise this initiative? In essence, it boils down to dynamic vs. static features, and this usually makes for an entertaining scrap.

9... bxc6 10. ♖f4 d5 11. ♖e3!

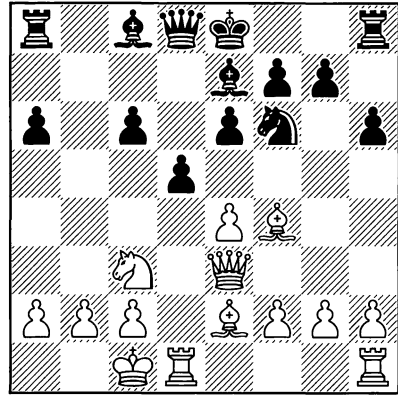
Again White is able to find aggressive squares for his pieces, which at the same time restrict his opponent's mobilisation – an unusual and very effective dark square influence is being exerted along two sweeping diagonals. Still, advantages in development have a habit of being rather transient, and Black to move now has a very fundamental choice of ways to get his bits into the game.

11... ♖a5!?

Interestingly, even as my opinions about the variation as a whole have fluctuated wildly, my belief that this is the most promising try has stayed quite stable. Let us first take a look at the others:

a) 11... ♖e7 represents Black's simplest mode of development, but the potency of the attack which White can generate is in turn the best

advertisement for his dynamic chances. As usual here White plays 12. ♖e2, directed against ... ♗h5, when Black can try:

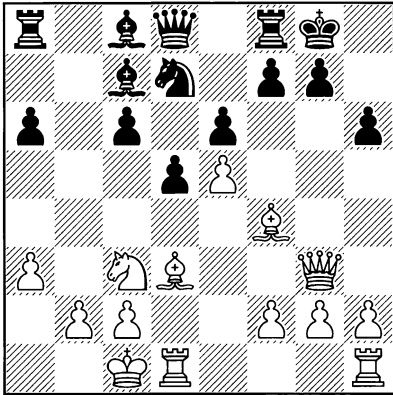


a1) 12... 0-0 13. h4!? (the older 13. ♖g3 ♗h8 14. ♖c7 ♖d7 15. ♖e5 ♖b7! 16. exd5 cxd5 17. ♖d4 ♗e8 18. ♖d3 ♖f6 of Nisipeanu - Ivanchuk, Las Vegas (Wch) 1999 is to my mind less convincing) 13... ♖e8 14. ♖g3 ♗h8 15. ♖c7! ♖d7 16. ♖e5 ♖f8. Fressinet – Bacrot, France (ch) 2000 and now 17. ♖f4!? ♗g8 18. ♖h5! ♖a7 19. g4! – Gofshtein, would have presented Black with huge problems.

a2) 12... ♗d7 has aspirations to control e5 and maybe have the liquidating ... ♖g5 available too. White should try 13. h4! when after 13... ♖b6 14. ♖g3 d4?! 15. ♗b1 ♖a5 16. ♖xd4 e5 17. ♖d2 ♖b6 18. ♖c4 he already had a significant advantage in Khalifman - Xu Jun, China-Russia Shanghai 2001. Black can try a couple of improvements, but 14... g6 which has been suggested looks very dangerous too in view of 15. exd5 cxd5 16. ♖xd5! exd5 17. ♗d5 with every prospect of winning back material with a strong initiative. Also 13... 0-0 failed in dramatic fashion to 14. exd5 cxd5 15. ♖xh6! in Bauer – Chabanon, France (ch) 2003 since if 15... gxh6 16. ♖xh6 ♗e5 (16... ♖e8 17. ♖d3 ♖d6 18. f4!) then 17. ♗e4! dxe4 (otherwise 18. ♗g5 will be too strong) 18. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 19. ♖h3! when White has regained material and retains a powerful attack. The obvious problem with 13... e5? was demonstrated in Calistri-Badii,

Paris 2005: 14.♙xe5! ♖xe5 15.exd5 ♖c7 (15...♗d6 16.♗e4! and 17.d6) 16.f4 and White regains the piece with a winning position.

b) 11...♙b4 does not overly impress me. Since 12.a3 looks good, it is not even a legitimate move order for transposing to the main game. White has 12.a3!? ♙a5 (12...♙xc3 13.♗xc3 ♗xe4 14.♗xg7 ♗f6 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♙e5! ♖e7 17.g4 favours White) 13.♙e2 0-0 14.e5 ♗d7 (14...♙xc3 15.♗xc3 ♗e4 16.♗e3 f6 17.f3 fxg5 18.♙xe5 ♗g5 was better for White after the queen exchange in Degraeve - Apicella, France 1999, but 19.f4! ♗e7 20.♙f3 could have heralded a still more punishing response.) 15.♗g3 ♙c7 16.♖he1 f6 17.♙xh6 ♗e7 18.♙h5 ♙xe5 19.♙f4 ♙xf4† 20.♗xf4 e5 21.♗h4 ♖d8 and Black's strong centre gave him counter-chances in Mainka - Kritz, Hoeckendorf 2004. However, while ...f6 can be quite a potent idea, Black really seems to me to lack a 'plan b'. So why not play a move which really acts as a deterrent to this pawn break. After 16.♙d3!



16... f6 17.♗g6 is really too dangerous, while 'quiet' moves like 16...♗e7 17.♖he1 ♖h8 allow 18.♗h3! and if now 18...f6, the sacrifice 19.♙xh6 gxf6 20.♗xh6† ♖g8 21.♖e3 ♙xe5 22.f4! is very strong.

c) 11...♗e7 also makes a rather artificial impression, especially when development deficit is Black's main challenge. Chandler - Bellin, Birmingham 2000 was typical. 12.exd5 cxd5 13.♙e2 ♗a7 14.♗g3 d4 15.♗d3 ♙d7 16.♗xd4

♙c5 17.♗e5 ♙xf2 18.♙f3 ♖c8 19.♖d3 ♙b6?! and now White could have caused quite severe problems already with 20.♗e4!.

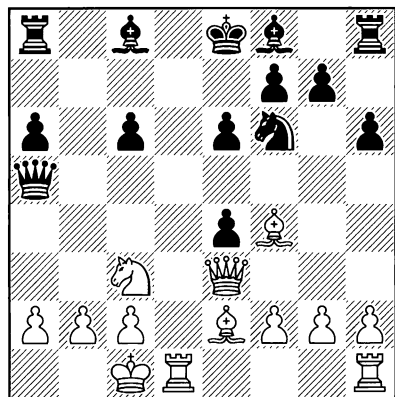
12.♙e2! ♙b4?!

It is easy to be wise after the event. In putting the question to this move, it is worth reminding ourselves that it is only the extraordinary energy of White's solution that reveals its deficiencies. The problem is that after the coming exchange on c3, White's dark squared bishop (his pride and joy in this variation) will attain new heights and Black's inability to contest it will compensate for a pawn and some inconvenience to the white king.

Two alternatives, the second of which is of great importance and for a time gave me serious pause for thought before advocating White's hyper-aggressive set-up:

a) 12...♗c5 is all about driving away the queen in order to play ...d4. However, positional problems persist after 13.♗g3 d4 14.♗a4 ♗b4 (14...♗xe4? 15.♗f3 ♗d5 16.c4!) 15.♗b3! ♗xb3 16.axb3 ♗d7 17.♖xd4 e5 18.♖xd7! ♙xd7 19.♙xe5 ♙e6 20.♖d1 ♙e7?! (20...♖d8 21.♙xa6! looks grim too) 21.♙d6! a5 22.e5!+- h5 23.♙f3 when White had a terrific grip, Balashov - Kiselev, Russia 2000.

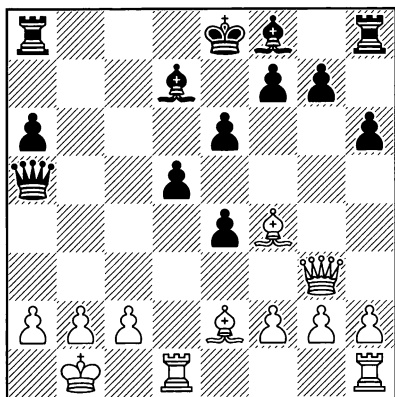
b) 12...dxe4!? is a tough nut to crack.



b1) I have spent a long time trying to make 13.♙c4 work (13.♗xe4 ♗d5 14.♖xd5 cxd5 15.♗d6† is also not without some venom, but is at the same time unnecessarily speculative)

but had to bow to the inevitable after the excellent reply 13...♙f5! 14.f3 (14.g4 ♖xg4 15.♚b6 ♙xf4† 16.♗b1 ♘d7 17.♙xd7 ♗xd7, Nataf, - Gershon, Bermuda, 1999 is fun, and after 18.♚b7† ♚c7 19.♙d1† ♘d6 20.♘xd6† ♗xd6 21.♗e4† etc. White should have enough to draw, but not more) 14...♙c5! 15.♚d2 0-0 16.fxe4 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 ♙xe4 18.♘d3 ♙a4 and Black holds the balance. Again 18.♙xh6!? should lead to no more than a draw by perpetual.

b2) 13.♙g3! is much more to the point, threatening 14.♙c7 and monitoring the g7-pawn too. The real conceptual breakthrough is that White is even willing to 'mend' his opponent's compromised structure in the interests of maintaining the momentum of his initiative. After 13...♗d5! 14.♗xd5 (14.♙e5 ♗xc3 15.♙xd3 ♙g5†) 14...cxd5 15.♗b1 ♘d7!?



he can try:

b21) 16.f3?! which was recommended by Tsesarsky, who offered only the rather compliant 16...exf3 17.♙xf3, when indeed it is plausible that the opening of another file piles more woe upon the defender. Unfortunately, the liquidation which accompanies the very natural 16...♙b5! 17.♙h1 ♙xe2 18.♙xe2 exf3 19.♙xf3 ♙e7 looks just fine for Black. White adapted sensibly in Zaragatski- Rau, Willingen 2003 with 20.c4 0-0 21.cxd5 ♙fd8 22.♙ed2 exd5 23.♙xd5 ♙b6 24.♙xd8† and a draw was agreed.

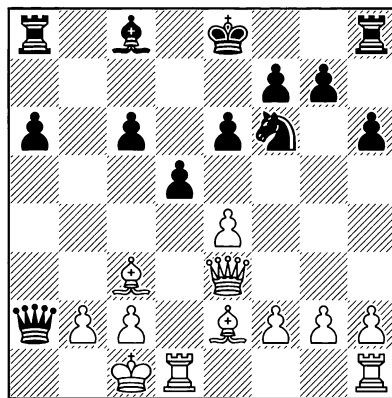
b22) 16.♙e5! is strongly preferable, and

consistent with White's fundamental strategy: keep the black pieces at home! Lines like 16...♙g8 17.f4!? ♙b5 18.♙h5! g6 19.f5!? look very promising, but the whole thing needs practical tests.

13.♙e5! ♙xc3

13...dxe4 is less ambitious, arguably less consistent and also probably falls short of equality although the young Chinese talent Bu Xiangzhi's patronage gives pause for thought. White retained a structural plus after 14.♙xf6 gxf6 15.♙xe4 ♗e7 16.♙d3 ♙a7 17.a3 ♙xc3 18.♙xc3 in Degraeve - Lerner, Koszalin 1999, while 14.♙g3!? ♙xc3 15.♙c7 ♙xb2† 16.♗xb2 ♙b4† 17.♗a1 ♗d5 18.♙xg7 ♙f8 19.♙d4 ♘d7 20.♙g3 ♙g8 21.c4 c5 22.♙b2 ♗b4 23.a3 ♗d3 24.♙xd3 exd3 25.♙xd3 was a more punchy route to a good position in Ponomarev - Bu Xiangzhi, Lausanne 2001.

14.♙xc3 ♙xa2



15.♙d3!?

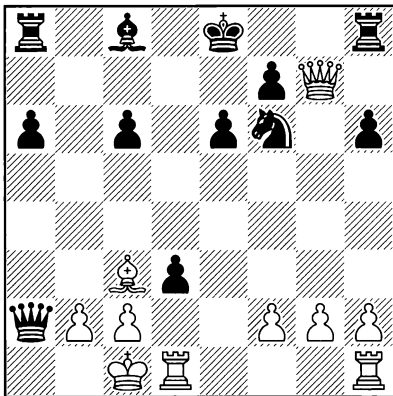
The priority of course is that Black should not be able to land a knight on e4, when his counter-chances are real indeed! The huge power of the bishop on c3 – especially in the context of opposite coloured bishops - in conjunction with the weakness of g7 are the grounds for White's tremendous idea. I have to admit, I have found no flaw with Balashov's play, but in later encounters White has demonstrated alternative methods of causing trouble too:

a) 15.♙f3 0-0 16.b3! dxe4 17.♙xe4 ♗d5

18.♙xd5 exd5 (18...cxd5 19.♗d2! ♖a3 20.♗d4) 19.♞he1 ♙f5?! (19...f6! is not so clear) 20.♙b2 ♙g6? 21.♞c3 f6 22.♞d4 1-0 Chanoine - Santo Roman, Paris 2001 is obviously striking. While Black could have defended much better, the potency of opposite coloured bishops for the attacker was very much in evidence.

b) 15.f3!? 0-0 16.g4 ♞d8 (16...dxe4 17.fxe4 e5 18.b3! and capturing on g4 is too risky, although White will enjoy a serious kingside attack in any case) 17.g5 d4?! (17...♖a1† 18.♗d2 ♞d8† 19.♙d3 ♖a4 20.gxf6 exd3 21.cxd3 ♖h4! 22.fxg7 also clearly holds dangers for Black, but no clear win is in sight) 18.♞xd4 ♞xd4 19.♞xd4 ♖a1† 20.♗d2 ♖xh1 21.♞d8† ♗h7 22.gxf6 ♙b7 23.♞e7 c5 24.fxg7 ♞g2 (24...♗g8 is tougher, but White is still winning after 25.♖h4 ♗h7 26.g8†♞ ♞xg8 27.♖f6 – Boto) 25.♖f8 ♞g5† 26.♗e1 e5 27.♙xe5 ♞xf8 28.gxf8=♞ ♞xe5 29.♞xf7† ♞g7 30.♞xg7† ♗xg7 31.♗f2 1-0. E. Hossain - Mohammad, Bangladesh (ch) 2003. 15...dxe4 16.♞g3!!

The star move, and a graphic illustration of the weakness of Black's dark squares which as we shall see, persists deep into the endgame phase. 16... exd3 17.♞xg7



17...♞g8

17...d2† does not help. Balashov himself gives the nice line 18.♗xd2 ♗e4† 19.♗e3 ♞f8 20.♞d8† ♗xd8 21.♞xf8† ♗c7 22.♙e5† ♗b7 23.♖b4† ♗a7 24.♙c7 and wins.

Threatening mate with 17...♗e4 is also

hopeless: 18.♞xh8† ♗e7 19.cxd3! was an effortless day for White in Bromberger - Hen. Hoffmann, Bundesliga 2006.

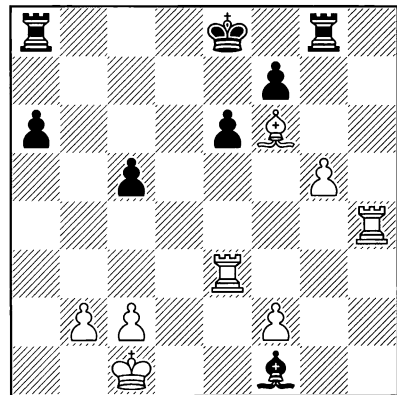
18.♞xf6 d2†

18...♖a1† 19.♗d2 ♖a4 20.♗e3! – Balashov - also seems to be good. Black can try 20...♙b7 21.♞xd3 c5, but 22.f3! consolidates, and Black's dark square misery continues unabated.

19.♗xd2 ♞d5† 20.♗c1 ♞g5† 21.♞xg5 hxg5

21...♞xg5!?! 22.♙f6 ♞d5 is tougher, although 23.c4 evicts the rook, with some positional advantage guaranteed.

22.♙f6 ♙b7 23.h4! gxh4 24.♞xh4 c5 25.g4 ♙f3 26.♞d3 ♙e2 27.♞e3 ♙f1 28.g5



Detailed coverage of the remainder of this game is clearly beyond our scope given limited space. Suffice to say that the dark-squared bishop remains the star of the show, and Black soon decides that a rook is a fair price to pay to get rid of it!

28...♗d7 29.c4 ♗c6 30.♗d2 ♞ad8†?! 31.♙xd8 ♞xd8† 32.♗c2 ♞g8 33.♞g4 ♗d6 34.b3 ♞h8 35.g6 fxg6 36.♞xg6 ♙h3 37.♞g7 ♙f5† 38.♗b2 ♗c6 39.♞a7 ♗b6 40.♞d7 ♗c6 41.♞d2 ♞h1 42.♞g3 a5 43.♞g8 a4 44.♞c8† ♗b7 45.♞xc5 ♞b1† 46.♗a3 axb3 47.♞b5† ♗c6 48.♞xb3 ♞c1 49.♗b4 ♞h1 50.♞a3 ♞b1† 51.♗c3 ♞e1 52.♞a6† ♗b7 53.♞a5 ♗b6 54.♞b5† ♗c6 55.♞a2 ♞c1† 56.♗d4 ♞d1† 57.♗e5 ♞e1† 58.♗f6 ♙d3 59.♞a6† ♗c7 60.♞c5† ♗b7 61.♞a3 ♙c2 62.♞a2

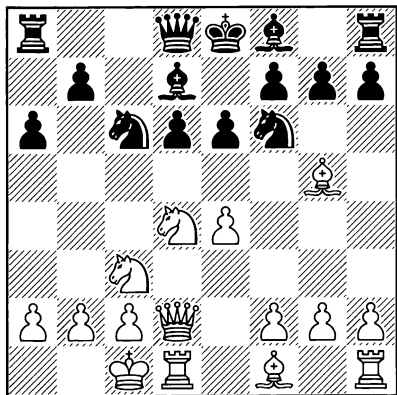
1-0

Game 25

Lastin - Spraggett

Moscow 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3
 ♗c6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♙d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♙d7



A flexible and popular developing move which as we shall see does not yet commit Black to any single set-up. Along with the 8...h6 of Game 24, this is by far the most significant choice. Others tend to be transpositional. The most significant, 8...♙e7, is likely to lead to the main lines of game 27.

9.f4 b5

One of the main lines of the Rauzer over many years, this attempt to create rapid play on the queenside without committing the e7 bishop has enjoyed a fluctuating reputation but has also enjoyed the truly fierce partisanship of a committed group of devotees. Chief among these are the talented Croatian grandmaster Zdenko Kozul and the wily Yugoslav Branko Damljanovic who have repeatedly shown the enormous power latent in the black bishop pair following the exchange on f6.

Two other moves also deserve detailed consideration:

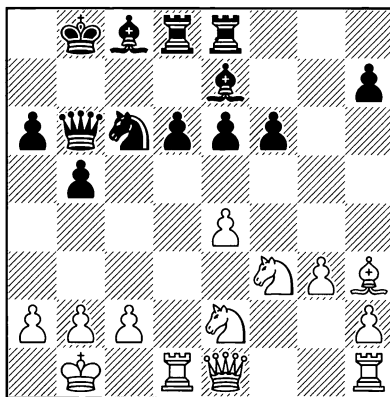
a) 9...♙e7 10.♗f3!? b5

11.♙xf6 and now:

a1) 11...♙xf6 is not quite respectable. After 12.♙xd6 ♙e7 (12...♙a7!? is interesting. 13.e5 ♗e7 14.♙d2 ♙a5 15.♗b1 ♙b4 16.♗g5 ♙xc3

17.♙xc3 ♙xc3 18.bxc3 ♗a5 restricts White to a modest edge, but 14.♙d3!? is worth a look too) 13.♙d2 b4 14.♗a4 ♗b8!? (after 14...♙a7 15.♙e3 ♙a5 16.b3 ♙b7 17.♗d2 Black's compensation is rather effortlessly neutralised) 15.♙d4 ♙c7 16.♗b6 ♙a7 17.♗b1 0-0 18.♗xd7 ♗xd7 19.e5 ♙c8 20.♙d3 ♗c5 was Illescas Cordoba - San Segundo, Madrid 1997 when 21.f5! would have been strong.

a2) 11...♙xf6 is the main line and introduces yet another version of the doubled f-pawn structure. It bears obvious comparison with the main game. White has withdrawn his knight to f3, while Black's bishop is committed to the relatively modest e7. Indeed there is a sense that the Black position is a little passive in comparison with the 9...b5 lines. After 12.♗b1 ♙b6 13.f5 0-0-0 14.fxex6 fxe6 15.g3! ♗b8 16.♙h3 ♙c8 17.♙e1 ♙he8 18.♗e2 we reach a parting of the ways:



a21) 18...♗e5 19.♙f1 ♗c4 20.♗f4 ♙f8 (20...♗e3 21.♙xe6 ♗xd1 22.♙xd1± completely and unacceptably cedes the light squares) 21.♙f2! Instructive. The exchange of queens will still leave White with enough targets in the Black position. The priority in this strategy should be given to restraint. 21...♙xf2 (21...♙b7 offered more chances of counterplay, but 22.♗d2! goes a good way towards nullifying this too) 22.♙xf2 f5 23.exf5 ♗e3 (23...exf5 24.♗d4!) 24.♙e1 ♗xf5 25.♗g5 e5 26.♗d5 ♗d4 27.♙xc8 ♙xc8 28.c3 ♗e6 29.♗xe6 ♙xe6 30.♗b6 1-0. Bruzon

– Molander, Santo Domingo 2003. A snappy victory for the talented young Cuban.

a22) 18...♙f8 19.♚f1 ♗g7 20.♖f4 and now:

a22) 20...♙h8 21.c3 ♚e7 was Adams – Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2004. White played 22.♚f2(!) which granted time for 22...♚de8 so that 23.♖d4 could be met with 23...♖a5! and some counterplay. As Adams himself points out the immediate 22.♖d4! was better since 22...♖xd4?! 23.cxd4 is very pleasant for White, while 22...♚de8 23.♖xc6† ♚xc6 24.♚f2 again represents a success for White's strategy of constraint.

a22) 20...♚c5 21.c3 f5 (21...♙h6 22.♖d4 ♗xf4 23.♚xf4! makes limited sense as 23...e5 can be met with 24.♖b3! and 25.♚h4 with substantial positional pluses) 22.exf5 exf5 23.♚f2 b4 24.cxb4 ♖xb4 25.a3 ♖c6 26.♚c1 ♚xf2 27.♚xf2 ♖d4 28.♚d1 ♖xf3 29.♚xf3 and White retained a small advantage based on his opponent's substantially damaged structure in Kolev – Damljanovic, Skopje 2002

b) 9...h6!? is also interesting. Black prepares ...g5 and control of the e5 square. Interestingly, recent attention has centred on White refusing to return the pawn lightly. The resulting positions are, as we shall see, full of tension. 10.♙h4 g5!? (Rather than 10...♖xe4?! 11.♚e1! ♖f6 (11...g5? 12.♖xe4 gxh4 13.♚c3 is a major accident) 12.♖f5 ♚a5 13.♖xd6† ♙xd6 14.♚xd6 ♚c7 (or 14...0-0-0 15.♚d1! ♚c7 16.♚f2 ♖e7 17.♙d3 with a pleasant position) 15.♚d2 ♚xf4?! (In Izoria-Avrukh, Athens 2005, Black played the tougher 15...0-0-0 After 16.♙xf6 gxf6, Avrukh suggests 17.♚h4 as promising.) 16.♙xf6 ♚xf6 17.♖e4 ♚f4 18.♖d6† ♖e7 19.g3 ♚xd6 20.♚xd6 ♖xd6 21.♚f2 with a decisive plus in Guseinov - Mamedov, Baku 2002.) 11.fxg5 ♖g4 12.♙e2 ♖ge5 13.♖f3 ♙e7 14.♚hg1!?

Initially played by Ziatdinov in a couple of striking outings, this indirect defence of g5 ensures that Black will not win back his pawn so easily. Moreover, the considerable tension that arises in the position greatly restricts his options, and f7 is potentially very vulnerable.

14...b5 (14...♚g8? 15.♙g3! hxg5 16.♖xe5 ♖xe5 17.♙xe5! dxе5 18.♙h5 heralds a

nasty accident on f7. Ziatdinov – Barbero, Montpellier 1994) 15.♚df1! It is important to free up the d1-square as a comfortable retreat for the knight. 15...b4 16.♖d1 ♚b8 (The recent trend has been for 16...hxg5 The following sequence is almost forced. 17.♙xg5 ♙xg5 18.♖xg5 ♚a5 19.♖b1 b3! 20.♚xa5 bxc2† 21.♖xc2 ♖xa5 This position has been reached a few times, including Senff-Baklan, Cappelle la Grande 2006. The results suggest Black has just enough compensation to draw.) 17.♖b1 a5 18.b3!.. The key move. Since e3 is out of bounds due to the 'g5 situation' the knight is headed for c4 via b2. Black has tried:

b1) 18...hxg5 (18...♖g6!? 19.g3 ♖ce5 is met with the immediate 20.gxh6! although after 20...♖xf3 21.♚xf3 ♖e5!?! this still might be Black's best choice) 19.♙xg5 ♖xf3 (maybe 19...♙xg5 20.♖xg5 a4 (Gofshtein) 21.♖b2 axb3 22.cxb3 but both f7 and d6 remain problems) 20.gxf3 ♙xg5 21.♚xg5 ♚f6 was Acs - van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 'B' 2003, when 22.♚fg1!? ♚d4 23.♙d3! ♖e7 24.f4 looks good for White according to Acs and Hazai.

b2) 18...a4 19.♖b2 axb3 20.cxb3 ♚a5?!. A mistake, which nicely illustrates the problem of altering the delicate balance of force around g5. (20...hxg5 21.♙xg5 ♙xg5 22.♖xg5 ♚a8 is better though either 23.♖a4 or 23.♙b5 look quite promising) 21.g6! fxg6 22.♙xe7 ♖xe7 This exchange is pretty disastrous for the black king. Not just d6 but also the dark squares on the f-file become very exposed. The speed of the denouement is still striking. 23.♚d1 ♚c7 24.♖c4 ♖xc4 25.♙xc4 ♖a5 26.e5! d5 27.♙d3 ♚c3 28.♚f4 1-0. Karjakin - Nijboer, Wijk aan Zee 2003.

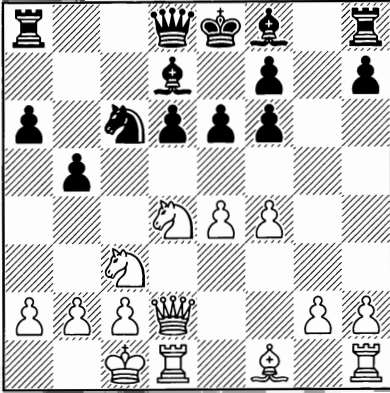
Back to the main game with 9...b5.

10.♙xf6

Clearly the most principled continuation.

10...gxg6

10...♚xf6 is inferior due to 11.e5 dxе5 12.♖dxb5 ♚d8 13.♖d6† ♙xd6 14.♚xd6 exf4 when either 15.♖e4!?! or 15.♙xa6 ♚xa6 16.♖b5 ♚a7 17.♖xa7 ♖xa7 18.♚d4! ♖c6 19.♚xg7 ♚f8 20.♚d2! offer good chances.



11. ♖b1 ♜b6 12. ♘xc6 ♙xc6 13. f5!?

For a long while 13. ♜e1 has been the most fashionable move here. The claim is that by floating the idea of ♘d5 into the equation, White forces his opponent to make some kind of concession. It has been a long haul for me towards the conclusion that, while Black may enter this system with high hopes of a more than usually active role for his king's bishop, in many cases the unpretentious e7 is not such a bad square and slightly misplacing the queen in order to coax it there is not necessarily best.

Specifically Black's counterplay in the variation 13... ♙e7 14. f5 ♜c5 15. ♙d3 b4 16. ♘e2 a5(!) (likely to replace the older 16... e5 which aims to restrict White's knight, but in fact offers it a choice of promising routes via g3 or c1) 17. fxe6 fxe6 18. ♘f4 ♜e5 19. ♝f1 a4 20. ♙c4, Nijboer - Acs, Wijk aan Zee 2003, when by flicking in 20... a3! it seems that White could be caused some embarrassment. Hence we shall try to expend no tempi on moving the queen, even if it is necessary to sacrifice a pawn in the process.

13...b4

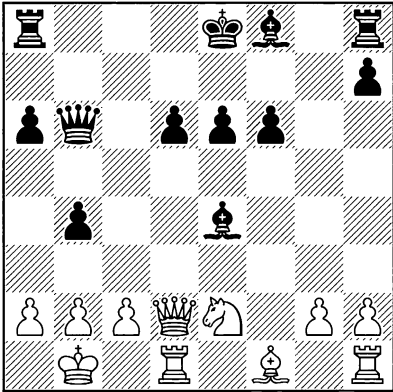
Highly committal. There is the danger that if Black is not actually taking on e4 then the text may merely be driving his opponent's knight to a better square, offering White's bishop more promising options than d3 and rendering any future ...0-0-0 highly problematic. Rather a menu of drawbacks for any move to bear.

For all these reasons I am more inclined towards the solid 13... ♜c5!?: eg 14. ♙d3 h5 15. ♜e1! (Only now. The tempo expended on ...h5 means that Black can no longer get the level of counterplay described in Nijboer - Acs above. Waiting for ...h5 to play this queen move seems like a fair rule of thumb.) 15...0-0-0 (If now 15... ♙e7 16. ♘e2 e5 17. h4! (fixing the h5-pawn in order to target it) 17...a5 18. ♘g3 ♖d7 19. ♙e2 ♝ag8 20. ♙f3 a4 21. ♘xh5 a3 22. b4! ♜c4 23. g4 with clear advantage Kosteniuk - Bu Xiangzhi, China-Russia, Shanghai 2001.) 16. ♝f1 ♙h6!?: 17. fxe6 fxe6 18. ♝xf6 ♜e5 19. ♜f2 ♙b7 (19... ♙e3!?: is risky due to 20. ♜xe3 ♜xf6 21. a4! (21. ♜b6 ♙b7 22. ♙xb5 axb5 23. ♘xb5 ♝d7 is just a draw after 24. ♘a7† etc) 21... ♜e7 22. axb5 axb5 23. ♘xb5 with promising compensation) 20. ♝f7 ♝hf8 21. a3 ♝xf7 22. ♜xf7 ♝f8 23. ♜g6 ♙e3 24. ♙e2 and although Black has some activity for the pawn, there are still enough weaknesses for White to aim at too. Lastin - Palac, Panormo 2001.

Kozul, the main specialist in this line, has recently favoured 13...h5 The idea is 14. fxe6 fxe6 15. ♜f4 ♜c5 16. ♜xf6 ♝h6 as in Svetushkin-Kozul, Turkey 2006. Black certainly has some dark-squared compensation but his king position is also somewhat insecure.

14. ♘e2 e5

This has been played on several occasions, and a sneak look back through my private files suggest that a couple of years ago I spent a while on this variation without so much as suspecting Lastin's superbly economical novelty on move 17. Taking the pawn is also a serious option, but White's compensation looks quite attractive enough to recommend the line, and indeed there may even be a decent choice after 14... ♙xe4 15. fxe6 (15. ♘g3!?: is interesting but untested. Acs and Hazai consider 15... ♙b7 [or 15... ♙d5 16. ♘h5 0-0-0 17. ♘xf6 ♙b7 18. fxe6 fxe6 19. ♜e2 d5 20. g3. The bishop pair is scant compensation for the weakness of e6.] 16. fxe6 fxe6 17. ♜e2 although after 17... ♖d7!?: I would be happier if the pattern of White's further development was clearer) 15... fxe6 and now there are two good choices:



17. ♖e2!

Another example of a novelty of ‘why didn’t I think of that’ simplicity! Moving the queen immediately takes the sting out of defences based upon the activation of the bishop commencing ...♗h6, while White has nothing to fear from 17...♗b5?! since the exchange of light-squared bishops is near the top of his menu of positional goals.

17...a5 18. ♖xh5 ♗e7 19.g4 a4 20. ♖h3!

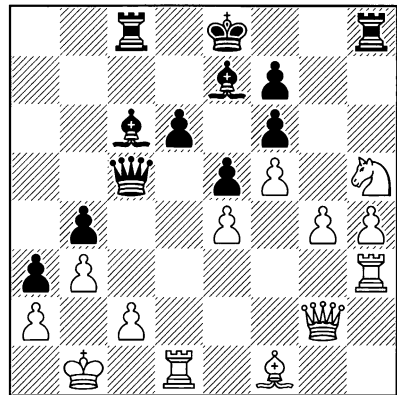
Another excellent move with both defensive and aggressive designs.

20...a3 21.b3 ♖c8 22. ♖g2!

a) 16. ♖f4 d5 (or 16...b3!? 17.axb3 ♖xb3 18. ♗d3 ♗xd3 19. ♖xd3 ♖c4 20. ♖he1 e5 21. ♖b4 – Acs/Hazai, again with definite compensation) 17. ♗d3 0–0–0 18. ♗xe4 dxe4 19. ♖e2 ♖xd1† 20. ♖xd1 e3 21. ♖f3 ♗d6 22. ♖xe6 ♖e8 23. ♖d4 ♗c7 24.g3 and White has a light-square advantage, although until he can round up the e3-pawn there will always be tricks. Sadvakasov - Yermolinsky, Stratton Mountain 2000.

b) 16. ♖f4!? f5 (16...d5 17. ♖xf6 ♖c8 18. ♖d4 ♖g8 19. ♗d3! – Acs/Hazai.) 17. ♖g3 ♖c6 18. ♖xe4! ♖xe4 19. ♖d2! was Acs - Duppel, Germany 2000, when after the best defence 19...♖c6!? 20. ♗e2 ♖g8! Acs and Hazai give 21. ♖he1 but I also like the look of 21. ♗f3!? d5 22. ♖he1 0–0–0 23. ♖c1! and the coming c4 break will cause a real headache, en passant notwithstanding. 15. ♖g3 h5 16.h4! ♖c5

Damljanovic’s latest try was the pawn sacrifice 16...♗h6!? 17. ♖xd6 ♖d8 18. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 19. ♖xd8† ♖xd8 20. ♖xh5 ♗xe4 (Black also had enough compensation after 20...♖e7 21. ♗d3 ♗e3 in Bologan - Kotronias, Warsaw 2005.) 21. ♖xf6 ♗xf5 22. ♗xa6 ♗e6 23. ♗e2 ♖e7 24. ♖f1 ♗e3 25.g3 ♗d4 26. ♖e4 ♗h3 27. ♖f6 ♗e6 with the bishop pair spearheading quite decent compensation. However, 17. ♖e2! looks very plausible here too. This was tested, without any clear conclusion, in G. Guseinov - Kotronias, Moscow 2005: 17...♖e7 18. ♖xh5 ♖b7 19. ♖e1 b3!? with an unclear position that was eventually drawn.



Now Black is also helpless against ♗c4, almost always a powerful move in this variation if it can be effected safely. The speed with which White accumulates almost every advantage imaginable against a player of Kevin Spraggett’s calibre is quite awesome and an excellent advert for Lastin’s treatment.

22...♖b6 23. ♗c4 ♗b7 24. ♖e2 ♖g8 25.g5 fxg5 26.f6!

The rest is a massacre and requires little comment. A very powerful display, and I suspect we shall see a good deal more of these treatments without an early ♖e1 in the future.

26...♗f8 27. ♖g3 ♖xc4 28.bxc4 ♖c6 29.hxg5 ♗a6 30. ♖d2 ♗xc4 31. ♖xb4 ♖xe4 32. ♖b3 ♖c6 33. ♖xa3 d5 34. ♖g7† ♖d7 35. ♖a7† ♖c8 36. ♖a5 ♗c5

1–0

Game 26

Dolmatov – Makarov

Samara 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6
5.♞c3 d6 6.♟g5 e6 7.♞d2 ♟e7

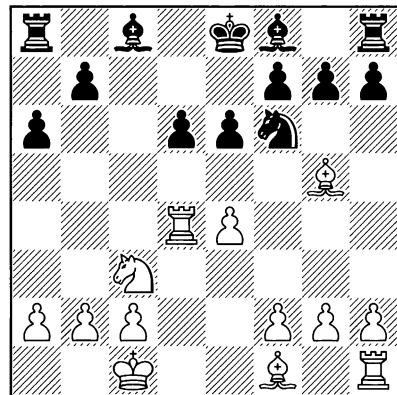
With the customary apologies to historical record I have fiddled with the move order. In fact Makarov chose 7...a6 8.0-0-0 ♞xd4 9.♞xd4 ♟e7, but it useful to invert this in order to deal conveniently with a number of minor lines commencing 7...♟e7 here. First though, this seems like a good moment to consider various other 7th move choices:

a) 7...h6 does not impress. As we have seen, every Rauzer player should be ready to play the familiar structure with the doubled f-pawns under certain circumstances, but the enthusiasm for it embodied in this loss of tempo is regarded as slightly eccentric. White secures good play with something like an extra tempo over lines considered under Game 23 note c2 to 6...♞b6. In Z. Almasi - Damljanovic, Cacak 1996, White gave a convincing example of how to handle this structure after 8.♟xf6 gxf6 (8...♞xf6? 9.♞db5) 9.0-0-0 a6 10.f4 ♟d7 11.♞b1 ♞b6 12.♞b3 0-0-0 13.♟e2 ♞b8?! (Black should at least try to prevent White's next by 13...h5, although 14.h4!? looks appealing then when the h5-pawn is distinctly vulnerable.) 14.♟h5! ♞h7 15.♞hf1 ♟c8 16.♞e2 ♞c7 (if 16...♟e7 then 17.♞d5! is strong – a common motif in such positions) 17.♞d4 ♞xd4 18.♞xd4 ♟g7 19.♞c4 ♞e7 20.f5 ♞hh8 21.♞d3 ♞hg8 22.a3 and all activity and life is being squeezed out of Black's game. A rosy version of how to handle this structure, but the f4-f5 plan has featured many times, and this model execution is a useful game to know, as well as a warning against 7...h6.

b) 7...♞b6 poses questions for our repertoire built as it is around 9.f4 rather than 9.♞b3 in the main line of game 25. Here White can again consider 8.♟xf6 likely to transpose to positions dealt with under the note to 6...♞b6 to game 23. However, as I said there, I am quite keen not to force these difficult positions upon the reader. So another alternative with Garry

Kasparov's stamp of approval. 8.0-0-0!? ♞xd4 (8...a6 9.♞xc6!? bxc6 10.♟c4! ♟e7 11.♟b3 ♟b7 (11...e5 12.♟xf6 gxf6 13.f4±) 12.f4 ♞d8 13.f5 e5 14.g4! h6 15.♟xf6 gxf6 16.♞b1 was terrific for White in Vorobiov - Avrukh, Moscow 2002. The only mystery here is why there have been few imitators; the idea looks very fine.) 9.♞xd4 ♞xd4 10.♞xd4 a6

Of course, the simplification may not be to the taste of those who like a quick knock-out, but this is definitely one of the set of Rauzer endings in which I find it inconceivable that White's space advantage should count for nothing. In particular, bear in mind the weakness of b6.



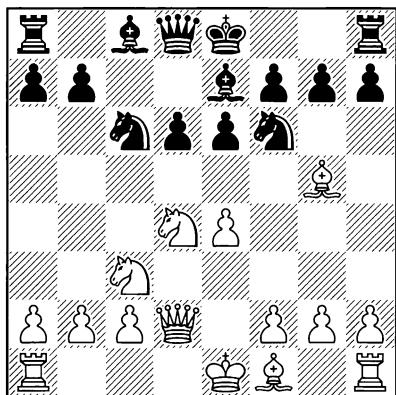
b1) 11.♟xf6!? gxf6 12.♞a4 ♟d7 13.♞b6 ♞d8 14.♞xd7 ♞xd7 15.♟e2 ♞g8 16.g3 ♟h6† 17.♞b1 ♞e7 18.♞hd1 ♞c8 19.♞d3 ♞c5 is not terribly exciting, with undeniable drawish tendencies, but there are pretty well only two results in play which will appeal to those who like to play very safe. It is unlikely to appeal to Black! J. Fernandez Garcia - Estremera Panos, Spain (ch) 2002.

b2) 11.f3 ♟d7 12.♞a4(!) was Kasparov's contribution which, as is customary, set the stage for subsequent tussles. Critical is probably 12...d5 (12...e5 13.♞b6! favours White, whose knight by one route or another will enjoy the excellent outpost on d5; while after 12...♟c6 13.♞b6 ♞d8 14.♞c4 ♟e7 15.♞a5! ♞c8 16.♞b4! d5 17.♞xc6 bxc6 18.♞b7 ♞d7 19.♟d2!. White was richly rewarded for his creative manoeuvres

in the influential Kasparov - Mchedlishvili, Bled (ol) 2002) 13.exd5 ♖xd5 14.♙c4 ♙xa4 15.♙xd5 exd5 16.♞xa4 f6 17.♙e3 ♘f7 18.♞d1 b5 19.♞ad4 ♙c5 20.♞d3 ♙xe3† 21.♞xe3 ♞he8 22.♞de1 ♞xe3 23.♞xe3 ♞e8 24.♞xe8 ♘xe8 25.♘d2 ♘d7 and Black held the pawn ending in Volokitin - Gershon, Bermuda 2003.

It might be worth checking out 13.♙xf6!? though. After 13...gxf6 14.exd5 White's coordination may suffer a little after 14...e5 15.♞h4, or 14...♙h6† 15.♘b1 e5 16.♞c4! b5 17.♘b6, but whether that will amount to full value for Black's investment is rather more doubtful.

Now we return to the main game after 7...♙e7.



8.0-0-0 a6

8...♖xd4 9.♞xd4 0-0 is a quite legitimate transposition of moves leading to Game 27, while 9...b5 10.f4 leads back to the main line here.

9.f4 ♖xd4 10.♞xd4 b5!?

Almost unheard of just 10 years ago, this has already become another major Rauzer system, which has at any rate defied all the more brutal early attempts to kick it into touch. For this reason a solid system will be advocated here, heading for the doubled f-pawn structure but with due preparation.

11.♙e2!?

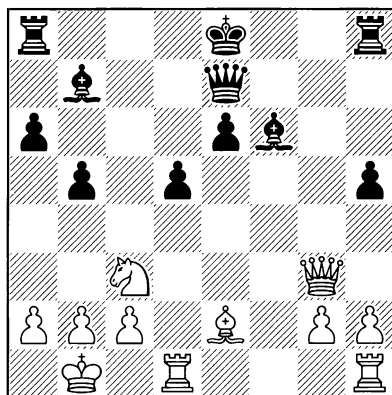
This requires some explanation since immediately inflicting damage on the

opponent's structure with 11.♙xf6 is by far the more popular choice. In particular a word on two on the popular tries which in my view 'just miss' for White:

11.♙xf6 gxf6! (11...♙xf6? 12.e5 dxe5 13.♞c5! (13.♞e4! is also very strong) 13...♙d7 14.♘b5! meeting 14...axb5 with the devastating 15.♞xd7!, while if 14...♙e7 simply 15.♘c7† ♘f8 16.♞xe5 is very strong according to Kasparov.) and now:

a) 12.♙e2 ♞c7 13.f5 ♞c5 14.fxe6 fxe6 15.♞xc5 dxc5 16.♙h5† ♘f8 17.e5 f5 18.g4! was a line which put me off the black side of this variation for some time. White opens the position against the bishop pair to embarrass the black king and to prise open nice squares for his knight. However, with precise defence it seems that Black can neutralise the White initiative, and with precise handling the bishops can still be a major defensive asset. 18...♞a7 19.gxf5 exf5 20.♖d5 ♙g5† 21.♘b1 ♙e6 22.♞hg1 ♞d7! (also Curt Hansen's 22...♞g8 23.♖f4 ♙c4! seems tough to refute since 24.b3 is well met with 24...♙xf4!) 23.♞xg5 ♞xd5 24.♞xf5† ♘e7 25.♞g5 ♞g8 26.♞xg8 ♞xd1† 27.♙xd1 ♙xg8 28.♙g4 ♙e6 29.♙f3 ♙f7 and this ending should be a draw Grischuk – Grosar, Batumi 1999.

b) 12.e5 d5 13.♘b1 ♙b7 14.f5 has been ultra-trendy lately and is certainly the fiercest weapon at White's disposal. However, after 14...fxe5 15.♞xe5 ♙f6 16.♞g3 ♞e7 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.♙e2 h5



I do find myself disturbed at the large number of positional concessions that White is required to make. The position reminds me of the material of game 24, a true battle between strategic and dynamic features, and yet there it is somehow more believable that White's initiative is durable and represents genuine compensation. It is true that the clever break 19...b4 is still troublesome for Black since 19...b4 is met by 20.♘e4! dxe4 21.♖xg6† ♜f7 22.♖xf7† and White recoups the piece with interest. However, I am attracted to the deflecting 19...h4! of Kovalev - Supatashvili, Leon 2001. 20.♖g6† ♜f7 21.♖d3 when 21...0-0! was OK, and even 21...bxa4 looks worth a look. I offer this so that the reader has a starting point for keeping pace with shifts in high fashion, but personally speaking I am fundamentally sceptical about White's position. 11...♙b7 12.♙f3

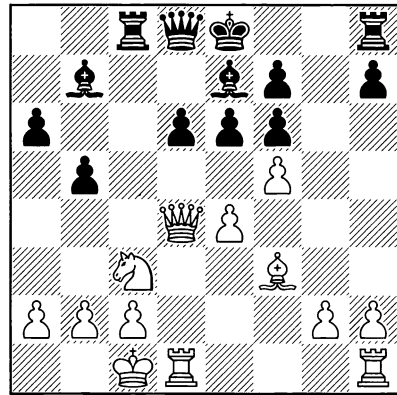
What has this manoeuvre achieved? Well, the e-pawn is well defended and the e2 square cleared for the knight, both useful preparations for the familiar strategy of pushing f5 against doubled f-pawns, and also as we shall see, handy too if Black wishes to keep his structure intact. More subtle, but no less important, the whole plan with f5 seems far more effective with Black's bishop already committed to b7. Indeed it was this nuance that finally persuaded me that this set-up was worthy of the repertoire. 12...♜c7

Or 12...♞c8 13.♙xf6 and now:

a) 13...♙xf6?! attempts to cross White's plans. Black doesn't even lose a pawn, but as is often the case in the Sicilian, the move ...b5, so useful in the middlegame, gives White a handy target for operations in the ending after 14.♖xd6 ♜xd6 15.♞d6 ♙xc3 16.bxc3 ♞xc3 17.♞hd1 0-0 18.♞d7! ♙c8 (18...♙c6 19.♞c7 b4 20.♞d4 ♙b5 21.♞xc3 bxc3 22.a4 ♙f1 23.♙d1 ♞c8 24.♙e1 ♙c4 25.♙e2 ♙xe2 26.♙xe2 also left Black very overstretched in the rook ending in Chandler - Fernando, Santo Antonio 2001) 19.♞a7 ♞e8 20.♞d4 ♙f8 21.♙b2 ♞c5 22.e5 ♞e7 23.♞d8† ♞e8 24.♞d3! ♞e7 25.♞xe7 ♙xe7 26.♞c3! ♞xc3 27.♙xc3 ♙d7 28.♙b4 ♙c7 29.♙c5 and White's superb king is a decisive

asset in the bishop ending. Malakhov - Blehm, Cappelle la Grande 2000.

b) 13...gxf6! 14.f5 and now:



b1) 14...♞c5 15.♙b1 ♜c7 16.♖d2 h5(!) My hunch is that the weakness of g6 outweighs the coverage of the h5 and h6 squares. 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.♙e2 ♙f8 19.♙f4 striking at the dual weaknesses on e6 and g6. Again, I am struck by how the b7 bishop would be happier never to have moved. 19...♙f7 20.♖e2 h4 21.♞hf1 ♙e7 22.♙h5† ♞cxh5 23.♙xh5 ♜c4 24.♖xc4 bxc4 25.♙xf6! ♙g6 26.e5 ♙xg2 27.♞fe1 d5 28.♞d4± Kreiman - Mainka, Bad Zwosten 1998.

b2) 14...♞c4!?, gaining a tempo to double on the c-file 15.♖d3 ♜c7 16.fxe6 (16.♙e2!?) 16...fxe6 17.♙e2 ♜c5 18.♙b1! ♖e5 19.♙d4 h5 (Again I am not convinced by this move. Shirov gives 19...♞c8!?. However, White will build with g3/♙g2 etc and Black lacks counterplay.) 20.♞he1 ♙d7 21.g3! ♞g8? 22.♙g2 ♞g4?! 23.♙f3 ♜c5 24.♙d2!± ♞a4 (24...♞d4? 25.♙b3!) 25.♙h3 ♞g5! 26.♙f3 ♞g7 Shirov - Pelletier, Elista (ol) 1998, when 27.b3! ♞a5 28.♙d4 ♞g4 29.♙xg4 hxg4 30.c3 – Shirov, would have been immediately decisive.

Of course these examples are not clear-cut, but the simplicity of White's plan and the economy of force with which he can attack on the light squares suggest that this is a promising approach. The main game provides further promising evidence.

13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.f5 h5

Yet again, this does not seem strictly necessary. However, the complexity of Black's defensive task is rather reflected in the complete lack of agreement among commentators. There is in particular no consensus around whether Black should be looking to castle long, or whether his rook belongs on c8. If it was a check on h5 Black feared, then I think the text was questionable. After 14...♗c8 15.fxe6 fxe6 neither 16.♙h5† ♘d7 nor 16.♙g4 ♘f7 17.♙h5† ♘g7 18.e5 (18.♙g4!?) 18...♗f8!.

G. Garcia – Smirin, New York 1997 really convinces. However 15.♗d2!? looks interesting. White will follow up with ♘b1 and ♖e2, while if 15...♗c4?! 16.♘b1 b4 17.♖e2 ♙xe4 18.♙xe4 ♗xe4 19.♗g3 ♗c6 20.fxe6 fxe6 21.♗he1 ♘f7 22.♗e2 d5 23.♗f5 gives a strong attack. The argument against 14...♗c8 might indeed be that ...0-0-0 was needed in reserve!

15.fxe6

I see no special objection to this exchange, but White could also keep the tension, since after 15.♘b1 ♗c5 16.♗xc5!? dxc5 17.fxe6 fxe6 18.♖e2! h4 19.♗f4 looks quite promising, as in Herrera-Fernando, Havana 2003.

15...fxe6 16.♘b1 0-0-0!

As we have seen, where to put the king is a riddle with no easy answer for Black in this line. However at this particular moment there is no impediment to White immediately compromising the king's new home, and we can give a fairly unambiguous assessment of this decision.

17.a4! d5

Looks a bit desperate, but stronger than the horrible 17...bxa4 18.♗xa4 when 18...♗hg8 19.♗b3! ♗d7 20.♖a4! – Gofshtein, illustrates one danger lurking!

18.exd5 b4 19.♖e2 ♘b8?!

For better or worse, 19...♙xd5 had to be tried. White has a positional plus based on Black's light-square looseness both in the centre and on the queenside after 20.♙xd5 ♗xd5 21.♗e4! but he can struggle on.

20.♗e3 e5 21.♗g3! ♙c5 22.♗b3 h4 23.♗f5 ♙c8 24.d6!

It is still all about White's light-square chances,

but now they take on an added ferocity. White answers threat with counter threat, and the momentum never dies down!

24...♗b6 25.a5 ♗b5 26.♗f7! ♗d7 27.♗xf6 ♗e8 28.♖e7 ♙b7 29.♙xb7 ♗xb7 30.♗xe5 ♙xd6 31.♖c6†

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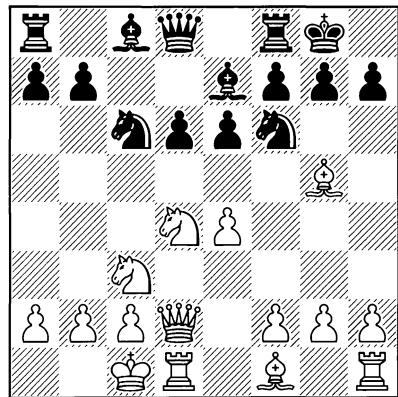
Game 27

Iordachescu - Campos Moreno

Linares 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 d6 6.♙e5 e6 7.♗d2 ♙e7 8.0-0-0 0-0

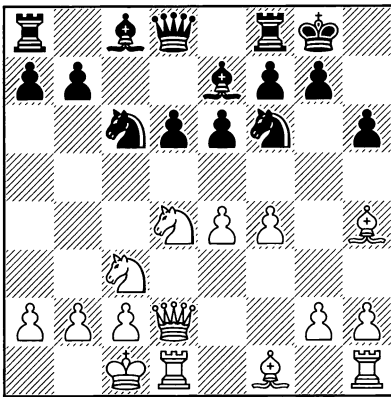
After 8...♖xd4 9.♗xd4 a6 was covered in game 26, while 9...0-0 is also a quite legitimate move order, but since it is designed primarily to circumvent lines with 8...0-0 9.♖b3, it causes no inconvenience to our proposed repertoire and White should just return to the main game with 10.f4.



9.f4 ♖xd4

Black can also put the question to White's bishop immediately with 9...h6, hoping to find situations in which its unprotected status on h4 will become a real issue. In addition, whereas there is often a sacrificial option available to the attacker in the event of a later ...h6, choosing this moment has the important virtue that the soundness of 10.h4?! is in real doubt (at least given that White is playing for a win) and therefore I am recommending that White accept

the need for 10.♔h4. The drawback for Black is that there are also cases where this square proves a good deal more comfortable (see in particular (d) below). Indeed the limitations of this piece's supposed vulnerability are immediately evident in the event of 10...♗xe4?! 11.♕xe7 ♖xd2 12.♕xd8 ♗xf1 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♕e7 ♖e8 15.♖hxfl ♖xe7 16.♖xd6 ♕b7 17.g3! c5 18.♖fd1 Unzicker – Stahlberg, Moscow 1956, when although Black's weaknesses do not leave him 'lost' his defensive task is certainly unenviable.



After 10.♔h4, Black does nonetheless have quite a wide choice:

a) 10...♖b6 has been pretty much condemned since White's powerful display in Leko - Kramnik, Belgrade 1995. In the structure which arises from the forcing sequence 11.♗xc6! bxc6 12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 ♗e4 14.♗xe4 ♕xh4 15.♖f4!, Black's bishop pair is a decidedly mixed blessing, indeed it seems to me that he sorely misses his knights. White's kingside aspirations are a bit crude, but rather effective, and although Kramnik undoubtedly missed a chance to generate a bit more on the other wing, the theoretical verdict remains intact. 15...♕e7 16.♕d3 ♖b8 17.b3 ♖c7?! (A bit cooperative. On grounds of both offence and defence 17...♖b4! makes more sense. However, even then I prefer White's chances after 18.♖hf1 a5 19.♗b1 a4 20.♖f3 axb3 21.cxb3 ♖a3 22.♖g3 ♖d8?! Wapner - Pavasovic, Bled 1996 when with 23.♖f1! White could have exerted extreme

pressure. This game was maybe treated a bit too harshly by Peter, though his recommendations were correct. Here after 23.♖f1! (23.♖d2 ♕a6 24.♕c2 ♖xd2 25.♖xh6 looks very fancy, but Black has 25...♖xb3+!! 26.♖xb3 ♖d1+ 27.♕xd1 ♕d3+ 28.♗a1 gxf6 29.♖xa3 ♕xa3 with a better endgame.) 23...♗h8 The only move. And now White should play 24.♕c2! with an attack.

Instead, 22...♗h8! makes more sense, but 23.♖g4! ♖g8 24.♖f1 is still promising. Black tends not to be really threatening to sacrifice on b3, provided the splendid knight on e4 stays put!) 18.♗b1 c5 19.♗f6+ ♗h8 20.♖e4 g6 21.h4 ♕b7 22.♖f4 ♗g7 23.♗g4 ♖h8 24.♖df1 ♖bf8 25.♗f6 ♖d8 26.♖g3 h5 27.♖g5 ♖h7 28.♖f4 with utter domination.

But 17...♖c7?! is a bit cooperative. On grounds of both offence and defence 17...♖b4! makes more sense. However, even then I prefer White's chances after 18.♖hf1 a5 19.♗b1 a4 20.♖f3 axb3 21.cxb3 ♖a3 22.♖g3 ♖d8?! Wapner - Pavasovic, Bled 1996 when with 23.♖f1! White could have exerted extreme pressure. After 23...♗h8 White should play 24.♕c2! with an attack.

Instead, 22...♗h8! makes more sense, but White retains the initiative: 23.♖h3! Suggested by Phil Taylor. (23.♖g4 ♖g8 24.♖f1± as suggested by Wells is also very strong, but the forcing line should be more attractive on principle.) 23...♖d8 (Fritz claims that 23...♖a8 gives Black equal play, but a little bit of human help makes the machine understand that 24.♖xh6+! ♗g8 25.♗f6+ ♕xf6 26.exf6 is facing a faith worse than death, whatever that is supposed to mean... 23...♗g8 24.♗f6+! just wins.) 24.♖xf7 Now White can just cash in. 24...♕a6 25.♖xe6 ♕xd3+ 26.♖hx3 ♖xd3 27.♖xd3 and White has a great advantage.

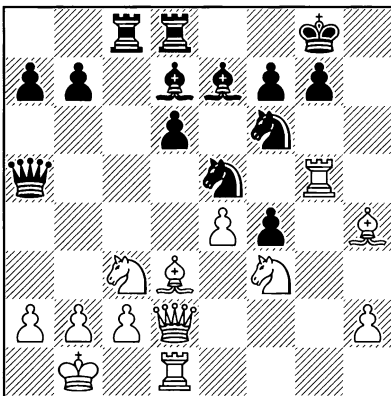
b) 10...♖c7 has still more emphatically disappeared without trace. However, the 'refutation' is not just convincing, but also quite specific and hence worth being aware of. White should play 11.♗db5 ♖a5 12.♖e1! ♖d8 13.a3! ♖d7 14.♕xf6 ♕xf6 (14...gxf6 15.♖d3 does not bear thinking about!) 15.♗xd6 ♕xc3 16.♖xc3 ♖xc3 17.bxc3 e5 18.f5 ♗f8 19.♕e2 as

in Yudasin – D. Gurevich, Beersheba 1993, and since 19...♙e7?? now loses to 20.♘xc8† ♜xc8 21.f6† gxf6 22.♞xd7† ♘xd7 23.♙g4† Black has particularly awkwardly placed pieces in addition to his pawn deficit.

c) 10...♙d7 11.♘f3! (directed against ...♘d4 and ...♙c6 with the hope of showing that Black's 10th move is fundamentally rather passive) 11...♞a5 12.♙b1 ♜fd8 13.♙d3 and now:

c1) 13...b5 14.g4! This dangerous pawn storm is White's main strategy here, especially as 9...h6 has created a useful target. 14... b4 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♘e2 e5 17.g5 hxg5 18.fxg5 ♙e6 19.♘c1 ♙e7 20.h4 d5 21.♞e2 ♜d6 22.h5 ♜ad8 23.g6 gave White a very powerful attack in Tiviakov - Shmuter, St Petersburg 1993. It is instructive that Black's execution of the standard central break with 20...d5 here does nothing more than create a rather meaningless 'tension' in the centre, neither impeding White on the kingside nor enhancing Black's efforts on the other wing.

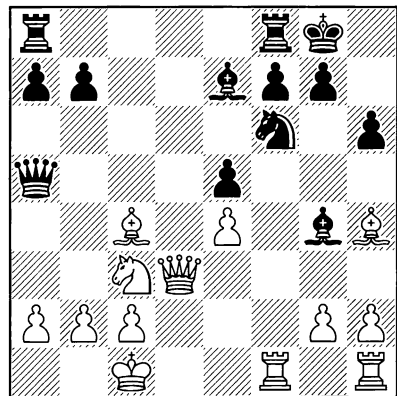
c2) 13...♜ac8!? 14.♞hg1 (the immediate 14.g4 is also possible, but Black can try 14...♘g4 15.♙xe7 ♘xe7 16.♞hg1 ♜xc3!? 17.♞xc3 (17.♞xg4 ♜c3 18.♞g2 g6 doesn't really convince) 17...♞xc3 18.bxc3 ♘f6 which is quite hard to assess) 14...e5 15.g4! exf4 16.g5 hxg5 17.♞xg5 ♘e5



18.♜d3! (the safe 18.♘xe5 dxe5 19.♘d5! is also sufficient to suggest that White has won

the opening battle, but the text is much more incisive) 18...♘xf3 19.♞xg7† ♘f8 20.♞xf4 ♘xg1 21.♙xf6 ♙xf6 22.♞xf6 ♙e6 23.♞h7 ♘e8 24.♙b5† ♜c6 25.♞h5 d5 26.exd5 ♞xd5 27.♞xd5 ♙xd5 28.♞e5† ♘f8 29.♞h8† ♘e7 30.♘d5† ♘d6 31.♞h6† ♘c5 32.♙xc6 ♞e1† 33.♞c1 ♞xc1† 34.♘xc1 bxc6 35.♘f4 ♘f3 36.h3 ♘d4 and Black was active enough to hold the ending in Ivanchuk – Cu. Hansen, Skanderborg 2003. However 25.♞g5!? d5 26.exd5 ♞xd5 27.♙xc6† bxc6 28.♞xg1 retains material and positional plusses, while restricting any counterplay.

d) 10...♘d4 11.♞d4 ♞a5 has, by contrast with the moves considered above, recently enjoyed a real renaissance. In the event of 12.♙c4! it quickly becomes clear that the move can only really be deployed in conjunction with a quick ...e5, which represents a certain positional concession for which Black seeks solace in the bishop pair and some activity. The fate of 12...♙d7?, in the style of the main game, emphasises the problem that the white bishop enjoys a far more secure existence on h4 – 13.e5! wins material immediately. 12...♜d8 13.♞hf1! is also problematic since White can open the f-file and cause trouble there. Hence 12...e5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.♞d3 ♙g4 15.♜df1 (15.♙xf6 is similar, but seems to me to allow Black more options – White can usually throw in this move when required) and now:

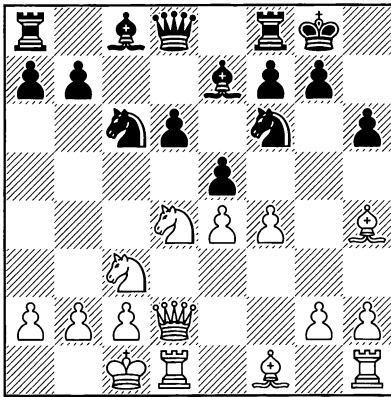
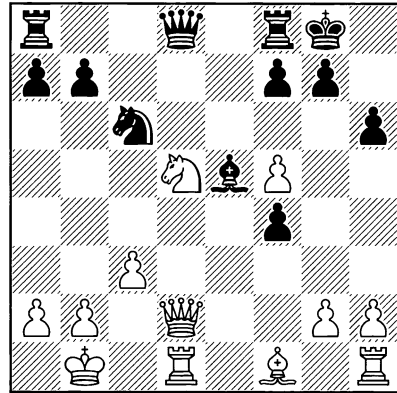


d1) 15...♙e6 (the bishop on g4 can be vulnerable. For example 15...♜ad8!? 16.♞g3

♖e6 17. ♖xf6 ♘xc4 18. ♖xh6(±.) 16. ♘xf6!? ♘xf6
 17. ♖b1 ♖c5 18. ♘b3 ♖h8 19. h4 ♘e7 20. ♖e2
 ♖c8 21. ♘e6 fxe6 22. ♖xf8† ♖xf8 23. ♖b5 ♖c8
 24. ♘e2 ♖c7 25. ♘c1! ♖c8 26. ♖e2 with pressure
 Ponomariov - Avrukh, Panormo 2001.

d2) 15... ♖c5 16. ♘b3 ♖h8 17. ♘xf6 ♘xf6
 18. ♖b1 ♖ad8 19. ♖g3 ♘e6 20. ♘d5 ♘xd5
 21. ♘xd5 is very typical of the small but pleasant
 advantage White can expect here. He has the
 far superior bishop, and chances to activate his
 rooks, both on the f-file and swinging along
 the third rank. Kobalija - Gershon, Kharkov
 2002.

e) 10...e5!? nonetheless remains by far the
 most important of these 'side-lines'.



11. ♘f5 ♘xf5 12. exf5 exf4! 13. ♖b1 d5!
 14. ♘xf6 ♘xf6 15. ♘xd5 ♘e5 is a fairly well
 established sequence at the end of which we
 reach a position in which the key factor is
 the presence of opposite coloured bishops
 and with it a degree of dominance by the
 respective sides over 'their colour domains'.
 There are two dangers to be aware of – that
 Black will generate rapid counterplay based
 upon his excellent bishop on e5, and that the
 advanced doubled f-pawn can be consolidated
 and prove a bit of a thorn in the side. However,
 I am confident that White's light square play
 should be the more durable if he carefully
 exerts pressure not just on the kingside but in
 the centre too.

16.c3!?

This quiet but far from innocuous
 continuation is likely to increase in popularity
 now that the 'main line' 16. ♘c4 has recently
 suffered a slight dent after 16...b5 17. ♘b3 a5
 18. a3 a4 19. ♘a2 b4! 20. ♘xb4 ♖f6 21. ♘d5
 ♖xf5 22. ♖d3 ♖xd3 23. ♖xd3 g5! and it looks
 as though, in spite of White's passed pawn and
 his opponent's doubled pawn, the black pawns
 might be the more mobile. Tiviakov - Solak,
 Istanbul, 2003.) Black has tested various moves
 here:

e1) 16... ♖b8 17. ♖c2 b5 18. ♘e2 ♖e8 19. ♘f3
 ♖c8 20. ♖he1 f6 21. ♖e4 and the light square
 bind is in full flow. Black tried 21...b4 but
 was clearly worse after 22. cxb4 ♖b7 23. ♘xf6†
 ♘xf6 24. ♖c4† ♖h7 25. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 26. ♘xc6
 ♖c8 27. ♖c2 in Lutz – Lugovoi, Vienna 1996.

e2) 16... ♖g5!? 17. ♘d3 ♖ad8 18. ♘e4 ♖d6
 19. ♖c2 ♖d8 20. g3!? fxg3 21. hxg3 ♘e7 22. ♘e3
 ♖xd1† 23. ♖xd1 ♖c7 24. ♘g4 and White has
 enduring chances on the kingside which
 deny Black full equality. Simacek - Furman,
 Olomouc 2003.

e3) 16... ♘e7 17. ♘c4! (17. ♘xe7† ♖xe7
 18. ♘c4 might also yield a slight edge,
 but the text is richer in ideas) 17... ♘xf5
 (Critical, otherwise White's last would be
 an unambiguous improvement. 17... ♘xd5
 18. ♖xd5 ♖f6 19. ♖he1 ♖ad8 20. ♖e4 gives
 a clear plus according to Kobalija, although
 18... ♖c7!? might restrict White's initiative
 a bit. The fact that Black is still slightly

uncomfortable as the position simplifies, largely due to light square targets on b7 and f7, is a reassuring sign for White.) 18.♖e2 ♜e8 (Alternatives are no panacea either. 18...♗d6 19.♘xf4 looks innocuous enough, but the Black pieces are actually quite loose, as is the f7-pawn. For example: 19...♜e8? loses to 20.♗xf7† and 19...♝c8 to 20.♘e6!. 19...♙h8 holds but looks unappetising. If 18...♗b8, Kobalija gives 19.♞hf1, but 19.g3!? played already in Mark Tseitlin – Kveinys, Gdynia 1989 is effective against 19...♘e3 20.gxf4 ♘xd1 21.fxe5 while 19...fxg3 20.♗d3! is exceptionally awkward!) 19.♗b5! ♜e6 20.♘xf4 ♗d6 21.♘d3! The key manoeuvre 21...♗f6 22.♘c5! with a lasting and powerful plus on the light squares. Kobalija – Zaitsev, Russia 1998.

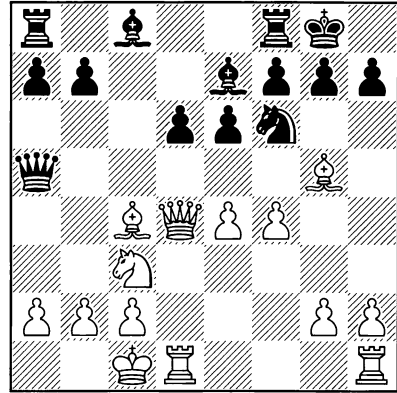
10.♖xd4 ♗a5

There are not a million ways to develop in this position and the text, preparing either ...e5, or ...♗d7 by tactical means exploiting the pin along the 4th rank, is by far the most popular. As usual, 10...a6 represents an alternative, although for some reason less popular at this juncture. 11.♙b1 still makes sense to me, and after 11...b5 White has the shot 12.♗xf6! ♗xf6 13.e5 dxe5 14.♖e4 ♗b6 15.♖xa8 ♗b7 16.♗d6! ♗c7 17.♖a7 ♖xd6 18.♗xb7 b4 (18...exf4!? 19.♗d3 ♗xc3 20.bxc3 would at least be less fun for White to play, although I do not believe that Black can claim full compensation.) 19.♘e2 exf4 20.♖e4 ♗d8 21.♘c1 ♗d1 22.g3 ♗d4 23.♗d3 ♖h5 Wells – A. Kiss, Hungary 1996, and now 24.♖e2! would have been an eminently sensible way to consolidate.

11.♗c4

This might be seen by some as the 'old main line', but in my opinion there is little doubt that it represents objectively the best try for an advantage – certainly when defending the Black side it is the line I have the most respect for. In addition it does have the serious practical virtue of being rather forcing, and results in a degree of simplification which retains a decent level of tension while at the same time somewhat restricting Black's winning chances. Some commentators refer to it as leading to a boring

endgame. Check this out – it is often the Black player annotating and trying to put his future opponents off the move!



11...♗d7

Black also has the sharp 11...b5!? at his disposal, but I like 12.♗xb5 ♗b8 13.a4!? (Securing the bishop in preparation for a quick e5) 13...h6 (13...a6 14.e5! dxe5 15.fxe5 axb5 16.exf6 bxa4 17.♘e4! e5 18.♖d5 is very strong, especially as after 18...♖xd5 19.fxe7! ♖a5 20.exf8=♖† ♙xf8 21.♗d8† ♖xd8 22.♗xd8 ♗b7 23.♗c7 ♗c8 24.♗d6† wins material) 14.♗h4 e5 (Here too 14...a6 fails to solve the problems since 15.e5 dxe5 16.fxe5 axb5 17.exf6 gxf6 18.♗xf6 ♗xf6 19.♖xf6 bxa4 20.♗d3 ♖g5† 21.♖g5† hxg5 22.♘xa4 leaves Black with little to show for the pawn.) 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.♖xe5 ♗e6 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.exd5 ♗xh4 19.dxe6 ♗g5† 20.♙b1 ♗f6 21.exf7† ♙h8 22.♖d6± Campora - Moreno Tejera, Linares 2003.

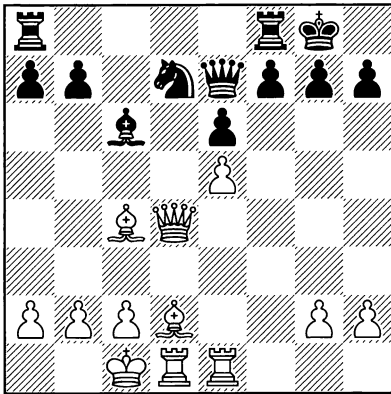
12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 ♗c6!

A good square for this piece, and a tactical solution that underlies Black's entire strategy. White's best is simply to retreat and secure the bishop pair.

14.♗d2! ♘d7 15.♘d5 ♖d8

The trap 15...♖c5!? 16.♗b4? (16.♘xe7!) 16...exd5 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 etc netting three pieces for the queen remains fairly victimless, but is worth being aware of!

16.♘xe7† ♖xe7 17.♞he1



This may seem rather far into the game to be a describing the diagram position as a ‘crucial starting point for further theory’, but there is some recompense for this in that the forcing nature and the strong underlying logic of the play do serve as a useful ‘aide memoire’. In positional terms, there is also a fascinating and delicate balance of factors at work. White enjoys the bishop pair, more space and in many cases, whilst he might also reasonably aspire to attacking chances on the kingside, he will not be averse to an exchange of queens – Black’s lack of room may even paradoxically be emphasised in such cases. Black has a solid position and hopes of either play on the queenside, and/or the chance to target the e5-pawn. Combating the bishop pair, there are also prospects of the knight and bishop working together to obtain chances on the light squares.

17...♜fd8

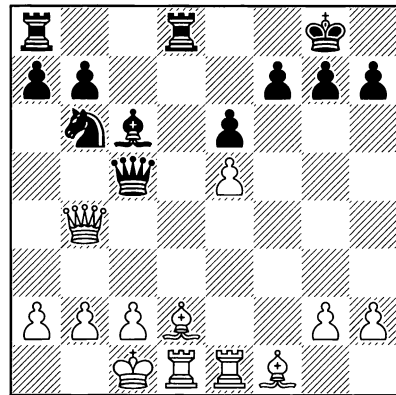
Two others also deserve consideration:

a) 17...♜fe8 18.♙f1? a5! 19.h4 b5 20.♙g5 ♜c5 21.♜xc5 ♘xc5 22.♙e7! with an edge for White in Lahno – Kotronias, Hastings 2003/4.

b) 17...♘b6 18.♙f1! (This time 18.♙d3?! is well met by 18...♜fd8 19.♜g4 ♜xd3 20.cxd3 ♙a4 21.♙h6 f5! 22.exf6 ♜xf6 23.♙e3 ♜c8† 24.♘b1 ♙c2† 25.♘a1 ♙xd1 which tends to be given as ‘=’, but in fact the excellent black knight coming to d5 will give him at least an edge.) 18...♜fd8 19.♜g4 and now:

b1) 19...a6?! Weakens the knight on b6, and interestingly permits 20.♙d3!? (threatening ♙g5), with the nice point that after 20...♜xd3 21.cxd3 ♙a4 22.♙h6 f5 23.exf6 ♜xf6 24.♙xg7 ♜xg7 25.♜xe6† is very strong.

b2) 19...♜c5 looks a better try. However, it is here that White’s rosy prospects in some of the endings come to the fore. 20.♙h6 is possible, but I much prefer 20.♜b4! and now:



b21) 20...♜xb4 (20...♜g1?! has a quirky appeal, but 21.♜f4! ♘d5 [21...♜d4 22.♙e3!] 22.♜h4! ♜c5 23.♙d3 g6 24.♙g5 is clearly unsatisfactory for Black) 21.♙xb4 ♘d5 22.♙d2!? b5 23.♙g5 ♜dc8 24.♜d4 a5 25.c3 a4 26.a3! (that’s about it for Black’s queenside play. Now switch to the other side) 26...h6 27.♙d2 ♘b6 28.♜g4 h5 29.♜h4 g6 30.♙g5 ♘d7 31.g4! with very strong pressure ♙f3 32.gxh5 ♙xh5 33.♙xb5 ♘c5 34.♙f6 ♘f8 35.♙e2 ♘e8 36.♜d1 1–0 Gallagher - Baumegeger, Dresden (zt) 1998.

b22) 20...♜f2 21.♜f4! ♜c5 22.♙b4 ♜xd1† 23.♜xd1 ♜g1 24.c4 ♘d7 25.♙d6 ♘f8 26.h3 ♘g6 27.♜g3 a5 28.♘b1 a4 29.♜e1 h5 30.♜e3 Efimenko - Muir, Hastings Challengers 2003, and again the ending will favour White. For me personally the understanding that the bishop pair tends to be the number one factor in these endings has led to a degree of disillusion with 17...♘b6, since the Black queen cannot flee the exchange indefinitely. 18.♜g4 ♘f8 19.♙d3!

Note ‘b’ above should not blur the fact

that other things being equal this is the most threatening posting for this piece. The exchange sacrifice above was so potent precisely because the black knight on b6 was well poised for counterplay. Great respect though there should be for the beast on f8, its perspective is not primarily aggressive, and as we shall see, the coming exchange sacrifice will also be dominated by defensive considerations.

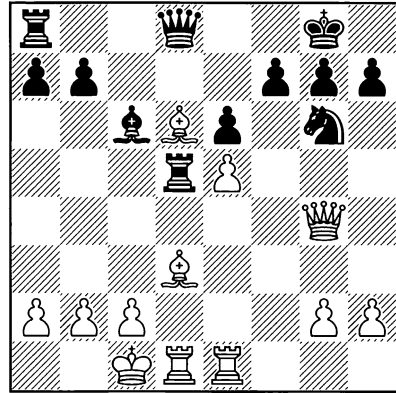
19... ♖xd3

A familiar exchange sacrifice to nullify White's attacking prospects and his queenside majority, while also enhancing control of the light squares. When I last wrote about this more than six years ago, I stressed the fact that the play often reached an ending in which Black was made to suffer with nothing more than a half point to even aspire to. However, just before we went to press, Black was just waking up to the fact that his knight is a great piece and retaining it is more important even than ensuring that he gets a pawn into the kitty. This has undoubtedly enriched the counterplay, although I am still generally enthusiastic for White.

The exchange sacrifice is not the only way to play. However, slow moves enable White to build up a serious initiative. 19... ♖c7?!, for example, was met with 20. ♖b4 ♘d5 21. ♗b1 ♖ac8 22. ♘d6 ♖c6 23. b3! b5 24. ♗e3 ♘g6 25. h4 f5 26. ♖g5 ♗d7 27. h5 ♘f8 28. ♗d2 ♖f7 29. ♖f2! h6 30. ♖f4 ♘h7?! 31. g4± in Tatai – Epishin, Reggio Emilia 1994. An excellent example of controlled aggression, keeping a tight grip on the position.

Personally, as Black I would still tend to favour the risky but apparently playable 19... ♗d5!? The idea is clear – the rook exerts pressure on e5 and also prepares to put further major pieces on the d-file. The drawback is equally apparent – the rook like the knight before it is vulnerable to attack from White's c-pawn and even in some danger of entrapment. After 20. ♖b4 ♗d8 (But not 20... ♖c7 21. c4! ♗d7 [21... ♖b5? 22. ♗b1±] 22. ♘d6 ♖a5 23. ♗b1 ♘g6 24. h4! f5 25. ♖g3 ♗d8 26. ♖h1! [26. h5 ♖h4!] 26... ♘h8 27. c5! - cementing the bishop on d6, and activating its partner – 27... b5 28. ♘c2! a5?! 29. ♖b3 White

enjoyed a crushing position in Z. Almasi - Hracek, Germany 1997. It is useful to have an illustration of what White can achieve when all the circumstances are favourable.) 21. ♖b6 ♘g6

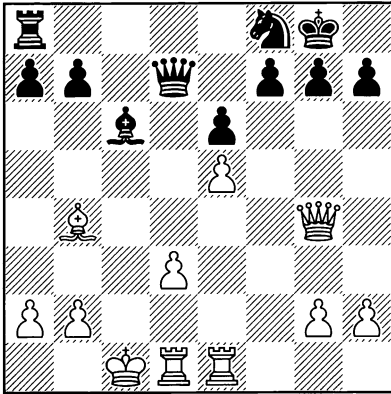


Black has two useful sources of counterplay - ... ♖a5 forking pawns, and ... ♖h4 commencing the task of probing White's kingside pawns – and one vital resource ... f5. The latter can be critical. 22. c4?! would all but win here were it not for 22... f5! when after 23. ♖g3 the rook can nestle on d4 enjoying both security and swing potential. 22. g3 fails to impress either. After 22... ♖a5 23. ♖xg6 (23. ♗b1? ♘e5) 23... hxg6 24. ♗b1 ♖c8 White is a long way from drumming up anything scary on the kingside. In general the exchange on g6 is only recommendable if a quick h4-h5 follows. The best move from the diagram position therefore seems to be 22. ♗b1!

Now of course 22... ♖a5?! may be simply met with 23. ♖g3 and it is instructive quite how difficult it is to strengthen Black's position. Moreover, the valuable role which the queen should be playing stopping h4 will soon become apparent – much as in the Almasi – Hracek note above to 20... ♖c7?!

Much more serious then is 22... ♖h4!?. Then after 23. ♖xh4 ♘xh4 24. g3 ♘f3 25. ♗e3! (this position has as yet only been reached in Shomoev – Kharlov, ACP blitz (!) prelim 2004, and after 25. ♗e2 ♖b5! Black was fine) 25... f5!? (25... ♘xh2 26. c4 virtually obliges 26... ♖xd3

27.♖1xd3, which should be a reasonable version of the exchange sacrifice endings from White's standpoint. 25...h5 26.h3! also leaves Black a bit stuck for what to do next) 26.♗xf3 ♖xd6 27.exd6 ♗xf3 28.♖f1 and White has time to support his pawn with c4-c5 and should stand somewhat better in the ending.
20.cxd3 ♗d7 21.♗b4

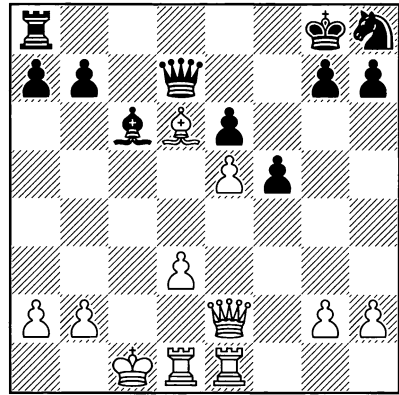


21...♗g6!

Of course! Keeping the knight is now almost always preferred to the rather depressing endings arising from 21...♗d5 22.♗xf8! (the point. With this knight gone Black's hopes are almost purely defensive) 22...♗xf8 23.♖b1 ♗xg2 24.♗xg2 ♗xg2 25.♖c1 ♗c6 26.♖c2!? f5 27.exf6 ♗xf6 28.♖c3!? 29.♖f1 ♗h6 30.♗g1 ♗g6 (30...♗h5 31.h4!±) 31.♖d4 g4 32.b4 a6 33.a4 h5 (33...♗xa4 34.♖c8† ♖f7 35.♖c7† ♖f6 36.♗xb7±) 34.♗xc6!? (not strictly necessary, but returning the exchange does clarify White's task) 34...bxc6 35.♖c5 e5 36.♖b6 ♖d6 37.♖xa6 ♗xd3 38.♖b6 ♖b3 39.♗a1! and basically the a-pawn runs home. Marciano - Lugovoi, St Petersburg vs. Paris, 1996. Of course, this is a necessarily brief survey, but time and again Black's problem has been that undertaking anything active merely assists White in exchanging rooks!
22.♗d6 f5!? 23.♗e2!

An important improvement over 23.♗g5. Quite simply the queen is better placed for dealing with any counterplay Black may muster on the queenside.

23...♗h8!?



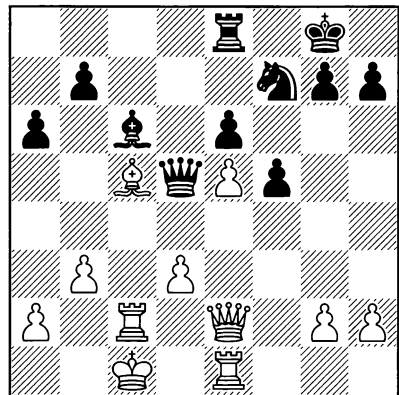
Just how well prepared White is to combat standard light-square efforts is illustrated by the terrible tangle in which Black caught himself in Stefanson - Gershon, Bermuda 2001, after 23...♗d5 24.♖b1 ♗c6 25.♗d2 ♗xg2? 26.♖c1 ♗d5 27.♖c5 ♗f3 28.♗g1 ♗f1 29.♗g3 ♗h1 30.♗c1! ♗f8 31.♖c7 ♖h8 32.♖a1 ♗xh2 33.♖c8 1-0.

So Black gives priority to evicting the annoying bishop on d6. Sensible, but the powerful knight he tried so hard to keep is otherwise less impressive on f7.

24.♗d2 ♗f7 25.♖c2!?

White doesn't fear 25...♗xd6 26.exd6 ♗d5 27.♗e5! with a decisive invasion on the 7th rank on its way.

25...♖e8 26.♗c5 ♗d5 27.b3 a6?



A serious mistake. Better defensive chances were offered by 27...♙b5 28.♞c3 ♞c8 29.♙b4 ♞xc3† 30.♙xc3 ♙xd3 31.♞d2 ♙e4 32.♞xd5 ♙xd5 33.♞e2 – Gofshtein, although Black is a long way from securing the draw. Now, having evicted the bishop from one excellent outpost, Black offers it others.

28.♙b6! ♞b5 29.♙c5 ♞d8 30.d4 ♞a5 31.♙b2 ♞d7 32.♞ec1 ♞d8 33.♞c4 ♞d5 34.♞b4

It is clear that compared with the note above, White's coordination is quite admirable. All

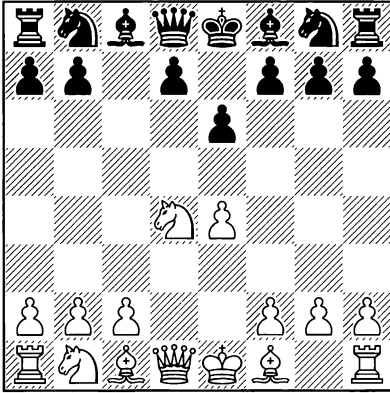
he needs is a plan to make further progress, and his excellent 36th move reveals this. The technical phase is a bit beyond our scope, but the Moldovan's handling is very sound.

33...♞d7 35.a4 ♘g5 36.♙a7! h6 37.♞b6 ♙h7 38.♞xc6 bxc6 39.♞xa6 ♘e4 40.♞xc6 ♞xd4 41.♙xd4 ♞xd4† 42.♙a2 ♞d2†?! 43.♙a3 ♞xg2 44.♞c4 ♞g1 45.♞xe6 ♞a1† 46.♙b4 ♞d4† 47.♙b5 ♞d3† 48.♙b4 ♞d4† 49.♞c4 ♞d2† 50.♙a3 ♞f2 51.♞c6

1–0

Kan and Taimanov

- By Sune Berg Hansen



The Kan and Taimanov are both very sound and flexible Sicilian systems. I think that with good preparation it is possible to gain an advantage against both of these systems, but after some time surely a proper antidote will be found for Black and in the long run I do not think that either system can be refuted. They are popular at the highest level and players such as Anand and Kramnik use them occasionally. If White finds a good (or winning) idea in one of the sharpest lines he can be sure that he will only be able to use it once. Then all serious players will have fed it to their computer program (Fritz or Junior) and found an improvement. If they cannot find an improvement they will switch to another line. So in the computer age one improvement usually means only one point. And it can take a week to find it!

The approach I will take in this chapter is a bit different. Instead of going for a refutation I will try to explain a system that is positionally well founded yet still active and aggressive. Therefore it can be part of the reader's repertoire for a long time.

In general the idea behind the chosen systems means placing the pieces on active squares and finishing development very quickly. White will attack with the pieces when possible. One of

the reasons for this is to keep the risks involved to a minimum – when White throws the g- and f-pawns at Black's king he risks running into a nasty counterattack, and the endings also tend to favour Black. So the aim of this repertoire is what I will call controlled aggression: White will try to develop an initiative without taking undue risks. White's main ideas include: attacking Black's king (as usual in the Sicilian) and – more distinctively for the Kan and Taimanov – punishing b7-b5 if possible. I cannot guarantee a White advantage in every variation. But what I can promise is that you will usually know what you are doing, and why you are doing it! My ambition is that there will be no dead ends - there will always be play left in the suggested positions!

Let us start with a short introduction. First you should know that 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 is the Kan variation (also called the Paulsen), and 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 (or 2...e6) 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e6 is the Taimanov variation.

The Taimanov and Kan variations enjoy a special place and reputation in the Sicilian. These systems are not so easily understood as, say, the Najdorf, Sveshnikov or Dragon. One of the reasons for this is that they overlap each other (if Black goes ♘c6 in the Kan the game often transposes to the Taimanov) and they can also overlap with the Scheveningen and therefore some understanding of the Scheveningen is also necessary to avoid being 'move ordered'. Move orders are one of the biggest problems in the flexible Taimanov and Kan lines. I will begin by explaining some of the things that characterize the Kan/Taimanov. The big difference compared to the Scheveningen (1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 d6) is, of course, that Black has not played d7-d6 yet (and might not do so at all) or ♗f6, but he has the option almost every move! This is very important for understanding White's different lines against the Taimanov and Kan:

Black is under no circumstances to be allowed to play d7-d6 with a favourable transposition to the Scheveningen, or to a line that is not part of the repertoire recommended in this book.

Hence the first principle for playing against the Taimanov/Kan: Always remember Black can play d7-d6 (and ♖f6) 'all the time', and you should never allow him to get a *good* Scheveningen! A lot of tricky players use Kan or Taimanov move orders to avoid lines like the ♗g5-Najdorf, the English Attack, the Keres Attack and lines with ♗c4 – this should not be achieved without paying a price.

Most of the variations I recommend against both the Taimanov and Kan are based on putting the white squared bishop on the active square d3. Before we start the survey of the proposed repertoire I will briefly mention White's other options. The reason is to avoid leaving the reader in the dark if he or she for some reason does not like the suggested repertoire.

Differences between the Taimanov and Kan

In the Taimanov Black has the knight on c6 from the beginning, this means that White has to keep the d4 knight guarded either by the queen from d1 or by the bishop from e3. In the Kan Black often keeps the knight at b8, and most Kan players prefer a set-up with the knight going to d7 instead of c6.

Maroczy set-up

Taimanov: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖c6 5.♗b5 d6 6.c4 ♗f6 7.♗1c3 a6 8.♗a3

Kan: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.c4

White has the option of playing a set-up with pawns at c4 and e4. Some will argue that this is the 'punishment' for adopting the Kan and Taimanov instead of say the Najdorf, Classical, Scheveningen or Dragon variations where White forces ♗c3 before c4 by attacking e4 early. This line might give very good results for experts, but I do not think it fits very well with the rest of the repertoire suggested in this book. The lines are very positional in nature and I will

recommend an attacking set-up instead. The c4-e4 system is better against the Kan than against the Taimanov where White has to put his knight at a3 in order to set up the Maroczy centre.

Recommended for positional 'system' players who enjoy a space advantage.

g3-systems

Taimanov: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♖c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e6 5.♗c3 ♗c7 (or 5...a6 6.g3) 6.g3

Kan: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♗c7 (5...b5 6.g3) 6.g3

Another option for White is to fianchetto his white squared bishop at g2. In general this is not a very critical approach to the open Sicilian. The exception is the Taimanov where the g3 variation ranks among the critical responses. The experts are Adams and Tiviakov. Against the Kan this line is pretty harmless.

Recommended for patient players with a solid style and who like a heavyweight positional battle.

♗e2-Systems

Taimanov: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖c6 5.♗c3 ♗c7 6.♗e2 a6 7.0-0 ♗f6 and now 8.♖h1 or 8.♗e3

Kan: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 (or 5.♗e2) 5...♗c7 6.♗e2

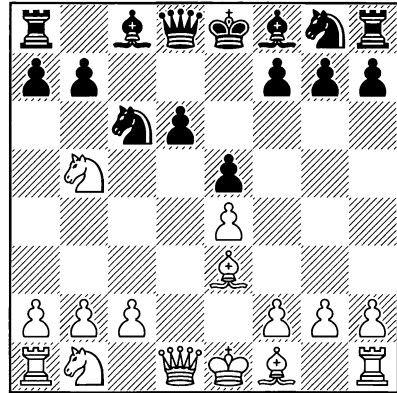
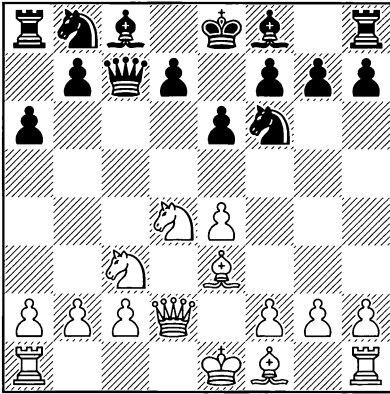
This is very popular and critical line against the Taimanov and a tricky sideline against the Kan. The biggest problem for White is that he has to be ready to accept a classical Scheveningen, which is not part of our recommended repertoire. At the moment I regard the ♗e2, ♗e3 line as White's most critical response to the Taimanov (this is what I fear the most when I play Black). Against the Kan this does not make so much sense.

Recommended for principled players who have the time to keep up with current opening theory (the verdict swings between an advantage for White and 'unclear' almost every week). Kasparov and Shirov play this successfully as White against the Taimanov. I think it is mostly recommended for players who also use ♗e2 against the Najdorf and Scheveningen.

English attack (♙e3 and f3)

Taimanov: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.♙e3 a6 7.♖d2

Kan: 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 (or 5...b5 6.♙e3 ♙b7 7.f3) 6.♙e3 ♗f6 7.♖d2



This is all the rage against the Taimanov at the time of writing. Against the Kan this does not make much sense as Black can go ♖c7, ♙b4 and d5 or b4 and d5 in one go. Again Black has the option of playing d7-d6 transposing to a line that is not part of our recommended repertoire against the Najdorf/Classical.

This line is only recommended for players with plenty of time for opening studies. The verdict changes on a daily basis and we are still far from a 'stable' situation. This might be a good line for young aggressive (professional) players, but only against the Taimanov.

f4-systems

White is currently doing very badly with f4-systems in all lines of the Sicilian and this is therefore not recommended for anyone.

There are also some lines that are particular to the Taimanov and Kan move orders.

Special lines in the Taimanov

White has the option of switching to the Pelikan/Sveshnikov kind of centre with 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗b5 d6 6.♙f4 e5 7.♙e3. A line previously favoured by Leko.

If Black dislikes this he might use the move order 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖c7 instead. This line does not promise much, but positional players with a technical style usually does not like to play with e5 instead of the more flexible (and elegant) positions with the pawn on e6.

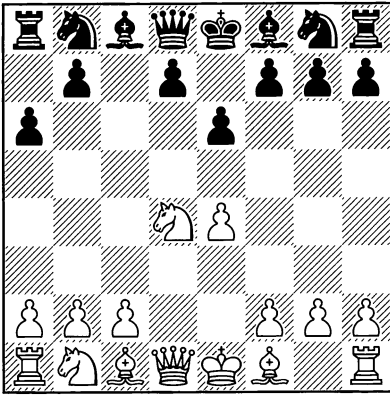
Special lines in the Kan

Black's set-up is flexible in the Kan, but this also means there is no immediate pressure against White's centre (no knight on c6 or f6). Therefore White can also stay flexible with 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♙d3 keeping the options of playing c2-c4 or developing the knight at d2 instead of c3 open. This is regarded as the main line and represents a whole different branch of the Sicilian (there is some overlap if White put the knight on c3 early). This line is very complex and Black has no fewer than 10 different respectable set-ups! Anand and Adams are among the experts in this line.

Recommended for players with plenty of time for studying theory. This line can lead to very different kind of positions, and therefore White must have a universal style to be successful with this line.

The above characteristics are the opinion of the author and are not by any means certified truths.

Part I: The Kan



Against the Kan I recommend a system based on playing 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 followed by 6.♕d3. White has two standard ways to play these positions. The first consists of playing moves like 0-0, ♖e2, ♕d2, ♜ae1, f4, ♔h1 and then either transfer a rook to h3 or go e4-e5 aiming for a kingside attack. The other way to generate active play is to start an assault on the queenside with a2-a4 (After Black's b5.). This will usually be answered by b5-b4 after which White retreats the knight, and attacks b4 with c2-c3 leading to the opening of the c-file (Which is usually advantageous to White.). White will get active play on the queenside and in the centre.

Overview of part I

Game 28-30 covers the variation with 5... ♖c7 which is the old main line in the Kan. In Game 31-34 the fashionable 5...b5 is covered. We begin with the game that has put the old Kan under a cloud.

Game 28

Acs – Fancsy

Zalakaros 1997

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3

If Black tries 5...d6 here, to sidestep the Keres Attack, White's best move is probably 6.g4! anyway (see page 218).

5...♖c7 6.♕d3 ♗f6 7.0-0 ♕c5

This is one of Black's main ideas. Before the bishop goes to e7 it kicks the white knight to the not very great b3-square. Black could of course play 7...d6 as the rush with the g-pawn does not fit with ♕d3, but then the queen might not belong at c7. (In the lines where White plays ♕d3 Black does not play ♖c7 once in the lines given by Emms in his excellent book *Play the Najdorf Scheveningen Style*. More on d6 set-ups in Game 33.).

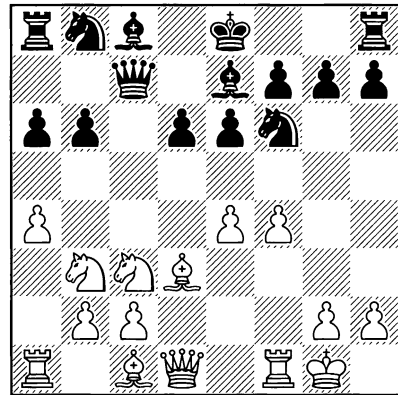
8.♗b3 ♕e7 9.f4

Threatening e4-e5, which will kick the knight to a bad square and gain the e4-square for the white pieces.

9...d6 10.a4!

A very interesting idea. White wants to play a4-a5, which will seriously cramp Black's queenside.

10...b6



Almost forced. If Black allows a4-a5 White is clearly better.

10...♗c6 11.a5 is just clearly better for White. Emms' idea 11...♗d7 planning to play ...♗c5 and maybe win the a-pawn, does not work at all because of 12.♕e3 ♗c5 13.♗a4!. Refuting the idea. 13...♗xd3 14.cxd3 And White is controlling the c-file and b6, and is much better.

11.e5!

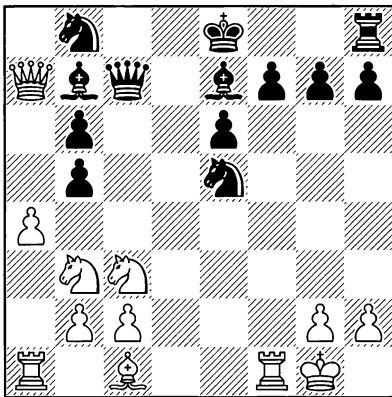
Without this move I would not recommend this line for White. White has a lead in

development and is trying to blow Black away immediately. After normal moves like ♕d2 , ♖e2 , ♗h1 etc. Black would be happy, as he has reached his desired set-up and kicked White's bishop to the b3-square. Also, without $11.\text{e4-e5}$ it is doubtful White should play $10.\text{a4}$ at all.

11...♗fd7

Almost forced. After the dangerous $11...\text{dxe5}$ $12.\text{fxe5}$ the pawn is poisoned ($12...\text{♖xe5}$? $13.\text{♗f4}$ ♖h5 $14.\text{♕e2}$ ♖h4 [$14...\text{♖g6}$ $15.\text{♗f3}$] $15.\text{♗g3}$ ♖g5 $16.\text{♗f3}$ wins for White) and Black must play $12...\text{♗fd7}$. I recently made an attempt to revive this line for Black, but (fortunately for us) I could not find a satisfactory reply to $13.\text{♖f3}$!?. Emms dismissed this line in his great book *Sicilian Kan* because of $13...\text{♗xe5}$ ($13...0-0$ is too dangerous after $14.\text{♖h3}$ g6 [$14...\text{h6}$ $15.\text{♗h6}$ is winning] $15.\text{♗h6}$ ♖e8 $16.\text{♗g7}$! A brilliant attacking idea my little slave Fritz found while I was cooking. Now White is winning.) $14.\text{♖xa8}$ ♗b7 $15.\text{♗b5}$ † axb5 $16.\text{♖a7}$

With the verdict *unclear*. I, and maybe more notably Fritz, do not agree with this evaluation at all. In the modern age where computer programs are very strong (And everyone has one!) such positions can be worked out to a definite conclusion. I have not found a line where Black gets sufficient compensation. Some sample lines:



$16...0-0$ $17.\text{axb5}$ (Taking the c6-square away from the queen and knight. $17.\text{♗xb5}$? ♗c5 † wins for Black. $17.\text{♗f4}$ ♗c5 † $18.\text{♗xc5}$ ♖xc5 † $19.\text{♗h1}$

♖c6 $20.\text{♖f2}$ is possible, but risky.) $17...\text{♗bc6}$ $18.\text{♗d5}$! exd5 $19.\text{bxc6}$ ♖xc6 ($19...\text{♗g4}$ $20.\text{♖f4}$ ♖xc6 $21.\text{♖a4}$) $20.\text{♗d4}$ ♗c5 $21.\text{♗e3}$ ♖c7 $22.\text{c3}$ ♗c4 ($22...\text{♗g4}$ $23.\text{♗f4}$) $23.\text{♗f4}$ and White is better. This, of course, awaits future practical tests. If White does not like this he can just play $13.\text{♖g4}$ g6 $14.\text{♗f4}$ ♗c6 $15.\text{♗e4}$ ♗b7 $16.\text{♖ae1}$ with a very active position. Please notice that the e-pawn is immune: $16...\text{♗cxe5}$ (Or $16...\text{♗dxe5}$ $17.\text{♗xc6}$ †) $17.\text{♗xb7}$!, when White is winning material.

12.exd6 ♗xd6

$12...\text{♖xd6}$ transposes after $13.\text{♗e4}$ ♖c7 .

13.♗e4 ♗e7

$13...\text{♗b7}$ $14.\text{♗xd6}$ † ♖xd6 $15.\text{♗e3}$ and White has the bishop pair in an open position. Black is solid but White's advantage is quite clear. $15...\text{♗c6}$ $16.\text{♖g4}$ $0-0-0$ $17.\text{♖fd1}$ ♗f6 $18.\text{♖e2}$ ♗b4 and now instead of $19.\text{♗c4}$ which led to a draw in Trabert – Vasilev, Kavala 2001, $19.\text{a5}$ b5 $20.\text{♗b5}$ is almost decisive.

14.f5!?

White should not rest for a second - he must use his better development before Black consolidates.

14...exf5

$14...\text{e5}$ $15.\text{♖g4}$ is terrible for Black. Black never had a chance in Sulskis – Emms, Gausdal 1995: $15...\text{♗f8}$ $16.\text{♗g5}$ f6 $17.\text{♗e3}$ ♗c6 $18.\text{♖f3}$ ♗b4 $19.\text{♖g3}$ ♖g8 $20.\text{♗h6}$! ♗xd3 $21.\text{♗xg7}$ † ♗e8 $22.\text{cxd3}$ ♖c2 $23.\text{♖h5}$ † ♗d8 $24.\text{♖f7}$ ♖e8 $25.\text{♗xf6}$ $1-0$.

15.♗f4!

White is very active and keeps developing with tempo. $15.\text{♖xf5}$ ♗e5 does not promise anything.

15...♗e5

$15...\text{♖c6}$ $16.\text{♗d4}$ and $15...\text{♖d8}$ $16.\text{♗d6}$ † is very scary for Black.

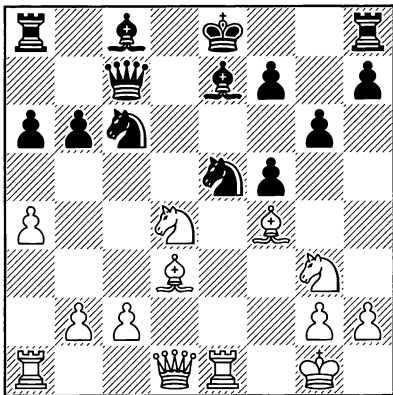
16.♗c3!?

$16.\text{♗g3}$ is much more aggressive and according to my analysis the complications favour White. White has to be prepared to sacrifice a piece in several lines here. Black has a choice between the solid $16...0-0$ after which $17.\text{♗xf5}$ ♗bc6 $18.\text{♗xe7}$ † ♖xe7 $19.\text{♗e4}$ leads to a position where White has the bishop pair

and the initiative, or the 'greedy' 16...g6!, which demands very aggressive play from

White. He has two lines to choose from:

a) 17.♖e1 I think this is best. 17...♗bc6 (17...♗bd7 is not good. After 18.♗xf5! gxf5 19.♗xf5 f6 20.♗h5† ♗d8 21.♖ad1 White has a big attack.) 18.♗d4!



Improving the position of the worst placed piece. Black now has three tries:

a1) 18...♗c5 19.c3 ♗xd4 20.cxd4 ♗xd4† 21.♗h1 is good for White.

a2) 18...f6 19.♗dx5 ♗xf5 (19...gxf5 20.♗h5† ♗d8 21.♖ad1 ♗c5† 22.♗h1 ♖g7 23.♗h6 ♖a7 24.♗xf5† ♗c7 25.♗g7 ♗xf5 26.♗xf5 looks good for White) 20.♗xf5 gxf5 21.♗h5† ♗d8 22.♗xf5 ♗c5† 23.♗h1 ♖e7 24.♖ad1† ♗d6 25.♖xd6† ♖xd6 26.♖d1 is much better for White.

a3) 18...♗b7 19.♖e2 f6 20.♗e6! and White seems to hold an advantage.

b) 17.♗xf5 gxf5 18.♖d5 f6 19.♗xe5 fxe5 20.♗xf5 ♗xf5 21.♖xf5 is given as good for White by Emms but after 21...♖a7! this is not clear at all.

16...0-0 17.♗d5 ♗c5† 18.♗h1 ♖b7 19.♗e2 ♗bc6 20.♖e1 ♗e6 21.c4 ♖ad8

Black has no problems after 21...♗g6! 22.♗xc5 bxc5 23.♗d6 ♖fd8.

22.♖d1 ♗h8 23.♖c3 f6 24.♗xc5 bxc5 25.♗e3 ♖a7 26.♖d2 ♖fe8 27.♖fd1 ♖d7 28.h3 f4 29.♗xf4 ♗d4 30.♗h5 ♖b8? 31.b4 ♗xd5 32.cxd5 ♖xd5 33.bxc5 ♗ec6 34.♗xb8

Game over.

34...♖xb8 35.♗f3 ♗xf3 36.♖xf3

1-0

I have given up this variation as Black because of this line.

Game 29

van der Wiel – Nijboer

Holland 1996

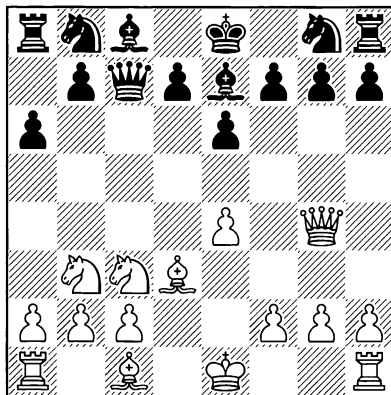
1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.♗d3 ♗c5!?

This is a very typical thing for the Kan – after Black encounters problems in one line he changes the move order and tries to avoid the problem.

7.♗b3 ♗e7

If White now continues like in the Acs' game Black can just keep the knight at g8 for a move or two and thereby sidestep the e4-e5 advance.

8.♖g4!



White immediately attacks g7. This is the downside to postponing ♗f6.

8...g6

Black has two alternatives:

a) 8...♗f6 This move is rejected by Hansen. However: 9.♖xg7 (9.♖g3!?) might in the long run give White a slight advantage. 9...♗b7 10.e5 ♗h5 11.♖h3 g6 12.0-0 ♖c7 13.f4 d6 14.exd6 ♗xd6 15.f5 exf5 16.♖e1† with initiative.) 9...♖g8 10.♖h6 ♗c6 (This is compensation as can be seen by two games by Bosboom, one

against the amnesic editor! 10...♞xg2? 11.e5+-) 11.♙d2 (11.f4!? d6 12.0-0± But 11.♙f4 and the bishop comes to g3, which is horrible for Black, as claimed by Suné is a bit optimistic. It is more likely that an ...e5 move will annoy the bishop greatly.) 11...♗e5 12.f4 (12.♙e2 ♙b7 13.f4 ♗c4 14.♙f3 b4 15.♗e2 ♞g6 16.♞h3 ♙xe4± Aagaard - Bosboom, Hafnarfjörður 1999.) 12...♗xd3† 13.cxd3 b4 14.♗e2 ♞xg2 15.♞h3 ♞g6∞ Tiviakov - Bosboom, Hoogeveen 1999.

b) 8...♙f6 A clumsy move. White just develops naturally and has a better position. 9.♙d2 ♗c6 10.0-0 d6 11.♞g3 and White is slightly better.

9.♙g5!?

White uses the fact that the Black queen is at c7 to try to exchange the black squared bishop. As all (!) Black's pawns are currently located on light squares, Black will have weak dark squares for a long time to come. Please note that this is not possible in the fashionable line: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♙d3 ♙c5 6.♗b3 ♙e7 7.♞g4 g6 and there is no ♙g5 due to the queen at d8.

9...h5

9...d6 is more sensible. Hector has tried two moves in this position:

a) 10.0-0-0!?! Hector recently switched to this move. It is probably best, and White does seem to have good chances of getting an advantage. Hector - Agrest, Aarhus 2003 continued 10...♗f6 11.♞f4 ♗bd7 12.♞he1 (12.♗b1 also looks promising e.g. 12...b5 [12...e5 13.♞d2 b5 14.a3] and now 13.a3 as it is not certain the rook belongs on e1.) 12...e5 13.♞d2 b5 (13...♗b6?! 14.♙e2 Wins a pawn or forces the knight to go back again.) 14.♙xb5 (Very typical of Hector, but I will recommend 14.a3(!) instead. After 14...♙b7 15.♗b1 0-0-0 16.f3 White is better – he enjoys more space and has a safe king.) The game concluded 14...axb5 15.♗xb5 ♞b8 16.♗xd6† ♙xd6 17.♞xd6 ♞xd6 18.♞xd6 ♞a6 19.♞xa6 ♙xa6 20.♙xf6 ♗xf6 21.♗c5 ♙c8 22.c4 ♗e7 23.♗c2 ♗d7 24.♗d3 ♙a6 25.♗c3 ♞c8 26.b3 ♗e6 27.a4 ♗c5 28.♗xc5† ♞xc5 29.♞d1 ♞c8 30.f3

f5 31.a5 fxe4 32.fxe4 ♙b7 33.♞e1 ♙a6 34.♞d1 ♙b7 35.♞e1 ♙a6 36.♞e3 h5 37.h4 ♞c5 38.♞g3 ♗f6 39.♞d3 ♞xa5 40.♞d6† ♗e7 41.♞xg6 ♙c8 42.♞g5 ♙g4 43.♗b4 ♞a2 44.♞xe5† ♗d6 45.♞d5† ♗c6 46.♞c5† ♗b6 47.♞b5† ♗c6 48.♞c5† ♗b6 49.♞b5† ♗c6 ½-½.

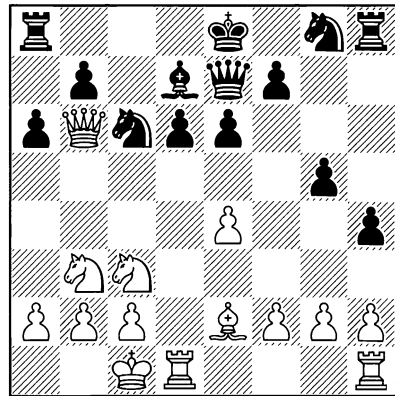
b) 10.♙xe7 ♞xe7 (An earlier Hector – Agrest game went 10...♗xe7 11.0-0-0 e5 12.♞g5 ♙e6 13.♙e2 ♗bc6 14.♞d2 and here Ziegler in *Chessbase Magazine* stated that White is slightly better.) 11.0-0-0 ♗f6 12.♞g3 ♗bd7 13.♙e2 e5 14.♞e3 0-0 15.g4 b5 16.g5 ♗e8 17.♗d5 ♞d8 18.h4 ♙b7 19.h5 ♙xd5 20.♞xd5 ♗b6 21.♞d3 ♗c4 and the game was later drawn in Hector – Mortensen, Copenhagen 1996.

10.♞h4 d6 11.0-0-0 ♗c6

White also has good attacking chances after 11...f6 12.♙d2 g5 13.♞g3 h4 14.♞e3. 12.♙xe7 ♞xe7 13.♞g3 h4 14.♞e3 g5 15.♙e2 ♙d7?!

A mistake but Black's position is full of holes anyway. The text allowed...

16.♞b6!



More or less winning a pawn by force. The b-pawn is attacked and White is planning to double rooks on the d-file.

16...♗f6?

The lesser evil was 16...♞d8 17.♞xd8† (17.♗a4!?. But not 17.♞xb7?? ♞a7!) 17...♞xd8 18.♞xd6 and White is a clear pawn up. 17.♞xb7 ♞d8 18.♗d4 ♗a5 19.♞b4 ♞c7 20.♗b3 ♗b7 21.♗d2! ♞b8 22.♗c4 The rest

is easy. 22...h3 23.g3 $\text{\textcircled{c}}6$ 24. $\text{\textcircled{d}}6\text{\textdagger}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$
 25. $\text{\textcircled{w}}6$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}6$ 26. $\text{\textcircled{x}}6$ $\text{\textcircled{x}}4$ 27. $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$
 $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$ 28. $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$ f5 29.f3 $\text{\textcircled{c}}5$ 30. $\text{\textcircled{x}}4$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}7$
 31. $\text{\textcircled{d}}1$ $\text{\textcircled{f}}6$ 32. $\text{\textcircled{x}}6$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}7$ 33. $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$ $\text{\textcircled{b}}e8$
 34. $\text{\textcircled{c}}4$ f4 35.gxf4 g4 36.fxg4 $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$ 37. $\text{\textcircled{x}}6$
 $\text{\textcircled{h}}2$ 38. $\text{\textcircled{x}}8\text{\textdagger}$

1-0

Notice how weak Black's dark squares became after the exchange of the black squared bishops.

Game 30

Predojevic – Fogarasi

Budapest 2004

1.e4 c5 2. $\text{\textcircled{d}}3$ e6 3. $\text{\textcircled{c}}3$

A smart way to sidestep different lines like the tricky 4... $\text{\textcircled{w}}6$ and the Pin-variation. Black cannot exploit this move order in any way as both the White systems recommended in this chapter involve playing the knight to c3.

3...a6 4.d4 cxd4 5. $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}7$ 6. $\text{\textcircled{d}}3$ $\text{\textcircled{f}}6$
 7.0-0 $\text{\textcircled{c}}5$ 8. $\text{\textcircled{b}}3$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}7$!

Another way for Black to retreat the bishop. Black is playing in similar fashion to 1.e4 c5 2. $\text{\textcircled{d}}3$ e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$ a6 5. $\text{\textcircled{d}}3$ $\text{\textcircled{c}}5$ 6. $\text{\textcircled{b}}3$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}7$. It is White's job to make sure that he gets a worse version!

9. $\text{\textcircled{h}}1$!

If White chooses to play $\text{\textcircled{w}}e2$ and $\text{\textcircled{e}}3$ then Black simply gains a good line from the 5. $\text{\textcircled{d}}3$ $\text{\textcircled{c}}5$ 6. $\text{\textcircled{b}}3$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}7$ system. Once again this shows that it is necessary to have a broad knowledge of the various lines in the Sicilian.

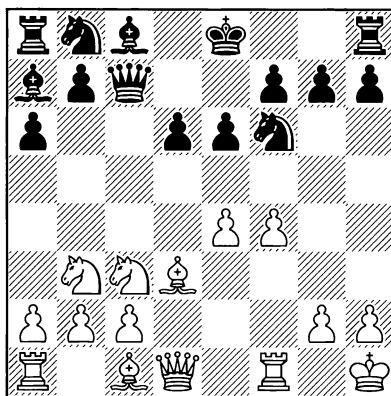
9...d6

9...h5 10.f4! $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$ 11. $\text{\textcircled{w}}3$ b5 12.e5 $\text{\textcircled{b}}7$
 13. $\text{\textcircled{d}}4$ shows how ineffective the bishop can be at a7.

9... $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$ 10.f4 d6 just transposes to the game. 9...b5 might be premature after 10.a3 $\text{\textcircled{c}}6$ 11.f4 d6? 12. $\text{\textcircled{x}}b5$! 0-0 13. $\text{\textcircled{e}}2$ Black was just a pawn down and White went on to win in Semenova – Drmic, Harkany 1997.

10.f4

10. $\text{\textcircled{g}}5$ is also possible. If White does not like the text he can investigate this idea.



10... $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$

Black can also play 10... $\text{\textcircled{c}}6$. White now plays 11. $\text{\textcircled{w}}e2$! and seems to be a bit better as Black has problems in finding a safe haven for the king. 11... $\text{\textcircled{d}}7$ (Not the optimal square for the bishop but the more active and thematic 11...b5 does not solve Black's problems after the standard plan 12. $\text{\textcircled{d}}2$ 0-0 13.a3 $\text{\textcircled{b}}7$ 14. $\text{\textcircled{x}}a1$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}e7$ 15.e5. This is White's normal play/plan against the Kan, and if you do not know what to do, this is often the recommended course! $\text{\textcircled{d}}f5$ 16.exd6 $\text{\textcircled{d}}xc3$ 17. $\text{\textcircled{x}}c3$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}xd6$ 18. $\text{\textcircled{b}}4$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}d7$ 19. $\text{\textcircled{d}}1$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}5$ 20. $\text{\textcircled{x}}e7$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}xe7$ 21. $\text{\textcircled{h}}7\text{\textdagger}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}7$ 22. $\text{\textcircled{x}}d5$ and White won in Wiese - Guimaraes, Lisbon 2001.) 12. $\text{\textcircled{e}}3$! Only now, when Black has messed up his set-up with $\text{\textcircled{d}}7$, does White agree to this exchange. The game Ecsedi – Feher, Hungary 1995 concluded quickly: 12... $\text{\textcircled{x}}e3$ 13. $\text{\textcircled{w}}xe3$ b5 14. $\text{\textcircled{x}}a1$ (!) 0-0-0? 15.a4 $\text{\textcircled{d}}a7$ 16. $\text{\textcircled{x}}a1$ g5 17.axb5 $\text{\textcircled{d}}g4$ 18. $\text{\textcircled{w}}g1$ gxf4 19.b6 $\text{\textcircled{w}}c6$ 20.bxa7 $\text{\textcircled{d}}e3$ 21. $\text{\textcircled{x}}a6$ $\text{\textcircled{w}}a8$ 22. $\text{\textcircled{x}}f4$ 1-0. Admittedly not a great game, but White is better!

Some Black players (maniacs) will go 10...h5!?. This is not very trustworthy and if White just sticks to the scheme ($\text{\textcircled{w}}e2$, $\text{\textcircled{d}}2$ $\text{\textcircled{x}}a1$ and e5) he will get a good position with nice attacking chances.

11. $\text{\textcircled{d}}2$

White is making room for the rook at e1. After e4-e5 the bishop will be good on the c1-h6 diagonal if Black takes on e5. And if Black

does not take, and instead retreats the knight, this bishop can often find a nice square at c3 (after dxd5 and exd6). In both cases the bishop will be helpful for White's attack.

11...0-0 12.♖e2 ♜e8?!

Black does not have time for this, but even after the better 12...b5 13.♞ae1 ♙b7 14.e5 dxe5 (14...d5 15.exd6 ♞xd6 16.♗e4 ♞c7 17.♗a5 ♙c8 18.c4 bxc4 19.♗xc4 and White has the initiative.) 15.fxe5 ♗d5 16.♗xd5 ♙xd5 17.♙g5! White has a strong attack. By the way, this is a good position to use to "play-out" against a computer program.

13.♞ae1

White is ready for e4-e5 with a big attack.

13...e5?!

13...♙b8 (preventing e4-e5) is probably better, even though it is awfully passive. White should go 14.g4 when Black is pushed back.

14.g4!

Here we go! In general White does not push his g-pawn (and often not even his f-pawn) in the lines recommended in this chapter but, when the conditions dictate it, White must include the kingside pawns in the battle or else he will risk losing the initiative.

With g5 coming White is getting seriously involved in the fight for control of d5.

14...♗f8 15.g5 ♗d6d7 16.♗d5 ♞d8 17.f5

Black is busted.

17...b5 18.♗a5 ♗b8 19.c4

19.♞h5 is also good.

19...♙b6 20.♗xb6 ♞xb6 21.b4 ♙b7 22.cxb5

22.♞e3 is simpler.

22...d5 23.♙e3 ♞c7 24.♞c1 ♞d7 25.a4 g6 26.b6 ♗c6 27.♗xc6 ♙xc6 28.b5 dxe4 29.bxc6 exd3 30.♞g2

1-0

The lines with ...♙a7 promise White good chances if he plays precisely.

Now we move on to the current main line in the Kan.

Game 31

Adams – Kasimdzhanov

FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004

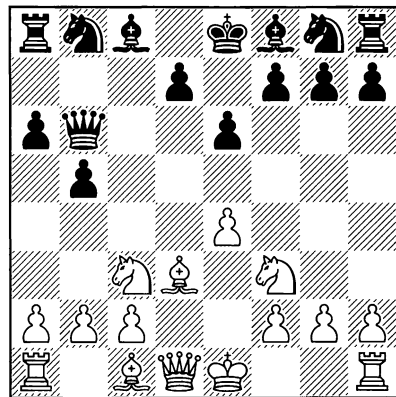
1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 b5?!

Black immediately starts the attack with the wing pawn, which is so typical of the Taimanov and Kan. The advance of the b-pawn creates the option of b5-b4, which increases Black's influence in the centre. The downside for Black is that the a6-b5 pawn-phalanx can easily become a weakness after either a well timed c2-c4 or especially a2-a4. Black is only making pawn moves so White is ahead in development and, even though Black is solid, White has good chances of creating an attack. This line has been very popular in the new millennium.

6.♙d3 ♞b6

This has become very popular and is currently regarded as Black's best chance in the Kan after 5.♗c3. As usual Black wants a normal set-up with the queen at c7, but first he tries to kick White's knight from d4 to the passive square b3. This is known in some sources as the Enhanced Kveinys variation. I will recommend:

7.♗f3!?



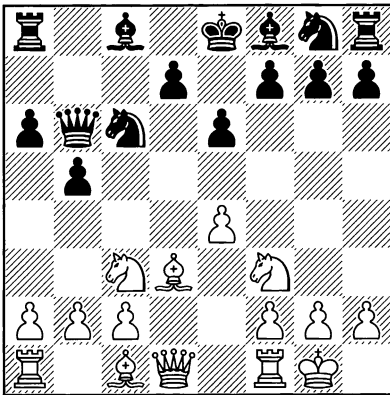
It looks almost like a beginner's move - blocking the f-pawn and what on earth is the knight doing here? Of course the knight was under attack and had to retreat (I have not found any trace of an advantage after 7.♙e3!? ♙c5!). At b3 the knight is just passive and sometimes even gets in the way, but at f3 it is eyeing g5 and e5. Black is using a lot of time to kick the knight so at the moment his development

is in a sorry state, and this might give White the chance for a rapid attack with the pieces. When I was preparing this line for Black, this was the variation I was afraid of. If White can attack with the pieces instead of pawns he is also not taking the usual risks: If the attack fails the position will be approximately equal, whereas if this happens in the normal Sicilian lines, White is usually left with a lot of pawn weaknesses.

7...♞c7

Black has many alternatives, but I believe this is best. Black avoids allowing White to go a4-a5 with tempo. The other lines are a jungle:

a) 7...♟c6 8.0-0



And now:

a1) 8...♟b7 was good for White after 9.♞e2 (or 9.♞e1!) 9...♟ge7 10.♟e3 ♞a5 11.a3 ♟g6 12.♟d5 exd5 13.exd5 0-0-0 14.dxc6 dxc6 and later 1-0 in Krakops – Bellin, Gausdal 2000.

a2) 8...♟ge7 9.♞e1! is nasty for Black. 9...♟g6 (9...♞b8 transposes to line 'c' below) 10.♟d5! (10.a4 allows 10...♟c5! when Black is more or less OK) 10...♞d8 11.a4 ♞b8 12.axb5 axb5 13.♟c3 b4 14.♟b5 ♟c5 15.♟e3 ♟xe3 16.♞xe3 0-0 17.♟d6 with a clear advantage for White, Xu Yuhua - Khurtsidze, Hyderabad 2002.

a3) 8...♞b8 (planning a set-up with ♟ge7-g6 and ♟d6) I think White's best move is 9.♞e1! (9.e5 is also very popular). Black now has a choice between a31) 9...♟d6, a32) 9...♟ge7 and a33) 9...d6:

a31) 9...♟d6 10.a4! Freeing c4 for the knight.

10...b4 11.♟b1 ♟ge7 12.♟bd2 ♟g6 13.♟c4 ♟c7 14.♟f1 ♟ge5 15.♟cx5 ♟xe5 16.♟d4 ♟b7 17.♞h5 0-0 and now, instead of 18.♞e3, which quickly led to a draw in Smirnov – Fominyh, Chennai 2004, White can keep an edge with 18.♟d2! attacking b4 and preparing c2-c3.

a32) 9...♟ge7 10.♟e3! Eyeing b6. 10...d6 (10...♟g6 11.a4! b4 12.♟d5 is very good for White) 11.♞d2 ♟g6 12.♟d4 ♟xd4 13.♟xd4 ♟e5 14.f4 ♟c6 15.♟f2 ♟e7 16.♟d5 exd5 17.exd5 This position was reached in two games:

Myo Naing - Zaw Win Lay, Bangkok 2004 was fun: 17...♟a7 18.♞e3 ♟d7 19.♞ae1 ♟c8 20.♟h4 f6 21.♞e2 ♞b6 22.♟h1 ♞d8 23.♟xf6! gxf6 24.♞h5† ♟f8 25.♞h6† ♟f7 26.♟xh7 ♟g4 27.♞g6† ♟f8 28.♞xg4 ♞xh7 29.♞g3 ♟e8 30.♞g8† ♟d7 31.♞xh7 1-0.

In Grischuk – Smirin, New Delhi (2) 2000 Black instead went 17...♟e5 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.♞e2 0-0 20.♟d4 exd4 21.♞xe7 g6 22.♞f6 ♟b7 23.d6 ♟d5 24.♞xd4? (White is totally winning after 24. ♟e4!). The game concluded 24... ♟e6 25.♞xe6 fxe6 26.c4 bxc4 27.♟xc4 h5 28.♞c1 ♞a7 29.♟xe6† ♟h7 30.h4 ♞b7 31.d7 ♞xb2 32.♟h3 ½-½.

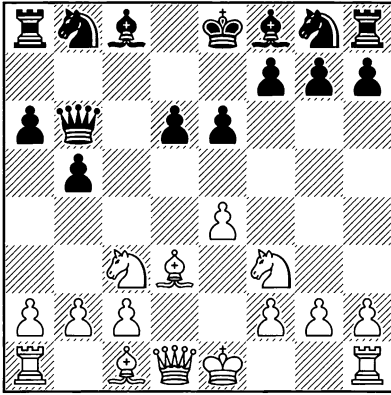
a33) 9...d6 should be answered by 10.♟d2! planning the typical a4 and c3.

a4) 8...♟f6 is very provocative after 9.e5 b4 10.♟e4 ♟g4 11.♟f4 ♞a5 Black defended successfully in Bauer – Ciuksyte, Zurich 2002 after 12.♞e1 ♟gxe5 13.♟xe5 ♟xe5 14.♞h5 ♟c6 15.♟g5 g6 16.♞f3 ♟e7 17.h4 0-0. But White is almost winning after 12.♟eg5! For example 12...h6 13.♟xf7! ♟xf7 14.h3 or 12...♟b7 13.♟e4 with tremendous pressure.

a5) 8...d6 9. ♞e2 when White has done well in practice. Spraggett – Boudy, Montreal 1996 proceeded: 9...♟f6 10.a4! b4 11.♟b1 Another route for the knight. 11...♟e7 12.♟bd2 coming to c4. 12...0-0 (12...♞b8 did not help Black in Baklan – Stiri, Corinth's 2004. The game concluded 13.♟c4 ♟g4 14.♟f4 e5 15.♟d2 f5? Asking much too much of the black position 16.♟e3 ♟xe3 17.fxe3 0-0 18.exf5 d5 19.e4! ♟c5† 20.♟h1 ♟xf5? 21.exf5 e4 22.♟xe4 dxe4 23.♞c4† ♟h8 24.♞xc5 exf3 25.♞xc6 1-0.)

13. ♖c4 ♜c7 14.a5 ♘d7 15. ♙f4 and White is better (1-0, 43).

b) 7...d6



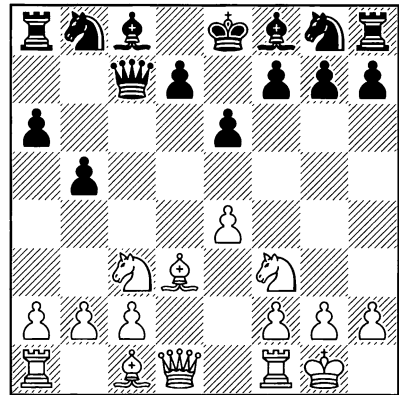
b1) 8.0-0 and now only 8...♘d7 has independent significance (8... ♜c7 transposes to 2) under Black's alternatives at move 8 and 8...♘c6 transpose to a5) above) 9.a4! is as usual the standard response. U. Ecker – E. Anka, Bayern 1999, took an interesting course 9...b4 10.a5 ♜c7 11.♘a4!? ♜xa5 12.♙e3 ♜c7 13.c3 Very dynamic. 13...bxc3 14.♙c1 ♘gf6 15.♙xc3 ♜b8 16.♜c2 ♙b7 17.♘b6 ♘xb6 18.♙xb6 ♙e7 19.♜a4† ♔f8 and here White has a fantastic position after 20.♙fc1, but instead he played 20.♙c7 and later went astray and even lost.

b2) 8.a4!? b4 (8...bxa4 9.♘xa4 is better for White) 9.a5! And Black has a choice. 9...♜b7 (After 9...♜c7 10.♘a4 ♘d7 11.♙e3 ♙b7 12.♘b6 White already has a clear advantage. The a-pawn is weak and the ♘b6 is very annoying.). 10.♘a4 ♘d7 11.0-0 ♘gf6 12.♜e2 with a pleasant position.

c) 7...♙c5 8.0-0 ♙b7 (8...♘f6? 9.e5 ♘g4 10.♘e4 and Black is busted) 9.a4 b4 10.a5 ♜c7 11.♘a4 ♜xa5 This cannot be right. Black will miss his black squared bishop. 12.♘xc5 ♜xc5 13.♙e3 ♜c7 14.♘d2 ♘f6 (14...a5 15.♙d4 f6 16.♜e3 and White has a raging initiative.) 15.♜xb4 ♘c6 and now instead of 16.♜b6 as in Meshcheriakova – Kucherova, Essentuki 2003, White has 16.♜c3, which gives a huge advantage. Black is missing her bishop.

d) 7...♙b7?! 8.a4! ♜a5 (A sign that everything is not right with Black's set-up, but 8...b4 9.a5 ♜c7 10.♘a4 is much better for White.) 9.0-0 b4 10.♘b1 d5 11.e5 ♘d7 12.♘bd2 ♘c5 13.♘d4 ♜c7 14.♙e1 ♘e7 15.♜h5 g6 16.♜h4 ♙g7 17.♘2b3 h6 18.♘xc5 ♜xc5 19.♘f3 and White is better. The game concluded. 19...♘c6 20.♙e3 ♜e7 21.♜g3 ♔d7 22.a5 g5 23.c3 g4 24.♜xg4 ♘xe5 25.♘xe5† ♙xe5 26.♜h5 f6 27.♙d4 ♙xd4 28.cxd4 ♙ag8 29.f4 ♜g7 30.g3 f5 31.♙e5 ♜g6 32.♜e2 ♙a8 33.♙e1 ♙he8 34.♘d2 ♙c6 35.♜xb4 ♙ab8 36.♜c3 ♙b5 37.♙xf5! 1-0. Ghinda – Petre, Sovata 1999.

8.0-0



8...♙b7

Again Black has alternatives:

1) 8...♘c6 is not very logical (it fits better with ♜b8) 9.♙e1 is a good reply.

1a) 9...d6 10.a4! The normal reply to d7-d6. 10...b4 11.♘a2 ♘f6 12.♙d2 a5 (White is better after both 12...d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 14.♙e4 and 12...♜b8 13.c3 bxc3 14.♙xc3! ♙e7 15.b4 0-0 16.b5) 13.c3 bxc3 14.♘xc3 and White is clearly better.

1b) 9...♙d6? 10.♙xb5!

1c) 9...♘f6 10.e5 ♘g4 11.♙f4 f6 12.♙g3! fxe5 13.♘g5 ♘f6 14.♙xh7 d6 15.♙g6† ♔e7 16.♘f7 ♙g8 17.♘e4 d5 18.♘eg5 1-0. Nikolenko – Ivanov, Moscow 2000.

2) 8...d6 9.a4! with the usual play on the c-file after b5-b4, ♘a2 and c2-c3.

3) 8...♟f6 9.e5 b4 10.♞e4 and White is better.

9.♞e1

9.♞d2!? is an interesting alternative. White had an easy time after 9...♞e7 10.a4 b4 11.♞a2 ♞c6 12.♞e1 a5 13.c3 bxc3 14.♞xc3 ♞f6 15.e5 ♞g4 16.♞b5 ♞b8 17.♞c3!. Now all White's pieces are participating in the attack. 17...f5 18.h3 ♞h6 19.♞d1 0-0 20.♞c4 ♞d8? 21.♞xd7! ♞xd7 22.♞xe6† ♞h8 23.♞xd7 ♞b4 24.♞e2 ♞d5 25.♞d2 ♞f7 26.♞xf5 ♞c5 27.e6 ♞d6 28.♞xh7 ♞xh7 29.♞g5† ♞g8 30.♞xd6 ♞xd6 31.♞h5 ♞f6 32.♞f7† ♞h8 33.♞xb7 1-0 in Pelletier – Lobron, playchess.com 2004.

9...♞c5

a) 9...d6 10.a4!

b) 9...♞e7 Epishin's most recent idea and therefore probably the critical line. (Vladimir Epishin is the main connoisseur of this line in the Kan). I like 10.♞d2!? with the usual plan of generating play on the queenside. 10...b4 (10...d6?! 11.a4 bxa4 12.♞xa4 with the usual slight advantage to White even though Black managed to draw in Tsherkovsky – Epishin, St Petersburg 2004) 11.♞e2 ♞f6 (11...♞c6 12.c3 ♞f6 13.♞g3 bxc3 14.♞xc3 0-0 15.♞c1 and White has a slight advantage, Tyomkin – Epishin, Kapuskasing 2004) and now instead of 12.♞ed4 which was not very successful (even though White is slightly better) in Arizmendi Martinez – Smirin, Istanbul 2003, I think 12.♞g3!, planning ♞d2 and c3, gives White good chances.

c) 9...♞f6 10.e5! b4 11.♞a4 and White will play the bishop to d2 and then go c2-c3 with an initiative. This idea should be familiar to the reader by now!

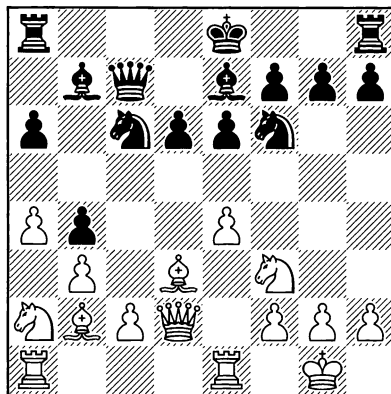
10.♞d2

Very artistic. White can also play 10.♞d2, planning the usual a4 and a later c2-c3 opening the c-file. White has also enjoyed some success with 10.♞g5!? followed by manoeuvring the bishop to g3.

10...♞e7

White was threatening 11.♞g5.

11.b3!? ♞f6 12.♞b2 d6 13.a4 b4 14.♞a2 ♞c6



15.♞d4

15.c3! bxc3 16.♞xc3 with the rook coming to c1. White has the initiative.

15...♞xd4

15...a5! is better. Black won in Zhang Zhong - Ye Jiangchuan, Taiyuan. 16.♞b5 ♞d7 17.♞ad1 0-0 18.e5? A silly pawn sacrifice. 18...♞xe5 19.♞f1 ♞c6 20.f4 ♞g6 21.f5 exf5 22.♞d4 ♞c5 and Black is in control.

16.♞xd4 a5 17.♞ac1 0-0 18.c3 bxc3 19.♞xc3 ♞d8 20.♞b5 e5 21.♞c7!

White is better.

21...exd4 22.♞xb7 d5 23.♞f4 ♞b4 24.♞d1 dxe4 25.♞xe4 ♞xe4 26.♞xe4 ♞f6 27.♞c7 ♞ad8 28.♞d5 ♞d6 29.♞xd4 ♞e6 30.g3 ♞d6 31.♞xb4 axb4 32.♞e7† ♞xe7 33.♞xd6 ♞e2 34.♞d4 h5 35.♞xb4 ♞f3 36.h4 ♞c8 37.♞d2 ♞c3 38.♞f4 ♞c6 39.♞h2 ♞xb3 40.♞d8† ♞h7 41.♞d1 ♞b7 42.♞xh5† ♞g8 43.♞d4 ♞f6 44.♞d2 ♞a7 45.a5 g6 46.♞b5 ♞h7 47.♞b6!

1-0

It seems to me that Black has plenty of problems in this line at the moment. I doubt it will keep its current popularity.

Game 32

Svidler – Milov

Biel 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♞f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 a6 5.♞c3 b5 6.♞d3 ♞b7

Another way to play.

7.0-0 ♖b6

Black is trying to reach the 6...♖b6 line by a different move order. We will look at the alternatives in Game 33.

8.♗e3!?

White can also play 8.♘f3 probably transposing to Game 31.

8...♗c5 9.♘ce2

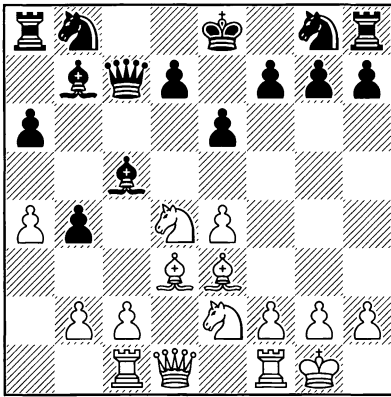
Not 9.♗e2? ♘c6!.

9...♘f6

a) 9...♖c7 is currently regarded as Black's best chance - I think this will change after these notes are published!

White goes 10.a4!:

a1) 10...b4 (10...bxa4 11.♖xa4 is a bit better for White.) and here in El Arousy – Annageldyev, Dubai 2001, White continued 11.c3 and the game was later drawn. Instead 11.♗c1! is very strong.



A move I found while trying to make this line work for Black. c2-c3 is coming and this will give Black big problems on the c-file. 11...♘f6 (11...♘c6 12.♘xe6) 12.c3 b3! (12...♘g4 13.♗f4.) 13.♘g3 and b3 is dropping.

a2) 10...♘f6 11.axb5 ♘xe4 12.bxa6 ♘xa6 13.♘b5 and White is a clear pawn up.

b) 9...♘c6 is better for White after 10.c3 ♘f6 11.b4 ♗xd4 12.♘xd4 ♖c7 13.♘xc6 ♗xc6 14.f3 0-0 15.♖e2.

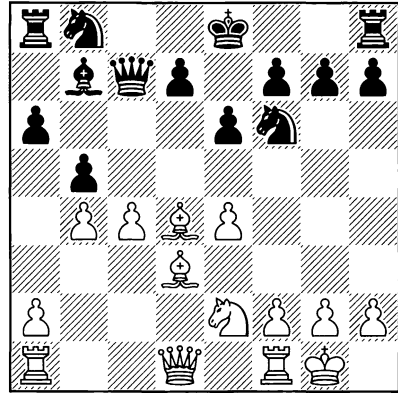
10.b4!

Already White is better.

10...♗xd4!?

Black could try 10...♗xb4!? but White has a nice initiative after 11.♘f5!.

11.♗xd4 ♖c7 12.c4!



As usual White is generating attacking chances on the c-file (who knows, maybe this will one day teach Black players to keep the b-pawn back).

12...e5

12...bxc4 13.♗c1 ♗xe4 14.♗xc4 and White is attacking.

13.♗b2 ♘c6

13...bxc4 14.♗c1 d5 15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.♗xc4 ♗xc4 17.♖c2 is better for White according to Ribli.

14.cxb5 axb5 15.♘c3♘d4 16.♗xb5 0-0 17.♗d3

And Svidler's great technique decided the issue.

17...♗fd8 18.♗e1 d5 19.exd5 ♗xd5 20.♘xd5 ♗xd5 21.♗c1 ♖b7 22.♗c4 ♗d7 23.a3 ♗ad8 24.♖d3 e4 25.♖e3 h6 26.h3 ♗d6 27.♗f1 ♗d5 28.♗c4 ♘f5 29.♖c1 ♗8d6! 30.♗xf6 ♗xf6 31.♗cx4 ♖b6 32.♗e5 ♘g3 33.♖c8† ♗d8 34.♖xd8†

1-0

Game 33

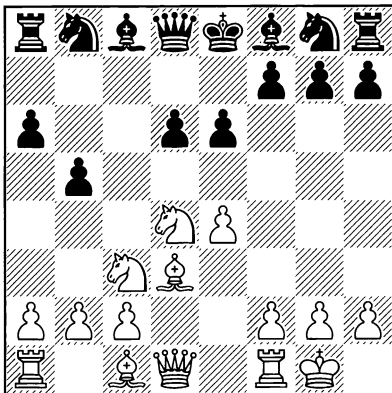
Smirin – Markowski

Plovdiv 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♘c3 b5 6.♗d3 d6

A specialty of Svidler and Markowski.

7.0–0



7...♟f6

a) 7...♟b7 is answered by the standard 8.a4! b4 9.♟a2 d5 (9...e5 is no better. 10.♟f5! ♟c6 11.♟d2 a5 12.c3 bxc3 13.♟xc3 With a clear advantage in Wiersma – H. Van der Spek, Amsterdam 2002.) 10.e5 ♟c6 11.♟xc6 ♟xc6 12.♟d2 ♟b8 13.♟e1 ♟b7 14.♟c1 ♟e7 15.♟b3 ♟g6 16.f4 ♟d7 17.♟g4 and White was better and duly won in V. Malisauskas – M. Brodsky, Riga 1995.

b) 7...♟e7 8.a4 ♟f6 9.♟e3 bxa4 10.♟xa4 ♟e7 11.c4 0–0 12.b4 ♟bc6 13.♟xc6 ♟xc6 14.♟b1 ♟b8 15.♟d2 ♟d4 ½–½ Kundin – Kudischewitsch, Tel Aviv 2002. A weird decision by White, as he is much better.

8.♟e2

The best move in my opinion. The queen is often good on this square, where it adds to the pressure on the f1–a6 diagonal, defends e4, and supports a future e4–e5. 8.♟e1 is also possible.

8...♟b7

8...♟e7 9.a4! b4 (9...bxa4 10.♟xa4 ♟b7 11.♟d2 0–0 12.b4 and White has the better prospects and went on to win in Cernousek – Bernasek, Lilie Litomysl 2003) 10.♟a2

a) 10...e5 11.♟f5! With Black's central pawns on dark squares it makes a lot of sense to force the exchange of his white squared bishop. 11...♟xf5 12.exf5 a5 (12...♟a5 13.♟d2 ♟c6 14.c3 bxc3 15.♟xc3 ♟b6 16.b4 0–0 17.♟e3

seems to be a bit better for White) 13.♟b5! ♟bd7 14.♟g5 0–0 15.c3 bxc3 16.♟xc3 And White has an obvious advantage according to Smirin in *New In Chess*. I tend to agree, as White has the bishop pair and free play. The black bishop does not seem to have a very bright future and if White is careful he will always be able to 'play around it'. The game continued: 16...h6 17.♟h4 ♟c5 18.♟ad1 ♟b3 19.♟xf6 ♟xf6 20.♟d5 ♟d4 21.♟d3 ♟c8 22.♟c1 ♟g5 23.♟c3 ♟xc3? (23...♟c5 is still good for White but Black has better chances than after the text move, which robs his knight of the d4-square) 24.bxc3 ♟b3 25.♟d1 ♟c5 26.♟e2 e4 27.♟g4 ♟f6 28.♟e1 ♟e5 29.♟e3 ♟h7 30.♟h3 g6 31.f3 exf3 32.gxf3 h5 33.f4 ♟g7 34.♟g2 ♟g8 35.♟h1 ♟f6 36.fxg6 ♟fxg6 37.f5 ♟h4 38.♟c4 ♟g7 39.♟f3 ♟g5 40.♟f4 ♟xf5 41.♟xh4 ♟e7 42.♟d3? After a well-played game Smirin throws the win away. The easiest win is probably 42.♟b5!. After the text move Black managed to draw. 42...♟xd3 43.♟xd3 ♟e4 44.♟g2 ♟xa4 45.♟d1 ½–½ Smirin – Markowski, Rethymnon 2003.

b) 10...♟b6 Markowski's latest try. 11.♟e3 ♟b7 12.♟d2 (12.c3 ♟xe4 13.♟xb4 ♟f6 14.♟g5 0–0 15.a5 d5 16.f4 and here White quite prematurely agreed to a draw in Bakalarz – Markowski, Antalya 2004. Not the best decision as he has a promising attacking position.) 12...e5 13.♟b3 ♟c6 14.♟g5 0–0 15.♟xf6 ♟xf6 16.♟c4 ♟e6 17.♟fd1 The position is very unclear but later won by White in Cyborowski – Markowski, Warsaw 2004.

c) 10...a5 11.c3 e5 12.♟b5! and White is already clearly better. V. Faibisovich – R. Rodkin, Pardubice 2001.

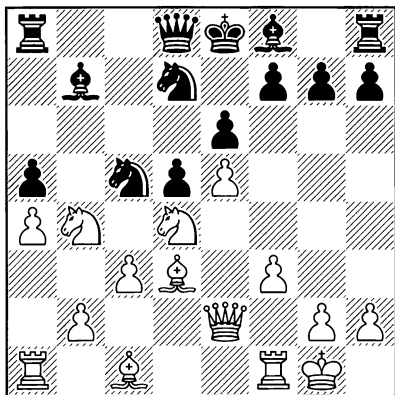
9.a4 b4 10.♟a2 d5

10...♟e7 11.♟xb4! d5 12.e5 ♟xb4 13.exf6 ♟xf6 14.c3 ♟e7 15.♟b5! ♟d7 (15...♟f8 16.♟d3 e5 17.♟b3 leaves White only slightly better.) 16.♟xd7 ♟xd7 17.♟e3 ♟hc8 18.♟f3 ♟d6 And here, instead of 19.♟fe1 (Ribli – Garcia Martinez, Cienfuegos 1972), White should play 19.♟d4! with an obvious advantage.

11.e5 ♟e4 12.c3 ♟d7

12...bxc3 13.♟xc3 ♟xc3 14.bxc3 ♟c7 15.♟b1 and White is better according to Smirin. Black

has no way to develop his pieces in a sensible way. And where is Black's king supposed to go?
 13.f3 ♖ec5 14.♖xb4 a5



15.♖bc6!

Very smart. Smirin has calculated that the discovered check is harmless.

15...♗xc6

15...♗b6 16.♗b5 ♖b3 17.♗e3 ♖xa1 18.♖xe6.

16.♖xc6 ♗b6 17.♗b5 ♖b3?!

17...♗c8 is better, but even here White is clearly better after 18.♗e3 ♗xc6 19.b4! ♗c7 20.♗ab1 ♗a7 21.♖h1 ♗e7 22.bxc5 ♗xc5 23.♗g5 0-0 24.f4 with a nice kingside attack in the making.

18.♗e3 ♗c5 19.♗ae1 ♗c8 20.♗xc5 ♗xc5† 21.♖h1!

A computer move.

21...♗xc6 22.♗d1!

The rest is easy. White is just a pawn up.

22...♗c7 23.♗xb3 0-0 24.♗d1 ♖b6 25.f4 g6 26.♗f3 ♖g7 27.♗h3 h5 28.♗d3 ♖c8 29.f5

A forceful shift of gear.

29...exf5 30.♗xd5 ♗f2 31.e6 ♗xb2 32.♗d7 ♗xc3 33.e7!

Winning a piece.

33...♖xe7 34.♗d4†

1-0

Game 34

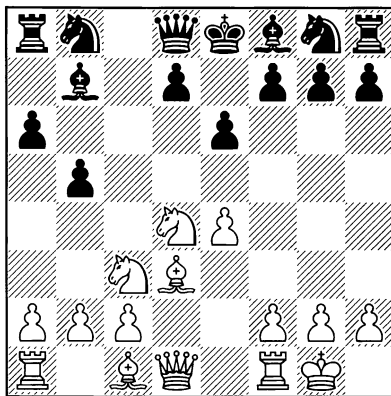
Ponomarev – Gallagher

Biel 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 a6 5.♖c3 b5 6.♗d3 ♗c5

Another way to try to reach the positions with White's knight stuck at b3.

The alternative is 6...♗b7 7.0-0 and apart from 7... ♗b6, which we looked at in Game 5, Black has the following options:



1) 7...♗c7 (In combination with b5 and ♗b7 this is begging for trouble. The position often arises via 5... ♗c7 too.) 8.♗e1!?. Getting ready for a knight jump to d5. Now we have:

1a) 8...♖c6 9.♖xc6 ♗xc6 (9...♗xc6 10.♖d5! and 9...dxc6 10.a4 is better for White) 10.a4 b4 11.♖d5 ♖f6 12.♗d2 ♗c5 13.c3 and White has the initiative.

1b) 8...d6 9.a4! bxa4 (9...b4 10.♖d5! A typical sacrifice even though 10.♖a2 with the usual plan of attacking the queenside is safe and good, 10...exd5 11.exd5† ♖e7 and here instead of 12.♖f5 which looked unclear in Stocek – Protaziuk, Zagan 1995, I prefer 12.♗g5 g6 13.♗e2!?) with an interesting attacking position.) 10.♗xa4 White's play in this game is very instructive: 10...♖f6 11.♗c4 ♗d8 12.♗b4 ♗c7 13.♗g5 ♗e7 14.♗c4 ♖c6 15.♖xc6 ♗xc6 16.♗xf6 gxf6 17.♗b3 ♗g8 18.♗h5 ♗g6 19.♗xh7 f5 20.♖d5 1-0 Ribli – Tokaji, Hungary 1967.

1c) 8...b4?! 9.♖d5! (The alternative 9.♖ce2 led to a White success after ♖f6 10.♖g3 ♗c5 11.♖b3 ♗d6 12.♗d2 ♖c6 13.c3 a5 14.♖d4 ♗c5 15.♗e3 ♖e5 16.♖b5 ♗b6 17.♗xc5 ♗xc5 18.cxb4 1-0 in Tiviakov – Anand, Tilburg

1992 but the text move is more forceful.) 9...exd5 10.exd5† ♘d8 11.♞h5! and White's attack is very strong.

1d) 8...♙d6 rapidly led to a disaster for Black. 9.♗f3 b4 10.♗a4 ♘c6 11.♙e3 ♘e5 12.♗xe5 ♙xe5 13.♞h5 ♗f6 14.♞h4 ♞c6? 15.♞g5 d6? 16.f4 1-0 Krakops – Kunte, Zagan 1997.

1e) 8...♙c5!? 9.♗b3 ♙e7 10.♞g4 g6 11.♙g5 is similar to Game 2.

1f) 8...♙e7 and in Emms – Franklin, West Bromwich 2004, White tried the adventurous 9.e5 (9.♞e2!? is a good alternative) and after 9...b4 10.♗a4 ♘c6 11.♗xc6 ♙xc6 12.b3 h5 13.♙e4 h4 14.♞f3 ♙c8 15.♙d2 ♗h6 16.♙ac1 ♗f5 17.c3 bxc3 18.♙xc3 he had gained a big advantage. The game concluded: 18...0-0 19.g4 hxg3 20.hxg3 ♙xe4 21.♞xe4 ♞a7 22.♗g2 d5 23.exd6 ♗xd6 24.♞f3 ♙f6 25.♙d3 ♙f8 26.♙a5 1-0.

1g) 8...♗f6 is as usual answered by 9.e5!. Black went 9...♗d5 in Haba – Voloshin, Plzen 2003. After 10.♗xd5 ♙xd5 11.♞g4 ♘c6 12.♗xc6 ♞xc6 13.♙d2 h5 White could have gained a clear advantage with 14. ♞g5 when Black has problems developing. In the game White played 14.♞h3?! and still won with some luck.

2) 7...d6 8.♞e2!

2a) 8...♗f6 Transposes to Game 33.

2b) 8...♗c6 9.♗xc6 ♙xc6 10.a4! with a clear advantage.

2c) 8...♗d7 9.a4 bxa4 10.♗xa4 and White is a little better.

3) 7...♗e7 8.♙g5! has long been known to be good for White. Both 8...h6 and 8...f6 should be answered by 9.♙e3 when Black's structure is weakened and White has good attacking chances.

4) 7...♗c6!? 8.♗xc6

4a) 8...dxc6 9.e5 (9.a4!) ♘e7 10.♞h5 ♞c7 11.♙e1 ♗g6 12.♙xg6 fxg6 13.♞g4 ♞f7 14.♗e4 ♞f5 15.♞h4 c5 16.♗d6† ♙xd6 17.exd6 and White went on to win in Emms – Crouch, England 1997.

4b) 8...♙xc6 9.♙e1!

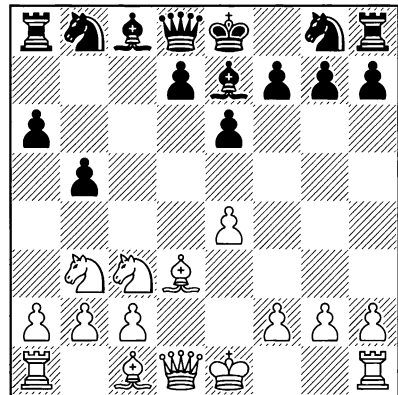
4b1) 9...♗f6 10.e5 is slightly better for White after 10...b4 11.♗e4. Black has some problems with his queenside pawns.

4b2) 9...♞b8!? 10.a4! b4 11.♗d5 ♙d6 12.♞h5 ♙xd5 13.exd5 ♗f6 14.♞g5 ♗f8 A concession. The rest of the game is instructive – White goes very hard after Black's king. 15.dxe6 dxe6 16.♞h4 ♗e7 17.a5 ♙c8 18.♙d2 b3 19.♙c3 bxc2 20.♙xc2 ♞b5 21.♙ad1 ♙c4 22.♞h3 ♗g4 23.♙xd6 ♗xd6 24.♙d3 ♙xc3 25.bxc3 ♞g5 26.♞g3† ♗e7 27.♙e2 ♞d2 28.♗f1 h5 29.h3 ♙c8 30.♙d1 1-0 Tiviakov – Perez Candelario Malaga 2003.

4b3) 9...d6 10.a4 is good for White. 10...b4 is answered by 11.♗d5!.

4b4) 9...♗e7 10.♞h5 ♗g6 11.a4 b4 12.♗d5 ♙d6 and now, instead of 13.♙e3 which was later drawn in Ponomarev - Dao Thien Hai, New Delhi 2000, I prefer 13.♙d2!?.

7.♗b3 ♙e7



8.♞g4! g6

8...♗f6 9.♞xg7 ♙g8 10.♞h6 ♘c6 11.♙f4 and Black has no compensation for the pawn.

9.♞e2

Back to the ideal square. Compared to the line 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♙d3 ♙c5 6.♗b3 ♙e7 7.♞g4 g6 8.♞e2 Black has played b7-b5 too early and White can punish this with a well-timed a2-a4.

9...d6 10.0-0 b4!?

A strange move but White was planning to hit this pawn anyway with a2-a4 (as usual).

11.♗d1

11.♗b1 is also interesting.

11...♙b7 12.a3!

Another way to attack the queenside.

12...♟c6

12...bxa3 13.♞xa3 is slightly better for White.

13.♟d2 bxa3

13...a5 is answered by 14.♟b5.

14.♞xa3

According to notes by Ribli in *Chessbase Magazine*, White is now clearly better

– I agree.

14...♞c8

Defending a6.

15.♟e3 f6 16.♟c4 ♞c7 17.♟ca5

Now “Pono” wraps it up nicely.

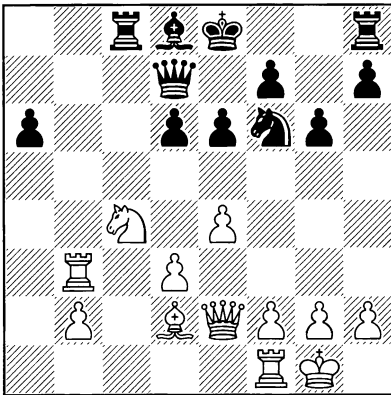
17...♟e5 18.♟xb7

The bishop will be sorely missed.

18...♟xd3 19.cxd3 ♞xb7 20.♟a5 ♞d7

20...♞xb2 21.♞b3 ♞a2 22.♞b7 with an attack.

21.♞b3 ♞c8 22.♟c4 ♟d8



23.♟h6! d5 24.♟b6 ♟xb6 25.♞xb6 ♞a4
26.♞f3 ♟d7 28.dxe4 ♞a5 29.♞b7 ♞h5 30.♞f4
e5 31.♞d2 ♟c5 32.♞a7 g5 33.♞d6
1–0

And here I conclude the survey of the Kan and move on to the Taimanov.

Part II: The Taimanov

Against the Taimanov I recommend the following system: 1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟c6 5.♟c3 ♞c7 6.♟e3 a6 7.♟d3.

This is one of White’s most aggressive systems. In no time White finishes his development and is ready for action. Plaskett’s remark in his book from 1997 *The Sicilian Taimanov* is still valid: ‘It is possible for great violence to occur very early on in these games as you will soon gather’. A good rule of thumb is: **If you spot an attacking idea – go for it!**

In Game 34 we will investigate 7...b5. This move has a very good reputation. In Games 35-39 we will look at Black’s different moves after 7...♟f6 8.0-0. In Game 40 we cover the lines after 5...a6.

Game 34

Hector – Lindberg

Umeå 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟c6 5.♟c3 ♞c7 6.♟e3 a6 7.♟d3 b5

This has a very good reputation. Once, when I was preparing to play against Hector, I noticed that the line he plays against this variation is actually very annoying for Black. So here we go.

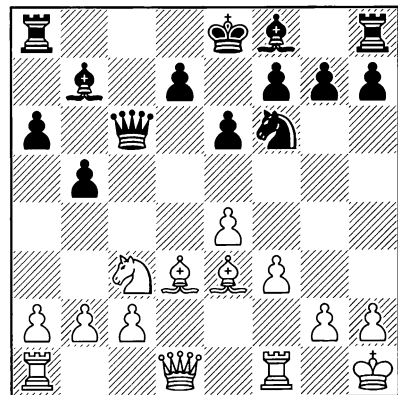
8.♟xc6

The move b7-b5 is almost always answered by ♟xc6 in the Taimanov.

8...♞xc6 9.0-0 ♟b7 10.♟h1(!)

Preparing f2-f3!

10...♟f6 11.f3!?



I like this idea. White just fortifies the centre

and gets ready to attack Black's queenside with a4. Just like we did against many lines in the Kan.

11...♙c5!

I think this move is best. Black has two alternatives.

a) 11...♙c7 is risky. 12.a4 b4 13.♗e2 ♙e7 14.♙d2 0-0 15.♟f1 ♟f8 And now instead of 16.♙ad1?, which allowed 16...d5! 17.e5 ♗e4!! and Black was better and went on to win in Hector – Cramling, Malmo 2001, I like 16.♗d4!. For instance 16...d5 17.e5 ♗d7 (17...♙xe5 18.♙f4 ♙h5 19.♟e5 ♙h4 20.g3 ♙h3 21.♙f1 and wins) And White has a very nice French structure. Do not get confused by the chess programs' evaluations - they do not understand the position! Sample line: 18.♙g5!? ♙c5 19.♗b3 ♙f8 20.♙e2 ♗c5 21.♗xc5 ♙xc5 22.f4 h6 23.♙h4 ♙d4 24.♟ab1 and White has a free hand on the kingside.

b) 11...d6 12.♙d2 ♙e7 13.a4 bxa4 14.♟xa4 0-0 15.♟fa1 ♟f8 and 16.♙e2 (16.♗e2!? might be better. For instance, 17...d5 17.e5 ♗d7 18.♙g5 ♙f8 19.♟h4 h6 20.♙f4 with an interesting attacking position.). 16...d5 17.exd5 ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♙xd5 19.♙xa6 (White could also force a good ending with 19.♙e4 ♙d7 20.♙d3) Hector – Tozer, Copenhagen 2002, concluded 19...♙xa6 20.♟xa6 ♟xa6 21.♟xa6 ♙e5 22.♟a7 ♙d6 23.f4 ♙xb2 24.♙a6 ♙b1† 25.♙g1 ♙b8 26.g3 h6 27.c4 ♙c5 28.♟b7 ♙d6 29.♙xd6 ♙xd6 30.♟d7 ♟c6 31.♗g2 g5 32.♗f3 ♗g7 33.h4 gxf4 34.gxf4 h5 35.♙d4† ♗g6 36.♗e4 f6 37.f5† 1-0.

12.♙e1 ♙xe3 13.♙xe3 ♙c7

A strong move according to Ribli. Alternatives:

a) 13...b4 14.♗e2 0-0 15.♟f1! We have seen this theme before! 15...e5 16.c3 ♙d6 17.♗g3 and White was better in Short – Rogers, Manila 1992.

b) 13...0-0? 14.e5 ♗d5? 15.♗xd5 ♙xd5?? 16.♙e4 ♙xe5 17.♙xh7† ♗xh7 18.♙xe5 wins.

c) 13...d6 14.a4 b4 15.♗a2 ♙c7 16.♙d2 transposes to the main game.

14.a4

14.e5 ♗d5 15.♗xd5 ♙xd5 is equal according

to Ribli - and Ribli is almost always right!

14...b4 15.♗a2 a5 16.c3! bxc3 17.♗xc3 0-0 18.♗b5

18.e5 ♗d5 19.♗xd5 ♙xd5 does not give anything.

18...♙b8 19.e5

White could also try 19.♟ac1!? with the more pleasant position.

19.♟f1 ♟c8 20.♙d2 ♟c5 21.♙f1 ♙c6 22.♗d4 and draw agreed in Lutz – Ribli, Germany 1996, is not what we want!

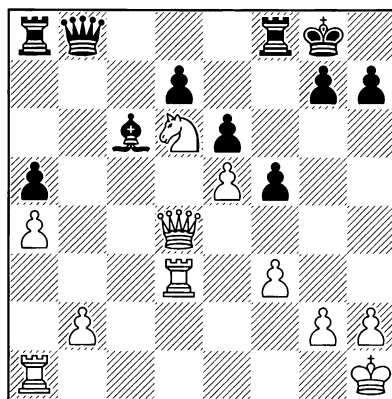
19...♗d5 20.♙e4 f5 21.♙d4!

After 21.exf6 ♗xf6 a draw was agreed in Z. Almasi – Leko, Groningen 1995.

21...♙c6 22.♗d6 ♗b4!

The only chance. If White is allowed to play ♙b5 he will take over the c-file with an easy win.

23.♟fd1 ♗xd3 24.♟xd3



I think this position is great for White. He has all the play and can slowly prepare a kingside assault with a transfer of the queen to the kingside followed by f4 and ♟g3. If White is careful Black will not be able to build up any counterplay.

24...♟a6 25.♙c3 ♙b6 26.b3 ♟a7 27.♟c1 ♟b8 28.♙d2 h6 29.♟c4

29.♟dc3! ♗h7 30.♙e1 ♟f8 31.♙h4 ♟aa8 32.f4 ♙d4 33.♟g3 looks promising. In the game White starts to drift.

29...♗h7 30.h3 ♟f8 31.♗h2 ♟aa8 32.h4 ♟ab8 33.♟dc3 ♙d5 34.♟f4 ♙xb3 35.g4 ♙d5 36.gxf5

exf5 37.h5 ♖e6 38.♞c1 ♞b2 39.♞xb2 ♞xb2†
40.♔g3 ♞g8 41.♞d4 g5 42.hxg6† ♞xg6†
43.♔f4 ♞g8 44.♞c7?

44.♞h1! and White should not lose.
44...♞b4 45.♔b5 ♞b8 46.♔e3 ♔g6 47.f4 ♔f7
48.♞a7 h5 49.♞xa5 ♞b3† 50.♔f2 h4 51.♞d1
♞b2† 52.♔e3 h3 53.♔d4 h2 54.♔xe6 ♞8b3†
55.♔d4 ♞b1

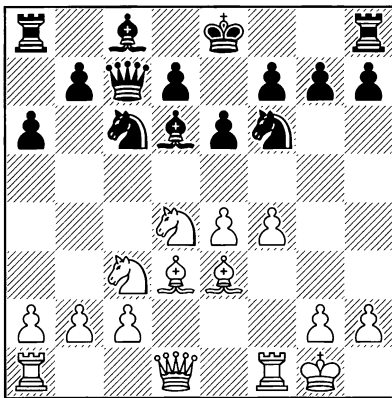
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It is noteworthy that Ribli does not play this line anymore.

Game 36
Hector – Pogorelov
Copenhagen 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♔f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♔xd4 ♔c6 5.♔c3
♞c7 6.♖e3 a6 7.♖d3 ♔f6 8.0-0 ♖d6

8...b5 just transposes to Game 35 after
9.♔xc6 ♞xc6 10.f3 ♖b7 10.♔h1. We will deal
with Black's other options: 8...h5, 8...♔xd4,
8...♔e5 and 8...d6 in the following games.
9.f4



A very aggressive move. White is trying to punish Black for the extravagant bishop move. 9...♖c5

Once again we dive into a heavy theoretical minefield.

- a) 9...♔xd4 10.e5!
- a1) 10...♖xe5 is risky. 11.fxg5 ♞xe5 12.♞d2 with a further split:
- a1a) 12...b5 13.♞ae1 ♔g4 14.♖f4 ♞c5

15.♔h1 ♖b7 16.h3 ♔f6 17.♖e5 and White has a huge initiative.

a1b) 12...♔g4 13.♖f4 ♞c5 14.♔h1 f5 (14...e5 15.♞ae1) 15.♔a4 ♞c6 16.♞b4 b5 17.♞xd4 ♖b7 18.♞f3 bxa4 19.♞xg7! and White is much better. This is an improvement on 19.♖xf5 which ended in a draw in Vavra – Bunk, Bayern 1999.

a1c) 12...♔d5? 13.♔xd5 ♞xd5 14.c4 ♞d6 15.♞f2 ♔f5 16.♖xf5 exf5 17.♖c5 1-0 Roger – Lemeaux, France 2002.

a1d) 12...♔c6 13.♞ae1 0-0 (13...b5 14.♔h1!? ♖b7 15.♖g5! (improving on 15.♖b6 from Senff – Mieziš, Oslo 2003) 15...♞b8 16.♖xf6 gxf6 17.♔d5 with a fantastic attack.) 14.♖b6 ♞h5 15.♞xf6! gxf6 And now instead of 16.♔e4 as in Garcia – Lukov, La Pobla de Lillet 1996, White can play 16.♞e3! ♔e5 17.♖d4!! with a winning attack.

a2) 10...♔c6!? 11.exf6 (11.exd6 is unclear) 11...gxf6 12.♞h5 (12.♞g4 ♖e7 13.♞g7 ♞f8 14.♔e4 f5 15.♔f6† ♖xf6 16.♞xf6 is very unclear) 12...♖e7 (12...f5 13.♖xf5 ♞a5 14.♖g4 ♞xh5 15.♖xh5 ♖b4 16.♔a4! and White is clearly better) 13.f5 ♔e5 14.♞ad1 b5 and instead of 15.♖e4 which turned out badly for White after 15...♖b7 16.♖d4 0-0-0 17.♖xb7† ♞xb7 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.♖xe5 fxe5 20.♞xe5 ♞hg8 21.♔e4 ♞g4 22.♞d4 ♞dg8 23.g3 ♞c7 24.♞xc7† ♔xc7 in Hector – S. Salov, Copenhagen 1997, I prefer 15.fxe6 dxe6 16.♖e4 ♖b7 17.♖d4 0-0-0 18.♖xe5 fxe5 19.♖xb7† ♞xb7 20.♞xe5 with a slight advantage.

a3) 10...♖c5 11.exf6

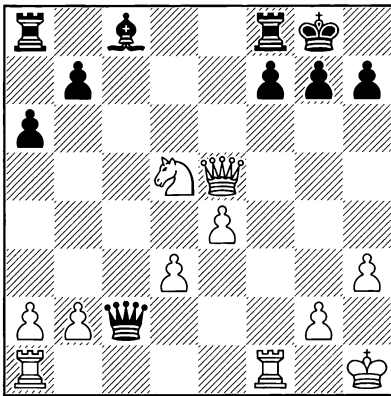
a3a) 11... ♔xc2 The very famous game Azmaiparashvili – Kurajica, Strumica 1995, continued 12.fxg7 ♖xe3† 13.♔h1 ♞g8 14.♞xc2 ♞xg7 15.♞ae1 ♖xf4 16.♞xf4 ♞xf4 17.♔d5 ♞h4 18.♞e4 ♞g4 19.g3 ♞g5 20.♔c7† ♔d8 21.♔xa8 ♞xe4 22.♖xe4 ♞a5 23.♞c3 ♞xc3 24.bxc3 d5 25.♖xh7 b5 26.♔b6 ♖b7 27.♔g1 ♔c7 28.h4 d4 29.h5 dxc3 30.♖c2 f5 31.h6 ♖e4 32.h7 1-0. It was rumoured that this game was prearranged, or maybe not even played at all, but that does not change the verdict: 11... ♔xc2 is bad.

a3b) 11...♔f5 12.♖xc5 ♞xc5† 13.♞f2 is just

better for White. 13...g6 (13...gxf6 14.♖h5 is very good for White) 14.♙xf5 gxf5 and here I like 15.♗f3 preventing b7-b5.

a3c) 11...♖b5 12.fxg7! ♙xe3† 13.♗h1 ♖g8 14.♙xb5 ♖xg7 (14...axb5 15.♗d3 wins for White) 15.♙d3 ♙xf4 16.♖e4 ♙e5 17.♗h5 b5 (17...d6 18.♖f6† ♙xf6 19.♖xf6 and with the other rook coming to f1, White has good chances.) 18.♖xf7! is good for White. 18...♖xf7 19.♖g5 etc.

b) 9...e5?! has only been seen in one game. It received severe punishment: 10.♖f5 exf4 11.♖xd6† ♗xd6 12.♙xf4 ♖c5† 13.♗h1 d6 14.♗f3 0-0 15.♖d5 ♖g4 16.♗g3 ♖ce5 17.h3 ♖xd3 18.cxd3 ♖e5 19.♙xe5 dxe5 20.♗xe5 ♗c2



21.♖xf7! Boom! 1-0 in Mussanti – Triunfetti, Buenos Aires 2002.

10.♖f5 ♖e7

A tricky move that forces White to sacrifice a piece.

Black has a safer alternative in

10...♙xe3† 11.♖xe3 d6 (11...♗b6?! 12.♗d2) 12.♗h1! with the following split:

a) 12...b5? 13.♙xb5 axb5 14.♖xb5 ♗d8 15.♖xd6† ♗e7 16.e5 ♖e8 17.♗f3 ♙d7 18.♖ad1 And White has great compensation.

b) 12...b6(!) Best according to Ribli. 13.♗e1! White is planning ♗g3 or ♗h4

13...♙b7 (13...0-0 14.♗h4 with a nice attacking position) 14.♖c4! and now:

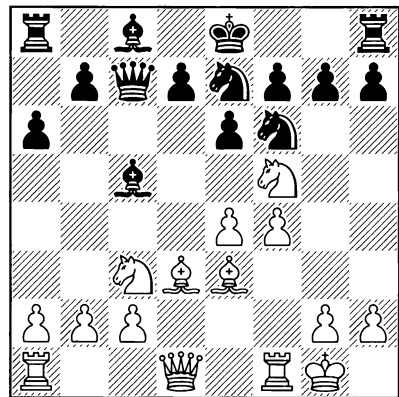
b1)14... b5 15.♖xd6† ♗xd6 16.e5 ♗e7

17.exf6 gxf6 And now 18.f5 is nice for White. b2) 14...0-0 15.e5 is great for White.

b3)14...0-0 15.♗h4! ♖ad8 16.♖ae1 b5 (16...h6 17.e5) 17.♖xd6! and White has a huge attack.

c) 12...0-0?! 13.g4 (13.♖f3 is also good. The game De Vilder – Kiseleva, Amsterdam 2000, was short and sweet. 13...b5 14.♖h3 ♖b4 15.e5 ♖xd3 16.♗xd3 dxe5 17.♖g4 ♖d8 18.♖xf6† gxf6 19.♗xh7† ♗f8 20.♖e4 1-0) 13...d5 (13...b5 14.g5 ♖d7 15.♗h5! ♙b7 and now 16.♖f3 with 17.♖h3 coming is very good for White according to Timman – I do not see a defence for Black.) 14.g5 ♖xe4 15.♖cxd5 exd5 16.♖xd5 ♖g3† 17.hxg3 ♗d7 18.♗f3 ♗h3† 19.♗g1 ♙g4 20.♗g2 ♖ad8 and White was just a pawn up in Manso Gil – De la Riva Aguado, Zamora 1996, even though the game ended in a draw.

10...♗b6?! 11.♖xg7† is a worse version than the text.



11.♖xg7† ♗f8 12.♙xc5 ♗xc5† 13.♗h1 ♗xg7 14.e5 ♖e8

The clumsy 14...♖fg8 turned out badly for Black after 15.♖e4 ♗c6 16.♖d6 f5 17.♗h5 ♖g6 18.♙xf5! exf5 19.♖xf5† ♗f8 20.♖d6 ♖f6 21.♗h6† ♗e7 22.♗g7† ♗d8 23.♗xf6† ♗c7 24.f5 ♖g8 25.♖f3 ♗d5 26.fxg6 1-0 in Abashev – Chernyshov, Voronezh 1998.

15.♖e4 ♗b6

15...♗c7 16.♗h5 ♖g6 17.♖f6! has been known as good for Whitesince Topalov–Huebner,

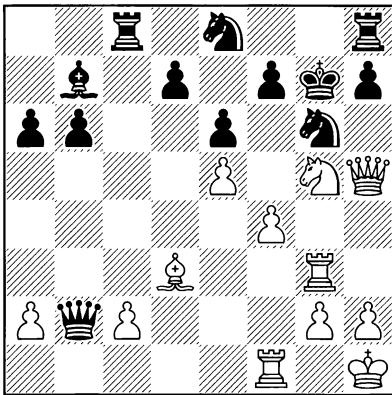
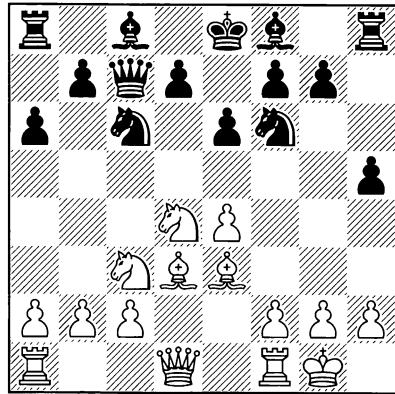
Wijk aan Zee 1996. The text move was doing fine for Black, but this game changed theory's verdict from unclear to winning for White.
 16. ♖h5 ♘g6 17. ♜f3 ♜xb2 18. ♜af1 b6

18...b5 should also be answered by 19. ♘g5!
 19. ♘g5!

19...♞h3 was unsuccessful after ♙b7 20. ♖h6† ♘g8 21. ♘g5 ♜c8 22. ♘h7 ♜xc2 23. ♙xc2 ♜xc2 24. ♜g1 b5 25. f5 ♜xf5 26. ♞h5 ♜c2 27. h4 ♜f2 0–1 in Paalman – Van der Elburg, Dieren 2001.

19...♙b7 20. ♜g3 ♜c8

20...♜xa2 21. ♘xf7 ♘xf7 22. f5 with a winning attack.



21. ♘h7!

21. ♘xf7 ♘xf7 22. ♙xg6† hxg6 23. ♜xh8 also wins.

21...♞xh7 22. ♜xg6† fxg6 23. ♜xg6† ♘f8 24. ♜xh7 ♘g7 25. ♙g6 ♜b5 26. ♜h8† ♘e7 27. ♜h4†!

Please stay.

27...♘f8 28. ♜f6† ♘g8 29. ♙f7† ♘f8 30. ♙xe6† ♘e8 31. ♙f7† ♘f8 1–0.

Game 37

Parligras – Miladinovic
 Istanbul 2002

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♘c3 e6 4. d4 cxd4 5. ♘xd4 ♜c7 6. ♙e3 a6 7. ♙d3 ♘f6 8. 0–0 h5?!

A speciality of Miladinovic. I have tried this line on several occasions in blitz (it is kind of cool just to lunge forward with the h-pawn in Larsen-style) but I do not believe it is a good move. Too often the h-pawn would just love to get back to h7. And where is the black king going to go?

9. h3 b5

9...♘d4 is similar to 8...♘d4 except for the position of the h-pawns. 10. ♙xd4 ♙c5 11. ♙xc5 ♜xc5 12. ♘a4 Now with h5 and h3 inserted this move is good.

a) 12...♜c6 got Black into trouble surprisingly quickly in Cuartas – Arias, Medellin 2003.

13. c4 d6 14. ♜c1 ♙d7 15. ♘c3 g5 16. ♜f3 ♘e7 17. ♘d5†! A typical device. 17...exd5 18. exd5 ♜b6 19. ♜fe1† ♙e6 20. ♙f5 1–0.

b) 12...♜c7 13. c4 d6 14. ♜c1 The black h-pawn is misplaced in this structure. 14...b6 (14...♙d7 went wrong for Black in the following very instructive game. 15. ♘c3 ♜c5 16. a3 g5 Played in the grand style, but very risky! 17. ♜f3 ♜e5 18. ♜e3 ♘e7 19. ♜fe1 ♞c8 20. ♜cd1 h4 21. ♜d2 ♜f4 22. ♜e3 ♘f8 23. ♙f1 ♜c6 24. ♘e2! Winning material. 24...♘xe4 [24...♜e5 25. ♘d4] 25. ♜e1 ♜xf2† 26. ♜xf2 ♘xf2 27. ♘xf2 ♜xc4 28. ♜xd6 ♘e7 29. ♜d2 g4 30. hxg4 ♜xg4 31. ♘d4 ♜f4† 32. ♘f3 ♜c8 33. ♜d4 1–0 Kolev – Miezis, Leon 2001) 15. b4 ♘d7 16. ♜e1 ♙b7 17. ♙f1 ♜d8 18. ♜d4 e5 19. ♜e3 ♜b8 20. c5!.. This is typical: with the h-pawn gone sailing away White can play very aggressively. We have been following S. Petrosian

– Stanke, Germany 2002. The game concluded:
 20...bxc5 21.bxc5 ♖a5 22.c6 ♜xa4 23.♞c4 ♖a5
 24.cxd7† ♘xd7 25.♞b1 ♞hc8 26.♞cb4!. A nasty
 pin. 26...♞c7 27.♞c4 f6 28.♞f3 ♞xc4 29.♞xc4
 ♞d5 30.♞xb8 ♞xc4 31.♞xh5 ♖e1† 32.♘h2 1–0
 10.♘xc6!

White almost always put this knight to sleep
 after b7-b5.

10...♞xc6 11.♞e2!

A new idea, which was first played by
 Kotronias in 2001.

11...♞c7

a) 11...b4 12.e5 bxc3 13.exf6 gxf6 14.bxc3
 ♞b8 And now instead of the crazy 15.♞xh5?!
 from A. Vouldis – H. Banikas, Athens 2001
 (0-1, 42) White should play 15.♞e1!?. Here is a
 possible line: 15...♞e7 16.c4 ♞b7 17.♞f3 ♞xc4
 18.♞b1 ♞c8 19.c4 with good compensation for
 the pawn.

b) 11...♞b7 12.♞f3! e5 (a concession) 13.♞g5
 (13.♘d5?! might be better) and White won after
 13...♞b4 14.♞xf6 ♞xc3 15.♞xg7 ♞g8 16.bxc3
 ♞xg7 17.♞e1 ♞xc3 18.♞e3 ♞c5 19.♞xh5 0–0–0
 20.♞g4 ♘b8 21.a4 d5 22.axb5 axb5 23.♞b3
 ♞d6 24.♞ab1 dxe4 25.♞e2 f5 26.♞xf5 e3
 27.♞xb5 ♞xg2† 28.♘h1 ♞g7† 29.♞e4 1–0 in
 M. Parligras – A. Botsari, Kavala 2002.

12.♞f3 ♞b8 13.♞d4 b4

13...♞d6 is a rather risky alternative. Roskar
 – Kukovec, Dobrna 2002 continued: 14.♞e1!
 ♞h2† 15.♘h1 ♞e5 16.♘d5! Always look out
 for this move when Black's king is stuck in
 the centre. 16...♞d6 17.c3! h4 18.♞d2 ♞b7
 19.♞ad1 ♘h7 and here instead of 20.♘e3
 I prefer the more straightforward 20.♞xe5!
 ♞xe5 21.♘b4 ♞d8 22.♞e3 and White is much
 better.

14.e5 bxc3 15.exf6 cxb2 16.♞b1!?

A new move. 16.fxg7 ♞xg7 17.♞xg7 ♞g8
 18.♞xb2 ♞xb2 was unclear in Kotronias –
 Miladinovic, Patras 2001.

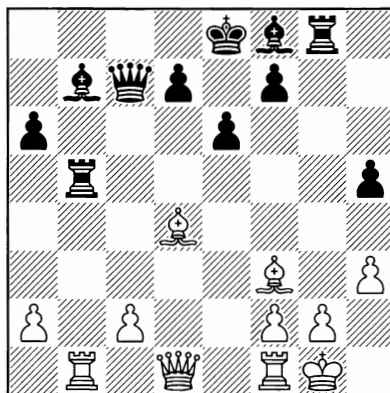
16...gxf6 17.♞xf6 ♞g8 18.♞xb2

The black king is homeless, so White has the
 upper hand.

18...♞b5

18...♞b7 is answered by 19.♞d4!.

19.♞d4 ♞b7



20.♞xb5!?

20.♞b3! is a big improvement: 20...♞xb3
 21.axb3 ♞xf3 22.♞xf3 ♞xc2 23.♞a1 And White
 has a great attacking position.

20...axb5 21.♞e1 ♞g7

21...♞xf3! 22.♞xf3 ♞c6 is fine for Black. The
 rest is rather random.

22.♞xg7 ♞xg7 23.♞d4 ♞g5 24.h4 ♞f5 25.♞xb7
 ♞xb7 26.♞e5 ♞xe5 27.♞xe5 ♞c6 28.♞h8†
 ♘e7 29.♞xh5 ♞xc2 30.♞xb5 d5 31.♞b4†
 ♘e8 32.a4 ♞c1† 33.♘h2 ♞c4 34.♞b5† ♘e7
 35.g3 ♘f6 36.♞xc4 dxc4 37.a5 c3 38.a6
 c2 39.a7 c1=♞ 40.a8=♞ ♘g7 41.♘g2 ♞c4
 42.♞f3 f5 43.♞e3 ♘f7 44.♞d2 ♞e4† 45.♘h2
 ♞f3 46.♞e3 ♞d5 47.♞e2 ♞d4 48.♞h5†
 ♘g7 49.♞f3 ♞b4 50.♘h3 ♞b5 51.g4 fxg4†
 52.♞xg4† ♘f6 53.♘g3 ♞f1 54.♞f3† ♘g6
 55.h5† ♘g7 56.♞g4† ♘f6 57.♞g6† ♘e5
 58.♞g5† ♘d6 59.♞f4† ♘e7 60.h6 ♞g1†
 61.♘h4 ♞h1† 62.♘g4 ♞d1† 63.f3 ♞c2 64.h7
 ♞c3 65.♞g5† ♘d7 66.♞b5† ♘c7 67.♞g5
 ♘d7 68.f4 ♞b2 69.♞e5 ♞g2† 70.♘h5 ♞h1†
 71.♘g6 ♞b1† 72.♘g7 ♞g1† 73.♘f7
 1–0

Game 38

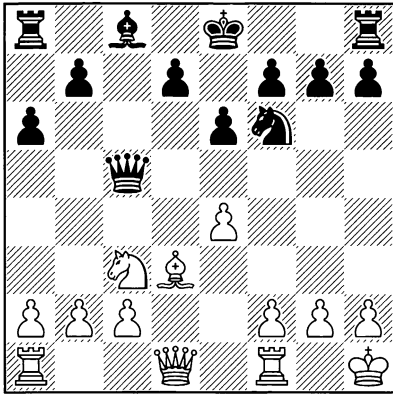
Almasi – Piket

Istanbul 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3
 ♞c7 6.♞e3 a6 7.♞d3 ♘f6 8.0–0 ♘d4

Black is trying to exchange everything and achieve a draw.

9.♙xd4 ♘c5 10.♙xc5 ♖xc5 11.♚h1!



This is very similar to Hector's play in Game 34.

11...b5 12.♖e1!

Looking to both sides of the board. A nice flexible move.

12...♙b7

After 12...d6 I recommend 12.f3 but 13.f4 is also possible.

13.f3

Just following the recipe from Game 35.

13...d6 14.a4 b4

14...bxa4 15.♙xa4 is, as usual, a little better for White.

15.♗a2 a5 16.c3

16.♙b5† ♚e7 (16...♙c6 17.♙xc6† ♖xc6 18.c3 bxc3 19.♗xc3 is good for White says Ribli.) 17.c3 transposes to the game.

16...bxc3 17.♙b5† ♚e7

17...♙c6 18.♗xc3 is a little better for White.

18.♗xc3 ♖hc8

18...♖hd8 might be more logical. White is slightly better after 19.♖d1 ♚f8 20.♖d3 ♚g8 21.♖d2.

19.♖d1 ♚f8 20.♖d3

With his good bishop at b5, pressure against d6 and more activity, White is better.

20...d5!?

20...♖c7 was suggested by Ribli, but after

21.♖g3 e5 22.♖fd1 ♖d8 23.♖e1 ♖b4 24.♖d2 White is simply winning the d6-pawn.

21.e5

21.exd5 ♗xd5 22.♗xd5 ♙xd5 gives nothing.

21...♗g8!?

Ribli suggest 21...♗e8!?! as an improvement for Black, but then 22.f4! planning a kingside attack looks promising. A sample line: 22...♗c7 23.♖h4 ♚g8 24.♖h3 h6 25.♖g3 ♚h8 26.♙d3 d4 and now 27.f5! gives White a winning attack (Fritz is happy!).

22.♗e2

22.f4 ♗h6 is Black's idea.

22...♗e7 23.♗d4!?

23.♖h4!?! is a better try. Sample line: 23...♚g8 24.♖c3 ♖b4 25.♖xb4 axb4 26.♖xc8† ♙xc8 27.b3 ♙a6 28.♙xa6 ♖xa6 29.♗d4 and it seems White has the better ending.

23...♙c6!?

23...♗c6! equalizes.

24.g4!

Rules out ...♗f5 altogether.

24...♙xb5 25.axb5 a4!?

A strange move.

26.♖f2 a3? 27.bxa3!

White is winning.

27...♚e8 28.♖e3 ♖a4 29.♖b1

29.f4 is not bad.

29...♖b8 30.f4 h5 31.gxh5 ♖c4 32.♖g1 ♚d7 33.♖xg7 ♖h8 34.f5 ♖xh5 35.♖xf7 exf5 36.e6† ♚c8 37.♚g2 ♖h4 38.♗f3 ♖c2† 39.♚g3 ♖g4† 40.♚h3 d4 41.♖xd4 ♗d5 42.e7!

1-0

Game 39

Ponomariov – Sadler
Enghien les Bains 1999

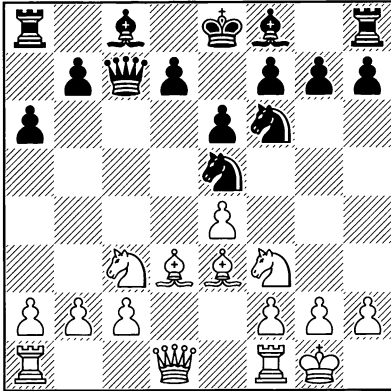
1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖c7!?

Another way to reach the mainline Taimanov. Black is sidestepping the 5.♗b5 line.

5.♗c3 e6 6.♙e3 a6 7.♙d3 ♗f6 8.0-0 ♗e5

Black's threat is 9...♗fg4. This is by far Black's best line against White's aggressive system.

9.♗f3!?



9.h3 is the main line, and the rather meek 9.♘e2 is also possible. The text move is an invention of Ponomarev. It is very tricky and White does not have to play the risky f2-f4 as in the main line.

9...♗f4

Black has 7 (!) alternatives.

a) 9...♘d6 10.♗xe5 ♘xe5 11.f4 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♜xc3 13.e5 ♗d5 14.♘d2 ♜c5† 15.♔h1 b5 and now 16.♞c1! with c4 coming looks promising.

b) 9...♗d6 10.♗a4! ♗ed7 11.c4 ♘e7 12.♞c1 b6 13.b4 0-0 14.♞e1 ♘b7 15.♘d4 ♗g4 16.♘b1 ♞ac8 17.a3 with an interesting position - later won by White in Mamedov – Esplana, Nakhchivan 2003.

c) 9...♗eg4 10.♘d2 ♘c5 11.♞e2 d6 12.h3 ♗e5 13.♗xe5 dxe5 14.♞f3 0-0 15.♘g5 and White is slightly better.

d) 9...♗xf3† 10.♞xf3±

e) 9...♘c5 10.♘xc5 ♜xc5 11.♗a4 ♞a5 12.♗xe5 ♞xe5 13.♗b6 ♞b8 14.♗c4 ♞h5 15.e5 ♞xd1 16.♗d6† ♔f8 17.♞axd1 ♗e8 18.♘e4 with an obvious advantage for White, Hector – Buhr, Hamburg 2001.

f) 9...♗c4 10.♘xc4 ♜xc4 11.e5 ♗e4 12.♗xe4 ♞xe4 13.♞e1 ♜c6 14.♘d4 and White is better.

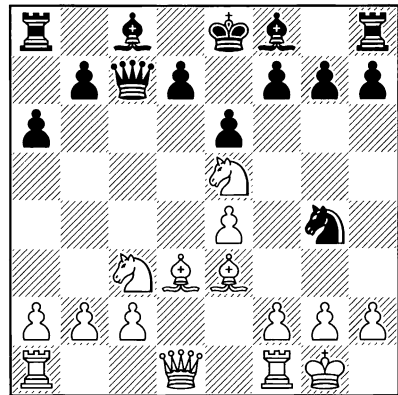
g) 9...♗g6 10.♗a4 is good for White.

10.♗xe5

White has an alternative in 10.♘f4 if he does not like the text move.

10.♘f4 ♘d6 (10...♘e7 11.♗xe5 ♗xe5 is fairly equal - but not a draw). 11.♘g3 ♗xf3† 12.♞xf3

♘g3 13.hxg3 ♗e5 14.♞h5 is about equal. In Areshchenko – Bryzgalin, St Petersburg 2003, the better player won: 14...d6 15.♘e2 b5 16.a3 ♘b7 17.♞ad1 0-0 18.♞d4 ♞ad8 19.g4!? ♗g6 20.♞h2 e5 21.♞d2 ♗f4. This position is fine for Black. 22.♞fd1 ♗e6 23.♞g3 ♗d4 24.♘d3 g6 25.♞e3 ♞d7 26.f3 ♜c7 27.♔f2 ♞e7 28.a4 ♘c6 29.axb5 axb5 30.♗e2 ♗e6 31.♞b6 ♜c7 32.♞xc7 ♗xc7 33.c4 ♞b8 34.♗c3 ♞fc8 35.b3 b4 36.♗e2 ♞a8 37.♘b1 ♗e8 38.♗c1 ♞cb8 39.g3 ♞a1?. This rook soon gets into trouble. 40.♗a2 ♔f8 41.♔e3 ♔e7 42.♞d3 h5 43.gxh5 gxh5 44.♔d2 ♗f6 45.♔c1 ♗xe4 46.fxex4 47.♔b2. Trapping the unlucky rook. 47...♞xb1† 48.♔xb1 ♔e6 49.♔c1 ♘xd3 50.♞xd3 f5 51.♔d2 e4 52.♞d5 ♞g8 53.♗xb4 ♞xg3 54.♗c2 ♞g2† 55.♔c3 ♞g3† 56.♔b4 ♞d3 57.♗d4† ♞xd4 58.♞xd4 h4 59.♔c3 1-0.



10...♗xe5

10...♗xe5 11.f4:

a) 11...♘c5 12.♘xc5 .♞xc5† 13.♔h1 is a little better for White.

b) 11...♗c4 is best says the guru (Ribli). 12.♘xc4 ♜xc4 Now White can choose between the safe 13.♞d3!? ♞xd3 14.cxd3 b5 15.♞ac1 ♘b7 16.♗e2 with a tiny edge or go into the jungle with 13.f5!?. Black answers 13...♘c5! 14.♞f3 b5 (! - Ribli) 15.♘xc5 ♜xc5† 16.♔h1 ♜c7 17.♞ad1 with attacking chances for White according to Ribli. I think he is right. Sample line: 17...0-0 18.f6! ♞e5 19.♞g4 g6 20.♞h4 h5 21.♗d5!?

c) 11...♠xd3 12.cxd3 and White will enjoy a huge initiative after the coming 13.♞c1.

11.♞h5! g6

11...♠xf1 12.♞xf7† ♠d8 13.♞h5 g6 14.♠xg6 ♞g8 15.♠e5 d6 16.♠f7† ♠d7 17.♠xf1 and, even though he has sacrificed an exchange, White is better.

12.♞f3 ♞xe5 13.fxe3 ♞g7?!

a) 13...f6! is clearly a better try. After 14.♞xf6 ♞xf6 15.♞xf6 ♠g7 16.♞f3! I think White is better but he has to play very energetically, otherwise Black's pair of bishops will start to tell: 16...b5 17.♞af1 ♞f8? (Time, and Delchev, have shown that this is where Black should improve his play. Without this mistake it is not clear White has any advantage to speak of – the editors.) 18.♞h3 ♞xf1† 19.♠xf1 h6 20.e5 g5 and now instead of the known 21.♠e4, I like 21.a4! b4 22.♠e4 ♠e7 23.a5! and White seems to be much better. How is Black going to free himself?

b) 13...f5 14.exf5 ♠d6 15.g3 exf5 16.e4 is much better for White.

c) 13...♠c5! 14.♞xf7† ♠d8 15.♞f3 b5 16.♞e2! ♠b7 17.♞f7 with a double-edged position where I prefer White.

14.♞f4

Planning e4-e5 and ♠e4.

14...d6 15.e5!

Very important – White must attack!

15...dxe5

15...♞xe5! 16.♞xf7† ♠d8 17.♠h1, it is rather unclear but I prefer White.

16.♞a4† ♠d7 17.♠b5 0–0–0

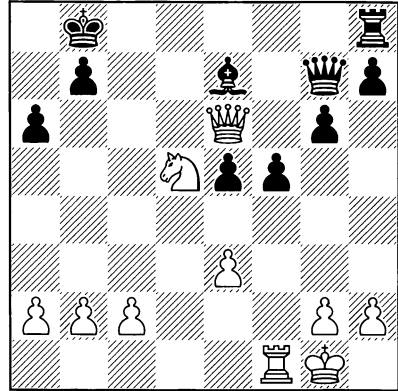
17...♠xb5? 18.♠xb5 0–0–0 19.♞c4† ♠b8 20.♞c7 wins for White (Ribli).

18.♞ad1 f5!

a) 18...♠xb5 19.♞xd8†! 19.♠xd8 20.♠xb5 axb5 21.♞d1† ♠c7 22.♞a5† ♠c6 23.a4 ♠d6 24.axb5† ♠d7 25.♞b6 wins (Ribli).

b) 18...axb5 19.♞a8† ♠c7 20.♠xb5† wins. 19.♞a5 ♠e7 20.♠xa6

According to Ribli, White is a little better – and has a safe position – after 20.♠xd7† ♞xd7 21.♞xd7 ♠xd7 22.♞b6 ♠c8 23.♞xe6† ♠b8 24.♠d5.



This does indeed look good for White, who will have a dominating knight at d5 after c4.

20...♠g5!? 21.♞c5† ♠b8 22.♠xb7?!

Here Ribli recommends the surprising 22.h4!! in *Chessbase Magazine*. After 22...♠h6 23.♞b6 White is much better. This is very complicated though, and I think I would prefer 20.♠xd7†!. 22...♠xb7 23.♞d6 ♠c8!

Strong defence.

24.♞b6† ♠a8 25.♠b5 ♞d7 26.♞c6 26...♠b8 27.♞b6† ♠a8 28.h4 ♠h6 29.♞xe6 ♞g8 30.e4 ♞f8 31.♞c6† ♠b8 32.♠d6 ♠e3† 33.♠h2 ♞d8 34.g3 ♞c7 35.♞b5† ♠b7 36.♞xe5 ♠xe4? 37.♞b5† ♠a8 38.♠xe4?

38.♞xe4! wins.

38...fxe4 39.♞a4† ♠a7 40.♞xe4† ♞b7 41.♠h3 ♞xe4 42.♞xe4 ♞gd8 43.♞fe1 ♠b7 44.a4 ♞c7 ½–½

A fantastic game!

Game 40

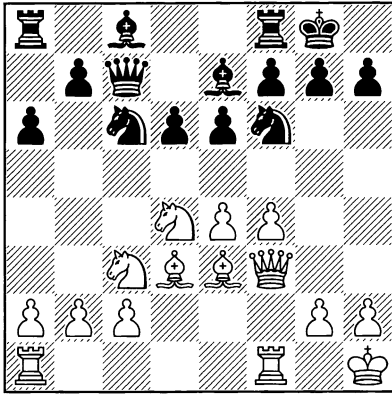
Yagupov – Khusnullin

Tula 1999

1.e4 c5 2.♠f3 e6 3.♠c3 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♠xd4 ♠f6 6.f4

Not our usual move order. The position after move 11 would normally be reached by the following move order 1.e4 c5 2.♠f3 ♠c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♠xd4 e6 5.♠c3 ♞c7 6.♠e3 a6 7.♠d3 ♠f6 8.0–0 d6 9.f4 ♠e7 10.♞f3 0–0 11.♠h1.

6...♖c6 7.♙e3 a6 8.♚f3 ♚c7 9.♙d3 ♙e7
10.0-0 0-0 11.♗h1



In practice Black is getting slaughtered from this position. The reason is simply that White has a very promising kind of classical Scheveningen: The bishop is at d3 and the queen is already active at f3. (In the classical Scheveningen the queen takes the route e1-g3, but here it might skip g3 altogether and go directly to h3).

11...♙d7

a) 11...e5 Here I like 12.♗de2!?. e.g. 12...♗b4 (12...♙e6 13.f5; 12...exf4 13.♗xf4) 13.♙ac1 and 14.a3 is coming.

b) 11...♙e8 12.♙ae1 ♙f8 13.♚g3 ♗b4 14.e5 ♗d7 15.♗e4 ♗xd3 16.cxd3 dxe5 17.f5! ♚a5 18.fxe6 fxe6 19.♚f3 And White won in Korneev – Vidarte Morales, Badalona 1995, after 19...♗f6 20.♗xf6† gxf6 21.♚xf6 ♚c7 22.♗f3 ♙g7 23.♚h4 ♚d8 24.♚h5 ♙f8 25.♗g5 h6 26.♗f7 ♚xd3 27.♙xh6 ♚h7 28.♙e3 1-0.

c) 11...♗xd4 12.♙xd4 b5 13.e5 ♗d5 14.exd6 ♙xd6 15.♗xd5 exd5 16.♚xd5 ♙e6 17.♚h5 g6 18.♚h6 f5 19.♙ae1 and White is a pawn up and went on to win, Mitkov – Bello Filgueira, Burgas 1998.

12.♙ae1

12.a4 is also not bad:

a) 12...b6 13.♙ae1 e5 14.fxe5 ♗xe5 15.♚e2 ♗xd3 16.cxd3 ♙e6 17.♗f5 ♙xf5 18.♙xf5 ♗d7 19.♗d5 ♚d8 20.♙ef1 and White was better and later won in Emms – Baczynski, Hamburg 1995.

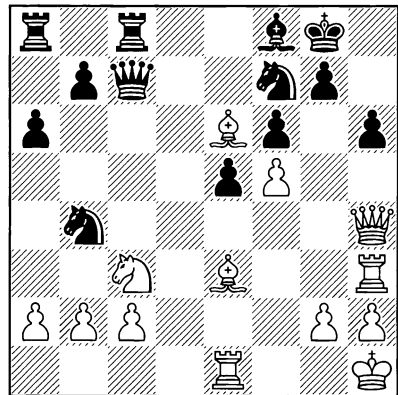
b) 12...♙ac8 led to another success for Emms: 13.♚g3!. A typical attacking move: eyeing g7 and preparing e5. 13...♗h5 14.♚h3 g6 15.f5 ♗xd4 16.♙xd4 ♙f6 17.♙xf6 ♗xf6 18.♚h4! with an 'autoattack'. The rest was instructive:

18...♚d8 19.♙f3 exf5 20.exf5 ♙c6 21.♙h3 ♗h5 22.♚g4 ♗f6 23.♚g5 ♚e7 24.♙e3 ♚d8 25.♙f1 ♗g7 26.♙h3 ♙h8 27.♚h6† ♗g8 28.fxg6 fxg6 29.♙xg6! ♙c7 30.♙g3 1-0 Emms – Naaktgeboren, Hastings 1995.

c) 12...♗xd4 is extremely dangerous. One example: 13.♙xd4 ♙c6 14.♚g3 b6 15.e5!. The typical attacking move in this line. 15...dxe5 16.♙xe5 ♚b7 17.f5! Opening more lines. 17...exf5 18.♙xf5 ♗e8 19.♚h3 ♙d6 20.♙xd6 ♗xd6 21.♙d5!. The winning move. 21...♙fd8 22.♚xh7† ♗f8 23.♙e1 f5 24.♙c4 1-0 Tseshkovsky – Brodsky, Rostov 1993. A model attacking game by White.

12...b5

12...♗b4 is a bit tricky. In S. Polgar – Benkö, Budapest 1998 White quickly got an attack going. 13.♙e2 e5 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.♚g3 ♗e8 16.♗f5 ♙xf5 17.exf5 f6 18.♚h4 ♗d6 19.♙f3!. Black is now defenceless. The finish was nice: 19...♗f7 20.♙h3 h6 21.♙c4 ♙f8 22.♙e6 ♙f8



23.♙xh6 gxf6 24.♙g3† ♗h7 25.♚xf6 1-0 13.♚g3!

Again the standard attacking move. Black already has to be very careful – and even that might not be enough.

13...b4

The (overtly) prophylactic 13...♖h8? loses to 14.♗xc6! ♙xc6 15.♙d4 b4 16.e5 ♗e8 (16...dxe5 17.♙xe5 ♖a5 18.♗e4 ♖g8 19.♗g5 ♖af8 20.♗xh7 ♗xh7 21.♙xh7 ♖xh7 22.♖h3† wins - a typical attack in this line.) 17.♖h3 1-0. Saltaev – Gikas, Katerini 1993.

14.♗ce2 ♖h8 15.♗xc6 ♙xc6 16.♙d4!

The right square for the bishop.

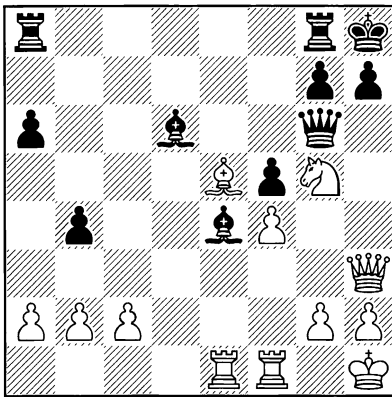
16...♖g8

16...♖ad8 17.e5 dxe5 18.♙xe5 ♖a5 19.♗d4 ♙d5 20.f5 with a nice attack.

17.e5 ♗e4 18.♖h3 dxe5 19.♙xe5 ♙d6?!

Losing.

20.♗d4! f5 21.♗xe6 ♖f7 22.♙xe4 ♙xe4 23.♗g5 ♖g6



24.♖xh7†!

Oh yes!

24...♖xh7 25.♗f7 mate. 1-0

The transposition to the Scheveningen is very risky and none of the world's top players enter this line as Black.

It is definitely worthwhile to go over the notes in the previous game as they contain a lot of useful attacking ideas.

Game 41

**Hector – C Hansen
Malmö 2003**

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e6 5.♗c3 a6

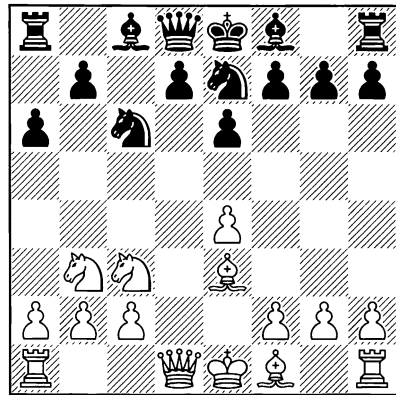
This position can, of course, also arise via the Kan: 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 a6 5.♗c3 ♗c6.

6.♙e3

6.♗xc6!? bxc6 7.♙d3 is a good alternative.

6...♗f6

6...♗ge7 is the *real* Taimanov variation. But against 6.♙e3 this runs into a strong reply, namely 7.♗b3!.



A bit weird as we have struggled to avoid this move in other lines. However, in this position there is a traffic jam in Black's position: one of Black's ♗s is superfluous (They are on the same circuit.) so White avoids the exchange on d4.

a) 7...d6 8.f4 (8.♗a4!? is also not bad.) 8...b5 9.♖f3 ♗a5 10.♗xa5 ♖xa5 11.♙d3 ♗c6 and White is better. A. Sokolov – Moor, Switzerland 2002 continued: 12.0-0 ♙e7 13.♖g3 g6 14.♗e2 ♗b4 15.♗d4 ♙b7 16.a3 ♗xd3 17.cxd3 ♖d8 18.♖a1 ♙f6 19.f5 ♙e5 20.♖h3 gxf5 21.♗xe6 fxe6 22.♖h5† ♖e7 23.exf5 ♖g8 24.♖xh7† ♖g7 25.♙g5† 1-0

b) 7...♗g6 8.f4 (8.♗a4 is possible again) and then:

b1) 8...d6 9.g3! preparing h2-h4-h5.

b11) 9...b5 10.h4 ♙e7 11.h5 ♗f8 12.♖d2 ♙b7 13.0-0 ♖c8 14.♙h3 ♗a5 15.♙d4 b4 16.♗d5! and White is attacking, Muir - Lalic, British Championship 1989.

b12) 9...♙e7 10.h4 0-0 11.h5 ♗h8 12.a4! White is controlling the whole board and has a huge advantage.

b2) 8...♟b8 9.g3 ♙e7 10.h4 0-0 11.h5 The march of the h-pawn is always a problem for Black in this line. We are following Reinaldo Castaneira – Ortega Hermida, Lanzarote 2003. The game ended 11...♞h8 12.♞d2 f6 13.0-0-0 b5 14.♟b1 ♞f7 15.g4 h6 16.♞g1 ♞c7 17.e5 b4 18.♞e4 fxe5 19.g5 d5 20.gxh6 ♞xh6 21.fxe5 ♞f5 22.♞f6† ♟h8 23.♞g4 ♞xe3 24.♞xe3 ♞a7 25.♞g3 ♙g5 26.♙d3 ♞e7 27.h6 g6 28.♞f6 ♙e3 29.♙xg6 ♙xg1 30.♞xg1 ♞g8 31.♙f7 1-0.

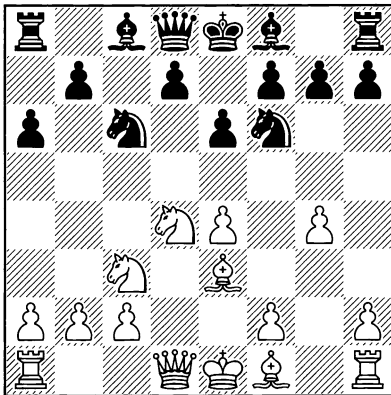
c) 7...♞a5?? 8.♞a4! and ♟b6 wins something.
 d) 7...b5 and now 8.a4! is very annoying.
 8...b4 9.a5! And now:

d1) 9...♟b8 10.♞a4 ♞xa5 11.♞xa5 ♞xa5 12.♞b6 ♞xb6 13.♙xb6 ♞xb6 14.♞d4 And White won at move 37, Senff – Vanderwaeren, Leuven 2002.

d2) 9...♞xa5? 10.♞a4! and White wins - a very good trick!

d3) 9...d6 was not a success for Black either after 10.♞a4 ♙b7 11.♞b6 ♟b8 12.f4 ♞c7 13.♙c4 ♞d8 14.♞e2 ♞b8 15.f5 ♙xe4 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♞d4 1-0 Fressinet – Moor, Zurich 2001.

7.g4!?



An aggressive move that fits well with playing the Keres Attack against the Scheveningen. It is a relatively unexplored line and I expect we will see many developments in this line in the coming years.

7.♙d3 is possible but Black can reach a reasonable Scheveningen variation with 7...d6.

7...♟b4

a) 7...h6 8.♙g2 ♞c7 9.h3 ♞xd4 10.♞xd4 e5 11.♞b6 ♞xb6 12.♙xb6 d6 13.0-0-0 ♙e6 14.♙c7 ♟d7. Now with ♟b6 White keeps a small edge. Instead he went 15.♙a5 ♟b8 16.f4 b6 17.♟b4 ♟c7 18.♞hf1 exf4 19.♞xf4 ♙e7 20.e5 dxe5 21.♙xe7 exf4 22.♙d6† ♟c8 23.♙xf4 ½-½. Hector – Andersson, Sweden 2000.

b) 7...d5 8.g5! ♞xe4 9.♞xe4 dxe4 10.♞xc6 ♞xd1† 11.♞xd1 bxc6 12.♙g2 ♙d7 13.♙xe4 and here White prematurely agreed a draw in Hvenekilde - Jensen, Aarhus 1976. White is slightly better but was apparently peacefully inclined.

8.♙g2 d5

Ribli recommended 8...h6!? here.

9.g5!

This is almost always the answer to d5 after White has rushed forward with the g-pawn.

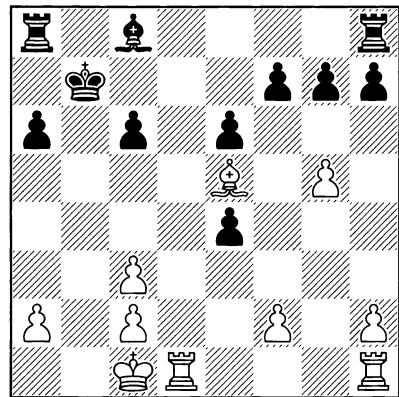
9...♞xe4 10.♞xc6! bxc6

10...♞xc3 is answered by 11.♞d4 and White has a dangerous initiative after 11...♞b5† 12.♞xb4 bxc6 13.0-0-0.

11.♙xe4 ♙xc3†

Forced. The ending after 11...dxe4 12.♞xd8† ♟xd8 13.0-0-0† ♟e7 14.♞xe4 is terrible for Black who has the living dead sitting at c8.

12.bxc3 dxe4 13.♞xd8† ♟xd8 14.0-0-0† ♟c7 15.♙f4† ♟b7 16.♙e5



Winning back the pawn and keeping the initiative. Opposite coloured bishops benefit the player with the initiative, and we will

therefore see a hard struggle for the initiative in the following moves.

16...f6

16...g8 17.♖h1 with an undisputed advantage for White.

17.gxf6 gxf6 18.♗xf6 ♖f8 19.♗e5 ♖f5?!

19...♗xf2! was better. According to Ribli in *Chessbase Magazine* White still keeps an advantage after 20.♖hg1 ♖f7 21.♖ge1 c5 22.♗xe4.

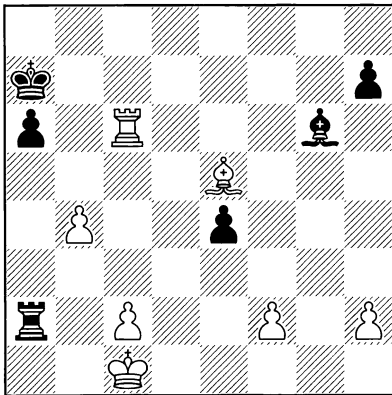
20.♗g3 ♖a5 21.♖d4 e5

Getting the problem piece out.

22.♖b4† ♗a7 23.♖d1 ♗f5 24.♖d6

White is clearly better. Usually Jonny Hector has a very bad score against Curt Hansen, but in this game he brings home the full point.

24...♖c8 25.♖f6 ♗g6 26.♖e6 ♖b8 27.♗xe5 ♖xb4 28.cxb4 ♖xa2 29.♖xc6



A pawn and the initiative – White is winning.

29...♗b7 30.♖c5 ♖a3 31.♗c3 ♗f7 32.h4! ♗b6 33.♗d2 ♖a2 34.h5 ♗b7

35.♗d4 ♖a3 36.c3 ♖a1 37.♖f5 ♗c4 38.♖g5 ♖h1 39.♖g7† ♗c6 40.♗xh7 ♖h3 41.h6

The pawn decides.

41...♖d3† 42.♗e1 ♖h3 43.♖h8 ♗b7 44.♗e3 ♗d3 45.♗d2 ♗b5 46.♖h7† ♗c6 47.♖e7 ♗d5 48.h7 ♗d3 49.♗d4

1–0.

And with this game I conclude the repertoire against the Taimanov and Kan. I sincerely hope it will give the reader many successes!

Editors' note: As can be seen in the notes to Black's 13th move in Ponomariov – Sadler, Black has played the ball back in White's court in this repertoire. This does not mean that it is not good, only that some problems exist. Especially GM Delchev has defended the Black side with his 2006 publication – *The Safest Sicilian*. To pay him back in his own currency, we have found a possible hole in his repertoire, which we are happy to share with the readers. It is outside Sune's recommended repertoire, but might still interest some of our readers.

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♖d2 ♗f6 8.0–0–0

The practical problem with playing this system is that it does not harmonise too well with playing 6.♗g5 against the Najdorf, as there are some overlapping variations with the standard English Attack if Black plays an early ...d6.

8...♗b4 9.f3 b5 10.♗b3 ♗e5 11.♖f2!

This is a completely new idea and should be investigated.

11...♗xc3!

This is the correct move.

11...♗c4 12.♗c5 ♖f4† 13.♗b1 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 d5 was Delchev's recommendation, but it looks simply suicidal. After 15.♗a1! with the idea of ♗xc4 and ♗a5 it is impossible to see how the Black king shall ever find safety.

12.bxc3 d6 13.♗b6 ♖b8 14.♗a5

Delchev fears this position, but it is looks as it is the critical position in the line currently.

14...♗c6 15.♖g3

15.♗b4 ♗xb4 16.cxb4 0–0=

15...0–0 16.♖xd6 ♗xa5 17.♗xa5 ♖a7 18.♗c6 ♖e3† 19.♗b1 ♗b7 20.♖d4 ♖h6∞

The Accelerated Dragon

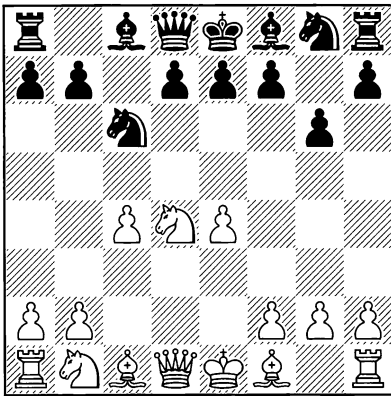
- By Peter Heine Nielsen

Game 42

Svidler - Tiviakov

Chalkidiki 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4



White's most solid and, I think, best choice. If instead White tries to transpose to normal Dragon lines then Black has extra options because he has not moved his d-pawn yet, which can be exploited in many possible ways.

5...♙g7

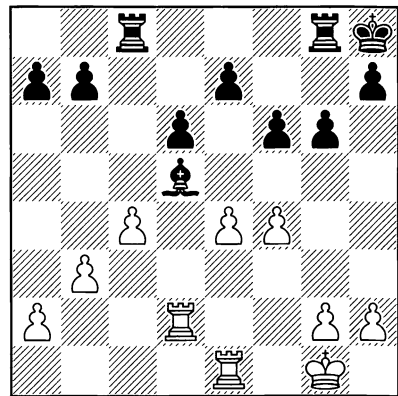
5...♘f6 6.♘c3 ♘xd4 7.♙xd4 d6 (Black is trying to reach the move order with 6...d6 7.♙e2 ♘xd4 8.♙xd4 ♙g7, which is a respectable line [of course our repertoire would not allow this line because of 7.♘c2]). Here this gives White the additional option of developing the bishop to d3 instead of e2 and secure an opening advantage.) 8.♙g5 ♙g7 9.♙d2 0-0 (9...♙e6 10.♙c1 ♙c8 11.b3 ♙a5 12.f3 h6 13.♙e3 0-0 14.♙d3 ♖h7 15.0-0± was played in Polugaevsky - Beliavsky, USSR (ch) 1975, a game White won.) 10.♙d3! a6 (10...a5 11.0-0 a4 12.♙ac1 ♙e6 13.♙c2 was a little better for White in Portisch - Reshevsky, Petropolis (izt) 1973, another game White won.) 11.0-0 ♙d7 12.♙fe1 ♙c6 (12...♙b8 with the idea of ...b5

is met with 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.exd5± - Belov.) 13.♙ac1± Petrosian - Beliavsky, USSR (ch) 1975.

6.♘c2

An interesting sideline gaining in popularity these days. I have quite some experience on the Black side of the Maroczy systems, and always felt most uncomfortable when White kept as many minor pieces on the board as possible. It is rather strange, but to my mind White would prefer either to keep all four minor pieces, or to exchange them all! From the famous game Botvinnik - Toran (see below) we know that this structure with just rooks on is very uncomfortable for Black.

Botvinnik - Toran, Palma de Mallorca 1967



White is better, the question is whether to take on d5 with the rook or the e-pawn.

22.♙xd5!

22.exd5 ♙c7 23.♙de2 ♙g7 and despite Black's clumsy rooks, he will bring the king to f8 and slowly reactivate the g7-rook. White is, of course, better but it is difficult to find a way to make serious progress. This is much easier in the game.

22...♙c6?

22...♙c7 23.e5 dxe5 24.fxe5 f5 25.♙ed1 ♖g7 is better for White, but Black keeps reasonable drawing chances.

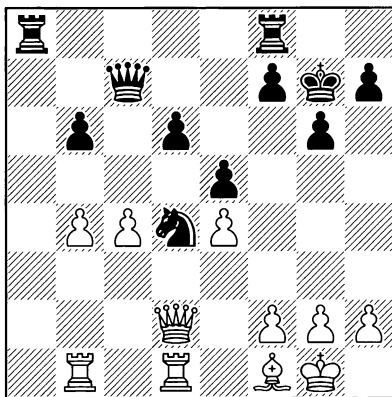
23.e5 dxe5 24.fxe5 ♙c6 25.♖f2 ♙f8 26.♙d7 fxe5† 27.♖e3 ♙b8 28.♖e4 ♖g8 29.♖d5 ♖f7

30.♞xe5 ♜d6† 31.♞xd6 exd6 32.♞xd6 ♜d8†
 33.♞c7 ♜d2 34.♞xb7 ♞xg2 35.c5 ♞xh2 36.c6
 ♞c2 37.b4
 1-0

A typical Botvinnik game: simple but very strong. This game has become a classic example of how to win with the Maroczy.

So, why not exchange as many pieces as possible and get closer to the goal? Well, Black will not cooperate. He will happily exchange some minor pieces, but will try to keep some on the board as well. Especially, White has to watch out for the scenario where Black ends up with a knight against a white squared bishop.

How often have I had positions like this as Black?

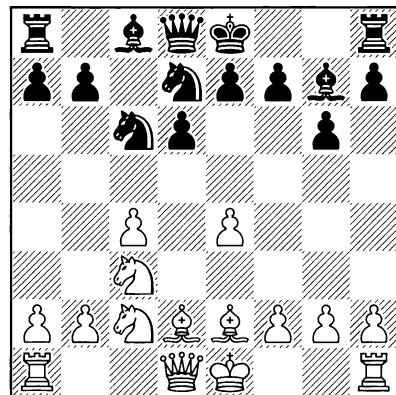


White should avoid such positions at any cost. White sooner or later will have to sacrifice on d4, but he will be hard pressed to make a draw. Of course when seeing this position it is obvious Black is better, however what normally goes wrong is that White realises too late that Black's idea with knight against white squared bishop is e7-e5! This weakens d5 but as no white knight is left, who cares? Then Black reroutes the knight to d4, normally via c5-e6-d4. This Diagram is Black's dream; never let it become reality.

Therefore, I can say from experience that although White would like to exchange all the minor pieces, it felt unpleasant when he kept all four on as well! Black would definitely like

to exchange one pair of knights. This is seen in all three major Black systems against White's main line. The old main line was 6 ♞e3 ♞f6 7 ♞c3 ♞g4 which these days is much less popular, despite Larsen breathing some new life into the system in the 80s. My favourite was always 7...0-0 8 ♞e2 d6 9 0-0 ♞d7 10 ♞d2 ♞xd4 11 ♞xd4 ♞c6 12 f3 a5. Why not 10 ♞c2 here you might ask, as Black is now committed to putting his bishop on d7? Good question. Experts like Tiviakov therefore play 9...♞xd4 as Black, which normally transposes back to what Black wants. Still, White has caused Black some problems in this system recently, so the real reason I have not recommended the main line for White is 5...♞f6 6 ♞c3 d6 7 ♞e2 ♞xd4 8 ♞xd4 ♞g7. A safe and solid system that, for example, the young Russian Malakhov uses to great effect. As I mentioned earlier, it is noteworthy that in all the main systems Black happily exchanges one pair of knights. So why let him? It was Boris Gulko who pointed this out to me. An extra pair of knights in the standard positions is definitely to White's advantage.

6...♞f6 7.♞c3 d6 8.♞e2 ♞d7 9.♞d2



Our main line. This defensive looking move prevents Black's ♞xc3. Is it really so clear that ♞xc3 is a threat? Again, I'm not too sure. Nigel Short played ♞e3 against Tiviakov and he did not take on c3. If two such experts agree ♞xc3 is not dangerous then White should definitely go ♞e3. However, compare this to the English opening:

1.c4 c5 2.♖c3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♗g2 ♘c7 There one of White's main ideas is 6.♞b3 ♘c6 7.♗xc6† bxc6 8.♞a4. He is actually willing to sacrifice a tempo in order to be able to take on c6. It is not a direct transposition as here Black has used time on ♘f6-d7, still ♗xc3 is a serious idea, even used by White players to go for an advantage. My suggestions are based on ♗d2, but avoiding this slightly passive move is worth a punt, especially for players who enjoy unbalanced positions.

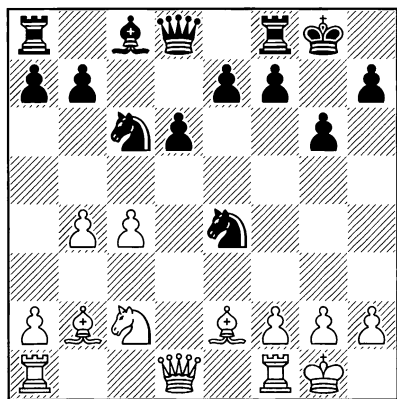
9...0-0 10.0-0 ♘c5 11.b4!?

An interesting pawn sacrifice. The alternatives are worse. For example, 11 f3 was once the main line. I still do not see anything wrong with my old recommendation: 11...♞b6 12 ♘h1 ♞xb2 13 ♞b1 ♗xc3 which should be fine for Black.

11...♗xc3

The principled, brave, but probably bad response to the challenge.

12.♗xc3 ♘xe4 13.♗b2



Again there are huge similarities to the English opening. Without the move b4 included (and with colours reversed) it would be Vaganian - Kasparov. Garry then had to retreat his bishop to e8, but still gained enough positional compensation to draw. Of course an extra tempo is something, however often sacrifices intended to yield positional compensation for a draw as Black are often not enough for an advantage, even with an extra tempo. However, here there is one huge difference:

White gets to put his bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal directly. 11.b4 not only grabbed space, it cleared b2 for the bishop. For those who are not impressed with all kinds of talk trying to justify White's compensation, I will just add that Deep Fritz 8 claims White has an edge here despite the pawn minus.

13...♗e6

How to deal with this as Black then? At the time I thought Tiviakov's approach was correct. Try and attack c4 in time. As Svidler effectively refutes this, Black has to look in other directions. An obvious try is to block the a1-h8 diagonal in time. This makes sense, but White keeps a dangerous initiative.

An instructive game is: 13...e5 14.♞e1!? Freeing d1 for the rook. The queen is fine on e1, as White intends to push his f-pawns in order to pressurize on the long diagonal. 14...♞g5 15.♞d1 ♗e6 16.♘h1 (16.♗d3!? f5 17.f3 ♘f6 18.f4 seems like an obvious improvement) 16...♞h4 17.♗f3 f5 18.b5 ♘d8 19.g3 ♞f6 20.♘e3 ♘f7 21.♗g2 ♞ac8 22.f3 ♘c5 23.f4 with good compensation and later 1-0, Milos - Spangenberg, Argentina 1995.

13...♞b6 14.a3 ♗e6 is a way of trying to get the positive sides of Tiviakov's idea, without facing the rout as in the game. 15.♞c1!? f6 16.♞f4 ♘g5 17.♘e3 was promising for White in Gausel - El Taher, Moscow 1994. I like the idea of activating the queen before putting the knight on e3, but even the immediate 15 ♘e3 should give excellent compensation.

14.b5

Ugly but strong. It of course weakens the c5-square, but the fact that it wins tactically is more important.

14...♘e5?

14...♘a5 is given by Svidler as the only chance. He thinks White has excellent chances after 15.♞d4 ♘f6 16.♘e3 ♞c7 17.♞ac1 ♞c5 18.♞h4 ♞ac8 19.♞fd1. I see no reason to disagree with him on that one.

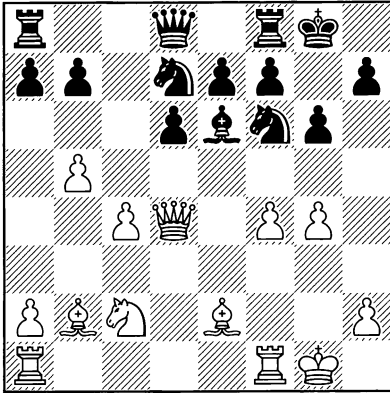
14...♘b8 15.♞d4 ♘f6 16.g4 ♞b6 may seem OK for Black, however White keeps a huge initiative even without the queens: 17.g5 ♞xd4 18.♗xd4 ♘e4 (18...♘fd7 19.♗f3 just wins b7)

19. ♖f3 d5 20. ♗g2 when Black's centre is about to collapse.

15. ♖d4 ♖f6 16. f4 ♖ed7

16... ♖eg4 17. h3 ♖h6 18. g4 left Black lost in Van Wely – Gustafsson, Dieren 1999.

17. g4!



Wins a piece and thus the game. It is amazing that a top professional like Tiviakov loses like this in a very computerized age. Probably he made the mistake of trusting Carsten Hansen's and my book which recommended 13... ♗e6.

17... ♖b6 18. f5

The rest is easy.

18... ♗xc4 19. ♗xc4 ♖xg4 20. ♗d5 ♗ac8 21. ♖e3 ♖ge5 22. ♖xb6 ♖xb6 23. ♗xb7 ♖b8 24. ♗a6 ♖d3 25. ♗d4 ♖b4 26. ♗fc1 ♖xa6 27. bxa6 e5 28. fxe6 fxe6 29. ♗ab1

1-0

Game 43

Aronian - Vorobiov

Aeroflot Open 2004

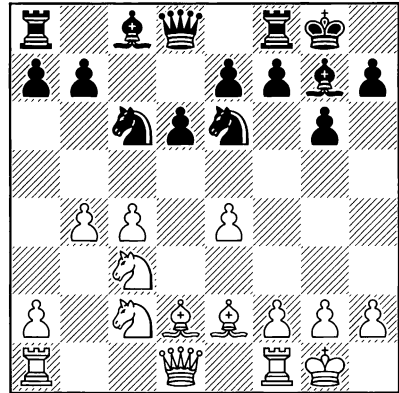
1. e4 c5 2. ♖f3 ♖c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 g6 5. c4 ♗g7 6. ♖c2 ♖f6

One reader raised the following concern to Peter Heine Nielsen's recommendation: What happens after 6... ♖b6!?. Reminds of a line from the English, where Black takes on c3 and plays ... ♖a5. Here the loss of tempo should favour White if only ever so slightly: 7. ♖c3! ♗xc3† 8. bxc3 ♖f6 (8... ♖a5 9. ♗d2 [9. ♖d2!? ♖f6 10. f3

d6 11. ♖e3 ♖d7 12. ♖d5 0-0 13. ♖b1±] 9... ♖f6 10. f3 d6 11. ♗e2 ♗e6 12. ♖e3 ♗c8 13. ♖b1±

Cebalo-Bilobrk, Pula 1997.) 9. ♗d3 d6 10. ♖e3 0-0 11. 0-0 ♖e5 12. ♖d5± ♖xd5 13. cxd5 ♖a5 14. ♗e2! ♖xc3 15. ♖b1 ♖c7 16. f4 ♖d7 17. ♗b2

Eljanov – Zubarev, Kharkov 2001. 7. ♖c3 0-0 8. ♗e2 d6 9. 0-0 ♖d7 10. ♗d2 ♖c5 11. b4 ♖e6



The sane choice. Black tries to establish control over the d4-square, as usual in the Maroczy hoping to secure it for one of his knights. White's b4 of course grabbed some space, however it has a downside as well. Soon Black will go ...a5 asking the question: Will White weaken c5 by playing b5, or will he allow the a-file to be opened by answering it with a3? 12. ♗c1!?

12. ♖b1 has been more popular, but this move has its hidden points. Mainly it protects c3, which will soon become important. Also it leaves the a-file thus not allowing Black to exchange his rook there.

12... ♖ed4

12...a5 seems like a more logical move. Why not at least get the a-file opened? The b6-square is weakened, but this does not seem relevant in this exact position. 13. a3 axb4 14. axb4 ♖ed4 15. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 16. ♗e3! e5!? (16... ♖xe2† 17. ♖xe2 ♗e6 18. ♗fd1 ♗xc3!? [18... ♖c7 19. ♖d5 ♗xd5 20. exd5 gives White an edge. The tactical point is that 20... ♖a4 21 c5! is very strong and even after the better 20... b6 21 ♗d4 ♗f6! 22 ♖e3

White has a serious initiative although Black benefits from the fact that the a-line has been opened.] 19.♖xc3 ♗c7!? [19...♗b8 20.♙f4 ♖c8 21.♖cc1 b6 22.e5 dxe5 23.♙xe5 ♗b7 24.♖e1 h5 25.♙d4 ♖h7 26.h3 ♖c7 27.♗e5 ♙g8 28.♗f4 was basically winning for White in Speelman – Pigusov, Sochi 1982. It is noteworthy that the presence of opposite coloured bishops makes it much worse for the defender. He cannot oppose on the black squares. 19...♗h4?! 20.♙f3! ♖fd8 21.♖c7 ♖ab8 was played in Aagaard - Isonzo, Arco 2005. Here White should have played: 22.♗d2! h6 23.g3 ♗f6 24.♙g2 ♖h7 25.♖a1 ♖d7 26.♖a7 ♗d8 27.♗c2+] 20.c5 ♖fc8 [Just before this book was to go to the press I noticed that the following game had been played: 20...♖fd8 21.♙f4 ♗c8 22.h3 dxc5 23.♖xc5 ♖xd1† 24.♗xd1 ♗d8 25.♗xd8† ♖xd8 26.e5 ♖g7 27.♙e3 ♖d5 28.♖c1 h6 29.♙c5 ♙d7 30.♖a1 f6 31.exf6† ½–½. Fressinet - Maze, Val d'Isere 2004. I would not want to defend Black's position in these lines, but there is a drawish tendency you have to acknowledge when you are White against this kind of opening. Besides, 22.♗e1! with the idea of 22...dxc5 23.♖xc5 and ♖xd1 is not with check looks like an obvious improvement. I would like to make the reader believe that it is my great understanding of chess, and not my ability to press ctrl+3 (enabling the Fritz engine – ed.), which found this improvement – but I would not enter such a foolish endeavour.] 21.♖cc1 [21.h3!? seems like an obvious improvement. It is not clear what Black should do except for ...dxc5, which however leaves White a tempo up on the game. Maybe 21...f6!? is the most useful, controlling some dark squares. Black might draw this fairly often, but it is an unpleasant task and obviously we are playing for two results only.] 21...dxc5 22.♖xc5 ♗b8 23.h3 ♖xc5 24.♙xc5 ♗c7 25.♗e3 f6 26.f4 ♖d8 And Malakhov drew this somewhat inferior position as Black against Dominguez at the 2004 WC in Libya.) 17.♙b5!? I like this direct approach although it has never really worked out in practice. If Black manages quietly to finish his development he should be fine.

17...♙xb5 (17...♖a2 18.♙d3 [18.♖e1!? Seems like the obvious improvement, not fearing ...♙xe2 and questioning Black's knight on d4 immediately.] 18...♙d7!? was drawn in Geller-Velimirovic, Skara 1980. Black is now very active.) 18.cxb5 ♙e6 was seen in two Geller-Pigusov games. 19.♙c4 ♗d7 20.♗d3 ♖fc8 was agreed drawn in their first encounter, Sochi 1989. The second, Cappelle 1992, went 19.b6!? f5 20.f3 ♖a3 21.♗d2 ♖a2 was decent counterplay in the second. My recommendation is 20 ♙c4. The point being the positional pawn-sac: 20...♙xc4 21.♖xc4 f4 22.♗d5† ♖h8 23.♙d2 ♗xb6 24.♖fc1, which to me looks like excellent compensation. 13.♙xd4 ♙xd4 14.♙e3!

Again this is the key motif. Here without the a-file open e5 does not make much sense, so Black has to go for...

14...♙xe2† 15.♗xe2 b6

The bishop pair is not a major factor here. White can easily exchange the dark squared bishops and Black lacks a way of creating counterplay. White has a huge edge.

16.♖fd1 ♙b7 17.♙d4 ♙xd4

Probably the ugly 17...f6 needed serious consideration.

A proof that Peter believed in his recommendation was seen 2 months after the first edition was published: 17...♖c8? 18.♙xg7 ♖xg7 19.e5! White now wins a pawn. 19...♗e8 20.exd6 exd6 21.♗xe8 ♖xe8 22.♙b5!+- Nielsen – Lie, Drammen 2005.

18.♖xd4 ♗c7

19.h4!

A typical thrust leaving Black with an unpleasant choice. To allow the pawn to settle on h6 or to weaken himself with h5, allowing an eventual g4 opening lines.

19...♖ac8 20.h5 a6 21.♙d5 ♙xd5 22.exd5!

Well, no need to be too dogmatic. Yes, I spoke highly of ♖xd5 in such positions. However, here White already has something going on the kingside and Black has no time for the typical e6 break. After 22 ♖xd5 a5 would give some counterplay.

22...♖fe8 23.♖e4 ♗d7 24.♖e1 b5 25.cxb5 axb5

26.h6 ♖f8 27.♚b2 f6 28.♞xe7!

Crashing through.

28...♞xe7 29.♞xe7 ♖xe7 30.♞e2† ♖f7
31.♞xb5 ♞c1† 32.♖h2 ♞c2

But simultaneously Black resigned. Just pushing his a-pawn wins easily for White.

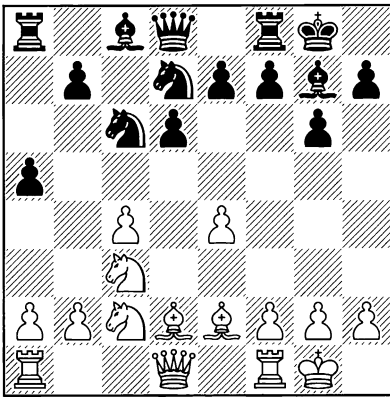
1–0

Game 44

Bologan - Motylev

Togliatti 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖c6 5.c4
♖f6 6.♖c3 d6 7.♖c2 ♖g7 8.♙e2 0–0 9.0–0
♖d7 10.♙d2 a5



A logical move, stopping White's space grabbing b4. The drawbacks are the weakening of the b6 and, especially, the b5-square.

11.♖a3!?

11.♞c1 followed by ♙h6 might also claim a small edge.

11.♞e1 ♖c5 12.♙f1 b6 13.♖a3 ♙b7 14.♞c1 ♞c8 15.♙g5 ♖d4 was reasonable for Black in Van Wely- van der Wiel, Leeuwarden 2004, but I guess White keeps a tiny edge in a complex position.

11.♙e3. I once had a lot of sympathy for this. The point is that now ♙xc3 is much less attractive for Black as a5 has weakened squares in the b-line and Black will not have ♖a5 pressurizing the c4-pawn. However, White's most natural plan is sooner or later ♖d4, which

will then lead to some standard positions with White having wasted some time. For example, 11...♖c5 12.♖d4 a4 (12...♖xd4!? 13.♙xd4 ♙d7 gives Black a reasonable version of one of the Maroczy main lines, though White may still have some edge) 13.♖db5 ♙e6 14.♞b1 ♞a5 which actually is a transposition to a later mentioned Dominguez-Malakhov game. 11 ♙e3 has its points, but as what Black wants is to establish himself on the b5 square, why go via d4 allowing Black a desirable exchange?

11...♖c5 12.♖ab5 ♖d4

Black insists on exchanging knights. And why not? White just lost a lot of time going ♖c2-a3-b5. However, he has a strong retort prepared. 12...♙e6 13.♙e3 a4 14.♞b1 (I am not sure why this has to be played, but it is the only move seen in practice and by some very strong players indeed. 14.♞c1!? ♞a5 15.f4 to me seems logical and strong. As usual in Maroczy positions with all minor pieces still on the board, Black finds it hard to develop naturally. He lacks space.) 14...♞a5 15.f4 (15.♞c1 was Morozevich's move, intending to go ♖d5 at some point without allowing Black to swap pawns on d2, which would be the obvious square for the queen. 15...♞fc8 16.f4 ♞d8 17.♞e1 ♖b4 18.♞d2 with the usual edge for White in Morozevich – Iskunsnyh, Togliatti 2003, a game later won by Black though!) 15...f5 (15...a3!? seems to work, which is one strong argument in favour of 14 ♞c1!?. Here the point is that Black seems to survive the tactics after 16.f5 [16.e5 axb2 17.♞xb2 seems like White's best option. Despite his shattered pawns, White's central pressure gives some hope, at least of equality.] 16...axb2 17.fxe6 ♙xc3.) 16.exf5 (16.e5!) 16...♙xf5 17.♞c1 ♞b4? 18.g4 ♙d7 19.♖d5 ♞a5 20.♙d2 (20.♖xe7†! ♖xe7 21.♞xd6 wins outright) 20...♞d8 21.♙c3 with a huge edge in Dominguez-Malakhov, Tripoli 2004.

If you are not too impressed with the quality of that game, keep in mind it was the deciding 6-5 minute blitz game of their Tripoli 2004 WC encounter. Many, including me, have made worse errors in that situation.

12...f5 is a logical and aggressive choice by Black. This is how White tries to fight for an edge with coloured reversed and thus an extra tempo. Here Black might argue that ♖a3-b5 was indeed a bit slow, and therefore direct action is justified. 13.exf5 ♙xf5 14.♙e3 seems to give White an edge. Black's problem is: what's next? 12...f5 certainly compromises his position, but should give some activity in return. Here I do not see how Black can intensify his pressure, which means White's positional advantages are more weighty.

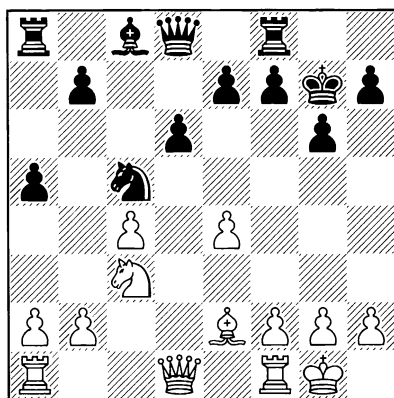
13.♖xd4 ♙xd4 14.♙h6!?

Forcing a desirable swap.

14...♙g7!?

14...♙xc3!?! 15.bxc3 ♜e8 I think this is the better choice for Black, if only because here he can play for the win too. As usual in ♙xc3 structures, it however hurts a lot that the black pawn is on a5. This is actually the only reason that I think White can claim an edge. 16.f3 is the correct approach for White. A direct attack with, for example, ♖d4 will not succeed. Black will put pawns on e5 and f6 anyway, no need to force him to do necessary deeds. Now White will put a rook on b1, the queen on d2, play ♗h1, etc. I think White has a slight edge, but it is a very complex position. If this does not suit you, I would recommend doing Moro's move order 11 ♙e3.

15.♙xg7 ♗xg7



16.♙g4!

White's point, without this his play would make much less sense. Getting rid of the white squared bishops is huge progress. Often White ends up with that bishop being bad; this is an integral part of Black's counterplay in the Maroczy. So why is the 3.♙b5† system against 2...d6 in the Sicilian not more popular then? It often ends up as a Maroczy with the white squared bishops exchanged. Well, as usual generalizing such concepts is impossible in chess. I guess it is again due to the fact that White prefers four minor pieces on the board rather than three, but will be happy to swap down to one or none. Three or two seems to favour Black somehow!

16...♙xg4

16...♙e6 17.♞e2 when White eventually will be ready for ♙xe6 fxe6 e5!, leaving him structurally clearly better.

17.♞xg4 a4 18.♞e2 ♞a5 19.♞ac1

White's edge is bigger than it might seem at first sight. Apart from being solid Black has no plusses. His a-pawn march did not bring much joy, White managed to protect c3 in time, which means the undermining ...a3 is pointless. White simply has control of the centre and the possibility of playing on the kingside for free.

19...♖d7 20.♖d5 ♖f6 21.♞fd1 ♖xd5 22.♞xd5 ♞a6 23.h4

Well, we have been here before. Such heavy-piece middlegames are just much better for White.

23...♞fc8 24.h5 e6 25.♞d4 ♞c5 26.♞d2

Excellent judgement by Bologan. White still has a huge edge despite the simplifications.

26...♞xh5 27.♞xd6 ♞a5 28.♞xa5 ♞hxa5 29.♞d7 ♞5a7 30.c5 b5 31.♞d6 ♞b8 32.f4 ♗f6 33.♗f2 g5 34.g3 ♞c7 35.♗e3

White is winning. The king enters with decisive effect.

35...gxf4† 36.gxf4 ♞g8 37.♞c2 ♞g1 38.e5† ♗f5 39.c6 ♞g3†

39...♞e1† 40.♗d4 ♗xf4 41.♗c5 wins, although Black can play on a bit longer than in the game.

40.♗d4 ♞f3 41.♞d7

1-0

Game 45

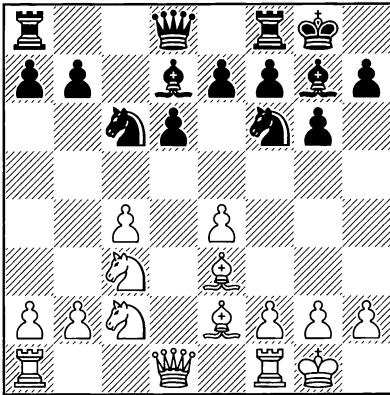
Gulko - Nielsen

Esbjerg 2000

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♙g7 5.e4
♜c6 6.♙e3

As said, 6.♗c2 is our preferred move-order.

6...♗f6 7.♗c3 0-0 8.♙e2 d6 9.0-0 ♙d7
10.♗c2



Why discuss this position? Well, ♗f6-d7-c5 is not Black's only plan. Although this position arises far more often by the move order in the game rather than via our early ♗c2, Black can choose to enter this position, only giving us some not too relevant extra options like putting the bishop on g5 instead of e3, etc. As mentioned earlier Black has started going 9...♗xd4 to avoid this exact position, certainly most players prefer putting the knight on d7, not the bishop. 10...a6

A favourite of Larsen. 10...♙a5?! 11.f4 ♗ac8 12.♙b1 a6 13.b4 ♙d8 14.♙d3 was clearly better for White in Short-Andersson, Wijk aan Zee 1990. Black is clearly suffocating, and the weakness of the b6-square makes things even worse.

11.f3 ♗c8 12.♙d2

12.♗c1!? is an interesting move order. After 12...♗e8 Short went back to the game with 13.♙d2, but why 12.♗c1 might be a tad more exact was shown by Schlosser against me as after 12...♗e5?! 13.♗a3 ♙a5 he had the very

unpleasant 14.♙b3 eyeing the b6 square, and forcing me to retreat with 14...♗c6 just to get b4 for my queen. I was definitely suffering in that game.

12...♗e8 13.♗ac1 ♙a5 14.♗a3

14.♗fd1!? is interesting as well. Originally I liked Black due to the game Anand-Larsen, Roquebrune (rapid) 1992, won by my great compatriot after: 14...♗e5 15.♗a3 h5 16.♗f1 ♙a4!? 17.♗e1 ♙c6 when Black had decent counterplay. However, Short came up with the space grabbing 15 b4!? ♙d8 16 ♗a3 a5 17 b5 ♙e6 18 ♗a4 ♗fd7 19 b6! and held an serious edge against Felgaer, Argentina 2001.

But even stronger was 15.c5! and Black is in deep trouble, as taking the pawn drops a piece.

Black is also in trouble after: 14...♗ed8

15.b4! ♙h5 (15...♗xb4 16.♗xb4 ♙xb4 17.♙b1 ♙a5 18.♙b6±) 16.♗d5±

14...♙e6 15.♗ab1

Definitely not as ambitious as Short's approach, but White will potentially expand on the queenside, and in the meantime Black finds it hard to come up with a good plan for counterplay.

15...♗e5 16.b3 ♗b8 17.a3 ♗ec8 18.b4 ♙d8 19.♗d5 b6 20.♗fd1 a5 21.h3 axb4 22.axb4 ♗d7

Again the only positive thing to say about Black's position is that it is solid. The extra set of minor pieces compared to the normal positions definitely favours White, and the weakness of b6 is also a factor.

23.♗a3 ♙c6 24.♙f1 ♗ed7 25.♗c2?

A mistake but an instructive one! 25.♗c3 followed by ♗ab5 keeps the edge.

25...♙a4!

Finally I manage to exchange some minor pieces and get decent counterplay. An exchange could have been made earlier on d5, but that would change the pawn-structure in White's favour. Now everything is OK.

26.♗e1 ♗xd5 27.exd5

Well, it is not always bad for Black to take on d5. Here I will find it easy to protect e7, and will soon be active on the a-line.

27...♙xc2 28.♗xc2 ♗a8 29.♙g5

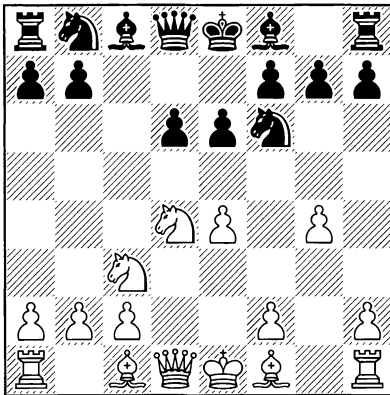
With a draw offer. Not even bothering to check if I knew the standard reply 29...♙f6! intending to take back on f6 with the pawn, ridding myself of the e7 weakness. Thus White would not have taken on f6, but might have gone 30 h4! with a balanced game.

1/2-1/2.

The Scheveningen

- By Viktor Gavrikov

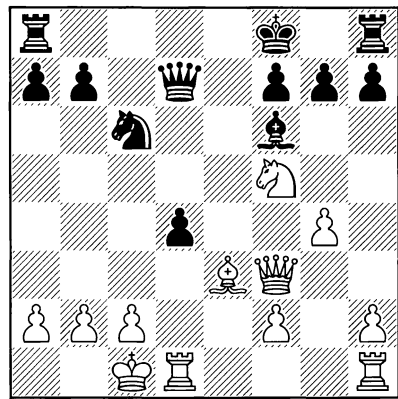
After 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖f6 5.♗c3 e6 the move 6.g4 was introduced into tournament practice by Paul Keres in his game against Efim Bogoljubow, Salzburg 1943. White invests some time moving the g-pawn onwards. The obvious idea is to play g4-g5 and thereby gain space and create attacking possibilities on the kingside. White hopes that Black will get a slightly cramped position for his pieces which will force Black to spend time rerouting all his pieces to better squares, while White will be building an attacking position.



2000.) 15.♗d4! ♜xe2 16.♗xg7! ♜e6 17.♗xc6 Black loses a pawn without compensation. 11.♗f5 ♔f8 12.♗xd7 ♜xd7 13.♗e3 ♖c6 14.0-0-0 ♗f6

14...♗d8 15.♞he1 ♜c7 16.♔b1 h6 17.h4 with a dangerous initiative, Bebchuk – Shamkovich, Moscow (ch) 1964.

15.♞f3 d4



Luther – Rahl, Bad Wildbad 2000, and now instead of 16.♗f4 g6 stronger was:

16.g5 ♗e5 17.♔b1!? Intending to meet 17...♗d8 with 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4 (18...♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4 20.c3.) 19.c3 ♜d5 20.♞xd5 ♞xd5 21.♗xd4 ♞xg5 22.♗xa7!

2) 6... ♗e7 7.g5 ♗fd7 8.h4

8.♗e3 with the idea ♗xg5?! 9.♗xg5 ♜xg5 10.♗db5 is interesting.

8...♗b6

8...♗c6 transposes to the variation 6...♗c6 7.g5 ♗d7 8.h4 ♗e7.

9.♗e3 0-0 10.a3!? d5 11.e5 ♗c6 12.f4 ♗d7 13.♞d2 ♞c8 14.b3 ♗c5 15.♗ce2 ♜e7 16.a4 with a slightly better position for White, Gruenfeld - Volke, Biel 1993.

3) 6...e5 7.♗b5+ ♗d7 8.♗xd7+ ♜xd7 9.♗f5 h5

Black has three main continuations: He may further his own plans with 6...a6 or 6...♗c6 and allow g4-g5, or he may discourage the advance of g-pawn by 6...h6.

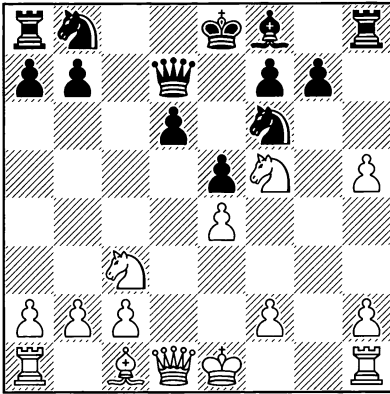
Against other moves it is easier for White to fight for the initiative:

1) 6...d5 7.exd5 ♗xd5 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.♗xd5 exd5 10.♞e2+ ♗e7

After 10...♞e7 11.♗e3, both 11...g6?! (Or 11...a6 12.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 13.♗f5!? ♜e6 14.0-0-0 0-0-0 15.♞d3 with advantage for White.) 12.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 13.♗b5 ♗e5 14.0-0-0 ♗g7 15.♞xd5 Fischer – Reshevsky, USA (ch), New York 1966, and 11...♗c6?! 12.0-0-0 g6 13.♞he1 ♗g7 14.♗xc6 bxc6 (Rosen – Fronczek, Germany

10. gxf5!

With the following possibilities:



a) 10... ♖xe4?!

10... ♖xe4?! 11. ♗d5 ♙xf5 12. exf5 ♖c6 13. ♙e3 and Black does not have enough for the exchange, Tishin - Iljushin, Tula 2002.

11. ♗xg7† ♙xg7 12. ♖xe4 d5 13. h6! dxe4 14. ♗xd7† ♗xd7

After 14... ♗xd7 15. hxg7 ♙g8 16. ♙g1 ♖c5 then 17. ♙h6 ♙c8 18. h4 is unpleasant, Aseev - Epishin, USSR 1988.

15. hxg7 ♙g8 16. ♙g1 ♖c6 17. ♙e3 ♖e7 18. 0-0† ♗e6 19. ♙c5 ♖f5 20. ♙f8 ♖d4 21. ♗b1! ♗f5 22. c3 ♖f3?!

More stubborn was 22... ♖e6 23. ♙a3 ♙xg7 24. ♙xg7 ♖xg7 25. ♙d7 ♗g6 26. ♙xb7 ♙h8.

23. ♙h1! ♙gxf8 24. gxf8=♙ ♙xf8 25. h4 and White won in Bologan - Timofeev, Europe - Tartarstan 2001.

b) 10... ♖xh5 11. ♙h6! ♖c6!

11... g6?! 12. ♙xf8 gxf5 13. ♙xd6 ♖c6 14. ♙c5±.

12. ♗xh5 ♖e7

12... g6?! 13. ♗g5 gxf5 14. ♙xf8 ♗xf8 15. 0-0-0 ♖d4 16. ♙hg1 ♗e6 allows White an excellent attacking position after 17. ♙xd4! exd4 18. ♗g7† ♗e7 19. ♖d5† ♗d7 20. ♗xd4 ♙hc8 21. ♗b4! ♙ab8 22. ♗a4† ♙c6 23. ♗xa7 ♙h6† 24. ♗b1, Shmuter - Obukhov, Russia 1993, or 20... b5 21. exf5 ♗e5 22. ♗d3 ♗c6 23. ♙d1, Korneev - Suba, Zaragoza 1995.

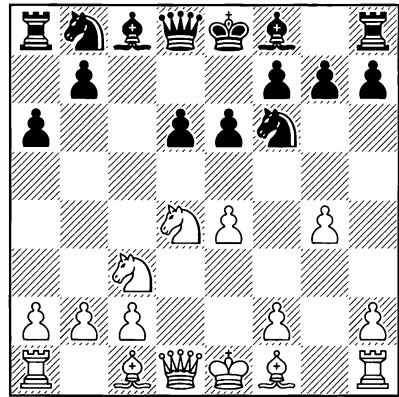
13. ♖xe7

Less convincing is the recommendation of Nunn: 13. ♗g4 ♖xf5 14. exf5 ♙xh6 15. 0-0-0 0-0-0 16. f4 in view of 16... ♙g6 17. ♗h3 exf4. 13... ♙xe7 14. 0-0-0 ♙xh6 15. ♗e2 0-0-0 16. ♗b1 ♗b8 17. ♖d5 ♙dh8 18. f3 with slightly better prospects for White, Ye Jiangchuan - Minnebo, Geneva 1997.

After these minor lines, let us turn to the first main line.

The variation with 6... a6

6... a6



A standard Sicilian move. Black prepares b7-b5 and plans to organize counterplay on the queenside.

7. g5 ♖fd7 8. h4 b5

If Black plays 8... ♗c7 9. h5 b5 10. a3 ♙b7 White may reply 11. ♙h3!? with the idea g5-g6.

9. a3 ♙b7

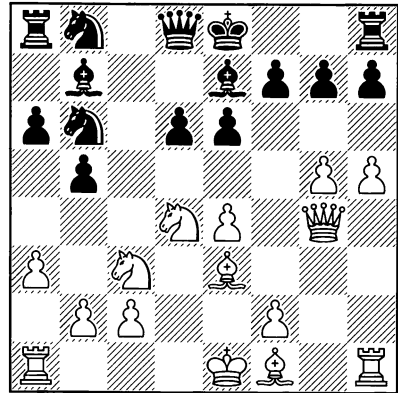
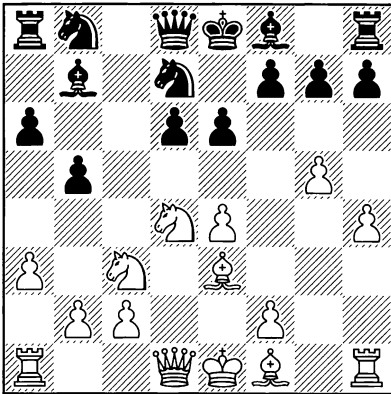
After 9... ♖b6 10. h5 Black has several possibilities which all seem insufficient to equalize:

a) 10... e5?! 11. ♖f5 d5 12. h6! gxf6 13. ♖xh6 d4 14. ♖e2 ♖c6 15. ♖g3± Lobron - K. Schulz, Germany 1985.

b) 10... ♙e7 11. ♙g1 (In case of 11. ♗g4 (with the idea 11... e5?! 12. ♖f5 g6 13. hxg6 fxg6 14. ♙e3! gxf5 15. exf5 and White has a

dangerous initiative for a piece) 11...♞c7 is playable for Black.) 11...g6 12.♙e3, T. Ernst - Barash, Gausdal 1991, with the threat of 13.♜dxb5 axb5 14.♞d4.

c) 10...♜8d7 11.♞h3 ♜c5 (11...♞c7 12.♙g2) 12.g6 f6 13.♞g3±, Nunn - Walden, Nottingham 1983.
10.♙e3



We will now deal with the most important moves, A) 10...♜b6, B) 10...♜c5, C) 10...♙e7 and the main move, D) 10...♜c6.

A) 10...♜b6

10...d5?! 11.exd5 ♜b6 12.♙g2 ♜xd5 13.♜xd5 ♙xd5 14.♞g4 gave White a clear advantage in Sax - Fedder, Plovdiv 1983.

11.h5 ♜8d7?!

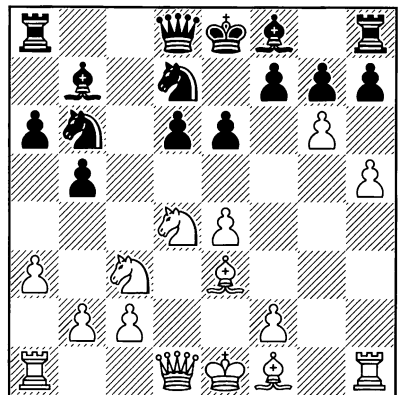
The alternatives are:

a) 11...♜c4?! 12.♙xc4 bxc4 13.♞e2 ♞c7 14.0-0-0 ♜d7 15.g6 hxg6 16.hxg6 ♞xh1 17.gxf7 ♜xf7 18.♞xh1 ♜f6 19.♜f3! ♞c7 20.♜g5 ♜e7 21.♞d1 followed by f2-f4 was very unpleasant for Black in Luther - Nagendra, Bad Wildbad 1993.

b) After 11...d5 White can play 12.h6?! (with the idea 12...g6? 13.♜xe6 fxe6 14.♞d4) 12...gxf6 13.♞h5 ♞d6 14.♙h3 e5 15.♜f5 ♞g6 16.♞xg6 hxg6 17.♙xb6 gxf5 18.♙xf5 d4 19.♜d5 ♙xd5 20.exd5 with advantage.

c) 11...♙e7 12.♞g4

12...♜bd7?! (12...♜c6 is an untested alternative which is probably a better choice) 13.g6! f5?! (13...hxg6 14.♜xe6! with the idea 14...fxe6? 15.♞xg6 ♜f8 16.h6 ♙f6 17.hxg7 ♙xg7 18.♞xh8 ♙xh8 19.♙h6 ♜e7 20.♞h7 ♜f6 21.f4, with the idea 14...♞c8 15.♜xg7 ♜f8 16.♙d4 ♙f6 17.♙xf6 ♜xf6 18.♞f4 followed by h5-h6) 14.♞g3! ♜f8 15.h6 ♙f6 16.hxg7 ♙xg7 17.gxh7 ♙f6?! 18.♞h6 with a decisive advantage in Yagupov - Yezersky, St Petersburg 1993.
12.g6!



The strongest continuation. This excellent idea was introduced into tournament practice in the game Adams - C. Hansen, Wijk aan Zee 1991. Less dangerous for Black is 12.♞g1 g6 or 12.♞h3 d5.

12...hxg6 13.hxg6 ♖xh1 14.gxf7† ♕xf7

14...♗e7? is refuted by 15.♙g4! ♖c8 16.♙xe6† ♗d8 17.♙e8† ♗c7 18.♗e6† ♗c6?! (Black is also in a hopeless situation after 18...♗b8 19.♗xf8 ♗xf8 20.♗xb6 ♗c6 21.♙e7 ♗d7 22.♗d8 ♖h8 23.♙xd6† ♗b7 24.♗e7) 19.♗d5! ♖xf1† 20.♗xf1 ♗xd5 21.exd5† ♗xd5 22.♗xf8! ♙xe8 (22...♗xf8 23.♗d1† ♗c4 24.♗d4† or 22...♗e5 23.♗d1† ♗e4 24.♗d4† ♗f5 25.♖f4†, Kotronias – Kr. Georgiev, Karditsa 1994, leads to mate and 22...♗c6 loses to 23.♙e4† ♗c7 24.♗e6† ♗b8 25.♙f4, Forster – Weigler, Switzerland 1993.) 23.fxe8=♙ ♖xe8 24.♗xd7 ♗c6 25.♗b6 ♖xe3 26.fxe3 ♗xb6 27.♗d1 ♗c7 28.♗d4 with a won ending for White.

15.♙f3† ♙f6

Unsatisfactory is 15...♗f6 16.♙xh1 ♖c7 17.♗f3!. For example 17...♗g8 18.♗g5 ♖e8 19.0-0-0 d5? 20.♙h3! ♗c8 21.♗xb5! and Black cannot parry the threat of ♖h1, Svidler – Nepomniashy, St Petersburg 1996.

16.♙xh1 ♗c5

In the aforementioned game Adams – C. Hansen Black tried 16...♗e5?! but ran into 17.♗xe6! ♙xe6 18.♗xb6 d5. Play continued 19.♗d4 ♗c6 (19...dxe4? is not good because of 20.♙h5† ♗g6 21.♗h3.) 20.♗h3 ♙e8 21.0-0-0 ♗xd4 22.♖xd4 ♙e5 23.♗d3 d4 24.♗d5 ♗xd5 25.exd5 with good winning chances for White.

17.♙h5†!? g6 18.♙g4

and it is hard to see what Black can do against the logical follow-up 0-0-0 and ♗f3.

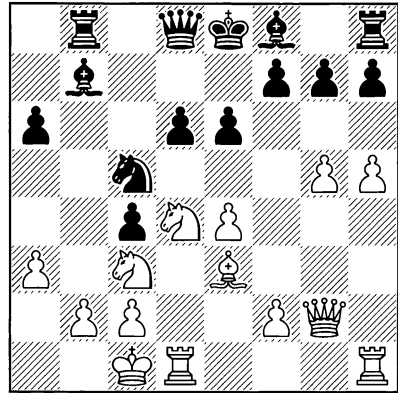
B) 10...♗c5 11.♙g4!? ♗bd7 12.h5

This is more accurate than 12.0-0-0 ♙a5! 13.h5 b4 14.axb4 ♙xb4 with strong counterplay for Black.

12...♗e5 13.♙g2 ♗c4

13...♖c8 also looks good for White, e.g. 14.f4 ♗c6 15.g6 hxg6 16.hxg6 ♖xh1 17.gxf7† ♕xf7 18.♙xh1 ♙f6 19.0-0-0 ♗xd4 20.♖xd4 ♗e7 21.♗g2±, De Vreugt – G. Horvath, Vlissingen 1997.

14.♗xc4 bxc4 15.0-0-0 ♖b8



The alternative is 15...♙b6 when 16.g6 ♖b8 17.gxf7† ♕xf7 18.♗f3! should be dangerous for Black. For example: 18...♗c6 (if 18...♗a8, then 19.♗a4! ♙b5 20.♗xc5 ♙xa4 21.♙g4!, or 20...dxc5 21.♗e5† ♗e8 22.♙g4!) 19.♗xc5 ♙xc5 20.♗g5† ♗e7 21.♙g4 ♗d7 22.♙f4 ♗e8 (after 22...♙b6 winning is 23.♗f7 ♖g8 24.♗xd6 ♙xb2† 25.♗d2 ♖b3 26.♖h3) 23.e5! d5 (both 23...dxe5 24.♙h4 ♙b6 25.♗xe6†! ♗xe6 26.♙g4† ♗f7 27.♙xc4† ♙e6 28.♙c7† ♗e7 29.♙xb8 and 23...♙xe5 24.♙h4 ♙f5 25.♖he1 ♗d7 (25...e5 26.♖xe5†! ♙xe5 27.♗f3† ♙f6 28.♗d5† and 26...dxe5 27.♗xh7† ♗e6 28.♙xc4† ♗e7 29.♗d5†) 26.♗xe6 are bad for Black) 24.♗xe6!! ♗xe6 25.♗xd5 ♗d7 (25...♗a4 26.h6! ♙c6 27.♖h5) 26.♗d4! ♙a5 27.e6† ♗c8 28.♖xc4† ♗b7 29.♖c7† ♗a8 30.♙f3 ♖b7 31.♖c8† ♖b8 32.♖xe8 ♖xe8 33.♗b4† winning (analysis).

16.♗de2!!

Now ♙b6 can be met by ♗a4. However, also possible is 16.g6 ♙c7 17.gxf7† ♙xf7 18.♙g4 and White has at least a small edge.

16...♙a5 17.g6

With a strong initiative for White. Now the game Kulaots – Yewdokimov, Tallinn 2001 continued:

17...♗e7

17...f5 18.gxh7 ♗xe4 19.♙g6† ♗d7 20.h6! gxh6 21.♙f7† ♗e7 22.♖xh6.

18.gxf7† ♕xf7 19.♙f3† ♗f6!:

19...♗e8 was better, when White plays 20.♖g4 with the idea 20...♗f7 21.♖f4 ♕c8 22.♖g6!
20.♗xd6 with a clear advantage.

C) 10...♗e7 11.♖d2

Interesting is 11.♖e2 ♖c6 (11...♖b6!?) 12.0-0 0-0 13.f4 ♖xd4 14.♗xd4 ♖a5, Baikov – Antkowiak, Nuremberg 1989, and now 15.g6!? fxc6 (15...hxc6? 16.h5) 16.♖g4 ♖f7 17.♖xe6 with better prospects for White.

The continuation 11.♖g4 ♖c6 12.0-0-0 gives Black sufficient counterplay after 12...♖ce5 13.♖g3 ♖c8 14.f4 ♖c4 15.♗xc4 ♖xc4 16.f5 ♖c5 (16...e5!?) 17.g6 fxc6!, Zhao – Alcazar Jimenez, Oropesa del Mar 2000.

11...♖c6

11...♖c5 12.f3 ♖c7 is less accurate since after 13.0-0-0 White may meet 13...♖bd7 (Or 13...♖c6 14.♗xb5!?) with a typical piece sacrifice 14.♗xb5! axb5 15.♖dxb5 ♖c6 16.♖xd6† ♗xd6 17.♖xd6±, Fischer - Najdorf, Leipzig (ol) 1960.

Another idea is 11...♖b6!?. Then 12. h5 ♖8d7 13.0-0-0 ♖c7 gives us a fairly normal position where White should be slightly better. A good plan is 14.♗g1 followed by g5-g6. 12.0-0-0 0-0

In Campora – Landenbergue, Biel 1991, Black tried 12...♖c8 13.♗b1 ♖a5 14.h5 b4?! 15.axb4 ♖xb4, but after 16.♖xc6 ♗xc6 17.♖d4! ♖xd4 18.♗xd4 ♗g5 White could play 19.♗xa6 ♖a8 20.♗b5 ♗xb5 21.♖xb5 when Black loses a pawn without compensation. 13.♗b1 ♖b8 14.f4 ♖e8 15.g6!? hxc6 16.h5 ♖xd4, Vogt - Summermatter, Lenk 1990, and here 17.♗xd4 gives White good attacking prospects.

Now let us turn to our main game after 1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 e6 6.g4 a6 7.g5 ♖fd7 8.h4 b5 9.a3 ♗b7 10.♗e3 with

D) 10...♖c6.

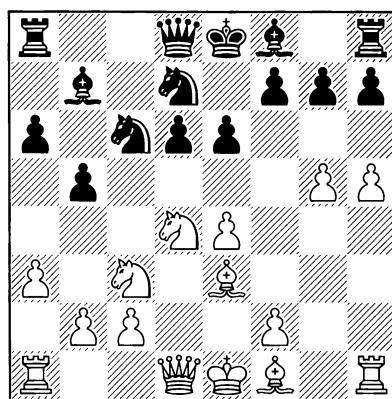
Game 46

Renet – Summermatter

Swiss Championship 1992

D) 10...♖c6 11.h5

11.♖e2 ♖de5 (11...♖c8 12.0-0-0 ♖ce5 13.f4 ♖c4 is also good for Black, Heinemann – Hetey, Germany 1998.) 12.0-0-0 ♖c4 13.♖xc6 ♗xc6 14.f4 ♖a5 15.♖d5 (Alexander – Lundholm, corr. 1970-71) was recommended by Nunn in his book with Gallagher *Beating the Sicilian 3*, but after 15...♗b7! White has serious problems!



11...♖xd4

The alternatives are:

a) 11...♗e7 12.♖g1 g6 13.♖h1!? ♖f8 (13...♗xc6 14.hxc6 ♗xe3 15.gxf7† ♗xf7 16.♖h5† ♗e7 17.fxe3 is slightly better for White. Actually White will be better off if he first includes 14.♖xc6 ♗xc6 and then 15.hxc6 ♗xe3 16.gxf7† ♗xf7 16.♖f3†! ♖f6 17.♖xe3 with a better position.) 14.f4 ♖xd4 15.♖xd4 e5 16.♖d2 exf4 17.♗xf4 ♖c5 (17...♖e5 18.0-0-0 with the idea 18...♖f3? 19.♖e3 ♖xc5 20.♖xb5!) 18.0-0-0! ♖xe4? 19.♖xe4 ♗xe4 20.♗g2 ♗g2 21.♖xc2 ♖c8 22.♖he1 with decisive threats in Leenhouts – Muhren, Dieren 2003.

b) 11...♖c8 12.♖h3 ♖xd4 (12...♖ce5 13.g6!, Ghinda – Tsarouhas, Ano Liosia 1998, with the

idea 13...hxg6 14.hxg6 ♖xg6 15.♞xh8 ♜xh8 16.♞h5 ♜g6 17.♜xe6, but 13...♞f6 seems to hold the balance.) 13.♞xd4 ♜e5 14.0-0-0 ♜c4 15.g6 hxg6 16.hxg6 ♞xh3 17.♞xh3 ♜xe3 18.♞xe3 with a dangerous initiative, Tolnai – Janetschek, Austria 1993.

12.♞xd4 ♜e5 13.0-0-0 ♜c6 14.♞d2

Black's manoeuvre is quite common, but the downside of it is that it costs time. One could say that White has gained 0-0-0 for nothing. White's position is now slightly better.

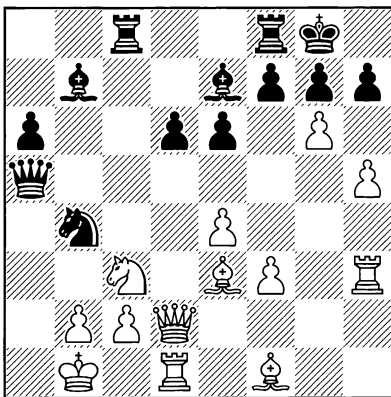
14...♞c8 15.♞h3!

This is a typical idea for such positions. White intends to play g5-g6.

15...b4 16.axb4 ♜xb4 17.♜b1 ♞a5 18.f3 ♞e7

18...d5 looks risky for Black after 19.g6. For example 19...e5? 20.exd5 ♞xd5 21.♞b6! ♞xb6 22.♜xd5 ♞c6 23.♞c4! with the threat of ♜b6. 19.g6 0-0?

An illogical decision that allows White to organize an attack against the black king. After 19...fxg6 20.hxg6 h6 White has only a small advantage.



20.♞g3!

An important resource. Now Black has to reckon with the manoeuvre ♞f1-h3.

20...♞f6

The other moves are worse:

20...f5? 21.h6 and 20...♞xh5? 21.gxh7† ♞xh7 22.♞g2.

Also 20...fxg6? 21.♞h3 is no joyride.

21.♞d4 e5

Black cannot exchange the dark-square bishops: 21...♞xd4? 22.♞xd4 e5 23.♞xd6 ♞fd8 loses to 24.gxf7† ♜h8 25.h6! or 24...♜xf7 25.♞c4†!

22.♞e3?

The natural reply, but this retreat was only strong after the inclusion of the moves 22.gxh7†! ♜xh7.

22...d5?

Missing a chance by 22...hxg6! 23.hxg6 d5! to punish White for his mistake.

23.gxh7† ♜xh7

23...♜h8 would also be met by 24.♞g5!.

24.♞g5! d4?

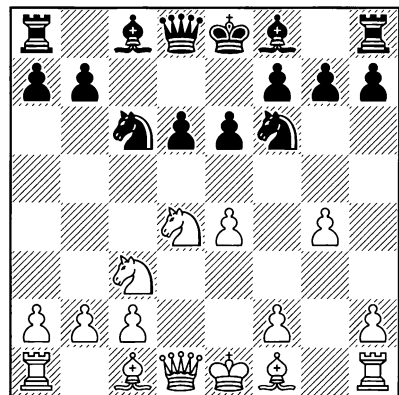
Resignation. The only possibility to continue the fight was 24...♞xc3 25.♞xc3 ♞a2† 26.♜c1 ♞a4 27.♞b3 ♞xb3 28.cxb3 ♞xg5† 29.♞xg5 dxe4 (29...♞c8† 30.♜b1 dxe4 31.♞h3 ♞b8 32.♞f5† ♜h6 33.♞g4.) 30.fxe4 ♞c8† 31.♞c4 ♞xe4 when it is not so easy for White to realize his material advantage.

25.♞xf6 gxf6 26.♞h3

1-0

The variation with 6...♜c6

6...♜c6



7.g5 ♜d7 8.♞e3

A flexible move that prepares long castling and, in comparison with 8.h4, reserves the attacking manoeuvre ♞g1-g3-h3.

The main alternative is 8. ♖b5 ♖b6 9. ♙f4 ♖e5 (after 9...e5 10. ♙e3 ♙e6 11. ♖d5 ♙xd5 12. exd5 ♖e7 13. c4 White has a small plus) 10. ♗h5 ♖g6 (worse is 10...♙d7 because of 11. ♙xe5 dxe5 (11...g6? 12. ♙xd6!) 12. g6! a6 13. gxf7† ♔e7 14. ♖a3 ♗c7 15. ♖g1!?) 11. ♙g3 (to unclear play leads 11. ♙e3 a6 12. ♖d4 d5) 11...a6 12. ♖d4 ♙e7 13. 0-0-0! ♙xg5† 14. ♔b1 0-0 15. ♙xd6 ♗xd6 16. ♗xg5 h6 17. ♗e3 with a slightly better position for White according to Kasparov.

8...♙e7

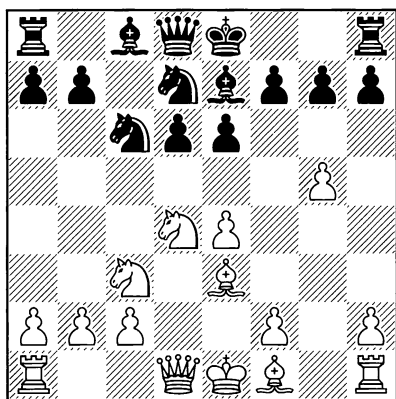
A central strike is the recommended reaction to a wing attack, but here the plan with d6-d5 does not promise Black adequate counterplay:

a) 8... ♖b6 9. h4 d5 10. ♙b5 ♙d7 11. exd5 exd5 (11... ♖xd5 12. ♖xd5 exd5 13. ♗d2 and White's flexible position should give him a solid plus.) 16. h5 ♙b4 17. ♗d3 ♖c4 18. ♙c5! ♙xc5?! (better was 18... ♗b8) 19. ♖xc5 ♗d6?? 20. ♗xc4 1-0, Glek – Dydshko, Azov 1991.

b) Sometimes Black tries to create counterplay on the queenside by 8...a6 9. h4 ♗c7, when White can choose between two queen moves:

b1) 10. ♗e2 b5 11. ♖xc6!? ♗xc6 12. ♙d4 ♙b7 (12...b4 13. ♖d5 a5 14. ♗b5! ♗xb5 15. ♖c7† ♔d8 16. ♖xb5 ♙b7 17. ♙g2 is favourable for White according to Nunn) 13. 0-0-0 0-0-0 14. a3 ♖b6 15. ♗h3 ♔b8 16. f4 with better prospects, Korsunsky – Eingorn, Baku 1979.

b2) 10. ♗d2 b5 11. 0-0-0 ♙b7 12. ♖xc6 ♗xc6 13. a3 ♖e5 14. f4! ♖c4 15. ♙xc4 ♗xc4 16. ♙d4 ♖g8 17. ♗h3 ♙e7 18. ♔b1 ♖c8 19. f5 with the initiative, Ermenkov – Kr. Georgiev, Bulgaria 1987.

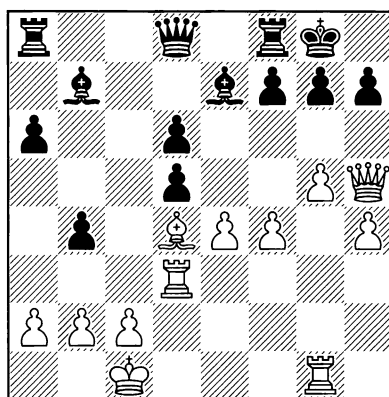


Game 47

Timmermans – de Jonghe
Belgium 1989

9. ♖g1

Another interesting attacking possibility is 9. h4 0-0 10. ♗h5. The game Movsesian - Cvitan, Germany, 1997 is a good illustration of this idea: 10...a6 11. 0-0-0 ♖xd4 12. ♙xd4 b5 13. ♙d3!? ♖e5 (13...b4? loses in view of the typical sacrifice 14. ♙xg7! with the idea 14... ♔xg7 15. ♗h6† ♔h8 16. e5 etc. The same goes for 13... ♗e8?, 14. ♙xg7! ♔xg7 15. ♗h6† ♔h8 16. e5 ♖f8 17. ♖e4 ♖g6 18. ♖f6 ♙xf6 19. gxf6 ♖g8 20. h5 ♗f8 21. ♗xh7†! 1-0, Madl - Summermatter, Geneva 1988.) 14. f4 ♖xd3† 15. ♗xd3 ♙b7? (15... ♗e8?! gave White a crushing attack in Naiditsch - Bischoff, 2000 after 16. f5 ♙f8?! (16...exf5 17. ♖f1) 17. f6 g6 18. ♗f3 e5 19. h5! Black should have played 15...b4 16. ♖e2 ♗a5 17. ♔b1 e5 18. ♙e3 ♙e6 19. b3 d5, when White can still claim an edge by 20. ♗f3! f5 21. gxf6 ♙xf6 22. f5 dxe4 23. ♗xe4 ♙f7 24. ♙g5, Z. Almasi - Cvitan, Budapest 1991.) 16. ♖g1! (the opposition with the black king is a decisive factor in this position) 16...b4 17. ♖d5! exd5



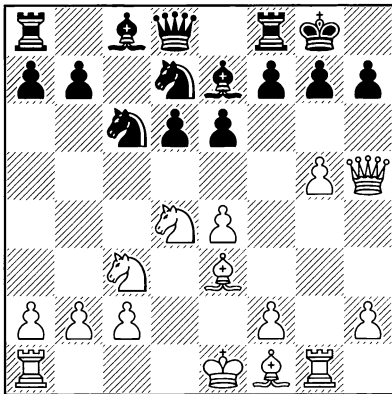
18. ♖dg3!! (with the terrible threat ♗h6) 18... ♗c7 (18... ♗e8 19. g6 fxe6 20. ♖xg6 hxe6 21. ♗xg6 ♙f6 22. ♙xf6 ♖e7 23. ♙xg7+-) 19. ♗h6! ♗xc2† 20. ♔xc2 ♖fc8† 21. ♔d2 gxe6 22. gxe6† ♙g5 23. ♖xg5† ♔f8 24. exd5 ♔e7 25. ♖f5 ♖c4

(or 25...♖f8 26.♗g7 ♘c8 27.♙f6† ♚e8 28.♗fg5 winning) 26.♚d3 ♜ac8 27.♗g7 1-0.

9...0-0

If Black plays 9...a6 White may reply 10.♞h5 when Black has nothing better than 10...0-0 transposing back into the main line.

10.♞h5



This looks natural and strong. The space advantage allows White to prepare his forces for an attack on the kingside.

10...♞e8

Black vacates the f8-square for the knight and prepares for the manoeuvre ♗g3-h3. The alternatives are:

a) 10...a6 11.0-0-0 ♞e8 12.♗g3 (In Akopian – Brenninkmeijer, Groningen 1991, White included first the moves 12.f4 ♙f8 and only now played 13.♗g3 g6 14.♞h4 h5?! 15.♙e2 ♙g7 16.♚xc6! bxc6 17.♞xd6 ♙xc3 18.bxc3 ♞a5 19.♚d2! with a clear edge.) 12...♚xd4 13.♙xd4 b5 14.♚b1! (preventing ♙xg5 landing with check after ♖f3 or ♖h3). Now we have three options:

a1) 14...b4? is bad on account of 15.♖f3! f6 (15...♖f8? 16.♞h3 h6 17.gxh6) 16.♞h3 ♚f8 17.gxf6 ♙xf6 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.♗g3† ♚h8 (Or 19...♚g6 20.♗xg6† hxg6 21.♞xg6† ♚f8 22.♞h6† ♚f7 23.♙e2! with decisive threats.) 20.♞f7 ♚g6 21.♞h3 ♚f8 and now: 22.♙b5! clearing the path for the queen's rook to g1 wins.

a2) 14...♚f8? 15.♞dd3! b4 16.♙xg7! ♚xg7

17.♞df3 bxc3 (17...♚g6 18.♗xf7† ♚xf7 19.♞xh7† ♚f8 20.♖f3†) 18.♗xf7† ♚g8 19.g6 winning, Zaichik – Siekanski, Polanica Zdroj 1989.

a3) Probably Black should settle for the worse position after 14...e5 15.♙e3 g6 16.♞h6 ♙f8 17.♞h4, as he did in the game Santo Roman – Bischoff, Uzes 1990.

b) 10...g6 11.♞h6 (unclear is 11.♞h4 ♚de5 12.♙e2 ♚xd4 13.♙xd4 f6, Wohl – Cvitan, Groningen 1997.) 11...♚de5 (the continuation 11...♞e8?! 12.0-0-0 ♙f8 13.♞h4 a6 14.♗g3 ♙g7 15.f4 ♚f8? 16.e5! looks very dangerous for Black, Ivanovic – Mascarinas, Manila (izt) 1990) 12.0-0-0 f6 13.gxf6 ♙xf6 14.♚xc6 bxc6 15.♙e2 with slightly better prospects for White in Kengis – Murugan, Gausdal 1991.

c) 10...♚xd4 11.♙xd4 ♚e5 12.♗g3!? (an idea which deserves attention is 12.0-0-0! g6 13.♞h6 f6 14.gxf6 ♙xf6 15.♙e2 ♙g7 16.♞d2 with a slightly better position for White) 12...g6 13.♞e2 ♙xg5 14.♙e3 ♙f6?! (14...♙h4!) 15.0-0-0 with compensation for the pawn, Jansa – Nielsen, Gausdal 1990.

11.0-0-0 ♚f8 12.f4

Also possible is 12.♗g3 planning to meet 12...a6 by 13.♚xc6 bxc6 14.e5 ♞c7 15.♚e4! dxe5 16.♚f6† gxf6 17.gxf6† ♚g6 18.fxe7 ♞xe7 19.♙g5 with a dangerous initiative, Atri Sangari – Kelly, Moscow (ol) 1994.

12...a6

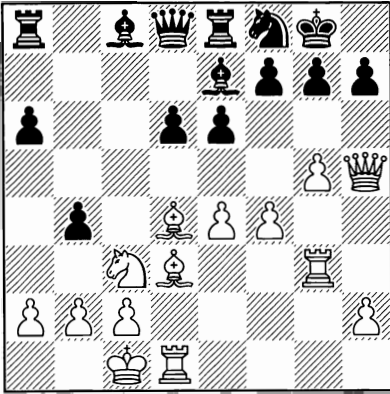
It is easy to criticise this move, but Black has serious problems since 12...♚xd4 13.♙xd4 ♙d7 14.♙d3 e5?! fails to 15.fxe5 dxe5 16.♙xe5 ♙c5 17.♙c4!. Better is 14... ♞c8 with the idea of a future sacrifice on c3, when White's chances would only be slightly preferable. After 14...♞c8, the move 15.f5 with interesting prospects for White suggests itself.

13.♗g3 ♚xd4 14.♙xd4

Thanks to Black's last move the white bishop is able to take up a menacing position.

14...b5 15.♙d3 b4?

Provoking the following combination. The only chance for Black to prolong his resistance was a pawn sacrifice by 15...e5 16.fxe5 dxe5 17.♙xe5 ♞a5.



16. ♖xg7! ♜g7

After 16...bxc3 White wins with 17. ♖h6 ♜b6
18. ♙xc3 e5 19. ♙xe5.

17. ♖h6† ♜g8

Or 17...♜h8 18.e5 followed by ♙xh7.

18.e5 ♜g6

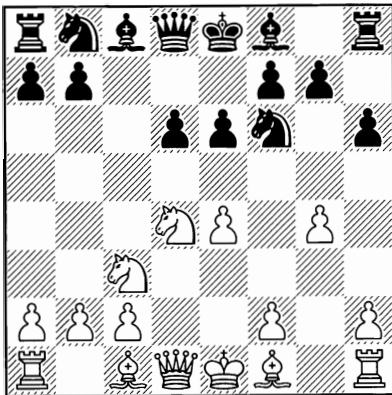
If 18...bxc3 then 19. ♙xh7† ♜xh7 20.g6 is
decisive.

19. ♙xg6 fxg6 20. ♖h3 ♙xg5 21. ♖xh7† ♜f8
22. ♖h8†

1-0

The variation with 6...h6

6...h6



Black tries to keep his knight on f6 and gain
some time for counterplay.

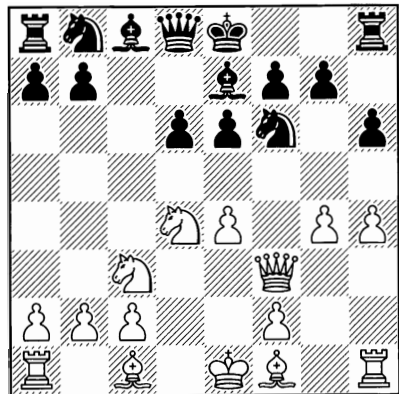
7.h4

For a long time White mostly played 7.g5
hxg5 8. ♙xg5, but now 7.h4 is considered more
promising. White wants to continue with ♖g1
(or ♙g2) and g5, driving the black knight away.
7...♜c6

The most natural reply, but Black has two
other possibilities:

a) 7...a6 8. ♙g2 ♜c6 (8...g6 9.g5 hxg5 10. ♙xg5
♙e7 11. ♖d2 e5 12. ♜de2 ♙e6 13.0-0-0 ♜bd7
14.f4 ♖a5 15.♜b1 is a little better for White.)
9.g5 hxg5 10.hxg5 ♖xh1† 11. ♙xh1 ♜d7 12.f4
♖b6 (12...g6 13. ♙e3 ♖b6 14.a3 ♖b8, Fernandez
Garcia – Suba, Seville 1994, 15. ♖d2 with the
idea 0-0-0) 13. ♜de2 g6 (This move has been
played at least six times at grandmaster level:
Black's statistics are disastrous. Black should
probably try something else like 13...♙e7 with
the idea 14...f6, the point is that Black threatens
to play 15...fxg5 16.fxg5 ♜de5 with a fully
satisfactory position, and if White takes on f6
then the bishop takes back and threatens ♙h4†
with good play.)14.b3 ♖c7 (after 14...♖c5
White plays 15. ♖d2 b5 16. ♙b2 ♙b7 17.0-0-0
0-0-0 18.♜b1 ♖f2 19. ♖e1! followed by ♜d1-
e3, Short – Kindermann, Dortmund 1986)
15. ♙b2 b5 16.a3 ♜c5 17. ♖d2 ♙b7 18.0-0-0
b4 19.axb4 ♜xb4 20.♜b1 ♖a5 21.f5! with the
initiative, van der Weide – Agdestein, Cappelle
2001.

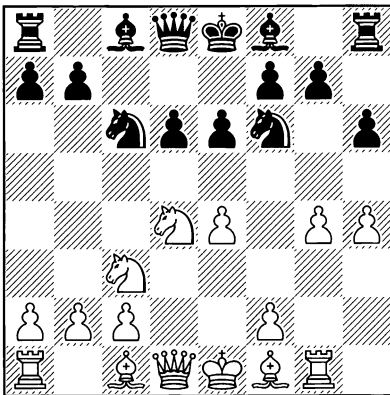
b) 7...♙e7 8. ♖f3



8...♜c6 (if 8...h5 9.gxh5 ♜xh5, then 10. ♙e3!?)

♭c6 11.0-0-0 a6 12.♙e2 ♙d7 13.♚g2 looks good for White, Brodsky – Krzywicky, Warsaw 1993.) 9.♭xc6 (dubious is 9.♙b5?! because of 9...♙d7 10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.g5 hxg5 12.hxg5 ♗xh1† 13.♚xh1 ♭g4! 14.♚h3 ♚b6 15.♚xg4 ♚xd4, Agopov – Gavrikov, Helsinki 2000.) 9...bxc6 10.g5 ♭d7 11.gxh6 gxh6 12.♙d2! (Inserting the moves 12.♙f4 e5 and then 13.♙d2 is a bit more accurate, because then Black's knight will be deprived of the e5-square and the white squares on d5-e6-f7 will be more exposed.) 12...♙xh4 13.0-0-0 ♚e7 14.♚f4 ♙f6 (14...♙g5 15.♚g3) 15.♗xh6 ♙b7 16.♗xh8† ♙xh8 17.♚g3 0-0-0 18.♙g5 ♙f6 19.♙xf6 ♭xf6 20.e5 dxe5 21.♗xd8† ♚xd8 22.♚xe5 with a favourable ending for White in Gallagher – Cu. Hansen, Germany 2002.

8.♗g1

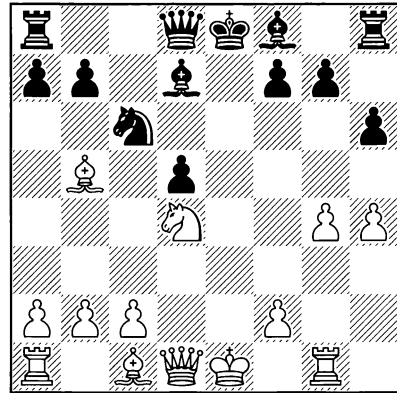


Now Black has a choice between two main continuations A) 8...d5 and B) 8...h5. Possibilities like 8...g6 9.g5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♙e7 11.♚d2 a6 12.0-0-0 or 8...♭d7 9.g5 hxg5 10.♙xg5?! (10.hxg5 with the idea ♙e3.) 10...♚b6 11.♭b3 a6 12.h5 are promising for White.

A) 8...d5 9.♙b5 ♙d7 10.exd5 ♭xd5

In the ending that arises after 10...♭xd4 11.♙xd7† ♚xd7 12.♚xd4 ♭xd5 13.♭xd5 ♚xd5 14.♚xd5 exd5 15.♙e3 ♙e7 16.h5 White has slightly better prospects, Nikolenko – Zakharov, Smolensk 1991.

11.♭xd5 exd5



Game 48

Karpov – Spassky

Tilburg 1980

12.♙e3!?

This pawn sacrifice is more dangerous for Black than 12.♚e2†.

12...♙e7

After 12...♚xh4 13.♚d2!? (13.♚e2 ♭xd4 14.♙xd4† ♚e7 15.♙xd7† ♭xd7 16.♙e3 ♗d8 17.0-0-0 ♭c8 18.♚f3 a6=, Ashley - Salov, New York 1996) 13...a6 (13...♙e7 14.0-0-0 with the idea ♭f5) 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.0-0-0, White has sufficient compensation for the pawn. For example:

15...♙d6 16.♭f5 ♙xf5 17.gxf5 ♙e5 18.f4! ♙f6 19.♚b4! (19.♙c5 Nunn).

Or 15...♙e7 Ferguson-Mirumian, European Youth Championship (U18) Chania 1994. 16.♙f4!? (with the idea 16...0-0 17.♭f3! ♚f6 18.g5 hxg5 19.♙xg5 ♚xf3 20.♙xe7 ♗fe8 21.♚g5 g6 22.♚h6! ♗xe7 23.♗h1 ♙f6 24.♚h7† ♭f8 25.♚h8† etc.) 16...c5 17.♭f3 (17.♭f5!?) ♚f6 18.♗de1 gives White a solid plus.

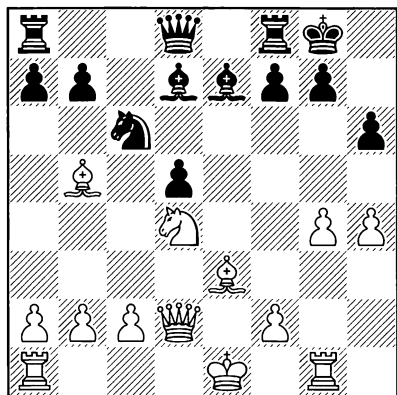
13.♚d2 ♙xh4

This is a risky idea.

The exchanges with 13...♭xd4 14.♙xd7† ♚xd7 15.♚xd4 ♙f6 16.♚b4 are in White's favour, e.g. 16...a5 (16...♙e7 17.♚b3 with the idea 0-0-0) 17.♚a3 ♙e7 18.♚d3 ♚a4 19.0-0-0! (19.a3) 19...♚xa2 20.♚b5† ♭f8

21.♖xb7 ♖d8 (Rowson - Stoczek, Budapest 1996) 22.♖c7! ♖e8 23.♙c5 ♙xc5 24.♖xc5† ♗g8 25.♖a3±.

The best move for Black is probably 13...0-0 when White has the following options:



a) 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.0-0-0 ♖b8 16.♗f5 (16.g5 might be better according to Shredder 8. Unclear play arises after 16...h5 17.g6 ♖b6 18.♗b3 ♖a6 19.♙d4 f6 20.♗b1.) ♙xf5?! (16... ♙f6 is better when Black is not worse after 17.♙d4 ♖e8.) 17.gxf5 ♙f6 18.♙d4 ♗h7 19.♖c3 ♙xd4 20.♖xd4, Nunn - J. Anderson, Kilkenny 1997, 20...♖g8!? with equal play. The idea is to counter 21.♖xa7 with 21...♖f6 (21...♖a8 22.♖xf7 ♖xa2 is also very interesting).

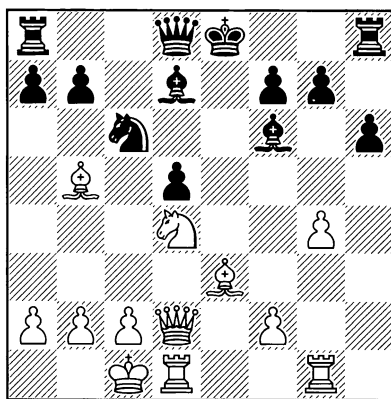
b) 14.♗f5!? gives highly enterprising play: 14...d4!? 15.♙xh6 ♙b4! (15...gxf6? loses to 16.♖xh6 ♙f6 17.g5! ♖e8† 18.♗f1 ♙h8 19.g6.) 16.c3 dxc3 17.bxc3 ♗e5! 18.♙e2 ♖e8 19.♗f1 ♙f8 20.♙f4 ♖a5, Timmerman - Andersson, corr. 1996, gave Black good counter chances.

c) White's most solid continuation is the relocation of the bishop to f3 with 14.♙e2. White doesn't have to fear 14... ♙xh4 because he will win back the d5-pawn, and perhaps obtain slightly better chances. e.g. 15.0-0-0 ♖e8 16.♗f5 ♙g5 17.♙xg5 ♖xg5 18.♙xg5 hxg5 19.♙f3 and White seems to be slightly better. 14.0-0-0 ♙f6

The alternatives are dubious:

14...♗xd4?! 15.♙xd7† ♖xd7 16.♙xd4 with the idea 16...0-0? 17.g5! hxg5 18.♙xg7! ♖fc8 (18...♗xg7 19.♖xg5†) 19.♙f6 ♖d6 20.♖xg5† ♙xg5 21.♖xg5† ♗f8 22.♖e1 and Black gets mated. 16...♗f8 is better, but still problematic for Black.

14...0-0?! 15.g5! ♗xd4 (15...♙xg5 16.♙xg5 hxg5 17.♖xg5! with the idea ♗xd4? 18.♖xg7† ♗xg7 19.♖xd4† f6 20.♖g1† ♗f7 21.♖xd5† ♙e6 22.♖xb7†+-) 16.♖xd4 hxg5 (16...♙xb5? 17.gxf6! ♙f6 18.♖xg7† ♗h8 19.♖f4) 17.♙xd7♖xd7 18.♙xg5 ♙xg5† 19.♖xg5 f6 20.♖xd5±.



15.♗f5 ♙xf5 16.gxf5 a6 17.♙xc6† bxc6 18.♙c5 ♖b8 19.b4 ♖b5?

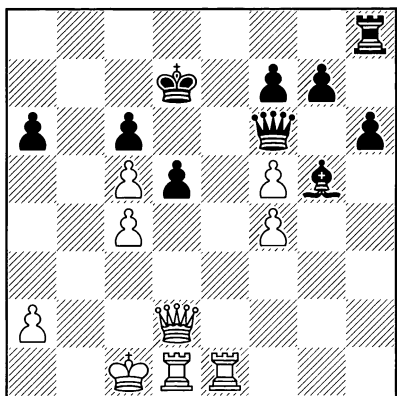
Black decides to eliminate the bishop, but this sacrifice fails because of his inability to bring the h8-rook into play. Deserving of attention is 19...♗d7!? 20.c4 ♗c7 (20...♗c8? 21.cxd5 cxd5 22.♖e2 ♗b7 23.♖f3 ♗c6 24.♖g4! with the idea ♖c4.) 21.cxd5 cxd5 22.♖d3 with an unclear position.

20.♖ge1† ♗d7 21.c4 ♖xc5 22.bxc5 ♙g5

After 22...♖b8 White wins by 23.cxd5 ♙g5 24.♖e3 ♙xe3 25.fxe3 ♖e5 26.dxc6† ♗xc6 27.♖d7† ♗xc5 28.♖a7† ♗b5 (28...♗c6 29.♖xa6† ♗c7 30.♖c4† ♗b8 31.♖b3† with the idea ♖d4+-) 29.♖b7† ♗c5 30.♖d2! ♖a1† 31.♗c2 ♖xa2† 32.♗d1 ♖a4† 33.♖c2† ♗d6 34.♖c7† ♗d5 35.♖c5† ♗e4 36.♗e2.

Therefore 22...d4 was the best defence.

23.f4 ♖f6



24.cxd5!

Of course not 24.fxc5? ♖a1† 25.♔c2 ♜xa2† 26.♔d3 ♜xc4† 27.♔e3 hxg5.

24...♜a1† 25.♔c2 ♜xa2† 26.♔d3 ♜xd2†?

The last mistake. Black could have offered more resistance by 26...♜b3† 27.♜c3 ♜b5† 28.♜c4 ♔h4 29.♔h1 ♔f2.

27.♔xd2 ♔xf4 28.♔a2 cxd5 29.♔xa6 h5 30.♔d4 h4 31.♔xd5 ♔b8 32.f6 gxf6 33.♔xf6 ♔g3 34.♔xf7† ♔d8 35.♔f8†

1-0

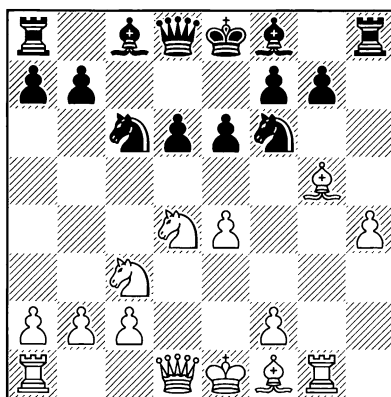
B) 8...h5 9.gxh5 ♔xh5 10.♔g5 ♔f6

The main alternative is 10...♜b6 (The passive 10...♜c7 11.♜d2 a6

12.0-0-0 ♔d7 13.♔e2 ♔xd4 14.♜xd4 ♔c6 15.♔g4!? b5 16.♔ge1 ♜a7 17.♜d3 ♔f6 (17...♜xf2? 18.♔f1 ♜a7 19.♔xe6! fxe6 20.e5) 18.♔xf6 gxf6 19.♔d5 was very good for White in Van Blitterswijk – Van Beek, Haarlem 1996.) 11.♔b3 a6 12.♔e2 g6 (After 12...♔f6?! 13.h5 ♜c7 14.h6! Black has immediate difficulties as in the game Fedorowicz – S. Polgar, Wijk aan Zee 1990, which continued 14...♔h7?! (14...♔d7) 15.hxg7 ♔xg7 16.♔e3 ♔f6 17.♜d2 ♔d7 18.0-0-0 ♔e7 19.♔h1 0-0-0 20.♔a4! with a large advantage for White.) 13.♜d2 and now:

a) 13...♜c7 14.0-0-0 b5 15.a3 ♔d7?! (15...♔b8) 16.♔xb5!? axb5 17.♔xb5 ♜b8 18.♔xd6† ♔xd6 19.♜xd6 ♜xd6 20.♔xd6 ♔c8 21.♔gd1 ♔b8 22.e5 and the white pawns are stronger than the black knight, Govedarica – Mokry, Trnava 1987.

b) 13...♔d7 14.♔g2! (White is not forced to sacrifice his pawn on f2) 14...♜c7 15.0-0-0 b5 16.a3 ♔e5 (16...♔c8 17.f4!?) 17.♜d4 ♔h7 18.f4 ♔c4 19.♔xh5 ♔xh5 20.♔e1! ♔c6 21.♔d5 ♔xd5 22.exd5 e5 23.♜d3 ♔e7 24.♔d4! ♔xg5 25.hxg5 0-0-0 26.♔c6 ♔dh8, Motwani – Roca, Dubai (ol) 1986, and here 27.♔ge2! ♔h3 28.♜d1 gives White a clear plus, as 27...exf4? does not work because of 28.♔e8† ♔xe8 29.♔xe8† ♔b7 30.♜e4 ♔xg5 31.♜d4+-.



Game 49

Morovic Fernandez - Veingold

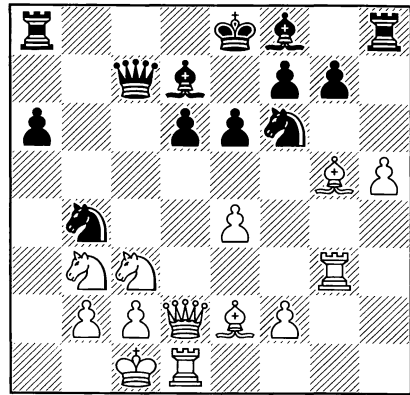
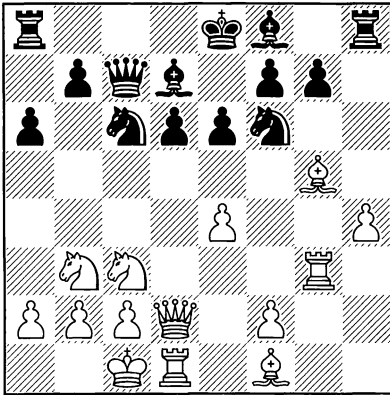
Spain 1993

11.♔g3!?

This move is less investigated. One of the hidden points with this move is that the queen's rook can sometimes come to h1! Usually White has chosen 11.♜d2 or 11.♔e2 with the following possible continuations:

a) 11.♜d2 ♜b6 (after 11...a6 12.0-0-0 ♔d7 13.f4 ♜c7 14.f5!?) ♔xd4 15.♜xd4 ♔e7 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♔h3 0-0-0 18.♜b4 (with the idea ♜b3) White's position is preferable, Santo Roman - Lepelletier, Cannes 1994.) 12.♔b3 a6 13.0-0-0 ♔d7 (Another idea is 13...♜c7 14.♔b1 b5 when White can proceed 15.f3! ♔b7 16.♜f2 0-0-0 17.♔e3 ♔d7 18.♔c1 ♔b8 19.a4! b4 20.♔a2 with the idea c2-c3 which will yield slightly better play, as in Frolov - Raisa, Helsinki 1992. One point of White's

play is that Black can't develop his dark squared bishop: 13... ♖e7? 14.♗e3 and g7 hangs.) 14.♞g3 (interesting is 14.♗b1 intending to meet 14...0-0-0?! (14...♞c7) with 15.♗e3 ♞c7 16.f3! ♗e8 (16...♞xh4? 17.♞f2) 17.♞f2 ♖d7 18.♗g5 ♖f6 19.f4! ♗e7 20.f5±, Luther - Ungureanu, Oberwart 2003.) 14...♞c7.



Now:

a1) in the game Karpov - Kasparov, Moscow (31) 1984, there occurred 15.♗g2 ♗e7 16.f4 0-0-0 17.♞f2 ♗b8 18.f5 ♖e5 19.♗h3 ♖c4 20.♖d2 ♖xd2 21.♞xd2 ♞c8 and Black had overcome his opening difficulties.

a2) 15.♞e2 b5 (in case of 15...0-0-0 we see another point of placing the rook on the third rank: 16.♞gd3 ♗b8 17.f3 ♗e7 18.♞f2 ♖e8 19.♗b1 ♗xg5 20.hxg5 in Short - Xu Jun, Lucerne 1985, White could claim a slight advantage) 16.a3 ♞c8 17.♗b1 b4!? (stronger than 17...♖e5?! 18.f4 ♖c4 19.♞gd3 ♖h7 20.f5! with initiative, Kindermann - Briffel, Dubai (ol) 1986) 18.axb4 ♖xb4 Gallagher - Pritchett, BCF (ch), Swansea 1987, and now 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.f4 reaches a position which is more difficult to handle for Black because his king is permanently stuck in the centre.

a3) 15.♗e2 (threatens h4-h5-h6) 15...b5 (15...♗e7?! 16.♗f4 g6 17.♗g5 and White is better, Ziegler - R. Akesson, Swedish Championship 1999.) 16.a3 b4 17.axb4 ♖xb4 18.h5 Black's position is critical.

18...d5 (18...♖xh5 19.♞h1 ♖xg3 20.♞xh8 ♖xe2† 21.♞xe2 ♖c6! (21...f6 22.♗xf6, White wins as in Ziegler - Maus, Lugano 1988.) 22.f4 ♖e7 23.♗xe7 ♗xe7 24.f5 White is slightly better.) 19.h6 dxe4 20.♗b1 a5 21.♖b5 ♞d8 22.♖d6† ♗e7 23.♖xe4 ♖bd5 24.c4 ♖b6 25.♗xf6 gxf6 26.♗xf6† 1-0 Ziegler - Ludvigsen, Gausdal 1988.

b) 11.♗e2 a6 12.♞d2 (White has nothing after 12.h5 ♗d7 (12...♗e7?!)) 13.♞d2 ♗e7 14.0-0-0 ♖xh5 15.♗xh5 ♞xh5 16.♗xe7 ♞xe7 17.♞xg7 0-0-0) 12...♞b6 (Black can try 12...♗d7 13.0-0-0 b5 14.♖xc6 ♗xc6 15.♞e3 ♞a5 16.♗b1 ♗e7. However, White is clearly better after 17.e5!.) 13.♖b3 ♗d7 14.h5!? (14.♞g3!, which can transpose to the variation above, seems to be best. Actually, the idea 14.♞g2!, which was used in Motwani - Roca above, is also interesting.) 14...♖xh5! 15.♞h1 g6 16.0-0-0 ♞xf2! 17.e5!? and now, instead of 17...♞f5!? with unclear complications, an interesting idea is 17...♖xe5!? 18.♖e4 ♞f5 19.♞e3 (19.♞xh5? gxh5 20.♖f6† ♖d8 21.♖d5† ♗c8 22.♖b6† ♗b8+) 19...♗c6 20.♖f6† (after 20.♖bd2?! ♖d7! White does not have enough compensation for the sacrificed material) 20...♖xf6 21.♞xh8 ♖eg4 22.♗xg4 ♖xg4 23.♞d2 ♗d5 with better prospects for Black.

11...a6

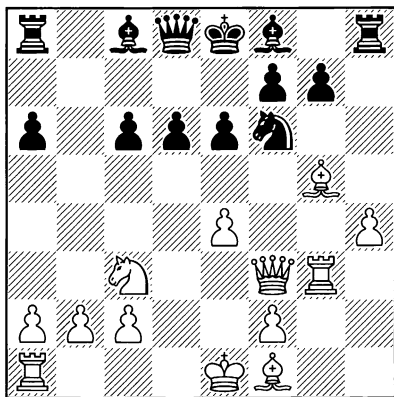
In this situation the standard reply 11...♞b6 is dubious in view of 12.♖db5! ♖e5

(if 12...a6?, then 13.♟xd6† ♞xd6 14.♞xd6 ♞xb2 15.♞b1 ♞xc2 16.♟xf6 gxf6 17.♟c4 with the idea ♟b3) 13.f4! (less clear is 13.♟e3 ♞d8 14.♟xa7 ♞xh4) 13...♟g6 14.e5! dxe5 15.fxe5 ♟h5? (15...♟xe5 16.♞e2 ♟fd7 17.0-0-0†) 16.♞d3 ♟e7, Hellers - Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1990. Now White has 17.♟d6†! ♟f8 18.♟xe7† ♟xe7 19.♟f5†! ♟e8 20.♞d6 winning.

And after 11...♟e7 12.♞d2 ♟xd4 13.♞xd4 ♞b6?! 14.♟b5†! ♟f8 15.♞xb6 axb6 White can exploit the weak b-pawns by 16.0-0-0 e5 17.♞gd3! ♟e6 18.f3, Gavrikov - Adorjan, Biel 1990, planning b3 and ♟a4.

12.♟xc6?! bxc6 13.♞f3

White prepares queenside castling as quickly as possible, when Black has to reckon with the advance e4-e5.



13...♞b8

This is probably the best. The alternatives are:

a) 13...e5?! 14.♟c4! ♟e6 15.♟xe6 fxe6 16.0-0-0 ♞b8 17.h5! ♞b7? (17...♞b6?! 18.b3 ♟xh5? loses to 19.♞h1 g6 20.♟e3 followed by ♞xg6. Black should have tried 17...♟e7 after which White can continue 18.h6!? gxh6 19.♟h4 ♞f8 20.♞g7 ♞b6 21.b3 with the idea 21...♞b7 (21...♞f7 22.♞xf7 ♟xf7 23.♞xd6!) 22.♞h3.) 18.h6 ♞f7 19.hxg7 ♟xg7 20.♞d3 d5 21.♞xa6 ♞c7 22.♟b5! cxb5 (Or 22...♞d7 23.♞a8† ♟e7 24.♞a3† ♟d8 25.♟d6 ♞e7 26.♞b3 White wins.) 23.♞c3, 1-0 Vasiukov - Danailov, Moscow 1986.

b) 13...♟d7?! 14.0-0-0 ♟e7 15.e5! dxe5 16.♟e4 with compensation for the pawn, e.g. 18...♞b8 17.♟xf6 gxf6 (17...♟xf6? 18.♞xg7!) 18.♞g2! ♞f8 19.♟c4 (with the idea 19...♞b4 20.♟xe6! fxe6 21.♞g8 ♞c8 22.♞xf8† ♟xf8 23.♞g1 ♟e8 24.♞g8† ♟f8 25.♞g7 with a decisive advantage for White) 19...♞b6 20.♞b3 ♞a7 21.♞bd3 ♞b7 22.♞g7 and White's initiative proved decisive in Kir. Georgiev - Sax, Reggio Emilia 1988/89.

c) 13...♟e7 14.0-0-0 d5 (after 14...♞c7 - 15.e5! dxe5 16.h5!? (with the idea h6) 16...♟xh5 17.♟xe7 ♟xe7 18.♞h3 g6 19.♟e4 f5 20.♞a3† ♟f7 21.♟d6† ♟f6 22.♟e2 gives White a strong attack, Sibarevic - Masic, Pula 1990) 15.♟c4?! ♟b7 16.♟b3 ♟f8 17.h5!? ♟d7 (17...♟xh5?! would be met by 18.♟xe7† ♟xe7 (18...♞xe7? 19.♞h1 g6 20.♞xg6) 19.exd5 cxd5 20.♟xd5! exd5 21.♟xd5† ♟xd5 22.♞xd5 ♟xg3 23.♞xd8 ♞axd8 24.fxg3 with good winning chances for White) 18.♟f4±, Pavlovic - Razuvaev, Cetinje 1991.

14.0-0-0 ♞b6 15.b3 ♟h5

Less accurate is 15...♟e7 because of 16.e5!? dxe5 17.♟e4 ♟a3† (17...♟h5? 18.♟xe7 ♟xe7 19.♞xg7! and 17...♟xe4 18.♞xe4 White's compensation is ample.) 18.♟b1 ♟d5 19.c4 ♟b7 20.cxd5 cxd5 (with the idea 21.♟d2? ♞d4 22.♟c4 dxc4.). This was played in Gorin - Rodin, Simferopol 1989. Now strong was 21.♞f6! dxe4 22.♞xg7 ♞f8 23.♞xe5 ♞c8 24.♞c3± with the idea 24...♞xc3? 25.♟b5†! axb5 (25...♟c6 26.♞xc3) 26.♞xb5†+.

16.♞g1 d5

White did not achieve anything in the game van der Wiel - Winants, Budel (zt) 1987, after 16...g6 17.♟c4?! ♞a5 18.e5?! d5, but instead of 17.♟c4?! both 17.♟h3 and 17.♟b1 deserved attention. The advance d6-d5 looks rather risky because White's forces are better prepared for concrete play and the position of the black king in the centre becomes more vulnerable.

17.♟b1 ♟b4?!

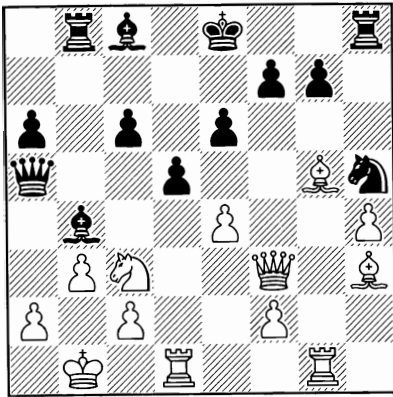
Also if 17...♟d6?! then 18.♟h3 causes serious problems, e.g. 18...♞c7 (18...♟e5 19.exd5 cxd5 20.♞ge1 with the idea 20...f6 21.♟g4 g6 22.♟xh5 ♞xh5 23.♟xd5 exd5 24.♞xf6)

19. exd5 cxd5 20. ♖ge1 ♗e5 (20... ♗b7 21. ♗xe6 fxe6 22. ♖xe6† ♗d7 23. ♖f5) 21. ♗xd5 exd5 22. ♖xd5 ♗xh3 (22... f6 23. ♖xe5†!) 23. ♖xe5† ♗f8 24. ♖e7+.

Black should have sought to prevent the eventual sacrifice on d5 by 17... ♗b7, although White's position is more promising after, for example 18. ♗h3.

18. ♗h3! ♖a5?

Missing a second chance to play ♗b7.



19. ♗e2!?

A natural reply, although 19. exd5!? was strong too as White wins a pawn after 19... cxd5 (19... ♗xc3? 20. dxe6+-) 20. ♗xd5! ♗b7 (20... exd5? 21. ♖xd5 ♖c7 22. ♗xc8 ♖xc8 23. ♖e4†) 21. ♗f4! ♗xd5 (21... ♖c8 22. ♗f6† ♗xf6 23. ♖xb7 ♖c5 24. c4) 22. ♖xd5 ♖xd5 23. ♖xd5 exd5 24. ♗xb8±.

19... ♗d7?

Black is already in trouble and it is hard to suggest anything else.

20. c4

Another, and perhaps better possibility, was 20. ♗f4 ♗xf4 21. ♗xf4 ♖b5 22. ♖xg7.

20... dxe4 21. ♖xe4 ♖c7?!

More stubborn is 21... ♗f6 22. ♖f4 ♖b7.

22. ♗f4! ♗f6 23. ♖e2

23. ♗xf6 gxf6 24. ♖g7! (Threatening ♗xe6) would have won easily with the idea 24... ♖xh4 (24... ♖e5 25. ♖d3) 25. ♖g8† ♗f8 26. ♗g6!.

23... ♗d6?

The final mistake. 23... ♖d8 was the only way to continue the fight.

24. ♗xe6! ♗xe6 25. ♗xe6 fxe6 26. ♖xe6† ♗e7

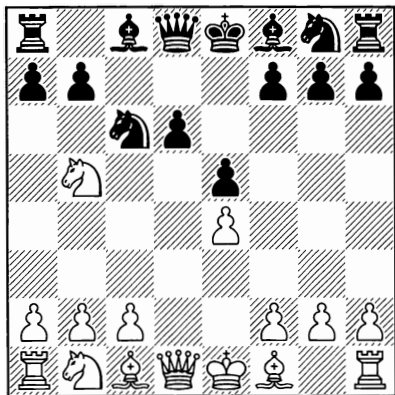
27. ♗xf6 gxf6 28. ♖g8† ♖xg8 29. ♖xg8†

1-0

The Kalashnikov

- By Jan Pinski

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 e5
5.♞b5 d6



The Sicilian Kalashnikov has become a real opening over the last 15 years or so. It was developed by Evgeny Sveshnikov more than anyone to start with, but he already had his own main line in the Sicilian!

Here I suggest 6.♞1c3 is the right decision. 6.c4 is the main theoretical move, but it promises positional play with an easy way for Black to gain equality. Instead this more tactical and confrontational approach promises White an advantage, and makes me wonder how I ever got away with playing the Kalashnikov for so long without being punished!

But as this is a minor line, I will not waste your time with unnecessary talk. All you need to know is in the games below. Basically you play 8.♞d5, 9.exd5 and 10.c4!, or the same moves in another order!

Game 50

Motylev - Shariyazdanov

Tomsk 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 e5
5.♞b5 d6 6.♞1c3 a6 7.♞a3 b5

The alternatives are:

7...♙e6 8.♞c4 b5 (Radjabov's latest try, at the Turin Olympiad 2006, was 8...♞b8. Perhaps the simplest plan now, instead of 9.a4 as in the game, was 9.♞e3 ♞f6 10.g3 with the usual edge.) 9.♞e3 ♞f6 10.g3! The best way for White to play for an advantage. 10...♞c8 11.♙g2 and White is slightly better.

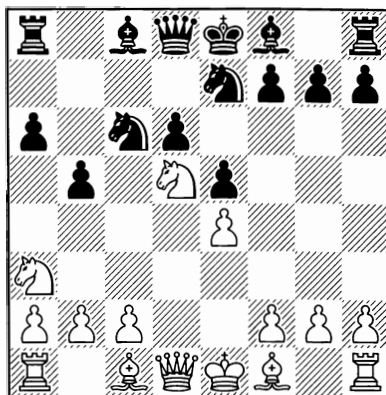
7...♙e7 8.♞c4 b5 9.♞e3 ♞f6 10.g3! h5!? GM Teimour Radjabov's idea. (10...0-0 11.♙g2 ♙e6 12.0-0 White is slightly better) 11.♙g2 h4 12.♞ed5! A new move. 12...♞xd5 13.♞xd5 h3 14.♙f3 ♞d4 15.♙e3 ♞xf3† 16.♞xf3 ♞b8 17.0-0 ♙b7 18.♞ad1 White is a little better.

8.♞d5 ♞ge7

The most popular move here. There was a time when I believed in this position for Black, but I have changed my mind. White is better but the position is extremely complicated.

8...♙e7 9.c4 b4 10.♞c2 (10.♞xb4? ♞xb4 11.♞a4† ♙d7 12.♞xb4 d5 13.♞c3 ♞b8 and Black is better.) 10...♞b8 11.b3 ♞f6 12.♙d3 0-0 13.0-0 ♞d7 14.♙b2 ♞c5 15.♞ce3 ♙g5 16.♙c2 a5 17.♞h1 White is better.

8...♞b8 9.c4 ♞ge7? (for 9...b4 – see 8...♙e7). For nearly ten years this position has been assessed as unclear in *ECO*. The game Kaminski – Pinski, Katowice 1995, and the winner's comments (GM Kaminski) were the basis for this. The truth is different: 10.cxb5 ♞xd5 11.exd5! ♞d4 12.bxa6 ♞a5† 13.♙d2 ♞xd5 14.a7 ♞a8 15.♙e3 ♞xa7 16.♞b5 with a clear advantage for White.



9.c4

It is easy to remember. No matter what Black play (8... ♗e7, 8... ♖ge7, 8... ♖ce7, 8... ♖b8), White should always answer c2-c4.

9... ♖xd5

The more popular move order is: 9... ♖d4 10.cxb5 ♖xd5 11.exd5

10.exd5

10. ♗xd5!? ♗d7 11. ♗e3! White is at least slightly better. 11.cxb5?! ♖d4! 12. ♗e3! ♗e6 13. ♗b7 ♖b8 14. ♗xa6 ♖a8 15. ♗b7 ♖b8 is equal.

10... ♖d4 11.cxb5! ♗d7

The only move, after which we reach the critical position for the 8... ♖ge7 line. 11... ♗h4? There was a time when people believed in this move. 12.bxa6!! I was unlucky enough to face this innovation (previously the weak 12. ♗e3? had been played). 12... ♗e7 13. ♗e3 0-0 14. ♗xd4 exd4 15. ♗d3 ♖xa6 16. 0-0 and White has a winning position, Iordachescu-Pinski, Cappelle la Grande 1998. 11... ♗e7?! 12. ♗c4! 0-0 (12... ♗a5† 13. ♗d2 ♗b6 14.bxa6! ♗xb2 15. ♖b1 ♗xa3 16. ♗b4 ♗g4 17. ♗xa3 ♗xd1 18. ♖xd1 and White wins) 13. 0-0 f5 14.bxa6 f4 15. ♖c2 ♖xc2 16. ♗xc2 f3 17. ♗d3! White has a clear advantage.

12. ♗e3

Just weak is 12.bxa6? ♗a5† 13. ♗d2 ♗xd5.

12... axb5

Black can't be happy after 12... ♖xb5 13. ♖c4! Remember this useful idea: when the black knight takes on b5, the white knight comes to c4. 13... f5 14. a4 ♖a7 15. ♖c1 f4 16. ♗d2 ♖c8 17. ♗b3 and White is better, Smirin-Shirov, Klaipeda 1988. 12... ♗e7 13. ♗d3 axb5 (13... ♖xb5 14. ♖c4! etc.) 14. 0-0 ♖b8 15. ♗xd4 exd4 16. ♖c2 0-0 17. ♖xd4 ♗b6 Here I have a new idea: 18. ♗f5! (Instead of 18. ♖c1) 18... ♗f6 19. ♗xd7 ♗xd4 20. ♗d2 and White is better.

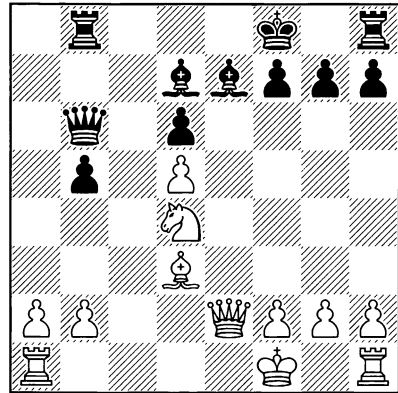
13. ♗xd4 exd4 14. ♗d3 ♗a5† 15. ♖f1

The position after 15. ♗d2 ♗e7 16. ♗xa5 ♖xa5 17. ♖c2 is not so clear. Black has some compensation for his pawn weaknesses here.

15... ♗e7

15... b4 16. ♖c4 ♗c5 17. ♗e2† ♖d8 18. ♗f3 ♗b5 19. b3 ♖a7 20. g3! h5 21. h4 and White is better.

16. ♗e2 ♖b8 17. ♖c2 ♖f8 18. ♖xd4 ♗b6



19. ♖c6!

Opposite coloured bishops do not always lead to an easy draw, they can also give good attacking possibilities.

19... ♗xc6 20. dxc6 ♗xc6 21. h4 h5 22. ♖e1 ♗f6 23. ♖h3 ♖h6

This looks ineffective, but it is hard to find alternatives. 23... g6? 24. ♗xg6! fxg6 25. ♖f3 ♖g7 (25... d5?? 26. ♗e7† and White wins) 26. ♖xf6 ♖he8 27. ♖e6 ♖xe6 28. ♗xe6 ♗c4† 29. ♖g1 This endgame is winning for White.

24. ♖e3

White has an interesting plan: ♖e4-b4-b5

24... ♗e5

24... b4?? 25. ♗b5 and White wins. 24... g6 25. ♖e4 d5 26. ♖b4 ♗d6 27. ♗d2 ♖g7 28. ♖g1 ♖hh8 29. ♗xb5 ♗xh4 30. ♖xh4 ♖xb5 31. ♖d4 with good winning chances.

25. ♖e4 g6

There is no time for 25... b4 26. f4! ♖f6 27. ♗xh5 and White gains a decisive advantage. 26. ♖b4 ♖g7 27. ♖xb5 ♖hh8 28. b3 ♖xb5 29. ♗xb5

In positions like this White can continue to play for a win forever, without having to take any risks.

29... ♗c5 30. ♗c4 ♗a3 31. g3 ♖a8 32. ♗f3 ♖a7 33. ♖e2 ♗b2 34. ♗e3 ♗f6

34... ♗xa2?? 35. ♖xb2 and White wins.

35. ♗d2 ♖a5 36. ♖g2 ♗c5 37. ♖g1 ♗b6 38. ♖e3 ♖a3 39. ♖f3 ♖a7 40. a4 ♗c5 41. ♖d3 ♗e5

42.♖d5 ♖a3 43.♗g2 ♖a1 44.♖d1 ♖a2?

The position was more or less lost, but after this mistake all is clear.

45.♗xd6! ♖a1 46.♖xa1 ♗xa1 47.♖d3 ♗b2
48.♗f3 ♗a3 49.♗e4 ♗c5 50.f4 ♗b4 51.♖d5
♗e1 52.♗f3 ♗c3 53.f5 ♗b4 54.♗d3 ♖c7
55.♖b5 ♗c5 56.b4 ♗e7 57.fxg6 fxg6 58.♖b6
♖c3 59.♗e2 ♖b3 60.♖xg6† ♗f7 61.♖a6 ♖b2†
62.♗f1 ♗xb4 63.♗g6† ♗e7 64.♖b6
1-0

Game 51

Delchev - Brumen

Zadar 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e5
5.♗b5 d6 6.♗1c3 a6 7.♗a3 b5 8.♗d5 ♗c7?!
9.c4! ♗xd5 10.exd5!

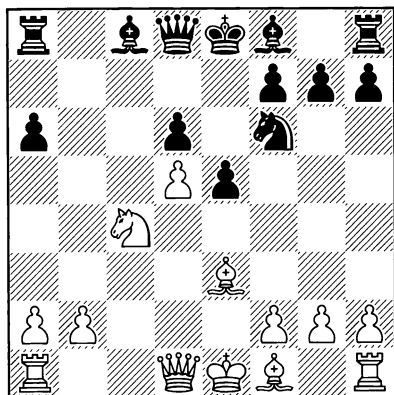
Keeping the symmetrical pawn structure is less dangerous for Black. White has some problems with the knight on a3 after cxd5.

10...bxc4

There is no compensation after 10...♗e7
11.cxb5 ♗f6 12.♗c4 0-0 13.bxa6 ♗xa6 14.0-0
♖b6 15.♖d3 ♖fc8 16.b3 h6 17.♖d1 White is
clearly better.

11.♗xc4 ♗f6

11...f5 12.♗d2 ♖b8 (12...a5? 13.♖a4† ♗d7
14.♖a3 ♖b8 15.♗xa5 White take a pawn.)
13.♗a5 ♖e7 14.♗b6 ♗b7 15.♖a4† ♗f7 16.g4!
fxg4 17.h3 White has a clear advantage.
12.♗e3!



This is more dangerous than 12.♗d2.

12...♖b8 13.♗e2 ♗e7 14.0-0 0-0 15.a4

The critical position for the 8...♗ce7 variation. 15...♗b7 seems to be the best way to search for equality.

15...♗b7

15...♗d7 16.a5! This is better than the previously popular 16.Qd2. White's chances are on the queenside, therefore it makes no sense to play slowly. 16...f5 17.f4 g5 (17...exf4 18.♗xf4 ♗c5 19.♗b6 ♗b7 20.b4 ♗e4 21.♖c1 and White is better.) 18.fxe5 ♗xe5 19.♗b6 ♗f6 20.♗xc8 ♖xc8 21.♖c1 ♖d7 22.♗b6 White is slightly better, Ehrenfeucht - Pinski, Warsaw 1999.

15...♖d7 16.♗b6 ♖f5 17.♗xc8 ♖xc8 18.♖c1
♖f5 19.b3 a5 20.h3 e4 21.♗c4 and White is
better.

15...a5?! 16.♗d2 ♖a8 17.♖e1 with a clear
advantage.

16.♗b6 ♗d7

16...♖e8 17.a5 ♗d8 18.♗c4 ♗xb6 19.axb6!
(19.♗xb6 ♗d7 20.♗e3 f5 with counterplay.)
19...♗d7 20.♖b3 f5 21.f3 f4 22.♗f2 White is a
bit better - he has the two bishops and an attack
on the a6-pawn, Bogachkov-Sherbakov, Russia
2001.

17.a5 f5 18.f3 ♖e8

18...♗xb6 19.♗xb6 ♖d7 20.b4 ♗d8 21.♗e3
♗f6 22.♖b1 ♖f7 23.♗c4 ♖bc8 24.♖d3 ♖a8
25.♖fc1 ♖h5 26.♗b3 ♗g5 27.♖d2 ♗xe3†
28.♖xe3 White is slightly better, Karjakin -
Kosteniuk, Brissago (4) 2003.

19.♖d2

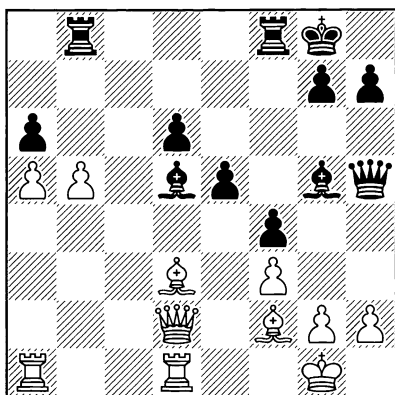
More thematic is 19.b4 ♗d8 20.♗xd7 ♖xd7
21.♖b1 and White has the more pleasant
game.

19...♗d8 20.♗xd7 ♖xd7 21.b4 f4?

If such a move does not win by force then it
is a bad move! But seriously: Black breaks his
own pawn chain, irreversibly, and without any
compensation!

22.♗f2 ♖f7 23.♖fd1 ♗g5 24.♗d3 ♖h5 25.b5
♗xd5?!

25...axb5 26.a6 ♗a8 27.♗a7 ♖bd8 28.♗xb5
White is simply better.



26. ♖xh7†! ♜xh7 27. ♖c2†!

27. ♖xd5? ♜xb5 28. ♖e4† ♖g6 29. ♖xg6†
♜xg6 30. ♜xd6† ♜f6 and Black is alive!

27... ♜h8 28. ♜xd5 axb5 29. ♜xd6

Now White has good attacking possibilities because of the weak light squares. White also has good possibilities to win by promoting the a-pawn.

29... ♗e7 30. ♜b6 b4 31. ♜xb8 ♜xb8 32. a6

Brutal and effective. Black does not have any chance.

32... ♗h4 33. ♗b6 ♗d8 34. ♗xd8 ♜xd8 35. a7
♖e8 36. ♖e4 ♜a8 37. ♖xb4 ♖d7 38. ♖b8† ♜h7
39. ♖b6 ♖d5 40. h3 e4 41. ♜a5 ♖f7 42. ♖b8
1-0

Game 52

Anand – Shirov

Linares 2002

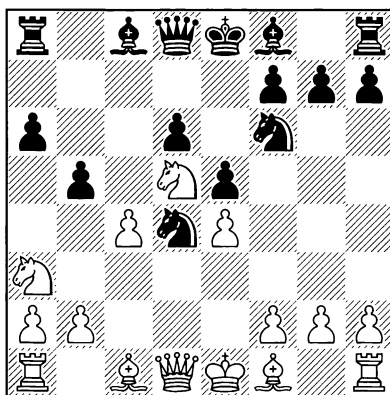
The annotations to this game are inspired by those of Anand, as published in several places.

1. e4 c5 2. ♖f3 ♗c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 e5
5. ♗b5 d6 6. ♗1c3 a6 7. ♗a3 b5 8. ♗d5 ♗f6
9. c4

This is the most aggressive line. 9. ♗g5 transposes to very well known positions from the Sveshnikov Sicilian, and not the lines recommended in this book.

9... b4

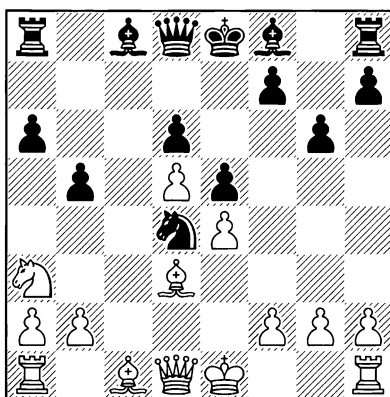
9... ♗d4 leaves us with some options:



a) 10. cxb5!? ♗xd5 11. exd5 transposes to the lines after 8... ♗ge7 9. c4 ♗d4 10. cxb5! ♗xd5 11. exd5.

b) If you do not like complications, try 10. ♗d3!? ♗xd5 11. cxd5 g6!.

(This looks better than 11... ♗e7 12. 0-0 0-0 13. ♗e3 This is a common position for the 8... ♗f6 and 8... ♗ge7 variations [If Black takes ♗xd5 of course]. White has the advantage. 13... ♗d7 14. ♖d2 ♖b8 15. ♜ae1 ♗d8 16. ♗xd4! exd4 17. ♗c2 ♗f6 18. f4 etc.)



12. ♗c2 (Interesting is 12. ♗e3 ♗g7 13. 0-0 0-0 14. ♗xd4 exd4 15. ♗c2 with the plan ♗b4-c6. However White should play very carefully because Black has good attacking chances here. 15... ♖h4! 16. a4! [16. ♗b4?! f5 17. exf5

♙xf5 18.a4 ♘g4! 19.♙e2 (19.♙c2? ♙f3!! 20.♙fe1 (20.gxf3? ♙e5 21.♙fe1 ♙xh2† 22.♙f1 ♙h3† 23.♙e2 ♙xf3† Black is winning.) 20...♙g5 (20...♙xg2 21.♙xg2 ♙g4† 22.♙f1 ♙h3† 23.♙g1 ♙g4† Draw.) 21.g3 ♙ac8 with initiative.) 19...♙xe2 20.♙xe2 with unclear play.] 16...bxa4 17.♙xa4 ♙d7 18.♙a5 f5 19.exf5 ♙xf5 20.b4 White is at least slightly better.) 12...♙xc2† 13.♙xc2! (After 13.♙xc2 ♙d7 the black bishop keeps control of the a4 square.) 13...♙g7 14.a4 ♙d7 15.♙e3 0-0 16.0-0 f5 17.f3 and White is slightly better because of his space advantage.

c) 10.♙g5! ♙a5† (of course there is no real compensation after 10...♙e7? 11.♙xf6 ♙xf6 12.cxb5) 11.♙d2 ♙d8 12.cxb5 (12.♙xf6† ♙xf6 13.♙c3 ♙b7 leads to an unclear position) 12...♙xd5 13.exd5 ♙b6 14.♙e3! (14.♙c4 ♙c5 15.bxa6 ♙xa6 16.♙e3 ♙xf1 Black has good compensation for the pawn.) 14...♙e7 15.♙xd4 exd4 16.♙d3 ♙b7 17.♙f3! White has a clear advantage. For example: 17...♙c5 18.0-0 ♙xd5 19.♙g4 0-0 20.♙ae1! ♙fe8 21.b4! Nice trick. 21...♙xb4 22.♙f5 g6 23.♙xd5 and White wins.

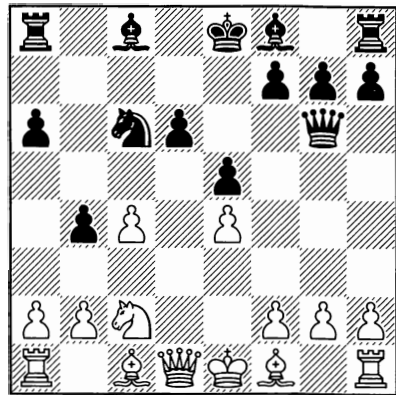
9...♙xe4?! 10.cxb5! ♙a5† 11.♙d2 ♙xd2 12.♙xd2 axb5 13.♙xb5 ♙xd2† 14.♙xd2 ♙d8 15.♙c4 White has the advantage.

10.♙xf6†

Of course not 10.♙xb4?? because of 10...♙a5 10.♙c2!? ♙xe4 (10...♙b8 This is better than 10...a5, after which the b6-square is weak. 11.♙d3 ♙e7 12.b3 White stands slightly better – compare with the line 8...♙e7 9.c4.) 11.♙f3 ♙c5 (11...f5 12.♙d3 ♙e7 13.♙xe4 fxe4 14.♙xe4 ♙b8 15.♙f3! White is better) 12.♙dxb4 ♙xb4 13.♙xb4 ♙b7 14.♙d5 ♙e7 15.b4 ♙e6 16.♙e3 0-0 17.♙d3 ♙xd5 18.cxd5 White is better, Mitkov - Permyu Lorenzo, Nigran 1994.

10...♙xf6 11.♙c2 ♙g6

This position has been played a few times. The conclusion seems to be that White has the better chances. White has two possibilities now: 12.♙d5 leads to complicated play; 12.♙e3 is less ambitious, but White is safer here.



12.♙d5!

The winner of the following game wrote in *New In Chess* that he found no faults in Anand's play, but all the same he decided to play more carefully and secure a simpler advantage with the following approach: 12.♙e3!? ♙e7 (12...♙b7 13.♙d3 ♙e7 14.0-0 0-0 15.♙f5 ♙fd8 16.♙c2 ♙e6 17.♙e3 g6 18.♙xe7† ♙xe7 19.b3 f5 20.♙g5 f4 21.a3 bxa3 22.♙xa3 and White is much better, Palac - Srebrnic, Ljubjana 2004. 12...♙xe4 13.♙d3 ♙d4 14.♙d5 ♙b8 15.0-0 ♙g4 16.♙a4 ♙d7 17.♙e3 ♙e7 18.♙b6 ♙c7 19.♙xc8 ♙xc8 20.♙xa6 and White is slightly better, according to grandmaster Viktor Bogolan.) 13.g3! 0-0 (13...h5? 14.♙g2 h4 15.♙f5 ♙e6 16.♙e3 ♙c8 17.♙xe7 ♙xe7 18.c5 White is much better according to grandmaster Alexei Fedorov. GM Sveshnikov recently found a clever way to strengthen Black's play: 13...♙d4!? 14.♙g2 ♙b7 15.♙f5 [Bogolan claimed that 15.♙d5!? ♙xd5 16.cxd5 0-0 17.♙e3 was an edge for White, but it doesn't look like much after 17...f5] 15...♙xf5! 16.exf5 ♙xg2 17.♙g1 ♙f3 18.♙a4+ [18.♙d3 ♙e2 is also level] 18...♙c6 19.♙d1 Draw agreed in Klovans-Sveshnikov, Latvian Championship 2005.) 14.♙g2 ♙g5 15.0-0 ♙xe3 (15...♙d4?? 16.f4 ♙h6 17.f5 ♙g5 18.♙d5 ♙d8 19.♙xh6 gxf6 20.f6 ♙h8 21.♙h5 and White has a decisive advantage) 16.♙xe3 ♙b8 17.♙a4 ♙b7 18.♙fd1 a5 19.♙d2! White stands better, Bogolan-Tregubov, Belfort 2002.

12...♙b7 13.♜xb4 ♖c8

13...♞d8 14.♞d1! ♞xe4† 15.♙e3 ♙e7 16.♞d5 ♖c8 (16...♙h4 17.♞d3 ♙xd5 (17...♞xd3 18.♙xd3 is also better for White.) 18.cxd5 ♞b4† 19.♞d2 ♞e4 20.♖c1 ♙g5 21.♞d3 ♞b4† 22.♞c3 ♞xc3† 23.♖xc3 ♙xe3 24.fxe3 This is one of the typical endings in the Kalashnikov. It is also much better for White. First of all, White has bishop against knight. Secondly, the black pawn on a6 is weak. Last but not least, White has good chances to create a passed pawn on the queenside.) 17.f3 ♞g6 18.♞xe7! (Anand believes that after 18.♞d2 White is much better. However it is not so easy to prove. 18...♙xd5! 19.♞xd5 (of course bad is 19.cxd5 ♖c2 20.♞b4 0-0 and White is even worse) 19...♞c6 and White has serious weaknesses on the kingside. The question is: how does White finish his development? For example: 20.♞d2? d5! with an attack.) 18...♞xe7 19.♞d2 and White is much better!

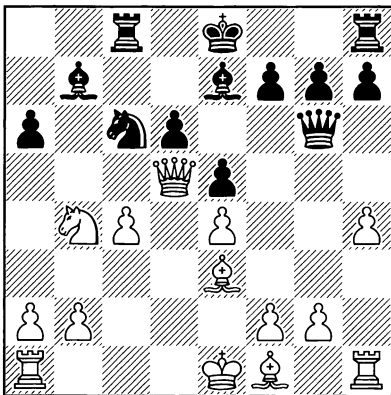
14.♙e3

14.f3 ♙e7 15.♞xc6 ♙xc6 16.♞d2 f5 17.exf5 ♞xf5 18.♙e2 0-0 19.0-0 e4 with compensation, according to Anand.

14...♙e7

14...♞d8 15.♞d2 ♞xe4 16.f3 ♞h4† 17.♙f2 ♞h5 18.♞d5 ♞g6 19.♞d1 ♙xd5 20.cxd5 ♙e7 21.♙g3 White stands better.

15.h4!



A strong prophylactic move, which is also a strong attacking move. Prophylactic, because

White takes control of the g5 square. Attacking, because White threatens h4-h5.

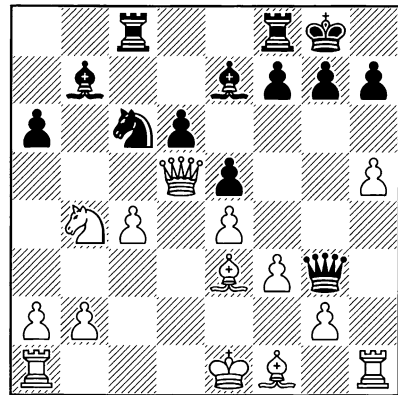
15...0-0

15...♞g4 Black defends ♖c8 and threatens ♞xb4. 16.♞d1 0-0 17.f3! ♙h4† 18.♞e2! ♞g6 19.♞xc6 ♙xc6 20.♞xd6 ♙f6 21.♞a3 White's position is much better: there is no real compensation for the material.

15...h5?! 16.f3 0-0 17.0-0-0 ♞xb4 18.♞xb7 ♞xa2† 19.♞c2 White stands much better - Anand.

16.h5 ♞g4 17.f3 ♞g3†

17...♞d7 18.♞xc6 ♙xc6 19.♞d2 White is better.



18.♞d1

18.♙f2? ♞xb4 19.♞d2 ♞g5 20.♞xb4 d5! 21.c5 The only move. 21...♞b8 22.exd5 ♙xd5 with a strong initiative.

18...♙g5 19.♞xc6

19.♞h3 ♞xh3 20.gxh3 ♙xe3 21.♞c2! (Better than 21.♞d3 ♙d4 22.♞d5 h6! with positional compensation for the material, according to Anand.) 21...♙b6 (21...♙f4 22.b4 ♖b8 23.♞d3 f5 24.a4 ♞e7 25.a5 White is better.) 22.h6 gxh6 23.♞d2 and White is better.

19...♙xe3

19...♙xc6 20.♞d2 ♙xe3 21.♞xe3 f5 22.♞h3 ♞f4 23.♞xf4 exf4 24.exf5 ♖xf5 25.b4! White has a clear advantage: Black has a wrecked pawn structure, and not enough active play to compensate for it. It is only an illusion that the rook on h3 is out of the game. After ♞h4 (xf4) it

is playing at 100%!

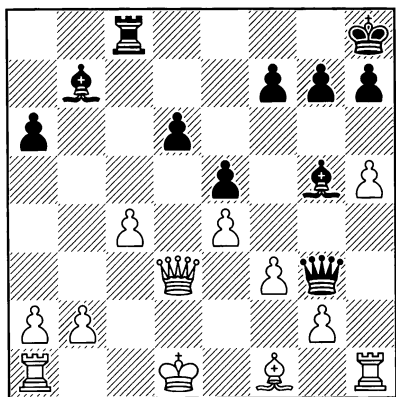
20.♖e7† ♘h8 21.♖d3

21.♖xb7? ♜f2 22.♙e2 (22.♖d5 ♖xb2 Black has a clear advantage.) 22...♞b8 23.♖d5 ♞xb2 24.♞e1 ♙g5 Black is close to winning.

21...♙g5 22.♖xc8

22.♖f5? This does not prevent Black's counterplay. 22...♜f2 23.♖c2 ♖b6 with a strong initiative for the pawn.

22...♞xc8



23.h6?!

23.♗c2 ♜f2† 24.♙e2 d5 25.♞af1!! (25.exd5?! ♙xd5 26.b3 ♙e6 27.♞af1 ♖c5 28.♞d1 e4 29.fxe4

♖a3 30.♗b1 ♙xc4 31.♖c2 ♙e6 32.♖b2 ♖a5 33.♞hf1 h6 with good practical compensation.) 25...dxc4 (25...♖c5 26.exd5 ♙xd5 27.♗b1 and White wins) 26.♖d8†! ♞xd8 27.♞xf2 ♙e3 (27...♞d2† 28.♗c3 ♙e3 29.g3 and White wins.) 28.♞hf1 ♞d4 29.g3 ♙xf2 30.♞xf2 ♙c8 31.♞f1 ♙e6 32.♗c3 f6 33.♞d1 ♞xd1 34.♙xd1 This ending is just lost.

23...gxh6 24.♗c2 d5?

24...f5 25.exf5 ♜f2† 26.♙e2 d5 27.♞ae1 ♞xc4† 28.♗b1 ♖b6 29.♖a3 ♞c8 Black has some compensation for the material.

25.exd5 ♙xd5

25...♜f2† 26.♙e2 ♙xd5 27.♞af1 ♖c5 28.♗b1 ♙xc4 29.♖xc4 ♖xc4 30.♙xc4 ♞xc4 31.♞d1 and White wins.

26.♖xd5 ♞d8

Better was 26...♜f2† 27.♗c3 ♖e3† 28.♖d3 ♖b6. Now White should play very carefully. 29.♞d1 e4 30.♖c2! ♙f6† (30...♖e3† 31.♗b4 ♖c5† 32.♗a4 ♖c6† 33.♗a3 ♙e7† 34.b4 ♞b8 35.♖c3† ♗g8 36.c5 and White wins) 31.♗d2 exf3 (31...♙g5† 32.♗e1 exf3 33.♖c3† ♙f6 34.♖xf3 ♖b4† 35.♗f2 ♖xb2† 36.♙e2 and White should win) 32.♗c1 and White wins.

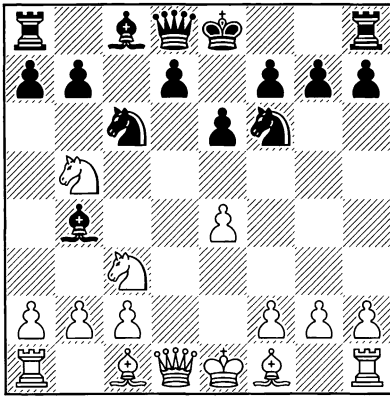
27.♖c5 ♞d2† 28.♗b3 ♗g7 29.a3 e4 30.♞h3 ♖f4 31.fxe4

1-0

The Four Knights

- By Alexander Raetsky

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6
5.♞c3 e6 6.♞db5 ♙b4



The Four Knights variation of the Sicilian, as seen in the diagram above, is a rather sad variation that I, for reasons that will soon be clear to everyone, have chosen as my main defence. Some years ago I wrote a book called *Meeting 1.e4* for Everyman. For this book my editors, Jacob Aagaard and Byron Jacobs, decided that the Four Knights variation was a timely choice: despite seeming quite playable it had found no real attention in recent theoretical works. Since I prefer to play football with my son rather than study chess, this became the line I knew best from Black's point of view, and therefore I chose to adopt it in my own games.

I have now agreed to write another article about this line, this time with a few recommendations for White, on the condition that my jokes would not be removed from this manuscript. (We lied – the editors.)

So let us move to the few lines you need to know to be able to get an advantage against me with White – if I still play this rubbish when this book comes out.

Game 53
Timoshchenko – Chernov
Bucharest 1993

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6
5.♞c3 e6 6.♞db5 ♙b4 7.a3

7. ♙f4!? is a sharper line. However, I see no reason why it should be stronger, or even provide White with a guaranteed advantage. So I recommend just snatching the two bishops and getting on with it.

7...♙xc3† 8.♞xc3 d5 9.exd5 exd5

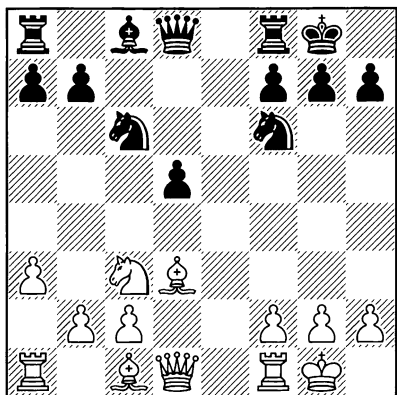
9...♞xd5 is a less popular alternative in this position. As in all other lines White should be slightly better. Here I will give two examples, but basically there is not a lot of theory here, nor a lot needed, as the position is more technical than tactical in nature.

a) 10.♞xd5 ♜xd5 11.♜xd5 exd5 12.♙f4 ♙f5 13.0–0–0 0–0–0 14.f3 h5 15.♞d2 ♞he8 16.♙g3 a6 17.♙e2 ♞e6 18.♞hd1 ♞d7 19.♙f1 d4 20.♙f2 ♞c7 21.♙d3 ♙xd3 22.♞xd3 ♞e2 23.♞1d2 ♞xd2 24.♞xd2 ♞d7± Peng - L. Christiansen, Yerevan 1996.

b) 10.♙d2!? ♞xc3 The safer choice. (10...0–0 11.♞h5!? ♞xc3 [11...♟f6 12.♞h4 ♞d4 would still have kept White's advantage to a minimum. 13.♞xd4 ♞xd4 14.0–0–0 e5 15.♞b5 ♞xb5 16.♙xb5 ♙f5 17.f3±] 12.♙xc3 e5 13.♙d3 g6 14.♞h6 ♞f6 15.0–0 ♞g7 16.♞e3 g5 17.h4!? h6 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.f3 ♙e6 20.♞f2± with an attack in Tal - Liberzon, Kislovodsk 1964) 11.♙xc3 ♞xd1† 12.♞xd1 f6 13.f4 ♙d7 14.♙c4 0–0–0 15.0–0 ♞c7 16.♞de1 ♞he8 17.♞f3 ♙c8 18.♞g3 ♞e7 19.♞ge3 ♞d6 20.b4± Fischer - Addison, New York 1962.

These kind of slightly worse endgames for some reason appeal very little to Black players, while being slightly worse with the queens on is another story.

10.♙d3 0–0 11.0–0



This is the standard position in this system. In the next game we shall consider one of the main moves, 11...d4, here we look at two alternatives.

11...h6

11...g4 12.f3 Now we have two alternatives:
 a) 12...e6 13.g5 ♖b6† 14.♗h1 ♘d7 Only move. (14...♗xb2? loses directly to a very simple attack. 15.♗d2 ♗b6 16.gxf6 gxf6 17.♖h6 f5 18.♗xd5! ♗xd5 19.gxf5 and Black cannot defend himself.) 15.f4 f5 (15...h6? 16.gxh6 gxh6 17.f5 ♗de5 18.♗d2 ♗xd3 19.♗xh6 would allow White to establish a winning attack. Black can only escape with 19...♗d4 20.cxd3 ♗g7 when White will win all the same. Strongest is probably 21.♖h4!?) 16.b4 d4 17.♗a4 ♗c7 18.♖e1 ♗d5 (18...♖fe8± was better) 19.c4! ♗f7 20.gxf5 h6 21.gxh6! ♗xc4 22.g6† ♗xe6 23.♖xe6 ♗f6 24.g5 ♗f7 25.♗c5 and White won in Tshchkovsky - Maiorov, Novorossiysk 1995.

b) 12...h5 13.g5 ♖b6† 14.♗h1 ♗e4 It is hard to see any other good moves for Black. 15.♗xe4 dxe4 16.gxe4 ♗xb2 17.♗b1 (17.♗d5!? ♗g6 18.♖ab1 ♗xa3 19.gxg6 hxg6 20.♖xb7 ♗a6 21.♖fb1±) 17...♗xb1 18.♖fb1 f5 19.♗d3 (19.♗d5† ♗f7 20.c4± was also interesting) 19...b6 20.♖b5 ♗g6 21.♖d5 h6 (21...f4 22.gxg6 hxg6 23.♖e1 ♖ae8 24.♖xe8 ♖xe8 25.♗g1 ♖e2 26.gxf4 ♖xc2 27.♖d6±) 22.g4 ♗h7 23.♖e1 ♖ae8 24.♖xe8 ♖xe8 25.f4 ♖f8 26.♗g1±.

White retains some pressure in the endgame, Tshchkovsky - Barlov, Budva 1996. All in all a sad story for Black.

12.g4 d4

12...a6 has also been tried. In Areshchenko - G. Kuzmin, Kramatorsk 2003, White replied naturally with 13.♖e1 d4 14.♗e4 and now Black went wrong with 14...g5?! (14...♗xe4 15.gxe4 ♗f6 16.g3± was preferable), when White had a tactical shot with 15.gc7! ♗xc7 16.♗xf6† gxf6 17.gxf5 ♗f4 18.g4 ♖ad8 19.g3 ♗g5 20.h4 ♗g7 21.♖h5±.

13.♗b5!

Knight sorties to other squares promise little according to common practice.

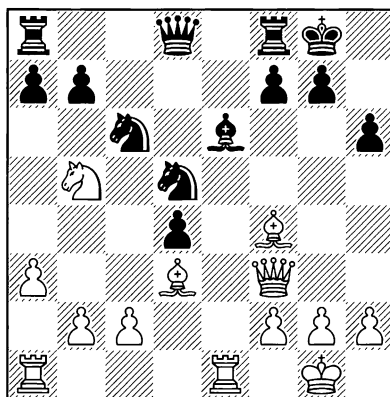
13...♗d5 14.♗f3!?

14.g3 g6 15.♖e1 ♗d7 16.h3 ♖ad8 17.♗f3 ♗de7 18.♗d6 g5 19.♖h5 f5∞ Krogius - Tal, Riga 1958.

14...g6

14...♗xf4 15.♗xf4 leaves the d-pawn in trouble, and after 15...g6?! (15...a6 16.♗d6± is necessary, though unpleasant) White has 16.gc7! ♖c8 17.♖e4 g5 18.♗xf5 g6 19.♗e6!±.

15.♖fe1



15...♗d7!?

This is too automatic as will soon be apparent. Black had two preferable alternatives.

15...g6 16.♖e4 g5 17.♗xf5 (17.♗xd5 ♗xd3 18.gd6 gxc2 19.gxf8 ♖xf8 offers Black counterplay with the d-pawn) 17...♗xf5 18.gxf5 ♗xf4 19.♖ad1 ♖ad8 20.g4 and White is better.

15...a6!? 16.♖d6 ♗xf4 17.♞xf4 ♞c7 18.♞e4 g6 19.♗c4 ♜fe8 20.♞h4 ♗g7 and White is only slightly better.

16.♙e5 ♗xe5 17.♞xe5 ♗e7?!

I have had this position once. I played 17...♗f6 when after 18.♞f4 ♜fd8 19.♙d1 ♙g4 (Bromann - Raetsky, Taastrup 2002) my opponent should have played 20.f3! when the problems with the d-pawn leave me clearly worse. e.g. 20...♙e6 21.♙f1±. Instead my opponent played something else and we drew 136 moves later. 18.♞e4 ♜fd8?!

Black decides not to let the pawn go. It was a sad choice. He could have kept his kingside position together with 18...♗g6 when White wins a pawn with 19.♙c5 (19.♞xe6!?) 19...♜fc8 20.♞xc8† ♞xc8 21.♗xd4± and he should win. 19.♞h7† ♗f8 20.♞h8† ♗g8 21.♞ae1 ♙d5 22.♙xd5!

The bishop must be stopped from coming to e6. Now Black is mated.

22...♞xd5 23.♗c7 ♞d7 24.♙h7

1-0

Game 54

Karjakin – Raetsky

Biel 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 e6 6.♗db5 ♙b4 7.a3 ♙xc3† 8.♗xc3 d5 9.exd5 exd5 10.♙d3 0-0 11.0-0 d4 12.♗e2

12.♗e4 might seem to be the natural option, but it leads to simplification and boring positions after 12...♙f5 13.♙g5 ♙xe4 14.♙xe4 h6. 12...♙g4

12...♞d5 is the main alternative to 12...♙g4. 13.c4 White should try to open the game and use the strength of the two bishops. (White had a slight advantage after 13.♗f4 ♞d6 14.♗h5 ♗xh5 15.♞xh5 h6 16.♙d2 ♙d7 17.♞ae1 ♜fe8 18.f4 ♗e7 19.♞e5 ♙c6 20.♙b4 ♞f6 21.♙c4 Xie – Z. Polgar, Jaen (8) 1996) 13...dxc3 14.♗xc3 ♞a5 15.♙f4 ♙g4 16.♞b1 ♗d4 17.b4 ♞h5 18.f3 ♙e6 19.♞b2 ♜fd8 20.♞ae1±/= Kamsky - Lobron, Dortmund 1993.

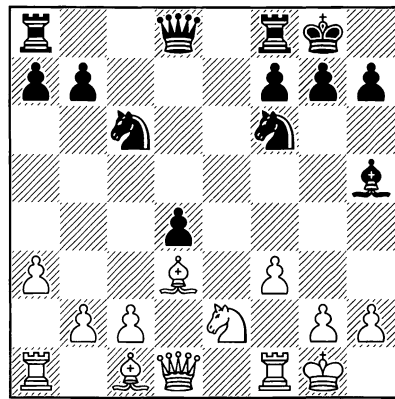
12...♞e8 is another quite solid alternative. 13.♙g5 ♞e5 (13...h6 14.♙h4 a6?! [Better was

14...g5 15.♙g3 ♗e4 16.f3 ♗xg3 17.♗xg3 ♗e5 and Black is only very slightly worse] 15.♞e1 g5 16.♙g3 ♗e4?! [16...♗h5 was better] 17.♗xd4! ♞xd4 18.c3 ♙g4 19.cxd4 ♙xd1 20.♙xe4 ♙b3 21.d5 ♗d4 22.d6± with a close to winning ending for White in Alekseev - Ianocichin, Oropesa del Mar 2001.) 14.f4!? ♙d5 15.♗g3 (15.f5!? with various attacking ideas also looks good) 15...h6 16.♙h4 g5!?! Otherwise White is just a whole lot better. 17.fxg5 hxg5 18.♗h5! Only move. 18...♗g4 19.♙g3 ♗e3 20.♗f6† ♞xf6 21.♞xf6 ♗xd1 22.♙xd1 with a better endgame for White in Korneev-Moreno, Mondariz 2000.

13.f3

Harmless is 13.♙g5 ♞d6 14.♞e1 ♜fe8 15.♞d2 ♙xe2!. The standard exchange in this variation. 16.♙f4 ♞d7 17.♞xe2 ♞xe2 18.♞xe2 ♞e8 19.♞f1 ♙e6 20.h3 h6 21.♙d1 ♗d5 22.♙g3 ♗f6= Kasparov - Grischuk, Cannes 2001.

13...♙h5



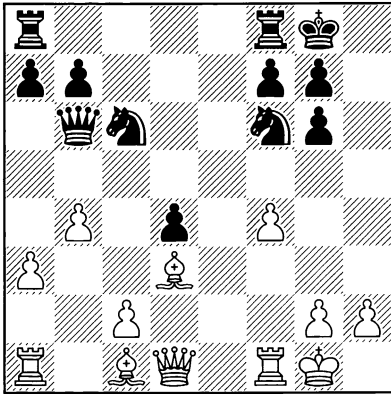
14.b4!?

White takes risks by allowing the weaknesses at first e3, and now the c3 and c4 squares. Obviously Black has some counterplay here, but White avoids simplifications with the strategy of winning the isolated d4-pawn, and using the strength of his bishop pair. This is a typical modern chess struggle.

In my games I have also faced 14.♗f4 ♙g6 15.♗xg6 hxg6 16.f4 ♗e7 (also possible is 16...♗d5 17.f5 gxf5 18.♞xf5 ♗e3 19.♙xe3 dxe3

when 20.♖h5!? g6 21.♗h6 ♖d4 22.♞h5!? gives White a very interesting attack.) 17.♞e1 ♖f5 18.♗f3 ♖d7 19.♞e5 a6 20.♙d2 ♞fe8 21.♞ae1 and White is definitely better, A. Sokolov - Raetsky, Basel 2003.

14...♗b6 15.♖f4 ♙g6 16.♖xg6 hxg6 17.f4



17...♖d5

White should be better no matter what. Another example is: 17...♖e7 18.♗f3 ♖ed5 19.♞e1 ♞fe8 20.♙d2 ♖c7 (20...♖e3 21.c4! is generally good for White) 21.♖h1 ♖d6 22.f5 gx f5 23.♙xf5 g6 24.♙d3 ♖g7 25.h3 ♞h8 26.♞f1 ♞ae8 27.♞ae1 with an advantage for White in Galkin - Rabiega, Ohrid 2001.

18.♗f3

This is probably best.

18.f5 ♖e3 19.♙xe3 dxe3 20.♖h1 (a bad direction is 20.♖e2 gxf5 21.♙xf5?! 21...♖d4 22.♗xe3?, when Black wins with 22...♞ae8 23.♗f2 ♞e2) 20...♖e5!? (20...gxf5 21.♙xf5∞) 21.fxg6 fxg6 and Black has good counterplay. 18...♖e3 19.♞f2!

Subtle play from the kid who recently described his greatest fear in life as “not becoming World Champion”. If he takes a close look at what happened to his friend Ponomarev, he should maybe fear becoming World Champion more than not doing so!

Anyway, 19.♞e1 ♞fe8 20.♙d2 looks natural, and the computer thinks White is better, but Black has 20...♖xc2! 21.♙xc2 d3† 22.♖f2 (22.♙e3 ♖d4 23.♗f2 ♞xe3! and Black ends on

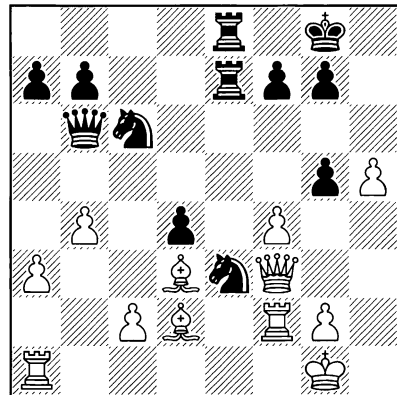
top) 22...♞xe1† 23.♞xe1 dxc2 24.♙e3 ♗a6 and White is struggling to keep equality.

19...♞fe8 20.♙d2 ♞e7

Here I could also have continued 20...a5!?. White is still better after 21.b5 ♖e7 22.♞e1 ♖7d5 23.♞fe2 ♞ac8 24.c4 dxc3 25.♙xe3 ♞xe3 26.♞xe3 c2 27.♙xc2 ♖xe3 28.♗xe3 ♗xe3† 29.♞xe3 ♞xc2 30.♞e8† ♖h7 31.♞e7 and White has some winning chances in the endgame, even though I have drawing chances too!

21.h4!? ♞ae8 22.h5 g5!

He wants to complicate the game and I am not afraid to follow suit. I estimated that after 22...gxh5 23.♗xh5 g6 24.♗g5 White would have the better game. Black should fear the advance f4-f5, and the white rook will also come into play by f3-h3 with dangerous threats.



23.h6!

OK, the little guy is not so bad. My main idea was 23.fxg5 ♖e5 24.♗e4 (24.♗g3 ♖xd3 25.cxd3 ♗b5 and I cannot for the life of me pretend to be worse here) 24...♖xd3 25.♗xd3 ♞e5 26.g6 fxg6 27.hxg6 ♞8e6 and I think I am fully in the game.

23...g4

I considered 23...gxh6 24.♗h5 to be very uncomfortable.

24.♗g3

24.h7† ♖h8 25.♗g3 is not clear at all. Maybe White is better, but I am not sure about that at all.

24...g6!?

Unfortunately I was running short of time. My alternatives here were 24...f5? 25.hxg7 ♖xg7 (25...♗xg7 26.♗xf5! is not right.) 26.♖e2 ♖ge7 27.♖ae1 and I would simply lose a pawn without compensation.

24...gxh6! was the right choice now. After 25.♖h4 ♗g7 26.♖e1 White still has some pressure, but I would have had good chances of neutralising it.

25.b5! ♖b8 26.f5

26.♖h4! also looked quite strong. After 26...♖e6 27.♖e1 White is threatening f5 and after 27...f5 28.♖fe2 he is contemplating c3. White is better, but how much?

26...♖d7?

This is just a mistake. Necessary was the uncomfortable 26...gxf5 opening up the king. White is better, but at least there is some limit to how much.

27.♗b4

Ouch.

27...♖e5

27...♖c5 28.♖h4! and there is no real defence against ♗xc5 and ♖f6 as 28...♖e5, with the idea of later playing ...♖f8, is met by 29.fxg6 fxg6 30.♖f6 with a winning attack.

28.fxg6 fxg6 29.♖f4

Now it is all over. However I play on...

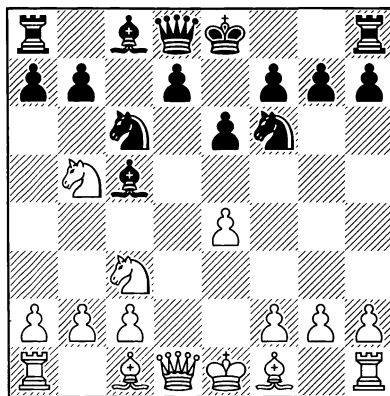
29...♖e6 30.♖xd4 ♗h7 31.♗d6 g3 32.♖e2 ♖f5 33.♗xf5 ♖xf5 34.♗xe5 ♖xe5 35.♖ae1 ♖h5 36.♖xe5 ♖h2† 37.♗f1 ♖f8† 38.♗e2 ♖xg2† 39.♗d1

1-0



The Cobra-variation

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 ♖c6 6.♖db5 ♗c5!?



This line is called the Cobra and was popularised by an article in *New In Chess* by Swedish IM Jesper Hall who, among other games, presented his win against grandmaster Krasenkow. However, since then White has been able to locate a simple way to gain a slight edge. This has not prevented me from playing it way too often!

7.♗f4!

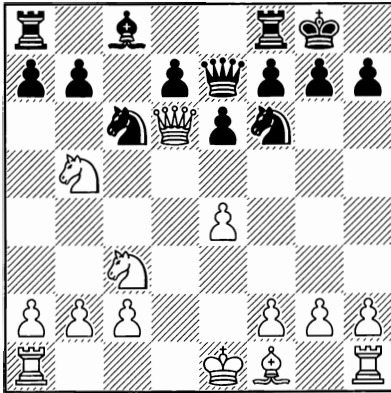
This is the simple choice. If White plays like this only masochists will continue to play the Cobra with Black.

7...0-0

7...e5 is met strongly with 8.♗e3! d6 (8...♗xe3? 9.♖d6† ♗f8 10.fxex3 ♖b6 11.♖d2 ♖xb2 12.♖b1 ♖a3 13.♗c4±) 9.♗xc5 dxc5 10.♖xd8† ♗xd8 11.0-0-0† with a very nice endgame for White.

8.♗c7

Also interesting is 8.e5!? ♖e8 9.♖e4 ♗e7 10.c3!? when White is probably better as well. 10...f6 11.exf6 ♗xf6 (11...♖xf6?! 12.♗c7 ♖e8 13.♖xf6† ♖xf6 14.♗g3 ♖f8 15.♖d6 looks very good for White) 12.♗d6 ♖xd6 13.♖bxd6 ♗e5 14.♗e2 ♖c7 15.♖d3 ♖e7 16.♖d1 ♖d5 17.♖g5 ♖f6 18.♖f3 ♗xd6 19.♖xd6 ♖xd6 20.♖xd6 ♗f7 and the endgame slightly favours White - Hall. 8...♖e7 9.♗d6 ♗xd6 10.♖xd6



Basically this position is depressing and passive for Black. All his dreams of winning the game seem to have gone.

10... ♖e8

10... ♖d8 11.0-0-0 a6 12.♗d4 ♖b6 13.♗xc6 bxc6 (13... dxc6 14.♗d2 ♖a5 15.f4 b5 16.♖c5 also favours White. Soon will come e5 and ♗e4-d6.) 14.f3 a5 15.♗a4 ♖b4 16.b3 ♖xd6 17.♗xd6 ♗e8 18.♗d3 d5 19.♗c3 ♗f6 20.♗d3 ♗d8 21.♗e1 ♗b7 22.♗b6 ♗a7 23.♗c5± Oll - Janssen, Dieren 1996.

Even more passive is 10... ♖xd6 11.♗xd6 ♗e8 12.♗xe8 ♗xe8 13.0-0-0 ♗e7 14.♗b5 b6 15.♗d6 ♗b8 16.♗b5 ♗f8 17.♗xc6 dxc6 18.♗xc8 ♗xc8 19.♗d6, which left Black a miserable endgame in Aagaard - Bellon Lopez, Gothenburg 2004.

11. ♖xe7 ♗xe7 12.0-0-0 f5 13.♗d6

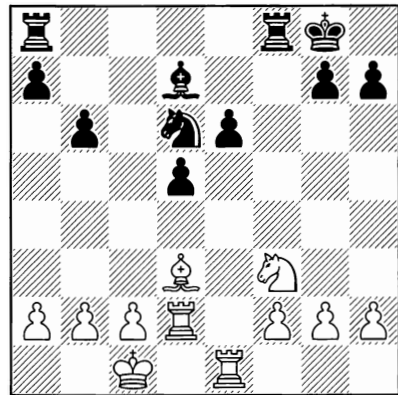
The simplest. Also possible is 13.e5 ♗g6 14.♗e1 a6 15.♗d4 b5 16.g3 ♗b7 17.♗g1 f4 18.♗d3 with a slight edge for White, or 13.f3!?

fxe4 14.fxe4 a6 15.♗d6 ♗xd6 16.♗xd6 b5 17.♗e2 ♗g6 18.♗b6 ♗e5 19.♗f1 ♗xf1† 20.♗xf1 and White had some advantage in Fichtl - Opcensky, Prague 1953.

13... ♗xd6 14.♗xd6 fxe4 15.♗xe4 ♗f5 16.♗d2 d5 17.♗g5 b6!?

This is a marginal improvement. 17... ♗d7 18.♗d3 e5 is met strongly with 19.♗e4!? dxe4 20.♗xd7 e3 21.fxe3 ♗xe3 22.♗e1 ♗xg2 23.♗xe5 ♗ad8 24.♗xd8 ♗xd8 25.♗e7 ♗f4 26.b4 and White has good winning chances - Hall.

18.♗f3 ♗d6 19.♗d3 ♗d7 20.♗e1±



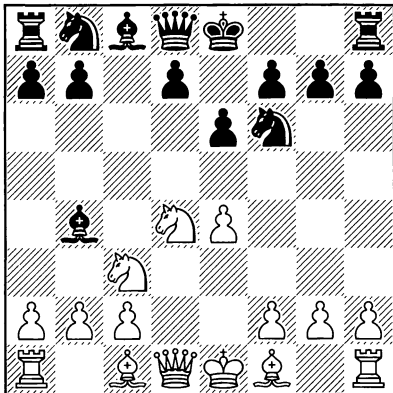
Berg - Hall, Germany 2002.

This kind of endgame often arises from the French. White can now choose between different plans. The main problem for Black will always be his slightly worse bishop and pawn structure. He was able to draw the game with a pawn sacrifice and tenacious defence, but it was a difficult and unpleasant task.

The Pin Variation

- By Jacob Aagaard

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6 5.♞c3 ♟b4



This rare and provocative line is generally considered unsatisfactory for Black, as White will be able to start a kingside attack with the support of his advanced e-pawn. However things are not that simple. In recent years players such as Federov, Van Wely and in particular the Lithuanian grandmaster Sulskis (a legendary fighter on the European tournament circuit, as well as a really nice guy) have employed this system with relative success. For the 1.e4 player who braves for no one, insight into this line seems to be becoming more and more important. For this reason we have decided to expand from the planned 2 pages to a full size chapter.

However, an interesting alternative is to play 3.♞c3!? in reply to 2...e6. Now after 3...Nf6 we can transpose to the Nimzowitsch variation with 4.e5!, as dealt with on page 255. And after all other reasonable moves 4.d4 leads into the normal main lines. In this way there is also a link to the Kan/Taimanov lines, where after 2.♟f3 e6 Sune Berg Hansen suggests 3.♞c3!? as a viable alternative. This actually prevents the Pin-variation; but who wants to do that?

The following line is the established refutation of the most important sideline with 6.e5 ♟e4?!, which is close to a losing mistake, though it has taken decades to prove it! In the sidelines White wins, but only after several minor improvements.

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♟f6 5.♞c3 ♟b4 6.e5 ♟e4?!

6...♟a5? can be refuted in more than one way, but the following is probably simplest. 7.exf6 ♟xc3† 8.bxc3 ♟xc3† 9.♟d2 ♟xa1 10.c3! ♟b1 11.♟d3 ♟b6 12.fxg7 The only debatable move, but here we just go for it. 12...♟g8 13.♟g5! Here White gets an endgame with two bishops and 2-3 passed pawns, where at least one is extra. 13...h6 (13...♟d8 14.♟xd8† ♞xd8 15.♟g5† ♞c7 16.♟f6 d6 17.♟xh7 ♞d7 18.♟xg8 ♞xf6 19.♟xf7+- Ngo Ngoc - Bao, Dalat City 2004) 14.♟f6 ♟d8 15.♟xd8†! Always this. 15...♞xd8 16.♟xh6 f5 17.♞xf5 exf5 18.♟c4 ♟e8† 19.♞d2 ♞c6 20.♟f7 d6 21.♟e1 ♟e5 22.f4 and White won in Kozakov - Todorov, Valjevo 2000.

7.♟g4 ♞xc3

Again 7...♟a5 should be a losing move. 8.♟xg7! (8.♟xe4!? ♟xc3† 9.bxc3 ♟xc3† 10.♞d1 ♟xa1 11.♞b5 d5 is less clear than I want it to be. Probably it also wins though, but the main line seems most convincing to me.) 8...♟xc3† 9.bxc3 ♟xc3† 10.♞e2 b6 11.♟xh8† ♞e7 12.♟a3†! White wins. Most sources stop here, but let us look a few moves further. 12...♟xa3!? (12...d6 13.♞b3! wins easily for White. There is no reason for 13.♞c6†?! as played in some games.) 13.♟xc8 ♟b2

14.♞b3 ♞c6 15.♟xa8 ♟xc2† 16.♞e3 ♟xf2† 17.♞xe4 ♞xe5 18.♟f8†!! (18.♞xe5 ♟e3† 19.♟e4 f6 mate is wonderful, and probably blinded Black) 18...♞xf8 19.♞xe5 ♟e3† 20.♞d6 ♞e8 21.♞c7 1-0. Schatzle - Filartiga, corr. 1974.

This is the line you could expect to find elsewhere, as the game is certainly very nice. But instead of 14...♞c6? Black has 14...♟xe5, which is a strong novelty. After 15.f4 ♟xf4 there is White can apparently defend with the stunning 16.♟c4!! Phil Taylor (16.c4 ♟f2† 17.♞d3 ♞c6 18.♟xa8 ♞b4† 19.♞xe4 f5† 20.♞e5 d6 mate),

when Black should have reasonable chances after 16...♖c6 17.♗d3 ♗f2† 18.♙d1 ♗h4 19.g3 ♖f2† 20.♙e2 ♗f6 21.♗e3 ♖xh1 22.♙g2 ♖xg3† 23.hxg3∞.

So White needs to come up with 14.♙e3!, which is the only winning move, and seven after this it is not easy.

a) 14...♖xf2 15.♙e2 ♖xh1 16.♗d1! (The most accurate move. White is threatening 17.♖c6†!.) 16...♗a3† 17.♖b3 ♗b2 18.c3 and White wins.

b) 14...♗xa1 15.♙xe4 ♗e1† 16.♙f3 ♗xe5 17.♗b7 ♗xd4 18.♗xa8 ♖c6 19.h4! The white king will escape. However this win is not hard to find. On move 16 there might be alternative ways to do it, but here 19.♗g8? ♖e5† 20.♙g3 ♖g6!! would draw for Black.

8.♗xg7

When I used to play the Pin Variation in Blitz I would often lose to 8.a3, but after 8...♙f8! Black seems to be OK.

8...♙f8 9.a3 ♖b5†

Black has the following alternatives:

9...♖c6 10.axb4 ♖xd4 11.bxc3 ♖xc2† 12.♙d1 ♖xa1, which simply loses to 13.♙g5! as in Mendoza - Blejman, Guaymallen 2001 among others. Now 13...♗xg5 14.♗xg5 a5 is the computer's idea. The word desperation springs to mind.

9...♙a5 10.♙h6 ♗e7 11.♖b3! and I cannot see any justification for the exchange Black will eventually lose.

9...♗a5 is the most complicated move here, but Black will not escape after some simple moves from White. 10.♖b3 ♗d5 (10...♖e4† 11.axb4 ♗xb4† 12.c3 ♖xc3 13.♙h6 ♖e4† 14.♖d2 ♖xd2 15.♗xf8† ♗xf8 16.♙xf8 ♖b3 17.♙a3 and White won in Elis - Schork, Bonn 1998.) 11.♙d3 ♖a2† (11...♙e7 12.bxc3 Schmidt - Boidman, Bad Breisig 2000.) 12.axb4 ♖xc1 13.♙xc1± Harasimovic - Berisha, Brno 1997.



10.axb4 ♖xd4 11.♙g5 ♗b6

The standard move. 11...♖xc2† 12.♙d1 ♗b6 was successful for Black in May - Beier, East Germany 1979, but here 13.♙h6! ♗xb4 14.♙xc2 would lead to an endgame where White has an extra exchange against a pawn, and every chance of winning.

12.♙h6

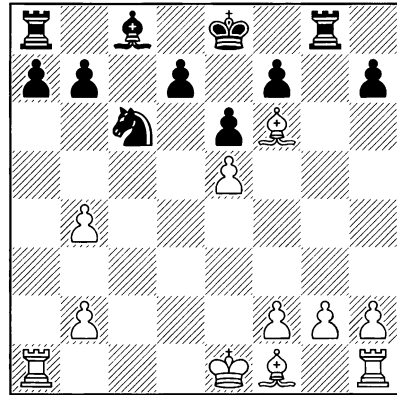
12...♙d3 was successful in some games, but 12...d6 13.c3 dxe5! leaves the position unclear.

12...♗xb4† 13.c3 ♖f5 14.cxb4 ♖xg7 15.♙xg7 ♗g8 16.♙f6±

This is the old main line. Now

16...♖c6!?

was analysed by my friend Torben Sorensen in Denmark a longtime ago. The conclusion was the following wonderful winning line. Alternatively Black can try 16...d5 to fight for a draw in a very depressing way. After 17.exd6 ♖d7 18.♙c3 ♖b6 as in Krumova - Teodorescu, Bydgoszcz 1978, I think the simplest is 19.g3 ♙d7 20.♙d3 f5 21.♙e5±. Is White not just a pawn up?



17.♙a3!

This wonderful manoeuvre was Torben's recipe against his own idea.

17...♖xb4 18.♙h3 ♖d5 19.♙xh7 ♖xf6

19...d6! is better, but White has the advantage after 20.h4! with similar ideas.

20.exf6 d5 21.h4

21.♙b5†? only helps Black to play the move he wants to play, ...♙f8 with the idea of preventing ♗g8†. However if White plays accurately, Black is

too late with his counterplay on the queenside.
 21...♔f8 22.h5 ♔d7 23.h6 ♖c8 24.♖g7 ♖h8
 25.h7 ♔a4 26.♖g8†! ♖xg8 27.h8=♚!

White wins.

So 6...♗e4 is discredited, but the same does not go for 6...Nd5.

The Pin-variation with 8...♔a5

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3
 ♔b4 6.e5 ♗d5 7.♔d2

In the first English edition I wrote: "Experience has proved that this is the strongest move here. If you have too much time on your hands you can try to investigate 7.♚g4 and see if this is really true. Here I will focus on the main line." Later I have tried the Pin-variation in practice myself on a few occasions and have found that White's prospects are great after 7.♚g4, but maybe less so after the currently popular 7.♔d2. Two examples from recent practice start with the same moves, but soon deviate. 7...0-0 8.♔h6 g6 9.♚g3 And now:

a) 9...♗c6 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.h4 ♚a5 12.♖h3 ♖e8 13.h5 ♖b8 14.♔d2 ♗xc3 15.♔xc3 ♔xc3† 16.bxc3 ♖b2 17.♗d2 d6 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.♖xh7 1-0 Handke – Teske, Germany 2002.

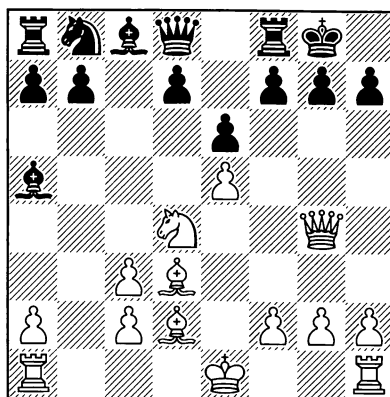
b) 9...♚a5 10.♔d2 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♔e7 12.h4 d6 13.exd6 ♔f6 14.♗b5 a6 15.h5 axb5 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.♔d3 ♔xc3 18.♖xh7 ♔xd2† 19.♗e2 g5 20.♚e5 1-0 Petr - Grigorjev, Czech Republic 2006.

In a future re-written Experts vs. the Sicilian 7.♚g4 is destined to be the main recommendation. For now, we have decided not to cut anything from this chapter, as it still appears to be the best piece of writing on the Pin-variation available today.

7...♗xc3 8.bxc3 ♔a5!?

The bishop abandons the defence of the kingside. However it is not so easy to refute and a clear refutation has never occurred over the board. The bishop does leave the kingside unprotected, but on the other hand the bishop is not a very good defender in many lines, and now leaves room for the queen.

9.♚g4 0-0 10.♔d3!



This natural developing move has to be the right move. 10.♚g3! has scored well for White, but no one has played the principled 10...f6!, when the position is far from clear. Why should Black not be fine here?

Another way to play the opening for White is 9.♔d3! when 9...0-0 10.♚h5! looks nothing like the transposition which could occur after 10.♚g4. However Black has other possibilities. 9...♚c7 10.0-0 a6 Being the only move that does not seem to lose by force, this is of course a new move. 11.♚g4 g6 12.♚g5 ♔xc3 13.♔xc3 ♚xc3 14.♚f6 0-0 15.♗e2 ♚c5 16.♗g3 d6 17.exd6 ♚xd6 18.♗h5 gxh5 19.♚g5† ½-½ was played in R. Jones – Aagaard, England 2004. It has not been possible for me to prove an advantage for White in this game, despite not believing much in my own play. I have come to think that this is where a future advantage for White is to be found.

10...d6!

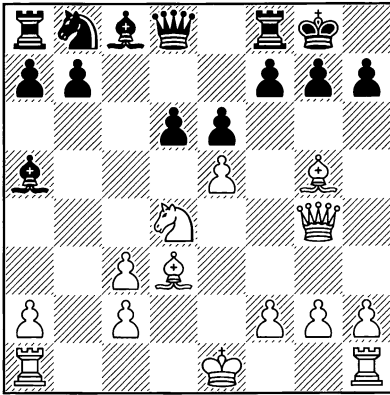
This is, of course, the way Black should play. Now it gets really interesting. The alternative is rather passive: 10...♗c6 11.♗xc6 dxc6 12.0-0 ♚d5 13.♚h4 g6 14.♔h6 ♔d8 15.♚f4 ♖e8 16.♖fe1± This position is very uncomfortable for Black. The game finished: 16...♚a5 17.♖e3 ♚xc3 18.♖d1 ♚c5 19.♖f3 ♚e7 20.♔e4 ♔b6 21.♔g5 ♚f8 22.♚h4 h5 23.g4 ♚g7 24.gxh5 ♚h7 25.♔f6 1-0 Wosch - Rueppel, e-mail 2001.

11. ♖f3!

The most aggressive.

11.exd6 is my computer's preference. But now 11...f5! 12.♖g3 e5 13.♗b3 ♖b6 14.0-0 ♗xd6 15.♙ad1 ♗c6 is closer to worse than to better for White. Lanc - Arnason, Prague 1980.

The direct attack with 11.♙g5!? was analysed by Byrne and Mednis.



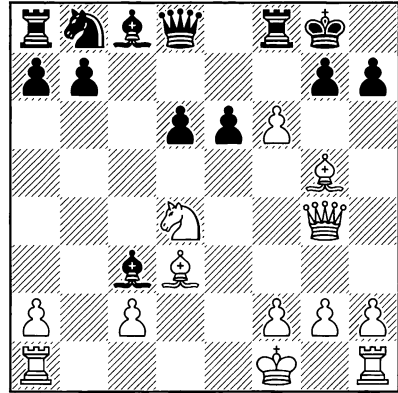
The lines credited here to the two American gentlemen are quoted from Nunn and Gallagher's *Beating the Sicilian 3*. Essentially Black has two choices:

a) 11...♗c7 12.♙f6 ♗xc3† 13.♔e2 And here it is not hard to find out that 13...g6! is the superior move order. (13...♗d2† 14.♔f1 g6 15.♙d1! was the line given by Byrne and Mednis.) 14.♗g5 ♗d7 15.♗h6 (15.♗b5 ♗c5 16.exd6 e5†) 15...♗d2† 16.♗xd2 ♙xd2 17.♔xd2 dxe5 looks good for Black.

But what about 12.♙xh7†! ♔xh7 13.♙f6 ♗xc3† 14.♔f1 gxf6 15.exf6 ♙xa1† 16.♔e2 and White wins? This is beyond the immediate scope of the computers, but not this writer! (Nice to have been of assistance Mr. Fritz...)

b) 11...♙xc3†! This move order is probably the most reliable. (11...f5!? is also possible, with the idea of transposing, but why bother?). 12.♔f1 f5! This is absolutely forced. (12...♗a5 loses easily to 13.♙f6 g6 14.♗g5 ♙d2 15.f4 and Black cannot protect his king. And 12...f6? fails to 13.♗h5! g6 [13...h6 14.♗g6 and White should win.] 14.♙g6 ♗d7 [14...♗c7 15.♙xf6

♙xd4 16.exd6 ♗c4† 17.♙d3 and White wins the queen for insufficient compensation] 15.♗xe6 ♙xa1 16.♗h6!+-. The attack is too strong] 13.exf6



13...♗d7! The only move. It looks rather shaky, but to refute it is not so easy. (13...♙xf6 was part of the original analysis by B&M, but now 14.♙xh7†! ♔xh7 15.♙xf6 ♗xf6 16.♗h3† ♔g8 17.♗xc3 ♗c6 18.♙d1 and White wins) 14.♙b1 (14.♙d1 g6 15.♙b5 ♗f7 and the position appears unclear to me) 14...♗c6! (14...g6?! 15.♙b3 ♙xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗c6 17.♗h4 e5 gives White a strong attack with 18.♗h6 ♗f7 19.h4 and the black king is very tender) 15.fxg7! (15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.fxg7 ♗xg7 17.♗h4 White might be better, but how clear is it after 17...♙f7!. It is possible to analyse these positions until one goes blue in the face. I will stop here saying that the position is complicated, and a clear conclusion is hard to make. Probably the chances are about level.) 15...♗xg7! (15...♙xf2† 16.♔xf2 ♙xd4† 17.♔e1 ♗xg7 18.♗h5 and White wins. Black never got out) 16.♗xe6 and now:

b1) 16...♙xe6? 17.♗xe6† ♔h8 18.♙h6 ♗f6 (18...♗d4 19.♙xf8 ♙xf8 20.f3 cannot be working) 19.♗xf6† ♙xf6 20.♙g5±

b2) 16...♗e5! 17.♗c4!? (17.♙xh7† ♗xh7 18.♗xf8 ♗xg4 19.♗xh7 ♔xh7 is just not very clear.) 17...♗f7! (17...♗c4 18.♗xg7 ♗b2 19.♗h5 ♗xd3 20.cxd3± with chances for White in the endgame, though Black has reasonable

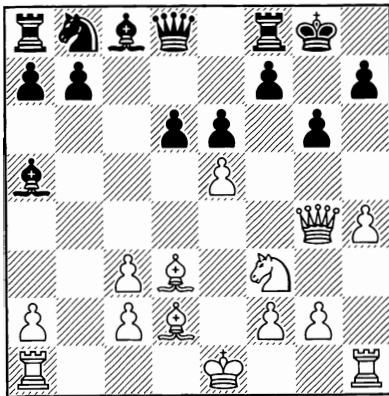
drawing chances) 18.♙xh7† ♖xh7 19.♘f8† ♜xc4 20.♘h7 ♘xh7 and the endgame could have any of three results.

I think we can conclude that 11.♙g5! is not a killer, though clearly interesting.

11...g6?

This is the traditional move, but my analysis seems to suggest that Black cannot allow White to attack the king unhindered like this. Suddenly the critical move becomes 11...f5! 12.exf6 ♖xf6 13.0-0 h6 14.♗e4±. I believe that White is better here, but it is not easy to prove. As there are limits to how much independent analysis there is time to provide for a book like this, especially on the Pin-variation, then I will stop by giving the moves in the game. 14...♘d7!? (14...♖f5 is also possible, though it appears risky to me not to develop.) 15.♗h7† ♘f7 16.♙g5 ♘f8 17.♙xf6 ♖xf6 18.♗e4 ♙xc3 19.♖ab1 d5 Bilbao - Ramos, Alicante 1989. Is White better in the end here? I am not certain. The game was eventually drawn, but then Black was much higher rated.

On 11...dxe5?? then 12.♙xh7† ♘xh7 13.♗h5† ♘g8 14.♘g5 wins the game. 12.h4!



Again the most aggressive approach is necessary, as White otherwise risks being stuck with a bad structure.

12.0-0?! f5! 13.♗g3 (13.exf6 ♖xf6 14.♙g5 ♗g7∞ Milosevic - Ammann, Switzerland 1993) 13...dxe5 14.♘xe5 ♖f6! (14...♘d7?? 15.♘g6+-)

15.♙g5 ♗g7 16.♙b5 a6 17.♙a4 ♙c7 18.♖ae1∞ This kind of position is close to impossible to analyse. With the aid of a computer we can give some predictions: 18...♙d7 is probably fine for Black is one of them.

12...dxe5

12...f5 13.♗g3 dxe5 14.h5 transposes.

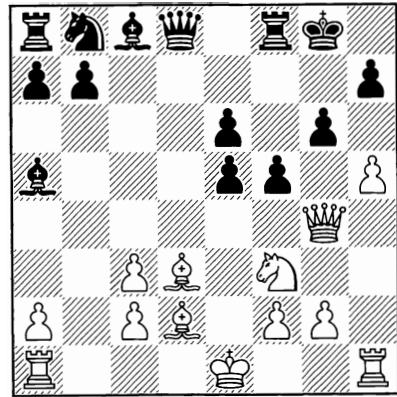
13.h5 f5

13...♗c7 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.0-0-0 leaves White with a very strong attack. I have not found a good defence.

15...e4 16.♙xe4 ♙xc3 17.♙xc3 ♖xc3 18.♖xh7! and White's attack is crushing.

15...♘c6 16.♖h6! followed by ♖dh1 and Black's position will collapse.

15...♖f5!? A desperate computer move. 16.♖h6! There is no reason to take the exchange, even though this also favours White. 16...♘d7 17.♗h4 ♘f8 18.♙xf5 exf5 19.♘g5 ♙e6 20.♘xh7 and White wins.



14.♗g3!

It is this new move that does the most damage to Black's position.

14.♙xf5?! is a dubious sacrifice, far from being completely conclusive as had previously been thought. 14...exf5 15.♖c4† ♘g7! (15...♖f7? 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.♘g5 ♗c7 18.♖h4+- Wagman - Barle, Biel 1981) 16.hxg6 f4! The move overlooked in other sources, which claim the attack is winning. 17.♖xh7† ♘xg6 18.♗e4† In the first English edition I gave 18...♖f5? here, something I possibly could explain, but would

not want to. A reader, Phil Taylor, e-mailed me some analysis two days before the final editing of the Italian version to make me aware of the mistake. He claimed that the old 14.♙xf5 was the right path to an advantage. After a brief exchange of opinions, we settled on 14.♙g3 as the winner, and 14.♙xf5 as nothing but a draw after 18...♙f5! 19.♙xb7 ♙d7 (19...♙d7!? also looks ok after some analysis, but we already know enough to stop the discussion) 20.♙e4† ♙f5 21.♙b7= (21.♙xa8?! ♙xh7 22.0-0-0 ♙e7±).

14.♙h3?! g5 15.♙xe5 as in Lerner - Khodos, Rostov 1976 is less strong. After 15...♙f6!± I would prefer to be Black. Where is White's attack?

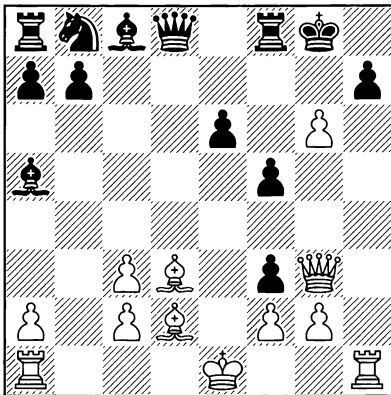
Now two moves deserve attention:

a) 14...e4

14...f4 15.♙g4 e4 16.hxg6! (16.♙xe4 e5 is less clear) 16...exf3 17.♙xh7 ♙f6 18.g7 and White wins.

15.hxg6 exf3

15...exd3 16.gxh7† ♙h8 17.♙e5 and White wins.



16.♙xh7!

This is the way to play the attack. The h7-square is the weakest spot in Black's position, so it needs to be accessible. Again this is a move computers do not find easily, but they really do love it, once they are told about it.

16.gxh7† would allow the black king to hide behind the white pawn. After 16...♙h8

17.♙e5† ♙f6 (17...♙f6!? is maybe safer. After 18.♙g5 ♙d7 19.♙xf6† ♙xf6 20.♙h6! fxg2 21.♙e2. White seems to end with a better game, but Black has the clever answer 21...♙c7! 22.♙xf6† ♙xf6 23.♙xf6 ♙h2 when the endgame is at best even for White.) 18.♙xa5 fxg2 19.♙g1 b6 20.♙b4 ♙b7 21.0-0-0 ♙d7± I cannot see any reason why this should not be better for Black. An important line is: 22.♙d4 e5!! 23.♙xd7 ♙c6 24.♙xf5 ♙xf5 25.♙xf5 ♙xf5± 16...♙f6

There are no alternatives. 16...♙d7 17.0-0-0 ♙f6 18.♙h3 and White wins.

17.0-0-0 ♙xc3 18.g7!

White wins.

b) 14...♙f6

This move is a slight improvement of the Black position, which however remains desperate.

15.hxg6 ♙xg6 16.♙xe5!?

16.♙xg6† also provides White with a substantial advantage.

16...♙c6 17.♙h2

It is obvious that White has an attack here, but the options are too many to give concrete further analysis. A few illustrative moves is however in order.

17...♙f7 18.0-0-0 ♙g7

Or 18...♙c7 19.♙h4 ♙d8 20.♙g5 ♙xg5†

21.♙xg5 ♙g7 22.f4± Phil Taylor.

19.g4

Very logical, White wants to open files on the kingside. 19.♙h6!? also looks natural and strong.

19...♙c7

19...♙f6 20.gxf5 ♙xc3 21.♙xc3 ♙xc3 22.♙dg1 with a winning attack.

20.gxf5 ♙xf5

20...exf5 21.♙h3 ♙g4 22.♙h6 ♙g6 23.♙c4† ♙h8 24.♙he1! and White wins based on 24...♙d7 25.♙g1!+-, which is a truly exceptional manoeuvre.

21.♙xf5 ♙xh2 22.♙e4 ♙d6 23.♙g5

The endgame seems to be quite bad for Black. It is not only the missing pawn, which is after all doubled, but also more the frailty of the

Black monarch, as well as the White leads in development. These are rarely aspects decisive in the endgame, but here Black is surely troubled.

In the next game we shall see a Danish GM, and co-author of this book, display his full mastery over the opening, by disposing of the old main line of 8...♙e7 9.♚g4 0-0?!, before we turn to the critical lines of 9...Kf8! and 8...♙f8!?

Game 55

Hansen - Kristensen

Taastrup 1998

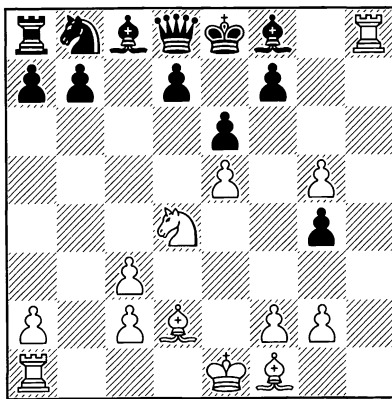
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 ♙b4 6.e5 ♘d5 7.♙d2 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 ♙e7
9.♚g4

This is the way to go.
9...0-0?!

This used to be the main move, but now it has been close to refuted.

9...g6?! is probably too passive and weakening at the same time. I like the true computer move 10.♘b5!? (10.h4 h5 11.♚g3 also looks reasonable) 10...♘c6 11.♘d6† ♙xd6 12.exd6 ♚a5 13.♚f4 f5 14.♙d3± Shredder - Hiarc 7.32, Debrecen 2000.

9...g5 also does not seem to work. 10.h4! h5 11.hxg5 hxg4 12.♙xh8† ♙f8



was played in Grosar - De Waal, Belgium 1986, and now 13.g6 fxg6 14.♙h6 ♘f7 15.♙xh8† ♚xf8 16.♙xf8 ♘xf8 17.♙e2 is good

for White according to Nunn and Gallagher. However this line is wishful thinking. 14...♘f7 makes little sense, and especially 13...fxg6 is an automatic move that serves the interests of the opponent. After 13...♚c7! Black is simply winning. The lines could continue 14.0-0-0 ♚xe5 15.♙g8 ♘e7 and, though the position is still complicated, it is very hard to believe that White will prove real counterplay.

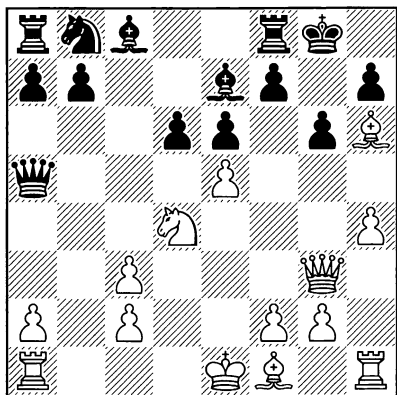
Instead of 11.hxg5? then 11.♚g3! was the right move. Black has little pleasure in the position. The weakness of the dark squares is terminal. After 11...gxh4 12.♚g7 ♙f8 13.♘b5 White wins. Eventually ♘d6† and ♙h6 will ruin Black's position. Necessary is 11...g4 12.♘b5 a6 (12...♘c6 13.♙g5±) 13.♘d6† ♙xd6 14.exd6 ♘c6 15.c4 where I would not mind being White. Black will have a nightmare finding safety for his king, after White develops and then starts to open up the position.

10.♙h6 g6 11.h4! ♚a5

Though this is bad, 11...d6?! is an even worse move order for Black. After 12.h5 ♚a5 (12...dxe5 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.♙xf8! wins for White, as if Black recaptures on f8 then 15.♘xe6 and 16.♙c4 is winning. Now 14...exd4 15.♙xe7 ♚xe7 16.♙d3 ♙d7 17.♙b1 b6 18.cxd4+ - was played in Klovans - Schein, Graz 1999.) 13.♘b5! White has won a tempo compared to the main line, which is also winning. 13...a6 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♙xf8 axb5 16.♘d2 ♙xf8 17.♙xh7! 1-0. B. Lalic - Sulava, Pula 1997. White's attack is conclusive: 17...♘xh7 18.♙d3 ♙h6† 19.f4 ♘g8 20.♚xg6† ♙g7 21.♚e8† ♙f8 22.♙h7† and mate follows.

12.♚g3 d6

12...♙d8 looks entirely wrong, when White is not planning to take on f8 at the first given moment anyway. However, it does make sense to play it sooner rather than miss out on it later. But after 13.h5 d6 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.♙f4 (keeping the centre stable and the black king exposed) 15...dxe5 16.♙xe5 ♙d5 17.f4 ♘d7 18.♙c4! ♘xe5 (18...♙xe5† 19.fx5 ♚xe5† 20.♚xe5 ♘xe5 21.♙b3± - Nunn & Gallagher) 19.♙xd5 ♚xd5 20.fx5 ♚e4† 21.♘d2 White is completely winning, Wedberg - Pokojowczyk, Copenhagen 1984.



13. ♖b5!

White's strategy in this game is little short of amazing. Our very own expert in the Kan and Taimanov seems to bust this system.

13... ♖c6

13... ♖d7 as played in some games is best met with 14.h5! dxe5 (14... ♖xe5 transposes to the game) 15. ♖c4! Probably strongest, as it forces Black into 15...g5 16. ♖d6 when I am very optimistic about White's position. The next moves will be ♖xf8, ♖d1, or similar. White is winning.

13...dxe5 14. ♖xe5 f6 15. ♖c7 leads to a lost endgame for Black.

14.h5!

A wonderful move. White is not after material gains, but instead aims at the naked black king. Only at the absolutely correct moment will he take the exchange. Right now after 14.exd6 ♖f6 Black is allowed unnecessary counterplay. This is the kind of game Black wants, why give it to him?

14... ♖xe5 15.f4 ♖d7

This allows White to get rid of his only strange piece, the knight on b5. But 15... ♖d7 allows a winning attack. 16. ♖d3 ♖c5 (16... ♖f6 17.hxg6 ♖xc3† 18. ♖d1 fxg6 19. ♖xg6+-) 17.hxg6 ♖xd3† 18. ♖xd3 fxg6 19. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 20. ♖xd6 and the endgame after 20... ♖xd6 21. ♖xd6 ♖xc3† 22. ♖f2 ♖xc2† 23. ♖g1 h5 24. ♖d8† ♖g7 25. ♖h2 wins for White. The line analysed to

the end goes like this: 25... ♖f5 26. ♖hc1 ♖xf4† 27. ♖h1 ♖h6 28. ♖f1 ♖e5 29. ♖ac1 and Black loses his bishop.

16.fxe5 ♖xb5 17. ♖xb5?!

17. ♖xf8! is the superior move order, where Black is just lost.

17... ♖xb5?!

After this it is all over. Black could have tried 17... ♖fc8!? 18.exd6 ♖xc3 19. ♖d2 ♖xg3 20. ♖xa5±, when White might have a few technical difficulties, was maybe the last hope!?

18. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 19.exd6 ♖g5 20. ♖d1

Now White is simply winning.

20...h6 21.d7 ♖f5 22. ♖d3 ♖d8 23.hxg6 ♖e4† 24. ♖f2 f5 25. ♖f3 ♖a4 26. ♖e2 ♖f4† 27. ♖f3 ♖d6 28. ♖d1 ♖e7 29. ♖fd3 ♖g7 30. ♖e1 ♖xd7 31. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 32. ♖xe6

1-0

The final game of this chapter deals with the critical lines of the Pin-variation. I cannot promise White an easy advantage in these lines. They are still developing and Black players are learning more and more about the defensive possibilities in this line.

Game 56

Varga – Horvath

Hungary 1991

1.e4 c5 2. ♖f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 ♖b4!? 6.e5 ♖d5 7. ♖d2 ♖xc3 8.bxc3 ♖e7

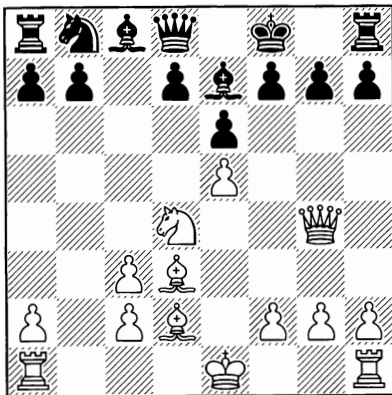
8... ♖f8!? is a really interesting idea that has been popularised over the last few years. I think White is maybe a little better due to his lead in development, but it is not so clear. 9. ♖d3 d6 (On 9... ♖c6 then 10. ♖xc6!? makes good sense. 10...dxc6 11.0-0 ♖c7 12. ♖e1± Lakdawala - Serpik, Costa Mesa 2003. This kind of position is hard to evaluate. Black is happy with his better pawn structure, while White enjoys more space and a lead in development. I think the position favours White, as the open b-file compensates for the double pawns, and the black king will be under some kind of harassment later in the game. However, the inconvenience for Black is likely to be minor.) 10.exd6 (Famous is 10. ♖e2

♠d7 11.♠xe6 ♖b6 12.♠c7† 1-0. Kasparov - West, telex 1977, but 10...dxe5 would seriously test White's idea. Probably the position is just unclear.) 10...♠xd6 11.0-0 (11.♖h5! is my preferred move here. The position is not really so clear. Both players have their chances, but White seems to retain slight pressure.) 11...0-0 (11...e5!? should be considered when the critical line is probably 12.♖e2 ♖e7 [12...0-0 13.♠b5! is unpleasant for Black, based on 13...♠c6 14.♠xh7† ♜xh7 15.♖d3† e4 16.♖xd6 a6 17.♖xd8 ♞xd8 18.♠c7 ♞b8 19.♠f4 when White has the advantage.] 13.♞fe1 where White might have the advantage, based on 13...exd4?! 14.♖h5 ♠e6 15.♞xe6 ♖xe6 16.♞e1 ♖xe1† 17.♠xe1±) 12.♖h5 g6 13.♖h6± Sargissian - Bursteinas, Tallinn 1997. White has a slight edge after the opening. However, all the lines are too difficult to analyse conclusively based on just one game. We will stop here with the conclusion that White should not fear going for this line.

9.♖g4 ♜f8!?

This also has to be taken into consideration, one opening book says. Actually it is quite a good move.

10.♠d3



10...d6!?

I do not like this approach. Black should be careful about how he opens the position.

10...h5!? 11.♖e4 d5 12.exd6 ♠xd6 13.0-0 ♠d7 led to unclear play in Zyla - Sulskis, Swidnica

1999. This might very well be Black's best option in the Pin-variation.

Very solid is 10...♠c6 but I still think that White is better. Black has no active play and the pawn weaknesses cannot really be attacked. 11.♠xc6 dxc6 12.0-0 ♖c7 (12...h5!? 13.♖f3 ♖d5 14.♖e2 h4 was Diaz - Luzuriaga, Buenos Aires 1999, when 15.h3 was the more normal move, when I think White should be a little better. There is no reason to fear weakening the g3-square, as Black has no way to exploit it.) 13.f4!? b6 14.♞ae1 c5 Black is completely oblivious to White's plans: 15.f5 is a nightmare for Black. White won quickly in Kottwitz - Hoen, St Ingbert 1994.

11.f4 ♠d7

11...♠c6 12.0-0 d5 (12...♠xd4 13.cxd4 f5 14.♖f3± Leone -Galli, corr. 1969) 13.f5!? White goes for it. An alternative was 13.♞ae1 preparing this advance. (Also strong seems to be 13.♞ab1. 13...♖a5 14.♠xc6 ♠c5† (14...bxc6 15.f5 exf5 16.♠xf5 was also not pleasant) 15.♠d4 ♠xd4† 16.cxd4 ♖xd2 17.f5 ♖h6 18.♖f3 b6 19.♠b5 ♖h4 20.♞f2 ♖e7, but Black had had enough and resigned in Bresadola - Vibranovski, corr. 1996.) 13...exf5?! (13...♠xe5 was the logical move. My analysis goes like this: 14.♖e2 ♠xd3 15.fxe6! ♠e5 [maybe better is 15...♠f6 16.cxd3±] 16.♖xe5 ♠f6 17.♖e2 ♠xe6 18.♠xe6† fxe6 19.♖xe6 and I like White. The main point is 19...♖e7 20.♖xd5 ♞d8 21.♖g5!±) 14.♠xf5 ♖b6† 15.♜h1 g6 16.♠h6† ♜e8 17.♠g7† ♜d8 18.♖f4 ♠e6 19.c4± Spiridonov - Poulin, e-mail, 1999.

12.0-0 ♠c5 13.♞ae1

I like this approach from the Hungarian grandmaster. His attack has a very natural feel to it. However also successful was 13.f5!? dxe5 (An improvement would have been to remove the queen from the excellent square g4 with 13...h5!? 14.♖e2 dxe5 15.♖xe5 ♠d6 16.♖e3 e5 17.♠b5 ♠xd3 18.♠xd6 ♖xd6 19.cxd3 when White is only very slightly better.) 14.fxe6 ♠f6? (14...f6 15.♖h5 ♠xe6 16.♠xe6† ♠xe6 17.♖xe5 ♖d6 18.♖e2 would just have been slightly better for White) 15.♞xf6! ♖xf6 16.♠g5 and White won comfortably in Chorfi - Nadli, Ronde 1995.

13...♠xd3 14.cxd3 h5

This look like a weakening move, but the computer's choice is not reassuring either.

14...♞a5 is met very strongly by 15.f5! All the pieces are ready, so why not? 15...dxe5 (White also wins after 15...exf5 16.♗xf5 ♕xf5 17.♞xf5 ♞xa2 18.c4) 16.fxe6 f6 17.♞h5 g6 18.♞xe5 Why exchange queens? 18...♞xa2 19.♞h6† ♖g8 20.♕g5! ♕f8 21.e7 and White is winning.
15.♞f3±/±

The question is not if White is better, but how much he is better.

15...g6 16.♞b1 d5 17.♕e3 b6 18.c4 ♕b7

It is hard to see how Black should have played differently. Now White crashes through with a very thematic attack.

19.f5! gxf5 20.♗xf5 exf5

20...dxc4 21.♞xb7 exf5 22.♞xf5+- The f7-square is very weak. Black will not be able to resist the attack.

21.♞xf5 ♞e8 22.♞g6!

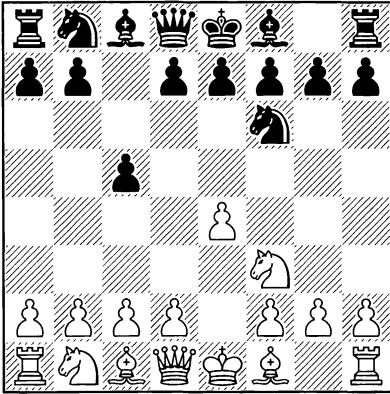
A brilliant move. White wins by force.

22...dxc4 23.e6 f6 24.♞xf6† ♕xf6 25.♞xf6† ♖g8 26.♕d4

1-0

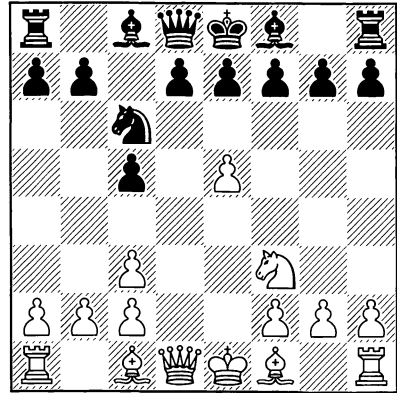
The Nimzowitsch Variation

- By Jacob Aagaard



The Nimzowitsch Variation is a very provocative line, in some ways not dissimilar to the Alekhine Defence. Black allows White to advance his e-pawn with gain of tempo, hoping that it will be weak rather than strong on e5. When I started to work on this chapter I believed that this was a minor line and could be dealt with quickly. Instead it proved at times more difficult to approach than the feared Sveshnikov.

Against the Nimzowitsch variation 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6!? I have decided to recommend the less principled 3.♘c3! based on lengthy analysis and my own personal preference. I know that this move gives Black the chance to escape back to the main lines, but since we were ready to play them just a move ago, we still should be now. Obviously it would be desirable to punish Black for his provocation, but if 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘c3 then 4...♘xc3!. This is, of course, what Black wants to do. The e-pawn has advanced too far, and White's pawn structure is damaged. White gets so-called "free play", but I seriously doubt that this includes an advantage. 5.dxc3 ♘c6.



This position has not give White a particularly good score. I generally do not like the position for White; I would much rather play the Black side, as in that case I would mind less if the game suddenly fizzled out into a draw! (4...e6 5.♘xd5 exd5 6.d4 ♘c6 7.dxc5 ♙xc5 8.♙xd5 is notoriously bad for Black, but besides the Israeli IM Afek who has 1/2/4 with this system, no strong player seems to favour it regularly. Still I have included two games with it; game 59 and 60). 4.d4!? cxd4 5.♙xd4 promises White a slight edge in *ECO*, but maybe that is the only place. This method of play seems to be logical and gives White a good score, but I did not find it dangerous enough to Black.

Still, after 3.♘c3 there are ways for Black to continue with deviations from the main lines. And actually many Black players would choose to do so: with 3...e6, inviting 4.e5 (which we accept), with 3...d5!?, which is considered in our first game, and with 3...♘c6 4.d4 (4.♙b5 is another popular move here, but I want to stay true to our repertoire) 4...d5!?, which is underrated by theory. However, I still think White is a little better – see game 58. We will start by having a look at the counterintuitive 3...d5!?

Game 57
Borriss - Bartsch
 Germany 2003

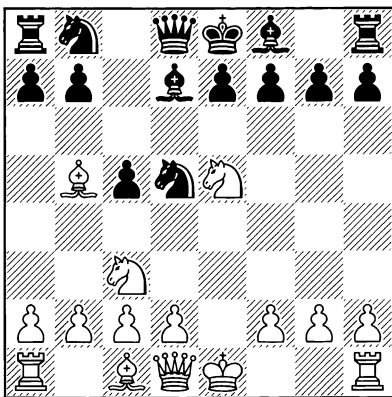
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6!? 3.♗c3! d5!?

This is pushing it! Black decides to open the position after a move like ...c5, and obviously being behind in development. It is no surprise that aggressive play seems to give White an advantage.

3...d6 4.d4 leads to the standard positions of the Sicilian.

4.exd5 ♗xd5 5.♖b5† ♗d7 6.♗e5!

I like this move and find it logically correct, but 6.♞e2 is a possible alternative to this aggressive approach.



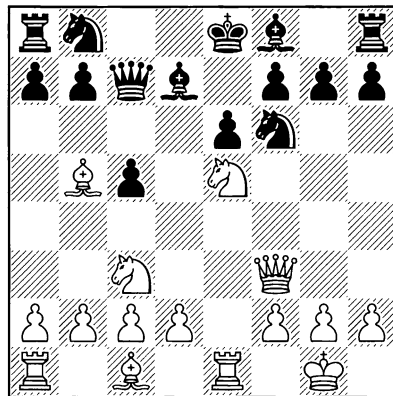
6...♗xb5!?

The alternative is 6...♗f6 and now White has two options, where only the most aggressive seems to work.

a) 7.♗xd7 ♗bxd7 8.d4 cxd4 (8...a6 9.♗xd7† (9.♗e2!?) 9...♗xd7 10.d5 g6 11.♗g5 ♗g7 12.0-0 f6?! (12...0-0 13.d6±) 13.♗f4 0-0 14.♞e2± Poulsen - Bach, Esbjerg 2004) 9.♞xd4 a6! (9...e6 10.♗g5 a6 11.♗xf6 gxf6 12.♗xd7† ♞xd7 13.♞xf6 ♞g8 14.0-0 (14.♞f3!?) 14...♞c6 15.g3 ♗g7 16.♞h4 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♞xc3 18.♞xh7 ♞h8 19.♞e4± Papin - Grigorov, Chalkidiki 2003.) 10.♗e2 (10.♗xd7† ♞xd7 11.♗e3 ♞c6= Bielczyk - Kunin, Schwarzach 2002.) 10...♞c7 11.0-0 e6= Almagro Llanas - Solaesa Navalpotro, Madrid 2003.

b) 7.♞f3! ♞c7 8.0-0 (8.♗xd7 ♗bxd7 9.d3 (9...a6 10.♗xd7† ♞xd7 11.♗g5 was unpleasant for Black in Gentinetta - Perez, e-mail 2000. 9...0-0 10.♗f4! e5 11.♗g3 a6 12.♗c4 ♗b6

13.0-0 ♗d6 14.♗h4± Shirov - Fernandes, Elista 1998.) e6 10.♗f4 ♞c8 11.♗e4± Ganguly - Sriram, Calicut 2003.) 8...e6 (8...♞xe5? 9.♞xb7+-. I see no possible compensation. Remember 9...♗g4? 10.♞c8 mate.) 9.♞e1! In this position it is very difficult to find a way for Black to escape from the opening without permanent scars in his pawn structure or loss of material.



a) 9...♗e7 10.a4? was played in Gusev - Krivobokov, Tula 2002. Instead 10.♞g3! would have won a pawn for very little. 10...♗xb5 (10...♗c6 11.♞xg7 ♞f8 12.♗xd7 ♞xd7 13.♗e4±. 10...0-0 11.♗xd7+-) 11.♗xb5 ♞b6 12.♞xg7 ♞f8 13.a4±

b) 9...♗c6 10.♗xd7 ♗xd7 11.♗xc6± with a very nice endgame.

c) 9...♗d6 does not work because of 10.♗xd7†! ♗bxd7 11.♗b5 ♞b8 12.♗xd6† ♞xd6 13.♞xb7 0-0 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7 15.d3+-. It is just a pawn.

d) 9...♗xb5 10.♗xb5 ♞b6 11.a4! gives White a position that is close to, or perhaps even directly, winning. It is all based on trapping the black queen in an unusual manner. (11.♗a3 ♗bd7 12.♗xd7 ♗xd7 13.♗c4 ♞a6 14.b3 ♗e7 15.♗b2 0-0=) 11...♗c6! Only move. (11...♗e7 12.♗c4± 11...a6 is met strongly with 12.a5!! ♞xb5 13.c4 ♞b4 14.b3+-. The next move is 15.♞a4.) 12.♗xc6 (12.♗c4 ♞d8 13.♞g3 Black's position is obviously problematic, still it is not entirely clear. 13...♗d4! 14.♗c7†

♙e7 15. ♘e3 ♚c8 16. ♖b5 ♙e8±) 12...bxc6
13. ♗a3±

e) 9...a6!? In the first edition I wrote: "This is the best try. Actually the only one I cannot refute directly." Now I can! 10. ♗d5! Being less sure first time around, I am now certain that this is the right move - but for different reasons than what I had originally thought. 10...♗xd5! Only try. 11. ♗xd7† ♗xd7 12. ♗xf7†!! Incorrectly dismissed in the first edition. (12. ♗xf7 ♗7f6 13. ♗xh8 0-0-0 14. ♗h3 was what I gave in the first book, but after 14...♙b8!∞ as pointed out by two young French readers, Black is doing "very fine". I admit freely that the evaluation I gave was superficial. I have done so much work on the sharper lines, and also quite a bit here, but somehow I followed the computer more than my own intuition. This is of course always a danger. But this time around I have the lines some real thought.) 12...♙d8 13. ♗xe6 ♗xe5 14. ♗xd5†! The move I "overlooked" in the first edition. 14...♗d7 (14...♗d6 was suggested by Kasten Müller. Now after 15. ♗xe5 ♗d7 White should probably just follow Fritz with 16.d3 [16.d4!? ♗xe5 17. ♗xe5 ♗xd4 18. ♗g5† ♙c8 19. ♗e3 ♗d7 20. ♗xc5† is also good for White, but it strikes me as a poorer version of the lines with 16.d3, as White should benefit from having fewer open lines for the time being.] 16...♗xe5 17. ♗xe5 b6 18. ♗e3 and a clear advantage. Materially White is doing fine, and positionally he is doing excellently.) 15. ♗e6! This move is a very nice example of persistent initiative. White is better because his domination of the light squares and sixth rank completely paralyzes Black. 15...♗e7 I see no other sensible moves here. If White has time for b3 and ♗b2 Black will be unable to get his kingside into play. (15...h6 16.b3!± 15...♗a7 16.b3 [16.d4!±] 16...♗f4 17. ♗b2 ♙c7 18. ♗ae1 with a lethal attack. e.g. 18...h6 19. ♗e7 ♗xe7 20. ♗xe7 ♗d8 21. ♗e5†+-) 16.d3! (16.d4?! would be weaker because of 16...cxd4 17. ♗d2 ♗c5! where Black is allowed to dismiss the queen from her dominant position. 18. ♗xb7 ♗a7 19. ♗e4 ♗f6 20. ♗d3∞)

16...♗f6 (16...♗a7 17.g3 ♗f8 with the idea of ♗xf4. [17...b6 18. ♗f4 ♗b7 19. ♗c6±] 18. ♗d2! ♗f6 19. ♗ae1 ♗xe6 20. ♗xe6 ♗d6 21. ♗g8† ♗f8 22. ♗xg7± 16...♗e8 17.g3±) 17.g3 ♗c8 18. ♗f4 a5 19. ♗ae1 ♗a6 20. ♗xa6 bxa6 21. ♗e6 ♗e8 22. ♗d6± and ideas such as ♗d2-a5 secures White a lasting and deadly initiative. I do not think that a clear plus for White in too harsh an evaluation.

If White is afraid of going for this kind of adventure, then 8. ♗xd7 offers a slight edge without any complications. However I truly believe that White is better here. 15...♗d6 16.d4 ♗xh8 17.dxc5 ♗e5 18. ♗xf4 ♗xf4 19. ♗xe6± is just one line where White enjoys the strength of a rook vs. two minor pieces which have no good squares.

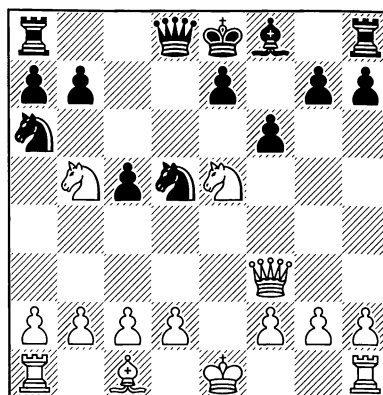
7. ♗f3!

This is a famous trick-shot.

7...f6 8. ♗xb5 ♗a6

This is the gambit choice behind 6...♗xb5, but it is flawed. Unfortunately for Black it seems that the best move is 8...fxe5 9. ♗xd5 ♗xd5 10. ♗c7† ♙d7 11. ♗xd5 ♗c6 12.d3 e6 13. ♗e3±/± and the endgame is great for White. Laznicka - Malmqvist, Marianske Lazne 2003.

8...♗b4 9. ♗xb7! just wins for White. 9...fxe5 10. ♗c7† ♙f7 11. ♗f3† ♙g8 12. ♗b3† ♗d5 13. ♗xa8 ♗c6 14. ♗c7 ♗d4 15. ♗xd5† ♗xd5 16. ♗xd5 ♗xc2† 17. ♙d1 ♗xa1 18.b3+-



9.♖h5†!

Otherwise nothing makes a lot of sense to me. Other moves have been played, but they are not worth our time.

9...g6 10.♗xg6 hxg6 11.♖xh8

Ka-ching!

11...♗d7 12.♗c3 ♖e6† 13.♗f1 ♗db4

13...♗ab4 14.♖h3! (14.♗xd5 ♖xd5 15.♖h4 ♗d8!!♠. 14.♖h7! however looks strong. Black has no simple response as after 14...0-0-0 15.♖xg6 the queen is back in the game.) 14...♖a6† (14...♖xh3 15.gxh3 ♗c7 is in the spirit of the position, but White should be better here as well) 15.d3 ♖d8 16.♖g4 f5 17.♖e2+- Carlsen - Runde, Norway 2002.

14.♖h4!

This is the way to play. The queen enters the game and slows down Black's initiative.

Less clear is 14.♖h3 ♖xh3 15.gxh3 ♗xc2 16.♖b1 ♗ab4 17.♖g1 ♗f7♞ Dirr - Bartsch, Germany 2003. The pawn structure is a true nightmare, and White cannot develop without compromising it further.

14.d3! looks sound. However, after 14...♗xc2 15.♗h6 0-0-0! Black certainly has a lot of play. One plausible line is 16.♖c1 ♗xh6 17.♖xh6 ♗ab4 18.♖xg6 ♗xd3 19.♖b1 ♗f4 20.♖e4 ♖a6† 21.♗g1 ♗h3†! 22.gxh3 ♖g8† 23.♖g4† ♖xg4† 24.hxg4 ♖d3♠. 16.♖d1 looks safer, but still Black obviously has play.

14...0-0-0

14...♗xc2?? 15.♖a4† is an important, though simple, point.

15.♖e4!

Offering the exchange of queens without ruining the pawn structure.

15...♗d7

It is easy to criticise this, but Black's position is bad. 15...♖xe4 16.♗xe4 ♗xc2 17.♖b1 ♗cb4 18.a3 ♗d3 19.h4±. Here I do not trust Black's compensation. A queen is obviously needed, or a general target. Both ♗a6 and ♗f8 are out of play.

16.a3 f5 17.♖c4 ♗xc2 18.♖b1±/±

White has escaped from the opening an exchange up. If the advantage is ± or ± is not so clear, but does it really matter?

18...♗b8 19.d3 e5 20.♗g5 ♖xd3† 21.♖xd3 ♖xd3 22.h4! ♗xa3 23.bxa3 ♖xc3 24.h5 gxh5 25.♖xh5 ♗d6?

Losing a piece. But after 25...♗c7 26.♖h7† ♗c6 27.♖xb7 ♖xa3 28.♖xa7 c4 29.♖f7 ♗d6 30.♖xf5 White is a likely winner.

26.♖d1!

1-0

I clearly have my doubts about 3...d5, though an outright refutation probably cannot be found. However the next line was a real nightmare to prepare for. It took me two days to decide that the uncommon 6.dxc5! is White's best try for an advantage.

Game 58

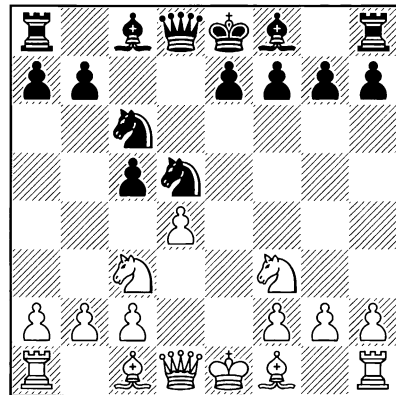
Ismagambetov - Palit

Kuala Lumpur (U-16 Wch) 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗c3 ♗c6 4.d4 d5!

The more I studied this move the more surprised I was. It is actually not stupid at all! 5.exd5 ♗xd5

By transposition we have reached the position after 3.♗c3 ♗c6 4.d4 d5 5.exd5 ♗xd5.



6.dxc5!

This is the best attempt for an advantage I can offer here. Basically I think Black should be able to scrape a draw quite often, but still it is a sad life...

6.♗b5?! ♗g4! leads to no advantage for

White, only problems. I wonder why 6...♙g4 has been played only a few times.

6.♘xd5 ♖xd5 7.♙e3 cxd4 8.♘xd4 a6 9.♙e2 e5 also seems reasonable to me.

6...♘xc3 7.♗xd8† ♘xd8!

7...♗xd8 is the main alternative. My feeling is that White should gain a small plus in all lines. 8.bxc3 f6 (8...e5 9.♘g5 ♖e8 10.♙c4 ♘d8 11.f4 h6 12.♘e4± Santo Roman - Hausner, Prague 2000) 9.♙e3 e5 10.♙c4 (10.♘d2!?) is a very natural alternative with the score of 3/3. 10...♙e6 11.♙c4 ♙xc4 12.♘xc4 ♖c7 13.0-0-0 ♙e7 14.♙d3 ♙ad8 15.♙hd1± Feygin - Afek, Belgium 2004.) 10...♖c7 (10...♙g4 as in Collins - Schalkwijk, Corr. 2001 is best met with 11.♘d2 ♖c7 12.f3 ♙f5 13.♘e4± where Black soon could be much worse) 11.♘d2 ♙f5 12.0-0-0 ♙e7 13.f3 ♙ad8 14.h4 ♙c8 15.♘e4 h6 16.g4 h5 17.♙xd8 ♘xd8 18.g5± Rowson - Murey, Pula 2002.

8.bxc3 f6!

Building a big centre is the best plan for Black.

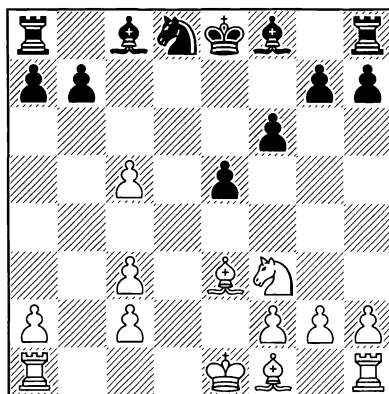
On 8...g6 then 9.♙b5†! seems to be the best way forward. 9...♘c6 (9...♙d7 10.♙xd7† ♖xd7 11.♙e3 ♙c8 12.0-0-0† ♖e8 13.♙d3±/±) 10.♘e5 ♙g7 11.♘xc6 a6 12.♙a4 ♙d7 13.♙b1 ♙xc3† 14.♙d2 ♙xd2† 15.♖xd2 bxc6 16.♙b7± Froeyman - Hajenius, Belgium 2001.

8...♙d7 9.♙e3! is known as better for White. The following lines shows why:

a) 9...g6 10.0-0-0 ♙g7 11.♙d4 ♙h6† 12.♖b2 0-0 13.♘e5 ♙e6 14.♙b5 f6 15.♘d3 ♙d5 16.f3 e5 17.♙f2± Krnic - Wedberg, Eksjö 1978.

b) 9...f6 10.♘d4 ♙c8 11.♘b3 e5 12.♙c4 b6 13.♙a6 ♙b8 14.0-0± Bravo Barranco - Paredes, Barcelona 1996.

c) 9...♙c8 10.♘e5 ♙a4 11.♙b1 a6 (11...e6 12.♙b4 ♙xc2 13.♖d2 ♙xc5 14.♙xc5 ♙xc5 15.♙b5!± Müller - Bastian, Germany 1991) 12.♙d3 e6 13.♙b4± ♙c6 14.0-0 ♙e7 15.♙fb1 0-0 16.♘c6 ♙xc6 17.♙e4 ♙c7 18.♙xb7 ♙xc5 19.♙xc5 ♙xc5 20.♙xa6+- Romero Holmes - Casafus, Dubai (ol) 1986. 9.♙e3 e5



10.♘d2

The most flexible. Also played has been 10.0-0-0!?. With this White loses the option of invading down the b-file, and with that all chances of an advantage. 10...♙d7 (10...♘e6 11.♙d5 ♘c7?! 12.♙d2 ♘e6 13.♙b5† ♖f7 14.♙c4 ♖e8 15.♙hd1± is not what Black is looking for. Those “repetitions” make his position worse continually.) 11.♘d2 ♙c8? 12.♘e4 ♘e6 (12...f5!?) was a better try. After 13.♘d6† ♙xd6 14.cxd6 b6 15.♖b2± White is better all the same.) 13.♙d5 ♙c6 14.♘d6† ♙xd6 15.♙xd6± Vallejo Pons - Afek, France 2003. However 11...b6! would have kept Black at least equal. The main point is 12.♘e4 ♘b7! with compensation. I have analysed this line somewhat and equality was the best I found for White, and that was not so evident in all lines!

10...♙e6

10...♘e6 11.♘e4 ♙d7 12.♙b1 ♙c6 as in Schramm - Pawlitzki, Germany 1992. White might have a slight advantage, but I am not even certain. However all moves are open to discussion.

11.♙b5† ♙d7

12.♙xd7†!

White has the chance to play for an advantage only through his lead in development. Therefore the right choice was a developing move, and not a move that develops the opponent’s king.

12.♙b1! would guarantee White a slight

advantage: 12...♞c8! (12...♙xb5 13.♞xb5 ♖d7 14.♙e2 and 15.♞hb1 is clearly good for White.) 13.♙xd7† ♖xd7 14.♖b3± Now there is no a7-a5, so I think that White has the better prospects. One line could be 14...♖e6 15.♙e2 ♙xc5 16.♖xc5† ♖xc5 17.♙xc5 ♞xc5 18.♞xb7† ♙e6 19.♞xa7 ♞xc3 20.♞c1±. 12...♙xd7 13.0-0?!

13.♙e2 is also better here. 13...♖e6 14.♞fd1 ♖c6 15.♖b3 ♙e7?? Black realises that he cannot allow White to invade to the 7th rank. However, if he had prepared it, taking the c-pawn would have been fine. 15...a5! 16.a4 ♙xc5 17.♖xc5 ♖xc5 18.♙xc5 ♖xc5 19.♞d7 b5 and the distant passed pawn and active king are quite good for creating counterplay. 16.♖a5† ♖c7 17.♖xb7!± White won.

In the next two games we shall see the heavily theoretical main line of the Nimzowitsch Sicilian. I actually think that the previous line represents Black's best option here, and that the next two games are fought over in somewhat dubious territory.

Game 59
Braun - Choroba
e-mail 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 ♖f6 3.e5 ♖d5 4.♖c3 e6
Our move order is of course with 3.♖c3 e6 4.e5! ♖d5, when we can continue with the game.

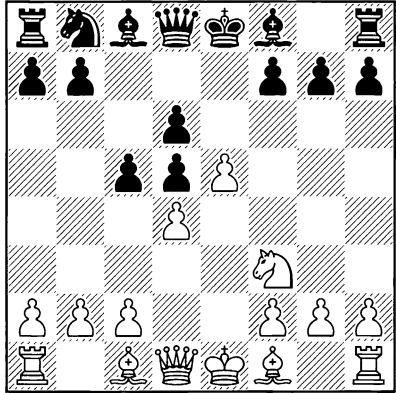
However in our move order it would also be possible to play 4.d4 aiming for a normal Sicilian. If Black is a true Nimzowitsch-Sicilian player he can try 4...d5!?. I now prefer 5.exd5, but let us look at both lines:

a) 5.e5!?. is possible, but now we are in the French Defence. Positions such as 5...♖e4 (5...♖fd7 6.dxc5 ♙xc5 7.♙d3 ♖c6 8.♙f4 f6 (8...♞b6?! 9.0-0 ♞xb2 is a bad idea. White wins with 10.♖b5 0-0 (10...♖f8 11.♙d2! d4 12.♞e2 and the queen is trapped.) 11.♙xh7†! ♖xh7 12.♞d3† g6 13.♞fb1 ♖b4 14.♖g5† ♖g7 15.♞h3+-) 9.exf6 ♖xf6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e5

Black should be OK here, still the position is not that easy. 11...♖e4? 12.♙xe4! ♞xf4 13.♖d3, White is slightly better in Zatonskih - Tessier Desrosiers, Kapuskasing 2004.) 6.♙d3 ♖xc3 7.bxc3 c4 8.♙e2 ♙e7 9.h4 h6 10.h5 ♖c6 11.♞h3 ♞a5 12.♙d2 ♙d7 13.♞g3 ♙f8 14.♖f1 0-0-0 15.♖g1± Baklan - Danneel, Ghent 2003. It is all a matter of what kind of position you enjoy playing, of course.

b) 5...♖xd5 6.♖xd5 ♞xd5 (6...exd5 7.♙b5† ♙d7 8.♙e2!?. Hardly the only way to play. 8...♙e6 9.0-0 ♙e7 10.dxc5 ♙xc5 11.♖g5 ♖c6 12.♖xe6 fxe6 13.♙g4 ♞f6 14.♞e2 ♖d4 15.♞d3 0-0 16.♙e3 ♞c8 17.♞ae1, with a slight advantage for the first player, Filippov - Kohanchik, Moscow 2002.) 7.♙e3 cxd4 8.♖xd4± a6 9.♙e2 e5?! But it was not so easy for Black anyway. 10.♙f3 ♞a5† 11.♙d2 ♙b4 12.0-0 ♙xd2 13.♖b3 ♞c7 14.♞xd2 0-0 15.♞fe1 ♙e6 16.♞a5 ♞c8 17.♞xe5 White is objectively winning, Tiviakov - Afek, Vlissingen 2003. That White did not win this game is not easy to understand.

5.♖xd5 exd5 6.d4 ♖c6
6...d6 has long been held in disregard because of



7.♙b5†! giving White a slight but lasting edge in all lines. 7...♖c6 (7...♙d7 8.♙xd7† ♞xd7 9.0-0 ♖c6 10.exd6 ♙xd6 11.♞e1† ♖e7 12.dxc5 ♙xc5 13.♙e3± with a sad endgame for Black in Nemeč - Volf, Czech Republic 2003.) 8.0-0 ♙e7 9.c4 and we now have:

a) 9...♙e6 10.♙e3 ♖b6 11.a4 a6 12.a5 ♖c7 13.exd6 ♖xd6 14.dxc5 ♖d8 15.♙xc6† bxc6 16.♗e5 ♖c7 17.♖a4 ♖c8 18.cxd5 ♙xd5 19.♗c4, White is better, Unzicker - Pomar Salamanca, Bad Aibling 1968.

b) 9...dxc4!? is possible. White however retains the better play after 10.d5! a6 11.♙a4 b5 12.dxc6 bxa4 13.exd6 ♖xd6 14.♖xa4 0-0 15.♙d1 ♖c7 16.♙g5± Old theory says:

c) 9...a6 10.♙xc6† bxc6 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.exd6 ♖xd6 and now White has two ways to go.

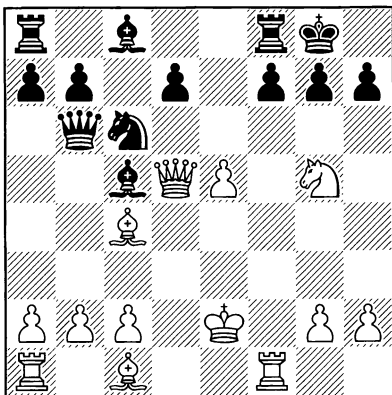
c1) 13.♙g5!? ♙xg5 14.♗xg5 0-0 15.dxc5 ♖xc5 16.♖d3±

c2) 13.dxc5 ♖xc5 14.♙e3 ♖b5 15.♗d4 with a clear edge for White according to Boleslavsky, something I have had to agree with faced with hard facts since the first edition. One game went 15...♖xb2!? 16.♗c6 ♙e6 (16...♙f6 17.♖xd5 ♙e6 18.♖d6 ♖b7 19.♖fd1, gives ±, I claimed in the first edition. But after 19...♖d7 20.♖c5 ♖c7 (20...♙xa1 21.♖xd7 ♗xd7 22.♙f4 ♙f6 23.♖d6+ ♗e8 24.♗b8!+-) 21.♖ac1 ♖c8 22.♙d4 ♙xd4 23.♖xd4 and White is of course absolutely winning. Analysis by Phil Taylor.) 17.♗xe7 ♗xe7 18.♙c5† ♗d7 19.♙d4 ♖a3 20.♖e1♞ ♖hg8 21.♖b1 ♖ac8 22.♙e5 a5 23.♖b7† ♗d8 24.♖ab1 ♖c5 25.♖b6 ♖e7 26.♖a6 a4 27.♙d6 ♖d7 28.♙b4 ♖e8 29.♖d6† 1-0 Herbst - Rossell, e-mail 2000.

7.dxc5 ♙xc5 8.♖xd5 ♖b6

8...d6 is maybe slightly sounder, and portrayed in the next game.

9.♙c4 ♙xf2† 10.♗e2 0-0 11.♖f1 ♙c5 12.♗g5



12...♗d4†

This main line move does not seem to lead anywhere. I have a bad feeling about Black's position in these lines.

12...♗xe5!? is a very tricky move. According to theory it is just winning for White. However, the theoretical line leads to unclear play or a forced draw, if Black finds some simple improvements. 13.♖xe5 d5 14.♙xd5 (14.♖xd5 ♙g4† 15.♖f3 ♖ad8! was unclear in two mid 80s correspondence games from Prieto Fernandez. However I am not sure that White cannot find an advantage here as well, though it would be under very unclear circumstances. In Beating the Sicilian 3 Nunn and Gallagher only give a game with 15...♙g1, which to me seems less relevant. To be fair, I must point out that the databases over the last few years have improved immensely.) 14...♙g4† 15.♗d3 was successful in Kaidanov - Kreitner, Chicago 1995, which made Kaidanov believe it was close to winning. However (15.♗e1!? ♖ae8 16.♙xf7† ♗h8 17.♖xe8! (17.♙xe8?? ♖a5†!+-) 17...♖xe8† 18.♙xe8 h6 19.h3 (19.♗e4 ♙e3∞) 19...hxg5 20.hxg4 ♖e6†=) 15...♖fe8!! gives White only perpetual check with 16.♗xf7, as 16.♙xf7† ♗h8 17.♙xe8?? ♖d8†! is mate in a very few moves.

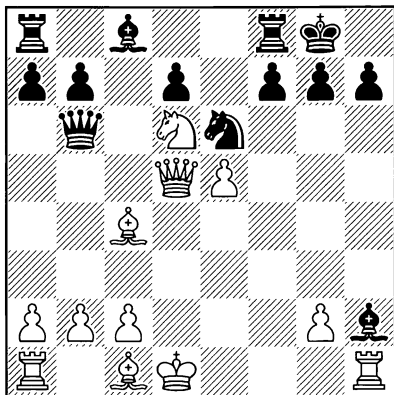
Maybe the most practical is: 13.♗xf7 ♗xf7 14.♖xf7 ♖e6† 15.♖xe6 dxe6 16.♖xf8† ♗xf8 17.♙g5!? ♙d7 18.♖f1† ♗e8 19.♙d3 ♙e7 20.♙e3 g6± to avoid the complex lines after 13.♖f4!?, which eventually is unlikely to offer a larger advantage anyway.

13.♗d1 ♗e6 14.♗e4 d6

14...♙g1 has only been played once. In that game Black even managed to get the advantage, but logical play wins for White. 15.♗d6! An excellent square for the knight. 15...♙hx2 (15...♖d4†? 16.♖xd4 ♙xd4 17.♖e1± and Black cannot easily get his pieces into play.). Now 16.g3 ♖c6 17.♙f4 was played in Kopelevich - Muehlenweg, e-mail 2002. 17...♖xd5† 18.♙xd5 g5!∞ is not what White is looking for. 16.♙d3 also looks tempting, but I could not make it work. 16...♖c6! 17.♖xc6 (17.c4 h6 18.♗f5 ♖e8 19.♙xh6 ♖xd5 20.cxd5 ♙xe5!♞) 17...dxc6 18.♖h1 ♙xe5 19.♙xh7† ♗h8 20.♙g6† ♗g8

21. ♖xf7† A wonderful combination, but only a draw. 21... ♖xf7 22. ♖h8† ♗xh8 23. ♗xf7† ♗g8 24. ♗xe5=

But 16. ♖h1!, simple and strong, seems to be too dangerous for Black.



My analysis gave these lines:

a) 16... ♗g3 17. ♗d3! h6 (17... f5 18. ♗xf5) 18. ♗f5 ♗f4 19. ♗e7† ♗h8 20. ♖e4+-

b) 16... h6 loses in similar ways to the other lines. 17. ♗d3 ♗f4 18. ♖e4 f5 19. exf6 ♖xd6 20. fxg7 ♗xg7 21. ♖h7† ♗f7 22. ♖f1 and White wins material.

c) 16... ♖f2!? 17. ♗d3 (17. ♖e4 f5∞) 17... ♗f4 18. ♗xh7†!! A very nice refutation. (18. ♗xf4 ♖xf4=) 18... ♗xh7 19. ♖d2 ♖xd2† 20. ♗xd2 It is obvious that White has a fantastic position once he regains the material, but he also has a fantastic attack after 20... ♗e6 21. ♖xh2† ♗g6 22. a4! with ♖a1-a3-g3 coming, deciding the game in White's favour.

d) 16... h5!? appears to be the hardest move to kill. The point is that the pawn is better placed on h5 than on h6 in many lines. However I seem to have found a way to grind Black down. 17. a4! A whole new resource. (17. ♗d3 g6 surprisingly seems to lead nowhere: Black's position is hard to crack. So what I thought was that White should get ♖a1 into play, since this was the problem with all my previous attempts. And I should know, having lectured continuously on the importance of this simple rule in my books.) 17... ♗f4 18. ♖a3. I think White must have the

better chances here. Moves like ♖h3 and ♖f3 are coming, and f7 seems bound to fall. My two main lines are:

d1) 18... ♖c6 19. ♖xc6! dxc6 20. ♗xe6 fxe6 21. ♗xf4 ♖xf4 22. ♖xh5+- White clearly wins positionally, but he has a winning attack as well.

d2) 18... g6 19. ♖f3 ♗xc1 20. ♗xc1 and White has an absolutely winning position. The next few moves are likely to be ♖d3 and ♗xe6. One line is 20... ♖b4 21. ♖e4! with the idea of various sacrifices: 21... ♗g7 22. ♗xf7 ♖xf7 23. ♖xf7† ♗xf7 24. ♗xe6†+-

15. exd6 ♖d8 16. ♗d3 ♗xd6 17. ♖h5 f5 18. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 19. ♖xf5 ♖xh2

I do not believe that Black's position can be saved anymore.

Another try has been 19... ♗f8, but 20. ♖f7† ♗h8 21. ♖f4 seems to put Black a pawn behind. It is really as simple as that. Here are a few lines to prove it:

a) 21... ♗g6 22. ♖xd6 ♗g4† 23. ♗e1 ♖xd6 24. ♗f4 ♖f6 25. ♗g3+- Zanetti - Corinthios, corr. 1986.

b) 21... ♖xf4 22. ♗xf4 ♗f5 Repp - Boeckler, corr. 1993. Now strongest is 23. ♗e2! ♖e8† 24. ♗f2+- with a winning endgame.

c) 21... ♖e7 22. ♗d2!. White is best off developing. 22... ♗g6 23. ♖g5 ♖xg5 24. ♗xg5 ♖d5 25. ♗e3 ♗g4† 26. ♗c1 ♗e5 27. ♗e4+- Wolff - Izumikawa, USA 1987.

d) 21... ♖c5 22. ♗e3 ♖h5† 23. ♗e1!. Simplest. There is security to be found on the kingside. 23... ♗d7 24. ♗f2 ♗g6 25. ♖g5 ♖f8† 26. ♗g1+- Lehner - Kummer, Hartberg 1992. 20. ♖f7† ♗h8 21. ♗g5 ♖g8 22. ♗e3 ♖xg2

The only move. The alternative 22... ♗d8 23. ♖f4 ♖xf4 24. ♖xf4+ has given White a clearly better endgame in many games. There is no reason to know more than this.

23. ♖h5!

The old move. An impressive game was 23. ♗c1!? ♖d5 24. ♖f5 ♖h1† 25. ♗d2 ♖h2† 26. ♖f2! ♖h4 27. ♖g1 g6 28. ♖h1!! The final blow. 28... ♖b4†, but Black resigned because of 29. ♗c1 ♖g7 30. ♖xh7†! Haba - Kummer, Austria 1998.

However, there is still life in Black's position, despite the computer's disbelief. 23...♖h2! 24.♗f3 ♖e5 25.♖h1 ♖f8!! was an impressive discovery. I am not sure White is better after this. 26.♖xh7† ♔g8 27.♗h3 ♘d4 28.♖h8† ♘f7 29.♖xf8† ♘xf8 30.♗f1† ♘f5 31.♙f4 ♖d5 32.♙c4 ♖e4 33.♙d6† ♘e8 34.♙h2 ♙e6 35.♙d3 ½–½. Elburg - Turati, e-mail 2000.

23...g6 24.♙d4† ♘g7 25.♙xg7† ♘xg7 26.♖e5† ♘h6 27.♖e3†!

27.♗f4† ♘g7 28.♗f6† ♘h6 29.♗h4† ♘g7 30.♗d4† ♘h6 leads nowhere.

27...♔g7

27...g5 28.♔c1! (28.♖f6† ♖g6 29.♖f2 ♗h3 30.♖xh3† ♙xh3∞) 28...♙h3 29.♖e7 ♖g6 30.♖d1± is similar to the game. Black is suffering and there is no end in sight.

28.♔c1!

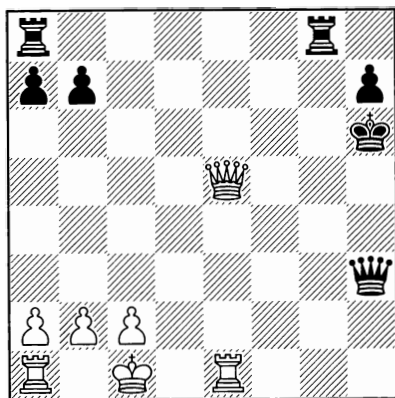
This quiet waiting move underlines the real problem in Black's position, which is not the open king, but that he is unable to develop his pieces sensibly.

28...♙f5

This must surely have hurt, but Black cannot save the position. 28...♙h3 29.♖f2 ♖g1† 30.♔d2 ♗g4 31.♖h1 ♖b4† 32.♔d1 ♙g4† 33.♔c1 h5 34.♖e5† ♘h6 35.♖f7 and the king is toasted.

28...♗h2 29.♗d4† ♘h6 looks like a defence, but White wins elegantly with 30.♗d5!! ♙h3 31.♖h1 ♖g3 32.♙f1+.

29.♗d4† ♘h6 30.♖g1 ♗h3 31.♙f5 gxf5 32.♗d2† f4 33.♖xf4† ♘h5 34.♖e5† ♘h6 35.♖e1!



White has succeeded in stripping Black's king completely, and material is still level. If White succeeds in getting ♖a1 into play he will win very easily. This is exactly what happens in the game. There are many lines possible in the coming moves, all leading to White's satisfaction. I have chosen not to include them, as this position is clear enough to make an evaluation on, and as almost any move is possible all the time.

The game played by White here is a great achievement, especially as both players are rated around 2000. However, being an e-mail game I cannot help wondering if they had some help from the silicon monsters. Advanced chess does seem to live quite well in e-mail tournaments. From a theoretical point of view it is, of course, a great thing that this game exists.

35...♖ac8 36.♔b1 ♖c6 37.a4 ♖g5 38.♖e7 ♖f5 39.♖a3 ♖xc2† 40.♔a1 ♖g2 41.♖f8† ♘h5

41...♖g7 42.♖ae3 ♖a6 43.♖f4† ♖g5 44.♖e7 and Black's position is collapsing. 42.♖f3 1–0

In the last game of this chapter we will have a look at the double pawn sacrifice line with 8...d6. This is not played as often as 8...♖b6, probably because it is less dramatic. White should be able to prove an advantage by keeping one of the pawns and torturing Black in endless endgames, until Black players stop playing this line.

Game 60

Hlavac – Bazant

Czech Republic 2000

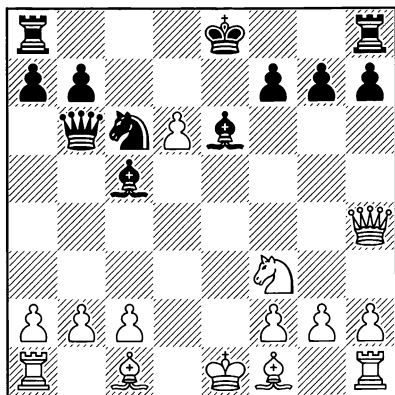
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e5 ♘d5 4.♘c3 e6 5.♘xd5 exd5 6.d4 ♘c6 7.dxc5 ♙xc5 8.♗xd5 d6!?

This move has a better theoretical reputation than 8...♖b6, which is probably justified. I still think that White should get the advantage.

9.exd6 ♖b6 10.♖e4†

This is the main response, and probably also the best.

10...♙e6 11.♗h4



11...f6

Black has many alternatives, from which the first is the best, and the last is the worst possible move in the position.

On 11... exd6 then 12. exd3 ? is a fine move. (12. exe2 is played more often, but after 12... exf5 ? as in David - Luther, France 2003 it is not easy to prove an advantage, nor after the main line 12... exe7 13. we4 0-0-0) 12... exb4 (12... web4 ? 13.c3 wxh4 14. exh4 0-0-0 Joecks - Arnold, Germany 1989. Now strongest was 15. exf5 ± and Black has some compensation, but not enough.) 13.0-0 exd3 was played in Paavilainen - Westerinen, Finland 1991 among others. Now White has an improvement in 14. wa4 ! which forces a nice endgame 14... wc6 15. wxc6 ? bxc6 16. cxd3 ± where only White has winning chances. The key idea is to play exf3 - d2-e4 or c4 when the talk of the two bishops will stop.

11... exf5 12. exc4 0-0 13.0-0 exc2 (13... exd6 14. exb3 ±) 14. exf4 wxb2 15. Eac1 Ea3 16. Efe1 ± Doggers - Afek, Tilburg 2003.

11...0-0 12. exd3 wb4 ? 13.c3 wxh4 14. exh4 Ead8 was played in Jurek - Suchon, Poland 1999. Now the strongest continuation is 15. exf4 exd6 16. exd6 Exd6 17.0-0-0± and there is no compensation for the pawn.

11... exb4 12. we7 mate! Paaske - Pedersen, Copenhagen 2003.

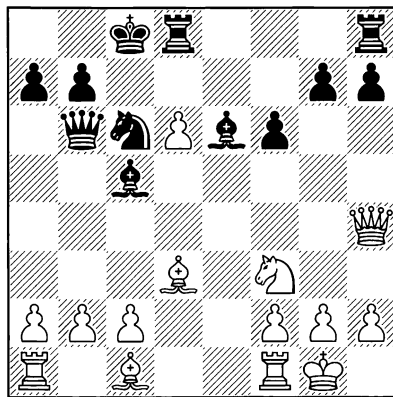
12. exd3

12.d7? exd7 13. exe2 as in Ribeiro - Fernandes, Lisbon 1998 only helps Black as 13...g5! is very strong now. Other alternatives are equally senseless.

12...0-0-0

12...g5 13. exg5 ?! fxg5 14. exg5 wa5 ? 15.c3 1-0 Schwab - Dumitriu, corr. 1995.

13.0-0



13...exd6

13...g5 14. wh6 g4 15. exg5 exd5 16. exe4 + Seirawan - Seybold, Zurich (sim) 1988.

13...h5 14. exe3 ?! Not the only way to play, but a very reliable move. 14... exc3 15. fxe3 wxex3 ? 16. exh1 exg4 This is given as compensation in *ECO*, which is completely wrong. Though the book is a very well structured reference guide, it is sometimes too apparent that the lines are made up of a reshuffling of all the games in the Informants, and no evaluation by the editors themselves. This is also why a weaker player's recommendations are made to seem more important than Kasparov's choices over the board, when given the main lines. (Also after 16... exd6 17. wg3 ! Black is in deep trouble. White simply wins a pawn without any counterplay. 17... ehd8 18. wxg7 exg4 19. Eae1 wb6 20. exd2 ±.) 17. wg3 !± A very powerful move. Now Black cannot free himself. 17... wc5 18. Ead1 exb8 19. exe4 exe5 20. exe5 exd1 This was Hansson - Fernandes, London 1984. Now 21. wxg7 just wins outright. 21... wc8 (21... wb4 22. exc6 !+; 21... wb5 22.c4+; 21... wb6

22. ♖xh8+-) 22. ♕f5! and Black has no squares for the queen since 22... ♗c5 23. ♘d7† is all over.

14.a3!

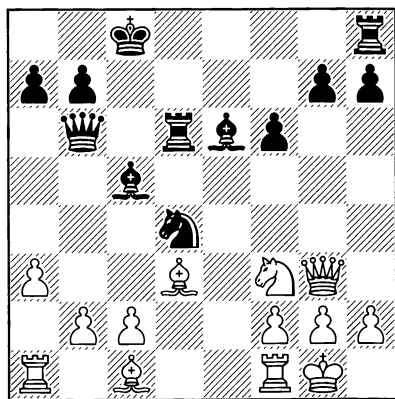
Black's pieces are not ready to meet the advance of the queenside pawns.

14... ♘d4

14...g5 15. ♗h6! A standard move in these lines. 15... ♗d8 16.b4 ♕b6 17. ♕e3± Lamprecht - Bach, Hamburg 1998.

14...a5 does not work at all. 15.b4! axb4 16.axb4 and Black loses material: 16... ♕xb4 17. ♕e3 ♕c5 18. ♖a8† ♘b8 19. ♕f4 g5 20. ♕xd6 gxh4 21. ♖xb8† ♘d7 22. ♕xc5 ♗xc5 23. ♖xh8+- 15. ♗g3!?

This subtle move is probably even stronger than 15. ♘d4 ♕xd4 16. ♗g3± when I am not certain that Black does not have a little compensation. Now weak is 16... ♗d7?! 17. ♕e3 ♕xe3 18. ♗xe3 ♗xe3 19. fxe3± as in Negri - Elburg, e-mail 2000. Why did Black want to play this endgame?



15... ♗c6

The alternatives are not better. 15... ♘b3?! 16.cxb3 ♖xd3 17.b4 ♕d6 18. ♕f4±

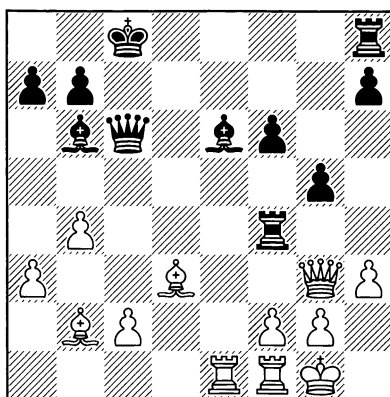
15...g5 16. ♕e3±

15... ♘xf3† 16. ♗xf3 ♕d4 17.c3 ♕e5 18. ♕f5± This all seems very clear-cut to me.

16. ♘xd4 ♖xd4

16... ♕xd4 17. ♕e4! ♕d5 18. ♕f4 (also possible is 18. ♕f5†?) ♕e6 19. ♗xg7 ♖e8 20. ♖xh7 and why should Black have compensation for this sea of pawns? 20... ♗d7 21. ♗h3 ♕xf5 22. ♗xf5 ♖g8 23.g3+-) 18... ♗d7 19. ♕xd5 ♖xd5 20.c3+- This is the simplest. There is no hope for Black here.

17.h3 g5 18.b4 ♕b6 19. ♕b2 ♖f4 20. ♖ae1



20... ♕d7?!

Black is looking for excuses. I have not found sufficient compensation for him here, and I cannot see why I should.

The most obvious line goes 20... ♗d8 21. ♖e2! h5 22. ♖fe1 h4 23. ♗xf4 Forced. (23. ♗h2? leads to 23... ♕c4 24. ♕c1 ♕xd3 25.cxd3 ♖fd4 26. ♕e3 ♕c7 27. ♗h1 ♖xd3†) 23... gxf4 24. ♖xe6 ♖d6 25. ♖e7± and Black's defence is just a nightmare. If White is actually already winning here is hard to tell, but he has all the chances at least.

21. ♕c1 ♖h4 22.c4± ♕c7 23.f4 ♖d8 24. ♖f3 ♘b8 25.c5 ♗d5 26. ♕f1 ♗d4† 27. ♕e3 ♗b2 28. ♖d1 ♗c2 29. ♗e1 h6 30.b5

1-0

Minor lines

- By John Shaw

In this chapter we will have a brief look at some of Black's less popular lines. This does not necessarily mean that they are bad, though some are, just that they are played less often. We will in turn look at 2...b6, 2...a6 (O'Kelly), the Andersson line, the 2...g6 3.d4 ♘g7?! line, different versions of ...cxd4 followed by ...♗b6, the dubious Löwenthal and finally 1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 d6, which is by no means bad at all.

The first game is with 2...b6, which is more respectable than it looks.

Game 61

Thorhallsson – Balinov
Plovdiv 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 b6

A few years ago this was almost unknown but now it is a recognised, if still minor, variation. Several grandmasters have tried it and it is even the main defence to 1.e4 of the Austrian GM Stanec. Here we see it employed by his grandmaster compatriot.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘b7 5.♗c3 a6!?

This move is the reason for the mini-revival of 2...b6. Black's idea is to delay the development of his kingside until he has one more move's information about the destination of White's king bishop. Specifically, if White plays 6.♗d3 Black will choose a set-up with g7-g6 and d7-d6. Who would play ♗d3 against the Dragon? While if White tries 6.♗c4 then Black will play e7-e6 and leave the d-pawn alone. There are no good ♗c4 lines against the Kan. White's task is to find a set-up that is threatening against both Dragon and Kan style positions.

The Brazilian IM Limp has a weakness for the move 5...♗f6. The simple 6.e5 must be reasonable but 6.♗g5 is great fun. His countryman GM Milos played this in his second

attempt against 5...♗f6, so we can assume he prepared 6.♗g5 and trusts it. After 6...♗xe4 7.♗xe4 ♗xe4 8.♗e2 White has a dangerous lead in development. Milos - Limp, Sao Paulo 2004, continued 8...d5 (8...♗b7? illustrates the danger. 9.♗b5! and White is already completely winning. For example, 9...d5 10.♗f4, or 9...d6 10.0-0-0.) 9.♗d1 h6 10.♗h4 a6 11.f3 ♗h7 12.♗f2 (intriguing, but I would prefer the immediate 12.c4!) 12...♗d7 (12...b5!?) 13.c4 and White had a strong initiative and soon won.

Mr Limp continues to keep the faith with 5...♗f6, with a couple more tries in Sao Paulo 2005. In Round 5 after 6.♗g5 he tried 6...e6 against Van Riemsdijk, whose 7.♗db5 only succeeded in reaching a funny Sveshnikov. Repeating the line against Leitao in Round 6 was a step too far: 6.♗g5 e6 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♗e4 10.♗xe4 ♗xe4 11.h4 and Black was already in deep trouble. 1-0 in 22 moves... 6.♗e3!

I think this is the logical answer and guarantees White an edge. White plans ♗d2, f2-f3 and 0-0-0. Whether this is a Yugoslav Attack or an English Attack is up to Black.

I also like the look of 6.♗g5!?. This is not quite as clear as 6.♗e3, but it does give White the chance to play for mate at a shockingly early stage of the game.

Now after 6...h6?! the weakening of g6 is more than just theoretical. 7.♗h4 d6 8.♗c4 ♗c8 (This may seem odd but 8...♗c7 allows the incredibly annoying 9.♗e6!. The justification is 9...fxe6 10.♗xe6 ♗c8 11.♗h5† ♗d7 12.♗f5 and White wins.) 9.♗e2 ♗d7 10.0-0-0 g6 11.f4 ♗g7 12.e5 dxe5 was Moreno Carnero - Korneev, Dos Hermanas 2003. Now White missed his big chance with 13.♗e6!! when Black has no defence. For example, 13...fxe6 14.♗xe6 ♗c6 15.♗g4.

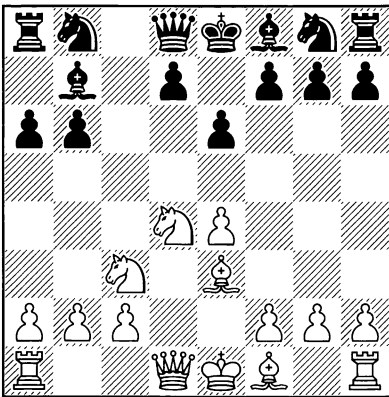
The punch of 6.♗g5 is shown by the fact that a 2600 player was lost with Black after only 13 moves.

6...♗c7 prepares e7-e6 and is probably the only move to avoid immediate trouble. Now White has several reasonable moves such

as 7.♔d3 or even 7.♖g4 but a critical try is 7.♗d5!? when Black has little choice. 7...♗xd5 (7...♖e5 8.♗e3 should just be a transposition after 8...♗xd5, but in Groszpeter - Berezjuk, Pardubice 2000 Black blundered with 8...e6?? when 9.♗f3! won easily.) 8.exd5 ♖e5† 9.♗e3 ♖xd5 10.♗e2 I believe White's massive lead in development gives him excellent compensation for the pawn. I recently had a chance to test this analysis against world-class opposition. Shaw - Sasikiran, Gibraltar 2005 continued 8...e5?! (instead of 8...♖e5†) 9.dxe6 fxe6 10.♖f3 ♖a7 11.0-0-0 g6 12.♖e3! With the idea of ♗xe6!. White's advantage is already decisive and only an only an idiotic blunder allowed Black to win in Shaw - Sasikiran, Gibraltar 2005. This confirms that 8...♖e5† is necessary, but even here Sasikiran thought White had excellent compensation. This evaluation recently had a successful test against super-GM opposition. Rahal-Bauer, France 2006, continued 9.♗e3 ♖xd5 10.♗e2 e5 11.♗b3 ♖b7 12.0-0 ♗f6 13.f4 e4 14.c4 ♗e7 15.g4! and White had a powerful initiative for the pawn. Later White should have won, but only drew. Perhaps this line is strong, but unlucky.

6...e6

This is now the only sensible set-up. Playing in Dragon-style would be mad with the passive a6 and b6 already played, and White heading for a Yugoslav Attack.



7.♖d2 ♗b4 8.f3 ♗f6

Instead 8...♖c7 transposes to Karjakin - Balinov, Vienna 2003. After 9.a3 ♗e7 (If 9...♗xc3 then either recapture is good enough for an edge. Black will have weak dark squares and no bishop to cover them.) 10.0-0-0 b5 11.♗f4 ♖c8 12.♗b3! ♗c6 13.♗d6 Black's position was disgusting. This game was played two months before our main game, so we can assume that the text is GM Balinov's (unsuccessful) attempt to improve.

9.a3 ♗xc3

Now Black has problems on the dark squares but 9...♗e7 10.e5! was even worse. For example, 10...♗d5 11.♗xd5 ♗xd5 12.♗f5! is a disaster.

10.♖xc3 d5 11.e5 ♗fd7 12.0-0-0 ♗c5 13.f4

White has an excellent version of the Classical French.

13...♖d7 14.♗f3

Challenging Black's only well-placed piece with 14.♗b3! seems more logical. For example, 14...♗e4 15.♖b4 b5 16.♗d3 ♗c6 17.♖e1 and White has a great position.

14...0-0 15.♗d3 ♖c8 16.♗b1 a5

Planning to improve his feeble bishop with ♗a6, but the tactics dictate that ♗xd3 must be played very soon.

17.♖he1 ♗a6?

This was Black's last chance to reach a decent position with 17...♗xd3.

18.♗xc5

White begins to clear the queen's path to h3. 18...bxc5

It was too late for 18...♗xd3 because of 19.♖xd3 bxc5 20.♗g5 g6 21.♖h3 h5 22.♗e4 with a winning attack.

19.♗xh7†!

The Greek Gift is still claiming victims.

19...♗xh7 20.♗g5† ♗g8 21.♖h3

White is winning since f4-f5 will further strengthen the attack.

21...♖d8 22.♖h5 ♖a7

Or 22...♖e8 23.f5! ♗d7 24.♖h7† ♗f8 25.♗e4! and Black has no defence. For example, 25...dxe4 26.♖xd7 ♖xd7 27.f6 leads to mate.

23.f5! exf5 24.e6 g6 25.♖h7† ♗f8 26.e7†

1-0

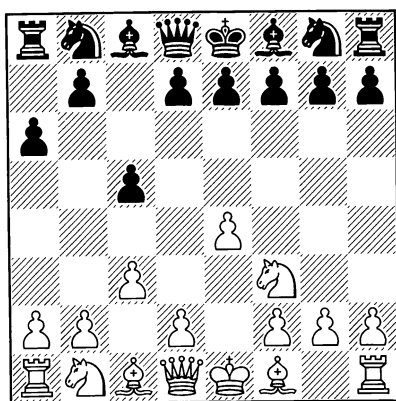
The O’Kelly Variation has never been regarded as fully respectable, yet several GMs are willing to risk it. Former World Junior Champion Kurajica is a true believer and the 2600-rated Baklan has recently added it to his repertoire. Still, White should get an edge.

Game

Shirov – Kurajica

Sarajevo 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 a6 3.c3



I hesitated before selecting this as our main line: a c3-Sicilian in a book that recommends only the most critical lines? I convinced myself by studying the database: 3.c3 is the anti-O’Kelly choice of even the most aggressive of the world’s top GMs (Shirov, Bologan and even Kasparov). It is also the move that scores most heavily against the 2...a6 experts. The convincing logic of 3.c3 is that a7-a6 is rarely a useful move in the normal c3-Sicilian.

Those determined to play in Open Sicilian style could consider 3.♟c3. After 3...b5 4.d4 transposing to our anti-Kan repertoire may seem likely but Black has enjoyed considerable success with the surprising 4...e6. The critical line should be 5.d5 but then we reach a 1.d4-style position where White seems to have “forgotten” to answer ...a6 with a4.

3.c4 is a logical, reliable move, but if Black chooses a line with e7-e6 the positions reached

are inconsistent with both this book’s anti-Kan/Taimanov recommendations and our attacking piece play style. Having said that, the tricky line 3...d6 4.d4 ♟g4 is now under a cloud after the discovery of 5.dxc5 ♟xf3 6.gxf3! ♖a5† 7.♟c3! ♗xc5 (7...dxc5 8.♗b3 is more than annoying) 8.♟e3 and White has a tremendous initiative. For example, Sedina-Korbut, Biel 2005, continued 8...♗c6 9.♟g2 ♟d7 10.♞c1 ♟gf6 11.0–0 g5?! 12.e5! dxe5 13.f4 followed by 14.fxg5 with a crushing position.

The trick every player must know (and probably already does) is that 3.d4?! is a mistake. After 3...cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 e5 Black has an excellent version of the Sveshnikov with ♟c5 or ♟b4 as extra options. The usual ♟db5 is ill advised and 6.♟f5 d5 is not clever either. Instead White would have to retreat the knight passively, and hope to hang on to equality. 3...g6

This is one of many possible replies. The unforced nature of the play means that it is neither possible nor necessary for White to memorise much theory in this position. Black has a multitude of ways to achieve a worse version of a normal variation. For example:

a) The most solid try is probably 3...d5 but after 4.exd5 ♗xd5 5.d4 White’s “extra” move gives him a pleasant position. One example: 5...♟f6 6.♟e2 cxd4 7.cxd4 g6 8.♟c3 ♗d8 9.0–0 ♟g7 10.♟e5 0–0 11.♟f3 ♟e8 12.♟f4 ♟d6 13.♗d2 ♟f5 14.♞ad1 ♟d7 15.♞fe1 and White was clearly better in Karjakin - Khamrakulov, Dos Hermanas 2004.

b) 3...e6 4.d4 d5 5.e5 gives White a good version of the Advance French. Black can try to make use of 2...a6 with 5...♟d7 planning to exchange the bad bishop on b5 but this runs into problems. For example, 6.♟d3 (Not the only good move. Reasonable alternatives include 6.a3 and 6.♟bd2.) 6...cxd4 (The problem with 6...♟b5 is 7.♟xb5† axb5 8.dxc5 ♟xc5 9.b4 ♟b6 10.♟a3 and White wins a safe pawn.) 7.♟xd4!. Cutting across Black’s plans. 7...♟c6 8.♟xc6 ♟xc6

9.0–0 and White’s lead in development gives him attacking chances on the kingside.

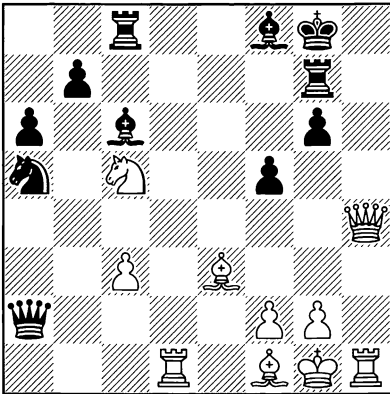
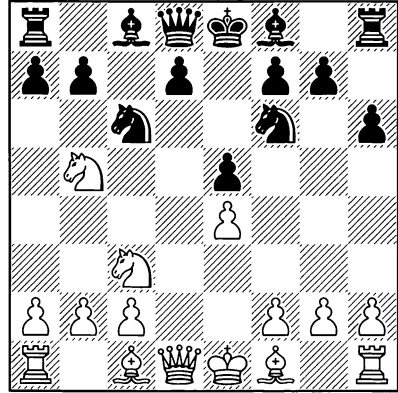
4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 d5 6.exd5 ♖f6 7.♗c3 ♗xd5
8.♙c4 ♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♙g7 10.h4!?

This is certainly not forced, but it does exploit the slowness of Black's second move. If White tried to hack a normal c3-Sicilian in this style then Black would never consider the irrelevant a6 in reply.

10...♞c7 11.♞b3 e6 12.♙d3 ♗c6 13.h5
♙d7 14.♗g5 ♞c8 15.♗e4 0-0 16.hxg6 hxg6
17.♙g5 f5

Black should probably have fought for control of the dark squares with 17...f6, but White still has good attacking chances.

18.♗c5 ♗a5 19.♞b4 ♞f7 20.♞b1 ♙f8 21.♙f1
♙c6 22.♙g1 e5 23.dxe5 ♞xe5 24.♙e3 ♞d5
25.♙f1 ♞xa2 26.♞h4 ♞g7 27.♞d1



Among many, many others, Black has to defend against 28.♗xb7.

27...♙d5 28.♞d2

Winning the queen for rook and minor piece is good enough, but White could have concluded the attack with 28.♞h8† ♙f7 29.♞h7! ♞xh7
30.♞xh7† ♙g7 31.♙h6 ♞g8 32.c4!.

28...♞xd2 29.♙xd2 ♞xc5 30.♞d8 ♞f7 31.♙e3
♗c6 32.♞h4 ♞g7 33.♙xc5 ♙xc5 34.♙c4
1-0

The following sideline, here ascribed to Ulf Andersson, is sometimes called the Haberditz variation.

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6
5.♗c3 e5 6.♗db5 h6

This rare move is a favourite of GM Ulf Andersson. Most of the main lines involve an early exchange of queens, which explains the interest of this famous endgame expert. However, White is able to achieve an edge with accurate play.

7.♗d6†

This is the logical way to exploit the omission of d7-d6, but there are other options. 7.♗d5 should be avoided. After 7...♗xd5 8.exd5 a6! analysis and practice show that Black has equalised. For example, 9.dxc6 axb5 10.cxd7† ♙xd7 11.♞d5 ♞c7.

If White is determined to keep the queens on then 7.♙e3!† is worth considering. Black must play 7...d6 8.♗d5 ♗xd5 9.exd5 ♗b8. The only move. (9...♗e7? loses a pawn to 10.c3! because if 10...a6?? then 11.♞a4!, a standard trick known from the 7.♗d5 Sveshnikov.) 10.c4 Compared to a normal 7.♗d5 Sveshnikov White has the extra move ♙e3, and Black has ...h6. Generally, this must favour White, but ...h6 may help prepare a later ♙e7-g5. I would recommend this line to players who prefer an unclear middlegame to a slightly better ending.

7...♙xd6 8.♞xd6 ♞e7 9.♞xe7†

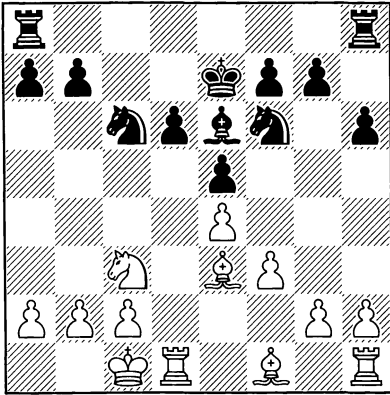
This is the simple approach. The sharpest try is 9.♗b5!† but Black has recently strengthened his defence with 9...♞b8!. This obviously avoids the fork but also fights to prevent the knight landing on d6. Previously 9...♞xd6 was always

played with White scoring well after 10.♖xd6† ♕e7 11.♗f5†. After 9...♟b8! one critical line is 10.b3 ♖xe4! 11.♞xe7† ♕xe7 12.♙a3† d6 13.f3 a6! 14.fxex4 axb5 15.♙xb5 ♟a8 and Black is fine.

9...♕xe7 10.♙e3 d6

10...♖g4? is premature. 11.♖d5† ♕d8 12.♙c5 and Black is crushed.

11.f3 ♙e6 12.0-0-0



White has a slight but definite edge. The plan is g2-g4 and h2-h4 preparing a later g5. White can wait and play ♖d5† only if and when it is most inconvenient for Black.

The following line has been around for a while, but it does not seem to be fully trustworthy.

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 g6

This is a perfectly acceptable move order to reach either variety of Dragon. However, if Black avoids this possibility then he runs into immediate trouble. Of course White has third move alternatives, but none of them are superior to 3.d4.

3.d4 ♙g7?!

Black can, and should, head back towards regular Dragon lines with 3...cxd4 4.♖xd4. White can prevent a transposition with 4.♞xd4 but I think Black is OK after 4...♖f6. For example, 5.♙b5 a6 6.e5 axb5 7.exf6 ♖c6.

4.dxc5

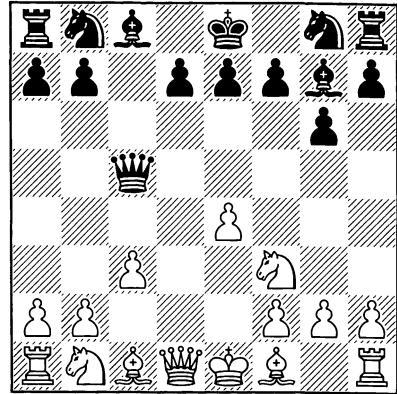
It is worth noting that 4.c4 does not force a

transposition to the Accelerated Dragon. Black has interesting alternatives in 4...♞b6 and 4...♞a5†.

4...♞a5† 5.c3!

5.♖c3 is a little speculative. After 5...♙xc3† 6.bxc3 ♞xc3† 7.♙d2 ♞xc5 Black has had encouraging results.

5...♞xc5



6.♖a3!

This causes Black far more problems than the obvious 6.♙e3. Black now has six likely replies of which four are clearly bad.

6...♖f6

a) 6...♙xc3†? is a trap which has caught several strong players. 7.bxc3 ♞xc3† 8.♞d2! ♞xa1 9.♖b5. The threatened fork gives White just enough time to trap the queen. 9...♖a6 10.♖c3. There is no escape. For example 10...♖c5 11.♖d4! and White wins easily.

b) Preventing ♖b5 with 6...a6? is disastrous after 7.♖c4 with ♙e3 to follow.

c) 6...♞a5?! 7.♞d5! forces an advantage in every variation: 7...♖c6 8.♞xa5 ♖xa5 9.♖b5, 7...♞d8 8.♙c4 e6 9.♞d3 and 7...♞xd5 8.exd5 ♖f6 9.d6 - Bruzon.

d) 6...♞c7?! allows White to gain a clear advantage: 7.♖b5 ♞d8 (7...♞a5 8.♞d5!) 8.♙f4 d6 9.e5 a6 10.♞a4 - Bruzon.

e) 6...d6 is the only serious alternative to 6...♖f6, but White can still achieve a slight advantage. 7.♖b5 a6 (7...♞b6?! wastes more time than Black can afford. Markowski -

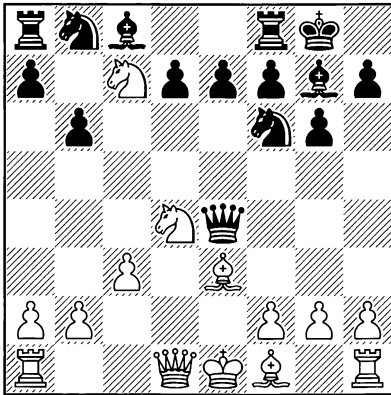
Danner, Istanbul (ol) 2000, continued 8.♙e3 ♖a5 9.♙c4 ♘c6 10.♗b3 ♘d8 11.♘xa7!. And now 11...♞xa7? loses to 12.♙b6.) 8.♙e3 ♖c6 9.♘a7 ♖c7 10.♘xc8 ♗xc8 11.♗b3 ♘f6 12.e5 dxe5 13.♘xe5 0–0 14.♙e2 and White was a little better and later won in Dolmatov - Solak, Istanbul 2003.

7.♘b5 0–0

7...♘xe4? is rather naive. 8.Be3 ♖c6 9.♘fd4! ♙xd4 10.♗xd4 ♘f6 11.♘xa7 and White has a clear advantage.

7...♘g4 is direct but White has a convincing answer. 8.♘fd4 d6 9.h3 ♘xf2. This is effectively forced. (For example, 9...♘f6? 10.♙e3 wins.) 10.♙xf2 e5 11.♙e3 exd4 12.cxd4 ♗b6. This is Al Sayed - Velikhanli, Abu Dhabi 2003. Now 13.♞c1 ♘a6 14.e5! is very strong.

8.♙e3 ♖c6 9.♘fd4 ♗xe4 10.♘c7 b6



So far this is Bruzon - Malakhov, Yerevan 2000. Now Bruzon's suggestion of 11.♗f3! forces a queen exchange while still winning the exchange.

The line with 2...♘c6 and 4...♗b6 is a favourite of Israeli GM Golod, who plays it with absolutely fantastic results (94%, a fabulous 2790 performance in the last 5 years. But all games were played against lower rated opponents.). It should not be underrated. Still, it is not the refutation of the Open Sicilian and White can fight for an advantage just as in any other system. Especially if he follows my recommendation.

Game 63

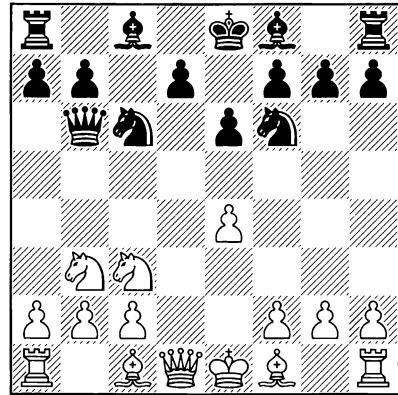
Movsesian – Kozul

Sarajevo 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♗b6

This is an interesting, playable line. Black nudges the d4-knight towards b3, while keeping his own pawn structure as flexible as possible.

5.♘b3 ♘f6 6.♘c3 e6



7.♗e2!?

I think this is the best way to attack Black's system. White prepares queenside castling, while the f1 bishop will develop to g2. A common alternative is 7.♙e3 but it not clear that this is a gain of tempo. Firstly, the queen is almost certain to move anyway to enable a later b7-b5. Secondly, since ...♙b4 is a definite possibility, d2 may prove to be the correct square for the bishop.

7...d6

The major alternative is 7...♙b4 8.♙d2 0–0 9.a3 and now Black has a major decision to make:

a) Most strong players have given up 9...♙xc3 10.♙xc3 e5 11.0–0–0 ♖d8. (In A. Ivanov-Yermolinsky, USA (ch) 2000, Black tried the tricky 11...d6. After 12.♞xd6 ♘d4 13.♙xd4 ♗xd6 14.♙c5 ♖c7 15.♙xf8 ♙xf8 16.f3?! [Instead I think 16.♗c4! refutes the gambit. The idea is 16...♗xc4 17.♙xc4 ♘xe4 18.♞e1 ♘d6 (Not 18...♘xf2? 19.♞f1) 19.♙d3 and White will soon be a pawn ahead.] 16...♙e6 Black had enough

for the pawn.) 12.♔d6! ♖c7 (12...♗d4?? is now simply a blunder. 13.♖xd4 exd4 14.♗a5) 13.♖xf6! This idea of Michael Adams has effectively ended the popularity of 9...♗xc3. 13...gx6 14.♖g4† ♗h8 15.♖h4 ♖d6 (A later game Nijboer - Piket, Amsterdam 2001, continued 15...d6 16.♖xf6† ♗g8 17.♖g5† ♗h8 18.f4 and White was much better.) 16.f4 ♖e7 (Nijboer suggested 16...♗g8 as a better defence but also supplied a promising reply. 17.g4! ♖e7 18.♗b5 d6 19.h3 and White has superb compensation. For example, 19...♗g7 20.♖f1 a6 21.♗xc6 bxc6 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.♗b4 ♖d8 24.♗a5! and Black is lost.) 17.♗b5 Adams - Knezevic, France 1997. Black is already in trouble since the natural 17...d6? fails to 18.♗xc6 bxc6 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♗b4!.

b) 9...♗e7 10.e5 It is wise to push now since 10.0-0-0 d5! has scored exceptionally well for Black. 10...♗d5 11.0-0-0 (If 11.♗xd5 exd5 12.0-0-0 d6 Black's potential c-file play compensates for his weaker structure.) 11...d6 12.exd6 ♗xd6 13.♗b5! ♗e5 (13...♗f4 was tried in Kotenko - Arzumanyan, Ukraine 2003. After 14.c4 ♗xd2† 15.♖xd2 ♗c7 16.c5 ♖xb5 17.♖xb5 ♗xb5 18.♗xb5 White had a definite edge.) 14.c4 This only looks risky - "Trust me, I know what I'm doing." 14...a6 15.cxd5 exd5 16.♗e3 ♖xb5 17.♖xb5 axb5 18.♗xb5 ♗e6 Motylev-Kunte, India 2002. Now Judit Polgar suggests 19.♖he1 is slightly better for White.

Black can also play 7...♖c7, but this generally transposes to the 7...d6 variations. One independent example is 8.g4 h6 9.h4 a6 10.♗g2 ♗d6. A creative and unusual attempt to stop White's traditional pawn storm. 11.♗e3 (11.g5!?) 11...b5 12.0-0-0 ♗f4?! 13.♗d5! and White was much better in Ciuksyte - V. Georgiev, Porto San Giorgio 2003.

8.g4 a6 9.♗d2 ♖c7 10.0-0-0

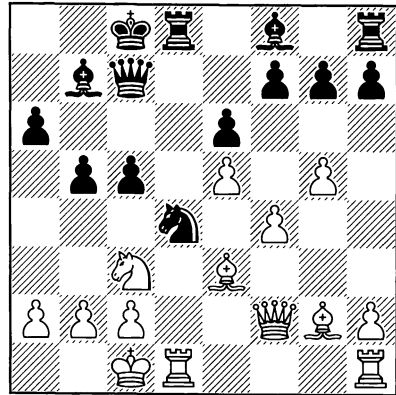
Black has far too many possibilities here to give comprehensive coverage. However, White appears generally to have the better chances in an unbalanced position.

10...♗d7

Black can also choose to delay g4-g5 with 10...h6. Now 11.h4 g6 12.♗g2 b5 transposes to Tomescu - Bruno, Porto San Giorgio 2002.

Play continued 13.e5! dxe5 14.♖f3 ♗d5 15.♗xd5 exd5 16.♖xd5 ♗b7 (16...♗d7 17.♗a5!) 17.♗c5. Black is already worse but 17...♖d8? 18.♗xa6! ♖b6 19.♖xb5! did not help. 11.f4 b5 12.g5 ♗c5

Kozul clearly believes 12...b4 13.♗a4 safely blocks his queenside attack. 13.♗xc5 dxc5 14.♗e3 ♗d4 15.♖f2 ♗b7 16.♗g2 0-0-0 17.e5



17...♗e7 18.♗xb7† ♗xb7?!

Now White wins a safe pawn. Black had to try 18...♖xb7 but after 19.♖he1 White is still a little better.

19.♗xd4 cxd4 20.♖xd4 ♖xd4

Of course if 20...♗c5 21.♖f3†. 21.♖xd4 ♗c5 22.♖d3 ♖d8 23.♖f3† ♖c6 24.♖f1 ♖d4

There is still work to do but Movsesian completes the job convincingly.

25.♗e2 ♖e4 26.♗g3 ♖a4 27.♗b1 ♖xf3 28.♖xf3 ♗g1 29.c3! ♖c4 30.♗c2 ♖c7 31.♗e2 ♗b6 32.♖h3 ♗c6 33.♖xh7 g6 34.♗d3 ♗d5 35.h4 a5 36.♗g3 b4 37.♗e4 bxc3 38.bxc3 ♖c4 39.♗f6†

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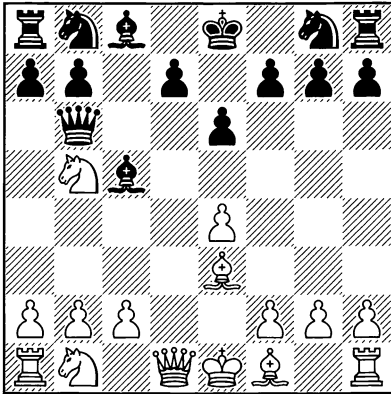
2...e6 and 4...♖b6 is a rare line now but an old favourite of GM Kveinys (which explains why a later ...♖b6 in the Kan is known as the Enhanced Kveinys variation). The idea, as in many of the Kan lines, is to encourage the ♗d4 to leave its perfect central position.

Game 64

Yu Shaoteng - Zaw Win Lay
Bangkok 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♖b6

4...♗c5 is likely to transpose back to our main game after 5.♗c3 ♖b6, but White can also try an immediate attack on Black's position with 5.♗b5!? ♖b6 6.♗e3.



First played by Paul Morphy! It gives White good compensation and a wonderful score after 6...♗e3 7.fxe3 ♖xe3†. The only move. (7...♗e7 was played once, but 8.♗d3! with the ideas ♖a3† and ♖c3, as well as 9.e5 blows Black away. One line is 8...d6 9.e5! dxex5 10.♖a3† ♗f6 11.♗d2 ♗c6 12.♗d3 with the makings of a winning attack. e.g. 12...♖xe3† 13.♗d1 ♗h6 14.♗f1† ♗f5 15.♗c7 ♗b8 16.♗xf5†! and White wins. And after 7...♗f6 8.♗d6† ♗e7 9.♗c4 ♖c5 10.e5 ♗e8 (10...♗d5 11.♖h5! and I do not see how Black can defend his kingside.) 11.♗c3± Hruciov - Rusev, Oropesa del Mar 2000.) 8.♗e2 ♗a6 9.♗1c3 ♗h6 (9...♗f6 10.♗d6† ♗f8 11.♗f1 White has far more compensation than needed for the pawn, Staniszewski - Ostrowski, Augustow 1996.) 10.♗d6† ♗e7 11.♗c4 ♖c5 12.a3 b5 13.b4 ♖c6 14.♖d4 gave White a wonderful initiative in Brodsky - Staniszewski, Rowy 1999. He converted this to a better endgame, but a full-blown attack on the king was also an option. 5.♗c3

The most common move is 5.♗b3 but in an active repertoire it is worth avoiding this slightly passive retreat if there is a reasonable alternative.

The unusual 5.♗a3! was once played by the creative Russian GM Dvoirys. In the game Dvoirys - Agrest, Cattolica 1994, Black allowed the planned ♗c4 and was soon worse. The critical try must be 5...♗xa3 6.bxa3 when the positional question is obvious - will White's dark square play be more important than his weak pawns? Dvoirys gave the line 6...♗f6 7.♖d3 0-0 8.♗e2 ♗c6 9.♗b5 d5 10.exd5 exd5 11.♗b2! ♗e4 12.0-0 ♗e6 13.♗ab1 a6 14.♗d4 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♖c7 16.a4± which is interesting but not forced. 5...♗c5 6.♗a4

If 6.♗e3 Black is OK after 6...♗c6, but he must avoid 6...♖xb2?? 7.♗db5; winning instantly.

6...♖a5† 7.c3

7.♗c3 ♖b6 is relevant only as a way of playing out a pre-arranged draw.

7...♗xd4

Black is committed to giving up his better bishop as 7...♗e7 8.♗b5 d6 9.♗f4 e5 10.♗e3 is simply good for White.

8.♖xd4

Basically, White already has what he wants - the bishop pair. The onus is on Black to find compensation.

8...♗f6

Or 8...e5 9.♖c5 and White keeps a clear edge.

9.♗c5 ♗c6

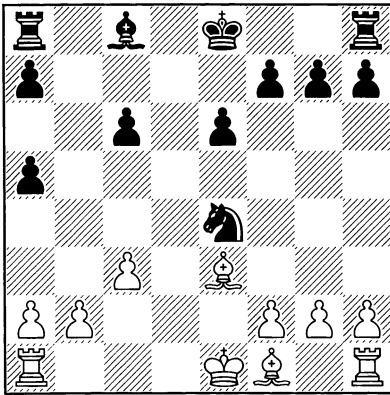
9...0-0 10.♗b3 allows White to consolidate his gains.

10.♖d6!?

I prefer this positional pawn sacrifice to the more common and passive 10.♖e3, which seems to give Black good equalising chances.

10...b6 11.♗b3 ♖e5

It is telling that Zaw Win Lay switched to this move after trying the main line a year earlier. The critical position is reached after 11...♗xe4 12.♖xc6! dxc6 13.♗xa5 bxa5 14.♗e3.



Black has a healthy extra pawn on the kingside, but his shattered queenside and White's bishop pair constitute more than adequate compensation. I believe that White's control of the position means that he can play for the win with virtually no risk of defeat, or in modern jargon: White is playing for two results.

Hamdani - Zaw Win Lay, Vietnam 2003, continued 14...0-0 (Instead, Nikolenko - Arzumanian, Tula 2000, continued 14...e5 15.0-0-0 ♗e6 16.♗a6 ♖b8 17.♖he1 ♗f6, and now the simple 18.♗c5 would have given White a clear advantage.) 15.0-0-0 e5 16.♗c4 ♗f5 17.f3 ♗f6 18.♗d6 ♖fc8 19.♖hd1. This is a typical position in this variation. White dominates the d-file while Black is tied to defending his weak pawns. 19...♗e8 20.♖6d2 ♗c7 and now White, the lower rated player, headed for a draw with 21.♗d6. Instead he could have played for the win with no risk in several ways. One example is 21.a4!?, simply fixing the weaknesses. 21...♗e6 22.♗xe6 ♗xe6 23.♗d7 and White will soon recover his pawn with a fine position. 12.♞xe5 ♗xe5 13.f4 ♗g6 14.e5 ♗d5 15.g3 ♗b7 16.♗g2 0-0-0 17.0-0

Without doing anything special White has achieved a slight but definite edge.

17...d6 18.exd6 ♖xd6 19.♗d4 ♗d7 20.a4

It was worth considering 20.f5!?: exf5 21.♗xf5 ♖f6 and only then 22.a4.

20...♗de7 21.a5 ♗xg2 22.♗xg2 ♗b7 23.♗e3

♗c6 24.axb6 axb6 25.♗xc6 ♗xc6 26.♖a6 ♖b8 27.c4 ♗e7 28.b4 ♗f5 29.♗g1 ♗d3 30.c5 ♗e3† 31.♗xe3 ♖xe3 32.♖c1

The simple 32.♗d1 gives White decent winning chances.

32...♖b7 33.cxb6† ♗b5 34.♖ca1 ♖c3 35.♖1a5† ♗xb4 36.♖a7 ♖c2† 37.♗h3 ♖xb6 38.♖a1 f5?! 38...e5 should draw.

39.♖xg7 ♗c5 40.♖c7† ♖c6 41.♖xh7 ♖e2

Black has a very unpleasant defensive task ahead, and soon cracks.

42.♖h1 ♗d5 43.♗h4 ♗e4 44.♗g5 ♗f3 45.♖a1 ♖e3 46.♖a5 ♗g2 47.♖e5 ♖e4 48.♖h6 ♖a6? 49.♖xf5

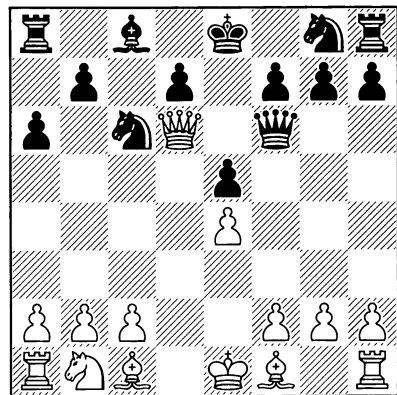
1-0

The next line we will examine is the Löwenthal, which was first played more than 100 years ago. It has never achieved any popularity in high-level chess. Black's weakened dark squares do not appeal to strong players. At lower levels the Löwenthal is far more common. I suspect the large number of tactical tricks in the main lines is the main attraction.

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 e5 5.♗b5 a6

This is the initial position of the Löwenthal. 5...d6 is of course the Kalashnikov (see page 173).

6.♗d6† ♗xd6 7.♞xd6 ♞f6



8.♞xf6

This is an easy way to guarantee an edge. The positions tend to be not very exciting, but they are even less fun for Black. The main line is considered to be 8.♖d1 but I do not think it is any better than 8.♗xf6. It also commits White to studying and remembering a large amount of theory about a rarely met line.

8...♗xf6 9.♗c3

Black is now committed to searching for compensation for his positional concessions.

9...♗b4

The only other significant try is 9...d5. Now 10.exd5 is better than the frequently recommended 10.♗g5. After 10.exd5 play continues 10...♗b4 11.♗d3 ♗xd3† (if 11...♗fxd5 12.♗xd5 ♗xd5 13.♗d2 White has an edge in a simple position) 12.cxd3 ♗f5 13.0-0!? (I find this clearer than the also promising 13.♗g5). Now:

a) 13...0-0 14.♗g5 ♗xd3 15.♖fd1 ♗f5 16.♖ac1 and Black is in trouble. 16...♗d7 (16...♗b8 17.f4) 17.♗a4

b) 13...0-0 14.♖e1 ♖fe8 15.♗g5 ♗xd3 16.♖ad1 ♗f5 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.d6

c) 13...♗xd3 and now 14.♖e1 wins a pawn.

10.♗d2 d5

This is the only aggressive try. The quiet 10...d6 changes nothing. A sample line: 11.a3 ♗c6 12.♗d3 ♗e6 13.♖d1 0-0 14.♗e1 and, as usual, Black will suffer in a long ending.

11.a3 d4 12.axb4 dxc3† 13.♗e3

This convincing line has been known for decades.

13...♗g4†

The critical attempt but White has it covered. Quiet play will leave White with a simple advantage. One recent example is 13...♗e6 14.♗d3 0-0 15.f3 ♖ac8 16.b3 ♗e8 17.b5 ♗c7 18.bxa6 bxa6 19.♗a3 ♖d8 20.♗b4 and White was already winning in Kotronias - Stankovic, Greece 2002. GM Kotronias is not a player who ducks a theoretical challenge, so he clearly believes 8.♗xf6 is an effective answer to the Löwenthal.

14.♗e2 f5 15.bxc3 ♗f6 16.♖a5!

White has a clear advantage.

In the last game of this chapter we shall look at an anti-Keres Scheveningen line. Naturally I suggest playing the Keres attack all the same.

Game 65

Senff – Schlosser

Germany 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗c6 5.♗c3 d6

This has never been a popular position with Black players though there is nothing particularly wrong with it. White has many options, but the consistent move with our anti-Scheveningen line, and also the most theoretically respected, is 6.g4!

The Pseudo-Keres Attack seems like a reasonable name. This move first attracted attention after being played by Anatoly Karpov in his 1985 World Championship match against Kasparov.

Instead 6.♗e3 is a good alternative but 6...♗f6 transposes to a Scheveningen line outside this book's repertoire, so we will keep our focus on 6.g4.

6...a6

This standard Sicilian move is the most popular, but Black has several reasonable, and little explored, alternatives.

6...h6 was Kasparov's choice in his previously mentioned game against Karpov. Karpov continued 7.h4, but the developing 7.♗e3 is also fine. Transpositions are always possible but one distinct, and inspirational, example is Kasimdzhanov - Van der Sterren, Germany 2001. 7.♗e3 ♗f6 8.h3 ♗e7 9.♖d2 a6 10.0-0 ♗xd4 11.♖xd4 ♗d7 12.f4 ♗c6 13.♖g1 ♗d7 14.♗c4 ♖a5 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.♖xg7 ♗f6 17.♖g6† ♗e7 18.e5 dxe5 19.♖xd7† ♗xd7 20.♖d1† ♗e7 21.g5 ♖hf8 22.♖h7† ♖f7 23.gxf6† ♗xf6 24.♖xh6† ♗e7 25.f5 1-0

6...♗e7 is also reasonable and may transpose to other lines. This really is an ideal variation for those who would rather play chess than learn theory.

Of course 6...♗f6 is a regular Keres Attack. See Page 157.

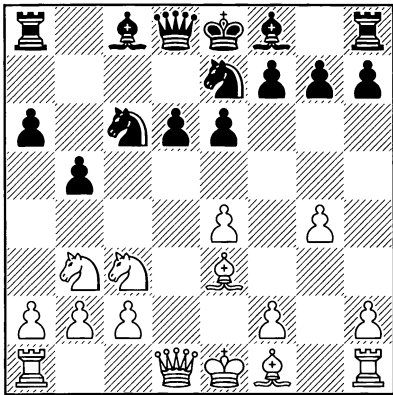
7. ♖e3 ♜g7

Now the game is distinct from the real Keres. Black plans to ease the congestion by ♜xd4 followed by ♜e7-c6.

8. ♜b3!

This is the key point to remember. The idea is borrowed from the Taimanov Variation. ♜d4-b3 is usually a passive move but here it leaves Black's pieces cramped and uncoordinated, in particular Black's knights, which are on the same circuit and so "step on each other's toes."

8...b5



9. ♖d2

I would prefer 9.f4 first. The possible downside of this move order is the pawn sacrifice 9...g5, but after 10.fxg5 I do not believe in Black's compensation. The knight will look very pretty on e5, but White also has active pieces and Black's king has no safe haven.

9.a3!? is an interesting and unusual way to avoid the regular lines. Gallagher - Klauser, Switzerland 2003, continued 9...♜g6 10.g5 ♖b7 11.h4 ♜ge5 12.f4 ♜c4 13.♙xc4 bxc4 14.♜d4 with an unclear position.

9...♙d7?!

The normal move here is 9...♖b7. Svidler - Bischoff, Bled (ol) 2002, continued 10.f4 ♜c8 11.0-0-0 ♙e7 12.♙b1 0-0 13.g5 with a sharp opposite side castling position. In other words a fairly typical Sicilian.

The move I want to avoid with the 9.f4 move order is 9...♜e5 with unclear play.

10.0-0-0 ♜c8 11.f4 ♙e7 12.g5 0-0 13.e5!

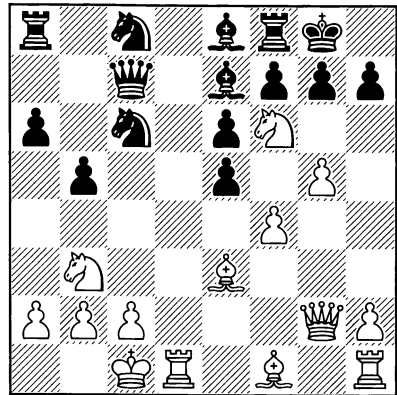
Black suffers because of his bishop on d7. 13...♙e8?

This allows White to decisively strengthen his kingside attack but Black's position was already unpleasant. For example 13...♜a5 14.♜xa5 ♖xa5 15.♖g2!? ♜b8 16.♙b1 and White is clearly better.

14. ♜e4 dxe5?!

Now White has a forced win but the alternative 14...d5 still leaves Black in trouble. 15.♖g2 ♙h8 (or 15...♖c7 16.♜f6† ♙h8 17.♙d3) 16.♖h3 and White's simple, crude attack is deadly.

15. ♖g2 ♖c7 16. ♜f6†!



16...♙h8 17.♙d3 ♙xf6

If 17...exf4 White wins with 18.♜xh7!. For example 18...fxe3 19.♜f6! and mates.

After 17...gxf6 White has an easy win with 18.gxf6 ♜g8 (if 18...♙xf6 then 19.♖e4 and mate next move) 19.♖h3 ♙g6 20.♙xg6 fxc6 21.♖xe6.

18.gxf6 g6

Black is forced to weaken his structure since 18...♙g8 loses immediately to 19.♙xh7!.

19. ♖g5 exf4 20. ♙xf4 e5 21.h4!

Not the only way to finish but definitely the most stylish.

21...exf4 22. ♖h6 ♜g8 23.h5

Black has no answer to the beautiful threat of 24.♖xh7†! ♙xh7 25.hxc6 mate.

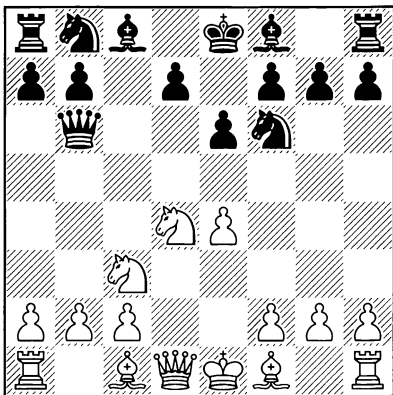
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Game 66

Van der Wiel – Lammens

Vlissingen 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞f6 5.♞c3
♞b6



The Gaw-Paw (named by Rolf Martens).

6.e5! ♟c5 7.♟e3!

Interesting, but unnecessary, is 7.♞db5!?! a6!
(7...♟xf2†? 8.♞e2 ♞g4 9.h3 ♞xe5 10.♞d6!
♞xd6 11.♞xd6† ♞e7 12.♞xc8† ♞xc8 13.♞xf2+-
and 7...♞d5? 8.♞e4 0-0 9.c4 are not good)
8.♞d6†!?! or 8.♞f3!?.

7...♞d5

Not 7...♞g4? 8.♞xg4 ♞xb2 9.♞d2!+-. For
example: 9...♞xa1 10.♞xg7 ♞f8 11.♞b3 ♟xe3†
12.fxe3 ♞b2 13.♞b5

8.♞xd5 exd5 9.♞b5!

The mainline 9.♞f5 ♞xb2 is very messy.

9...0-0

The critical try must be 9...♟xe3 10.fxe3 ♞c6
(If 10...♞xe3† 11.♞e2 ♞xe2† 12.♟xe2+ with
a clear advantage, or maybe just winning. Or
10...0-0 11.♞d4+.) 11.♞d6† ♞e7 12.♟e2! and
White has a strong initiative.

10.♟xc5 ♞xc5 11.♞d4! ♞xd4 12.♞xd4 ♞c6
13.0-0-0

Or 13.♞b5 with similar play.

13...♞xe5 14.♞b5 ♞g4 15.♞d2+

Material will soon be level, but Black will
still have a weak d-pawn. White has excellent
winning chances.

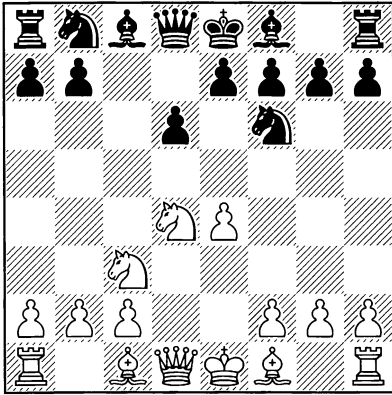
15...d6 16.f3 ♞e3 17.♞c7 ♞b8 18.♞xd5 ♞xd5
19.♞xd5 ♞d8 20.♟d3 ♟e6 21.♞d4 ♞bc8 22.♞d1
♟xa2 23.♞a4 ♟e6 24.♞xa7 ♞b8 25.♟b5 ♞f8
26.♞d4 ♟d7 27.♟d3 ♟c6 28.b4 ♞e7 29.b5
♟d7 30.♞c4 ♞dc8 31.♞xc8 ♟xc8 32.♞d2 ♞d8
33.b6 ♟e6 34.♞e3 ♟d5 35.♟b5 ♞c8 36.♞d4
♞c5 37.c4 ♞c8 38.♞a8 mate.

1-0

5th move alternatives

- By Jacob Aagaard

In this chapter we shall investigate Black's alternatives on the 5th move to the normal lines. In the following position



Black has some alternatives to the normal 5... a6, 5...g6, and so on. These include 5...e5, 5...d7 and 5...d7. Though none of them are really completely reliable they are still not as bad as might be imagined. In this chapter I will quickly present a way to play against each of them.

5...e5

This line is a true provocation. Normally Black plays 5...a6 in order to play ...e5 without allowing g6, but here Black decides to allow it. This will lead to a position where White has a slight positional pull, and the better player will most likely win with White, and draw with Black.

Basically the 5th move alternatives presented in this chapter have their drawbacks, but are not really bad moves as such. Therefore it is usual for White to achieve a slight advantage, but not more.

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxd4 d7

Lately IM Bator has gone 4...e5 5.g6 d7 6.f5 a6 7.g7 g7 when he is retaining some flexibility with the g8-knight. Still White must be a little bit better here. 8.c3 c6 9.f3 e7 (9...e6 10.g5 f6 11.d2± Ramesh - Ferrufino, Bled 2002 looks reasonable to me) And now it is of course possible to go 10.g4 e6 11.e3 d8 12.ed5∞ Hector - Bator, Sweden 2003. But White should also do well with the simple 10.e7 e7 11.g3±. 5.c3 e5 6.g6 d7

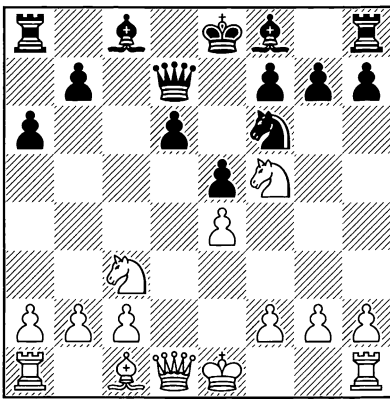
6...d7 7.g7 g7 leads to a slightly inferior position after 8.d2! (8.f5?! e4 9.xg7 e7 10.e4 d5 11.h6 0-0 leads to an equal position, or maybe even a forced draw. One line is 12.c5 d6 13.xg7 xg7 14.xb7 b4 15.d2 xb7 Schopf - Hendrix, e-mail 1997). Now Black has the following possibilities:

a) 8...g4!? This looks very strange, but it does win a pawn. 9.d3!? A very aggressive approach that left Black with material but without development. 9...xg2 (9...c6 10.0-0 e7 11.g3± according to Peng. However, maybe the position is just really bad for Black. The queen is utterly misplaced and 12.d5 would be a strong reply against 11...g6.) 10.g1 xh2 11.g5 d7 12.0-0-0 xf2 13.e3 f3 14.g3 h5 15.d5 c8 16.xa7 d8 17.d5 e7 18.xg7 c5 19.c4 cxe4 20.d7 c7 21.xf7 and the attack was very strong in Willemze - S. Ernst, Vienna 2003. Possibly Black can defend better at various places, but what about 9.d5! which leaves White with a small but lasting advantage after 9...xd5 10.xd5 c6 11.d3 e6 12.c4. Compared to the Kalashnikov, White's bad bishop has been exchanged, while Black will find it hard to exchange his bad bishop, in contrast to the Kalashnikov. 9.d3 xd1 10.xd1 also looks like a preferable position for White.

b) 8...e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.d3 g6 is no way

to play chess. 11.♔g5 ♖c6 12.♗d2 ♔h8 13.♞ad1 ♞ad8 14.f4 ♘g8 was played in Peng - Alexandria, Jakarta 1997. Now Peng gives 15.f5 ♔xg5 16.♗xg5 f6 17.♗e3± as the best continuation.

c) 8...h6 This seems to be the most serious move. But the fact is that White is a little better no matter what. 9.0-0 (9.♘g3!?) with the idea of 9...g6 10.♘f1±) 9...♘c6 So far Paehtz - Petrenko, Plovdiv 2003. In the game I think Black could have equalised, but after 10.♘g3 White is simply slightly better.
7.♘f5 a6 8.♔xd7† ♗xd7



9.♘e3±

This is a very modest decision, far from an outright refutation of Black's opening. Usually when I meet an unusual line I do not try to refute it, unless there is no other way of gaining an advantage, or unless I think it is straightforward to refute it over the board. Here this kind of thinking explains my choice. Instead of 9.♘e3 White has a more aggressive alternative:

9.♔g5 ♘xe4 10.♘xg7† ♔xg7 11.♘xe4 0-0 12.♗xd6 f6 13.♗xd7 ♔xd7 14.♔d2 ♘c6 15.♘d6 has been played a number of times, and this also leads to a slight advantage for White. The two bishops and the strong pawns in the centre do provide Black with some counterplay though, and I do not feel that this is the most challenging way to play with White. The positional approach, where d5 remains weak, is more to my liking.

9...♗c6 10.♗d3

There is an alternative that also really appeals to me. 10.♗f3!? ♔e6 11.0-0 ♔e7 12.♘f5 ♔xf5 13.♗xf5 ♗d7 14.♗f3± Strautins - Gallerani, e-mail 2002.

10...♔e6 11.0-0 ♞c8

11...♔e7 is also playable. 12.a4 0-0 13.♔d2 ♞fc8 14.a5 b5 15.axb6 ♗xb6 Marinkovic - Rajkovic, Ulcinj 1997. 16.♞a4!? ♔d7 (Untenable is 16...♗xb2? 17.♞b1 ♞xc3 18.♞xb2 ♞xd3 19.cxd3±) 17.♘cd5 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♗d8 19.♞xa6 ♞xa6 20.♞xa6 and White would be laughing, as 20...♞xc2 21.♔c3 traps the rook.

12.a4

White has won the opening battle as far as I am concerned. He has exchanged the correct pair of bishops and prevented Black's counterplay on the queenside. Soon he will advance his pawns and create lasting problems for Black on the queenside.

12...♔e7 13.a5 ♗c5

13...0-0 14.♘cd5 ♔d8 15.c4 ♘d7 16.b4 ♔xd5 17.exd5 ♗c7 18.♔a3± Della Morte - Larrea, Vicente Lopez 2004.

14.♞d1 0-0 15.♔d2 ♞fd8 16.♔e1 ♔f8 17.♘a4 ♗c6 18.♘b6 ♞c7 19.f3 ♘h5 20.c4±

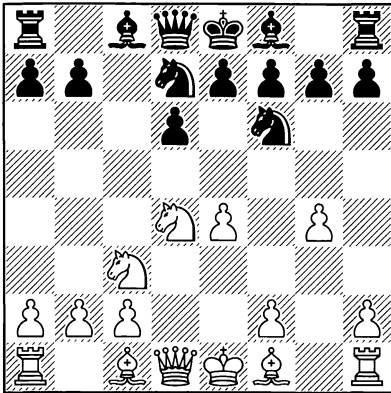
White later won, Hjartarson - Bator, Gausdal 1996.

5...♘bd7

This provocative move was invented by Bent Larsen who has played it from time to time, never presuming that it is very good, but to get young players out of theory. In the game fragment below his much younger opponent shows him the drawback with this kind of thinking: Bad moves often lead to bad positions!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘bd7 6.g4!

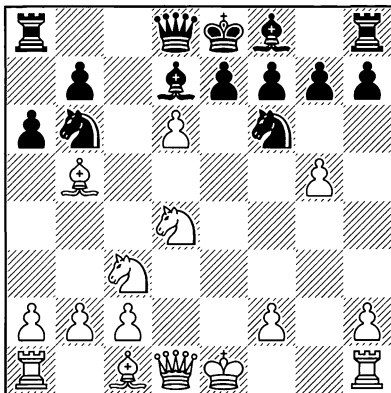
This is the strongest reply, both statistically and logically. Black will be badly placed to play a hybrid between the English Attack and whatever he is trying to do.



6...♘c5?!

I think this move is questionable.

6...d5 does not look good once we have a deeper look at the practical examples. 7.exd5 (7.♘xd5!? is a serious alternative. 7...♘xd5 (7...♘xe4? 8.♘b5+-) 8.exd5 ♖a5† (8...♘f6 does not work on account of 9.♙b5† ♙d7 10.c4±) 9.c3 ♗xd5 10.♙g1 and White is probably slightly better here. One line is 10...e5 11.♗e2 ♙c5 12.♙g2 ♗d6 13.♘f5 ♗f6 14.♙e3±) 7...♘b6 8.♙b5† ♙d7 9.d6 a6 as played in Feher - Gross, Budapest 1998. (9...exd6 10.♘f5 ♙xb5 11.♘xb5 d5 12.♙f4± was something White quickly made a full point of in Van Asperen - Barks, e-mail 1998) Here White played the innocuous 10.♙e2?! and the game was eventually drawn after the strongest reply 10...e5!. But White had a much stronger continuation with 10.g5!



when I cannot find a playable move for Black! 10...♙xb5 (10...axb5 11.gxf6 gxf6 12.♘dxb5 either transposes or gives Black problems after 12...exd6 13.♘xd6† ♙xd6 14.♗xd6±) 11.♘dxb5 axb5 12.gxf6 gxf6 13.♘xb5 exd6 14.♗e2† ♙e7 15.♙f4± and Black's position is a complete wreck. I am sure a stronger player than I would go all the way and say that White is winning...

6...h6 is probably Black's best move here. I would imagine that 7.h4!? is a good reply. 7.♙e3 a6 (7...h5? is punished with 8.g5 ♘g4 9.g6! fxg6 10.♘e6 ♘xe3 11.fxg3 ♗a5. This was all played in Gaggiottini - Beggi, Italy 1995. Now the computer quickly finds the winning move: 12.♗d5!! ♗xd5 13.♘xd5 ♖b8 14.♘dc7† ♔f7 15.♙c4+-) 8.h4 g6 9.♗e2 h5 10.gxh5 ♘xh5 11.0-0-0 ♙g7 12.♙g1 ♘c5 13.f4± with a good attacking position for White in Fogarasi - Bilek, Zalaegerszeg 1992.

7.f3 g6

This is one way to play the position for Black. But really he has no easy options anymore. 7...e6 8.♙e3 a6 9.♗d2 b5 10.a3!?. Strictly speaking this is not necessary. 10...♙b7 11.g5 ♘fd7 12.0-0-0 ♖c8 13.♔b1 ♙e7 14.h4± These kind of attacking positions do not usually allow a player to waste time, as Black has done here with the artificial knight manoeuvre. White won in Barczay - Ciocaltea, Varna 1967, though Black is still in the game at this moment.

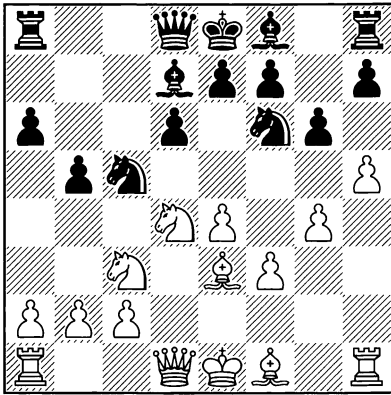
8.♙e3 ♙d7

8...a6 9.♗d2 b5 10.0-0-0± is pleasant for White. Here Black is not really ready to face ideas such as ♘d5 followed by ♘c6, or just the basic g5 and ♘c3-e2-g3. Black has a problematic choice to make. 10...♙b7?! is, however, not the way to go. After 11.♘dxb5! White had just won a pawn in Shevelevich - Makarov, corr. 1985, based on 11...axb5 12.♙xc5 dxc5? 13.♙xb5† and White wins.

9.h4 a6 10.h5

I quite like White's flexible play in this game. Already here he must have been thinking of 11.b4 and the later ♙c4 and ♗d3. However 10.♗d2!?, with the idea of 11.0-0-0, would also have given White the better game.

10...b5



11.b4!

This move is rather surprising. Usually White would not commit to an offensive on both sides of the board. Here it is fully justified.

11...♟c6

It is hard to argue with this move, even though Black will be worse after it. The computer wants to play rough with 11...e5, but White has a refutation in 12.g5! ♟xh5 13.bxc5 exd4 14.♟xd4 ♟g8 15.♟d5±, based on ideas with ♟xh5, and 15...dxc5 16.♟e5 and White wins.

12.♟xa4 bxa4 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.♟c4 ♟c8

14...e5 15.♟e6 ♟c8 16.♟xf8 ♟xc4 17.♟xd7 ♟xd7 18.♟xd6 ♟c3† 19.♟f2 ♟xc2† 20.♟g3± was no alternative either. Black's position is simply bad.

15.♟d3 ♟g7 16.0-0 a5 17.b5 ♟b8 18.a3±

White won an exciting game and later the Danish Championship in a play-off between the same two players. Mortensen - Larsen, Aalborg 1989.

5...♟d7

This variation is the best of the three 5th move alternatives, and is usually attributed to the Byelorussian grandmaster Kupreichik.

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 ♟d7 6.f3!

I think the English Attack is the most natural

reaction to this move. Black now has the option to go into the unusual lines of the Dragon, or play a position where the bishop is a little strangely placed on d7.

6. ♟g5 will most often transpose to the Richter-Rauzer after 6...♟c6. This is, of course, something White can choose to play, but I like to recommend the best move in the position.

6.♟e2 is another way to play the position, but is not in line with our repertoire.

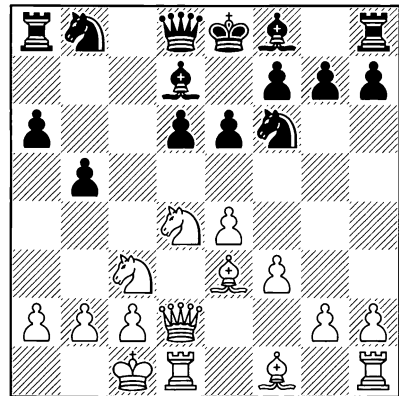
6...a6

I am not convinced this is the best plan. The alternatives are:

6...e5 7.♟b3 a5 8.a4 ♟e7 9.♟e3 ♟a6 10.♟b5± Topalov - Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 1998.

6...♟c6 7.♟e3 g6 (7...a6 8.♟d2 ♟c8!?) is an interesting idea that cannot be correctly evaluated before it has been played between stronger players than it has currently.) 8.♟d2 transposes to the Dragon variation, see page 37. In this way, choosing 6.f3 is maybe just a question of which transposition to allow.

7.♟e3 e6 8.♟d2 b5 9.0-0-0±



White is a little better after the opening.

9...h5 10.♟d3 ♟e7 11.g3!?

A slow but dangerous plan. Black needs to react in the centre as in the game, or he will be in trouble.

11...♟c8 12.h3 e5!

12...♟c6 13.g4 with an advantage for White.

13.♟f5 ♟xf5 14.exf5 d5 15.f4 d4

15...e4? 16.♟e2 ♟b4 17.♟d4 ♟bd7 18.g4±

and Black will soon find himself with very serious problems.

16. ♖g2 ♗c6

16... ♗bd7 17. fxe5 dxc3 18. exf6 cxb2† 19. ♖b1 ♗xf6 20. ♗d4 0-0 21. g4± leads to a position where White has good attacking prospects.

17. ♗e4! dxe3?

This simply loses the exchange without compensation. After 17... ♗d5 18. ♗f2 f6 19. fxe5 fxe5± Black is worse, but there is no clear way for White to break down Black's defences.

18. ♗xf6† ♗xf6 19. ♗e4 ♗c7 20. ♗xa8

White is winning, and won in another 20 moves. Movsesian - Markovic, Jahorina 2003.

Index of variations.

Najdorf

1.e4 c5 2.♁f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♁xd4 ♁f6 5.♁c3 a6 6.♁g5
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