ADVANCED CHESS TACTICS

LEV PSAKHIS



QUALITY CHESS

Revised and Expanded Edition

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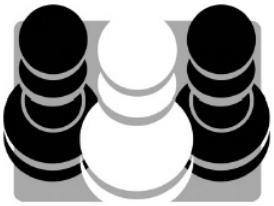
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Advanced Chess Tactics

By

Lev Psakhis



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Epigraph

In youth the years stretch before one so long that it is hard to realize that they will ever pass, and even in middle age, with the ordinary expectation of life in these days, it is easy to find excuses for delaying what one would like to do but does not want to; but at last a time comes when death must be considered. Here and there one's contemporaries drop off. We know that all men are mortal... but it remains for us little more than a logical premise till we are forced to recognize that in the ordinary course of things our end can no longer be remote... I have long thought that it would exasperate me to die before I had written this book.

Somerset Maugham, 'The Summing Up'

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Key to symbols used

⩲	White is slightly better
⩱	Black is slightly better
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
⩳	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
↑	with an initiative
∞	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
□	only move
#	mate

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Publisher's Foreword to the Second Edition

When the time came to reprint *Advanced Chess Tactics* we faced a decision – reprint exactly the same book again or add something new? The former is the easier option but instead we asked Lev Psakhis to write a new chapter: Attacking in the French Defence. It was a natural topic, as the French Defence is a lifelong favourite of Lev and its characteristic blocked centre can inspire spectacular attacking play, as the new chapter shows.

The first edition of this book was a favourite of many. To quote Dennis Monokroussos: "Psakhis writes with great enthusiasm, as someone who clearly loves the game and enjoys playing, analyzing and the people with whom he shares the profession. I found his enthusiasm infectious." The book you hold in your hands is an updated and expanded version. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we did.

John Shaw
Managing Director, Quality Chess
Glasgow, September 2019

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Preface

Throughout most of my life I have been a chess professional. Spending six to eight months a year at tournaments, I fully satisfied my chess hunger. Later, somewhat to my surprise, I realized that I was playing the game less and less, and teaching it more and more. Then in 2006, I finally took my leave of the game as a player. I wiped away the odd few manly tears, "hung my skates on the wall" and started leading the far-from-easy life of a chess coach. This gave me the chance to look at the game from the other side of the fence.

I endeavoured to work only with talented players, and was quite astonished to find how even the very strong ones were lacking in classical chess education. There is a kind of blind faith in openings. A typical view is, "I'm going to learn a new line in the Najdorf, or maybe two, maybe five, and I'll beat everybody." This goes with an obvious neglect of other equally important aspects of the game. True, for grandmasters rated over 2650, good opening knowledge is essential – but then *they* aren't reading these lines, are they?

What do you need for good results in tournaments? A sensible knowledge of the openings, making use of a fair dose of common sense; an understanding of basic strategic laws (how to handle positions with various pawn structures, how to play against weaknesses, and so forth – the study of games by Petrosian, Karpov and many others is a great help here!); improvement of your tactical skill, with good precise calculation of variations two to four moves long; a flair for the attack (in *this* department, games by Kasparov, Tal, Alekhine and Judit Polgar will not only give you great pleasure but afford invaluable help); and of course, good play in the endgame. Material on the level of Mark Dvoretsky's *Endgame Manual* is in my view fully adequate for the vast majority of grandmasters, while players in a somewhat lower category can be quite content with less.

The object of analysis in this book is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of chess – that sovereign entity, *the attack!* We may take any amount of pleasure in playing against a weak pawn or, say, against a poorly placed knight in the enemy camp; but it's only when we conduct an attack on the opponent's king that the blood's adrenalin content soars and our heart tries to leap out of our chest. Such a splendid feeling! Not that I have any wish whatever to isolate the business of attack as some kind of separate component of chess. I even devised this motto: Attack is the continuation of strategy by other means. I only hope General Carl von Clausewitz won't take me to court for plagiarism!

A few words about the structure of the book: attack in chess has many facets, and several systems can be devised for classifying the examples. For instance a scheme would be possible with such headings as attacking with the two bishops, giving mate with your last remaining pawn, sacrificing a rook, and so forth. I decided to try a somewhat different scheme: attacking in various specific openings, and attacking in positions with certain typical pawn structures. How far I have succeeded in this, you must judge. As they say, you cannot get a quart into a pint pot. Naturally I am not hoping to teach you how to checkmate all your opponents in (let us say) the Sicilian Defence, within the confines of a single book. That would of course be impossible! I have simply tried to convey my views on positions that

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contain attacking chances – and to share my experience of playing them, using typical or sometimes *not* so typical devices. Many splendid openings had to be left out, and this is not down to my opinion of them but merely to the shortage of space.

Now, about the games: selecting them was not a simple task, considering that so many works on tactics and aggression were on the chess book market and that I was categorically opposed to repeating other people's analyses. It is for this latter reason, and not at all out of unbridled narcissism, that I have included many games of my own. But that is not all. For several years now, inspired by Garry Kasparov's immensely interesting work *My Great Predecessors,* I have been diligently studying the games of the great former generation that included Mikhail Tal, Boris Spassky, Leonid Stein, Viktor Korchnoi, Tigran Petrosian and many another illustrious names. It frankly amazed me to ascertain how many games from that era, which is not so very distant, had remained practically uninvestigated. It seemed to me quite a senseless idea to analyse the brilliant victories of Kasparov, Anand or Topalov for the thousandth time; in a country like India, for instance, where I have spent a fair amount of time coaching with delight and gratitude, these games are known in every nursery school! It therefore seemed entirely reasonable to focus primarily on games played by the giants of that earlier generation. Many of the games, naturally, are wins by Mikhail Tal, and this of course is not surprising. Few players have conducted as many brilliant attacks as the Hussar from Riga. Some games will strike you as familiar – this was impossible to avoid – but all of them are supplied with some *fundamentally* new analysis, allowing you to look at them from an entirely new angle.

Who is this book intended for? I think (hope) that chess players ranging from 2000 to 2600 will find something useful and interesting in it. While writing it, I visualized a typical reader as a young International Master who doesn't want to rest content with what he has already achieved. But of course, players in a considerably weaker class can also benefit from the book. There is just one proviso. I have tried to write in a lively, individual manner, but the study of the material demands quite serious work. And to this end, it is highly desirable to use that antiquated device, a *chessboard*. Don't forget that improvement (and not just in chess) can result only from independent work. The best coach in the world can only help you with useful advice and a selection of important material − it is still up to you to assimilate it!

A few practical hints:

(1) Don't go out of your way to calculate long variations. A capacity for *precise* calculation to a depth of 2-4 moves is usually quite enough.

(2) An attack may be prepared over quite a long stretch of time, but when carrying it out, do so at top speed without letting your opponent get his bearings.

(3) Don't relax too soon, even if it seems to you that the goal is already attained – your opponent may take a completely different view.

(4) Most importantly: constant time-scrambles are the worst sign of a poor chess education!

In conclusion I would like to say that writing this book was hard work for me, but very interesting too. I hope you will enjoy it.

Lev Psakhis

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Rishon le Zion, Israel
October 2011

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Chapter 1

Attacking in the Benoni



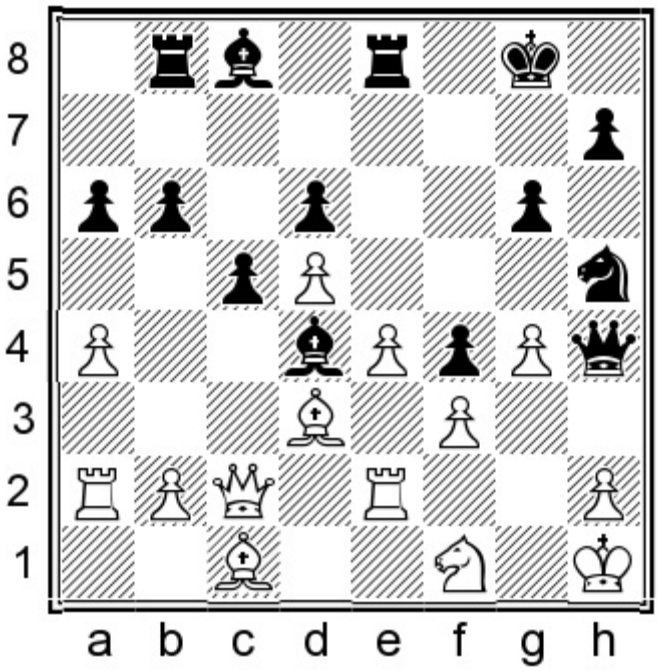
Tel Aviv 1990 My last game against the great Mikhail Tal

Diagram Preview

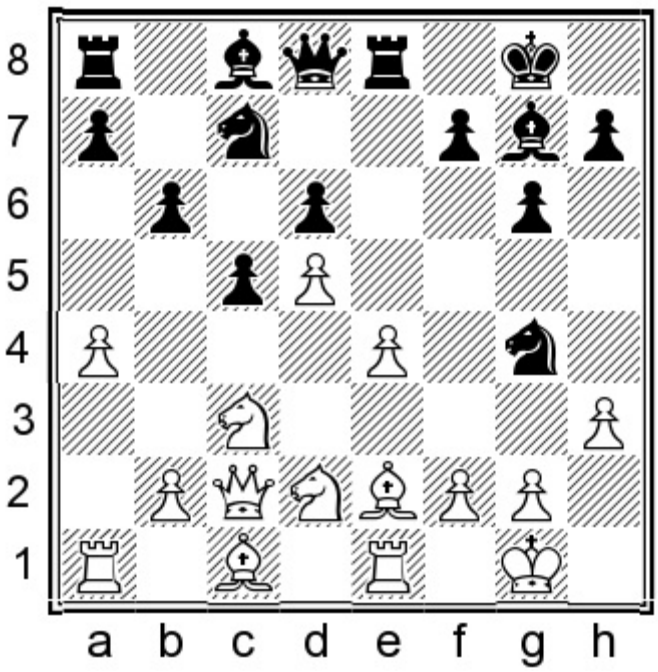
On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions

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are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

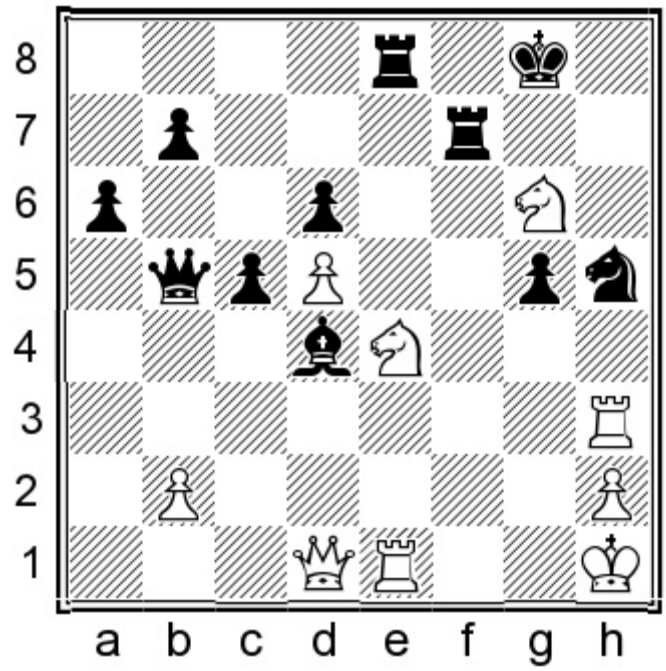


A complicated decision
(see page 12)

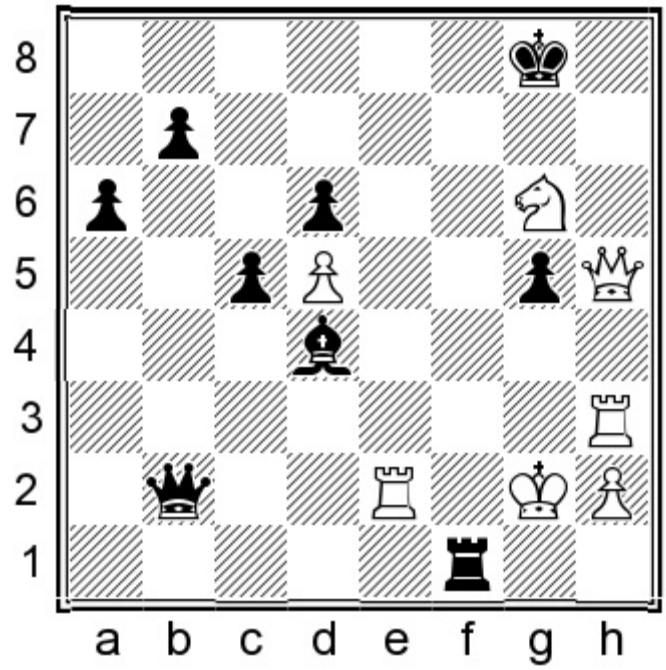


How to react?
(see page 17)

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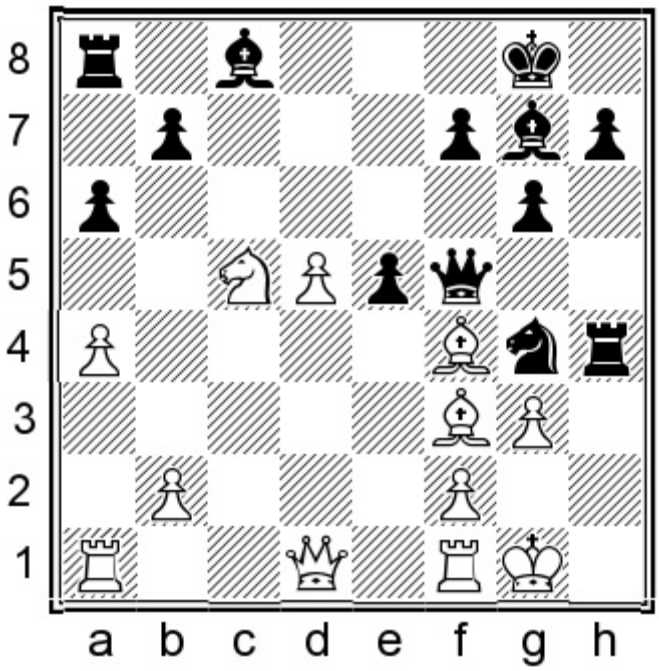


What fantastic attacking idea did White miss?
(see page 30)

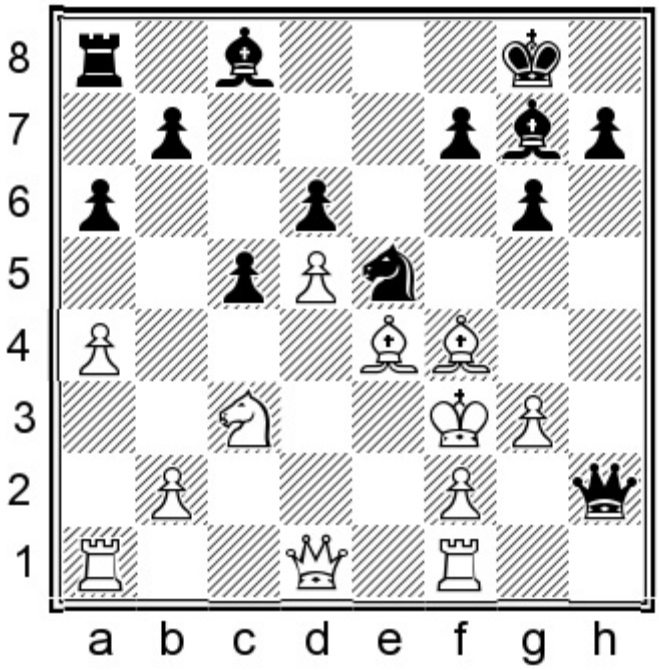


How does Black hold the draw?
(see page 32)

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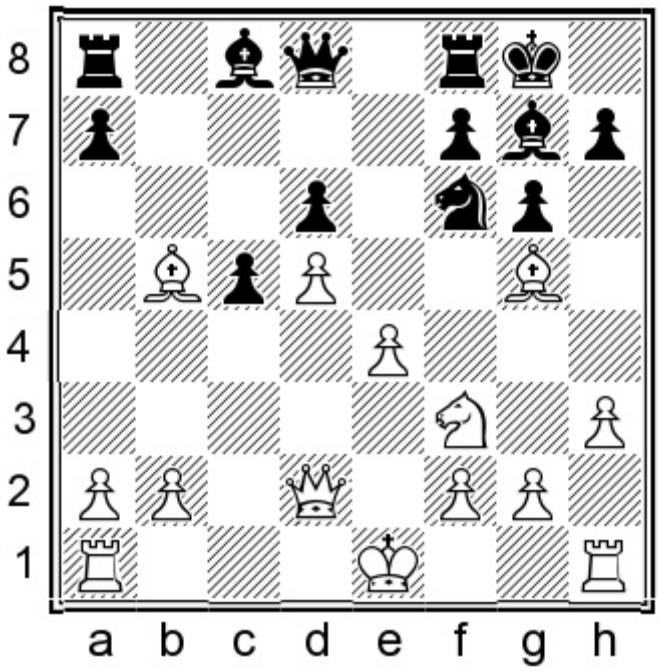


This never happened, but what if it did?
(see page 36)

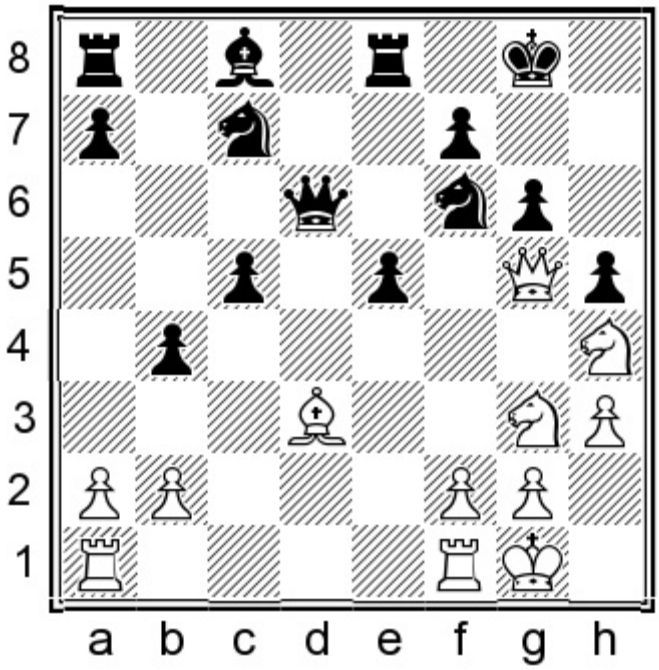


How to defend?
(see page 38)

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What is Black's tactical resource?
(see page 41)



The grand finale!
(see page 46)

The Benoni is an opening for people with excellent tactical vision and nerves of steel. You almost always feel distinctly anxious about Black's position: White has an advantage in space, and often in development too. Why, then, have so many strong and enterprising players included this opening in their repertoire? It is sufficient to recall the names of Tal, Fischer, Stein, Topalov, Gashimov and Ljubojevic; indeed your obedient servant himself belonged to this exclusive club for decades. The

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reason is simple; unlike many other openings that are a good deal safer, the Benoni enables Black to fight for the initiative (and often obtain it!) literally from the very first moves. Of course it means accepting a certain risk, but who said that that was such a bad thing? It's hard to find any other opening in which we have so many opportunities to show our tactical and aggressive skills. Who worries about the fact that our opponent has plenty similar chances of his own? There will be a fight, and may the stronger player win.

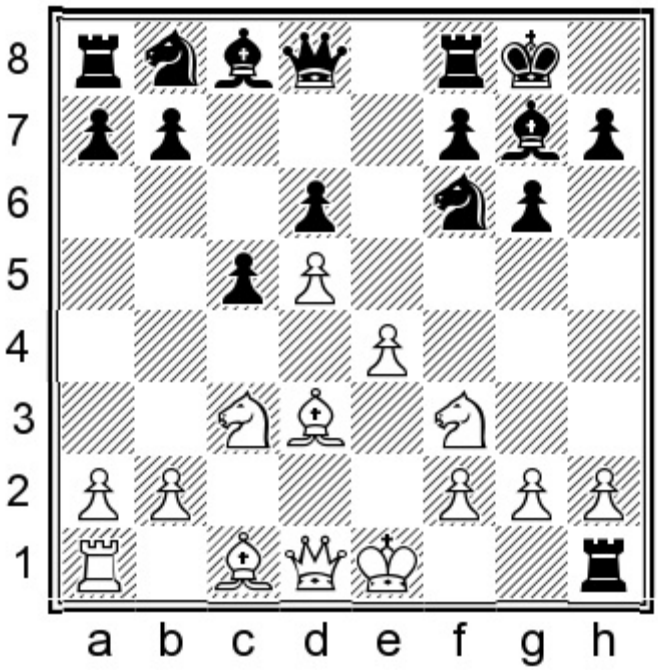
It should therefore come as no surprise at all that I have chosen the Benoni as material for my opening chapter.

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Isaak Birbrager – Mikhail Tal

USSR 1953

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♘f3 ♗g7 8.♗d3 0-0



9.0-0

Interestingly, 9.h3!? at this point would give a standard position from the 1990s. After the move played, Black could have equalized with no particular trouble.

9...♘a6

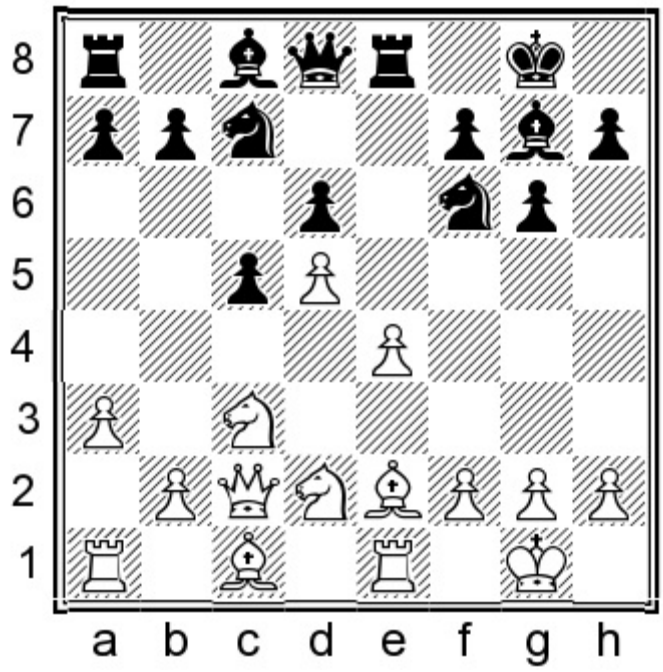
According to the present state of theory, 9...a6!? 10.a4 ♗g4 is stronger. Then after, for instance, 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘bd7∞ Black can face the future with optimism.

10.♘d2 ♘b4

A strange move, but let us not forget that Tal was just sixteen at the time. In our day, players of that age are already seasoned veterans, but in 1953 it was quite a different matter!

11.♗e2 ♖e8 12.a3 ♘a6 13.♖e1 ♘c7 14.♕c2

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14...♖b8

A standard plan; Tal prepares to activate his queenside pawns with ...b5. Black can hardly count on adequate counterplay otherwise.

15.a4

Likewise a standard reply – perhaps *too* standard. White had at least two other plans at his disposal.

In the first place he could have played 15.♖b1!? and answered 15...b5 with 16.b4!±.
Secondly, he had available an interesting continuation in 15.♘c4 b5 16.♘a5 ♗d7 17.♘c6 ♗xc6 18.dxc6 ♖b6 19.♗f4 ♖xc6 20.♖ad1 with strong pressure that fully compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

15...b6 16.♘b5?!

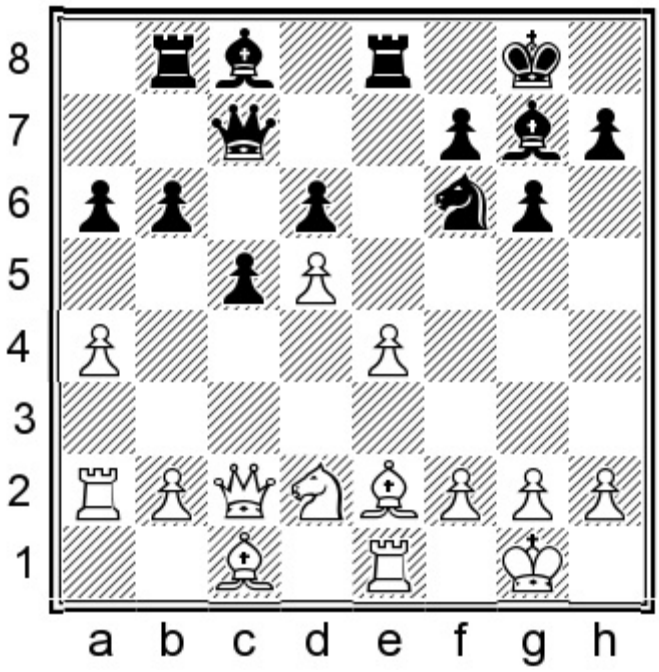
I don't like this move much. The main defect of Black's position is his lack of space, so practically any exchanges are in his favour – and White is only helping to bring them about. For the alternatives, see the note to Black's 13th move in the next game (Gurgenidze – Tal).

16...a6 17.♘xc7

The optimistic 17.♘a7?! ♗b7 18.♘c6 ♗xc6 19.dxc6 d5! actually hands the initiative over to Black. White's problems with his development make themselves felt.

17...♕xc7 18.♖a2

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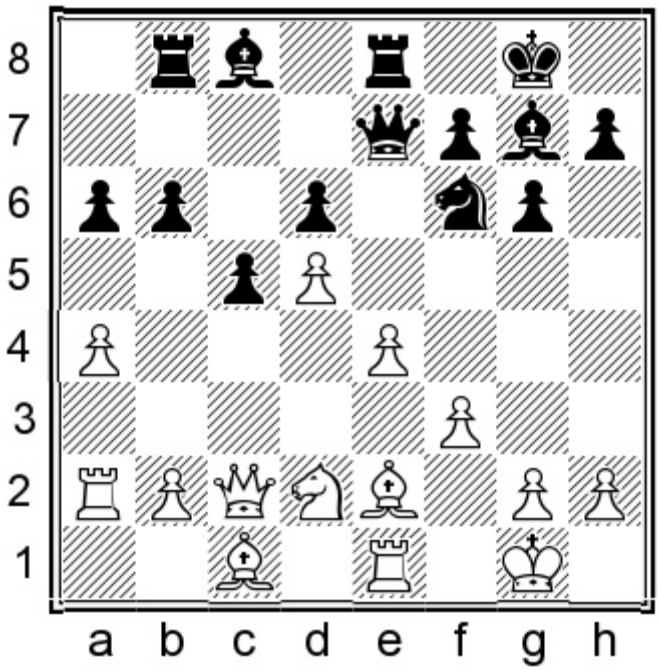


18...♕e7!?

Not a bad move, subjecting White to unpleasant pressure down the e-file. But Black would also have quite a good game after the prosaic 18...b5 19.axb5 axb5. White can then choose between 20.b3!?∞ and 20.b4 c4 21.♗b2, although the latter results in a pawn structure in which he definitely misses his knight on c3.

19.f3?

A risky move; the modest 19.b3!? would lead to a game with mutual chances after 19...♘xe4 20.♗d3 f5.



Black now has an interesting tactical choice.

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19...♘h5!

An excellent move, with the aim of seriously getting to grips with the weak dark squares in the opponent's camp. Tal was, no doubt, strongly tempted to follow a different course, with a piece sacrifice:

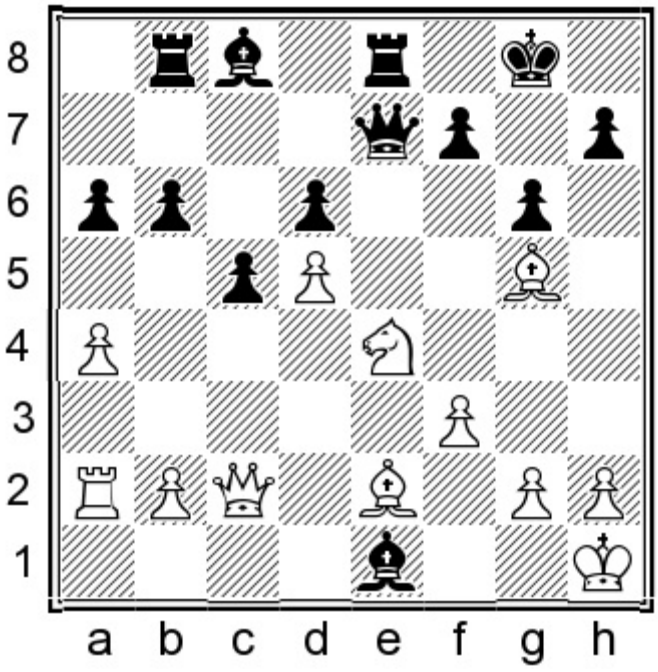
19...♘xd5 20.exd5 ♗d4† 21.♔h1

White can pin no hopes on 21.♔f1?? ♕e3–+.

21...♗f2

It would also be interesting to try 21...f5!?, taking control of e4.

22.♘e4! ♗xe1 23.♗g5



23...♕f8!

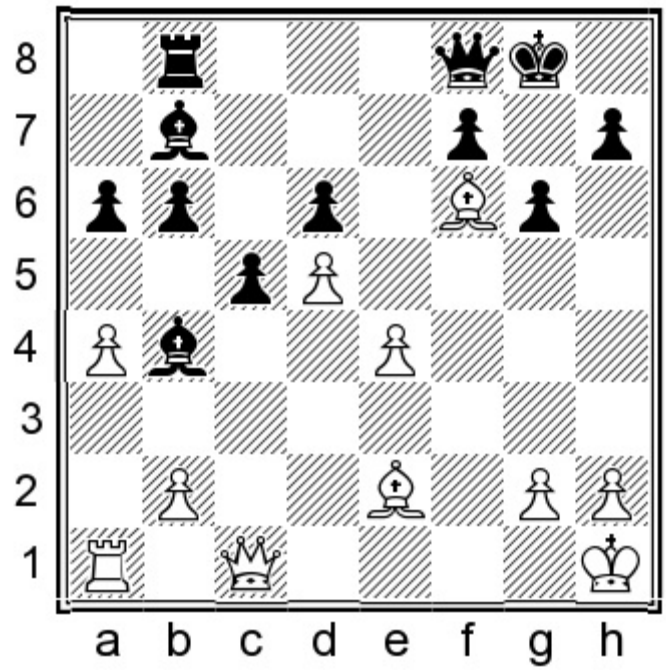
The outwardly active 23...♕e5?! meets with the powerful retort 24.♕c1!, and seeing that Black cannot be happy with either 24...♗b7 25.♖a3 ♗b4 26.♖e3 or 24...♗f2 25.♗f6 ♕h5 26.b3!? – defending the bishop on e2 and winning easily – there only remains 24...♗b4 25.♗f6 ♕h5 26.b3!?, and if 26...♖xe4 27.fxe4 ♗g4 then 28.♗xa6↑ with a large plus for White.

24.♖a1

Approximate equality results from both 24.♕c1 ♖xe4!? 25.fxe4 ♗f2 26.♗f6 ♗d4 27.♗xd4 cxd4 and 24.♘f6† ♔h8 25.♘xe8 ♕xe8.

24...♖xe4!? 25.fxe4 ♗b4 26.♗f6 ♗b7 27.♕c1!?⇄

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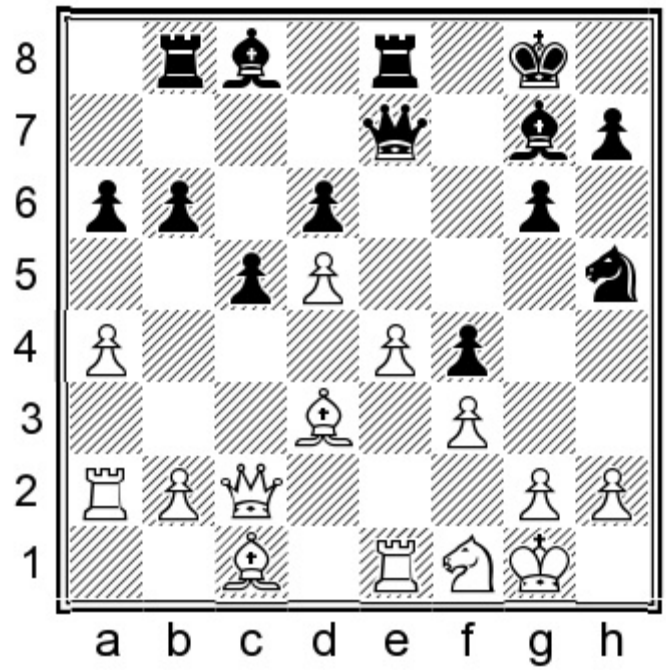
White of course has excellent compensation for the pawn, but does he have a genuine advantage? At any rate, in all these variations Black may be risking more than his opponent. Tal was certainly right, then, to choose the move he did. (Still, it would be interesting to know which variations he worked out, and in which ones he was rather following his renowned intuition.)

20.♘f1

White already has to walk on a knife edge. His knight can't stray too far from the king, since after 20.♘c4 b5 21.axb5 axb5 22.♘e3 (I don't think you could find many players who would want to continue with 22.♘a5 ♗d4† 23.♔f1 ♕h4–+) 22...♗d4, Black is threatening to play ...f5 at a suitable moment, and it isn't entirely clear how White is going to guard the dark squares on the kingside.

20...f5↑ 21.♗d3 f4!

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22.g4!

Birbrager has to keep on finding what are virtually only moves. Thus, the natural 22.♔h1 would lose quickly to 22...♕h4 23.♖e2 (or 23.♗d2 ♗d4–+) 23...♗d4, when White lacks a suitable defence against the simple threat of 24...♘g3†!?.

22...♗d4† 23.♔h1

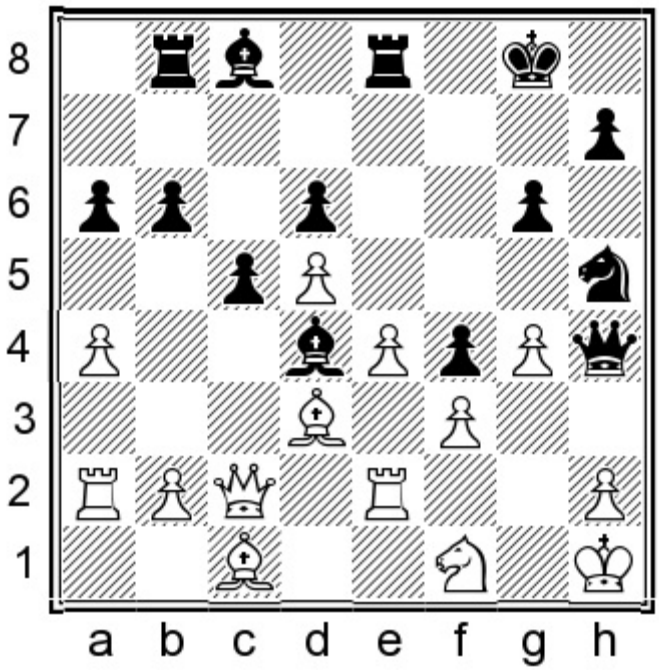
This time, if White wishes to lose the game in short order, he can continue 23.♔g2?. Then after the forced moves 23...♕h4 24.♕e2 ♗xg4! 25.fxg4 f3† 26.♕xf3 ♖f8–+ he can simply stop the clock!

23...♕h4 24.♖e2

On 24.♕e2, Black has 24...♗f2!.

There is no salvation in 24.gxh5 either. After 24...♕xe1 25.♗xf4 ♕h4 26.♗xd6 ♕f6! 27.♗xb8 ♕xf3† 28.♕g2 ♕xd3 29.♖a3 ♕xe4–+ Black's two mighty bishops will bring him the long-awaited point.

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24...♕h3?!

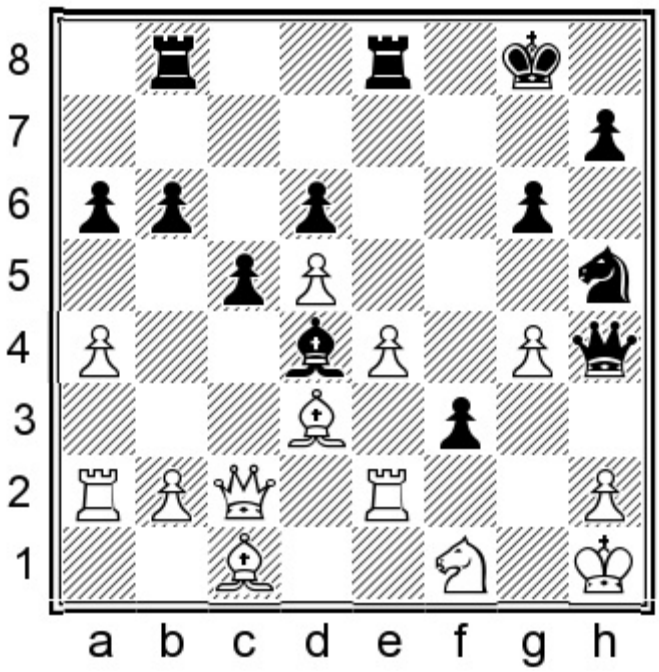
Tal's first error in the game. At this point Black had a pleasant choice.

For one thing, he could play 24...♘g3†!? 25.♘xg3 fxg3 26.♖g2 gxh2 27.♕e2 ♖f8↑, though in this line White would retain decent defensive possibilities.

Secondly, Black had the very strong:

24...♗xg4! 25.fxg4 f3!

For a while I was fascinated by the variation 25...♕h3! 26.♖d2 f3 27.gxh5 ♖xe4! 28.♖f2 ♖e2! 29.♗e3 ♖xc2 30.♗xc2 ♗xe3 31.♘xe3 ♖e8, when Black has a plus – but is it sufficient for victory?



26.gxh5

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Or 26.♖f2 c4!, hitting White in the most awkward place. The weakness of his e-pawn is his undoing: 27.♗e3 ♗xe3 28.♖xf3 ♕xg4 29.♖xe3 cxd3 30.♕xd3 ♘f4 31.♕d2 ♖xe4–+ and White's defensive possibilities are exhausted.

26...fxe2!? 27.♕xe2 c4!

Once again exploiting the same motif; this is stronger than 27...♖f8 28.♗e3.

28.♗xc4

White simply has no other move; given his overall development problems, he would lose at once after 28.♗c2 ♖f8–+.

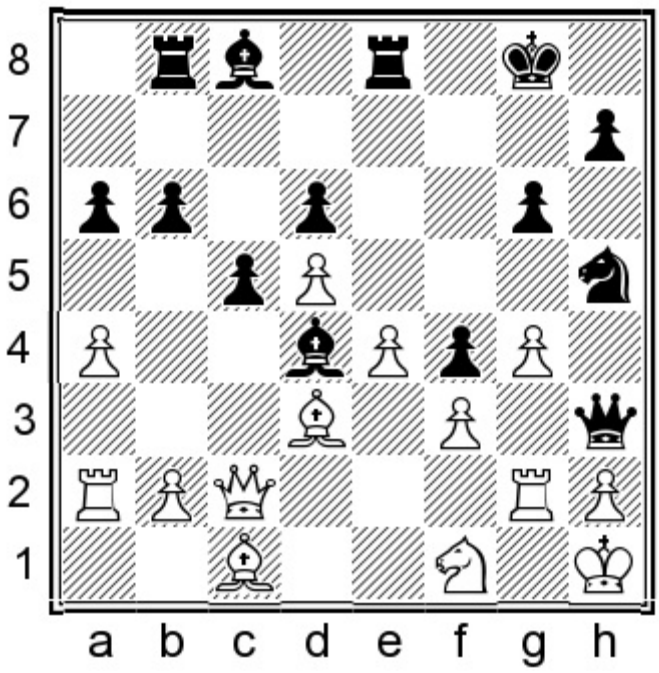
28...♖xe4 29.♗e3

29.♕g2 ♖g4 30.♘g3 ♖f8–+ leaves White with no hope of salvation either.

29...♗xe3 30.♘xe3 ♕f4 31.♖a3 ♖be8–+

Black wins the knight, and with it also the game.

25.♖g2



25...♕xf3?

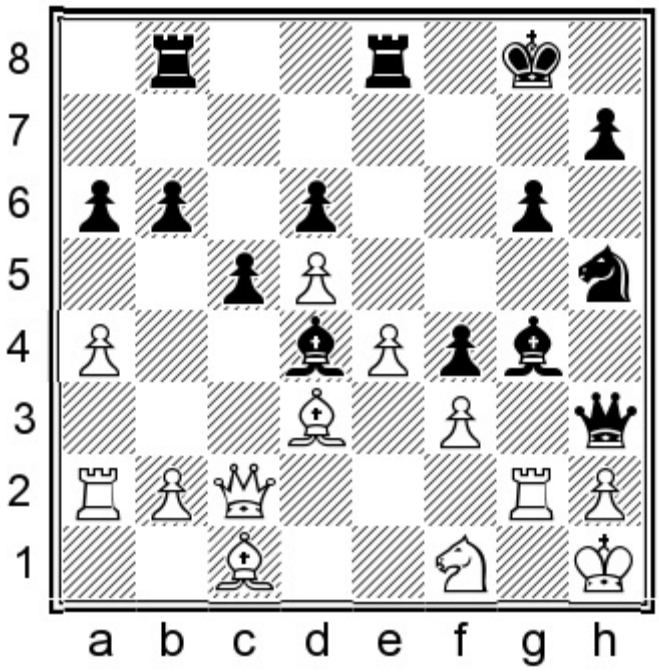
This second error running could have deprived Black of the victory he deserved – but as we know, mistakes never come singly.

The positional 25...♘f6!? was not at all bad; with ...g5 coming next, Black would have a clear initiative.

But the strongest line was the tactical solution:

25...♗xg4!

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26.♖xg4

26.fxg4 meets with a precise refutation: 26...f3 27.♖f2 c4! 28.♗xc4 ♖xe4 29.gxh5 ♖e2! 30.♗xe2 ♗xf2 31.♘e3 ♗xe3 32.♗d3 f2 33.♕e2 ♖f8 34.♕f1 ♕xh5 35.♗xe3 ♕xd5† 36.♕g2 ♕xd3–+ This long but completely forced variation has left White in an absolutely hopeless position.

26...♕xf3† 27.♖g2 ♕h3! 28.♖a3!? f3 29.♖f2 ♖e5! 30.♗xa6 ♖f8∓

Black has a large plus. Incidentally, try not to forget the methods of attack (...c4! and ...♖e2) which crop up in several variations – perhaps you will manage to carry out something similar in your own games.

26.♘d2

White is not to be envied after 26.gxh5?, when Black is offered a wonderful choice. He can play 26...♖xe4! 27.♗e2 ♖xe2 28.♕xe2 ♕xe2 29.♖xe2 ♗b7, successfully targeting both the king and the misplaced rook on a2. Or he may prefer 26...♗h3! 27.♖a3!? ♖xe4 28.♗xa6 ♗e3, and White obviously has to pay a high price to avoid immediate loss. Beautiful variations!

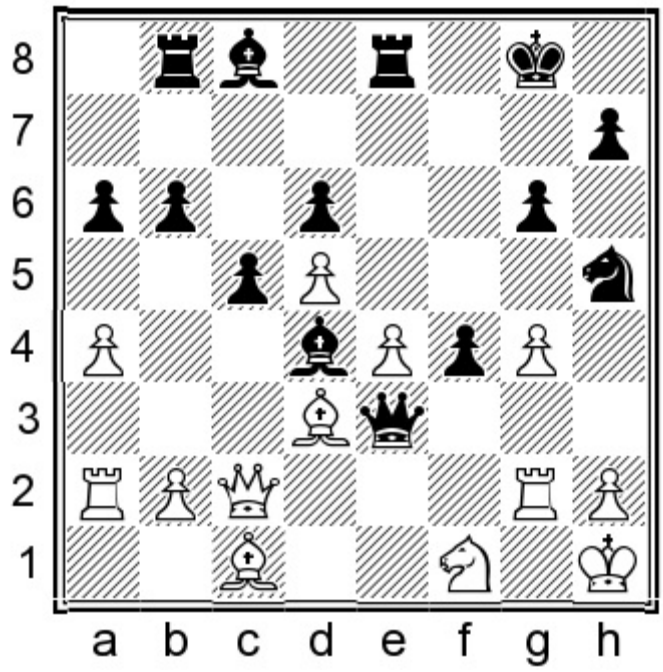
Now, however, the white knight intends to persecute the black queen perpetually, and the position appears to have taken on a drawish character. In such situations we have to decide how much risk we are prepared to take in order to pay for the right of playing on; but beware – sometimes the price becomes excessive!

26...♕e3

Avoiding the draw isn't so simple; after 26...♕h3 27.gxh5 ♕xh5 28.♗e2± White's chances are already preferable.

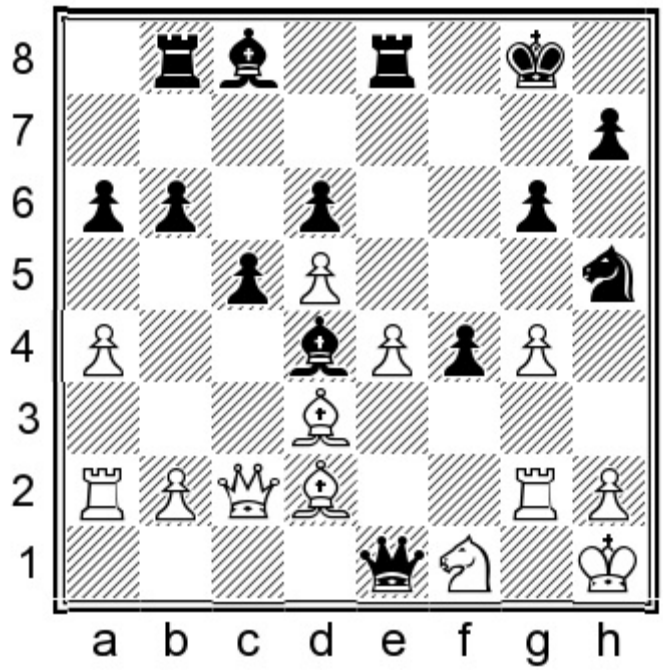
27.♘f1

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27...♕f3

It seems to me that at this moment Mikhail Tal might easily have been a prey to his emotions. It's obvious that a drawn result didn't suit him at all. I can understand this very well – I have been in similar situations plenty of times myself – but why he didn't choose the comparatively "normal" 27...♕e1! is unclear to me. The best reply would probably be 28.♗d2!? (28.gxh5 ♗h3 29.♗xf4 c4! is unpleasant for White after either 30.♕d2 ♗xg2† 31.♔xg2 ♕xd2† 32.♘xd2 cxd3 or 30.♗xc4 ♖f8! 31.♕d2 ♗xg2† 32.♔xg2 ♕xe4†−+), when the struggle could continue with:



28...♕h4 29.gxh5 ♗h3 30.♗c3 ♗xg2† 31.♕xg2 ♗xc3 32.bxc3 ♕xh5 33.♗xa6 ♕e5 giving approximate equality, but White would have a couple of reefs to negotiate.

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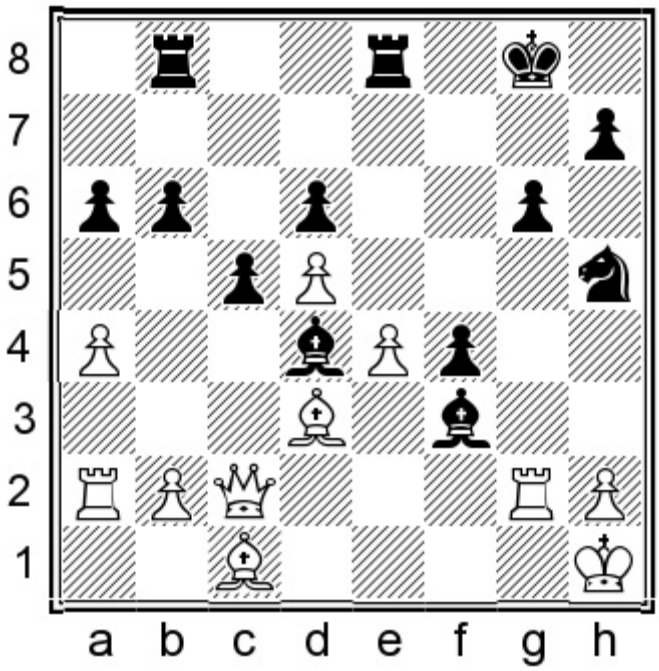
28.♘d2

Practically forcing a draw, and indeed 99% of opponents would now have settled for the half point – but on this day Birbrager was up against an exception to the general rule!

Incidentally, 28.♖a3 ♘f6 29.♘d2 was weaker in view of 29...♕h3 30.♗b5 ♕xg2†! 31.♔xg2 axb5, when Black holds the initiative despite parting with his queen.

28...♗xg4?! 29.♘xf3 ♗xf3

It is time to catch our breath a little. The fact is that Tal has made an outright sacrifice of queen for rook – or more precisely, we might say, for a minor piece; for who would want to part with the light-squared bishop, the pride of Black's position, by taking on g2 without dire necessity? Black does of course have some compensation for the queen, but it is psychological more than anything else. White was simply dumbstruck by such a rapid change in the situation, and most likely he was in time trouble – which immediately left its mark on the course of the game.

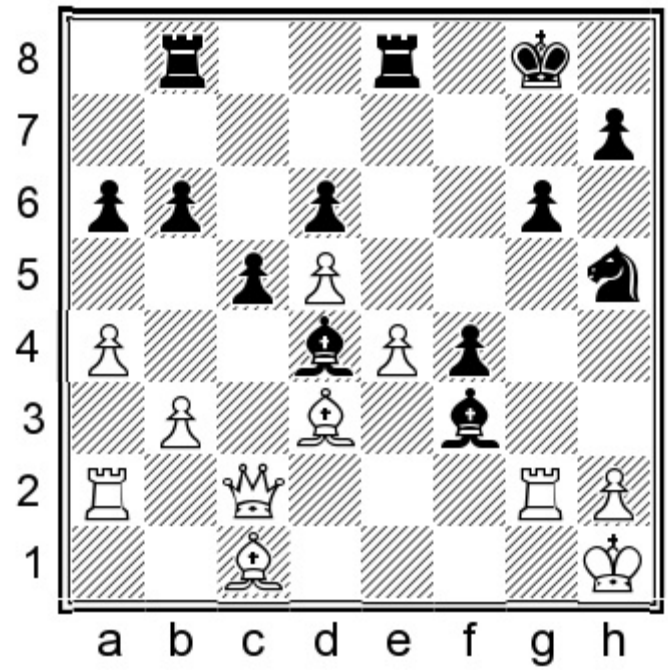


30.h4!?

It's hard for me to criticize this move; White takes control of g5 and gives his king a square. Let's look at two further possibilities that he had available:

Black should not have any real problems after 30.b3!?, which brings the a2-rook into play but has its defects:

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30...♖xe4! 31.♗xe4 ♖e8 32.♕c4 ♖xe4 33.h4 ♗e5! 34.♕xa6 ♖e1† 35.♔h2 ♖xc1 and it's quite impossible to predict how this will all end!

Interesting complications also arise from: 30.♗d2 ♖e5

How easy it would now be to miss the threat of 31...♘g3†!.

31.h4□ 31...♖f8 32.♔h2!

Or 32.♗c3 ♗xg2† 33.♕xg2 f3 34.♕h3!? f2 35.♗xd4 cxd4 36.♖a1 ♘f4 37.♕g3 ♘h5 38.♕g4 ♘f4± and White still has to prove his advantage.

32...♗xg2 33.♔xg2 f3† 34.♔h2 ♘f6!

And now in the event of:

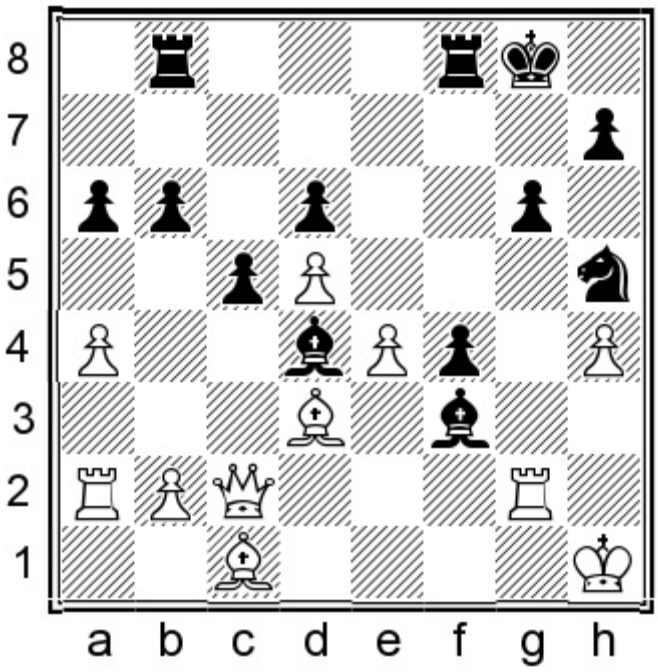
35.♗f4 ♘xe4 36.♗xe5 ♗xe5† 37.♔h3 f2 38.♔g2 ♖f4

The real fun is only just starting!

As we can see, playing a position like this for White is not at all a simple matter, so it's no surprise that his nerves are the first to crack.

30...♖f8

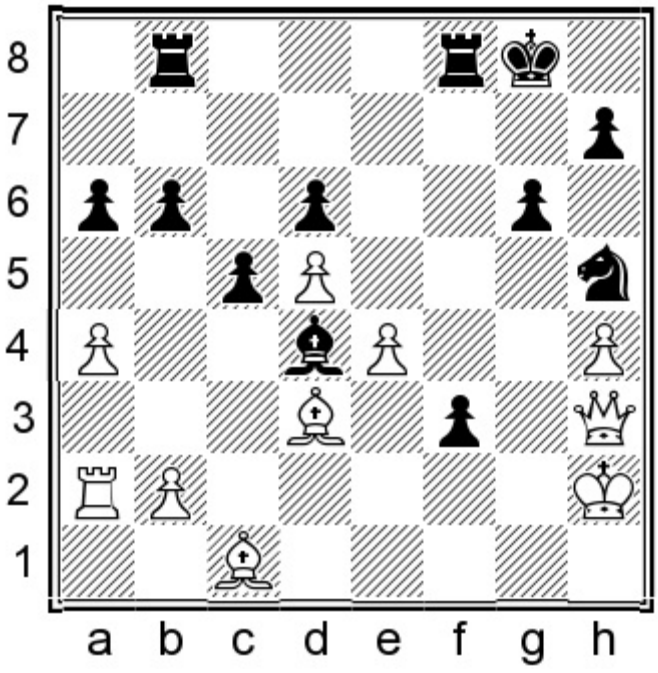
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31.♗e2??

The decisive mistake, in what was probably a won position! White had a wide choice of lines that should have led to victory after a certain amount of nervous tension – for example 31.b3!? or 31.♖a1!? or 31.♖a3!? b5 32.axb5 axb5 33.♔h2.

And finally, the following variation was possible: 31.♔h2!? ♗xg2 32.♕xg2 f3 33.♕h3!?



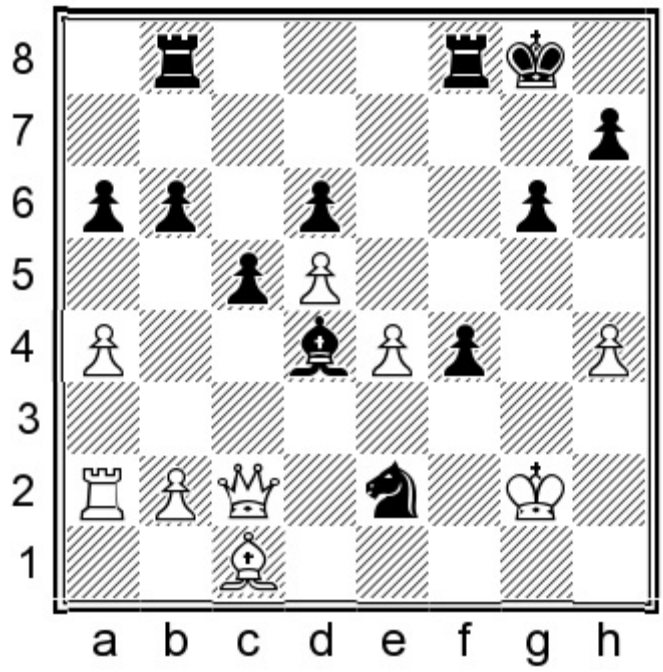
33...c4! 34.♗f1 ♗e5† 35.♔g1! (better than 35.♔h1? ♘g3†) 35...♗d4† 36.♔h1 ♘f4 37.♗xf4 ♖xf4 38.♕e6† ♔g7 But to be fair I would add that the position is not at all simple to assess correctly.

I think if I had to explain what happened in this game in one word, I would say "bewilderment". White completely lost control of the events on the board – and retribution was swift!

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31...♘g3† 32.♔h2 ♗xg2 33.♔xg2 ♘xe2–+

By now Black has both a material plus and an attack. The affair quickly heads towards its logical conclusion.



34.♕xe2

Bowing to the inevitable! The game could have ended prettily after:

34.♖a3□ 34...f3† 35.♖xf3 ♖xf3 36.♔xf3 ♖f8†! 37.♔g4

White has no chance of salvation in the endgame after 37.♔xe2 ♖f2† 38.♔d3 ♖xc2 39.♔xc2 ♔f7–+.

37...h5† 38.♔g5

38.♔h3 ♖f2 would end the game even more quickly.

38...♔g7! 39.♕xe2

Or 39.e5 ♖f6! 40.♕e4 ♗xe5 41.♗e3 ♘g3 42.♕d3 ♖f5† 43.♕xf5 ♘xf5 44.♗d2 ♘h6! and the white king will be mated from the f7-square!

39...♔h7 40.♕xa6 ♖f7! 41.♕e2 ♗g7–+

And White can only defend against mate next move by sacrificing his queen!

34...f3† 35.♕xf3 ♖xf3 36.♔xf3 ♖f8† 37.♔g3 ♗e5†

A good alternative would have been 37...c4!?.

38.♔g2 ♗f4

And White called a halt to his pointless resistance.

0–1

Well, what can be said or written about this? The black pieces were played by one of the rare geniuses

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in all of chess history, a fearless and irreproachable warrior. Although objectively Tal had still to reach his true strength, his famous style is already plain to see. Black obtained a fine position out of the opening and increased his pressure, but at a certain juncture he committed two errors running and ought to have settled for a draw. No doubt this prospect frightened the young player more than the risk of defeat, and what ensued was a simply stunning queen sacrifice – which, though incorrect, gave chances of continuing the fight. Birbrager failed to withstand this pressure and was crushed!

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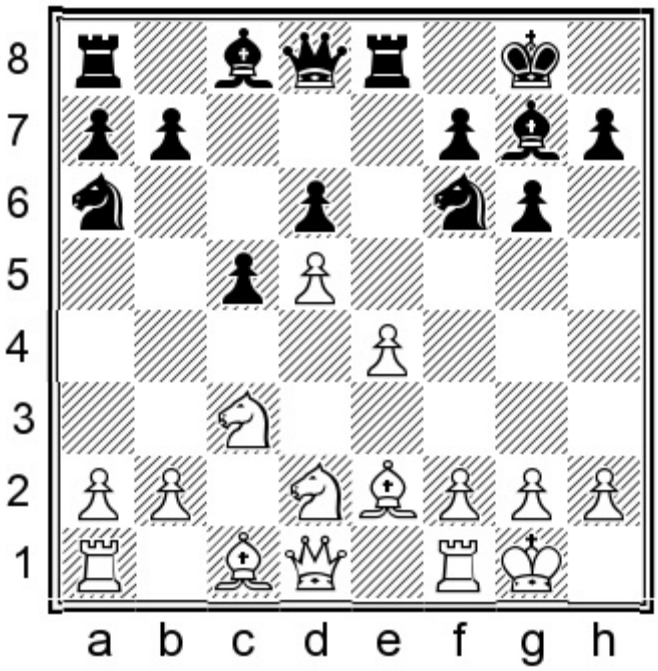
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6

The Benoni remained an important weapon in Tal's opening repertoire throughout his chess career. He employed it regularly, and nearly always with success; clearly the sharp, unclear positions that arise in this opening were absolutely in keeping with the great champion's style.

7.e4 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖e8

I too used to play the Benoni frequently, but at this point my preference diverged from Tal's. My favourite variation was 9...a6 10.a4 ♗g4, hoping for an advantageous exchange of this bishop at the appropriate moment. I also played lines with ...♘a6 from time to time, but my inclination lay elsewhere.

10.♘d2 ♘a6



11.♖e1

A rare move – which of course is not to say a bad one. The line seen much more often is 11.f3!? ♘c7 12.a4, and with precise play White can count on a small plus.

11...♘c7 12.a4 b6 13.♕c2

13.♗f3 is well met by 13...♗a6!?, while 13.f3 guarantees White no advantage after the standard 13...♘h5!?.

It seems to me that the most natural and strongest continuation is 13.h3!?. Then after, for example,

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13...♗a6?! 14.♗xa6 ♘xa6 15.♘c4↑ White has an easy and pleasant game.

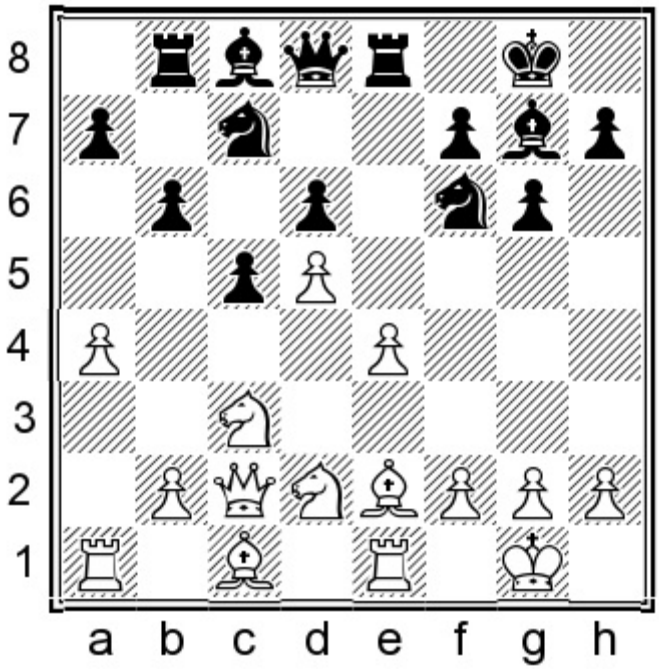
13...♘g4!?

A strange move with a single idea – to sacrifice the knight on f2, given the chance. The aim is quite simple, and in the former USSR it was only likely to come off in a schools tournament! That it worked just as well in such a strong event as the national championship is amazing.

In this position Black usually plays:

13...♖b8!?

We have transposed to the position after Black's 15th move in Birbrager – Tal.



14.♘c4!?

White's most popular continuation, although there is something to be said for 14.♖b1, preparing b2-b4.

14...♗a6 15.♗f4

Black is set fewer problems by 15.♖b1 ♗xc4 16.♗xc4 a6 17.b4 b5 18.axb5 axb5 19.♗e2 c4= Hort – Ermenkov, Slncev Brjag 1974.

However, 15.♗g5!? is worth considering, with chances of an initiative.

15...♗xc4 16.♗xc4 a6 17.♕d3 ♘g4

It would also be interesting to try 17...♘h5 18.♗d2 ♗d4, though I tend to prefer White's position.

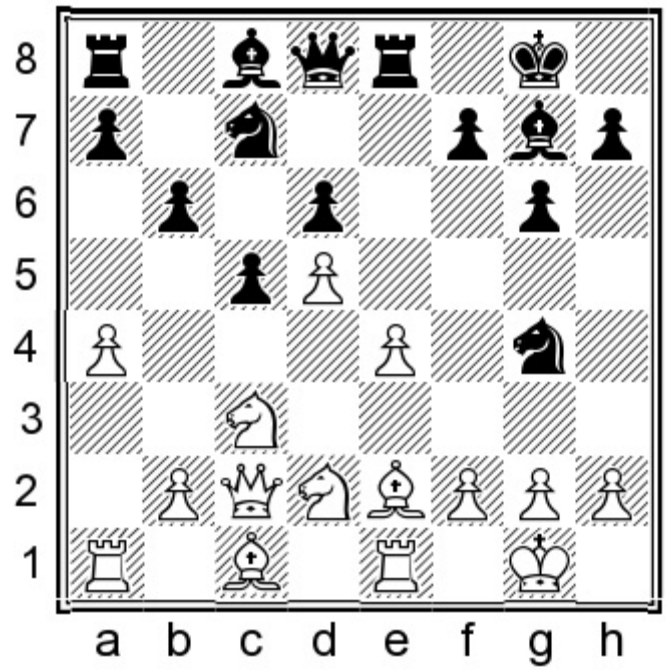
18.♕g3

18.♗xa6 ♗d4 19.♗g3 h5 promises Black serious compensation for the pawn.

18...♘e5 19.♗f1 b5 20.axb5 axb5

With a complex position and chances for both sides, Paragua – Shabalov, Ledyard 2008.

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14.h3?

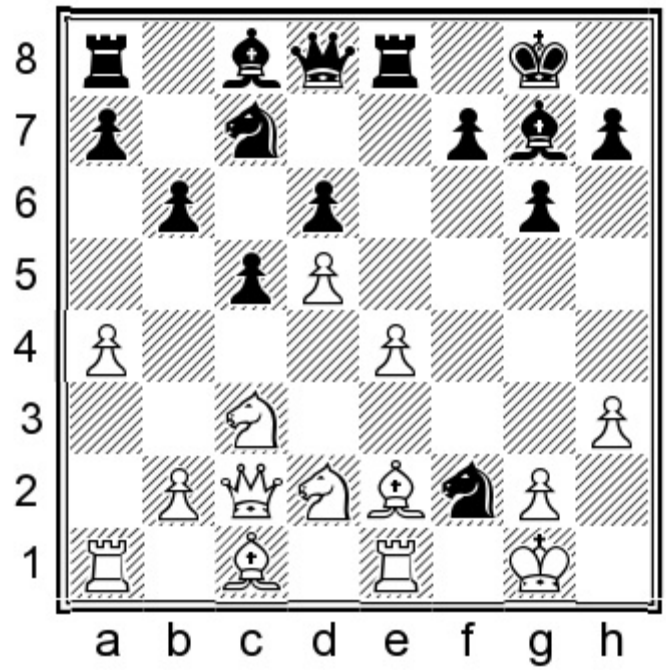
The fish willingly snaps at the hook! It would be interesting to know what the Georgian grandmaster (then just a master) was counting on. Did he think that Black – *Tal* – would move the knight back to f6? It is absolutely impossible even to imagine it!

Of course in 1957 Mikhail Tal was young, but that only added to his boldness – which it was unwise to provoke anyway – and meant that he was free from the burden of negative experience that inevitably comes with the years.

A much stronger line was the simple 14.♗xg4 ♗xg4 15.♘c4 ♕f6 16.♗e3 ♗d7 17.♕d2!± as in Hort – Pribyl, Luhacovice 1971. So my not very high opinion of 13...♘g4 is one that I am fully entitled to!

14...♘xf2!

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From Tal, no other move could possibly have been expected! The sacrifice, of course, is of a typical kind (though in 1957 it might have aroused more admiration than now), and far from complicated – but in any event, playing a move like this is most gratifying! The poor white king is now subjected to blows from all sides, and the chances of a successful defence are virtually nil.

15.♔xf2

White gets no relief from 15.♖f1 ♘xh3† 16.gxh3 ♗xh3∓ either.

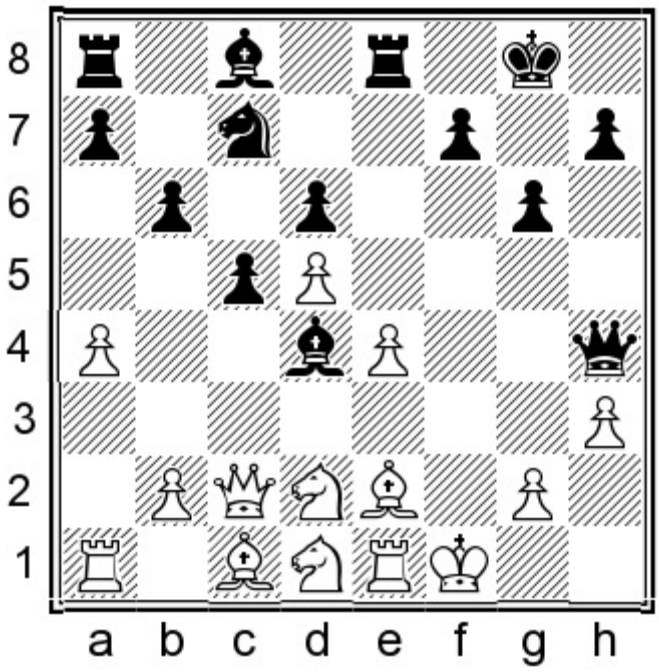
15...♕h4† 16.♔f1

After 16.g3? ♗d4† 17.♔f3 ♕h5†, mate follows in a few moves!

16...♗d4 17.♘d1□

White has succeeded in resisting the first onslaught, but the second wave of the attack now follows.

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17...♕xh3!

Probably the best move in the position, and very pretty as well – no wonder, then, that the young Tal couldn't resist the temptation to play it.

He did have an alternative in 17...♗xh3!. Then 18.♖a3 ♗f5!? is very promising for Black, while 18.♗f3 is answered by 18...♗c8!∓, though admittedly in this case Black would be a tempo down on the actual game.

18.♗f3

It was only in Black's dreams that 18.gxh3?? ♗xh3# could occur.

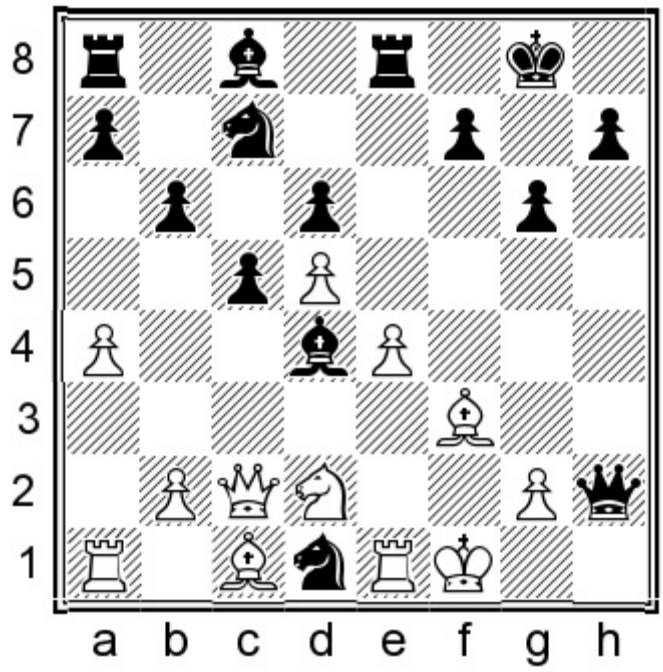
18...♕h2!

The accurate move!

A clearly weaker choice was 18...♕h1†!? 19.♔e2 ♗a6† 20.♘c4 ♕h4 21.♘de3□ 21...f5 22.♔d1 fxe4 23.♗e2 ♖ad8↑, when Black's win would still be a difficult and long drawn-out affair.

Nor are things all that clear in the case of 18...♗a6† 19.♘c4 ♕h4 20.♗e3 f5. Black retains a very powerful attack of course, but I wouldn't go so far as to say that he had a won position.

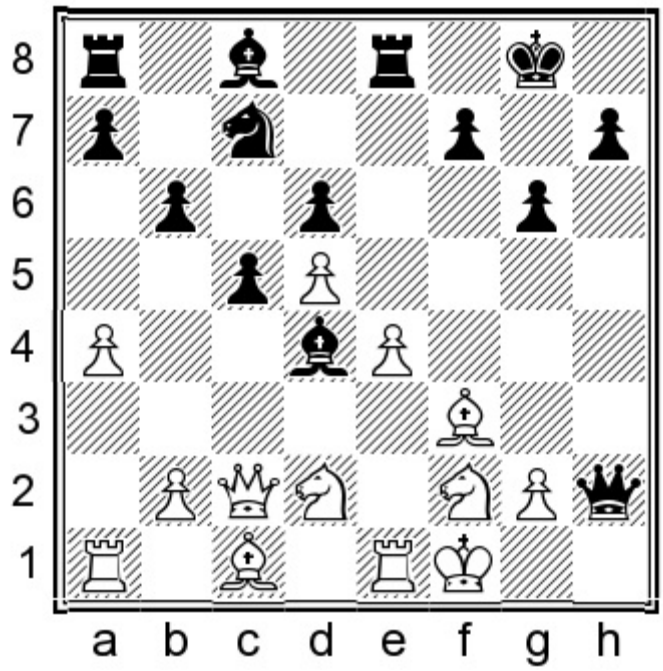
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19.♘e3

The king has to be rescued in some way, but how? White could consider:

19.♘f2



But Black has the strong reply:

19...♘xd5!

It's worth noting that White is also set exceedingly difficult problems by 19...f5!? 20.♘c4 ♗a6 21.♖a3 ♘xd5! 22.♗d2 ♕h4!, and I don't think any result other than a crushing defeat for White is on the horizon.

20.exd5

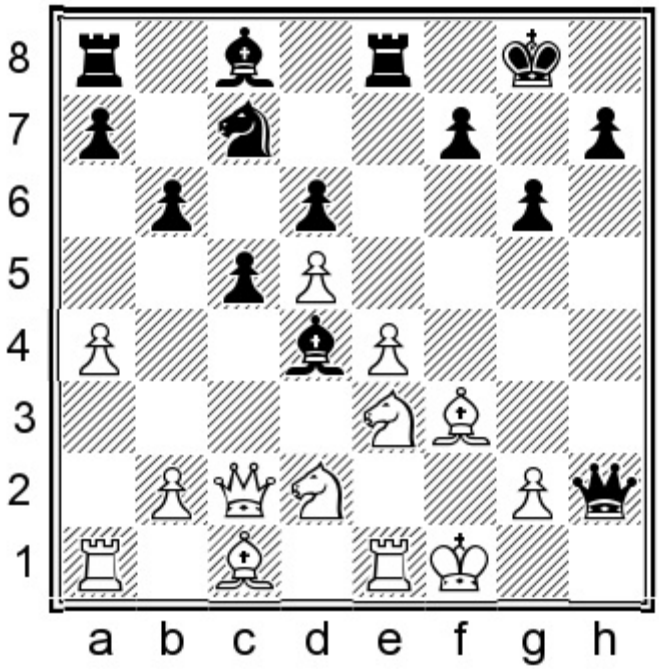
White loses at once with either 20.♘b3 ♗a6† 21.♗e2 ♗xf2 22.♔xf2 ♕h4† 23.♔f1 ♖xe4 or

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20.♘c4 ♘b4 21.♕b3 d5!–+.

20...♖xe1† 21.♔xe1 ♕g1† 22.♘f1 ♗a6–+

And White's position looks downright ludicrous.



19...f5?!

Tal considers that for the attack to conclude successfully, it is essential for the f-pawn to join in. The move he plays doesn't spoil anything, but there was a considerably simpler win with: 19...♗a6†! 20.♔f2 (or 20.♘dc4 f5!) 20...f5 Now is the time for the pawn to join the attack! 21.♘df1 ♗xf1 22.♔xf1 fxe4 23.♗xe4 ♕f4† 24.♗f3 ♗xe3–+ The two extra pawns are more than enough for victory.

20.♘dc4?

A crucial mistake, but perhaps Gurgenidze just couldn't bear to look at his position. He had to try: 20.♔e2!?

I'm not saying that this would have saved the game, but at least it would have made Black play with a certain degree of accuracy.

20...♗xe3

20...♗a6†?! 21.♔d1 ♗xe3 22.♖xe3 ♘xd5 23.♕b3 is less convincing.

21.♔xe3 ♘xd5† 22.♔f2

There isn't much choice: 22.♔e2 ♗a6† 23.♔d1 ♘b4 24.♕b3† d5!–+

22...♕h4† 23.g3 ♕h2† 24.♗g2 ♘f6 25.♖e2 ♘g4† 26.♔f1 ♗a6!

White is bound hand and foot.

20...fxe4

A more experienced chess player would have opted for 20...♗a6!?, when White would have had to defend against numerous threats, including imaginary ones – as in the work by Goya: "When reason sleeps, monsters are born!" But in itself, the move in the game is not at all inferior.

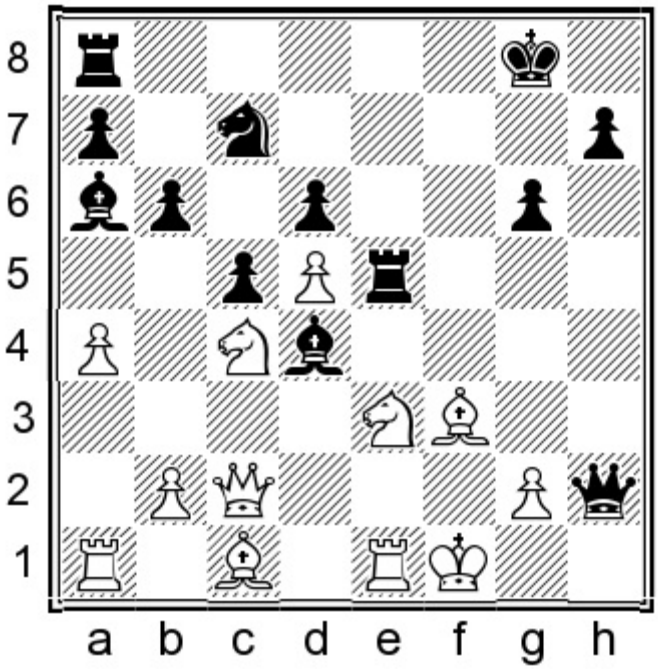
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21.♗xe4 ♗a6–+

A continuation in Tal's style was 21...♖xe4! 22.♕xe4 ♗a6 23.♕g4 (or 23.♔e2 ♗xc4†) 23...♖e8 with a rapid and well-deserved victory, but this time he decided to play a little more stolidly!

22.♗f3 ♖e5!?

After 22...♕h4!–+, eyeing the knight on c4, the game would similarly proceed to its logical conclusion – Black's threats could only be fended off by some kind of magic.



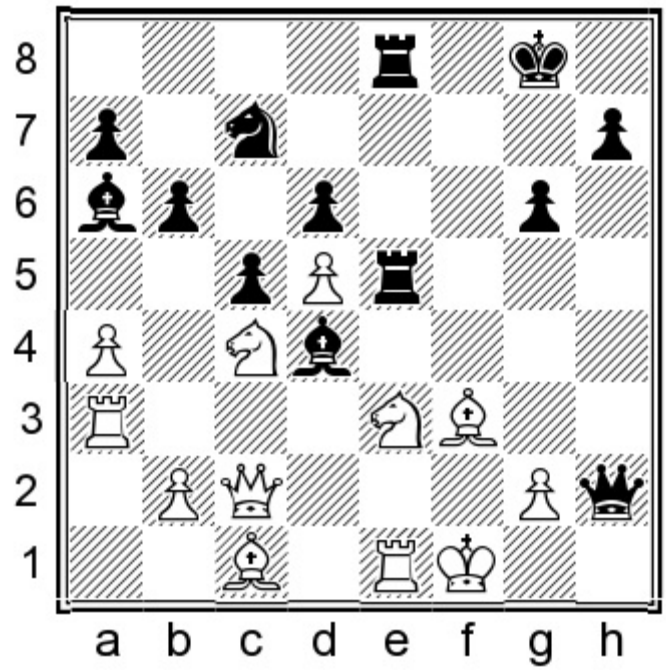
23.♖a3

Bukhuti Gurgenidze desperately tries to keep all his pieces on the board.

23...♖ae8

Tal faced a choice that wasn't trivial: on which square would the rook be most dangerous to the white king? The move played is too strong to be criticized. But perhaps 23...♖f8! is even stronger, for instance: 24.♔e2 ♖xf3! 25.♔xf3 ♕h5† 26.g4 (26.♔f2 ♕h4† 27.♔e2 ♗xe3 28.♗xe3 ♘xd5–+ is equally hopeless) 26...♕h3† 27.♔e2 ♗xe3 28.♗xe3 ♕xg4† 29.♔d2 ♗xc4–+

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24.♗d2?!

This loses, but then so do all other moves.

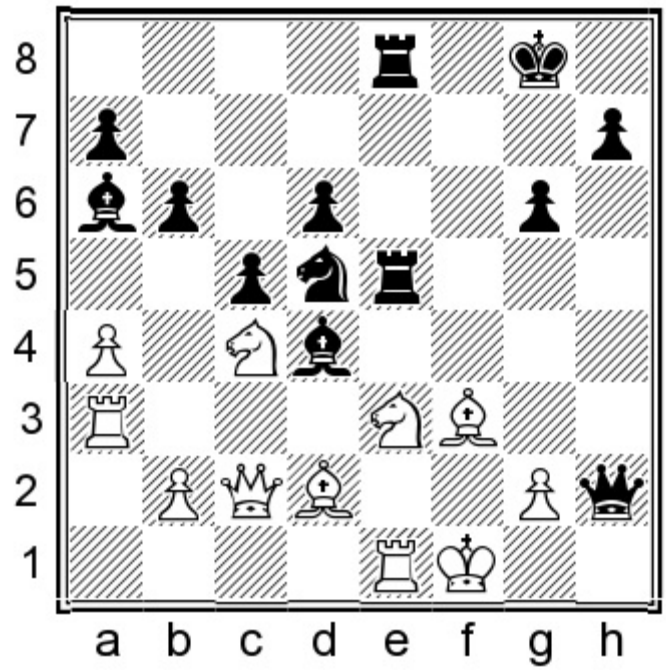
After 24.♔e2 Black's simplest continuation is: 24...♗xe3 (I have nothing against 24...♕f4 either; after 25.♔d1 ♗xc4 26.♕xc4 ♗xe3–+ Black won't even need good technique to exploit his two extra pawns) 25.♖xe3 (25.♗xe3 ♕h4) 25...♖xe3† 26.♗xe3 ♕f4 27.♔d2 ♕xc4 28.♕xc4 ♗xc4 29.♗f4 ♖xe1 30.♔xe1 ♘e8–+ Black is sure to win, though in this case it will take some time.

In the event of 24.♖d3!?, I think that even the young Tal would have avoided any dubious tactics such as 24...♘xd5? 25.♘xe5 ♘f4 26.♘5c4∞. He would have played 24...♖f5! 25.♔e2 ♖xf3! 26.♔xf3 ♘xd5, when only a miracle can save White!

24...♘xd5!

Here it is truly amazing how many paths lead to victory for Black. For example, 24...♕h4!? was worth considering.

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25.♗xd5†

It's difficult to comment on the final part of the game. If earlier White retained some practical chances of a successful defence, it has become obvious by now that the real struggle is over, the time has already come to stop the clock and accept the inevitable – but Gurgenidze decides to play on for a couple more moves.

In reply to 25.♕c1, I like the cold-blooded 25...♘f4!–+ with the irresistible threat of ...d5, although of course Black also has other winning lines available.

On 25.♖d3, the simplest way to win is 25...♘xe3† 26.♗xe3 ♖xe3 27.♖dxe3 ♗xe3 28.♖xe3 ♖xe3–+.

25...♖xd5

Threatening to check on f5, and on 26.♖e2 Black has the lethal 26...♕h1† 27.♔f2 ♖g5!.

26.♔e2 ♗xe3 27.♖xe3 ♗xc4†

0–1

White resigned here, which comes as no surprise at all. Black has various ways of winning; if he wants to have a little fun, he can go in for 28.♔d1 ♖xe3 29.♖xe3 ♕g1† 30.♖e1 ♕f2 31.♔c1 ♗b3 32.♕c3 ♕xe1† 33.♗xe1 ♖d1#.

Not Mikhail Tal's most difficult game. It was obvious that after 13...♘g4!? Black had not the slightest intention of going back again, and I am hard put to explain how such a strong player as Gurgenidze could ignore the possible (and obligatory!) sacrifice on f2. Admittedly there might have been something revolutionary about such a sacrifice in 1957, although today it appears to be standard. Be that as it may, after 14...♘xf2! the white king came under attack from every one of Black's pieces, and

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suffered a fitting punishment!

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Sotgo Namgilov – Lev Psakhis

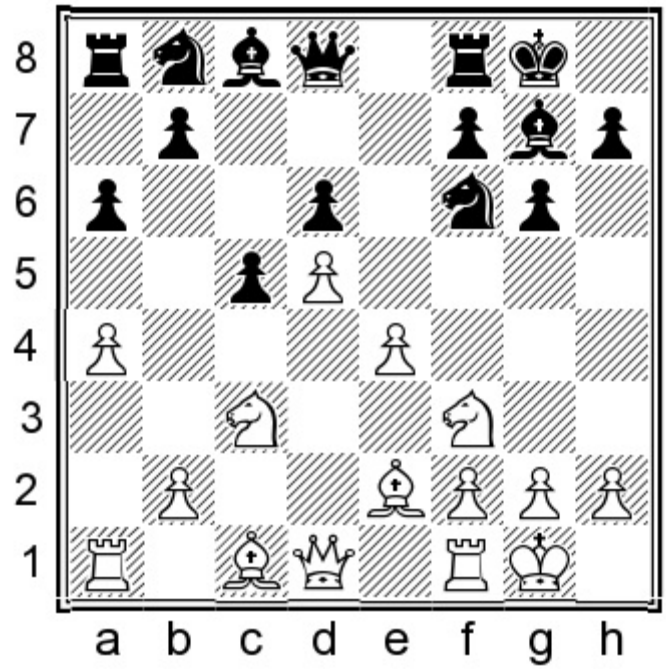
USSR 1977

In 1977 I made enormous progress in my chess development. Admittedly I hadn't yet managed to gain a master title, but in the mid-1970s that was practically impossible to achieve for a young man from Siberia whose talent was so modest by present-day standards. There were only a few masters and not a single grandmaster living in all the Siberian vastness! I had managed second place in the semi-final of the Russian Men's Championship at the beginning of the year, and was looking forward to the final which was due to start the month after the present game. By way of training, I decided to take part in the Russian Under-18 Championship. In the first round I gained a relatively easy win, and then in this second round I played one of the most interesting games of my entire chess career, replete with fascinating variations. A remarkable fact is that my opponent was a mere First Category player (!), yet he played parts of this game like a strong and experienced grandmaster! Off we go...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.d5 e6 4.c4 exd5 5.cxd5 g6 6.♘c3 d6

The Benoni of course! In those years, already so distant, it was hard to find any other opening with so many sharp variations that were not that well analysed.

7.e4 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 a6 10.a4



10...♗g4

Curiously enough, in my youth I was already regularly playing this move, although it wasn't all that popular at the time; I preferred it to either 9...♘a6 or 10...♖e8. Black aims to exchange bishop for knight, seize control of the e5-square, and then, depending on circumstances, either initiate play on the kingside or gradually prepare the stock move ...b5. Incidentally I was extremely attached to my queen's

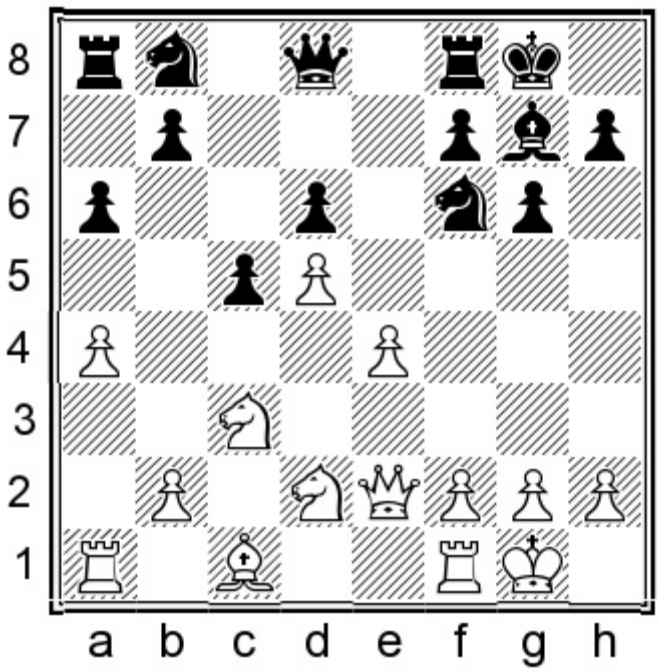
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bishop, but the chronic problem of space imposed severe restrictions on Black's counterplay, so by exchanging this bishop I was simply choosing the least of the evils – at any rate, that was how I judged the matter in those years.

11.♘d2

A sensible move; White offers an exchange of light-squared bishops and intends to find a more advantageous use for his knight. For instance it will be excellently placed on c4, controlling the opponent's queenside.

11...♗xe2 12.♕xe2



12...♖e8?

Astonishingly, this natural move is actually a serious error! Black would easily secure equal chances with 12...♘bd7□ 13.♘c4 ♘b6 14.♘e3 ♕e7! 15.a5 ♘bd7 16.♘c4 ♘e5=, when after 17.♘b6 ♖ae8 18.f4? ♘ed7 the e4-pawn would be a constant source of problems for White. What is still more astonishing is that I knew this line extremely well – but moving at a quick pace and not bothering to concentrate, I played a patently weak move.

13.♘c4

Simply completing your development is sometimes so difficult! The weakness of the d6-pawn means that Black can't bring his knight out to d7 – which would have been so easy last move!

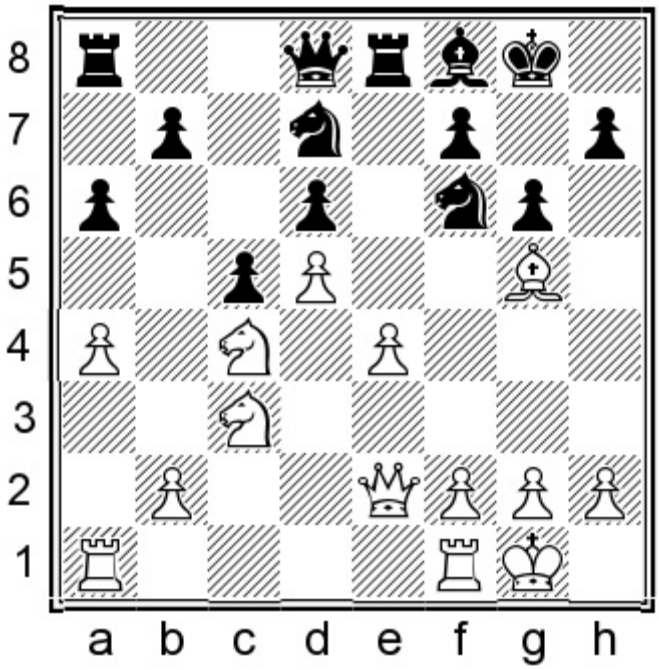
13...♗f8

My optimism quickly gave way to deep depression! This move shows that I well understood the defects of my position and was prepared for difficulties.

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Hardly anything would be altered by 13...♕e7 14.♗f4!?, for example 14...♘xe4 (14...♖d8 meets with the elementary refutation 15.♗xd6 ♖xd6 16.♘xd6 ♕xd6 17.e5) 15.♖ae1!? ♗xc3 16.bxc3 and White has a very powerful position, Donner – Hug, Berlin 1971.

14.♗g5 ♘bd7



15.a5!

A simple move and a most unpleasant one for Black to face. The prospect of f2-f4 followed by e4-e5 will be a headache for Black, whose possibilities are extremely limited.

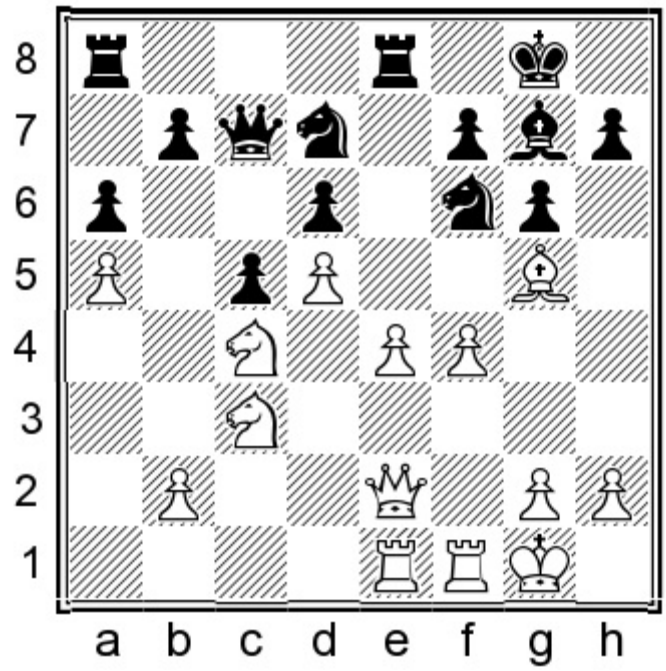
Continuing merrily with 15.f4 would give Black the breathing space he so much needs: 15...b5! 16.axb5 axb5 17.♘xb5 ♖xa1 18.♖xa1 ♕b8 19.♗xf6 ♕xb5 20.♖a5 ♕b7 21.♗c3 f5!⇄ Moehring – Honfi, Kecskemet 1975.

15...♕c7

The advance 15...b5 is simply ruled out, while Black would also lose material after 15...♘e5? 16.♘b6 ♖b8 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.f4, when White is winning easily.

16.♖ae1 ♗g7 17.f4±

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Black's mistake on the 12th move has cost him dearly. White has managed to deploy his pieces in what are virtually the ideal positions, and it isn't at all clear how Black can prevent the stereotyped but nonetheless powerful central break with e4-e5.

17...♘h5

17...b5 was objectively strongest, but after 18.axb6 ♘xb6 19.e5 the initiative is wholly with White, although of course Black's resources are not yet exhausted. Such "rational" variations struck me as rather a bore, and I decided to draw fire upon myself, hoping not to be consumed in the coming conflagration.

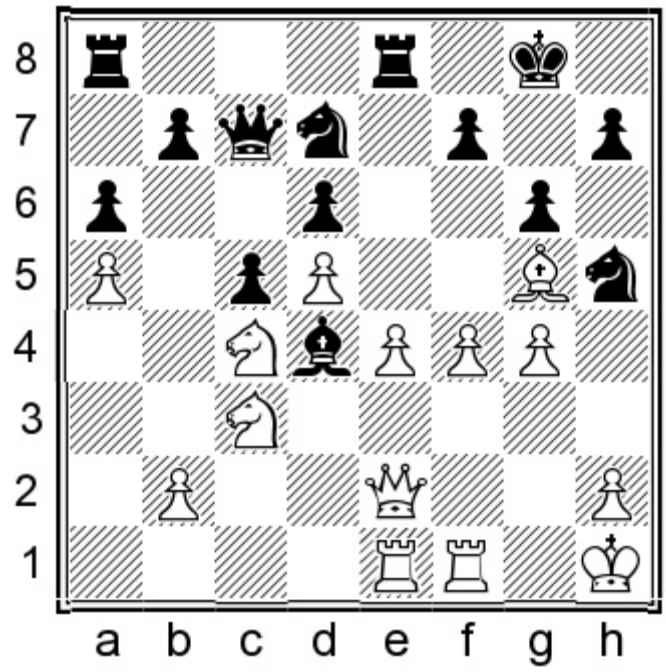
18.g4

Another line that looks excellent is 18.f5!? ♘e5 (or 18...♗d4† 19.♔h1 f6 20.g4↑) 19.g4, but in those years the idea of playing f4-f5 straight off (rather than a preparatory e4-e5 dxe5, and only then f4-f5) was none too familiar to the wider circles of the chess public, and enjoyed no great popularity.

18...♗d4† 19.♔h1

That Black has managed to give a check can be acknowledged as quite an achievement! He now has to answer a question that is far from simple: where is his knight to go? In an attempt to set up a local "Maginot Line" I played:

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19...♘g7

Depending on the situation, Black subsequently hopes either to play ...f6 or even to give battle in the centre with ...f5!?. But it was only in my most optimistic dreams that my f-pawn was going so far!

The other retreat is no better:

19...♘hf6 20.♕f3!

With this extremely awkward retort, White threatens a murderous e4-e5.

20.♕g2!? is another excellent way to threaten the advance of the e-pawn.

Playing 20.e5!? immediately is not bad either, although Black retains some defensive chances after 20...♗xc3 21.bxc3 dxe5 22.fxe5 ♘xd5 23.♕f3 ♕c6.

However one move that White should avoid is 20.f5?, when 20...♗xc3 21.bxc3 ♘xe4 turns the tables.

20...h5

Black has to make a square available for the f6-knight.

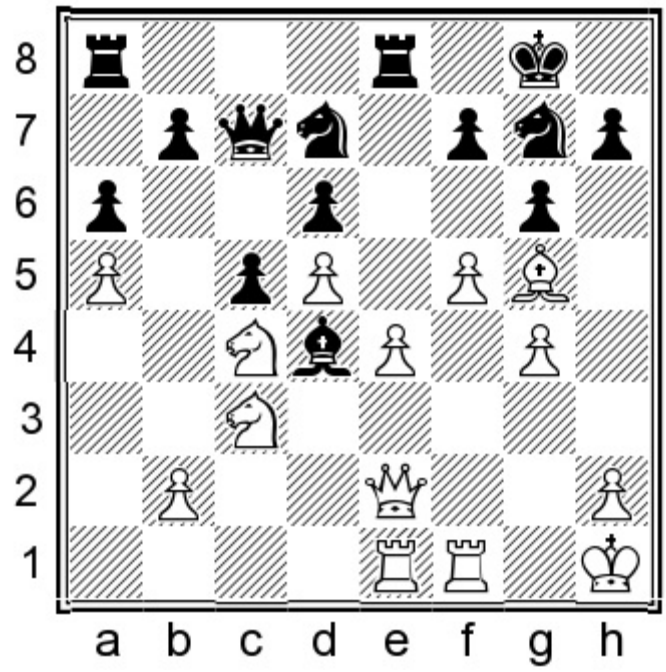
21.gxh5 ♘xh5 22.e5 dxe5 23.f5

White has a very strong attack.

20.f5!

I had seriously underestimated this natural move; I was hoping for 20.e5 f6!? with chances of counterplay.

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20...f6?!

Going over to passive defence. However, even the more active 20...b5!? does not solve Black's problems: 21.axb6 ♘xb6 22.♘xb6 (on 22.f6 ♘xc4 23.♕xc4 Black has 23...♕d8!) 22...♕xb6 23.f6 ♖e5 24.♗f4 ♘e8 25.g5±

Also, after 20...gxf5 21.gxf5 f6 22.♗f4 (22.♗h6 ♔h8) 22...♘e5 23.♖f3, good advice for Black is hard to come by.

21.♗f4 ♘e5 22.♗xe5 ♖xe5!?

The natural 22...♗xe5 is quite possibly stronger than the move played, although 23.♘xe5 ♖xe5 24.fxg6 hxg6 25.♖xf6+– is of course unpleasant for Black. Rather naively I was hoping to stop White's attack with the help of material offerings.

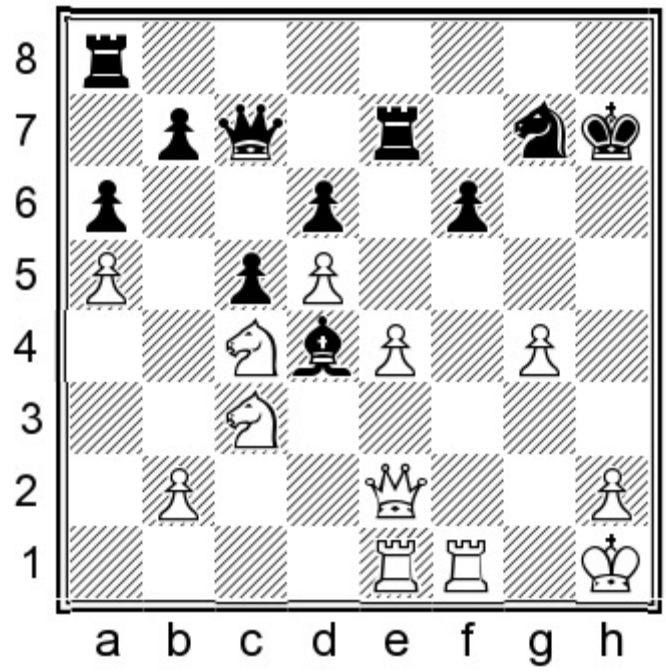
23.fxg6

You could not seriously expect 23.♘xe5 ♗xe5 24.♖a1± from a seventeen-year-old player!

23...♖e7 24.gxh7† ♔xh7

The first part of the game has turned out most unfavourably for Black; he has lost a pawn, his king position is weak, and he hasn't (yet!) succeeded in creating any substantial counterplay. His future is definitely in his opponent's hands; if White doesn't make any serious mistakes, Black's defeat will only be a matter of time. At this point, the interesting question for White is to find the most effective way to continue the attack.

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25.♖f3

It's hard to call this move a mistake, and furthermore it looks the most natural; the rook steals towards the black monarch, and White's very first check may prove fatal to his opponent. Yet to be honest I would prefer a different solution. 25.e5! is in full accordance with the scientific principles of warfare, striking a blow in the most heavily defended place. The e4-square is freed for a knight, and successful defence for Black becomes more than problematic. The continuation could be 25...♗xe5 (or 25...fxe5 26.♘e4) 26.♕d3† ♔g8 27.♘xe5 ♖xe5 28.♖xe5 fxe5 29.♘e4 (29.♕g6 ♖f8 30.♖xf8† ♔xf8 31.♘e4 is also winning) 29...♘e8 30.♘g5, with numerous threats against which Black is unable to defend. The variations I have given can hardly be called over-complicated, but White was simply dazzled by the abundance of possibilities!

25...♖ae8 26.g5!?

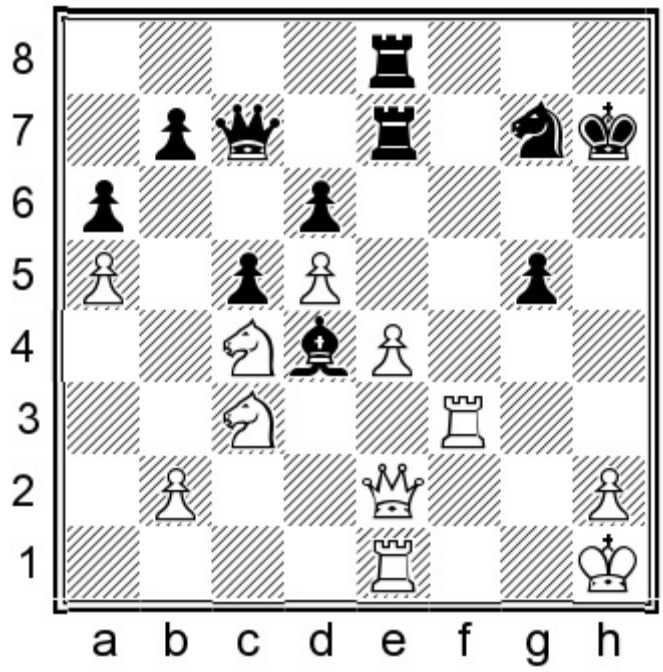
An excellent move, but by no means the only one! White has a very strong attack after, for instance, 26.♕d2!? followed by bringing the queen to h6.
Something more or less similar would result from 26.♖h3† ♔g8 27.♕f3 ♕d7 28.♖h6.

And finally there was one other interesting idea at White's disposal: 26.e5!? ♗xe5 27.♘e4 ♗d4 28.♕d3 ♔g8, and now 29.b4!+– leaves Black at a loss about how to react to the threat of 30.bxc5.

26...fxg5

Or 26...♗xc3 27.bxc3 ♖xe4 28.♕c2 f5 29.♖xe4 fxe4 30.♖f6, and the difference in strength between the knights is clearly visible.

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27.e5!?

My fairly inexperienced opponent is simply conducting the game at grandmaster level! Namgilov has finally hit on the right idea: the e4-square is freed for his knight, his queen threatens to penetrate along the b1-h7 diagonal with decisive effect, and Black (to put it mildly!) does not have an easy time ahead of him.

White's advantage is also obvious after 27.♕g2!? ♔g8 28.♕xg5 ♗xc3 29.bxc3 ♖xe4 30.♖xe4 ♖xe4 31.♕f6+–, but he preferred to start an all-out drive for mate, not settling for a "mess of pottage"!

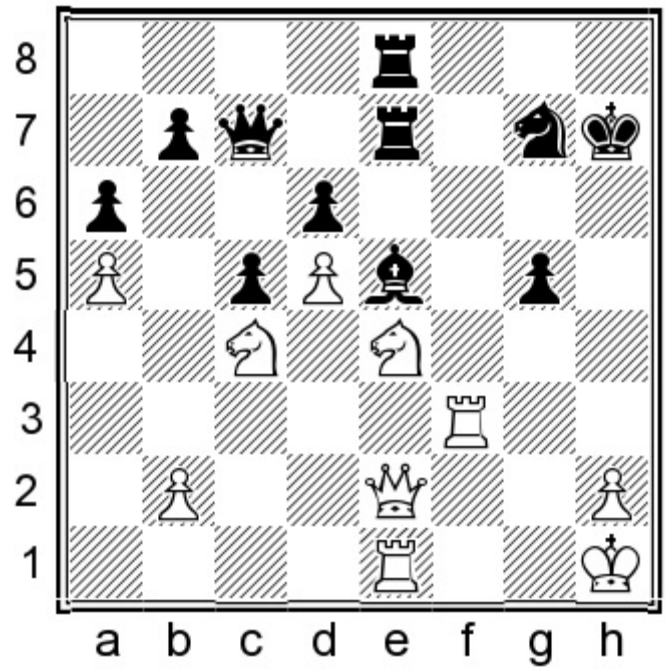
27...♗xe5□

Black couldn't save himself with 27...♖xe5 either: 28.♘xe5 ♖xe5 29.♕d3† ♔g8 30.♖ef1 ♕e7 31.♕g6+–

28.♘e4

It is not easy to find a more natural continuation, but 28.♕d3† ♔g8 29.♖h3 ♗f4 30.♕h7† ♔f7 31.♘e4 was by no means inferior – the concerted actions of White's pieces would be highly effective.

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It has become fairly obvious that Black simply must move his bishop away from e5; after all, where is he to look for counterplay if not along the open e-file? But where would you put the bishop right now?

28...♗d4

Let us first agree on one thing: Black has a bad position. His hopes rest purely on his own ingenuity, his opponent's mistakes (what would he do without them?), and luck.

A sober appraisal of the position can enable you to save many a game that may look hopeless. It seems to me (in 2010) that perhaps more chances would have given by:

28...♗f4!? 29.♕d3!

The sly 29.♕g2!? would be less convincing after 29...♖xe4! 30.♖xe4 ♖xe4 31.♖h3† ♔g8 32.♕xe4 ♕f7, when Black has managed to set up quite a robust position at only a minimal cost in material.

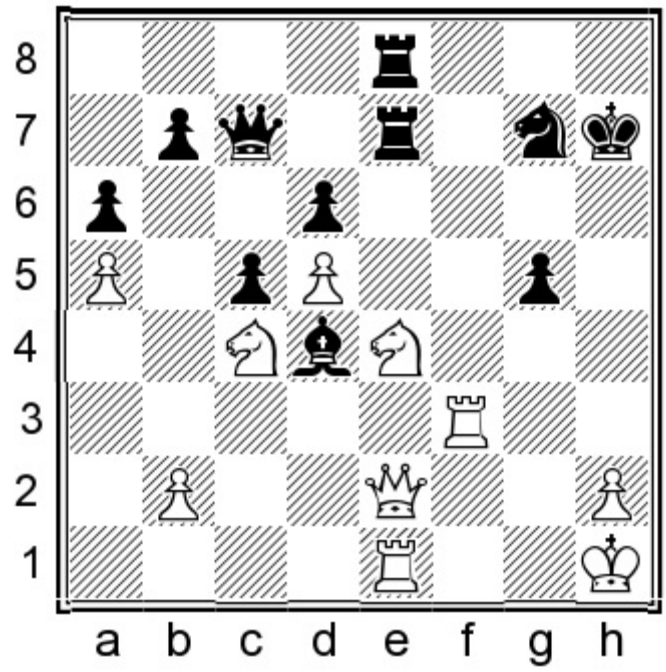
29...♔g8

Black loses at once with 29...♔h8 30.♖h3† ♔g8 31.♘f6† ♔f7 32.♖f1!, and if 32...♔xf6 then 33.♖h6† ♔f7 34.♘xd6†+−.

30.♘f6† ♔f7 31.♖g1

Black's position cannot be defended against White's overwhelming attack.

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29.♕d3

Without any doubt the strongest move. The queen sets up an ambush, reminding the black king of the transitoriness of life on earth.

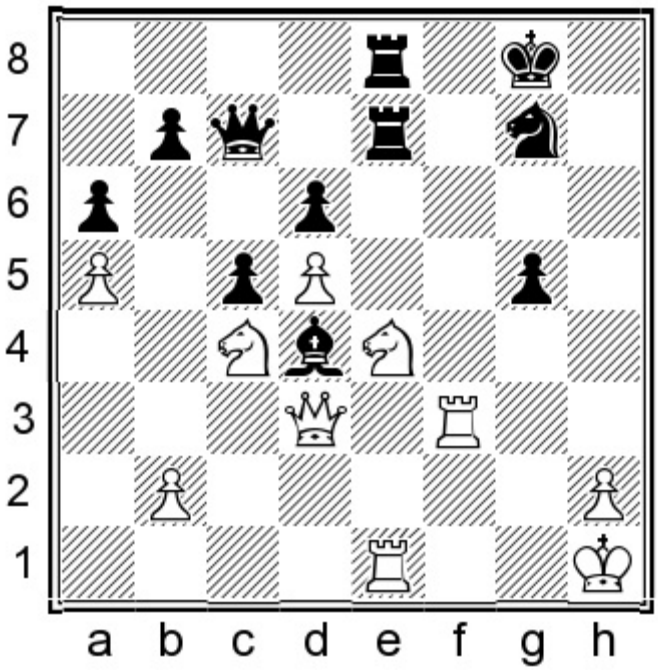
White also has strong threats after 29.♕g2 ♔g8 30.♖ff1.

On the other hand, one line that looks tempting at first sight is inferior: 29.♘xg5†? ♔g8 30.♘e6 ♘xe6 31.dxe6 ♖xe6!? (or 31...♗g7!?) 32.♕xe6† ♖xe6 33.♖xe6 ♕c6! (an extremely awkward pin!) 34.♔g2 ♕d5 35.♖g6† ♔h7 36.♖g4 ♗e5∞ and Black's chances are not at all worse.

29...♔g8!?

What else can you suggest for Black? With 29...♔h8? he would lose at once to 30.♖ef1! ♖xe4 31.♖f8† ♔h7 32.♖xe8 ♘xe8 33.♕xe4†.

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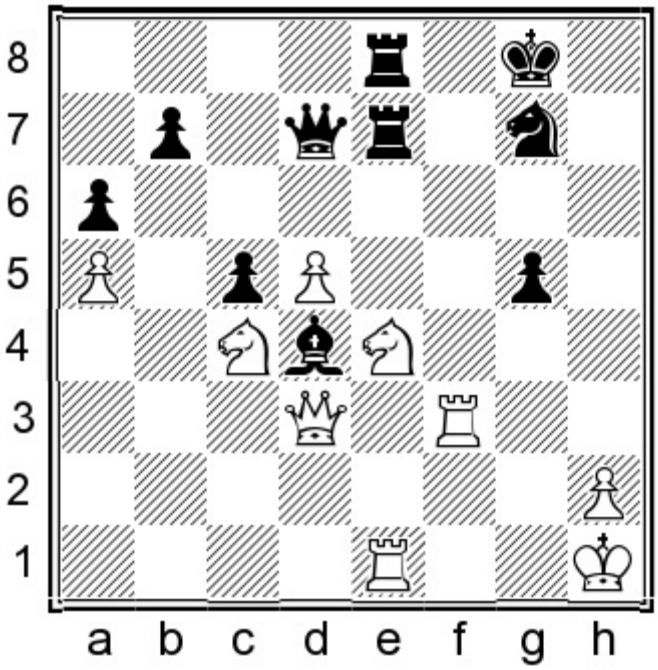


Now the interesting question is – what would you play for White? His choice of moves is simply huge – but of course this would not help him if there was only one move to decide the fate of the game. Fortunately for him, however, he has more than one winning line at his disposal.

He must certainly reject the flashy 30.♕xd4? which has dismal consequences after 30...cxd4 31.♘f6† ♔f7.

A move suggested by the Indian grandmaster Gopal is interesting: 30.b4!?

We have come across a similar idea already, but in this specific position it simply never entered my head, either during the game or in later analysis30...♕d7 (Nor is Black to be envied after 30...♘h5 31.♖f5 ♘f4 32.♖xg5† ♔h8 33.♕f3+–.) 31.bxc5 dxc5



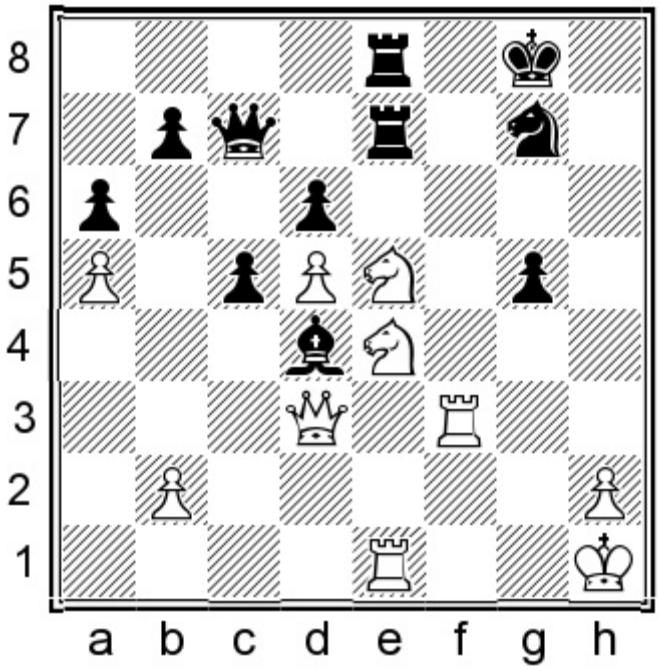
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32.♘e5! ♗xe5 33.♘xg5 ♘f5!? 34.♖xf5 c4 35.♕f3+–
White has an extremely strong attack.

The best move objectively is 30.♖ff1! when Black is in a sorry plight! The rook on e1 is now guarded, White threatens to take the pawn on g5, and against such a simple little threat Black has no adequate defence. His most stubborn line is probably 30...♖xe4 (if 30...♖f8 then 31.♘cxd6 ♖xf1† 32.♖xf1+–) 31.♖xe4 ♕d8 32.♖xe8† ♕e8 33.♘xd6, with a material and positional plus for White.

In the game, Namgilov played an astonishingly beautiful move that really took me by surprise!

30.♘e5!!?



I give this move the two exclamation marks for its beauty and its striking effect, and the question mark for its actual strength! We were approaching a mutual time-scramble – there was just no time left for lengthy deliberation. It was necessary not only to find the sole correct move at each turn, but to do this at top speed.

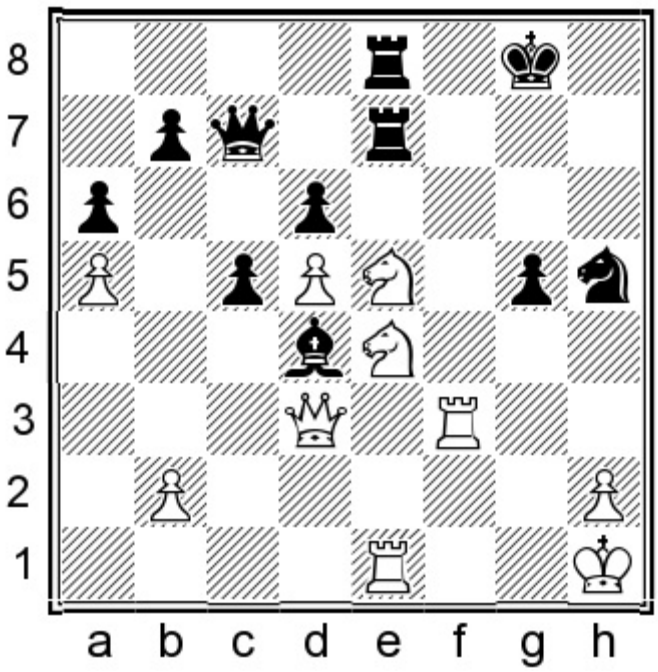
30...♘h5!
At this point it was easy to reject 30...♖xe5? 31.♘f6† ♔f7 32.♘xe8† ♔xe8 33.♕g6†.

Nor does 30...♗xe5? help Black: 31.♘xg5 ♘f5 (31...♖f7 has similar consequences after 32.♕h7† ♔f8 33.♖xe5! dxe5 34.d6! and mate next move) 32.♕xf5 ♖g7 33.♖xe5! dxe5 34.♘e6 and White's attack is irresistible.

But how else is Black to defend against the lethal check on f6? By dint of trial and error, I arrived at the move played. To be honest I just didn't know whether I was winning or losing here, or what the realistic verdict on the position should be. And I wasn't too interested in such questions – I played the

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only move. If the worst came to the worst, I would still be prolonging my resistance for a while, and only the future would show whether my stubbornness would bring me any dividends. The position has become exceptionally sharp; not expecting such a turn of events, my opponent frankly looked nonplussed.

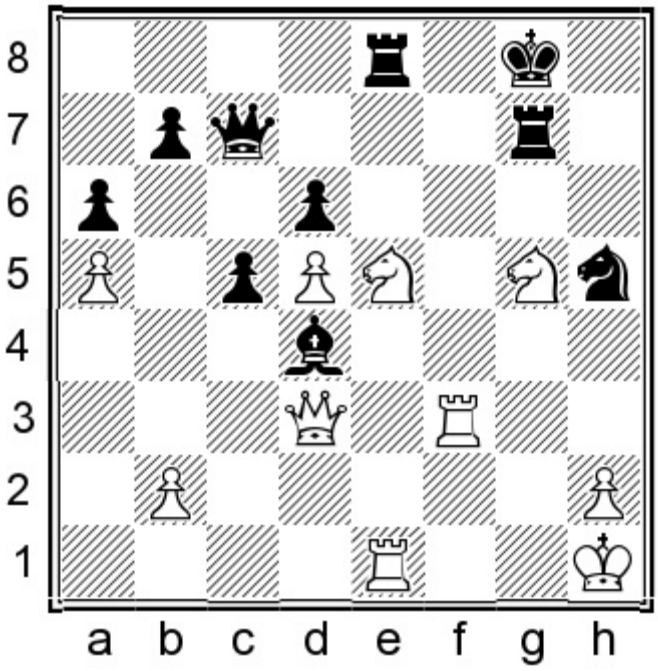


31.♘g6!?

It was worth considering the capture of the g-pawn, but by this time we were taking all decisions (even such serious ones) on a purely intuitive level; we had practically no time left for calculating variations, or even for assessing the position. Whether White chose the strongest continuation is a question I cannot answer for sure even today, but I offer the following analysis:

31.♘xg5!? ♖g7

Of course not 31...♖xe5 32.♕g6† ♕g7 33.♕xe8†.



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32.♖ef1!

A very difficult move! White unpins the knight and hopes to advance on the black king via the f-file. There are a couple of alternatives.

32.♘e6? is refuted by the simple 32...♖xe6 33.dxe6 dxe5 34.♕f5 ♘f4–+.

32.♘gf7? is more interesting: 32...♗xe5 33.♘h6† ♔h8 34.♖f5! (34.♕f5? can be met by 34...♘f6! 35.♕h3 ♕xa5! 36.♘f7† ♔g8 37.♘h6† ♔f8 38.♕f1 ♖g6 39.♖xe5 ♖xe5 40.♖xf6† ♖xf6 41.♕xf6† ♔e8 and Black wins easily) 34...♕xa5!? 35.♖exe5!? dxe5 36.♘f7† ♔g8 37.♘h6† and a draw will be the just reward for White's sangfroid and ingenuity.

32...dxe5

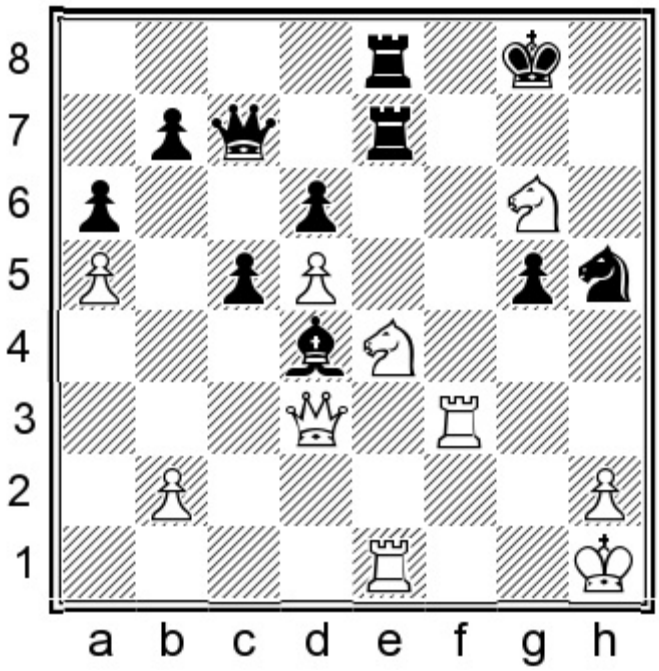
It's hard to suggest anything more tenacious.

32...♕e7? 33.♘g6! ♕xg5 34.♖f8† ♔h7 35.♘e7† ♖g6 36.♕xg6† ♕xg6 37.♘xg6+– is just not worth analysing at length.

32...♗xe5 is little better: 33.♖f7 ♘f4 34.♖1xf4 ♗xf4 35.♖xc7 ♖e1† 36.♔g2 ♖xc7 37.♘e6! ♖g7† 38.♘xg7 ♔xg7 39.♕c3† ♖e5 40.b4! and White will soon get at those tasty black pawns on the queenside!

33.♘e6 ♕d6 34.♘xg7 ♘xg7™ 35.♕e4! ♕d7!? 36.♖f6

White has a powerful initiative.



31...♖f7!

Black has plenty of moves at his disposal, but good ones are clearly harder to come by. Thus, a famous statement by Mikhail Gorbachev – "with all the wealth of choice, there is no alternative" (Don't even try to understand the meaning!) – applies to this specific case. After 31...♖h7? White has at least two routes to victory.

For one thing, 32.♖ef1 looks convincing enough: 32...g4 33.♖f8† (the irresolute 33.♖f5 lets Black seize the initiative with 33...♖xe4! 34.♖xh5 ♖xh5 35.♕xe4 ♖xh2† 36.♔xh2 ♕h7† 37.♔g3 ♕h3† 38.♔f4 ♕xf1†) 33...♖xf8 34.♖xf8† ♔g7 35.♘g5! ♔h6 36.♘e6! ♕xa5 And now the simplest way to win is 37.♕b1! – White's king is securely defended and the threat is 38.♘h4, which means that Black's

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defensive resources will suffice for at most a few more moves.

Secondly, 32.♕f1! looks more convincing still. For example 32...♔g7 (or 32...♕d8 33.♘xg5 ♖xe1 34.♕xe1+–) 33.♘xg5 ♖xe1 34.♕xe1 ♔xg6 35.♘e6 ♕e7, and now the white queen slowly and deliberately creeps towards the black monarch with an odd sort of dancing gait: 36.♕b1†! ♔h6 37.♕c1† ♔g6 38.♕c2† ♔h6 39.♕d2† ♔g6 40.♘f8†! ♕xf8 (40...♔g7 41.♕g2†! is no improvement) 41.♖xf8+– with an easy win.

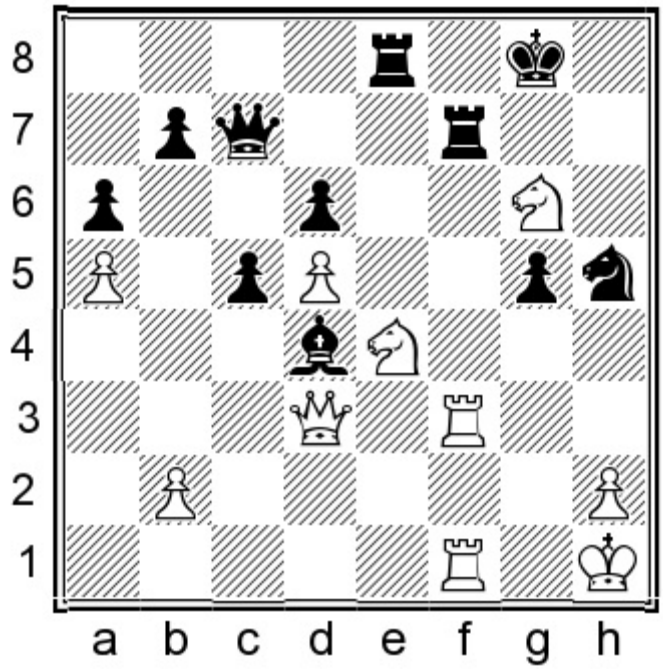
32.♖h3?

Gone is the time when White was in total control of the situation on the board and could prepare the decisive assault at his leisure! The play is now extremely sharp and Black also holds some trumps; already it's quite hard to say who is actually doing the attacking. This last move does more than hand the initiative to Black – it brings White to the very brink of defeat. Nor is this surprising; his pieces are losing their co-ordination, and I manage to exploit this circumstance at once. But then, what should White have played instead?

It is difficult to recommend 32.♕f1?, as after the uncomplicated 32...♖xf3 33.♕xf3 ♕h7! 34.♘f6† ♗xf6 35.♖xe8† ♔g7 (but not 35...♔f7?? 36.♖e7†) 36.♖h8 ♕xg6 37.♖xh5 ♕b1†∓ Black has an obvious plus in the ending.

A much stronger line is:
32.♖ef1!

We came across this idea before, in the note to White's 31st move.



32...♘f4!

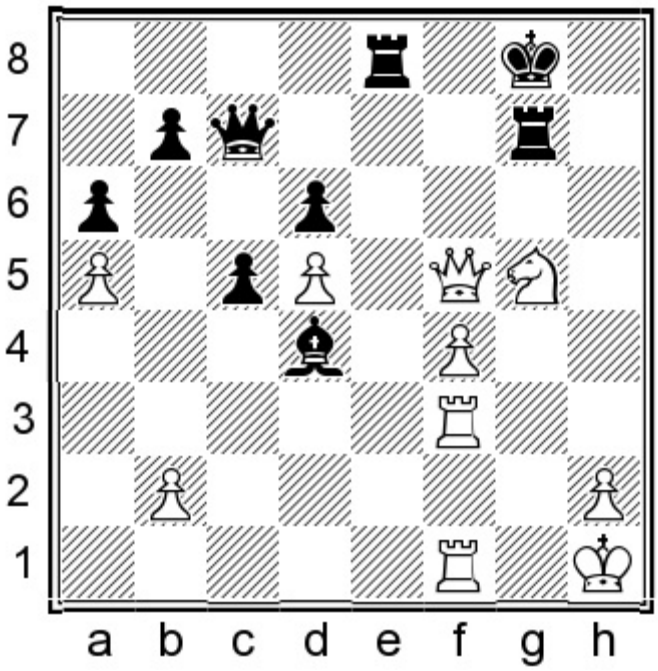
After 32...♖xf3?! 33.♕xf3, the game will be over in a few moves, for instance:
a) 33...♕g7 34.♕f5! ♘f4 35.♘xd6!+–

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b) 33...♔g7? 34.♕xh5 ♖xe4 35.♕xg5 ♔h7 36.♘f8† ♔h8 37.♕h5† ♔g8 38.♕g6† ♔h8 39.♕xe4+–

c) 33...♕h7 34.♕f5! ♗xb2 35.♕xg5 ♗c1!? 36.♖xc1 ♖xe4 37.♕d8† ♔g7 38.♕f8† ♔xg6 39.♖g1† +–

33.♘xf4 gxf4 34.♘g5 ♖g7 35.♕f5

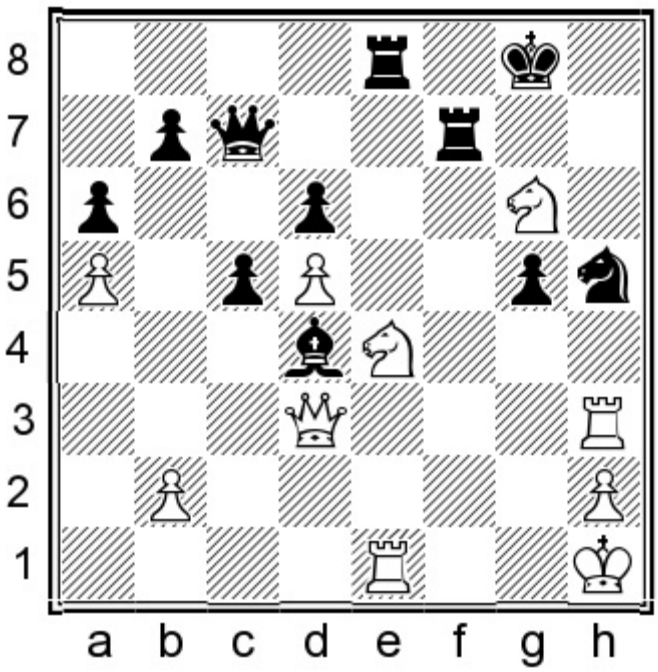


35...♗e5□

On 35...♖e5 36.♕xf4 ♖exg5 37.♕f8† ♔h7 38.♖h3† ♔g6 39.♕h8+– White successfully concludes his attack against the king.

36.♘e6 ♕f7 37.♘xg7 ♔xg7±

White has a slight material plus, but Black's strong and excellently supported bishop promises wholly reasonable chances of a successful defence. At any rate, White's position cannot possibly be assessed as won!



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32...♕xa5!

Not only picking up an important pawn – it all comes in handy! – but also attacking the white rook. To be honest, at this moment I was practically convinced that I was going to win quickly.

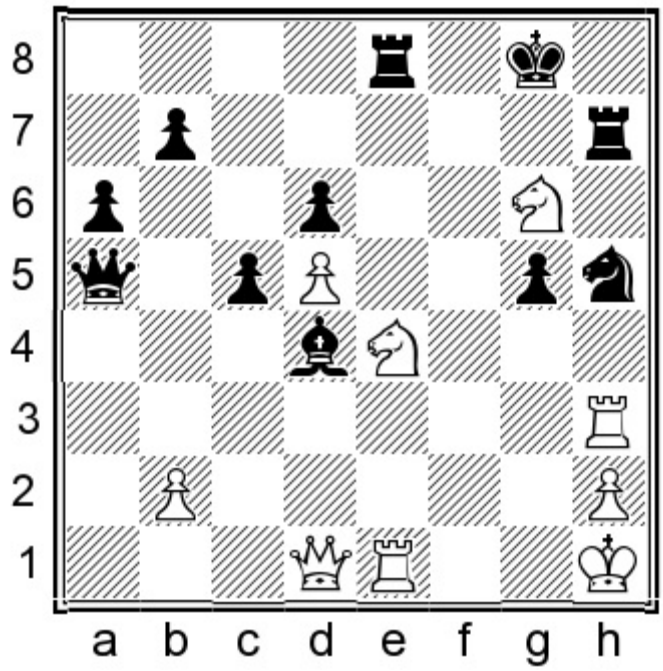
33.♕d1

As an alternative, the interesting 33.b4!? could be suggested. It virtually compels Black to go in for 33...♕xb4 34.♖b1 ♗b2! 35.♖xh5 ♕xe4† 36.♕xe4 ♖xe4 37.♖xb2 ♖f6! 38.♖xg5 ♔h7 39.♖xb7† ♔h6, when he has the better ending but White's drawing chances are still not at all bad.

33...♕b5?!

At this point I had something like two or three minutes left on my clock, and the lion's share of this time was spent on working out a long variation which seemed to me to be forced, but which of course turned out to have a hole in it! In itself the move is by no means bad, but was it worth calculating complicated variations when so short of time? From a practical viewpoint, it would be better to play: 33...♖h7!

At any rate, the black king would not then be faced with any immediate threats.



34.♕e2

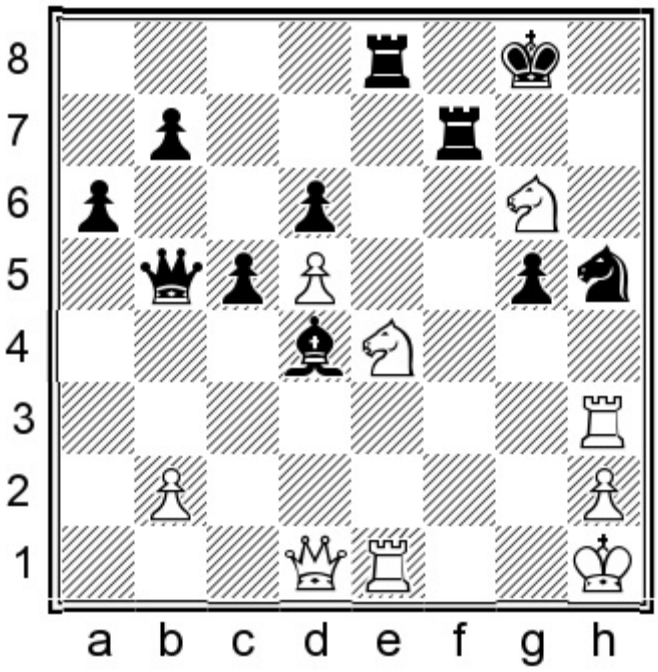
In the event of 34.♘c3 ♖xe1† 35.♕xe1 ♘f6, White is material down with no perpetual check.

White is no better off after 34.♖f1 ♖xe4 35.♖xh5 ♖f7! either.

Finally, 34.♖xh5 fails to save White after 34...♖xh5 35.♘f6† ♗xf6 36.♖xe8† ♔f7 37.♕xh5 ♔xe8 38.♘f4† ♔d7 39.♕f7† ♗e7–+ and the black king easily escapes from persecution.

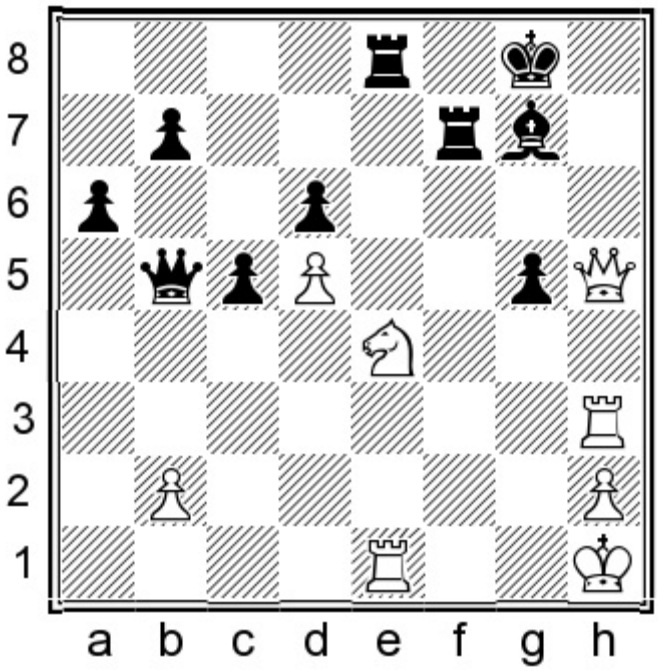
34...♕b5! 35.♕g2 ♘f6! 36.♖xh7 ♘xh7∓

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34.♕xh5?

White would obtain more chances after the somewhat crazy 34.♘h8! ♗xh8 35.♕xh5 ♗g7

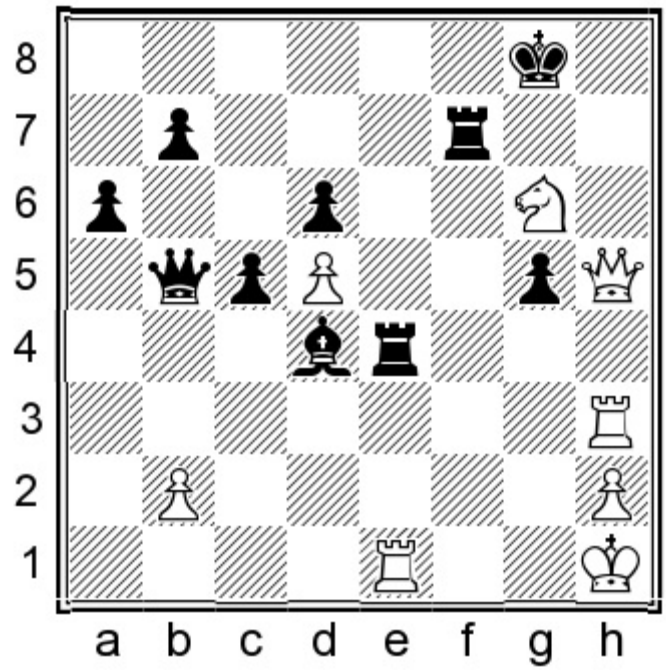


36.♕h7† ♔f8 37.♖he3, with plenty of tactical possibilities. However, to discover and evaluate a move like 34.♘h8! you would need at least half an hour, not half a minute – which was roughly the time remaining on Namgilov's clock.

34...♖xe4!

Not falling for 34...♖f1??† 35.♔g2, when White unexpectedly wins.

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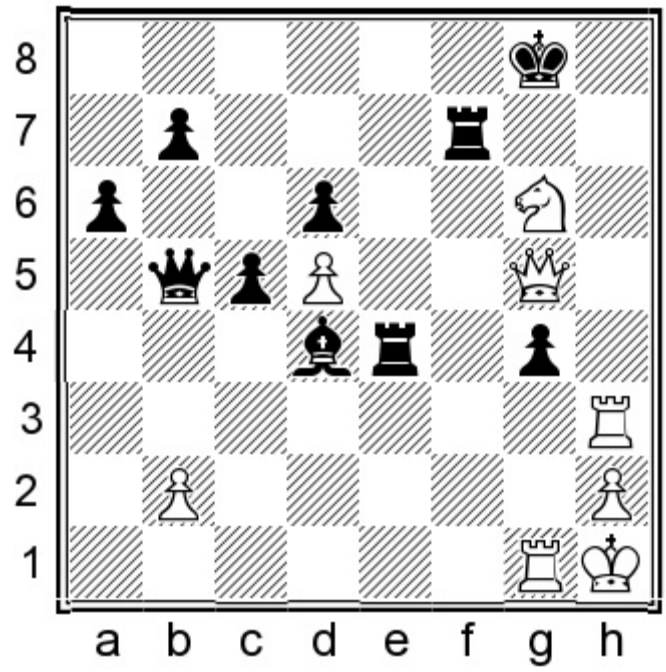
35.♖g1! ♖e1?

I had completely gone to pieces in the time scramble and lost control of the situation on the board. To be fair, I should mention that I had set great store by this move at the point when I played 33...♕b5, but there was just no time left for any checking of the analysis. However, what should be played in this position is an intriguing question. Black has at least two remarkable continuations at his disposal.

In the first place, 35...♕f1! is very strong. Interestingly, I had actually seen this move, but couldn't quite figure out what to play against 36.♖hg3!? (but not 36.♘e7† ♔f8 37.♘g6† ♔e8–+). However, the elegant 36...g4! wins very simply.

Secondly, Black can also carry out the same sort of idea in a slightly different version:
35...g4! 36.♕g5

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36...♗g7!

36...♕f1? 37.♘e5†**!**+− is wholly bad for Black.

But the play following 36...♗f6!? is a good deal more interesting. Neither 37.♕f5? ♕e8! 38.♘f4 ♖e1–+ nor 37.♘e7†!? ♔f8 38.♘f5!! ♕e2! 39.♕h6† ♔e8 40.♘xd6† ♔e7 holds out rosy prospects for White, but of course in the latter variation Black could easily lose his way!

37.♖hg3 ♕e2!

37...♖f1? is answered very simply by 38.♘e7†, when it is advisable for Black to settle for 38...♖xe7! 39.♕xe7 ♖xg1† 40.♖xg1 ♕d3 with a quick draw

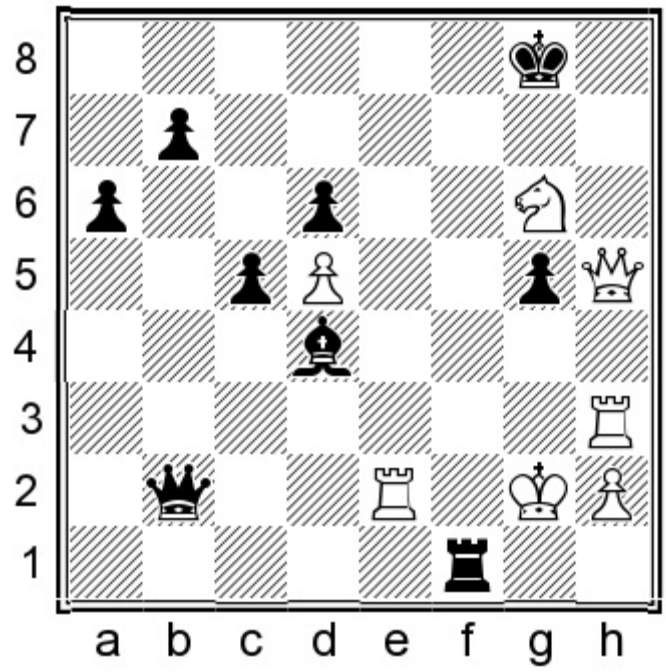
37...♕xb2 deserves consideration, with the possible continuation: 38.♕d8† ♔h7 39.♕h4† ♗h6 40.♖xg4 ♖xg4 41.♕xg4 ♕f6–+

38.♖3g2 ♕c4

There appears to be no way for White to obtain any compensation at all for the lost material.

36.♖xe1 ♖f1† 37.♔g2 ♕xb2† 38.♖e2

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38...♖f2†??

There! This is the very move I had been counting on – in vain, as it turns out! Black still had a perfectly decent chance to stop at the edge of the abyss, and give a slightly different check:

38...♖g1†! 39.♔f3 g4† 40.♔f4

Of course, 40.♕xg4?? ♕xe2† 41.♔xe2 ♖xg4–+ could not be to White's liking.

Black now just needs to make one more accurate move:

40...♖f1†!

By choosing a different check, Black would lose amusingly: 40...♗e5†? 41.♔f5! ♖f1† 42.♔e6 ♖f6† 43.♔d7! ♕b5† 44.♔d8! ♕b6† 45.♔c8+– The white king has found sanctuary right inside the opponent's den! In this line, incidentally, nothing would be altered by 41...♕b1† 42.♔e6 gxh3 43.♘e7† ♔g7 44.♘f5† ♔g8 45.♕f7† ♔h8 46.♕f8† ♔h7 47.♕h6† ♔g8 48.♘e7#. It's funny that in the successful attack on the black king, such an important role is played by its white counterpart!

Similar variations also result from 40...♕c1† 41.♔f5! ♕b1† 42.♔e6 gxh3, and again it all ends with the black monarch attractively mated: 43.♘e7† ♔g7 44.♘f5† ♔g8 45.♕f7† ♔h8 46.♕f8† ♔h7 47.♕h6† ♔g8 48.♘e7#

41.♔g3□

Following 41.♔g5?? the king's hyperactivity is punished without delay: 41...♗f6† 42.♔h6 ♕xe2–+

41...♖g1†

With perpetual check. Unfortunately, with my idiotic 38...♖f2†?? I wasn't even leaving my opponent with any scope for error!

39.♔g3! ♕b3† 40.♔g4

1–0

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A sorry end to such an interesting struggle! What, then, was going on in this game? Moving at a furious speed, I brashly committed a very grave opening error (12...♖e8?), while knowing perfectly well that this move was at best second-rate! Subsequently faced with great difficulties, I was brought down to earth. I made a long, hard effort to create some kind of counterplay – while my opponent was handling the game with supreme correctness, even at high grandmaster level. All my efforts remained unrewarded, at least up until 30.♘e5!!?, an extraordinarily pretty, impressive, but alas inferior move. One more mistake by White, 32.♖h3?, brought him to the verge of defeat. In horrendous mutual time trouble (which must not on any account be used as a possible excuse – if I hadn't gone wrong in the opening, there might have been no time trouble at all!), I completely lost my head. I missed a win on move 35 and a draw on move 38. Not that I am complaining about the result. Looking back on it, the game was exceedingly interesting – a fearless all-out contest.

I drew some important conclusions from the game:

(1) Try to avoid any unforced errors in the opening.

(2) Virtually *any* position can be saved in practical play.

(3) Passive defence *never* brings success. Search for counterplay at any cost. Whether you lose in three moves or in ten moves isn't that important; fishing in troubled waters may well yield a positive result.

(4) Time scrambles are a sign of a bad chess education. If (for a variety of reasons) you can't eradicate them totally, then at least try to keep their number to a minimum.

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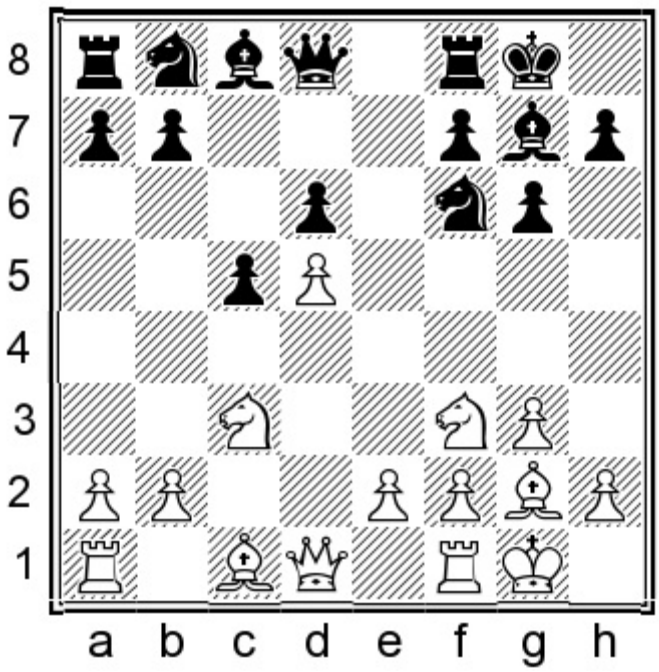
Gennadi Portnjagin – Lev Psakhis

Krasnoyarsk 1977

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5!?

The Benoni is one of the sharpest of openings, and it served me truly and faithfully for more than thirty years! As a child I read a brief monograph on it by that remarkable player and theoretician Isaak Boleslavsky, and I was utterly fascinated by this splendid opening, which instead of giving Black the mere prospect of a boring struggle to equalize, offers excellent chances of seizing the initiative at an early stage in the game.

4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘c3 g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0

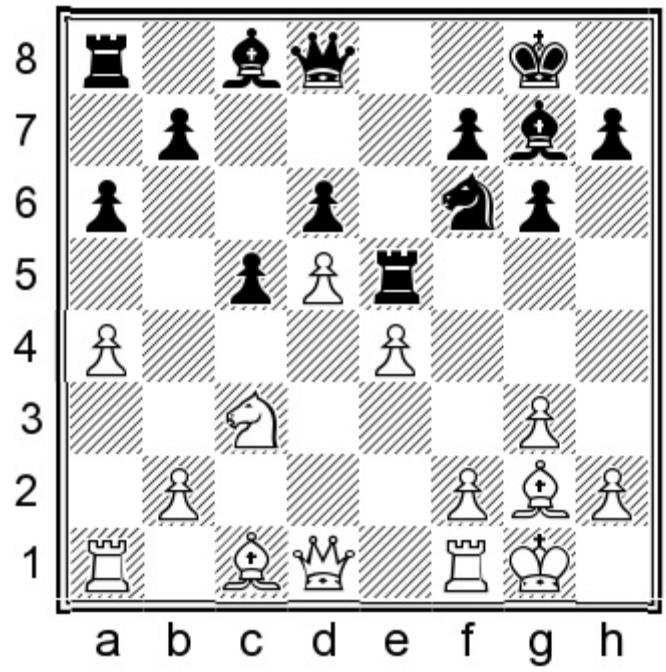


9...a6

Black can equally well develop his knight to the a6-square, followed by bringing it to c7 and preparing the standard advance ...b5.

10.a4 ♘bd7 11.♘d2 ♖e8 12.♘c4 ♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♖xe5 14.e4

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14...♖h5!?

Quite frankly this is rather an odd move; could I really have thought the white king was so vulnerable? I have given the move a question mark for its actual quality and an exclamation mark for its boldness. I am not even convinced that the move is truly bad, but − if I may put it mildly − the rook on h5 does look rather too precarious. And today I don't quite understand what the eighteen-year-old Psakhis could have had in mind in the event of 15.♗f3!?.

Funnily enough, after the "normal" 14...♖e8 15.♖b1 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.b4 c4 18.h3 ♗d7 19.♕c2 ♕c8 20.♔h2, Black reverted to this idea – to great effect, it must be said! – by continuing 20...♖e5 21.g4 ♗xg4 22.hxg4 ♕xg4⇄ in Karpov – Adianto, Jakarta (4) 1997.

15.h4

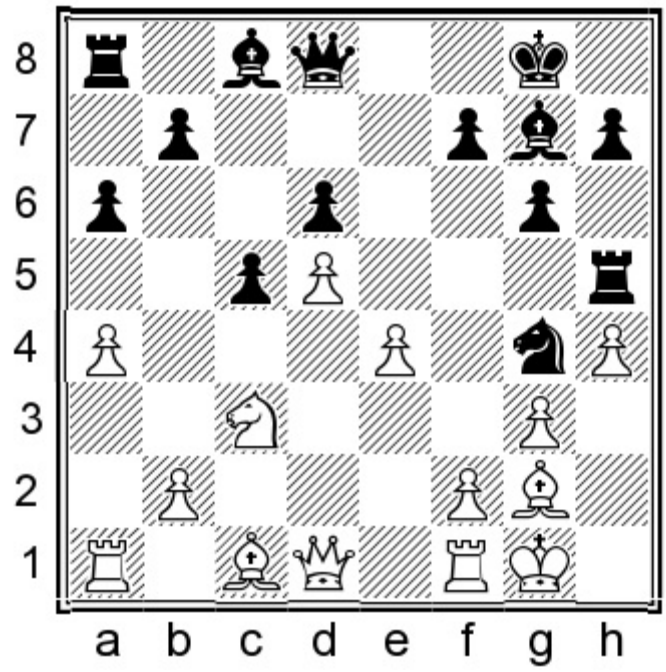
Undoubtedly the most radical response, heralding the start of a "big game hunt" for the rook. As to the move's defects, we may note the chronic weakening of the g4-square.

Another line to have been played is 15.♖e1 ♖b8 16.♗f3 ♖e5 17.♗f4 ♘d7!? 18.♗xe5 ♘xe5 19.♗e2 g5 20.♕d2 g4, and Black had splendid compensation for the exchange in Reefschläger – Hübner, Nijmegen 1982. I suspect, though, that White's play can be improved at more than one stage.

15...♘g4!?

Continuing to play with fire! It was worth considering 15...♖e5!? 16.♗f4 ♖e8 17.a5 ♘g4, with a solid game.

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16.♗f4

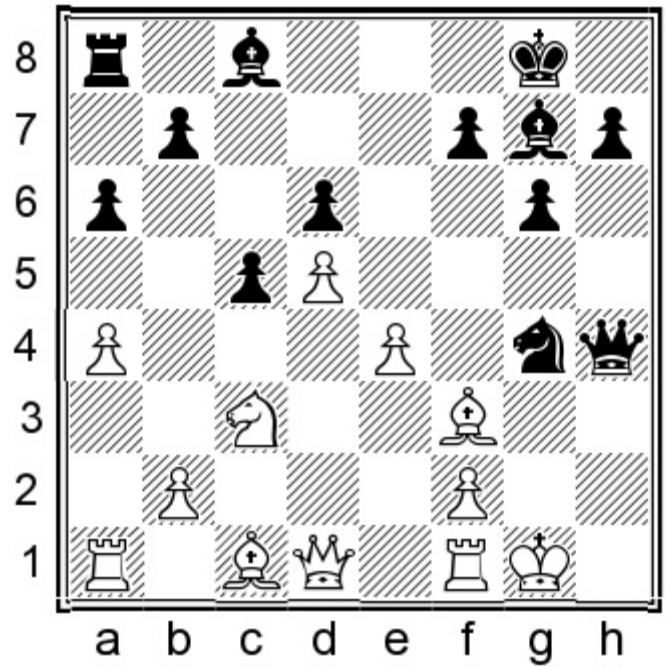
It's only too obvious that the superficial 16.♗g5? ♖xg5 17.hxg5 ♕xg5 favours Black, whose compensation for the exchange is excellent: a pawn, a mighty dark-squared bishop and a strong attack.

The play develops much more interestingly in the event of:

16.♗f3 ♖xh4

This rook sacrifice is practically forced – the mundane 16...f5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♘e2! compels Black to think more about defending his many weaknesses than about active play.

17.gxh4 ♕xh4



The white monarch has reason to start worrying: there are too many black pieces in his immediate vicinity! There may follow:

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18.♗f4

White too has little choice. The thoughtless 18.♗xg4? brings him close to defeat: 18...♗e5 19.f4□ 19...♕g3† 20.♔h1 ♗xg4 21.♕xg4 (the careless 21.♕c2? loses at once to 21...♕h3†! with a quick mate) 21...♕xg4 22.fxe5 ♕h3† 23.♔g1 ♕g3† 24.♔h1 dxe5 Black is in full possession of the initiative, while he has a guaranteed draw available at practically any time.

18...♗e5!

18...♘xf2? looks unconvincing: 19.♖xf2 ♗d4 20.♕d2 ♗xf2† 21.♕xf2 ♕xf4 22.♗g2 and Black's three pawns are no compensation for the strong knight on c3.

19.♗xe5 ♘xe5 20.♕e2 ♗h3 21.♕e3

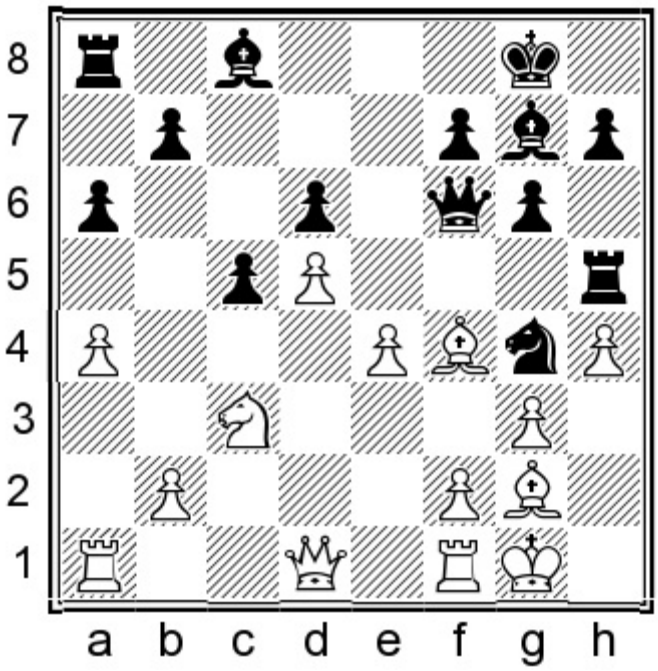
It's hard to suggest anything better than this for White; both 21.♖fe1 ♕g5† 22.♔h2 ♕h4 and 21.♗h1 ♕g5† 22.♔h2 ♕h4 would lead to an immediate draw

21...f5

Black has full compensation for the sacrificed material.

16...♕f6

With the unambiguous threat of 17...♖xh4!.



17.♗f3

White had better ways to defend:

17.♕d2 h6!? 18.f3

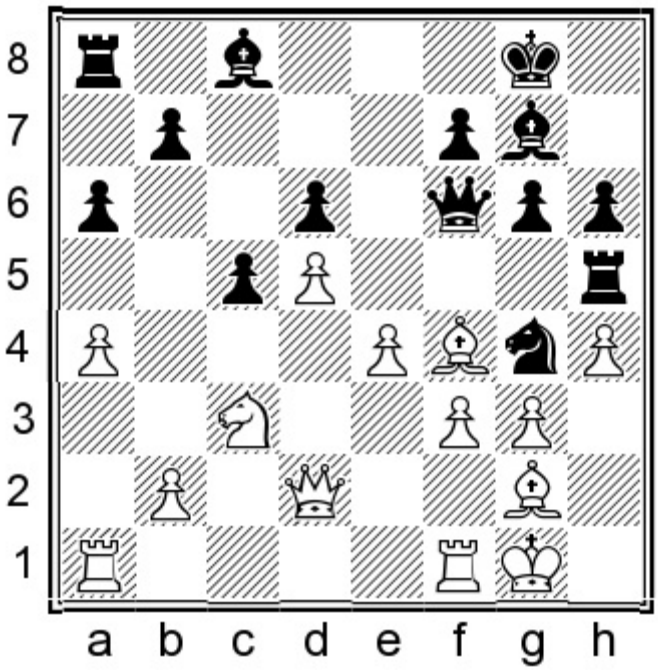
After 18.♗f3?! g5 19.♕e2! you can't help envying the options Black has as his disposal:

a) For one thing, he can choose the calm 19...♕g6! 20.hxg5 hxg5 21.♗xg4 ♗xg4 22.♕xg4 gxf4 23.♕xg6 fxg6 24.gxf4 ♖h4 with a superb game, thanks to the activity of his dark-squared bishop.

b) Then again, if he wants to have a go at playing Tal-style, the following merry line is of no small interest: 19...♖xh4 20.e5!? ♕g6 21.♗d2 ♘xe5 22.gxh4 g4 23.♗g2 ♘f3† 24.♔h1 ♕h5 and

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White will need considerable mastery in defence – his king is just too exposed!



18...♘e5

Black has to keep his balance on the very edge of the precipice. He can't be at all satisfied with the outwardly attractive 18...♕d4† 19.♕xd4 ♗xd4† 20.♔h1 and now:

a) 20...♘e5 21.♘e2 ♗xb2 22.♖a2 gives White the initiative.

b) 20...♘e3 21.♗xd6 ♘xf1 22.♗xf1 and White has splendid compensation for the exchange.

19.♕e2!?

After 19.g4? ♘c4 20.♕c1 ♖xh4! 21.♗g3 ♕e7! Black's attack is very powerful.

19...♗d7 20.♗e3!? g5

The rook on h5 may look rather like something in a pantomime, but White will still need to play with considerable precision!

Alternatively, if White is really keen on sidestepping the complications – some of which are exceedingly unclear – then the cool 17.♕b3!? can be recommended. After 17...♖xh4 18.♕b6 it isn't entirely clear how Black is to defend his d-pawn, seeing that the natural 18...♗f8 comes up against the highly unpleasant 19.e5!.

17...♖xh4!

Just as strong as it is obvious.

18.e5!?

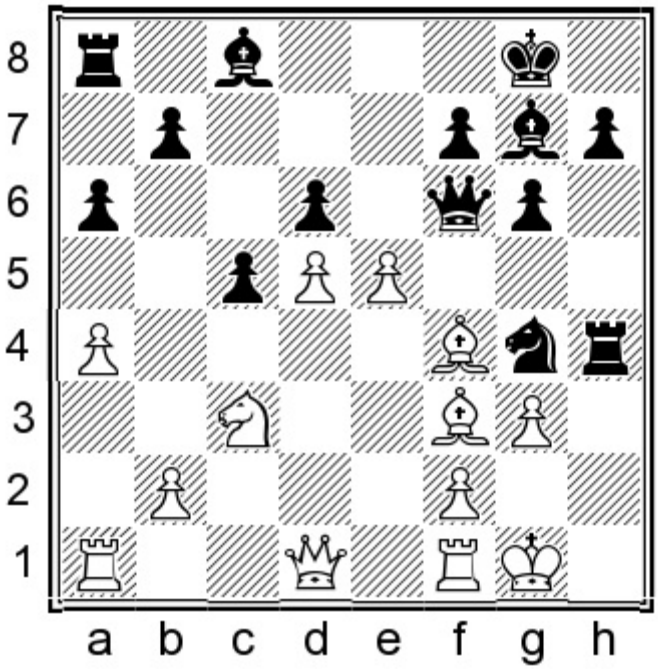
The alternatives leave White in a bad way:

18.gxh4? ♕xf4 19.♗xg4 ♗e5! 20.♖e1 ♗xg4–+

18.♖e1 ♘h2! A beautiful move – both white bishops are under fire. 19.e5 (19.gxh4 ♕xf4 20.♗h1

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♕xh4∓) 19...dxe5 20.♘e4 ♕f5 21.♗g2 (21.gxh4?! ♕xf4 22.♗g2 ♘g4 does not promise White a long and happy life) 21...♖xf4 22.gxf4 ♕xf4 23.d6 (after 23.f3? f5 24.♘xc5 e4 25.fxe4 ♘g4 Black has a winning attack) 23...♗f5 24.♕d5 ♘g4 and Black's threats are extremely unpleasant.



18...♕f5?

I had calculated a long line that seemed to turn out well for me; I quickly persuaded myself of its correctness – and unfortunately missed the fairly easy refutation. Such a pity! Objectively Black's position is already highly promising, and it was worth working out the variations a little better, a little more carefully! Black has very good winning chances after:

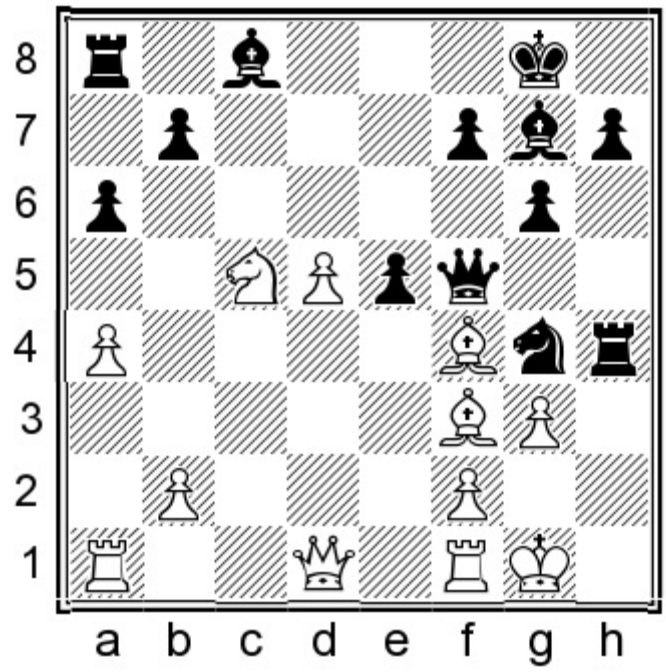
18...dxe5! 19.♘e4

19.♗c1 loses to 19...♘h2! 20.♗g2 ♖d4.

19...♕f5 20.♘xc5

On 20.♘d6, a simple combination decides the game: 20...♖h1†! 21.♗xh1 ♕h5 22.♔g2 exf4 and White is in dire straits.

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20...♖h1†!

As a fair alternative I might suggest the cunning 20...♖h3. Then White is practically forced to reply 21.♘e6!?, hoping to solve his problems by tactical means. However, Black has 21...♕h5! 22.♗xg4 ♖h1† 23.♔g2 ♕h2† 24.♔f3 ♖xf1 25.♕xf1 exf4 with a decisive plus.

21.♗xh1 ♕h5 22.♔g2

22.♕xg4 ♗xg4–+

22...♕h2† 23.♔f3 exf4

Black's victory is only a matter of time.

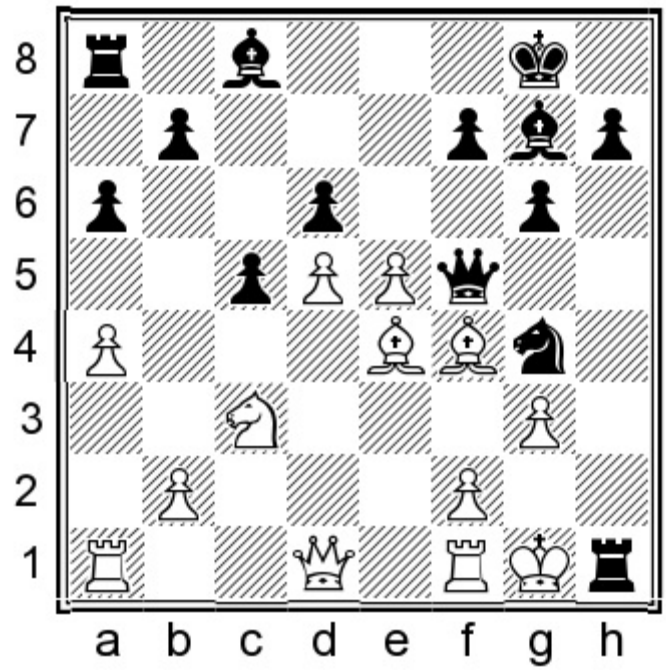
19.♗e4!

An excellent move, effectively forcing Black to carry out his basic plan without delay. During the game I was briefly afraid of 19.e6!?, but I quite quickly managed to find a fitting retort: 19...♗e5! 20.♗e4 ♕h5 21.♕f3 ♗xf4 22.gxh4 (White loses at once after 22.gxf4 ♖h3) 22...♗h2† 23.♔g2 fxe6 Black has very good play; he has succeeded in ridding himself of his over-zealous rook, and while maintaining approximate material equality he undoubtedly holds the initiative.

19...♖h1†!

The move Black has been dreaming of! It is as pretty as it is forced. The only alternative would be to stop the clock forthwith.

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20.♔xh1!

His Majesty decides to take the mad rook himself! However surprising it may seem, after the more natural 20.♗xh1 Black's attack becomes virtually irresistible. 20...♕h5 21.♔g2 and now Black has excellent alternatives to choose from:

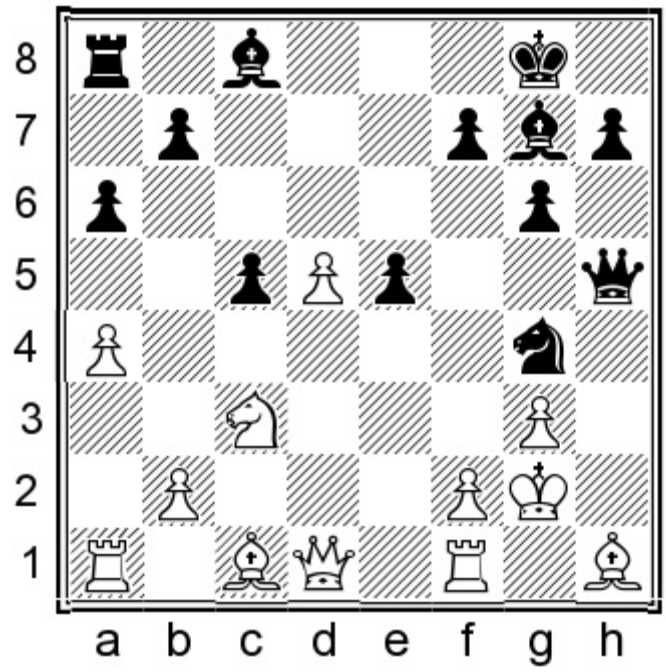
a) 21...dxe5! Though somewhat anti-aesthetic, this does lead to complications favouring Black. In this dangerous position, White has the choice of three continuations:

a1) He loses at once with 22.♗d2 ♕h2† 23.♔f3 ♘xf2! 24.♖xf2 ♗g4†!.

a2) 22.♗c1

This is more tenacious. White hopes that his bishop will avoid hindering the king's attempt to cross over to the less dangerous queenside. But not all hopes are destined to be fulfilled! The response is not too complicated:

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22...♕h2† 23.♔f3 ♘xf2! 24.♖xf2 e4†!

24...♗g4† doesn't do the trick − after 25.♔e3 ♗h6† 26.♔d3 ♕xf2 27.♕xg4 ♕f1† 28.♔c2 ♕xh1 29.♗xh6!? Black has a hard and thankless defensive task ahead of him. By combining threats against the king with the advance of his passed pawn, White should, to all appearances, easily succeed.

25.♔xe4

Nothing is altered by 25.♔e3 ♕xg3† 26.♖f3 ♗h6†! 27.♔e2 ♕h2†−+.

25...♕xf2 26.♔d3 ♗f5† 27.♗e4

27.♔c4 b5†! would be equally hopeless for White.

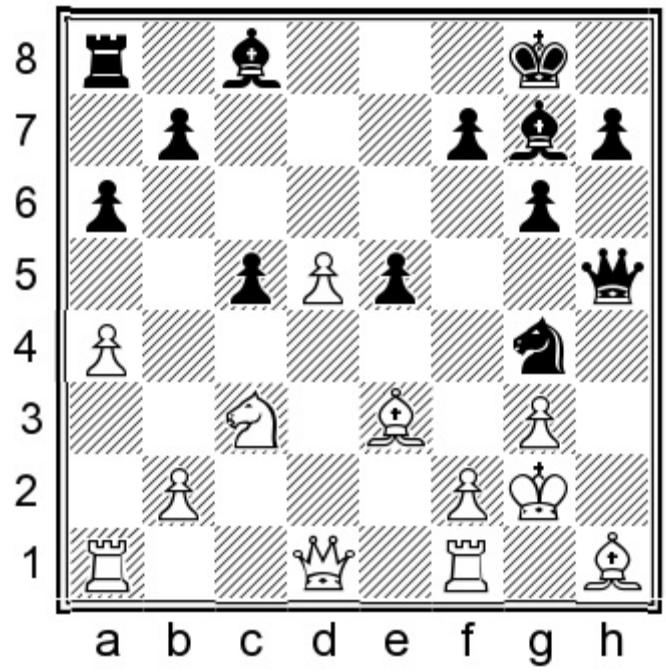
27...♗xe4† 28.♘xe4 ♕d4†

White is lost.

a3) 22.♗e3

The most stubborn continuation, but still not enough to rescue White.

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22...e4!

Cutting off the white king's escape route and, equally importantly, inviting Black's dark-squared bishop to join in the attack.

23.♖g1

This doesn't look too impressive, but it is definitely White's only chance to organize resistance. 23.♘xe4 loses in short order to 23...♕h2† 24.♔f3 ♘e5†, and the all too optimistic, but practically forced 25.♔f4 allows mate in five moves: 25...♕h6† 26.♘g5 ♕xg5†! 27.♔xg5 h6† 28.♔f4 g5† 29.♔e4 f5#!

23...♕h2† 24.♔f1 ♘xe3† 25.fxe3 ♕xb2

The ubiquitous queen has sorely frayed White's nerves on the kingside and now swings across to hunt for spoils on the other wing.

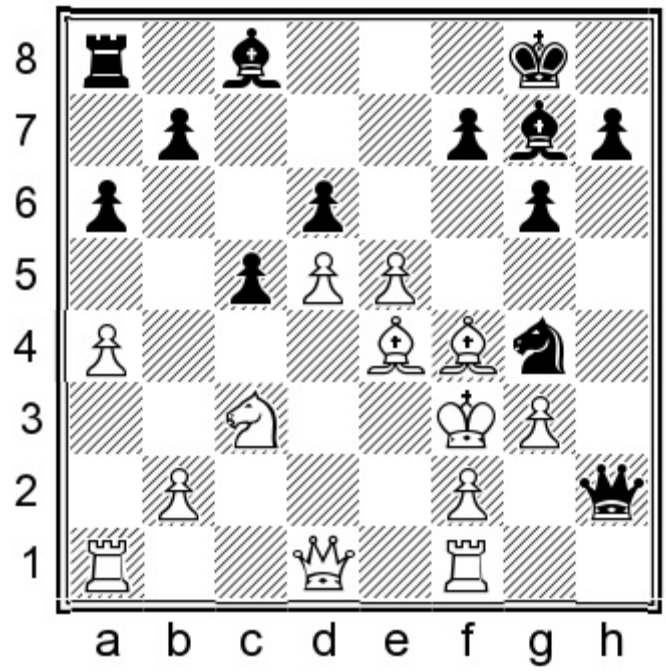
26.♖c1 ♗xc3

White retains some practical chances of salvation, in spite of Black's obvious plus.

b) I must now frankly admit that the beautiful variations I have been showing you have no practical significance; I wanted to give you some amusement and demonstrate the typical methods of attack. However, Black has: 21...♕h2†! Ham-fisted, crude, but very strong! 22.♔f3 ♘xe5† 23.♗xe5 ♗g4†! and now 24.♔xg4 ♕h5† 25.♔f4 ♗h6† 26.♔e4 ♕f5# results in a cute mate in the middle of the board!

20...♕h5† 21.♔g2 ♕h2† 22.♔f3

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22...♘xe5†?!

How long can you persist in the error of your ways? Major changes to the position have come about in the course of the last few moves: Black's provocative rook has departed from the arena, and the white king has very good chances of hiding away in the safety of the queenside. All this might well have served to make me pause for thought and assess the situation anew. Instead of this rational approach, however, I continued more or less at lightning speed, and played a series of moves that should have led to defeat – a most undeserved defeat, as it seemed to me at that time!

And yet, Black would retain excellent chances after the somewhat less forcing:

22...dxe5!? 23.♗g5!?

23.♗e3? loses immediately to 23...♘xf2! 24.♗xf2 ♗g4† 25.♔e3 ♗h6† 26.♔d3 ♗xd1.

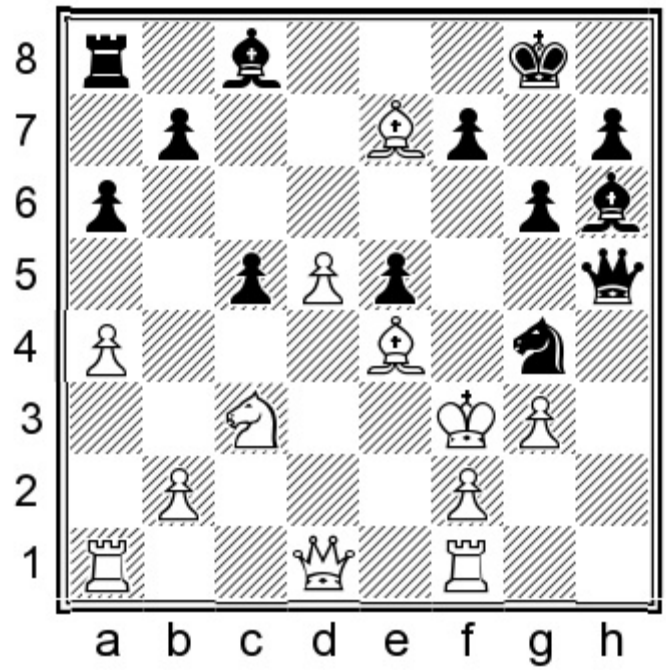
Another line that doesn't look too convincing is: 23.♗c1 f5 24.♕b3! (24.♗c2?! is elegantly refuted by 24...f4! 25.gxf4 ♘xf2! 26.♖xf2 ♕h3† 27.♔e2 ♗g4† and White is crushed) 24...fxe4† 25.♘xe4 ♔h8! 26.d6 ♗d7 and there are still quite a few unpleasant moments in store for the white monarch.

Wild complications result from 23.♕e1 ♘xf2! 24.♖xf2 ♗g4† 25.♔e3 exf4† 26.♖xf4 (26.gxf4 ♗d4†) 26...h5 27.d6 ♖e8.

23...♕h5 24.♗e7 ♗h6!

Threatening ...♘e3†.

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25.♔e2

White is not saved by 25.♔g2? ♕h2† 26.♔xf3 ♘xf2!.

25...♘e3† 26.♗f3 ♕xf3†! 27.♔xf3 ♗g4† 28.♔e4 ♗f5† 29.♔xe5

The cautious 29.♔f3 leads to a draw.

29...♘c4†! 30.♔f6 ♘b6!

Pretty – Black threatens 31...♘d7#.

31.♔e5!

31.♗xc5?? ♘d7† 32.♔e7 ♗f8# is too beautiful to occur in a real game!

31...♘c4†

With perpetual check.

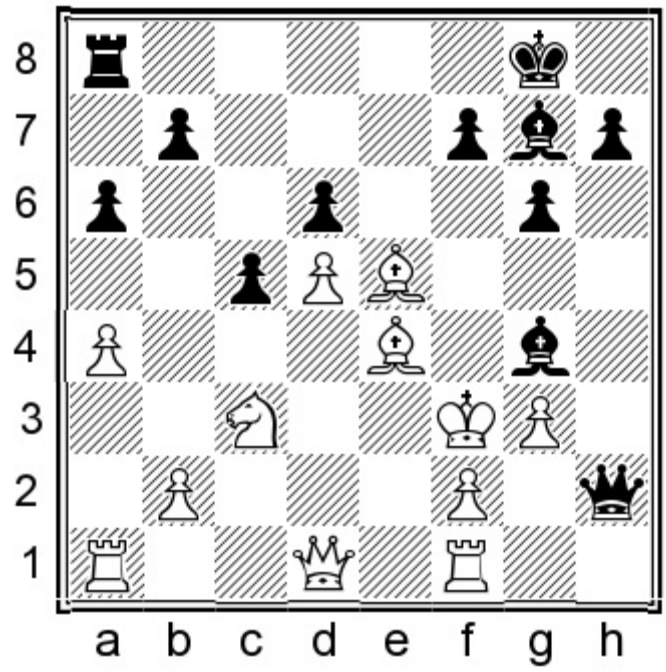
23.♗xe5!

Much better than 23.♔e3? ♘c4† 24.♔e2 (24.♔f3 ♗g4†) 24...♗g4† 25.♔e1 ♗xd1 26.♖h1 ♕xh1† 27.♗xh1 ♗c2, with an easy win for Black.

23...♗g4†!

The last reserves enter the fray!

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24.♔e3

Not 24.♔xg4?? ♕h5† 25.♔f4 ♗h6# – this didn't even happen in my dreams!

24...♗xd1

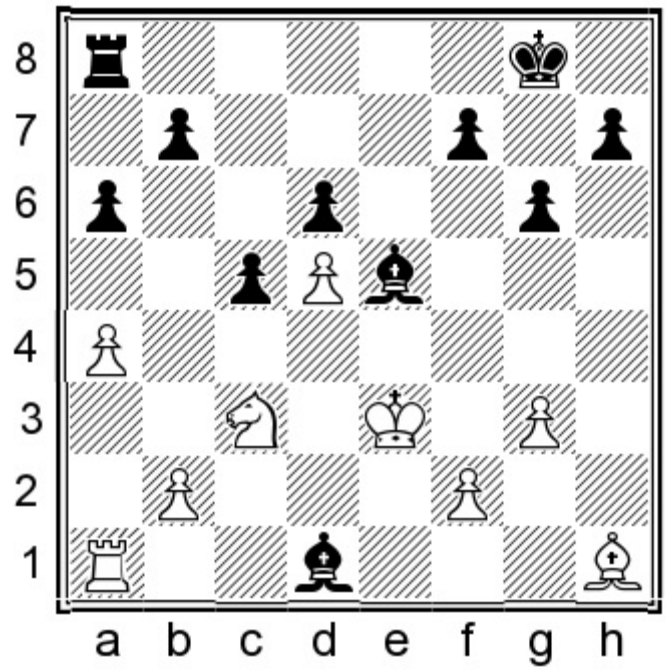
Nor is 24...♗h6† any help: 25.♗f4 ♗xf4† 26.gxf4! ♗xd1 27.♖h1!+–

25.♖h1!

This obvious resource is precisely what I had missed when playing my 18th move! The queen is trapped, the poetry is at an end, and the bleak prose of life takes over! The ending a piece down – albeit for two pawns – promises no great saving chances. But my opponent must have been so exhausted from working through the jungle of variations that he didn't set me any serious problems; and this game that was so full of fight headed quickly towards a drawn result.

25...♕xh1 26.♗xh1 ♗xe5

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27.♖xd1

Probably 27.♘xd1! was simpler, holding up ...b5 for the time being. There could follow 27...♖e8 28.♔d2 b5 29.axb5 axb5 30.♖a6 and Black's position is hopeless.

27...b5! 28.axb5 axb5 29.♘xb5

Another option is:

29.f4!? ♗d4†

29...♗xc3!? 30.bxc3 ♖a3 is also possible, and White would still need to apply quite good technique.

30.♔d3

In this ending White has a variety of promising continuations. For example, at this point it is worth considering the exchange sacrifice 30.♖xd4!? cxd4† 31.♔xd4 b4 32.♘b5, with very good winning chances.

30...♖a5

Black for his part has much less choice. As a possible alternative I can only suggest 30...b4, but 31.♘b5 ♗xb2 32.♘xd6 can hardly be to Black's liking.

31.♖e1 ♔f8 32.♘e4 ♖a6±

White has a plus, though Black can still continue his resistance.

29...♖b8 30.f4 ♗xf4†□ 31.♔xf4 ♖xb5 32.♖d2 f5 33.♖e2

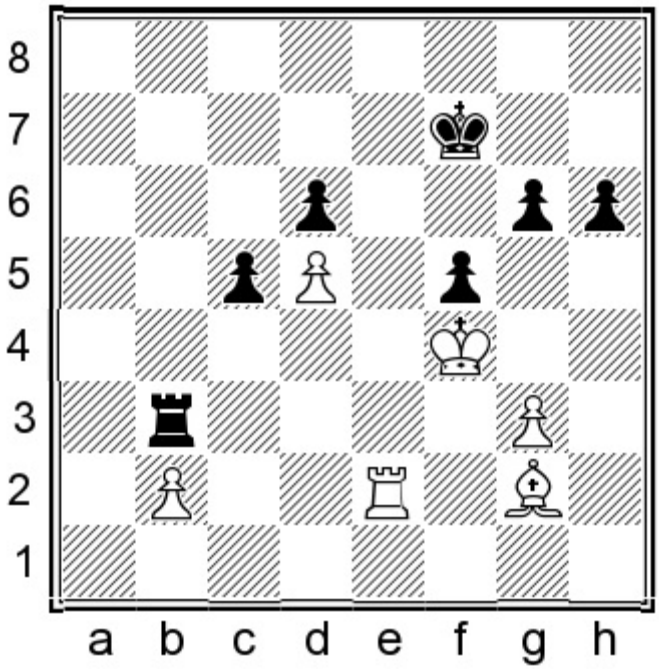
33.♔g5 can be met by 33...♔g7.

33...♔f7 34.♗f3

Unnecessary complications result from 34.♔e3 ♖b3† 35.♔f2 ♔f6 36.♖e6† ♔g5 37.♖xd6 ♖xb2† 38.♔e3 ♔g4. For example: 39.♖d7 ♖h2 40.♗f3† ♔xg3 41.♖f7 ♖b2∞

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34...♖b3! 35.♗g2 h6



At this point, rather unexpectedly, Portnjagin offered a draw, which of course I was happy to accept. To be fair, winning this position for White would be far from simple, if possible at all. For instance, 36.♖e6 ♖b4† 37.♔e3 ♖b3† 38.♔f4=; or 36.♗h1 h5 37.♗g2 (37.♖e6 ♖b4† 38.♔g5 ♖g4† 39.♔h6 h4! is no better) 37...♖b4† 38.♔e3 ♔f6 39.♔f2 ♔g5 and it is not clear how White can make progress.

½–½

From analysing this game, we can perhaps draw two conclusions. First, *never* trust long variations, even if they seem to you to be forced; somewhere in your calculations a mistake is virtually sure to have crept in. And secondly, never shirk re-checking your calculations after every move you make; the position may well reveal itself to you from some new angle.

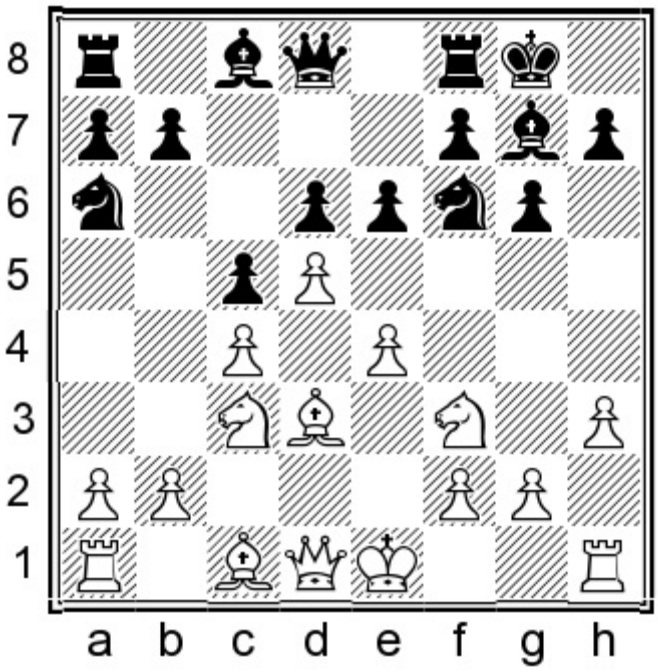
It happened that in the foregoing games the attacking side was generally Black. Such things do of course occur, but by no means always! In the final game of this chapter I want to show that plenty of attacking possibilities can arise for White too.

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Lev Psakhis – Boris Chatalbashev

Benasque 1996

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.d5 g6 4.c4 ♗g7 5.♘c3 0-0 6.e4 d6 7.h3 e6 8.♗d3 ♘a6

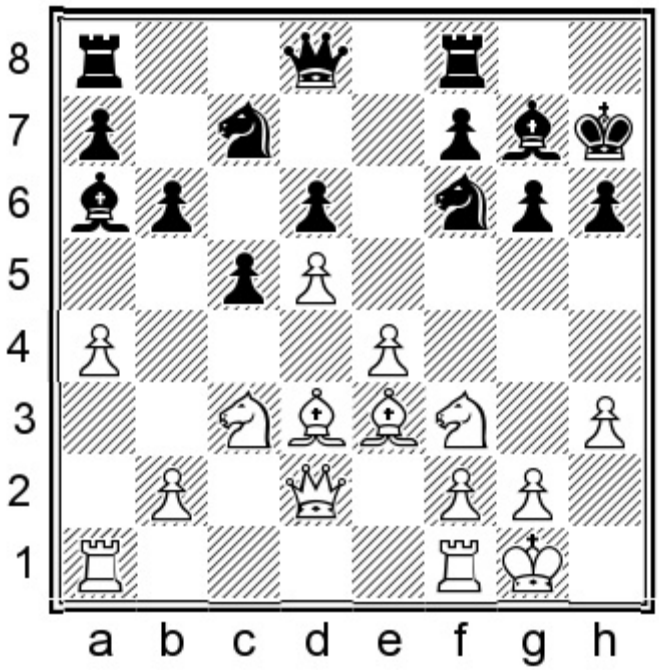


It would be simpler to play 8...exd5 9.cxd5, transposing to a standard Benoni position. However, that particular variation was considered to favour White in those already distant times. Moreover, in the present situation White could also of course take on d5 with the e-pawn. Grandmaster Smirin, who was probably the greatest specialist in playing such positions for the black side, liked to keep his pawn structure uncommitted, and would only capture on d5 when it was essential. Chatalbashev too endeavours to follow that strategy in his games, but his patience tends to give out before long!

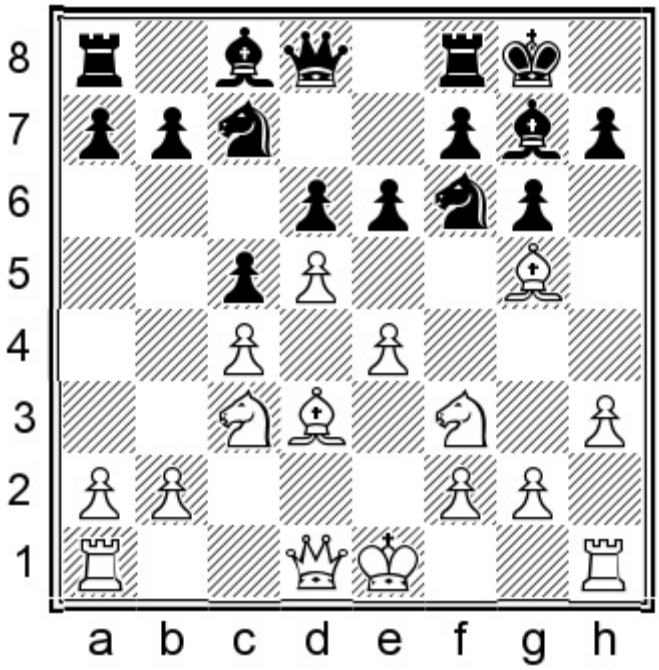
9.♗g5 ♘c7

The preliminary 9...h6 is also played quite frequently (once the white queen has appeared on d2, Black can often only dream about this move). Bareev – Damljanovic, Novi Sad (ol) 1990, continued 10.♗e3 ♘c7 11.♕d2 exd5 12.cxd5 ♔h7 13.a4 b6 14.0-0 ♗a6

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15.♗f4! with a clear plus for White. Indeed my general impression is that this kind of position is easier for White to play.



10.♕d2

I made this move without much thought, as it forms an integral part of White's plan. However, another line that has been seen is 10.a4!? ♕e7 11.0-0 h6 12.♗h4, and White had a very pleasant position in Epishin – Gheorghiu, Geneva 1993.

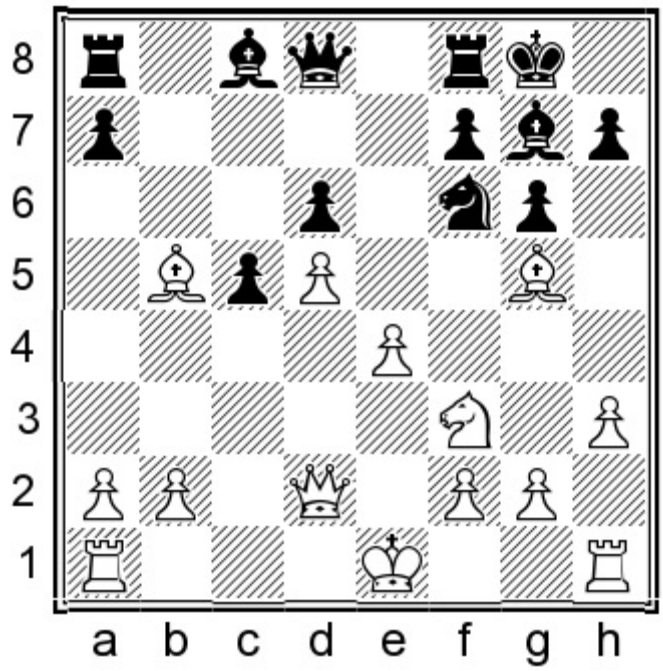
10...exd5

In the event of the sharp 10...b5!?, White is guaranteed an excellent game by either 11.dxe6 ♘xe6 12.♗h4± or even the simple 11.0-0!?.

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11.cxd5 b5 12.0-0!

Stronger than 12.♘xb5?! ♘xb5 13.♗xb5 Khenkin – Chatalbashev, Cappelle-la-Grande 1992. In that game Black simply failed to consider the none-too-complicated tactical line:



13...♘xe4! 14.♗xd8 ♘xd2 15.♗e7 ♘xf3† 16.gxf3 ♖b8 17.a4 ♗xb2 18.♖b1 ♗c3† 19.♔d1 ♖b7 In the resulting endgame Black is the only one who can venture to play for a win – his opponent's pawn structure is just too weak.

12...b4

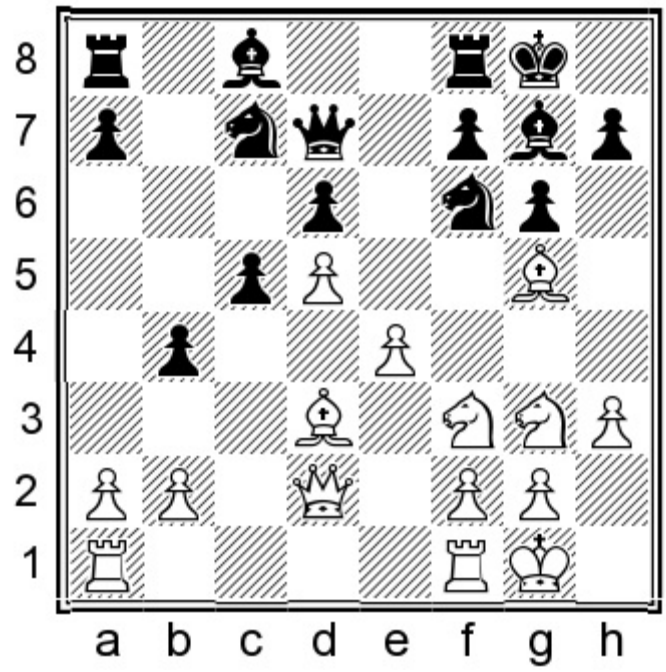
Or 12...c4 13.♗c2 b4 14.♘e2, when Black's queenside pawn advance has brought him no appreciable gain – his pawns are weak, and the important d4-square is firmly in White's hands.

White's advantage is also obvious in the case of 12...♖b8 13.♖fe1 b4 14.♘e2 ♕d7 15.♘g3 ♘fe8 16.♖ad1 f6 17.♗f4, with strong pressure in the centre, Ki. Georgiev – Cabrilo, Niksic (rapid) 2008.

13.♘e2 ♕d7 14.♘g3

This manoeuvre is also perfectly familiar from the Ruy Lopez. The white knight has no better square than g3; from here it not only serves as an excellent guard for the important e4-pawn, it is also ready at any moment to take the most direct part in an attack. It seems to me that White has come out of the opening with a splendid game. Black's pawn activity on the queenside has brought him no dividends (and incidentally don't forget about the c4-square, which a white knight might be fortunate enough to reach). Meanwhile on the kingside, even a slight error could be of crucial significance – there are many white pieces casting predatory glances at the black monarch!

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14...h5?!

An interesting and by no means simple question is how Black should try to improve his position. Thus 14...♖e8? encounters the extremely unpleasant 15.♕f4 ♕e7 16.♖ae1 a5 17.♘d2, when the knight and rook are ready to head for c4 and f3 respectively.

Perhaps 14...♘fe8!? 15.♖fe1 is the best that Black can come up with, but how passive his position is!

I also have objections to the move he actually played. In itself, the move is wholly typical – Black frees h7 for his knight and hopes to be able to create at least *some* counterplay. The problem is just that the black king's residence serves as a splendid target for White's active pieces.

15.♗h6!

The only way, of course! "Carthage must be destroyed," and the bishop, the chief defender of the throne, must be exchanged! The problems facing Black are becoming more complex with literally every move.

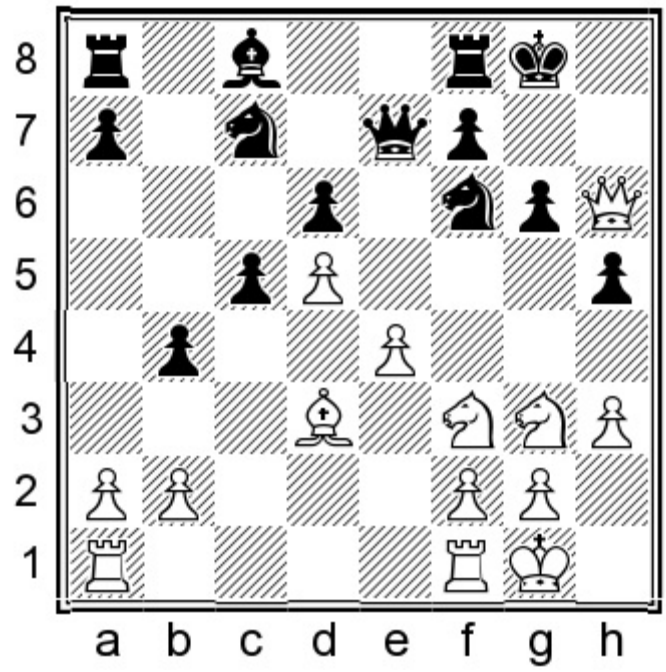
15...♕e7

Let us look at the alternatives:

15...♖e8? is refuted fairly simply by 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♘f5† gxf5 18.♕g5† ♔h7 19.♕xf6 ♕e7 20.♘g5† ♔g8 21.♕h6 f6, and now the crowning combination follows: 22.exf5! and if 22...fxg5 then 23.f6 ♕d7 24.♗f5!+– with a quick mate.

The play is a good deal more interesting after 15...♗xh6 16.♕xh6 ♕e7, when White can choose between (at least!) two plans:

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a) 17.♘g5!?

Threatening 18.f4!? followed by e4-e5, so Black simply has no choice.

17...♕e5□ 18.f4!? ♕d4† 19.♔h1

The following long and almost forced variation similarly produces complications that are entertaining and favourable to White: 19.♖f2 ♕xd3 20.e5! ♘cxd5 21.exf6 ♘xf6 22.f5! ♕xg3 23.fxg6 ♗xh3 24.♖af1 ♕h2†!? 25.♔xh2 ♘g4† 26.♔xh3 ♘xh6 27.gxf7† with a decisive plus for White.

19...♕xd3 20.f5! ♕xg3 21.fxg6+–

And mate will not be long coming.

b) 17.♗c4!?

By defending the d5-pawn, White calmly prepares the decisive breakthrough in the centre.

17...♖d8

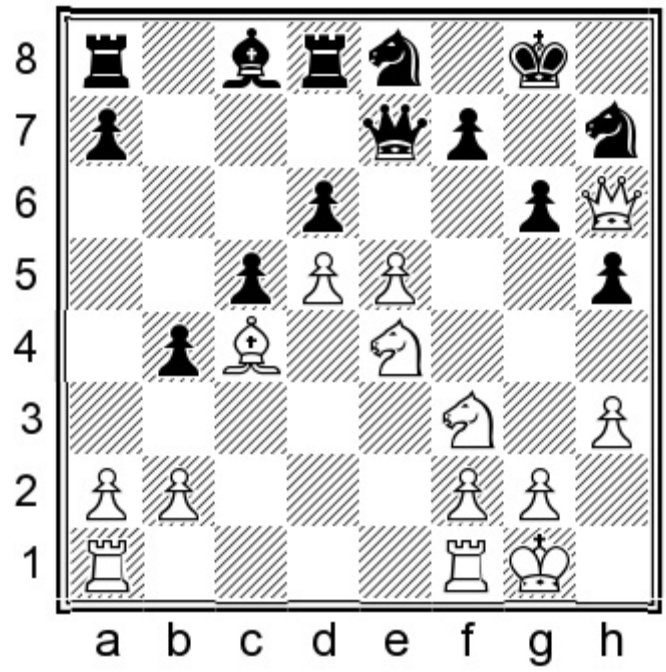
Black loses prettily after 17...♗a6 18.e5 ♗xc4 19.♘f5!+–.

18.e5 ♘h7 19.♘e4! ♘e8

Black has to balance on the edge of the precipice.

19...dxe5? 20.d6 ♖xd6 21.♘fg5 ♘xg5 22.♘xg5+– can scarcely suit him.

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20.e6! ♘f8 21.♕g5 f6

21...♕xg5 merely helps White to reach his goal: 22.♘fxg5 fxe6 23.dxe6 d5 24.e7+–

22.♕xh6 ♗xe6 23.dxe6 d5 24.♘h4

White shouldn't have much trouble exploiting his large plus.

16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕g5!

White threatens 18.♘xh5†, and also 18.♘h4.

17...♖e8?!

Chatalbashev guards his queen, thereby forestalling 18.♘xh5†, but this only solves a small part of his problems. His position is difficult and complicated to handle; successful defence is already practically impossible.

17...♖h8

This would have been rather more tenacious. Even so, I honestly wouldn't wish this position on my worst enemy! White simply continues:

18.♘h4 ♔f8 19.f4 ♘d7!

It's hard to suggest any other move! After 19...♘fxd5 20.exd5 ♕e3† 21.♔h2 ♕xd3 22.♖ad1 ♕c2 23.f5! the poor black monarch has to defend himself alone against nearly all the white pieces. I don't think he will be living happily ever after!

20.e5!

The last reserves go into battle.

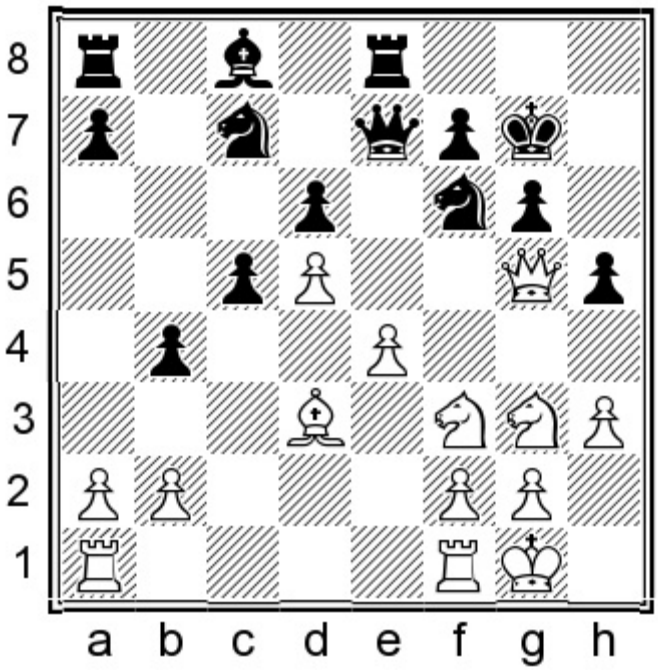
20...♕xg5

The situation isn't altered much by 20...♘xd5 21.♗xg6! either.

21.fxg5 ♔g7 22.e6! ♘e5 23.♖xf7†! ♘xf7 24.exf7 ♔xf7 25.♘xg6 ♖g8 26.♖f1† ♔e8 27.♖e1† ♔d8 28.♘e7

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The game is in effect already over; Black has nothing to oppose his opponent's material plus.



18.e5!+–

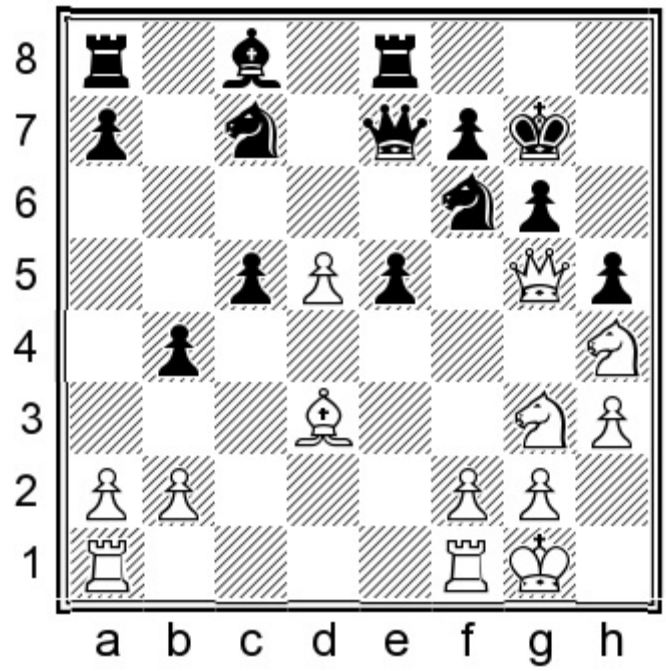
A typical, yet very attractive move. White not only opens a diagonal for active operations with his light-squared bishop, he also acquires the e4-square for his knight almost as a bonus. Other tactical motifs figure in his plans too.

18...dxe5

You get the impression that Black's actions have all been more or less forced, ever since about move 10. It is still the case now, and he can't save himself with: 18...♘fxd5 19.♘xh5† ♔g8 20.♘f6†! (20.♕xe7 ♖xe7 21.exd6 ♖d7 22.dxc7 gxh5 23.♗e4 ♗b7 24.♖ad1 ♖e8 25.♖fe1!+– is also adequate for a win on points, but by this time I was only interested in winning with a knockout!) 20...♘xf6 21.exf6 ♕f8 22.♗xg6! ♘e6 23.♕h5 fxg6 24.♕xg6† ♔h8 25.♖fe1 White threatens to bring his rook to e4 with deadly effect, while 25...♗b7 is met by 26.f7+–.

19.♘h4!

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You can smell burning! Obviously one or other piece will be sacrificed on g6 within a move or two, not to mention that White is threatening 20.♘gf5†.

19...♔g8

This is neither better nor worse than the other lines that Black might have looked at:

19...♕d8 is met by 20.♗xg6 fxg6 21.♕xg6† ♔h8 22.♕h6† ♔g8 23.♘xh5+–.

Nor is Black helped by 19...♔h8 20.♕h6† ♔g8 21.d6! ♕xd6 22.♘xg6 fxg6 23.♕xg6† ♔f8 24.♘xh5+–

19...♔h7 20.♘xg6 fxg6 21.♗xg6† ♔h8 22.d6! ♕xd6 23.♘e4 ♘h7 24.♕xh5 ♕e7 25.♘g5!+– also results in a quick end to the game.

I would point out that all these variations are quite simple and easily found.

20.d6!?

White continues to play very energetically. A weaker choice would have been: 20.♘hf5 ♗xf5 21.♘xf5 ♕d8 22.♘h6† ♔g7 23.♘xf7! ♔xf7 24.♗xg6† White keeps a plus, but his long-awaited victory would still be far away.

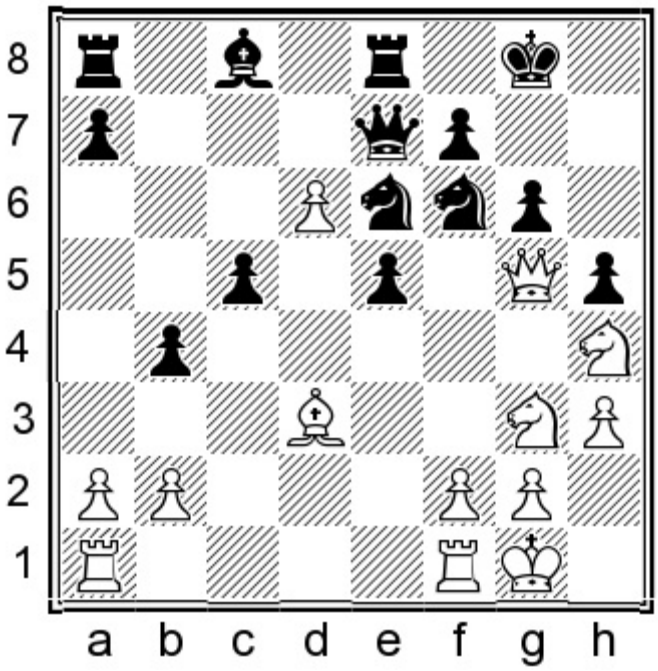
20...♕xd6?

Finally the Bulgarian player succumbs to the pressure and commits a decisive error.

The strongest move was:
20...♘e6!

I am certainly not convinced that this would have saved the game, but Black simply had to play it.

The knight takes an active part in the defence.



21.♕xe5

Stronger than 21.♕xg6† fxg6 22.dxe7 ♘f4! and Black can fight on.

21...♘d7

In the event of 21...♕d8? 22.♘xg6! fxg6 23.♗xg6 ♖f8 24.♘f5!+– the black pieces are merely the objects of attack, and are playing hardly any defensive role.

22.♘xg6!?

White also has a large plus after either 22.♕e4!? ♕xd6 23.♘xg6 or 22.♕xh5!? gxh5 23.dxe7 ♖xe7 24.♘hf5!

22...fxg6.

After 22...♘xe5 23.♘xe7† ♔f8 24.♗e4, further material losses are unavoidable for Black.

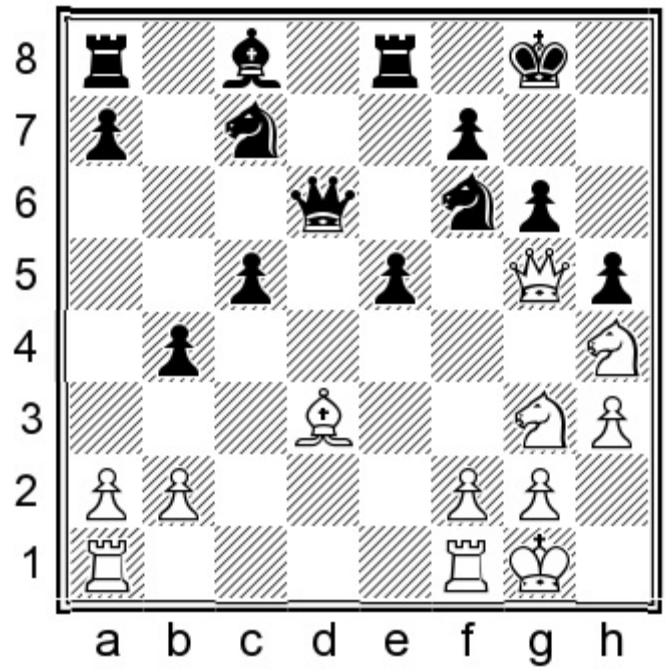
23.♕e4 ♕f7!

23...♕f6? 24.♕xa8 ♘f4 25.♖ae1 ♖f8 26.♗c4† ♔h8 27.♕c6+–

24.♕xa8 ♗a6 25.♕xe8† ♕xe8 26.♗xa6+–

White has great winning chances. All the same, Black had no other choice – he was simply obliged to test his opponent's technique in this variation.

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21.♗xg6!+–

Now the game will be over in a few more moves.

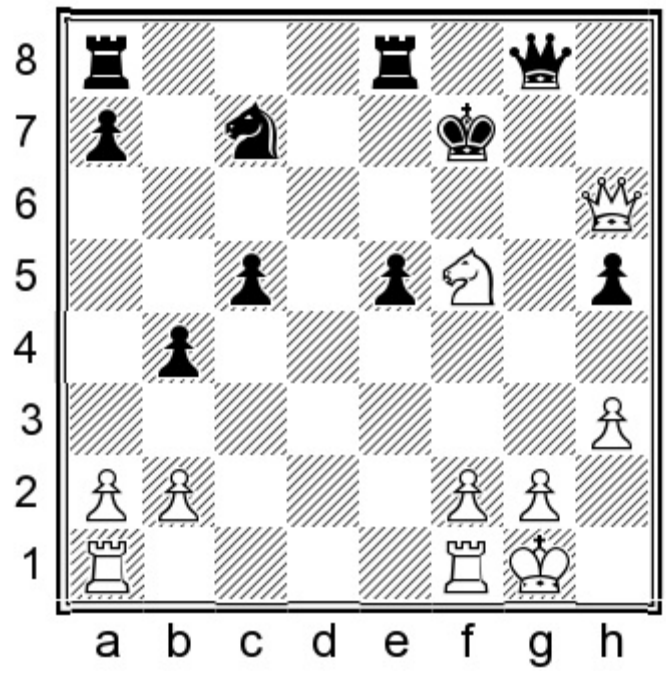
21...fxg6 22.♕xg6† ♔f8

After 22...♔h8 23.♘xh5 Black would have to give up his queen for no compensation.

23.♘gf5 ♗xf5 24.♘xf5 ♕d7 25.♕xf6† ♕f7

25...♔g8 26.♖ad1! is no improvement for Black.

26.♕h8† ♕g8 27.♕h6†! ♔f7



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28.♕c6!

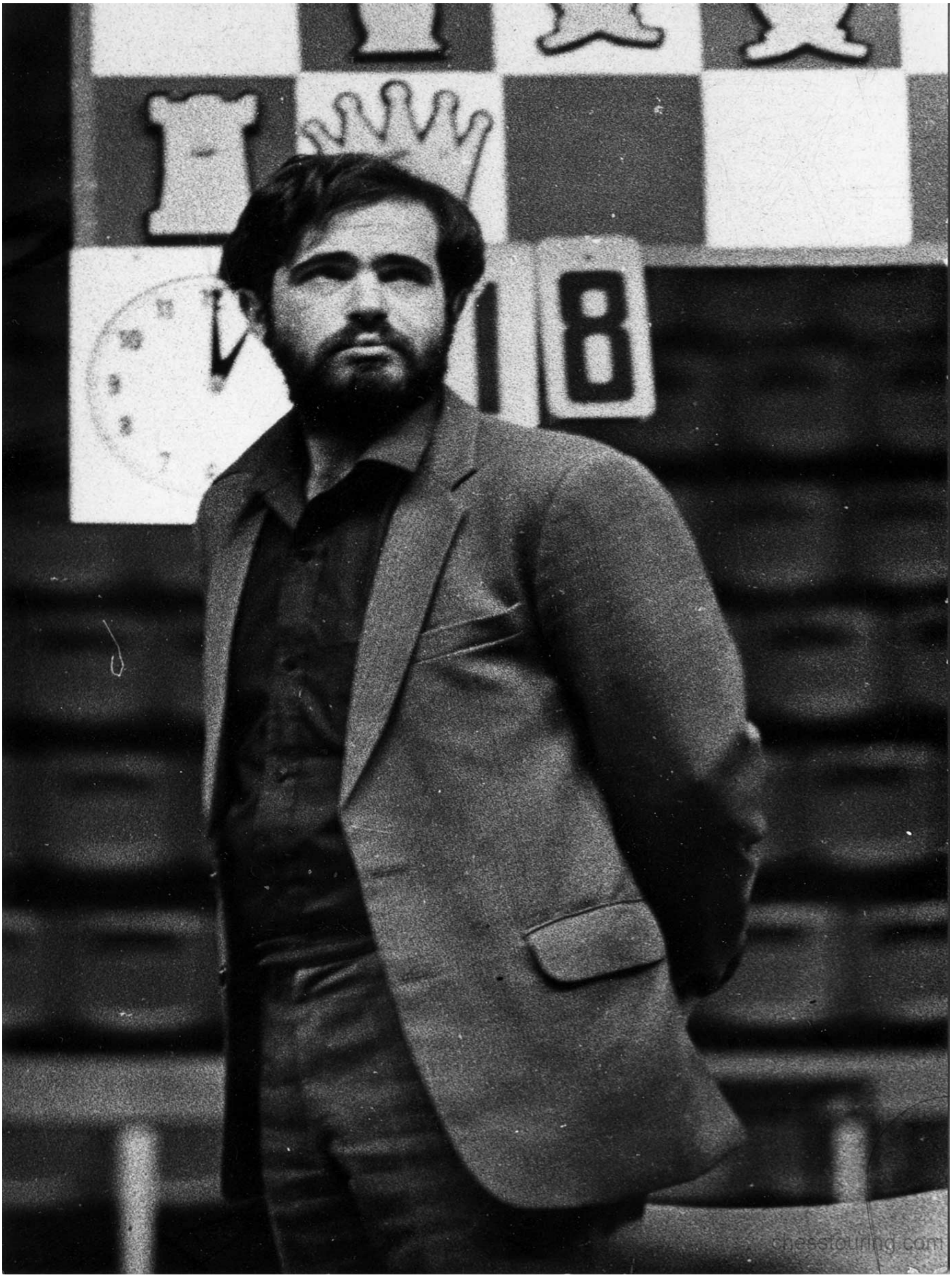
The c7-knight is attacked and White threatens 29.♘h6†, so it isn't at all surprising that Black resigned.

1–0

Black's opening play was unsure, yet one question bothers me. Where, specifically, did he make the serious mistake for which he was so harshly punished? Was it 14...h5 that provoked this reaction? But this is a very popular move that has been played many a time in similar positions.

To me, all this was and is a riddle, and I dare say there is no need even to look for the right answer to it. At the end of the day, chess ought to remain – even if only partially – a mysterious game!

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18
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Chapter 2

Attacking with Hanging Pawns

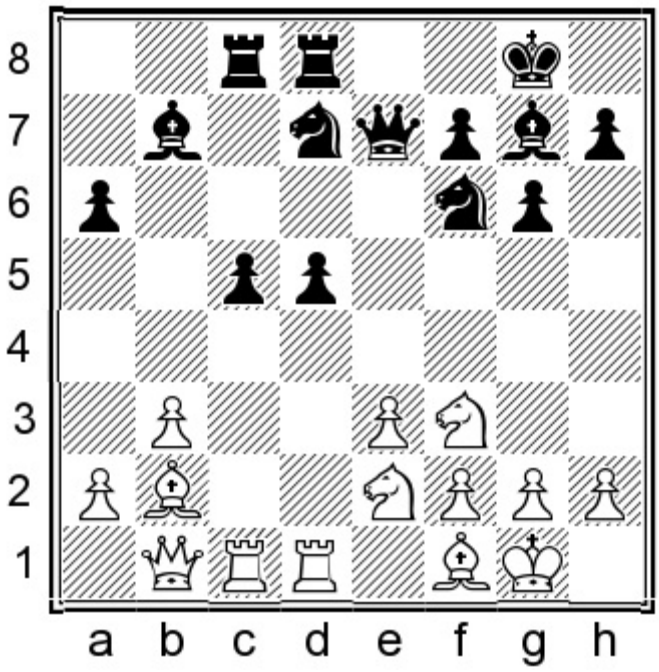


Armenia 1979 Yusupov, Kasparov, Psakhis, Azmaiparashvili & Kasparov's mother Klara

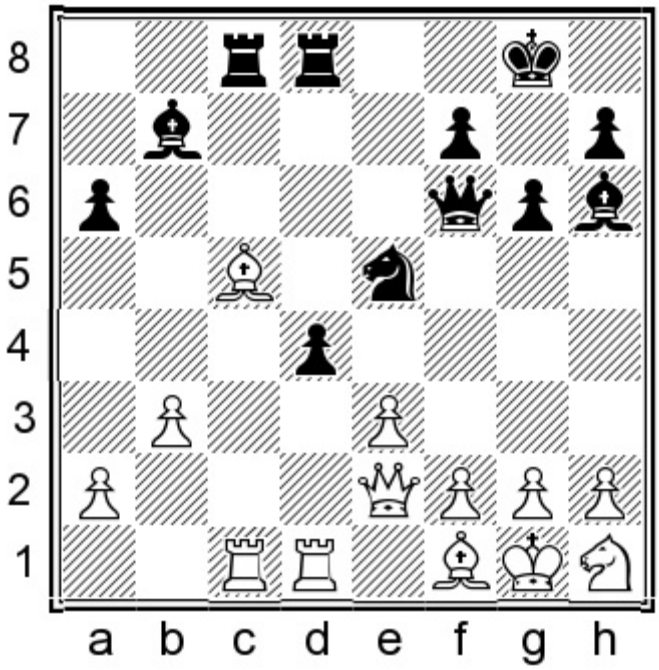
Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

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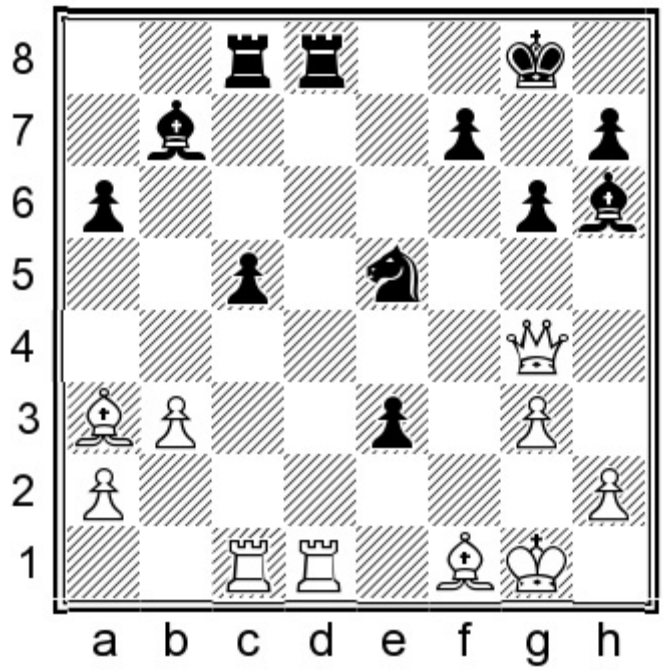


A positional decision
(see page 51)

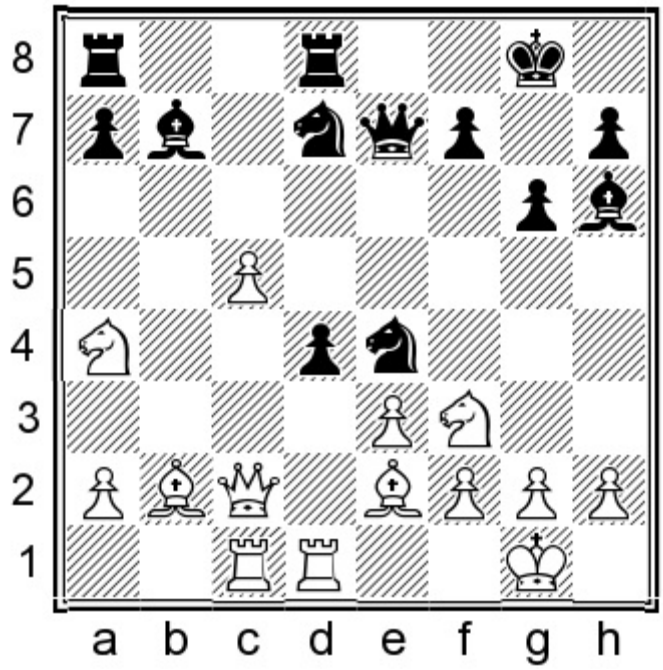


How to crash through?
(see page 55)

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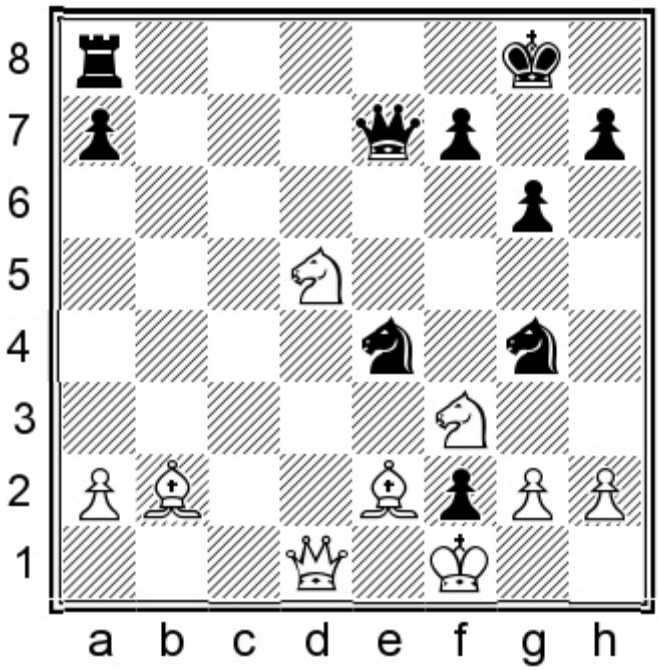


How can White defend himself?
(see page 56)

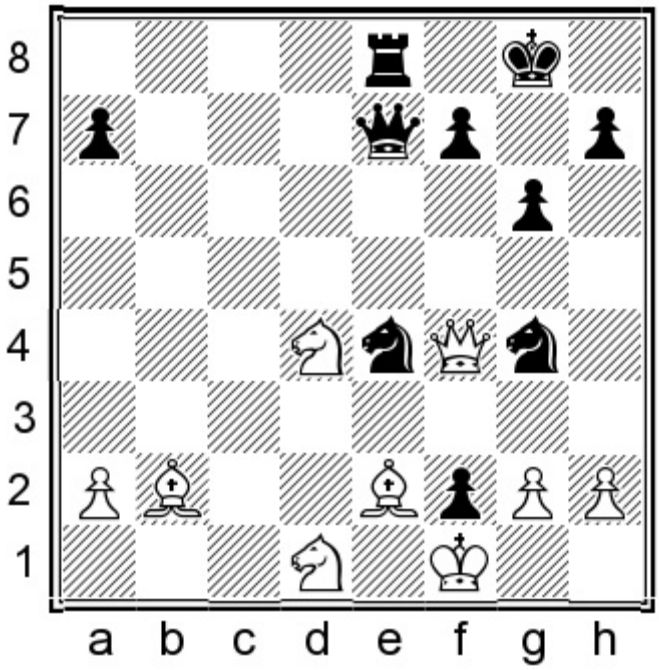


Many tempting options. Which one is strongest?
(see page 62)

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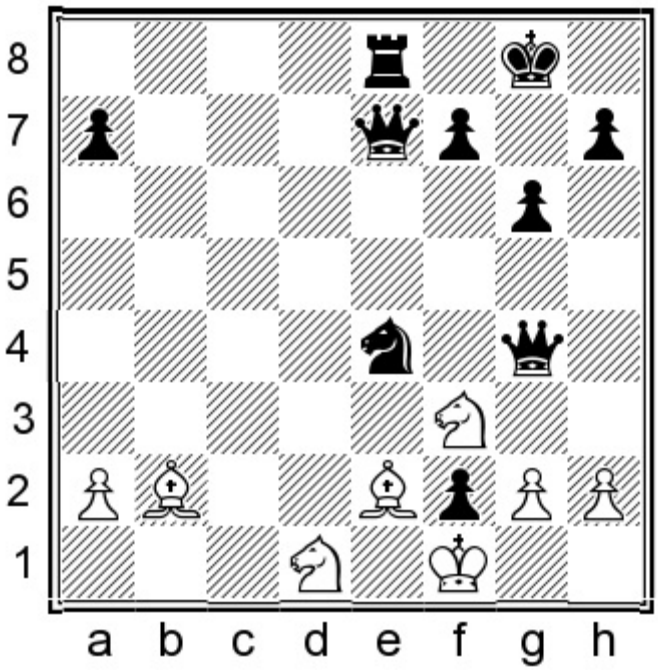


How can Black get more than a small plus?
(see page 65)

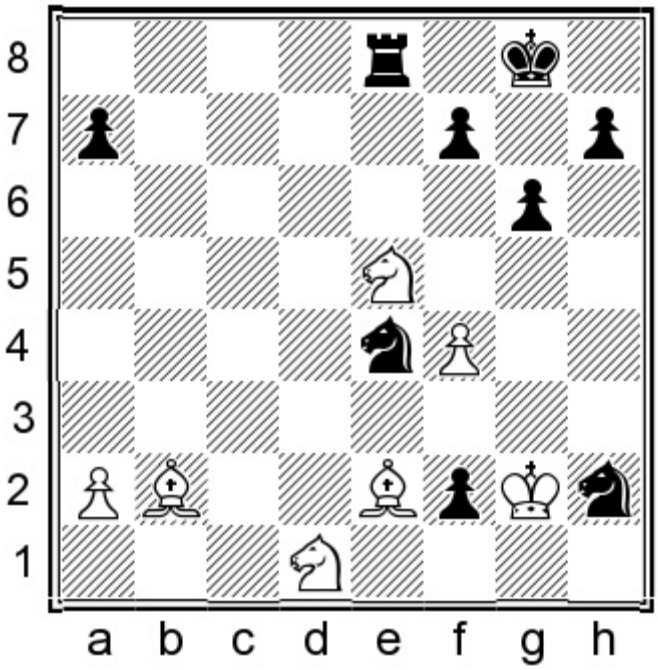


The direct win is?
(see page 67)

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How to conclude the attack?
(see page 67)



The winning move
(see page 68)

First, let us be clear about the term “hanging pawns”. This is the standard way of referring to two connected pawns (most commonly c- and d-pawns), on the same rank (usually), with no other pawns to defend them. This type of structure naturally has its plus and minus points. There have been quite a few players who have loved playing with hanging pawns. The names of Yusupov and Yudasin immediately spring to mind, and indeed your humble servant too played plenty of games with this pawn structure.

Among its adversaries, we may certainly single out Anatoly Karpov.

To release (or enhance) their attacking potential, the owner of the hanging pawns will usually try to open the position in the centre by a breakthrough with d4-d5 (for the sake of simplicity and clarity, I am treating these pawns as belonging to one side only, namely White). A plan involving the advance c4-c5 is seen a good deal more rarely. Finally, a white knight on e5 will be excellently supported and active, and will gladly take part in an attack.

Let us examine a pair of games in which the player with the hanging pawns exploited their potential one hundred per cent.

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Alexey Sokolsky − Mikhail Botvinnik

USSR Championship 1938

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7

The Grünfeld Defence was part of the first Soviet World Champion's repertoire for a long period of years. His handling of it was outstanding and he scored many memorable wins with it.

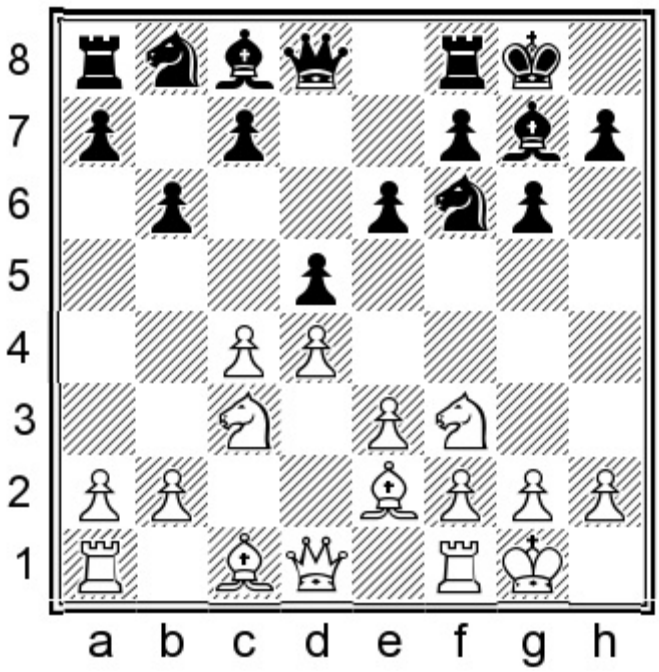
5.e3

A quiet move, perhaps even *too* quiet. In playing it, White is practically renouncing the struggle for an advantage and contenting himself with a solid and safe position.

5...0-0 6.♗e2 e6

A rare move; Black aims to fianchetto his light-squared bishop. He doesn't want to allow the simplification in the centre that would quite possibly occur after the perfectly good move 6...c5.

7.0-0 b6



8.cxd5

Botvinnik didn't like this move, but it isn't entirely clear how White can fight for a more or less tangible plus in any other lines either.

Black hardly has cause to be afraid of 8.b3 ♗b7 9.♗a3 (or 9.♗b2 ♘bd7 10.♖c1 ♕e7 11.♕c2 ♖fc8 12.♖fd1 c5 13.♗a3 ♘e4= Franco – Korchnoi, Pamplona 1994) 9...♖e8 10.♖c1 ♘e4 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.♘e5 ♗d5 with comfortable equality in Mititelu – Smyslov, Leipzig (ol) 1960.

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8...exd5 9.b3

"A mistake, after which Black's queenside position becomes unassailable." – Botvinnik.

However, Botvinnik's suggested improvement does not trouble Black either:
9.♕b3 ♗b7 10.♗d2

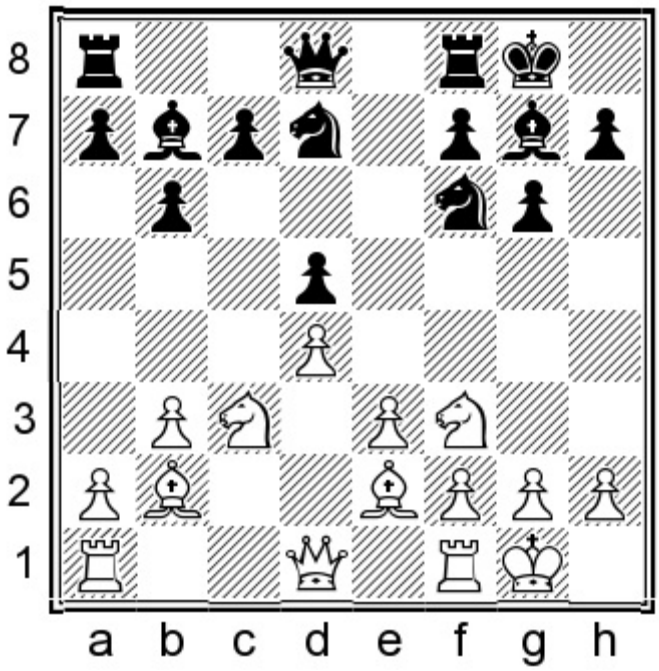
Black shouldn't be in the least frightened of 10.♖d1 ♘bd7 11.a4 c5 12.a5 ♕c7 13.♗d2 ♗c6 14.♘b5 ♕b8 Gereben – Smyslov, Budapest 1949.

10.♘e5 ♕e7 11.f4 c5 12.♗f3 ♘c6! also gives Black a fully satisfactory position.

10...♘bd7 11.♖fd1 ♕e7

Black has completed his development without hindrance, and if he wants he can easily carry out the freeing move ...c5.

9...♗b7 10.♗b2 ♘bd7



11.♕c2

Mikhail Botvinnik openly disapproved of the somewhat vague nature of White's strategy, and criticized practically all his opponent's moves. Here he recommended 11.♘e5, which would lead to approximate equality after 11...♘xe5 12.dxe5 ♘e4∞.

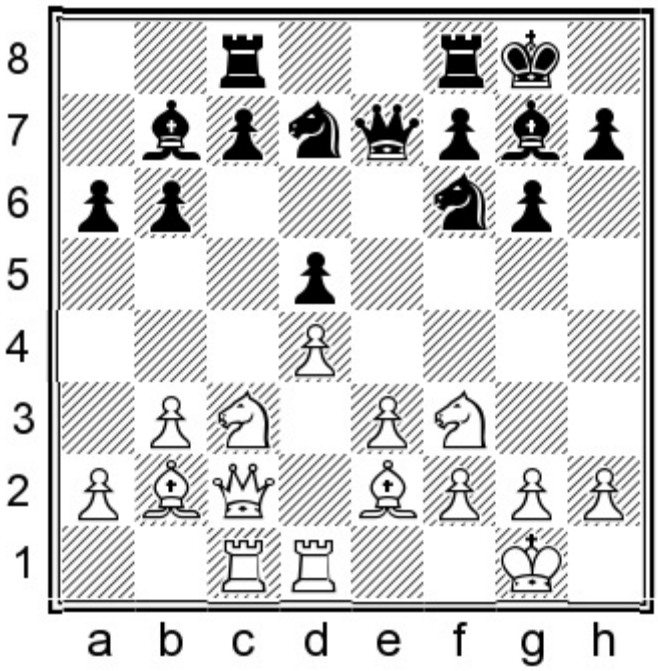
The typical move 11.b4!? also deserved attention, not only gaining space on the queenside, but also freeing the important b3-square for the queen.

11...a6 12.♖ac1

In the event of 12.♘e5 c5 13.f4 ♖c8∞ the chances are equal. Black intends to play ...b5 shortly. Whether the knight on e5 is the pride of White's position or a source of worry to him, only the future will show.

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12...♖c8 13.♖fd1 ♕e7



14.♕b1

I liked Botvinnik's comment on this position: "White's pieces cannot get beyond the fourth rank." Yet why not? To me it seems that the active 14.♘e5! at this point is not at all bad. Black cannot capture the knight in view of the weakness of his own d-pawn, while White aims to post his light-squared bishop on the long diagonal and slowly but surely increase the pressure on his opponent's position. Unfortunately for Black, the sharp 14...c5 holds out no rosy prospects for him either; after the natural 15.♘xd7 ♘xd7 16.dxc5 ♕xc5 17.♗f3, the initiative is undoubtedly with White.

14...♖fd8 15.♗f1?!

Continuing with the same passive strategy, for reasons I can't comprehend. This was probably White's last chance to place his knight on e5 to good effect. He would then retain at least equal chances, for example: 15.♘e5!? ♘xe5 (better than 15...c5 16.♘xd7 ♘xd7 17.dxc5 ♘xc5 18.♘a4! and White is the only one who can lay claim to a small plus) 16.dxe5 ♘e4 17.f4 ♘xc3 18.♗xc3 c5 19.♕b2 and White has a comfortable game.

15...c5 16.dxc5?!

I don't think too much of this move, and nor did the patriarch of Soviet chess; Black's game becomes just too easy to play!

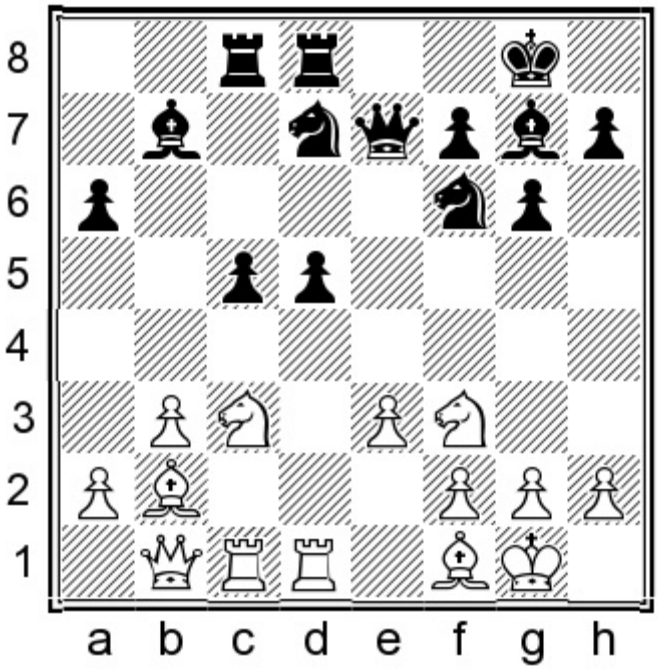
It was worth maintaining the tension in the centre with 16.h3. Then if, say, 16...♗h6, the reply 17.♕a1!? doesn't look bad; White will meet 17...c4 with 18.a4!?, and it isn't clear how Black can strengthen his position.

16...bxc5

At this point we arrive at the theme of the present chapter. Black has deployed all his pieces

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splendidly and is preparing an unpleasant break in the centre with ...d5-d4. His position has only one defect: for the time being he is, after all, forced to think about the defence of his hanging pawns.



17.♘e2?!

Mistakes, like illnesses, rarely come singly! White's idea is fully understandable: he wants to bring this knight closer to his monarch and create some advantageous pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal. On the other hand, this move does nothing to help him solve the really serious problems of defending the weak points f2 and e3. It will be harder and harder for him to stop ...d5-d4, the central breakthrough that forms a crucial link in Black's plan.

Sokolsky should have been thinking about how to bring his queen into the game without delay; this piece has simply been in cold storage on the queenside. It seems to me that after the natural 17.♕d3!? ♗h6 (or 17...♖e8 18.♖e1 ♕e6 19.♘a4=) 18.♖e1! ♕d6 19.♖cd1, White can look to the future with some optimism; the game has yet to step outside the bounds of approximate equality.

17...♗h6!

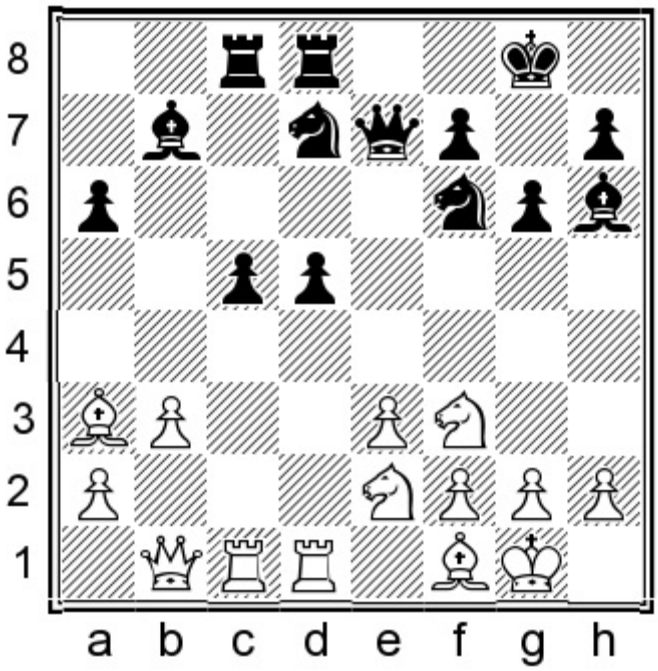
An excellent move, which to us looks absolutely natural, though I suspect that in 1938 it may have come as a real shock to White. The bishop is abandoning the very important long diagonal (thereby giving extra scope to the white bishop on b2); but on the other hand Black increases the pressure against the vulnerable e3 and f2 points, casts a glance towards the white rook on c1, and is ready to start an attack on the enemy king's residence. White now needs to show considerable mastery in defence.

18.♗a3?!

Showing a clear disbelief in his opponent's attacking possibilities! White throws all his forces into the fight against the "minor" threat – the standard central breakthrough with ...d4! – but forgets about his chief duty, which is to ensure the safety of his king.

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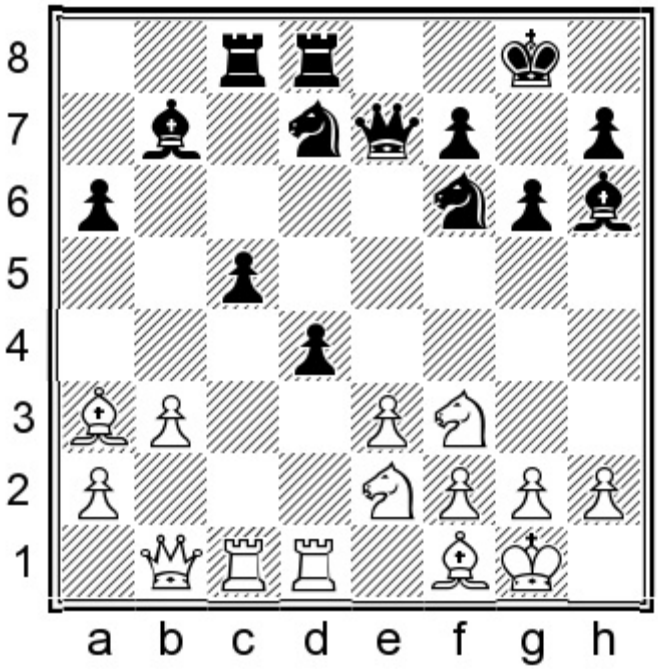
White had to play the cautious 18.♖c2. Then 18...♘g4 19.♘g3 gives a position with good defensive chances.
If instead Black goes for 18...d4!? 19.exd4 ♗e4 20.♘g3 ♗xc2 21.♕xc2, then we can only speak of a slight plus for Black; the white pieces are excellently placed, and the a6-pawn is weak.



18...♘g4!

Here Black had a rich (perhaps *too* rich!) choice of lines that deserved attention, and Botvinnik chose the strongest of them.

The alternative 18...d4!? doesn't look at all bad:



19.exd4! (19.♘fxd4? loses outright to 19...♘g4; 19.♘exd4 ♘e4! 20.♖e1 ♕f6 21.♘e2 ♘e5 22.♘xe5

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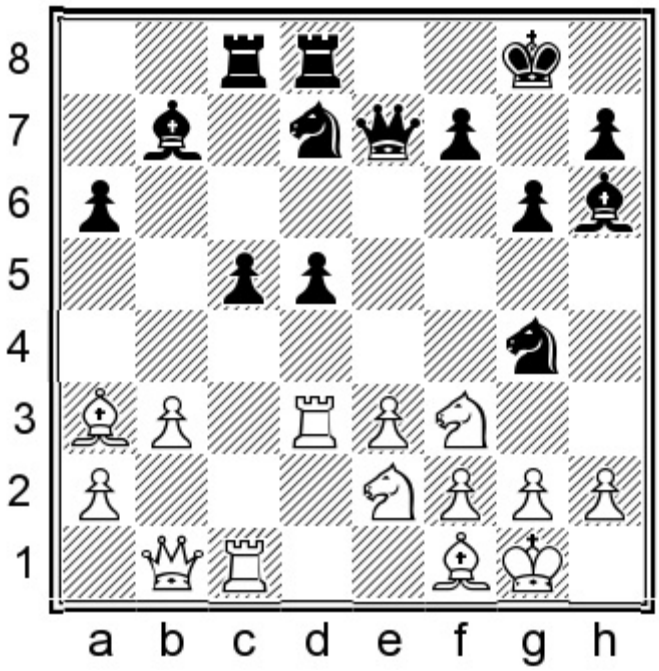
♕xf2† 23.♔h1 ♘d2! 24.♘g4 ♘xb1 25.♘xf2 ♘xa3 leads to an ending that is highly unpleasant for White) 19...♗xc1 20.♕xc1 ♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♘d5 with an obvious initiative for Black.
Black could also sacrifice a piece at once: 18...♗xe3!? 19.fxe3 ♕xe3† 20.♔h1 ♘e4 21.h3 ♘f2† (or 21...♘e5 22.♘xe5 ♘f2† 23.♔h2 ♕xe5† 24.♔g1 ♘xd1 25.♖xd1 ♕e3† 26.♔h2∓, though in this case White's chances of successful defence are fairly high) 22.♔h2 ♘xd1 23.♖xd1 d4 (23...♘e5!?) 24.♗c1 ♕e7∓

19.♕d3?

Truly, good defensive skills were not counted among a chess player's indispensable virtues in the early and middle years of the 20th Century! Once genuine difficulties arise, White immediately reacts in a most inept manner.

His options were extremely limited – the squares and pawns on the kingside had to be defended somehow, but 19.♖c3? merely helps his opponent's attack after 19...♘df6!.

Nothing else remains for White except cold-bloodedly playing:
19.♖d3!



19...♖e8!

I recommend maintaining the tension on the board, and stepping up the pressure against the e3-pawn.

White would also have no simple task organizing serious resistance after the obvious 19...♘de5 20.♘xe5 ♕xe5 21.♘g3! ♕f6, and with the black queen relocating to h4, the white king may well not live to a happy old age.

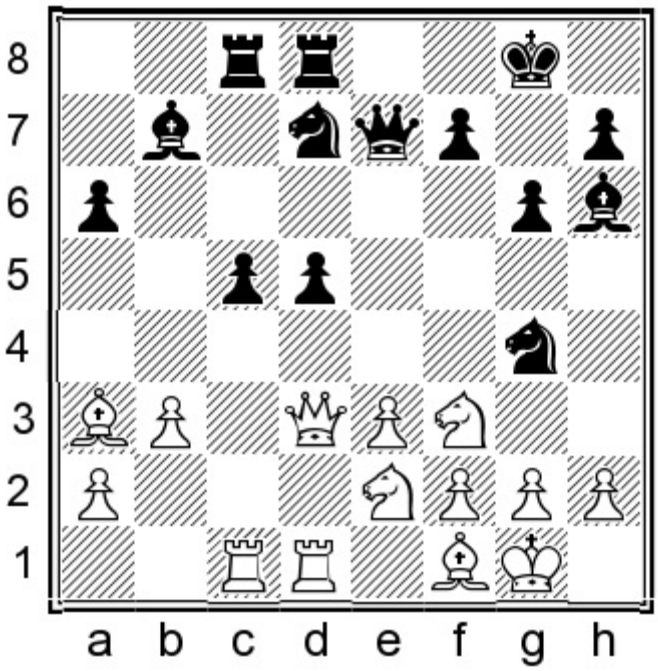
20.♕b2 ♘xf2 21.♔xf2 ♗xe3† 22.♖xe3 ♕xe3† 23.♔g3

23.♔e1 d4 is worse.

23...♖e5 24.h3 ♖f5

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With a virtually irresistible attack.



19...♘de5

My hand doesn't reach out to put a question mark after this move, but Black did have some stronger continuations available!

19...♖e8!? merits attention.

Black's attack is also overwhelming after the powerful:

19...♘df6!

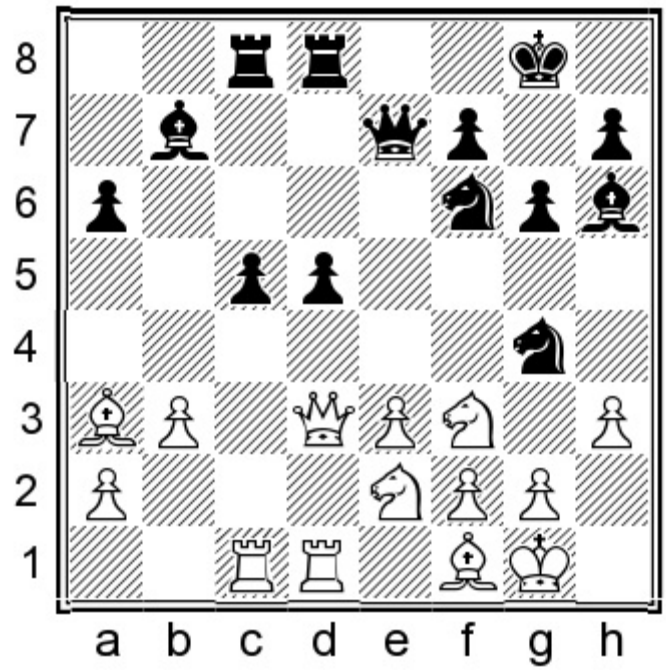
This has the wholly transparent threat of placing this rampant knight on e4. According to my conviction, the more natural and simple the threat, the harder it is to defend against it.

20.h3

20.♘f4 d4 does not help White.

20.♖xc5 ♖xc5 21.♕d4 ♖dc8 22.♖c1 ♘e4 is winning for Black, since White has no way of exploiting the pin that seems so unpleasant at first sight.

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20...♘xe3! 21.fxe3 ♗xe3† 22.♔h2

White is no better off after 22.♔h1 d4 23.♘g3 ♕c7.

22...d4–+

This pawn cuts White's position into two unconnected halves, and his monarch will be powerless to elude the fate in store for him.

However, the strongest move in this position is:

19...♕f6!

Threatening 20...d4. What is White to do? The most stubborn defence is probably offered by:

20.♕c3!?

White can scarcely be happy with 20.h3 ♘xf2! 21.♔xf2 ♘e5 22.♕c2 d4 23.e4 ♗e3† 24.♔g3 (24.♔e1? ♕xf3!) 24...♕d6–+.

Similar variations arise from 20.♘g3 ♘xf2! 21.♔xf2 ♘e5 22.♕b1 ♘g4† 23.♔e1 ♖e8 and Black's attack is crushing.

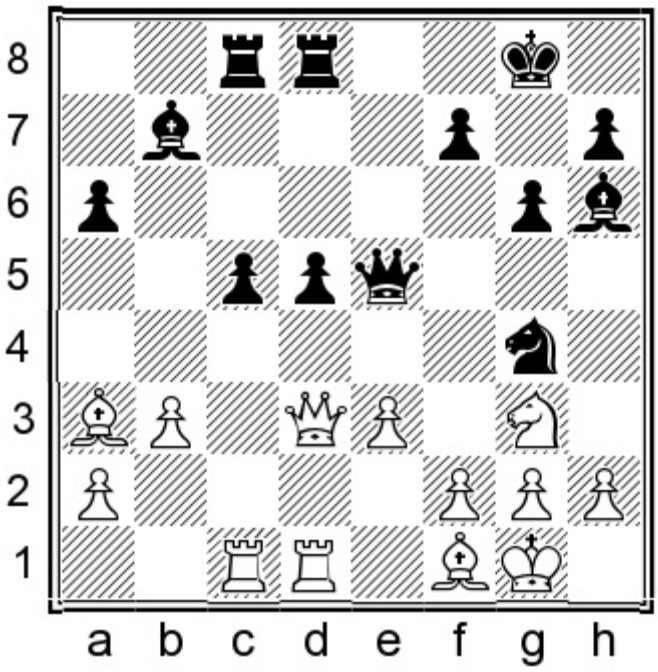
20...d4 21.exd4 cxd4 22.♕xd4 ♗xc1 23.♕xf6 ♘dxf6 24.♖xd8† ♖xd8 25.♗xc1 ♖d1–+

Black has an easily won ending; the pin on the first rank will exact a high price from White.

20.♘xe5□ 20...♕xe5 21.♘g3

Surprisingly enough, the best place now for this knight is the modest square h1. For one thing it won't be in the way of the other white pieces, and secondly the f2-pawn will be safely defended at last! The more active 21.f4?! ♕xe3† 22.♕xe3 ♘xe3 23.♖d3 ♘xf1 24.♖xc5 ♖xc5 25.♗xc5 a5! 26.♔xf1 ♗a6–+ loses fairly quickly. At least I don't see how White can parry the many threats without serious material losses.

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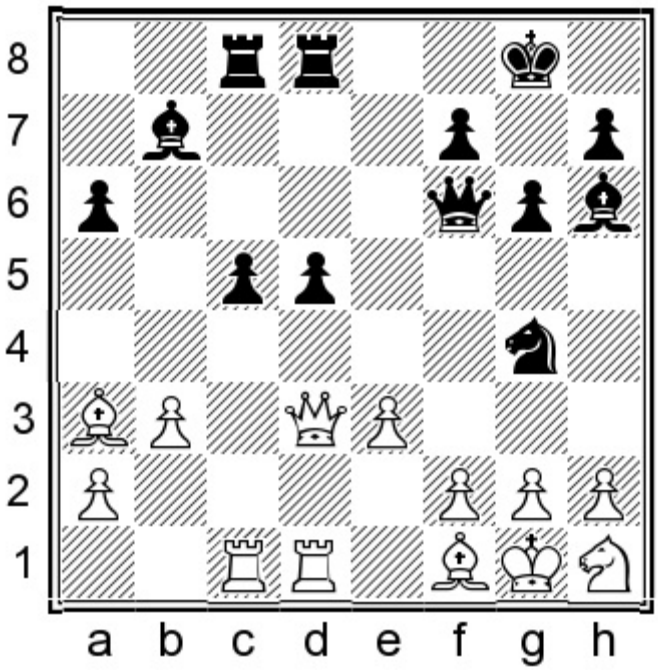
21...♕f6!?

The temptation to drive the knight to h1 proves too strong, and the future World Champion cannot resist it.

A line that was at least as good was 21...d4! 22.exd4 ♖xd4 23.♕e2 ♗xc1 24.♖xc1 ♕d6, with a healthy extra exchange.

22.♘h1!

The only move! White loses immediately after both 22.♕e2 ♕h4 23.h3 ♘xe3 and 22.♖c2 d4! 23.exd4! ♖xd4 24.♕xe2 ♕h4 25.h3 ♘xf2!.



22...d4

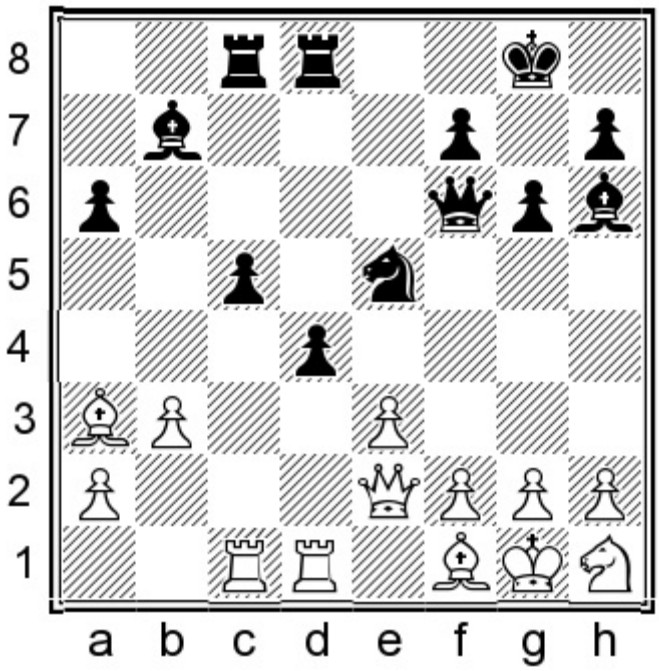
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Botvinnik didn't make a single *bad* move in the whole course of the game, but some of his moves were not the strongest and permitted White to hope for a happy outcome. At this point, the natural move he plays allows Sokolsky to obtain some quite good saving chances.

It was worth considering the quiet 22...♖e8!? 23.♖e1 (or 23.h3 ♘xe3 24.fxe3 ♗xe3† 25.♔h2 d4 with an irresistible attack), and only now 23...d4.

The best move, as I see it, was 22...♕e5!, with the possible continuation 23.♘g3 d4 24.exd4 ♖xd4 25.♕e2 ♗xc1 26.♖xc1 ♕xe2 27.♗xe2 ♘e5 28.♗xc5 (or 28.♖xc5 ♖xc5 29.♗xc5 ♖d2) 28...♘d3–+. In this ending Black shouldn't encounter many problems in converting his huge advantage into a full point!

23.♕e2! ♘e5



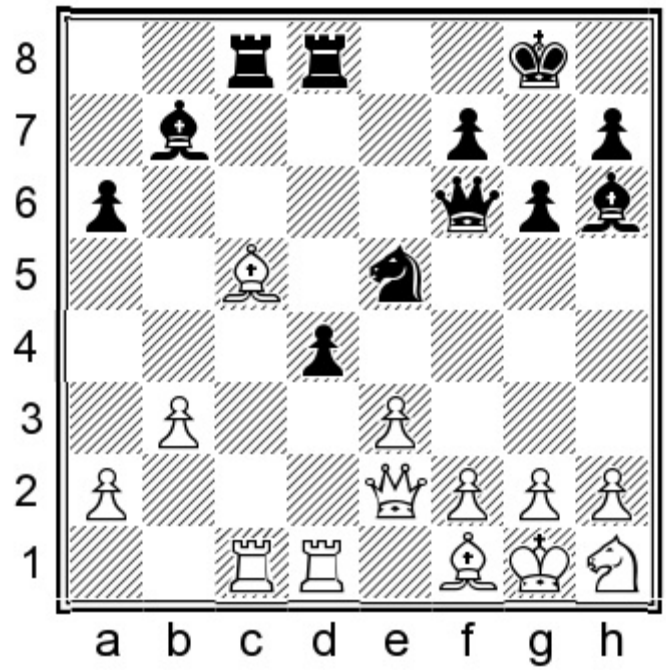
24.exd4?!

Almost imperceptibly we have arrived at the critical moment! White should of course have rejected this move, but what he ought to have done instead is a much more complicated question. He has quite a wide choice:

a) The refutation of 24.♗b2?! requires no great effort: 24...♕e6!? (Black could also very well choose the simple 24...dxe3 25.fxe3 ♕g5∓ with a powerful attack) 25.h3 ♗f3! (a beautiful blow, clearly stronger than 25...d3? 26.♕d2) 26.gxf3 d3 and Black has a big advantage.

b) 24.♗xc5?

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24...♗f3!

Which piece to throw in on f3 is a constant dilemma for Black in these positions; here he must decide in favour of the bishop.

The tempting 24...♘f3†? meets with a curious refutation. If Black answers 25.gxf3 with 25...♗xf3?, he loses outright to 26.♗e7! – the sort of move you can easily miss! If instead 25...♕g5†, then 26.♘g3 ♖xc5 27.f4±.

25.♕xa6□

25.gxf3 loses to 25...d3!.

25...♖c6!

This demands precise calculation, but it is much stronger the line indicated by Botvinnik: 25...♕xa6 26.♗xa6 ♗xd1 27.♗xc8 ♖xc8 28.♖xd1 ♖xc5 29.exd4 ♖d5∓

26.♕a3 ♗xd1 27.♗e7

After 27.♖xd1 ♖xc5 28.♕xc5, Black has the decisive 28...♕g5!–+, and the knight check on f3 will cost White his queen.

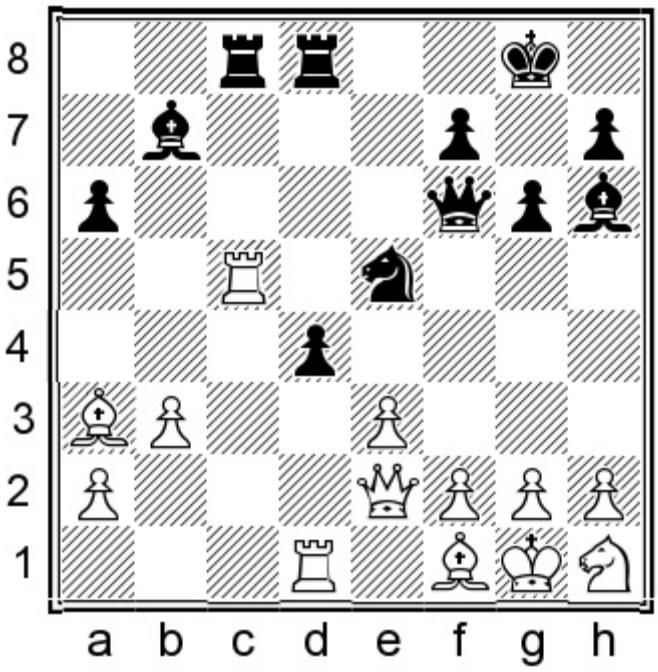
27...♕e6! 28.♗xd8 dxe3 29.♖xd1 ♕g4 30.♗e2 ♕xe2 31.♖f1 ♕g4

White's position is pitiful – mate will inevitably follow soon.

c) 24.♖xc5!?

This also leads to interesting complications.

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24...♖xc5

In practical play it would be very difficult to make the right choice between this move and the very tempting 24...dxe3, but the latter brings Black no special dividends: 25.h3! ♘f3† 26.gxf3 ♖xc5 27.♗xc5 ♖xd1 28.♕xd1 ♕g5† 29.♘g3 ♕xc5 30.♔g2 exf2 31.♕d7∓ White has quite good chances of repelling the opponent's onslaught.

25.♗xc5 d3!

Better than 25...♘f3†? 26.gxf3 and now it is most unfortunate that 26...♗xf3??, as given by Botvinnik, fails to the tactical stroke that we have already seen: 27.♗e7!! and it is White who wins! Instead 26...♕g5†!? 27.♘g3 ♕xc5 28.♕c4 would be unclear.

26.♕d2 ♖d5!

Black brings the rook across to the kingside.

27.♕b4

At least this doesn't lose at once, as does 27.b4?? ♘f3† 28.gxf3 ♖g5† 29.♘g3 ♕xf3–+.

27...♕c6!

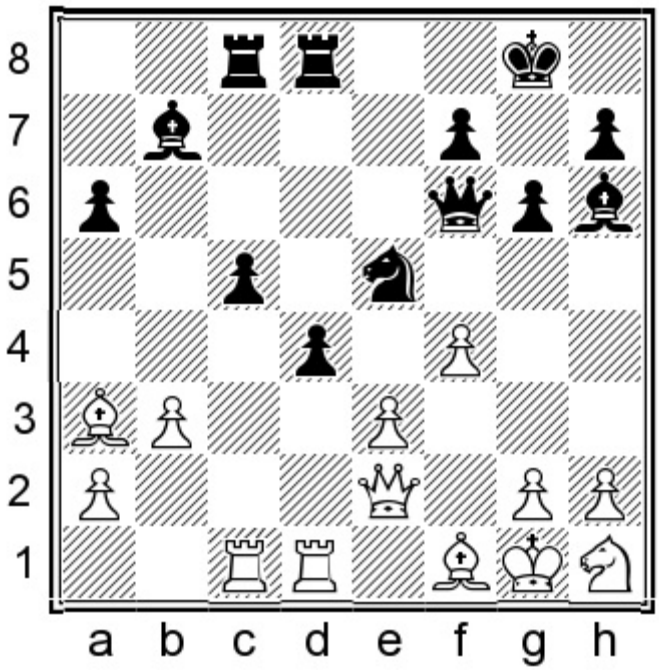
More convincing than 27...♘f3† 28.gxf3 ♕xf3 29.e4□ 29...♖xc5 30.♖xd3 ♕xe4 31.♕xe4 ♗xe4 32.♖d7∓.

28.♗e7 ♖d7 29.♘g3 a5 30.♕c5 ♕e6 31.♗h4 f6!

And there appears to be no way for White to save his bishop. This variation may not be all forced, but it is instructive enough.

d) 24.f4!

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Botvinnik took a sceptical view of this move, but it seems to me that it practically rids White of his problems − or at least it can lead to utterly wild complications with unpredictable consequences. And that undoubtedly benefits the weaker side − fishing in troubled waters, you can always hope to land a catch! Black has to withdraw his knight from the centre, and there are two ways to do this: 24...♘d7 or 24...♘c6. Let us look at how the game might then continue.

d1) 24...♘d7

Botvinnik's own choice.

25.♘f2!

An excellent tactical chance.

On 25.exd4? ♗xf4 26.dxc5 ♘e5, Black's attack is irresistible.

25...dxe3

Or 25...♕b6 26.♕d2!? dxe3 27.♕xe3 ♗g7 28.♗c4 ♗d4 29.♖xd4! cxd4 30.♕e7⇄ and it's hard to believe that the white pieces were so passive just a few moves ago!

26.♘g4 ♕xf4□ 27.♖c4

27.♘xh6†!? ♕xh6 28.♖c3⇄ is not bad either.

27...♕g5□ 28.♘xh6† ♕xh6 29.♗c1

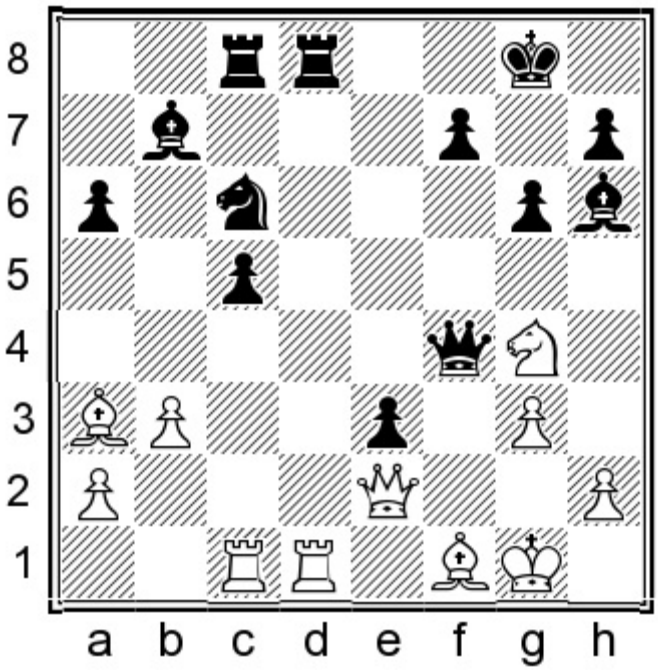
White has very good compensation for the pawn. At any rate, the most that Black can fight for is a nominal plus.

d2) 24...♘c6 25.♘f2!?

If White wants to avoid the complications, he can choose the relatively simple 25.♗xc5!? dxe3 26.♗xe3 ♗xf4 27.♗xf4 ♕xf4 28.♖c4∞, but for the purposes of analysis I won't allow him to do so!

25...dxe3 26.♘g4 ♕xf4 27.g3

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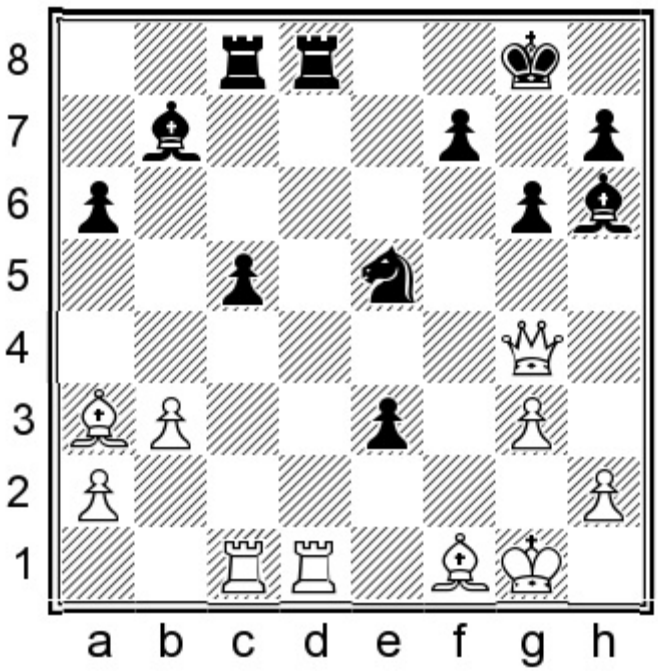


27...♕xg4!?

Brilliant, and the only chance to fight for a plus! By sacrificing his queen Black hopes to launch a second wave of the attack, which may turn into a veritable tsunami!

The pusillanimous 27...♕g5 leads to a drawish endgame after the forced 28.♖xc5 ♖xd1 29.♕xd1 ♖d8! 30.♖xg5 ♖xd1 31.♘xh6† ♔g7 32.♘f5†□ 32...♔f6 33.♘xe3 ♖xf1† 34.♔xf1 ♔xg5=.

28.♕xg4 ♘e5



Now the poor white king could easily suffer a heart attack! A rook, two bishops, a knight and the e3-pawn are all playing their part in Black's attacking force, and their actions are splendidly co-ordinated. Around the king there are several weaknesses; the f3-square alone is worth a great deal. There are clearly going to be plenty of checks, and it will be no surprise at all if one of them administers mate! But above all White must keep calm and not panic! He can now choose

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between the following continuations:

d21) 29.♖xd8†? ♖xd8 30.♖d1 ♖d2! 31.♖xd2 exd2 32.♕e2 d1=♕! 33.♕xe5 (being mated by 33.♕xd1?? ♗e3# would be a real pain!) 33...♕d5!? 34.♕xd5 ♗e3† 35.♔g2 ♗xd5† 36.♔h3 a5 and Black has reasonable winning chances.

d22) 29.♕a4? ♖d2!? 30.♖xd2□ 30...exd2 31.♗h3

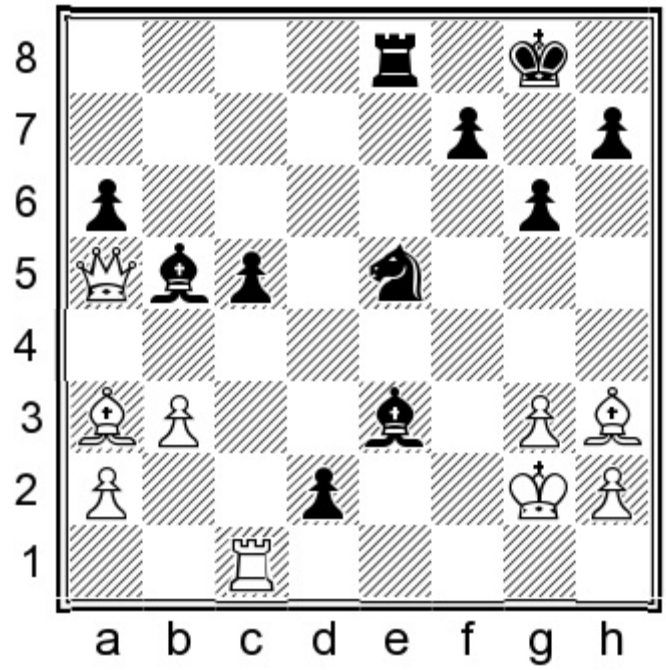
In the event of 31.♗g2? ♗e3† 32.♔h1 dxc1=♕† 33.♗xc1 ♗xg2† 34.♔xg2 ♗xc1 35.♕xa6 ♖d8–+ Black has too many pieces for the queen.

31...♗c6! 32.♕a5

The same verdict can be passed on 32.♕xa6? ♖a8 33.♕b6 dxc1=♕† 34.♗xc1 ♗xc1 35.♕xc5 ♗b2 36.♗g2 ♖d8–+, when the white king has little chance of emerging onto dry land.

32...♗e3† 33.♔f1 ♗b5† 34.♔g2 ♖e8!!

White has no counterplay, so Black doesn't need to hurry − the king now has no chance of getting across to the relatively safe queenside.



35.♖a1 ♗c6† 36.♔f1 ♘f3 37.♗b2 c4!

A pretty concluding stroke – now the bishop on e3 can get at the white queen.

38.bxc4

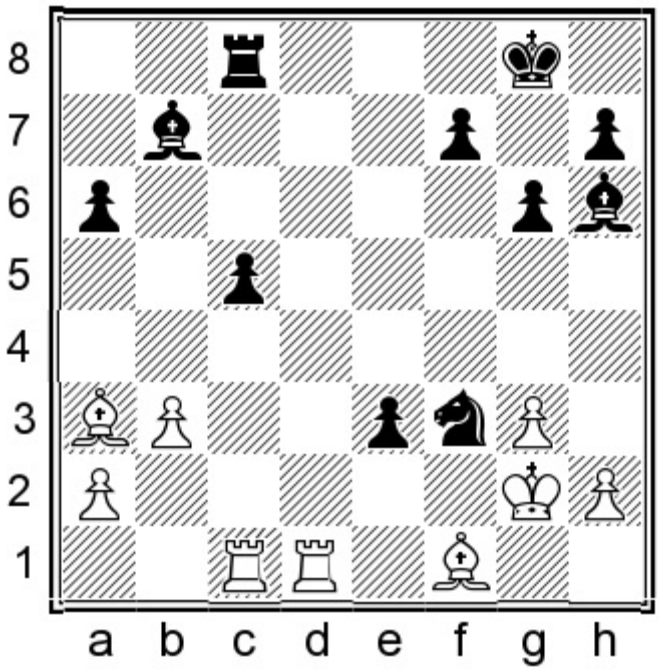
38.♕xa6 ♘xh2† 39.♔e2 ♗f3# is a variation only to be dreamt about! Incidentally, it involves the c4-pawn taking a direct part in the attack!

38...♘xh2† 39.♔e2 ♗b6† 40.♕e5 ♖xe5† 41.♗xe5 ♗a5

There is no defence against a check on f3, which means the game is at an end.

d23) 29.♕xc8! ♘f3† 30.♔g2 ♖xc8

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31.♗e2!

The move to save the game!

Not 31.♖xc5? ♘d2†! 32.♔h3 ♖xc5 33.♗xc5 ♗f3 34.♖e1 ♘xf1 35.♖xf1 e2 36.♖b1 ♗d2 37.♗f2 f5, when White faces a tough struggle for the draw.

31...♘d2† 32.♔g1

Naturally Black can draw, but his winning attempt has clearly come to a dead end. I find these variations astoundingly interesting and beautiful! Of course, at move 25 it would be simpler for White to play 25.♗xc5!?, when he wouldn't have to steer between Scylla and Charybdis in order to achieve equality.

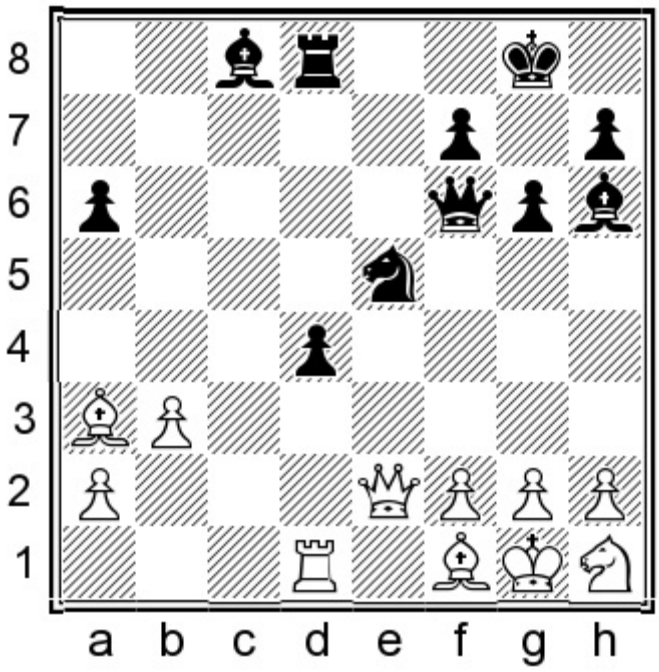
24...cxd4

As experienced players say, a pawn that has crossed the equator of the chessboard is no longer isolated, but passed!

25.♖xc8 ♗xc8

"The last difficult move in the game. After 25...♖xc8 26.♗b2 White could still have held on. The rook definitely needs to be left on d8, where it supports the passed pawn, and in addition Black gains a vital tempo, since 26...♗g4 is threatened." That is what Botvinnik wrote, and I fully agree with the great Champion's view! I would just like to observe that the path to victory is still not as simple as all that.

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26.♖e1??

This is the move that surely amounts to the decisive error. For better or worse, White had to continue: 26.h3!

Depriving the enemy bishop of the g4-square.

26...♗b7

26...d3 27.♕e4 d2 28.♘g3!∞ doesn't look too dangerous for White.

27.♗b2 ♖e8!

27...♗g7 28.♖xd4 ♘f3† 29.gxf3 ♖xd4 30.♘g3!? is less convincing.

28.♗xd4

After 28.♕c2 Black's attack is irresistible: 28...♘f3†! 29.gxf3 ♕xf3 30.♘g3 ♗e3! 31.fxe3 ♕xg3† 32.♗g2 dxe3 33.♖d7 ♗c6! with an easy win.

28...♗f3! 29.♗xe5 ♗xe2 30.♗xf6 ♗xd1 31.♘g3 ♗f4

The ending is probably won, but Black's victory will not be a trivial matter.

26...d3!–+ 27.♕d1

After 27.♕xe5 ♕xe5 28.♖xe5 d2–+ there is no stopping the pawn.

27...♗g4 28.♕a1

In the event of 28.f3 ♗xf3 29.gxf3 ♘xf3† 30.♔g2 ♘xe1† 31.♕xe1 d2 32.♕d1 ♕c6†–+ White's position is only to be pitied.

28...d2 29.♖xe5 d1=♕

There was a quicker win with 29...♗g7! 30.♗b2 d1=♕ 31.♖e8† ♖xe8 32.♗xf6 ♕xa1–+.

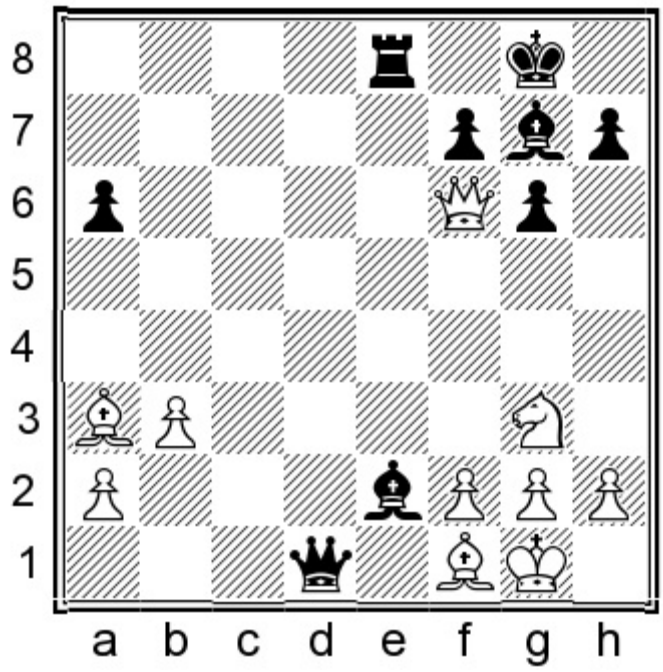
30.♖e8† ♖xe8 31.♕xf6 ♗e2

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The consequences of 31...♖e1 32.♘g3 ♗e2 33.h3 ♗g7!–+ are similar.

32.♘g3 ♗g7!

Accuracy to the end.



33.♕c6 ♗b5 34.♕c1 ♕xc1 35.♗xc1 ♖e1 36.♗e3 ♖a1

36...h5 37.h4 ♗e5 also wins with no problems.

37.a4 ♗d3 38.f4 ♖b1 39.♔f2 ♗xf1 40.♘xf1 ♖xb3

0–1

An excellent win by the future World Champion. Of course Black's play was by no means perfect, but at any rate the game appears splendidly modern. Black attacked the weak spots e3 and f2 – an attack in which he wouldn't have shrunk from any necessary sacrifices – and successfully combined this with the advance of his d-pawn.

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Mark Taimanov – Lev Psakhis

Moscow 1981

Right at the start of 1981, an extremely interesting event took place in Moscow. It was a match-tournament between four teams: the national first and second teams, a veterans' team and a youth team. The first team, headed by World Champion Karpov, was incredibly strong, and of course it was quite impossible for the others to contend with it. I was playing for the youth team (what a long time ago this all was!), which had Kasparov on top board and Artur Yusupov on second. I was down on board three. Only a month before, I had gained the title of USSR Champion for the first time in my career; I was young, absolutely sure of myself, and eager for battle! My opponent was the illustrious and very experienced grandmaster Mark Evgenyevich Taimanov, whose best achievements were already behind him, but who was nonetheless a danger to any opponent, even the strongest. I suspect he was very keen to put this young upstart in his place, so it isn't surprising that the game turned out so interestingly.

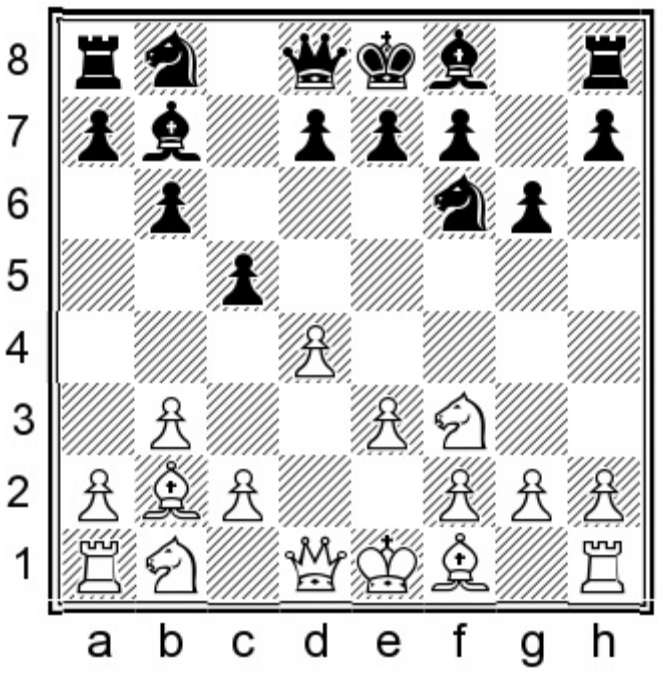
1.♘f3

In those years, as I now understand him, Mark Taimanov was steering clear of theoretical disputes. He endeavoured to reach positions that were little known (to his opponents), where he felt he was in his element.

1...c5 2.b3 b6

At that time I was very fond of posting my bishops on b7 and g7, and would try to do this at the very first opportunity.

3.♗b2 ♗b7 4.e3 ♘f6 5.d4 g6



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This move may not be so bad, but today my hand would simply refuse to reach out and make it! I

don’t much like the position arising after 6.dxc5!? bxc5 7.♗xf6! exf6 8.c4 ♗g7 9.♘c3 f5 10.♖c1, when Black has a number of weaknesses on the d-file. He can probably manage to defend, but how he could play for a win I just cannot imagine. However, I well remember playing 5...g6 almost instantly, so I would obviously have had some ideas and plans prepared.

6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.c4 e6

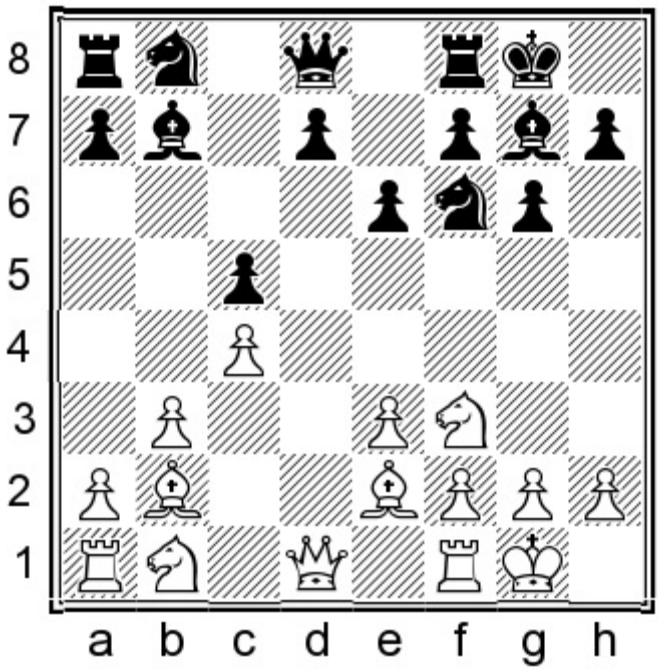
At this point it dawned on me what opening we were playing – a Reti with colours reversed. I don’t know whether this realization gave me extra strength and energy, but in principle the game became simpler to handle!

If Black is intent on levelling the chances, he can choose the rather boring – but strong – continuation: 8...cxd4 9.♘xd4 (or 9.exd4 d5 10.♖e1 ♘c6 11.♘a3 e6 12.♗f1 ♖c8 with equality, Yermolinsky – Gorelov, Volgodonsk 1981) 9...d5!? 10.♘c3 ♘c6 11.♘xd5 ♘xd5 12.cxd5 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♕xd4 ♕xd5 15.♕xd5 ♗xd5= and a draw was soon agreed in Makarichev − Kasparov, USSR Championship 1979. The very young Kasparov, up against an experienced Grandmaster, had no objection at all to a draw.

9.dxc5

Black similarly has no cause for worry after 9.♘c3 ♕e7 10.♖c1 ♖d8 11.♕c2 ♘c6 12.♖fd1 d6 13.♕b1 ♖ac8= Hodgson – Psakhis, Yerevan 1986.

9...bxc5



The opening stage of the game is over, and you can hardly say that White has managed to obtain any advantage whatsoever. Black’s pieces are excellently placed, and he can choose what type of position he wants to play. In the first place, a game involving the central advance ...d5 is possible, and secondly the restrained ...d6 doesn’t look at all bad either.

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10.♘c3 ♕e7 11.♕d2?!

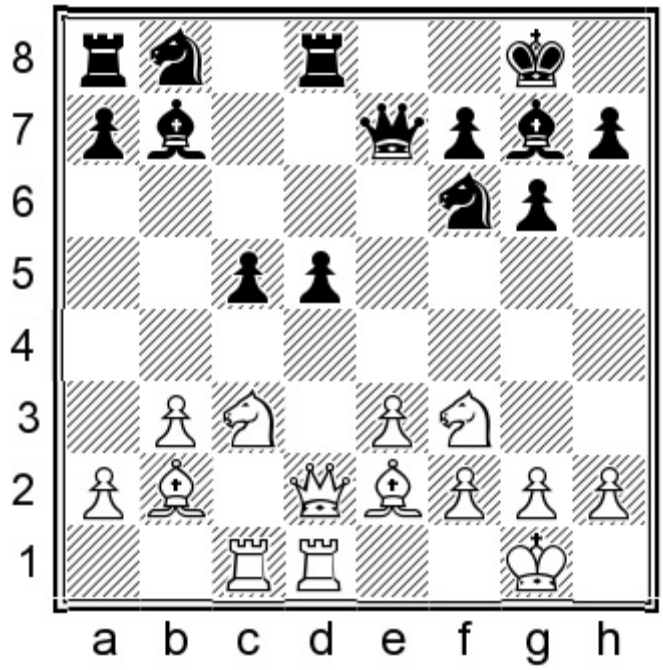
I am not at all keen on this move; it seems to me that on d2 the queen is a good deal more vulnerable than it would be after the standard 11.♕c2. But then I know what happened in the rest of the game, so I willingly concede that my view is a little biased!

11...♖d8 12.♖fd1 d5!

The position of the queen on d2 is positively provoking me to go into action! At the same time, the modest 12...d6 would be quite sufficient for comfortable equality.

13.cxd5 exd5 14.♖ac1?!

The provocations continue! The configuration of the white queen and the rook on c1 would induce even the most boring "technician" to consider searching for a combination, and I certainly didn't need to be asked twice! In White's place I would have considered 14.♕c2!?, thereby admitting that not all my actions had been ideal.



What would you now play for Black?

14...♗h6!

My study of the Sokolsky – Botvinnik game has borne fruit! The bishop leaves the long diagonal in order to prepare for a breakthrough in the centre with ...d4.

Black could play 14...♘c6 with the same end in view, but after 15.♘a4 ♘e4 16.♕e1!? I didn't succeed in finding anything concrete – the pawn on f2 is securely defended, and the white pieces are not at all badly placed.

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15.♘a4 ♘e4

Not falling for the simple little trap: 15...♘bd7? 16.♘xc5! ♘xc5 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♖xc5± leaves Black a pawn down for no compensation.

16.♕c2

The modest and safe 16.♕e1!? was worth thinking about.

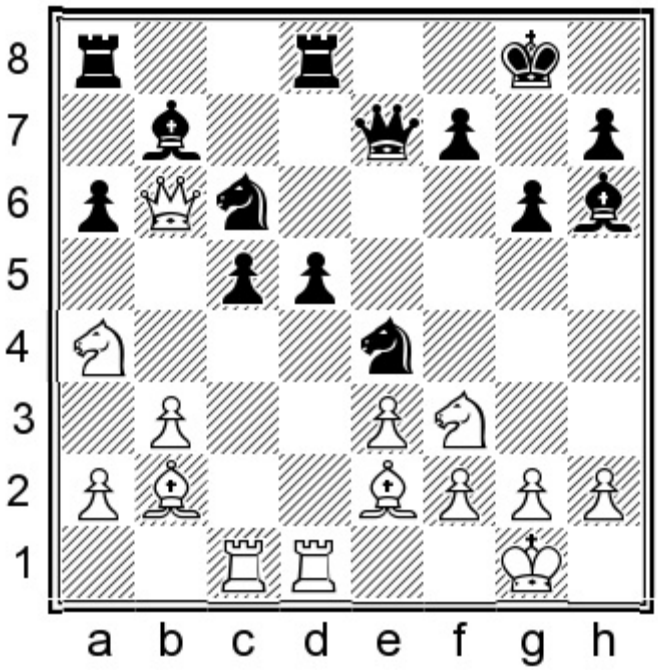
16.♕a5

This optimistic move leads to wholly unclear complications.

16...♘c6

16...♘d7 looks natural, but meets with the rather unpleasant 17.♕c7!.

17.♕b5 a6 18.♕b6



18...♖d6!

The rook sets up an ambush – the time for sacrifices has not yet arrived. This cool move is much stronger than the extremely alluring 18...♘xf2? 19.♔xf2 ♗xe3† 20.♔f1 c4, when Black's hopes are unfortunately dashed by the relatively straightforward 21.♗a3! ♕e8 22.♘c5±. But how easy this would be to miss!

19.♖xc5!

Undoubtedly preferable to 19.♘xc5 ♘xf2 20.♕xb7 ♘xd1 21.♖xd1 ♕xe3† 22.♔f1 ♖e8 and Black has a strong initiative.

19...♖e8! 20.♗d3 ♘d4↑

It isn't at all simple for White to parry his opponent's threats successfully.

16...♘d7

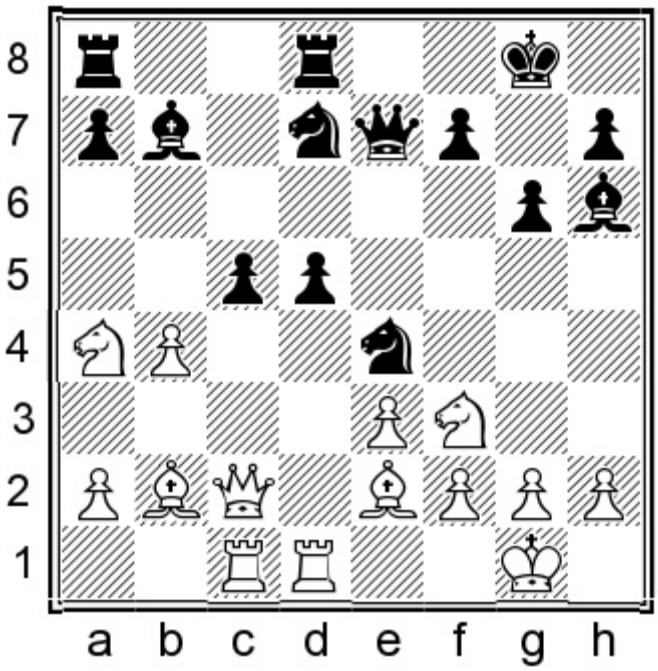
The premature 16...♘xf2?! 17.♔xf2 ♗xe3† 18.♔f1 ♘d7 19.♖b1± rather favours White; at any rate I couldn't find any direct continuation of the attack.

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17.b4!?

On 17.♖e1!? I intended to continue simply with 17...♖ac8!? preparing ...♘b6. On the other hand 17...♘xf2 18.♔xf2 ♗xe3† 19.♔f1 ♗xc1 20.♗xc1∞ brings Black no particular dividends. It seems that for now, the threat of ...♘xf2 must remain a beautiful dream – an excellent illustration of the maxim that the threat is stronger than the execution!

Sensing danger, Taimanov starts a fight to control the key square d4, and is prepared to pay a small material price to attain this end.



17...d4!?

One thing I knew for certain was that 17...c4? was out! After 18.♗d4± White would have a pleasant and comfortable position.

Things are more complicated after the greedy: 17...cxb4!? (but who said that greed in moderate doses was such a bad quality?) 18.♕d3 (an interesting possibility is 18.♕c7?!, though after 18...♘xf2! 19.♔xf2 ♗xe3† 20.♔f1 ♖ab8! Black's threats seem to me to be quite dangerous) 18...♘df6 Black keeps an extra pawn; however, White has definite compensation.

18.bxc5?!

White had a very difficult choice to make: should he take on c5 with the pawn or the knight? I honestly haven't the faintest idea how many variations Mark Taimanov worked out. Personally I would rely entirely on my intuition. Incidentally I am absolutely convinced that calculating all (or even most) of the variations in a fairly complex position is an impossible task. Either there isn't enough time, or, most often, the engine of the brain starts "pinking" (of course I speak only for myself!). So try to put faith in your intuition – in the last analysis it won't let you down!

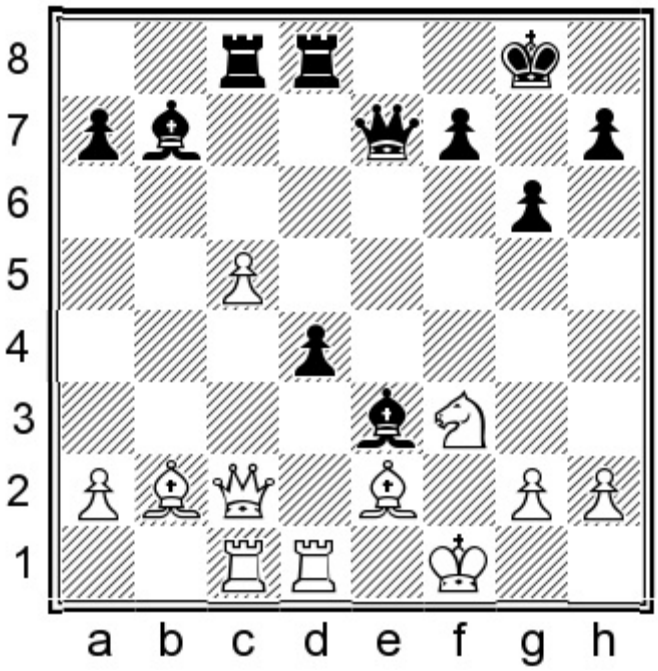
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18.♘xc5 ♘dxc5

Clearly better than 18...♘exc5?! 19.bxc5 ♗e4 20.♕c4 dxe3 21.♕c3 with excellent play for White.

19.bxc5 dxe3

Black can try sacrificing a piece in a different way, with 19...♘xf2 20.♔xf2 ♗xe3† 21.♔f1 ♖ac8!?.



But this doesn't work. The cool-headed 22.♖xd4! ♗xf3 23.♖xd8† ♖xd8 24.♗xf3 ♖d2 25.♕e4 compels Black to forget about his Napoleonic designs and begin a tough struggle for the draw.

20.c6 exf2† 21.♔f1 ♗xc1

White would face fewer problems after 21...♗xc6? 22.♕xc6 ♗xc1 23.♕xc1.

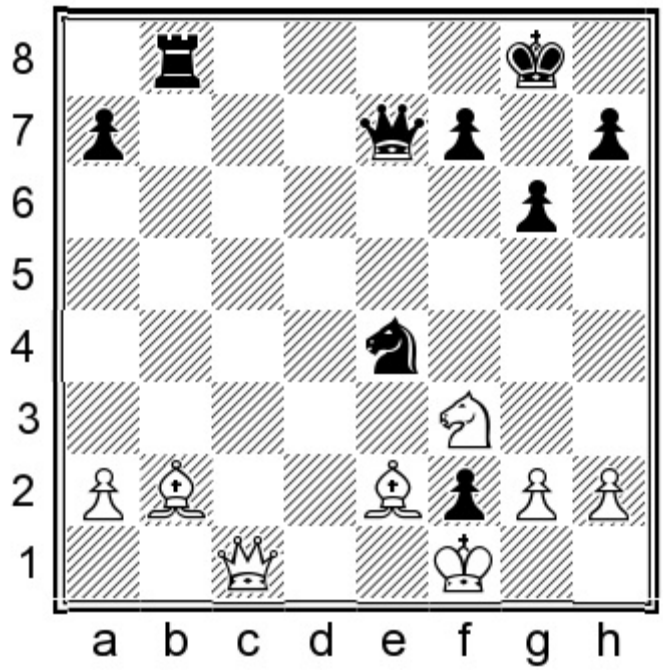
22.cxb7 ♖xd1† 23.♕xd1 ♖e8 24.b8=♕

24.♗xc1? loses at once to 24...♘c3 25.♕d3 ♘xe2 26.♗e3 ♘f4!–+.

24.♕xc1 ♘g3† 25.♔xf2 ♘xe2 26.♕c4 ♕xb7∓ doesn't leave White with much hope either.

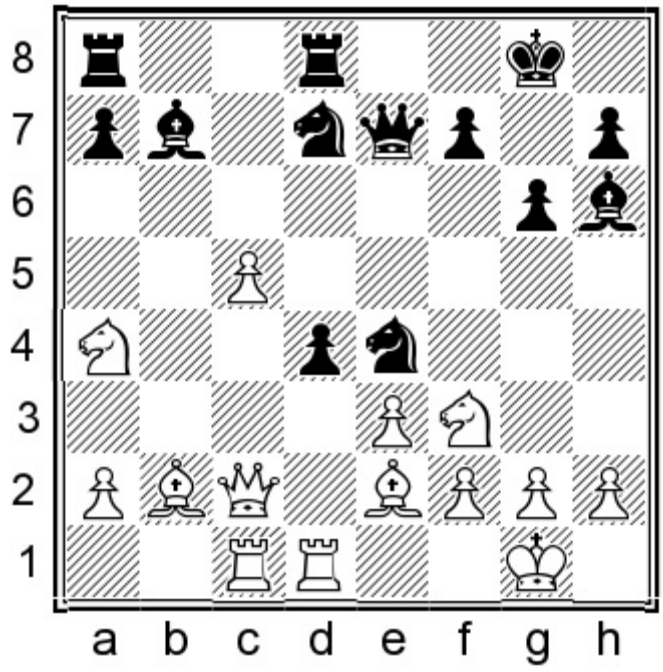
24...♖xb8 25.♕xc1

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25...♕b4!∓

White's prospects are fairly dismal!



An interesting question is what Black should do now.

18...dxe3?!

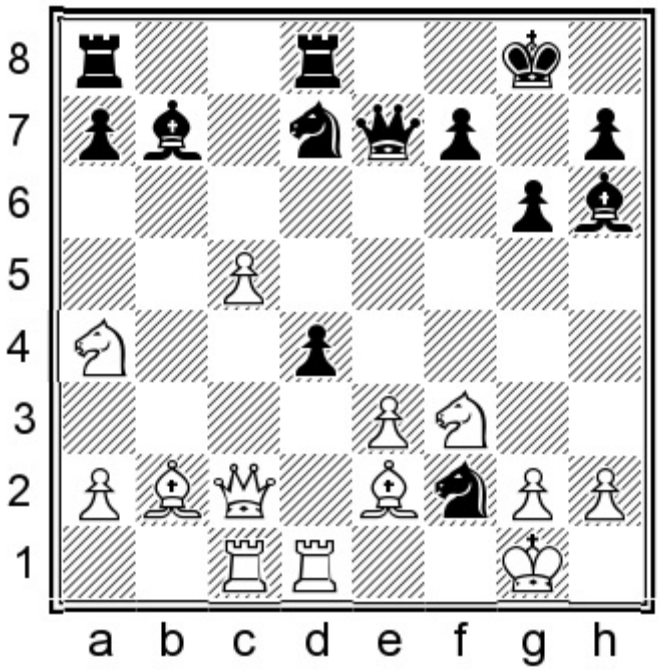
At this moment I would have done well to recall Kotov's procedure, which is popular especially in the West – the method of looking for "candidate moves". Perhaps in that case I wouldn't have settled for the game move, which frankly was the only move I considered.

The stronger alternative was:

18...♘xf2!

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White is faced with a difficult choice:



19.♔xf2

This is the most tenacious, though Black remains in charge. The other variations are not too complicated.

19.exd4 ♘xd1 (simplest, though Black can also win easily by 19...♘g4!? 20.♖f1□ 20...♘e3 21.♕d2 ♘f5 22.♕c2 ♗xc1 23.♖xc1 ♕e3† 24.♔h1 ♖ab8!?–+ with a material and positional plus) 20.♖xd1 ♘f6–+

Black wins just as easily after 19.c6!? ♘g4! 20.♔h1 ♖ac8 21.♗b5 ♗xe3 22.♖f1 ♘de5–+.

19.♖f1 doesn't save White either: 19...♗e4! 20.♕c4 ♗xf3 21.♗xf3 ♘e5 22.♕e2 ♘xf3† 23.♕xf3 ♘d3–+ and the game will hardly last longer than a few more moves.

19...♗xe3† 20.♔f1 ♘e5! 21.c6

21.♗xd4 ♘g4! 22.c6 ♗xd4 23.♖d3 ♗a6 is just as hopeless for White.

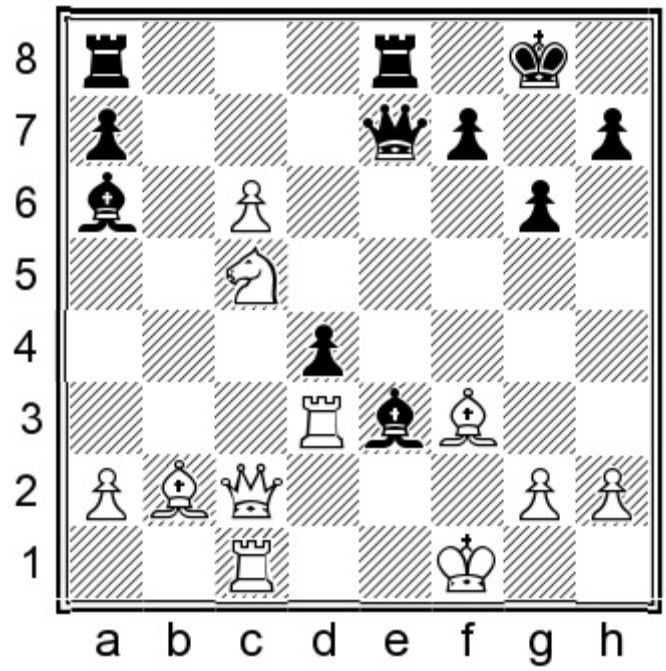
21...♘xf3 22.♗xf3 ♗a6† 23.♖d3 ♖e8!

The most precise move. The rook thwarts all the white monarch's hopes of getting out of the danger zone, while the queen can be used for other purposes

24.♖cd1

On 24.♘c5, a pretty little combination sweeps nearly all the white pieces from the board:

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24...♕xc5! 25.♕xc5 ♗xd3† 26.♔e1 ♗xc1† 27.♔f2 ♗xb2 28.c7 ♖ac8 29.♗b7 ♗f5–+

24...♕h4 25.g3

25.h3 ♕f4–+

25...♕h3† 26.♕g2 ♕f5–+

Black has an easy win.

Why didn't I play that way? I was pleased, even *too* pleased, with 18...dxe3?!, and thought there was no need to waste time and energy looking for alternative continuations. This mistaken decision could have had far-reaching consequences.

19.c6 exf2† 20.♔f1

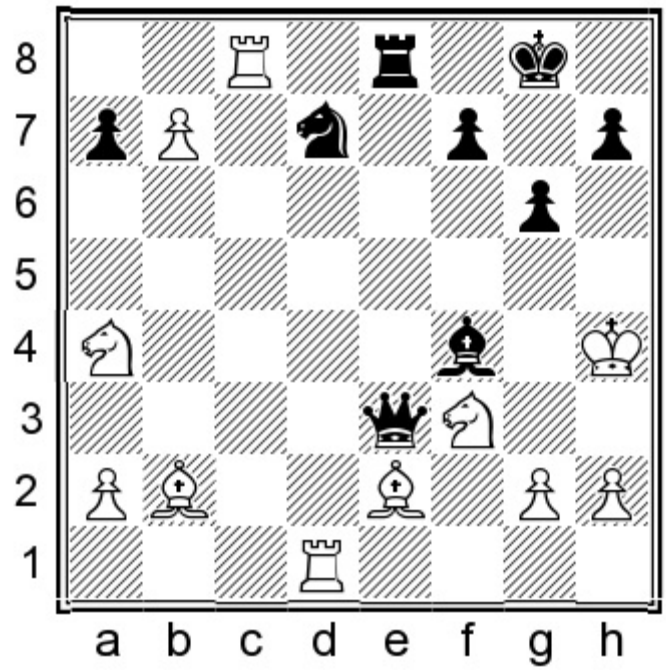
The best defence; now at least the bishop on e2 will be safely guarded.

After 20.♔h1 Black's path to victory is not at all difficult: 20...♖ac8!? 21.c7 (after 21.cxb7 ♖xc2 22.♖xc2 ♖b8 23.♖c8† ♗f8–+ the pawn on b7 is much less dangerous than it looks at first sight) 21...♗xc1 22.cxd8=♕† (22.♕xc1 ♖e8–+) 22...♕xd8 23.♕b3 ♕c7! and Black wins easily.

20...♗xc6!?

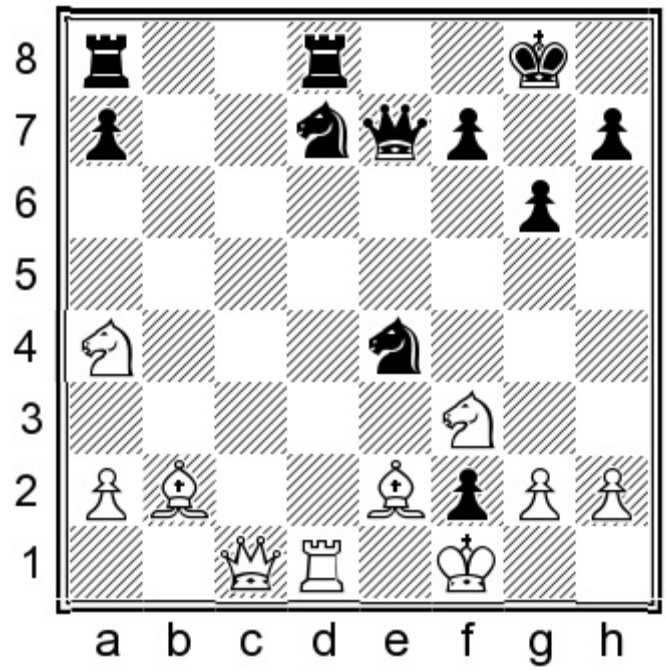
I was afraid to play the natural move 20...♖ac8? in view of 21.cxb7! ♖xc2 22.♖xc2. Here an amusing point is that the following very interesting line leads to a draw virtually by force: 22...♖e8 (22...♗f4 23.♖c8⇄) 23.♖c8! ♘g3† 24.♔xf2 ♕e3† 25.♔g3 ♗f4† 26.♔h4

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A truly fearless and irreproachable warrior! 26...♕e7† 27.♔h3 ♕e6† 28.♔h4= The white king looks just too vulnerable, yet amazingly Black has no decisive continuation of the attack!

21.♕xc6 ♗xc1 22.♕xc1



22...♘df6!

The splendid team of knight on e4 and pawn on f2 is giving the white king plenty to worry about, but mate cannot be achieved by just the two of them – so Black brings up his reserves.

It was also worth considering 22...♖ac8!? with a small advantage.

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23.♘c3!?

Probably the most accurate move; the knight had nothing to do on the edge of the board.

I am not so keen on 23.♘c5, which can be countered by simple means: 23...♖xd1† 24.♗xd1 ♘xc5 25.♗xf6 ♕xf6 26.♕xc5 ♕a6† 27.♗e2 ♕xa2 28.♗c4 ♕b1† 29.♔xf2 ♕b6 and Black has good winning chances.

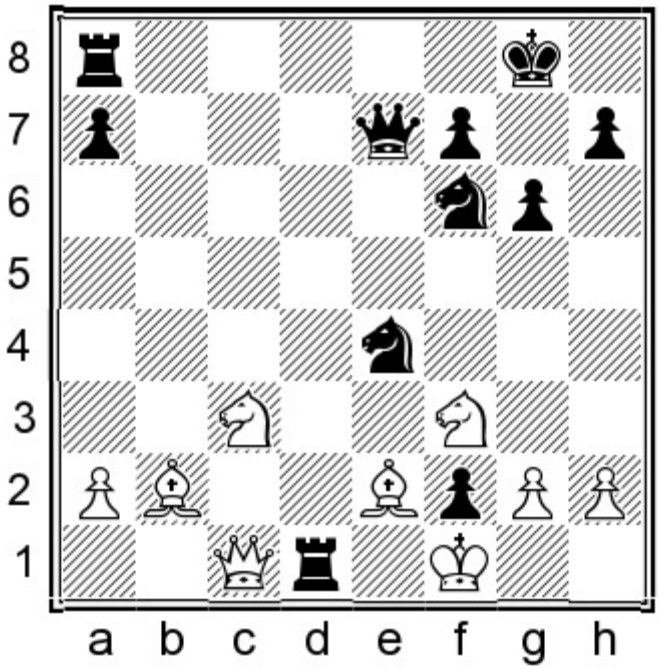
On the other hand, after 23.♗xf6 ♘xf6 24.♖xd8† ♖xd8 25.♕c5 ♕e6, Black's advantage isn't all that great.

23...♖xd1†

After his serious error on move 18, Black has encountered major problems in his fight for a plus. All the weak squares around the white king are safely defended, and the two sides' chances can probably be rated as roughly equal.

For example, 23...♘g4 24.♖xd8† ♖xd8 25.♘xe4 ♕xe4 26.h3! promises Black no gains.

23...♖ac8 leads to a similar result: 24.♘xe4! ♖xc1 25.♘xf6† ♕xf6 26.♗xf6 ♖dxd1† 27.♗xd1 ♖xd1† 28.♔xf2 ♖c1 29.a3 with a level ending.



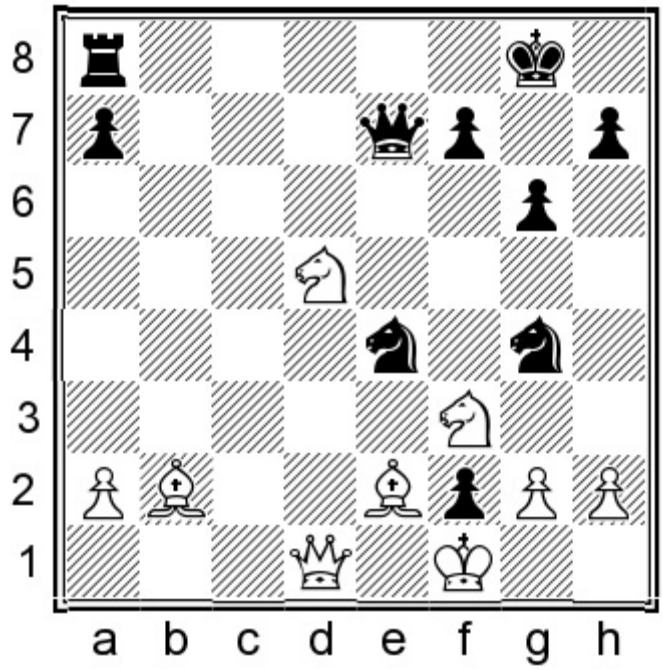
24.♘xd1?

Now it is White's turn to go wrong. The Leningrad Grandmaster has suffered a good deal because of the weakness of e3, and at the first opportunity he tries to take the square under control. Yet it was more important for him to keep his old enemy – the e4-knight – in his sights!

Capturing with the queen doesn't solve his problems either:
24.♕xd1 ♘g4!? 25.♘d5

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White loses entertainingly after 25.♕d4? ♘e3†! 26.♕xe3 ♘g3†, when neither 27.♔xf2? ♘h1†! nor 27.hxg3 ♕xe3 28.♘d5 ♕h6 29.♘f6† ♔f8–+ leaves any room for doubt about the result of the game.



25...♕b4!

A very pretty move, which would be so easy to overlook!

Black's gains are not so great in the event of 25...♕c5 26.♕d4□ 26...♕xd4 27.♗xd4 ♖d8 28.♗c4 ♔f8, with only a small plus.

26.♗c1 ♕a5! 27.♗f4

After 27.♗c4 ♖d8 28.g3□ 28...♕c5 29.♗b3 the easiest way to win is 29...♖d7!–+, depriving White of his last chance based on a check on f6, and setting up the unanswerable threat of 30...♘c3.

27...♖d8 28.♘e7† ♔g7 29.♕c1 ♕c3! 30.g3 ♕xc1† 31.♗xc1 ♔f8! 32.♘c6 ♖c8 33.♘fd4 ♘xh2† 34.♔g2 f1=♕† 35.♗xf1 ♘xf1 36.♔xf1 ♘xg3†

And Black wins quickly. This variation is quite long but not too complicated; Black was only required to make one or two accurate moves.

However, 24.♗xd1! would have levelled the chances, for instance 24...♕b7 (24...♘d6 25.♗b3 ♖e8⇄) 25.♘xe4 ♘xe4 26.♗b3 ♖c8 with approximate equality.

24...♘g4!

Somehow, imperceptibly, Black has managed to create a number of extremely awkward threats. If he succeeds in eliminating just one white knight, then one of the black knights might deliver a humiliating mate. White is unable to make any use of the strength of his dark-squared bishop. So what is he to do now? Taimanov chooses what is undoubtedly the most natural continuation, bringing his queen to the defence of his poor king, who can hardly feel any better than a patient in a straitjacket!

25.♕f4

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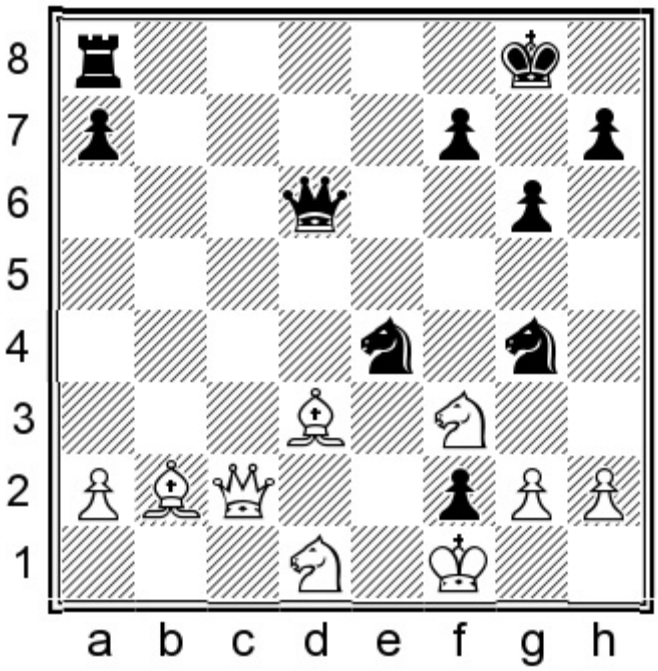
In order to get at the knight on e4 somehow or other, White could try:

25.♗d3

But Black has a very powerful retort available.

25...♕d6! 26.♕c2

26.♗xe4 ♕a6†! puts the white monarch out of his misery!



26...♕xh2!

It's hard to refrain from such a pretty move, even though 26...♖d8!–+ wins just as quickly.

27.♘xf2 ♘g3† 28.♔e1 ♖e8† 29.♔d1

After 29.♗e4 ♕xg2 the pin along the e-file is decisive.

29...♕xg2 30.♕c3 ♘xf2†

And Black quickly wins.

White might also try defending with:

25.g3 ♕e6!?

This move, preparing 26...♖c8 and at the same time eyeing the h3-square, is very strong, though Black has other lines that look no less convincing:

25...♕d6!? 26.♕f4 ♕xf4 27.gxf4 ♖d8–+

25...♘xh2† 26.♘xh2 ♘xg3† 27.♔xf2 ♘xe2 28.♕h6 f5 and Black's three passed pawns should ensure victory without trouble.

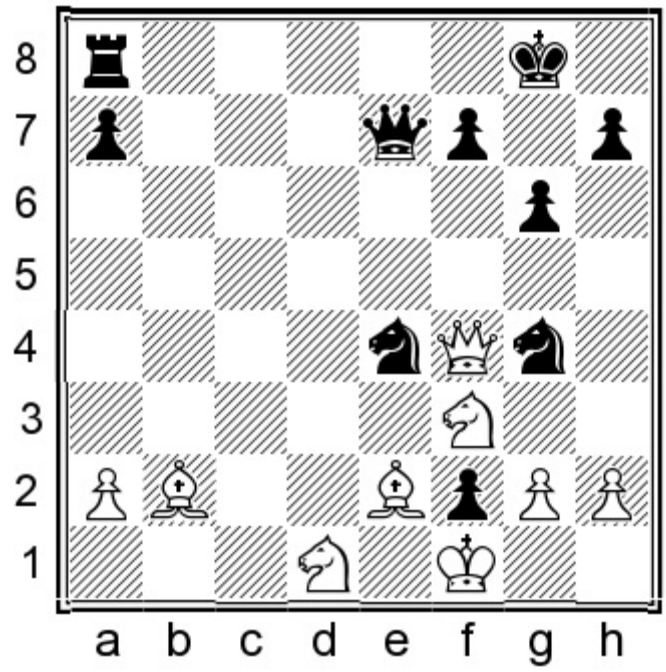
26.♔g2 ♖c8 27.♕f4 ♘xg3! 28.♗d3

28.♕d4 f6 brings White no relief either.

28...f1=♕† 29.♗xf1 ♘xf1 30.♔xf1 ♕d5–+

By attacking both white knights at once, Black assures himself of an easy win.

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25...♖e8!

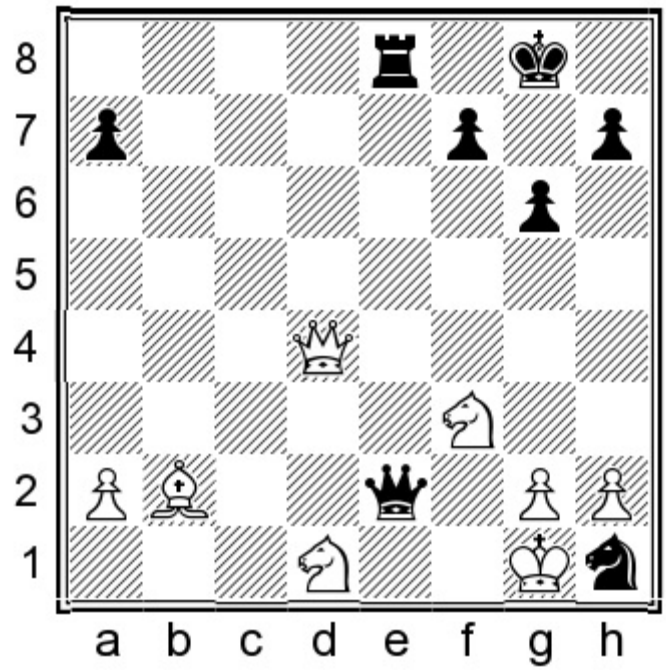
This move demanded a fair amount of effort and thinking time. On discovering it, I simply couldn't believe my eyes for quite a while!

26.♘e5

How else was White to continue? Finding the variation 26.♘d4 ♕h4! 27.♗xg4 ♘d2†! 28.♕xd2 ♖e1† wasn't at all complicated; and the same goes for 26.♗e5 ♘ef6!–+ with a decisive pin on the e-file.

Capturing the knight with 26.♕xg4 was undoubtedly the most thematic continuation. In reply, Black gives a couple of checks: 26...♘g3† 27.♔xf2 ♘h1†! 28.♔g1 ♕xe2 29.♕d4! (immediate resignation would be better than 29.♔xh1 ♕xd1† 30.♘g1 ♕xg4)

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White now threatens mate on the long diagonal, the knight on h1 is en prise, and Black appears to have no threats of his own! Was Black's entire conception incorrect, then? On reaching this point in my analysis I was somewhat nonplussed, but then suddenly I saw the brilliant idea of 29...♕e1†!! 30.♘xe1 ♖xe1#. To be honest, this mating pattern with a knight on h1 and a rook (or queen) on the first rank was something I had never come across before!

26...♕f6!

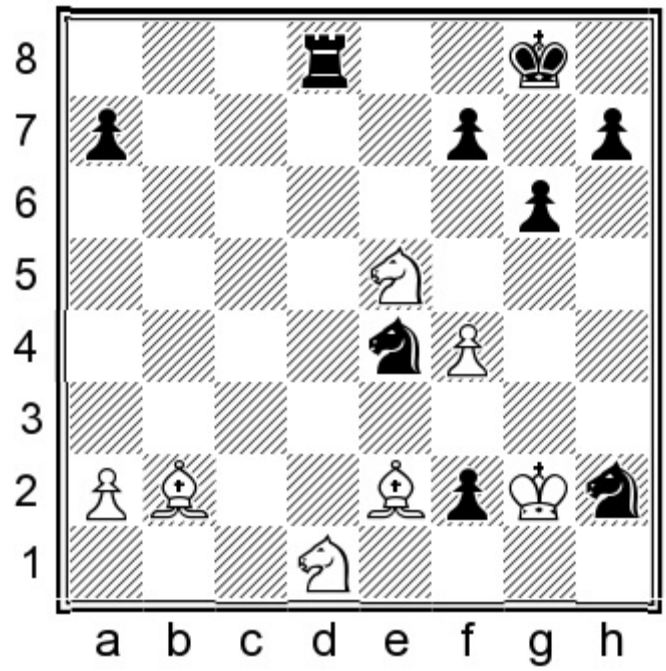
A simple little combination on the deflection theme. White has no defence, and the rest of the game is mere agony.

27.g3□

The variation 27.♕xg4 ♘d2# and its mirror image 27.♕xe4 ♘xh2# require no commentary!

27...♘xh2† 28.♔g2 ♕xf4 29.gxf4 ♖d8!–+

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The final accurate move. The threat is 30...♖xd1, and White's defensive set-up collapses. For me, the moment that all chess players love so dearly has arrived – the time for gathering in the harvest as the reward for work well done.

30.♘xf2

Variations such as 30.♘d3 f1=♕† 31.♗xf1 ♘xf1–+ and 30.♔xh2 ♖xd1 31.♔g2 ♖d2 32.♗d3 f1=♕†! 33.♔xf1 ♘g3† 34.♔e1 ♖xb2 can usually be calculated in a couple of minutes at most.

30...♖d2! 31.♘xe4 ♖xe2† 32.♘f2 ♖xb2 33.♘ed3 ♖xa2 34.♔xh2 a5 35.♔g3 a4

0–1

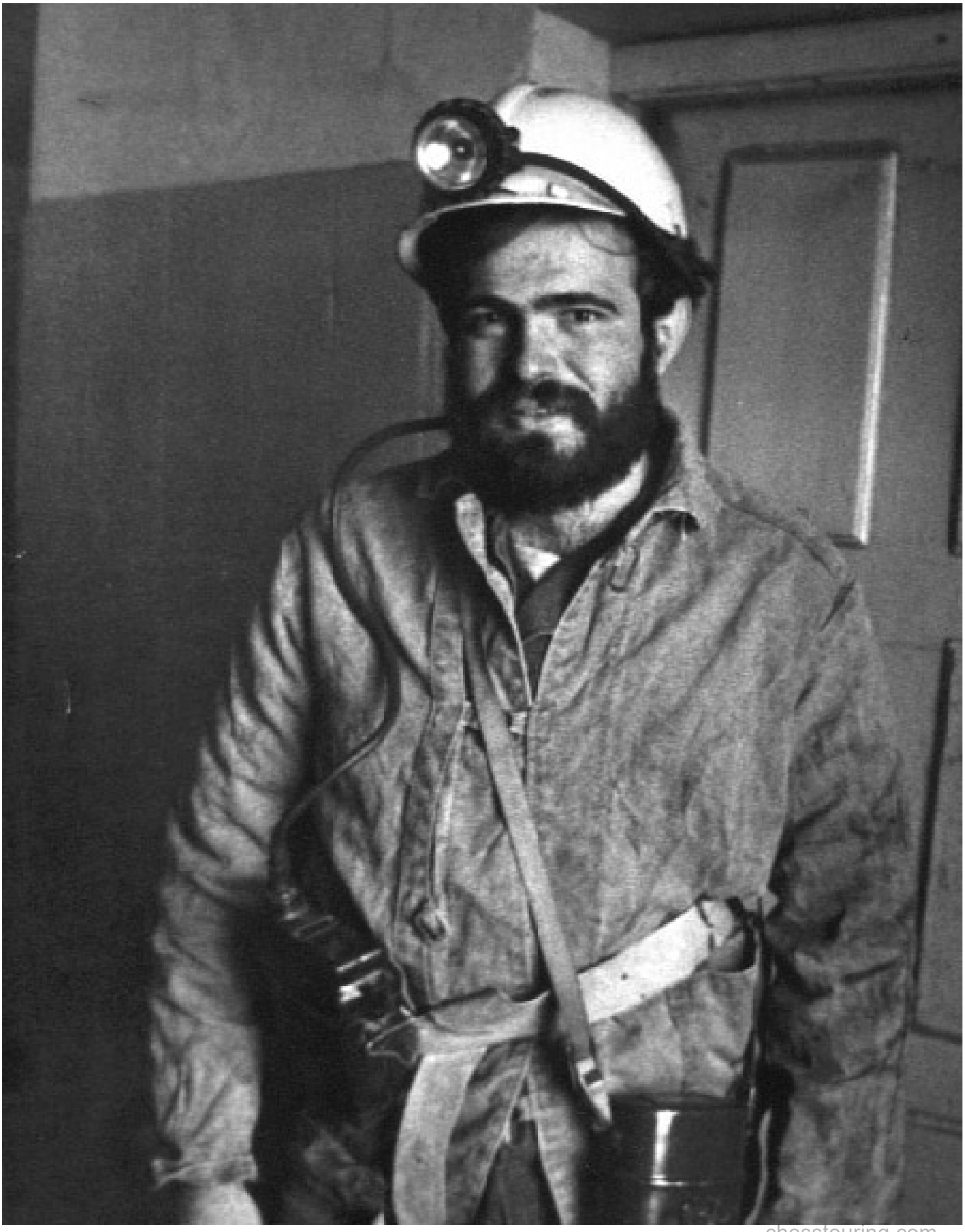
I am very fond of this game. The reasons might seem hard to grasp, because in the many years since then I have played games that were more complex and interesting. And yet, that unusual mating pattern, added to the combinations that were attractive though not too difficult, always made me regard this game with a special kind of love. At the end of the day, the heart cannot be given orders!

Briefly summarizing what happened in this game, I would draw attention to the following points:
1) In the opening, try to be focused. I can hardly call 11.Qd2?! a serious error, but I have no doubt that the problems that later faced White originated from this very move. As a matter of fact, Taimanov's games – like mine, incidentally – were always characterized by a certain artistic negligence, a factor which prevented us from exploiting our potential to the full.
2) I made an important mistake on move 18. Being very satisfied with my position, I shirked the task of looking for continuations other than the one I had already prepared – 18...dxe3?!. As a result, the state of the position immediately changed: a virtually won game became an equal one.
3) With 24.Nxd1? Mark Taimanov made a mistake of a similar type. Intuitively (and Taimanov was undoubtedly an intuitive player) he sensed the full importance of guarding the e3-square, but he underestimated other factors that were no less significant. In consequence, punishment was swift and

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merciless!

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Chapter 3

IQP Positions: Attacking the King with Pieces

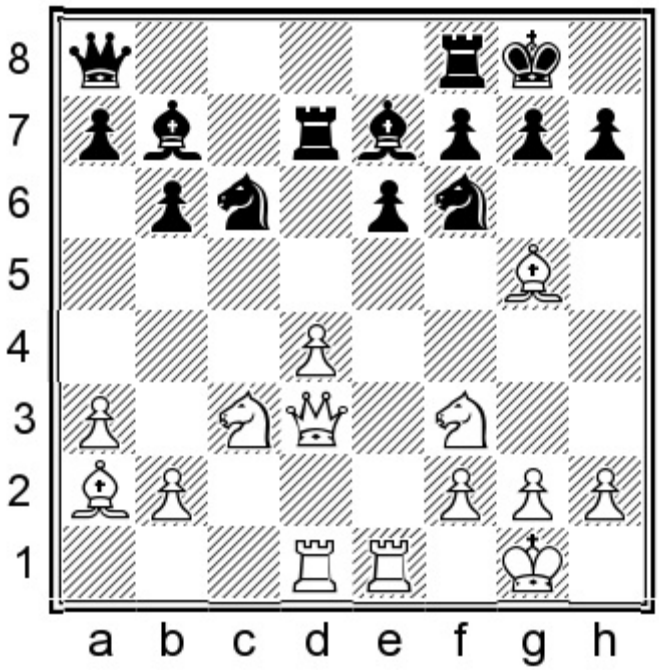


Graz 1981 - Soviet Union U26 World Championship. Visible are: Dolmatov, Psakhis, Kochiev & Kasparov

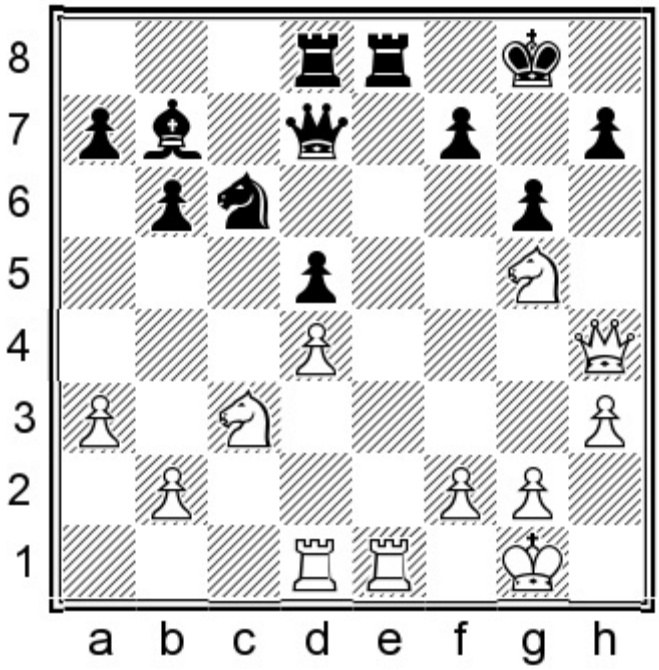
Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

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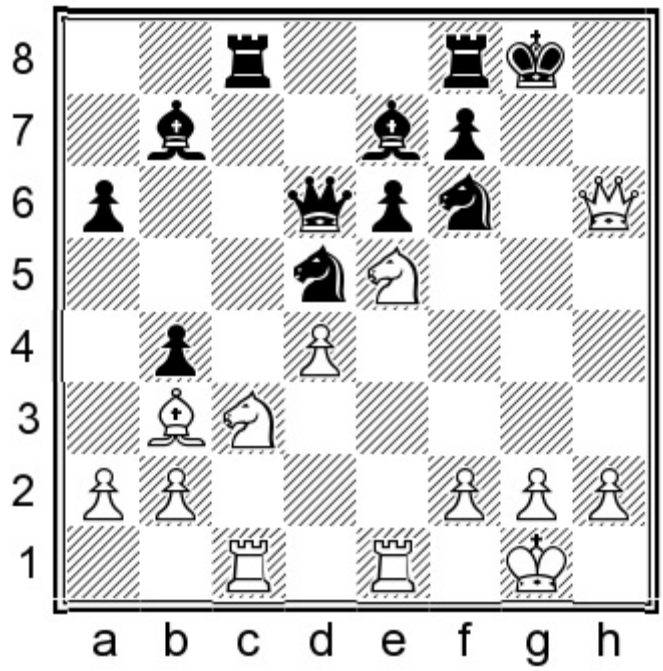


A classical combination
(see page 74)

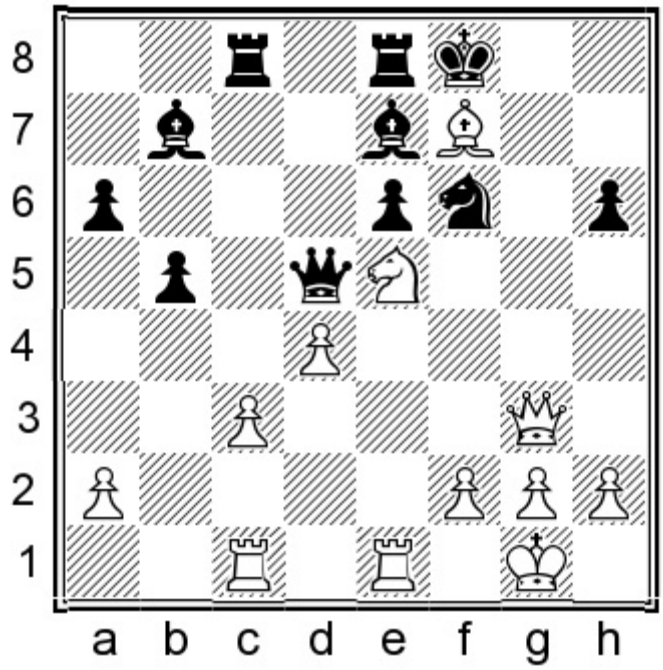


23...f6 or 23...h5 – which is best?
(see page 76)

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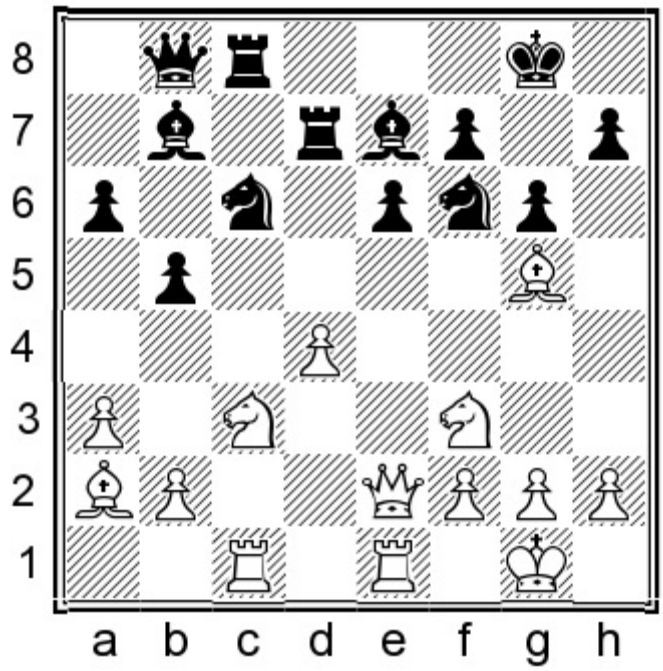


White to play. How to continue the attack?
(see page 80)

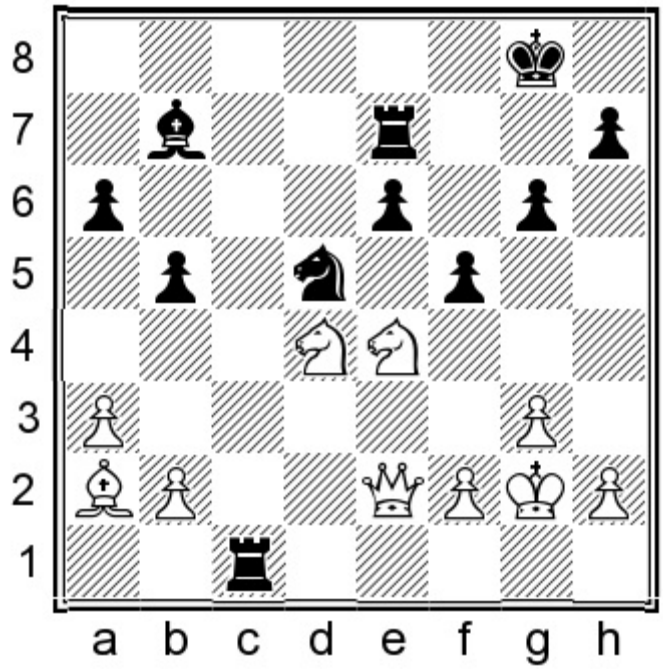


How can Black hold the position together?
(see page 81)

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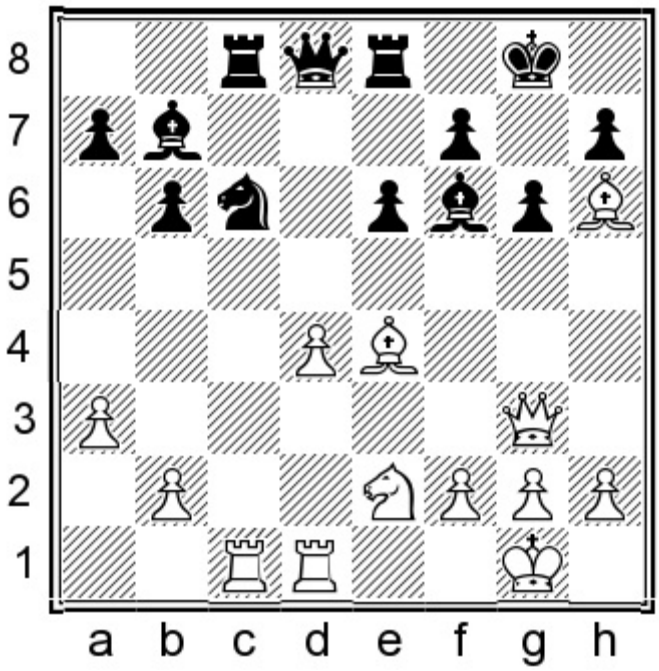


Black is under attack. How should he react?
(see page 91)

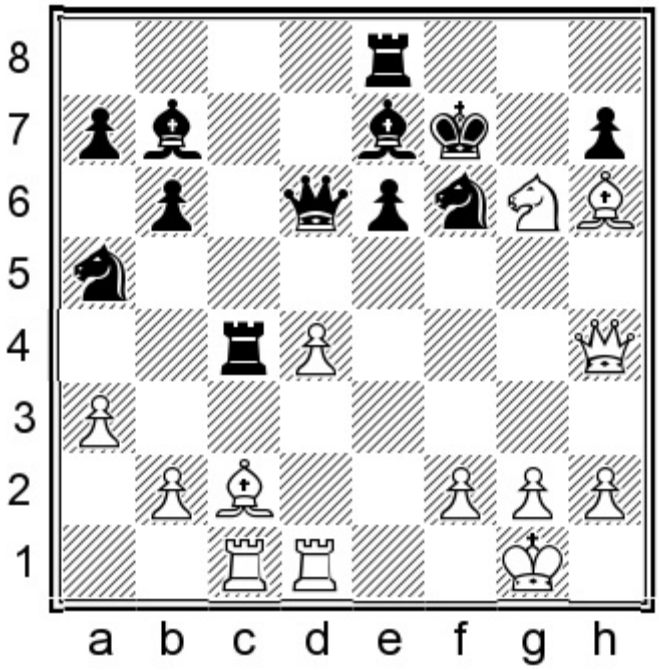


How to refute the attack?
(see page 93)

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What is Black's tactical resource?
(see page 99)



The simple refutation?
(see page 104)

Having examined some positions with hanging c- and d-pawns, the time has now come to look more closely at a pawn structure that is considerably more common − one that features an isolated pawn. For some reasons which (I confess) are utterly incomprehensible to me, an isolated pawn is more often encountered on the d-file than anywhere else. Whether this has to do with contemporary opening repertoires or with some other possibly mystical causes, the fact is that all other isolated pawns put

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together are surpassed in “popularity” by the d-pawn!

In a modest way I have tried to establish a classification of strong chess players according to their attitude to an isolated pawn on d4.

The first group, a fairly numerous one, comprises players who *never* willingly play positions with the isolated pawn.

The second group, again quite a large one, consists of those who love attacking; they delight in exploiting the aggressive potential with which this pawn is imbued and for which they are even prepared to pay a certain price.

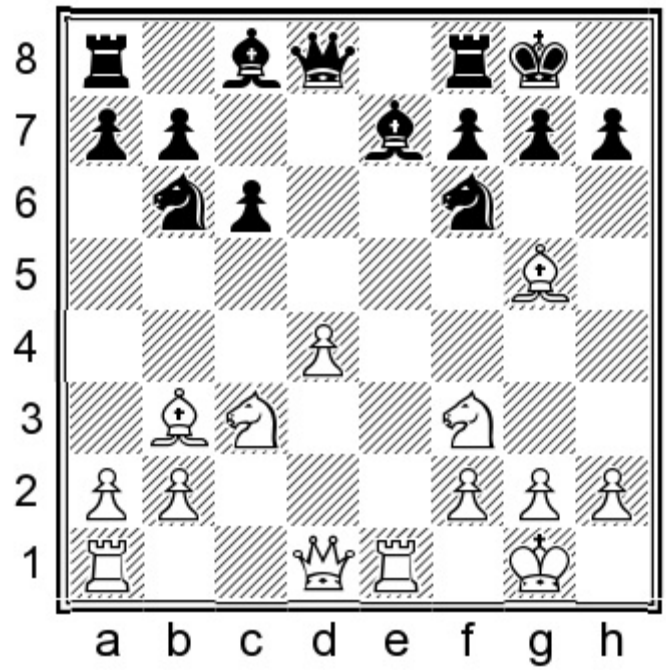
The third group is perhaps the least numerous in our own day – these enterprising people treat the isolated pawn like any normal factor in the game; they are prepared to attack with it, to defend against it, or to play an ending. This group includes many supporters of the French Defence (with 3.♘d2 c5), the Tarrasch Defence, and various other openings. I was very interested to ascertain that in the golden age of the Soviet chess school it was hard to find a single distinguished player who would have shunned the IQP. A brief list of the adherents of this structure is truly impressive: Botvinnik (undoubtedly the founding father of the modern approach to the isolated pawn), Keres, Petrosian, Spassky, Korchnoi, Tal, even Karpov and many, many more.

Incidentally, it has only just occurred to me that the very expressions we have been using – hanging pawns and isolated pawn – carry a sort of negative connotation. In Russian, “isolated” has the meaning of solitary and no use to anyone. But I would rather use the word in the sense of strong and fully capable of standing up for oneself! And I believe that the games we are going to examine can very well be relied on to bear this out!

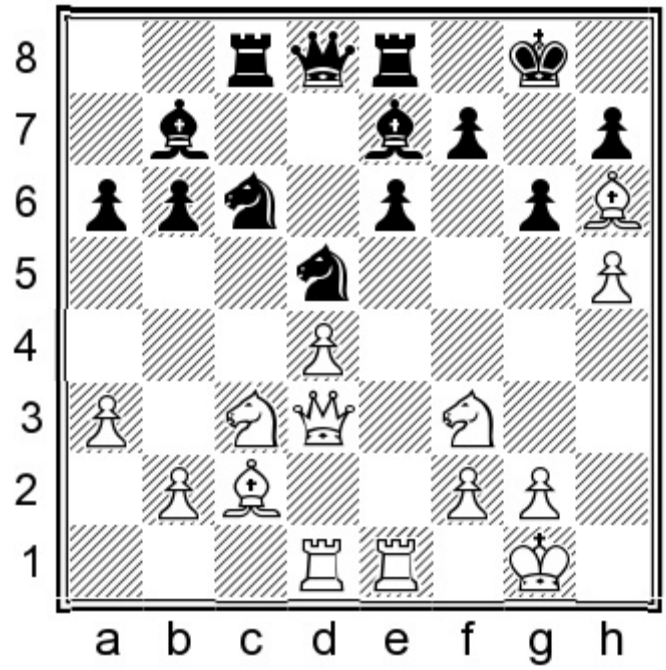
I shall not supply any special diagrams just to show what an isolated pawn *is*. I am writing this book for a fairly advanced readership, and I have no great wish to answer questions such as how to define an isolated pawn, or why the sky is blue!

In principle, there are a number of highly popular forms of attack with the isolated pawn. In this book I shall examine three of them; a detailed study of *all* of them would most likely require several weighty tomes! In the majority of isolated pawn positions, a white pawn on d4 is facing a black one on e6 (for convenience I am assuming that White is the owner of the pawn that interests us!). But I also aim to give at least a modest amount of attention to positions where the d4-pawn faces a c6-pawn, and accordingly the e-file is open. This will be the theme of Chapter 5.

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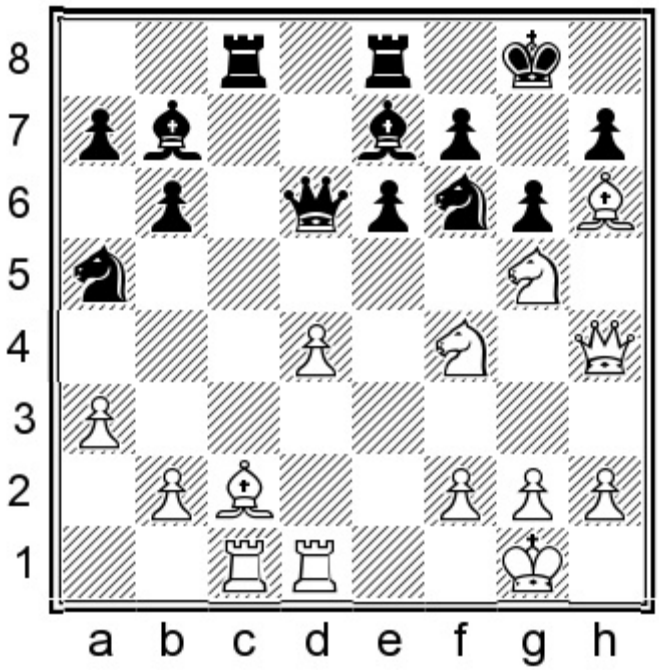


In Chapter 4, I shall draw your attention to attacking the opponent's pawn structure by an advance of the h-pawn; in this way the black king's position can be very seriously weakened.



Additionally, we shall examine some interesting games in which White conducts the attack by exploiting the strength of his pieces – and, where possible, the weakness of the black kingside. This in fact is the theme of the present chapter.

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Leonid Stein – Andrea Petersons

USSR Championship 1964

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.d4 d5

With a slight transposition of moves, the game has steered towards variations of the Semi-Tarrasch Defence that were popular in those years (and still are). The opponents now have to decide who will play with the isolated pawn and who will fight against it.

6.a3 cxd4 7.exd4

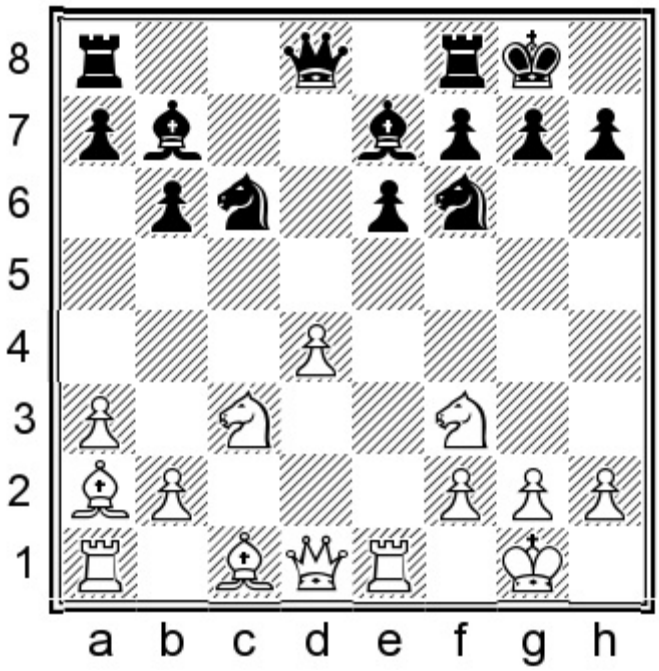
Frankly I have no idea how this type of position was evaluated in the mid-1960s, but if I were playing Black then I would prefer to steer clear of it.

7...♗e7 8.♗d3 dxc4 9.♗xc4 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♖e1

Of course Leonid Stein is not satisfied with 11.d5 ♘a5 12.♗a2 exd5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5 ♗b7, giving lifeless equality.

11...♗b7 12.♗a2

More precise than 12.♕d3 ♘a5 13.♗a2 ♗xf3, when Black has no trace of any problems.



12...♖c8

Stein didn't like this move. As a panacea for all troubles, he recommended:

12...♕d6 13.♗e3

After 13.d5 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 exd5 15.♕xd5 ♕xd5 16.♗xd5 ♗f6∞ the chances are roughly equal.

13...♖ac8 14.♕e2 ♘a5

The prophylactic 14...♖fe8 isn't at all bad either.

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On the other hand, after the sharp 14...♘g4?! White is promised a large plus either by 15.d5! exd5 16.♘xd5 ♘xe3 17.♕xe3↑ or by 15.♖ad1! ♘xe3 16.♕xe3 ♕b8 17.d5 ♗c5?! 18.♕d3! exd5 19.♘xd5+– Langeweg – Sosonko, Wijk aan Zee 1975.

15.♘e5 ♘c6!

Better than 15...♘d5? 16.♘b5! and Black drops a pawn.

16.♘b5 ♕b8 17.♗f4 ♘xe5 18.♗xe5 ♕a8

Black has succeeded, though not without some effort, in obtaining approximately equal chances.

13.♕d3

A standard arrangement of the pieces: the queen goes to d3, the bishop to g5, and a rook to d1. And after that, something is likely to happen – the white pieces will be so actively deployed, while Black's possibilities for counterplay are severely limited.

A weaker continuation is 13.♗e3 ♘a5 14.♘e5, when Black can choose between the normal 14...♘d5∞ and the somewhat startling 14...♗xa3! with excellent play.

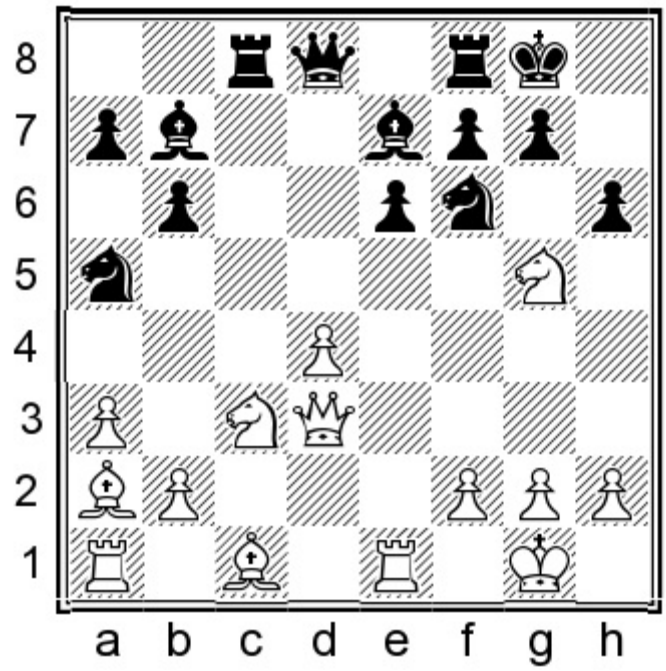
13...♖c7

Petersons is making all the "normal" moves, but his strategy is just too passive.

It was worth considering the sharp:

13...♘a5!? 14.♘g5 h6

If Black wants to avoid the complications, he can play 14...♔h8!?, removing his king from the sphere of influence of the powerful bishop on a2. Then 15.♗f4 ♗d6 doesn't promise White any advantage.



15.♘xf7

15.♘xe6 fxe6 16.♗xe6† ♔h8 17.b4 ♘c6 18.d5 comes up against the cool-headed 18...♗d6!, after which the black knight has the important squares e5 and e7 at its disposal.

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15...♖xf7 16.♗xe6 ♖c6! 17.♗xf7†

Nothing is altered by 17.♗a2 ♖d6, taking control of the d5-square.

17...♔xf7 18.d5 ♘b3!⇄

With chances for both sides.

14.♗g5

A simple, natural and strong move.

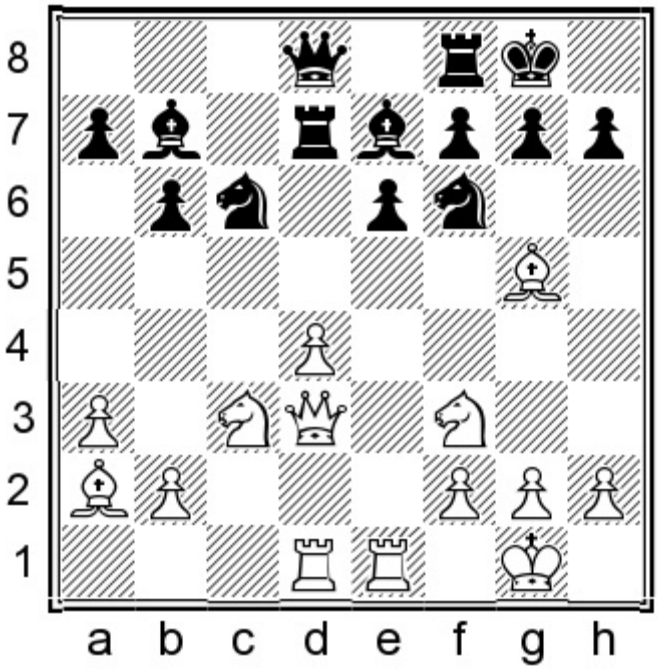
Instead 14.b4?! meets with the awkward rejoinder 14...♘xd4! 15.♘xd4 ♖d7 16.♘ce2 e5 and Black has everything in order.

A more interesting try is: 14.♗f4!? ♖d7 15.♖ad1 ♗d6 16.♗g5! h6 17.♗h4!? (the less risky 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♗b1 g6 19.♕e3 also gives White a slight initiative) 17...g5 This move is of course obligatory. 18.♗g3 ♗xg3 19.hxg3 g4 20.♘e5 ♖xd4 21.♕e3 and White has splendid compensation for the pawn.

14...♖d7

I would undoubtedly have preferred 14...h6!? to make the white bishop commit itself. After 15.♗f4 (or 15.♗h4 ♘h5) 15...♖d7, Black has a solid and safe position.

15.♖ad1



To my astonishment, this position has occurred several times in tournament practice. As Black, I would have gone to considerable lengths to avoid it! Black's main problem is that he lacks any reasonable plan. White can gradually strengthen his position, while Black's task is less appealing: he must watch carefully while his opponent develops his initiative, and can only hope that an opportunity crops up.

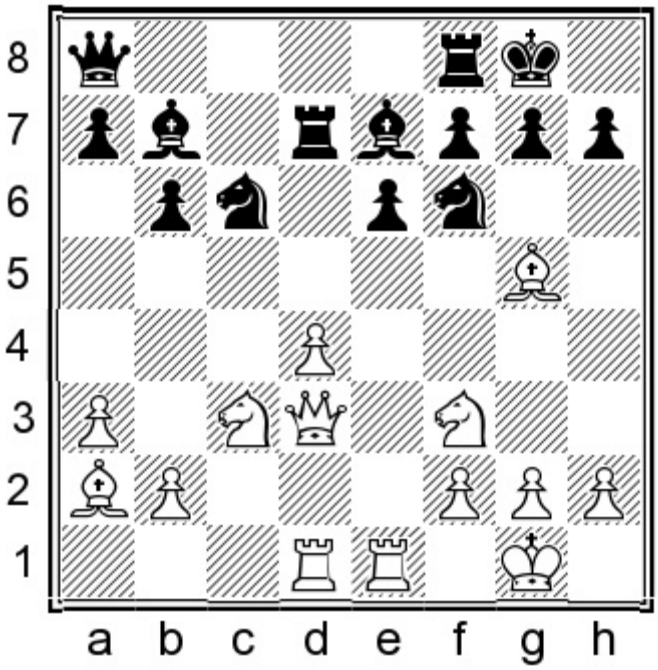
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15...♕c8

The standard 15...♘d5 fails to equalize: 16.♗xd5 exd5 (or 16...♗xg5 17.♗e4↑ and at any moment White may carry out the central break d4-d5!) 17.♗xe7 ♖xe7 18.♖xe7 ♘xe7 19.♖e1 and White's advantage, though perhaps not very big, is absolutely secure. The difference in strength between the c3-knight and the b7-bishop is plain to see!

Black is in a very bad way after:

15...♕a8?



16.d5!

This is clearly strongest.

However, White also obtains excellent play with the sharp 16.♖xe6 fxe6 17.♗xe6† ♖f7 18.♗xf7† ♔xf7 19.♕f5 g6 20.♕h3.

And 16.♗b1 g6 17.♗a2! is quite good for White too.

16...♖fd8

What else can you suggest for Black?

Not 16...exd5, which loses immediately to 17.♗b1 g6 18.♖xe7 ♘xe7 19.♗xf6.

Nor is 16...♘xd5 much better. After 17.♗xd5 exd5 18.♘xd5 White's advantage is of decisive proportions, and 18...♗c5 19.♕f5 ♖xd5 20.♖xd5 ♘e7 21.♗xe7 doesn't help Black at all.

17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♕c2 exd5 19.♘xd5

White has a won position.

It's rather surprising how many problems Petersons is faced with, when he hardly seems to have made a single mistake! In fact, for the moment, Black's affairs are not in so very bad shape; it's just that his game is incomparably more difficult to play than his opponent's.

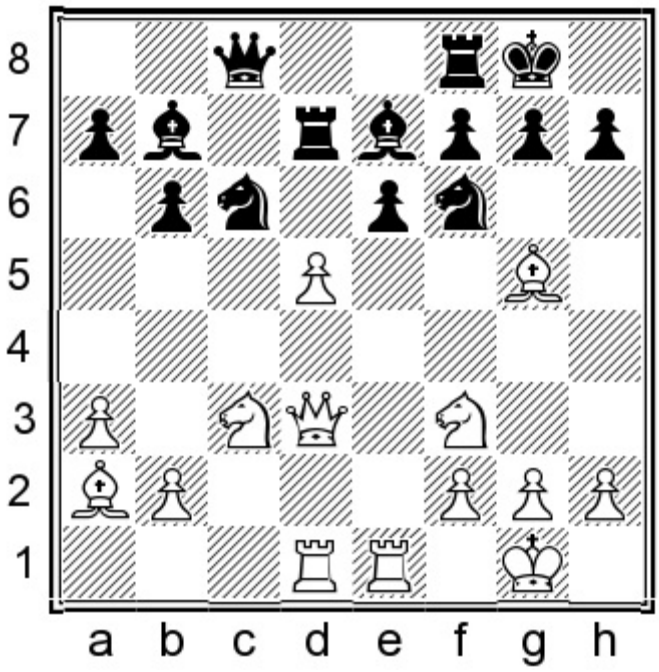
16.♗b1

Leonid Stein – incidentally one of those players for whom I have a special, reverential feeling – was a

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brilliant attacker, but he possessed one major fault: he was lazy about the calculation of variations, relying basically on his remarkable intuition.

At this point Stein had available the sharp:
16.d5!?



16...exd5

16...♖fd8? practically loses to 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘e4!, and if 18...♗xb2? then 19.♘eg5 g6 20.♕b3+–.

A more acceptable alternative is 16...♘xd5!? 17.♘xd5 exd5 18.♗xd5 ♘b8 19.♕f5 ♗xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖xd5 21.♕xd5 ♗xg5 22.♘xg5 and White has only a small advantage.

17.♗xf6

It would also be worth considering: 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♗xd5 ♘b8 19.♗xb7 ♖xd3 (19...♕xb7? is decisively refuted by 20.♕xd7! ♘xd7 21.♖xe7 ♖d8 22.♘e5+–; Black has quite a few traps to avoid before achieving a reasonable game!) 20.♗xc8 ♖xd1 21.♖xd1 ♗xg5 22.♘xg5 ♖xc8 23.g3±

17...♗xf6 18.♘xd5 ♔h8 19.♕e4

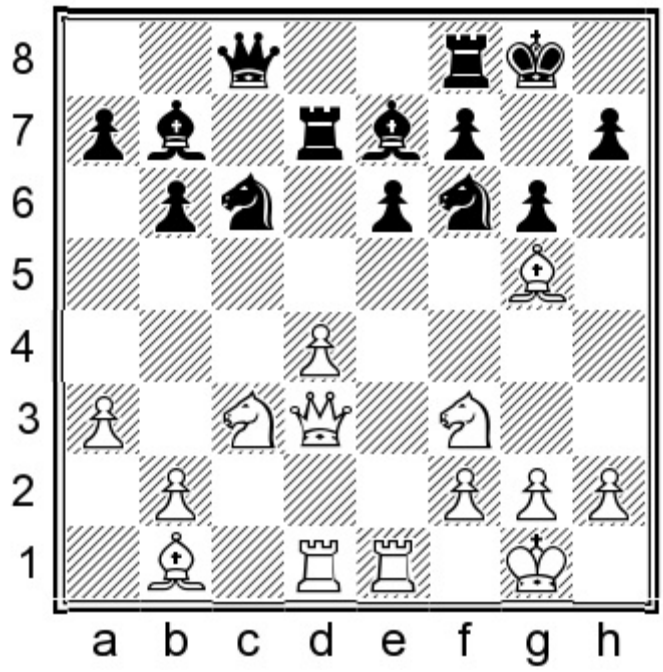
White has troublesome pressure.

As it happens, I think that in this specific case Stein was right. The move he plays retains all his threats and leaves Black with all his rights to err – and it is difficult to avoid exercising these rights in such an unpleasant position.

16...g6

Black can play 16...♗a6, but it does nothing to help him: 17.♕c2 g6 18.♗a2→

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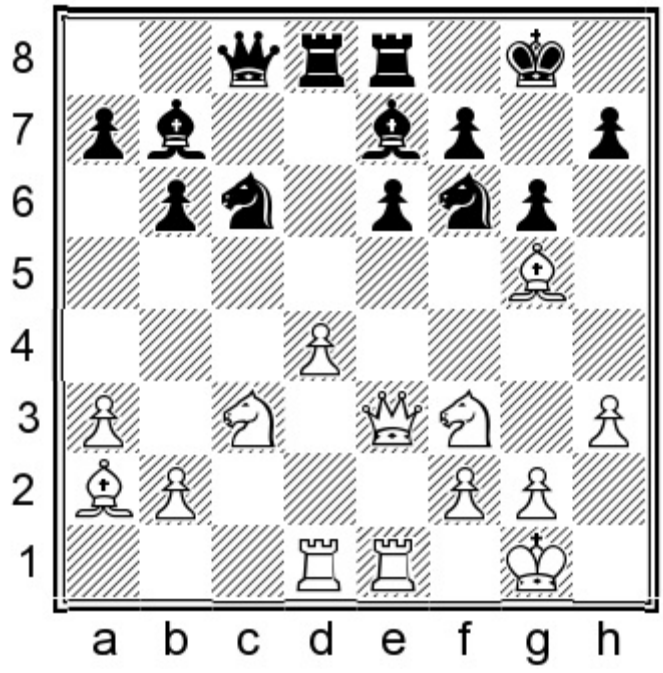


17.♗a2! ♖e8 18.♕e3!

An excellent move in this position, and one in Leonid Stein's style. White appears to be threatening to take on e6, and gives a hint that a central breakthrough with d4-d5 is also part of his plan. He makes his opponent defend not only against real threats, but against spurious ones too – and as is well known, a fight with phantoms demands special efforts!

18...♖dd8 19.h3!

Stein recommended 19.♕f4!?, and indeed 19...♘h5 20.♕g4 looks quite tempting for White. But the move played is certainly no worse and fully meets the requirements of White's chosen strategy in this game.

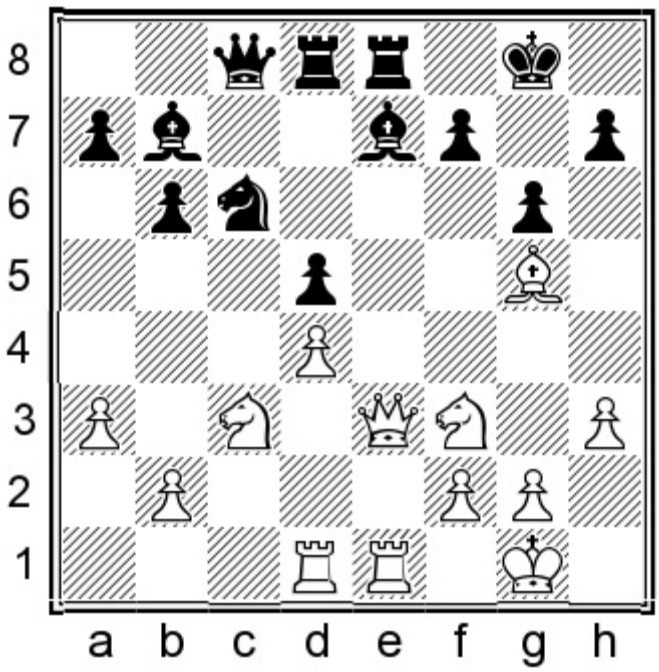


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19...♘d5

Petersons is unable (or unwilling) to continue simply awaiting his fate. By slightly altering the pawn structure Black will at least be spared worrying about the d4-d5 break, and White's supposedly weak isolated pawn was not under the slightest pressure anyway! However, the type of position that now arises is highly unpleasant for Black and promises him nothing but difficulties.

20.♗xd5! exd5



The knight on c3 is clearly stronger than the opponent's passive light-squared bishop, and Black has a number of weaknesses on the kingside. Still, White will have to do a fair amount of work to win the game.

21.♕f4

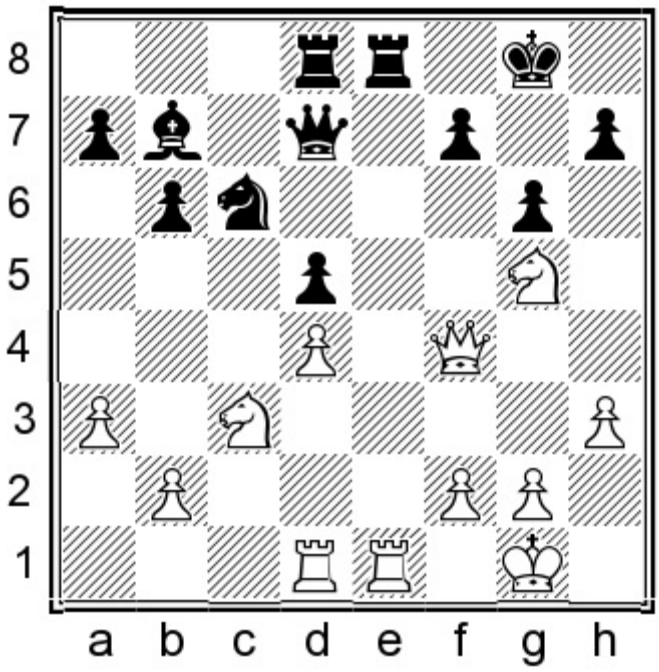
White also has an excellent game after 21.♗xe7! ♘xe7 (21...♖xe7 22.♕g5↑) 22.♕f4 ♘f5 23.♖c1. Here too, Black has passive defence ahead of him and can only dream of activity.

21...♗xg5 22.♘xg5

An important moment in the game. 22.♕xg5! was stronger, attacking the opponent's central pawn with the queen, and keeping the knight splendidly placed on f3.

22...♕d7

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23.♕h4

Stein recommended a possible improvement here:

23.♕f6!?

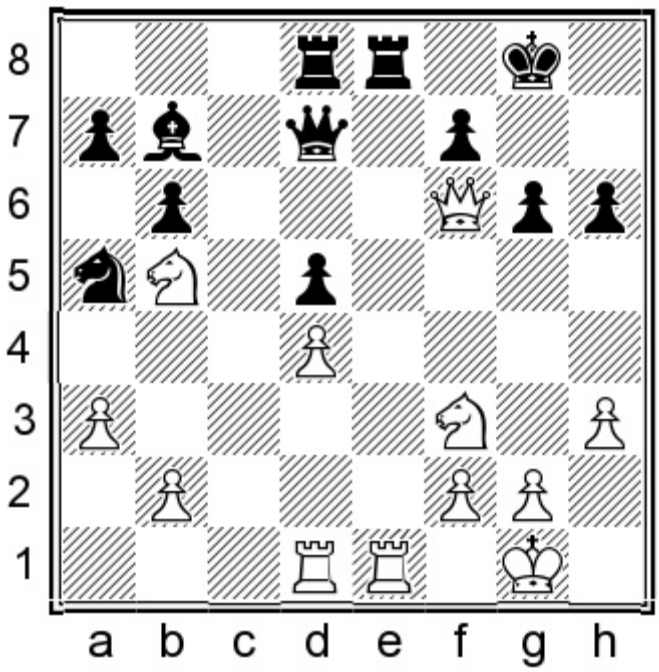
And it's hard for me to disagree with him! Black faces a difficult choice.

23...♘a5

Gufeld and Lazarev suggested 23...♗c8?, but 24.♘xf7! does the trick at once!

Black also faces a hard struggle for the draw in the event of 23...h6 24.♘f3 ♖e6 25.♖xe6 ♕xe6 26.♕xe6 fxe6 27.♖e1.

24.♘b5!? h6 25.♘f3



25...♘c4!?

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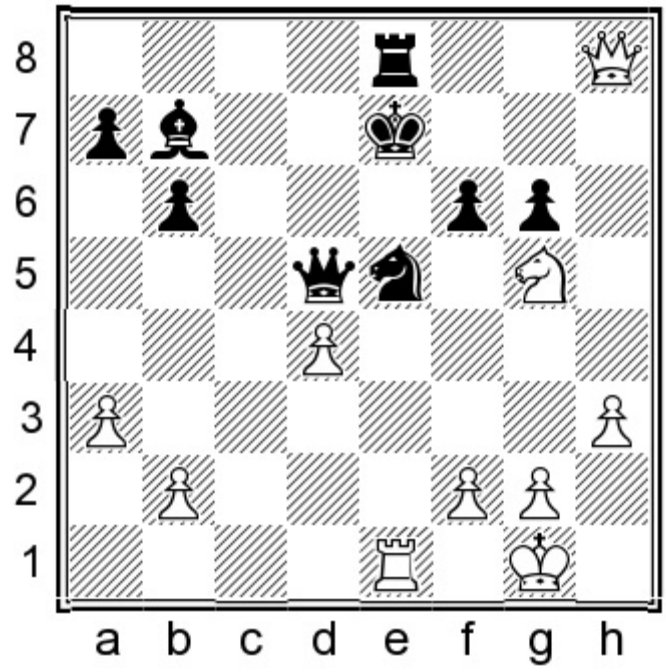
A curious point is that 25...♕xb5 loses at once to 26.♘e5!, when both 26...♖f8 and 26...♖d7 are answered by 27.♘xg6!

26.♘xa7 ♗a8 27.b3! ♕xa7 28.bxc4 dxc4 29.♘e5 c3 30.♖e3!

White has numerous threats. Of course, working out such variations is far from easy.

23...h5?!

This time I must take issue with Leonid Stein's commentary. He wrote: "Not 23...f6! [my exclamation mark] 24.♖xe8† ♖xe8 25.♘xd5!? fxg5? 26.♘f6† ♔h8 27.♕g3 ♕e7 28.♘xe8 ♕xe8 29.d5, with a won position." I have no reason to dispute that final assessment, but Black could have played more strongly with: 25...♕xd5! 26.♕xh7† ♔f8 27.♕h8† ♔e7 28.♖e1† ♘e5! A picturesque position!



29.♕g7† ♔d8 30.♕xf6† ♔d7 31.♖e4! The only move! 31...♘f7! (better than 31...♘c4 32.♕g7†↑) 32.♕xg6 ♖xe4 33.♘xe4 ♕xe4 34.♕xf7† ♔d6∞ and White's advantage has yet to be demonstrated!

24.♕f4±

White keeps applying the same tactics: attack, provoke a weakness, go back where you came from. He could most likely have played more aggressively at some point, but his method proved effective enough all the same: under constant, gruelling pressure, Petersons obviously slipped into time trouble and began committing errors.

24...♔g7 25.♘f3 f6 26.♖c1

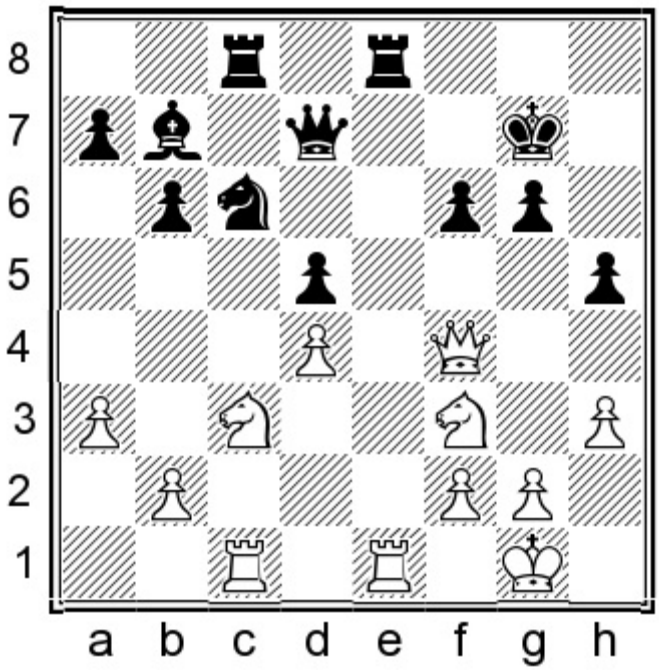
By way of a possible alternative, we could suggest 26.♖xe8!? ♖xe8 27.♕g3 ♗c8 (or 27...♘e7 28.♘h4±) 28.♖c1.

26...♖c8

Black's torments continue. Neither 26...♗a6 27.♕g3 nor 26...♕d6 27.♕d2 can entirely solve his

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problems – either way his bishop is taking no active part in the game.



27.♘b5

Taking a closer look at the d6-square.

It would also be interesting to try the aggressive 27.♘h4!, placing Black in a difficult dilemma:

On the one hand, he might choose the purely tactical 27...♘xd4!? with the possible continuation 28.♖xe8 ♕xe8 29.♕xd4 ♖c4 30.♕d1 ♖xh4 31.♘xd5 ♗xd5 32.♕xd5↑. It wouldn't surprise me if Black ought to be able to draw this position, but only after strenuous work – and would he have had enough time and energy left for it?

On the other hand, the natural 27...g5 is possible, but it doesn't much alter the assessment of the position: 28.♕d6! ♕xd6 29.♘f5† ♔g6 30.♘xd6 ♖xe1† 31.♖xe1 ♖b8 32.♘xd5 ♘xd4 33.♘e7† ♔g7 34.h4!? and with his superb endgame technique, Leonid Stein would undoubtedly have set his opponent plenty of problems.

27...♖xe1†

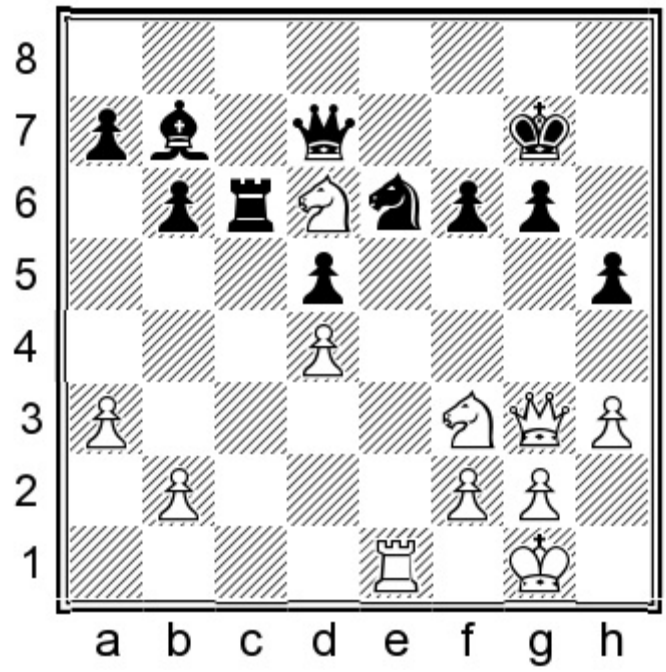
Black has to be constantly alert. 27...♖ed8 28.♕g3 a6? is refuted at once by 29.♘h4!+–.

28.♖xe1 ♘d8?

Only 28...♗a6 29.♘c3± would preserve chances of decent resistance.

29.♘d6 ♘e6 30.♕g3 ♖c6

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31.♘h4!+–

Obviously the end of the game won't keep us waiting long now.

31...♘f8

The outcome is not altered by 31...♘g5 32.♘xb7 ♕xb7 33.f4+– and the white queen gets to the g6-pawn.

32.♖e7†!

1–0

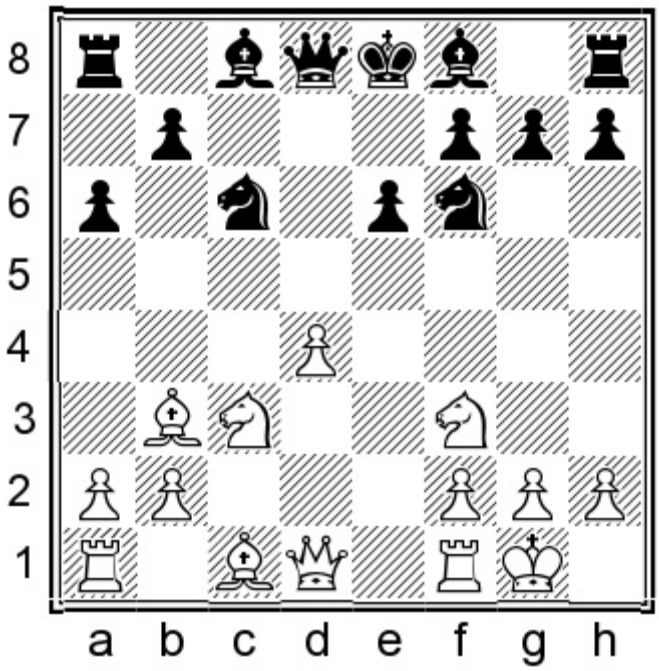
For several years I gave Maxim Rodshtein some fairly intensive coaching. We weren't just concerned with opening theory, which is so popular among young talents; we also studied standard positions and devoted a good deal of time to the endgame. On one occasion, before a regular strong tournament in Moscow (but are there any *weak* ones there?), I showed Max about fifteen games with an isolated d-pawn, including the one by Leonid Stein that we have just examined. I'm not sure whether Max liked it or not, but literally a couple of weeks later, playing a strong Armenian opponent, he showed that this study of classic chess material had been time very usefully spent!

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Maxim Rodshtein – Tigran Kotanjian

Moscow 2008

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 dxc4 4.e3 e6 5.♗xc4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3 ♘c6 8.♘c3 cxd4 9.exd4



9...♗e7 10.♗g5

These days, White quite often plays 10.♖e1 0-0 11.♗f4 ♘a5 12.♗c2 b5 13.d5 exd5 14.♕d3 ♘c6 15.♗c7 ♕d7 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.♗xe5 with excellent compensation for the pawn, as in Ponomariov – Galkin, Moscow 2005.

10...0-0 11.♖e1 b5 12.♕d3

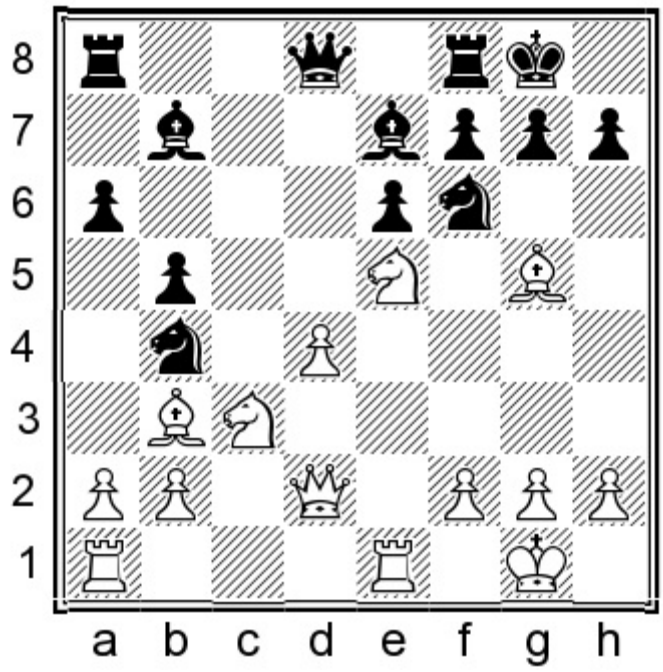
On 12.a3 ♗b7 13.♕d3 b4, the queenside pawns come into contact, which helps Black to create counterplay.

12...♘b4 13.♕d2

White can withdraw his queen to a different square, but it doesn't alter the assessment of the position as roughly equal. 13.♕e2 ♗b7 14.♖ad1 transposes into the game Illescas Cordoba – Anand, Leon (4) 1997, which continued 14...♘bd5 15.♘e5 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♘d5 17.♗xe7 ♕xe7=.

13...♗b7 14.♘e5

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14...♘bd5

Usually such moves are played without much thought, but I am immediately reminded of a well-known utterance by Bent Larsen: Why blockade the isolated pawn when you have a chance of capturing it? It was worth considering the knight retreat:

14...♘c6!?

After this move, I haven't managed to find any realistic chances for White to gain a plus.

15.♖ad1

15.♕e3!? is interesting, and now:

a) The capture of the d-pawn is more than convenient for White: 15...♘xd4 16.♖ad1 ♗c5 17.♕f4↑

b) But after 15...♘d5, what is White to do? 16.♗xe7 ♘cxe7 17.♕d2 ♘xc3 18.bxc3 ♗d5 leads to equality.

15...b4!?

White's chances are preferable after 15...♘b4 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♘xf7! ♖xf7 18.♗xe6 ♘d5 19.♘e4±.

Black also fails to equalize with: 15...♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♘d5 (the attempt to reach an ending with 16...♕xd2? is immediately punished by 17.♖xd2 ♘d5 18.♗xe7 ♘xe7 19.♖d7+–) 17.♘e4!?± 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♘e4 ♗xe5 18.dxe5 ♕xd2 19.♖xd2 ♘a5=

15.♕d3 ♖c8 16.♖ac1 ♕d6

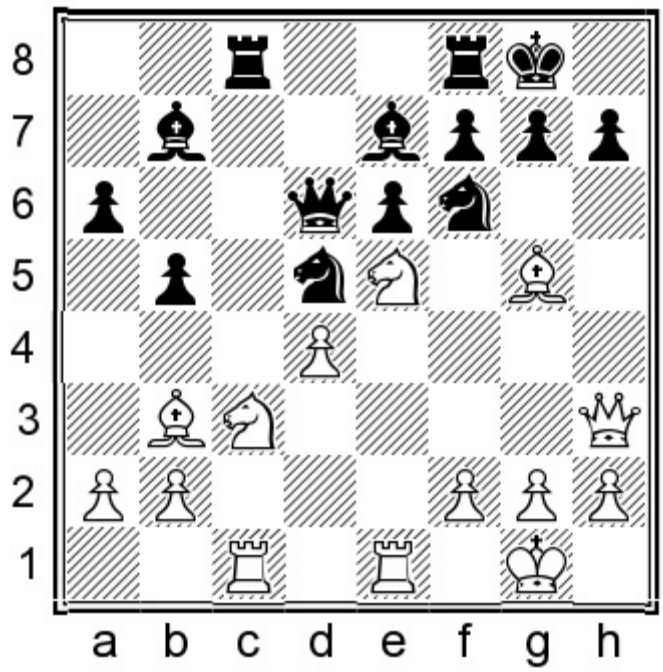
It is quite conceivable that this is objectively not a bad move, but was it worth Black's while to take such big risks?

It was surely more sensible to opt for the cool and calm: 16...♘xc3!? 17.bxc3 ♘d7!? (17...♘d5 18.♗d2 ♗g5= isn't at all bad for Black either) 18.♗f4 (in the event of 18.♗xe7 ♕xe7 19.♘xf7 ♖xf7 20.♗xe6 ♔h8∞ I would prefer to be playing the black side) 18...♘xe5 19.♗xe5 ♗d5 with approximately equal chances in a quiet position.

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17.♕h3

Unobtrusively, the white pieces are sneaking up closer to the black monarch. Possibly White wants to sacrifice his knight on f7 (it's only a possibility!). He doesn't seem to have any direct threats, but Black must somehow be starting to feel uncomfortable. In such situations we often begin to fight against shadows, and only harm our chances of a successful defence.

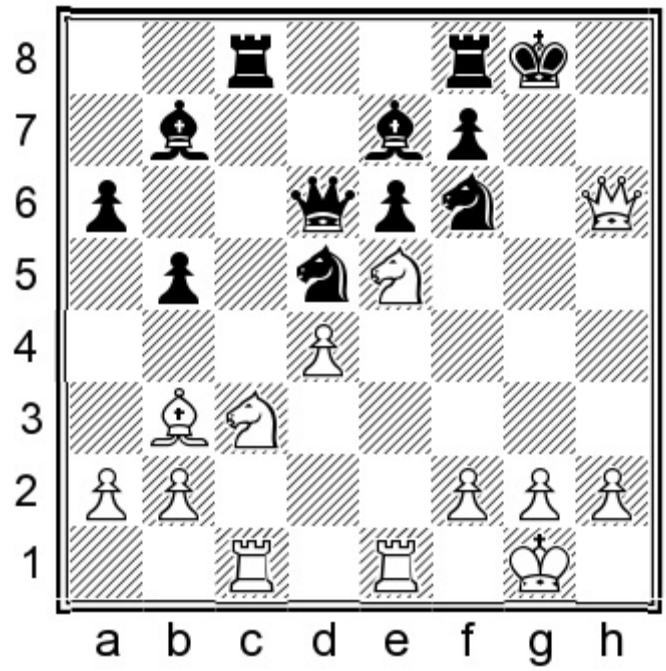


17...♖fe8

Kotanjian is uneasy about the potential weakness of the e6-square (the square, not the pawn), and as a preventive measure he gives it extra protection.

An interesting question is whether Black could play 17...h6 here, forcing his opponent's dark-squared bishop to reveal its intentions. Should White take the h-pawn or "chicken out"? Working out the variations in full is anything but simple, and the sovereign intuition must be called on for assistance! I will just give you one piece of practical advice: if you didn't risk sacrificing the bishop, you would be regretting it all through the game if not longer, and this would be bound to affect the quality of your play. So if in doubt whether to sacrifice or not, there can only be one right answer: *Yes!* Let us now try to back up this opinion with some concrete analysis. Afte18.♗xh6! gxh6 19.♕xh6, Black can choose between the following continuations:

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a) 19...♖c7 20.♖cd1! An excellent move that ends the game in short order. 20...♘h7 21.♖d3 and White could deliver mate with his eyes shut!

b) 19...♘h7

This move looks entirely logical; the audacious knight is ready to shield the king with his own body! There is only one snag: White can now use the e4-square for his own ends.

20.♖e4!

And he does so at once!

This is more convincing than: 20.♗c2 f5 21.♘e4! A different white piece lands on the magic square, regardless of material losses. 21...fxe4 22.♗xe4 ♘df6! (22...♘hf6? 23.♖xc8 ♗xc8 24.♕g5† ♔h8 25.♘g6† ♔g7 26.♘f4†! ♔h8 27.♕h6† ♔g8 28.♕g6† ♔h8 29.♘h5!+– and Black is swiftly mated) 23.♕g6† ♔h8 24.♗xb7 ♖xc1 25.♖xc1 ♕xd4 26.♘f7† ♖xf7 27.♕xf7 ♗c5 28.♖f1 It seems that White has achieved a small advantage – but I think he was dreaming of more!

20...♗g5

On 20...f5, the rook takes advantage of the slight change to the position and finds some other squares on which to break through: 21.♖e3! ♗g5 22.♖g3 ♖f6 23.♖xg5† ♘xg5 24.♕xg5† ♔h7 25.♖e1+– and the white pieces will quickly get to the enemy king

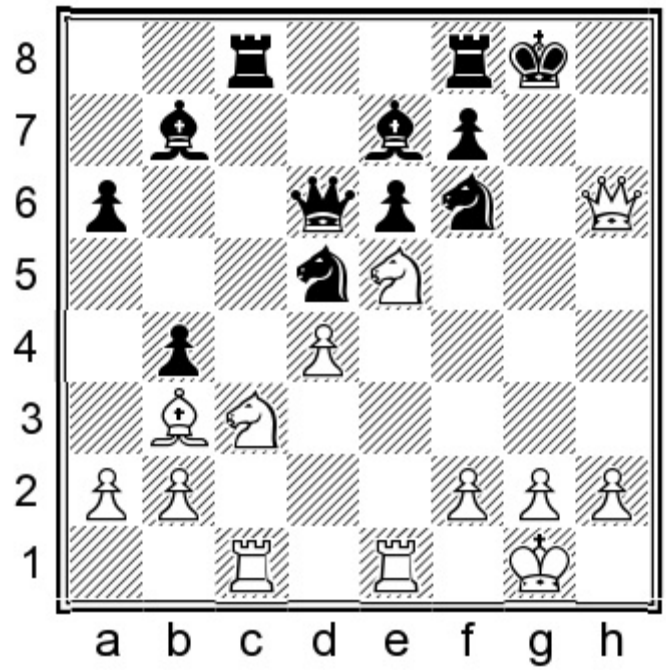
21.♖g4 f6 22.h4 fxe5 23.hxg5 ♕e7 24.♖e1!+–

White's attack is assured of a successful conclusion.

c) 19...b4

The squares on the e-file are all under control, and White's knight is en prise. Can his idea really be refuted so simply?

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20.♖cd1!!

A single strong move, and at once it becomes clear that White's attack is irresistible.

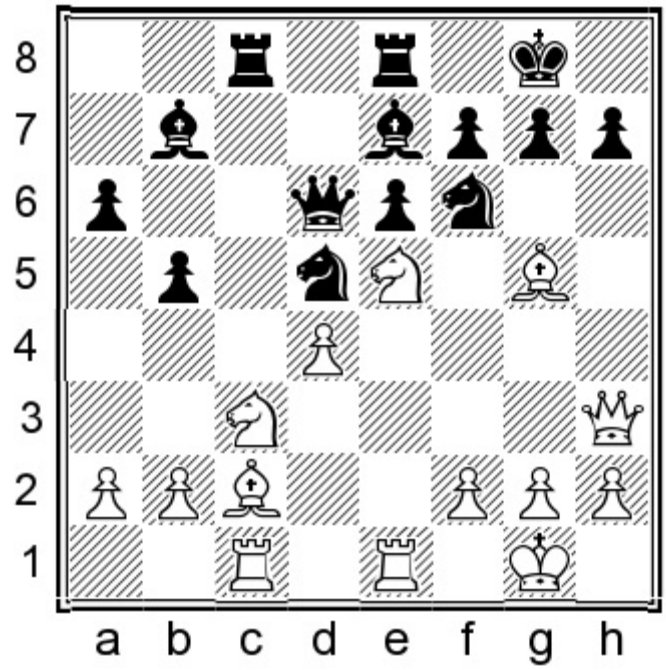
20...♘f4

The alternatives 20...♘h7 21.♘e4 ♕d8 22.♖d3+– and 20...♘xc3 21.♖d3!+– have similar outcomes.

21.♕g5† ♔h8 22.♕xf4 bxc3 23.♖d3!+–

Mate will arrive shortly.

18.♗c2



18...g6?!

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A critical moment in the game! This last move is played almost automatically in such cases, but can hardly be recommended here. Black is in quite a dangerous position (there are too many white pieces casting predatory glances towards his king), so increased circumspection is required.

18...h6!?

This looks very dangerous and immediately provokes White into sacrificing a piece:

19.♗xh6 gxh6 20.♕g3†!

Of course not 20.♕xh6? ♗f8.

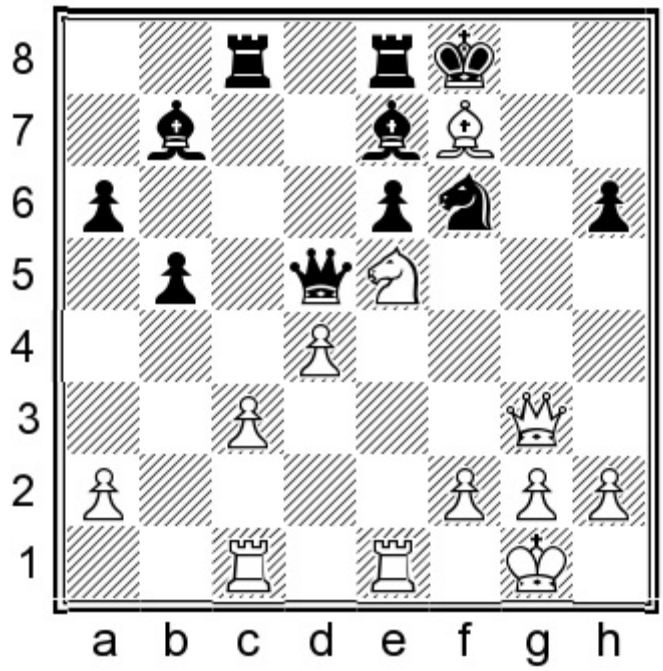
20...♔f8□ 21.♗g6!

For a strong grandmaster, finding this kind of move isn't such a difficult task.

21...♘xc3

Avoiding the fairly simple 21...b4? 22.♗xf7 bxc3 23.♕g6+–.

22.bxc3 ♕d5 23.♗xf7



23...♗a3!!

This beautiful move is precisely what the participants in this interesting game had missed.

Instead 23...♖ed8? loses at once to 24.♗xe6.

With 23...♗a3 Black not only attacks the rook, but also frees the e7-square for his king to escape from the numerous dangers.

24.♗xe8

Neither 24.♖c2 ♖e7 nor 24.♕g6 ♕xg2†! 25.♕xg2 ♗xg2 26.♗xe8 ♗xc1 27.♖xc1 ♗d5 would set Black serious problems.

24...♗xc1 25.♖xc1 ♘xe8 26.♕f4† ♔e7 27.f3 ♘f6 28.♘g6† ♔f7 29.♘e5†

Or 29.♕xh6 ♖g8∞.

29...♔e7

For the moment at least, White has a draw for the asking – but I don't quite see how he is to play for the win. Of course a move like 23...♗a3! is easy to overlook!

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And finally, however strange it may seem, 18...h5!? 19.♘e4 ♕b4 leads to interesting and unclear play.

19.♗b3!

It evidently was not for nothing that we carefully studied that game by Stein! In the words of Friedrich Schiller: “The Moor has done his work, the Moor can go.” Maxim has provoked a weakening of his opponent’s kingside, whereupon his bishop goes back again and awaits further events with interest!

19.♘xd5?!

This hasty exchange is significantly weaker.

19...♕xd5!?

Similarly White’s gains are not too great after 19...♗xd5!? 20.♕h4, provided Black plays 20...♔g7!± and doesn’t fall into the trap 20...♘h5 21.♗xg6! hxg6 22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♗xe7±.

20.♗b3 ♖xc1 21.♖xc1 ♕d6!=

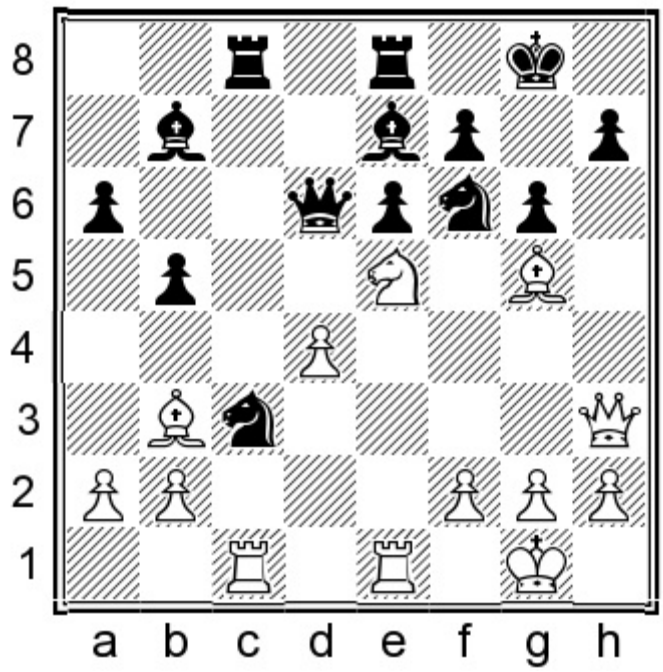
Black wouldn’t lose with 21...♕xd4 either, but after 22.♘xf7! ♗d5 23.♖d1 ♕b6 24.♘e5 the initiative is with White.

19...b4

Kotanjian attempts to shake off his opponent’s pressure with the aid of exchanges. The desire is perfectly understandable, but it comes up against a merciless tactical refutation.

Black also has a difficult game after:

19...♘xc3



20.♘xf7!

A thematic sacrifice, but the “simple” 20.bxc3 looks almost as strong: 20...♗d5 21.♗xd5 exd5 22.♕f3 ♗d8 23.♖e3 and White has a powerful initiative.

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20...♔xf7

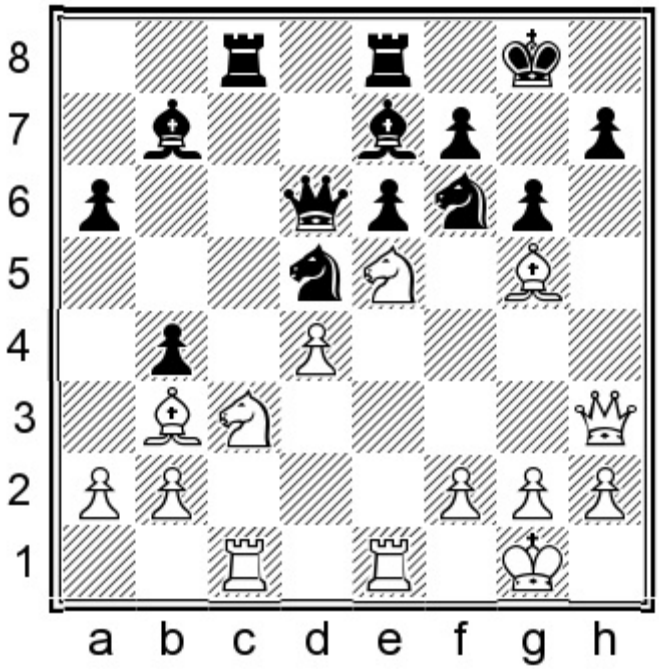
More tenacious than 20...♘e2†? 21.♖xe2 ♖xc1† 22.♗xc1 ♕xd4 23.♘g5 ♗d5 24.♘xe6+– and Black is crushed.

21.♕xe6† ♕xe6 22.♗xe6† ♔g7 23.♗xc8 ♗xc8 24.♖xc3 ♔f7 25.♖c7 ♗e6 26.♖c6

To rid himself of the mounting pressure, Black will almost certainly have to part with another pawn and conduct a long and difficult defence – with little chance of success.

The most stubborn defence seems to me to be: 19...♘h5!? 20.♗xd5!? (or 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.♗xd5 ♘f4! 22.♕f3 ♘xd5 23.♘e4 ♖xc1 24.♖xc1 ♖d8 25.♘c5± with a minimal – I would even say nominal – plus) 20...exd5 21.♗xe7 ♖xe7 22.♘d3 ♘f4! 23.♕g3 ♖xc3! 24.bxc3 ♘e2† 25.♖xe2 ♕xg3 26.hxg3 ♖xe2 27.♖e1± and the endgame is somewhat drawish.

Summing this game up, we may say that in spite of his risky play, Black maintained practically equal chances almost until the end. Don't forget, though, that playing the White side was easier and pleasanter, while Black had to balance on the edge of a precipice. For a long time Kotanjian managed to do so, but it only took one small error to bring down severe and immediate punishment!



20.♘xf7!

A brilliant decision; the knight has finally penetrated to the f7-pawn, but at the moment it isn't entirely obvious how White intends to follow up. In the diagram position his main problem was that a number of interesting lines were available – and choosing between the good and the best is anything but a simple matter!

20.♗xf6? ♘xf6! (not 20...♗xf6 21.♘e4↑) 21.♘xf7 looks tempting, but encounters an interesting refutation: 21...♔xf7 22.♖xe6 ♔g7!! 23.♖xd6 ♗xd6 and Black has seized the initiative.

There is more danger to Black in: 20.♘xd5! ♗xd5 (the game won't last too long after 20...♘xd5?

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21.♘xf7!; nor does Black equalize with 20...exd5 21.♗a4 ♖ed8 22.♖c5±) 21.♗a4 ♖xc1 22.♖xc1 ♖a8 23.♕h4 ♕d8 24.♕f4 ♖c8 25.♖xc8 ♕xc8 26.h4!± Playing the black side of this kind of position is extremely unpleasant!

20...♔xf7 21.♘e4! ♕b6

Black's choices are very limited. The pawn on e6 has to be defended, so he must play either the move in the game or else:

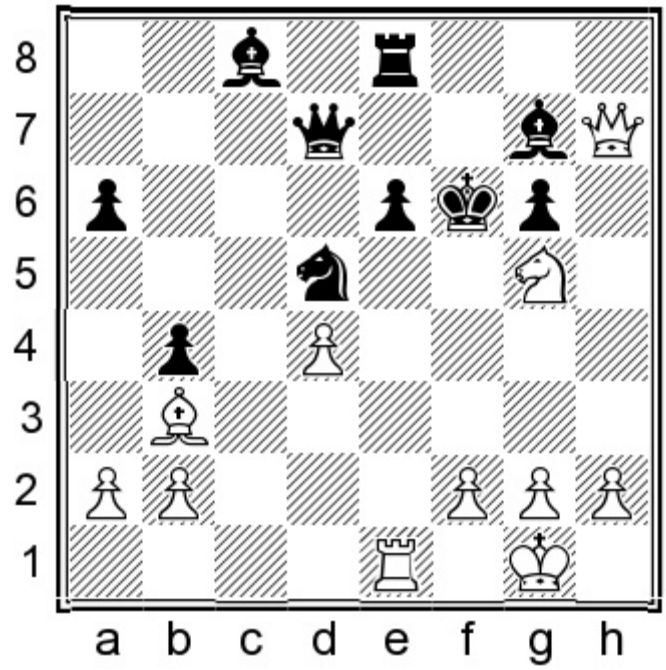
21...♕d7 22.♗xf6!

White must on no account slacken the pace of the attack – there are just too many enemy pieces participating directly in the defence of their king.

22...♗xf6 23.♕xh7† ♗g7 24.♖xc8 ♗xc8□

24...♖xc8? loses entertainingly to 25.♘g5† ♔f6 26.♗a4! ♕e7 27.♕h4 ♖c4 28.♘xe6†!? ♔f7 29.♘g5† ♔f8, and White's king hastens to the aid of his pieces: 30.♔f1!+–

25.♘g5† ♔f6



26.♕h4!

26.♗c2? is nowhere near as convincing; after 26...♘e7! 27.♖xe6† ♕xe6 28.♘xe6 ♗xe6 White has yet to prove that he has any advantage!

26...♖h8

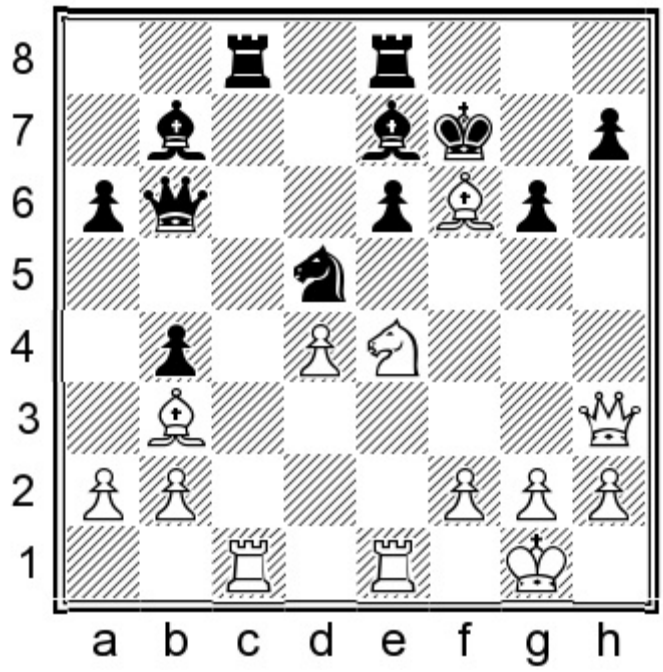
26...♕c6 is no better – though to be fair, it is no worse either! After the quiet 27.g3! it isn't at all clear how Black is to defend. For instance, in the event of 27...♔e7 28.♘xe6† ♔d7 29.♘c5† ♕xc5 30.dxc5 ♖xe1† 31.♔g2+– the resulting position doesn't leave him with many hopes of salvation.

27.♕g4 ♖h5 28.♖e5+–

It is simply painful to look at the poor black king!

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22.♗xf6!



22...♗xf6?

Probably the decisive mistake! I suspect Kotanjian was in severe time trouble and missed his last chance! For better or worse he had to play:

22...♘xf6□ 23.♘g5†

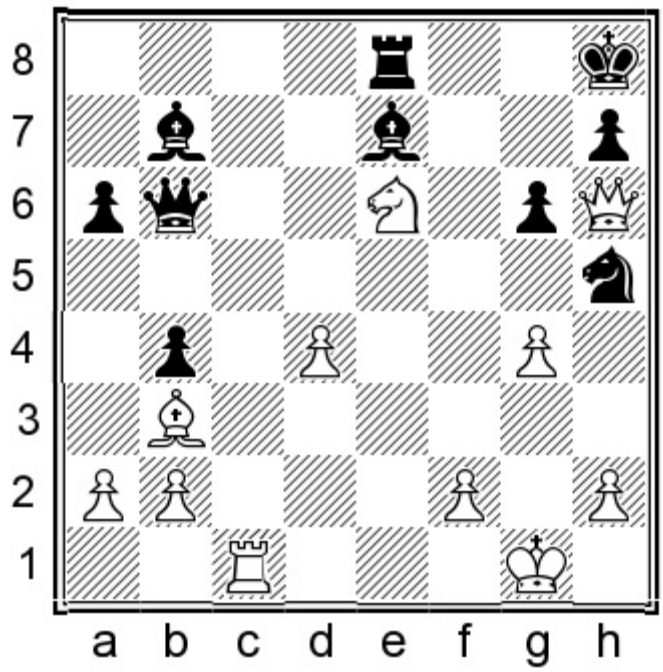
23.♗xe6†? ♔g7 24.♘xf6 ♗xf6 hands the initiative over to Black.

23...♔g7 24.♘xe6† ♔h8 25.♕h6 ♘h5□

Absolutely the only move.

Not 25...♖g8 26.♘g5! ♖gf8 27.♖xc8 ♖xc8 28.♘f7† ♔g8 29.♘d6† ♗d5 30.♖xe7+–.

26.g4 ♖xc1 27.♖xc1



27...♕b5!

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Again Black has no choice – he has to control g5, and would lose at once with 27...♕d6 28.gxh5 ♖g8 29.♘g5.

28.gxh5

It might be worthwhile choosing 28.♗c4 ♕c6 29.d5 ♕d6 30.gxh5 ♖g8, but even then, not everything is clear.

28...♖g8! 29.♘c7 ♗g5!

There – the g5-square comes in useful!

30.♘xb5 ♗xh6 31.♖c7 ♖g7 32.♖xg7

An interesting try is 32.♗f7!? gxh5† 33.♔f1 ♗g2† 34.♔e2 ♖xf7 35.♖xf7 axb5 36.f3 b3!? 37.axb3 h4±, and the d5-pawn is very dangerous – but Black too has his trumps.

32...♔xg7 33.♘d6

White has kept a material plus, but Black's two mighty bishops leave him with fully realistic drawing chances.

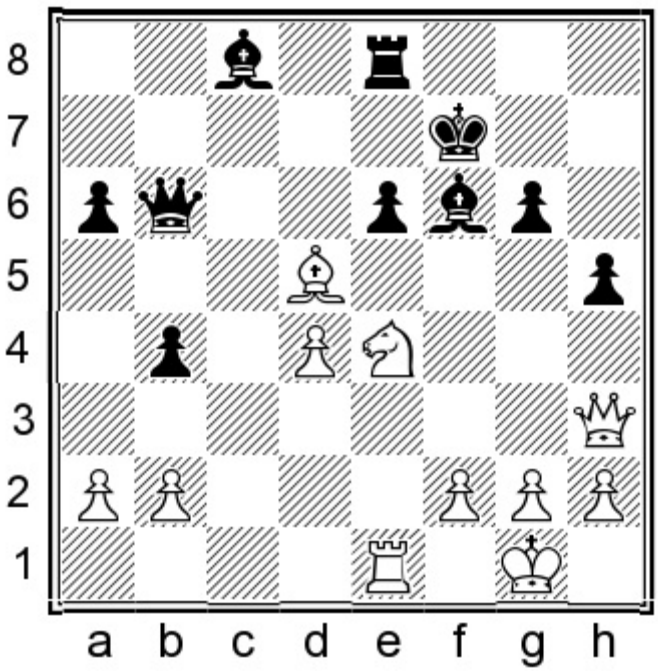
It's amazing how difficult it can be to win a game; you attack, you sacrifice, you trick your opponent, who actually goes wrong more than once – and still you don't succeed in winning! What the explanation is, I honestly don't know. Perhaps the stars are simply not on your side on that particular day, as Vasily Smyslov was fond of saying – and I have no wish to argue with that great Champion.

23.♖xc8 ♗xc8

With 23...♖xc8 Black loses in the most banal fashion: 24.♕xh7† ♔f8 25.♗xd5 exd5 26.♘xf6 ♕xf6 27.♕xb7+– and the game ends.

24.♗xd5 exd5?

Short of time, the Armenian player has lost his will to resist! A considerably more tenacious (or obstinate!) line was 24...h5!, when White would at least be required to find an amusing trick:



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25.♗c6! ♖f8 (Black loses after both 25...♕xc6 26.♕f3+– and 25...♖d8 26.♘xf6 ♔xf6 27.d5!+–) 26.♘xf6 ♔xf6 27.♕f3† ♔g7 28.♕e4±. At least White isn't winning by force, which is *some* good news for Black! Of course the extra pawn, the activity of the white pieces and the weakness of the black monarch should guarantee White the win, but at any rate it would take some time! But now the game is over in literally a few more moves.

25.♘g5† ♗xg5

The variation 25...♔f8 26.♕h6† ♗g7 27.♖xe8† ♔xe8 28.♕xg7+– will hardly find many supporters!

26.♕xh7† ♔f6

Or 26...♔f8 27.♕h8†.

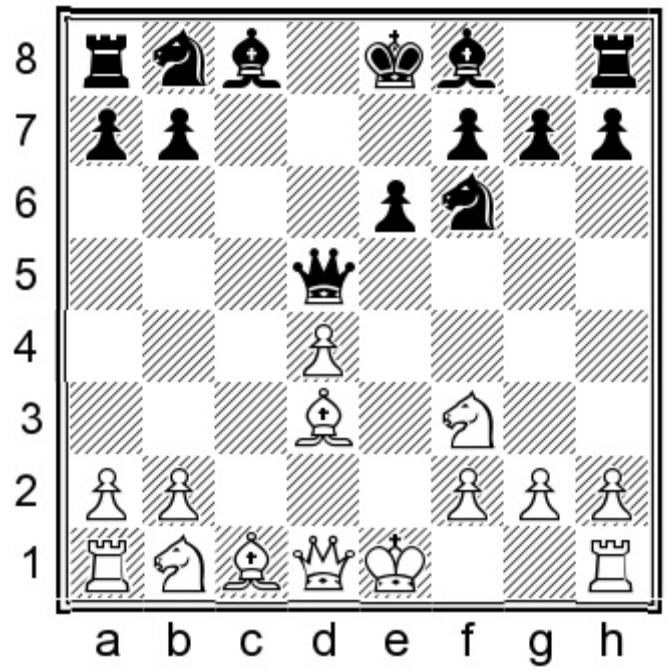
27.♖xe8

1–0

A splendid victory for the young Israeli Grandmaster, who not only displayed a good understanding of the methods of play with an isolated pawn, but also showed that his energy supplies are fully in order! Rodshtein succeeded in exerting strong pressure on his opponent's position; with literally every move he either improved his own position or created concrete tactical threats. After Black missed his chances to defend, White was accurate all the way to the end!

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1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c3 d5 4.exd5 ♕xd5 5.d4 ♘f6 6.♗d3 cxd4 7.cxd4



It's hard to find an opening in which there is no possibility of reaching an IQP position!

7...♘c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♘c3 ♕d8 10.a3 0-0 11.♗c2

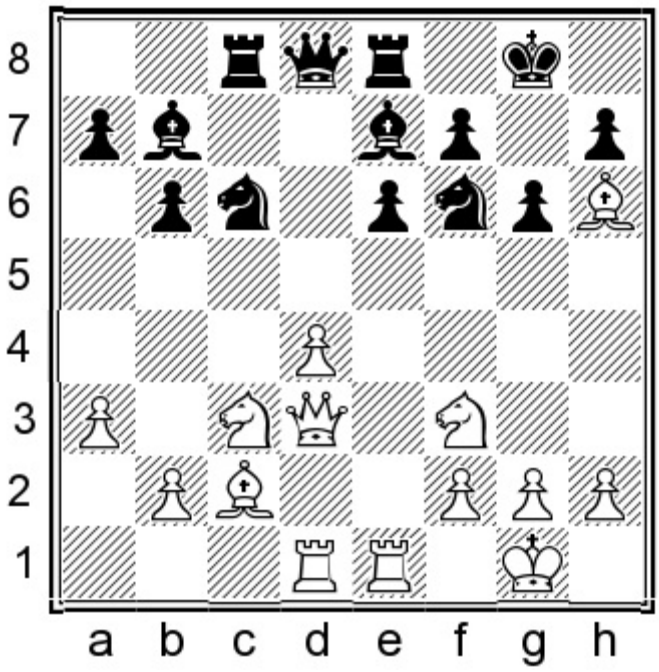
Undoubtedly the most popular and natural plan. The mechanism that White sets up with bishop on c2 and queen on d3 practically forces his opponent into a weakening of the kingside, thereby furthering White's initiative.

11...b6 12.♕d3 g6 13.♗h6 ♖e8 14.♖ad1 ♗b7

At first sight Black is not threatened with any immediate danger. His king is safely defended and it looks as if he can be confident about the future. But White has no reason to hurry! The kingside weaknesses will not go away, and in addition Black has to keep a careful watch for a break in the centre with d4-d5.

15.♖fe1 ♖c8

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16.♗b3

There's nothing new under the sun! This manoeuvre is also frequently seen; the bishop's transfer to the a2-g8 diagonal gives a boost to White's initiative. Now Black has to be on the lookout on literally every move for a possible sacrifice on e6, quite apart from the d4-d5 break, which could bring about a quick end to the game.

16...♘a5 17.♗a2 ♘d5

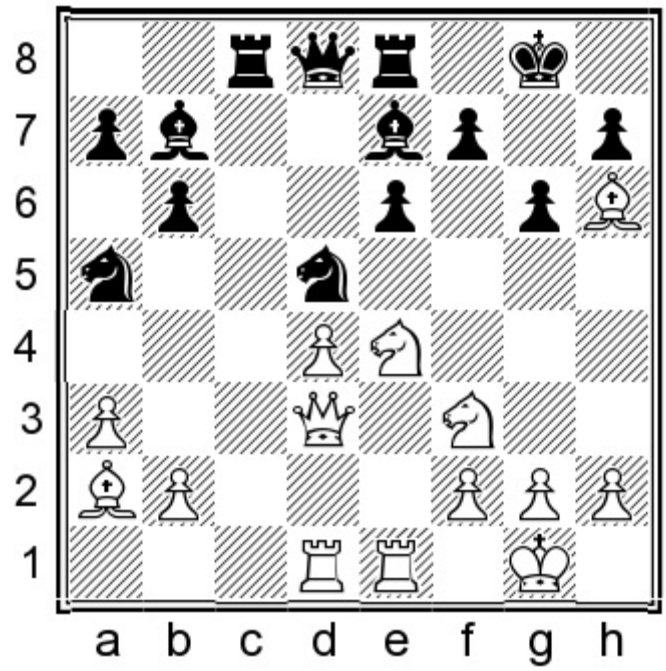
Black can hardly be happy with 17...♗d5 18.♘xd5 ♘xd5 19.♘e5, when White has a pleasant game.

18.♘e5

White posts his knight in the centre of the board, and what objection could there be to this move?

However, 18.♘e4 doesn't look at all bad either; White has no desire to allow exchanges. There could follow:

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a) 18...♘c6 19.♘fg5! ♕d7 20.♕f3 and Black will scarcely be able to organize proper resistance in the face of the many threats.

b) 18...♖c7 Christiansen – Gheorghiu, Torremolinos 1977, leads to similar, fairly dismal variations: 19.♘fg5!N 19...♕d7 20.b4 ♘c6 21.♗xd5 exd5 (nor does Black save himself with 21...♕xd5 22.♕h3 ♘xd4 23.♖xd4 ♕xd4 24.♘xe6!+–) 22.♕f3 ♘d8 (22...f5? 23.♘f6† ♗xf6 24.♕xd5†+–) 23.♘f6† ♗xf6 24.♕xf6 ♘xe6 25.♖d3 The position looks quite forlorn for Black.

c) Perhaps Black's best course is to use his knight to keep pestering the white one: 18...♘f6 19.♘c3!? ♘d5 and White must after all resort to 20.♘e5, as in our main game.

18...♗f8

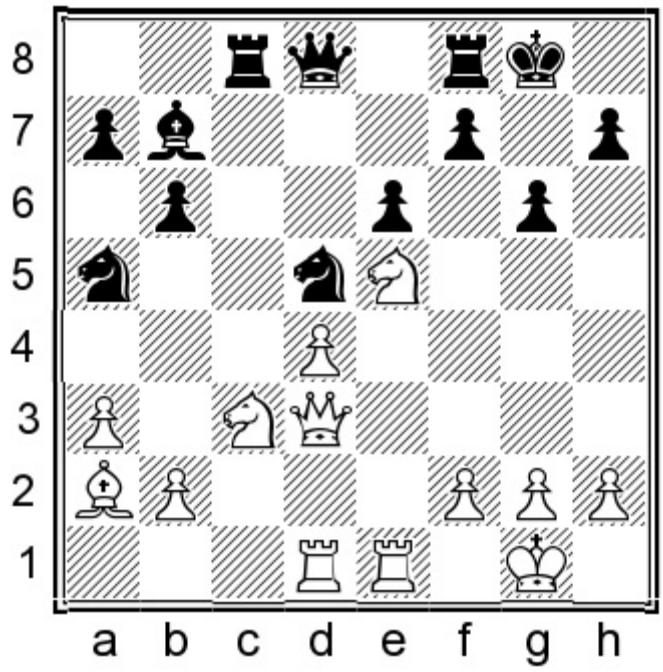
On 18...♗f6 19.♘e4 ♗g7 Fossan – Elseth, Norwegian Championship 1987, the simplest continuation is 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♕g3! with a strong attack.

19.♗xf8!?

Why? It was definitely not worth abandoning the crucial h6-square without extreme necessity. The simple 19.♕h3! would preserve all White's assets.

19...♖xf8

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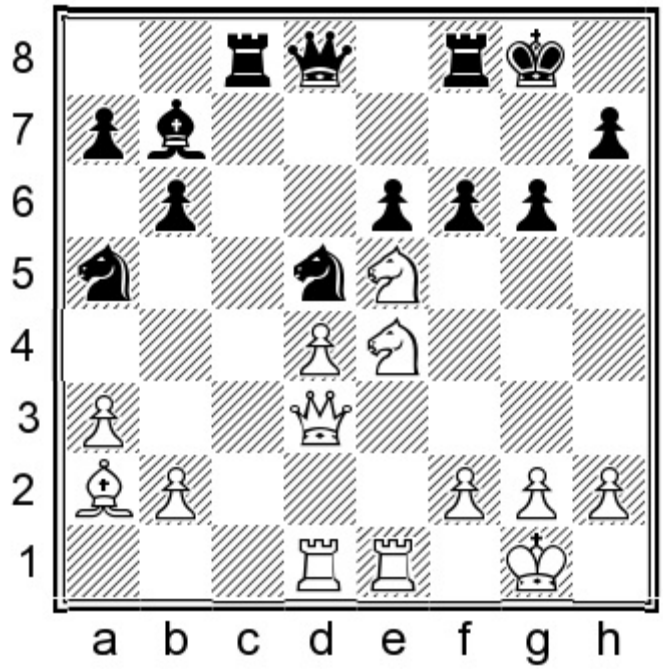


20.♘e4

It was only at this point that a novelty was introduced – such is modern chess! The game Gobet – Gerber, Swiss Championship 1988, had gone 20.♕g3 ♘xc3 21.bxc3 ♗d5, whereupon 22.♗xd5 exd5 23.h4 ♘c4 24.h5 promises White a small plus.

20...♔g7

An interesting question is whether Black can play 20...f6 here. The answer is undoubtedly negative, and the reason is not too complicated:



21.♘xg6! hxg6 22.♘c5! ♔f7 (What else can be suggested? After 22...♘f4 23.♘xe6 ♘xd3 24.♘xd8† ♘c4 25.♘xb7 ♘dxb2 26.♖c1 ♔h8 27.♖e7!? Black isn't left with much chance of a successful defence.)

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23.♘xe6 ♕d6 24.♘xf8 ♖xf8 25.♕h3 ♔g7 26.♖e6 ♕d7 27.♖de1 White has an irresistible attack.

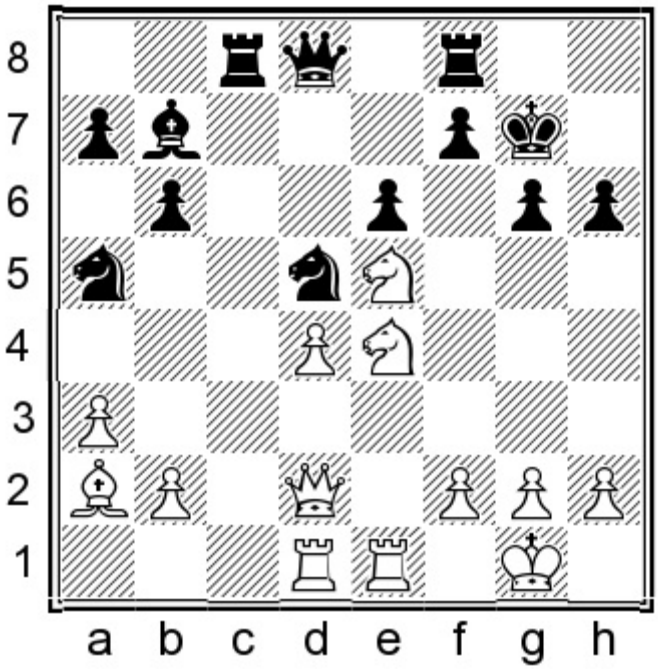
21.♕d2

Perhaps 21.♕g3!? is even stronger.

And also tempting is: 21.b4!? ♘c6 22.♕g3 ♕c7 23.♗xd5 exd5 24.♘g5! (more convincing than 24.♖c1 dxe4! 25.b5 ♕d6 26.♘xc6 ♕d5 27.♕e5† ♕xe5 28.dxe5 ♗xc6 29.bxc6 ♖fe8=) 24...♘xe5 25.dxe5 The knight is clearly stronger than the passive bishop, the black king's position is weak, and the dark squares are positively gaping.

21...h6

With 21...f6!? Black solves his problems only temporarily – after 22.♘g4 ♔h8 23.♕h6 White's pressure is quite troublesome.



22.h3

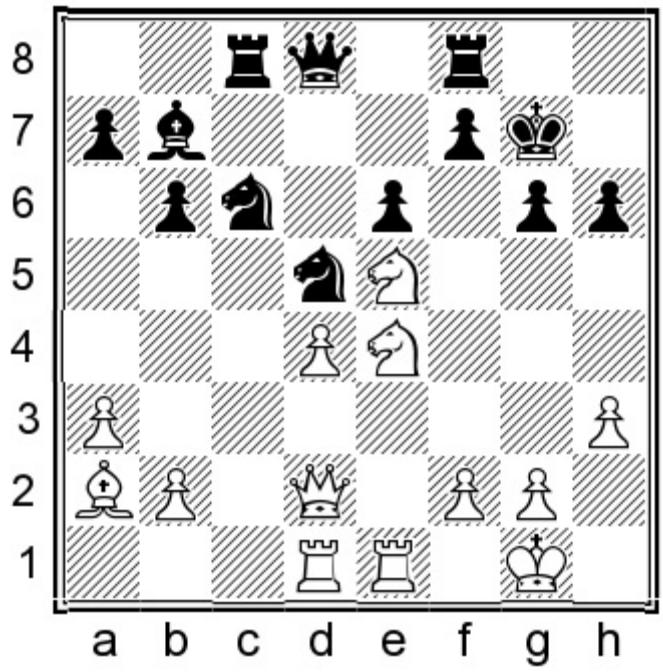
Copying Black and keeping him "in suspense".

White can obtain a very good game with the more forthright: 22.b4!? ♘c6 23.♗xd5!? (Black would have an easier time after either 23.b5 ♘ce7 or 23.♘c4 ♖c7) 23...exd5 Black is forced to shut in his bishop and relieve White of his sole weakness. (23...♕xd5? loses quickly to 24.♘g4 g5 25.♘ef6 ♕f5 26.♕b2! when Black has immense trouble in store for him on the a1-h8 diagonal) 24.♘c3±

22...♘c6?!

I think Black ought to have taken a difficult decision here. If he had been able to judge the full consequences of 22...♘c6 correctly, he might – and should – have resolved on 22...f5!?, although of course your very hand would shrink from carrying out such a move!

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23.♘g4!

White could well be dazzled by the number of good moves at his disposal!

One such alternative is the standard exchange: 23.♗xd5!? exd5 (23...♕xd5? 24.♘g4! ♖h8 25.♕f4 transposes into lines examined in the note to Black's 24th move) 24.♘c3↑ and Black is far from equalizing.

23...♖h8 24.♗xd5! exd5

Finally Black is obliged to take on d5 with his pawn. He would lose with:

24...♕xd5 25.♕f4

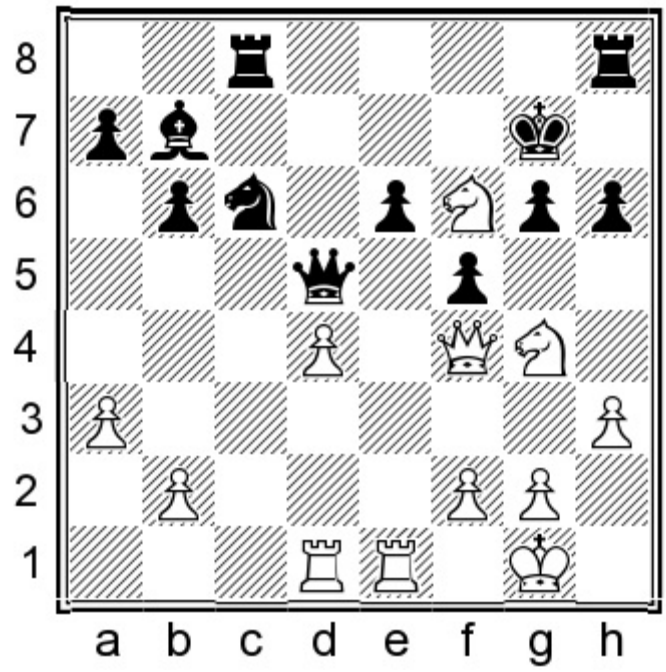
25.♘gf6 ♕f5 26.d5↑ also leads to the same result.

25...f5

25...♕f5 26.♕g3+–

26.♘ef6

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26...g5

After 26...♕c4 27.♘e5 ♕b3 28.d5! Black's position collapses like a house of cards!

27.♕g3 f4

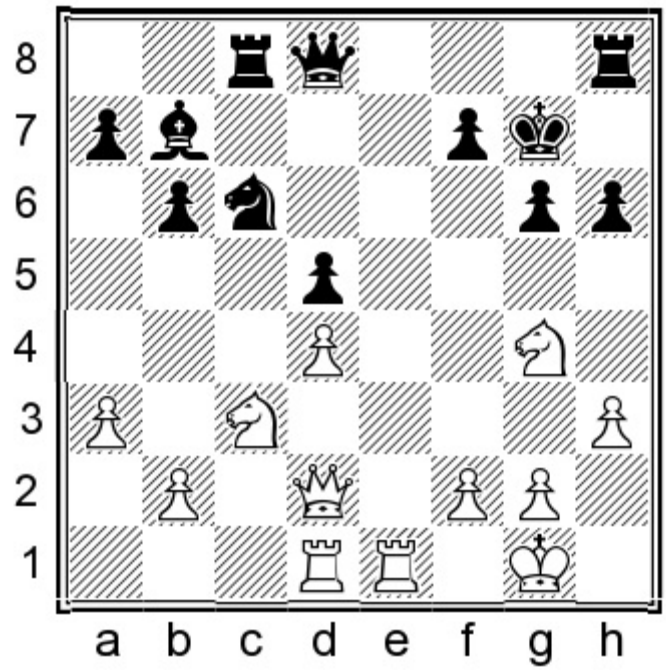
In the event of 27...♕a2 the poor black queen is heading into voluntary but permanent exile, giving White the opportunity for a series of checks: 28.♘h5† ♔g6 29.♘f4† ♔f7 30.♘xh6†! ♖xh6 31.♕xg5 ♖ch8 32.d5+– and mate will not be long coming!

28.♕c3 ♕a5 29.b4!? ♘xb4 30.♕b3! ♘d5 31.♖xe6+–

The time has come to put the chessmen away in their box – there are just too many white ones eyeing the black king.

25.♘c3

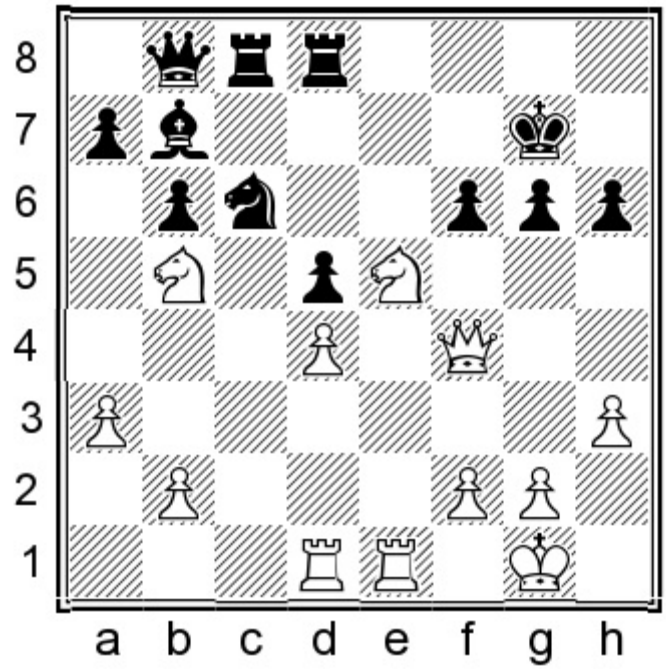
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We have reached the same type of position that we studied in the Stein – Petersons game.

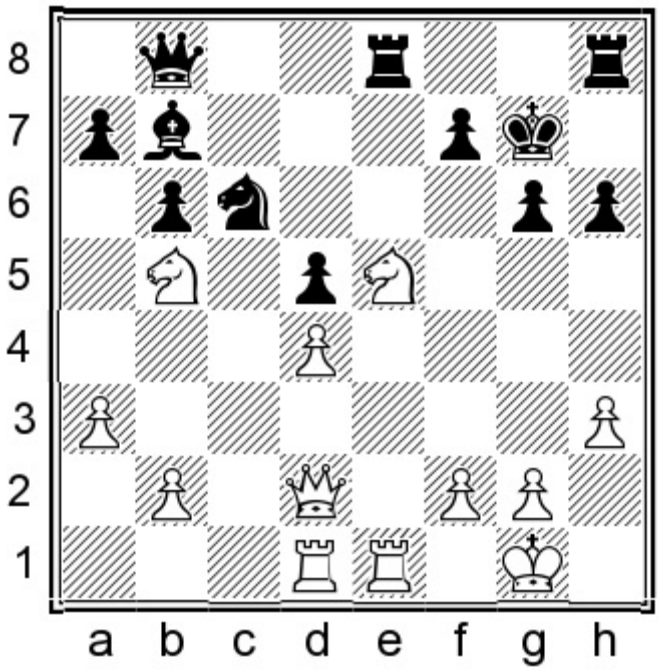
25...♕d6 26.♘b5 ♕b8 27.♘e5! ♖ce8

White wins attractively in the event of 27...♖hd8 28.♕f4!. After the most natural reply 28...f6, the refutation is pretty though not complicated:



29.♘xg6! ♔xg6 30.♕g4† ♔f7 31.♖d3! ♖e8 32.♕h5† ♔f8 33.♕xh6† ♔f7 34.♕h7† ♔f8 35.♖xe8† ♖xe8 36.♖g3 and White's attack concludes successfully. Given the weakness of Black's king position and the fact that his queen was far away on the edge of the board, it is no wonder that the attack unfolded so quickly!

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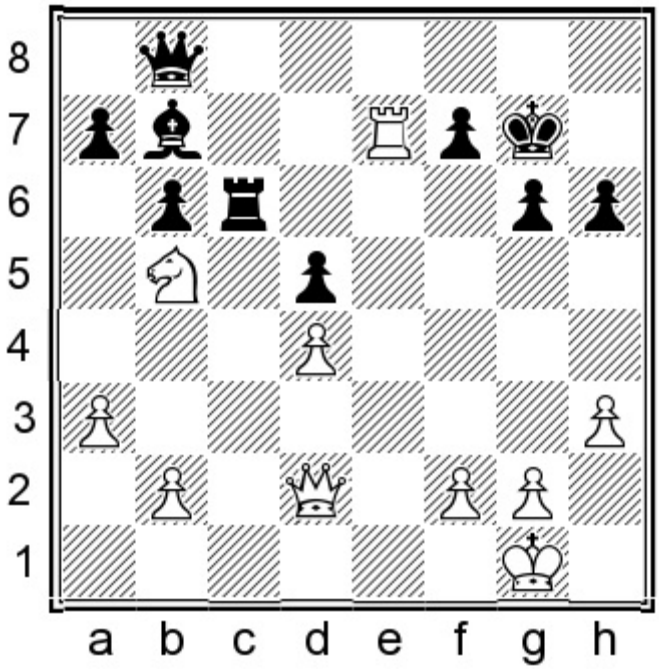
28.♖c1! ♖e6 29.♘xc6 ♖xc6 30.♖e7 ♖hc8?

Gheorghiu finally succumbs to the pressure and loses a position that may still have been defensible.

After 30...♖e8 31.♖ce1± Black's position is not to be envied, but it would still cost White a fair amount of energy to achieve success.

31.♖xc6 ♖xc6

31...♗xc6 loses instantly to 32.♘xa7, in view of 32...♖c7 33.♕f4!.



32.♕e3?!

Well, what can we say? Even the sun has sunspots! Luther misses his chance to finish the game

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prettily: 32.♘c7! ♖xc7 33.♕f4 ♖xe7 34.♕xb8 ♗a6 35.b3+– with ♕d6 to follow, and Black has no chance whatever of constructing an impregnable fortress.

32...♗a6?

32...♔f8 was slightly better than this, but I don't see any *other* merit in it.

33.♘c7!

Better late than never. The bishop is attacked, and White threatens to check on e6 or e5. Black has no chance at all of defending successfully and he therefore acknowledged defeat.

1–0

Not a difficult game, but an attractive one. Luther succeeded in blending attack with purely positional play. Black could probably have resisted the attack, but in the event White exploited all the open files in the position and took a serious look at the black queenside pawns. Such tactics proved highly effective and Black's position simply fell apart.

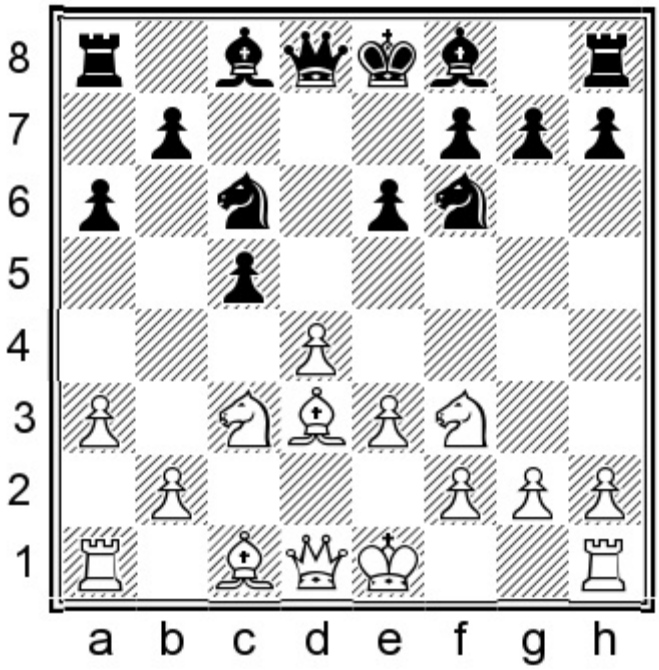
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1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.e3 e6 5.d4 d5

Again the opponents have to choose between playing with the isolated pawn or against it – which to be sure is a simple matter of taste.

6.a3 dxc4 7.♗xc4 a6 8.♗d3!?

In the event of 8.0-0 b5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.♘e4!?, it seems to me that White's position is slightly pleasanter to play.



8...cxd4

The great Bronstein makes his strategic decision. He hopes to show his young opponent that the isolated pawn is above all a source of worry, rather than a key helper in the mounting of an attack. How far he succeeds in this, the further course of the game will show.

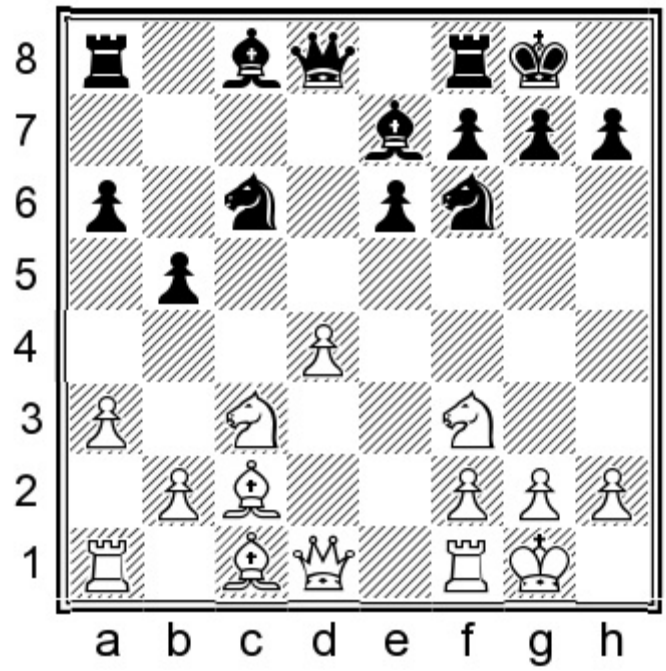
9.exd4 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗c2

We encountered a similar manoeuvre in the previous game.

11...b6

Black always has to face the dilemma of whether to advance his b-pawn one square or two: 11...b5!?

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This has only one slight defect – the weakening of the c5-square.

12.♕d3 ♗b7

12...g6 13.♗h6 ♖e8 14.♖fd1 ♗b7 leads to unclear play.

12...b4 13.♘e4 is also quite interesting, although it isn't clear that Black should encourage the knight towards c5, while at the same time allowing the white bishop to jump to a4 in some lines.

13.♗g5 g6 14.♖fe1 ♖c8 15.♖ad1 ♘d5

15...b4!?

16.♗h6 ♖e8

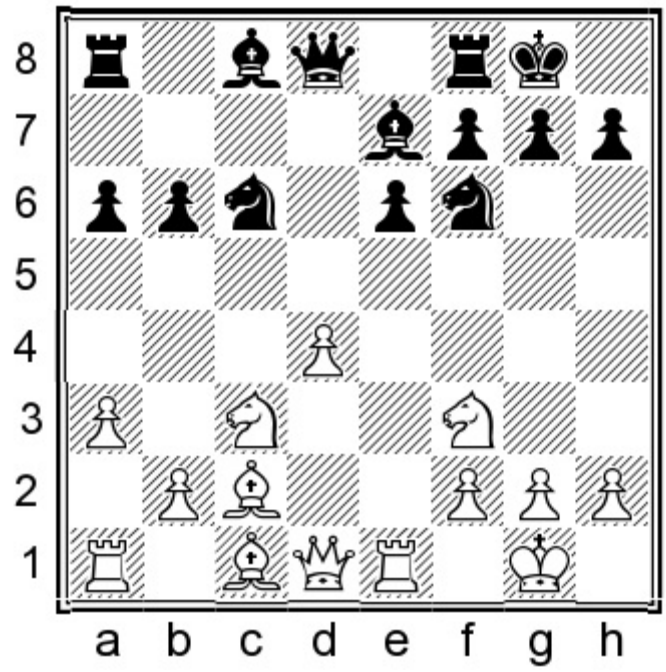
Chances were about equal in Fedorowicz – Yermolinsky, USA (ch) 1999. My view would be that 11...b5!? is stronger than the move in the game, or at any rate more active.

12.♖e1

This was a novelty at the time.

A similar type of position also arises from 12.♗g5 ♗b7 13.♕d3 g6 14.♖ad1 ♖c8 15.♗b3 b5 16.♗a2, with a minimal plus for White, I. Sokolov – P. Nikolic, Burgas 1993. Observe that Black eventually pushed his pawn from b6 to b5 in this game.

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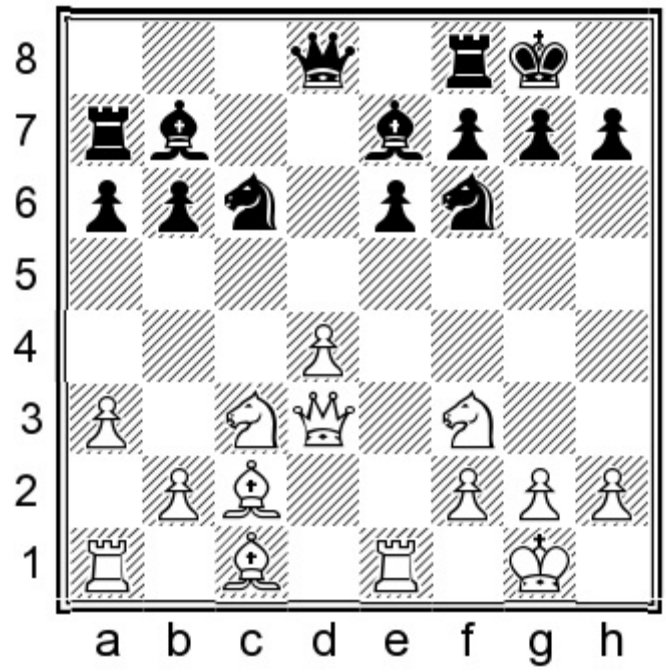
12...♖a7!?

An original idea, but then originality was a quality that accompanied Bronstein throughout his illustrious career.

Black's problem is that the standard line 12...♗b7 13.♕d3 g6 14.♗h6 ♖e8 15.♖ad1 ♖c8 16.♗b3 ♘a5 17.♗a2, Emms – K. Müller, Bundesliga 2001, fails to secure fully equal chances.

13.♕d3 ♖d7

At this point 13...♗b7? would leave the rook looking completely silly on a7. Furthermore, it meets with an immediate and ruthless refutation:



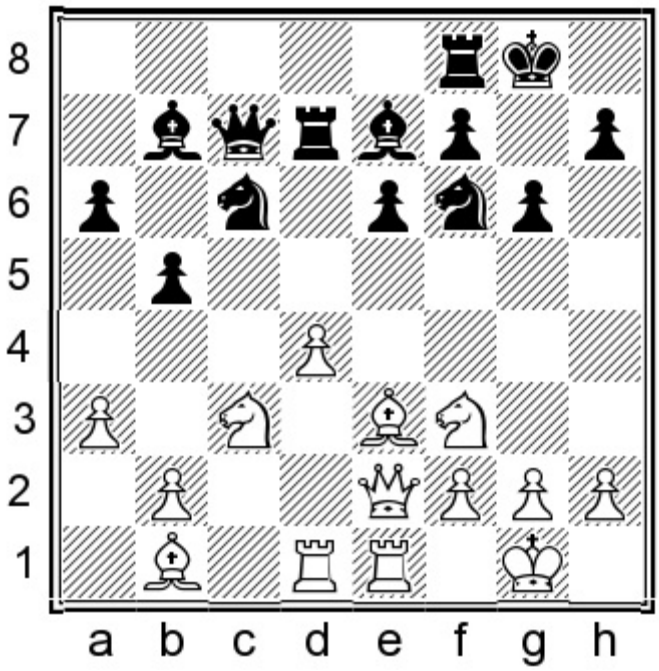
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14.d5! exd5 15.♗g5 g6 16.♖xe7! ♕xe7 17.♘xd5+– This, by the way, is a tactic that we may encounter in plenty of other games.

14.♗e3 ♗b7 15.♖ad1 g6

On 15...♕c7, White continues not with 16.d5 g6!∞, but with 16.h3!?, keeping up the pressure.

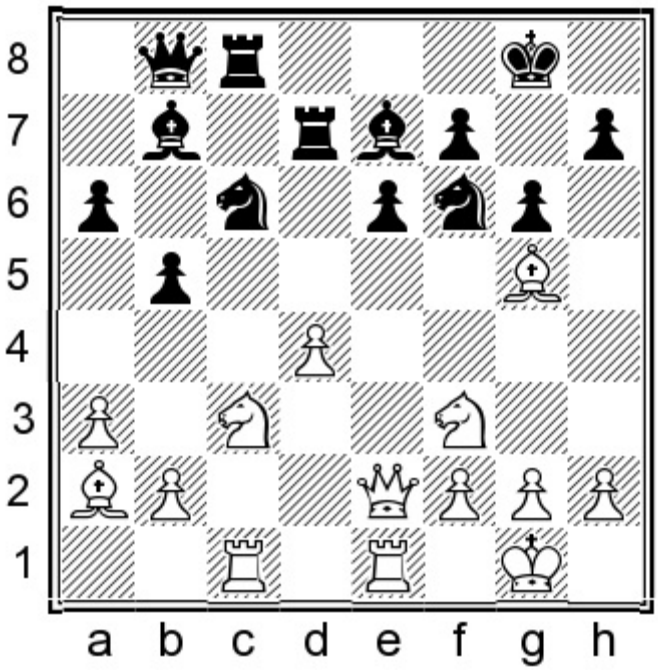
16.♕e2 ♕c7 17.♗b1 b5



18.♖c1 ♖c8 19.♗a2 ♕b8 20.♗g5?!

A critical juncture. Vaganian rather carelessly selects an active bishop move. He should have opted for the prophylactic 20.h3!±, restricting the black knight's activity. It was essential to take the g4-square under control, but Rafael simply relaxes and overlooks his opponent's tactical chance.

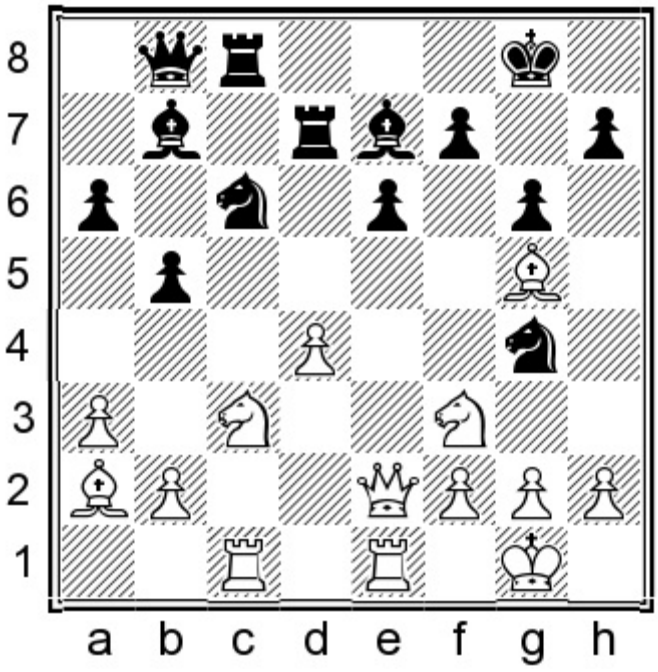
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20...♕d6?

The crucial moment in the game! David Bronstein misses, or fails to work out, a long and interesting combination – and the flow of the game changes direction at once. Perhaps he didn't judge this moment to be critical, or then again he may not have wanted to use up energy in calculating complex variations – we chess players are human like everyone else, and of course have human frailties. *À la guerre comme à la guerre!* But from now on, right to the end of the game, the initiative will be entirely in White's hands.

The former pretender to the chess throne ought to have resolved on:
20...♘g4!



This introduces the terrible threat of 21...♘xd4.

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21.g3□

White would very much like to avoid this move which weakens the long diagonal, but he has little choice in view of Black's threat.

21...♘xd4

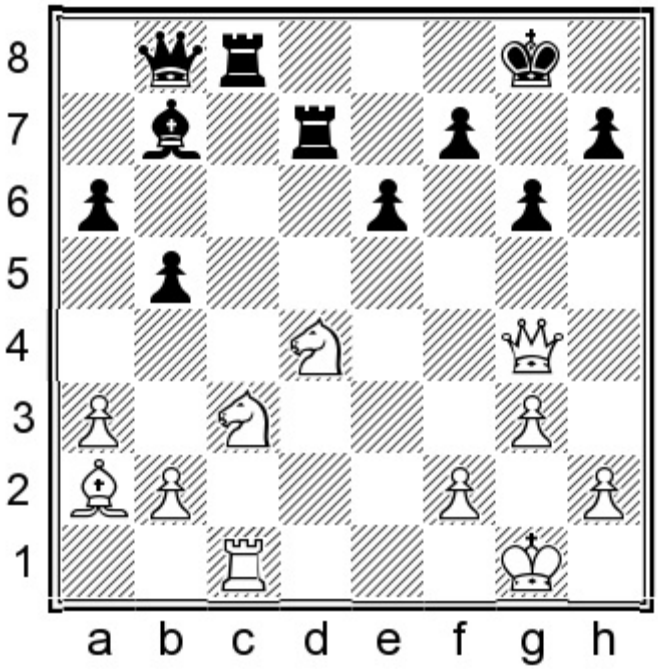
Black plays this move anyway, but it is no longer immediately fatal to his opponent.

22.♘xd4 ♗xg5 23.♕xg4

Black's game is very easy to play after 23.♖cd1 ♘e5 24.♕xe5! ♕xe5 25.♖xe5 ♗f6!. His two mighty bishops, acting in harmony on the key diagonals, along with the pin on the d-file, offer him a decisive plus.

23...♗xc1 24.♖xc1

Black now has at least three continuations that guarantee him the better chances:



a) 24...♕e5 25.♘xe6! (the only chance to save the game – 25.♘f3 ♕f6! wins for Black) 25...♖e8! 26.♕f4 ♖xe6 27.♗xe6 ♕xf4 28.gxf4 fxe6 29.♖d1 ♖xd1† 30.♘xd1 ♔f7 31.♘e3 ♔f6 32.♔f1 ♗f3 Next Black will carry out ...e5 and obtain an advantage in the endgame, though it's unclear to me whether he can win it.

b) 24...♕d6!

An interesting move, but its idea isn't entirely comprehensible at first sight.

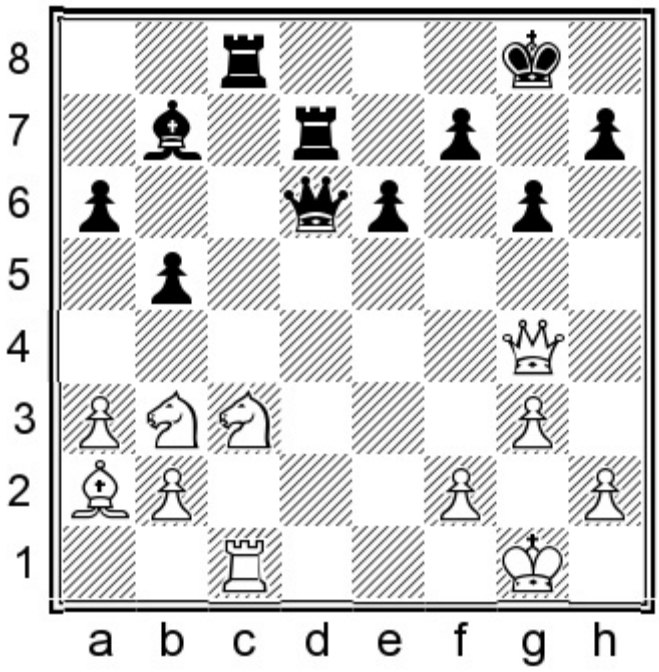
25.♘b3

What else can be suggested for White?

With 25.♖d1 he loses very quickly indeed: 25...♖cd8 26.♘f3 ♕xd1† 27.♘xd1 ♖xd1† 28.♔g2 ♖8d3–+

After 25.♘de2 a5! there is salvation neither in 26.♖f1 ♕c6 27.f3 ♖d2–+, nor in 26.♗b3 b4 27.axb4 axb4 28.♖d1 ♕c6, when it's rather hard to see how White can defend against the many threats.

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25...a5!

The plan now becomes clear: once the white pieces have been forced away from their active posts in the middle of the board, Black will be victorious by attacking alternately against the king and the weakened queenside.

26.♖e1

26.♘xa5 ♖xc3 27.bxc3 ♕xa3∓

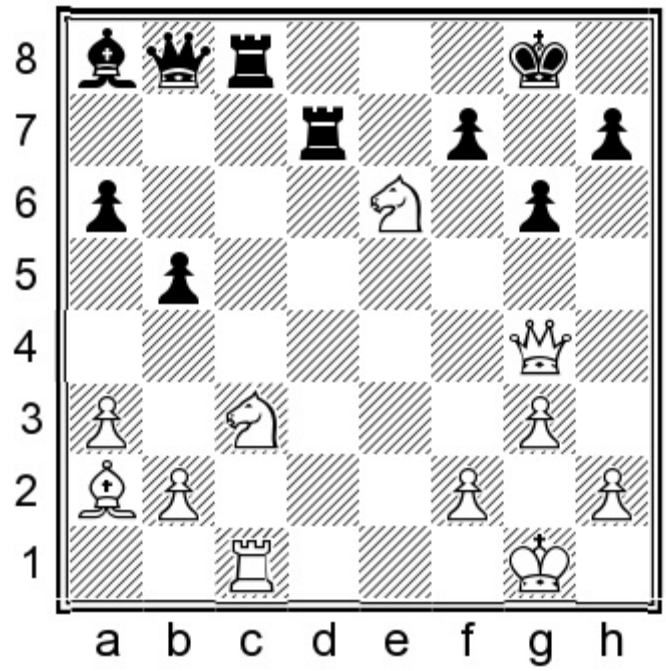
26...a4! 27.♘a5 ♖xc3! 28.bxc3 ♕d2 29.♖f1 ♕xa2 30.♘xb7 ♖xb7 31.♕b4 ♕d5 32.♖b1 ♖c7∓

White retains chances of a successful defence in the endgame, but there are definitely some unpleasant hours in store for him!

c) 24...♗a8!? 25.♘xe6

White could also take on e6 with a different piece, but after 25.♗xe6 ♕b7 26.f3 fxe6 27.♕xe6† ♖f7–+ Black would need no more than minimum accuracy to win the game.

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25...♕b7 26.f3 ♕b6† 27.♔f1 ♖d2 28.♘d4 ♖c7 29.♖d1 ♖xd1† 30.♘xd1 h5! 31.♕g5
31.♕f4 ♖d7–+
31...♕xd4 32.♕xg6† ♔f8 33.♕h6† ♔e8
Again Black is victorious.

I can't say that all these variations are very easy to find. However, what is obvious is that in practice White would face a tough, thankless and almost unremitting defensive task.

Before returning to the game, I would just like to mention that 20...♘h5? fails to the wholly uncomplicated 21.♗xe6!+–.

21.♖ed1

This is not quite as strong as 21.♖cd1!?↑, bearing in mind that the rook on the e-file was very active. White still keeps the initiative though.

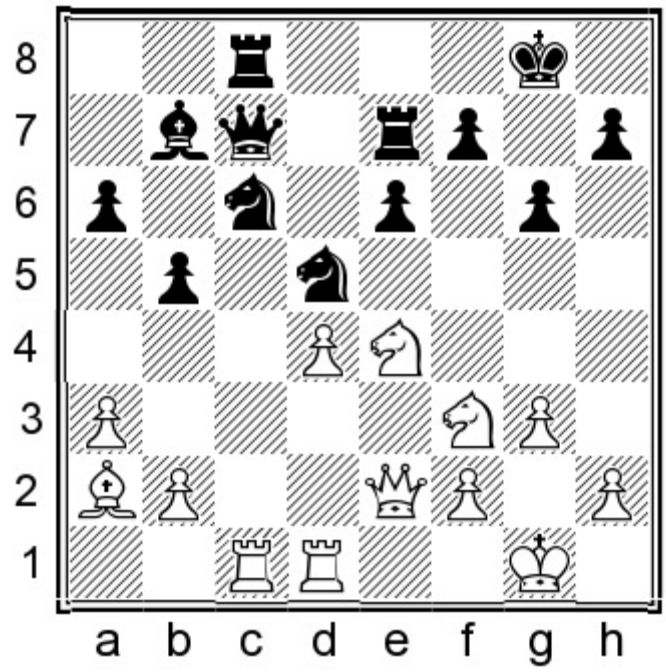
21...♘d5 22.♘e4!± ♕c7 23.♗xe7 ♖xe7 24.g3!?

A splendid decision! Vaganian takes control of the important f4-square.

The alternative 24.♕d2! also looks excellent.

On the other hand, 24.♗xd5? exd5 25.♘f6† ♔g7 26.♕d2 doesn't live up to expectations: 26...♔xf6! 27.♕h6 ♖ce8 (quite probably 27...♕d7 isn't bad either, but would your hand dare to carry out that move?) 28.♘g5 ♕f4 29.♘xh7† ♔f5 30.♕h3† ♕g4 Black has parried the mating threats successfully, and can very well lay claim to a plus.

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24...♔g7

Black could have tried fishing in troubled waters with:

24...♘xd4 25.♘xd4 ♕xc1!

Black hopes to exploit the long diagonal, but I suspect that his idea would have met with a refutation!

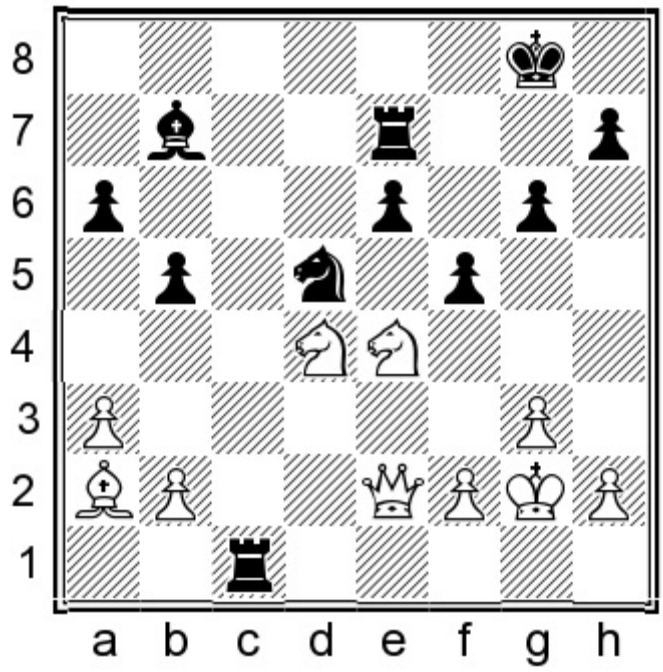
26.♖xc1

26.♘d6? is frankly weak. White would be left with few real chances of salvation after either 26...♕c7!? 27.♘xc8 ♕xc8! 28.♘xb5 ♘f4! 29.gxf4 axb5↑ or the even stronger 26...♘f6! 27.♘xb7 ♕c7! 28.♘a5 ♕xa5 29.♘c6 ♕c7 30.♘xe7† ♕xe7†∓.

26...♖xc1† 27.♔g2 f5

Black uses of all his tactical possibilities, but his opponent's material advantage will tell. 27...♘f6 28.f3 ♘fxe4 29.fxe4 ♖ec7 30.♗b3± is no help either.

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28.♘xe6!

Here is the refutation! At the end of the day, not only the black bishop but also the white one can go in for active play!

28...♖xe6

With 28...♖a1 Black attacks his chief enemy – the bishop on a2 – but comes up against a pretty and unexpected idea: 29.♘6c5 ♖xa2 30.♘xb7 fxe4 (after 30...♖xe4 31.♕d3+– there is no way to rescue the straying rook on a2) 31.♕d1 ♖d7 32.♕g4+– and now that the white queen is active, the game won't last much longer.

29.♕d2 ♖c4!

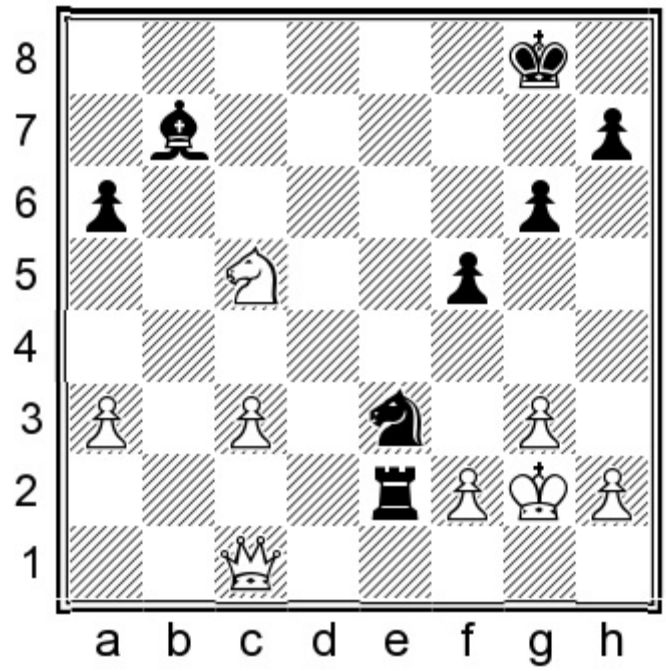
Self-sacrifice of a rare kind! The murderous bishop has to be shut out, even if one of Black's units must perish as the price!

30.♗xc4 bxc4 31.♘c5 c3!

Black's last chance – he can't allow the white queen into his camp. His defeat would be inevitable after 31...♖e2 32.♕a5! ♗c6 33.♔h3+–, when the king escapes persecution and the game quickly ends.

32.bxc3 ♖e2 33.♕c1 ♘e3†

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A curious position! The white king still has some troubles to face, but after a few precise moves the mirage is dispelled and the game proceeds to its logical conclusion.

34.♔g1 ♗f3!?

In the case of 34...♘c2 35.♘d3! ♗e4, White wins by 36.♕g5.

35.c4!+–

The knight will head for d3, Black's threats are parried, and the game will be over in just a few more moves.

These variations are beautiful, and difficult. Working them out completely at the board is not of course possible, but with the help of intuition we can at least head along the right track.

25.♕d2 ♕d8 26.h4±

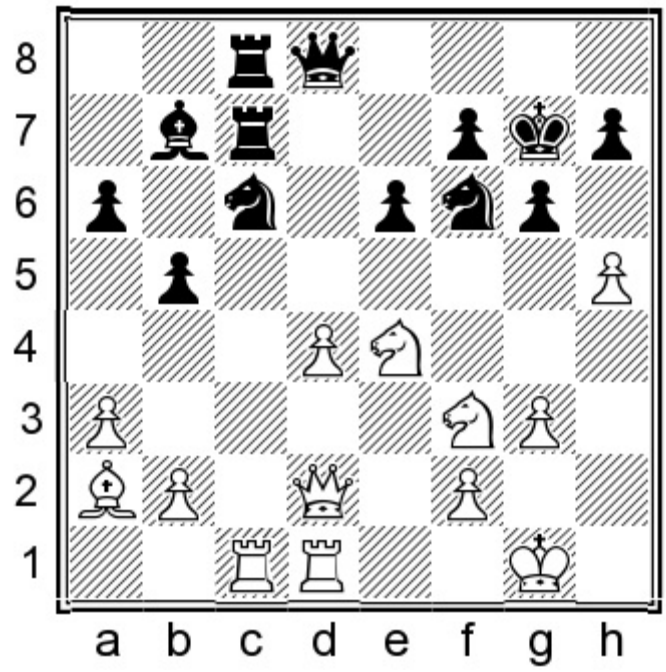
A typical idea; the pawn is going to h5, to weaken the black monarch's residence.

Quite a good alternative is 26.b4!?, taking the c5-square under permanent control! With such an abundance of possibilities, White can only be envied. He has good prospects for a kingside attack, and the possibility of playing ♘c5 at any moment gives him excellent queenside chances too.

26...♖ec7 27.h5 ♘f6

If 27...♔g8 then 28.♗xd5 exd5 29.♘c5± promises nothing good for Black.

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28.♘eg5?!

An error; White had at least two better options.

Driving the black king to the back rank with the more or less standard device of 28.h6†!? ♔h8 secures White a clear plus.

White also had a strong continuation in: 28.♘c5! ♕d6 (28...♘xh5? is met by 29.♗xe6!) 29.h6† ♔g8 30.d5!? ♘xd5 (30...exd5? loses to 31.♘xb7 ♖xb7 32.♕c3!) 31.♗xd5 exd5 32.♘xb7 ♖xb7 33.♕xd5 ♕xd5 34.♖xd5± Black's situation is unenviable – his weak king position and the extremely unpleasant pin on the c-file leave him with little chance of salvation.

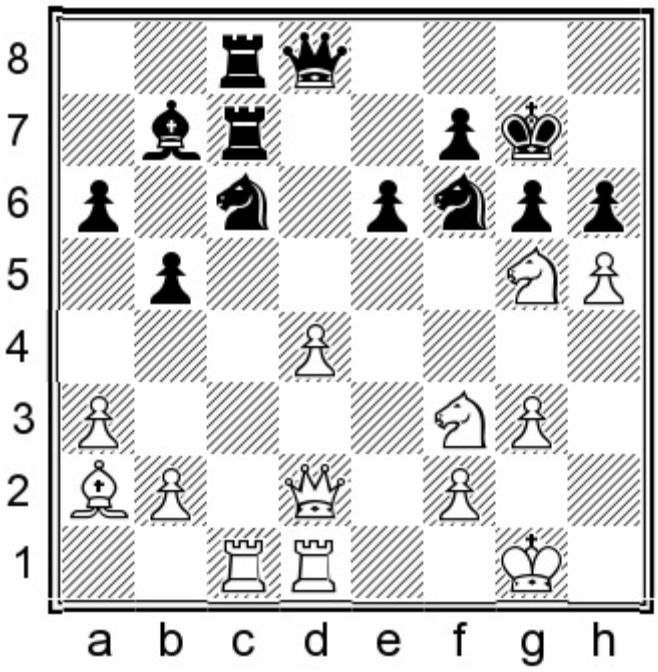
28...♘xh5?

Practically the decisive mistake; Bronstein has failed to stand up to the pressure. On the other hand, the correct decision for Black is extremely hard to find. He had to play:

28...h6□

This move looks so risky that it isn't at all surprising that Bronstein rejected it.

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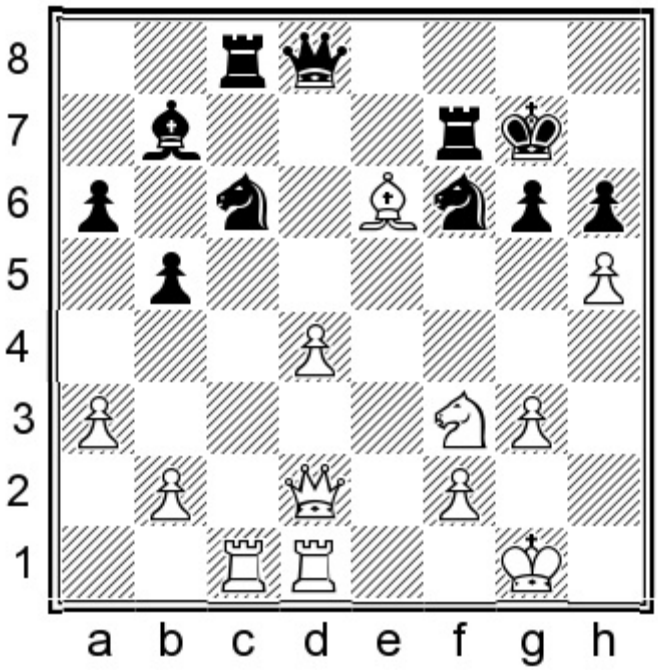


29.♘xf7

Evidently at this point White just can't do without sacrifices! The alternative involves leaving the g5-knight en prise, and sacrificing another piece into the bargain: 29.♗xe6!? hxg5 30.♗xc8 ♖xc8 31.d5 (31.♕xg5 ♘xh5 32.d5 ♘a5 would only help Black) 31...♕xd5 32.♕xd5 ♘xd5 33.♘xg5 (better than 33.♖xd5? ♘e5! 34.♖xc8 ♘xf3† 35.♔g2 ♗xd5–+) 33...♘ce7 34.♖xc8 ♗xc8 35.h6† ♔xh6 36.♘xf7† ♔g7 37.♘d6= and Black achieves equal chances without any real trouble.

29...♖xf7 30.♗xe6

30.hxg6 ♖e7! hands the initiative over to Black.



30...♘e7

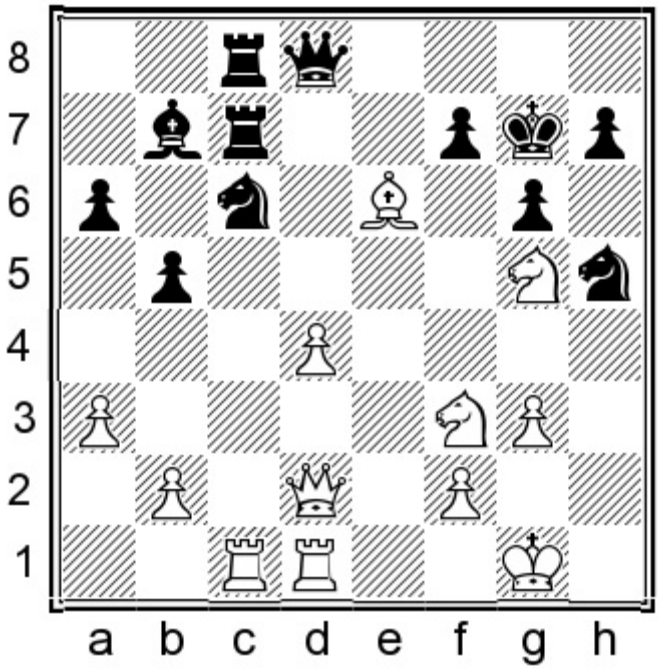
30...♖d7!? looks rather dangerous for Black after 31.♗xd7 ♕xd7 32.d5 ♘e7!? 33.♖xc8 ♕xc8 34.♖e1 ♘fxd5 35.♘d4 ♘f5 36.♘e6†, and White has a troublesome initiative.

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31.♖xc8 ♘xc8 32.d5 ♖c7 33.hxg6 ♘d6

The situation remains unclear. White's advantage looks only nominal, and Black retains very good prospects for a successful defence.

29.♗xe6!



29...♕f6?

The second mistake running! Black was obliged to play 29...♘xd4□ 30.♗xc8 ♘xf3† 31.♘xf3 ♕xc8 32.♖xc7 ♕xc7 33.♖c1 ♕e7 34.♕d4† ♘f6 35.♘e5±. White would then have a clear plus, but the road to victory would still be a long one.

30.♗xc8 ♖xc8 31.d5+–

Now the conclusion is not far off. The a1-h8 diagonal is opened, and Black just doesn't have the resources left to carry on the struggle. Apart from anything else, the d-pawn can hardly be stopped.

31...♘e7

What else would you suggest? After 31...♖d8 32.dxc6 ♖xd2 33.cxb7, there is no stopping the pawn!

32.d6

The pawn's advance symbolizes the beginning of the end of the game!
White would win just as easily with 32.♖xc8!? ♘xc8 33.♘h2!+–.

32...♘d5

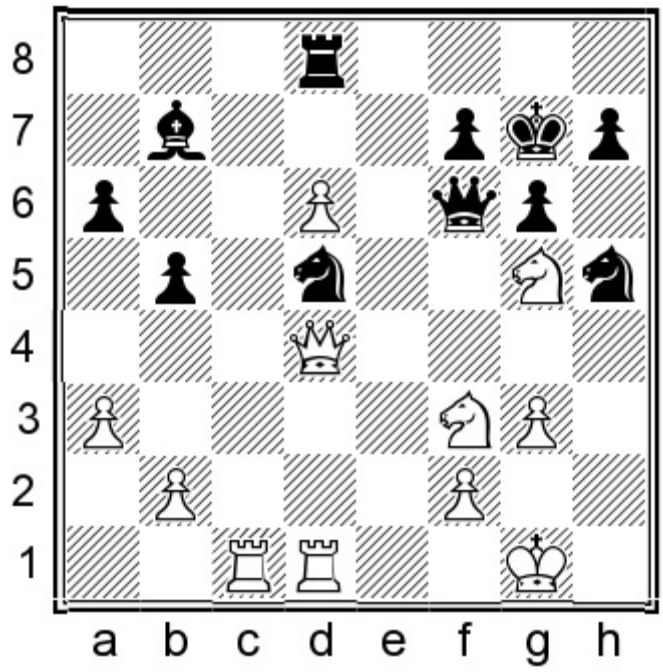
Neither 32...♖xc1 33.♖xc1 ♘c6 34.d7 nor 32...♗xf3 33.♖xc8! ♗d1 34.d7 permits Black to organize proper resistance.

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33.♕d4

There was a quicker win with 33.♖xc8! ♗xc8 34.♕xd5.

33...♖d8



34.♘e4 ♕xd4 35.♖xd4

The game could have finished beautifully after 35.♘xd4 ♘e3 36.♘c5! ♘xd1 37.♘xb7 ♖d7 38.♘e6†! fxe6 39.♖c7 ♘f6 40.♘c5+–.

35...♘b6

Bronstein had to play 35...♘hf6, although of course 36.♘c5 ♗c8 37.♘g5 would leave him without any saving chances. For instance, 37...♖xd6 38.♘ce4! ♘xe4 39.♘xe4 ♖d8 40.♖c5 ♗e6 41.♘c3+– and the pin on the d-file is decisive.

36.♘e5 f6

Or 36...♗xe4 37.♖xe4 ♖xd6 38.♖c7 ♖f6 39.♘g4+–.

37.♘c5

White also wins in elementary fashion with 37.♖c7†, seeing that 37...♔f8 loses at once to 38.♘f7 ♖d7 39.♘c5.

37...fxe5 38.♘e6† ♔f6 39.♘xd8 exd4 40.♘xb7 ♘g7 41.♘c5

1–0

A curious game. Vaganian didn't manage to acquire any advantage in the opening, and in the middlegame his gains were small. He committed a serious error, but it remained unpunished, and the

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game immediately changed course! White succeeded in working up a strong and ultimately victorious attack. Black couldn’t find any antidote and was simply crushed.

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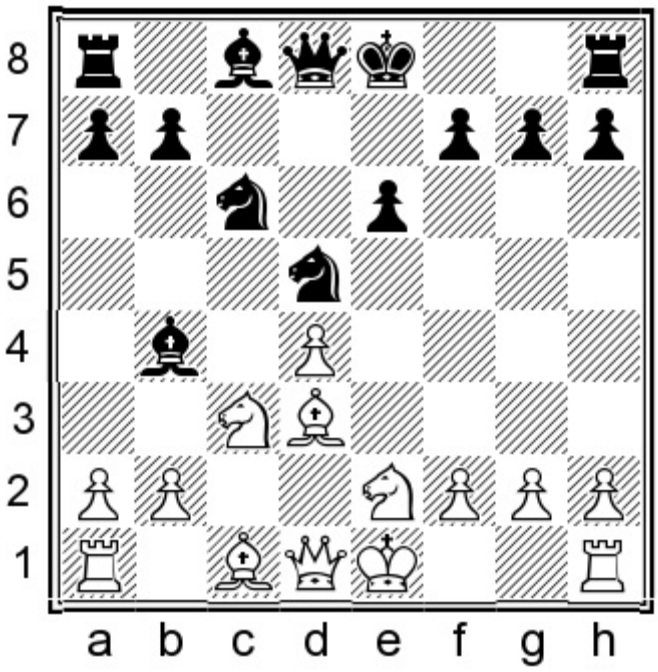
Semko Semkov – Lev Psakhis

Yerevan 1988

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4

I always liked playing the Nimzo-Indian, as it leads to a complex positional game in which Black can well expect to have his full share of the chances.

4.e3 c5 5.♗d3 ♘c6 6.♘ge2 cxd4 7.exd4 d5 8.cxd5 ♘xd5



The difference between this game and all the others we have been analysing lies in the placing of the white king's knight. On e2 this piece is undoubtedly deployed more harmoniously, but there are definite snags: the e5-square for example is not accessible to it, and generally speaking it isn't entirely clear where the knight will go next. The f4-square is probably the only place where it will fit in. However, there are some points in White's favour, for example from f4 the knight will be constantly threatening Black with potential sacrifices.

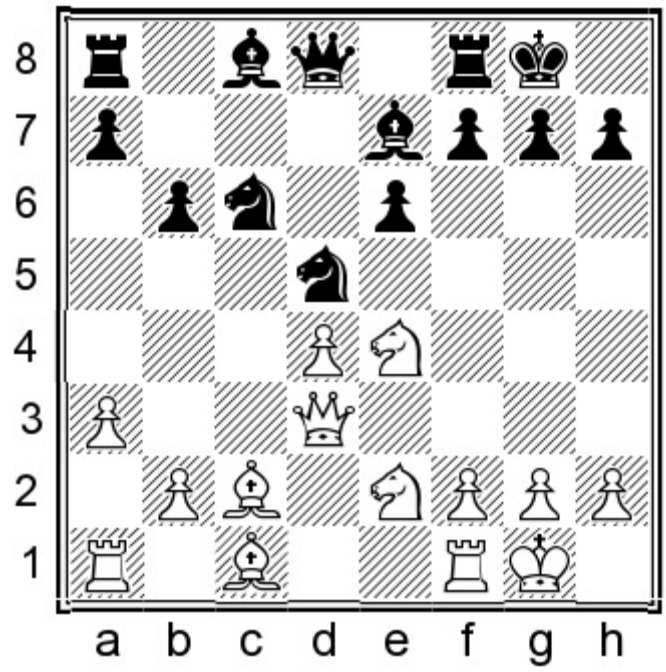
To me personally, it's wholly unclear where the knight is best placed; this is simply a different type of position with entirely different ideas!

9.a3 ♗d6!?

There are similar variations after 9...♗e7.

10.♘e4 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♗c2 b6 13.♕d3

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13...g6

Avoiding the elementary trap 13...♗b7?? 14.♘d6+–. All these tactics are very well known to a wide circle of chess enthusiasts, and have occurred hundreds if not thousands of times in practice.

14.♗h6 ♖e8 15.♖ac1 ♗b7 16.♖fd1

Another line which has been seen more recently is:

16.♗a4!? ♖c8 17.♖fd1

In our game, incidentally, White could have transposed to this position at move 17.

17...a6!?

Black has no trace of any problems after 17...♗f8 18.♕h3 ♕e7 19.♘f4 ♗xh6 20.♕xh6 ♘xf4 21.♕xf4 ♖ed8, Alvarez – Charbonneau, Bermuda 2002.

18.♗xc6

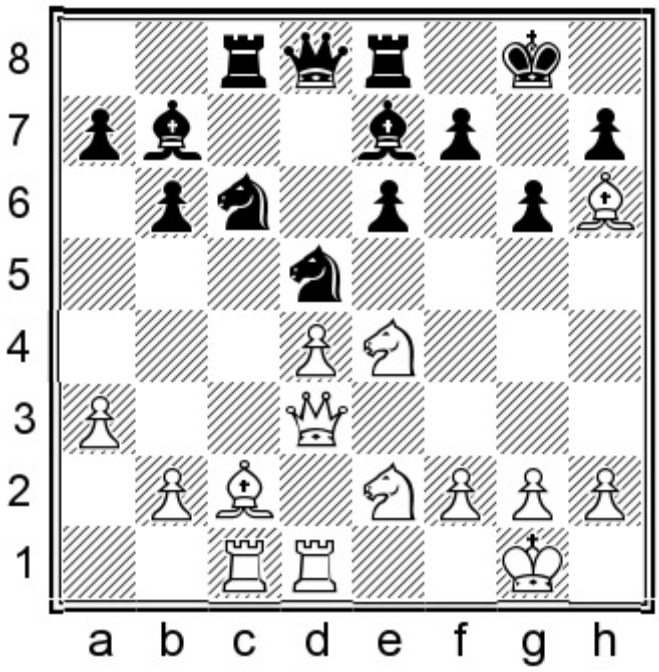
Or 18.b4 ♘f6 19.f3 ♘xe4 20.fxe4 ♗g5 21.♗xg5 ♕xg5= Alvarez – Christiansen, Bermuda 2002.

18...♖xc6 19.♖xc6 ♗xc6 20.♕xa6 ♕a8 21.♕xa8 ♖xa8 22.♘2c3 ♖c8

And Black equalized easily in Gelfand – Anand, Shenyang (2.5) 2000.

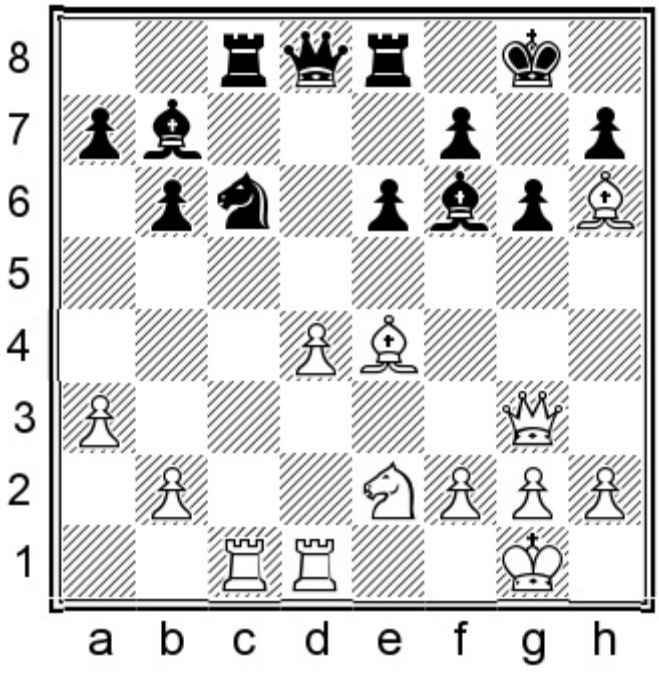
16...♖c8

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17.♕g3!? ♘f6! 18.♘g5!?

The queen is splendidly placed, heading to h4 – and the king's knight, as I predicted, will feel fine on the f4-square. There are plenty of sacrificial possibilities arising for White, and the black king is going to feel unsafe. I will now have to find literally the only move at several turns, or punishment will be swift and harsh! Still, circumspection at this point is required from Semkov too. For example, the careless 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♗e4 would practically lose:



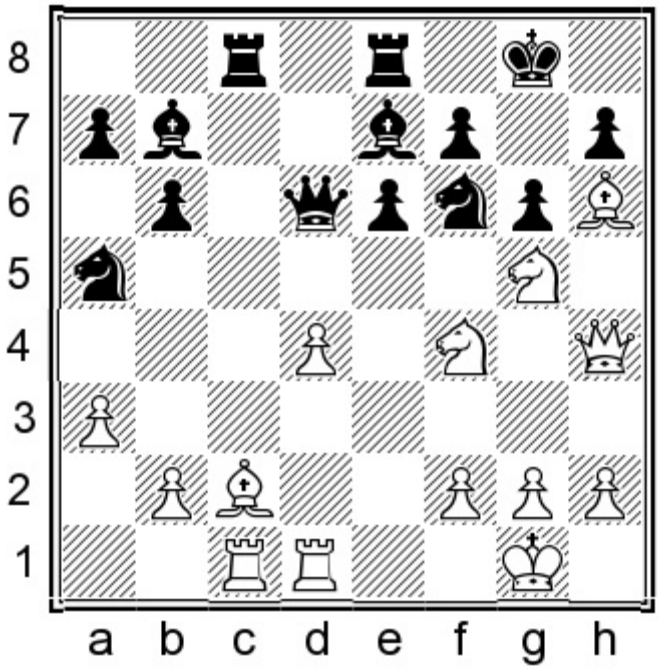
19...♘xd4! 20.♖xd4 (20.♕d3 ♖xc1† 21.♘c1 ♕c7! doesn't save White either) 20...♖xc1† 21.♗xc1 ♗xd4 Now on 22.♗xb7 the pretty refutation is 22...♗xb2!, and White can't avoid loss of material.

18...♕d6 19.♕h4 ♘a5!?

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This knight becomes quite active, and may land on c4. Of course the consequences of this risky move are impossible to evaluate, but if you don't take risks you won't drink the champagne! I wanted to play aggressively in the centre, which is why I didn't choose 19...♗f8!?.

20.♘f4



The first critical moment in the game. Black has to decide whether to attack the pawn on b2 or the one on d4, or whether to blockade this dangerous d-pawn. I took the decision to get to grips with the latter, and my next move fits in with this perfectly understandable wish.

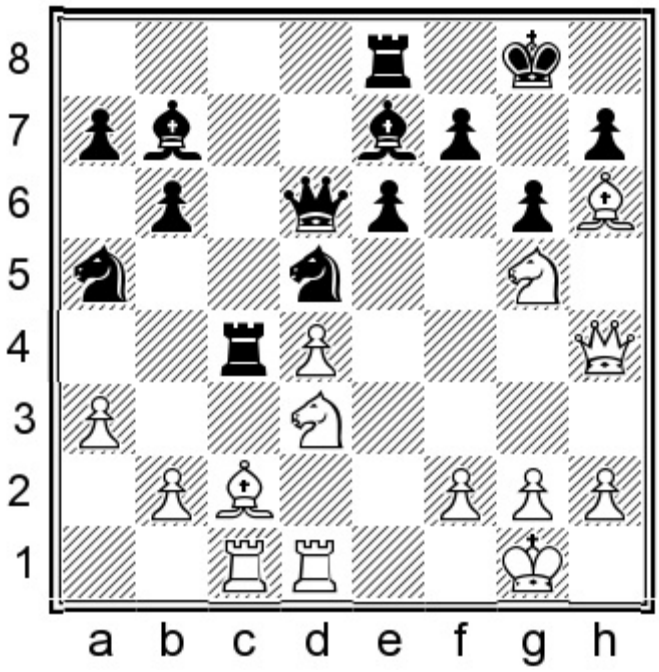
20...♖c4!?

The temptation of course was very strong! The other two moves that merit serious attention are the positional 20...♘d5!? and the most logical continuation, 20...♘c4!?. In the latter case Black not only attacks a pawn (which in itself is quite important) but also takes control of important central squares not so far from his king. Let's look more closely at these possibilities:

a) 20...♘d5!? 21.♘d3 ♖c4!

Only now does the rook advance, revealing the obvious desire to double rooks on the c-file.

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22.♗b1

22.b3? ♖c3

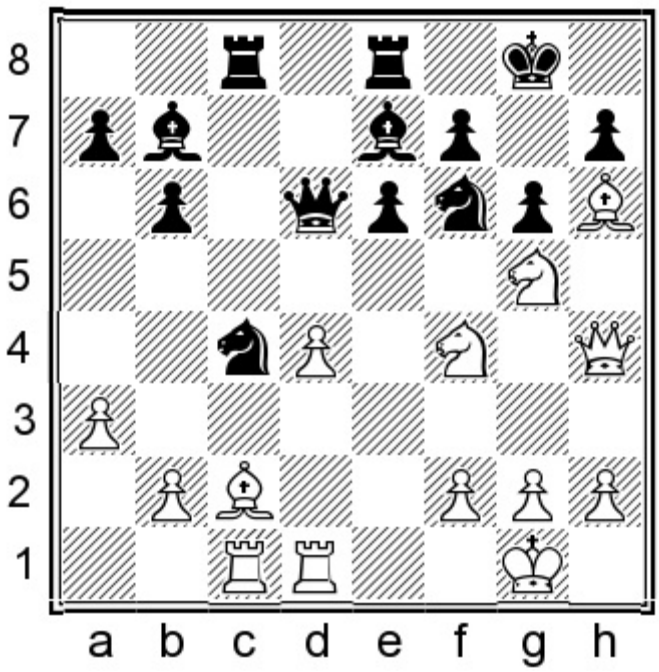
22...♖ec8

22...♘f6 is also playable. After the most reasonable reply, 23.♘xf7!? ♔xf7 24.♖xc4 ♘xc4 25.b3∞, the chances are not at all simple to assess.

23.♖xc4 ♘xc4∓

To me Black's position seems preferable.

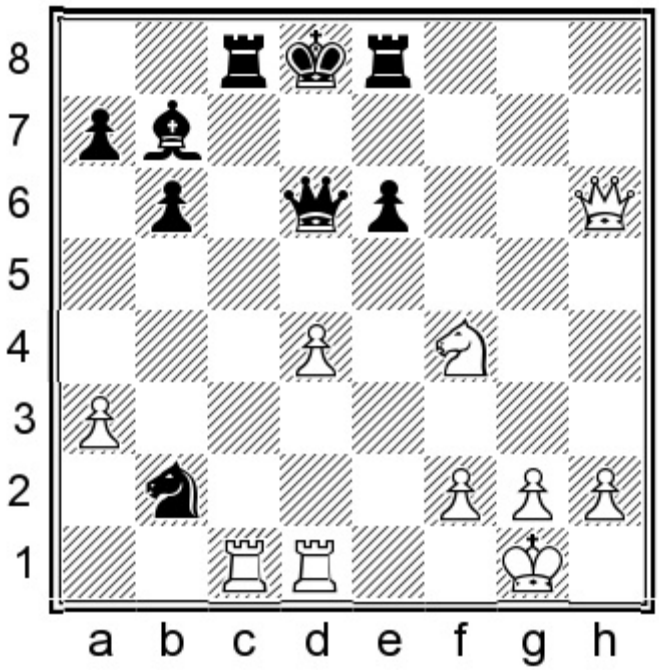
b) As I have hinted already, 20...♘c4!? leads to complex play. White now has four moves at his disposal (probably! – in such complicated positions nothing can be said for certain), and I offer the following analysis:



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b1) 21.♗b3 allows Black to solve virtually all his problems with 21...b5.

b2) 21.♕g3!? ♗f8 and now a long and practically forced variation ensues: 22.♘xh7 ♘xh7 23.♗xg6! ♗xh6 24.♗xf7† ♔xf7 25.♕g6† ♔e7 26.♕xh7† ♔d8 27.♕xh6 ♘xb2



28.d5!? (It's only at this point in the variation that White has an interesting alternative. After 28.♖e1!? ⇄ I find it hard to give a just verdict on the position.) 28...♘xd1 29.♕h4† ♔d7 All that is clear is that nothing is clear at all! An attempt to analyse such complex and obscure variations between the covers of one book would be downright impossible!

b3) 21.♖e1 ♘d2! A brilliant move! The sprightly black knight takes virtually all the key central squares under control, and casts doubt on White's chances of a successful attack. For instance: 22.♕g3 (after 22.♘xf7 ♔xf7 23.♘xe6 ♘de4, it will take a lot of effort for White to save himself!) 22...♘de4!? 23.♘xe4 ♘xe4 24.♗xe4 ♖xc1 25.♖xc1 ♗xe4 and White will have to struggle against two powerful bishops.

b4) 21.♘xf7!?

The most dangerous move – from Black's viewpoint. White launches a strong attack, which incidentally would have been quite possible to overlook!

21...♔xf7 22.♗g5!

The tempting 22.♘xg6? is refuted at once by 22...♖g8!–+.

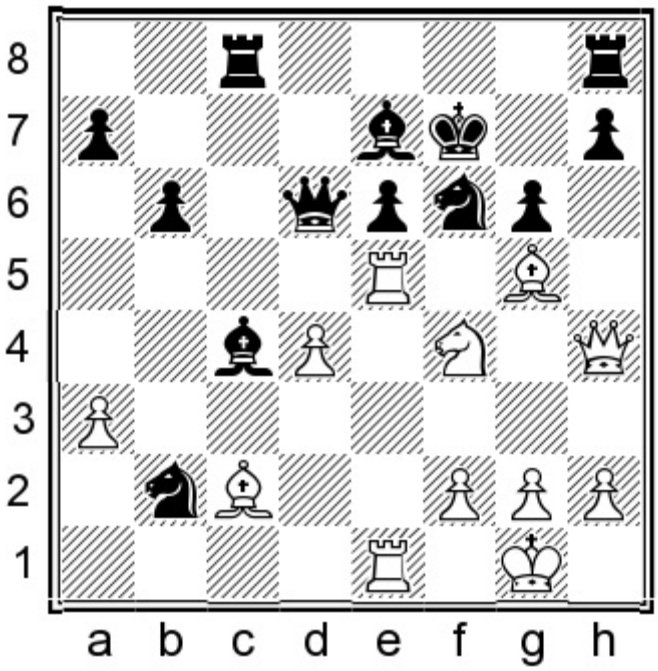
22...♖h8 23.♖e1 ♗d5 24.♖e2!

A typical grandmaster move – the rooks simply double on the e-file, setting the opponent plenty of difficult problems.

24.♕h6 ♖cg8! would be less convincing.

24...♘xb2 25.♖ce1! ♗c4 26.♖e5

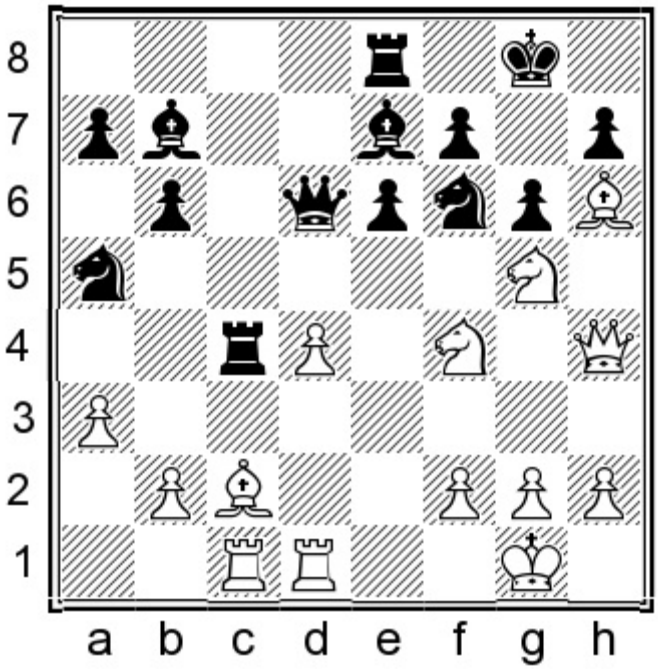
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An intriguing position! Black is a piece up, but his e6-pawn is very weak, the white queen may increase the pressure from h3, and Black's defence is anything but easy. A possible continuation, for instance, is:

26...♘d7 27.♖5e3 ♗xf6 28.♘xe6 ♗xe6 29.♖xe6 ♕xe6 30.♖xe6 ♖xc2

White undoubtedly has good play, but whether he can achieve anything concrete, I simply don't know! Such amazingly interesting variations!



21.♘xf7!

A completely unexpected move, and an extremely dangerous one for Black to meet – his king now feels most uncomfortable, and may end up totally exposed to the many threats!

Instead 21.♗b1 is refuted quite straightforwardly by 21...♕xd4!. Of White's other possibilities, the

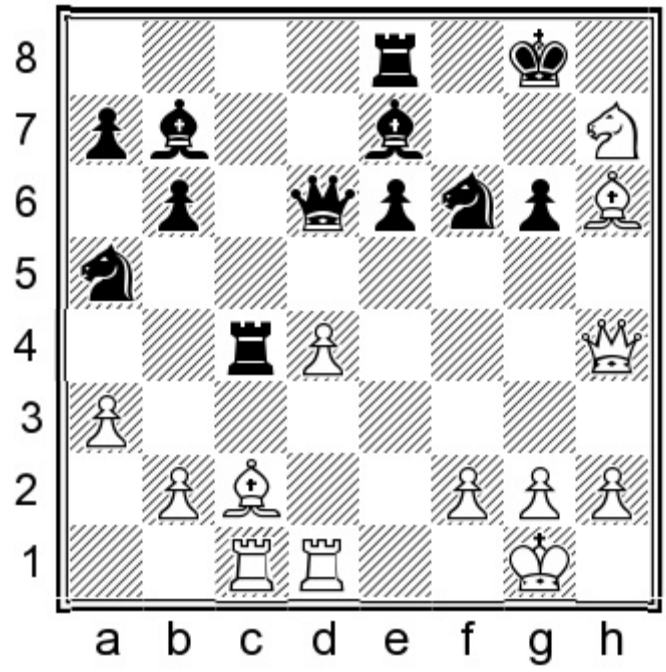
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following deserve attention:

21.♘xg6!? fxg6!?

Capturing this way is probably somewhat preferable to: 21...hxg6 22.♘xf7 ♕d5! 23.♕g3 ♕xg2†□ 24.♕xg2 ♗xg2 25.♘e5! ♖xc2 26.♖xc2 ♗e4∓

22.♘xh7!



22...♘e4!

The consequences of 22...♘xh7 23.♕g4 e5! 24.♗xg6 ♔h8 25.♗xe8 ♕xh6 26.♖xc4 ♘xc4∓ are not simple to assess either.

23.♗g5 ♕c7! 24.♕h6 ♗xg5 25.♘xg5

Or 25.♕xg6† ♕g7 26.♕xe8† ♔xh7 27.♗xe4† ♗xe4 28.♖xc4 ♘xc4 29.♕xe6 ♘d6!, and in this rather strange position Black's advantage is obvious. Ultimately the three pieces will prove much stronger than the lone rook, and of course 30.♕xd6? ♗f4! is hopeless for White.

25...♘xg5 26.♕xg5 ♕g7∓

21.♕g3

White now threatens to capture on either f7 or h7 – Black must be very careful!

21...♕c6!

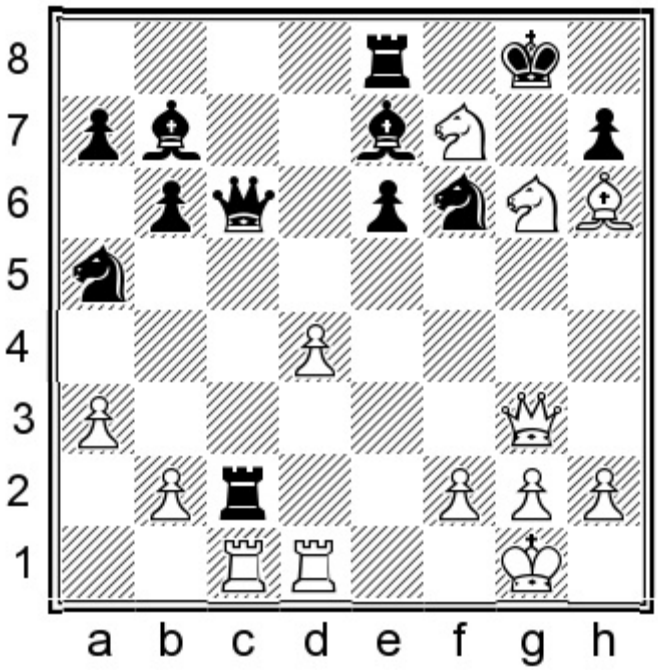
An excellent move! In many variations Black acquires the splendid possibility of taking on g2 as a noteworthy antidote to his opponent's attack

22.♘xf7

Things are also far from simple in the other important line: 22.♘xg6 hxg6 23.♘xf7 ♕xg2† 24.♕xg2 ♗xg2 25.♘e5 ♖xc2 26.♖xc2 ♗e4∓ with a minimal plus for Black.

22...♖xc2! 23.♘xg6!

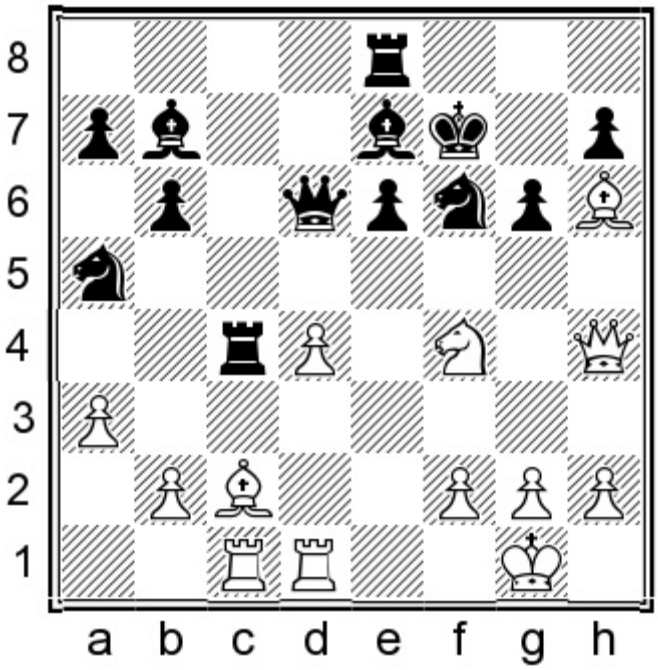
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23...♕xg2† 24.♕xg2 ♗xg2 25.♖xc2 ♗e4 26.♖c7 hxg6 27.♘e5 ♘d5 28.♖xa7 ♘b3∓

I like Black's position better, as White can't activate his d1-rook. All the same, his counter-chances shouldn't be underrated.

21...♔xf7



22.♘xg6?

The tension in the game has been so great that Semkov just couldn't endure it. Finally one of us had to crack, and the Bulgarian turned out to be less lucky! To be quite honest I had no clear idea of what White was up to, and plainly underestimated the possible threats. On my last move I had simply no choice. In reply, White's only playable continuation was the cold-blooded:

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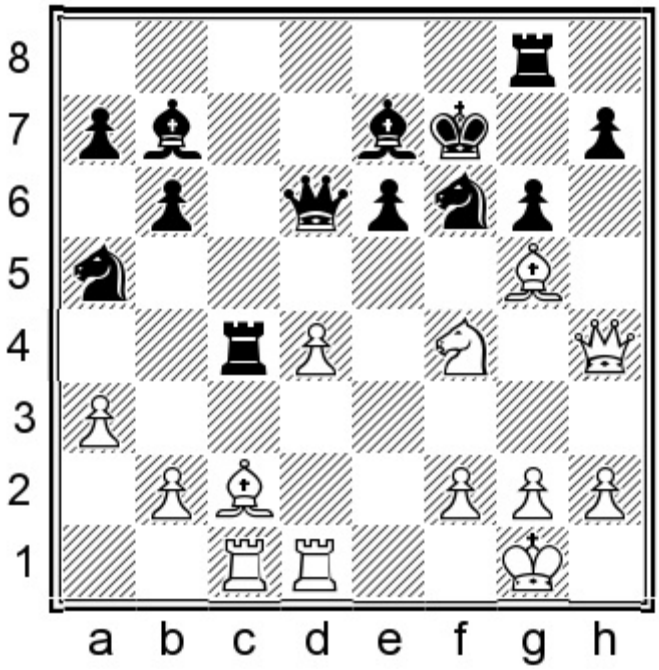
22.♗g5!

The consequences of this might well have displeased me. It's amazing: Black has an extra piece, everything is defended, White has no direct threats – yet Black's game is anything but simple to play! For one thing, he can have problems with the e6-pawn. Secondly – and much more importantly! – there is a threat to capture on f6, and it isn't wholly clear how Black is to deal with it. It quite often happens that the simpler and more natural the threats, the harder it is to combat them!

22...♖g8

What else can you suggest?

If 22...♖xc2 23.♖xc2, then 23...h5!?⇄ is not unfavourable to White, while 23...♗e4 24.♖e2, is even better for him.



White has three attacking lines that deserve attention:

a) 23.♖e1 ♗d5 24.♗xf6 ♗xf6 25.♕xh7† ♖g7 26.♗xg6† ♔e7 27.♕h6⇄ Black will need to be extremely careful, but at least he is very well prepared to face the attack, and the position is hard to evaluate objectively.

b) 23.♗xf6

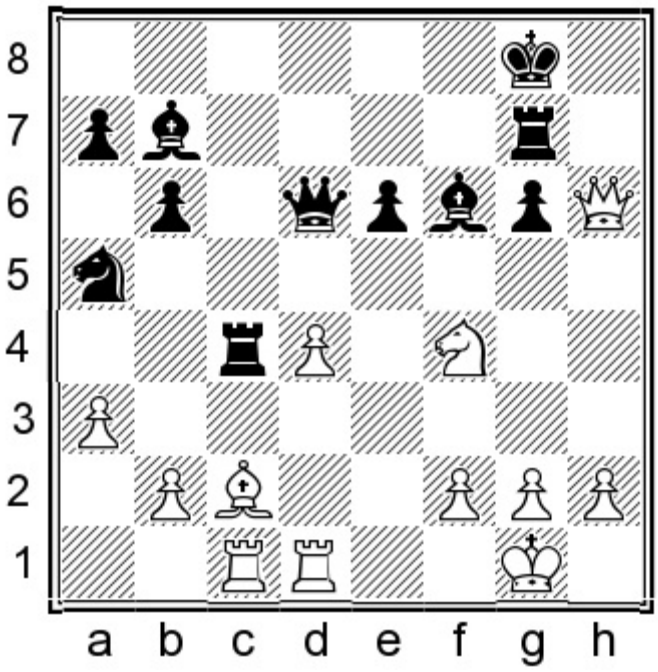
Probably not the most dangerous option.

23...♗xf6 24.♕xh7† ♖g7 25.♕h6

White doesn't rush to take on g6, which could lead to some interesting complications: 25.♗xg6†? ♔e7 26.♕h6 ♖xc1 27.♖xc1 ♘b3! 28.♘h5 ♘xd4! 29.♗e4 (29.♘xf6 is neatly refuted by 29...♘f3†!) 29...♘e2† 30.♔f1 ♗xb2 31.♔xe2 ♗xe4 32.♘xg7 ♗d3† 33.♔f3 ♕e5! with an obvious plus for Black.

25...♔g8

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26.♘xg6

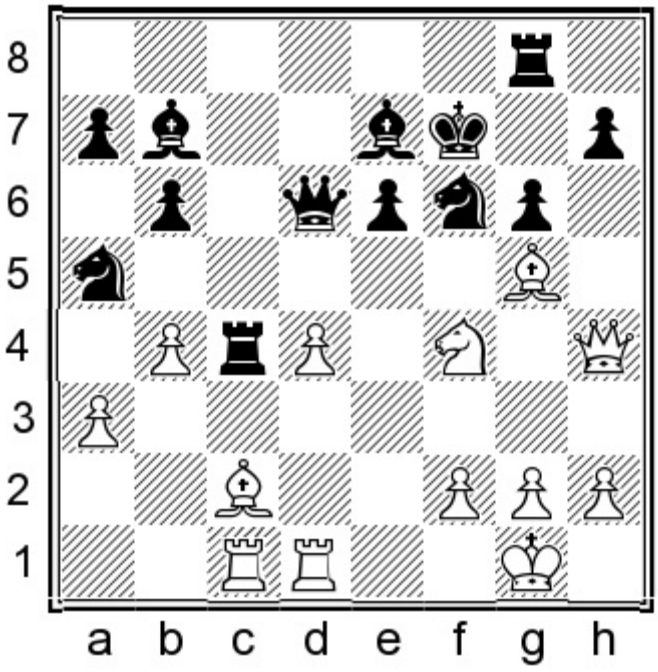
Nor does the other capture on g6 gives White full equality: 26.♗xg6 ♕e7!? 27.♖xc4 (or 27.♘h5? ♖xc1 28.♖xc1 ♗g5) 27...♗g5! 28.♗h7† ♖xh7 29.♕xe6† ♕xe6 30.♘xe6 ♘xc4 31.♘xg5 ♖e7∓ The piece is clearly stronger than the pawns in this ending.

26...♘c6!? 27.d5 ♖xc2 28.♖xc2 ♘d4

Black has the initiative. You may say this isn't much of an achievement for him, but the attack has been repulsed and the results should suit him perfectly well!

c) 23.b4!?

The most interesting move. The knight is driven further away from c4, and the black rook is left undefended – a factor of considerable importance in the ensuing complications!



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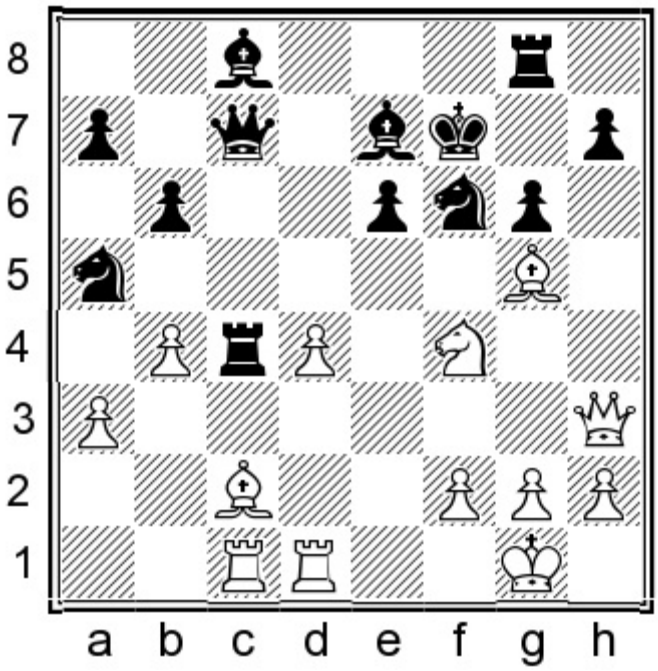
23...♕c7

23...♖xc2 may well be the safest line from Black's point of view, although it allows White to level the chances: 24.♖xc2 ♘c6 25.♖dc1 Fighting for the only open file on the board. (The solid 25.♖cd2 is also perfectly possible, for example: 25...♘d5!? 26.♘xd5 ♕xd5 27.♗xe7 ♘xe7 28.♕xh7† ♖g7 29.♕h3 ♘f5 30.♖e1!?∓) 25...♘xd4 26.♗xf6 ♘xc2 27.♗xe7 ♕xe7 28.♕xe7† ♔xe7 29.♖xc2 ♖d8=

23...♘c6 24.♗xg6† (24.d5!? looks more dangerous than it really is; Black replies 24...♖xc2 25.♖xc2 ♘xd5 26.♘xd5 exd5 27.♕xh7† ♖g7 28.♕h4=) 24...hxg6 25.♖xc4 b5 Now the d4-pawn will be left without its chief defender, but to be fair we should note that the position remains unclear. 26.♖c5 ♘xd4 27.♘d3! ♘f5 28.♕h3⇄

24.♕h3! ♗c8

Black would like the e6-pawn to be better protected!



25.♘d3!

White tries to carry on playing for the win.

The more circumspect option, if we can speak of circumspection in this type of position, was 25.♗xf6 ♗xf6 26.♕xh7† ♖g7 27.♗xg6† ♔e7 28.♕h6 ♖xc1 29.♘d5†! exd5 30.♖xc1 ♘c6, though even then the consequences are wholly unclear.

25...e5

Or 25...♖xc2 26.♖xc2 ♕xc2 27.♘e5† ♔e8 28.♖c1 ♕xc1† 29.♗xc1 ♘b7 30.♗g5 ♘d6 31.♕c3± and although White has no advantage in material, Black faces a thankless defensive task – his pieces lack any co-ordination.

26.♕e3!

Taking the crucial e5-square under control. I am not sure what I would play if I had this position as White in a tournament game, but in analysis there is nothing wrong with fishing in troubled waters.

Instead 26.♘xe5† ♕xe5 27.dxe5 ♗xh3 28.exf6 ♗xf6 29.♗xf6 ♔xf6 30.bxa5 ♗g4!? 31.♗b3 ♗xd1

32.♗xc4 ♖c8 33.axb6 axb6 34.♖xd1 ♖xc4± gives a position where Black has fair drawing chances. A nice variation, but it would be a pity to play that way in such an interesting position!

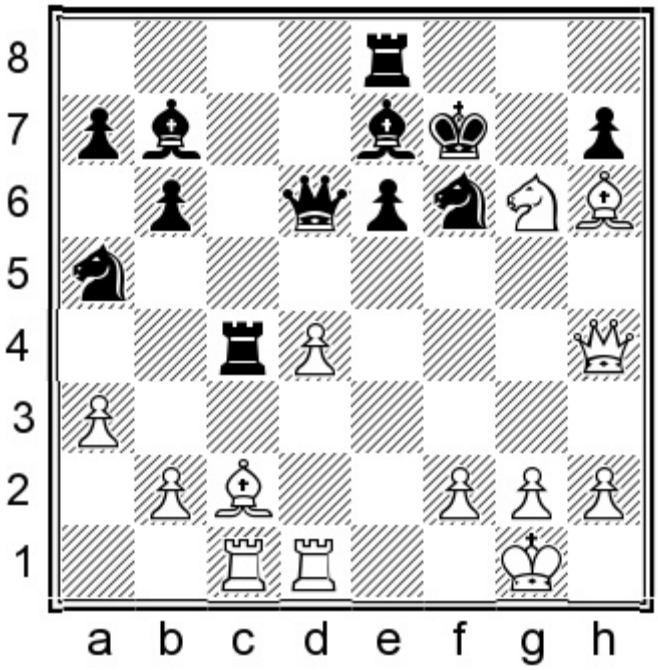
26...♖xc2

Neither 26...exd4? 27.♘xe5† nor 26...♘g4 27.♘xe5† ♘xe5 28.dxe5 ♗xg5 29.♕xg5 ♖e8 30.♗d3! promises anything good for Black.

27.♘xe5† ♔f8 28.bxa5

White has the better chances, though Black does retain hopes of a successful defence.

Drawing conclusions from the lines we have examined, I would say that at move 20, in all probability, the quiet 20...♘d5 was better than what I played. But how could all this have been foreseen? The variations were so complicated and unpredictable! Fortunately, Semkov was the first to go wrong!



22...♖g8!

The simple refutation of White's last move. Now the game is quickly over.

23.♘f4?!

The best move is probably 23.♗f4, but after 23...♕d5 24.♘e5† ♔e8 25.f3 ♖xd4–+ White is unable to organize serious resistance.

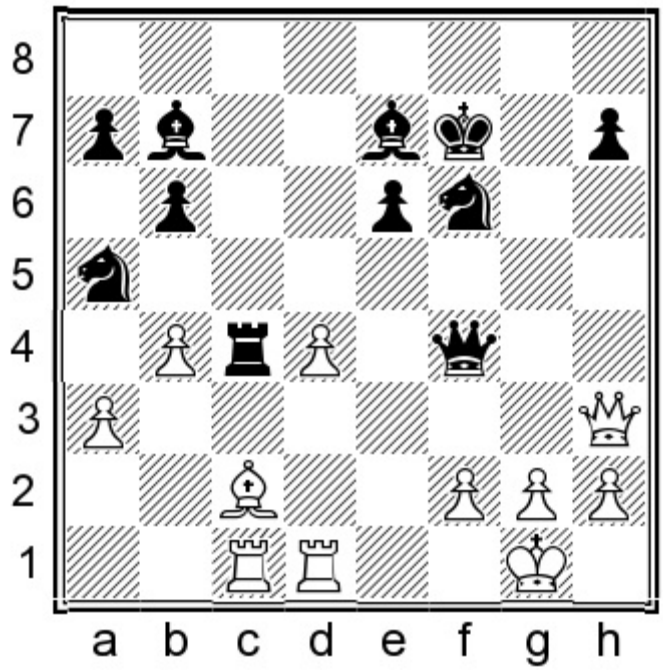
An equally hopeless try is: 23.♘e5† ♕xe5! 24.dxe5 ♖xg2† 25.♔f1 ♖xh4–+

23...♖g4

The black pieces feel quite at home in the enemy camp!

24.♕h3 ♖xf4 25.♗xf4 ♕xf4 26.b4

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26...♗e4!

Avoiding the final simple little trap 26...♘c6? 27.♗g6†, although even then Black's victory would not be far off.

27.g3 ♕c7

0–1

The pin on the c-file is decisive.

White's attack was truly powerful and a danger to his opponent. The placing of the knight on e2 introduced some fresh nuances into the position, and at some stages I had to find literally the only move to defend – though the game still remained within the bounds of approximate equality. Semkov played very well, but at a certain moment the tension grew simply unbearable, and his two successive errors completely transformed the situation on the board. I should add that I only returned to this game in 2011, when I discovered many new and interesting things in my analysis of it.

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Chapter 4

IQP Positions: Attacking with the h-pawn

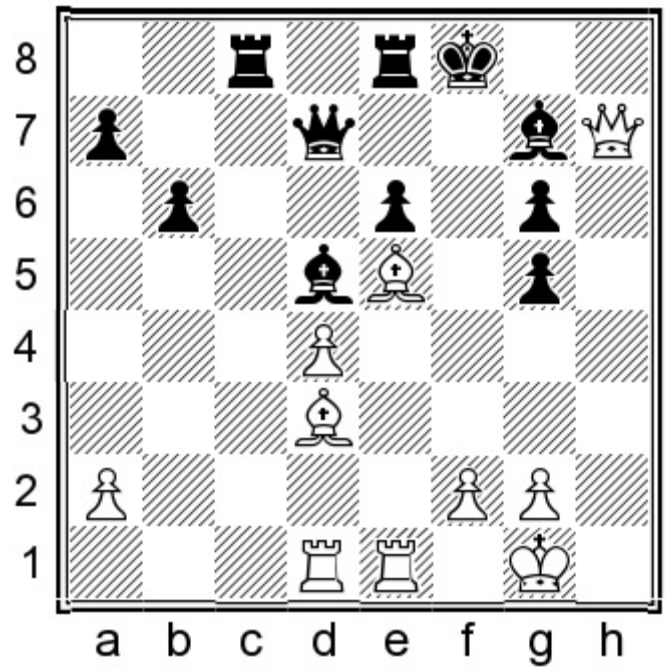


Match against Kasparov in Murcia 1990. Analysis of game five – The match ended with a "narrow" victory for the World Champion

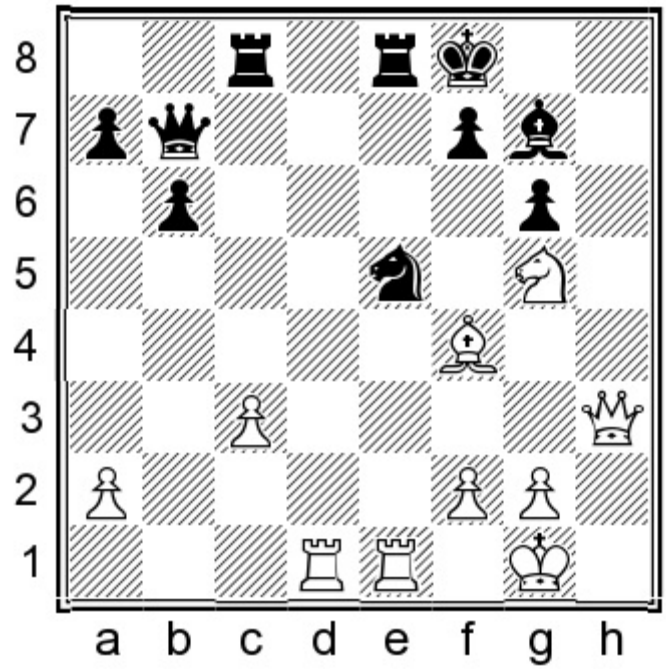
Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

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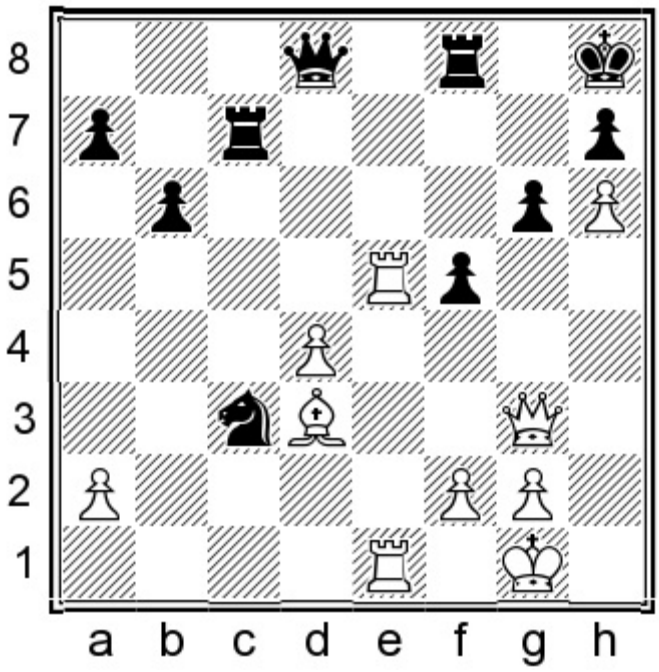


How to strengthen the attack?
(see page 110)

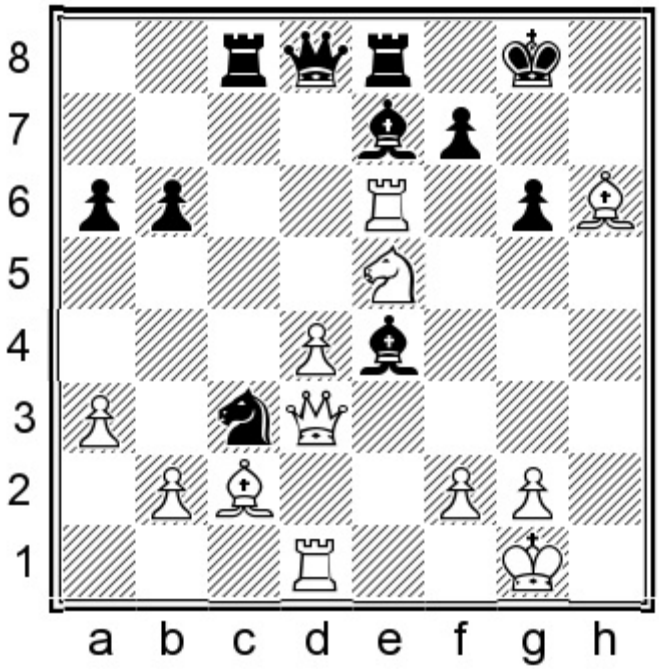


What had Geller planned against 25...♔f8?
(see page 111)

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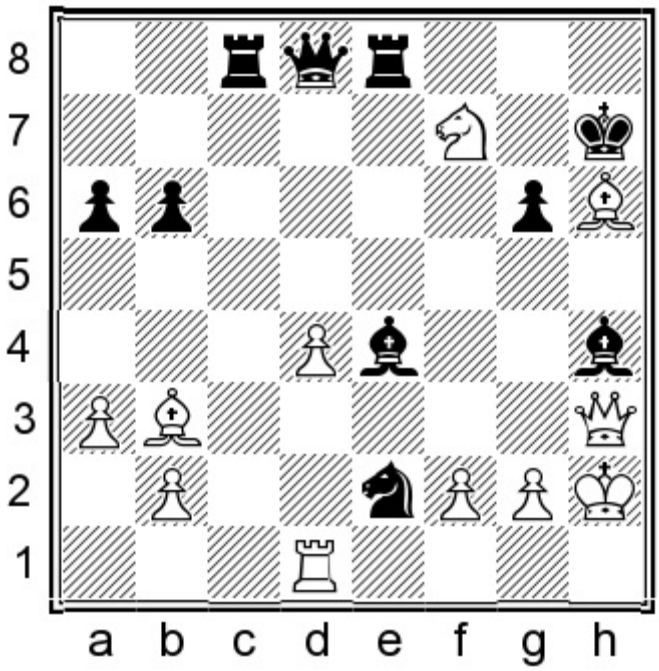


Please find both wins
(see page 116)

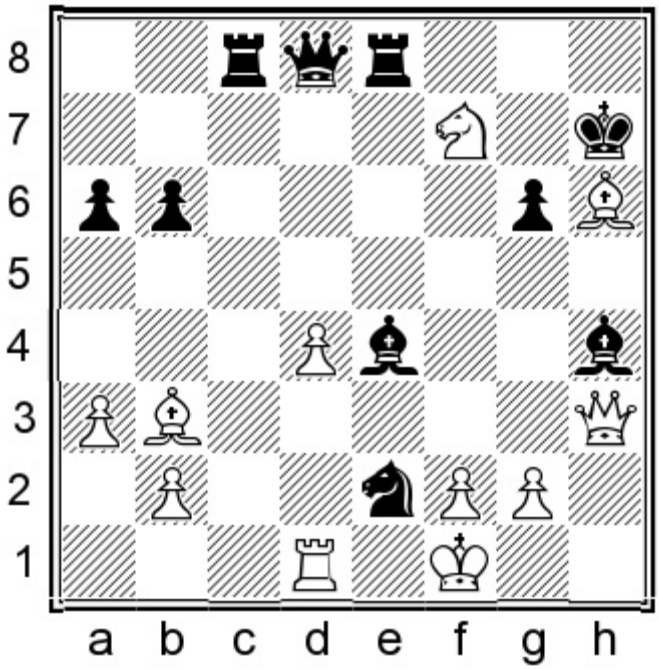


What is the accurate attacking move?
(see page 119)

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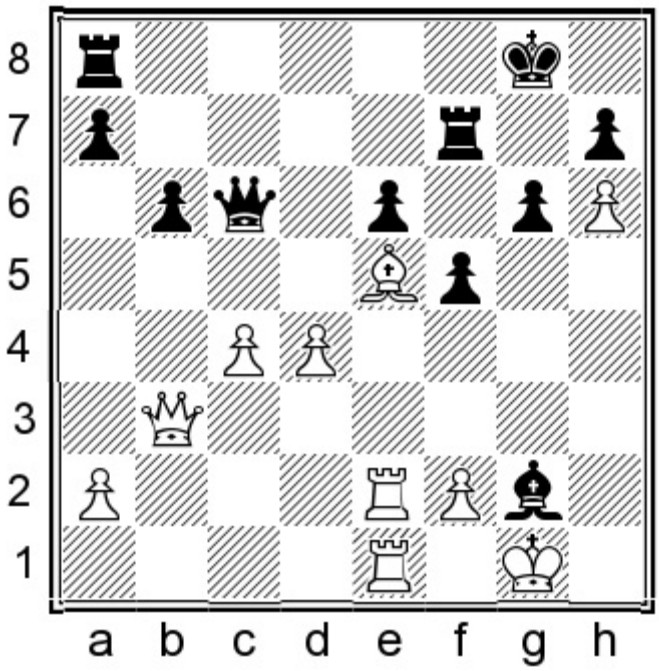


What is Black’s magical defence?
(see page 121)

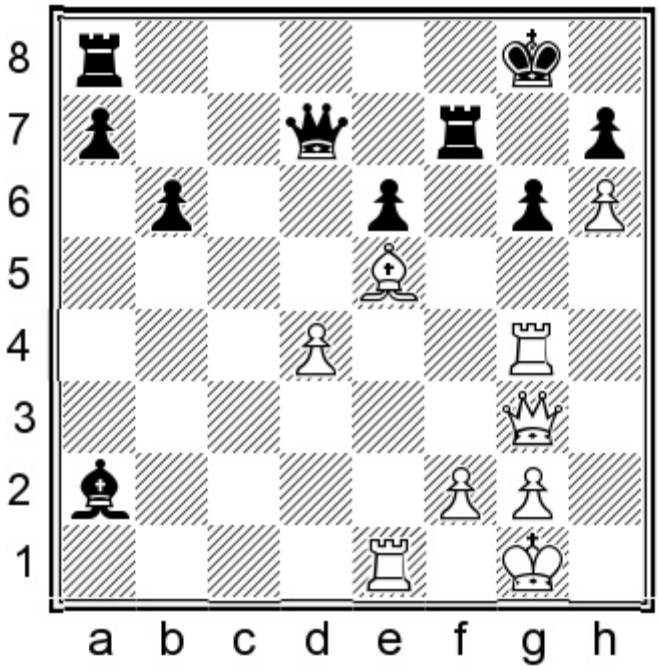


Our cover position. What is Black’s only move?
(see page 122)

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How does White win?
(see page 126)



What is the right defensive move?
(see page 127)

In the previous chapter we looked at some games in which White (who for some reason has the honour of playing this way much more often than Black) organized an attack utilizing the mobility of his excellently developed pieces. I would now like to draw to your attention to a somewhat different aspect of his strategy. This time, by way of enhancing his attacking possibilities, White uses his h-pawn as a battering ram to weaken the pawn structure in the immediate vicinity of the enemy king. Only then

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does he launch the assault.

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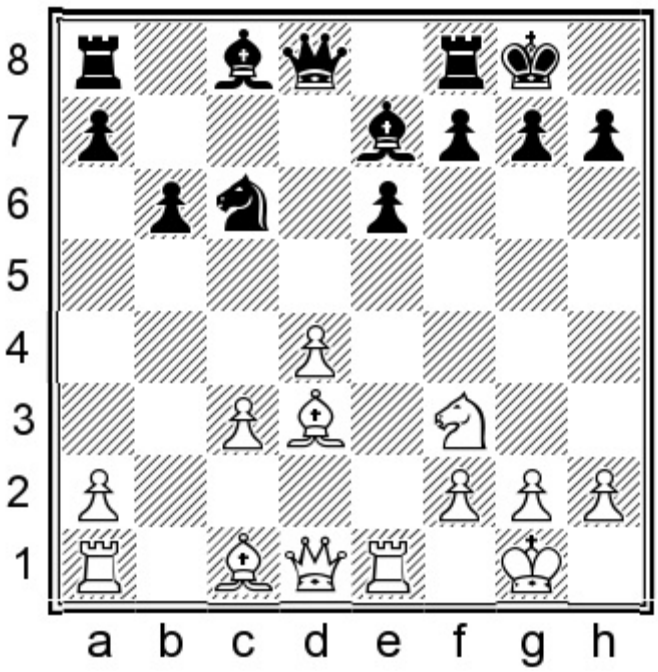
Efim Geller – Abram Davidovich Zamikhovsky

Ukrainian Championship 1958

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e3 c5 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.♘f3 cxd4 8.exd4 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖e1 ♘xc3?!

It was only when I undertook a serious analysis of isolated pawn positions that I grasped how many shortcomings this natural move has. The most important of them is the fact that White's crucial d4-pawn will be securely defended for many moves to come. This is a valuable asset for which White usually has to fight quite hard, whereas now he receives it as a more or less unearned prize!

11.bxc3 b6



12.♕c2

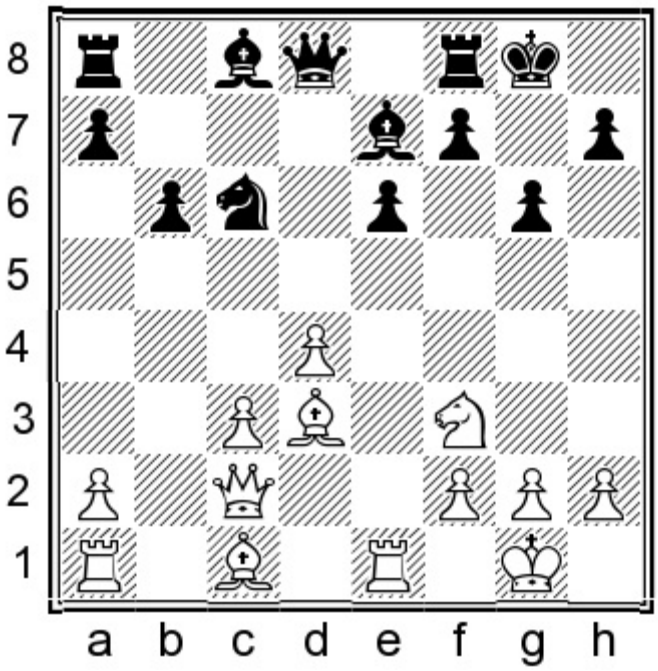
The great master of attack Efim Geller sets about provoking weaknesses in his opponent's camp. His tactics were quite novel if we recall that this game was played in that far-off year of 1958 – a very special one from my own point of view, since it was the year when I was born!

At a later date, my close friend Grandmaster Razuvaev was to adopt the idea of attacking with the h-pawn without losing time on this queen move – a splendid concept, but it was introduced into practice only at the very end of the 1970s. White can, then, very well consider 12.h4, with a possible ♘g5 to follow – but we shall come back to that position later in this chapter.

12...g6

On 12...h6 there follows the typical manoeuvre 13.♕e2! with the possible continuation: 13...♕c7 14.♗d2 ♖d8 15.♖ac1 ♗f6? 16.♕e4+– and the queen and light-squared bishop acting together constitute

a most formidable attacking unit.



13.h4!?

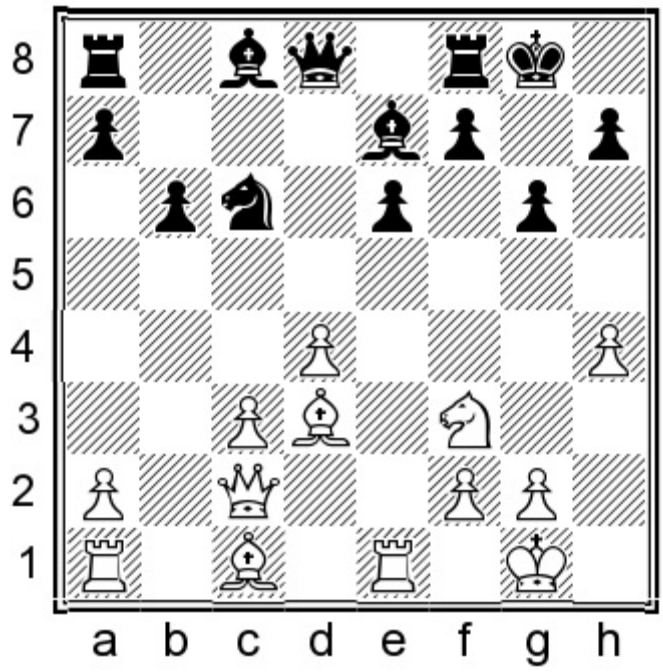
I have referred to this remarkable idea already. Geller is preparing ♘g5 to induce his opponent to create new weaknesses. At the same time, the h-pawn has no objection to taking part in a strong attack with an eventual h4-h5. This, of course, is not White's only idea in the position – he may choose to delay h2-h4 or do without it altogether:

13.♗h6 ♖e8 14.h4 (14.♕d2 is not at all bad) 14...♗f8 15.♗g5 ♗e7 16.♗f4 ♗b7 17.h5 ♔g7 18.♕d2 and the young Kamsky failed to create adequate counterplay in Winants – Kamsky, Tilburg 1992.

Another promising line is 13.♕d2 ♗b7 14.♕f4 ♗f6 15.♗a3 ♖e8 16.♖ad1 with attacking chances.

As we can easily observe, in all these variations White is attacking on the dark squares – and by no means unsuccessfully! Black's main problem is his almost total lack of counterplay – there are simply no weaknesses in his opponent's position!

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13...♗f6

Zamikhovsky resists taking the pawn – and I can well understand him! After 13...♗xh4?! White's attack is halted, yet he has an abundant choice of lines that bring material gains:

For instance, 14.d5!? ♘a5 (on 14...exd5? the surprising 15.♕a4! wins a piece) 15.♗h6 (a good alternative is 15.♘xh4 ♕xh4 16.♗a3→) 15...♗f6 (Black is in a very bad way after 15...♖e8? 16.♗b5!) 16.dxe6 ♗xe6 17.♗xf8 ♔xf8 18.♖ad1 with a material plus for White.

Another perfectly good move is 14.♗h6, with the none too difficult idea of meeting 14...♖e8? with 15.♗b5 ♗b7 16.♕e4+–.

Incidentally I don't so much like 14.♗b5 ♗b7 15.♕e4 ♘xd4□! 16.♕xd4 ♗xf3 17.gxf3 ♗f6 18.♕e3±, when White's pawn structure is too weak and his win is by no means guaranteed!

In all these lines White wins material, yet he doesn't always succeed in gaining a decisive plus. Accuracy is required right to the end!

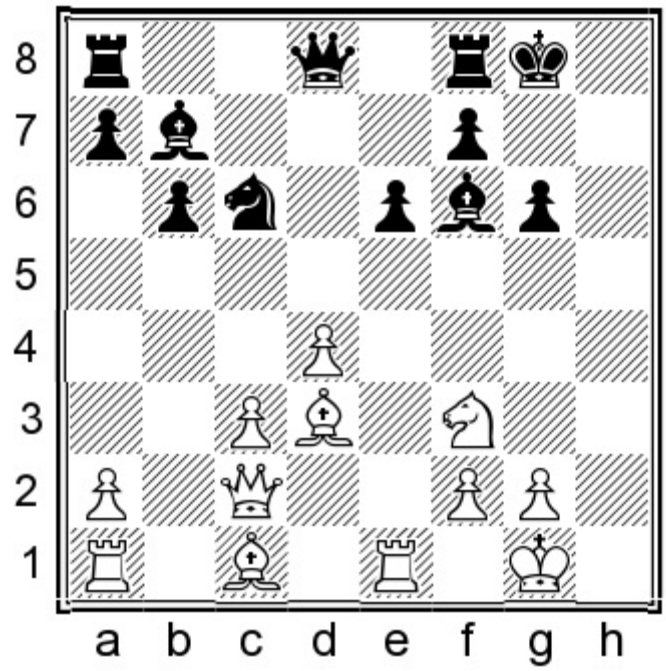
14.h5 ♕c7

To carry on his resistance Black needs a phenomenal nervous system, and it's far from clear whether that will help him anyway – the black king just has too many problems!

Thus, after either 14...♕d7 15.♗h6 ♗g7 16.♕d2, or 14...♗g7 15.♗e4 ♕c7 16.hxg6 hxg6 17.♘g5± Black's position looks downright atrocious.

Nor is there any help in 14...♗b7 15.hxg6 hxg6

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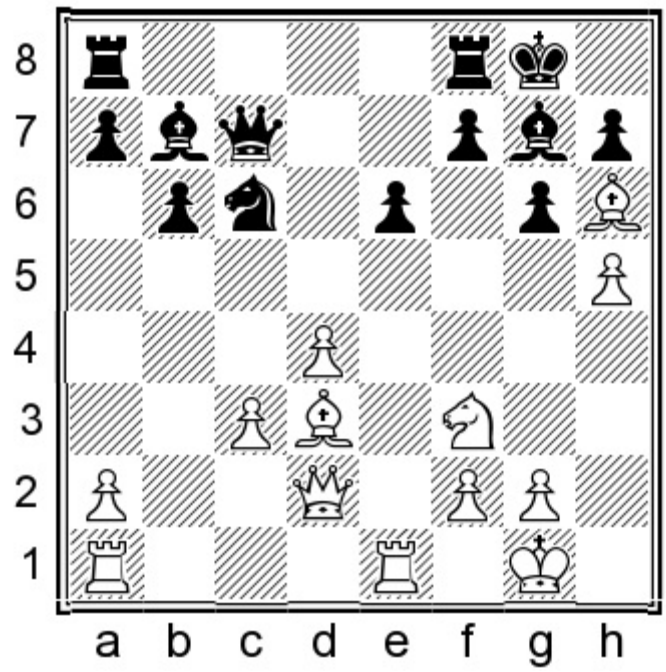


16.♗xg6! fxg6 17.♕xg6† ♔h8 18.♖xe6, when Black will scarcely manage to last more than a handful of moves! It's amazing how White has succeeded in working up such an impressive attack after such a small number of moves. Truly, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark!"

15.♗h6↑

Simpler and stronger than 15.♘g5 ♘e7 16.♘e4 ♗h8 17.♗h6, though that too leaves the initiative with White.

15...♗g7 16.♕d2! ♗b7



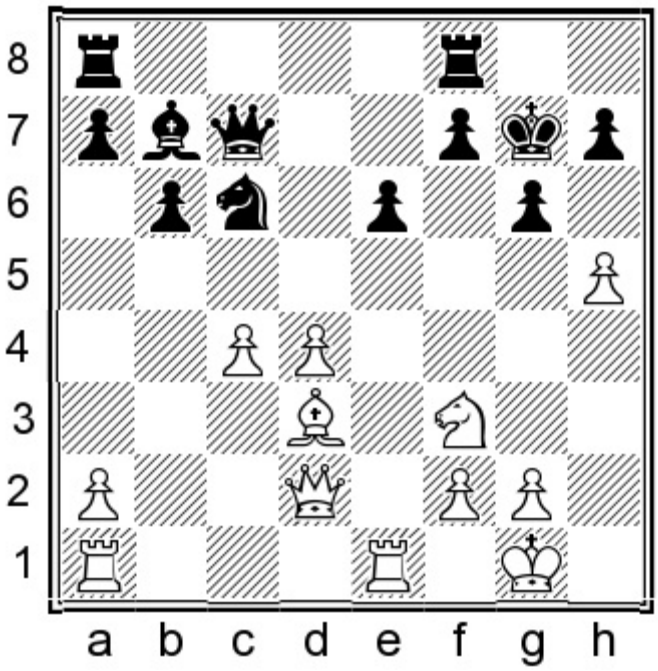
17.hxg6

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Geller chooses the most natural continuation.

The preparatory 17.♗f4!? may come to the same thing, for instance: 17...♕d7 (or 17...♕d8 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♘g5 ♘e7 20.♕e3, and White goes for an advantage by combining an attack on the h-file with possible strikes against the weakened e6-point) 18.♗h6 (18.hxg6 hxg6 returns to the game) 18...♘e7 (Black can also go back with 18...♕c7) 19.♘e5 ♕d8 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♕f4 White has the better chances, though to be fair it must be said that Black's possibilities for resistance are far from exhausted.

However, White has two other standard ideas that he may implement.
In the first place, he can gain a clear plus with 17.♗xg7 ♔xg7 18.c4!.



An attack on the king is threatened, and a push in the centre with either c4-c5 or d4-d5 in the near future is an extremely troublesome prospect for Black.

Secondly, 17.♘h2! gives Black some complex problems to solve, and it's by no means clear that he will succeed!

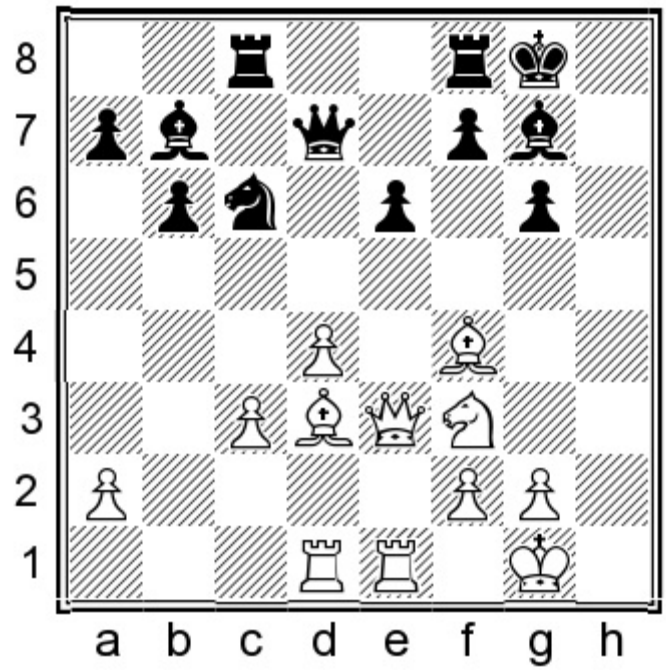
17...hxg6 18.♗f4 ♕d7 19.♖ad1

This move is understandable – on d1 the rook is potentially deterring ...e5 – but it does look like a loss of time.

The more energetic 19.♕e3 (with the obvious aim of bringing the queen over to h3 at the first opportunity) would give Black more worries.

19...♖ac8 20.♕e3

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20...♖fe8?

Black is in a most awkward position; White can easily set up a formation with ♘g5, ♗e5 and ♕h3 – Black appears to have no way of hindering it. Once this happens, White is still not likely to have an immediate mate available, but handling the black pieces will be just too ghastly an experience! White's attack will continue, while the slightest inaccuracy on Black's part will terminate the game at once.

All the same, in the absence of any alternative, 20...♘e7! 21.♘g5 ♘d5 22.♕h3 ♘f6 23.♗e5 ♖fd8± was the least of the evils.

21.♘g5 e5

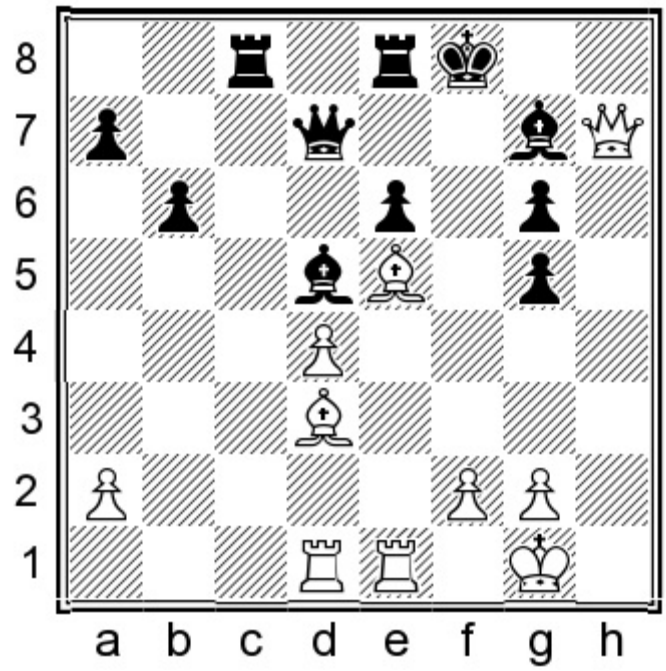
At first sight Black would seem to have emerged from his awkward situation with honour. He takes the h3-square under control and opens up the game in the centre – not that he had any alternative to speak of!

21...f6 loses at once to 22.♘e4!.

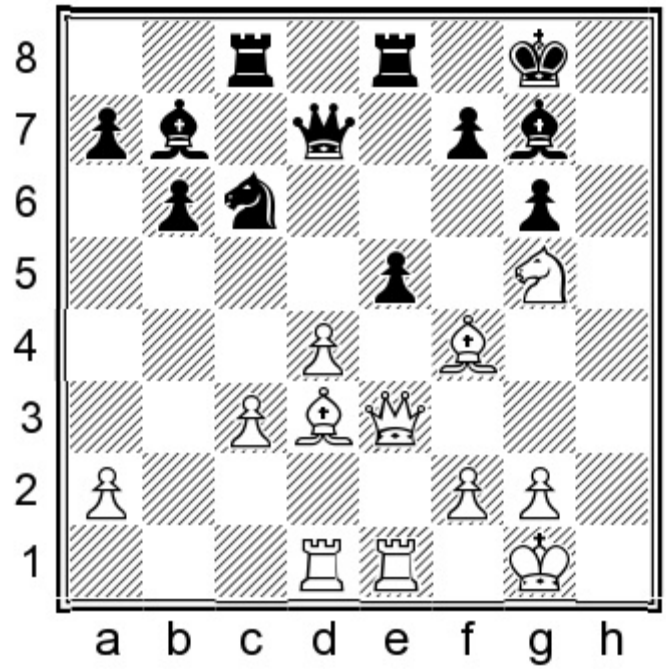
Nor is 21...♔f8 22.♕h3 ♖e7 23.♕h7+– any better, when among White's other threats it is worth noting the lethal transfer of the dark-squared bishop via c1 to the a3-f8 diagonal.

Another hardly satisfactory line is: 21...♘e7 22.♕h3 ♘d5 23.♗e5 f6 24.♕h7† ♔f8 25.c4! fxg5 (or 25...fxe5 26.cxd5) 26.cxd5 ♗xd5

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Now the simplest option for White is probably 27.f4! g4 28.♖f1!. This gives him the pleasant choice of starting to gather the material harvest, or else carrying out f4-f5! with threats of a quick mate, against which Black has no defence.



22.dxe5 ♘xe5

An optimistic player might try:

22...♕g4

Quietly hoping for mate!

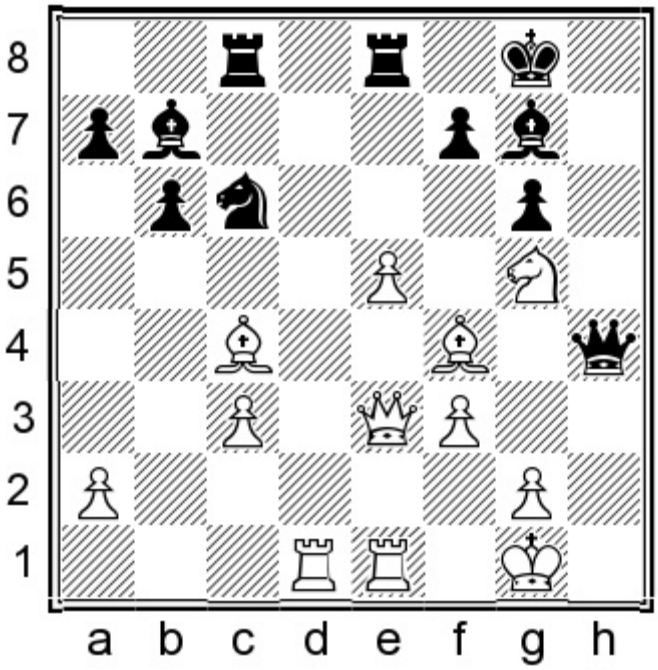
23.f3! ♕h4

23...♕h5 24.♗c4!+– is no better.

24.♗c4!

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Preparing to strike against f7, the most vulnerable point in the black camp – and there is simply no answer to the threat.

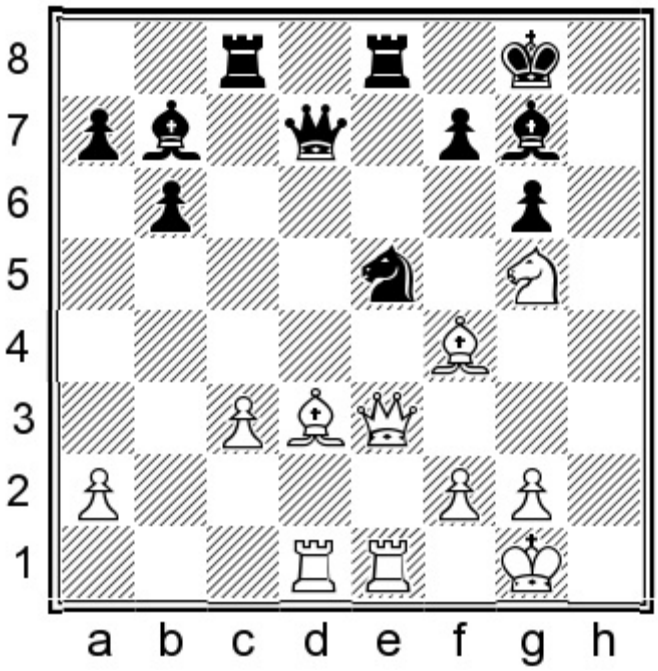


24...♖xe5

The attempt to defend with 24...♖e7 comes up against an immediate refutation in the shape of 25.♗xf7† ♖xf7 26.♘xf7 ♔xf7 27.♗g5+– and Black's poor king remains in "splendid isolation"! Nor is there any relief for him in 24...♘d8 25.♖xd8! ♖exd8 26.♗xf7† ♔h8 27.♗xg6+– with threats of ♘f7† and g2-g3, which means that the end of the game is not far off!

25.♗xf7† ♔h8 26.♗xe5 ♗xe5 27.♘h3+–

Black has nothing whatever to compensate him for White's material plus.



23.♗e4!

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A superb move that makes nonsense of Black's expectations! Zamikhovsky has defended against an immediate mate, but what is he to do now? The strength of White's plan lies in its simplicity! He is going to exchange the bishops and bring his queen to h3, ending the game. Black is clearly incapable of defending his king, the f7-pawn and the d7-square at the same time!

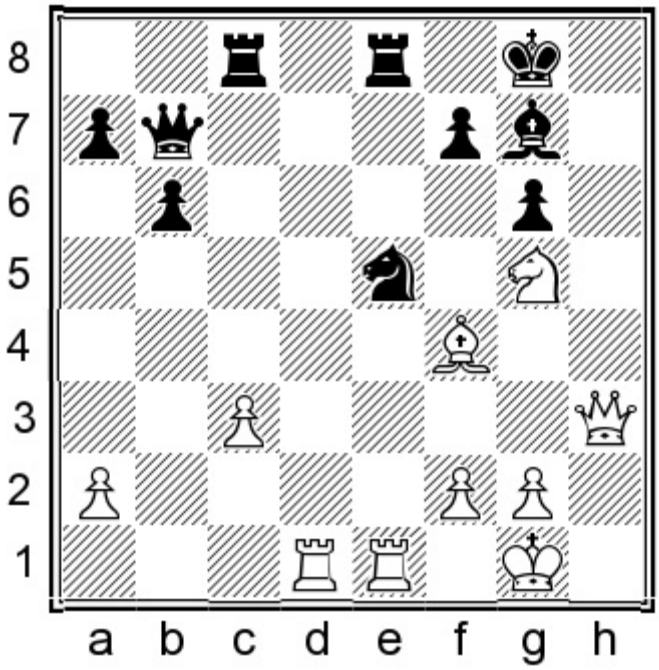
Black's reply to 23.♗xg6? would of course be 23...♕g4! with complex play, but not 23...♘f3†? 24.gxf3 ♖xe3 25.fxe3!+–.

23...♕c7

On 23...♕e7 White's simplest continuation is 24.♗xb7!?, transposing to the game.

24.♗xb7 ♕xb7 25.♕h3+–

Black's position doesn't look all that bad, but the mating threats count for more than anything else!

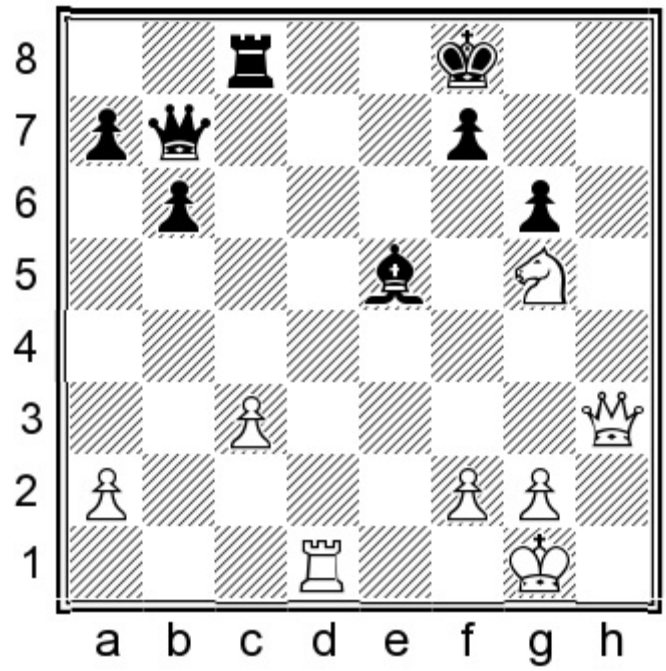


25...♕c7

Black can't drag out his resistance with 25...f6. White finishes him off in just a few moves: 26.♗xe5 fxg5 27.♖d7+–

A much stronger line from a practical point of view was: 25...♔f8 26.♗xe5 ♖xe5 (of course not 26...♗xe5 27.♖xe5) 27.♖xe5 ♗xe5

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At least Geller would have been required to find 28.♘xf7! ♖xc3 29.♕e6+–. Strong play is required of us virtually until the very end!

26.♖xe5 ♖xe5 27.♗xe5 ♗xe5 28.♖d7 ♗h2† 29.♔h1

1–0

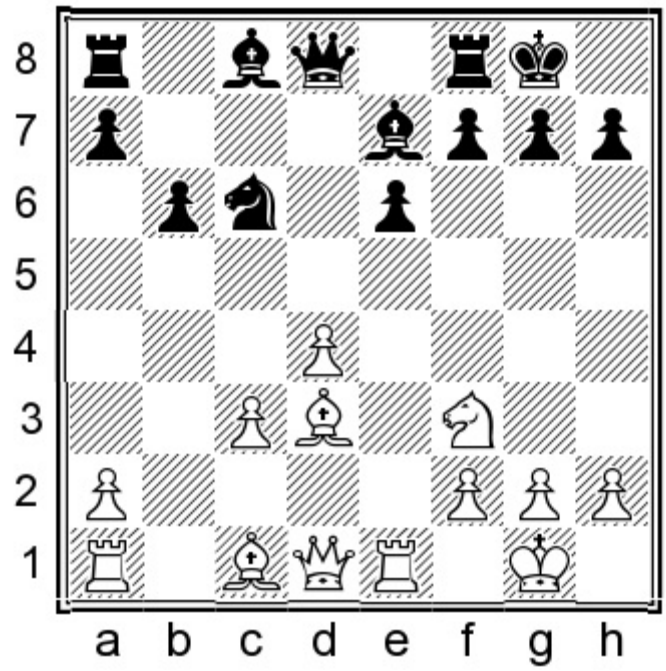
It is natural to ask why White managed to bring off a relatively easy victory. To me it seems that this was facilitated, first and foremost, by the presence of his powerful dark-squared bishop, which took the most direct part in the attack – and by the extreme passivity of this bishop's opposite number on the light squares. The black bishop didn't look at all badly placed on b7, but it failed to accomplish anything useful.

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Bogdan Lalic – Antoaneta Stefanova

Dos Hermanas 2002

1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘f3 ♗e7 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♗d3 ♘c6 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖e1 ♘xc3?! 11.bxc3 b6



12.h4!?

The most fashionable idea, although similar variations also arose in Geller – Zamikhovsky. The white knight aims to carry out a sortie to g5, and the simplicity of this idea in no way helps the charming Bulgarian lady to impede it. It isn't clear who employed the idea first, but it became widely known after the game Razuvaev – Farago, Dubna 1979.

12...♗f6

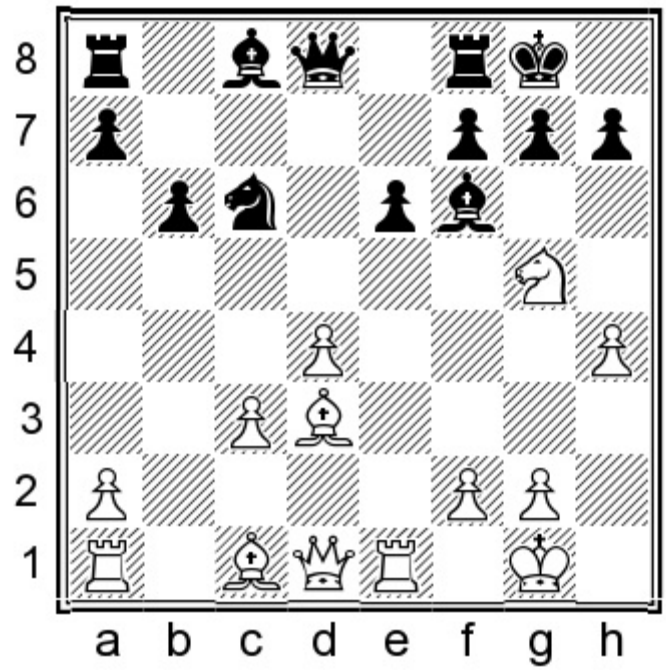
It is more than obvious that White also answers 12...♗b7 with 13.♘g5± (see Baburin – Fokin on page 123).

13.♘g5

The c1-bishop is in effect already developed – a notion familiar from the Ruy Lopez – so White can find something more interesting to do than bring this piece out!

He would also have an excellent game in the event of 13.♕c2!?, when 13...g6 transposes to Geller – Zamikhovsky above, while after 13...h6? 14.♕e2 ♕d5 15.♖b1!, the rook will switch to the kingside to assist White's other pieces in organizing an attack.

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13...g6 14.♕f3

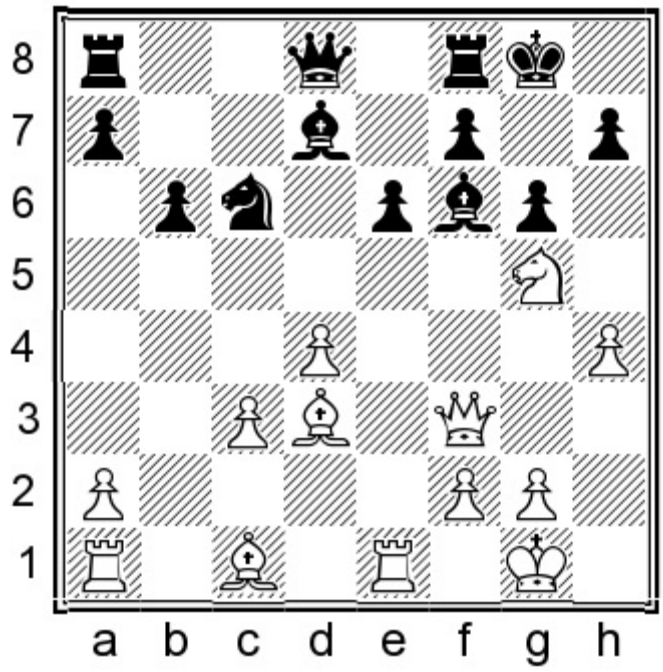
Not a bad move, but by no means the only one. There are likewise many uneasy minutes ahead for Black after either 14.♕g4! e5 15.♕g3 exd4 16.h5! or 14.♗e4 ♗b7 15.♕g4↑.

14...♗d7?!

A perfectly understandable move – Stefanova is thinking about the e6-square – but it *is* very passive!

However, the more natural continuation does not solve all Black's problems either: 14...♗b7 15.♕g3 ♘e7! (15...♖c8 16.h5 ♘e7 17.hxg6 ♘xg6 occurred in Belkhodja – Bouah, Lusaka 2005, now White could practically win with 18.♖xe6!, for example 18...♖xc3 19.♘xh7! ♔xh7 20.♗xg6†, or 18...fxe6 19.♘xh7+–) 16.h5 ♘f5 17.♕g4↑ White's attack is anything but simple to repel.

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15.♘e4

A different, more positional approach was also interesting: 15.♕g3!? ♘e7□ 16.♘e4 ♘f5 (16...♗g7 allows the queen to take up an active post without loss of time by 17.h5 ♘f5 18.♕h3±) 17.♘xf6† ♕xf6 18.♗g5!± White will have an obvious plus in the subsequent ending.

15...♗g7

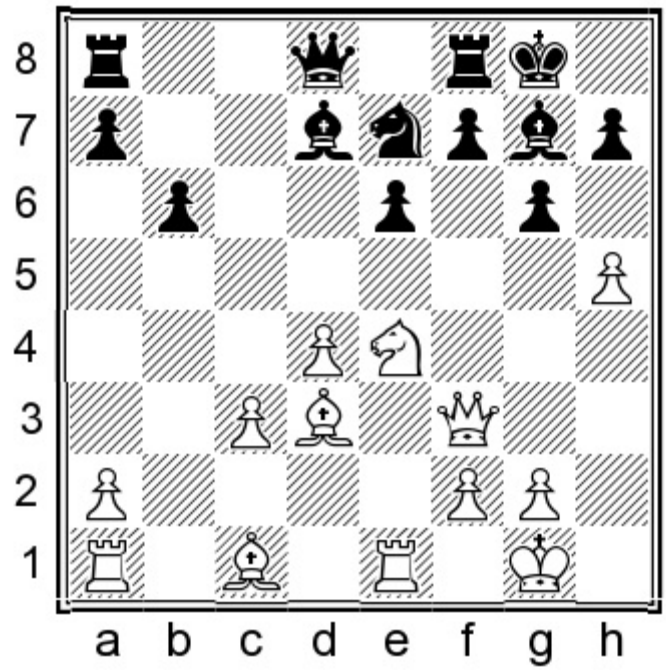
Black's position was already so uncomfortable that she ought probably to have settled for a small loss of material with: 15...♗xh4!? 16.♗h6 ♗e7 (after 16...♖e8?! 17.♘d6, White can meet 17...♖e7? with 18.g3+–, while 17...♕f6 18.♗f4! also greatly increases Black's problems) 17.♗xf8 ♔xf8 18.♖ad1 White has a large but not yet decisive plus.

16.h5± ♘e7!?

Black can hardly manage without stationing this knight on f5! After all, the king could do with a formidable defender! If instead 16...♕e7 (for example), White has more than one good answer:
a) The preliminary 17.a4! prepares to attack the queen from the a3-square. Then after 17...f5 18.♘g5 Black's resistance will already be no more than symbolic – she simply can't defend the numerous weaknesses in her camp!

b) Black also has a hard time after the straightforward 17.h6!? ♗h8 18.♗a3! ♕h4 19.♗xf8 ♖xf8 20.♕g3±, aiming to meet 20...♕xh6 with the decisive penetration of the white queen: 21.♕c7 ♗e8 22.♗b5+–

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17.h6!?

How remarkable to arrive at such a fantastic situation so early! Lalic already holds the initiative in the centre and on both wings, but the participation of his dark-squared bishop will lend his game the dynamism that is so indispensable. The move he plays is excellent, weakening the black king's position with no right of appeal. However, the alternatives were not at all bad either:

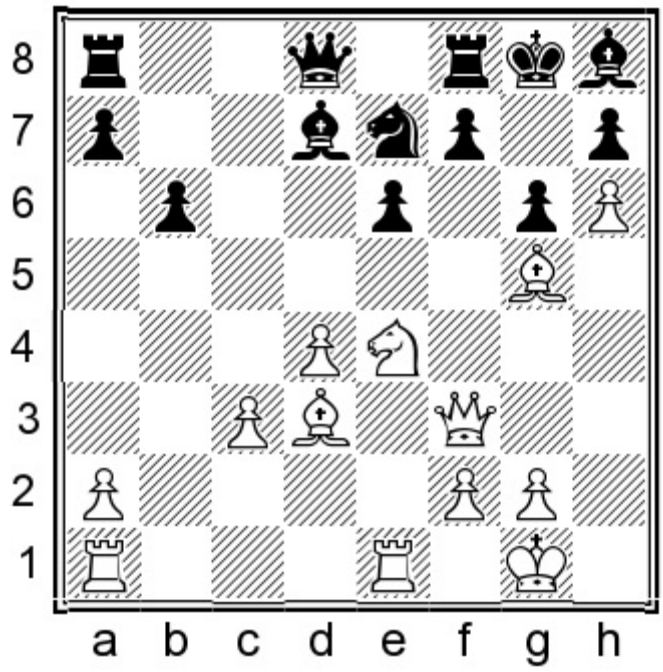
The simple 17.♗a3!? gives White an indisputable initiative.

A particularly interesting line is: 17.♗g5!? f5□ 18.♘d6 h6 19.♗f4 g5 20.♗h2 ♘d5 (or 20...f4 21.♗c4) 21.♖ac1↑ and by advancing the c-pawn White will breach the defensive rampart on the queenside.

17...♗h8 18.♗g5

The mind could start to boggle at the wealth of possibilities! In no way worse than the move in the game was 18.a4! with the idea of 19.♗a3!, or even 18.♗a3! at once.

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18...f5

The cunning 18...f6! probably offered more in the way of practical chances. For instance after 19.♘xf6†!? ♗xf6 20.♗xf6 ♕e8 21.c4, Stefanova could simply have continued: 21...♘f5 (I don't so much like 21...♕f7 22.♗xe7 ♕xe7 23.♕e3) 22.♗xf5 ♖xf6 23.♗xe6†! ♖xe6 24.♖xe6 ♗xe6 25.♖e1 ♖c8 26.♕f6!? ♕f7 27.♖xe6 ♕xf6 28.♖xf6 ♖xc4 29.d5 and Black may hope to hold this difficult ending. Of course, such an ending cannot have been what the young Bulgarian was dreaming of when she played the opening moves of the game, but right now it's impossible to conceive of any other realistic chance for Black!

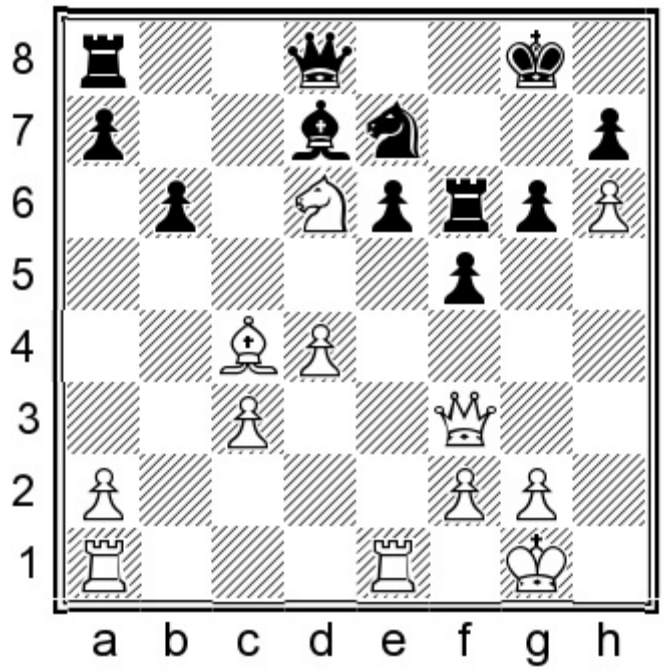
On the other hand, I wouldn't have been too surprised if in answer to 18...f6! Lalic had chosen the simple 19.♗c1!?±, preserving his advantage and avoiding the need for any long variations that would have been hard to calculate and assess correctly.

19.♘d6 ♗f6 20.♗xf6 ♖xf6 21.♘e4±

The opening phase is over, and the time has come to take stock. White's pieces are very active, and from the point of view of the pawn structure his advantage is plain to see. The pawn on h6 is especially strongly placed, feeling no doubt like a spy within the enemy camp.

I can scarcely fault the move played by the Croatian grandmaster, yet it was worth giving serious attention to:
21.♗c4!?

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21...♕f8

On 21...♗c6 the knight triumphantly returns, and in this case the effect is decisive: 22.♘e4! ♔h8 23.d5! ♘xd5 24.♘xf6 ♕xf6 25.♖ad1!? b5, and now White can win either by the pretty 26.♕g3! bxc4 27.♕d6!+– or by the uncomplicated 26.♗b3!? g5 27.♖xe6!? ♕xe6 28.♗xd5 ♗xd5 29.♕xd5 ♕xd5 30.♖xd5 a6 31.♖xf5+– with a quick victory in the endgame.

22.♕b7 ♕d8

22...♗c6 23.♖xe6! ♗xb7 24.♖xf6† ♗d5 25.♖xf8† ♔xf8 26♗b3±

23.♗b5 ♗xb5 24.♘xb5 a6 25.♘a7!

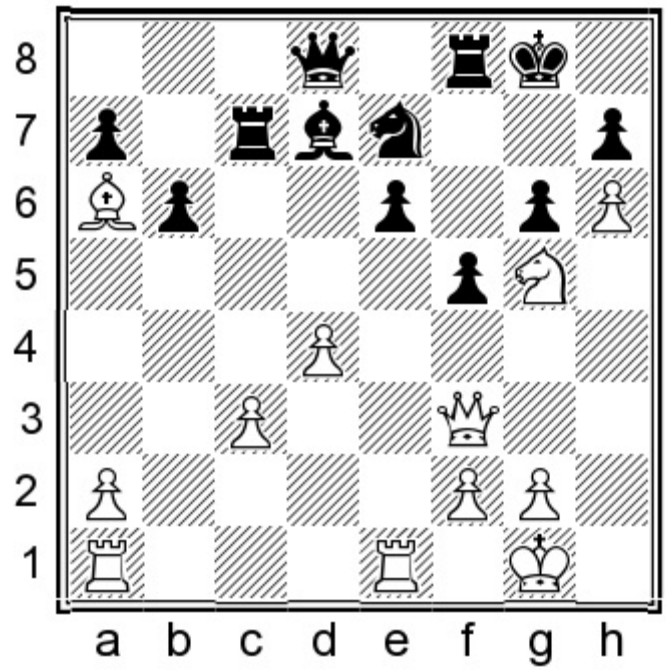
White will emerge a pawn up.

21...♖f8 22.♘g5 ♘d5

The e6-pawn cannot be defended – in the event of 22...♕c8 23.♕e2 Black loses without much resistance.

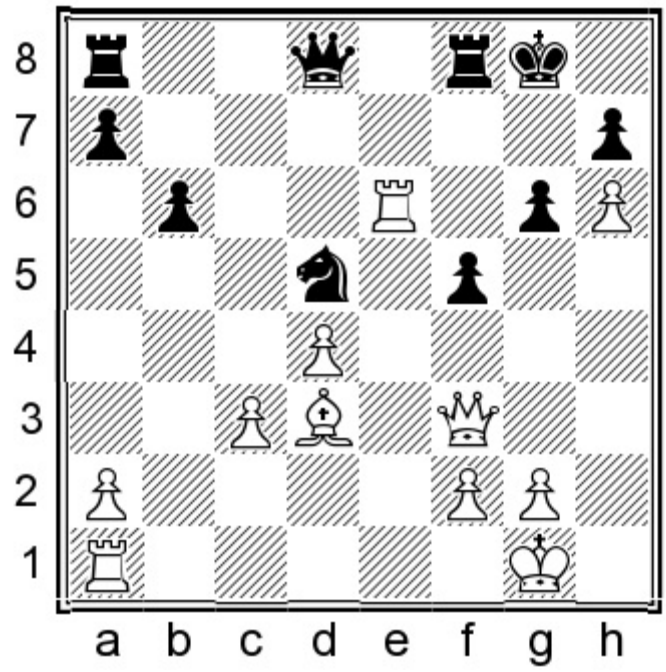
Also after 22...♖c8 23.♗a6 ♖c7

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24.♖xe6! White wins quickly.

23.♘xe6 ♗xe6 24.♖xe6



24...♖c8

White has won a pawn, but the game is still far from over. Contenting himself with a small gain, Lalic has left his opponent with some chances of continuing the struggle. The white bishop, however, may be expected to occupy a strong post on the a2-g8 diagonal before long.

Incidentally 24...♘f6 was weaker than the move played, as it would be well answered by 25.♕b7!? or by the even stronger 25.♕g3!.

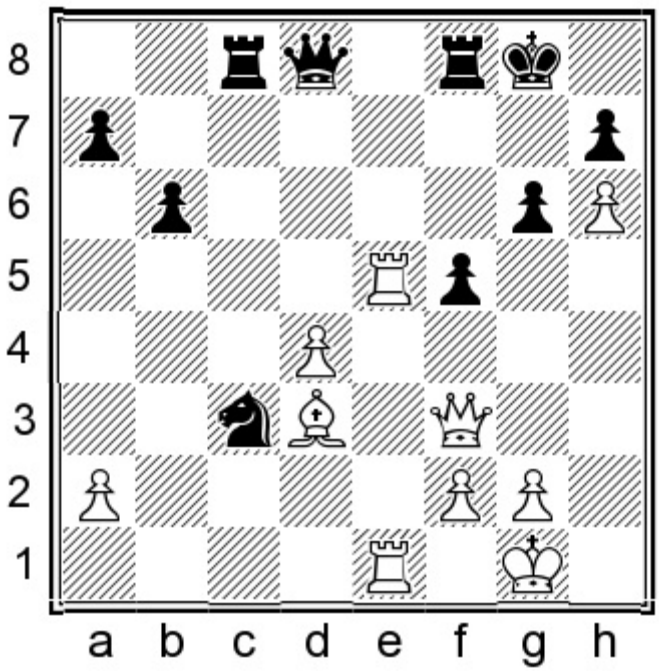
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25.♖e5

White maintains and even increases the pressure on his opponent's position.

A player with a more modest approach might have preferred the prophylactic 25.♖c1!. Then, for example, 25...♘xc3? would lose outright to 26.♖c6!.

25...♘xc3!? 26.♖ae1



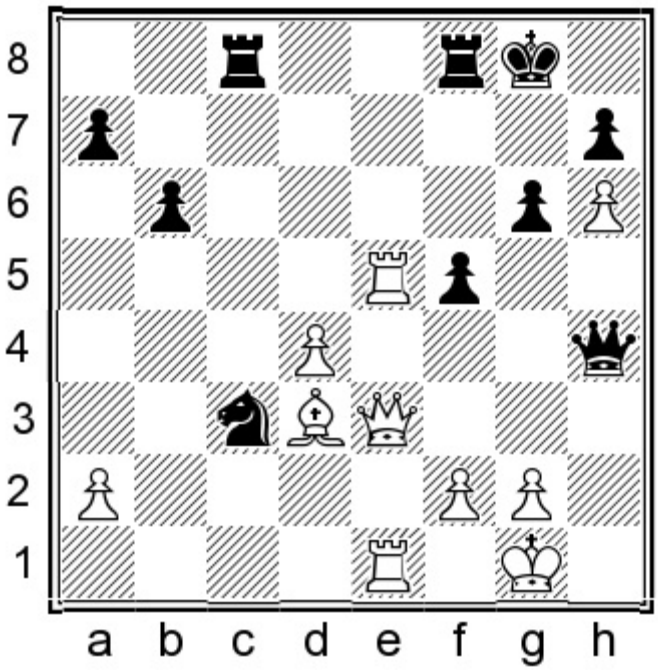
26...♖c7?

This places no obstacles in the opponent's path to victory! Black's king is in peril, and it was worth thinking about ways to evacuate it from the danger zone.

Hence 26...♔h8!? deserved attention. Then at any rate White would need to find 27.♗a6!, drawing the black rook onto a dark square. There could follow: 27...♖c7 28.♕f4 ♖cf7 (28...g5 29.♕f3 ♕f6 30.♖e8!) 29.♗c4 ♖f6 30.♖e6+– and there is no rescuing the knight.

It would also be interesting to try 26...♕h4!?. However, White replies 27.♕e3!.

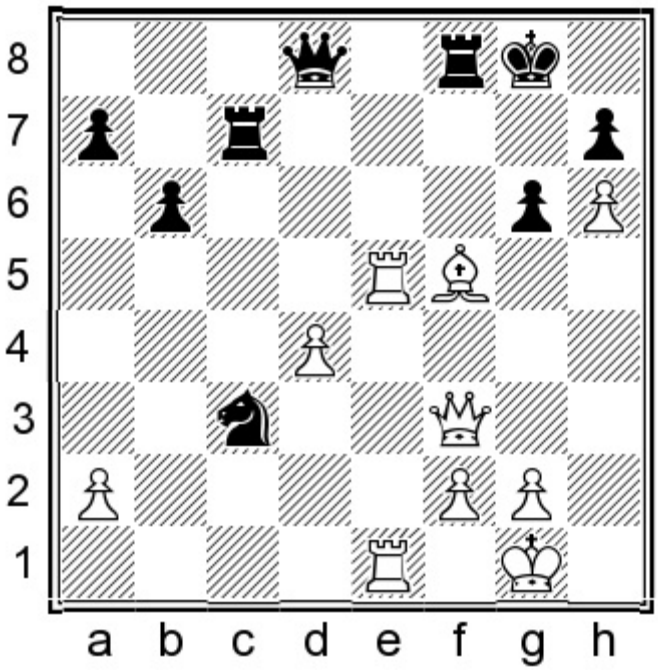
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Now 27...f4 28.♕f3 ♕xh6 doesn't work in view of 29.♖e7, and if 29...♖f7? then 30.♖xf7 ♔xf7 31.♕b7†+–. Black is also left with few chances after 27...♘e4 28.♗xe4 fxe4 29.♖xe4+– when the many weaknesses around her monarch merely add to the problems of the material deficit.

27.♕g3!?

I suspect White just didn't feel like working out variations in a won position, and played a normal move that is perfectly good. If he had wanted, though, he could have resolved on 27.♗xf5! which is not all that complicated. The bishop's participation in the attack decides the game quickly:



27...♔h8□ (27...gxf5 leads quickly to mate after 28.♕g3† ♔h8 29.♖xf5! ♖xf5 30.♕xc7! ♕f8 31.♖e8+–) 28.♕g3 ♖c6 (on 28...♖b7 29.♕xc3 gxf5 30.d5+– the passed pawn sets off on its victory march) 29.♖e7

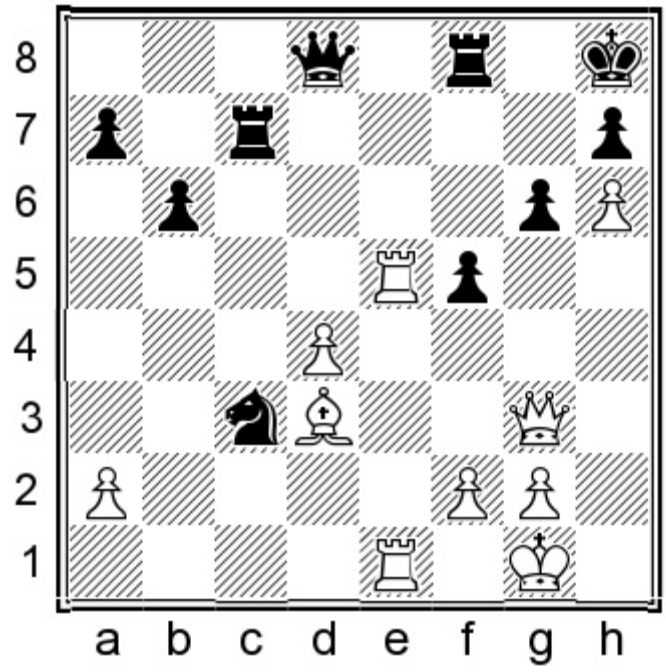
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♘d5 30.♕e5† ♘f6 31.♗d7! and Black is sure to be mated!

27...♔h8?

From a objective viewpoint, the best option was probably 27...♘e4, but after 28.♗xe4 fxe4 29.♖1xe4+– Black's position remains hopeless.

The play could develop more interestingly in the case of: 27...f4 28.♕g4 ♔h8 29.♕e6! ♖cf7 (29...f3 30.gxf3! doesn't help Black; while on 29...♕xd4 White finishes prettily with 30.♕f6†! ♔g8 31.♗xg6 and a quick mate) 30.♗c4 ♖f6 31.♕e7 ♕xe7 32.♖xe7 g5 33.♖c1 b5 34.♗d3 b4 35.♖xh7† ♔g8 36.♖e1+– and White has an easy win.



28.♖e8!

Simple and neat! After 28...♖xe8 29.♖xe8† ♕xe8 30.♕xc7 Black is losing her knight and getting mated.

The amusing 28.♖xf5! was also playable. Then after 28...♖cf7 29.♕e5† ♔g8 30.♗c4 Black has no defence against the mate on g7.

1–0

Black played the opening rather weakly; Stefanova evidently hadn't spent much time analysing the situations that arose. Her 10...♘xc3?! can already be called an error, and soon the passive 14...♗d7?! followed – after which Black's cause was practically hopeless. In our day, losing the game is easier than ever – so much experience of handling these positions has accumulated!

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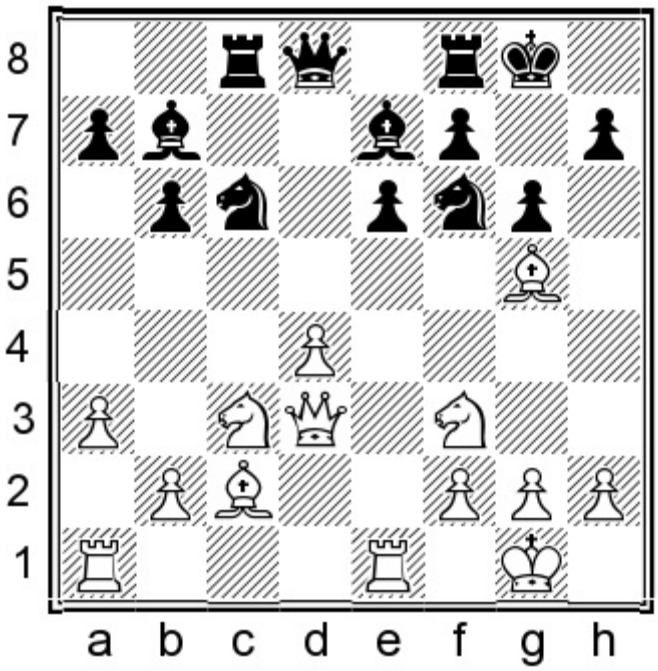
Jan Banas – Laszlo Navarovszky

Trencianske Teplice 1974

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘f3 ♗b4!? 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♗d2 0-0 9.♗d3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♘f6 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♖e1

White can also play on the queenside with 12.♖c1 b6 13.♗xf6!? ♗xf6 14.♘e4 ♗b7 15.♘xf6† ♕xf6 16.♗e4. His chances of a realistic advantage might not be great, but the situation would be one of complete safety. But here, in keeping with the theme of this book, I am focusing on a more aggressive approach.

12...b6 13.a3! ♗b7 14.♗c2 ♖c8 15.♕d3 g6



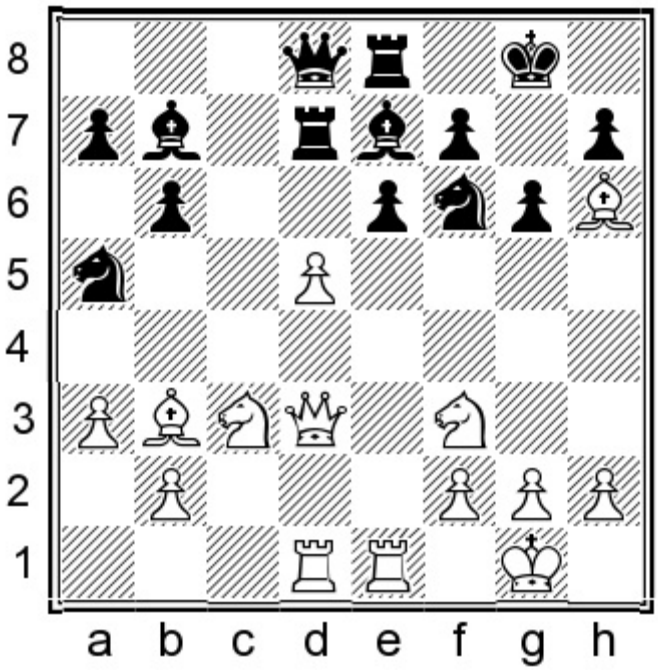
16.♗h6 ♖e8 17.♖ad1

White deploys all his pieces in the centre and makes preparations either for a breakthrough with d4-d5! or for an advance of his h-pawn so as to induce weaknesses in the black camp. Or of course it might well be possible to combine both plans! White has a significant advantage here, as he can vary his plans according to Black's defensive tactics. Meanwhile Black is rather cramped; as long as the board is so crowded, his pieces have insufficient room.

17...♘d5

Black puts a stop to the break in the centre by the most radical and natural means. Ultimately it would be hard for his knight to find any better square than d5, especially considering that the incautious 17...♖c7?! 18.♗b3! ♖d7 19.d5! ♘a5 loses outright (this is no exaggeration!) to:

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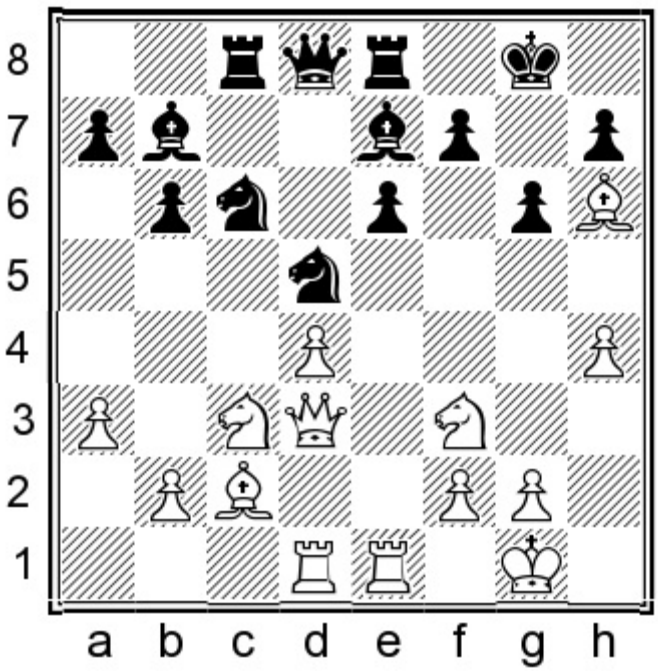


20.dxe6! ♖xd3 21.exf7† ♔h8 22.♖xd3 ♕xd3 23.fxe8=♕† ♘xe8 24.♖xe7+– For gross carelessness Black has to pay a high price – in this variation at least.

18.h4!?

With the black knight gone from the kingside, this thrust seems logical; at the moment the battery of queen on d3 and bishop on c2 is "biting on granite" (g6), so the h-pawn is needed to soften up the enemy position. This does indeed lead to interesting play, but it doesn't guarantee White the better chances.

White might have given more consideration to piece play, for instance with 18.♗a4!? or 18.♘e4.



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18...a6?

Astonishingly slow! Does Black really imagine that he has so much free time in hand?

Of course, 18...♗xh4? is refuted without much trouble: 19.♘xd5 ♕xd5 20.♘xh4 ♕h5 21.d5! with powerful play.

But nothing is preventing Black from opting for the natural:

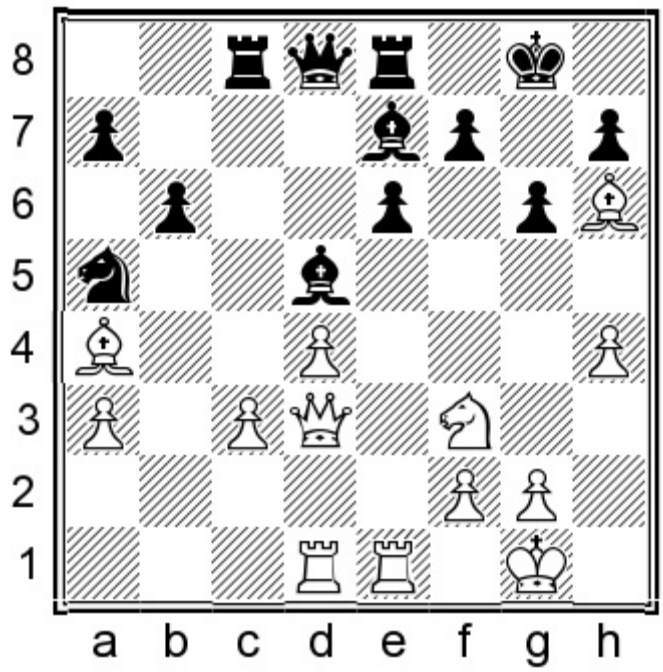
18...♘xc3 19.bxc3 ♘a5 20.♗a4

Black now has a choice.

20...♗d5!?

I would recommend this strict positional approach, in the style of Petrosian.

The continuation in Roiz – Doettling, Tel Aviv 2001, was not bad either: 20...♗c6 21.♗xc6 ♖xc6 22.♘e5 ♖c7 23.h5 ♗g5 24.hxg6 hxg6 with chances for both sides.



21.♗xe8 ♕xe8

Black has interesting compensation for the exchange sacrifice. White won't be able to create any concrete threats for some time; nearly all his resources will have to be devoted to defending his ruined queenside.

19.h5 ♘xc3?

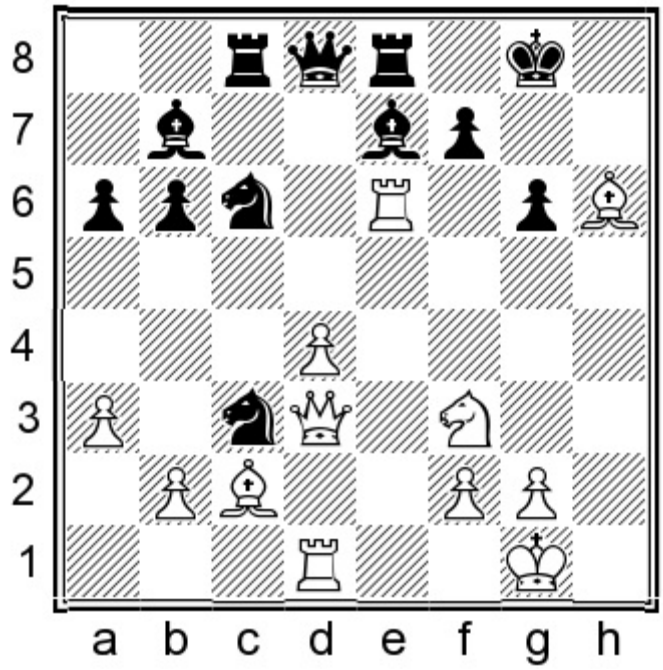
As happens quite often, one error brings at least one more in its wake. If you are able to stop at the first one, this testifies to an excellent nervous system and a high class of play.

It was worth considering 19...♗f6!?. Then 20.♘e4 runs into 20...♘cb4!, while 20.♗b3 ♘ce7 21.hxg6 hxg6 22.♘e4 ♘f5 23.♘xf6† ♕xf6 24.♗g5 ♕g7 leads to a position that is perfectly defensible, despite the exchange of Black's important dark-squared bishop.

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20.hxg6! hxg6 21.♖xe6!

A resounding zwischenzug which Black had obviously missed, expecting only 21.bxc3. Here is the first consequence of White's sensible plan (h4-h5) and his opponent's sluggish response. After this move, you might suppose that the basic part of White's work was already done, that he would just need to be reasonably careful, and his victory would not be long coming. A dangerous delusion! Navarovszky now gives the impression of rousing himself at last from a lengthy slumber and starting to play with formidable power!



21...♘e5!?

Making a move like this is truly gratifying – Black's king position is weak, his knight on c3 is en prise, and he merely pours more petrol on the flames!

However, to be fair (especially considering that Black still has real difficulties, almost until the end of the game) it must be said that the outcome would be similar after the much more normal 21...♗f6 22.♖xe8† ♕xe8 23.bxc3 ♘a5±. Here I would estimate White's chances of winning as being roughly equal to his opponent's chances of gaining a draw, provided of course that Black defends accurately and enjoys a modicum of luck!

22.♘xe5!?

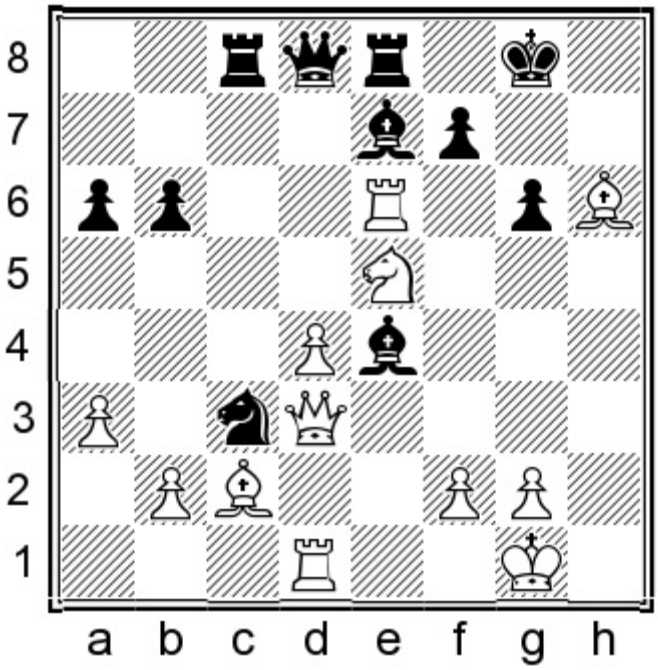
In playing this, White may have underestimated his opponent's startling reply.

22.♖xe5! seems stronger to me: 22...♗e4 (22...♘xd1? loses at once to 23.♗b3 ♖c6 24.♗xf7†! ♔xf7 25.♕b3† ♔f6 26.♘g5 with a mating attack) 23.♖xe4 ♘xe4 24.♖e1!± White's threats are probably irresistible. Pay no attention to the fact that Black is the exchange up; he simply has nothing with which to oppose White's light-squared bishop. But avarice is such an understandable human trait, and how difficult it is to sacrifice material when you can win a couple of pawns instead!

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22...♗e4!

What you would play now?



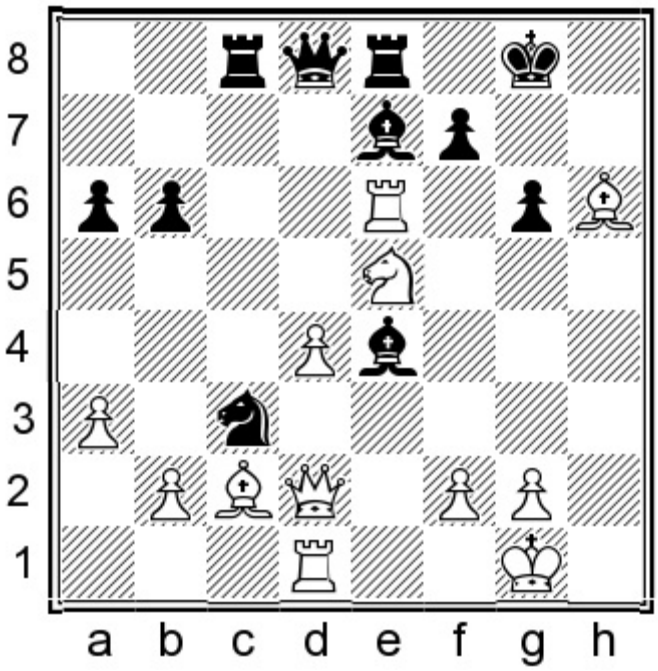
23.♖xg6†?

I showed this position to some of my pupils of a fairly high standard, and all of them, with one sole exception, chose the move that occurred in the game. How indeed could you reject it? A beautiful rook sacrifice, Black's weak king position, the chance to give plenty of checks... the temptation proved too strong!

White should have played:

23.♕d2!

This modest move is significantly stronger than the aggressive one he chose.



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23...♘e2†!

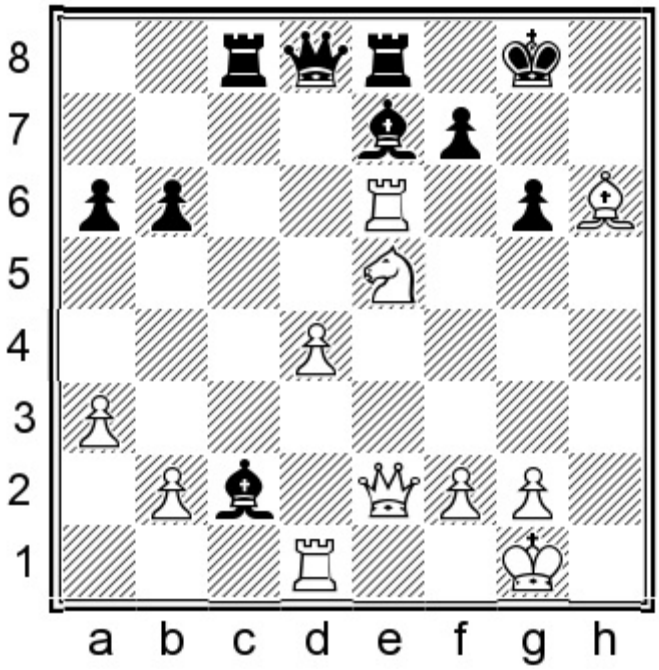
After 23...♘xd1 24.♕f4 ♗f5 25.♗xf5 White's attack is irresistible.

23...♗xc2 24.♕xc2 also gives White a decisive attack.

23...♗f8!? 24.♖xe8 ♕xe8 25.♖e1! is dismal for Black too. In this last variation, incidentally, White could also choose 24.♗g5!+–.

The abundance of winning lines is enough to make one's head swim!

24.♕xe2 ♗xc2



25.♕f3 ♗f5 26.♘c6 ♕d7 27.♘xe7† ♖xe7 28.♖xb6±

As the result of the long and practically forced variation, White has won a second pawn – though in view of the opposite bishops he will still need some good technique to achieve victory.

23...fxg6□

Absolutely the only move. Black loses quickly with 23...♗xg6? 24.♘xg6+–, and he is likewise crushed after 23...♔h7? 24.♕h3! fxg6 25.♗xe4 ♘xe4 26.♗g5† ♔g8 27.♕e6† ♔h8 28.♘f7† ♔g7 29.♘xd8+–.

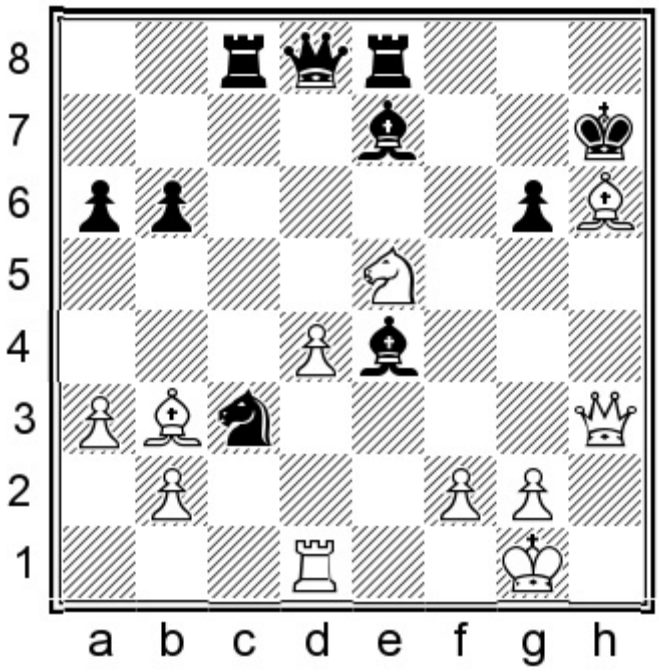
24.♗b3†! ♔h7

Again Black had no choice – 24...♔h8 25.♘f7† ♔h7 26.♕h3 ♗f5 27.g4! finishes the game in a few moves.

25.♕h3

The moment of truth has arrived, and by this time White too is quite unable to feel secure!

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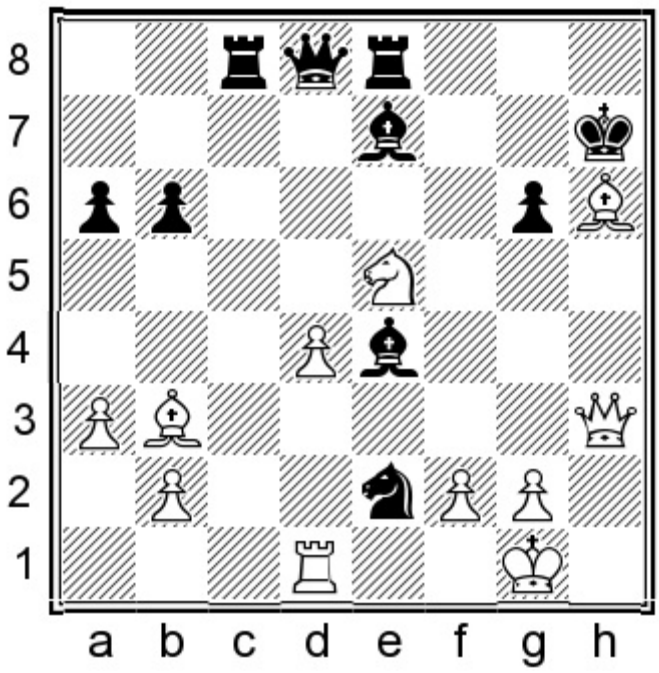


25...♗h4??

Such a pity! The game has no sooner become really interesting than Black succumbs to the pressure (it was perhaps just his turn to go wrong!) and loses almost instantly. What, then, should he have done?

First of all, apart from the move in the game, we can forget about 25...♗d5? 26.♗xd5 ♘e2† 27.♔f1 ♕xd5 28.♗e3†!? ♔g8 29.♕g4 ♗f8 30.♕xg6† ♗g7 31.♔xe2± when Black's drawing chances are minimal.

Black ought to have checked on e2 (an excellent tactic, by the way – if you can't see a move to play, give a check!). After 25...♘e2†! White has a difficult choice to make, and there is no guarantee against error!



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All three king moves must be analysed:

a) 26.♔h1?

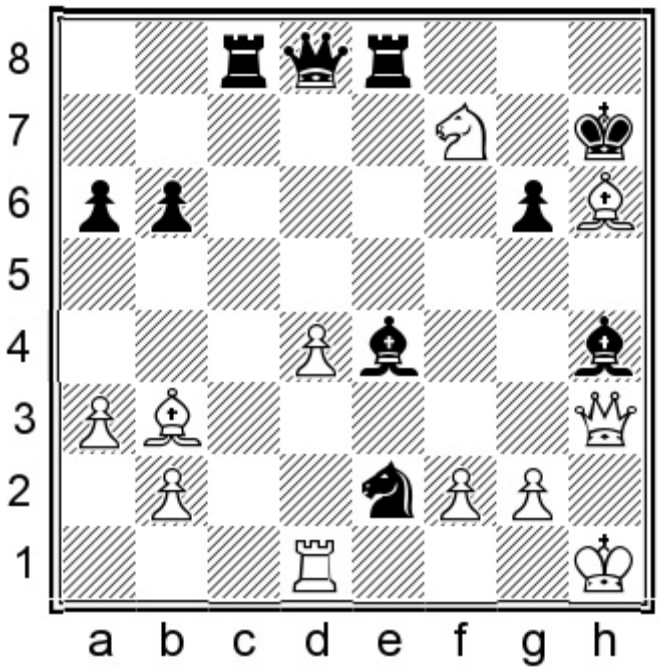
The one thing of which I am totally convinced is that this is downright weak!

26...♗h4!

Black simply continues by shielding his king from the discovered check.

27.♘f7

Against 27.♗d2? the simplest way to win is 27...♖h8 28.♘f7 ♔g7 29.♘xh8 ♕xh8–+ and Black's large material plus guarantees him victory.



27...♕f6!

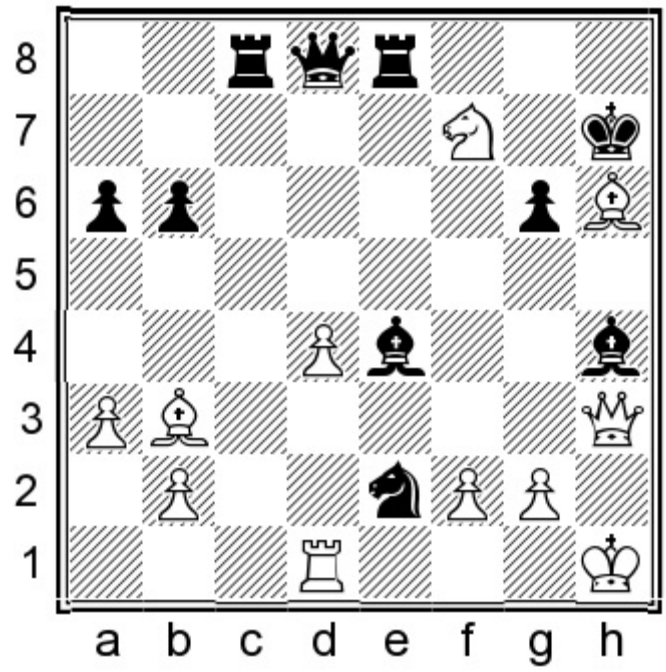
Accuracy to the end!

The careless 27...♗f5? 28.♕h2 ♕e7 allows White to maintain the balance by 29.♘g5†! ♔xh6 30.♕xh4† ♔g7 31.♕h7† ♔f6 32.♕h4=, and to avoid anything worse, both sides have to settle for repeating the position. Incidentally in this line White avoided a fairly simple trap – after 29.♗g5? ♘g3† 30.fxg3 ♕e1† 31.♖xe1 ♖xe1† 32.♕g1 ♖xg1† 33.♔xg1 ♗xg5∓ he would soon have to acknowledge defeat.

28.♗g5

Slightly more tenacious than 28.♘g5† ♔xh6! 29.♕xh4† ♔g7 30.♕h7† ♔f8 31.f3 ♗c2–+, and for the missing rook White has no compensation at all – apart, if you like, from the chance to give a few checks that will frighten no one.

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28...♗xg2†

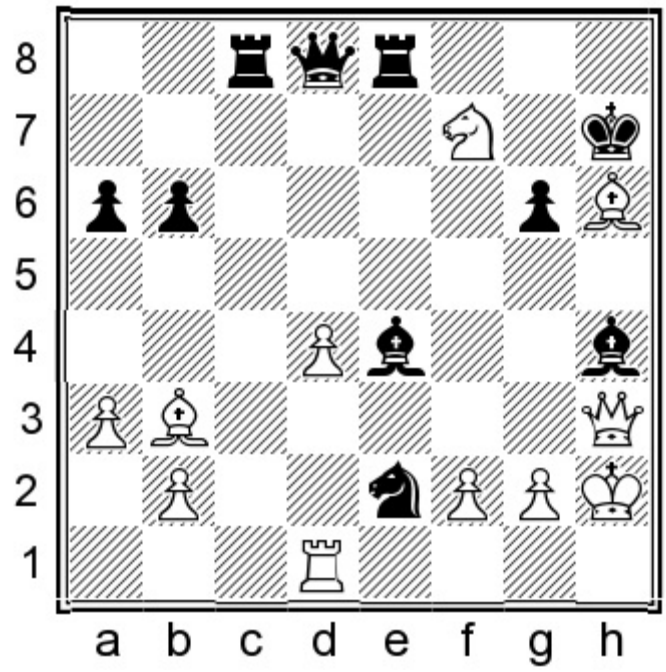
28...♕xf2! 29.♕xh4† ♕xh4† 30.♗xh4 ♔g7–+ is also sufficient to win.

29.♕xg2 ♗xg5 30.♘xg5† ♔g7–+

The extra exchange together with an attack should secure Black the win without difficulty.

b) 26.♔h2 ♗h4 27.♘f7

Almost the same position as we had in line 'a', but the slightly different placement of the white king has a significant effect on Black's choice of move here:



27...♗f5!!

A magical solution to the problem – at this moment it's even quite a task to count how many units on each side are under attack!

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Of the alternatives, 27...♕f6 28.♗g5!↑ is clearly weaker.

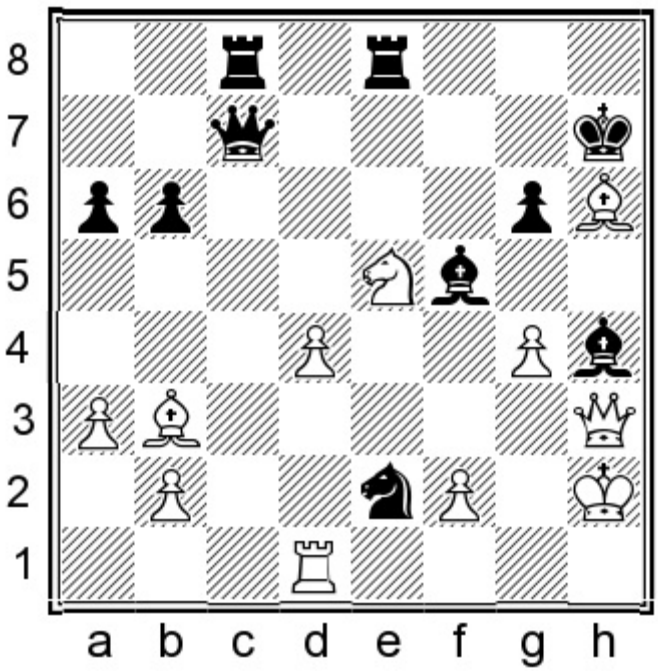
Black has more joy with 27...♗xg2!, after which 28.♔xg2 transposes to line ‘c’ below.

28.g4□ 28...♕c7†

After 28...♗xg4 29.♕xg4 ♕f6 30.f3!? I very slightly prefer White’s position.

29.♘e5

Of course not 29.♔h1? ♗c2–+.



29...♗c2!

The tactics continue!

In the event of 29...♖xe5 30.♕xh4! Black is not to be envied.

30.♕xh4 ♗xb3 31.♗g5† ♔g8 32.♗f6 ♖xe5

32...♕h7 33.♕xh7† ♔xh7 34.♖d3 ♖xe5 35.♗xe5 is just a transposition.

33.♗xe5 ♕h7 34.♕xh7† ♔xh7 35.♖d3 ♗e6 36.♖h3† ♔g8 37.d5!

And as frequently happens, the wild complications culminate in a prosaic draw.

37...♗xg4 38.♖h8†

White delivers perpetual check.

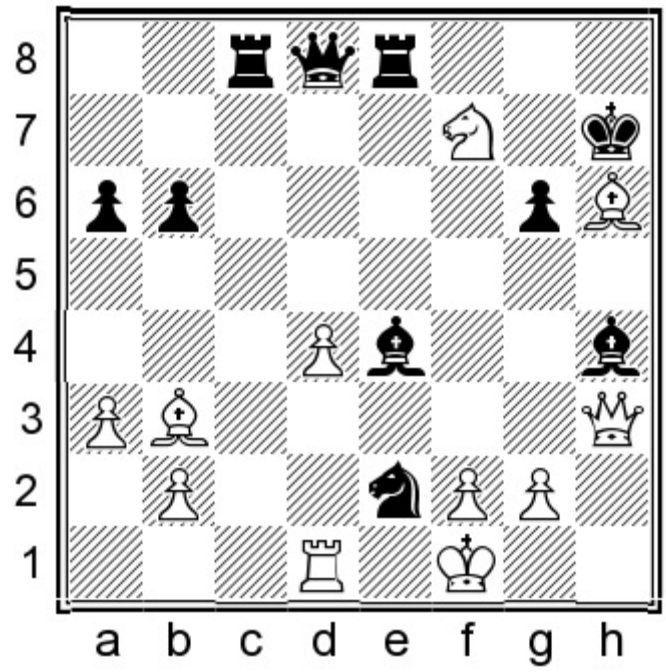
c) 26.♔f1!?

Undoubtedly the most promising move.

26...♗h4! 27.♘f7!

The position isn’t simple to evaluate after 27.♔xe2!? ♗c2 28.♗f4 ♔g7⇄ either.

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27...♗xg2†!!

Pretty, and practically forced!

Black is in a bad way after 27...♕f6 28.♘g5† ♔xh6 29.♕xh4† ♔g7 30.♕h7† ♔f8 31.♕h6† ♔e7 32.♘xe4+– with a fearsome attack.

The complications also go against him following: 27...♗f5 28.g4!? (the simple 28.♕h2!+– looks even stronger) 28...♕d7!? 29.♕xh4 ♗xg4 30.♘e5 ♘g3†!? 31.fxg3 ♕b5† 32.♔g1 ♗h5 33.♗a2 ♔xh6 34.♕f4† ♔g7 35.♖f1+– White's knight is heading for f7 and his attack can scarcely be resisted without great material losses.

28.♔xg2

This shows true fighting spirit!

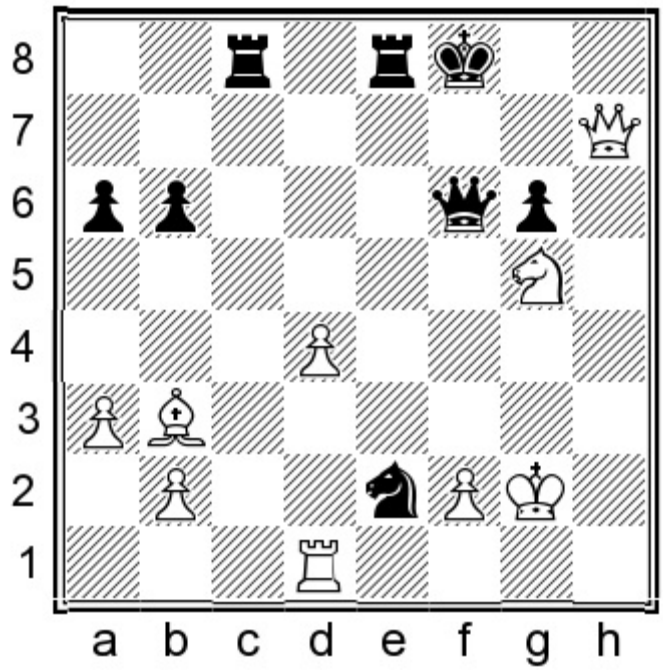
The cautious 28.♕xg2!? leads to approximate equality: 28...♕d7 29.♘e5 ♘g3†!? 30.fxg3 ♕b5† 31.♔e1 ♖xe5† 32.dxe5 ♕xe5† 33.♔f1 ♕b5† 34.♕e2 ♕xb3 35.♗f4 ♖f8= and Black succeeds in holding.

28...♕f6! 29.♘g5†

In the event of 29.♕f3 ♘xd4 30.♕xf6 ♗xf6 31.♗g5!? ♘xb3 32.♗xf6 ♔g8 33.♘d6= the game remains balanced despite the activity of the white pieces.

29...♔xh6 30.♕xh4† ♔g7 31.♕h7† ♔f8

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32.♘e4

Chances are about equal after 32.♘f3 ♖cd8⇄.

On the other hand, the ineffective 32.♕h6† ♔e7 33.♘e6?! ♔d6! places the overall initiative in Black's hands.

32...♖xe4 33.♕g8† ♔e7 34.♕xc8 ♕g5† 35.♔f3□ 35...♕f4† 36.♔g2

Once again it all ends in perpetual check, which might well be considered an equal disappointment for both sides.

Returning to the game, after 25...♗h4?? the finish is much simpler and more mundane.

26.bxc3+– ♖c7 27.♘f7 ♖xf7 28.♗xf7 ♗f5 29.♕h2 ♖e2 30.♗e3 ♔g7 31.♗c4 ♖c2 32.♕f4!

1–0

A sorry end to such an interesting game. After White had gained a large plus out of the opening, there was a certain point where he gave his opponent a breathing space, and the game entered a phase of totally unfathomable complications. But as is well known, the winner is the player who makes the last mistake but one, so White's victory in this game was fully merited!

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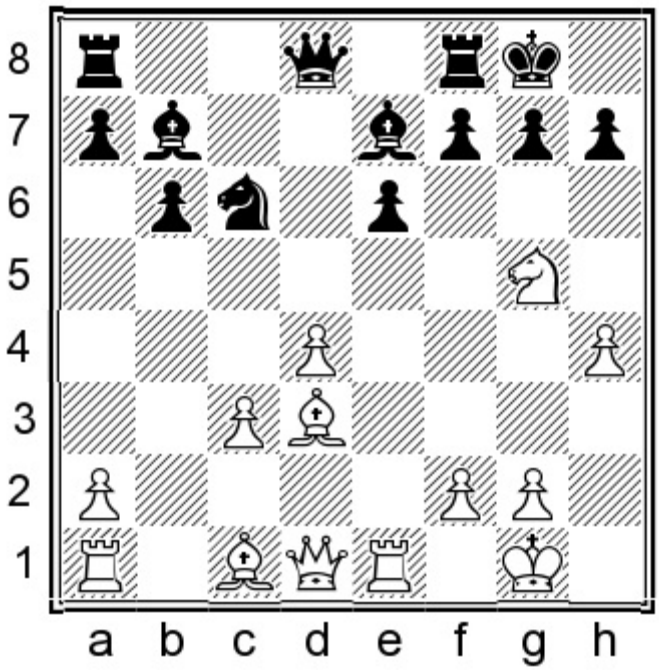
Alexander Baburin – Sergey Fokin

Gorky 1989

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.♘f3 c5 6.e3 ♘c6 7.♗d3 ♗e7 8.0-0 cxd4 9.exd4 ♘xc3?! 10.bxc3 0-0 11.♖e1 b6 12.h4!?

We have already seen this and a number of similar positions. Quite often, as in Geller – Zamikhovsky at the start of this chapter, White carries out the same idea after a preliminary 12.♕c2 (12...g6 13.h4), which has its plus and minus points. One of the main ideas of playing 12.h4 at once is that after the expected knight sortie to g5 the white queen will reach the kingside without delay. But then again, White will have to pay a certain price for that possibility; too many pieces will be forced to leave the chessboard for any really dangerous threats to be created.

12...♗b7 13.♘g5



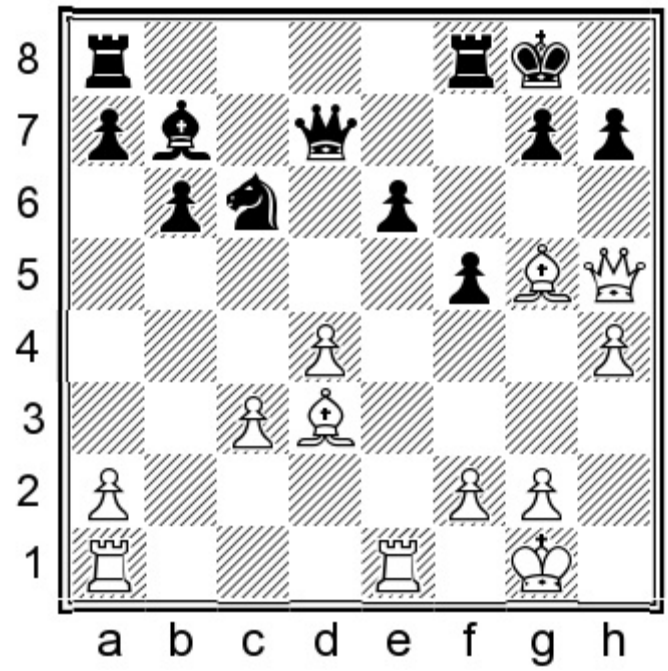
13...♗xg5

Black has no choice, seeing that after 13...g6 14.♘xh7! ♔xh7 15.♕h5† ♔g8 16.♗xg6 fxg6 17.♕xg6† ♔h8 18.♖e4! it is already impossible to parry White's threats.

14.♗xg5 ♕d5

Black doesn't get very far with: 14...♕d7 15.♕h5 f5? (15...g6± is an improvement)

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16.♗c4 ♖fe8 17.♕e2 ♔f7 18.♕h5† Toying with Black before going in for the kill. 18...♔g8 19.♕e2 ♔f7 20.♕d3!+– Kalinitschew – Antonov, Berlin 1986.

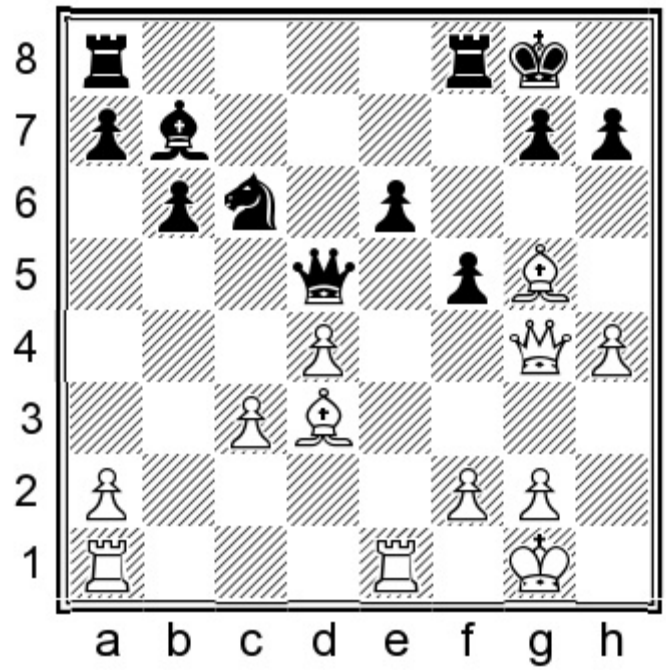
15.♕g4

After 15.♗e4 ♕d7, it may be worth White continuing with 16.♗c2∞, rather than: 16.♖e3 ♘e7 17.♗xe7 (the position is likewise equal after 17.♗c2 ♘f5 18.♗xf5 exf5 19.c4 ♖fe8=) 17...♕xe7 18.♗xb7 ♕xb7 19.♕g4 ♖ad8=

15...f5

So the opening stage of the game is over, and White undoubtedly holds the initiative (he has the two bishops, and Black constantly needs to think about the weakness of the dark squares in his camp). However, it is also easy to see how much the position offers by way of defensive resources for Black, who has managed to exchange off both White's galloping knights.

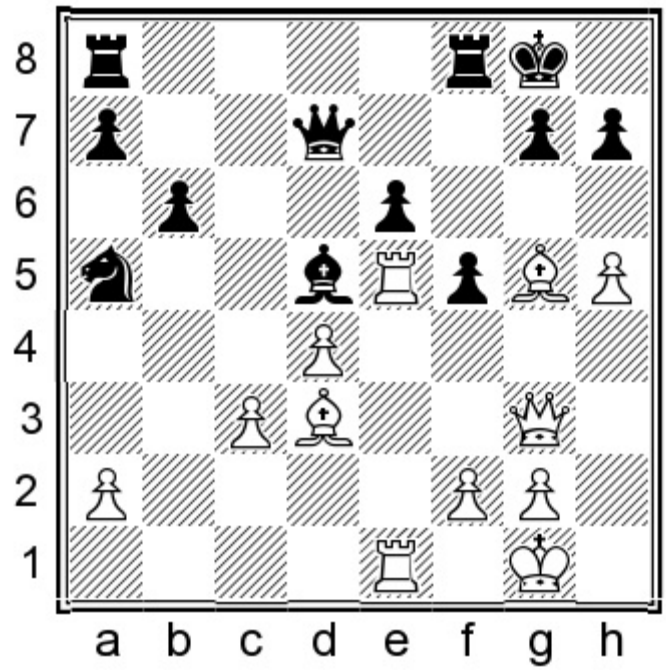
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16.♕g3 ♘a5

The alternative 16...♔h8!? 17.h5 h6 18.♗f4 makes no fundamental difference to the character of the position.

17.♖e5 ♕d7 18.♖ae1 ♗d5 19.h5

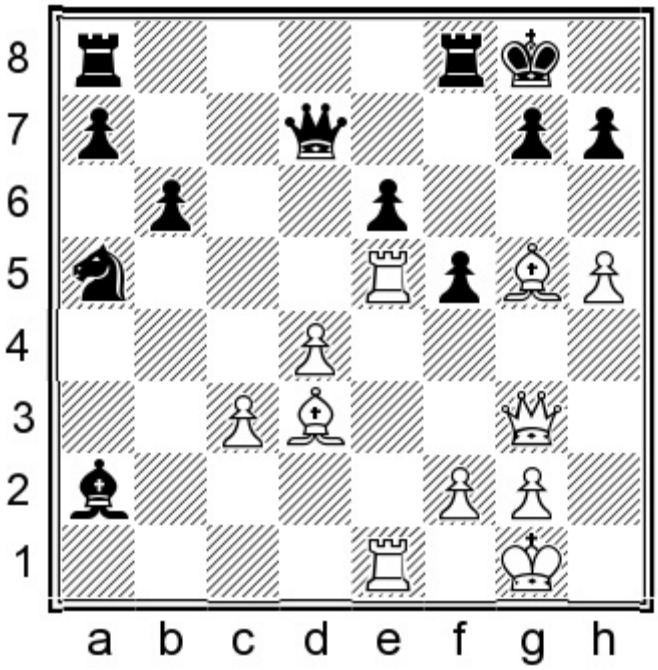


The h-pawn goes forward like a battering ram and is ready to provoke a weakening of the black pawn structure, even at a slight cost in material. But a good question has arises: Does Black snatch the pawn on the other wing, or does he let it live for now?

19...♘c4!

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Without any doubt, the correct decision! Against the truly suicidal 19...♗xa2?, White would have at least three interesting ideas:



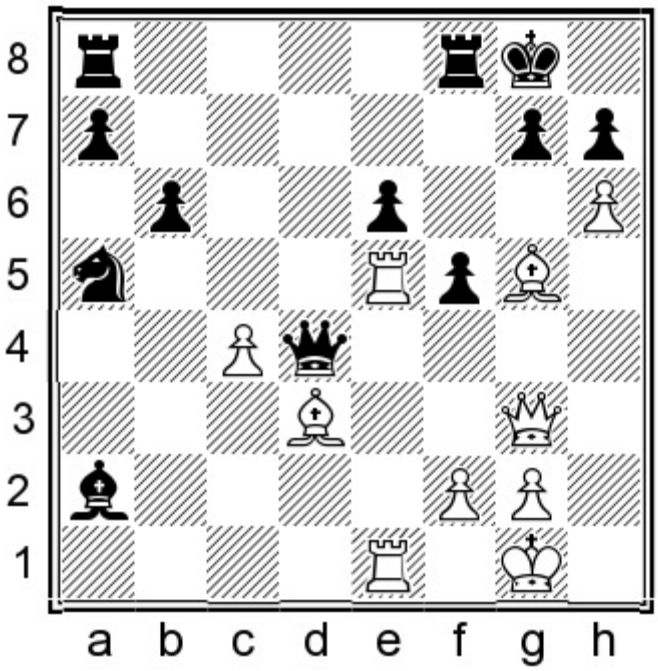
a) 20.c4!?

A move that is standard in this type of position, cutting the black bishop off from the kingside.

20...♕xd4

If you want to try defending the black king after 20...♖ae8 21.d5, or after 20...♗xc4 21.♗xc4 ♘xc4 22.♖xe6 ♕xd4 23.♕f3! – then go ahead, but personally I wouldn't waste too much time on it.

21.h6



21...♗xc4

In the event of 21...♕g4 22.♕xg4 fxg4 23.♖xe6, White's attack in no way suffers from the queen

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exchange.

22.hxg7 ♖fc8 23.♗xc4 ♘xc4 24.♖xe6 ♕g4 25.♕xg4 fxg4 26.♗h6

It isn't exactly clear how Black can defend against White's simple threat: to bring a rook to the f-file, and then – at the right moment – to check on f8.

b) 20.h6!? ♖f7

On 20...g6 White gains a clear advantage with the none too complicated 21.♗xf5!.

21.c4!

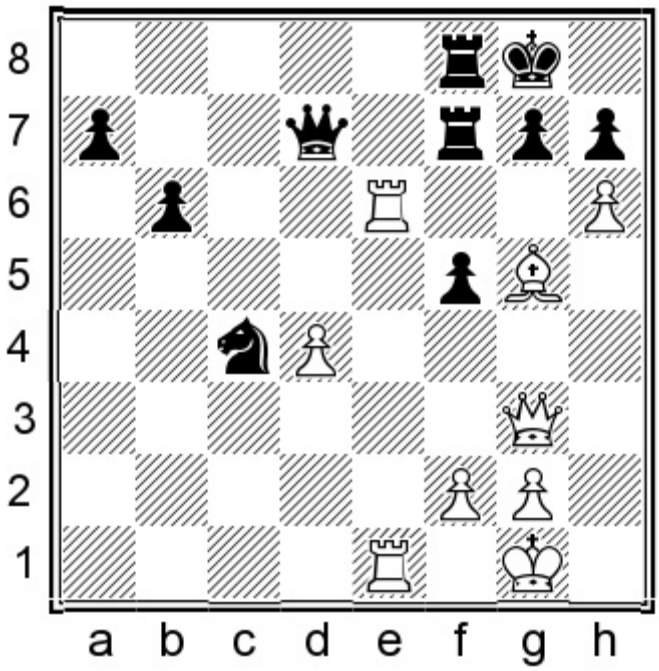
Reverting to the theme of our previous variation, only in a slightly improved form.

21...♗xc4

After 21...♘xc4, the full force of White's attack is splendidly illustrated by the variation 22.♖5e2! ♗b3 23.♖xe6 ♕xd4 24.♖e8† ♖f8 25.♖xa8 ♖xa8 26.♗xf5 – and the poor black king is forced to defend almost single-handed against the opposing hordes! There were quite a few other lines that Black could have chosen, but none of them promise him anything good; the actions of White's pieces in the crucial theatre of war are too effective and well co-ordinated!

22.♗xc4 ♘xc4 23.♖xe6 ♖af8

23...g6 24.d5! doesn't help Black either; the bishop will go to e7 and the pawn to d6, after which the game is sure to end with a strike against g6 and a quick mate.



24.♕f4!

Simplest; White takes the precaution of blockading the black f-pawn, while his own d-pawn threatens a victorious forward march.

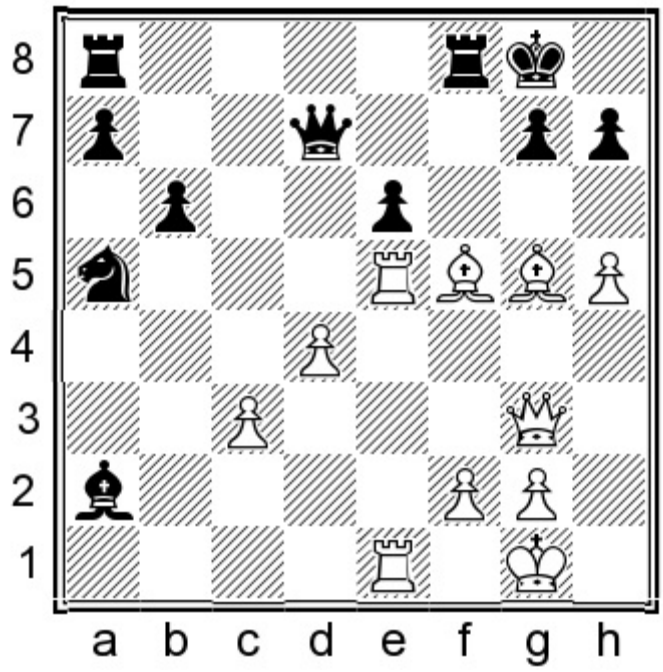
24...♘b2 25.hxg7 ♖xg7 26.♖e7+–

There obviously won't be long to wait before the game ends!

c) 20.♗xf5!

Probably the most convincing of all.

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20...♖xf5

Black could of course leave the bishop where it is, but how is he then to defend?

21.♖xf5 exf5 22.♖e7 ♕a4

A defence in a lost position is about as easy to find as a black cat in a dark room! What else can be suggested for Black?

The insertion of 22...f4 23.♕xf4 would do absolutely nothing to alter the verdict.

The same goes for 22...♕c6 23.♖c7! ♕e4 24.♗f6! with mate soon to follow.

23.f3 ♖e8 24.h6! ♖xe7 25.♗xe7 ♔f7 26.♕xg7† ♔e6 27.♗g5

By combining threats to the black king with the advance of his h-pawn, White easily wins.

20.♖5e2± ♘d6

A critical juncture! White's game is to be preferred, but an interesting question is how he would improve his position after 20...♖f7! 21.h6 g6, with an almost total blockade.

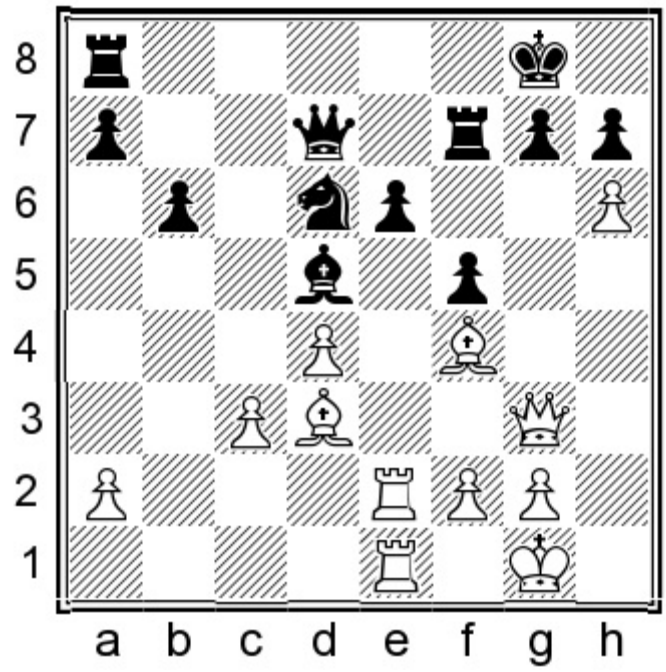
21.h6 ♖f7

Here too Fokin could have played 21...g6!?, although after 22.♗f4 ♘e4 23.♗xe4 fxe4!? the opposite bishops would promise White the initiative.

Black could well consider defending actively with: 21...b5!? 22.hxg7 (perhaps White should think about an exchange sacrifice; after 22.♗f4 ♘c4 23.♖xe6! ♗xe6 24.♖xe6 he has a strong initiative) 22...♖f7 23.♗h6 ♖f6 24.♕h4 ♖g6 25.g3 ♖c8 The correct evaluation of the position is somewhere between a slight plus for White and equality.

22.♗f4

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22...♘e4?!

I would prefer 22...♘c4, but Black didn't want to admit the loss of two tempos!

23.♗xe4 fxe4

In an ending, the presence of opposite bishops will merely play into Black's hands – but he still has to survive until the ending is reached, and this phase of the game will clearly not be easy for him!

Black also faces difficulties after the other recapture:

23...♗xe4

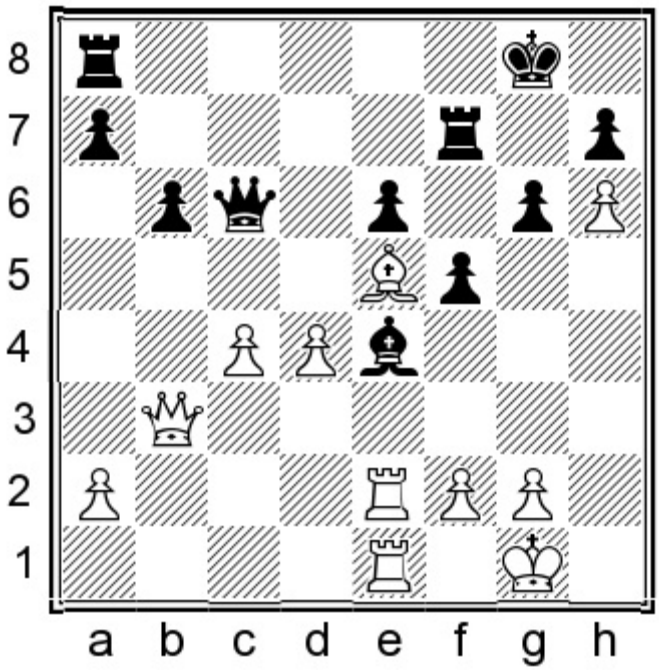
White can take pleasure in combining preparations for a central breakthrough with a banal attack on the e6-pawn.

24.♗e5

24.c4!? ♖c8 25.♗e5 g6 26.♕b3± looks quite good too.

24...g6 25.c4 ♕c6 26.♕b3!

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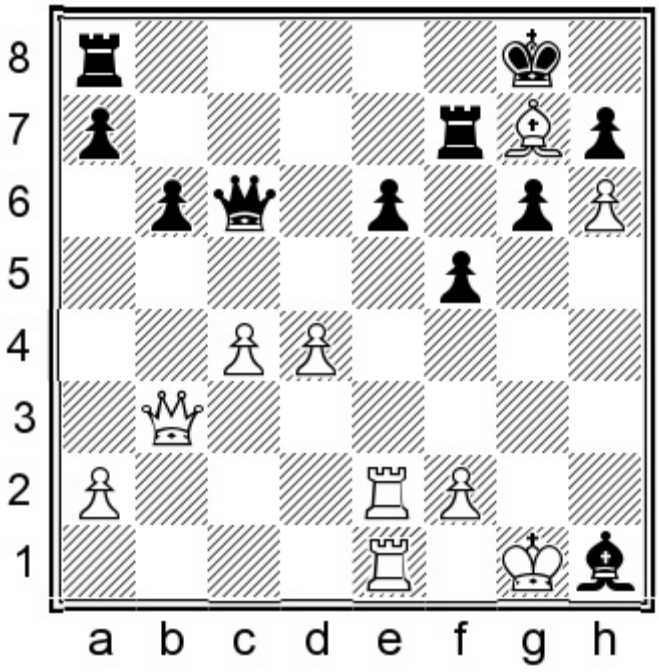
26...♗xg2

Unfortunately for Black this fails, but everything else leaves him passive and clearly worse.

27.♗g7! ♗h1

There is no relief in 27...♖xg7 28.♖xe6 ♕d7 29.hxg7 ♗e4 30.d5+–.

Nor does 27...♗e4 28.f3! help Black.



28.d5! exd5 29.♖e6 dxc4 30.♕h3 ♕d7 31.♕xh1 ♖c8 32.♗c3+–

White has an irresistible attack.

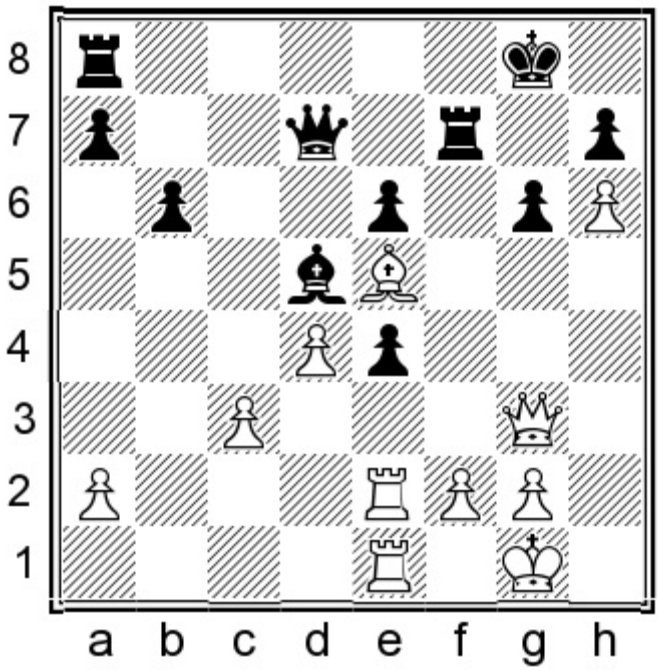
24.♗e5

Alex Baburin is trying to extract the maximum from the position. Otherwise he would have continued

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24.hxg7 ♖xg7 25.♕h4 ♖g6 26.♗e5 ♖f8 27.♖e3 with some initiative.

24...g6



25.c4!

White's chief idea hinges on this very move being possible. Everything could have turned out quite differently if Black had had a pawn on b5!

25...♗xc4

It's hard to say whether this move or 25...♗b7 preserves more possibilities of defence. In the latter case White would double rooks on the c-file and carry out a break in the centre with d4-d5 or c4-c5.

26.♖xe4

The rook is heading for g4 with the obvious intention of sacrificing itself on g6 at the appropriate moment.

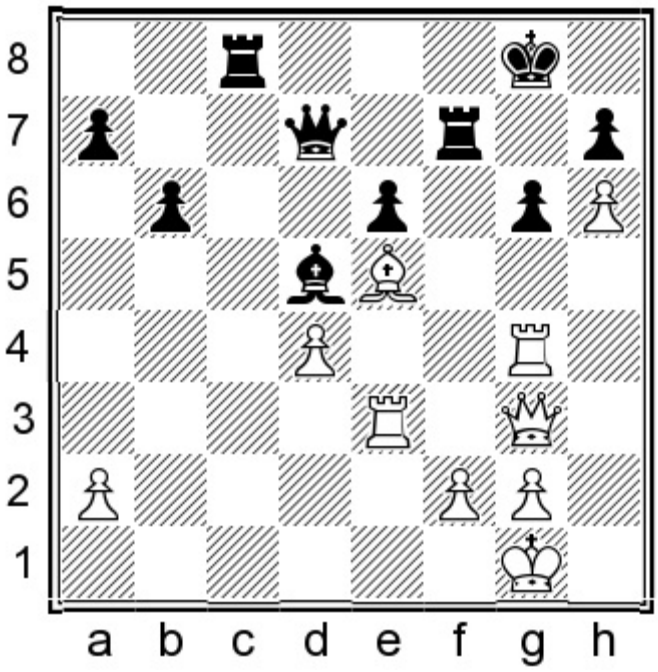
26...♗xa2

The temptation for Black to treat himself to an important pawn is difficult to resist, and this move can't actually be called an error – but excessive greed is so often punished!

Complex play results from:
26...♖c8!? 27.♖g4 ♗d5 28.♖e3!

All White's pieces are preparing to take part in hunting down the black monarch!

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28...♔f8!

28...b5? loses to 29.♖xg6† hxg6 30.♕xg6† ♔f8 31.♖g3.

29.♖c3!?

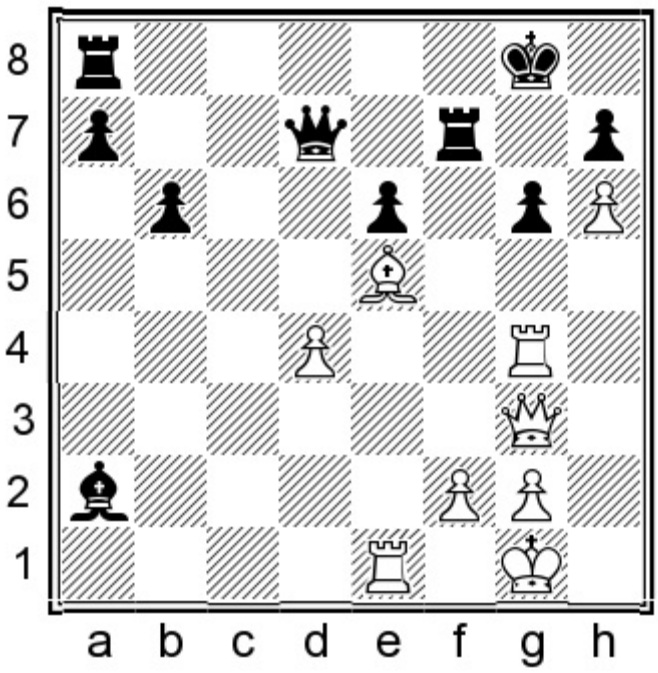
Just now, no sacrifices work: 29.♖xg6? hxg6 30.♕xg6 ♖h7

29...♖xc3 30.♕xc3 ♕c6 31.♕d2

The show is set to continue: White possesses the initiative as before, but Black retains quite good defensive chances.

27.♖g4

Now how do you think Black should continue?



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27...♗d5?

No! From this moment on, Black's hopes of a happy end to the game start melting before your very eyes! For better or worse, he just had to play:

27...♖c8!

Activating his rook and taking control of the c-file.

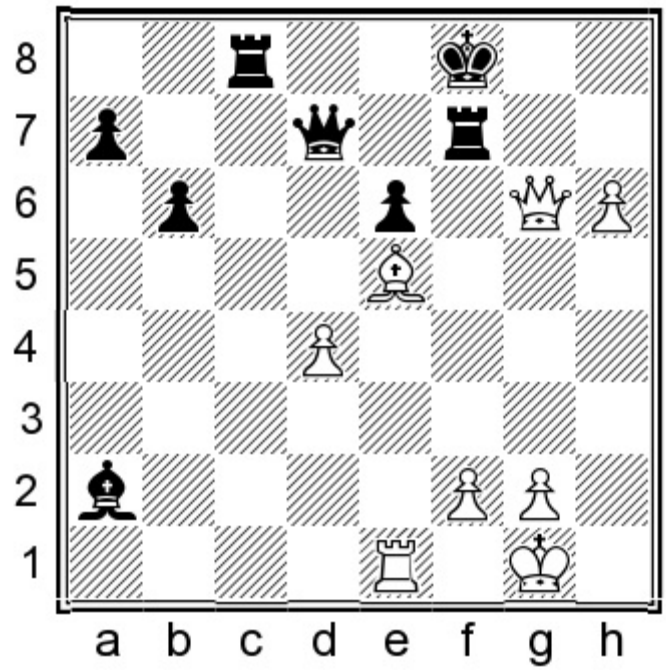
28.♖xg6†

This bold move is probably White's strongest.

After 28.♔h2 ♗d5 29.♖e3 ♔f8 30.♗d6† ♔e8 31.♕e5 ♕b7, the situation is far from simple.

The same also goes for the more energetic line 28.d5!? ♗xd5 29.♗b2 ♔f8! 30.♕e5 ♔e8 31.♗a3 ♔d8! 32.♖d4 ♖c2⇄. Incidentally in this variation White might try to break his opponent's resistance by 30.♗a3† ♔g8 31.♖xg6†, but here again, after 31...hxg6 32.♕xg6† ♖g7 33.hxg7 ♕xg7 34.♖xe6! ♕xg6 35.♖xg6† ♔f7 36.♖h6 ♗e4=, it all ends in mutual satisfaction!

28...hxg6 29.♕xg6† ♔f8



At first sight White's attack seems to have reached its natural conclusion, but he still has quite a few unused resources available:

30.♕g3!

Threatening highly unpleasant checks on d6 or a3.

30...♕c6!?

Black could also consider 30...♕b5 31.♗g7† ♔e8 32.h7 ♔d7 33.h8=♕ ♖xh8 34.♗xh8 ♕f5, after which White could only lay claim to a slight plus.

On the other hand, 30...♖h7? loses outright to 31.♗d6† ♔f7 32.♕f4† ♔g8 33.♖e3! ♖f7 34.♖g3† ♔h7 35.♕e4† ♖f5 36.♖g7† ♕xg7 37.hxg7†.

31.♗g7†

Unruly complications follow from: 31.♗d6† ♔e8 32.♕g8† ♔d7 33.♕xf7† ♔xd6 34.♕xa7 ♗d5 35.h7 ♕c7 36.♕a3† ♔d7 37.♕e3 ♖h8 38.♕h6⇄

31.♖e3? actually loses to 31...♕c1† 32.♔h2 ♔e7 33.♕h4† ♔d7 34.h7 ♗b1.

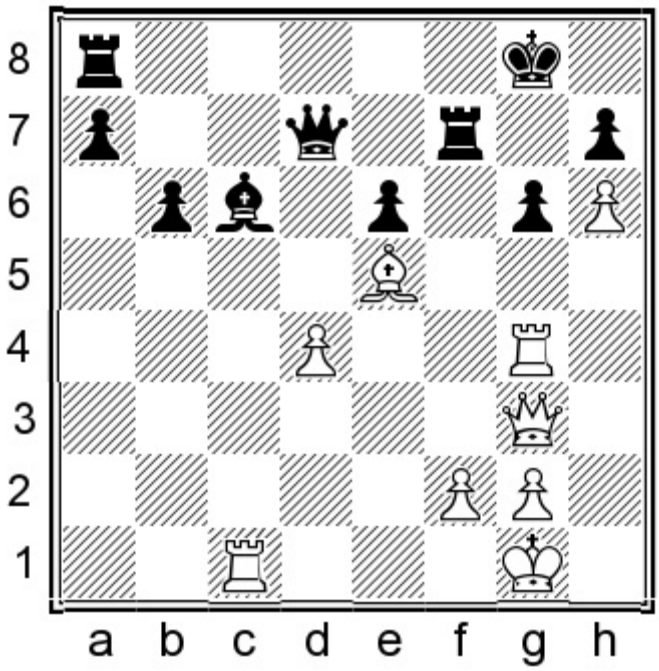
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31...♔e8 32.h7 ♔d7 33.h8=♕ ♖xh8 34.♗xh8 ♕c2!?∞
White still has his work cut out to acquire even a minimal plus.

Up to here, then, Fokin has managed to cope with the problems of the defence, but from now on he is forced to fight for a lost cause!

28.♖c1!
One more piece joins in the attack on the king.

28...♗c6□
It's hard to suggest a better continuation, as 28...♖c8? does nothing to help Black's defence: 29.♖xg6†! hxg6 30.♕xg6† ♔f8 31.♗d6†! ♕xd6 32.♖xc8† ♔e7 33.♕g5† ♖f6 34.h7+–



29.d5!?
A natural and strong move – on b2 White's bishop will undoubtedly be the main driving force of his attack. But in justice I would point out that White had an even stronger option:
29.♗d6!
Stopping the black king from escaping the danger zone.
29...♖c8
No better is: 29...♖f6 30.♖f4! ♖xf4 (or 30...♖f5 31.♖xf5 exf5 32.♖xc6! ♕xc6 33.♕b3†+–)
31.♕xf4 ♖e8 32.♕e5 ♖c8 33.d5! and White has a winning attack.
30.d5!
The time for this move has now come!
30...♗b7
30...exd5 31.♖xg6† hxg6 32.♕xg6† ♖g7 33.hxg7+–
31.♖xc8† ♗xc8 32.♖xg6† hxg6 33.♕xg6† ♖g7 34.hxg7 ♕f7 35.♕g5+–

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29...♕xd5

The only move. White wins too easily after 29...♗xd5 30.♖c7 ♕e8 31.♖xg6†+− or 29...exd5 30.♖xg6† hxg6 31.♕xg6† ♔f8 32.♗d6†+−.

30.♗b2

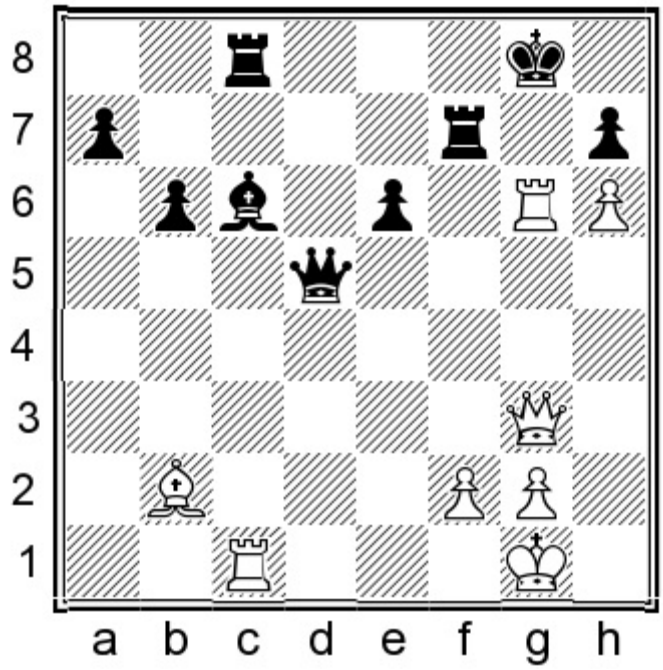
Similar possibilities arise from: 30.♖d4 ♕xg2†! (30...♕b5 loses more quickly to 31.♗b8! ♗d7 32.♖c8† ♗xc8 33.♖d8† ♖f8 34.♕c3) 31.♕xg2 ♗xg2 32.♔xg2 a5 33.♖dc4 and White should win.

30...♖c8?

Black's will to resist is obviously exhausted! I don't think he can save the game by 30...♕xg2†□ 31.♕xg2 ♗xg2 32.♔xg2 a5 33.♖gc4, but why give up without a struggle?

31.♖xg6†+−

The persistent Baburin has managed to get through to the black king after all!

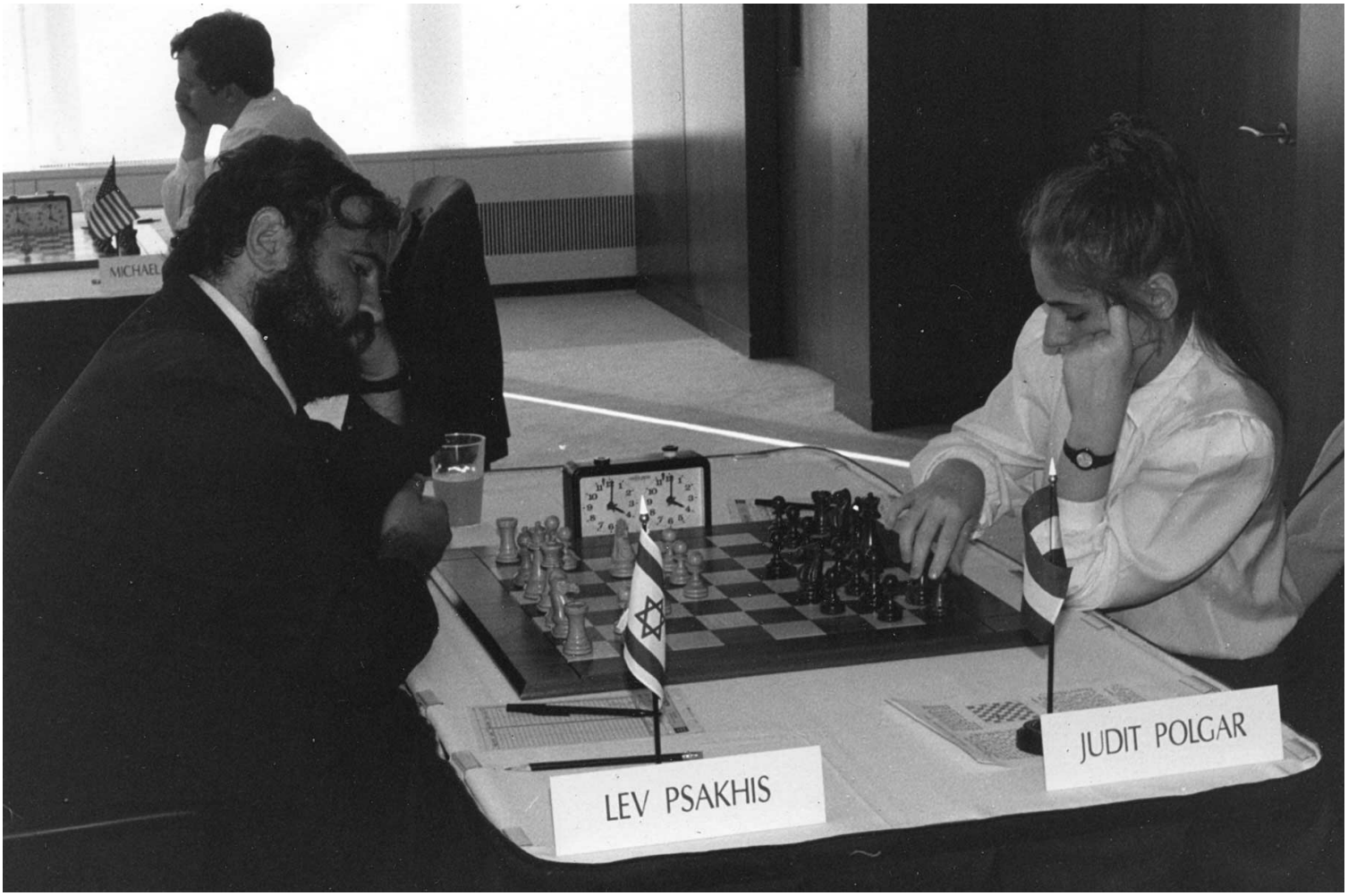


31...hxg6 32.♕xg6† ♔f8 33.♗a3† ♔e8 34.♕g8† ♔d7 35.♕xf7† ♔d8 36.♕e7#

1–0

A beautiful finish to a bright game! Alex Baburin mated his opponent in the finest style. When he got the chance he was quick to bring his rook into its attacking position. And try not to forget the move 29.d5!?. In any event, this game may serve as a splendid illustration of how to conduct the attack in such positions.

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New York 1992 - A game against a future pupil

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Chapter 5

IQP Positions: Versus the c-pawn

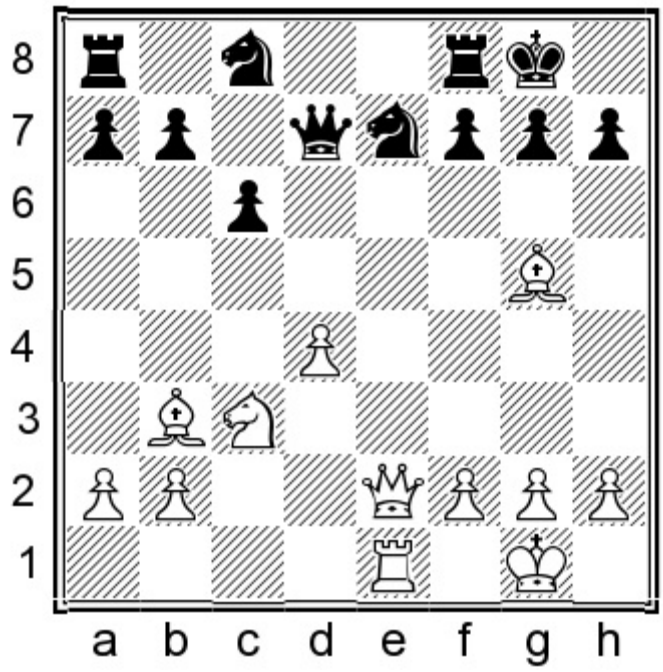


Aruba 1992 - Isolating two Queens - Judit and Susan Polgar

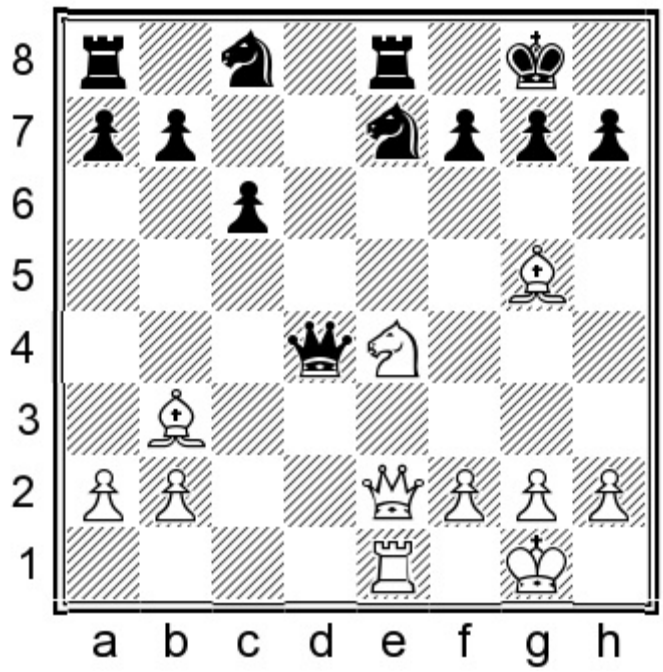
Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

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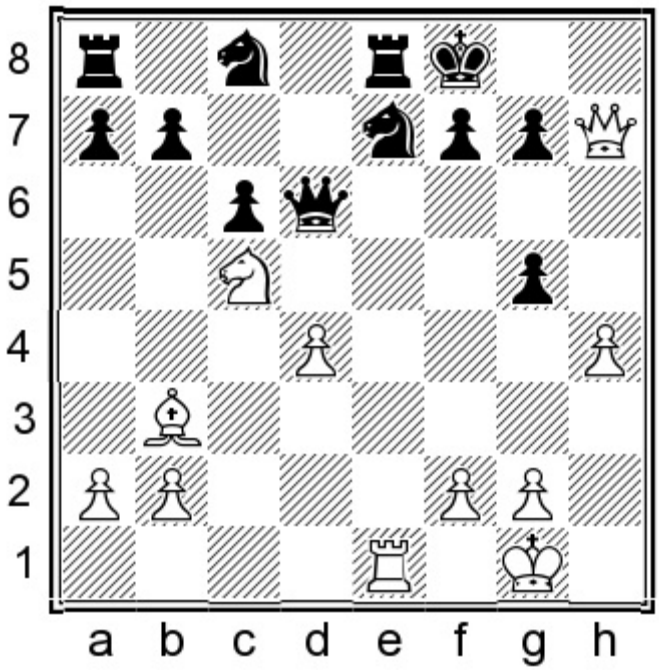


Look for the win in a subnote. What is it?
(see page 134)

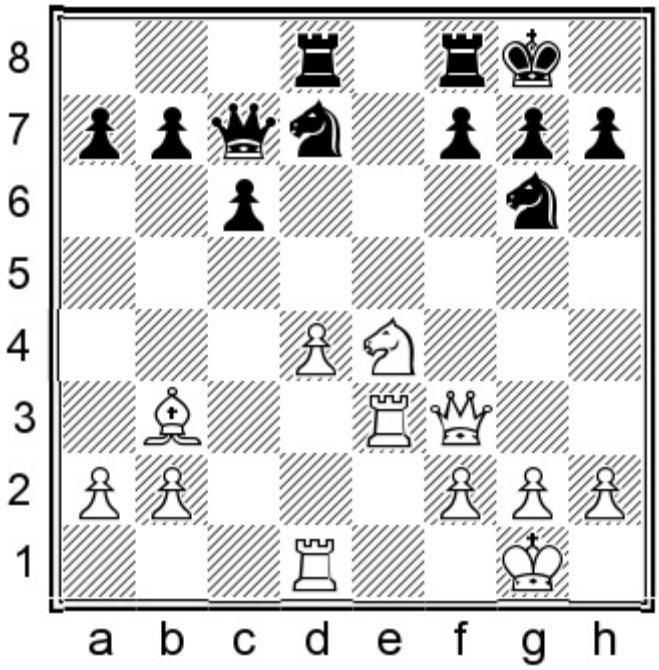


White has a winning attack, but how to execute it?
(see page 135)

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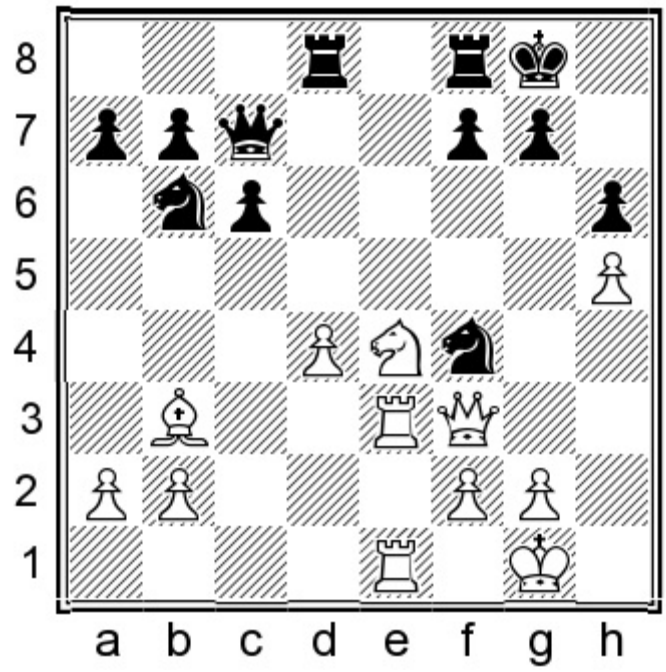


A neat combination
(see page 136)

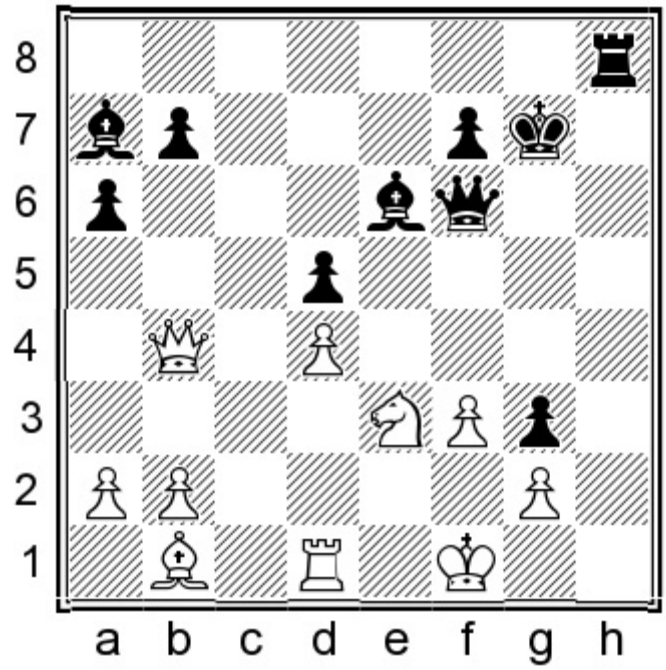


A positional decision
(see page 137)

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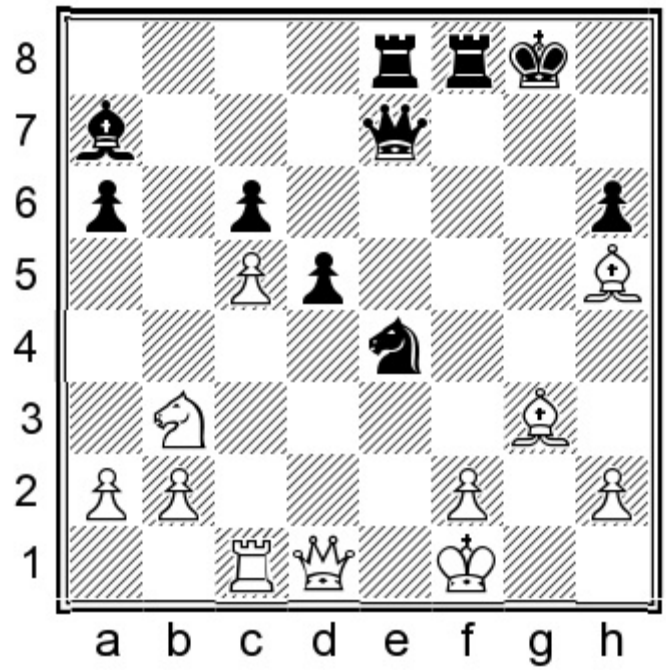


A nice combination
(see page 138)

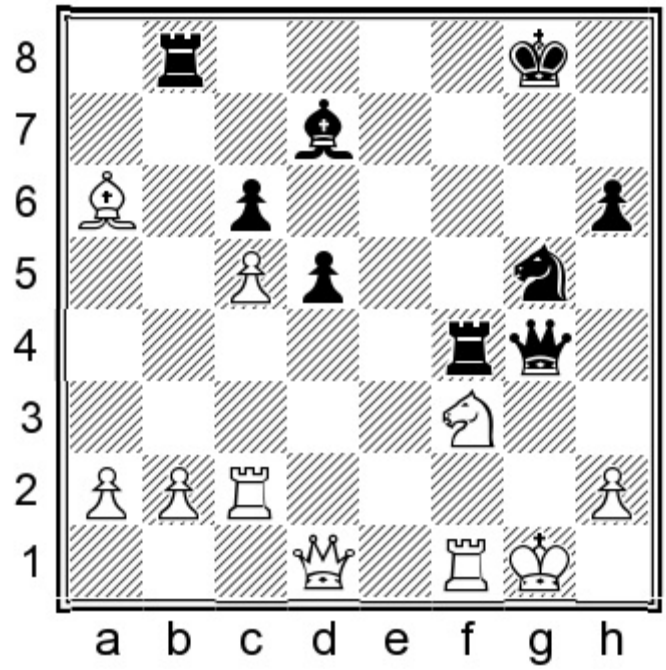


How to conclude the attack?
(see page 143)

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What refutation had I prepared?
(see page 150)



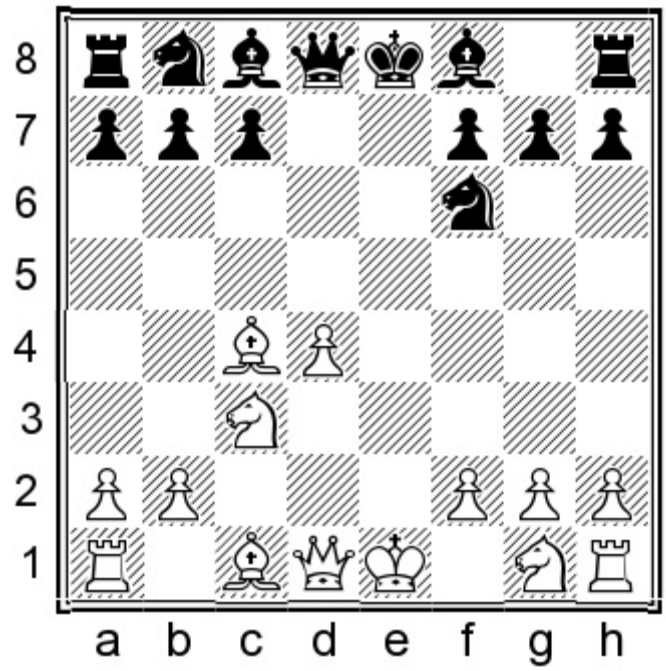
A clever trick
(see page 152)

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Rafael Vaganian – Robert Hübner

Tilburg 1983

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘c3 e5 4.e3 exd4 5.exd4 ♘f6 6.♗xc4

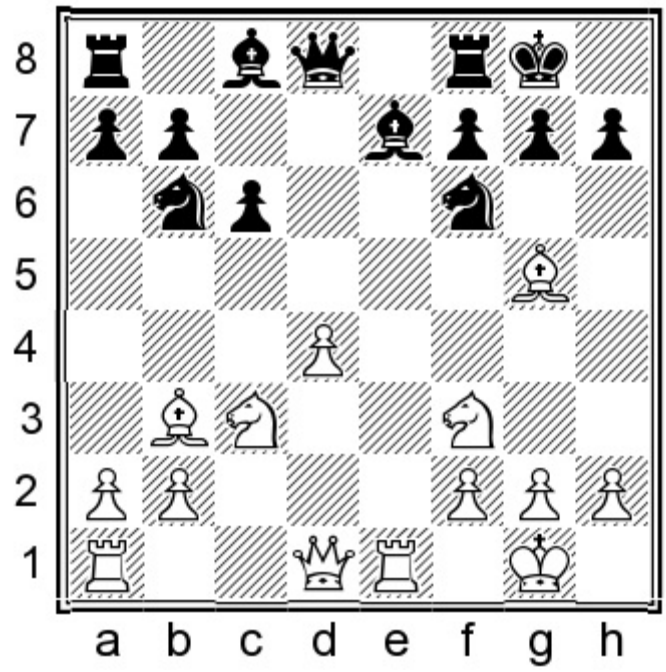


We have arrived once again at a position with an isolated queen's pawn, albeit in a somewhat different version from usual. Instead of the e6-pawn to which we are accustomed, we shall have to deal with a pawn on the c6-square, which of course radically alters the nature of the position. The chief difference lies in the greater degree of freedom acquired by both light-squared bishops. The white one, not confronted by a pawn on e6, undoubtedly poses a greater danger to Black; but on the other hand, Black has no problems with the quick development of his c8-bishop. So which player benefits more from this transformation? I rather feel that White does; his bishop will be able to play a most direct part in an attack.

6...♗e7 7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 ♘bd7 9.♖e1 ♘b6 10.♗b3 c6 11.♗g5

Another line is 11.♕e2 ♗b4. In Adams – Granda Zuniga, Merida 2008, (which reached this position from a Petroff Defence!) there followed 12.♗g5 h6 13.♗h4 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♘bd5 15.♕d2 ♕a5 16.♖ac1 ♘h5 17.h3 ♗e6, and the game was eventually drawn.

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11...♗g4

Doctor Hübner takes the first opportunity to develop his bishop, but the initiative remains in his opponent's hands.

Much more common is 11...♘bd5!?, but in that case too Black fails to secure complete equality. For example: 12.♘e5!? (White also has an excellent game after 12.♘xd5 cxd5 13.♘e5! ♗e6 14.♘d3! ♘e4 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.f3 ♘f6 17.♘c5 Browne – T. Petrosian, Las Palmas 1982) 12...♗e6 13.♖c1 ♖e8 14.h3 ♖c8 15.♖c2! ♘d7 This was Ki. Georgiev – Hübner, Batumi 1999, and now I think it was worth considering 16.♘xd7 ♗xg5 17.♘c5 ♘xc3 18.bxc3 ♗xb3 19.♖xe8† ♕xe8 20.axb3± with a small but lasting plus.

12.♕d3 ♗xf3?!

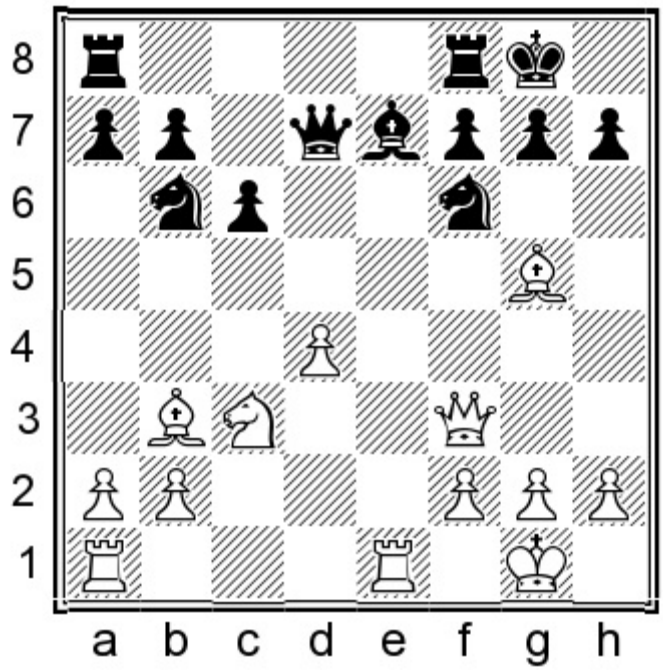
I definitely dislike this move but am unable to suggest anything substantially better. Perhaps it is just the case that White's position is more promising? For example, after 12...♗h5 13.♘e5 ♘bd5 14.h3, Black's pieces are very restricted in their actions.

13.♕xf3 ♘fd5

Black blockades the isolated pawn – what could be more natural? Yet in the present specific case this action involves a distinct risk.

Black could also try a different standard move:
13...♕d7!?

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14.♖ad1

White could also consider 14.♖e5 h6 15.♖ae1 ♗d8 16.♗c1!? ♕xd4 17.♖f5, with excellent compensation for the pawn.

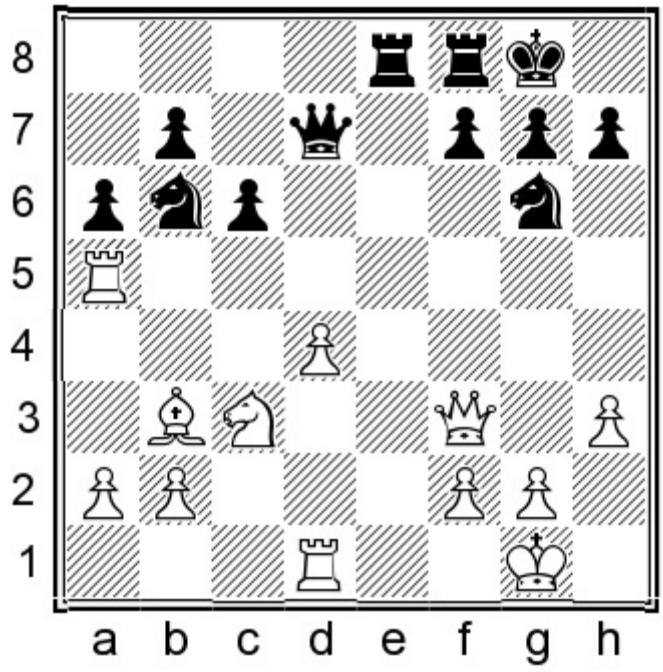
14...♖ae8 15.h3 ♘fd5

15...h6 16.♗f4±

16.♗xe7 ♘xe7

It's hard for Black to escape completely from his opponent's pressure. After 16...♖xe7 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.♗xd5 ♖xe1† 19.♖xe1 cxd5 20.♖e5± White can be optimistic about the future.

17.♖e5 ♘g6 18.♖a5 a6



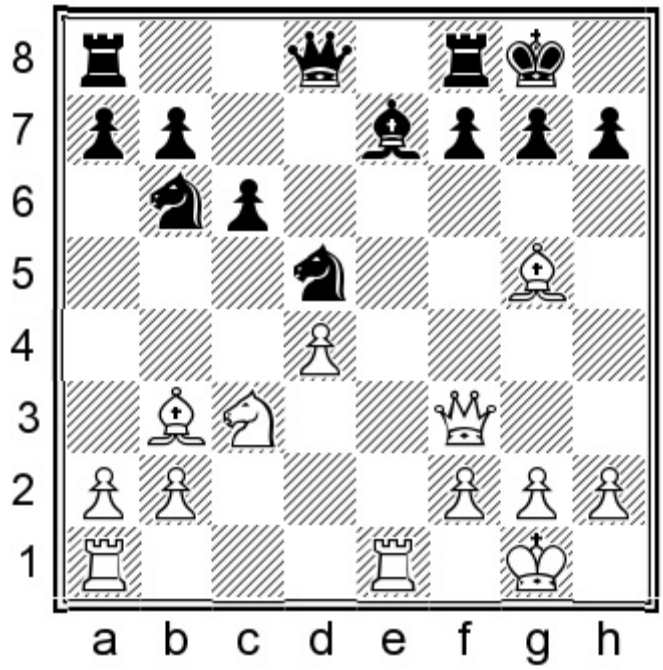
19.d5!

19.♖h5!?±

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19...c5 20.d6

By avoiding the awkward blockading line 20.♖xc5 ♕d6 21.♖a5 ♖e5, White has managed to keep a small plus.



14.♗xe7

An extremely interesting moment in the game! The move played is obvious and strong, and yet one question arises – about the possibility of taking on e7 with the rook. How do we assess the resulting position? Rafael Vaganian regarded that move as weak and probably losing, but I am now going to raise some objections (in collaboration with my silicon assistant, of course!). Vaganian's intuitive judgement (and we cannot do without intuition when working out large numbers of variations) was only partially at fault; the upshot of the following analysis is that Black (or indeed White!) should not lose. And yet in practice, I doubt whether the player on the black side would have succeeded in treading the narrow path to the draw! Well, then:

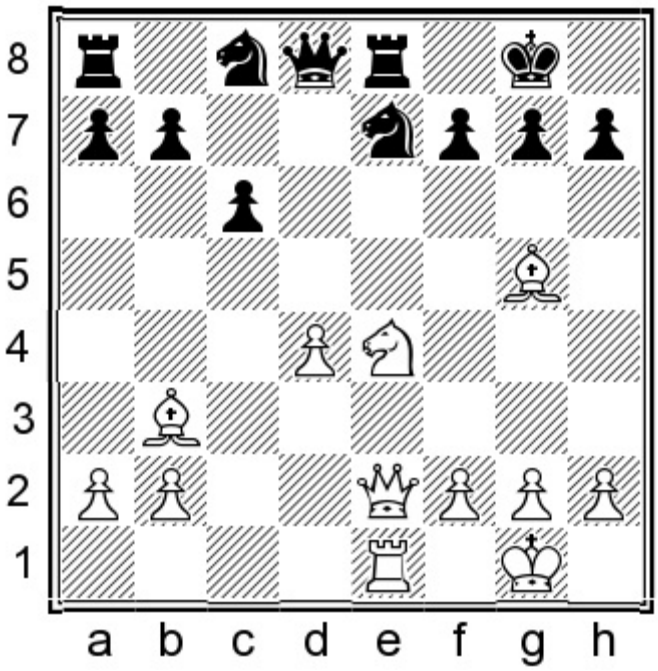
14.♖xe7 ♘xe7 15.♖e1 ♘bc8 16.♕e2 ♖e8!

Black starts to have difficulties. As Vaganian points out, 16...♕d7? 17.♗xe7 ♖e8? loses to 18.♗xf7†! ♔xf7 19.♕c4† ♔g6 20.♖e6†+−.

17.♘e4!

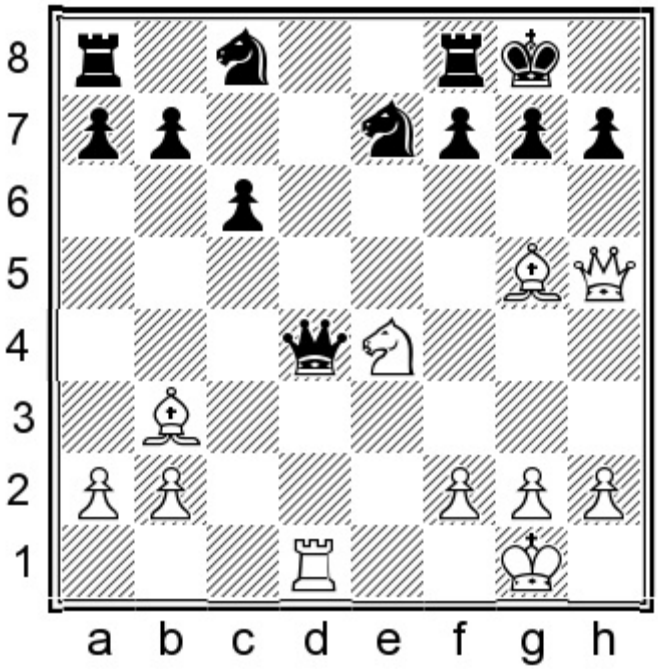
White brings up another piece for the attack – a move underestimated by the illustrious Armenian grandmaster! He considered 17.♗xf7†? ♔xf7 18.♕e6† ♔f8 19.♖e3 ♘d6! 20.♖f3† ♘ef5! 21.♖xf5† ♘xf5 22.♕xf5† ♔g8 23.♗e3 ♕xd4–+. Incidentally, in this variation it makes a crucial difference which knight Black places on f5. After the mistaken 20...♘df5? 21.g3! the situation is nowhere near so simple!

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Black now has an extremely difficult choice to make. White has numerous threats, the f7-square can easily be attacked, and the pin on the g5-d8 diagonal is most unpleasant. There are plenty of moves available to Black, but the question is how many of them lose!

a) 17...♕xd4? We start with one of the weakest choices, which meets with an instant refutation: 18.♕h5! ♖f8 19.♖d1

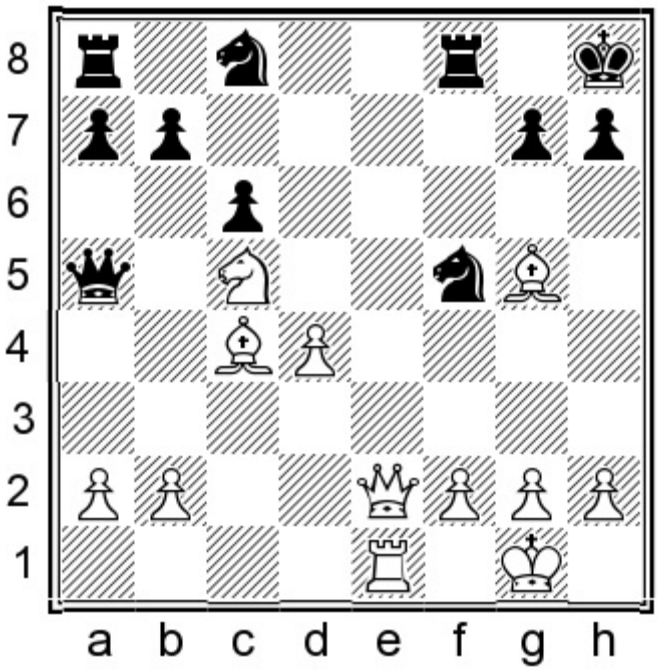


19...♕b6 (the poor queen now has to depart from the centre into utterly ignominious exile, seeing that 19...♕xe4 20.♕xf7†! doesn't take much analysing) 20.♘f6†! gxf6 21.♗xf6+– and there won't be long to wait before Black is mated!

b) 17...♕a5 18.♘c5 ♔h8 This move looks a little strange, but White was threatening to take on f7, even

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if it meant a sacrifice. 19.♗xf7 ♖f8 20.♗c4!? ♘f5



21.♗d2 ♕b6 22.♘d7 ♕xd4 23.♘xf8 ♘cd6! Now either 24.♘xh7!? ♕xc4 25.♕h5 or 24.♗b3 ♖xf8 25.♗c3 promises White a virtually won position. In the latter case his two bishops are controlling the whole board!

c) 17...♕d7 18.♘c5 ♕f5

There may be an improvement in 18...♕d6 19.♘xb7 ♕g6 20.♗f4±, but even so, Black's position is just too forlorn!

19.h4! h6 20.♗c2!

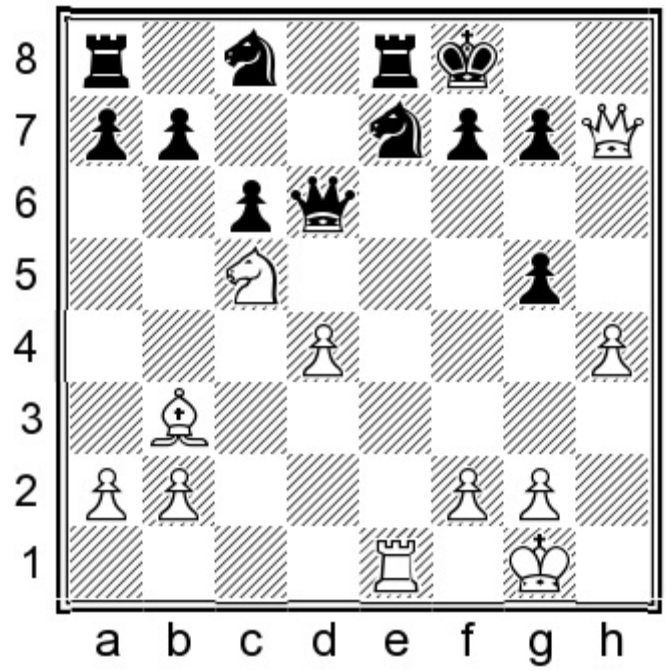
The trouble for White is that he can only make one move at once! He would also have a splendid position after 20.g4 ♕g6 21.h5! ♕xg5 22.♗xf7† ♔h8 23.♗xe8 ♘d6 24.♘e6±.

20...♕d5 21.♕d3 ♔f8 22.♗b3

White totally dominates the board!

22...♕d6 23.♕h7! hxg5

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24.♖e6!

A neat combination.

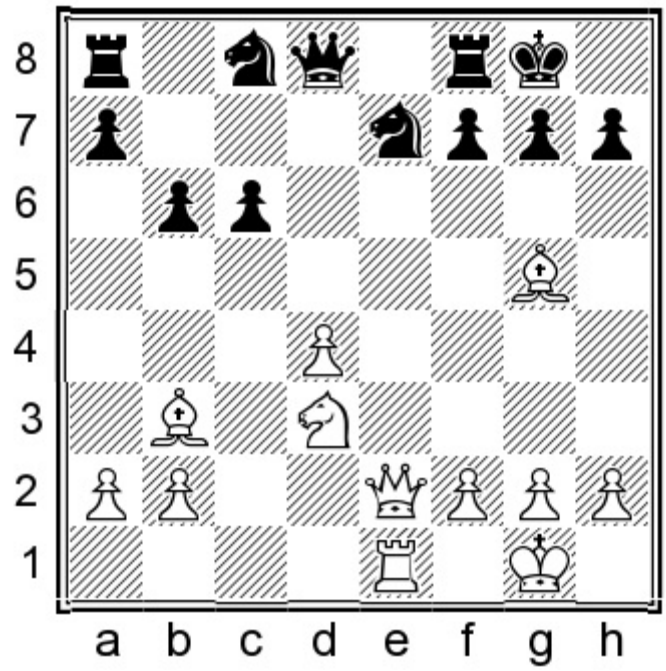
24...fxe6 25.♘xe6† ♕xe6 26.♗xe6+–

And Black is crushed.

d) 17...♖f8 18.♘c5

This is strong enough, although in Black's place I would also have serious worries about 18.♘g3, aiming to bring the knight to h5.

18...b6 19.♘d3!



19...a5!

The only move that enables Black to prolong his resistance.

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Black loses with 19...♖e8? 20.♗xf7† ♔xf7 21.♕e6† ♔f8 22.♘e5 ♘d6 23.♘d7† ♕xd7 24.♕xd7+–.

The result is the same after 19...♕xd4 20.♘e5 ♕c5 21.♖c1!, and now if, for example, Black plays 21...♕b5 and White wants to avoid a host of unnecessary variations, he simply plays 22.♗c4 ♕a5 23.♖d1+– with an irresistible attack.

20.♗xe7 ♘xe7 21.♕xe7 a4 22.♗c2 ♕xd4 23.♖e4 ♕d5 24.a3

White has a fairly obvious plus, though it would be a long and tedious job to exploit it.

e) 17...♘b6!

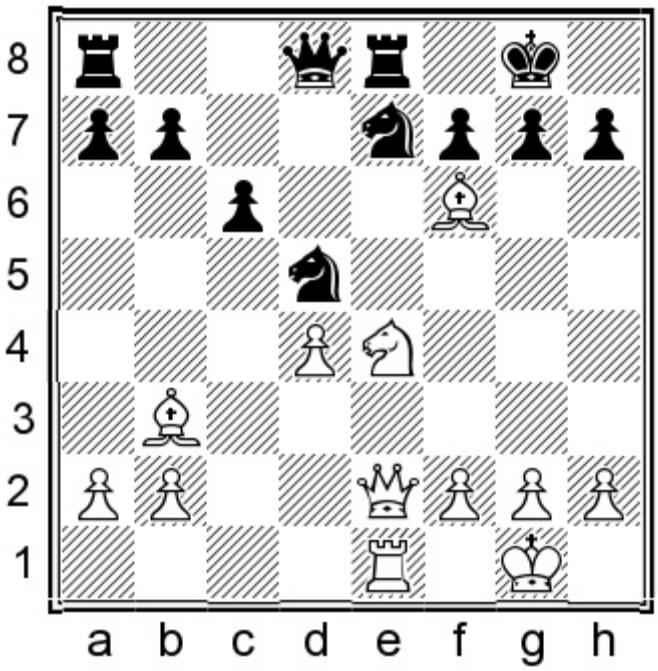
Without any doubt the strongest move, but by no means a simple one to find!

18.♗f6!?

A curious idea.

White can also consider: 18.♘c5 ♘bd5 19.♗xd5 ♕xd5 (better than 19...cxd5 20.♗xe7 ♕c7 21.g3 b6 22.♘d3 ♕d7 23.♘f4±) 20.♗xe7 ♕xd4 21.♘xb7!? ♖ab8 22.♘d6 ♖xb2 23.♕f1 ♖eb8 24.♘f5 ♕c3∞ with chances for both sides.

18...♘bd5



19.♕g4

In analysis I failed to extract an advantage from 19.♗xe7 ♖xe7 20.♗xd5 cxd5 21.♘f6† ♔f8 22.♘xh7† ♔e8 23.♕b5† ♕d7 24.♖xe7† ♔xe7 25.♕b4† ♔d8 26.♕f8† ♕e8 27.♕d6†. Black can then choose between the drawing line 27...♕d7!? and the combative 27...♔c8!?.

19...g6 20.♕f3 ♕a5 21.♖d1±

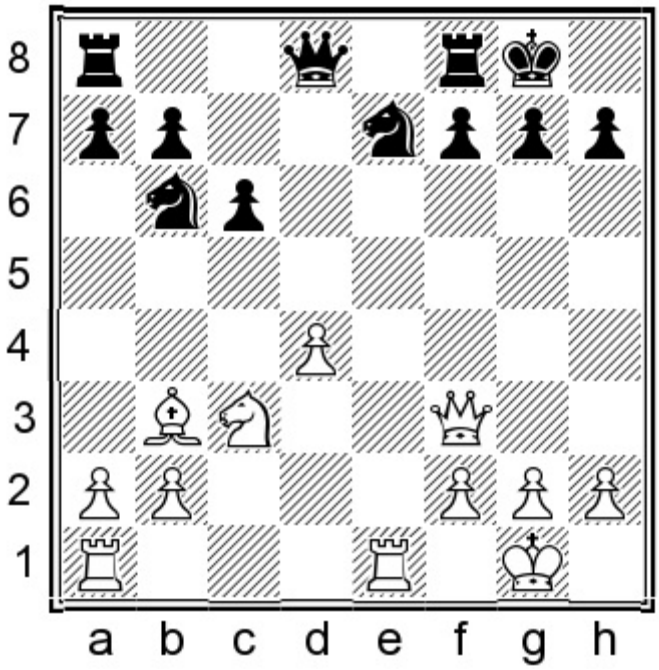
White retains good compensation for the exchange.

Given that this last variation is the only line in which Black achieves approximate equality, and considering how many hazards he encountered along the way, I am convinced that 14.♖xe7 would have been an excellent practical chance. But Vaganian, though anything but a chess coward, took a more

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prosaic option! He evidently liked the position, and there was no obvious reason for calculating all these variations – some of which are very difficult – and weighing up the nuances. Why should he go after two birds in the bush when he had such a splendid one in the hand?

14...♘xe7



15.♖e5!

White also has a minimal edge after the simple 15.♖ad1!?±.

15...♘g6 16.♖e4 ♘d7 17.♖d1± ♕a5

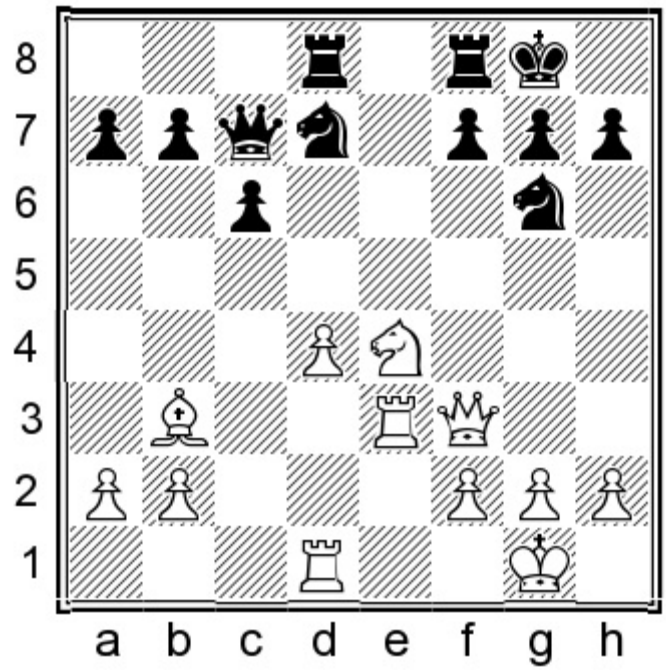
Interestingly, it is only this move that breaks fresh ground – speaking from the present-day standpoint. In Stella – R. Martinez, Bologna di Pasqua 2009, the continuation was: 17...♘f6!? 18.♖e3 ♕d7 19.♘e4 (White would also have a small plus after 19.d5!) 19...♘xe4 20.♖xe4 ♖fe8 21.♖de1 ♖xe4 22.♖xe4 ♖d8 23.h4±

18.♖e3 ♖ad8

Black fails to equalize with 18...♘f6; replying 19.d5 gives White an unpleasant initiative.

19.♘e4! ♕c7

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20.h4!

An excellent move. Vaganian has no intention of wasting time on the prophylactic 20.g3!?.

Another interesting possibility involved the idea of 20.♕h5! ♘f4 21.♕f5, when Black's position remains very passive.

20...h6

Probably best!

Playing the black side would be difficult after 20...♘b6 21.h5 ♘f4 22.h6 ♘bd5 23.hxg7 ♔xg7 24.♖ee1±.

20...♘f4 21.♕g3!? lands Black in an annoying pin.

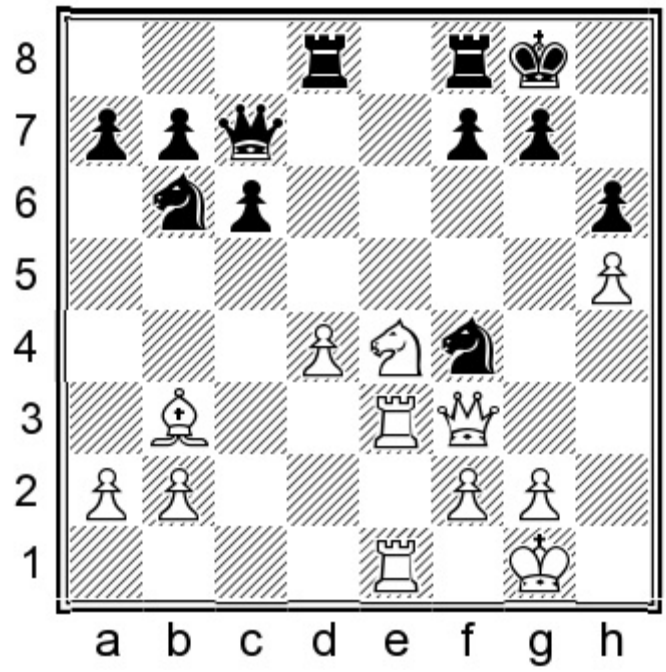
As for 20...♘xh4?, it loses outright: 21.♕h5 ♘g6 22.♖h3 ♖fe8 (22...h6? 23.♕xg6+–) 23.♕xh7† ♔f8 24.♖f3+–

21.♕g4

White's pressure keeps mounting. Now he is simply threatening to capture on g6 – and perhaps it is thanks to the very simplicity of the threat that finding an antidote is so very far from simple!

However, I would point out that as well as this move he had at least one very good alternative in 21.♖de1!, taking the whole of the centre under control. Then, for example: 21...♘b6 22.h5 ♘f4

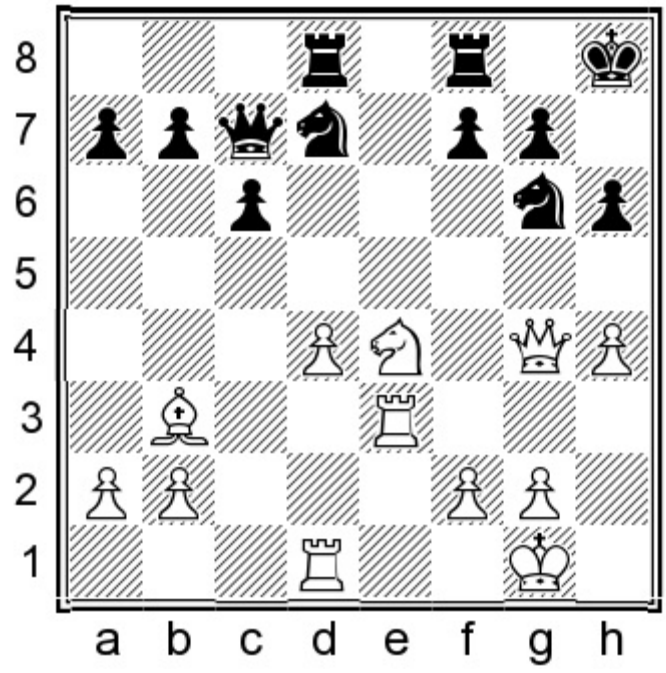
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23.♘f6†! gxf6 24.♕g4† ♔h8 25.♕f5 ♘bd5 26.♗c2+–

21...♔h8

After 21...♘f4 White does best to play: 22.♖f3! ♘d5 23.♖g3 g6 24.h5 ♘7b6 (24...♕f4 25.hxg6 ♕xg4 26.gxf7† ♔xf7 27.♖xg4±) 25.♘f6†!? (25.♖f3!?, severely restricting Black's choice of plans, may well be even stronger) 25...♔g7 26.♘xd5 ♘xd5 27.hxg6 f5 28.♕f3±



22.h5

White could win a pawn with 22.♗xf7 ♖xf7 23.♕xg6 ♘f8, but frankly this would not guarantee victory, in view of the genuine weakness of the d4-pawn!

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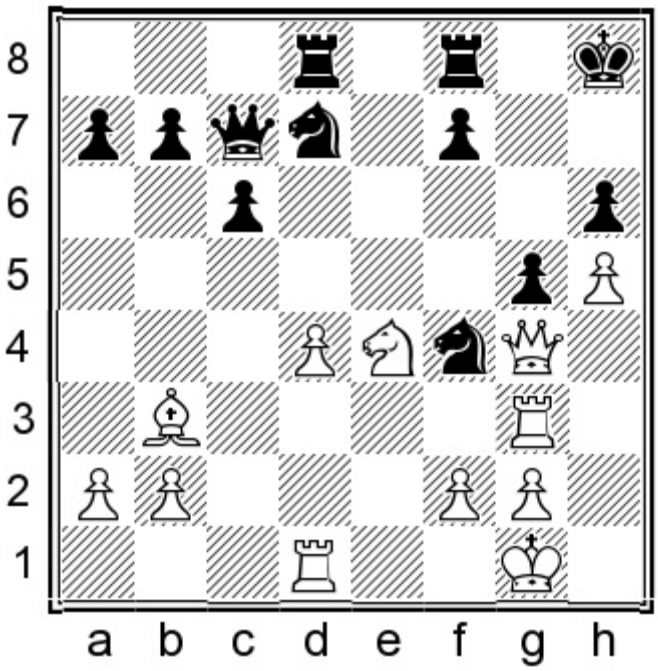
A move more deserving of attention was 22.♖g3!?± with good chances of reaching the desired goal.

22...♘f4!

Quite definitely the strongest move. After an opening that was not the most successful, Doctor Hübner has been conducting a stubborn defence, constantly setting his opponent new problems. Unfortunately this phase of the game was not to last much longer.

Black's position would be unenviable after 22...♕f4? 23.♕xf4 ♘xf4 24.♘d6!± or 22...f5 23.♕xg6 fxe4 24.♕xe4 ♘f6 25.♕g6±.

23.♖g3 g5



24.hxg6 fxg6 25.♖e1!±

An excellent move! White makes use of the superior mobility and co-ordination of his pieces, and challenges his opponent to a fight for the e-file. For this, however, Black's resources are simply insufficient.

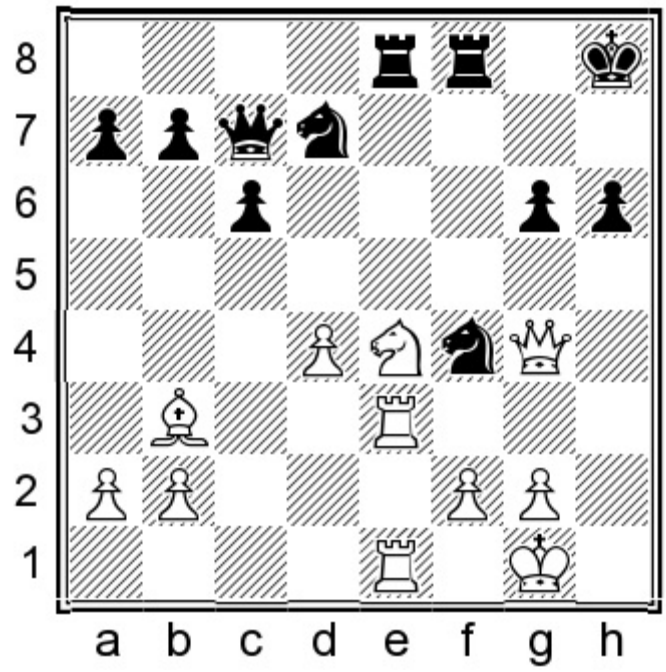
25...♖de8

White's initiative is quite impossible to resist in the event of 25...♕a5 26.♖ee3 ♕f5 27.♕h4 ♕h5 28.♕xh5 gxh5 29.♘d6+–.

On the other hand, 25...♘f6! 26.♘xf6 ♖xf6 27.♕h4 ♕g7 28.♖ge3 ♖xd4 29.♖e8† ♖f8 30.♕g3 would leave Black with chances of an acceptable outcome, although White certainly keeps a strong initiative.

26.♖ge3

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26...♘b6?

The decisive mistake. Black didn't have much choice; it was simply imperative to continue 26...♔g7! 27.♗c2±. He had to fight for control of the c5-square right to the end!

27.♘c5 ♕c8?

Black's will to resist has been sapped, but unfortunately for him, the natural continuation 27...♖xe3 28.fxe3 ♕e7 29.♕g3 ♘fd5 30.♕xg6+– similarly allows White to win material while retaining all the assets of his position.

28.♕xf4!

1–0

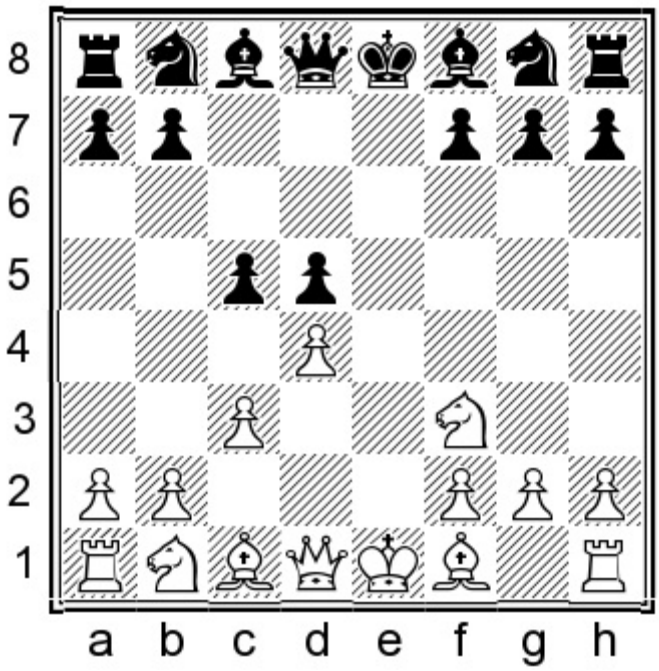
In this game Vaganian succeeded in demonstrating the defects of Black's pawn structure. All White's pieces – collectively as well as individually – were patently more active than those of his opponent, and his bishop was able to oversee the entire board. Throughout the game only two results were ever possible, and it is no surprise that Doctor Hübner finally succumbed to the strain.

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Antonio Torrecillas Martinez – Lev Psakhis

Andorra 2001

1.e4 c5 2.c3 e6 3.d4 d5 4.exd5 exd5 5.♘f3



5...a6

Quite a rare move, and rather a risky one. Black had a wide choice of continuations such as 5...♘c6 and 5...♘f6, and incidentally I also like the simple capture on d4. Of course, in all these lines Black has difficulty playing for a win – there isn't a single weakness in White's camp, and his pieces are harmoniously placed. It just can't be helped – when playing to win with Black, a certain amount of risk has to be shouldered!

6.dxc5 ♗xc5 7.♗e2

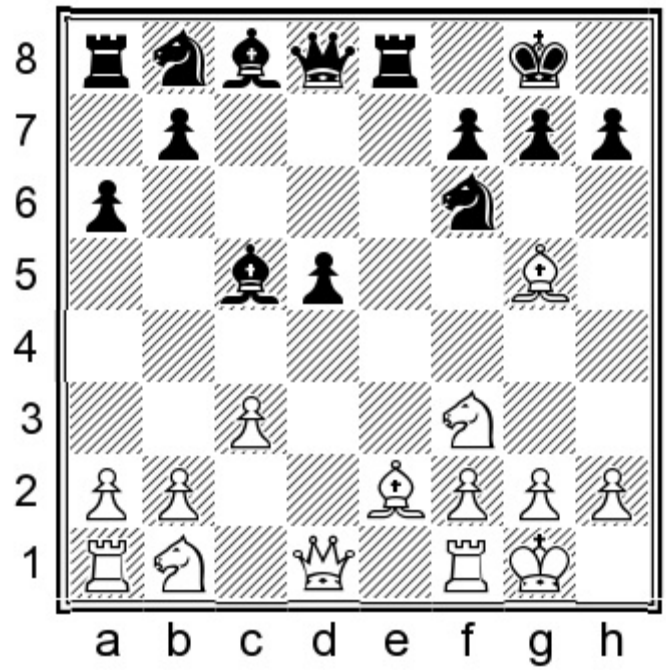
A line that looks more natural is 7.♘bd2 ♘c6 8.♘b3 ♗a7 9.♗g5 ♘ge7 10.♕d2, with a slight advantage for White, Sermek – Jankovic, Pula 1999. The development of the light-squared bishop can wait a while. On the other hand, the move in the game cannot in any way be considered a mistake.

7...♘f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗g5 ♖e8

This was a novelty; it involves a pawn sacrifice with completely unclear consequences. Whether it's worth playing this way is a matter of taste.

A safer alternative was 9...♗e6 10.♘bd2 ♘bd7. There could follow, for example, 11.♘b3 ♗a7 12.♘fd4 ♘e4 13.♗e3 ♕c7, with a perfectly reasonable game.

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10.♘bd2?!

Cowardice is probably the chief fault to which chess players (and not *only* chess players) are prone! Had I been playing White myself, I could hardly have resisted a continuation such as:

10.♗xf6!? ♕xf6 11.♕xd5 ♖xe2!?

Black takes up an active position with his rook before finishing the development of his other pieces, but there is nothing else for it. Both 11...♗b6 12.♗d3 ♘c6 13.♘bd2 and 11...♗a7 12.♗d3 ♘c6 13.♘bd2 ♗e6 14.♕e4 g6 would promise White a stable advantage.

12.♕xc5 ♘d7

12...♗g4 is most simply met by 13.♘bd2, though White could also consider 13.♕c4!? ♕e6 14.♕xe6 fxe6 15.♘bd2 with a minimal edge.

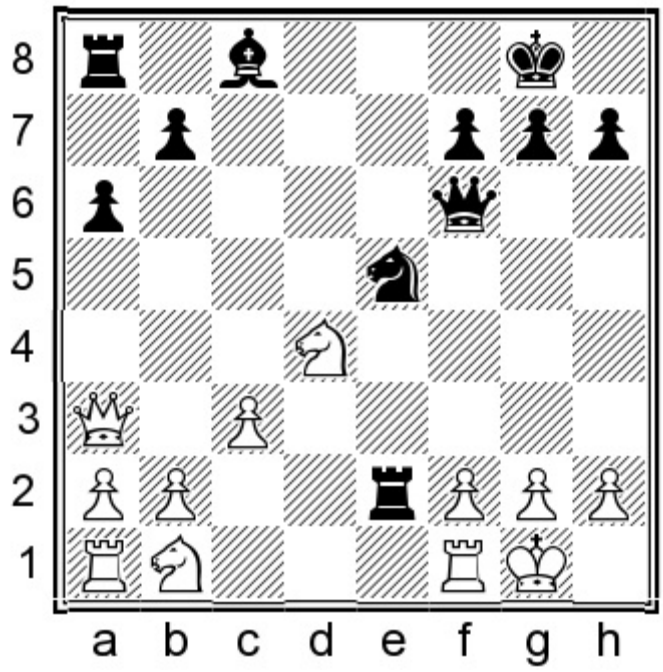
13.♕a3

13.♕b4!? deserves attention.

13...♘e5 14.♘d4

After 14.♘bd2 ♘d3 Black's pieces are very active.

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14...♗h3!?

Pretty and surprising! But then, if we consider the situation of the white queen, pining away on the other edge of the board for a period of several moves, the possibility of Black's attack isn't as astonishing as all that!

15.gxh3

In the case of 15.♘xe2 ♘f3† 16.♔h1 ♘h4, Black is guaranteed at least a draw.

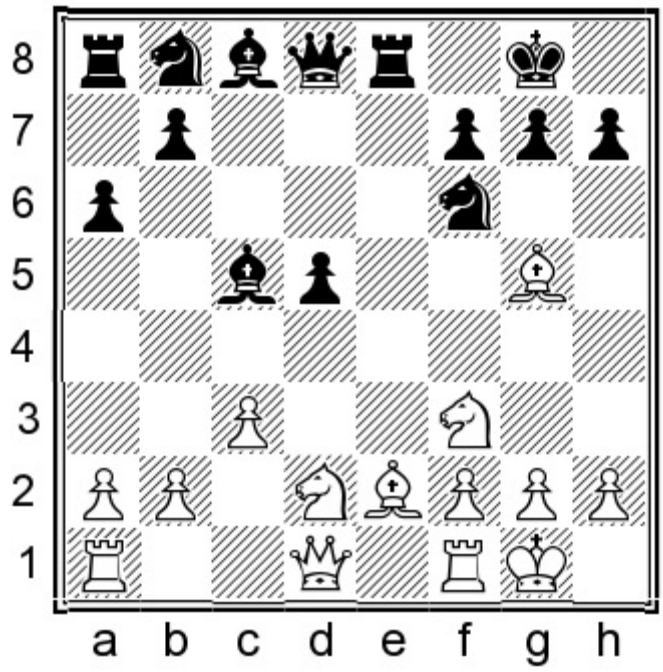
After 15.♕b3 ♗xg2 16.♔xg2 ♕g6† 17.♔h1 ♕e4† 18.f3 ♖xh2† 19.♔xh2 ♕h4† 20.♔g2 ♕g5†, it ends in perpetual check, because 21.♔f2 ♖e8! stops the king escaping.

15...♕g6† 16.♔h1 ♖d8⇄

The position is most unclear.

I would be misleading you if I claimed to have worked out all these variations at the time; even now I am not sure they are entirely correct. I did feel, however, that Black would obtain some kind of compensation for the pawn.

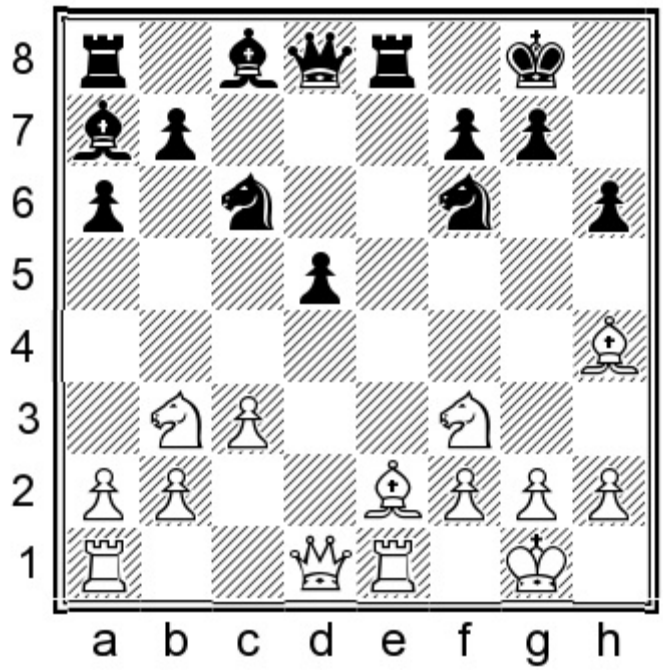
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10...h6 11.♗h4 ♘c6 12.♘b3 ♗a7

In a game a few years later, I varied with 12...♗b6!? and obtained an attractive position after 13.♕d3 g5 14.♗g3 ♘e4 15.♘fd4 ♕f6 16.♖ad1 ♗d7 Perunovic – Psakhis, Internet (rapid) 2006.

13.♖e1



13...g5!

A typical move in such positions. A powerful knight on e4 is absolutely worth the minimal weakening of the kingside pawn structure.

14.♗g3 ♘e4 15.♘fd2

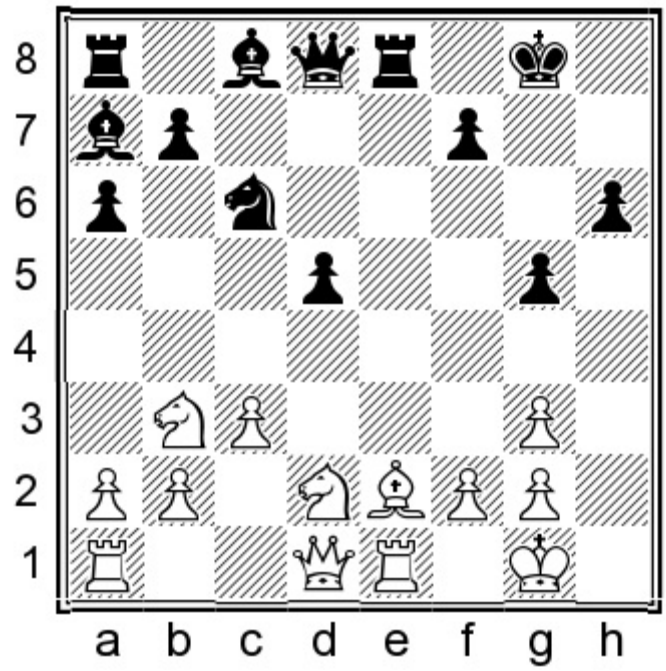
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I am not very keen on this move, although Black's position is already somewhat preferable.

White's game would not be easy to play after 15.♗d3 f5 16.c4 ♗e6 17.cxd5 ♗xd5, when the black pieces are clearly more active.

Instead it was worth playing 15.♘fd4!?, attempting to reduce the pressure from the bishop on a7, but Black still has a pleasant position after either 15...♕f6 or 15...♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♕d6 17.♕d2 ♗d7.

15...♘xg3 16.hxg3



16...g4!

I like this move. That doesn't sound entirely modest, but I want to be honest! White's pawn on f2 becomes weak and can easily be attacked by Black's mobile pieces. Nor should the threat of ...h5-h4 be underestimated. It's obvious at any rate that supreme mastery of defence will be required of White.

It would also be interesting to try 16...♕b6 17.♖f1 ♕c7, attacking the white pawns at once.

17.♗d3 ♖xe1† 18.♕xe1 h5

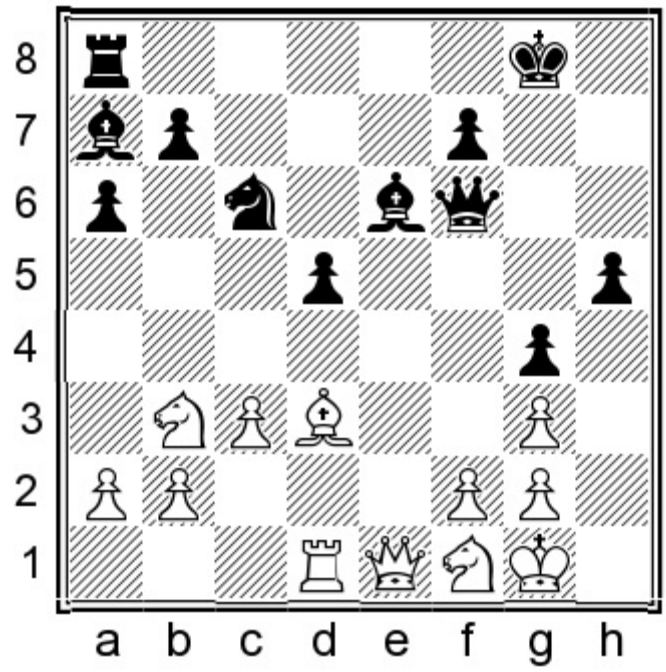
18...♗d7!? is quite good too, but I saw no reason to postpone the plan of advancing the h-pawn.

19.♘f1

19.♖d1 ♗e6 is liable to just transpose to the game, as White seems to have nothing better than 20.♘f1.

19...♗e6 20.♖d1 ♕f6

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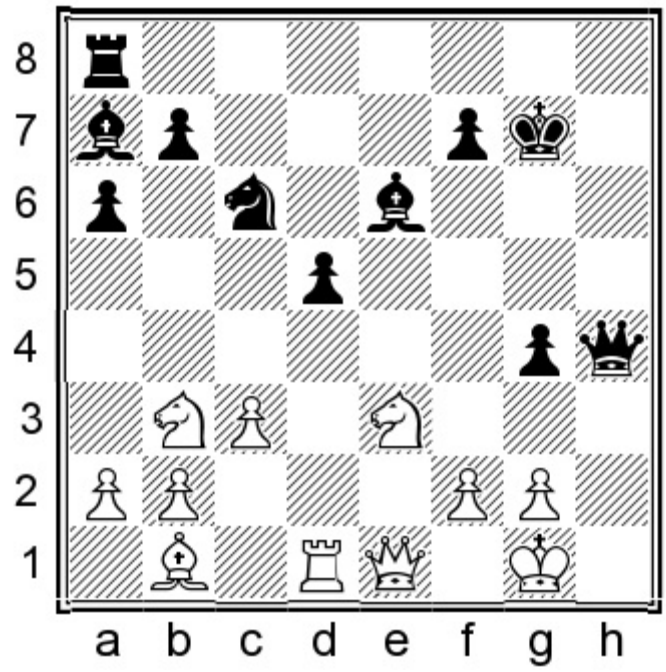
21.♘e3 ♔g7 22.♗b1

Black's advantage is only too obvious, and White's defence becomes more and more difficult.

22...h4!

On 22...♖h8 White should probably continue simply with 23.♕d2∓, seeing that 23.♘xd5?! ♗xd5 24.♖xd5 meets with the unpleasant retort 24...♖e8 25.♕d2 ♕xf2† 26.♕xf2 ♖e1† 27.♔h2 ♗xf2–+, and White's chances of survival in the ensuing endgame are minimal.

23.gxh4 ♕xh4



24.♘d4

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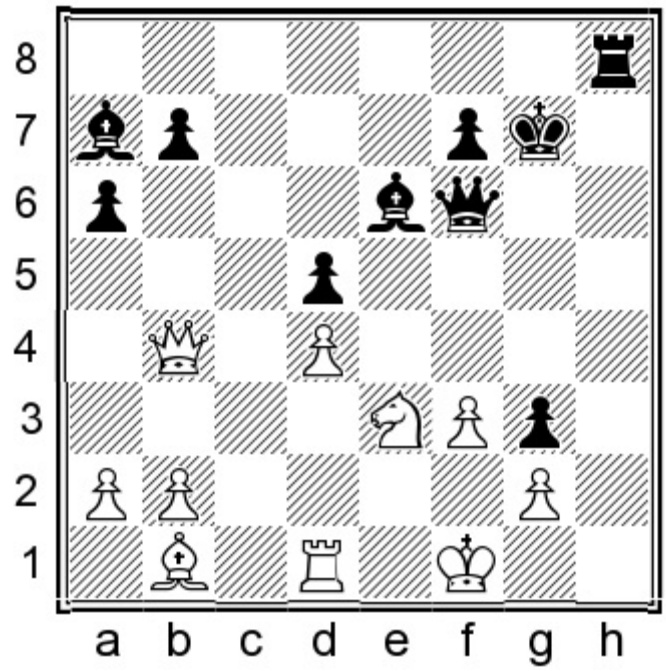
White attempts to shut out the murderous bishop, even if only temporarily. His hopes are not destined to be fulfilled, but then what else can be suggested for him?

After 24.g3 Black gladly utilizes the weakness of the f3-square: 24...♕h5 25.♘g2 ♘e5 26.♘d2 ♖h8! (26...♘f3† 27.♘xf3 gxf3 28.♘f4! ♕g5 29.♖d4! ♗xd4 30.cxd4∓ allows White to prolong his resistance) 27.♘h4 ♖h6 28.♗f5 (White would lose at once with 28.♘f5†? ♗xf5 29.♕xe5† ♔f8–+) 28...♘c6 29.♘f1 ♗xf5 30.♖xd5 ♖f6 and possessing an extra piece, Black wins without any trouble.

24...♘xd4 25.cxd4 ♖h8 26.♔f1 ♕f6! 27.♕d2

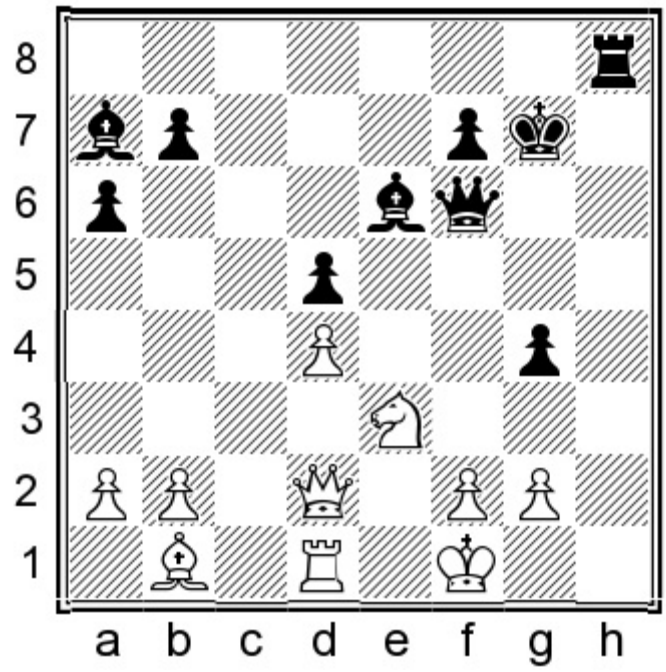
White needs to think about two things – defending his weak d4-pawn and rescuing his king – and he can't cope with both tasks at once!

Thus for example on 27.♕b4 Black has: 27...g3! 28.f3



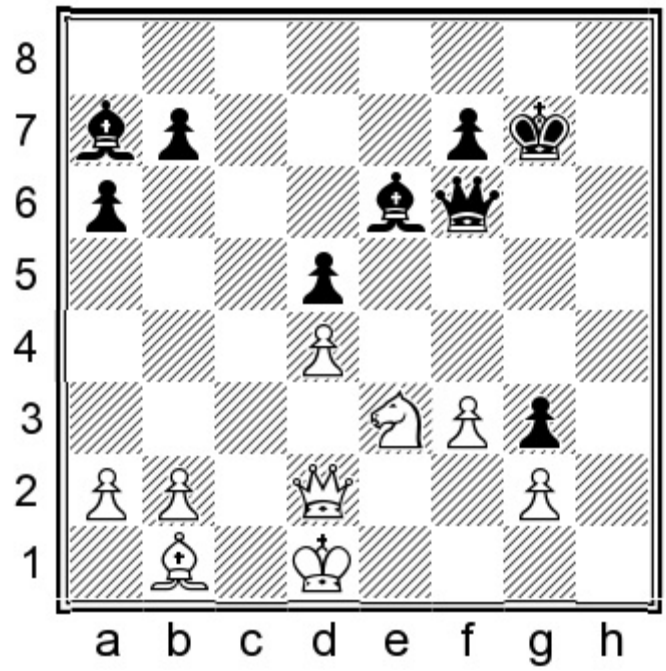
28...♗d7! (incomparably stronger than 28...♖h1† 29.♔e2 ♖xd1 30.♔xd1 ♗xd4 31.♘f5†! ♗xf5 32.♗xf5 a5 33.♕d2 ♗xb2 34.♕xd5 ♕b6, when Black has very good winning chances, but White's possibilities of resistance shouldn't be underrated either), and now 29.♕xb7 fails to 29...♗b5† 30.♗d3 ♗xd4 31.♗xb5 ♗xe3–+ and it becomes obvious that the game is heading towards its natural conclusion.

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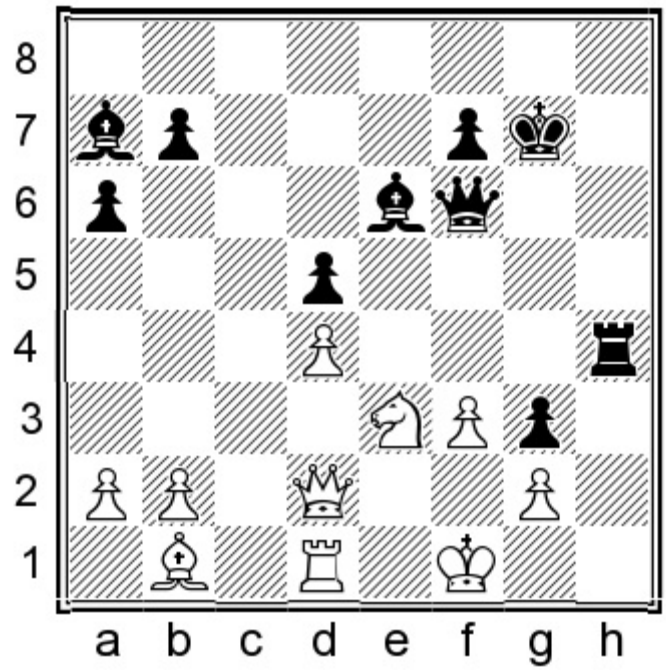
27...g3! 28.f3 ♖h4!

White cannot now defend the d4-pawn, and the a7-bishop breaks out to long-awaited freedom. This is much more convincing than: 28...♖h1†? 29.♔e2 ♖xd1 30.♔xd1



30...♗xd4 31.♘f5† ♗xf5 32.♗xf5

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29.♔e2

29.♘c2 ♗d7!–+

29...♗xd4 30.♕d3 ♖e4!

The concluding blow; White's position falls apart like a house of cards.

31.♔f1

Only slightly better than 31.fxe4 ♕f2#.

31...♗xe3

0–1

In this game White succeeded in maintaining the balance only up to move ten, and shortly later with 13...g5! I firmly seized the initiative. Like Vaganian's light-squared bishop in the previous game, my bishop on a7 was just too strong. Gradually White's problems multiplied, and the position of his king became more and more perilous.

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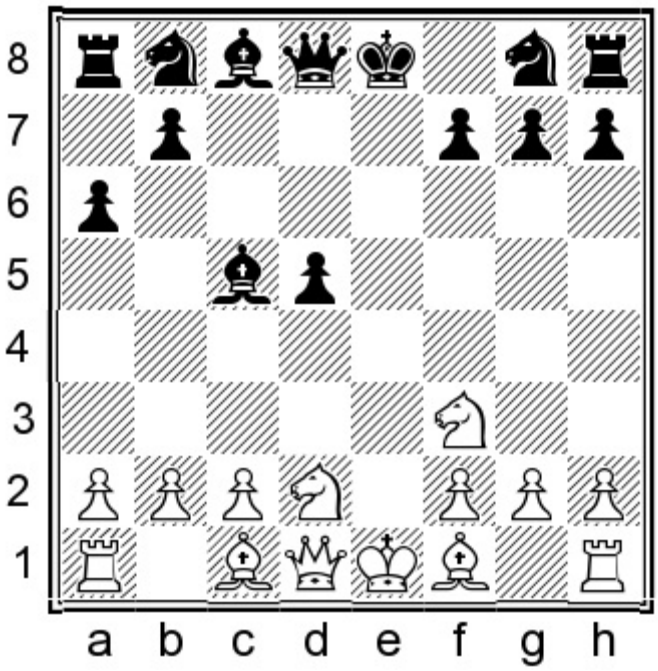
Aidyn Guseinov – Lev Psakhis

USSR Championship (First League) 1988

1.d4 e6 2.e4 d5 3.♘d2 a6

So it's the good old French Defence. This last move has never enjoyed very much popularity, but it is played with the aim (or more exactly, the hope) of avoiding extensively studied variations.

4.♘gf3 c5 5.exd5 exd5 6.dxc5 ♗xc5



7.♗e2?!

It would be hard to think up another move as boring as this. The bishop should of course go to d3, and White also has some other possibilities that aren't at all bad – for instance 7.♘b3 ♗b6 8.♗g5, hoping for an eventual advantageous exchange of the opponent's strong dark-squared bishop.

7...♘f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘b3 ♗b6

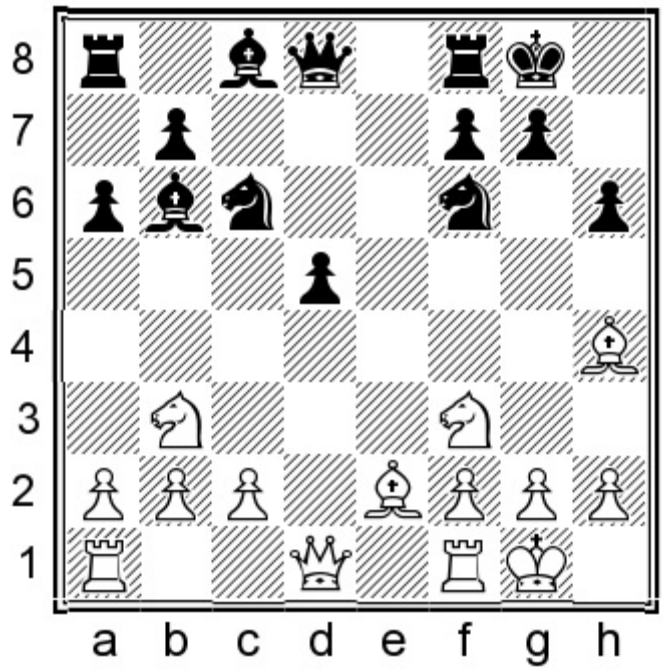
Black can be fully satisfied with the results of the opening. White's pieces are deployed passively – thanks to the misplaced bishop on e2 – and control of d4 is perhaps his sole asset.

10.♗g5

In Prasad – Psakhis, Calcutta 1988, White played 10.c3, which is equally harmless. The continuation was: 10...♖e8 11.♗f4 ♘c6 12.♘bd4 ♘e4 13.♖e1 ♗g4 14.h3 ♗h5 15.♗e3 ♗c7!∓

10...h6 11.♗h4 ♘c6

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12.♖c1

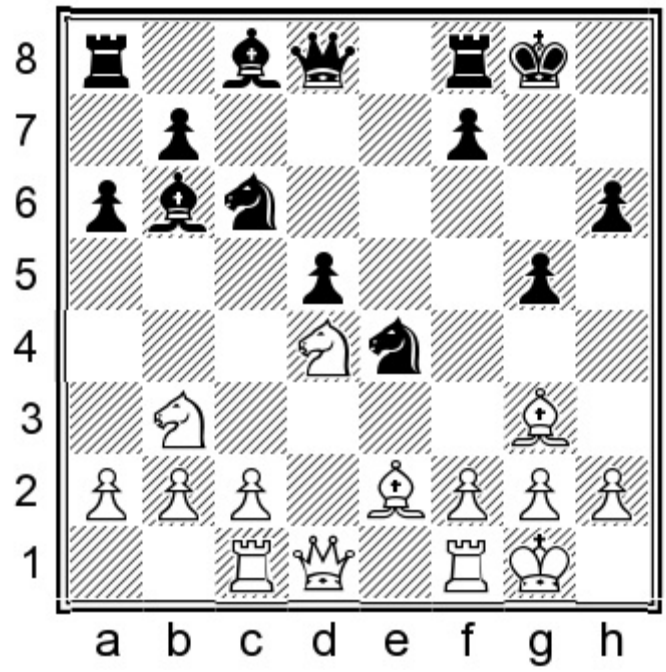
This move mystified me back in 1988, and I can honestly say that my feeling of bewilderment has not departed with the years! If White wants to advance the c-pawn he can do so without special preparation, while if it remains on c2 the pawn has no need to be overprotected. Either 12.c3 or 12.c4 would seem much more natural, though the position of the knight on b3 might raise one or two awkward questions.

12...g5! 13.♗g3 ♘e4↑

The pawn's advance to g5 in no way weakens Black's king position, while the knight on e4 and bishop on b6 are splendidly co-ordinating their efforts. It isn't simple for White to defend against the advance of the black f-pawn.

14.♘fd4

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14...f5

I couldn't refrain from playing such a strong and natural move, even though I wasn't totally certain that I wanted to!

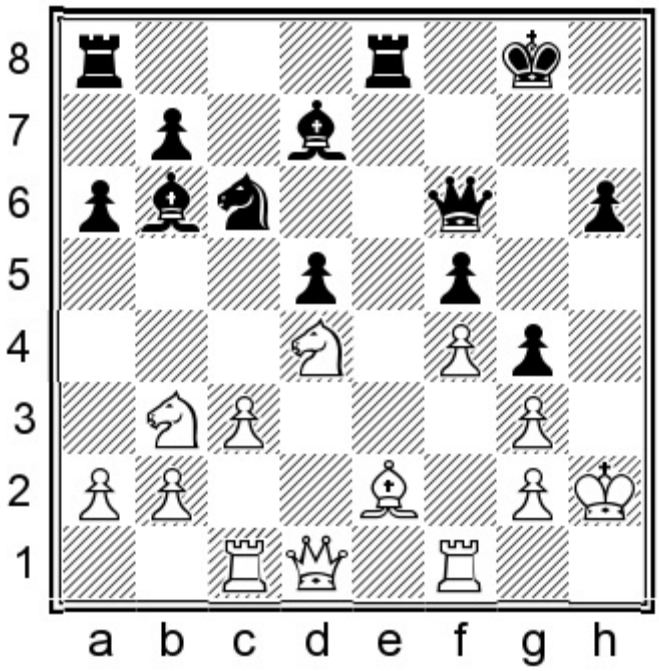
It was also worth considering 14...♕f6!? 15.c3 ♗d7, with excellent piece play.

15.♘xc6!

White was faced with a difficult choice. The move he plays appears to be necessary, but it relieves Black of the need to defend his isolated pawn (not that it was currently under attack).

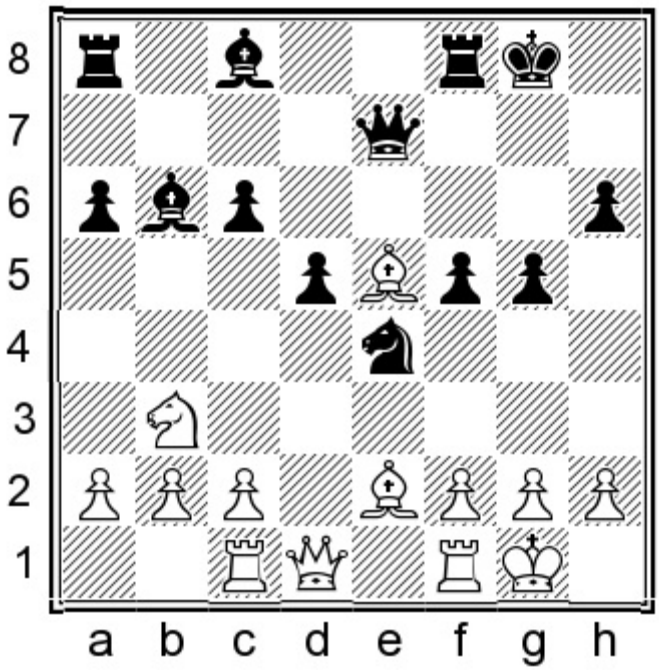
There would be some complex problems to solve in the event of 15.f3 ♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♕f6 17.c3 ♖e8 18.f4!? g4 19.♔h2 ♗d7.

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Black's total control of the crucial e-file, combined with the inevitable advance ...h5-h4, would soon enable him to create threats that would be hard to parry.

15...bxc6 16.♗e5 ♕e7



17.♗c3!?

A decision that rather surprised me – White is settling for a serious weakening of his queenside pawn structure.

In the event of 17.♗d4 c5 18.♗c3 ♗e6, Black has a small but stable plus.

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17...♗d7?!

An inaccuracy with far-reaching consequences. I understood that after an exchange on c3 I wouldn't be able to stop c3-c4, after which I didn't see any realistic possibilities for continuing to play for a win. The thoughtless move I made alters the course of the game radically, and more or less compels Black to seek salvation in some totally obscure variations.

I ought to have exchanged on c3 regardless: 17...♘xc3 18.bxc3 ♕e5 19.c4 (or 19.♕d3 ♖a7! 20.♖fe1 ♖e7 21.c4 ♖fe8↑)19...♗c7 20.g3 f4 and Black has the initiative.

It was also worth considering the move 17...a5!?, which would deny White access to the a5-square.

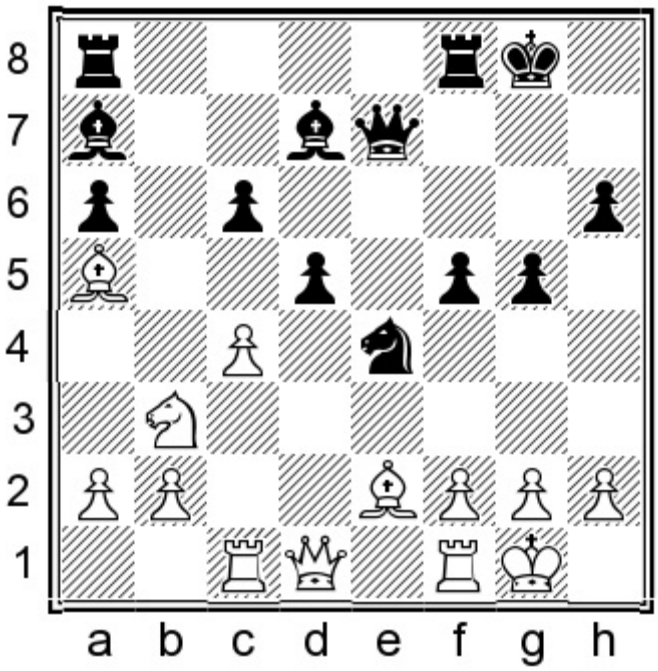
18.♗a5!

Of course!

18...♗a7!?

After 18...♗xa5 19.♘xa5 ♖ab8 20.♕d4∞ the chances are about equal, and White is threatened with no immediate dangers.

19.c4!



In the space of just a couple of moves there has been a radical change in the evaluation of the position. White's pieces have occupied excellent posts with good co-ordination; the rook on c1, incidentally, now looks quite well placed. So what is Black to do?

In the event of 19...♕e5, I didn't like 20.cxd5 cxd5 21.♗c3 ♘xc3 22.bxc3!?. There would then be a number of weaknesses in the black camp, the white knight would soon be occupying the central square d4, and Black would simply have to forget about playing for a win. Instead, I succeeded in finding an

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interesting, albeit very risky idea.

19...g4!?

The a7-bishop is co-operating excellently with the knight on e4, which incidentally is anything but easy to evict from such an important central square. But unfortunately you can't usually give mate with two pieces – additional resources are required. The pawn on g4 and, especially, the queen will take pleasure in joining the attack, but at a certain cost in material. It's obvious that the only way White can cast doubt on Black's plan is by capturing on d5, but the resulting variations are too complicated and, I feel, practically impossible to assess precisely and correctly over the board. But Guseinov made a timid move.

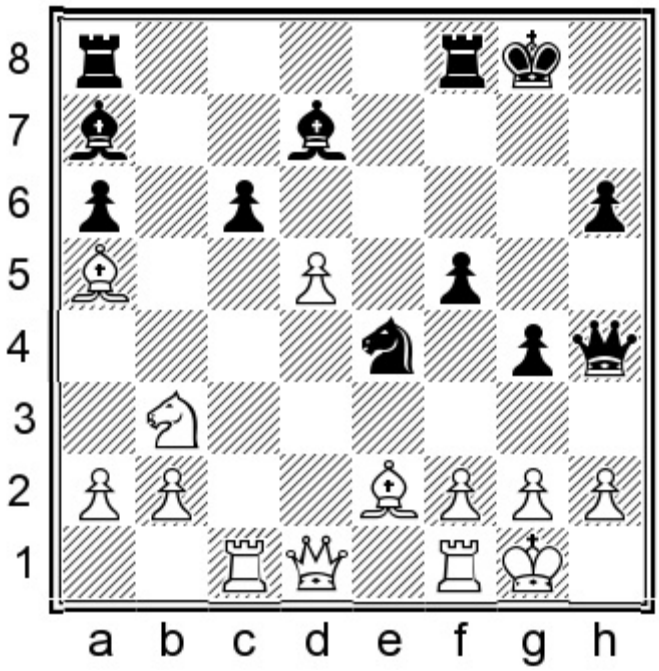
20.♗c7?!

Hoping – in vain! – to hold up the further advance of the f-pawn. The idea was to prove faulty, and it was easy for me to work up an overwhelming attack against the white monarch.

I should add that 20.c5 was just as inoffensive; after 20...♗b8 Black has excellent play.

The most thematic move, 20.cxd5!, was of course stronger. Black would then have the choice between two continuations – 20...♕h4 and 20...g3!? – which at first sight appear to be of roughly equal worth. Let us see.

a) 20...♕h4 and now:



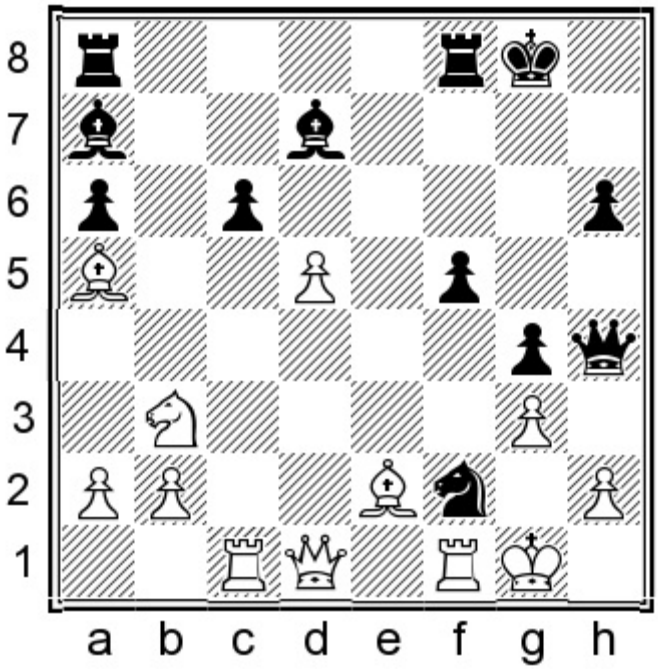
a1) 21.dxc6!? g3 leads by transposition to variation 'b'.

a2) 21.g3 ♘xf2

Black has no easy defence ahead of him after: 21...♘xg3 22.dxc6 ♘xe2† (Black is in a bad way

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after 22...♗e6 23.♘c5!) 23.♕xe2 g3 24.♕c4† ♕xc4 25.♖xc4 gxf2† 26.♖xf2 and the mighty pawn on c6 more than compensates White for the small loss of material.

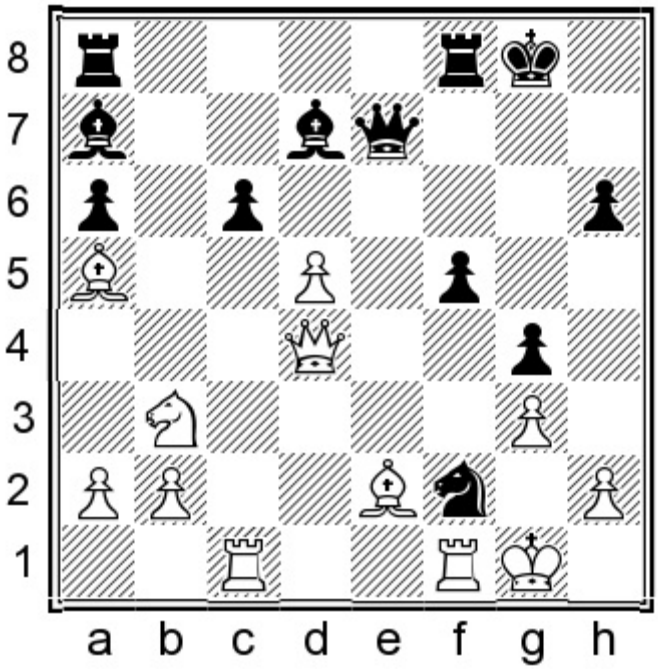


22.♕d4!?

A remarkable move. White sacrifices his queen, rejecting the capture on h4 which would give approximately equal chances: 22.gxh4 ♘xd1† 23.♔h1 ♘e3 24.dxc6 ♗e6∞

22...♕e7

22...♘h3† is less convincing: 23.♔g2 ♗xd4 24.gxh4 ♗xb2 25.dxc6 ♗e6 26.♗c4! and the c6-pawn is difficult to stop, especially considering the absence of prospects for the lonely knight on h3.



23.♗c4□ 23...♔h7 24.♖fe1 ♕xe1† 25.♖xe1 ♗xd4 26.♘xd4 ♘h3† 27.♔f1⇄

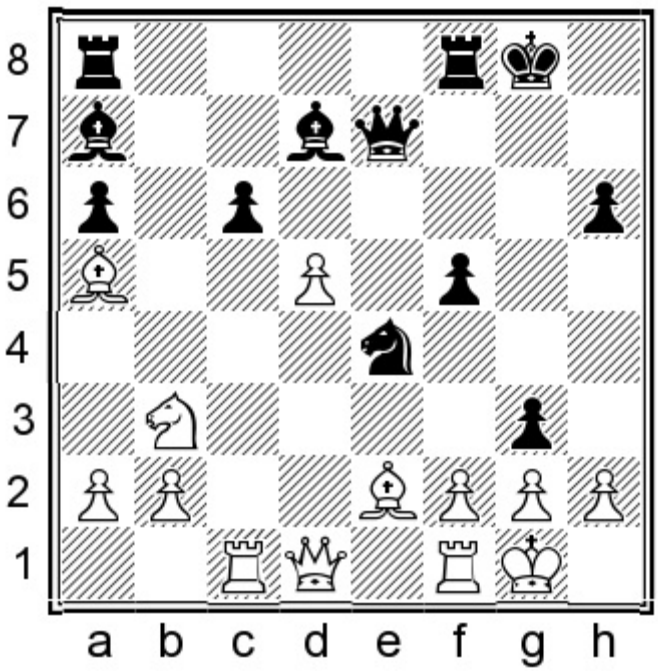
I think chances are roughly equal, though of course plenty of play still lies ahead.

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a3) 21.♘d4!? is a cool-headed and powerful move that practically refutes Black's idea. The activity of the a7-bishop is abruptly curtailed, Black's attack comes to an end, and White is left to enjoy his positional gains21...cxd5 (the optimistic 21...g3 22.hxg3 ♘xg3 merely leaves Black with even greater problems after the cold-blooded 23.fxg3! ♗xd4† 24.♖f2 ♗xf2† 25.♔xf2±) 22.♕b3 ♗e6 23.g3 White's advantage, though not perhaps very big, is secure.

b) 20...g3!?

This is more interesting and, I would say, more fun.



21.dxc6

Black has everything in order after 21.hxg3 ♘xg3 22.♗c4 ♕h4 23.dxc6† ♗e6! – we shall come across this fine idea more than once.

21...♕h4!

Bringing the queen up closer to the enemy king, Black creates numerous threats, although quite frankly, he has little choice.

Black gets nowhere with 21...♘xf2?! 22.♖xf2! ♗xf2† 23.♔h1±.

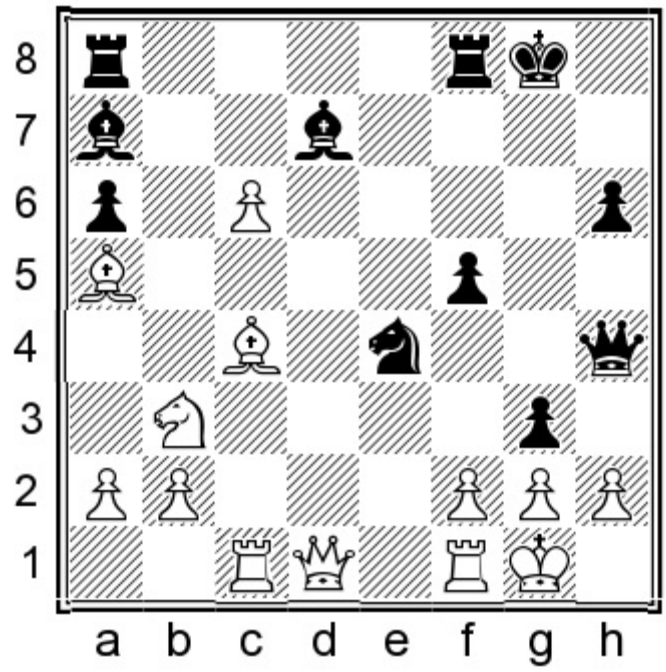
After 21...♗xf2† 22.♔h1 gxh2 23.♗c7! White's problems are at an end, while Black's are only just beginning!

By the way, the outwardly attractive 21...♗e6 22.hxg3 f4 also fails, in view of 23.♕d3 ♗f5 24.♕c4† ♔h7 25.♗b4!+–.

22.♗c4†

Black now faces a choice:

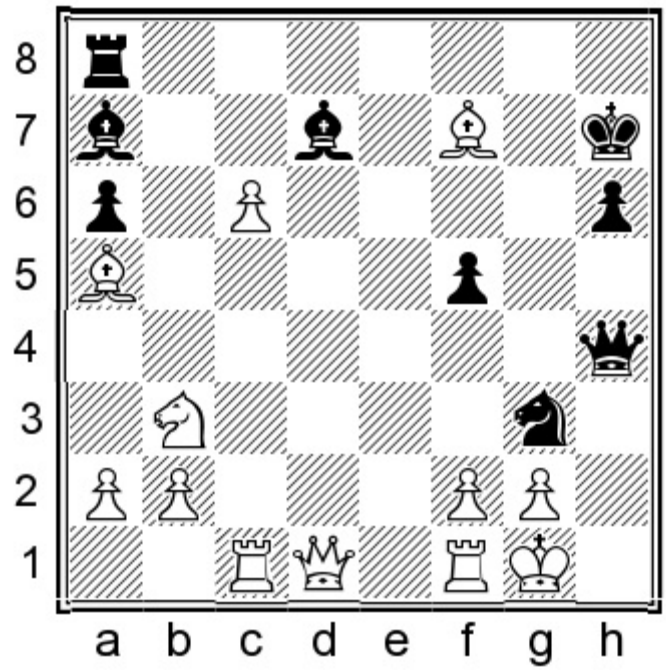
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b1) 22...♔h8?? loses at once to 23.hxg3 ♘xg3 24.♗c3†.

b2) 22...♖f7 23.♗xf7† ♔h7 24.hxg3 ♘xg3

Black's threats seem irresistible, but this is merely an illusion! White has the possibility of repelling them, though only by sacrificing his queen, which he can do in either of two ways.



25.♗g6†!?

I think this is the better way.

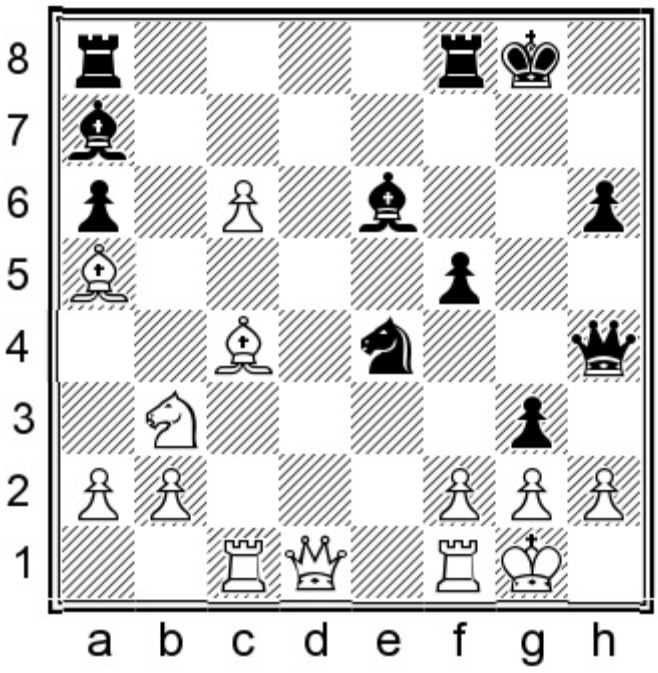
After 25.♕h5!? ♘xh5 26.♗xh5 ♗e6 27.♗f3 ♗c4 28.♖xc4 ♕xc4 29.c7 ♖c8 30.♖c1, White's game is not at all bad – but can he lay claim to an advantage?

25...♔xg6 26.♕d6† ♔h5 27.♕xg3! ♕xg3 28.♖c3 ♕d6 29.cxd7 ♕xd7 30.♖h3† ♔g6 31.♗d2

I would prefer to play the white side of this position.

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b3) 22...♗e6!

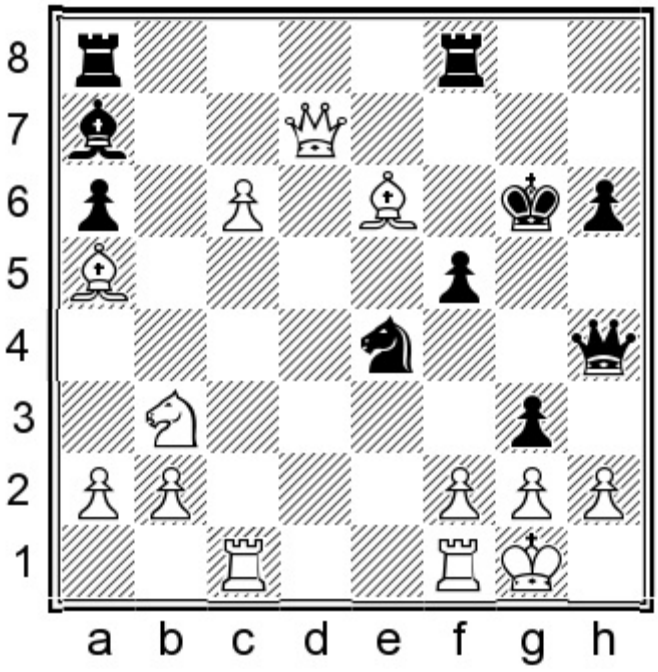


Pretty and strong.

23.♗xe6† ♔h7 24.♕d7†

24.h3?? would be suicide: 24...gxf2† 25.♔h1 ♘g3† 26.♔h2 ♕f4! and mate quickly follows.

24...♔g6



25.♗xf5†! ♖xf5 26.♕e6†!

The absence of a wide choice is a great help in looking for the best move!

White is not to be envied after 26.hxg3 ♘xg3 27.♕d6† ♖f6 28.♕d3† ♔g7 29.♕d7† ♔g8 30.♕h3 ♕xh3 31.gxh3 ♘xf1, when both 32.♖xf1 ♖xc6 and 32.c7 ♗xf2† 33.♔h1 ♘g3† would be equally hopeless for him.

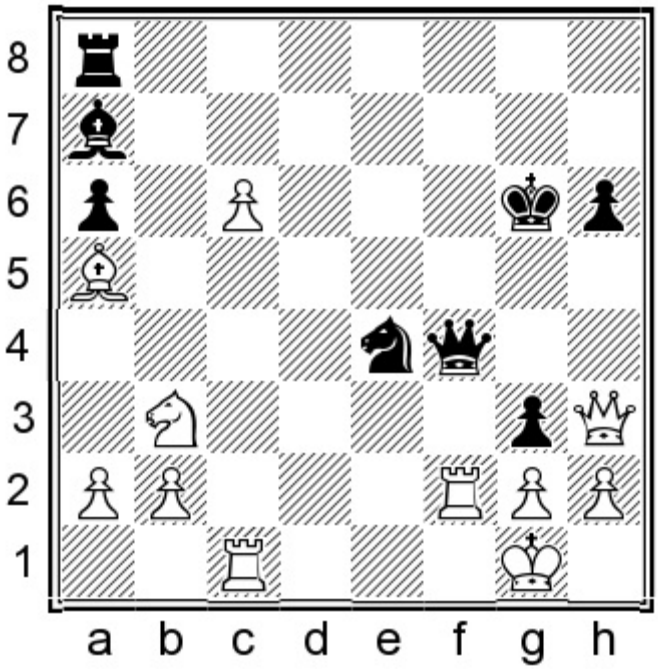
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26...♖f6

A final attempt at playing for the win!

On 26...♔g7, there are two possibilities – 27.hxg3 ♘xg3 28.♗c3† leads to perpetual check, whereas 27.♗c3† ♘xc3 28.hxg3□ 28...♕e4 29.♖ce1 ♕xe6 30.♖xe6⇄ results in wholly unclear play. Unfortunately it is White who chooses between the two!

27.♕h3 ♖xf2 28.♖xf2 ♕f4□



29.♕e6†!

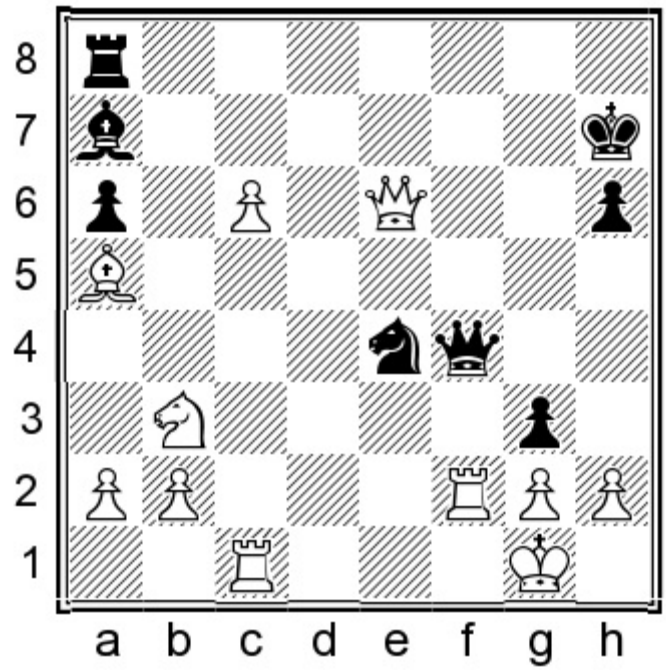
Avoiding the uncomplicated variation: 29.♖cc2?? ♗xf2† 30.♔h1 ♗e3! 31.♕e6† ♔h7 32.♕e7† ♔h8–+

29...♔h5 30.♕d5† ♔g6

The crazy 30...♔h4?? 31.hxg3† ♔xg3 is simply refuted by 32.♗c7+–, for if 32...♕xc7 then 33.♕d3†.

31.♕e6† ♔h7

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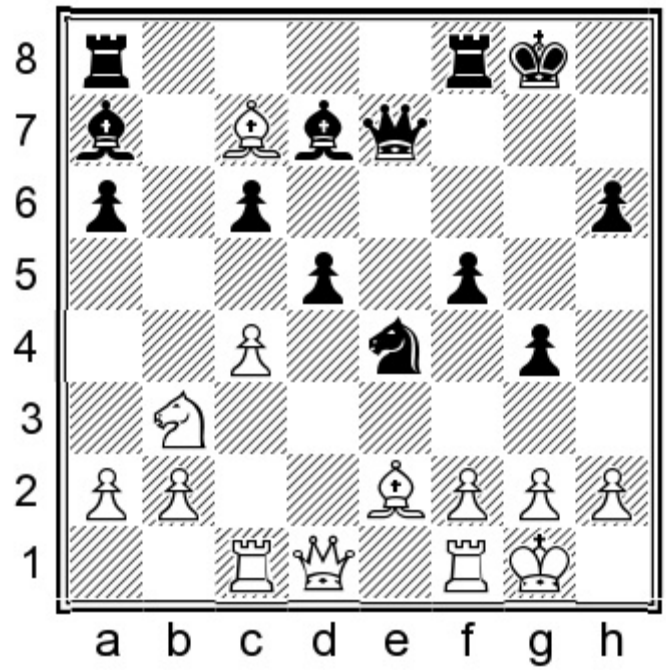


32.♕d7†

Seeing that 32...♔h8?? would lose to 33.♗c3† ♘xc3 34.♕xa7!, Black has to settle for a draw.

At the present time it's hard for me to say how many of these beautiful variations I worked out over the board, and how many are the fruits of post-mortem analysis. The game was played too long ago! I well remember seeing the idea of ...♗e6! in reply to the check on c4, and feeling that 20...g3 should secure me adequate counter-chances. Above all, I understood very well that in the resulting complications, taking the right decisions would be every bit as difficult for my opponent as for me!

After the move in the game, Black's task is much simpler.



20...f4! 21.c5

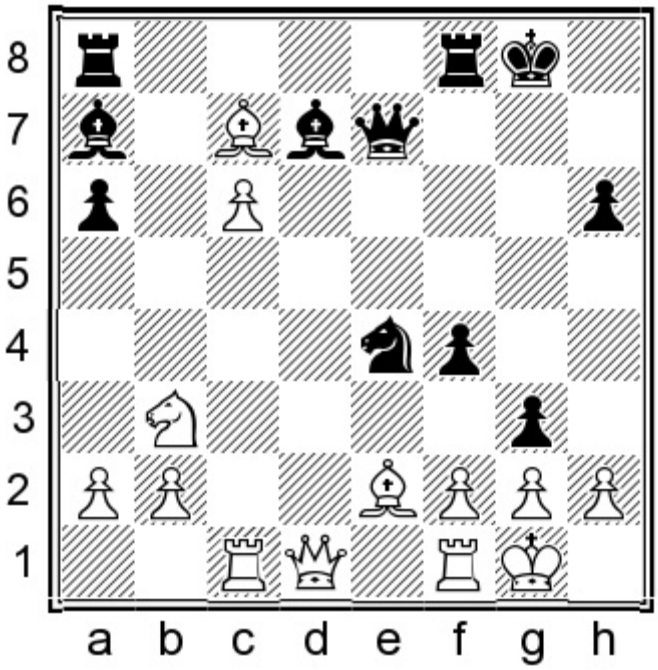
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Vainly hoping to limit the scope of Black's all-powerful bishop. This is certainly White's most stubborn move, but that is its sole merit!

A line that looks utterly dismal is 21.♗xg4 ♘xf2 22.♖xf2 ♗xf2† 23.♔xf2 ♕h4† 24.♔g1 ♗xg4–+ and Black emerges with an extra exchange. This might possibly have been the least of the evils, but it fails to give realistic saving chances.
A more interesting try is:
21.cxd5 g3!

21...♘xf2! is also good enough. After 22.♖xf2 ♗xf2† 23.♔xf2 ♕e3† 24.♔e1 f3 25.♖c3 fxe2! 26.♖xe3 exd1=♕† 27.♔xd1 cxd5 Black has a won endgame.

22.dxc6□



22...♕h4!

Simplest, although the calm 22...♗e6! also looks quite good: 23.♗c4 ♘xf2 24.♗xe6† ♕xe6 25.♕f3 ♘g4† 26.♘c5 ♘xh2–+

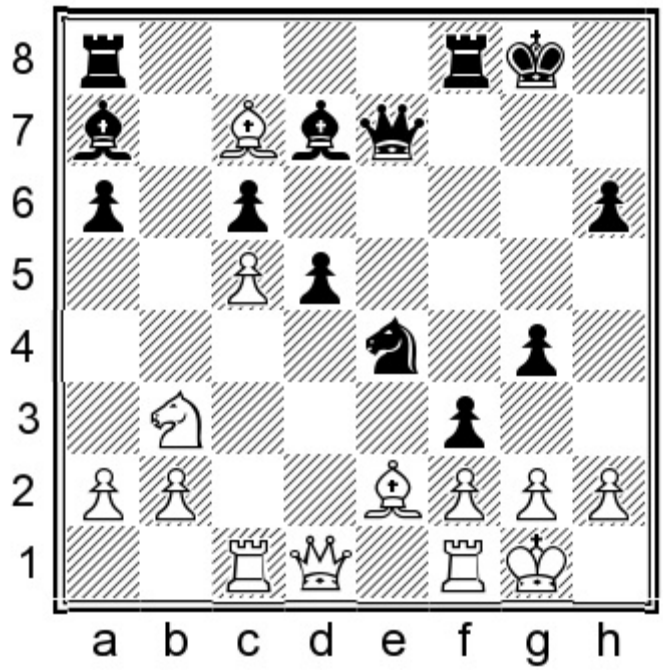
23.♗c4† ♔h8 24.♗e5† ♖f6 25.h3 ♗xh3!

And Black will soon deliver mate. White is indeed paying a high price for his mistake on move 20!

21...f3!

This move is too natural and strong for me to want to reject it, even for a minute! Still, 21...g3!? was not bad either.

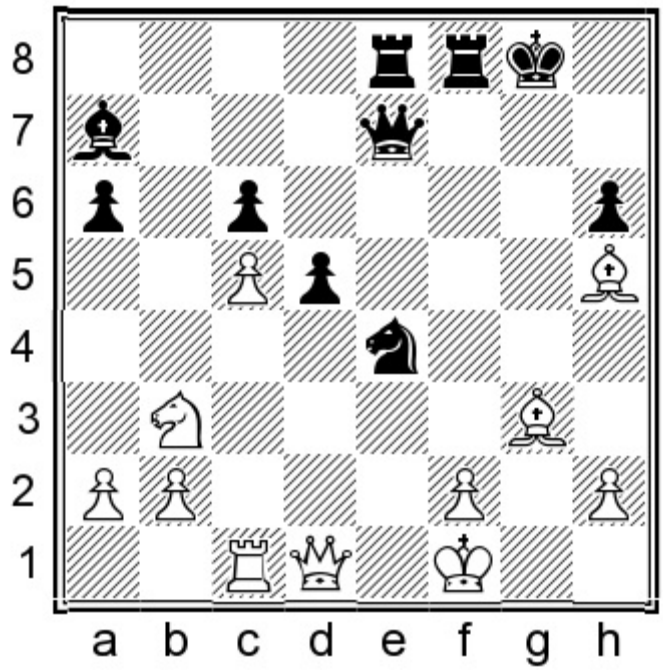
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22.♗xa6

With this move White practically admits that he is capitulating.

For good or ill, White simply had to take the much more important pawn on f3. The continuation could be: 22.gxf3 gxf3 23.♗xf3 ♗h3 Attacking a number of things at once, though it is still possible for White to resist. 24.♗g3 ♗xf1 25.♔xf1 ♖ae8∓ Now the natural 26.♗h5 meets with the uncomplicated refutation:



26...♗b8! 27.♕g4† ♔h8 28.♗xe8 ♗xg3 29.hxg3 ♘xf2!? 30.♕d4† ♔h7 31.♗h5 ♕g5, and Black has an irresistible attack.

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22...fxg2 23.♔xg2 ♕h4

The alternative 23...♗b8! 24.♗xb8 ♖fxb8 25.♗d3 ♖xa2–+ was in no way weaker, but all my thoughts were focused on one target only: the white king!

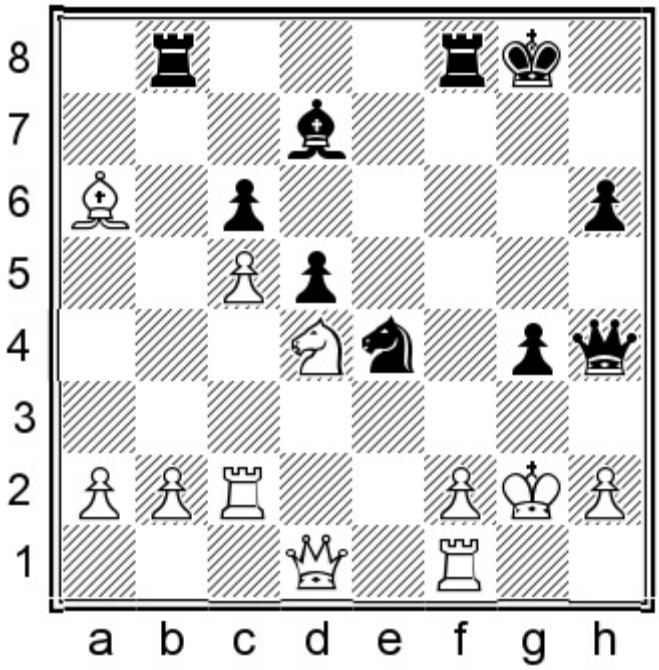
24.♖c2

The f2-pawn has to be guarded somehow, but the natural 24.♗g3 solves the problem only temporarily: 24...♕h3† 25.♔g1 ♘g5!? (25...♗b8!? also looks quite tempting!) 26.♘d4 (or 26.♗e2 ♘f3† 27.♔h1 ♘xh2! 28.♗xh2 ♗b8 29.f4 g3–+) 26...♘f3† 27.♔h1 ♘xh2! 28.♗xh2 ♗b8 29.f4 ♗xf4! 30.♖xf4 ♖xf4 31.♗f1 ♕h4–+ and White cannot defend against the many threats.

24...♗b8!

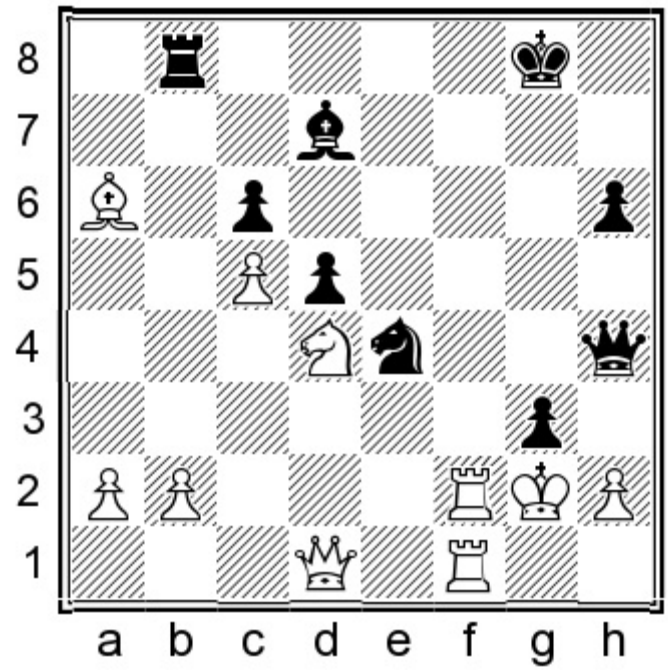
White's dark-squared bishop – perhaps his king's most important defender – is exchanged.

25.♗xb8 ♖axb8 26.♘d4

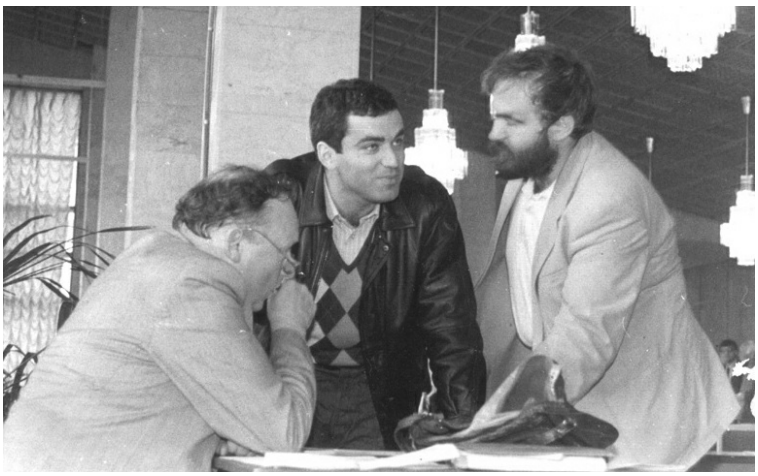


Black has a wonderful position – all his pieces are participating directly in the attack on the king, and it's clear that White will scarcely manage to defend for long. In this situation Black's main problem is without doubt the immensely wide choice of highly tempting continuations – he could quite easily lose his head over the abundance of possibilities. And in fact I nearly did! I spent some minutes working out the complex and double-edged variations starting with 26...♖xf2†. There could follow: 27.♖cxf2 (or 27.♖fxf2 g3 28.♖f1 ♕xh2† 29.♔f3 ♘g5† 30.♔e3 g2 with a strong attack) 27...g3

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28.♖e2□ (28.hxg3 loses to 28...♕xg3† 29.♔h1 ♘xf2† 30.♖xf2 ♕xf2) 28...♕xh2† 29.♔f3 ♕h3! with extremely interesting tactical possibilities. Fortunately I stopped in time, and asked myself the simple question whether I had any need of all these attractive, interesting, but excessively complicated lines. Black's large plus is obvious, and in all probability he can bring his attack to a successful conclusion without applying such drastic measures. My next few moves are directed against the knight on d4, which can claim to be the key defensive piece in the white camp.



26...♖f4!?

Roughly the same ends would be served by 26...♖b4!, attacking the knight from the other flank. In that case too, White would hard put to find an adequate defence. For example: 27.a3 (or 27.♔g1 ♘g5!) 27...♖xd4! 28.♕xd4 ♘g5 29.♕d3 ♗f5 30.♕g3 ♗e4† 31.f3 gxf3† 32.♔f2 ♕xg3† 33.hxg3 ♗xc2–+

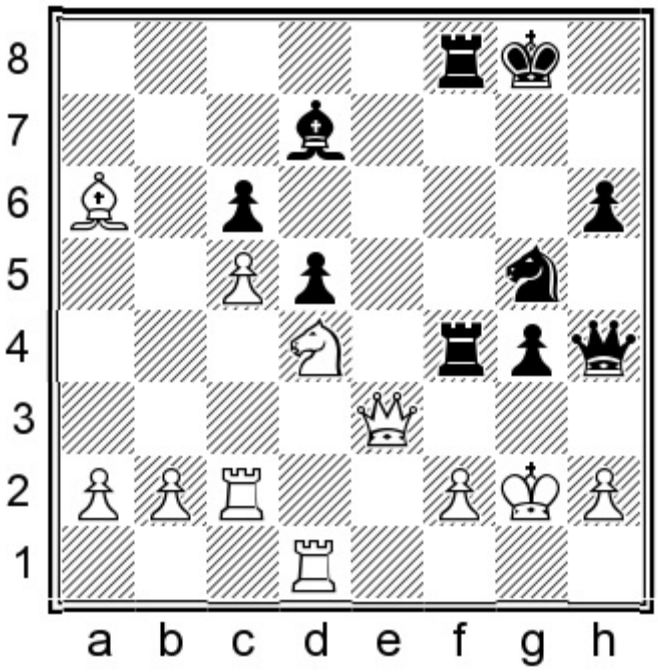
27.♕d3

Black would have quite a pretty win after 27.♔g1 ♘g5 28.f3 gxf3 29.♘xf3 ♖xf3 30.♖xf3 ♕d4†**!**–+. Of course, this would not be his only possible solution.

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27...♖bf8–+ 28.♕e3 ♘g5 29.♖d1

Black wins just as easily in the event of 29.♕g3 ♕h3†! 30.♕xh3 gxh3† 31.♔h1 ♖xd4–+, and also after 29.♖c3 ♖xd4! 30.♕xd4 ♘f3–+.



29...♖f3!?

By now I had taken the firm decision to refrain, as far as possible, from calculating variations. Otherwise I might well have gone in for the none-too-complicated: 29...♖xd4! 30.♖xd4 (similar results follow from 30.♕xd4 ♕h3† 31.♔h1 ♕f3† 32.♔g1 ♘h3† 33.♔f1 ♖e8!–+) 30...♘f3 31.♔f1 ♕xh2 with a quick mate.

30.♕e1

The more active 30.♕e5 is refuted by the straightforward 30...♖xf2† 31.♖xf2 ♕xf2† 32.♔h1 ♗f5!. Then 33.♘xf5 loses immediately to 33...♕f3† 34.♔g1 ♘h3#.

30...♖h3 31.♕g1 g3!

Another perfectly good method is 31...♖xf2†! 32.♖xf2 ♖g3† 33.♔f1 ♖xg1†–+.

32.♔f1 ♖xh2

0–1

What, then, happened in this game? White played the opening in an extremely boring manner and was saddled with the worse position (which he fully deserved). Unfortunately my own play was not faultless either, and my inaccuracy on move 17 abruptly altered the course of the game; the ensuing complications were well-nigh impossible to deal with correctly over the board. The move 19...g4!? turned out to be very strong (especially from a practical viewpoint). The attack on the dark squares was

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far from easy to repel, and White's very next move – 20.♗c7?! – proved to be the decisive mistake! It was of course essential for him to capture on d5, and he would have had little to lose by doing so; after the move in the game, the position he was forced to defend – without even the slightest counterplay – was just too hideous. In such positions every move carries an exceedingly high price, which means that the punishment White suffered was only seemingly out of proportion to the magnitude of his errors.

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Chapter 6

Attacking in the Sicilian Labyrinth

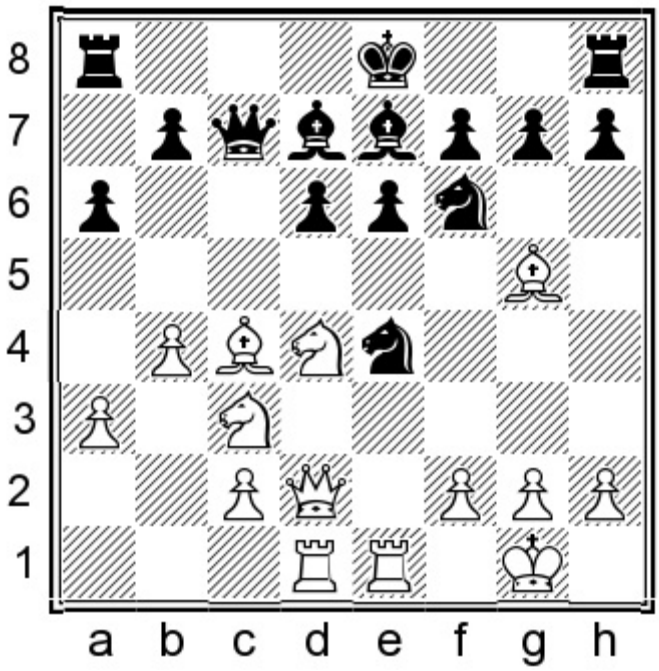


Rostov 1993. Psakhis – Smyslov

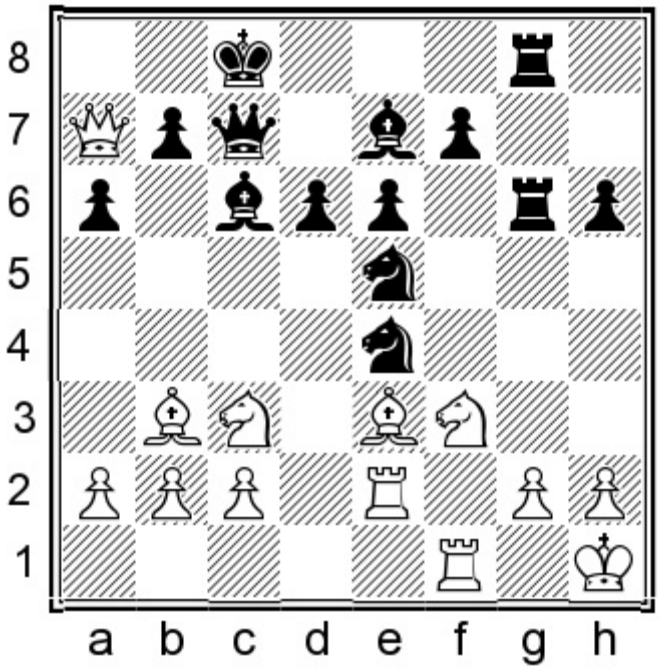
Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

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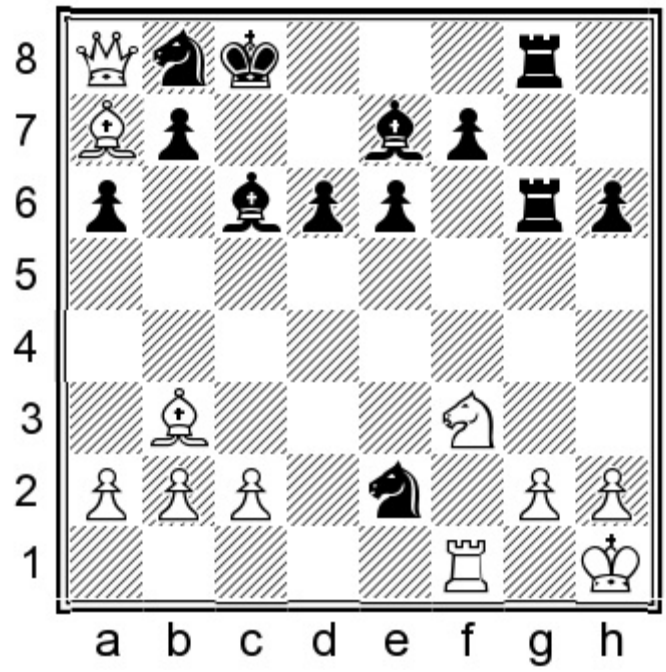


Why oh why did Black open the position?
(see page 158)

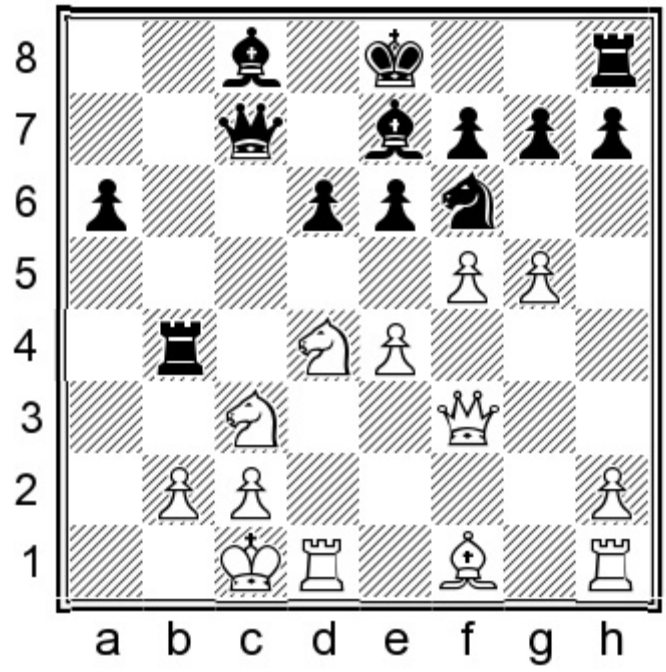


How to refute Tal’s combination?
(see page 168)

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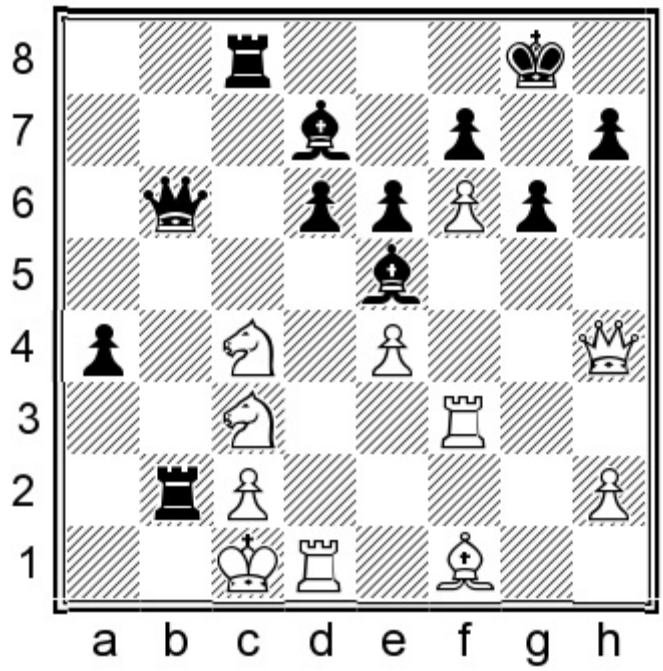


How to defend against the threat of ♕xb8?
(see page 170)

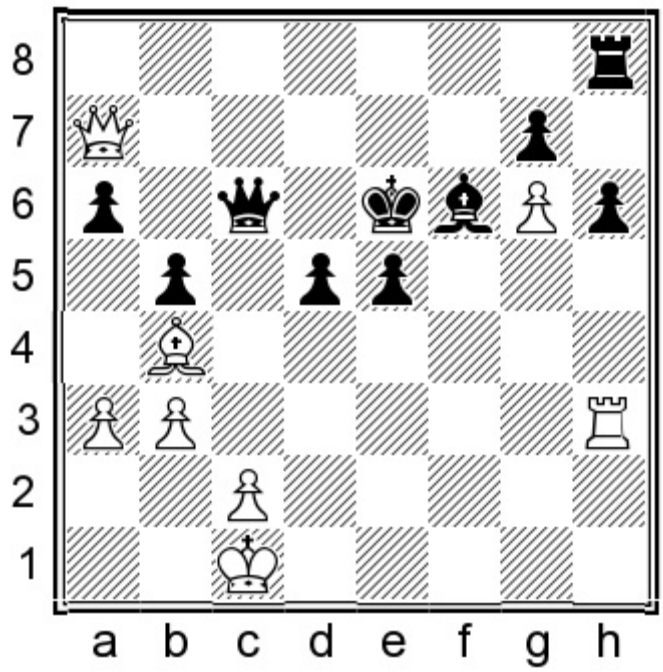


Black is in a tight spot. What is the most practical decision?
(see page 174)

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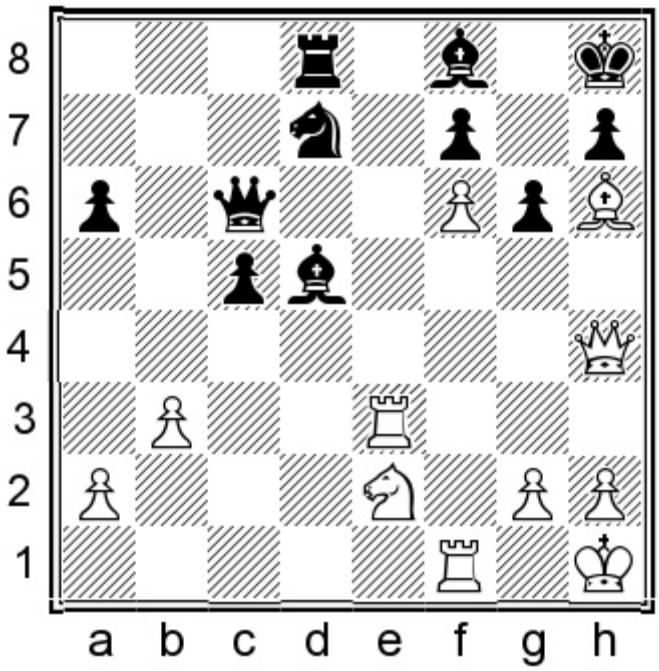


What golden opportunity did Cvitan miss?
(see page 180)

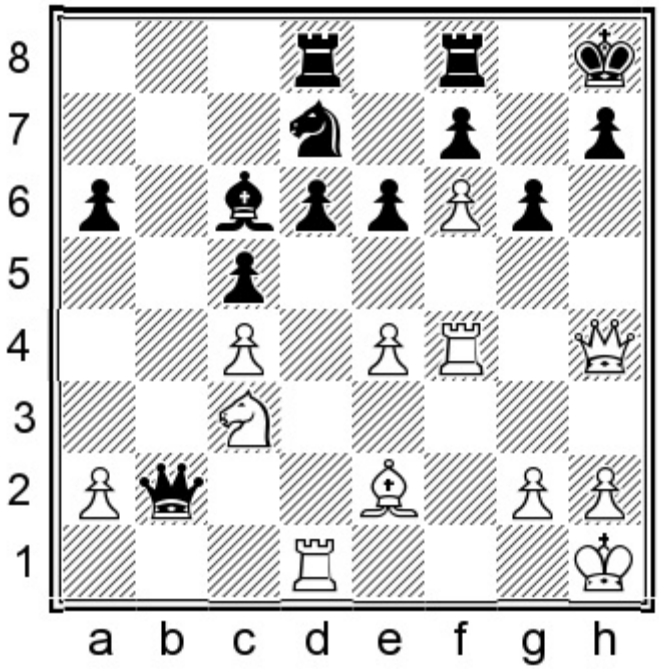


A tough one. White's best move?
(see page 186)

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White wins
(see page 207)



Calculate till the win, please
(see page 211)

The labyrinths of the Sicilian Defence... the phrase sounds very much like a cliché, yet it brings out the essence of the matter very accurately. These days, when playing the Sicilian (particularly the immensely popular Najdorf Variation), you find yourself, so to speak, in a vast and difficult maze, with at best only a single exit – which you have a tough job to discover. The Najdorf has probably been investigated more thoroughly than any other variation in the history of chess. Thousands of players

have become its ardent supporters (for example, 99% of Indians employ it as their principal opening), while thousands of computers – Rybka, Fritz, Junior, et al. – are at work on it.

The games I wish to present are taken from past times – though in some of the cases it was not too distant a past – when a premium was also placed on the ability to solve problems over the board, to discover the sole defence and to withstand the pressures of practical play!

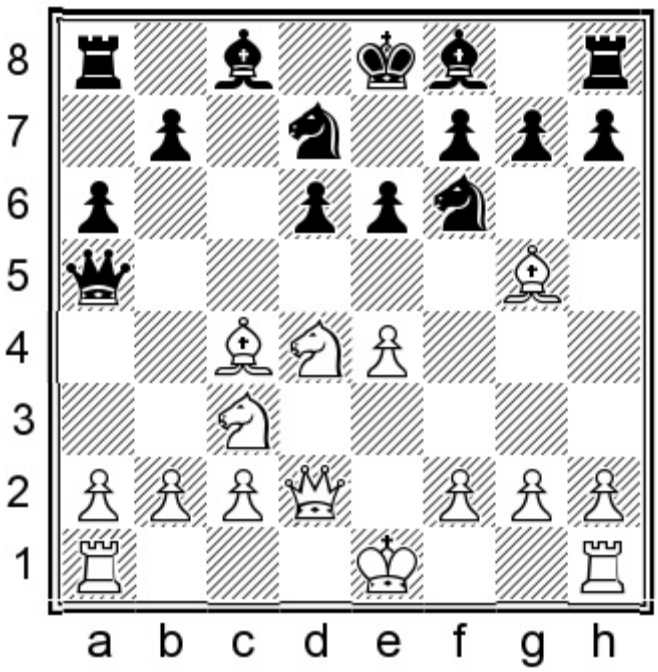
A writer on the subject of attacking in the Sicilian could fill just as many volumes as Leo Tolstoy. My own scope is restricted by the dimensions of this moderately sized book, so I have selected only two variations: the Najdorf and the Scheveningen. I have always loved to play them with either colour, and I will try to give you a share of the experience that accumulated naturally during my active chess career of thirty years and more.

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

This move is far less popular than 6...e6, but in the last couple of years it has undergone a veritable renaissance, and quite a few grandmasters are incorporating it into their opening repertoire. On a personal note, I well remember how in 1977 the young Lev Psakhis was shown into a room with the great, awesome and terrible Mikhail Tal, to play a blitz match with him. On that occasion I tried to hold the line for Black with the aid of precisely this sharp variation.

7.♗c4 ♕a5 8.♕d2 e6



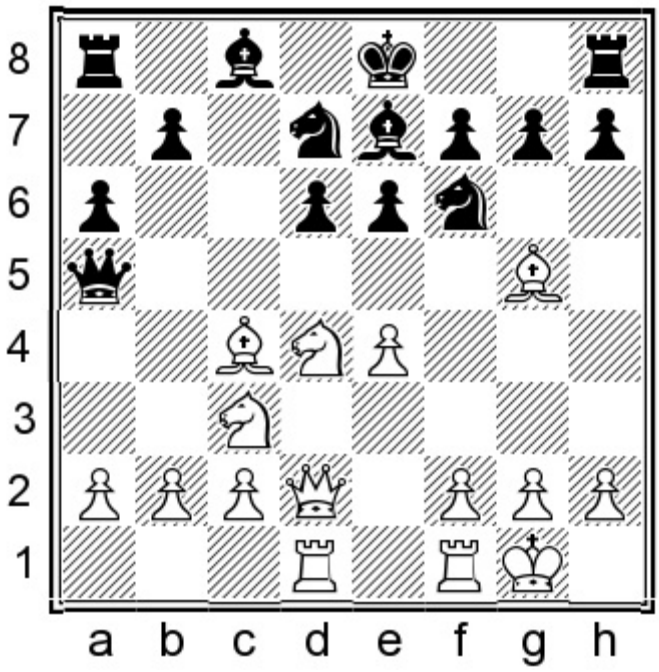
9.0-0

In the past thirty or forty years this move has gone completely out of fashion; White has been employing the much more aggressive plan based on castling long. Why this should be so is a curious question. Are players just bowing to the trend, or are they influenced by the famous 19th game of the 1969 World Championship match in Moscow between Spassky and Petrosian? I am unable to say; both explanations are plausible.

9...♗e7 10.♖ad1

The cautious 10.a3, aiming to avoid an exchange of the light-squared bishop, has been seen a few times, but usually Black experiences no great difficulties. For instance: 10...h6 11.♗e3 ♘e5 12.♗a2 ♕c7 13.♕e2 b5 14.f4 ♘eg4 15.h3 ♘xe3 16.♕xe3 0-0 17.♖ae1 e5 18.♘f5 ♗xf5 19.exf5 d5 with excellent play for Black in Spassky – Lombardy, Leningrad 1960.

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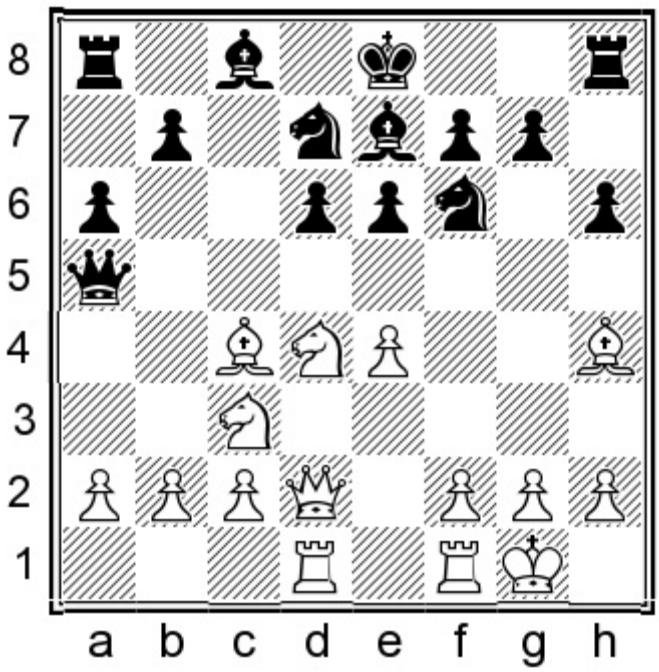
10...♘c5?!

I emphatically dislike this move, as I don't think c5 is the most effective square for this piece. For one thing, the knight is obstructing the c-file (the Nile, Ganges and Volga of the Sicilian Defence!). Secondly, it can easily come under attack. And finally, in general terms, it isn't entirely clear what the knight is doing here. The pawn on e4 is easy for White to defend, and any other work for the knight is hard to find!

A line that has occurred much more often is:

10...h6!? 11.♗h4

11.♗e3!? ♘c5 12.♘b3! gave White an edge in Ivanchuk – Ehlvest, Elista (1.2) 1998.



11...♘e5

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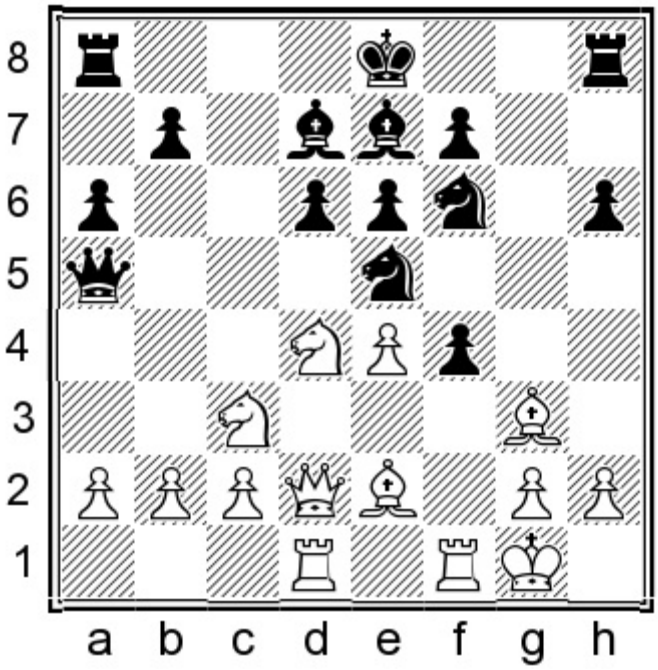
Black can't be at all pleased with either 11...0-0 12.♘d5! or 11...♘xe4? 12.♘xe4 ♕xd2 13.♖xd2 ♗xh4 14.♘xd6† ♔e7 15.♘4f5†+−.

In Unzicker – Tal, Leipzig (ol) 1960, Black reverted to the old plan of 11...♘c5 12.♖fe1 ♗d7, and now with 13.♘f5! – a standard resource, to say the least – White could have punished him immediately for his carelessness and his disinclination to occupy himself seriously with opening theory!

12.♗e2

Black is quite all right after 12.♗b3 g5 13.♗g3 ♘h5 14.♗a4† b5 15.♗xe5 dxe5 16.♘c6 ♕c7 17.♘xe7 ♔xe7 18.♗b3 ♘f6 Tal – Korchnoi, USSR (ch) 1959. The king in the centre feels fine; at any rate, even such a master of the attack as Tal failed to set Black any problems

12...g5 13.♗g3 ♗d7 14.f4 gxf4



15.♖xf4

The position is not easy to evaluate in the event of 15.♗xf4 ♖c8 16.♔h1 ♕b4 17.♕c1 ♘c4 18.♗xc4 ♖xc4 19.e5 ♖xd4 20.exf6 ♖xd1 21.♕xd1 ♗f8∞ Gipslis – Tal, USSR (ch) 1961.

15...♘g6 16.♖f2 ♕g5 17.♘b3 ♕xd2 18.♘xd2

This was Lepeshkin – Bangiev, Gelendzhik 1975, and now Black could try:

18...b5!?

As we see, all these variations are complex and often lead to unclear play. All well and good, but the time has come to end this fascinating excursion into the jungle of theory and return to the game.

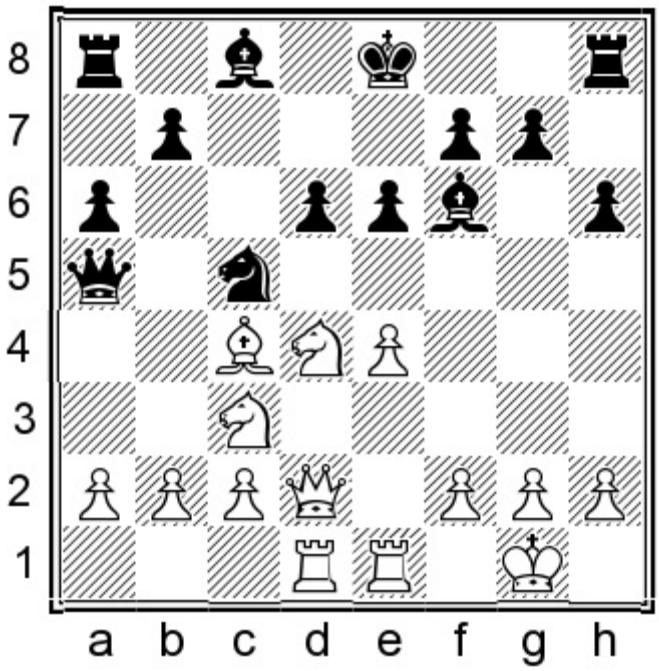
11.♖fe1 ♗d7?

Unbelievable! It is utterly impossible to imagine such a situation in present-day chess: a great master of the Sicilian Defence commits a decisive error as early as move 11. And as we shall see, his opponent, who will be World Champion the following year, misses the winning continuation! How I would have loved to play chess in those times myself!

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As a consequence of his unfortunate 10th move, Black already faced definite problems for Black, and finding a satisfactory continuation here is far from simple.

After 11...h6 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6, Tal would have started an immediate attack:



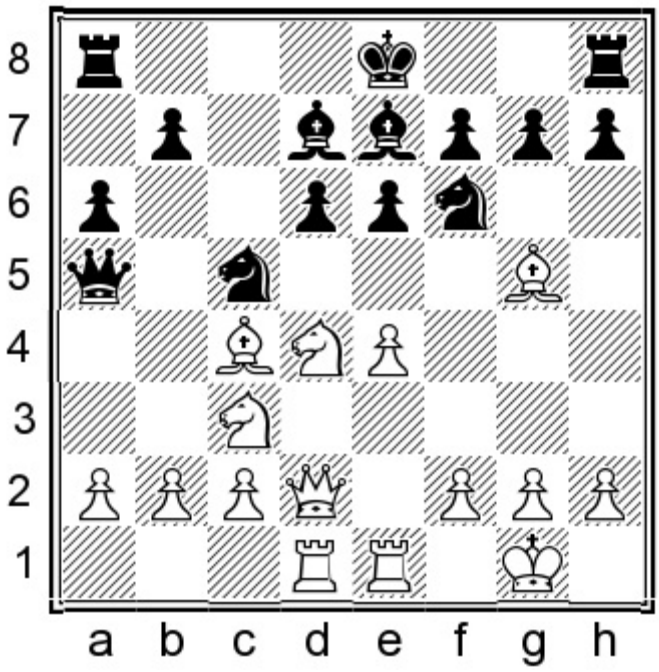
13.♘f5! 0-0 (13...exf5? 14.exf5† ♗e6 15.fxe6+–) 14.♘xd6 ♗e5 (14...♖d8 15.e5!) 15.f4 ♗xd6 16.♕xd6 ♗d7 17.a3 White has the initiative, though I wouldn't have been too surprised if Lev Polugaevsky had succeeded in defending.

There are likewise hard times ahead for Black after 11...♘a4 12.♘xa4 ♕xa4 13.♗b3 ♕d7 14.♕c3.

Conceivably 11...♘cd7 was his best chance, though my own hand would have refused to reach out and make this move against the young Mikhail Tal.

Clearly, then, 11...♗d7 was not played in comfortable circumstances! But in White's place, what would you do now?

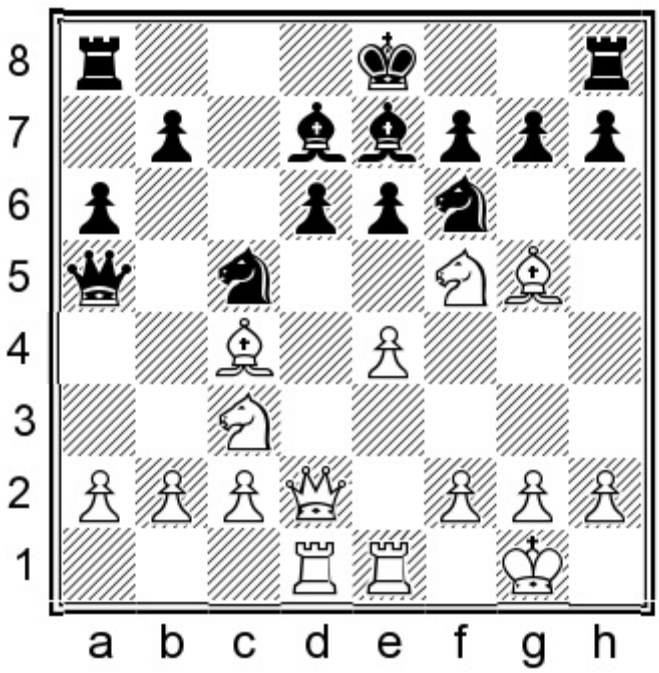
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12.a3?!

Tal was a practical player of genius, but as I understand it, when annotating games he never distinguished himself as a master of analysis. In practical play he was capable of finding the sole correct move and accurately calculating long and complex variations, yet his published analyses need to be checked very carefully! This move is a case in point. Tal liked it, but Kasparov, say, would have needed no more than two or three minutes for a sober appraisal of its quality.
Incidentally 12.♘b3 ♘xb3 13.♗xb3 ♖d8 14.♗f4 ♗c8 15.a4± was a reasonable alternative.

However, 12.♘f5! was immeasurably stronger. Black's position then simply collapses:

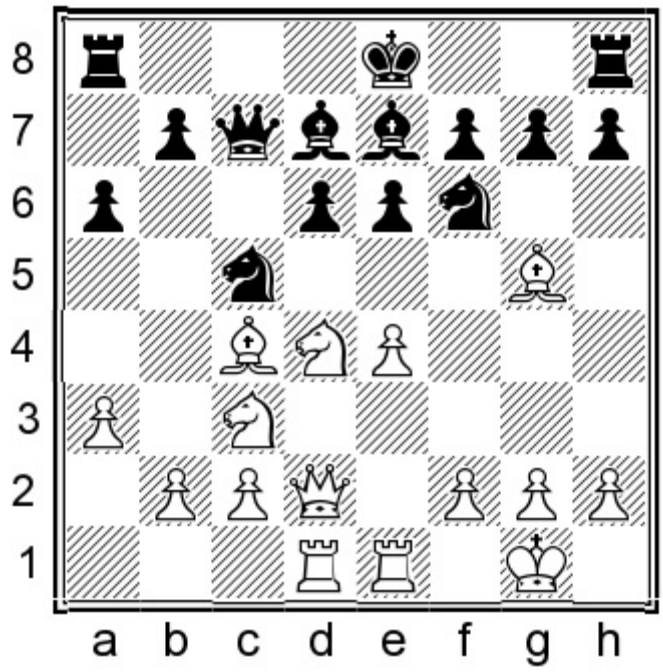


12...♘cxe4 (or 12...exf5 13.exf5 ♘ce4 14.♘xe4 ♕xd2 15.♖xd2+–) 13.♘xg7† ♔f8 14.♘xe4 ♕xd2 15.♘xe6†!? fxe6 16.♗xd2 ♘xe4 17.♖xe4 d5, and now, for example, 18.♗c3!? leaves White with an

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extra pawn and a won ending. If we ask how Tal came to overlook 12.♘f5!, I can find no rational explanation.

12...♕c7



13.b4!

A direct attack on the d6-pawn brings White no great dividends: 13.♘f3 0-0 (13...b5?! is well met by 14.b4, in view of 14...bxc4? 15.bxc5 ♕xc5 16.e5+–) 14.♗xf6 (14.e5 dxe5 15.♘xe5 ♖fd8=) 14...♗xf6 15.♕xd6 ♕xd6 16.♖xd6 ♗xc3 17.bxc3 ♖fd8 Black will bring his king to e7, making his position absolutely secure.

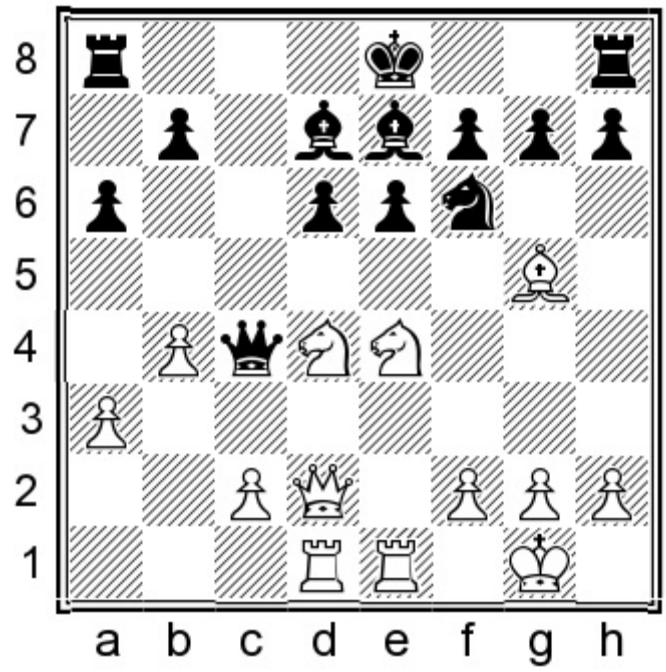
Once again, White could have played 13.♘f5, but this time – in contrast to the line in the previous note – a genuine sacrifice is involved, with consequences that are hard to evaluate after 13...exf5 14.exf5 ♗c6 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♕e3⇄. White definitely has some compensation for the piece, but is it enough?

13...♘a4

Polugaevsky played the only move, as we can see from the following:

13...♘cxe4? is easily refuted: 14.♘xe4 ♕xc4 (Black's fate is even worse after 14...♘xe4 15.♖xe4 ♗xg5 16.♕xg5 ♕xc4 17.♘f5!+–)

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15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♘f5!+–

13...♖c8? is no better: 14.bxc5 ♕xc5 15.e5! (15.♘f5! exf5 16.e5 ♘e4 17.♘xe4 fxe4 18.♗xe7 ♕xc4 19.♕g5+– is also sufficient to win) 15...♕xc4 16.exf6 ♕xc3 (or 16...gxf6 17.♘e4 fxg5 18.♘f5!+–) 17.fxe7 ♕xd2 18.♗xd2+– and the large material plus, together with the weakness of the d6-pawn, guarantees White a comfortable victory.

13...b5?

This allows White a wealth of possibilities.

14.bxc5!

14.♘dxb5!? axb5 15.♘xb5 ♗xb5 16.♗xb5† ♘fd7 17.e5! is excellent for White too.

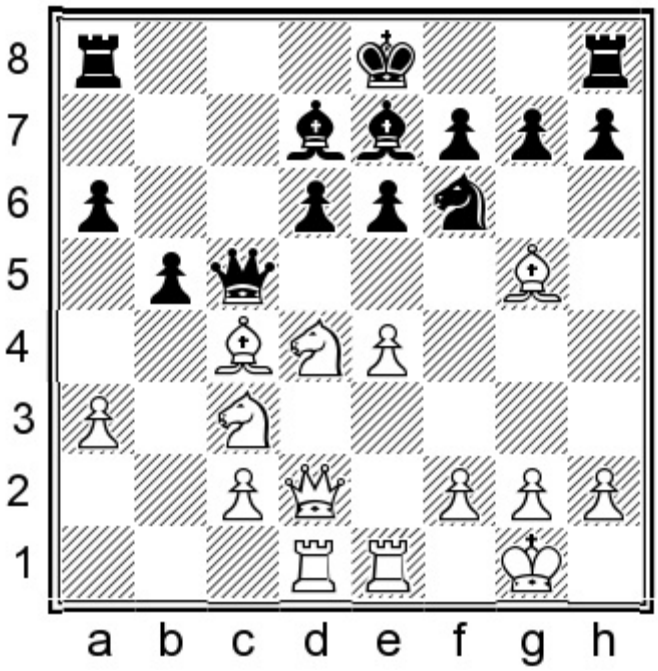
Also, after 14.♘f5!? exf5 15.bxc5 ♕xc5 16.e5! White's attack is irresistible.

14...♕xc5

14...dxc5 15.♘f5! is hopeless for Black.

14...bxc4 also loses at once to 15.♘f5 exf5 16.exf5!+–.

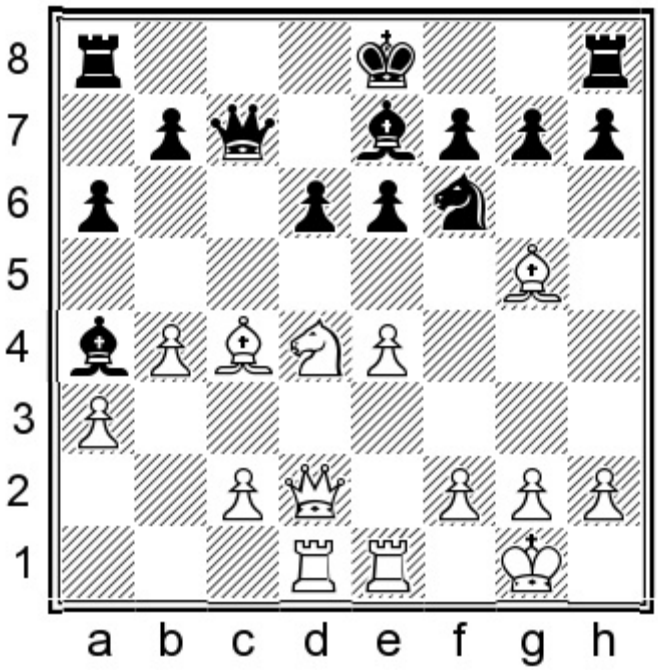
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15.e5!? dxe5 16.♘f5 exf5 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♕xd7† ♔f8 19.♗b3+–

Black is helpless, because taking the knight loses instantly to 20.♕d5!.

14.♘xa4 ♗xa4



15.♗xe6!

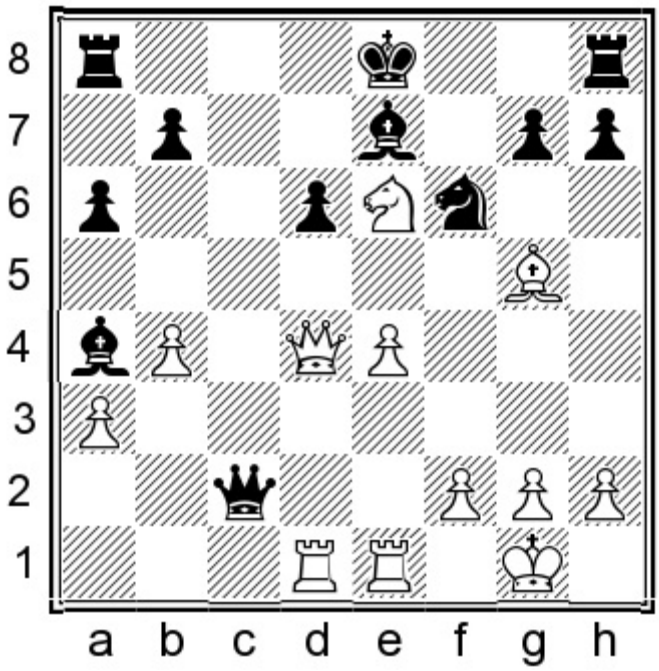
Tal isn't seeking any easy paths! Having missed a straightforward win already, he now goes in for obscure complications.

15...fxe6 16.♘xe6 ♕xc2□ 17.♕d4

We can already draw some provisional conclusions from the piece sacrifice. The knight on e6, controlling the entire centre and attacking against the king, is of course ample compensation for

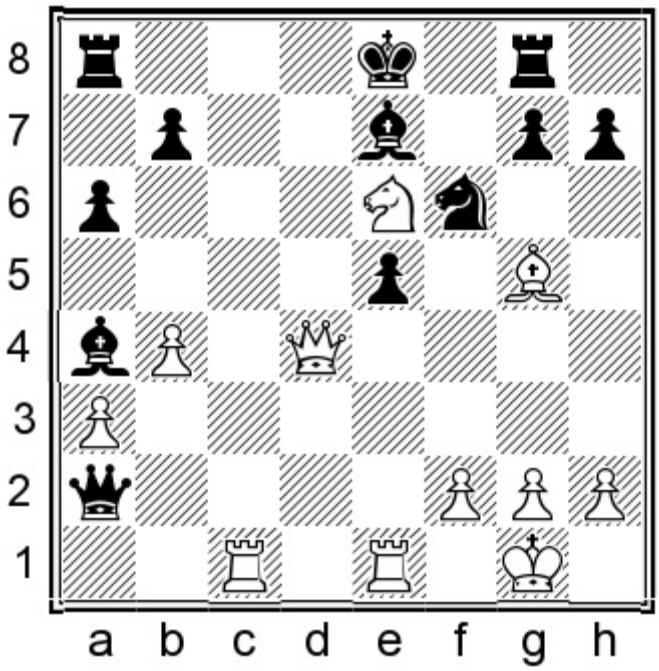
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White's minimal loss of material.



17...♔f7

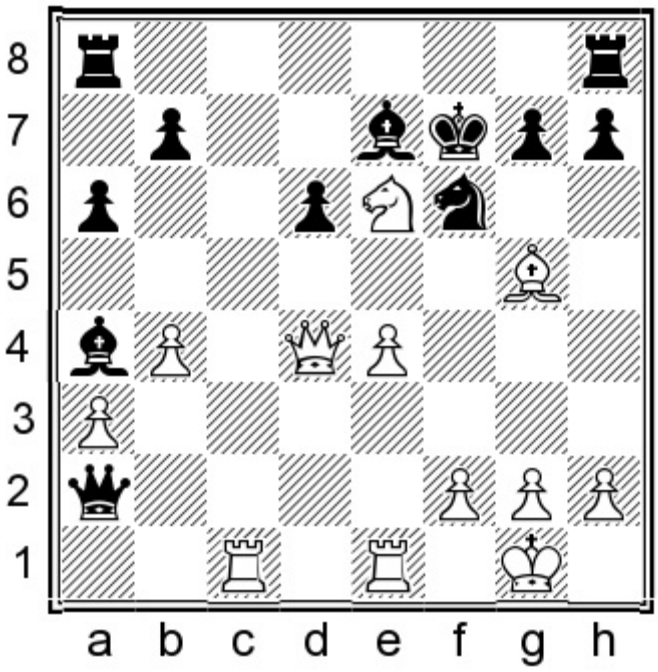
Without any doubt, the only move. 17...♖g8? is punished immediately: 18.♖c1! ♕a2 19.e5! dxe5



20.♖xe5!? (20.♕xe5 allows Black to get the queens off with 20...♕xf2†□ 21.♔xf2 ♘g4† 22.♔g1 ♘xe5 23.♖xe5, although even here White has a winning attack) 20...♗b5 (no better is 20...♗d7 21.♘xg7† ♖xg7 22.♗xf6 ♖f7 23.♕d6+–) 21.♘c7† ♔f7 22.♖xe7† ♔xe7 23.♗xf6† gxf6 24.♘d5†+–

18.♖c1 ♕a2

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19.e5!?

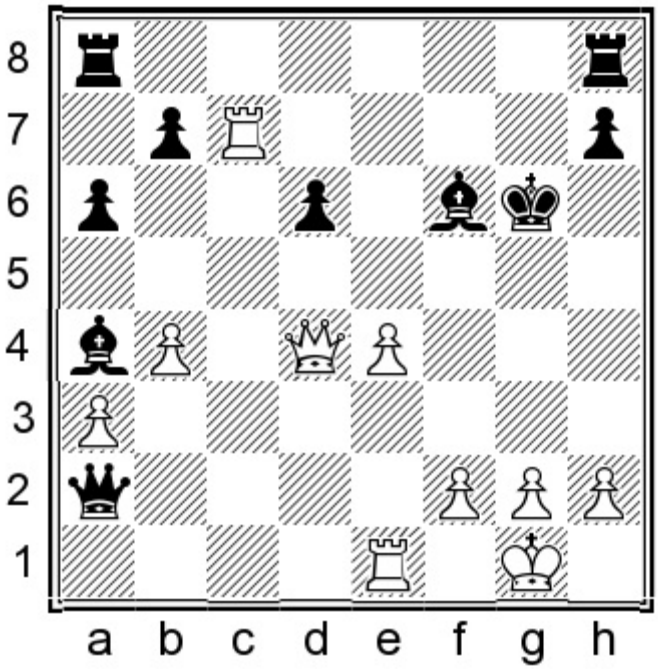
I spent a long time trying to discover the truth about the alternative line:

19.♘xg7 ♔xg7 20.♗xf6†!

This promises White more than: 20.e5 dxe5 21.♖xe5 ♕f7 22.♗h6†!? ♔xh6 23.♕e3† ♔g7 24.♖xe7 ♖hc8±

After 20.♖c7 ♕f7! 21.e5 Black is on the brink of the abyss, and yet 21...dxe5 22.♗xf6† ♕xf6 23.♖xe5 ♔f8 24.♖cxe7 ♕xe7 25.♖xe7 ♔xe7 26.♕e4† ♔d6 27.♕xb7!?⇄ allows him to maintain approximate equality in a position that remains fluid.

20...♗xf6 21.♖c7† ♔g6



22.e5!

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Adding fuel to the fire.

22...♕e6 23.♕d3† ♔h6

Black fails to organize decent resistance with 23...♕f5 24.♖e4 ♖ag8 25.exf6 ♗d7; after 26.g4 the discovered check will be decisive.

24.♕d2† ♗g5

24...♔g6 looks truly suicidal: 25.exf6 ♕xf6 26.♕d3† ♔h6 27.♕h3† ♔g5 28.f4† ♕xf4 29.♖g7† and mate will soon follow!

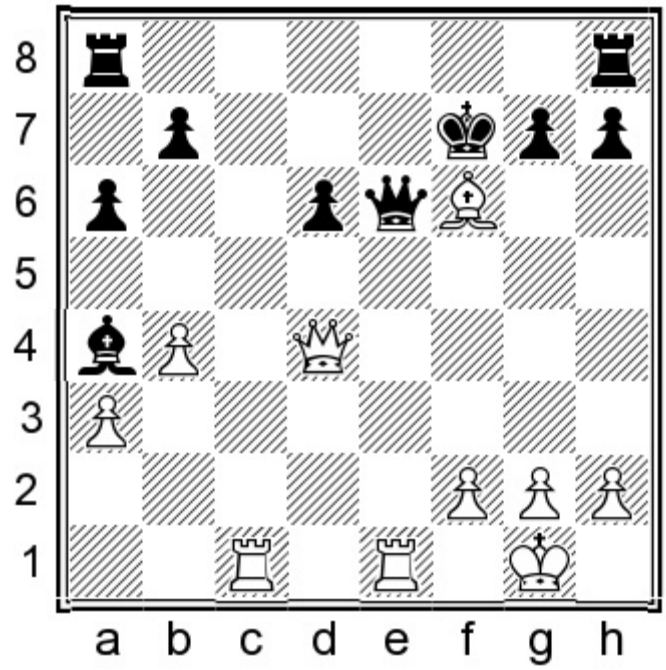
25.f4 ♗h4 26.f5† ♗g5 27.♕d3 ♕e8 28.♖e3!+–

This wasn't the only path to victory, but it was certainly the most attractive and simplest. The black king's remaining life span is limited to just a few moves.

Beautiful, striking variations – but unfortunately at the last minute it occurred to me that 19.♘xg7 can be answered by 19...♖hc8! 20.♘f5 ♕e6, and the position promises White nothing to speak of. So at least from the practical standpoint, the move in the game was stronger.

19...dxe5

At this point Lev Polugaevsky had a very difficult choice to make. After 19...♕xe6 20.exf6 ♗xf6 21.♗xf6, he would have had to decide whether to remove his opponent's last surviving minor piece or leave it alone for now. Let us examine both possibilities:



a) 21...♕xf6 22.♕d5† ♔f8 23.♖e6!

The greedy 23.♕xb7? ♖e8 24.♕xa6 was suggested by Tal, but is it worth wasting so much time over useless pawns?

23...♕f7

On 23...♕f4, White has the splendid choice between 24.♖e3! ♗c6 25.♖xc6 bxc6 26.♕xc6+– and the simple 24.♖c4!.

24.♕xd6† ♔g8 25.♖c7 ♕f5□ 26.h3!

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It never pays to forget about a bolt-hole – even kings need fresh air!

26...h5

After 26...♗e8 27.♖ee7 ♕f6 28.♕d5† ♔f8 29.♖e6! ♕f4 30.♖e5 ♗g6 31.g4! White's hunt is finally crowned with success.

27.♖e5

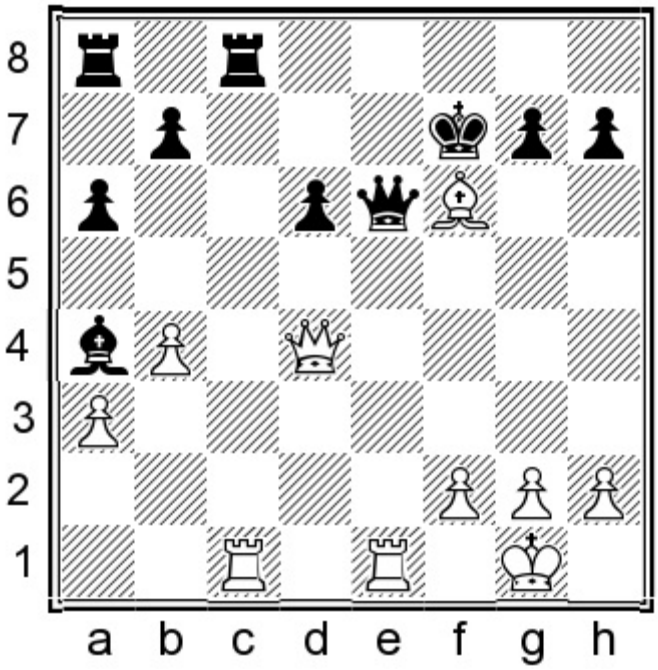
White also wins neatly after 27.♕d4 ♖h7 28.♕c4! ♔f8 29.♖e5! ♕f6 30.♖c8† ♖xc8 31.♕xc8† ♔f7 32.♖f5+–. He hasn't managed to mate the king, but the win of the queen entirely makes up for it!

27...♕b1† 28.♔h2 ♖h6□ 29.♖xg7† ♔xg7 30.♖e7† ♔f8 31.♖e6† ♔g8 32.♖xh6+–

The time has come to put the pieces away in the box! So it would seem that the white bishop was taboo.

b) 21...♖hc8!

As often happens, developing the pieces is more important than material gains.



22.♗xg7

A last attempt at playing for the win.

The game immediately ends in a draw after 22.♗h4 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖c8! 24.♕f4† ♔g8 25.♖xc8† ♕xc8 26.♗e7 ♕e8=, when White's extra pawn will constitute a purely symbolic plus.

22...♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖c8 24.♖a1

But not 24.♖f1? ♗b5 25.♖a1 ♖c4 26.♕b2 ♖g4–+ and it all ends in tears!

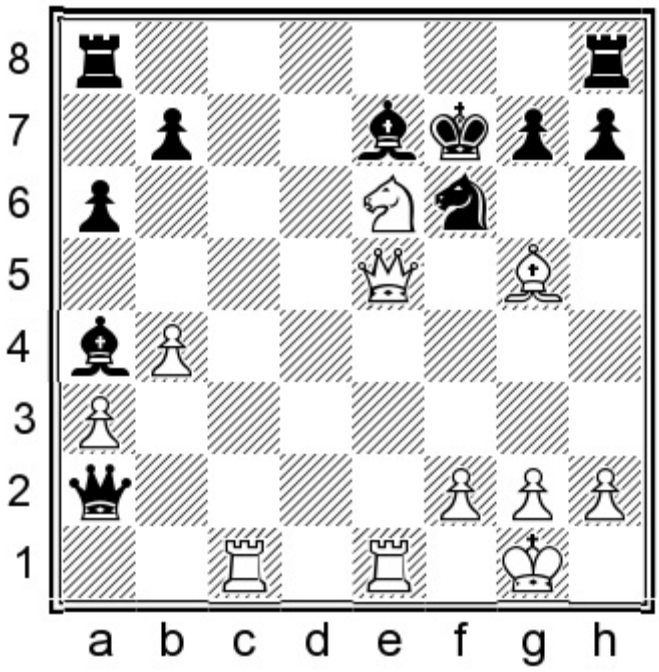
24...♖c4 25.♕b2 ♖c2=

And the rook can pursue the queen until the cows come home!

But let us not be hard on Polugaevsky for missing this draw; he will have further first-rate chances to attain that worthy result!

20.♕xe5

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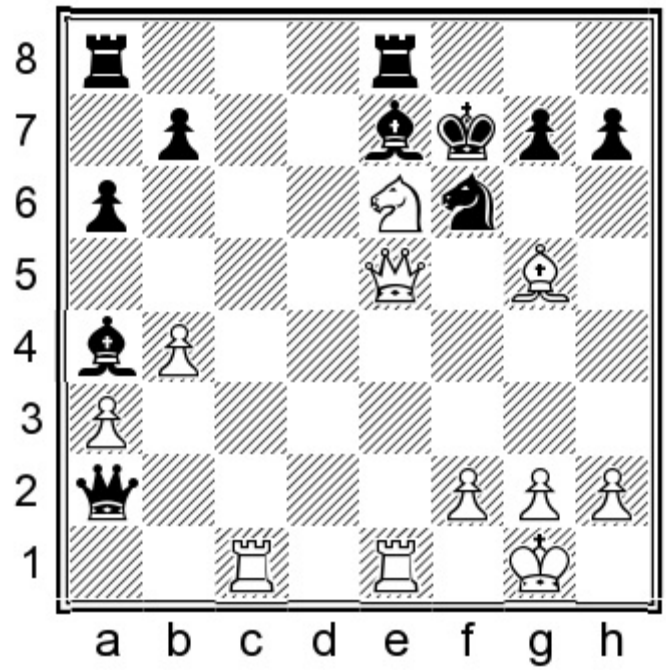
20...♕xf2†?

The critical moment of the game has arrived, but unfortunately there is no CNN newsflash to announce it, and Lev Polugaevsky misses a fortunate chance. The choice he makes is perfectly understandable – he has been under constant pressure for the last ten moves, there was at least one moment when he could have lost the game, and his king in the centre has been feeling extremely uncomfortable. He therefore takes the very first opportunity to exchange queens, hoping to secure equal chances in the ending. In so doing, however, he comes up against one unpleasant fact: without queens, White's attack is only strengthened!

Let us examine the position more closely to see what Black ought to have done. He has plenty of continuations available, but by no means all of them are effective:

Black loses with: 20...♖he8?

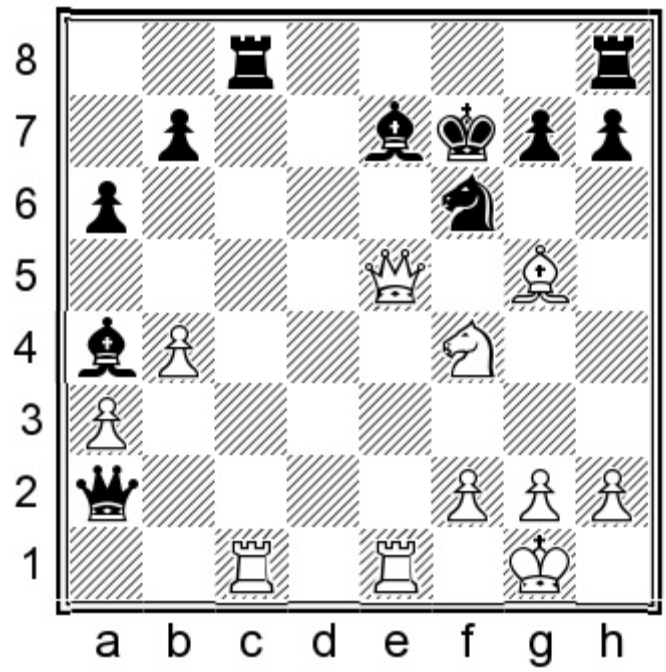
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21.♗xf6! ♗xf6 (if 21...gxf6? then 22.♕h5† ♔g8 23.♕g4† ♔f7 24.♕g7#) 22.♖c7† ♖e7 (22...♔g8? is simply refuted by 23.♖xg7†!+–) 23.♖xe7† ♔xe7 24.♕c7† ♗d7 25.♘g5† ♔f8 26.♘xh7† ♔g8 27.♘xf6† gxf6 28.♕xd7+– One failed attempt!

Another weak choice is: 20...♖hc8? 21.♖c7!±

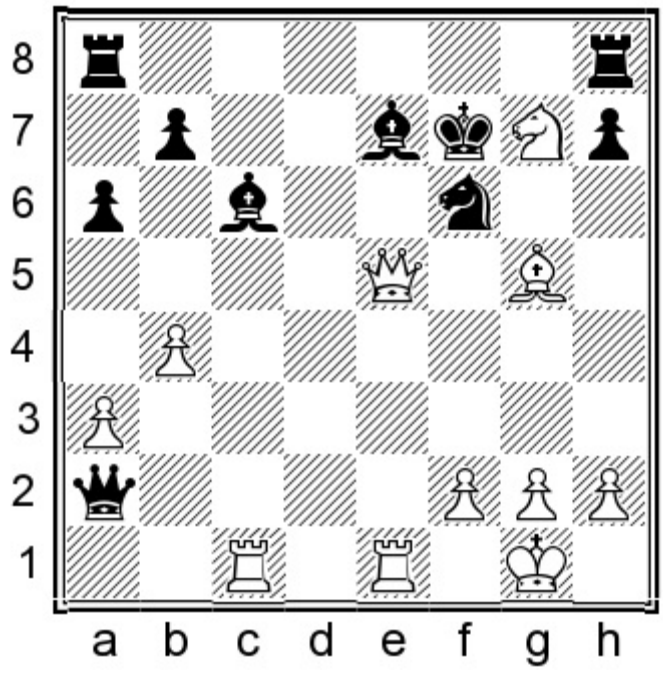
The play is much more interesting in the event of: 20...♖ac8!? 21.♘f4!



21...♗xb4 (21...♖ce8? 22.♖c7+– needs no comment; White also has a decisive plus after 21...♕xf2†? 22.♔h1! ♖he8 23.♕e6† ♔f8 24.♖xc8 ♕xe1† 25.♕xe1 ♖xc8 26.♘e6† ♔f7 27.♘xg7+–) 22.♗xf6 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖e8 24.♕h5† ♔g8 (24...♔xf6? 25.♘d5†+–) 25.axb4 gxf6 26.♕g4† White has some initiative, though Black's chances of a successful defence are good.

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20...♗c6!? 21.♘xg7

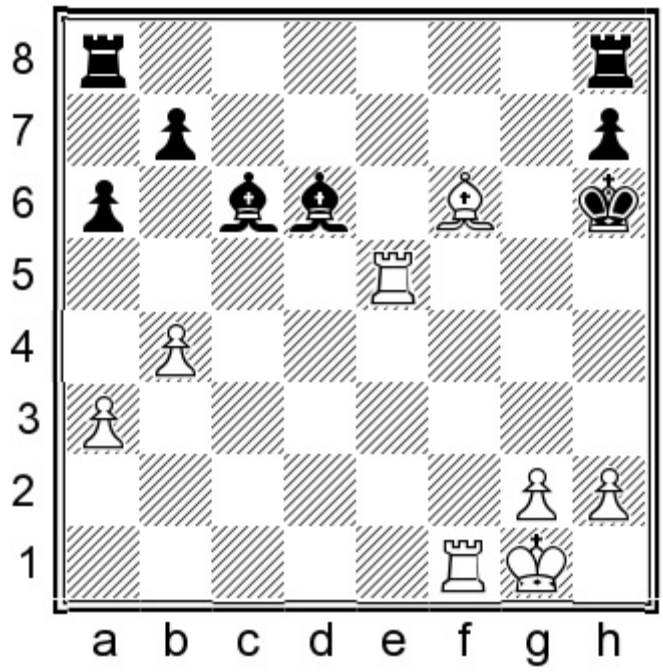


21...♕xf2†!?

At just the right time!

21...♗d8 22.♘e6 ♕d5!? 23.♘xd8† ♕xd8 24.♕e6†! ♔g6 25.♖ed1! (of course not 25.♖cd1? ♖e8!) 25...♖e8 26.♖xd8 ♖xe6 27.♗xf6 ♖xd8 28.♗xd8 and to all appearances the ending is won for White.

22.♔xf2 ♘g4† 23.♔g1 ♘xe5 24.♖xe5 ♗d6 25.♖f1† ♔xg7 26.♗f6† ♔h6



27.♗xh8

The outcome is not altered b27.♖e6 ♖hg8 28.♗e5† ♔h5 29.♖f5† ♔g4 30.♖f4† ♔h5= and there appears to be no way of exploiting the king's exposed position.

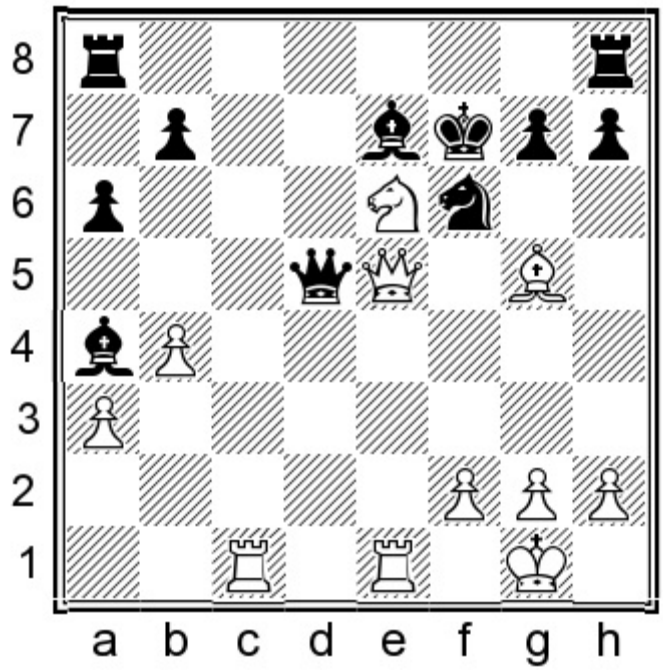
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27...♗xe5 28.♗xe5±

I find it hard to believe that White's extra pawn can be converted into a full point; the drawing factors in the opposite-coloured bishop ending are just too strong.

20...♕d5!

Probably the strongest move.



21.♗xf6

Black is all right after 21.♕xd5 ♘xd5 22.♗xe7 ♘xe7∞.

Tal recommended 21.♕g3 "with a strong attack", but 21...♖ac8! easily refutes White's idea. On 22.♘c7, Black has 22...♕d7. Nor is there any relief for White in 22.♗d2 ♘h5 23.♕g4 ♖xc1 24.♗xc1 g6 25.♗b2 ♖b8–+; he may use his active pieces to try to scare his opponent a little, but that is all.

21...♕xe5 22.♗xe5 ♔xe6 23.♗xg7† ♔d7 24.♗xh8 ♖xh8⇄

With chances for both sides in a complex ending.

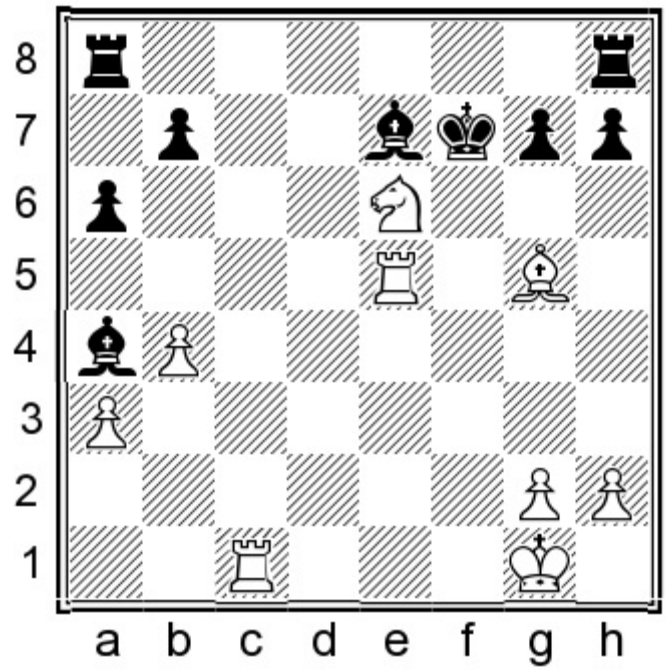
21.♔xf2 ♘g4† 22.♔g1

Incidentally avoiding an elementary trap: 22.♔g3? ♘xe5 23.♖c7 (23.♖xe5? ♗d6) 23...♘d7–+

22...♘xe5 23.♖xe5

Plenty of pieces have disappeared from the board, but White's attack continues with new strength!

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23...♗xg5

It isn't clear what else Black can do. He loses at once with 23...♗c6? 24.♖f1† ♗f6 25.♘xg7! or 23...♗f6? 24.♖c7† ♔g6 25.♘f4# or 23...♖ae8 24.♖c7.

And finally, 23...♗d6 also fails to save him: 24.♖f1† ♔g6 25.♖d5 ♗b8 26.♗e7! h6 (26...♗a7† 27.♗c5 ♗xc5† 28.bxc5 ♖ae8 29.♖d6+–) 27.♘f8† and Black suffers a heavy material loss.

24.♘xg5† ♔g6!

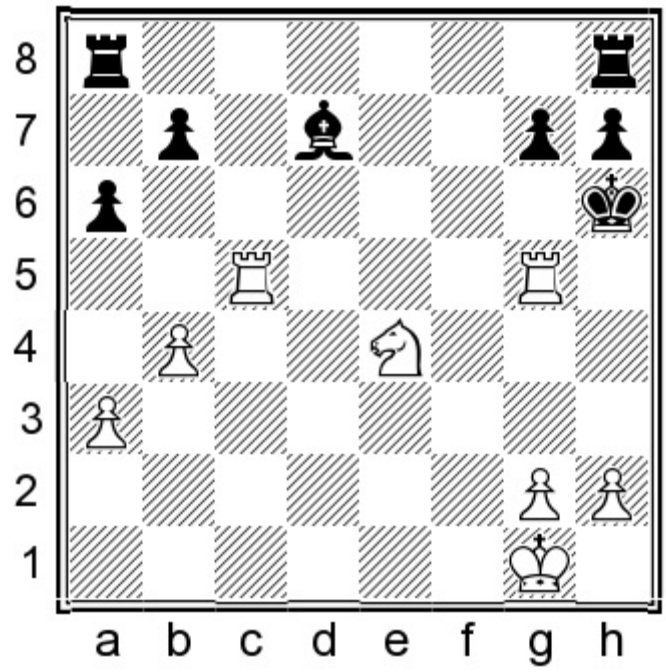
Polugaevsky continues to find the only move to defend. He would lose with:

24...♔f6? 25.♖cc5! ♗d7

On 25...♖he8, White wins the exchange by force: 26.♘e4† ♔g6 27.♖g5† ♔h6 28.♖h5† ♔g6 29.♖cg5† ♔f7 30.♘d6†

26.♘e4† ♔g6 27.♖g5† ♔h6

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28.♘d6! ♖af8

In the event of 28...♖hf8 29.♖h5† ♔g6 30.♖cg5† ♔f6 31.♘e4† ♔f7 32.♖xh7, Tal would have won a pawn while preserving all the advantages of his position.

The same can be said of 28...♗e6 29.♖ge5 ♗a2 30.♖c2 ♗g8 31.♘xb7, after which Black's chances of salvation are minimal.

29.h4 g6 30.♖c7 ♗e6 31.♖e5 ♖f6 32.g4!+–

Black can't avoid loss of material, and there is also a hard life ahead for his king.

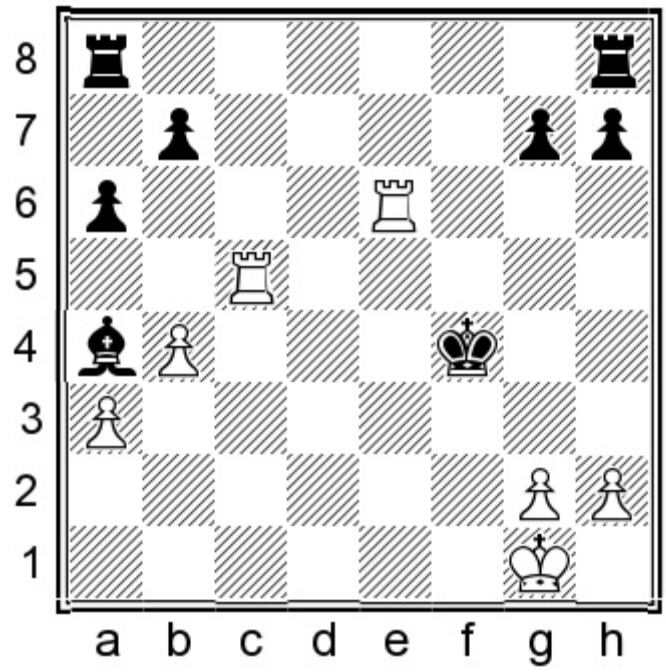
25.♘e6±

With accurate defence, Black should not lose after 25.♘f3 ♖hc8 26.♖f1 ♔f7!±.

Another try that fails is:

25.♖e6†?! ♔xg5 26.♖c5† ♔f4

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27.♖ee5!

27.♔f2? works perfectly after 27...g5? 28.h3!+– or 27...♖ad8?? 28.g3† ♔g4 29.♖e4† ♔h3 30.♖h4#.

But things turn out very differently in the case of 27...♗c6!? 28.h3 ♗xg2! 29.♔xg2 ♖he8 30.♖xe8 ♖xe8 31.♖c7=.

And Black can do even better with 27...♖ae8! 28.g3† ♔g4 29.♔g2 ♗c6†□ 30.♖exc6 ♖e2† 31.♔f1 ♖xh2∓.

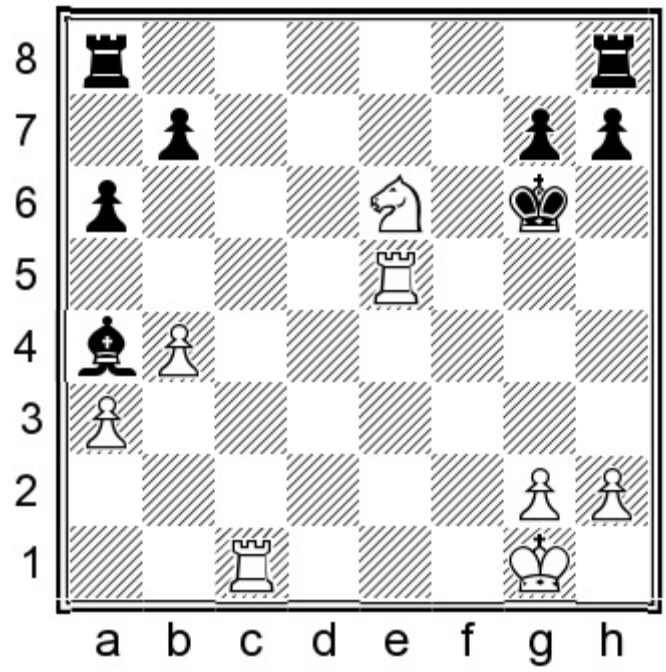
27...♖ac8 28.g3† ♔f3

28...♔g4?? 29.♔g2! can only occur in White's dreams!

29.♖f5† ♔e4 30.♖fe5†=

It is probably only 25.♖c7!? ♗c6!? (or 25...♖he8 26.♘f3! ♖xe5 27.♘xe5† ♔f6 28.♘g4†±) 26.♘f3 (or 26.♘h3) 26...♗xf3 27.gxf3 b5 28.♖ee7 that guarantees White a significant advantage.

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25...♖he8

Playing such a position (especially in time trouble, as was presumably the case) is most irksome. You keep getting the impression that the draw is somewhere near, and that if you play a good move you can expect an immediate reward for it. But in reality it all turns out to be much more complicated – you have to struggle for the draw by putting all your skill and energy into every move. Lev Polugaevsky has been defending splendidly, but he still has work to do.

At this point he could have played 25...♖hc8!?, but 26.♖f1 ♗b5 27.♖fe1 would still have left some initiative in his opponent's hands.

Nor would Black equalize fully after: 25...♖ac8 26.♘f4† ♔f6 27.♖ce1 ♖ce8 (a curious line is 27...♖he8? 28.♘d5† ♔f7 29.♘e7+–, and by threatening mate White wins the exchange) 28.♘d5† ♔g6 29.♘e7† ♔h6 30.♖e6† g6 31.♘f5†! ♔g5 32.♘d6 and again White keeps a small plus.

26.♖e3!

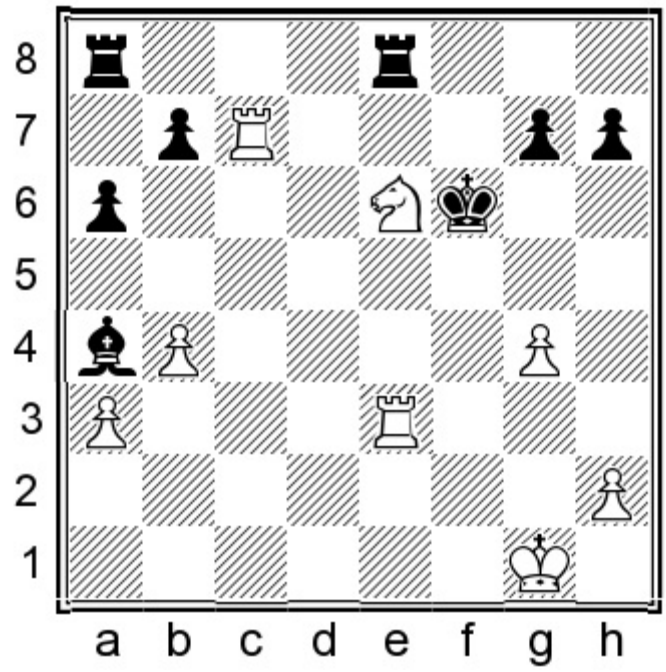
In the ability to maintain the tension on the board, there was simply no one to equal Mikhail Tal in those years. The rook threatens to check on g3, with ♘c7 to follow.

26...♖ac8

The difficulties confronting Black are well illustrated by the following variation: 26...♔f7 27.♖c7† ♔f6 28.g4!?

Without queens on the board, all your forces have to participate in the attack!

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28...h6!

Avoiding both 28...♖xe6? 29.g5† ♔f5 30.♖c5†+– and 28...g5? 29.♖xh7+–.

29.h4 g5 30.♖h7

On 30.hxg5† hxg5 31.♖h7 ♗d1!?± Black's drawing chances are increased.

30...♔g6

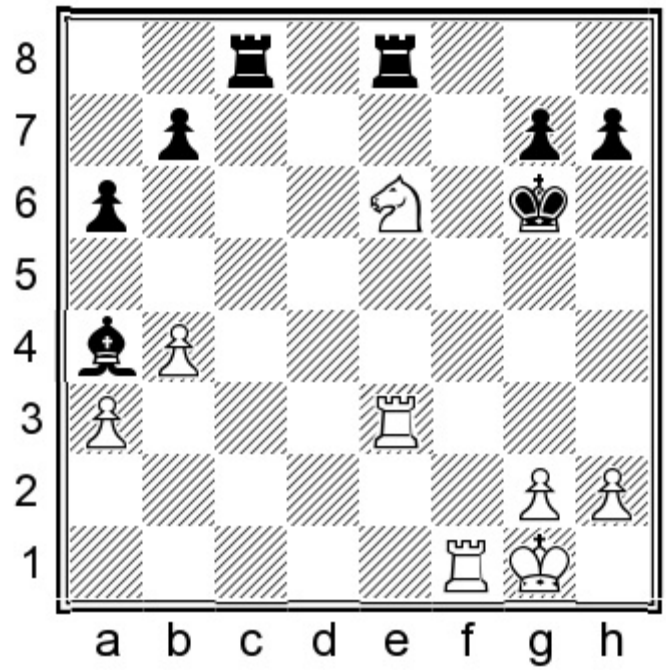
After 30...♖h8? 31.♖xb7! gxh4 32.♘c5, the attack flares up with new vehemence: 32...♗c2 (or 32...♗b5 33.♖e6† ♔g5 34.a4! ♗e8 35.♖g7† ♔f4 36.♔f2 and mate is unavoidable) 33.♖e6† ♔g5 34.♖g7† ♔f4 35.♖f7† ♔xg4 36.♖e2!+–

31.♖xb7 gxh4 32.♖e4!?

As well as threatening 33.♘f4† ♔g5 34.♖g7† ♔f6 35.♘h5#, White is planning to bring the king to the centre, and in some lines ♖b6 may be awkward to meet – Black is in trouble.

27.♖f1!

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27...♗b5?

A serious mistake! He could have preserved much more in the way of drawing chances with 27...♗d7!. Then after 28.♖g3† ♔h6 29.♘xg7 ♖f8□ 30.♖d1 ♖c6!? 31.h3 ♖f7 32.♖e1! Black will probably manage to reach a drawish rook endgame. The move he played makes his task a good deal more complicated.

28.♖g3† ♔h6 29.♘xg7!

Tactics right up until the end!

29...♖f8

Polugaevsky could have tried fighting for the draw in a different way: 29...♗xf1 30.♘xe8 ♗b5 (after 30...♖xe8 31.♔xf1 Black would have to play a rook endgame with his king stuck on the edge of the board) 31.♘d6 ♖c1† 32.♔f2 ♖f1† 33.♔e3 ♗c6 34.h3 ♖f6 35.♘e4 ♖e6 36.♖g4 a5 37.♔d4 and Black will need to play with great care and accuracy if he doesn't want to suffer defeat.

30.♖e1 ♖f6

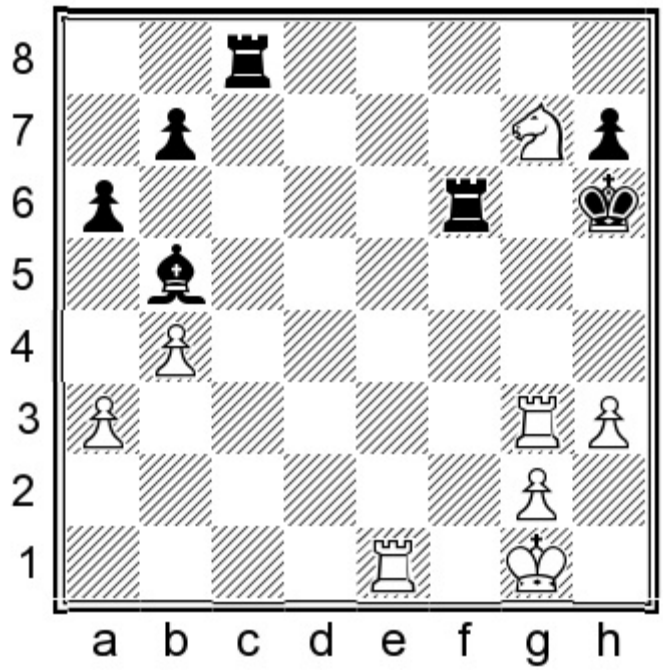
Or 30...♗d7, whereupon White would have to choose between 31.♘e6 ♖fe8 32.♖h3† ♔g6 33.♘f4† ♔g5 34.♖xe8 ♗xe8 35.♘e2 and 31.h3!? ♖f6! (31...♖f7?? 32.♖e4+–) 32.♖e7 ♖c1† 33.♔h2, with winning chances in both cases.

31.h3

Tal always liked such moves, which are insignificant at first sight, but leave the opponent alone with his problems.

Another interesting possibility is 31.♘e6 ♗c4 32.♘d4, which is best answered by 32...♖e8!±.

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31...♖c2??

It's difficult for me to say whether Black retained any real drawing chances, but after this move it is all over! However, it would be a hard and thankless task to defend Black's position after either 31...♗d7!? 32.♖e7 (32.♔h2!?) 32...♖c1† 33.♔h2 ♖d1 34.♖e5↑ or 31...♖cf8!? 32.♔h2±.

32.♖e4!?

The alternative 32.♖e5! ♖c1† (32...♗e2 33.♖e4) 33.♔h2 ♖g6 34.♘f5† ♔h5 35.♘e7†+– was perfectly good too, but Tal has other intentions.

32...♖c4 33.♖e5 ♖c1†

There is no longer any difficulty in evaluating the position. After either 33...♖g6 34.♘f5† ♔h5 35.♘e7† or 33...♖h4 34.♘f5† ♖xf5 35.♖xf5+– Black's game is completely hopeless, and the move he plays is no better.

34.♔h2

1–0

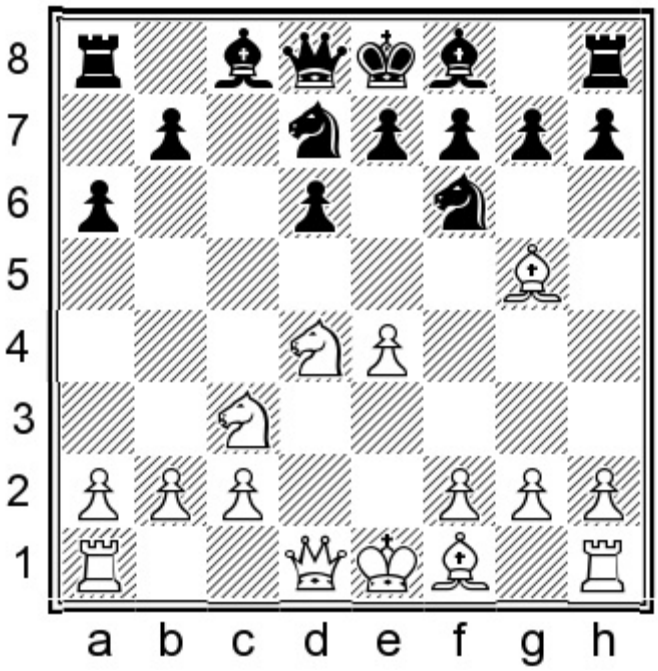
An interesting and difficult game. After the aberration in the opening – Tal would usually see moves like 12.♘f5! even in blitz chess – White succeeded in seizing the initiative, and in order to sustain it he didn't shrink from a piece sacrifice. Although it is of course astonishing that two such great players should have overlooked 12.♘f5!, there is perhaps the defence that in those years this kind of move wasn't as hackneyed as it is today. Endeavouring to reduce the pressure on his king, Lev Polugaevsky managed to exchange queens and almost equalized the chances – almost, but not quite! He may have imagined that the draw was not far off, but with ingenious play Tal was constantly able to maintain the tension, and for this he was rewarded. Under fatigue, Polugaevsky made a couple of small mistakes and was swiftly annihilated.

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Aleksander Nikitin – Mikhail Tal

USSR Championship 1959

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



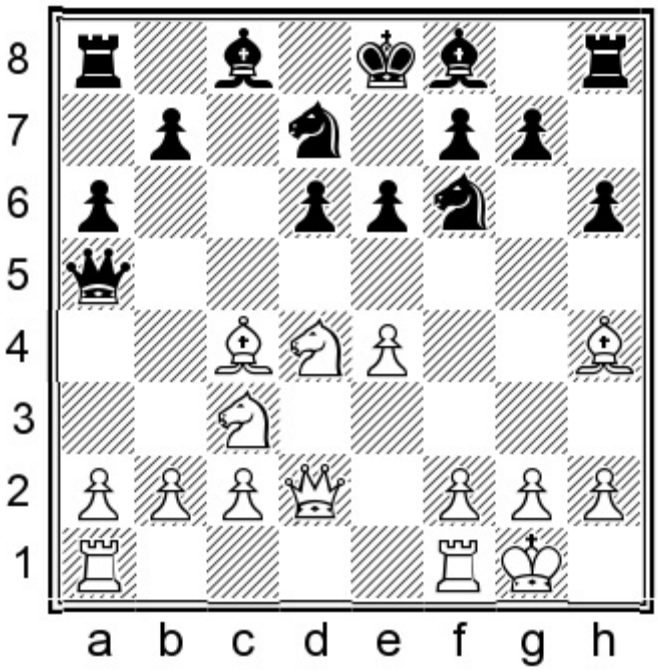
From all the evidence, this variation was very popular in 1959! The Tal – Polugaevsky game that we have just examined was played in the third round of the USSR Championship. We are now looking at a game from Round 17 of the same event, and this time it is Tal who is endeavouring to defend the black side.

7.♗c4 ♕a5 8.♕d2 e6 9.0-0

Within a fairly short time, 9.0-0-0!? was to become a good deal more popular.

9...h6 10.♗h4

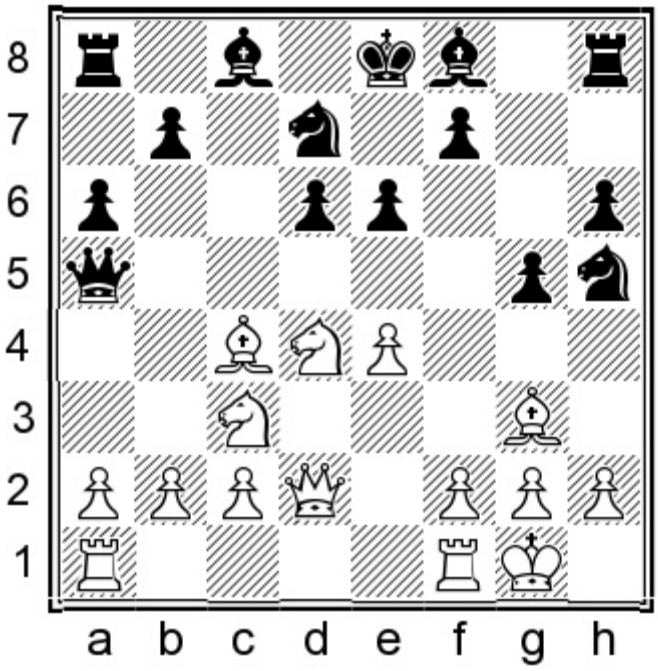
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10...♗e7

Not long afterwards, 10...♘e5 began to be played here much more often. One continuation was 11.♗b3 g5 12.♗g3 ♗e7 13.♔h1 ♗d7 14.f4 gxf4 15.♗xf4 ♖c8 16.♖ad1 ♕c7 with complex play in Van den Berg – F. Olafsson, Beverwijk 1959.

Similar variations arise from Tigran Petrosian's favourite line: 10...g5 11.♗g3 ♘h5



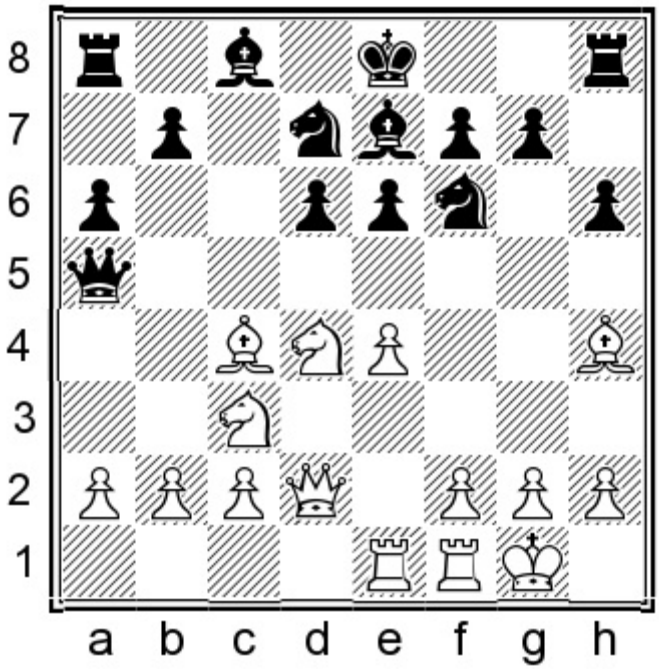
12.♗xe6! This results in a flurry of complications. (12.♖ad1 ♘e5 13.♗e2 ♘xg3 14.hxg3 g4 15.f4 gxf3 16.gxf3 ♗d7 17.f4 ♘c6 18.♘b3 ♕b6† was roughly equal in Gufeld – Petrosian, Moscow 1959) 12...fxe6 13.♘xe6 ♘xg3 14.fxg3 ♘e5 15.♖xf8† ♖xf8 16.♕xd6 ♖f6 17.♘c7† ♔f7 18.♖f1 ♖xf1† 19.♔xf1 ♘c4 20.♕xh6 ♕c5 21.♘xa8 ♘d2† 22.♔e2 ♗g4† 23.♔d3 ♕c4† 24.♔e3 ♕c5† ½–½ Tal –

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Petrosian, Yugoslavia 1959.

11.♖ae1

In the event of 11.♗g3 ♘h5 12.♖ad1 ♘xg3 13.hxg3 ♘e5 14.♗e2 ♗d7, the elimination of his opponent's important dark-squared bishop considerably simplifies Black's tasks.



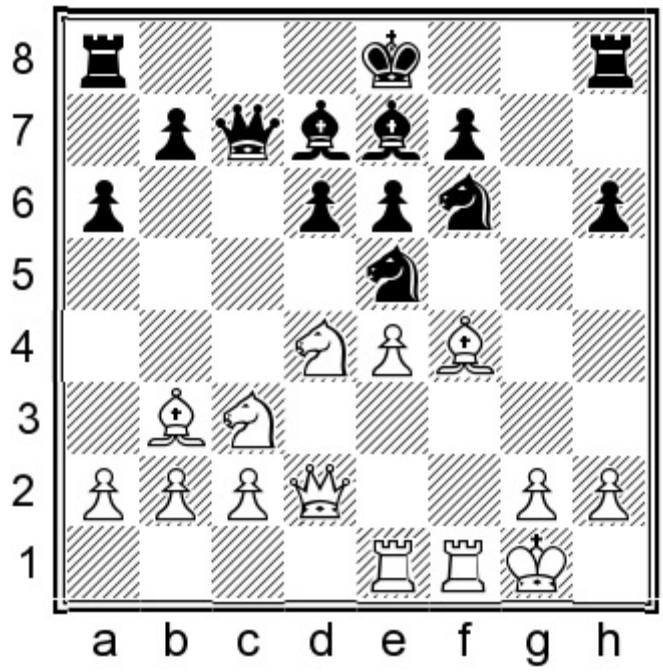
11...♘e5 12.♗b3

White isn't promised any gains by 12.♗d3 g5 13.♗g3 ♘h5 14.♘b3 ♕c7 15.♗xe5 dxe5 16.g3 ♗d7= Kholmov – Bogdanovic, Pecs 1964. Again the absence of his dark-squared bishop deprives White of any chances of an advantage.

12...g5 13.♗g3 ♗d7 14.f4!? gxf4 15.♗xf4 ♕c7

The play becomes sharper before your very eyes. White has opened the f-file for himself, but simultaneously opened the g-file for his opponent. And if you opened a file for Tal, you could always expect trouble!

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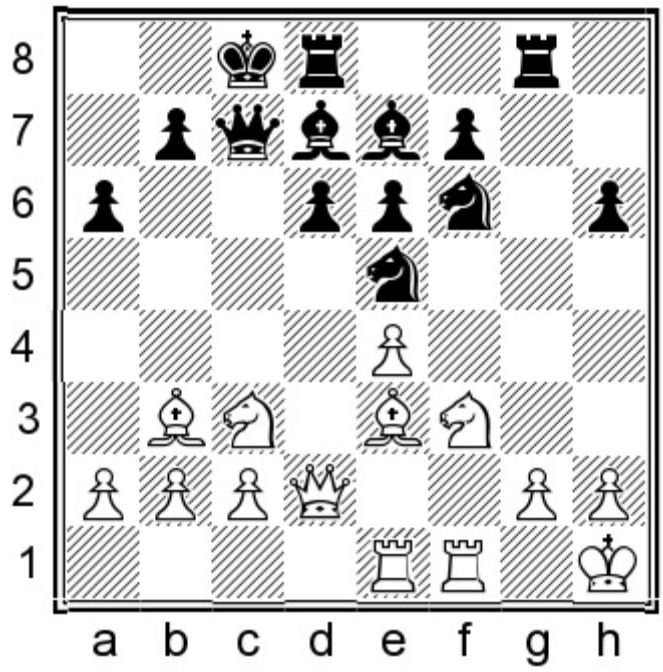
16.♘f3

Of course, 16.♗xe5? dxe5 17.♘f3 0-0-0∓ could be of benefit only to Black.

However, 16.♘a4!?, hoping to exchange queens on c3, deserved attention.

16...0-0-0 17.♔h1 ♖hg8 18.♗e3

It's interesting to ask whether you could have found many players willing to win a pawn by 18.♗xh6 when facing Tal. The fact is that Black has nothing concrete to show for it. Still, two open files leading towards the white king... You would at any rate need an iron nervous system! And would that even be sufficient?



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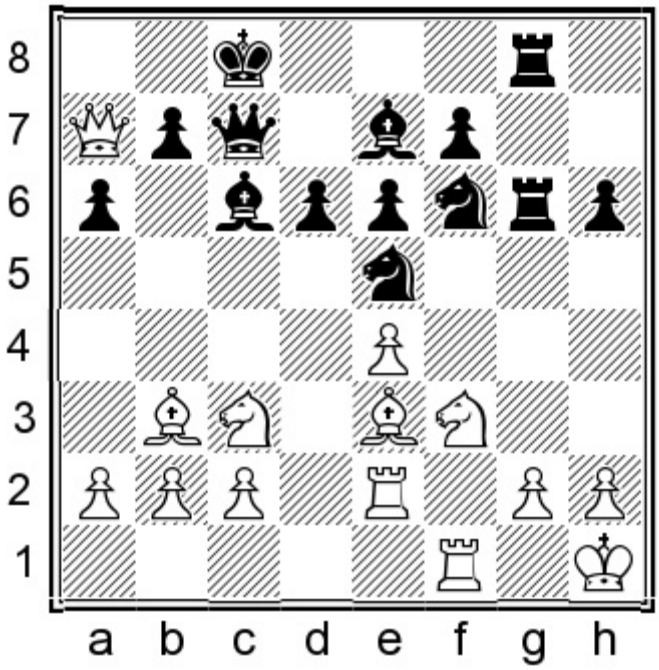
18...♗c6 19.♕d4 ♖g6

Tal could have tried fishing in troubled waters with 19...♘eg4!? 20.♗g1 d5, but it isn't clear why he should be in a hurry – he has a good position as it is.

20.♖e2 ♖dg8 21.♕a7

It's a curious question – who is actually doing the attacking? Nikitin could have tried exchanging queens with 21.♘xe5 dxe5 22.♕b6, but after 22...♕xb6 23.♗xb6 ♗b4! the ending is clearly better for Black.

However, in Black's place, what do we do now? Do we take on e4, or should we postpone this capture for the moment?



21...♘xe4??

Whenever I have come across this move in chess magazines and books, it has been accompanied by a pair of exclamation marks, but personally I have very serious doubts on that score! Moves that deserved consideration were 21...♘fg4!? and, especially, 21...♕b8!?.

22.♗b6??

The future trainer of Garry Kasparov takes for granted that his fearsome opponent's idea is sound. But he shouldn't have! We have a well-known saying – Take nothing on trust, don't be afraid, don't ask favours. And no one yet has declared it invalid!

It is perfectly easy to reject:

22.♘xe5?? dxe5 23.♘xe4

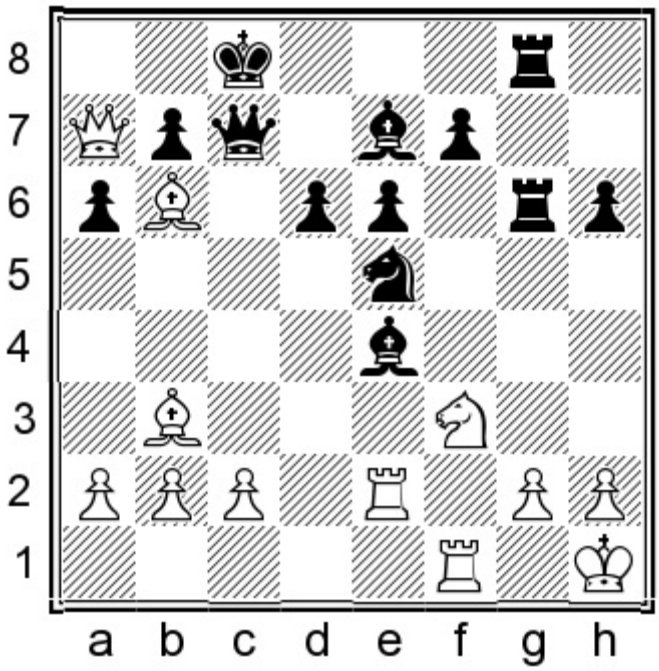
After 23.♖xf7 ♘xc3 24.bxc3, Black doesn't fall for the simple little trap 24...♗xg2†?? 25.♖xg2 ♕c6 26.♕a8† ♔d7 27.♗a4!+–, but just plays 24...♕d6!–+ with an easy win.

23...♗xe4 24.♖xf7 ♕d6!–+

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But not 24...♖xg2?? 25.♗xe6†+−.

However, the interesting question is why the annotators didn't find the following wholly uncomplicated continuation (for which I don't think they should even have needed Rybka):
22.♘xe4! ♗xe4 23.♗b6



23...♘c6

Other moves are worse:

a) If Black has a strong desire to end the game quickly, he can continue 23...♕c6 24.♖xe4! ♕xe4 25.♕a8† ♔d7 26.♗a4†! ♕xa4 27.♕xb7† ♔e8 28.♕c8† ♗d8 29.♕xd8#.

b) Nor does he manage to organize proper resistance after 23...♗xf3 24.♗xc7 and now:

b1) 24...♗c6 loses to 25.♗a4!. As we can see, this idea keeps on cropping up!

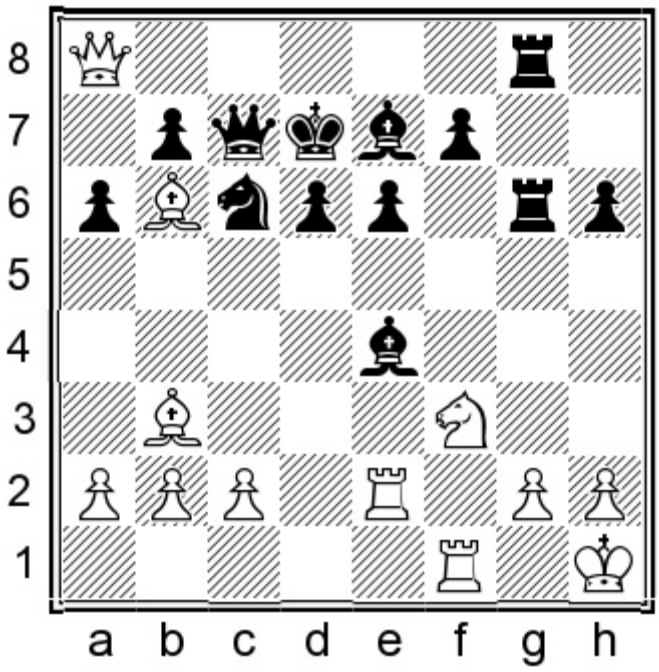
b2) 24...♗xe2? is very simply punished by 25.♕b8† ♔d7 26.♕xb7.

b3) 24...♖xg2 25.♖xf3 ♖g1† 26.♕xg1 ♖xg1† 27.♔xg1 ♘xf3† 28.♔f2 ♘d4 29.♗b6! ♘xe2 30.♔xe2+– Like the rest of the analysis, this is anything but difficult to find.

24.♕a8† ♔d7

24...♕b8 25.♕xb8† ♔xb8 26.♖xe4+– costs Black a piece.

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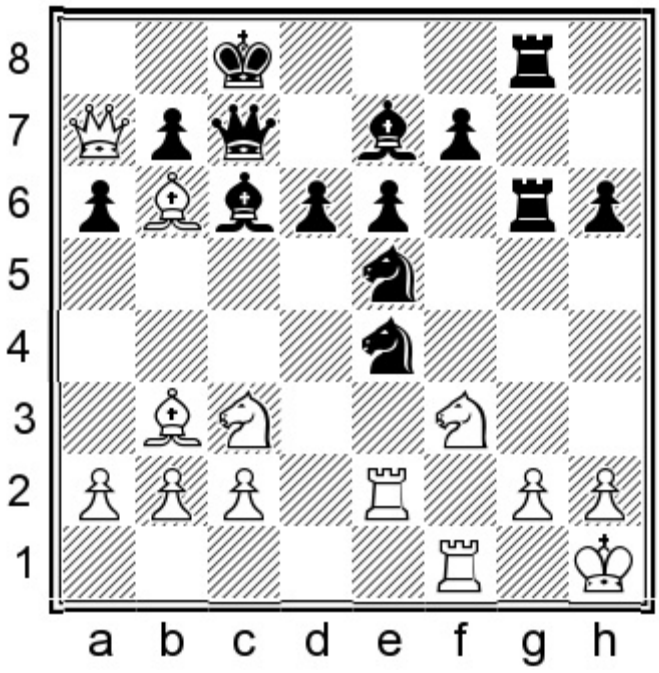


25.♕xg8! ♖xg8

25...♕xb6 26.♕xf7 ♖f6 27.♕g7 ♗xf3 28.♖xf3 ♕d4 29.♕g3+– can scarcely be recommended to Black.

26.♗xc7 ♗xf3 27.♖xf3!? ♘d4 28.♗b6 ♘xe2 29.♖f2 ♘c1 30.♗a4† ♔c8 31.♖xf7

White has a big advantage in the ending.



22...♘xc3!!

All Tal's pieces are directed against the crucial squares f3 and g2, and the impression is that mate will be a matter of a few more moves. But events are going to take rather an unexpected turn.

23.♗xc7

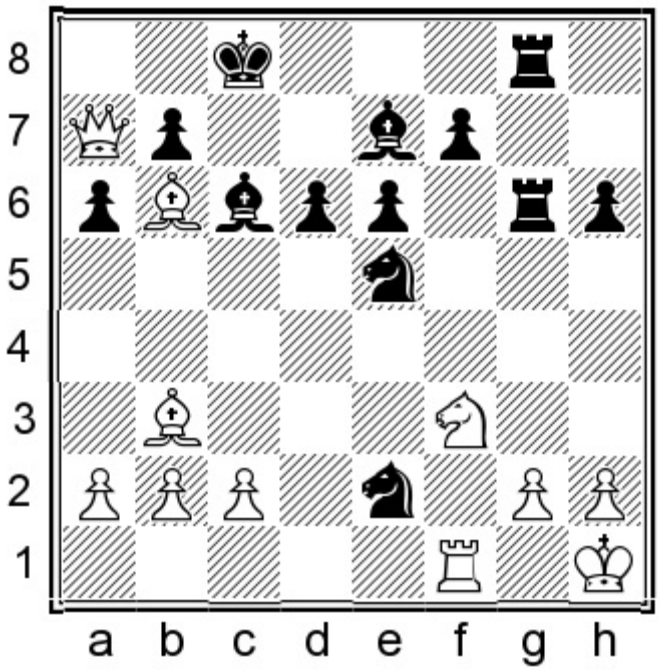
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What else can be suggested for White (other than acknowledgement of defeat)?

He loses at once with 23.bxc3 ♕b8–+.
No better is: 23.♖xe5 ♕b8! (but not 23...♗xf3?? 24.♖xf3+–) 24.♕xb8† ♔xb8–+

Nor is anything altered by 23.♘xe5 dxe5 24.♕a8† ♕b8–+.

23...♘xe2 24.♗b6

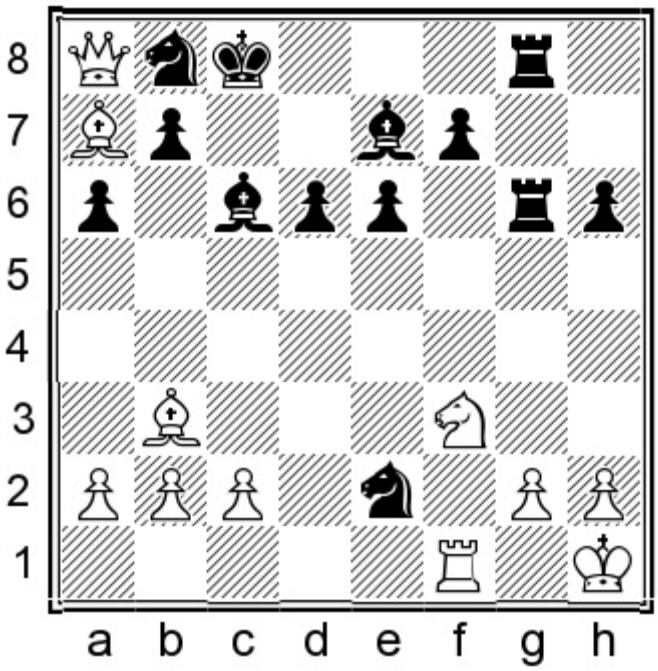


24...♖xg2?!

I fancy that at this moment Tal was not so much thinking about his move as feeling amazed that White was continuing resistance. That is the only way I can explain why the great master of combination played this move.

Much stronger is the less obvious: 24...♘d7! 25.♕a8† (in the event of 25.g3 ♘xb6 26.♕xb6 ♘xg3† 27.hxg3 ♖xg3 28.♔h2 ♗xf3–+ the white king is left completely isolated) 25...♘b8 26.♗a7

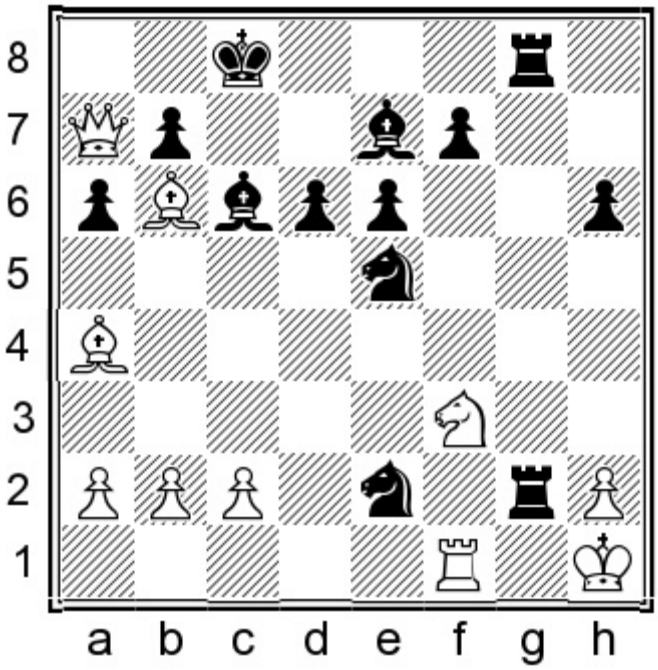
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26...♖xg2! 27.♕xb8† ♔d7 28.♕xg8 (or 28.♗a4 b5) 28...♖xg8–+ This line would have been a logical conclusion to the game, but Tal probably just missed his opponent's next move. Even the sun has sunspots!

25.♗a4!!

Not too complicated a move, but a beautiful one. White simply has to get rid of the bishop on c6!



25...♖g1†□

The heedless 25...♘xf3?? loses instantly to 26.♕a8† ♔d7 27.♕xb7†.

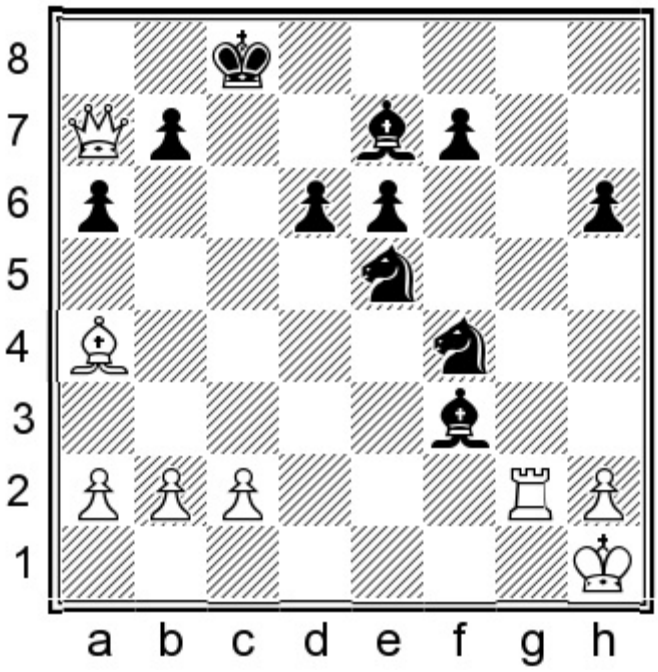
26.♗xg1 ♖xg1†

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26...♗xf3† 27.♖xf3 ♖xg1† 28.♕xg1 is merely a transposition.

27.♕xg1

After 27.♖xg1? ♗xf3† 28.♖g2 ♘f4–+

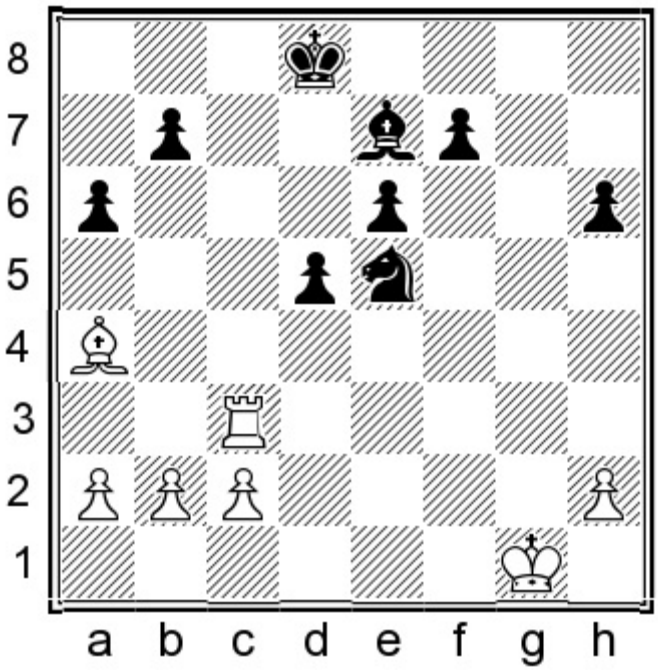


the board simply goes dark from the mass of black pieces.

27...♗xf3†

Of course not 27...♘xf3?? 28.♕g8† ♔c7 29.♗xc6+–.

28.♖xf3 ♘xg1 29.♖c3† ♔d8 30.♔xg1 d5∓



We can now take stock of the situation. Black has two pawns for the exchange, and an excellent

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pawn structure. A no less important point is that the bishops of opposite colours undoubtedly enhance his winning chances. Nikitin might possibly have succeeded in holding the position with accurate play, but it is very difficult.

31.♖g3 ♗g5 32.b4

Tal has succeeded in provoking a first weakness in the white pawn structure. It would have been very hard for White to avoid this. For example, 32.c3 ♘c4 33.b4 ♔e7 leads to much the same result.

32...b5 33.♗b3 f5

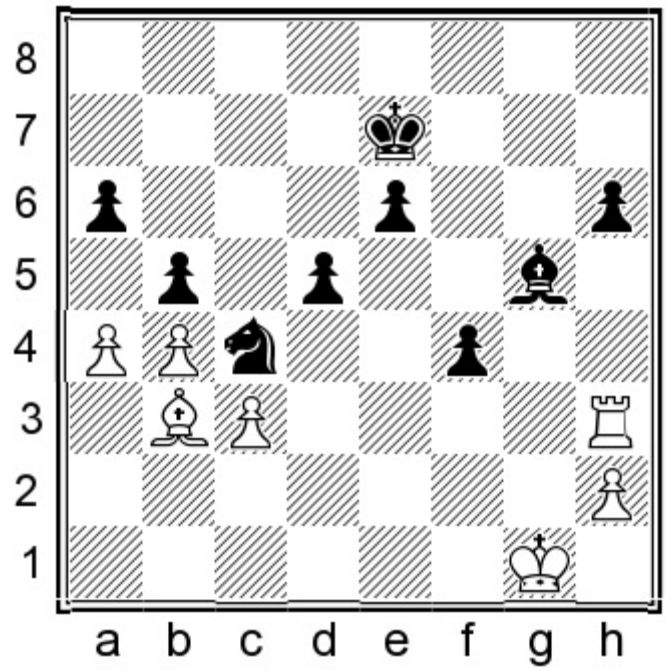
The pawns have been set in motion – a sign that by now the end of the game is not far off.

34.c3

Nothing in the position is fundamentally altered by 34.a4!? f4 35.♖h3 (or 35.♖c3 f3 36.axb5 axb5 37.♔f2 ♗e7) 35...♔e7.

34...♔e7 35.a4 f4 36.♖h3 ♘c4

36...♘g4!? looks equally good.



37.axb5

Taking the knight does not solve White's problems:

37.♗xc4 dxc4!?

37...bxc4 38.a5 ♔d6 39.♔f2 ♔c6 40.♖h5 only confuses the issue unnecessarily; White continues with h2-h4, and the play suddenly becomes sharper.

38.axb5 axb5 39.♖f3

39.♖h5 ♔f6 40.♔f2 e5 41.♔f3 ♔f5–+

39...♔d6–+

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Centralizing the king is more important than pushing the pawns without adequate support; 39...e5 40.♖f2 e4?! 41.♖e2 is less clear.

40.♖f2 ♗f6

And Black should gradually exploit his advantage.

37...axb5 38.♔f2 ♔d6!?

After 38...♘e3 Black would constantly have to reckon with a counter-sacrifice of the exchange.

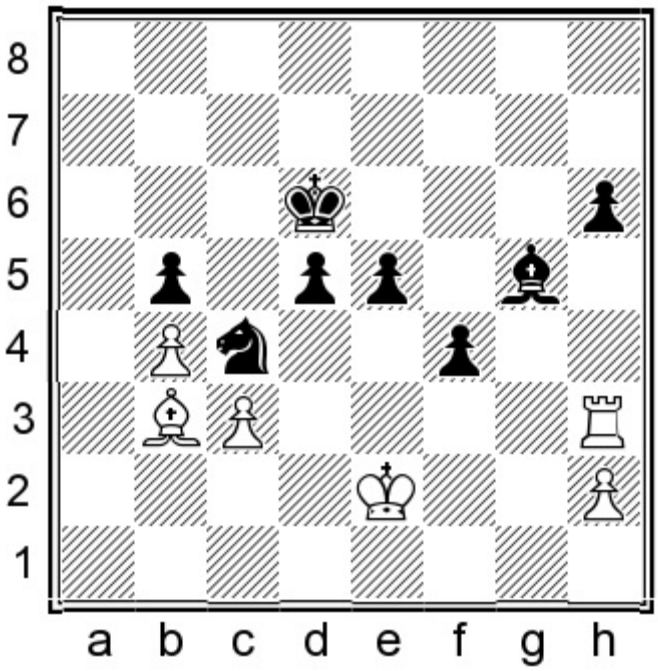
39.♔e2?

It might have been interesting to try 39.♗xc4 bxc4 40.b5 (after 40.♖h5 ♗f6 41.♖h3 h5!? White has done nothing at all to improve his position) 40...♔c5 41.♖h5 ♔xb5 42.h4 ♗f6 43.♖xh6 ♗xc3 44.♖xe6 d4. It turns out there is no stopping the connected passed pawns, but there was scope for Black to go astray somewhere in these variations.

It could also be worth considering 39.♗d1!?, with the aim of stationing the bishop on e2 and the rook on h5. Then Black's win (assuming it is possible) would be anything but a simple matter!

39...e5–+

The black pawns have now advanced too far for White to have any serious hope of stopping them.



40.♗xc4 bxc4 41.♖h5

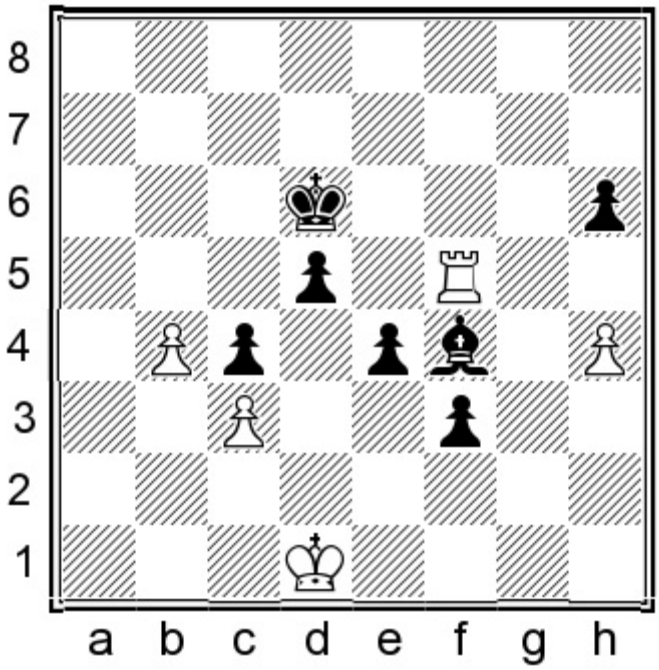
An attempt to defend passively cannot be successful: 41.♖f3 e4 42.♖f1 f3† 43.♔d1 (or 43.♔f2 d4!? 44.cxd4 c3–+) 43...d4 44.cxd4 ♔d5 45.b5 ♔xd4 46.b6 ♔d3 A picturesque position! 47.b7 c3 48.♖f2 ♗f4–+ Black's bishop finds time not only to support his own passed pawns, but also to stop White's last hope.

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41...e4 42.h4 f3† 43.♔d1

In the event of 43.♔f2 ♗d2, Black would soon be the happy possessor of four passed pawns in the middle of the board. A rare occurrence!

43...♗f4 44.♖f5



And in view of 44...♗e5 45.♔c2 ♔e6 46.♖f8 ♗d6! 47.♖e8† ♔d7, after which the f-pawn is unstoppable, White resigned.

0–1

An intriguing game. Black emerged from the opening with a comfortable and interesting position, the open g-file guaranteeing him plenty of tactical chances, although White too had his possibilities of counterplay. And then Tal indulged in his favourite activity of those years – he started bluffing. I am not insisting that he was *precisely* aware of the refutation of 21...♘xe4??, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if he suspected it! Once his striking victory was achieved, all the annotators admired his idea as that of a genius (let me state frankly that I like it too!). The fact that it has turned out to be unsound is not of practical significance.

But Tal was spurred on by his own reputation as a great master of combination – and his opponent fell prey to it. I imagine that if Nikitin had been facing any ordinary opponent, he would have found the refutation without much trouble. But at that time (1959) it was regarded as an axiom that Tal never made a mistake in his combinations. That is why, instead of any attempt at refutation, Nikitin started looking for a way to save himself – and didn't find one! The basic lesson of this game is that everything is subject to verification. Don't take anything on trust – no matter who is facing you across the board – and you will have much joy in your chess!

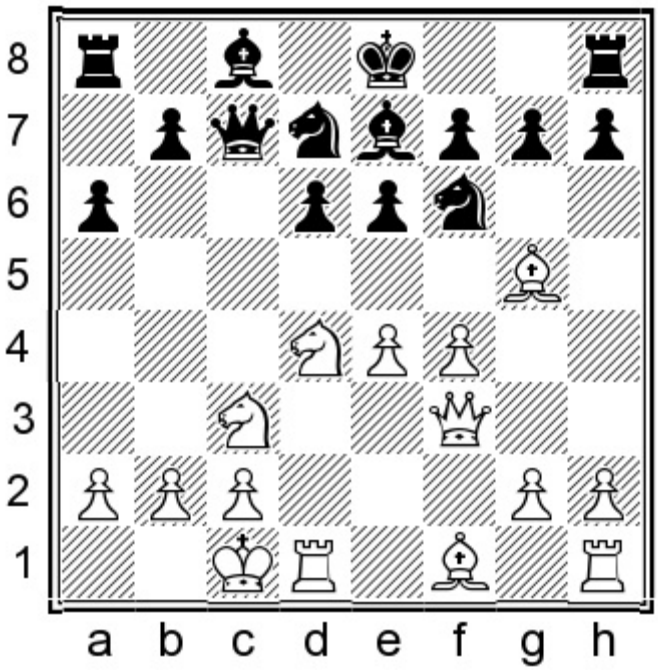
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Lev Psakhis – Ognjen Cvitan

Hartberg 1991

Let us look at one more Najdorf Sicilian game. My opponent, an excellent player who unfortunately didn't make one hundred per cent use of his chess abilities, was an expert in handling the Scheveningen Variation. In the hope of avoiding the Keres Attack, however, he would employ an exceedingly rare move order. I was uneasy about complying with his strategy, so I selected 6.♗g5, which I had played and analysed in my already distant school years.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗e7 8.♕f3 ♕c7 9.0-0-0 ♘bd7



10.g4

Following the 1972 Fischer – Spassky match, 10.♗d3 became a good deal more popular at grandmaster level.

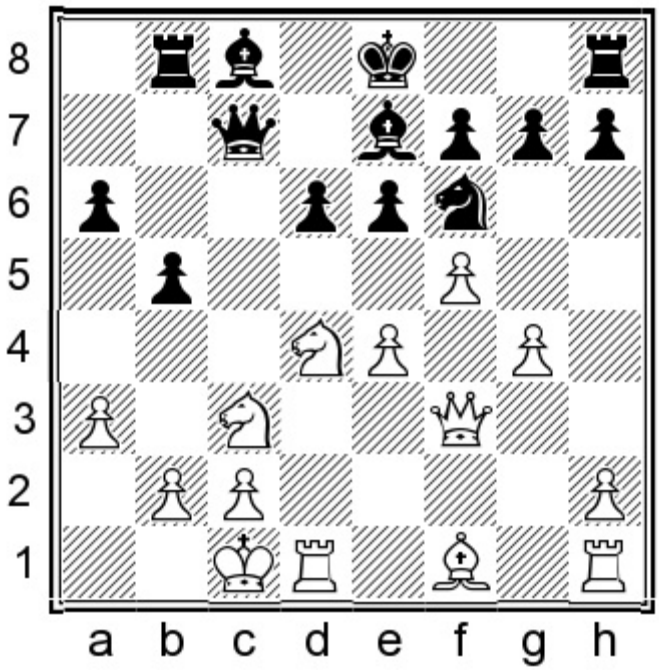
10...b5 11.♗xf6 ♘xf6

At this point the "normal continuation" is 12.g5 ♘d7, and then either the sharp 13.f5 or else 13.a3. Instead, with some effort (and of course very hazily) I recalled a game from 1974, and chose a move that had wholly gone out of fashion:

12.a3 ♖b8 13.f5

A crafty move order. White threatens 14.g5, and in view of the unprotected state of the e6-pawn the knight will not be able to retreat to d7. I was dying to know how Cvitan would cope with his difficult opening problems over the board. His next move took 50 minutes and a great deal of effort, but I entirely approve of his choice!

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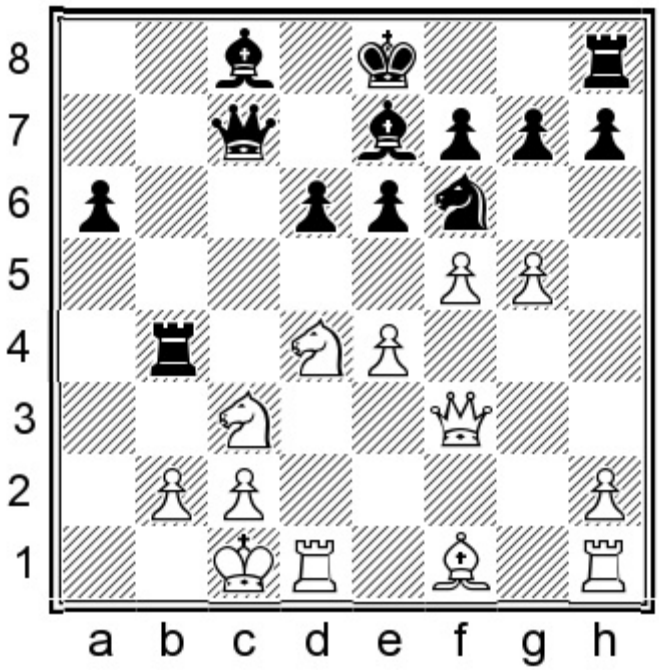


13...b4!

Playing the white pieces is easy and pleasant after 13...0-0 14.g5 ♘e8 15.♖g1 b4 16.axb4 ♖xb4 17.♖g3 ♕c5 18.♘b3 ♕e5± Shamkovich – Grigorian, USSR (ch) 1971.

Black has also tried 13...e5. There may follow: 14.♘de2 b4! (Nunn – B. Lalic, London 1996, saw the weaker 14...♗b7 15.g5 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 d5 17.♘4c3 d4 18.♘e4 ♗xg5† 19.♔b1 0-0 20.♘2g3±) 15.axb4 ♖xb4 16.g5 ♘xe4!? 17.♘xe4 ♗b7 18.♘2c3 ♗xg5† 19.♔b1 and now 19...♕b6 would lead to fairly unclear play.

14.axb4 ♖xb4 15.g5



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15...0-0!?

A brilliant resource that I hadn't at all foreseen! Black had never played this way previously, and I can only admire my opponent's boldness. Black is sacrificing a piece for only one pawn, but in return he acquires a mighty dark-squared bishop and attacking chances.

Tomczak – Jakubowski, Biala Podlaska 2000, went 15...♘d7 16.fxe6 ♗xg5† (or 16...♘e5 17.exf7† ♔f8 18.♕g3 ♕c5 19.♘b3 ♗xg5† 20.♔b1 ♕e3 21.♕xe3 ♗xe3 22.♘d5+–) 17.♔b1 ♘e5 18.♘d5 ♕c5 and now it was worth considering 19.exf7† ♘xf7 (19...♔f8 20.♕g3! ♖xd4 21.♖xd4 ♕xd4 22.♕xg5+–) 20.♘b3 with a clear advantage for White.

16.gxf6

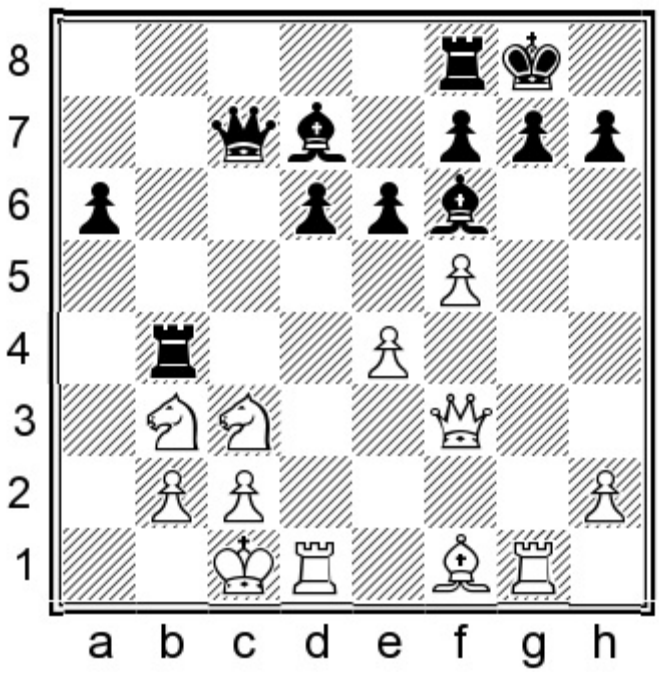
On 16.♖g1, Black can opt for the relatively solid 16...♘e8 17.f6 ♗d8, but he might well prefer the sharper 16...♕b6 17.gxf6 ♗xf6 18.♘de2 (18.e5? ♖xd4) 18...♖xb2, with good compensation for the sacrificed material.

16...♗xf6 17.♘b3 ♗d7

An interesting alternative is 17...a5!?, starting the attack at once. G. Walter – Mraz, corr. 1992, continued 18.♘b5 ♕b8 19.♘3d4 ♗d7 20.c3 ♖xb5 21.♗xb5 ♗xb5 22.♘xb5 ♕xb5 23.♕d3, and now Black could have gone for 23...♕b3!?⇄ with good play.

18.♖g1!?

I was frankly none too keen to spend time on variations such as 18.♗xa6!? ♗a4 19.♘xa4 ♖xa4 20.♕d3 ♖b8.



18...a5!

One of the chief merits of the black position is that it is much simpler to handle! A piece has been

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sacrificed, and now the a-pawn goes forward like a battering ram. For my own part, I was overcome by doubts about how to continue. Should I just try to exploit my material plus (if only that were so easy!), or should I start a counterattack? Eventually I decided on the latter course.

19.♕g3

There is no promise for White in 19.e5?! ♗xe5 20.f6 g6.

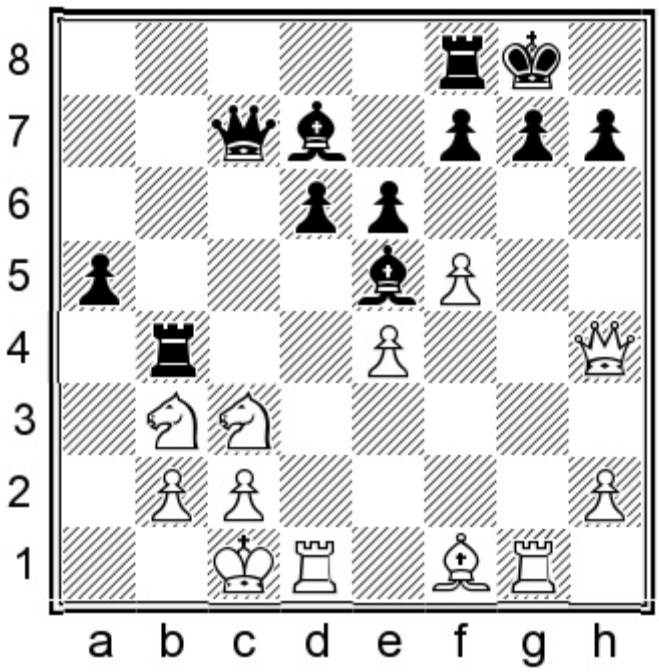
The alternative 19.♖g4 ♗e5 (not falling into the trap 19...a4 20.e5! ♖xg4 21.exf6, and White has an obvious plus) 20.♕g2 g6 21.♖d3 a4 results in wild complications!

19...♗e5!

Here too, 19...a4? would have allowed me to turn my dreams into reality: 20.♕xd6! ♕xd6 21.♖xd6+–

20.♕h4

The tension has reached its height. White is threatening to transfer his rook from d1 to h3, and Black naturally has to oppose this!



20...♕b6

Cvitan had a wide choice here, which of course didn't help him in his search for the best move. We chess players are eternally dissatisfied: we don't like it if we have no choice, but if we have too much choice we dislike it just the same. It would suit us very well if we had one single *strong* move available in every position, but unfortunately things don't happen like that, either in life or in chess! Let us look at Black's other possibilities:

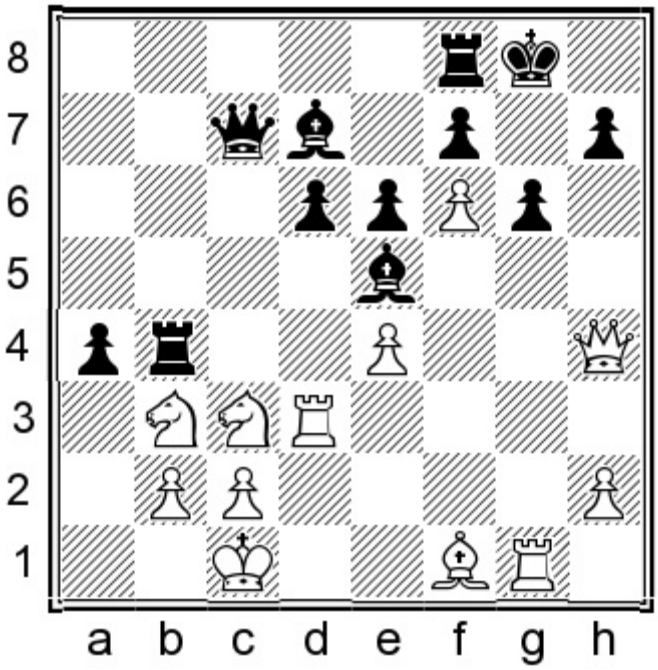
20...a4?

Not the most successful try, even though the move looks natural. Its defect is that Black is

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completely forgetting about his own defence – and the punishment will be swift and merciless.

21.f6 g6 22.♖d3!



22...♗xf6

In the event of 22...d5 23.♖h3 h6 24.♖g4!+– White takes control of f4 and his attack is irresistible. Also after 22...♖fb8 23.♖h3 h5 24.♕xh5 ♗xf6 25.♖xg6† fxg6 26.♕xg6† ♗g7 27.♕h7† Black is quickly mated.

23.♕xf6 axb3 24.♖f3!

With the terrible threat of taking on g6 and then playing ♖h3.

24...♖bb8 25.♕h4!

In addition to his material plus, White has a winning attack.

20...♕a7

An interesting suggestion of the Serbian player Tomislav Paunovic. Black not only attacks the rook on g1, but also hopes to bring about a speedy advance of the a-pawn.

21.♖g3!

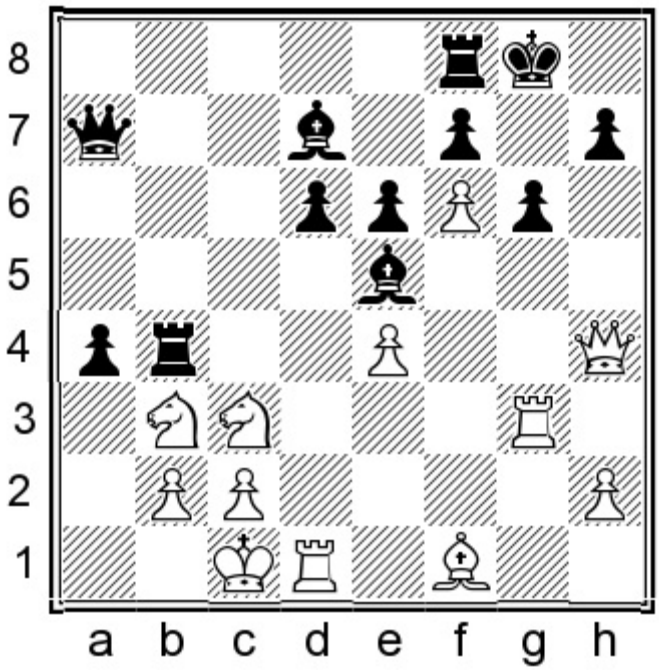
21.♗d3 could turn out to be a simple loss of time: 21...a4 22.f6 g6 23.♖gf1 ♕e3† 24.♘d2 a3 25.bxa3?! ♗xc3 26.axb4 ♖a8 and Black wins outright.

21...a4

Black's dark-squared bishop is every bit as important a piece as the white rook, so this is better than the greedy 21...♗xg3?. After 22.♕xg3 Black's prospects are far from rosy, whether he continues 22...exf5 23.♘d5 fxe4 24.♘f6† ♔h8 25.♕xd6± or 22...a4? 23.f6 g6 24.♕f4 ♔h8 25.♕xd6+–.

22.f6 g6

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23.♕h6

It may look as if White is bound to checkmate his opponent after 23.♖h3?, but in fact things turn out quite differently and White is the one who gets mated! Thus, 23...h5 24.♗e2 axb3 25.♗xh5 bxc2 26.♗e2 cxd1=♕† 27.♘xd1 ♗xb2† 28.♔d2 ♖d4† 29.♗d3 ♖xd3† 30.♖xd3 ♕a5† 31.♔e3 ♗c1† 32.♔f3 ♗b5–+ and the life span of the white king is cut short through circumstances beyond his control.

23...♗xf6 24.♖h3 ♖fb8 25.♕xh7† ♔f8 26.♖f3 ♔e7 27.♖xf6 ♔xf6 28.♖d3 ♔e7⇄

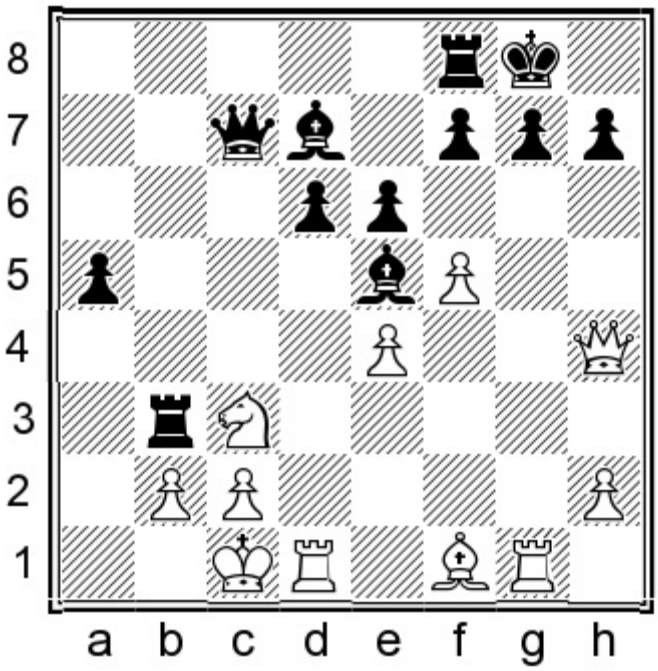
The chances are very hard to assess with certainty.

From the practical point of view, I am convinced that Black's best choice would have been:

20...♖xb3!?

This has the advantage that it wouldn't even have required Black to calculate any long variations and use up a large amount of time!

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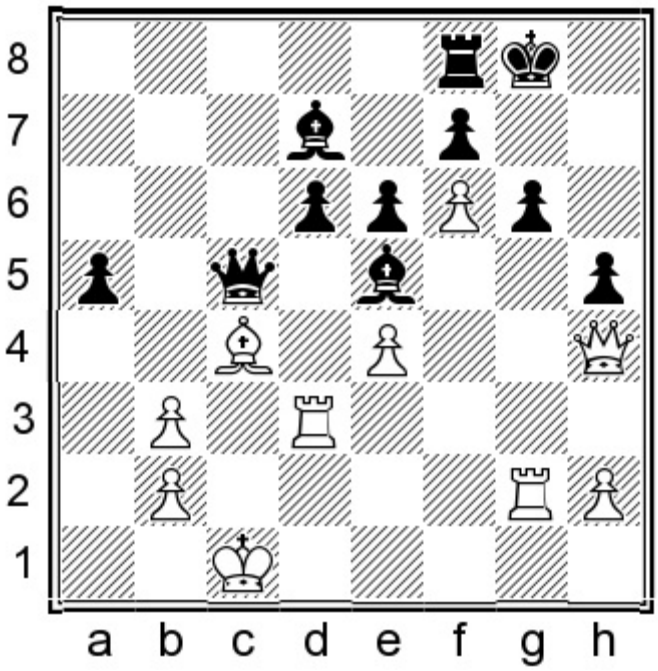


21.f6

21.cxb3 ♗xc3 22.♗c4 ♗e5 promises White nothing to speak of.

Similarly 21.♖d3 ♖xc3 22.bxc3 ♖b8 23.♖h3 ♔f8 does not offer White anything.

21...g6 22.cxb3 ♗xc3 23.♗c4 ♗e5 24.♖d3 ♕c5 25.♖g2 h5⇄



Black's chances are in no way worse.

I keep using phrases like "simpler to handle", "from the practical point of view" and so forth. Say what you will, we have not yet become robots – we are subject to emotions, weaknesses and finally fatigue. And that is precisely why I would advocate 20...♖xb3!?, as it leads to fairly simple positions and doesn't demand an inordinate expenditure of energy. Cvitan played differently – he managed to achieve a won position, but very soon landed in time trouble and lost the game, whereas after 20...♖xb3 the

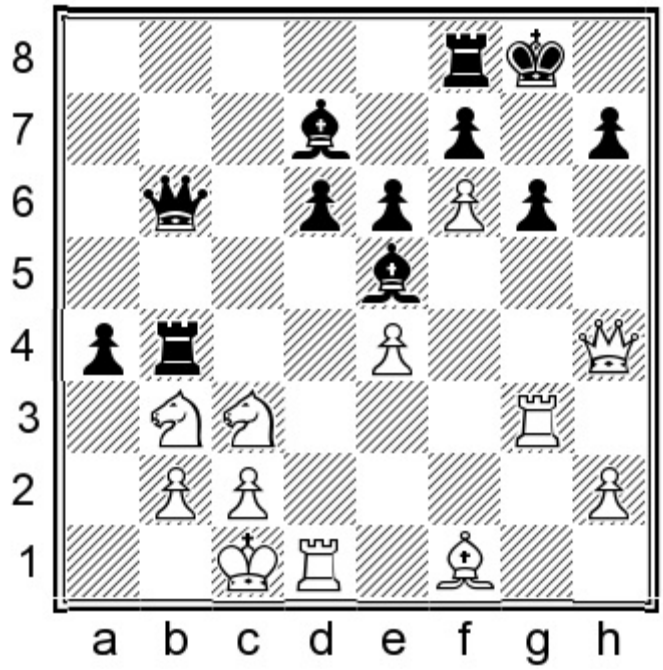
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result would much more likely have been positive. So think for yourself and decide what you are capable of doing *today, in this particular game.* There are no ready-made recipes here!

21.♖g3□

Here too I offer an exchange sacrifice, fully convinced that the Croatian grandmaster will not go in for such an unprofitable transaction. The alternative 21.♗e2 a4 was definitely not to my liking!

21...a4 22.f6 g6



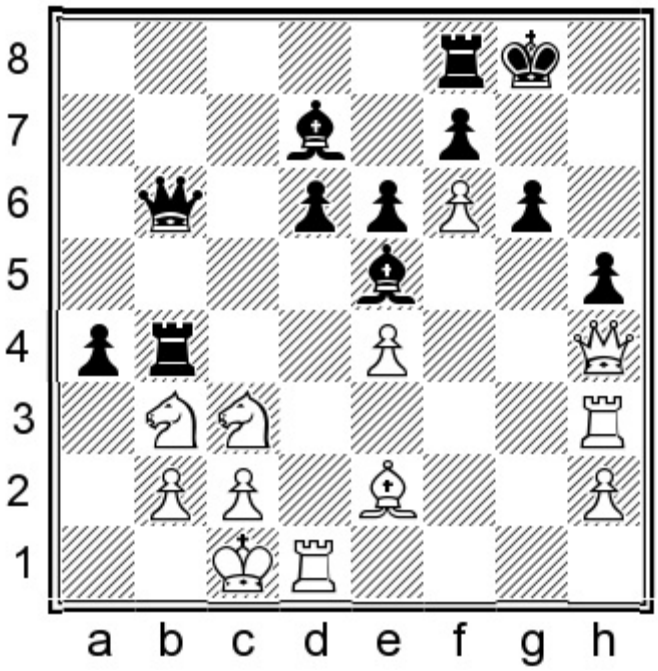
23.♘d2

In such positions every move has an inordinately high price. What is White to do? Should he play this prophylactic move, or should he go in for 23.♖h3, the consequences of which are quite impossible to assess over the board, especially with 15-20 minutes left on the clock? Getting into time trouble in such positions is of course a serious failing, but I fear it simply cannot be helped – there are just too many extremely complicated lines that have to be calculated.

Incidentally, I even used up a few minutes on the strange move 23.♖d5 – so great was my exasperation with Cvitan's dark-squared bishop! Unfortunately this try doesn't work; after 23...exd5 24.♘xd5 ♕d8 25.♘d2 (or 25.♘e7† ♔h8 26.♖xg6 fxg6 27.♘xg6† ♔g8 28.♘e7† ♕xe7 29.fxe7 ♖xf1† 30.♔d2 axb3–+) 25...♗xb2† 26.♔d1 a3∓ White already has to think only about saving himself.

The play could proceed much more interestingly in the event of the sharp 23.♖h3! h5 24.♗e2! (but not 24.♖d2? ♖a8!–+). My plan is simple; to take on h5 and see what will come of it all. A more complicated question is what Black can do in reply:

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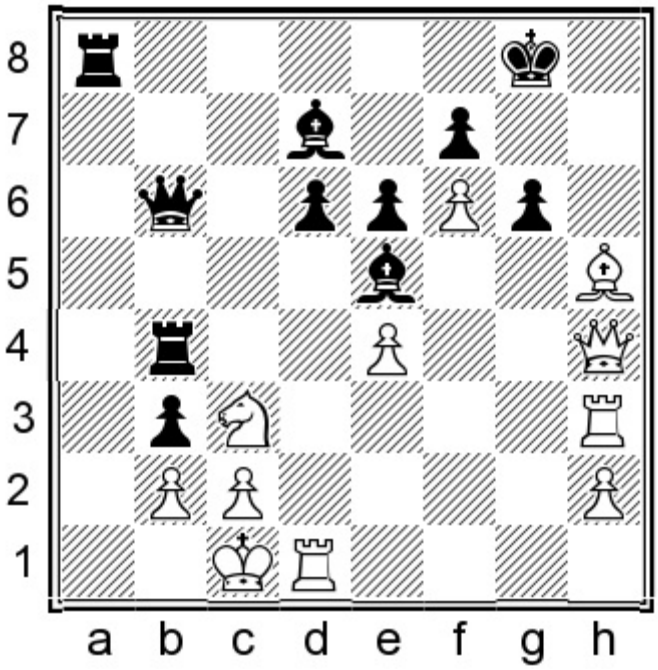


a) 24...♖xb3? A futile try. 25.♗xh5! (stronger than 25.cxb3 ♕xb3) 25...♖xb2 26.♗xg6 ♖xc2† 27.♔xc2 ♕b3† Black gives quite a lot of checks, but the white monarch easily escapes from the persecution. 28.♔c1 ♕a3† 29.♔d2 ♕b2† 30.♔e1 ♕xc3† 31.♖xc3 ♗xc3† 32.♔e2 fxg6 33.♕g3+– and White wins easily.

b) 24...axb3 25.♗xh5 ♖a8!?

Correctly judging that Black can only achieve anything if he brings this rook into the attack. Black would lose with 25...♗xc3 26.♗xg6! ♗xb2† 27.♔d2! ♕d4† 28.♔e2 ♗b5† 29.♖dd3! ♗xd3† 30.cxd3, whereupon the checks come to an end and there is no defence against mate!

Nor can Black be happy with 25...bxc2 26.♗e2 cxd1=♕† 27.♗xd1 after which he gets no further. His pawn realized its dream of becoming a queen, but only for the briefest of moments!



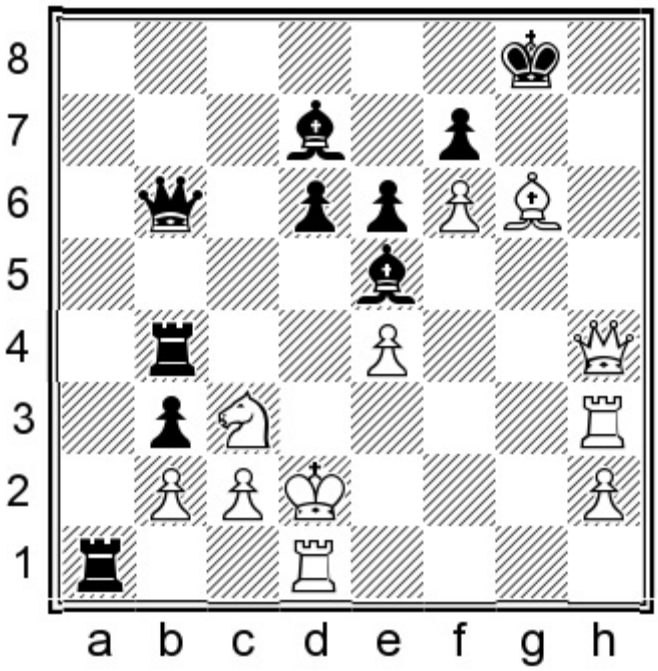
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26.♗xg6!

Keep going forward!

The seemingly more cautious 26.♗e2? loses to 26...♖a1† 27.♔d2 ♕d4† 28.♖d3 ♖xd1† 29.♗xd1 ♗xf6!–+.

26...♖a1† 27.♔d2



27...♖xd1†

For some seemingly mystical reason, Black has no way of creating substantial threats to the white king.

He only manages to give a few useless checks in the event of 27...♗xc3† 28.♔e2 ♗b5† 29.♔f3+–, or 27...♕d4† 28.♔e2 ♗b5† 29.♔f3.

Nor is there any improvement in 27...♗f4† 28.♔e2! ♗b5† 29.♘xb5 ♕xb5† 30.♔f3+–.

28.♘xd1 ♖d4†

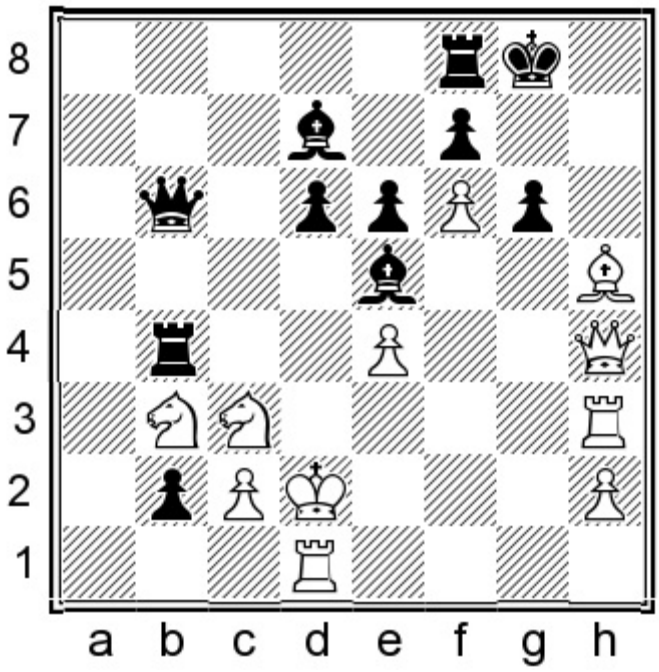
28...♕d4† is simply met by 29.♔c1, and Black can only delay mate by giving away all his pieces.

29.♔e2 ♕b5† 30.♔f3 ♕f1† 31.♘f2+–

At last the weary white king has found a safe refuge.

c) 24...a3 25.♗xh5 axb2† 26.♔d2

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26...♖d4†

After 26...♗xc3† 27.♖xc3 e5 28.♗e2 d5 29.♖f3! White has a won position.

27.♘xd4

Obviously, after 27.♔e2?? ♗b5† 28.♘xb5 ♖xd1 it is White who loses.

27...♕xd4† 28.♔e2 ♗b5† 29.♘xb5 ♕xd1† 30.♔xd1 b1=♕† 31.♔d2 ♕xb5 32.♗f3! ♕b4† 33.♔e2 ♕c4† 34.♔f2 ♕xc2† 35.♗e2 ♗d4† 36.♔f3 ♕c3† 37.♔g2

The king has finally managed to shake off the tiresome checks.

d) 24...♗xc3! Simplest and best! 25.bxc3 axb3 26.cxb4 bxc2 27.♖f1 ♕xb4 28.e5!? ♕a5⇄ In spite of White's extra rook, his exposed king means that the position can be assessed as unclear.

To all appearances, 23.♖h3! was the strongest move in the position and would have set Black definite problems – it is only in this last line that he has a fully viable game. However, I simply didn't succeed in correctly calculating and then evaluating such a large number of complicated variations; to be honest, I don't think this would have been humanly possible. It was necessary to put more trust in intuition, but that is quite another story.

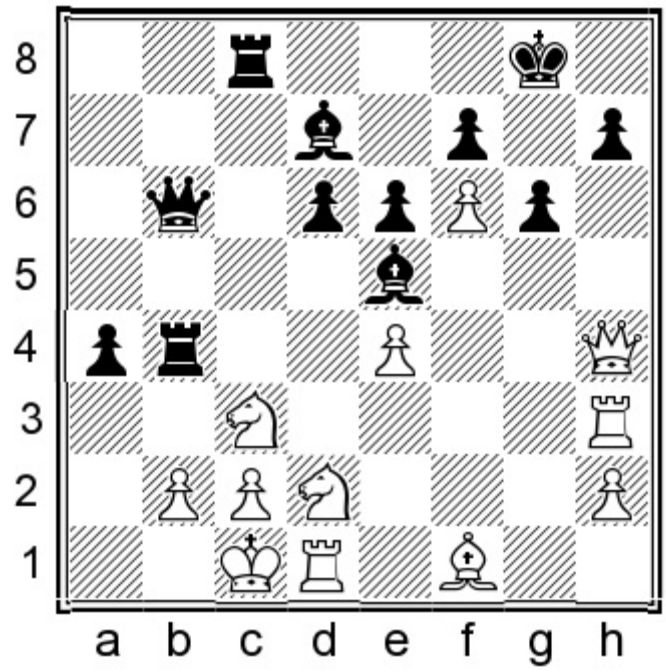
23...♖c8! 24.♖f3?

The impression is that Black is gradually taking over the initiative, and by this time absolutely faultless play was required of me. This move already brings White to the verge of defeat. What else was there?

24.♖h3

This fails to a sequence of logical moves:

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24...h5 25.♕g5

White has no choice. 25.♗e2? is wholly bad in view of 25...♖xb2 26.♘c4 ♕b4 27.♘xb2 ♗xc3–+ and the game is over.

25...♖xb2

More convincing than 25...a3? 26.♖xh5 axb2† 27.♔b1 ♗xf6□ 28.♕xf6 gxh5 29.♘b3⇄.

26.♘c4

If White is in a real hurry to lose, he can continue 26.♖xh5? ♖xc2† 27.♔xc2 ♖xc3#.

26...♖xc4 27.♗xc4 a3! 28.♖f1 ♗xc3 29.♖xc3 ♖b1† 30.♔d2 ♖xf1 31.♗xf1 a2–+

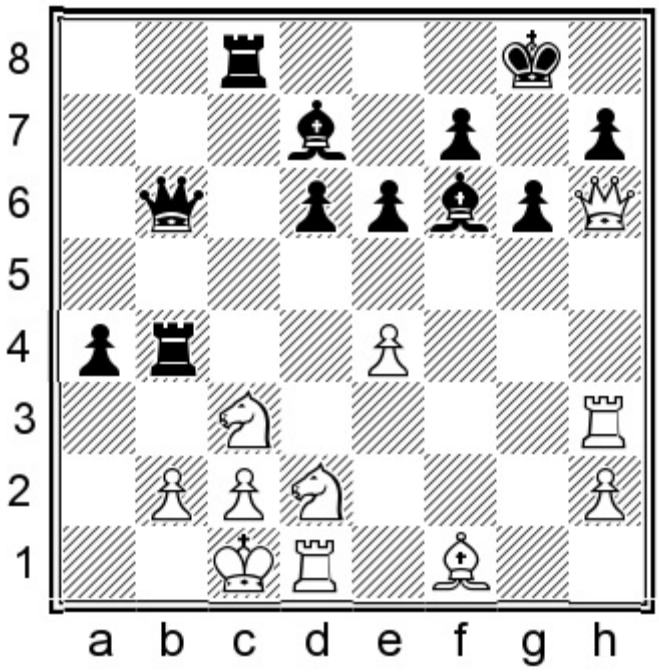
The pawn will reach its queening square after all!

For better or worse, I just had to play:

24.♕h6 ♗xf6 25.♖h3

I would have had to await Black's reaction, not that the wait would have been too long – we each had 5 or 6 minutes left on the clock, and of course no one was going to give us any "increments"!

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25...♖xb2

The most natural move in the position, although not necessarily the best; several other moves deserve attention.

The prophylactic 25...♗e8!? is worth considering.

Another interesting line is: 25...a3!? 26.bxa3 ♖d4 (or 26...♖xc3 27.axb4 ♕xb4 28.♘c4!∞) 27.♕xh7† ♔f8 28.♖f3 ♕c5⇄

Possibly the strongest continuation was a move I didn't notice during the game, the cunning 25...♕a5. For example 26.♕xh7† ♔f8 27.♗c4 a3! with an extremely unpleasant attack.

26.♘c4 ♖xc4

26...♕b4? is refuted without much trouble: 27.e5! ♗xe5 28.♕xh7† ♔f8 29.♘xe5 dxe5 30.♖xd7+–

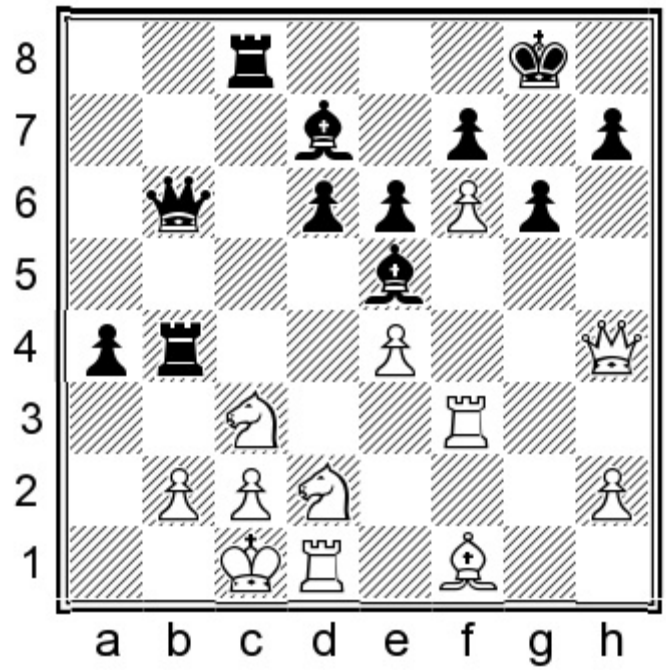
27.♗xc4 ♗xc3

Unclear complications arise from 27...a3 28.♖f1 ♗a4! 29.♘xa4 ♖b1† 30.♔d2 ♕a5† 31.♔e2 ♕xa4 32.♕xh7† ♔f8 33.♖xb1 ♕xc2† 34.♔f3 ♕xb1 35.♕h6† ♔e8 36.♕d2 d5!⇄.

28.♕xh7† ♔f8 29.♖xc3 ♖b1† 30.♔d2 ♕d4† 31.♖d3 ♕f2† 32.♔c3 ♕f6† 33.♔d2=

It seems that Black is obliged to give perpetual check.

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24...♖xb2!

A splendid, powerful, winning move – I'm not sure what other epithets I ought to muster, but they would all be justified!

And yet perhaps I even prefer:

24...a3!

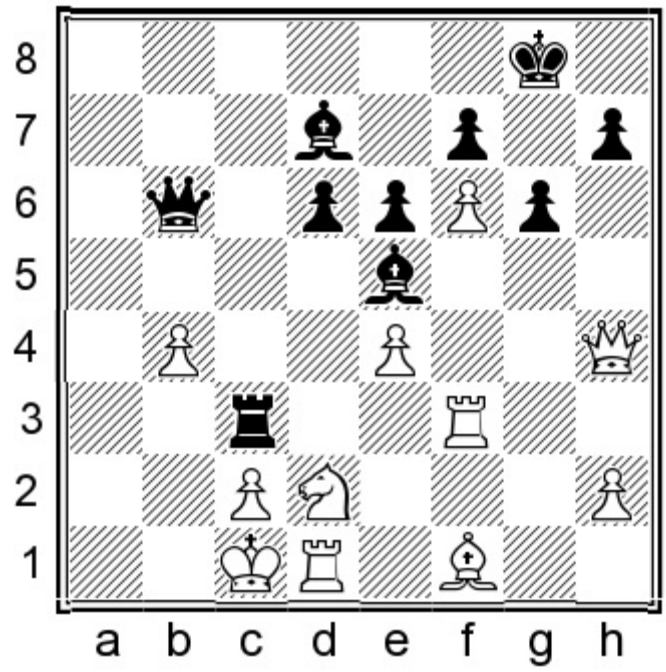
Very strong, though it also requires the ability to calculate variations accurately in conditions of time shortage.

25.bxa3

White's chances of a successful defence are also minimal after 25.♕h6 axb2† 26.♔b1 ♗xf6 27.♘a2 ♕a5 28.♘c4 ♖bxc4 29.♗xc4 ♗a4!–+ when there is no fending off all Black's threats – the white king's position is too weak!

25...♖xc3 26.axb4

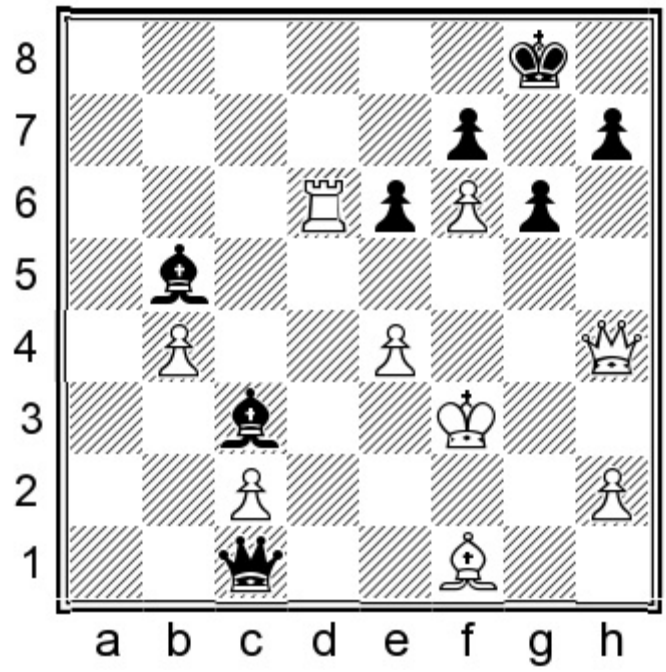
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26...♕a7!

A clever move, although the simple 26...♖xf3 27.♘xf3 ♕e3† 28.♖d2 ♕a3† 29.♔d1 ♕xf3† 30.♗e2 ♕h1† 31.♕e1 ♕xe4–+ also wins the game with no particular problems.

27.♖xc3 ♕a1† 28.♘b1 ♗xc3 29.♖xd6 ♕b2† 30.♔d1 ♕xb1† 31.♔e2 ♗b5† 32.♔e3 ♕c1† 33.♔f3



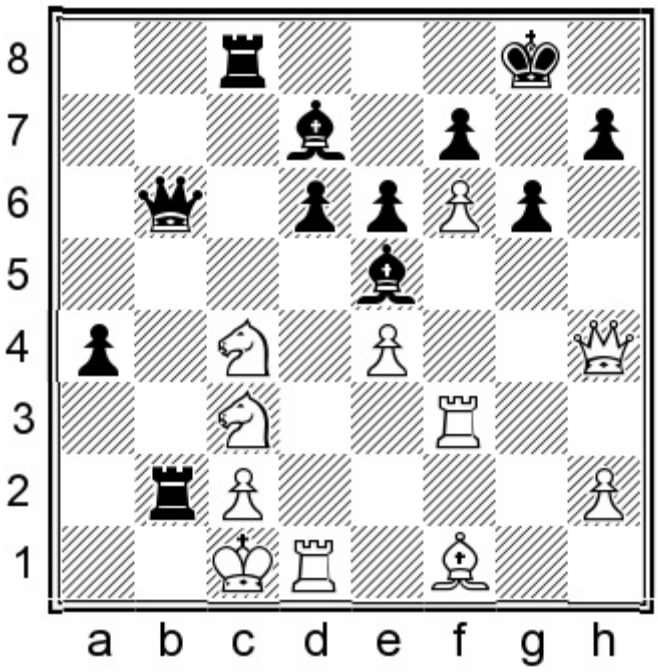
33...♗xf6!–+

The concluding stroke that dots all the i's and crosses the t's! White loses material and is deprived of all chances to organize any resistance at all.

25.♘c4

The only move. At this moment I took a highly pessimistic view of how events might develop.

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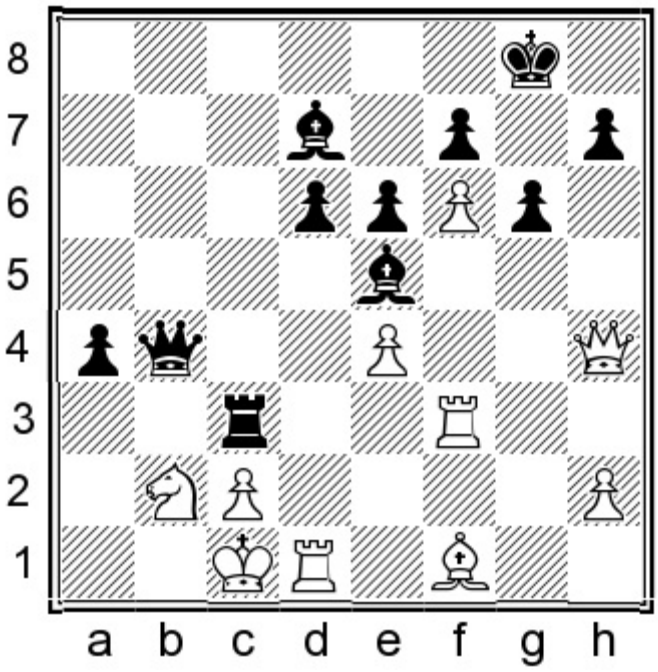


25...♖xc4?

The first error committed by my opponent in this game, which up to now he had conducted quite brilliantly, and which he deserved to win! Cvitan needed to make just one final effort for victory. All he had to do was play:

25...♕b4! 26.♘xb2 ♖xc3!

The most precise, although another line that doesn't look bad is: 26...a3 27.♘c4 ♗xc3 28.♖xc3 ♕xc3 29.♕g3 ♕a1† 30.♔d2 ♕d4† 31.♔e1 ♕xe4†−+



27.♕h6

Few people would be pleased with 27.♘d3 ♕b3−+ either.

27...♗xf6!

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To scotch White's last hope, the bishop can be sacrificed for good measure!

28.♖xf6

28.e5 ♗xe5 29.♘d3 ♖xc2†! 30.♔xc2 ♕c3† 31.♔b1 a3! is also hopeless for White.

After 28.♘d3 ♕b3 29.♘e1 ♕a3† 30.♔d2 ♖xf3 31.♘xf3 ♕xf3 Black has a material plus as well as an attack.

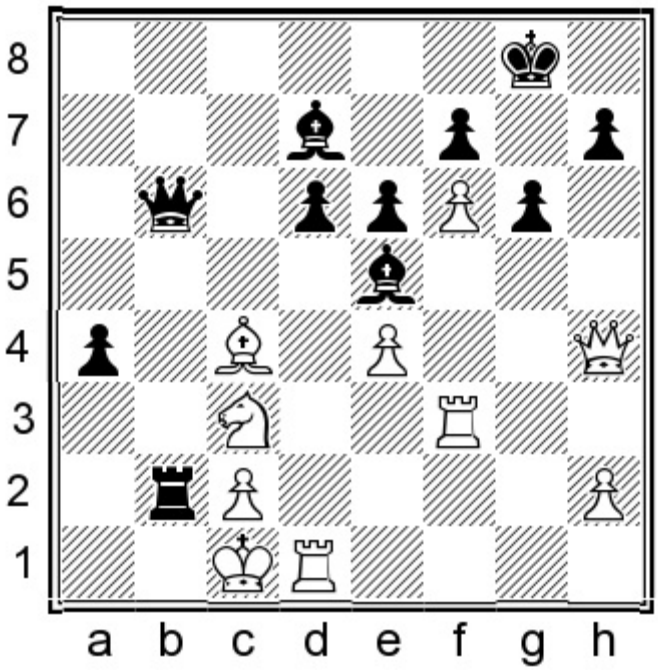
28...a3 29.♖xf7

Nor is there any salvation in 29.♘d3 ♖xc2† 30.♔xc2 ♗a4† 31.♔c1 ♕c3† 32.♔b1 ♗c2† 33.♔a2 ♗b3† 34.♔xa3 ♗d5† 35.♔a4 ♗c6#.

29...♕xb2† 30.♔d2 ♖xc2† 31.♔e1 ♔xf7 32.♕xh7† ♔f8–+

White has no more than a handful of checks.

26.♗xc4



26...♕b4?

Misfortunes never come singly! Black's first mistake deprived him of victory, his second takes away his last chances of a draw. It was imperative to play:

26...a3!

White then has little choice.

27.♗b3 ♖xb3

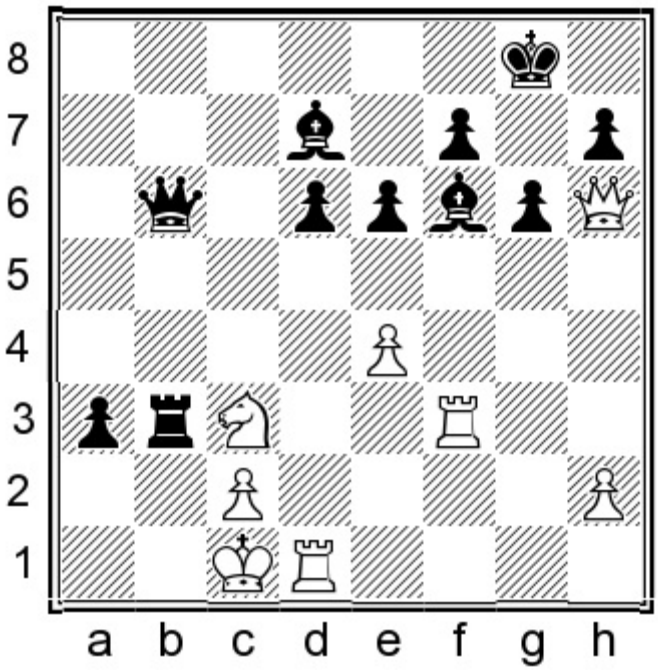
Both 27...♕c5 and 27...♕a5 are adequately met by 28.♕e1!.

28.♕h6

28.cxb3 also leads to a draw: 28...♕xb3 29.♖d2! ♗xc3 30.♕h6 ♗b2† 31.♖xb2 axb2† 32.♔b1 ♕d1† 33.♔xb2 ♕e2†= and the white king can't escape persecution.

28...♗xf6

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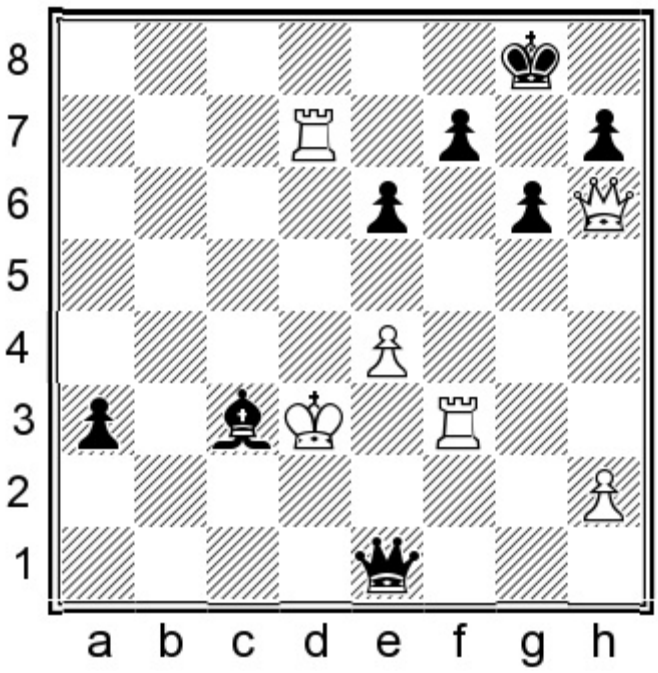
29.cxb3!

Should White wish to lose the game, 29.♖xf6? ♖xc3–+ works splendidly!

29...♕xb3 30.♖xd6□ 30...♗xc3

The ability to stop in time is an excellent quality in a chess player; 30...♗a4?? looks tempting at first sight, but loses to 31.♖d2!. All Black's threats then vanish, while White's huge material advantage remains.

31.♖xd7 ♕b2† 32.♔d1 ♕b1† 33.♔e2 ♕e1† 34.♔d3



34...♗a5!

To see such a complicated move at a distance is a tall order!

35.♖dxf7

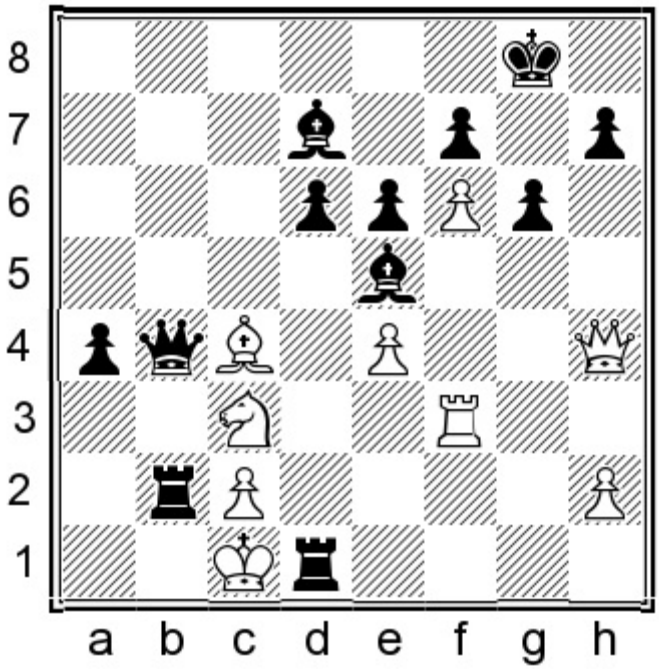
Nothing is altered by 35.♖fxf7 ♕d1† 36.♔c4 ♕a4†=, as White clearly can't continue 37.♔c5??

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♕b4† 38.♔c6 ♕b6#.

35...♕c3† 36.♔e2 ♕e1†=

With perpetual check – a frequent outcome from even the wildest complications!



27.♖dd3!+–

White threatens 28.♕h6. He has an extra rook, and all his opponent's threats have evaporated into thin air.

27...h5

This move is no better or worse than any other. Black loses just about as quickly with 27...♕xc4 28.♕h6, or 27...♗xc3 28.♖xc3, or 27...a3 28.♕h6 ♗xf6 29.♖xf6 ♗a4 30.♖f2□ 30...♕xc4 31.♖h3+–.

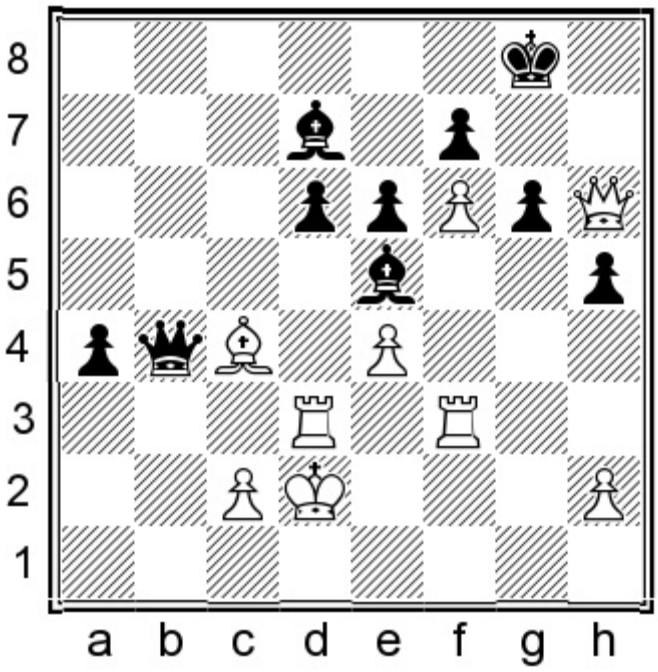
28.♕g5! ♖b1†

White was again threatening 29.♕h6, and the result of the game would not be altered by 28...♔h7 29.♖h3 ♔g8 30.♖xh5 ♖b1† 31.♔d2+–.

29.♘xb1 ♕b2† 30.♔d2 ♕xb1 31.♕h6 ♕b4†

31...♗xf6 32.♖xf6 ♕b4† 33.♖c3+– comes to the same thing.

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32.♖c3!

Simplest! Black will have to give up his dark-squared bishop for the f-pawn anyway – and that bishop is bound up with all his best memories in this game. Therefore:

1–0

This game took a couple of years off my life! Not wanting to defend passively, Cvitan completely altered the course of the play by means of a piece sacrifice. It doesn't even matter whether this sacrifice was completely correct, or only fifty per cent; White was forced to give up his thoughts of attack and face the awkward reality. Black's initiative was very strong, and after committing a couple of inaccuracies I landed in a difficult situation. Eventually, not without a certain amount of luck, I succeeded in winning, but Black's play effectively demonstrated for the thousandth time that *only active defence can bring positive results!* Never set store by defending passively, which can only be of help from the point of view of dragging out your resistance; it will never help you to solve all your problems.

We have now looked at three games with the Najdorf Variation, and satisfied ourselves that playing this system is a very difficult undertaking. Is playing the Scheveningen Variation much simpler? Let me disappoint you straight away – I don't think it is any simpler than the Najdorf. But it does have one small point in its favour: it has not been so well investigated.

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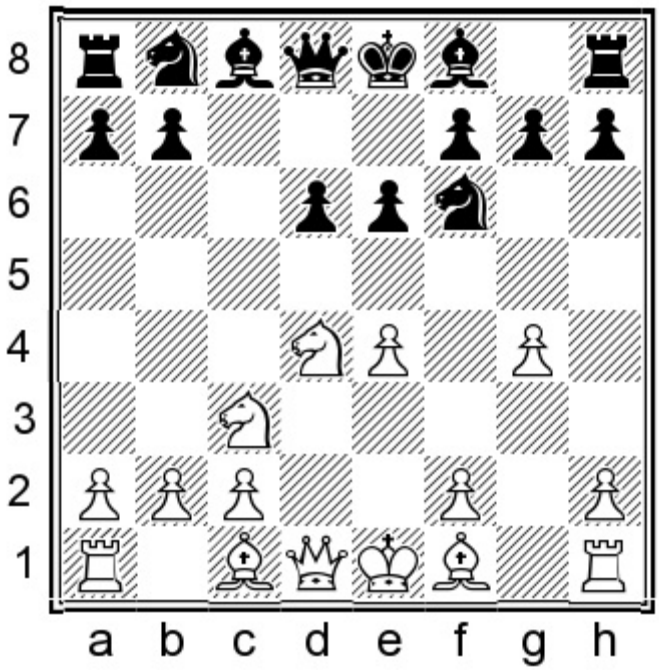
Rodolfo Cardoso – Tigran Petrosian

Las Palmas 1975

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6

The Sicilian Defence was never one of Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian's favourite openings. He gave preference to half-open systems in which Black has a sturdy and solid pawn structure and there are a minimum of intensively analysed variations. Nonetheless he understood very well that you cannot do without the Sicilian in modern chess, and he did employ it from time to time throughout his celebrated chess career. It's interesting that he should choose it in this game against Rodolfo Cardoso, a player of striking tactical ability.

6.g4



6...a6

In our day Black plays 6...h6 without giving it a thought, and that move is probably best, forestalling the further advance of White's g-pawn. But how many interesting games we must all have been deprived of, just because moves like 6...a6 or 6...♘c6 are virtually extinct!

7.g5 ♘fd7 8.h4!? b5 9.♗g2

Not the most popular move. Other lines to have been seen in practice are:

9.h5 b4?! (9...♗b7!?) 10.♘ce2 ♗b7 11.♗g2 ♘c5 12.♘g3 ♘bd7 13.f4± Ljubojevic – Tal, Las Palmas 1975.

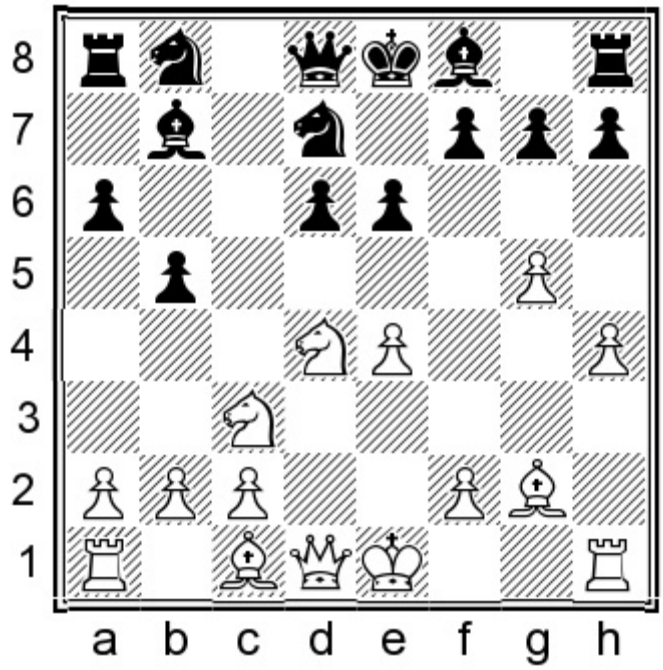
9.♗e3!? b4 10.♘ce2 ♗b7 11.♗g2 ♘c5 12.♘g3 ♘bd7 13.0-0 g6 14.a3!± Beliavsky – Soln, Slovenia

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1996.

9.a3 ♗b7 10.h5 ♘c6 11.♖h3 ♖c8 12.g6 hxg6 13.hxg6 ♖xh3 14.gxf7† ♔xf7 15.♘xe6 ♕h4∞ Nataf – Graf, Ourense 2007.

9...♗b7



10.h5

White's intentions are perfectly understandable: he wants to carry out an eventual g5-g6, though it must be said that the best way of implementing this plan is with the bishop on f1 and rook on h3.

After the all too quiet (un-Sicilian!) move 10.♗e3, Black can obtain excellent play with no difficulty: 10...♘b6 11.♕g4 ♘c4 12.♗c1 ♘d7 13.f4 ♕b6 14.♘ce2 e5 15.♘f5 g6∓ Tsesarsky – Psakhis, Tel Aviv (rapid) 1990.

10...♘c6

The correct move; White's centralized knight may become too dangerous and needs to be kept under constant observation.

11.a3

After 11.g6 hxg6 12.hxg6 ♖xh1† 13.♗xh1 ♕h4, Black is already the only one who can claim any advantage.

11...♖c8

Typical Petrosian tactics. For one thing, he wants to get as far away as possible from theory and compel his opponent to use his own brain – not everyone is ready for that in the opening. Secondly, one

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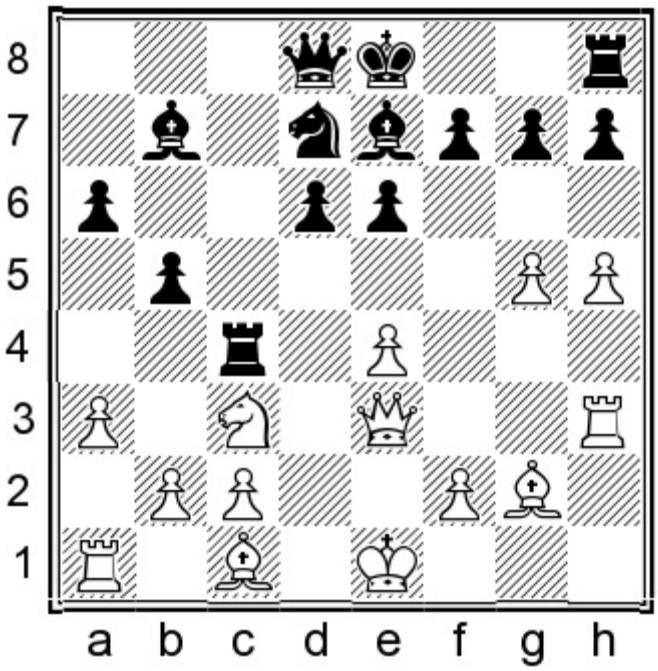
inveterate penchant of the great Armenian grandmaster shows itself here: he was very fond of playing with his king in the centre, and generally castled at the very last moment. I believe Petrosian simply tended to think that it was always possible to find moves which were more important than the banal act of castling!

12.♖h3

Though by no means bad in themselves, White's moves are not too well co-ordinated. For instance, if Cardoso intended ♖h3, why did he place his bishop on g2?

12...♘xd4 13.♕xd4 ♖c4 14.♕e3 ♗e7

Petrosian has played the opening strongly and achieved an excellent game. White's kingside pawns are soon going to come under fire, and he cannot even dream of launching an attack.



15.f4 e5

Not bad, but 15...h6! was even stronger. Then after 16.g6 ♗h4† 17.♔f1 0-0 White would have lost his castling rights for no compensation.

16.f5 h6! 17.g6

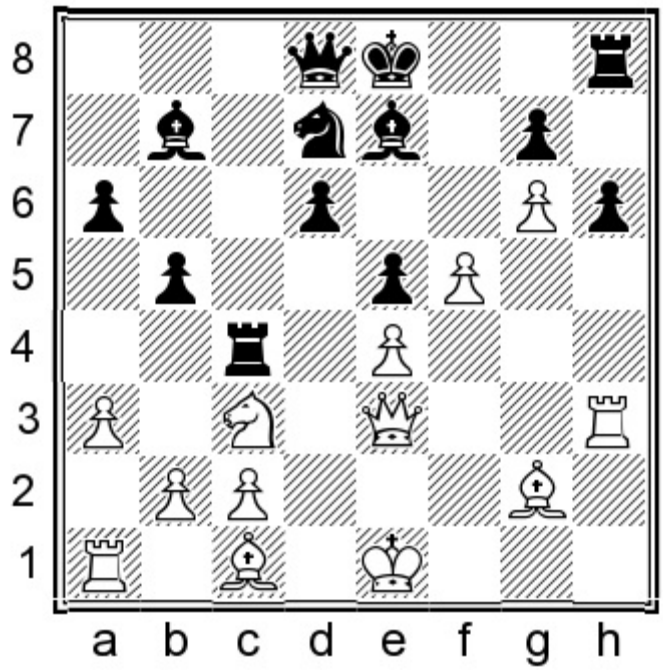
Or 17.gxh6 gxh6!? and the black bishop heads for g5.

17...fxg6

A good alternative could have been 17...0-0, maintaining the tension.

18.hxg6

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18...♘f6

Such a natural move cannot be bad, but I feel that a player with a sharper style might have preferred 18...d5! 19.exd5 (after 19.♘xd5 ♗h4† 20.♔d1 ♗xd5 21.exd5 ♖d4† 22.♔e2 ♕c8 the white king begins to have every reason for worry) 19...♗h4† 20.♔e2 0-0∓, and the white monarch may not survive until the endgame!

19.♗d2?!

This nondescript move allows Black to take a firm hold of the initiative.

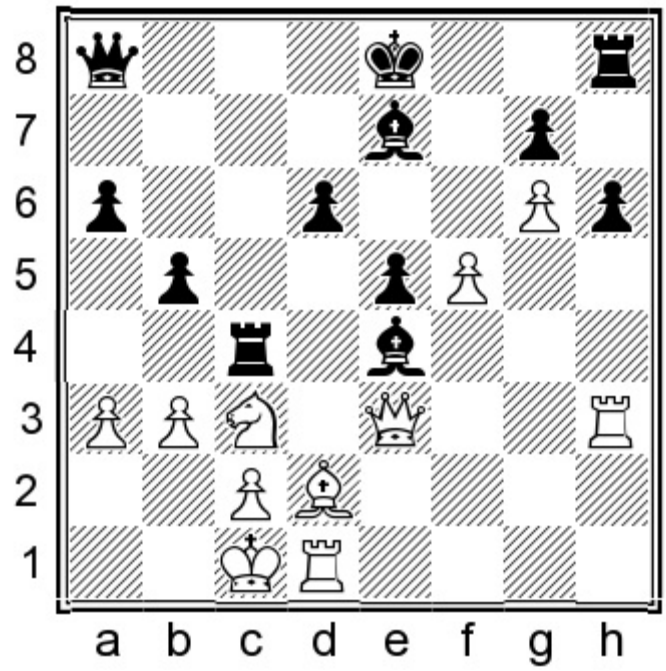
White would do better with 19.♕e2!?, keeping the black rook in his sights – which is significant in the variation 19...♕a8 20.a4!?. A stronger reply would probably be 19...0-0 20.b3 ♖d4 21.♗e3 ♖xe4 22.♘xe4 ♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♘xe4 with wholly unclear play.

19...♕a8! 20.0-0-0

What else is White to do? His pawn on e4 is indefensible, and there is no help for him in: 20.b3 ♖d4 21.0-0-0 (21.♘e2 ♖xe4∓) 21...♘xe4 22.♘xe4 ♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♕xe4 24.♕xe4 ♖xe4 25.♗b4 ♖f8! 26.♗xd6 ♗g5†∓ White would hardly succeed in holding such a difficult ending, especially when playing Petrosian.

20...♘xe4∓ 21.♗xe4 ♗xe4 22.b3

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Up until this moment the game has proceeded on a familiar pattern: a great player, facing an opponent he clearly surpasses in skill, outplays him and fairly easily reaches a won position. And if Petrosian had now continued in his characteristic style with 22...♖xc3! 23.♕xc3 ♗xf5!–+, the game would hardly have aroused any great interest in me. But perhaps being convinced he could win the game without any sacrifices, or for some other reason, Tigran selected a different line which, though not bad, is much more complicated and stirs up a storm on the chessboard.

22...♖d4!? 23.f6!

Cardoso senses that he is in his element. Instead of a long and tough defence in a difficult position, he aims to break free with his queen. Great complications, albeit not unfavourable to Black, are now unleashed.

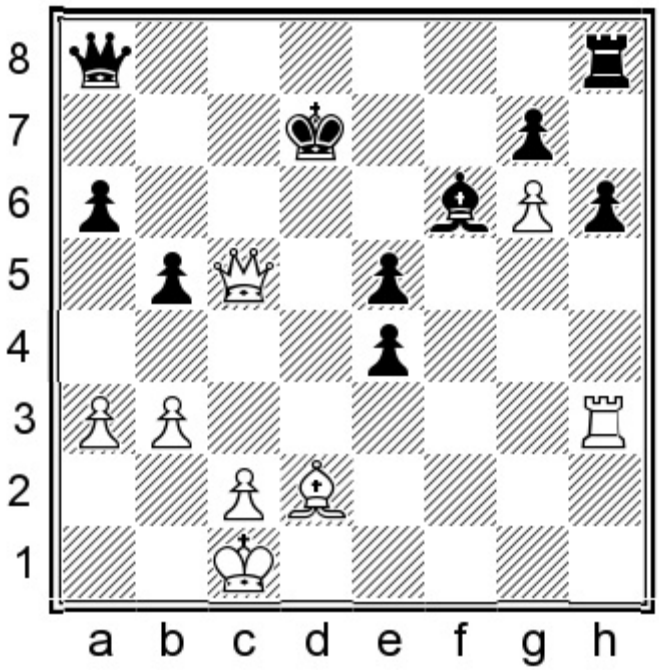
23...♗xf6 24.♖e1 d5 25.♘xe4 ♖xe4

After 25...dxe4 26.♗c3∓ it would be difficult, if possible at all, to exploit Black's small advantage.

26.♕c5! ♖xe1†

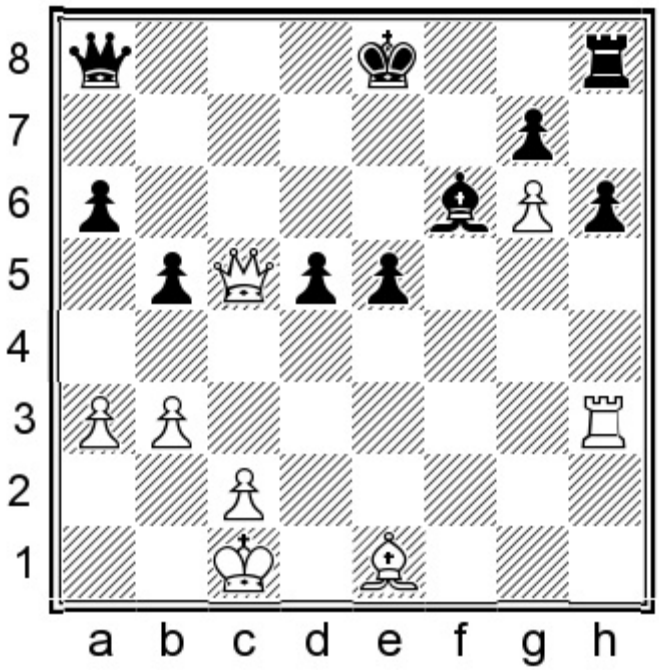
Or 26...♔d7 27.♖xe4 dxe4:

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28.♕g1!? looks very good, offering White substantial counterplay.

27.♗xe1



27...♔d7

Tigran Petrosian begins a king march into the centre of the board, which is one of his trademarks (you may recall his famous game against Fischer in the 1959 Candidates Tournament); but in this case there was no need at all for such radical measures. Black could have continued:

27...♗e7! 28.♕c7 ♗g5†!

Better than 28...♗xa3†? 29.♔b1 0-0 30.♕d7! ♕d8 31.♕e6† ♔h8 32.b4 ♕f6 33.♕g4⇄ with unclear complications.

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29.♗d2

After 29.♔b2 0-0 30.♗b4 ♕c8∓ White's drawing chances are very slight.

29...♗xd2† 30.♔xd2 0-0 31.♕xe5 ♕c6∓

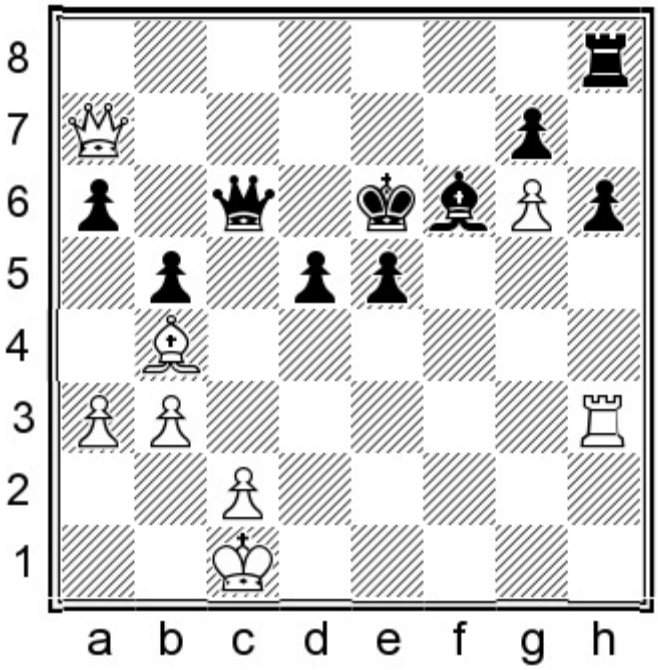
The weakness of the g6-pawn, coupled with the hyperactive position of the white king (the position cannot yet be called an endgame!), guarantees Black a large plus.

28.♗b4 ♕c6 29.♕a7† ♔e6?

This mistake is far more serious than all the inaccuracies Black committed earlier; it could have changed the course of the game completely. From this point on, it becomes clear that the players have failed to withstand the tension of the struggle. Alongside interesting schemes, they begin to produce garbage more and more frequently.

Black simply had to play 29...♕c7□ 30.♕xa6 ♖b8 (30...♕c6? 31.♕a7†=), whereupon 31.♖f3!∓, targeting the f6-bishop, is the only move to keep White properly in the game.

It would be interesting to know how you would continue if you had White here.



30.♖g3?

An uninspired move! Cardoso correctly appreciates the full importance of his g6-pawn, but he had no business wasting time on overprotecting it! Time, no less than material, is a crucial factor in chess – all this has been well known ever since Morphy's day!

White could try playing for mate with:

30.♖f3?

Taking control of the f5-square. But Black can repulse the threats, albeit with some difficulty:

30...e4 31.♖xf6†

31.♖c3 transposes to the note to White's 31st move below.

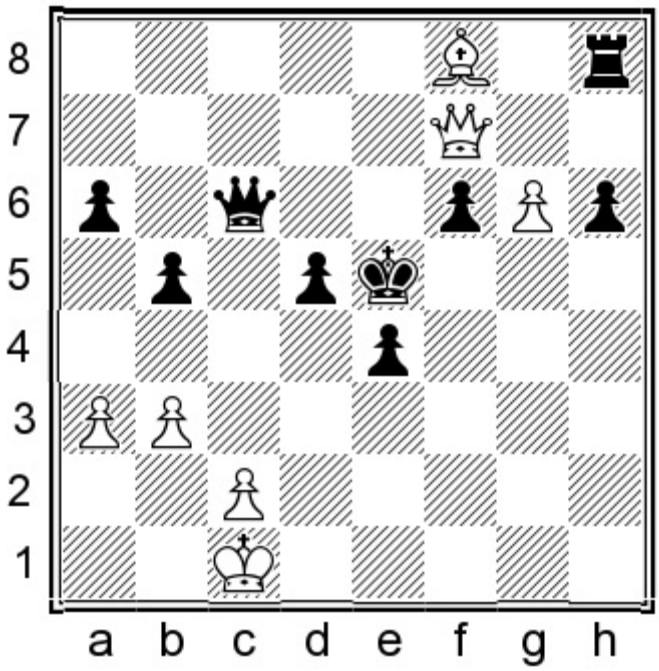
31...gxf6

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Better than 31...♔xf6? 32.♕f7† ♔g5 33.♗d2† ♔g4 34.♕f4† ♔h3 35.♕f5† ♔g2! 36.♕g4† and it all ends in perpetual check.

32.♕f7† ♔e5 33.♗f8

33.g7? ♖c8 34.c3 ♕e6 35.♕h5† f5–+ doesn't help White either.



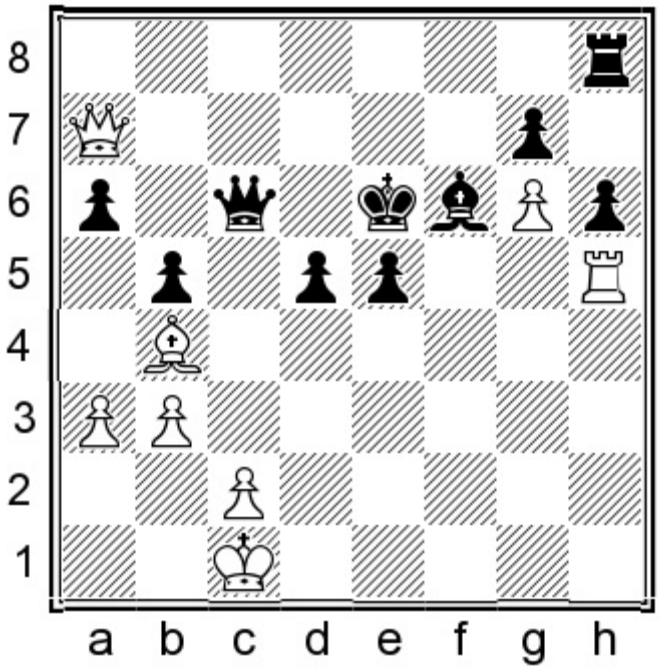
33...♕e6! 34.g7 ♖g8 35.♕h5† f5 36.♕h2† ♔f6 37.♕xh6† ♔f7

Black is winning.

But now let us slightly reroute the white rook:

30.♖h5!

This radically alters the situation. The continuation is virtually forced:



30...♕e8□

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30...♗g5† 31.♖xg5+–

31.♕xa6† ♔d7 32.♕d6† ♔c8 33.♕xd5 ♕xg6

It's hard to find anything else for Black to do, but he will now find himself mated by force:

34.♕e6† ♔b7 35.♕d7† ♔a8 36.♕c6† ♔a7 37.♗c5† ♔b8 38.♗d6† ♔a7 39.♕c7† ♔a8

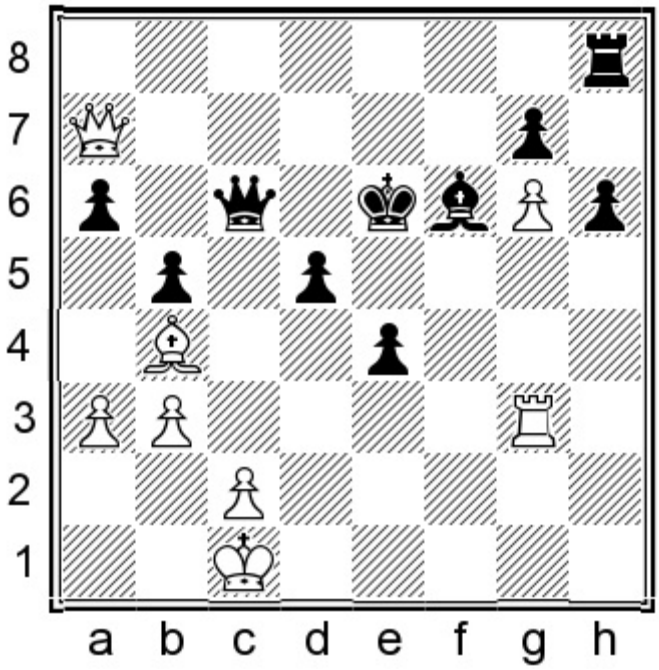
39...♔a6 40.♗c5 also leads to mate.

40.♕a5† ♔b7 41.♕xb5† ♔c8 42.♕c6† ♔d8 43.♕c7† ♔e8 44.♖xe5†! ♗xe5 45.♕e7#

It would be marvellous to beat a World Champion like this, but Cardoso didn't make use of his lucky chance!

30...e4?!

It would be sounder to keep all the central squares under control with 30...d4!. Then in answer to 31.♕f7† ♔f5 32.♗f8, Black has 32...♖xf8! 33.♕xf8 e4–+ with an easy win – the bishop is at least equal to the white rook in strength, and Black is threatening the deadly 34...d3.



31.♕f7†?

Too compliant! To take advantage of the opportunities presented to him by Black's inaccurate last move, White should have played 31.♖c3!? and now:

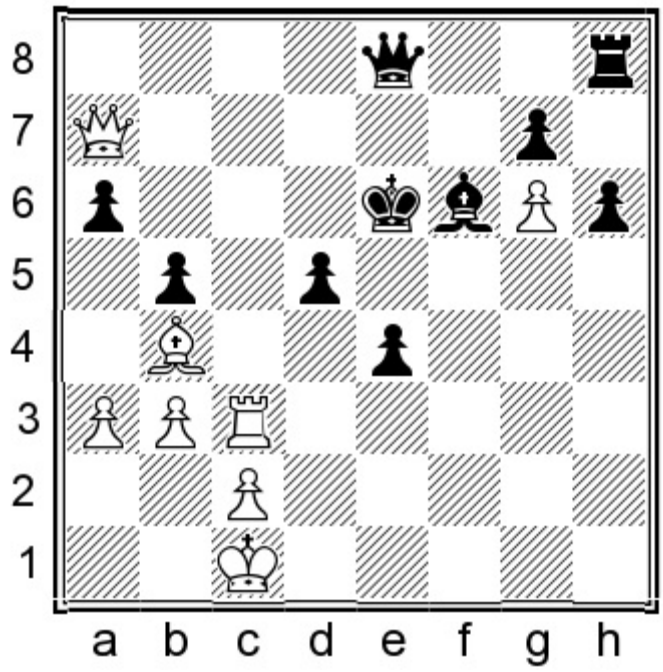
a) 31...♗xc3? only leads to a draw: 32.♕f7† ♔e5 33.♗xc3† d4 34.♕xg7† ♔f5 35.♕xh8 ♕xc3 36.g7 d3 37.♕f8† ♔e5 38.♕f2 d2† 39.♔d1 e3 40.♕g3† ♔f5 41.♕f3†= with perpetual check. Incidentally 40...♔f6 is not good because 41.g8=♘†! gives White possibilities to play for a win.

b) 31...♕d7 32.♖c7 ♕e8 33.♗c3!?⇄ is also unclear.

c) 31...♕e8!

The strongest reply.

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32.♖c7!

White's best try.

After 32.♕xa6† ♔f5 33.♖c5 ♔xg6 34.♖xd5 e3 Black has a large plus.

32.♖g3 ♕d7 33.♕xa6† ♔f5–+ leaves White without a good way to continue.

32.♖c5 ♔f5 33.♕f7 ♕xf7 34.gxf7 g5!? results in a big endgame advantage for Black.

32...♔f5

White needn't be afraid of 32...♕g6 33.♖c6† ♔f5 34.♕f2† and the black king cannot escape the checks.

33.♖xg7 e3!

33...♗xg7 34.♕xg7⇄

34.♖f7 ♔xg6 35.♖xf6† ♔xf6 36.♗c3† ♔f5

Black retains some chances of victory.

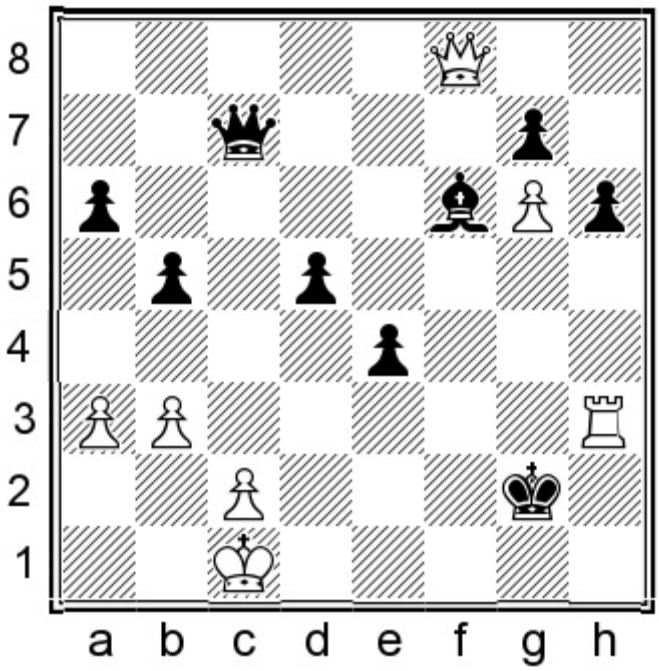
31...♔e5

Moving the king to a different square would have been more precise: 31...♔f5! 32.♖c3 ♕e6 33.♖c7 ♕e5–+

32.♖c3

There could have been a curious finish to the game after 32.♗f8 ♖xf8! 33.♕xf8 ♔f4 34.♖g2 ♔f3 35.♖h2 ♕c7 36.♖h3† ♔g2–+.

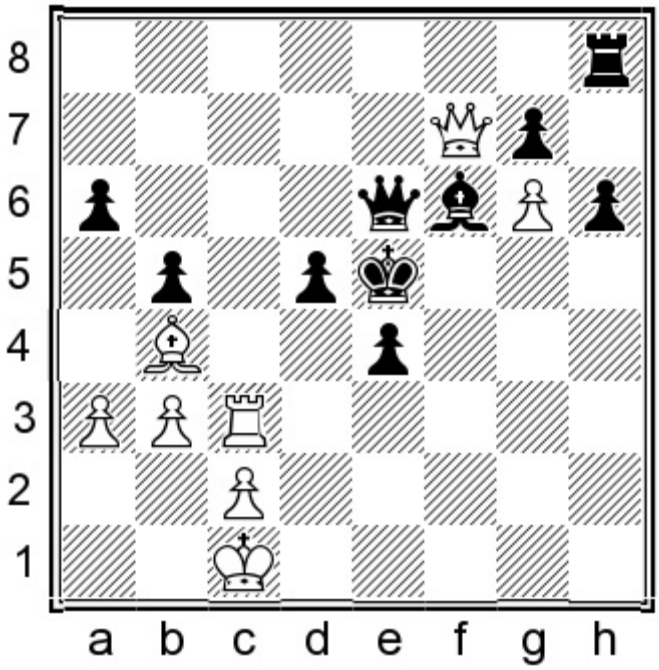
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The rook is trapped in its own camp, since 37.♖h5 ♕f4† is mate in a few moves.

32...♕e6

By their combined efforts the players have created a highly picturesque position. The black king has pressed forward into the middle of the board, where it feels fairly comfortable for the time being – at least it isn't now exposed to any direct attacks.



33.♖c7 ♔f5?!

Rather nervously played. If the king is protected, why move it without any particular necessity? It was worth considering 33...e3!? 34.♖d7 d4 35.♗c5 ♖e8 36.♗xd4† ♔f5 37.♗xf6 ♕xf6!. Thanks to the powerful pawn on e3, the initiative is firmly in Black's hands.

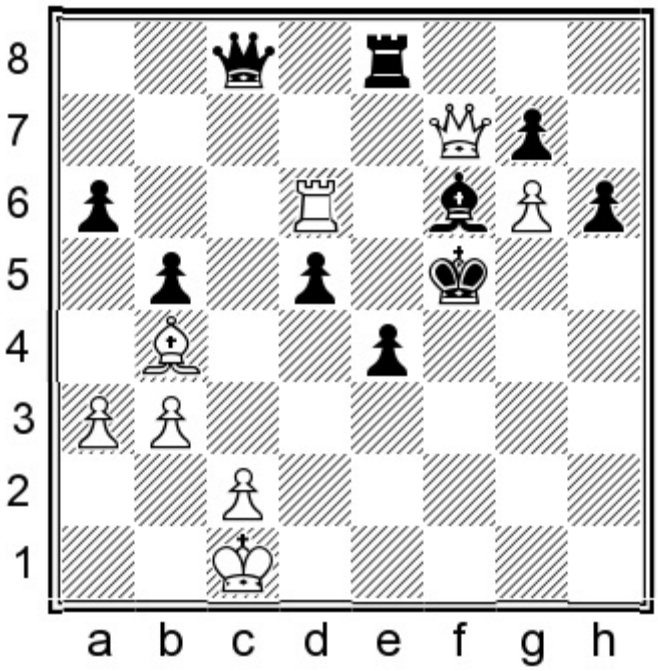
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Black incidentally had another interesting line at his disposal: 33...♖e8 34.♖d7 h5 35.♖d6 ♕xf7 36.gxf7 ♖f8! 37.♖xf6 ♔xf6 38.♗xf8 ♔xf7 39.♗c5 h4 and I don't quite see how the white bishop is going to cope with Black's passed pawns.

A very important point, by the way, is that in both these variations Black would be guaranteed complete security!

34.♖d7 ♖e8□ 35.♖d6 ♕c8□

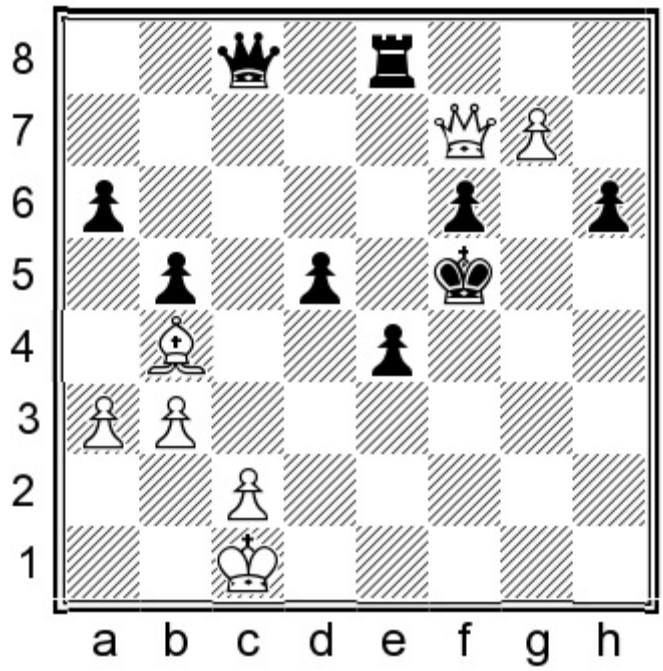
A situation has somehow come about in which nearly all the black pieces have had to abandon the centre of the board, and their poor monarch is forced to defend himself almost in proud isolation. Cardoso may well have come to think that the position was won for him, and that he could checkmate the ex-World Champion within a few moves. It's interesting – what do *you* think of this position?



36.♖xd5†

In itself this move isn't bad, but it creates the conditions for future errors – which are bound to occur. Instead White could have played 36.♖xf6†! gxf6 37.g7, presenting his opponent with a very difficult choice. Black has three continuations that call for attention:

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a) 37...♕e6?!

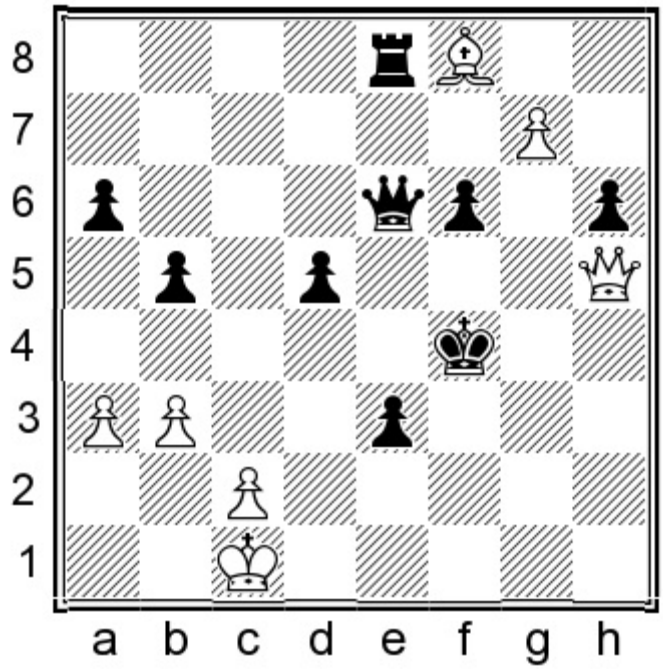
This is easiest to refute:

38.♕h5† ♔f4 39.♗f8

39.♗d6†!? ♔e3 40.♕h2 also wins.

39...e3

What else is Black to do? 39...f5 40.♗d6† and 39...d4 40.♕g6 are equally hopeless.



40.♗d6†! ♔e4 41.♕g6† f5 42.♕g2† ♔d4 43.c3†! ♔xc3 44.♗c5!

The winning move.

44...e2 45.♕g3†+−

The game is near its end.

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b) 37...e3

This move seems so natural, but it turns out that there is now no salvation for Black.

38.♗f8 e2

Which pawn will queen first?

39.♕h5†! ♔f4 40.♗d6† ♔e3

Black has no choice – after 40...♖e5 41.♗xe5† fxe5 42.♕xe2+– there is no stopping the g-pawn.

41.♕h4!

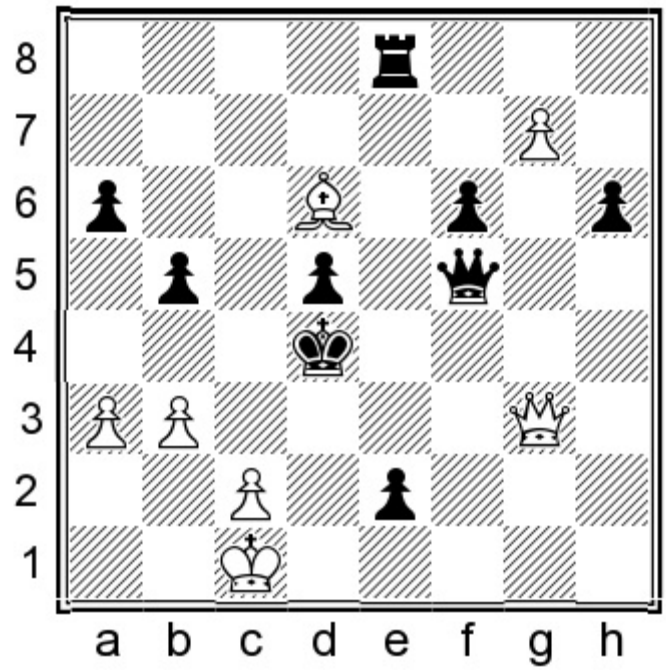
A superb move! White threatens mate on f4.

41...♕f5

41...♖e4 42.♕g3† ♔d4 43.♕d3# is by no means a complicated line to calculate.

42.♕g3† ♔d4

42...♕f3 43.♕g1† ♔e4 44.♕g6† ♔d4 45.♕xe8+–



43.♔b2!

The last reserves go into battle, and the statement "all White's pieces are taking part in the attack" becomes quite literally true.

43...e1=♕

43...♖c8 doesn't help, as White has 44.♗c7!, maintaining all the threats.

44.c3† ♔e4

44...♕xc3† 45.♕xc3† ♔e4 46.♕c2†+–

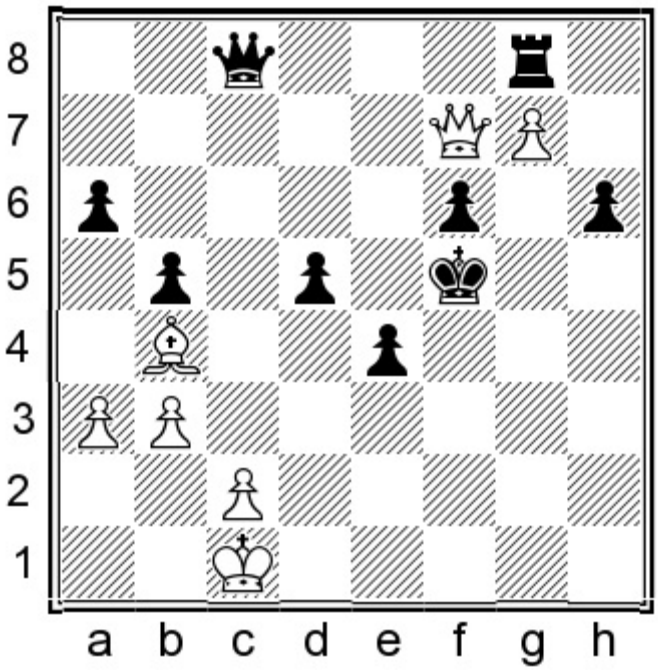
45.♕xe1† ♔d3 46.♕b1†!

With a beautiful finish to the brilliant combination. Of course, it would be quite impossible for White (or Black, for that matter) to calculate all these complex variations, but his intuition may guide him along the way.

c) 37...♖g8!

The only move!

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38.♗f8!

38.♕xd5†? is weaker – afte38...♔g6 Black can start playing for a win again.

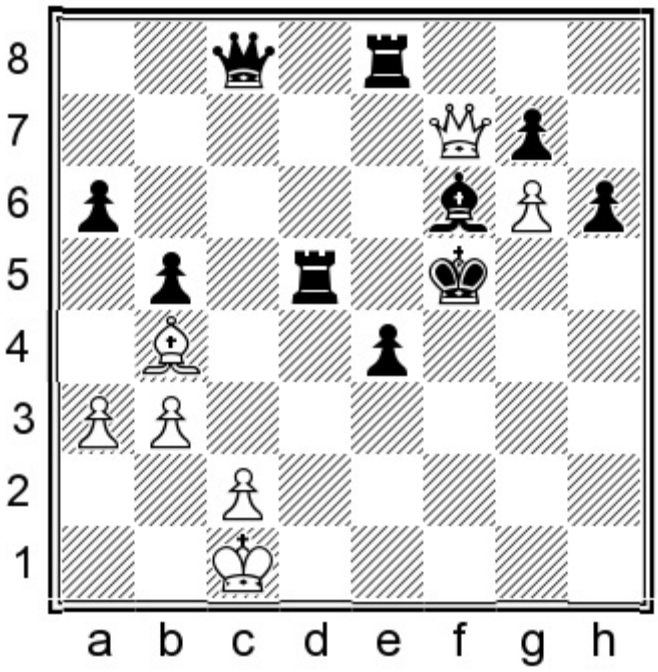
38...♕e6 39.♕h5† ♔f4 40.♗d6†!? ♔e3□ 41.♕xh6† ♔f3 42.♕f4† ♔e2

If Black has a strong desire to lose, he can still do so with 42...♔g2?, which is punished at once by 43.♕g3† ♔f1 44.♗c5 with mate to follow.

43.♕d2† ♔f3=

And it all ends in perpetual check.

It remains an interesting question – in answer to 36.♖xf6†! gxf6 37.g7, what *would* Black have chosen?



36...♔g4

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Petrosian knows no fear! The white queen is shut out of play, and this permits Black to go in for such risky manoeuvres.

It was worth considering the slightly more normal:

36...♖e5!? 37.♖d1

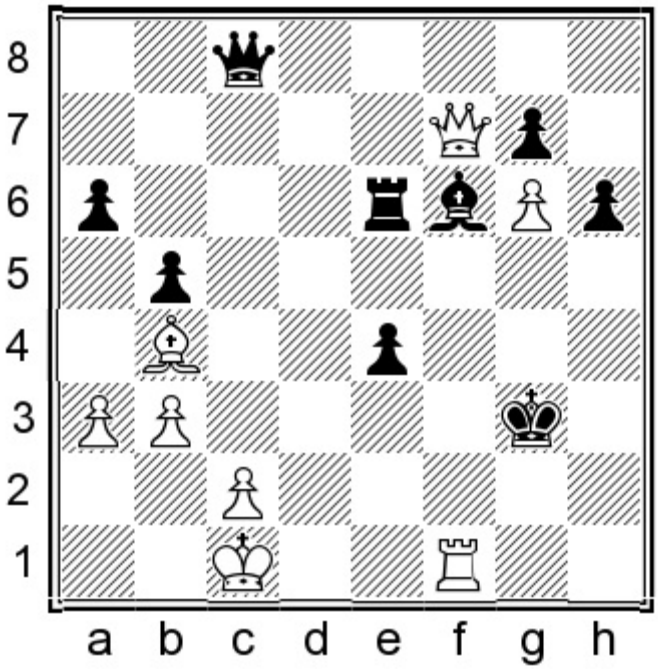
37.♖d6 is weaker: 37...♖e6 38.♖d1 e3 39.♖f1† ♔g4 and Black's passed pawn is already dangerously advanced.

37...♖e6!?

Overprotecting the pride of his position – the bishop on f6.

A less convincing line is 37...e3 38.♖f1† ♔g4 39.♖xf6! gxf6 40.g7 ♖g5 41.♕xf6 ♕e8 42.♗c3 e2 43.♕f2⇄ with obscure complications.

38.♖f1† ♔g5 39.♖g1† ♔f4 40.♖f1† ♔g3



41.♗e1† ♔g2 42.♖f2† ♔g1 43.♕a7 ♗g5†

But not 43...e3 44.♖xf6! gxf6 45.♕d4 and White has good counterplay.

44.♔b1 e3!

The initiative belongs to Black.

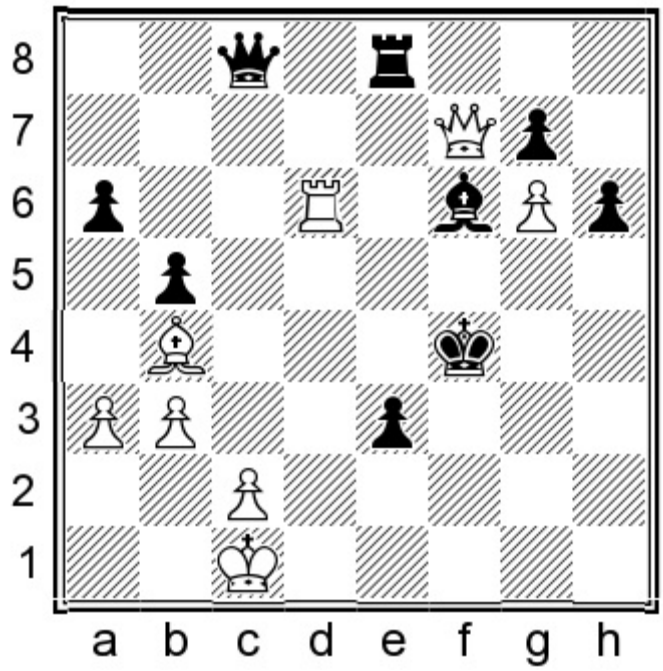
The other king advance looks less natural:

36...♔f4 37.♖d6!

37.♖d1 ♖e6 38.♖f1† ♔g3 transposes to the position after 40...♔g3 in the first part of this note.

37...e3

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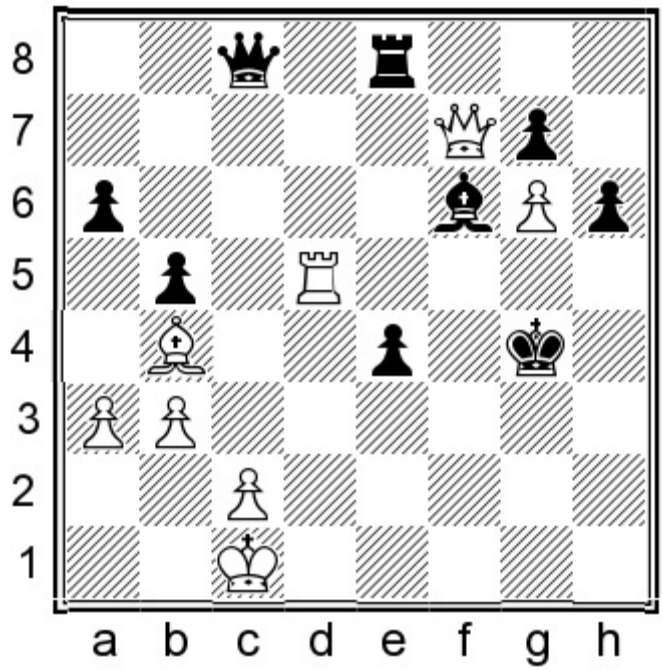


38.♖xf6† gxf6 39.g7 e2 40.♔b2!

The most precise move.

40...♕d8 41.♕h5

With unclear play.



37.♖d1?

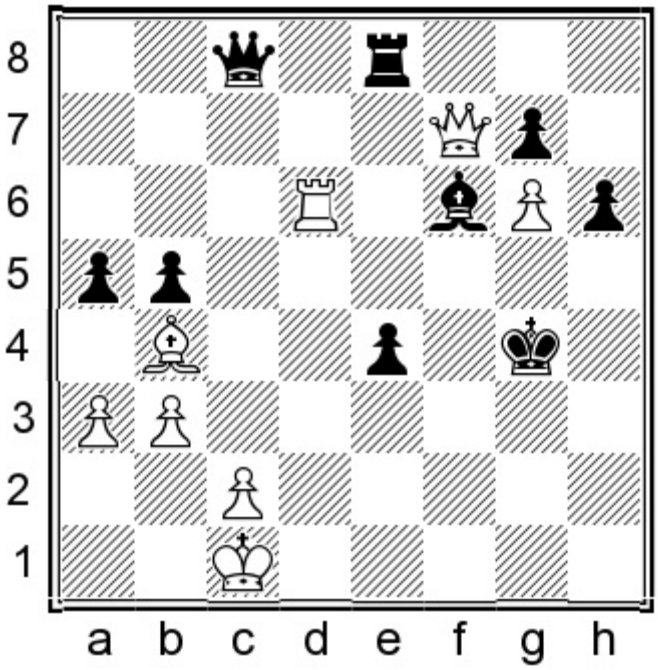
I am convinced that both players must have had no time at all left for calculating variations, and on that day their intuition was patently in poor shape! This move places White on the brink of defeat once more.

White had the stronger:

37.♖d6! a5!?

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37...e3 38.♖xf6 gxf6 probably also leads to a draw, but White is the only one who can play for a win. For example 39.g7 e2 40.♕g6† ♔f3 41.♕xf6† ♔g2 42.♔b2! with advantage.
Black would lose at once with 37...h5? 38.♖xf6 gxf6 39.g7.



38.♖xf6! gxf6

But not 38...axb4? 39.♖f1+–.

39.♗e7 e3 40.g7 e2 41.♕g6† ♔f3 42.♕xf6† ♔e4 43.♕h4† ♔f3 44.♕f6†=

As we have had occasion to observe more than once already, White only succeeds in obtaining counterplay when he takes action against the bishop on f6 – as long as that piece remains on the board, White can't even dream of creating real threats.

37...♕e6 38.♖g1†

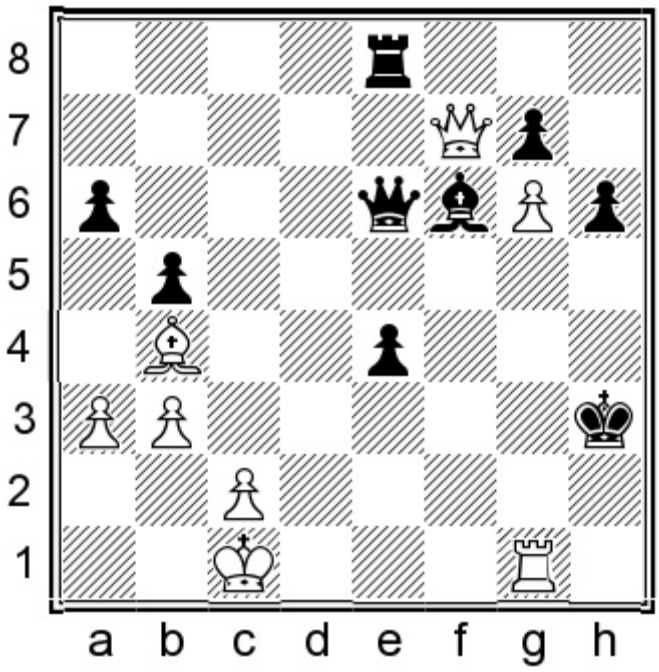
White doesn't have much choice; he would lose with either 38.♗c3 ♕xf7 39.gxf7 ♖f8 40.♗xf6 gxf6 or 38.♕c7 ♖c8 39.♖g1† ♔f5 40.♕g3 ♗g5†.

38...♔h3

I like 38...♔f3! better; one important detail is that 39.♗c3 ♔f2! is good for Black.

The last critical moment of the game has now arrived.

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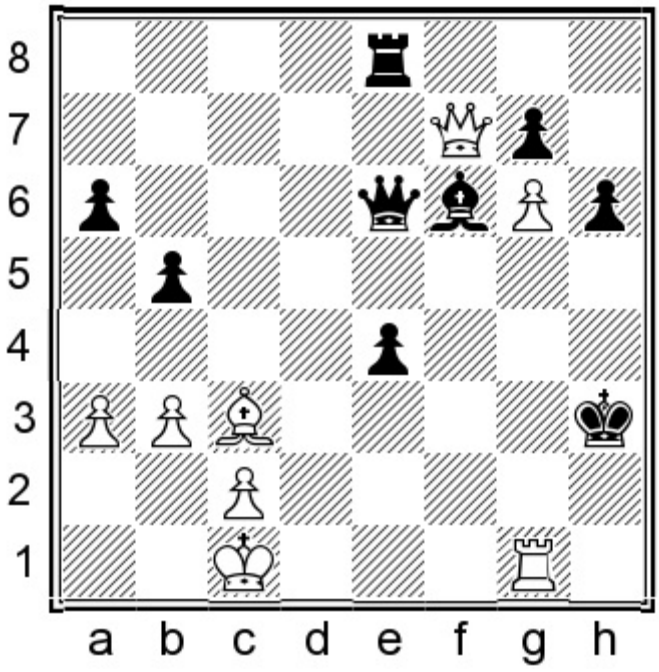


39.♕a7?

Still hoping to bring the queen to the kingside and mate the aggressive black monarch, but this attempt was not to be crowned with success.

What ought White to have done, then? Let us at once reject 39.♕c7? ♕e5–+, and 39.♔d2? ♖d8† 40.♔e2 ♕f5–+, and 39.♖f1? e3. In all these variations Black wins without any problems.

So by dint of trial and error we arrive at 39.♗c3! (here again, note that in his search for salvation White *must* attack the f6-bishop). There are several continuations for Black to try in his quest for the win:



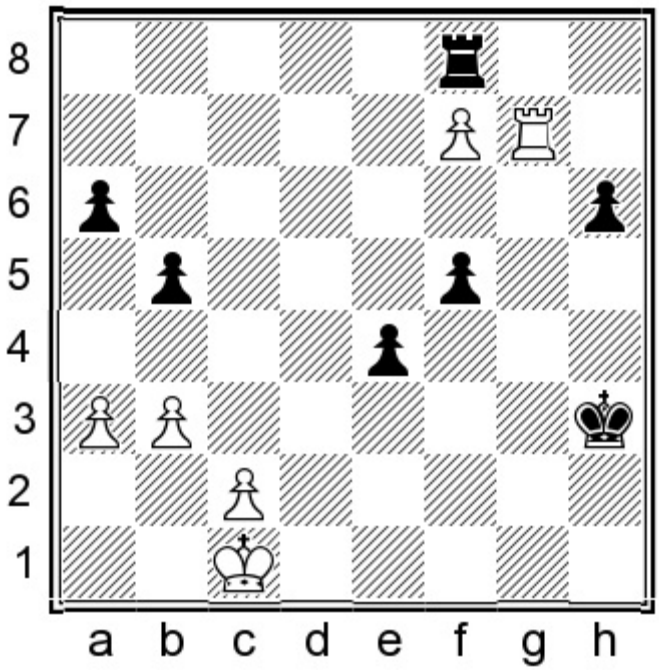
a) 39...♕xf7?

The least effective move, with awkward consequences for Black.

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40.gxf7 ♖f8 41.♗xf6 gxf6 42.♖g7 f5

White's aim is to create another passed pawn, on the queenside. With 42...a5 Black can try to hinder this standard plan, but he won't be very successful! Thus, 43.c4 a4 44.cxb5 axb3 45.b6 e3 46.b7 e2 47.♖g1 f5 48.♔d2+– and with logical steps White achieves the win.



43.c4!

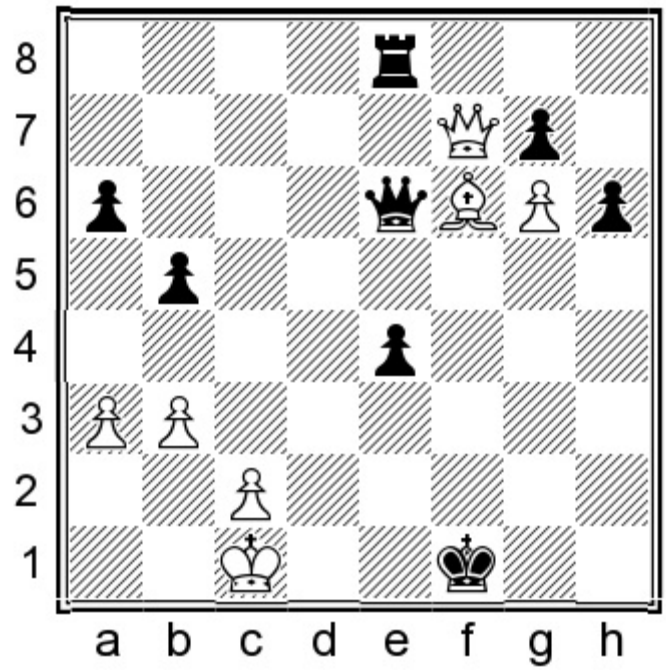
Successfully evading the sly trap – 43.♔d2 a5!? 44.c4? a4 45.cxb5 axb3 46.b6 b2 47.♖g1 ♖xf7 with an unclear outcome. Though I should add that with 44.c3 h5 45.♔e3 in this line, White would still win.

43...bxc4 44.bxc4 f4 45.♔d2

White will soon be victorious.

b) 39...♔h2 40.♖f1 ♔g2 41.♗xf6 ♔xf1

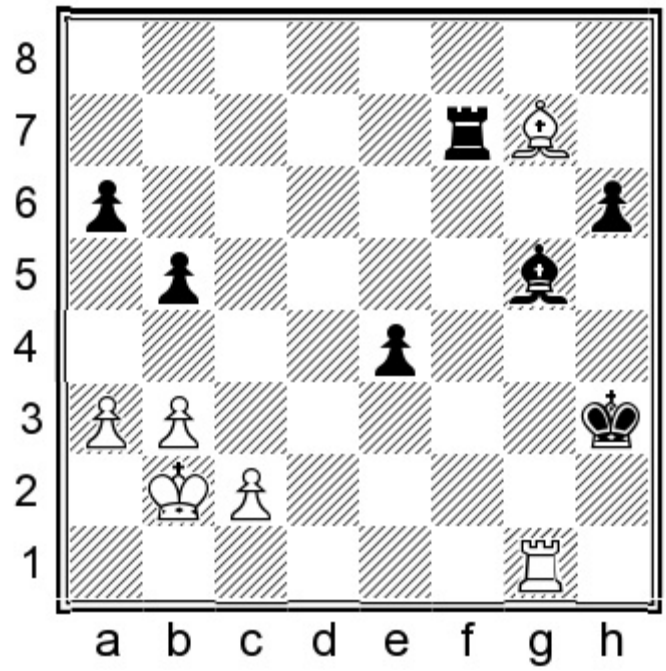
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42.♗e7†! (better than 42.♗xg7† ♔e2 43.♗xh6 e3) 42...♕xf7 43.gxf7 ♖c8 44.♔d2 h5 45.♔e3 h4 46.f8=♕† ♖xf8 47.♗xf8 g5 48.c4 bxc4 49.bxc4 g4 50.c5 g3 51.♗d6 g2 52.♗h2 h3 53.c6 g1=♕† 54.♗xg1 ♔xg1 55.c7 h2 56.c8=♕ h1=♕ 57.♕c1† ♔h2 58.♕xh1† ♔xh1 59.♔xe4 ♔g2 60.♔d5 ♔f3 61.♔c6 ♔e4 62.♔b6 ♔d5= It is of course possible that I have made a mistake somewhere in this analysis, but the line does seem to me to be largely forced.

c) 39...♖e7!? 40.♕f8 ♕b6 is very interesting. It looks risky for Black to keep the queens on, but this may be his best winning attempt.

d) 39...♗g5†!? 40.♔b2 ♕xf7 41.gxf7 ♖f8 42.♗xg7 ♖xf7



43.♗xh6!

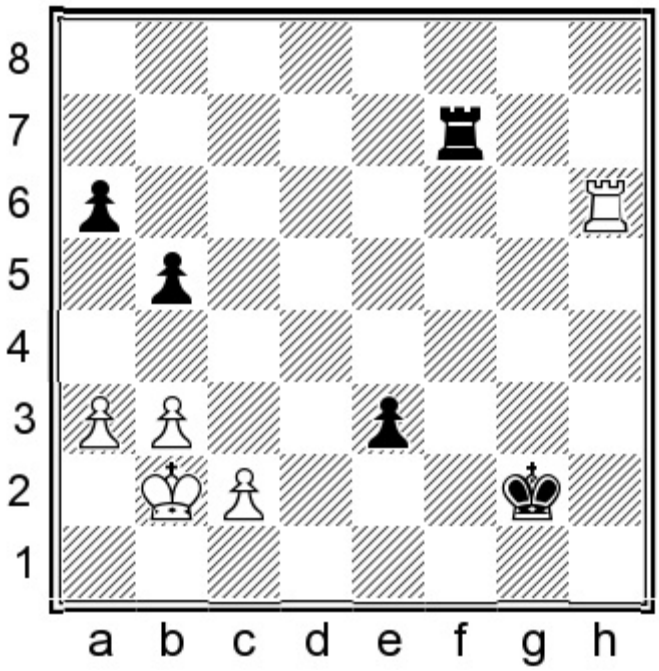
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White is fortunate to have this stroke available – otherwise it would be time to stop the clock.

43...♗xh6 44.♖h1† ♔g2

Nothing is altered by 44...♔g4 45.♖xh6 e3 46.♖xa6.

45.♖xh6 e3



46.♖xa6 e2

On 46...♖e7 47.♖g6†, the white rook will find a way to reach the first rank.

47.♖e6 ♔f2 48.♔c3 ♖f4

Trying to hold up the advance of the white pawns.

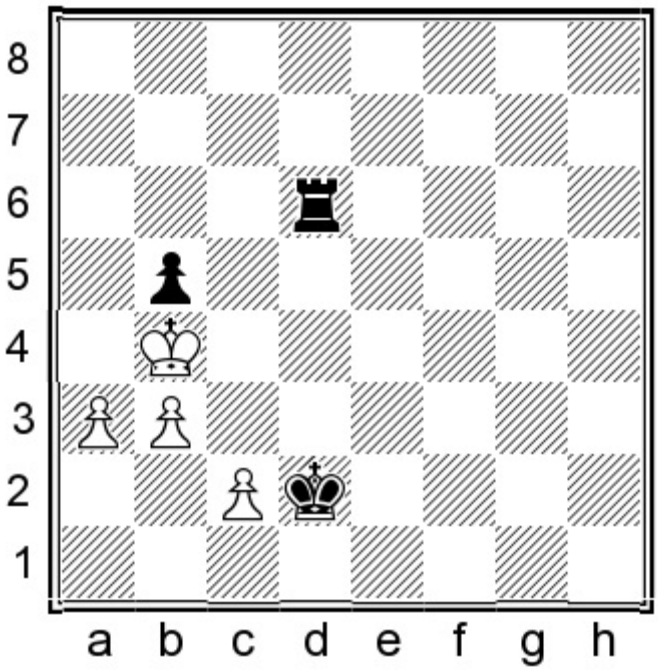
After 48...e1=♕†, I didn't succeed in finding a win for Black: 49.♖xe1 ♔xe1 50.♔b4 ♔d2 51.a4 bxa4 52.bxa4 ♔xc2 53.a5 ♔d3 54.a6=

49.♔d2!

On 49.a4? e1=♕† 50.♖xe1, Black's winning process is: 50...b4† 51.♔d3 ♔xe1 52.a5 ♔d1 53.a6 ♖f6 54.a7 ♖a6 55.c3 bxc3 56.♔xc3 ♖xa7 57.b4 ♖b7! 58.♔c4 ♔c2 59.b5 ♖b8 60.♔c5 ♔b3 61.b6 ♔a4–+

49...♖d4† 50.♔c3 ♖d6!? 51.♖e4 e1=♕† 52.♖xe1 ♔xe1 53.♔b4 ♔d2

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54.a4!

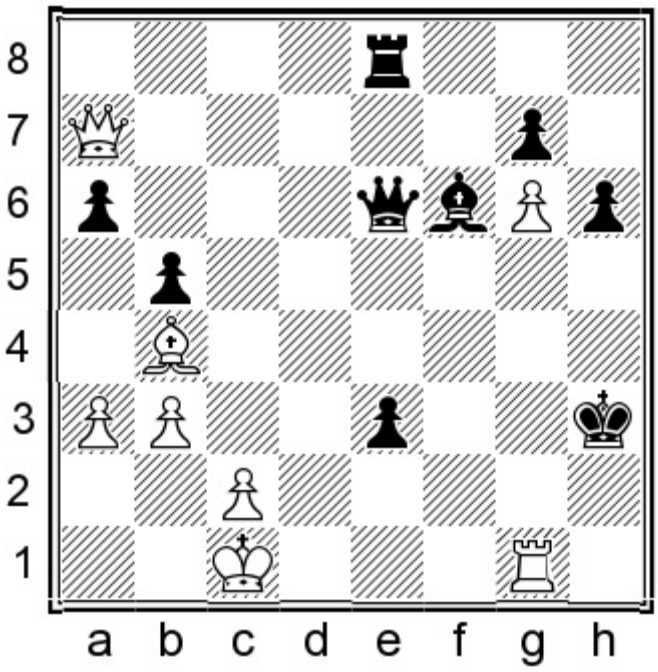
Avoiding a final trap: 54.♔xb5? ♔xc2 55.a4 ♔xb3 56.a5 ♖d5† 57.♔b6 ♔b4 58.a6 ♖d6† 59.♔b7 ♔b5 60.a7 ♖d7† 61.♔b8 ♔b6 62.a8=♘† ♔c6–+ and White loses this well-known theoretical position within a few moves.

54...bxa4 55.bxa4 ♔xc2 56.a5 ♔d3 57.♔b5

And finally White achieves the draw. Perhaps all this talk about chess suffering a "death of draws" isn't so far from the truth?

39...e3!

The advance of the e-pawn signals the beginning of the end; White's attacking possibilities are reduced with every move.



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40.♕b7

Nor can White save himself with:

40.♕c7 ♕e5!

But not 40...♗e5?? 41.♕b7+–.

41.♕d7† ♖e6 42.♗c3 ♕d6

The simplest route to victory.

42...♕e4 43.♗xf6 ♔h2! should also win, but it's more complicated.

However, 42...♕xc3? just throws away the win: 43.♕xe6† ♔h2 44.♖h1†! ♔xh1 45.♕h3† ♔g1 46.♕g3† ♔f1 47.♕f3† ♔e1 48.♕g3†=

43.♕b7 ♕c6 44.♕b8 ♗h4!

And with that, White's attack comes to a halt.

40...♕e4–+ 41.♕d7†

On 41.♕c7, Black wins with either 41...♖e5 or 41...♗e5!? 42.♕d7† ♔h2.

41...♖e6 42.♕d1 e2 43.♕e1

In the event of 43.♖h1† ♔g4 44.♕g1† ♔f5, the king easily escapes pursuit.

43...♕e5 44.♖h1† ♔g4

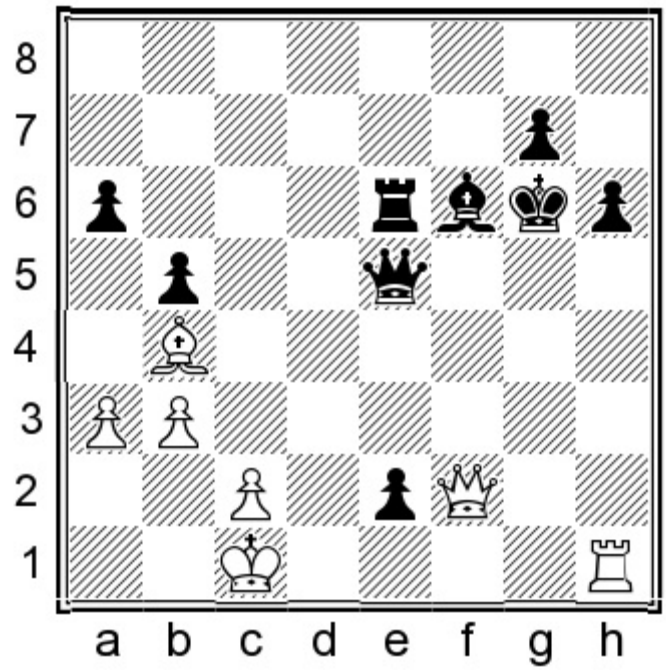
The king has coped with the tasks that fell to him, and returns in triumph.

The exotic 44...♔g2? loses to 45.♕g1† ♔f3 46.♖h3† ♔e4 47.♕g2† ♔f5 48.♖f3†+–, but I shouldn't think Petrosian spent so much as a minute on this variation!

45.♕g1† ♔f5 46.♕f2† ♔xg6

The vengeful monarch in person has destroyed the g6-pawn that gave him so many problems during the previous twenty or so moves.

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47.♖g1† ♔f7 48.♖e1 ♔g8

It's over! The king has reached an absolutely safe refuge, and Black has a material plus as well as an attack.

49.♔d2 ♗g5† 50.♔d3 ♕d5†

0–1

A curious game. Petrosian obtained a big advantage out of the opening, but in the next phase of the game the precise and faultless calculation of variations was not his strong point. He made some gross mistakes and could have been punished for them at more than one stage, but this proved to be beyond the Filipino grandmaster's powers. One piece of practical advice: we are not computers, and we cannot concern ourselves purely with the analysis of variations. Pick out the chief enemy in your opponent's camp – in this case it was clear that all Black's hopes and aspirations were linked to the secure position of his dark-squared bishop – and direct all your firepower against it. If Cardoso had been thinking on those lines, the result of the game would quite probably have been different.

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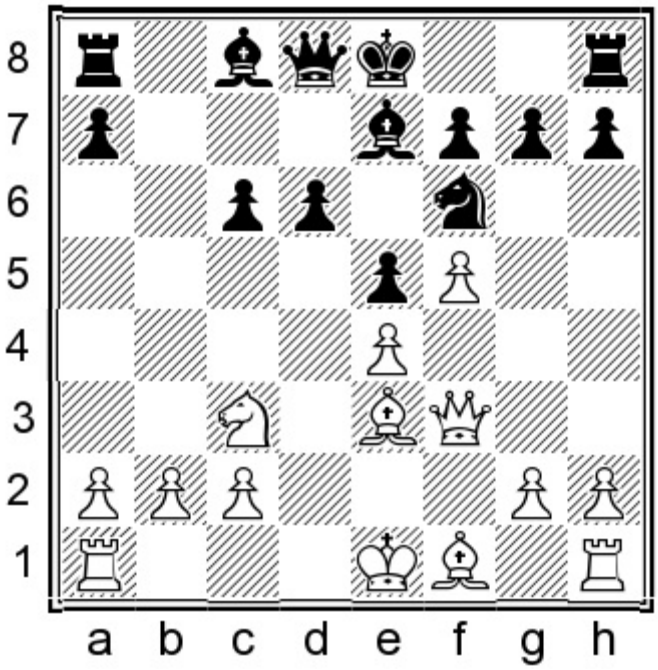
Lev Psakhis – Craig Pritchett

Troon 1984

1.e4

This game was played in the last round of a tournament to mark the centenary of the Scottish Chess Association. I was in the lead, one point ahead of Jim Plaskett. His game finished fairly quickly, and it was only with an effort that I resisted the temptation to get the tournament over in a hurry. However, I resolved to give my opponent a genuine battle. And I must say that this wish met with his full understanding!

1...c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.f4 ♘c6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♕f3 e5 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.f5



A sharp variation, leading to wholly unclear play. I had taken a look at it before the tournament – I liked the positions arising from it, but I could hardly be called an expert on it. If my memory doesn't deceive me, my first game with this line proved also to be my last.

10...♕a5 11.0-0-0 ♖b8 12.♗c4 h5!?

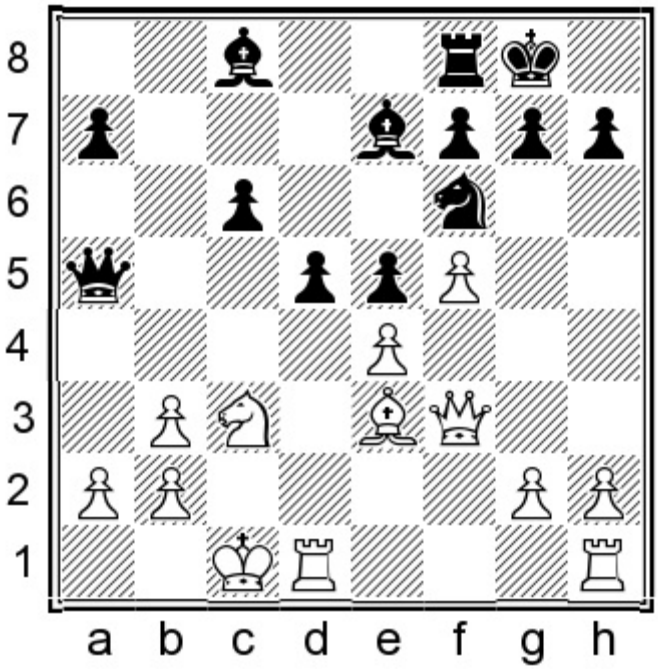
This idea is popular in many variations in our own day, but at that time it was still in the nature of a novelty and was not in widespread use. At any rate, I personally had merely heard about it; it was only at the board that I set about solving all the complex problems. Black holds up White's dangerous g2-g4 for the time being, and hopes to create counterplay on the queenside. The move has only one defect, but a substantial one: Black probably has to forget about kingside castling. Incidentally, 12...h5!? had first been played a year before this game, by Lev Polugaevsky – a fact which itself speaks of the move's quality.

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There is complex play in the event of:

12...0-0 13.♗b3 ♘d7

After 13...♖xb3 14.cxb3 d5, two lines promise White the better chances:



a) 15.♗d2 dxe4 16.♘xe4 ♕xa2 17.♗g5! gave White a plus in Lopez Martinez – Lacasa Diaz, Barcelona 2006.

b) 15.exd5 cxd5 16.♖xd5 ♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♗d6 18.♖d1 ♕xa2 19.♘f6† ♔h8 20.♖xd6 led to a win for White in Tseshkovsky – Pavlovic, Vrnjacka Banja 2005.

14.g4 ♘c5 15.g5 ♘xb3† 16.axb3!? d5 17.f6

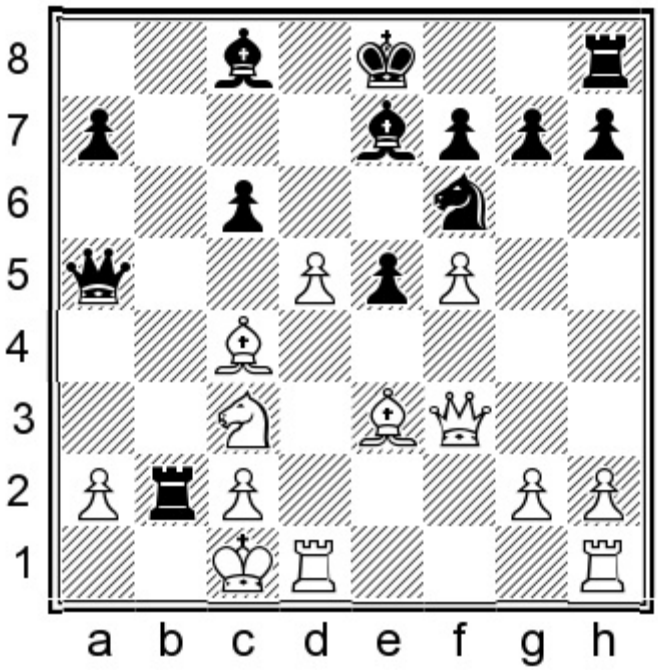
White holds the initiative.

Advancing the d-pawn immediately is only superficially dangerous for White:

12...d5 13.exd5 ♖xb2

13...♗a3 leads to a virtually forced line: 14.bxa3 ♕xc3 15.♗xa7 ♕b2† 16.♔d2 cxd5 17.♗xb8 ♕xb8 18.♗xd5 0-0 Li Chao – Hou Yifan, Danzhou 2010, and here White's simplest continuation was 19.♖he1!?±.

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14.d6!

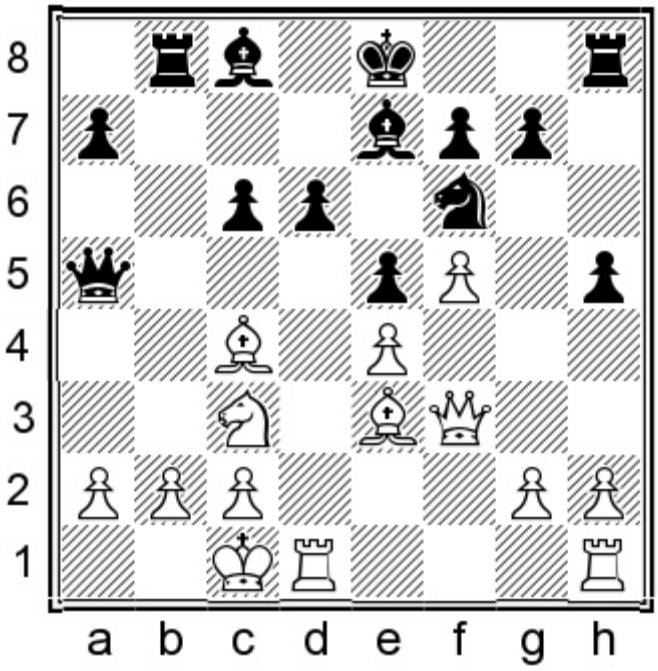
This seems to be stronger than 14.♔xb2 ♕a3† 15.♔b1 ♕xc3 16.♗b3 cxd5 17.♗g5 Balashov – Andersson, Munich 1979, and now 17...♕b4± limits White's edge.

14...♖b4

14...♕a3? 15.♘b1+–

15.♕xc6† ♗d7 16.♕a6

White has an obvious advantage.



13.♗b3

White could consider 13.♗g5 ♗a6 14.♗xa6 ♕xa6, and now simply 15.♖he1 offers good chances of a small plus. Instead 15.♗xf6, as played in Yakovich – Melnikov, USSR 1984, can be met with with

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15...♗xf6, in view of the variation: 16.♖xd6? ♗g5†! 17.♔d1 (not 17.♔b1? ♕a3!–+) 17...♗e7 with a clear advantage for Black, thanks to the awkward position of the white king.

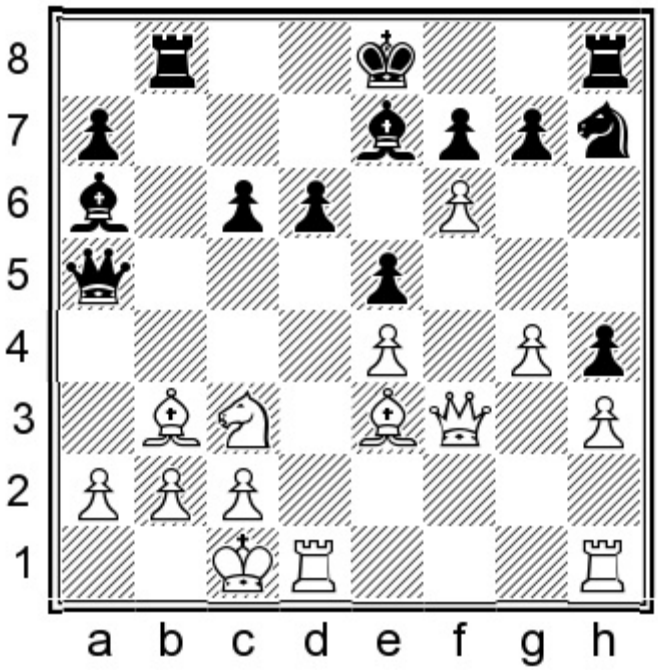
13...♗a6 14.h3!?

For a long time I couldn't decide whether or not it was worth spending a tempo moving the king to b1, but I came to the conclusion that the king was safer actually on the c1-square. This is confirmed by the Polugaevsky game already mentioned, which went 14.♔b1 c5! 15.♗c1 c4 16.♗a4† ♔f8 17.♗c6 ♕c5 18.♗d5 ♗d8 19.h3 h4 20.g4 hxg3 21.♕xg3 ♗a5, and Black's attack should not be underestimated, Lukovnikov – Polugaevsky, USSR 1983.

14...h4 15.g4 hxg3

Of course Black would like to maintain a blockade on the kingside and avoid the opening of lines, but how is he to do this?

He does not succeed with:
15...♘h7 16.f6!



16...♘xf6!

On 16...gxf6 White has the highly unpleasant 17.♕f2!, attacking the h4-pawn, and if 17...♘f8 then 18.♖xd6!.

Black is also very badly off after 16...♗xf6 17.♖xd6±.

17.g5 ♖xb3□ 18.axb3!

18.cxb3!? is also quite good.

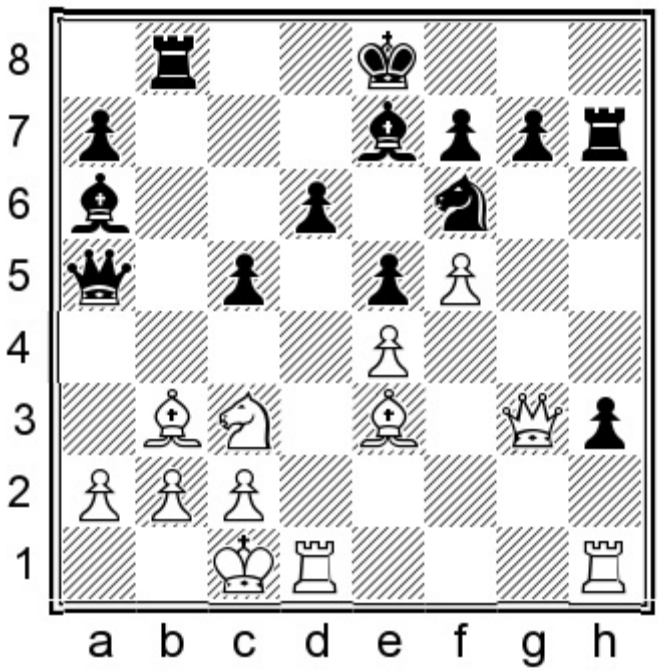
On the other hand, 18.gxf6?! is met by: 18...♖xb2! 19.♔xb2 (19.♗f2 ♕a3 20.fxe7 ♖h6!∓) 19...♕b4† 20.♔c1 ♕xc3 21.fxe7 ♖h6! and Black has excellent attacking chances.

18...♘d7 19.g6

White is doing well on the kingside.

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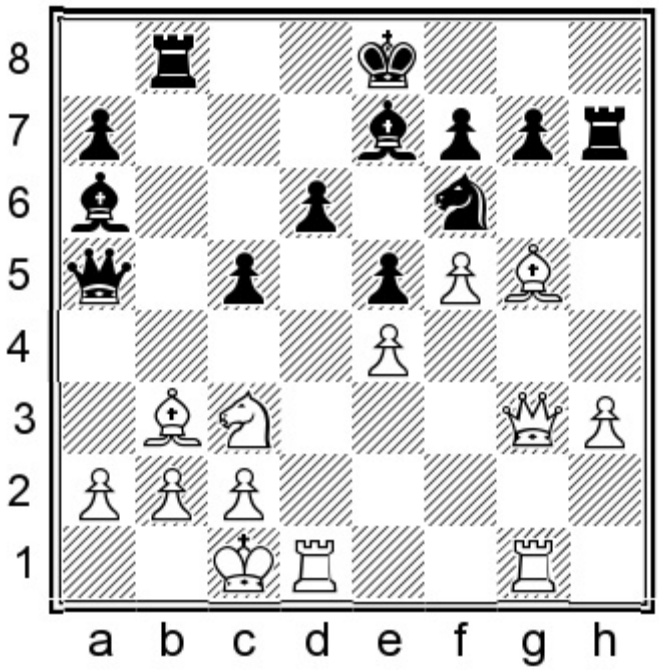
16.♕xg3 ♖h7



17.h4!?

I opted for the most typical plan: the pawn is heading for h6, and “the attack will play itself”.

Another possibility was slightly more cunning: 17.♖hg1!? c5 18.♗g5

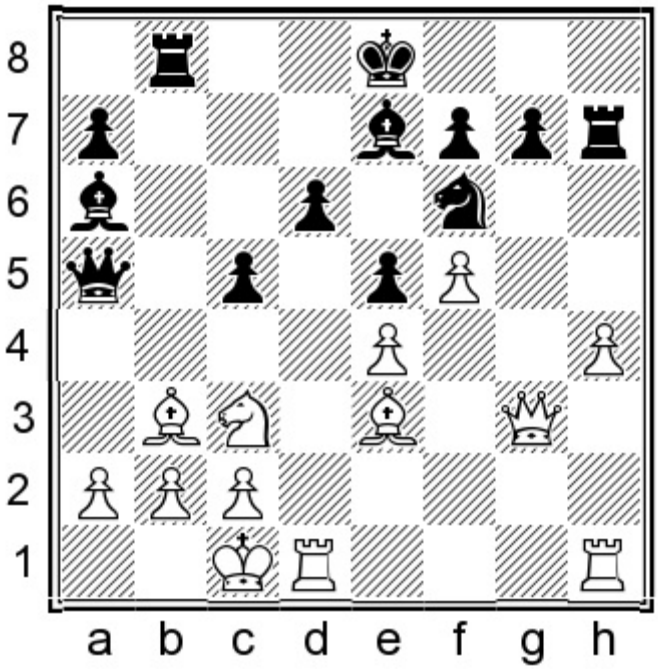


This has the point that 18...c4? would fail to 19.♗a4† ♔f8 20.♖xd6, in view of 20...♗xd6 21.♗xf6 gxf6 22.♘d5+–!

17...c5

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It was worth considering 17...♖b4!?, taking control of the a4-square and envisaging an exchange sacrifice on e4.

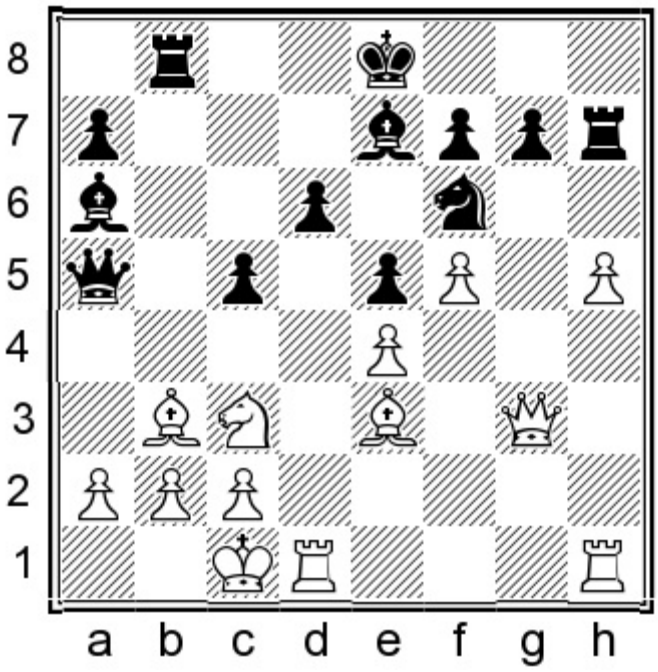


18.♗g5?!

At this juncture, the strategic choice I made was wrong! I wanted to combine my attack with positional themes (utilization of the d5-square and play against my opponent's bad dark-squared bishop). This may indeed be quite a good idea, and yet the direct and unsophisticated 18.h5! was clearly stronger! I spent a long time analysing the possible complications, and in principle I saw all the important lines – yet I talked myself into playing 18.♗g5, particularly since the position appealed to me and I didn't see the point of taking on any excessive commitments. I fancy that this kind of mental sloth is in some way familiar to virtually all chess players – apart, of course, from those who have done plenty of work to master it, and *force* themselves to seek the best move!

Let us see how the game could continue after 18.h5!. Black has these choices:

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a) 18...♕b4 19.h6! gxh6

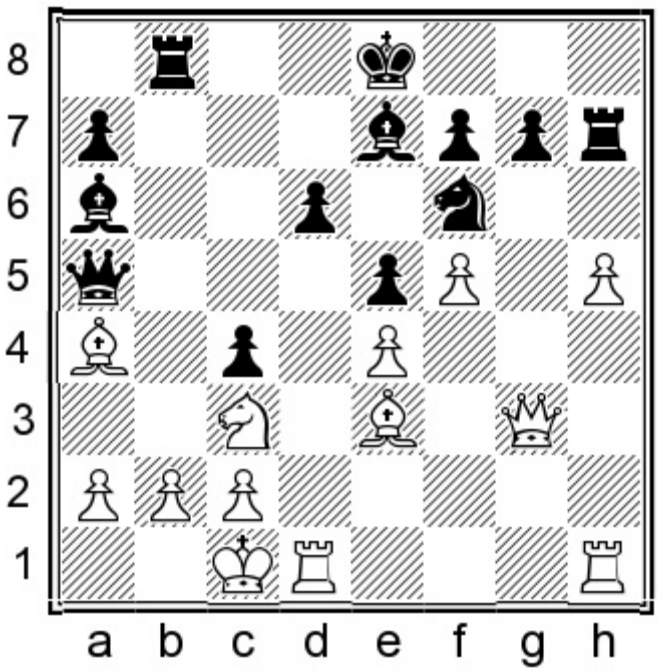
Black also loses after 19...c4 20.a3 ♕b7 21.♗a4† ♔d8 22.b4 cxb3 ♕xe5.

20.a3 ♕b7 21.♘d5 ♗c4

21...c4 22.♗a4† ♔f8 23.b4 ♘xe4 24.♕g4+–

22.♘xf6† ♗xf6 23.♗xc4 ♕xb2† 24.♔d2 ♖g7 25.♕f2+–

b) 18...c4 19.♗a4†



19...♔d8!

Going the other way is worse: 19...♔f8?! 20.h6! ♕b4 21.hxg7† ♔g8 22.♗b5! This beautiful move interferes with the black pieces acting along the b-file, a theme which is familiar in chess problems. (At the last moment I spotted that White must definitely avoid 22.♖xh7?? ♕xb2†

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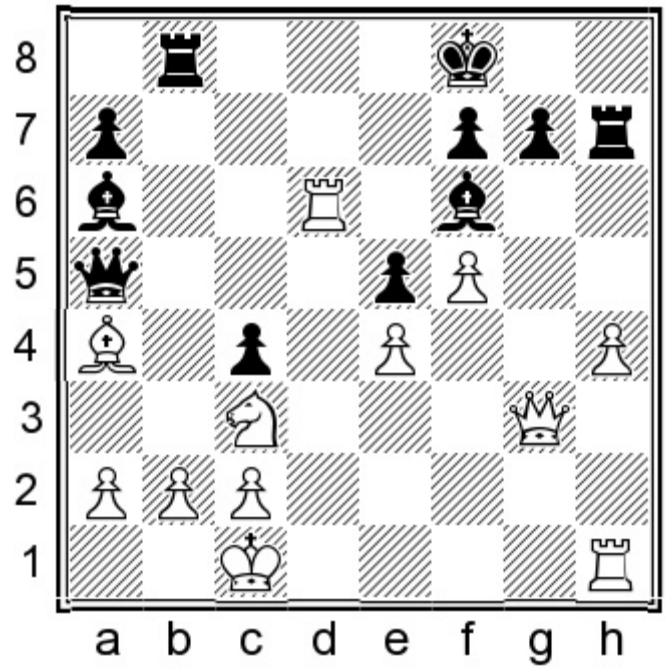
23.♔d2 ♕xc3†!! 24.♔e2 ♘xh7–+.) 22...♖xb5 (22...♗xb5 23.♘d5! ♘xd5 24.♖xh7+–) 23.♘xb5 ♘xe4 24.♕f3+–

20.h6 ♕b4 21.b3!±

Black's threats have been successfully parried and his king in the centre is leading a miserable life; so the position can definitely be judged favourable to White.

18...c4 19.♗a4† ♔f8 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♖xd6

With the last couple of moves, some major changes to the position have come about; in particular I have managed to win a pawn. However, I had underestimated the activity of Black's pieces, which are now co-operating excellently with each other on all parts of the board.



21...♗e7!

Black was correct not to be tempted by:

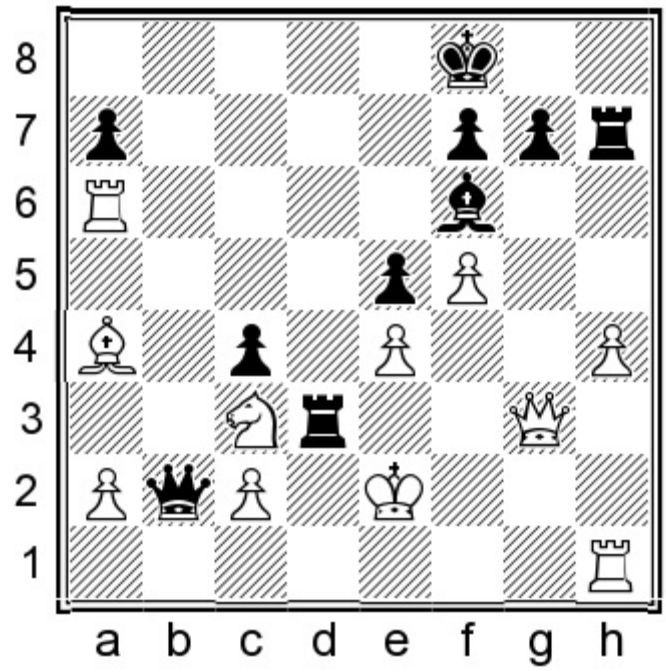
21...♕b4?! 22.♖xa6! ♕xb2† 23.♔d2 ♖d8† 24.♔e2

24.♘d5? ♕d4†–+

24...♖d3!

The move on which Black's idea is based, but it can be refuted – in two different ways.

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25.♕e1!

Not 25.♖b1? ♕xb1 26.cxd3 ♕b2†−+.

However, the cold-blooded 25.♘d1!? ♕xa2 26.♘e3! is adequate for victory.

25...♖xc3

25...♕xc3 26.♕xc3 ♖xc3 27.♖b1+–

26.♕b1! ♕xb1 27.♖xb1 g5□ 28.fxg6!? fxg6 29.♖f1 ♖f7 30.♖axf6

White is winning easily. I remember feeling very proud when I found all these variations over the board.

22.♖d5?!

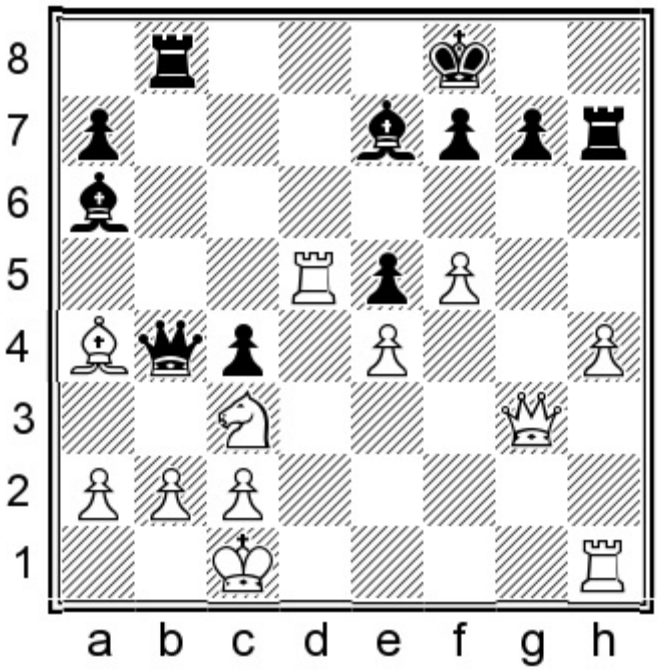
Not the best move.

White could have made the game end in an elegant draw by 22.♖hd1 ♗xd6 23.♖xd6 ♖d8!? 24.♕xe5! ♕xe5 25.♖xd8† ♔e7 26.♖d7†! ♔f8 27.♖d8†=.

But the strongest continuation was undoubtedly 22.♖d7! ♕b4 23.b3±, preserving the extra pawn for which Black appears to have no direct compensation.

22...♕b4

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23.b3

The one thing I couldn't understand was who was actually attacking whom!

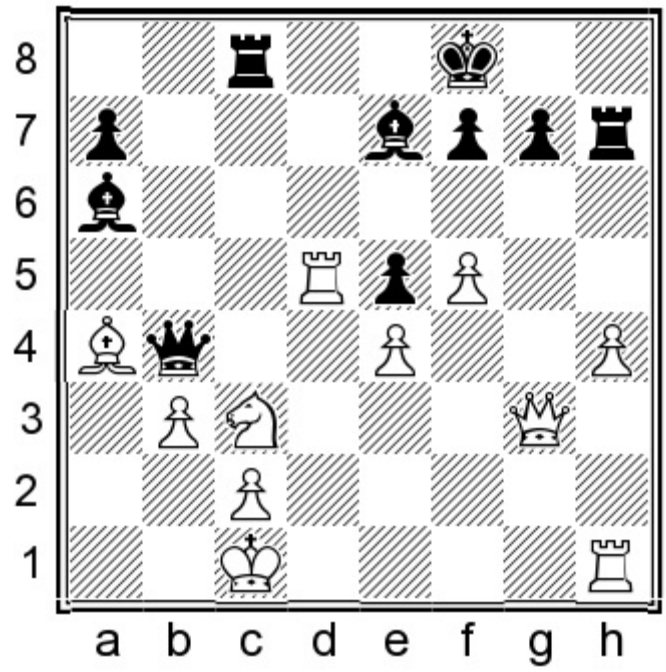
On 23.♕xe5, Black continues with: 23...♗xh4!? (more convincing than either 23...♖xh4 24.♖xh4 ♕xb2† 25.♔d2 ♗xh4 26.♕f4± or 23...♕xb2† 24.♔d2 ♕b6 25.♔e2!±) 24.♖xh4 ♕xb2† 25.♔d2 ♖xh4 26.♗b5! ♖a8! 27.♗xa6 ♖h1 28.♘e2 ♕b4† (28...♕b1!?) 29.♘c3 ♕b2= All attempts made by Pritchett and me to escape the confines of a balanced position have so far been unsuccessful!

It would also be interesting to try: 23.♗b5!? ♗xb5 (or 23...♖xb5 24.♘xb5 ♗xb5 25.a3 ♕a4 26.♕xe5 ♗e8⇄) 24.a3 ♕a5 25.♕xe5 (25.a4 ♗b4↑) 25...♖e8 26.f6! ♗xf6 27.♕f5 ♗xc3 28.♖xb5⇄

Perhaps it was worth admitting my error on the previous move and playing the surprising 23.♖d7!?. Then after 23...♕xb2† 24.♔d2 ♗b4 25.♕xe5 White can lay claim to an advantage in spite of the loss of tempo – but frankly, making such a move is practically impossible!

23...cxb3 24.axb3 ♖c8!

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25.♔b2

I should mention that I played this natural move without thinking, but White also had another interesting continuation available: 25.♖h3!? ♗f1 26.♗d7 ♗xh3 27.♗xc8 ♗g2!? 28.f6! (more precise than 28.♖b5 ♗xh4 29.♖xb4 ♗xg3 30.♖b8 ♔e7 31.♗a6 ♗f2⇄) 28...♗xf6 29.♗f5 g6 30.♔b2±

25...♗b7!

A splendid move!

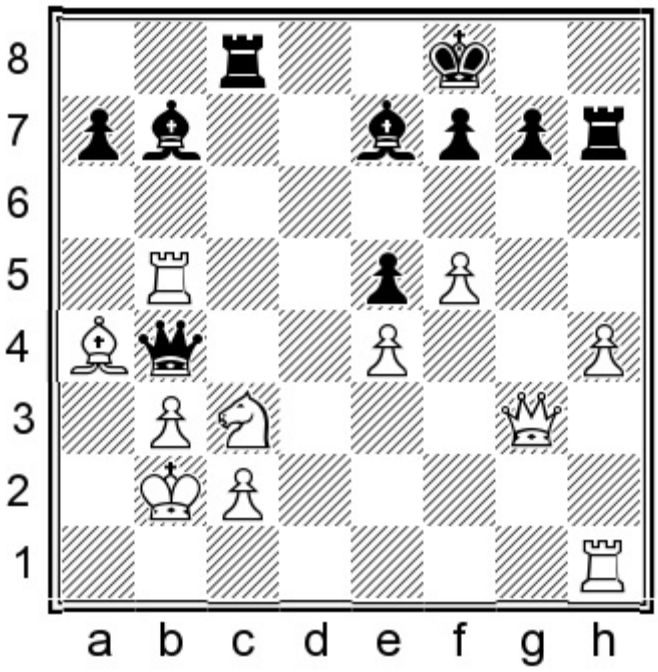
Black loses with 25...♕a3† 26.♔b1 ♗b4? 27.f6! (27.♖hd1! isn't bad either: 27...♗xc3 28.♖d8† ♖xd8 29.♖xd8† ♔e7 30.♖e8† ♔d6 31.♕xc3+–) 27...♔g8 (he has to spend precious time moving his king; 27...♗xc3 28.♕xc3+– and 27...gxf6 28.♖g1 are equally hopeless for Black) 28.♖hd1+–.

However, Black could also have considered 25...♖xh4!? 26.♖hd1 ♖h6 27.♗d7 ♖a8 28.♖a1±.

26.♖b5

With 26.♖d3 ♗xe4!? White would be handing the initiative to his opponent.

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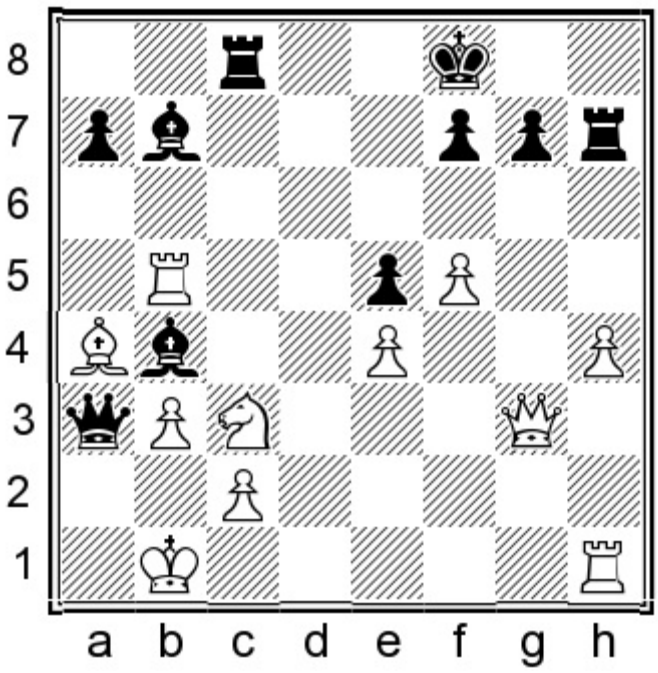
26...♕a3†

26...♕d4? allows White to win with either 27.♖d1 ♖xc3 28.♖xd4 ♖xg3 29.♖d7+– or 27.♖xb7 ♖xc3 28.♕xc3 ♗a3† 29.♔xa3 ♕xc3 30.♖d1+–.

27.♔b1 ♗c6!

My opponent is conducting the game superbly, not falling for any of the numerous traps.

White can cope with the adventurous:
27...♗b4



28.♖xe5!

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I simply wouldn't have been keen on sacrificing the exchange on b4.

And neither 28.♘a2? ♖xc2! nor 28.♘d5? ♗xd5 29.♖xd5 ♗c3 30.♖d8† ♖xd8 31.♕xc3 ♖xh4!–+ can satisfy White.

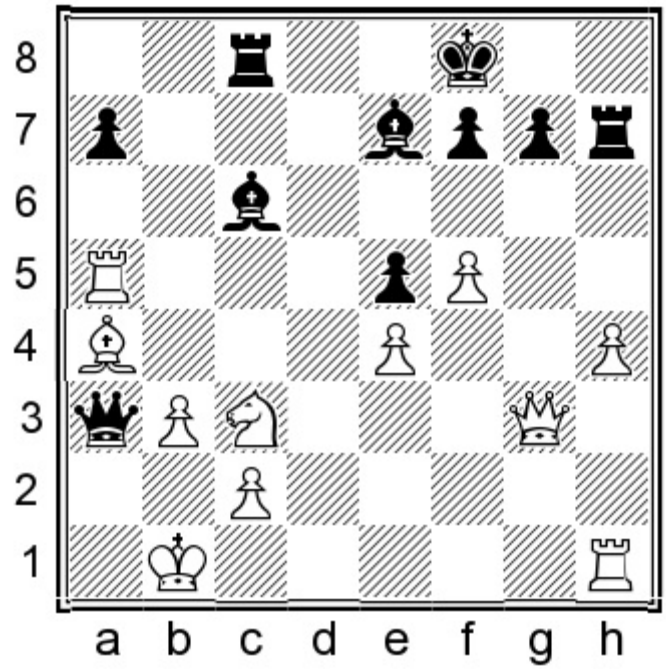
28...♗d6□

After 28...♗xc3 29.♕xc3 f6 30.♕xc8† ♗xc8 31.♖e8† ♔f7 32.♖xc8+– White emerges with too much material for the queen

29.♖d1 ♗xe5 30.♕xe5

White has more than enough compensation for the exchange.

28.♖a5



28...♕b4!

Yet another excellent move.

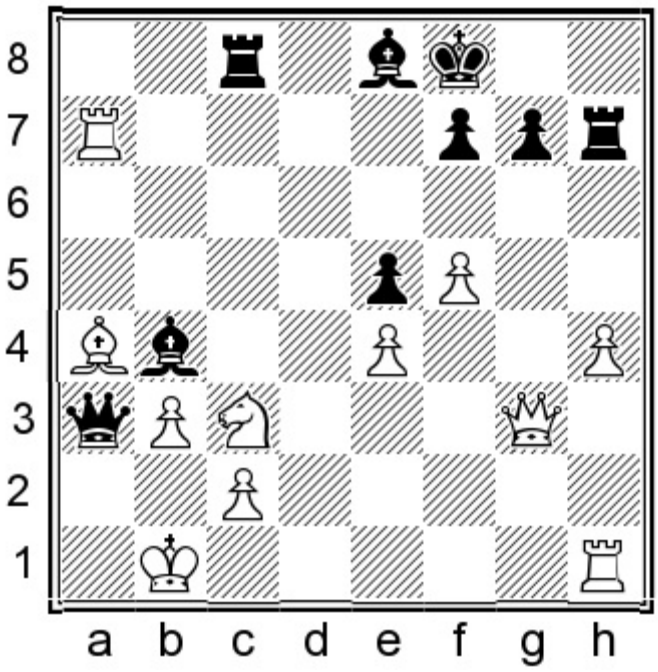
There was a strong temptation for Black to play:

28...♗b4 29.♖xa7 ♗e8

Defending the f7-pawn.

During the game I was quite concerned about this line, especially with time starting to run short, but I had spotted the correct response:

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30.♗d7!

White should certainly avoid: 30.♖xf7†? ♔xf7! (30...♗xf7? 31.♘b5) 31.♕g6† ♔f8 32.♗xe8 ♖xe8 33.♘b5 ♕a5!∓

Black is also set no problems by 30.♘d5 ♖xc2! 31.♔xc2 ♕a2† 32.♔c1□ 32...♕a1† with perpetual check.

The intrepid 30.♘d1 is more deserving of attention: 30...♗d2 31.♕xe5 ♗xa4 32.bxa4 ♕b4† 33.♕b2 ♕xe4 34.♕b3 ♕xf5 35.♘b2± and although White's small plus will be far from easy to exploit, it would be worth trying!

30...♕xa7

30...♖xc3? loses to 31.♕xe5 ♖xb3† 32.cxb3 ♕xb3† 33.♕b2 ♕d3† 34.♕c2.

31.♗xc8 ♕d4 32.♘d5!

But not 32.♔b2, when Black suddenly decides the game with 32...♖h6!–+, bringing his rook into the attack.

32...♗a3 33.♕c3 ♕xe4 34.♖d1

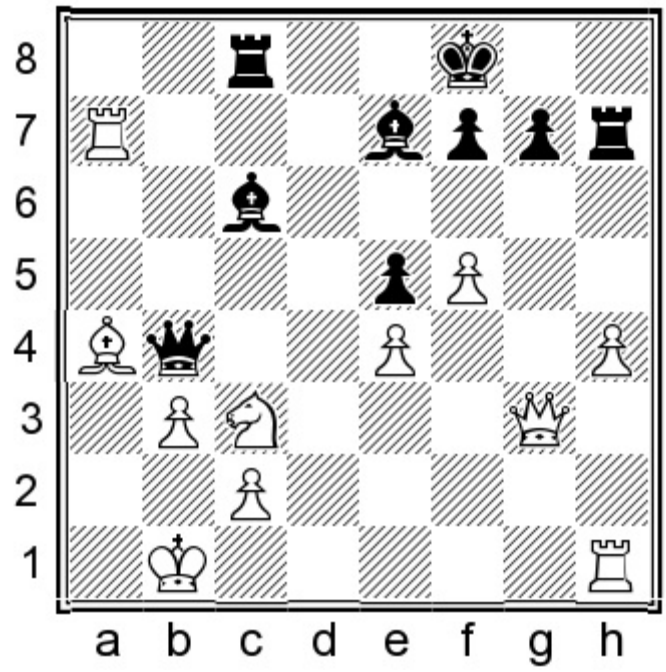
White has a clear plus, even though Black's attacking possibilities are not exhausted.

29.♕xe5!?

I confess it was incredibly difficult for me to choose between taking this pawn and taking the a-pawn. Nearly all through the game I had been seriously overestimating my position (the downside of excessive self-confidence!), and in my calculations I recoiled from all lines that might lead to a drawn result.

It would be Black's turn to face a difficult choice after:
29.♖xa7!?

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29...♗xe4!?

It turns out that Black has more than one way to maintains equal chances.

Black may also play 29...♕c5!? 30.♖xe7 ♕xe7 31.♗xc6 ♖xc6 32.♘d5 ♕c5 33.c4∞.

Another possibility is: 29...♗c5!? 30.♖xf7†! ♔xf7 31.♕g6† ♔f8 32.♕xh7 ♕xc3 33.f6! gxf6 34.♖f1 ♗xa4 35.♕h8† (the assessment of the position isn't altered by 35.♖xf6† ♔e8 36.♕g8† ♔d7 37.♕d5† ♔e8=) 35...♔e7 36.♕xc8 ♗d7 37.♕h8!?⇄ The position remains unclear, but I believe Black is outside the danger zone.

30.♘xe4!

Simplest.

Black's attack becomes too strong after 30.♖e1? ♗xc2† 31.♔xc2 ♗xh4 32.♕xe5 ♗xe1 33.♖c7 ♖d8 34.♕xe1 ♖h2† 35.♔b1 ♕d6!∓.

On the other hand, 30.♖xe7!? ♗xh1 31.♖xf7† ♔xf7 32.♕g6† ♔f8□ 33.♕xh7 ♕xc3 34.f6!, aiming to answer 34...gxf6 with 35.♕h8† ♔f7 36.♕h7†=, is another drawing line.

30...♕xe4 31.♖c1

With a roughly balanced position.

29...♗xa4!

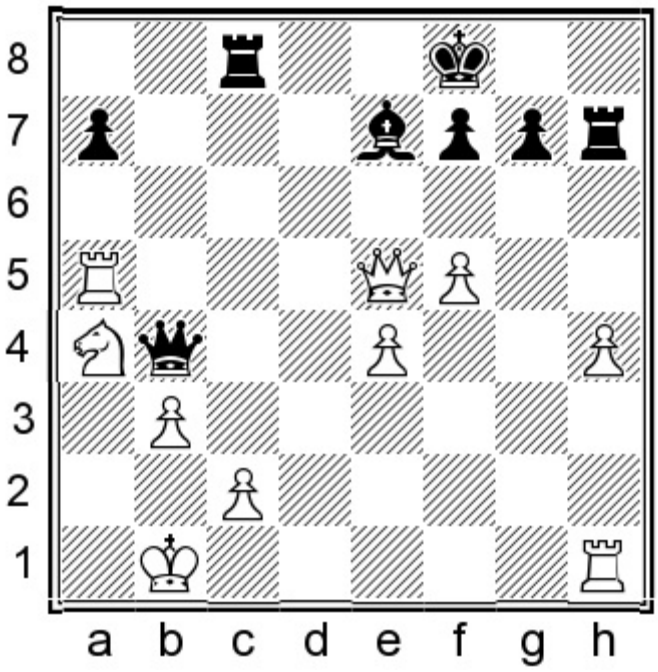
How long can he keep playing faultlessly?

It was easy enough to spot 29...♗f6 30.♕c5†+−.

However, I had been secretly hoping for 29...♗d6 and preparing to answer it with: 30.♘d5! (to be honest, 30.♘a2!? ♕b8 31.♕d4 also promises White a plus) 30...♗xe5 (30...♗xd5 31.♕xd5 ♖xh4 32.♖d1! can hardly be recommended for Black) 31.♘xb4 ♗xe4 32.♖e1 ♗xc2† 33.♘xc2 ♗c3 34.♖c5! and White wins.

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30.♘xa4



30...♗f6?

At this point we each had less than three minutes left on the clock, and the moment for mistakes – on both sides, unfortunately – has arrived.

A stronger continuation for Black was 30...♖xh4! 31.♖xh4 ♕e1† and now the logical conclusion is: 32.♔a2 ♖xc2† 33.♘b2 ♖xb2†! 34.♔xb2 ♕d2†= with perpetual check.

Instead 32.♔b2 would be very risky, without bringing White real prospects of any dividends: 32...♕xh4 33.♕d5 ♕f6† 34.♔b1 ♖d8 35.♕e5 ♖d1† 36.♔a2 ♕xe5 37.♖xe5 ♗f6 38.♘b2! ♖d4 39.♖a5 ♖xe4 40.♖xa7 ♖e5⇄ and (by some miracle!) White has avoided losing.

31.♕d5 ♖xh4!

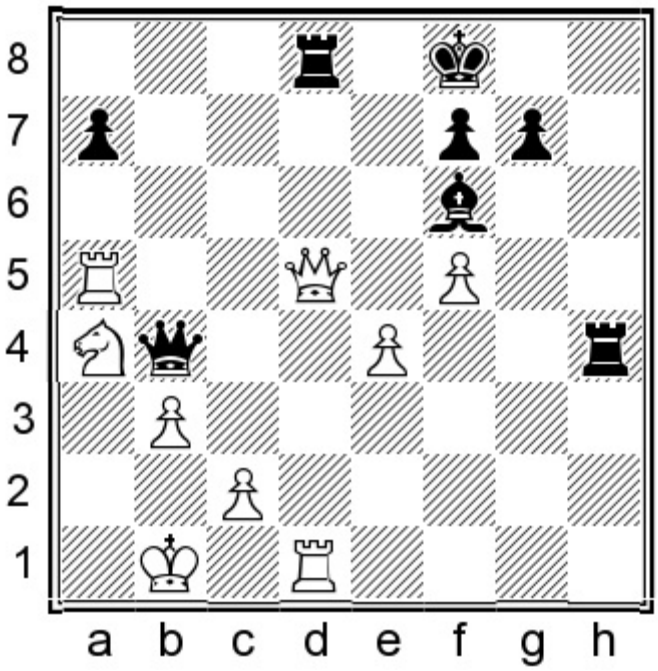
A little late, Black reverts to the correct idea. Better late than never, but the best thing of all is to do everything in good time! Feeling my own time to be seriously short, I wasn't able to size up the situation quickly and accurately – the normal punishment for chess players who keep getting into time trouble!

32.♖c1

This move is not bad in itself, but it isn't the strongest in the position!

There is also little promise for White in:
32.♖d1 ♖d8

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33.♕xd8†

Of course not 33.♕c5†?? ♕xc5 34.♖xd8† ♔e7! and Black wins

33...♗xd8 34.♖xd8† ♔e7 35.♖dd5

35.♖ad5 ♖xe4∞

35...♕a3 36.f6†

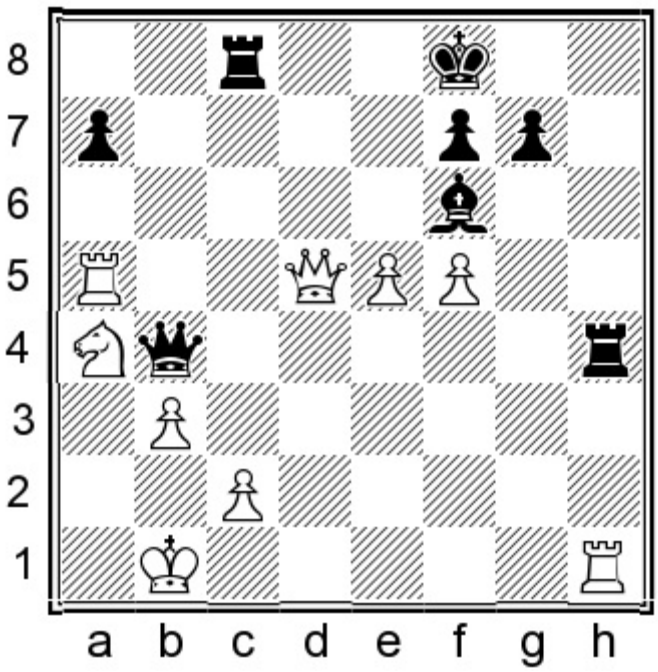
36.♖d7†!? leads to unclear chances after 36...♔f6 37.e5† ♔xf5 38.♖xf7† ♔g6 39.♖f1 ♕e7⇄.

36...gxf6 37.♖xa7† ♔f8 38.♖a8† ♔g7 39.♖d1 ♖h5!?

Black's position is not worse.

Events proceed much more interestingly after:

32.e5!



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Not such a difficult move, but of course the basic problem lay not so much in finding it (a fairly easy task!), but rather in correctly evaluating the virtually forced continuation; that is what I failed to cope with!

32...♖xh1†

Neither 32...♗xe5 33.♖d1! nor 32...♖d8 33.♖xh4 ♕xh4 34.♕c5† ♗e7 35.♕c7± would suit Black.

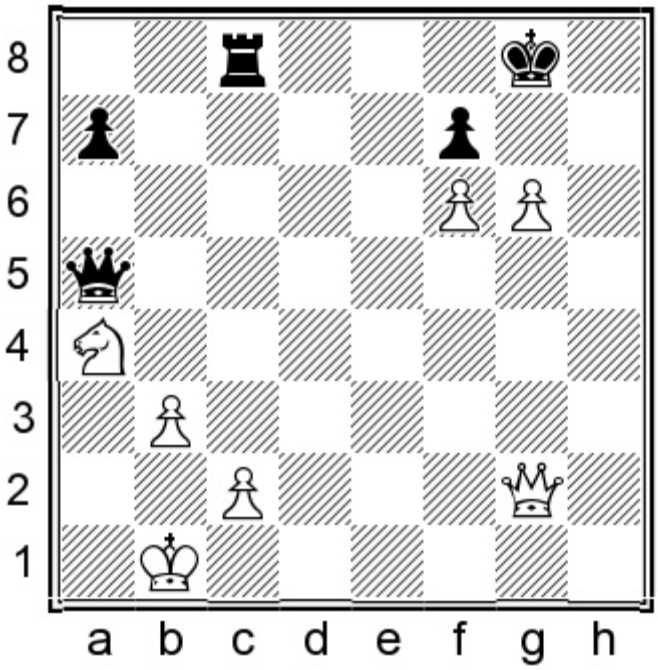
33.♕xh1 ♕xa5 34.exf6

More convincing than 34.♕h8† ♔e7 35.exf6† ♔d7 36.♕xg7 ♕d5!∞.

34...♔g8□ 35.♕g2!

35.♕g1 is weaker; after 35...g6 36.fxg6 ♕f5! the pawn on c2 is unprotected, and 37.gxf7† ♔xf7 38.♕g7† ♔e6 39.♕e7† ♔d5 40.♕e2 ♕xf6= promises White little.

35...g6 36.fxg6



36...♕f5!

The only move!

A gratuitous check could cost Black dearly – 36...♕e1†? 37.♔a2! ♕e6 and now there are two lines for White to consider:

a) 38.♘c3!? ♖xc3 39.gxf7† ♔xf7 40.♕g7† ♔e8 41.f7† ♕xf7 42.♕xc3 with an extremely difficult endgame for Black.

b) The crafty 38.g7! ♕xf6 39.♕h3! ♖xc2† 40.♔b1 wins for White.

37.g7 ♕g6

37...♖e8!? doesn't help either. After 38.♕h1 ♕h7 39.♕f3 and White's queen and knight will strive persistently to penetrate the enemy position. For example, Black loses with 39...♕e4 40.♕h3 ♕h7 41.♕d7 ♕e4 42.♘c3 ♕e6 43.♕b5+– as the square d5 is positively beckoning the white knight!

38.♕h2 ♕h7 39.♕e2!? ♕f5

39...♕h6 40.♘c3! ♕xf6 41.♘d5+–

40.♘c3 ♕h3 41.♘b5!

Black is facing insurmountable problems.

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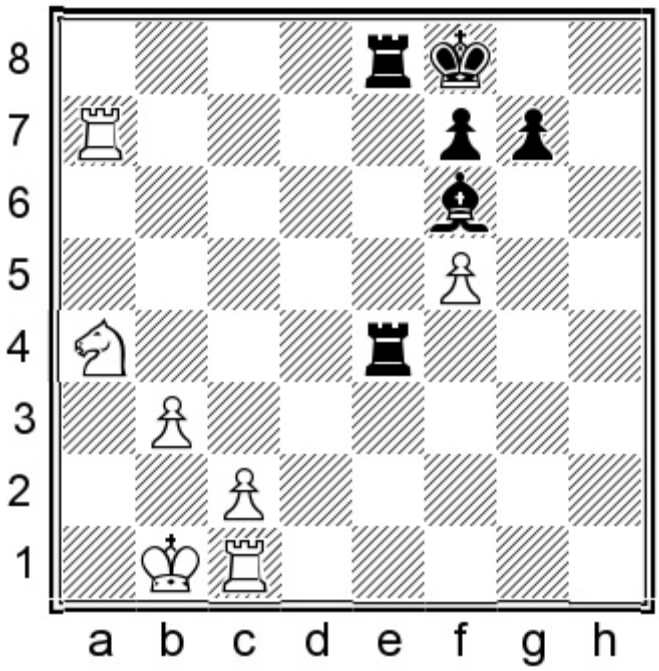
Working out such variations completely might not have been possible, but choosing this line would have presented Black with the problem of having to find the only move at every turn, within seconds!

32...♕xe4

I don't think White could count on any advantage after the more precise 32...♖xe4! 33.♖xa7 ♖e7⇄. His king position makes a poor impression, and this should guarantee Black easy equality!

33.♕xe4 ♖xe4 34.♖xa7 ♖ce8

I have succeeded in maintaining my extra pawn, but what do I do next? Amazingly, with my flag "dangling", I found the right idea!



35.c4!±

Passed pawns should be pushed, not stay where they are! This is all the more true since the slight additional weakening of the white king's position cannot be exploited, and the attempt to activate the knight with 35.♘c5 comes up against 35...♗d4.

35...♗g5

After either 35...♖f4 36.c5! or 35...♖h4 36.c5 ♖b8 37.♔a2, the c-pawn would give Black difficult problems to solve.

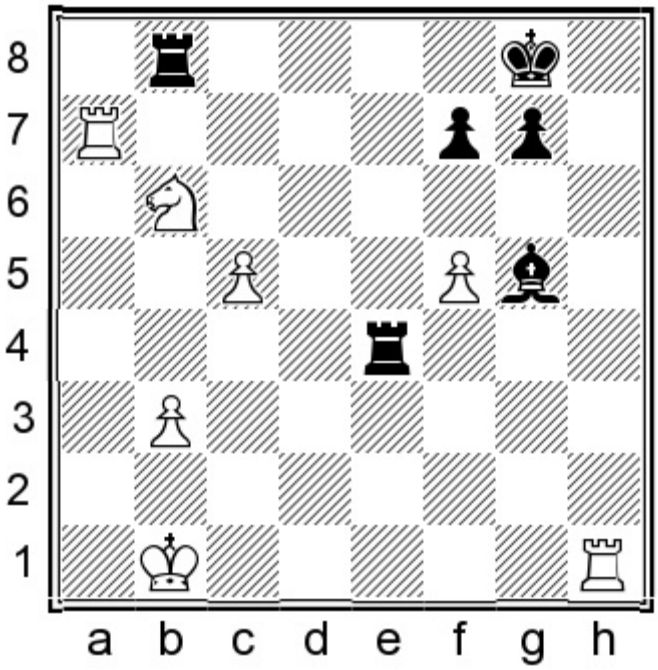
36.♖h1 ♔g8 37.c5 ♖b8

Or 37...♖b4 38.♔c2 ♖f4 39.♘b6 ♖xf5 40.b4, and White's two passed pawns are not to be stopped without great material losses.

38.♘b6

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White should probably prefer: 38.c6 ♖e3 (38...♖xb3† is weaker, since after 39.♔c2 the rook comes under attack from White's pieces, while the passed c-pawn presses on unhindered) 39.c7 ♖c8 40.♖d1 ♖xb3 41.♔a2, retaining winning chances.



38...♖e3?!

There are no chess players alive who would never go wrong in time trouble – an excellent reason for avoiding getting into it!

Black would be very close to drawing after:

38...♗d8! 39.♖a2

White gains nothing substantial from 39.♘d5 ♖xb3† 40.♔c2 ♖b8 41.♔d3 ♖e5. He is probably going to win a piece, but he will be left without any pawns.

39...g5!?

Nor is everything totally clear after the "normal" 39...♗xb6 40.♖ah2 g5 41.♖h8† ♔g7 42.♖1h7† ♔f6 43.♖xb8 ♗xc5 44.♖c8 ♗b4 45.♖c6†±, when Black too has a passed pawn that shouldn't be underrated.

40.fxg6!

After 40.♖ah2 ♖h4 41.♖xh4 gxh4 42.♔c2 ♗xb6 43.cxb6 ♔g7 44.♖xh4 ♔f6, I don't see how White can improve his position.

40...♗xb6

I don't like 40...fxg6 41.♖ah2 ♗f6 42.♔c2!, when the position remains dangerous for Black.

41.gxf7† ♔xf7 42.♖f2† ♔e7 43.♖h7† ♔e6 44.cxb6 ♖b4

I find it hard to imagine that White could entertain serious hopes of victory.

39.♔c2

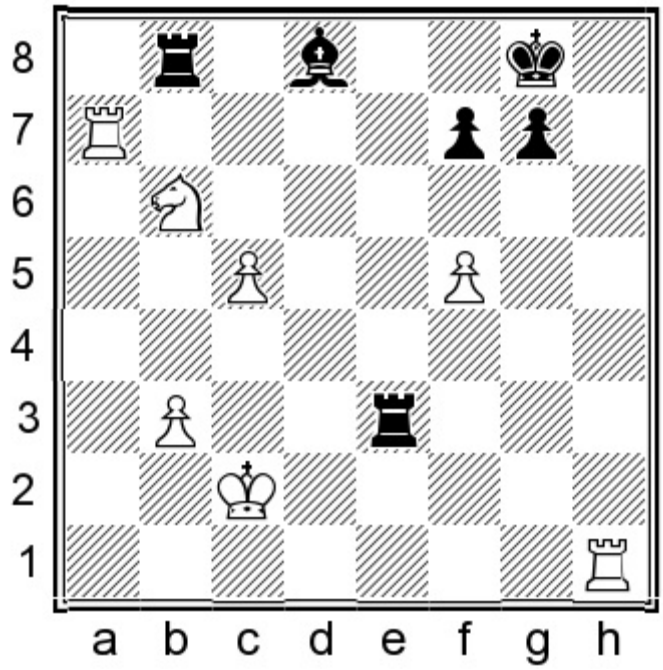
White could preserve excellent winning chances with 39.♔a2! ♖d3 40.♖h2+–.

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39...♗f6?

For good or ill, Black had to take aim at the knight on b6 with:

39...♗d8!?



40.♖a6!

White is left too short of pawns after 40.b4 ♗xb6 41.cxb6 ♖e5 42.♔b3 ♖b5 43.b7, although even then he would keep *some* practical winning chances.

Similar variations arise from 40.♖a8 ♖xa8 41.♘xa8 ♖e2† 42.♔d3 ♖a2 43.♘b6 ♗xb6 44.cxb6 ♖a6 45.♔c4 ♖xb6 46.b4 g5!, and a draw is the likely result.

40...♖f3 41.♖d1 ♖xf5 42.♘d7 ♖c8

42...♖f2† doesn't help: 43.♖d2 ♖xd2† 44.♔xd2 ♖xb3 45.♖a8+–

43.b4

The white pawns are advancing, and the outlook for Black is grim.

40.♘d5?

At this point my nerves snapped! I could have continued with: 40.b4! ♖c3† (or 40...♖f3 41.♘d7) 41.♔d2 ♖g3 (41...♖b3 42.♘d5 ♖d8 43.♔c2 ♖b2† 44.♔c1+– makes no difference) 42.♘d7+–

But even after the move I played, the game could have carried on with 40...♖exb3 41.♘xf6† gxf6 42.♖a4!, keeping a minimal plus. However, I simply lost control of myself and the position for a second, and after making my 40th move I offered a draw, which of course was accepted.

½–½

An exceedingly interesting game. We played the first thirty moves at a very high level and virtually without errors. After that, time trouble took power into its autocratic hands and the quality of play abruptly dropped, but the tension persisted from the first move to the last. Years have gone by, my disappointment at the result has passed, and pleasant memories of the game remain. It was an

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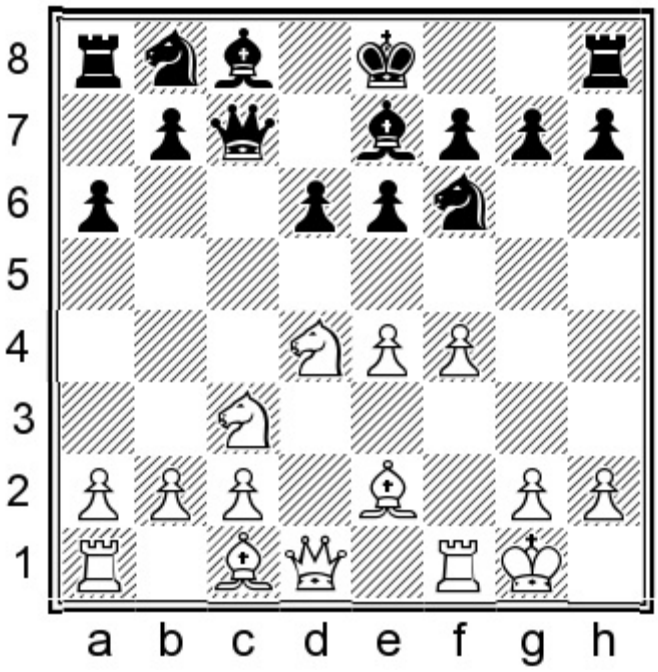
interesting one for me to play and to analyse afterwards, and I hope you too have taken some pleasure in looking at it.

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Lev Psakhis – Jon Arnason

Yurmala 1987

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0-0 a6 8.f4 ♕c7

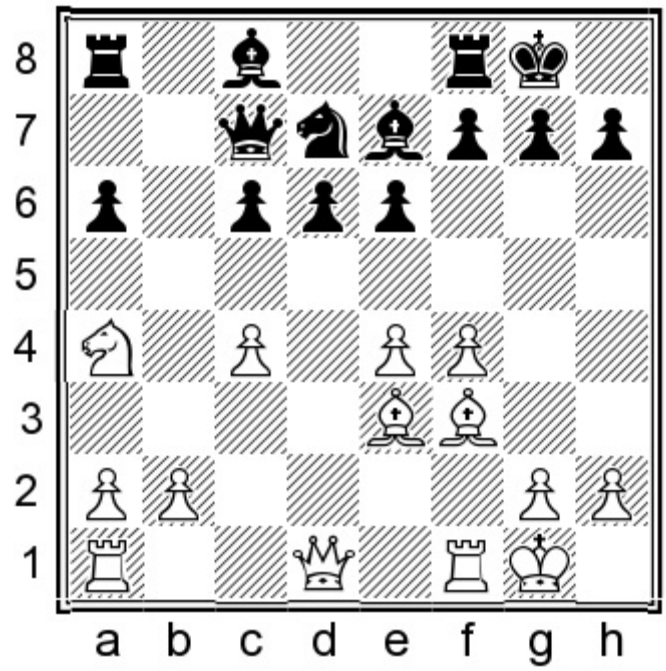


This variation was popular in those years (I more than once tried this kind of set-up for Black myself). Black intends to postpone the development of his queen's knight for a while and to station his light-squared bishop on b7, from where it will exert pressure on the white pawn centre. As a way of fighting against this interesting system, a quick mobilization of White's f- and g-pawns can be recommended.

The method I employed myself is quite good too. A few words about this line: it was shown to me one day in 1980 by Sergey Dolmatov, and I can't even say that he took that much time over it! In the odd hour or so he explained the basic ideas for White, and I spent perhaps another hour committing relevant positions to memory and doing some light analysis on them; and I may say that these labours proved fully adequate to win seven or eight games against grandmasters! Among today's elite players, that kind of analysis may merely provoke a condescending smile. Well, times and manners have changed a good deal over the past thirty years!

9.♗f3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘c6 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♘a4 ♘d7 13.c4

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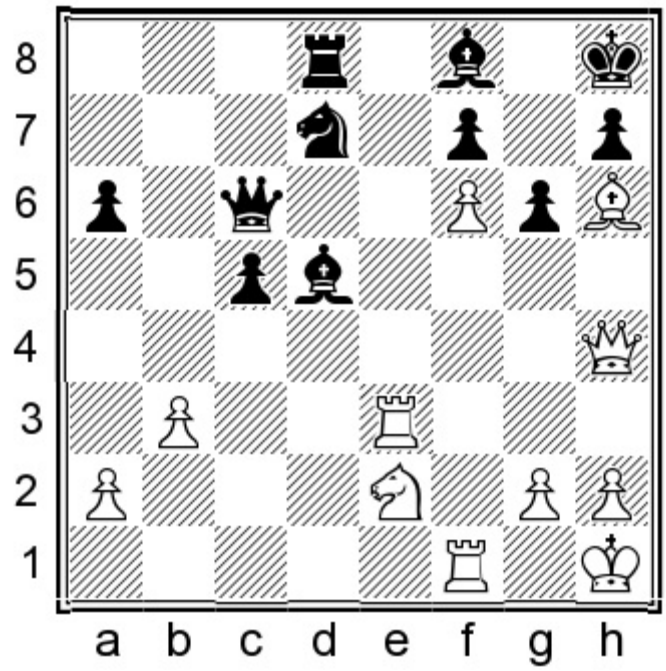


This is the key to White's plan, which rests on a sound positional basis. To begin with, I have succeeded in transforming Black's queenside pawn structure. The c-file is now closed; and if we recall the general view that in the Sicilian Defence this very file is Black's main transport artery, its closure can already count as quite an achievement for White. On the other hand, Black's position also has its good points: the easy development of his pieces and the weakness of d4 can give him definite hopes. Summing up, I would say that Arnason and I were both satisfied with our positions and were looking to the future with optimism.

13...c5

Curiously, many players – even strong ones – have spent time on 13...♖b8 here; permit me the pleasure of showing you a game of mine against another Icelandic player. Spotting five differences between that one and my game with Arnason is not at all easy: 13...♖b8 14.♕c2 c5 15.♘c3 ♗b7 16.♖ad1 ♖bd8 17.♕f2 ♘b8 18.♔h1 ♘c6 19.b3 ♖fe8 20.♗h5 g6 21.f5 ♘e5 22.f6 ♗f8 23.♗e2 ♔h8 24.♕h4 d5 25.cxd5 exd5 26.exd5 ♘d7 27.♖d3 ♕b6 28.♗g5 ♖xe2 29.♘xe2 ♕b5 30.♖e3 ♗xd5 31.♗h6 ♕c6

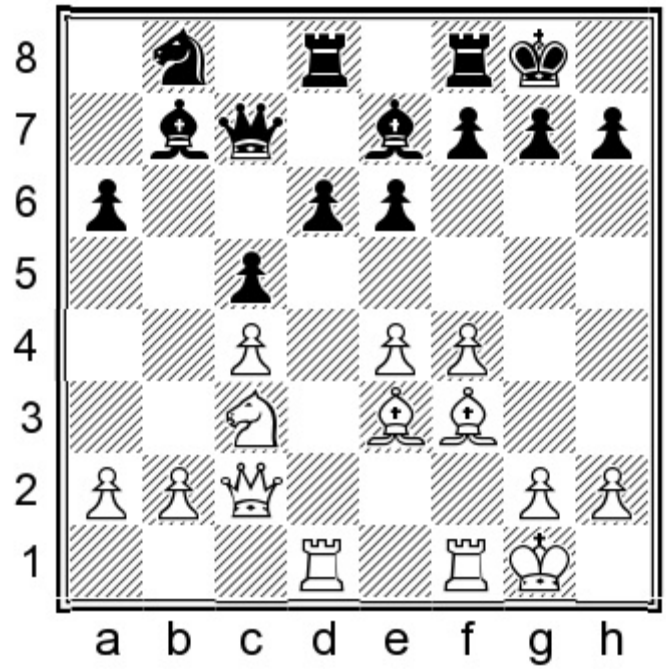
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32.♗g7† ♔g8 33.♕xh7† 1–0 Psakhis – J. Hjartarson, Madrid (rapid) 1988.

14.♘c3 ♗b7 15.♕c2 ♖ad8 16.♖ad1 ♘b8

A typical manoeuvre: the knight heads for c6, and from there, given the opportunity, it may jump to the magical d4-square. At any rate, Black's whole strategy is directed towards taking control of that very square.

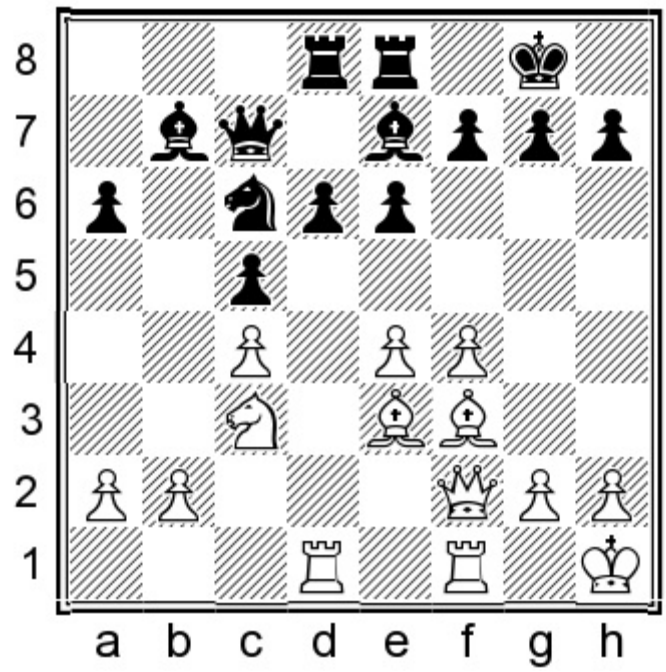


17.♕f2 ♘c6 18.♔h1 ♖fe8

Black's chief problem is the difficulty of transferring his dark-squared bishop to the a1-h8 diagonal, given that 18...♗f6 comes up against 19.e5! dxe5 20.♗xc5. Arnason hopes to bring the bishop to g7, and should his plans succeed, the entire set-up that White has constructed would lose all its point.

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Incidentally 18...g6 cannot be recommended, as White easily seizes the initiative: 19.f5! ♗f6 20.♗h6 ♕e7 21.e5! ♘xe5 22.♗xf8 ♖xf8 23.♗xb7 ♕xb7 24.fxe6 fxe6 25.♕e2 and White went on to win in Psakhis – Kr. Georgiev, Palma de Mallorca 1989.



19.♗h5!?

Amazingly, this position occurred in my games more than once, and if I remember rightly it was Dolmatov who had told me of this possibility. You see how useful it can be to spend one hour working diligently with a good trainer!

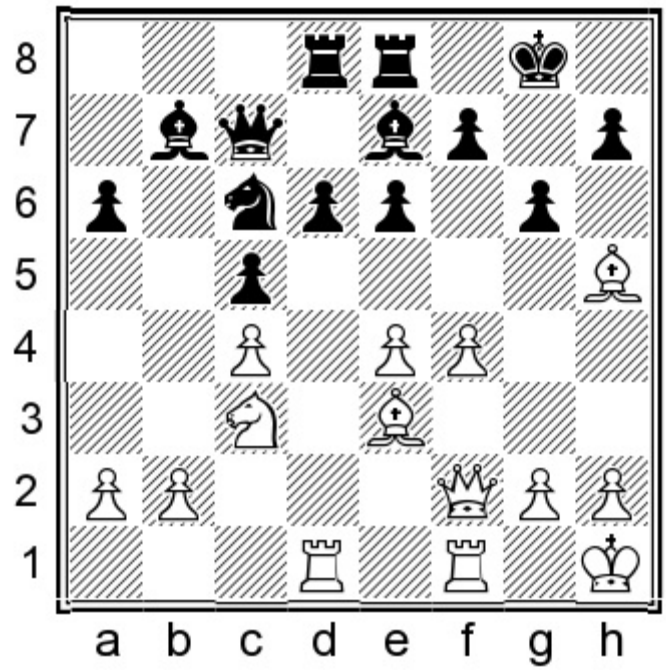
19...g6?!

White's idea is interesting of course, but the accepted thing in our computerized age is to cast doubt on all old assessments! For instance, long ago I used to think that 19...♗f6 20.e5!± led to a clear advantage for White, but actually in this line everything is far from clear – Black continues 20...dxe5 21.♘e4 ♘d4 22.♘xf6† gxf6 23.♖fe1 e4 24.♗xd4 (24.b4!?∞) 24...cxd4 25.♖xd4 ♕a5 with a good game.

Moreover, I always wondered what I would play in answer to the cynical 19...♖f8!?.
And finally, 19...♘d4!? is also perfectly playable: 20.♗xd4 (not 20.♕g3, as the initiative is firmly in Black's hands after 20...♗f6 21.♖d2 ♕e7 22.♗f3 g6 23.♕e1 ♗g7∓ Riff – Mainka, France 2004) 20...cxd4 21.♕xd4 ♗f6 22.♕d3 ♗xc3 23.♕xc3 ♗xe4 with absolute equality.

So if White wants to fight for an advantage, it will pay him to think up something new.

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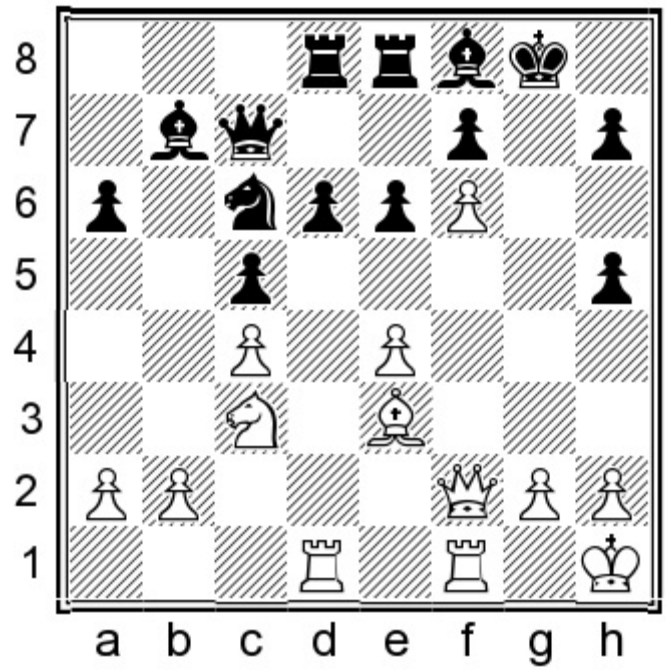
20.f5!

An attractive move, but quite a simple one! For the sacrificed piece White obtains a powerful attack, and my main problem was rather of a psychological nature. Though unable to scrutinize all the variations, I was firmly convinced that my compensation for the piece would be more than adequate – yet I was sorry to lose the bishop all the same. And then it struck me that if I didn't play 20.f5! I would lose all respect for myself, so I didn't waste any more time analysing. Self-esteem is an important factor!

20...♘e5

Arnason didn't think for long before deciding not to take the bishop. To be honest I heaved a sigh of relief at that moment! But let us look at what would happen in the event of 20...gxh5?! 21.f6 (21.♗h6? ♔h8) 21...♗f8.

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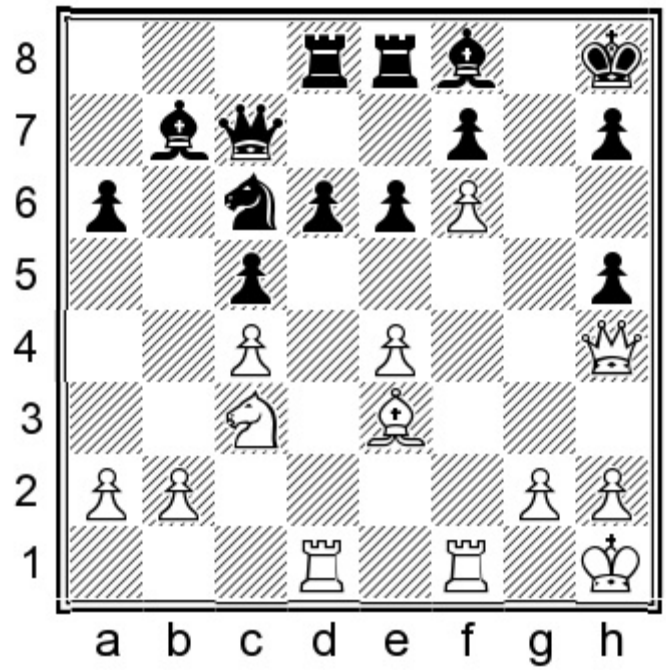
Now should White check on g3 or not? On a purely instinctive basis, what would you do?

a) 22.♕g3†

Running ahead, I may say that this is *not* the best move.

22...♔h8 23.♕h4

I am not going to bother you with long variations but will merely give the main line following White's other natural move: 23.♖f3 ♘e5 24.♕g5 ♘xf3 25.gxf3 ♗h6□ 26.♕xh6 ♖g8 27.♕xh5 ♖g6 28.♗h6 ♕b6 29.b3 ♕a5 30.♖c1 ♖xf6 31.♕h4 ♖g6 32.♘e2!⇄ with unclear complications. This variation alone is sufficient to bring home to us how difficult it is to rely solely on the art of calculation in such positions; we just cannot do without intuition!



23...d5!

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23...♘e5 loses to 24.♕xh5 ♘xc4 25.♖f3! ♘xe3 26.♖xe3 d5 27.♖h3 h6 28.♕g5 ♔h7 29.♖dd3 ♕d6 30.♕g4+– with a quick mate.

The pawn on f6 splits the position into two parts, and on the kingside White has the initiative all to himself. As a matter of survival, Black needs to open up the game in the centre.

24.♗f4

Not 24.exd5? exd5 25.♖f5 ♘e5!, and by bringing his knight to g6, Black gains a decisive plus.

24...♕c8 25.♕xh5 e5 26.♗g5 dxe4

White probably does best to answer 26...dxc4 by coolly playing 27.♖de1, maintaining his attack.

27.♕xf7 ♖xd1 28.♘xd1!

The position is far from simple for Black to defend, even though White wouldn't appear to have any direct threats. Bent Larsen once wrote, "Never trust long variations." I entirely agree with him, but my analysis may serve as a form of guideline.

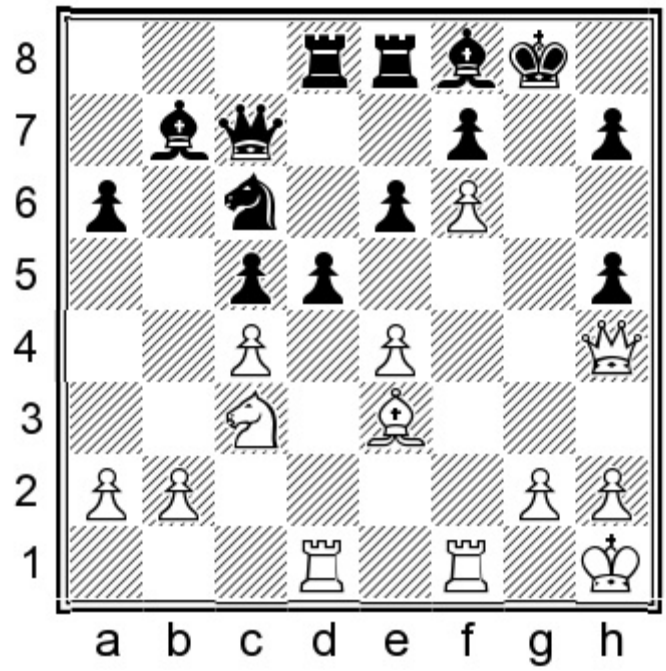
b) 22.♕h4!

This is much stronger and leaves Black with no saving chances.

22...d5

22...♘e5 23.♕xh5 leaves Black defenceless.

Nor is anything altered by 22...♘d4 23.♖f3!.



23.cxd5!

Capturing on d5 is essential; the clearly weaker 23.♗xc5? ♔h8 24.♗xf8 ♖xf8 25.cxd5 ♘e5 26.♕xh5 ♖g8 was fine for Black in Qin Kanying – Arakhamia, Novi Sad (ol) 1990.

23...exd5

23...♘e5 is answered by 24.♕g3† ♔h8 25.d6!+–.

And 23...♘d4 24.♖d3! also fails to save Black.

24.♗xc5! ♔h8 25.♗xf8 ♖xf8 26.♖f5+–

Using the f5-square as a springboard, the rook reaches h5 and a quick mate is inevitable.

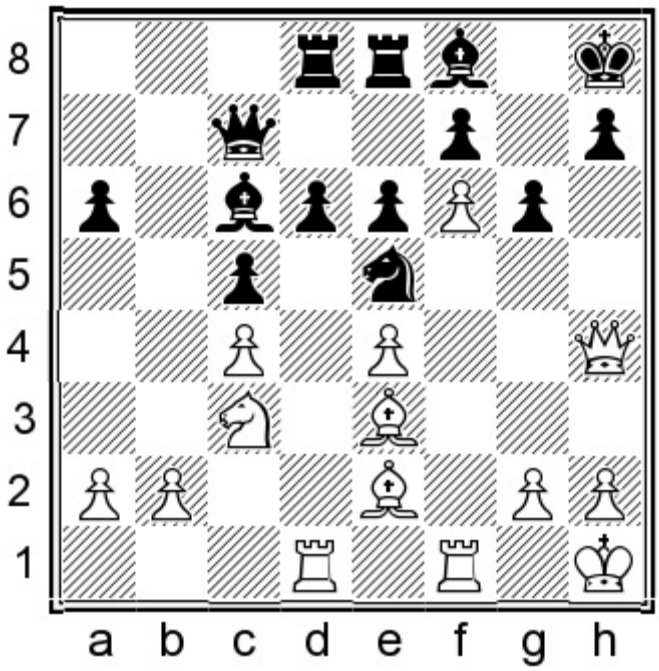
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21.f6 ♗f8 22.♗e2 ♗c6 23.♕h4

Now the threat of 24.♗h6 leaves Black with no choice.

23...♔h8

The refutation of 23...h5 is very simple: 24.♗xh5 gxh5 25.♕xh5+– and Black has no defence against ♖f3.



24.♗g5!

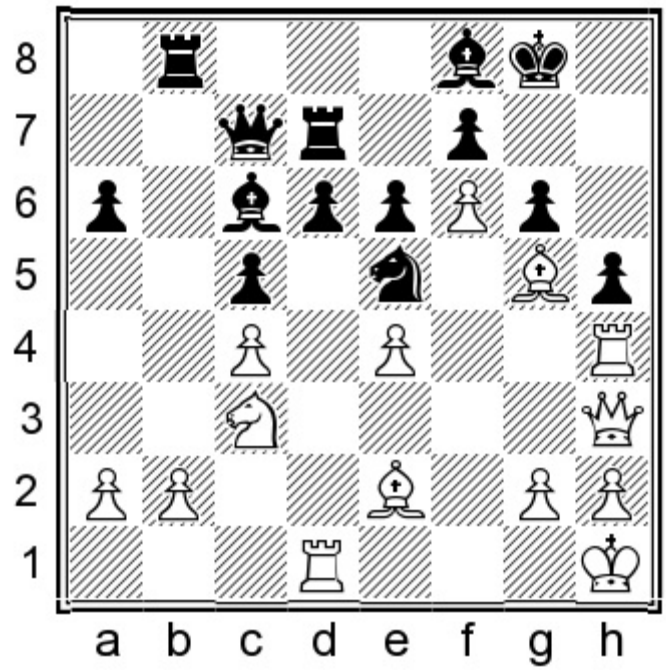
White sets about constructing an effective attacking formation: his queen is going to h3, and then his rook will head for h4 via f4. After that, it isn't clear how Black can resist the attack.

The move played is more convincing than 24.♕h3 ♕b7 25.♖f4 g5□.

24...♕b7!

Not wanting simply to await his fate, Arnason prepares active operations in the centre of the board. Let me give you an example of how White's attack can develop if his opponent doesn't take drastic measures: 24...♖d7 25.♖f4 ♖b8 26.♕h3 ♔g8 27.♖h4 h5

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28.♗xh5 (of course White needn't hurry if he doesn't want to; 28.b3!? is good enough, and 28.♗c1!? is better still) 28...gxh5 29.♖xh5 ♘g6 30.♕f3! ♘e5 31.♕e2 Black appears to have no way to prevent White's regrouping manoeuvre: the rook withdraws to h3, the queen occupies the vacated h5-square with pleasure, and the game ends at once.

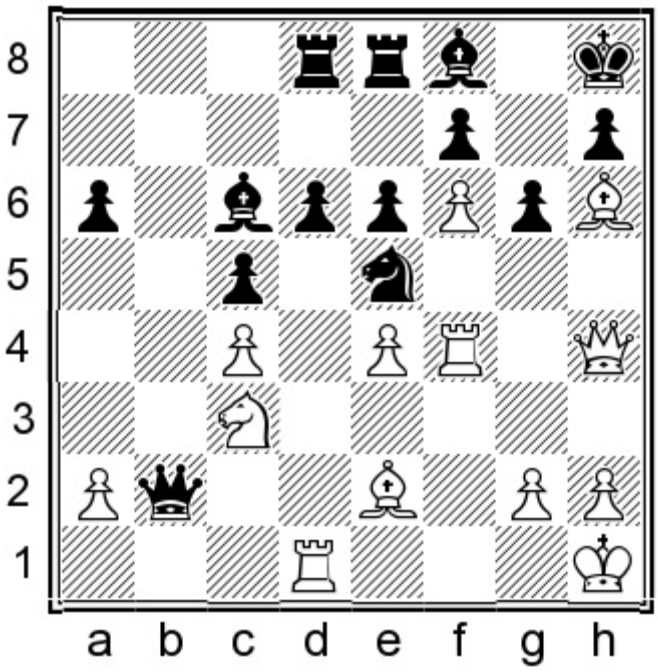
25.♖f4!

I quickly worked out the variation: 25.b3 d5!? 26.cxd5 exd5 27.exd5 ♗xd5 28.♘xd5 ♖xd5 29.♕e4 (29.♗h6!?) 29...♖d7 (29...♖ed8? 30.♕xe5!+–) 30.♕xb7 ♖xb7 31.♗xa6 ♖a7 32.♗b5 ♖b8 33.a4+– I liked the end position, but it somehow went against the grain to be satisfied with a mere extra pawn instead of giving mate. Such arrogance! Actually, I think that after 26.♗h6! in this line, Black wouldn't get off so easily! But I was convinced that checkmate was a matter of a few more moves, and I didn't want to deviate from my basic plan.

25...♕xb2 26.♕h3

The normal move and not a bad one, but it would have been worth spending a few extra minutes on the more exact solution:
26.♗h6!

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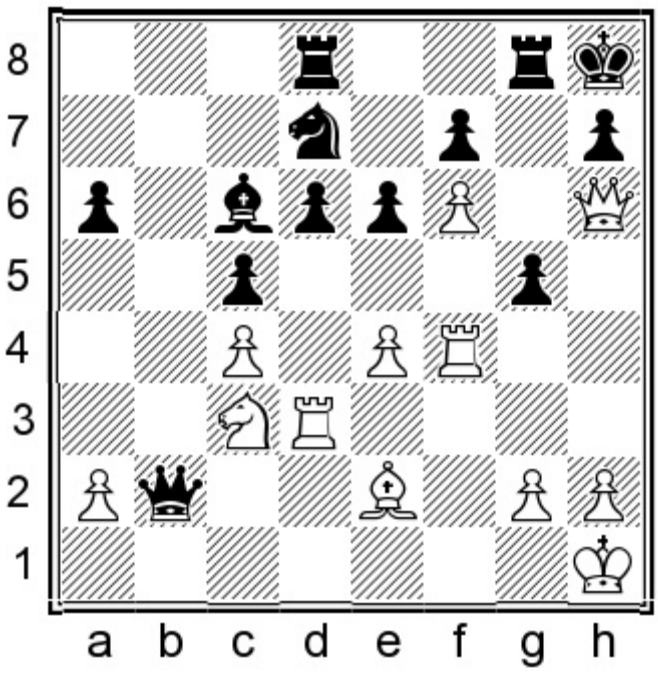
26...♘d7

Black has to get rid of the f6-pawn somehow, even if it means sacrificing. He loses even more quickly with 26...♕xc3 27.♗xf8 ♖xf8 28.♕h6 ♖g8 29.♕xh7† ♔xh7 30.♖h4#.

27.♗xf8 ♖xf8 28.♖d3!

28.♕h6? ♘xf6! entirely transforms the situation on the board – it would then be White who had to think about saving himself.

28...g5 29.♕h6 ♖g8



30.♕xh7†! ♔xh7 31.♖h3† ♔g6 32.♗h5† ♔h6 33.♗xf7#

This variation would have been a worthy conclusion to the game!

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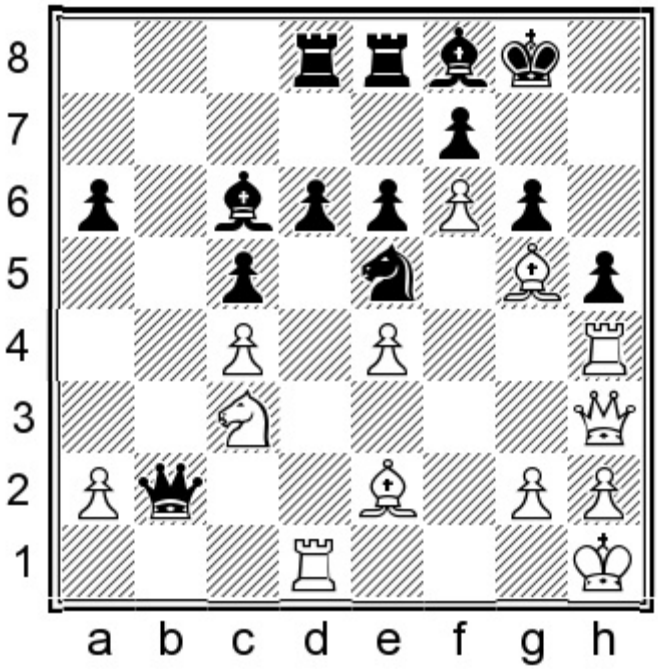
26...♔g8

The only move. 26...h5 27.♗xh5 is something White can only dream about.

27.♖h4

Here 27.♗h6!? looks natural and strong, but I didn't fancy 27...♕xc3! 28.♕xc3 ♗xh6± with quite decent saving chances.

27...h5



28.♗xh5!

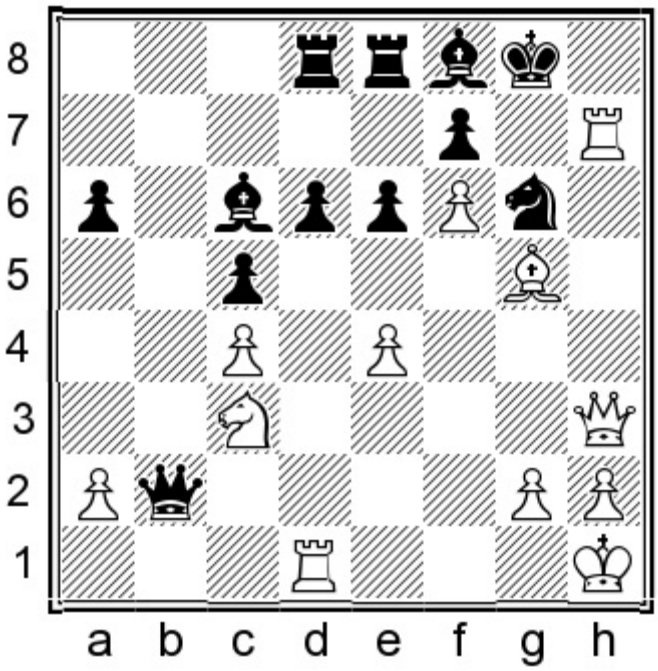
This kind of capture can hardly even be called a sacrifice!

28...gxh5 29.♖xh5 ♘g6 30.♖f1!?

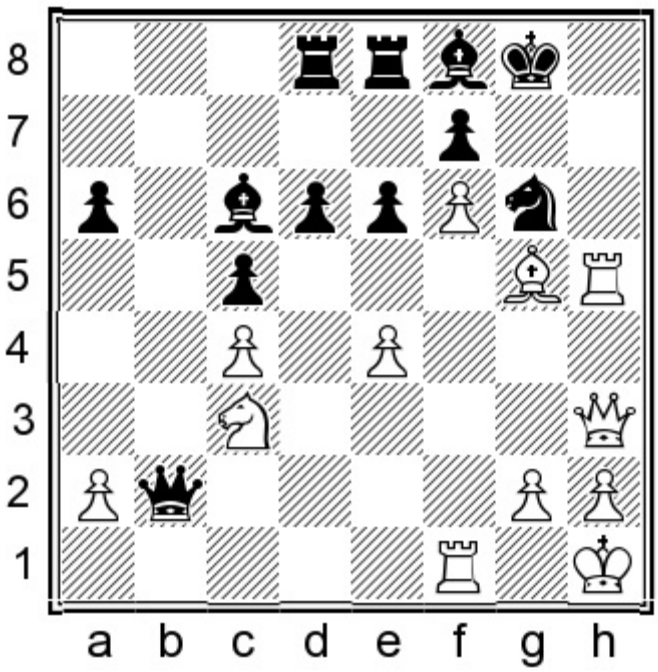
Depriving the black queen of the f2-square. The significance of this is seen clearly in the variation: 30.♗h6 ♕f2! (unfortunately for Black, 30...♗xe4 loses to 31.♖g1! ♗f5 32.♕e3+–) 31.♗xf8 ♕xf6 (not 31...♖xf8? 32.♖h8† ♘xh8 33.♕h6 and mates) 32.♗h6 White's advantage is plain to see, but the end of the game is still a long way off.

In answer to 30.♖h6?! Black has only one move, but an adequate one: 30...♖d7!
However, he has no antidote at all against: 30.♖h7!

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30...♖d7 (or 30...♕xc3 31.♕xc3 ♔xh7 32.♕h3† ♔g8 33.♗h6+–) 31.♗h6! ♔xh7 32.♗xf8† ♔g8 33.♕h6+– I'm a little ashamed of missing this simple path to victory. The fact that both players were getting into time trouble can in no way serve as an excuse!



30...♕c2?

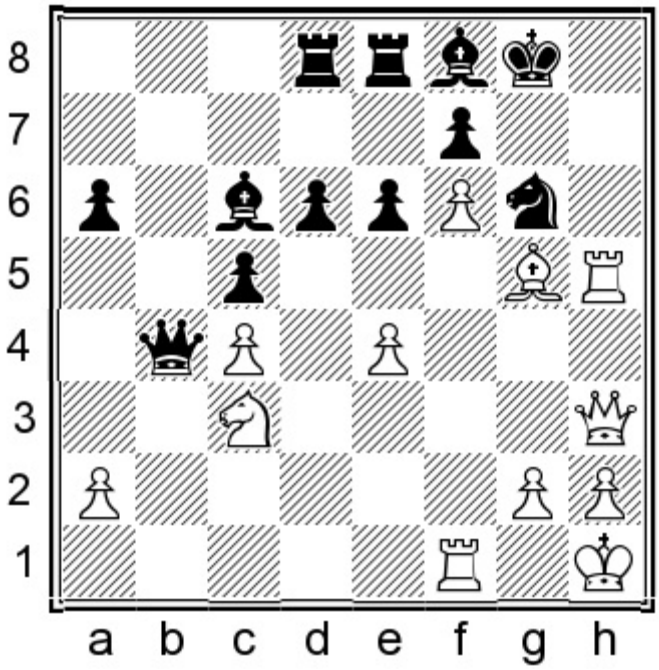
A critical moment! It is now Arnason's turn to go wrong. But then, when you have a wide choice of continuations (I'm not saying a *pleasant* choice!) and 3-4 minutes on your clock, mistakes come all too easily. Let us see where the alternatives might have led:

30...d5? 31.♗h6 (the less refined 31.♖h6!? also wins) 31...d4 (or 31...♗d6 32.♗g7) 32.♖g5! and Black has no satisfactory defence against the threat to capture on g6. Incidentally 32.♗xf8 is also perfectly good: 32...♕xc3 33.♖h8†! ♘xh8 34.♕h6 with unavoidable mate.

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30...♕b4!?

An interesting move; Black wants to take on c4 in order to harass the white rook that is doing such a splendid job of guarding the first rank.



31.♖h6

Black's defence is also very difficult in the event of 31.♗h6 ♕xc4 32.♖d1!? ♗a4 33.♖c1 ♕d4 34.♗xf8 ♕xf6 35.♗h6 ♗c6 36.♗g5 ♕f2 37.♖h7 ♖d7 38.♕h6+–.

31...♖d7

White was threatening to take on g6, when the d8-rook could become a victim of the enemy dark-squared bishop. For example, 31...♕b7 32.♖xg6† fxg6 33.f7† ♕xf7 34.♖xf7 ♔xf7 35.♕f3† ♔g8 36.♗xd8 ♖xd8 37.♕f6+–.

32.♕h5 ♕xc3

On 32...♕b7, the simplest way to win is 33.♖f4! ♖b8 34.h3+–.

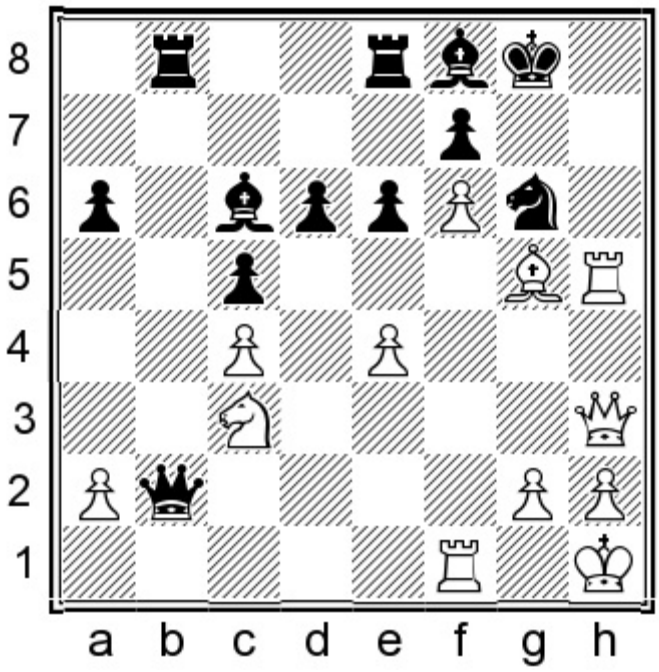
33.♖xg6† fxg6 34.♕xg6† ♗g7 (34...♖g7 35.f7†) 35.♕xe8† ♔h7 36.♕xe6

White wins easily.

30...♖b8!

To be honest, I clean overlooked this perfectly natural move, or at least I seriously underrated it. The rook occupies the open file and removes itself from the white bishop's sphere of influence, so the move deserved much more attention than I gave it. White now has to fight to obtain any advantage at all.

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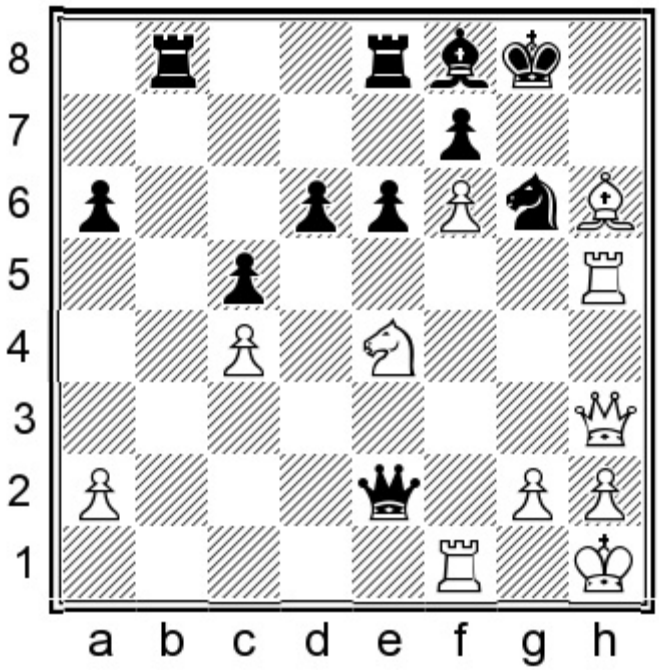


31.♗h6!?

31.♖h6 ♕b7 32.♖xg6† appears to achieve little. After 32...fxg6 33.f7† ♕xf7 34.♖xf7 ♔xf7 35.♕h7† ♗g7 Black successfully defends.

If White tries 31.♕f3 ♕c2 32.♖h3, threatening ♕h5, Black has a strong rejoinder: 32...♗xe4! 33.♘xe4 ♖b1 34.♘g3 ♖xf1† 35.♘xf1 ♕xc4 36.♔g1 ♕d4† 37.♔h1 ♕c4= and it all ends in repetition. A dismal result for White!

31...♗xe4□ 32.♘xe4 ♕e2



33.♕f3!

A most surprising move – White consents to a queen exchange, but does he have anything better? In answer to 33.♘g3 ♕d3 34.♗g7 ♗xg7 35.fxg7, Black has 35...f5□ 36.♖g1 ♖b1 37.♖h8† ♔f7 38.♖xe8 ♖xg1† 39.♔xg1 ♕d4†= with perpetual check.

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33...♕xf3

33...♖b2 makes little difference after 34.♗xf8 ♖xf8 35.♘g5 ♕xf3 36.gxf3 ♖fb8 37.♖h7 ♖b1 38.♖g7† ♔f8 39.♖g1, and White a big advantage in the ending – his pieces are just too active, and furthermore the pawn on f6 has clearly not yet said its last word!

34.gxf3 d5

34...♖ed8 35.♗xf8 ♔xf8 36.♖g1±

35.♗xf8 dxe4 36.♗xc5 exf3 37.♗d6

37.♖g5 ♖ed8 38.♖xf3 also offers White some advantage.

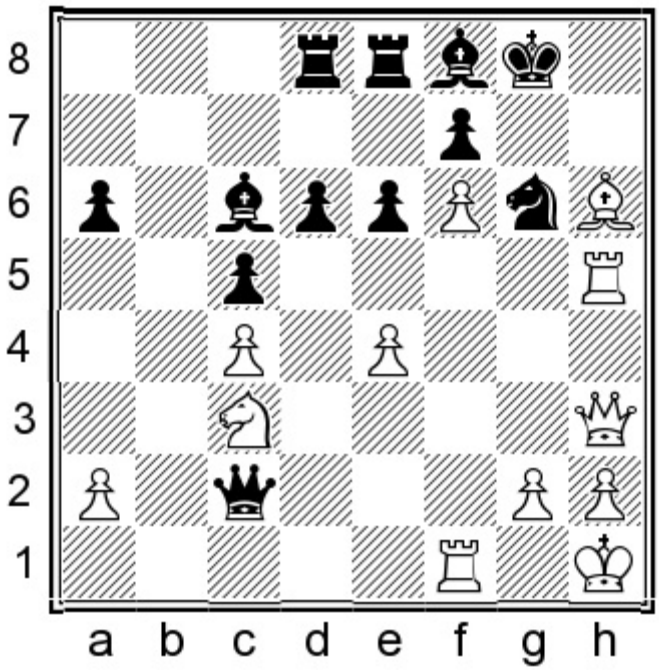
37...♖b2 38.♖xf3 e5 39.♖g5 ♔h7 40.♖fg3

White has both a material and a positional plus. If Black now goes for the f6-pawn, he meets with an unexpected refutation:

40...♖f2 41.♔g1 ♖xf6? 42.♖h5† ♔g8 43.♗xe5!+–

31.♗h6!+–

Black has lost a vital tempo, and White's attack is now irresistible!



31...♖b8

Black could try 31...♗xe4, but the answer is by no means hard to find: 32.♘xe4 ♕xe4 (Black loses quickly with 32...♖b8 33.♗g7!+– or 32...♗xh6 33.♖xh6 ♕xe4 34.♖h7 ♕f5□35.♖xf5 exf5 36.g3! ♖e1† 37.♔g2 ♖de8 38.♖h8†! ♘xh8 39.♕h6+–) 33.♗xf8 ♖xf8 34.♖h7! ♖fe8 35.♖g7† ♔f8 36.♖xf7† ♔xf7 37.♕h7† with mate next move.

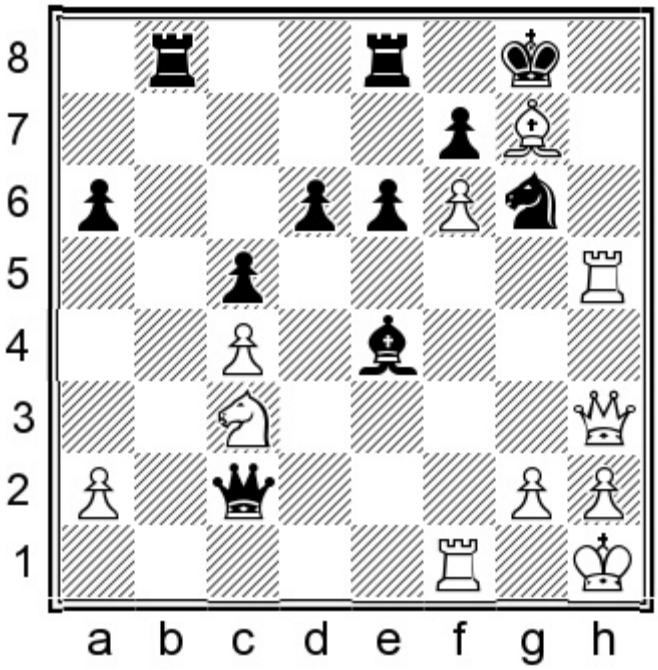
32.♗xf8 ♗xe4

If 32...♖xf8, then 33.♖h8† ♘xh8 34.♕h6 concludes the attack by the simplest of means.

33.♗g7!+–

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Now Black can save himself from mate only at a serious cost in material. Of course I didn't even consider 33.♘xe4? ♖b1 with mutual chances.



33...♗xg2† 34.♕xg2 ♕xg2†

Greed is punishable – on 34...♕xc3 White mates by force: 35.♖h8†! ♘xh8 36.♗xh8† ♔xh8 37.♕g7#

35.♔xg2 ♖b2† 36.♔g1 ♖c2 37.♖f3!

It's all over! White's second rook heads for the h-file, and Black's resources are clearly inadequate to create counterplay.

37...♖b8

Or 37...♖c1† 38.♔f2 ♖c2† 39.♘e2.

38.♖fh3 ♖c1† 39.♔f2 ♖b2† 40.♘e2

1–0

Another interesting game. Black's opening play was unsure, allowing the white pawn to penetrate to f6. After that, the black king was left practically on its own against a whole army of aggressive white pieces. I then committed a couple of inaccuracies, which I now suspect were due to insufficient concentration (White's attack was so strong that it was too easy to relax). This gave Arnason a chance – just one – to try to create substantial counterplay. Once he had missed this chance, it was no longer possible to halt White's attack!

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Chapter 7

Attack in the Catacombs of the Caro-Kann

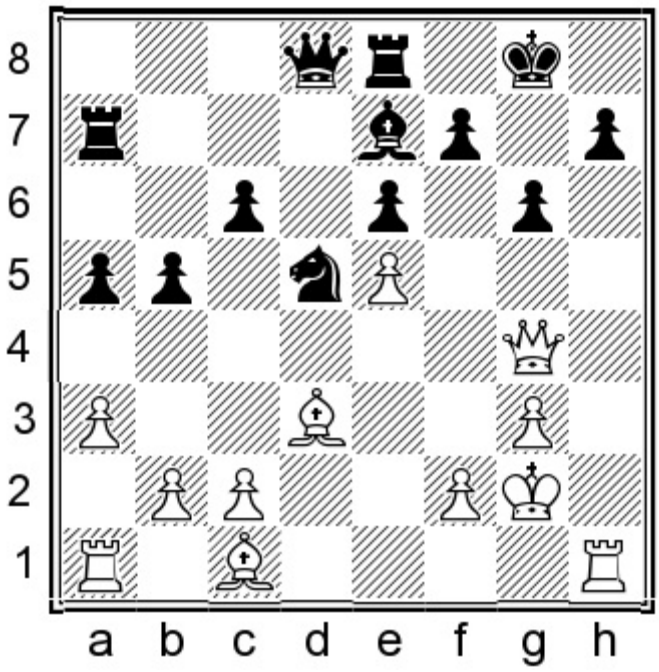


Wydra Memorial, Haifa 2000. Gelfand, Anand, Bareev, Psakhis, Oratovsky, Avrukh, Huzman & Svidler

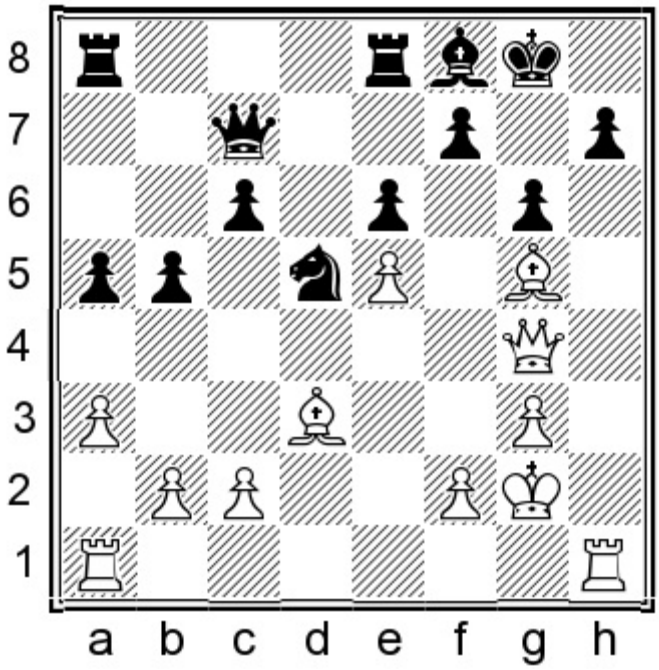
Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

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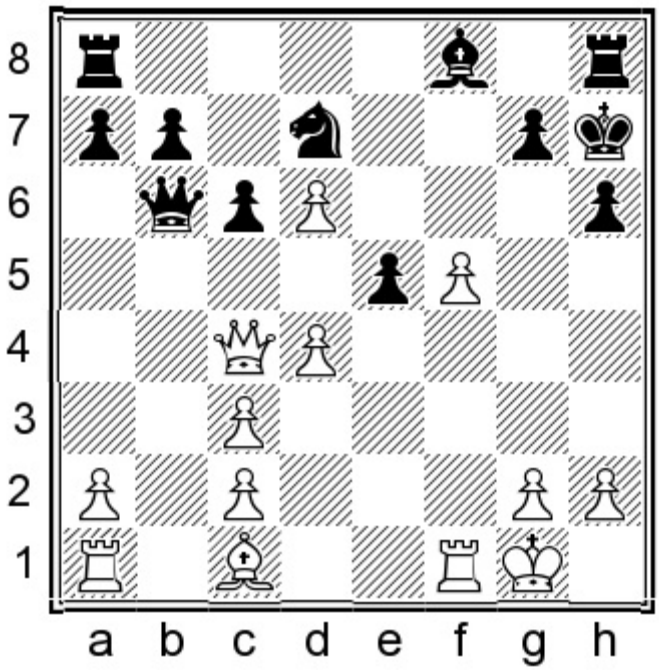


A lot of calculation
(see page 219)

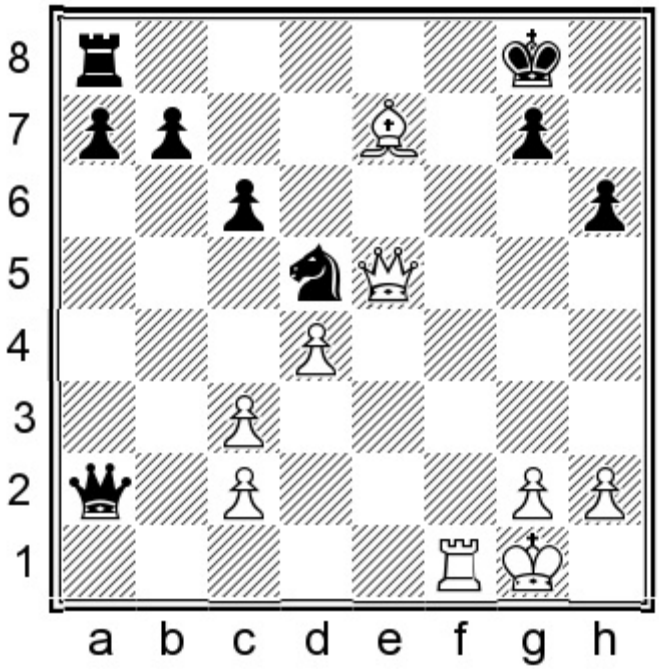


A clever combination with many details. Concentrate!
(see page 222)

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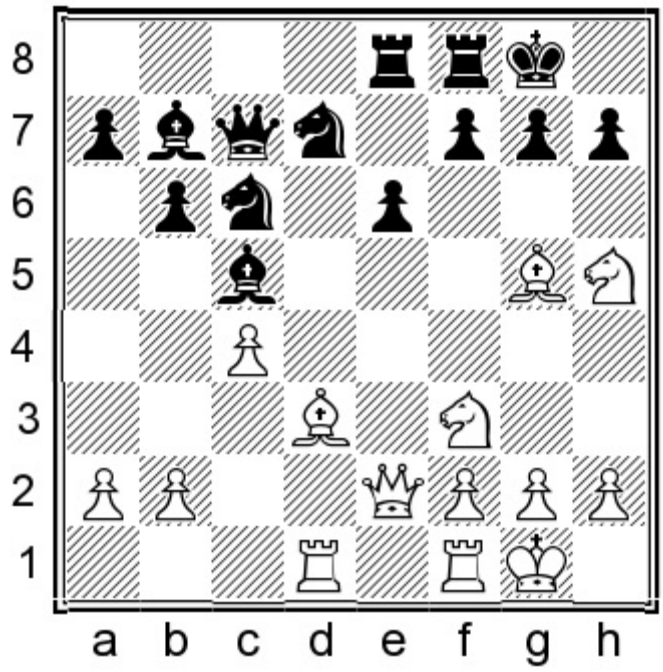


How to energize the attack?
(see page 225)

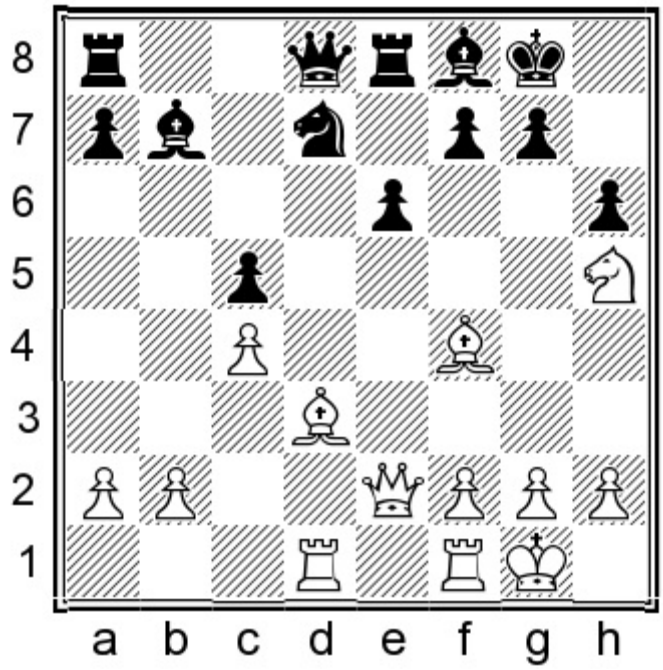


A nice little tactic
(see page 229)

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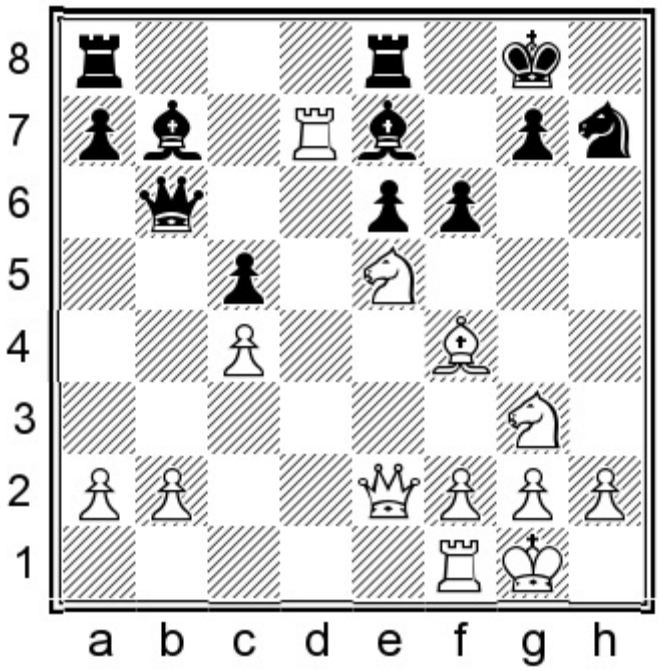


What was wrong with 16...♘b4?
(see page 249)

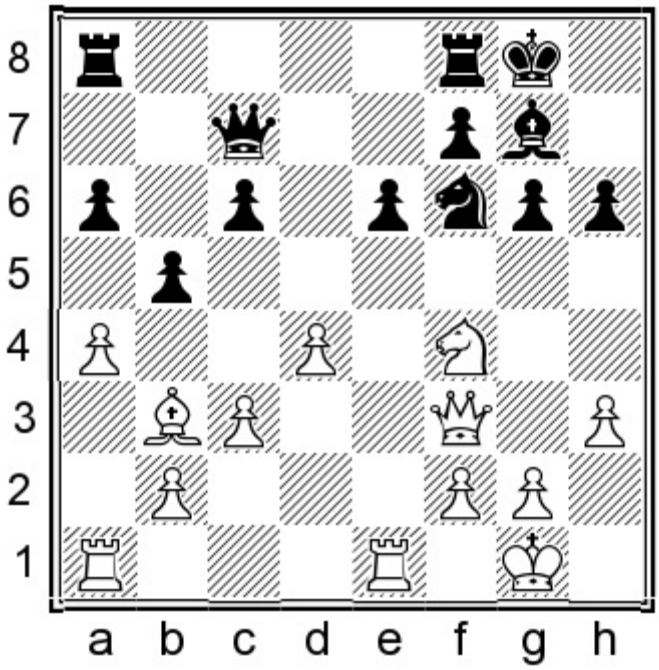


White can flex his tactical muscles
(see page 258)

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A wholly “uncomplicated” combination
(see page 259)



What had I planned after 19...e6?
(see page 275/6)

As if deliberately playing with contrasts, I decided to devote my next chapter to aggression in the Caro-Kann. Writing this chapter was not at all a simple matter, especially coming after the one devoted to the Sicilian. I don’t know about you, but to me the Sicilian Defence (and “defence” is perhaps not quite the right word here!) is linked to the idea of an honourable, manly fight. The associations it conjures up include a bright sun, a blue sky, and the odour of a freshly baked pizza. Utterly different feelings and

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images arise at the mention of the Caro-Kann – catacombs, dungeons, a knife in the back, smog and endless rain. I realize I may well be wrong, but I cannot alter my feelings with regard to this defence. From the very first moves, Black is thinking not about an open game but about restricting his opponent's scope. The fortifications he erects are such that... to undermine them is almost impossible.

True, the Caro-Kann Defence was a major opening of the young Kasparov; and a statement by Tal comes to mind, to the effect that when it was *essential* to play for a win, this very opening was his choice. I simply don't know what to say; *those* are people I am not too keen to argue with. Perhaps there is something I just don't understand about this creation of two little-known masters. Be that as it may, whenever I see a game in which a Caro-Kannite (what else are we to call such players?) is crushed, it gives me a feeling of total chess satisfaction.

Mikhail Tal went through quite an ordeal against the Caro-Kann in his second match with Botvinnik. Afterwards, by way of taking a certain amount of belated revenge for his sufferings, he played especially strongly against adherents of this defence. Thus it is that games by the combinative wizard of Riga are in an absolute majority in the present chapter.

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Mikhail Tal – Bukhuti Gurgenidze

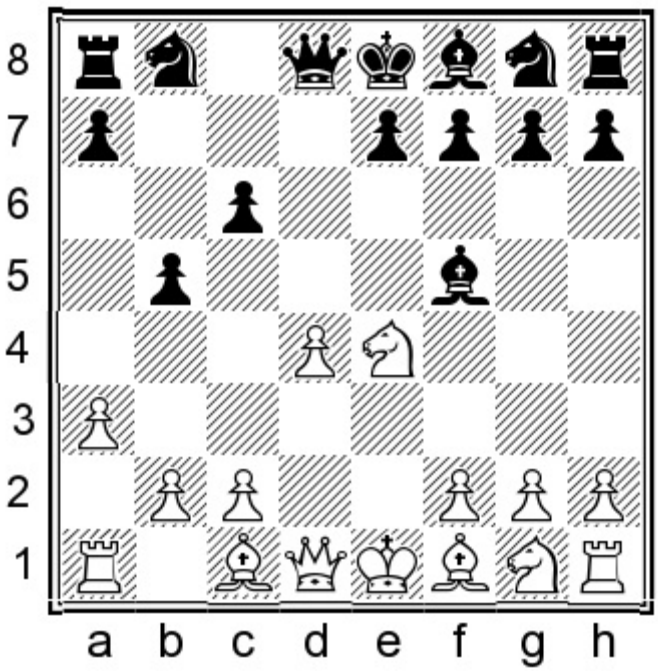
USSR Championship 1969

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 b5?!

A rare move and not a very effective one, especially against such a master of the attack as Mikhail Tal. It isn't entirely clear what Black is hoping to achieve in return for weakening his queenside. But what's done cannot be undone, and this pleasing game has taken its place in chess history.

4.a3!? dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♗f5

The Georgian Grandmaster never liked following official theory, and I should think this position entirely suited him.



6.♗d3

White has played 6.♘g3!? much more often, with the possible continuation: 6...♗g6 7.♘f3 (Black succeeded in equalizing after 7.h4 h6 8.♘h3 ♘f6 9.c4 a6 10.♘f4 ♗h7 11.♗e3 e6 12.♘fh5 ♘bd7 in Nedev – Zelcic, Dresden 1998) 7...♘d7 8.♗d3 ♘gf6 9.♕e2 e6 10.0-0 ♗e7 11.♘e4 0-0 12.c3 a6 13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.♗f4 and White has a slight advantage, Rasic – Zelcic, Pula 2000.

The move in the game involves a pawn sacrifice, but when did such things ever stop Tal?

6...♗xe4

6...♕xd4 is too dangerous: 7.♘f3 ♕d8 (or 7...♕d5 8.♕e2±) 8.♕e2 ♗xe4 9.♗xe4 Stenroos – Holmgren, corr.1988, and White's compensation for the pawn is plain to see – Black is clearly too far behind in development.

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7.♗xe4 ♘f6 8.♗d3

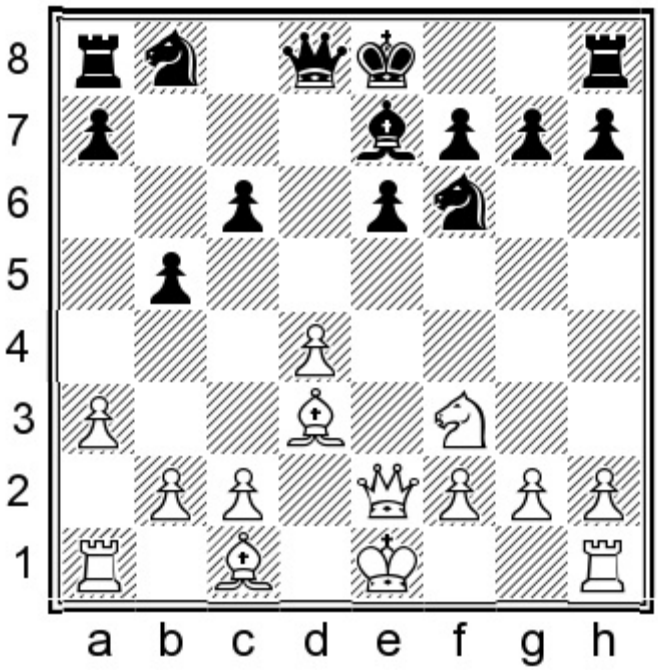
Here 8.♗f3!?, keeping up the pressure against Black's queenside, was in no way inferior to the move played, but Tal always preferred to look in the direction of the enemy king, not at some paltry pawns.

8...e6?!

At this point it *was* worth thinking about 8...♕xd4. At least Black would then have a pawn to show for his troubles – although after 9.♘f3 ♕d5 10.♕e2, White's position is clearly preferable.

9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.♕e2

Quite a good alternative was 10.a4!? b4 11.♘e5 0-0 12.0-0 and White has the initiative.

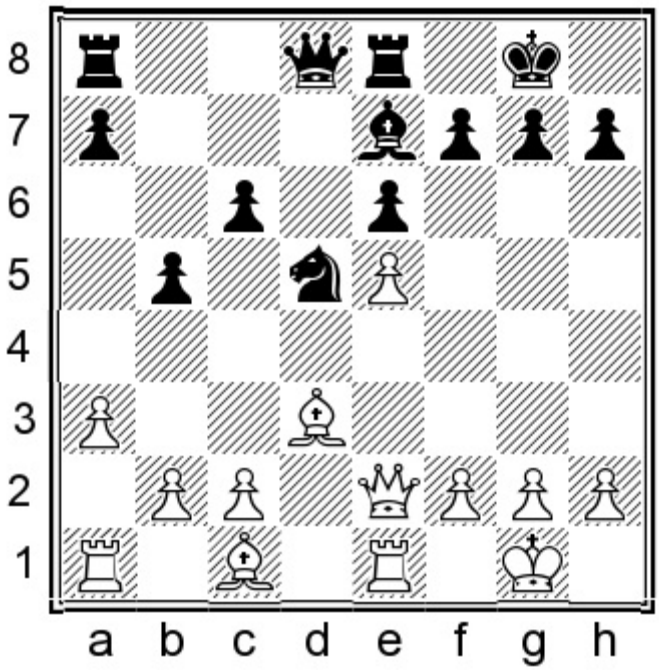


10...♘bd7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖e1 ♖e8

I would have preferred 12...a6!?, to prepare the freeing advance ...c5.

13.♘e5 ♘xe5 14.dxe5 ♘d5

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15.♕g4

White has an excellent game with good attacking chances – except that, for the coming onslaught to succeed, he could well do with having a knight on the board.

15...a5?!

Gurgenidze displays a fatalistic attitude to the outcome of the game. The prophylactic move 15...g6!? was worth considering. Then in the event of 16.h4 ♗xh4 17.g3 ♗e7 18.♔g2 h5, Black's defensive chances are not at all bad.

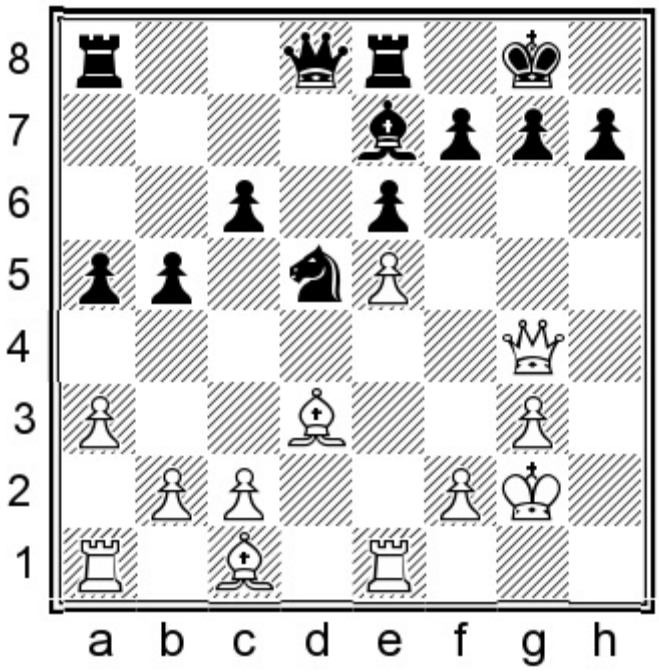
16.h4!

Tal naturally has no intention of wasting time on the cautious g2-g3, and he places Black in rather a difficult dilemma – whether to allow the further advance of White's h-pawn or to open the h-file by his own means, with loss of tempo too. Speaking for myself, I would probably not have risked snapping up the pawn, but Gurgenidze takes a different view.

16...♗xh4 17.g3 ♗e7 18.♔g2

It's obvious that White has full compensation for the pawn. Two powerful bishops, an open file, an active queen... all these factors are working in his favour. Nonetheless Black's position is robust, and a pawn is a pawn – so the struggle is only just beginning!

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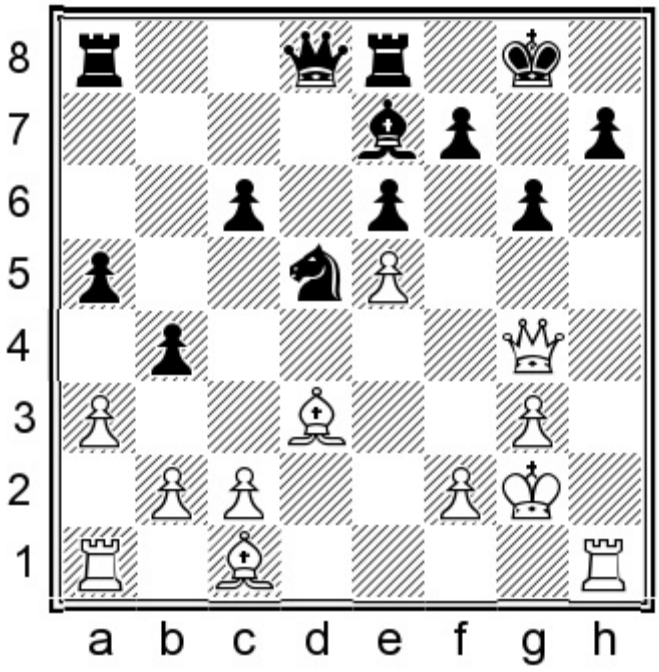
18...g6?!

What could be more natural than this move, firmly denying White's light-squared bishop the possibility of taking part in the attack? However that may be, the move doesn't strike me as best. But before anything else, let us see what White is actually threatening – what his plan of action would be if Black tried to play on the queenside:

18...b4? 19.♖h1!

19.♗xh7† ♔xh7 20.♕h5† ♔g8 21.♖h1 was given as winning by Suetin, but the simple 21...f6!?= refutes it, leaving White with no more than perpetual check.

19...g6



20.♗xg6!

Giving Black no time to construct new lines of defence.

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20...hxg6

20...fxg6? is weaker: 21.♕xe6† ♔g7 22.♗h6† ♔h8 23.♕f7 ♖g8 24.♗f8 ♘f4† 25.gxf4 ♗h4 26.♗h6 ♕e7 27.e6! and there is no adequate defence against the threat of ♗g5.

21.♕h3 ♗h4 22.♕xh4 ♕xh4 23.♖xh4

White has an advantage in the ending. Note that the threat of an attack against the black king still persists.

It seems to me that Gurgenidze ought to have played 18...♕c7!, keeping White's centre pawn under observation. Then 19.♗xh7† ♔xh7 20.♖h1† ♔g8 21.♕h5 f5! leads once again to a draw, while 19.♖h1 ♕xe5 promises White nothing tangible.

So it looks as if Black's acceptance of the pawn sacrifice was entirely legitimate! Note how many mistakes are needed to lose a game – sometimes even two or three are not enough. But with his last move, Gurgenidze has just overstepped that imperceptible line that divides a complex and dangerous position from a downright bad one.

19.♖h1

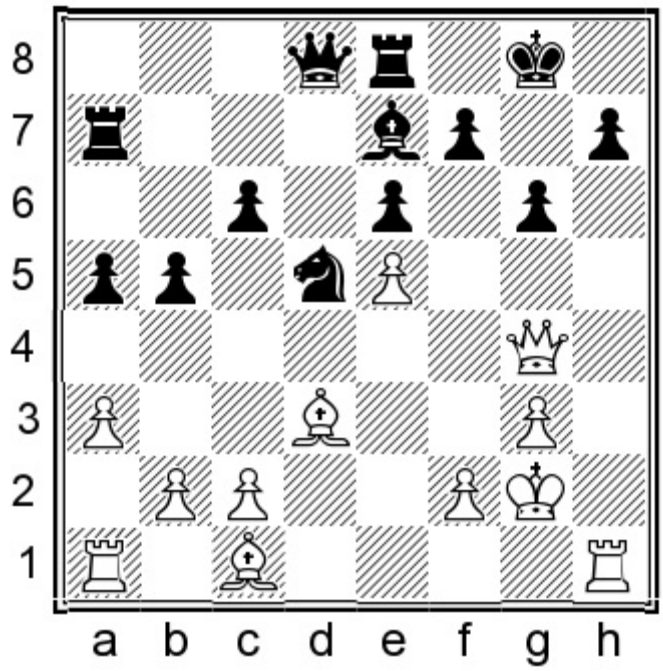
Now there will be the possibility of a rook sacrifice on h7, and a high degree of precision is required from Black.

19...♗f8

The most natural and strongest move!

Black doesn't solve his problems with:

19...♖a7?



20.♖xh7! ♔xh7 21.♕h5† ♔g8 22.♗xg6 fxg6 23.♕xg6† ♔h8

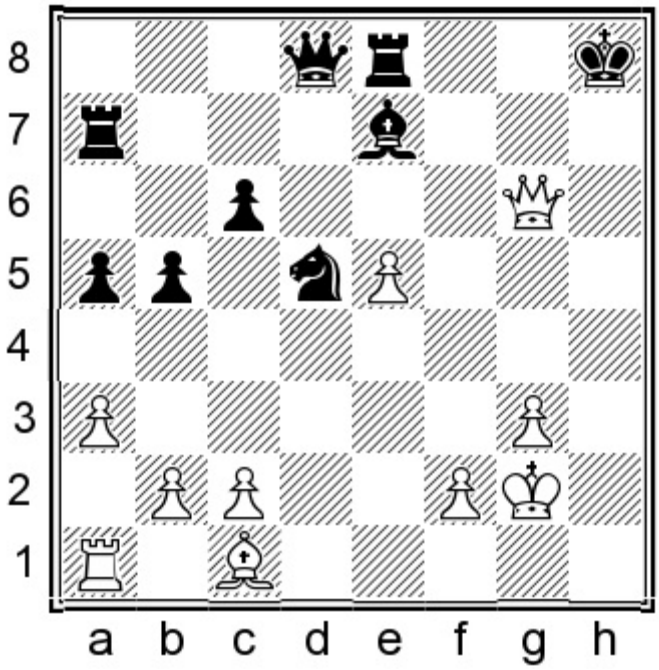
23...♔f8?? 24.♗h6#

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24.♕h6† ♔g8 25.♕xe6† ♔g7 26.♕h6†

26.♗h6†? doesn't work: 26...♔h8 27.♖h1 ♗h4!, and the a7-rook joins in the defence.

26...♔g8 27.♕g6† ♔h8



28.♗g5! ♘f4†!

A brilliant defensive resource; the only alternative would be instant resignation.

29.♗xf4 ♗h4 30.♖h1 ♖f8!

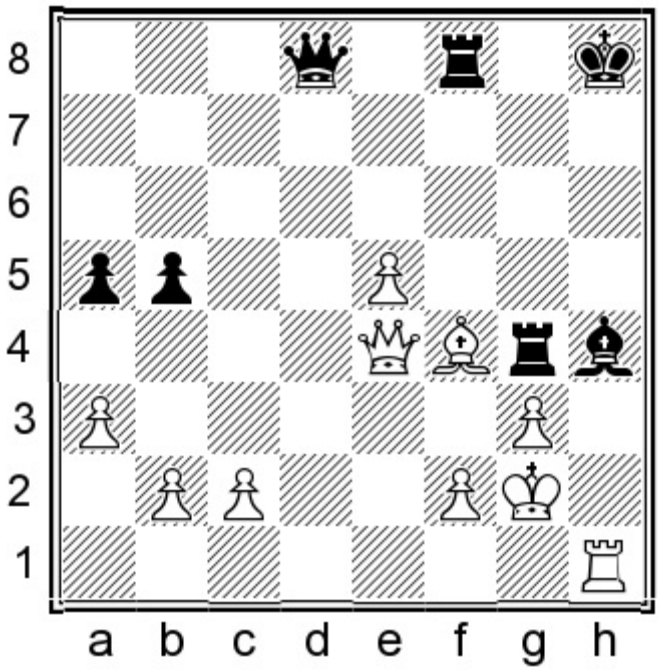
More tenacious than 30...♖h7 31.♖xh4! ♖xh4 32.♗g5 ♖e6 33.♗xd8 ♖xg6 34.♗xh4, after which White's three passed pawns would enable him to gain an easy victory.

31.♕xc6 ♖g7

After 31...♖h7 32.♖xh4 ♖xh4 33.gxh4 ♕xh4 34.♗g3, White has a clear plus, though some quite precise play would be needed to exploit it successfully.

32.♕e4 ♖g4

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33.♔f3! ♕g5 34.♔e3!

Having performed a swift forced march into the middle of the board, the white monarch takes personal command at the head of his forces! I find it hard to believe that an adequate defence can be found for Black.

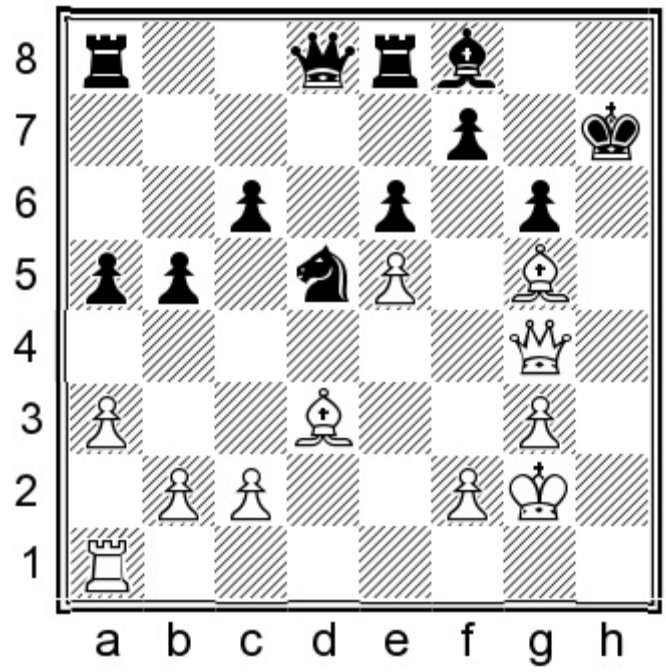
20.♗g5!±

The most clear-cut and accurate solution.

There is no great promise for White in 20.♕h3 h5 21.g4 h4 22.g5 ♗g7 23.f4⇄.

Nor is the rook sacrifice totally convincing:
20.♖xh7? ♔xh7 21.♗g5

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21...♕d7!

Probably the best move in the position.

21...♘e7? is thoroughly bad in view of 22.♕h4† ♔g8 23.♗f6 ♗g7 24.♖h1 ♗xf6 25.♕xf6 ♔f8 26.♖h7 with a quick mate.

Tal's own recommendation deserves a good deal of attention too: 21...♘e3†!? 22.fxe3 ♕d5† 23.♗e4 ♕xe5 24.♕h4† ♔g8 25.♖h1 (not 25.♗f6 ♕h5 26.♕xh5 gxh5 27.♗xc6 ♗g7!?=) 25...♗g7 26.♗xg6! fxg6 27.♕h7† ♔f7 28.♖f1† ♕f5 29.♗h6 ♖g8 30.g4 ♕xf1† 31.♔xf1 and White has no more than a minimal edge.

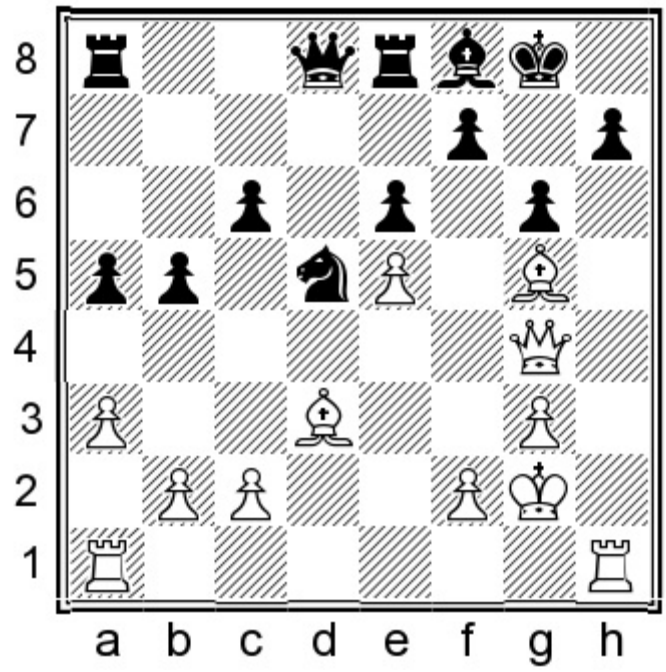
22.♖h1† ♔g8 23.♕h4 ♗g7 24.♕h7†

24.♗f6? is weak: 24...♘xf6 25.exf6 ♕d5† 26.♗e4 ♕h5 27.fxg7 ♕xh4 28.♖xh4 ♖ab8∓

24...♔f8 25.♗h6 f5 26.♕h8† ♔e7 27.♕xg7† ♔d8 28.♗g5† ♔c7 29.♕xd7† ♔xd7 30.♖h7† ♔c8 31.♖g7∞

With chances for both sides.

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20...♕c7

The most stubborn reply, but it would have been better to play it a couple of moves earlier! Other tries are:

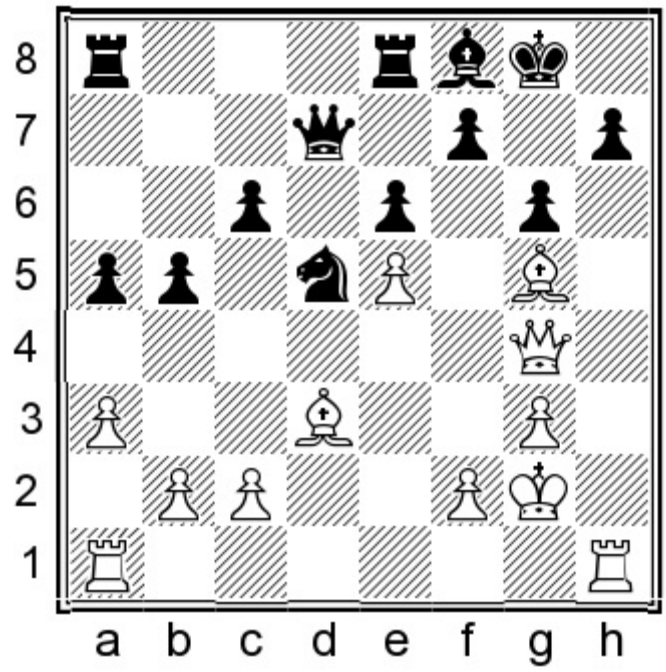
20...♗e7? is no good: 21.♖xh7! (21.♗xg6! ♗xg5 22.♗xf7† ♔g7 23.♗xe8+– is equally effective) 21...♗xg5 22.♖ah1 ♔f8 (or 22...♘f6 23.♖h8† ♔g7 24.exf6† ♔xf6 25.♖xe8 ♕xe8 26.f4+–) 23.♗xg6! ♖a7 24.♖h8† ♔g7 25.♖xe8 ♕xe8 26.♕xg5 fxg6 27.♕h6† ♔f7 28.♕h7†+– with decisive material gains.

20...♘e7 can also hardly be recommended: 21.♗xg6! hxg6 (21...fxg6 allows a quick mate by 22.♕xe6† ♔h8 23.♗f6† ♗g7 24.♖xh7† ♔xh7 25.♖h1† ♗h6 26.♕f7#) 22.♕h4 ♗g7 23.♕h7† ♔f8 24.♗f6 ♕d5† 25.f3 ♕d2† 26.♔f1 ♗xf6 27.exf6 ♖ed8 28.♕h8† ♘g8 29.♖h7+–

20...♕d7

This makes it slightly more difficulty for White to achieve success.

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21.♕h4!

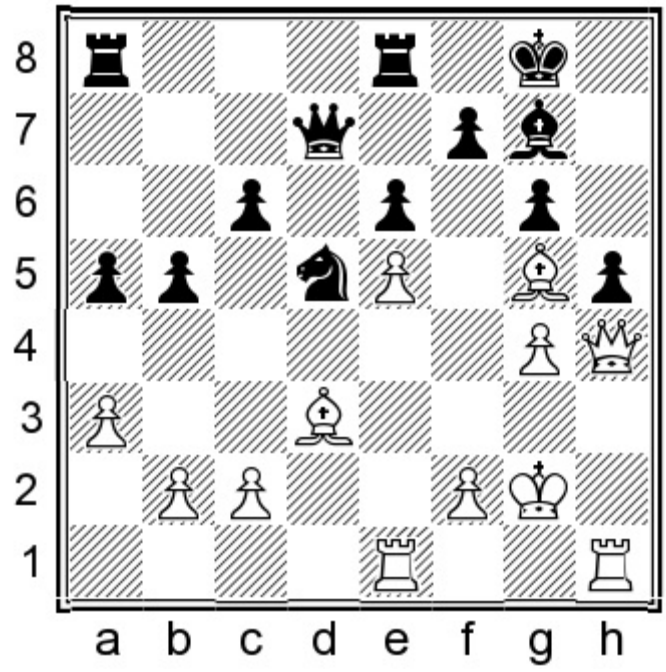
We have a rare instance where the rook sacrifice fails: 21.♖xh7 ♔xh7 22.♖h1† ♔g8 23.♕h4 ♗g7 24.♕h7† ♔f8 25.♗h6 f5!? 26.♕h8† ♔e7 27.♕xg7† ♔d8 28.♗g5† ♔c7 29.♕xd7† ♔xd7 30.♖h7† ♘e7∞ and as a result of the long forced variation, a strange and unclear ending has arisen.

21...h5 22.g4 ♗g7

22...♗e7 doesn't look too convincing: 23.gxh5 ♗xg5 24.♕xg5 ♕e7 25.♕h6 ♕f8 26.hxg6+–

23.♖ae1!

This seems most accurate, although White also has everything in order after 23.gxh5 ♗xe5 24.hxg6 f5 25.c3 ♕g7 26.♖ae1.



23...♕c7

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23...♔f8 24.gxh5 gxh5 25.♕xh5 isn't worth analysing seriously. Within a few moves Black's

position will fall apart.

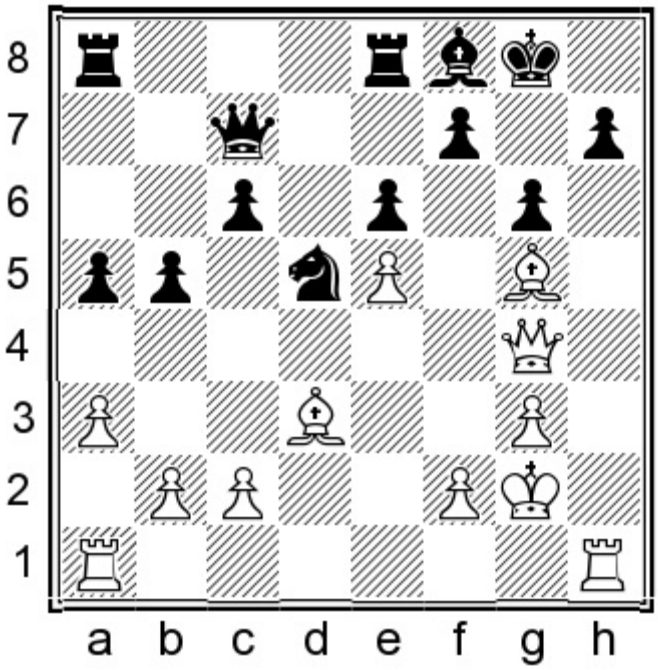
The same result follows from 23...hxg4 24.♖e4!, taking control of f4 and threatening ♗f6. After 24...♔f8 25.♗h6 it is time for Black to stop the clock.

23...♘e7 is met by 24.gxh5, and then both 24...♘f5 25.♗xf5 exf5 26.h6 ♕d5† 27.♔g1 ♗xe5 28.♖xe5! ♕xe5 29.♗f6 ♕e1† 30.♔g2+– and 24...♕d5† 25.♔g1 ♔f8 26.h6 ♗h8 27.h7+– are equally hopeless for Black.

24.gxh5 gxh5

24...♗xe5 doesn't help either: 25.hxg6 ♗xb2 26.♕h7† ♔f8 27.♗h6† ♔e7 28.gxf7 ♖f8 29.♗f5+– 25.♕xh5 ♔f8 26.♖h3+–

At least Black's torments will not last for very long!



21.♖xh7!

Tal must have foreseen this rook sacrifice several moves earlier; otherwise White's entire strategy would have made no sense.

21...♕xe5

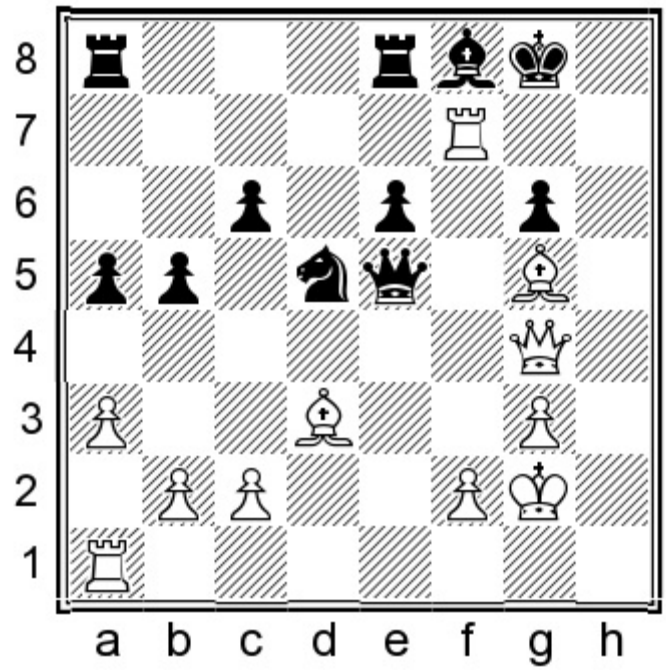
The gift could not be accepted: 21...♔xh7 22.♖h1† ♔g8 23.♗f6! ♘xf6 (23...♗g7 24.♕h4!+–) 24.exf6 ♕d7 (Black is mated prettily in the event of 24...♕e5 25.♗xg6 ♕xf6 26.♗h7†! ♔h8 27.♕g8#) 25.♔g1! ♕d5 26.♗xg6+–

Nor does Black benefit much from: 21...♗g7 22.♗f6 ♗xf6 (or 22...♘xf6 23.exf6 ♗xf6 24.♗xg6! ♗g7 25.♖ah1 ♕e5 26.♖1h5 ♕xb2 27.♗e4 ♔f8, and now the simplest way to win is 28.♗xc6!?) 23.exf6 ♘xf6 24.♕xg6†! fxg6 25.♖xc7 ♖ac8 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 27.♗xg6+– with an easily won endgame.

22.♖xf7!

In which century was this game played?

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22...♔xf7?

Black has clearly lost the will to resist. He had to play: 22...♗h6 23.♗xh6 (White is also close to victory after 23.♗f6 ♕h5 24.♕xg6† ♕xg6 25.♗xg6 ♘xf6 26.♖xf6 ♗g5 27.♖f7±) 23...♔xf7 24.♗xg6† ♔e7 25.♗xe8 ♖xe8 26.c3± Black's position is highly unpleasant, but with a certain amount of luck he could at least have dreamt about half a point.

23.♗xg6†+−

The slaughter has commenced!

23...♔g8

There is no need to comment on 23...♔xg6 24.♗f4†+−.

24.♗xe8 ♗g7 25.♗d7

25.♗xc6 wins just as quickly.

25...♘c7

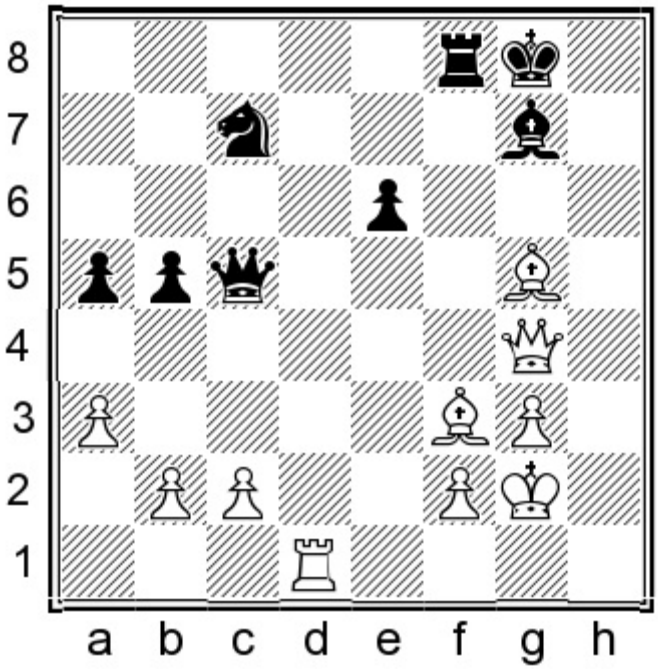
It might have been worth giving check with 25...♘e3†, although White can deal with it fairly comfortably: 26.♗xe3 (26.fxe3 ♕d5† 27.e4 ♕xd7 28.♖d1+– is also good) 26...♕d5† 27.♕f3 ♕xd7 28.♖d1 ♕c7 29.♕e4+– and White easily wins.

Nor does 25...♔f7 make any difference: 26.♗xc6 ♖c8 27.♗d7 (after 27.♗xb5 ♘f6 28.♗xf6 ♕d5† 29.♕f3 ♗xf6 30.♕xd5 exd5 31.c3 d4 Black is of course losing, but some minimal chances are emerging for him) 27...♖h8 28.♖d1+–

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26.♗xc6 ♖f8 27.♖d1 ♕c5 28.♗f3

Possessing extra material while retaining all his other advantages, White is guaranteed a speedy victory.



28...♕xc2 29.♖d7

White wins just as easily with 29.♖c1! or 29.♗f4!?, but Mikhail Tal wants to finish off the game with an attack.

29...♖f7 30.♖d8† ♖f8 31.♗f6!

A nice move.

31...♕h7 32.♗e4 ♕h6

Or 32...♕h8 33.♗e7! ♖xd8 34.♗xd8 and White wins a piece.

33.♗g5 ♕h8 34.♖d7

1–0

In the opening Black offended against all the principles of chess: he created weaknesses in his own camp and fell badly behind in development. But in spite of this, if he had found 18...♕c7! then he would have retained excellent chances of a successful defence. Gurgenidze missed this move, and his permissible quota of mistakes had already been used up in the early stage of the game. As a result, Black was routed in a style that recalled the best paradigms of 19th-century play!

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Mikhail Tal – Vladimir Simagin

USSR Championship 1956

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.f4 ♕b6

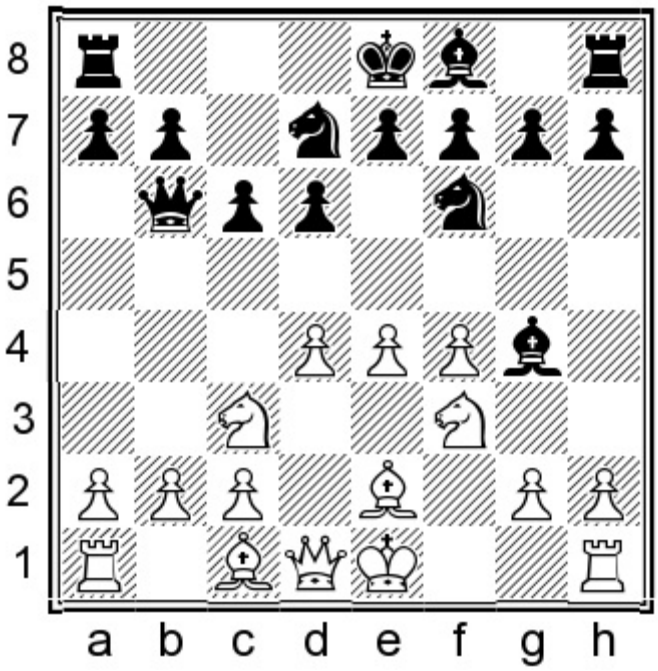
I confess I don't even know what to call this opening; an odd kind of hybrid has arisen. However, some Caro-Kann criteria have been fulfilled – the game did begin 1.e4 c6 – and there would be something rather inhuman about simply labelling it "B07"! Black gives his opponent the opportunity to arrange his pawns comfortably in the centre, but will attempt to exert pressure on them. These are familiar tactics, but very dangerous! By the way, 4...♕a5 5.♗d2 ♕b6 6.♘f3 is a line more frequently seen.

5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.♗e2 ♘bd7

This move looks the most natural.

It's hard to recommend 6...e5?! 7.fxe5 dxe5 8.♘xe5 ♗xe2 9.♘xe2 ♘xe4 10.0-0± Kislov – Fedulov, Briansk 1995.
6...d5 7.e5 ♘e4 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.♘g5 ♗xe2 10.♕xe2 ♕xd4 occurred in Zozulia – Mikhaletz, Swidnica 2000, and now 11.♗e3!? ♕xb2 12.0-0 would have set Black some barely soluble problems.

And finally, Black fails to secure full equality with 6...♗xf3 7.♗xf3 e5 8.♘e2!? ♘bd7 9.c3 ♗e7 10.0-0± in De la Villa – Rivas Pastor, Pamplona 1995.



7.e5! ♘d5 8.0-0!?

In more recent years 8.♘e4 has been played; there can follow 8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 dxe5 10.fxe5 e6 11.a3 c5 12.c4 ♘c7 13.b4!→ Z. Almasi – Schaefer, Budapest 1991. However, I like the young Tal's move

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just as much.

8...♘xc3 9.bxc3

I no longer recall who spoke those famous words about Tal: “If Misha has an open file, he’ll give mate.” The b-file is now open – the rest is a trifling matter!

9...e6

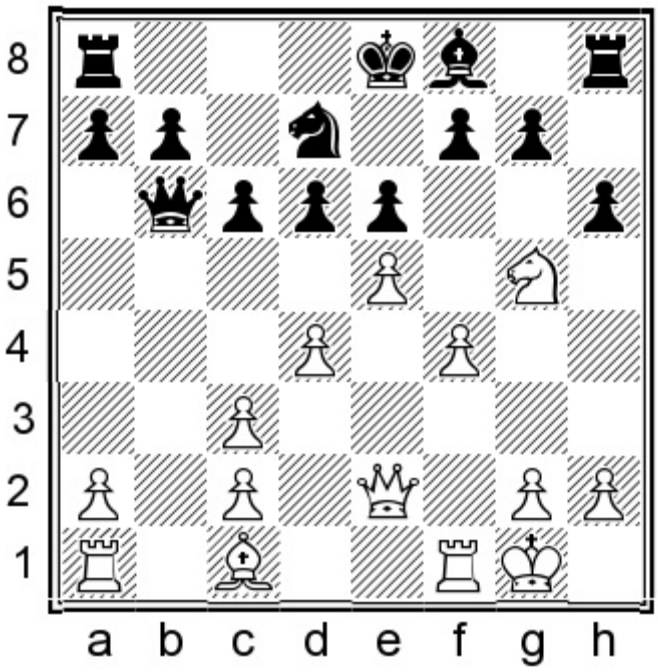
Quite possibly Black could have taken the pawn, although after 9...♗xf3 10.♖xf3 dxe5 11.fxe5 ♘xe5 12.♖f2 ♘d7 13.♗c4!? White’s initiative compensates for the sacrificed material. However, I dare say that in those years Tal’s reputation was already enough to deter even the most hot-headed opponents from taking risky decisions. Moreover Simagin himself was fonder of attacking and sacrificing than of conducting a tedious and unpromising defence.

10.♘g5!

A strong move and a most dangerous one for Black, who has to work extremely hard to avoid losing in the very opening.

10...♗xe2 11.♕xe2 h6

It’s hard to think of anything better than this. White was threatening a breakthrough in the centre with f4-f5, and 11...g6? does nothing at all to prevent it; A. Pereira – Ribeiro, Lisbon 1995, continued 12.f5! gxf5 13.♕h5 ♘xe5 14.♘xe6 ♘g6 15.♘xf8 ♘xf8 16.♖e1†+−.



It’s interesting to ask what you would play now, especially since there is an answer that the romantic young Tal simply couldn’t resist.

12.♘xf7!?

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I should think many of you would have continued this way too! The move is indeed a good one, but less romantic mortals could very well have chosen:

12.♕h5!?

This also secures White an advantage.

12...g6 13.♕h3 ♕a5!

Black can hardly expect to survive 13...d5 14.♘xe6 fxe6 15.♕xe6† ♔d8 16.♕xg6.

Nor can he be pleased with: 13...♗e7 14.exd6 ♗f6 15.♘e4 ♗g7 (after 15...♗xd4†? 16.cxd4 ♕xd4† 17.♕e3 ♕xa1 18.♘c3+– the black queen ends up in a trap from which it can't escape)16.♕d3 0-0 17.♗e3±

14.♗d2

14.♖b1!? also looks promising for White.

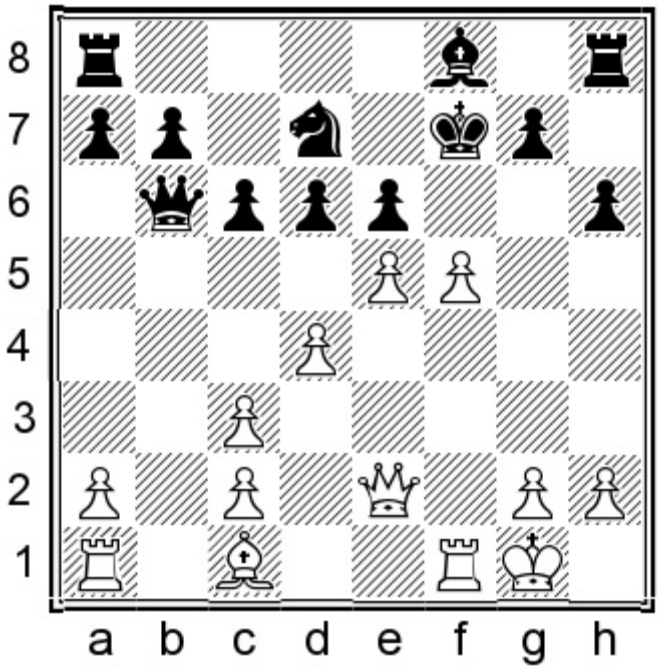
14...♕d5 15.♖ae1

White has a strong initiative.

However, trying to persuade Tal not to sacrifice his knight in such a situation would be about as easy as telling fish to fly, not swim!

12...♔xf7 13.f5!

This is the obvious move in the position, and I am sure it was played without any great doubts. Black's poor monarch comes under the crossfire of the white pawns and pieces, and all the life left in him has to be devoted to the business of survival. Frankly speaking, the game ought not to have lasted much longer, but at that time Tal was still a mere talented child who more than once did his best to help his opponent.



13...dxe5?!

In this critical situation Vladimir Simagin was not to be envied! He had to make a very difficult choice – between the bad, the very bad, and the appalling! Keeping your sang-froid, with your king in

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the centre and with all those open files and diagonals, is an almost impossible task! The move Black plays is bad, and he ought to have lost fairly quickly. The really difficult question to answer is a famous Russian one – "What Is to Be Done?" Let us look closely at how the game might have proceeded if Black had taken a different path at this point.

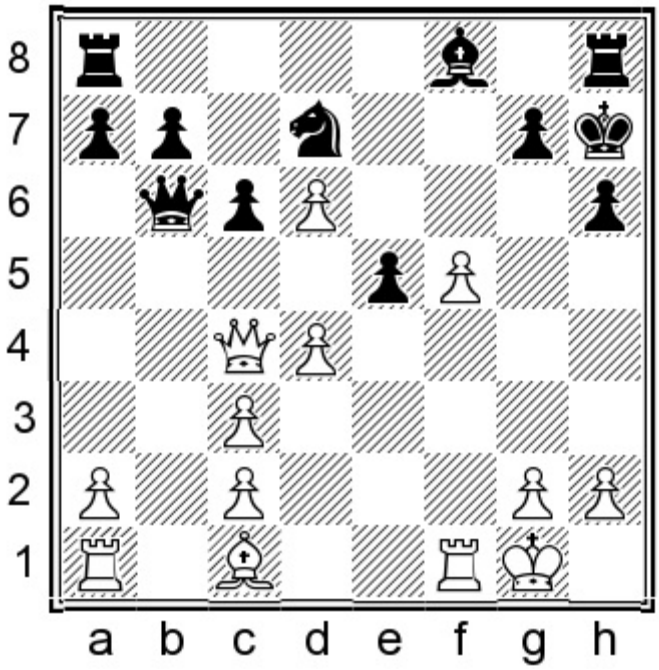
13...♔g8!?

For a long time I thought this move was best, but I was eventually forced to change my mind.

14.exd6!

White's superiority is less obvious after the natural 14.fxe6 ♘xe5 15.♗e3 ♕a5 16.dxe5 ♕xe5 17.♖ae1 ♕xe6 18.♕h5 ♔h7 19.♗c1 ♕g6 20.♕xg6† ♔xg6 21.♖e6† ♔h7 22.♖f7. He has the initiative in the ending – but in my view, reaching this position is not such a great achievement.

14...e5 15.♕c4† ♔h7



16.♗xh6!

A complete surprise – you could so easily miss this move in your calculations. White methodically destroys the black king's pawn cover, and soon everyone will be able to see, even without spectacles, that the king is naked!

16...♕d8

16...♔xh6? loses to 17.♕f7.

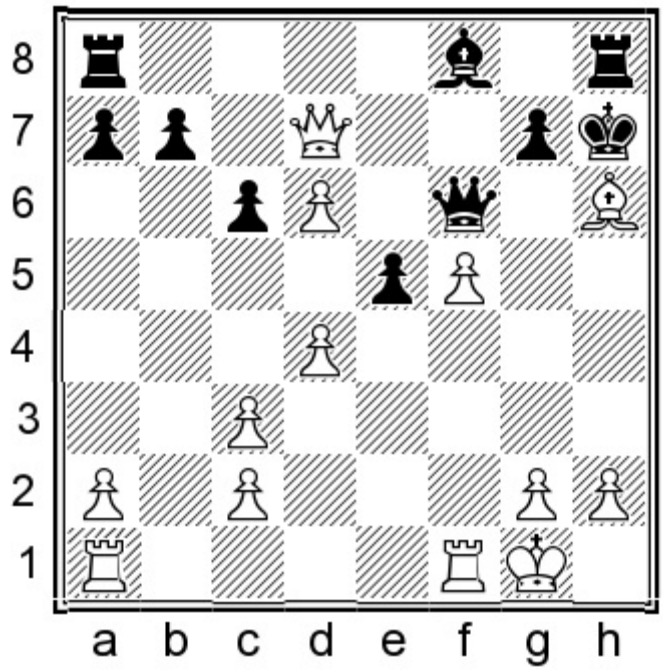
16...exd4 also loses, although this time White needs to show some imagination and boldness: 17.♕e6 ♘f6 18.♗g5 dxc3† (18...♖e8 19.♕f7+–) 19.♔h1! ♘g4 20.♕e4 ♘f2† 21.♖xf2 ♕xf2 22.f6† ♔g8 (22...g6 23.♕e6+–) 23.♕c4†! ♔h7 24.♕d3†! ♔g8 25.♖f1+–

17.♕e6 ♕f6

17...♕e8 18.♗g5+–

18.♕xd7

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18...♖d8

Black is still walking on a minefield; a single careless move is enough to lose the game at once. If 18...♕xh6, then 19.f6! is very strong.

18...♔xh6 also fails to rescue Black: 19.♖f3! ♗xd6 20.♖h3† ♔g5 21.♖g3† ♔h5 22.♖g6 ♕e7 23.♖xd6+–

19.♕xb7 ♗xd6

19...♕xh6 20.♖f3+–

20.♗e3 exd4 21.cxd4 ♖he8

After 21...♕h4 22.h3 ♕g3 23.♖f3+– Black can give one check, but that is the extent of his achievements!

22.♕b3

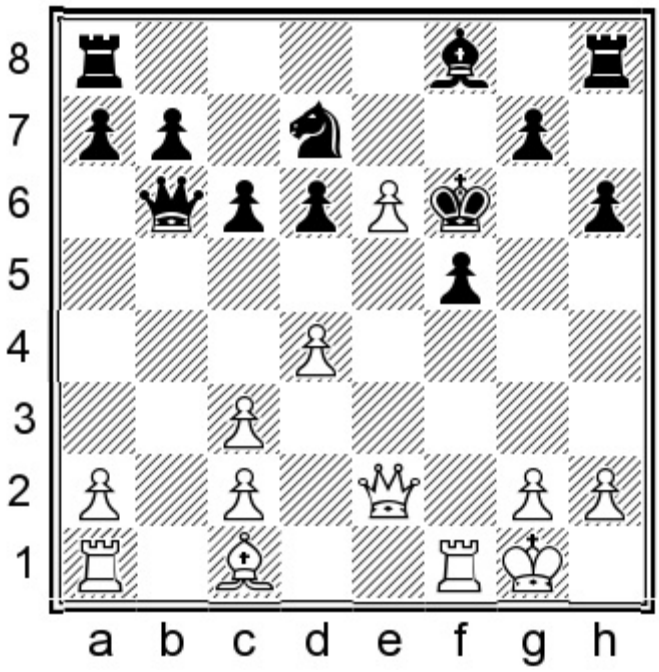
White's large material plus guarantees him an easy win.

13...exf5 14.e6† ♔f6

At least the black monarch won't be putting on weight – he has to keep moving all the time, and this will mean heading into the thick of the fight.

14...♔e7 is strongly met by: 15.♖b1! For quite some time, the open b-file has been a major source of headache for Black! 15...♕xb1 (15...♕a6 16.♕h5! ♔d8 17.♕f7 ♗e7 18.♕xg7 ♖f8 19.exd7+– is no help either) 16.♗g5† hxg5 17.exd7† ♔xd7 18.♖xb1 ♖b8 19.d5!+– Black's position falls apart like a house of cards. Note, by the way, that he never succeeded in completing his development.

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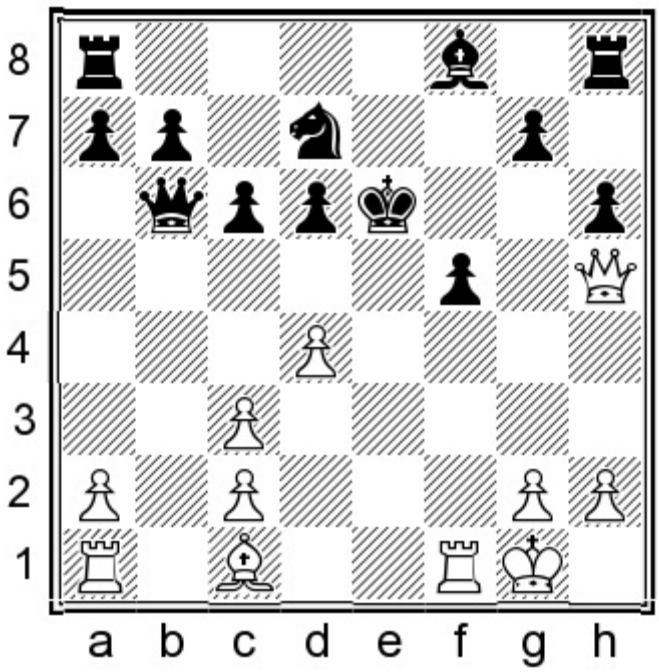


15.♕h5!

This is even stronger than: 15.exd7 ♕d8 16.♕h5 g6 (if Black wants to commit suicide, he can play 16...♕xd7 17.♗g5† ♔e6? 18.♖ae1† ♔d5, and now he is mated in three moves by 19.♕f3† ♔c4 20.♕d3† ♔d5 21.c4#) 17.♗g5† hxg5 18.♕xh8† ♗g7 19.♕h3 and White has a sizable advantage.

15...♔xe6

On 15...g6, White wins in beautiful style: 16.♖xf5†! ♔xe6 17.♕xg6† ♔e7 18.♗g5† hxg5 19.♕xg5† ♔e8 20.♖e1† ♘e5 21.♖fxe5† dxe5 22.♕xe5† ♔d7 23.♕e6† ♔c7 24.♕f7† ♔c8 25.♖e8† ♕d8 26.♖xd8† ♔xd8 27.♕f6†+− The variation is long but forced, and Tal wouldn't have had much trouble finding it.



16.♗xh6!

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A superb move!

16...♖xh6

16...♘f6 17.♖ae1† ♔d7 18.♕f7† ♔c8 19.♗g5+–

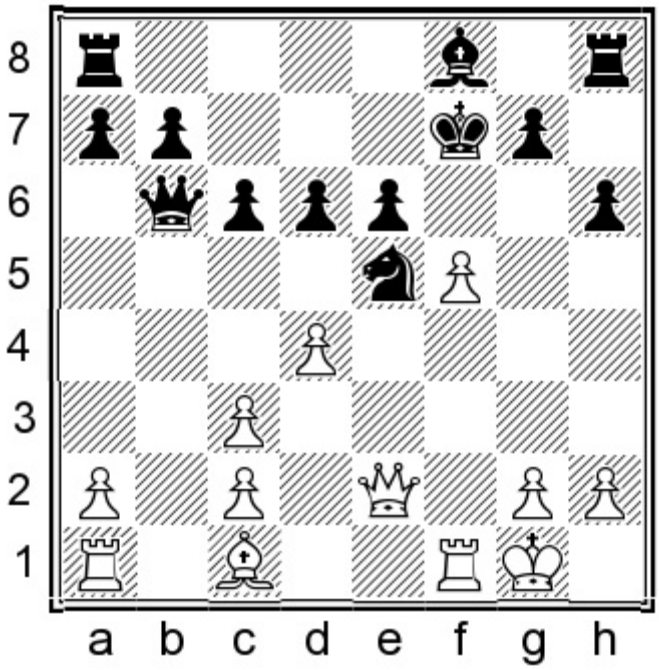
17.♖ae1† ♘e5□ 18.♕xf5† ♔d5 19.♕e4† ♔e6

19...♔c4 20.♖b1! puts Black out of his misery.

20.♖b1! ♖f6 21.♖xb6 axb6 22.dxe5 ♖xf1† 23.♔xf1 dxe5 24.♕g4† ♔d6 25.a4+–

White should win without any problems, seeing that he can always create a passed pawn on the kingside.

13...♘xe5



14.♗e3!

We have observed more than once already that beautiful sacrifices can very well go together with quiet moves that seem insignificant at first sight.

14...♕b5 15.fxe6†

15.♕h5†!? is also promising: 15...♔g8 16.♖ab1 ♕c4 17.♖xb7 ♕xc3 18.♖b3 ♕a5 19.fxe6 g6 20.♕h4 g5 21.♕h5 and White has a large plus.

15...♔g6

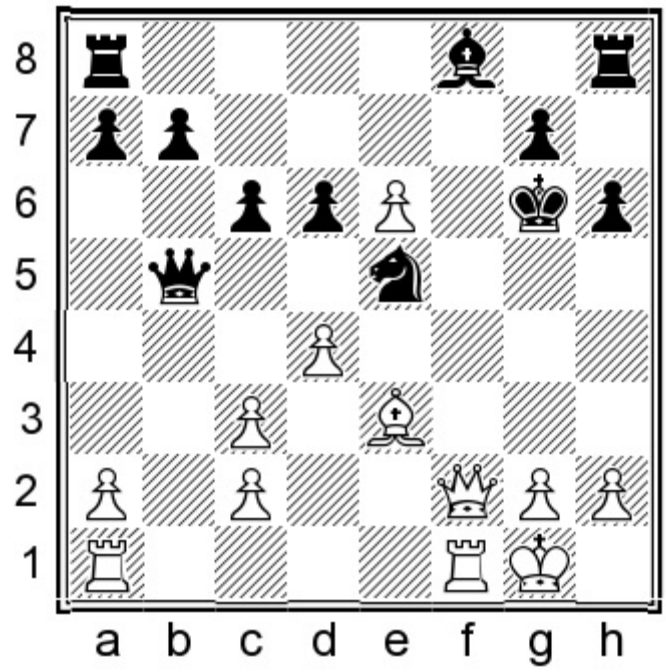
The alternative 15...♔xe6 16.♕h5+– is not worthy of serious analysis.

A more interesting option is 15...♔g8!? 16.♕xb5 cxb5 17.dxe5 dxe5 18.♖f5 ♖e8 19.♖xe5 a6± and Black retains some slim chances of a successful defence.

16.♕f2

The black king must be getting nervous about the white queen coming too close. What can be suggested for Black?

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16...♔h7

16...♘c4 loses quickly to 17.♖ab1! ♕d5 18.♕f7† ♔h7 19.♗xh6! ♔xh6 20.♖f5+–. As we have seen, White's chief attacking ideas are associated with ♖b1 and ♗xh6; these moves crop up with startling regularity!

After 16...♘g4 Black will again face problems that are scarcely soluble: 17.♕f3 ♘f6 18.♖ab1! ♕h5 (or 18...♕d5 19.♕g3† ♔h7 20.♖xf6!+–) 19.♕g3† ♔h7 20.♖xf6! b6 21.♖f7 ♖e8 22.♖bf1 and White has a won position.

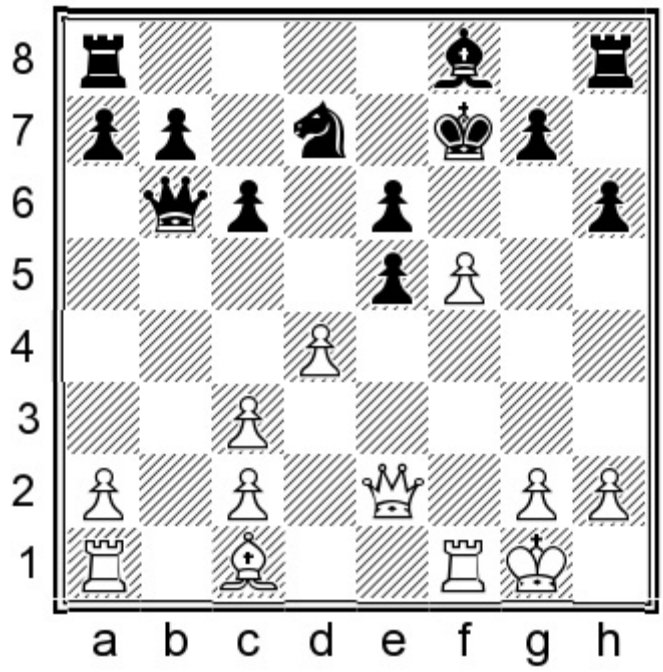
17.♖ab1! ♘g4

The most stubborn. With 17...♕d5 Black loses very quickly to 18.dxe5 ♕xe5 19.♖xb7 ♕xe6 20.♗d4.

18.♕h4 ♕e2 19.♖be1 ♕xc2 20.♕xg4 ♕g6 21.♕xg6† ♔xg6 22.♖f7 ♖e8 23.♖xb7±

White should probably win, although a certain amount of endgame technique will be required of him.

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14.fxe6†?

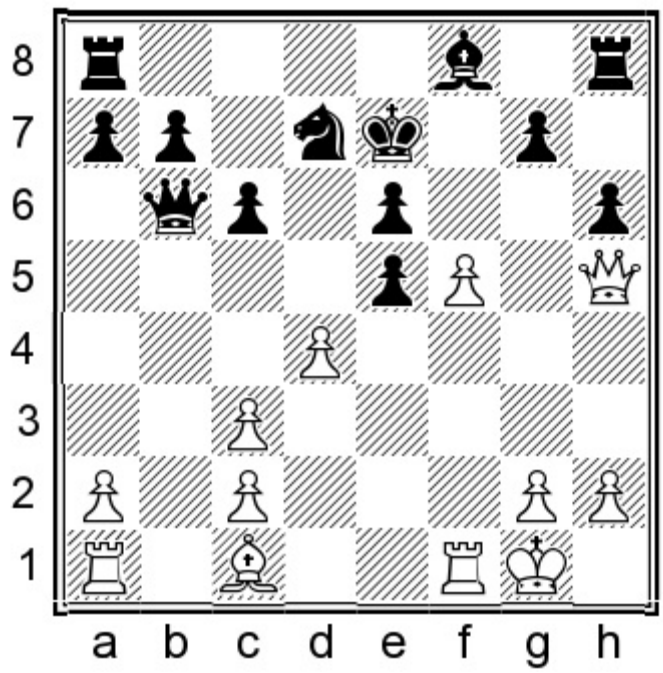
It's amazing that such a natural move as this should give away some of White's advantage.

Black defends successfully after 14.♕c4? ♔e8 15.fxe6 ♘f6 16.♕d3 e4⇄ or 14.♗e3? exf5 15.♕c4† ♔e7 16.♖xf5 ♖e8 17.♖d1 ♔d8–+.

However, he is faced with quite a different level of problems following:

14.♕h5†! ♔e7

14...♔g8 loses quickly: 15.fxe6 exd4 16.exd7 dxc3† 17.♔h1 ♕d8 18.♖f7+–



15.fxe6

This is good enough, but 15.♖b1!? may be even stronger: 15...♘f6! 16.♕g6 ♕c7 17.fxe6 b6

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(Black's position cannot be held after either 17...b5 18.dxe5 ♕xe5 19.♗a3† ♔d8 20.♖be1+– or 17...♔xe6 18.dxe5! ♕xe5 19.♗f4+–) 18.♗a3† ♔d8 19.♖xf6 and White wins.

15...♔xe6 16.♗e3! ♕a5

16...♘f6 is refuted instantly by 17.d5†!+−.

Black is also crushed after 16...♔e7 17.♖f7† ♔d8 18.♕h3 ♕c7 19.dxe5+–.

17.dxe5

There is likewise no salvation for Black after 17.♖ab1!?, for instance: 17...♔e7 18.♖xb7 ♕xa2 19.dxe5 ♖b8 20.♖xa7 ♕e6 21.♖f7† ♕xf7 22.♖xd7† ♔xd7 23.♕xf7† ♗e7 24.♗c5 ♖b1† (or 24...♖be8 25.e6† ♔d8 26.♗d6 and Black is in zugzwang) 25.♔f2 ♖f8 26.e6† ♔c7 27.♗xe7 ♖xf7† 28.exf7+– and the game is over.

17...♘xe5 18.♕f5† ♔e7

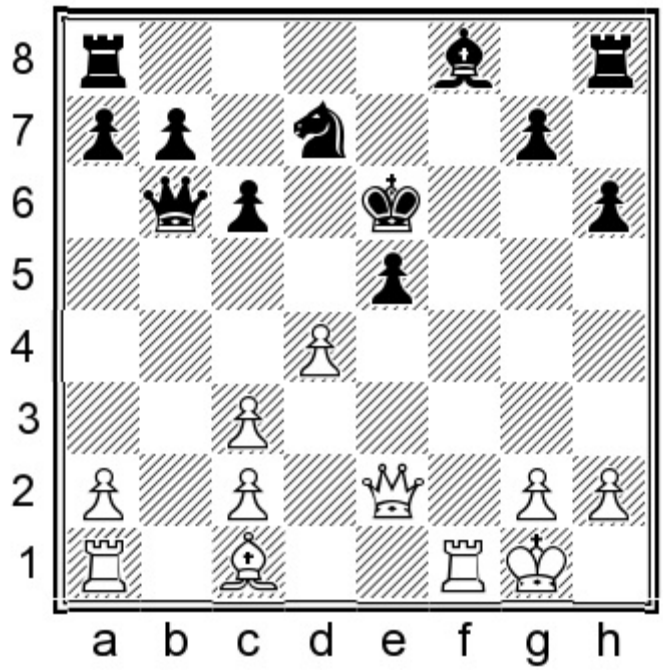
18...♔d6 19.♗f4+–

19.♗d4

The lonely black king will soon be mated.

Only Tal's youth (and no doubt the hastiness that goes with youth) can explain why he missed such a simple win. But then again, to err is human – and we are all merely human, even geniuses like Tal.

14...♔xe6



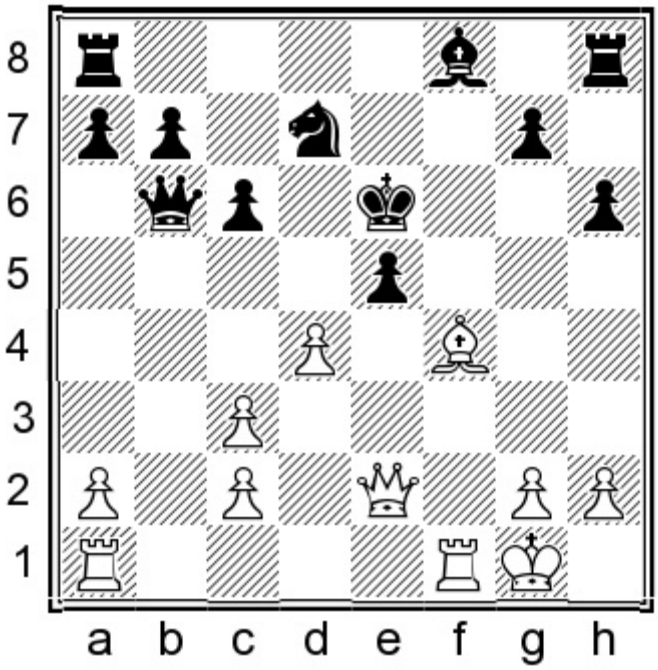
15.♖b1!

A splendid idea – White's last reserves join in the battle! Having missed an easy win on the previous move, Mikhail Tal starts on a new line of attack against the black king.

As is only natural in a position like this, White also had other ways of developing his initiative. Two variations that we can reject at once as unsound are 15.♕g4†? ♔d6 16.♖b1 ♕xb1 17.♗a3† ♔c7 18.♖xb1 ♗xa3∓ and 15.♕c4†? ♔d6 16.♗e3 ♕b5 17.dxe5† ♔c7 18.♕f7 ♗c5–+.

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Instead, let us take a closer look at the far more interesting 15.♗f4!?, to which Black has much more difficulty finding a response:



a) 15...♕a5? loses in short order: 16.dxe5 ♗c5† 17.♔h1 ♔e7 18.♖ad1 ♘f8 19.e6! ♘xe6 20.♖fe1+–

b) 15...♗d6? loses immediately to 16.♕g4†.

c) The same fate awaits Black after 15...♖e8? 16.♖ab1 ♕a6 17.♕g4† ♔e7 18.dxe5+–.

d) 15...♘f6

This requires White to show a good deal more imagination and persistence.

16.♖ab1 ♕a6 17.♕xe5† ♔f7 18.♕c7† ♗e7!

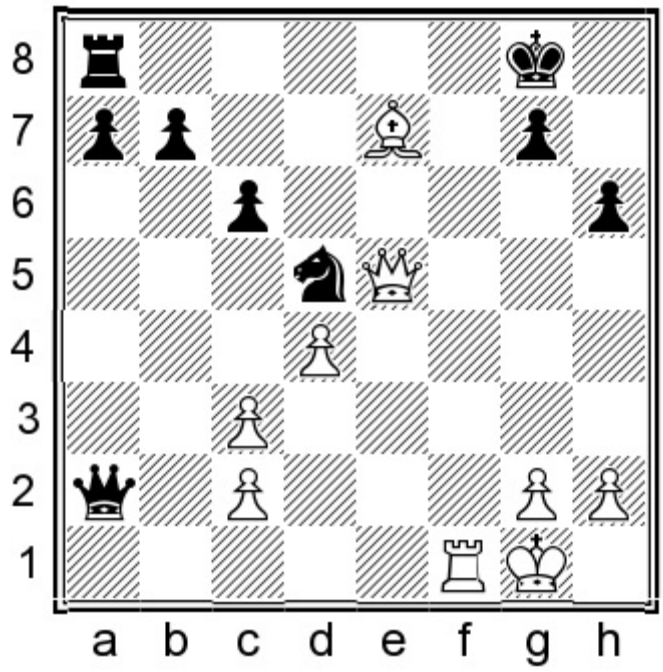
The only attempt at a defence.

On 18...♔g6, White will get at the black king without needing to hurry unduly. For instance: 19.♖xb7 ♕xa2 20.♗e5 ♕d5 21.♗xf6 gxf6 22.c4! ♕xd4† 23.♔h1 h5 24.♕f7† ♔g5 25.♖b3 h4 26.♖bf3+– I have only given the main line, but from this alone we can clearly see the type and quantity of the dangers awaiting Black – the position of his king is just too vulnerable!

19.♗d6 ♖he8□ 20.♖be1 ♔g8 21.♖xe7 ♖xe7 22.♗xe7 ♘d5 23.♕e5 ♕xa2

23...♘xe7 24.♕xe7 ♕xa2 25.♕xb7+–

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24.♗f8!

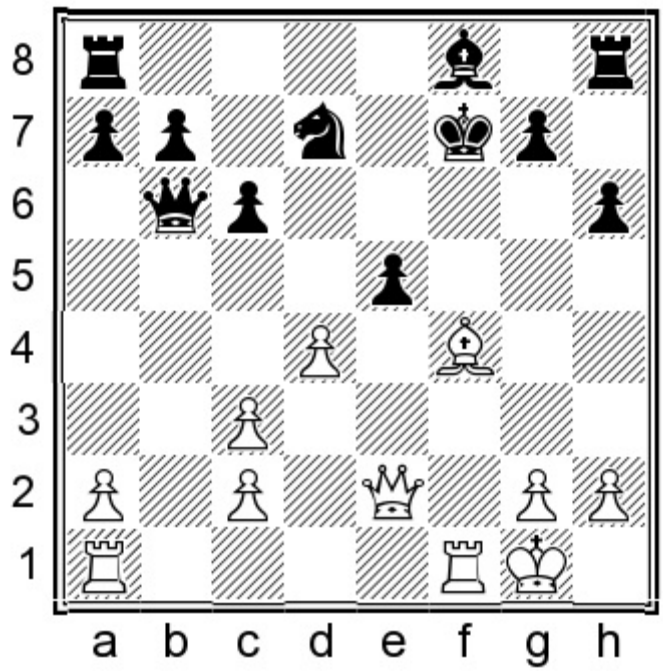
The decisive stroke!

24...♖xf8 25.♕e6† ♔h7 26.♖xf8 ♕b1† 27.♖f1 ♕xc2 28.h3

White should eventually achieve the win.

e) 15...♔f7!?

This appears to me to be the best move. Instead of waiting while the enemy completes the regrouping of his pieces to strike the decisive blow, the black king begins an urgent evacuation.



16.♗g3†

Better than 16.♗xe5† ♔g8 17.♕c4† ♔h7 18.♕d3† ♔g8 19.♕c4†=.

16...♘f6 17.♖ab1 ♕a6 18.♕h5†

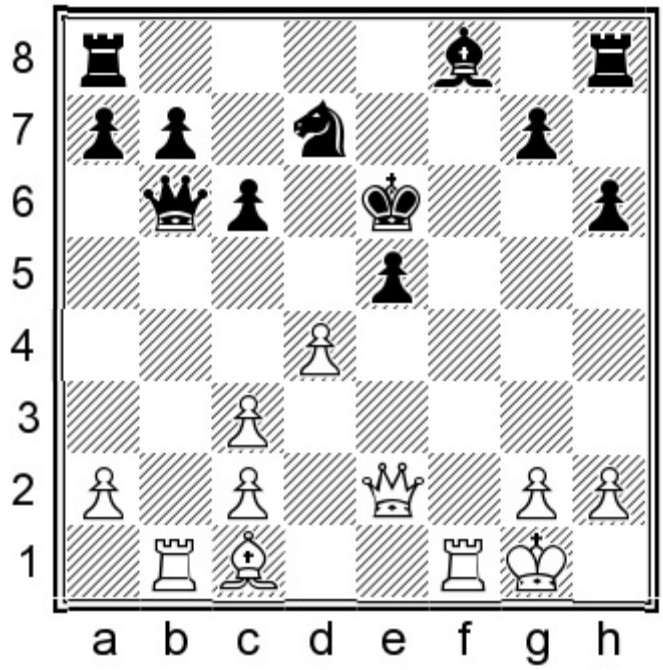
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This is more ambitious than going into an ending with a minimal plus: 18.♕xa6 bxa6 19.dxe5 ♗c5† 20.♔h1±

18...♔g8 19.♕g6 ♗e7 20.dxe5 ♘d5 21.♖f7 ♖h7 22.e6

White's powerful attack still goes on.

Playing positions where you have no choice at all is difficult and unpleasant, but no fewer problems arise when the choice is too wide!



15...♕xb1

"To take or not to take – that is the question." Such would be the classical literary view of this situation! I don't actually know what to recommend to Black, except that he should avoid getting into such appalling positions in the first place. Still, seeing that the past cannot be altered, we should try to set our opponent as many problems as possible in the present. Despite the fact that the game move loses by force, I consider it to be the best decision from the practical point of view. Let us take a careful look at the alternatives.

15...♕a6

This allows White to continue the attack by the simplest of means, endeavouring to exploit the position of the black queen on the very edge of the board.

16.♕g4† ♔e7

16...♔d6 17.dxe5† ♔c7 18.♗f4+–

17.dxe5 c5

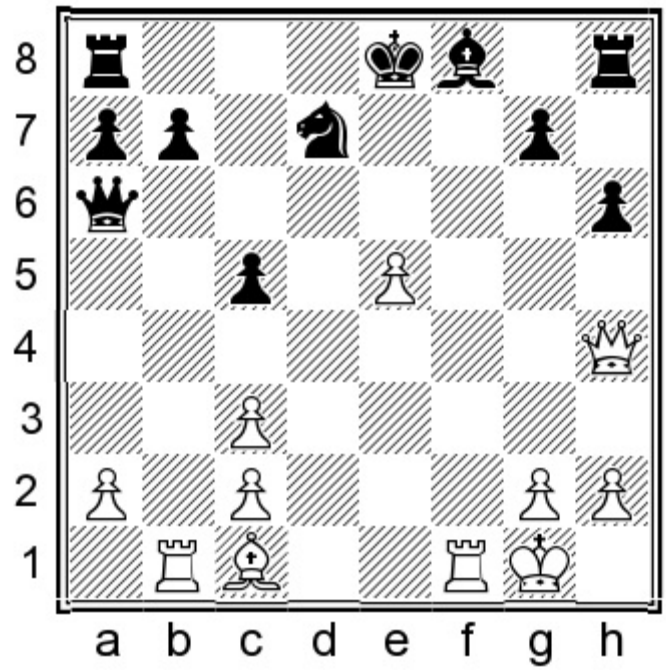
This doesn't save Black, but nor do the alternatives:

17...♖e8 18.♗f4, with ♖fd1+– to follow.

17...b5 18.♗e3 ♕a4 19.♖b4 ♕xa2 20.♖d4 ♕e6 21.♖xd7† ♕xd7 22.♖f7† ♔xf7 23.♕xd7†+–

18.♕h4† ♔e8

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19.e6!

The situation of the black king literally gets worse with every move.

19...♕xe6

19...♘f6 is equally hopeless: 20.♖xf6 gxf6 21.♕xf6 ♖h7 22.♗xh6! ♗xh6 23.♕g6† ♔f8 24.♕xh7+–

20.♖e1 ♘e5 21.♕g3 ♔f7

21...♗d6 22.♗f4 doesn't offer Black any hope either.

22.♖xe5 ♕c6 23.♕f4† ♔g8 24.♕c4† ♔h7 25.♖e6 ♕d7 26.♖xh6†!?

The simplest way to win.

26...gxh6 27.♕e4† ♔g8 28.♖xb7 ♕d1† 29.♔f2 ♗g7 30.♕e6† ♔h7 31.♕xh6†+–

It would seem that by tucking his queen away on a6, Black was forfeiting his last chances of defence.

15...♕c7

A more normal square for the queen, but commanding Black's army is still a difficult affair.

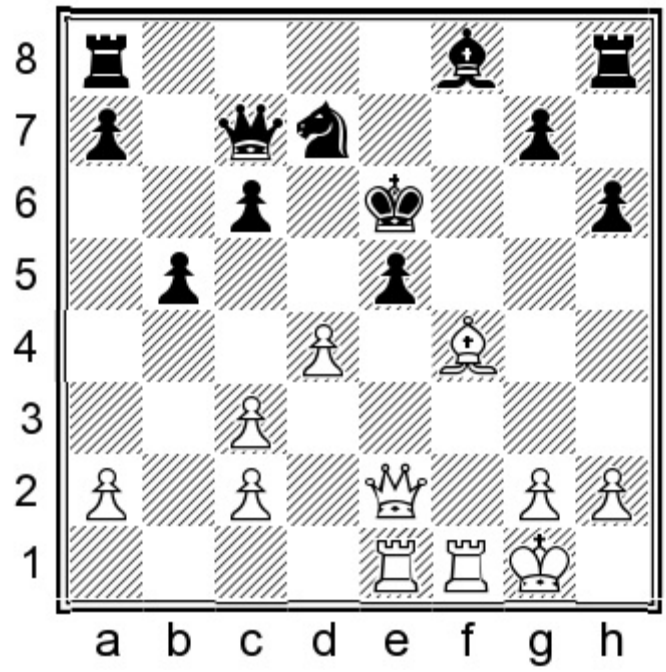
16.♗f4!?

16.dxe5 is clearly inferior: 16...♗c5† 17.♔h1 ♘xe5 18.♗f4 ♖af8 and Black successfully defends himself.

However, 16.♕h5 leads to interesting play: 16...♘f6 (16...♔e7 17.♗g5†! hxg5 18.♖f7† ♔e8 19.♖xf8†! ♔xf8 20.♕xh8† ♔e7 21.♕xa8+–) 17.♕f5† ♔f7 18.dxe5 ♗c5† 19.♔h1 ♗e7 20.♗e3±

16...b5 17.♖be1

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17...♔e7

White has completed the mobilization of all his pieces with alarming ease, and the black king can't find even a moderately safe place on the board.

Instead, 17...♖e8 would lose to 18.♕h5 ♗d6 19.dxe5 ♗c5† 20.♔h1 ♖hf8 21.♕g6† ♔e7 22.e6+–.

18.dxe5 ♕c8

Organizing a defence is quite impossible with Black's king in the centre and his rooks still on their starting squares.

After 18...♕b6† 19.♗e3 c5, White gives his opponent no chance: 20.e6 ♘f6 21.♖xf6! gxf6 22.♕h5 ♕c6 23.♕f7† ♔d8 24.♗f4+– and mate is bound to follow shortly!

19.e6 ♘f6 20.♗e5+–

Nothing, except perhaps a miracle, can help Black! White will place his queen on d3, from where it will attack the crucial squares d6 and g6; his opponent has nothing with which to oppose even such a simple plan as this.

It should be evident that if you have a strong attack and your opponent has no possibility of creating counterplay, the result of the game is as good as settled.

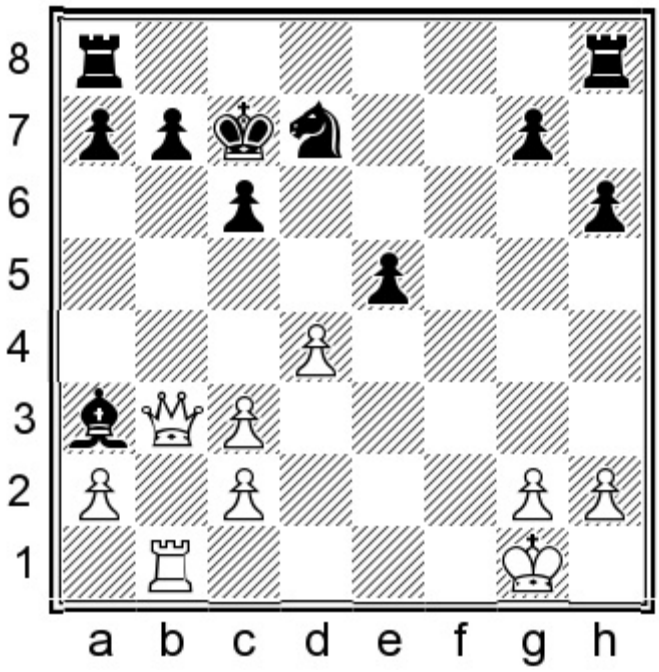
16.♕c4† ♔d6

The other king move was, I suspect, a little better, although after 16...♔e7 17.♗a3† ♔d8 18.♖xb1 ♗xa3 19.♖xb7±, Black would still be facing an uneasy future.

17.♗a3† ♔c7 18.♖xb1 ♗xa3 19.♕b3!

This is the whole point of White's combination. From the material point of view, Black has no reason to complain of his lot – a rook and two minor pieces are more than enough compensation for the absence of his queen – but White has no intention of breaking off the attack!

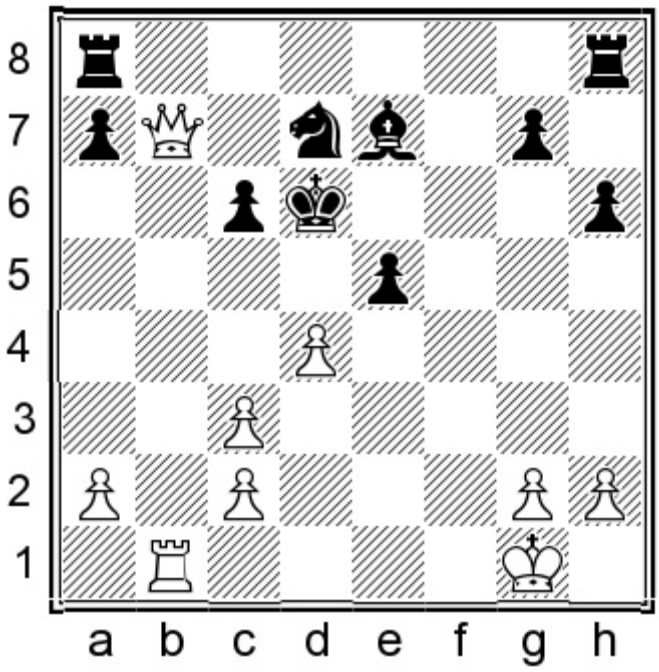
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19...♗e7

The verdict on the position is no different after 19...exd4. Tal would simply have recaptured the pawn: 20.cxd4!? ♗e7 21.♕xb7† ♔d6 22.c4!+– and White's victory is not far off.

20.♕xb7† ♔d6



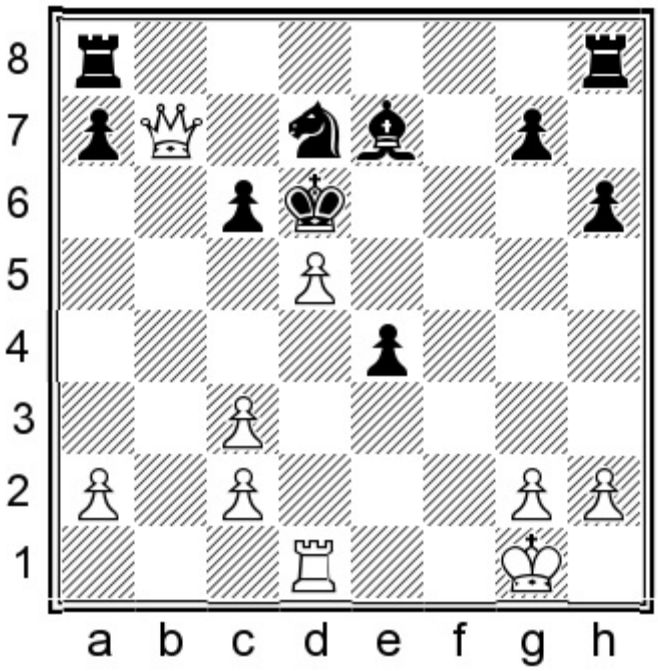
21.dxe5†?!

For the second time within a short period, Tal lets the win slip (or at least makes it much more complicated). Victory could be achieved in quite a simple manner by:

21.♖d1! e4

21...♖hd8 22.dxe5† ♔xe5 23.♕xc6 ♘f6 24.♖e1† ♔f5 25.♕f3† ♔g6 26.♖xe7+– chesstouring.com

22.d5!



22...♘e5

22...♘c5 loses even more quickly to 23.♕xc6† ♔e5 24.d6!.

23.dxc6† ♔e6 24.♕b3† ♔f6 25.♖f1† ♘f3†

25...♔g6 26.♕d5 ♗f6 27.♕xe4† ♔f7 28.♕xe5+– doesn't even allow Black to drag out his resistance.

26.gxf3 e3 27.♕c4

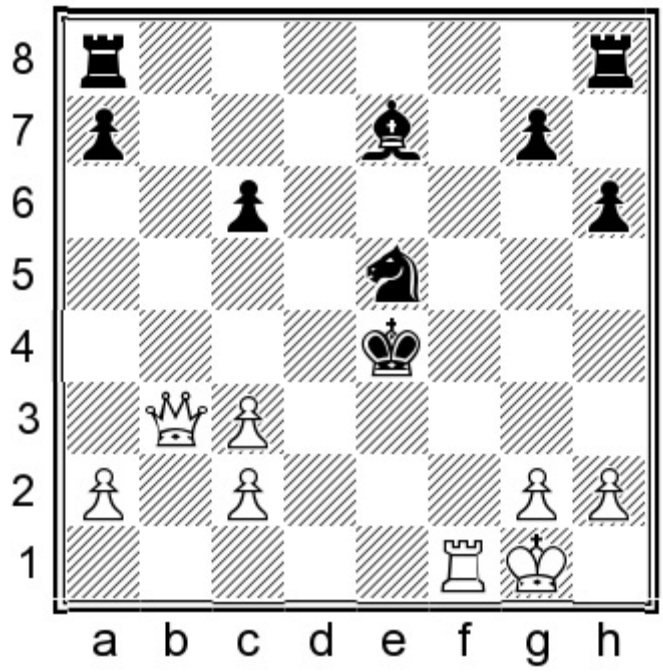
White has a decisive material advantage.

21...♘xe5 22.♖d1† ♔e6 23.♕b3† ♔f5 24.♖f1† ♔e4

One thing the black king cannot be accused of is a lack of boldness! I should think Simagin had no doubt at this stage that he was going to be mated, but at least he was trying to confuse his youthful opponent! The amazing thing is that such risky tactics very nearly paid off.

By the way, 24...♔g6 fails to save the piece: 25.♕e6† ♗f6 26.♕f5† ♔f7 27.♕xe5+–

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25.♖e1†?!

It's hard to call this natural move a mistake, but White did have more convincing continuations available.

In the first place it was worth considering the sharp 25.g4!?, cutting off the black king's line of retreat. There could follow: 25...♗d6 (after 25...♗c5† 26.♔g2 ♖ae8 27.♖e1† ♔f4 28.♕a4† ♔g5 29.h4† White's threats are irresistible) 26.♖d1 ♔f3 Keep moving forward! 27.c4† ♔xg4 28.♕g3† ♔f5 29.♖xd6+– and the time has come for Black to stop the clock.

The fate of the game would also be decided by 25.♕e6!?, for instance: 25...♗c5† (or 25...♗f6 26.g3! ♗g5 27.♖f5+–) 26.♔h1 ♖he8 27.♖e1† ♗e3 28.♕h3 ♘c4 29.♕d7!? ♖ad8 30.♕xc6† ♔e5 31.♕xc4+– White has a large material plus, quite apart from the fact that there are still plenty of adventures in store for the black king.

25...♔f5 26.g4†! ♔f6

26...♔f4 27.♕a4†! leads to a quick mate.

27.♖f1† ♔g6 28.♕e6† ♔h7

At last the king has found a safe refuge.

Incidentally after 28...♗f6 29.♕f5† ♔f7 30.♕xe5 White wins the knight all the same – although in that case too, winning the game would still be far from simple.

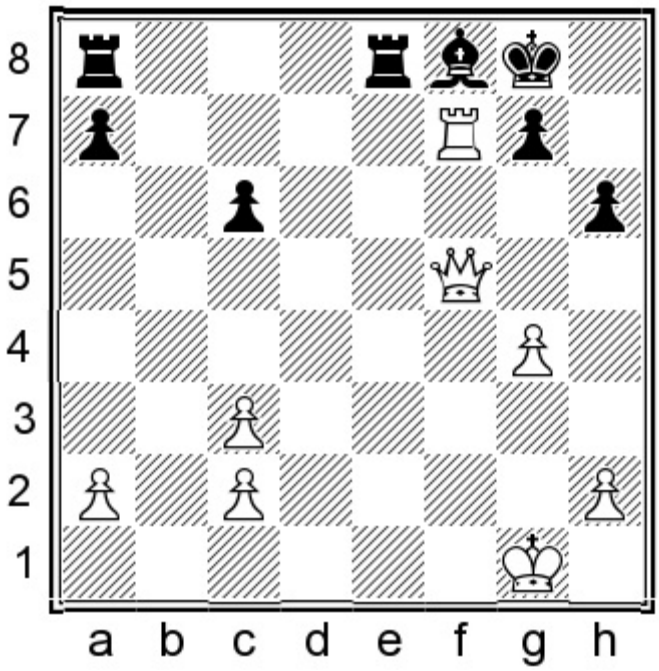
29.♕xe5 ♖he8 30.♖f7

I suspect that a better option was 30.♕e4†!? ♔h8 31.♕xc6 ♖ac8 32.♕g6, but having started his attack

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about twenty moves earlier, Tal simply cannot stop.

30...♗f8 31.♕f5† ♔g8

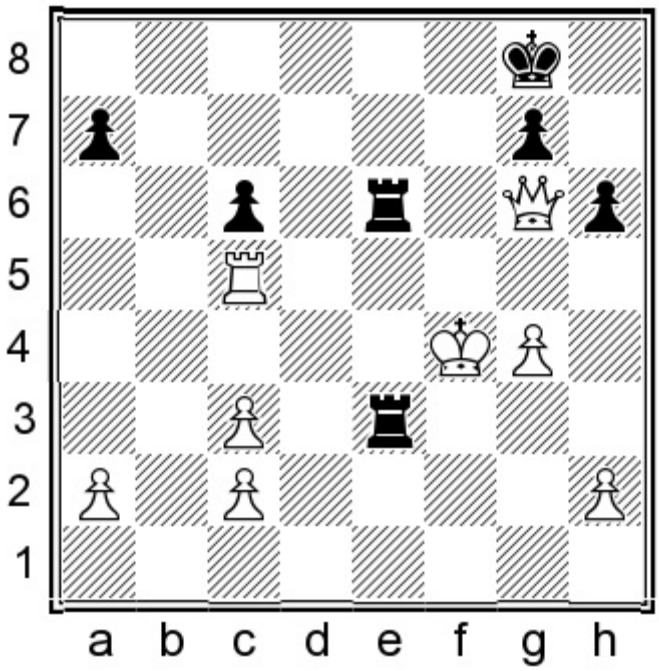


32.♔f2

The white king would seem to envy his black counterpart for taking such a risky stroll and returning with honour.

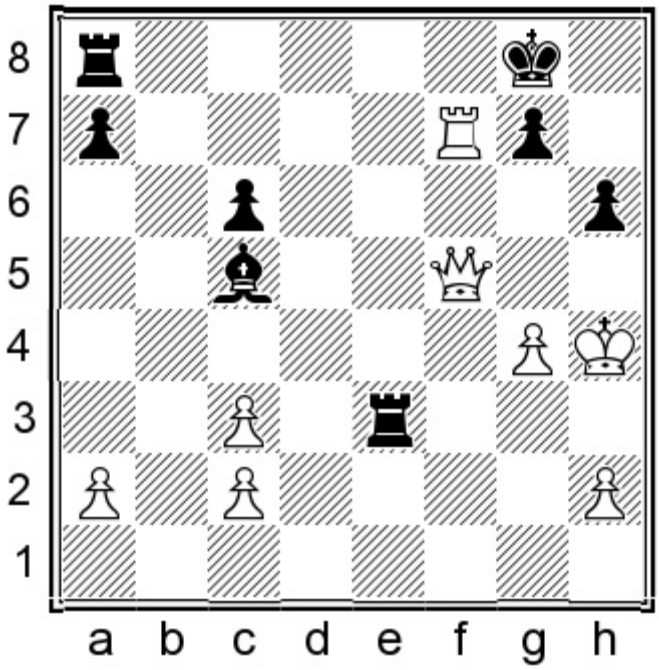
A more cautious approach was 32.♕g6 ♖e1† 33.♖f1.
But a stronger option was: 32.♔f1!? ♖e3 (32...♖ad8 is met by 33.♖d7!) 33.♕g6 ♖ae8 34.♖f5 ♗c5! A cute move, but White wins all the same. 35.♖xc5 ♖e1† (35...♖8e6 36.♕d3!+– comes to the same thing) 36.♔g2 ♖1e2† 37.♔f3 ♖2e3† 38.♔f4 ♖8e6

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And now the fine move 39.♕d3! settles matters; the rook endgame is completely hopeless for Black. However, these variations are all quite complicated, and it would be hard to work them out correctly after conducting a long, tense and difficult struggle.

32...♗c5† 33.♔g3 ♖e3† 34.♔h4

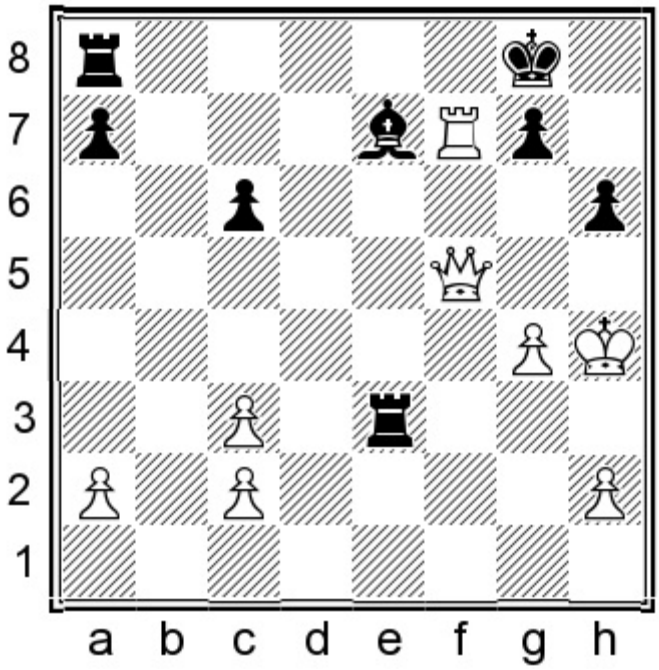


34...♖ae8!

It's as if the opponents had swapped places: not so long ago the black king was preparing for an untimely demise, while the white one was already resting on the victor's laurels! Simagin's last move is simple and good – his rook on e3 is now securely protected, which certainly cannot be said of the white monarch.

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However, it was also worth considering:
34...♗e7†!?



35.g5!

35.♔h5? leads only to a draw after 35...♖d8! and now:

a) 36.c4?? would even lose to 36...♖h3† 37.♔g6 ♖d6†.

b) Neither side has any advantage in the event of 36.g5 ♖d5 37.♖xg7†□ 37...♔xg7 38.♕g6† ♔h8 39.♕xh6† ♔g8 40.♕g6†=.

c) 36.♖xg7† ♔xg7 37.♕g6† ♔f8 38.♕xh6† ♔f7 39.♕g6†=

35...♗xg5†

A better attempt than 35...hxg5† 36.♔h5 ♖d8 37.♕g6 ♖h3† 38.♔g4 ♖h4† 39.♔f3 ♖f4† 40.♖xf4 gxf4 41.♕e4+–.

36.♔h5 ♖ae8 37.♕g6 ♖h3† 38.♔g4 ♖h4† 39.♔g3 ♖e3† 40.♔f2 ♖f4† 41.♖xf4 ♗xf4 42.♕xc6 ♖e7 43.h4 ♗e3† 44.♔f3 ♗b6

Black has succeeded in setting up something like a fortress, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if a win for White could be found somewhere along the way.

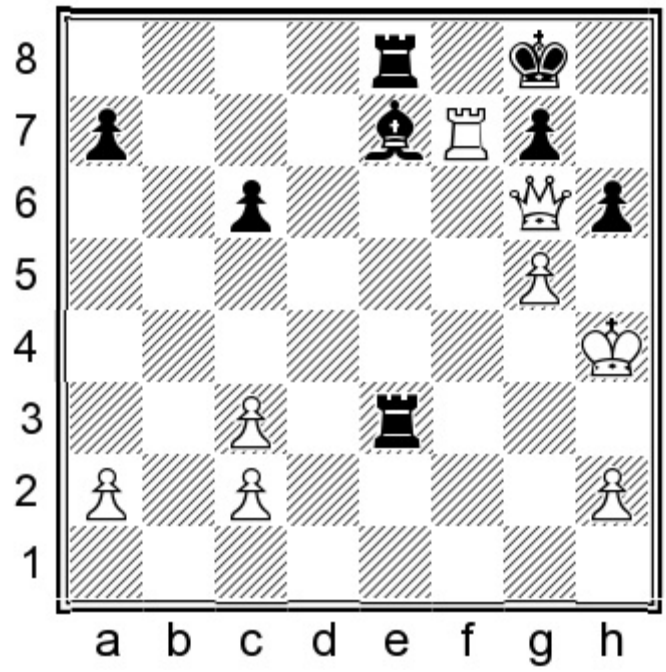
35.♖xg7†!?

Without any doubt the best practical chance.
With 35.♕xc5? ♔xf7 White would be handing the initiative to his opponent.

Black would have excellent drawing chances after 35.♖c7 ♗e7† 36.♔h5 ♖f8 37.♖c8 ♗d8 38.♕xf8† ♔xf8 39.♖xd8† ♔e7.

Tal could have tried:
35.♕g6!? ♗e7† 36.g5

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36...♗f6!

Also after 36...hxg5†, not everything is simple: 37.♔h5 ♗f8 38.♖xa7 ♖8e5 39.♕f7† ♔h7 40.♕xf8 ♖h3† 41.♔g4 ♖h4† 42.♔f3 ♖f4† 43.♕xf4 gxf4 44.♔xf4 ♖e2 with chances of a draw.

In fact, even 36...♗xg5† 37.♔h5 ♖h3† could be considered, transposing to the note to Black's 34th move.

37.♔h5!

The thoughtless 37.gxf6?? loses to 37...♖8e4†.

37...♖3e5 38.h4 ♖8e6

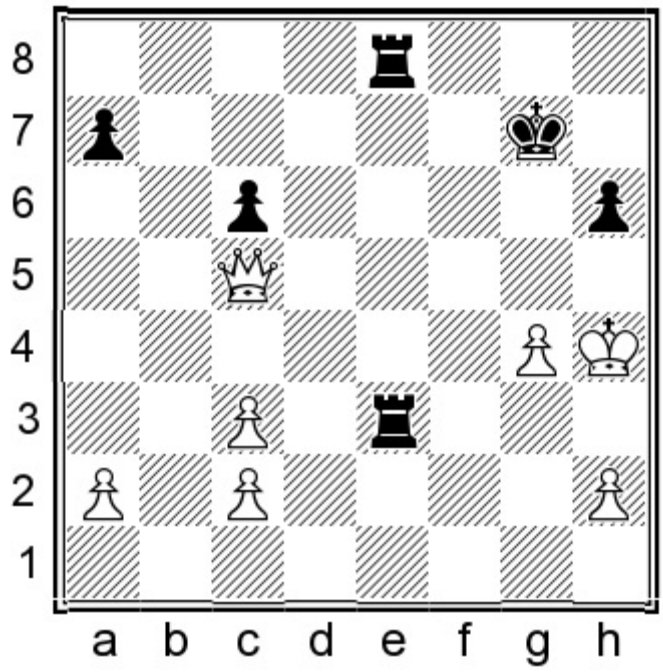
I find it very hard to evaluate the position resulting from 38...♖f8 39.♖xf8† ♔xf8 40.♔g4 hxg5 41.h5 ♔e7. Possibly White should win, but I can't imagine how!

39.♖xa7 ♗e7 40.♖xe7 ♖xe7 41.♕xc6 ♖5e6∞

White will hardly succeed in exploiting his very slight advantage.

35...♔xg7 36.♕xc5

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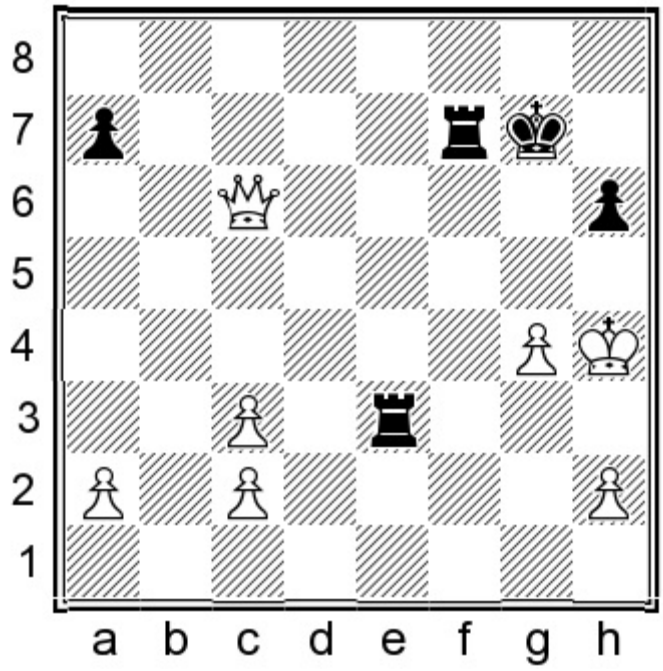


36...♖8e6?

The final error in this extremely interesting game. Tal has been attacking ingeniously (though with a fair number of mistakes); Simagin has defended splendidly, and by this time he has virtually secured equal chances. He ought to have played:

36...♖8e7 37.♕xc6 ♖f7!

The second black rook edges closer to the white king.



38.♕c8!?

38.a4 ♖ff3 39.♕b7† ♔g6= leads at once to a draw.

38.g5?? even loses to 38...♖f4† 39.♔h5 ♖h3#.

38...♖e2!?

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White also has difficulty justifying his claims to an advantage in the event of 38...♖ff3 39.g5 hxg5† 40.♔xg5 ♖f7!?, as I fail to see what he can do after either 41.♕c5 ♖e2 or 41.♕c4 ♖e5† 42.♔g4 ♖fe7. There are too many weak pawns in the white camp.

39.h3

39.g5 hxg5† 40.♔xg5 ♖g2†=

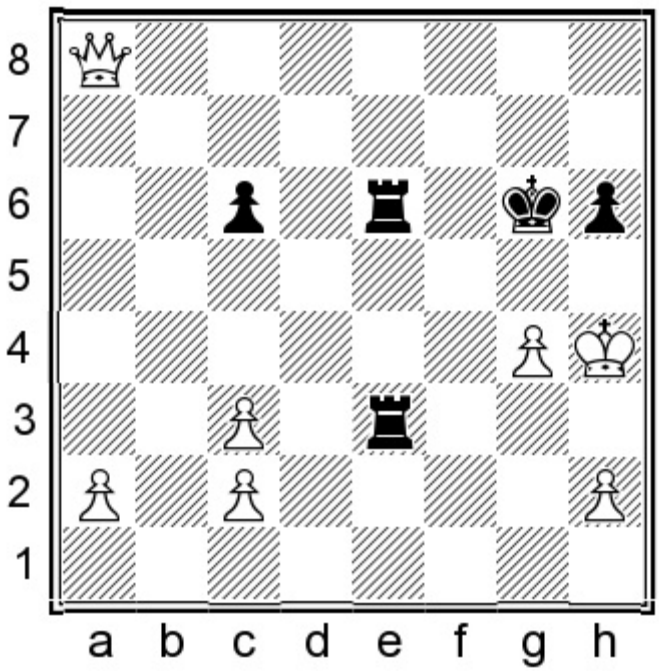
39...♖e3

Black has excellent chances of a draw, especially since White can't play 40.g5 ♖e4† 41.♔h5 hxg5 42.♔xg5?? ♖fe7–+.

A draw on these lines would have been a fitting conclusion to the game. Instead, for some reason, Simagin gives up a crucial pawn without a fight, and the game is literally over in a few moves.

37.♕xa7† ♔g6 38.♕a8+–

The passed a-pawn will quickly set off for the eighth rank, and Black has no possibility of creating real threats.



38...♔f6

Or 38...♔g7 39.♕d8.

39.a4 ♔e5 40.a5 ♔d5

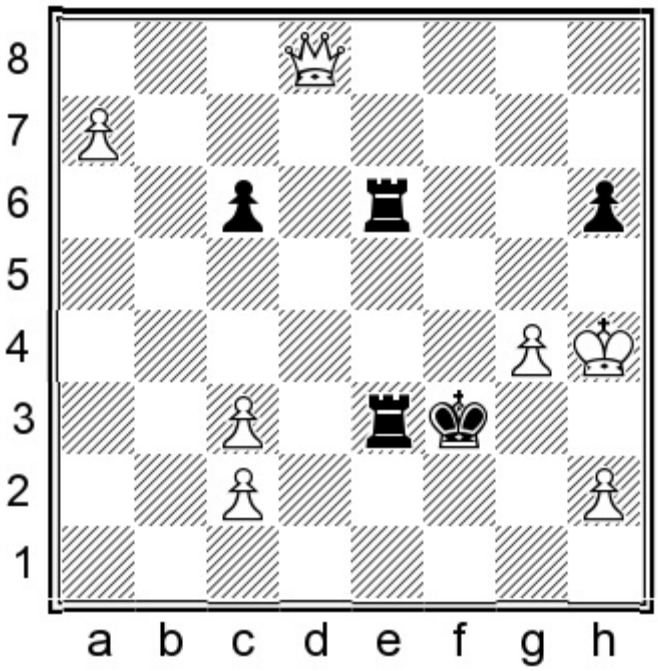
Capturing the c-pawn is no better; after 40...♖xc3 41.♕h8† ♖f6 42.a6 ♖xc2 43.h3 ♖a2 44.a7! it is all over.

41.♕d8† ♔e4

41...♖d6 42.c4† ♔e5 43.♕c7 ♔e6 44.a6+–

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42.a6 ♔f3 43.a7



43...♖e2

After 43...♔g2 44.♕d2† ♖e2 White is quite happy to sacrifice his queen with 45.♕xe2†, as its reincarnation appears on the board at once: 45...♖xe2 46.a8=♕

44.♕d3† ♖6e3 45.♕xe3†

1–0

Simagin played the opening in an incredibly risky manner and encountered serious problems (to put it in formal language!) by move 10. Tal quickly launched a direct attack which Black ought not to have survived. White more than once had the chance to win within a few moves, but either from lack of concentration or for some other reason the brilliant tactician kept missing the decisive continuations. To me, quite frankly, this is the most interesting aspect of the game. A great chess player is distinguished from a merely strong one by his ability to win *all,* or nearly all, won positions – but Mikhail Tal is partly excused by his youth! Subsequently, by his virtuoso defence, Vladimir Simagin almost equalized the chances, but extreme fatigue took its toll – he had been under constant pressure for 25 moves – and one final mistake put paid to all his hopes. So, my friends, play your openings with a little more circumspection and don't lower your level of concentration in won positions – and you will be surprised at the dramatic improvement in your results!

We have just looked at a game involving the Moscow Grandmaster Vladimir Simagin – not an extremely strong chess player (relatively speaking!), but imaginative, interesting and utterly fearless. Of course he had difficulty contending with the elite players, but now and again he would win a tactical fight against the strongest and most talented. Allow me to show you one such game.

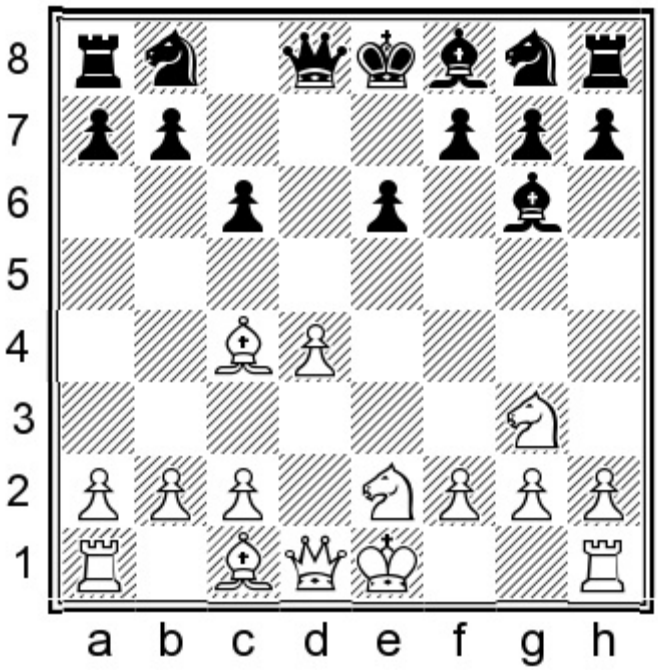
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Vladimir Simagin – Tigran Petrosian

Moscow (4) 1956

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.♗c4 e6 7.♘1e2

Sergei Rublevsky's favourite variation. I was so impressed by his successes that I tried using it myself, but I only managed to equalize in one game!



7...♗d6 8.0-0 ♘d7 9.♗b3

J. Polgar – Adianto, Jakarta 1996, continued 9.♘f4 ♗xf4 10.♗xf4 ♘gf6 11.a4 0-0 12.a5 ♕e7 13.♖e1 ♖ac8 14.c3 ♖fd8, and Black succeeded in holding his slightly inferior position without any particular problems.

9...♘e7

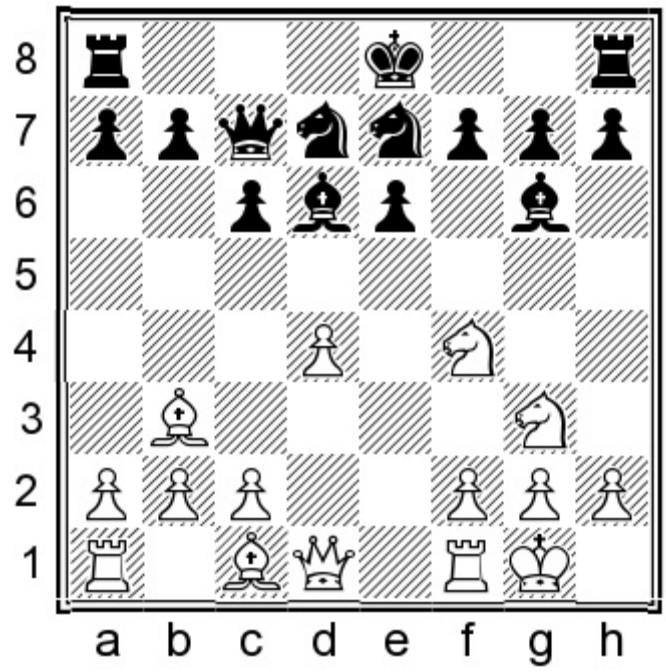
A typical Petrosian move; he was not too keen on memorizing long theoretical variations, and at the first opportunity he would try to force his opponent to do some brain work! The far more popular move is 9...♘gf6.

10.♘f4

The only idea that presents any danger to Black is to station a white knight on f4 and then play h2-h4 – at any rate, I recall that Mikhail Tal successfully employed a similar plan in his first match with Botvinnik.

10...♕c7

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11.♕f3

A standard piece sacrifice is of considerable interest here: 11.♗xe6! fxe6 (11...♗xf4? 12.♗xd7† ♕xd7 13.♗xf4) 12.♘xe6 ♕c8 13.♘xg7† ♔f7 14.♘7h5 with fully adequate compensation in the shape of three pawns and the initiative. Still, a piece is a piece, and Black would certainly have realistic counter-chances.

11...♘f6 12.♖e1 0-0-0 13.c3 ♔b8

We may sum up the results of the opening. White hasn't succeeded in gaining a plus, but I suspect that the character of the position suited Simagin perfectly well; the opponents have castled on opposite wings, which almost inevitably makes for complex play. Petrosian's predilection for simple positions was common knowledge in those years.

14.a4!? h5!?

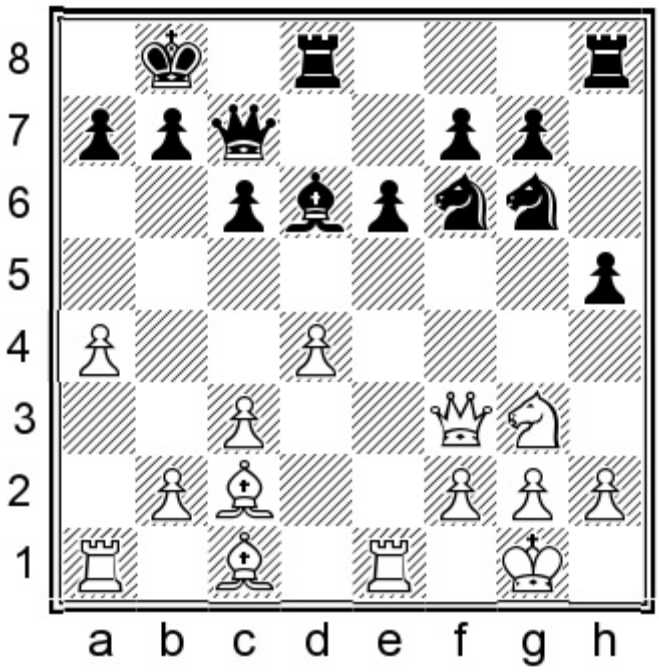
An adequate move for equality was 14...♘f5!?, but Petrosian is beguiled by a different idea!

15.♘xg6

It looks entirely reasonable to play 15.h4!?, fixing the h5-pawn as a potential weakness in Black's camp.

15...♘xg6 16.♗c2!?

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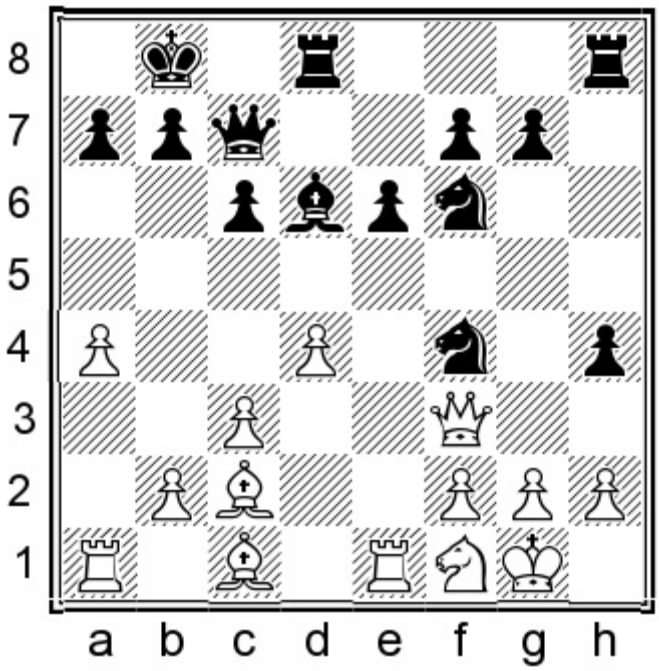


16...♘f4?!

To me this move seems mistaken – White now seizes the initiative and keeps it to the end of the game, notwithstanding his far from ideal play.

The game would take a much more interesting course after:
16...h4!? 17.♘f1 ♘f4

17...h3 18.g3 e5? fails to 19.♗xg6 fxg6 20.dxe5 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5+–.



18.b4

With 18.♖e5 White could aim to post this rook on g5 and hamper his opponent's kingside attack, but Black has a strong rejoinder in 18...♘6d5!.

Following 18.♘e3 g5 19.h3 ♘6d5 20.♘c4 ♗e7, the position is not easy to assess.

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18...g5

Of course not 18...h3 19.g3 ♘g2 20.♖e2, after which it's hard to explain what the over-zealous knight is doing on g2.

19.h3 ♘6d5

It would also be interesting to try 19...♖dg8 20.♘e3 ♖g7.

20.♗d2 f5

With chances for both sides.

17.h4!?

With this typical move Simagin halts Black's kingside play, while Black is unable to take advantage of the position of the h4-pawn. I have analysed this game a few times and always had the feeling that this was not one of Petrosian's best days. Apart from this move which is not at all bad, White could have acquired a plus with the more forthright: 17.c4!? g5 18.h4! ♘g4 (after 18...g4 19.♕e3 ♘g6 20.♗xg6 fxg6 21.♕g5, Black's position calls to mind a poorly preserved ancient ruin) 19.hxg5 ♘g6 20.♗xg6 (more convincing than 20.c5 ♗xg3 21.♕xg3 ♕xg3 22.fxg3 ♖xd4 23.♗xg6 fxg6 24.♗f4† e5 25.♖xe5 ♖xf4 26.gxf4 ♘xe5 27.fxe5 ♖e8∞ with good equalizing chances) 20...fxg6 21.c5 ♗xg3 22.fxg3± and in spite of White's tripled pawns, Black's defence will not be easy.

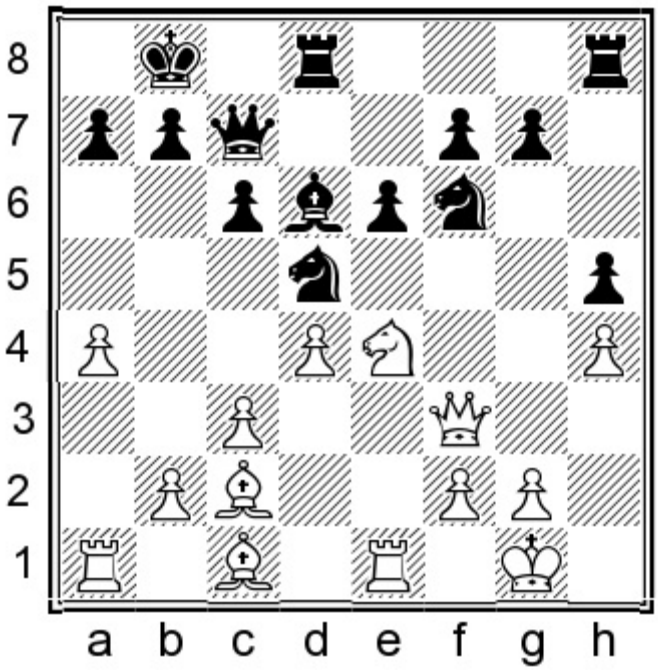
17...♘4d5

Of course Petrosian didn't like: 17...♖dg8? 18.c4! (again 18.♖e5? fails to 18...♘6d5 19.♗xf4 ♘xf4 20.♕xf4 f6 with advantage) 18...♘g6 (the impatient 18...g5? loses to 19.hxg5 ♘xg2 20.♔xg2 h4 21.c5+–) 19.♗xg6 fxg6 20.♖xe6±

Black isn't in quite such bad shape after 17...♖hg8!? 18.c4 (18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♖xe4 ♘d5 20.g3±) 18...♘g6 19.♗xg6 fxg6 20.c5 ♗xg3 21.fxg3, but he is still the one who has to think about defending.

18.♘e4

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18...♘xe4

With this move Black shows his unwillingness to fight only for a draw. I am absolutely convinced that in the position after 18...♗f4!? 19.♗xf4 ♕xf4 20.♕xf4† ♘xf4 21.♘g5 ♖d7± Petrosian would *never* have lost to Simagin, but he probably thought it was just boring to play that way!

19.♗xe4 ♘f6 20.♗c2

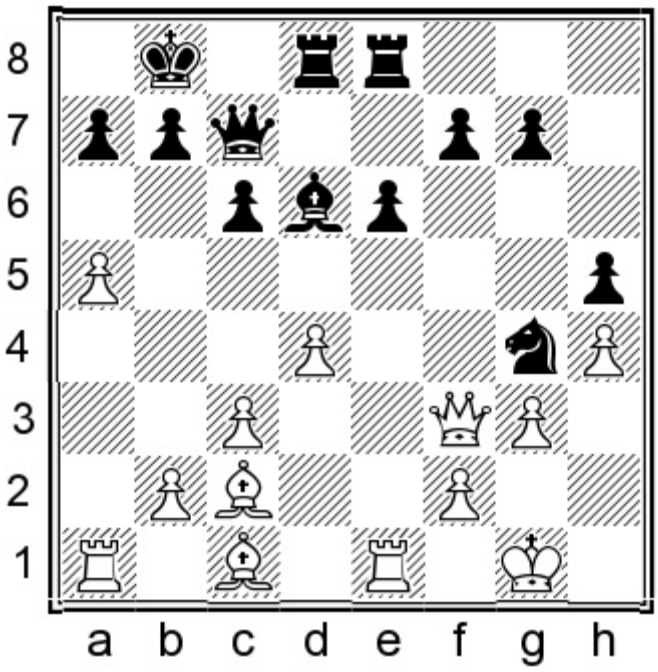
White's two active bishops guarantee him a small but distinct and stable advantage. On 20.♗g5 ♗e7, Black defends successfully.

20...♘g4 21.g3 ♖he8

Petrosian comes up against a dilemma as old as the hills. White has two bishops, while Black has some advantage in development, but if this is to have any significance at all, he has to open up the game – and then the white bishops will gain in strength.

22.a5!

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22...e5

I would probably have preferred the calm 22...a6, but my guess is that Petrosian was loth to conduct a long, boring defence with no chance of ever really improving the state of the struggle.

23.♗g5!

A standard move, which a strong and experienced player is likely to make more or less automatically, without unnecessary deliberation. White's position would deserve preference even after 23.♗d2!?⩲, but why shouldn't he provoke a weakening of Black's kingside pawns?

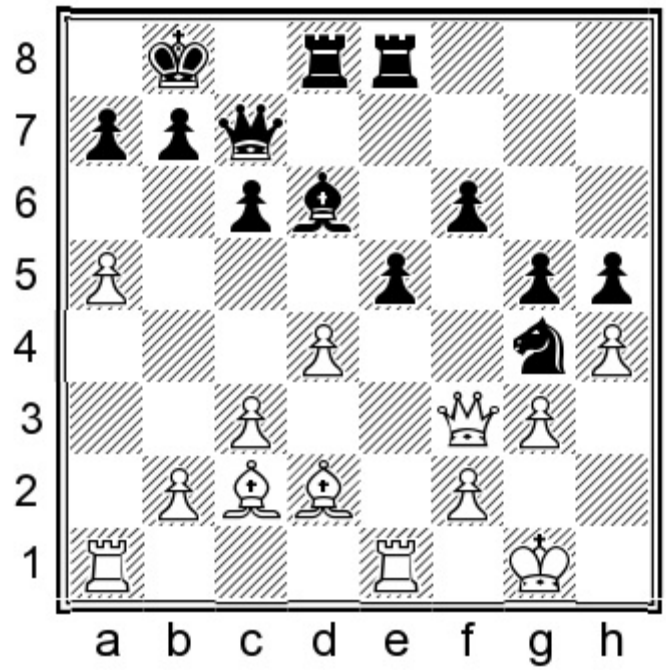
23...f6

Black hadn't much choice. For example23...♗e7 24.♕xf7! ♗xg5 25.♕xc7† ♔xc7 26.hxg5 exd4 (or 26...♖f8 27.♖e2 exd4 28.cxd4, and now both 28...♖xd4 29.♗g6 and 28...c5 29.♖d1! are equally unpleasant for Black) 27.cxd4 ♖xe1† 28.♖xe1 ♖xd4 29.f3! ♔d6 (in the event of 29...♘h2 30.♔xh2 ♖d2† 31.♔h3 ♖xc2 32.♖e7†+− Black has no hope whatever in the rook endgame) 30.fxg4 ♖xg4 31.♔f2 ♖xg5 32.a6⩱

24.♗d2 exd4?

A critical juncture. Petrosian has had no trace of counterplay for such a long time that he fails to summon up the strength to go for a risky but interesting line at the right moment. He could have played the sharp 24...g5!, which dramatically alters the agenda:

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25.hxg5 (in the event of 25.♗g6 ♖h8 26.♗xh5 ♖xh5 27.♕xg4 ♕h7 Black has tremendous compensation for the pawn) 25...fxg5 26.♗xg5 ♖f8 27.♕h1 exd4 28.♗xd8 ♕xd8 and the play has become truly lively and unpredictable – all three results are possible.

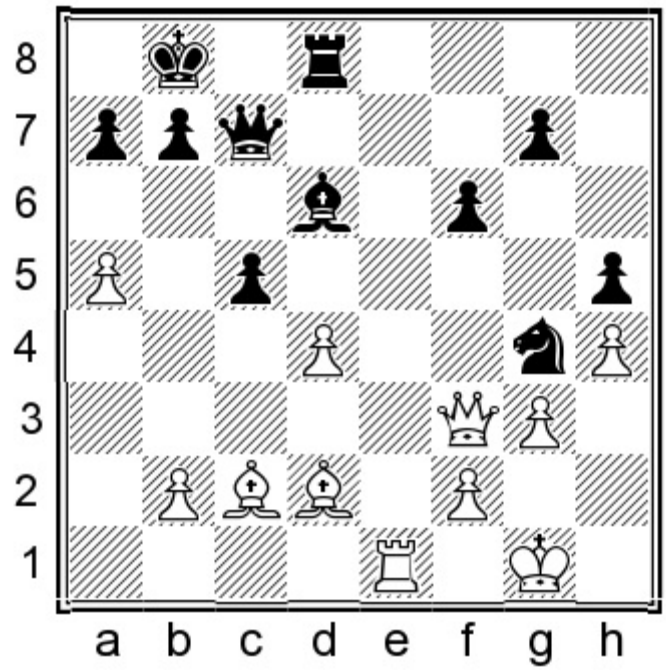
25.cxd4?

An inaccuracy; 25.♖xe8! first was stronger. After 25...♖xe8 26.cxd4 (threatening ♗g6) 26...♕f7 27.a6± Black's h-pawn would continue to give him plenty of worry!

25...♖xe1† 26.♖xe1 c5

After either 26...♗c5 or 26...♗e5, White takes the bishop and answers 27...♖xd2 with 28.♕c3↑.

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27.a6

White is dazzled by the wealth of possibilities. The move he plays is by no means bad, but two others were also worth considering:

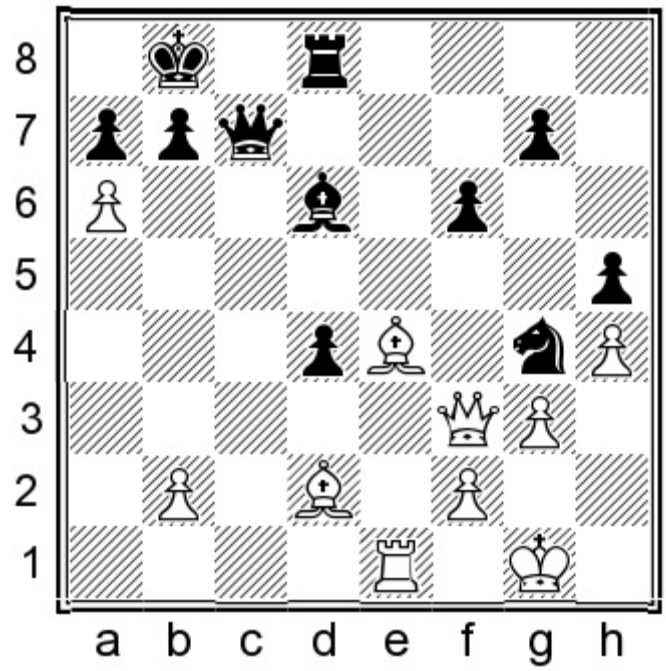
27.♕b3!? cxd4 (or 27...♗e5 28.dxe5 ♖xd2 29.exf6 ♘xf6 30.a6) 28.♗e4±

27.♗f5!? cxd4 28.♖c1 ♕f7 29.a6 ♘e5 30.♕e4 bxa6 (30...g6 31.♗e6!) 31.♗a5 ♖e8 32.f4 with a splendid game.

27...cxd4 28.♗a5?

Not the first and not the last mistake in this fascinating game. Simagin wants to make Black play ...b6, but it wasn't really worth wasting two tempos for this – especially since White had a powerful and natural move at his disposal: 28.♗e4!

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28...bxa6 (both 28...b6 29.♖c1 ♕e7 30.♗f5 and 28...♘e5 29.♕xh5 bxa6 30.♖c1 would be too dangerous for Black) 29.♕d3 ♘e5 (29...♕b6? 30.♗g2 merely gives Black extra problems, seeing that 30...♘e3? fails to 31.fxe3 dxe3 32.♗xe3 ♗c5 33.♕e4+–) 30.♕xa6 ♕b6 31.♕a4 Black's position is highly problematic.

A less convincing choice is 28.♖c1 ♘e5 29.♕g2 bxa6! with unclear play.

28...b6 29.♗d2 ♘e5 30.♕g2 d3

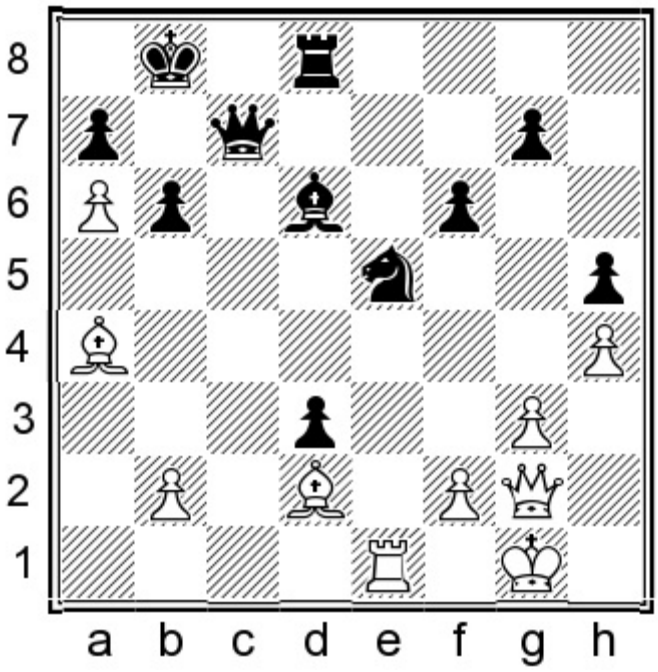
Petrosian has managed to keep an extra pawn – a passed pawn, indeed – but I think White has full compensation for it; the black king is too vulnerable.

It was worth considering 30...♕c8 31.f4 ♘c4 32.♗d3 ♘xd2 33.♕xd2 ♕c6 with sharp play, though the move in the game is not bad either.

31.♗a4

Now what would you play?

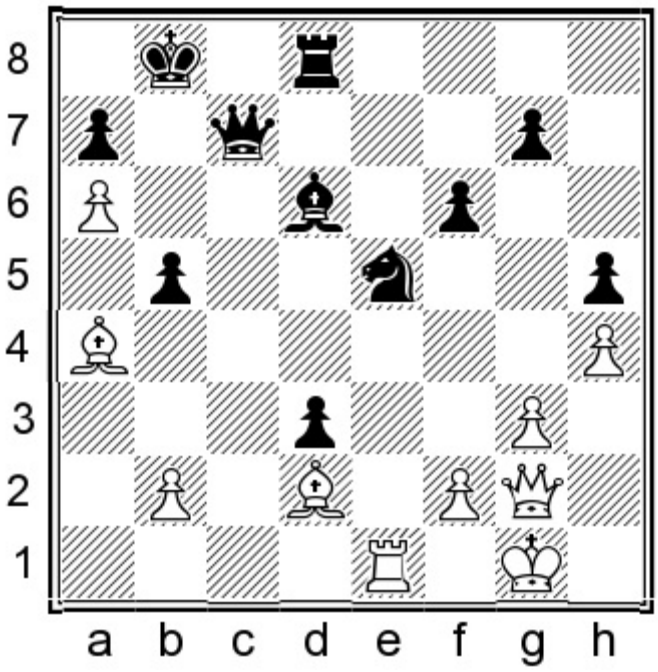
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31...♗c5?!

A weak move, roughly equal in value to other unfortunate tries such as 31...g5? 32.♖c1 ♕f7 33.♗b3 ♕h7 34.hxg5 or 31...♖c8 32.♗b5!, and the black pieces are beginning to be starved of oxygen. Black's chief problem is his lack of *Lebensraum* (I use this word without any fascist overtones!); he simply hasn't enough space for starting active operations.

The purpose of solving this problem would be excellently served by the fine move 31...b5!, which allows the black queen to take possession of the b6-square. There may follow:

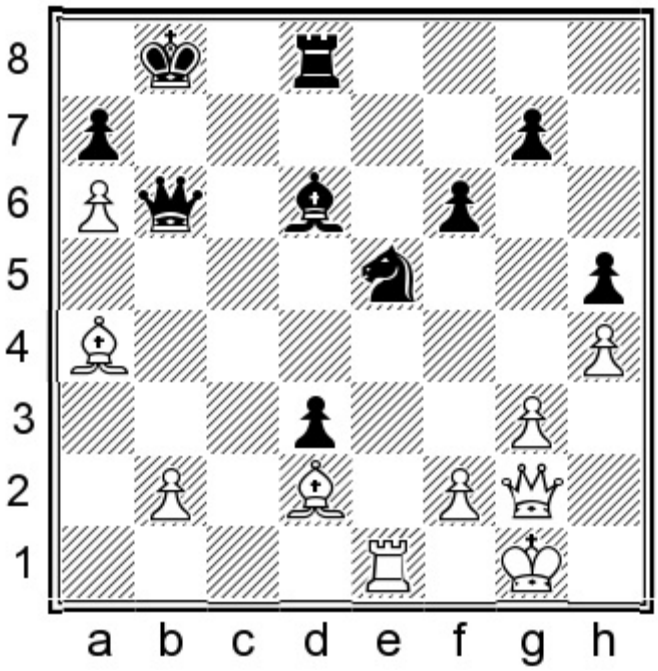


a) 32.♗a5? ♕c6! 33.♗xd8 (33.♕xc6 ♘xc6 34.♗xd8 bxa4!–+) 33...♘f3† 34.♔h1 bxa4∓ and White is in dire straits.

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b) 32.♗xb5 ♕b6 33.♗a4

Excessive greed is again punished with the full force of the law: 33.♗a5 ♕xb5 34.♗xd8 d2 35.♖d1 ♕b3 36.♖xd2 (after 36.♕b7† ♕xb7 37.axb7 ♗b4∓ the bishop on d8 is trapped) 36...♘f3† 37.♕xf3 ♕xf3 38.♖xd6 ♕f5∓ and White is worse, though he does retain some drawing chances.



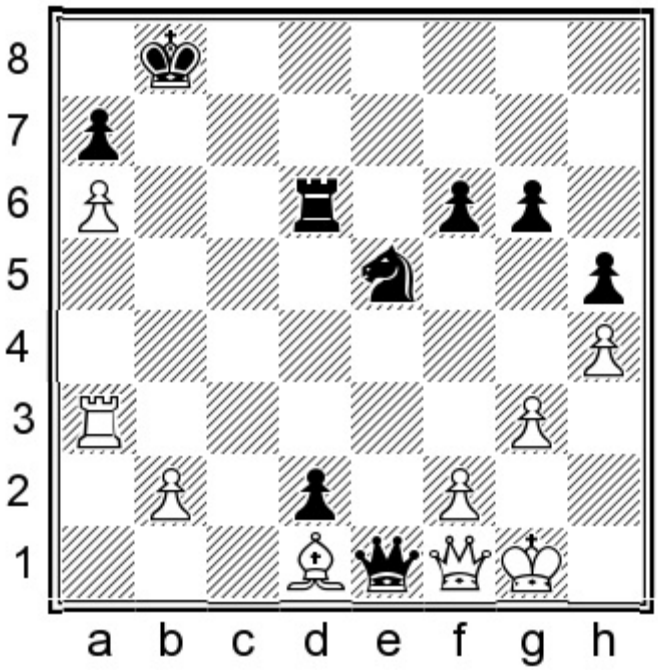
33...♗b4!?

Black is also quite all right after 33...♕xa6!? 34.♗d1 ♘c4 35.♗c3 ♗e5 36.♕e4 ♗xc3 37.bxc3 d2 38.♖f1 ♘e5 39.♗xh5 ♕b7∓, when the pawn on d2 may still give White quite a few anxious minutes.

34.♗xb4 ♕xb4 35.♖a1 ♖d6!?

Similarly after 35...d2 36.♗d1 ♔c7!?∓ White will have to think about nothing but defence.

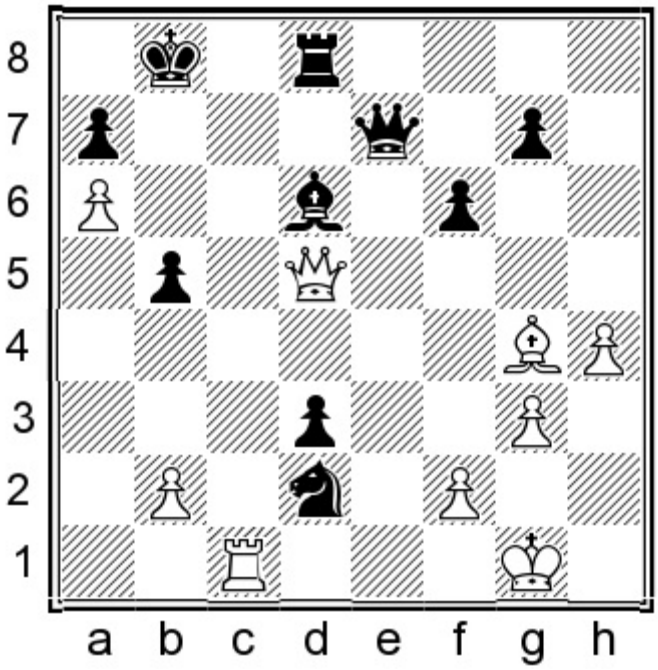
36.♗d1 g6 37.♖a3 ♕e1† 38.♕f1 d2∓



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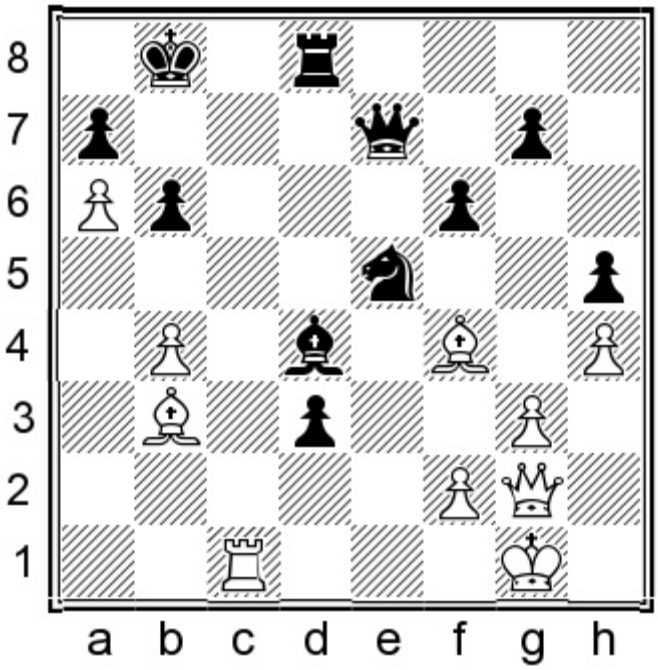
39.♖e3? ♘d3!–+
White is practically in zugzwang.

c) 32.♖c1!? ♕d7 33.♗d1 (33.♗b3 ♖c8∞) 33...♘c4 (or 33...♖c8 34.♖xc8† ♕xc8 35.♕d5 ♕xa6 36.♕g8† ♔b7 37.♕xg7† ♗c7 and again the position is not at all clear) 34.♗xh5 ♘xd2 35.♗g4 ♕e7!? (better than 35...♕f7? 36.♗e6 ♕e7 37.♕c6 ♕c7 38.♕xb5† ♕b6 39.♕xd3, with advantage to White) 36.♕d5



36...♗c5! 37.♖xc5 ♕e1† 38.♔h2 ♕xf2† 39.♔h3 ♕f1† 40.♔h2= And to the general satisfaction, it all ends in perpetual check.

32.♖c1 ♕f7 33.b4 ♗d4 34.♗b3 ♕e7 35.♗f4



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35...b5

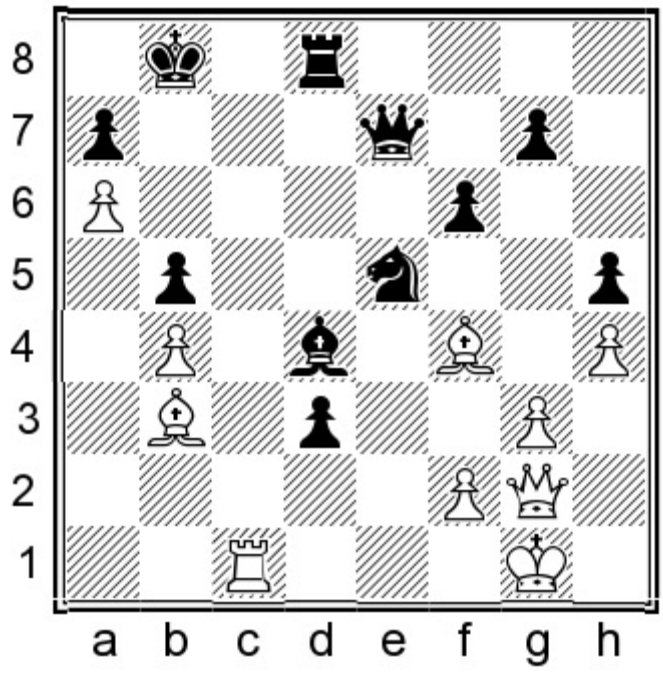
By some unobtrusive process, Black has more or less run out of useful moves and can only wait while White finishes regrouping his pieces for the decisive onslaught.

The outwardly attractive 35...d2? loses as follows: 36.♗xd2 ♗xf2† 37.♔h1! ♗d4 (37...♖xd2? 38.♕a8† ♔xa8 39.♖c8#) 38.♗f4, and after, for example, 38...♖f8 39.♗e6! ♖d8 40.♕c6! there is simply no stopping the mate on c8.

I don't even wish to comment on 35...g5? 36.hxg5 fxg5 37.♗xg5.

Perhaps the most tenacious move was 35...♗b2, but even then, after 36.♖c4 d2 37.♗d1 ♕d7 38.♖c2 ♗c1 39.♕f3!+– Black is not to be envied. He will lose the h5-pawn and then the game – although this would at least take a long time.

After the move played, I can't resist setting you this problem:
White to play and win



36.♕c6?

An absolutely unnecessary move for White, although from the strategic viewpoint it doesn't spoil anything – Simagin still retains his advantage.

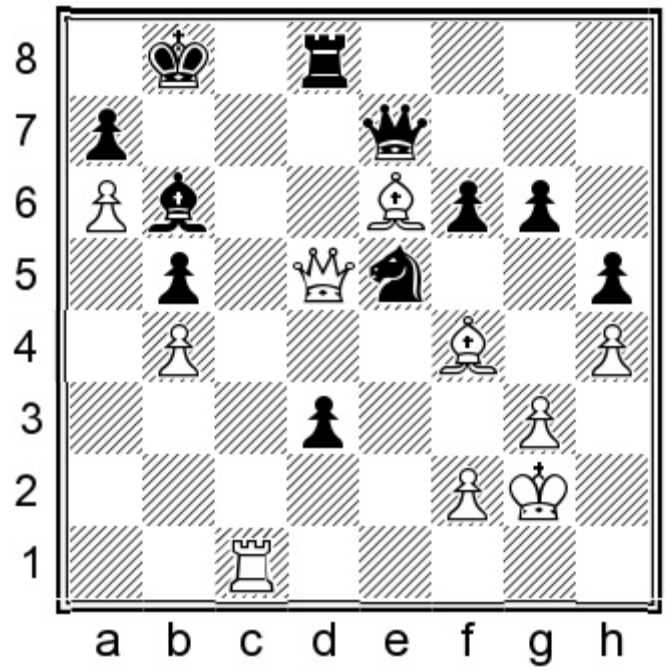
The correct solution, which wasn't so simple to find, was:
36.♗e6!!

Taking the c8-square under control.

36...d2

Passive defence loses quickly: 36...♗b6 37.♕d5 g6 38.♔g2+–

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A beautiful position: it quite unexpectedly emerges that despite the presence of so many pieces on the board, Black is in zugzwang. After literally one or two more moves, he will not only run out of useful ones, he will have no moves left at all!

37.♗xd2 ♘d3

Black also loses after 37...♗xf2† 38.♔h1 ♗xg3 39.♗e3 ♗xh4 40.♕d5!+–.

38.♖c6 ♗b6

Other moves make no difference: 38...♘e5 39.♗f4+– or 38...♗xf2† 39.♕xf2! ♕xe6 40.♖xe6 ♘xf2 41.♗f4†+–.

39.♕d5!! ♗xf2† 40.♔g2 ♘e5 41.♗f4 ♗b6 42.♕xb5

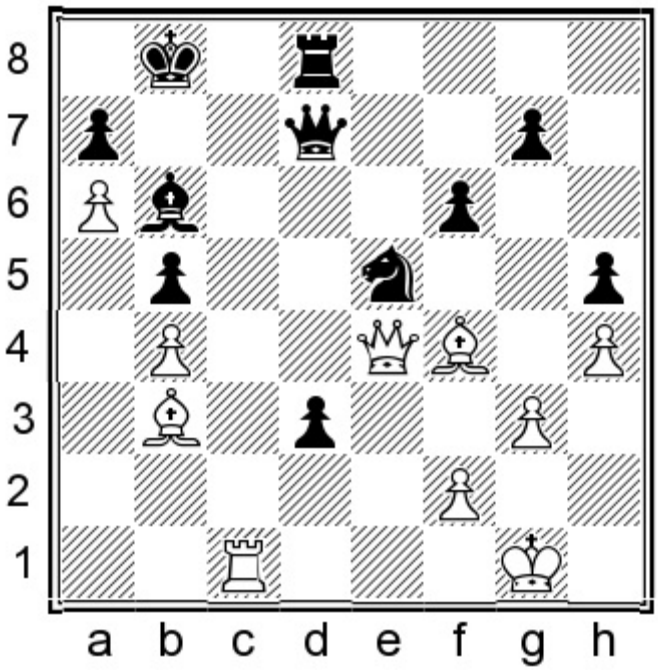
White has a completely won position.

These are marvellous variations – a zugzwang in the middlegame is something you don't see every day!

36...♕d7 37.♕e4 ♗b6?

The last chance to defend lay in 37...♖c8. White would then have to choose between 38.♖d1 ♖c7 39.♗d5 f5 40.♕g2 and 38.♖xc8† ♔xc8 39.♗d1, with some advantage in either case.

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38.♖d1?!

Again White neglects the remarkable idea that we have seen already: 38.♗e6! d2 (38...♕e7 39.♕d5+–) 39.♗xd2 ♗xf2† 40.♔g2 ♕e7 41.♕d5! The bishop will return to f4, and Black will once again be left without any useful moves.

38...♖e8

What else can be suggested? White answers both 38...♕c7 and 38...♕e7 with 39.♖c1!, while 38...♕c8 is refuted by 39.♖xd3 ♖xd3 40.♕xd3, leaving little room for doubt about the result of the game.

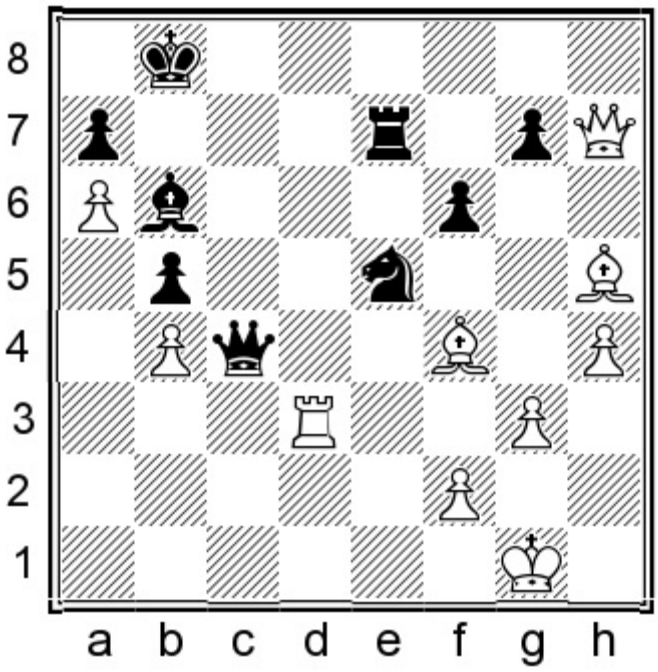
39.♖xd3 ♕c8 40.♗f7!+–

Simplest. White does best to combine the attack with material gains.

40...♖e7 41.♗xh5 ♕c4 42.♕h7!

White could also win without any problems by 42.♗xe5† fxe5 43.♕f3+–.

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42...♔c7 43.♖d2 ♕xb4 44.♕g8 ♖d7

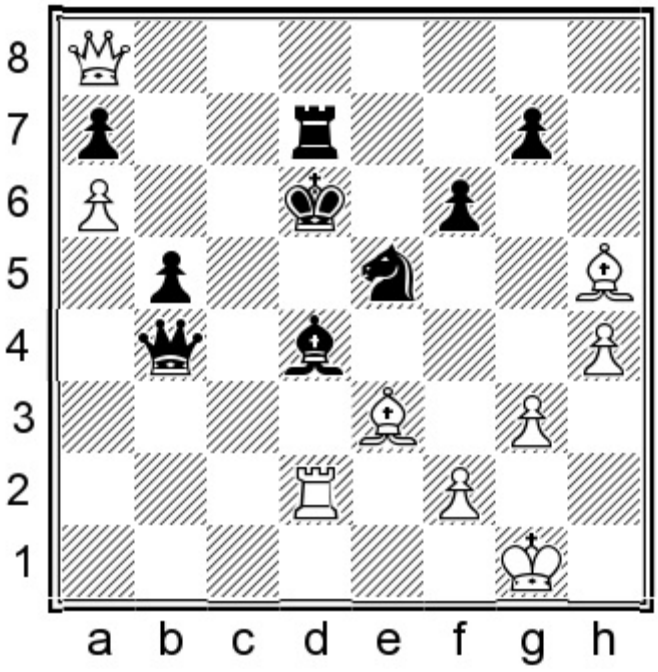
After 44...♗d4 45.♕d5 ♖d7 46.♗xe5†! fxe5 47.♖c2† Black can resign.

45.♖c2†

White has arrived at that most congenial stage of the game when he merely has to finish his opponent off. At each turn he can choose between various winning continuations. Here, for instance, 45.♗xe5†! was in no way inferior: 45...fxe5 46.♖xd7† ♔xd7 47.♗e8† ♔c7 48.♕xg7†+−

45...♗c5 46.♕a8! ♔d6 47.♖d2† ♗d4 48.♗e3

The hunt for the black king has entered its final phase.



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48...♔e6

Or 48...♔c5 49.♗xd4† ♖xd4 50.♕xa7†+−.

49.♕e8† ♔f5 50.g4† ♔e4 51.♕a8†

51.♗g6† ♔f3 52.♕a8† is another way to do it.

51...♖d5 52.♖xd4†

1–0

A colourful game. Of course this was not Petrosian's best day – he neglected quite a few defensive resources. Simagin's play was not ideal either, but he splendidly exploited the power of the two bishops and resourcefully conducted the attack against an opponent who was to become World Champion seven years later, and whose every defeat was already greeted as a sensation.

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Mikhail Tal – Leonid Shamkovich

USSR Championship 1972

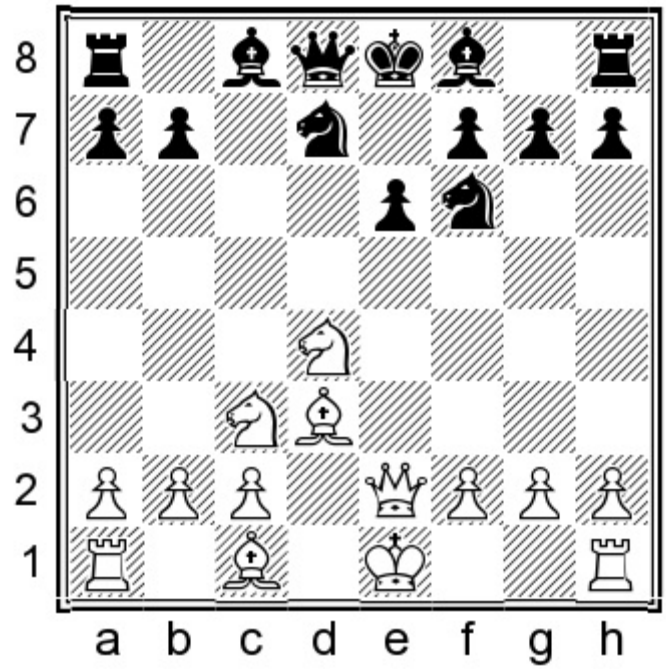
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♘c3

Until I started analysing this game, I simply didn't know that 6.♘c3 was a move. As people rightly say, you learn something every day!

6...e6

Confronted with an opening surprise, Leonid Shamkovich selects a passive but solid continuation. To me it seems that 6...♘b6!? and 6...g6 were stronger moves, after which hardly any problems at all could arise for Black.

7.♗d3 c5 8.♕e2 cxd4 9.♘xd4



9...♗c5

It isn't clear why Black placed his bishop here; I would reserve c5 for a knight. Black is quite all right after 9...♘c5 10.♗b5† ♗d7 11.♗g5 ♗e7 (better than 11...♗xb5 12.♕xb5† ♕d7 13.0-0-0↑) 12.0-0-0 0-0, when he shouldn't be at all frightened of 13.b4?! ♘fe4!.

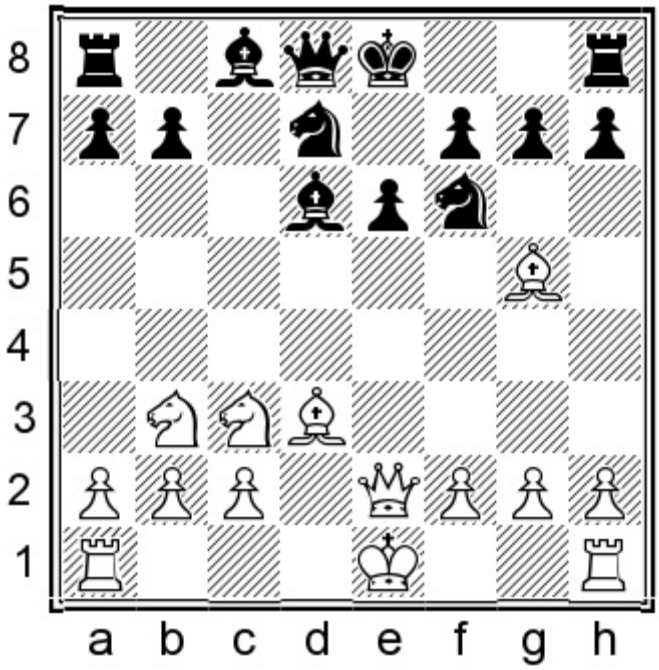
After 9...♗b4 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖d1 a6 12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♗g5, White managed to secure a minimal edge in Conquest – Sundararajan, British Championship 1999.

10.♘b3 ♗d6

Again Black fails to equalize fully with 10...♗b4 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♖d1 ♕c7 14.♗g5± Makepeace – Lunn, Liverpool 2008.

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11.♗g5



11...a6

It isn't yet time to castle: 11...0-0? 12.♗xh7† ♔xh7 13.♕d3†

But Black could consider 11...h6!? 12.♗h4 ♗e5 13.0-0 0-0∞ with very good equalizing chances.

12.0-0-0 ♕c7 13.♔b1 0-0

In some imperceptible manner, without making any big mistakes, Black has landed in a highly unpleasant situation. His king can't find a safe refuge, and he is unable to complete his development – but failing that, how is he to resist White's excellently mobilized forces successfully?

In the event of 13...♗e5 14.♘e4 ♘d5 15.g3±, there is a most awkward threat of f2-f4.

Black can try to forestall that possibility by playing 13...h6!? 14.♗h4 ♗e5 15.♘e4 ♘d5 16.g3!? g5, but 17.f4 suggests itself all the same. Then after 17...gxf4 18.c4 ♘e3 19.gxf4 ♗xf4 20.♖de1 the assessment of the position is not in any doubt. White's threats are strong and of various kinds: he will place his other rook on g1 and his queen on h5, in addition to which Black must somehow contend with c4-c5.

Unfortunately for Shamkovich, castling doesn't solve all his problems, even though objectively it is the best move.

14.♘e4 ♗e5?!

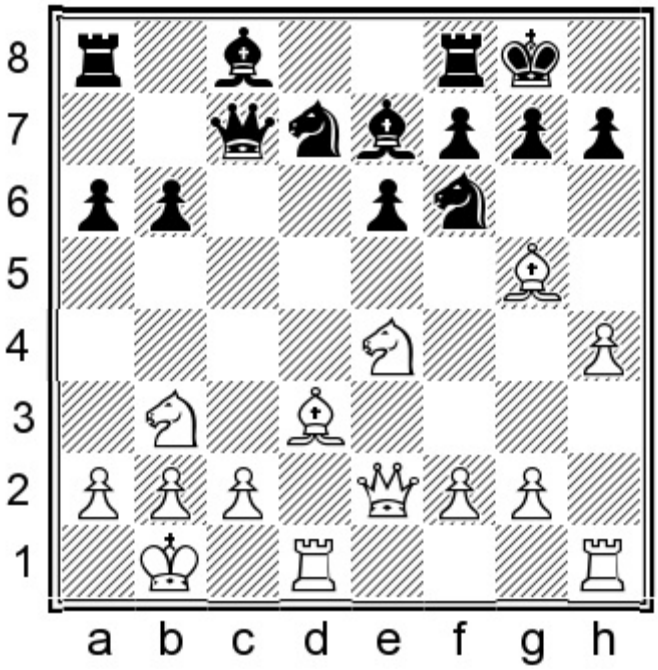
It's hard to believe it, but to all appearances this move is the decisive mistake!

Black also loses with 14...♘d5? 15.♘xd6 ♕xd6 16.c4+–.

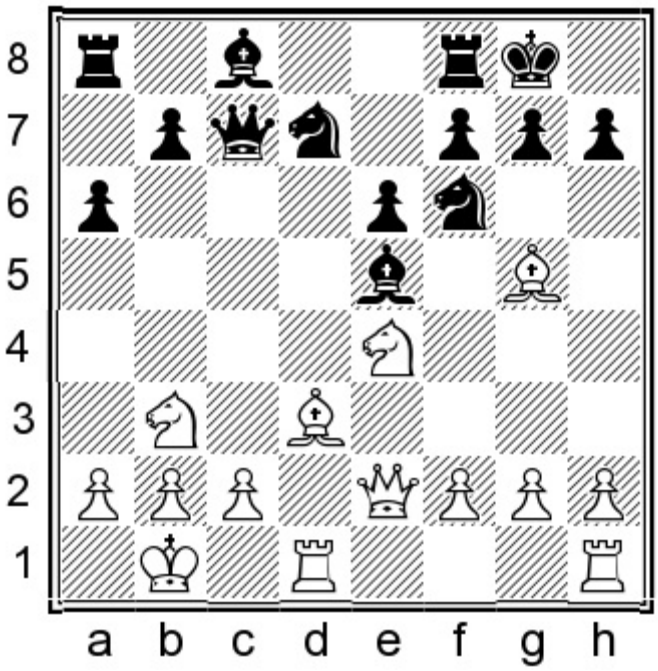
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And there is nothing good in store for Black after 14...♘xe4?! 15.♕xe4 g6 16.h4±; in the absence of counterplay from his opponent, White will soon get through to the black king.

Shamkovich was a player with an active style (in particular, he wrote a good book on the subject of attack). He didn't like passive defence, and he therefore failed to submit to the requirements of this position. He needed to play 14...♗e7!? and meet 15.h4 with the accurate move 15...b6! (not 15...b5? 16.♘xf6† ♘xf6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♕e4+–).



Then nothing decisive is to be seen for White; the incautious 16.♘xf6† ♘xf6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♕e4 g6 19.♕xa8 ♗b7 would hand the initiative over to his opponent.



15.f4!

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Surely Black wasn't expecting any other move?

15...♗xf4

Black had nothing better. After 15...♘xe4 16.♕xe4 f5 17.♕e3! (17.♕e2 ♗xf4 18.♕xe6† ♔h8 19.♗xf4 ♕xf4 20.♖hf1± is not at all bad either) 17...h6 18.♗xh6 gxh6 19.fxe5±, his kingside pawn structure is in shreds!

16.♘xf6† ♘xf6

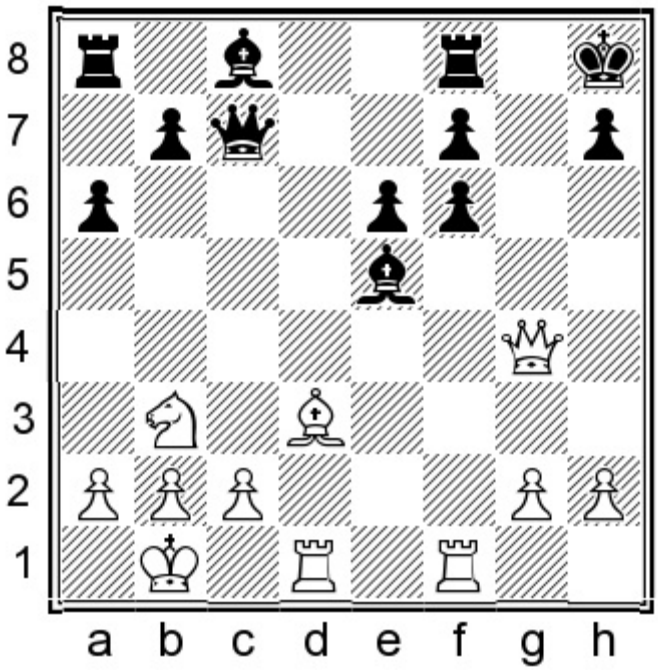
The suicidal 16...gxf6 loses at once to 17.♕e4.

17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♕g4† ♔h8

Or 18...♗g5 19.h4 ♕f4 20.♕h5 ♗h6 21.♖df1+– and Black is going to have to part with his bishop.

19.♖hf1 ♗e5

This is the first time in quite a while that Black has had any choice at all. He could have played 19...e5 here, although after the forced sequence 20.♕h5 f5 21.g3 ♗e3 22.♗xf5 ♗xf5 23.♕xf5± his position inspires no confidence.



20.♗xh7!

Tal methodically opens up his opponent's king for the attack. White would also retain a clear plus after 20.♖xf6?! ♖g8 21.♕h5 ♖g7 22.♖h6 f5 23.♘c5, but the move he played is much stronger.

20...f5 21.♕h4

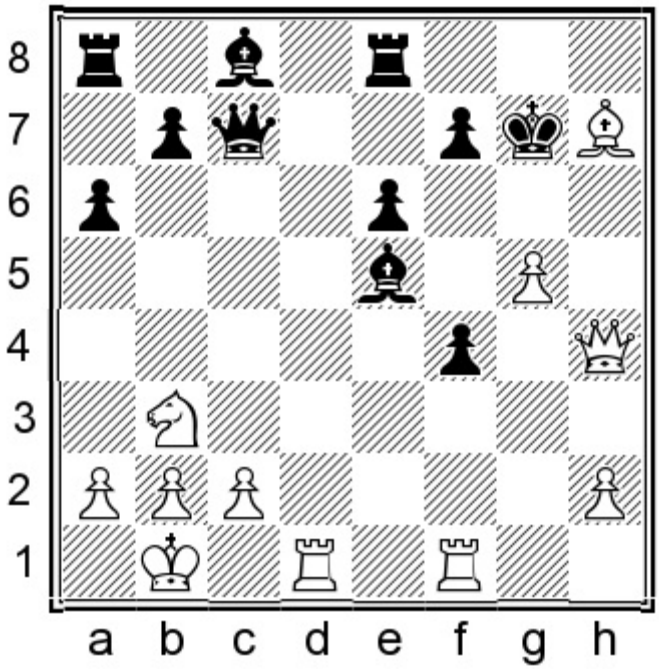
Even simpler was 21.♕h5! f6 22.♗g6† ♔g8 23.♖f3 ♕g7 24.♖h3 ♖a7 25.♗h7† ♔h8 26.♗xf5† ♔g8 27.♗h7† ♔h8 28.♗g6† ♔g8 29.♖h4. With the rook coming to g4, the best option for Black would be to stop the clock and settle down to the post-mortem analysis. However, the move in the game also leaves

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him with no chances of survival.

21...♔g7 22.♖f3

A splendid conclusion to the game could have been supplied by the simple but attractive: 22.g4! f4 23.g5 ♖e8



24.♘c5! ♕xc5 Otherwise the knight will jump to d3 (or d7!), with an easy win. 25.♕h6† ♔h8 26.♗g6† ♔g8 27.♕h7† ♔f8 28.♕xf7#

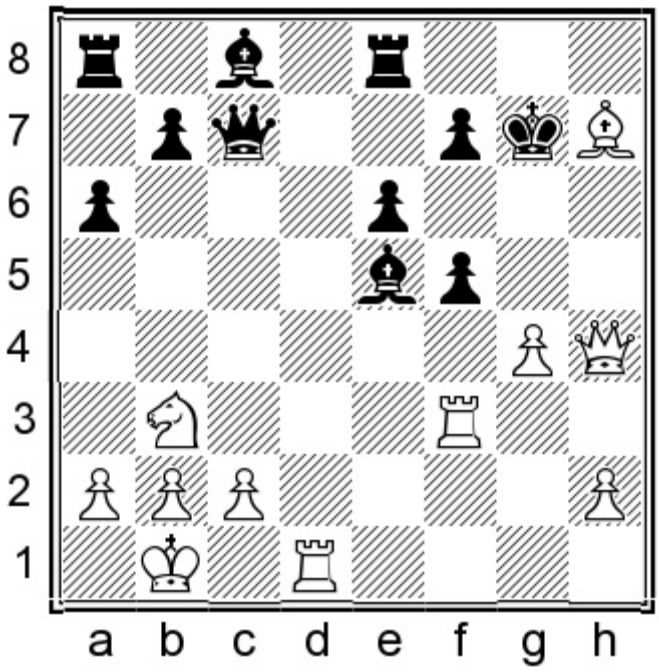
22...♖e8

Or 22...♗f6 23.♖g3† ♕xg3 24.♕xg3† ♔xh7 25.♘c5+–, and with such poor development Black can hardly offer genuine resistance.

23.g4!

The last reserves enter the fray. It's completely obvious that the opening of the g-file will be lethal for Black.

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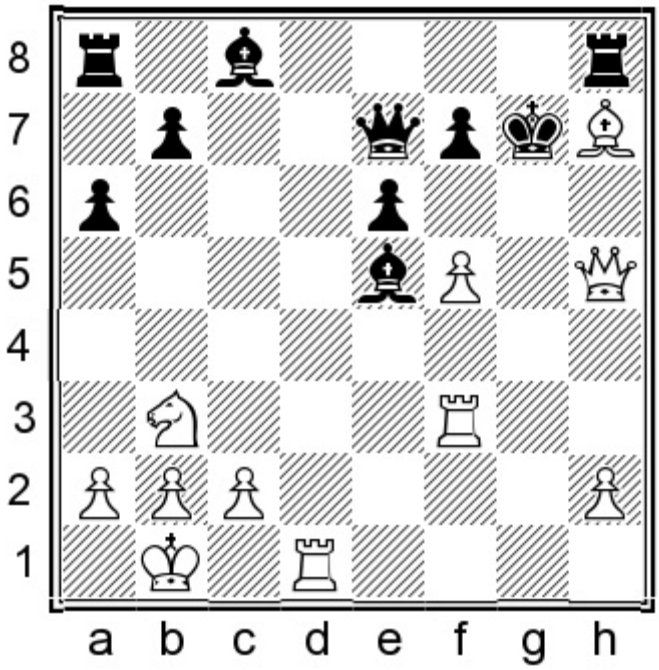
23...f4

It may look at first sight as if Black could at least postpone his already inevitable defeat by playing:

23...♕e7

However, White's attack continues unabated.

24.♕h5! ♖h8 25.gxf5



25...exf5

25...♖xh7 is no help either: 26.♖g1† ♔h8 27.♕xh7†!+−

26.♖e3!

Threatening to take on e5.

26...♔f8

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Naturally 26...♕f6 also fails to save Black: 27.♖xe5! ♕xe5 28.♕g5† ♔xh7 29.♖g1 with imminent mate.

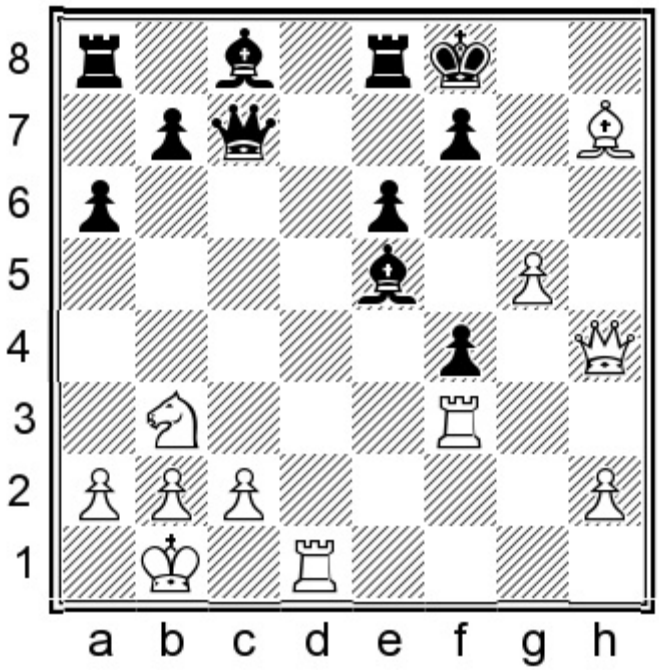
27.♖d5 f6 28.♕h6† ♔f7 29.♘c5!

Bringing his last inactive piece into the attack, White now threatens ♖ed3 followed by ♖d7.

29...♗e6 30.♕g6† ♔f8 31.♖dxe5

White wins easily.

24.g5 ♔f8



25.♖xf4!

The concluding stroke. The f-file is opened, and Black faces a difficult dilemma: taking the rook is out of the question, and not taking it is absolutely unthinkable!

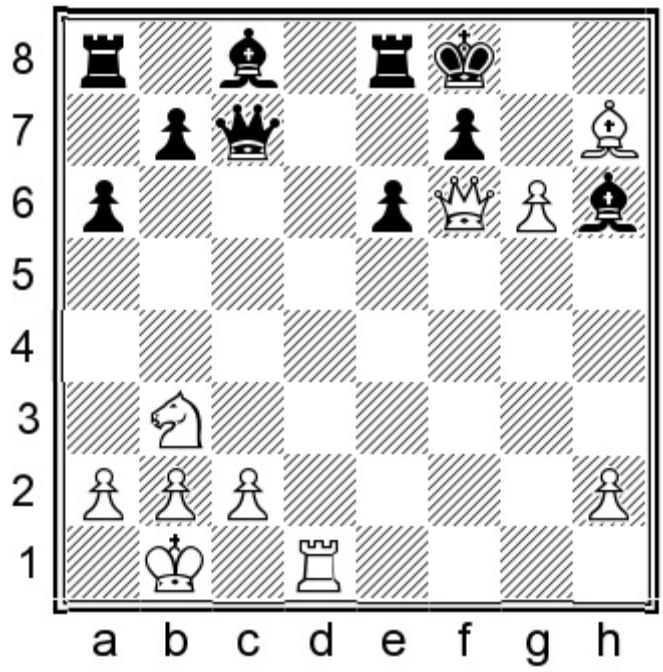
25...♗xf4

On 25...f5, White has 26.gxf6 ♗xf4 27.♗g6+– with mate in a few moves

After 25...♖d8 26.♕h6† ♗g7 27.♖xd8† ♕xd8 28.♕h5 ♕c7 29.♖f1+– Black has no adequate defence against the threat of ♗g6.

26.♕h6† ♔e7 27.♕f6† ♔f8 28.g6 ♗h6

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29.♖f1!

White threatens a simple capture on f7, with mate to follow. On 29...♖d8, he wins at once with 30.♕h8† ♔e7 31.♖xf7†.

1–0

Tal selected an extremely rare variation (6.♘c3). Black played the opening a little superficially; nevertheless, as constantly happens in the Caro-Kann, his position remained sufficiently solid, and after the correct 14...♗e7!? he would have had every reason to count on defending successfully. After 14...♗e5 he no longer had any such chances and was simply crushed.

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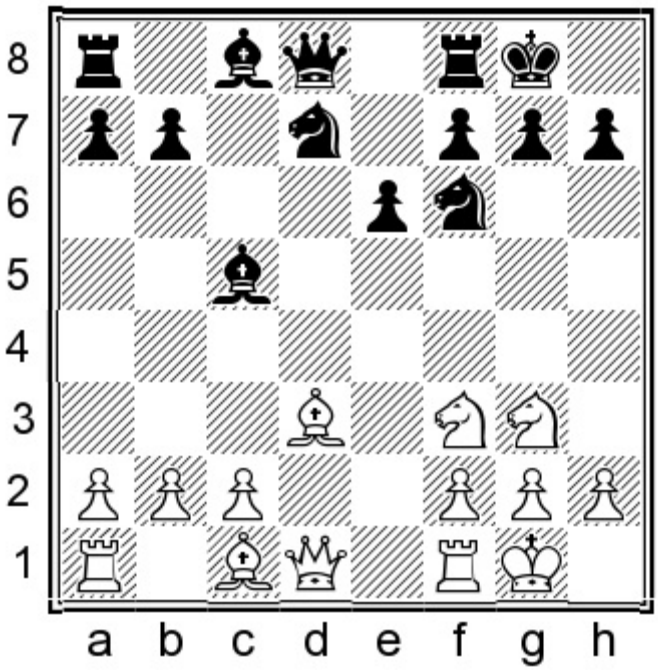
1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♘g3!?

This sharp move enjoys incomparably more popularity than its mirror image, 6.♘c3, which we saw in the previous game. Even Garry Kasparov played this way, which is saying a great deal. It's as if White is dropping his opponent a hint that he aims to join battle with him on the kingside, and he is transferring his pieces there in good time.

6...e6 7.♗d3 c5 8.0-0 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♗c5 10.♘f3

In this position 10.♘b3 has also been played, though to me it doesn't seem all that logical. However that may be, in Tiviakov – Adams, New York (1) 1994, White acquired a minimal plus: 10...♗e7 11.♖e1 0-0 12.♕f3 a5 13.a4 ♘b6 14.♗d2±

10...0-0



11.♕e2 b6 12.♗f4

There is no promise for White in 12.♘e4 ♗b7 13.♘xc5 ♘xc5 14.♗c4 ♕c7 15.♘e5 ♖fd8; his two bishops have little scope for activity in view of the excellent development of all Black's pieces.

12...♗b7

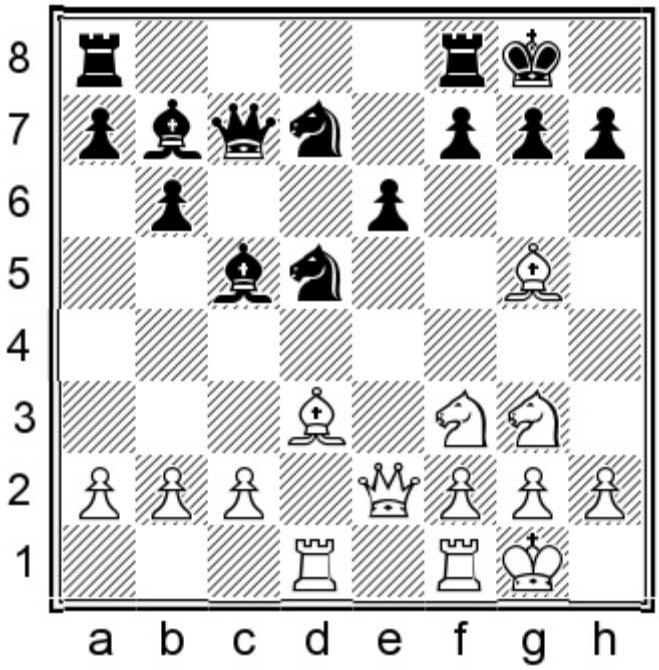
On 12...♘d5!? 13.♗g5 ♕c7, White continues not with 14.c4 ♘f4 15.♗xf4 ♕xf4=, but with 14.♘h5!, preserving some initiative.

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13.♖ad1 ♘d5 14.♗g5

More active than 14.♗c1 ♕c7 15.♘g5 ♘5f6 (15...♘7f6!?) 16.♔h1!? ♖ad8 17.♘5e4 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 ♗e7, with fine play for Black in Ivanovic – Speelman, Thessaloniki (ol) 1984.

14...♕c7



15.♘h5!?

From Tal, hardly any other move could be expected. Why else did he bring his knight across to g3 right at the start of the game?

All the same, there is a reasonable alternative in:

15.c4 ♘5f6

After 15...♘f4 16.♗xf4 ♕xf4 17.♗xh7† ♔xh7 18.♖xd7± Black is left a pawn down.

16.♘e4 h6!?

16...♗e7 is strongly answered by 17.♗h4!.

17.♘xf6†

Black is quite all right after 17.♘xc5 ♕xc5 with even chances.

17...♘xf6 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♗e4 ♗xe4 20.♕xe4 ♖fd8=

15...♔h8?!

In his notes to the game Tal gives this prophylactic move an exclamation mark, but I don't entirely agree with that judgement.

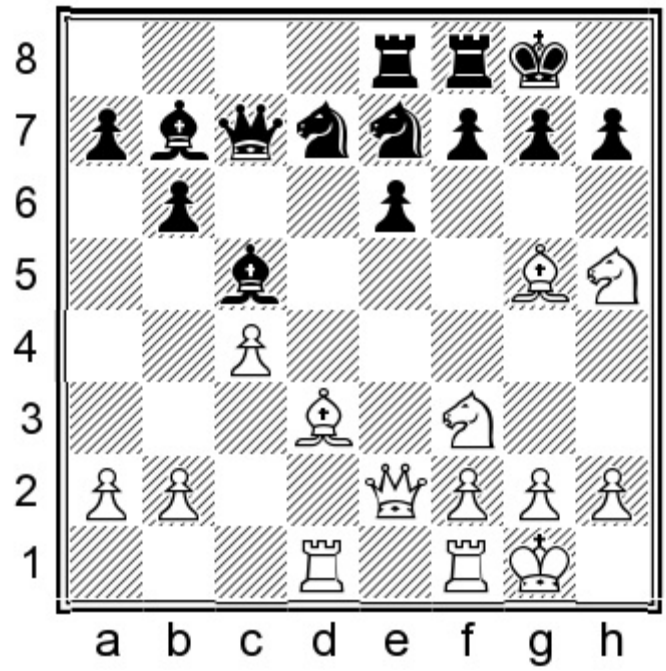
To me it seems that a stronger line was: 15...h6!? 16.♗h4 (Black defends successfully after 16.♗xh6!? gxh6 17.♕d2 f5! 18.♕xh6 ♘7f6 19.♕g6† ♔h8 20.♘g5, with unruly complications) 16...♗d6!? 17.c4 ♘f4 18.♘xf4 ♗xf4 19.♗e4 ♗xe4 20.♕xe4 ♘c5= with equal chances.

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There are plenty of dangers in store for Black in the event of:
15...♖ae8 16.c4 ♘e7!?

On 16...♘5f6, White should not follow Tal's recommendation of 17.♘xf6† ♘xf6 18.♘e5, in view of 18...♗e7, whereupon 19.♗xf6 ♗xf6 20.♘d7 ♕c6! isn't too dangerous for Black. Instead, White should continue 17.♗xf6! ♘xf6 18.♘g5 with a strong attack.

The knight can't move away to b4, as Black is then mated in short order: 16...♘b4? 17.♗xh7†! ♔xh7 18.♖xd7! ♗xf3! (18...♕xd7 loses to 19.♘e5! ♕d4 20.♘f6† gxf6 21.♕h5†) 19.♕xf3 ♕e5 (or 19...♕xd7 20.♘f6†!) 20.♗f6! and White wins. A beautiful attack!



17.♗xh7†!?

White is also guaranteed a small plus by the quiet 17.♗e4.
17...♔xh7 18.♖xd7 ♕xd7

This time 18...♗xf3? loses to 19.♕d3†.
19.♘e5! ♕d8! 20.♘f6† gxf6 21.♗xf6 ♘g6! 22.♕h5† ♔g8 23.♘g4! ♕xf6 24.♘xf6† ♔g7 25.♘xe8† ♖xe8 26.♕d1

White's position is undoubtedly better, but by how much? The question is not simple.

16.♗e4

White is not guaranteed an advantage by 16.c4!? ♘5f6! 17.♘xf6 ♘xf6 (better than 17...gxf6?! 18.♗h4 ♖g8 19.♗e4 ♗e7 20.♗g3 ♕c8 21.♗b1±) 18.♘e5 ♖ad8, with mutual chances.

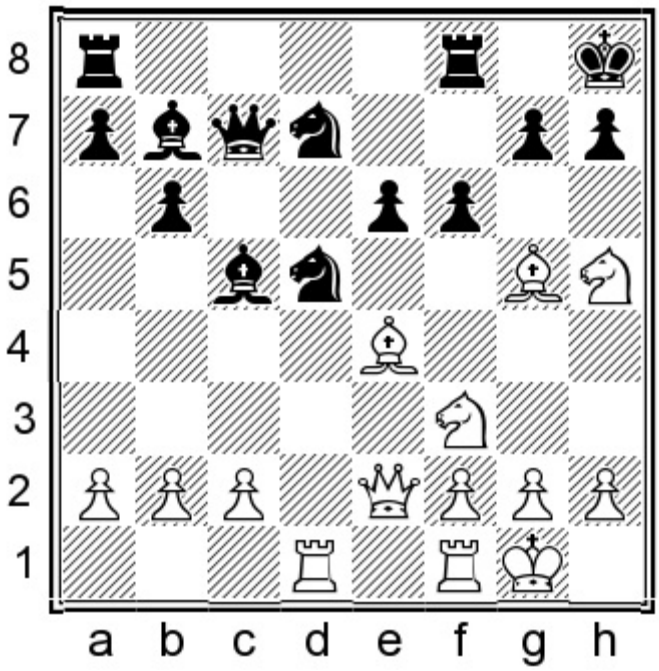
However, 16.♖fe1 deserves attention. Then after 16...♖ae8 White should not be tempted by 17.♗e4 f5! 18.♗xd5 ♗xd5 19.♖xd5? exd5 20.♕xe8 ♖xe8 21.♖xe8† ♗f8∓. Instead, 17.♗b5!? maintains the pressure on the black position.

16...f6?!

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At this point 16...f5 17.♗xd5 ♗xd5 fails to 18.♘f4, intending to answer 18...♗c4? with 19.♖xd7+–.

Black could, however, consider: 16...♖ae8!? 17.c4 f5! 18.♗c2 (18.♗xd5 exd5 19.♕d2 ♘e5! 20.♘xe5 ♕xe5 gives wholly unclear chances, seeing that 21.cxd5 is met by 21...f4!) 18...♗a6!? with double-edged play.



17.♗h4

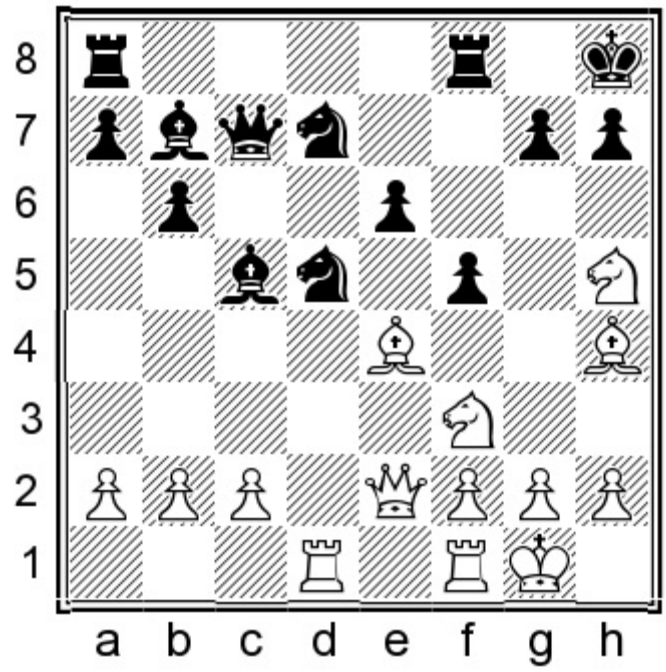
A good move at White's disposal here is 17.♗f4!?, although after 17...♘xf4 18.♘xf4 ♕xf4 19.♗xb7 ♖ad8 20.♕xe6 ♘e5 he must certainly avoid the variation indicated by Tal: 21.♖xd8 ♖xd8 22.♘xe5?? ♕xf2†!−+ Instead he can simply play 21.a3!?±, and Black faces a long and tedious defensive task to draw the game.

17...♗d6?!

Vasiukov is playing with fire. I imagine he missed White's coming combination altogether, or else seriously underestimated it.

He should have made the active move:
17...f5!?

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18.♗xd5

After 18.♗g3 f4 19.♗h4 ♖ae8 20.c4, there is the excellent tactical idea 20...♘e3! 21.♗xb7 ♘xd1 22.♖xd1 ♕xb7 23.♕d2 ♘b8, leading to an advantage for Black.

18...♗xd5

I am not so keen on 18...exd5. White's reply would not be 19.♘d4 ♖ae8 20.♘e6 ♕c6 21.♘hf4 d4 with sharp play. Much stronger is 19.♖fe1!, asserting his rights to the open e-file. Care and precision would then be required from Black, for instance 19...g6 could be strongly met by 20.♘g5! gxh5 21.♘xh7! ♖f7 22.♘g5±.

19.c4 ♗xf3

Of course not 19...♗xc4? 20.♖xd7!.

20.♕xf3

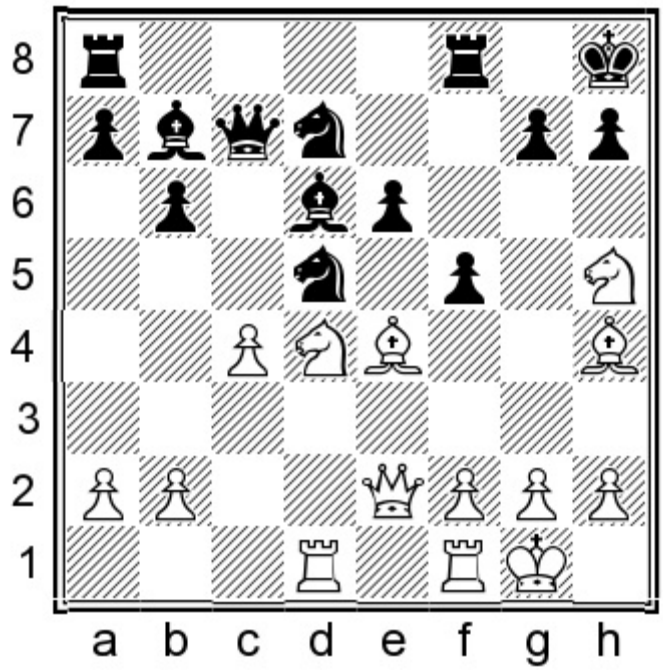
After either 20...♖ae8 or the sharp 20...f4!?, the position is far from simple to assess.

18.c4 ♗a6

Some interesting complications arise from:

18...f5 19.♘d4!

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19...♖ae8

19...♗xh2† 20.♔h1 ♖ae8 21.♘b5 is merely a transposition.

20.♘b5 ♗xh2† 21.♔h1 ♕b8 22.f4 ♗xf4

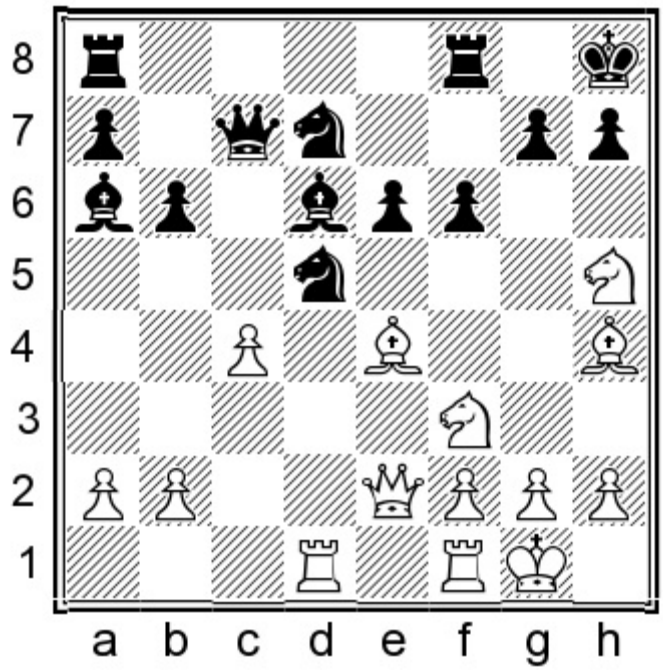
Not 22...g6? in view of 23.cxd5 exd5 24.b3! ♖xe4 25.♕b2† and White wins.

23.cxd5 exd5

Of course not 23...fxe4? 24.dxe6 ♖xe6 25.♖xd7+–.

24.♘xf4 ♖xe4 25.♕f2

In the resulting position, Black's three pawns will hardly be sufficient compensation for the piece.



19.♘xg7!

Of course Tal cannot resist such attractive tactical possibilities. It was for this style of play that he

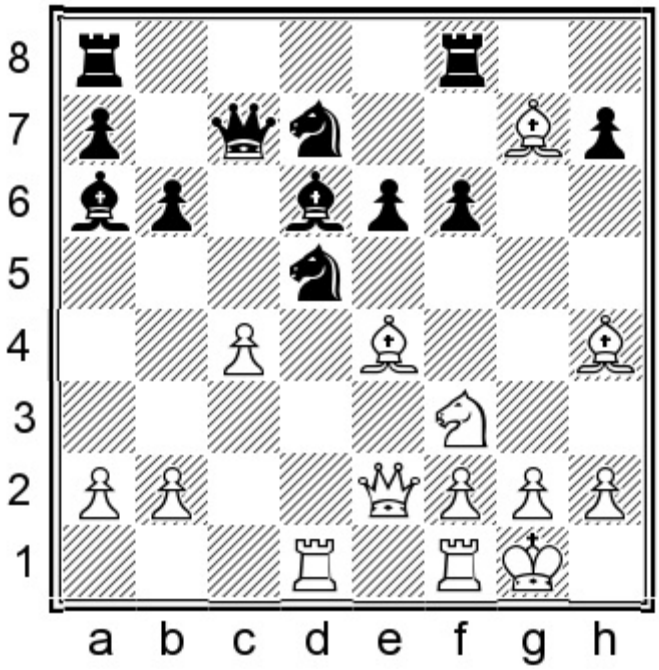
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was so much loved among chess players in all countries of the world.

Someone with a more placid temperament might have settled for: 19.♗d3 ♘f4 (both 19...♘b4 20.a3 ♘xd3 21.♕xd3± and 19...♘c5 20.cxd5 ♘xd3 21.♖xd3 exd5 22.♖fd1± would favour White) 20.♘xf4 ♗xf4 21.b4 ♗b7 22.♗e4 with a small but stable plus.

19...♔xg7

There is big trouble for Black after either 19...♗xc4 20.♘xe6 ♗xe2 21.♘xc7± or 19...♘f4 20.♕d2 ♘c5 21.♘xe6!? ♘xe4 22.♘xc7 ♘xd2 23.♘xa6 ♘xf3† 24.gxf3 ♗e5 25.♗g3+–.



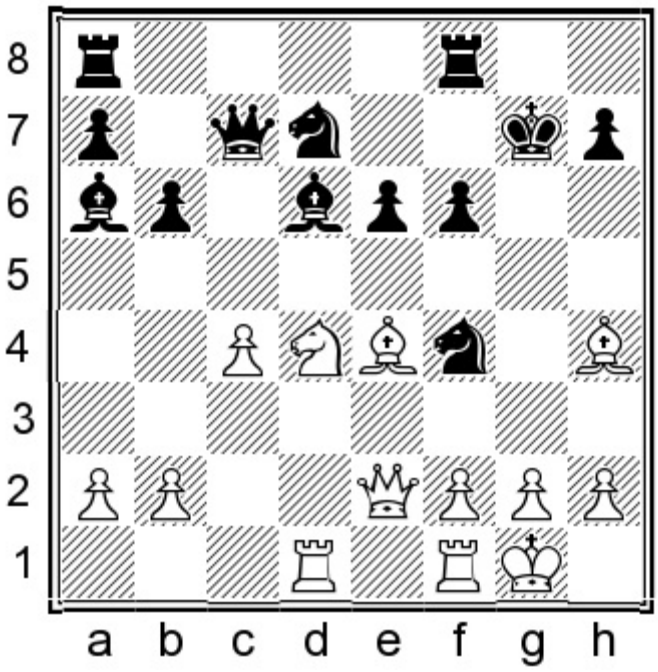
20.♘d4!

Tal pours oil on the flames! Instead 20.♗b1? ♗xc4 21.♕xe6 ♘e5 22.♘xe5 ♗xe5 23.♖xd5 ♔h8! would hand the initiative to his opponent.

20...♘c5

Black avoids the most thematic move, 20...♘f4!?. It leads to wild complications, and I am convinced that over the board it would be practically impossible to work them out to the end. Evgeni Vasiukov probably wasn't too keen to compete with Mikhail Tal in the calculation of variations. White has two replies that merit consideration: 21.♕h5 and 21.♕g4†. It is interesting to ask, which one you would have chosen?

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a) 21.♕h5!?

A beautiful move which could quite easily be clean overlooked. Black now faces quite a few problems, but he can still count on having his full share of the play.

21...♖h8

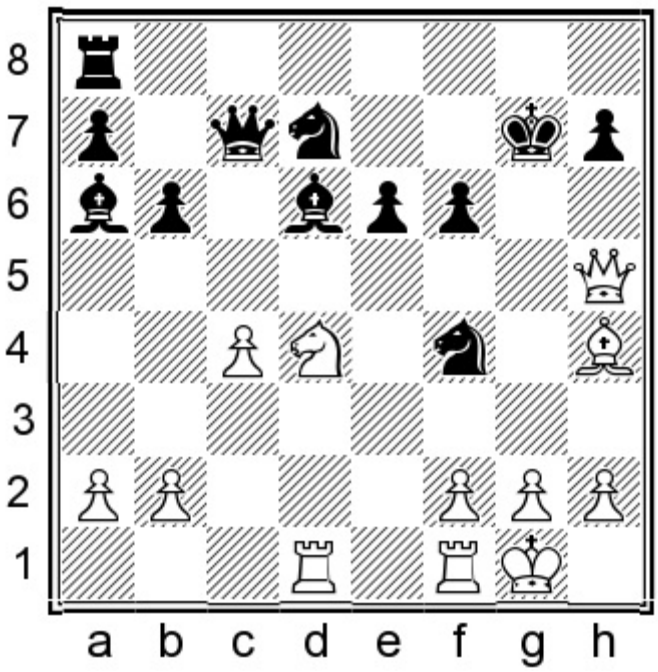
Some curious positions arise from the alternatives:

21...♘xh5 22.♘xe6† ♔g8 23.♘xc7 ♗xc7 24.♖xd7 ♖ac8 25.b3⩲

21...f5 22.♗xa8 ♘e5! 23.g3 ♘xh5 24.♘xe6† ♔h6 25.♘xc7 ♗xc7 26.♗h1 ♗xc4 27.♖fe1±

It seems to me that in both lines White's chances are slightly preferable, but other opinions are of course possible.

22.♗xa8 ♖xa8



23.g3!?

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Black is all right in the event of 23.♕g4† ♔f7 24.♗g3 ♖g8.

23...♘xh5 24.♘xe6† ♔h6!

A little more precise than 24...♔g6 25.♘xc7 ♗xc7 26.♖xd7 ♗e5 27.f4 ♗c8 28.f5† ♔h6 29.♖e7, when White has the initiative and threatens to advance the g-pawn.

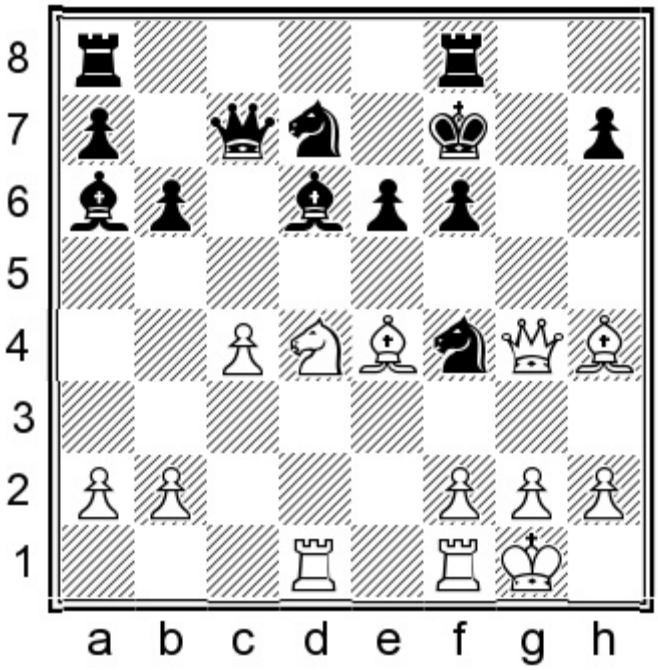
25.♘xc7 ♗xc7 26.♖xd7 ♗e5 27.b3 ♗c8 28.♖d8 ♘g7⇄

The ending is unclear; White's chances are of course no worse, but are they any better?

b) 21.♕g4†! gives Black much more trouble. We now have:

b1) 21...♔f7?

This has unpleasant consequences.



22.♘xe6!

White's chances are preferable even after 22.♗g3 ♖g8 23.♘xe6! ♖xg4 24.♘xc7 ♘e2† 25.♔h1 ♗xc7 26.♗xa8 ♘xg3† 27.hxg3 ♘c5±, but the immediate knight sacrifice is significantly stronger.

22...♘xe6 23.♕h5† ♔e7 24.♗xa8 ♗xc4 25.♖fe1 ♗xa2

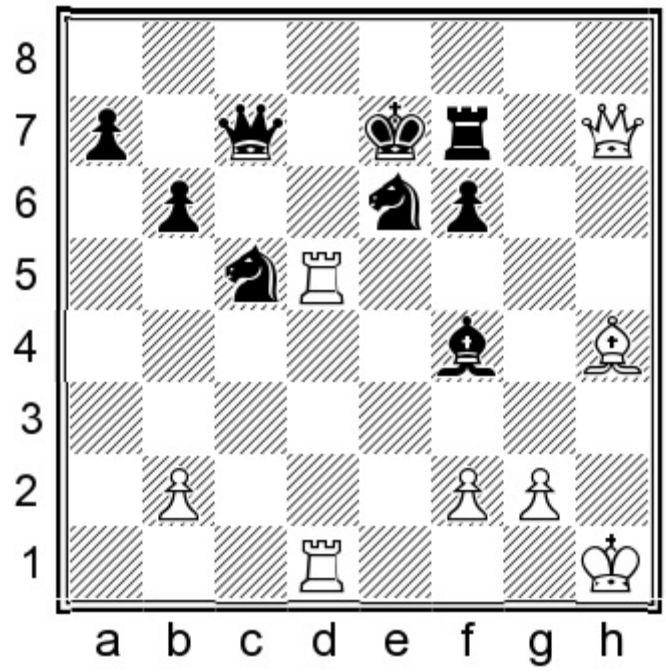
Taking the h-pawn with check doesn't help: 25...♗xh2† 26.♔h1 ♗e5 27.b3! and if 27...♖xa8 then 28.♕xh7† ♔e8 29.f4!+– and the attack is quickly victorious.

26.♗d5 ♗xh2† 27.♔h1 ♗xd5 28.♖xd5 ♗f4

Blocking the e-file does not prove successful: 28...♗e5? 29.♖ed1! ♘dc5 30.♖xe5!+–

29.♖ed1! ♘dc5 30.♕xh7† ♖f7

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31.♗xf6†!+−

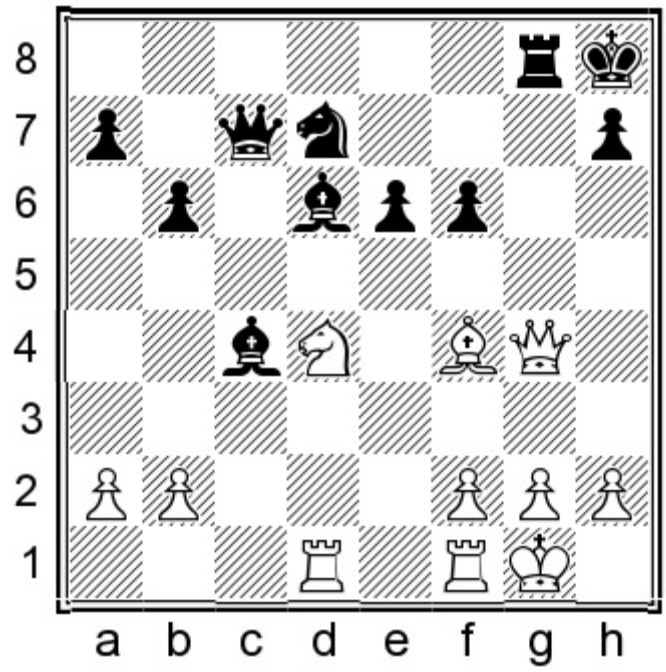
The hunt for the black king concludes triumphantly.

b2) 21...♔h8! 22.♗xa8 ♗xc4

Or 22...♖xa8 23.♘xe6 ♘xe6 24.♕xe6 ♗xh2† 25.♔h1 ♗xc4 26.♗xf6† ♘xf6 27.♕xf6† ♔g8 28.♖d4+− with a quick mate.

23.♗g3 ♖xa8 24.♗xf4 ♖g8

Black isn't to be envied after 24...♗xf4 25.♘xe6.

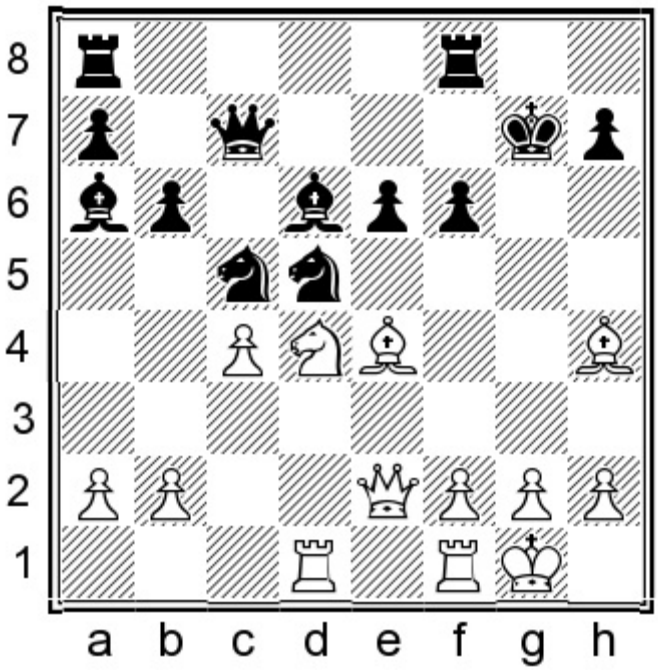


25.♘xe6 ♖xg4 26.♘xc7 ♗xf4 27.♖xd7 ♗xh2† 28.♔xh2 ♗xf1 29.g3

The result of the wild complications is a small endgame advantage for White. A little disappointing I dare say, but there is still the chance to make an impression by displaying meticulous endgame

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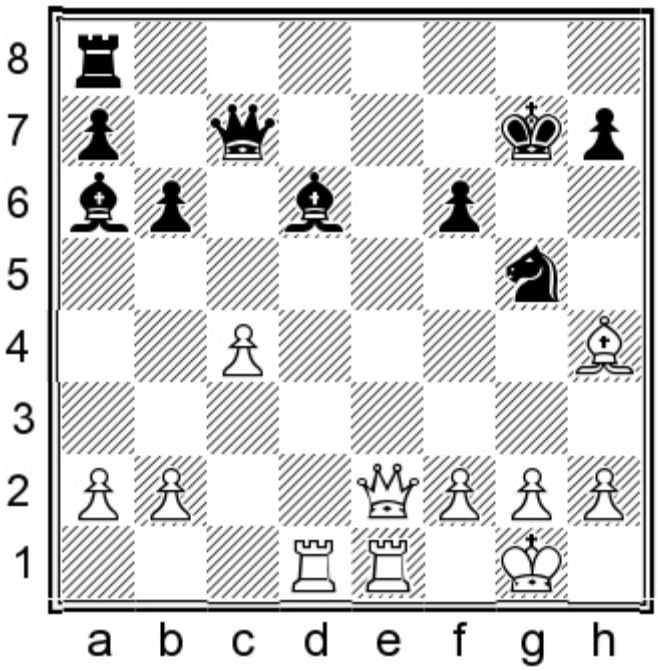
technique!



21.♕g4†?!

I am bound to repeat myself: even the sun has its sunspots. Perhaps such a great master of combination as Mikhail Tal has the unofficial right to make a mistake. This move allows Black to escape unscathed. What ought White to have done?

For one thing, he could have continued with 21.♘xe6† ♘xe6 22.♗xd5 ♘g5 23.♗xa8! (better than 23.♗xg5 fxg5 24.♗xa8 ♖xa8 25.♕g4⇄) 23...♖xa8 24.♖fe1, going all out for the attack.



There would then be unpleasant consequences for Black after 24...♗xc4 25.♕c2 or, even more so, after 24...♗xh2† 25.♔h1 ♗f4 26.♖d4!, aiming to meet 26...♗e5 with 27.♗xg5 ♗xd4 28.♕g4 fxg5 29.♕xd4†+−.

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A second possibility is of great interest:

21.b4!? ♗xh2† 22.♔h1 ♕f4

Sensibly enough, Black tries to create play on the kingside.

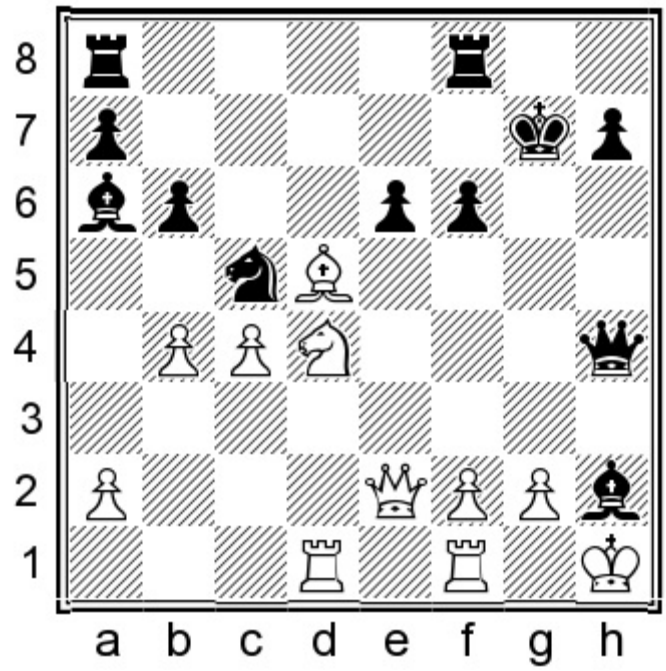
22...♘xb4? 23.♗xa8 would be wholly bad for Black, since 23...♖xa8 fails to 24.♘xe6† ♘xe6 25.♕xe6+–.

23.♗xd5

An amusing draw results from 23.♘xe6† ♘xe6 24.g3 ♘c3 25.♖d7† ♔h8 (not 25...♔g8?? 26.♗xh7† ♔h8 27.♕h5 with inevitable mate) 26.♖xh7† ♔g8 27.♖h8†□ 27...♔g7 28.♖h7† ♔g8= and both sides are obliged to repeat moves.

23...♕xh4

23...exd5 24.bxc5 ♖ae8 is refuted by 25.g3!.



24.♕xe6!

Perhaps Tal simply gave no attention to this brilliant move.

The natural 24.♘f3 ♕h5 25.♗xa8 ♗c7† 26.♔g1 ♗h2†! leads to perpetual check.

24...♗e5†

After 24...♘xe6 25.♘f5† ♔h8 26.♘xh4 White has a clear plus.

25.♕h3 ♕xh3† 26.gxh3 ♗xd4 27.♖xd4

Rightly avoiding 27.♗xa8? ♗c3∓.

27...♖ae8 28.bxc5 bxc5 29.♖g4† ♔h8 30.♖fg1

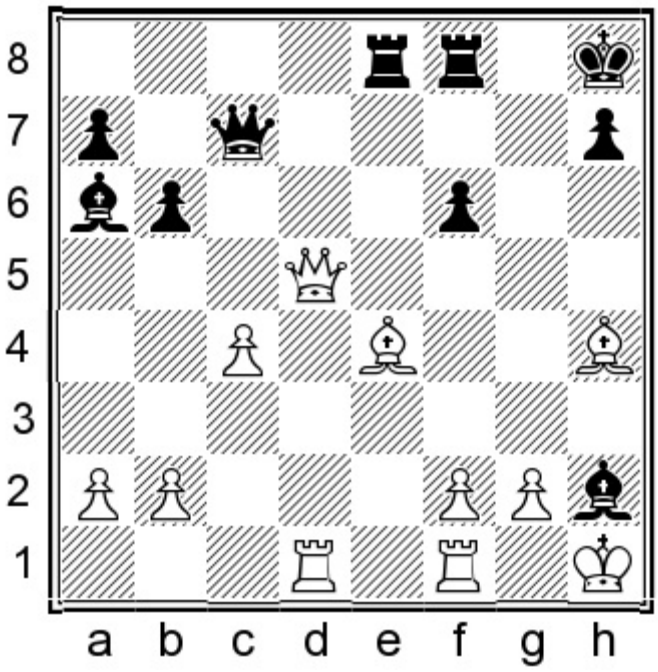
Thanks to the difference in strength between the bishops, White's advantage is stable and obvious.

21...♔h8 22.♘xe6 ♘xe6 23.♕xe6 ♖ae8

Or 23...♗xh2† 24.♔h1 ♖ae8 (24...♘b4?? 25.♖d7+–) 25.♕xd5, transposing to the game.

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24.♕xd5 ♗xh2† 25.♔h1

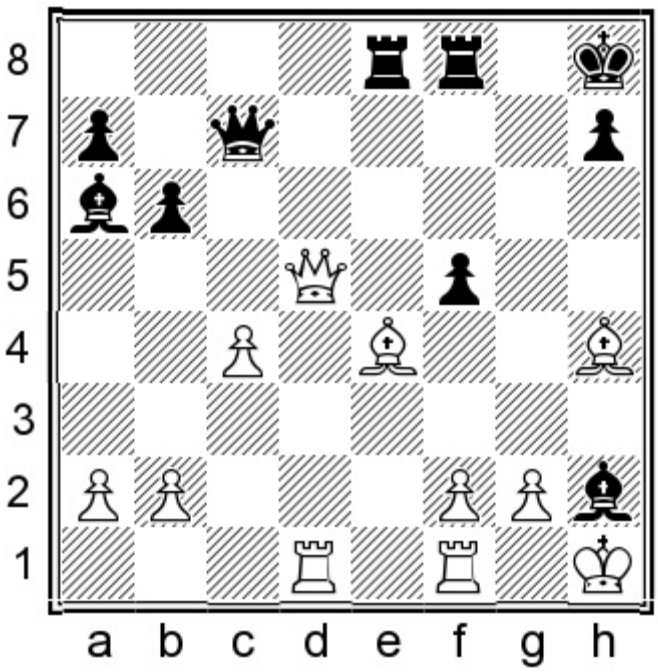


25...♕f4?!

It quite often happens that a well-played game enters a kind of eccentric phase in which both opponents start to commit errors on practically every move. I have no explanation of why this should be so, but it occurred more than once in my own games, and each time I was sincerely amazed at how things could come to such a pass!

White would be perfectly happy with 25...♕xc4 26.♖fe1±, let alone with 25...♗xc4 26.♕f5±.

However Black can force a position with equal chances with the accurate:
25...f5!



26.♗xf5

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After 26.♗d3? the black bishop is free to come to the long diagonal with dire consequences for White: 26...♗b7 27.♕d4† ♗e5 28.♕e3 ♖g8 29.♖g1 ♕g7 and this time it is Black's attack that cannot be resisted.

Incidentally, Black would also have quite good play after 26.♗f3 ♗xc4.

26...♗xc4 27.♕d7 ♕xd7 28.♗xd7 ♖e4!

A precise and strong move which makes the assessment of the position completely clear.

29.g3

Or 29.♔xh2 ♖xh4† 30.♔g3 ♖h6!=.

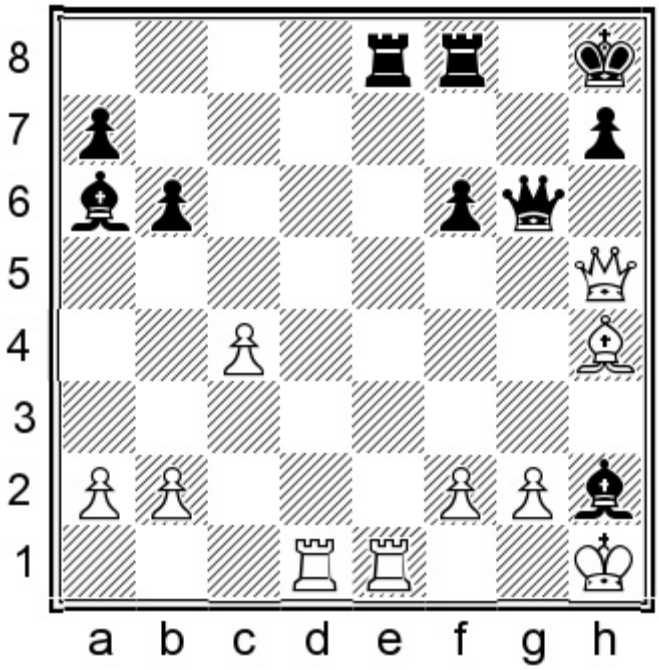
29...♗xf1 30.♖xf1 ♖xh4 31.gxh4 ♗g3!=

It is time to agree a draw.

26.♕h5 ♕xe4 27.♖fe1

After 27.♖de1 ♕g6 28.♕xg6 hxg6 29.♗xf6† ♔g8 30.♖xe8 ♖xe8 31.♔xh2 ♗xc4 32.♖a1!? White remains with an extra pawn, but there is still a long road to travel before the game is won.

27...♕g6



28.♕xg6?!

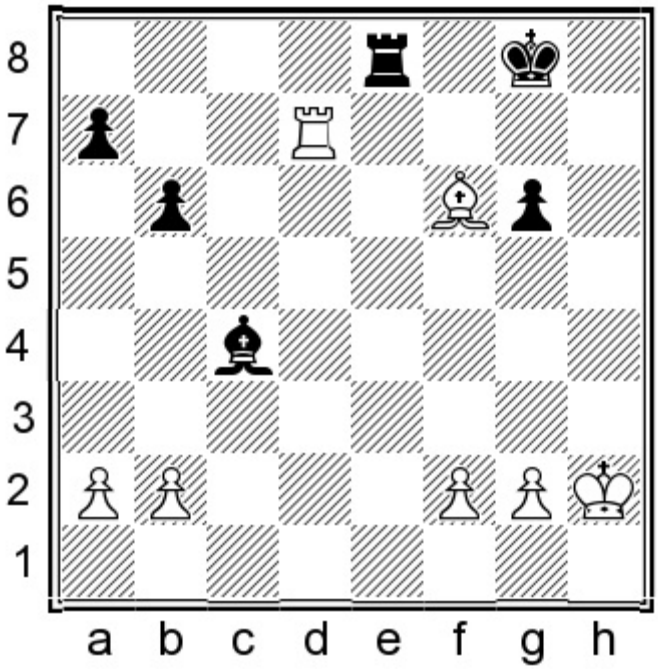
The time for mistakes is clearly not over yet! Tal saw the variation 28.♗xf6†! ♕xf6 (better than 28...♔g8? 29.♕d5† ♕f7 30.♖xe8 ♖xe8 31.♔xh2±) 29.♖xe8 ♗d6□ 30.♖xf8† ♕xf8, and rightly judged the position after 31.♖e1? ♕xf2 to be equal. However, White can improve with 31.♔g1!±, when 31...♗xc4? fails to 32.♕h4+–, picking off one of the bishops.

28...hxg6?

Luckily for Tal, Black's own quota of mistakes was not exhausted until after this move! Black could have drawn at once with 28...♖xe1†! 29.♖xe1 hxg6 30.♔xh2 g5 31.♗g3 ♗xc4=.

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29.♗xf6† ♔g8 30.♖xe8 ♖xe8 31.♔xh2 ♗xc4 32.♖d7!±



In this opposite-coloured bishop endgame Black's prospects are not good for many reasons, of which I shall just mention three. In the first place, there are rooks on the board as well as bishops; secondly, all White's pieces are more active than their black counterparts; thirdly and lastly, the black king is passive and can be subjected to a troublesome attack, even in the endgame.

32...♖e6 33.♗c3 ♗xa2 34.♖xa7 ♗c4 35.♔g3 ♗d5 36.f3 ♔f8 37.♗d4 b5 38.♔f4

Black has been unable to stop White from activating his king. Incidentally, one other good idea for White is becoming plausible: to advance his kingside pawns and then, at the appropriate moment, to sacrifice the exchange on g6.

38...♗c4 39.♔g5 ♔e8 40.♖a8† ♔f7 41.♖a7† ♔e8 42.b4

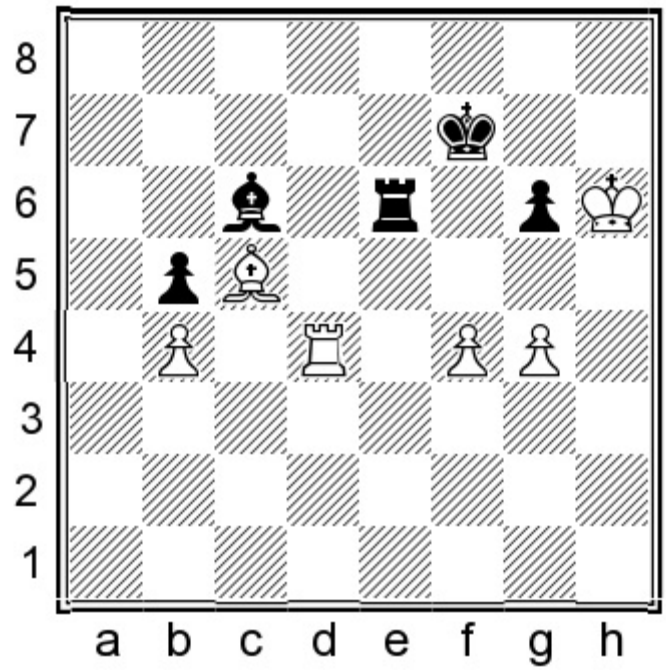
White has no reason to hurry; slowly but surely he improves his position.

42...♗d5 43.♖a3! ♔f7 44.g4 ♖e2 45.♗c5 ♖e5† 46.♔h6 ♖e6

If 46...g5 then 47.♗d4+– leads to further loss of material for Black.

47.♖d3 ♗c6 48.♖d8 ♖e8 49.♖d4 ♖e6 50.f4

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50...♔e8 51.♔g7! ♗e4 52.♗b6!

Having improved the placing of his few pieces to the maximum, Mikhail Tal proceeds to the final stage of hunting down the black king.

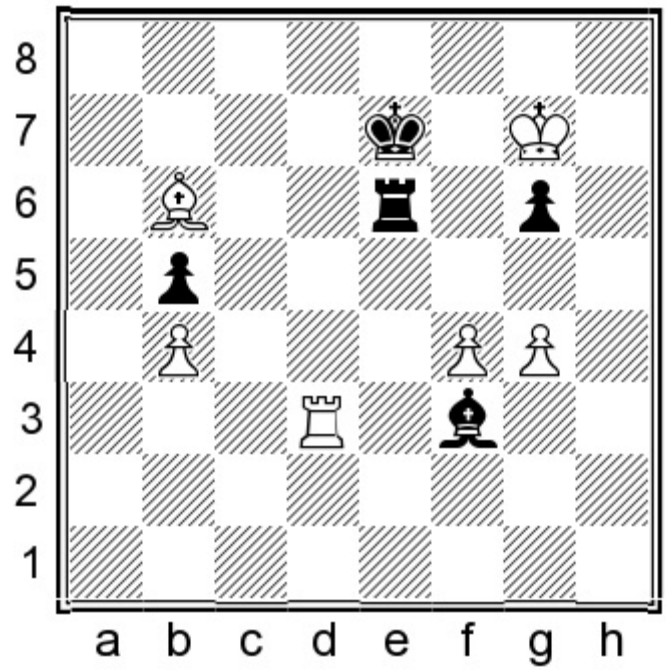
52...♗f3

Of course, going into a rook endgame with 52...♖xb6 53.♖xe4† ♔d7 54.f5+– would not have saved Black.

53.♖d8† ♔e7 54.♖d3! ♗e2

With 54...♗xg4 Black could momentarily restore the material balance, but after 55.♗d8† ♔e8 56.♗g5 there is no satisfactory defence against mate.

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55.♗d8†! ♔e8 56.♖d2 ♖e3

Once more, 56...♗xg4 57.♗g5 leaves Black defenceless.

57.♗g5 ♗d3 58.f5

And in view of 58...♖f3 59.f6 or 58...♖g3 59.f6 ♗c4 60.f7† ♗xf7 61.♖d8#, Black resigned.

1–0

I very much like this game, despite the quantity of errors. You can only admire Mikhail Tal's imagination and intuition – the knight sacrifice on g7, even by itself, is of great merit. As for the errors... who is really interested in how many of them occurred in such a complicated game? As the age-old wisdom has it, the only people who don't make mistakes are those who do nothing at all. At any rate, it isn't the errors that stick in the memory but the lofty ideas displayed by the contestants. And so, my friends, don't be afraid of making mistakes – if you do make them, you will be in excellent company!

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Mikhail Tal – Tony Miles

Porz 1981

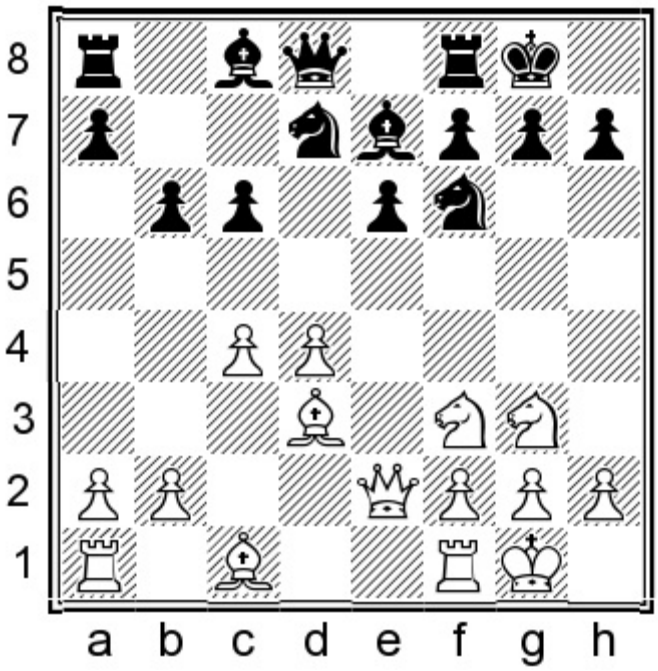
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7

Tony Miles was a great specialist in various rare systems. He was fond of the Caro-Kann and employed it quite regularly, but in my view he achieved his best results with a different variation – 4...♗f5.

5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♘g3 e6 7.♗d3 ♗e7

Black often plays this move when he has no intention of getting involved in the theoretical dispute about the main line, 7...c5. I have never been an expert in such variations and I find it hard to say whether this one is good or bad, but in the present game Mikhail Tal shows very convincingly that such a slow handling of the opening does have its minus points.

8.♕e2 0-0 9.0-0 b6 10.c4



10...♗b7

It's worth considering 10...♕c7!?, taking the f4-square under control.

11.♗f4±

Tal takes immediate advantage of his opponent's slight inaccuracy.

In Olivier – Dumitrache, St Lorens 1999, Black easily secured equal chances after 11.♖d1 ♖e8 12.b3 ♕c7 13.♗b2 c5 14.♖ac1 ♖ad8 15.♗b1 ♗f8 16.♖d2 g6=.

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11...♖e8?!

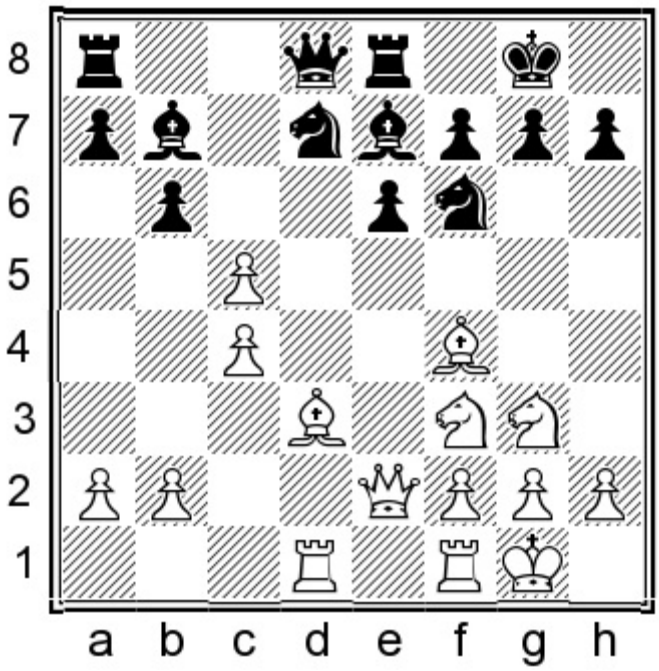
Miles chooses not to open up the game in the centre with 11...c5 12.dxc5 ♗xc5, but he should have! After 13.♖ad1 White holds the initiative, but it isn't clear whether he has anything concrete; on the other hand, 13.♘e5 ♕e8! leads to full equality. The waiting policy that Black adopts has serious defects.

12.♖ad1± c5

Tony's boisterous British temperament doesn't permit him to sit around in his own camp for too long, but perhaps he ought now to have shown a little more patience. He could have considered 12...♕c8!?. Then after 13.♘e5 c5 14.dxc5 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♕c6, Black had a fully acceptable position in Neumann – Lange, West German Championship 1982. To be fair though, the move in the game was by no means the chief cause of Miles's eventual defeat.

13.dxc5

Sounding the drum roll!



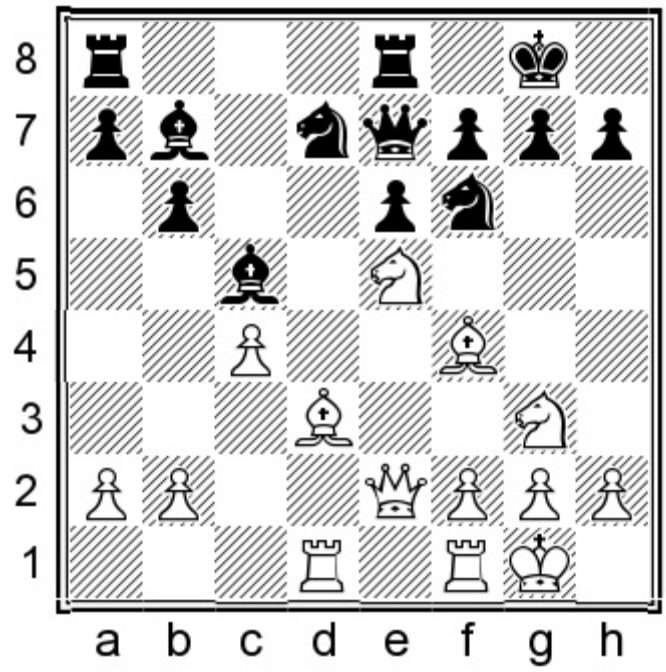
13...bxc5?

After this error, it becomes exceptionally difficult to defend the black position. I think Miles simply panicked. Nothing terrible would happen to Black after the cool-headed:

13...♗xc5 14.♘e5 ♕e7

Better than 14...♕c8? 15.♗xh7†! ♔xh7 16.♖xd7! ♘xd7 17.♕h5† ♔g8 18.♕xf7† ♔h8 19.♗h6! ♖g8 20.♕h5 and mate is imminent.

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15.♘xd7

Tal suggested that 15.♗g5!? would give White the advantage, but I am not so sure about that; after 15...♘xe5 16.♕xe5 ♗d6 17.♕e2 ♗xg3 18.fxg3 ♕c5† 19.♗e3 ♕e5 the position is rather unclear.

15...♘xd7 16.♗e4!?

I'm not convinced that White has realistic winning chances in the event of 16.♗xh7† ♔xh7 17.♕d3† ♔g8 18.♕xd7 ♖ed8 19.♕xe7 ♗xe7±. With his two strong bishops, Black can be reasonably confident about the future.

16...♗xe4 17.♘xe4 e5 18.♗g5! f6 19.♗e3

White has a slight though stable plus. Black would of course retain decent chances of gradually achieving equality.

14.♘e5 ♕b6?

Black's final error; from now until the end of the game, he will only play the role of an extra on the stage.

It is also difficult to recommend:

14...h6 15.♘xd7

Black's game is slightly simpler to play in the event of 15.♘h5 ♘xe5 16.♗xe5 ♕b6.

However, White has one other excellent idea at his disposal – the direct 15.♗g6!? fxg6 16.♘xd7 ♕c8 17.♖fe1±.

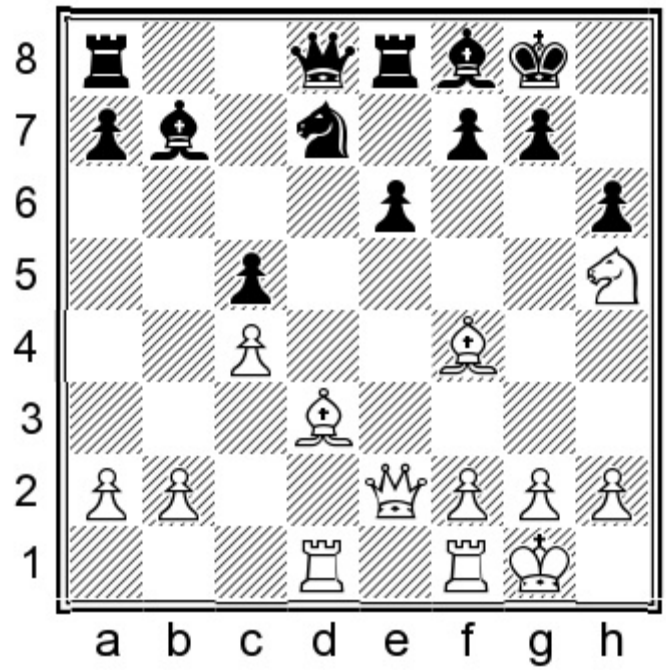
15...♘xd7 16.♘h5!?

16.♗e4!? ♕c8 17.♕f3 ♗xe4 18.♘xe4± could serve as a very good alternative.

16...♗f8

In answer to 16...♗g5, White is spoilt for choice. He can play 17.♗e4 ♗xe4 18.♕xe4 g6 19.♕c6 ♗xf4 20.♘xf4 ♕f6 21.♘h5!?±; or the even stronger 17.♗e5 ♘xe5 18.♕xe5, leaving Black to decide between 18...f6 19.♕g3 f5 20.h4 ♗f6 21.♗e4+– and 18...♗f6 19.♕xc5±.

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17.♗xh6! ♕e7

17...gxh6? loses to 18.♗h7† ♔xh7 19.♖xd7.

Nor does 17...♕h4 save Black: 18.♗xg7! ♗xg7 (after 18...♗xg2 19.♗c3! ♗xf1 20.♔xf1 there is no defence to be found against White's many threats) 19.♗h7†! ♔xh7 20.♖xd7 with an irresistible attack.

18.♕g4

18.♗d2± is not at all bad either.

18...f5

Nothing but a miracle can help Black.

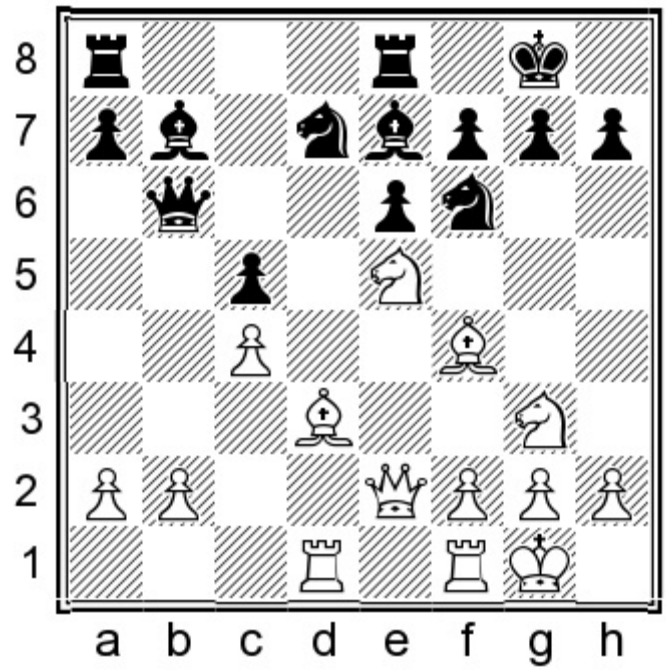
He gets nowhere with 18...♘e5 19.♕g3 f6. White answers with the uncomplicated but pretty 20.♗g5! ♘f3† 21.gxf3 fxg5 22.♗g6, and now 22...♖ed8 23.♕h3+– leads to a quick mate.

19.♕g3 ♕f7 20.♗e2+–

Although Black's position is bad in any case, the most stubborn defence lay in 14...g6, with the possible continuation 15.♗e4 ♕c8 16.♘xd7 ♘xd7 17.♕f3 ♗xe4 18.♘xe4±.

I can't help thinking that there was a certain incongruity between the errors Black committed and his punishment. Tony Miles did play the opening inaccurately, he was rather hesitant and missed the most tenacious defence – all this is true. Yet the fact that Black was practically in a lost position by move 14 indicates that on that day his share of help from "Lady Luck" was clearly insufficient.

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15.♗xh7†!

At this point, contrary to Tal's opinion, White could also continue with: 15.♘xd7 ♘xd7 16.♗xh7† ♔xh7 17.♖xd7 Tal gives this a question mark, which to all appearances is an aberration – particularly since the move is the strongest in the position! (Black would equalize, albeit with some trouble, after 17.♕d3† ♔g8 18.♕xd7 ♖ad8 19.♕c7 ♖xd1 20.♖xd1 ♕xb2∞.) 17...♕c6 (–+ according to Tal) 18.♕d3†! ♔g8 19.f3 White retains an extra pawn and quite good winning chances.
However, the move played in the game is much stronger.

15...♘xh7

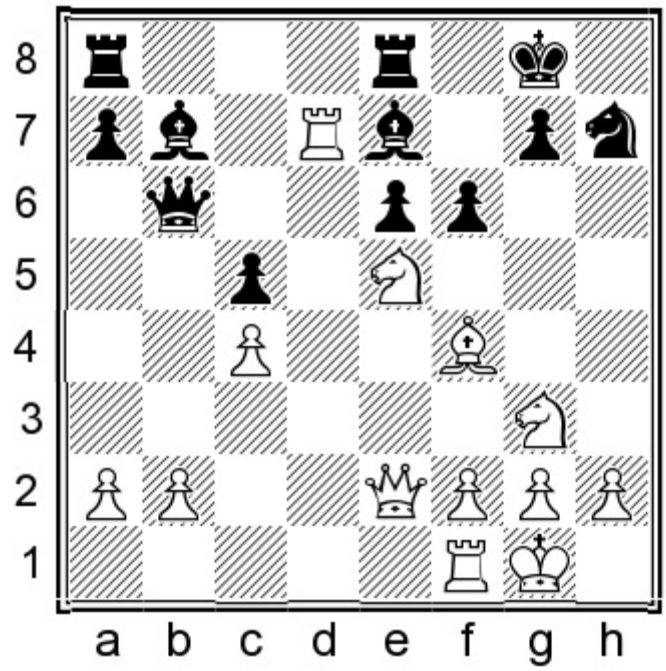
He loses even more quickly with: 15...♔xh7 16.♖xd7 ♔g8 (16...♘xd7 17.♕h5† ♔g8 18.♕xf7† ♔h8 19.♘xd7 ♕c6 20.f3+– is just as hopeless; and so is 16...♗c6 17.♖d3, with the rook heading for the h-file) 17.♘h5! ♘xd7 18.♕g4 and the lonely king will soon be mated.

16.♖xd7 g6

Miles tries to stop his opponent's queen from arriving at h5 – a praiseworthy wish, the more so since there is nothing more constructive available:

On 16...f6, White has a pleasing and wholly uncomplicated combination:

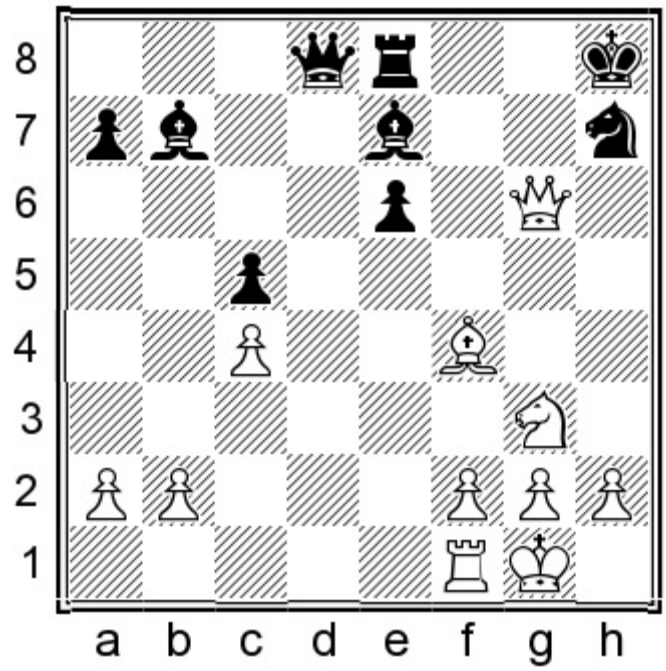
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17.♘h5! fxe5 18.♕g4 g5 19.♖xb7 ♕xb7 20.♕xe6† ♔h8 21.♕f7 ♗f6 22.♕xb7+–

Similarly in the event of 16...♘f6, there is a crushing finish: 17.♘h5! ♘xd7 18.♕g4 g5 19.♘xd7 ♕xb2 20.♗e5 ♕c2 21.♘hf6†+– and the efforts of the white pieces reap their reward.

Finally, the phlegmatic 16...♖ad8 also fails to save Black: 17.♕h5! g6 18.♖xd8 ♕xd8 (or 18...gxh5 19.♖xe8† ♗f8 20.♖b8+– and White has an advantage in position as well as material) 19.♘xg6 fxg6 20.♕xg6† ♔h8

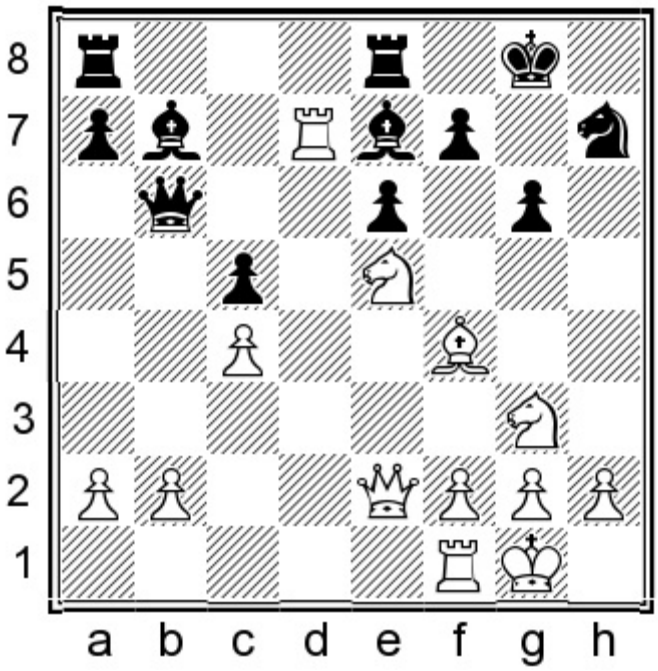


21.♗c7! ♕xc7 22.♕xe8† ♘f8 23.♖e1+– and it is high time for Black to stop the clock.

White obviously has a won position – his attack is deadly – but a curious question remains: How many

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candidate moves would you consider here, and what would they be?



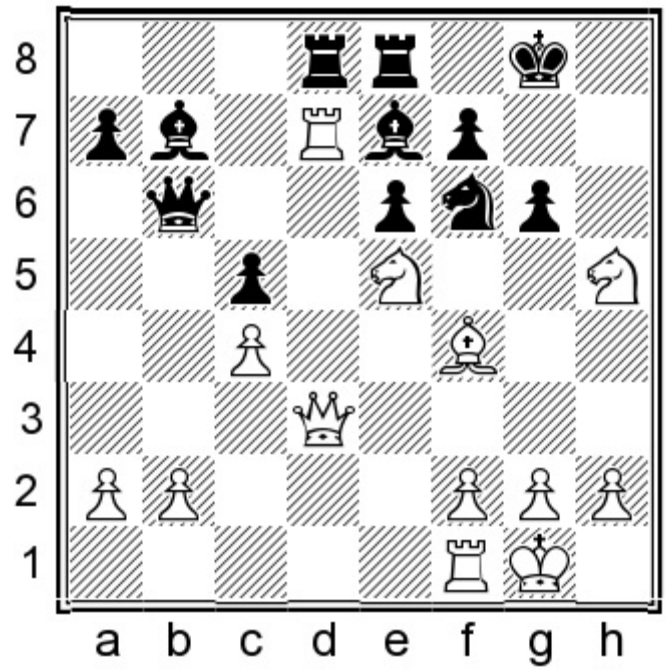
17.b4!!

Let me be honest: this move would *never* have entered my head – for a couple of reasons. In the first place, it is the move of a genius (I say this irrespective of its objective quality), and there is quite a wide gulf between the thoughts of a genius and those of ordinary people! Secondly, I can see no real need for it – White could easily win by means of ordinary, routine continuations.

One such way is: 17.♘e4!? ♗xe4 (in the event of 17...♖ad8 18.♖xb7 ♕xb7 19.♕f3 ♕xb2 20.♘xf7+–, the game would be over within a few more moves) 18.♕xe4 ♘f6 19.♕f3! ♘xd7 20.♘xd7 ♕d8 21.♖d1+– and White's attack quickly decides the game. The threat is ♗e5, and all the weak squares around the black king will soon be occupied by white pieces.

White wins just as easily with: 17.♘h5! ♖ad8 (or 17...♗c6 18.♘xg6! ♗xd7 19.♘e5 ♕d8 20.♖d1+–) 18.♕d3! ♘f6

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19.♖xe7! ♘xh5 20.♖xe8† ♖xe8 21.♕d7 ♖f8 22.♗h6! ♘g7 23.♘xg6!? and any further resistance is senseless.

17...♗c8

It looks as if Tony Miles has already started setting up the pieces for the next game.

Taken the impudent pawn with 17...♕xb4 loses immediately to 18.♘xg6.

Black lasts a bit longer with: 17...cxb4 18.♗e3! (this is even stronger than Tal's suggestion of 18.c5 ♕a6 19.♕c2!, although that does indeed suffice for a large plus after 19...♖ac8 20.♘xg6 ♕c6 21.♖xb7 ♕xb7 22.♘xe7† ♕xe7 23.♘e4) 18...♕a6 19.♕g4 The black monarch, left in forlorn solitude, will be mated quickly and efficiently. 19...♖ad8 20.♘xg6! ♖xd7 21.♘e5† ♘g5 22.♗xg5 f5 23.♕h5+– Black is not helped by 17...♘f8 either: 18.bxc5 ♕a6 19.♖xb7! ♕xb7 20.♘e4 and White has a won position.

18.bxc5 ♕xc5 19.♘e4 ♕b6

The alternative 19...♕b4 is no better: 20.♖c7 ♕b6 21.♘xf7 ♔xf7 22.♘d6† ♔g8 23.♕e4+–

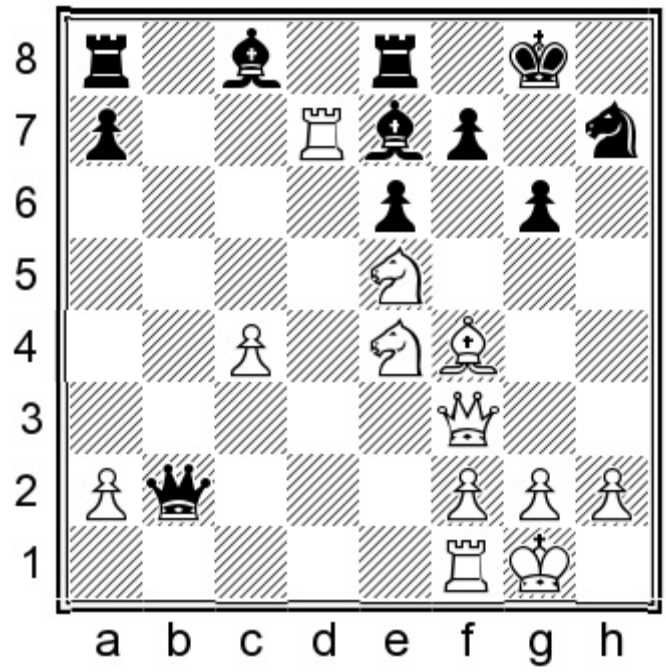
20.♕f3!

The white queen has long had designs on the f7-pawn, and it can now no longer be defended.

20...♕b2

There is no need to comment on 20...♗xd7 21.♗e3+–.

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21.♘xf7

The concluding stroke. Mikhail Tal has been attacking with fantastic energy, not giving Black even the slightest breathing space.

21...♕g7

Or 21...♗xd7 22.♗e5+– and the knight threatens to give mate from h6.

22.♘h6† ♔h8

After 22...♕xh6 23.♖xe7 ♕f8, the simplest course is 24.♖xe8 ♕xe8 25.♘d6+–, winning the rook on a8.

23.♖c7!

Another perfectly adequate way wa23.♗e5 ♗xd7 24.♘f7† ♔g8 25.♗xg7 ♔xg7 26.♘e5+–, but why calculate variations when there is no need?

23...♖f8 24.♖xe7!

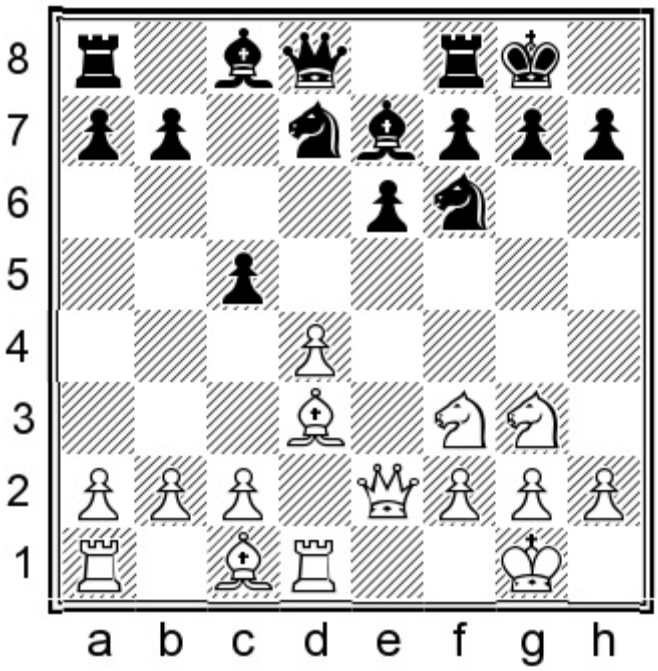
1–0

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Mikhail Tal – Miroslav Filip

Moscow 1967

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♘g3 e6 7.♗d3 ♗e7 8.♕e2 c5 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖d1



10...cxd4

In our day, Black usually postpones the exchange on d4 by one more move, playing:

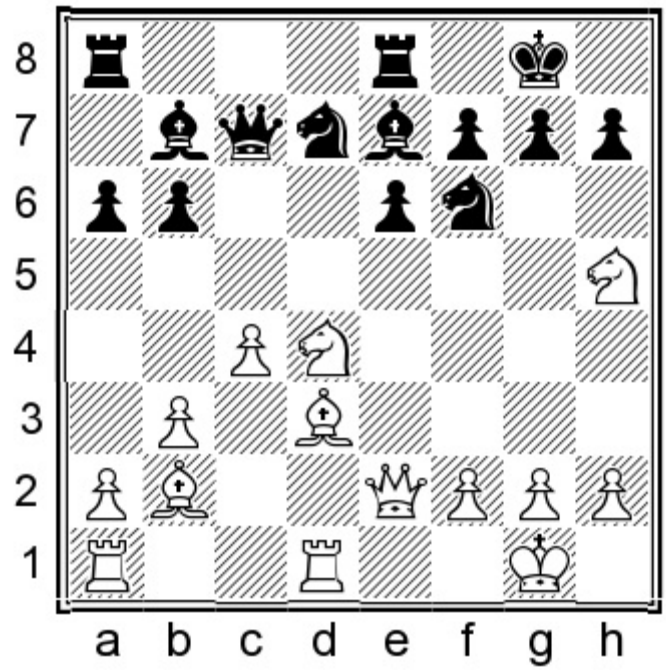
10...♕c7 11.c4 cxd4

Incidentally, against 11...♖e8 White similarly has trouble asserting his claim to an advantage. For example, Tal – Ciric, Budva 1967, went 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13.♗c2 ♘cd7 14.♘e4 b6 15.♗a4 ♖d8 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6 17.♗g5 ♗b7 with about equal chances.

On the other hand, I would not recommend 11...b6?, as after 12.d5 exd5 13.♕xe7 ♖e8 White wins with 14.♗xh7†!.

12.♘xd4 a6 13.b3 ♖e8 14.♗b2 b6 15.♘h5 ♗b7

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16.♘xe6!?

16.♘xg7?! ♔xg7 17.♕xe6 doesn't work, in view of 17...♕xh2†! 18.♔xh2 fxe6 19.♘xe6† ♔f7∓. 16...fxe6 17.♕xe6† ♔f8□ 18.♗xh7 ♘c5!?∞

White eventually succeeded in winning in Kasparov – Karpov, Amsterdam 1988, but Black could be pleased enough with the outcome of the opening.

11.♘xd4 ♖e8

In Arizmendi Martinez – Garcia Roman, Andorra 2007, White maintained a minimal plus after 11...♘c5 12.♗c4 ♗d7 13.b3 ♖e8 14.♗b2 ♕c7 15.♘f3 ♗c6 16.♘e5.

12.b3 ♕b6

I don't quite understand what the queen is doing on b6. The most logical continuation would seem to be 12...a6!? 13.♗b2 ♕c7.

13.♗b2 ♘f8

A careful and cautious player, Filip isn't even fighting for the initiative. In fairness though, 13...♘c5 fails to equalize: 14.♗c4 ♗d7 (Black should avoid 14...♘a4 15.bxa4!? ♕xb2 16.♘b5 ♕b4 17.♘c7±) 15.♘f3 ♗c6 16.♘e5 ♗d5 17.♗b5 ♖ed8 18.c4 and White's position deserves preference.

14.♘f3!?

Tal starts preparing to attack; his pieces are gradually crossing to the kingside.

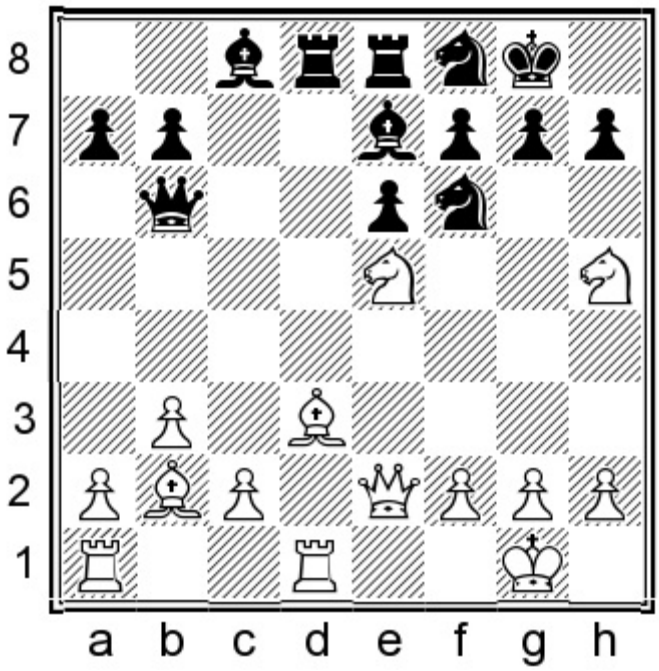
14...♗d7 15.♘e5 ♖ad8 16.♘e4!?

An important juncture. The move played isn't bad, but it's astonishing that Tal rejected the most active continuation – 16.♘h5!, setting Black problems that are hard to solve:

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a) 16...♘xh5 is easy to reject. After 17.♕xh5 ♘g6 18.♗xg6 fxg6□ 19.♕f3 ♖f8 20.♘xd7 ♖xd7 21.♕xf8† ♗xf8 22.♖xd7, White's advantage is plain to see.

b) Tal was afraid of 16...♗c8?!, but it's evident that his fears had nothing to do with the true situation on the board. White has various options:



b1) 17.♘xf6†!? ♗xf6 18.♘c4 ♕c5 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.h4 is an uncomplicated way for White to achieve the better position.

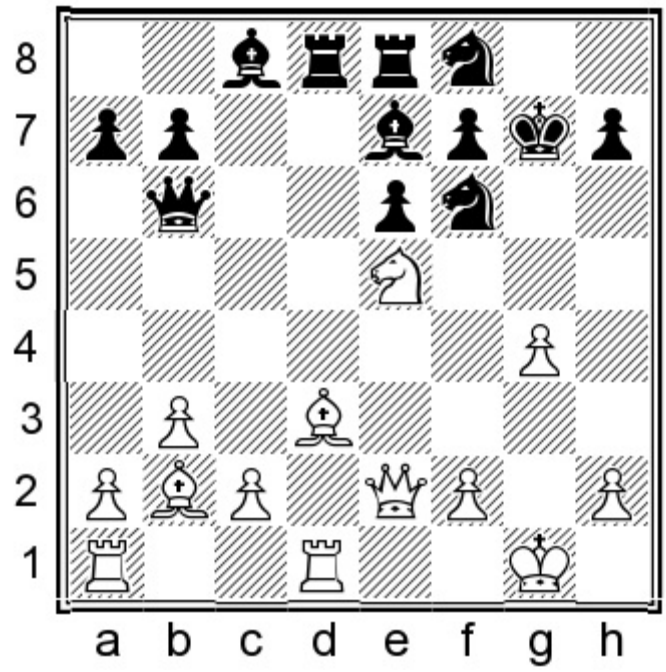
b2) 17.♘xg7!?

This promises White a little high-class amusement.

17...♔xg7 18.g4!

Not, as indicated by Tal, 18.♘g4? ♘g6.

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18...♘g6

On 18...h6, the continuation could be 19.h4 ♘8h7 20.♕f3 ♕c7 21.♕f4 ♖g8! 22.♔f1!? ♖d5 23.g5 ♘xg5 24.hxg5 hxg5 25.♕xg5† ♔f8 26.♕f4 ♗d6 27.♗a3!? and Black's troubles are only just starting. Of course this variation isn't forced, but just have a try at finding an improvement on Black's play – it won't be an easy task!

19.g5 ♕c5 20.a3!? a5 21.c4 ♔g8 22.b4! axb4 23.axb4 ♕xb4 24.♗a3 ♕c3 25.♗xe7 ♖xe7 26.gxf6 ♖ee8 27.♗xg6 hxg6 28.♕e3!±

Thanks to the dominating position of the knight – particularly in contrast to the enemy bishop – White's chances are clearly preferable. I have only given the main line; an analysis of this kind of position could fill several pages.

b3) Finally, 17.♕f3! is quite a straightforward route to an advantage. Then after either 17...♕c7 18.♕f4 or 17...♕c5 18.a4 ♖d5 19.♖e1!, Black can make no further progress and is forced to look on while his opponent improves the placing of all his pieces. In particular, Black needs to think about how to deal with a possible advance of the white g-pawn.

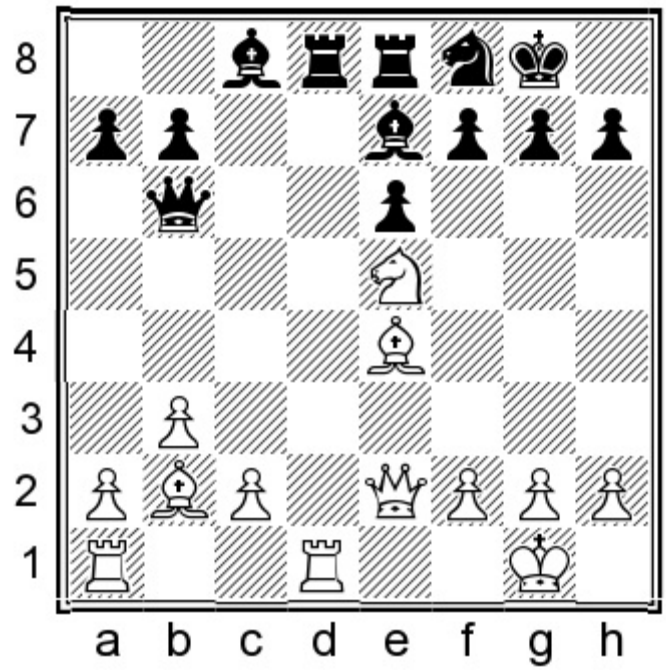
c) It seems to me that Black's best chance lay in 16...♗c6 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♘xf6† ♗xf6 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.♖d2±, allowing White a small but stable plus.

16...♘xe4 17.♗xe4

Not falling into the trap: 17.♘xd7? ♕xf2† 18.♕xf2 ♘xf2 19.♗xh7† ♔xh7 20.♘xf8† ♗xf8 21.♔xf2 f6∓ and Black has a minimal advantage in the ending.

17...♗c8

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18.♕h5!

This at any rate will force Black to defend with great accuracy.

After 18.♕f3 Black's task would be easier: 18...f6 19.♘c4 ♕c7 20.♕h5 f5! 21.♗d3 ♘g6 with a good game.

18...♘g6

Absolutely the only move!

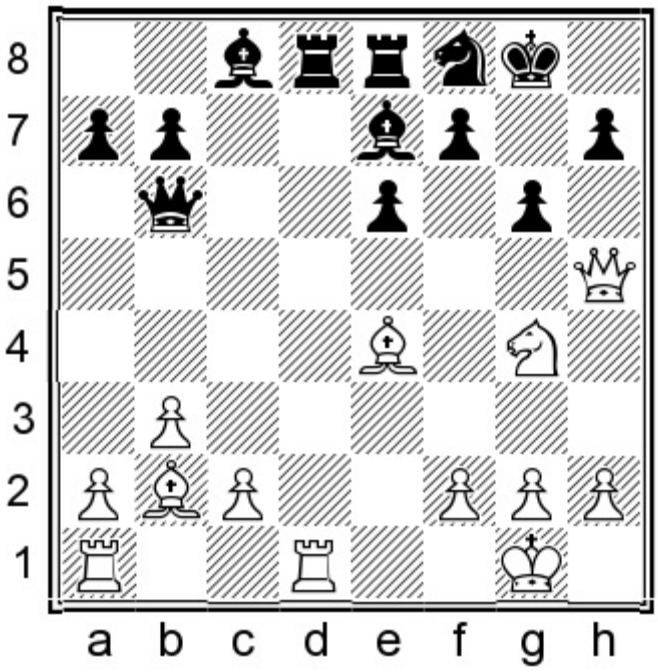
Black must avoid:

18...g6? 19.♘g4!

The best move, although not the only way to win.

After 19.♘xg6!? ♘xg6 20.♗xg6 fxg6 21.♕e5 ♗f6□ 22.♕xf6 e5 23.♕xb6 axb6 24.♖xd8 ♖xd8 25.♗xe5, the endgame is winning for White, in spite of the opposite-coloured bishops.

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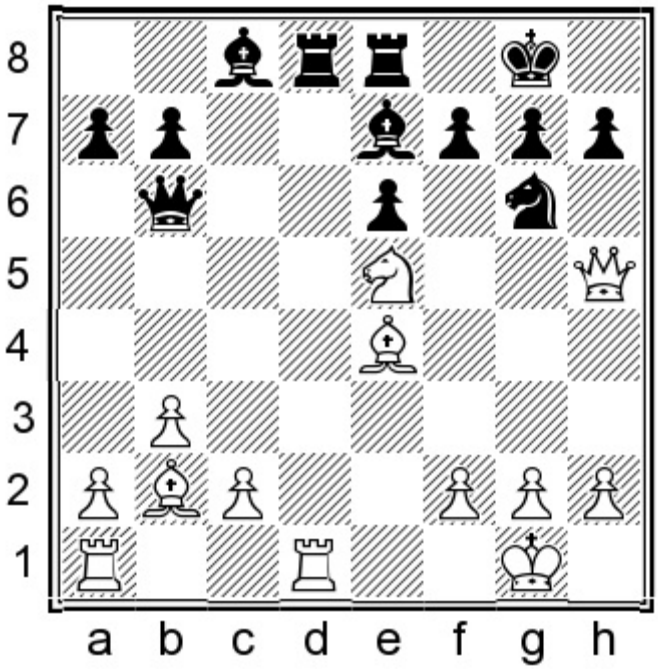
19...e5

Black cannot of course capture the queen.

19...f6 is also wholly bad: 20.♗xf6! ♗xf6 21.♘xf6† ♔f7 22.♕f3+–

20.♕xe5 f6 21.♖xd8 ♕xd8 22.♕f4 ♗xg4 23.♕xg4+–

In addition to possessing two mighty bishops, White has managed to win a pawn – so that the result of the game is a foregone conclusion.



19.♘xf7!

An extremely interesting moment! I am sure Tal must have realized that with precise defence Filip could repel White's onslaught, but he didn't see another way to improve his own position. He therefore decided to bring about a situation of controlled chaos: White would hardly be losing in any of the lines, whereas any mistake on Black's part could have extremely awkward consequences.

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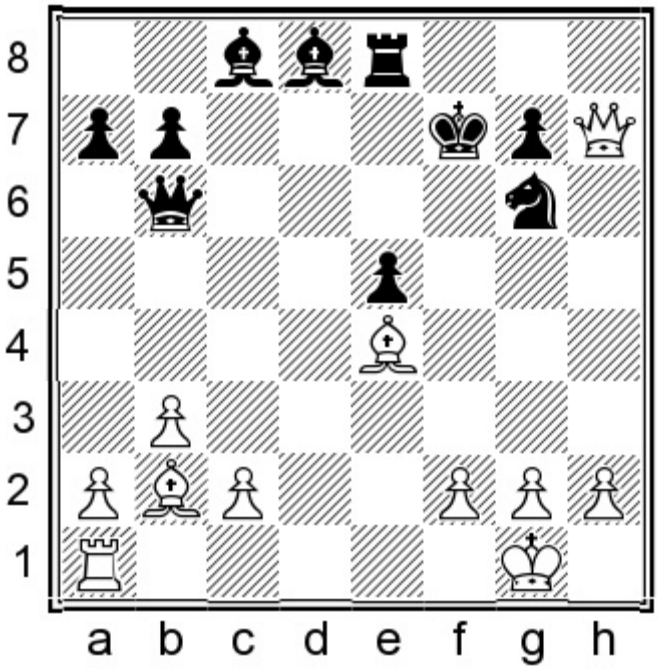
Black could defend successfully in the event of 19.♗xg6 hxg6 20.♕f3 ♖f8∞.

White does not achieve much with: 19.♖xd8 ♖xd8 20.♘xf7 ♖f8! (20...♔xf7!? 21.♕xh7 e5 22.♕h5 transposes to the game) 21.♗xg6 hxg6 22.♕h8† ♔xf7 23.♕xg7† ♔e8 24.♗d4 ♕a5 25.♕xg6† ♖f7⇄ This variation was indicated by Tal himself.

I have tried to extract an advantage, however slight, from 19.♖ab1!? defending the bishop (which may be important if Black plays ...♗f6). However, after the accurate reply 19...♕a5, neither 20.a3? ♗xa3! 21.♖a1 ♕b4 nor 20.♗xg6 hxg6 21.♕f3 ♖f8 22.♖xd8 ♕xd8 23.♖d1 ♕c7 promises White any trace of a plus.

19...♔xf7 20.♕xh7 e5 21.♖xd8 ♖xd8

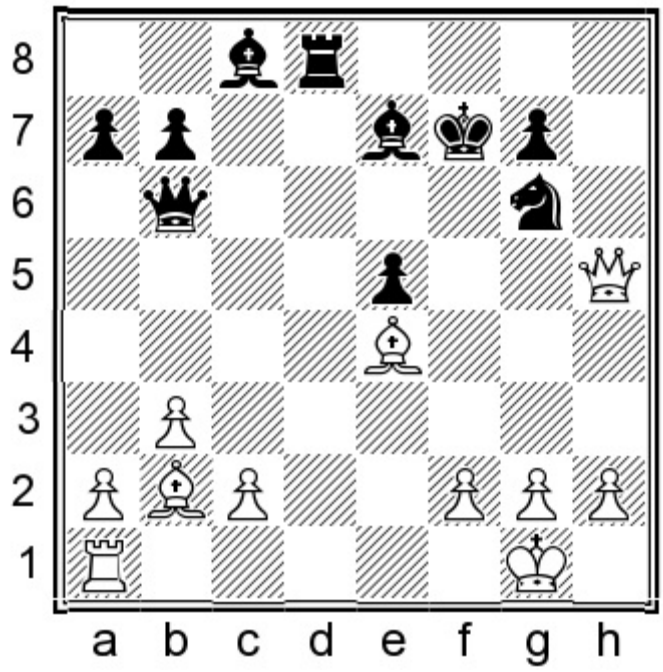
Probably 21...♗xd8 was the simplest way for Black to secure his defence.



Then seeing that 22.♕h5!? ♕f6 23.♖e1 ♕g5 24.♕f3† ♔g8 would suit Black perfectly well, White's best option objectively would be to repeat moves with 22.♗d5†!? ♗e6 (22...♔f6 23.♕h5!±) 23.♗e4=. However, I suspect that Tal wouldn't have consented to such an outcome.

22.♕h5

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22...♕e6

I can only feel sorry for Filip, who was under the obligation of choosing correctly between numerous plausible lines. Apart from 22...♗c5, which merely transposes to the game continuation after 23.♔h1 ♕e6 24.h3, there are three alternatives worth examining:

22...♗d7?

Probably the weakest of the three.

23.♗xe5 ♗g4

23...♗e8 24.♗c7!

24.♕xg4 ♘xe5 25.♕h5† ♘g6 26.♖e1 ♖d2 27.♔h1 ♖d6

27...♖xf2 is wholly bad: 28.♗xg6† ♕xg6 29.♖xe7† ♔xe7 30.♕c5† ♕d6 31.♕xf2 ♕d1† 32.♕g1 ♕xc2 33.♕xa7 ♕b1† 34.♕g1 ♕xa2 35.♕e3† with very good winning chances for White.

28.♖e3 ♔e8 29.♔g1

White has an obvious plus.

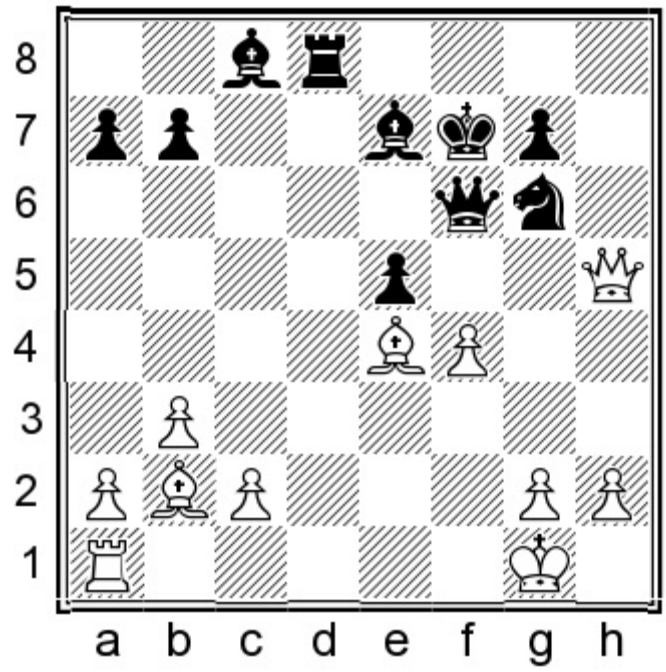
22...♕f6 23.f4!

An essential move.

23.♖e1 ♕g5 24.♗xg6† ♕xg6 25.♕xe5 ♗e6 leads to unclear play.

And 23.h4? actually loses – Tal gives the variation 23...♖h8! 24.♗xg6† ♕xg6 25.♕xh8 ♗h3 26.g3 ♕e4 27.♕h5† ♔g8–+, and a perfectly good alternative is 23...♗c5!? 24.♗xg6† ♕xg6 25.♕xe5 ♗h3–+.

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23...♕b6†

Black loses immediately with both 23...♗c5†? 24.♔h1 ♖h8 25.♗xg6† ♔g8 26.♕g5 and 23...♖h8?? 24.♗xg6† ♔g8 25.♕xe5.

24.♔h1 exf4 25.♖e1!

Better than 25.♕h7 ♘f8 26.♕xg7† ♔e8 27.♖e1 ♗e6 28.♗c3 ♖d7 29.♗f3 ♕d6, and with the black king securely protected, the position offers mutual chances.

25...♗f8

25...♗b4 26.♕h7!

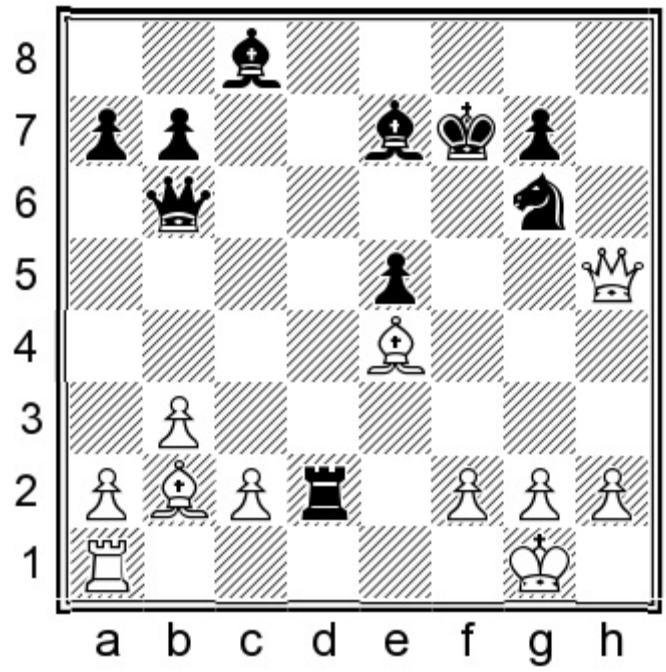
26.c4! ♕e6 27.♗c3±

Now that the rook is safely guarded, White can improve his position unhindered.

22...♖d2!?

Tal's suggestion.

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23.♖f1 ♕e6

Not 23...♗c5? 24.♗xe5! ♖xf2 25.♗xg6† ♕xg6 26.♕xg6† ♔xg6 27.♖xf2 ♗f5 28.c3 ♗xf2† 29.♔xf2 ♗b1 30.a3 ♗a2 31.b4± and I am not at all convinced that Black would succeed in holding this difficult endgame.

24.♗c3

24.h3!? deserves attention.

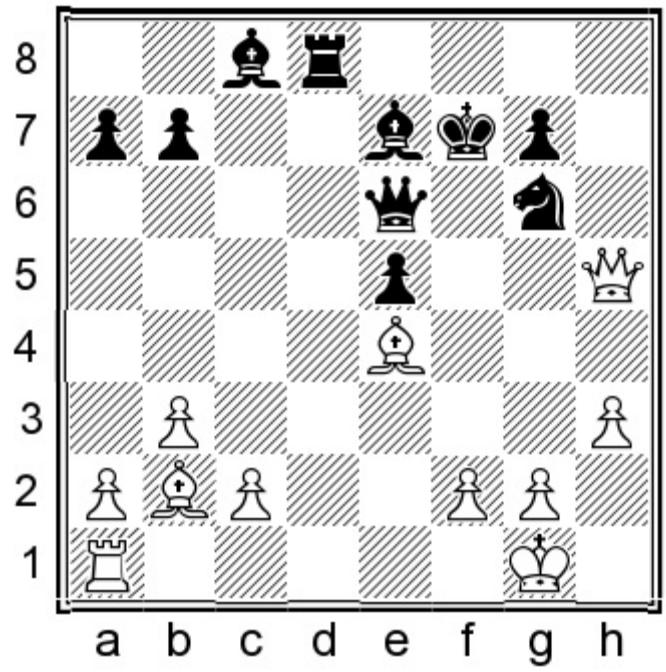
24...♖d6 25.♗b4 ♖a6!? 26.♗xe7 ♔xe7 27.♗xg6 ♕xg6 28.♕xe5† ♗e6∞

This doesn't look too dangerous for Black.

23.h3!

A remarkable move! White has no decisive continuations, so Mikhail Tal, the chess world's serial killer, is happy to make a bolt-hole for his king and await his opponent's mistakes.

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23...♗c5?!

A critical moment in the game. We can only imagine how much time and energy Black's last few moves must have cost him, and finally he starts to go wrong.

Black would have a difficult time after:

23...♖d6?! 24.♗a3!

In the event of 24.♖e1, Tal's suggestion of 24...♔f8? is easily refuted by 25.♗xg6 ♕xg6 26.♕h8† ♔f7 27.♕xc8. But a different retreat of the king – 24...♔g8! – is much stronger. Then after 25.♗a3!? ♘f4 26.♕h7† ♔f7 27.♗xd6 ♕xd6 28.♗f3± White holds the initiative, but Black is perfectly capable of defending.

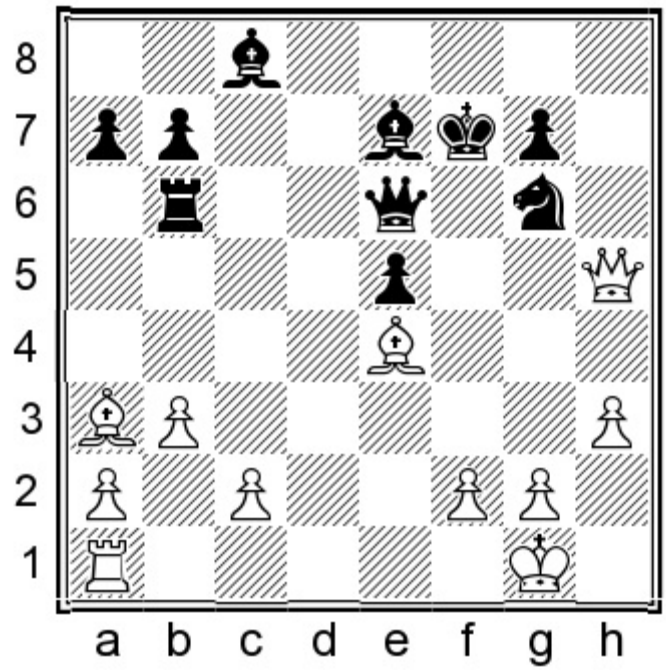
24...♖b6

Black has problems finding suitable squares for his rook.

White would answer 24...♖d4 with 25.♗xg6† ♕xg6 26.♕xg6† ♔xg6 27.♗xe7±.

Black could consider 24...♖c6, but even then 25.♖d1 ♕f6 26.♗xe7 ♔xe7 27.♗xc6 ♕xc6 28.♕g5† ♔f7 29.c4 leads to a clear advantage for White.

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25.♖d1! ♕f6 26.♗xe7 ♔xe7

26...♕xe7 27.♖d3!

27.♗xg6 ♕xg6 28.♕xe5† ♗e6 29.♕c7† ♔f6 30.♖d3

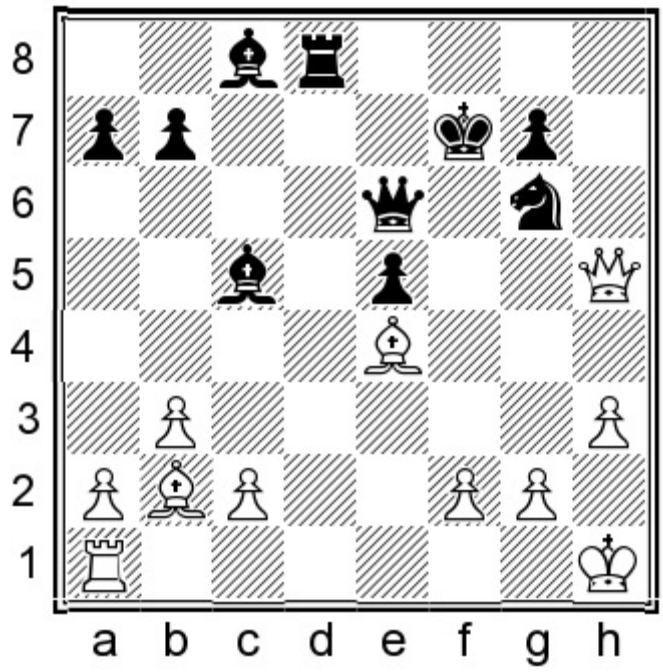
I don't think Black will manage to organize an adequate defence.

However, Black had at his disposal the excellent move 23...♗d7!?, completing his development at last. There could follow: 24.♖e1 (or 24.♗xb7 ♗c6 25.♗xc6 ♕xc6 26.♗xe5 ♕xc2∓) 24...♗c6 25.♗f5 ♕f6 26.♖xe5 (26.♗xe5 ♕g5 is also fine for Black) 26...♖d1†! 27.♕xd1 ♘xe5∓ and Black is the only one who can play for a win.

24.♔h1!

It's a delight to observe Tal's sang-froid! White is attacking without any undue haste (23.h3! and 24.♔h1!), but such tactics splendidly perform their work on the opponent, especially if he is short of time. He ceases to understand where the most dangerous threats are coming from, he gets nervous, and – very often – he will even start doing his best to help you!

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24...♗d4?

The first mistake is almost sure to be followed by a second – such is the law of the chess jungle! But then, the problems confronting Black were becoming harder to solve with every move. What else could he have done?

It is hard to recommend Tal's suggestion here:

24...♖d6? 25.f4!?

White brings his f-pawn into the attack at once.

25.♖e1? is inferior: 25...♔g8! (25...♗d4 is refuted without difficulty by 26.♗a3! ♖d8!? 27.♖f1!? ♕a6 28.♖d1!, aiming to meet 28...♕xa3 with 29.♗xg6† ♔f6 30.f4!+–) 26.f4 ♗b4 27.c3 ♗c5 28.c4 ♗b4 29.♗d5 ♖xd5 30.cxd5 ♕f5 31.♕xf5 ♗xf5 32.♖c1 ♘xf4 with chances for both sides.

25...exf4

25...♔g8 26.fxe5 ♖b6 27.♗d3!+–

26.♕xc5 ♕xe4 27.♕xd6 ♗xh3 28.♕d2 ♘h4 29.♔h2 ♕xg2†

29...♗xg2 doesn't help either: 30.♕d7† ♕e7 31.♕xe7† ♔xe7 32.♗xg7+–

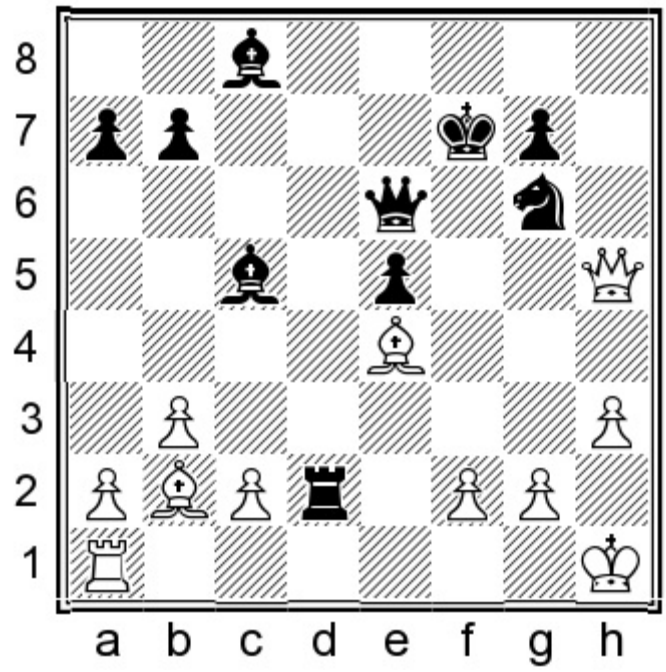
30.♕xg2 ♗xg2 31.♖g1 f3 32.♔g3 ♘f5† 33.♔f2 g5 34.♖e1 g4 35.♗e5

White's advantage in the ending is probably decisive.

24...♖d2!

The play following this active move is more interesting.

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25.♖e1!

25.f4?! exf4 26.♖e1 ♗f2! 27.♕h7 (if White wants to lose in a hurry, he can try 27.♗xg6†?? ♕xg6 28.♖e7† ♔xe7 29.♕xg6 ♖d1† 30.♔h2 ♗g3†−+) 27...♘e7 28.♖f1 (not 28.♕xg7† ♔e8 29.♗g6† ♔d7! 30.♖f1 b6–+) 28...♗e3 and thanks to the active placing of his pieces, Black's chances are at least no worse.

25.c4 ♕f6! cannot be at all to White's liking.

25...b6

25...♖xf2 26.♗xe5±

26.f4!?

An odd sort of King's Gambit has arisen!

Black equalizes easily after 26.♗xg6† ♕xg6 27.♕xe5 ♔g8□ 28.♕e8† ♔h7 29.♕xc8 ♖xf2⇄.

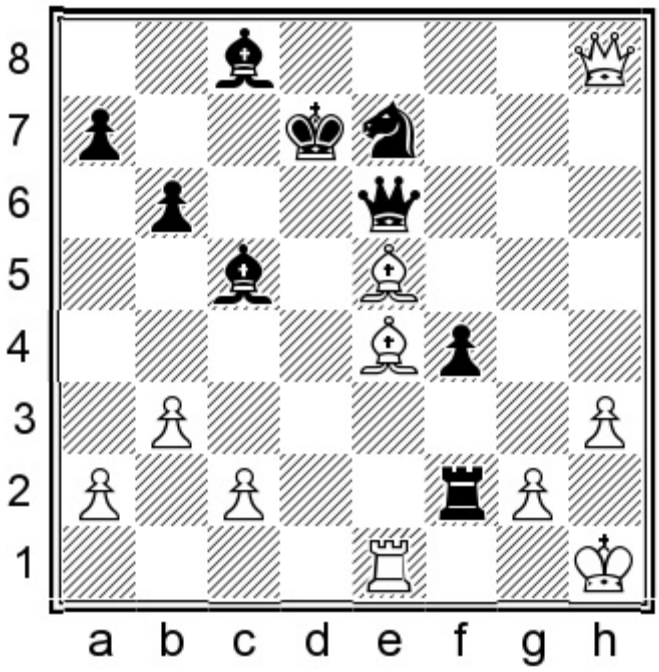
26.c4 leads to unclear complications: 26...♖xb2 27.♗d5 ♖xf2 28.♗xe6† ♗xe6 29.♕d1!? ♘f4 30.♖f1 ♖xa2 and seeing that 31.g3? loses to 31...♗f5!, White has to be content with 31.♕h5† ♔f6 32.♕h4† and perpetual check.

26...exf4 27.♕h7

After 27.♗c3 ♗e3! 28.♗xd2 ♕xe4, the activity of Black's pieces will be fully adequate for equality.

27...♘e7! 28.♗xg7 ♔e8 29.♗c3 ♖f2 30.♕h8† ♔d7 31.♗e5

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31...♖d2!

31...♗d6 is less convincing: 32.♗xd6 ♕xd6 33.♗d3, and since 33...♗b7? fails to 34.♖xe7† ♔xe7 35.♕h4†, Black has to settle for 33...♖d2! 34.♗b5† ♔c7 35.♕c3† ♔d8 36.♗d3 when he is forced to go into a highly unpleasant ending.

32.♗xf4 ♖d4 33.♗e5 ♖xe4! 34.♖xe4 ♗b7

Which side is actually doing the attacking?

35.♖g4 ♕f5

With wholly unclear play.

Summing up, we may say that against the correct 24...♖d2! it would be very difficult, if possible at all, for White to gain any advantage.

25.♖d1!?

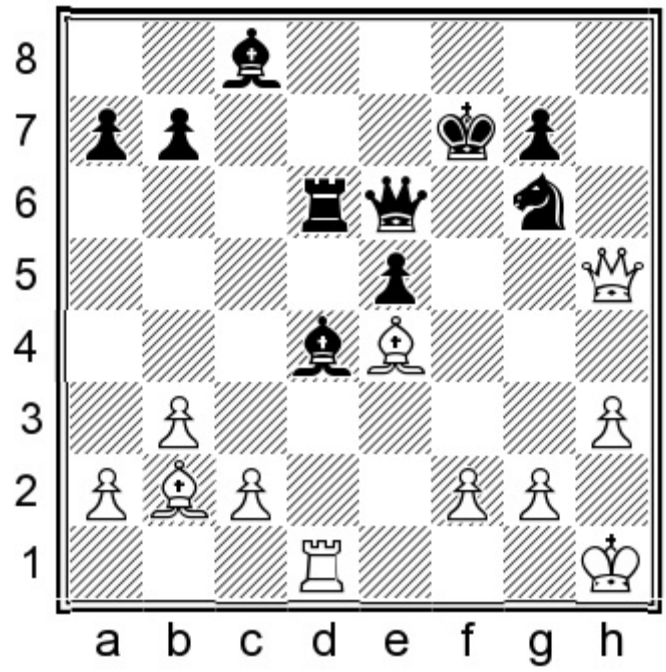
A perfectly reasonable alternative wa25.c3. There could follow: 25...♗b6!? (better than 25...♗xf2 26.♖f1 ♖d2 27.♗c1! ♖xa2 28.♗b1+– or 25...♗c5 26.♖f1! ♗d6 27.f4+–) 26.♖f1 ♗c7 27.c4 ♖d6 Hoping to evacuate his king to a safe place. 28.f4 exf4 29.♖e1! ♔g8 30.♕xg6 ♕xg6 31.♗xg6±

25...♖d6?

Filip was hard put to find a move that didn't lose immediately. Neither 25...♗b6 26.♖xd8! ♗xd8 27.f4+– nor 25...♖h8 26.♗xg6† ♔g8 27.♕g5+– would have met that demand.

As a final attempt to offer resistance, Black probably had to play 25...♕f6, but even then his lot would be unenviable: 26.♗xd4 ♖xd4 (26...exd4 27.♖d3) 27.♖xd4 exd4 28.f4! ♕xf4 29.♕xg6† ♔f8 30.♗d3 and White's chances of winning are much greater than Black's of drawing.

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26.♗a3!

The concluding stroke, deciding the fate of the game at once.

26...♖a6

The rook can't leave the rank; on 26...♖d8 White has 27.♖d3!+–.

27.♖xd4!

And Filip stopped the clock, in view of the wholly uncomplicated variation: 27...exd4 (or 27...♖xa3 28.♗d5) 28.♗d5 ♖xa3 29.♕f5† ♔e8 (29...♔e7 30.♗xe6 ♗xe6 31.♕c5† is just as hopeless) 30.♗xe6 ♗xe6 31.♕xg6†+–

1–0

A remarkable game and a genuine "Tal game". White acquired a small plus out of the opening, but on account of the slight lapse on move 16, his opponent practically recovered to full equality. Tal was soon confronted with a dilemma: he could carry on for a few more moves, settle for half a point, and for a long time afterwards bemoan the "death of draws" that chess faced – or else he could go in for a *nearly* correct piece sacrifice. The risk he was taking was not great – it was only at move 23 that Black could have gained a slight advantage by playing ...♗d7! – and think how many dangers Filip had to live through, both before and after that moment! On the very next move, he could still (to all appearances) have secured a draw, but when it came to playing 24...♖d2! his powers failed him. After another relatively slight error on Black's part, Tal took just three more moves to conclude the game victoriously.

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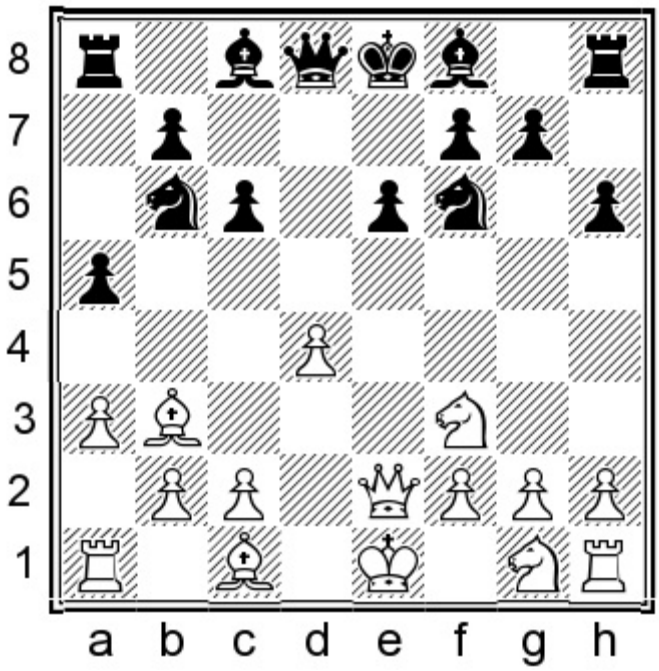
Mikhail Tal – Jonathan Speelman

Subotica 1987

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♗c4

Even the great ones follow the fashion! In the mid-1980s this move attracted the attention of practical players and analysts alike, and the majority of Caro-Kann games began in precisely this way.

5...♘gf6 6.♘g5 e6 7.♕e2 ♘b6 8.♗b3 h6 9.♘5f3 a5 10.a3



10...♗e7

At this point 10...a4!? 11.♗a2 c5, clearing the ground for future queenside counterplay, looks quite good.

11.♗d2!?

After 11.♗f4 a4 12.♗a2 ♘bd5 13.♗e5 b5 14.c3 ♕a5 15.♕c2 ♘b6 16.♘e2, White's chances are slightly preferable, Lie – Groenn, Norwegian Championship 2001.

11...♘bd5?!

Through the efforts of both opponents, the game has very quickly stepped outside the bounds of known theory. I suspect that Jon Speelman – who incidentally was playing with quite phenomenal strength in those years – was a little afraid of his legendary opponent; prepared to play defensively, he was intent on reaching a safe and solid position.

From the objective standpoint it would have been better to open up the game in the centre by 11...c5 12.dxc5 ♘bd7. In Bach – Nisipeanu, Spain 1996, the continuation was 13.c6 bxc6 14.♘d4 ♗a6

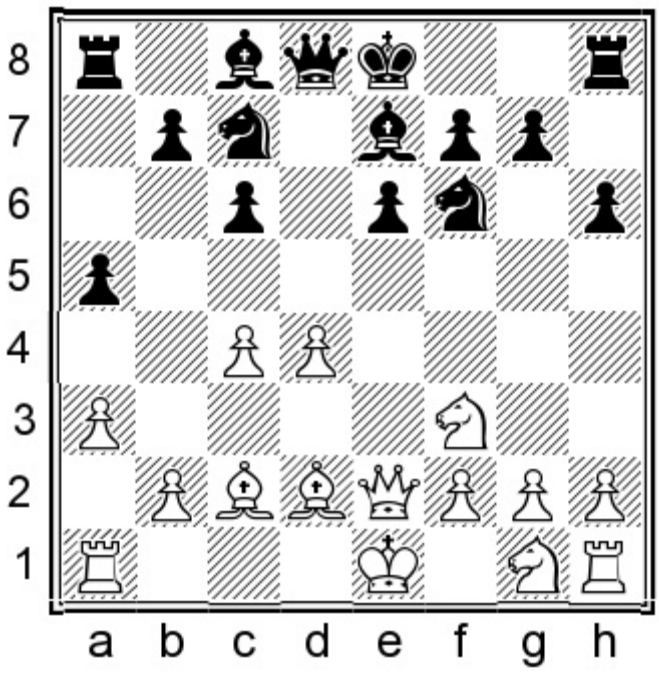
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15.♘xe6 fxe6 16.♕xe6, and now Black could have obtained an excellent game with 16...♘c5! 17.♕f7† ♔d7 18.0-0-0 ♔c8∓.

It was also worth considering 11...0-0 12.0-0-0 c5!?.

12.c4 ♘c7 13.♗c2

I would prefer 13.♖d1!?, answering 13...b5 with 14.♘e5 or even 14.c5!?.



13...0-0?

That Jon should have decided to castle in this situation is nothing short of amazing! All White's pieces are aiming at the kingside, and the position of the pawn on h6 is positively provoking him into launching a pawn storm.

Black simply had to continue: 13...b5 14.c5 (on 14.♘e5, he might well be able to get away with 14...♕xd4 15.♗c3 ♕c5 16.♘gf3 bxc4⇄) 14...b4 15.axb4 ♗a6 16.♕d1 axb4 17.♗xb4± Black has fair compensation for the pawn, and at least his pieces can take a direct part in the action. As the game goes, they don't succeed in doing so!

14.♘e5!

Many players would prefer to make one more prophylactic move – 14.♖d1. However, after 14...b5 15.♘e5 bxc4 Black's chances of a successful defence would clearly be improving. With the move played, Tal prevents ...b5 – and for this he is quite prepared to pay the small price of a pawn. For someone who had sacrificed hundreds of pieces in the course of his life, this price does not seem excessive!

14...♕xd4

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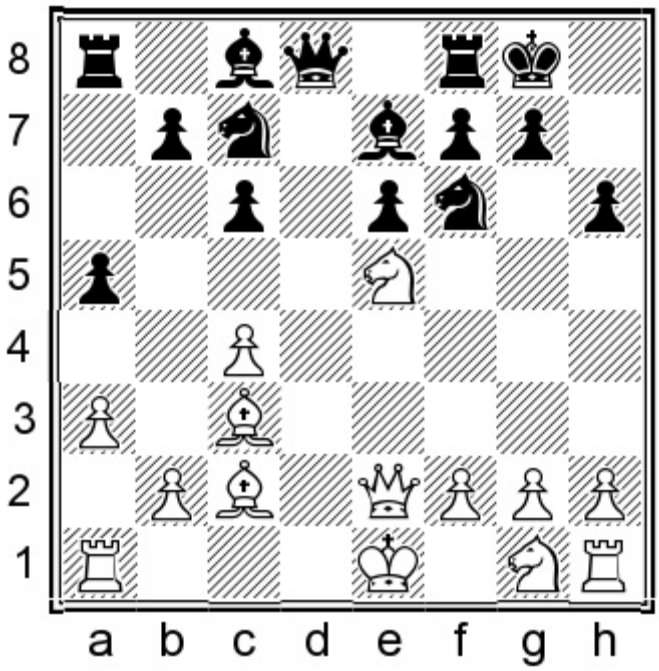
Anything but a timid player, Jon Speelman understands that he will have to suffer anyway, and wants to acquire some material compensation, however slight.

15.♗c3

In answer to 15.0-0-0 Tal was a little afraid of 15...♗xa3, but White's chances would still be superior: 16.bxa3 ♕a1† 17.♗b1 ♕xa3† 18.♔c2 b5 19.♕f3 and Black's attack has come to a dead end.

15...♕d8

It might have been better to retreat with 15...♕b6!?, although it makes no huge difference to the position. After 16.♘gf3 ♘a6 17.g4! White would still have a formidable attack, but at least the black queen would not be subject to harassment from the enemy pieces.



16.♘gf3

A remarkable position arises after: 16.♖d1! ♕e8 17.♕d3 (threatening 18.♘g4!) 17...♕d8 (or 17...g6 18.♕e3) 18.♕g3 ♕e8 19.♘e2 and Black is almost in zugzwang. But Mikhail Tal prefers to play for mate rather than concern himself with restricting the activity of his opponent's pieces.

16...♘ce8 17.g4!

Off we go! Black has nothing with which to oppose the attack that is now starting. His pieces on the queenside, taking no part in the defence of their monarch, make an impression that is just too pitiful.

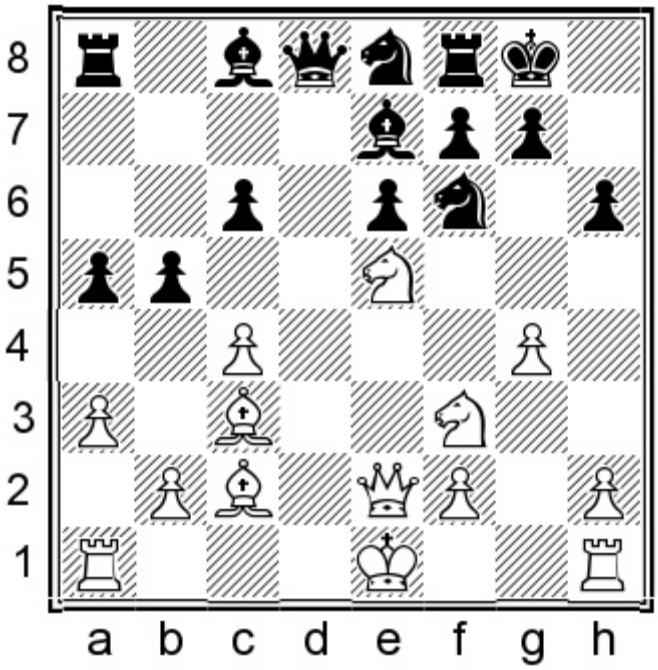
17...b5

By offering material, Speelman tries to divert his opponent from the attack on the king.

After 17...♕c7 18.h4 h5 19.g5 ♘g4 20.♘xg4 hxg4 21.♘e5± Black's troubles are only just beginning.

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And in the event of 17...♘d6 18.h4 h5 19.♘g5! hxg4 (or 19...♕c7 20.gxh5 ♘f5 21.♖g1+–) 20.♘xg4+–, the opening of the g-file means that there will not be long to wait before the end of the game.



18.g5

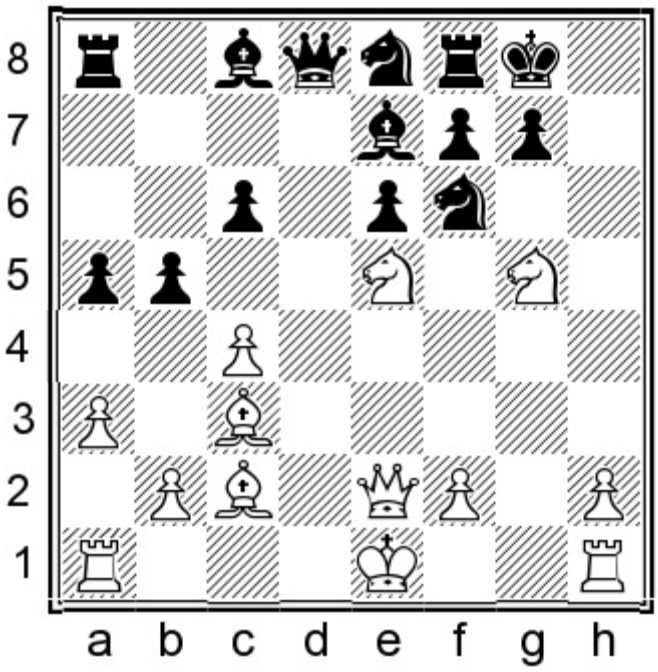
Tal has evidently scented blood and is paying no attention to his opponent's actions.

In fact it was perfectly possible to take the pawn – after 18.♘xc6!? ♕c7 19.cxb5± White has a virtually won position – but Tal has a more interesting target in his sights!

Personally I would probably have preferred 18.h4!. Then after 18...bxc4 19.g5 ♘d5 20.gxh6 ♘xc3 21.bxc3 ♗f6 22.♖g1+–, the black king cannot survive. However, the move in the game is not in any way worse.

18...hxg5 19.♘xg5

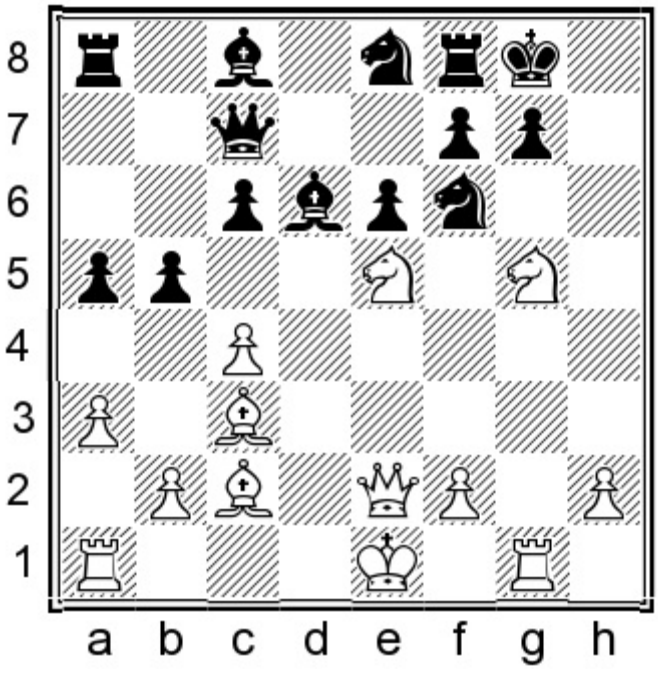
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19...♖a6

After 19...bxc4!? 20.♘xc6 ♕c7 21.♘xe7† ♕xe7 22.♕xc4, the white queen switches to h4 with decisive effect.

I tried in vain to find a black defence with:
19...♕c7 20.♖g1 ♗d6



21.♘g4

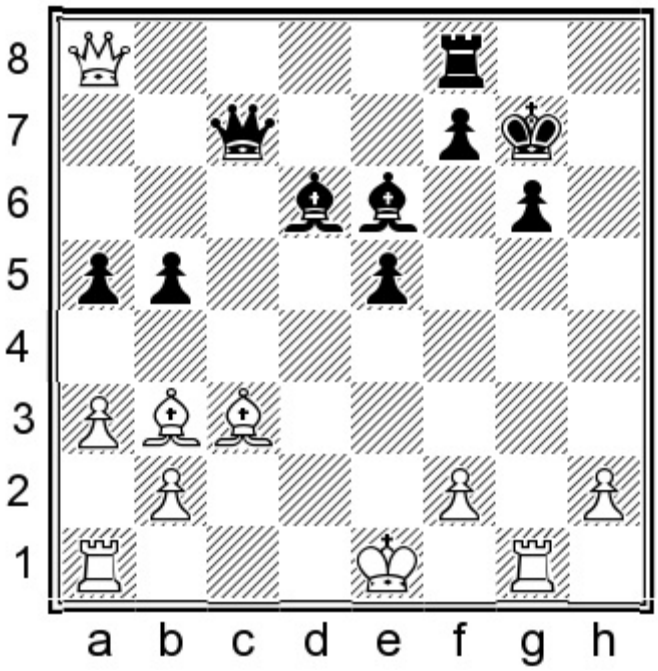
White may also choose the prosaic 21.cxb5 cxb5 22.♘g4 ♘xg4 23.♗h7† ♔h8 24.♕xg4 ♗e5 25.♕h3 ♘f6, and now he can replace anger with mercy and merely pick up the rook on a8 instead of giving mate.

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21...e5

The long but virtually forced variation 21...♕e7 22.♗xf6 ♘xf6 23.♘xf6† ♕xf6 24.♘e4 ♕e7 25.♘xd6 ♕xd6 26.♖xg7†! ♔xg7 27.♕g4† ♔f6 28.♕h4† ♔e5 29.f4† ♔d4 30.0-0-0† ♔c5 31.♕f2† +− could easily be worked out in a few minutes.

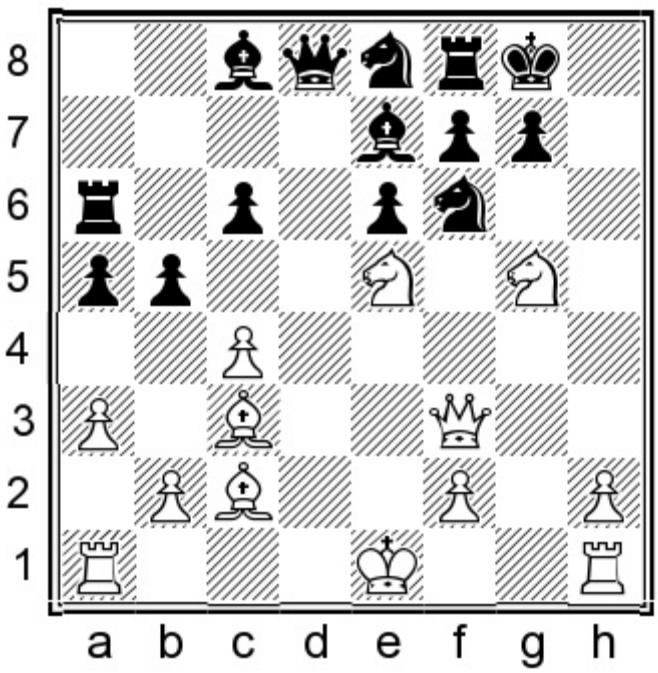
22.♘xf6† ♘xf6 23.cxb5 cxb5 24.♘e4 ♘xe4 25.♕xe4 g6 26.♗b3 ♔g7 27.♕xa8 ♗e6



28.♗xa5! ♖xa8 29.♗xc7 ♗xc7 30.♗xe6 fxe6 31.0-0-0

White has an easy win.

20.♕f3



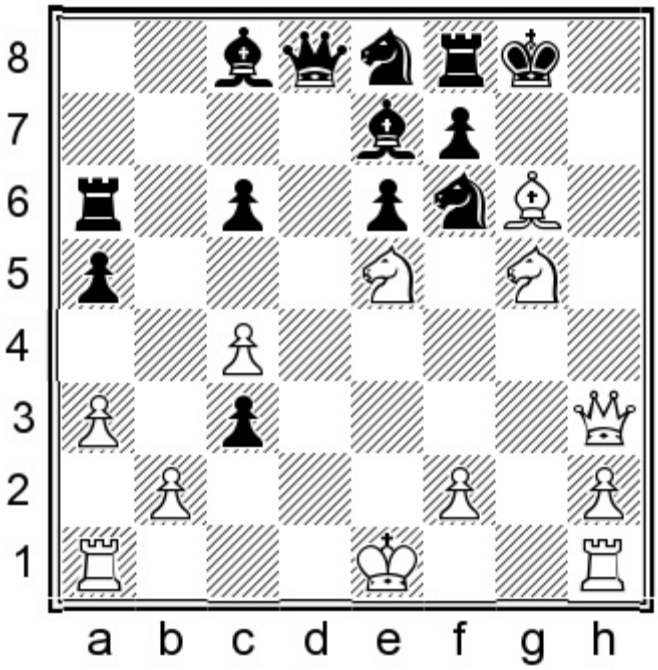
20...b4

An attempt to reduce White's pressure somehow by 20...♗d6 21.♕h3 ♗xe5 is no help either: 22.♗h7†

♔h8 23.♗xe5 ♕b6 (or 23...bxc4 24.♗c2† ♔g8 25.♖g1+–) 24.♗d3† ♔g8 25.♖g1 bxc4 (25...g6 26.♘h7!+– doesn't even allow Black to prolong his resistance) 26.♗h7†! ♔h8 27.♗c2† ♔g8 28.♘h7 and Black will quickly be mated.

21.♕h3! g6 22.♗xg6! bxc3

The game could have ended amusingly after 22...fxg6 23.♘xg6 ♔g7, and now 24.♕h7#!

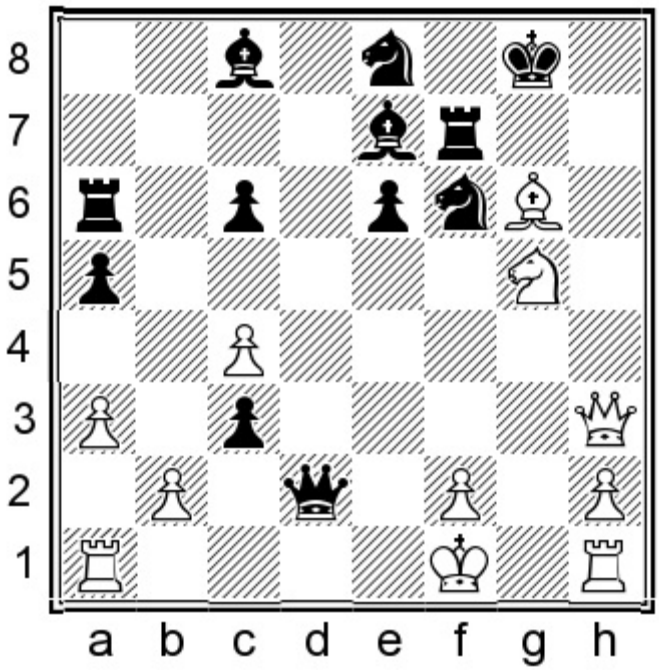


23.♘exf7?!

Interestingly, at the scent of imminent victory, even the strongest and most experienced players (let us ignore the rare exceptions) will start to get excited and miss the strongest continuations, thus making their task more complicated. If at this point Tal had played 23.♘gxf7! ♕d2† 24.♔f1 ♔g7 25.♗c2 ♖g8 26.♖d1!+– or 23.♗h7† ♔g7 24.♖d1+– the game would have been close to its end. Now, for the first time in ages, Black may hope to obtain some realistic defensive chances.

23...♕d2† 24.♔f1 ♖xf7

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25.♗xf7†!

Fortunately Tal manages to recover in time and limit himself to just one mistake!

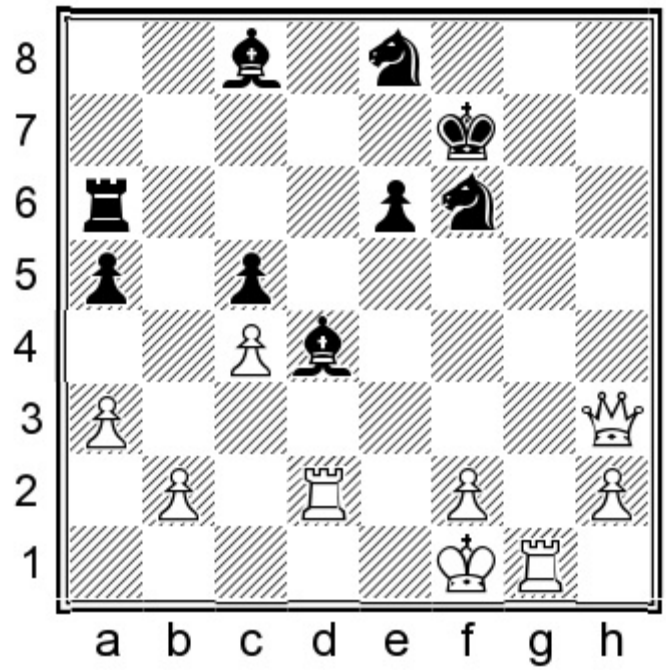
With 25.♘xf7? ♔f8! (not 25...♔g7?? 26.♖g1 ♔f8 27.♕h8† ♘g8 28.♗h7+–), the course of the duel would be radically altered: 26.♕h8† ♘g8 27.♕xc3 (27.♗h7? simply loses to 27...♗h4!) 27...♕xc3 28.bxc3 ♗f6∓ with the better ending for Black.

25...♔g7 26.♖g1 ♕xg5?

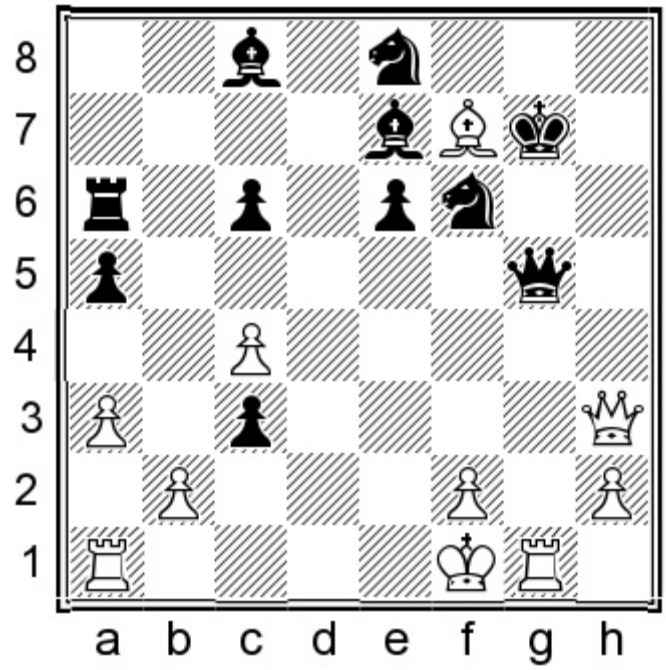
Desperation! This move practically amounts to an admission that the game is over and the time has come to put the pieces back in their starting positions.
Black would lose just as quickly with 26...cxb2 27.♘f3† ♘g4 28.♕xg4† ♗g5 29.♖b1 ♕d3† 30.♔g2+–.

Instead it was imperative for him to play 26...♗c5!?, leading to the forced variation: 27.♘f3† ♔xf7 28.♘xd2 cxd2 29.♖d1 ♗d4 30.♖xd2 c5

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Quite a bizarre distribution of material! White of course has a decisive plus, but at least he would need to play with a certain precision.



27.♖xg5† ♔xf7 28.bxc3! e5?

This move must have been made in severe time trouble. Realizing that White would simply reply 29.♕xc8, Jon Speelman stopped the clock.

1–0

As clever people say, at first you work for your reputation, then your reputation works for you! We have looked at several games by Tal in the Caro-Kann, and time and again we have witnessed the same scenario: a strong grandmaster shies away from the theoretical lines that sometimes lead to double-

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edged, complex positions, and prefers to defend passively. The punishment was usually fierce and inexorable. So I can give you this good advice: work to enhance your reputation! I cannot say that Speelman made many mistakes in this game; I dare say 11...♘bd5?! and, especially, 13...0-0? were second-rate moves. Tal's attacking play was on the highest level. He was happy to sacrifice a pawn in order to open up extra lines for the onslaught, he threw all his forces over to the kingside, and the triumphant march of his g-pawn settled the outcome of the game. And all this happened in a game that was not against some unknown amateur but against one of the strongest players in the world at that time. There is nothing more for me to say, other than the admiring words: Bravo Tal!

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Lev Psakhis – Amador Rodriguez

Sochi 1988

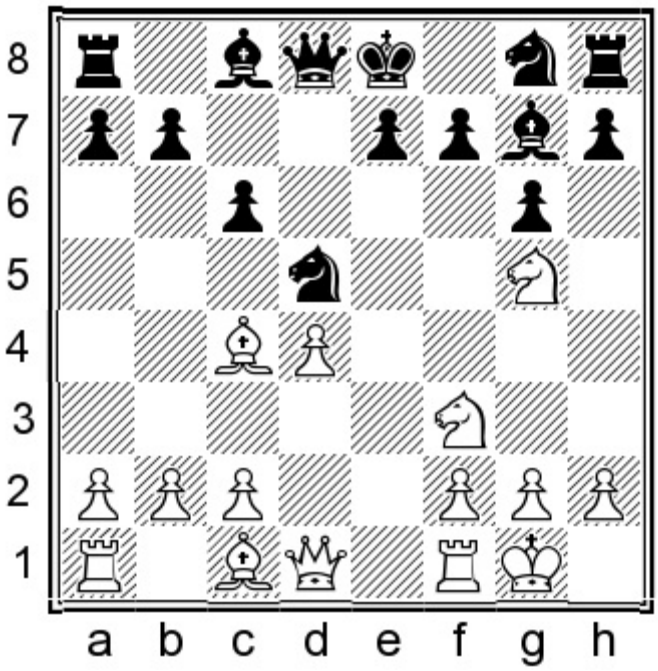
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘g5 ♘df6?!

A rare move, and not an especially good one. For some reason unknown to me, the Cuban Grandmaster considered me an expert on the fashionable variation 5...♘gf6 6.♗d3 (Could he just have been confusing me with someone else?), and decided to bypass the theoretical disputes. To be fair, I should add that 5...♘df6 met with Anatoly Karpov's favour and that it isn't so simple for White to gain an advantage against it.

6.♗c4 ♘d5

In Hübner – Karpov, Belfort 1988, Black gradually managed to equalize after 6...e6 7.♘1f3 h6 8.♘h3 ♗d6 9.♕e2 ♘e7 10.♗d2 ♕c7 11.0-0-0 b5.

7.♘1f3 g6 8.0-0 ♗g7



9.♖e1 h6

In the case of 9...♘gf6 10.♘e5 0-0 11.c3 h6 12.♘gf3± White's chances are somewhat superior, thanks to his unchallenged control of the e5-square.

10.♘e4 ♗g4 11.c3

The position Black has constructed is astonishingly passive, without any chances of counterplay. No wonder White has no problems in obtaining the better game; in fact he can do so in various ways.

Spassky – Karpov, Belfort 1988, continued interestingly: 11.a4 ♘gf6 12.♘xf6† ♗xf6 13.♖a3!? ♔f8

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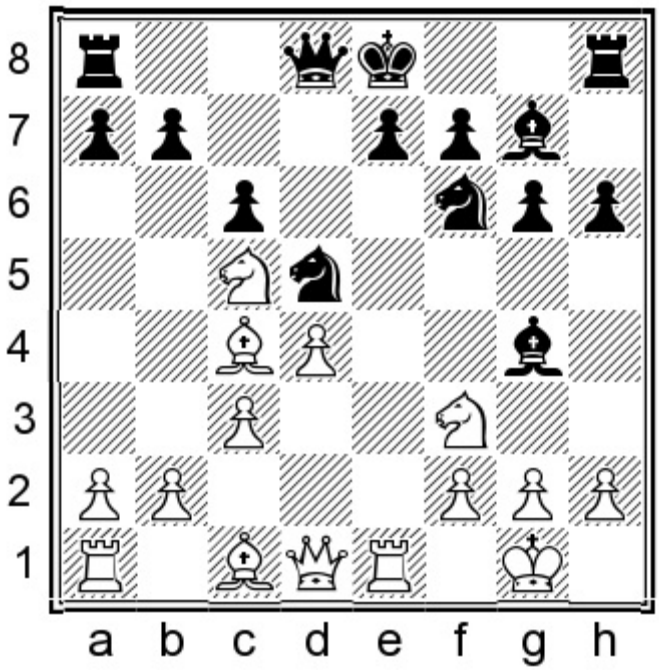
14.h3 ♗xf3 15.♖xf3 ♔g7 16.c3 ♕d7 17.♕d3±

Alternatively 11.♘c5!? b6 12.♘d3, aiming to bring the knight to e5, doesn't look bad.

The strongest move, however, is 11.h3!. There may follow: 11...♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♗xd4 (the pawn sacrifice has to be accepted; after 12...♘gf6 13.♘xf6† ♘xf6 14.♕b3 0-0 15.♕xb7 Black can't play 15...♕xd4 on account of 16.♗xf7†!) 13.c3 ♗g7 (or 13...♗e5 14.♘c5 ♗h2† 15.♔xh2 ♕d6† 16.♔g1 ♕xc5 17.♗b3, and I am at a loss to understand how Black is to complete his development) 14.♗b3 with splendid compensation for the pawn.

11...♘gf6 12.♘c5!?

White also has a pleasant position following 12.♘xf6† ♗xf6 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3±, but I like the game move better.

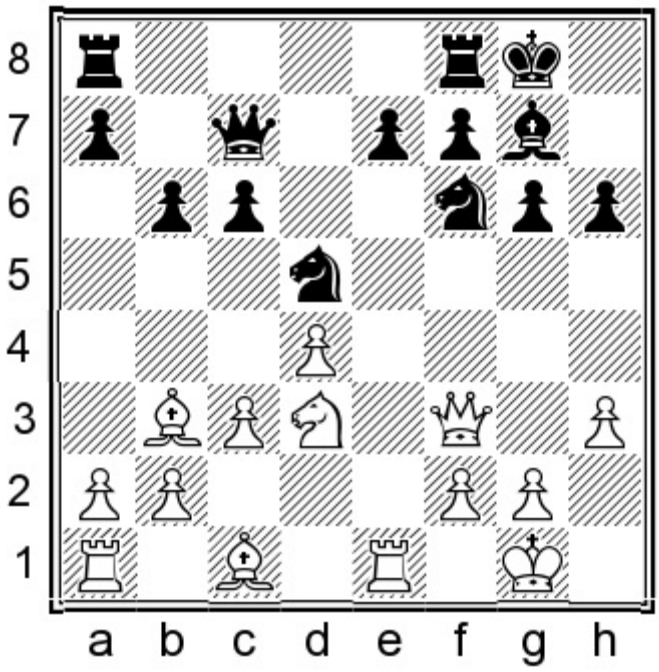


12...♕c7 13.h3

It now seems to me that 13.♘d3 0-0 14.♘de5 ♗c8 15.♗b3 would have been more logical.

13...♗xf3 14.♕xf3 0-0 15.♗b3!? b6 16.♘d3

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16...b5

While engaged in analysing this game, I discovered to my astonishment that the present position was reached in Kabanov – Gladkikh, Novosibirsk 1999. That game continued 16...e6 17.c4 (17.♗d2!?) 17...♘e7 18.♗f4 (18.♗xh6? ♗xh6 19.♕xf6 ♗g7) 18...♕d7 19.♗e5 ♘e8 20.♖ad1, and again Black failed to equalize. Rodriguez tries not to allow c3-c4, but in addition to its advantages his move has some snags, which I succeeded in exploiting.

17.a4 a6 18.♗f4!±

An interesting conception. I am willing to play with bishops of opposite colours, reckoning that my own bishop will be stronger and more active than my opponent's. A point of some importance, of course, is that Black will be exchanging off the pride of his position – the knight on d5 which has been a great hindrance to me in implementing my attacking ideas.

By no means a bad alternative was 18.♗d2!?, but I was afraid that in that case Black would manage to strengthen his position further.

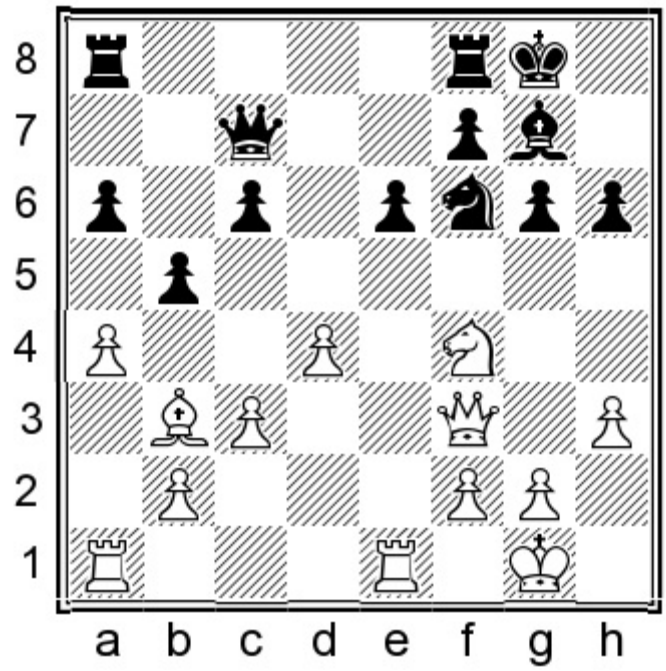
18...♘xf4

The retreat 18...♕c8 doesn't look too attractive for Black after 19.♗e5±.

19.♘xf4 ♔h7?

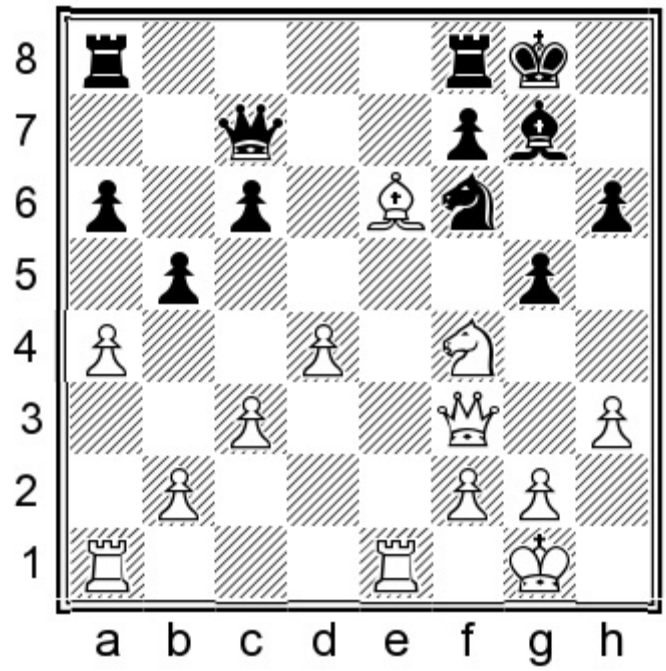
A mistake for which Black receives immediate punishment. I had spent much more time on the consequences of the more logical 19...e6. Incidentally, how would you have replied to that move?

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White obviously has to sacrifice something or he won't be able to break down Black's defences, but what is it to be – rook, bishop or knight?

a) White obtains good prospects with 20.♗xe6. Then 20...fxe6 21.♘xe6 ♕b7 22.♘xf8 ♖xf8 23.axb5 axb5 24.♖e6 leaves Black very badly off. But even after the strongest reply, 20...g5!



21.♘g6!? fxe6 22.♘xf8 ♖xf8 23.♖xe6 ♘d5 24.♕e4±, White's chances must be preferred.

b) Playing the black side is also difficult following the knight sacrifice: 20.♘xg6!? fxg6 21.♖xe6 ♔h8 22.♖xc6 ♕b8±

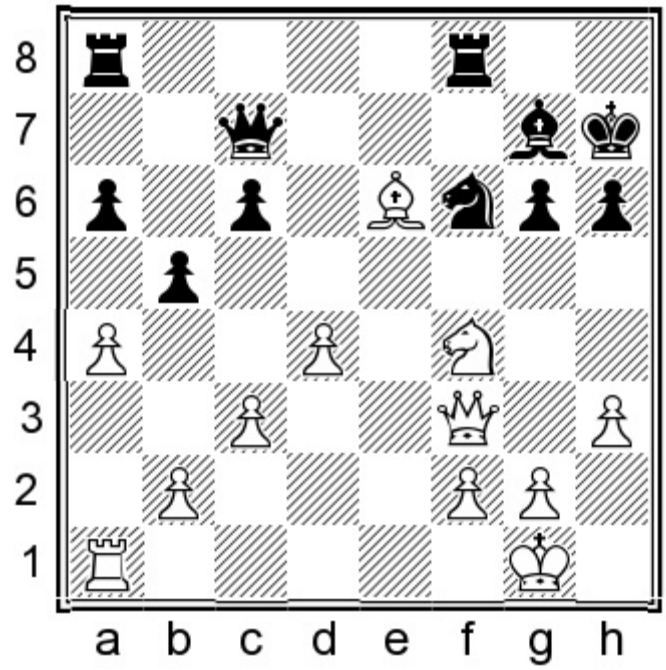
c) During the game I was intending:

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20.♖xe6! fxe6 21.♗xe6†!

21.♘xe6 ♕f7 22.♕xc6 ♖fc8∞ isn't so convincing

21...♔h7



22.♘xg6!

White's pieces are positively running wild!

22...♖fe8 23.♕f5 ♖xe6□ 24.♘e5†

Two alternatives are roughly equal in value to this move.

One is 24.♘f4† ♔h8 25.♘xe6 ♕d7 26.axb5 cxb5 27.f4!, aiming to support the knight with f4-f5 at the requisite moment.

The other is 24.♘e7† ♔h8 25.♕xe6 ♖e8 26.♖e1 bxa4 27.♕f7, with the powerful threat of ♖e6!.

24...♔h8 25.♕xe6±

With excellent prospects in either the middlegame or a possible ending.

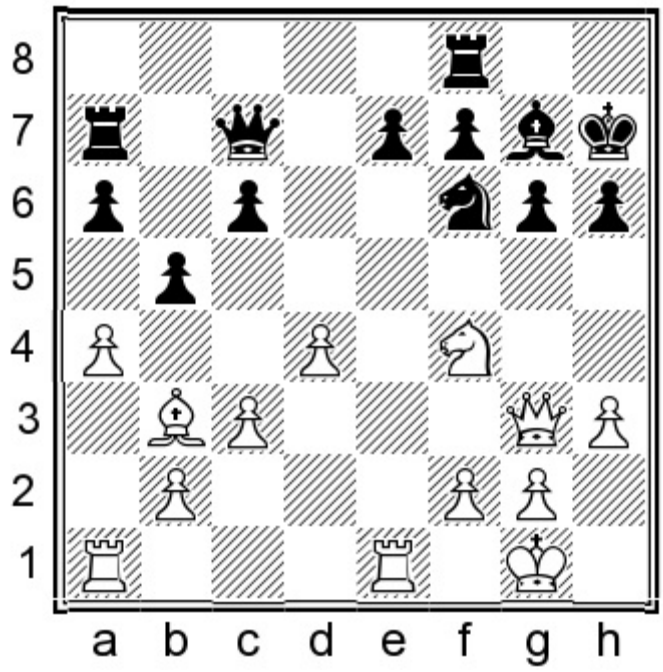
20.axb5

Another move that promises some interesting possibilities is:

20.♕g3!? ♖a7!?

On 20...♖ac8, White has the splendid choice between 21.♗xf7 ♖xf7 22.♕xg6† ♔g8 23.♘e6 ♕d6 24.♖e3↑, and the less trivial 21.♗e6!? ♘d7, whereupon the attack with 22.h4 is highly unpleasant – for Black.

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21.♗xf7!? ♖xf7 22.♕xg6† ♔g8 23.♘e6 ♕d7 24.axb5 cxb5

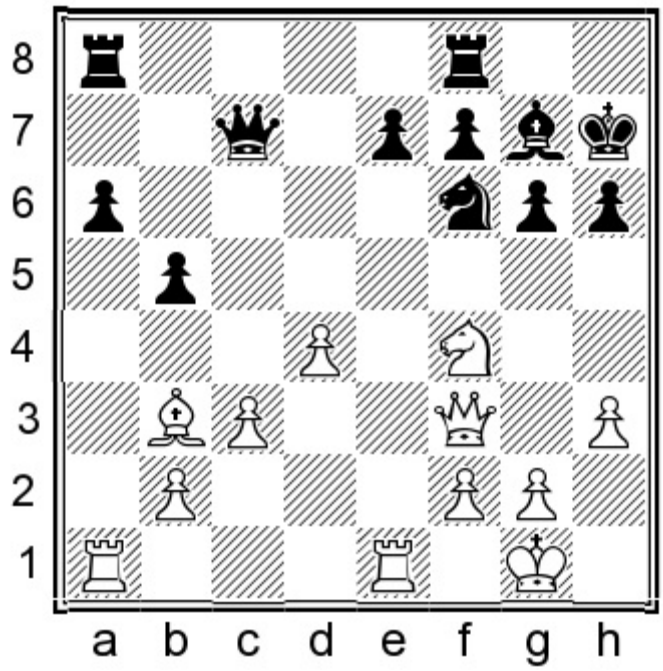
24...axb5? allows the superb reply 25.♘d8!!+–.

25.♖e3 ♘e8 26.♖ae1

White has more than enough compensation for the sacrificed piece.

20...cxb5

The only move, seeing that 20...axb5? loses to the elementary 21.♖xa8 ♖xa8 22.♗xf7+–.



21.♗xf7!

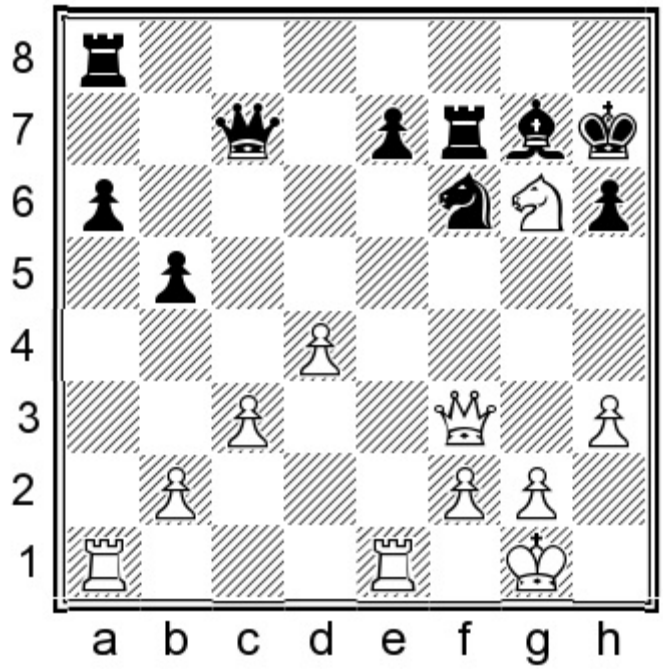
A sacrifice my opponent had underestimated.

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21...♖xf7 22.♘xg6!

White's entire strategy relies on this fine move!

Of course, after 22.♕xa8? ♕xf4 Black could have breathed a sigh of relief at last.



22...♖d8

After the desperate 22...♔xg6, White could simply take the rook; indeed 23.♕xa8+– would be a highly professional decision! But if he really wanted, he could mate the black king: 23.♕d3† ♔g5 24.h4† ♔xh4 25.g3† ♔g5 26.f4† ♔g4 27.♕g6† ♔h3 28.♖e2 ♘g4 29.♕h5† ♔xg3 30.♖g2† ♔xf4 31.♕xg4† ♔e3 32.♕e2† ♔f4 33.♖f1#

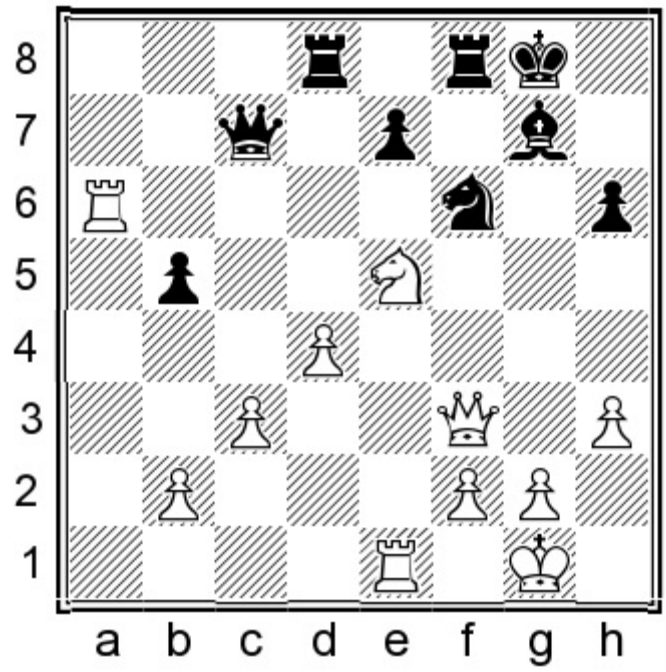
Black would also face a tough defensive task in the event of: 22...♖a7 23.♘e5 ♖f8 24.♘c6 ♖b7 25.♕f5† (similarly after 25.♖xe7 ♕xe7 26.♘xe7 ♖xe7 27.♕f5† ♔h8 28.♖xa6, serious responses from the black side are difficult to find) 25...♔h8 26.♘e5 ♔g8 27.♖xa6+–

23.♖xa6 ♔g8

The knight is invulnerable – on 23...♔xg6? White mates in a few moves: 24.♕e4†! ♔g5 25.♖xf6! ♔xf6 26.♕e6† ♔g5 27.♕g4† ♔f6 28.♖e6#

24.♘e5 ♖ff8

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25.♘c6?!

In a game featuring a tense struggle, you rarely come through without making any mistakes. Up to this point I was completely satisfied with my play, but unfortunately two inaccuracies could have put my win in jeopardy.

After 25.♖c6! ♕a7 (25...♕b7? 26.♖xf6) 26.♖e6 ♘d7 27.♕g3 ♘xe5 28.♖1xe5, the exploitation of White's advantage would not have taken much time!

25...♘d5!

The only move. 25...♖d7? loses quickly after 26.♕f5!? ♖e8 27.♖e6!, when the white pieces completely dominate the board.

26.♕e2 ♖d6 27.♕xb5?!

A second inaccuracy.

White would keep some winning chances with 27.♘xe7† ♘xe7 28.♖xd6 ♕xd6 29.♕xe7 ♕xe7 30.♖xe7 b4!, but I was afraid of multiple exchanges and wanted to keep the queens on the board.

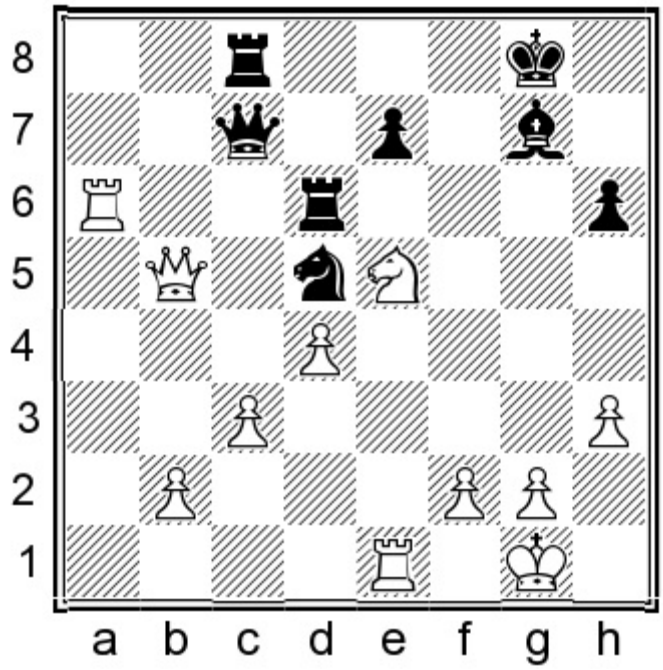
27...♖c8?

Amador has defended well, but at the critical moment he misses the strongest line. After 27...♕d7! White would have his work cut out to obtain any advantage at all. For example: 28.♖a5 (or 28.♕c4 ♔h8 29.♘e5 ♕f5! and Black has everything in order) 28...e6 29.♘e5 ♗xe5 30.♕xd7 ♖xd7 31.♖xe5 ♘f4 32.♔h2 ♖g7! 33.g4!, and despite his opponent's material plus, Black maintains drawing chances.

28.♘e5

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It was worth considering 28.♖e6!? ♖xe6 29.♕xd5 ♕xc6 30.♖xc6 ♖cxc6 31.b4+–, after which the white passed pawns cannot be stopped; note that the black bishop is taking virtually no part in the game. However, the move I played is not at all inferior.



28...♖b8 29.♕a4 ♖xb2?

Rodriguez succumbs to the tension and loses the game within a few moves.

He would also be in a bad way after 29...♖xa6 30.♕xa6 ♘f4 31.♖e4 ♖f8 32.♕c4† ♕xc4 33.♘xc4 ♘d5 34.g3!?, when Black's drawing chances in the ending are minimal.
He had to continue: 29...♗xe5 30.♖xe5 (30.dxe5 is also playable, for instance 30...♖xa6 31.♕xa6 ♕b6 32.♕c4 e6 33.♕g4† ♔h7 34.c4 ♘e7 35.♖d1 with a large plus) 30...♕b7 (30...♖xb2? 31.♕e8† ♔g7 32.♖a8+–) 31.♖xd6 exd6 32.♖e8† ♔f7 33.♖xb8 ♕xb8 34.♕c4 and White should eventually achieve the win.

30.♖xd6

An even simpler winning line was 30.♕e8† ♔h7 31.♖a8+–, but I was following my predetermined plan.

30...♕xd6

The other recapture is just as hopeless: 30...exd6 31.♕e8† ♔h7 32.♕g6† ♔g8 33.♕e6† ♔h7 34.♕f5† ♔g8 35.♘d7+–

31.♘c4

And in view of the elementary 31...♕b8 32.♘xb2 ♕xb2 33.♕a8†, Rodriguez resigned.

1–0

In this game Black made practically no mistakes, except just one: his passive variation was the main

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cause of his defeat. Passivity and its close relation, cowardice, are in my view the cardinal chess sins.

Concluding this chapter, I would like to apologize to lovers of the Caro-Kann. I know very well that there are no bad openings, just bad exponents of them. In my own games I had problems time and again in my efforts to overcome this defence, but I have been able to do that now, in this book – *my* book, in which it would be quite impossible to demand complete objectivity from me!

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Chapter 8

Attacking in Rare and Non-Standard Openings

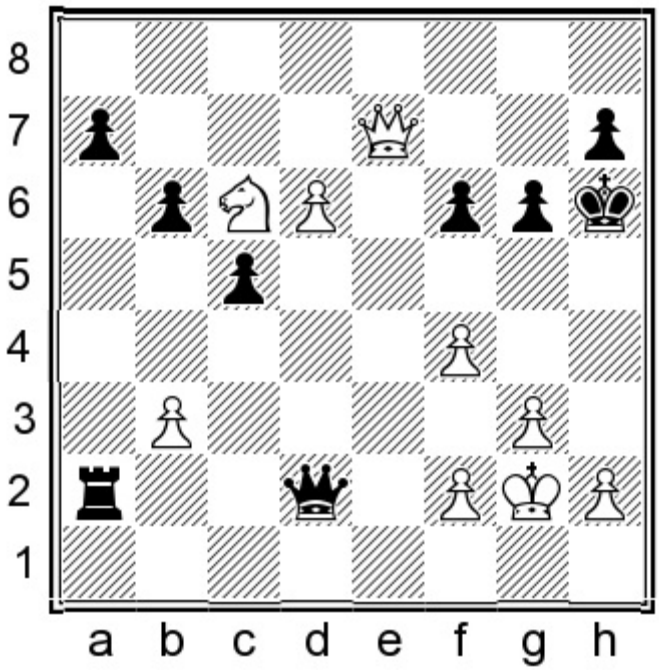


Benidorm 2002. Karpov – Psakhis

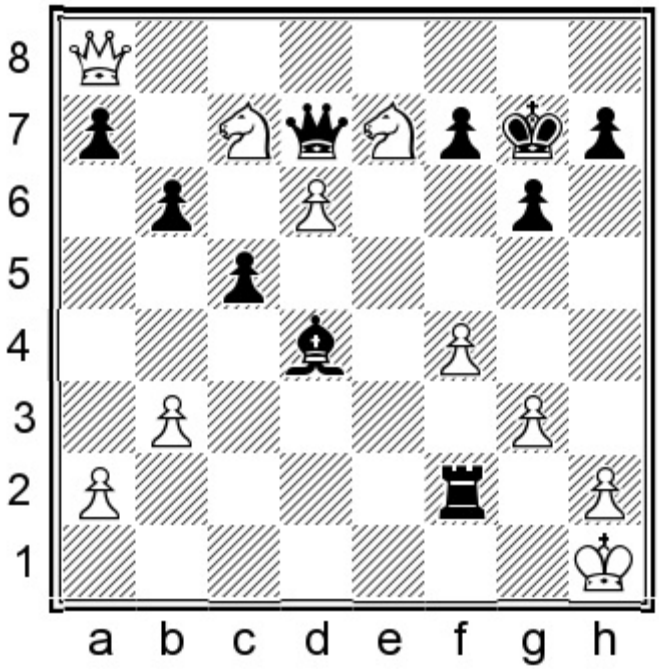
Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.

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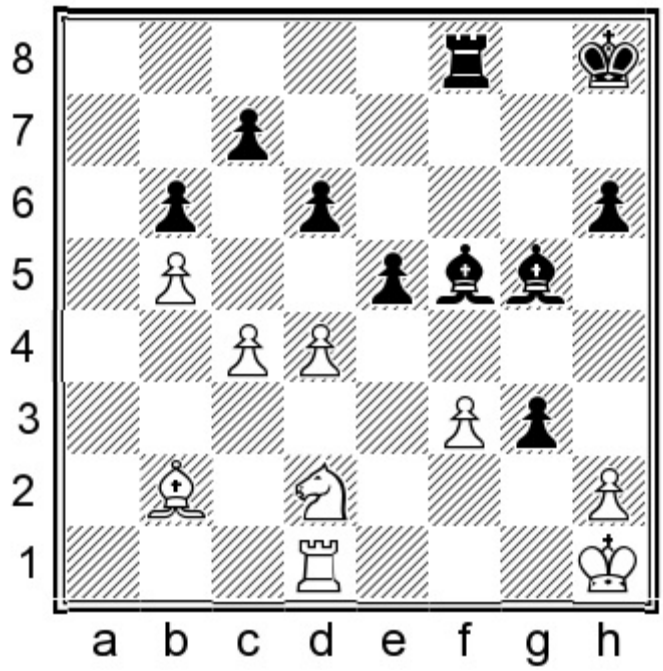


White to play. How can he hold?
(see page 288)

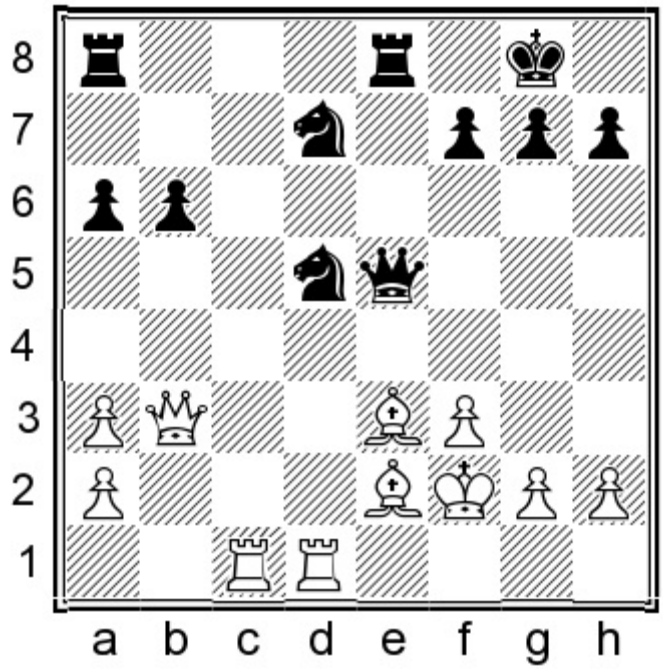


Black is winning. Find the deep line that proves this.
(see page 290)

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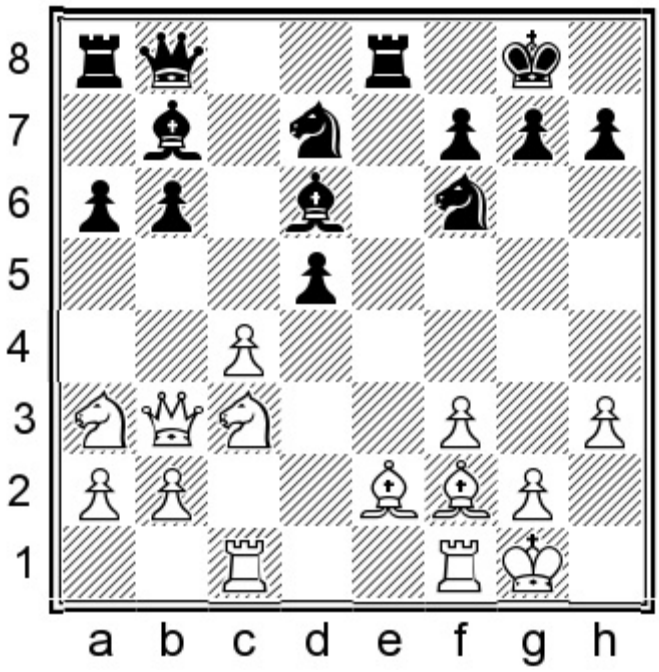


How does Black cash in on his advantages?
(see page 297)

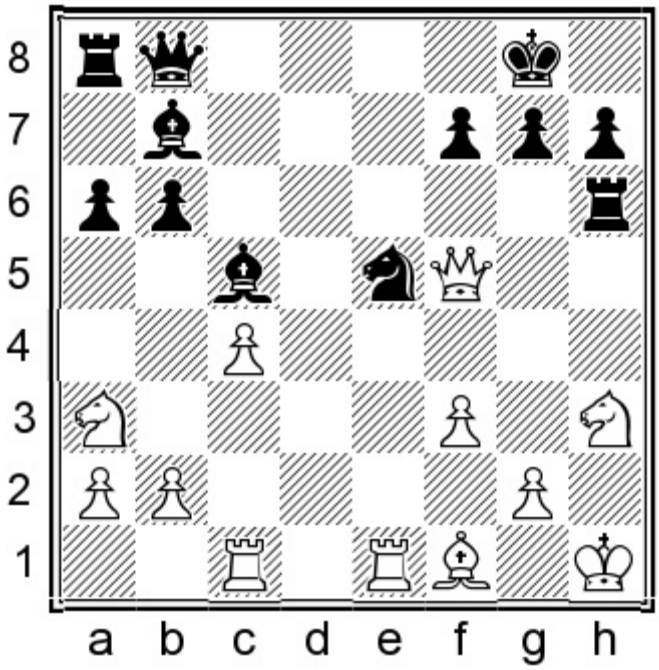


Calculate the winning lines
(see page 308)

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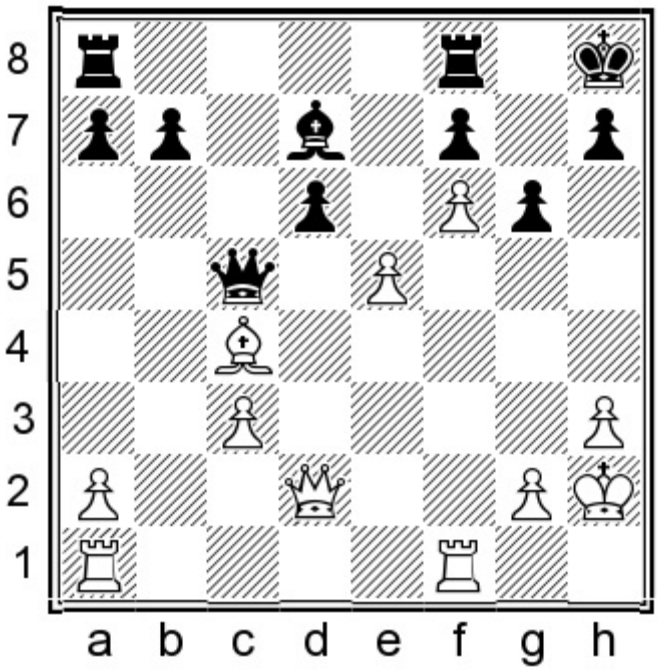


A positional decision
(see page 309)

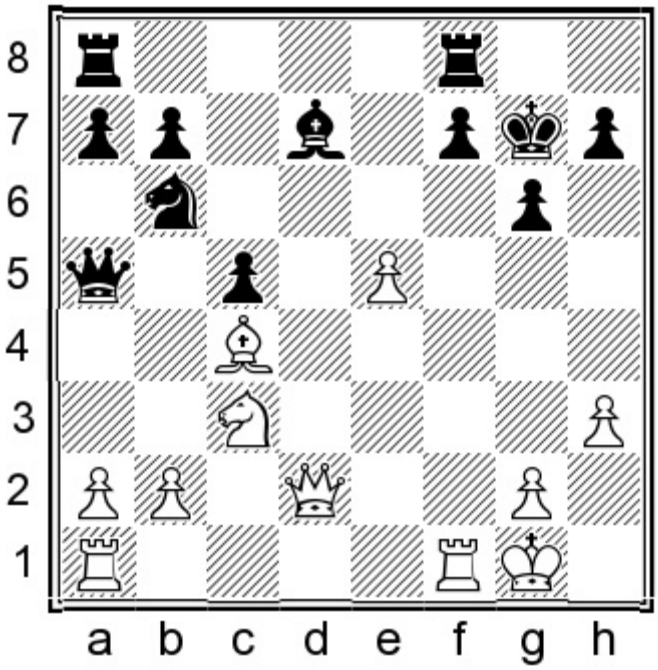


We are getting towards the end, but how do we get there?
(see page 313)

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What is Black's best defence?
(see page 318)



A party trick
(see page 318)

I thought for quite a long time about which opening to discuss at the end of this book. Chapters on the French, King's Indian and Grünfeld Defences are missing of course, but the trouble is that a survey of the attacking possibilities in any of those openings, if done thoroughly, would require between a third and one half of the book's total length. Instead, therefore, I decided to dwell on some relatively unorthodox lines – although adherents of the English Opening, of course, may justly balk at this

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slightly disrespectful designation of their favourite system.

Naturally the moves 1.♘f3 and 1.c4 are oriented primarily towards positional play, but ultimately everything depends on us, the players – on our disposition and our wish to play in an aggressive and creative style – and I very much hope that the games I am going to present will convince you that an opening in which the kings can feel safe has yet to be devised!

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Lev Psakhis – Alvis Vitolins

USSR Championship (First League) 1979

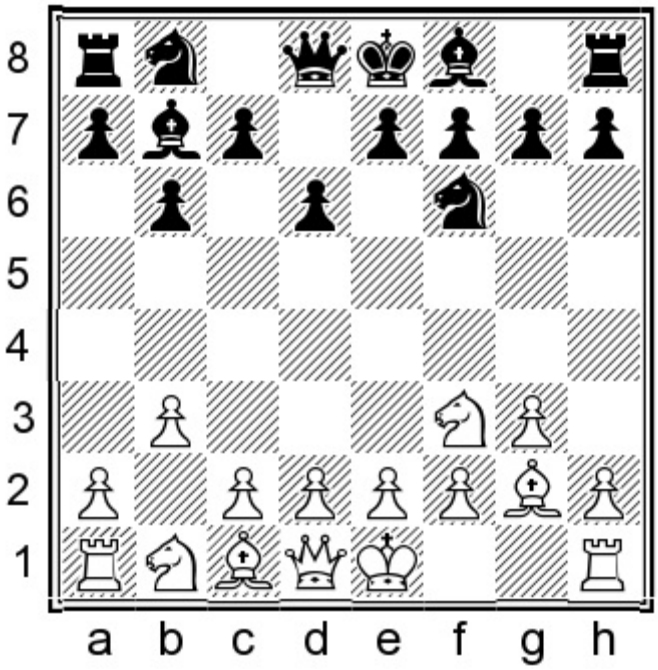
1.♘f3

I chose this move, which for me is quite a rare one, not so much to avoid complications – in games against Vitolins that would have been wholly unrealistic – but at least in order to postpone the start of them until a later stage in the game. How far my cunning plan succeeded, you may judge for yourselves.

1...♘f6 2.g3 b6 3.♗g2 ♗b7 4.b3

A more solid move would have been 4.0-0, but in those years I had a great weakness for fianchettoed bishops. Oddly enough, I should add that in this game the bishop never actually goes to b2.

4...d6!?

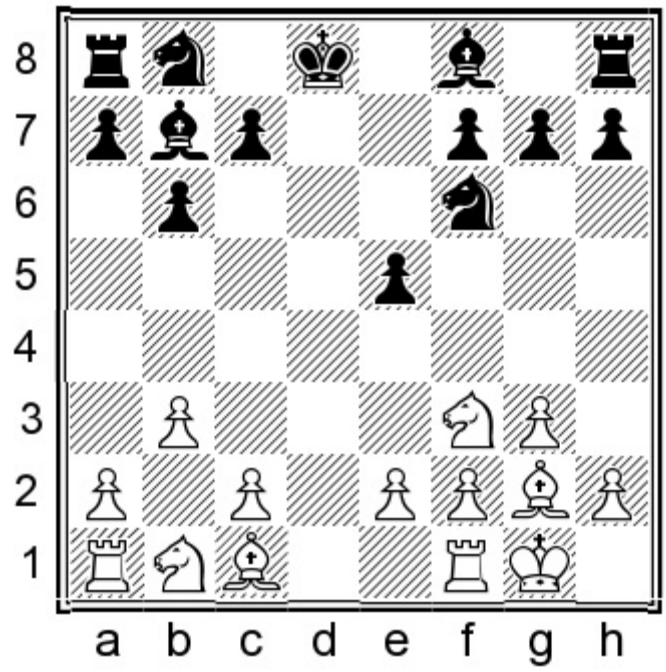


5.c4

I was astonished at my opponent's last move, and treated it perhaps with too much deference.

From a quick examination of the line 5.d4!? e5 6.dxe5 dxe5 7.♕xd8† ♔xd8, it seemed to me that Black would equalize with no trouble. However, Black's inadequate development makes itself felt even with the queens off, and after (say) 8.0-0:

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White is doing well. For example:

After 8...♗d6 9.♗b2 ♘bd7 White is promised a stable advantage in the ending by either 10.♖d1 or 10.♘a3!?.

8...♘bd7

This is even less successful in view of:

9.♖d1!

More convincing than 9.♘xe5? ♗xg2 10.♘xf7† ♔e8 11.♘xh8 ♗xf1 12.♔xf1 ♗d6, after which the knight is easy prey for the black pieces.

The pin on the d-file is then extremely awkward for Black, for instance:

9...♔e7

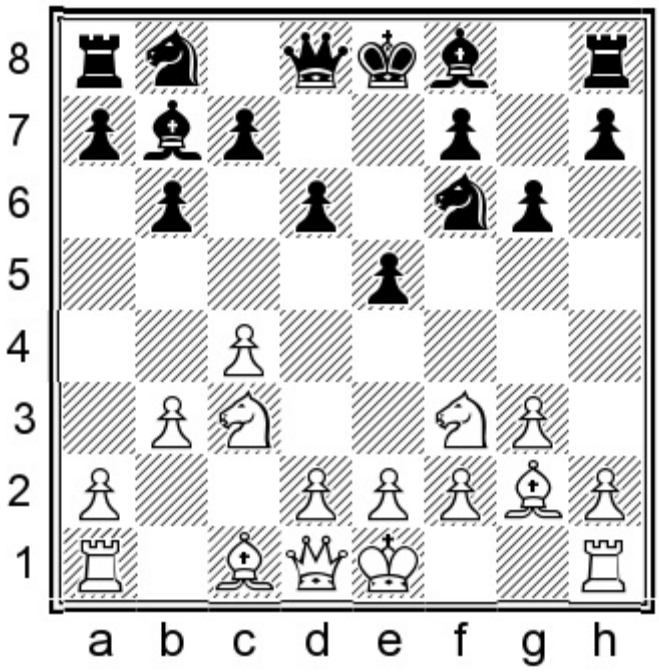
9...♗d6? is immediately refuted by 10.♘g5! ♗xg2 11.♘xf7† ♔e7 12.♘xd6 with a decisive plus.

10.♘bd2↑

With most unpleasant pressure.

5...e5 6.♘c3 g6

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7.0-0 ♗g7 8.d4

It may well have been worth settling for the modest 8.♗b2 0-0 9.d3 with quite a good game, but I simply missed Black's powerful 10th move.

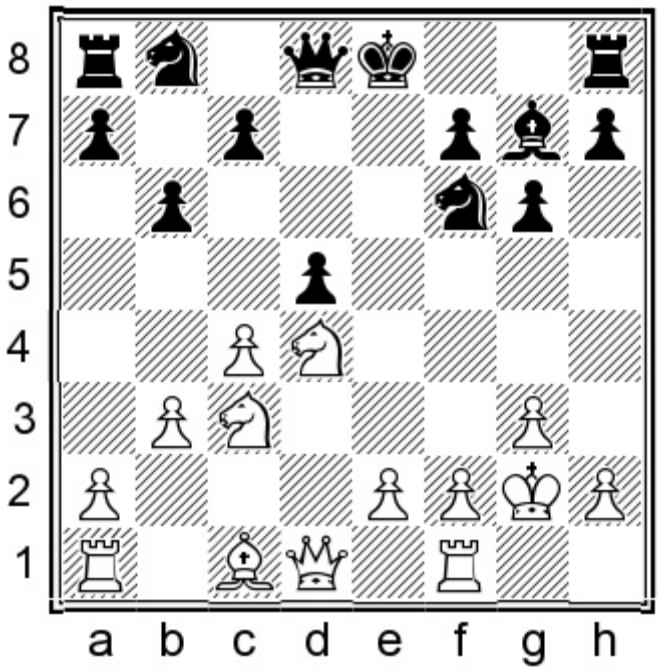
8...exd4 9.♘xd4 ♗xg2 10.♔xg2

White's advantage would be obvious if he could establish a pawn on e4, but right now it is Black's turn to move, and my ingenious opponent thwarts my plans with quite a surprising ploy.

10...d5!

An interesting move! Vitolins doesn't waste time on the routine ...0-0 but instead strikes a blow where it hurts White the most! The black bishop eyes the white pieces on the a1-h8 diagonal with undisguised interest, and some fairly inventive play is now required from White.

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11.♗f4!?

White's lead in development now becomes truly menacing! Black has yet to complete the mobilization of his pieces, and this move rather transparently threatens a knight sortie to b5.

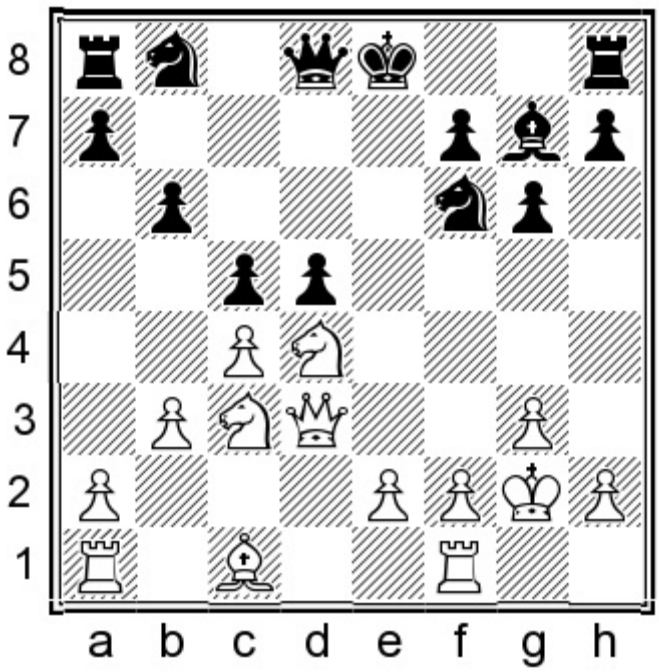
A more cautious choice was:

11.♕d3

But after, for example:

11...c5!?

White does better out of 11...0-0 12.♖d1 c5 13.♘c2, as the pin on the d-file is fairly unpleasant for Black.



12.♘f3

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It would of course be possible to play 12.♕e3† ♔f8 preventing Black from castling, but this brings White no obvious gains – for instance 13.♗a3 ♔g8 14.♘c2 d4 15.♕f3 ♘bd7, and Black can be optimistic about the future.

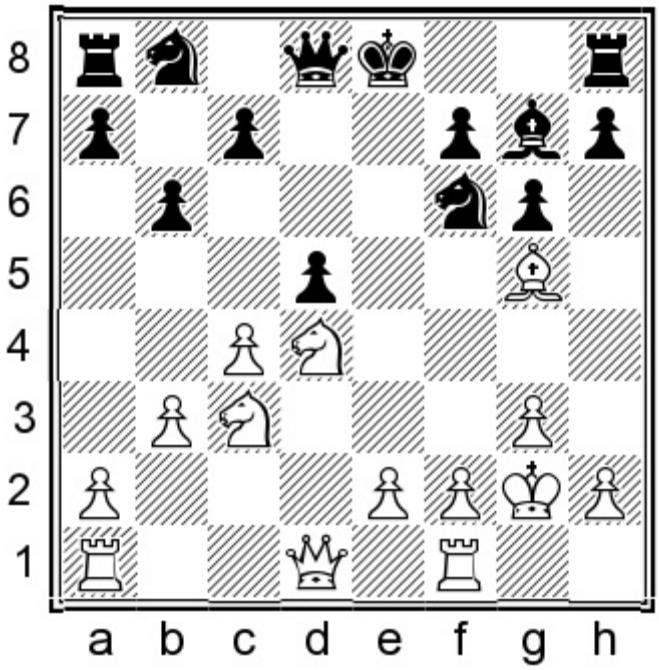
12...d4 13.♘e4

Or 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.♕e4† ♔f8 15.cxd5 ♘d7 16.♗g5 ♕e8, and the weakness of the d5-pawn is quite palpable.

13...0-0 14.♗g5 ♘bd7

White has no trace of an advantage.

To all appearances, the most awkward move to meet would have been 11.♗g5!.



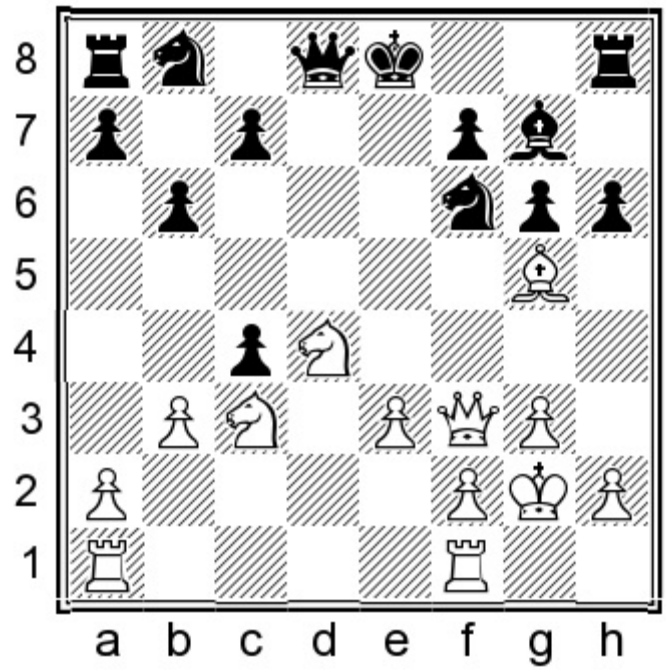
Black is then in dire straits, for example:

a) After the most natural reply, 11...c5, White has the following long and practically forced variation at his disposal: 12.♘xd5! cxd4 13.♕xd4 ♘bd7 14.♖ad1 0-0 15.♕h4 ♖e8 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6 17.♗xf6 ♕xf6 18.♖xd7 ♕c6† 19.♖d5 ♖xe2 20.a4 ♖b2 21.♕e4± With excellent winning chances.

b) Nor does 11...h6 12.♗xf6 ♕xf6 hold out many rosy prospects for Black: 13.♘db5! (13.♘xd5!? also merits attention, but we shall contain ourselves) 13...♘a6□ (13...0-0 loses material after 14.♘xd5 ♕xa1 15.♕xa1 ♗xa1 16.♘dxc7 ♗e5 17.♘xa8 ♘c6 18.♘ac7↑) 14.♘xd5 ♕xa1 15.♕d3 With a very strong attack.

c) Finally, the optimistic (no doubt *over*-optimistic!) 11...dxc4 comes up against the extremely troublesome: 12.e3! h6 13.♕f3

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13...♘bd7 (In the case of 13...hxg5 14.♕xa8 ♕c8 15.♘f3↑ Black's initiative is only temporary whereas his material losses are permanent!) 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♘c6 ♕c8 16.♖ac1 Black is not to be envied!

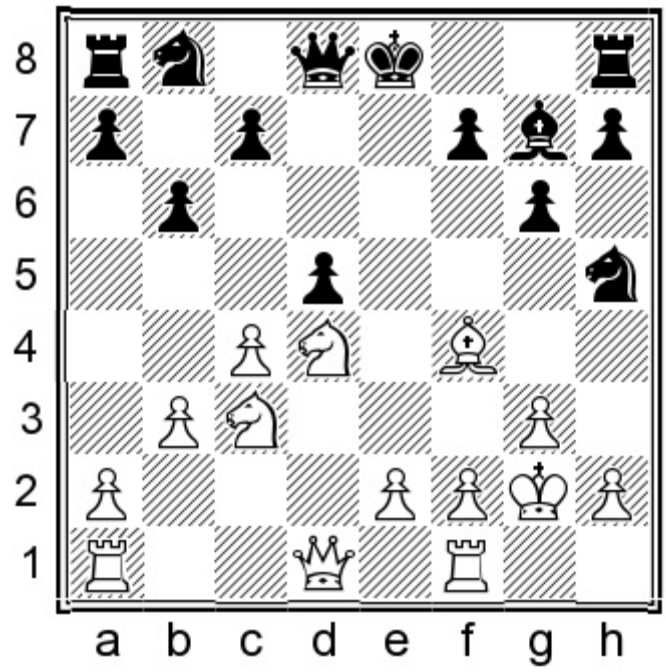
11...♘h5!

Again an interesting but incredibly risky move! You get the impression that my opponent isn't bothered at all about such standard aims as the development of his pieces and the safety of his king.

At this point 11...dxc4 12.♘db5 looks too dangerous for him.

The least of the evils is probably the most natural move in the position, 11...0-0!?. There could follow: 12.e3! dxc4 (after 12...c5 13.♘db5 a6 14.♘c7 ♖a7 15.♘7xd5 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 White has more than enough compensation for the exchange) 13.♕f3 ♘a6 14.♖fd1 ♕e7 15.bxc4 ♕c5 16.♘d5!?± Notwithstanding his opponent's fairly obvious advantage, Black's defensive resources are not yet exhausted.

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12.e3!?

An excellent move. Black wins after 12.♘xd5? ♘xf4† 13.gxf4 c6, and he also has a large plus in the event of 12.cxd5 ♘xf4† 13.gxf4 c5! 14.dxc6 ♕xd4 15.♕xd4 ♗xd4. On the other hand, 12.♕d2!? deserved consideration.

In selecting 12.e3, I was counting on the opening of the e-file, and another quite important point is that the e2-square becomes available to a white knight. Also, incidentally, in some lines White threatens a queen sortie to f3. In short, the move I played has many points in its favour and only one snag: White's kingside pawn structure ceases to be ideal.

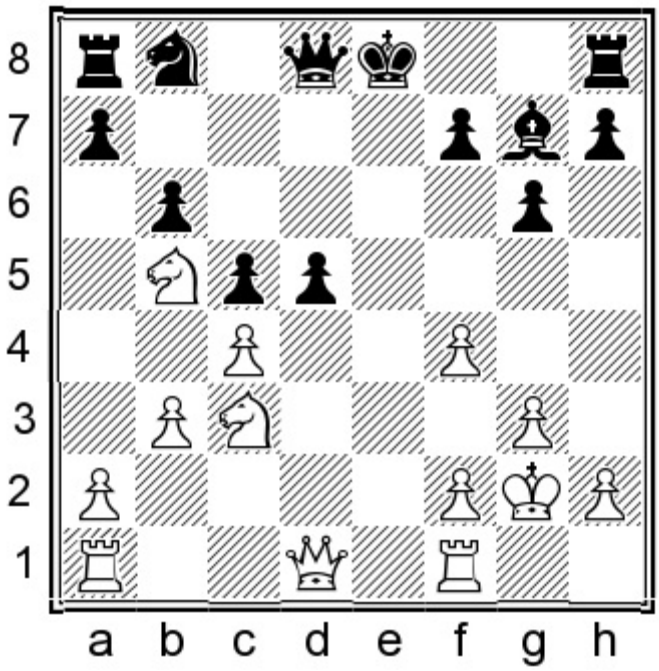
12...♘xf4†

Things turn out much worse for Black in the case of: 12...dxc4?! 13.♕f3 ♘xf4† 14.exf4 (14.gxf4 doesn't look bad either; after 14...♗xd4 15.♖ad1 White has the initiative) 14...♗xd4 15.♖ad1 ♘a6 16.♖xd4!? ♕xd4 17.♕xa8† ♔d7 18.♕f3 White's attack is gathering speed.

13.exf4 0-0?!

Perhaps it was worth putting off castling a little longer with: 13...c5!? 14.♘db5 (14.♖e1† ♔f8 15.♘db5 a6 leads to a loss of material for White)

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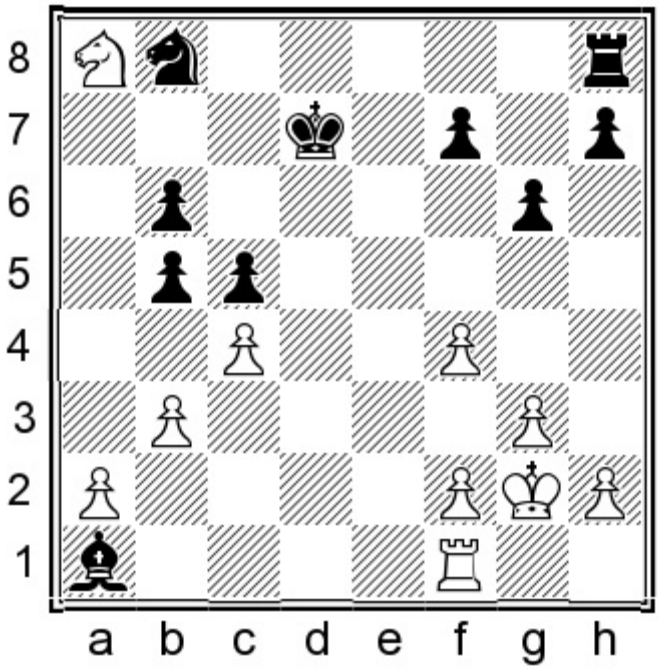


Now there are at least two interesting continuations at Black's disposal:

a) 14...♗xc3 15.♘xc3 d4 16.♖e1† ♔f8 17.♕f3 ♘d7 18.♘d5 ♔g7 19.♖e7 The activity of White's pieces more than compensates for the slight defects of his pawn structure.

b) White's chances are also preferable in the event of:
14...a6 15.♕xd5! ♕xd5† 16.♘xd5 axb5 17.♘c7† ♔d7 18.♘xa8 ♗xa1

Or 18...♔c6 19.cxb5† ♔xb5 20.♖ad1 ♘a6 21.♘xb6 ♔xb6 22.♖d7, and in this specific case the rook is significantly stronger than the two minor pieces.



19.cxb5!

After 19.♖xa1 ♔c6 20.cxb5† ♔xb5! 21.a4† ♔c6 the knight fails to escape from the trap.

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19...♗d4 20.♖e1!

The immediate 20.♘xb6† ♔c7 21.♘c4 doesn't look bad either.

20...♖d8

I feel that a rook exchange would rather favour White: 20...♖e8 21.♘xb6† ♔d8 22.♖xe8† ♔xe8 23.♘c4 f5 24.a4↑

21.♘xb6† ♔c7 22.♘c4

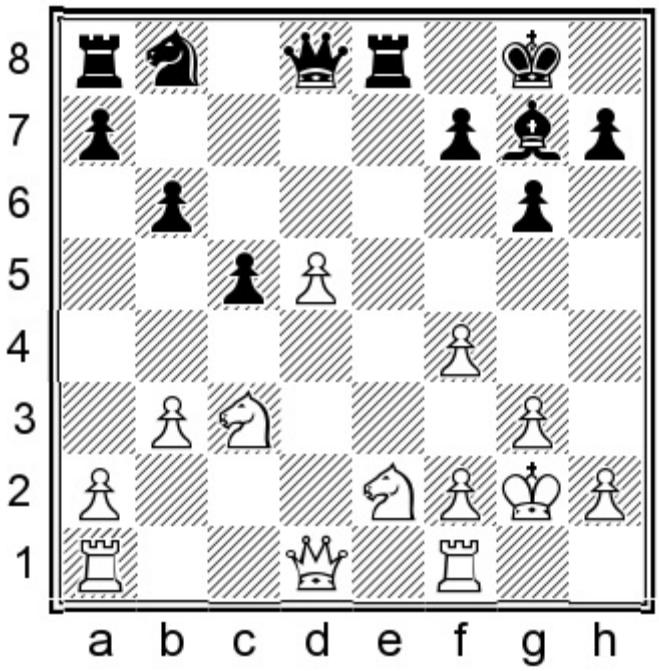
With an endgame initiative.

Black would probably have to conduct a hard struggle to level the chances, but at least he would be preserving the material balance. After the move in the game, White acquires a small material plus.

14.cxd5 c5

After 14...c6 15.♕d3 cxd5 16.♖ad1 the pawn on d5 will be lost within a few moves.

15.♘de2 ♖e8!?



16.♕d3?

In these happy circumstances – what with an extra pawn, a safe and solid position, and no tactical prospects whatsoever for my opponent – I simply overlooked Black's fairly obvious next move. A pity! After, say, the elementary 16.♖c1, White's advantage is obvious.

16...♘c6!

The knight is heading for d4. The passed d5-pawn – which I went to such trouble to acquire – is converted from a formidable strength into a weakness, and you may get the impression that the initiative is already in Black's hands. But I completely disagree with that assessment!

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17.♖ae1

The most practical decision at this point would be 17.♖ad1, after which White doubles rooks on the d-file and waits to see if Black can substantially improve his position; but when you are twenty years old it's so difficult to be patient!

The play develops a good deal more interestingly after:

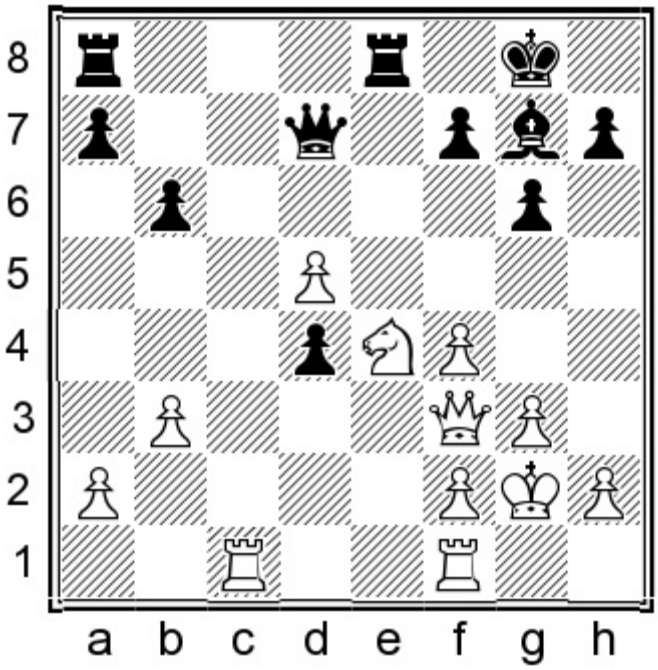
17.♕f3!?

Black has little choice:

17...♘d4 18.♘xd4 cxd4

Or 18...♗xd4 19.♖ad1 with ♘e2 to follow.

19.♘e4 ♕d7 20.♖ac1



20...♖ac8

Or 20...♖ad8 21.♖fe1 ♔f8 22.d6 and White has managed to improve his position considerably, while his central pawn is invulnerable as before.

21.g4! ♔h8

With the nonchalant 21...f5 22.gxf5 gxf5 23.♘g5↑ Black fails to solve all his problems but rather creates new ones.

22.d6 f5 23.gxf5 gxf5 24.♘g3↑

With a pleasant position.

Instead of these interesting lines, both of which deserved consideration, I used up an immense amount of time working out a long and complicated combination which unfortunately proved to have a fair-sized hole in it. Such, however, is the fate of many a creative idea. The game, at any rate, took a fascinating course.

17...♘d4

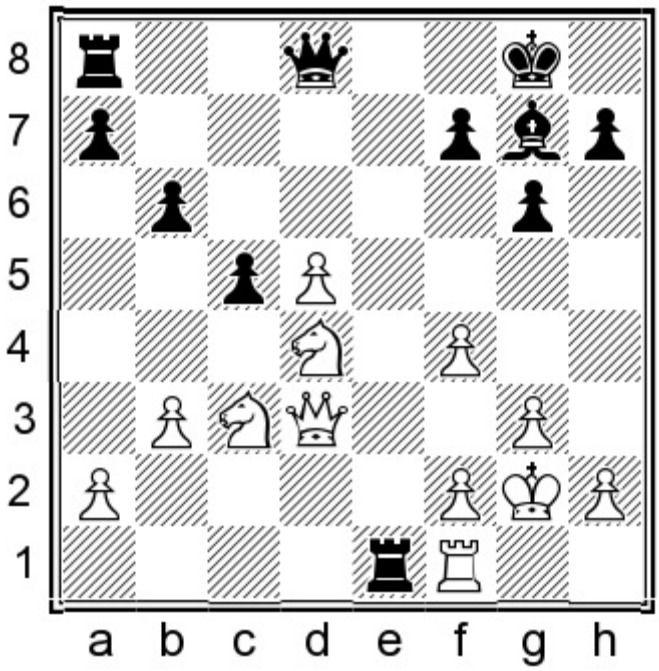
It was worth considering 17...a6!?, taking control of the important b5-square.

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18.♘xd4

It was not too late to back out and place the rook on d1 after all, but by way of an excuse I would merely repeat what I said about when you are 20 years old...

18...♖xe1



19.♘c6?!

White could still have held back from the brink by playing: 19.♖xe1! cxd4 (or 19...♗xd4 20.♖d1 ♕d7 21.♕c4 ♖d8 22.♘e4 and the pawn isn't at all easy to attack) 20.♘b5 ♕xd5† (20...a6 21.♘xd4! ♕xd5† 22.♕f3) 21.♕f3 ♕xf3† 22.♔xf3 With a good endgame.

Today I would undoubtedly choose this placid variation, but in 1979 I was incapable of "abandoning my principles"; I honestly felt that my combination, once begun, had to be carried out to the end. Indeed White's passed pawn, supported by the queen and two knights, does constitute a terrible force, and it isn't so simple for Black to stop it. Unfortunately, however, it is possible!

19...♕e8 20.♖xe1 ♕xe1 21.♘b5

Interestingly, after the cautious and cunning 21.♘d1!, Black's advantage is quite difficult (if not impossible) to demonstrate. The knight is going to e3, the pawn threatens to advance, and the ball is put back in the opponent's court. I believe that in practical play, White's chances would not be worse.

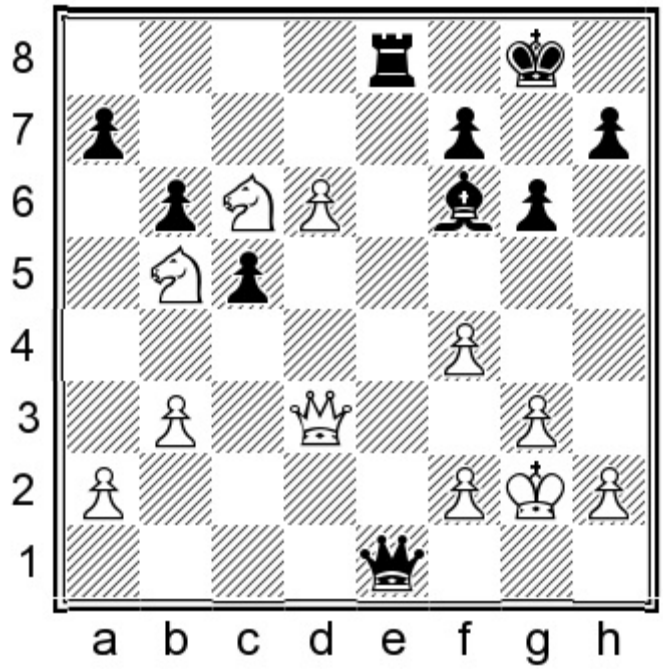
21...♖e8!

The pawn cannot be held up by passive methods, so Black starts an attack on the king, taking advantage of the fact that the white knights are far away.

22.d6 ♗f6?

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A transposition of moves that looks insignificant at first sight but could have had the most serious consequences! The accurate 22...♖e2! 23.♕f3 ♗f6 would lead to the same position as in the game, but without offering White additional possibilities!



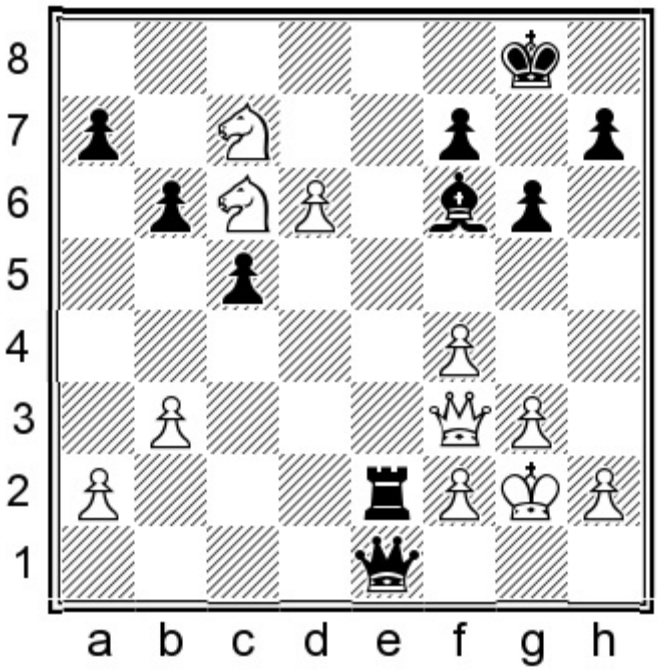
23.♘c7

White loses on the spot with: 23.d7? ♖e2 24.♕f3 (or 24.d8=♕† ♗xd8 25.♕xd8† ♔g7 and there is no defending the f2-pawn) 24...♖d2–+

On the other hand, he has at his disposal the interesting possibility of 23.♘c3! ♕e6 24.♘b5 ♕d7 25.♕d5. This completely transforms the character of the game, and I will simply not venture to evaluate the resulting position. However, to be honest, transforming the character of the game was something I had no wish to do!

23...♖e2 24.♕f3

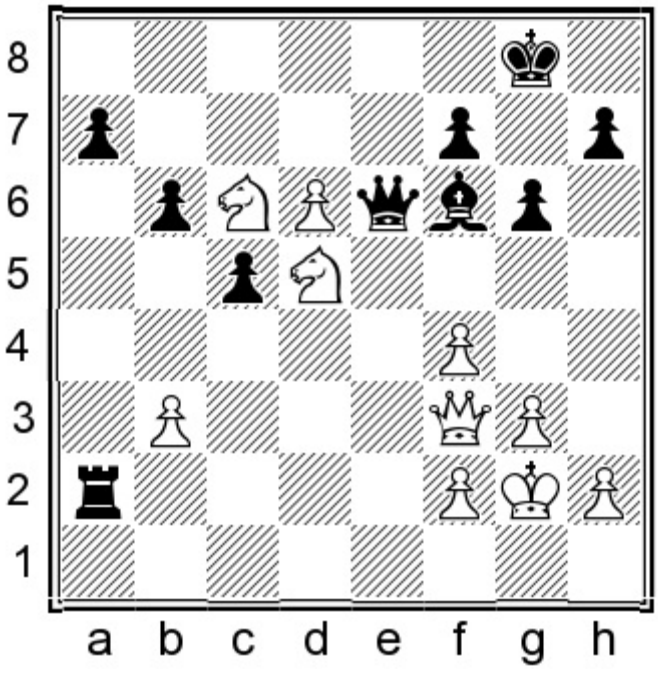
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24...♖d2

So far the game has been proceeding as planned. Black's last move was stronger than: 24...♕d2 25.♘e7†! ♗xe7 (or 25...♖xe7 26.♕a8† ♔g7 27.dxe7 ♗xe7 28.♕xa7, and now 28...c4? 29.bxc4 ♗c5 fails on account of a fortuitous tactical chance: 30.♘e6†! And White wins) 26.dxe7 ♖xe7 27.♕a8† ♔g7 28.♘e8† ♖xe8 (White has sufficient play in the event of 28...♔h6 29.♘f6) 29.♕xe8 With good drawing chances.

The greedy 24...♖xa2? can also scarcely be recommended to Black. There can follow: 25.♘d5 (but not 25.d7 ♖a1) 25...♕e6 (Black is the one for whom great problems arise after the incautious 25...♔g7? 26.♘xf6 ♖a1 27.♔h3! ♖d1 28.d7 ♔xf6 29.d8=♕† ♖xd8 30.♘xd8)

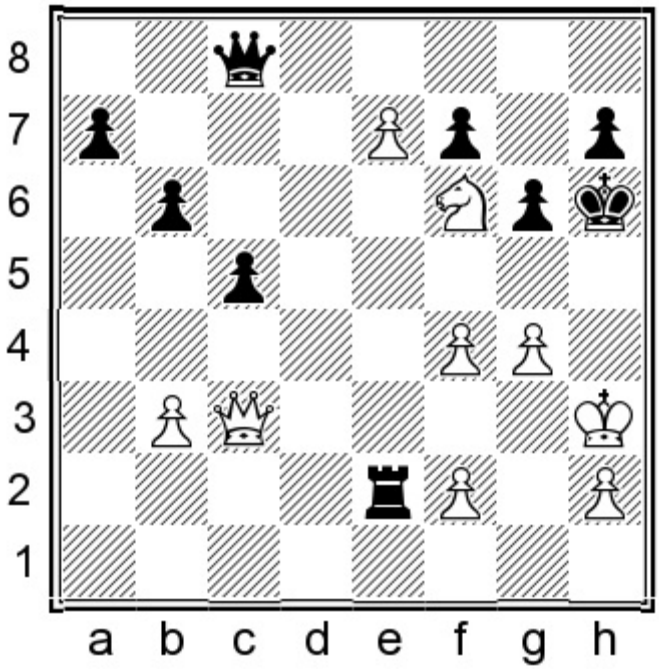


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And now there are three options to consider:

a) 26.f5 ♕xd6 27.fxg6 ♔g7 28.gxf7 ♕xc6–+ is unworthy of serious examination.

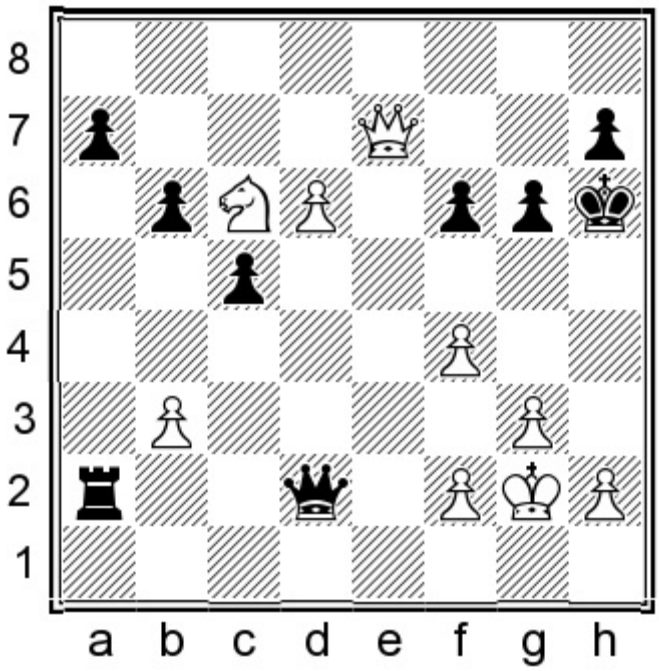
b) The play takes a more interesting course in the event of: 26.♘ce7† ♔g7! (The game ends beautifully after the careless 26...♗xe7? 27.dxe7 ♔g7 28.♕c3† ♔h6 29.♘f6 ♕c6† 30.♔h3 ♕c8† 31.g4 ♖e2, and now the simplest way to win is:



32.♘g8†! ♕xg8 33.g5† ♔h5 34.♕f3#) 27.♘c7 ♕d7 28.♕e4 ♗d4 29.♕a8 The variations that arise are not so different from those occurring in the actual game; the difference is that Black has pocketed the a2-pawn along the way, but frankly its presence or absence does little to affect the result.

c) 26.♘xf6†! ♕xf6 27.♕d3! ♕b2□ 28.♕e3 ♕d2 29.♕e8† ♔g7 30.♕e5† f6 31.♕e7† ♔h6

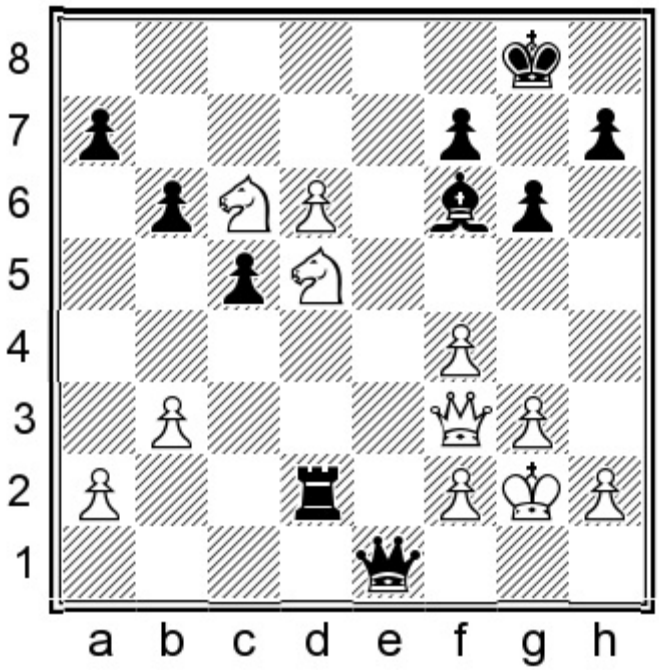
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32.♔h3!! This quiet king move is the finishing touch (in the case of the hasty 32.♕f8†? ♔h5 33.g4† ♔xg4–+ the black king easily evades pursuit). 32...♕d1 The only move to avoid defeat. 33.♕xf6 ♕h5† 34.♔g2 ♕d5† 35.♔h3=

Of course all these variations are practically impossible to calculate over the board, but on a purely intuitive basis I felt that 24...♖xa2?! would at least result in unclear play.

25.♘d5



25...♕e6!

Up until this last move, everything had been going according to my calculations at move 17, but 25...♕e6!, which is completely obvious at the present moment, had fallen outside my field of vision

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eight moves earlier; I had been too eager to believe in the correctness of my combination, and self-persuasion is only too easy a matter. Black's move now descended on me like a cold shower!

I had been naively hoping for 25...♖d1?? 26.♘xf6† ♔g7 27.♕xd1 ♕xd1 28.d7 with an easy win. Now, however, the pawn on d6 – White's chief hope – would seem to be lost. At first I just wanted to stop the clock, and it required quite an effort of will to refrain from doing so! Gradually I convinced myself that there were still a good many subtleties concealed in the position, and I played on.

26.♘ce7†

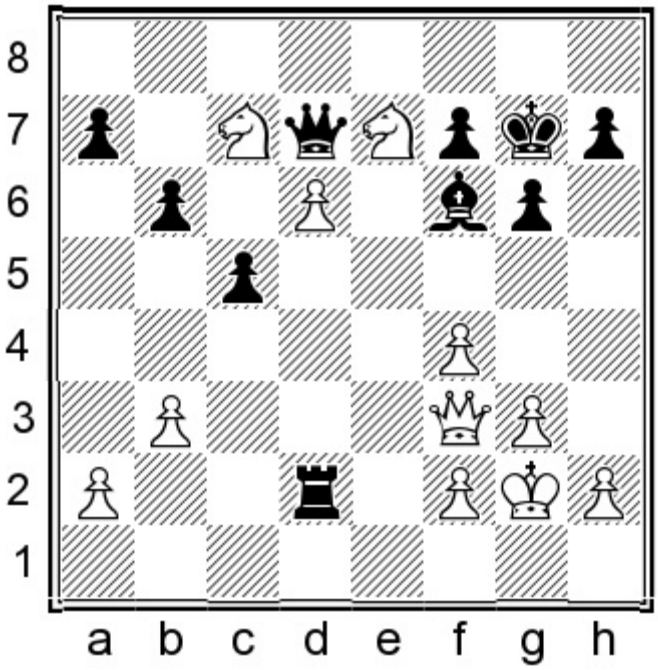
After 26.♘xf6†? the most that White can count on is a few checks: 26...♕xf6 27.♘e7† ♔g7 28.♕a8 ♕xd6! 29.♕g8† ♔f6–+ The king easily escapes the persecution.

26...♔g7 27.♘c7!

The vigour of the cavalry is admirable, and Black has to beware of various forks.

27...♕d7

A case in point is that 27...♕xd6?? loses to 28.♘e8†.



28.♕e4!

So far White has succeeded in keeping his balance on a very thin rope and rescuing his pawn from imminent doom, but misfortune now strikes from another quarter. Incidentally, 28.♕a8? loses to 28...♗xe7 29.dxe7 ♕xe7 30.♘e8† ♔h6 31.g4 ♕e3.

28...♗d4!

Vitolins doesn't fall into the simple little trap of 28...♖xd6 29.♘e8†! ♔f8 (after 29...♕xe8 30.♘f5† ♔f8 31.♕xe8† ♔xe8 32.♘xd6†↑ White picks up another pawn and is at least in no danger of losing) 30.♘xd6 ♗xe7 31.♘c4∞. Instead of these boring lines, he switches his attention from the paltry pawn

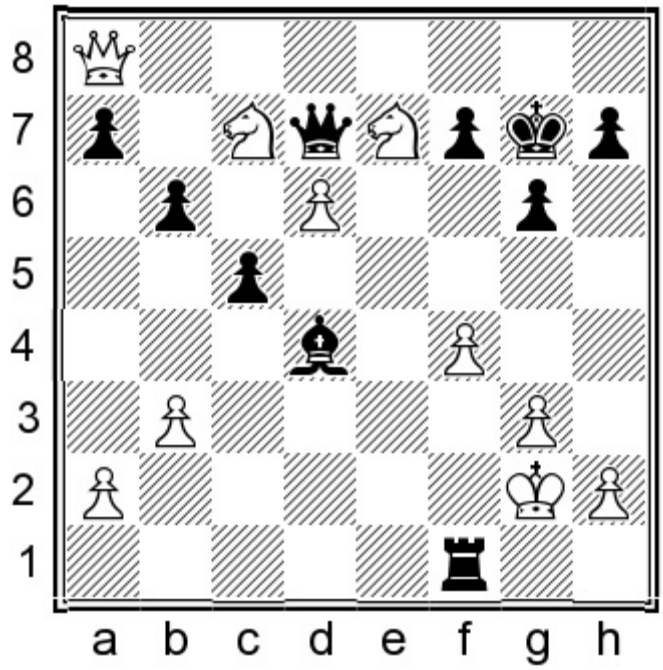
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to a more worthy target – the white monarch. I should mention, by the way, that we each had about 10 minutes left on the clock.

29.♕a8!

The last chance! White can't defend his own king, so he tries playing on the nerves of its black counterpart.

29...♖xf2† 30.♔h1 ♖f1† 31.♔g2



31...♖f2†

In time trouble, naturally enough, Vitolins repeats moves to gain on the clock. He could probably also have conducted the game to a victorious conclusion with the cold-blooded:

31...♖g1†!? 32.♔f3 h5!

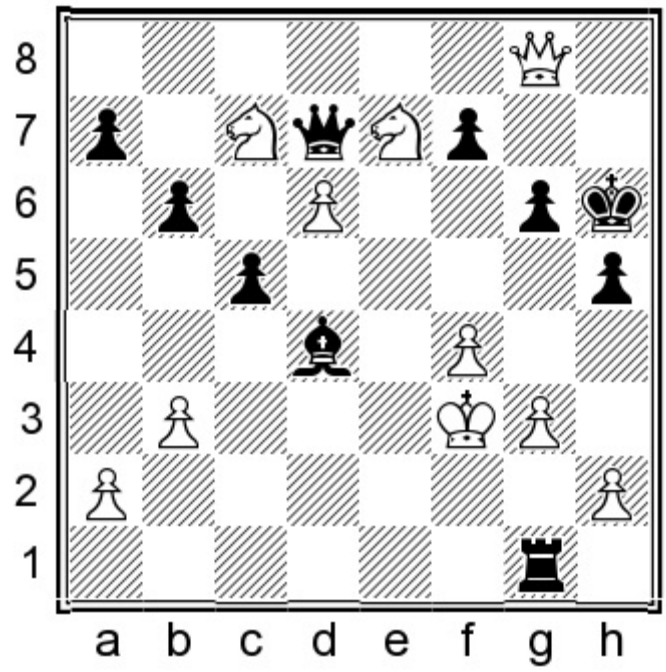
For example:

33.♕g8†

Exchanging queens with 33.♕c8!? ♕xc8 34.♘xc8 would not help White either, as after 34...♔f8□ 35.♘xa7 ♗f6!∓ Black has a big advantage.

33...♔h6

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34.f5

Trying to block the black queen's path.

White is mated by force in the event of 34.♕xf7 ♕g4† 35.♔e4 ♖e1† 36.♔d5 ♕f3† 37.♔c4 b5†! 38.♔xb5 ♕b7† 39.♔c4 ♖c1† 40.♔d3 ♕f3†−+.

34...♖f1†□ 35.♔g2

35.♔e2 is also hopeless after 35...♖f2† and 36...♕xd6.

35...♖f2† 36.♔h3 g5!

Accuracy to the end!

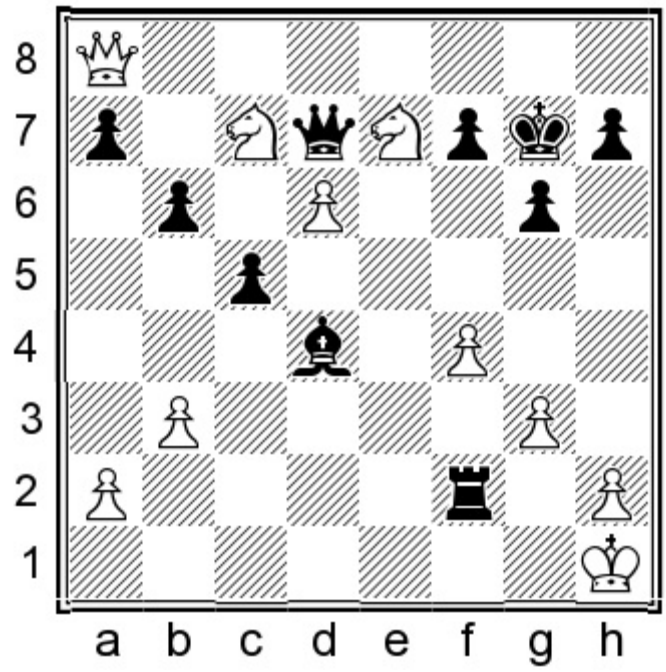
After 36...♖xf5? 37.♕e8!! White could still endeavour to resist.

37.g4 ♗g7–+

32.♔h1

At this point my opponent had a long think. The flag on his clock started to rise, and he still went on and on thinking – it was clear that the time left to him was measured in seconds. I think every chess player will understand my agitation at this moment! When Vitolins had no more than 10 seconds remaining, he came up with a superb move...

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32...♔h6!!

I had reckoned that in the chaos of the time-scramble he would fall for 32...♕h3? which meets with a beautiful refutation: 33.♘e8†! ♔h6 34.♘g8†! Words fail me to express my admiration for the knights that keep pushing further and further into the enemy camp. 34...♔h5 35.♘ef6† ♗xf6 36.♘xf6† ♔h6 37.♕f8# Mate!

Now, just as several times before in this game, I am brought down to earth from the clouds.

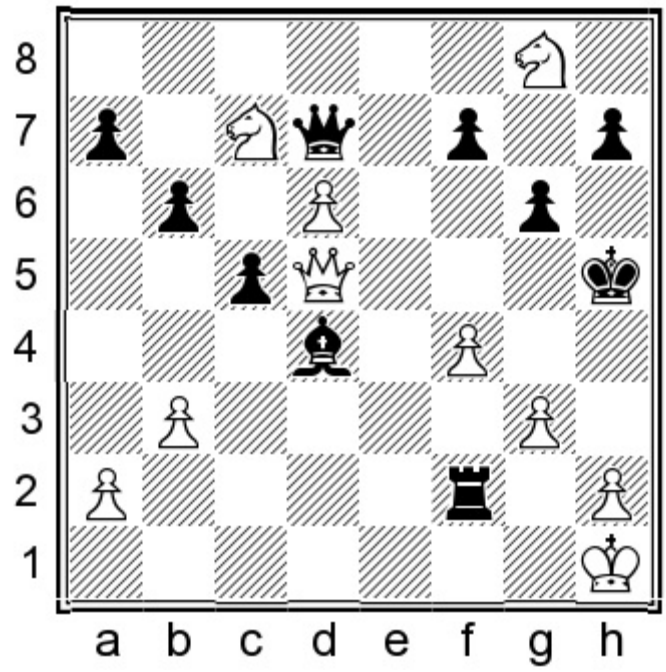
33.♘g8†

I instantly discarded 33.♕f8† ♔h5 34.♕c8 ♕g4!–+ with inescapable mate. Furthermore a quick calculation convinced me that 33.♕c8 ♕xc8 (not 33...♕xd6?? 34.♕h3† ♔g7 35.♘e8†) 34.♘xc8 ♖d2! would not help White to organize resistance.

33...♔h5 34.♕d5†

Now there are three "normal" moves at Black's disposal (I don't include 34...g5?? in that category!). Two of them lead to a draw, and only one wins. In other words, the odds can be reckoned as two to one my favour, according to the laws of roulette – which in this instance take precedence over the laws of chess!

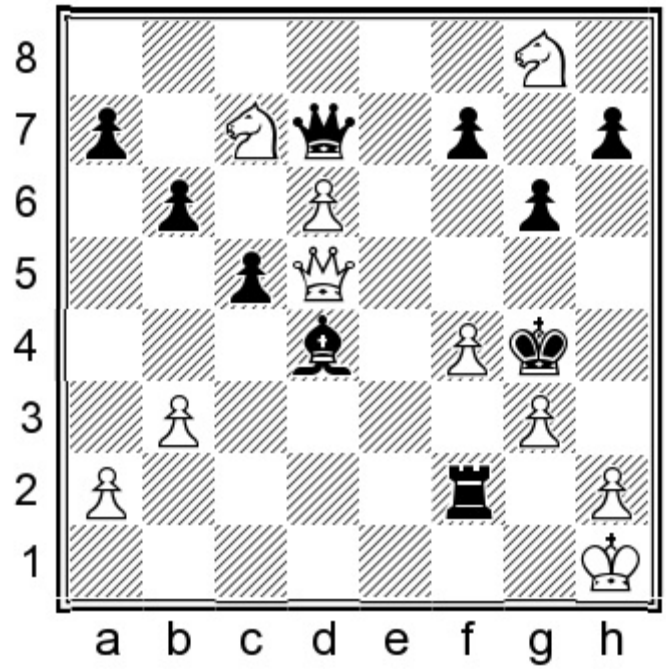
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34...♕f5?

There is the same result after: 34...f5? 35.h3! (naturally not 35.♕xd4? cxd4 36.♘f6† ♔h6 37.♘xd7 d3 and Black wins) 35...♖f1† 36.♔g2 ♖f2†=

The only way to achieve victory was the bold: 34...♔g4!!



35.♕xd4 (35.♕g5† ♔f3 36.♕d5† ♔e3–+ is just as hopeless) 35...cxd4 36.♘f6† ♔h3 With inevitable mate.

35.h3!

This prevents the undesirable *rapprochement* of the two kings in the most radical manner, and leads

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immediately to a draw. Actually White would still not lose after the less precise: 35.♕xf5† gxf5 36.h3! (only not 36.d7? ♔g4! 37.d8=♕ ♖f1† 38.♔g2 ♖g1#) 36...♖d2 37.♘d5! ♗g7 38.♘ge7 ♗f8 39.♘f6† ♔h6 40.♘d7 ♔g7 41.♘xf5† ♔g8 (41...♔g6 42.♘h4†) 42.♘f6† ♔h8 43.♘e4 ♖d5 44.g4 b5 45.♔g2⇄

35...♖f1† 36.♔g2 ♖f2† 37.♔h1 ♖f1† 38.♔g2 ♖f2†

By some kind of miracle Black's flag had not dropped, and this far from peaceful game had a peaceful end. Of course both sides made plenty of mistakes, but I feel that these sins are expiated by the interesting and unconventional play we produced.

½–½

Alvis Vitolins was undoubtedly one of the most talented and creative players I encountered in the whole of my long chess career. Every game with him turned into a thriller with a wholly unpredictable outcome. In this game I anticipated about fifty per cent of his moves. The rest were surprises – some of them pleasant ones, others *not* so pleasant! From the very first moves of the game, a genuine battle unfolded. Alvis played in an exceedingly risky manner and astounded me with his 10...d5. Ninety-nine per cent of all chess players try to complete their development first, and only then think about opening up the game in the centre of the board. Black's idea was interesting but not entirely correct, and I succeeded in acquiring a material plus.

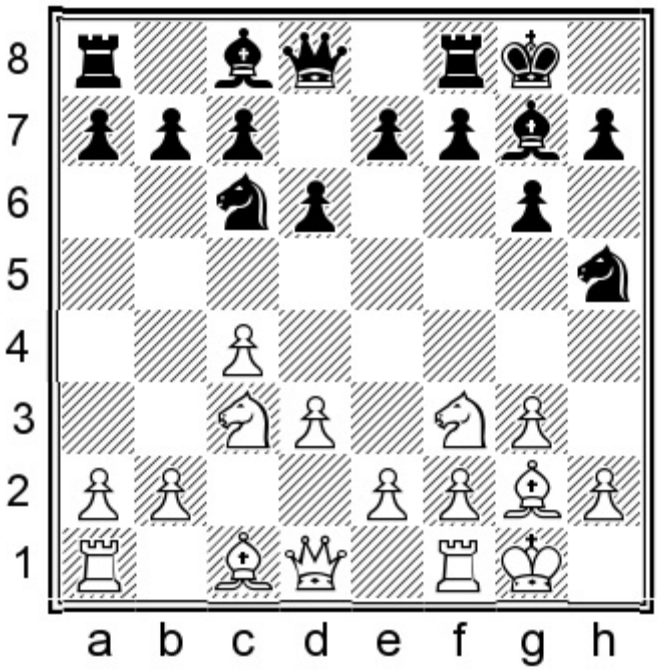
Then unfortunately my turn came to make mistakes. Instead of setting about the humdrum task of exploiting my extra pawn, I worked out a long variation which cost me no end of time and effort. Bent Larsen suggested that we should *never* have faith in long variations ("long variation, wrong variation") – but in youthful years, who listens to the old?

My second mistake was my reluctance to evaluate the position *anew* after every move played. As a result my hopes were dashed, but I didn't lose my composure, and by taking advantage of my opponent's time trouble I was able to avoid defeat after all!

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1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.0-0 0-0 5.c4 d6 6.♘c3 ♘c6 7.d3 ♘h5

A noteworthy move which, for reasons unknown to me, has practically disappeared from contemporary practice. Black aims for a quick advance of his pawn to f4, so as to exert a certain pressure on his white majesty. The move was quite popular in the 1950s and was by no means unsuccessful. But nothing under the sun lasts forever! At this point 7...e5 leads to popular variations, but that is quite another story.



8.♖b1 f5 9.♕c2

More often the continuation is: 9.♗d2 f4 10.b4 (in a game Pirc – Boleslavsky, Yugoslavia vs. USSR match 1957, Black gained the initiative after 10.♘d5 e5 11.b4 ♘e7 12.e3 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♗g4 14.♕c2 ♕d7) 10...e5 11.♕b3 ♗g4! 12.♘e4 (12.b5 ♘d4) 12...♔h8 13.b5 ♘d4 14.♘xd4 exd4⇄ As in Andersson – Tal, Sochi 1973.

It is also worth considering 9.♘g5 ♔h8 10.f4 e5 11.♘d5 ♘d4 12.e3 ♘e6; the resulting position is anything but simple to assess.

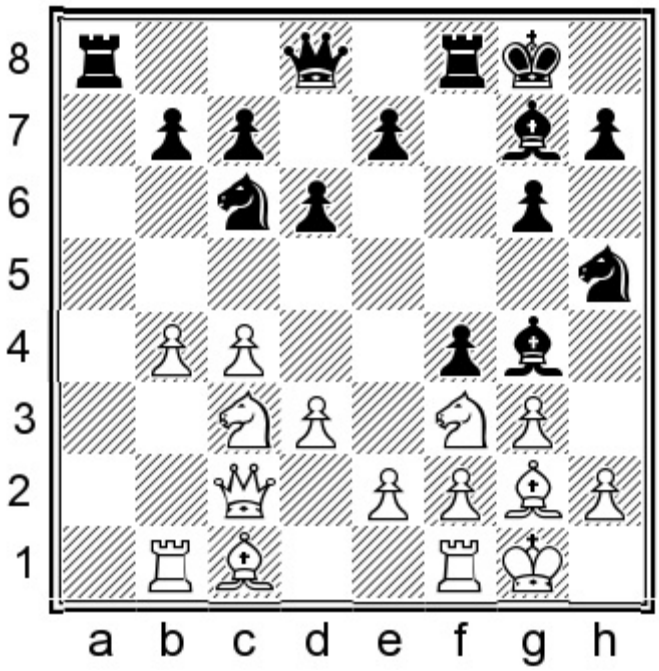
9...a5

The perennial problem for Black in such variations is whether to exchange his a-pawn, thereby opening up a file for his opponent's active queenside play, or to accept the fact that the pawn on a7 will constantly need defending. Evgeny Vasiukov decides to exchange this pawn off, whereas the other approach was tried in Har Zvi – M. Tseitlin, Tel Aviv 1992: 9...f4 10.b4 ♗g4 11.e3 e5 12.b5 ♘e7 13.♘e2 fxg3 14.fxg3 ♕d7 with chances for both sides.

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10.a3 f4 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 ♗g4

Both opponents can be satisfied with the results of the opening. White has carried out his standard manoeuvres and succeeded in pushing his pawn to b4, opening up the a-file; Black has completed the development of his pieces without difficulty and is fully ready to work up counterplay on the kingside. An interesting question, though, is what the white queen is doing on c2. Petrosian now has to be ready at any time to face an exchange on f3 followed by a knight jumping to d4. It would seem that White's ninth move was not the most precise.



13.e3

In the event of 13.b5 ♗xf3 14.exf3 ♘d4, Black has everything in order.

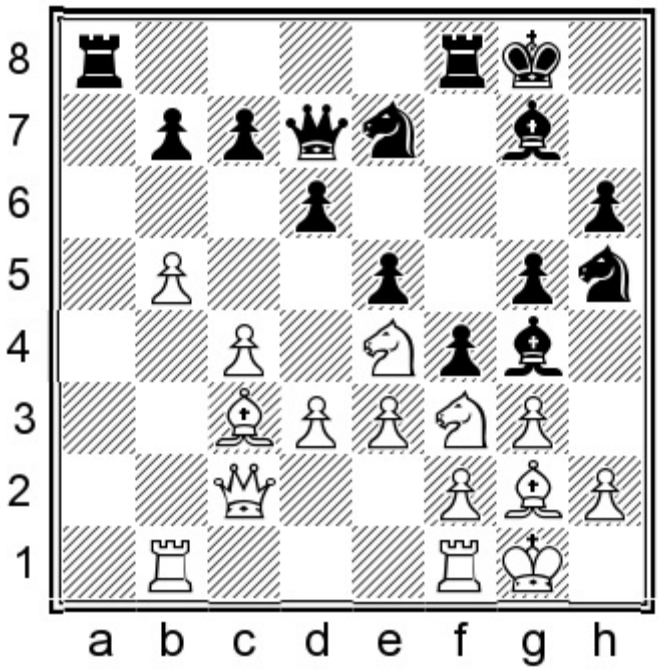
13...e5 14.b5 ♘e7 15.♘e4

On 15.♘d5, Black simply swaps knights and fixes the pawn structure: 15...♘xd5 16.cxd5 b6, with about equal chances. In White's place I would think seriously about 15.♘e2!?, forcing Black into a decision concerning his f-pawn. All the same, posting the knight on a central square is of course very tempting.

15...♕d7 16.♗d2 h6! 17.♗c3 g5

Vasiukov consistently increases the pressure on the white king's residence. He could have continued 17...fxe3 18.fxe3 ♘f6 in an attempt to equalize the chances, but after 19.♘fd2± I would prefer to play White.

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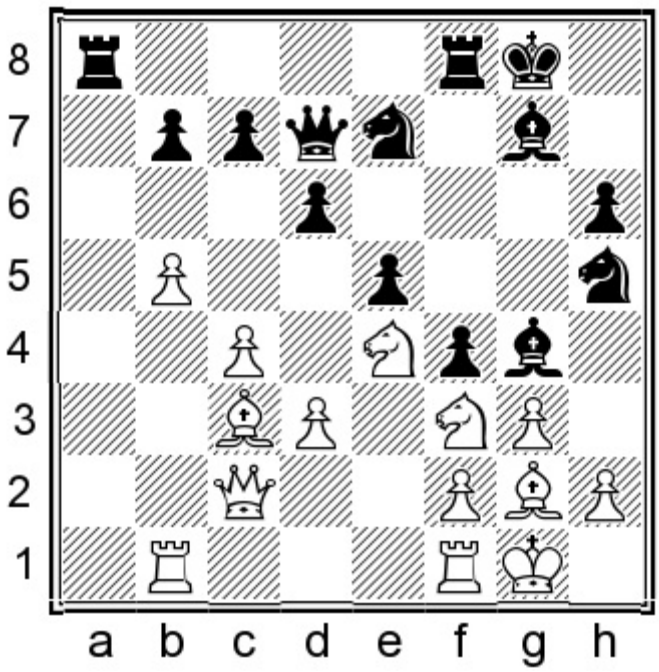


18.exf4!

Petrosian finds the right moment to release the tension, at least in the centre of the board. From the psychological viewpoint it is simply impossible for a good player to do nothing and just watch while the opponent improves his position.

18...gxf4

Better than 18...exf4 19.♗xg7 ♘xg7 20.♕c3. After for instance 20...♘h5 21.b6 c6 22.c5±, it would still be Black who would have to struggle for equality.



19.♕e2?

A critical juncture. For incomprehensible reasons Petrosian places his queen in a dangerous position,

and his pinned knight on f3 is going to give him plenty of worry. I believe this was the last moment in the game when White could have claimed his full share of the play.

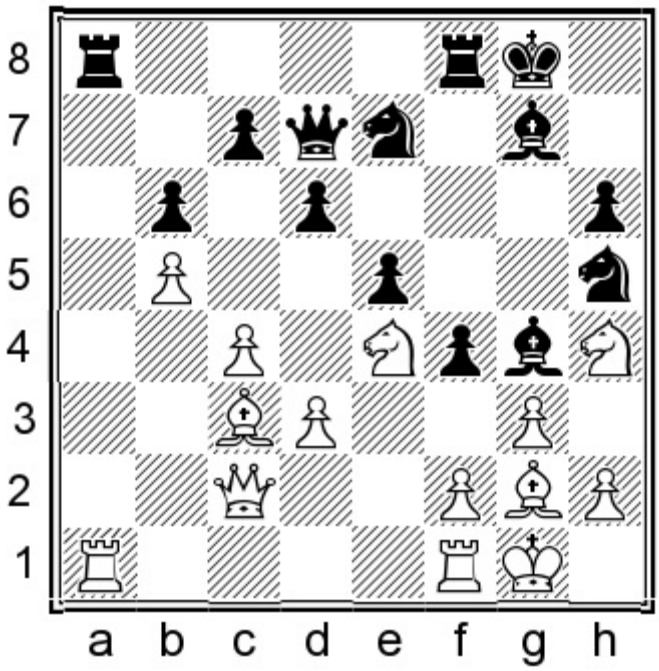
To that end, he had to resolve on 19.♘h4!?, taking several kingside light squares under control. Let us look at Black's replies:

a) 19...f3 is rather risky – after 20.♗h1 ♖f7 21.♖fe1 White might gradually set about winning the pawn.

b) Similarly 19...♘f6 20.♘d2!? can hardly suit Black. White aims to answer 20...♗h3 with 21.♗xb7 ♗xf1 22.♗xa8 ♗xd3 23.♕xd3 ♖xa8 24.b6↑.

c) 19...♖f7 20.♖a1 ♖af8 21.f3! ♗e6 22.g4 ♘f6 23.♕e2± Again White has no reason to complain of his lot.

d) 19...b6 20.♖a1



20...♖xa1

Interesting complications, not unfavourable to White, could arise from 20...d5 21.cxd5 ♘xd5 22.♘g6 ♖xa1 23.♗xa1 ♖e8 24.♕c4, aiming to answer 24...♗e6 with 25.♘xe5! ♗xe5 26.♗xe5 ♘e3 27.♕xc7 ♕xc7 28.♗xc7 ♘xf1 29.♗xf1. After which Black would still have to do a fair amount of work to achieve a draw.

21.♖xa1 ♗h3 22.♗f3

White is of course reluctant to exchange such an important bishop, and yet it would also be perfectly possible to play 22.♕d1!? ♘f6 23.♖a7 with unpleasant pressure.

22...♗g4 23.♗xg4 ♕xg4 24.♖a7

White shows that he isn't afraid of phantoms, particularly since the tempting:

24...fxg3 25.hxg3 ♘f4

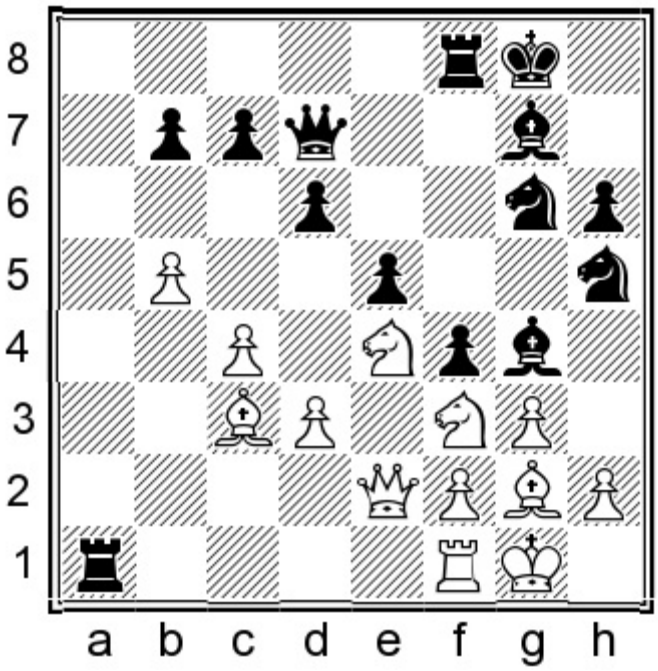
Meets with the uncomplicated refutation:

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26.f3!±

Summing up, I would like to say that until this last move White had a perfectly comfortable position; it is only now that the scales are tipped in his opponent's favour. In 1990 I lost a similar game to Kasparov, and I know how hard it is to play White in such positions. White's strategy, after all, is fairly abstract, whereas Black – though often acting rather primitively – has a target that anyone can understand: *the white king!*

19...♘g6 20.♖a1 ♖xa1



21.♗xa1

This is forced, as we can see by considering the alternative:

21.♖xa1?!

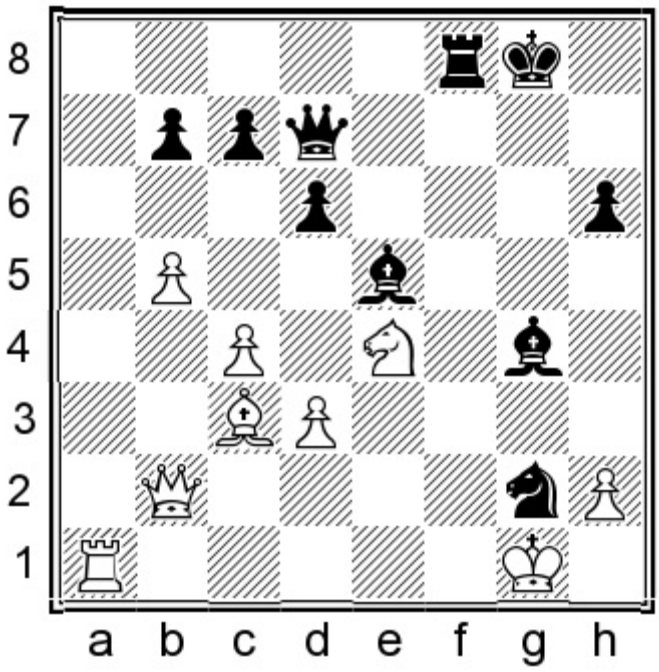
Black goes into action at once, exploiting the fact that such an important defensive piece as this rook is absent from the kingside:

21...fxg3 22.fxg3 ♘hf4!

Playing a move like this always makes you feel good!

23.gxf4 ♘xf4 24.♕b2 ♘xg2 25.♘xe5 ♗xe5

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26.♕xg2

Quite possibly White ought to continue 26.♗xe5 dxe5 27.♕xe5 ♕f7 28.♕g3 ♕g7 29.♖f1 ♗f5 30.♔xg2 ♗h3†! 31.♔xh3 ♖xf1∓, but who wants to play an ending like this one?

26...♗xc3 27.♘xc3 ♔h8

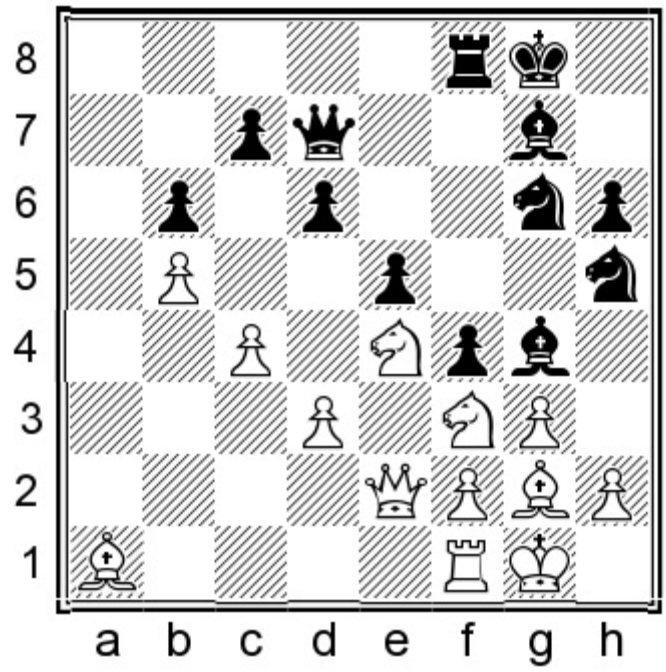
White's position is worse than it appears at first sight; his king will have to endure many an unpleasant minute!

21...b6

Again Vasiukov displays an excellent combative spirit. His level-headed move fixes the pawn structure on the queenside and secures Black against possible awkward surprises.

Here too, as a matter of fact, he could have played 21...fxg3!? 22.fxg3 ♘gf4!?, but this time White has a sound defence: 23.gxf4 ♘xf4 24.♕c2 ♘xg2 25.♕xg2 ♗h3 26.♘xe5!? (unruly complications result from 26.♕g3 ♗xf1 27.♔xf1 d5 28.♘f2 dxc4 29.dxc4 e4 30.♘d4□ 30...♔h8⇄) 26...♖xf1† 27.♕xf1 dxe5 28.♕f3 ♕f5= The position is drawish.

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22.♗c3

Perhaps White would have done well to admit his mistake and move his queen back with 22.♕c2!?.

22...♕f5 23.♗d2

It's only too evident that that Tigran Petrosian has lost the thread and doesn't know what to do next – hence such unimpressive manoeuvres with his bishop! It would be interesting to know what Black would have done against the desperately bold 23.♕a2!? ♔h8 24.♕a7.

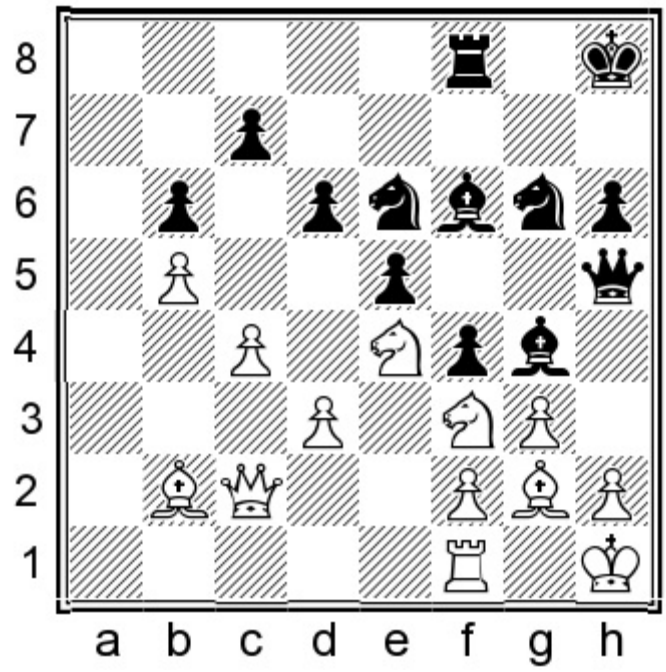
23...♔h8 24.♗c1 ♗f6

Black prepares to bring his knight to e6, which is not a bad idea at all. However, 24...♘f6!?, to exchange off the opponent's only active piece, also deserved consideration.

25.♔h1 ♘g7 26.♗b2 ♘e6 27.♕c2 ♕h5

The storm clouds above the white monarch have thickened; more and more black pieces are appearing in his immediate vicinity.

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28.♘ed2

Apart from this move, White might have gone back with:

28.♕e2

Although of course this switching between e2 and c2 with the queen cannot inspire much confidence! Black's reply is obvious:

28...♘g5!? 29.♘exg5 hxg5 30.♕e4

Or 30.♔g1 ♔g7 and it isn't clear how White defends against the threat of 31...♖h8.

30...♔g7 31.♘g1 ♗d8!

An excellent prophylactic move; Black gives advance protection to his c7-pawn and clears the f-file.

32.♗f3

32.♖a1 doesn't solve all White's problems either: 32...♗f5 33.♕b7 ♗xd3 34.♖a8 fxg3 35.fxg3 ♕g4∓

32...♗xf3†

More convincing than 32...♖h8 33.h3 ♗xf3† 34.♕xf3 g4 35.♕e2, when White is still somehow hanging on.

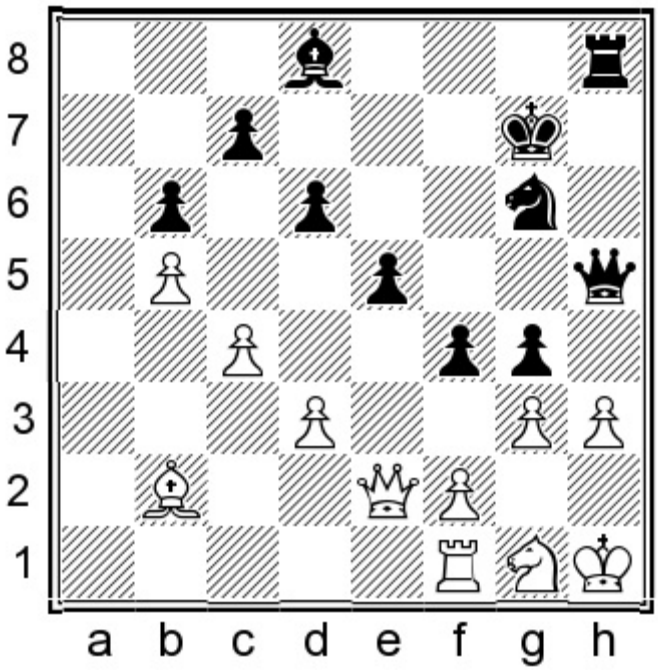
33.♕xf3 g4 34.♕e2!

The only move.

After 34.♕d1 ♖h8 35.h3 ♕g5! White has no defence against the threat of taking on h3.

34...♖h8 35.h3

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35...f3!

At first it seemed to me that Black should go into a favourable ending with 35...♕f5 36.♕e4 ♔f6!, but then I found a more clear-cut solution.

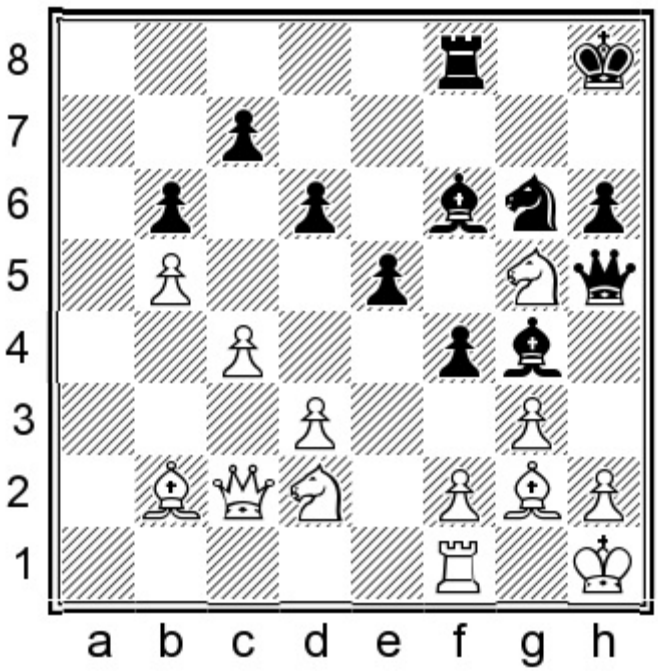
36.♕e3

Or 36.♕e4 ♕g5! with inescapable mate.

36...♕f5 37.♗c1 ♘f4!

White can resign.

28...♘g5! 29.♘xg5



29...♗xg5?!

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A slightly odd decision. In itself the move is not at all bad, and White's defensive task is extremely complicated as before. However, the following move looks much more logical:

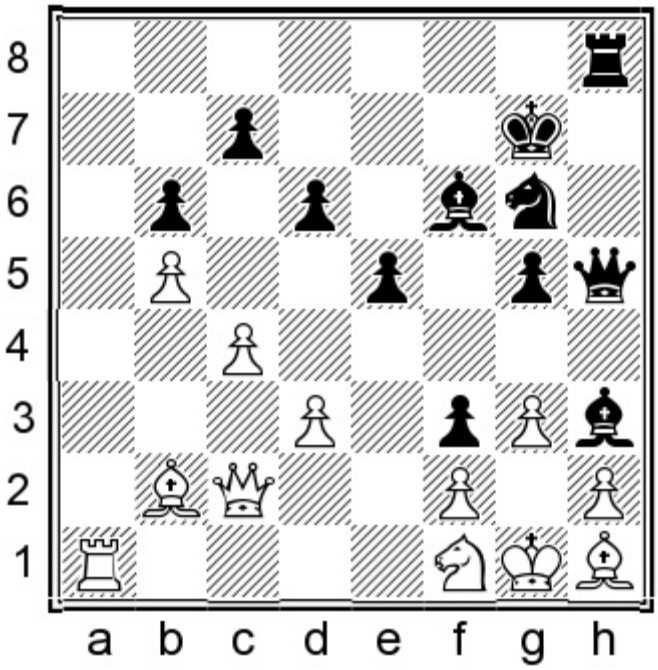
29...hxg5!

Black can easily create mating threats on the open h-file. Evgeny Vasiukov may have wanted to use his dark-squared bishop for the attack, but by this time Black is able to do without the help of this piece. The game could continue as follows:

30.♔g1

30.♗e4 ♔g7 31.♖a1 ♖h8 32.♘f1 f3–+ can hardly be recommended to White; on 33.♕d1, Black's simplest way to win is 33...♘f4! 34.d4 ♕h3 35.♗xf3 e4!, and the curtain can be lowered. The lonely king always has difficulty organizing effective resistance against the entire black army.

30...f3 31.♗h1 ♔g7 32.♖a1 ♖h8 33.♘f1 ♗h3



34.♖a7

What other advice can White be given?

The refutation of 34.♕d1 is simple: 34...g4 35.♘e3 ♗g2 36.h4 ♗xh4! 37.♗xg2 ♗g5 38.♘xg4 fxg2 And after 39.♔xg2 ♕h3† 40.♔f3 ♘h4† Black gets to the white monarch after all.

Nor is 34.♘e3 any help, in view of 34...♘f4! 35.gxf4 gxf4 36.♗xf3 ♕xf3 37.♕d1 ♕xd1† 38.♘xd1 ♔f7–+ and the attack continues in spite of the numerous exchanges.

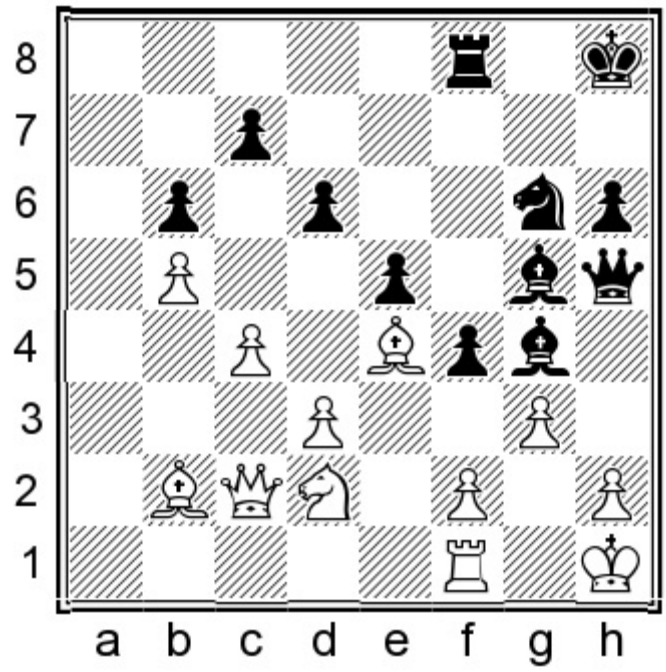
34...♗xf1 35.♔xf1 g4 36.♖xc7† ♘e7–+

And the game is over.

As you can see, the variations I have given are not too complicated, and furthermore Black is under no obligation whatever to calculate them to the end. Ultimately there is such a thing as intuition, which will insist that threats of *this* kind simply cannot be parried.

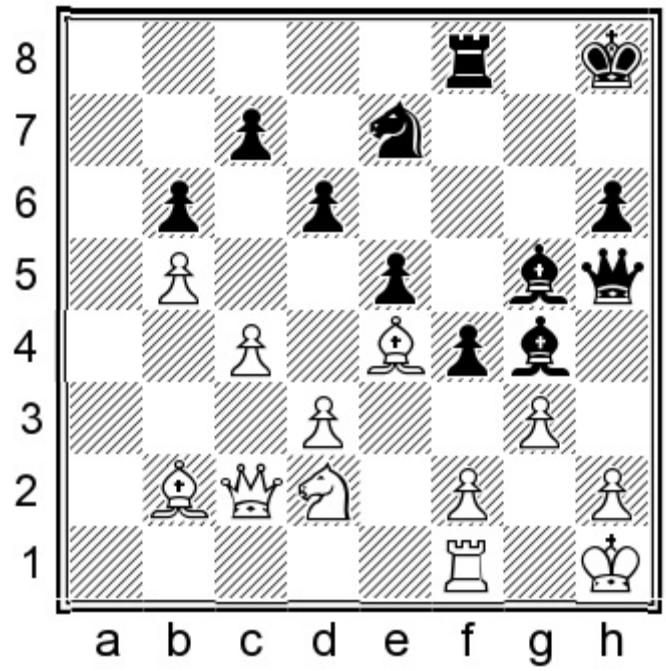
30.♗e4

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30...♗e2!

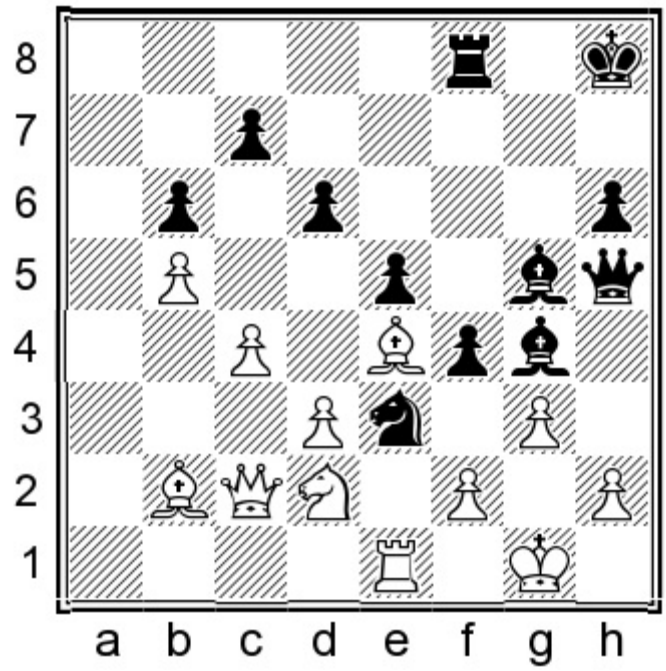
An excellent move, preparing the deadly ...f4-f3. However, Black also had another interesting plan of attack with 30...♘e7!, aiming to bring the knight to f5. So let us look at it, if only out of curiosity.



White has two reasonable replies:

a) 31.♔g1 ♘f5 White now has to reckon with a knight sacrifice on g3 or e3 in many variations. 32.♖e1 ♘e3!

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Here we have a case where accepting the sacrifice and declining it are equally bad!

a1) 33.fxe3 33...fxe3 34.♘f3 (or 34.♘f1 ♕f7 35.♔h1 e2 36.♗g2 ♕f2–+ and White no longer has a defence against the many threats) 34...♗xf3 35.♗xf3 ♕xf3 36.♕e2 ♕f2† With a decisive plus.

a2) Moving the queen away with 33.♕a4 allows an amazingly pretty combination: 33...♕h3! 34.♗h1 fxg3 35.hxg3 ♗d1!! 36.♖xd1 ♘g4 37.♘f3 (or 37.♘f1 ♗e3!! with unavoidable mate) 37...♗e3! 38.fxe3 ♕xg3† 39.♗g2 ♕f2† 40.♔h1 ♖xf3 41.♕a8† ♖f8–+ With an easy win.

b) 31.d4 ♘f5 32.♗xf5

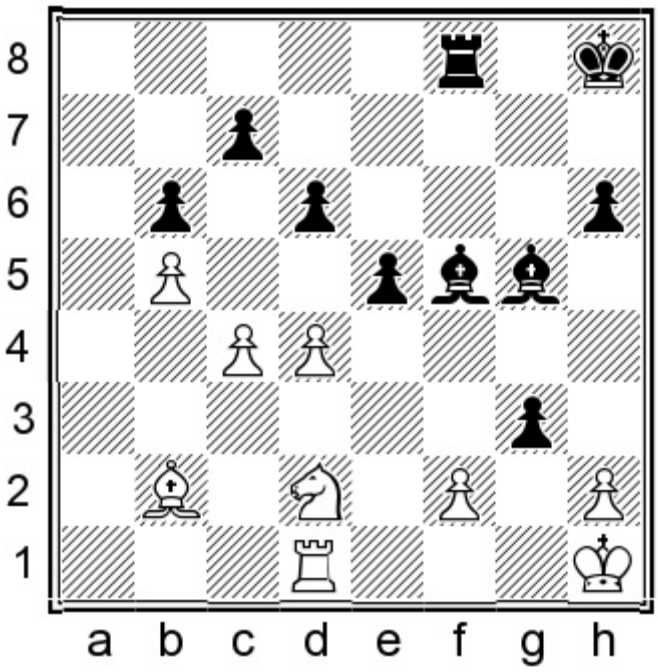
It is White's misfortune that he has to exchange such an important piece as this bishop, seeing that 32.dxe5 fxg3 33.exd6† ♗f6 34.fxg3 ♘xg3† 35.♔g1 ♘xf1 36.♘xf1 ♕c5† 37.♔g2 cxd6–+ leaves him unable to offer any resistance.

32...♗xf5 33.♕d1 ♕xd1 34.♖xd1

Even the queen exchange fails to bring White the anticipated relief.

34...fxg3

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35.f3

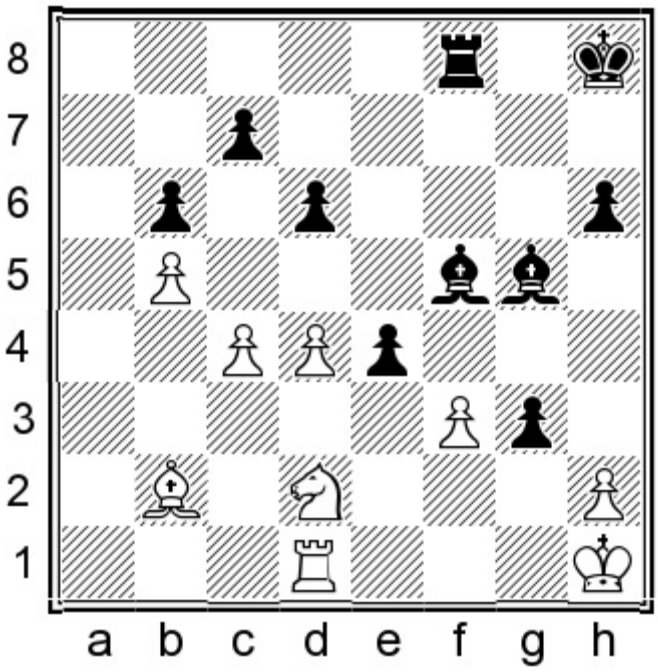
And now he has to make such a seemingly incomprehensible move.

The point is that Black wins easily in the event of 35.fxg3 e4! 36.h4 e3 37.hxg5 ♗g4!–+ with big material gains.

Or 35.hxg3 ♗g4 36.f3 ♖xf3 37.dxe5 ♔g8! 38.exd6 cxd6–+. In the latter case White has the unpleasant choice between losing his knight, sacrificing a pawn with 39.c5 which naturally fails to save him, or simply stopping the clock.

35...e4!

The concluding blow, inescapably settling the fate of the game.



36.♘xe4 ♗xe4 37.fxe4 ♖f2! 38.♗c1 g2† 39.♔g1 ♖f1† 40.♖xf1 gxf1=♕† 41.♔xf1 ♗xc1–+

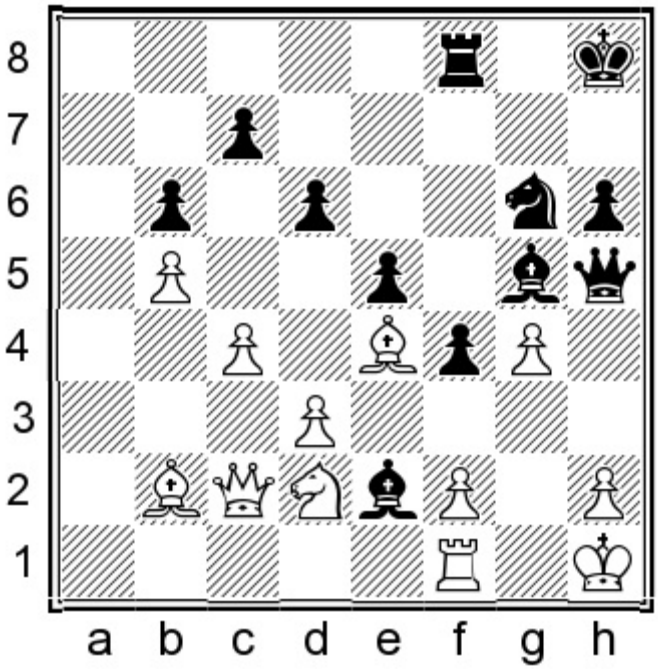
The successful exploitation of his large material plus will not require too much effort from Black.

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31.♔g1?!–+

After this unfortunate move, Black's win is no longer in any doubt at all. White was obviously panicking – not the ideal state of mind when defending such an awkward position!

It was imperative for Petrosian to play:
31.g4□



Black would at least need to respond with a certain precision. The only solution is:
31...♕h3!

White's chances are no worse in the case of 31...♕xg4? 32.f3! ♕h4□ 33.♗xg6 ♗xf1 34.♘xf1⇄.

Nor can Black be happy about 31...♗xg4? 32.d4! ♖g8 33.f3 – again with chances for both sides, seeing that White's pieces have suddenly become very active.

32.♖g1□ 32...♘h4 33.d4 ♘f3 34.♗xf3 ♗xf3† 35.♘xf3 ♕xf3† 36.♖g2 e4

With what is probably a won position; however, the material on the board is still equal and, with some good fortune, anything is possible!

31...f3

I would no doubt have been unable to resist:

31...fxg3! 32.hxg3

White loses at once with 32.fxg3 ♗e3†, and now 33.♔h1 ♗xf1–+ or 33.♔g2 ♘h4†!.

32...♘f4!

Or 32...♗xd2!? 33.♕xd2 ♘f4! which leads to similar results.

33.♗c3 ♗g4!

Freeing e2 for the knight. Among many other winning continuations, I would mention 33...♗xd3!?, and if 34.♗xd3? then 34...♕h3.

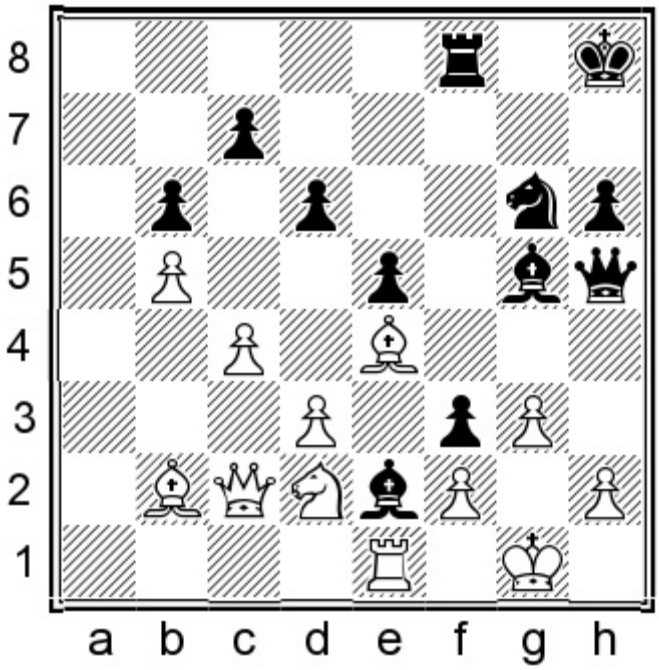
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34.f3 ♘e2† 35.♔f2 ♘xg3!–+

White's position collapses like a house of cards!

32.♖e1

It's obvious that 32.h4 simply fails to 32...♗xh4 followed by ♘f4!.



32...♗xd2

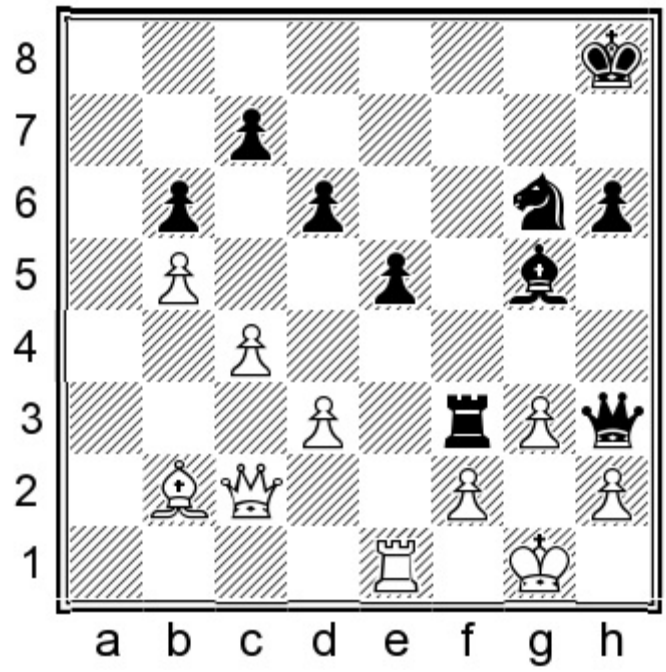
Evgeny Vasiukov avoids any drastic measures. He could have won at once with 32...♘f4! 33.♔h1 ♘h3 34.♖f1 ♗xd2–+.

33.♖xe2 ♗g5

On the face of it, both players must have been in time trouble. Otherwise I find it hard to explain why Black rejected the attractive line 33...fxe2! 34.♕xd2 ♘f4! 35.gxf4 ♕g4† 36.♔h1 ♖g8 37.♕e1 ♕g1† 38.♕xg1 ♖xg1† 39.♔xg1 e1=♕† 40.♔g2 ♕d2–+. White's dark-squared bishop can't hide from the pursuing black queen.

34.♖e1 ♕h3 35.♗xf3 ♖xf3

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36.d4

There's no doubt that White's position is quite hopeless, and so 36.♕e2 ♕f5 37.d4 ♗f6–+ does nothing to alter the verdict!

36...♘f4! 37.gxf4 ♗xf4

And faced with mate in a few moves, Tigran Petrosian resigned.

0–1

Of course such a victory is worth a great deal. To win a game in this style, against one of the strongest Grandmasters of his day and a future World Champion, is always especially pleasant. It cannot even be said that White played this game too badly. In essence, he made only one mistake –19.♕e2?. After that, I dare say he committed a couple of very insignificant inaccuracies. It just can't be helped – in such a sharp variation, with a multitude of dangers threatening your king, you are not entitled to make mistakes at all. And without doubt the chief responsibility for White's defeat lay with Evgeny Vasiukov, who conducted the whole game in a superb aggressive style.

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Tigran Petrosian – Yakov Estrin

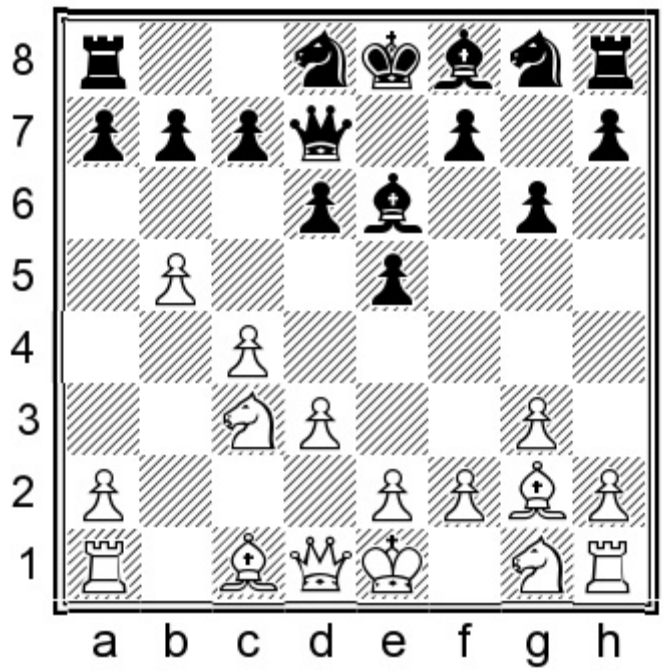
Moscow Team Championship 1968

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 d6 4.♘c3 ♗e6

Black plays the opening in a slipshod manner. The development of his light-squared bishop simply provokes White into carrying out the most natural plan of b2-b4.

5.d3 g6 6.b4! ♕d7 7.b5 ♘d8

White has already gained a slight advantage; it usually takes him much more of an effort to get his pawn to b5. The queenside ought now to be a constant headache for Black. The game takes a different course, however!



8.♘f3!?

An excellent move, but of course by no means the only one. White could simply have pushed his a-pawn; the plan is a standard one in the Closed Sicilian, where of course Black is the one who successfully employs it with colours reversed.

Beliavsky – Kupreichik, Odessa 1974, continued interestingly: 8.♗g5 f6 9.♗d2 ♘e7 10.♘f3 ♗g7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♕b3 ♗f7 13.♘e1 ♘e6 14.a4 f5 15.♕a3 With troublesome pressure.

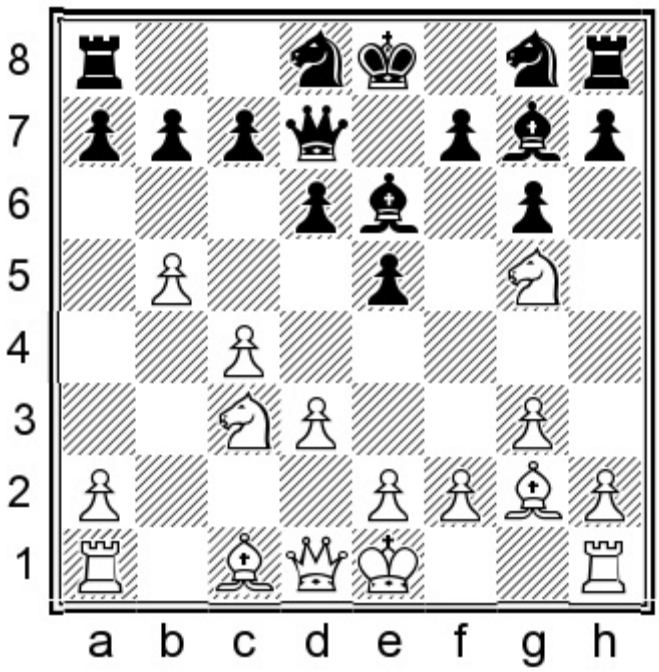
8...♗g7

An improvement is 8...♗h3, although after 9.♗xh3 ♕xh3 10.d4! ♗g7 11.dxe5 ♘e6 12.♘d5 White's chances are clearly preferable, Navara – A. Ledger, Britain (team ch) 2007.

9.♘g5!↑

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Petrosian's wish to exchange Black's bishop – virtually the sole defender of the light squares – is perfectly understandable. A more interesting question is why the experienced master Yakov Estrin agrees to this without demur!



9...e4?!

I don't like this move; Black should be thinking more about developing his kingside pieces! Moreover, there may now be quite a few problems in store for him on the a1-h8 diagonal. A slight improvement is:

9...♘f6

But White still has a pleasant game after:

10.♘xe6 ♕xe6 11.♗g5!?

The stock move 11.a4!? is also perfectly good.

11...0-0

It would be too risky to play 11...h6?! 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♘d5 ♖c8□ 14.h4! ♗g7 15.♗h3 f5 16.e4±, as there appears to be no way for Black to save his f5-pawn.

12.0-0

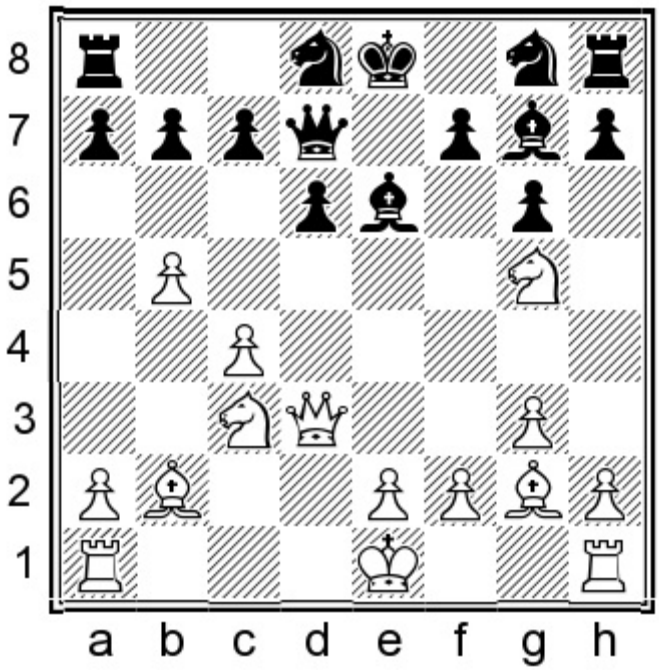
Incidentally the capture on f6 would still be worth considering: 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♘d5 ♖c8 14.♕a4↑

12...♕d7 13.♖b1 h6 14.♗d2!?

Undoubtedly Black's best move was 9...♗f5!?, preserving his bishop and trying to provoke White into e2-e4. After 10.♘ge4 ♘e6 (better than 10...♘e7 11.♗g5 0-0 12.♘f6† ♗xf6 13.♗xf6↑) 11.♖b1 ♘e7± Petrosian could only have laid claim to a small plus.

10.♗b2 exd3 11.♕xd3

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11...a6?!

At best this move is a waste of precious time. Black should still be thinking about getting castled, but Estrin is probably emulating his great opponent, who indeed was also fond of keeping his king in the centre. I don't want to give offence to anyone, but what is permissible to a World Champion is not permissible to an average Moscow master.

Black's position is already uncomfortable enough, but he should nonetheless settle for the routine continuation:

11...♘e7 12.0-0-0

White also has a very good game after 12.♕d2!? 0-0 13.♘ce4 f6 14.♘xe6 ♘xe6 15.0-0±.

12...0-0

12...h6? loses at once to 13.♘ce4! ♗xb2† 14.♔xb2 ♘g8 15.♕c3!+–.

13.♘ce4 ♗xb2† 14.♔xb2 f6 15.♘c5! dxc5 16.♕xd7 ♗xd7 17.♖xd7 fxg5 18.♖xe7 ♖xf2 19.♗f3±

White has an obvious advantage in the ending.

12.h4

Petrosian was clearly in the mood for creative play that day! His desire to mate the black king is praiseworthy, and yet there was a significantly stronger line: 12.b6! cxb6 13.♘ge4±, and White's advantage is already almost decisive.

I also like:

12.♕c2!?

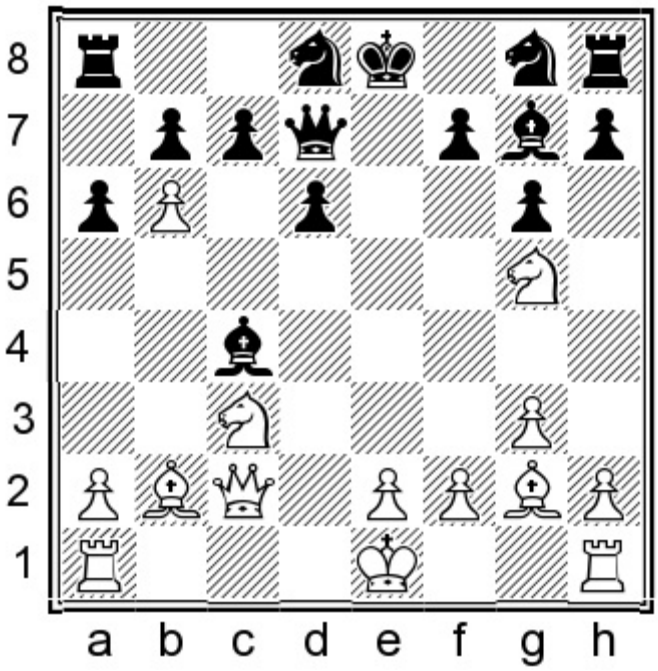
Preparing an exchange of dark-squared bishops. It's hard to find a move to recommend in reply. For instance:

12...♗xc4

This is met by:

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13.b6!



13...f6

The brave pawn steps into the breach, trying to seal the dangerous diagonal!

Nothing good for Black comes of: 13...h6 14.♘ce4 f5 15.bxc7! hxg5 16.♗xg7 ♕xg7 17.♘xd6† ♔f8 18.cxd8=♕† ♖xd8 19.♖d1±

Now White has the very pleasant choice between 14.♘ge4!? and:

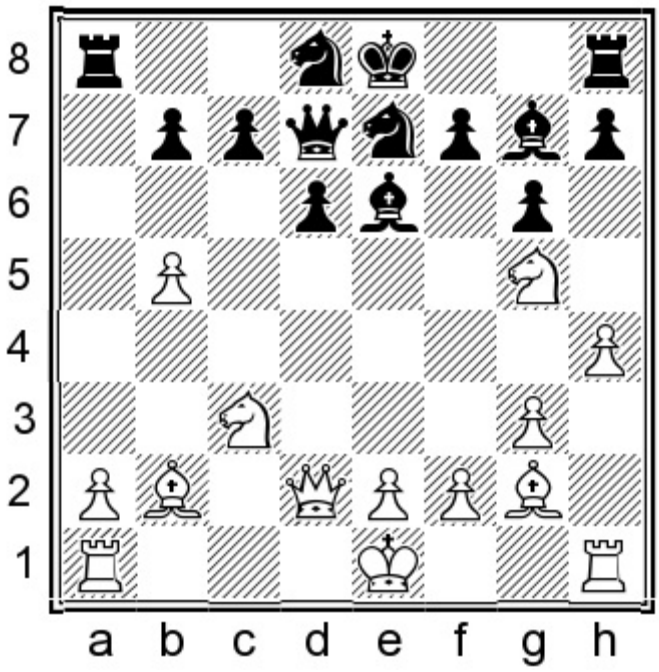
14.♕e4† ♘e7 15.♕xc4 fxg5 16.bxc7 ♘dc6 17.0-0

With a large plus in either case.

12...axb5 13.cxb5 ♘e7 14.♕d2!?

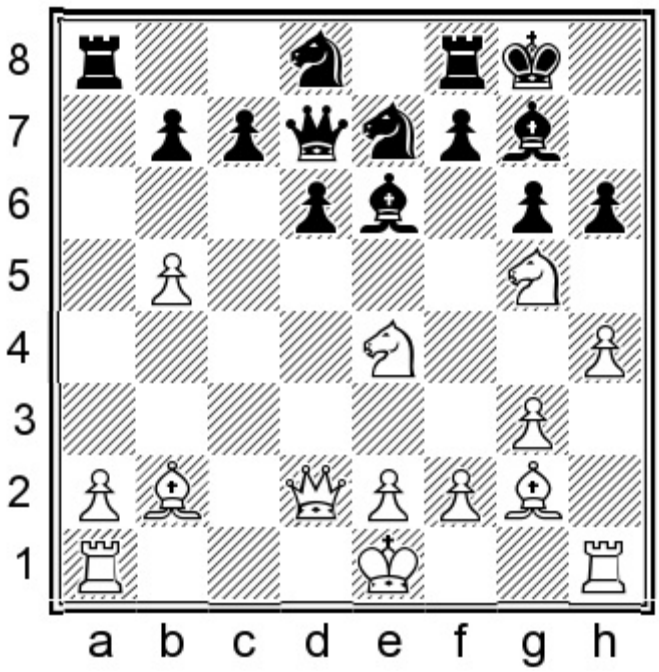
As we see, Petrosian was not renouncing the plan of exchanging bishops but merely postponing it for a couple of moves.

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14...0-0

Black had little choice, or more precisely he had none whatever. He would be in a very bad way after: 14...h6?! 15.♘ce4! (of course not 15.♘xe6? fxe6! 16.h5 g5 with a fully satisfactory game) 15...0-0 (It wouldn't be worth spending much time on 15...f6 16.♘xf6† ♗xf6 17.♗xf6 0-0 18.♗xe7 ♕xe7 19.♘xe6 ♘xe6 20.♗xb7+–, as White's two extra pawns guarantee him an easy win.)



16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♘h7!+– White's victory will not be long coming.

15.h5 gxh5

Playing a move like this in a game against Petrosian is tantamount to a suicide attempt! But then, what *should* Black have done here? The question isn't easy!

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15...d5?

This would make White calculate some variations – but by no means difficult ones. The continuation would be:

16.hxg6 hxg6 17.♘xd5! ♗xd5

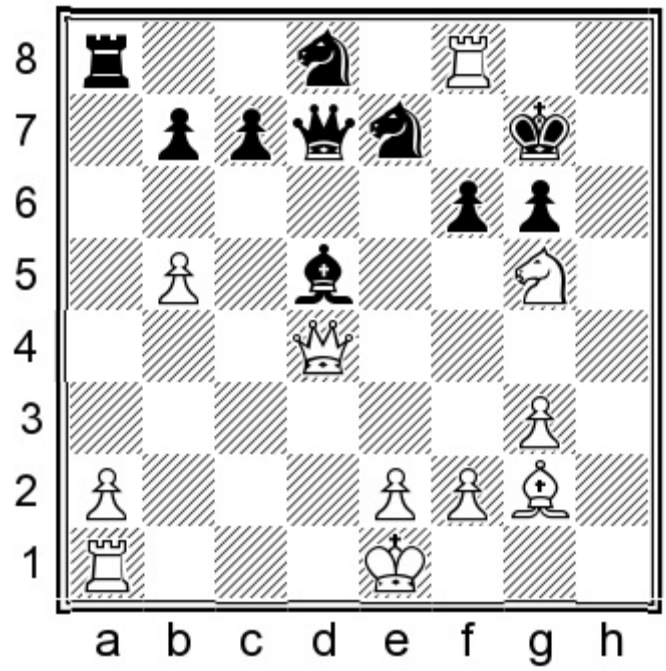
17...♘xd5 makes no difference to the outcome: 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♕d4† f6 20.♖h7†+–

18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♕d4†

To be truthful, I must point out that 19.♘h7!+– wins more quickly.

19...f6 20.♖h7† ♔g8 21.♖h8†! ♔g7 22.♖xf8

A colourful position, don't you think?



22...♕f5

22...♔xf8? loses amusingly – White replies 23.♘h7†! ♔f7 24.♕xf6† ♔g8 25.♕f8†! ♔xh7 and now at last he decides to castle: 26.0-0-0+– With mate in a few moves.

23.f4! ♔xf8

In the event of 23...c5 24.♕xc5 ♔xf8 25.♗h3! Black loses his queen for no compensation.

24.♗h3! fxg5

Or 24...♕c2 25.♕xf6† ♔e8 26.♘h7!+–.

25.♗xf5 gxf5 26.fxg5+–

In spite of the many exchanges, White's attack continues; his pawn on g5 is very strong, and I don't think he would encounter any problems in converting his advantage into a win.

Black's only suitable reply was the cool-headed:

15...h6□

With the possible continuation:

16.♘ce4

16.♘xe6 is also interesting; White then of course has the initiative after either 16...fxe6!? or

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16...♕xe6 17.a4 c6 18.a5, but there is still plenty to play for.

16...♕xb5 17.♗xg7

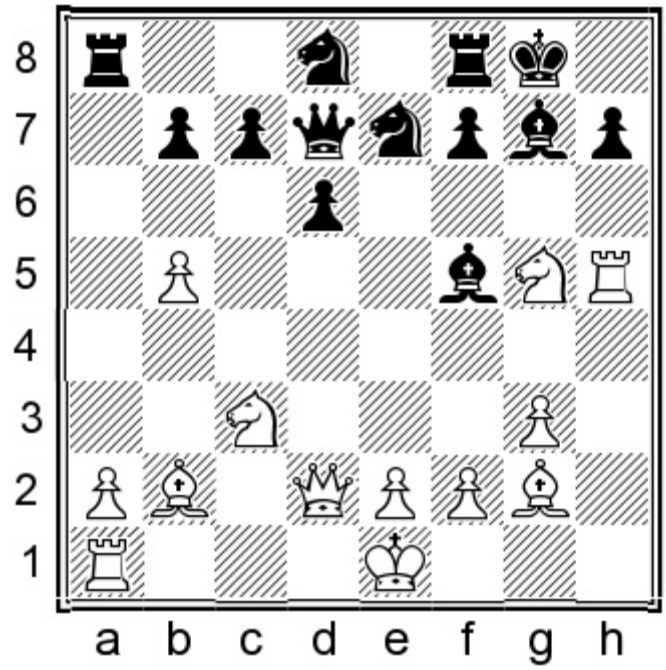
After 17.♘f6† ♗xf6 18.♗xf6 hxg5 19.♗xe7 ♖e8 20.♗f6 Black has the pretty 20...♖xa2!⇄.

17...♔xg7 18.♘xe6† ♘xe6 19.hxg6±

With a small but stable plus. This was undoubtedly the last moment when Black could have tried to do something to alter the course of the duel that was going so unfavourably for him.

16.♖xh5 ♗f5

Here 16...h6 fails to rescue him from the powerful attack: 17.♘d5! ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♘xd5 19.♕d3! f5 20.♕xd5†+−



17.♗e4!?

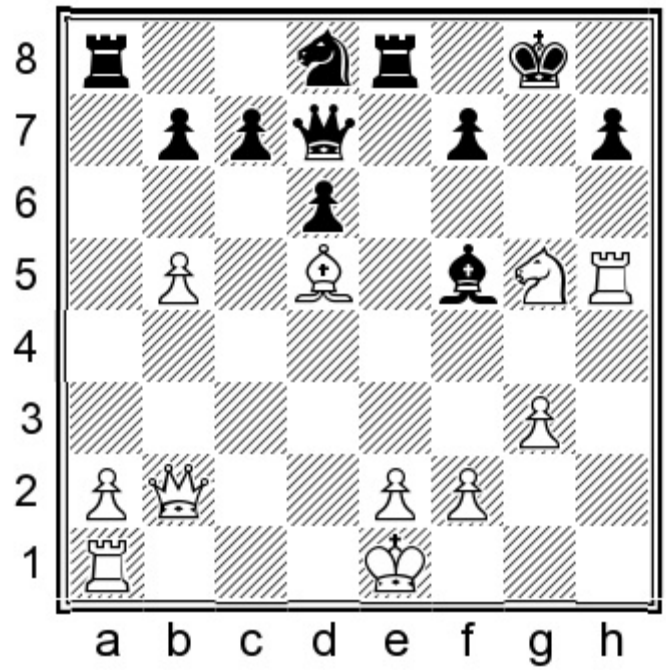
Tigran Petrosian was an intuitive player who was sincerely averse to calculating long variations. At this point he could have put the result beyond doubt with the aggressive:

17.♘d5! ♗xb2

The bishop exchange goes against Black's wishes, but 17...f6 18.♘xe7† ♕xe7 doesn't save him either; the surprising 19.♗xb7! ♘xb7 20.♕d5† ♖f7 21.♕xf5! settles matters, since 21...fxg5 allows an attractive mate: 22.♕xh7† ♔f8 23.♕h8†! ♗xh8 24.♖xh8#

18.♕xb2 ♘xd5 19.♗xd5 ♖e8

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20.0-0-0!?

Better late than never!

No doubt White can win by 20.♘xh7!? ♗xh7 21.♖g5† ♔f8 22.♕g7† ♔e7 23.♕xh7 ♕xb5 24.♖b1! ♕a5† 25.♔f1+–, but why hurry? There will be time enough for sacrificing on h7.

20...♖e5 21.♘xh7! ♗xh7 22.♖xe5 dxe5 23.♗xb7 ♕xd1† 24.♔xd1 ♘xb7 25.♕xe5 ♘d6 26.f3+–

Black's pieces are badly co-ordinated, and the white queen dominates the whole board. A fairly important point here is that 26...♖xa2 fails to 27.b6!.

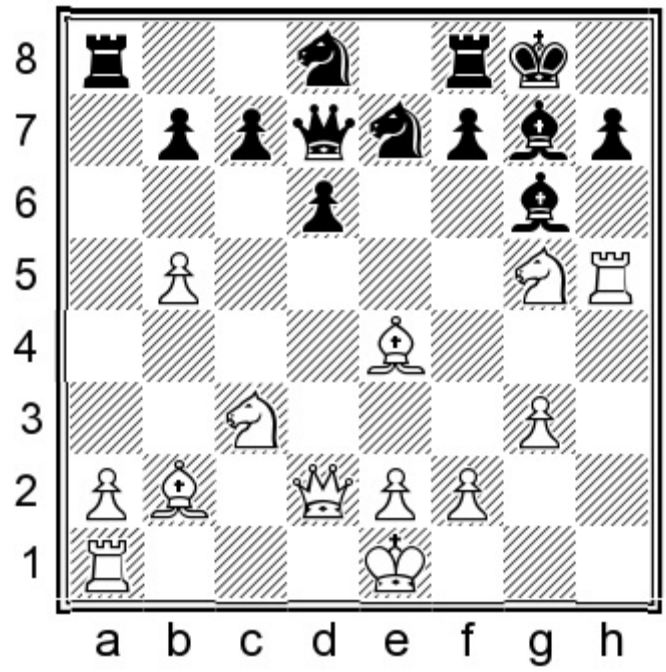
17...♗g6

Black has run out of good ideas and only has bad ones left!

On 17...f6, White concludes the struggle at once with 18.♘xh7.

Nor does 17...h6 bring any relief: 18.♘d5! f6 (or 18...♗xb2 19.♕xb2 ♘xd5 20.♗xd5+– with a winning attack) 19.♘xe7† ♕xe7 20.♕d5† ♗e6 21.♘xe6 ♕xe6 22.♕xe6† ♘xe6 23.♗xb7+– Black can only drag the game out, with no chance of a successful outcome.

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18.♖xh7! ♗xh7

Playing a position like this is extremely unpleasant, and I know quite a few strong players who would simply have stopped the clock.

On 18...♗xe4 19.♘cxe4 f6, White continues very simply with 20.♕c2 ♕f5 21.♕xc7+–.

If Black plays the immediate:

18...f6

Then the refutation is not a great deal more complicated:

19.♗xg6 ♘xg6 20.♕d5† ♖f7

Or 20...♘f7 21.♘ce4 ♘ge5 22.♘xf6† ♗xf6 23.♗xe5 ♗xe5 24.♕d3! and Black is quickly mated.

21.♘xf7 ♕xf7

Unfortunately for Black, 21...♔xh7 fails to 22.♘xd8 ♖xd8 23.♕h5†.

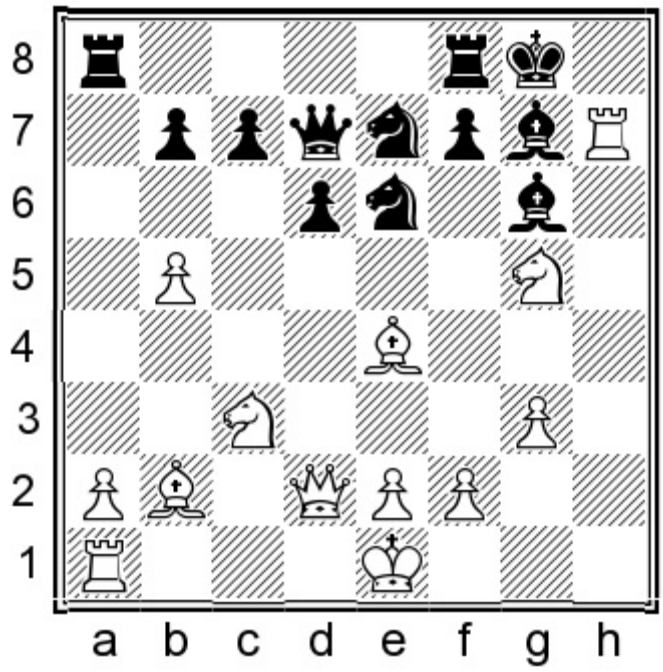
22.♕xf7† ♘xf7 23.♖h5+–

You don't have to be a World Champion to win this position.

The strongest move in the position was:

18...♘e6

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But even this fails to set White serious problems:

19.♗xg6

The same result is achieved by 19.♖xg7† ♔xg7 20.♘d5† f6 21.♗xg6 ♘xg6 22.♘xe6† ♕xe6 23.♘xc7+–, securing a large material plus.

19...fxg6

On 19...♘xg6 White reverts to his favourite plan of 20.♘ce4!, intending to meet 20...♘e5 with the deadly 21.♖xg7† ♔xg7 22.♗xe5†.

20.♘ce4 ♕xb5 21.♘xe6 ♗xb2 22.♕h6! ♖f7 23.♖xf7 ♕a5†

The queen is forced to leave the danger zone, so as not to perish after 23...♔xf7 24.♘4g5† ♔e8 25.♘xc7†.

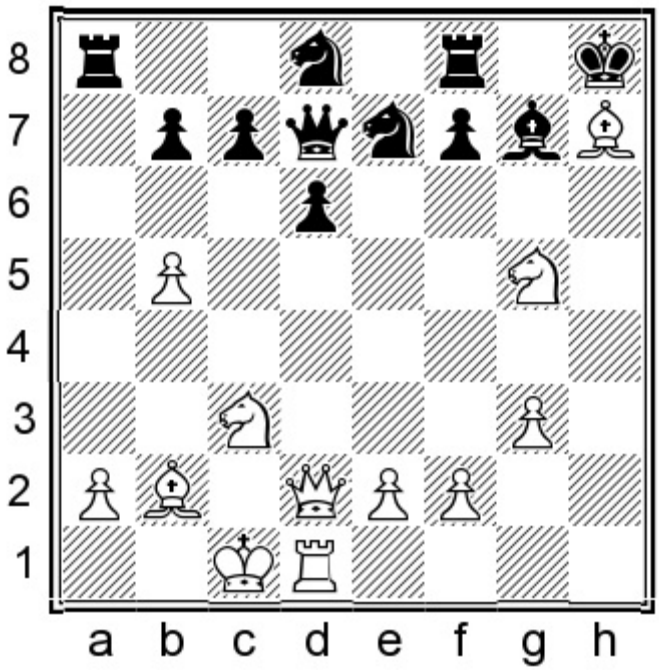
24.♔f1 ♔xf7 25.♘4g5† ♔e8 26.♖b1 ♗c3 27.♖b5! ♕xa2 28.♖xb7+–

This variation may well not be forced, but it does give a distinct idea of how bad Black's position is.

19.♗xh7† ♔h8 20.0-0-0!

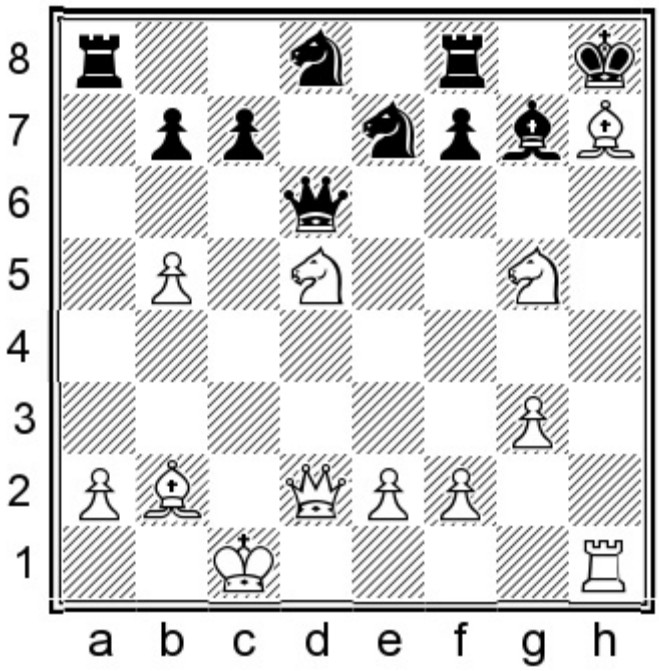
At this point, with full authority, we can say those hallowed words, "all White's pieces are taking part in the attack on the king!"

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20...♘g8

Estrin hopes to bring this knight to h6, so as to extend his monarch's life span, even if only for a short while. White answers 20...d5 with 21.♖h1 ♕d6 22.♘xd5!.



Then Black collapses after 22...♗xb2† 23.♕xb2 f6 24.♘xe7† ♕xe7 25.♗c2† ♔g8 26.♗b3+–, while on 22...f6 White wins by the same device: 23.♗c2† ♔g8 24.♘xe7† ♕xe7 25.♗b3+–

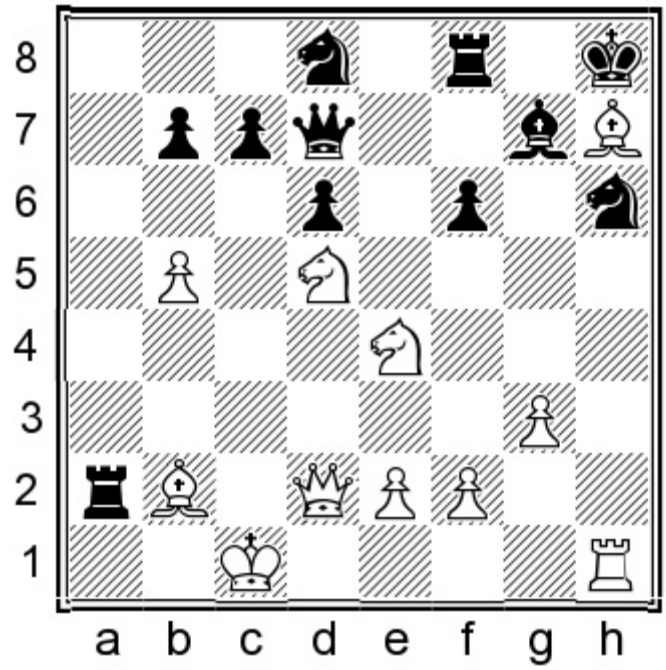
21.♖h1 ♘h6 22.♘d5 f6 23.♘e4

Or 23.♘f4! fxg5 24.♖xh6 gxf4 25.♗f5† which is just as convincing.

23...♖xa2

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Black's game, of course, has long been beyond salvation. On 23...♔xh7 White wins at once by 24.♘exf6†!, while in the event of 23...♘df7 he makes use of a pleasing idea: 24.♘exf6 ♕xb5 25.♘e7!, and Black has to sacrifice his queen to prevent mate on g6.



24.♖xh6

Petrosian decides to win the game in a manner which, though not perhaps the most spectacular, is the simplest. Had he been more concerned with beautiful effects, he could have continued: 24.♗f5! ♖xb2 25.♕xh6†! ♗xh6† 26.♖xh6† ♔g8 27.♘dxf6† ♖xf6 (27...♔g7 28.♖h7#) 28.♘xf6† ♔g7 29.♘xd7 ♔xh6 30.♔xb2+– Leaving White with an extra piece on a nearly empty chessboard. But why go in for long variations? White's position is too good for that!

24...♗xh6 25.♕xh6 ♕g7 26.♕h4

And in view of the forced variation 26...♕xh7 27.♗xf6† ♖xf6 28.♕xf6† ♕g7 29.♕xd8† ♕g8 30.♕xg8† ♔xg8 31.♘ec3+–, Black resigned.

1–0

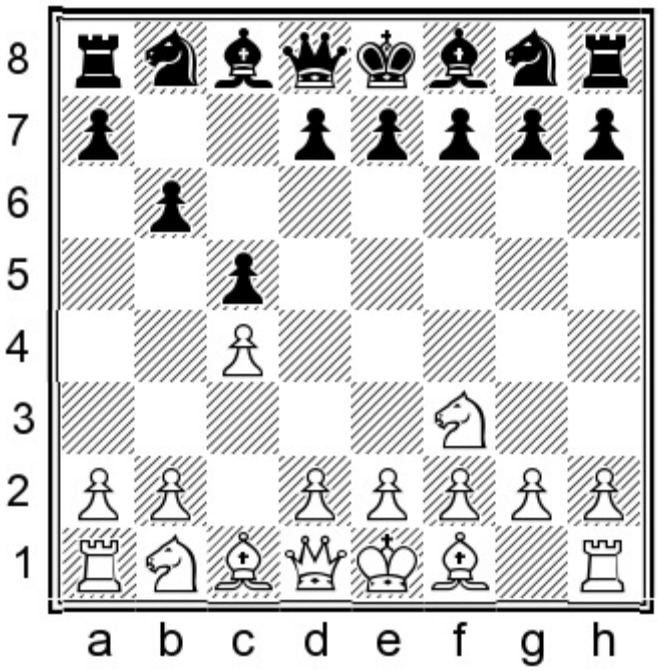
The majority of games examined in this book were fairly complicated to analyse and demanded considerable work to understand them. Therefore at the end of the book I decided to show you something in a relatively lighter vein – after all, chess is not played exclusively by Grandmasters! The Petrosian game, though not of course very complex, is quite pleasing. Black played the opening without any great insight, but obtained a position which, though difficult, remained defensible. Petrosian played most energetically. Consider his 12.h4 move – it may not have been strongest objectively, but it compelled his opponent to find the only moves to defend. Small wonder that Estrin couldn't entirely cope with this task and his position started deteriorating move by move. The moral from this is extremely simple: play more aggressively; the odd dose of impudence doesn't do any harm either. You will be surprised how quickly your results improve!

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Karen Grigorian – Lev Psakhis

USSR Championship (First League) 1979

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 b6

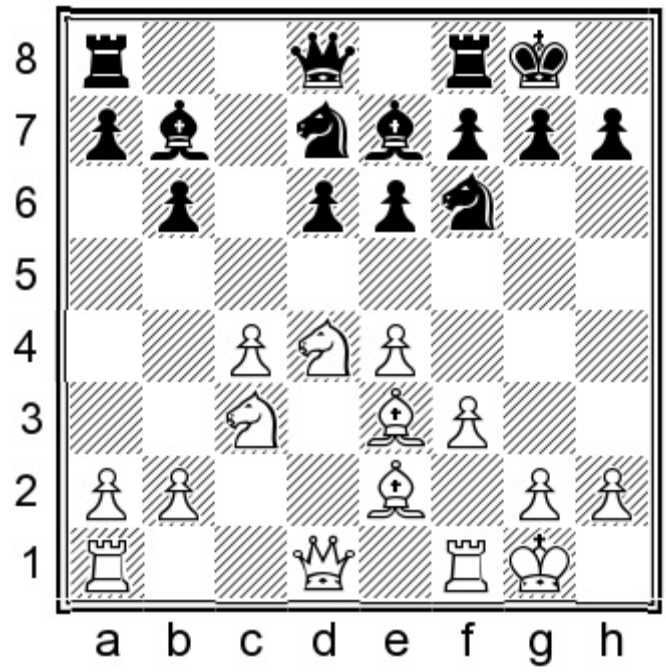


My favourite opening in those years! I was an absolute "hedgehog" fanatic, and one of the founding fathers who popularized this set-up in Russia. This fanaticism exceeded all rational bounds, to the extent that on the Black side of the Sicilian Defence I would often even play 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 b6. Curiously enough, one day my enthusiasm evaporated just as quickly as it had sprung up in the first place, and the hedgehog disappeared completely from my repertoire.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♗b7 6.f3 d6 7.e4 e6 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘bd7

I have not annotated the foregoing moves, as the resulting position was very familiar to me (and not *only* me!) at that time, occurring in no fewer than ten of my games. Ideally Black's plan involves either a break in the centre with ...d6-d5 or a blow from the flank with ...b6-b5. If White succeeds in preventing these pawn advances, a period of lengthy manoeuvres will begin.

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11.♘db5

In principle White has no need of this move. He is not in a position to win the d-pawn. The knight's trip to a3 is of course reminiscent of the Taimanov Sicilian, but will anyone explain to me what the knight will be doing on that square?

Much more often White plays 11.♕d2 and Black replies 11...a6 (instead 11...d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♗xd5 15.♘f5 ♗e6 16.♘xe7† ♕xe7 17.♗g5 occurred in Michalek – Mozny, Czech Republic 2006; this guarantees White a slight edge, thanks to his strong bishop pair).

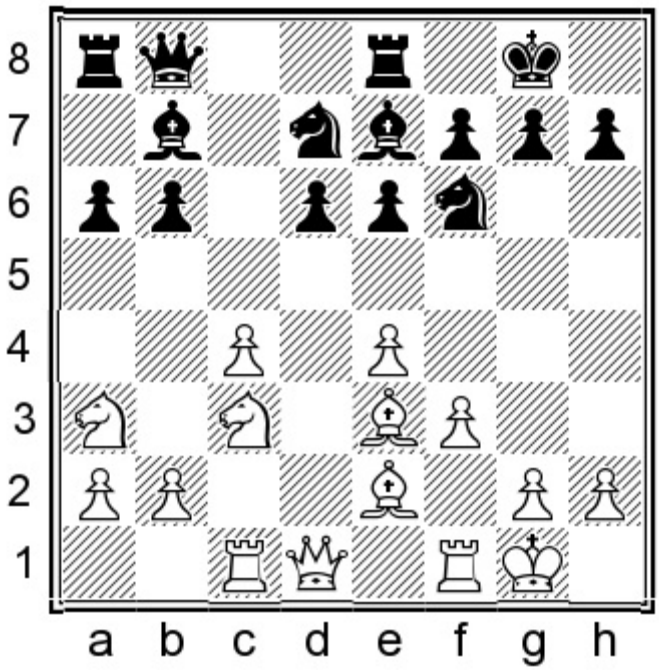
11...♕b8 12.♖c1

A new move. Bobotsov – Ciocaltea, Bucharest 1971, had continued with 12.♕d2 a6 13.♘d4 ♖e8 14.♖fd1 ♗f8 15.♔h1 ♖a7 16.♖ac1 ♗a8 17.♗f1 ♖c7 18.b3 ♖cc8 19.♘c2 ♗b7, leading to the standard type of play in this variation.

12...a6 13.♘a3 ♖e8!

Simple and strong. The rook is looking in the direction of White's dark-squared bishop, and it becomes obvious that Black's implementation of ...d6-d5 is just a matter of time. At this point Karen Grigorian, excellent positional player as he was, positively astounded me with his reply.

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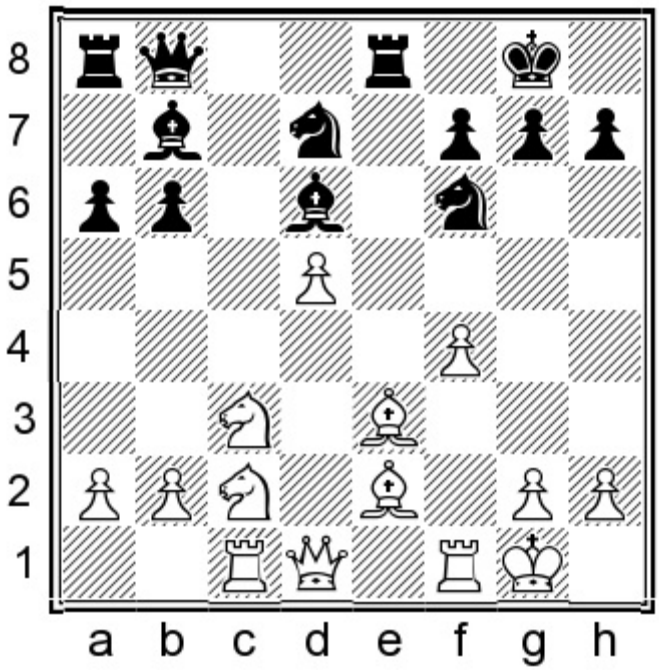
14.♕b3?

Tell me honestly – would you believe that this move was perhaps the decisive mistake already? However that may be, there is no doubt whatever that the initiative now passes to Black. As it turns out, the queen on b3 is cut off from the kingside, which is going to be the arena of the main action. A no less important point is that the bishop on e3 is left unprotected, if only for a short while.

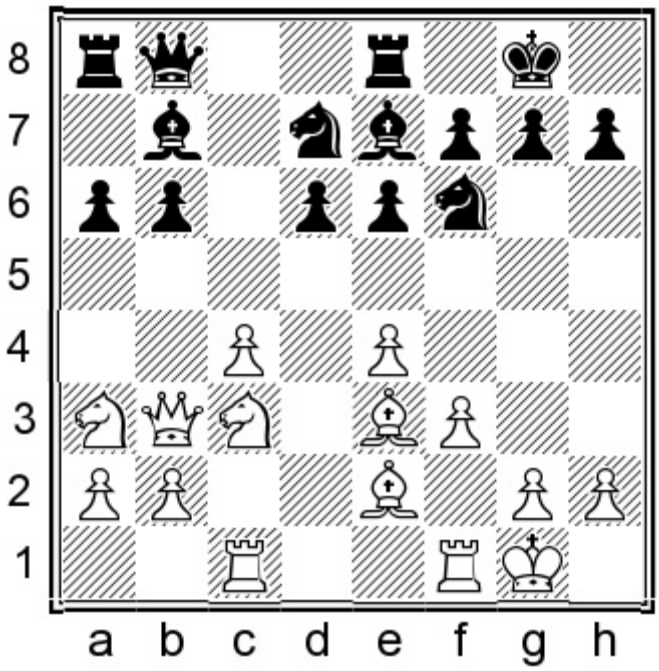
Instead it was worth playing 14.♕d2. Black would then have the choice between 14...♗f8 and 14...♗d8!?. In the latter case, his plan looks rather simple-minded – the bishop is going to c7, after which ...d6-d5 becomes a real threat. Anyway, I fancy I can claim the copyright for this idea, as I played that way against Sergey Dolmatov as long ago as 1978.

On the other hand 14.♘c2 can be answered by the forthright 14...d5!?. Then after 15.cxd5 exd5 16.exd5 ♗d6 17.f4

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Black can choose between 17...b5⩲ and 17...♖xe3 18.♘xe3 ♗xf4, with sharp play.



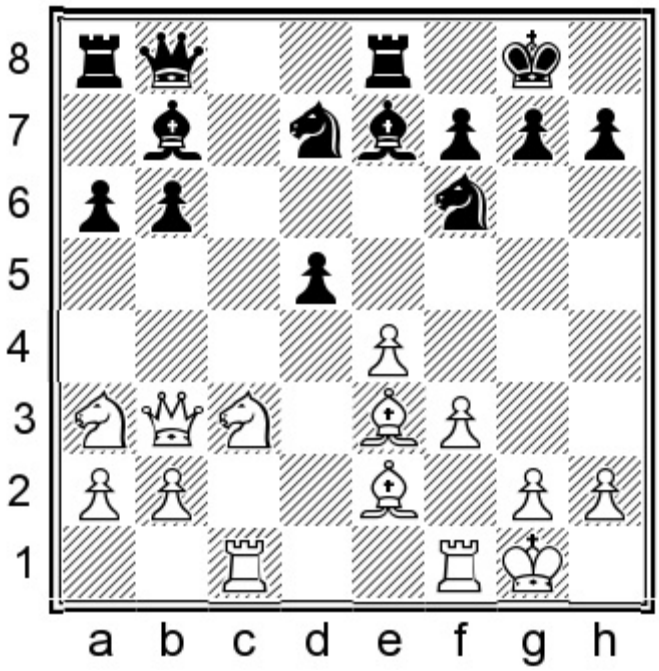
14...d5!

I was very pleased with my position after this move, but I confess that even *I* didn't suspect just *how* good it was! Karen became agitated, and had trouble finding his next move.

15.exd5?!

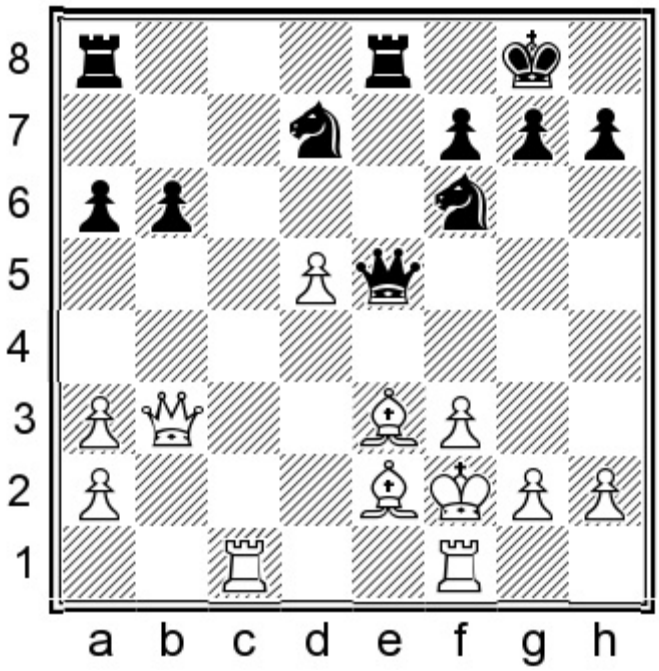
White can hardly be happy with the way the game goes following 15.cxd5 exd5 (Black might also play 15...♗d6!? at once; White would have to continue 16.dxe6 ♗xh2† 17.♔h1 ♖xe6 18.♗c4 ♖e7∞ with mutual chances, seeing that the outwardly tempting 16.f4? is tactically refuted by 16...exd5 17.e5 ♘xe5! 18.fxe5 ♗xe5∓ with a strong attack).

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Given that 16.♔h1!? b5↑ is unworthy of serious analysis, there would be two continuations for White to choose from:

a) 16.♘xd5? ♗xd5 17.exd5 ♗xa3! 18.bxa3 ♕e5 The poor bishop! Defending it becomes harder and harder. 19.♔f2 (19.♖c3 fails to 19...♘xd5 20.♖d3 ♘xe3 21.♖xd7 ♕f5!–+, winning the exchange)



Black now has two good moves available:

a1) 19...♘c5!? deserves close attention. It sets White problems that are scarcely soluble: 20.♖xc5□ 20...bxc5 21.f4 (21.♖d1 ♖ab8 22.♕d3 ♘xd5–+ doesn't save him either) 21...♕e7 22.♗f3 ♖ab8–+ With an easy win.

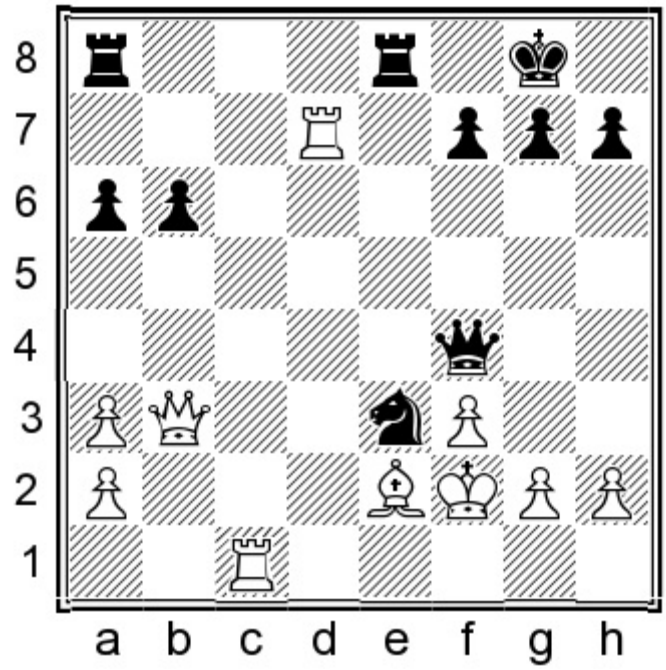
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a2) 19...♘xd5 20.♖fd1! ♘xe3!

Avoiding a simple little trap: 20...♕xe3†? 21.♕xe3 ♘xe3 22.♖xd7 And on 22...♘xg2? White wins, perhaps even to his own surprise, by 23.♗c4+–.

On the other hand Black does have a good alternative in 20...♘7f6 21.♖d3 ♘xe3 22.♖xe3 ♕xh2, emerging with an extra pawn in addition to his powerful attack.

21.♖xd7 ♕f4



22.♖c4

Trying to divert Black's attention by a sacrificial offering. It's hard to think of anything better. White loses at once with 22.g3 ♘g4†, or with 22.h3 ♘f5! – after which 23.♕xf7† ♔h8–+ or 23.♖c2 ♘d4 would be equally hopeless.

Finally, 22.♔g1 ♘g4! 23.fxg4 ♕xc1† 24.♗f1 ♕c5† 25.♔h1 ♕f2–+ similarly gives him no chance of survival.

22...♕xh2 23.♖e4 ♕xg2† 24.♔e1

24.♔xe3 ♖xe4† 25.♔xe4 ♖e8† 26.♔d4 ♕f2† 27.♔c3 ♕e3†, with the aim of meeting 28.♗d3 with 28...♖c8† 29.♔b4 ♕c5† 30.♔a4 ♕a5#, is the sort of line you can only dream about!

24...♖xe4 25.fxe4 ♕g1† 26.♔d2 ♘f1†!

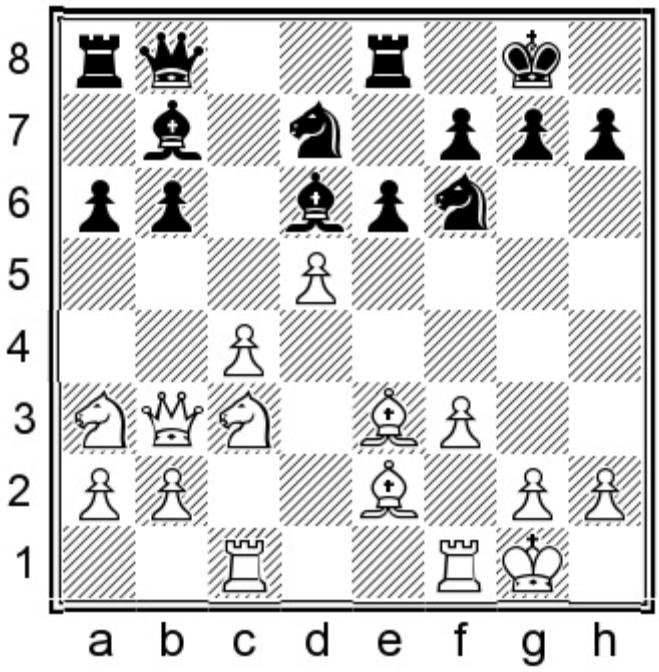
With a quick win. It's astonishing that in such a quiet variation as the hedgehog, White should be faced with problems like these as early as move 15.

b) 16.♖cd1! With the help of this strong move, White at least prevents his opponent's pieces from becoming too active. 16...b5 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.exd5 ♘f6 19.♘c2 ♕c7↑ White's d5-pawn cannot be held, and I like Black's position better. White will nonetheless be able to offer decent resistance.

15...♗d6

It would have made sense to recapture with 15...exd5!? first, opening up the e-file, but I was impatient to start the attack.

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16.h3

I suspect Karen was extremely reluctant to make this move, after which the dark squares in White's camp are left completely defenceless, but what else could he have done?

a) 16.f4 loses within a few moves: 16...exd5 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.cxd5 ♘c5! 19.♗xc5 ♗xc5† 20.♖xc5 bxc5 21.♕xb8 ♖exb8–+

b) 16.g3

The consequences of this move are no less depressing for White:

16...exd5!?

Black could also play 16...♗xg3, but White wouldn't take the bishop, seeing that 17.hxg3? ♕xg3† 18.♔h1 exd5 19.♗g1 ♕h3† 20.♗h2 ♘g4! 21.♖f2□ 21...♘xf2† 22.♔g1 ♘g4–+ leads to mate. Instead after 17.f4! ♗h4∓ Black's chances would be better, but there would still be a full-scale struggle ahead.

17.♗f2

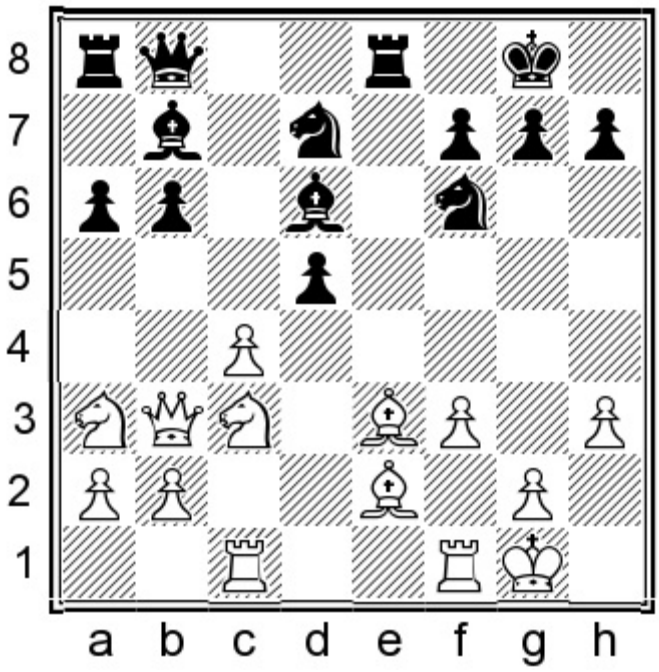
Or 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.cxd5 ♗xa3! 19.♕xa3 ♘xd5 and White can't avoid losing material.

17...d4! 18.♗xd4 ♗xg3

It is high time to bring the curtain down; the fate of the game is decided.

16...exd5

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17.♗f2

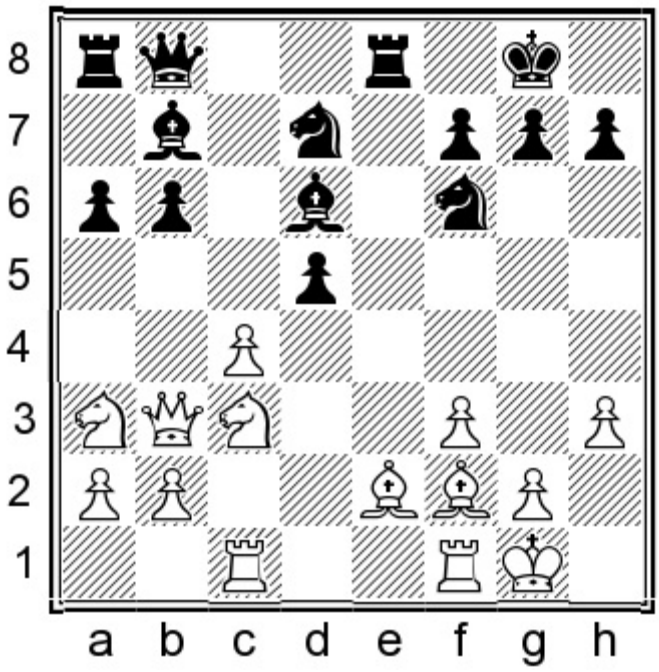
White would seem to have a certain choice, but not a very pleasant one.

Apart from the move in the game, he might for example play 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.cxd5, but after 18...♘c5 19.♗xc5 ♗xc5† 20.♖xc5 bxc5–+ Black should win without too much trouble.

White could also play 17.♗d4, to which Black's simplest answer is: 17...♘h5! (The somewhat surprising 17...♗c5!? is also playable. Then for instance after 18.♗xc5 ♘xc5 19.♕d1 ♕f4 20.cxd5 ♖ad8!, I have been unable to find a saving line for White – though possibly you may be more successful.) 18.♖cd1 ♗h2† 19.♔h1 ♘g3† 20.♔xh2 ♘xf1† 21.♔g1 ♘g3 22.♗d3 ♕f4–+ With an extra exchange and the better game.

Now an interesting question arises: what would you play here if you had Black?

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17...d4!

Allow me to boast a little – I am very fond of this move. “What is it for?” you may ask. “Why is Black sacrificing a pawn?” The answer is fairly simple. In the first place Black is gaining an important tempo for the attack, and secondly I wanted to keep the c4-pawn on the board, as it takes away a square from the unfortunate knight on a3 and hinders the white queen from joining in the play. I hope you will find my reasons convincing enough.

18.♗xd4□ 18...♘h5 19.♗f2

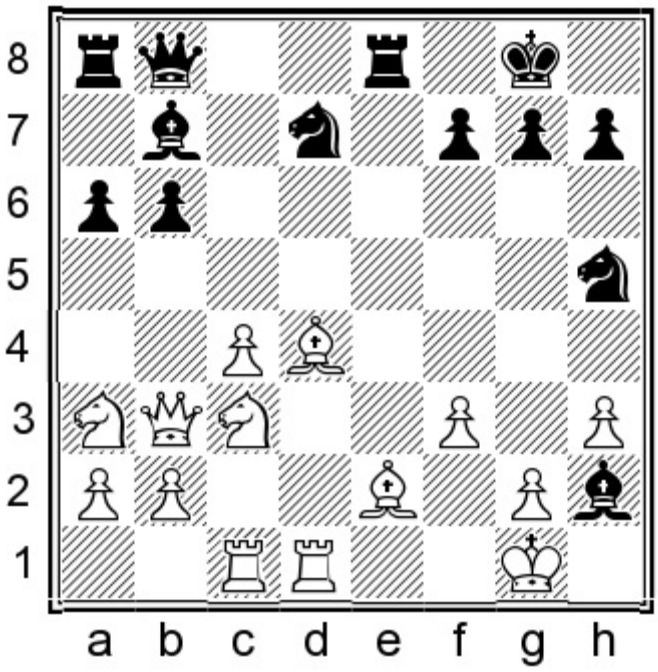
There are no other decent moves in the position. At home afterwards I gave some attention to:

19.♖fd1

During the game I had grudged spending any time on moves like that, as it was obvious Black had various methods of sustaining the attack. The simplest of these is:

19...♗h2†

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20.♔h1□

After 20.♔f2? ♕g3† 21.♔f1 ♘f4–+ the poor white king is pitiful to behold.

The consequences of 20.♔f1 are similar: 20...♘g3† 21.♔f2 ♕f4!–+ The black queen triumphantly crosses to h4 for a quick mate.

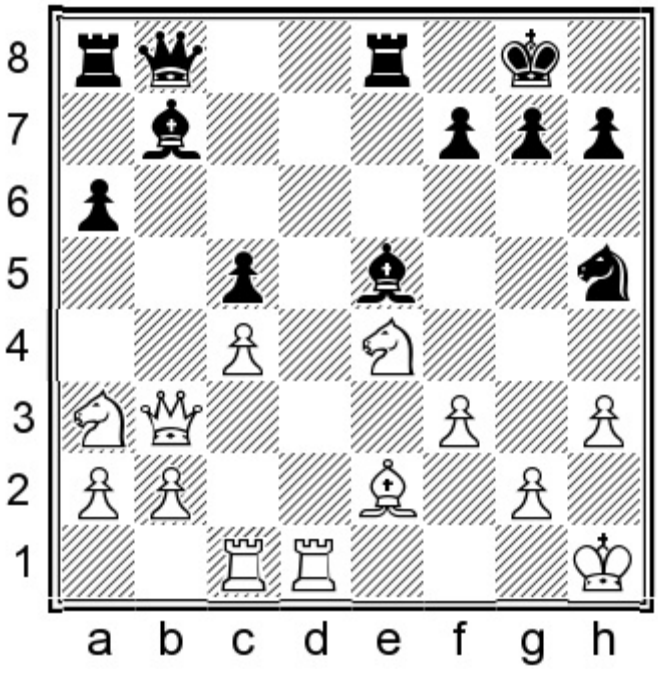
20...♘c5!

To all appearances 20...♘g3†!? 21.♔xh2 ♘xe2† 22.♔h1 ♘xc1 23.♖xc1 ♕f4 24.♕d1 ♖ad8 is also adequate to win.

21.♗xc5

In the event of 21.♕xb6 ♘g3† 22.♔xh2 ♘xe2† 23.♔h1 ♕g3! 24.♘xe2 ♖xe2 25.♗f2 ♕xf2 26.♕d8† ♖e8 27.♕d2 ♕h4–+ Black's extra piece guarantees him victory

21...bxc5 22.♘e4 ♗e5



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A positional struggle now commences, in which nearly all White's pieces look like mere extras on the stage – especially the passive light-squared bishop and the wretched knight on a3. If the latter vanished from the board, no one would even notice!

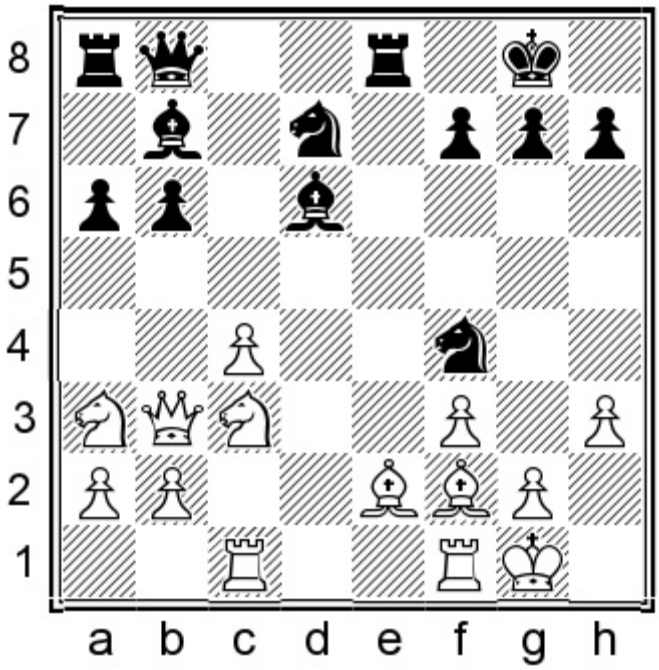
23.♖c2 ♗xe4 24.fxe4 ♘g3† 25.♔g1 ♕c7 26.♕f3 ♖ad8 27.♖cd2

Or 27.♖d5 ♖xd5 28.cxd5 ♗d4†−+.

27...♖xd2 28.♖xd2 ♘xe4 29.♖d3 ♗h2† 30.♔h1 ♗g3–+

Finally the black pieces have penetrated to the white king. Of course the variation I have given is not absolutely obligatory for White, but just try finding some real improvement for him! I couldn't.

19...♘f4



20.♖fe1

In response to 20.♕d1, Black would apply roughly the same ideas as in the game: 20...♖e6! 21.♘c2 ♕e8! 22.♔h1 (22.♘e4 is no help either: 22...♖xe4 23.fxe4 ♘xh3†! 24.gxh3 ♕e5 And if 25.♔g2 then 25...♗xe4†.) 22...♘xh3!–+ White's defence falls apart. So many black pieces are participating directly in the attack that no bookmaker would accept any bets on the white king's survival.

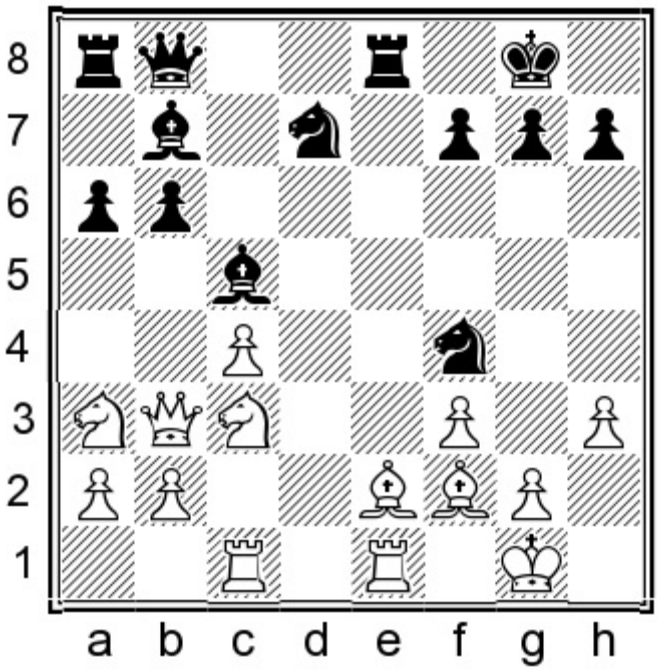
20...♖e6!

At this point Black's choices are enough to make him dizzy – each line he looks at is better than the one before. Thus, one way to win is: 20...♘xh3†!? 21.gxh3 ♗c5! 22.♘e4□ 22...♗xf2† 23.♔xf2 (nothing is altered by 23.♘xf2 ♕g3† 24.♔f1 ♖e6) 23...♕h2† 24.♔f1 (24.♔e3 ♗xe4 25.fxe4 ♘c5!–+ is no better) 24...♘c5! 25.♘xc5 ♗c8! And mates.

The consequences of the following move are equally dismal for White:

20...♗c5!

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21.♘e4□

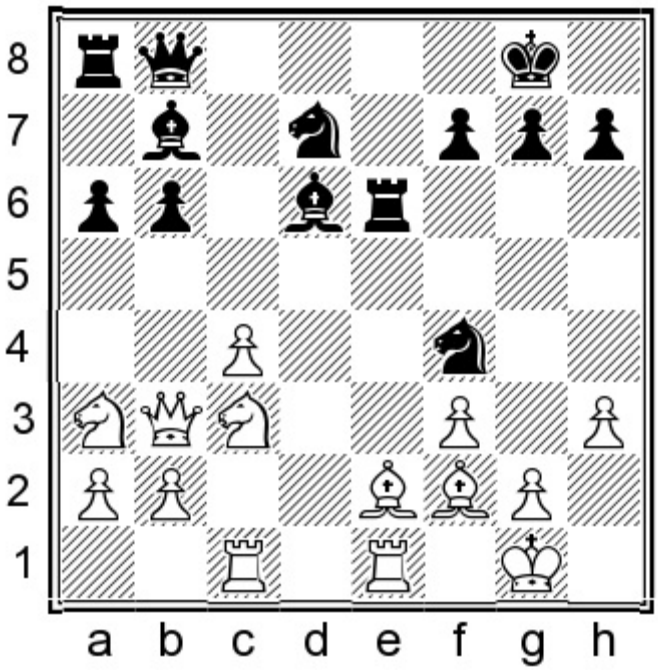
On 21.♗xc5? ♘xc5 22.♕xb6, Black has 22...♘xh3†! 23.♔h1 ♕g3 24.♕xc5 ♘f4, and now neither 25.♕g1 ♖e6! nor 25.♗f1 ♖xe1 26.♖xe1 ♕xe1 can be to White's liking.

21...♗xe4 22.fxe4 ♗xf2† 23.♔xf2 ♘xe2 24.♔xe2

24.♖xe2? ♕f4†

24...♘c5! 25.♕f3 ♘xe4 26.♔d3 ♕d6† 27.♔c2 ♕d2† 28.♔b1 ♕xe1!–+

The king has braved the enemy crossfire to reach a safe haven, yet this has not saved White from defeat.



21.♘e4

The variation 21.♗f1? ♘xh3† 22.gxh3 ♖g6† 23.♗g2 ♗xf3–+ would take ten seconds to work out and

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about one more minute to check carefully.

21.♔h1

To refute this move Black needs a little more imagination. He continues:

21...♗c5!

21...♘xg2! 22.♔xg2 ♖g6† 23.♔h1 ♗c5!–+ is also quite adequate to win.

22.♗g3

After 22.♗xc5 ♘xc5 23.♕c2 ♘xh3 24.gxh3 ♕g3 mate is unavoidable.

22...♖g6 23.♘e4

23.♗h2 is no help either: 23...♖xg2! 24.♗xf4 ♕xf4 25.♔xg2 ♕g5† 26.♔h1 ♕g3 With mate on the very next move. It's simply amazing how bad White's position is!

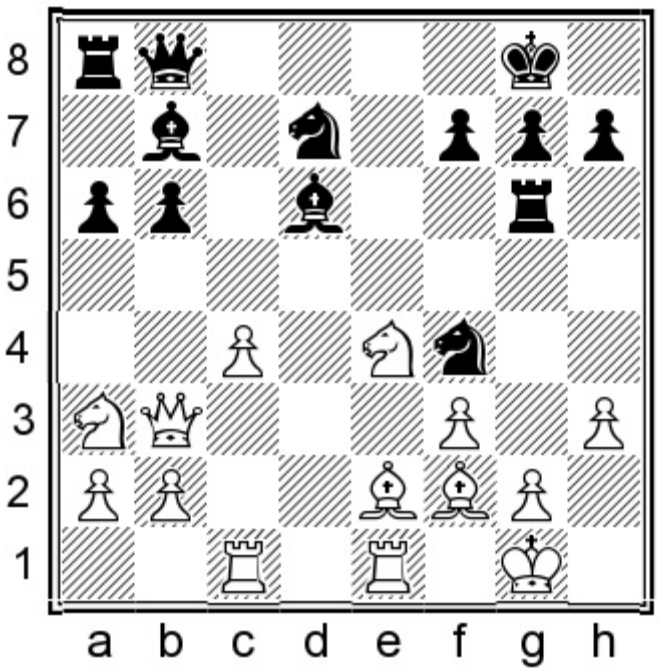
23...♖xg3!

The only white piece that was doing anything to cover the dark squares on the kingside is now destroyed.

24.♘xg3 ♘xh3 25.♘e4 ♗xe4 26.gxh3 ♗c6–+

White cannot defend against the many threats.

21...♖g6



22.♗f1

Black's attack also develops successfully in the event of:

22.♔h1 ♖xg2!? 23.♗f1

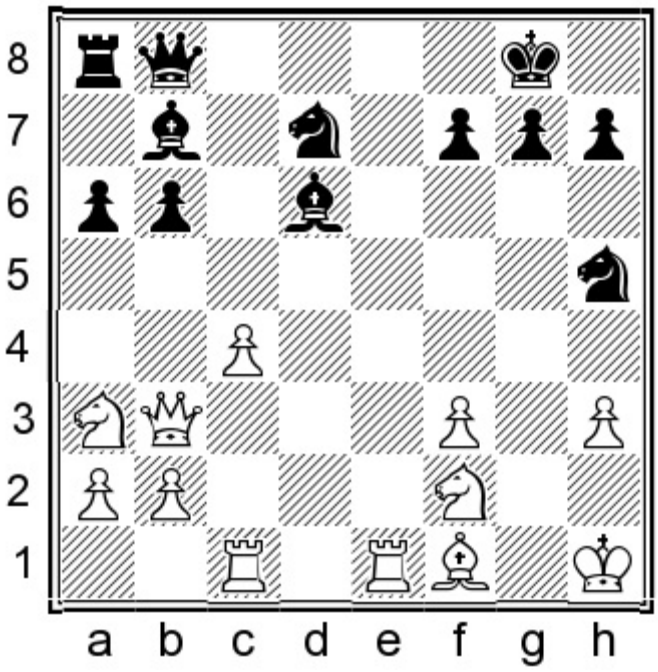
Exchanging with 23.♘xd6 ♕xd6–+ would only be helping Black.

23...♖xf2!?

23...♖g6 would also be perfectly adequate to win, but the exchange sacrifice is more instructive.

24.♘xf2 ♘h5!

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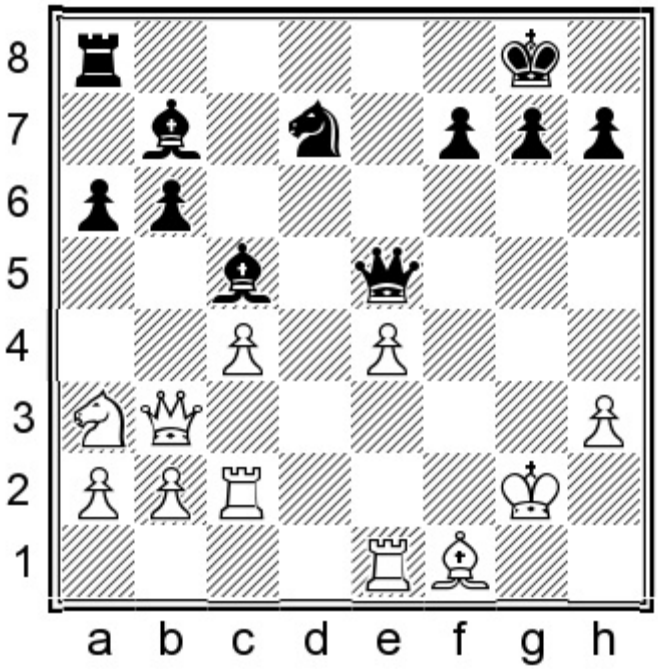
25.♖c2

After 25.♘e4 ♘c5 26.♕c2 ♘xe4 27.fxe4 ♘g3† 28.♔g2 ♗c5! Black threatens both 29...♕f4 and 29...f5, and the white monarch is left to his own devices.

25...♗c5 26.♘e4

26.♗g2 ♕g3 27.♖f1 ♕f4! is just as hopeless; the queen vacates g3 for the knight as in a well rehearsed dance, and all that remains for White is to stop the clock.

26...♘g3† 27.♔g2 ♘xe4 28.fxe4 ♕e5!–+



The white pieces are completely useless in defence. Observe how simply and naturally the attack proceeds; Black has no need at all to hurry, he just brings his pieces across to the vicinity of the white king. Such play is only made possible by Black's total domination of the dark squares and the absence of any counterplay from his opponent.

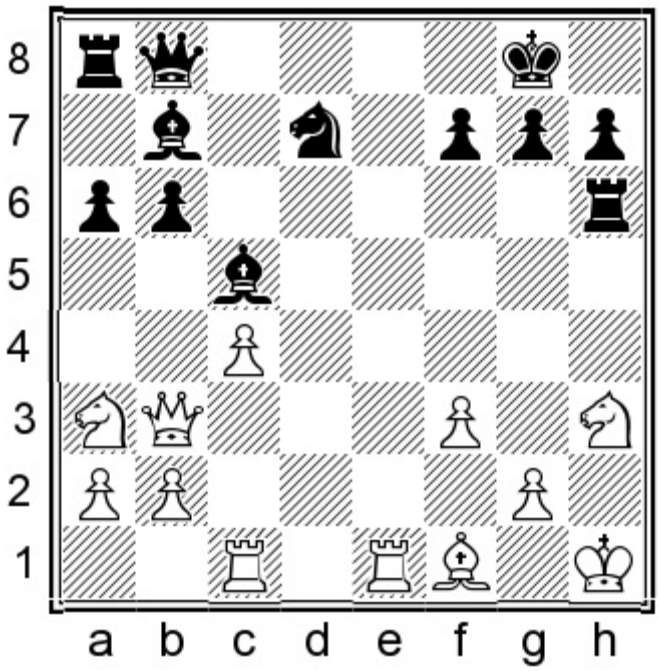
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22...♘xh3† 23.♔h1 ♘xf2† 24.♘xf2 ♖h6† 25.♘h3

On 25.♔g1, White is mated prettily by 25...♗h2† 26.♔h1 ♗g1† 27.♔xg1 ♕h2#!

25...♗c5

Black's queen wants to get to g3. This cannot be stopped, so the fate of the game is settled.



26.♕d3

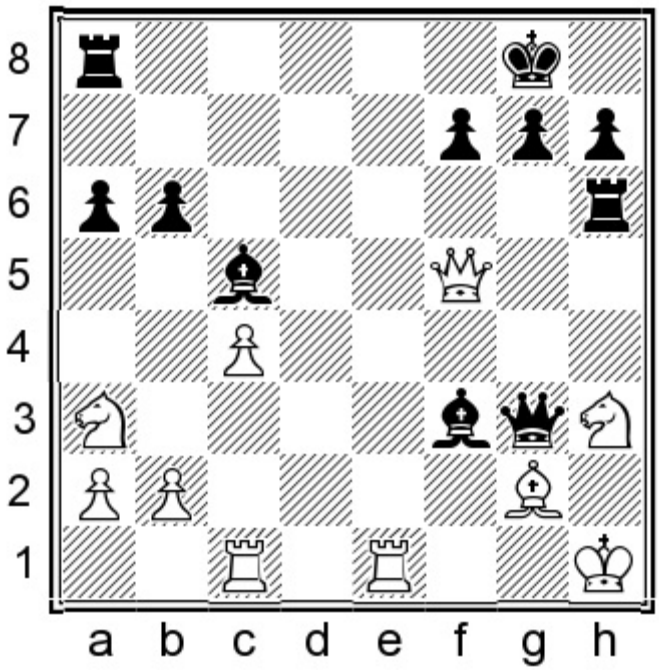
In the event of 26.♖e4 ♕g3 27.♖g4, the queen continues its journey: 27...♕f2! 28.♗d3 ♖xh3† 29.gxh3 ♗xf3† And mates.

26...♘e5

The most attractive route to victory was 26...♕g3! 27.♕xd7 ♗c6! 28.♕f5 ♗xf3–+ with mate in a few moves, but with *such* a won position you can't help going for the simplest and most transparent continuation. It's only natural that I wanted to win without unnecessary complications.

27.♕f5□ 27...♘xf3!–+ 28.gxf3 ♕g3 29.♗g2 ♗xf3

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Quite an appealing final position. White is a piece up, but if we look at the simply grotesque placing of his knights, it isn't at all surprising that at this moment he acknowledged defeat.

0–1

What can be said about this game? Karen Grigorian wasn't a specialist in this type of position – it wouldn't surprise me to discover that he had hardly ever faced the hedgehog before – and he therefore had no very good idea of the dangers White might encounter. At most he made two mistakes – 14.♕b3? and 15.exd5?! – but they were quite sufficient to lose. I have already spoken (in my notes to Tal – Miles) of how the punishment is sometimes out of proportion to the crime. Why this should be, I wouldn't know. Perhaps on that day Caissa, the goddess of chess, was just on my side?

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Lev Psakhis – Venkat Saravanan

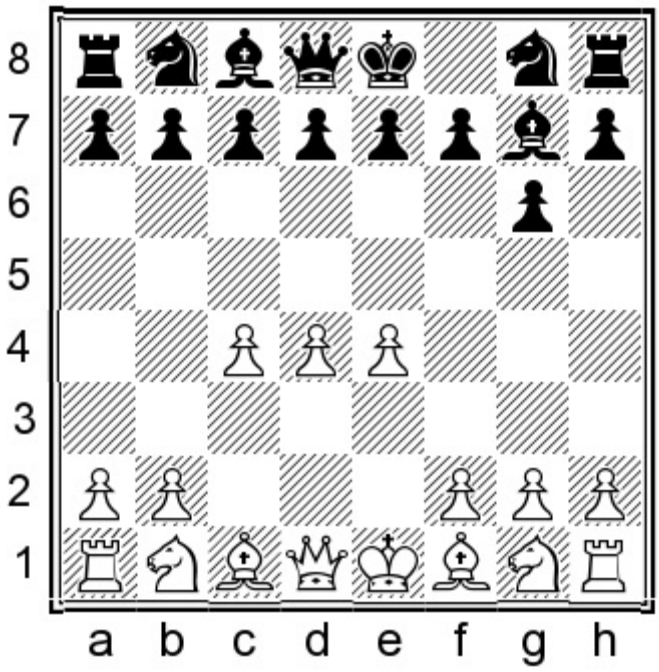
Andorra 2000

It always gives me pleasure to recall my tournaments in Andorra. From 1994 onwards I played there ten times without suffering a single defeat – although there was no shortage of lost positions in my games. In fact it was there, in 2002, that I gained my final tournament victory.

1.d4 g6

My Indian friend Venkat Saravanan can play a multitude of different variations, so I considered it a pure waste of time to do any preparation for this game. The one thing of which I was convinced was that he would steer clear of theoretical disputes and choose some rare continuation.

2.c4 ♗g7 3.e4

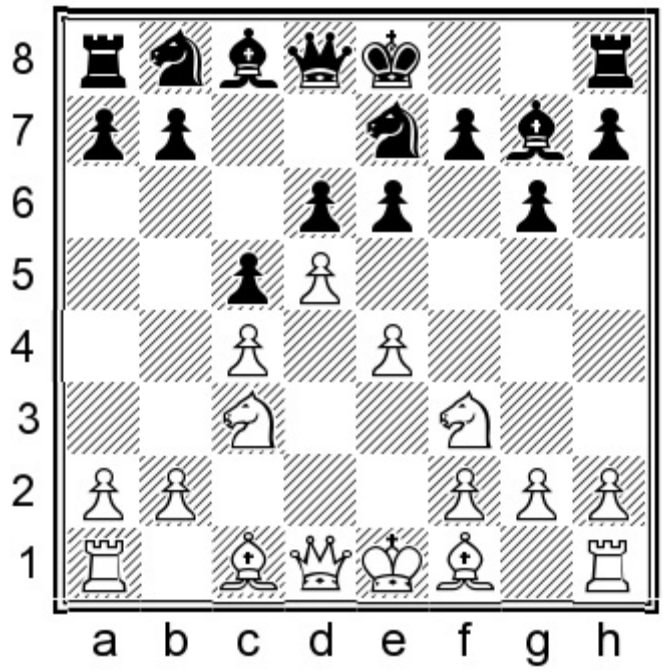


I always liked to seize as much space on the board as possible, but this policy has some negative aspects; you certainly aren't always able to consolidate the space successfully.

3...c5 4.d5 d6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘f3 ♘e7

I cannot say that this move surprised me – Venkat did sometimes play this way – but as I had no experience of handling this variation myself, I decided to deploy my pieces according to a scheme that is extremely popular in the Benoni.

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7.h3

Not that I was much afraid of ...♗g4 and a subsequent exchange on f3, but for one thing I like playing that way for Black myself, and furthermore the somewhat cramped nature of Black's game means that exchanging even one piece will have its advantages for him.

7...0-0 8.♗d3 exd5

Of course the insertion of 8...a6 9.a4 introduces no new factors into the position.

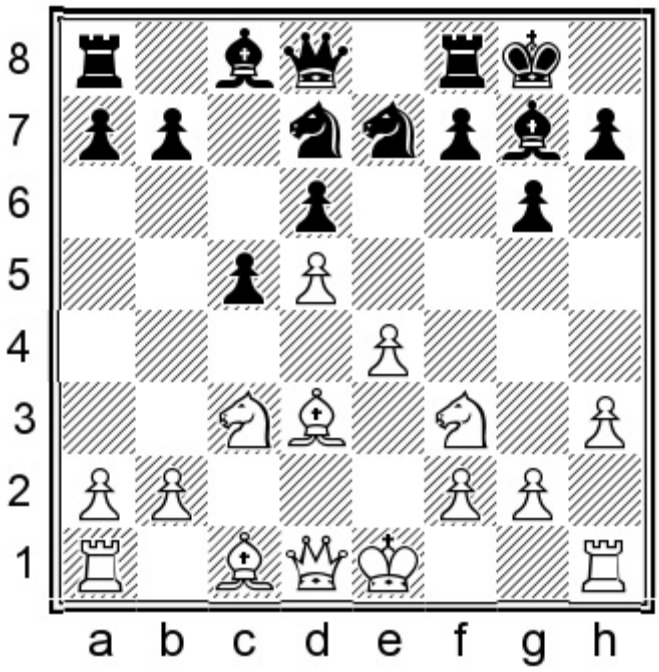
9.cxd5

If White wants a quieter game, he can play 9.exd5. For example, Prakash – Saravanan, India (ch) 2000, continued 9...♘d7 (9...h6!?) 10.0-0 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 12.♗g5, with somewhat the better prospects for White.

9...♘d7

In Bogdanovski – Efimov, European Club Cup, Izmir 2004, Black's risky play met with a powerful refutation: 9...a6 10.a4 h6 11.0-0 ♘d7 12.♗f4 ♕c7 13.♗h2 g5?! 14.e5!

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10.0-0

Interesting complications can arise from:

10.♗f4!? f5 11.♗h2!

The most exact move.

By no means everything is so clear after 11.♗xd6 ♗xc3† 12.bxc3 fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♘f6 14.♗e5! ♘xe4 15.d6, with chances for both sides.

11...fxe4

In this case I don't think it pays Black to exchange off such an important bishop. After 11...♗xc3† 12.bxc3 fxe4 13.♗xe4 ♘f6 14.♗d3 ♘exd5 15.0-0 his king can't feel too comfortable; at any rate, White obviously has more than enough for the pawn.

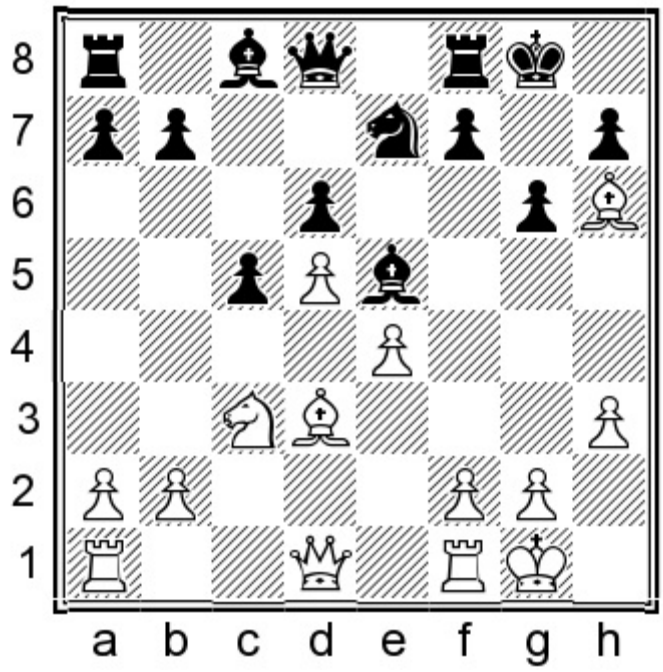
12.♘xe4 ♘b6 13.0-0

With some advantage.

10...♘e5 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 12.♗h6

Another possibility is 12.♗g5. Then for example after 12...f5 13.exf5 ♗xf5 14.♗c4± there are quite a few weaknesses in Black's position. But how can you reject such a natural move as the one I played?

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12...♗g7

Whether to exchange the dark-squared bishops or leave them on the board was a difficult choice for Black to make. In his place I probably wouldn't have hurried with the exchange, although after 12...♖e8 13.♕d2± White still has the better chances.

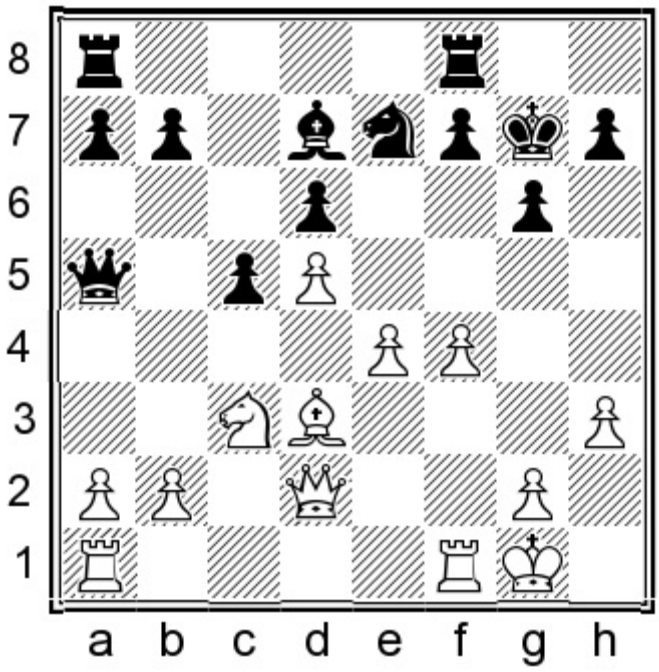
13.♕d2± ♗d7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.f4

Another option was 15.♖fe1!? with the firm intention of marshalling all White's forces in the centre and carrying out e4-e5 at the most suitable moment. I thought about this plan, but decided that bringing the f-pawn into play would give extra attacking possibilities.

15...♕a5

A risky move, but not a bad one. Obviously the initiative is firmly in White's hands, and it's only a matter of time before he carries out the break in the centre with e4-e5. Saravanan places his queen where it lies in wait; he pins the knight on c3 at least temporarily, and prepares the advance ...b7-b5 which is his only chance of counterplay. This move is especially justified since other constructive ideas for Black are hard to find; with 15...f5 16.e5 or 15...f6 16.e5↑ he would only be giving himself extra problems.

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16.e5

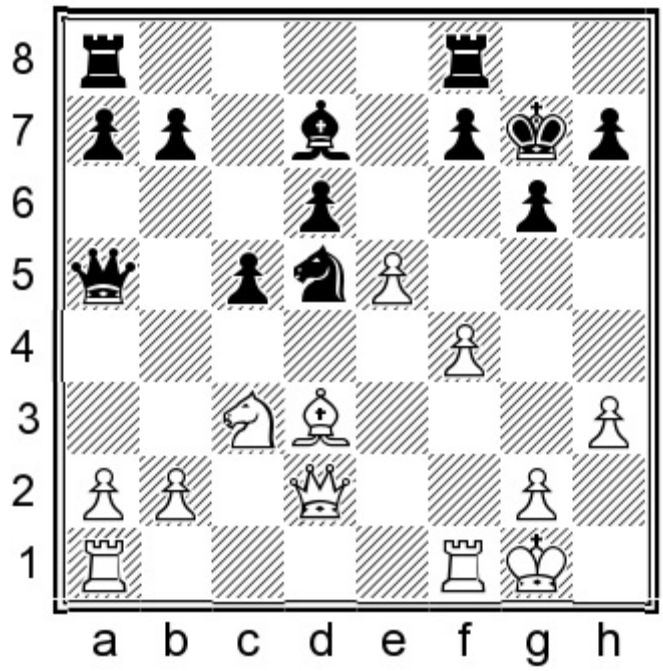
This was the only point in the game when I spent a good deal of time over a single move, and indeed I had something to think about! I wanted to go into action and start an attack immediately, so basically I found myself choosing between 16.e5 and 16.f5. After 16.f5, I wasn't too happy about 16...f6!? or even 16...♘g8, so I diligently set about calculating the complex lines stemming from the e4-e5 break – but I rather underrated Black's defensive possibilities.

Objectively the strongest continuation may well have been 16.♖f2!?, defending the queen in case of need and preparing to double rooks on the f-file. After 16...♖ae8 (16...b5? fails to 17.♘xb5) 17.♖af1, White maintains the tension in the centre and postpones the decision as to which pawn should advance first.

16...dxe5?!

Like my opponent I considered this to be the main line, as 16...♘xd5! looked exceedingly hazardous. Of course I spent quite some time on that move as well, but there were so many tempting ideas at White's disposal that I was convinced I would be able to gain the upper hand without much trouble.

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In reality things are more complicated. White does have quite a wide choice of lines that look promising – let us examine the three principal ones.

a) 17.♗xg6

This can be discarded without much regret. Black simply replies:

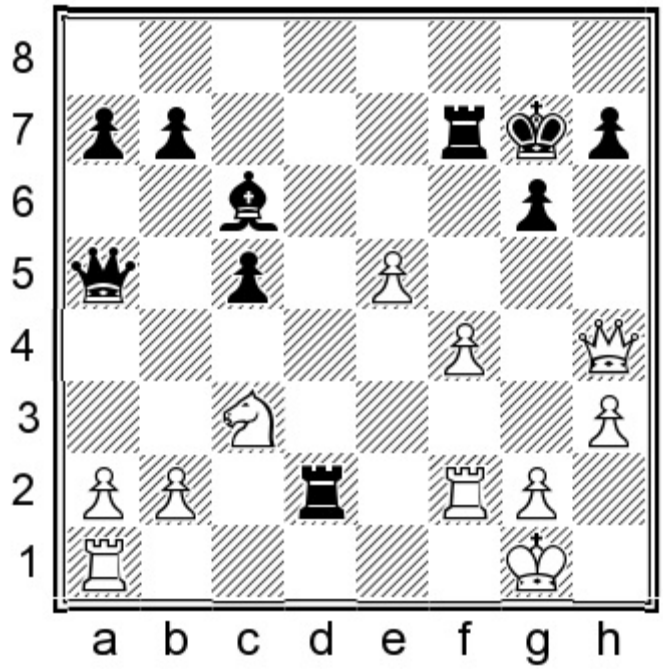
17...fxg6

17...♘xc3 is too risky; after 18.♗c2 ♗b5! 19.bxc3 ♗xf1 20.♖xf1 White has excellent compensation for the exchange.

18.♕xd5 ♗c6!

Black doesn't cling to his pawns but fights actively for the initiative.

19.♕xd6 ♖ad8 20.♕e7† ♖f7 21.♕h4 ♖d2 22.♖f2□



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22...♖xb2!

A splendid idea; Black's light-squared bishop will now play a key role.

23.♖xb2 ♕xc3 24.♕f2

In the event of 24.♖ab1 ♗e4! White will presently have to give perpetual check; it will be important for him not to miss the chance!

24...♖xf4 25.♕xf4 ♕xb2 26.♕f1 ♕xe5⇄

b) 17.exd6!?

I like this variation better than the last one, but does it guarantee White a plus?

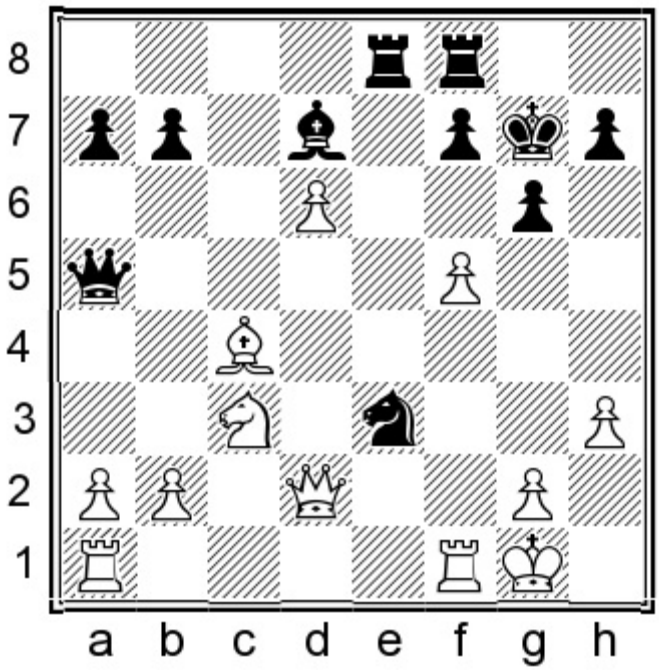
17...♖ae8 18.f5 c4!

It's only through activity that Black can count on a viable game.

After 18...♕b4 19.f6† ♔h8 20.♖f2! he remains a long way short of full equality.

19.♗xc4 ♘e3

19...♕c5† 20.♖f2↑ is unsatisfactory for Black.



20.♗e6!

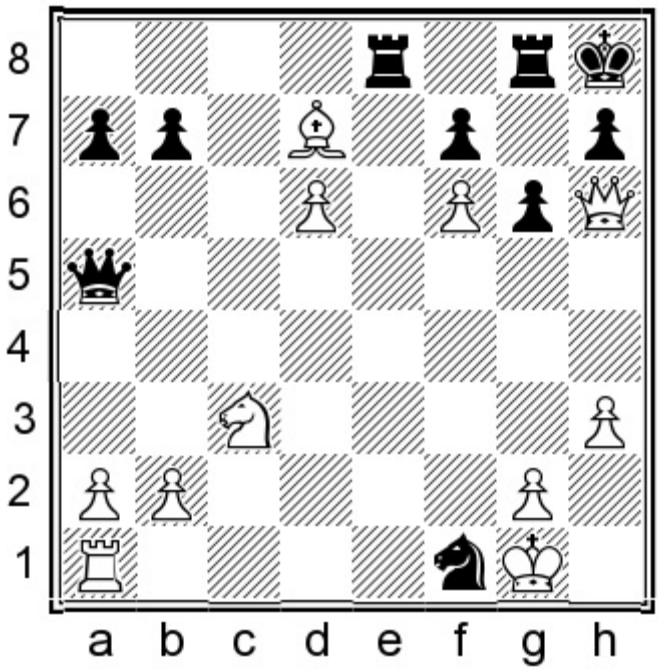
A beautiful move! White pours oil on the flames, and extreme precision is now required on his opponent's part.

20...♘xf1 21.f6†

Unfortunately 21.♕d4† is no good; after 21...f6! 22.♗xd7 ♖d8 Black already has the better chances.

21...♔h8 22.♕h6 ♖g8 23.♗xd7

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23...♘g3!?

For the first time in quite a while Black actually has a choice; he can also play 23...♖d8!? 24.♖xf1 ♖xd7 25.♘e4 g5⇄ with an unclear position. After something like 26.h4!? gxh4 27.♖f4 he can always resort to 27...♖g6, forcing White into 28.♕f8† ♖g8=.

24.♗xe8 ♕c5†

More convincing than 24...♕b6† 25.♔h2 ♕xd6 26.♖d1±.

25.♔h2 ♕e5! 26.d7! ♘f5† 27.♔g1 ♘xh6

After 27...♕d4† 28.♔h1 ♘xh6 29.♖d1 Black can't stop the pawn anyway, and White emerges with complete control of the d-file.

28.d8=♕ ♖xe8∞

An interesting variation!

c) 17.f5

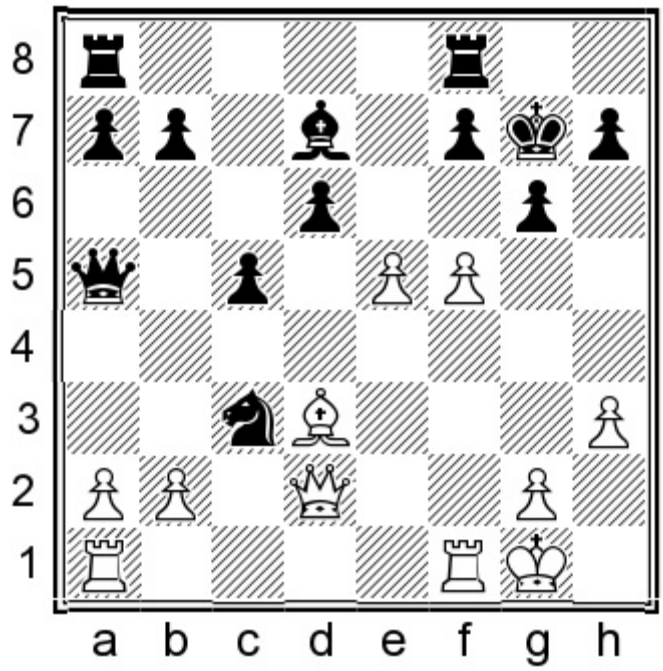
This is what I intended during the game.

17...♘xc3!

The only reply!

Capturing with 17...dxe5? is unsatisfactory for Black in view of 18.f6†!, after which neither 18...♘xf6 19.♖xf6 ♖ad8 20.♕g5 nor 18...♔h8 19.♕h6 ♖g8 20.♘e4+– can be at all to his liking. Much the same can be said of 17...♕b4?, as after 18.f6† ♔h8 19.♕h6 ♖g8 20.♘e4+– mate is inevitable.

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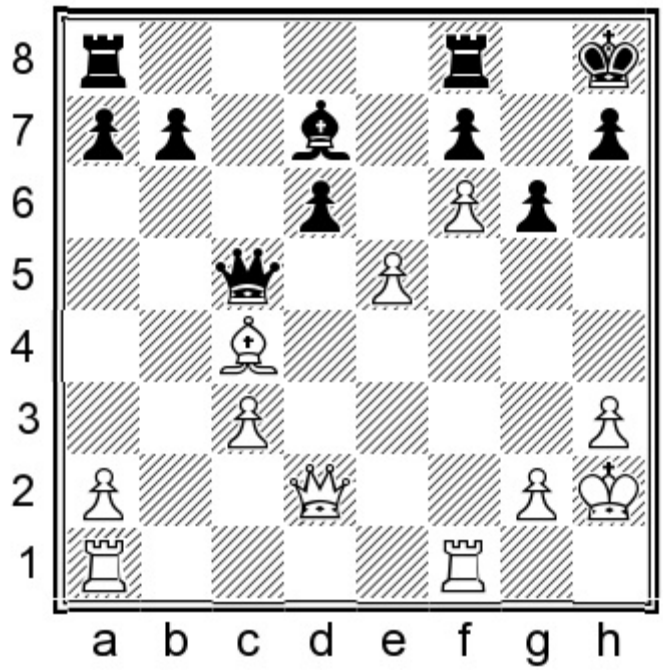
Now we need a further split:

c1) 18.f6† ♔h8 19.♕h6?! (19.bxc3 c4 transposes to variation c2) 19...♖g8 20.♖f4 This looks extremely dangerous to Black, but meets with the uncomplicated refutation 20...♘e2†! 21.♗xe2 ♕d2∓.

c2) 18.bxc3 c4! 19.f6† ♔h8 20.♗xc4!

The tempting 20.♕h6 ♖g8 21.♖f4 is weaker, as Black has a sound defence in 21...♕c5† 22.♔h1 ♕e3!↑.

20...♕c5† 21.♔h2



21...dxe5!

It isn't yet time for Black to relax; stumbling on level ground is possible even at the last moment!

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After 21...♕xe5† 22.♔h1, let alone after 21...♕xc4? 22.♕h6 ♖g8 23.♖f4±, there are hard times ahead for him.

A more interesting try is 21...♗e6, but after 22.♗xe6 ♕xe5† 23.g3 ♕xe6 24.♖ae1 ♕c4 25.♖f2! the activity of White's pieces is more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

22.♕h6 ♖g8 23.♗xf7 ♕f8! 24.♕xf8 ♖gxf8 25.♗b3

White has preserved a slight initiative, although in my view this shouldn't prevent his opponent from gradually levelling the chances.

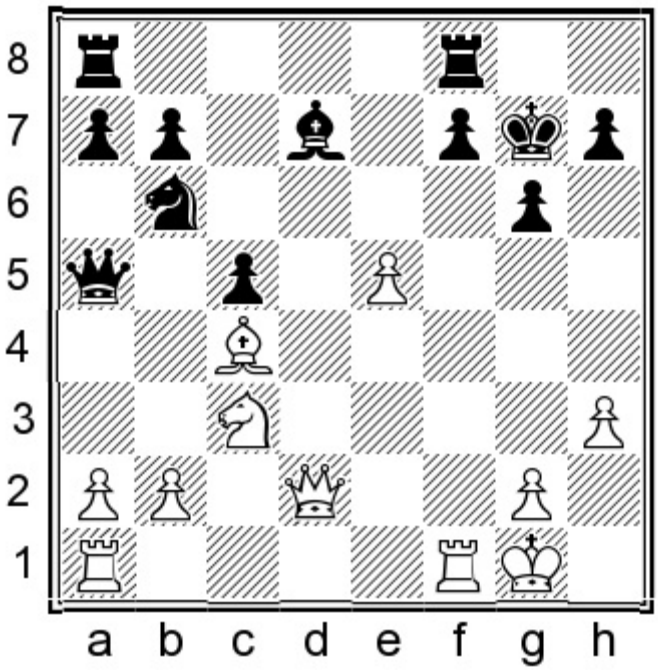
Of course all these variations are highly complex. Calculating them to the end is practically impossible, and in order not to lose quickly Black needs to find the sole correct move in several situations. Small wonder, then, that Saravanan went wrong.

17.fxe5 ♘xd5 18.♗c4!

A move my opponent had clearly underestimated. He was probably hoping for 18.♗xg6 fxg6 19.♕xd5 ♗c6 20.♕d6 ♕d8! (incidentally 20...♕b4!? isn't at all bad either). Then for example after 21.♕xc5 ♕g5 22.♘d5 ♖xf1† 23.♖xf1 ♖e8∞ Black can look to the future with some confidence.

18...♘b6□

Not 18...♘xc3 which loses at once to 19.♕xd7.



19.♗xf7!

This move constitutes White's main idea. Of course I had to see it when playing 16.e5; otherwise it would be hard to explain what I was counting on when I started all these complications. The black monarch is forced to crawl out of his cosy little nest, and in addition White acquires a powerful passed e-pawn. Add to this the position of the black queen which is in long-term exile, and White's attack becomes irresistible.

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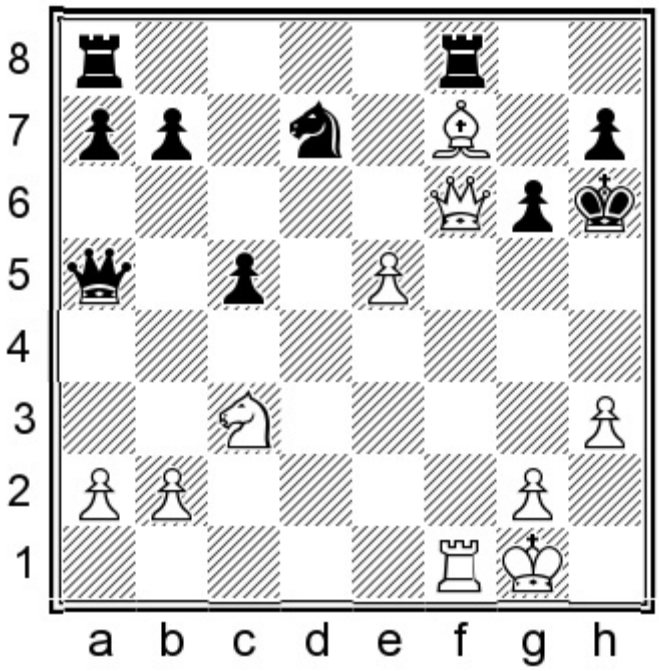
19...♖xf7

The attempt to decline the poisoned gift offered no great hopes of salvation either:

19...♗b5 20.♕f4

Or 20.e6!, which is just as good – for example 20...♗xf1 21.♖xf1 ♕b4 22.♖f4, and now the following options look equally hopeless: 22...♖ad8 23.♕e3! ♘c4 24.♕g3 or 22...♖fd8 23.♕e3! ♖d4 24.♕e5† ♔h6 25.♘e4!.

20...♗xf1 21.♕f6† ♔h6 22.♖xf1 ♘d7□



23.♕d6!

Conducting the attack with quiet moves.

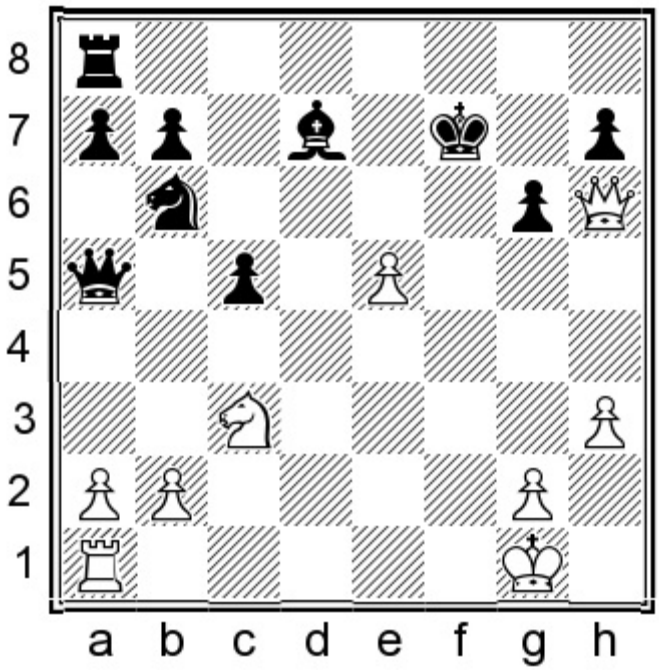
This is more convincing than 23.♕f4†, as after 23...♔g7 24.e6 ♕b4! the situation on the board is still not definitely clarified.

23...♕d8 24.e6 ♘b6 25.♕xc5+–

The e-pawn is not to be stopped.

20.♖xf7† ♔xf7 21.♕h6!

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21...♗f5

This loses straight away, but Black had no substantial improvements.

For instance after 21...♖f8, the simplest way for White to win is: 22.♕xh7† ♔e8 23.♖d1 c4 24.♕xg6† ♔d8 (24...♖f7 25.♘e4 is no help either) 25.♕d6! ♖f5 26.e6 ♕e5 27.♕xe5 ♖xe5 28.exd7+– The two passed pawns on the kingside will easily settle the outcome.

The refutation of 21...♔g8 is just as easy: 22.♘e4 ♕b4 23.♘f6† ♔f7 24.♕xh7† ♔e6 25.♖d1!+– And already the curtain can be lowered.

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Objectively the strongest move of course is:

21...♔e8

But the result is a foregone conclusion anyway. White simply takes the pawn:

22.♕xh7 ♔d8

Or 22...c4 23.♕xg6† ♔d8 24.♕f6† ♔c8 25.♕f8† ♔c7 26.♕d6† ♔c8 27.♖f1 with inevitable mate.

23.e6 ♗xe6

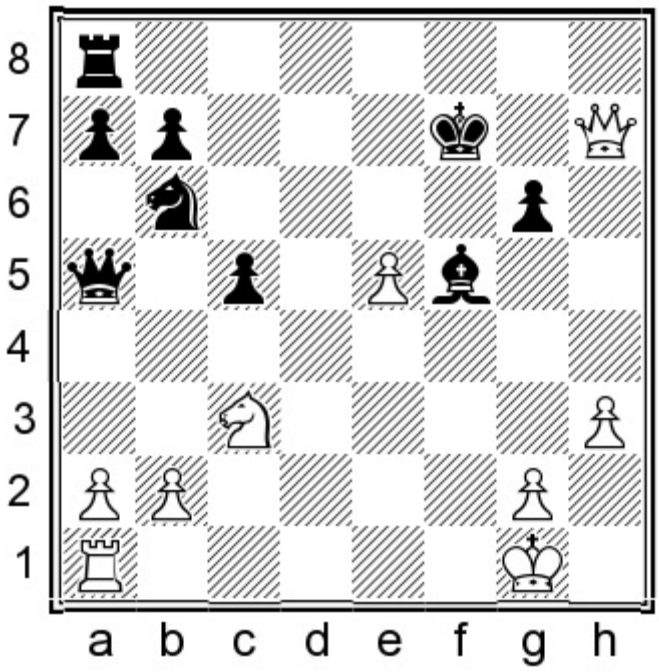
23...♔c7 24.♘d5† ♔c6 25.♖d1 ♗xe6 26.♕xg6+–

24.♕h8† ♔e7 25.♕g7† ♔d6 26.♖d1† ♔c6 27.♕e7+–

The king hunt concludes successfully.

22.♕xh7†

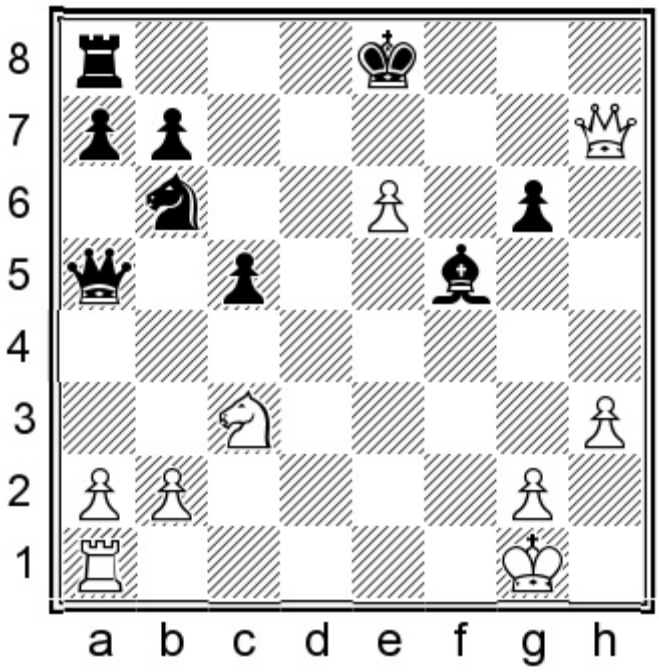
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22...♔e8

Black's moves are no longer of any significance; White's path to victory is too easy. On 22...♔f8, he has the decisive 23.e6! ♗xe6 24.♖f1† ♔e8 25.♖e1. Nothing is altered by 22...♔e6 either, in view of 23.♖d1 ♖e8 24.♕g7.

23.e6



Finding the variation 23...♗xe6 24.♖e1 ♔d8 25.♖xe6+– is no problem at all, so Venkat resigned.

1–0

Black chose a strategically hazardous variation that required him to play with extreme precision. I had no trouble obtaining a slight advantage from the opening, but on move sixteen I was faced with a

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dilemma: should I start active operations at once, or first spend some more time improving the placing of my pieces? I have said that the positional 16.♖f2 was objectively the strongest continuation, but from the subjective viewpoint 16.e5 was likely to be much more dangerous to Black. It was difficult, almost impossible, for him to find the narrow path to salvation in a situation where any inaccuracy could be fatal.

Summing up, I would like to say this: if you are in quest of that sovereign entity The Truth, then play 16.♖f2. But if you just want to play an interesting game – with every prospect of winning it too – then 16.e5 is the move for you!

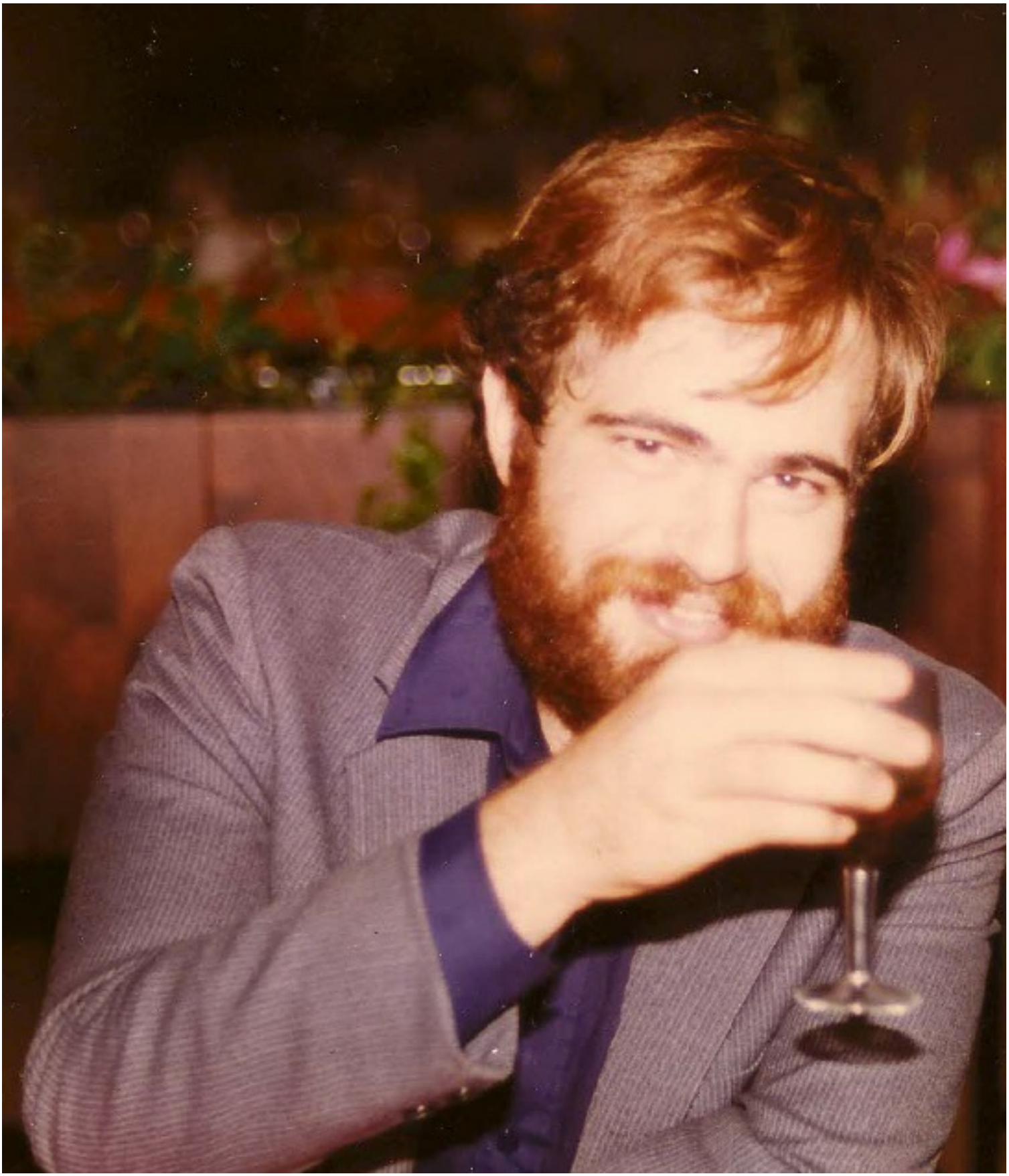


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Chapter 9

Attacking in the French Defence

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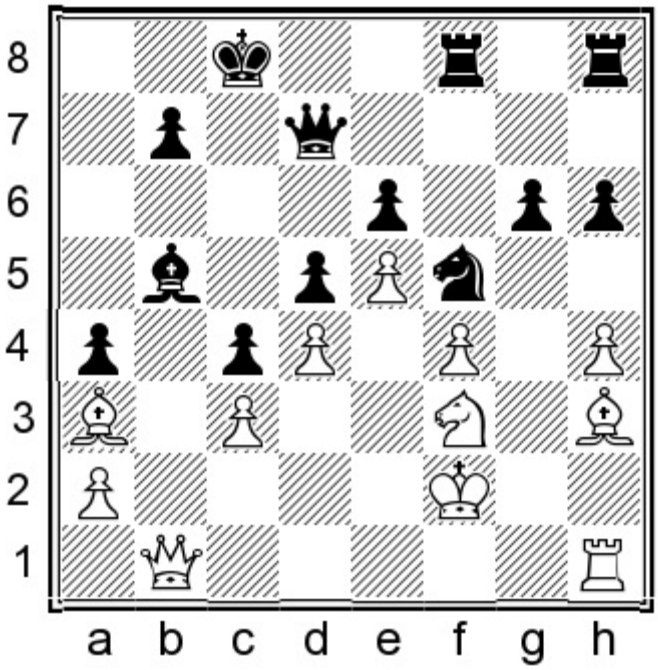


Moscow 1983

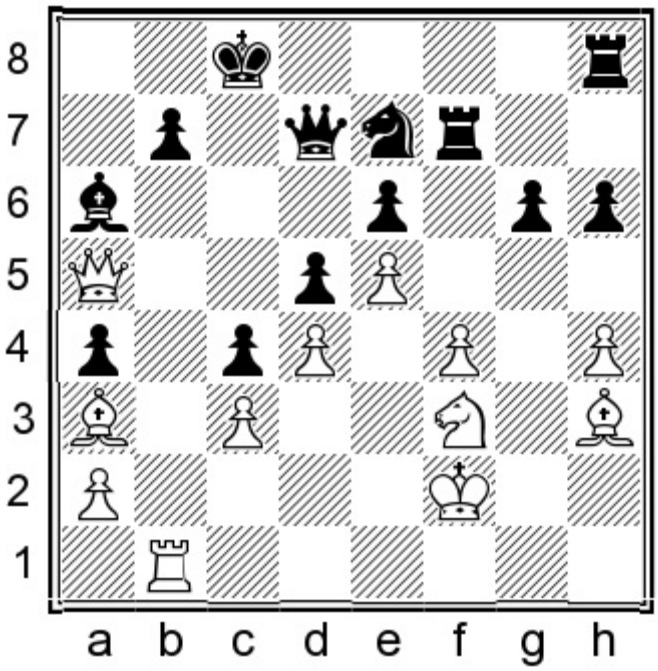
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Diagram Preview

On this page you will find 8 diagrams with critical moments from the coming chapter. I recommend that you take up to 15 minutes to think about each of them (though less in some cases). The solutions are found on the following pages in the annotations to the games.



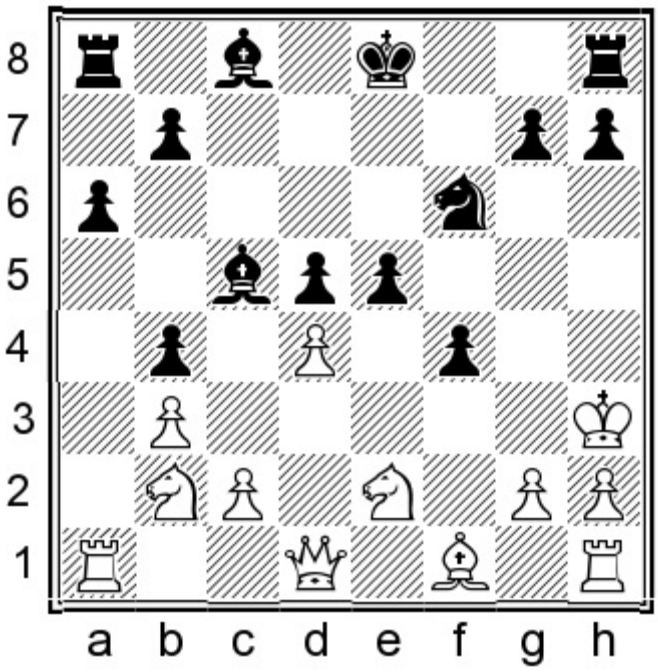
1) Should White exchange his star bishop for the unremarkable rook?
(see page 329)



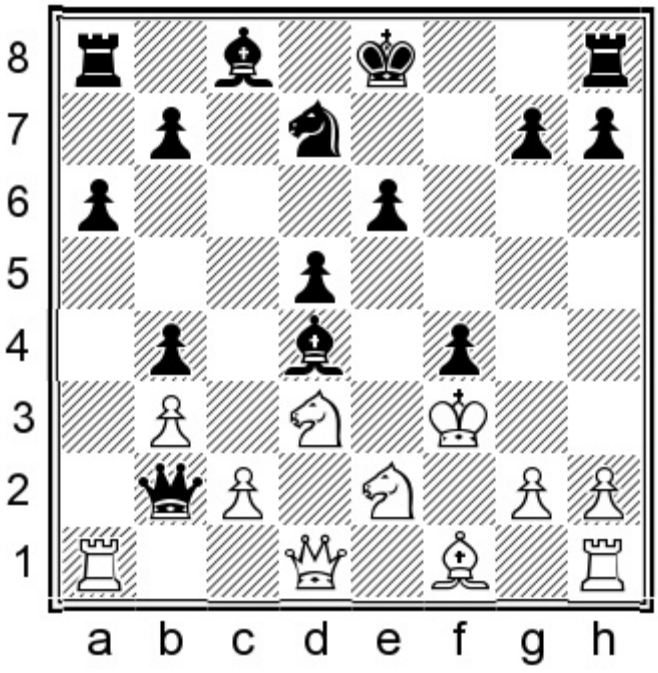
2) Perhaps White should exchange his bishop now?

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(see page 331)

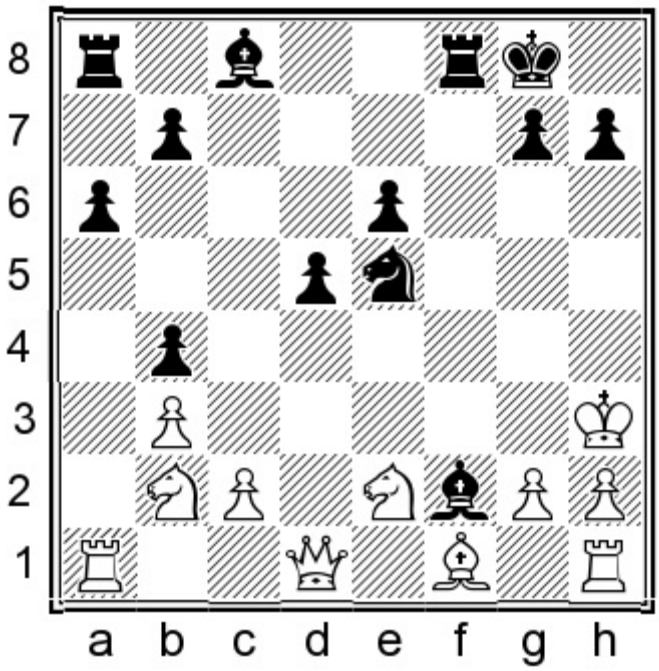


3) How should White escape the check in this bizarre position?
(see page 339)

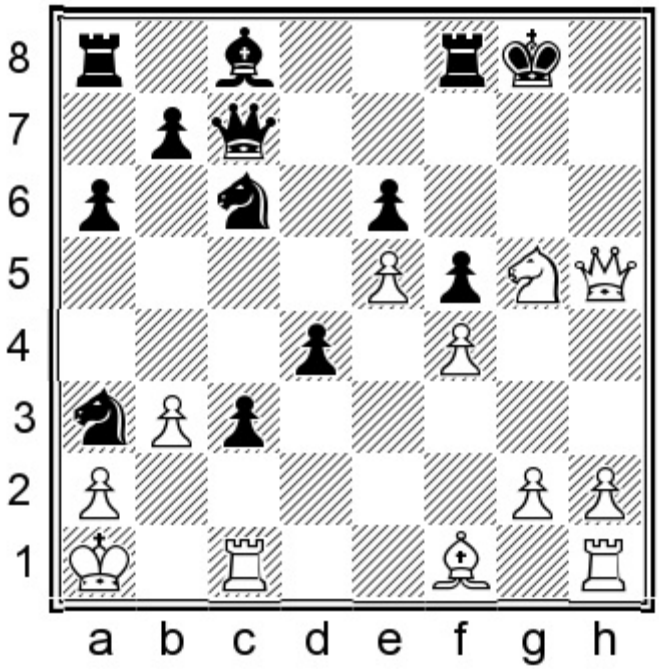


4) White faces a tough question – to take or not to take?
(see page 340)

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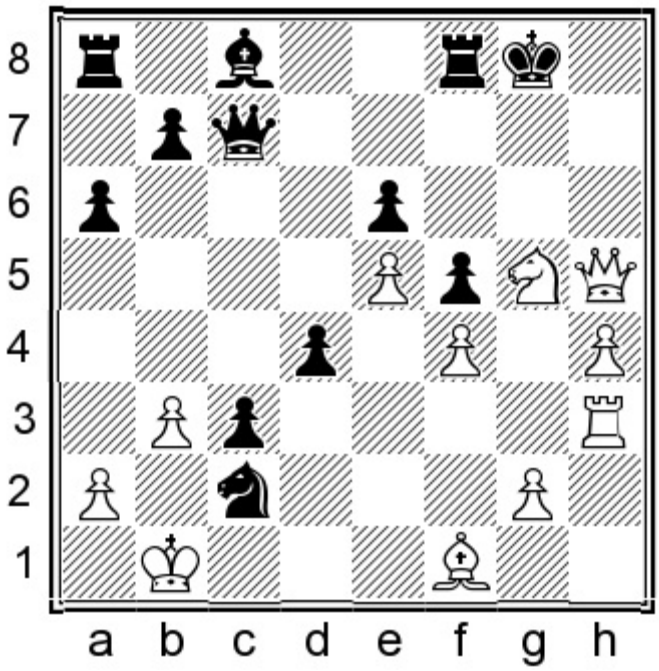


5) Black has lost his queen. Is all hope lost?
(see page 341)

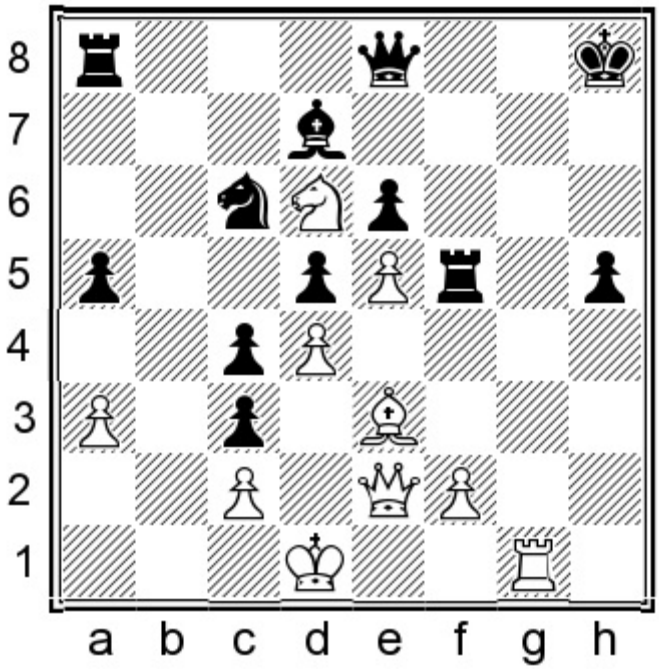


6) White must choose between g2-g4 and h2-h4.
(see page 350)

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7) Which of its tempting options should the black knight choose?
(see page 351)



8) Black had just a minute left to find the solution!
(see page 366)

The French Defence – this phrase holds so much meaning! It so happens that the French Defence (together with the Benoni) accompanied me throughout my own chess journey – in joy as well as in sorrow. The French is a wholly individual opening with its own character, its laws, even its eccentricities. I am hard put to recall any other opening in which, for instance, Black's king regularly waives the right to castle and feels quite confident on f8 – or in which White, time and again, has

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occasion to play with tripled c-pawns and is happy to do so! The French is a many-sided opening with full scope for both White and Black to choose a type of position to suit their taste; attacking and positional manoeuvring are fully compatible. That the French Defence has such a great list of loyal adherents is no accident: Nimzowitsch, Botvinnik, Korchnoi, Uhlmann, Petrosian and many other illustrious chessplayers have served it with faith and devotion.

* * * * * *

I would like to bring to your attention one of my favourite games of chess. It was played in the traditional Russia versus China match. White succeeds in creating a genuine masterpiece and in demonstrating once again the ascendancy of mind over matter – examples where the results were different can be found in books on defence! Vadim Zvjaginsev is a graduate of Mark Dvoretsky's chess school (or university, academy, general staff – take your pick!) and his chess style combines superlative technique with vivid, sometimes even fantastic, flights of imagination.

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Vadim Zvjaginsev – Zhang Pengxiang

China-Russia, Ergun 2006

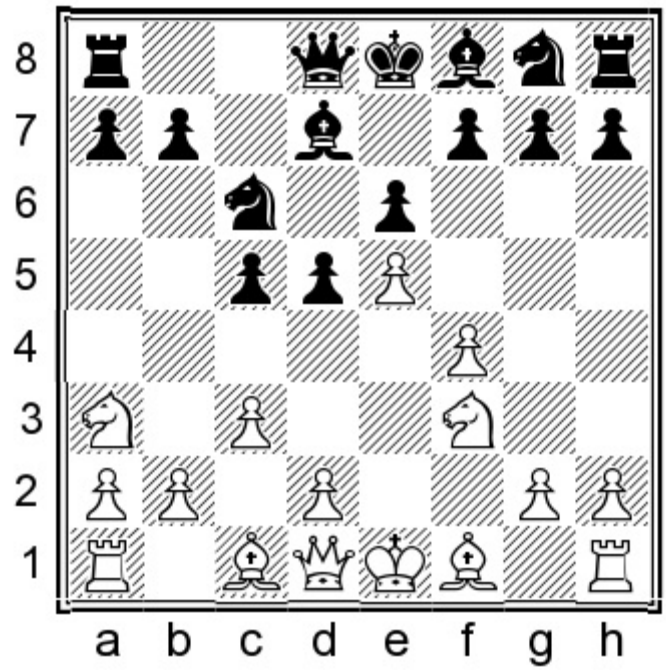
1.e4 e6 2.f4

Vadim often chooses eccentric openings – we need only recall the variation 1.e4 c5 2.♘a3!? which quite a few strong grandmasters at one time incorporated into their repertoires. I played the French Defence for decades, and came up against 2.f4 just once. I don't doubt that for the Chinese player too, it came as a distinct surprise.

2...d5 3.e5 c5 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.c3

Basically, notwithstanding the odd order of moves, the Advance (or Nimzowitsch) Variation is taking shape, with one slight but important difference – the white pawn on f4 bolsters the pawn centre but limits the mobility of the dark-squared bishop. Dialectics in operation!

5...♗d7 6.♘a3



The knight heads for c2. The pawn centre on which White pins his hopes of advantage will require defence and support, in the early stages at least.

6...f6

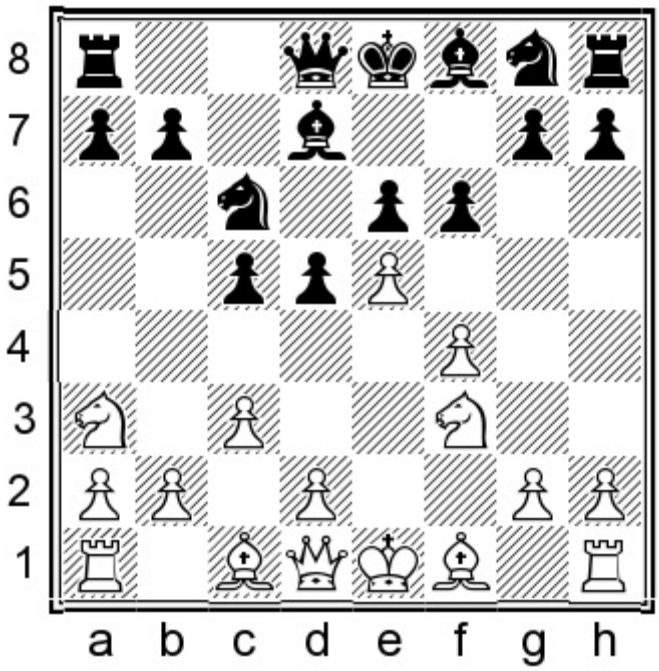
Zhang Pengxiang immediately sets about the undermining job!

To me it seems the natural 6...♘h6 may be more logical, mirroring White's manoeuvres, but not aping them! Black's knight will feel fine on either f7 or f5. There can follow: 7.♘c2 ♘f5 8.♗d3 (8.g3!?) 8...♗e7 9.0-0 ♘h4 10.♗e2 ♘xf3† 11.♗xf3 0-0 12.♕e2 f6 13.exf6 ♖xf6 There is no doubt that Black had

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managed to equalize fully in Komliakov – Psakhis, Yerevan (ol) 1996.

Another move to have been seen is 6...♘ge7, and then 7.♘c2 ♘g6 8.d4 ♖c8 9.a3 ♗e7 10.♗d3 0-0 11.0-0 f5 occurred in Saint-Amant – Staunton, Paris 1843. The play on both sides could doubtless be improved, but considering that the game was played nearly two centuries ago, I can't help my feeling of admiration.



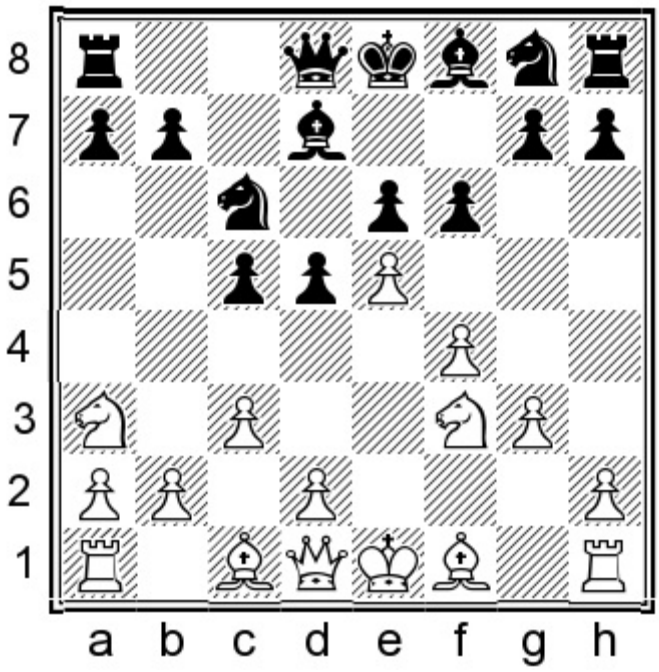
7.g3

An innovation which was subsequently to find no followers. White pursues a deliberately centrifugal strategy, developing his pieces on the edges of the board (or intending to).

The natural 7.d4?! is none too convincing; White is simply taking on too much, and after7...cxd4 8.cxd4 fxe5 9.fxe5 ♗b4† 10.♔f2 (not 10.♗d2? ♘xd4! 11.♗xb4 ♘xf3† followed by ...♕h4†) 10...♘ge7 11.♘c2 (the variation must still be assessed as quite favourable to Black after 11.♗d3 0-0 12.♘c2 ♗e8∓) 11...0-0 Black's light-squared bishop will gain access to the open board via e8 – while White, with his king stuck in the centre, will have to struggle laboriously for equality.

White should probably continue his knight's march with 7.♘c2!?. A possible continuation would be 7...♕b6 8.d4 cxd4 9.♘cxd4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4, with chances of a minimal edge in Pulvett – Perez Mitjans, Barcelona 2012.

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7...c4?!

Zhang attempts to punish his opponent at once for his extravagant opening set-up – and hands the initiative straight over to him.

Black would have an excellent game after the typical sequence 7...fxe5 8.fxe5 ♘h6 9.♘c2 ♗e7. After posting his knight on f5 shortly afterwards, he could be wholly satisfied with the results of the opening. Incidentally in the line just mentioned, 9...d4!? also deserves consideration.

8.b3!

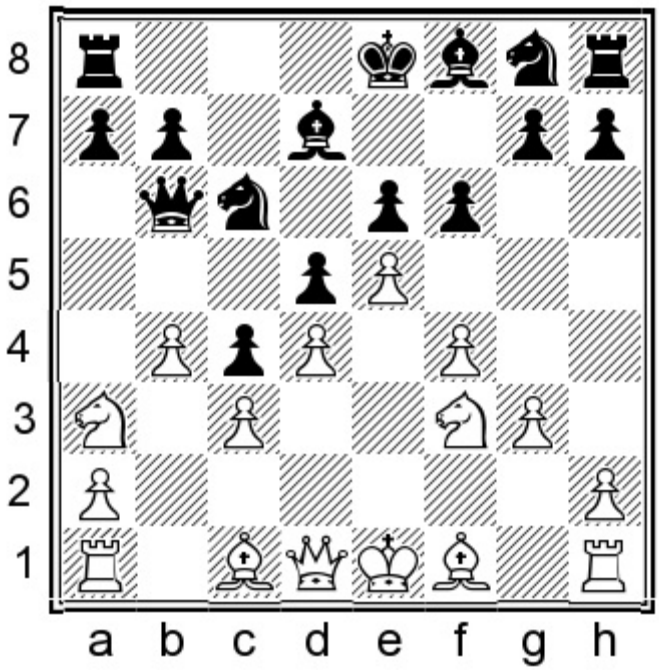
Something resembling a pawn centre has appeared on Black's side too, and Zvjaginsev immediately starts to undermine it.

8...♕a5 9.b4 ♕b6

The alternative queen retreat, 9...♕c7, would be less good, as after 10.d4! cxd3 White gains an important tempo with 11.♘b5 and seizes the initiative: 11...♕b8 12.♗xd3 fxe5 13.fxe5↑ And now the pathologically greedy 13...♘xe5?? leads to immediate catastrophe after 14.♗f4+–.

10.d4

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10...a5!?

Black doesn't just leave White to enjoy his pawn centre – and quite rightly!

The variation 10...cxd3 11.♗xd3 fxe5 12.fxe5 seems to me less convincing: White will defend the e5-pawn easily and comfortably, while his bishop on d3 is already casting predatory glances at the opposing kingside. Thus in the event of 12...♘h6 13.♕e2 a6, either 14.♗e3 ♕c7 15.0-0↑ or the even more reliable 14.♘c2 ♘f7 15.♗f4 guarantees White a fairly obvious plus. In the latter case his king isn't stranded in the centre indefinitely, but can walk across to g2.

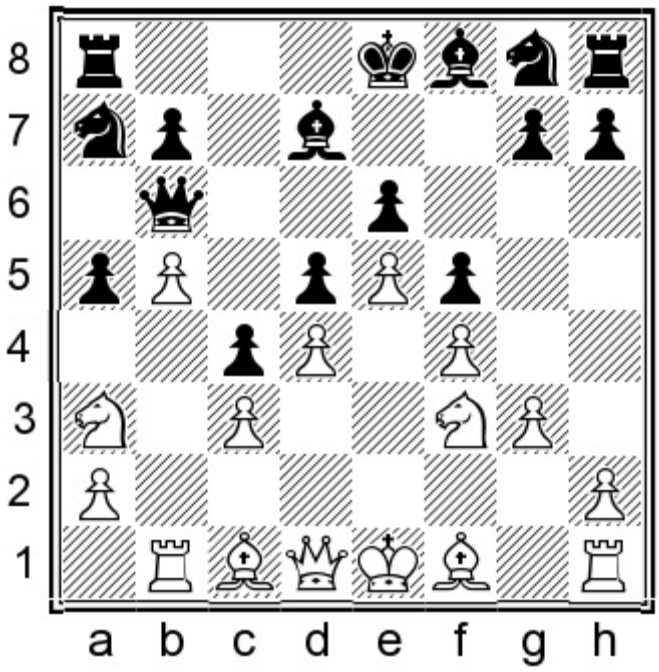
11.b5 ♘a7 12.♖b1 f5

The Chinese player decides to close the centre and deal at leisure with his legitimate prey – the pawn on b5, which White will clearly be unable to defend. But then, defending the "paltry" pawn is not what White is thinking about!

Whether Black was right to make this choice is hard to say, but he did have other continuations at his disposal. For the moment he could simply play 12...♘h6, without being afraid of 13.exf6 gxf6 14.♘d2 ♘f5.

Nor is it so simple to assess the position correctly if Black chooses the most uncompromising 12...♗xa3!? 13.♗xa3 ♘xb5 14.♘h4 g6. White would still have to prove that he had full compensation for the pawn!

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13.♘d2!?

Unmistakably showing his intention to sacrifice a piece on c4 sometime, and thus compelling Black to exchange his very important bishop on f8.

Other variations could also lead to similar results:

13.♘g5!? ♗xa3 14.♗xa3 ♘xb5 15.♗b2 a4 16.♗a3⩱

Or 13.♕c2!? ♗xa3 14.♗xa3 ♘xb5 15.♗c5 ♕c7 16.a4 b6! 17.♖xb5 bxc5 18.♖xc5 ♗c6, and whether White retains chances of an appreciable plus is not entirely clear.
Steeping myself in the fine crazy spirit of this game, I tried analysing the immediate piece offer 13.♘xc4!? dxc4 14.♗xc4. But I failed to evaluate the consequences of the counter-sacrifice 14...♖c8 15.♕d3 ♖xc4!? 16.♕xc4, after which either 16...♗xb5 17.♖xb5 ♕xb5 18.♕xe6† ♘e7∞ or 16...♘xb5 17.a4 ♕c6 18.♕xc6 ♗xc6 19.♖xb5 ♗xf3 20.♖g1 ♗c6 21.♖xa5 ♘e7 would lead to complex and obscure positions where you could so easily lose your way!

13...♗xa3

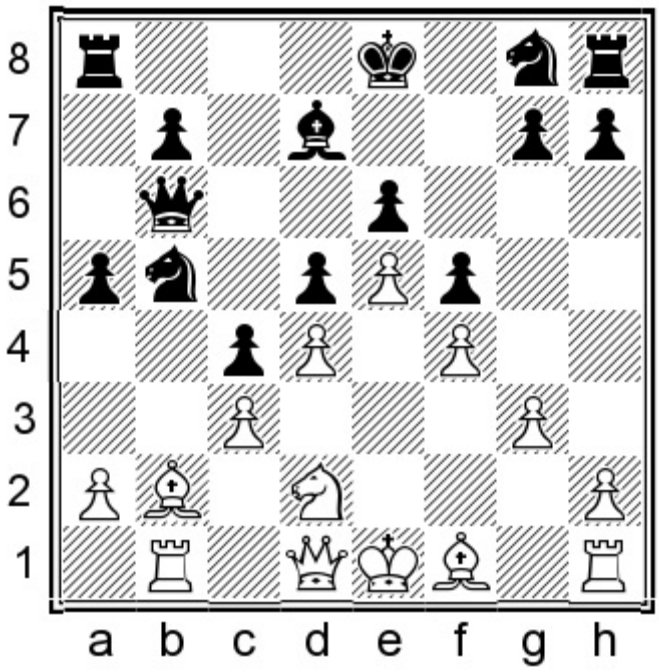
White can't have expected 13...♘xb5?? even in his dreams: 14.♘xb5 ♗xb5 15.a4+–

I wouldn't be too optimistic about Black's prospects after 13...♘h6 14.♘axc4!? dxc4 15.♗xc4!? ♘c8 16.a4 ♕c7 17.♕f3 either. With two pawns and a powerful centre for the piece, White is guaranteed a lasting initiative. Black is simply too short of space and air to breathe.

14.♗xa3 ♘xb5 15.♗b2

The bishop has temporarily retreated but is ready to return to its rightful post after a2-a4.

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15...a4

Zhang tries to solve his problem in the simplest way – and running ahead, I will say that the move he plays is not at all bad.

Alternatively, instead of preventing 16.a4, Black could have tried preparing for it with 15...♕c6!?. On 16.a4 he would simply remove his knight with: 16...♘c7 (I don't so much like 16...♘xd4, as after 17.cxd4 c3 18.♕b3! cxd2† 19.♔xd2 ♕xa4 20.♕xa4 ♗xa4 21.♗a3 ♗c6 22.♗b5! White keeps more than enough compensation for the two pawns.) 17.♗a3 ♕xa4 18.♕xa4 ♗xa4 19.♖xb7 ♘b5 Then either 20.♗b2 0-0-0!? 21.♖xg7 ♖d7 or 20.♗c5 ♘xc3 21.♖xg7 would lead to an unclear ending.

16.♗a3!

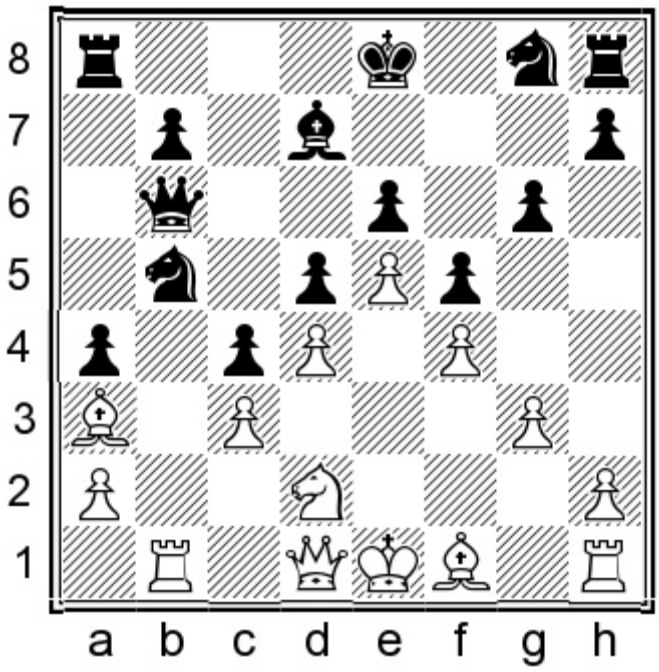
Astutely exploiting the drawbacks to Black's last move: on the bishop's important a3-f8 diagonal, an excellent fortified post has appeared for it on b4!

16...g6

Black takes the precaution of stopping the white queen from intruding on h5 (with check), but the move in the game was by no means obligatory.

The simple 16...♕c7! was worth considering. Black would have nothing at all to fear from either 17.♕c1 ♘xa3 18.♕xa3 ♘e7 or the possible exchange sacrifice 17.♖xb5 ♗xb5 18.g4 fxg4 19.♕xg4 ♕f7∓. And in the event of 17.♗b4 ♘e7, his following move ...♘c6 would seriously engage with that dark-squared bishop which is the chief pride of White's position.

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17.g4?!

The most amazing move in the game! For myself, I fear that a move like this would simply not have entered my head, and my admiration for it – I confess – is not dictated by its objective value.

White would have fully adequate compensation for the pawn after continuing simply with, for example, 17.♕c1!? ♕c7 18.♗b4 ♘e7 19.♗xe7 ♔xe7 20.a3∞ or 17.h4, but such a course doesn't suit Vadim and he drastically alters the direction of the play.

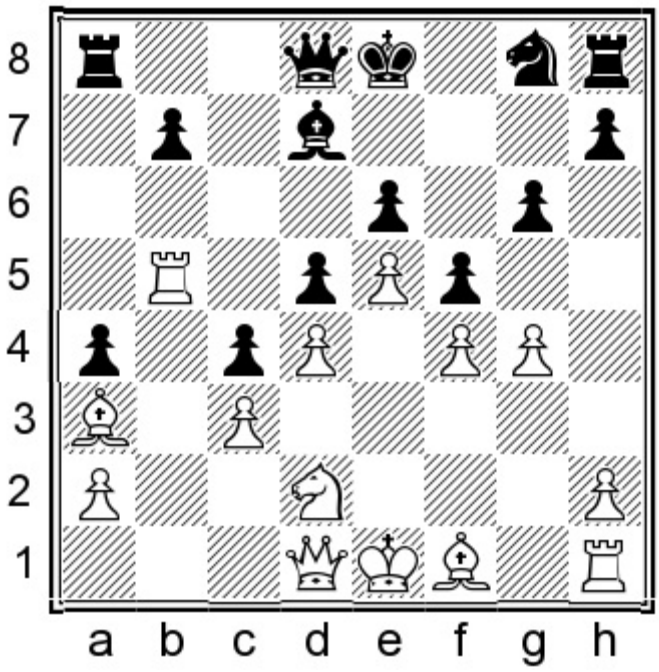
17...♕d8!

The queen is not just retreating to the place prepared for it in advance – it is also threatening a highly unpleasant check on h4.

18.♖xb5!

White simply had no other move!

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18...♗xb5

Unexpectedly it turns out that after Black's intended reply:

18...♕h4†

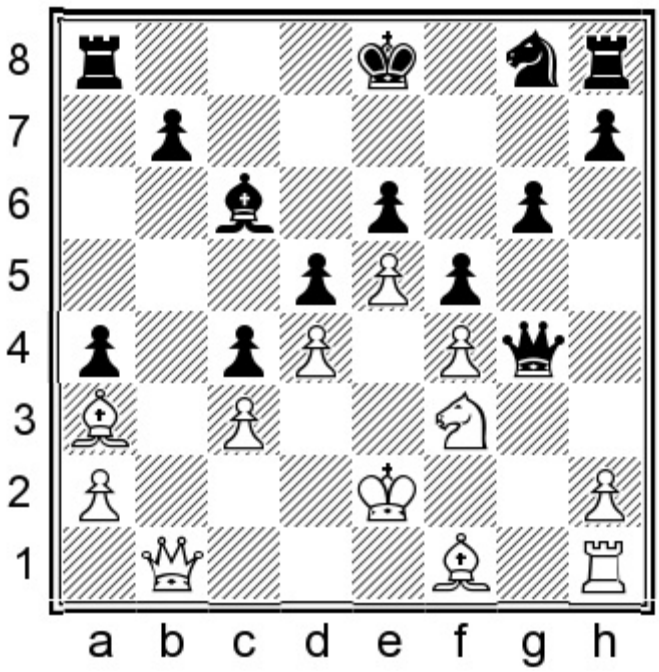
The check fails to bring any visible gains after:

19.♔e2 ♕xg4† 20.♘f3 ♗xb5 21.♕b1!

Entering the game all of a sudden. The queen isn't only attacking the bishop; Black will now constantly have to reckon with the threat of ♕b4.

21...♗c6

The only move.



22.♔e3!

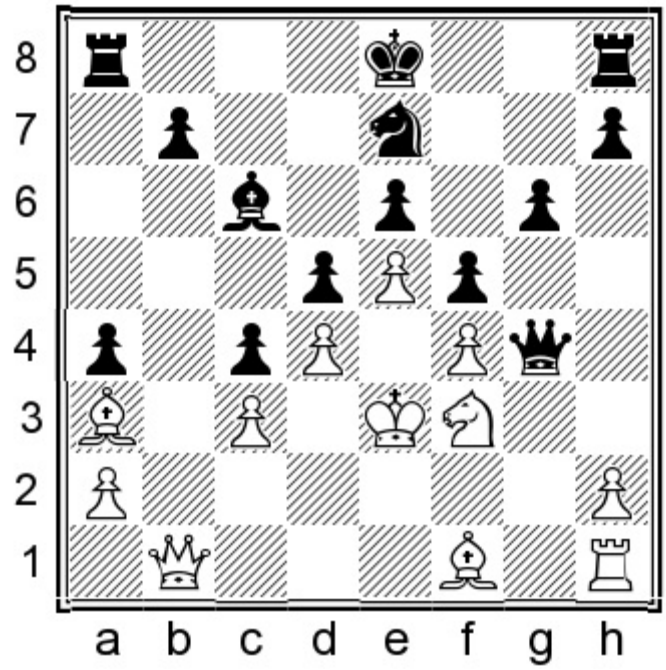
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A splendid idea of Sergei Shipov!

Although 22.♕b4 0-0-0, and only then 23.♔e3, doesn't look at all bad either.

22...♘e7!

In the event of 22...♕h5 23.♗e2!?, Black's two most important pieces are exposed to threats; if 23...♕h3 then 24.♕b6!, while after for example 23...♘h6 24.h3 ♖d8!? 25.♘g5 ♕h4 26.♘xe6, Black is hardly to be envied!



White then has no simple choice to make, between:

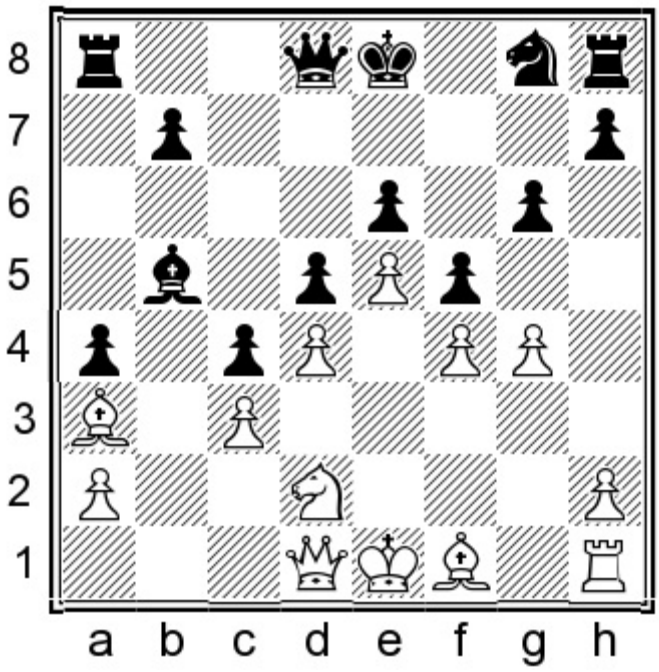
a) 23.♕b4 ♘c8 24.h4↑

b) 23.♖g1 ♕h5 24.♖g3 ♕h6 25.♘g5↑

c) And the more radical 23.♗xe7!? ♔xe7 24.♕b4† ♔e8 25.♕d6 ♗d7 26.♗e2.

In all three cases, he has full compensation for the sacrificed material.

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19.h4!?

The surprises continue! In the case of 19.g5!? h6 20.♘f3 Black's extra exchange and pawn don't in any way make themselves felt, but White's opportunities to play for a win are also substantially reduced.

19...♘h6 20.gxf5!?

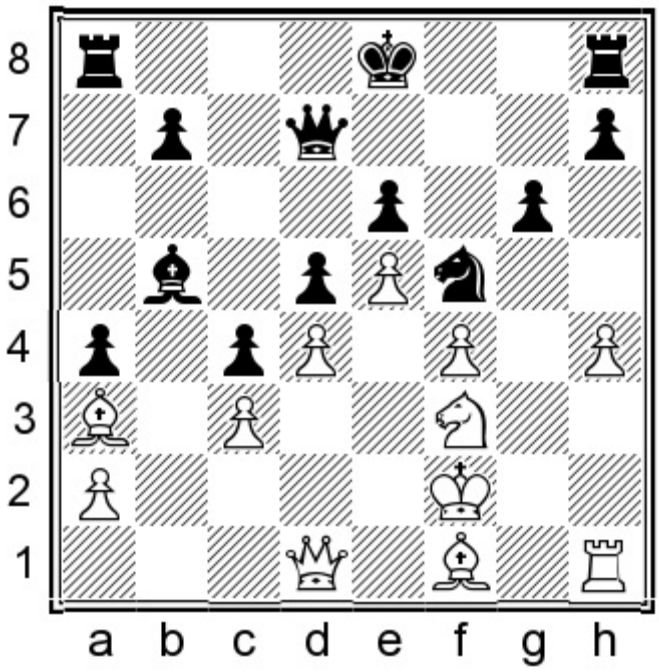
Here again, a less ambitious chessplayer would opt for 20.g5 ♘g4 21.h5. But Vadim Zvjaginsev is striving for a position that will be wide open for his bishops. Unfortunately – to be honest – the position is also opening up for the opposing rooks!

20...♘xf5 21.♘f3 ♕d7

White retains plenty of tactical chances after 21...♕a5 22.♕c1!?, or 21...♘g3!? 22.♖g1 ♘xf1 23.♖xf1 ♔d7 24.♕b1 ♗c6 25.h5 – when Black would still have to endure many an unpleasant moment before he could proceed with the calm exploitation of his material advantage.

22.♔f2

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22...0-0-0

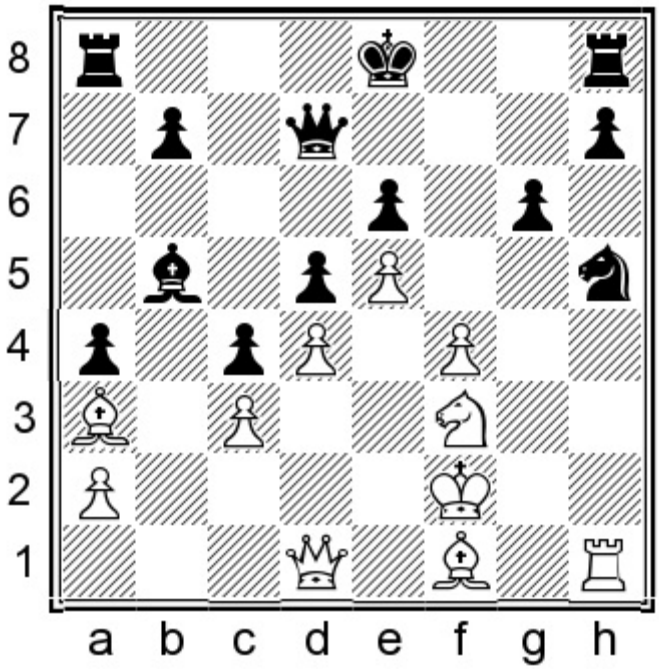
An excellent move; the black king can't stay in the centre forever! Black has a large material plus – though it isn't clear whether his absolutely useless light-squared bishop can count as a fully-fledged piece – but any weaknesses in the white position are hard to find, except possibly for the f4-pawn.

From that point of view, an interesting option was:

22...♘g7!?

This deserved attention, with the idea of transferring the knight to h5. In that case White would probably have to go in for the aggressive continuation:

23.h5 ♘xh5



24.♘g5

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Black is alright after 24.f5 exf5 25.e6 ♕g7, whereas instead 25...♕xe6 26.♗xc4 is a good deal less clear.

24...♘g7 25.♕b1 0-0-0

White can opt for the blockading move:

26.♖h6!?

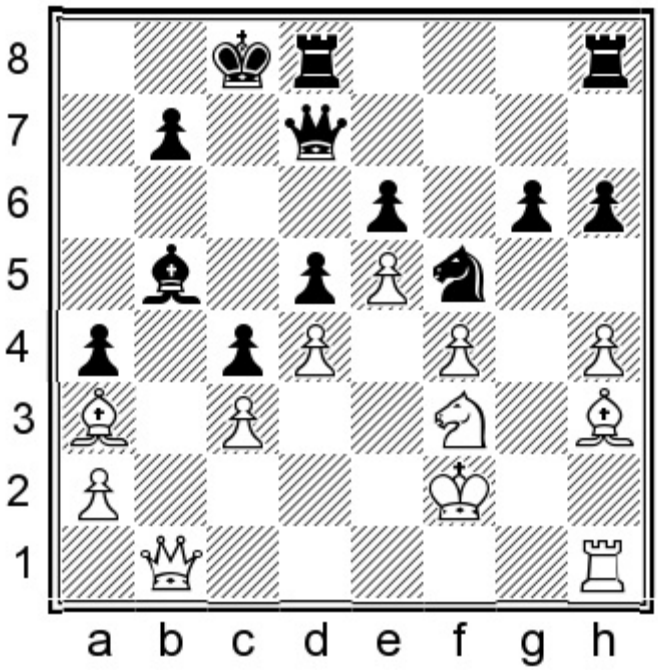
A curious situation arises. Black's extra exchange, added to the two pawns, allows him to look to the future with optimism, but in justice it must be said that that future is still some way off. After for instance 26...♘f5 27.♗h3!, White's threats are not to be taken lightly!

Instead 26...b6!?, aiming first to ensure the monarch's safety, is worth serious consideration.

23.♗h3 h6

Black has been defending well in a situation that is far from simple. His last move, taking the important g5-square under control, is logical in its way. Yet I would prefer the prophylactic 23...b6!, to be followed by bringing the king across to the a6-square. Thus, for example, in the event of 24.♕b1 ♔b7 25.♕b4 ♔a6 26.♖b1 ♖b8, Black would have succeeded in guarding all his queenside weaknesses; and in the subsequent long-drawn-out encounter, with little in the way of forced lines, his material plus would become a much more important factor.

24.♕b1



24...♖df8?

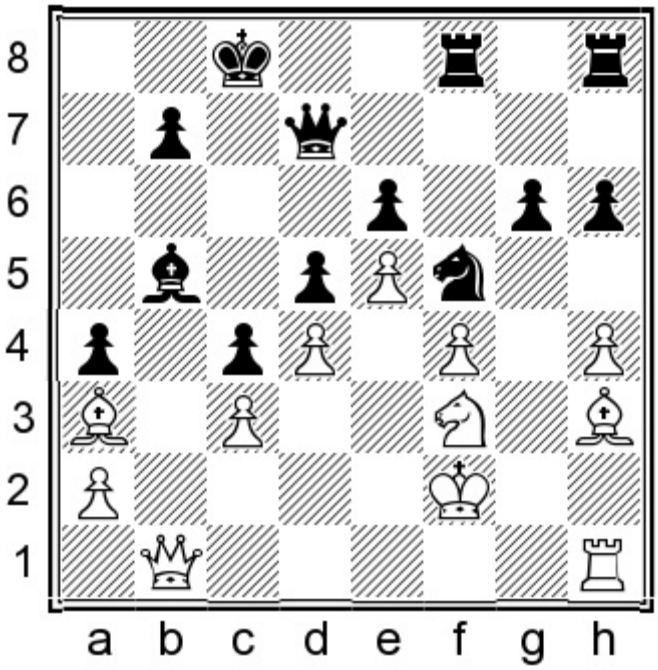
The Chinese player is frankly tired of defending, and he prepares to wrest the initiative from his opponent, even at the cost of the exchange. Nonetheless the move he makes is a mistake. What *should* he have played?

The move from the previous note, 24...b6, is nowhere near as convincing here. In reply White could consider 25.h5!?, with the possible continuation: 25...♖hg8 (not 25...gxh5? 26.♗xf5 exf5 27.e6! ♕e8

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28.e7 with a decisive plus) 26.♖g1 gxh5 27.♗xf5 exf5 (or 27...♖xg1 28.♕xg1 exf5 29.♕g6≅) 28.e6 ♕xe6 29.♖e1! ♕g6 30.♖g1! ♕e6!?= The turbulent complications would then end in a mundane repetition of moves.

Instead it was worth thinking about 24...♖hg8!, preparing in advance for the possible events on the g-file. After 25.h5 ♖g7 26.♗xf5 gxf5 27.♘h4 White would still have compensation for his material losses; but he could not count on an advantage.



25.♕b4?

An interesting moment! Captivated by the might of his beloved bishop, Zvjaginsev doesn't want to exchange that piece for a "mere" rook – but he is wrong! The bishop on a3 has played an immense role in the game already, and "mind over matter" is hardly ever the last word – if you don't believe me, you should re-read the works of Karl Marx!

White's best option was:

25.♗xf8! ♖xf8 26.♖g1

Black's rooks were none too active but were still capable of defending his weak pawns; now he has to find the only move:

26...♕e8!

On 26...♖g8? White wins easily with 27.♗xf5 exf5 28.h5.

After 26...♘e7? White has a wonderful choice of two continuations: 27.♖xg6! ♘xg6 28.♕xg6 ♖e8 29.f5!; or 27.h5! envisaging 27...gxh5 28.♖g7 ♖g8 29.♖xg8† ♘xg8 30.♕g6 with a winning initiative.

27.♕b4!

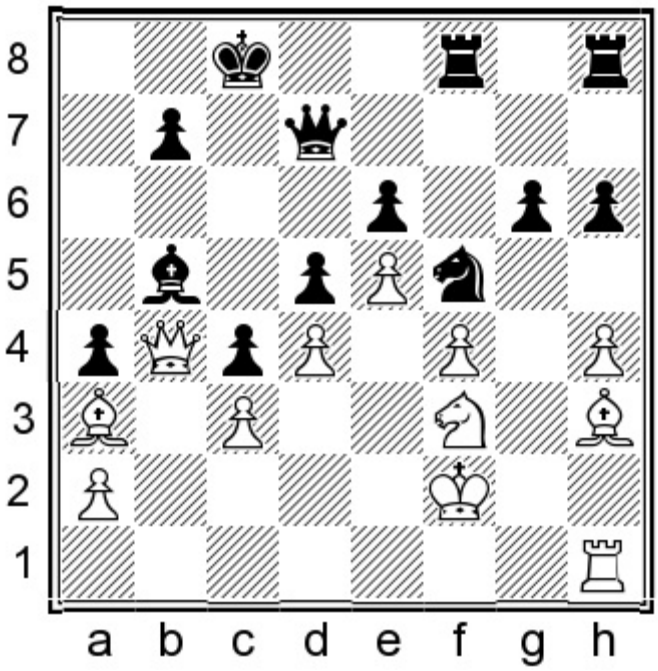
A dangerous capture on g6 is threatened, and after Black's best line:

27...♘g7 28.♖xg6 ♕xg6 29.♕xf8† ♗e8 30.f5!? ♘xf5 31.♗xf5 exf5 32.♘g1±

The knight is heading for e2 and f4. White succeeds in maintaining some initiative – though whether

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he would manage to convert it into something concrete is unclear.



25...♖f7?

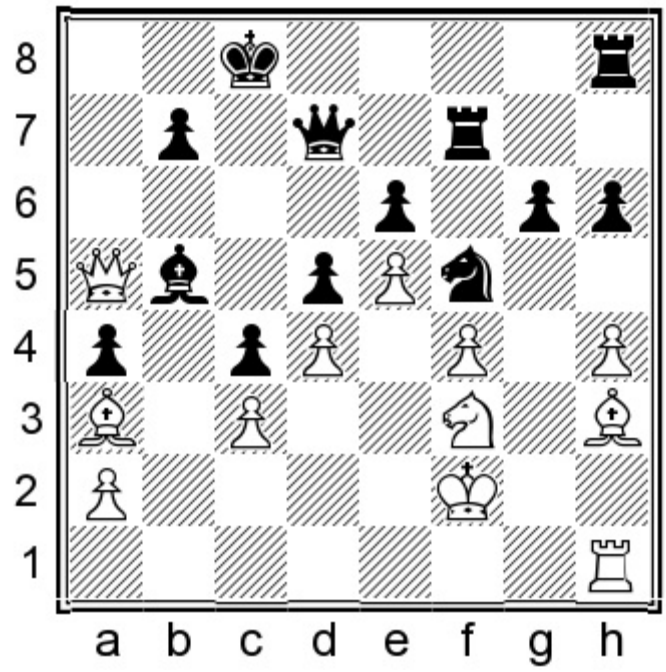
Zhang Pengxiang had to make a very difficult choice in a position that was not simple to play. He attempts to bring his rook, which has miraculously survived, to join the defence of his king – but the move he chooses merely provokes a new wave of the attack.

Black ought to have continued with 25...♗c6!. To meet the white queen's dangerous invasion with 26.♕a5 ♕d8! 27.♕a7, he could simply remove his rook from attack by 27...♖fg8!? – and on 28.h5 it would be the right moment for the king to make its own way out of the danger zone with 28...♔d7!. Against this I have not succeeded in finding a decisive reinforcement of the attack. After for instance 29.♗b4 ♖g7 30.hxg6 ♖xg6 31.♗xf5 exf5 32.e6†!? ♔xe6 (or 32...♖xe6 33.♘e5† ♖xe5 34.dxe5 ♔e6⇄) 33.♖e1† ♔f7 34.♖e7† ♔f6 35.♘e5 ♕g8!, Black has managed to save himself from the immediate threats and even to preserve his material plus.

26.♕a5

A simple and strong move, after which the black king can no longer find a safe refuge.

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26...♗a6?!

Now this bishop, which hasn't shown any activity for a long time, takes on the status of an overgrown pawn for the rest of the game.

A decision like this can hardly be good, but the continuation that is probably Black's best, 26...♕e8, doesn't rid him of severe problems either. In reply, White conducts the attack on a broad front with 27.h5! and:

a) The bold pawn cannot be destroyed: 27...gxh5? would lose at once to 28.♗xf5 exf5 (28...♖xf5 29.♗d6+–) 29.e6!+–.

b) However, Black is extremely short of choices anyway. A possible line is: 27...♖g8 28.hxg6 ♖xg6 29.♗xf5 ♖xf5 30.♕a8† ♔c7 31.♗d6† ♔b6 But in this rare moment when it looks as if Black can feel secure, White succeeds in stepping up the threats with the pretty 32.♗b8!.

c) Perhaps White would be set the greatest problems by the surprising resource 27...b6!, but even so, after the simple 28.♕xb6 ♖b7 29.♕a5, his threats would be very strong.

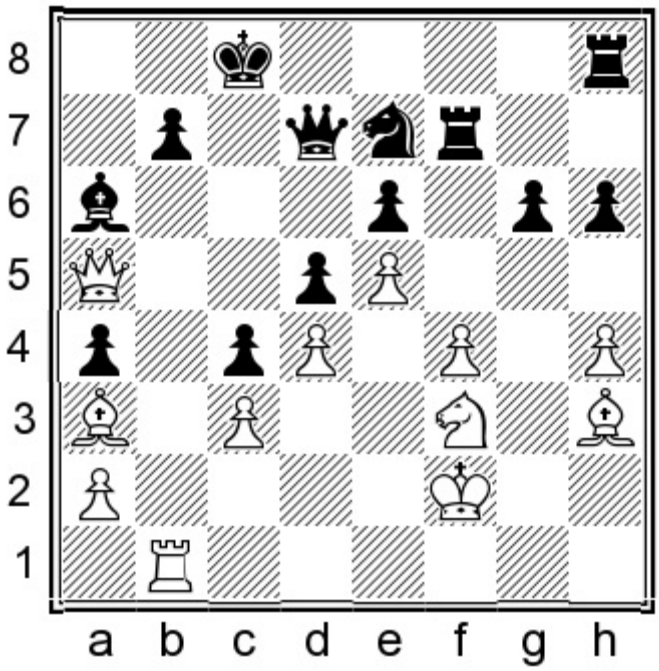
27.♖b1 ♘e7

White's idea is very simple – to place his rook on b6 and surrender it for the bishop at some stage, depriving the black king of its last support – and this is virtually impossible to prevent.

The force of White's attack is splendidly illustrated by the variation: 27...♖hh7 28.♖b6 ♕d8 29.♗d6! ♖h8 30.♖xa6 bxa6 31.♕xa6† ♔d7 32.♕xa4† ♔c8 33.♕a6† ♔d7 34.♕b5† ♔c8 The simplest way to win is with a manoeuvre thoroughly familiar to us: 35.h5! gxh5 36.♗xf5 exf5 37.♕a6† ♖b7 38.♕a8†+–

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An attempt to create counterplay with 27...g5!? is fairly easily parried by 28.♖b6! gxf4 29.♗d6. The unmistakable threat is 30.♕xa6! and Black is at a loss how to react. It's perfectly clear that 29...♘xd6 30.exd6 only helps his opponent: the white knight (of which there has been no news for a very long time) is ready to jump to e5 with lethal effect.



28.♗d6

No doubt the most natural move in the position, but not the best. For the second time in the game, Vadim decides against exchanging (betraying!) his dark-squared bishop – and for the second time this decision is wrong.

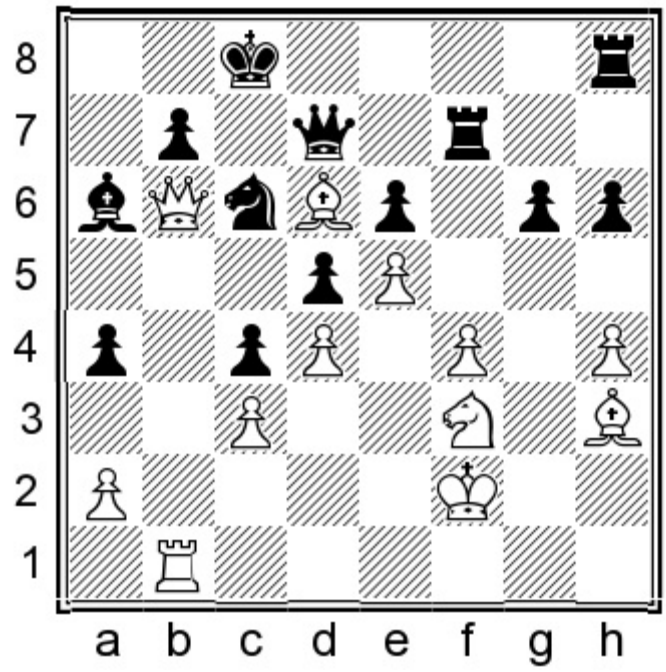
He should go in for 28.♗xe7! ♖xe7, but then reject Shipov's interesting and paradoxical recommendation of 29.♕c5†? ♔b8 (but not 29...♕c7? 30.♕xd5!) 30.♕d6† ♕xd6 31.exd6 ♖f7 32.♔g3⇄ although even in the ending White's chances would not be worse.

Instead he should continue the attack with 29.♖b6!. In reply, the desperate 29...g5 is no help to Black in view of the simple 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.♘xg5, while against 29...♖he8 White can consider 30.♔e3!?. Black will then eventually succumb to asphyxia and the impossibility of defending against the many threats; in particular he will constantly have to be alert to h4-h5 followed by f4-f5.

28...♘c6 29.♕b6

Zvjaginsev increases the pressure without hurrying. He has successfully brought all his forces into play; Black is suffocating due to a chronic lack of space. For all that, the outcome of the game is still by no means certain. Yet it is at this moment, in a position far from easy for him, that Black commits what is probably the decisive error.

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29...g5?!

The Chinese player succumbs to a wholly understandable human wish. He wants – by any available means – to free himself from the vice-like grip, to widen the sphere of activity of his pieces, and, ideally, to weaken the white monarch's position into the bargain. To his misfortune, the move in the game merely helps White's plans, as will become clear after the superb reply.

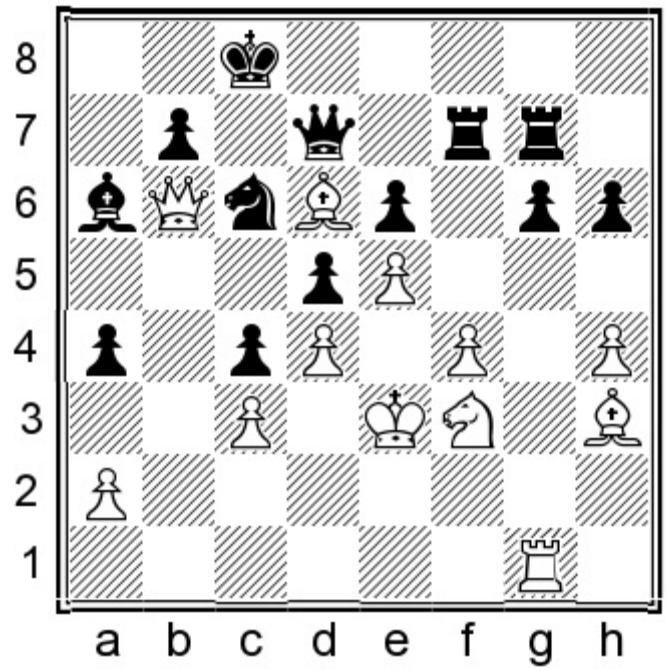
But what continuation *should* Black choose? A difficult question! The pawns on e6 and g6 are vulnerable and continually open to attack.

Thus for example 29...♖xf4?? loses immediately to a strike with 30.♗xe6+–.

Instead 29...♖e8 deserves more consideration, but I haven't been able to find a fitting answer to 30.♖g1!. There is no satisfactory defence in 30...♖g8, owing to 31.h5! ♖fg7 32.♖xg6 ♖xg6 33.hxg6, and if 33...♖xg6 then 34.f5+– after which Black's fortifications collapse.

Nor is 30...♕d8!? adequate; White replies 31.♕b1!, with the possible continuation: 31...♖xf4 32.♕xg6 ♕d7 33.♕xh6 ♖f7 34.♖g6! ♘d8 35.♔g3± Black's formal preponderance in material plays no role, the pawn on e6 needs constant watching, and the passed pawn on the h-file is very dangerous. The most stubborn resistance would be possible in the event of the prophylactic 29...♖g8!?, but that move too fails to rid Black of his burdens and woes. After 30.♖g1 ♖gg7 31.♔e3!?:

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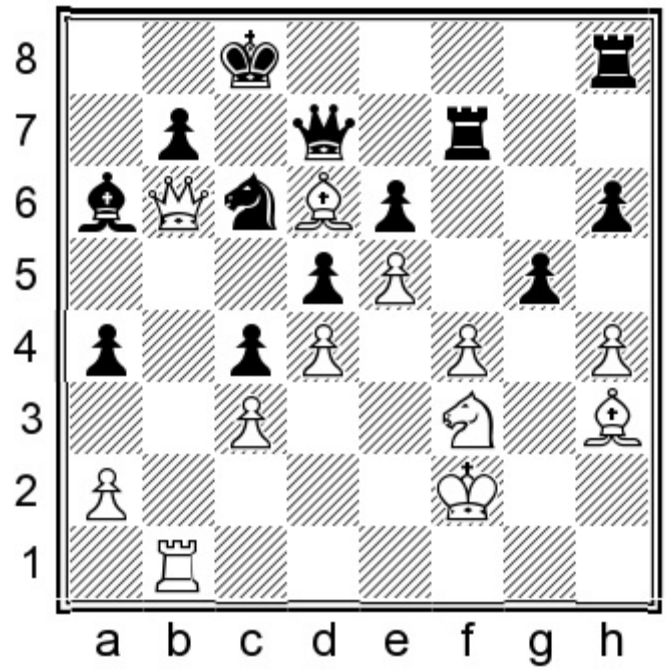
Black is hard pressed to find a useful move:

(a) The heroic 31...♖f5 doesn't help him, as after a pair of exchanges with 32.♗xf5 gxf5 33.♖xg7 ♕xg7 White plays 34.h5!, to be followed by ♔f2, ♘h4 and ♘g6 with an immediate rout.

(b) 31...♘e7 doesn't work either, thanks to the stock move 32.h5!, and now: 32...♘f5† 33.♔f2 g5 (or 33...♕b5 34.♕xb5 ♗xb5 35.hxg6 ♖d7 36.♗xf5 exf5 37.♘h4+–) 34.fxg5 ♘xd6 35.♕xd6 ♕xd6 36.exd6 ♔d7 37.♖e1+– Here the queen exchange has brought Black little help. His light-squared bishop's absence from the scene of action is sorely felt, and he cannot organize serious resistance.

(c) Finally, the attempt to erect something like a fortress by means of 31...♕e8 also fails. White increases the pressure at his leisure and demolishes the shaky defensive structures: 32.♕c5 ♕d7 33.♖g3 Black is in zugzwang (33.♖b1, with a strong attack, doesn't look bad either). 33...♔d8 (33...♕e8 34.♕xd5!) 34.♗f8! ♖g8 (or 34...♔e8 35.♗xg7 ♖xg7 36.h5!+–) 35.♗xh6 With the fall of such an important pawn, the game is practically over, since the knight gains the access to g5 which it so much needs.

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30.♖g1!+–

A wonderful answer. The rook stations itself in ambush, and prepares to invade on the g-file, which Black's last move made a good deal easier to open.

Instead 30.hxg5? looks much less convincing: 30...hxg5 31.♘xg5 ♖xf4† 32.♔e3 ♖xh3† 33.♔xf4 ♖h5 And Black can defend quite successfully.

However, the move in the game is not the only one that could lead White to victory:

His attack is irresistible if he takes on g5 rather more cunningly with: 30.fxg5! hxg5 31.♔e2 His knight cannot then be stopped from reaching g5; and when it does, it will be an important addition to White's co-ordinated attacking force – a force in which, in effect, all his pieces except his king will be participating. The following line, for example, is sufficiently characteristic: 31...♖e7 (buying White off with the exchange sacrifice 31...♖f5 32.♗xf5 exf5 doesn't help either: 33.hxg5 f4 34.g6+–) 32.♘xg5 ♖xh4 33.♖f1! ♖h8 34.♘xe6+– And by now the end of the game is not far off!

30...♖e8

There is no longer any salvation.

After either 30...gxf4 or 30...gxh4, the white rook breaks into the opposing camp with decisive effect: 31.♖g6 ♖e8 32.♖xh6+–

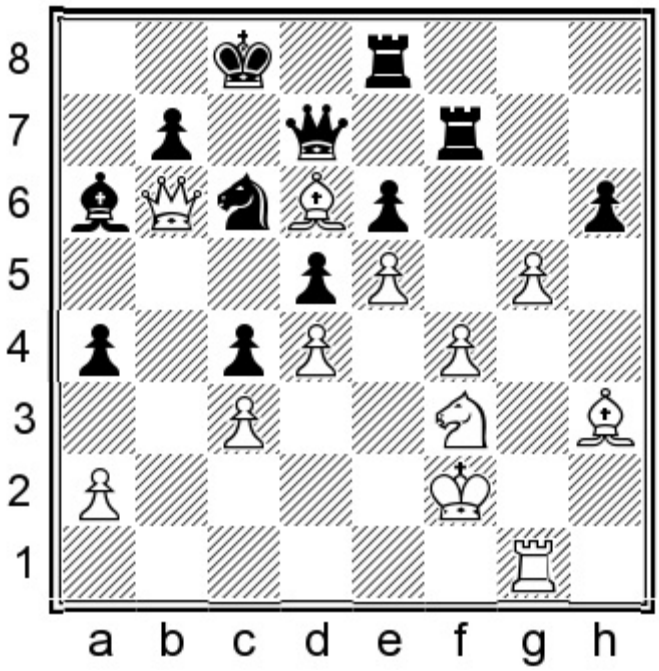
On 30...g4 the bishop can devour the pawn quite happily, but 31.♖xg4 ♕d8 32.♕c5 also gives Black little relief. For example: 32...♕a5 33.♕xa5 ♘xa5 34.♖g6+–

After the most stubborn move, 30...♖g7, the win is achieved in beautiful style: 31.fxg5! h5!? (31...hxg5 32.♘xg5+–) 32.g6! ♖hg8 33.♖g3! And White awaits Black's next move with curiosity – for instance

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33...♖xg6 meets with immediate refutation in the shape of 34.♗xe6!.

31.hxg5



31...hxg5

By this time, an attempt to evict the white queen from b6 by 31...♕d8 alters nothing. White wins either with a simple queen exchange, 32.♕xd8† ♘xd8 33.gxh6+–, or by the more sophisticated 32.g6!? with the possible continuation: 32...♖xf4 (32...♕xb6 33.gxf7!+–) 33.♕b1! ♕h4† 34.♖g3 ♔d7 35.g7 ♖g8 36.♕h7 The raging white pieces will quickly decide the fate of the game.

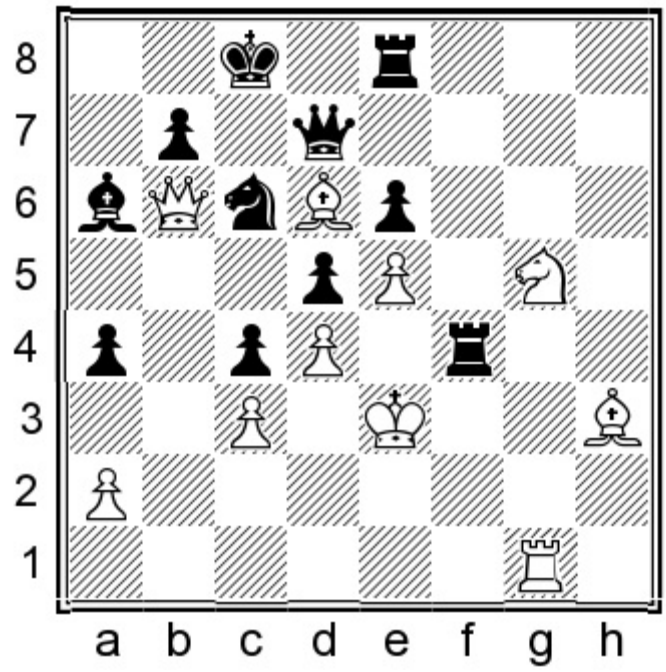
32.♘xg5+–

Perhaps Zhang was hoping his opponent would want to win the game with the pretty manoeuvre 32.♖xg5? ♖xf4 33.♖g8!, against which he may have prepared the fitting retort 33...♖f7 34.♕c7† ♕xc7 35.♖xe8† ♘d8!. White would then have to begin his work all over again!

32...♖xf4† 33.♔e3

The situation has been clarified – the rook on f4 is hanging and a deadly capture on e6 is threatened.

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33...♖h4

This move allows Zvjaginsev to conduct the game to victory easily and comfortably.

Sometimes in a desperate situation you have to take desperate measures! Possibly 33...♖f6!?, bringing extra defence to e6 in paradoxical fashion, would have given more practical chances. Frankly speaking White would still win, but he would need to do some precise calculation – and the element of surprise might also play its part.

In fact White would have a pleasant choice to make. After 34.exf6! ♕xd6 35.f7 ♖h8, the simplest way to win is the cool-headed knight manoeuvre 36.♘f3! ♖f8 37.♘e5, followed by the rook's invasion on g8 which cannot be averted.

Alternatively, after: 34.♘xe6!? ♖exe6 (or 34...♖fxe6 35.♖g8! and Black's huge material advantage will not save him from a quick mate) 35.♖g8† ♘d8 36.♔d2! Despite being a rook down, White finds the time for a quiet king move. 36...♖h6 37.♕a7! Black still cannot rescue his monarch from calamity.

34.♗xe6! ♖xe6 35.♘xe6 ♖h3† 36.♔e2 ♖h8 37.♖g7 ♘xd4†

The final check of the game is delivered by Black – a generous moral consolation for all the burdens he has been faced with!

38.♕xd4

1–0

A remarkable win by the Russian player! This game counts among my favourites in spite of containing a certain quantity of errors. White's extravagant opening didn't bring him any real gains. The fight for the initiative demanded some sacrifices and some interesting positional decisions on his part. Black could have altered the course of the duel on several occasions, but at the end of the day Vadim

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Zvjaginsev’s boldness and ingenuity were rewarded.

In my search for interesting attacking games, my attention was caught by an encounter which a young Polish International Master wins in fine style, against a mighty and renowned Russian grandmaster whose rating has more than once topped the 2700 mark.

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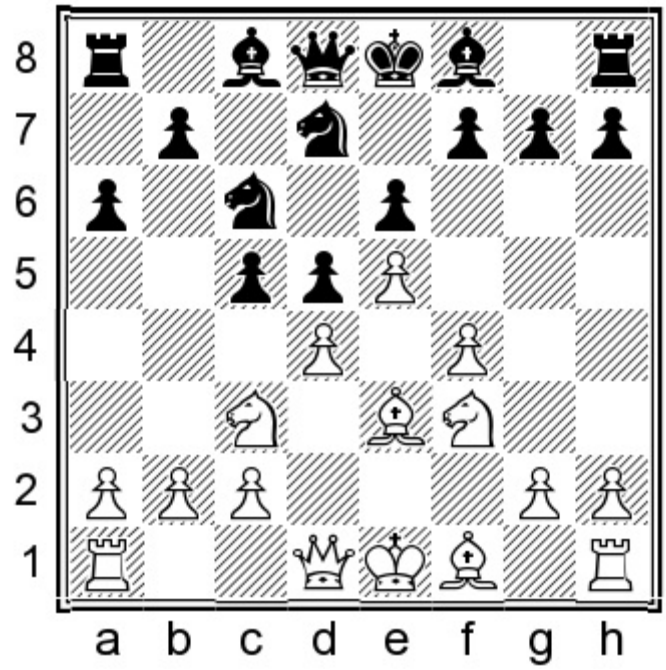
Evgeny Alekseev – Marcin Sieciechowicz

Katowice (rapid) 2017

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5

Perhaps the most popular variation of the French Defence these days. Bobby Fischer's favourite move 4.♗g5 is now employed much more rarely in the tournaments of high-ranking players. With 4.e5 White is striving to erect and fortify a powerful pawn centre and to commence aggressive operations under its cover.

4...♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 a6



A logical and good choice. Black makes advance preparation for working up counterplay on the queenside. The b-pawn is ready for a rapid forward march, which will not only drive away the enemy knight but also create extra possibilities for the light-squared bishop, enabling it to settle on a6 in comfort and neutralize its white counterpart. As the game goes, however, the play takes on a wholly different character.

8.♘e2

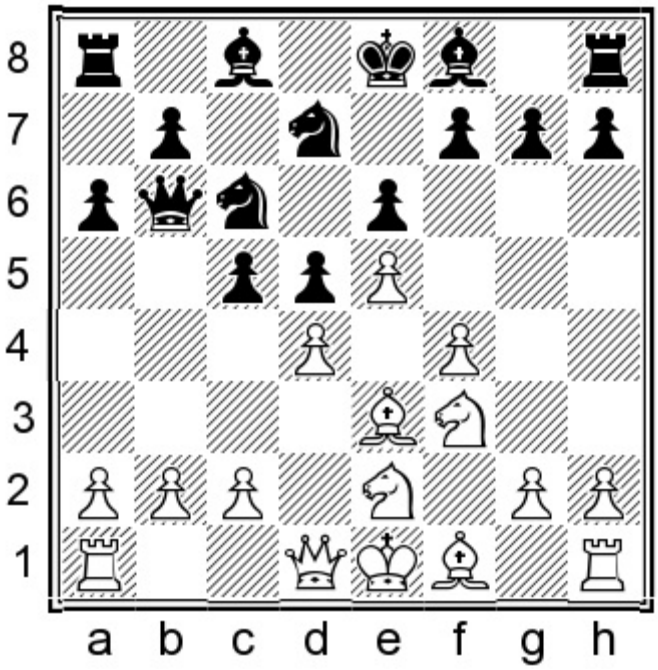
A rare move which is nonetheless appearing more and more regularly in top-level tournaments. The proud knight doesn't intend to wait until forced to move away; it starts relocating to the kingside of its own accord. Most players play 8.♕d2!? more or less automatically, but Evgeny Alekseev has his own views on the theory of this variation.

8...♕b6!?

Flexibility in the implementation of a plan is absolutely necessary to achieve success in present-day chess.

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If Black persists with his original idea of 8...b5 9.c3 b4, then after 10.cxb4! cxd4 11.♘exd4 ♗xb4† 12.♔f2 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 White undoubtedly holds a slight initiative; he is more active on both flanks, while his king on f2 feels perfectly safe.



9.♖b1

The most solid.

Another move to have been seen, quite frequently in fact, is 9.♕c1!?. It then seems that White can be fully satisfied with the results of the opening after 9...g5!? 10.fxg5 cxd4 11.♘exd4 ♘cxe5 12.♘xe5 ♘xe5 13.c3 ♘g4 14.♗e2 ♘xe3 15.♕xe3 ♗g7± as in Vachier-Lagrave – Blohberger, Gibraltar 2018; Black's bishop pair can't entirely compensate for the weakness of his f7-pawn and the insecure position of his monarch.

Also after 9...f6 10.c3 ♗e7, White would be guaranteed a pleasant game by 11.g3.

9...♕a5†

Sieciechowicz is rightly afraid of coming under persistent pressure after 9...cxd4 10.♘exd4! ♘xd4 11.♗xd4±, when the pawn on a2 is poisoned: 11...♕a5† 12.c3 ♕xa2? 13.b4! And the queen can only be saved at the cost of sacrifices. He does decide to eliminate this same pawn, but without a preliminary exchange on d4. A bold but wholly plausible decision!

10.♗d2 ♕xa2!?

A new and interesting move. Black hopes his queen will manage to escape a premature demise in the enemy's rear and will return home bearing trophies.

Earlier, 10...♕c7 11.c3 b5 had been seen. Then in my view 12.g3!? again deserves attention, with chances of a small plus thanks to that almost-hallowed pawn centre.

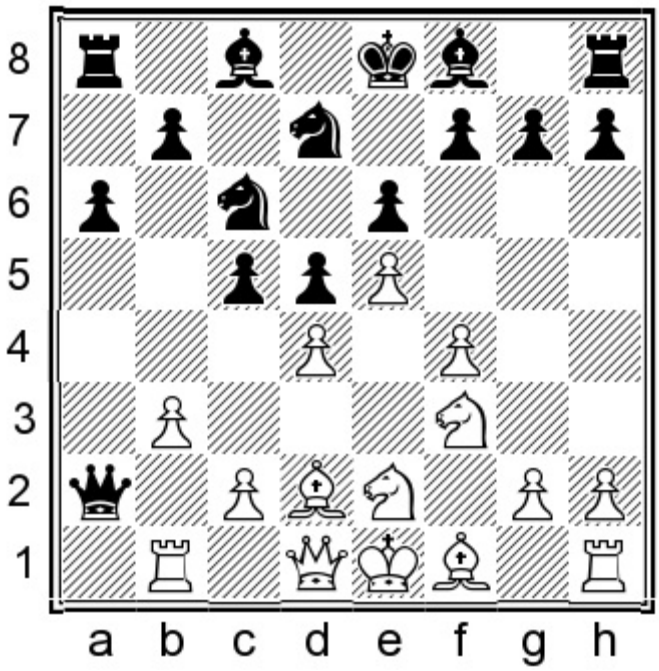
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Alexei Shirov, true to his usual style, sacrificed a pawn instead with 12.f5!?. After 12...exf5 13.♘f4 ♘b6 14.♗d3 c4 15.♗c2 he did acquire some compensation for it, but he lost in the end in Shirov – Andreikin, Plovdiv 2010.

11.b3

Beginning the queen hunt.

The calm continuation 11.dxc5!? ♘xc5 12.♘c3 ♕a5 13.♘xd5 ♕d8 would leave White with a pleasant game but no great chance of a serious advantage. The move he plays is much more ambitious.



11...♘b4?

White's plan has worked splendidly! Clearly the Polish player has not fully grasped the level of danger menacing his lady.

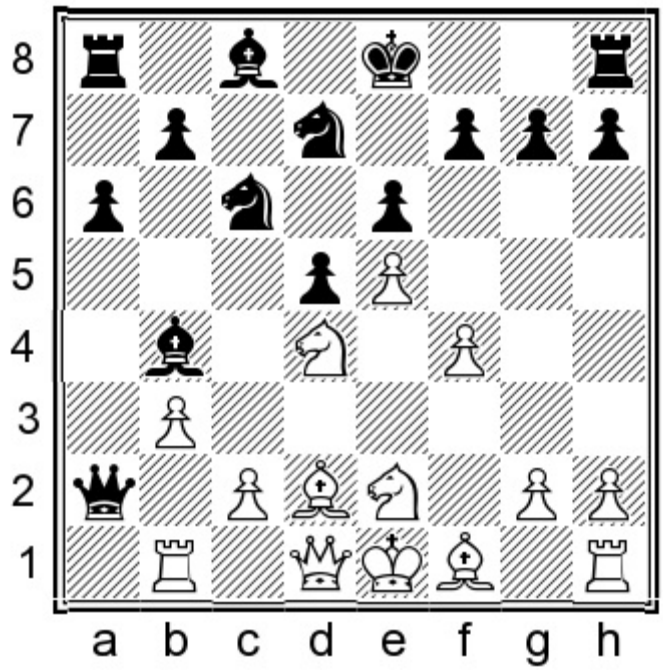
To help her, a proper rescue expedition was already required:

11...cxd4!? 12.♘fxd4

Or 12.♘exd4 ♕a3 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.b4 a5∞.

12...♗b4

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13.c3

In the event of 13.♗xb4 ♘xb4 14.♖a1 ♕b2 15.g3 it is essential for Black to exert pressure against d4; he can do this by 15...♘c6 with the possible continuation 16.♘xc6 bxc6 17.♗g2 a5 18.0-0 ♘c5, or he can even think about the rather more refined 15...♘b8!? 16.♗g2 ♘8c6 – in either case I can see no immediate problems for the black queen.

13...♗e7 14.b4!?

Or 14.♖a1 ♘c5!? 15.♘g3 ♕b2 and White can always repeat moves; his prospects of obtaining something more are uncertain.

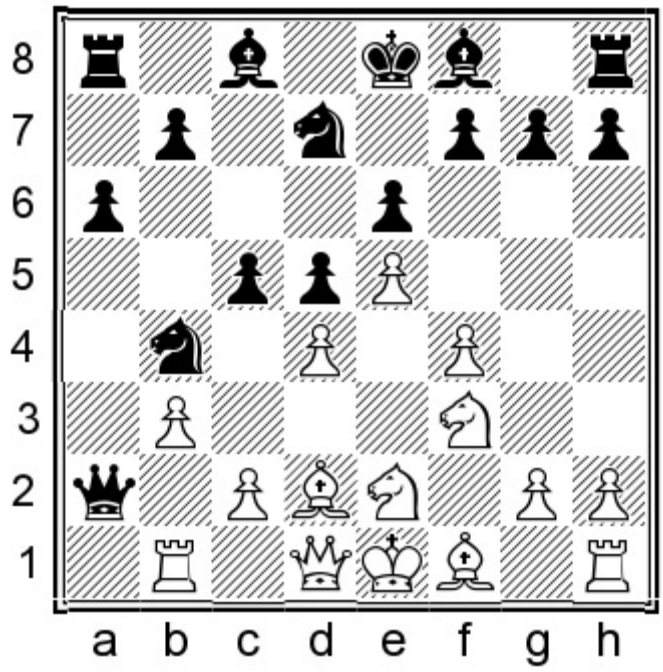
14...♘dxe5!?

A move like this can hardly even be called a sacrifice – Black obtains a fully adequate material equivalent for the piece.

15.fxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘g3 ♘c4 17.♗xc4 ♕xc4

With fairly unclear play. In the middlegame a piece often proves stronger than three pawns, but at any rate a complex and interesting game would lie ahead.

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12.♗xb4!

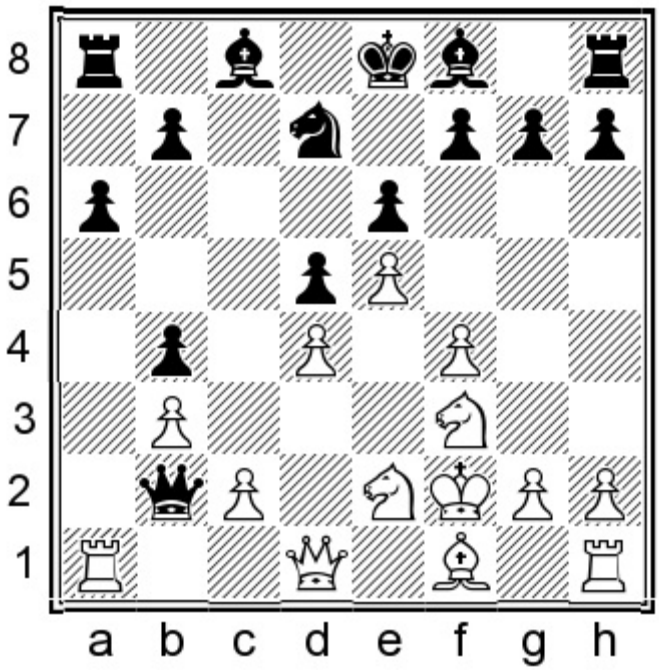
In the event of 12.♖c1 the queen can make a dignified return to its own camp with 12...♕a5 or go in for a little hooliganism with 12...♕xb3!?. I'm not wholly sure which of these moves is objectively stronger, given that the latter simply compels White to burn his boats: 13.f5! exf5 14.♘f4 And the queen's safety is still not guaranteed.

12...cxb4 13.♖a1 ♕b2 14.♔f2!

An excellent move, which Black must have left out of his calculations. The white knight aims to use the vacated e1-square to come and attack the queen, whose fate now arouses increasingly justified anxiety.

Incidentally there was also quite a good alternative at White's disposal: 14.♔d2!? And after the practically forced sequence 14...♘b6 15.♘e1 ♘c4† 16.bxc4 dxc4 17.♔e3± Black is not to be envied; his queen is in danger as before, while his material situation also leaves something to be desired.

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14...f6

Marcin's nerves of steel can only be admired!

I myself probably couldn't have resisted an impatient move like 14...♘c5!?. Then after 15.dxc5 ♗xc5† 16.♔g3, or 16.♘ed4!?, White indubitably has a big (even decisive) advantage and will go on to win. Playing in a rapid chess tournament, Black may simply not have had the time to experience genuine fear. And in such grave situations, fear very rarely plays a salutary role.

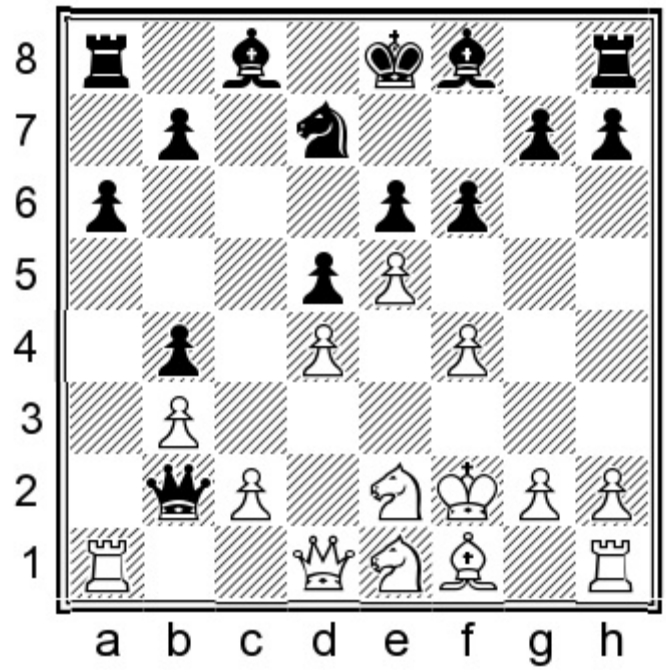
15.♘e1?!

White's first questionable move. I believe that if Evgeny Alekseev had been facing a more prestigious opponent, he would have been more worried about the safety of his own king.

After the prophylactic move 15.g3!, securing the white monarch a natural haven on g2, the result of the game would have been in little doubt. For example after: 15...fxe5 16.fxe5 ♘c5 (or 16...♗e7 17.♗h3 0-0 18.♔g2) 17.dxc5 ♗xc5† 18.♔g2+– White simply keeps an extra piece, for which there is not the slightest compensation. His knight will soon head for f4 and his bishop for d3, with an elementary win.

The move in the game doesn't at all forfeit the advantage, but it gives Black some extra chances which he does not fail to utilize!

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15...♗c5?!

The threat of ♘d3 is already impossible to avert by "normal" methods, and the forced sacrifice of a piece was entirely predictable.

However, it was probably worth going to c5 with the *other* piece. After 15...♘c5!?, play could continue (say) with: 16.♔f3!?

Or 16.♔g1!? ♗d7.

16...fxe5 17.fxe5 ♗d7

White could then employ an idea familiar to us: 18.g3! With the possible follow-up: 18...♗b5 19.dxc5 ♕xe5 20.♔g2±

Or he could play 18.♖b1!? ♕a3 19.dxc5 ♕a5 20.♘d3.

Either line guarantees him a clear and lasting advantage, but I would be wary of calling his position won; and that is already quite an achievement on Black's part.

16.♔g3

An excellent move – the king often strolls to g3 in similar French variations.

Nevertheless, from a practical point of view, it was worth calling off the hunt for the enemy queen and being content with "merely" a won position for White after: 16.dxc5! ♘xc5 17.♕d4!? ♕xd4† 18.♘xd4+– With an extra piece in the ending, victory would be easy. I suspect Alekseev simply got carried away and was only interested in winning the game with a knockout!

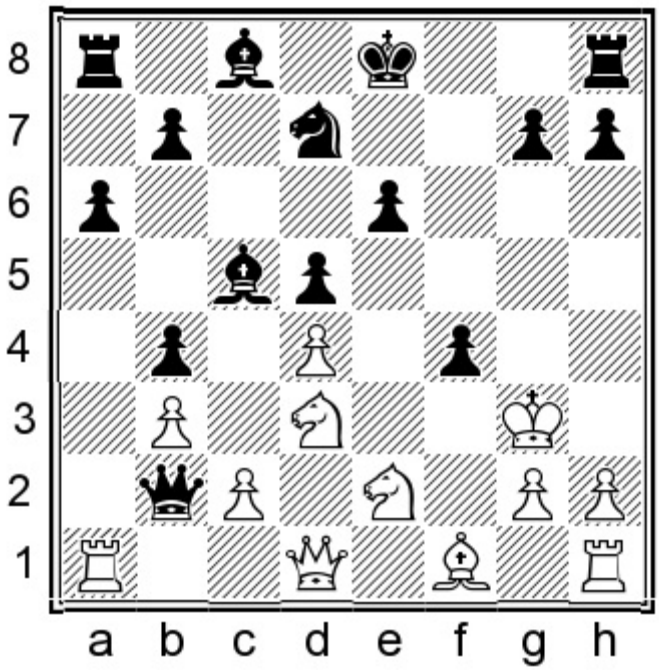
16...fxe5 17.♘d3

Tying the final knot in the rope around the black queen's neck. White didn't send his king on its travels just to settle for: 17.fxe5! ♘xe5 (I don't like so much 17...♗xd4 18.♕xd4 ♕xd4 19.♘xd4 ♘xe5)

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18.dxc5 He would have an obvious plus, but he would still have to struggle for victory against a desperately resisting opponent.

17...exf4†



18.♔f3

The choice facing White was a wide one, and far from simple. He had two different ways of destroying the pawn, or he could try to hide his king in a safe place. But where *is* there a safe place in these tempestuous times? Let's take a calm look at all the reasonable continuations.

a) The worst choice appears to be 18.♘exf4??. After 18...♕xd4 19.♘xc5 ♕xc5 White simply finds himself three pawns down.

b) The other capture also looks unconvincing: 18.♔xf4 0-0† And now after the relatively cautious 19.♔e3 ♗xd4† 20.♘xd4 ♕c3 Black's chances are obviously superior but the game still continues; whereas after the optimistic 19.♔g3? ♗d6† White can encounter awkward consequences such as 20.♔h3 e5! 21.♘xb2 ♘f6† 22.g4 ♘xg4!. In this position both players have achieved their aims: White has won the queen (for three pawns!) while Black has created threats that are difficult to parry!

c) If White plays the rash 18.♔h4?? then 18...g5† immediately draws his king into a mating net. After 19.♔xg5 ♖g8† 20.♔xf4 e5†! 21.dxe5 ♖f8† Black just needs to exercise a certain amount of care, for example: 22.♔g5 (or 22.♔g3 ♗f2† 23.♘xf2 ♕xe5†−+) 22...♘xe5! 23.♘xb2 ♖f5† 24.♔h4 ♘g6† 25.♔g3 ♗f2† 26.♔g4 ♘e5† 27.♔h3 ♖h5#! The amazing energy and co-ordination of Black's pieces makes a striking impression.

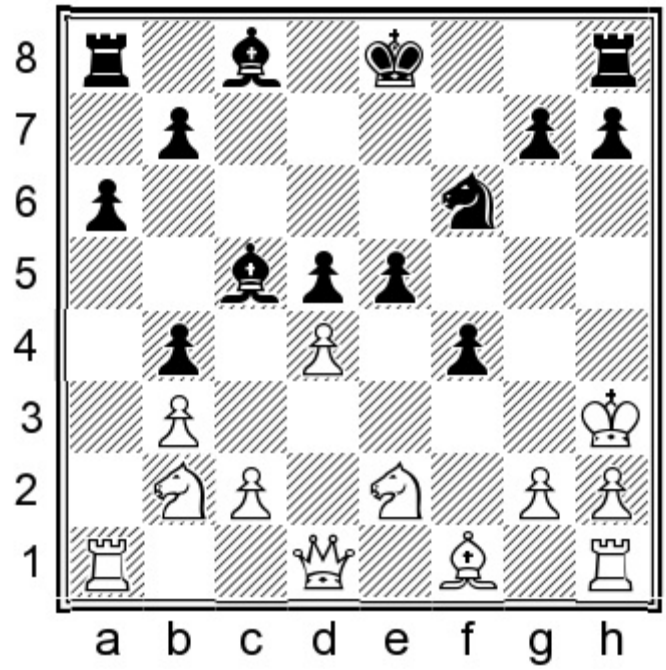
d) 18.♔h3

Together with the move in the actual game, this is the most interesting reply. Black cannot save

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his queen of course, but you get the impression that he has long since washed his hands of that piece, and learnt to create mating threats even without its help:

18...e5! 19.♘xb2 ♘f6†



The bishop on c8 suddenly coming to life is extremely unpleasant for White:

20.g4

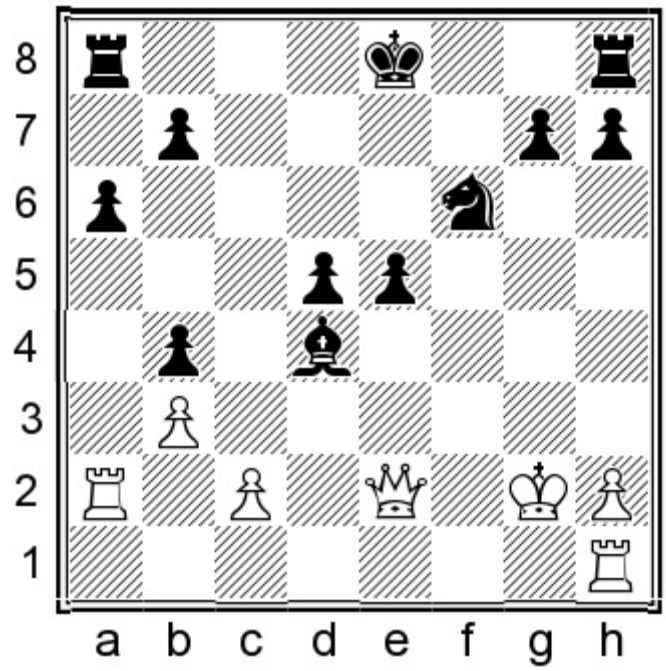
The only decent reply, as the king move 20.♔h4? would lead to an immediate fiasco after: 20...g5† 21.♔xg5 ♖g8† 22.♔xf6 In fairness we should add that Black would now need to find the sole continuation, though this does win at once: 22...♗d6!–+ With a view to: 23.♘xf4 ♗e7† 24.♔xe5 ♖g5# A high-class mate in the middle of the board.

20...♗xg4† 21.♔g2 f3† 22.♔g1

The variation 22.♔g3 fxe2 23.♗xe2 ♘e4† 24.♔g2 is noteworthy; at the end of it, Black has the saving idea 24...♗h3†! 25.♔xh3 ♘f2† 26.♔g2 ♘xd1 27.♖axd1 ♗xd4 28.♘d3 with approximate equality in a complex ending.

22...fxe2 23.♗xe2 ♗xe2 24.♕xe2 ♗xd4† 25.♔g2 ♗xb2 26.♖a2 ♗d4

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At this point, to avoid ending up in the worse position in spite of his extra queen, White should exercise his own right to play tactically:

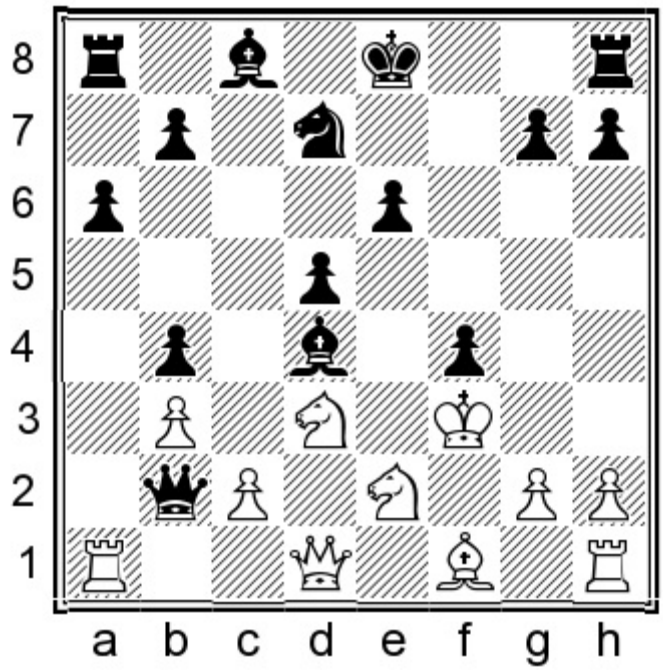
27.♕b5†! axb5 28.♖xa8† ♔d7 29.♖xh8 e4±/=

With a smooth transition from the strange middlegame to an equally strange ending. Given this interesting material balance – four pawns for two exchanges – I cannot evaluate the mutual chances precisely, but at least White shouldn't now be all that worried about the prospect of losing.

18...♗xd4!

A splendid move! Making no attempt to sell his queen's life a little more dearly, Black fixes his attention more and more firmly on the enemy king. Literally in the course of a mere few moves, the situation on the board has been thoroughly revalued; the player who seemed the likely victim is now endeavouring to act the role of persecutor – and not without success. Alekseev doesn't want to acknowledge these changes, and commits a serious error.

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19.♘xb2?!

White's wholly excusable cupidity is the chief cause of his future defeat.

It still wasn't too late to stop and play 19.♖b1!, trying to split the queen from the bishop. There could follow 19...♕xb1 20.♕xb1 ♗b6, giving a situation where in spite of his huge material plus (queen for rook) White will still have to solve the problem of his frozen kingside, the advanced position of his king, and the activity of the black pieces. For example: 21.♕e1 0-0 22.♘exf4 With a view to: 22...e5 23.♘xe5 ♖e8 24.♘xd7 ♖xe1 25.♘xb6 ♖b8∞ This leads to an unclear ending.

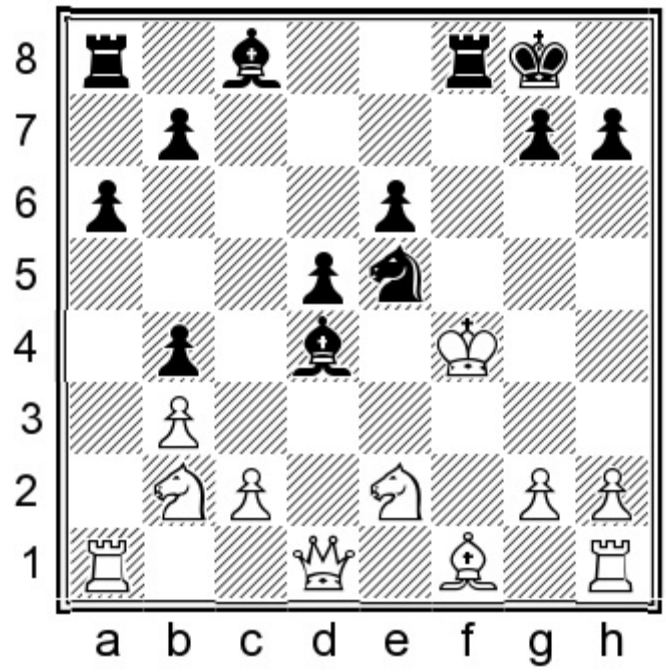
19...♘e5†!

A most unpleasant check which White may have underestimated, expecting the automatic capture of the knight.

After 19...♗xb2? 20.♖b1 ♗e5 21.g3 his king acquires the right to a safe shelter.

20.♔xf4 0-0†

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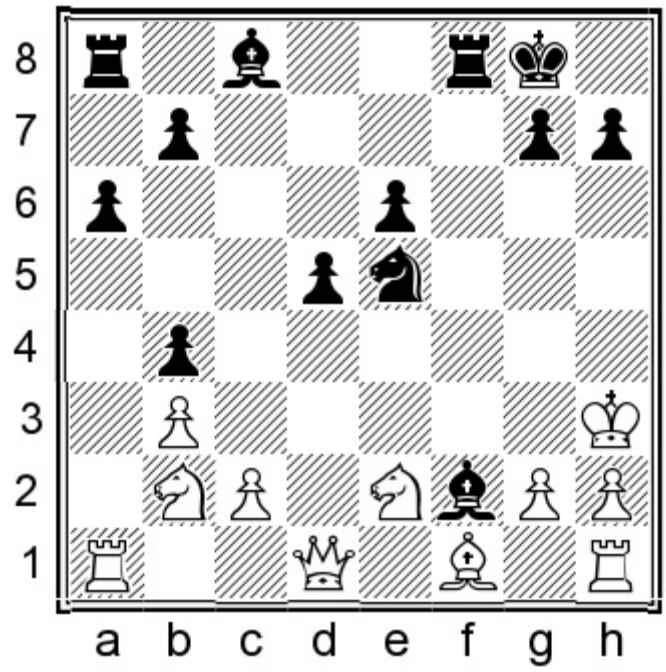
21.♔g3

An attempt to throw the king forward with 21.♔g5? would end in utter disaster. There is a forced mate after: 21...h6† 22.♔h4 ♘g6† 23.♔h5 (the sole privilege left to the white king is that of deciding which black piece will be allowed to administer the *coup de grâce;* in the event of 23.♔h3 it will be a pawn: 23...e5† 24.g4 ♖f3† 25.♘g3 ♘f4† 26.♔h4 g5#) 23...♖f5† 24.♔g4 ♖g5† 25.♔h3 e5† 26.g4 ♗xg4† 27.♔g2 ♗c8† 28.♘g3 ♘h4# When the king can only be congratulated on the end of its torments.

21...♗f2† 22.♔h3

Wow! White is a queen up for nothing except a few pawns. Surely the fate of the game is settled, notwithstanding all Black's exertions and ingenuity? Fortunately for Black, he succeeds in finding an absolutely brilliant move. Can you do the same?

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22...♘g4!!

A fantastic idea! Throwing his last resources into the fray, Sieciechowicz gives a demonstration of that very ascendancy of mind over matter in which we all yearn to believe! Black threatens to bring his bishop into play with ...e6-e5, and his knight will be constantly threatening a fork on f2. I should think the Russian grandmaster was reluctant to believe his eyes!

A weaker move – *much* weaker! – was 22...♖f6?, against which White wins with either the banal 23.♕d2!? (to meet 23...♖h6† with 24.♕xh6 gxh6 25.g3) or 23.♘f4! ♖xf4 24.g3+– bringing Black's initiative to a dead end.

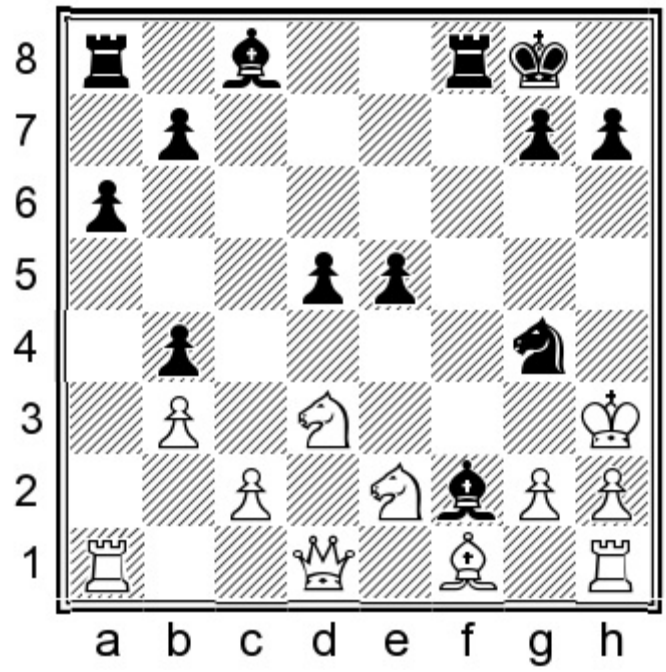
23.♘d3

After 23.♔xg4? e5† 24.♔h5 ♖f5† 25.♔g4 h5† 26.♔h3 ♖f3# Black's rook and bishop can engage in quite a difficult dispute as to which one of them has actually checkmated the unfortunate white monarch.

The play is more interesting after 23.♘f4!? ♖xf4 24.♕xg4 ♖xg4 25.♔xg4 e5† 26.♔f3 ♗d4, when several pieces have disappeared from the board and White's material advantage is still large – yet *he* is the one who needs to think about equalizing. For example: 27.♖d1!? (or 27.♖b1 ♗f5! 28.♘d3 e4† 29.♔f4 ♖f8∓ and the combined force of rook and two mighty bishops spells extreme danger to the white king) 27...♗xb2 28.♖xd5 ♔f7 With advantage to Black, though White is not at all without chances of a successful defence.

23...e5

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24.♘xf2!?

I think this is the most practical decision.

It's possible that White would not lose – not instantly, at any rate – after 24.♘ef4, but in that case he would have to confront a new wave of the attack. Black would have more than one perfectly good choice.

In the first place he could well consider 24...♖f6!?. After the strictly forced 25.♘h5 ♖h6 26.♘xf2 ♘xf2† 27.♔h4 g5†!? 28.♔g3 ♘xd1 29.♖xd1 ♗e6 30.♗e2 ♗f7↑ the ending is obviously better for Black.

Another line is slightly crazy (just like the whole of this game, of course) – 24...♘e3†!? 25.g4 ♖xf4!? 26.♘xf4 exf4 – but this too looks quite good. Again the white king is in trouble. In the event of 27.♗g2!? ♗e6, threatening ...h7-h5, White could still hope for a favourable outcome. On the other hand the slightest mistake could be severely punished; thus the natural 27.♕e2? (for instance) loses at once: 27...g5! 28.♗g2 h5 29.♗xd5† ♔g7–+ With deadly threats.

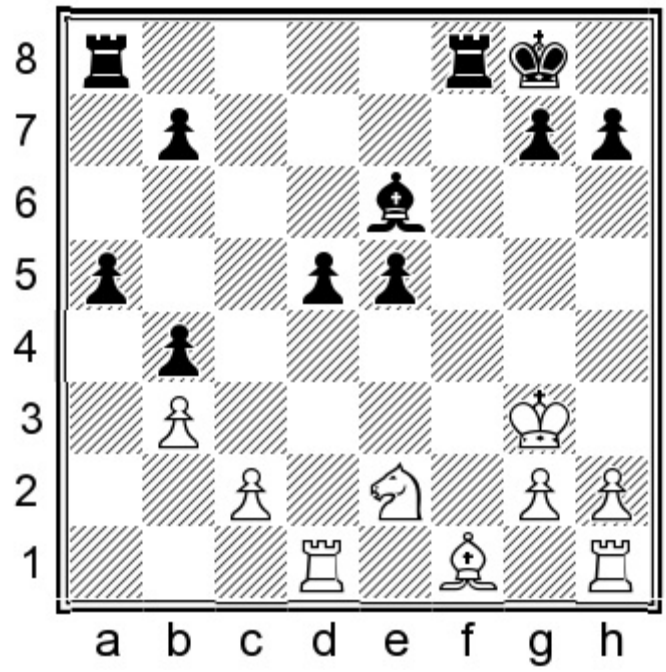
24...♘xf2† 25.♔h4 ♘xd1 26.♖xd1 ♗e6∓

The tension in the game has palpably slackened. The queens have disappeared from the board, and the time has now come to take stock: White's immense material plus has somehow unobtrusively evaporated, and Black can look to the future with full confidence in the ending that has come about. And by the way, we must not forget that White still has some pieces that he hasn't managed to bring into the battle.

27.♔g3 a5

I would have preferred 27...♖ac8!? 28.♖d2 ♔f7↑ with the idea of repositioning His Majesty on d6, securely protecting the centre pawns and only afterwards seeking the possibility of queenside activity.

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28.h3

It was worth considering 28.♘g1!? ♖ac8 29.♘f3 with reasonable chances of defence after 29...♖xc2 30.♘xe5 ♖c3† 31.♘f3 ♖xb3 32.♗b5. But I don't think Evgeny Alekseev was very keen on exposing his king to additional risk in the case of: 29...e4 30.♘d4 ♖c3† 31.♔h4 ♖f4† 32.♔g5 ♖g4† 33.♔h5∓ Especially since – as we must not forget – the game was played with a fast time control, and time was clearly short for both players.

28...a4?

Continuing his faulty strategy. White's pieces lack strong points in the centre, but this move merely helps him to create some.

A better choice was the simple 28...♖ac8 29.♖d2 h6∓ with an obvious plus.

29.♘c1!?

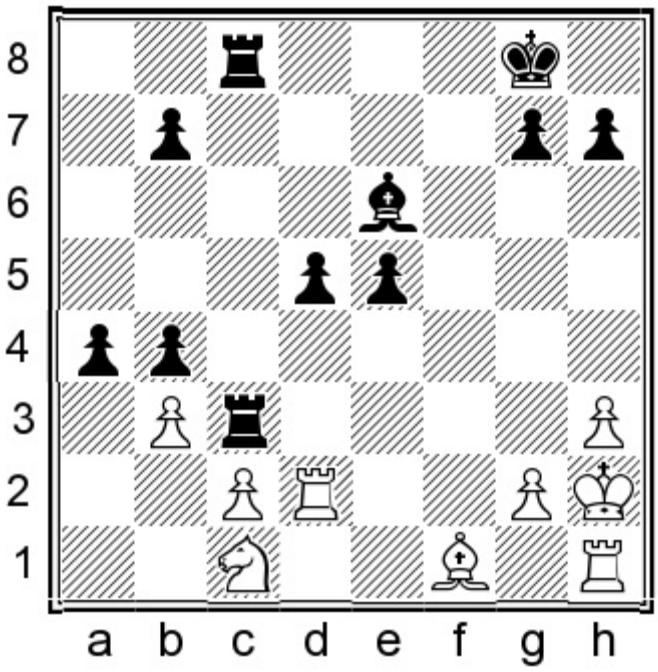
Or 29.bxa4!? ♖xa4 30.♘c1.

29...♖fc8 30.♖d2?

Missing an excellent chance to turn the game right around! After 30.bxa4! ♖xc2 31.♘d3 b3 32.♘xe5 the initiative would suddenly pass to White.

30...♖c3† 31.♔h2 ♖ac8!

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32.♗b5?

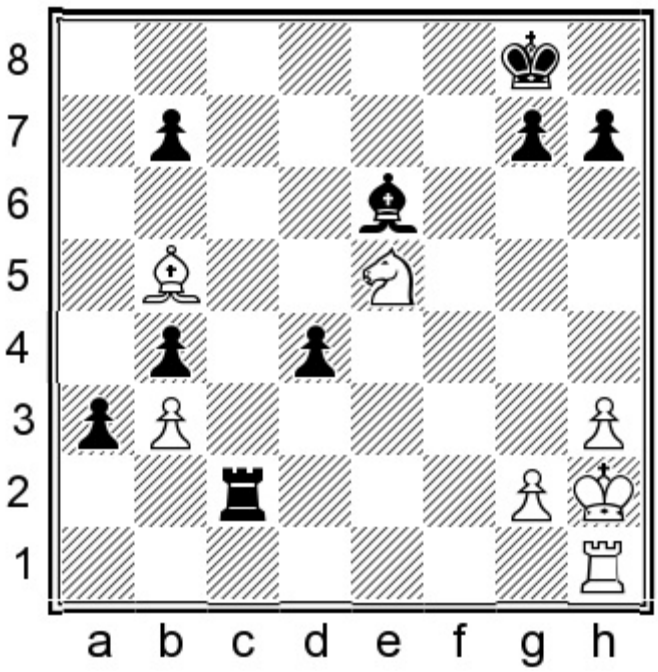
The decisive mistake in a position that was already far from easy.

With the cool-headed 32.bxa4!? ♖xc2 33.♖xc2 ♖xc2 34.♗b5∓ White would retain some defensive chances, although of course his opponent's pawns look menacing.

32...a3–+ 33.♘d3 ♖xc2 34.♖xc2 ♖xc2 35.♘xe5

Or 35.♘xb4 ♖b2 and both White's minor pieces are under threat, while how he is to stop the passed a-pawn is a complete mystery.

35...d4!?



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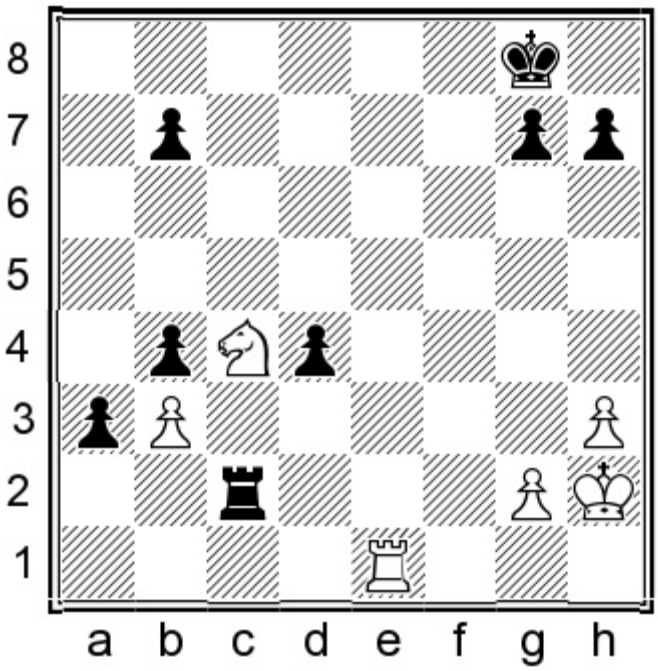
36.♖e1

Perhaps 36.♘d3 would have been a little more tenacious, but the result of the game was no longer to be altered. With the aid of an uncomplicated combination – 36...♗d5 37.♖g1 ♖xg2†! 38.♖xg2 ♗xg2 – White's resistance would be broken. For example: 39.♗c4† (39.♘xb4 ♗d5) 39...♔f8 40.♘xb4 ♗e4 And the bishop arrives at b1 with an easily won endgame.

36...♗d5 37.♗c4

Nothing would be changed by: 37.♔g3 ♖xg2† 38.♔f4 ♖f2† 39.♔g3 ♖b2–+

37...♗xc4 38.♘xc4



38...♖xc4! 39.bxc4

A number of black pawns are aspiring to be queened and there is no possibility of stopping them, so Evgeny Alekseev acknowledged defeat.

0–1

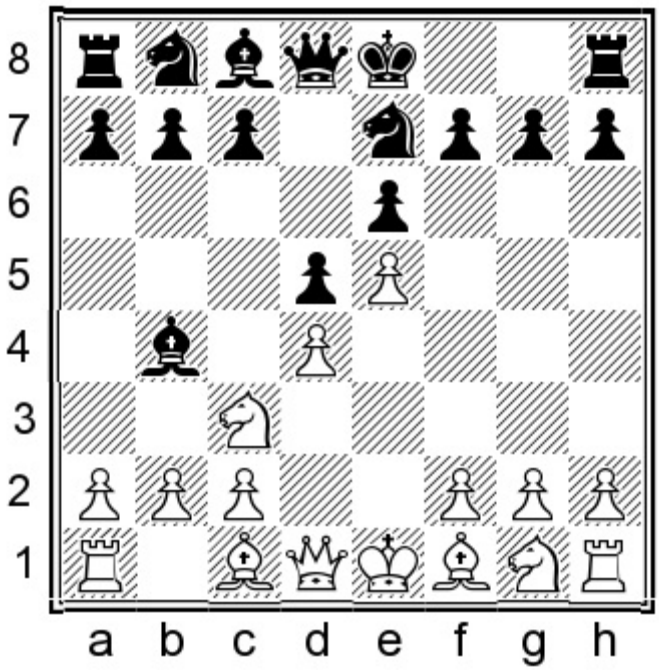
A game not free from errors (putting it mildly!) but nonetheless a fantastically interesting one. Black played the opening in risky style, underrated his opponent's possibilities, and found himself in what seemed to be an utterly hopeless situation. I am simply filled with wonder and admiration by the energy and inventiveness that Marcin Sieciechowicz displayed. Again and again, struggling with a wish to stop the clock, he found the only available resources allowing him to continue the fight, and won through to success.

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Viktor Kupreichik – Ivan Farago

Polanica Zdroj 1981

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 ♘e7



5.♗d2!?

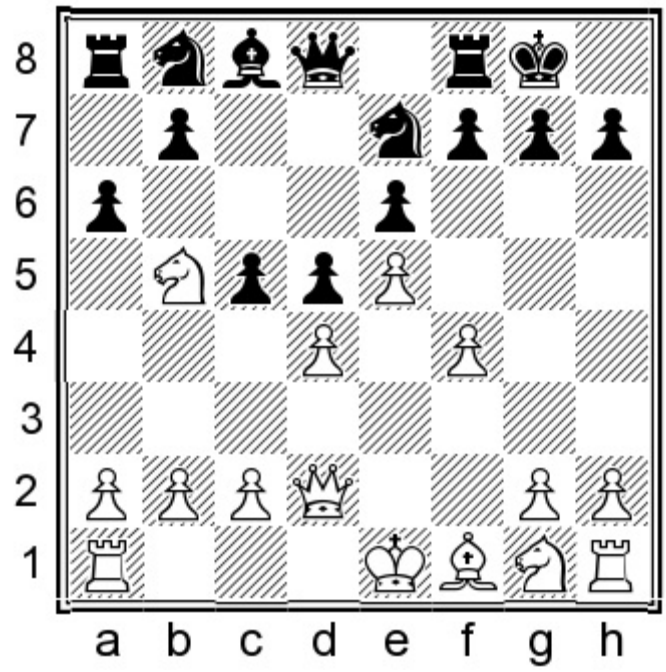
One of the most popular attempts to avoid the main lines, which have been investigated in detail, based on 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 c5.

5...c5 6.♘b5 ♗xd2† 7.♕xd2 0-0 8.f4

An excellent choice! White rejects 8.c3 ♘bc6 9.♘f3 a6 10.♘d6 cxd4 11.cxd4 f6.

8...a6!

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9.♘c3?!

Viktor Kupreichik is surprisingly untrue to his own style of play – forwards, only forwards! – and quite quickly runs into serious difficulties.

However, I don't think White can lay claim to any real advantage even after 9.♘d6!? cxd4 10.♘f3 ♘bc6 11.♗d3 f6∞ as in Maslak – Agdestein, Dos Hermanas 2004. His pawn centre is subject to severe pressure, but to some extent the stationing of his knight on d6 enables him to put up with it.

9...cxd4 10.♘ce2

Viktor quite rightly reckons that a knight on d4 will be a good deal more effective than the queen on that square, but by this time White's backward development is becoming a danger to him.

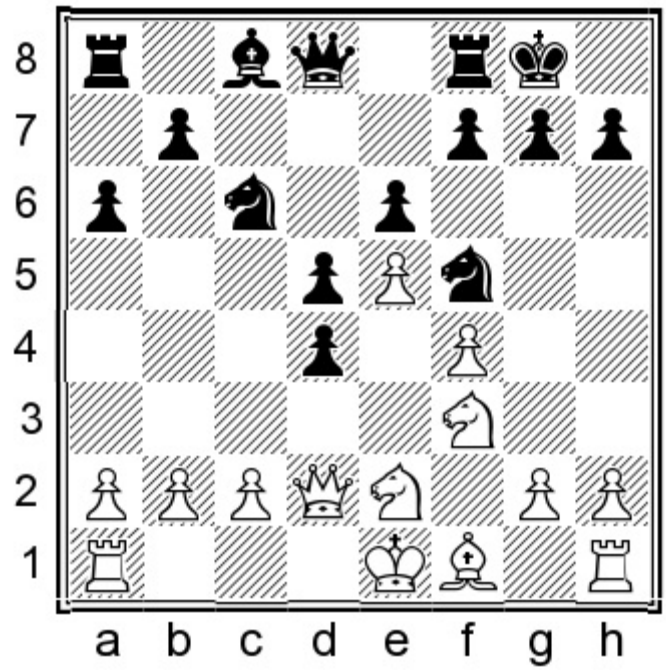
Black also feels completely comfortable after the unassuming: 10.♕xd4!? ♘f5!? 11.♕d2 d4 12.♘e4 f6! But White isn't then threatened with any immediate danger.

Quite a good alternative for Black was seen in Mammadov – Goganov, Kirishi 2011: 10...♘bc6 11.♕d2 ♘f5 12.♗d3 d4 13.♘e4 ♕b6 14.0-0-0 ♘b4 15.♔b1 ½–½

10...♘bc6 11.♘f3 ♘f5

At this point the Hungarian grandmaster doesn't fancy the approximate equality that can result from 11...♕b6 12.0-0-0 ♗d7 13.♘exd4 ♖fc8 14.♔b1 ♘xd4, as in Urosević – Z. Nikolic, Vrnja"ka Banja 2007. He carries on the fight for the initiative, taking into account his opponent's irrepressible and optimistic character.

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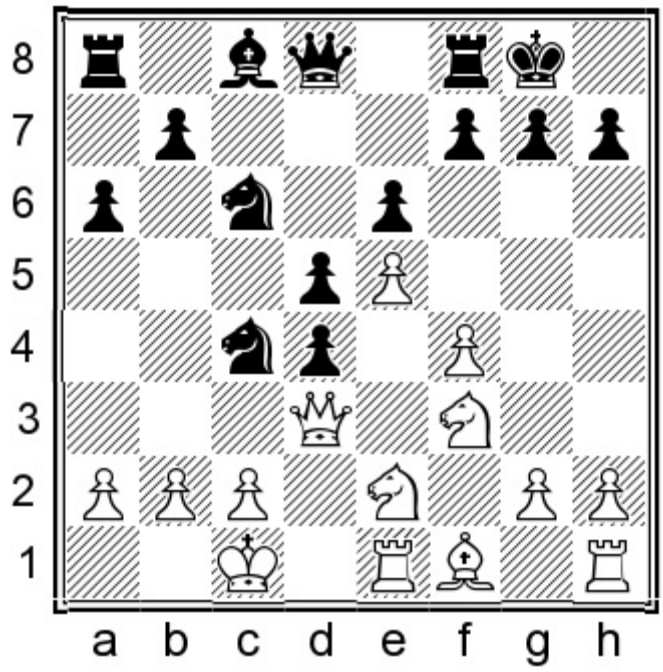
12.0-0-0?!

And Farago proves to be perfectly right! Kupreichik isn't keen on the modest (*very* modest!) 12.♘exd4 ♘fxd4 13.♘xd4 f6³. In that case White's king is stuck in the centre, and his pawn on e5 requires watchful and diligent defence – not a very impressive result from his opening. All the same, this was undoubtedly White's best continuation. After the incredibly optimistic move in the game, he has to devote all his strength not to defending a pawn but to preserving the life of his monarch!

Incidentally, after 12.♘exd4 I don't think White should be afraid of the ending arising from: 12...♘cxd4 13.♘xd4 ♕h4† 14.g3! (14.♔d1 ♘g3! 15.♘f3 ♕h6∓) 14...♘xg3 15.♕f2 ♘f5 16.♘xf5 ♕xf2† 17.♔xf2 exf5 18.♗g2 ♗e6∞ As in Zivković – Raicević, Valjevo 1984. He then has fully adequate compensation for the pawn.

12...♘e3 13.♖e1 ♘c4 14.♕d3

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14...♕a5

Black has succeeded not only in keeping his extra pawn but in starting a direct attack on his opponent's king.

Then again, White would have some very difficult problems to solve after:

14...♕b6!? 15.♕b3

The b-pawn has to be defended, and the consequences of 15.b3 ♕c5!? 16.bxc4 dxc4 17.♕e4 ♖d8–+ would not be hard to predict; Black would combine a multitude of checks with the advance of his queenside pawns, and his attack would develop easily and naturally.

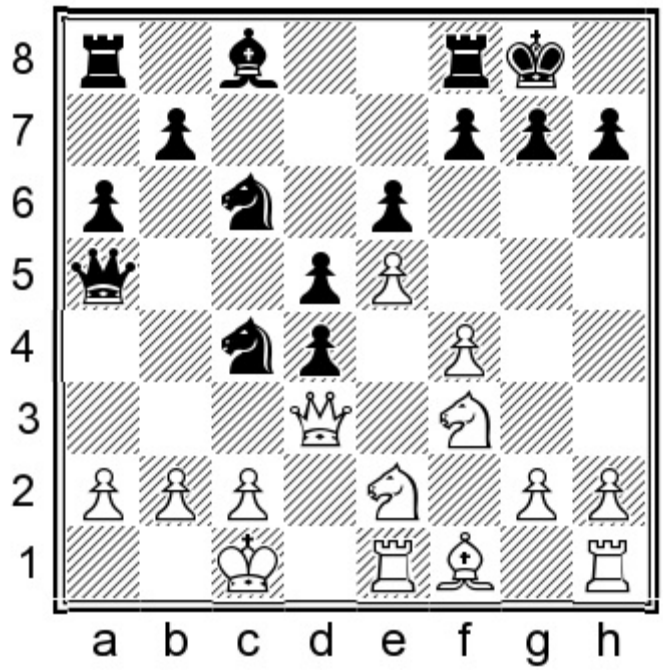
15...♕a5 16.♖d1 d3! 17.cxd3

Or 17.♖xd3 ♘b4.

17...♘e3 18.♖d2 d4! 19.♕a3 ♕d5↑

The black knight's position on e3 is extremely comfortable and might give rise to some awkward recollections on White's part: just a short while ago, his own knight *renounced* what is practically the mirror-image square – d6.

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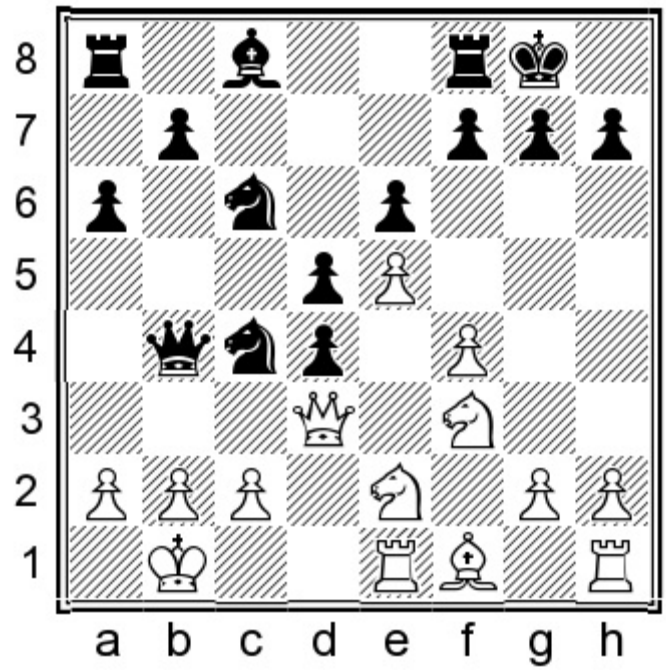
15.♔b1?

His almost total lack of pragmatism and his inability (and unwillingness!) to restrain himself in good time have led the illustrious Belarusian grandmaster to numerous defeats as well as outstanding achievements!

White could still very well have counted on a successful defence after 15.a3! f6↑ with the possible continuation: 16.♘exd4 (greed is punishable: 16.exf6? e5! 17.fxg7 ♔xg7–+ and the deadly 18...♗f5 is not to be stopped) 16...fxe5 17.♘b3 ♕c7 18.fxe5 Then 18...♖f5!? or the crafty 18...♘6xe5 19.♘xe5 ♘xe5 20.♕g3 ♖f4!∓ would win a pawn for Black and give him an undoubted advantage, but the destiny of the game would still be unclear.

15...♕b4!

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16.b3

This is just how White has to continue!

In the event of 16.♕b3, a simple but pleasing little combination would conclude the game in Black's favour: 16...♕xe1†! 17.♘xe1 ♘d2†−+

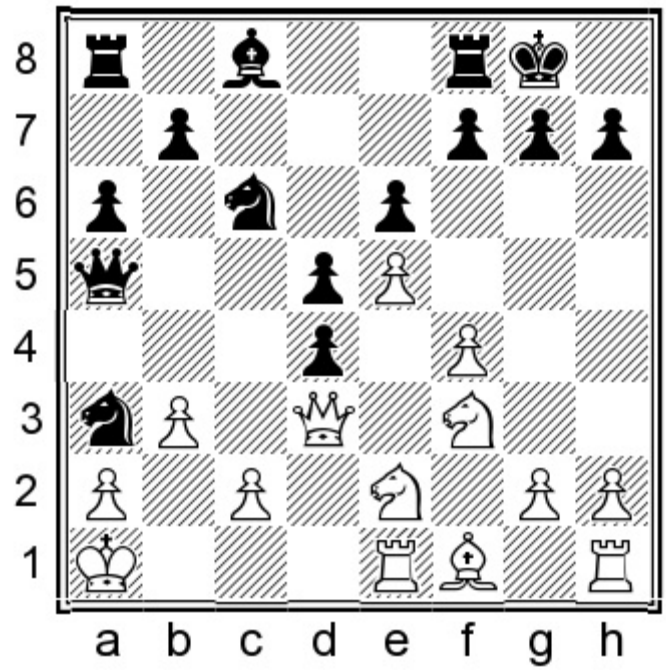
16...♘a3† 17.♔a1

White has to make a choice between something bad and something appalling!

It would be difficult to recommend the alternative 17.♔b2 ♘b5!, after which the queen cannot be stopped from penetrating to a3 with dire consequences for White. For example: 18.♖a1 (or 18.♔c1 ♕a3† 19.♔d1 ♕b2–+) 18...♕a3† 19.♔b1 ♘b4 20.♕d2 And now Black has the attractive move 20...d3!, opening the c-file and practically ending the game after the logical continuation: 21.cxd3 ♗d7 22.♘ed4 ♖fc8 23.♘xb5 ♗xb5 24.♗e2 ♖c2–+

17...♕a5!

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The black queen is incredibly mobile. The b4-square is freed for the knight, and it looks as if the end of the game is nigh!

18.c3

In the case of 18.♖c1 ♘b4 19.♕d1 (and not 19.♕d2 ♘c4!) Black conducts the attack on lines already familiar to us: 19...d3! 20.cxd3 ♗d7 21.d4 ♖fc8 Then after 22.♘c3 Black has two fine options:

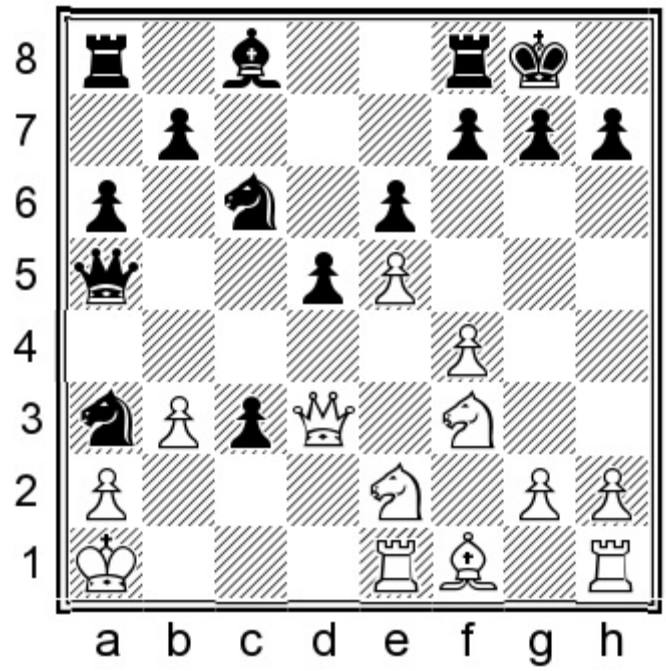
One way to win is simply by doubling rooks on the c-file: 22...♖c7 23.♕d2 ♖ac8 And Black's overwhelming advantage in mobilization leads to the rapid denouement: 24.♗e2 ♖xc3 25.♖xc3 ♘ac2†−+

An even more forcing line is: 22...♘b5! 23.♗xb5 ♖xc3 24.♕d2 ♖xc1† 25.♖xc1 axb5−+ White has managed to fend off the immediate mating threats, but to do so he has had to pay too great a price in material.

18...dxc3

The results of the opening have proved downright depressing for White. In a tough struggle he has not only lost two pawns (and *what* pawns!) but come under a very strong attack that nearly led to mate. What should he do now? The answer is very simple: either stop the clock and congratulate his opponent on gaining such an easy victory, or else start an attack that is less than sound, lacks any preparation, and has minimal chances of success.

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Viktor Kupreichik resolved to go out with a bang, and played:

19.♘g5!?

For the first time in the game, White has at least succeeded in creating a direct and immediate threat!

19.♖c1

This passive move cannot possibly help him to set up a "Maginot Line" and doesn't even help his effort to prolong resistance. Black easily and comfortably conducts the game to a victorious finish with:

19...♘b4 20.♕xc3 ♘c4!

The simple developing move 20...♗d7!? also wins quickly after either 21.♕c7 b6! 22.♕xd7 ♘b5 23.a4 ♖a7 24.♕c8 h6–+, when Black has rather surprisingly managed to catch the strongest enemy piece in his net, or: 21.♘ed4 ♖ac8 22.♕b2 ♖xc1† 23.♕xc1 ♖c8 24.♕b2 ♖c2! 25.♘xc2 ♘bxc2†–+

21.♖c2

21.a4 ♗d7 is hopeless for White.

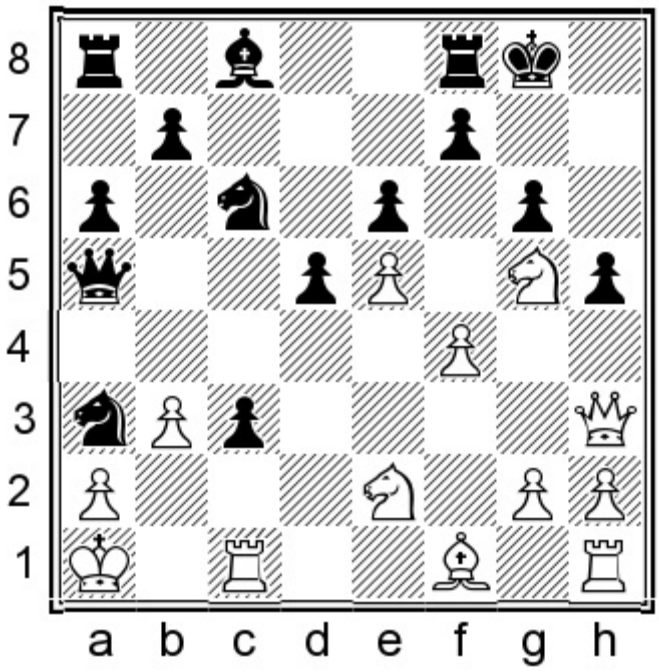
21...♘xc2†!? 22.♕xc2 ♘e3

Black's attack has not won outright, but with an extra exchange and pawn, he can hope that the game won't drag on for too much longer!

19...g6 20.♕h3 h5 21.♖c1

White's first raid is rebuffed, and Viktor has to switch his attention back to the queenside. He didn't have a wide choice; the negative consequences of 21.♘xc3 ♘c2† 22.♔b2 ♘xe1 23.♗e2 d4–+ are only too obvious.

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21...d4!?

At this point Black, unlike his opponent, *did* have a choice – and *what* a choice!

Apart from the logical move in the game, which defends the crucial c3-pawn, Ivan Farago could have launched an immediate attack on his opponent's king with 21...♘b4!. Then after 22.♘xc3 Black has two excellent options:

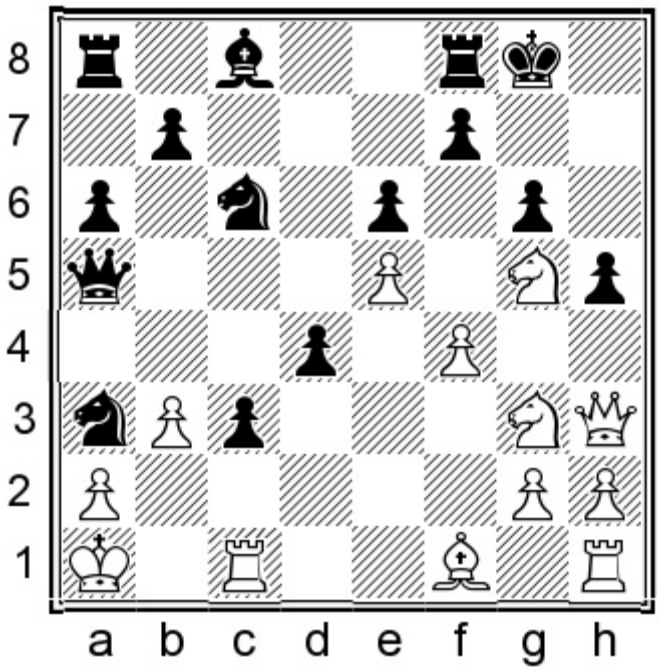
(a) He can continue his onslaught with the knights: 22...♘b5 23.a4 (23.♘a4 ♘xa2! 24.♖c2 ♘d4 25.♖c5 ♕d2 26.♕d3 ♕xd3 27.♗xd3 ♘b4–+ doesn't save White either) 23...♗d7 24.♗e2 ♘xc3 25.♖xc3 ♗xa4 26.♔b2 ♗xb3 27.♖a1 ♕b6! 28.♖xb3 ♖fc8 The white monarch clings to life, but Black does after all get to him; for example: 29.♗xh5 ♖c2† 30.♔b1 ♕g1† With mate literally next move.

(b) He can play the calm 22...♗d7!? 23.♗e2 ♖fc8, bringing his last reserves into the fight. Then even White's desperate counterattack with 24.♗xh5 gxh5 25.♕xh5 ♘bc2† 26.♖xc2 ♘xc2† 27.♔b1 ♘a3† 28.♔b2 ♕xc3† 29.♔xa3 ♗e8!?–+ doesn't much help him! It's notable that the variations given below are far from simple, and correctly evaluating the results of the mutual attacks and counterattacks is an extremely complicated task. For the present the Hungarian grandmaster doesn't want to take on such great responsibilities.

22.♘g3

Kupreichik has frankly abandoned his king to its fate and isn't going to waste many resources defending it; at the end of the day, rescuing the drowning is a job that the drowning must do for themselves! He throws all the strength and energy of his pieces at his *opponent's* king, and forces Black to make an extremely difficult choice. White is threatening to sacrifice a knight on h5, and it's becoming quite obvious that at some point Black must advance his f-pawn for defensive purposes. But which move, 22...f6 or 22...f5, is stronger? The question takes on a truly Shakespearean level of drama!

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22...f5?

After this fairly obvious move, White obtains saving chances – however strange that may sound! Farago has failed to fathom the intricacies of the numerous complex variations, and he commits a serious error. But I have no wish at all to cast a stone at him – he was just faced with too difficult a problem!

An attempt to bring the queen to the defence by means of 22...♘xe5? would not be too successful. White would ignore Black's ritual sacrificial offering and go ahead with 23.♘xh5. Then after the perfectly plausible (though not obligatory!) continuation 23...f6!? 24.♘xf6† ♖xf6 25.♕h7† ♔f8 26.fxe5 ♖f2 27.♕xg6, it should all end in perpetual check: 27...♖xa2† 28.♔xa2 ♘c2†!? 29.♔b1 ♘a3†= The win would have slipped from Black's hands!

Black does better with the optimistic:

22...c2!?

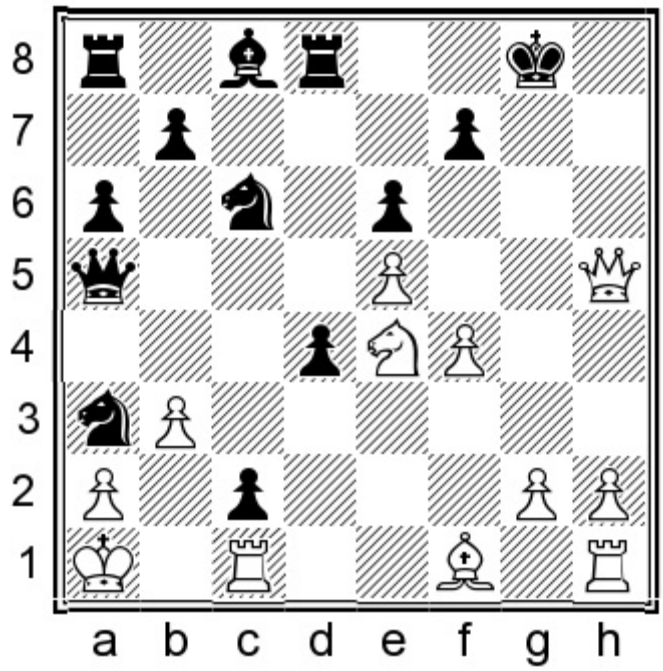
To all appearances White should continue:

23.♘xh5!?

The range of attacking tools at White's disposal overall is quite limited. He wouldn't set his opponent any great problems with 23.♘3e4 ♔g7 24.♕h4 ♘b4.

23...gxh5 24.♘e4 ♖d8 25.♕xh5

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A small but active contingent of white pieces has come dangerously close to the black monarch, but the imperturbable king manages to slip away from pursuit at literally the last moment.

25...♔f8! 26.♕h8† ♔e7 27.♕f6† ♔e8

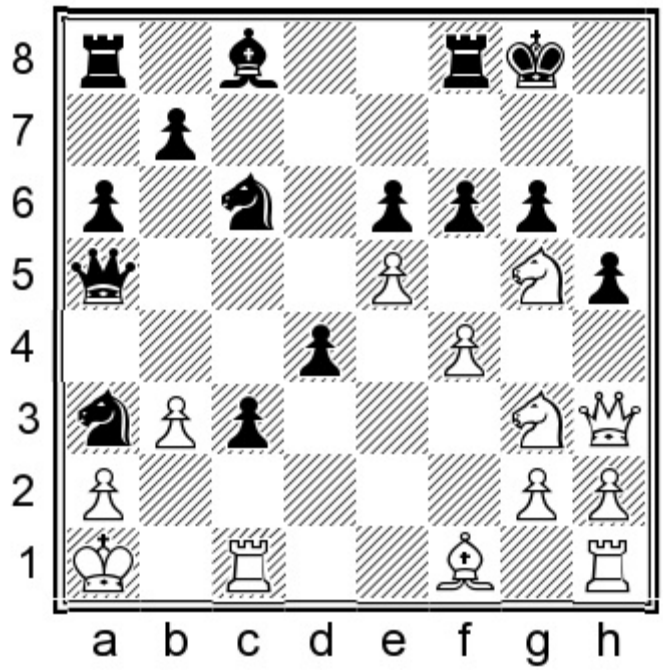
And now after for instance:

28.♗d3 ♘b4 29.♘d6† ♖xd6 30.exd6 ♕d8!–+

The result of the duel is in no doubt.

Matters could turn out just as successfully for Black if he moved his f-pawn one square only. For example:

22...f6!



23.♗d3

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Variations such as 23.exf6? ♘b4 or 23.♘xh5 fxg5 24.♘f6† ♖xf6 25.exf6 ♕f5!? look wholly unconvincing.

After 23.♘5e4 f5 24.♘xh5 fxe4 25.♕g3 ♔f7 White has virtually no attacking pieces left available, and would have to bring up all his reserves in a hurry!

23...fxg5 24.♗xg6

24.♘xh5 gxh5 25.♕xh5 ♕c7 thwarts the attack.

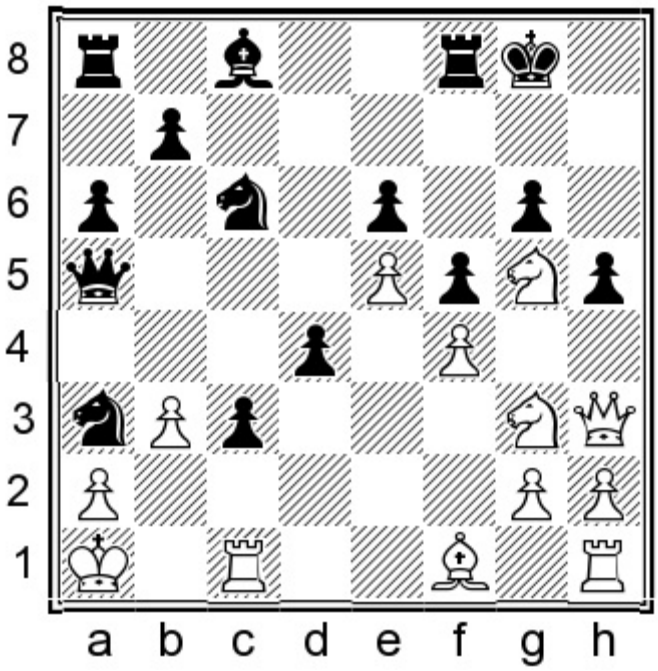
24...gxf4!?

Black ensures immediate access to the all-important e5-square for his queen.

However, after 24...h4! 25.♕g4 ♖xf4 26.♕xg5 ♕xe5 27.♗f5† ♕g7 28.♕xf4 exf5 Black also has everything in order

25.♘xh5 ♘xe5 26.♘xf4 ♖xf4 27.♕h7† ♔f8 28.♕h6† ♔e7 29.♕xf4 ♕c5–+

Black's king and indeed all the rest of his family have had fair cause for worry, but finally his pieces have reunited to form a single iron fist, and there can be no doubt about the outcome even for the most inveterate sceptic!



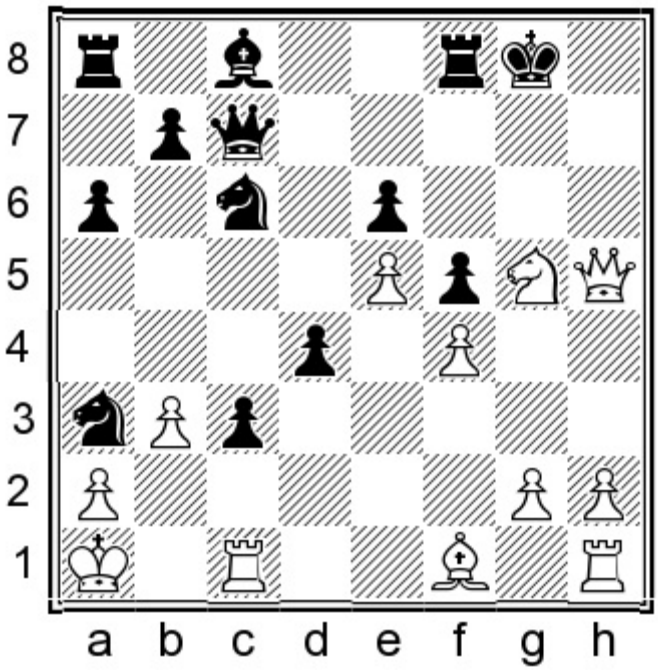
23.♘xh5

White's only option.

23...gxh5 24.♕xh5 ♕c7

From the material viewpoint White's affairs are deteriorating all the time, yet he has made some definite progress. The pawn cover in front of Black's king is now pretty thin; the shells are falling closer and closer. However, the moment has arrived for White to make a complicated choice between opening the g-file with 25.g4 and bringing his rook into the battle by means of 25.h4. Which path would *you* have taken?

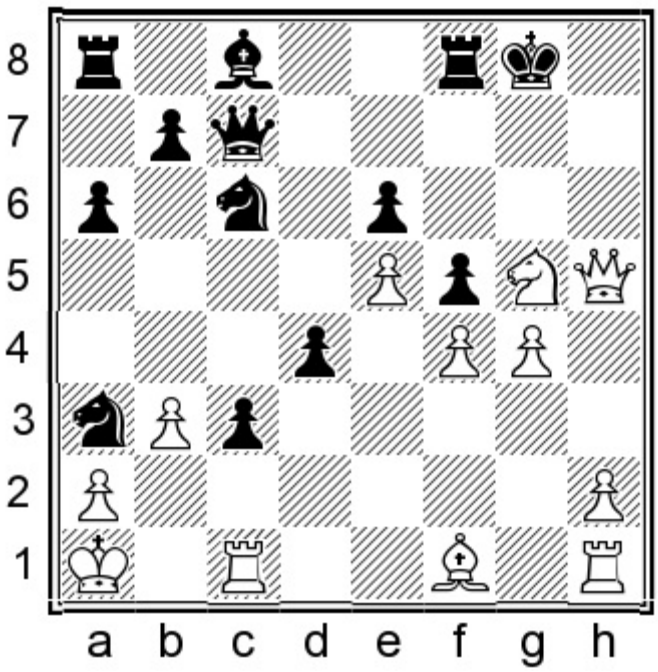
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25.h4?

An excellent idea – the rook joins in the king hunt – but the whole thing doesn't turn out too well for White. And yet it *could* have done; the trick was so close at hand!

25.g4! would have given Black difficult problems to solve. The g-file opens up to the delight of the white rooks, which are ready to acquaint themselves a little more closely with the black monarch!



Let's see:

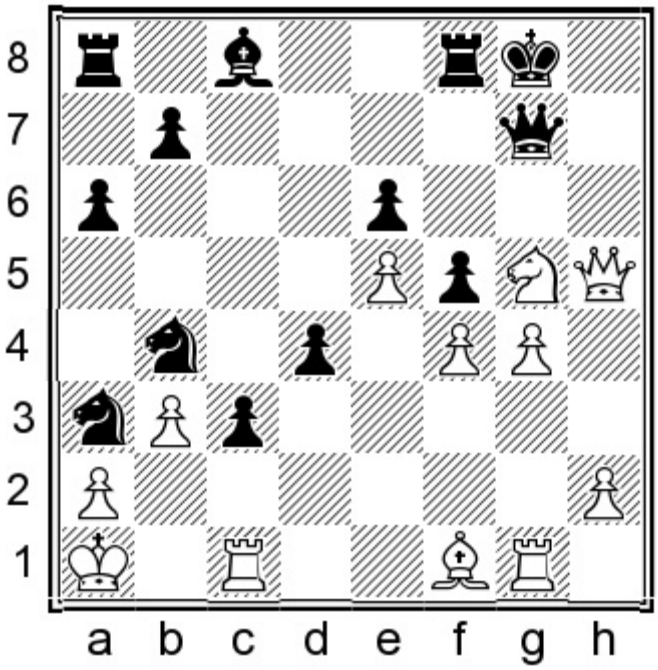
(a) In the event of 25...♘b4? 26.♖g1! Black is already in dire straits:
(a1) After the natural 26...♘bc2† 27.♖xc2 ♘xc2† 28.♔b1 ♘b4, the cool-headed 29.♗c4! comes to White's assistance – although in justice it must be said that his path to victory is still not simply rosy:

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29...♕g7 30.♘xe6 ♗xe6 31.♗xe6† ♖f7 32.♗xf7† ♕xf7 33.gxf5† ♔f8 And now he needs to find what is perhaps the only move: 34.♕h3! White takes the d3-square under control and creates the unanswerable threat of 35.f6. At any rate *I* couldn't find a way for Black to save himself, although in such a crazy position you cannot be one hundred per cent certain of anything!

(a2) 26...♕g7

This doesn't help Black very much either.



White plays:

27.gxf5! ♖xf5 28.♗h3!

It's simply amazing how quickly all the white pieces come into the game!

28...♖xf4

It's hard to recommend anything else for Black.

In the case of 28...♘bc2† 29.♖xc2 ♘xc2† 30.♔b1 ♘a3† White would on no account assent to a peace treaty, but would throw his king into the very thick of the action: 31.♔c1! d3 32.♗xf5 d2† 33.♔d1 And with Black's checks at an end, White's retributive operation after 33...exf5 34.♕e8† +– ends in complete success!

29.♖g3!

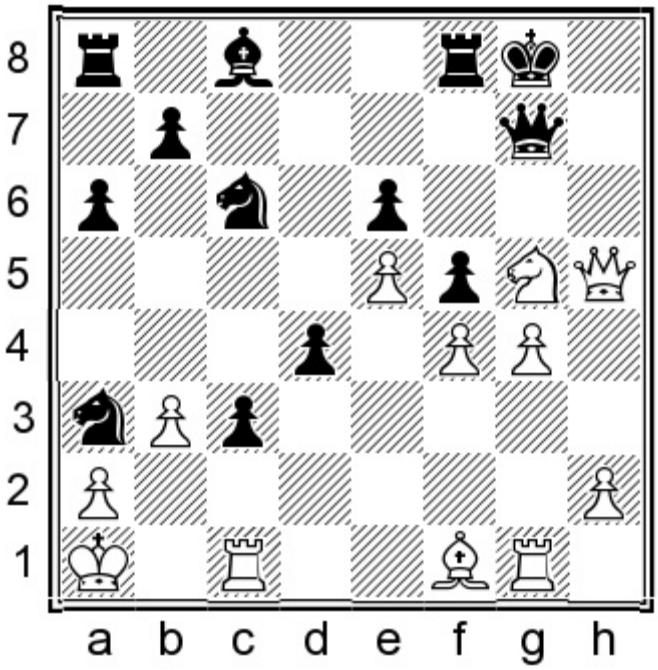
The simplest move – White is thinking about doubling rooks on the g-file and shouldn't be afraid of possible checks on c2. The game could continue:

29...♗d7 30.♘xe6 ♘bc2† 31.♖xc2 ♘xc2† 32.♔b1 ♗xe6 33.♖xg7† ♔xg7 34.♕g5† ♔h7 35.♕xf4+– And at the end of it all, Black has to stop the clock!

(b) White's path to success is considerably simpler in the case of 25...fxg4 26.♗d3!. After for example 26...♖xf4 27.♖cf1, the victorious conclusion to the contest will not involve any dramatic deeds on White's part.

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(c) As far as I can see, the only playable reply is:
25...♕g7 26.♖g1



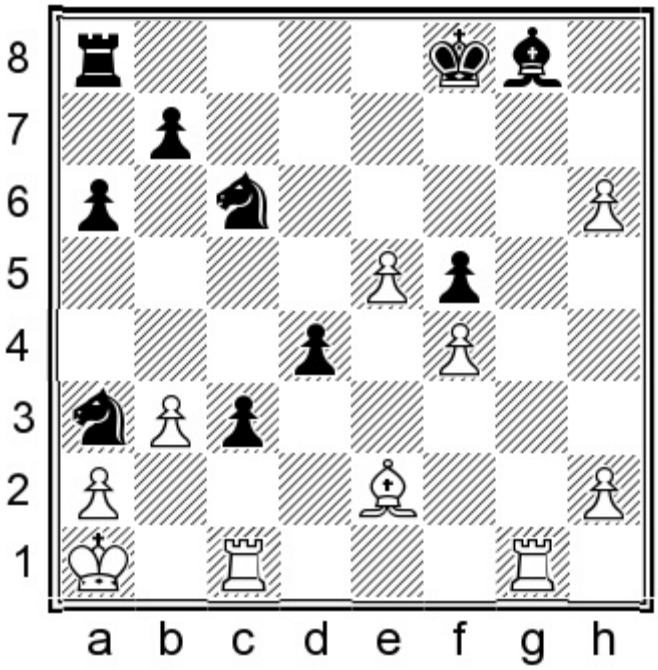
26...♕h8

Or 26...♗d7? 27.gxf5 ♖xf5 28.♗d3! ♖af8 and now there are a number of winning lines for White to choose from. Such as 29.♕h4 ♖xf4 30.♕h3, or 29.♕h3 at once; Black is also in a very bad way after the combinative action: 29.♘xe6!? ♖xh5 30.♖xg7† ♔h8 31.♖xd7 ♖g8 32.♘g5+–

27.♘xe6!

The pusillanimous repetition of moves with 27.♕g6† ♕g7 28.♕h5 would not be in the spirit of this game!

27...♕xh5 28.gxh5† ♔f7 29.♘xf8 ♔xf8 30.h6 ♗e6 31.♗e2 ♗g8



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And in spite of the numerous exchanges (including the exchange of queens) it would still be hard to

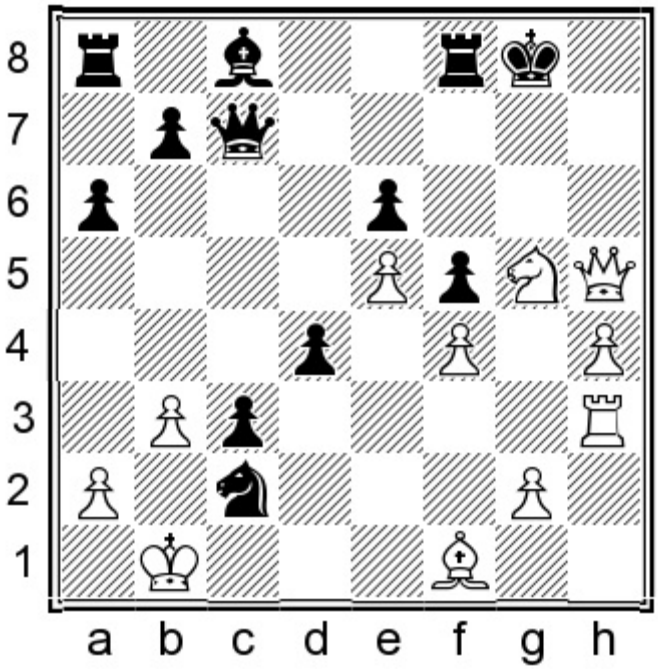
give a definite verdict on the position.

White's mistaken move hands the initiative back to his opponent. But will this last long?

25...♘b4!

Farago makes immediate use of the chance that has been given back to him, and mounts a full-blooded cavalry charge against his opponent's position.

26.♖h3 ♘bc2†! 27.♖xc2 ♘xc2† 28.♔b1



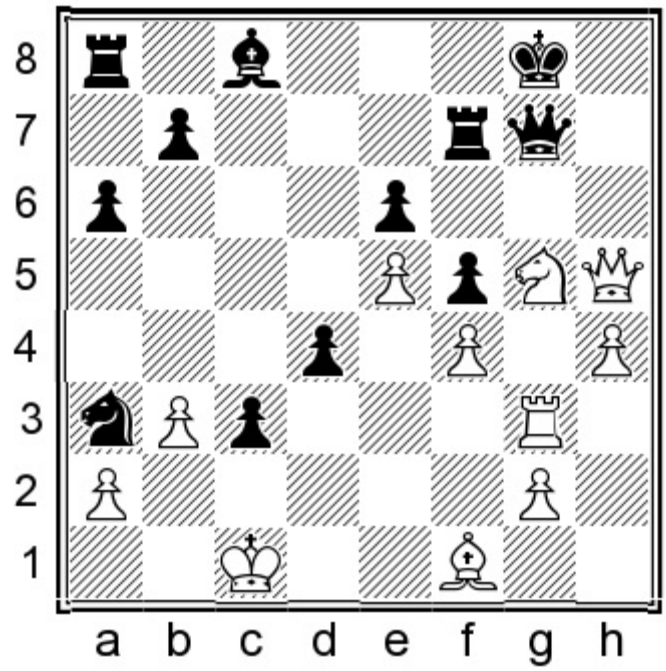
Black has a huge material plus and mighty passed pawns in the centre. The intrepid white king is completely unprotected. Yet in spite of all these factors, the winning line is far from simple.

28...♘b4?

The Hungarian player is in the position of a more or less typical fairytale hero: all the paths are open, but only one of them leads to the princess, or rather (excuse my mistake) to victory! Farago has already come through fire and flood, but now he founders. Most unexpectedly, the move he plays lets the win slip.

Interestingly, one other move that looks tempting would also fail. After:
28...♘a3†? 29.♔c1 ♕g7 30.♖g3 ♖f7

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White could draw at once with 31.♘e4!? fxe4 32.♖xg7† ♔xg7 (32...♖xg7 33.♕e8†=) 33.♕g5† ♔h8 34.♕g6= and perpetual check.

Alternatively he could fish in troubled waters with 31.♗e2!?. Then after 31...♔f8 32.♘e4 fxe4 33.♖xg7 ♔xg7 34.♕g5† ♔h7 35.♕h5† he would have to settle for a draw all the same, but on the way Black would need to avoid a straightforward trap: 32...♕h7? 33.♘f6! ♕xh5 34.♖g8† ♔e7 35.♖e8# would be a catastrophe!

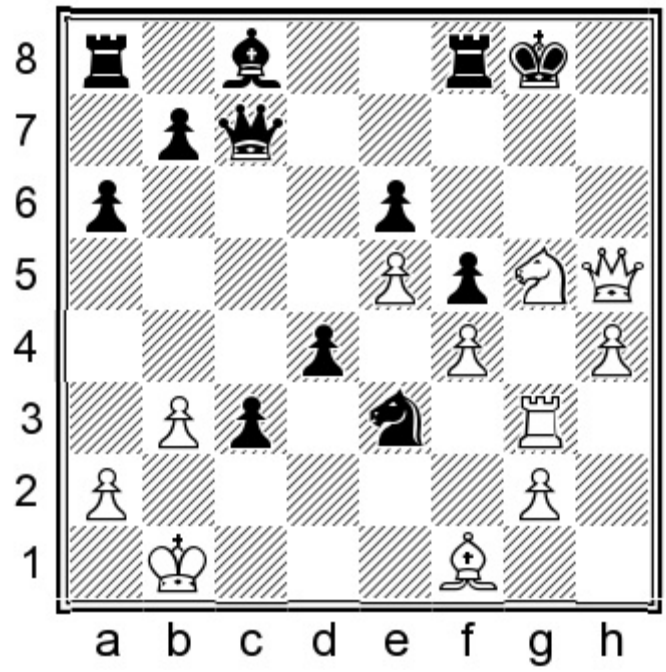
A perfectly possible happy outcome awaits Black if he resolves to combine attack with defence. This purpose is excellently served by:

28...♘e3!

A knight in the centre of the board is always a good thing, and this square is within arm's reach of g4! However it is still too early for Black to be relaxing, and in answer to:

29.♖g3

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He needs to find:

29...♕g7!

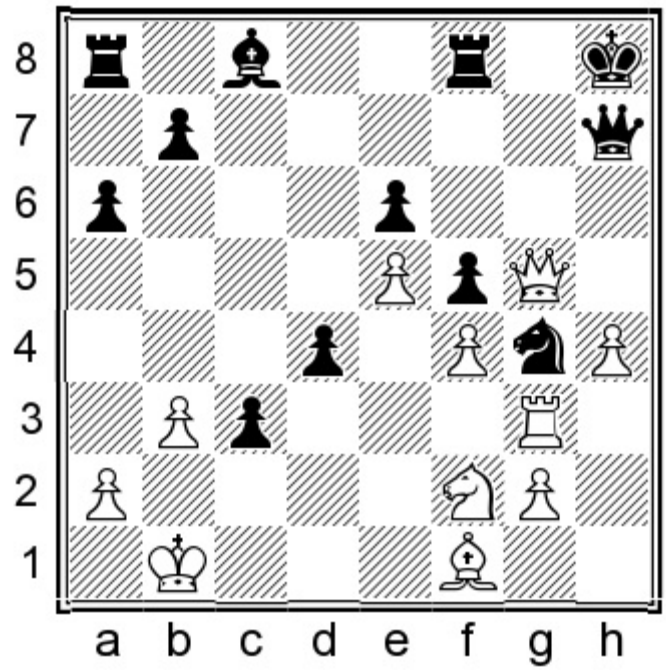
White's tactical possibilities must not be underrated.

The incautious 29...♘g4? would be refuted immediately by 30.♗d3 with the simple and scarcely answerable threat to give up rook for knight on g4 and force perpetual check.

30.♘e4 ♘g4 31.♘f2

31.♗e2 ♗d7 32.♗xg4 ♗e8 wins.

31...♕h7 32.♕g5† ♔h8



33.♘xg4

To White's misfortune, 33.♖xg4? fxg4† 34.♗d3 ♖g8–+ doesn't help him either.

33...fxg4† 34.♗d3

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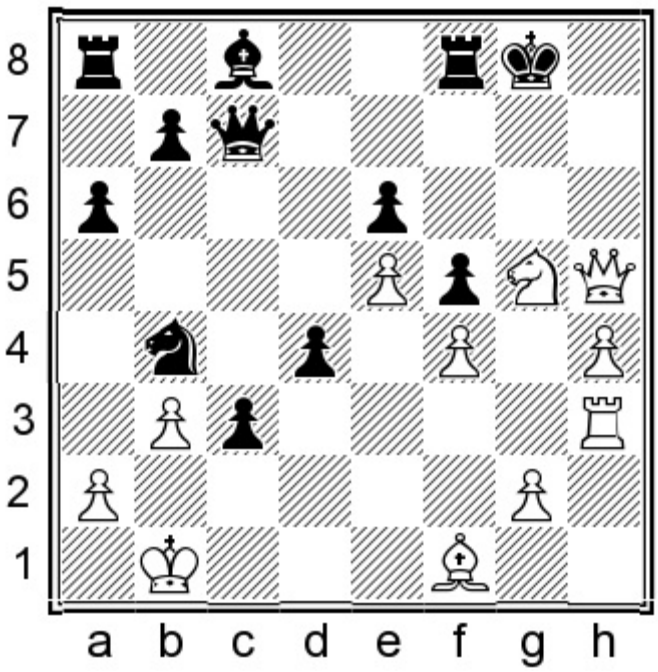
It’s amazing how good White’s resources are; he contrives to keep his opponent under constant pressure.

34...♖f5!

34...♖g8!? is laso good.

35.♕d8† ♕g8 36.♕xd4 ♖f7–+

At the end of it, Black has managed to weather his opponent’s onslaught while retaining his material advantage. White still keeps *some* chances of a favourable result, but objectively speaking Black is very close to winning!



29.♗c4!

White’s last piece comes out into the battle. His threats are not all that varied, but the black king is too exposed to hope for a peaceful life.

29...c2†

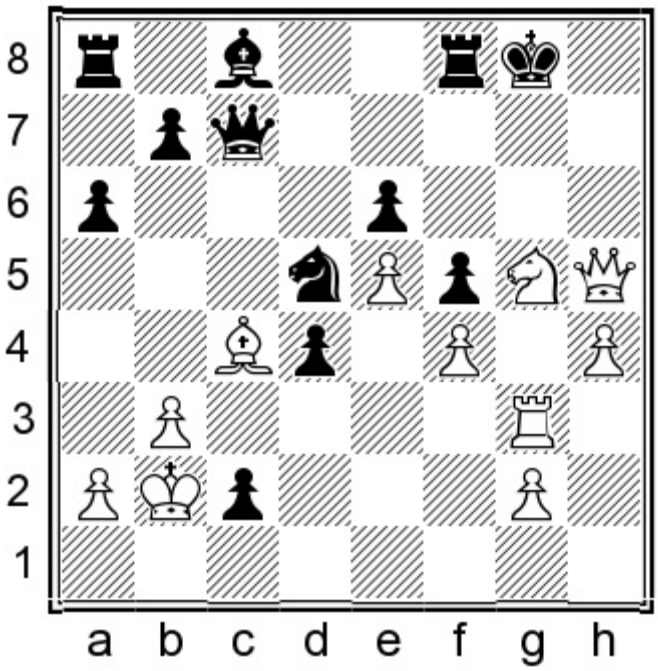
If 29...♘d5, then after 30.♖g3!? Black can’t even dream about winning. Also, if White wants, he can force a draw with an uncomplicated combination: 30.♗xd5 exd5 31.♘e6 ♗xe6 32.♖g3† ♕g7 33.♖xg7† ♔xg7 34.♕g5† With what is by now a familiar perpetual check.

30.♔b2

Here 30.♔c1? d3! is merely the stuff of Black’s dreams!

30...♘d5 31.♖g3

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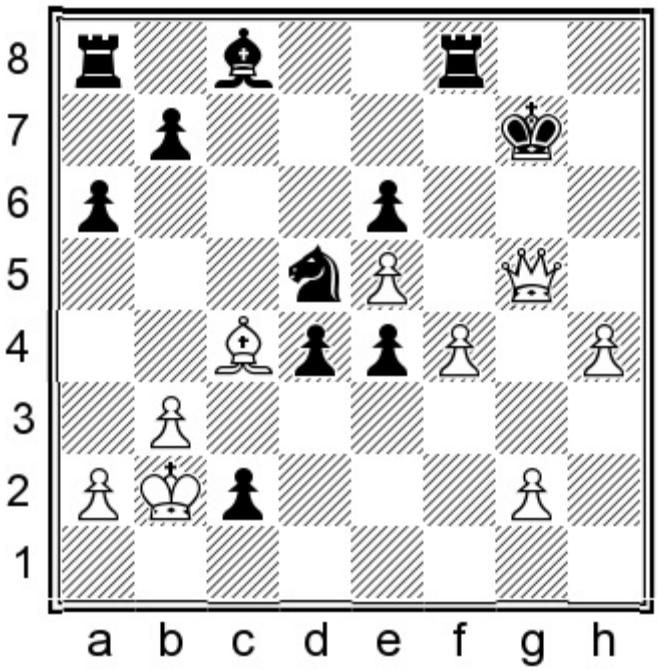


The tension has reached its height. For more than ten moves running, White has been creating a variety of threats to the black king, and repelling them is becoming more and more difficult!

31...♕g7

Despite his time trouble, Black again finds the only move.

32.♘e4!? fxe4 33.♖xg7† ♔xg7 34.♕g5†



34...♔f7?!

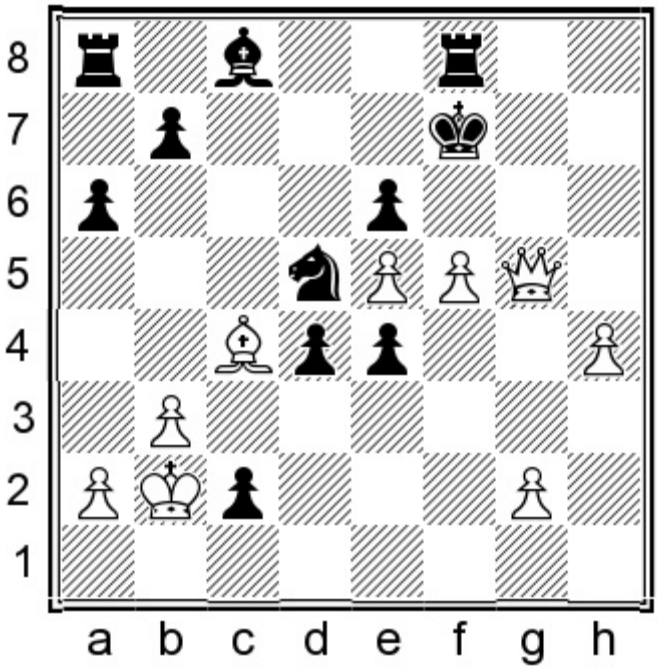
Black's quantity of passed pawns in the centre is only to be envied, but his king position and certain "peculiarities" of his piece development (the rook on a8 and bishop on c8 have yet to leave their

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starting squares) compel him to think about defence before realizing his material plus or advancing his pawns to queen. I imagine that with his last move Farago was trying to avoid a draw, but something was amiss there!

The move in the game cannot be classed as a clear mistake, and yet 34...♔h7! was no doubt safer. A sample continuation could be: 35.♗xd5 exd5 36.♕e7† ♔g8 And now a bold attempt with 37.e6!? is easily parried by: 37...d3! 38.♕g5† ♔h8 39.e7 ♗f5! 40.exf8=♕† ♖xf8= With the magical fortieth move passed and Black's pawns in fantastic shape (I find it hard to moderate my enthusiasm!) White would have to settle for perpetual check, probably to both players' satisfaction.

35.f5!



35...♔e8

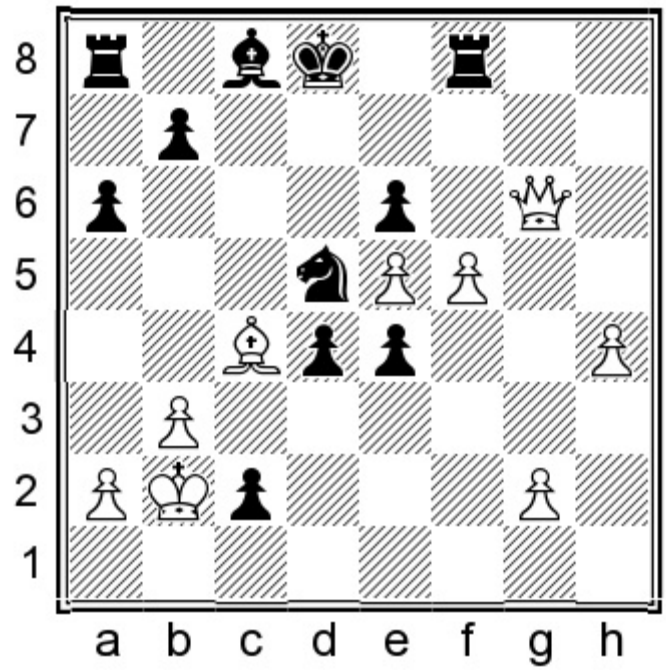
A difficult decision in an utterly insane position.

In the event of 35...♗d7, Black would not only have to assess the consequences of the following line correctly: 36.f6 ♔e8 37.♕g6† ♔d8 38.♕g7 ♔c7 39.♗xd5 exd5 40.e6 ♖ac8! 41.exd7 ♖cd8⇄ Leaving each player with a fair number of passed pawns – you get the impression they exist in parallel universes.

He would also need to understand what would result from the even more dangerous variation: 36.♗xd5 exd5 37.e6† ♔e8 38.♕g6† ♔e7 Having in mind 39.♕g7† ♔d6 40.♕xd7† ♔e5. Frankly, White's threats make the greater impression here.

36.♕g6† ♔d8

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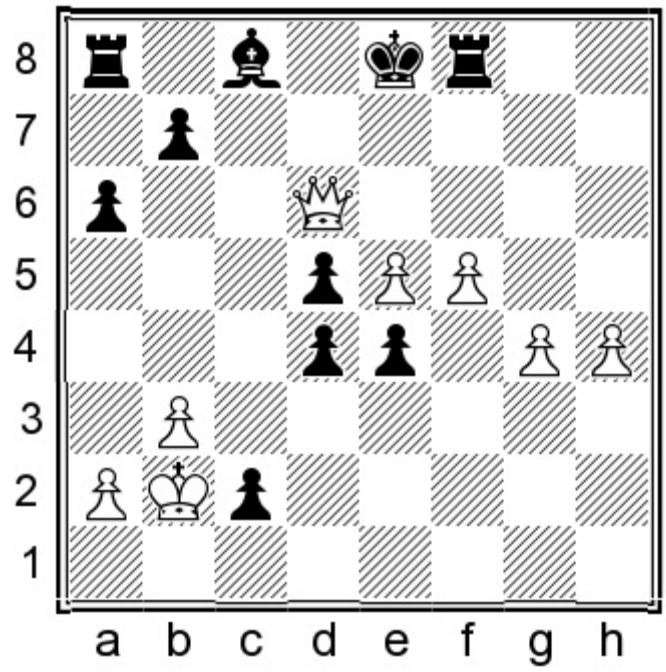


37.♗xd5!

I'm not convinced that White ought to insert 37.f6!? ♗d7, as 38.♗xd5 exd5 then leads to a perfectly tolerable position for Black – provided he avoids numerous traps. A possible continuation would be: 39.♕g7 ♔c7 40.e6 ♖ac8! (not 40...♖fd8? 41.♔xc2!+–) 41.♔c1 d3 42.exd7 ♖cd8 43.♕e7 e3! 44.♕xe3 ♖xf6 45.♕xd3 ♖c6⇄ After which the game can only end in perpetual check!

37...exd5 38.♕d6† ♔e8 39.♕g6† ♔d8 40.♕d6† ♔e8 41.g4!

Viktor has no wish at all for an amicable conclusion. He keeps on setting his opponent new problems, and his laudable persistence finds its reward!

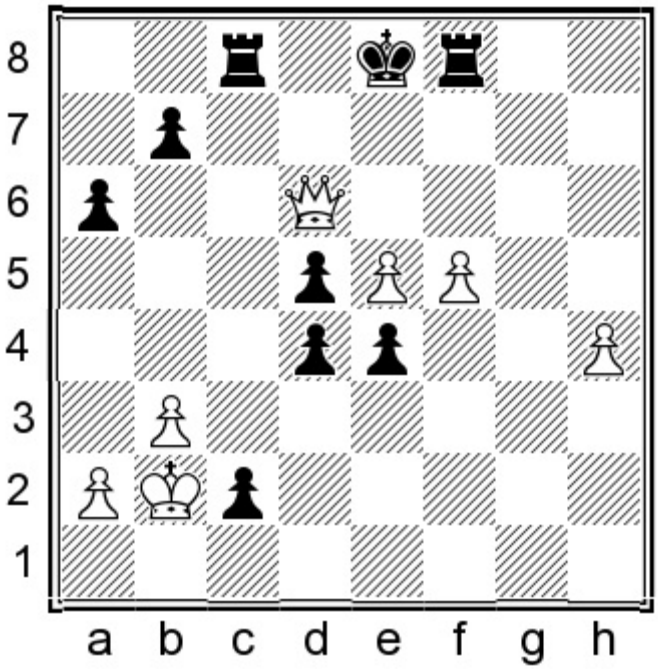


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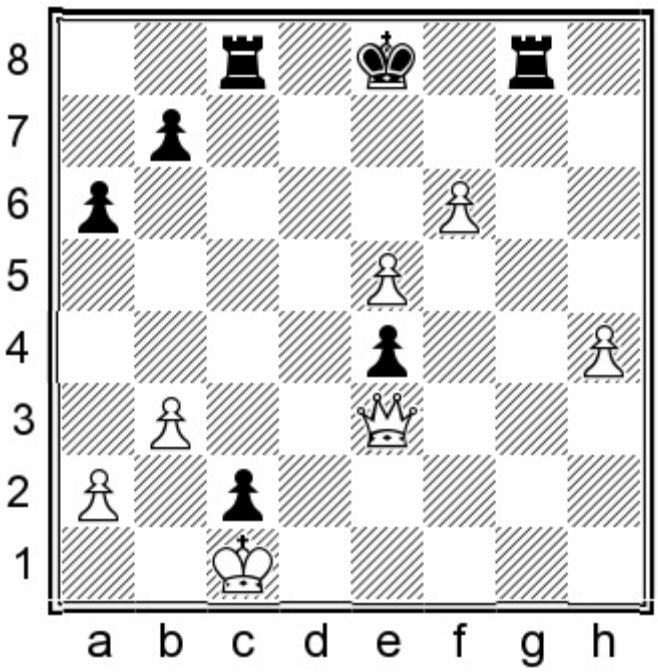
41...d3?

The final mistake always has to be made by someone, and this time the lot falls to the Hungarian. And yet a happy end (a draw!) was within close reach. Black needed to complete the development of his pieces at last, even if this meant sacrificing some of them!

The right continuation was:
41...♗xf5! 42.gxf5 ♖c8!



Reminding his opponent that there are passed pawns not only on White's side. White can, however, still have a little more fun:
43.♔c1 d3! 44.♕e6† ♔d8 45.♕xd5† ♔e8 46.♕e6† ♔d8 47.♕d6† ♔e8 48.f6 d2†! 49.♕xd2 ♖g8! 50.♕e3



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50...♔f7!

It would be a shame to throw away the draw at the last moment.

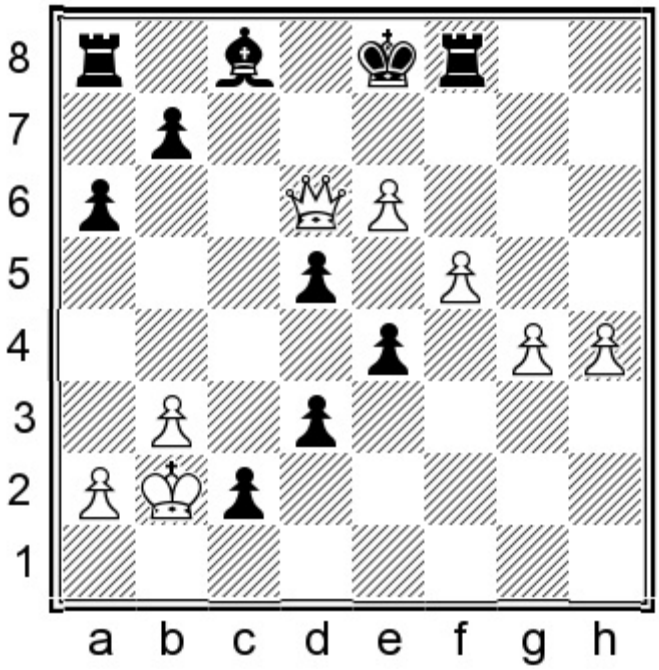
After 50...♖c6? 51.♕a7! the nimble white queen can no longer be stopped.

51.♕d4 ♖gd8

And now it is White who must swallow his pride and bow to the inevitable. After the only move: 52.e6†! ♔xe6 53.♕xe4† ♔xf6 54.♕f4†

This thoroughly combative game would culminate in a peaceful result.

42.e6!+–



42...♗xe6

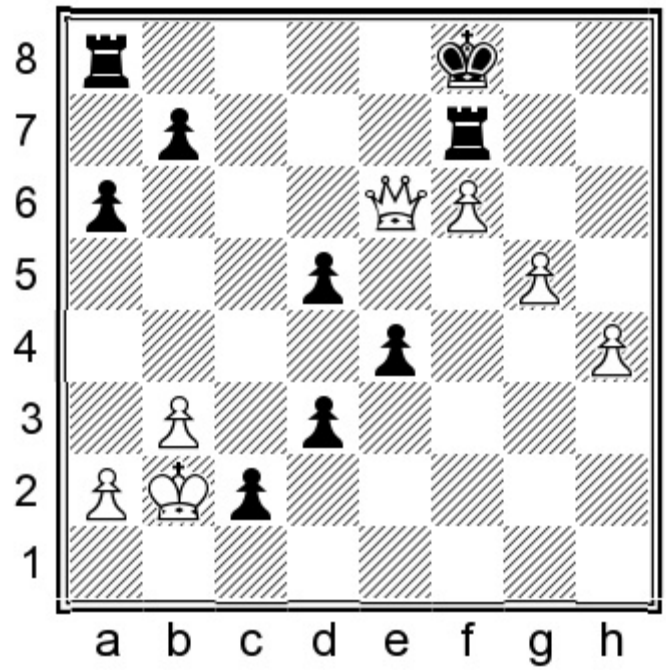
The bishop sacrifice now takes place in a much worse situation, but unfortunately for Black the natural 42...♖f6 doesn't work; White's sole reply, but not a difficult one, is 43.♕e5! ♖h6 44.f6 ♖h7 45.f7† ♖xf7 46.exf7† ♔xf7 47.♕xd5† with an easy win.

43.♕xe6† ♔d8 44.♕d6† ♔e8 45.f6! ♖f7

If Black sacrifices again with 45...♖xf6 46.♕xf6 ♖c8, White easily picks up all his opponent's important pawns: 47.♕e5† ♔d8 48.♕xd5† ♔c7 49.♕xe4+–

46.♕e6† ♔f8 47.g5

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47...e3

Nothing is changed by 47...♖e8 48.♕d6† ♔g8 49.g6.

48.g6 c1=♕† 49.♔xc1 ♖c7† 50.♔d1

And the Hungarian player had to stop the clock. The consequences of 50...e2† 51.♔d2 ♖c2† 52.♔xd3 e1=♘† 53.♕xe1 ♖e8 54.♕b4† are all too obvious. I suppose it must have been most distressing to have to resign when possessing material equality and three united passed pawns in the centre; but the horde of white pawns on the kingside was not to be halted!

1–0

A vivid and exceedingly complicated game. Viktor Kupreichik was faced with difficulties after his slipshod opening play, but his optimism and boldness helped him first to create counter-threats and then to torment his opponent with constant problems and the harassment of the black king. Up to a certain point, Ivan Farago successfully answered the questions that were put to him, but every chessplayer has a limit to his resilience, and a moment came when that limit was reached and could be exploited.

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The following game from the last round of the splendidly-conducted Olympiad in the Slovenian town of Bled was extremely important, both to the Israeli team which was fighting for medals, and to me personally. I was perfectly aware that owing to the state of my health as well as my age, I would be unable to take part in wonderful contests of this kind in future; and I was very keen to end my Olympic career on a high note.

Erik van den Doel – Lev Psakhis

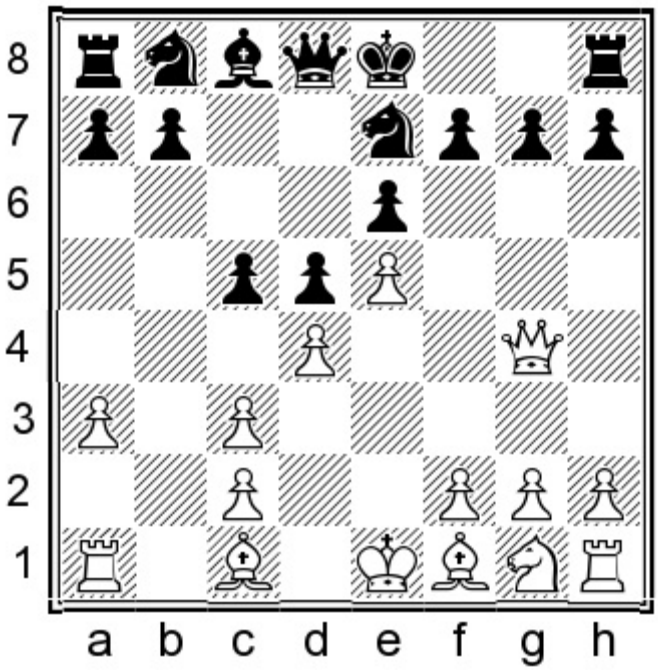
Bled Olympiad 2002

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 ♘e7 5.a3 ♗xc3† 6.bxc3 c5

White's following move is undoubtedly the strongest in the position and sets Black some serious problems. Usually I would try by various means to avoid it. However, from what I could recollect, Erik tended to choose continuations that were less ambitious. So after spending ten minutes on preparation (just in case!) I opted for the standard order of moves.

7.♕g4!

An unpleasant surprise! I was particularly upset by the speed with which this unwelcome move was played.



7...0-0

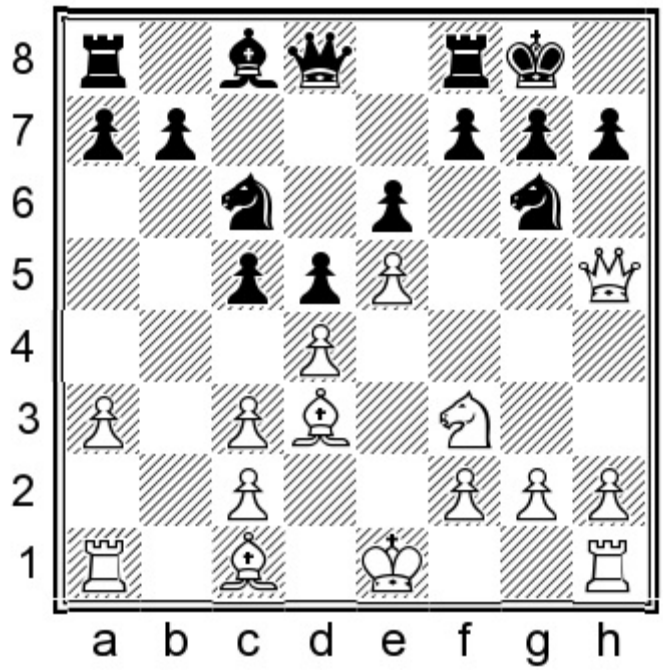
I dare say 7...♕c7!? gives positions that are more tense and double-edged, but I generally preferred the move in the game. It was a typical case of unrequited love – my results with this variation were far from convincing, and I suffered quite a few severe defeats.

8.♗d3 ♘bc6 9.♕h5! ♘g6

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The best reply without any doubt! In the variation 9...♘f5 10.♘f3 c4 11.g4! White scores almost one hundred per cent.

10.♘f3



10...♕c7

The simple and direct threat of 11.♘g5, with a capture on f7 to follow, was looming large, and Black's move is an attempt to forestall it.

Another move to have been seen is 10...♘ce7. White then usually fights for the initiative by means of 11.h4!? ♕a5 12.♗d2 c4 13.♗e2 f6 14.♕g4 fxe5 15.h5 with advantage, as in Ter-Sahakyan – Goganov, Chennai 2011; or by the paradoxical, typically "French" move 11.dxc5!?. Theory considers that in the latter case White maintains the initiative after, for example: 11...b6 12.c6!? ♕c7 13.0-0 ♕xc6 14.a4↑ But of course his queenside pawn structure is not ideal.

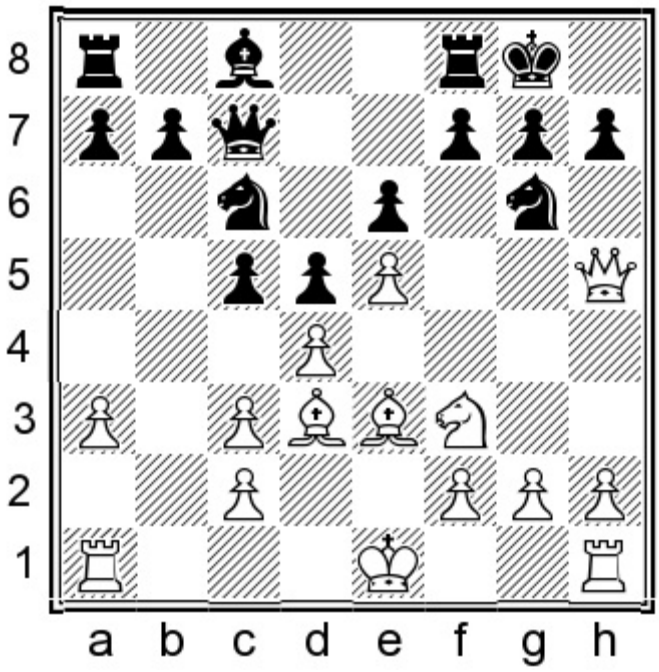
11.♗e3!?

With this move White hopes to achieve the stabilization of the pawn structure on the queenside.

The active 11.♘g5 has also occurred repeatedly. However, cases of relative failure after 11...h6 12.♘xf7 ♕xf7 13.♕xg6 ♕xg6 14.♗xg6 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘xd4=, as in Gelfand – Hübner, Wijk aan Zee 1992, compelled White to start searching for new ideas!

Nor was this search unsuccessful – at least *I* couldn't find a fitting response.

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11...c4!?

The same kind of pawn structure arises after 11...♘ce7 12.h4 c4 13.♗xg6 (13.♗e2 f6) 13...fxg6 14.♕g4, when White's attacking possibilities should not be underestimated.

12.♗xg6 fxg6 13.♕g4 ♕f7!?

Three years later in this position I played:

13...♕e7

A move employed repeatedly and successfully by Artur Yusupov. But after:

14.h4 ♖f5

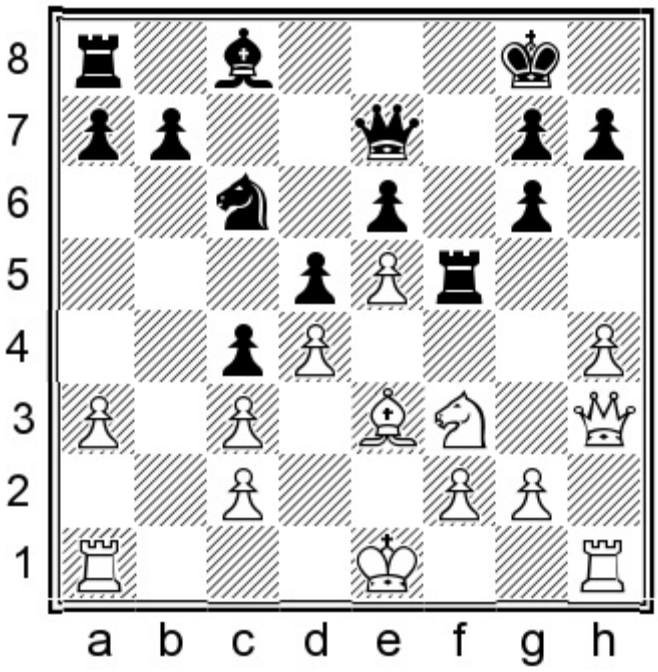
I was confronted by the strong riposte:

15.♕h3!?

Clearing the way for the g-pawn.

This is better than 15.h5 gxh5 16.♖xh5 ♖xh5 17.♕xh5 ♕f7 18.♕h2 ♗d7 when Black was level in Pelletier – Yusupov, Basel 2005.

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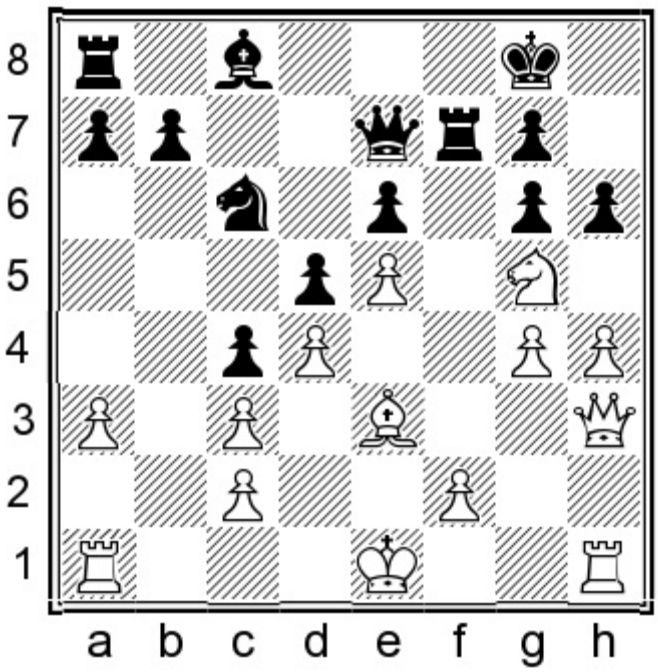
There followed:

15...h6 16.g4 ♖f7!

A long think persuaded me to reject the natural move 16...♖f8, in view of 17.h5 g5 18.♘xg5! hxg5 19.h6 ♗d7 20.hxg7 ♕xg7 21.♗xg5 with a powerful initiative for White.

17.♘g5!

A superb move which, to put it mildly, I had underrated; or to be absolutely honest, I simply hadn't seen it!



17...♖f8

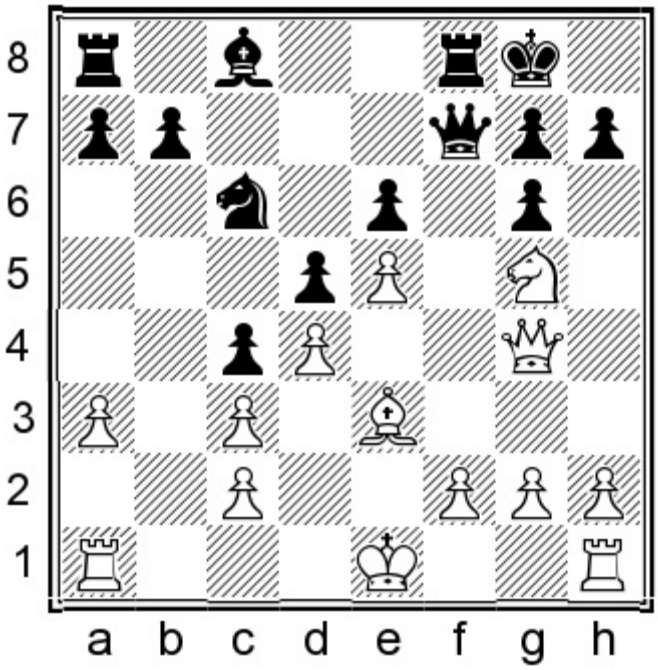
The knight, alas, is invulnerable: 17...hxg5? 18.h5!+– And now only 18...♖f6 saves Black from a quick mate, but certainly not from defeat.

18.h5 gxh5 19.♕xh5 ♕e8 20.♕xe8 ♖xe8 21.♘f3±

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In Korneev – Psakhis, Benasque 2005, White had a slight edge which he eventually succeeded in converting into a win, thanks in part to my time trouble; I had used up too much time and energy defending against my opponent's mating threats.

14.♘g5



14...♕e8

Not 14...♕f5?! 15.♕e2 which would only be helping White's attack to develop; his g-pawn would presently be happy to harass the black queen.

15.h4 h6

It was worth considering 15...♘e7. Against this, White could simply continue with 16.♘h3, or he could play the cunning 16.a4 – intending to transfer his bishop to its ideal position on a3, and accepting the inevitable loss of a pawn after (for instance) 16...a5!?.

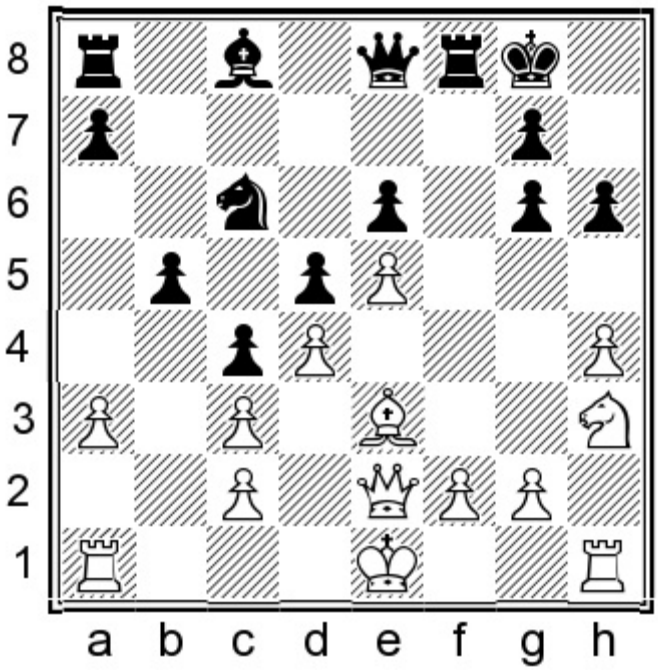
Or again, he could fish in troubled waters with the interesting though not forced variation: 16.h5 h6 17.♘f3 g5 18.♘xg5!? hxg5 19.h6 ♕g6 20.hxg7 ♕xg7 21.0-0-0 ♔f7 22.♖h5 ♔e8 23.♖dh1 ♖f7 24.♖h8† ♔d7 25.♕xg5 Of which the consequences are hard to assess.

16.♘h3 b5

In my preparation for this game I had basically concentrated on Anand – Yusupov, Bastia (rapid) 2002. That game was very recent – it had been played while the Olympiad was in progress. The continuation was 17.♘f4 ♘e7 18.♔d2 a5 19.♕h3 ♗d7 20.♖ab1 ♕f7 21.f3 ♖ab8 22.♘e2 ♘c6 23.♖b2 b4. I didn't have time for any deep analysis, but the general course of that struggle appealed to me, especially considering Van den Doel's lack of experience with such formations. However, virtually in a flash, he made a move that was new at the time and very dangerous:

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17.♕e2!



White's plan is very simple, and dangerous for that reason. He aims for g2-g4, h4-h5, and then, depending on circumstances, either g4-g5 or f2-f4, opening the game on the kingside to the maximum extent.

17...♗d7

Little would be altered by 17...a5 18.g4 ♖a7 19.h5 gxh5 20.g5! hxg5 21.♘xg5, with a powerful attack for White.

18.g4

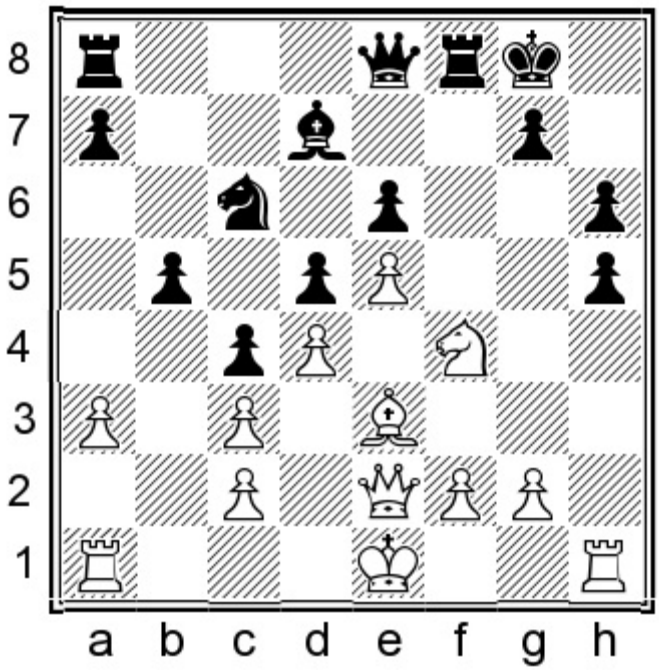
I had mainly examined the following variation:

18.h5 gxh5

The consequences of 18...g5 seemed to me to be too dangerous: 19.f4 gxf4 20.♘xf4 Then 0-0 and g2-g4 with a strong initiative.

19.♘f4

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19...♖xf4!

This is now a standard exchange sacrifice, as it was later to be employed repeatedly – don't forget we were more or less acting as pioneers!

20.♗xf4 ♕f8

There could follow:

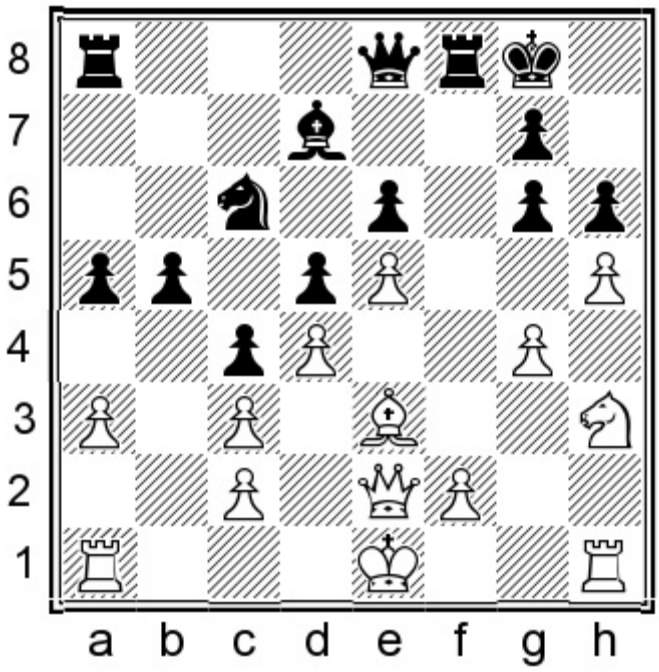
21.♗e3 ♗e8 22.g4 ♗g6 23.gxh5 ♗e4 24.♖h3 a5

Black would then have the prospect of bringing his knight to f5, hoping that the closed nature of the position would prevent White from successfully exploiting his material plus.

18...a5 19.h5!

Significantly stronger than 19.♘f4 ♘e7 20.h5 g5 21.♘h3 b4, which gave Black two precious extra tempos for creating counterplay in Lahno – Smeets, Wijk aan Zee 2004. Not surprisingly, in that game Black was victorious.

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19...gxh5

Probably the best reply, but unfortunately only in the sense that it's the least of the evils!

After either 19...g5 20.f4 gxf4 21.♘xf4 or 19...b4 20.g5! gxh5 21.gxh6 g6 22.♗g5!?, White's attack develops with incredible speed.

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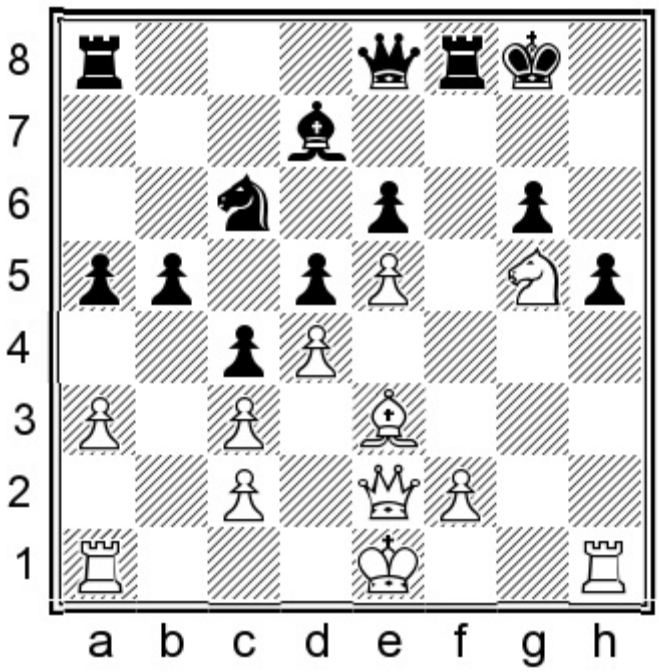
Portugal 2018

20.g5!

Van den Doel is conducting the game powerfully and confidently, and Black's defence is coming apart at the seams!

20.gxh5 ♖f5 is less convincing – Black is given time to set up a new line of defence.

20...hxg5 21.♘xg5 g6



The black monarch's residence is too open to the prying eyes of outsiders (and to the white rooks, unfortunately!) and it's becoming obvious that his safety is only guaranteed until White brings fresh reserves to the battle. The only question is how he is to do this.

22.♔d2!

The most natural and strongest move, which in my view leads to a large plus. In numerous games played in the following years, White continued the search for the truth – even though, in this particular case, it lies right near at hand!

In the event of 22.♕f1 ♘e7 23.♕g2, as in Sulypa – Apicella, Bois Colombes 2004, Black has everything in order after 23...b4!,, when his counterplay is not to be underestimated.

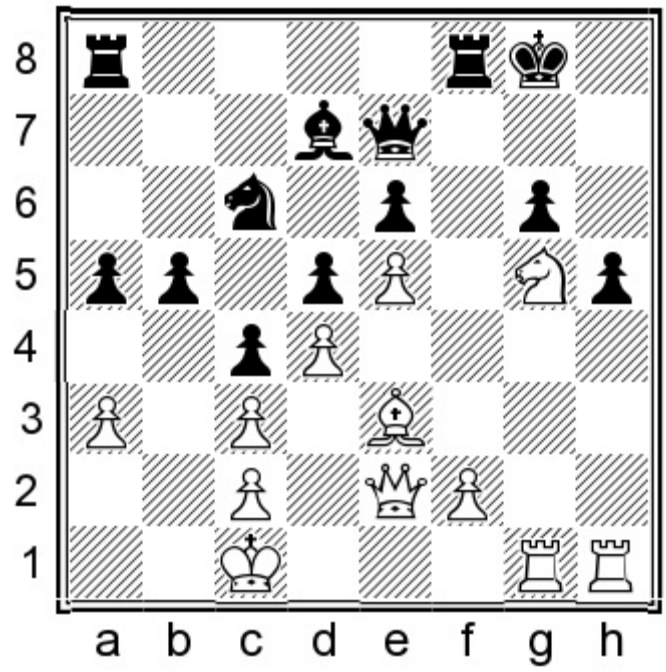
Etienne Bacrot's paradoxical move is:

22.0-0-0!?

This is a good deal more interesting. The white king heads towards the very centre of the storm, but is very difficult to get at! At any rate my old friend and second, Anatoly Vaisser, failed in that task. He continued in the most natural manner:

22...♕e7 23.♖dg1!

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23...♕xa3†?! 24.♔d2 b4?!

But now to his horror, after the elegant:

25.♘e4!+–

It became clear that the white king was perfectly protected – which was more than could be said, alas, for its black counterpart! The game ended fairly quickly:

25...dxe4

Nothing is altered by 25...bxc3† 26.♔d1.

Or by 25...♖f5 26.♖xg6† ♔f7 27.♖xh5 dxe4 28.♖xf5† exf5 29.♕h5! with inevitable mate in a few moves.

26.♕xh5

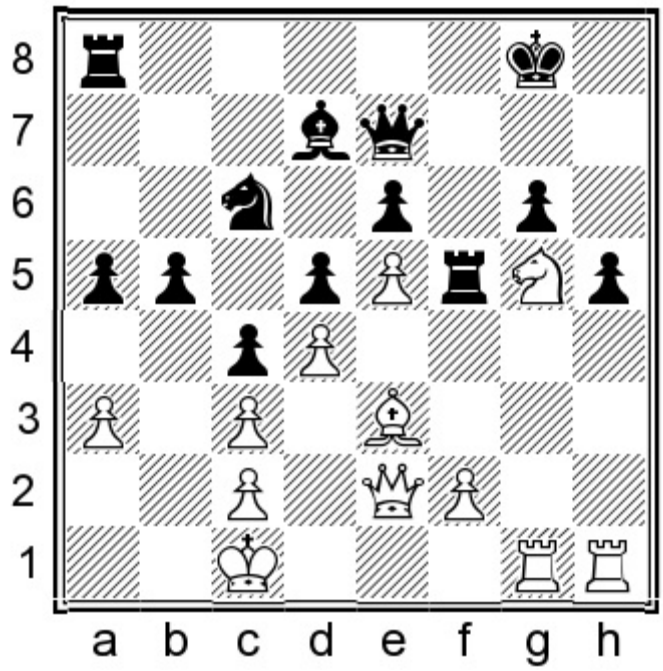
And Black only managed to give some checks that made no difference:

26...♖xf2† 27.♗xf2 ♕xc3† 28.♔d1 ♕f3† 29.♕xf3 exf3 30.♖xg6† ♔f7 31.♖f6† ♔e7 32.♖h7† 1–0

Bacrot – Vaisser, Aix-les-Bains 2003.

All things considered, the capture on a3 was a mistake – and the decisive one! Instead, the prophylactic move 23...♖f5!⇄ would have saved Black.

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After for instance 24.♖xh5 gxh5 25.♕xh5 ♕g7= finishing off the black monarch is not at all easy!

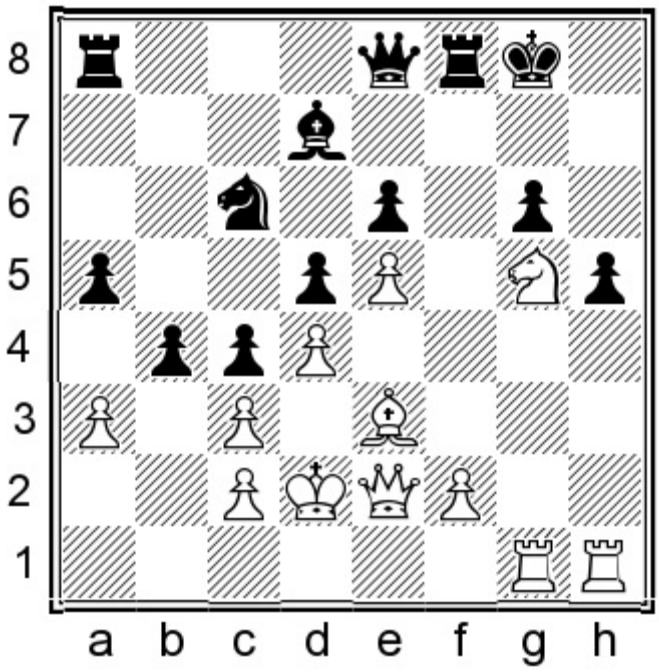
Another winning try that doesn't work is 24.♘e4 dxe4 25.♖xg6† ♔f7 26.♖f6† ♖xf6 27.♕h5† ♖g6! 28.♕h7† ♖g7 29.♕h5†; White has to content himself with perpetual check. In this line some heroic exertions are required of Black, but they are crowned with a worthy result!

22...b4

An attempt to use the knight for the defence doesn't come off too well; after 22...♘e7 23.♖ag1 ♖f5 24.♘f3! ♕f7 25.♘h4 White maintains a strong attack and can at any time upset the material balance in his own favour.

23.♖ag1

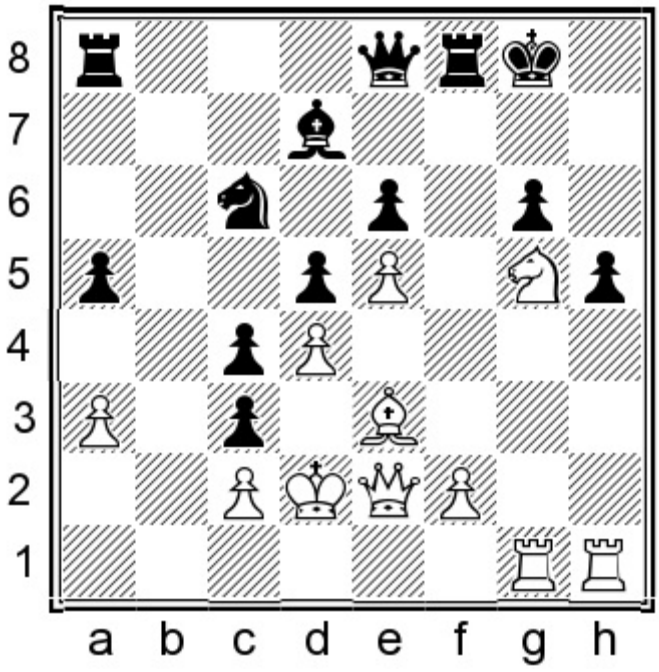
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23...bxc3†

In the case of 23...♖f5, Black's affairs are in just as sorry a state as in the last note. Again White makes use of the knight manoeuvre familiar to us: 24.♘f3! And after 24...bxc3† 25.♔xc3+– the strongly centralized white king, unlike the black one, feels entirely safe. The game Grigoryan – Apicella, Aix-les-Bains 2011, continued 25...♖b8 26.♘h4 ♕e7 27.♖xg6† ♔f7 28.♖g7†! ♔xg7 29.♘xf5† exf5 30.♕xh5 with a quick mate.

I perfectly well understood the danger of Black's situation, and was in none too optimistic a mood. Fortunately I just didn't have time for despondency – I had no more than five minutes left on the clock!



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24.♔d1?

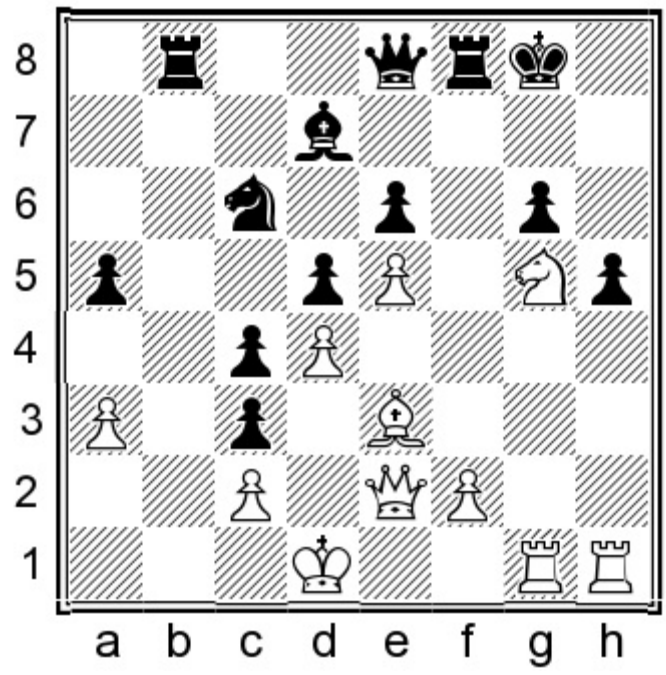
Up to here, White's conduct of the game has been virtually ideal. All he had to do now was show just a little courage and audacity, and play 24.♔xc3!. Black's possibilities for effective resistance would then be slight. Thus 24...♖f5 loses to 25.♘f3!, while the attempt to frighten the white king with 24...♕e7 is immediately refuted by a ploy we are very well acquainted with: 25.♘e4! No one dies of a few checks, and after 25...♕xa3† 26.♔d2 c3† 27.♔d1 ♕a1† 28.♗c1+– there would have been nothing for me to do except congratulate the Dutch grandmaster on his fine play.

24...♖f5!

The remaining minutes were disappearing at a catastrophic rate. Working out all the variations in this insane position within a couple of minutes would be quite out of the question. At this critical moment I recalled the advice given by the great David Bronstein: if you have less than five minutes left, rely on your intuition and simply try to play blitz chess. I tried to follow that advice!

Black did have a choice of moves at his disposal, but not a very wide one, as analysis shows. During the game I already saw that 24...♕b8?? loses: 25.♘xe6! ♕b1† 26.♗c1 ♔f7 27.♖xg6! And the black king's life expectancy amounts to only a few moves.

The play is considerably more interesting after 24...♖b8?!. My opponent would then have had to enter a lottery! In conditions of time shortage and a multitude of lines deserving attention – always an awkward combination of circumstances – he would have had to find the one and only line to win!



An attack with 25.♖xh5? can be refuted in various ways, of which the simplest is the appealing tactical stroke 25...♘xd4!. The knight is taboo, and after 26.♕g4 gxh5 27.♕xd4 ♖b1† 28.♗c1 ♔h8–+ White's attack has somehow vanished into thin air along with some of his pieces.

There are also unpleasant consequences awaiting White after: 25.♘f3? That move served him faithfully and truly in many foregoing variations, but history is constantly written afresh, and past services do not count. 25...♖b1† 26.♗c1 ♘e7! Black's king is securely guarded, he has some extra pawns, and threatens

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to bring his queen to either f4 or b2. The aggressive 27.♖xh5 is instantly rebutted by 27...♖xc1†! 28.♔xc1 ♕b8. A few moves ago the sentence “Black is attacking” would have sounded like an oxymoron, but now it is absolutely true. After 29.♕e3 ♕b2† 30.♔d1 ♖xf3! 31.♕xf3 ♕b1† 32.♔e2 ♕xc2† 33.♔f1, the calm 33...♕d3† 34.♕xd3 cxd3–+ takes the game into a completely won ending. Nevertheless, optimism on Black’s part would be premature! With the aid of a pretty and thoroughly familiar move:

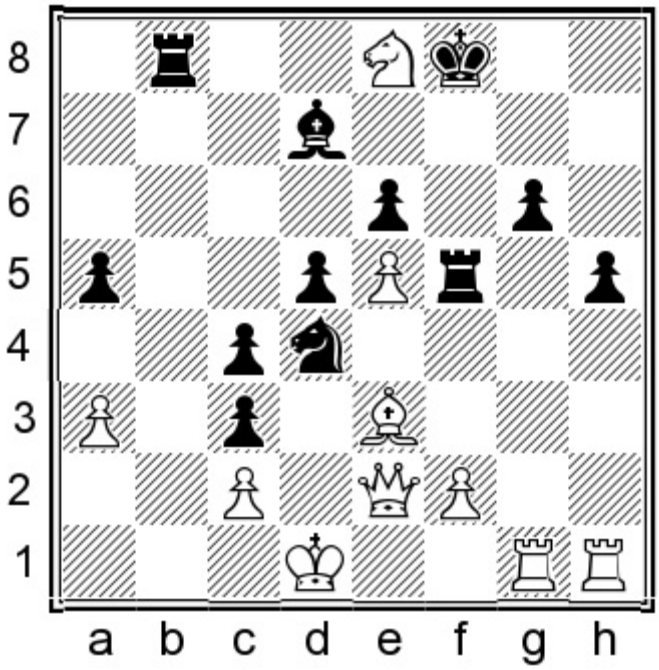
25.♘e4!

Justice would be restored. Then an attempt to muddy the waters is:

25...♖f5

25...♔h7 is weaker: 26.♕g4! ♖b1† 27.♗c1 dxe4 28.♖xh5† ♔g8 29.♖gh1+–

26.♘f6† ♔f8 27.♘xe8 ♘xd4!



This would force Van den Doel to find the only playable queen move:

28.♕e1!

Not 28.♗xd4?? ♖b1#.

28...♖b1† 29.♗c1 ♖f3!

This would have been an excellent try in time trouble; Black threatens to check on d3 and then give mate with his bishop on a4!

30.♖g3! ♖d3† 31.♖xd3 cxd3

So far Black has managed to find some resources – mate on c2 is threatened, and the deadly advance of the pawn to d2 also needs to be stopped! Unfortunately, after the simple:

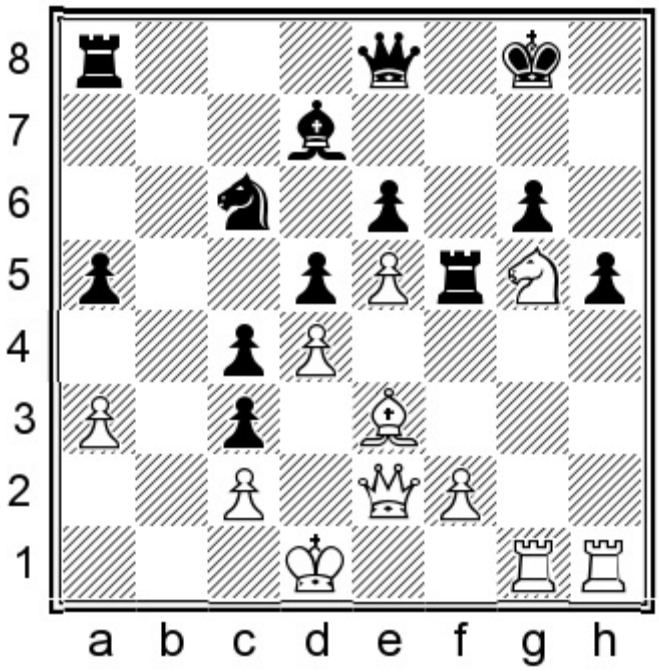
32.♕xc3!

This does the trick for White, giving him a trivially won endgame after:

32...♖xc1† 33.♔xc1 ♘e2† 34.♔d2 ♘xc3 35.♔xc3 ♗xe8 36.cxd3+–

A forlorn end to all the unrealized hopes, dreams and fantasies!

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25.♖xh5?

The mutual time trouble interferes more and more with the logical course of the game. White's error on move 24 radically altered the situation – seeing that the open b-file, and the c3-pawn which has miraculously survived, will always form a basis for Black's counterplay. And after the unfortunate move that he now plays, White is simply on the edge of the abyss.

How *should* he have continued?

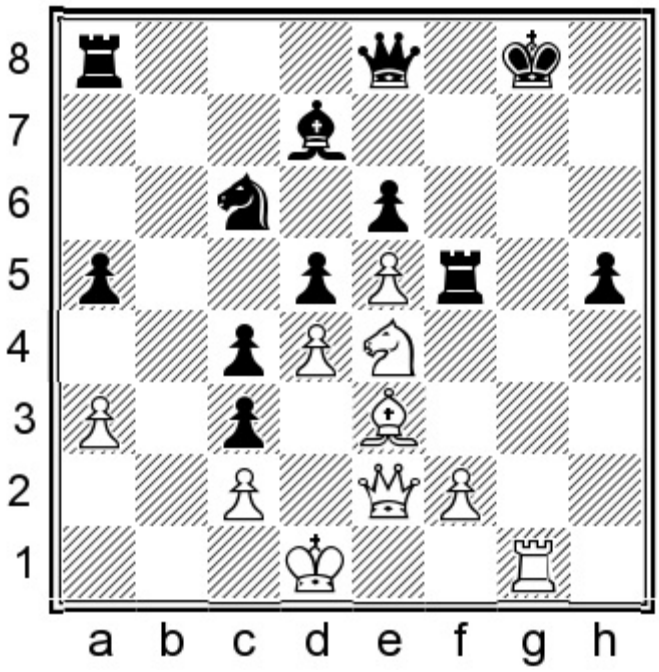
Against the other untimely sacrifice, 25.♘e4?, Black defends perfectly well: 25...dxe4 26.♖xh5 ♘e7! (The simplest solution, but it would also be interesting to try: 26...♖b8!? 27.♖h6 ♖b1† 28.♗c1 ♘e7 With the probable continuation: 29.♖gh1 ♔f8 30.♖h8† ♘g8 31.♕e3 g5–+ White's threats would then no longer be dangerous.) 27.♖h6 ♕f7 28.♖gh1 ♕g7 29.♕g4 ♖h5! With a won position.

White's attacking potential has, after all, rather slumped in consequence of the last couple of moves. The best chances of staying well in the game were probably offered by the far-from-obvious 25.♕e1!. "Carthage must be destroyed," as history tells us; well, White must destroy the pawn on c3! After for instance 25...♖b8 26.♕xc3 ♘a7! 27.♗c1 ♗a4, I am inclined to prefer Black's chances, but all three possible results would undoubtedly be there to play for.

25...gxh5 26.♘e4†

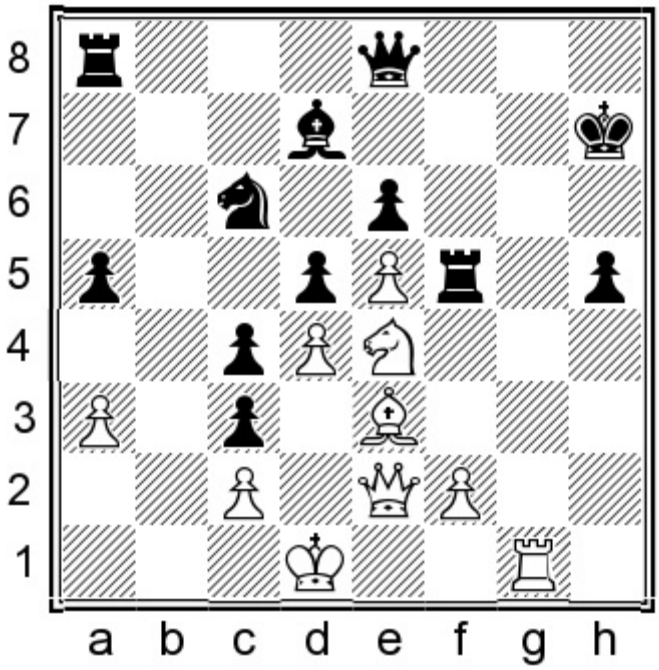
Nothing would be changed by 26.♘xe6† ♔h8 27.♘g7 ♕f7–+ with a large material advantage.

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26...♔h8!–+

Even visually this appears more attractive than 26...♔h7? although to be fair we must say that after the latter move, the white knight, like Buridan's ass, would have to make a difficult choice: should it go to f6 or d6?



In fact 27.♘d6? would be a serious mistake with grave consequences: 27...♘xd4! 28.♗xd4 ♖b8! And White is unable to repel the many threats that seemingly spring up from nowhere! For example: 29.♗xc3 (29.♗e3 doesn't alter matters: 29...♖b1† 30.♗c1 ♖xc1† 31.♔xc1 ♕b8–+) 29...♖b1† 30.♔d2 ♖xg1 31.♘xe8 ♗xe8 And the two rooks, aided by the powerful light-squared bishop and the important passed pawn, will easily deal with the sluggish white pieces.

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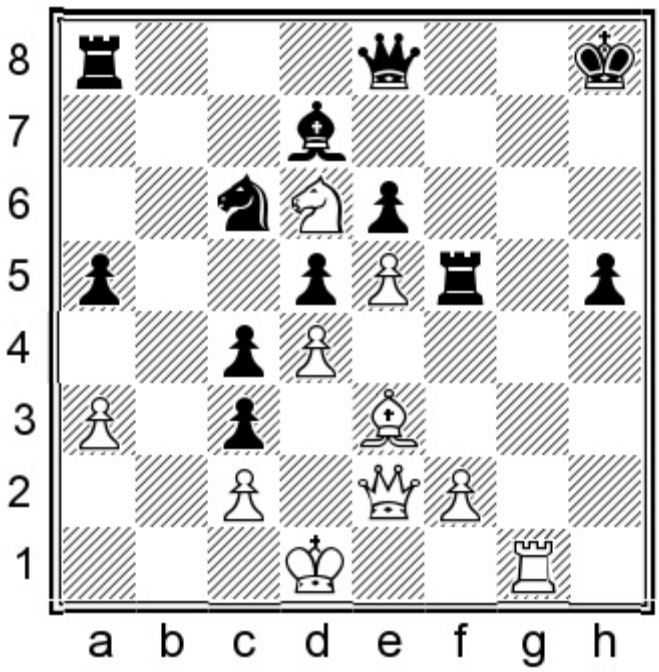
The play takes a completely different turn if the knight jumps towards the right with 27.♘f6†!. After

the obvious 27...♖xf6 28.exf6, Black's attempt to organize a counterattack with 28...♖b8 29.♖g7† ♔h8 fails to save him in view of the cool-headed 30.♗c1!. Then after 30...♘xd4 31.♕e5 ♘f5 32.♖e7+– White is the first to reach his goal.

Against 28...e5 he also wins in fine style: 29.♖g7† ♔h8 30.f7 ♕e6 31.♖g8†! ♖xg8 32.♕xh5† ♔g7 33.♗h6† ♕xh6 34.fxg8=♕† This is completely crushing.

27.♘d6

The tension has reached its peak; it's obvious that the fate of the game will be decided in the next few moves.



In fright at having hardly any time left, I played a move that was original but, to say the least, not best.

27...♕g8?

In an insane world, rational conduct will seem weird. That's what I decided, and in a sense I may have been right – although objectively speaking this move is one of the worst in the position, and could have handed the initiative over to my opponent.

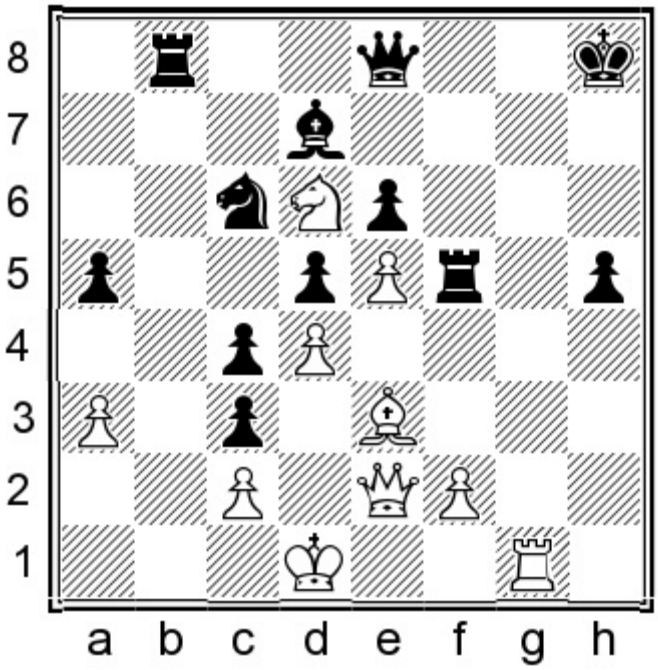
Approximate equality would result from 27...♘xd4? 28.♗xd4 ♕f8 29.♘xf5 ♕xf5 30.♕e3 ♔h7 31.♖g5 ♕f7 32.♗xc3 ♖g8, but I simply could not assess this variation accurately.

Nor would Black have any problems after 27...♕f8 28.♘xf5 ♕xf5 29.♖g5, thanks to the saving resource 29...♘xd4!. Then in the event of 30.♖xh5† (30.♕xh5† ♕h7) 30...♔g7 31.♗xd4 ♕g6⇄ there is once again equality.

However, at this moment I missed a very pretty win that could have been achieved by:
27...♖b8!

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I'd had this idea in mind all along, but in the turmoil and furious time trouble (my own fault!) I couldn't cope with working out the variations.



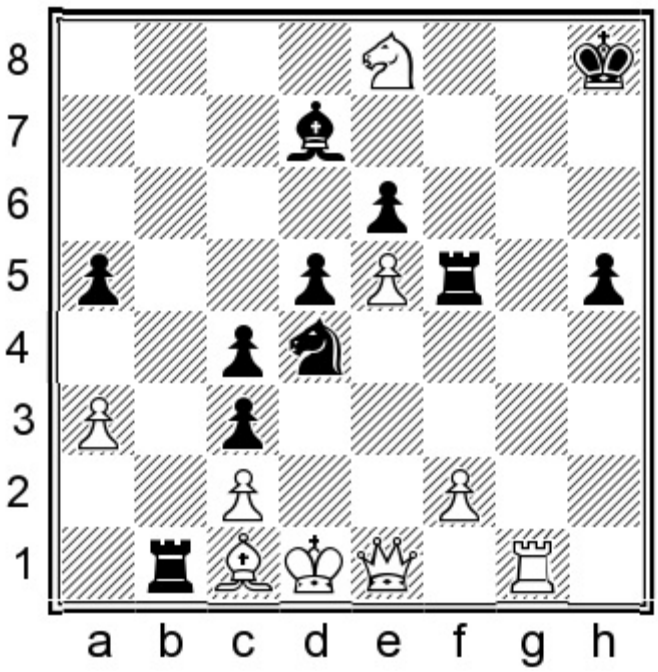
There could follow:

28.♘xe8

In answer to 28.♘xf5 exf5 29.♕f3 the easiest way to win is 29...f4! 30.♕xf4 ♕f8.

While 28.♔c1 ♘xd4! 29.♗xd4 ♖b1†−+ would simply be a dream variation!

28...♘xd4 29.♕e1 ♖b1† 30.♗c1

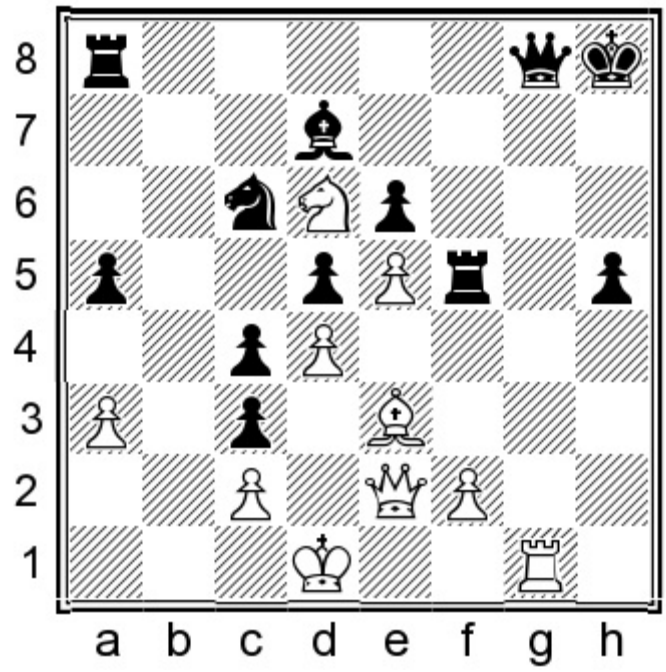


And now the fight is finished off by the brilliant:

30...♖f3!

With the lovely threat of 30...♖d3†!. In this way I missed the chance to play my Immortal Game!

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28.♗g5?

Stunned by my choice of move, Van den Doel plays an astonishing one of his own.

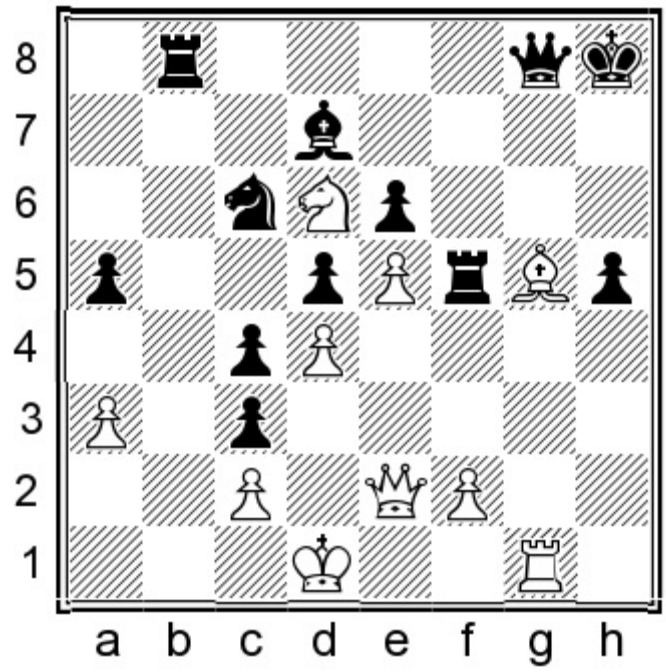
In my alarm at the events on the board, I had been frantically calculating variations such as: 28.♖xg8† ♖xg8 29.f4 (or 29.♕e1!? ♘e7 30.♘xf5 ♘xf5 31.♕xc3 a4) 29...♘e7! 30.♘xf5 ♘xf5 31.♕xh5† ♔g7 32.♗f2 ♗e8 With the idea of 33.♕f3 ♖h8 34.♕xc3 ♖h2. I hoped that even in the worst case, I would not lose quickly, while in the optimal case I would try to construct a fortress or at any rate something similar.

In the game, fortunately, it all turned out quite differently!

28...♖b8!–+

Missing such a chance for a second time would be sheer idiocy! Black is on the attack again, and the game concludes in just a few moves.

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29.♕xh5†

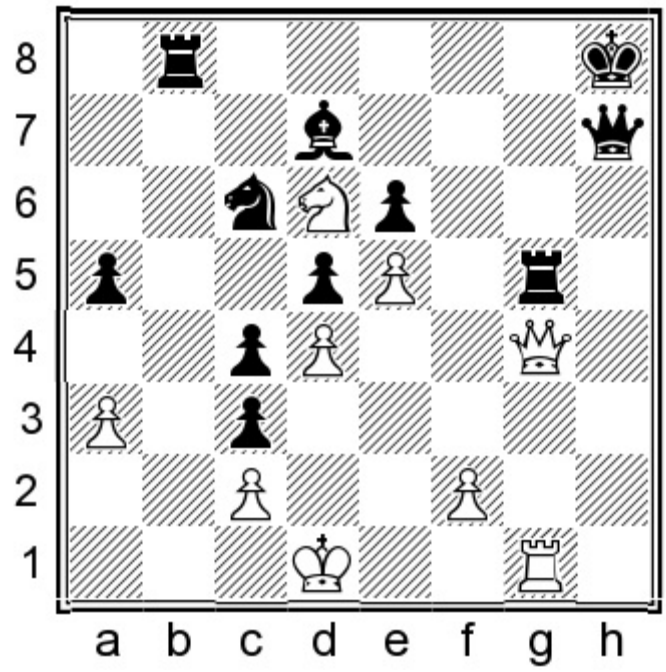
In the event of 29.♗f6† ♔h7 the white king is threatened with mate from either b1 or g1, and parrying both threats is simply impossible.

The way White loses after 29.♔c1 is a little more complicated, but even in that case I would have a pleasant choice. The safe 29...♖xg5!?, with the possible continuation 30.♘f7† ♕xf7 31.♖xg5 ♕f4†−+, is what I would actually have played.

But there is also another line that isn't difficult: 29...♖b1† 30.♔xb1 ♕b8† 31.♔c1 ♕b2† 32.♔d1 ♕b1† 33.♗c1 ♘xd4 34.♘f7† ♔h7–+ And White's checks run out while Black's are only starting.

29...♕h7 30.♕g4 ♖xg5

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31.♘f7†

Forced. Correctly calculating the variation 31.♕xg5 ♖b1† 32.♔e2 ♕xc2† 33.♔f3 ♘xd4† 34.♔g2 ♖xg1† 35.♔xg1 ♘f3† would hardly take you more than a few seconds.

31...♕xf7 32.♖h1† ♔g7 33.♕xg5† ♕g6

At the end of the great complications Black remains two pieces up, and to convert such an advantage into a win would not be very hard, even in time trouble. Therefore...

0–1

So my final Olympiad game was a success, for which I am very grateful to the uncompromising player who was my opponent!

A few words about the objective content of the game. The variations involving 7.♕g4! are very dangerous for Black, and you should either be excellently prepared for that move or else think hard about whether it is worth facing it at all. It is no surprise that in recent high-level games Black has more and more frequently been playing 3...♘f6. The second important thing that may be concluded from this game is the need for rational expenditure of your thinking time. Without it you are sure to be constantly balancing on the edge of a precipice, and the outcome will by no means always be positive.

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Chapter 10

56 Exercises

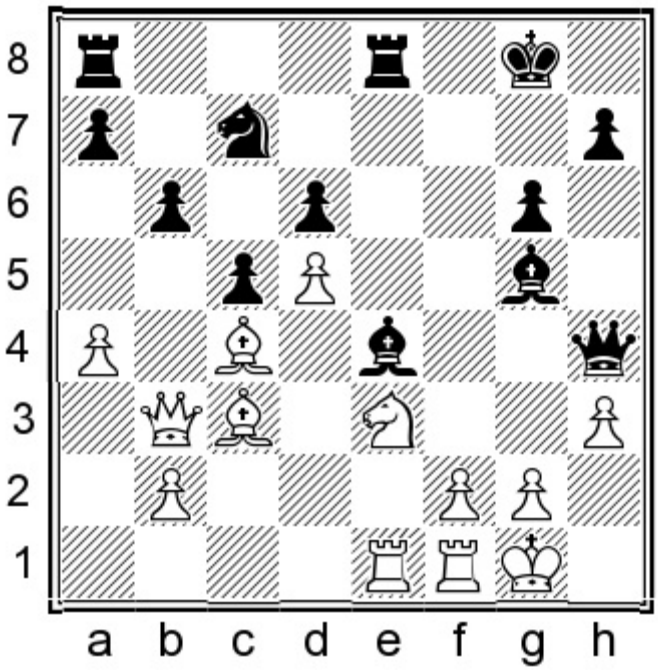


Thailand 2009. Finally reunited with my long lost twin brother. It could be you. Good luck with the exercises!

Exercises 1-25

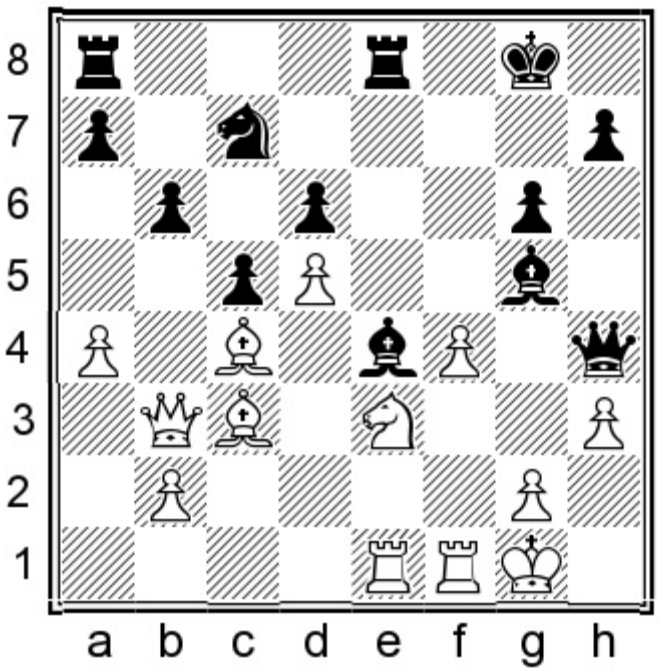
1. Baranov – Psakhis, Krasnoyarsk 1974

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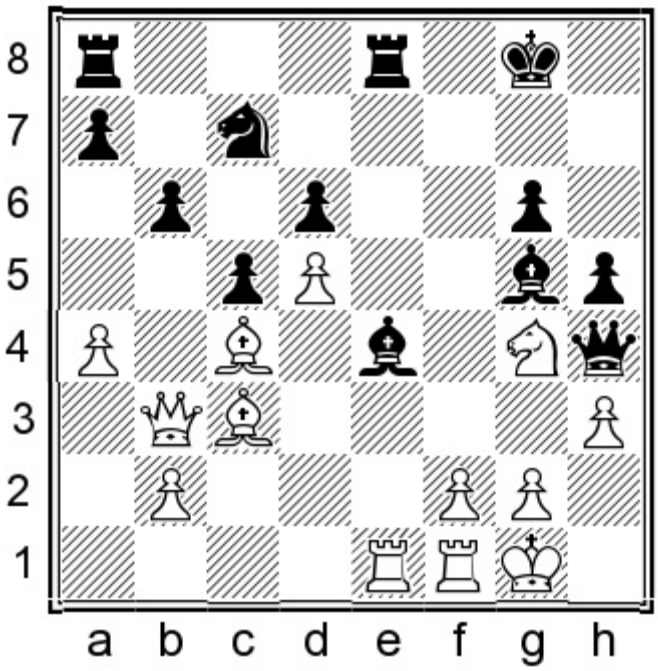
Show/Hide Solution

In this complex position my opponent found a dangerous continuation. **24.♘g4** Disrupting Black's co-ordination and preparing a lovely idea. However, preparing the knight move with 24.f4! would have been more accurate, with the following possibilities:



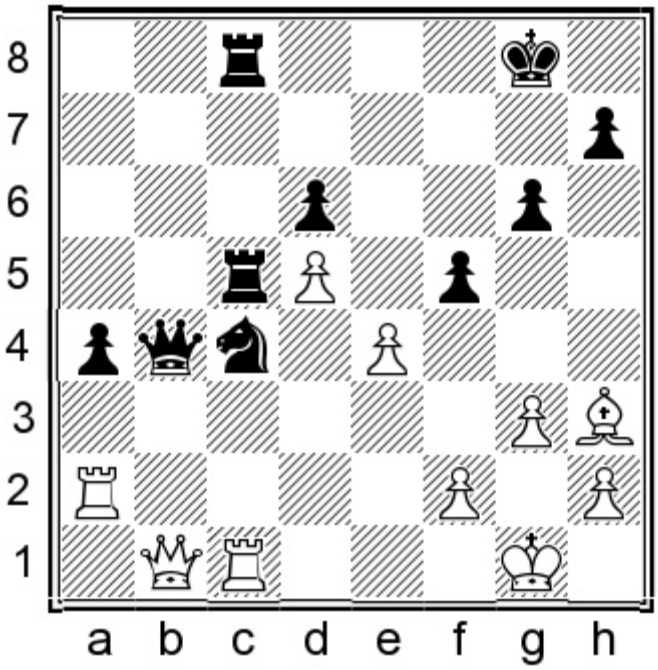
(a) 24...♗h6 25.♘g4 ♗g7 26.♗xg7 ♔xg7 27.♕c3† ♔f7 28.♘e5† dxe5 29.♖xe4+–; (b) 24...♗f6 25.♘g4 ♗d4† (25...♗xc3 26.♕xc3+–) 26.♗xd4 cxd4 27.g3 ♕d8 28.♗d3 ♗xd3 29.♕xd3+–; (c) 24...♗xf4 25.♘g4 ♗g5 26.♗e5!! (26.♗f6 ♗f5!∞) 26...dxe5 (26...♖ad8 27.♖xe4+–; 26...♗f5 27.♗g3 ♕h5 28.♗xd6+–) 27.d6† ♔h8 28.♖xe4+– **24...h5** (I missed the chance to put up a better defence with 24...♗f5 25.♗e5!? dxe5 26.d6† ♔g7 27.dxc7 ♗f4!∞)

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25.♗e5!! White leaves the knight and puts a second piece en prise! **25...♗xg2** (25...hxg4 26.♖xe4 ♖xe5 27.♖xg4! [27.♖xe5 dxe5 28.d6† ♔g7 29.dxc7 ♖c8 30.♗e6 ♖xc7 31.♗xg4 e4! 32.g3 ♕h8 33.♕d5±] 27...♕h6 28.f4 ♗xf4 29.♖gxf4+–) **26.♔xg2** (26.♕d3!? dxe5 27.♘xe5 ♖xe5 28.♖xe5 ♕xh3 29.d6† ♔g7 30.♕xh3 ♗xh3 31.♖fe1 ♗f6 32.♖5e3 ♗f5 33.dxc7 ♖c8 34.♖e7† ♗xe7 35.♖xe7† ♔f6 36.♖f7† ♔e5 37.♗a6 ♖e8±) **26...hxg4 27.♗xd6 ♖xe1 28.♖xe1 gxh3† 29.♔h1 ♖e8 30.♗e5!+–** White went on to win.

2. Piankov – Psakhis, Irkutsk 1977

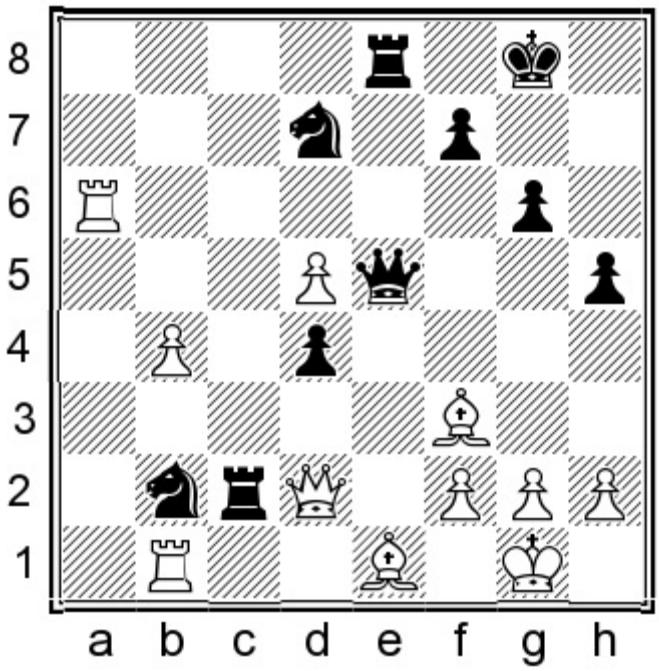


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This time there is a one-punch knockout which forced White's immediate resignation. **35...♘e3!! 0–1**

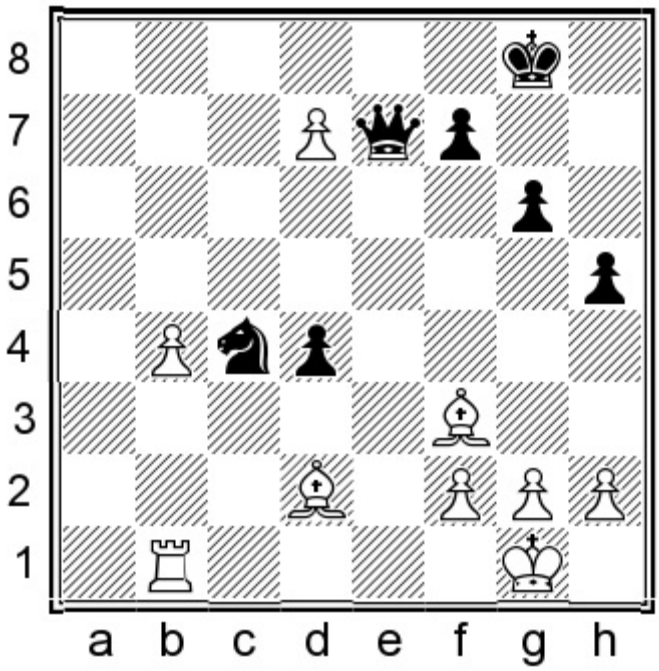
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3. Skembris – Psakhis, Novi Sad (ol) 1974



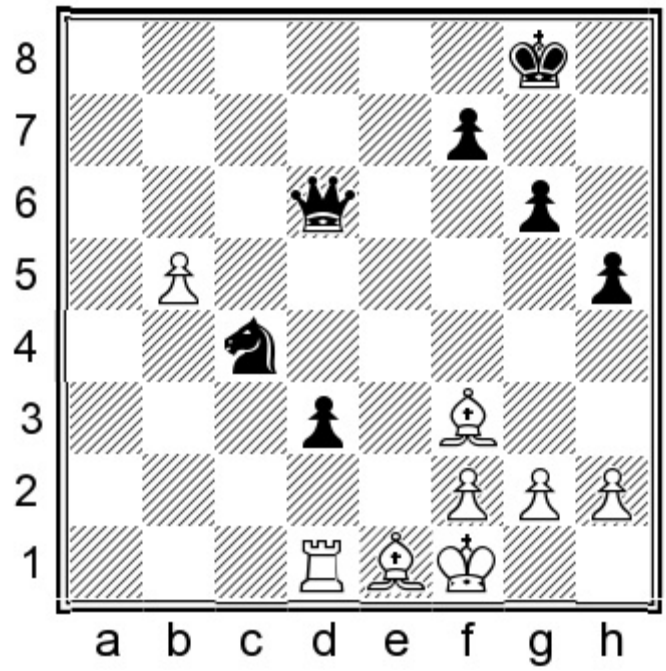
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White looks to be – and is! – in serious trouble, but he can keep himself in the game with the help of some remarkable tactics. **31.♖e6!! ♖xe6** The only dangerous reply. **32.dxe6 ♖xd2 33.exd7 ♕e7 34.♗xd2 ♘c4**

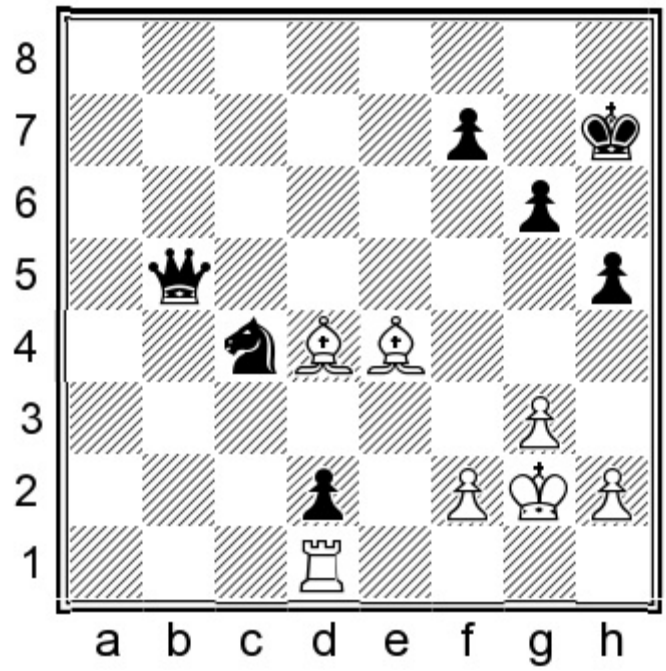


35.♗e1? White could have defended successfully with: 35.♗c6! ♘xd2 36.♖a1 ♔g7 37.h3! d3 38.b5 ♘b3 (38...♕d6 39.♖a8 ♘f3† 40.♗xf3 ♕xd7 41.b6 d2 42.♖a1 ♕d4 43.♖b1 ♕c5 44.♖d1 ♕xb6 45.♖xd2=) 39.♖a8 ♕e1† (39...♘d2 40.♖e8 ♘f3† 41.gxf3 ♕xd7 42.♗xd7 d2=) 40.♔h2 ♘d2 41.♖e8 ♘f1† 42.♔g1 ♘e3†= Black has no more than perpetual check. **35...♕xd7 36.b5 ♕e6 37.♔f1 d3** (37...♘a3! 38.♖c1 ♘xb5–+) **38.♖d1** (38.♗c3!?) **38...♕d6**

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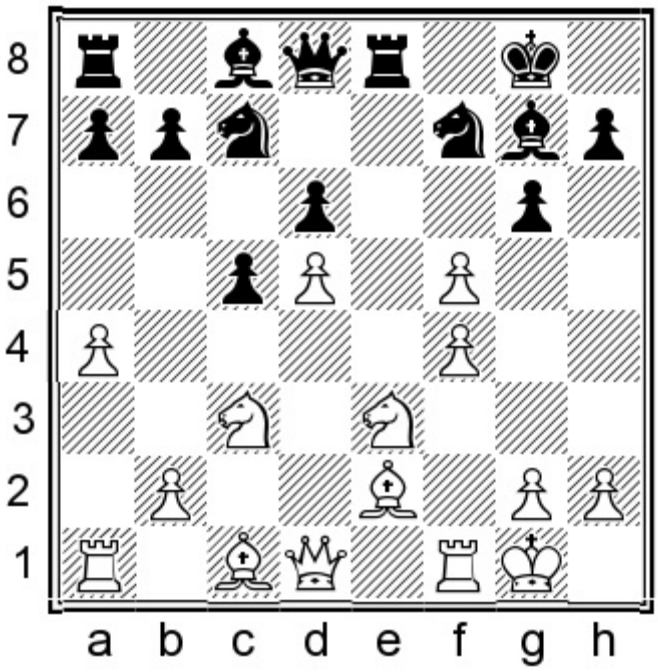
39.g3? (39.♗c3∓ was necessary. After the text move Black is winning, and was able to convert his advantage.) **39...♕d4** (39...d2! 40.♗xd2 ♕d3†! 41.♔g2 ♘xd2–+) **40.♗d2 ♕b2 41.♗e3 ♕xb5** (41...♘e5!? 42.♖d2 ♕xb5–+) **42.♗d4 ♔h7 43.♗e4** (43.♖xd3 ♘d2†! 44.♔e2 ♘xf3–+; 43.♔g2 d2 44.♗c3 ♕d7 intending ...♕d3 winning) **43...d2 44.♔g2**



44...h4!–+ 45.h3 hxg3 46.♗f3 (46.♔xg3 ♕g5† 47.♔f3 ♕h5†; 46.fxg3 ♘e3†! 47.♗xe3 ♕e2†) **46...gxf2 47.♔xf2 ♕b8 48.♔e2 ♕d6 49.♗f2 ♕e6† 0–1**

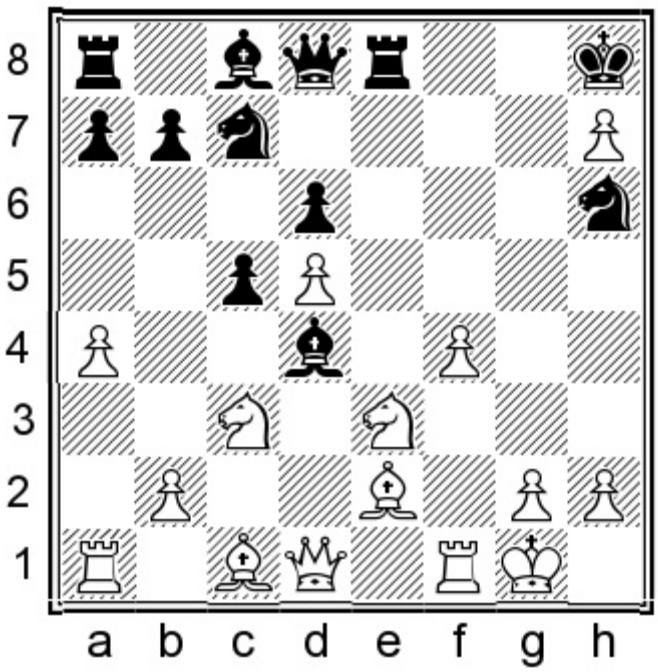
4. Toth – Matulovic, Budapest 1972

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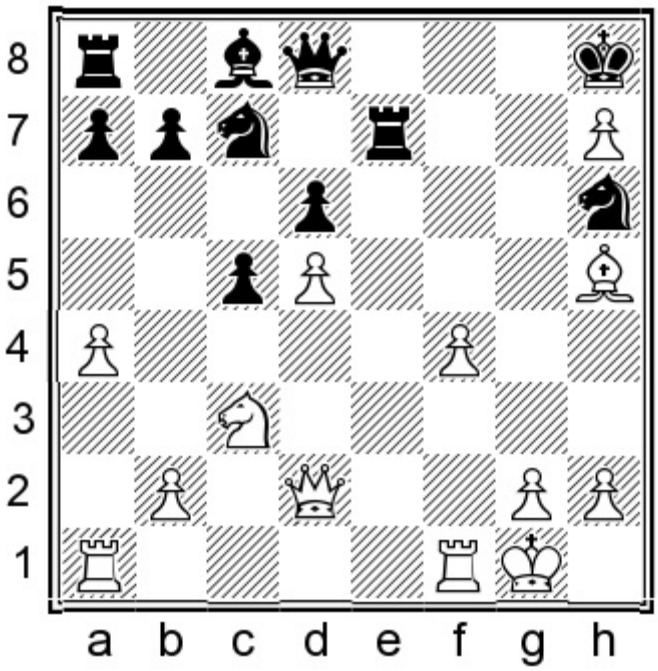
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Presumably White was expecting a mundane recapture on f5, but Black found a much more dynamic way to handle the position. **16...♘h6!?** (16...♗d4 17.fxg6 ♘h6! is equally valid) **17.fxg6** (17.♔h1 ♘xf5 18.♘xf5 ♗xf5∓) **17...♗d4! 18.gxh7† ♔h8**



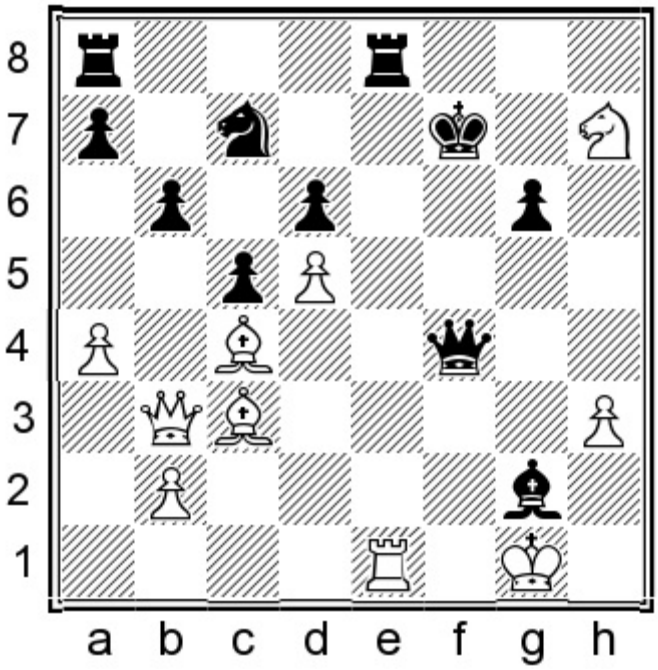
19.♖f3 White's efforts to defend the pinned knight lead him into difficulties. White should instead return some material to resolve the pin: 19.♗h5!! ♗xe3† (19...♖xe3 20.♗xe3 ♗xe3† 21.♔h1 ♗d4 22.♕e2∞) 20.♗xe3 ♖xe3 21.♕d2 ♖e7 (21...♘f5 22.g4 ♖h3 23.♘e4∞; 21...♕e7 22.♖ae1 ♖xe1 23.♖xe1 ♕g7 24.♘b5! ♗g4 25.♘xc7 ♕xc7 26.♕c3† ♕g7 27.♕xg7† ♔xg7 28.♖e7† ♔h8 29.♗xg4 ♘xg4 30.h3 ♘f6 31.g4 b5 32.axb5 ♖b8 33.g5 ♘xd5 34.♖f7 ♘xf4! 35.♖xf4 ♔xh7=)

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22.f5! ♘xf5 23.♗g6 ♖e5 (23...♘g7? 24.♕f4+–) 24.♖ae1 ♖xe1 25.♖xe1 ♕f6 26.♘b5 ♕xg6 27.♘xc7 ♖b8 28.♖e8† ♔xh7 29.♕d3∞ **19...♘g4 20.♕d3 ♕h4** (20...♕f6! 21.h3 ♘xe3 22.♗xe3 ♖xe3 23.♖xe3 ♗f5! 24.♘e4 ♗xe4 25.♕xe4 ♖e8–+) **21.h3 ♘xe3 22.♖xe3** (22.♗xe3 ♖xe3 23.♖xe3 ♕xf4 24.♔h1 ♗xe3 25.♖f1 ♕h6 26.♘e4 ♗d7∓) **22...♕xf4 23.♘d1 ♘xd5 24.♖a3 ♘xe3 25.♘xe3 ♗f5–+ 26.♕b3 ♗xh7 27.♔h1 ♗e5! 28.♔g1 ♕h2† 29.♔f2 ♗g3† 30.♔f3 ♗e4† 31.♔g4 ♖g8† 0–1**

5. Baranov – Psakhis, Krasnoyarsk 1974 (var)

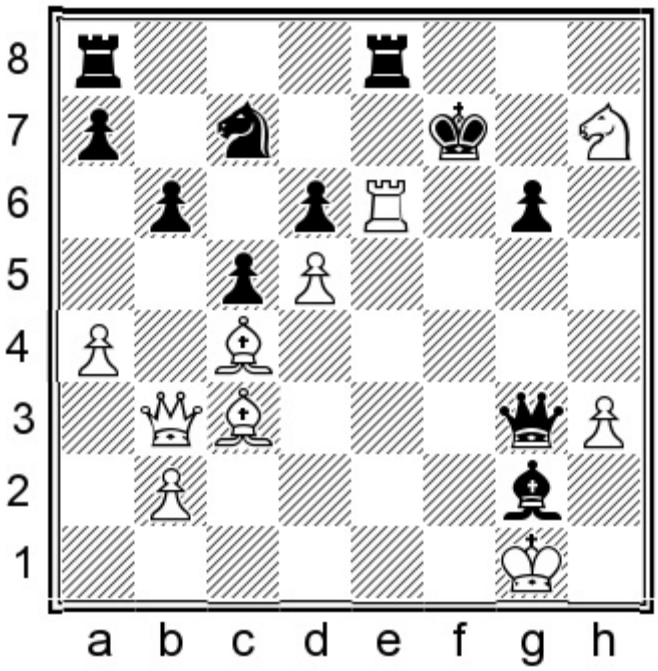


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This is just one of many potential offshoots from the first test position, and contains a lot of tactical nuances. **29.♖e6!** The only way to survive! (29.♖xe8? ♖xe8 30.♔xg2 ♖e3–+; 29.♔xg2?! ♖xe1 30.♗xe1

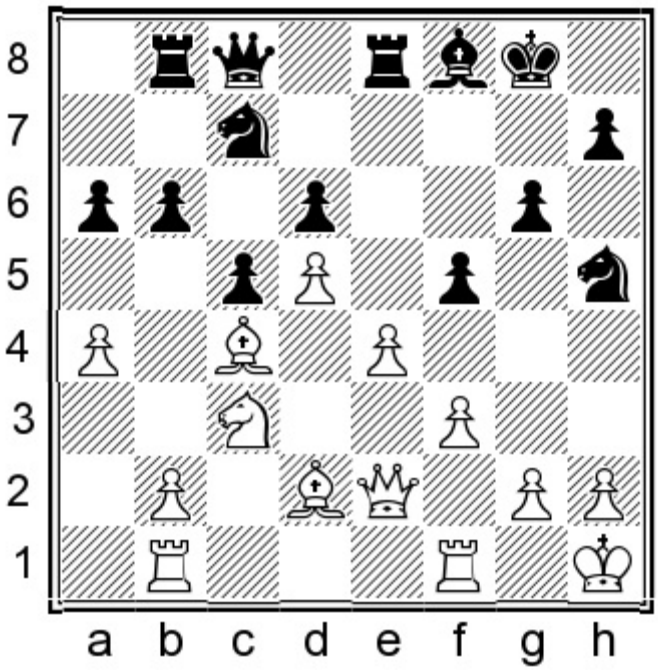
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♔g7 31.♗g3 ♕d2† 32.♔g1 ♔xh7 33.♕f3 [33.♗xd6 ♖e8–+] 33...♕d4† 34.♔h1 ♔g7–+) **29...♕g3** (29...♘xe6? 30.dxe6† ♔g8 31.♘f6† ♔f8 32.♘d7† ♔g8 33.e7† ♔h7 34.♘f6† ♔h6 35.♘g4† ♔h7 36.♔xg2+–; 29...♖xe6 30.dxe6† ♔g8! 31.♘f6† ♔f8 32.♘d7† ♔e8! [32...♔g8? 33.♔xg2 ♕e4† 34.♔f2 ♕f4† 35.♔e2 ♕e4† 36.♔d1+–] 33.♔xg2 ♕g5† 34.♔f3 d5 35.♗b5 ♕f5† 36.♔g3 ♕g5† 37.♔f3=)



30.♗e5! This idea is already familiar from the first test position. **30...♕xb3** (30...♕e1†? 31.♔xg2 ♕d2† 32.♔g1 dxe5 33.♕f3† ♔g7 34.♕f6† ♔g8 35.♕xg6† ♔h8 36.♕f6† ♔g8 37.♘g5+–) **31.♘g5† ♔f8 32.♗xd6† ♔g7 33.♗e5† ♔h6** (33...♔f8 34.♖f6† ♔g7 35.♖e6† ♔f8=) **34.♘f7† ♔h7 35.♘g5†=**

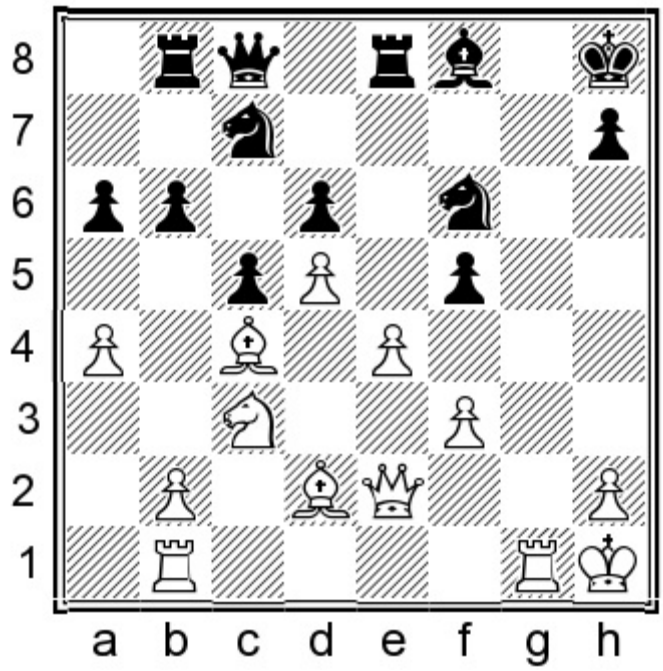
6. Petrosian – Schmid, Zürich 1961



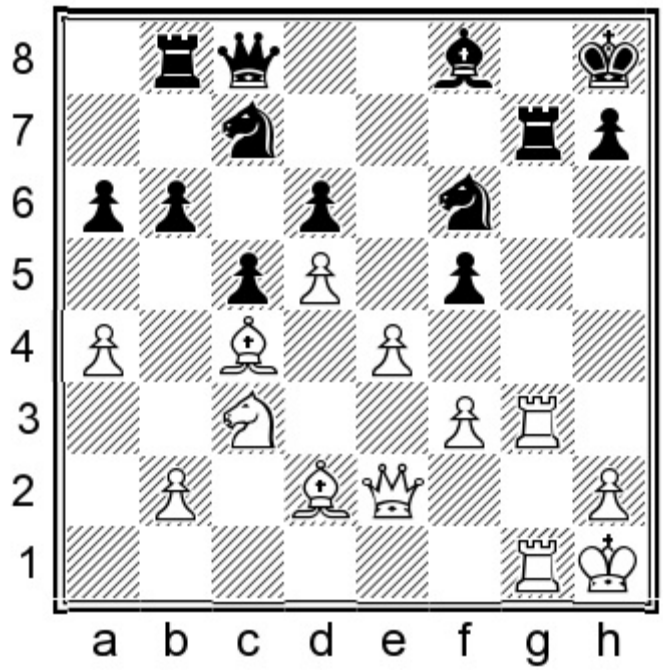
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In this position Petrosian quickly obtained a huge advantage with some energetic play. **21.g4! ♘f6** (21...fxg4 22.fxg4 ♘g7 leaves the knight horribly misplaced, and after 23.b4! White has the upper hand all over the board; 21...♘g7 22.b4! is similar.) **22.gxf5 gxf5 23.♖g1† ♔h8** (23...♔f7 24.♗f4! [threatening e4-e5] 24...♘h5 25.♗g5+– Black is busted and f3-f4 is coming next.)

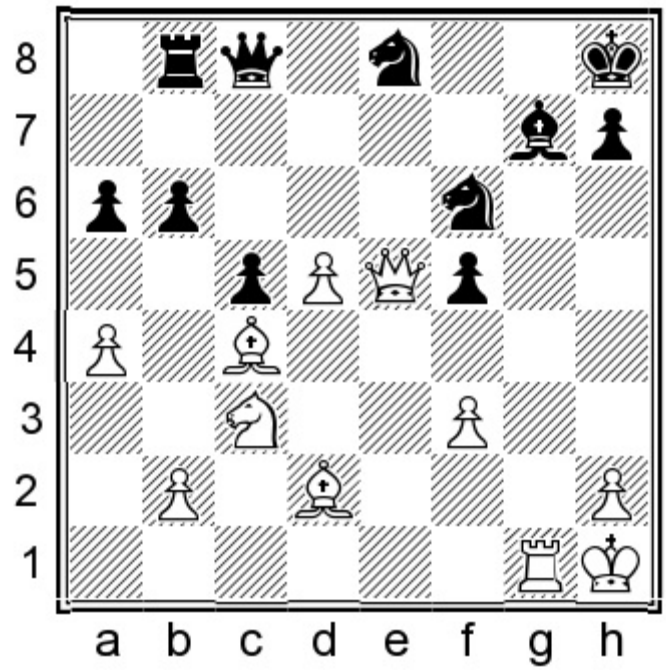


24.♖g3!? (24.♕g2 b5 [24...♕d7 25.b4±] 25.axb5 axb5 26.♘xb5! ♘xb5 27.♗xb5 wins as 27...♖xb5 is met by 28.♗c3.) **24...♖e7 25.♖bg1 ♖g7** (25...♕d7 26.♗g5! ♗g7 27.♕g2 ♖f8 28.exf5+– ♕xf5 29.♘e4 ♘ce8 30.♗xf6 ♖xf6 31.♘xf6 ♕xf6 32.♗xa6+–)



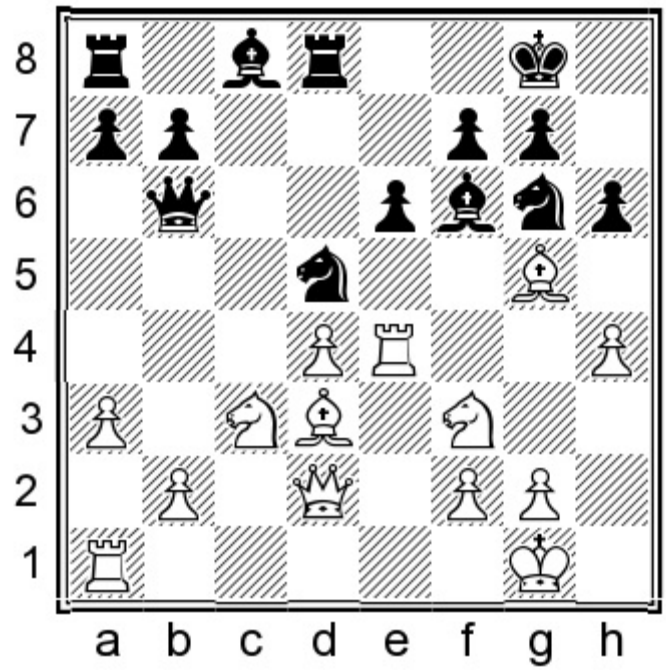
26.e5! (26.♖xg7! ♗xg7 27.e5 dxe5 28.♕xe5 is also crushing.) **26...dxe5** (26...♖xg3 27.♖xg3 ♘h5 28.♖g5 ♘g7 29.e6+–) **27.♕xe5 ♘ce8** (27...♕d8 28.♖xg7 ♗xg7 29.♗f4 ♖c8 30.d6 ♘ce8 31.♗h6!+–) **28.♖xg7 ♗xg7**

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29.♖xg7! (29.♗f4 ♖a8 30.♕e7 ♕d8 31.♕f7+–) **29...♔xg7 30.♕e7† ♔g6** (30...♔h8 31.♗f4+–) **31.d6!** Black resigned in view of **31...♖b7 32.♕e3**, or 31...f4 32.♗d3†. **1–0**

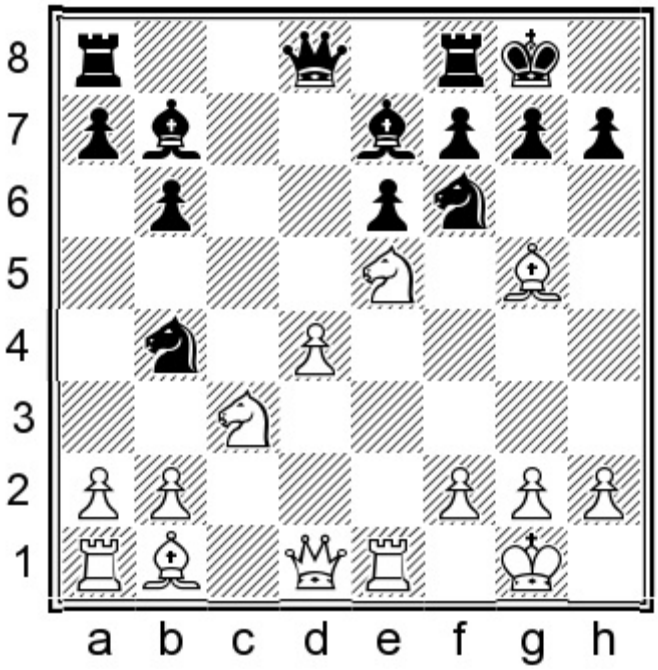
7. Vladimirov – Psakhis, Riga 1980



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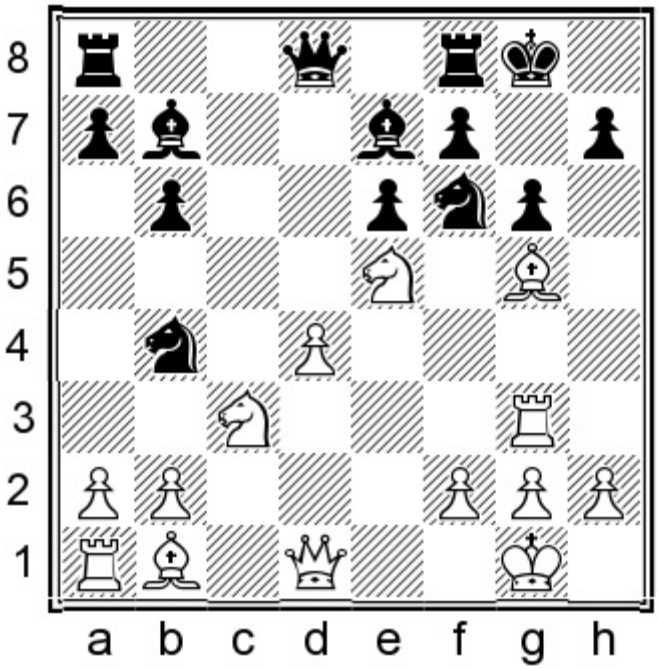
My opponent has built up a powerful attacking position, and now he broke through in style. **16.♗xh6! gxh6 17.h5 ♘ge7** (The best chance was 17...♘gf4!? 18.♘xd5 ♘h3†, but after 19.gxh3 exd5 20.♖f4!+– White can continue with ♘e5, or ♔h2 and ♖g1.) **18.♕xh6 ♗g7** (18...e5?! 19.♖g4† ♘g6 20.hxg6+–; 18...♘f5 19.♖g4† ♘g7 20.♘xd5 exd5 21.♖e1!+–) **19.♖g4 ♘g6 20.♕g5 ♘xc3** (20...e5 21.♘xd5 ♖xd5 22.♖g3 ♗f6 23.♕e3+–) **21.♗xg6!+– ♘e2† 22.♔f1 fxg6 23.♕xg6 ♕c7 24.h6 1–0** chesstouring.com

8. Keene – Miles, Hastings 1975-76



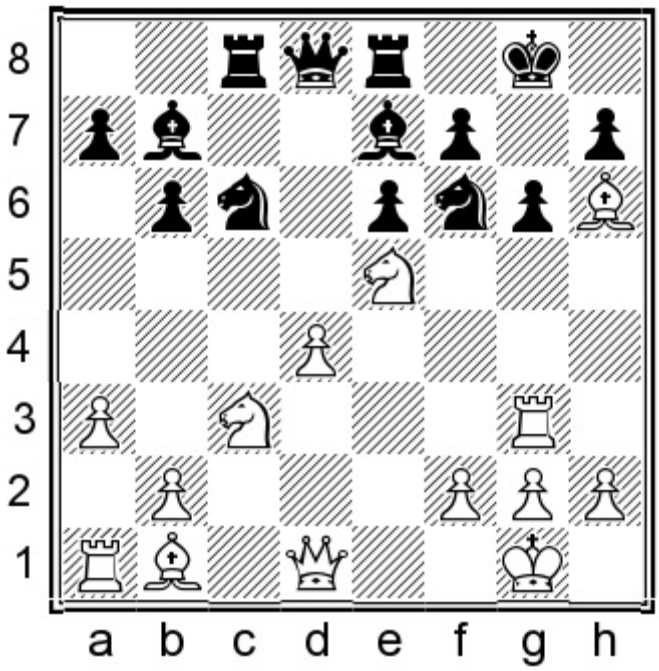
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In this thematic IQP position Keene found a nice idea to put pressure on his opponent. **14.♖e3!** This move yields promising attacking chances, although Black's position remains sound. **14...g6!** (14...♘bd5 is strongly answered by: 15.♖g3 [15.♘xd5? ♕xd5! – but not 15...♘xd5? 16.♗xh7†! – 16.♖g3 g6 17.♗h6 ♖fd8 keeps Black solid] 15...g6 16.♗h6 ♘xc3 [16...♖e8? 17.♗xg6 hxg6 18.♕c2+–] 17.bxc3 ♖e8 18.h4! White has a winning attack. 18...♗f8 19.♗g5 ♗g7 20.h5 ♕d5 21.hxg6 hxg6 22.♗xf6 ♗xf6 23.c4 ♕d6 24.♗xg6 fxg6 25.♖xg6† ♗g7 26.♖xg7† ♔xg7 27.♕g4† Black will be mated in a few moves.)
15.♖g3



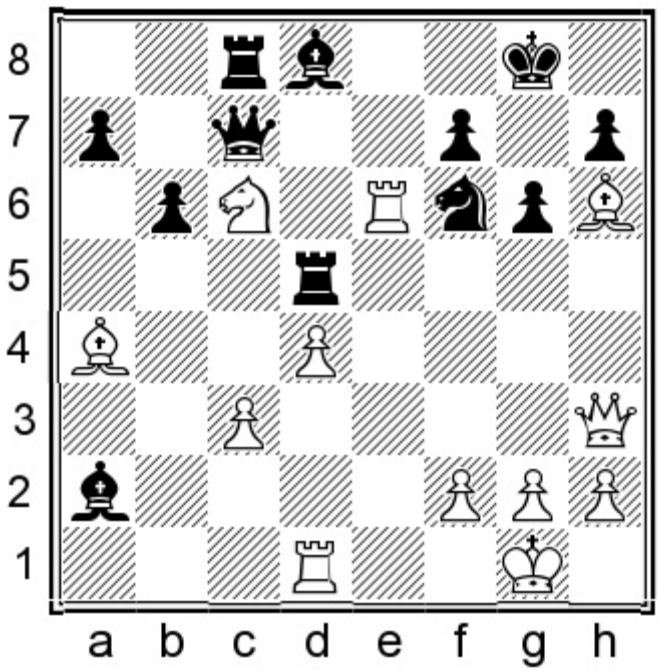
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15...♖c8?! (15...♘c6 16.♗h6 ♕xd4 17.♕xd4 ♘xd4 18.♗xf8 ♗xf8!⩱ gives Black reasonable compensation for the exchange.) **16.♗h6 ♖e8?** (16...♘c6 17.♘xc6 ♖xc6 18.♗xf8 ♗xf8±) **17.a3 ♘c6** (17...♘bd5 18.♗xg6 hxg6 19.♕b1 ♘xc3 20.♖xg6† ♔h7 21.♘xf7! ♘e2† 22.♔f1 ♖c1† 23.♗xc1 [more convincing than 23.♕xc1 ♖g8] 23...♗e4 24.♖h6† ♔g8 25.♘xd8 ♗xb1 26.♔xe2+–)



18.♘xg6!+– hxg6 19.♗xg6 fxg6 (19...♗d6 20.♗xf7† ♔xf7 21.♖g7† ♔f8 22.♕f3+–; 19...♗f8 20.♗e4† ♔h8 21.♗xf8 ♖xf8 [21...♘xe4 22.♕h5#] 22.♕c1 ♘g8 23.♖h3† ♔g7 24.♕f4+–) **20.♕b1!** (20.♕c2? ♘e5! 21.♖xg6† [21.dxe5 ♗e4] 21...♔h7!) **20...♘e5□ 21.dxe5 ♘e4** (21...♗e4 22.♘xe4 ♘h5 23.♘d6 ♖c1† 24.♗xc1 ♘g7 25.♕xg6+–) **22.♘xe4 ♔h7** (22...♖c1†□ 23.♕xc1 ♗xe4 24.♕f4 ♗f5 25.♗g5+–) **23.♘f6† ♗xf6 24.♕xg6† ♔h8 25.♗g7† ♗xg7 26.♕xg7# 1–0**

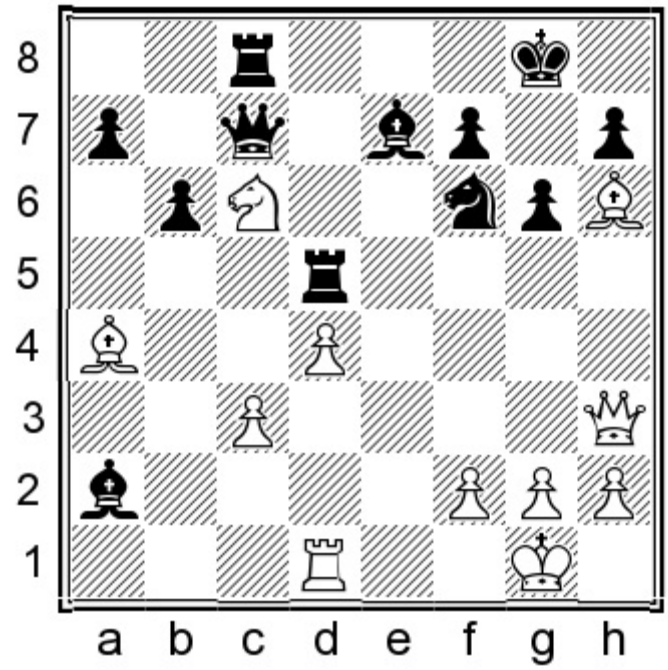
9. Zlotnik – Sokolov, Moscow 1976



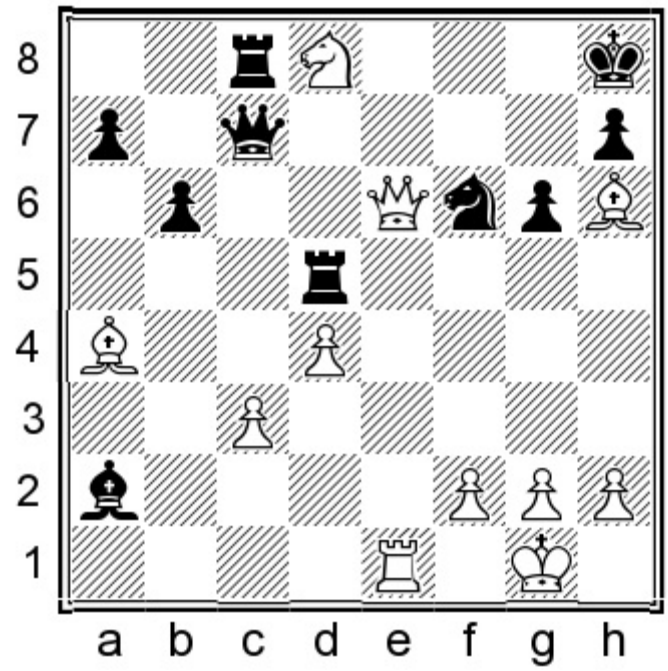
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The move White played brought him success in the game, but he missed a choice of much more effective routes to victory. **25.♖de1?** Stronger was: 25.♖e7! ♖d7 [25...♗xe7



26.♕xc8†! ♗d8 27.♕xc7 ♗xc7 28.♘e7† ♔h8 29.♘xd5+–] 26.♖xd7 [or 26.♖e3!?+–] 26...♕xd7 27.♘e7† ♕xe7 28.♕xc8 ♗e6 29.♕b8+–. Another powerful option was 25.♖e3! planning to double rooks on the e-file, for example: 25...♖f5 (25...♖d6 26.♖de1 ♗e6 27.♖xe6 fxe6 28.♖xe6 ♖a8 29.♘e5 ♖b8 30.♖xd6 ♕xd6 31.♗b3† ♘d5 32.♕f3+–) 26.♖de1 ♗e6 27.g4 ♖d5 28.♖xe6 fxe6 29.♖xe6 ♕f7 30.♕e3+–. A third winning move was 25.♖e2! meeting 25...♗c4 with either 26.♖e7+– or 26.♖e3+–.
25...fxe6□ 26.♕xe6† ♔h8 27.♘xd8

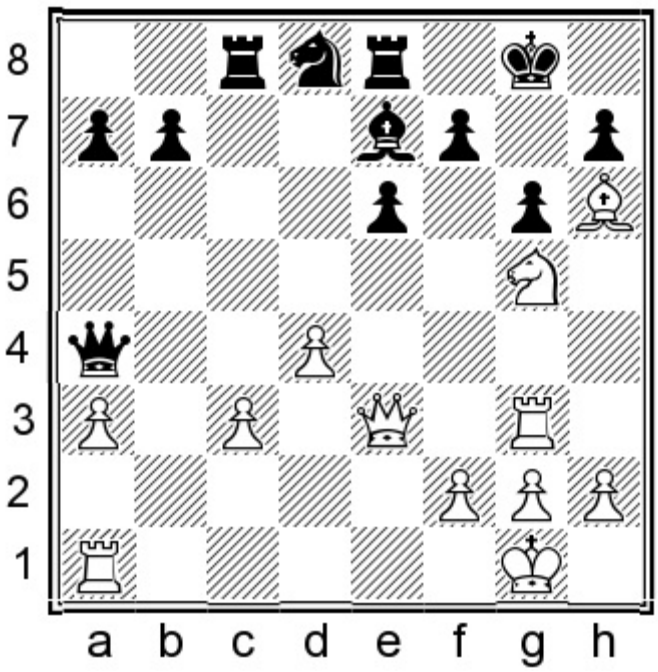


27...♕xd8? (27...♕xh2†! 28.♔xh2 ♖h5† 29.♕h3 [29.♔g3 ♗xe6 30.♖xe6 ♖xd8 31.♗f4 ♘d5∞]

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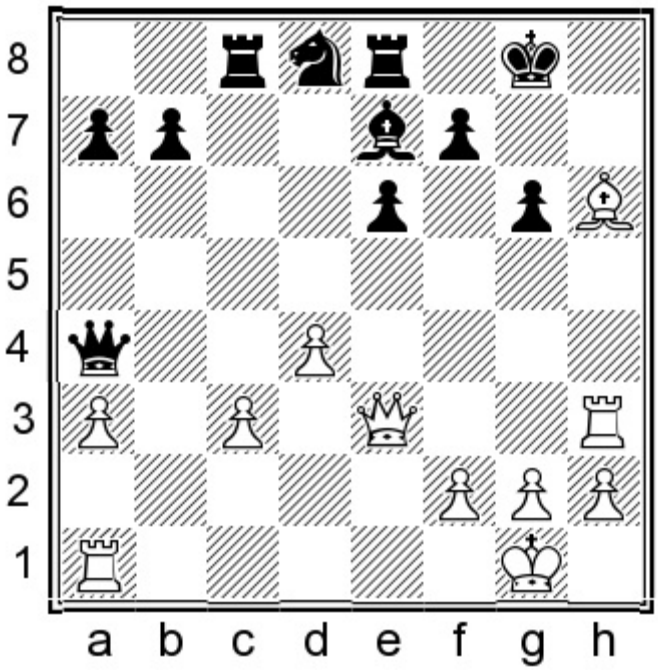
29...♖xh3† 30.♔xh3 ♖xd8 31.♗g5 ♖f8± would have left Black with some chances to survive.)
28.♕f7!+– ♘h5 29.♖e8† ♕xe8 30.♗xe8 ♖f5 31.♕e7 ♖f6 32.g4 ♖e6 33.♕f8# 1–0

10. Baburin – Lengyel, Budapest 1990



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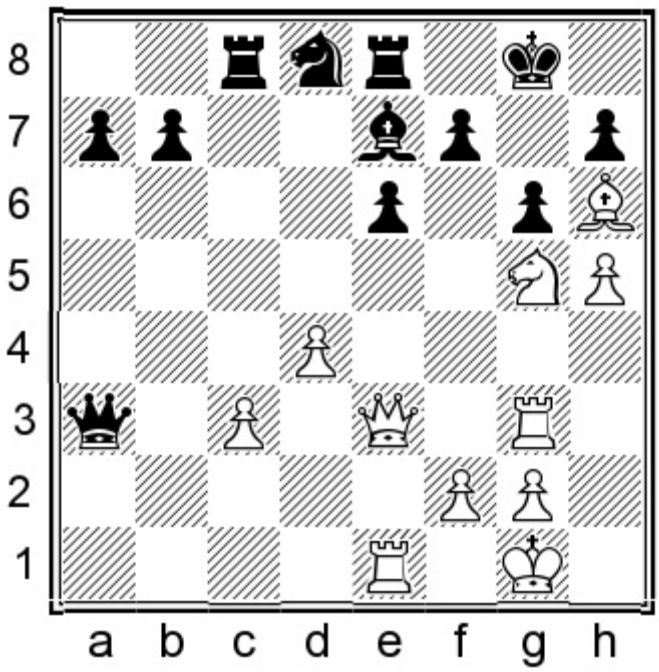
White has a promising position, but how should he finish Black off? **21.h4?!** White aims to increase the pressure but misses a great opportunity to crown the attack in style: 21.♘xh7!! ♔xh7 22.♖h3 (or 22.♕e5!? f6 23.♕e4 ♖g8 24.♖h3 ♖g7 [24...♖xc3 25.g3 ♖g7 26.♗d2†+–] 25.♗xg7† ♔xg7 26.♕h4 ♘f7 27.♕h7† ♔f8 28.♕xg6+–) 22...♔g8



23.♗g7! ♗f8 (23...♔xg7 24.♕h6† ♔f6 25.♖f3#) 24.♗f6 ♗g7 25.♕e5!? (or 25.♕g5 intending ♕h4+–)

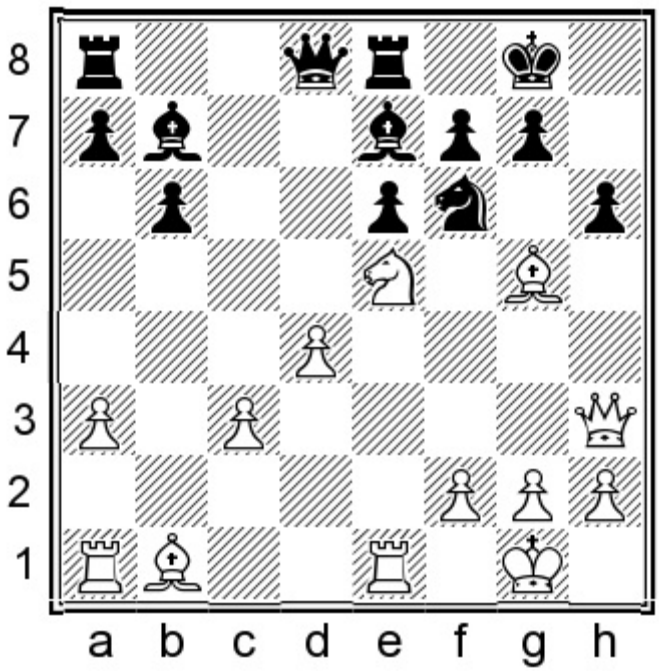
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25...♘c6 26.♗xg7 ♘xe5 27.♗f6 Followed by ♖h8#. The immediate 21.♖h3? (preparing ♘xh7) allows Black to defend with 21...♗xg5! 22.♕xg5 f5! intending ...♕d7.) **21...♕b3** This is too slow. Black should try either 21...e5!? 22.dxe5 ♖c5 (22...♕xh4? 23.♖h3 ♕g4 24.♘xh7+–) 23.♖e1± or 21...f6 22.♘e4 ♕b5 (22...♘f7? 23.h5! g5 24.f4! ♘xh6 25.fxg5 fxg5 26.♖xg5† ♗xg5 27.♕xg5† ♔h8 28.♕f6† ♔g8 29.♕xh6+–) 23.h5! ♕xh5 24.♖h3 ♕f5 25.♖f3 ♕h5 26.♘xf6† ♗xf6 27.♖xf6±. **22.h5 ♕b2** (22...♕b5 23.♖e1+–) **23.♖e1** (23.♘xh7! ♕xa1† 24.♔h2 ♔xh7 25.hxg6† fxg6 26.♕e5 ♖g8 27.♖h3+–) **23...♕xa3?!** Now Black is swiftly destroyed.



24.♘xh7!+– ♔xh7 (24...♕a5 25.hxg6 fxg6 26.♕e4 ♕f5 27.♕xf5 exf5 28.♘f6†+–) **25.hxg6† fxg6 26.♕e5 ♗f8 27.♕f6 1–0**

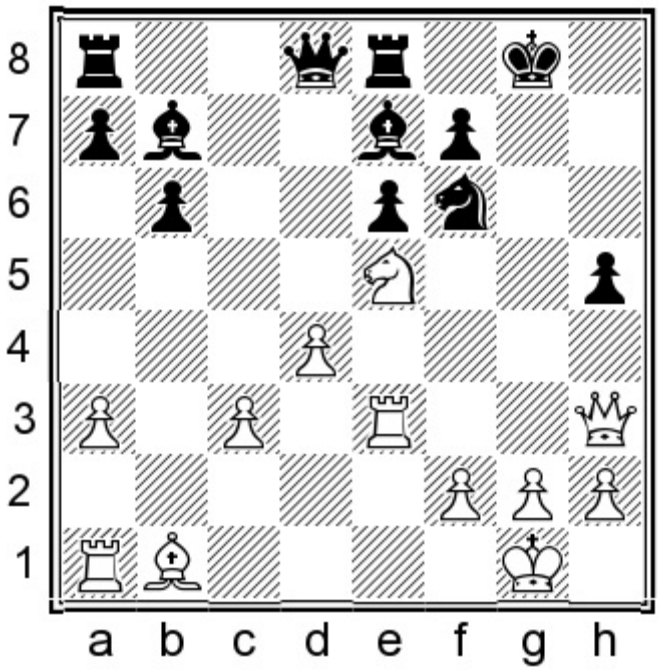
11. Stean – Padevsky, Moscow 1977



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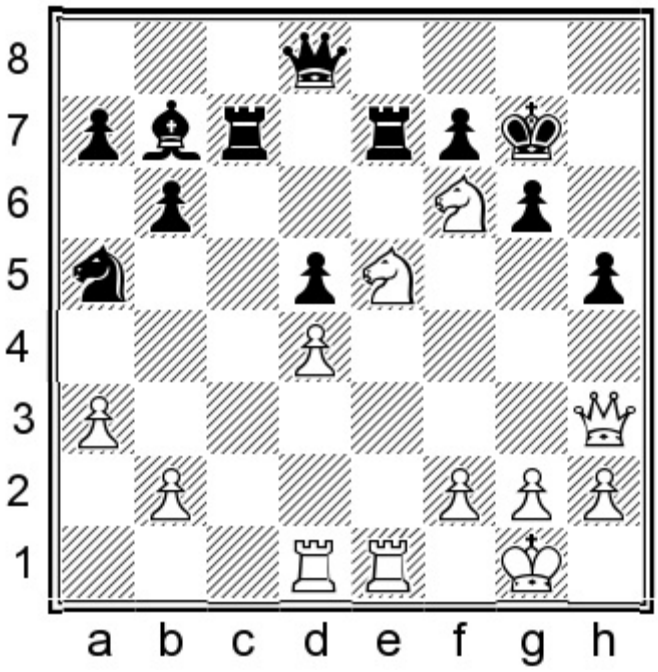
18.♗xh6! The first move is obvious, but the real challenge is to follow it up correctly. **18...gxh6 19.♖e3!** (19.♕xh6 ♗f8 20.♕f4 ♗g7 21.♖e3 ♕e7∓; 19.♕g3† ♔f8 20.♗g6 [20.♘xf7 ♔xf7 21.♕g6† ♔f8=] 20...♗d6 21.♕h3 ♗xe5 22.♕xh6† ♔e7 23.dxe5 ♘d5 24.c4 ♖h8 25.♕g5† ♔e8 26.♕xd8† ♖xd8 27.♗e4 ♖h4 28.cxd5 ♗xd5 29.♗xd5 ♖xd5±) **19...h5!** Black defends resiliently. (19...♗f8 20.♖g3†+−)



20.♕h4? Throwing away the win. (White should opt for either 20.♖g3†!? ♔f8 21.♗g6!+– or 20.♗g6! ♖f8 21.♗xh5 ♘e4 22.♖ae1 f5 23.♖xe4 ♗xe4 24.♖xe4 fxe4 25.♕xe6† ♔g7 26.♕g6† ♔h8 27.♕h6† ♔g8 28.♗g6+–.) **20...♗d6!** (There is also 20...♔f8!? 21.♕g5 ♗d6 transposing.) **21.♕g5† ♔f8 22.♘g6†! fxg6 23.♕h6† ♔g8** (23...♔e7?? 24.♕g7#) **24.♕xg6† ♔f8 25.♕h6† ♔g8 26.♕g6† ½–½**

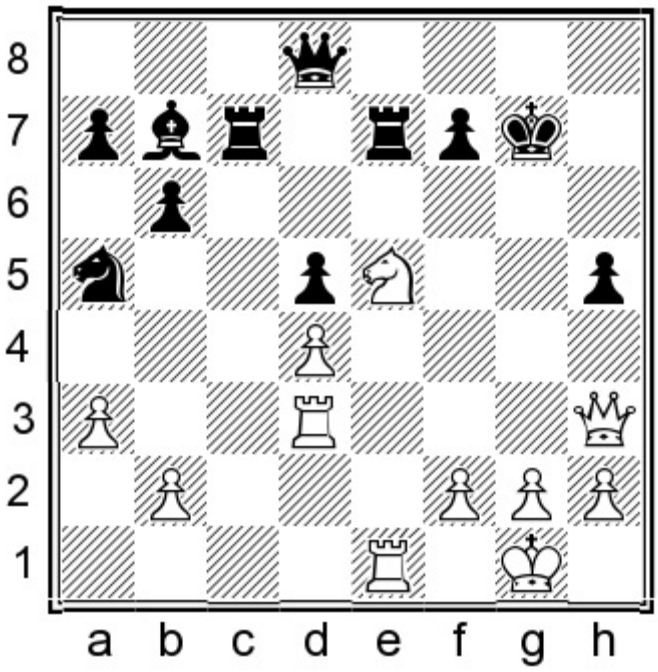
12. Christiansen – Gheorghiu, Torremolinos 1977

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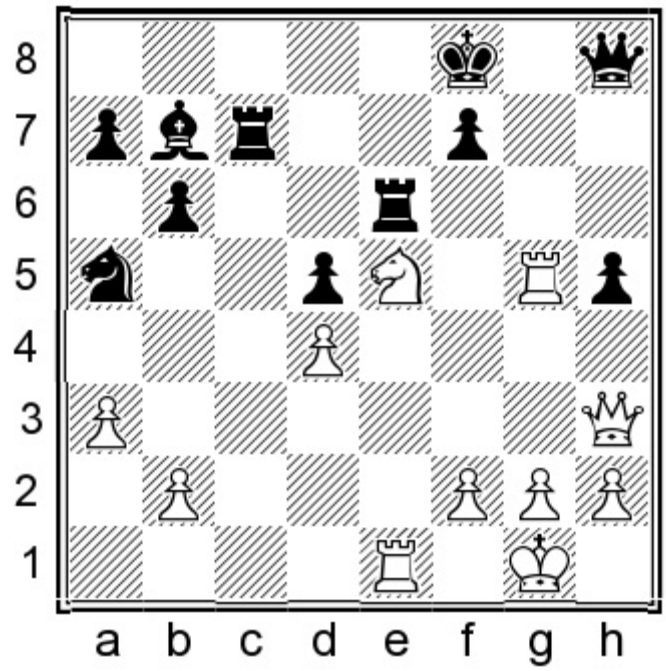
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This game started as a traditional IQP position, before the structure was altered by an exchange on the d5-square. White clearly has the initiative, but how can he capitalize? **25.♘xh5†!?** (25.♕h4! is more accurate, leading to an improved version of the knight sacrifice: 25...♕d6 [25...♘c6 26.♕g5+–] 26.♘xh5†! gxh5 27.♖e3 ♕h6 28.♖g3† ♔f8 29.♖g5+–) **25...gxh5 26.♖d3?** After ripping open the kingside, it is natural to bring a rook into the attack. (However, White should have first forced improved his queen with 26.♕g3†! ♔h7 27.♕g5±, when a possible continuation is: 27...♕f8 28.♕f5† ♔g8 29.♖e3! ♕h6 30.♖g3† ♔f8 31.♘g6† ♔e8 32.♘xe7 ♖c1 33.♖g8† ♔xe7 34.♕e5† ♔d7 35.♕e8† ♔d6 36.♕b8† ♔e6 37.♖e8† ♔d7 38.♕d8† ♔c6 39.♖ee1+–)



26...♕h8! The best defence. (26...♕d6 27.♕xh5 is hopeless for Black.) **27.♖g3† ♔f8 28.♖g5** (28.♕f5?

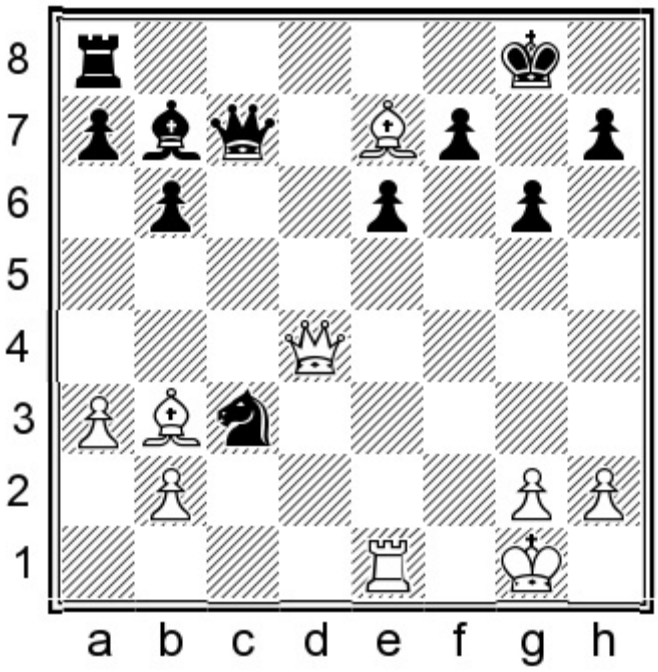
♕h6 leaves White without a convincing follow-up, for example: 29.♖g5 ♘c4 30.♖xh5 ♘d6! 31.♕g4 ♖c1–+) **28...♖e6?** (28...h4! would have enabled Black to defend. The point is that 29.♖g4? allows 29...♖xe5!! 30.dxe5 ♕xe5–+ taking advantage of White's weak back rank. Instead 29.♕f5 is unclear, for example: 29...♘c6 30.♘g6† ♔e8 31.♘xe7 ♖xe7 32.♖e3 ♘xd4 33.♕g4! ♔f8 34.♕f4 ♘e2† 35.♖xe2 ♖xe2 36.♕d6† ♖e7 37.♕d8† ♖e8 38.♕d6†=)



29.♕xe6 (29.♘g6†? ♖xg6 30.♖xh5 does not work on account of 30...♕g8 31.♖h8 ♖xg2†! 32.♔h1 ♖e7! when Black is okay; however, 29.♖xh5! ♕f6 30.f4! is strongest, because 30...♕xf4 loses to 31.♖h8† ♔e7 32.♘g6†!, and against other moves 31.f5 will win.) **29...fxe6 30.♘g6† ♔g7 31.♘xh8† ♔xh8 32.♖xh5† ♔g7 33.h4±** Despite his stubborn defence, Black is still in trouble and from here he fails to offer much resistance in the endgame. **33...♘c6 34.♖xe6 ♘xd4 35.♖g5† ♔h7 36.♖d6 ♖f7 37.f3 ♘f5? 38.♖xf5!+– ♖xf5 39.♖d7† ♔g6 40.♖xb7 ♖f4 41.♖xa7 1–0**

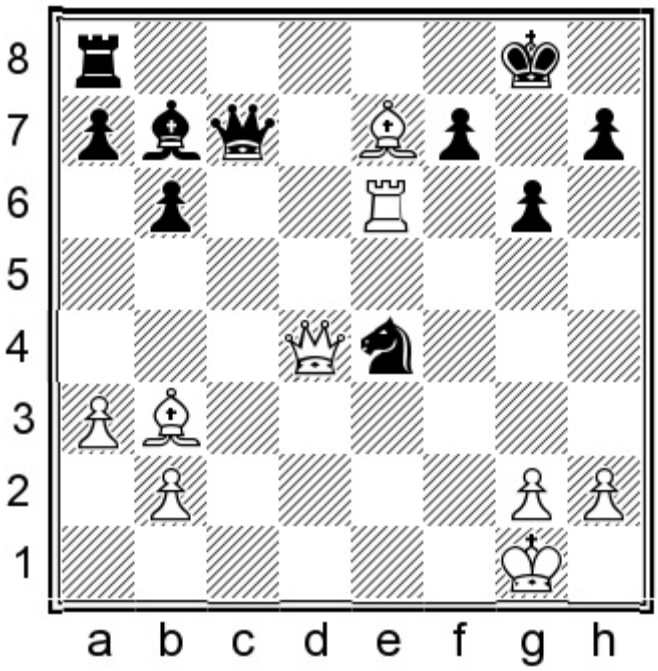
13. Chekhov – Veselovsky, USSR 1980

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23.♖xe6! The first move is obvious, but the question is how to evaluate the resulting position. Before looking any further, try to work it out for yourself. (Note that 23.♗d6? ♘b5!–+ was not a good solution.) **23...♖e8??** A most unfortunate novelty, allowing White to make an instant kill. (23...♘b5? 24.♕f2!±; 23...♘d5?! occurred in a previous game: 24.♗xd5 ♗xd5 25.♕xd5 ♖e8 26.♕e5? [White should have preferred 26.♕e4! fxe6 27.♕xe6† ♔g7 28.♕f6† with equality.] 26...♕d7 27.♖d6 ♕xe7 28.♕xe7 ♖xe7 29.♔f2 h5∓ Black went on to win in B. Kurajica – R. Kutirov, Strumica 1995; However, the best move of all is: 23...♘e4!

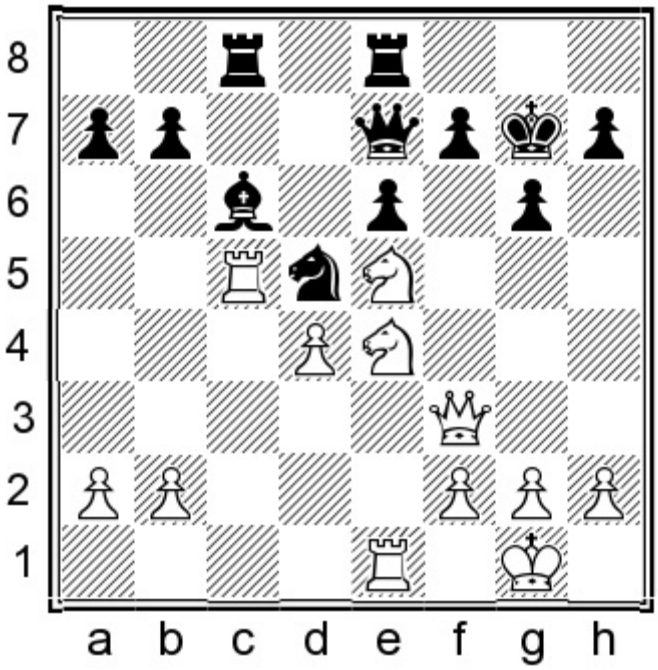


24.♖e5 [24.♖xe4 ♗xe4 25.♕xe4 ♖e8–+] 24...♖e8 [24...♖c8 25.h3] 25.♖xe4 ♖xe7∓ [but not 25...♗xe4? 26.♗xf7†! ♔xf7 27.♕f6† ♔g8 28.♕e6†=] when Black emerges with the advantage!) **24.♖xg6†!**

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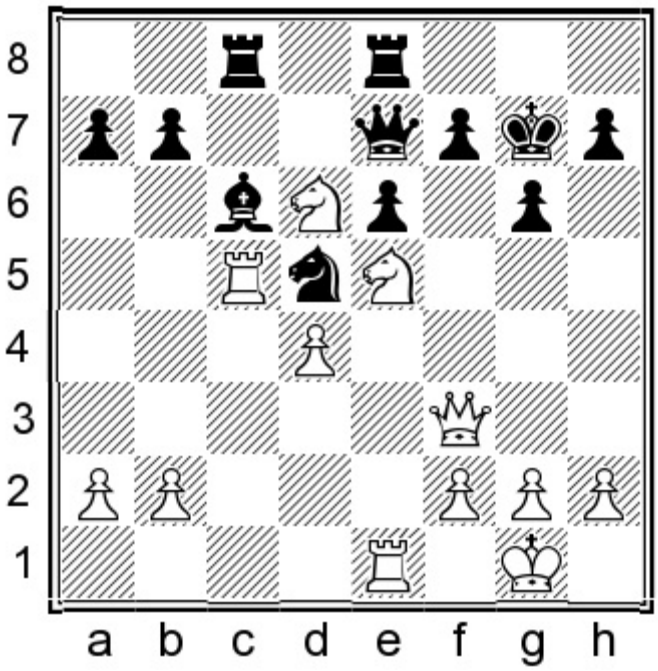
(24.♕h8†! ♔xh8 25.♗f6† ♔g8 26.♖xe8# was an alternative solution.) **24...hxg6 25.♗xf7† 1–0**

14. Hebden – Littlewood, England 1981



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21.♘d6! White's diamond-shaped piece configuration on the dark squares makes a nice geometric impression.



21...♕xd6 22.♕xf7† ♔h6? Losing with no resistance.

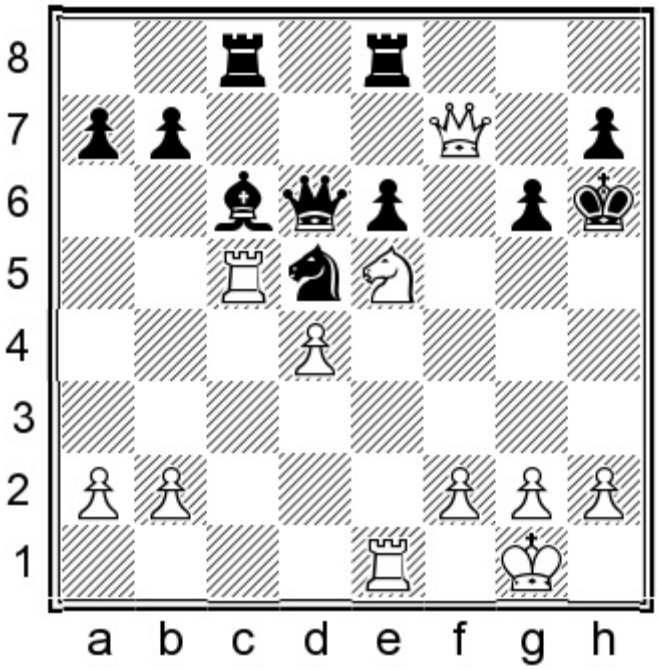
22...♔h8 would have forced White to make an important choice:

a) The tempting 23.♖c3? allows 23...♘xc3 when 24.♖e3? ♘e2†! leads to a dramatic reversal of fortunes: 25.♔h1 (25.♔f1 ♘g3†! 26.hxg3 [26.♖xg3 ♗b5†!] 26...♖f8!–+) 25...♗xg2†! 26.♔xg2 ♕d5†

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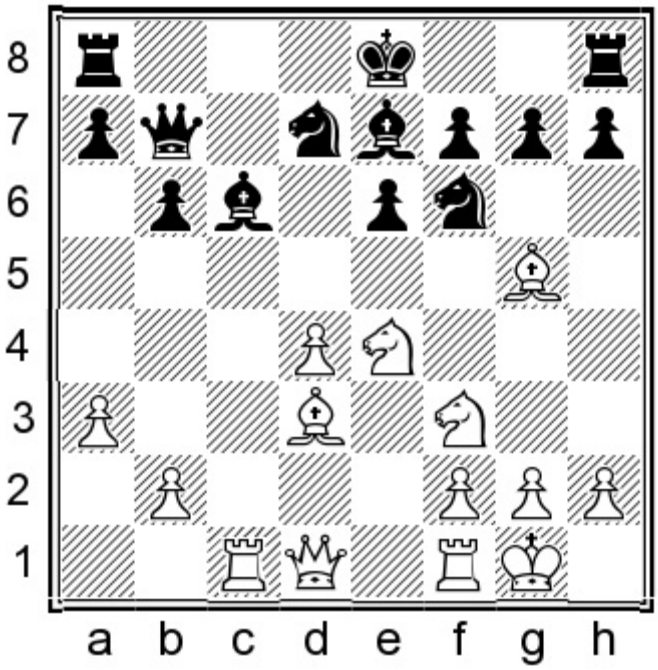
27.♔f1 ♘g3†! 28.♖xg3 (28.hxg3 ♖f8–+) 28...♕h1† 29.♔e2 ♕e4† 30.♖e3 ♕c2† 31.♔f1 ♖f8–+

b) White can do better with 23.♖xc6! bxc6 24.♕xe8†! ♖xe8 25.♘f7† ♔g7 26.♘xd6 ♖b8 27.b3 with a clear advantage, although the game goes on.



23.♘g4† Black resigned as he will soon be mated after **23...♔h5 24.♕xh7† ♔xg4 25.♕xg6† ♔h4 26.♕h6† ♔g4 27.f3†**, or 23...♔g5 24.♕f6† ♔xg4 (24...♔h5 25.♖e3!) 25.♖e4†. **1–0**

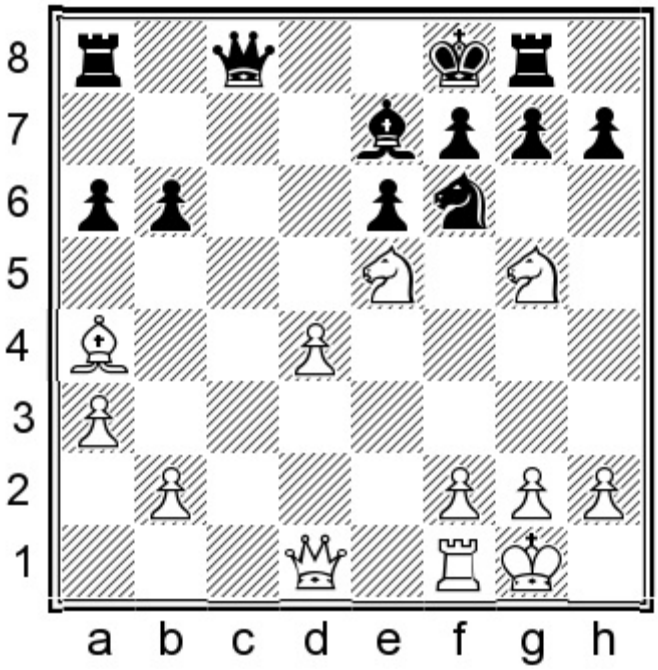
15. Rivas Pastor – Psakhis, Minsk 1982



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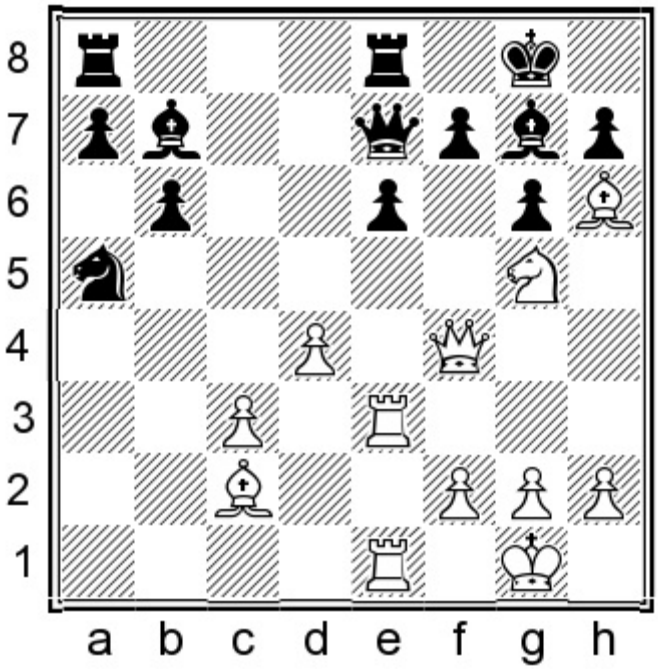
Black has yet to castle and White is ahead in development, but how can he capitalize? **15.♗xf6! ♘xf6?** (Black had to play 15...gxf6, although after 16.♗a6!? ♕xa6 17.♖xc6± he still has real problems.)

16.♖xc6! ♕xc6 17.♘e5 ♕c8 (17...♕d5 18.♕a4† ♔f8 19.♘g5+–) **18.♗b5† ♔f8 19.♘g5 a6 20.♗a4+– ♖g8**



21.♕f3 (21.♘xh7†! ♘xh7 22.♘d7† would have been the quickest route to victory.) **21...g6** (21...b5!?) **22.♗d7! ♕b8 23.♗xe6 ♖g7** (23...fxe6 24.♘xe6† ♔e8 25.♕c6†+–) **24.♗xf7 ♖xf7 25.♘gxf7 ♔g7 26.♘g5 ♕c8 27.♖e1 h6 28.♘e6† ♔h7 29.♘f4 1–0**

16. Novikov – Kourkounakis, Isle of Man 1996

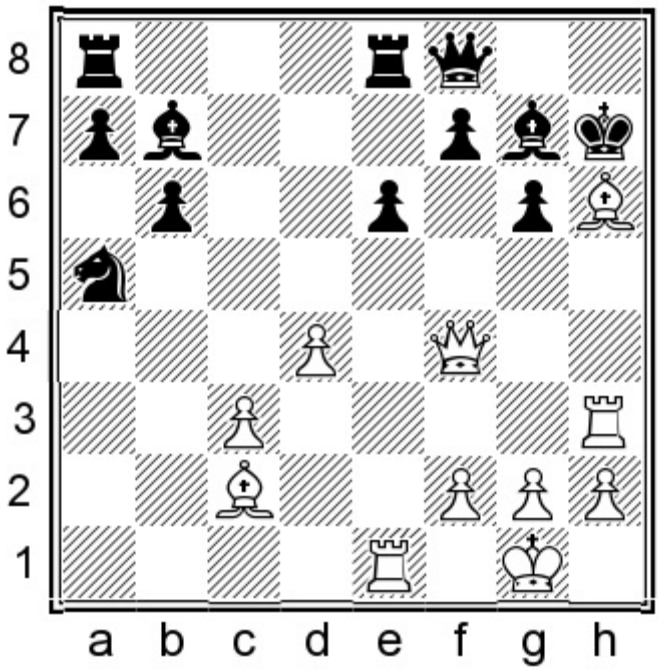


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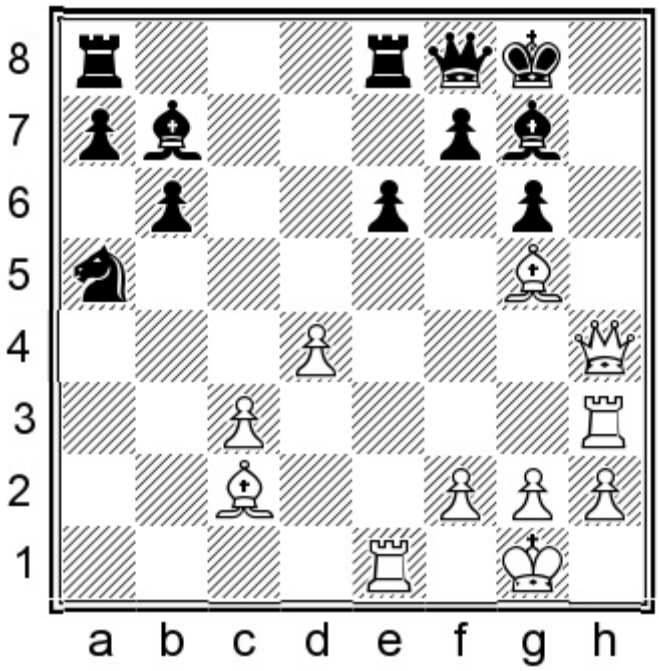
How can White make progress on the kingside? **24.♘xh7!+–** Strongest, though not the only route to victory. (24.♗xg7 ♔xg7 25.♖h3 ♖h8 26.♗xg6!! hxg6 27.♖xe6 ♕xg5 [27...fxe6 28.♕e5† ♕f6 29.♕c7†

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leads to mate] 28.♕xg5 ♖xh3 29.♕e5† ♔f8 30.gxh3 fxe6 31.♕f6†+–; 24.♖h3!? e5 25.♕h4 ♕f6 26.♗a4 ♗c6 27.♗xc6 ♘xc6 28.♖f3 exd4 29.♖f1+–) **24...♔xh7** (Or 24...f5 25.♗xg7 ♕xg7 26.♖h3+– intending ♕h4.) **25.♖h3 ♕f8** (25...♔g8 26.♗xg7 ♔xg7 27.♕h6† ♔f6 28.♗xg6 [or 28.♖g3!?+–] 28...fxg6 29.♕f4† ♔g7 30.♕e5† ♕f6 31.♖h7† ♔xh7 32.♕xf6+–)



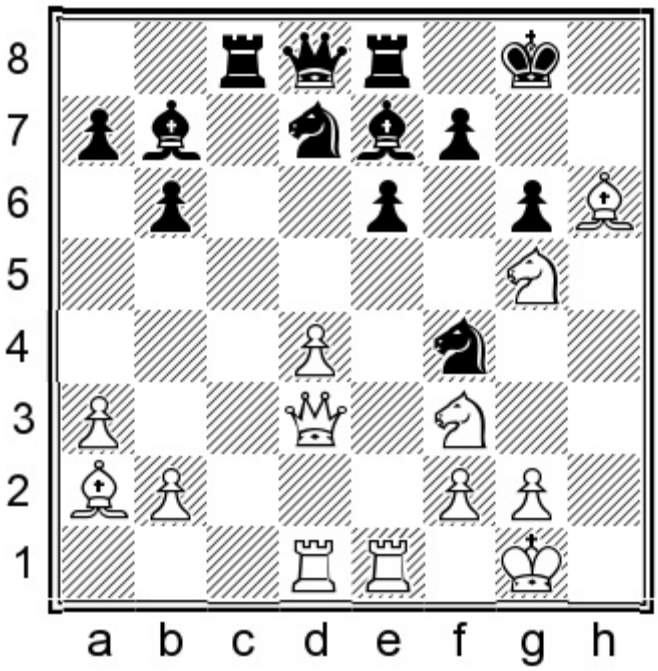
26.♗g5† (White also had two other convincing ways to win: 26.♗xg6†! fxg6 [26...♔g8 27.♗h7† ♔h8 28.♗xg7† ♕xg7 29.♗d3† ♔g8 30.♖g3+–] 27.♗xg7† ♔xg7 28.♕e5† ♕f6 29.♖h7† ♔xh7 30.♕xf6 ♖f8 31.♕e7† ♔h8 32.♖e3+–; or 26.♗xg7† ♔xg7 27.♕e5† f6 28.♕f4!+–) **26...♔g8 27.♕h4**



27...f5 (27...f6 28.♗xg6 ♕e7 29.♕h7† ♔f8 30.♗h6+–) **28.♕h7† ♔f7 29.♖h6 ♕g8 30.♕xg6† ♔f8 31.♖h7 ♕f7 32.♖xg7 ♕xg6 33.♖xg6 ♗d5 34.♖e3 b5 35.♖g3 ♔f7 36.♖f6† ♔g7 37.♗h4† ♔h7 38.♖f7† ♔h6 39.♖fg7 1–0**

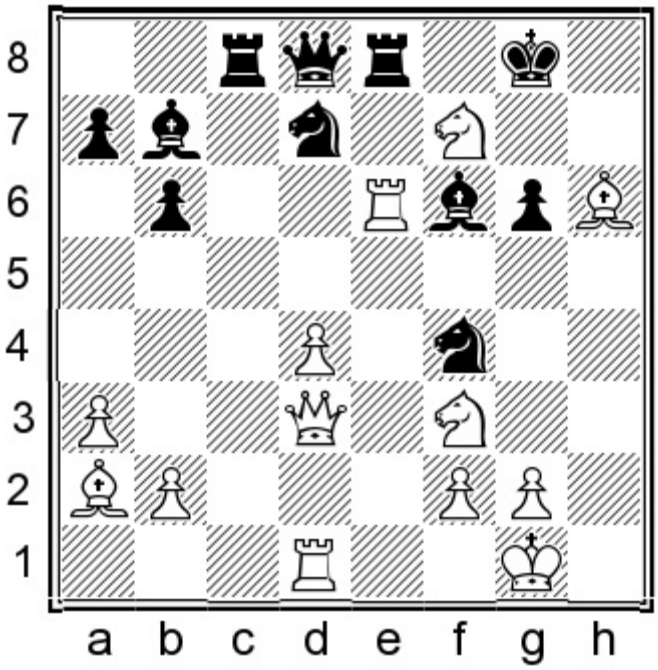
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17. Avrukh – Gheorghiu, Biel 1996



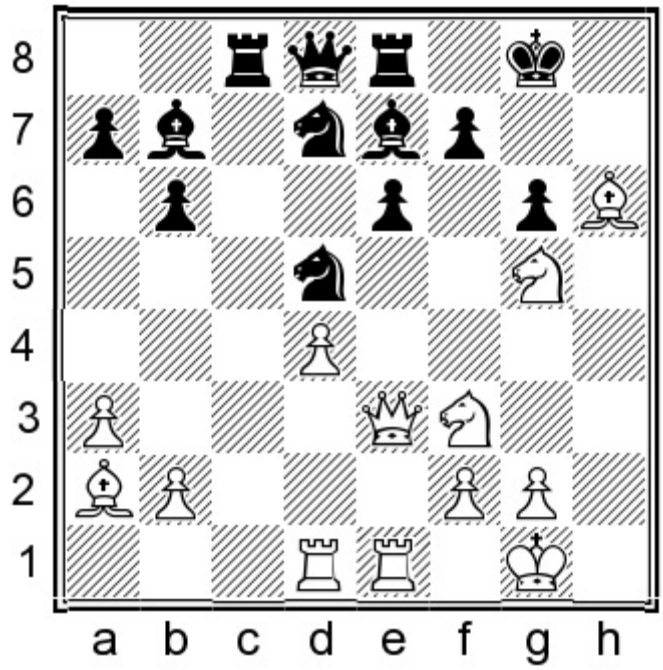
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White's pieces are tremendously active, but how should he proceed? In the game he chose a decent move, but not the best one available. **27.♕e3?!** A better square for the queen was 27.♕d2!? ♘d5 28.♘xe6! fxe6 29.♖xe6 ♗f6 30.♖d6+–. However, most convincing of all was smashing through with 27.♖xe6!, with the following possibilities: (a) 27...♘xd3 28.♖xg6† ♔h8 29.♘xf7† ♔h7 30.♖g7#; (b) 27...♘f8 28.♖xg6†! ♘8xg6 (28...♘4xg6 29.♕f5 ♗f6 30.♗xf7† ♔h8 31.♗xe8+–) 29.♕f5! ♗d5 30.♘xf7 ♖f8 31.♗xf8 ♕xf8 32.♗xd5 ♘xd5 33.♕xg6†+–; (c) 27...♗f6 28.♘xf7!

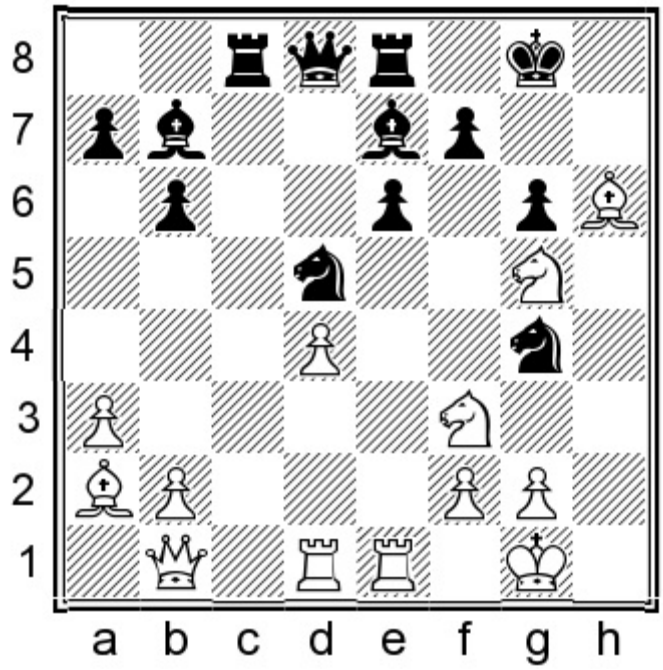


28...♘xd3 (28...♖xe6 29.♘xd8 ♘xd3 30.♗xe6† ♔h7 31.♘xb7 ♘xb2 32.♖c1+–) 29.♘xd8 ♖exd8 30.♘g5!? ♗xg5 31.♗xg5 ♘xb2 32.♖xb6† ♔h7 33.♖xb2+–; (d) 27...♘f6 28.♘xf7! ♘xd3 29.♘xd8 ♗d5

30.♗xd5 (or 30.♘c6+–) 30...♘xd5 31.♘c6+– **27...♘d5** The only move. (27...♗d6 is refuted by 28.♘xf7!.)



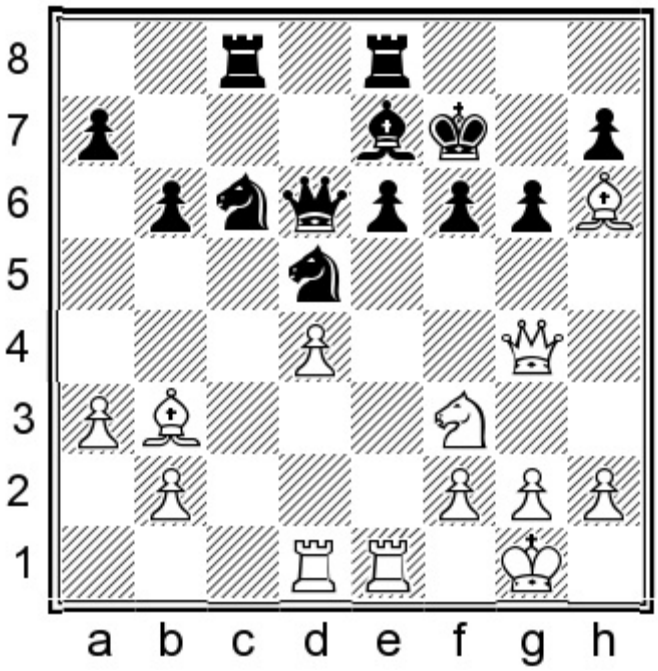
28.♕e4 Despite the previous inaccuracy White still has a large advantage. (Once again there was an immediate tactical solution: 28.♘xf7! ♘xe3 [28...♔xf7 29.♕xe6#] 29.♘xd8 ♘xd1 [29...♗xf3!? 30.♗xe6† ♔h7 31.♗xe3 ♗xd1 32.♗xd7 ♖cxd8 33.♗xe8 ♗b3 34.♗c6+–] 30.♗xe6† ♔h7 31.♘xb7 ♗xa3 [31...♖c7 32.♗f4 ♖xb7 33.♗f7 ♗d6 34.♗xe8 ♗xf4 35.♖xd1+–] 32.bxa3 ♔xh6 33.♘d6 ♖xe6 34.♖xe6+–) **28...♘7f6** (28...♗f6 29.♕g4 is also difficult for Black, for instance 29...♗g7?! 30.♘xf7! ♔xf7 31.♘g5† ♔f8 32.♖xe6 [32.♕h4!?→] 32...♘7f6 33.♕h3 with a raging attack.) **29.♕b1!** Threatening a sacrifice on f7. **29...♘g4?!** (29...♕c7 30.♘xf7 ♕c2 31.♘3e5+–)



30.♖xe6!+– ♖c6 31.♘xf7! ♖xe6 32.♘xd8 ♗xd8 33.♗g5 ♗c7 34.♘e5 1–0

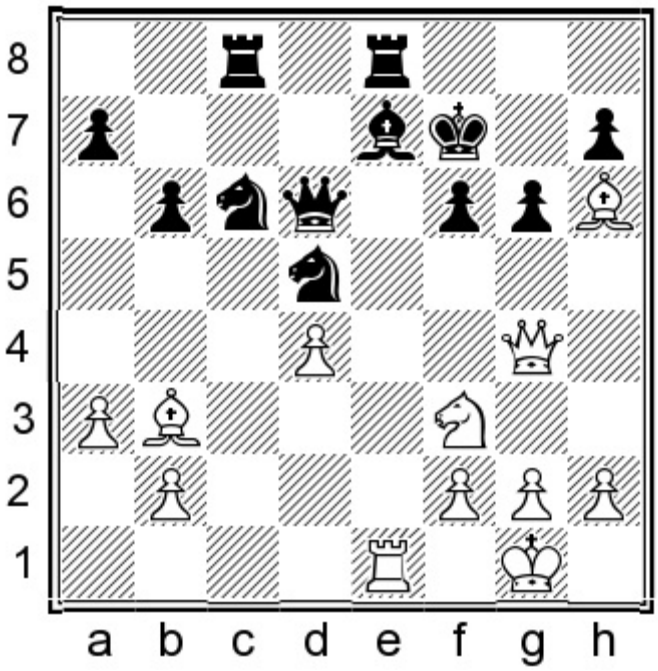
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18. Sturua – Kutirov, Yerevan (ol) 1996



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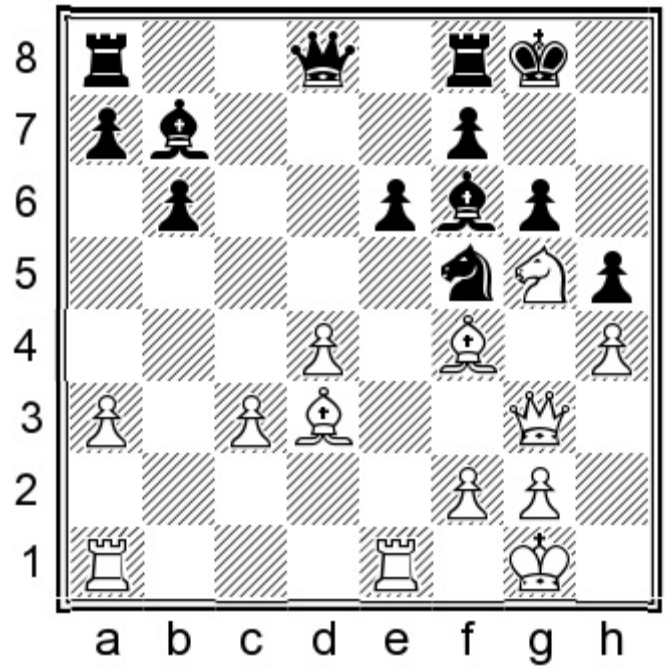
In the game White launched a spectacular combination. **22.♖xe6!?** A slow build-up would have proved even stronger. (22.♕h3! first targets the h7-pawn, and after 22...♖h8 23.♖e2 ♘d8 24.♘d2+– White will increase the pressure on the e6-pawn with ♖de1 and possibly ♘e4-c3.) **22...♕xe6 23.♖e1!** The only good follow-up. (23.♘g5†? looks tempting, but after 23...fxg5 24.♕f3† ♕f5 25.♗xd5† ♔f6 Black escapes with a decisive material advantage.) **23...♕d6** (23...♕xg4? 24.♗xd5† ♕e6 25.♗xe6#; 23...f5 24.♖xe6 [or 24.♕g3!?+–] 24...fxg4 [24...♔xe6 25.♕g3+–] 25.♗xd5 ♖ed8□ 26.♖xc6† ♖xd5 27.♖xc8 gxf3 28.gxf3 ♖xd4 29.♖c7+–)



24.♗f4!! ♕d8? Losing quickly. (24...f5?! is refuted by 25.♕h3! ♕xf4 26.♕xh7† ♔f6 27.♗xd5 ♘d8

28.♘e5+–; The best chance was 24...h5! 25.♕xc8! ♖xc8 26.♗xd6 ♗xd6 27.♗xd5† ♔g7± when White would hope to win the ending with an extra pawn, but plenty of work remains.) **25.♕e6† ♔g7 26.♗xd5 g5** (26...♗f8 27.♕g8#; 26...♘a5 27.♕f7† ♔h8 28.♘g5! fxg5 29.♗e5†+–) **27.♕f7†** Black resigned in view of **27...♔h8 28.♗e4**. **1–0**

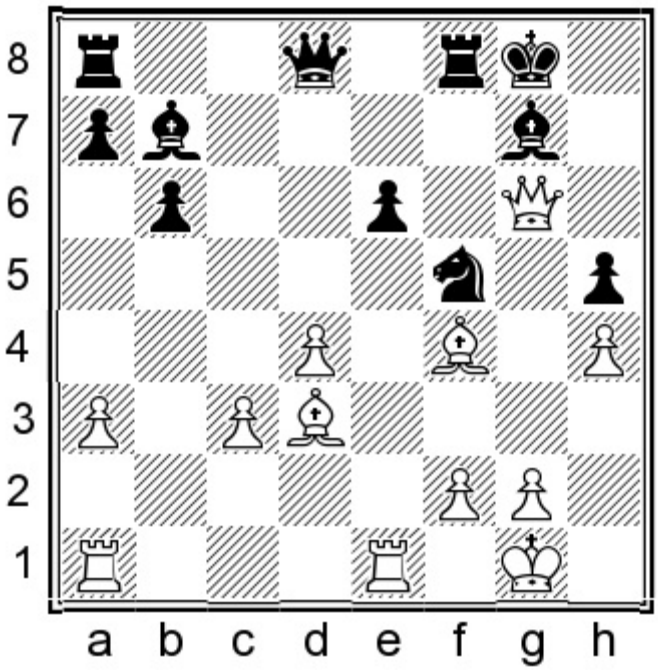
19. Vaisser – Anic, Auxerre 1996



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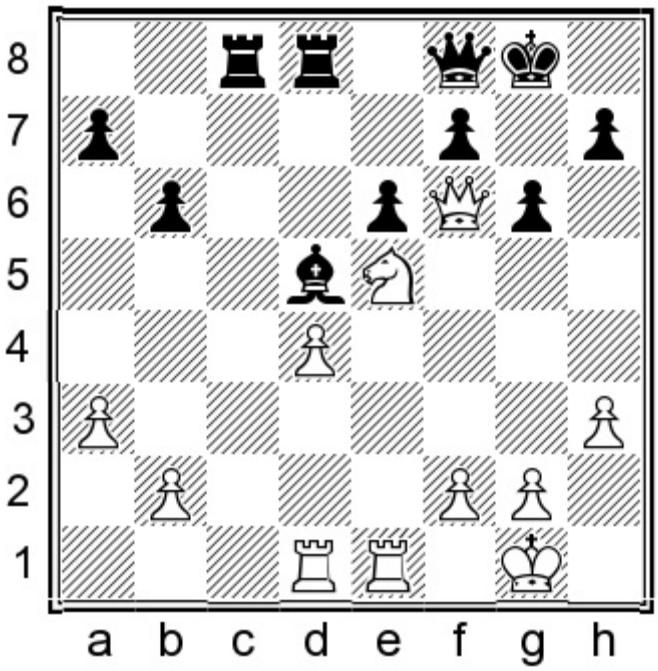
How should White respond to the attack on his queen? **18.♘xe6!** By ignoring it of course! **18...fxe6?** Taking the material but going down quickly. (18...♗xh4 19.♘xd8 ♗xg3 20.♗g5! [20.♗xg3 ♖fxd8 21.♗xf5 gxf5 22.♖e5! ♖d5 23.♖e7 also offers White winning chances] 20...♗f4!? 21.♘xf7 ♗xg5 22.♘xg5+–; The best chance was: 18...♘xg3! 19.♘xd8 ♖fxd8 20.♗xg3 ♖ac8 21.♖ec1!± This rook is more accurate as White may want to advance his a-pawn.) **19.♕xg6† ♗g7** (19...♘g7 20.♖xe6 ♕d5 21.♕h7† ♔f7 22.♖xf6†**!**+–)

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20.♖xe6!+– (20.♕xe6†?! ♔h8 21.♕g6! [21.♗xf5? ♗c8! 22.♕g6 ♗xf5 23.♕xh5† is less convincing, though still better for White] 21...♕f6 22.♕xh5† ♘h6 23.♗g3 ♖ac8 24.♖e2!+– with the idea 24...♖xc3? 25.♗e5) **20...♕xh4 21.♗xf5 ♕xf4** (21...♖xf5 22.♕xf5 ♖f8 23.♗g3!+–) **22.♕h7† ♔f7 23.♖ae1 1–0**

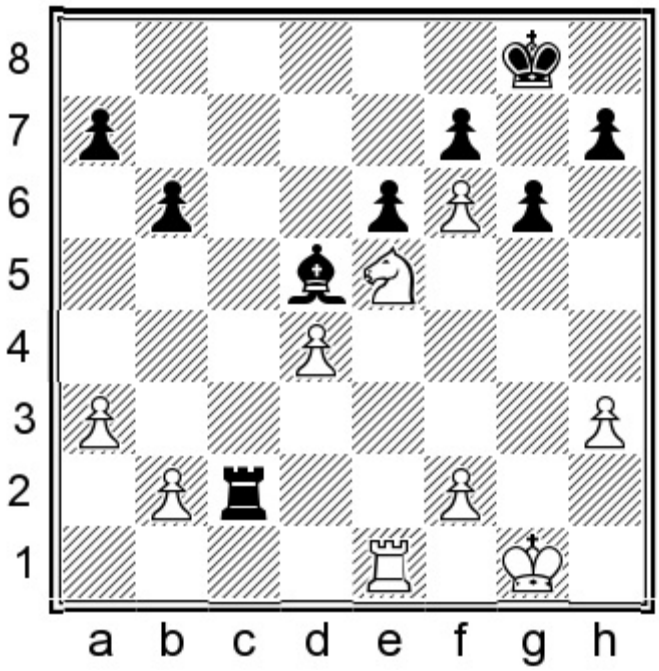
20. Cvitan – Zhukova, Valle d'Aosta 2002



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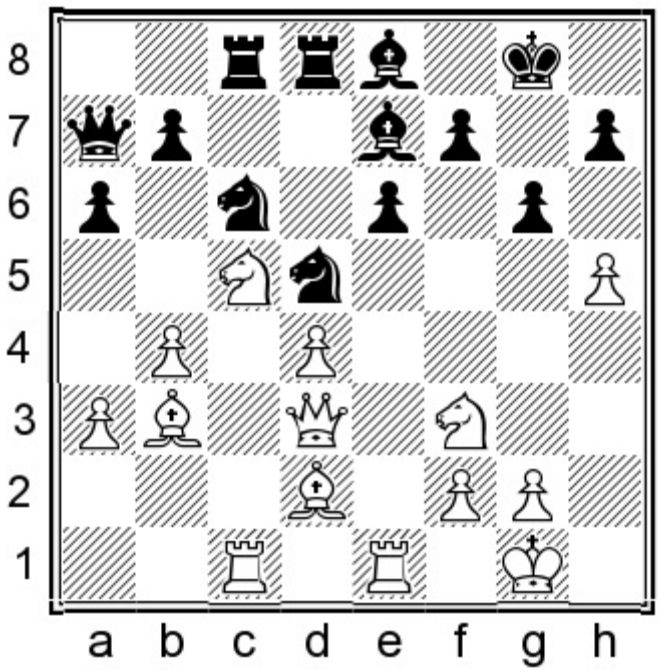
How can White make something of his dark-squared domination? **25.g4!** (25.h4!? ♕g7 26.♕f4! may keep an edge, though 26...h6 27.♖d3 g5 28.hxg5 hxg5 29.♕g4 ♔f8 is not entirely clear) **25...♕g7** (25...h6 26.h4 ♕g7 27.g5 hxg5 28.hxg5 ♕xf6 29.gxf6 ♖c2 30.♖c1 ♖dc8 31.♖xc2 ♖xc2 32.f3 ♔f8 33.♖e3±) **26.g5 ♕xf6** (26...h6 27.h4 transposes to the previous note) **27.gxf6** The doubled pawns are in

no way weak; quite the opposite in fact! **27...♖c2 28.♖c1 ♖dc8 29.♖xc2 ♖xc2**



30.♖e3? Intending to put the rook on c3, bearing in mind that the minor piece endgame would be hopeless for Black. However, this allows Black a hidden defensive resource. (30.f3! is more accurate, planning ♖e3 next.) **30...♖c1†** (30...♖xb2? 31.♖c3+–) **31.♔h2 g5** (31...♖c2! was Black's chance to draw, with the point that 32.♔g3 ♖xb2! 33.♖c3 ♖b3 prevents the back-rank mate.) **32.f3** (But not 32.♖c3?? ♖h1† 33.♔g3 ♖g1† 34.♔h2 ♖g2† when Black picks up both f-pawns and wins.) **32...♖c2† 33.♔g3 h5 34.♖c3! ♖d2** (34...♖xb2 35.♖c7 ♔h7 36.h4!+–; 34...♖xc3 35.bxc3 wins for White, with h3-h4 coming next.) **35.♖c7+– ♖xd4** (35...♔h7 36.h4! gxh4† 37.♔xh4+–) **36.♖xf7 h4† 37.♔f2 1–0**

21. Gulko – Kaidanov, Washington
1994

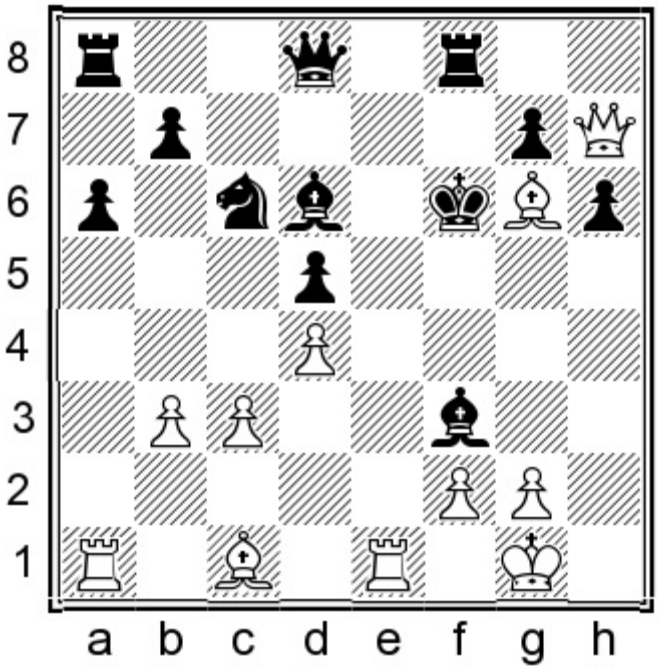


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White smashed through the defences with: **22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♘xe6!** A nice sacrifice, though it was not too difficult to find. (23.♘g5 and other moves are winning as well, but there is no excuse not to play the forcing win.) **23...fxe6 24.♖xe6 ♗f7** (24...♔g7 25.♗xd5 [or 25.♕e4+–] 25...♖xd5 26.♕e4 ♗f7 27.♕xd5 ♖d8 28.♕e4+– gives White a crushing position.) **25.♖xg6† ♔f8** (25...♗xg6 26.♕xg6† ♔h8 27.♕h5†+–) **26.♖h6 ♔e8 27.♖e1 1–0**

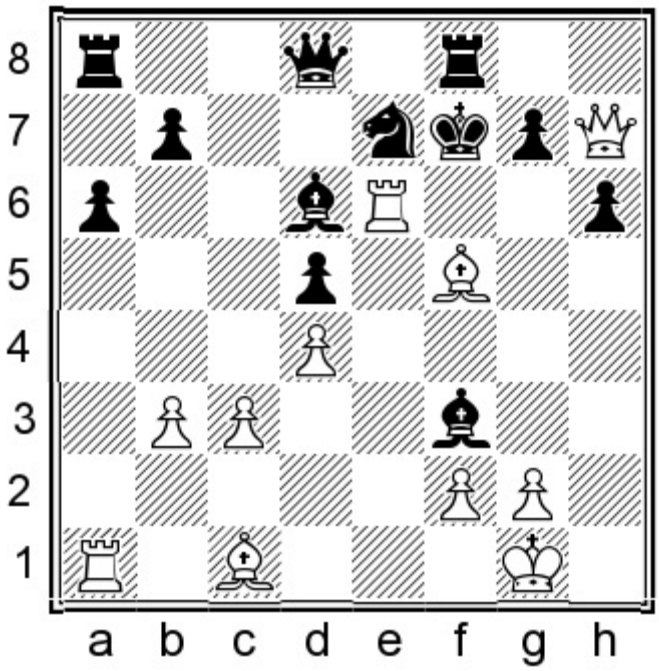
22. Skripchenko – Dzagnidze, Antakya 2010



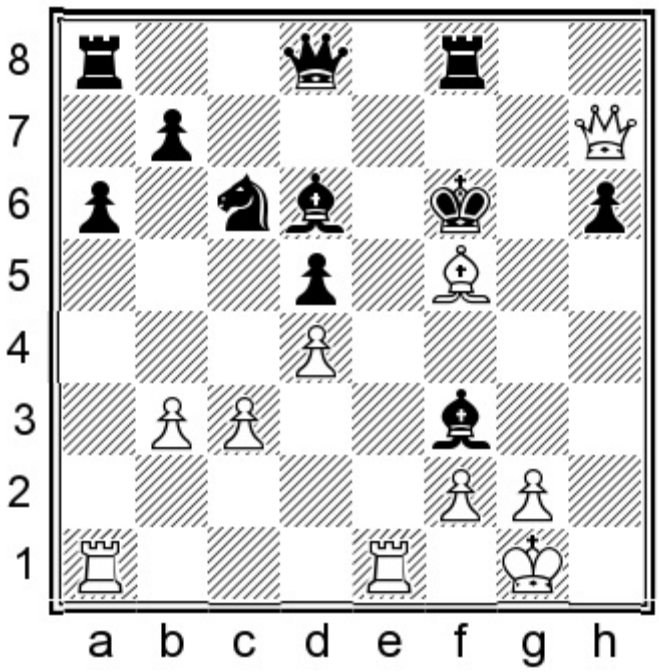
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Black's king is extremely exposed, but how can White take advantage? **22.♗xh6!!** (22.♖e3?! ♗g4! [22...♗e4? 23.♗xe4 dxe4 24.♕xe4 g5 25.♕h7! ♖h8 26.♖f3† ♗f4 27.♕xb7+–] 23.♗d3 ♘e7 24.♖xe7 ♔xe7 25.♕xg7† ♖f7 26.♕xg4±; 22.♗f5 is possible, though Black can fight on with: 22...♘e7 23.♖e6† ♔f7

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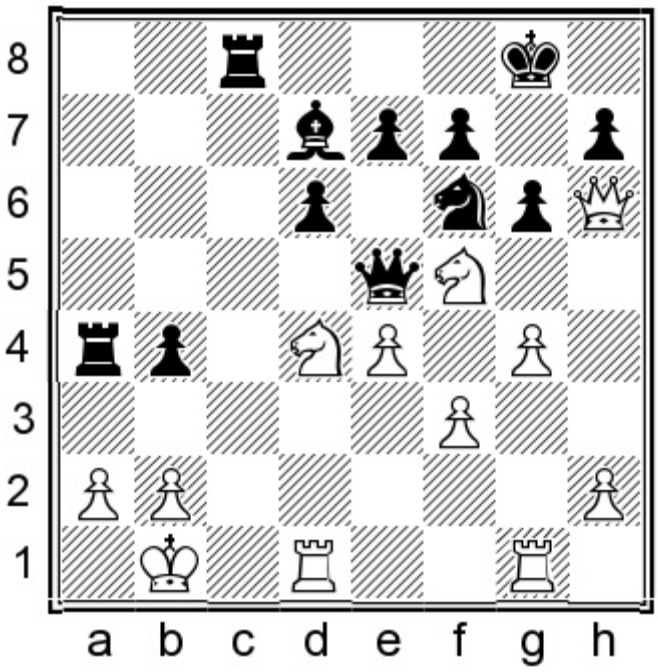
24.♖xh6! [24.♗xh6 ♘xf5 25.♕xf5† ♔g8 26.♕g6 ♗h2†!! 27.♔f1 ♕c7∞] 24...♔e8! [24...♘xf5 25.♕xf5† ♔g8 26.♕h7† ♔f7 27.gxf3+–] 25.♖e6 ♔d7 26.♖xe7† ♔c6! 27.♖d7 ♕f6 28.gxf3 ♕xf5 29.♕xf5 ♖xf5 30.♖xg7 ♖xf3 31.♗e3±) **22...♖g8** (In the event of 22...gxh6 23.♗f5! Black will soon be mated:



a) 23...♘e7 24.♖xe7!+–; b) 23...♗h5 24.♖e6† ♔g5 25.♖g6†! ♔xf5 26.♖xd6† ♔f4 27.♖xd8 ♖axd8 28.♕xh6† ♔f5 29.♕xh5†+–; c) 23...♗h2†!? 24.♔h1! [24.♔xh2? ♕d6††±] 24...♖g8 25.♖e6† ♔g5 26.♖g6† ♖xg6 [26...♔f4 27.♗h3+–] 27.♕xg6† ♔f4 28.♗h3+–) **23.♗f5** (or 23.gxf3+–) **23...♘e7 24.♖xe7** (there is also 24.♖e6† ♔f7 25.gxf3+–) **24...gxh6 25.♖e6† ♔g5 26.♖g6† ♔f4 27.g3† ♔xf5 28.♖xg8† 1–0**

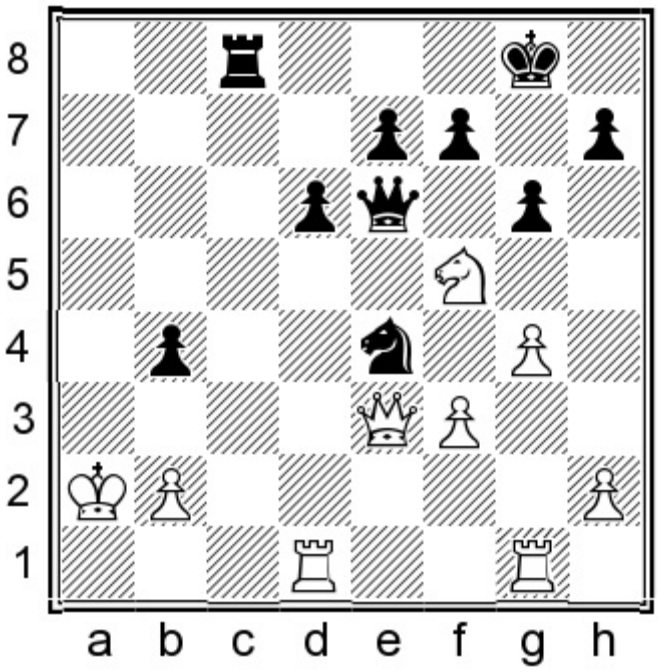
23. Annaberdiev – Bu Xiangzhi, Russia (ol) 2010

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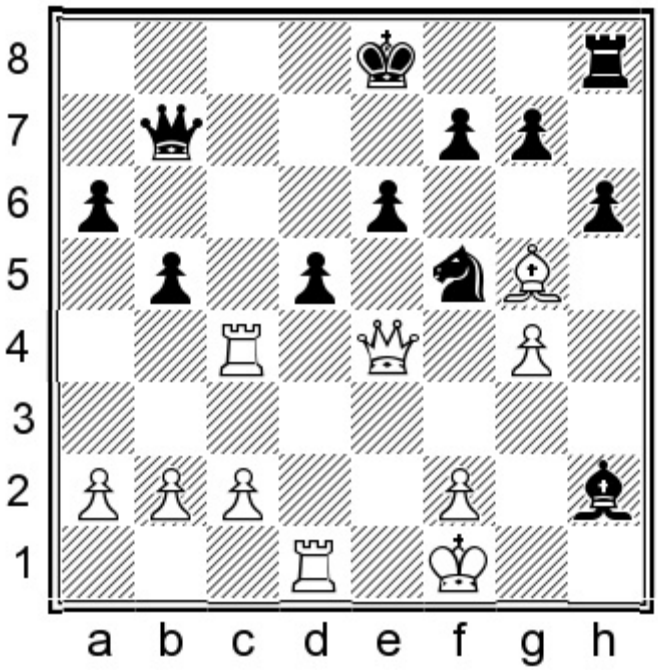
In this complex position Black found an excellent way to combine attack and defence. **21...♘xe4!! 22.♕e3** (22.fxe4 ♕xe4† 23.♔a1 allows Black to force mate: 23...♖xa2† 24.♔xa2 b3†! 25.♘xb3 ♖a8† 26.♘a5 ♖xa5† 27.♔b3 ♗a4† 28.♔c3 ♖c5† 29.♔d2 ♖c2#) **22...gxf5?** A serious mistake! (Instead 22...♗xf5! 23.♘xf5 [23.gxf5 ♘c3†−+] 23...♖xa2! 24.♔xa2 ♕e6†! wins quickly, for example:



25.♔b1 [25.b3 ♘c3† 26.♔b2 ♘xd1† 27.♖xd1 gxf5–+] 25...♘c3† 26.bxc3 ♕b3† 27.♔c1 bxc3 28.♘xe7† ♔f8 29.♖xd6 [29.♖g2 ♖a8–+] 29...♕b2† 30.♔d1 c2†−+) **23.gxf5† ♘g3 24.♖xg3† ♔h8 25.♕g5 ♖a5 26.♕d2?** (White had to play 26.♖g4!∓) **26...♗xf5† 27.♔a1** (27.♘xf5 ♕xf5† 28.♔a1 b3 29.a3 ♖d5! 30.♕e1 ♖xd1† 31.♕xd1 ♕c2 32.♖g1 e5–+) **27...♖xa2† 28.♔xa2 ♕d5† 0–1**

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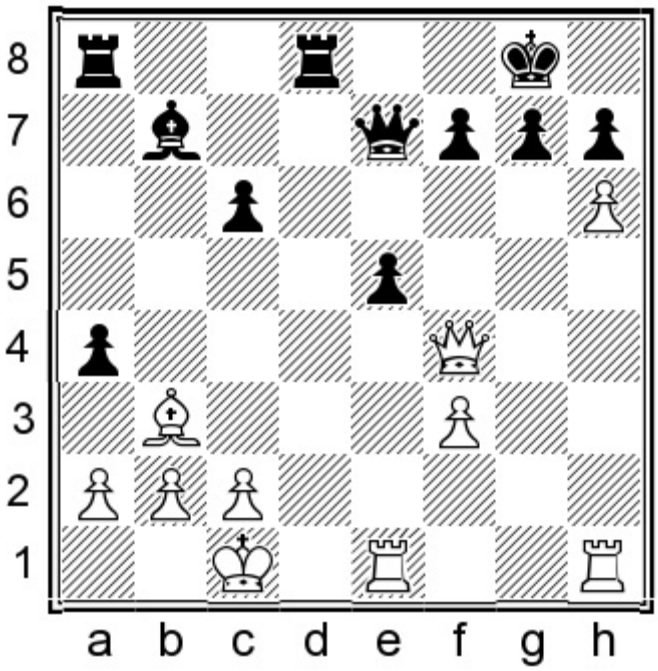
24. Pijpers – Swinkels, Meesterklasse 2010



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The position is wild and several pieces are hanging, but White had calculated more accurately. **22.♖xd5! 0-0** (Objectively 22...♕xd5 may have held out for longer, but 23.♕xd5 exd5 24.♖c8† ♔d7 25.♖xh8 ♘d4 26.♗d2 ♗d6 27.♗c3 ♘e6 28.♖a8 ♘c7 29.♖b8+– leads to an easy endgame for White.) **23.♖d8!!** The key point of White's play, and an easy move to miss! **23...♕xe4** (23...♖xd8 24.♕xb7+–) **24.♖xf8† ♔xf8 25.♖c8 mate! 1–0**

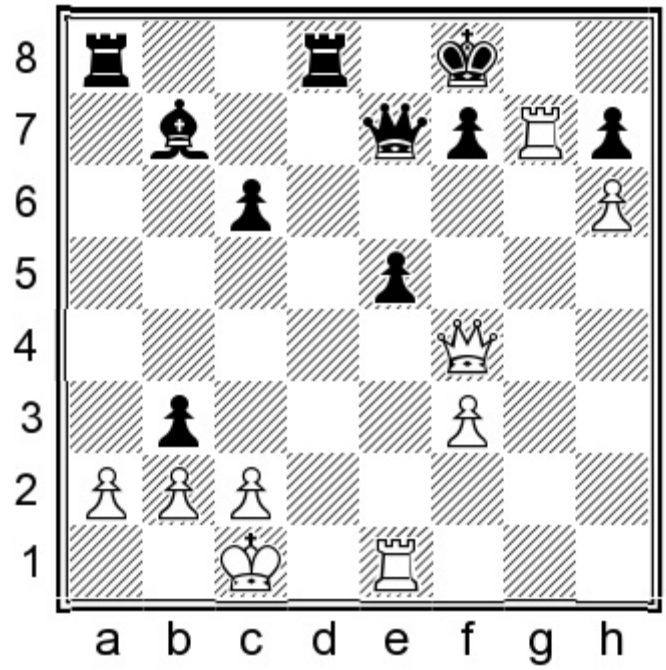
25. Tukhaev – Radovanovic, Chalkis 2010



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What should White do about the attack on the bishop? **21.♖hg1!** Ignore it of course! Actually this move is not so difficult to find, but the main problem is how to evaluate the ensuing position. (Note that White cannot play 21.♖xe5? ♕f6!–+ or 21.♗xa4 exf4 22.♖xe7 ♖xa4 23.♖xb7 ♖xa2∓.) **21...axb3??** It is strange that Black chose this move, which loses immediately. (21...exf4? 22.♖xe7 is bad for Black, but he should have played 21...g6! 22.♖xe5 ♕f8 23.♗xa4 c5 24.♗b3 ♖d4± when he is worse but still has some compensation for the missing pawn.) **22.♖xg7† ♔f8** (22...♔h8 23.♕f5+–)



23.♖xh7! f6 (23...exf4 24.♖h8#; 23...♕e6 24.♕g5+–; 23...♕d7 24.♖h8† ♔e7 25.♖xe5†+–) **24.♖xe7 ♔xe7** (24...exf4 25.h7+–) **25.♕b4† 1–0**

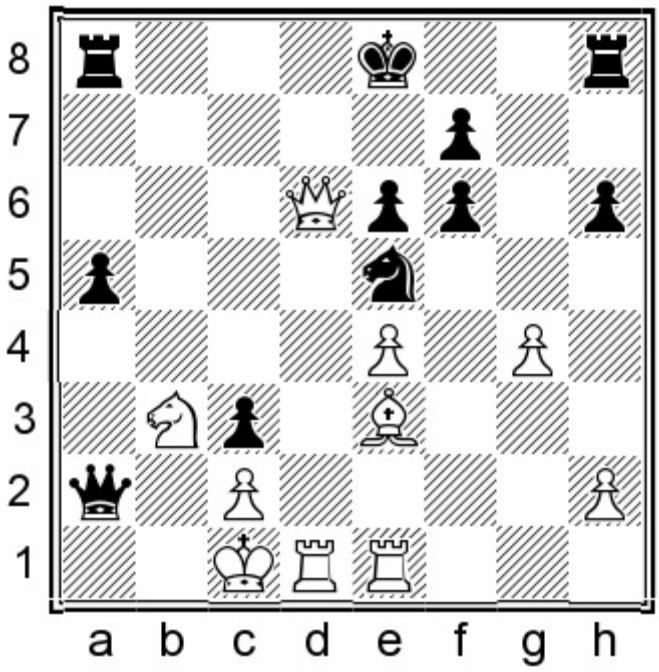
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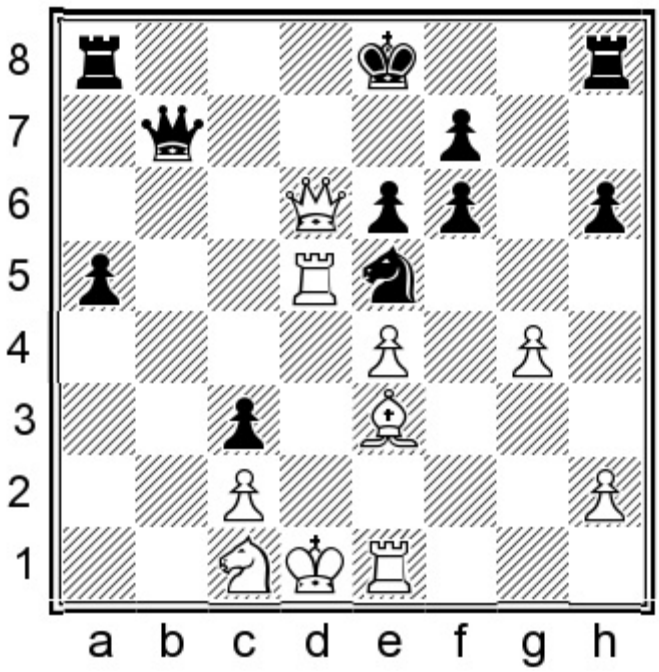
Exercises 26-56

26. De la Riva – Caruana, Dresden (ol) 2008



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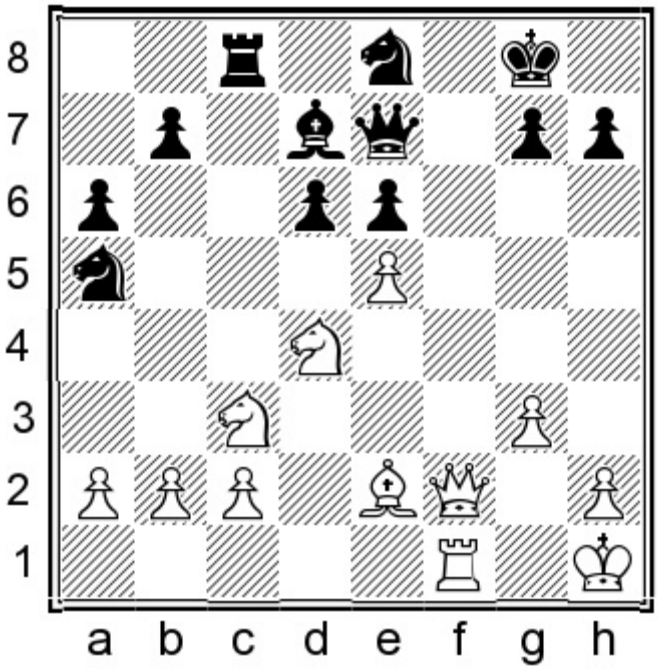
White cannot stop the queen from coming to b2, so it is clear that he must move his rook. The question is where. **23.♖d5!!** The only move! (In the game De la Riva chose 23.♖d4? a4 and had to resign immediately in view of 24.♖b4 ♕a3†! 25.♔d1 ♖d8 when Black wins the queen.) **23...♕b2†** The only move to keep Black in the game. (23...a4 24.♗c5+–;23...exd5 24.♗c5 ♘d3† 25.cxd3 ♕b2† 26.♔d1 c2† 27.♔e2 c1=♕† 28.♔f1+–) **24.♔d1 ♕b1† 25.♘c1 ♕b7**



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26.♖xe5! fxe5 (26...♖d8 27.♕xd8† ♔xd8 28.♖xa5+–) **27.♕xe5 ♖g8 28.♔e2↑** White's two pieces are stronger than Black's rook.

27. Brooks – Becerra, Saint Louis 2011

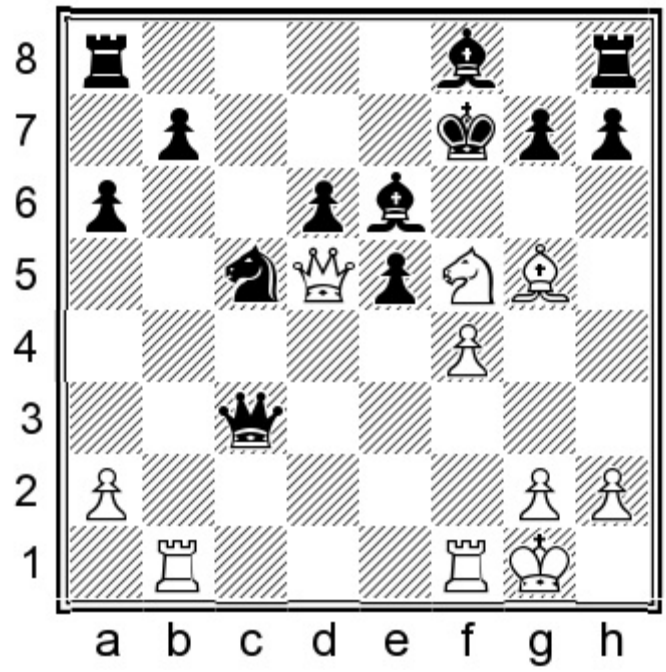


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There is a potential mate on the f8-square, but how can White exploit this? **21.♗g4!!** Targeting e6, and Black has no satisfactory defence. **21...h5** (21...dxe5 22.♘d5! exd5 [22...♕d6 23.♕f7†] 23.♗xd7 ♘f6 24.♗xc8+–; 21...h6 22.♘xe6 dxe5 23.♕f8† ♕xf8 24.♖xf8† ♔h7 25.♘g5† hxg5 26.♗xd7+–) **22.♘d5! exd5 23.♗xd7 ♖c7 24.♗e6† ♔h7** (24...♔h8 25.♕f5!+–) **25.♕e2** (25.♗f5†!? g6 26.♘e6+–) **25...♕g5 26.♗f5† ♔g8 27.♘e6 ♕h6 28.♘xc7 ♘xc7 29.e6 ♘c6 30.e7 ♘e5 31.♗d7 h4 32.gxh4 1–0**

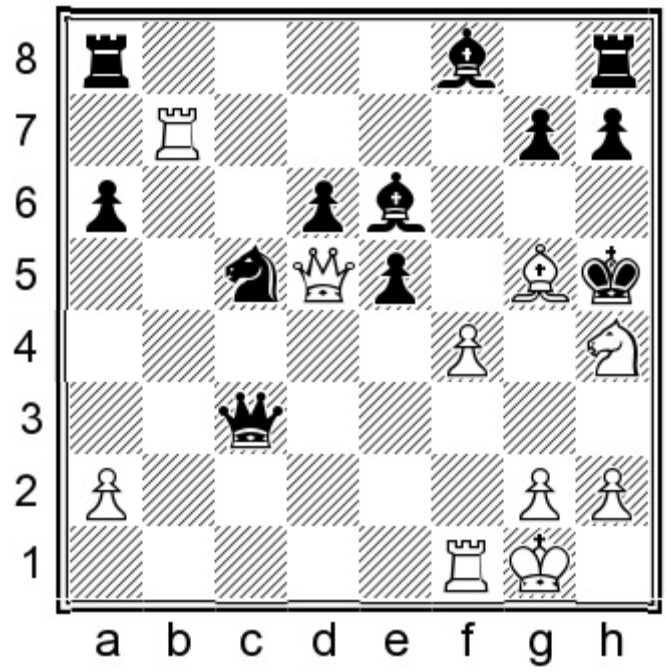
28. Kotronias – Xiu Deshun, Moscow 2011

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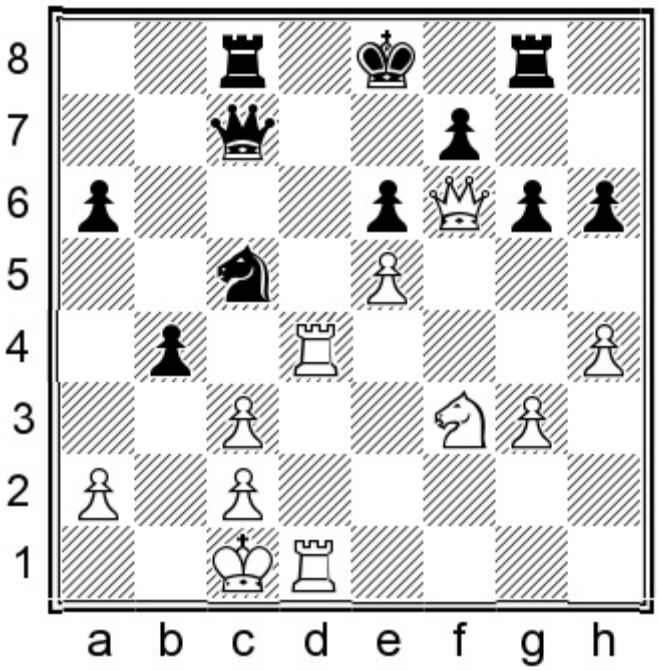
White's attack is in full flow, but he needs to find the right way through. **16.♖xb7†!** The computer helpfully points out that it is now mate in 11! (16.♘xd6†?? ♔g8–+ is no good.) **16...♔g8** (16...♘xb7 17.♘h6† gxh6 18.fxe5† ♔g7 19.♕xe6+–; 16...♔g6 17.♘h4† ♔h5 forces White to find another accurate move:



18.g4†! [but not 18.♕d1†?? ♗g4 19.♕xg4† ♔xg4 20.h3† ♕xh3! 21.gxh3† ♔h5!–+] 18...♗xg4 [18...♔xg4 19.♕d1† ♔h3 20.♖f3† ♔g4 21.♖e3#] 19.♕f7† g6 20.♕xh7†+–)
17.♖xg7†! ♗xg7 18.♘e7† ♔f7 19.fxe5† ♗f6 20.♖xf6† ♔xe7 21.♕xd6† Black resigned in view of **21...♔e8 22.♖f8† ♖xf8 23.♕e7#. 1–0**

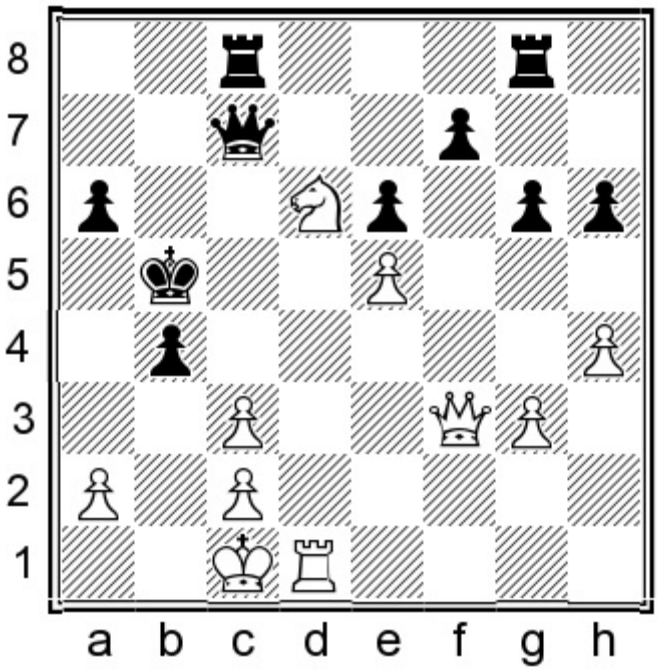
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29. Robson – Chirila, Dallas 2011



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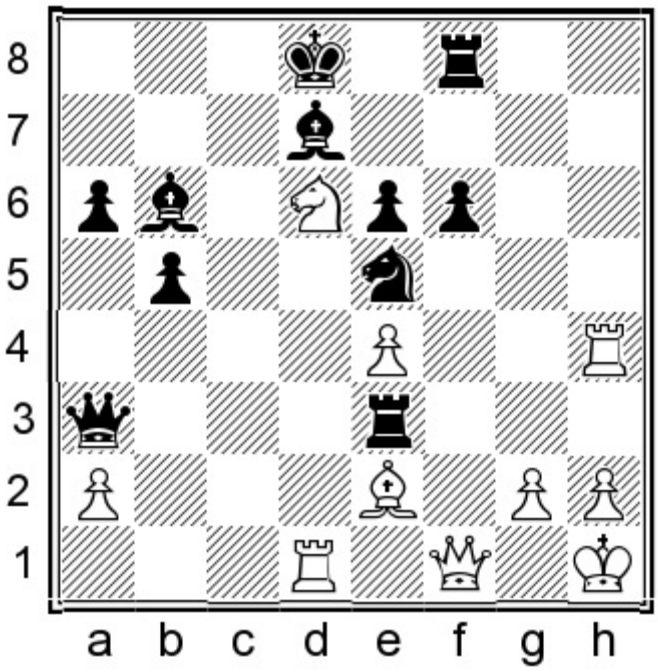
Black seems to be covering all the important squares, but White's next move shattered that illusion. **25.♘d2!** The last piece joins the attack. **25...♘d7** (25...bxc3 26.♘c4+–) **26.♖xd7! ♔xd7** (26...♕xd7 27.♘e4 ♕c7 28.♘d6† ♔f8 29.♘xc8+–) **27.♘c4† ♔c6 28.♕f3† ♔b5** (28...♔c5 29.♖d6+–) **29.♘d6†**



29...♔a4 (29...♔b6 also loses quickly: 30.♕f2† ♔a5 [30...♔c6 31.♖d4!+–; 30...♕c5 31.♖d4!] 31.cxb4† ♔xb4 32.c4!+–) **30.♕d3! ♕c6 31.cxb4 ♔xb4 32.♕b3† 1–0**

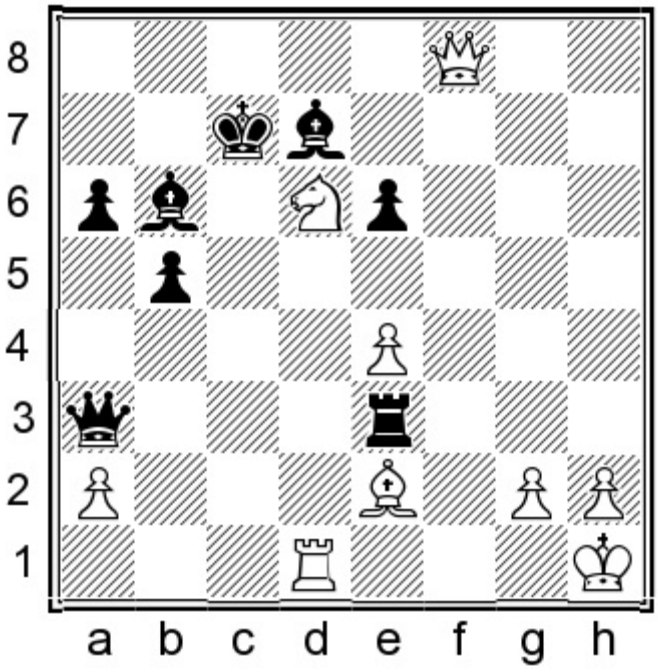
30. Simagin – Stein, Moscow 1961

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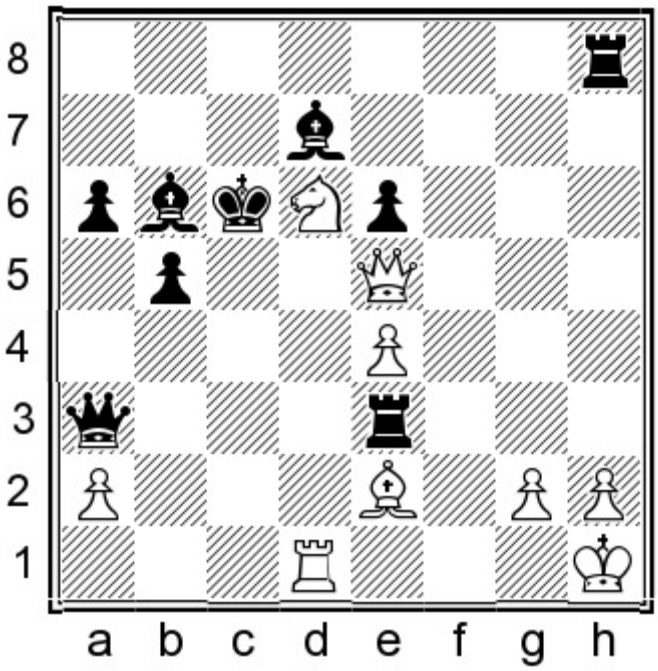
How should White continue, and how do you evaluate the position? **32.♖h8! ♖xh8?** Black had several ways to keep the position approximately level. (32...♔c7 33.♖xf8 ♗c5! 34.♘e8† ♔b6 35.♖h8 ♕b2∞; 32...♗c5 33.♖xf8† ♔c7 transposes to the previous line; 32...♘g6 33.♖xf8† [33.♕xf6† ♔c7 34.♖xf8 ♘xf8 transposes; 33.♖h7 ♘e5 leaves White with nothing better than 34.♖h8 repeating.] 33...♘xf8 34.♕xf6† ♔c7 35.♕xf8 when there are two options:



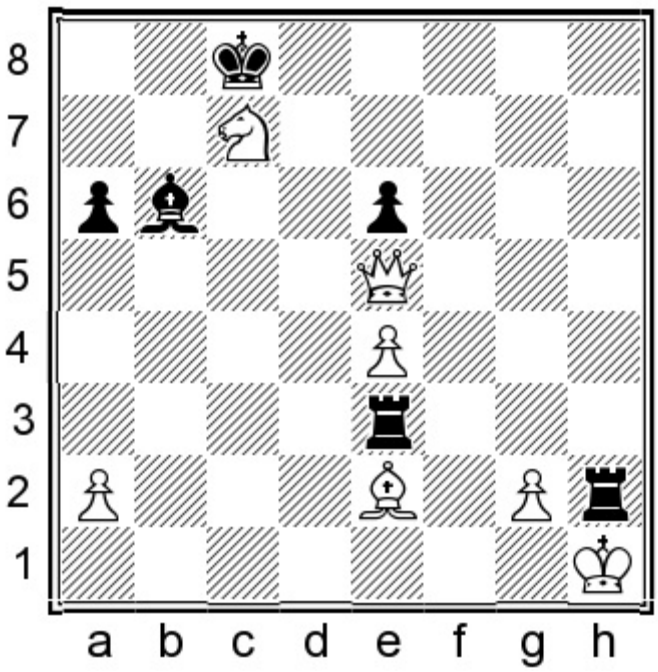
a) 35...♗c5 36.♕f4 [36.♘e8† ♔b6 37.♘d6=] 36...♗xd6 37.♖xd6 e5!? 38.♖xd7† ♔xd7 39.♕f5† ♔c7 40.♕f7† ♔b6 41.♕f6† ♔a5 [41...♔c5 42.♕xe5†=] 42.♕d8† ♔b4 43.♕d6†=; b) 35...♗d4!? 36.♘xb5† [36.♖xd4 ♖xe2 37.♕f1 ♕e3 38.♖d1 ♖xa2⇄; 36.♗f1 ♕xd6 37.♕xd6† ♔xd6 38.♖xd4† ♔e7 39.♔g1 e5∞] 36...axb5 37.♕xa3 ♖xa3 38.♖xd4 ♖xa2∞) **33.♕xf6† ♔c7 34.♕xe5! ♔c6** (34...♖h5 35.♘xb5†!

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♔c8 36.♘d6† ♔b8 37.♗xh5 ♕c5 38.♘c4† ♕xe5 39.♘xe5 ♗b5 40.♗f3+–)



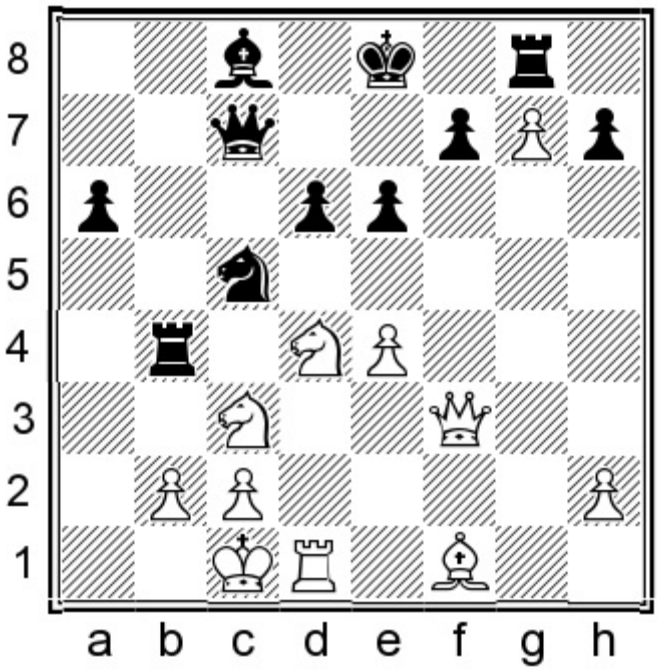
35.♘xb5! ♕c5 36.♖d6† ♔b7 37.♖xd7† ♔c8 38.♖c7†! ♕xc7 39.♘xc7 ♖xh2† (39...♖xe2 40.♕xh8†+–; 39...♖d8 40.♗xa6† ♔d7 41.♗b5† ♔c8 42.♕xe6†+–)



40.♕xh2 (40.♔xh2?? ♗xc7–+) **40...♖xe2 41.♕h8† ♔xc7 42.♕c3† ♔b7 43.♕c4** (43.g4! was a bit more accurate.) **43...♖e1† 44.♔h2 ♗c7†** (44...♖e3! was more resilient although White is still winning: 45.♕xe6 ♗c7† 46.♔g1 ♗g3 47.♕d5† ♔b8 48.♕g8† ♔b7 49.♕g7† ♔a8 50.♕f8† ♔b7 51.♕b4† ♔c6 52.♔f1+–) **45.♔h3 ♖h1† 46.♔g4 ♖h2 47.♔f3 ♖h6 48.♕b4† ♔c6 49.♕c3† ♔b7 50.♕b2† ♔c8 51.♕g7 ♖h5 52.♕g8† ♔b7 53.♕xe6 ♖a5 54.g4 1–0**

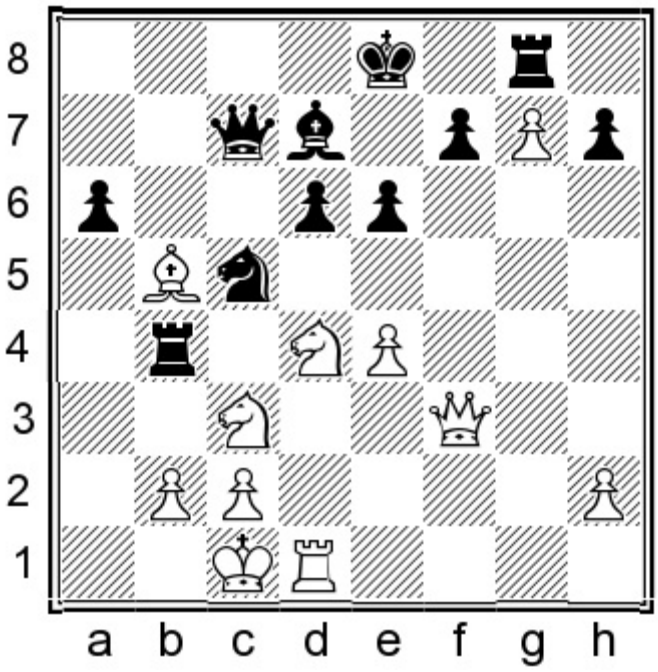
31. Jacko – Dydyshko, Michalovce 2011

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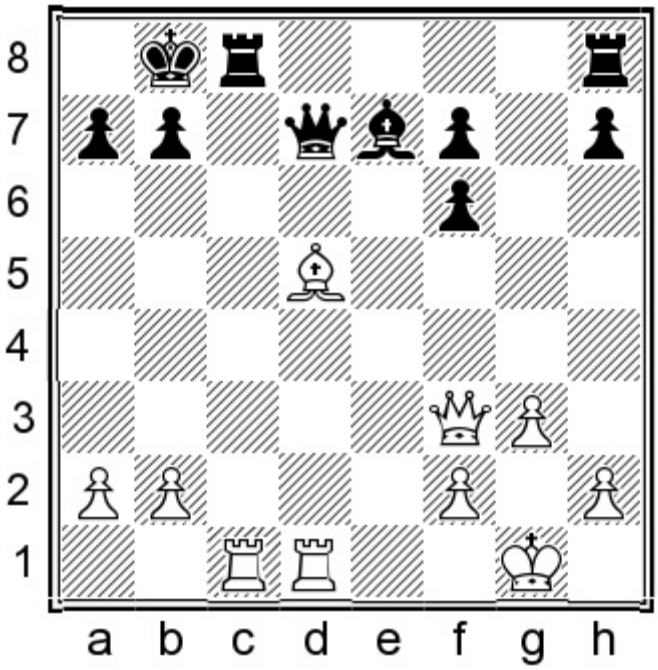
In this razor-sharp position White has already given up an exchange. How can he increase his initiative? **21.♗b5†!!** A beautiful move. (In the game White made a mistake but got away with it: 21.♕f6?! ♗b7?? A terrible move! [Instead after 21...♕b6!∞ the position is unclear.] 22.♗b5†! 1–0 Better late than never!) **21...♗d7** (21...axb5 22.♘dxb5+–)



22.♘xe6!! ♘xe6 (22...fxe6 23.♖f1+–) **23.♗xd7†** (White can also consider 23.♘d5!? ♖xb5 [23...♕a5 24.♗xd7† ♔xd7 25.♕xf7†+–] 24.♘xc7† ♘xc7 25.♕f6 ♘e6 26.♖xd6±) **23...♕xd7 24.♘d5 ♕a4!** The only chance. (24...♕c8 25.♘xb4 ♖xg7 26.♘d5+–; 24...♕d8 25.♘xb4 ♕a5 [25...♖xg7 26.e5+–] 26.♘d5 ♖xg7 27.♔b1+–) **25.♘f6† ♔d8 26.♖xd6† ♔c7 27.♖d7†±** The game goes on, but White should be winning with accurate play.

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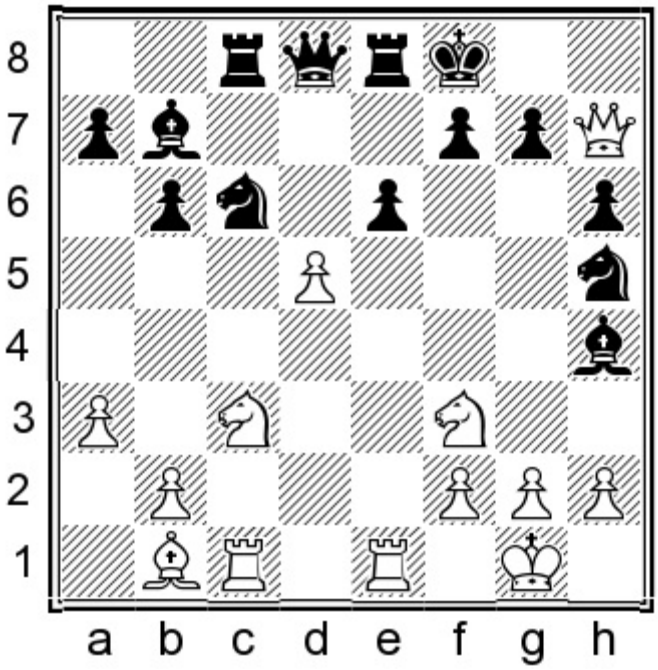
32. Ivanchuk – Beliavsky, Russia (ol) 2010



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White already has a positional advantage, and he found a clever way to wrap up the game in style: **22.♗xb7! ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♕xb7 24.♕f4† ♔a8 25.♖c7** Black resigned. It is easy to understand why, as **25...♕d5 26.♖xe7** and 25...♕b4 26.♕e3! ♗c5 27.♕xc5 are both utterly hopeless for Black. **1–0**

33. Naiditsch – Eljanov, Sibenik 2010



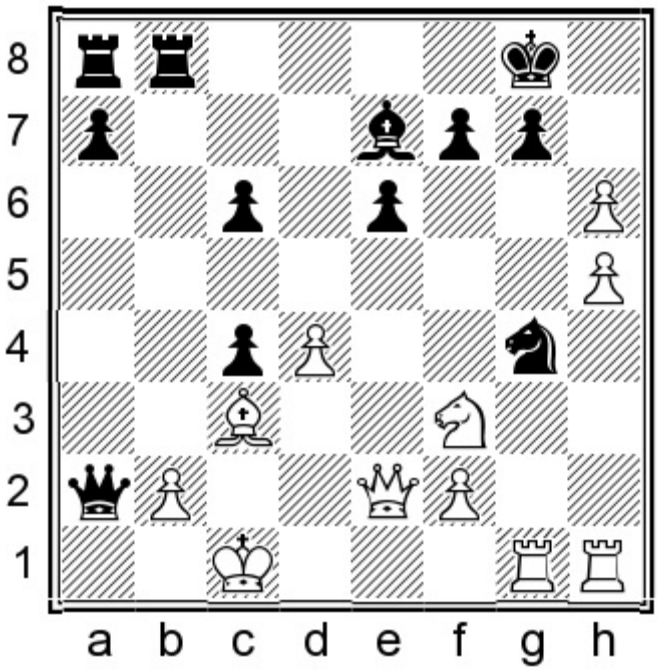
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White has sacrificed a piece for a dangerous-looking initiative. What would you suggest for Black?

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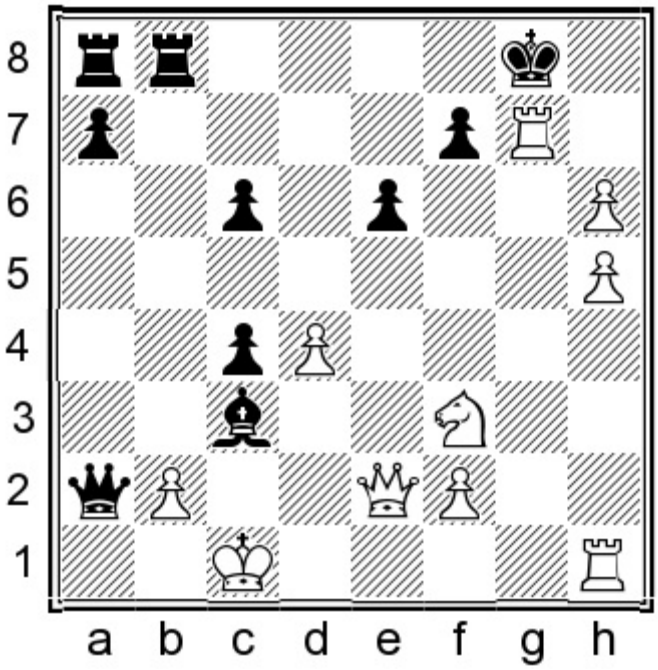
18...♘d4!! (In the game Black faltered with 18...♗g5?? and lost quickly: 19.♖cd1 ♕f6 20.d6 g6 21.♘xg5 ♖cd8 22.♘xe6† 1–0) **19.♘xd4 ♗xf2† 20.♔xf2 ♕h4† 21.♔f1 ♕xd4–+** White's attack is over and Black is winning.

34. Barbosa – Le Quang Liem, Vietnam 2011



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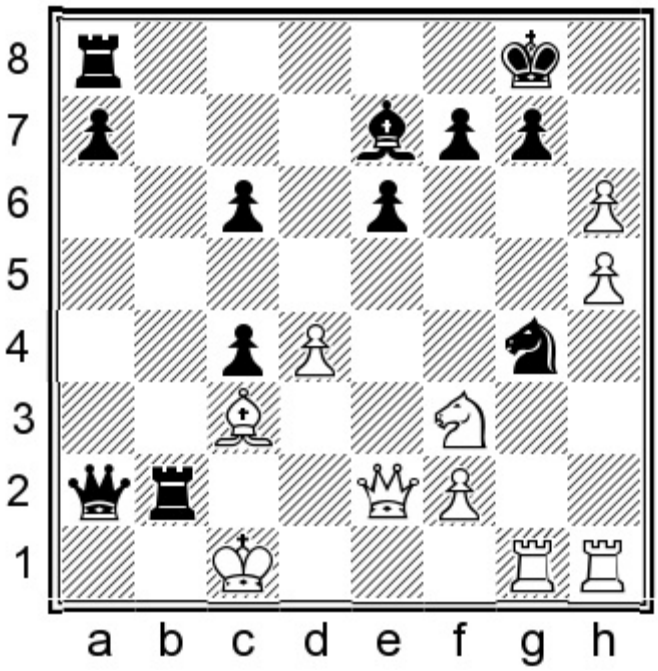
In this wild-looking position both sides are attacking fiercely, but it is Black who can strike first. **21...♖xb2!!** (The tempting 21...♗b4 only leads to a draw: 22.♖xg4 ♗xc3 23.♖xg7†



23...♔h8 [nothing is changed by 23...♔f8 24.♖xf7†! ♔xf7 25.♘g5† ♔e8 26.♕xe6† ♔d8 27.♕d6†=] 24.♖h7†!! As pointed out by Baburin. 24...♔xh7 25.♘g5† ♔xh6□ 26.♘xf7† ♔g7 27.♕e5† ♔xf7

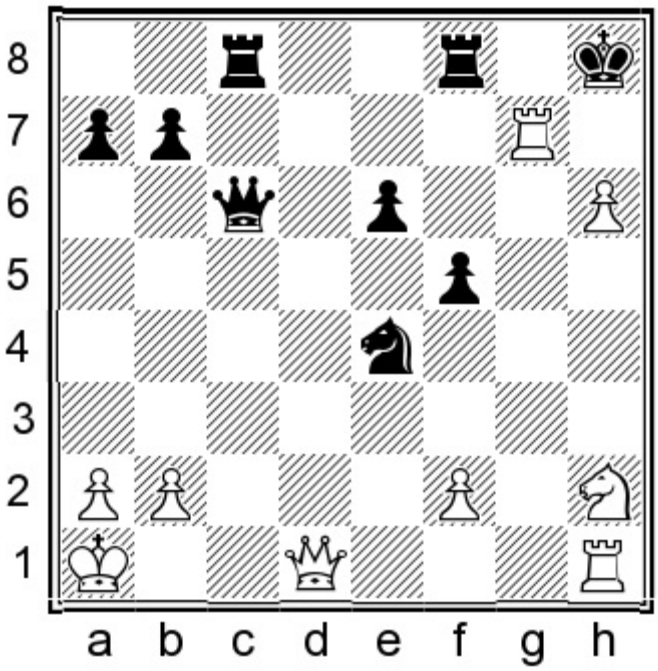
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28.♕c7†=)



22.h7† Losing quickly, but what else could White do? (22.♗xb2 c3 23.♕c2 [23.♖xg4 cxb2† 24.♕xb2 ♗a3 25.♖xg7† ♔f8–+]23...cxb2† 24.♔d2 ♗b4† 25.♔d3 [25.♔e2 b1=♕ wins easily] 25...b1=♕!? [Even stronger than 25...♕a6† 26.♔e4 f5† 27.♔f4 ♗d6† 28.♔g5 when White struggles on although he is losing here too.] 26.♕xb1 ♕a6† 27.♔e4 ♗d6 The poor white king will soon be mated.) **22...♔h8 23.♕xb2 ♗a3 24.h6 ♘xh6 25.d5 f6 0–1**

35. Piorun – Stoma, Warsaw 2011

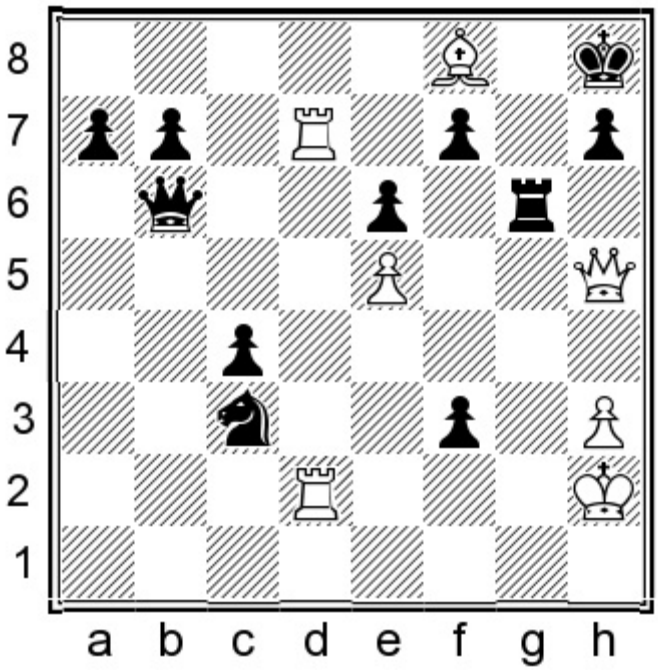


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All the white pieces are taking part in the attack and after the next accurate move it transpires that the

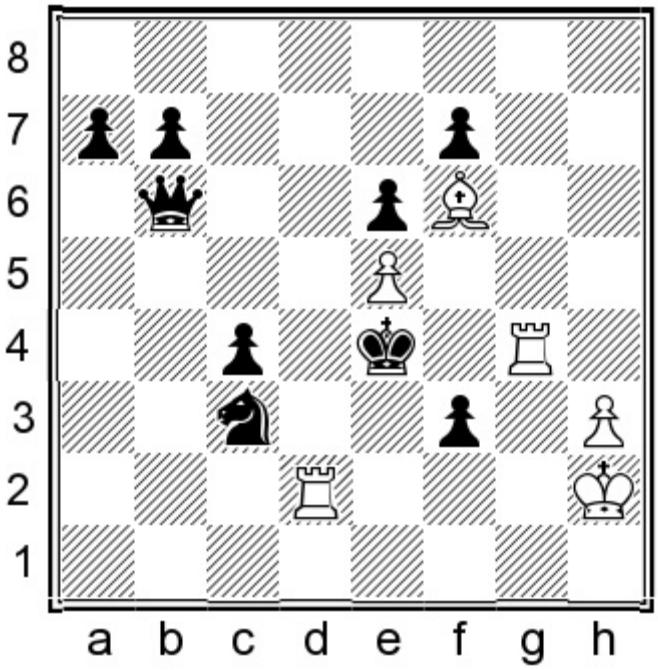
black king cannot be protected. **29.♘f3! ♘xf2 30.♕g1! ♘g4** (30...♖g8 31.♘e5 does not change anything.) **31.♘e5!** Black resigned in view of the simple **31...♘xe5 32.♖h7† ♔xh7 33.♕g7#. 1–0**

36. Rendle – Howell, Hastings 2010-11



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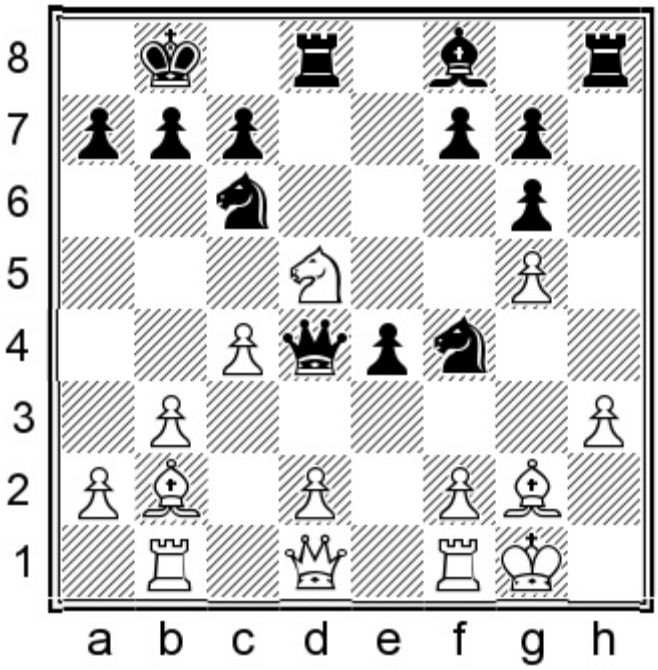
In this position White missed a beautiful way to make a draw. **34.♗g7†!!** (The game ended as follows: 34.♖7d4? ♘e2 35.♕xf3 ♘xd4 36.♕e3 ♘f3† 0–1.) **34...♔g8** (34...♔xg7 35.♖xf7† ♔xf7 36.♕xh7† ♖g7 37.♖d7† ♔e8 38.♖xg7 ♕f2†=) **35.♕xg6!! hxg6** (It is not impossible for Black to end up worse: 35...fxg6? 36.♗h6 ♘d5 37.♖g7† ♔h8 38.♖f7 ♕c5 39.♖f8† ♕xf8 40.♗xf8±) **36.♗f6 g5 37.♖d8† ♔h7 38.♖h8† ♔g6 39.♖g8† ♔f5 40.♖xg5† ♔e4 41.♖g4†=**



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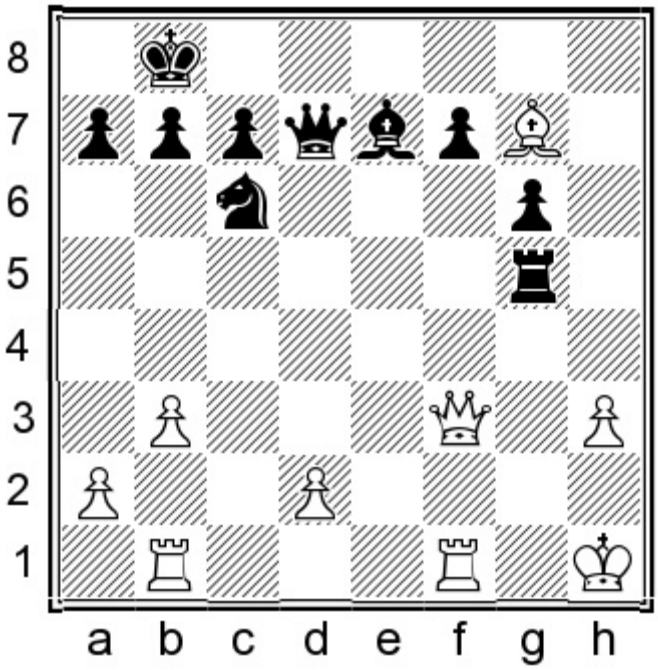
Black must settle for a draw, as **41...♔e3??** is punished most severely by **42.♗g5#**.

37. Stefanova – Dzagnidze, Doha 2011



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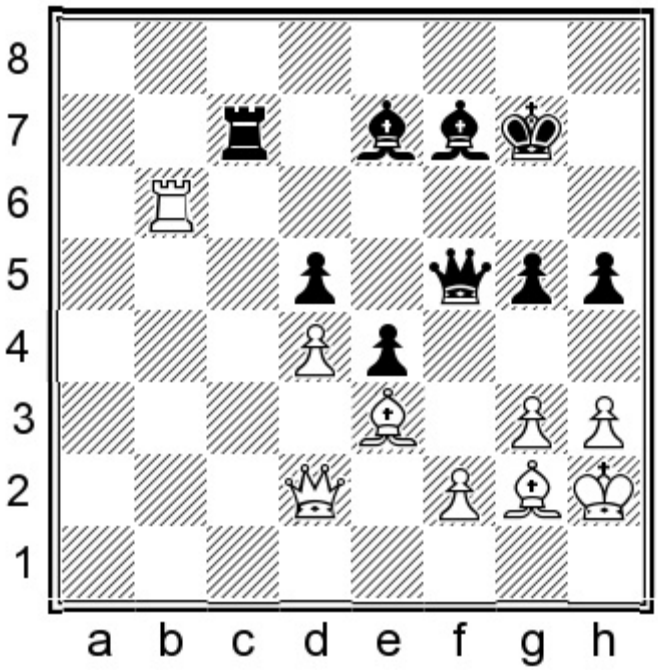
It looks like Black is losing material. What can she do? **17...♖xd5!** A nice idea. **18.♗xd4?** For some reason Stefanova does not even try to organize any resistance. She had to play: 18.cxd5 ♕xd5 19.♕g4 ♘xg2 20.♔xg2 ♗e7 21.♗xg7 ♖h5 22.f4 (22.h4 ♗xg5) 22...exf3† 23.♕xf3 ♖xg5† 24.♔h1 ♕d7∓



Black is much better, but still there are some chances to defend.
18...♖xg5! Despite being a queen for a piece up, White had to resign as mate is inevitable. **0–1**

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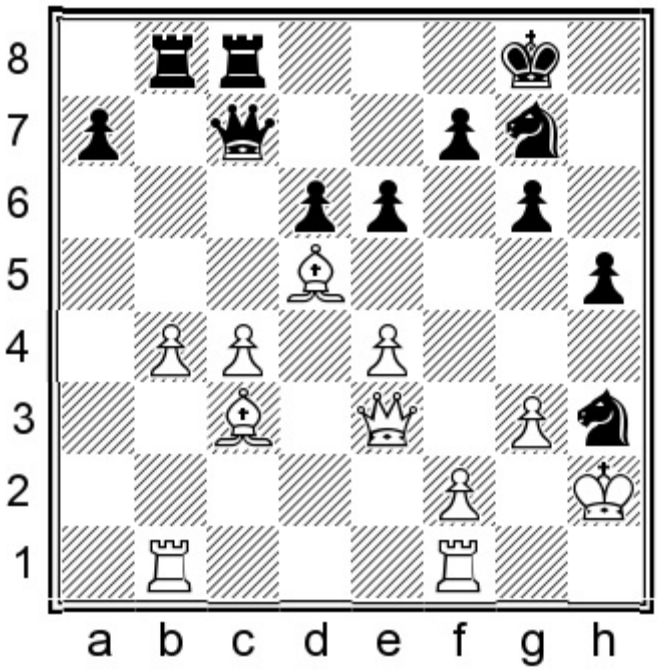
38. Miroshnichenko – Kulaots, Reykjavik 2010



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Black's kingside looks a little loose, but how can White capitalize? **40.h4!!** Now the dark-squared bishop will join the action with great force. **40...gxh4?** Losing at once. (Kulaots had to play 40...♖a7! although here too White gets a big advantage after: 41.hxg5! [stronger than 41.♗xg5 ♗xg5 42.hxg5 h4] 41...♗e6 [41...h4 42.g4! ♕xg4 43.♗h3 ♕f3 44.♗f4+–] 42.♗f4 ♗d8±) **41.♗f4!+–** Black's extra pawn is irrelevant as his king is too vulnerable. **41...hxg3† 42.fxg3 ♖a7** (42...♖c8 43.♗h3+–; 42...♖c4 43.♗e5† +–) **43.♗e5† ♔f8 44.♖b8† 1–0**

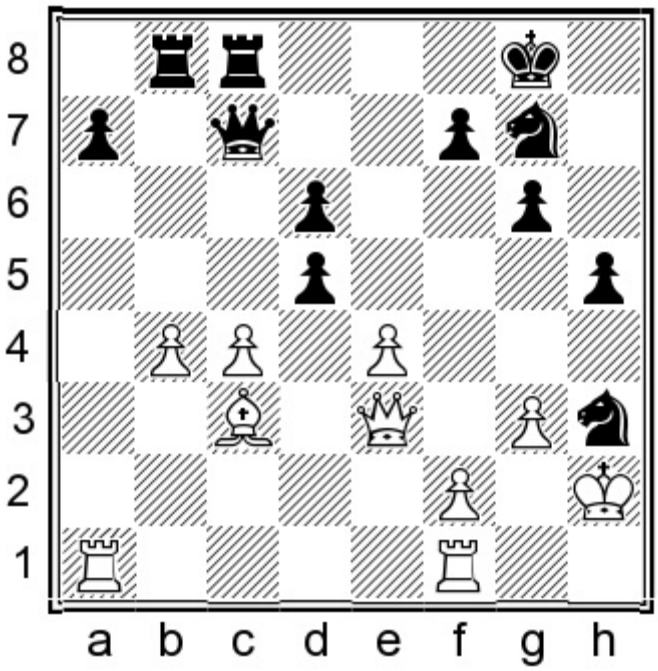
39. Flumbort – Serov, Oberwart 2010



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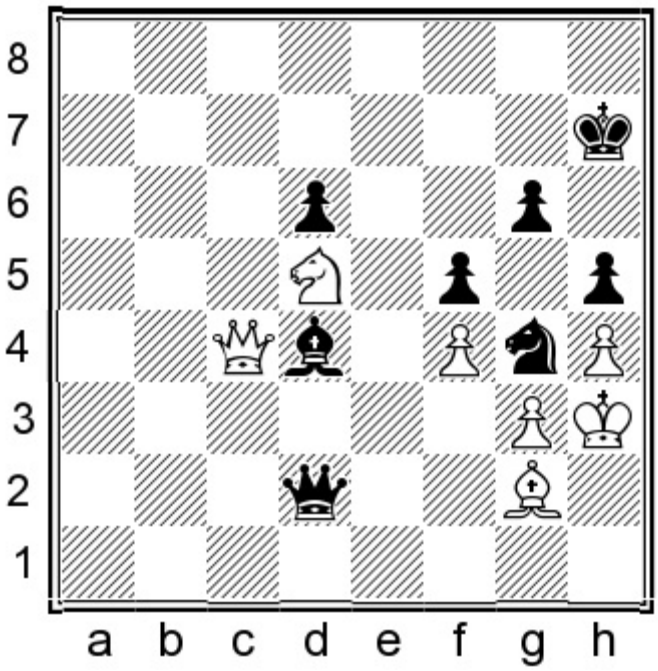
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White already has a promising position, but how best to exploit it? **24.♖a1!!** A most original solution! (24.♕d4 f6 25.♖a1 ♘g5± gives Black some chances to defend his unfavourable position.) **24...exd5?** Failing to offer any resistance. (24...♕d8 is refuted by 25.♕h6 ♕f8 26.♗xe6! fxe6 27.♖xa7 e5 28.c5+–; 24...♖b6!? was the best chance: after 25.c5 dxc5 26.bxc5 ♕xc5 27.♗d4 White has a clear advantage, but victory is still a long way off.)



25.♕d4! Now the game is over! **25...f6 26.♖xa7 ♕xc4** (26...♕d8 27.♕xd5† ♔h7 28.♔xh3+–) **27.♖xg7†! ♔h8 28.♕a7 ♘g5 29.♗xf6 1–0**

40. Zagrebelny – Spraggett, France 2011

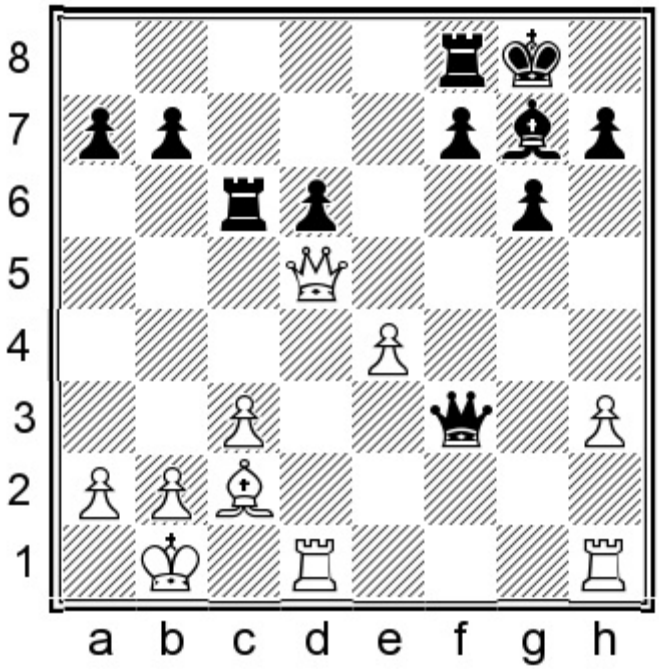


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How can Black exploit his opponent's awkwardly placed king? **60...♗g1!** Threatening mate in one. **61.♘f6† ♔h6!** (61...♔g7? throws away the victory, as after 62.♕g8† ♔xf6 63.♕f8† ♔e6 64.♕e8† White forces perpetual check.) **62.♘g8† ♔g7 63.♕c7† ♔h8!** The checks have run out, so White resigned. **0–1**

41. Ahmed – McNab, Russia (ol) 2010

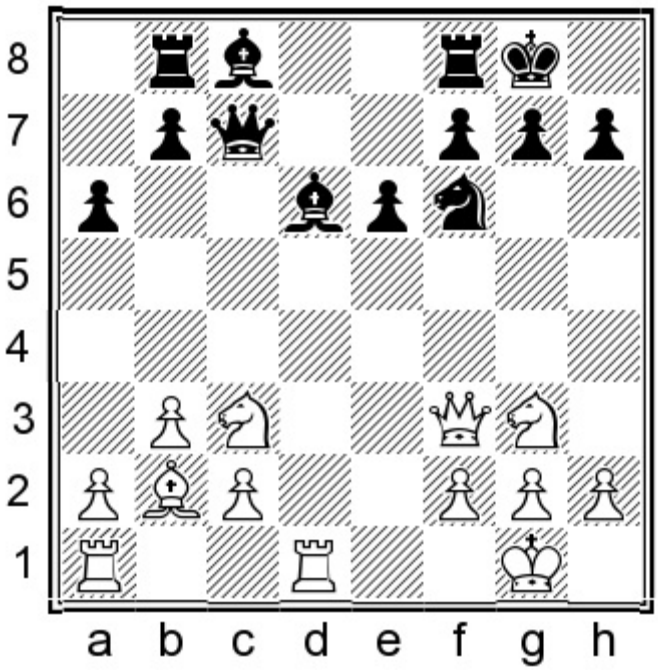


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White is a pawn down, but it turns out that this is the least of his worries. **22...♖xc3! 23.♖hf1?!** (23.♖df1 ♖xc2! 24.♖xf3 ♖xb2† 25.♔c1 ♖c8† 26.♔d1 ♖b1† 27.♔d2 ♗h6† 28.♔d3 ♖xh1 29.♕xf7† ♔h8∓ was the lesser evil, although I doubt that White can protect his king here either.) **23...♖xc2!! 24.♔xc2 ♕e2† 25.♕d2 ♕xe4† 26.♔b3?** Losing at once. (The last chance was: 26.♕d3 ♕b4 27.♕b3 ♖c8† 28.♔b1 ♕e4† 29.♔a1 ♕e7∓) **26...b5 27.♖f4 ♕e6† 0–1**

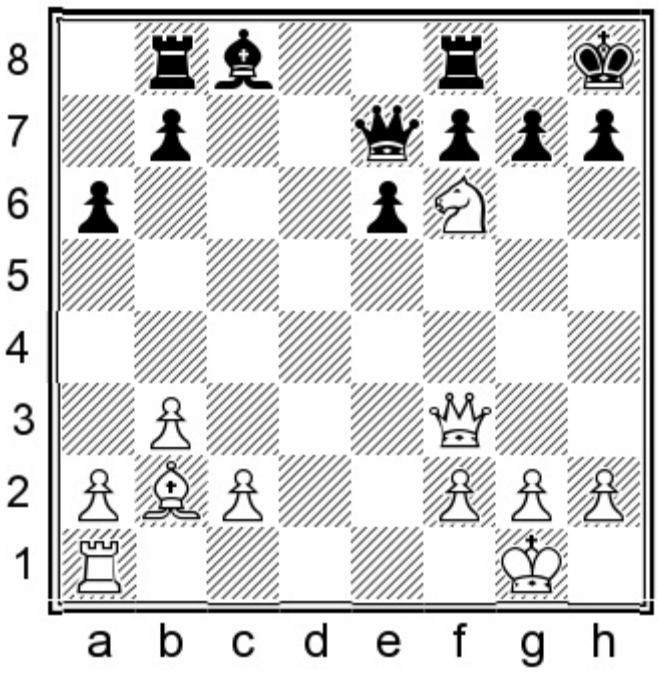
42. Magem Badals – Oms Pallisse, Spain 2010

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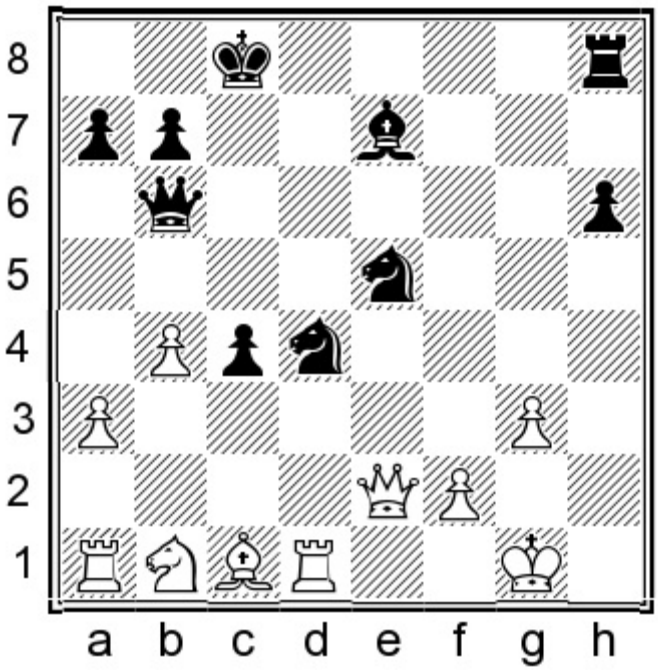
White succeeds in whipping up an attack out of nowhere. **17.♖xd6!!** Unexpected and extremely strong! **17...♕xd6 18.♘ce4 ♘xe4 19.♘xe4 ♕c7?!** (Losing at once, but even after the superior 19...♕e7 White's attack is too strong: 20.♘f6†! ♔h8



21.♗e5!! A brilliant move, not only attacking the rook but also stopping ...e5 forever. 21...♖d8 [21...h6 22.♘h5+–; 21...♖a8 22.♕e4 gxf6 23.♕h4+–] 22.♕h5 h6 [22...gxf6 23.♕g5!] 23.♘d5! ♕g5 24.♕xg5 hxg5 25.♘b6!+– White wins a piece.) **20.♘f6† ♔h8 21.♕e4 1–0**

43. Haba – Ponkratov, Plovdiv 2010

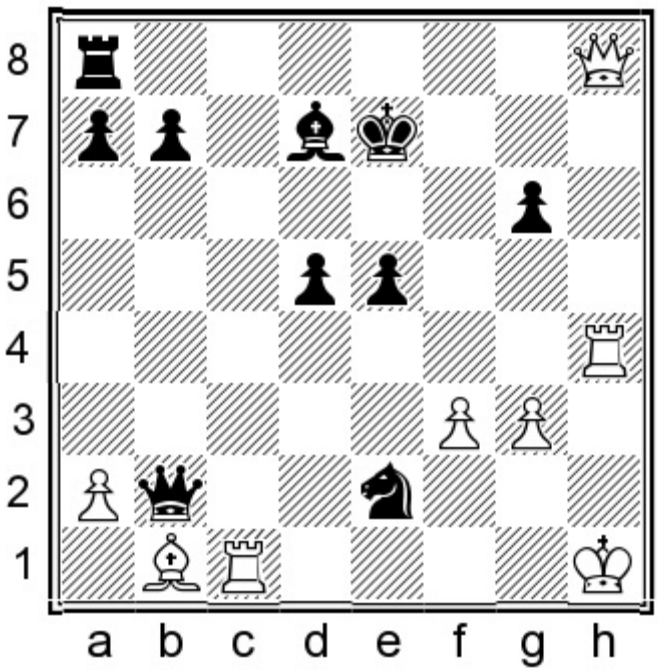
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White's queenside pieces are on their original squares, yet still he can win by force. **28.♖xd4! ♕xd4 29.♗b2 ♘f3†! 30.♔g2!!** The only move! (30.♔f1 gives Black additional time for 30...♕d5!! 31.♗xh8 ♘h2† forcing a perpetual.) **30...♘h4†** (After 30...♘e1† White can choose between 31.♔h3 ♕d7† 32.♔h2 and 31.♕xe1 ♕xb2 32.♘c3!, both of which win easily.) **31.♔f1 ♕d5 32.♕g4†! ♘f5 33.♗xh8 h5 34.♘c3 1–0**

44. Oleksienko – Gupta, New Delhi 2011



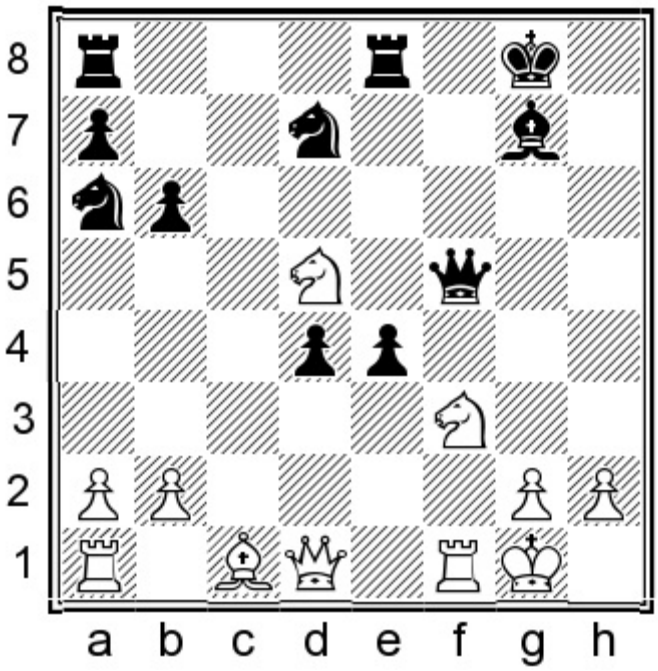
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White is close to victory, but he must be precise. **28.♖h7†!** A natural move, but as we will see, the

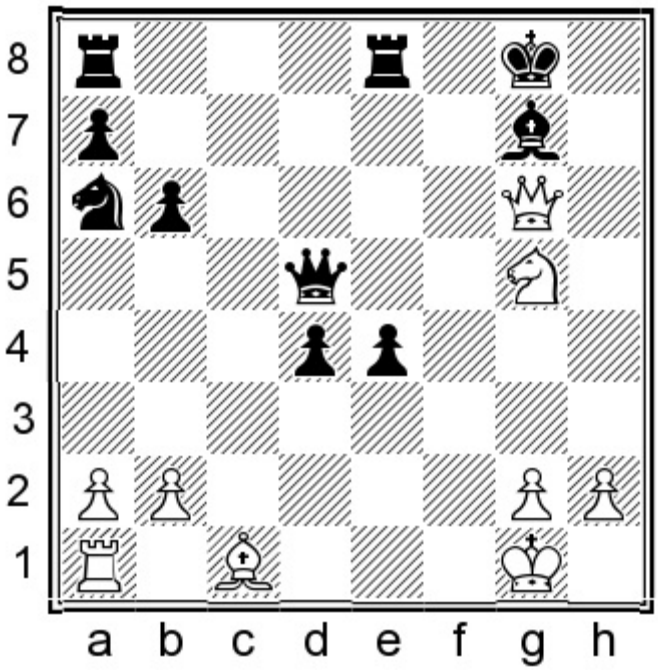
real key is the follow-up. (28.♕g7†? would throw away the victory: 28...♔d6! 29.♖d1 ♘xg3† 30.♔g1 ♘e2†=) **28...♔e6** (28...♔d6 29.♕f6† ♗e6 30.♕e7 is mate.) **29.♗f5†!!** Without this move White would be losing, but now he is mating by force, and so Black resigned. **1–0**

45. Tissir – Bisby, Daventry 2010



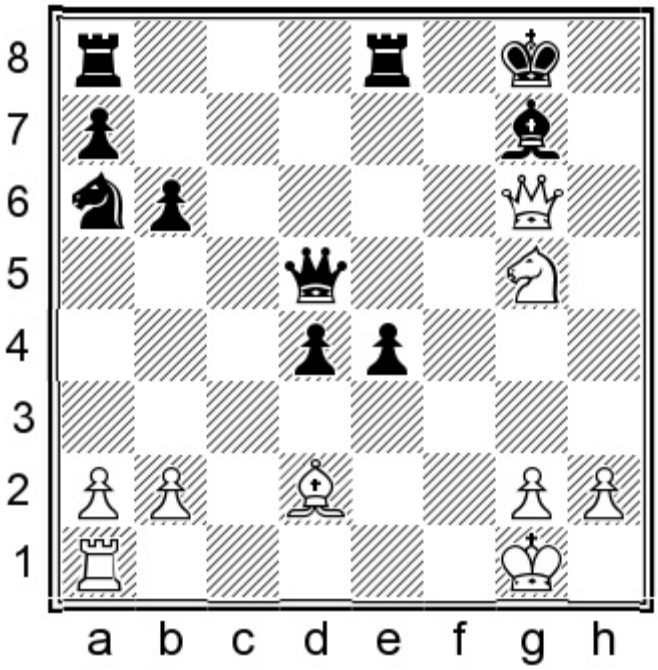
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With both knights en prise, White must take immediate action. **21.♘g5!** (The tempting 21.♕b3 is weaker in view of 21...♘ac5! 22.♘e7† ♔h8 23.♘xf5 ♘xb3 24.axb3 exf3 25.♖xf3 ♖e1† 26.♔f2 ♖e5± when Black retains some defensive chances.) **21...♕xd5** (21...♕g6 22.♕b3 ♔h8 23.♕h3† ♔g8 24.♕xd7+–) **22.♕h5 ♘f6** (22...♘f8 23.♖xf8† ♔xf8 24.♘h7†+–) **23.♖xf6 ♗xf6 24.♕g6† ♗g7**



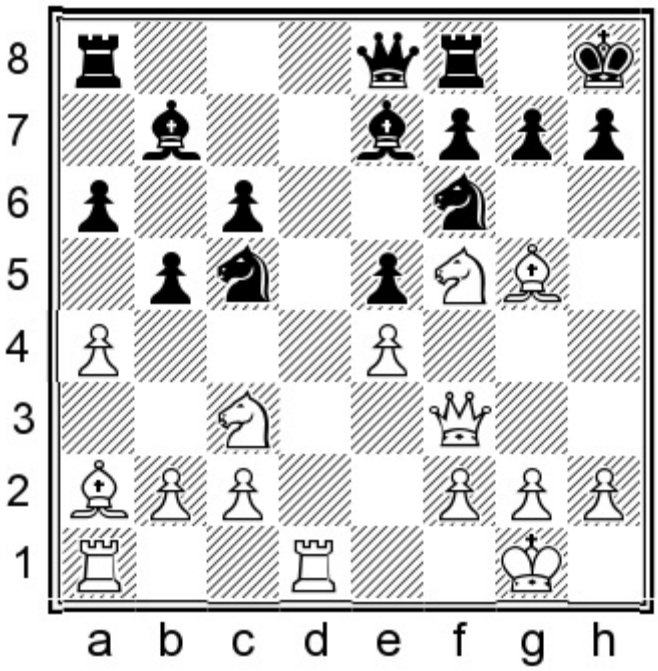
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25.♗d2? A bad move which might have thrown away the win. (25.♗f4! was correct: 25...e3 26.♕h7† ♔f8 27.♗d6† This is the difference between the two bishop moves! 27...♕xd6 28.♖f1† ♔e7 29.♕xg7† ♔d8 30.♘f7†+−)



25...♖e7? Losing at once! (Black should have gone for one of the following two ideas: 25...♖e5! 26.♕h7† ♔f8 27.♖f1† ♔e8 28.♕xg7 ♖e7 29.♕g6† ♔d7 30.♖f5∞; or 25...e3!? 26.♖f1 [26.♕h7† ♔f8 27.♖f1† ♔e7 28.♕xg7† ♔d8⇄] 26...♕xg5 27.♕xg5 exd2 28.♕d5† ♔h8 29.♕h5†=) **26.♖f1 1–0**

46. Motwani – Rowson, Dundee 1995

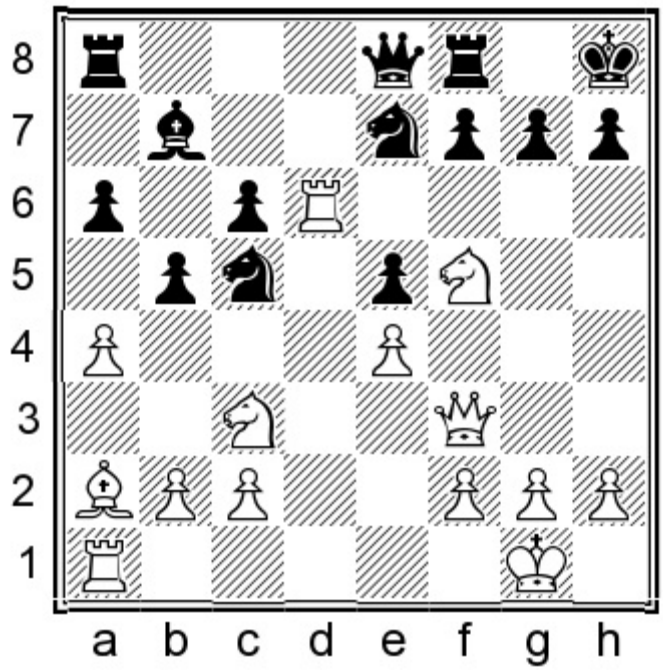


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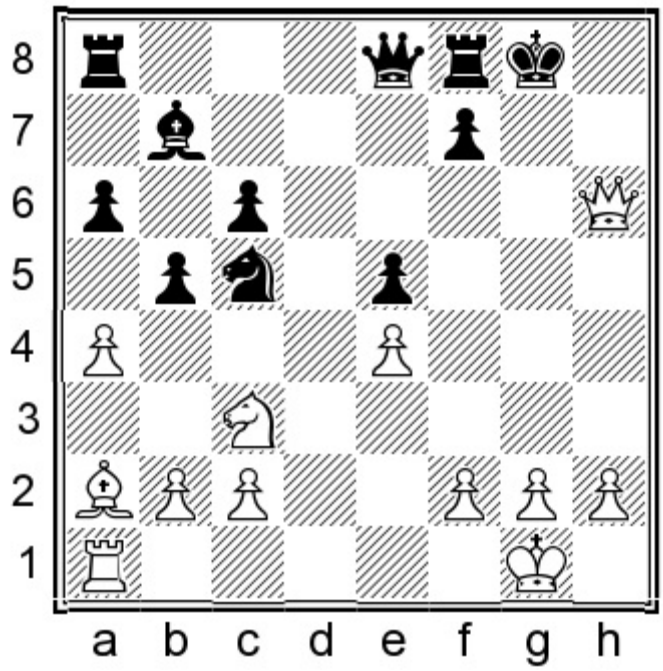
White is obviously better; all his pieces are active and he has full control over the d-file. But how can

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he win the game? **16.♖d6!** (16.♘d6 ♗xd6 17.♖xd6 ♘fd7± gives Black chances to resist; however, 16.♕g3! was a strong alternative. Black is unable to offer much resistance, for example: 16...♘fxe4 17.♘xe4 ♘xe4 18.♕xe5 ♗f6 19.♗xf6 ♘xf6 [19...gxf6 20.♕f4+–] 20.♕g3 ♘h5 21.♕h4 f6 22.♖e1+–) **16...♘g8** (16...♗xd6 17.♘xg7+–; 16...♘cd7 17.♘xe7 ♕xe7 18.♖xd7 ♕xd7 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.♕xf6† ♔g8 21.♖d1+–) **17.♗xe7 ♘xe7**



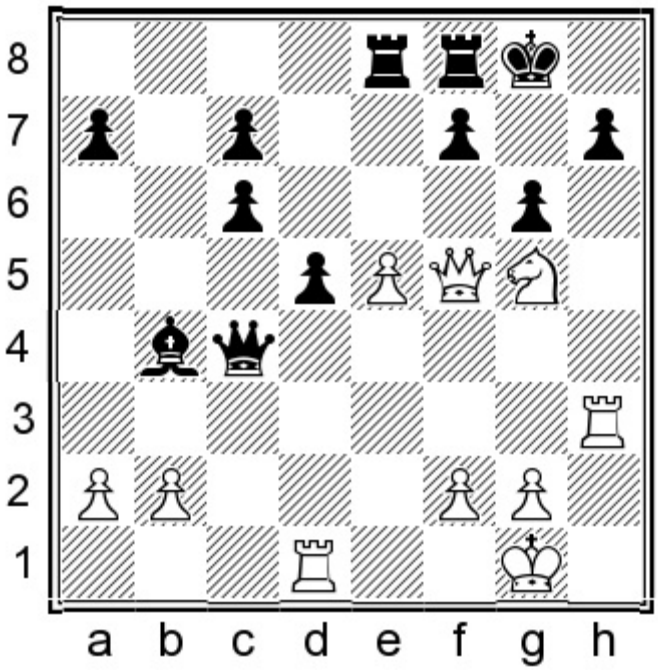
18.♘xg7!! The decisive blow! **18...♔xg7 19.♕f6† ♔g8 20.♕g5† ♘g6** (20...♔h8 21.♕xe5† ♔g8 22.♕xc5+–) **21.♖xg6† hxg6 22.♕xg6† ♔h8 23.♕h6† ♔g8**



24.♖e1! Motwani has enough time to bring the rook to the kingside. **24...♕d7 25.♖e3 ♕g4 26.♖g3 ♕xg3 27.hxg3 b4 28.♕g6† ♔h8 29.♕h5† ♔g8 30.♕g6† ♔h8 31.♗xf7 1–0**

47. Vallejo Pons – Onischuk, Italy 2011

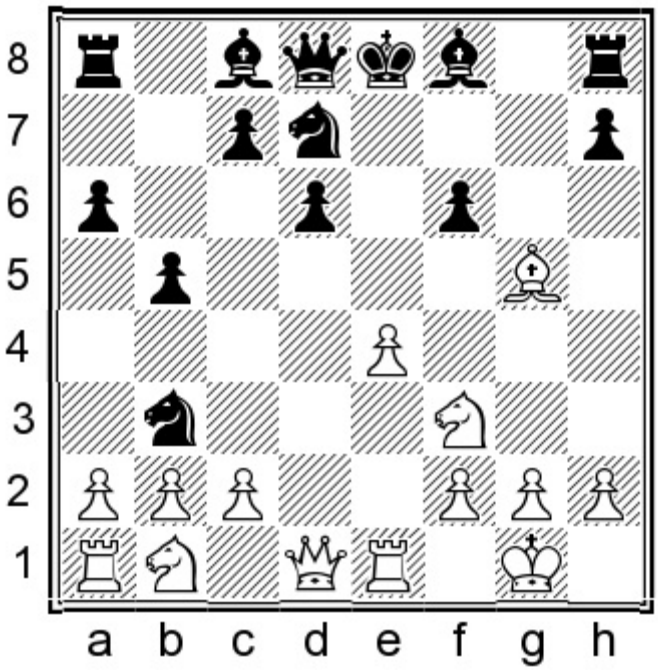
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White has a powerful attacking position, and he found a nice way to seal the victory. **26.♕f6! ♗e7** What else? **27.♘xh7!!** A simple but nonetheless pleasing move. **27...♕g4** (27...♗xf6 28.♘xf6† ♔g7 29.♖h7#) **28.♕xe7! 1–0**

48. Edouard – Tkachiev, Belfort 2010

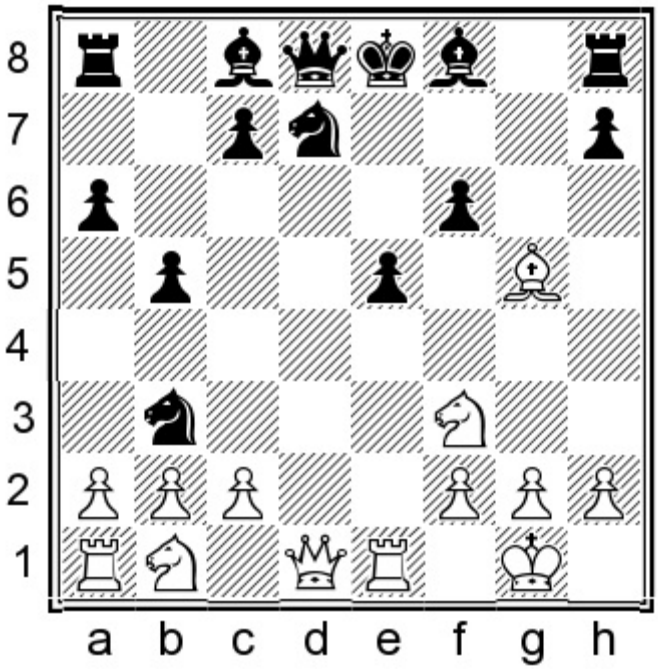


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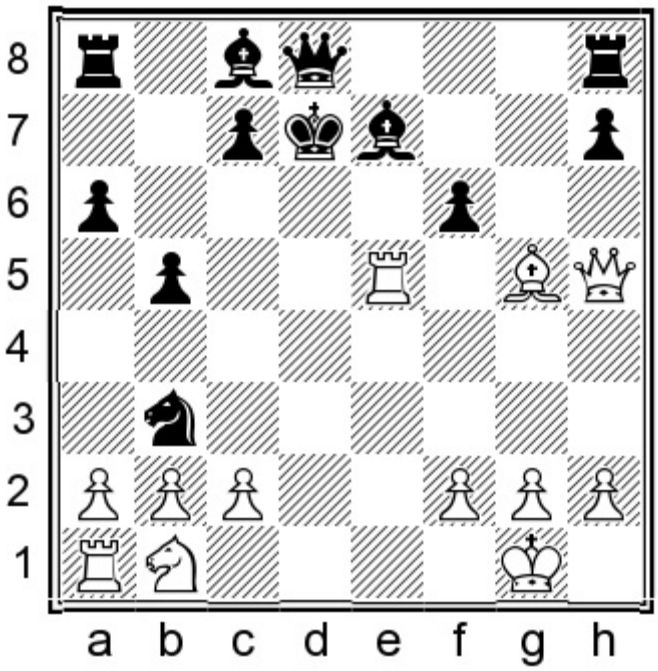
White is already committed to the sacrificial path, and the only solution is to throw more wood on the fire. **12.e5!!** Not the most difficult move to find, but all the same it must have been a great feeling to play it on the board! **12...dxe5?!** (12...fxg5 would have been a bit more resilient, although 13.exd6†

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♔f7 14.dxc7 ♕f6 [14...♕xc7 15.♘xg5† ♔f6 16.♘e4† ♔e7 17.axb3+–] 15.axb3 ♔g7 16.♘c3 still wins as Black's king is too exposed.)



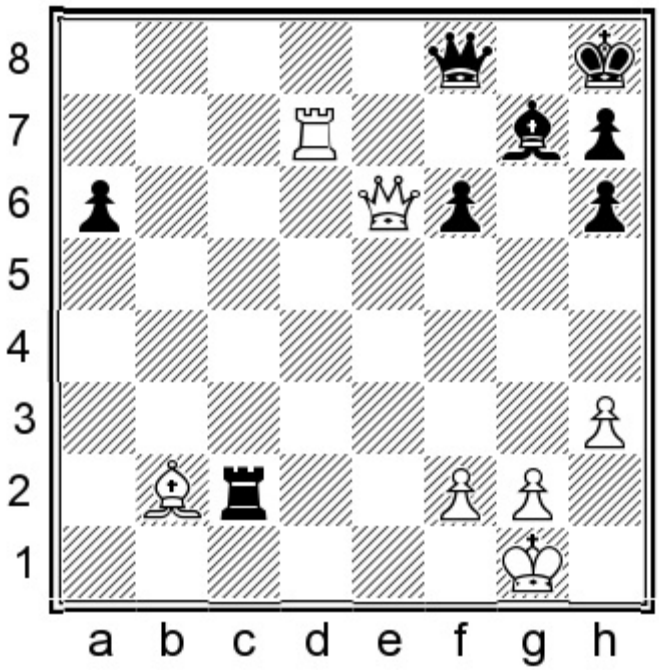
13.♘xe5! ♘xe5□ 14.♖xe5† ♗e7 15.♕h5† ♔d7 (15...♔f8 16.♗h6† ♔g8 17.♖e3 ♗f5 18.♖g3† ♗g6 19.♖xg6† ♔f7 20.♖g7† ♔e6 21.axb3+–)



16.♗xf6! ♘xa1 (Here is a funny line: 16...♖e8 17.♖e3! ♗xf6? 18.♕d5 mate!) **17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.♖xe7† ♔xe7 19.♕c5† ♔f7 20.♕xc7†** Here Black resigned instead of suffer the further continuation: **20...♔g8 21.♕d8† ♔g7 22.♕d4† ♔g8 23.♕d5†+– 1–0**

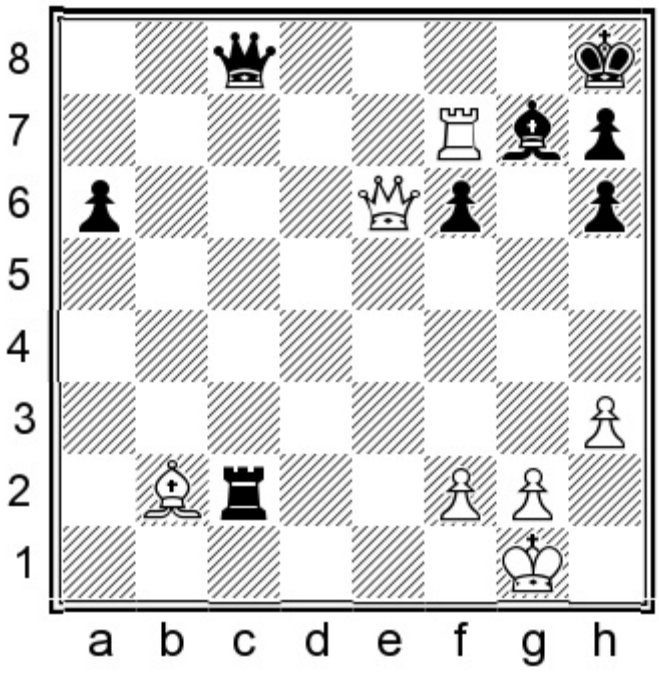
49. Anand – Carlsen, London 2010

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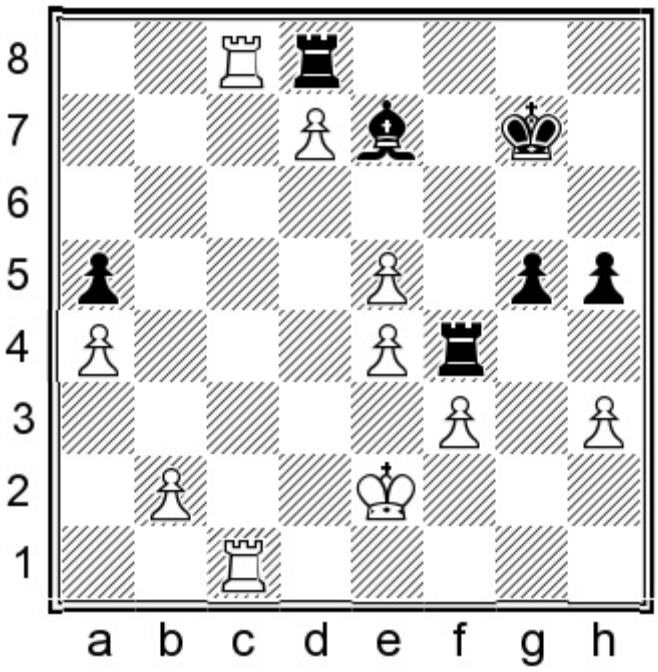
In this position Anand chose 33.♗a3(?) and after 33...♕g8 34.♕xa6± he eventually succeeded in wearing his opponent down. However, he missed an even stronger continuation which would have decided the game immediately: **33.♖f7!** (But not 33.♖e7? ♖xb2 34.♖e8 ♖b8 when Black holds easily.) **33...♕c8** (33...♕g8 34.♗xf6+–; 33...♕b8 34.♖e7 ♖c8 35.♖xg7 ♕xb2 36.♕f7 ♕b1† 37.♔h2 ♕f5 38.♖g3+–)



34.♕e7! ♖xb2 35.♖xg7 ♕c1† (35...♕f5 36.♕f8#) **36.♔h2 ♕f4† 37.♖g3!+–** Anand subsequently confessed that he had missed the last move in his calculations.

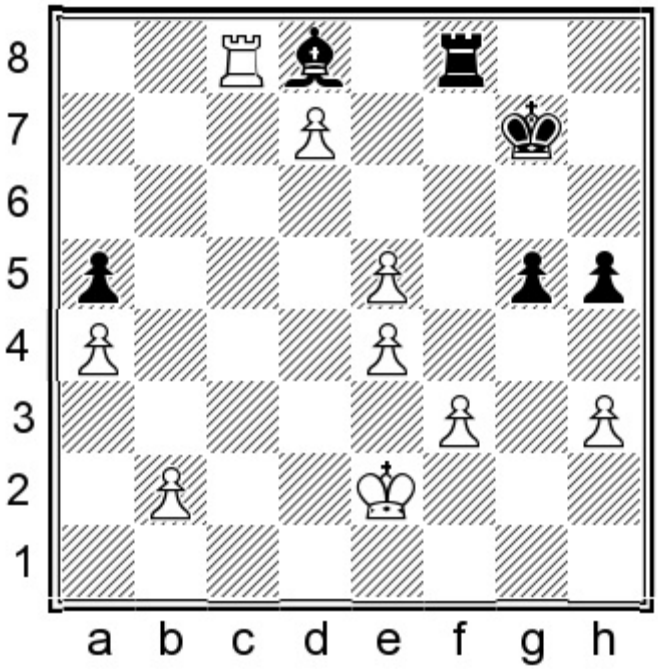
50. Kharitonov – Hasangatin, France 2011

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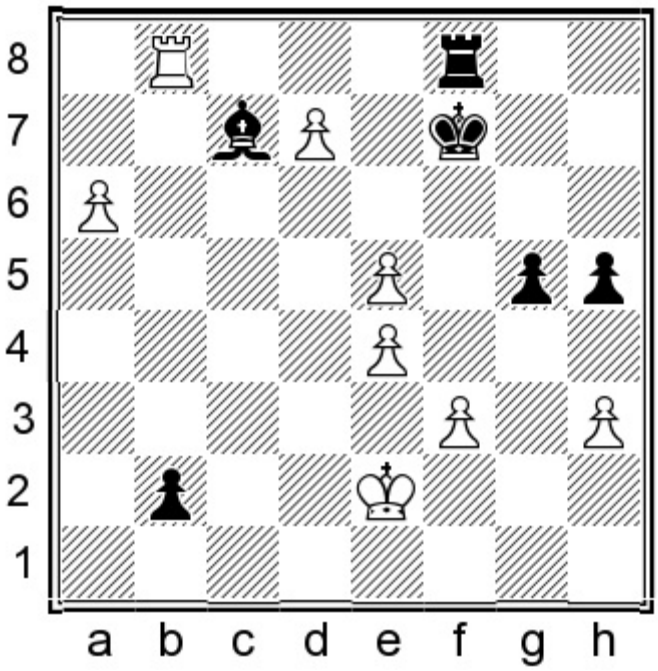
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How would you evaluate the position – is White winning, losing or drawing? **41.♖xd8 ♗xd8 42.♖c8 ♖f8** The first two moves were straightforward, but now there is an important decision to be made.

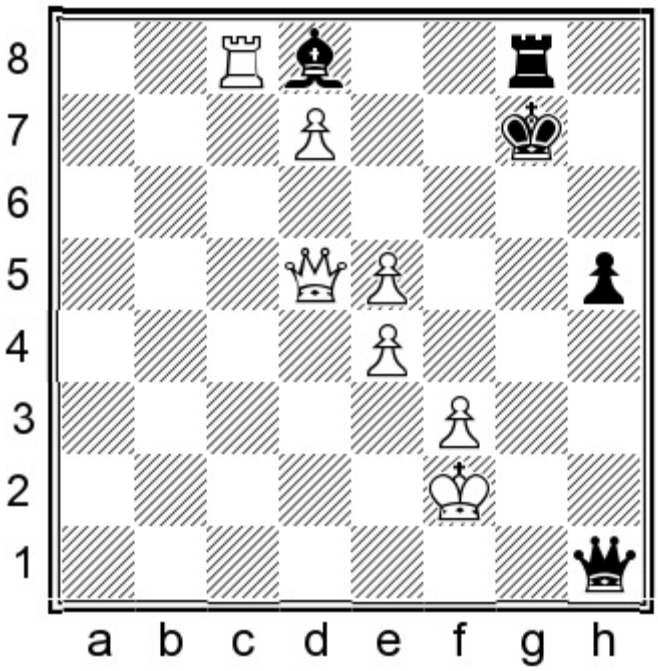


43.b4! (In the game White erred with 43.♖a8?! and soon agreed to a draw after: 43...♔f7 44.b4 axb4 45.a5 b3 46.a6 b2 47.♖b8 ♗c7

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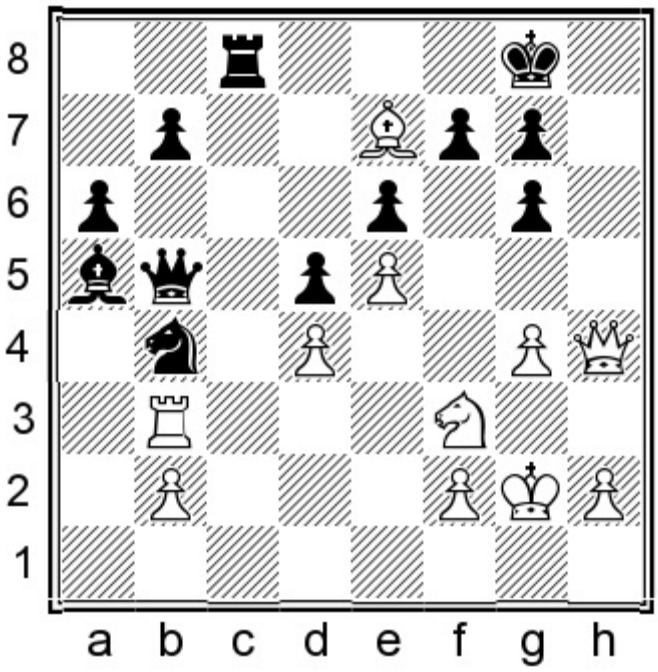
48.♖xf8† ½–½ The final decision was a strange one, as after the forcing line 48.♖xb2 ♔e6 49.♖c2 ♔xd7 50.e6† ♔c8 51.♖b2 ♗b8 52.♖b7 ♖e8 53.♖d7 ♖xe6 54.a7 ♗xa7 55.♖xa7± White still has good winning chances.) **43...♔f7** (After 43...axb4? 44.a5 b3 [44...♗xa5 45.e6+–] 45.a6 b2 46.♖b8 ♗e7 47.a7 White wins easily.) **44.bxa5 ♗xa5 45.h4! ♗d8** Otherwise the f-pawn joins the action with decisive effect. **46.a5! gxh4** (There is also 46...♗xa5 47.♖xf8† ♔xf8 48.hxg5 and nobody can stop five passed pawns!) **47.a6 h3 48.♔f2 ♖g8 49.a7 h2 50.a8=♕ h1=♕ 51.♕d5† ♔g7** Black is almost surviving, but with the help of a few simple tactics White simplifies to a winning queen ending:



52.♕xg8†! ♔xg8 53.♖xd8† ♔g7 54.♖g8†! ♔xg8 55.d8=♕†+–

51. Vachier-Lagrave – Wang Hao, Wijk aan Zee 2011

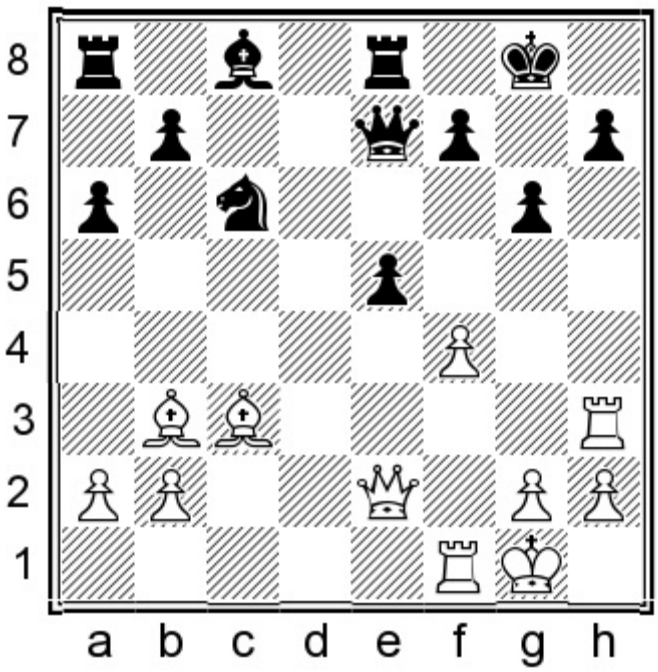
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Wang Hao is a pawn up, but he seems to be in real trouble due to the deadly threat of ♘g5. How can Black prevent it? **32...♘d3!!** A simple but elegant move. **33.♖xb5!** White understands that he must bail out for a draw. (33.♖xd3?? g5!! 34.♘xg5 ♕xd3–+) **33...♘f4† 34.♔g3 ♘e2† 35.♔h3 ♘f4† 36.♔g3 ♘e2† 37.♔g2 ♘f4† ½–½**

52. Ganguly – Filippov, Guangzhou (rapid) 2010

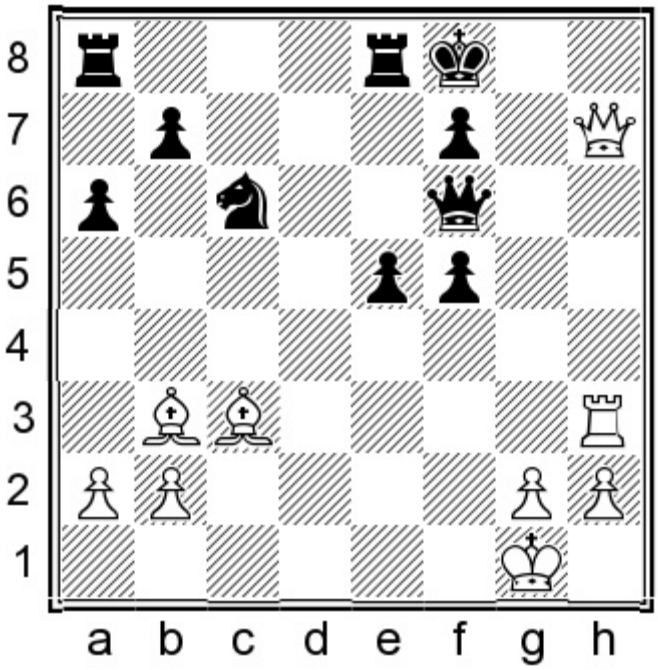


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How can White fulfil his attacking potential? **24.f5! ♗xf5?** Going down quickly. (Also bad is 24...♔h8? 25.fxg6 fxg6 26.♖e3! ♕c5 27.♕f3+– when Black cannot protect his king; 24...♘d4! would

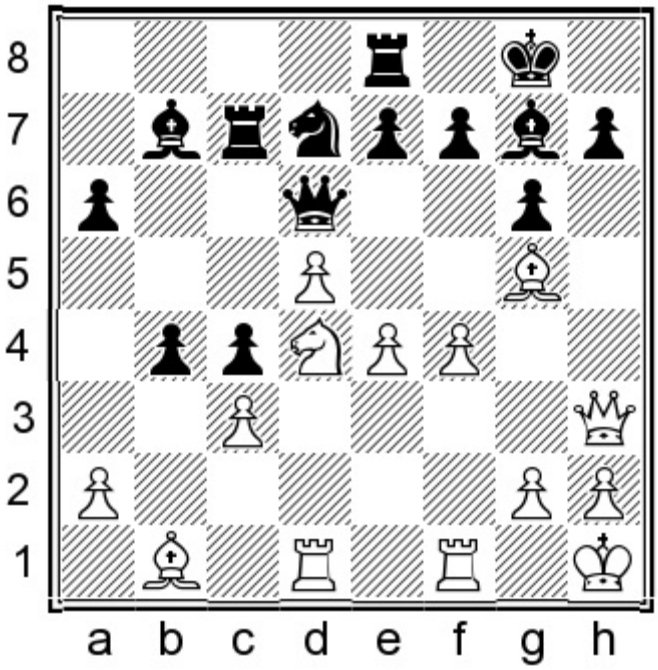
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have given some chances though: 25.♗xd4 exd4 26.♕d2! ♔h8 [26...g5 27.♕d1! ♕e2 28.♕xd4 ♕e5 29.♕g4+–] 27.♕h6 f6 28.♕xg6 ♖f8 29.♕g4±) **25.♖xf5!** Obviously. **25...gxf5 26.♕h5 ♕f6 27.♕xh7† ♔f8**



28.♖h6! ♕g7 29.♕xf5 Threatening ♖h7. **29...♖e7 30.♖h7 ♕g8** (30...♕g6 31.♕xg6 fxg6 32.♖h8†+–) **31.♕h5 1–0**

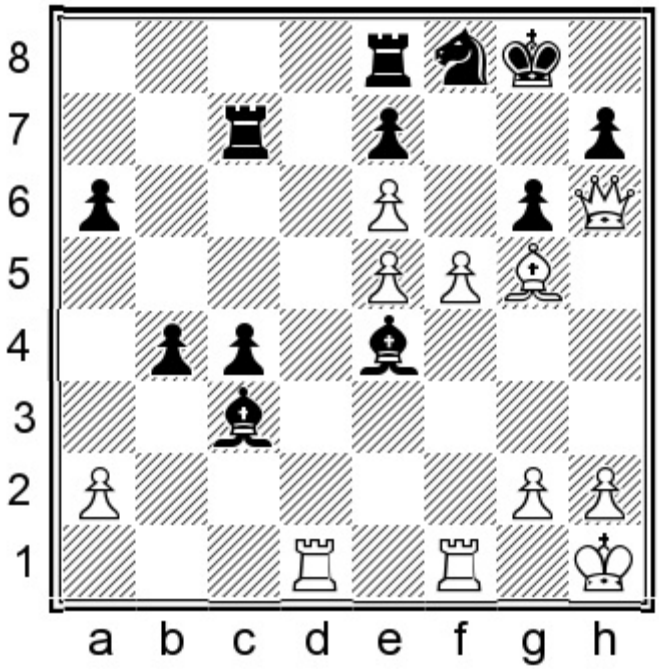
53. Vovk – Sasikiran, Cappelle-la-Grande 2011



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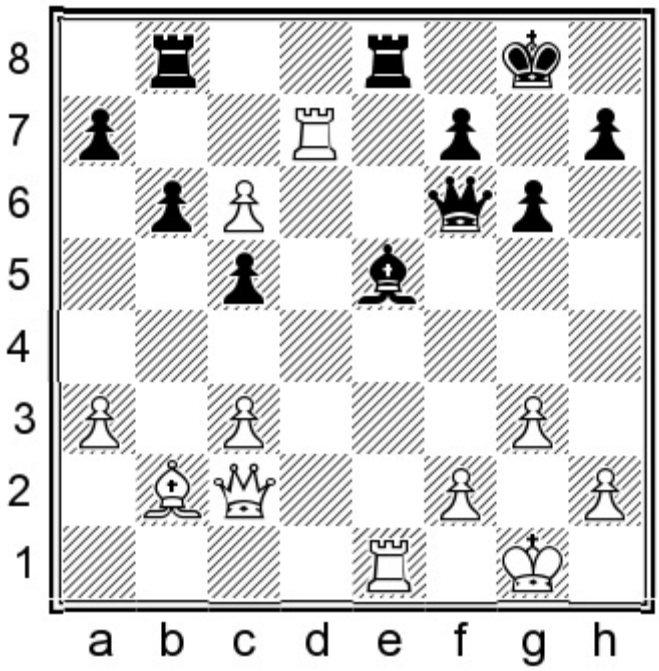
White has a strong position and he capitalized on it convincingly. **21.♘e6!!** Black's king is in serious danger. **21...♗xc3** (21...fxe6 22.dxe6 ♕c6 23.exd7 ♖d8 24.♗xe7 ♖dxd7 25.♗xb4+–; 21...♖cc8 22.♘xg7

♔xg7 23.e5 ♕c7 24.♗xe7+–) **22.e5 ♕b6 23.♗xg6!** The most stylish, although White already had a choice of wins. (23.f5!?+–; 23.♕h6 fxe6 24.♗xg6 ♘f8 25.♗xe8+–) **23...fxg6** (23...hxg6 24.♕h6+–) **24.♕h6 ♕xe6 25.dxe6 ♘f8 26.f5 ♗e4!** Black is doing the best he can to cause problems.



27.f6 (White could have won more easily with: 27.fxg6! ♗xg6□ 28.♖f7 ♘xe6 29.♖xh7! ♗xh7 30.♕xe6† ♔h8 31.♗f6† exf6 32.♕xe8† ♔g7 33.e6+–) **27...exf6 28.exf6** (28.♖xf6 ♗xe5 29.♖xf8† ♖xf8 30.e7 ♖e8 31.♖d8+–) **28...♘xe6 29.f7† ♖xf7 30.♖xf7 ♘xg5 31.♖fd7+–** Black struggled on until move 59 but there was no miracle. **...1–0**

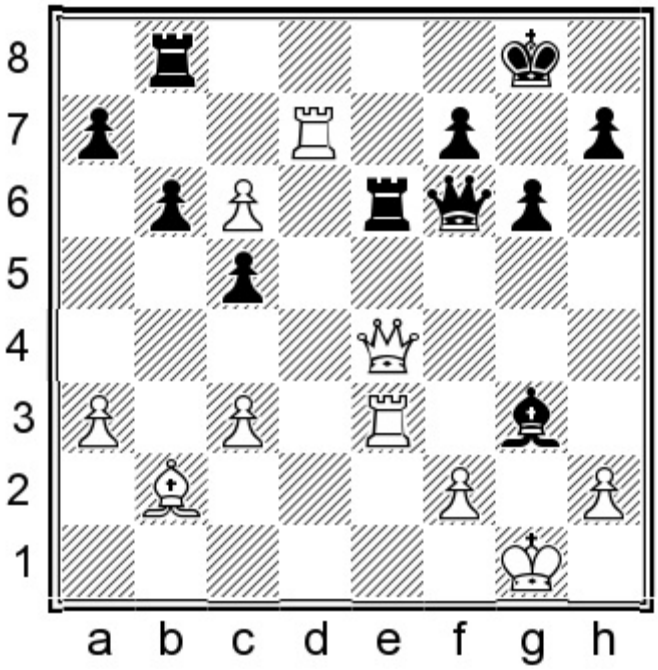
54. Petrosian – Sosonko, Tilburg 1982 (var)



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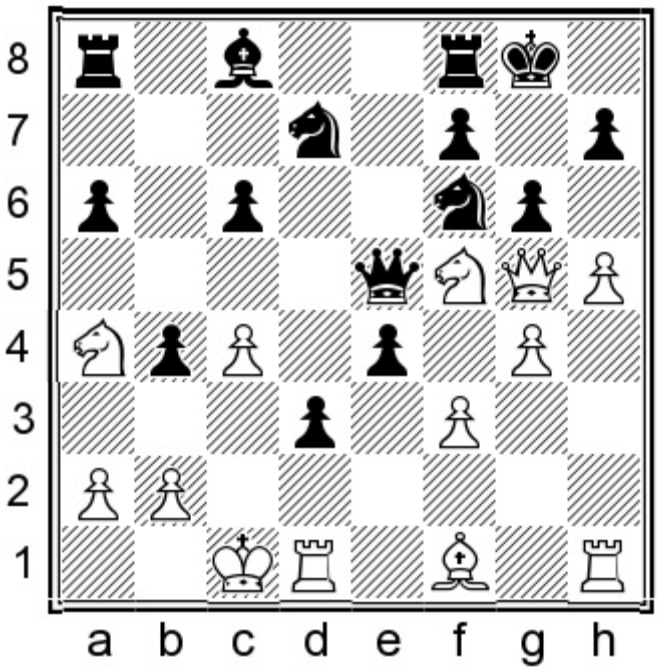
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White has the advantage, but he must choose the right path. **25.♕e4!** (It is important to avoid the following trap: 25.c7? ♗xc7! 26.♖xe8† ♖xe8 27.♖xc7 ♕d8! 28.♖xa7 ♖e1† 29.♔g2 ♕d5† 30.f3 ♕c4 and White is in considerable danger.) **25...♖e6 26.♖e3! ♗xg3**



27.♕f3!± Black may have won a pawn, but he faces an unpleasant defence due to White's passed pawn and active rooks, not to mention the bishop which is poised to join the action as soon as White gets time for c3-c4.

55. Vitiugov – Khismatullin, Moscow 2009

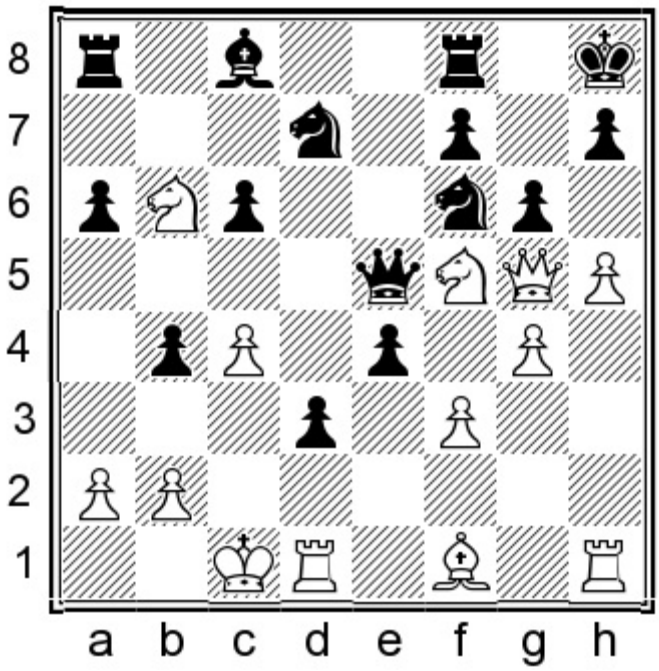


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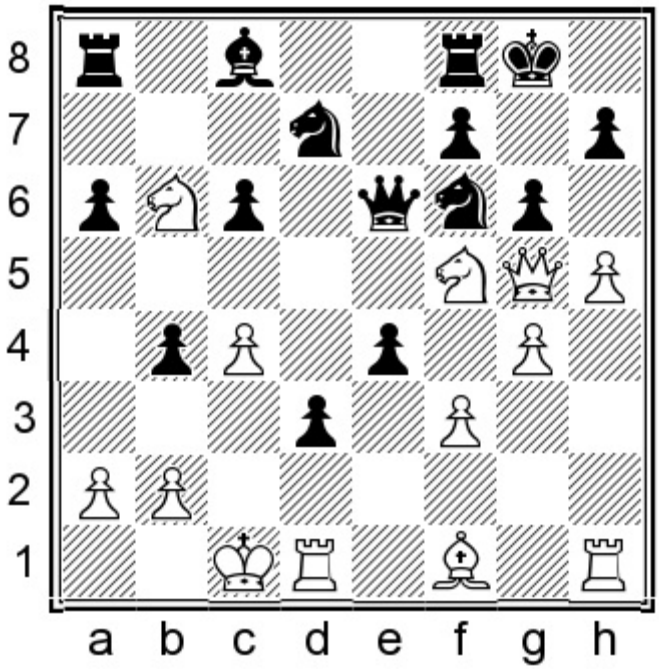
White has a few tempting ideas available; which would you choose? **19.♘b6!?** Vitiugov strikes from

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an unexpected angle in order to exchange the enemy knight. The idea is interesting, but not objectively strongest. (Best was 19.♗xd3! ♔h8 [19...exd3? 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.♖de1+–] 20.f4! with a strong attack.) **19...♕e6??** A terrible mistake which loses immediately. (19...♖a7? was also bad: 20.♘xd7 ♘xd7 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.♘e7† ♔g7 23.♖xh7†+–; However, the cold-blooded 19...♔h8! was good enough for equality, for example:



20.f4 [20.hxg6 fxg6 21.♘xa8 gxf5 favours Black] 20...♕c5! 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.♕xg6 ♖g8 23.♕f7 ♕xb6! [It is not too late to err with 23...♕f2? 24.♗xd3 when both 24...exd3 25.♖d2 and 24...♕xf4† 25.♔b1 ♕g5 26.♗xe4 ♘xb6 27.♘e7! are winning for White.] Now White has nothing better than forcing a draw: 24.g5 [24.♗xd3 ♕d8! 25.♗xe4 ♕f8 26.♕xf8 ♘xf8 27.♗xc6 ♗xf5 28.♗xa8 ♖xg4⇄] 24...♕f2 25.♖d2 ♕e1† 26.♖d1 ♕f2=)

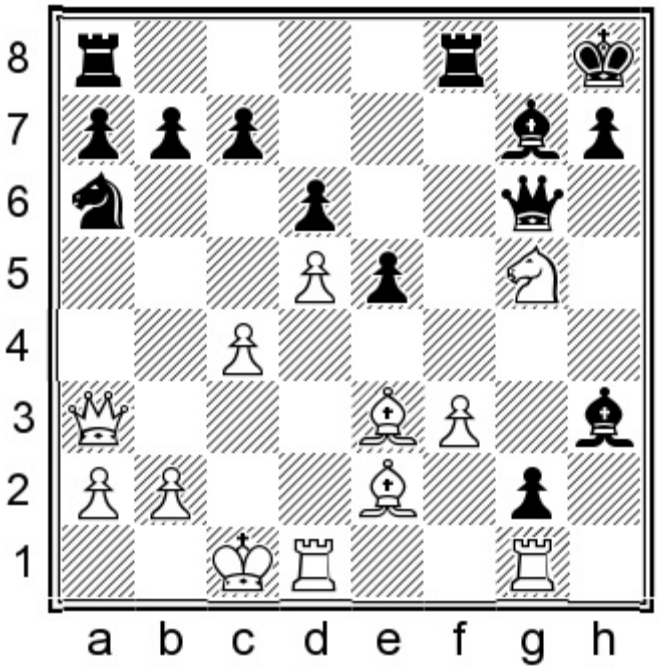


20.♕h6! (20.♘xa8?? ♕xc4† 21.♔d2 ♕c2† 22.♔e1 exf3–+; 20.♗xd3!? is not bad, but the text move is

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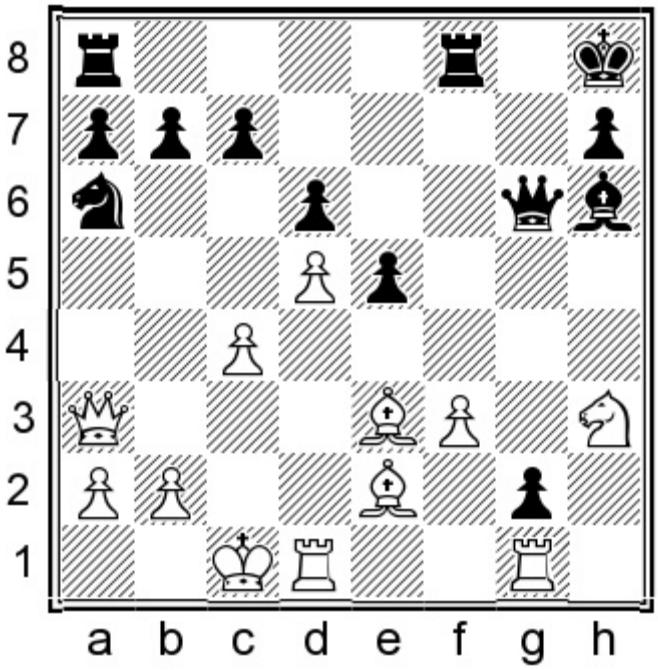
simplest.) **20...gxf5** (20...d2† 21.♖xd2+–) **21.gxf5 ♕xf5 22.♖g1† 1–0** White's last few moves were pretty simple, so it is hard to imagine what Khismatullin missed when contemplating his 19th move.

56. Sethuraman – Shyam, New Delhi 2010



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Black already has the advantage and he found a convincing way to increase it. **22...♗h6!!** An excellent move which sets up a cute tactical trick. **23.♘xh3?!** (White could have prolonged the game with 23.♘e4, although after 23...♖f4!? 24.♘d2 ♗f5 his position is terrible and Black should win eventually.)



23...♘b4!! A great move! **24.♔d2** (24.♗d3 ♗xe3† 25.♔b1 ♘xd3–+; 24.♕xb4 ♗xe3† 25.♖d2 ♕g3!–+)

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24...♘c2! (Stronger than 24...♕c2† 25.♔e1 ♕f5 26.♕xb4 ♗xe3 27.♘f2 when White is still alive, even if only temporarily.) **25.♗d3 ♘xa3 26.♗xg6 ♘xc4† 0–1**

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