



# Creative Chess Strategy

Using an Imaginative approach to exploit advantages

Alfonso Romero

# **Creative Chess Strategy**

**Alfonso Romero**

*Translated by Roberto Alvarez*

**GAMBIT**

First published in the UK by Gambit Publications Ltd 2003

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A copy of the British Library Cataloguing in Publication data is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1 901983 92 7

**DISTRIBUTION:**

Worldwide (except USA): Central Books Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN.

Tel +44 (0)20 8986 4854 Fax +44 (0)20 8533 5821. E-mail: [orders@Centralbooks.com](mailto:orders@Centralbooks.com)

USA: BHB International, Inc., 302 West North 2nd Street, Seneca, SC 29678, USA.

For all other enquiries (including a full list of all Gambit Chess titles) please contact the publishers, Gambit Publications Ltd, P.O. Box 32640, London W14 0JN. E-mail: [info@gambitbooks.com](mailto:info@gambitbooks.com)  
Or visit the GAMBIT web site at <http://www.gambitbooks.com>

Edited by Graham Burgess

Typeset by John Nunn

Printed in Great Britain by The Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wilts.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Gambit Publications Ltd**

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# Preface

This book is intended for intermediate and high-ranking players who wish to understand the differences between ordinary players and masters. I have sought to make this book a course about creative chess strategy and technique.

The greatest players are those who have the sharpest intuition and perceive the essence of a position at just a glance. This intuition stems from the knowledge stored in the player's mind, and this knowledge is based on previous study and experience. It is quite obvious that our understanding of a position, and the ease with which we find the best moves, will be far greater if we have experienced it previously than if it is unfamiliar to us. Thus acquired knowledge is translated into technique.

However, my fundamental aim in this book is to show that the way we handle and interpret positions shouldn't become something automatic or mechanical, but it should always be original and innovative. The positions we encounter will never be identical to those we have seen before, and so there is a need for unexpected and creative solutions.

In this book we examine many typical positions of the sort that can easily arise in practice. Pawn-structure, bishop-pair, control of light/dark squares, exploitation of weaknesses, general themes with the IQP, blockade – these are fundamental topics and are examined thoroughly in these pages.

I'm sure the reader will find the selection of games highly interesting. I have chosen games that to me seem most instructive, and feature original ideas by grandmasters. I offer my personal reflections on the positions studied, going into depth in the fashionable world of strategic analysis. Knowing how to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a position, and reaching an appropriate decision, is one of the most difficult topics in chess. Given this, I found it necessary to analyse some of the games in great depth, and so to present my conclusions over many pages.

While each chapter is focused on one main strategic subject, these titles naturally can't describe the entirety of the themes relevant in each game. A well-fought game inevitably includes many positional and tactical ideas and strategic plans, and they need to be considered as a whole. So let's enjoy solving this unique puzzle and the creative solutions of the best grandmasters.

*Alfonso Romero*  
*October 2003*

# Introduction

The book *Ajedrez en la cumbre* (Chess at the Summit) written by former world champion Tigran Petrosian, raises an important topic in teaching chess:

## What do we mean by ‘chess technique’?

The Armenian grandmaster strongly rejects in his book that chess technique should be deemed as something mechanical, just as the Chess Dictionary suggests: ‘Technique is the control of the battle in typical positions and, especially, the ability to profit from an acquired advantage by the shortest means... it has a more or less mechanical character’. And Petrosian, immediately, refers us back to one of his most interesting games, contradicting this definition. In the game, technique is shown to be creative and in no way mechanical.

Technique should be creative – as Petrosian remarks – but only when planning in certain positions demands it. It is not necessary to try to squeeze all situations to the utmost. It is enough to discover the critical moments, letting each chess-player’s intuition act freely.

Apart from this, a **technical player** should devote absolute concentration to the game while he carries out his creative plan, trying to avoid any tactical trap or undesirable element prepared by the opponent. He should avoid the natural relaxation that affects a player when he has the advantage, and should not try to be more specific than necessary once the winning plan has been chosen. All this is technique and all those elements coexist with it.

Everybody knows Petrosian’s merits as a chess-player. In general, many chess-players remember him as a very strong defensive player who used his great combinative skills when he faced danger. A comment Mikhail Botvinnik made about him is very insightful: “He has the most original and genuine talent in all our grandmasters. A surprising talent: he places his pieces with such unusual perception that all attacks upon them run into serious trouble.” His

playing style somewhat resembles that of English grandmaster Michael Adams: he places his pieces on the best squares and then he thinks. But this is of course a difficult skill to emulate: mere imitation will not suffice.

In the following game by Petrosian, his superb move 18 ♖c5 springs from his enormous practical understanding.

## Petrosian – Bannik

USSR Ch (Riga) 1958

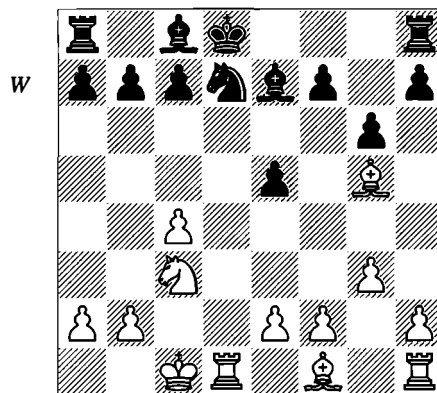
1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 g3 d6?

Often a dubious opening decision shapes the course of the middlegame. Here both 4...♗b4 and 4...d5 are considered better. The text-move allows White to win the central battle.

5 d4! g6

Still trusting in the defensive resources the endgame offers: Black appears to be super-solid and without weaknesses.

6 dxe5 ♘xe5 7 ♘xe5 dxe5 8 ♚xd8+ ♜xd8 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 0-0-0+ ♘d7 (D)



11 h4!

This accurate move has a great positional basis. This pawn advance tries to produce a future weakening in Black’s pawn-structure and gains space in a vital part of the board. This is a

sample of Petrosian's clear-sighted talent. Very probably, he already realized that only a miracle could save Black.

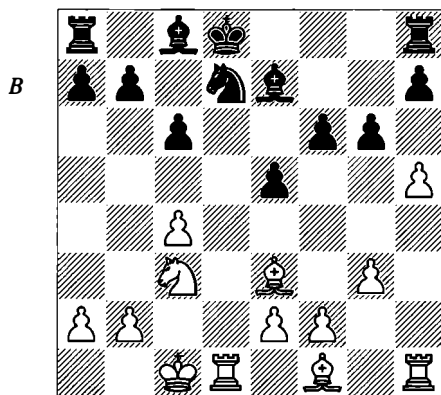
It is worth mentioning that a continuation like 11  $\text{♙xe7+}$   $\text{♜xe7}$  12  $\text{♝d5+}$   $\text{♜d8}$  13  $\text{♙h3}$  requires precise calculation to be rejected. Following 13...f5! (due to the threat of  $\text{♝f6}$ ) 14 e4 c6, it is clear that after 15  $\text{♝f6?}$   $\text{♜e7}$  all the advantage has disappeared, but not in case of 15  $\text{♝c3}$ . Black should be content with the humble 15... $\text{♞f8}$  (15... $\text{♜c7}$  16  $\text{exf5}$   $\text{♝f6}$  17  $\text{♞hcl}$   $\text{♞e8}$  18  $\text{g4}$   $\text{gxf5}$  19  $\text{gxf5}$  gives Black no compensation) waiting for the development of the events. Many chess-players would have chosen this forcing variation, which is definitely attractive, and drastically changes the nature of the position. However, Petrosian wants to give the game a more positional character, choosing a more 'technical' position.

The style of a player is defined by this type of decision.

#### 11...f6

Black must act without delay. The king would remain confined in the centre of the board if he took no action against the g5-bishop. After 11...h6 12  $\text{♙xe7+}$   $\text{♜xe7}$  13  $\text{♝d5+}$   $\text{♜d8}$  14  $\text{♙h3}$  f5 15 h5 White has achieved one of his goals: to break up Black's solid pawn-chain, through combining a series of tactical threats. In case of 11...c6, Black will suffer the consequences of his early weakening of the d6-square: 12  $\text{♝e4!}$  h6 13  $\text{♝d6!}$ .

#### 12 $\text{♙e3}$ c6 13 h5 (D)



This move complements the previous decision. Forcing the black pawns onto dark squares

favours White, as it enables him to exploit the weakness of the f5-square later on.

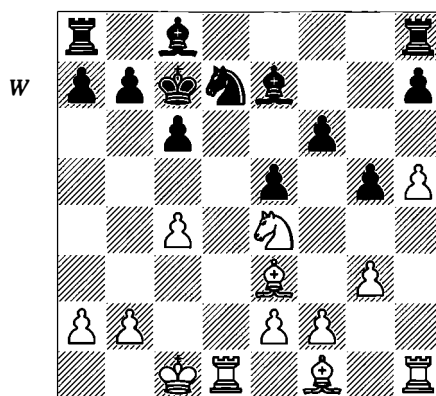
#### 13...g5

Although sad, this move is necessary and understandable, since other moves allow the rook to penetrate through to the seventh rank.

#### 14 $\text{♝e4}$

Paradoxically, this knight located at the centre is unassailable. During large parts of the game the pressure on f6 will be apparent.

#### 14... $\text{♜c7}$ (D)



#### 15 $\text{♙h3!}$

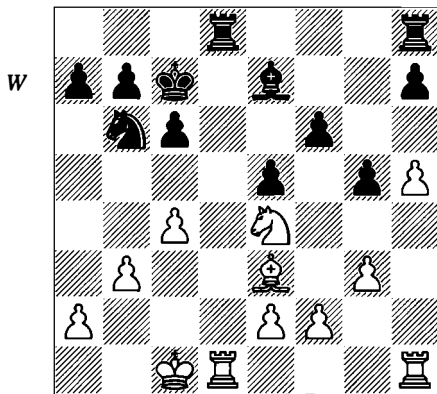
The exchange of the light-squared bishops is one of Petrosian's goals, since the situation of the black pawns on dark squares means that Black's c8-bishop is a potentially strong piece. Although this move is 'natural', I am convinced that many players would prefer to break open the position by 15 f4!?, so as to increase the activity of the white pieces. Indeed, this also seems a healthy move, although the principle that it makes sense to keep positional advantages in as clear a form as possible, should be borne in mind. The break could simplify the position too much and also, paradoxically, offer Black's pieces a freer game with simple tactical threats after 15... $\text{♝b6}$  16 b3  $\text{♙f5}$ . Petrosian prefers to secure the position, and only open the game if it is necessary or clearly increases his advantage.

#### 15... $\text{♝b6}$

This knight will be very much misplaced here. One might suggest transferring the knight to the centre of the fight by means of 15... $\text{♝f8}$ , although this doesn't win tempi with direct threats as in the game. After 16  $\text{♙xc8}$   $\text{♞xc8}$  17

f4! (now Black doesn't have real counterplay), 17...♖e6 is no good, since Black is severely constrained after 18 f5! (seemingly, nothing is achieved by closing the position, but this way the knight is left without squares) 18...♖f8 (18...♖d8 19 ♖c5 ♖xc5 20 ♖xc5 gives White oppressive pressure, and if 18...♖g7 then 19 g4 and the black knight is blocked) 19 ♖xa7 ♖a8 20 ♖c5 ♖xc5 21 ♖xc5 ♖xa2 22 ♖b1 ♖a8 23 ♖e4 ♖d7 24 ♖d2. All these variations are unpleasant for Black, and first opening the g-file would solve nothing: 17...gxf4 18 gxf4 ♖e6 19 f5 ♖f4 20 ♖xf4 exf4 and now White does not seek material gains but rather control of the g-file. Thus 21 ♖hg1 ♖hg8 22 h6! (with the idea of ♖g7) is unpleasant.

16 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 17 b3 ♖cd8 (D)

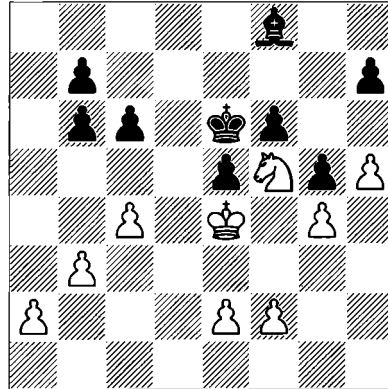


It is clear that White has obtained a clear positional advantage.

**What is the right plan to realize the advantage?** According to Petrosian this is a critical moment of the game where the player with the white pieces should display his technique. White's advantage is defined by several factors. One very important feature is the configuration of black pawns, on e5, f6 and g5, all on dark squares. They have no possibility of moving to light squares, and this allows us to conclude that the bishop on e7 may be bad. Based on this discovery, an expert reader will deduce that it is interesting to leave on the board only the white knight (with unassailable squares from which to exercise control) and Black's 'bad' bishop. This situation would occur after an exchange of all the rooks on the d-file and the exchange of

the white bishop (which is 'good') for the badly placed black knight.

In this case a target position would be like this:



Quite likely it will not be so easy to bring the knight to f5 and the king to e4, but it looks plausible. It is also logical to suppose that the black king can reach e6, where it prevents the white king from entering via f5 (if this happened the result would be obvious) and the black bishop may remain on a defensive square, such as f8, trying to hinder White's plans. Is it then possible to penetrate the fortress Black has built?

Let us suppose the bishop leaves the f8-square. Then, a possibility to activate the white king is 1 ♖g7+ ♖f7 2 h6!?. Now:

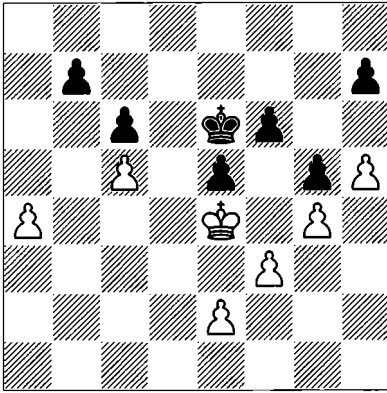
a) The consequences of the 'natural' move 2...♖f8 are difficult to foresee (we are in a situation where calculation must be precise). However, it is not very advantageous for Black; a possible continuation is 3 ♖f5 ♖xg7 4 hxg7 ♖xg7 5 ♖e6 and White will move towards the queenside given that the black king is on g7; all attempts to break by ...h5 or ...f5 to create a passed pawn fail.

b) 2...♖g6 3 ♖e6 ♖e7 4 a4 is good for White.

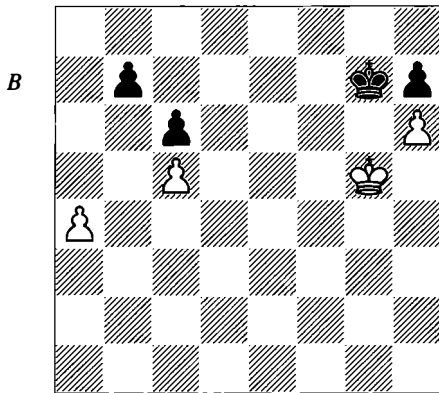
However, if Black leaves his bishop on f8, these possibilities do not arise.

We have seen that victory becomes difficult if White leaves himself exposed on the kingside, and that Black does best to wait patiently, alternating his king between the squares e6 and f7.

However, Black finds an unexpected enemy in his fixed pawn-chain on the queenside, and a player with good technique would find White's winning plan rather easily. After playing a4 first of all (annulling the reply ...b5) a plan would be to locate his knight at d3, and then to break on c5 (pushing the b-pawn) and reach a winning pawn ending:

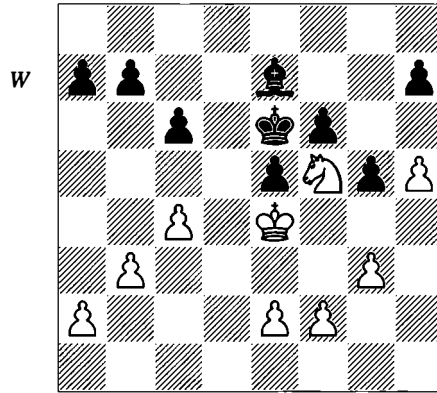


White would carry out the break f4 under good conditions – with the king on f5 – and he would get the position to prepare the winning break g5 again. We would then reach this position:



After 1...♖f7 2 ♖f5 ♗e7 3 ♗e5 ♖f7 4 ♖d6 White easily wins the pawn race.

On the other hand, what would happen if in the starting position of our 'endgame study', Black had not altered his pawn-structure (pawn on a7 instead of b6), thus keeping it less vulnerable?



As Petrosian remarks, it would be very complicated to convert the theoretical advantage into a full point.

All these general considerations could be nullified by several very significant details. After exchanging the bishop for the knight, the entry of the black king via the dark squares on the queenside (b4 and a3) becomes a possibility. Then, the white king might not go towards the centre of the board so easily. Another hurdle is actually to organize the exchange of rooks, which is not very pleasant for Black's cause. In short, mechanical technical play would lead us to a dead end. We know that the bishop is bad and the knight is excellent, but this knowledge is not enough on its own. It is factors like this that make chess advantages so difficult to realize.

Now Petrosian makes a move which appears to defy logic. However, it is at this point that he really shows his sharp insight and deep understanding...

**18 ♗c5!! (D)**

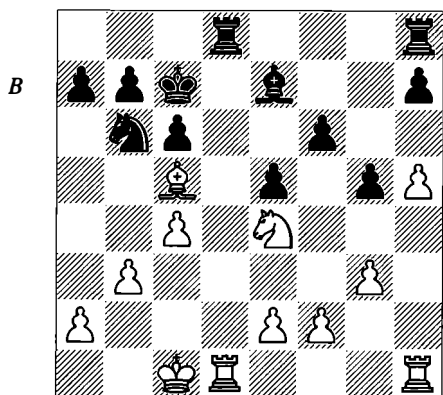
Petrosian will exchange his 'good' bishop for the opponent's 'bad' one, but thanks to this, the white knight will occupy key squares. His rook and knight will operate in mutual harmony and achieve coordination that Black can only dream of. Finally, Black's pawn-chain e5-f6-g5 will prove weaker and the white king will be able to penetrate through the light squares.

**18...♞xd1+ 19 ♞xd1 ♗xc5**

The only move. 19...♗d8 is too passive.

**20 ♞xc5 ♞e8 21 ♞e4**

While Petrosian is showing plenty of aces (the rook controls the open file and his knight



has a superb central square) Black's position is starting to creak: his far-away knight has difficulty reaching the main theatre of action and his rook is passive.

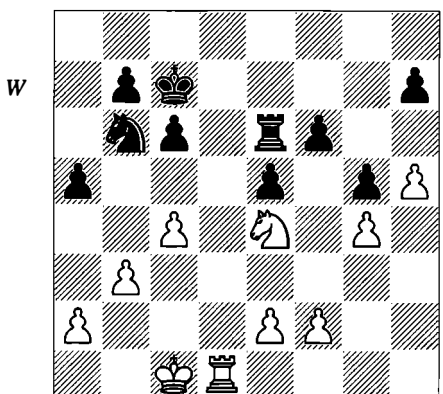
**21...Rf8**

There is no alternative. After 21...Rf8 22 g4 Rf7 23 Rd6 Qd7 24 Re6 a terrible feeling of resignation would invade Black when he sees in flesh and bloods how the attacking pieces fulfil their threats.

**22 g4**

This is a typical move by the side that has the advantage: White prevents any ideas of ...f5.

**22...a5 (D)**



Petrosian lightly criticizes this move, without actually awarding it a question mark. And automatically he reminds us about the principles of defence: 'in a bad position it is necessary not to make weaknesses, such as those often caused by a pawn advance'. However,

White was threatening to launch a pawn-storm on the queenside, with an offensive like Qc2, Qc3, b4, Qb3 and a4, with such a large space advantage that Black would be unable to cope. The resource ...a5 airs the small prison in which Black's pieces move, but has a formal defect: White is the one capable of opening another file when he wants (the h-file).

**23 Rd3!?**

Before defining his true plan, Petrosian limits his opponent's possibilities. Patience is a limitless weapon. The pressure on f6 is a secondary idea.

**23...Qd7 24 Qc2 b6**

This anticipates an eventual c5 by White, and a possible infiltration via the d6-square. However, is this detail so important? If so, then Black would have good possibilities to resist. The pawn's advance to b6 shows the nervousness in Black's decisions. It is possible that Bannik had played this move wishing to prevent any direct variation that requires precise calculation, and a simplification to a pawn endgame with the white king centralized (i.e. on e3) after Rxd7+ Qxd7, Qc5+, would demand it. Which would then be the most likely result? After analysing this very interesting endgame, the reader can conclude that the break with e3 and f4 guarantees victory, based on the pawn moves that White is able to waste. Although the placing of his h-pawn at h7 (instead of h6) is of no small significance for Black, the situation would become dramatic.

The ramifications of this innocent move in the course of the fight will be clearer when White grabs the a-file. It is evident that in this hypothetical case Black's position would remain sounder with the pawn on b7.

**25 Rf3**

Black threatened 25...Qc5, forcing 26 Qxc5 bxc5. This exchange undoubtedly does not benefit White, since he has exchanged a strong piece for a passive one. However, a little analysis is still necessary to confirm this first impression. After 27 f3?, 27...Rd6? leads to a lost pawn ending: 28 Rxd6 Qxd6 29 Qd3 Qd7 30 Qe4 Qe6 31 e3 Qe7 32 Qf5 Qf7 33 f4! exf4 34 exf4 gxf4 35 Qxf4 Qe6 36 g5! Qf7 37 Qf5 fxg5 38 Qxg5 (it is important that the white pawn still remains on a2, to take advantage of

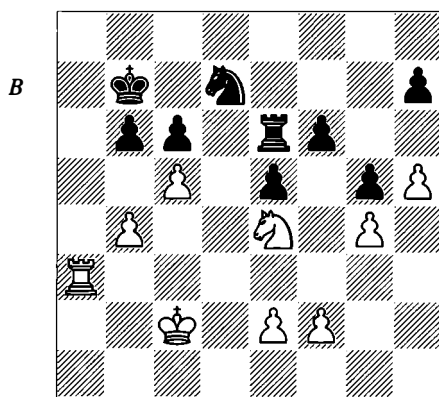
these tempi) 38...♔g7 39 ♕f5 ♖h6 40 ♕g4! ♕g7 41 ♕g5 ♕f7 42 ♕f5 ♕g7 43 ♕e6 and White wins. Therefore, Black would do better to play actively: 27...e4! 28 ♖e3 ♕d6!

**25...♕d8 26 a3!**

The imminent threat is the break with b4, which would practically force the exchange (otherwise White would isolate the a-pawn) getting the control of the a-file to penetrate with the rook. Later, it would be White who could choose the pawn formation to suit his needs, when advancing up to b5 or c5. These passive situations for Black are very unpleasant and force him to make decisions of dubious value. But when everything is bad... it is difficult to choose between two evils.

**26...c5**

Weakening another square, i.e. d5, to which the white knight (or the king) can easily go. Another difficult decision for Black, added to ...a5 and ...b6: the three pawns moved to dark squares, with unusual stubbornness. What justification is hiding behind Black's last move? The black king seeks to go to e7 freeing a black piece of the painful burden of defending f6, and for this purpose he doesn't like the opening of the a-file. After 26...♕e7 27 b4 axb4 28 axb4 nothing could prevent White from taking possession of the a-file and the seventh rank. The alternative is 26...♕c7 27 b4 axb4 28 axb4 ♕b7 29 ♖d3 ♕c7 30 ♖a3 ♕b7 31 c5! (D).



Despite the simplification that might happen, the problems remain. The activity of the white rook on the a-file and the passivity of the

black pieces, still more noticeable when the white pieces are more active, are tipping the scale towards White. If Black agreed to exchange pawns, the white king would arrive on c4, the knight on d6 and the rook would move up to a6 or b7. Black could not put up any resistance. Otherwise, White could choose the appropriate moment to capture on b6, taking advantage of some tactical issues.

The black king is hardly able to forsake the defence of the eight rank, giving us an idea of the problems Black is facing. With his move 26...c5 Bannik is trusting that the bestowed square is not decisive for the outcome of the game, although this is not the case. Penetration by the white king via d5 or f5 will bring about a zugzwang situation.

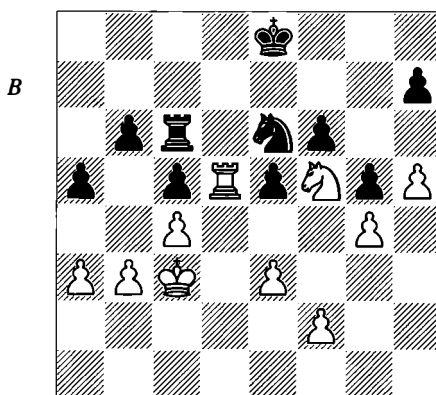
**27 ♕c3 ♕e7 28 ♖d3 ♖c6 29 ♖d5**

The rook leaves its post, allowing the king's approach to the centre. Of course, the rook should be placed ahead.

**29...♗f8 30 ♗g3**

The f6-pawn is no more the ultimate goal for White. The knight will coordinate better with the white rook from f5, where it has good penetration squares. Anyway, the d6-square will continue being a key one.

**30...♗e6 31 ♗f5+ ♕e8 32 e3 (D)**



To have moves like this is a perfect luxury. Here we can observe the difference between the knights of one and the other side. One has impressive squares in prospect while the best the other can do is to control small squares without any chance of creating danger.

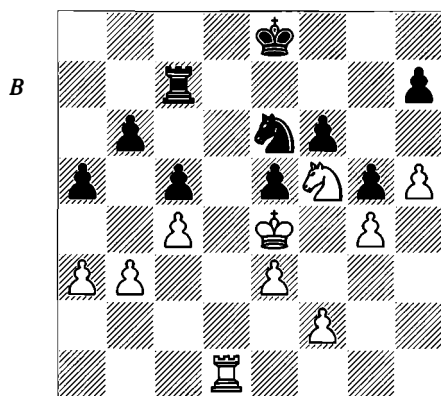
**32...♗c7**

According to Petrosian the result of the game is in no doubt from now on. He suggests transferring the knight to f7 defending the vital d6-square. Conceptually, this is right, but Black will lack useful moves after 32...♖d8 33 ♗d3 ♜f7 34 ♖e4. Black cannot play the natural 34...♗e6 due to the surprising jump 35 ♘g7+, and other moves such as 34...♗f8 35 ♗d7 or 34...♗c7 35 ♘d6+ only confirm the zugzwang situation. Probably the best thing would be to go back with 34...♘d8 and we would arrive at a similar situation to that in the game.

**33 ♗d1**

The exchange of rook is only favourable to White when the white king arrives at e4.

**33...♗e6 34 ♗d3 ♗c7 35 ♖e4 (D)**



The king has approached the border zone, aiming to occupy d5 or f5 (the holes in Black's position) at a favourable moment. Meanwhile, Black's pieces must remain where they are.

As general rule, now it would be interesting for Black to exchange a passive rook for the active one, by playing 35...♗d7. However, apart from making it easy for the white king to infiltrate the enemy camp (for example, 36 ♗d6 ♗xd6 37 ♘xd6+ ♗d7 38 ♘b5) Black should fear the simple tactical detail 36 ♘d6+ ♖e7 (otherwise follows 37 ♗f5) 37 ♘c8+.

**35...♗c6 36 ♘d6+ ♖e7 37 ♘f5+ ♖e8 38 ♘d6+ ♖e7 39 ♘f5+ ♖e8 40 a4**

This decision may have been due to the approach of the first time-control. After 40 ♗d6! ♗xd6 41 ♘xd6+ ♗d7 42 ♘b5 Black is in zugzwang, thanks to the manoeuvre ♘c3-d5 and the king's entry. Now:

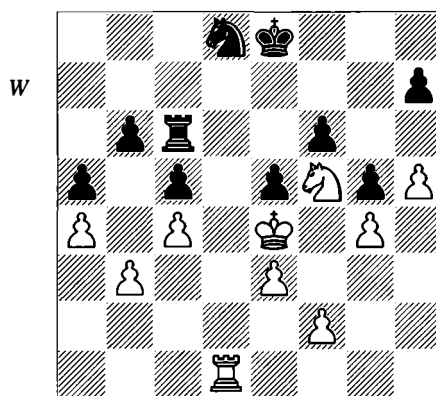
a) If Black plays 42...♖e7, 43 ♘c3! ♘c7 44 ♘d5+ decides matters, since White has many available tempi.

b) 42...♘f8 43 ♗f5 ♖e7 44 ♘c3 ♘d7 45 h6! and Black is helpless.

c) If 42...♘g7, 43 h6! ♘e8 (43...♘e6 is met by 44 ♘c3!, but not 44 ♗f5? ♖e7 45 ♘c3 ♘c7 46 ♘e4 ♘e8! when surprisingly it is White who is without a move, in face of the unusual mating possibility ...♘d6# if the white knight retreats; White could still undo the error by playing 47 a4 ♗f7 48 f3 ♖e7 49 f4, with some winning possibilities) 44 ♗d5!.

**40...♘d8 (D)**

Intending to play 41...♘f7 with some resistance.



**41 ♘h6!**

This jump prevents Black from reaching a defensive fortress, and helps to clear the way for the king, thanks to some tactical points. The first consideration when carrying out this move was, without a doubt, the rook endgame that arises after 41...♘f7 42 ♘xf7 ♗xf7 43 ♗d7+ finishing in a simple position. Other replies don't seem satisfactory either. For example, after 41...♖e7 42 ♘g8+ ♖e8 43 ♗f5 White arrives at a won position, and the same happens in the event of 41...♘b7 42 ♘g8 ♗f8 43 ♗d7.

Petrosian's move is highly imaginative: it is rare that a move so close to edge of the board causes such chaos amongst the enemy pieces.

**41...♘e6 42 ♘g8 ♘f8**

White exploited the fact that both rook and knight are unusually misplaced: 42...♗f7 43 ♗d7+ ♗xg8 44 ♗d5! winning.

**43 ♖d2**

Surprisingly enough, as Petrosian notes, the sequence 43 ♖f5 ♖f7 44 ♜h6+ ♖g7 45 ♜d8 fails to the resource 45...♜e6! 46 ♜e8 ♜c7, winning. In advantageous positions is not advisable to relax too much, since there are always surprises possible. Although certainly there is nothing more pleasant than winning from the beginning to the end, is also true that losing half or a whole point due to a lapse in concentration is very depressing.

**43...♖f7**

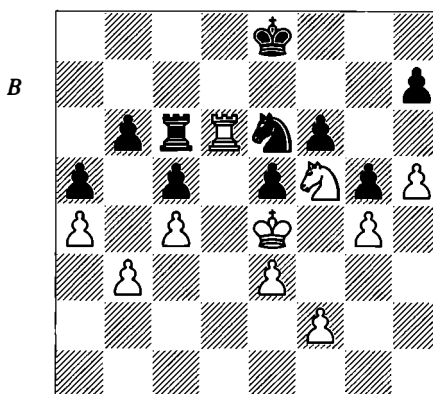
A beautiful finish arises after the passive defence 43...♜d7 44 ♖f5 ♜d8 45 e4! ♖e8 46 f3 ♜d8 47 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 48 ♜xf6+, chewing up all the black pawns.

**44 ♜h6+ ♖e8 45 ♜f5 ♜e6**

There is no longer any chance to escape. 45...♜d7 46 ♜d5 ♜b8 47 ♜h6! ♖f8 (if Black plays 47...♖e7, then 48 ♜g8+ ♖f7 49 ♖e4) 48 ♖e4 ♖e8 49 ♖f5 ♜d7 50 ♜g8 transposes to the note to Black's 43rd move.

**46 ♜d6! (D)**

Finally, the decisive move.

**46...♜xd6 47 ♜xd6+ ♜d7 48 ♜b5 ♜g7**

All variations end up in zugzwang, like we saw in notes to move 40.

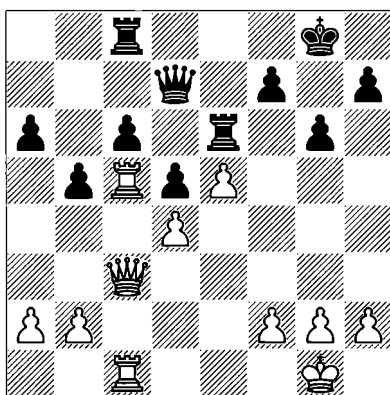
**49 h6 ♜e8 50 ♜d5! f5 51 ♖xe5 fxg4 52 ♜c3 ♖e7 53 ♜e4 ♖f7 54 ♖f5 g3 55 fxg3 g4 56 ♜g5+ ♖g8 57 ♖e6 ♜c7+ 58 ♜d7 ♜a6 59 e4 ♜b4 60 e5 ♜d3 61 e6 1-0**

In short, Petrosian reminds us that in technical positions it is necessary to take original decisions many times – sometimes they are the only correct ones. This game provides an emphatic example.

# 1 Pawn-Structure

In his well-known book *Chess Fundamentals*, the great Cuban chess-player and former world champion Jose Raul Capablanca wrote on the Open Spanish and the methods of fighting against it. Great 'Capa' had some contempt for Black's pawn-structure in this line, devoting a section of his book to its study, as an example of how to take advantage of a favourable pawn-structure. His outstanding skill in this matter makes his comments extremely interesting.

Given the state of theoretical knowledge in Capablanca's era, and the trouble faced by the supporters of this defence, to some degree his contempt for the Open Spanish is natural. In fact, he illustrates in his book one of his games with this system (Capablanca-Salwe et al., Lodz (consultation) 1913) where all the weaknesses in Black's position were demonstrated. The following is a typical position of the Open Spanish, an opening which will be our subject of study in this chapter.



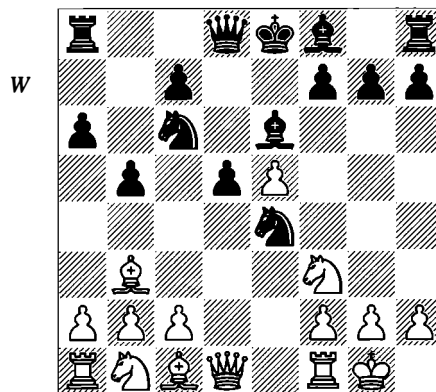
Capablanca's way of exploiting the central superiority and kingside pawn-majority was made clear in this line.

Gradually, and thanks to more active procedures by Black, the Open Spanish found a following, along with the trend for re-evaluating

opening lines where a backward pawn is accepted in return for other advantages. The improvements in Black's play are very interesting from the point of view of dynamic strategy. Euwe, Korchnoi, Yusupov and Timman are four of the players who injected new life into this line.

Capablanca recommended an opening and middlegame set-up that supports his theory. The course of events seems logical for White and a bit less for Black – that seems liable to show all the shortcomings in his position. These are the initial moves:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♝c6 3 ♚b5 a6 4 ♚a4 ♞f6 5 0-0 ♜xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♚b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♚e6 (D)



All three options available in this position (9 c3, 9 ♚e3 and 9 ♞bd2) are directed towards d4. A more contemporary treatment requires the study of the Karpov-Korchnoi games from the Baguio (1978) and Merano (1981) matches, and the Candidates matches Dolmatov-Yusupov, Wijk aan Zee 1991, and Short-Timman, El Escorial 1993. In this sense, it is highly heart-warming to get to discover the evolution of the variation through these kind of encounters. These four matches left a deep imprint in the heart of the variation, with major theoretical and strategic discoveries.

**Dolmatov – Yusupov**  
*Wijk aan Zee Ct (5) 1991*

**9 ♖e3**

Dolmatov concentrated his attention on this move.

**9...♗e7**

Yusupov had achieved some success with 9...♗c5 but the game Smagin-Mikhalchishin, Moscow 1989 created doubts about its validity: 10 ♗c3 ♗xb3 11 cxb3! ♖e7 12 ♖c1 ♗d7 13 ♗e2 (Black remains with the usual problem, his c-pawn, while he is not in good condition to press against e5) 13...♗g4 14 ♗f4! ♖d8 15 ♗xd5!.

**10 c3 ♗d7**

Another possibility is 10...♗c5 11 ♖c2 ♗d7 (demonstrating the shortcomings of White's 9th move, in neglecting the defence of the e5-pawn; instead, 11...♗g4 followed by ...♗e6 did not achieve equality in Dolmatov-Yusupov, Wijk aan Zee Ct (11) 1991) 12 ♖e1 ♗dx5!?! (declining the pawn with 12...0-0 13 ♖f4 ♗b6 14 ♗d4 ♗xd4 15 cxd4 c5 16 ♗d2 ♗c4 17 ♗b3 ♗xb2 18 ♗b1 gave Black a difficult position in Dolmatov-Yusupov, Wijk aan Zee Ct (7) 1991) 13 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 14 ♖d4! ♗c6?! (the other possibility is 14...♗g6 15 ♖xg7 ♖g8 16 ♖xg6 ♖xg7 17 ♖xe6! hxg6 as in Ernst-Todorović, Vienna 1991, but here White missed 18 ♖e2! with some advantage) 15 ♖xg7 ♖g8 16 ♗h5 ♗d7?! 17 ♖h6 ♖d6?! (better is 17...♗g5 18 f4 ♖xh6 19 ♗xh6 though it doesn't solve all Black's problems) 18 f4! (18 ♗d2 is met by 18...♗f6!) 18...♗c8 (18...♗f6 19 f5! ♗e5!?! 20 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 21 ♗d2 is likewise advantageous for White) 19 ♗d2 ♗b7 20 f5! ♖d7 21 ♗f3? (after 21 ♖b3 Black has serious problems: 21...♗e7 22 f6) 21...f6! 22 ♖ad1 ♗e5! 23 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 24 ♖xd5 ♖xg2+ 25 ♗xg2 ♖c6 and Black achieved equality in Dolmatov-Levin, Dortmund 1992.

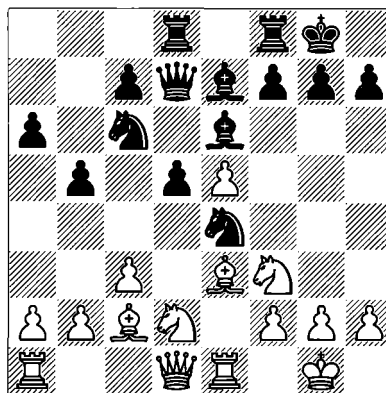
**11 ♗bd2 ♖d8 12 ♖e1**

A good novelty, improving over the usual continuation 12 h3. White seeks to get rid of the pressure exerted by the strong black knight, and to protect the e5-pawn.

**12...0-0**

Winning the pawn by 12...♗xd2 13 ♗xd2 ♖g4 14 ♗d4 ♗xe5 is risky due to the strong reply 15 ♖h6!.

**13 ♖c2 (D)**



**13...♗xd2**

Or:

a) 13...♖f5 14 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♖xe4 dxe4 16 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 17 e6! fxe6 18 ♗d2 ♗e5 19 ♗xe4 ♗d3 20 ♖e2 gave White a clear advantage in Dolmatov-Yusupov, Wijk aan Zee Ct (1) 1991.

b) 13...f5!?! 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♗b1 h6 16 ♗h4 ♗e5 17 ♗b3 ♗fg4 18 ♗c5 ♗c8 19 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 20 ♖h7+ ♗h8 leaves the game terribly unstable, Ki.Georgiev-Ivanchuk, Manila OL 1992; here Ivanchuk suggested 21 ♖g5!.

**14 ♗xd2 ♖f5**

If 14...♖g4 there follows 15 ♗d3! g6 16 ♖f4 and then h3, when Black would only achieve a weakening of his own position.

**15 ♖ad1 ♖fe8 16 h3 ♗e6**

The best possibility.

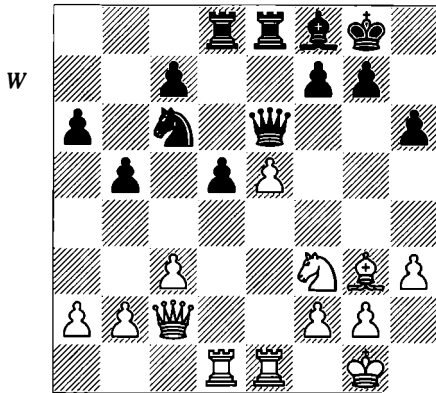
a) 16...f6, on the other hand, doesn't seem suitable. Right now the reply will be 17 exf6 followed by 18 ♖b3, making the defence of d5 troublesome.

b) Nor does the exchange of bishops solve Black's problems: 16...♖xc2 17 ♗xc2 f6 18 exf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖g5!.

c) 16...h6 (this also leads to trouble) 17 ♖f4 ♖f8 18 ♖g3! ♖xc2 19 ♗xc2 ♗e6 (D).

Now:

c1) 20 ♗d4? ♗xd4 21 cxd4 ♖c8! 22 f4 c5! (the logical reaction, getting rid of the perpetual weakness in this opening line, and obtaining enough counterplay to equalize; instead, 22...f5 allows the rook to penetrate: 23 exf6 ♗xf6 24 ♖e5!) 23 f5 cxd4 24 ♗d3 ♗c6 25 ♖f2 ♗c2 and



Black is still in the game, Dolmatov-Yusupov, Wijk aan Zee Ct (3) 1991.

c2) 20 ♖d2!? prepares to double on the d-file as well as the typical move ♖d4.

c3) 20 ♗h4! ♗d7 21 ♖d4 ♖xd4 22 cxd4 ♗c8 23 f4 (the c8-rook is defenceless) fulfils the outlined positional goals. This was Dvoretzky's suggestion.

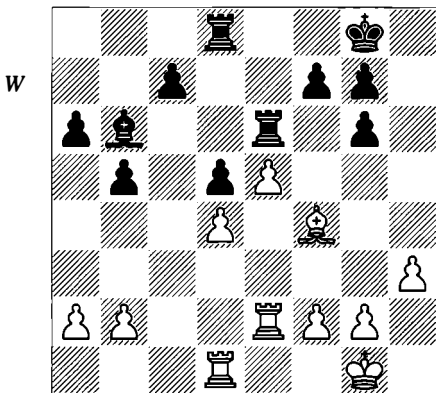
17 ♗g5?!

17 ♗f4! is somewhat better, and if 17...♗xc2 18 ♗xc2 ♗g6 19 ♗xg6 hxg6 then 20 e6!

17...♗xc2 18 ♗xc2 ♗g6 19 ♗xg6 hxg6 20 ♗f4 ♗c5 21 ♖d4 ♖xd4!

In case of 21...♗xd4 22 cxd4 ♗d7 23 ♗e3 White can break through on the c-file.

22 cxd4 ♗b6 23 ♗e2 ♗e6 (D)



Black has reached comfortable equality, compensating for his problems on the c-file with pressure on d4, the king's approach to d7 and especially the possibility of a break with ...f6, and in some cases with ...c5.

These many variations constitute just a tiny part of modern theory about this sharp opening, and my reason for quoting them is to show the complexity of the play and how important move-orders are. The Open Spanish, despite its defects, is still played in high-level games. Was Capablanca too dogmatic? An opening variation like this, so rich in tactical and strategic nuances, is a good source of study for the chess-player.

We shall now return to the classical continuation.

9 c3 ♗e7

After 9...♖c5 10 ♗c2, 10...♗g4 is a key move in Black's system, exerting pressure on e5. Then 11 ♗e1 ♗e7 (11...d4 12 h3 ♗h5 13 e6!) transposes to the main line.

Instead, 9...♗c5!? is more interesting and independent. 10 ♖bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2 and now:

a) 11...f5!? 12 ♖b3 ♗b6 13 ♖fd4 ♖xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♗xd4 (this is necessary now, because 15 cxd4 f4! 16 f3 ♖g3 leads to complications that favour Black) 15...c5 16 ♗d1 h6! (16...f4 had been the usual move) 17 f3 ♖g5 18 ♗e3 ♗c8 19 ♗d2 a5 20 ♗ad1 ♗e7 and in return for the bishop-pair, Black has a space advantage and good chances on the queenside, Short-Timman, El Escorial Ct (12) 1993.

b) 11...♗f5 12 ♖b3 and here:

b1) 12...♗g4?! was played in several games of the 1978 world championship match. Korchnoi successfully held in the 2nd and 4th games, but Karpov later showed an interesting improvement: 13 h3! ♗h5 14 g4 ♗g6 15 ♗xe4 dxe4 16 ♖xc5 exf3 17 ♗f4 ♗xd1 18 ♗axd1 ♖d8! 19 ♗d7 ♖e6 20 ♖xe6 fxe6 21 ♗e3 and the ending certainly favours White, who achieved a brilliant victory in Karpov-Korchnoi, Baguio City Wch (14) 1978.

b2) 12...♗g6! 13 ♖fd4 ♗xd4 14 cxd4 a5 15 ♗e3 a4 16 ♖c1 a3! 17 b3 (17 bxa3 ♗xa3 18 ♗b3 ♖c3 has been tried many times, but Black has no trouble) 17...f6 18 ♖d3 (18 exf6 was seen in Karpov-Korchnoi, Merano Wch (6) 1981, where Black won) 18...fxe5 19 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 20 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 21 dxe5, Aseev-Korneev, Krumbach 1991. White's guarantees are his strong bishop and his great freedom to exploit his pawn-majority.

**10 ♖bd2**

In his book Capablanca proposed the move-order 10 ♖e1 ♗c5 11 ♙c2 ♙g4 12 ♖bd2 0-0. However, 10 ♖e1?! seems less precise and flexible due to 10...0-0 11 ♖bd2 (after 11 ♗d4 Black will continue sacrificially: 11...♗xe5 12 f3 ♙d6! 13 fxe4 ♙g4 14 ♖c2 c5 15 ♙xd5 cxd4 16 ♙xa8 ♖h4) 11...♗c5 12 ♙c2 d4! with good play for Black, Lasker-Tarrasch, St Petersburg 1914. The addition of ♖e1 and ...0-0 favours the advance ...d4, which otherwise is ill-advised.

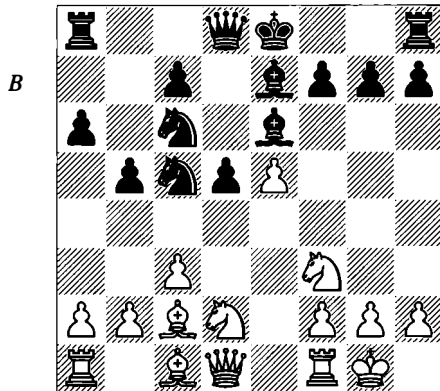
**10...♗c5**

Or 10...0-0 11 ♙c2:

a) 11...f5 (a typical continuation to support the knight) 12 ♖b3 ♖d7 13 ♖e1 ♖ad8 14 ♖e2 ♖fe8 15 ♗fd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗xd4 (again 16 cxd4 is interesting; White perhaps feared the counterplay with 16...c5 17 f3 c4 18 fxe4 dxe4!?) 16...c5 17 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 18 f3 ♗g5 19 a4 and White begins to open the position for his bishops, Nunn-Wedberg, Novi Sad OL 1990.

b) 11...♗c5 12 ♗d4!? (12 ♖b3 is also possible) 12...♗xe5 13 b4 ♗a4 14 ♖h5 ♗g6 15 f4 with an advantage for White.

**11 ♙c2 (D)**



**11...♙g4**

Black wants to 'make contact' with the e5-pawn, and eventually to let the knight retreat via e6. Another customary move is 11...♖d7 (with an exchange of bishops on f5 in mind) although a possibility like 12 b4 will always be something to worry about, as it banishes a knight from the battlefield. Since the queen's natural square is d7 (thus depriving the knight of a choice) the bishop does well to vacate the e6-square.

Black is not ready for a break with the d-pawn: 11...d4?! 12 ♗e4! dxc3 13 ♗xc5 ♙xc5 14 ♙e4 ♖d7 15 ♖c2 ♙d5 16 bxc3 ♖d8 17 ♙g5 with a clear advantage for White, Capablanca-Chajes, New York 1916.

**12 ♖e1**

In the game Capablanca-Salwe, White didn't play so carefully: 12 h3 ♙h5 13 ♖e1 ♙g6 14 ♗d4.

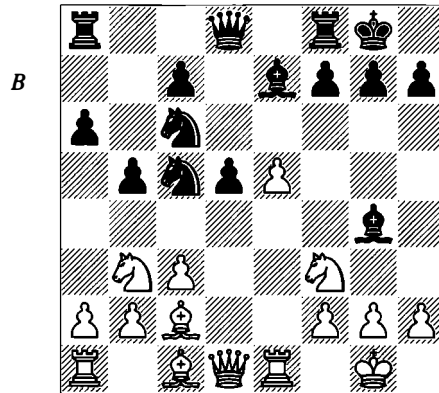
**12...0-0**

12...♖d7!? (a standard move in this set-up, thwarting the attack on d5) has become quite popular. 13 ♖b3 ♗e6 and now:

a) 14 h3 ♙h5 15 ♙f5 ♙g6 16 g4 ♗cd8 17 ♙e3 a5 18 ♖e2 a4 19 ♖bd4 ♖b8 20 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 21 ♗d4 c5 gave Black no trouble in Zielinski-Haba, Cappelle la Grande 1989. The move 16...♗cd8 is another 'modern' idea, strengthening e6 and easing the advance of the c-pawn.

b) 14 ♖d3!? ♙h5 15 ♗fd4 ♗cxd4 16 ♗xd4 ♙g6 17 ♗f5 and White makes progress with 18 ♖g3, Hazai-Diesen, Helsinki 1989.

**13 ♖b3 (D)**



**13...♗e6**

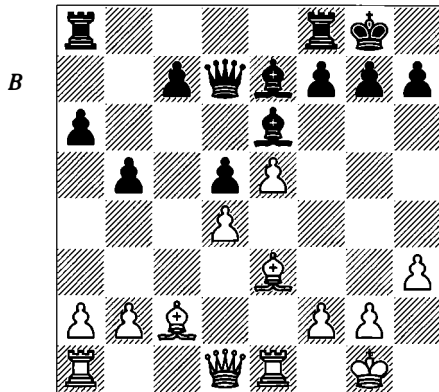
This move seeks to support the advance of the d-pawn but restricts the pressure on e5. Other moves:

a) 13...♗e4 14 ♙f4 f5 15 exf6 ♗xf6 16 ♖d3! (as we will see, this move is mostly a very strong one, allowing ♖ad1 and to try weakening the castled position) and then:

a1) 16...♗e4? 17 ♙xc7! ♖d7 18 ♗e5 ♗xe5 19 ♙xe5 ♙h4 20 ♙g3 ♙xg3 21 hxg3 and White secured a material advantage in Alekhine-Nimzowitsch, St Petersburg 1914.

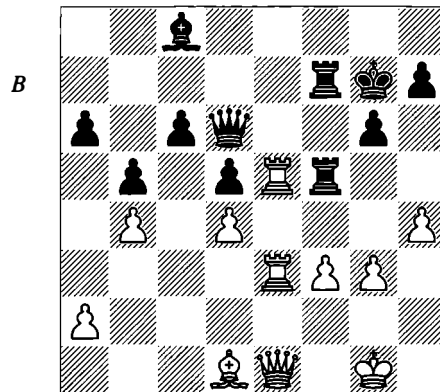
a2) 16...♖d7 is an attempted improvement but the attack speeds up with 17 ♘g5! g6 18 ♘h7! ♗xh7 19 ♗xg6+ ♗h8 20 ♜e3 ♘d6 21 ♘xd6 cxd6 22 ♜g3 ♘e5 23 ♗h6+ ♘h7 24 f4 ♗a7+ 25 ♘d4 ♘f5 26 ♘xf5 ♜xf5 27 fxe5 dxe5 28 ♜g7 and White should win the game with his extra pawn, Am.Rodriguez-Milos, Bogota 1991.

b) 13...♖d7 14 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 is another idea. The drawback of this move is that delays the advance of the c-pawn. 15 h3! (this exploits a tactical detail to get a favourable pawn-structure, and is Ivanchuk's contribution; another possibility is 15 ♖d3 g6 16 ♘g5 ♘e7 17 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 18 ♗e3! and the castled position is seriously weakened) 15...♘e6 (if 15...♘h5, 16 ♘xh7+ ♗xh7 17 ♘g5+ ♗g6 18 g4! winning) 16 ♘d4! ♘xd4 17 cxd4 ♘e7 (a forced retreat, because after 17...♘b6 18 ♖d3 the black bishop cannot defend the newly-created weaknesses) 18 ♘e3 (D) (White can also play 18 ♖d3 g6 19 ♘e3 with an advantage).



18...f5 (this allows White control of the e-file, but it is practically forced; after 18...♘f5 19 ♜c1 ♘xc2 20 ♖xc2 ♜fc8 21 ♖c6 White has a great advantage) 19 exf6 ♘xf6 20 ♜c1 ♜ac8 21 ♖d3 (always the same theme, so that afterwards, the exchange of the dark-squared bishops will be more effective) 21...g6 22 ♖d2 c6 (in case of 22...c5 23 dxc5 ♘xb2 24 ♜cd1 it is true that Black gets rid of his troublesome c-pawn, but White will press strongly on the d-pawn and he will exchange the dark-squared bishops, making clear the weakness of Black's castled position) 23 ♘g5 ♘f5 (if now 23...c5

there follows 24 ♘xf6 ♜xf6 25 dxc5 ♜xc5 26 ♖d4! and Black faces several tactical problems) 24 ♘xf6 ♜xf6 25 ♘b3 (25 ♘xf5 is interesting, with a better ending) 25...♜cf8 26 ♜e3 ♗g7 27 ♜ce1 (White is going to exert pressure on the open file and he will take advantage of the availability of the e5-square; the subsequent development of the game indicates that Black should have fought for control of the e-file earlier on) 27...♖d6 28 ♜e5 ♜8f7 29 ♜1e3 ♘d7 30 f3 ♜f4 31 ♘d1! (supporting the advance of White's kingside majority, something that is going to limit the scope of Black's rooks) 30...♖f6 32 g3 ♜f5 33 ♖e1 ♖d6 34 b4! ♘c8 35 h4 (D).



White is virtually a pawn ahead. Black's pawn-majority is restrained, whereas White has possibilities of a breakthrough in the kingside, taking advantage of the weakness in Black's castled position, and greater control of the position. 35...♜xe5 36 ♜xe5 ♘d7 37 ♗g2 ♗f8 38 ♘c2 ♗g7 39 h5 ♖f6 40 ♖e3 ♘g4? 41 h6+ 1-0 Ivanchuk-Haba, Debrecen 1988.

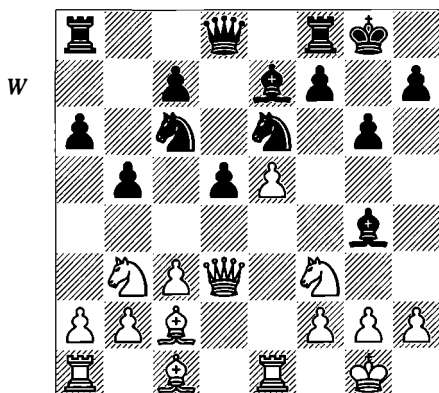
#### 14 ♖d3!

Capablanca possessed a remarkable clarity of thought. This move not only weakens Black's kingside but also prevents a quick ...f6.

#### 14...g6 (D)

Having reached this point, it makes sense to pause to consider the position in general terms. What is your assessment of this position?

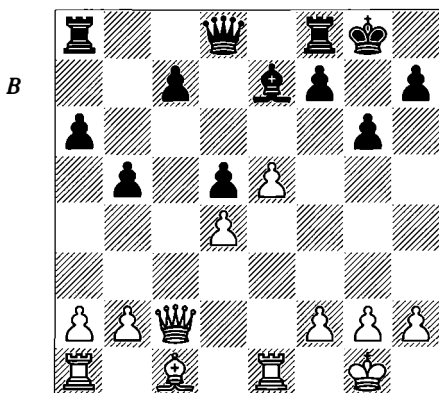
Black has a solid position but also an additional difficulty: the backward pawn on c7, which most likely will never reach c5. Capablanca annotates in his book that 'such a position must be considered lost from a theoretical point



of view, and in practice, a strong master will win without exception having the white pieces'. A powerful statement.

How should White take advantage of the slight weaknesses in Black's camp? Consider for a moment the endings that might arise. Obviously, if we remove a pair of knights (and this can be done by preparing the exchange on d4) and the light-squared bishops, this lessens the possibility of counterplay by Black; moreover, White's plan of expanding the kingside, trying to exploit his superiority on that side of the board, will be more feasible. The importance of the exchange on d4 is very significant to understand. After the pawn captures, the black c-pawn will have trouble advancing, with the negative effect that this implies.

Let us take a look at a position that results from our long-term vision:



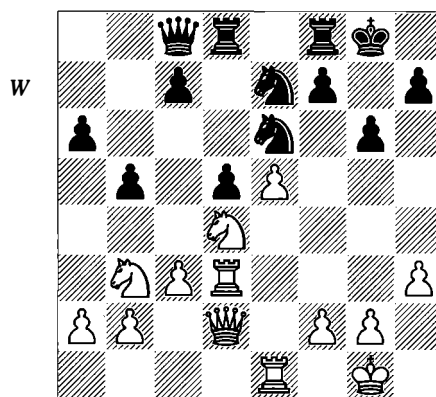
The intermediate moves that enable us to reach this point are of course important, but

before we can find them, we need to have determined where we actually want to go. The sequence could be 15  $\text{f}2\text{d}4$   $\text{d}2\text{c}4$  16  $\text{d}2\text{d}4$   $\text{d}2\text{d}4$  17  $\text{c}4\text{d}4$   $\text{e}4\text{f}5$  18  $\text{c}3\text{c}3$   $\text{e}4\text{xc}2$  19  $\text{c}3\text{xc}2$ . Let us investigate the specifics:

### 15 $\text{f}2\text{d}4$

This seems adequate to shake the dust off the f2-pawn, although this is not the only method to combat Black's scheme.

Geller-Unzicker, Bad Wörishofen 1991 featured an excellent display by Geller, a player with a classic style. He preferred to continue with 15  $\text{e}4\text{h}6$   $\text{e}8\text{e}8$  16  $\text{a}1\text{d}1$   $\text{e}4\text{f}5$  (only move) 17  $\text{d}2\text{d}2$   $\text{e}4\text{xc}2$  18  $\text{c}3\text{xc}2$   $\text{d}7\text{d}7$  19  $\text{d}3\text{d}3$ !  $\text{a}8\text{d}8$  20  $\text{h}3$ ! (White is pre-empting counterplay against his back rank and also supports typical expansion on the kingside; instead, 20  $\text{e}4\text{d}1$  moves the rook away from the defence of the e-pawn, and allows 20... $\text{e}8\text{f}8$  21  $\text{e}4\text{xf}8$   $\text{d}4\text{xf}8$  22  $\text{e}4\text{d}5$   $\text{c}3\text{d}5$  23  $\text{e}4\text{d}5$   $\text{e}4\text{d}5$ , when the e5-pawn is lost; with 20  $\text{h}3$ ! played, White could now consider playing this way, with 25  $\text{c}4$  at the end of the sequence) 20... $\text{e}8\text{f}8$  21  $\text{d}2\text{d}2$   $\text{e}7\text{e}7$  22  $\text{e}4\text{xf}8$   $\text{d}4\text{xf}8$  23  $\text{f}2\text{d}4$   $\text{c}8\text{c}8$  (D).



Now Geller played 24  $\text{c}3\text{e}3$ , which is much better than 24  $\text{d}2\text{e}6$   $\text{f}6\text{e}6$  25  $\text{d}2\text{c}5$ , after which White finds it difficult to make progress. In this way, White stops any possible counterplay by ...c5 or ...f6, and he will continue his kingside play. After some moves like g4,  $\text{g}2\text{g}2$  and f4, the threat of f5 will loom.

### 15... $\text{d}2\text{c}4$ 16 $\text{d}2\text{d}4$

16  $\text{c}4\text{d}4$  brings about the desired structure, but risks losing the initiative. In view of the threatened 17  $\text{c}3\text{g}3$ , Black must play 16... $\text{e}4\text{f}5$

17 ♖e2 ♗xc2 18 ♖xc2, when we can make a quick assessment of the position. The blockading knight on e6 not only limits the scope of White's knight but also presses on d4 and it can support the advance of the c-pawn. This gives rise to a new and straightforward plan: the expulsion of the white knight by means of the advance ...a5-a4, now or after the more elastic 18...♗d7!. If White tries to develop a quick offensive on the kingside, Black is in time to counter this: 19 ♗h6 ♜fe8 20 f4 f5 21 h3 a5! 22 g4 a4.

#### 16...♗xd4

The flexible 16...♗d7!? is interesting. Then:

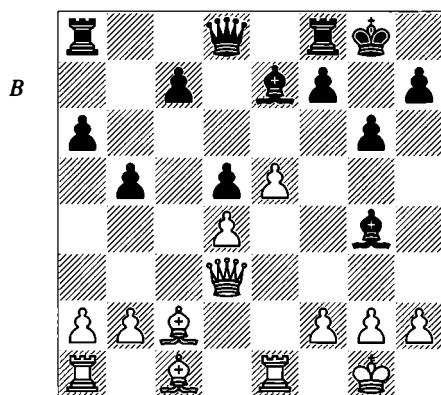
a) 17 h3 looks like a loss of time: 17...♗xd4 18 cxd4 ♗f5 19 ♖c3 ♗xc2 20 ♖xc2 and Black has several plans at his disposal:

a1) A kingside counterattack by means of 20...f5, intending further expansion with the advance of the g-pawn, if allowed.

a2) A typical break by 20...♜ac8 21 ♗e3 c5 22 dxc5 d4.

b) 17 ♖g3 and only now does Black play 17...♗xd4 (Black fixes the pawn-structure, but he will prepare counterplay with ...c5) 18 cxd4 ♜ac8 (18...♜fc8 is very interesting, to meet 19 ♗e3 with 19...c5 20 dxc5 d4!) 19 ♗e3 c5 20 dxc5 ♗xc5 (if 20...d4 then 21 ♗h6) and although Black still has some problems to solve, he is very close to equality.

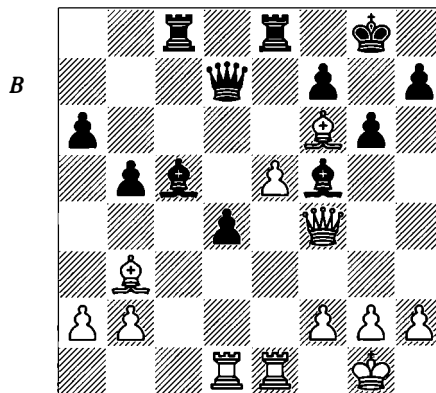
#### 17 cxd4 (D)



#### 17...♗f5?!

This gives up the control of the c-file without resistance, and White gets his desired position. There are better possibilities...

a) 17...c5?! is not one of them: 18 ♖g3! ♗d7 19 dxc5 ♗xc5 20 ♗g5 (the bishop seizes upon the weaknesses in Black's kingside to create trouble) 20...♜fe8 21 ♗f6 ♜ac8 (if 21...♗e7 then 22 ♖f4 is annoying) 22 ♗b3 ♗f5 (22...d4 loses to 23 ♜e4! ♗e6 24 ♖h4! h5 25 ♖g5 ♗f8 26 ♜h4) 23 ♜ad1 d4 24 ♖f4 (D).



Black is in serious trouble due to his king's shaky defences and the pressure on the d-pawn. The game Chandler-Wedberg, Haninge 1988 continued 24...d3 25 h3 ♜c6 26 ♖f3 ♗b4 27 ♜e3 d2 28 a3 ♗e7 29 ♜xd2 ♜c1+ 30 ♜d1 ♜xd1+ 31 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 32 ♗xd1 with a winning advantage for White.

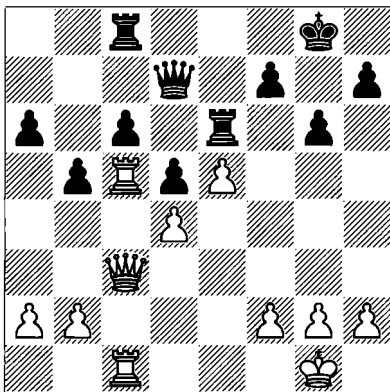
b) A more serious alternative seems to be 17...♜c8!? with the idea of reaching a tenable isolated d-pawn position. 18 ♗e3 ♗f5! 19 ♖d2 ♗xc2 20 ♖xc2 c5! 21 dxc5 d4 22 ♜ed1 (after 22 ♜ad1 ♗xc5, 23 ♖e4 allows the trap 23...dxe3 and 24...exf2+, while 23 ♗h6 ♗b4! leads to complications that White should avoid) 22...♗xc5 23 ♖e4 f5! 24 ♖f4 (after 24 exf6 ♖xf6 and exchanges on d4, Black will gain counterplay with ...♜c2) and now 24...d3 offers prospects of equality, but 24...♖d5! is best, since 25 ♗xd4? loses to 25...♜fd8 26 ♜d2 ♗xd4 27 ♜ad1 ♖e4!.

After all these possibilities for Black, it seems clear that the four knights and the light-squared bishops are going to be exchanged, but not in the most advantageous way for White.

Capablanca also considered it appropriate for Black the exchange dark-squared bishops, though I think he was going too far in his wish to show us a pawn-structure decorated with few

pieces. The lack of dark-squared bishops seems to favour White, since the black bishop protects the c5-square and brings hopes for a further advance of the backward black pawn. Besides, from the perspective of an ending, it is clear that the presence of the bishops may result in additional difficulties for White over d4. We can find a model endgame in Dolmatov-Yusupov, Wijk aan Zee Ct (5) 1991, where Black's defensive possibilities are not worse.

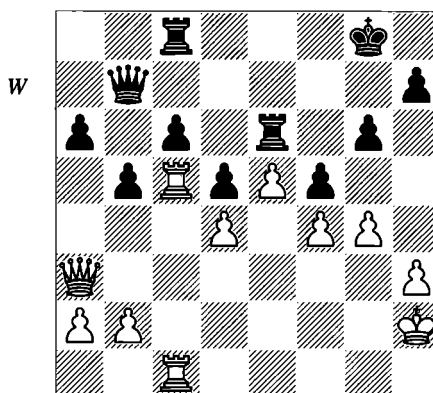
We can imagine that White might force the exchange of the dark-squared bishop, by transferring it to g5, or to h6, provoking ... $\text{f8}$ . So, it is not unrealistic to think – from the position we are now seeing – that it is possible to reach the following position (which we first mentioned on page 13), where the white pieces get a dominating set-up tying Black to grim defence. The c-pawn must be placed on c6, both to defend d5 and to allow the queen to help the a-pawn.



After tying Black in extreme passivity (...f6 would only result in a passed white pawn) Capablanca's claim of a decisive positional superiority is based on his mobile and dangerous kingside pawn-majority. The e5-pawn doesn't only mean a space advantage, but it is also going to become a major character in the battle. In the end, it will be the winning passed pawn.

Let us look at the king shelters, as little by little the pawns start moving. Black cannot gladly wait; he must avoid being overrun by playing ...f5. We should sum up the situation with another diagram.

Which is the new idea that Capablanca had in mind to breakthrough Black's shaky blockade?



If at this moment, the reader discovered that the exchange of all the pieces leads to a won ending, and the new goal is to take control of the g-file, he will experience a pleasant sensation. The execution of the advantage must be precise, and calculation comes into play. In this case, Black has no real chances of counterplay, so the task is relatively easy. The game could continue as follows:

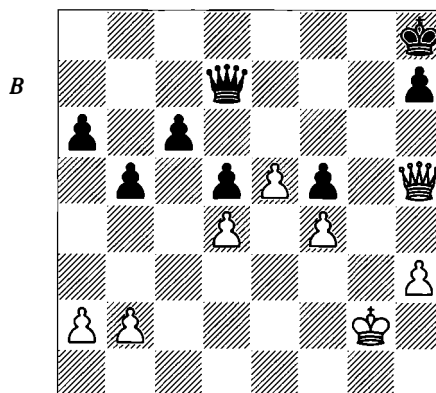
**1 gxf5 gxf5 2 ♖f3**

White brings the queen to the kingside (towards the important penetration square h5) with an additional gain of time: the tactical threat of 3 ♕xd5! forces Black's reply. Accuracy and technique go hand in hand.

**2... ♗d7**

2... ♗f8 doesn't help due to 3 ♗xc6.

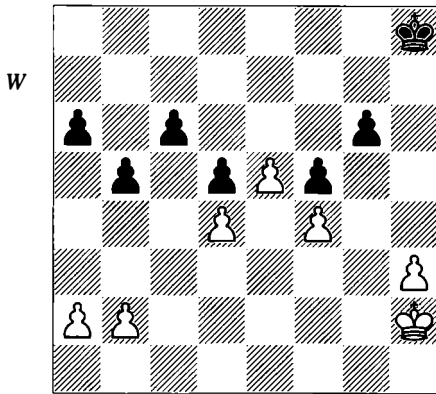
**3 ♗5c2 ♗g6 4 ♗g2 ♖h8 5 ♗cg1 ♗cg8 6 ♕h5! ♗xg2+ 7 ♗xg2 ♗xg2+ 8 ♖xg2 (D)**



White's queen is now threatening to penetrate via the dark squares, and to support the

passed pawn. The lesser evil is to get rid of the active white queen.

8... ♖g7+ 9 ♔h2 ♗g6 10 ♗xg6 hxg6 (D)



This ending is easily won in several ways. The most elegant and practical is 11 b4! (impeding the potential creation of a black passed pawn), followed by the king's trip to g5, supporting the passed e-pawn.

Instead, the typical king-march beginning with 11 ♔g3 is also decisive. Black can try 11...a5, with the idea of sacrificing the c-pawn on c5 and to get a passed d-pawn only when the white king oversteps the boundaries of the fifth rank. However, White will still win due to his

better-placed king and the possibility of reaching promotion first. The pawn-structure will favour White again.

Capablanca managed to carry out this 'mopping-up' procedure over the board. The above-mentioned example, Capablanca-Salwe et al., Lodz (consultation) 1913 went 9 c3 ♔e7 10 ♖bd2 ♖c5 11 ♔c2 ♔g4 12 h3?! ♔h5 13 ♖e1 ♔g6 14 ♖d4 ♖xd4 15 cxd4 ♖e6 16 ♖b3 ♔g5? 17 g3 ♔xc1 18 ♖xc1 0-0 19 f4 ♔xc2 20 ♖xc2 g6 21 ♖c5 ♖e8 22 ♗d3 ♖xc5 23 ♖xc5 ♗d7 24 g4 c6 25 ♖e1 ♖ac8 26 ♗c3 ♖e6 27 ♔h2 ♔h8 28 ♗a3 ♗b7 29 ♗g3 f5 30 ♗f3 ♗d7 31 ♔g3 ♖f8 32 ♗a3 ♖a8 33 ♗c3 ♖c8 34 ♗c2 ♔g8 35 ♔f3 (forcing Black to play ...fxg4) 35...fxg4+ 36 hxg4 ♗f7 37 ♔e3 ♖f8 38 ♖f1 ♗d7 39 ♗g2 ♗e7 40 ♖fc1 ♖ef6 41 ♖f1 ♔h8 42 ♗c2 ♗e8 43 ♗h2 ♗e7 44 ♖f3 ♖e6 45 ♔f2 a5 46 f5 gxf5 47 gxf5 ♗g5 48 ♗f4!, winning. Capablanca combined the threat against the weak c6-pawn with the one on f5 until Black was forced to play ...fxg4, giving White an impressive pawn-centre.

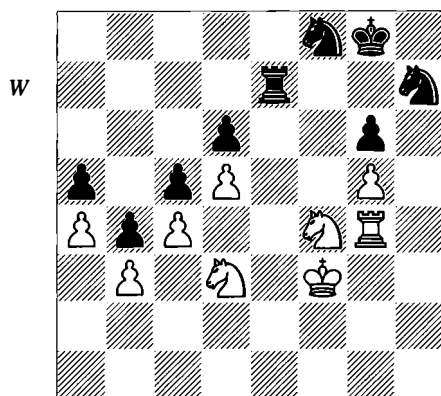
As Konstantinopsky wrote, a good teaching method is to delete the intermediate moves that link the positions shown in the diagrams, in order to allow the reader to learn to conceive strategic plans and to analyse the consequences of one idea or another seriously.

## 2 Space Advantage

Usually, a nice game or a brilliant position remains in our mind because of a unique feature – a positional factor that grabs our attention. Of course, the strategic topic that prevails in a particular game is rarely the sole reason for the final outcome, although in our recollection these subsidiary factors tend to be forgotten.

Pawn-structure is used to define the topics we usually discuss (such as the centre, hanging pawns, or an isolated pawn). The structure also determines who has a space advantage, as it marks out a boundary between the two sides, although this is often an ambiguous issue.

In one of my battles against GM Zenon Franco, white and black pawn-chains, totally blockading each other, gave the game a very positional character.



**Romero – Franco**  
*Las Palmas 1992*

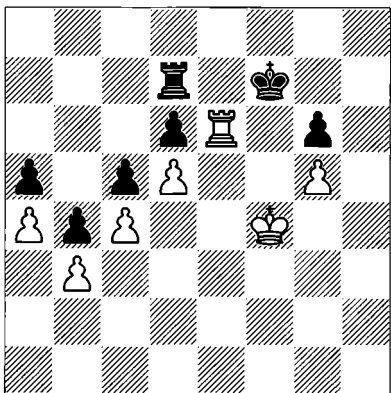
The pawn-structure proves essential to the final outcome. Specifically, the white pawns on d5 and g5 are indicating the path to follow for the active white knights, which have good entry points in Black's position. The e6-square, for instance, will be the main point of contention.

We need to add another argument to all this. What weaknesses are there in the two sides'

positions? It is easy to conclude that from my own side, one is the g5-pawn, which besides restraining Black's position, could easily become a target for Black's attack, thanks, partially, to the docile posting of the black knight on h7. The second weakness in my position is the pawn on b3, a defender of the whole pawn-chain on the queenside. Of course this is very difficult to exploit and an experienced player can predict how long will elapse until this point really becomes a true target for Black, due to its distant location. On the black side, the weaknesses are clearly defined. The g6-pawn, the important d6-pawn (which has the difficult task of supporting other links of the chain) and the distant a5-pawn are the elements that must concern Black. White has established reasons to be optimistic in the general assessment of his position. The defence of these three points together with the lack of space define, even more, the passivity of the black pieces.

What hope does Black have? The defender must always be realistic, and he must identify his possibilities in an inferior position. Of course, if Black manages to bring a knight to e5 in good conditions, having defended himself against the threats on d6 and g6, and avoided the entry of the white knights, he would get rid of some pressure. If the black knights, now totally inactive, could change their current positions, with one on d7 and the other on f8, a draw would be very close. Of course this is not easy, because when playing ...♘d7 you may allow White to put a knight on e6. However, the small amount of material on the board provides some drawing chances, but Franco's hopes were directed towards a much less noticeable detail. To Black, it is essential to reach an ending where the white knights can be adequately countered by their black counterparts. He needs to defend all his weaknesses or bring about extensive simplification (for instance, without knights and where the white rook cannot make progress),

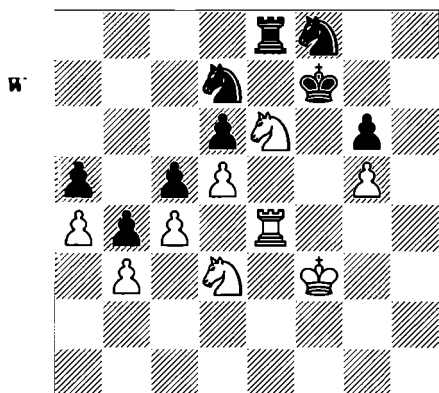
and keep the white king out. Note that the sensitive pawns on d6 and g6 currently create an unbreakable barrier to penetration by the king.



A position like this will be ideal for Black, because although he remains in a passive situation, he is able to control every route for White's rook and king.

So, what sort of position may White seek to attain? There are three principal scenarios, and we shall consider them in turn.

A) White must try to paralyse both black knights, and at the same time, to support the penetration by a knight to a strong point. This square could be f6 or e6. From e6 it would be easy to find another entry point to attack Black's weaknesses. Let us take this example, which could rise from our starting position:



Black has allowed the entrance on e6 in return for placing his knight on d7 and now puts

strong pressure on the granted square. White has two natural ways of establishing a presence in Black's camp.

**1 ♖c7!**

With this move White seeks a knight ending where Black cannot defend his weakness on d6.

The other idea involves an invasion by the rook: 1 ♖xf8 ♜xf8 (if 1...♖xf8, then 2 ♜f4+ and 3 ♜f6! winning, because of the simultaneous attack against d6 and g6; in case of 1...♜xe4 2 ♖xd7 ♜h4 3 ♖b8! White will arrive just in time) 2 ♜e6! ♜xe6 3 dxe6 (the d-pawn becomes a strong passed pawn thanks to the support of the e6-square) 3...♖b6 (after 3...♖b8 4 ♜e4 the white king will pass through the light squares) 4 ♖f4 ♜e7 5 ♜e4 ♖a8 (due to the threat of ♖d5+) 6 ♖xg6+ ♜xe6 7 ♖f4+ and there is nothing that prevents White's king from deciding matters.

**1...♜xe4 2 ♜xe4 ♜e7**

2...♖h7 3 ♜f4 ♜e7 4 ♖b5 ♖b8 (defending in time against the threat of ♖a7-c6) 5 ♜g4 ♖d7 6 ♖f4 ♖f8 7 ♖a7 (or 7 ♜f3!?) 7...♜e7 8 ♜f3! (the 'natural' 8 ♖c6+ ♖xc6 9 dxc6 ♖d8 10 ♖d5 ♖e6 doesn't seem to bring White any particular advantage) 8...♖d7 9 ♜e4 transposes to the main line.

**3 ♖b5 ♖b8 4 ♖f4 ♖d7 5 ♖a7 ♖h7**

A practically forced move. Black cannot move his king because that would allow a deadly knight move.

**6 ♖e6 ♜e7 7 ♜f4 ♖d7 8 ♜g4 ♜e7 9 ♖c7!**

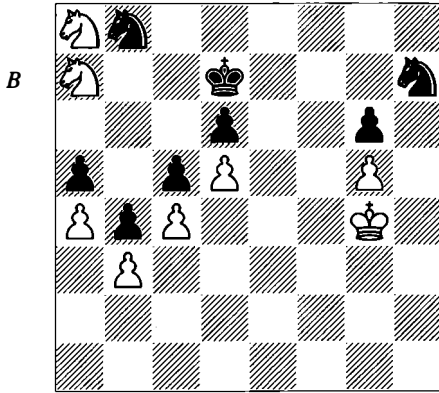
The only move to win; accuracy is always needed. After 9 ♖c8+ ♖d7 10 ♖b6+ ♜e7 11 ♖c7, with the same idea of putting pressure on d6, there comes the freeing move 11...♖d7! 12 ♖c8+? ♖d8!. In this line, if White plays 11 ♜f4 first, then 11...♖a6! prevents any progress.

**9...♖d7**

Now 9...♖d7 is met by 10 ♖c6+. This is the main reason why the white knight must go to a7 and not b6.

**10 ♖a8!! (D)**

Giving the technical work an artistic touch. Paradoxically, both white knights have better prospects from this far corner. The target remains the black pawn on d6, which cannot be protected due to the sad position of the black knights. The possibility of bringing them back to life relies on playing ...♖d7, which is not



possible while White has the unpleasant move  $\Delta c8$  at his disposal.

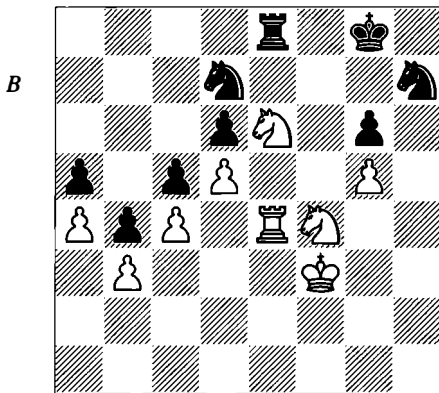
**10...  $\Delta f8$**

If  $10... \text{Ke}7$ , then  $11 \Delta b6!$  followed by  $\Delta b5$ .

**11  $\Delta b5$   $\text{Ke}7$  12  $\Delta b6$**

The d6-pawn finally falls, in face of the passivity of the black knights.

**B)** The latent strength of the d-pawn is a vital theme for White. As we have seen, the importance of this pawn stems from its support for an invading piece on e6. At the same time, Black has chances to get counterplay on the e5-square. So, we can see that the following diagram is quite easy to reach from the starting position.



The rook watches over the entry square of the black knight, e5. There are tactical possibilities that demonstrate the potential strength of the white d-pawn; e.g.:

**1...  $\Delta e5+?! 2 \text{Kxe}5! dxe5 3 \Delta h3!$**

The right move, defending against Black's tactical resources. Without this move White could not make progress. Instead,  $3 \Delta xg6 \text{Kxe}6$   $4 dxe6$  is met by  $4... \Delta xg5+$  and  $5... \Delta xe6$ .

**3...  $e4+$**

$3... \Delta f8$  and  $3... \text{Ke}7$  would both be met by  $4 \Delta xc5$ , again showing the passivity of the black pieces.

**4  $\text{Ke}4$**

$4 \text{Ke}3$  is also possible, and surely more precise.

**4...  $\Delta f8$  5  $\Delta f4$**

Or **5  $\text{Ke}5$ .**

**5...  $\text{Ke}7$**

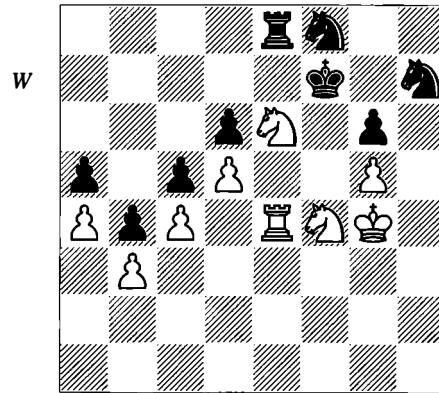
In case of  $5... \Delta d7$ , seeking a blockade,  $6 \Delta xg6$  is decisive, while  $5... \Delta xe6$  cannot be recommended either, because the rook will be dominated by White's strong king and knight.

**6  $\text{Ke}5$**

and the white king penetrates easily.

**C)** If the black pieces are displaying extreme passivity, it is not difficult to believe there are real possibilities to put them in zugzwang. The entry of the white rook via the h-file is a destabilizing motif.

The following diagram shows this possibility:



White establishes threats on g6 with the help of the rook and both knights.

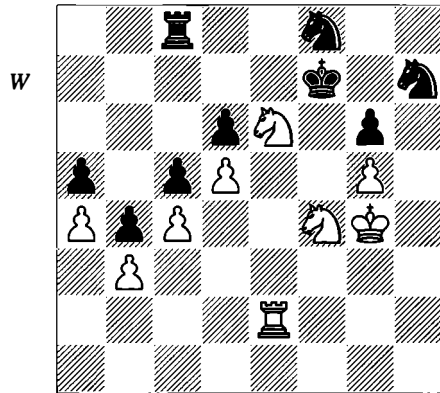
**1  $\text{Re}2!$**

This is a typical sort of move to create a zugzwang. The fact that the rook goes to a square that remains defended should not go unnoticed. And now... what useful moves does Black have

at his disposal? One of the knights cannot move, and the other does best to remain passive, since there is an elegant tactical resource possible due to the situation of the black rook and the h7-knight: 1...♖d7 2 ♖xg6! ♕xg6 3 ♜f4+ ♕f7 4 g6+. Then, there remain only rook and king moves. After the 'natural' 1...♞e7 there will follow 2 ♖d8+, so Black can only wait with 1...♕g8, or give up the e-file, which at first glance seems inadvisable. Of course nobody will consider the possibility of 1...♖xe6, because 2 dxe6+ will transform a totally blockaded pawn in a passed and well-supported one. In these cases the pawn-structure becomes favourable to the side with a space advantage, a fact that is emphasized by the strong position of a piece placed on e6.

1...♞c8 (D)

After 1...♕g8 2 ♖c7! (with the black king away this knight trip is decisive) 2...♞xe2 3 ♖xe2 ♕f7 4 ♖b5 ♕e7 5 ♖f4 (5 ♖a7 also wins) 5...♕d7 6 ♖a7 ♕c7 7 ♖c6 ♕b6 (now the black king is too far from the other weakness, g6) 8 ♖e7! the black knights are too poorly positioned.



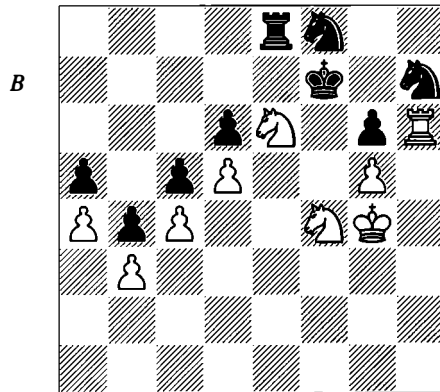
2 ♞h2!

White's goal is shown by this move. First, the black pieces are denied any possibility of counterplay, and secondly, g6-pawn has become a tactical target. The f8-knight cannot support the entire load while the black king doesn't occupy the g7-square, and so the disturbing presence of the advanced white knight is essential.

We see that the possibility of exchanging a pair of knights would reduce the pressure,

provided White could not get an entry point for his rook. This general notion can help us avoid trouble, and the need to analyse the attractive but unnecessary line 2 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 3 ♞f2 (making sure of winning the f6- or e6-square; it may appear that with only one knight Black now isn't in a good position to prevent the rook entry via e6 or f6, but the black knight proves highly versatile) 3...♕g8! (Black must be precise; he loses after both 3...♖d7? 4 ♖d3+ followed by ♞e2 {with the idea of ♞e6 or ♞e7} and 3...♞e8 4 ♖h5+ ♕e7 5 ♖f6! ♞d8 6 ♖g8+ ♕e8 7 ♞e2+ {the white rook is busily looking for his best position, combined with an active knight} 7...♕f7 8 ♖h6+ ♕g7 9 ♞e7+, etc.) and White's winning chances fade; after 4 ♖d3 ♞e8! 5 ♞f6 ♞e3! the position requires extensive analysis to determine a clear verdict.

2...♞e8 3 ♞h6! (D)



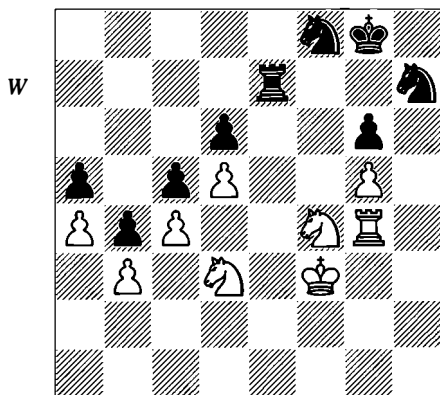
White threatens simply 4 ♖xg6! ♖xe6 5 dxe6+ ♞xe6 6 ♖h8+ winning (or 6 ♞xh7+ ♕xg6 7 ♞h6+ ♕f7 8 ♞xe6 winning the pawn ending).

3...♕g8 4 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 5 ♖xg6

White's rook on the sixth rank more than outweighs Black's counterplay with 5...♞e3.

All these considerations and variations have an undeniable practical value, especially in understanding the trouble faced by Black, with his weaknesses, with the awkward movements of his knights and his need to prevent the white pieces from entering. A knight on e6 is not only decorative. It will go into action at some point, or assist the action of its fellows. Because of

this, Franco decided to avoid this possibility and left his knights in their initial positions for a while. However, this doesn't prevent zugzwang from arising.



#### 42 ♖g1

My plan is clear. White shall transfer the d3-knight to a more active position; e4 is the ideal place. It is true that I need first to restrict all possible counterplay, such as the manoeuvre ...♞d7-e5, whenever it can represent a severe threat. Indeed, after 42 ♠f2 ♞d7 White has no satisfactory response: 43 ♜xg6 is answered by 43...♙g7!

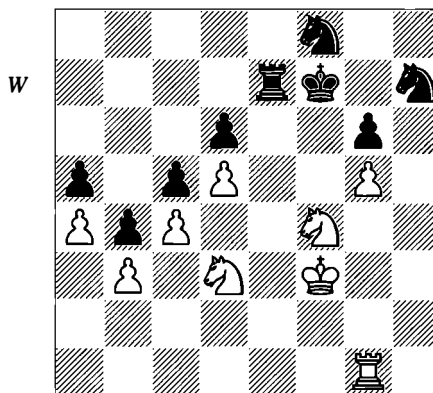
With the text-move, the rook willingly steps aside from the unpleasant idea that Black has in mind. Besides, the first rank will be protected, because a later ♠f2 would weaken it, allowing the black rook to enter.

#### 42...♟f7 (D)

Black's king approaches the defence of d6, and on its way, it also protects g6. However, 42...♞d7 does not seem useful:

a) 43 ♜xg6 ♙g7! is a trap White should avoid: 44 ♞df4 ♟f7 45 ♚e1 (or 45 ♞h8+ ♟g8 46 ♞hg6 with a draw) 45...♜xg5+ 46 ♟g4 ♙xg6 47 ♜xg6 ♟xg6 48 ♚e7 ♞e5+ and the minor pieces are beginning to create problems.

b) 43 ♞e6! would scare even the calmest chess-player. After 43...♞hf8, 44 ♞d8! (or 44 ♞c7!) profits from the fact that the white king is defending the entry points of the black rook. White will transfer his knight to attack Black's queenside weaknesses: a5, and especially d6. The knight must therefore remain on f8, awaiting the later development of White's plans.



#### 43 ♞f2 ♚e5

Franco made all his moves quickly once he had reached the first time-control, which can be a good method if you have clear ideas, and want to put the pressure on your opponent. However, here we could analyse the consequences of 43...♞d7 deeply. After 44 ♞e4 ♞e5+ 45 ♟e3! the black knight will be well placed, but the d6-pawn will require the attention of the only active black piece: his rook. Then:

a) If 45...♞d7 46 ♚h1 ♟g8, the best White can do is to play 47 ♞e6, with the same position as at the end of line 'b'. It would be wrong to enter the endgame arising after the combination 47 ♙xh7 ♙xh7! 48 ♠f6+ ♟h8 49 ♞xh7 ♟xh7 50 ♞e6 ♠f7! 51 ♟f4 (51 ♠f8+ doesn't help: 51...♟g7 52 ♞d7 and now 52...♞d8 defends, but not 52...♜xg5?) 51...♟g8! (starting a race is risky: 51...♞e5 52 ♞xc5 ♞xc4 53 ♞e4) and Black patiently waits in his fortress, because White cannot make progress; after 52 ♞c7, the black knight will join the defence through the manoeuvre ...♞d8 and ...♞b7.

b) After 45...♟g8 46 ♞e6 ♞d7 (the attempt to simplify fails: 46...♞f8 47 ♞xd6! ♞xe6 48 dxe6 ♙xe6 49 ♞e4! and Black has opened the d-file in favour of the white rook, and at the same time he now has an eternal weakness on c5, well accessible to the white pieces; moreover, the active 46...♙f7 fails: 47 ♞xd6 ♙f3+ 48 ♟e4) 47 ♚h1! Black is in zugzwang.

#### 44 ♞e4 ♟e7

Both players have managed to defend their own weaknesses, and activate their forces. Now Black faces three new problems:

1) The fact that the king no longer protects g6 leaves his knights less useful.

2) White's e4-knight hints at another method of opening the position: the f6-square. The black knights thus have another reason to be concerned: penetration by their white counterparts.

3) The poor mobility of the black rook, caused by the presence of the king on e7.

**45 ♖g4!**

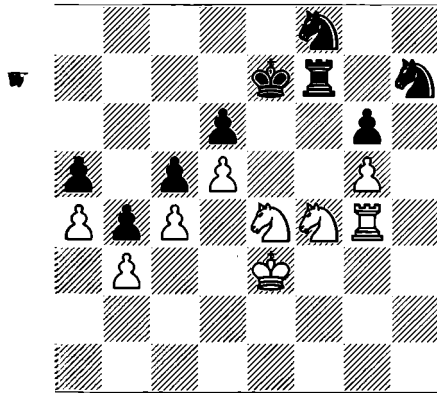
A key move to make progress. White creates the possibility of an exchange of rooks on f4. Now I realized that with the rooks exchanged my chances would greatly increase, thanks to the superb situation of my knights. Indeed, nothing can prevent my knight from reaching the key f6-square, with terrific results. Now I had the feeling that my advantage could be turned into a win.

**45...♞f5 46 ♖e3 ♞e5**

This is a natural move, 'pursuing' the white king. The other possibilities are based on the potential activity of the black rook along the f-file. For instance:

a) After 46...♔d7 47 ♘h3! ♞f1 48 ♞f4 ♞b1 the exchange of rooks will ease White's task, as we shall see later. 49 ♞f7+ ♔d8 50 ♘f4! ♞xb3+ 51 ♖e2 and White is preparing strong threats against the black king.

b) The 'passive' 46...♞f7 (D) has the major drawback of relaxing the pressure on g5, and this allows White to create another target.



After 47 ♞h4! ♔d7 (47...♞f5? is not possible because of 48 ♘g6+!) 48 ♞h6 ♞g7 White has a choice:

b1) 49 ♘f6+ and here:

b11) 49...♔d8 fails to 50 ♘xg6! ♘xf6 51 ♘xf8 ♘g4+ 52 ♖f4 ♘xh6 53 ♘e6+ winning.

b12) In case of 49...♔c8 there follows 50 ♘e6! ♘xe6 51 dxe6 ♘xg5 52 ♞h8+ ♖b7 53 ♞e8 and e7.

b13) 49...♖e7 50 ♘xh7 (or 50 ♘xg6+) 50...♘xh7 51 ♘xg6+ winning.

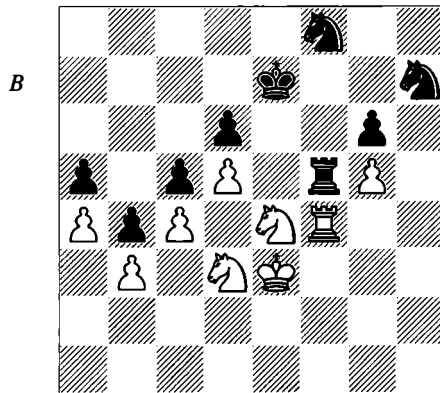
b14) 49...♘xf6 50 gxf6 ♞h7 (50...♞f7 51 ♘xg6 ♞xf6 52 ♘e5+, etc.) 51 ♞xh7+ ♘h7 52 f7 ♖e7 53 ♘e6! should be compared with note 'b' to White's 47th move.

All these variations tactically favour White, who is well prepared to decide the game in this way.

b2) However, White can also win in classical style with 49 ♖f3!, heading for g4, to defend g5 and to follow later with ♘f6.

**47 ♘h3**

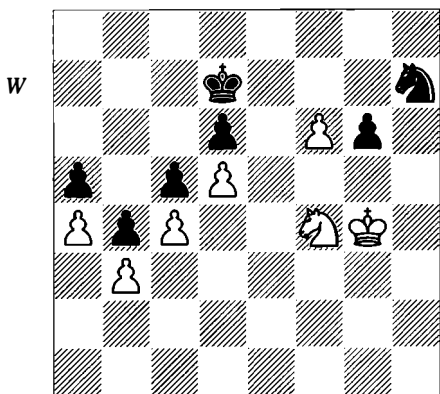
A strong move, and unexpected since the knight allows itself to be diverted. Nonetheless, this odd move has an unquestionable advantage over the natural 47 ♘d3!, by which White defends the g5-pawn so as to threaten a favourable exchange of rooks on f5, by playing ♞xf5 gxf5, ♘g3. However, this interesting idea is based on a serious calculation mistake (though it may also be labelled a positional error) when analysing the sequence 47...♞f5 48 ♞f4 (D).



White is not threatening 49 ♞xf5 because the g-pawn falls. Nor is he threatening 49 ♖f3 (since 49...♘g5+ is check) or 49 ♖f2 ♘xg5 50 ♞xf5? ♘xe4+. Therefore I abandoned this line. However, this was a big mistake – I forgot that sometimes it is not necessary to threaten something to make progress, because the opponent

must play a move! As you will have guessed, we have a surprising zugzwang.

After 48...♔d7 (there is no other move, because 48...♔d7 stops guarding the g6-square and allows the exchange: 49 ♖xf5 gxf5 50 g6! ♕hf6 51 ♕g3 ♕e8 52 ♖xf5+ ♔f6 53 g7! winning) 49 ♔f3! (of course; now the f8-knight is undefended, and this prevents the possibility of 49...♖xg5+ 50 ♕xg5 ♖xg5) 49...♔e7 50 ♔g4 (concluding the plan) 50...♖xf4+ 51 ♕xf4 ♔d7 52 ♕f6+ ♕xf6+ 53 gxf6 ♕h7! (*D*) and an important position appears, whose analysis to a large degree determines the whole validity of the plan started with 45 ♖g4.



Of course the f-pawn cannot be sacrificed. There are two ways of trying to convert this small advantage into something more tangible:

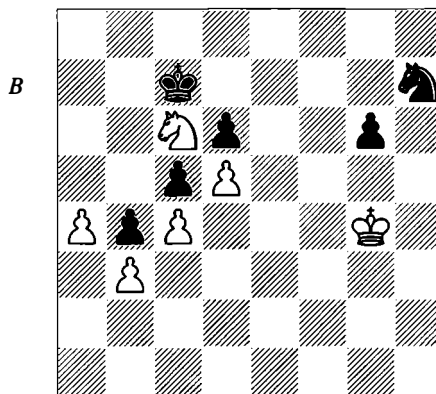
a) The first supposes to profit from the space advantage and the situation of the white pieces (active king and knight), with the only drawback of keeping the same structure of blocked pawns, but with the additional advantage that many pawn endings are won. After 54 ♖xg6 ♕xf6+ 55 ♔f5 White wins following 55...♕e8? 56 ♕f8+ ♔e7 57 ♕e6 ♕f6 58 ♕d8!. The same goes for 55...♕h7? 56 ♕f4! ♔e7 (56...♕f8 also loses: 57 ♔f6 ♕h7+ 58 ♔g6 ♕f8+ 59 ♔f7 ♕h7 60 ♕e6!) 57 ♕e6! ♕f6 (or 57...♔f7 58 ♕d8+) 58 ♕d8!, winning. However, Black only needs to activate his knight slightly more to show the trip by the white king to be too slow: 55...♕h5! with counterplay.

b) The most attractive option is therefore 54 f7! ♔e7 55 ♕e6! (sacrificing the f-pawn in return for the important black a5-pawn) 55...♔xf7

(other possibilities are worse: 55...♕f6+ 56 ♔g5 ♔xf7 57 ♕d8+ ♔g7 58 ♕b7 ♕e4+ 59 ♔f4 ♕d2 60 ♕xa5 ♔f6 61 ♔e3 and the a-pawn cannot be stopped; 55...♕f8 loses to 56 ♔g5!, because after 56...♔xf7 57 ♖xh8 ♔xf8 58 ♔xg6 the pawn ending is hopeless for Black) 56 ♕d8+ ♔e8 57 ♕c6 ♔d7 58 ♕xa5 and now:

b1) The immediate 58...♕f6+ is poor, because after 59 ♔g5 ♕e4+ 60 ♔xg6 ♔c7 White arrives just in time with his king to protect b3, even though this seems incredible: 61 ♔f5 ♕f2 (if 61...♕d2, 62 ♔f4 ♔b6 63 ♔e3 ♕f1+ 64 ♔f2 ♕d2 65 ♔e2 reaching the goal) 62 ♕c6! ♕d3 63 ♕a7 ♕c1 64 ♕b5+ ♔b6 (64...♔d7 65 a5 ♕xb3 66 a6 ♔c8 67 ♔e6 +-) 65 ♕xd6 ♕xb3 66 ♔e4 with good winning chances.

b2) 58...♔c7 59 ♕c6 (*D*).



This is a critical endgame position. The passed a-pawn is undoubtedly much more important than the black one, which remains at least as weak as it was before. The black king must not only watch White's passed pawn, but must also guard the 'eternal' weakness, d6. White's last move shows all his cards, threatening to activate the knight in an unstoppable way. If the knight reached b5 and the pawn were advanced to a6, the game would be decided. Of course the knight is not only threatening to reach b5; the second possibility is to go for the g-pawn. 59...♕f6+ and then:

b21) 60 ♔f4 is an interesting idea but is not too successful: 60...♔b6! (60...g5+ 61 ♔f5 ♕h5 62 ♕a7 ♕g3+ 63 ♔xg5 ♕e4+ 64 ♔f4 ♕d2 65 ♕b5+ ♔b6 {if 65...♔d7, 66 a5 ♕xb3 67 a6 winning} 66 ♕xd6) 61 ♕e7 g5+ 62 ♔f5 (or 62

♖f3!?) 62...g4 63 ♖f4 g3 64 ♖xg3 ♗e4+ keeps Black in the game.

b22) 60 ♖f3 (the most precise way to play this position is to deprive Black of any counterplay, watching out for ideas by which the black knight might reach b3; it does not matter that the king moves away from the black g-pawn for a moment) 60...♗b6 (avoiding the winning manoeuvre ♗a7-b5) 61 ♗e7 g5 62 ♖f5 ♖c7 and now White can choose between the simple 63 ♗e3! followed by ♗f1 and ♗d2, and 63 ♗g7!?, forcing the g-pawn to advance: 63...♗b6 64 ♗e6 g4+ 65 ♖e3 ♗h5 66 ♗g5 ♖g3 67 ♗e4 ♗f5+ 68 ♖f4 g3 69 ♗xg3 ♗d4 70 ♗e4 ♗xb3 71 ♗xd6.

**47...♖f5?!**

Black should play 47...♖d7. Then:

a) The idea is to reply to 48 ♖f4 ♖e7 49 ♖f3 with 49...♖c7! followed by ...♗d7, with a stubborn defence.

b) White's only chance of securing the win is to play 48 ♗f4!. Now:

b1) 48...♖e7 repeats the position that occurred in the game after Black's 46th move, giving White another chance to play 49 ♗d3!, as in the note to White's 47th move. However, Black has other options...

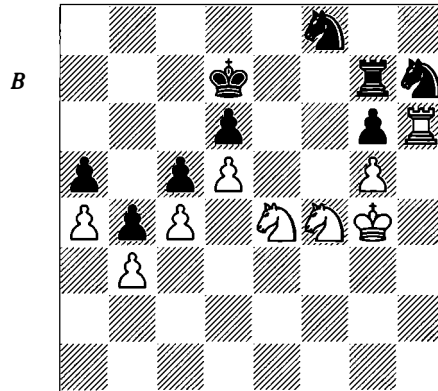
b2) Although he cannot develop the same defensive set-up as before, it is possible to continue 48...♖c7 49 ♖f3 ♖d7 and now 50 ♗d3! leads the game to normal paths: 50...♖e7 50...♖f5+ 51 ♖f4 transposes to the note to White's 47th move, i.e. the position after 49 ♖f3!) 51 ♖h4! ♖c7 (in case of 51...♖f7+, 52 ♖f4 ♖e7 53 ♖g4 seems to put Black in zugzwang) 52 ♗f4 and then:

b21) After 52...♖e5 everything is ready for a tactical solution: 53 ♗e6+ ♖d7 54 ♗xf8+! (the simplest way is best; 54 ♗f6+ ♗xf6 55 ♗xf8+ ♖e8 56 ♖h8 ♖f5+! 57 ♖e2 ♗e4 58 ♗e6+ ♖d7 is unclear) 54...♗xf8 55 ♖f4! ♖e7 (55...♗h7 56 ♖f7+ ♖e7 57 ♖xh7!) and now rather than 56 ♖xd6, which allows Black a rook ending with some drawing chances, 56 ♖f6! wins.

b22) 52...♖d7 53 ♖h6 ♖g7 (53...♖e5 54 ♖xg6!) 54 ♖g4 (D).

White is bringing about a new zugzwang position. Now:

b221) 54...♖c7 presents White with a pleasant choice between 55 ♗e6+ and 55 ♗f6. With



the latter, White ends the game in elegant fashion: 55...♗xf6+ 56 gxf6 ♖f7 57 ♖g5! ♗h7+ 58 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 59 ♗e6+, etc.

b222) 54...♖e7 55 ♗f6 ♖f7 (not 55...♗xf6+ 56 gxf6+ ♖xf6 because of 57 ♗h5+!) 56 ♗e6 ♗xf6+ 57 gxf6 ♖g8 58 ♗xf8 followed by 59 ♖g5 with complete command of the position.

**48 ♖f4 ♖e5**

Black should probably play 48...♖f4 49 ♗xf4 ♖d7 50 ♖f3 ♖e7 51 ♖g4 transposing to the note to White's 47th move.

**49 ♖f3!**

Slowly but surely, White is implementing his plan. First, he transfers the king to g4, from where it will protect the g5-pawn and control the f5-square (denying the black rook its flight-square). Later, the h3-knight, released from its defensive task, will go for the black rook.

**49...♗d7**

If 49...♖d7 there can follow 50 ♖f7+ ♖e7 51 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 52 ♗f4 or 50 ♗hf2 ♖f5 51 ♗d3.

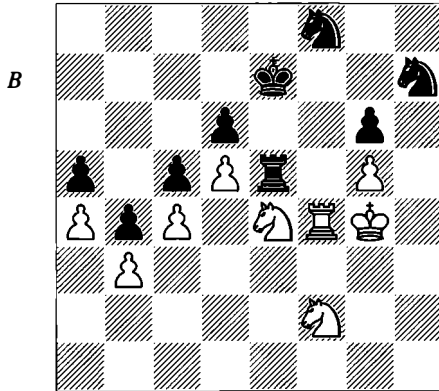
**50 ♖g4 ♗df8**

There is no escape for Black. The interesting idea 50...♖d8!? 51 ♗xd6 ♖e3 doesn't work: 52 ♖e4! ♖xb3 (52...♖xh3 is met by 53 ♖e8+!, and 52...♗e5+ by 53 ♖xe5!) 53 ♖e8+ ♖c7 54 ♗b5+ ♖b6 55 ♖e6+ ♖b7 56 ♖e7 winning, and the same goes for 50...♗hf8 51 ♗hf2 ♖d8 52 ♗d3! (52 ♗xd6 ♖e3 53 ♖e4 ♖xb3 54 ♖e8+ ♖c7 55 ♗fe4 also deserves attention) 52...♖e7 53 ♗xd6 ♖e3 54 ♗b7+! followed by 55 ♗bxc5.

**51 ♗hf2 (D)**

The knight is threatening to go to d3, controlling e5. 51 ♗g1 (with the idea of ♗f3) is also viable, but the text-move is probably more precise, with the additional possibility of

building a 'bridge' with the knights between f6 and e4.



51...♔d7

Black enables his rook to retreat.

52 ♖f7+

White had another good option in 52 ♖f6+. Then 52...♔e7 53 ♗2e4! leaves Black without any useful moves. The caravan of white knights will occupy dominant positions beneath the shy gaze of the black knights; that without doubt is an elegant way of finishing off the previous work. Black could not even withstand a little more by playing 52...♗xf6+ 53 gxf6 ♖e1 54 ♔g5 ♖e3 due to 55 ♔h6!. I must confess that all this was very complicated to me, and even more after analysing the text-move.

52...♖e7 53 ♖f6+!

A key move.

53...♗xf6+

After 53...♔d8 54 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 55 ♗2e4! Black is forced to reply 55...♗xf6+, allowing the creation of a strong passed pawn, and more important yet, opening the way for the white king.

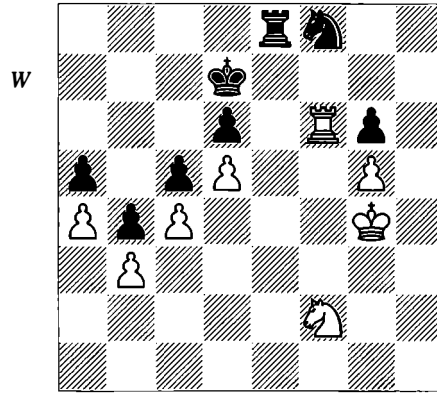
54 ♖xf6 ♖e8 (D)

In my opinion, 54...♔e8 is preferable, hoping to activate the rook. Then:

a) 55 ♔f4? ♖e1 56 ♗e4 ♔e7! and it is not clear how White might make progress.

b) 55 ♖xd6! wins: 55...♖e3 56 ♖c6 ♗d7 57 ♖xg6 ♖xb3 58 ♖e6+ ♔f8 59 ♗e4 ♖b1 60 ♗d6 and White can stop Black's b-pawn and advance his own passed pawns: 60...♔g8 61 ♖e8+ ♗f8 62 ♗e4 b3 63 ♖b8 b2 64 ♗d2! +-.

55 ♖f7+!



With ruinous effect. The a-pawn is cannon-fodder.

55...♔d8 56 ♔f4

White spends a tempo preventing any entry by the black rook.

56...♗d7 57 ♗e4 ♗e5

What irony... The first time the black knight arrives on e5, it constitutes a concession. Continuing the battle with 57...♖e7 58 ♗xd6 ♖e1 59 ♖g7! is also hopeless, because the knight threatens to come to a5, while if 57...♔c7 58 ♗f6 ♖d8 then 59 ♖g7 wins.

58 ♖a7

Attractive, but 58 ♖f6! is probably more precise.

58...♗d3+ 59 ♔e3

59 ♔f3? is a mistake because of the reply 59...♗e1+!

59...♗c1 60 ♖a8+

The last move before the time-control, and fortunately not a mistake. 60 ♖xa5 seems better, but I feared odd lines starting with 60...♔e7, avoiding the exchange of rooks.

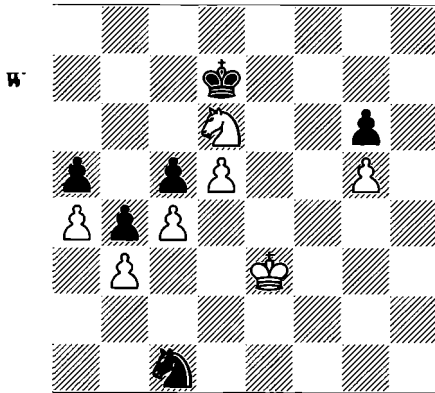
60...♔e7 61 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 62 ♗xd6+ ♔d7 (D)

Forced, because after 62...♔e7 63 ♗e4 ♗xb3 64 ♔d3 followed by 65 ♔c2, Black doesn't succeed in defending the important c5-pawn.

63 ♗e4!?

This is the most interesting move, trying to tie up the black pieces first, and to win a couple of pawns later. However, 63 ♗f7! seems better: 63...♗xb3 64 ♗e5+ ♔d6 65 ♗xg6 ♗d4 66 ♗f4! and there are no doubts about the outcome of the game.

63...♗xb3 64 ♔f4



Black's knight is hampered by its own pawns and the active white king decides the fight.

64...♖e8

Black would resist more by playing 64...♗e7 65 ♖e5 ♘c1. White can then choose an artistic method: 66 d6+ ♗d8 67 ♘xc5 b3 68 d7!? ♗e7 69 ♗d5! b2 70 ♗c6 b1♚ 71 ♗c7 and White's coordinated pieces impose their will.

65 ♖e5 ♘c1 66 ♗d6 ♘d3 67 ♘d2 ♗d8 68 ♘b3 ♘b2 69 ♘xa5 ♘xa4 70 ♗c6 ♘c3 71 d6 1-0

The advance of the d-pawn cannot be prevented, and so this pawn emerges as the main character of this game.

The game we are about to examine features a favourable pawn-structure, with a white pawn on e5 and where a knight has an active square just behind it on e4. Black needs some sort of counterplay in return for this, such as a knight on d5, a counterattack on the queenside, or maybe pressure on the d-file.

In the game Black seems to neutralize the advantage with some pressure on the weak white b3-pawn (the supporter of the c4-pawn) in an ending without queens. This game is very instructive and entertaining. With very little in his favour, White gets an almost mathematical win. He needs something more than exerting pressure on a weakness, and here he finds it thanks to his space advantage and the possibility of an invasion by the white pieces, principally the knights, which truly come into their own in closed positions. The regrouping of the white pieces on the kingside, pointing at both flanks, also produces a pleasant sensation.

**Hort – Wirthensohn**  
*Biel 1981*

1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 e6 3 f4

Facing a sharp defence, White selects a rare system, based on kingside expansion and the flexibility of his development. The opening of the centre with d4 is not, at this point, part of White's plans, and so he chooses this closed set-up. However, the threat to push this pawn at a favourable moment is always present, depending on the set-up Black chooses. As a rule, White will try to make useful moves that give nothing away, and will fianchetto his king's bishop.

3...d5

The occupation of the centre is perfectly advisable. This move virtually rules out White playing d4 later on. Obviously, Black does not fear the check on b5.

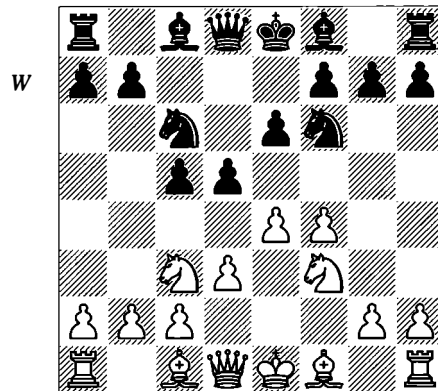
4 d3 ♘c6

In case of 4...dxe4 5 dxe4 ♚xd1+ 6 ♘xd1 we reach an ending slightly in White's favour, thanks to his space advantage in the centre.

5 ♘f3 ♘f6 (D)

This was the last chance to enter an ending by playing 5...dxe4. Taking with the knight on e4 is considered dubious, because Black controls the d4-square and is able to press along the d-file later.

Black can choose a different set-up with 5...♗ge7, but this allows White to take the initiative on the kingside, for instance after 6 g4!? g6 7 ♗g2 ±.



6 ♗d2!

White is displaying great accuracy. Although the game is unlikely to become sharp and forcing in the near future, White is fine-tuning the move-order. The natural move is 6 e5 ♘d7 (6...d4?! is funny: 7 ♘e4 ♘xe4 8 dxe4 with strong central play for White and some possibilities of attacking the king by f5) 7 g3, but Black then has the good reply 7...b5! 8 ♘xb5? ♚a5+ 9 ♘c3 d4 winning. The strange text-move conceived by Hort not only prevents the exchange of queens, which now is less favourable because after 6 g3 dxe4 7 dxe4 ♚xd1+ White must recapture with the king, but also prevents ...b5.

**6...♗e7 7 g3 a6**

The Swiss master, who understands that White will start kingside action very soon, is preparing an offensive on the queenside (entirely typical in this line) and this will force White to define the centre.

7...b5 seems to be a little risky: 8 e5 ♘d7 9 ♘xb5 ♚b8 and now 10 c4 dxc4 (10...a6 11 cxd5 exd5) 11 dxc4 a6 12 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 13 exd6, or 10 ♘d6+ at once: 10...♗xd6 11 exd6, with good prospects for White.

**8 e5**

White advances now that Black has wasted a tempo preparing ...b5.

**8...♘d7**

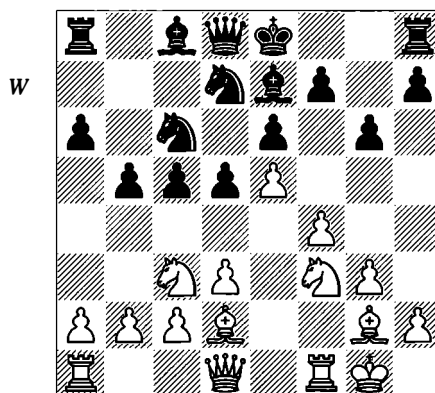
The advance 8...d4, clearing the d5-square for the knight, forces 9 exf6 dxc3 10 fxe7 cxd2+ 11 ♚xd2 ♚xe7 12 ♗g2 0-0 13 0-0 ♗d7 14 ♚ae1 ±. The new pawn-structure determines the ideas for both sides, and marks out their natural theatres of action. White seems to be better off: his initiative could be on the side of the board where the opponent's king resides, and seems to be more threatening (f5 and ♘e5 are the ideas) in addition to the difference in activity of the bishops.

**9 ♗g2 b5 10 0-0 g6 (D)**

When Hort finally decided to move the e-pawn to the fifth rank, clarifying the central situation, his purpose was to gain space in order to have a direct threat, the f5 pawn-break. Wirthensohn restrains this possibility in a radical manner, and so he clearly shows which will be the destination of his king.

**11 ♘e2!**

Trying to regroup the pieces for play against Black's kingside.



**11...♗b7 12 ♗e1!?**

The queen's bishop takes the first step towards participating in the central battle. The limited space available to the white pieces demands our attention, and also their arrangement, establishing a false impression of a bottleneck.

**12...♘b6 13 ♗f2 ♚d7?!**

The queen is not well placed here. An interesting suggestion is 13...♚c7 followed by ...0-0-0 and ...d4. Black will pay a high price for leaving the b6-knight unguarded.

**14 c3**

White threatens the unpleasant b4, opening the position to his advantage.

**14...a5 15 g4**

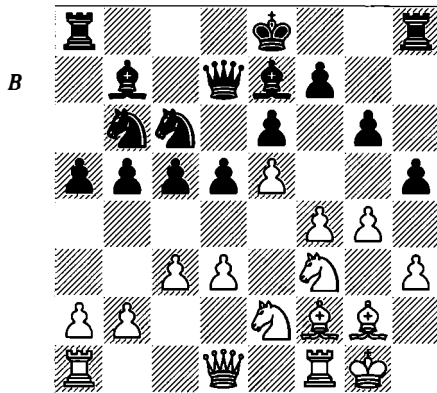
This move is natural, even though the black king is not on the kingside. White has ideas not only of a break with f5 (though the black queen on d7 makes this inadvisable at present) but is also seeking space for his sluggish pieces. A battle with opposite-side castling seems very likely, and so tempi and the active posting of the minor pieces will be decisive. If 15 d4 then 15...c4.

**15...h5 16 h3 (D)**

**16...hxc4**

Even though the previous move, 15...h5, was logical, this hasty exchange cannot be totally justified. There was no need to hurry. Probably, Wirthensohn considered it favourable to his cause to open the h-file, but how wrong he was!

The reason for the immediate exchange was probably for economical reasons: he no longer needs to be concerned about the tension in this part of the board nor to choose the right moment



to capture on g4, making calculations continuously. If so, it was a very natural decision, but also a very lazy one, and this rebounds on Black in the end.

#### 17 hxg4 a4

Black continues with his initiative on the queenside, trying to create weaknesses in this part of the board, though without apparent success. Probably he underestimated White's reply. His idea was to keep advancing his pawn to a3, forcing White to reply with b3, and then to break White's control of the b4-square with ...d4. Another possibility is simply ...b4 and ...a3, gaining squares for the black knights. But White, with his next move, stops all possible counterplay, albeit at the cost of simplifying the position a lot.

a) Another method for attacking White's queenside is to advance another pawn: 17...b4 18 c4!? (18 ♖c1 ♗a6 is unclear) 18...dxc4 19 dxc4 ♜xd1 20 ♜fxd1 ♗xc4 21 b3 and then:

a1) 21...♗a3 can be met by 22 ♗g5 followed by ♗e4, or the simple 22 ♜ac1 exerting pressure on c5, when White aims to get more than enough compensation.

a2) 21...♗b6 22 ♜ac1 (22 ♗g5 ♗xg5 23 fxg5 ♗d5) 22...♗d7 23 ♗d2 (23 ♗g5 ♗xg5 24 fxg5 ♗d8; 23 ♗g3 ♗d8) 23...♗d8 24 ♗c4 with compensation.

b) Black can choose a plan more consistent with the earlier opening of the h-file: opening the a8-h1 diagonal for his bishop. However, after 17...d4!? 18 ♗g3! ♗d5 19 ♜d2 ± it is obvious that although the black knight is still perfectly placed on d5, the strong central white knight (that now will go to e4) is more important, and

its menacing presence will discourage Black from the long-awaited move ...0-0-0. There might follow 19...f5 20 exf6 ♗xf6 21 g5 ♗g4 22 ♗e4 ♗xf2 23 ♜xf2 ♗d8?! 24 cxd4.

c) After 17...0-0-0 18 a3!? the break with b4 seems dangerous.

#### 18 b4!

White is looking to create some possibilities on the queenside and he tries to keep a flexible pawn-structure. The game is being played in both flanks and the pace begins to quicken from now on.

#### 18...axb3 19 axb3 ♜xa1 20 ♜xa1

The exchange of a pair of rooks seems to have helped Black, due to the somewhat risky position of his king.

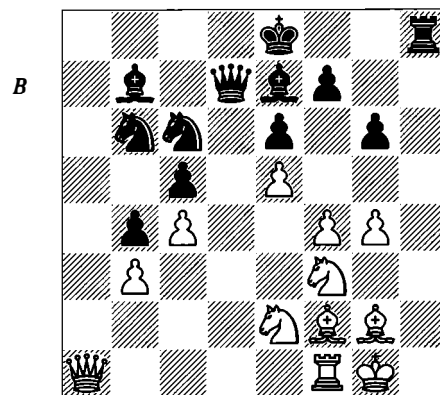
#### 20...b4

Black pre-emptively White's threat of playing b4 himself, and tries to control the d4-square. It is also possible to leave the pawns where they are by playing 20...♜d8, but after 21 d4 c4 22 ♜b1 White is exerting pressure on the b-file and he has the break f5 at hand.

#### 21 c4!

Hort fixes the c5-pawn, which will be a target later. Black cannot achieve anything more than closing off access to the c-file, and he goes into an ending that might appear balanced. However, the pawn-structure in this sort of closed position has a strong bearing on the outcome of the game.

#### 21...dxc4 22 dxc4 (D)



White has conquered the e4-square, an excellent post for any knight. Besides, it is fair to note that its black counterpart, the d5-square, is

denied to the black pieces. Then, White assures the most important achievement of the newly-formed pawn-chain and a permanent advantage that could be essential (or not) depending on the course of events. In closed positions like this, obtaining central squares for the knights is a prominent factor.

**22... ♖d3**

Due to the threat of ♜d1, Black acquiesces to the exchange of queens.

**23 ♖d1**

Hort doesn't decline the exchange, because after 23 ♜c1 ♖c2 the black queen will create a lot of trouble.

**23... ♖xd1 24 ♜xd1 ♘a5**

Even though White has managed to blockade the queenside and to restrain Black's minor pieces (and these seem to compensate for this detail with the opening of two files), Black is hoping that the b3-pawn would be a continual source of concern for White. The attempt to get counterplay based on ...g5 (a typical reaction in this kind of position) will be unsuccessful because it opens the game against his own interest; viz. 24...g5? 25 ♜xg5 ♘xg5 26 fxg5.

**25 ♜c1**

The exchange of bishops by 25 ♜d2?! is inappropriate because it temporarily blocks the action of the white rook, and so allows 25...♘xg2 26 ♜xg2 ♜d7! followed by ...♙c6.

**25...0-0**

The king finally clears its route.

**26 ♜d2!**

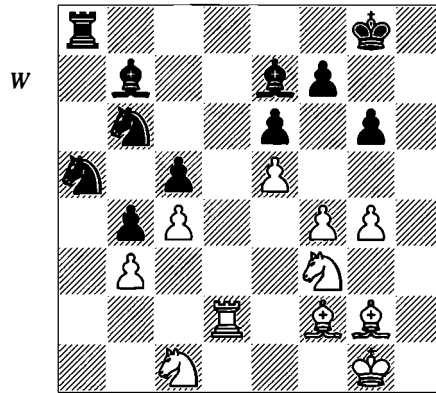
A multi-purpose move. White creates a deep positional threat (the exchange of the dark-squared bishops) and prepares to contest the a-file, where there are entry points, unlike on the d-file. Instead, 26 ♘h4 fails due to 26...♘xf3.

**26... ♜a8! (D)**

Rather than protecting his active a5-knight, Black wants to exchange rooks – or failing this, to occupy the a-file. White shares this idea, because in this way he is avoiding any black counterplay. Black also avoids the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, since it can retreat to f8.

**27 ♜a2**

It is dangerous to delay the confrontation of the rooks on the a-file, because Black can sacrifice a piece and mobilize his two queenside



pawns. Let us see: 27 ♘h4 ♘xh4 (27...♘f8?! 28 ♜d8!) 28 ♜xh4 ♘xg2 29 ♜xg2 g5! 30 fxg5 ♜axc4 31 bxc4 ♜xc4 32 ♜e2 ♜a3 with good compensation for the piece.

**27... ♘c6!**

With the idea of 28...♜b7, releasing the pressure exerted by the white pieces, both on the a8-h1 diagonal and the a-file, and likewise defending the c5-pawn (the weakest one) adequately. If Black disregards this prophylaxis and plays, for instance, 27...♜d7 then 28 ♜d2 will be very annoying.

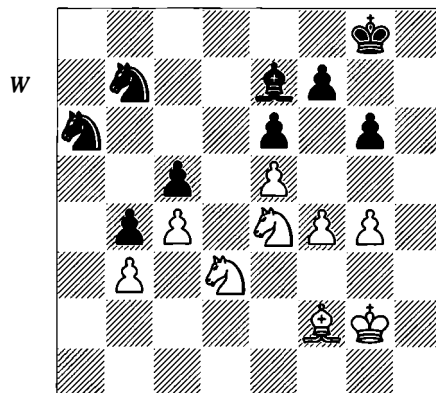
**28 ♜g5 ♘xg2 29 ♜xg2 ♜b7**

Just in time. Instead 29...♘xg5? is bad due to 30 fxg5, when the c5-pawn cannot be protected.

**30 ♜xa8+ ♜xa8 31 ♜d3**

White exploits the fact that the a5-knight was retreated in order to attack the c5-pawn with all his forces. The defence of b3 slows White down, though not permanently.

**31... ♜c7 32 ♜e4 ♜a6 (D)**



Even knowing that White's pieces are more active, Black's position looks totally sound: it has only one weakness (c5), which is adequately defended, and the white king cannot get there.

We know the principle of two weaknesses. Hort must find another target, exploiting the passive position of the black pieces, and the place to do so is the kingside. Thanks to his flexible pawn-structure in this side of the board, and a clear space advantage (the pawn-chain e5 versus e6 gives him two important entry points {f6 and d6} for his minor pieces), White has some possibilities of success. However, it must be borne in mind that if White relaxes the pressure on c5 in search of better prospects, Black would again have immediate counterplay on b3.

33 ♖h3!

The only way! The king approaches via the short side in order to offer the exchange of bishops, an idea that arose earlier but that has been postponed until a better occasion; the right moment arrived after the exchange of rooks. Another interesting option would be the advance with the king via the centre (e4) and to make room somewhere on the board with the standard break f5, which would endanger Black's e6-pawn. However, this plan could be premature, removing any winning chances after a sequence of forced exchanges. Let's see:

a) 33 ♖f6+ ♗xf6! 34 exf6 ♖f8 35 ♖f3 ♗e8 36 f5 (36 ♗e4 ♖d7 37 ♖e5+ ♗e8) 36...gxf5 37 gxf5 exf5 38 ♖f4 and now Black can defend in several ways:

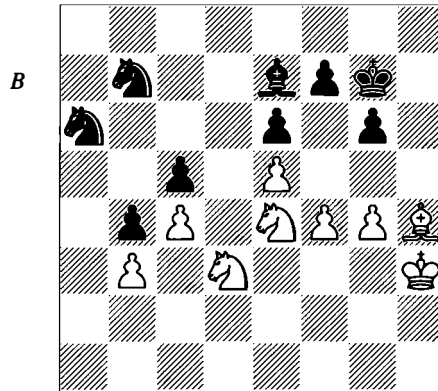
a1) 38...♖a5 39 ♖xc5 (or 39 ♗xc5 ♖xb3 40 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 41 ♖xb4 ♖d2 42 c5 ♖e4) 39...♖xc5 40 ♗xc5 ♖xb3 41 ♗xb4 ♖d4 42 ♗a3 ♖d7 43 ♗e5 ♖c6+ 44 ♖xf5 ♖a5 45 c5 ♖c6.

a2) 38...♖c7 plans to go to e6, but this is passive: 39 ♖xf5 (39 ♗e5 ♖e6 40 ♖d5 is dangerous, though Black can speculate with the advance 40...f4) 39...♖e6 40 ♗e5 ♖d7 and now 41 ♗e4! wins, but White must avoid 41 ♖d5? ♖c7+ 42 ♗e4 ♖a6! (not 42...♖e6? 43 ♖e5+ ♗e8 44 ♖d5), when Black resists.

a3) 38...♖d7! 39 ♖xf5 ♖a5 40 ♗xc5 ♖xb3 41 ♗xb4 ♖d4+ and Black creates a resilient defence after transferring the knight to c6 and the king to e6.

b) 33 f5 gxf5 34 gxf5 exf5 35 ♖f6+ is similar to line 'a': 35...♗xf6 36 exf6 ♖h7!? (36...♖f8).

33...♗g7 34 ♗h4 (D)



34...♗xh4?!

Black simplifies the position obeying two practical principles:

- 1) In difficult positions it is good to simplify completely.
- 2) It is always useful to remove the opponent's most active piece.

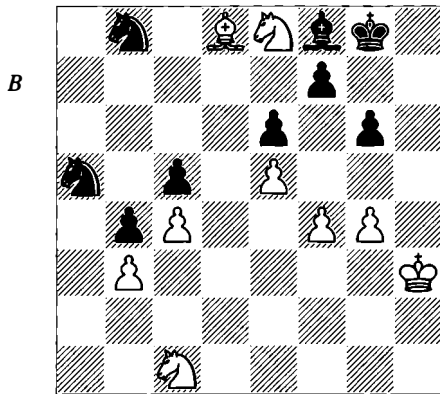
And indeed, after 34...♗f8 there is no doubt that White's dark-squared bishop would stay in the best situation, threatening and able to penetrate Black's position at any time. Even though this is true, it is no more relevant than other factors that are compelling us to reconsider this first impression. Despite the black bishop being seemingly passive, it is defending the valuable and contested dark squares, and it keeps firm control over his weakest point (c5) and in some variations this would allow some counterplay against b3. Last but not least, the bishop keeps an eye on d6, potentially a useful outpost for White's pieces. According to Hort in his annotations for *Informator*, White's advantage would then be minimal. In my humble opinion this advantage is not so slight and I consider it essential to make a thorough analysis of this specific position before giving a verdict about the soundness (or otherwise) of the pawn-structure established earlier on. The first two moves seem to be forced.

Let us see: 35 ♖f6!. White uses the f6-square to penetrate with his knight. In a general

manner, White's idea consists of the penetration of Black's camp, first with the knight (that wavers over the squares e8 and d7) and later with the bishop. Black should not allow ♖d7 and he can prevent it by playing ...♗b8 at once or after inserting the natural ...♗a5.

a) 35...♗b8!? (maybe this is the most accurate move despite its passive appearance) 36 ♖e8+ ♖g8 (36...♖h8!? is also possible) 37 ♖g2!? (aiming to approach the centre, especially the e4-square) 37...♗c6 (Black wants to place this knight on its perfect square, i.e. d4, now or after inserting the moves ...♗a5 and ♗c1) 38 ♖f6+ ♖g7 39 ♖f2 and once the jump to d4 is prevented and White has regrouped his pieces, the c5-pawn will come under fire. White now threatens, for the second time, ♗d7, and the white king will arrive at e4 very soon.

b) 35...♗a5 has the idea of making one of White's active minor pieces passive, but it also leaves a vital square unwatched. 36 ♗c1 ♗b8 (preventing ♗d7) 37 ♖e8+ ♖g8 38 ♖d8! (D).



White's pieces enter via the last rank. This penetration represents the culmination of the previous strategy. Now:

b1) 38...♗ac6 39 ♖c7 (in case of 39 ♖f6+ ♖g7 40 ♖c7 ♗a6 41 ♖b6 Black would react with 41...g5). White's ideas: the bishop makes another small step, displacing the knight from the defence of d7 and preparing to assault the outpost d6, where it would offer a highly advantageous exchange of bishops. Let us see the procedure:

b11) 39...♗d7 40 ♖f6+! (40 ♖d6 ♗d4!) 40...♗xf6 41 exf6 ± (White is playing against

the virtually dead f8-bishop) 41...♗d4 42 ♖g3 ♖h7 (42...♖h6 43 ♖d6 ♖f8 44 ♖e7! {again playing against the f8-bishop} 44...♗c6 45 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 46 ♗d3! and White wins the c5-pawn and defends his own at b3) and now:

b111) 43 ♖e5 ♗c6 44 g5 ♗d8 45 ♖c7 (45 ♖f3 ♗b7 46 ♖e4 ♗d6+ 47 ♖d3 ♖f5 48 ♗e2 ♖g8 49 ♗g1 ♖d6 50 ♖f3 ♖f8) 45...♗b7 46 ♗d3 ♗d6 47 ♖d8 (47 ♗e5 ♖g8 48 ♗d7 ♖f5+ 49 ♖f2 ♗d4 50 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 51 ♖d6+ ♖e8 52 ♖xc5 ♗xb3 53 ♖xb4 ♗d4 54 ♖c3 ♗c6) 47...♗f5+ 48 ♖f2 ♖g8 49 ♗e5 ♖d6 and Black defends.

b112) 43 ♖f2! (White must transfer his king to the defence of b3 in order to activate his knight) 43...♖h6 44 g5+ (44 ♖e3 g5 45 ♖e4 ♖g6) 44...♖h7 (44...♖h5 45 ♖g3 ♖f5+ 46 ♖h3) 45 ♖e5 ♖f5 46 ♗d3 ♖g8 (46...♗d6 47 ♗xc5) 47 ♖e2 ♖h7 48 ♖d1 ♖g8 49 ♖c2 ♖h7 50 ♖c7 ♖g8 51 ♖b2 (51 ♖d8 ♖d6 52 ♖b2 ♖f8 53 ♖b6; 51 ♖b6 ♗d4+ 52 ♖b2 ♗e2) 51...♗d6 52 ♗e5 (52 ♖b6 ♗b7) 52...♖f5 53 ♗d7 ♗d4 and now White wins by 54 ♖b6! (rather than 54 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 55 ♖d6+ ♖e8 56 ♖xc5 ♗c6 57 ♖c2 ♖d7 58 ♗d3 ♖c7 59 ♖e4 ♖d7).

b12) 39...♗a6 40 ♖d6 ♗d4 (the black knight finds the best square, exerting pressure on b3 and leaving in the air a funny mating-net related to the presence of the white king on g5, the black king on g7 and the jump ...♖f3) 41 ♖f6+ +- (once the white bishop has crossed the 'other puddle', the knight uses this check to find a decisive square) 41...♖g7 42 ♗d7 (now Black is forced to take on d6, which produces a passed pawn that is decisive in the outcome of the game; refusing the exchange is positional surrender) 42...♖xd6 43 exd6 f6 and then:

b121) 44 ♖g3 ♖f7 45 ♖f2 g5 (preventing g5) 46 fxg5 fxg5 47 ♖e3 ♖e8 48 ♖f6+ ♖d8 49 ♗e4 ♖d7 50 ♗d3! ♗xb3 51 ♗e5+ ♖d8 52 ♗xg5 and the pawn will queen.

b122) 44 g5! clears the important e5-square for the knight and fixes another weakness: the g6-pawn. Black has one more 'tough day': another dark square falls. 44...fxg5 45 fxg5! (45 ♗e5 ♖f6 46 d7 ♖e7 47 fxg5 ♗b8) 45...♖f5 46 ♗d3! ♗xd6 47 ♗7xc5 ♗xc5 48 ♗xc5 ♖f7 and now 49 ♖g4 should win thanks to White's more active pieces and the weakness of Black's

**pawns.** White can also play 49  $\text{d}3!$ ?  $\text{e}4$  50  $\text{g}4$   $\text{d}2$  51  $\text{x}b4$   $\text{x}b3$  52  $\text{d}3$ , when it is **not** difficult to discover that White has very good winning chances, despite the reduced material on the board, thanks to his strong outside passed pawn that is well supported by the knight, since the black king must remain 'at home' with the piggyback  $\text{g}6$ -pawn.

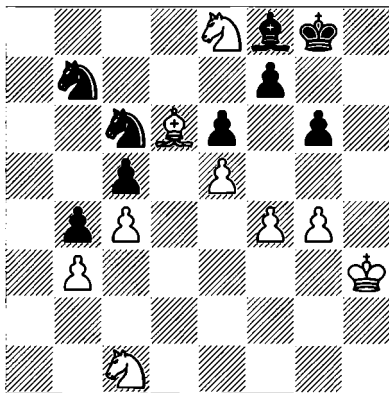
b2) 38... $\text{b}7$  39  $\text{c}7$   $\text{c}6$  and now:

b21) 40  $\text{d}6$ ?! (attempting to exploit the unstable situation of the  $\text{b}7$ -knight) 40... $\text{x}d6$  41  $\text{x}d6$  (41  $\text{e}6$   $\text{f}8$  42  $\text{h}4$   $\text{f}6$ ) 41... $\text{d}4!$  and Black comes close to a draw. 42  $\text{h}4$  (42  $\text{g}3$   $\text{x}d6$  43  $\text{e}6$   $\text{f}8!$  44  $\text{h}4$   $\text{f}6$  ♣) 42... $\text{g}7$  (42... $\text{f}3+$  43  $\text{g}3$   $\text{d}4$  and now 44  $\text{h}4$  is better than 44  $\text{e}7$   $\text{c}6$  45  $\text{f}6$   $\text{b}a5$ ) 43  $\text{e}7$  (43  $\text{g}5$   $\text{f}3$ ♯) 43... $\text{c}6$  44  $\text{f}6+$  (44  $\text{d}6!$ ) 44... $\text{h}6$ .

b22) 40  $\text{f}6+$   $\text{g}7$  41  $\text{d}7$ , followed by  $\text{b}6$  and the approach of the king up to  $\text{e}4$ , threatens the now unstable situation of the  $\text{d}4$ -knight and the  $\text{c}5$ -pawn.

b23) 40  $\text{d}6!$ ? (D).

B



b231) 40... $\text{b}a5$  41  $\text{f}6+$   $\text{g}7$  42  $\text{x}f8+$   $\text{x}f8$  43  $\text{d}7+$ .

b232) 40... $\text{c}a5$  41  $\text{f}6+$   $\text{g}7$  42  $\text{x}f8+$   $\text{x}f8$  43  $\text{h}4$  (the white king advances dangerously) 43... $\text{g}7$  (43... $\text{c}6$  44  $\text{d}3$  +-  $\text{b}8$  45  $\text{g}5$   $\text{g}7$  46  $\text{e}8+$   $\text{f}8$  47  $\text{d}6$   $\text{x}d6$  48  $\text{e}6$   $\text{d}7$  49  $\text{h}6$ ) 44  $\text{g}5$   $\text{c}6$  45  $\text{e}8+$   $\text{f}8$  46  $\text{d}6$   $\text{x}d6$  47  $\text{e}6$   $\text{e}5$  (47... $\text{g}7$  48  $\text{d}3$   $\text{f}6+$  49  $\text{h}4$ ) 48  $\text{d}3$   $\text{e}4$  49  $\text{x}c5$   $\text{e}3$  50  $\text{f}6$  +.

b233) 40... $\text{h}6$  41  $\text{f}6+$   $\text{h}8$  42  $\text{g}5$   $\text{g}7$  43  $\text{e}4$   $\text{x}d6$  44  $\text{x}d6$   $\text{g}8$  45  $\text{d}3$  +-.

b234) 40... $\text{d}4$  41  $\text{f}6+$   $\text{g}7$  42  $\text{x}f8+$   $\text{x}f8$  43  $\text{h}4$   $\text{g}7$  44  $\text{e}4$   $\text{f}8$  and Black resists.

b235) 40... $\text{x}d6$  41  $\text{e}6$  and then:

b2351) 41... $\text{d}4$  and here:

b23511) 42  $\text{d}7$   $\text{c}6$  (42... $\text{e}7$  43  $\text{d}6!$ ) 43  $\text{d}3$   $\text{e}7$  44  $\text{g}5$  (44  $\text{e}5$   $\text{x}e5$  {44... $\text{d}4$  45  $\text{d}6$   $\text{x}b3$  46  $\text{c}6$   $\text{f}8$  47  $\text{b}7$   $\text{f}6$  48  $\text{g}5!$ ) 45  $\text{f}e5$   $\text{f}8$  46  $\text{d}6$  {46  $\text{f}6$   $\text{d}8$ } 46... $\text{d}8$  47  $\text{b}7$  {47  $\text{c}8$   $\text{f}5$  48  $\text{e}6$   $\text{x}f6$ } 47... $\text{e}7$  48  $\text{x}c5$   $\text{c}7$  ♯) 44... $\text{f}8$  and then:

b235111) 45  $\text{f}6$   $\text{d}6$  46  $\text{e}4$   $\text{e}7$  47  $\text{x}e5$   $\text{x}c5$  48  $\text{x}c5$   $\text{d}6$  49  $\text{d}3$   $\text{c}d7$  50  $\text{e}5+$   $\text{c}7$  is not too clear, and White can even lose if he is not careful; e.g., 51  $\text{x}c6$  (51  $\text{x}f7$   $\text{d}4!$ ) 51... $\text{x}c6$  52  $\text{g}3$   $\text{c}5$  53  $\text{f}2$   $\text{d}4$  54  $\text{f}3$   $\text{e}5$  55  $\text{f}e5$   $\text{x}e5$  56  $\text{e}3$   $\text{f}5$  57  $\text{d}4$   $\text{x}g5$  58  $\text{d}5?$   $\text{f}5$  59  $\text{c}5$   $\text{f}4$  60  $\text{e}4$   $\text{f}6!$  61  $\text{x}f4$   $\text{e}6$  62  $\text{e}4$   $\text{g}5!$  +-.

b235112) 45  $\text{g}4$   $\text{b}8$  46  $\text{x}c5$   $\text{x}d7$  47  $\text{x}d7+$   $\text{x}e8$  48  $\text{e}5$  +-.

b23512) 42  $\text{g}5$  +-; e.g.: 42... $\text{f}5$  43  $\text{d}7$   $\text{e}7$  44  $\text{d}3!$ .

b2352) Better seems 41... $\text{f}5!$  42  $\text{d}3$   $\text{f}7$  43  $\text{d}7$   $\text{e}7$  44  $\text{x}c5$   $\text{f}7$  45  $\text{d}3$   $\text{e}7$ .

35  $\text{x}h4$   $\text{h}6$

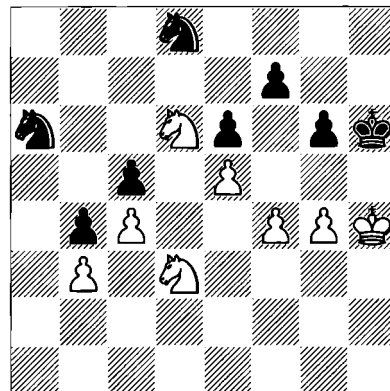
Preventing for a while the entry of the white king.

36  $\text{d}6$

White can occupy this square for the first time in the game. Hort is thus reducing the scope of the disorganized black knights, while the  $\text{e}4$ -square will be kindly granted to the other white knight, thereby producing a situation where the white pieces have plenty of activity.

36... $\text{d}8$  (D)

W



37 ♖f2!

Now White is winning. The other knight takes advantage of the passivity of the black knights to generate decisive activity.

37...♗b8 38 ♖fe4 ♖d7

Black seemingly arrives in time to defend the vital squares c5 and f6 (the second critical square in White's space advantage) but his efforts are not going to be rewarded. The activity of White's pieces and his space advantage are great. When facing situations like this, we intuitively know that zugzwang is close. Indeed, if it were Black's turn to play, White would decisively penetrate his opponent's territory. This detail didn't pass unnoticed to Hort; White only needs to do a little triangulation with his king to reach this same position but with Black to play.

39 ♔g3!

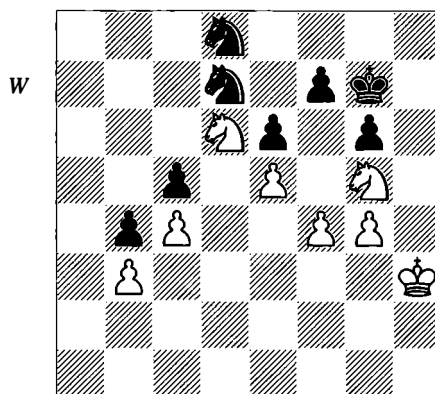
39 ♖f6 doesn't assure the win after 39...♖xf6 40 exf6 ♔h7. Moreover, the solution found in the game is subtler...

39...♔g7 40 ♔h3! ♔h7

The knight cannot move...

41 ♖g5+ ♔g7 (D)

42 ♔h4 ♔f8



The king must move and he cannot disregard the f7-pawn. If 42...♗b8 43 ♖ge4 ♖d7 then 44 ♔g5, winning.

43 ♖ge4 ♔g7 44 ♔g5

Done! The white king has finally reached g5. Now there is only one more step left...

44...♖c6 45 ♖e8+! ♔f8 46 ♖8f6

White wins a decisive tempo by threatening one of the knights...

46...♖cb8! 47 ♔h6 1-0

The f7-pawn will fall.

# 3 Strong Centre

We have already seen how often a sole factor is able to tilt the scales towards one side. However, it is usually necessary to have several small positional advantages in order to win.

When one side has a well-defined and steady centre, it is quite customary that other small positional advantages can be collected with sudden ease. A strong centre often means a great space advantage for one side, and therefore, some freedom for his pieces.

In the next model game we will see Karpov, playing in inspired and subtle style, gaining victory from what appear to be very small factors. He gets a good central position from the opening, due to his pawn-majority, and little by little he restrains his opponent's pieces, which watch powerlessly since they are constantly crashing against a pawn-wall. In the Skellefteå tournament of 1989, Anatoly Karpov fully demonstrated that he is the most technical modern player. His games versus Andersson and Seirawan displayed both a straightforward and a difficult type of chess. Quite often Karpov gives us the impression that we understand his play, but this happens less frequently with Kasparov, who often breaks away from normal patterns.

## Karpov – Seirawan Skellefteå 1989

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

Yasser Seirawan is an expert in the Queen's Gambit Accepted. Black often gets a comfortable game from the opening, based on free development and a symmetrical pawn-structure after the typical break ...c5.

3 e4

Karpov often plays this sharp move, which can lead to gambit play.

3...e5

3...dxf6 is also interesting. 4 e5 d5 5 dxc4 leads to a complex middlegame, where Black

controls d5 and White secures a space advantage.

4 f3 b4+!?

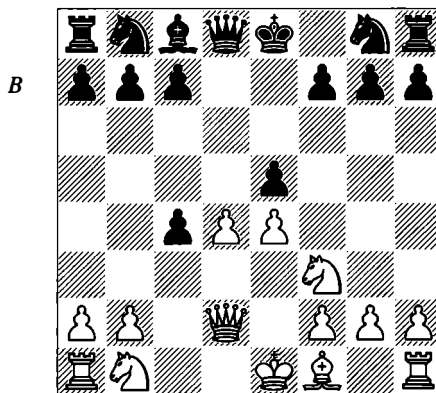
White gets a strong initiative in the line 4...exd4 5 dxc4 b4+ 6 b2. Black chooses this move-order just to force White to play 5 d2.

5 d2

Now 5 b2 is not possible on account of 5...c3.

5...exd2+ 6 Wxd2 (D)

Playing for an ending. White will get a central pawn-majority and an active king that will be placed behind the pawn-chain. 6 bxd2 is very interesting: 6...exd4 7 dxc4 c6 8 0-0, and here there are many possibilities. After 8...d6 9 e5 d5 10 b3 0-0 11 bxd4 dxd4 12 Wxd4 b6 13 b3 e6 14 Wc5 e8! 15 ad1 e7 16 e3 xb3 17 Wxb3 ad8 Black equalized in Karpov-Anand, Linares 1992.



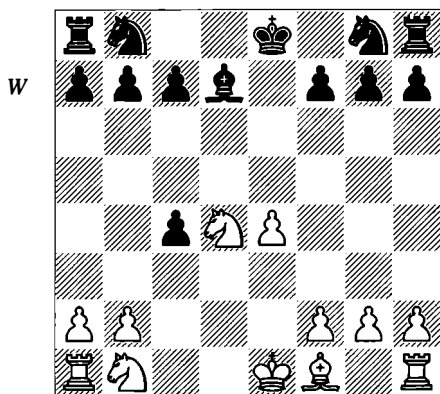
6...exd4 7 Wxd4 Wxd4

This is probably a mistake, even though it is a very natural move. In later games it was established that 7...d6! is the best move at this point. After 8 Wxd8+ cxd8 9 c3 e6! (this is the main reason for 7...d6) 10 e5 (if White plays 10 d4 Black can fight against the white centre allowing an isolated e-pawn:

10...♖bd7 11 ♜xe6+ fxе6 12 ♙xc4 e5 13 f3 c6 14 ♜f2 ♜c7 15 ♜hd1 ♜hd8 16 ♜e3 b5! = Miles-Rachels, USA Ch (Long Beach) 1989) 10...♜c6! 11 ♜xc4 ♜e7 12 ♜e3 ♜hd8 13 f4 ♜f8! 14 ♙e2 ♜d4 and Black doesn't have any trouble, Salov-Nikolić, Reykjavik World Cup 1991.

### 8 ♜xd4 ♙d7 (D)

It is necessary to develop pieces at the same time as avoiding White's threats. The alternative is 8...a6 9 ♙xc4 ♜f6 10 f3, when 10...b5 leaves the c5-square exposed and allows White queenside play with a4.



### 9 ♙xc4 ♜c6

Seirawan may have felt that he was equalizing, but this is an illusion. Now, 10 ♜b5 0-0-0 11 ♙xf7 ♜e5 would allow Black to demonstrate the strong points of his position. However, White's next move provides a little surprise.

### 10 ♜xc6 ♙xc6

Even though the exchange of knights is not a difficult decision, it makes clear the defects in Black's position: the bishop occupies an unfortunate position. White will have a long-lasting advantage, and the smallest mistake from Black could result in a complete collapse.

### 11 ♜c3 ♜d8

Sooner or later, this will be a useful move, because it takes the open file, and at the moment prevents White from castling queenside.

### 12 ♜e2 ♜f6

A debatable decision. 12...♜e7 is more flexible, aiming to destroy White's pawn barrier with a prompt ...f5. Besides, the knight would have other prospects, such as the manoeuvre

...♜c8-d6, or ...♜b6, and ...♜g6-e5. The line 13 f3 f5! 14 exf5 (if 14 e5, 14...♜g6! seems convincing) 14...♜xf5 looks risky since castling kingside would not be possible any more, but the knight will be a staunch defender – it acts as a stopper on d6, covering the escape-route of the black king towards the queenside. For instance: 15 ♜he1 ♜d4!? (or 15...♜d7) 16 ♜f2+ ♜d8 and all the problems are solved.

### 13 f3

It's time to make a more precise assessment. White has a strong and very solid pawn-centre with a space advantage and better pieces. The c4-bishop prevents Black from exchanging both rooks, which would make his defensive task easier. Black's pieces are restrained, awaiting the development of events and without any possibility to mobilize the black pawn-majority on the queenside.

### 13...♜e7

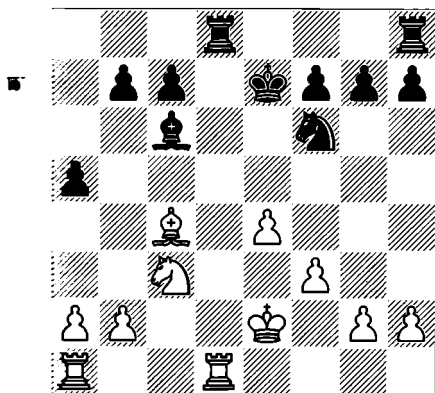
A careless move. These are the most critical moments of the game, where Black's fate shall be virtually sealed. Therefore it would be appropriate to spend some time fathoming the position and proceed with a more concrete and less routine move. Obviously the text-move is not bad enough move to deserve a question mark, but it is also clear that Black should be interested in simplifying the position to the utmost, to dissipate the pressure. An original move of his queen's rook would bring this goal closer: if Black inserts 13...♜d4! 14 ♙b3 before continuing 14...♜e7 15 ♜hd1 ♜hd8, then the tactical possibility 16 ♜d5+? does not work due to 16...♜xd5 17 ♜xd4 ♜f4+ 18 ♜e3 ♜xg2+.

### 14 ♜hd1

The exchange of one set of rooks makes the advantage clear. The exchange of all the rooks would only reduce it.

### 14...a5 (D)

As in the game Petrosian-Bannik, this advance comes when Black is restrained and without counterplay. This is a typical example proving that psychology is very meaningful in our sport. Anyway, despite weakening the pawn-chain, Seirawan's choice seems to be justifiable in face of White's threat of placing another barrier in the position by means of 15 b4. Karpov, when assessing this move, offers us a distinctive remark on how he perceives chess:



“...you should always remember that pawns never go back”.

15 ♖a1

Since Black has no other plan than exchanging rooks, it would be better to play 15 ♖e3, which could well gain a tempo. However, the text-move doesn't deserve a question mark, since the loss of a tempo is not critical in positions like this. Black can do nothing but wait.

15... ♜xd1 16 ♞xd1 ♜b8

This must have been played for psychological impact; the advance ...b5 would only make Black's problems worse, since it weakens the queenside. The more standard 16... ♞d7!? is an attempt at counterplay. Then White can choose which piece to use to occupy d5:

a) 17 ♞d5+ is not the best continuation: 17... ♜xd5 18 ♜xd5 ♜f6!? (18... ♞c5 looks worse if White plays precisely: 19 ♜c1! ♜b6 20 a3, and 20...a4?! the pawn stays undermined after 21 ♜c4! ♞d8 22 ♜c6 ♞b3!? 23 ♜xa4 ♜b5 24 ♜c7+ ♜d6 25 ♜xb3 ♜xc7 26 ♜xf7, with good winning chances for White) 19 ♜xb7 ♜b6 20 ♜d5 ♜xb2+ 21 ♞d2 ♞xd2+ 22 ♜xd2 and Black can exploit his defensive resources after 22... ♞b6 and 23...c5.

b) 17 ♜d5 ♜xd5 18 ♞xd5+ ♜d8 19 g4! and White expands on the kingside, with more than a slight edge.

17 ♖e3 g6

Prophylaxis. After the 'psychological move' 17...a5 comes a truly practical move. Seirawan tried to justify the advance of his a-pawn before with an apparent threat to expand on the queenside by 17...b5. Indeed it proves sham, because after the bishop's retreat (probably to

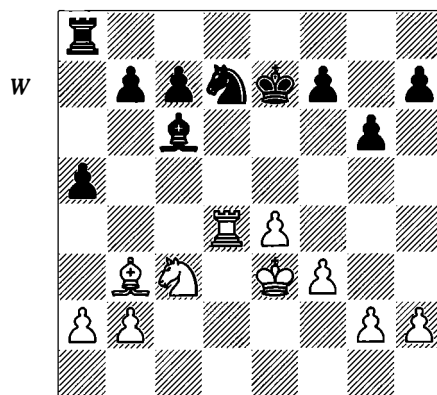
f1) Black would face the positional threat of ♞e2-d4 that in connection with ♜c1 would make the weakening of Black's queenside evident. The text-move protects the f5-square in advance, because sooner or later it would be available to the white knight.

18 ♜b3 ♞a8 19 ♞d4

A good and natural move. It not only has the idea of preventing the advance ...a4, but also seeks to centralize all the white pieces. Once the pieces are well placed, it will be the right moment to think about a pawn-advance on the kingside. The difference between the two sides becomes more clear after this move. White's pieces have the impression of being a true team all working together, while Black's pieces appear isolated, uncoordinated and lacking activity.

19... ♞d7 (D)

To transfer the knight to the battlefield, for instance from c5 to e6, while also restraining White's kingside pawns. Of course we could debate whether this move is suitable, given the game's continuation. 19... ♞a6 looks interesting, anticipating the future events – even if it is undeniable that the black knight cannot wait on f6 forever.



20 ♜d5!!

This is chess technique, entirely creative and astonishing. Few chess-players would have taken this decision, because the white bishop seems to be better than Black's. With this *coup de théâtre*, Karpov is not looking for the exchange of bishops, but rather to make the situation of Black's pieces worse, opening a range of

tactical possibilities that are always in his favour.

### 20...♖a6

Is there any other possible move? The direct exchange is bad, and weakening the pawn-structure doesn't seem advisable. Then, as the only solution, we could suggest the defence of the bishop by 20...♘b8 (both minor pieces would be passive) and the text-move, which seems more active. However, the rook will remain misplaced.

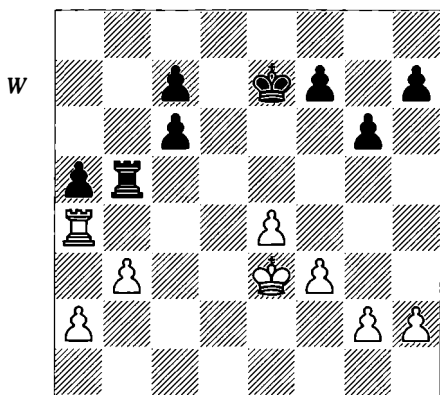
Something tells me that maybe it is interesting to accept the challenge and allow the doubled pawns. In return for this, Black would get active pieces and pressure on the b-file. Let us see: 20...♘b6!? 21 ♕xc6 bxc6 (after all, we have managed to exchange the worst black piece for the most active of the opponent). Black's next moves would without a doubt be 22...a4 and 23...♗a5, getting some relief. Of course White could prevent this in three different ways:

a) 22 a4?! intends b4, trying to exchange the b-pawn for the black a-pawn, thus obtaining a passed a-pawn. However, there is not enough time, since Black replies 22...c5!?

b) 22 b3 c5!? 23 ♘d5+ ♔d6 followed by ...♕c6.

c) 22 ♘a4!? seeks a good rook ending:

c1) We see this after 22...♘xa4 23 ♖xa4 ♖b8 24 b3 ♖b5 (D).



Now:

c11) White's advantage after the natural sequence 25 f4 f6 26 g4 h5 27 h3 hxg4 28 hxg4 g5 is beyond question, but is it enough to win? The pawn ending arising after 29 f5 ♖c5! 30 ♖c4

♖xc4 31 bxc4 ♔d6 is a draw. The reader can continue the analysis until he is convinced that there is a forced draw, including the curious 32 a4 ♕e5 33 c5 with stalemate in the centre of the board.

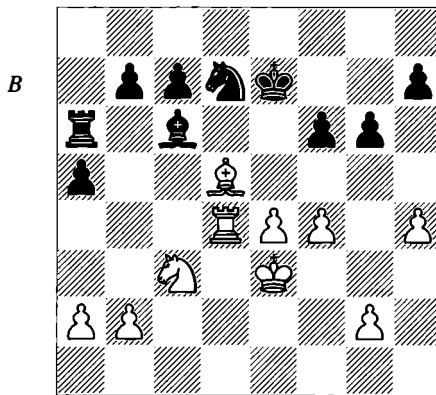
c12) White should not force events; better is 25 ♖c4 ♔d6 26 f4 f6 27 g4 h5! (White was threatening h4 and g5) 28 h3 hxg4 29 hxg4; e.g., 29...g5? 30 e5+! fxe5 31 fxg5 (and 31 f5) gives White good prospects of realizing his advantage, as does 29...♖b8? 30 e5+! fxe5 31 fe5+ ♔d5 32 ♕f4.

c2) Another possibility for Black, once he has gone in for this 'active' line, is to preserve the knights with 22...♘d7!?, following up with ...♖b8 and ...♖b5. The action of the black rook, formerly purely symbolic, would gain in value. Maybe in the near future Black could offer an exchange of rooks on b4. The white knight should stay on a4, guarding against Black's threats of counterplay on the queenside.

### 21 f4 f6

Black has the possibility of exchanging bishops, but it is not very pleasant, since 21...♕xd5 22 ♘xd5+ ♔d8 23 e5 is torture.

### 22 h4 (D)



Karpov shows his customary superb judgement in deciding the right moment to take advantage of his pawn-majority. With this move, he wishes to gain an open file, or to make a weakness in Black's fortress.

### 22...h6(?)

This move prevents the advance g4-g5. However, Black could have waited a move more, and after 23 g4 then played 23...h6 with the idea

of ...g5, without allowing White to solidify the point f4. The effects of this hasty move will be very unpleasant now: the black pawn-chain will remain weakened, and the white knight, having the f5-square after the eventual advance of White's h-pawn, will strongly exert pressure on the new weakness h6.

Moreover we need to stress that the advance 22...h5 would not be right either, because White could calmly prepare the break f5 and then go on to attack the weakness on h5.

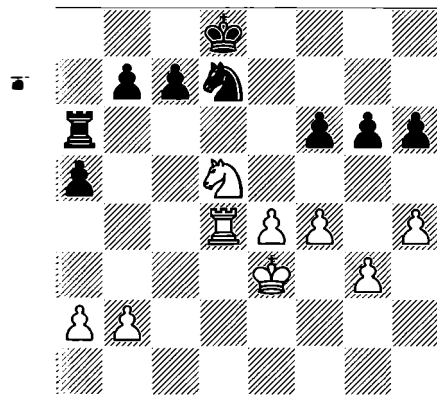
**23 g3**

Another typically 'Karpovian' move, building brick over brick, and increasing his domain. This move strengthens White's pawn-majority and looks ahead to the future course of events.

**23...e7**

Seirawan despairs. He cannot activate his knight, since 23...c5 is, as always, met by 24 c4, and 23...f8 allows 24 e4! a8 25 h5! g5 26 d5+ e5 27 exd5 with a great advantage for White. Black must play actively; at least he is comforted because he has removed a truly annoying piece.

**24 e5+ e8 (D)**



**25 e3!**

Another great move, directed against the black rook. Black was threatening to free himself by playing 25...d6. The other strong point of this move is the threat of 26 h5 gxh5 27 e5.

**25...b6**

At this point Seirawan lacked any good rook move on the third rank. The rook-lift to the kingside, 25...e6, might appear better, but this does not solve Black's problems. After 26 h5

g5 27 e5! b6 28 e5! (starting the decisive knight manoeuvre; 28 e5 is met by 28...e7!) 28...c6 (28...c6 also fails, considering the reply 29 e6 or even 29 e4) 29 e4, followed by f5, White is winning.

**26 e2 c6**

This move supports the king's approach and tries to avoid the latent threat of h5.

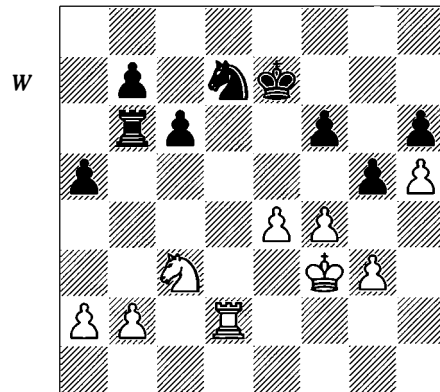
**27 h5! g5**

There is no choice. The unorthodox 27...gxh5 leaves White with a comfortable game after 28 b3 and 29 e2.

**28 f3**

As in the game Petrosian-Bannik, Black's light squares are seriously weakened, and not only the white knight but also the king can penetrate the enemy camp.

**28...e7 (D)**



**29 e2!**

This is the decisive piece to unbalance the game. The knight has a clear destination (f5), and he chooses the best route. On this occasion, technique joins mathematical precision; instead 29 d1 would be a big mistake due to 29...gx4 30 gx4 b5 31 g4 f5+!

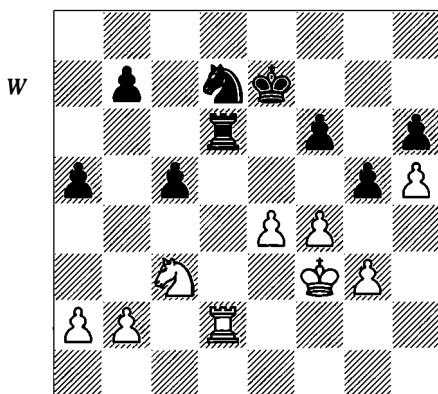
With the text-move, Karpov sees to the defence of the h-pawn in a subtle way: 29...gx4 30 gx4 b5 31 e3!.

**29...c5**

Resignation. Even though Black gets the desired exchange of a second set of rooks, giving up the d5-square means the knight ending will be hopeless.

**30 e3 e6 (D)**

**31 e5!**



Another finesse. Karpov is extremely efficient in winning positions and doesn't move in for the kill until everything is ready. The gain of a tempo after the rook exchange is reason enough to justify this move, but his idea doesn't end here. Karpov wants to force Black to play 31...b6 if he aims to activate his knight, but in doing so, paradoxically, he denies this piece its potentially best square. Black must now make an important decision, because waiting moves are forcibly punished: 31...e6 32 g4! fxd5 33 exd5+! f7 and both 34 f5 and 34 e4 are decisive.

**31...fxd5 32 exd5+ e6 33 e3**

Aiming at h6.

**33...b5**

33...b6 is better, although it does not affect the outcome of the game: 34 f5 a4 35 b3 (35 exh6 exb2 36 f5 f7 37 ed6+ must also win) 35...c3 36 exh6 b5 37 f5 f7 38 fxg5 fxg5 39 e5 winning.

**34 f5 b6 35 exh6 c4 36 f5 f7 37 b3 d2+ 38 e3 f1+ 1-0**

Black decided to resign without waiting for a reply.

Generally, when we have a space advantage and a strong centre, the usual method to break down the opponent's resistance is the same: to launch a pawn-storm on the side of the board where we have the advantage, achieving entry-squares for our minor pieces or obtaining weaknesses that can be exploited later. Here, White achieved a win thanks to the good use he made of the f5-square, which Black had seriously weakened. From the beginning White had better pieces than Black, and if he agreed to exchange some of them, this was to turn an advantage into a greater one, finally reaching a technically won knight ending.

# 4 Bishop-Pair

The topic of this chapter has been extensively discussed in hundreds of articles by the best chess-players, but usually to stress the principles and methods with which everyone is very familiar, i.e. the supposed advantage of having the bishop-pair in open positions. However, it is fair to say that there are other situations where the theoretical advantage of the bishop-pair displays all its strength. In semi-closed positions and with the support of a strong centre, the bishop-pair can have a prominent role in the battle.

When I saw the following game for the first time I had a pleasant feeling: the sense of perfection that this game offers is undeniable. Miles puts the pieces in their best locations until envisaging an interesting attack with his pawns. In this example, the bishop-pair, combined with a strong centre, becomes overwhelming.

**Miles – Hübner**  
*Wijk aan Zee 1984*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 f3

3 f3 is a popular alternative. If Black replies with 3...f6 then 4 e3 is a flexible reply; it is important in some lines that the king's knight is still on its original square, and can choose rather more flexible developments (e.g. f2). However, White must in that case take into account 3...dxc4 and 3...e5!?, a gambit made popular by Morozevich.

3...f6 4 c2

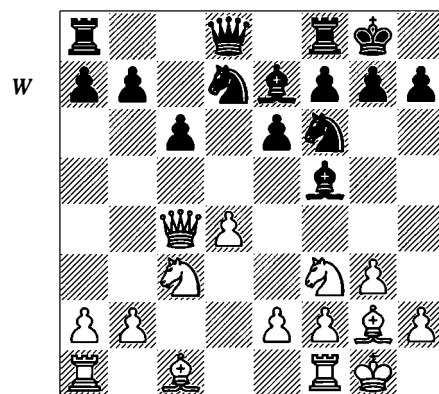
A move with character, right in the opening. White protects the pawn and seeks healthy piece development by 5 f4, 6 e3 and 7 c3. The usual continuation, 4 c3 dxc4 5 a4 f5 6 e3 6 e5!?, is also a main line) 6...e6 7 fxc4 f4 offers Black, in my view, a very sound game.

4...dxc4 5 fxc4 f5

Another possibility, with some points of contact with the Grünfeld Defence, is 5...g6. After 5 c3 f7 7 e4 0-0 8 f4 b5 9 b3 the

position is complex, as shown by the fact that Kasparov went astray in Miles-Kasparov, Basle (2) 1986, which continued 9...a5?! 10 f3 f6 11 d1! f8 12 0-0 f4 13 e5 f5 14 f5 cxd5 15 c1! with an advantage for White.

6 g3 f7 7 f2 e6 8 0-0 f7 9 c3 0-0 (D)



10 f4

A suitable position for a bishop, exerting pressure on the h2-b8 diagonal. Hort's idea 10 a3 (in order to start the classical minority attack with b4) is also interesting: after inducing 10...a5?! White will play 11 f4.

10...f6 11 a4

Seeking to fix the queenside pawn-structure and thus prevent any counterplay by Black's pieces against the white queen.

11...a5

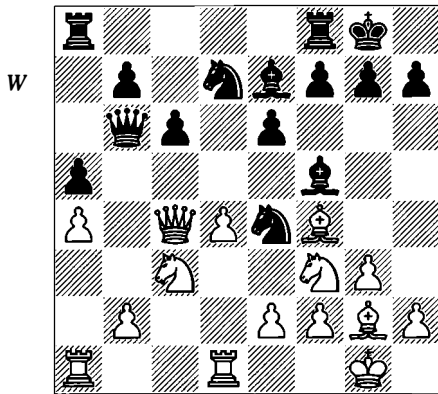
Natural. Hübner wants to blockade White's a-pawn and at the same time secure the splendid b4-square, where one of his pieces could stay in the future.

12 f3 b6 (D)

Given the development of the game, this move seems to deserve the 'dubious move' label at least. However, things are not as they seem. Black is tied down by the threat of 13

♞e5 and lacks a more active reply. The alternative was to allow the opening of the b-file, which is in White's favour: 12...♙g6 13 ♞e5 ♞xc3 14 bxc3 ♞xe5 15 ♙xe5 followed by e4 with an advantage.

It is interesting to note that the insertion of the moves a4 and ...a5 was accurate and significant, because 11 ♜fd1?! allows 11...♞xc3, when 12 bxc3? fails to 12...♙c2!, threatening to trap the queen with ...♞b6 and so winning the exchange.



### 13 ♞h4!

White escapes unscathed from the pressure on b2 without needing to make any strategic concession. This move has positional aims, and is based on a small piece of tactics: 13...♞xc3? 14 ♞xf5 ♞xe2+? 15 ♜xe2 exf5 16 ♜xe7. Often, these two factors will come together as we will see in many examples. With his intricate knight move, Miles secures the 'theoretical' advantage of the bishop-pair; however, there is a reasonable doubt: Hübner's position is extremely sound, isn't it?

The text-move is the only good one, as shown the fact that other 'natural' moves, 13 ♞e5 and 13 ♞d2, have strong replies:

a) 13 ♞e5 is punished by 13...♞xe5 14 ♙xe5 ♞d6! 15 ♜a2 (or 15 ♜c5 ♜xc5 16 dxc5 ♞c4 and a pawn is lost) 15...♙c2! followed by ...♙b3, with a clear advantage.

b) 13 ♞d2 gets the same treatment, as it is tough for White to keep the b3-square under control: 13...♞d6 14 ♜a2 ♙c2 15 ♙xd6 ♙xd6 and now 16 ♜dc1, followed by ♞c4, with equality. Instead 16 ♞c4? is worse due to 16...♜b4!.

### 13...♙xh4 14 ♞xe4 ♙xe4

Hübner decides that he should be able to defend the position that is going to appear on the board. Moreover, allowing the white knight to settle on d6 does not seem very promising, although the situation of the knight on d6 would give rise to complications difficult to assess at first glance: 14...♙e7 15 ♞d6 ♙g6 and now:

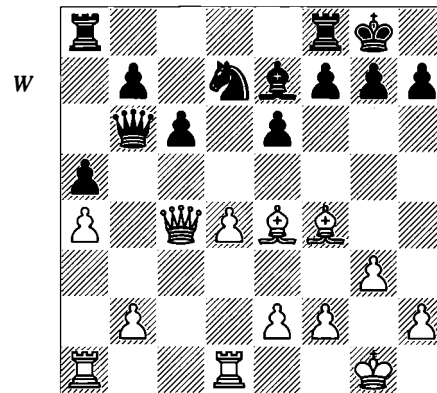
a) Vacating the c4-square doesn't offer anything tangible: 16 ♜a2 ♜a6 17 ♞c4 ♞b6.

b) After 16 e4!? ♙h5 17 ♜d2 g5 18 ♙e5 the artificial posting of the white pieces gives rise to some doubt.

c) White can still improve upon line 'b' by keeping e4 vacant, quietly playing 16 ♜d2 ♙h5 17 h3 g5 18 ♙e5, and the knight could return to e4, going towards Black's weakened kingside.

d) It is easy to suggest other ideas for White, but not ones that give him real chances of an advantage. For example, 16 ♜a3 (to put pressure on b7) is well met by 16...♜xb2 or 16...♜b4!. The most interesting ideas cannot always be carried out when facing a particular position, and the chess-player shall be familiar with these annoyances.

### 15 ♙xe4 ♙e7 (D)



### 16 ♙f3

Bishops are a little more awkward in semi-closed positions than in open ones, as we clearly can see, but little by little they will succeed in improving their position. From now on, White's space advantage will enable him to improve his pieces one by one in a typical manoeuvring middlegame. Miles carries out this task with near-perfection.

In situations like this, with a stable centre, White often carefully prepares a breakthrough on the kingside by advancing his pawns. Miles decides against any plan involving playing f4, and instead gives the main role to his h- and g-pawns. For this reason he drops the bishop back to f3, providing the g2-square for the king so as to bring his rooks into the attack on Black's king. Another interesting plan is 16 ♖g2 with ideas of e4, h3, ♙e3 and f4. The choice is a matter of taste.

16... ♘f6

Forcing White's next move.

17 e4 ♖ad8

White takes control of the centre, but in exchange Hübner gets a target: d4.

18 ♙e3 ♚c7 19 ♖ac1

White could have tried the thematic break 19 d5 in order to release the power of the bishops. It certainly deserves attention, but after 19...exd5 20 exd5 c5 followed by 21...♘e8 (with blocking ideas) and ...♙f6, Black holds the position.

19... ♚d7

The queen moves to a less exposed square. The doubling of rooks can wait.

20 ♖c3

Before starting operations on the other side of the board, Miles reinforces his 'weakness' (d4), a pawn that is going to come under great pressure but also restrains Black's position.

20... ♙b4 21 ♖cd3 ♚e7 22 ♖g2

Miles is gradually showing his intentions. The king occupies this square to let the rook pass through as soon as the kingside pawns reach Black's king-position.

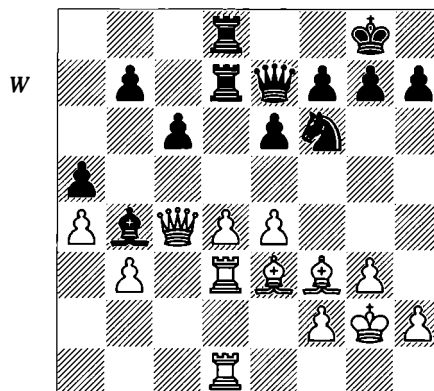
22... ♖d7 23 b3

As Karpov did in his game versus Seirawan (by playing 23 g3), Miles plays this discerning move, thwarting and/or anticipating any break on the queenside.

23... ♖fd8 (D)

24 ♙g5!

Technique again becomes a creative matter. Miles is playing with maddening slowness, but he has plenty of time to do this. Before moving his kingside pawns, he decides that it is best to have a point of contact, namely the one arising from the reply 24...h6. Another interesting



24...h6 25 ♙c1 ♙a3 26 ♙e3 ♙b4 27 h4

The first step of the pawn-advance is made. As we saw before, this is the most effective method to exploit the space advantage and strong centre acquired from the opening.

27... ♘e8!

Hübner understands that he must seek a better place for his pieces. The knight steps aside in order to hinder White's attack, and at the same time is seeking a more active square, such as b4.

28 ♚c2!

Not only preventing the jump ...♘d6. With this move Miles starts to develop a deep concept.

Can you find it?

The queen is indeed going to the kingside, trying to speed up the attack and, above all, to support the advance of the g-pawn. Instead, 28 ♖h1 (aiming to play g4), doesn't work due to 28...e5!, nor does the seemingly interesting 28 g4, with the trap 28...♚xh4? 29 g5! hxg5 30 ♖h1 winning the black queen. However, Black can profit from the briefly unguarded situation of the h4-pawn to start central counterplay, not with 28...e5, but by 28...♘d6 29 ♚c2 f5! creating an extremely double-edged situation.

28... ♘c7 29 ♚e2 ♙a6 30 ♖g1 ♙d6

The bishop retreats (indeed it seemed a mere decoration on b4) not only to give its square to the knight, but also to start a new attack on d4. This seems to be the only target for Black, and he is pinning all his hopes for counterplay on it.

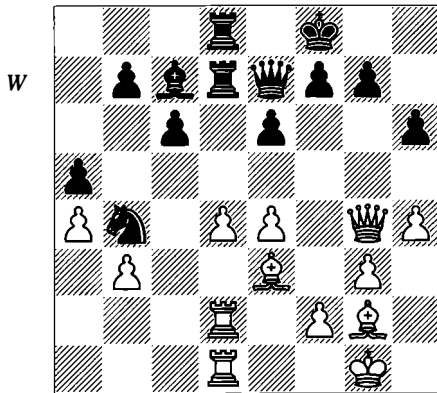
31 ♙g2 ♘b4 32 ♖3d2 ♙c7 33 ♚g4!

The exclamation mark is not strictly necessary, but is for the culmination of the plan

White could again push his f-pawn by 33 f4, trying to break the rock-solid position of the e6-pawn. However, this also weakens White's position, and allows 33...f5!?

33...♟f8 (D)

33...♟h8 is riskier due to 34 ♖h5.



34 ♙f1!

Another piece finds its best posting. An impressive exhibition of positional skill.

34...♙b6 35 ♙c4 ♖f6

Hübner is doing everything he can, aiming all his pieces, with the exception of his knight and his king, at d4, in the hope of diverting attention from his kingside and hindering White's attack. Attempts to execute central pawn-break prove fruitless:

a) 35...c5 36 d5! (once the black knight is absent from the blockading square d6, this advance is decisive, arousing tactical issues in White's favour and new possibilities for the bishops) 36...exd5 (36...e5 can be met by 37 ♙b5 or, even better, 37 d6! – the white queen penetrates decisively) 37 exd5 ♙c7? 38 d6!.

b) 35...e5! (exploiting the instability of the e3-bishop, but giving up the f5-square to the white queen) 36 dxe5 ♗xd2 37 ♗xd2 ♙xe3 38 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 and with 39 ♖f5!? ♙xf2+ 40 ♙xf2 (the king will find protection on h3) or 39 fxe3 at once, White sets difficult tactical problems for his opponent.

36 ♟g2

The pawn is taboo thanks to the move ...e5. As on move 22, the king provides room for the rooks to support the attack.

36...♟e7

With this unusual move, Black threatens to take the d4-pawn, by protecting the d7-rook from the pin.

37 ♖h5!

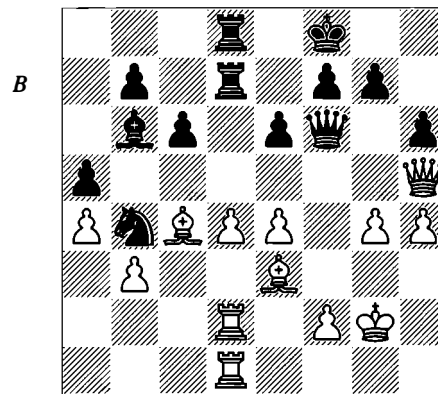
White has made all the necessary preparations for the decisive assault by means of g4 and g5, and more important yet, succeeds in indirectly defending his d-pawn – a complete strategic and psychological defeat for Black.

37...♟f8?

After defending well for so long, Hübner makes a serious mistake very close to the first time-control.

This was the right moment to hinder White's plans, reaching an ending that is certainly bad for Black, but provides opportunities for resistance. After 37...♖g6 38 ♖xg6 fxg6 39 f4 followed by g4, ♟f3, h5! and further pressure on g7 and e6 with one of the rooks, White has a substantial advantage.

38 g4 (D)



Eleven moves after laying the first brick (h4), the second is laid, and this proves decisive. Now Black cannot offer the exchange of queens at g6 due to the loss of the e-pawn.

38...♗e8 39 g5 hxg5 40 ♙xg5 g6 41 ♖h7! 1-0

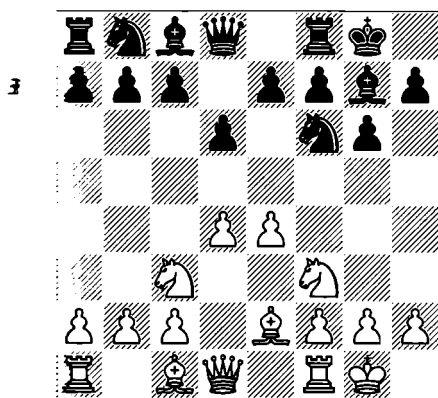
Finishing the game off, given that 41...♖g7 is met by 42 ♙h6!.

The following game relates to the same topic. I think it is an excellent example of the lasting advantages enjoyed by the side having such a powerful weapon as the bishop-pair. On this occasion, White doesn't have a sound and

secure centre like in the previous game, and therefore his initiative is not so strong. However, when the light-squared bishop finally gets a good diagonal, Black's position falls apart completely.

**Romero – Gual**  
*Catalonian Cht 1985*

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 g6 4 Qf3 Qg7 5 Qe2  
6 Qc6 0-0 (D)



7 Qe3 Qc6 8 Qd2

Black chooses the old main line. The idea is to press strongly against White's d-pawn, and Black will develop his pieces in a natural fashion according to this plan. Another well-known idea is to aim to play the freeing ...e5. However, after 6...c6 7 Qe1, the line 7...Qbd7 8 Qf4 Qc7 was clearly refuted by 9 e5 Qh5 10 Qg5! dxe5 11 Qxe7 Qe8 12 d5!. Later, Azmaiparashvili and Piket, experts in the Pirc Defence, tried ...Qa5 with good results, an interesting idea that also has in mind to support the advance of the e-pawn.

7 Qe3 Qc6 8 Qd2

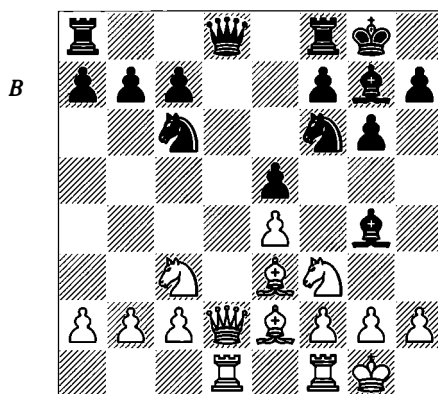
And this is White's classical response. Often this move is taken as an indication that White is happy with a draw. However, this is far from true! Although modern opening books don't rate this move very highly, some players who enjoy technical battles have demonstrated White's possibilities. The modern main line is 8 d5 Qc3 9 Qxf3 Qe5 10 Qe2 c6, when Black has some counterplay.

8 e5 9 dxe5

9 d5 Qe7 10 Qad1 used to be fashionable, and was often used by Karpov. Despite White's space advantage, Black has a good reply in 10...Qd7 11 Qe1 Qg4. Azmaiparashvili's victory over Karpov in 1983, with the idea 10...b5!? 11 a3 a5 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 Qa3! 14 Qg5 Qxc3 15 Qxf6 Qxf3 16 Qxf3 Qa3, is well-known.

The text-move is a good way to lead the battle towards a simple position, with few pieces, but more comfortable play for White.

9...dxe5 10 Qad1 (D)



Controlling the d4-square so that the black knight cannot go there. If the scales turn in White's favour, we can find one of the reasons for this in his better dark-squared bishop.

10...Qc8

This is the most frequently played move. The immediate exchange of queens is considered bad for Black. After 10...Qxd2 11 Qxd2 Qfd8 12 Qfd1 Qxd2 13 Qxd2 Qe8? (13...a6 is better) 14 Qb5! Black cannot avoid damage to his pawn-structure, as happened in the model game Browne-Andersson, Hastings 1972/3. 10...Qe7 is poor due to the reply 11 Qg5! Qe6 12 Qxf6 Qxf6 13 Qd5 Qd6 14 c3! Qad8 15 Qg5 Qe6 16 Qb5! with a large advantage for White, Browne-Kaplan, Skopje OL 1972.

11 Qc1

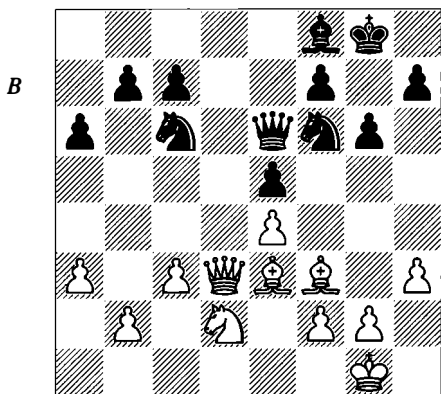
White's whole set-up is justified by his last two moves and the lasting control of the d4-square.

11...Qd8 12 Qxd8+ Qxd8 13 Qd1 Qe8?!

Deviating from the theoretical (and superior) continuation, 13...Qf8, trying to exchange the

dark-squared bishops on h6. 14 h3 ♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 a6! (preventing any ideas of ♖b5) 16 ♖b1! (a fantastic move with two ideas: to manoeuvre with the knight to a better square (via d2-c4), and to take firm control of the d4-square by means of c3). Now:

a) 16...♗d8 is not advisable considering that White gets a good ending after 17 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 18 c3 ♖d3 19 ♖d2 ♗f8 20 ♖b1!. In Petrosian-Sax, Tallinn 1979 Black refused to exchange queens and Petrosian finally managed to activate his queen: 20...♖b5 21 ♖c2 ♖d8 22 ♖b3 ♖d3?! 23 ♖c4 ♖d6 24 ♖e2 (with the idea of ♖c4) 24...♖e6 25 ♖d3! ♖c6 26 a3! (D).



Now White is aiming to carry out a straightforward and effective plan: b4, ♖c4 and ♗d1-b3, activating his light-squared bishop.

b) The best plan for Black is consistent with his 13th move: after 16...h5! 17 c3 ♗h7 18 ♖a3 (now 18 g4 is interesting, definitely avoiding the freeing exchange of bishops) 18...♗h6 19 ♖c4 White has only a very slight advantage.

**14 ♖b5!**

As we saw in the previous games, White's plan is to secure the d4-square (by means of c3) and to improve the posting of his knight, with c4 being the best square.

**14...♖e7 15 h3 ♗xf3**

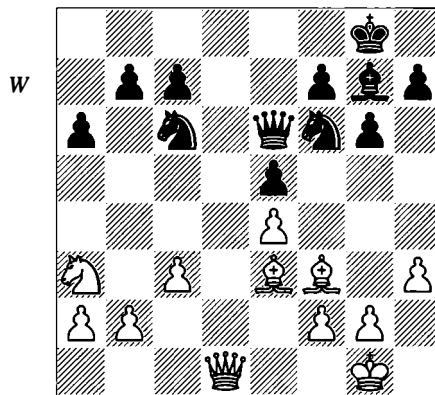
An understandable decision. The complications arising after 15...♗e6 16 ♖g5 ♗xa2 17 b3 h6 18 ♖f3 ♖xe4 19 ♖b2 a6 20 ♖xa2 ♗e8 turn out in White's favour after 21 ♖a4!.

**16 ♗xf3 a6**

While White has achieved his humble goal, Black is trying to exchange as many pieces as

possible, believing that his position is sound enough and that White's bishops will not attain great activity. But first, Black wants to take some preventive measures, e.g., to hinder White's play against the a7-pawn.

**17 ♖a3 ♗d8 18 c3 ♗xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♖e6!** (D)



Virtually forcing the exchange of queens, which one would expect to be in White's interest, but this decision was well thought-out by Black. The exchange leaves White with a less flexible queenside pawn-formation, a detail that obviously lessens his advantage. Nevertheless, this advantage still exists.

**20 ♖b3 ♖xb3 21 axb3 b5**

Gual anticipates the events. In fact, White was threatening the break b4-b5, activating his knight.

**22 b4**

It is clear that White's advantage would increase if his bishop reached b3. This is not possible now, because the bishop is tied to the defence of the e-pawn, so that White needs to transfer his king to d3.

**22...♗f8 23 ♗f1 ♖e8!?**

Gual finds the best defensive plan: the knight is being directed to the best possible defensive position, i.e. d6.

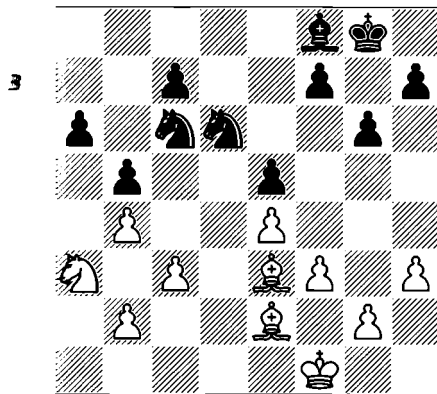
**24 ♗e2**

The power of Black's centralized knight is shown by the trap 24 ♗g4? ♖d6 25 f3? (25 ♗d7?! ♖b8!) 25...h5! 26 ♗d7 ♖b8, when White loses his bishop. Obviously, from d6 the knight is partially annulling the terrific power of the white bishops. Nor could White play 24

♠d1 (with the idea of ♠b3) since Black can reply with a quick break, virtually levelling the game: 24...♖d6 25 f3 a5!. Therefore, the bishop must remain alert, avoiding any simplification on the queenside, which would without doubt ease Black's task.

24...♖d6 25 f3 (D)

The other option is 25 ♠d3, with the idea of continuing g3 and f4 at the right moment. However, my decision was purely psychological. The bishop, previously tied to the defence of e4, wants to step aside from this unpleasant task



25...♖d8!

The remaining knight also wants to be centralized (don't forget that knights cover more squares when located in the centre), enabling the strengthening move ...c6. After this subtle move Black could also choose, in the best conditions, to make the advance by means of ...♖b7, ...♠e7, and ...c6, replying to White's ♠b6 with ♠d8.

Faced by this prospect, and since the white knight has completed its job at a3, White must find the knight's best square so that it can take an active part in the battle. I suggest the reader stops for a moment and tries to find the solution.

26 ♖b1! ♖e6

The simplification to which we referred in the previous note seems possible, but this possibility requires precise calculation of the upcoming ending. 26...♖b7!? 27 ♖d2 a5 and then:

a) 28 ♖b3 axb4 29 cxb4 is very interesting, aiming to penetrate with the knight via a5 or c5

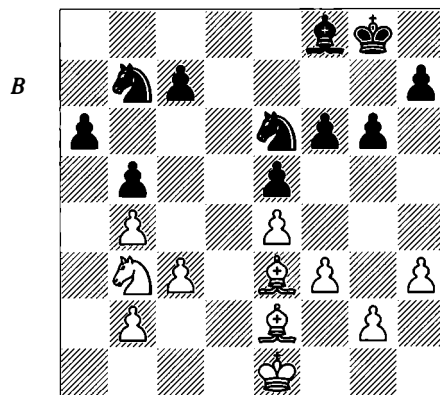
(aiming at the d7-square). 29...♖c4 doesn't work due to 30 ♠xc4 bxc4 31 ♖a5 +-.

b) 28 bxa5 ♖xa5 29 b4 ♖ac4 (probably, Gual rejected this move) 30 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 31 ♠xc4 bxc4 (the white king seems to be unable to pass, despite the support of his most active bishop) 32 ♖e2 ♠e7 33 ♖d2 ♖f8 34 ♖c2 ♖e8 35 ♖b2 ♖d7 36 ♖a3 and now 36...♖c6? fails to 37 ♖a4 followed by ♖a5, ♖a6, etc. White would create a zugzwang, since the black bishop cannot deal with the entry of its white counterpart via g5 to f6, or by c5, and to play b5+, ♖a5, ♖b4 later, or h6. Thus Black should continue with 36...c6 37 ♖a4 (I am not sure if White can win the pawn ending after 37 ♠c5 ♠xc5 38 bxc5 ♖c7) 37...♖c7 38 ♖a5 ♖b7 39 b5 g5!?, when White should not be able to break through the defensive barrier Black has built.

27 ♖d2 f6 28 ♖b3

The knight is impressively located on b3, preventing any attempt by Black to break open the queenside. White has accomplished his earlier goals. All his pieces are on good squares, and besides the advantage of having the bishop-pair, we can add another very important one: White's e3-bishop is better than its black counterpart.

28...♖b7 29 ♖e1 (D)



29...♖f7

Black could have tried the break 29...c5 (and this idea is relevant over the next few moves of the game too), but, perhaps led by his intuition, or obeying the old rule that 'expressly forbids' opening the position for the white bishops, Gual rejected it immediately. However, the

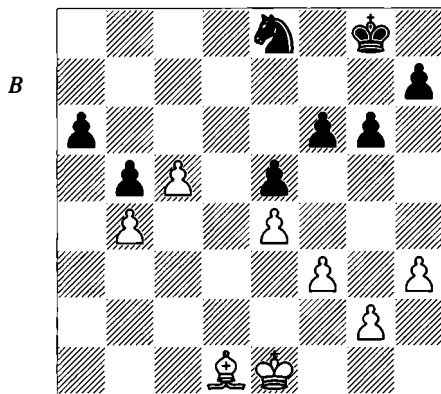
break should not be dismissed from a strategic point of view, since it seeks the exchange of the dark-squared bishops.

a) Everything seems OK for Black in the line 30 bxc5 ♖exc5 31 ♗xc5 ♜xc5 32 ♜xc5 ♗xc5 33 b4!:

a1) 33...♗a4? is not possible: 34 ♖d2 (34 c4 is wrong: 34...♗c3! with the idea of ...♗a2) 34...♗b6 due to the strong reply 35 c4! +-.

a2) 33...♗e6! seems interesting, in order to reply to 34 c4 with 34...♗d4. Then White could still keep some hopes by continuing 34 ♜d1 followed by ♜b3 and if possible, the manoeuvre ♜d5-b7.

a3) 33...♗b7 34 c4 ♗d6 35 c5 ♗e8 (or 35...♗c8 36 ♜d1 ♗e7 37 ♜b3+ ♖f8 38 ♜d5!? {preventing ...♗c6}) 38...♗xd5 39 exd5 ♖e7 40 g4 f5 41 gxf5 gxf5 42 ♖f2 ♖d7 43 ♖g3 ♖e7 44 ♖h4 h6 45 ♖h5 ♖d7 with a draw; the reader should be acquainted with this type of pawn ending) 36 ♜d1 (D).



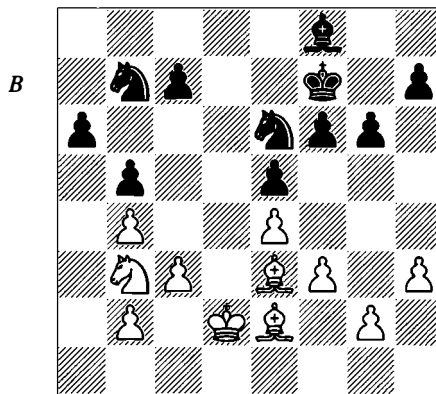
White has parted with his dark-squared bishop, but he has got some pluses in return. He has forced a bishop versus knight ending with weak black pawns (one, the a6-pawn, is clear, but the others are not so apparent: Black's king-side, which will allow the penetration of the white king via the light squares, once weakened by the action of the bishop). However, we need to get used to thinking with 'the opponent's head'. Indeed, White has a weakness too, namely his b4-pawn, and this helps Black to level the game: 36...♗c7 (preventing ♜d5 for a while) 37 ♜b3+ ♖f8 38 g3! ♖e7 (if 38...g5 White wins the pawn ending with 39 ♜d5!

♗xd5 40 exd5 f5 41 g4!) 39 f4 ♗e6 (the threat was the advance of the f-pawn) 40 ♜d5 ♗d8! (again, the pawn ending after 40...exf4 41 ♜xe6 ♖xe6 42 gxf4 is hopeless for Black; the reader can use this a good exercise in analysing the endgame in depth) 41 ♖d2 ♖d7 and Black threatens 42...♗c6 with equality. After 42 f5 would follow 42...g5, while if 42 h4 then 42...h6.

So, what should White play against the break 29...c5 ?

b) The natural move is 30 c4!, and in reply to 30...♗d4, 31 ♗xd4! seems forced: 31...cxd4 32 ♜d2 ♗d6 33 c5 ♗e8 (the active 33...♗c4? doesn't work on account of 34 ♜xc4+ bxc4 35 c6 ♜d6 36 b5! axb5 37 ♜a5, winning). Combining the f4 break (not only with the idea of establishing another weakness, but also to play ♜g4 and then to put the bishop on c8) with the manoeuvre ♜d1-b3 should ruin Black's position.

30 ♖d2 (D)



30...♖e8

This is another moment to consider 30...c5!?. White would then play 31 c4! ♗d4 32 cxb5!? (or 32 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 33 bxc5 ♜xc5 34 cxb5 ♗b3+ 35 ♖d3 axb5 36 ♜xc5 ♗xc5+ 37 ♖c3 winning) 32...axb5 (if 32...♗xb3+ then 33 ♖c2 with the advantage) 33 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 34 bxc5 ♜xc5 35 ♜xb5 winning a healthy pawn.

31 g3?!

Of course, it is necessary to give Black another reason to be concerned, but playing 31 h4! first is better.

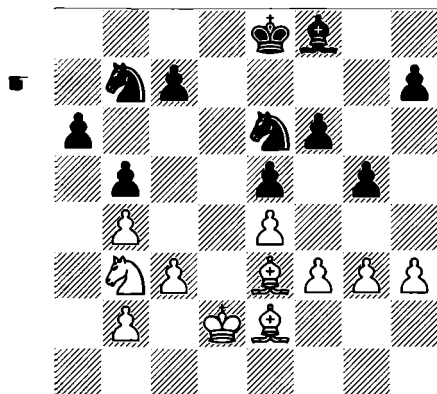
I admit I didn't suspect for a moment that my opponent would play a move like his next one. I

was really very surprised, because the move is unusual, inflexible and seems highly risky, as it leaves Black's kingside with many holes.

31...g5! (D)

Not a mistake, despite its anti-positional appearance. Black needs to prevent the threatened f4 and he does so, even though it greatly weakens his kingside pawn-structure. However, he is not wrong, because it is difficult for White to exploit this, in view of his difficulty supporting the advance h4.

These are the moments when the defender must take important decisions, and Gual does it radically. Even though 31...d6 seems to be worth a look, the move is bad, because after 32 h4 followed by g1-f1-h3, White has a clear superiority.



If White manages to play h4 in good conditions, that is to say, supporting the advance with a piece, he would gain a strong open diagonal for his bishop. But how to carry out this plan?

32 a1!

The knight is going to g2, via e3 or e1. However, Black is granted an opportunity to break with ...c5. But if we go by psychological reasoning, we could guess that the break was not part of his plans. Indeed, Gual played in a passive way during the whole game.

32...d7?!

32...c5! is critical. Then:

a) 33 d2 cxb4 and now:

a1) After 34 dxb4 .dxb4 35 cxb4 d6 Black has strong centralized knights. But is this enough? During the game I liked the idea of transferring the bishop to h3 after playing 36

h4, at the expense of damaging the structure. I was underestimating the variation 36...gxh4 37 gxh4 f4! 38 xf4 exf4, thinking my king would easily penetrate, but this is not possible: 39 d3 d7 40 d4 c6 41 e5 and now 41...f5+! 42 e4 dg3+ refutes my idea.

Another way to activate the bishop is to play d1-b3, after first transferring the king to c3. However, after placing the bishop on d5 there are so many hindrances that they forced me to discard this variation:

1) White's dark-squared bishop can be located at c5, but even so there is nothing preventing Black from exchanging it for the knight.

2) The white king is not able to approach the kingside in order to penetrate, because the knights would immediately jump to c4 and d4.

3) White's move b3 denies the d5-bishop a flight-square after a supposed ...d7.

4) White's break f4, which would be a good way to open the position, is practically impossible.

a2) 34 cxb4 (keeping the knight, since from e3 it can go to excellent squares, like d5, f5, g4) doesn't seem to favour White either simply because Black quickly transfers the knight to c6, digging in thanks to the control of the d4-square. For instance: 34...dbd8! 35 c3 d2c6.

The best chances to win the game can be found in the following two variations:

b) 33 bxc5 .dxc5 34 d2c2, trying to take advantage of Black's weak a-pawn.

c) 33 c4 d4! 34 cxb5 axb5 (if 34...dxb5 35 bxc5 .dxc5 36 d2c2! .xe3+, then both 37 ex3, with the idea of b4, and 37 dxe3 d4 38 d5!? offer good prospects) 35 .dxd4 (35 bxc5 doesn't work: 35...dxe2 36 c6 da5!) 35...cxd4 36 .dxb5+ with some advantage.

33 d2 c6

Threatening 34...a5.

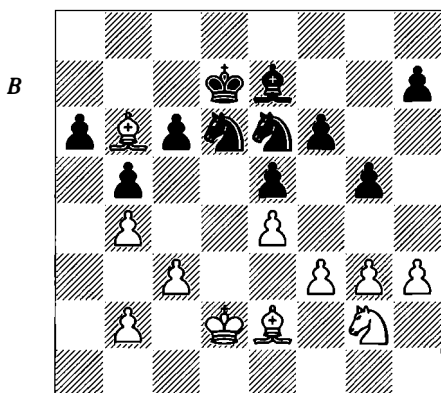
34 .d6 d6

Black seeks to prevent 35 d3 since then would follow 35...d8!

After 34...e7 35 d3 d8 36 .a7 the break 36...a5, a lesser evil, would arrive a little late.

35 d1 e7 36 dg2 (D)

The plan started with d1a1 has been completed successfully. After opening the position, the weakened light squares in Black's camp

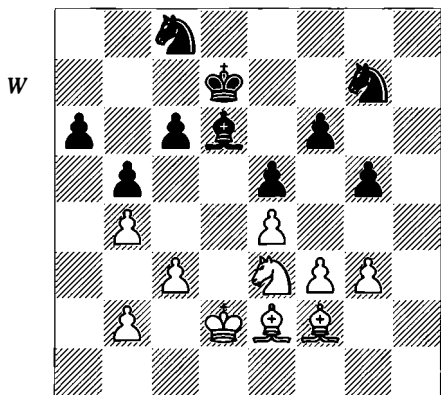


will become keenly felt. From now on, Gual loses his bearings, and this was the first time in the game where I truly believed in my winning chances.

**36...♖c8 37 ♙f2 ♜d6 38 h4 h6**

Although this is an ugly move, I could not take advantage of the new weakness created on h6. On the other hand, allowing the f-pawn to become disconnected from the e-pawn doesn't seem very healthy.

**39 hxg5 hxg5 40 ♜e3 ♜g7 (D)**



It is instructive to observe how the white pieces are going to infiltrate, little by little, into Black's reduced territory, and how the black knights are going to be left without play.

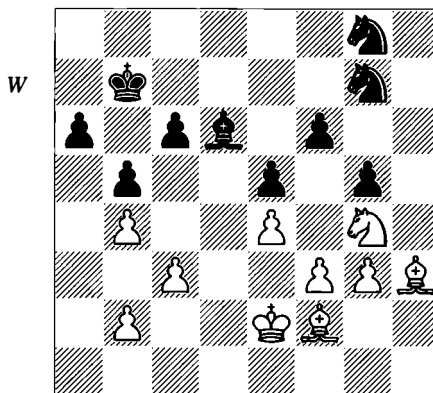
**41 ♙f1 ♜e7 42 ♙h3+ ♜c7**

Protecting the queenside, and particularly the a-pawn.

**43 ♜e2!**

The plan is to bring the king close to the entry points (g4 and f5).

**43...♜b7 44 ♜g4 ♜g8 (D)**



Black has behaved cautiously, preventing an invasion by ♜h6.

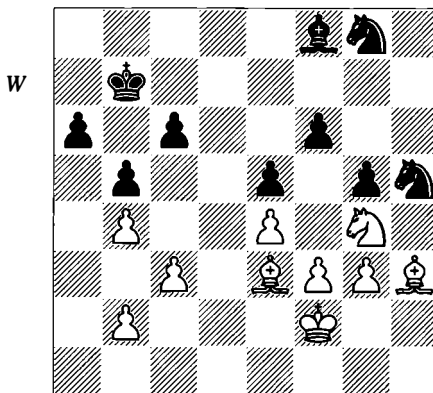
**45 ♙e3!**

Just in time. The king is granted a route and the bishop occupies its best square, ready to support the advance of the f-pawn at any time. White has a decisive plan: the transfer of the knight to c5.

**45...♜h5**

Gual makes a mistake, although it is not going to change the outcome. Black should try 45...♜c7 46 ♜f2 ♙f8 47 ♜g2 ♙e7 48 ♜f2 ♙d6 49 ♜d3 ♜e7 (Black is running out of moves) 50 ♜c5 ♙xc5 51 ♙xc5 ♜d8. Among other plans, the most aesthetic seems to be 52 ♙b6+ ♜e8 53 ♙c7! (Black is in zugzwang) 53...♜f7 54 ♙d7, winning.

**46 ♜f2 ♙f8 (D)**



**47 ♜g2 ♙e7 48 ♜f2! ♙d8**

Now it is too late to stop the entry of the white bishop by 48...♘g7, since then the other white bishop penetrates after 49 ♖d3 and 50 ♗c5 ♕xc5 51 ♕xc5 followed by 52 ♕f8.

49 ♕e6

After 49 ♖d3, Black can still put up some resistance with 49...♗b6 50 ♖c5+ ♔a7.

49...♖e7 50 ♕c5

The activity developed for the bishop-pair reaches the highest point.

50...♖g7 51 ♕f7 ♔c7 52 ♖g4 (D)

Now that the light-squared bishop has penetrated the enemy camp, it is the knight's turn.

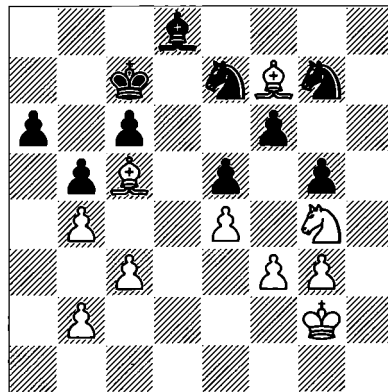
52...♖c8 53 ♕f8

White wins material after all.

53...♖d6 54 ♕xg7 ♖xf7 55 ♕xf6

This is the last pawn Black can afford to lose, since, afterwards, there will be others following his fate.

B



55...♔d6

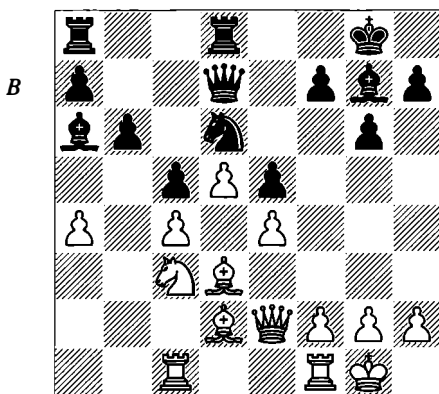
This yields another pawn, but other moves let the white king into g4.

56 ♖xe5!

and Black resigned some moves later.

# 5 Blockade

The idea of blockading, as a strategic concept, applies mainly to pawns – since these are the easiest pieces to blockade – and it appears when trying to hinder the pawns' mobility and their attacking potential. However, the concept of blockader extends to other pieces, even though the two most effective are the knight, which can attack squares placed behind the pawn, and the bishop, which likewise continues exerting its powerful effect in the diagonal, in such a degree that it can easily watch over several pawns. The queen and the rook, instead, are considered bad blockaders, since they can be threatened by minor pieces at the right moment, and so they must abandon their mission.



**Polugaevsky – Gutman**  
*Biel IZ 1985*

In this position, a typical Grünfeld Defence middlegame, Black has the advantage. Why? Because the strong blockading knight, together with the immediate possibility of a break on the kingside (and a further one on the queenside) are limiting the power of White's passed d-pawn. White can only envisage hopes with the break f4, gaining territory for his passive pieces, although Black anticipates his intentions:

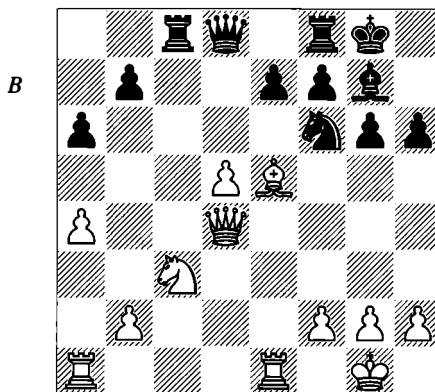
**19...f5 20 a5**

Making Black's job easy. After 20 f4 ♖e8 and the bad situation of the white queen would be clear.

**20...bxa5 21 ♖a1 ♛c7 22 f3 ♜db8 23 ♜fc1 ♜b3 24 ♘b5 ♙xb5 25 ♙xa5 ♛c8 26 cxb5 fxe4 27 fxe4 ♙h6 28 ♙d2 ♙xd2 29 ♛xd2 c4 30 ♙c2 ♛c5+**

and Black won.

Here is an example where a blockade saves Black:

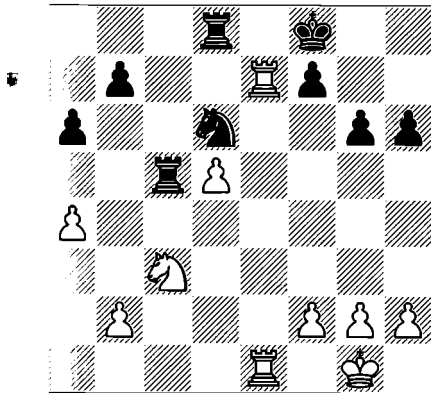


**Timman – Salov**  
*Sanghi Nagar FIDE Ct (8) 1994*

White has a space advantage and pressure on the backward e7-pawn. How to stop White's initiative? Salov played:

**18...♘e8! 19 ♛f4 ♘h7?!**

This move leaves the black king in a precarious situation. It is better to sacrifice the weak pawn in exchange for more freedom of action. For instance: 19...♘d6 20 ♙xg7 ♘xg7 21 ♛e5+ ♘g8 22 ♛xe7 ♜e8! (forcing the exchange of queens; I think this is better than Salov's suggestion 22...♛b6?! since then follows 23 a5! with the idea of 23...♛xb2 24 ♘a4) 23 ♛xd8 ♜exd8 24 ♜e7 ♘f8 25 ♜ae1 ♜c5 (D).



Black has very good chances to draw this game, due to the passive position of the white king, tied to the defence of the passed pawn. Black is threatening the advance ...b5.

20 h4! ♙xe5 21 ♖xe5 ♘d6

Now Timman should have played 22 h5! ♖4 23 ♖e3 with a great initiative.

In the following game, Kotov and Gligorić become entangled in a fight to the death for the blocking square e5. Black spares no effort to keep his privileged blockade position, sacrificing two pawns, while White tries to create chaos in Black's plans.

**Kotov – Gligorić**  
Zurich Ct 1953

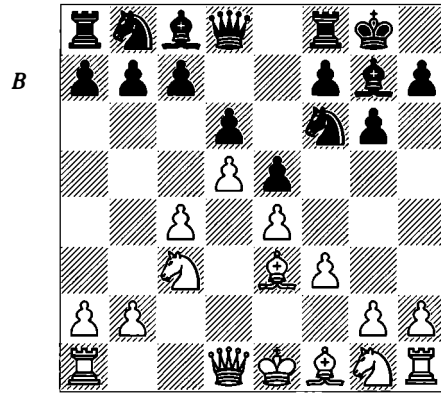
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 e5

Nowadays, this is the continuation endorsed by Garry Kasparov, although for a while it had been mostly abandoned in favour of more modern set-ups like 6...♘c6, 6...♘bd7 or even 6...c5. This last possibility is without doubt the most active one, sacrificing a central pawn in return for counterplay on the dark squares and especially, on the weak d4-square. The King's Indian's most enthusiast defenders, Glek, Gelman and Judit Polgar, caused a revolution in this opening with their dynamic ideas in lines such as this.

7 d5 (D)

This move is less flexible than 7 ♘ge2, and reminds me very much of those situations in the Closed Spanish where White must choose the

right moment to close the position. We shall take a closer look at 7 ♘ge2 after this game.



7...c5

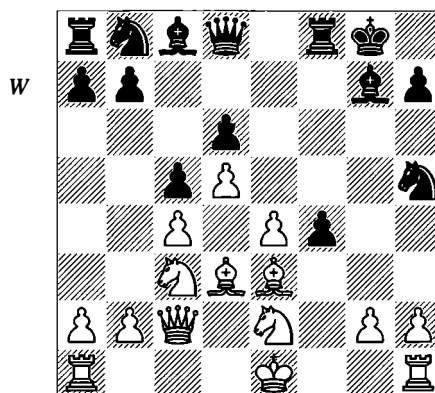
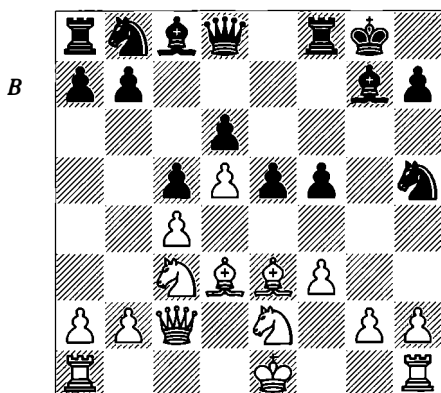
This move is no longer played at master level. Black blocks the centre at a very early stage. In his tournament book, Bronstein explains the reasons for this choice: in his games versus Geller and Petrosian in the same tournament, Gligorić experienced difficulties after 7...♘h5, because of White's continual threat of playing c5 himself. In many King's Indian lines where Black blocks the position with ...c5, White manages to exert pressure following the standard break by a3 and b4. In this line, however, the white king tends to seek protection on the queenside, so it is difficult for him to achieve the b4 break.

8 ♙d3

It is interesting to follow the development of the game Tal-Boleslavsky, USSR Ch (Riga) 1958. White played 8 g4! at once: 8...♘e8 9 h4 f5 10 gxf5 gxf5 11 exf5 ♙xf5 12 ♙d3! e4 13 fxe4 ♖e7 (after 13...♙c8 Tal's idea was to continue 14 e5! ♙xe5 15 ♘f3 ♙g7 {15...♙g3+ 16 ♘d2 ♙g4 allows a brilliant queen sacrifice: 17 ♖g1! ♖xf3 18 ♖xf3 ♙xf3 19 ♖xg3+ ♘h8 20 ♖ag1 ♘f6 21 ♙g5 ♘bd7 22 ♖xf3 with a large initiative} 16 ♘g5 ♘f6 17 ♖d2 h6 18 0-0-0! with a strong attack) 14 exf5 ♖xe3+ 15 ♖e2 ♖g3+ 16 ♘d2 ♘c7 and now, instead of 17 ♖h2?!, as played, White should choose 17 ♘f3 with an advantage.

8...♘h5 9 ♘ge2 f5 10 exf5 gxf5 11 ♖c2 (D)

With this move White is trying to prevent the typical manoeuvre ...♘d7-f6.



### 11...e4!

This game shows the advantages of 7...c5. Black has secured a firm grip on d4 and thanks to this he can advance his e-pawn. With this surprising sacrifice, Gligorić paves the way for a blockade. After the pawn captures on e4, White's light-squared bishop appears severely imprisoned on d3. Because of this, Black wants to put a blockading piece on e5 until the end of the game. Another advantage, and not a lesser one, is the clear activity displayed by the 'Indian' bishop.

We can state that Gligorić has paid a very low price to get a promising position. Obviously, the opening hasn't proved a strategic success for White.

After the sequence played in the game, one could think that the move 11 ♖c2 is the reason for White's trouble. So, one could believe that the prophylactic 11 ♖d2 is better, and in case of 11...e4 12 fxe4 f4 13 ♘xf4 ♖h4+ 14 g3 ♘g3 15 ♙f2 White escapes unscathed from this tactical mess. Black could try to carry out the blockade by playing 11...♖h4+ 12 ♙f2 ♖e7 13 0-0-0 e4 14 fxe4 f4 but White has the break 15 g3! solving matters. Accordingly, Black should be satisfied with natural development, without forcing the course of the events, as in Hort-Gligorić, Nikšić 1978: 11...a6 12 a4 ♘d7 13 ♙g5 ♖e8 (13...♙f6!?) 14 0-0 ♘d6 15 ♙c2 ♙d7 and Black is now ready to continue ...e4. Twenty-five years after the main game, and despite all the doubts about this line, Gligorić repeated it!

12 fxe4 f4! (D)

13 ♙f2

White naturally retreats the bishop, but he had another more interesting option, which would have changed the whole battle: 13 e5!?. This possibility appeared nearly 20 years later: White ignores the threatened bishop, taking into account another complex strategic issue to which we shall refer later (**lack of communication between our forces**). Then:

a) In case of 13...fxe3:

a1) White could capture a second pawn at once: 14 ♙xh7+ ♖h8 15 e6 ♖h4+ (15...♙f2 16 g3 ♙xc3+ 17 bxc3 ♘f4 18 gxf4 ♖h4 19 0-0-0 ♖xh7 20 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 21 ♙del with compensation) 16 g3 ♘g3 17 ♘g3 ♖xh7 18 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 19 ♘ge4! ♙e5 20 ♖e2 with good prospects in the ending.

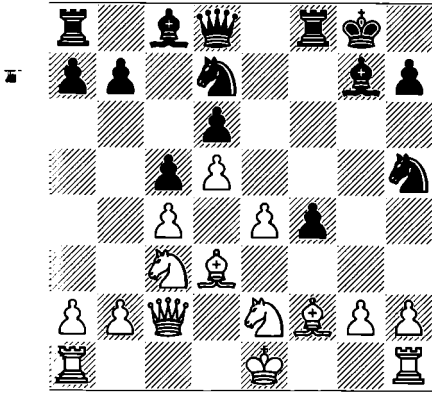
a2) The alternative is to maintain the threats by 14 e6. In case of the passive 14...♘f6 White's pieces would display their best abilities and the e3-pawn would not be safe; White could play 0-0 and ♘g3-f5.

b) 13...♙xe5 14 ♙xh7+ ♖h8 15 ♙f2 and then:

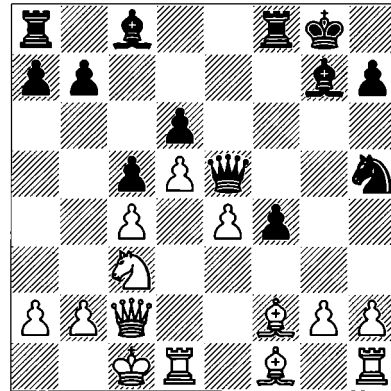
b1) The instructive game Knaak-Velimirotić, Sombor 1972 continued 15...♖g5? (giving up in the theoretical duel) 16 ♖g6 ♖xg6 17 ♙xg6 ♘f6 18 g3 f3 19 ♘f4 ♘g4 20 h3 ♘xf2 21 ♖xf2 ♘d7 22 ♙ae1 ♙d4+ 23 ♖xf3 ♘e5+ 24 ♖g2 ♙xf4 25 gxf4 ♘xg6 26 ♙e8+ ♖g7 27 ♖g3 ♖f7 28 ♙he1 ♙f6 29 ♘b5 ♙h4+ 30 ♖f3 ♙xe1 31 ♘xd6+ ♖f6 32 ♘xc8 and the d-pawn cannot be stopped.

b2) Much better is 15...♘f6 16 ♙f5 (16 ♙h4 ♖b6 gives Black compensation) 16...♘d5 17 ♙xc8 ♘b4 18 ♖g6 ♖xc8 19 a3 ♘4c6 with active play.

13...♘d7 (D)



B



The knight, the best piece when you need to carry out a blockade, is going to e5. The painful situation of the d3-bishop is clear: hemmed in by its own forces, and resembling a true pawn.

White could try to avoid such a passive situation by playing 14 e5 ♘xe5 15 ♙xh7+, but this idea so natural in similar positions, does not work here because of the serious threats of ...♗xc4, ...♘g4, ...♙g5 and ...f3.

14 ♘g1!

Kotov holds on excellently. Facing the blocking knight, White directs his useless knight towards the theatre of the events: the e5-square. This is because the exchange of a passive piece for an active one is a great trade. The game is now reaching a critical stage that foreshadows a stormy fight between the two sides, one aiming to maintain the blockade, the other to break it.

14 ♙g5!

A strong intermediate move, forcing the white bishop to retreat to its original square. Even though the black queen is going to lose an appreciable tempo, the outcome of this operation was well calculated.

15 ♙f1 ♗e5 16 ♘f3 ♙e7 17 ♘xe5 ♙xe5

We have said before that the queen is a bad defender. However, in this case, the queen cannot be attacked by White's minor pieces, and taking advantage of this circumstance and together with the fianchettoed bishop, the queen attacks powerfully against White's king.

15 ♙0-0 (D)

16 ♙f6!?

This enigmatic move, seemingly blocking Black's own lines of attack, is a good prophylactic measure. Black is not only exerting pressure on the weak pawn, but is also threatening 19...♘g4, forcing White to make a move that weakens the dark squares still more. Incidentally Black makes sure that White cannot break with g3 at the right moment. Besides, the idea reveals the uneven look that the course of events is going to take in the near future.

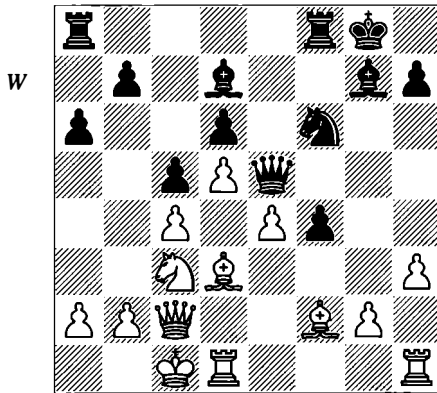
However, all this logical reasoning obscures the strength of another intuitive move: 18...f3!. The pressure on the upcoming open file would grant new prospects to the light-squared bishop, and on the other hand, after the reply 19 g3, which is virtually forced, all the white pieces would remain enslaved.

19 h3 ♙d7?!

According to Bronstein, "Gligorić likes to prepare his breaks with great care, but a more aggressive player would not have refrained from 19...a6 20 ♙d3 b5! 21 cxb5 axb5 22 ♙xb5 ♙a6." Indeed, Black would have the open a- and b-files for his rooks, and would be ready to start a strong attack. However, thanks to this cautious decision we are able to admire Kotov's brilliant (and stubborn) defence.

20 ♙d3 a6 (D)

What can White do now? Unpleasant prospects await him if he doesn't play actively. White must try removing the opponent's queen from its splendid blockading position, because if not, Black's forces would penetrate via the dark squares. The only pieces able to remove the queen are the bishop and the knight. From c3 the bishop would reach its goal, but our



plans often collide with specific and self-governing moves and it is necessary to state our calculations accurately. The bishop doesn't arrive on c3 in time, since Black's threats are faster. Let us see an example of this: 21 ♖e2 b5 22 ♙e1 bxc4 23 ♙c3? cxd3!. We can see that the pressure on e4 produced by the mysterious move 18...♗f6 proved successful.

#### 21 ♗b1!

White is not only trying to transfer the knight to f3 but he is doing it in the most precise way, defending e4 along the way, and adding support to the c4-square, which is going to come under strong attack.

Black must now find a way to keep the initiative.

#### 21...f3!

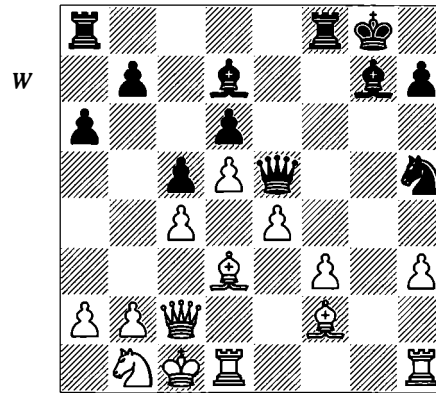
Very well played. If Black had allowed the manoeuvre ♗d2-f3, then the blockade would be broken and, what is worse, the white bishop would come back to life after a possible e5 advance. Gligorić prefers to sacrifice a second pawn to occupy the square destined for the white knight, with the purpose of preserving his privileged blockading position. The knight will help the queen in this new task.

#### 22 gxf3 ♗h5! (D)

#### 23 ♗d2 ♗f4

Bronstein noted: "...a classic model of a blockade position. White's light-squared bishop has turned out to be a mere pawn, White's pawns are occupying the best squares of his knight, and what is more important, such a powerful piece as the queen remains hindered..."

This is all correct, but also is the long-term vision showed by Gligorić when he decided to



play 18...♗f6. The results of inducing h3 are now clear, since White is unable to play ♙g3, which would counter the blockade.

#### 24 ♙f1

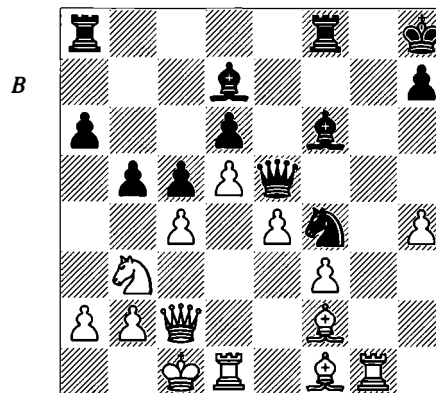
Forced in view of Black's threats on h3 and b2.

#### 24...b5

Finally, the long-anticipated break. White now undertakes a vigorous plan on the king-side, trying to free himself, and diverting the attention of Black's army to the other side of the board.

#### 25 h4! ♙h8 26 ♙g1 ♙f6 27 ♗b3 (D)

A provocative move, placing the knight on Black's firing line. If White wants to manoeuvre the knight to d3, then it looks better to play 27 ♙b1 at once. However, after this move Black would happily continue 27...b4, 28...a5 and 29...a4. The white knight, even being a good defensive piece, prevents the queen from having some chances of activity. The reader should now look for the justification of the text-move.



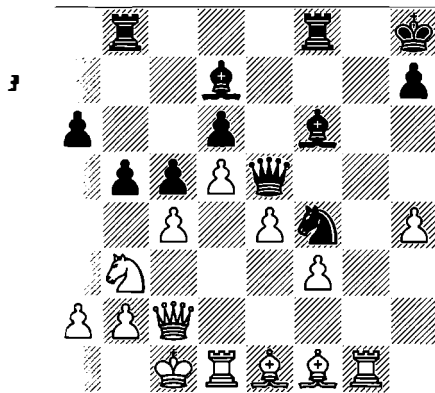
**27... ♖ab8?!**

After some kingside skirmishes which Black controlled with cold blood, he makes an inaccuracy on the queenside. Anyway, Black's position is so good that losing a few tempi hardly damages his previous work. Alternatives:

a) 27... a5?! is no better since after 28 cxb5 ♠ 29 ♖d2 a3 30 ♖c4 axb2+ 31 ♖b1 the blockade is lifted: 31... ♗e7 32 e5!.

b) However, the most suitable plan is to close the b-file by 27... b4 and then to move the pawn, taking advantage of the tempo won with the threat on the white knight. Perhaps Kotov relied on preventing it by playing 28 ♖a5, despite opening the diagonal after 28... ♗a4 29 ♖ ♖d7. The white king, fortunately placed on e1, could emerge unharmed towards the centre thanks to the barrier built by his blockaded pawns on e4 and f3. However, he cannot secure his position. Both 30 ♗e3 and 30 ♗g3 allow Black to win material with 30... ♗al+ 31 ♖d2 ♖c3. 30 ♖c6 is inopportune due to 30... ♗xc6 ♖dxc6 a5, while 30 ♖d2 ♖g6! 31 ♗g3 ♗d4+ is too pleasant for White either. Black would enjoy an enviable position.

**28 ♗e1! (D)**



Therefore Kotov prevents the obvious threat 27... a5 or 28... bxc4 29 ♗xc4 and then 29... a5 or 29... ♖b4) and forces Black to close the b-file to prevent the freeing move ♗c3.

**28... b4 29 ♖b1 ♖a8?!**

White has exploited the respite granted to him to secure his own king position and to support the manoeuvre ♖c1-d3, aimed to fight

against the blockade. Meanwhile Black prepares the assault on the queenside, but ignores White's chances for counterplay.

It was necessary to make a realistic assessment of the situation, which would indicate the need for a general reorganization of Black's strategy. The continuation 29... ♖g8! was eagerly knocking at the door, exerting strong control all over the board.

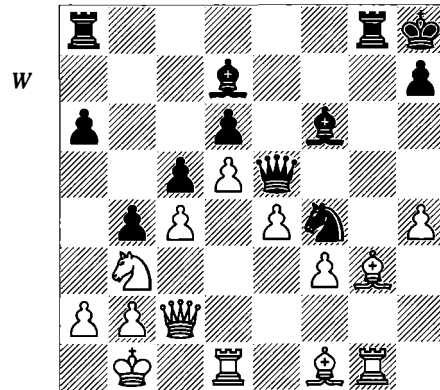
**30 ♗g3!**

The bishop, from its little home, does as much as it is able to do. The pursuit of the omnipresent black knight again becomes an issue, awakening Black from his dreams.

30 ♖c1 is premature on account of the reply 30... ♗a4.

**30... ♖g8 (D)**

Another precise move. Black blunts his opponent's threats against his knight; viz. ♗d2 or ♗h2 followed by ♖c1.



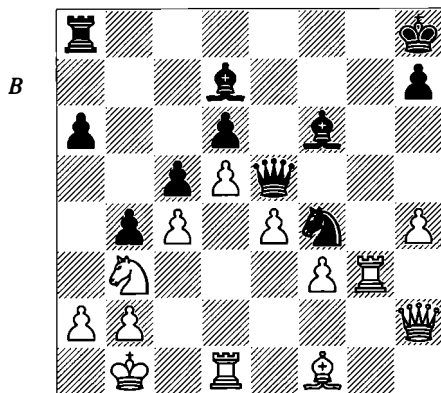
**31 ♗h2**

This is a very critical stage of the game. At this moment it might seem better to play 31 ♗d2, because it prevents the combination that we see in the game. However, I imagine Kotov assessed his possibilities very well, and he didn't allow himself to be tempted by another material gain. Probably, Gligorić was planning to reply with 31... ♖xg3 32 ♖xg3 ♗xh4! (but not 32... ♖xd5 33 ♖g5! ♗xg5 34 ♗xg5 releasing the pressure entirely) 33 ♖g1 and now it is interesting to continue with 33... ♗a4. This parries the threat of ♖c1-d3 and the blockading black knight is then definitely safe (if 34 ♖g4 then 34... ♗g5!). Despite being an exchange

and a pawn down, Black has great possibilities on the dark squares thanks to his strong minor pieces and the scarce mobility of the white rooks, and he could continue with his threat of a break on the a-file and expect heroic deeds from his h-pawn.

With his 31st move, Kotov wants to protect the important h4-pawn.

31...♖xg3 32 ♖xg3 (D)



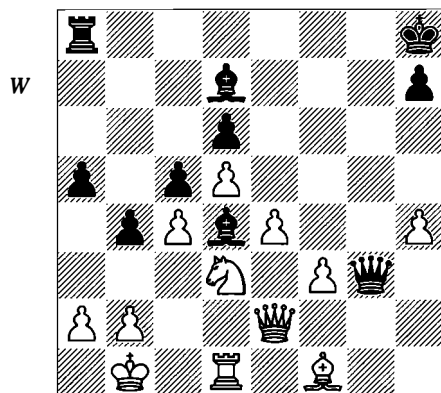
32...♗e2

Black regains the exchange. This frees White somewhat, but leaves Black still with absolute control of the dark squares and possibilities of the penetration by his queen.

33 ♖xe2 ♖xg3 34 ♘c1 a5

The reason for not capturing the pawn at once is explained by the variation 34...♖xh4 35 ♘d3, when 35...♗d4 is met by 36 ♘xb4! while after 35...♗e8 36 ♗g2 White's hopes seem to come alive again.

35 ♘d3 ♗d4 (D)



36 h5

Up until now, the game can be considered a brilliant display of strategic chess from both sides. Black needed to make difficult decisions, and White replied with great accuracy, in as much as he has recovered some chances of exploiting his material advantage. However, the game is about to enter a chaotic stage, since both players were by now in time-trouble.

36 f4! is very interesting. The most logical sequence seems to be 36...♗g4 (36...♖xh4 37 e5 ♗f5 is also possible, with a complex position) 37 ♖e1, and then:

a) 37...♖f3?! 38 ♖d2 ♗e8! (Black loses the initiative after 38...♖h1 39 ♗e2! ♖xe1+ 40 ♘xe1 ♗e3 41 ♖d3! or 38...♗e3? 39 ♗e2!) 39 ♗g2 ♖e3 40 ♖xe3 ♗e3 41 ♘c2 with great compensation.

b) 37...♖e3! 38 ♖d2 ♗e8! leaves the game balanced from a dynamic point of view, since White cannot shake off the pressure without suffering material losses: 39 ♗g2 ♖xe1+ 40 ♘xe1 ♗e3!; 39 ♖xe3 ♗e3 40 ♗g2 ♗h3 41 ♗e2? ♗xf1 42 ♖xe3 ♖xe4! with advantage; 39 ♗e2 with equality; 39 e5 with enough compensation.

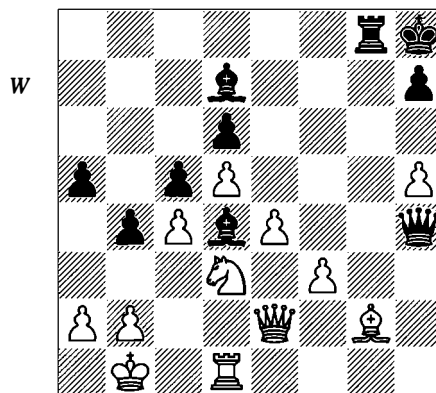
36...♖h4

36...♗g8 is also interesting.

37 ♗g2

Once again, White could risk more by playing 37 f4!? ♗g4 38 ♖e1 ♖xh5 39 ♖d2 although the position is certainly not so clear after 39...♗e8 40 ♗g2 ♗f5!, when 41 ♖e2 allows 41...♖g6 and 41 ♗e2 ♗g4 42 ♖d2 is a draw. Overall, it seems the advance of the f-pawn may not be the perfect solution.

37...♗g8 (D)



### 38 ♖h1?!

Again, we should consider 38 f4. It might seem as if Black would be more than happy to activate his rook by 38...♖g3, but after 39 ♖f3! and not 39 ♖h1 ♖g4! 40 ♖xg4 ♖xg4 41 ♖f1 41 ♖e1 loses to 41...♖f2} 41...♖f3 42 ♖h3 ♖h3 43 ♖xh3 ♖xe4 since Black is better despite being a pawn down), 39...♖h3 is not useful in view of 40 ♖h1!. We might think that Klov missed an opportunity here. However, things are not so easy since Black has an accurate reply to keep the initiative: 39...♖h3!. After 40 ♖f1 (other moves are worse: 40 ♖e1? ♖xe1 41 ♖xe1 ♖f2 42 ♖g2 ♖g3 43 ♖f1 ♖g4; 40 e5 40 f5 ♖h2 41 ♖e1 ♖h3 {41...♖g5!?) 42 ♖e1 ♖g3 and the activity of the black pieces has reached its climax) 40...♖h2 41 ♖e1 ♖h3 the black pieces are under control, even though we cannot say that White's forces are very lively. After 42 f5 (what else? 42 ♖h1? ♖xf3!) 42...♖h4 Black would continue making progress thanks to his fierce control of the seventh rank.

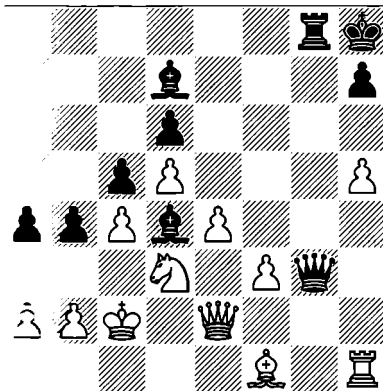
### 38...♖g3 39 ♖f1 a4

Black is preparing an eventual ...b3, leaving the white king trapped on the first rank.

### 40 ♖c2? (D)

White's pieces are clumsily placed and now it is difficult to rearrange their positions.

Even though it is difficult to make a move without having so little choice (40 f4 ♖g4 41 ♖e1 41...♖h4), this move is not the best because the king will suffer without compensation.



### 41 ♖c2?

this move deprives Black of any winning chances. With a few more seconds on his

clock, Gligorić would surely have continued 40...b3+!, opening the position and the b-file for the final assault. After 41 axb3 axb3+ 42 ♖xb3 both 42...♖b8+ and 42...♖g7 43 ♖c2 ♖b8 (threatening ...♖a4+ and ...♖b7) 44 b3 ♖a8! are decisive.

### 41 b3 1/2-1/2

As noted by Bronstein, here the game was adjourned, and after thorough analysis both players concluded that nobody could take any decisive measures. Curiously, all the white pieces ended the game on light squares.

A vibrant struggle, even with the final mistakes.

Now we shall take a brief look at 7 ♖ge2:

### Campos Moreno – Ll. Comas

*Catalonian Ch 2000*

I consider this a model game.

### 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♖e3 e5 7 ♖ge2

This is the main option.

### 7...c6 8 ♖d2 ♖bd7 9 d5 cxd5 10 cxd5 a6

Preparing ...b5.

### 11 g4

A move popularized by Karpov.

### 11...h5!

Black must not allow ♖g3: 11...b5 12 ♖g3 ♖c5 13 b4 gave White a slight advantage in Karpov-Kamsky, Linares 1993.

### 12 g5

12 h3 ♖h7!.

### 12...♖h7

12...♖e8 13 ♖c1 b5 14 ♖g1 ♖b6 15 b3 ♖d7 16 ♖d3 ♖c8 17 ♖e2 ♖e7 (this manoeuvre aims for the break ...f6, but it loses a lot of time) 18 a4 f6 19 h4 fxg5 20 hxg5 bxa4 21 bxa4 a5 22 ♖b2 ♖c7 23 ♖c4 ± Comas-Bernal, Spanish Ch 1997.

### 13 ♖g1 f6

Before starting actions on the queenside, Black secures chances on the kingside.

13...b5 14 ♖c1 ♖b6 15 b3 ♖d7 16 a3 (16 ♖d3 ♖c8 17 ♖b4 ♖a8 18 a3 ♖c7 19 ♖c1 ♖b7 20 ♖e2 ♖f8 21 ♖f2 ♖f8 22 ♖ca2 ♖e7 23 ♖c6!, Campos-Gamez, Pamplona 1997) 16...♖b8 17 ♖la2 ♖c8 18 ♖c1 ♖e7 19 ♖e2 f6 20 gxf6

♞xf6 21 ♖b4, Campos-Pablo, Castellar del Valles 1999.

#### 14 gxf6 ♞xf6!

White won in the well-known game Karpov-Dolmatov, Dortmund 1993: 14...♞xf6 15 0-0-0 ♞f7?! (15...b5 16 ♖b1 {16 a3} 16...b4 17 ♖a4 ♞xf3 18 ♖g2 ♞f6 19 ♞xb4 ♞b8 20 ♞d2 ±) 16 ♖b1 b5 17 ♖c1 ± ♖df8 (17...b4 18 ♖a4 ♞xf3 19 ♞xg6 ♞xe4+ {19...♞f6? 20 ♖g2 +-} 20 ♖d3 ♞xd5 21 ♞xd6 ±) 18 ♖e2! ♖d7 19 a3 ♞d8 (19...♞b8 20 ♖3a2! ♞d8 21 ♖b3 ±) 20 ♖1a2 (20 ♖b3 ♖f6 21 ♖a2 a5) 20...♞b8 21 ♖b4 ♞b7 22 ♞c1 (22 ♖c6 ♖xc6 23 dxc6 ♞xc6 24 ♞xd6 ♞xd6 25 ♞xd6 ♞f6 ±) 22...♖e8 23 ♖ca2 ♞c8 (23...♞c7 24 ♖c6 ±) 24 ♞xc8 ♞xc8 25 ♞c1 ♞a8 (25...♞h3 26 ♖xa6 ♞xh2 27 ♖c7 ♖d7 28 ♖c3 +-) 26 ♖c6 ♖f6 27 ♞a5 ♖g5 28 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 29 ♖ab4 ♖xf3 30 ♖xf3 ♞xf3 31 ♖e7+! ♖f7 32 ♖c8 ♖d7 33 ♖xd6+ ♖g8 34 ♖c6! +- ♞f6 35 ♞c7 ♖xc6 36 ♞xc6 1-0.

#### 15 0-0-0

It appears that there is no time to play the usual 15 ♖c1. Let us see:

a) 15...♞xf3 16 ♞xg6 ♖df8 17 ♞g2 ♖h3 18 ♞f2 ♞h4 (18...♞xf2 19 ♞xf2 ♖xf1 is unclear).

b) 15...♖df8 16 ♖e2 ♞f7 17 ♖d3 ♞h4+.

#### 15...b5

15...♞e8?! (forcing the bishop to g2, but this move also has drawbacks) 16 ♖g2 b5 17 ♖b1 ♞b8 18 ♞c1 ♖b6 19 b3 ♖d7 20 ♖d1! ♖h8 21 ♞a5 ♖c8 22 ♖b2 g5 23 ♖d3 ♖e7 24 ♖b4 ♖g6 25 ♖xa6 and White captures all the black queenside pawns unopposed, Karpov-Kotronias, Athens rpd (2) 1997.

#### 16 b3

This move, preparing a safe square for the knight on a4, after ...b4, will cause White some severe trouble. For instance, the break f4 cannot be carried out any more. If 16 ♖h3, then 16...♖df8, but it is interesting to analyse in depth the break 16 f4! exf4 17 ♖xf4 ♖e5 (17...b4 18 ♖a4 ♖e5 19 ♞xb4) 18 ♖e6! ♖xe6 19 dxe6 ♞e8 20 e7 (20 ♖h3 ♖f3 21 ♞xd6 with compensation) with a complex game. In the game White will not have any active possibilities like this.

#### 16...♖df8!

Renouncing play on the queenside, but opening new prospects on the kingside. Without a

doubt, this is an innovative manoeuvre in the variation. In the game Karpov-Topalov, Varna rpd (3) 1995 Black placed his bets on the queenside, where White inevitably has the upper hand: 16...♖b6 17 ♖b2 ♖d7 18 ♖c1 ♖e8 19 ♖e2 (the main difference from the main game: the bishop is much better placed on e2) 19...b4 20 ♖b1 a5 21 ♖d3 ±. In another game, Campos Moreno-Spraggett, Zaragoza 1995 Black followed the same screenplay: 16...♞b8 17 ♖b2 ♖b6 18 ♖c1 ♖d7 19 ♖e2 ♖e8 20 ♖a1 (20 ♖d3? ♖c4+) 20...b4 21 ♖b1 a5 22 ♖d3 ♖a8 23 ♖b2 ♖c7 24 ♞c1 ♖b5 25 ♖xb5 ♞xb5 26 ♞d1 ♞f8 27 ♖d2 (Black has no counter-play) 27...♞f6 28 ♞c7 ♖f7 29 ♞e2 ♞bb8 30 ♖b1 ♞bc8 31 ♞xc8 ♞xc8 32 ♖dc4 with a decisive plus for White.

#### 17 ♖g2

This bishop, so passively placed, is one of the reasons for White's defeat. 17 f4 exf4 18 ♖xf4 ♖g4.

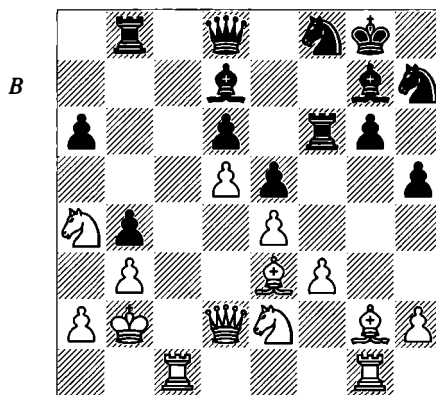
#### 17...♖d7 18 ♖b2 b4

18...♞f7!?

#### 19 ♖a4

After 19 ♖b1 a5 20 ♖c1 g5! the f8-knight comes to f4 or h4.

#### 19...♞b8 20 ♞c1 (D)



#### 20...h4!? 21 ♞c2?

Too passive. He should play more actively; e.g., 21 ♞c6 (or 21 h3 g5! ∞) 21...h3 22 ♖h1 ♖xc6 23 dxc6 ♖e6 24 ♞c1 ♞f7.

#### 21...h3 22 ♖h1 ♖b5!

Preventing ♞c7 and keeping the initiative on the queenside, at the cost of sacrificing the h3-pawn. 22...♞f7 is met by 23 ♞c7.

23 ♖g3  
 23 ♖ge1 ♖f7 24 ♗g1 ♖fb7 25 ♗hx3 ♗xa4  
 26 bxa4 b3 27 axb3 ♗d7!.

23...♖f7 24 ♗b1

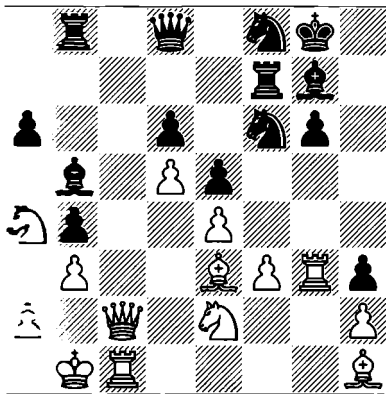
24 ♖hx3 ♗f6 (24...♗xa4 25 bxa4 b3 26  
 axb3 ♖fb7 27 ♖g3) and then:

a) 25 ♗g5 ♗a5 (25...♗d7 26 ♖g3 ♗xd5 27  
 exd5 e4+) 26 ♖g3 ♗xa4 27 bxa4 b3 28 axb3  
 ♗b7.

b) 25 ♖g3 ♗h5 26 ♖gg1 ♗f4 ♢ winning  
 material.

24 ♗f6! (D)

Black successfully carried out his plan on the  
 ♗f4, and he places the knight on a wonderful  
 square (f4), from where it will exert unpleasant  
 pressure on White's position. If 24...♗xa4 then  
 25 bxa4 b3 26 axb3 ♖fb7 27 ♗a2 ♖xb3 28  
 ♖c3 ♖xb3 29 ♗xb3.



25 ♗b2

25 ♖hx3 ♗xd5 26 exd5 ♗d7 --+; 25  
 ♗f5 26 ♖hx3 ♗f4 27 ♗b2 ♗hx3 28  
 ♖c3.

25...♗h5 26 ♖gg1 ♗f4 ♢ 27 ♗g3 a5

As the black pieces are working together,  
 mounting the assault with ...a4.

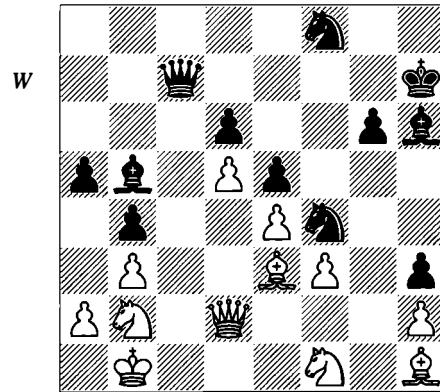
25 ♖ge1 ♗h6 29 ♗f1 ♗h7 30 ♗d2?

Penetrating the c-file without a fight. Alter-

a) The line 30 ♗f2 ♖c8 31 ♗b6 ♗d3 32  
 ♗xd3 ♗xd3+ 33 ♗a1 ♗xb6 34 ♗xb6 ♗xc1 35  
 ♗f2 ♖fc7 36 ♗e3 ♗a3 --+ is funny.

b) 30 ♗g3 ♖bb7 (30...♗d7!? followed by  
 ...♖f8 and ...♖c8) 31 ♗c8 ♗xc8 32 ♖xc8 ♗d3  
 33 ♗hx6 ♗hx6 34 ♗xd3 ♗xd3+ 35 ♗b2 ♖bc7  
 36 ♖c1 ♖xc8 37 ♖xc8 ♗h7 38 ♗c1 ♗g5 39  
 ♗d2 ♗b1 40 ♗c1 ♗xa2 41 ♗b2 ♗xf3 42  
 ♗f5+ gxf5 43 ♗xf3 fxe4 44 ♗xe4 ♖f4 is un-  
 clear.

30...♖c8 31 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 32 ♖c1 ♖c7 33  
 ♖xc7+ ♗xc7 (D)



The deflection started with ...♗h6 and ...♗h7  
 has been successful: Black controls the c-file  
 and can penetrate via c3.

34 ♗g3 ♗d7 35 ♗c1 ♗xc1+ 36 ♗xc1 ♗c5

The transition to the endgame is hopeless for  
 White, considering the poor situation of the  
 h1-bishop.

37 ♗c2 ♗fd3 38 ♗hx6 ♗hx6 39 ♗d1 ♗f4  
 40 ♗e3 ♗g7 41 ♗b2 ♗cd3+ 42 ♗c2 ♗f7 43  
 ♗d2 ♗e7 44 ♗c2 ♗d7 45 ♗d2 ♗c7 46 ♗c2  
 ♗b6 47 ♗d2 ♗c5 48 ♗c2 ♗f2 49 ♗d2

49 ♗d1 ♗xd1 50 ♗xd1 ♗d4 51 ♗d2 ♗d3  
 --+.

49...♗h5 50 ♗g4 ♗xg4 51 ♗hx5

51 fxc4 ♗xg3 52 hxg3 ♗d4.

51...gxf5 0-1

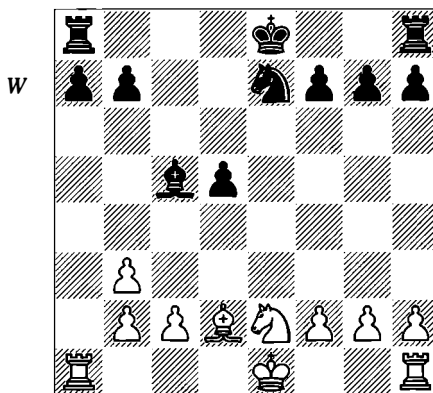
# 6 Isolated Queen's Pawn

When we enter the complicated world of positions with isolated queen's pawns, there is nothing definite. In general, players at an intermediate stage between novice and master find it very difficult to handle either side of IQP positions. At first, it is difficult to become acquainted with it, since the positional factors ruling them are diverse and complex.

Positions with an isolated pawn are closely linked to a previously studied issue: the blockade. Indeed, the side fighting against an IQP must generally keep a firm blockade on the square in front of the pawn, not only to preserve a profitable pawn-structure for the ending, but also to control important squares behind this pawn. When the blockade cannot be maintained and the player with the IQP is fighting just for equality, the advance of the pawn is generally a good equalizing method. Of course, in many other situations, where the IQP gives the game a very dynamic character (usually meaning strong pressure on the opponent's kingside) the owner of the IQP is not normally interested in a simplification.

The student can find countless examples in games where White uses the Tarrasch Variation of the French Defence, as in many Karpov-Korchnoi encounters, the Petroff Defence, the French Exchange or the Sicilian Alapin, the Queen's Gambit Accepted and the Panov Attack of the Caro-Kann. With reference to the world championship match played at Baguio, 1978, I always like to remember a surprising confession made by Bent Larsen (author of a superb book about this match) exposing his 'clinical' and especially ironic touch in the annotations to one game.

The position in the following diagram is reached after the moves 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♗b5+ ♗d7 6 ♖e2+ ♖e7 7 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 8 dxc5 ♘xc5 9 ♘b3 ♖xe2+ 10 ♘xe2 ♘xb3 11 axb3 ♗c5 12 ♗d2 (12 ♘c3!?) 12...♗e7 (D).



W

The great Bent Larsen spoke out: "In my opinion White has a clear advantage. A small but very clear one. I don't like isolated pawns! The same day, at the Spanish National Team Tournament, I agreed to play with an IQP against Arturo Pomar. I won after 23 moves! My queen did a wonderful job. Here, things are different because Korchnoi no longer has his queen..."

This personal view might well be a little overstated, though essentially is very enlightening. In general, only the continued and systematic study of these positions will take those passing fears away. We should note that many outstanding players both of a positional style (e.g. Smyslov), and more creative ones from the point of view of dynamic strategy (such as Nunn), have a place for IQP positions in their opening repertoire – both players mentioned handle them with virtuosity.

## Combination of Positional and Dynamic Factors

This game shows us one side of the coin. White combines healthy strategic decisions with some pressure on the opponent's kingside. Smyslov's

handling of the opening is a little unusual but at the same time strong. Black, obsessed with the idea of maintaining the blockade, allows the entry of the white rook on the seventh rank, and worse still he loses control of the d5-square.

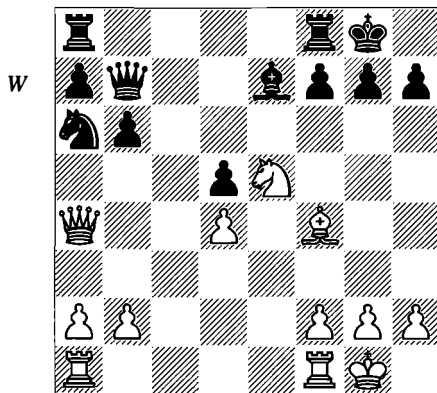
**Smyslov – Ribli**  
London Ct (7) 1983

Vasily Smyslov, at the age of 62, surprised everybody in 1982-4 candidates cycle. Probably, his simple and intuitive play made it far easier for him to remain part of the world elite for such a long time. His is one of the most outstanding cases of longevity in the whole history of our sport (his last participation in a top tournament was the Petrosian Memorial in 1999, along with many illustrious veterans like Spassky, Taimanov, Larsen, Ivkov, Gligorić, etc.).

Smyslov had beaten Hübner in the first match of the road to the title (the tie was broken by roulette and favoured Vasily) and in this, the Candidates semi-final against Hungarian GM Zoltan Ribli, he was slightly ahead in the match coming into the seventh game. The following game turned out to be decisive.

1 d4 ♟f6 2 ♟f3 e6 3 c4 d5 4 ♟c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♟xd5 6 e3 ♟c6

The above-mentioned game Larsen-Pomar, Spain tt 1978 featured a delayed development of the queen's knight: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♟f6 5 ♟c3 e6 6 ♟f3 ♟e7 7 cxd5 ♟xd5 8 ♟d3 0-0 9 0-0 b6 10 ♟xd5 exd5 11 ♟e5 ♟a6 12 ♟xa6 ♟xa6 13 ♟a4 ♟c8 14 ♟f4 ♟b7 (D).

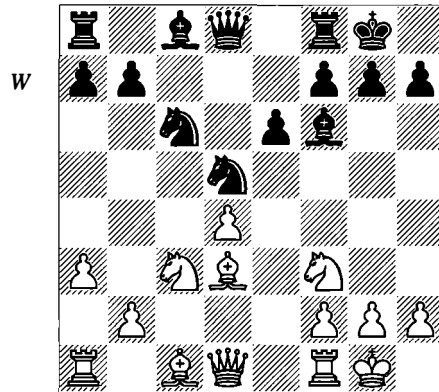


15 ♟c6 ♟ab8 16 ♟fc1 ♟b4 17 ♟d7 ♟a6 18 ♟c3 ♟f6 19 ♟f5 ♟fe8 20 ♟h3 h6 21 ♟xh6 ♟c8 22 ♟d7 ♟e6 23 ♟xg7 1-0.

7 ♟d3 ♟e7 8 0-0-0 9 a3 cxd4

Finally, Black opens the door. He could retain the tension by playing 9...b6 10 ♟c2 g6 11 dxc5 bxc5 12 ♟d1 ♟c7. With his choice, he brings about a standard Isolated Queen's Pawn (IQP) position.

10 exd4 ♟f6 (D)



This position can also arise from the Panov Attack of the Caro Kann. Black's last move seems logical, aiming to put pressure on White's d-pawn, and clearing the e7-square for the c6-knight. In this way, Black controls the blockading square in front of the isolated pawn once more, an essential idea in the defensive set-up of this and all such positions. The isolated queen's pawn is not exactly weak, as many players think, since if the opponent relaxes the blockading task and devotes his efforts to capturing it, the pawn can freely advance.

11 ♟e4

In turn, pressure on d5 is an important part of White's strategy. Once Black has denied his knight the f6-square, this move is perfectly reasonable.

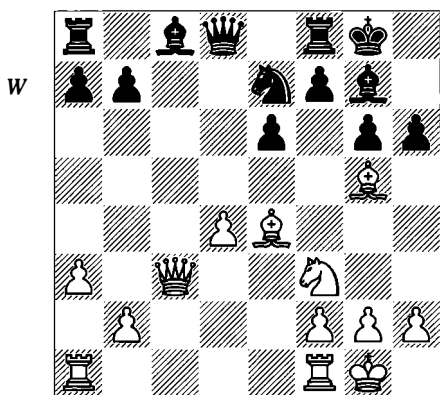
11...♟ce7 12 ♟e5!?

At the time of the game, this move was not mentioned in opening books, so it shall be considered as a contribution to modern theory. In fact, *ECO* considers this move to be best, possibly thanks to its success in this game.

To tell the truth, logic is guiding this move, because once he has established control of e5,

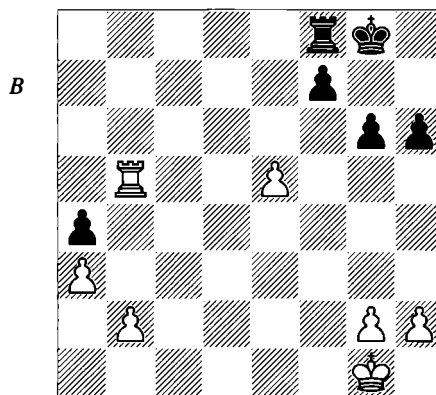
White will profit from the value of the threat ♖g4. If Black is really forced to play 12...g6 to preserve his dark-squared bishop, then the benefits of Smyslov's move are obvious, in comparison with the usual choice 12 ♖d3, when the common sequence is 12...g6 13 ♙h6 ♙g7 14 ♙xg7 ♜xg7. The move ♗e5 actually seems to be more useful than any particular queen move, especially because we don't know which is the queen's best square yet.

The standard continuation also deserves attention, however. The game Romero-Antunes, Andorra Z 1987 removes some doubt about the pressure exerted by the white pieces once the blockade is rendered ineffective. After 12 ♖d3 g6! 13 ♙h6 ♙g7 14 ♙g5!? ♗xc3? (the immediate 14...h6! is better, with a similar idea to the text-move, and if 15 ♙xe7?! ♗xe7 16 ♗e5?, the tactical weakness of the white queen would be manifest: 16...f5! 17 ♙f3 ♙xe5; White should play 15 ♙h4, although the bishop remains artificially placed) 15 ♖xc3 (not 15 bxc3? f5!, winning the bishop) 15...h6 (D).



16 ♙xe7! (this simple move enables White to prevent a full blockade and strengthens the pressure the remaining white bishop exerts) 16...♖xe7 17 ♗e5! (White's knight also performs a major role in the battle, blocking out Black's dark-squared bishop; Black cannot contemplate playing ...♙xe5 yet, because White's control over the d6-square and increasing pressure on the queenside would cause serious trouble) 17...♗d8 18 ♜fd1 (usually, in the dynamic Panov Attack, rooks are placed on the d- and e-files, in order to exert pressure on e6;

the trouble developing Black's light-squared bishop is obvious, and White believes that the c-file will be his domain) 18...a5!? (this move anticipates the upcoming trouble in case of choosing another development for the light-squared bishop; for instance, after 18...♖b8, with ...♙d7 to follow at once or after an exchange on e5, Black should assess very carefully the consequences of the thematic queen move to a5; after 19 ♖a5 ♙xe5 {19...b6 is bad owing to 20 ♗c6! bxa5 21 ♗xe7+! followed by 22 ♗c6} 20 dxe5 {20 ♖xe5!? ♙d7 21 d5 is interesting} 20...♜xd1+ 21 ♜xd1 b6 22 ♖d2! White wins a healthy pawn; the text-move, then, prevents the entry of the white queen, and seeks to activate his rook, keeping the c8-bishop on its original square) 19 ♜ac1 ♙a6 20 f4 a4 (necessary if Black wants to continue with 21...♖b6) 21 ♖c7! ♖xc7 22 ♜xc7+ ♙xe5 23 fxe5 b5 (after 23...♖b6 24 ♗dc1 ♙d7 25 ♖xb7 Black's game is condemned) 24 ♙c6 (24 ♜f1 ♙d7 25 d5 is probably better, with good winning chances) 24...♖b6 25 d5! exd5 (even at the cost of a pawn, the resulting ending is not an easy win; other moves allow the advance of the d-pawn, which, supported for the bishop, turns out to be decisive) 26 ♜xd5 ♜f8 27 ♜xb5 ♜xc6! 28 ♜xc6 ♙d7 29 ♜cb6 ♙xb5 30 ♜xb5 (D).

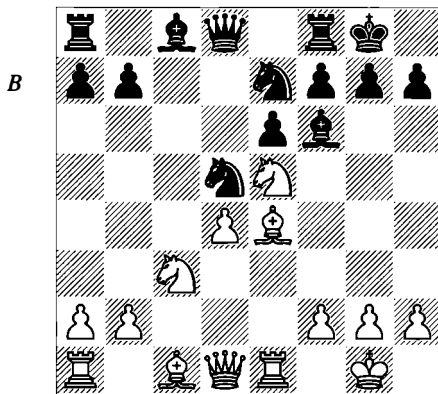


30...g5?! (clearly wrong, because it gives White a winning resource; without this move, Black's defensive possibilities would be much greater) 31 h4! ♜c8 32 h5! (now the black king shall always be ready to protect the h-pawn) 32...♜c2 33 ♜h2 ♜f8 34 ♖b6 ♜e2 (34...♜g7 35 ♜g3 sees White making easy progress) 35

♠xh6 ♠xb2 36 ♠a6 ♠e2 37 e6! fxe6 38 ♠xa4 ♗g7 39 ♗h3 ♠e3+ 40 ♗g4 ♗h6 41 g3 ♠e5 42 ♠b4 (42 ♠a7!?) 42...♗g7 (42...♠a5 fails to 43 ♠e4! e5 44 a4 followed by ♠b4, winning) 43 ♠b7+ ♗f6 (if 43...♗h6, 44 ♠e7) 44 h6 with a decisive advantage for White.

### 12...g6

This is probably a mistake. Let us consider a few lines after 1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 c5 4 e3 cxd4 5 exd4 d5 6 ♗c3 ♗e7 7 cxd5 ♗xd5 8 ♗d3 ♗c6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♠e1 ♗f6 11 ♗e4 ♗ce7 12 ♗e5 (D) – i.e. the same position but with ♠e1 played instead of a3.



a) 12...♗c6! is a move introduced by Karpov:

a1) 13 ♗g4 is without significance now, since the bishop can retreat.

a2) 13 ♗f3 ♗ce7 1/2-1/2 Ivanchuk-Karpov, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1988. The fighting spirit of both players was not exactly high.

a3) The critical move 13 ♗d3 is interesting, and for instance was played in Smyslov-Ivanchuk, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1988: 13...h6 (13...♗xc3 14 bxc3 ♗xe5 15 ♗xh7+) 14 ♗xd5 (14 ♗g3 ♗h4! 15 ♗d3 repeats; 14 a3!? ♗xe5 {14...♗xc3! 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♗xc6 ♠b8 17 bxc3 ±} 15 dxe5 ♗xe5 16 ♗h7+ ♗h8 17 ♠xe5 ♗xc3 18 bxc3 f5 19 ♗xf5 exf5 20 ♗xd8 ♠xd8 21 ♗e3 ±) 14...♗b4 (14...exd5 ± 15 ♗f4 ♗b4 16 ♗b1 ♗e6 17 a3 ♗c6 18 ♗d3 ♠c8 ∞ J.Polgar-J.Horvath, Hungarian Ch 1991) 15 ♗g3 ♗h4 (15...♗c2? 16 ♗e4 ♗xe1 17 ♗xh6 ♗xd4 18 ♗g4 ±; 15...exd5 16 ♠e2!) 16 ♗f3 exd5?! (16...♗c2 17 ♗e4 ♗xa1 {17...♗xe1 18 ♗b3 ±} 18 ♗c4 ±; 16...♗xd5! ±) 17 ♠e2 ♗e6 18 a3

♗c6 19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 ♗a4 (White has obtained a minimal positional advantage and in masterly fashion he converts it into a win taking advantage of the superiority of the dark-squared bishop against his opponent's light-squared one) 20...♗c8 21 h3 ♗e7 22 ♗f4 ♗a6 23 ♗c5! ♗xc5 24 dxc5 ♗b5 25 ♠ael ♗h7 (25...♗xc5 26 ♗g3 ♠fd8 27 ♗xh6 gives White the initiative) 26 ♗g3 ♗f5 27 ♗d6 ♠g8 28 ♠e7 ♗g6 (28...♗xb2 29 ♗xf7) 29 ♗c3! ♗a4 (the idea is to play ...d4-d3) 30 ♗e5 ♠ae8 31 ♗d4 ♠b8 (31...♗xe7 32 ♗xe7 with the initiative) 32 ♠le3! a5 33 f4! ♗dl+ 34 ♠e1 (34 ♗h2?! a4!) 34...♗a4 35 ♗d2 (the threat is ♗c3, ♗f2 and f5) 35...♠b3 36 ♗c3 ♗c4 37 ♗f2 ♗e4 38 ♗xf7 d4 39 ♗xd4 ♗xf7 40 ♗xe4+ ♗h8 41 f5 ♗d5 42 ♗xd5 cxd5 43 ♠e6 ♠d8 (43...♗xc3 44 bxc3 ♠c8 45 c6 +-; 43...♗h7 44 ♠d6) 44 ♠xh6+ ♗g8 45 ♠h4! ♠c8 46 ♠g4 ♠xc5 (46...♠c7 47 f6) 47 ♠xg7+ ♗f8 48 f6 ♠cxc3 49 bxc3 ♠xc3 50 ♠d7 ♠xa3 51 ♠xd5 ♗f7 52 ♠d6 1-0.

b) In fact, in a later game Karpov preferred to play 12...♗d7!? 13 ♗d3 (now 13 ♗g4 ♗c6 14 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 gives White nothing) and now 13...♗g6! led to a very complex game in Ivanchuk-Karpov, Roquebrune rpd 1992. Instead, both 13...h6 14 ♗g3 ♗c6 15 ♗g4! ± Illescas-Bass, Leon 1990 and 13...g6 14 ♗h6 ♗g7 15 ♗h3 (another basic idea of 12 ♗e5) 15...♗c6 16 ♗g5 are bad for Black.

### 13 ♗h6

Another option that deserves attention is 13 ♗f3 ♗g7 14 h4, by which White puts pressure on Black's sound position, but his attempt is unsuccessful due to a tactical detail related with the lack of defence of the white knight: 14...♗f6! 15 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 16 ♗xb7 ♗xd4.

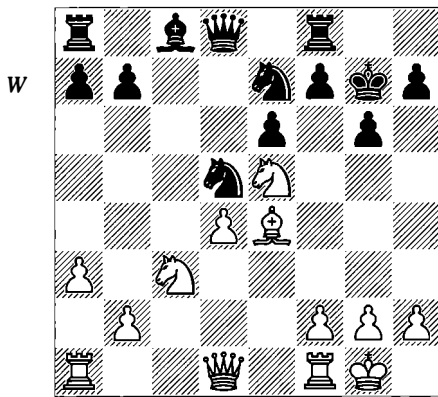
### 13...♗g7 14 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 (D)

### 15 ♠c1!

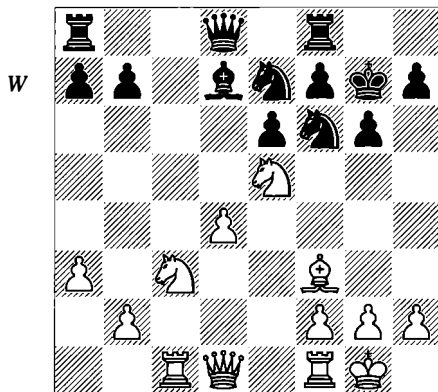
Smyslov has a very simple plan in mind: rather than focusing solely on d5, he will get his rook to the seventh rank, where it will destabilize Black's position. White, in a very subtle way, will exert strong pressure against Black's weakened kingside.

Another natural plan is to exert pressure on d5 by playing 15 ♗f3. Of course, we would have then to evaluate very well the consequences resulting from allowing 15...♗b6.

### 15...b6



While Ribli slightly criticizes this move in his annotations for some magazines, Smyslov, in *Informator* didn't mention any other options. Ribli suggested 15...d6 as an improvement. 16 e3 (allowing the exchange is not appropriate, since Black would play ...f6 later and defend the point e6) 16...d7 (D).



Now White can choose what type of advantage to aim for:

1) To be satisfied with a very slight advantage after Black plays ...c6.

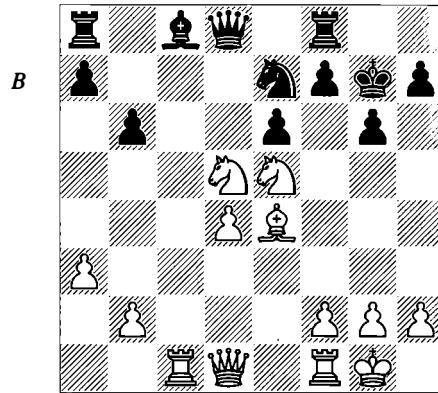
2) To profit from the tactical chances coming from the variation 17 e3 b8 18 f3 d5! (if 18...b6?!, then 19 f6+) and now:

a) 19 e4!? d4 20 f6+ f6 21 d5 e2+ 22 h1 d1 23 fxd7.

b) 19 f1 b6 (19...h4?! 20 f4 b7 21 xh4 b2 22 d5! with the initiative) and now 20 e4 or 20 d7 d7 21 c6, taking advantage of the fact that 21...d4? is not feasible, or even 20 c6!?

The text-move seems not to be a mistake. Anyway, ...b6 is a very standard move.

16 dxd5! (D)



16...dxd5

Ribli attaches a question mark to this natural move. Curiously, Smyslov thinks this move is quite OK. *ECO* makes no comment either. Instead, Ribli proposes 16...exd5 17 e3 e5 ending with an ambiguous statement: "White is held back". In general, with a symmetrical pawn-structure, with two IQPs blockading one another and both sides having bishops of the same colour, the advantage belongs to the player whose IQP is not on the same colour square as his own bishop (since his pawn is not weak, and his opponent's can be attacked). Therefore we could expect White to be better here, even before we take into account the other small advantages he has gathered:

1) The move ...b6 has left the black position very vulnerable and prevents his queen from using this square, via which it might otherwise be activated.

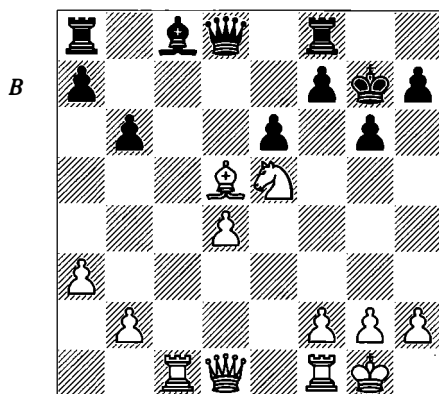
2) Black is forced to expel the white knight, therefore weakening the position a little.

White can continue 18 e1 (or 18 a4!?) 18...c8 19 xc8 xc8 20 e2 (eyeing the b5-square), securing some initiative. Probably, Ribli's remark is founded on his own personal experience with this line. Portisch-Ribli, Hungarian Ch 1981 featured 12 c2?! g6 13 e5 b6 (as we can see, White has lost a tempo in comparison with Smyslov-Ribli, by placing the queen on a less fortunate square) 14 h6 g7 15 dxd5 exd5! 16 xg7 xg7 17 f3 f5

(winning a tempo) 18 ♖d2 ♗d6 19 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 and Black achieved a level game.

In my opinion, the extra time White has in the current case is too important, and would deny Black chances to consolidate his position. The best proof is that Ribli, in the heat of the moment, favoured the other choice. In the game we are studying, Black has a very clear chance to improve his play, but this is on the next move.

17 ♗xd5 (D)



17... ♗xd5?

Ribli believes this is the fatal mistake, but this might be too severe and determined by the outcome of the game. Anyway, his suggestion 17...exd5! is well justified, since the white knight could not find a square with good prospects. Indeed, White should stop the threat of 18...f6 19 ♗d3 ♗a6 20 ♗f4 ♗d6!, but not with 18 ♖e1 ♗f5, since the same idea would be restored. To transfer that beautiful knight to f3 (without great prospects) is nearly a crime.

Is there any way to stop Black's defensive plan? At first glance it is obvious that the white knight can perform a more important role in the battle than the bishop. Yet the task is not easy.

First we need to think about possible plans, and then move on to the specifics. An obvious idea is to transfer the queen to the heart of Black's position (c6 or c7) establishing threats against the weak black pawns.

a) 18 ♗c2 is one idea. Then:

a1) After 18... ♗f5 19 ♗c7 the e5-knight is extremely irritating for Black. If he continues 19... ♗g8 (the ending is very bad), there would

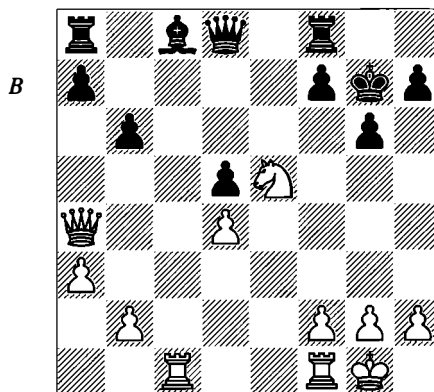
follow 20 ♗b7! in order to reply to 20...f6 with 21 ♗c6 or, even better, 21 ♖c7!.

a2) 18... ♗a6 is met by 19 ♖fe1 ♖c8 (19...f6 is no good due to 20 ♗c7+ ♗g8 21 ♗g4! – the knight now has this square available) 20 ♗a4! winning.

a3) However, there is nothing at all wrong with 18...f6. After 19 ♗c7+ (19 ♗d3 should not be met by 19... ♗a6? in view of 20 ♗f4! ♗d6 21 ♗c7+ ♗xc7 22 ♖xc7+ ♖f7 23 ♖fc1 ♗c4 24 b3! ♗xb3 25 ♗e6+ ♗g8 26 ♖c8+ leading to a nice mate, but 19... ♗f5! leaves this variation without effect) 19... ♗g8! 20 ♗xd8 (20 ♗d3 allows 20... ♗a6) 20... ♗xd8 21 ♗c6 ♖d7! (not 21... ♖e8 on account of 22 ♗b4!?) followed by ... ♗b7, and Black reaches a very tenable position, slightly worse but solid.

After this thwarted try, it is easy to discover another way to penetrate Black's position:

b) 18 ♗a4! (D) suggests itself.

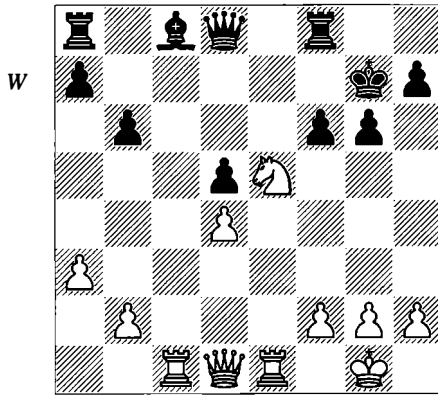


b1) After 18... ♗f5 19 ♗c6! the queen is pursuing the same goal as on c7, namely to hinder the expulsion of his knight. After 19...f6, 20 ♗b7+! is winning and if 19... ♖c8 again 20 ♗b7 a5 21 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 22 ♗a7! decides the game. The prophylactic 19... ♖b8 doesn't seem to help, since it loses an important tempo: 20 ♖fe1 f6 21 ♗c7+ ♗g8 22 ♗xd8 ♖bx8 23 ♗c6 ♖d7 24 ♖e7! with a won ending.

b2) But what happens again if 18...f6? After 19 ♗d3 ♗f5 20 ♗f4 the knight reaches f4, but it doesn't seem to be an unassailable bulwark: 20... ♗d6 21 g3 g5 22 ♖c6 ♗d7! and we have got nothing. Nor does White make progress after 19 ♗c6 ♗d7!.

After these unsuccessful efforts we join two ideas: the command of the e-file and then placing the queen aggressively.

c) Therefore 18 ♖e1 might be the right move. After 18...f6 (D) (18...♙f5 is worse on account of 19 ♖a4 f6 20 ♖c6 ♖d6 21 ♖b4! with a good ending) White has an important decision:



c1) 19 ♖c6 ♖d6 20 ♖a4 threatens to simplify to an ending as well as exerting pressure on the a-pawn. Let us see Black's options:

c11) 20...♙d7 21 ♖b4!.

c12) 20...♙f5 21 ♖b4! ♖xb4 22 ♖xb4 ♖fe8 (after 22...♖ac8 there are several convincing possibilities such as 23 ♖e7+ ♖g8 24 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 25 f3 {or 25 h4}, or 23 ♖xd5 ♖fd8 24 ♖xc8 ♙xc8 25 ♖e7+ ♖f8 26 ♖xh7) 23 ♖c7+ ♖h6 24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 f3 (or 25 h4) 25...♖e1+ 26 ♖f2 ♖b1 27 ♖xd5 with little hope for Black.

c13) 20...♙b7 (the idea is to reach a tenable ending if White replies with 21 ♖b4) 21 ♖xa7! ♖b8 22 ♖e7+.

c14) 20...♙e6 (the same idea as line 'c3') 21 ♖xa7! ♖f7 22 ♖b5.

c15) Black should counter both threats by 20...♖f7! (controlling the seventh rank) 21 ♖e8 ♖d7! 22 ♖d8 ♖c7, when White gets no advantage, not even by exploiting his knight's active position: 23 b4 ♙b7 24 ♖xa8 ♙xa8 25 b5 ♙xc6 26 bxc6 ♖d6 followed by ...♖c7, with a likely draw.

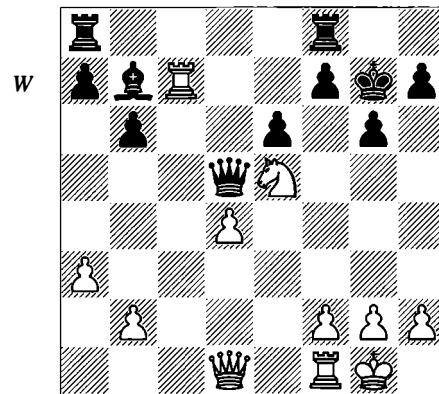
We have seen how difficult it is to get an advantage after the unusual 17...exd5!. White must lower his sights:

c2) White should probably content himself with a slight edge by playing 19 ♖d3 ♙f5 20

♖f4 ♖d6 and now 21 ♖d2 or 21 g3 (the manoeuvre ♖g2-e3 will always be possible).

18 ♖c7! ♙b7 (D)

Black seems to have his pieces in ideal positions, but appearances are deceptive, and this is the point where we shall recognize Smyslov's excellence. The g2- and d4-pawns will be easily defended and the presence of a rook on the seventh rank turns out to be unpleasant. Black cannot play 18...♖d6 on account of 19 ♖xf7-♖xf7 20 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 21 ♖f3+.



19 ♖g4!

The queen defends and attacks. g6 is going to be very vulnerable.

19...♖ad8

The ending arising from 19...♖ac8 20 ♖d7! ♖e4 21 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 22 f3 ♙d5 23 ♖xa7 ♖c2 24 b4 is easy for White to win, since Black dare not vacate the c-file: 24...♖d2 25 ♖c1!. Likewise 19...♖e4 is hopeless, due to 20 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 21 f3 ♙d5 and now 22 ♖fc1 or 22 g4 with the idea of g5.

20 ♖d1 a5

Before activating the black bishop, it is necessary to place the a7-pawn out of the scope of the white rook. Therefore the pawn moves to a dark square.

21 h4!

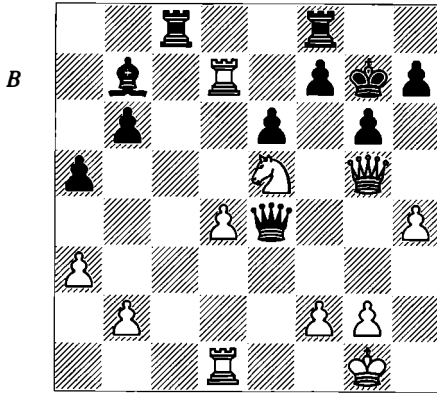
A new element comes to complicate matters. This advance allows the king a flight-square and threatens to breach the defences: the pressure on g6 will be unbearable.

21...♖c8 22 ♖d7

The rook on the seventh rank causes much more trouble than those initially predicted, and

among them there is the lack of activity of Black's f8-rook. Black tries to get some activity with the other rook on the c-file, but now the position of Black's queen becomes more awkward.

22...♖e4 23 ♖g5! (D)



Not even the superb diagonal in Black's hands can hide the weakness of his own king. The queen, from g5, opens a new door towards the final assault, revealing the entry point f6 after the thematic advance of the h-pawn, or an eventual ♘g4. Ribli must react quickly in order to repel the attack.

23...♗c6?

The final mistake. This move counters the threat of h5, but Black's pieces are not able to prevent the other threats. Smyslov doesn't consider this move worthy of a question mark, but Ribli does, and he shows the variation 23...h6! 24 ♖xg6+ ♖xg6 25 ♘xg6 ♗xg6 26 ♖xb7 ♖b8 (if 26...♗c6 then 27 ♗d3!) concluding that he would have some drawing chances in the rook ending. I believe he is right. After a hypothetical sequence 27 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 28 f3 (it is not possible to occupy the file first since the h-pawn is hanging: 28 ♖c1 ♗d8 29 ♖c6 ♖xd4 30 ♖xb6 ♖xh4) 28...♗c8 29 ♗d2, it is clear that White would need to demonstrate superb technique to win.

This illustrates how difficult it is to decide when to give up a pawn in return for some practical counterplay, in search of a draw. Ribli prefers not to give up material yet, confident that the right moment to start counterplay will come.

24 f3!

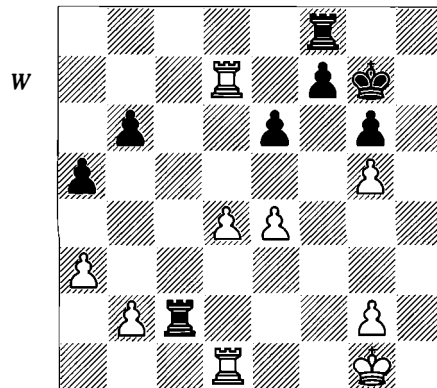
Closing the diagonal and forcing the black queen to adopt a more passive role, because 24...♖e2 is not possible. White could not hesitate; if 24 ♖a7, then 24...h6!

24...♖f5

Black has paid a high price for stopping h5. He avoids an elegant trap, well calculated by Smyslov: 24...♖c2 25 ♘g4! ♖xd1+ 26 ♗h2 ♗g8 27 ♖h6 followed by ♘f6+.

24...h6 looks more interesting. This move was not even mentioned in the annotations of the players. Black is looking for a tenable rook ending:

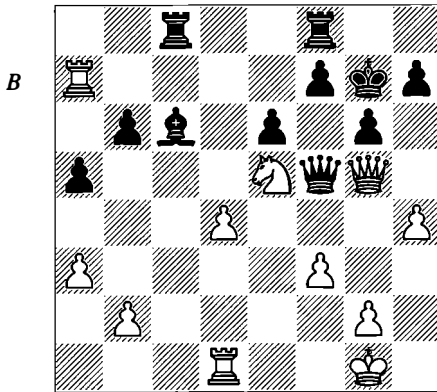
- a) 25 ♖c1? is punished by 25...♖e2!.
- b) 25 ♖e7? fails to 25...♖e3+!.
- c) 25 fxe4 hxg5 26 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 27 hxg5 ♖c2! (D).



This is a good point for White to abandon this variation and seek something better on move 25, but we can look a little deeper just to make sure. Undoubtedly, after 28 b4 axb4 29 axb4 ♖b2 White has only the possibility of pushing his d-pawn (unsuitable) or choosing to play e5 followed by d5 and e6, but it is easy for Black to defend against that idea. The reader will find it easy to discover that 28 ♖b1 is not only a defensive move, but it also aims to play 29 b4 and after 29...a4, 30 ♖f1 followed by ♖f3. The problem is that after 28...♗d2 29 b4 the move 29...♗d3 is unpleasant. Therefore, White is forced into the variation 28 b3 ♖c3 29 ♖b1 (a curious position where both sides have an active rook and the other occupied in defensive tasks, and where the goal is to activate both rooks despite a small material loss; White, for

instance, would profit from attacking f7 and Black from attacking g2; in fact, 28 b3 is justified by removing the active black rook from c2) 29...♖d3! (the 'psychological' 29...♙g8 is worse, as we shall see later) 30 e5 (30 a4 e5! 31 d5 ♖e3 32 ♖b7 ♖xe4 33 ♖xb6 ♖g4! gives Black strong counterplay) and now with 30...b5! Black keeps his chances intact. Instead 30...♙g8 allows 31 a4 ♖c3 32 ♖b2! (32 ♖b7 ♖d8! 33 ♖f1 ♖xd4 34 ♖xf7 is also interesting) 32...♖d3 33 ♙h2 ♖c3 34 ♖d6!, when White has defended the seventh rank and so he can free his passive rook: 34...♖b8 35 b4!.

25 ♖a7 (D)



25...♙a4?!

A fatal move to Ribli, who made this same move, ...♙a4, in the fifth game of this match, with exactly the same results. This time it is not quite so serious, although 25...♙d5 is a somewhat better defence (Black must move the bishop in view of the threat of 26 ♖c1). Then 26 ♘d7 ♖fd8 27 ♘xb6 ♖b8 is a variation that Ribli, maybe over-optimistically, considers to give Black "some drawing chances". 28 ♘d7! ♖xb2 (the same position is reached after 27...♖c2) 29 ♘e5 ♖f8 30 ♙xf5 and now:

a) 30...gxf5 31 ♖c1! (intending ♖cc7) wins.

b) 30...exf5 defends f7 but allows White to get another passed pawn. For instance: 31 ♖xa5 ♙b3 32 ♖c1! (worse is 32 ♖d3 f6!) 32...♖d2 33 ♖c3! ♙e6 34 ♖d3 ♖xd3 35 ♘xd3 ♖d8 36 ♖a4 followed by ♖b4, ♘c5 and a4, winning.

26 ♖e1! ♖c2 27 b4

The bishop allows this possibility.

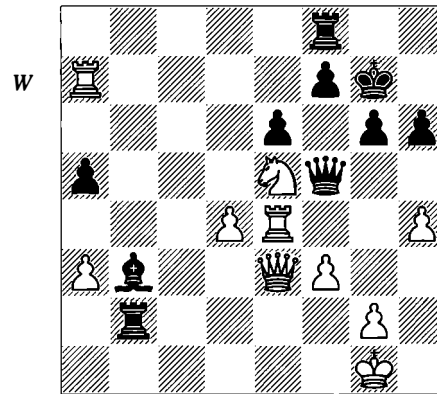
27...♙b3 28 bxa5 bxa5 29 ♖e4!

Much better than winning the pawn, since another piece joins the attack against f7 and g6, and the defence becomes untenable.

29...h6 30 ♙e3

30 ♙g3 imprisons the white king, and so 31 ♖f4 is not much of a threat due to 31...♖c1+ 32 ♙h2 ♙b1.

30...♖b2 (D)



31 ♖g4

31 ♖f4 is also good, since 31...♙c2 fails to 32 ♖g4; for example, 32...♖b1+ 33 ♙h2 g5 34 ♘xf7!.

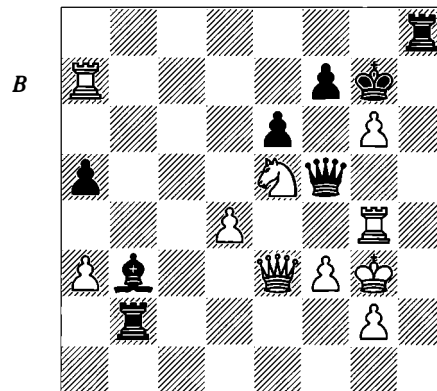
31...g5

At this point it is worth noting Ribli's resourcefulness. Unfortunately for him, Smyslov just has 'only moves' at his disposal and in such a situation he would not make any mistakes.

32 hxg5 h5 33 ♖g3 h4 34 ♖g4 h3 35 g6 h2+

This appears to be hopeless, but still White must pay the greatest attention.

36 ♙xh2 ♖h8+ 37 ♙g3 (D)



37...♖xg2+ 38 ♔xg2 ♖c2+ 39 ♖f2! ♗h2+ 40 ♔xh2 ♖xf2+ 41 ♔h3 ♖f1+ 42 ♗g2 ♖h1+ 1-0

Black resigned without waiting for a reply after the adjournment. There would follow 43 ♔g3 ♖e1+ 44 ♔g4 ♖h1 45 ♗g3 ♗c2 46 gxf7 (or 46 ♗xf7+ ♔g8 47 ♔g5) 46...♖h6 47 ♗g2! ♗f5+ 48 ♔g3 with the threat of 49 ♔f2+.

## A More Dynamic Treatment

White's dynamic possibilities with an IQP are often very important. The possibility of lining up his queen and light-squared bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal is a major feature of the position, and the ease with which this can be arranged is very noteworthy. If Black, for instance, carelessly played ...h6, the white queen might find a way to penetrate Black's kingside.

The following game is a clear example of the dangers threatening Black if he allows the entry of the queen via h7 and also the trouble that can await a cornered queen. Karpov leads the play towards the centre of the board, where all his pieces, perfectly placed, are preparing the advance of the isolated pawn. In the end he finds an advantageous point to start the final assault against Black's king.

**Karpov – Timman**  
*Moscow 1981*

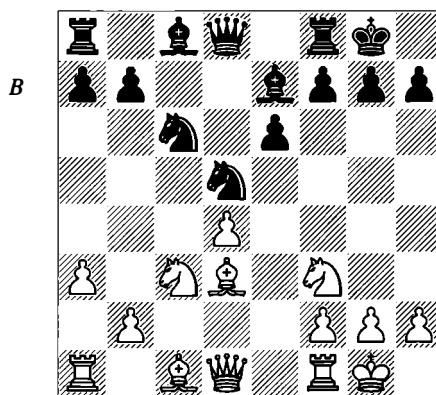
Panov Caro-Kann or Semi-Tarrasch QGD? Without a doubt, this is one of the messiest areas of the ECO classification. The move-order 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♗f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♗f3 ♗e7 7 cxd5 exd5 appears as a Caro-Kann in ECO, but if Black instead played 7...♘xd5 we would reach a position classified as a Queen's Gambit. This doesn't seem very logical, given that after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗f6 4 ♗f3 c5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 e3 ♗c6 7 ♗d3, it looks unreasonable that the main line should be 7...cxd4, opening the diagonal for the white bishop.

We are about to see these positions arise via an English Opening move-order.

1 c4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 e3 ♗f6 4 ♗c3 e6 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3 cxd4

After this move, a typical position with an IQP comes into view.

10 exd4 (D)



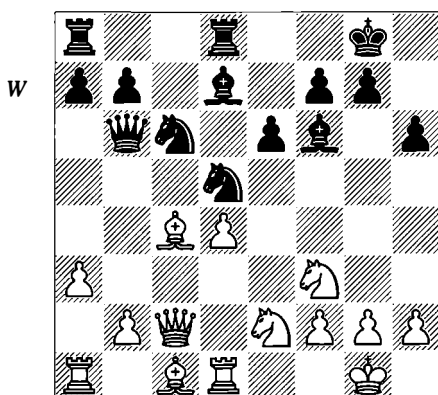
10...♗f6

This is the usual move. The natural-looking 10...b6 leads to some trouble due to the double attack after 11 ♖c2 g6?? 12 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 13 ♗e4. On the same theme, a curious variation is 10...♘xc3 11 bxc3 b6 12 ♖c2 g6 13 ♗h6 ♗e8 14 h4! ♗xh4 15 ♗b5 ♗b7 16 ♖e4 ♘xd4 17 ♖xd4 with some advantage for White, Ermolinsky-Aseev, Leningrad 1984.

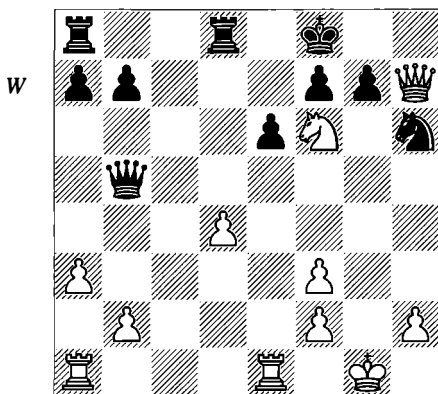
11 ♗e4

Smyslov-Ribli, London Ct (5) 1983 featured 11 ♖c2, a new move at the time. After 11...g6 12 ♗h6 ♗e8 13 ♗ad1 White has placed his pieces in an ideal way (he only needs to transfer the king's rook to e1, exerting pressure on e6), so Ribli replied with the less standard 11...h6. The game continued 12 ♗d1 ♖b6 13 ♗c4 ♗d8 (Black cannot accept the gift, relying on the resource 13...♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♘a4 ♖c7 16 ♗xd4 b5, since 17 ♗xh6! leads to a swift attack) 14 ♗e2 (White's defensive set-up seems to be not very healthy, but this is one of the shortcomings of removing the queen's support of the d-pawn) 14...♗d7 (D).

15 ♖e4! (a curious manoeuvre, exerting pressure on d5 and directing the queen towards Black's kingside) 15...♗ce7 16 ♗d3 ♗a4? (this mistake allows White a straightforward attack; 16...♘g6 also appears advisable; better is 16...♗b5 17 ♖h7+ ♔f8 18 ♘g3 ♗xd3 19 ♖xd3 ♗ac8 – the difference between placing the rook on d1 or e1 is going to be noticed in



White's favour) 17 ♖h7+ ♔f8 18 ♚e1 ♜b5 19 ♜xb5 ♞xb5 20 ♘g3 ♘g6 (20...♘g8 appears to defend the position better) 21 ♘e5! (justifying the position of the rook on e1) 21...♘de7 (after 21...♘df4 22 ♜xf4 ♘xf4 White has artistic ideas like the jump 23 ♘f5!!) 22 ♜xh6! ♘xe5 23 ♘h5! ♘f3+ 24 gxf3 ♘f5 25 ♘xf6 ♘xh6 (D).

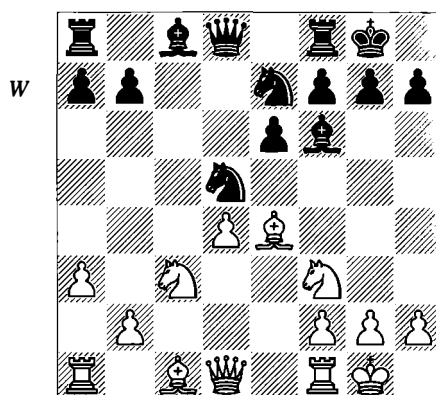


Now Smyslov played 26 d5! – a typical advance in White's attacking set-up. Although the white queen and knight have been aggressively placed, the soundness of Black's position demands a new destabilizing element. Both in this game and in the main game, the isolated pawn displays its huge power to break up a position. There followed 26...♞xb2 27 ♞h8+ ♔e7 28 ♜xe6+! fxe6 29 ♞xg7+ ♘f7 30 d6+! ♜xd6 31 ♘d5+, winning the queen.

11...♘ce7 (D)

12 ♞d3 h6?!

The usual way of countering White's set-up along the b1-h7 diagonal is by playing 12...g6,



although this involves the exchange of the dark-squared bishops and the weakening of the king's defences. However, the text-move is a formal invitation for the white queen to justify her high fees.

13 ♘e5

As we saw in Smyslov-Ribli, this is a typical move. On e5 the knight exerts pressure and is in a perfect position to play an ideal supporting role to the queen. Its possible transfer to g4, and the option of transferring the queen to g3 are other important reasons in favour of this move.

13...♘xc3

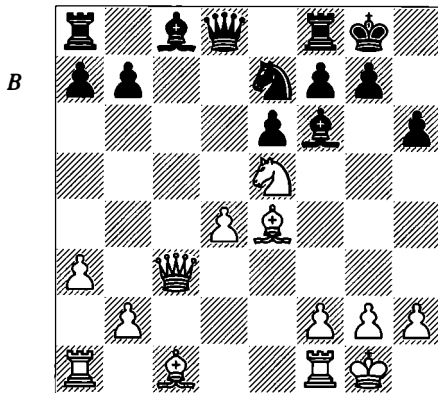
Black takes this difficult decision after accurately assessing the consequences of 13...♘d7. With the text-move, Timman prevents action against his king (by, e.g., ♞g3 and ♘g4) by exerting pressure on the d4-pawn.

14 ♞xc3 (D)

The ending after 14 bxc3 ♘xe5 15 dxe5 ♞xd3 16 ♜xd3 ♘d7 clearly did not appeal to Karpov (17 a4 ♜fc8 18 ♜a3? allows 18...♜xc3). His somewhat weakened pawn-structure would be to his detriment.

14...♘f5(?!)

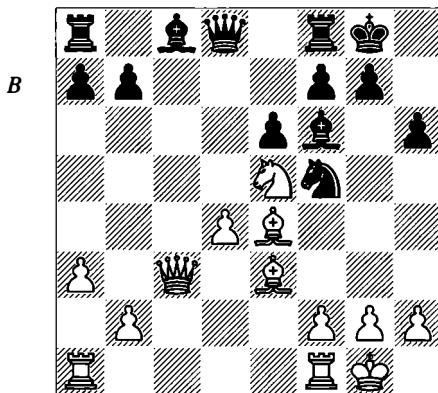
In my view, this is the mistake that causes the failure of Black's defensive plan. This knight is heading for d6, a superb central bulwark, and furthermore, the b-pawn will be protected, but all Black's pieces will be in artificial positions, exerting little control over d5, which is generally essential in Black's scheme. 14...♞d6 looks better, questioning the position of the white knight on e5 and especially, preventing the good development of the c1-bishop (15 ♜e3 ♘d5!).



The continuation suggested by Karpov, 15 b4!? ♖d8 (if 15...♗d5 then 16 ♖g3!) 16 ♗b2 is an original method for coordinating the pieces, supporting the strong position of the knight, and it appears to arrive at a good end after 16...♗d5 17 ♖h3! (17 ♖g3 ♗d7 18 ♗c1 is unclear) 17...♗d7 (however, 17...b6 doesn't work considering threats like 18 ♖h5 ♗f8 19 f4! or better yet 18 f4 followed by ♗f3, ♗g4, etc.) 18 f4, when all White's pieces are very actively placed and his attack is unstoppable. However, Black has a very strong move that justifies the pressure on d4: 16...♗f5. White does not have a satisfactory reply.

Black's strategy is modern. Many years ago the strategy was more one-dimensional: blockading the advance of the isolated queen's pawn with a knight, even though that square was well protected by the white pieces, and he was forced to recapture with a pawn – as we saw in the previous game.

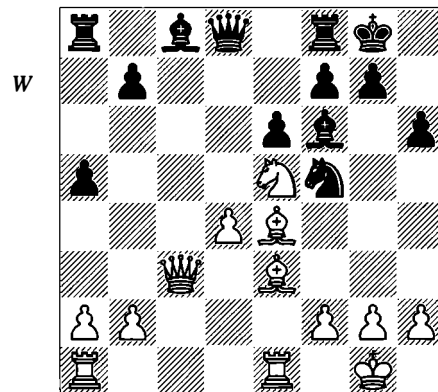
15 ♗e3! (D)



15...♗d6

In case Timman had been intending to exchange some pieces, he must have now realized that it would leave him in a very restricted position. After 15...♗d6 16 fxe3!? (an interesting decision in order to play along the f-file after 16...♗xe5 17 dxe5) White would get a comfortable advantage, thanks to the protection of the d-pawn and his queen's freedom to manoeuvre. For instance: 16...♖b6 17 ♖a1 ♗d8 18 ♖c7!.

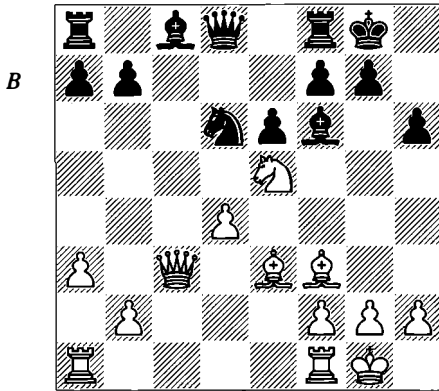
An almost identical position arose in the game Topalov-Karpov, Linares 1995, but with ♗e1 instead of a3. There Black tested the strange idea 15...a5!? (D).



16 ♖a1 a4 17 ♖ed1 ♗xe3 18 ♖xe3 (18 fxe3 ♗xe5 19 dxe5 ♖g5) 18...♖b6 (Black is already threatening something concrete thanks to his intricate plan on the queenside: 19...♗xe5 20 dxe5 ♖xe3 21 fxe3 ♖a5! winning the e5-pawn) 19 ♗g4 (19 f4!?) 19...♗g5 20 f4 ♗e7 21 ♗b1 ♗d7 (21...♖xb2?! 22 ♖g3 ♗h8 23 ♖h3 ♗g8 24 ♗xh6+ gxf6 25 ♖xh6 f5 26 ♖g6+ ♗h8 27 ♖c7 ♖b4 28 a3! ♖xa3 29 ♖d3 +- ) 22 ♖g3 f5 (according to Karpov 22...♖fc8 is better, but not 22...♗h8? 23 ♖h3 f5 24 ♗xh6 gxf6 25 ♖xh6+ ♗g8 26 ♖g6+ ♗h8 27 ♖c3 +- ) 23 ♗xh6+ ♗h7 24 ♗g4 ♖fd8 25 ♗e5 ♗e8 gave Black some counterplay in return for the pawn, exerting pressure on b2 and d4, but would have been insufficient if Topalov had played 26 ♖f2!?: 26...♗f6 27 d5 ± or 26...♖d5 27 a3! ♖ad8 28 ♗a2 ♖xd4 29 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 30 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 31 g3.

16 ♗f3! (D)

The pressure on b7 is going to bear fruit, by forcing Black to adopt substandard positions for his pieces, creating a kind of chaos. Besides, there will always be time to restart the attacking device along the b1-h7 diagonal, as we will see later. 16 ♖c2 is no good here, since Black can activate his forces: 16...b6! 17 ♚d3 ♜f5 18 g4 ♙xe5 19 gxf5 ♙xh2+ with an immediate draw.



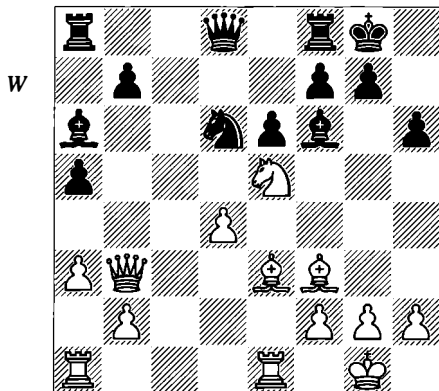
16...♙d7 17 ♚b4!

This is a slightly unusual square for the queen in the IQP structure, but a very effective one. It is fair to acknowledge the value of this move, since it misplaces Black's light-squared bishop by forcing a move that protects the knight.

17...♙b5 (D)

A necessary change in Black's approach. 17...♙e7 is more passive, and is met by 18 ♚b3, patiently carrying out the plan started on move 17, preparing the break d5.

18 ♜fe1 a5 19 ♚b3 ♙a6 (D)



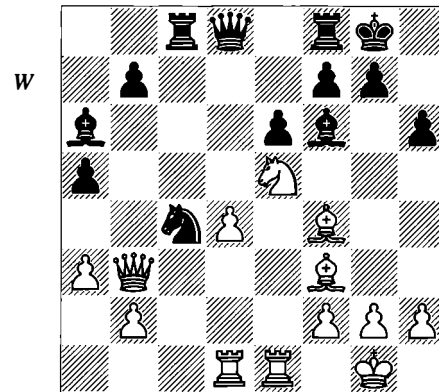
20 ♜ad1

The diagram illustrates White's gains perfectly. Black has misplaced the bishop, while White has strengthened his central play, in order to open the position (with an eventual d5) and to take advantage of the badly placed black queen.

20...♜f5

Timman decides that simplification is the lesser evil, since Karpov was threatening 21 ♙f4 followed by 22 d5, when the black queen would not find a safe place. In my opinion, this position was highly critical, in as much as Black has an interesting defensive plan. It was not so difficult to find out that the key was e5, and therefore, to try destabilizing the break d5 by means of pressure on the central knight. 20...♜c8 is therefore logical. Then:

a) 21 ♙f4 ♜c4! (D) reveals Black's intention. Now:



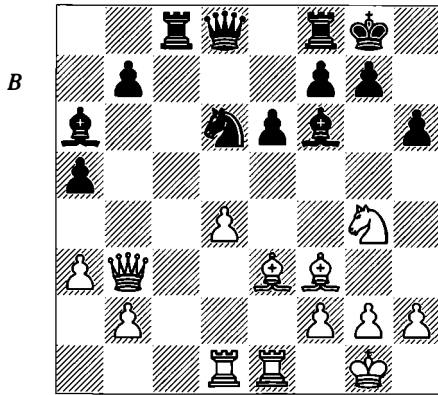
a1) 22 ♙xb7? doesn't work: 22...♜b8 23 ♜xc4 ♜xb7 24 ♚f3!? ♜d7!.

a2) The tactical issues appearing after 22 ♜xc4 are not useful to White: 22...♜xc4 (the variation 22...♙xc4? 23 ♚xb7 a4 24 d5 exd5 25 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 26 ♜xd5 is very expressive, and the queen is dead; this line displays the trouble to which the black queen is exposed) and now 23 d5? is impossible due to the pin on the 4th rank, while 23 ♙xb7 is well met by 23...a4! 24 ♚a2 ♜xd4! 25 ♜xd4 ♚xd4. White has nothing better than 23 ♙e5 a4, when Black will later exchange on e5 with an equal game.

a3) White can transfer the knight to g4, but 22 ♜g4 ♙g5 (or even 22...♙xd4) gives him nothing.

a4) White does best to advance the d-pawn, which is a natural move. After 22 d5  $\text{♙xe5}$  23  $\text{♙xe5}$   $\text{♜xe5}$  24  $\text{♝xe5}$   $\text{♞f6}$  White is without doubt better, but it is difficult to realize the advantage.

b) Instead, the same idea is more appealing a move before: 21  $\text{♜g4!}$  (D).



b1) Indeed, after 21... $\text{♙c4}$  22  $\text{♜xf6+}$   $\text{gxf6}$  (the black queen cannot abandon the defence of the b6-square) 23  $\text{♞c2}$   $\text{♙d5}$  24  $\text{♞e2}$ , Black goes not arrive in time: 24... $\text{♜f5}$  is met by 25  $\text{♙g4!}$ .

b2) Black is therefore forced to exchange the dark-squared bishops (as a rule this detail appears to favour White, since the f6-bishop works very well in the event of the advance of the d-pawn) by 21... $\text{♙g5}$  22  $\text{♙xg5}$   $\text{hxc5}$ , but after 23  $\text{♜e5!}$ ? Black is defenceless against the thematic break d5.

#### 21 $\text{♙e4}$ $\text{♜xe3}$

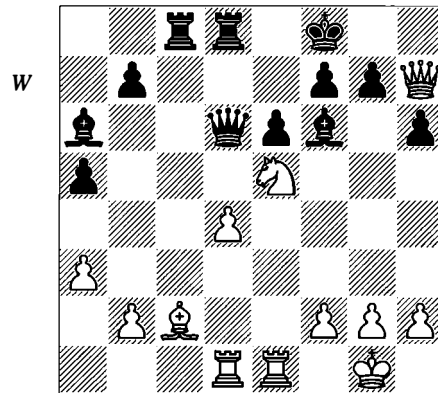
Forced. The character of the position doesn't allow hesitation. After 21... $\text{♜d6}$  22  $\text{♙b1}$   $\text{♝c8}$  23  $\text{♙f4}$  (preparing the advance), 23... $\text{♜c4}$  is bad, since the white queen would take the critical diagonal, with disastrous effects.

#### 22 $\text{♞xe3}$ $\text{♞d6}$ 23 $\text{♙c2!}$ $\text{♝fd8?}$

This is certainly a brave decision, but may not be a mistake. Black can prevent White from lining up his queen and bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal by playing 23... $\text{♞d5}$  24  $\text{♙b3!}$  (it is important to note that this is the difference between playing 23  $\text{♙c2}$  and 23  $\text{♙b1}$ ) 24... $\text{♞d6}$  25 d5  $\text{♙xe5}$  26  $\text{♞xe5}$   $\text{♞xe5}$  27  $\text{♝xe5}$   $\text{exd5}$  28  $\text{♝exd5}$  and White is clearly better thanks to the possibility of taking the seventh rank and the

activity of his bishop. This possibility was unpleasant, so the text-move is preferable if it cannot be refuted.

#### 24 $\text{♞e4}$ $\text{♝ac8}$ 25 $\text{♞h7+}$ $\text{♜f8}$ (D)



#### 26 h3!?

Karpov and his prophylactic moves... his intuition for choosing the right moment for playing this type of move is extraordinary. This move aims to avoid back-rank trouble, and is therefore logical. However, it is tempting to avoid spending a tempo on such a move, and we are naturally attracted to 26  $\text{♙b3?!}$ , which hits e6 and provides a retreat-square for the queen. So why didn't Karpov play it?

a) 26... $\text{♜e7!}$ ? seems risky, but it isn't even clear White has the advantage here. 27  $\text{♜g4}$  and then:

a1) 27... $\text{♙xd4?}$  is a mistake due to the reply 28  $\text{♜e3}$ .

a2) 27... $\text{♝h8?!}$  28  $\text{♞f5}$  threatening  $\text{♞xa5}$  followed by d5, and probably the sequence  $\text{♙xe6}$   $\text{fxe6}$ , d5. 28... $\text{♙xd4}$  is strongly met by 29  $\text{♙xe6}$   $\text{fxe6}$  30  $\text{♝xd4}$ .

a3) 27... $\text{♞b6}$  28  $\text{♜xf6}$   $\text{♜xf6}$  29  $\text{♝e3}$  and now 29... $\text{♝xd4?}$  30  $\text{♝f3+}$   $\text{♜e7}$  31  $\text{♞xg7}$  gives White a large advantage, so Black must play 29... $\text{♞xd4!?$ .

b) 26... $\text{♞b6!}$  seems best. After 27  $\text{♜g6+}$   $\text{fxg6}$  28  $\text{♙xe6}$ , 28... $\text{♝c6?}$  loses to 29  $\text{♙d5!}$ , but Black has the surprising resource 28... $\text{♞xe6}$  29  $\text{♝xe6}$   $\text{♜f7}$ , with the idea of ... $\text{♝h8}$  trapping the queen. White should try 30  $\text{♝e3}$   $\text{♝h8}$  31  $\text{♝c3}$ , though Black should certainly not be in danger.

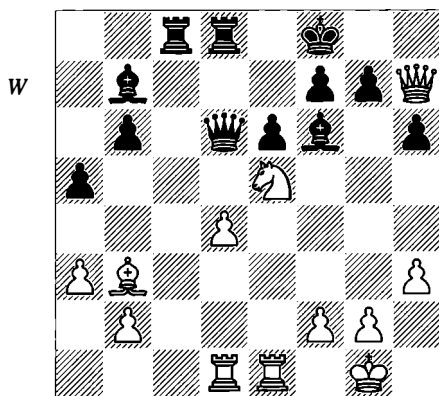
#### 26...b6?

An unfortunate move. Black can exert a lot of pressure after 26...♔e7!. The over-optimistic 27 ♘g4 ♖h8 28 ♗f5 (28 ♗e4 ♗c6!) 28...♙xd4! 29 ♗e4 ♖hd8 30 ♘e3 g6 31 ♗h4+ ♙f6! leaves White worse. However, 27 ♙a4!? is an original move that keeps White's chances alive. The bishop lacks any other useful square to allow the flight of the white queen, since it must protect the queen's rook. For instance, 27 ♙b3 fails on account of 27...♗b6.

27 ♙b3!

Now Black doesn't have the multi-purpose move 27...♗b6.

27...♙b7 (D)



28 d5!?

From a strategic point of view, this is the culmination of the previous good work. As we saw in Smyslov-Ribli, this move disrupts Black's defences.

28 ♘g6+ fxg6 29 ♖xe6 is also strong, but is less straightforward.

28...♗c7

It is clear that 28...exd5 is not possible due to 29 ♘d7+!, while 28...♙xe5 29 dxex6! ♗c7 transposes to the next note.

29 dxex6 ♖xd1

29...♙xe5 30 exf7 ♖xd1 31 ♗g8+ ♔e7 32 f8♗+ ♖xf8 33 ♗e6+ ♔d8 34 ♖xd1+ is another nice conclusion.

30 ♘g6+! 1-0

If 30...fxg6 then 31 e7+ winning.

Karpov's squeezes possess an impressive beauty. A single mistake (14...♘f5?!) and an elegant disrupting manoeuvre (17 ♗b4!) were enough to disorganize Black's pieces and to

control the central position. Similarly, the route of Karpov's light-squared bishop (♙d3-e4-f3-e4-c2-b3) is worth mentioning.

## Freedom to Manoeuvre

Sometimes, one of the players deliberately accepts an isolated pawn, obtaining as sole compensation active play and freedom of manoeuvre for his pieces. The Tarrasch Variation of the French Defence (3 ♘d2) allows Black to go in that direction by playing 3...c5. For long time, this possibility was deemed to be sacrilege, believing that only a perfect defence would lead to a draw. A lot of conceptions have been modified since then, and dynamic play is now regarded as a top-ranking strategic element in a position, often justifying any sort of weakness.

The winner of the following game is the English GM Michael Adams, currently one of the world's top five players, and a player with extraordinarily steady results. His play is not at all stereotyped, and brims with talent in all stages of the game. In comparison with his colleagues in the world elite he lacks immense theoretical baggage, and stands out thanks to his deep positional understanding.

The following game markedly impressed me. It is not often you see a young player displaying such a perfect positional treatment against an experienced opponent who has defended similar positions hundreds of times before.

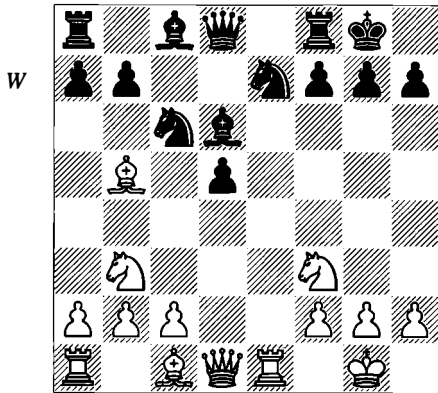
### Adams – Vaganian

Manila IZ 1990

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5

This is the Tarrasch Variation of the French Defence. Michael Adams has a predilection for this sort of simple play, with definite and long-lasting advantages. He has a narrow repertoire and does not have a reputation as an expert on opening theory, but when the middlegame appears, all his powers become clear. In the line Black has selected, the middlegame immediately arrives.

4 exd5 exd5 5 ♘gf3 ♘c6 6 ♙b5 ♙d6 7 dxc5 ♙xc5 8 ♘b3 ♙d6 9 0-0 ♘ge7 10 ♖e1 0-0 (D)

**11 ♖d3!**

The light-squared bishop has fulfilled its task in obstructing Black's natural development and now finds its best square on d3, preparing to oppose its black counterpart. From d3 the white bishop hinders the action of the other white pieces on the isolated queen's pawn, but this factor isn't so important now, because this pawn is well protected. It is more important for now to blockade it and coordinate his pieces.

**11...h6**

There are many alternatives at this point, such as 11...♗b4, 11...♘g6 and 11...♙c7. The text-move prevents an exchange of the dark-squared bishops by way of g5-h4-g3 (an exchange that in no way favours Black), and because it makes it easier to play ...♙g4. The immediate 11...♙g4? fails to the tactical blow 12 ♙xh7+.

**12 h3**

A typical move in positions with an isolated pawn. Adams prevents Black from activating his pieces by playing ...♙g4.

**12...♙f5**

An entirely logical decision, concluding development and placing the light-squared bishop on an active square. The only drawback is that White will now have a small and enduring advantage. Can the bishop find a better place? I suppose it is a matter of personal taste. An often-used variation is 12...♘f5 13 c3 ♗f6, seeking activity and control of d4, and planning to defend d5 by means of ...♞d8.

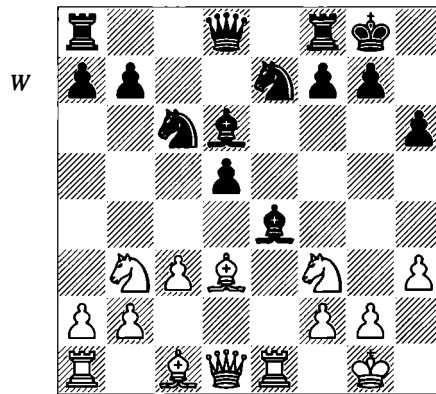
**13 c3**

Another natural move, but a new idea in this specific position. Vaganian had previously used 12...♙f5 against Andrei Sokolov in Rotterdam

1989, and the game continued 13 ♙e3 ♞e8 14 ♙c5 ♙xc5 15 ♘xc5 ♗b6 16 ♙xf5 ♗xc5 1/2-1/2.

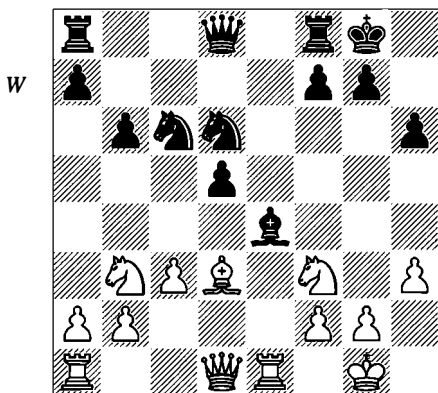
The text-move has the following advantages: it renews the control of the blockading square d4 and Black doesn't have the standard move ...♞e8 any more, since it would abandon the defence of the d-pawn.

The only drawback: it deprives White of the c3-square, a square that can be useful for the queen in some cases. However, this is not especially important.

**13...♙e4!? (D)**

This ingenious move is based on another equally interesting idea. White has no need to blockade the isolated pawn 'physically', and on the other hand, combining the action of the b3-knight and that of a bishop on e3, his aim could be directed to the c5-square. Well, the black bishop grants its square to the e7-knight, forcing White to define his plans, at least more than is desirable: 14 ♙e3 ♘f5 15 ♙c5 b6! (15...♞e8 is worse due to 16 ♗c2!, when Black has serious trouble with the artificial placing of his pieces; for instance, 16...b6 does not work since the black knight is defenceless: 17 ♙xe4! dxe4 18 ♞xe4 bxc5 19 ♞xe8+ ♗xe8 20 ♗xf5) 16 ♙xd6 ♘xd6 (D) and the black bishop stays strongly placed, awaiting the right moment for simplification.

A quick look at this diagram obliges us to contemplate again which pieces we must keep and which ones we must exchange. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops tends to be unprofitable for Black, but in this particular position there is an important element in his



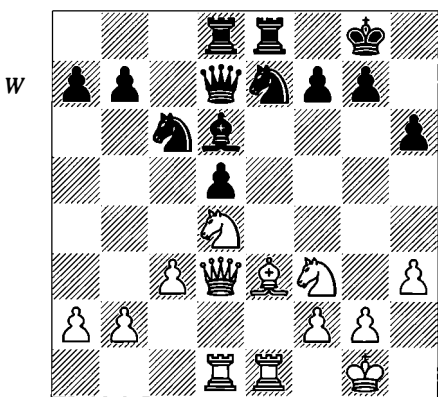
favour: the bishop placed at e4. Expelling it with an eventual f3 would awfully weaken the dark squares around White's king. 17 ♖bd4 (17 ♙f1 ♚e8 18 ♜fd4 ♜e5!? is OK for Black; 17 ♜fd4 is met by 17...♜e5!) 17...♜xd4 18 ♜xd4 ♜g5 19 ♙xe4 (19 f3 ♙xd3 20 ♜xd3 ♚fe8) 19...dxe4 20 ♜e6 (20 ♜c6 ♜c5!) 20...fxe6 21 ♜xd6 ♜f6 gives Black counterplay.

With his 13th move (13...♙e4), Black affords the luxury of losing a tempo to free himself of the additional pressure (on c5) that may end up becoming a valuable factor.

#### 14 ♜bd4

Comprehensive, clear and profound play. Adams chooses a flexible move that virtually forces the exchange of bishops.

14...♙xd3 15 ♜xd3 ♜d7 16 ♙e3 ♚ad8 17 ♚ad1 ♚fe8 (D)



Both players have developed their pieces in a predictable way, seemingly placing them on their best squares. Black is unable to bring his

rooks to the open files since the d-pawn must be protected. Meanwhile, the other rook will complete its job controlling the most important open line, the e-file, that can help in making some freeing exchanges of pieces.

#### 18 ♜b3!

Now White loses a tempo, but it is less important than the fact that he is following a good and clear plan. White's control of c5 and pressure against d5 considerably limit Black's options.

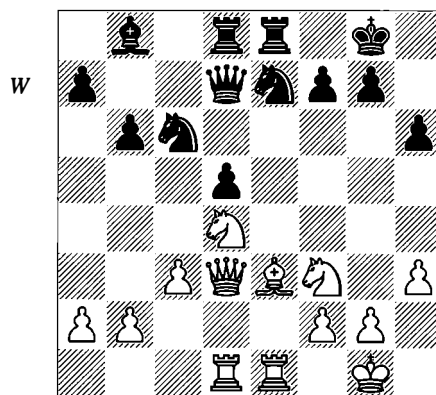
#### 18...b6

Now what should White play? He had another plan in mind: to double rooks and then to exert pressure along the e-file.

#### 19 ♜bd4!

Who ventured to say that time is very valuable in chess? As soon it has been able to weaken some light squares, the knight goes back to d4, from where it will act on the vital points c6 and b5. On the other hand, the weakness of the a6-square will also end up being felt in some variations.

#### 19...♙b8 (D)



#### 20 ♚e2!

Another powerful positional and psychological blow. Black lacks truly useful moves and, meanwhile, White is building his fortress with enormous patience and knowledge. This move is mainly preparing to double rooks on the e-file, with the healthy positional goal of exchanging only one rook and at the same time removing Black's most active rook; with his remaining one, White will press against the isolated pawn.

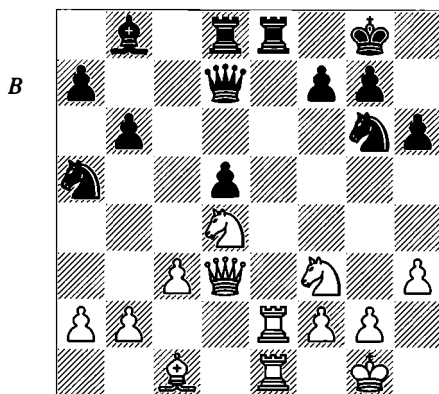
20 ♖a6!?, suffocating Black's position, also deserves attention.

20...♗a5!

Searching for counterplay via the c4-square. Vaganian's defence is quite accurate for the next four moves – he is seeking active play.

21 ♜de1 ♕g6! 22 ♙c1 (D)

The ending for which White is aiming will be more advantageous after a rook exchange. For instance, 22 ♖b5 (22 ♖f5 is met by 22...♖a4!) 22...♗xb5 23 ♕xb5 ♕c4 24 ♙c1 ♜xe2 25 ♜xe2 ♙f4! gives Black some counterplay.



22...♜xe2 23 ♖xe2 ♕c4 24 ♖c2

An important move. White threatens 25 ♖f5, a goal that likewise can be fulfilled with the natural 24 ♖d3, but that move leaves the queen in a more exposed situation. It is easy to prove: 24...♜e8 25 ♜d1 ♕ce5 26 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 27 ♖f5 ♖a4! and 28 ♜e1 doesn't work on account of the abrupt 28...♕d3. Black would have been totally freed, as a result of just a slight inaccuracy.

24...♕d6?!

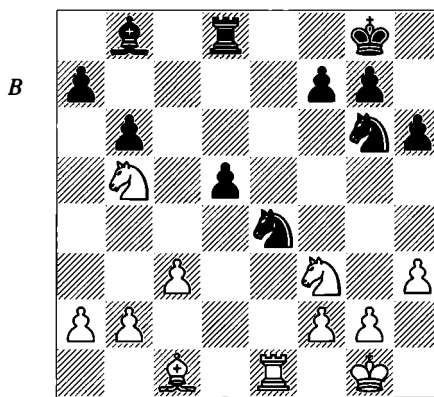
This seemingly logical move is a significant mistake. Vaganian overestimates his position and he only takes care of the most primitive threats. With this jump Black rules out any threats of ♖f5, and tries to place the knight on a more important central square. These are both quite reasonable aims, but this was the right moment to start counterplay with 24...♕ce5! 25 ♕xe5 ♙xe5! 26 ♕f3 ♙f4, when White has only a very slight advantage.

Sometimes the survival instinct is lost during the course of a hard and difficult game, after spending a lot of time defending.

25 ♖d3!

The white queen targets the black knight, while seeking her best square. The a6-square beckons, but if the black knight finally goes to e4 there is the possibility of offering the exchange of queens, which would make Black's weaknesses more clear.

25...♕e4 26 ♖b5 ♖xb5 27 ♕xb5 (D)



This is a troublesome ending for Black. In addition to the isolated pawn, Black has some new positional burdens that should not be enough to lose by themselves, but undoubtedly increase his difficulties:

1) The b5-knight is terribly annoying and it must be expelled, thereby weakening the pawn-structure on the queenside and, what is really important, the g1-a7 diagonal will be occupied by the white bishop.

2) The a6-pawn will become a target.

3) The c6-square will become even weaker without queens.

However, Adams needs to play skilfully to turn all these positional elements into a win.

27...♜c8

Hurrying to defend c6 against infiltration by a white knight. 27...a6 it not advisable because it would make it easier for the knight to enter via d4-c2-b4.

28 ♜d1 ♕e7 29 ♙f1?!

My preferences don't lean toward this highly flexible move. If the right plan is grabbing space on the kingside, then 29 g4 is the right move. Vaganian could now take advantage of this concession to free himself a little with 29...h5 followed by ...f6 and ...♙f7. This defensive set-up

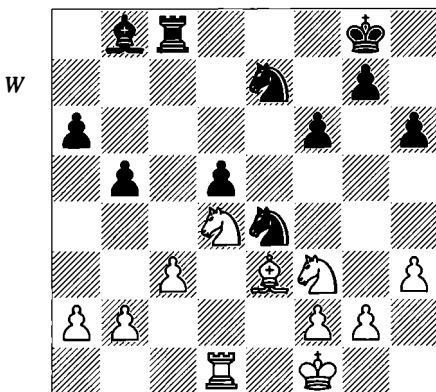
would hinder the technical realization of the advantage to the utmost.

**29...a6 30 ♖bd4 b5 31 ♙e3**

Again, directing his fire towards c5. Some strategic issues are repeating in different stages of the game.

**31...f6?! (D)**

Too passive. It was interesting to play 31...f5 at this time, looking for some freedom and grabbing space on the kingside. Although the e5-square is seriously weakened, is also true that it is difficult to take advantage of this circumstance, and the black king may come to the rescue of the black bishop, by way of ...♙f7, defending the weakness. Of course 31...h5 deserved attention too, avoiding White's next move.



**32 g4!!**

White is not so much seeking to gain space on the kingside, but rather to create pressure on the d5-pawn. Adams aims to eliminate the black piece that defends this point (the e7-knight) by means of 33 ♖f5. Without a doubt, this is the key move in the later development of the battle, and the beginning of a brilliant plan that Black cannot ignore. All the elements of the position are ripe enough as to direct a final offensive on the weak isolated pawn.

**32...♙f7 33 ♖f5! ♜d8**

The exchange on f5 is, without a doubt, a more appealing possibility. The f5-pawn can end up being weak at any time, although White would have more than enough compensation. The black king and the pawn-chain on the kingside, for example, will be immobilized; the

d5-pawn will fall hopelessly. After 33...♖xf5 34 gxf5 ♜d8 35 ♖d4 Black has the option of 35...♜d6, which is not available in the game continuation. After 36 ♙f4 ♜b6 37 ♙xb8 ♜xb8 38 ♖c6 ♜c8 39 ♖b4 a5 40 ♖xd5 ♜d8 41 ♜d4 White consolidates his advantage. For instance, after 41...♖c5 42 ♖c7! ♜xd4 43 cxd4 ♖a4 44 ♖xb5 ♖xb2 45 ♙e2 White's advantage is sufficient to win.

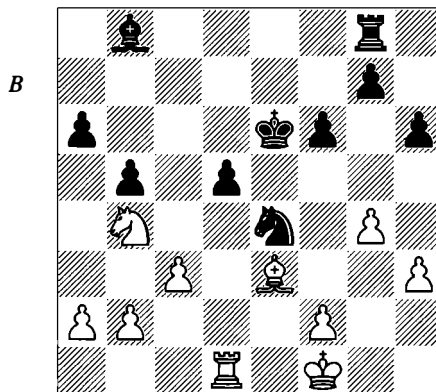
**34 ♖xe7 ♙xe7 35 ♖d4! ♜g8**

This enigmatic move is aiming to meet an eventual ♖f5+ with ...♙e6, having defended the g-pawn. In the event of 35...♜c8 (defending the penetration square of the white knight), 36 ♖f5+ would terminate the game.

**36 ♖c6+**

This is more direct than the also unpleasant 36 a4!?, trying to break up Black's pawn-chain. Adams is heading towards a clear target.

**36...♙e6 37 ♖b4 (D)**



The culmination of White's strategy. All the light and dark squares on the queenside are dominated and Black cannot avoid losing a pawn.

**37...♙d6 38 ♖xd5 g5 39 f3?!**

39 ♙e2 is simpler, followed by ♙f3, also hitting the knight but without giving any possibility of counterplay.

**39...♖g3+ 40 ♙f2 f5 41 ♖b4?**

The first move after the time-control seems to be the first false step, allowing a simplification that makes the technical task difficult. I believe this mistake was due to the relaxation that happens just after the time-control following an intense and decisive game for the tournament standings. It is by no means simple,

but 41 f4! is better. 41...♖e4+ 42 ♖f3 gxf4 and then:

a) Adams suggested 43 ♗xf4 ♘g5+ 44 ♗xg5 (44 ♖e3 is met by 44...♗c5+, while 44 ♖e2 ♗xf4 45 ♘f4+ ♖f6! gives Black practical chances) although he only mentions 44...hxg5?. After 44...♗xg5! (or even 44...fxg4+ 45 hxg4 hxg5) 45 ♘f4+ ♗xf4 46 ♖xf4 fxg4 47 hxg4 ♗g6 48 ♗h1 White is much better, but Black has some drawing chances.

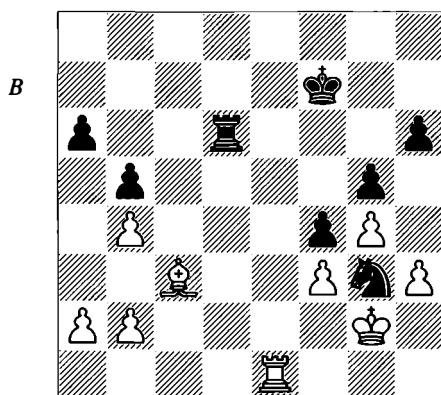
b) 43 ♘xf4+! ♗xf4 (if 43...♖f6, 44 ♘h5+ ♖g6 45 gxf5+! ♖xf5 46 ♗d5+ winning) and now 44 ♖xf4! wins. Note that 44 ♗xf4? is less good due to 44...♘g5+ 45 ♗xg5 (45 ♖e3 ♘xh3! 46 ♗d6+ ♖e7 47 ♗xa6 ♗xg4! 48 ♗xh6 f4+ 49 ♖e4 ♗g2! is unclear) 45...hxg5 (or 45...♗xg5!?) 46 gxf5+ ♖xf5 47 ♗d6 ♗h8 48 ♖g3 ♗e8 49 ♗xa6 ♗e3+! 50 ♖f2 ♗xh3, and Black finds some counterplay, among other things since he has the possibility of ...♖f4.

41...f4 42 ♗d4 ♗xb4 43 cxb4 ♗d8 44 ♗e1+ ♖f7 45 ♗c3

An unusual position. Black has left his knight imprisoned deliberately, but in a surprisingly active situation, so that if White activated his rook, the team of rook and knight could create dangerous threats against the white king. Also, the knight can hardly be harassed.

45...♗d6 46 ♖g2 (D)

Approaching with the king in order to prepare the break h4.



46...♗e6??

The minor-piece ending is won for White due to Black's weak kingside pawns, located on squares of the same colour as the bishop.

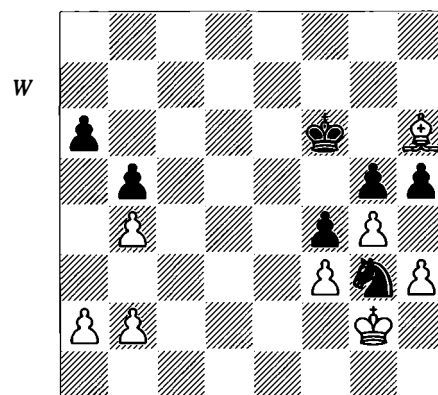
Black's only chance is to keep the rooks and to activate his when the white rook invades. The slow access of the white rook to the black pawns is precisely where Black is basing all his defensive chances. Therefore 46...♗d3 is best: 47 ♗e5 ♗d1! 48 ♗c5 (48 ♗e1 ♖f6! 49 ♗e8 ♖f7 is a funny sequence – the rook has no escape; the help of the knight would be undeniable) and now:

a) 48...♗c1!? 49 ♗c7+ (Black's idea is to meet 49 ♗e5 with 49...♗e1) 49...♖g8 50 ♗c6 ♗c2+ 51 ♖g1 ♘e2+ 52 ♖f1 ♘xc3 53 bxc3 ♗xa2 with some drawing chances.

b) 48...♘f1! 49 ♗c7+ ♖g8 50 ♗c6 (50 ♗g7+ ♖f8 51 ♗g6 ♘e3+ 52 ♖f2 ♗h1! 53 ♗xh6 ♗h2+ 54 ♖e1 ♘c2+ 55 ♖d1 ♘e3+ 56 ♖c1 ♗c2+! 57 ♖b1 ♗f2 58 a3 ♗xf3 and probably Black is no worse) 50...♘e3+ 51 ♖f2 ♗h1!? (51...♖h7!? 52 ♗xa6 ♗h1 also seems possible) 52 ♗xh6 ♗h2+ 53 ♖e1 (or 53 ♖g1 ♗g2+ 54 ♖h1 ♗f2 with an unavoidable draw) 53...♘c2+ 54 ♖d1 ♘e3+ 55 ♖c1 ♗c2+ 56 ♖b1 ♗f2 57 a3 ♗xf3 58 ♗g6+ ♖f7! 59 ♗xg5 (59 ♗g7+ ♖e6 with an easy approach of Black's king to the centre) 59...♗xh3 and Black again has real counterplay.

In short, we can say that Black's drawing chances are very good after 46...♗d3, which takes advantage of White's mistake on move 41.

47 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 48 ♗g7 h5 49 ♗h6 ♖f6 (D)



50 h4!

A predictable break, in order to activate the white king and to fix one of Black's pawns at least.

50...hxg4 51 fxg4 gxf4 52 ♗xf4

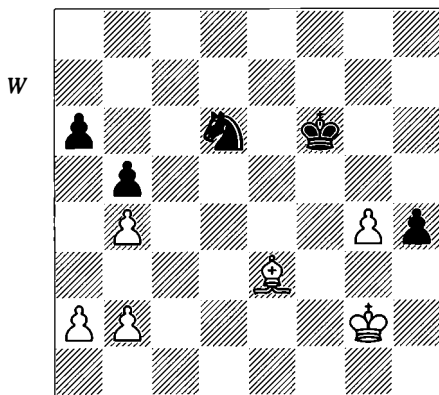
The h4-pawn will fall soon.

**52...♗e4 53 ♖e3**

The bishop should control the knight's jump toward d3.

**53...♘d6 (D)**

If 53...♘g5 54 ♖xg5+ ♗xg5 then 55 ♗h3 winning.



**54 ♗h3 ♘c4 55 ♖d4+ ♗g6**

55...♗g5 is met by 56 ♖c3!, creating a zugzwang position, since after the knight moves, there would follow 57 ♖d2+.

**56 ♗xh4 a5 57 b3 ♘d2 58 ♖e3 1-0**

New losses force resignation. An impressive game.

## The Bishop-Pair

The game we are about to see is an example of a very different fight in comparison with the previous three games. Black seems to control the situation, thanks to his command of the blocking square d5 and the fact that White barely has any chances of launching a kingside attack. However, not everything is in Black's favour, since White has a terribly powerful weapon: the bishop-pair.

**Karpov – Andersson**  
*Skellefteå 1989*

Anatoly Karpov produced two masterpieces in the Skellefteå tournament. One of them was that beautiful game against Seirawan and the other, the current game.

**1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 ♖b4+**

The Bogo-Indian Defence has for a long time been part of the hyper-solid opening repertoire of Swedish GM Ulf Andersson.

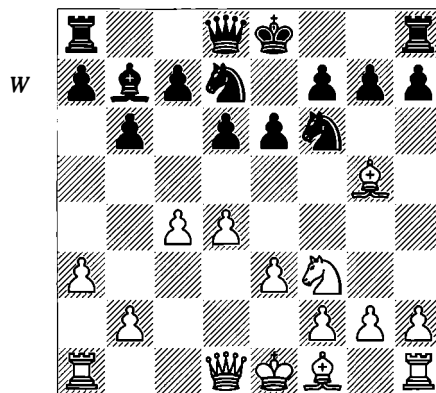
**4 ♘bd2 b6 5 a3 ♖xd2+ 6 ♖xd2 ♖b7**

Black's control over the centre compensates for the bishop-pair he has granted White.

**7 ♖g5**

Before deciding how to develop his kingside, Karpov prefers to spend a tempo improving this bishop's placing, and gets it outside the pawn-chain. From g5 it will exert strong pressure.

**7...d6 8 e3 ♘bd7 (D)**



**9 ♖h4!?**

A typical Karpov move. White continues without defining the situation of his king's bishop, since after 9 ♖d3 Black can play 9...h6 10 ♖h4 e5 (or even 10...g5). The text-move is useful, avoiding drastic measures against this bishop, while he waits to see Black's set-up.

**9...c5**

This is a logical break, offering a lot of possibilities where to place the queen. With his last move, also, Black aims his strategy toward White's c-pawn.

The retreat of the white bishop to h4 raises another question: what happens if Black doesn't determine his central structure so soon? And, in short, what would White play after 9...0-0 or 9...h6? After 9...h6 the move is 10 ♘d2, to give life to the bishop by means of f3, while after 9...0-0 10 ♖d3 it is not advisable to play 10...e5 because it allows 11 ♖f5 with some threats.

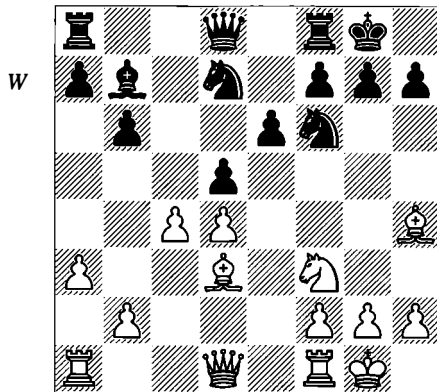
**10 ♖d3 0-0 11 0-0 cxd4**

Andersson is directing the fight to a position with an IQP, which will suit his manoeuvring style perfectly. It is also possible to delay this decision, carrying out natural moves with rook and queen, such as ...♖c7, ...♞ac8 and ...♗b8.

On the other hand, 11...d5 at once would be a serious mistake, since after the exchange 12 cxd5 exd5 the weaknesses on the dark squares and the bad position of the bishop, imprisoned by its pawn, would become more perceptible.

**12 exd4**

12 ♜xd4 gives new prospects to Black's queen's knight. After 12...♞e5 13 ♖e2 ♞g6 Black equalizes comfortably.

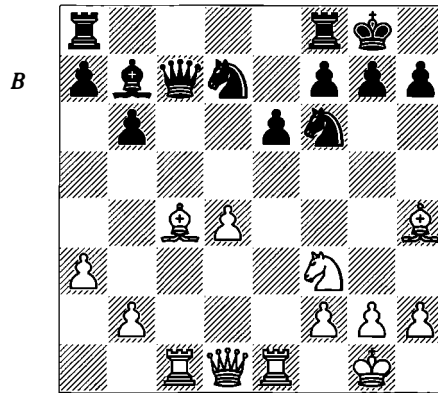
**12...d5 (D)****13 ♖e1**

In this type of position, White invariably places his rooks on the open files. Something would be wrong if the IQP needed the rook's protection right now. In this case control of the e4-square (as defender) and the e5-square (as attacker) is very important.

13 b3, aiming to get hanging pawns, is now inadvisable since it weakens a3. 13...♞e8 14 ♖e1 ♗e7 15 ♞e5 dxc4 16 bxc4 ♞fd8 leads to a complex position, with chances for both sides.

**13...dxc4 14 ♖xc4 ♗c7**

A perfectionist could discuss the validity of this move. Black can opt for a better development for the queen, playing 14...a6 followed by ...b5 and ...♗b6. If White prevents it by 15 a4 it is clear that Black has made progress, since the b4-square will be available to the queen later on.

**15 ♞c1 (D)****15...♞fc8!**

However unusual it might seem, the king's rook is the right one to occupy this file, since after an eventual ♖g3 the queen would return to her initial position without hindering the action of this rook. Indeed, 15...♞ac8 16 ♖g3! ♗d8 17 ♗d3 ♞d5 18 ♖d6! (or 18 ♖a6!?) 18...♞e8 19 ♖b5 doesn't seem very pleasant for Black.

Black had to be careful when choosing this move, however. He needed to calculate accurately the unbalanced situation arising after the tactical blow 16 ♞xe6?! b5! 17 ♞e8+ ♞xe8 18 ♖xf7+ ♗xf7 19 ♞xc7 ♞xc7!. Black easily repels White's threats along the a2-g8 diagonal.

**16 ♞c3 ♗d6**

Black still cannot take advantage of his control of e4 due to tactical reasons: 16...♞e4? loses to 17 ♞xe4 ♖xe4 18 ♖a6.

**17 ♖g3 ♗f8!**

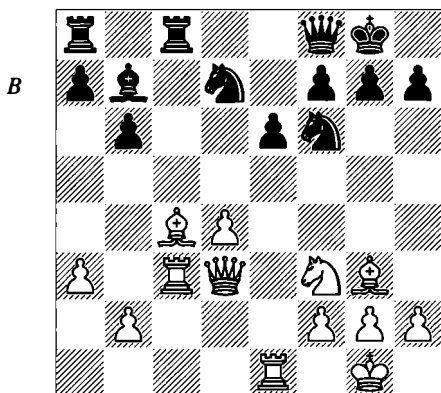
The complement of the rook move. There isn't any safer square because after 17...♗e7 would come 18 d5. Black is awaiting advantageous simplifications.

**18 ♗d3 (D)**

Just in time to prevent ...♞e4.

**18...a6!**

Before this move the black d7-knight seemed to lack a clear goal. From now on, and thanks to the newly open square (b6), we can assess Black's prospects with optimism. This move also eliminates a possibility that Karpov had in mind, ♖a6.



Another logical idea is 18...d5, occupying the blockading square. However, fears about the h7-square make this inadvisable:

a) 19 e5! e5xd5 20 d5g5 f6f6 21 e5h6 22 e5xf6 hxg6 23 e5xg5 f6xc3 24 f6xc3 c8c8 gives Black enough compensation for the pawn.

b) 19 d5g5 f6f6 20 e5e5 d5xc3 21 e5xf6 d5e4! repels the attack.

c) White could simply take advantage of his control of the e4- and e5-squares by playing 19 c2 (now threatening d5g5) 19...h6 (if 19...d7f6, then 20 d5e5 or 20 e5e5) 20 d2! (in order to occupy the e4-square, now abandoned) 20...d7f6 21 e5e5 with strong pressure, thanks to the bishop-pair's activity.

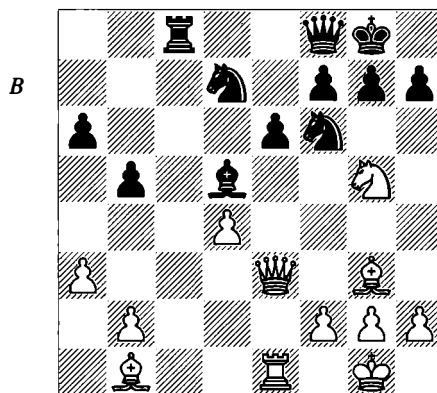
### 19 d5g5!

This unusual move forces Black to place his bishop on d5, thus eliminating the possible blockade with the knight, which seems more natural. In fact, despite being odd, this move is forced, in order to strengthen the control on the e4-square, since Black was threatening 19...b5 20 e5a2 f6xc3 21 f6xc3 d5e4!

With the text-move White is not threatening to play 20 d5xf7, but this would be the reply if Black now played the impatient 19...h6?. Then, the logical sequence would be 20 d5xf7! f6xc4 21 d5xh6+ gxh6 22 f6xc4 and the weaknesses in Black's kingside tilt the scales in his favour. This knight move perfectly illustrates the tactical possibilities that White has against e6 and h7.

19...b5 20 e5a2 f6xc3 21 f6xc3 e5d5 22 e5b1 f6c8 23 f6e3 (D)

This temporary location of the queen is necessary, since 23 f6d3 is met by 23...e5c4, and 23 f6d2 by 23...h6!.

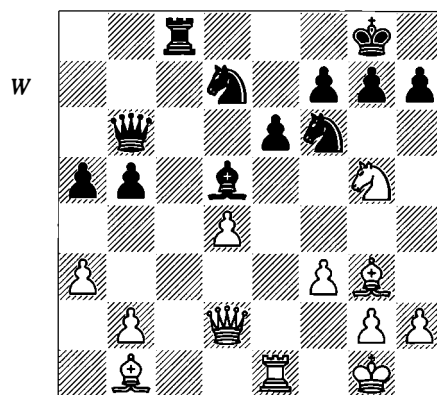


### 23...f6d8

After exchanging the king's rook and activating the other, nothing prevents the queen from returning to the battlefield. At this point Black has another interesting possibility, 23...b4, seeking activity. Let us see: 24 f3! bxa3 25 f6xa3 f6xa3 26 bxa3. The ending seems to favour White, mainly due to his strong dark-squared bishop.

It is interesting to observe the permanent passivity of Black's queen's knight, which cannot enter the action due to the constant pressure against the black king.

24 f3 f6b6 25 f6d2 a5 (D)



Andersson is toiling to find counterplay on the queenside, and to obtain good penetration points on the c-file, but this factor will turn against him.

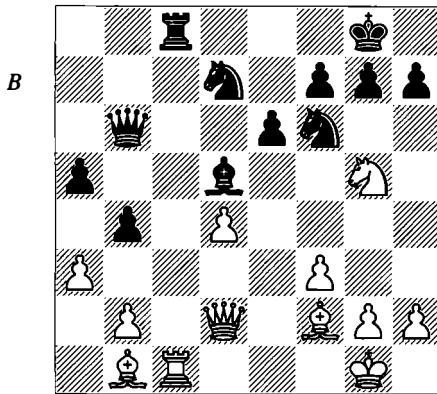
### 26 e5f2

This is a critical moment of the game, and it is in these situations where it is necessary to

formulate a new plan. The attacking possibilities against Black's kingside have disappeared completely, so White begins to play for a better ending, understanding that it is necessary to exchange Black's active rook. As Karpov explains "these are the complicated moments when you should decide which pieces to keep on the board and which not".

It is too early to transfer the knight to the centre on account of Black's possibilities along the a7-g1 diagonal: 26 ♖e4 ♗xe4 27 fxe4 e5! 28 ♗f2 ♖g4.

26...b4 27 ♖c1! (D)



27...♗xc1+ 28 ♖xc1 h6 29 ♖h3

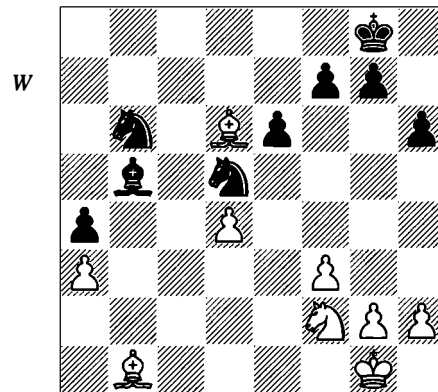
Transferring the knight to the centre by 29 ♖e4 allows Black the resource 29...♗xe4! 30 fxe4 (30 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 31 fxe4 bxa3 32 bxa3 ♖b7 is advantageous for Black) 30...bxa3 31 bxa3 ♖g4!.

29...♖c6?!

Karpov severely criticizes this move, and he is right that from now on, the defence becomes very difficult. But it is also true that if Black keeps the queens on the board, for instance by playing 29...♖b7 (to prevent White from entering at c8), he is in danger of becoming a passive onlooker of White's manoeuvre ♖f4-d3, followed by ♗g3-d6. In these circumstances the jumps ♖c5 or ♖e5 are always to be feared and White gets too much activity.

The text-move is based on the view that after the exchange of queens the black pawn will be less weak on b4 than on a5. This is probably wrong: it was better to get rid of the b4-pawn; then the black pawn would advance up to a4

where it would be well protected. Of course this would give more freedom to White's dark-squared bishop, but the knights are also very strong and the possibility of attacking White's a-pawn by ...♖b6-c4 is very significant. A natural sequence would be 29...bxa3 30 bxa3 ♖c6 31 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 32 ♗e1 a4 33 ♗b4 ♖d5 34 ♗d6 ♗b5 (or 34...♖7b6 35 ♗d3 ♖c3 intending ...♗b5) 34 ♖f2 ♖7b6 (D) followed by ...♖c4.



The excellent coordination of the knights may compensate perfectly well for the bishop-pair.

30 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 31 axb4 axb4 32 ♖f4

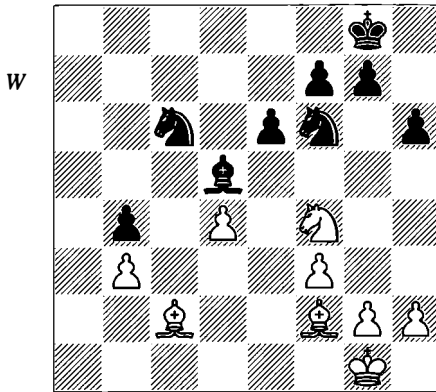
After analysing the game on several occasions, I have some questions that surely only Karpov could answer. The first one relates to the move 32 b3!?. Karpov's pragmatism is unquestionable, as is his talent for avoiding danger, i.e. his subtle prophylactic thought. In this sense the text-move is an attempt to bring the knight into the battle before the black knight cuts off its circuit. But since Black now had the possibility of 32...b3! (that is analysed later on) it becomes absolutely necessary to check the consequences of White pre-empting this by putting his own pawn on b3. In that case, Black has two options:

a) The natural 32...♖d5 33 ♗e1 (in order to play ♖f2) 33...♖c3!? 34 ♗xc3 bxc3 35 ♖f4 ♖b6! 36 ♖e2 (if 36 ♖f2 then 36...g5!) 36...♖d5 and now:

a1) Again, the 'natural' move is not the best: 37 ♗e4 f5 38 ♗xd5? ♗xd5 39 ♖c1 g5! 40 ♖f2 f4 41 ♖e2 g4! with enough counterplay.

a2) The alternative 37  $\text{♙d3}$  offers White good chances. For instance, after 37... $\text{♜b4?}$  38  $\text{♙c4}$  c2 39  $\text{♜c1}$  the pawn has been excessively weakened while Black's counterplay is unsuccessful: 39...g5 40  $\text{♜f2}$   $\text{♜g7}$  41 g3! followed by  $\text{♜e3}$  and  $\text{♙e2}$  with some advantage. Better is 37...g5! 38 g3 (obviously White is not interested in Black's pawn reaching the f4-square in the variation 38  $\text{♜f2}$  f5 39  $\text{♙c4}$  f4 since Black then has counterplay: 40  $\text{♜e1}$   $\text{♜f7}$  intends ... $\text{♜e3}$ , while after 40 g3 fxg3+ 41 hxg3 c2 Black shows his trumps) 38...f5 39 f4  $\text{♜f7}$  (after 39...gxf4 40 gxf4 c2 41  $\text{♙xc2}$   $\text{♙b5}$  42  $\text{♜f2}$   $\text{♙xe2}$  43  $\text{♜xe2}$   $\text{♜xf4+}$  44  $\text{♜f3}$  Black still has some difficulties to solve, such as the entry of the white king via the kingside) 40  $\text{♜f2}$ , but White can hardly make progress since he must attend to the penetration by Black's king via h5.

b) Black can build a fortress by 32... $\text{♙d5!}$ ? 33  $\text{♙c2}$   $\text{♜b8!}$  34  $\text{♜f4}$   $\text{♜c6}$  (D).



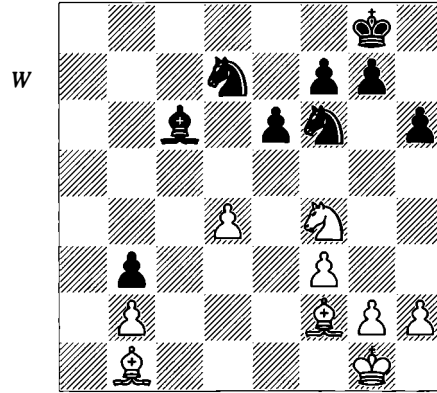
Breaking this fortress seems very difficult. The knights can attack White's weaknesses on b3 and d4. After 35  $\text{♜f1}$   $\text{♜a5!}$ ? (or 35...g5) there would be no progress.

**32... $\text{♜b6!}$ !**

Andersson, considered the world's best player of endgames involving knights, chooses a move that may look odd. The d7-knight, not very active during the game, executes this jump and forces White to play 33 b3 closing its route again. However, Andersson must have believed that his position was defensible, overestimating the weakness White creates on c3. This consideration would be more important if Black's b-pawn were one square back, but not with the

pawn on b4, since here it will can only be defended by one of his knights.

But, what happens if Black advances his pawn, playing 32...b3!? (D) instead?



It seems a logical move, and not only because Black gets two good squares from which to attack White's b-pawn (c4 and a4). There are three reasons to endorse this advance.

- 1) The queen's knight is activated.
- 2) It locates a pawn on a square of the same colour as his bishop.
- 3) The pawn might be less weak on b3 than on b4, since to attack it, the white bishop needs to reach c4, and this is not very easy.

However, in spite of all the advantages, there is a little trouble that probably persuaded Andersson to choose the alternative move.

**What move do you think White should play? Please consider the position carefully.**

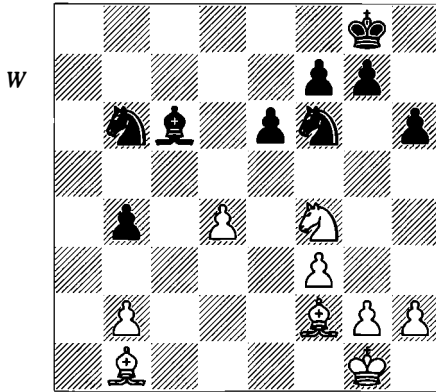
Indeed, the c3-square becomes a superb route for the white king, and if White carries out this approach successfully, the defence of the b-pawn will not be easy. Let us see:

a) 33  $\text{♙e1}$ ?  $\text{♜d5!}$  34  $\text{♜xd5}$   $\text{♙xd5}$  35  $\text{♜f2}$   $\text{♜b6}$  36  $\text{♜e2}$   $\text{♜c4!}$  (not 36... $\text{♜a4?}$  37  $\text{♙c3}$  with the advantage) 37  $\text{♙c3}$  and the king cannot use this square any more.

b) 33  $\text{♙e3}$   $\text{♜d5!}$  34  $\text{♜xd5}$   $\text{♙xd5}$  35  $\text{♜f2}$   $\text{♜b6}$  36  $\text{♜e2}$   $\text{♜c4}$  (if 36... $\text{♜a4}$ , then 37  $\text{♙c1}$  followed by  $\text{♙d3-b5}$ ) 37  $\text{♙c1}$  g5 (trying to get some counterplay against White's g2- and f3-pawns) 38  $\text{♜d3}$   $\text{♜g7}$  39  $\text{♜c3}$  f5 (Black is expanding on the kingside in order to fix White's kingside with ...f4 and ... $\text{♜f5-h4}$ ) 40  $\text{♙d3}$  (a natural move, carrying out the idea of activating

all the pieces; instead 40 f4!? gives Black the e4-square for his knight) 40...♞d6 41 ♖e3! (41 ♜b4, with the idea of expelling Black's knight and offering the exchange of bishops at c4, is worse since after 41...♜f6 42 ♜c5 ♞b7+! 43 ♜b6 ♞d6 Black has built a terrific defensive fortress) and White protects the d-pawn and prevents the manoeuvre ...♞f5-h4 by means of the defensive move ♖f2. The next plan will be to play ♖e2-d1. If Black wants to get some counterplay, he must react with ...f4 and ...g4, but as compensation this would open the diagonal for White's dark-squared bishop. The most logical sequence would then be 41...f4 42 ♖f2 g4 43 ♖e2 gxf3 44 gxf3 (not 44 ♖xf3 ♞e4+!).

We now return to 32...♞b6?! (D):



Can White now win? Karpov has the floor...

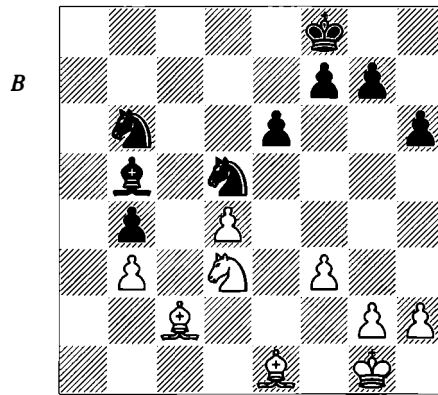
**33 b3! ♞fd5 34 ♞d3 ♖b5 35 ♖c2!**

Karpov's caution (and also his concentration) is unlimited. This is the type of moment where most other players would fail: 35 ♖e1? ♞c3! 36 ♖xc3 ♖xd3! (not 36...bxc3? 37 ♞b4 ♞d5 38 ♞xd5, leading to a won ending) 37 ♖xd3 bxc3 38 ♜f2 ♞d5 and Black will reach b4 so the king would not enter.

**35...♜f8 36 ♖e1 (D)**

**36...♖xd3?!**

Was this necessary? It was another difficult decision for Andersson, where calculations are more important than any other logical consideration. 36...♞c3!? is a very interesting move: 37 ♖xc3 (after 37 ♜f2 ♞b5! White cannot make progress: 38 ♞xb4? ♞xb4 39 ♖xc3 ♞xc2) 37...bxc3 38 ♞b4. Obviously, the first thing coming in view in this position is the weakness



of the c-pawn. The next step in our thoughts is to check if the pawn endings are won. For instance: 38...♞d5! (White threatened 39 ♞a2 ♞d5 40 ♖e4) 39 ♞xd5 (if 39 ♞a2, then 39...f5! to prevent ♖e4, and Black strengthens his position) 39...exd5 40 ♜f2 ♜e7 41 ♜e3 ♜d6 and now:

a) 42 ♖d3 ♖xd3 43 ♜xd3 ♜c6 44 ♜xc3 ♜b5 45 b4 ♜a4 (if not, there follows 46 ♜b3) and Black is always a tempo ahead. The reader can check this easily. If 46 h4, then 46...f5! (not 46...g5? 47 h5!) 47 g4 (47 h5 f4!) 47...fxg4 48 fxg4 g6, etc.

b) The best White can do is to create a point of contact on the kingside, starting with 42 f4, which also places a pawn on a dark square. After 42...♜c6 and eventually ...♖f1, White would have much trouble winning the game.

**37 ♖xd3 ♜e7**

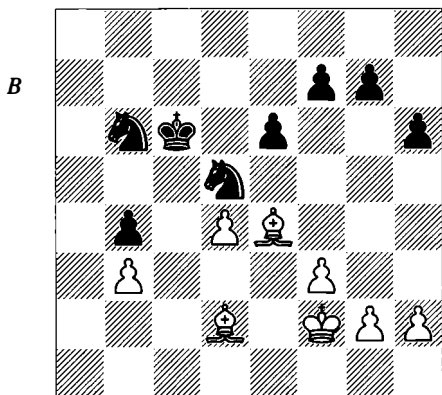
In the current position, it seems impossible that the bishops won't be stronger than the knights, and basically it is true. Black can do nothing to avoid the loss of the b-pawn, and his sole target is to build a fortress.

**38 ♜f2 ♜d6 39 ♖d2 ♞d7**

With the idea of ...♞b8-c6. Black could choose other set-ups for his knights. For instance, if Black transfers his knight to c7 he would avoid the trouble he experiences in the game.

a) Of course, 39...♞a8 allows White to play 40 ♖b5! (when the knight moves, the bishop always penetrates) 40...♞ac7 41 ♖a4! followed by the king moving to c4. This light-squared bishop's manoeuvre likewise stops the black king passing through c6.

b) Another possibility connected with the previous note would be to play 39...♖c6 first, preventing the bishop from entering. In this case, 40 ♙e4! (D) brings trouble.



Black cannot solve the problems:

b1) 40...♗b5 moves the king away the king-side. White would continue 41 g4! followed by 42 f4 and 43 g5. Let us assume that Black plays 41...♘d7 (there are not many options) 42 f4 ♘7b6 43 g5. If now Black exchanges, White would get an outside passed pawn and in case of 43...h5 there follows 44 g6! f5 (44...fxg6 45 ♙xg6 ♘f6 allows 46 ♙f7!) and then White has a choice of winning methods:

b11) 45 ♙xd5 ♘xd5 46 ♗g3 ♘f6 47 ♖h4 ♗a5 48 ♙c1! ♗b5 49 ♙b2 (with the idea of 50 d5) 49...♘d5 50 ♖xh5 ♘xf4+ 51 ♗g5 ♘h3+ 52 ♖h4 ♘f4 53 d5! ♘xg6+ (53...exd5 loses to 54 ♗g5) 54 ♗g5 ♘f8 55 ♙xg7 winning.

b12) 45 ♙d3+ ♗c6 46 ♗g3 ♘d7 47 ♖h4 ♘7f6 48 ♙c4 and White wins.

b2) If 40...f5, then 41 ♙d3 and the king slowly penetrates. Instead after 41 ♙xd5+? ♘xd5! (41...♗xd5? 42 ♗e3 is similar to the game, since Black is too late with his defence: 42...♘a8 43 ♙xb4 ♘c7 {otherwise 44 ♙a5!} 44 ♙f8 +-) 42 ♗g3 ♗b5! 43 ♖h4 ♘f6 White is not better.

**40 ♙e4!**

This prevents the formation of a defensive line.

**40...♘7b6**

Or:

a) If Black transfers the knight to c6 by 40...♘b8, then there follows 41 ♙xd5! (not 41

♗e2? ♘c6 42 ♙d3 ♘a5, when Black holds on 41...♗xd5 42 ♙xb4 and here:

a1) 42...♗xd4 43 ♙f8 g6 44 ♙xh6 ♗c3 45 ♗e3 ♖xb3 46 ♘d4! (the consequences of 46 ♗f4 are interesting: 46...♘d7 47 ♙g7 ♗c4! 48 g4 ♘d5 49 h4 e5+ 50 ♗g5 e4 51 fxe4+ ♖xe4 52 h5 gxh5 53 gxh5 f6+ 54 ♙xf6 and White wins 46...♘d7 47 g4! (47 ♙g7 is hasty: 47...g5! 48 g3 f5! 49 h4 f4 and I'm not sure if White can win) 47...f5 48 ♙g7 g5 49 ♙h6 e5+ 50 ♗e3 fxg4 51 fxg4 ♘f6 52 h3 ♘d5+ 53 ♗e4 ♘f4 54 h4!! +-). As we see here, knight endings are unusually rich in tactical features and they require considerable accuracy.

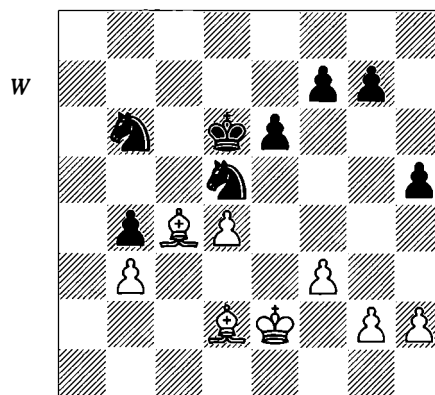
a2) 42...h5 43 ♙f8! (43 ♗e3 ♘c6! 44 ♙f5 {if 44 ♙c5, then 44...e5!} 44...♘xd4! leads to complications) 43...g6 44 ♗e3 ♘c6 45 ♙g7 and the king enters via f4.

b) Another possibility is 40...h5 intending ...♘b8-c6. Then:

b1) 41 ♙xd5 doesn't appear so effective due to 41...♗xd5 42 ♗e3 ♘b8! 43 ♙xb4 ♘c6. If White is forced to play this position, then he has no reasons to be optimistic.

b2) However, the proximity of the white king to Black's pawn-chain, suggests a 'long trip' which this time seems impossible to prevent: 41 ♗g3! g6 42 ♖h4 f6 (as a safeguard against ♗g5) 43 ♙d3! and White wins.

**41 ♗e2 h5 (D)**



An important decision. Andersson is freeing himself of the pawns located on dark squares (g7 and h6) in order to avoid tactical ideas in the coming bishop vs knight ending (it lessens the effect of ♙f8, for example). Black is relying on

the white king never being able to penetrate, thanks to the powerful knight located at d5.

After this move, it's time to think in general terms again. White could have prevented ...h5 by playing g4 and continuing the typical expansion with f4 and g5. If Black prevented g5 by means of ...f6, then f5 would punch a hole in Black's position. That Karpov decided against this, is, we may presume, due to several reasons:

1) He prefers to carry through to a happy conclusion the plans foreseen initially and not to vary them unless it is strictly necessary.

2) He dislikes advancing pawns unless it is absolutely necessary, and this time was not. It is worth repeating a tired but true statement: 'pawns cannot move backwards'.

3) He would create weaknesses that knights could exploit later on.

4) He sensed that his plan would win since his king would end up infiltrating among the black pawns.

#### 42 ♖d3

An interesting idea is to return the king to the kingside by 42 ♖f2, although he would have to look out for the resource ...♗xc4, bxc4 b3 later on, and play 43 ♗d3 next move.

Instead, Karpov persists with his plan. He also discarded 42 g4!? hxg4 43 fxg4, which follows the classical principle when playing with a bishop vs a knight: the attainment of potentially passed pawns, which will be more difficult for a knight to cope with. After moves like 43...f5 44 g5 g6 45 h4 White might return to the original plan of winning the b4-pawn. Another idea for Black would be to try to prevent White from creating a passed pawn, by playing ...f6 at the right moment. However, this would have a formal defect, because the kingside pawns would end up on dark squares (g7 and f6), which would favour White's 'bad' bishop. Moreover, this set-up was not in Andersson's initial plans. In short, this was an interesting idea.

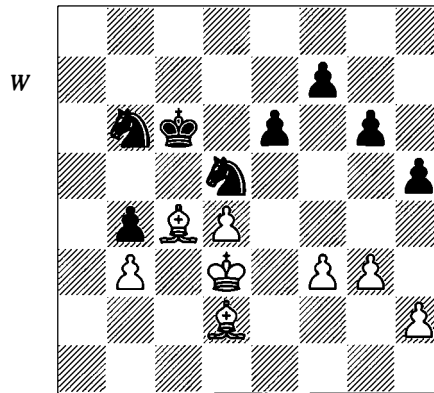
#### 42...♗c6 43 g3

Preventing ...♗f4.

#### 43...g6 (D)

#### 44 ♗xd5+ ♖xd5

Forced. The bad situation of the b6-knight means that 44...♗xd5 45 ♗xb4 is no good for Black:



a) 45...♗a8 46 ♗a5!.

b) 45...♗c8 46 ♗c5! e5!? 47 ♖e3 and the white king becomes a threat.

c) 45...♗d7 (best) 46 ♗a5 (intending b4-b5) 46...♗b8 47 ♗b6 ♗c6 (if 47...♗d7, 48 ♗a7!) 48 ♖e3 and White will play 49 ♖f4, causing the weakening of f6 and then he will return to c3.

It is interesting to stop for a moment at this position and to verify that with the knight on c7 (instead of b6) Black would have many possibilities of a successful defence. That is because after taking with the king, the knight would have the active b5-square, easily blocking White's passed pawn.

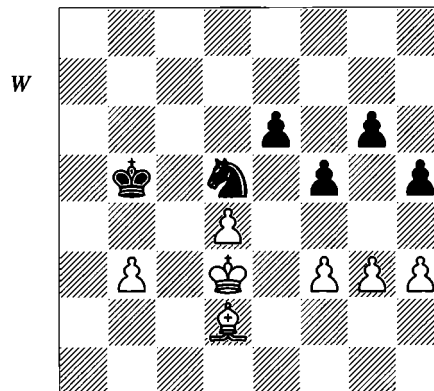
#### 45 ♗c4 f5

Eliminating the entry point e4.

#### 46 h3

It was necessary to avoid 46 ♗xb4 ♗e3+ and 47...♗f1. With this move, Karpov also begins a plan to infiltrate with his king.

46...♗b6 47 ♗xb4 ♗e3+ 48 ♗d3 ♗d5 49 ♗d2 ♗b5 (D)



Karpov's vision is long-term. Although it seems that Black has created an unassailable fortress, based on his control of the light squares, White has a winning plan: to break with g4 and isolate the h5-pawn.

**50 g4! ♖f6**

If Black allows 51 gxf5 gxf5 the white king would try to reach h4, and if during the trip he is obstructed by Black playing ...f4, he will return to d3 and then gain entry via e4.

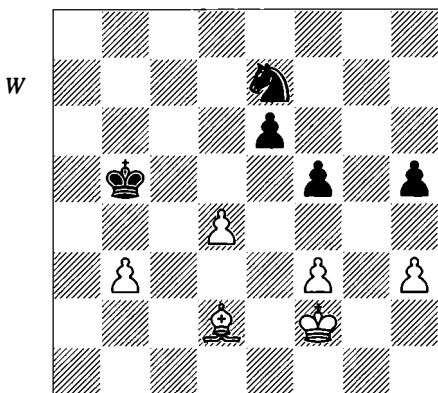
Another possibility is 50...hxg4 51 fxg4!, threatening 52 g5 and 53 h4, getting another passed pawn after 54 h5 gxf5 56 g6, since the black knight would remain sadly confined at g8 with the bishop strongly placed at g5. **Remember: bad bishops, when the position opens a little, might become superb.** After 51...♗f6 52 g5! ♗h5 53 h4 ♗g7 (Black must not give the c4-square to the white king) 54 ♕f4! the bishop is active again, eliminating all possible play with the knight: 54...♞e8 55 ♕e5.

**51 ♕g5!**

The bishop arrives just in time to cause the isolation of Black's h-pawn, and to defend against Black's threat ...♗b4.

**51...♞d5 52 gxf5 gxf5 53 ♕d2 ♗f6 54 ♗e3 ♞d5+ 55 ♗f2 ♗e7 (D)**

Heading for g6 to prevent the king from entering, but the knight will be displaced by White's next move...



**56 ♕g5!**

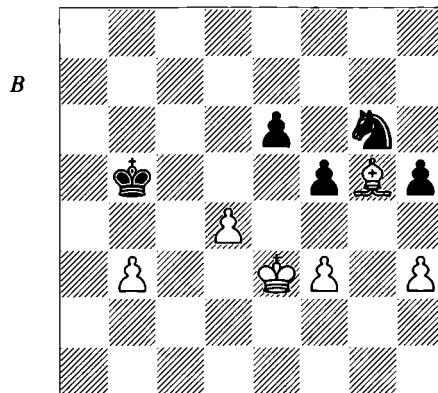
With the king on f2, ready to go to the centre or to h4, this move is really a blow.

**56...♞c6?!**

Instead:

a) The consequences of weakening Black's h-pawn are shown in the variation 56...♞d5 57 ♗g3 ♗b4 58 ♗h4 ♗xb3 59 ♗xh5 ♗c4 60 ♗g6 ♗xd4 61 h4 and the h-pawn, supported by the bishop, will promote.

b) A better choice is 56...♞g6! 57 ♗e3! (D), and now:



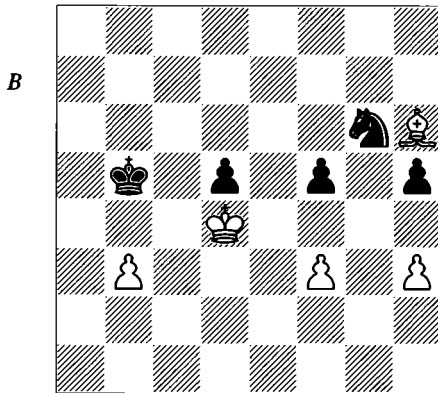
b1) 57...♗b4 58 d5! (usually this tactical blow always works when the white bishop is located on g5, hampering the black knight; later on we shall see how important this detail is) 58...e5! (58...exd5? loses to 59 ♗d4) 59 f4 (a precise reply; 59 d6 ♗f8 60 f4 e4 61 ♗d4 ♗xb3 62 ♕e7 {if 62 ♗e5, then 62...♗c4!}) 62...♞d7 63 ♗d5 looks as if it might win, but 63...♗c3! resists: 64 ♗e6 ♗c5+ 65 ♗xf5 ♗d4 66 ♗g6 e3 67 f5 ♗d5!, complicating the win) 59...♗c5 (worse is 59...e4 60 ♗d4 ♗xb3 61 ♕h6! ♗h8 62 d6 ♗f7 63 d7 with an easy win; 59...exf4-60 ♕xf4 ♗c5 61 d6 is likewise winning for White) 60 fxe5 ♗xd5 61 ♕f6 and Black is in zugzwang, since all moves have their drawbacks.

b2) The innocent-looking move 57...♗c6! gives White more trouble. His winning chances are considerable, but victory is not guaranteed. White has only complicated matters by combining bishop moves with the advance of the b-pawn. Then:

b21) 58 ♕f6 ♗d5 59 ♕g7 ♗c6 gives White nothing.

b22) 58 ♕h6! and then:

b221) 58...♗b5 is answered by 59 d5! exd5 (59...e5 60 f4! ♗c5 61 fxe5 ♗xd5 62 ♕g7) 60 ♗d4 (D), and here:



b2211) 60...♖h4 61 f4! ♜c6 62 ♖e5 (62 b4 is bad due to 62...♗f3+) 62...♗f3+ (62...♜c5 loses to 63 ♗f8+) 63 ♜xf5 ♗d4+ 64 ♜g5 ♗xb3 65 ♜xh5 d4 66 f5 d3 and now both 67 f6 and 67 ♜g6!? win.

b2212) 60...♜c6 61 ♗g5! (preventing ...♗h4) 61...♗h8!? (61...♜d6 also loses: 62 b4 ♜c6 63 b5+! ♜d6 64 ♗h6!) 62 b4 (62 ♖e5 ♗f7+ 63 ♜xf5 ♗xg5 64 ♜xg5 ♜c5 65 ♖f5 ♜d4 66 ♖e6 also wins) 62...♗f7 63 ♗f4 winning.

b222) 58...♜d5 59 ♜d3 (White is trying to take advantage of his passed pawn) 59...♗e7 and now: 60 b4 ♗c6; 60 ♜c3 ♜c6! (60...♗c6? loses to 61 ♗g7) 61 ♜c4 ♗d5 62 b4?! ♗b6+ and White makes no progress; 60 ♗g5 ♗c6 61 ♗f6 f4! with some counterplay.

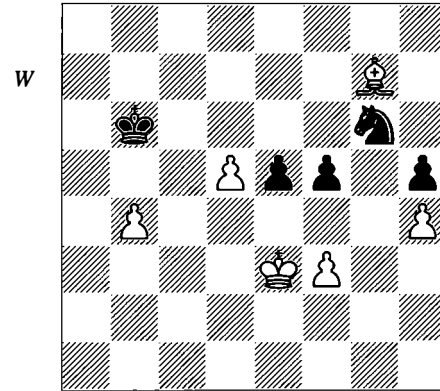
b23) 58 b4!? (to distract the king) 58...♗f8! (58...♜b5 59 d5! e5 and now 60 f4!?, rather than 60 ♗h6, which allows 60...♗e7!) 59 ♗h4!? (to gain entry for the king; 59 ♜d3 works in case of 59...♗d7? 60 ♗d8! ♜b5 61 d5 e5 62 ♜c3 ♗b8 63 ♗c7 {63 f4? exf4 64 ♗c7 f3!} 63...♗d7 64 ♗d6! ♗b6 65 ♗xe5 ♗xd5+ 66 ♜d4 ♗xb4 67 ♗d6 with a large advantage, but not after 59...♜b5!) 59...♗g6 (the pawn ending after 59...♜b5 60 ♖f4 ♗g6+ 61 ♜g5 is won for White) and here:

b231) 60 ♗g3 ♜b5 61 d5 exd5! (61...f4+? loses to 62 ♗xf4 exd5 63 ♗g5! ♜c4 64 f4) 62 ♜d4 ♜xb4! and the black king is set quickly in motion.

b232) 60 ♗f6!? ♜b5 61 d5 exd5 62 ♜d4 ♗f4 63 h4.

b233) 60 ♗g5 ♗f8 61 ♗f6 ♗g6 62 h4!? aims to enter line 'b232' with an extra tempo. Black would play 62...♜b5 63 d5 e5! 64 ♗g7!

(if 64 ♜d2, then 64...♜xb4! 65 d6 ♗f8 66 ♗xe5 ♜c5 offers Black good drawing chances) 64...♜b6 (D).

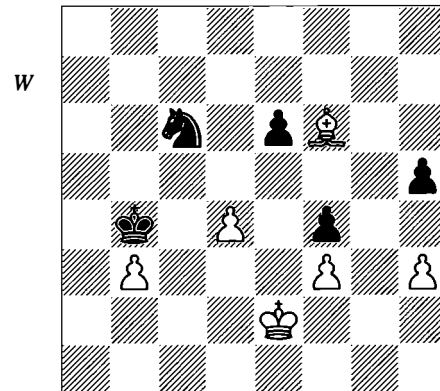


Now 65 ♗xe5!? ♗xe5 66 ♖f4 gives White good practical chances. For instance: 66...♗d3+ 67 ♜g5! ♗xb4 68 ♜xh5 ♗xd5 69 ♜g5 winning.

**57 ♗f6 f4**

Black's h-pawn shall be maintained until the end.

**58 ♖e2 ♜b4 (D)**



**59 ♜d3 ♜xb3**

Andersson has managed to restore the material balance, but in return the white king has penetrated to the heart of Black's position, and White has turned his bad bishop into an excellent piece.

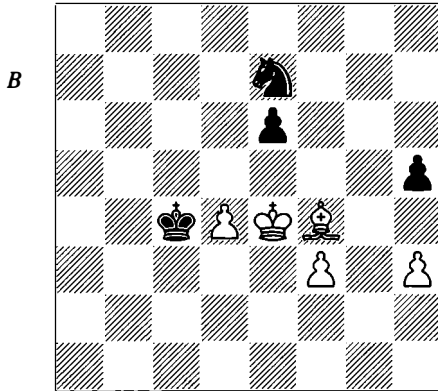
**60 ♖e4 ♜c4 61 ♗e5!**

The pawn ending is not won.

**61...♗e7**

A semi-zugzwang. After 61...♞e5 62 dxe5, 62...♞c5 63 ♜xf4 ♞d4 64 ♜g5 ♞xe5 65 h4! leads to victory for White, and the same goes for 62...h4 63 ♜xf4 ♞d4 64 ♜g4! ♞xe5 65 ♜g5. Nor is 61...♞c3 possible due to 62 ♙xf4, when 62...♞xd4 loses to 63 ♙e5.

62 ♙xf4 (D)

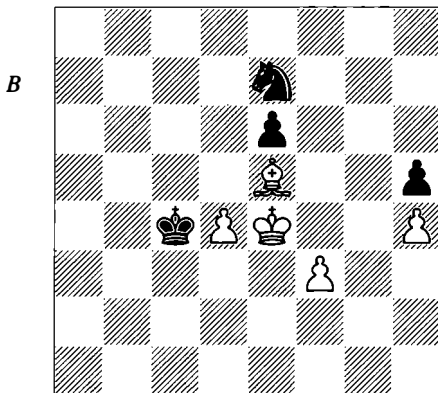


White now wins by force.

62...♞c6

There is no better reply. 62...♞f5 63 ♙e5 ♞e7 transposes to the game, and if 62...♞d5, then 63 ♙d6! seems strong. 62...♞g6 63 ♙g5 ♞h8 (63...♞f8 64 ♞e5 ♞d3 {64...♞g6+ 65 ♞f6 ♞f8 66 ♞f7 +-} 65 f4 ♞c4 66 ♙h6 ♞g6+ 67 ♞xe6 ♞xd4 68 f5 +-} 64 ♞e5 ♞f7+ 65 ♞f6 ♞d8 66 ♞g6 (for instance) 66...♞c6 67 ♙f6 is also winning for White.

63 ♙e5 ♞e7 64 h4 (D)



Black is in zugzwang.  
64...♞d5 65 ♙h8!

When the knight is on e7 the bishop must be on g7.

65...♞e7 66 ♙g7! ♞g6

66...♞b5 67 ♙f6 ♞g6 68 d5! wins.

67 ♙f6 ♞f8 68 ♞e5 1-0

Analysing this game will no doubt take the reader several hours of hard work. I hope you don't despair! I am convinced that after this intense chess session, your strategic chess level will have gone up many steps.

## The Knight-Pair

In the next game we will see another interesting IQP position. At the end of the 1980s GM Vladimir Malaniuk developed an interesting and not very usual set-up against the Tarrasch Queen's Gambit which brought him many points. Often, the understanding and determined study of some similar variations, even though less popular, bears fruit in master practice, obtaining very positive results. This example should attract the attention of readers who want to investigate chess openings.

The outcome of the game is not entirely correct, because Black missed a good opportunity to seize the initiative. It was only a fleeting moment, but this game is a superb example of the active possibilities that the isolated pawn provides to its possessor. White played with great accuracy, but he needed to elude active ideas continually. It was an exciting fight between two strategic concepts that are transparently displayed move by move, until reaching the highest point. The game shows that long-term plans don't work without some specific and timely decisions. It also illustrates perfectly a fascinating struggle between the bishop-pair on the one hand, and the tenacious pair of black knights on the other hand, thanks to their freedom of manoeuvre, a standard feature of positions with an IQP.

**Malaniuk – G. Georgadze**  
*USSR Ch (Odessa) 1989*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♞f3 c5

The Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit is a very interesting line in which to investigate

positions with an isolated queen's pawn. Black causes this situation hoping for enough dynamic possibilities to level the fight. In this sense, it is important to note that he often presses on White's e-pawn (which partially counters the weakness of the d-pawn) and fortifies the e4-square, often placing a knight on this excellent square. The other obvious positional compensation is the free play of Black's pieces, something quite attractive when you are going to select a defence against 1 d4.

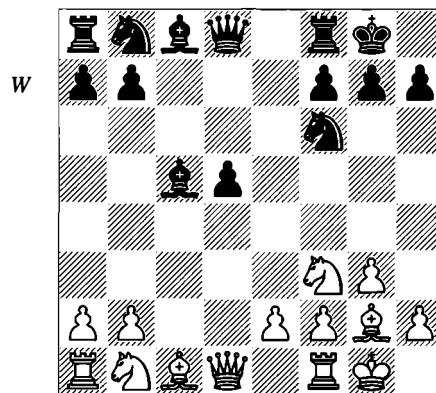
This defence reached some popularity when Garry Kasparov used it as his main defence for much of 1982-4. It was his choice during the Candidates final in 1984 against Smyslov, and he got spectacular results against other strong grandmasters, such as Larsen and Seirawan, refuting the mythical label that reduced this line to a distressing search for the draw. Later on, and after the first World Championship match with Karpov (in 1984), he abandoned it as if it were a disappointment in love, because it clearly suited Karpov's style perfectly.

**4 cxd5 exd5 5 g3 ♘f6 6 ♙g2 ♙e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 dxc5**

This is an interesting idea, because White wins a tempo for the development of his queen, and he doesn't define the position of the dark-squared bishop yet, which in the main line is usually on g5, exerting pressure on the isolated pawn at once. It is worth taking a quick look at a game in the main line, 8 ♘c3 ♘c6 9 ♙g5 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 h6 11 ♙e3. Karpov-Illescas, Leon 1993 seems really important to me in the strategic conception of the whole line. The former world champion contributed a new and simple idea on move 13: 11... ♖e8 12 ♖c1 ♙f8 13 a3!? (13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 ♘a4 ♙d7) 13... ♙g4 14 h3 ♙e6 (14... ♙h5 15 ♘f5 ♙g6 16 ♘h4 d4 17 ♘xc6!) 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 ♙d4 (hindering the advance ...c5) 16... ♙d7 17 ♖d3 ♘h7?! (very slow, although he is threatening ...c5) 18 ♙e3 ♙d6 19 ♖fd1 ♙e6 20 b4 ♘f8 (justifying the idea 13 a3; 20... a5!? 21 b5 ♙xa3 22 bxc6! gives White excellent compensation) 21 ♘a4 (c5 is weak) 21... ♘g6 22 ♖c3 ♙d7 23 ♘c5 (White is carrying out a clear plan while Black is mixing many plans) 23... ♘xc5 24 ♙xc5! ± ♖xe2 25 ♙e3 (winning material) 25... ♖e7 26 ♙f1 ♖xe3 27 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 28 fx3 ♖e8 29 ♘f2 ♘e5 30

♖c5 +- (a typical manoeuvre in the Tarrasch Defence) 30... ♖e7 31 e4! ♙e6 32 b5! cxb5 33 exd5 ♙d7 34 d6 ♖e6 35 ♙xb5 ♖f6+ 36 ♔g2 1-0.

**8... ♙xc5 (D)**



**9 ♖c2**

This queen move, vacating the square for a rook in order to exert pressure on the d-pawn and forcing Black to decide on the location of his dark-squared bishop, justifies White's previous decision.

**9... ♙b6**

Black keeps his bishop on this diagonal, where it will always exert pressure on f2 (and over e3 if White ends up moving the pawn to free himself from Black's pressure along the e-file) and will keep control on the d4-square, very important in positions with an isolated pawn, to enable a further advance of this pawn, getting more space for the black pieces.

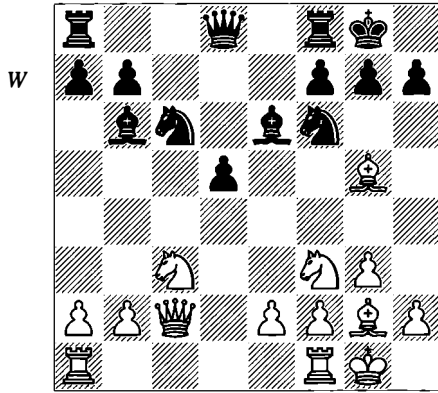
9... ♙e7 is more passive, but it has some advantages over the text-move. The most important is that it avoids the loss of the bishop-pair, since on b6 the bishop is more exposed, and can be exchanged for the c3-knight, as happens during the game. After 10 ♖d1 ♘c6 11 ♘c3 (threatening e4) 11... ♖a5 12 ♙e3 ♙e6 13 ♖a4 ♖xa4 14 ♘xa4 ♘e4 15 ♖ac1 White got a slight advantage in Gavrikov-Timmer, Berne 1989.

**10 ♘c3**

Since Black was aiming to get counterplay by using the e4-square, White decides to eliminate the b6-bishop.

**10... ♙e6?!**

A slight mistake, hastening to defend d5. Better is 10...♖c6 at once, keeping more options for the queen's bishop without allowing the manoeuvre ♖a4-c5. Then there might follow 11 ♖g5 (11 ♖a4 is less precise because Black can play more useful moves than moving the bishop to e6 {the d-pawn doesn't need this support any more} such as 11...♗e8 or 11...♖g4) 11...♖e6 (D) and now:



a) 12 ♖a4?! h6! 13 ♖xb6 axb6 14 ♖f4 (14 ♖e3 d4 15 ♗fd1 is met by 15...♖b4! or even 15...dxe3) and now Black should play 14...♖e4 ♞. Instead, Malaniuk-Palatnik, Kherson 1989 continued 14...♗e7 15 ♗fd1 ♗fc8 (15...♖g4!? is an interesting alternative) 16 a3 ♖g4 (16...b5!? is a way to seek queenside play) 17 ♗d3 ♗e6 (17...♖h5 is a possible way for Black to reorganize his forces) 18 ♖e3 ♖a5 19 ♖d4 ♗d7 20 f3 ♖e6 21 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 22 ♖d4 ♗e8 23 ♖f1 ♖c4 24 ♖f2 b5 25 b3 ♖xa3 26 ♖c5 b4 27 ♖g2 ♗ac8 28 ♗dc1 ♗e5 29 ♖d4 ♗d6 30 ♖f2 ♗c6 31 ♖h3 ♖h7 32 ♗xc6 bxc6 33 ♗c1 ♖g5 34 ♖f5 ♖b5 35 ♖c5 ♗f6 36 h4 ♖e4+ 37 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 38 ♗f3 ♖d4 39 ♖xd4 ♗xd4+ 40 ♖f1 and White went on to win with his extra material.

b) 12 ♗ad1 h6 and then:

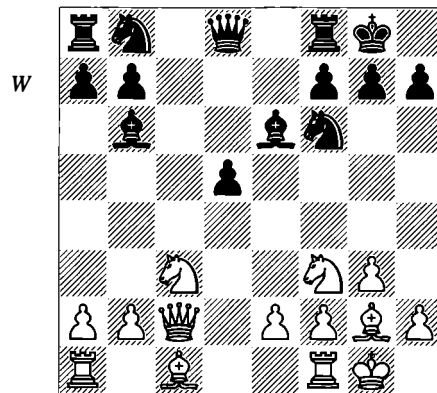
b1) 13 ♖h4 takes advantage of the fact that the black bishop is located on the queenside, with an interesting position and great complications.

b11) The absence of the b6-bishop from the kingside means that Black can't break the pin by 13...g5. White replies 14 ♖xg5 hxg5 15 ♖xg5 ♖d4 16 e4 (or 16 ♗a4).

b12) Therefore Black should stay calm and continue 13...♗e7! 14 ♗a4 ♗ad8 15 ♗f4 d4 (15...♗fe8 is another interesting possibility) 16 ♖xf6 (16 ♖e4 ♖d5 17 ♖xe7 ♖xf4 18 ♖xf5 ♖xe2+ 19 ♖h1 ♖xf8 is unclear) 16...♗xf6 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♖e4 ♖g7 (or 18...♖xa2 19 ♖xf6+ ♖g7 20 ♖h5+ ♖h8), when Black has good compensation for his defective pawn-structure thanks to the free play of his pieces. Indeed, these variations help us to understand that provoking White's move ♖g5, without doubt a critical move, promises a complex and balanced struggle, with chances for both sides.

b2) 13 ♖f4 (a less dramatic retreat) 13...♗e7 14 ♖a4 ♖a5?! (it is better to leave the bishop on b6 to get counterplay on the a-file) 15 a3 ♗fc8 16 ♗d3 ♖g4 17 ♗c1 ♖c7 18 ♖e3 ♖a5 19 ♖d4 ♖e4 20 ♖c3 ♗d8 21 ♗fd1 ♖c6 22 ♖b5 ♖b8 23 ♖e3 ♖f5 24 ♖bd4 ♖xd4 25 ♖xd4 ♖g6 26 ♗b3 a6?! 27 ♖c2 ♖e5 28 ♖b6 ♗d7 29 ♖b4 d4 30 f3 ♖d6 31 f4 ♖f6 32 ♖d5 ♗xe2 33 ♖xf6+ gxf6 34 ♗xd4 ♗e8 35 ♖f1 ♗e7 36 ♗cd1 ♖h5 37 ♗c1 ♖f5 38 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 39 ♗c3 ♗d6 40 ♖c5 ♗c6 41 ♖g2 ♗e6 42 ♖f2 ♗d8 43 ♖xb7 ♖d6 44 ♗e1 1-0 Malaniuk-Fogarasi. Sverdlovsk 1989.

We now return to 10...♖e6 (D):



**11 ♖a4**

The dark-squared bishop, so actively located at b6, is too strong, so White diverts his attention from d5 for a while.

**11...♖c6 12 ♖xb6 ♗xb6**

After 12...axb6 White finds a perfect reply in 13 b3!, not only vacating a useful square for the queen (and a good diagonal for controlling d4),

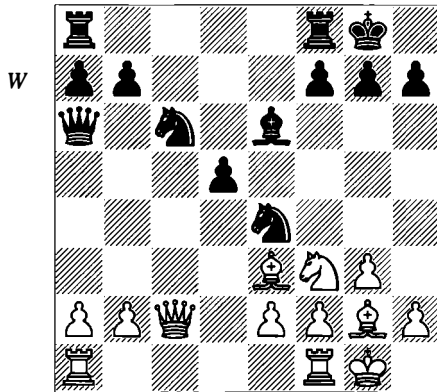
but also anticipating the defence of the a2-pawn, which is exposed in some variations.

Now Black believes that his control of d4 offers him enough counterplay in return for the dark-squared bishop, and he is ready to advance the d-pawn.

**13 ♖g5!**

Seemingly losing a tempo, but with the idea of keeping the blockade on d4. Without this manoeuvre, White could not hope for an advantage.

**13...♟e4 14 ♖e3 ♗a6 (D)**



Black appears to have no reasons to be worried. His pieces seem to be actively placed, and well arranged; after ...♞ac8 the white queen will have to solve some problems. And if that were not enough, with the queen on a6, the a2-pawn could become a tactical target.

All these important factors open our eyes to understand the simple and at the same time outstanding solution that White had prepared.

**15 b3!**

Malaniuk assesses very precisely the consequences of weakening the critical c3-square. It will hardly be noticeable during the game since a rook will protect it adequately. The queen is going to find an ideal hideout on b2, from where it will not hinder the activity of the white pieces but will support the dance of the pieces around d4.

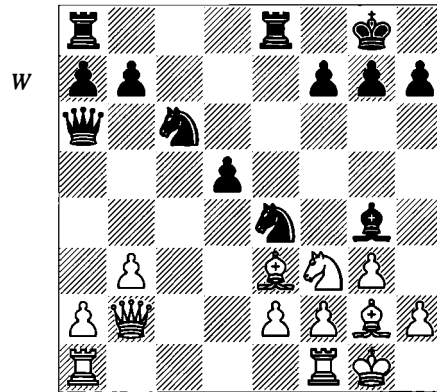
**15...♟g4!?**

Black continues playing actively, fighting for control of d4. An alternative is to try to centralize the black queen (despite its current active posting) or to force the exchange of

queens by means of the manoeuvre 15...♞a3 16 ♖c1 (16 ♞c1 ♞xc1 17 ♞axc1 is slightly less accurate, though still a shade better for White) 16...♞e7 17 ♞b2 ♞f6!, obtaining an endgame where Black is slightly worse though very solid.

Possibly Georgadze was already viewing the position optimistically thanks to his chances of counterplay and his pressure on e2. On the other hand, the black queen will be under control now.

**16 ♞b2 ♞fe8 (D)**



**17 ♞fe1**

This is such a simple move that it seems difficult to choose. White is not preventing any threat from Black; he is only planning to free himself by ♟d4, fighting not only for the blockade on the critical d4-square but also to exert pressure on Black's position by means of timely exchanges.

The centralization of the white rooks might be an interesting choice, but after 17 ♞fd1 ♞ad8 18 ♞a1 White lacks logical moves. In fact, without the prophylactic move 17 ♞fe1 White could not defuse the pressure exerted by the black pieces.

**17...♟d6**

With the idea of ...♟f5, preventing ♟d4. With a black knight on f5, Georgadze seems to have the central situation under control again, winning the battle for the d4-square.

**18 ♟f4**

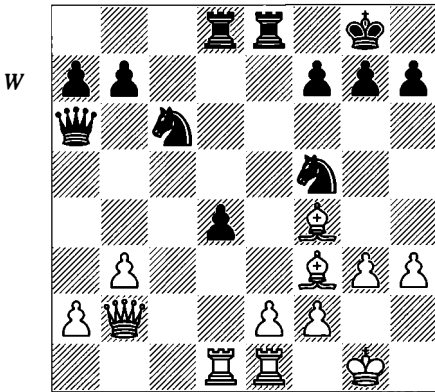
Anticipating Black's reply ...♟f5, since now the knight would hit nothing. After 18 ♟d4 Black would fight under superb conditions for

this important square: 18...♖b5! (instead, if 18...♗xd4 19 ♗xd4 ♘f5 20 e3, White has a firm grip on d4) 19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 ♖ac1 ♗e6 21 ♗c5 ♖ae8 22 e3 ♖f6 (or 22...♗f5), and Black's pieces are very active.

18...♖ad8 19 ♖ad1 ♗f5 20 h3 ♗xf3

The knight manoeuvre started with ...♗d6-f5 has a serious drawback; he must give up his outstanding light-squared bishop. But Black has assessed the pros and the cons very well. The pair of black knights appears well coordinated in this specific position. The position is rich in tactics and, what is really important, White's grip on d4 is going to disappear at once, so that White will have a somewhat more restricted position.

21 ♗xf3 d4 (D)



When Black decided to play ...♗d6 he already had in mind to reach this position. Now the black knights are quite active (in IQP positions it is usual that the pair of knights plays a vital role) and they strongly support his isolated pawn, which provides some extra earnings: pressure on e2. In this way it is obvious that White's advantage is not so clear.

Similarly, the active f5-knight prevents for the time being the advance e4, which under other circumstances could free White's game.

22 ♗g2!?

A good prophylactic move, unhurriedly trying to undermine the position of the f5-knight, and avoiding tactical blows (such as ...d3, exd3 ♗fd4) that the situation of a bishop on f3 might cause. For instance in the variation 22 a3 d3 23 exd3 ♖xe1 + 24 ♖xe1 ♗fd4 25 ♗e4 ♖b5, Black

gets a lot of counterplay and an excellent central post for one of his knights.

White had other interesting options, such as 22 ♖b1, though that is met by 22...g6!? (intending ...♗g7-e6) when there is no time for 23 ♗g4 because of 23...♗b4! (intending ...♗d5). If 22 ♗g4, then 22...♖b5 23 a4 ♖d5 24 b4 ♗d6.

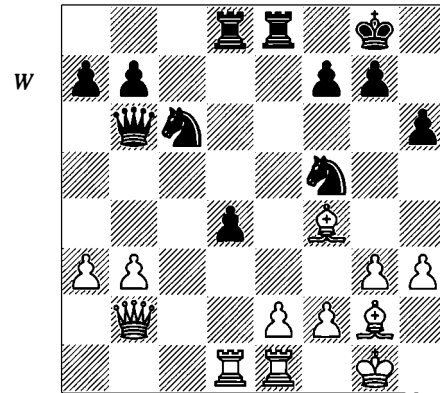
22...h6

Sooner or later, the king will need a flight-square, and besides it is required to control the dark squares. The move ...g6, to support the knight in its current position, would weaken the dark squares and allow the typical attack h4-h5. Georgadze makes a small strategic concession: he allows White's plan of advancing the e-pawn.

23 a3

White definitely prevents ...♗b4 and threatens b4, attacking the queen. That's why the black queen feels threatened and abandons the pleasant corner of the board where it has stayed for so many moves.

23...♖b6 (D)



24 ♖b1

Now this move is very strong and the black knight must retreat to a less active square. If 24 ♖c2, then 24...♗fe7 25 ♗c1 ♖c8 26 ♖d3 ♗g6.

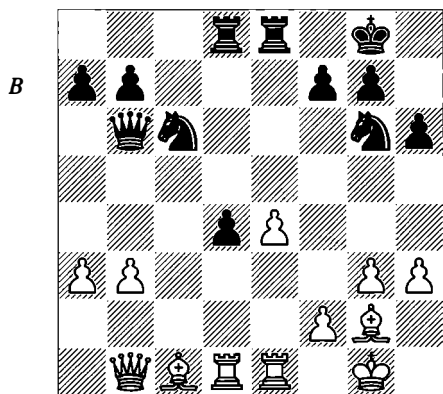
24...♗fe7 25 e4

Gaining space in the centre. Obviously, if now Black exchanges on e3, the white bishops would wreak havoc. The first stage of the plan has ended successfully: the f5-knight has been destabilized. The e2-pawn would always have been a weakness worthy of attention, and a

serious drawback in the realization of the advantage, so this advance is the first step to get ahead.

Likewise, with this advance, Black's knights have fewer squares available, and apparently, their activity is reduced. They must hurry to find new locations; if not, they will be cornered by White's central pawns. The advance e4, then, threatens to be the first link of a powerful white central majority. What we don't know is if the d4-pawn is strong or weak. The second stage starts now.

25...♖g6 26 ♖c1 (D)



26...a5?

In his eagerness to prevent b4 and a subsequent attack against the passed pawn, Black makes a mistake. Maybe he had the vain hope of moving the knight from c6 to c3, via a7-b5.

Black's best chance is 26...♖a5! 27 b4 (this advance is forced, whereby the black knight will occupy an ideal square; there is not enough compensation after 27 f4 ♖xb3 or 27 ♖b2 ♖xb3 28 f4 d3+ 29 ♖h2 d2) 27...♖c4 and then:

a) The rook manoeuvre 28 ♖e2?! ♖ge5 29 ♖a2 d3 30 ♖h2 doesn't prevent Black from taking the upper hand during the complications: 30...d2 31 ♖xd2 ♖xf2.

b) 28 ♖a2?! ♖ge5 29 f4 (29 ♖f4 d3 30 ♖h2 ♖d4) 29...d3+ 30 ♖h2 d2 31 ♖e2 (31 ♖xd2 ♖f3+ 32 ♖xf3 ♖f2+ 33 ♖g2 ♖xd2 34 ♖xd2 ♖xd2) 31...dxc1 ♖ 32 ♖xc1 and now White will be the one having the IQP and without the bishop-pair.

c) 28 ♖h2 d3! 29 ♖xd3 ♖xf2 30 ♖ed1 ♖xd3 31 ♖xd3 ♖ge5 32 ♖f1 ♖c2! 33 ♖d5 followed

by ♖d1 and White has no problems maintaining equality.

How the trend of the fight changes with a single move! Now Black is clearly worse.

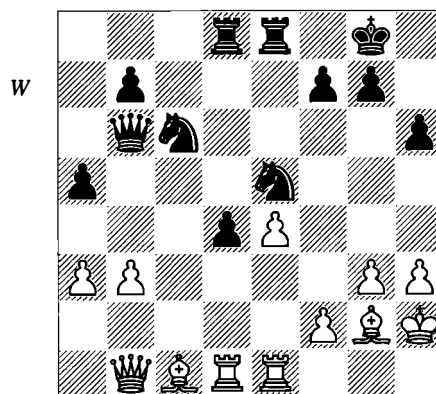
27 ♖h2

White prepares the advance of the f-pawn without needing to fear the reply ...d3. This is a rather cautious approach, but it doesn't spoil his advantage. The immediate advance 27 f4 is promising:

a) 27...♖a7 28 ♖d3 (28 a4 ♖c6 ±) 28...♖b5 29 ♖b2 and White will place the queen on d2.

b) 27...d3+ 28 ♖e3 ♖b5 29 ♖f1 and the tactical counterplay isn't useful: 29...♖d4 30 ♖xd3 ♖f3+ 31 ♖f2.

27...♖ge5 (D)



28 ♖d2!

White is in no hurry. 28 f4? is answered by 28...♖c4!.

28...♖d7

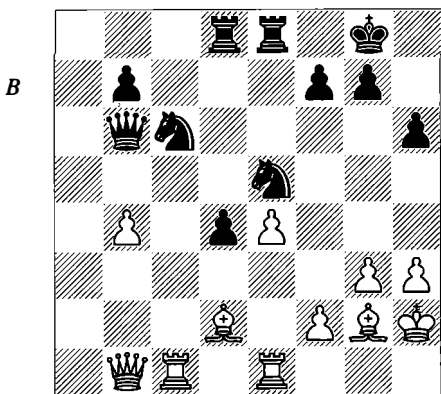
With this manoeuvre Black is improving the role of the knight in the central battle. Black threatens ...♖c5, achieving a very active square for the knight. White shall continue looking onwards, without losing time lamenting, because doubt is the worst obstacle. Pawn advances must be calculated with great accuracy, but there are moments when a player must follow his intuition. Here White understood that his blockade on the d-pawn was enough to stop the fleeting activity of Black's forces. In the long run, the unavoidable onrush of White's central pawns will be more significant in the outcome of the game.

29 b4 axb4 30 axb4 ♖de5

This was Black's idea, once he had provoked the advance b4, to give the knight an outpost. Another active idea is 30...♘a7!? going to b5, but the advantage would not change ends: 31 f4 ♘b5 32 ♖d3 ♜a8 33 ♙f1 (or 33 ♜a1). Anyway, this idea was somewhat better than the text-move.

### 31 ♜c1 (D)

Preventing Black's knight from accessing the c4-square.



### 31...d3!?

Black must advance this pawn, as a complement to the previous knight move. He is searching for complications, willing to weaken the d-pawn to give the knights new active chances.

### 32 ♜f1

This preventive move is entirely necessary. 32 f4? is not possible due to 32...♜f2!. Malaniuk displays impressive patience. Sooner or later, his strategic idea will have to turn into reality!

### 32...♜b5

Black is determined to bring his knight to c4. If 32...♘d4, then 33 f4 ♘ec6 34 ♖xd3 ♘xb4 35 ♜e3 (35 ♜b1 ♘f3+ 36 ♜xf3 ♜xd2 37 ♜c4 ±) 35...♘bc6 36 ♙c3.

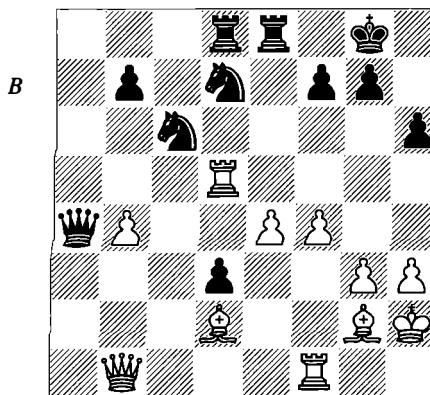
### 33 ♜c5

White cannot waste time, because otherwise the knights would begin to dominate the whole board. This rook move keeps the activity of the black pieces at bay and presses indirectly on the d3-pawn.

### 33...♜a4

33...♜a6 34 f4 ♘c4 35 b5 ♜a4 36 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 37 ♜c1 ±.

### 34 f4 ♘d7 35 ♜d5 (D)



Finally Black has created a serious threat, but the passed pawn will not last for long.

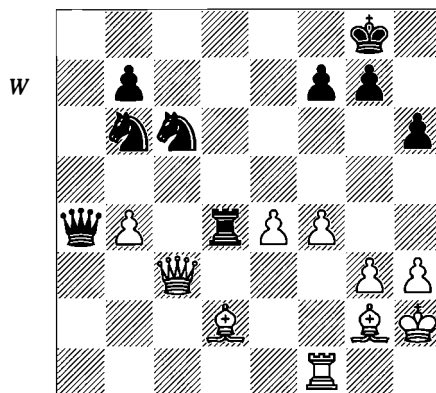
### 35...♘b6

With this pawn sacrifice, Black is hoping to get free play for his pieces.

### 36 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 37 ♜xd3 ♜d8

### 37...♘xb4? 38 ♜d4.

### 38 ♜c3 ♜d4 (D)



At last Black has freed his game, but at the cost of an important pawn, albeit one to which his pieces were tied. Now White must still play with great accuracy.

### 39 ♜b1

White is waiting patiently for the moment to free himself, although it was preferable to play actively, immediately taking control of the a-file, rather than passively defending the b4-pawn: 39 ♜a1! ♜xb4 (39...♜b5, with the idea 40 ♜c5 ♜xc5 41 bxc5 ♜xd2 42 cxb6 ♜b2, fails

to 40  $\text{♙f1} \text{+-}$ ) 40  $\text{♜xb4} \text{♝xb4}$  41  $\text{♙e3}$  and White wins material.

**39...♜a2?!**

Here Black missed a chance to get his share of the play. There were two more interesting possibilities, activating the pieces to the utmost:

a) 39...♝c4?! hinders White's technical task, although he can keep the advantage with careful play:

a1) 40  $\text{♙c1} \text{♞d6!}$  41  $\text{e5} \text{♞e4}$  42  $\text{♜e3}$  (42  $\text{♞e1} \text{♝xb4!}$  43  $\text{♙xe4} \text{♝c2!}$ ) 42...♜c2 43  $\text{♞b2}$  43  $\text{b5?!}$   $\text{♜xb1}$  44  $\text{bxc6} \text{♞c4}$  43...♜c4 44  $\text{b5} \text{♝b4!}$  45  $\text{♞b1} \text{♞d5}$  46  $\text{♜b3} \pm$ .

a2) 40  $\text{♙e1!} \text{♜a2}$  41  $\text{♞c1!}$  (41  $\text{b5} \text{♜xb1}$  42  $\text{bxc6} \text{♞d8}$ ; 41  $\text{♞a1} \text{♜e2}$ ) preventing the threat of ...♜e2, with clear advantage for White.

b) 39...♞c4! 40  $\text{♜e3!}$  (40  $\text{♜b3} \text{♞c2}$  41  $\text{♙e3} \text{♞xb3}$  42  $\text{♞xb3} \text{♝c4}$ ; 40  $\text{♜a1} \text{♞c2}$  41  $\text{♙e1} \text{♞a2}$  42  $\text{♜c3} \text{♞c2}$  43  $\text{♜b3} \text{♜xb3}$  44  $\text{♞xb3} \text{♝c4}$ ) 40...♞c2.

**40 ♞b2 ♜a1**

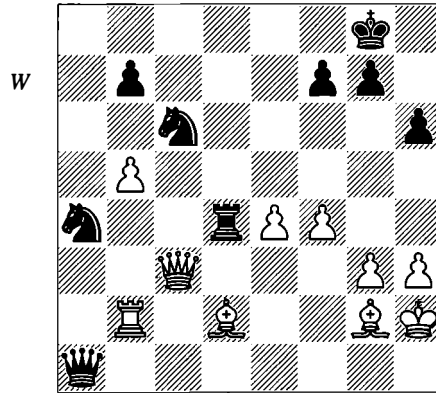
Now Black is threatening ...♝a4 and ...♝c4, both quite unpleasant moves, and he appears to have obtained counterplay. However, White has prepared an elegant combination, driving Black back and simplifying the game.

**41 b5! ♝a4 (D)**

41...♞c4 42  $\text{bxc6} \text{♞xc3}$  43  $\text{cxb7} \text{♞c8}$  44  $\text{♞xb6} \text{♞b8}$  45  $\text{e5} \text{♜d4}$  46  $\text{♙a5} \text{♜f2}$  47  $\text{♞b3} \text{+-}$ .

**42 bxc6 ♝xc3 43 ♙xc3**

The queen sacrifice is delicious from an aesthetic point of view. White has only two bishops for the queen, but his passed b-pawn decides the struggle.



**43...♞b4!**

This finesse does not change the outcome. If 43...♞d8, then 44  $\text{cxb7} \text{♞b8}$  45  $\text{♙e5} \text{♜a7}$  46  $\text{♙xb8} \text{♜xb8}$  47  $\text{e5} \text{+-}$ .

**44 ♞c2!**

This is the most accurate move, keeping White's passed pawn, which will be decisive. Otherwise: 44  $\text{cxb7} \text{♞xb7} =$ ; 44  $\text{c7} \text{♞c4}$ ; 44  $\text{♞b3} \text{♞xb3}$  45  $\text{♙xa1} \text{bxc6}$  46  $\text{♙d4}$  with a winning technical advantage that, however, demands very accurate play.

**44...♜b1 45 ♙xb4 bxc6**

Or 45...♜xc2 46  $\text{cxb7} \text{♜c7}$  47  $\text{e5}$  followed by  $\text{♙d6}$ .

Now White realizes his material advantage easily, coordinating his pieces in the assault.

**46 ♞c4 ♜b3 47 ♞d4 ♜b2 48 ♞d8+ ♝h7 49 ♙e7 ♜c2**

49...♜b7 50  $\text{♙d6}$ .

**50 ♞c8 ♜d2 51 ♞c7 1-0**

# 7 Control of Light (or Dark) Squares

There is no better choice than the Sicilian Defence to show hundreds of examples where the d5-square is conceded in return for rapid piece development. Black clearly defines his aims with an early ...e5, hoping to advance the backward d6-pawn at some point, and from this moment on, it becomes a 'fight to the death' between the two sides to establish control of the critical d5-square. If there is any established fact about these positions, it is that White's play must be very precise to prevent central counterplay.

In the next game White grabs the d5-square by offering the exchange of the light-squared bishops. But White's strategy is crowned by placing a knight on that square. Proceeding slowly, and grabbing the weak points first, White controls the c4-square, as a stepping-stone towards d5. Black's bishop, which battles alone against the awesome knight, never finds a good square.

The readers have the chance of tasting a wonderful chess candy. Chess seems simple when you watch this show. How do I explain now that a bishop is only given up in extraordinary situations?

## Geller – Najdorf Zurich Ct 1953

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6

The Najdorf Variation, as is logical to suppose, was the main weapon of this outstanding Polish chess-player, who settled in Argentina.

6 ♗e2 e5!?

It is common that those who play the Najdorf Variation advocate this move. It displaces the central knight at once, using the earned tempo to speed up development. On the other hand, there are drawbacks, which we shall discuss later on.

7 ♘b3

Another possibility is 7 ♘f3, with the idea of attacking the black bishop once it goes to e6.

7... ♗e6?!

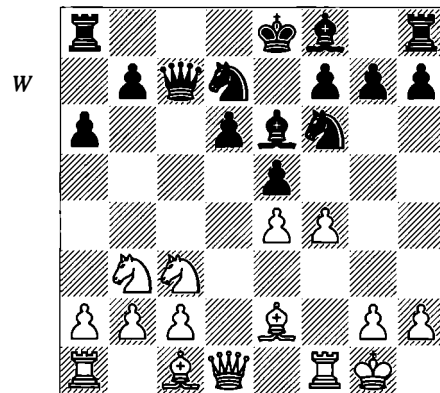
Wrong. With this move-order Najdorf tries to incite Geller, who could now have chosen a very interesting possibility: 8 f4 ♗c7 9 g4! and White gets a strong initiative on the kingside.

7... ♗e7 8 f4 0-0 is more cautious, and would probably lead to the same type of position as in the game.

8 0-0 ♘bd7

Najdorf, in his book on the 1953 Candidates tournament, writes that Argentinean grandmaster Pilnik disapproved of this move. According to Najdorf the move ... ♗e6 should be supplemented with ... ♘bd7 in order to guard the d5-square (e.g. after 9 ♗g5 h6 Black could recapture with the knight).

9 f4 ♗c7 (D)



If Black exchanged pawns on f4, White would win a tempo – in comparison with other lines in which the c1-bishop was developed – and might activate a knight by bringing it to f5, a place where it becomes surprisingly annoying.

10 f5

Attacking White's target: the d5-square. The exchange of the light-squared bishops favours Geller's idea.

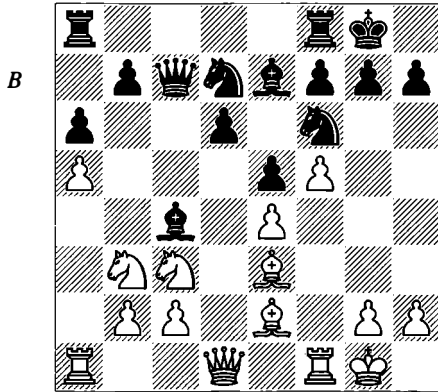
**10...♗c4 11 a4!**

This complements the previous move. White gains space on both flanks, so that Black's theoretical advantage on the queenside is lessened, and his game is going to be more restricted.

**11...♞c8?!**

This mistake will be keenly felt during the game, although Najdorf doesn't offer any other choices. Considering this move together with the later 17...b5, we see that the queen's rook can do useful work on the a- and b-files, and so it is the king's rook that should be activated along the c-file. Later games by Fischer supported this assessment.

After 11...♗e7! 12 ♗e3 (12 ♗g5 0-0 13 a5 ♞fd8! gives Black gets a comfortable game, Van der Sterren-Mecking, Wijk aan Zee 1978) 12...0-0 13 a5 (D) Black has two notable options:



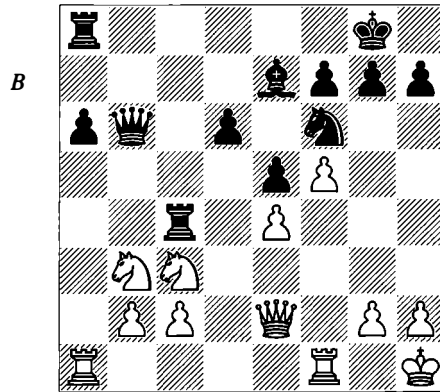
a) 13...♞fc8 (an important idea that shows the drawbacks of Black's 11th move) 14 ♗xc4 (14 ♗h1 ♗xe2 15 ♞xe2 d5! 16 exd5 ♗b4 gives Black good play) 14...♞xc4 15 ♞a4 ♞c6 16 ♗h1 ♗d8! (we shall see this move, once the king's rook has been developed, in line 'b', but this time it has a different idea) 17 ♞d3 b5 18 axb6 ♗xb6 19 ♗xb6 ♗xb6! 20 ♞xa6 ♞xa6 21 ♞xa6 ♗c4 and Black has sufficient counter-play.

b) 13...b5!? 14 axb6 ♗xb6 and now:

b1) 15 ♗xb6 ♞xb6+ 16 ♗h1 ♗b5! (the key move, stressing the pressure along the a6-f1 diagonal, and forcing White's next move) 17 ♗xb5 axb5 18 ♗d5 ♗xd5 19 ♞xd5 (White controls the d5-square but the white knight is

going to be displaced) 19...♞a4! 20 c3 ♞a6 21 h3 (21 ♞ad1 ♞c8 22 ♗c1 b4 gave Black the advantage in Tal-Fischer, Curaçao Ct 1962) 21...♞c8 22 ♞fe1 h6 23 ♗h2 ♗g5! (Black's control over the a-file and the important role played by the black bishop tip the scales in his favour) 24 g3 ♞a7 25 ♗g2 ♞a2 26 ♗f1 ♞xc3 0-1 Unzicker-Fischer, Varna OL 1962.

b2) 15 ♗h1 ♞fc8! (the ideal set-up; instead, 15...♗xe2 is hasty on account of 16 ♞xe2 ♗c4 17 ♗g5!) 16 ♗xb6 ♞xb6 17 ♗xc4 ♞xc4 18 ♞e2 (D) and then:



b21) 18...♞b4?! was played in the game Geller-Fischer, Caracas 1962 (two great experts face to face): 19 ♞a2 ♞b7 (there is no time for ...♗d8 due to the strong pressure on the a6-pawn) 20 ♗a5 ♞c7 21 ♗d5! ♗xd5 22 exd5 ♞b5 23 ♞d2 ♞c5 24 c4 ♞b6 and now the game continued 25 ♞e2? ♗g5 26 ♞f3 ♗f6 27 ♗c6 e4 (Black plays in a very active way) 28 ♞f4 e3 29 b4 ♞xb4 with obvious compensation for Black. White could have obtained a great advantage with 25 ♞a4, with the idea of continuing with b4 and ♗c6 as appropriate.

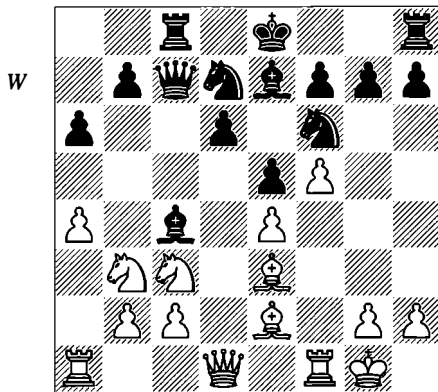
b22) 18...♞ac8! 19 ♞a2 ♗d8! (this is a typical move in these set-ups; it threatens to activate the bishop, supporting ...a5, and especially ...♞b7, preventing White from playing ♗a5) 20 ♞fal ♞b7 21 ♞a4 ♞xa4. At this very moment the players agreed a draw in Karpov-R.Byrne, Leningrad IZ 1973, but the earlier game Karpov-Stoica, Graz 1972 had continued 22 ♞xa4 ♞c6 (22...a5!? 23 ♞c4 ♞xc4 24 ♞xc4 g6) 23 ♞d3 g6 (another typical move in Black's reactive set-up) 24 h3 ♗h5!? 25 ♞al ♗f4 26

♖f3 ♜c4 with a complicated game. Karpov achieved a win, but with great difficulty.

Najdorf's move (11...♞c8) could involve the loss of two tempi compared to previous examples and opens a question about the soundness of the break ...b5 in the near future.

### 12 ♙e3 ♙e7 (D)

Bronstein suggested 12...d5, with lines such as 13 exd5 ♙b4 or 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 exd5 ♙xb3 15 cxb3 ♙c5, more in agreement with the spirit of the Najdorf Variation. The first line can be met by 14 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 (14...♙xc3 15 ♙xa6) 15 ♘d2! ♖c7 16 ♘de4 with some advantage. And I suspect the second line is not entirely right and/or it can be improved (e.g., 14...♙xe2 15 ♖xe2 ♖xc2 16 ♖xc2 ♞xc2 17 ♞ac1!) even though I agree with the aim of that remark. Bronstein seems to reprove Najdorf's attitude in the current game, playing in a terribly passive manner, and making the realization of White's plan easy.



### 13 a5

Restricting Black's actions far more, and activating the queen's rook (via a4), which is going to develop an active role. Geller will thus protect the e-pawn once more and support the raid of a white piece (generally a knight) via c4.

### 13...h5?!

Najdorf prevents White from exerting total control, such as he would after 13...0-0 14 g4. However, this attack has its dangers for White. After 14...h6 15 h4 b5! (Najdorf suggests 15...♙xe2 16 ♖xe2 ♘h7 17 ♘d5 ♖d8 with a good game) the white king would run unpredictable risks.

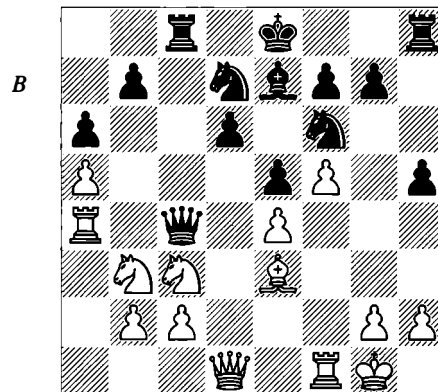
The text-move was surely the most difficult of the game, and involved considerable thought. However, it contains formal defects. Black leaves the h-pawn to its own devices (it would be a weakness if Black later castles) and this adventure costs a really important tempo.

It would be interesting to test the defence of the d5- and e4-squares by 13...♙xe2 14 ♖xe2 ♖c6 (a typical move). The usual 15 ♞a4 would allow 15...d5 while 15 ♖d3 would be met with 15...♘g4. Of course White could choose 15 ♙g5 or 15 ♖f3, keeping control. Everything suggests that the best reply was 13...0-0 14 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 15 ♞a4 ♖c7 16 ♖e2, though White's advantage is beyond question.

### 14 ♙xc4

14 h3 is possible at once.

### 14...♖xc4 15 ♞a4 (D)



### 15...♖c7

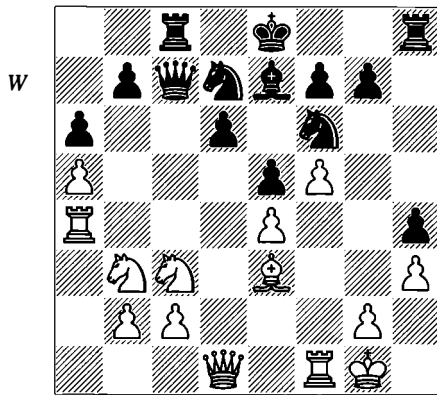
Is this a mistake? The queen could take a more active square by 15...♖c6, where it exerts pressure on important points in White's position. However, Najdorf has in mind the freeing move ...b5, and with the queen on c6 it could not be carried out. After 16 h3 (not 16 ♙g5 ♘xe4!, or 16 ♘d2 d5 17 exd5 ♘xd5 18 ♞c4 ♘xe3 19 ♞xc6 ♞xc6! with good play) 16...0-0 the queen might be exposed or else take part in the battle actively, with ideas such as ♘c5. With the white king on h1 (instead of him having played h3) and with ...♞fd8 (instead of ...h5) this same position arose in Geller-Ivkov, Hilversum 1973. Seemingly this change in the position favours White; the game continued 17 ♖f3 h6 18 ♞aa1! ♘c5 19 ♘d5! ♘xd5 20 exd5

♖b5 21 ♜xc5 dxc5 22 ♗g4 and suddenly White's attack became unstoppable.

### 16 h3!

Not to force Black's next move, which is forced and good, but to prepare the defence of the c2-pawn by means of ♜f2 and subsequently be able to work with the knight placed on c3.

### 16...h4 (D)



Black is dreaming of activating his bishop via g5 some day and dominating the dark squares, after playing ...♜h5. The problem is that on the other hand, Geller can get to bring a knight to d5, so that the black bishop would play a secondary role.

### 17 ♜f2!

Directed against the threat of 17...♜h5, which would now be met by 18 ♜d5. In this way c2 remains protected, the knight can move freely, and likewise the rook can get to d2, pressing along the d-file. For instance, after the mechanical 17 ♗e2 there would follow 17...♜h5. 17 ♗f3 seems more appealing, and 17 ♜d2 (Geller) could fill all the requirements to be considered as the strongest move in the position.

### 17...b5

Najdorf needs to breathe and so he doesn't avoid material sacrifices in search of the initiative. Indeed, if White accepted this sacrifice, Black's position would be promising. However, Geller finds a quiet solution to the problem. From the first moves, his tendency to control the light squares has been transparent and stubborn, and he is going to follow his plan, even if the character of the position is different now.

Although he will have more weaknesses and the same cruel fate as before, I find it difficult to criticize Najdorf's impulsive play. Since he cannot castle yet, on account of 18 ♜g5, Bronstein suggested 17...♗c6, trying to put pressure on the rook and the e4-pawn. But does it work? 18 ♜d2 is the natural reply, not only attempting the manoeuvre ♜c4-e3/b6, but also ♜c4, confining the queen. Then:

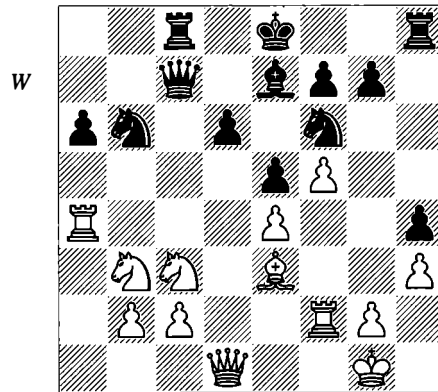
a) 18...d5 doesn't work: 19 exd5 ♜xd5 20 ♜c4 ♜c5 21 ♜xd5 ♗xd5 22 b4!.

b) 18...♜c5 and here:

b1) 19 ♜xc5 dxc5 would be only to Black's benefit, since now White will take a long time to reach d5, and meanwhile Black could quickly place a rook on d4, which would be very annoying.

b2) However, Bronstein's idea can be refuted tactically: 19 ♜c4! ♗d7 20 b4 and White wins a piece.

### 18 axb6 ♜xb6 (D)



### 19 ♜xb6!

The only way. The exchange of a bishop for a knight, defender of the d5-square, is a perfect way to achieve the goal, which is to obtain a central knight that dominates Black's dark-squared bishop. Of course, before considering this important exchange it is necessary to be sure that the knight is able to overcome all the obstacles and arrive at the goal happily. In this case, the obstacles are represented by the defence of the b- and c-pawns and the potential activity of the black bishop. Geller guesses right when sensing that these elements won't thwart the success of his strategic plan.

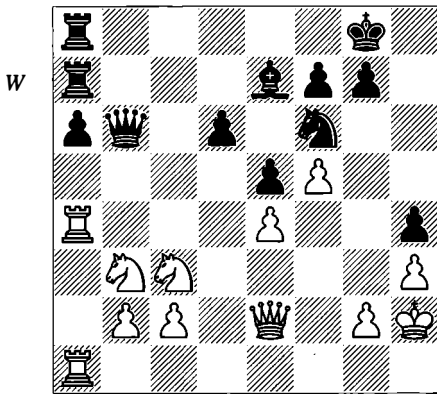
Instead after 19  $\text{Rxa6}$   $\text{Qc4}$  20  $\text{Qc1}$   $\text{Wb7}$ ! the game would turn in Black's favour.

19...  $\text{Wxb6}$  20  $\text{We2}$ !  $\text{Ra8}$

The consequences of Black's 11th move are clearer after this move. The queen's rook must return to its original square. This move is a sad admission of failure.

Which plan should White now choose? The priority is to activate the king's rook, so that all White's pieces can put pressure on Black's new weakness (a6) while half of Black's army remains passive.

21  $\text{Qh2}$  0-0 22  $\text{Rf1}$   $\text{Ra7}$  23  $\text{Rfa1}$   $\text{Rfa8}$  (D)



24  $\text{Ra2}$

Geller thus solves the defence of the b-pawn, so that he can transfer the knight from b3 to e3, taking advantage of the presence of a rook in the fourth rank. Also, with the attack on the a-pawn he makes sure the bishop will never be activated. Another idea with similar aims is 24  $\text{Wd3}$  followed by  $\text{Qd2}$ .

24...  $\text{Qd8}$

The bishop is seeking to breathe fresh air on the a7-g1 diagonal, besides preventing the jump of the white knight.

25  $\text{Qa5}$   $\text{Rc8}$  26  $\text{Qc4}$   $\text{Wc6}$  27  $\text{Qe3}$

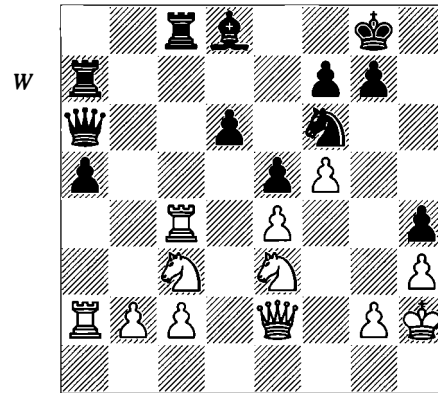
The rook on a4 had an outstanding role in the success of the knight manoeuvre. It controls c4 and defends the e4-pawn.

27...  $\text{a5}$

The black bishop will help in the defence of the weak pawn, and this way the rooks can perform a task more in agreement with their abilities. Geller, on the other hand, considers it opportune to start some simplifications that

tend to strengthen his advantage and to reduce the prospects of black counterplay. In our case, the exchange of a rook is always a good prophylactic measure, and yet more if we keep in mind that Black has already solved the problem of defending his a-pawn.

28  $\text{Rc4}$   $\text{Wa6}$  (D)



It is important to stress that if Black were able to play ... $\text{Qh5}$  he would get some compensation. The white queen was on its best square, supporting the manoeuvre  $\text{Qc4-e3}$ , exerting pressure on a6 and preventing ... $\text{Qh5}$ .

29  $\text{b3}$ !?

Directed against the pawn advance ... $\text{a5}$  that could come at any moment. This is the first time Geller shows clearly his dislike of calculating variations. Is 29  $\text{Rxc8}$   $\text{Wxc8}$  30  $\text{Qed5}$   $\text{Qxd5}$  31  $\text{Qxd5}$  premature? 31... $\text{a4}$ !? 32  $\text{b4}$   $\text{axb3}$  and now:

a) Geller presumably saw that after 33  $\text{cxb3}$ ?  $\text{Rxa2}$  34  $\text{Wxa2}$   $\text{Qg5}$ ! the poor situation of White's king and the existence of queens would help Black's counterplay. Some variations can bear witness:

a1) 35  $\text{Wf2}$   $\text{Wc1}$ ! 36  $\text{b4}$   $\text{Wc4}$  37  $\text{Wf3}$   $\text{Qd2}$  (with the idea of ... $\text{Qe1}$ !) or even 37... $\text{Qf4}$ +

a2) 35  $\text{Wb2}$   $\text{Wa6}$ ! and then:

a21) 36  $\text{b4}$   $\text{Wd3}$ ! 37  $\text{b5}$   $\text{Wxe4}$  38  $\text{b6}$ ?  $\text{Wxd5}$  39  $\text{b7}$   $\text{Qf4}$ + 40  $\text{Qg1}$   $\text{Qe3}$ + forces mate.

a22) 36  $\text{Wb1}$   $\text{We2}$  37  $\text{b4}$   $\text{Qf4}$ + 38  $\text{Qg1}$  (or 38  $\text{Qh1}$   $\text{Qd2}$ ! intending ... $\text{Qe1}$ ) 38... $\text{Qg3}$ ! 39  $\text{b5}$   $\text{Qf2}$ + with a draw.

b) However, Geller missed a hidden but simple possibility: 33  $\text{Rxa7}$   $\text{bxc2}$  34  $\text{Wb5}$ ! with a decisive attack.

The desire to calculate must also be present in games of positional character, when the conclusion requires a tactical solution. Fortunately, 29 b3 isn't a mistake though, since it does secure White's advantage.

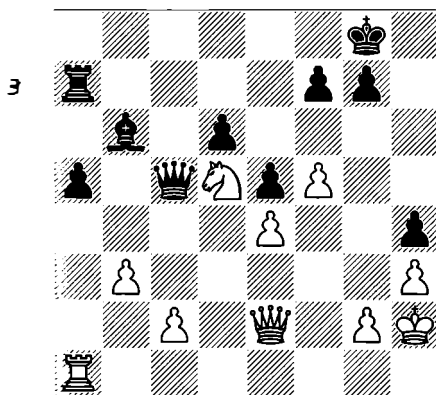
29...♙b6 30 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 31 ♘ed5 ♘xd5 32 ♘xd5

White's strategy has triumphed. Seemingly, the task shall be easy from now on, since the white knight dominates the board.

Reaching this point, I recall David Bronstein's ingenious theory, which he related with his usual charm: "For long time I suspected that the question of the weakness of the light squares and attacks on the light squares of which I often read in books were impossible to understand, not only to me, but also to the writers of those books. I summarized the issue in a way that my opponent's light squares were weak when his pieces were placed on dark squares and he lacked a light-squared bishop. But his pieces were not on light squares, so what could I attack? This was my reasoning until one day I woke up with the idea that the weakness of the light squares meant that pieces located on dark squares are equally weak... and they can be attacked".

When a position like this arises, we cannot do more than admire the subtle feel that guides this comment. Indeed, the light squares dominated by Geller can no longer be attacked, and from that advantageous position the white pieces are preparing to conquer the dark squares that, obviously, house unwanted guests. In our game this theory is fulfilled perfectly.

32...♗c5 33 ♖a1 (D)



33...♗f2(?)

What can Black do? White not only has a potential passed pawn but the better pieces and a safer king; even the centralized knight plays a role in this by covering f4. At this point the break 33...a4 seems interesting, hoping to get some counterplay in the ending after 34 b4 ♗f2 35 ♗xf2 (it seems that 35 ♗g4 should win though) 35...♙xf2 taking advantage of the trouble White's king has moving: 36 ♖f1 a3!. However, White had prepared a reply directed at the black king: 34 ♗g4!, meeting 34...axb3 by 35 f6 g6 36 ♗xh4 with the threat of 37 ♘e7+. 34...♗f2 35 f6 g6 36 ♗c8+ ♔h7 37 ♗f8 is also winning for White.

The exchange of queens offered by Najdorf extends the fight, although in his comments he criticizes this idea harshly, convinced that he could have induced Geller (who was in serious time-trouble) to make a mistake by playing 33...a4.

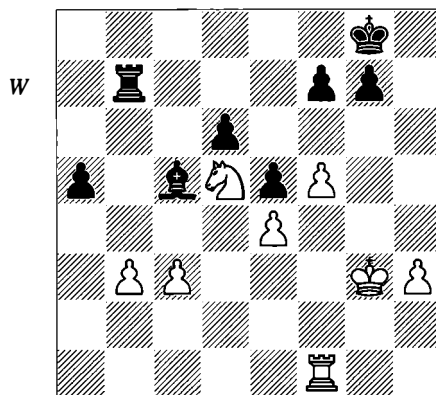
34 ♗xf2

Logical until the end. White can probably win in a more overwhelming way by keeping the queens and beginning the assault on the king. After 34 ♗g4 ♙d8 35 ♖a4! (intending ♖c4 or b4) 35...♗xc2? 36 ♖c4 ♗xb3 37 ♖c8, Bronstein's theory would be more obvious: White's pieces, located on their best squares, begin to conquer the enemy position.

34...♙xf2 35 ♖f1!

Black's bishop must now make a decision, whereupon the white king will be able to take part in the fight.

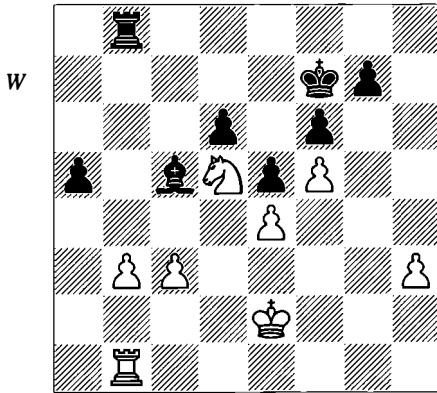
35...♙d4 36 c3 ♙c5 37 g4 hxg3+ 38 ♔xg3 ♖b7 (D)



**39 ♖b1**

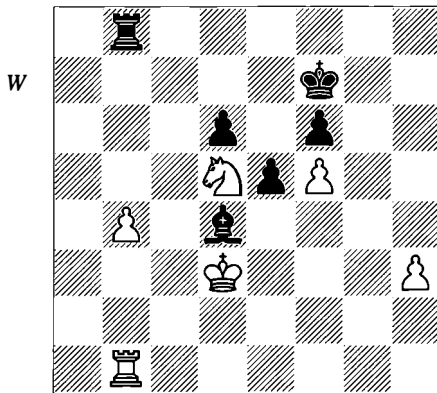
Geller is not in a hurry to make and advance a passed pawn, since Black still cannot advance his a-pawn: it would be automatically condemned after 39...a4 40 b4.

**39...f6 40 ♖f3 ♗f7 41 ♖e2 ♖b8 (D)**

**42 b4 g6 43 ♖d3**

Direct chess. It is true that 43 fxg6+ ♖xg6 44 bxc5 ♖xb1 45 c6 ♖b8 46 c7 and 47 ♗e7+ wins, but when a game is heading for positional channels, it is difficult to guide your mind toward another type of move. For the second time, Geller discards the calculation of concrete variations, preferring to follow his idea to the end.

**43...gxf5 44 exf5 axb4 45 cxb4 ♗d4 (D)**



It seems incredible that Geller can win so quickly with so little material, but it is partly due to the mating-net that the rook is going to produce, and his outstanding knight, well supported

by the king, that is blockading Black's two passed pawns.

**46 ♖c1! ♖g7**

After 46...♖b7 47 ♖c7+ the resulting ending is exceedingly simple.

**47 ♖c7+ ♖h6 48 ♖e4 ♖g5 49 ♖h7! ♗f2**

White was threatening 50 h4+ ♖g4 51 ♗xf6+ and 52 ♗d5!.

**50 ♖g7+ ♖h4 51 ♖f3 ♗e1 52 ♖g2 ♖f8**

Against the threat of 53 ♗xf6 and 54 ♖g4#.

**53 b5 ♗a5 54 b6 ♗xb6 55 ♗xb6 ♖b8 56 ♖g4+ ♖h5 57 ♗d5 1-0**

Next we consider an unequal fight, where the opening plays a major role, and the control of the light squares (d5 and c4) is defined at an early stage. Black hopelessly fights for that lost control and with his break ...d5 he is only able to increase the defects of his position, being behind in development. The result of the skirmishes is a weak isolated black pawn and the presence of a centralized and unassailable white knight (on e4). The pawns fixed on dark squares become fatal in the endgame.

**Romero – Outerelo**

*Albacete 1989*

**1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 c5!? 3 d5 e6 4 ♗c3**

In the last round of the first (and only) Grand Prix of Spain, I needed a win to tie for first place. Nerves often play dirty tricks in these cases, so it is preferable to prepare the course of the game mentally, that is the approach that you want to give it. I was acquainted with my opponent's opening repertoire, and weighed my opening choice accordingly. Against 1 e4, my usual first move, my opponent would most likely have chosen the sharp Schliemann Variation of the Spanish. If I had been theoretically well prepared against this secondary line, perhaps my doubts would have vanished. However, for such an important game, I wanted the position to have a different character. I wanted a slow manoeuvring game, where I could keep a slight but long-lasting positional advantage, hoping for 'micro-mistakes' from my opponent. In a simple and quiet position, my nerves would bear the pressure better. All these considerations were connected with the defence

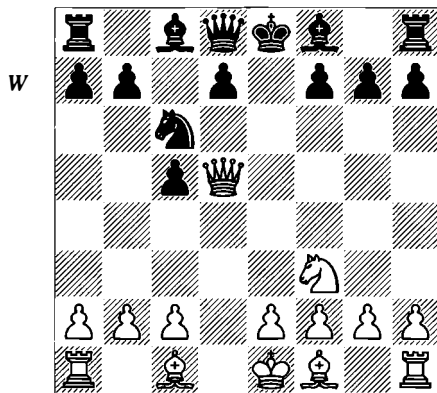
that my opponent was presumably going to choose if I opened 1 d4. Outerelo, a prominent chess-player who represented Spain in the European Team Championship, had used this defence two rounds before, and seemed to have analysed it deeply, until he trusted it blindly. My decision had its risks, since I could not discard the possibility of being caught out in the opening.

**4...♟xd5**

The standard move. It is interesting to study the consequences of the gambit 4...b5. If White accepts, then Black would take the centre and get good piece development: 5 dxe6 fxe6 6 ♟xb5 d5 7 e3 a6! (before White prepares the advance c4) 8 ♟c3 ♟c6. White would do better to refuse this gift, continuing his development and choosing 5 ♟g5!? b4 6 ♟e4 ♟b7 7 c4 with utterly unclear play. This line takes as a reference point a variation that was fashionable some years ago: 1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟f3 a6!? 4 ♟c3 c5 5 d5 b5 6 ♟g5 b4 7 ♟e4 – theory assesses it as highly advantageous for White.

In summary, all these variations had suddenly changed my previous approach to the game and my psychological situation had been changed. It is useful to remember then your approach should not be rigid, since one might then arbitrarily discard all kinds of complications that can arise over the board, even when one must plunge into them to keep the advantage. A player should always be prepared to adapt to any situation.

**5 ♟xd5 exd5 6 ♟xd5 ♟c6 (D)**



**7 e4!**

White reasserts his control of the centre. The d5-square turns to be the main goal of the battle and Black will try to fight for it, taking advantage of the tempi won by attacking the queen, usually by playing ...d6 and ...♟e6. Another possibility is rapid development by 7 ♟g5:

a) 7...♟e7 8 0-0-0 (8 a3!?) 8...♟b4 9 ♟e5!? (9 ♟xe7 ♟xe7 10 ♟b3 d6! followed by ...♟e6, helps Black's development) 9...f6 (9...♟xa2+?! 10 ♟b1 ♟c3+ 11 ♟xc3 {not 11 bxc3? f6 12 ♟xf6 ♟b6+} 11...♟xg5 12 ♟xg7 ♟f6 13 ♟g3 ♟b6 14 ♟e5 ♟e6 15 ♟g4 ♟g7 16 e4 favours White, Dizdar-Rajković, Yugoslav Ch (Vrbas) 1982) 10 ♟xf6 gxf6 11 ♟h5+ ♟f8 12 a3 with an unclear game.

b) 7...♟a5+ 8 ♟d2 ♟c7 9 e3 is an interesting idea. Then instead of 9...♟e7, as in Alvarez-Outerelo, Albacete 1989, Black should play 9...d6! followed by ...♟e6 and ...d5.

**7...♟b4?!**

This has a logical idea but it is difficult to carry out. Black is trying to get rid of his backward d-pawn once and for all, but at the expense of his development advantage and allowing some lines to open up against the black king. Black had two other options:

a) 7...d6 allows 8 ♟g5 ♟c7 9 ♟c4 ♟e5 10 ♟b5+ ♟d7 (10...♟c6? is a mistake due to 11 ♟xf7!) 11 ♟xd7+ ♟xd7 12 ♟f4 with an advantage, as proved in several master games.

b) 7...♟e7 8 ♟c4 0-0 9 0-0 d6 and here White has two different ways to direct the battle:

b1) 10 ♟h5!? is often an effective idea. White is trying to get rid of the important bishop that defends the d6-c5 pawn-chain. 10...♟e6 11 ♟xe6 fxe6 12 ♟g5 ♟xg5 13 ♟xg5 ♟c7 14 ♟ad1 h6 15 ♟h4 e5 16 ♟g6 ♟d4 17 c3 ♟e2+ 18 ♟h1 ♟f4 19 g3 ♟f7 20 ♟xf7+ ♟xf7 21 ♟d2 with an advantage for White, although it is hard to exploit, Khenkin-Kutuzović, Pula 1990.

b2) If White is seeking to achieve an advantage while remaining faithful to his first idea, that is to say, nailing down the d5-square and exercising strong pressure along the a2-g8 diagonal, I recommend 10 ♟d3 ♟e5 11 ♟xe5 dxe5 12 ♟g3.

**8 ♟b3!**

The first time I arrived at this position, I played 8 ♟d1 without too much thought, in the

belief that Black could not play an immediate ...d5.

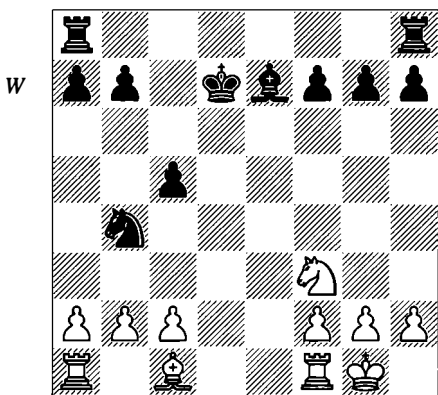
a) Indeed, IM Ochoa didn't dare to carry out this break but the remedy was worse because he lost a valuable tempo: 8...d6 9 c3 ♘c6 10 ♙c4 ♙e7 (in the event of 10...♙e6 there could follow 11 ♙xe6!? fxe6 12 ♙f4 ♙e7 13 ♖b3 ♖d7 14 0-0-0) 11 ♙f4 (impeding an eventual ...♘e5) 11...♖c7 12 0-0-0 (12...♘e5 13 ♙xe5 dxe5 is not possible due to 14 ♖d5!) 13 ♙d5 (White executes his plan) 13...♘e5 14 ♘d2 (the knight is looking for a better place; 14 ♙xe5 dxe5 15 ♖b3 also deserves attention) 14...♙e6 (losing patience) 15 ♙xe6 fxe6 16 ♙xe5 dxe5 17 ♖b3 ♖c6 18 ♘c4! ♙f6 19 a4 b6 (19...♖xe4 is met by 20 ♖ad1! intending ♘d6) 20 f3 ♖fd8 21 ♖fd1 ♙f7 22 ♖b5 ♖c7 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 a5 +- Romero-Ochoa, Portogalete 1986.

b) 8...d5 is critical, however. 9 exd5 ♖xd5 10 ♙b5+ ♙d7 11 ♖e2+ ♙e7 12 0-0 (if 12 ♙c4, then 12...♖f5 13 0-0 ♖xc2!) and now:

b1) 12...0-0 13 ♙c4! was my idea – White gets good play for his pieces.

However, in the current game, played three years later, facing a theoretical-inclined player, I discarded the move 8 ♖d1 at once without analysis, fearing that 8...d5 really did work. My intuition, in this case, was good...

b2) 12...♙xb5! 13 ♖xb5+ ♖d7 14 ♖xd7+ ♙xd7 (D) gives rise to an interesting position from the point of view of practical study:



Suddenly, the black king is in the centre and in a relatively open position. These two ingredients, by themselves, would be enough to imply a verdict in favour of White, but the last word is

never said in chess, and it is required to keep other factors in mind. The symmetrical pawn-structure, the time won by attacking the c2-pawn, and lastly, the fact that after the move ...f6 the white knight will find it difficult to reach an effective square, are important reasons to consider Black to be OK. Let us consider a more or less logical sequence: 15 ♖d1+! ♙e8! 16 c3 ♘c6 17 ♙e3 f6 followed by ...♖d8 with a level game.

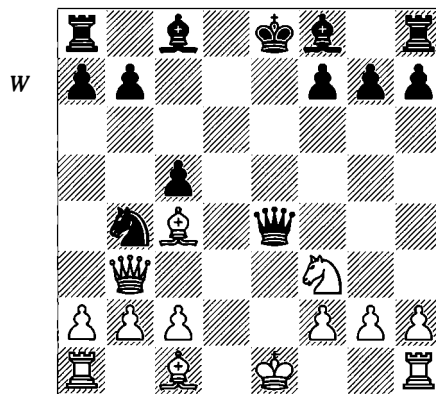
**8...d5**

Consistent with his 7th move. The battle for control of the d5-square is clearly unfavourable for Black, who opens his position too much, making his exposed king a factor. Indeed, White will win an important tempo to make threats against f7, and this in turn forces positional concessions.

**9 exd5**

9 c3 allows 9...c4! followed by ...dxe4.

**9...♖xd5 10 ♙c4! ♖e4+ (D)**



White now has a choice between 11 ♙d1 and 11 ♙f1. However, I must confess that under other circumstances I might have chosen the best move, 11 ♙d1! which is regrettably the more spectacular one. Once again, the pragmatic spirit in which I was approaching this game forced me to choose the safest continuation, with the sorry purpose of reaching a comfortable ending.

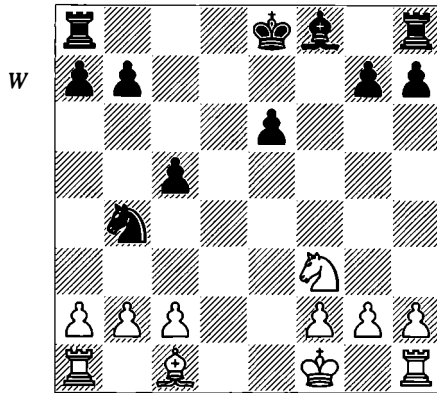
How do the tactical skirmishes after 11 ♙d1 turn out? After 11...♙e7 12 ♙xf7+ ♙f8 13 ♖e1 ♖g4 I ended my brief analysis, but now 14 h3! is very strong: 14...♖xg2? (14...♖d7+ 15 ♙d2 denies Black compensation) 15 ♖xe7! ♙xe7 16

♙g5+ ♖f8 17 ♜e3! ♜xf7 18 ♜e7+ ♙g6 19 ♜h4 winning the queen.

11 ♜f1 ♙e6

The only move.

12 ♙xe6 ♜xe6 13 ♜xe6+ fxe6 (D)



The e6-pawn is not a great weakness, despite what one can believe, since in an ending it can be easily protected. The e5- and e4-squares appear to be more troublesome, since Black will find it difficult to oppose the intrusion of a white piece on these squares.

14 c3 ♜d3!?

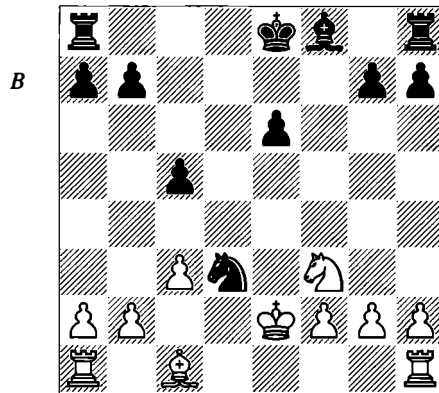
Trying to fish in muddy waters and to unbalance the fight. Obviously, after the natural continuation 14...♜c6 Black can expect an arduous defence.

15 ♜e2 (D)

This is natural, but is not the most precise move. It is true that both 15 b3, which would be met with the active 15...c4!, and 15 ♙e3 ♜xb2 16 ♜b1 ♜a4! are not good solutions, but the beautiful jump 15 ♜g5! would give White a more advantageous game.

15...0-0

The best move, defending the b-pawn. It is not so interesting to play 15...c4, though this is not because of 16 ♙e3, which is answered by 16...♙c5! (16...♜xb2 grants White a quick initiative in the line 17 ♜hb1 ♜a4 18 ♜xb7 ♜xc3+ 19 ♜f1 combining the threats on a7 and the centre: ♙d4, ♜e1) 17 b3 ♙xe3 18 ♜xe3 b5 19 ♔xc4 (19 a4 ♜c5) 19...bxc4 20 ♜hb1 0-0! with a good game. The main reason is that White would have a second opportunity to play 16 ♜g5!.



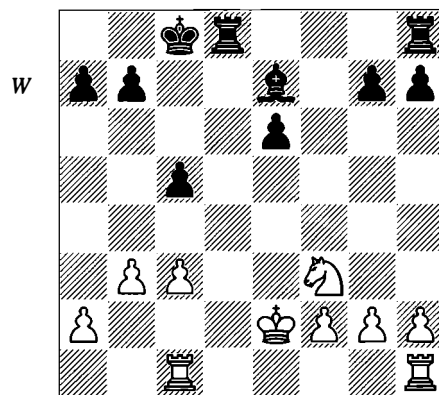
16 b3

Necessary, although a move like 16 ♜g5 seems obvious. However, its consequences at this time are not entirely good due to 16...♜d5! 17 ♜e4 c4. Black would find a lot of counterplay by advancing his pawn to c4, securing his knight and releasing his bishop a bit more. The variation 18 ♙e3 ♜xb2 19 ♙xa7 ♙a3! (19...♜a4 also seems interesting; 20 ♙d4 can be met by 20...♙c5 or 20...e5! 21 ♙e3 ♙a3) 20 ♙d4 e5 21 ♙e3 ♜d3 displays very clearly the drawbacks of allowing the advance of Black's c-pawn.

16...♜xc1+

The active 16...c4 is hasty: 17 bxc4 ♙c5 18 ♙e3 ♙xe3 19 ♜xe3 ♜b2 20 ♜e5! with good prospects.

17 ♜axc1 ♙e7 (D)



Black is trying to free himself at any cost. Thanks to tactical reasons, he is now preventing the typical manoeuvre ♜d2-e4 (18 ♜d2

♖xd2+) and probably he is threatening to expand on the kingside by the advance ...g5-g4, giving 'fresh air' to the passive bishop. It is very well known that the pairing rook+bishop is usually better than rook+knight. But for this to be the case, it is required that the bishop plays an active role in the battle, which is not the case yet. Thus, only if Black gains more ground could he take advantage of this powerful piece combination. Therefore, White shall try to prevent this.

**18 h4!**

Did White really have to prevent ...g5 in this way?

The first idea is to seek an exchange of one pair of rooks to simplify the task of realizing the advantage. However, after 18 ♖hd1 I feared reaching positions – from which there would be no way back – in which all my winning chances had vanished; e.g., 18...g5 19 h3 (the exchange of rooks is not clear after 19 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20 ♖d1 ♖xd1 21 ♖xd1 g4) 19...h5 (or 19...♗df8!? keeping both rooks and trying to get active play) 20 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21 g4 ♔d6! 22 ♖d1 hxg4 23 hxg4 ♔f4 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 and a route to victory is unclear.

White's 18th move isn't only directed against Black's plans. When playing this move my idea was to gain some dark squares with my pawns (so that they limit the action of the black bishop) and to take advantage of the manoeuvre ♔d2-e4, getting a superb and unassailable central square for the knight. On the other hand, I thought that there would always be time for an exchange of rooks at the right moment.

**18...♗hf8?! (D)**

A misstep. Black had a good opportunity to give White problems by seeking activity with 18...♖d5 or 18...♔f6:

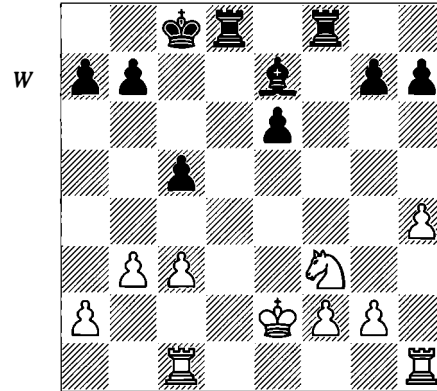
a) After 18...♖d5 White is virtually forced to play 19 c4 (since 19 ♖hd1 allows 19...c4! 20 bxc4 ♖a5 21 ♖c2 ♔f6 with counterplay) and now he could have the d4-square for the bishop, though it is also true that from this position it can perform just a secondary role.

b) 18...♔f6 and then:

b1) 19 ♖hd1 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♖d8+ 21 ♖e2 (21 ♖c2!?) 21...c4 22 bxc4 ♖d6, and Black hopes that White will not succeed in coordinating the defence of his queenside. 23 g3 ♖a6 24

♖c2 ♖c6 25 ♔d2 ♖c7 26 ♖d1 followed by 27 ♖c1 and 28 ♖b2 gets White nowhere, since Black will have the simple reply 28...♖b6+ 29 ♔b3 ♖b4! 30 c5 ♖c4.

b2) In my opinion White has a good move preventing Black's counterplay. Following 19 ♔d2! he will keep the advantage.



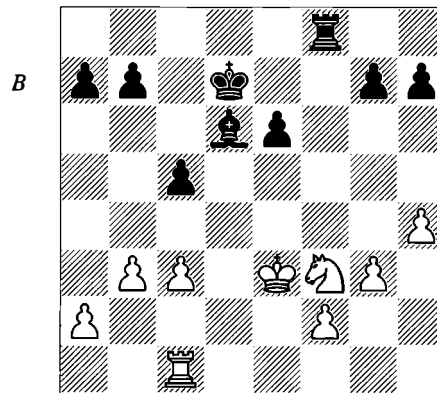
**19 ♖hd1 ♖d5 20 ♖d3**

To attack the weak e6-pawn from the third rank, and therefore virtually forcing the exchange.

**20...♖xd3**

The attempt to free himself with 20...c4 is also insufficient: 21 bxc4 ♖a5 22 ♖c2 ♔f6 23 ♖e3!. From now on Black must be satisfied with waiting passively.

**21 ♖xd3 ♖d7 22 ♖e3 ♔d6! 23 g3 (D)**



White has carried out his containment plan successfully. The white pawns located on dark squares form a picturesque barrier in their fight

against the bishop. We can already predict that the bishop is going to perform a poor role and the rook and bishop don't coordinate as well as normal.

23...♗e7

Black should try to take more ground by playing 23...b5!? although the situation is not very encouraging. For example, after the mechanical 24 ♖g5 h6 25 ♖e4 ♗c6 White has several plans although they are not all of the same value.

One idea is to expand on the kingside, trying to create a penetration point for the rook. The conclusion is that it is difficult to make progress (in the event of f4 comes ...e5, and if h5, ...♗f5). On the other hand Black can locate the bishop in a more active way (on c7) and react by playing ...c4 or ...a5-a4. The situation of the bishop along the b8-h2 diagonal is very good from the defensive point of view.

a) Another plan is to play a4 under good conditions and to get play for the rook along the a-file. This would be achieved with 26 ♖a1!?. In general this is the right plan, because at the same time it is flexible (it keeps other possibilities intact) and is healthy from a structural point of view. Then:

a1) If 26...c4?, then 27 bxc4! (but not 27 a4? ♗c5+! 28 ♖xc5 ♗xc5 29 b4+ ♗b6 30 a5+ {30 axb5 ♖d8! gives Black counterplay} 30...♗c7 31 ♖d1 g5! and the ending is far away from being won) 27...bxc4 28 ♖d4 winning.

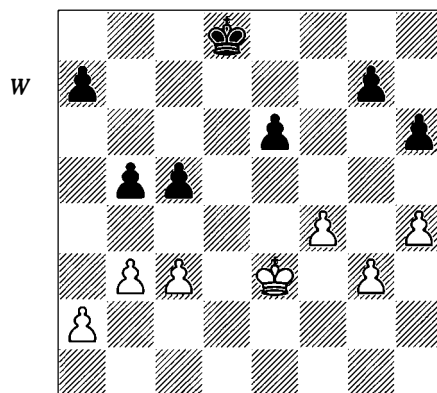
a2) However, Black can hold the attempts on the file back by means of 26...♗c7! 27 a4 a6 and now it is not easy to take decisions: 28 axb5+ axb5 29 f4 still allows 29...e5! 30 fxe5 (30 ♖a6+ ♗b6) 30...♗xe5 31 ♖a6+ ♖d5 and the black king is surprisingly safe.

b) An original plan (showing creative technique): to give the knight up for the bishop in order to reach an advantageous rook ending. The 'good' knight will be exchanged for the 'bad' bishop, a decision that might seem shocking. 26 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 27 ♖d1+ and then:

b1) 27...♗c6? 28 f4 (White attempts to set his king in motion and to bring it to e5) 28...♗f5 (this seems forced; 28...h5 29 ♗e4 ♖f5 leaves Black in zugzwang) 29 c4 (preventing 29...♖d5, whose consequences are unclear) 29...bxc4 30 bxc4 ♖f8 31 ♗e4 ♖b8 32 ♗e5 ♖b4 33 ♖d6+

♗c7 34 ♖xe6!? ♖xc4 35 ♖g6! with a decisive advantage.

b2) Since the rook ending is so hopeless, Black should seek sanctuary in a pawn ending by means of 27...♗c7!? 28 f4 ♖d8 29 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 (D).

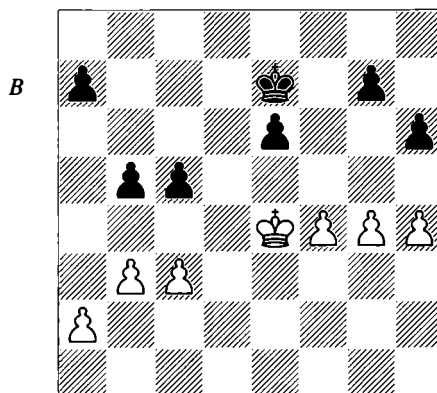


White should win this ending based on his better king and the possibility of breaking through by playing f5. However, accurate play is required:

b21) Not 30 b4? (seeking to open a path for the king) due to the precise reply 30...cxb4 31 cxb4 h5! 32 ♖d4 a6!, when 33 ♗e5 ♗e7 34 f5 exf5 35 ♗xf5 ♗f7 is a draw.

b22) 30 ♗e4 h5! 31 ♗e5 ♗e7 32 f5 (32 c4 bxc4 33 bxc4 g6!) 32...exf5 33 ♗xf5 ♖d6 will give White a queen ending with an extra pawn, but it will be long and difficult to win.

b23) 30 g4! ♗e7 31 ♗e4 (D) and then:



b231) 31...♖d6 32 f5! forces resignation.

b232) 31...g6 32 ♖e5 h5 (if Black waits with 32...a6, then White has 33 c4 b4 34 h5! gxh5 35 gxh5 followed by f5, winning) 33 gxh5! (33 g5? transposes to line 'b2341') 33...gxh5 34 f5 exf5 35 ♖xf5 c4 (if 35...♗d6, then 36 c4! and the king heads for the c5-pawn) 36 bxc4 and White wins.

b233) 31...♗f6 32 c4!? (or 32 h5, but not 32 f5? exf5+ 33 gxf5 c4!) 32...bxc4 (32...b4 can be met by 33 g5+!) 33 bxc4 g6 and now White wins in a forced and elegant fashion, taking advantage of having an outside pawn: 34 g5+! (34 h5 g5!) 34...hxg5 35 fxg5+ ♖f7 36 ♖f4 ♖f8 37 ♗g4 ♖g7 38 h5 gxh5+ 39 ♖xh5 e5 40 ♖h4! (trying to reach e4, the king's ideal position, without passing through g4) 40...♖f7 41 ♖g3 ♗e6 42 ♖g4! leaves Black no satisfactory reply, proving that the shortest path doesn't always lead to a win.

b234) 31...h5!? clearly defines the character of the position. Then:

b2341) 32 g5? g6 33 ♖e5 (33 b4 cxb4 34 cxb4 ♗d7 holds) might appear to win, but this is an illusion: 33...b4! (33...a5? loses to 34 a3 ♗d7 35 ♖f6! b4 36 axb4 c4 37 bxc4 a4 38 ♖xg6 a3 39 ♖h7) 34 cxb4 cxb4 35 ♖e4 (35 ♗d4 ♗d6 36 ♖c4?! e5!) 35...♗d6 36 ♗d4 a5 37 ♖e4 ♗d7 38 ♗d3 ♖c7! and there appears to be no way for White to make progress.

b2342) 32 gxh5! ♖f6 shows Black's idea, but then 33 a3! is strong: 33...c4 34 bxc4 bxc4 35 a4 a5 36 h6 gxh6 37 h5; 33...a6 34 c4! bxc4 35 bxc4 ♖f7 36 ♖e5 ♖e7 37 f5; 33...a5 34 b4! cxb4 35 cxb4 a4 36 h6 gxh6 37 h5.

The reader should familiarize himself with pawn endings, as they often involve surprising tactical ideas. This type of ending should be played with a great deal of caution, since this is probably the most difficult, when having to combine calculation and precision.

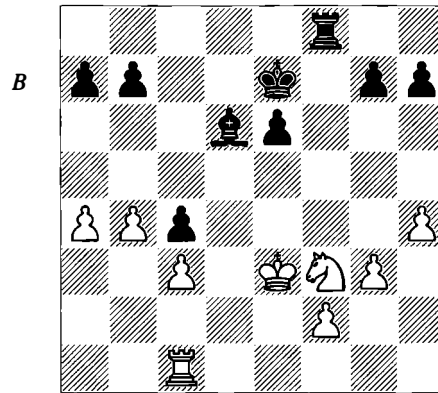
#### 24 a4!

White first of all rules out Black's possible expansion on the queenside. Now ...a6 and ...b5 could only favour White, as it opens the a-file for his rook. With this move he creates another potential threat, against the c-pawn. When the knight arrives at e4 and forces ...b6 to defend it, a move such as a5 can open a gate on the a-file.

#### 24...c4?

This active idea comes too late. The c-pawn will be weak and the black rook won't be able to penetrate via d3. This move crudely represents the problems that a player faces when he avoids all activity during the game and then makes a desperate bid for the initiative. The sense of danger needs to kick in far earlier, and this distinguishes the greatest players.

#### 25 b4! (D)



#### 25...♗c7

25...a5 seems more interesting. Obviously White needed to foresee the consequences of this interesting reply when deciding on 25 b4. The best continuation is 26 bxa5 ♗c5+ 27 ♖e2 ♗d6 28 ♖b1 ♖f7 (there is no satisfactory reply: 28...♖c6 is met by 29 ♖e5+, and if 28...♖c7, then 29 ♖b5! forces the bishop to take a difficult decision: 29...♗a7 30 ♖b4) 29 ♖b5! (White threatens 30 ♖g5 or 30 ♖d2 if the bishop moves) 29...♗a7 30 a6! bxa6 31 ♖a5 winning.

#### 26 ♖e2

This backward step is worthwhile. Now the c-pawn will be difficult to defend.

#### 26...a6?

This is a typical sort of mistake with little time in a difficult position.

#### 27 a5 ♗d6 28 ♖d1+ ♖c6 29 ♖d4 b5

If 29...♖b5 then 30 ♖d7 decides.

#### 30 axb6 ♗xb6 31 ♖xc4+ ♗d5 32 ♖g4 1-0

Black resigned on account of the threat of c4+.

The Sicilian Defence, as we already noted before, has countless examples in which the

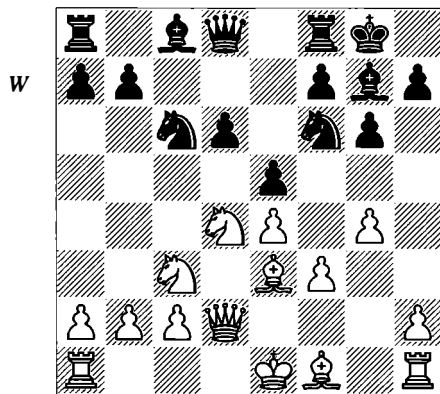
d5-square is voluntarily given up. It is less usual for Black's advance ...e5 to be made in the Dragon Variation, since the black bishop is in no position to defend the backward pawn. In some lines of the Yugoslav Attack, the d6-pawn can be sacrificed in return for good piece-play and control of the d4-square. Sometimes it seems that control of the light squares vanishes if we don't pay attention to the harmony and dynamism of the opponent's pieces.

Two examples can help us to clarify more our view about this drastic decision, which closes the diagonal of the strong fianchettoed bishop.

**Kuijff – Romero**  
*Sitges 1989*

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♘c6 9 g4 e5!?

(D)



A critical move but not new. Black believes in his activity and ignores positional prejudices. The battle for d5 has just begun.

10 ♘de2!?

Or:

a) 10 ♘db5 (the most direct attempt to attack the d6-pawn) is the first idea we need to refute. After 10...a6! 11 ♘xd6 ♘d4! 12 ♗xd4 exd4 13 ♘xc8 ♗xc8 14 ♘e2 ♖b6 15 ♗b1 ♘d7 Black got excellent control of the dark squares in Savereide-Chiburdanidze, Malta wom OL 1980.

b) 10 ♘b3 a5! 11 ♗b5 (we still have to test the possibility of 11 a4) 11...♗e6 12 0-0-0 ♗xb3! 13 axb3 ♘d4 14 ♗xd4 exd4 15 ♘e2?!

(15 ♖xd4!?) 15...♘d7 16 ♗b1 (16 ♘d4 ♘c5! followed by ...♖b6 gives Black a fierce initiative) 16...a4! 17 bxa4 ♘c5 18 ♖b4 ♖b6 19 b3 d3! 20 cxd3 ♘a6 and Black has dangerous counterplay, Short-Karlsson, Hastings 1983/4.

These two games show some of the advantages of Black's 9th move. The d4-square is essential for later counterplay.

10...♗e6 11 0-0-0 ♖a5 12 ♗b1

Could White have accepted the black pawn? No, since after 12 ♖xd6 ♗ad8 White has no good square for the queen. 13 ♖c5 loses to 13...♗h6!.

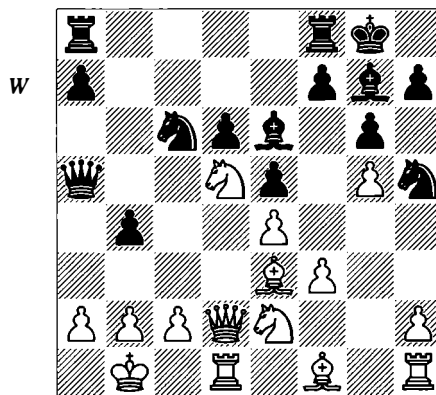
12...b5!?

Thanks to this interesting advance Black avoids the exchange of queens desired by White, and hopes to get some attacking prospects. Another possibility is 12...♗fd8 13 g5 ♘h5 14 ♘d5 ♖xd2 15 ♗xd2 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♘e7 17 ♗h3 with a slight advantage for White in the ending.

13 g5

White must make some positional concessions in order to win the d5-square.

13...♘h5 14 ♘d5 b4 (D)



Now if White wants to make progress he must temporarily give up the d4- and f4-squares. The whole fight will revolve around these 'strategic centres', without forgetting the most important thing: the d5-square.

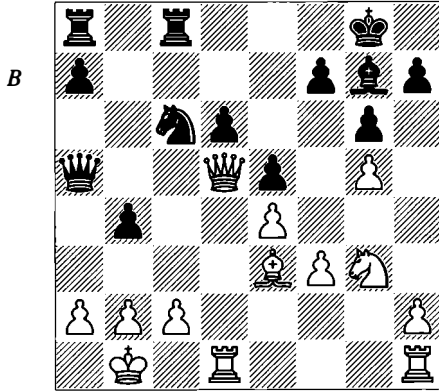
15 ♘g3 ♘f4! 16 ♗c4!

Of course, the Dutch IM does not give the initiative up, defending the captured territory at any cost.

16...♗fc8 17 ♗b3 ♗xd5!

Since Black cannot keep the tension on f4 any more, he should clarify his aims.

18 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 19 ♛xd5 (D)



19...♛a6!

Arriving just in time to prevent 20 ♜e2, which would control Black's only entry point. The position in the diagram is of high strategic complexity, although at first sight one might think that White has got the advantage. Black continues his attack easily, while White practically gave his up when playing 13 g5.

20 ♛d3

Kuijf wants to support the defence of d4 at any cost. 20 ♛xd6 is very risky due to 20...♞d8, when 21 ♛c5 ♖f8! costs White his queen, while 21 ♛c7 is met by 21...♖f8!? intending 22...♞ac8.

20...♛a5!?

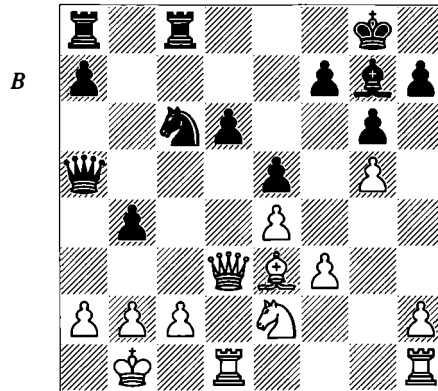
Implicitly offering a draw, because I was sure that Kuijf still believed he had the advantage. 20...♛b7 is very interesting, continuing with the advance of the a-pawn.

21 ♜e2? (D)

Very optimistic: White should have been satisfied with a draw by repetition. Kuijf understood that it is risky to capture the d6-pawn at once: 21 ♛xd6 ♜d4! 22 ♖xd4 exd4 and the queen is not well located, because it hastens Black's attack on the dark squares and via the c-file. For example: 23 ♛f4 ♞c5 24 h4 ♖e5 (or 24...♞ac8 first) 25 ♛g4 ♛c7!.

Thus White defends the d4-square first (the knight was no longer doing anything on g3), but he stumbles upon an unexpected resource.

21...b3!



An unpleasant surprise – Kuijf had underestimated this move. Black's strong tactical chances (once the b-file opens up) appear on the stage for first time.

22 ♛xb3 ♞ab8 23 ♛d5 ♞b5!?

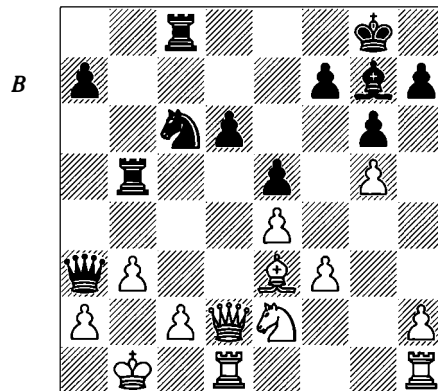
Choosing the most logical reply, although 23...♛a6 24 ♛d3 ♛b7 is also interesting.

24 ♛d2

The only way to prevent 24...♜b4, which would now be met by 25 ♜c3 (25 a3? ♞xc2!) 25...♞xc3 26 ♛xc3, when Black lacks compensation.

24...♛a3 25 b3 (D)

After 25 ♛c1 or 25 ♛c3 follows 25...♞xb2+ 26 ♛xb2 ♛xe3! with a powerful initiative.



25...d5!!

The long-awaited moment has arrived, justifying the whole piece set-up during the opening. This advance (planned when 21...b3 was played) gives sense to the course of the game and punishes White's inadequate control of the

d5-square. The threats of ...d4 and ...b4 oblige White to open the bishop's diagonal.

On the other hand 25...b4?! allows the resource 26 c4!.

**26 exd5 e4 27 ♖c1**

This is virtually the only move. If White closes the bishop's diagonal then b3 will be drastically weakened: 27 c3 d4! 28 ♖b2? ♗xb2+ 29 ♕xb2 d4c4+!.

**27...♗xa2+! 28 ♕xa2 ♖a5+ 29 ♗a3 d4+ 30 ♕b1 ♖xa3 31 ♗d4**

White has no good moves. 31 d4 is met by 31...dxd5.

**31...exf3**

Black not only remains a pawn ahead – the weakness of White's pawns ensures the win.

The following game is from 1956, and features a very interesting plan that refutes an ambitious opening idea. It is surprising that the game can hardly be found in modern opening books; it is not even mentioned in *ECO*.

**Boleslavsky – Lisitsyn**  
*USSR Ch (Leningrad) 1956*

**1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d6 f5 d3 g6 6 f3 g7 7 e3 d6 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 0-0-0**

This is one of the most popular systems in the Yugoslav Attack – it enjoys the favour of all kinds of chess-players. The last move directs the game towards quieter channels than 9 e4, and central play is more standard in this line than a race between flank attacks.

**9...dxd4**

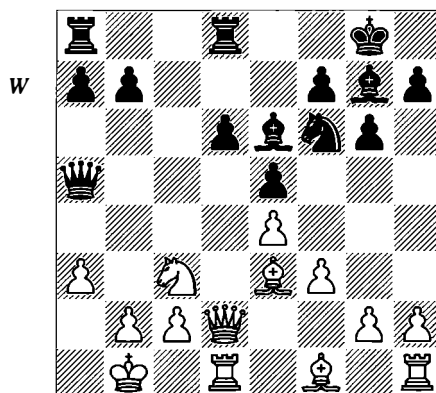
This move is considered inferior to the usual 9...d5, which sacrifices pawn-structure in return for interesting piece-play: 10 exd5 dxd5 11 dxc6 bxc6 12 e4 e5 (12...e4 13 ♗xd4 is interesting; Black can then play 13...♗c7 or 13...♗b6) 13 e5 e6 14 d4.

**10 e4 ♗a5**

The beginning of an ambitious plan. Black seeks an active game, where time is a high-priority factor over the position's weaknesses.

**11 ♕b1 e5 12 e3 e6 13 a3 ♖fd8 (D)**

Black has prepared the advance of the d-pawn thoroughly, and he is already very close to achieving it. And this is the moment when the master should devise a plan to avoid the



break, which seems to be unstoppable. Boleslavsky came up with an original and brilliant manoeuvre that allowed him to achieve full control of the besieged square (d5).

**14 d5!!**

Surprisingly, the knight goes away from the goal, but it is envisaging indirect threats. The ending that arises after the exchange of queens would be favourable to White thanks to the combined attack on a7 and c7. For example, 14...♗xd2 15 ♖xd2 d5 16 dxc7! ♖ac8 17 dxe6 fxe6 18 e4 dxe4 19 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20 e4 ♕f7 21 fxe4 is very advantageous.

**14...♗a4**

Black is now hoping to enter the complications arising after 15 b3 e4 16 cxb3 ♗xb3+ 17 ♕a1 a6 18 d3 ♗xa3+ 19 ♕b1 ♖ac8! 20 ♖c1 d5 21 exd5 dxd5 22 dxd5 ♖xc1+ 23 ♗xc1 ♗b3+ that would favour him. Boleslavsky prefers to continue along positional lines.

**15 c4**

This move, which involves a pawn sacrifice, rules out Black's central break.

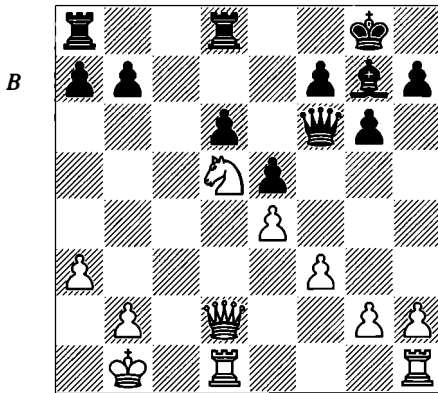
However, we should note that 15 dxc7 wins material, but this should not distract us from the tremendously instructive course of the game.

**15...e4?**

Lisitsyn would now do best to reject White's offer and retain the light-squared bishops, accepting a worse position.

**16 dxc3! ♗b3 17 e4 ♗xc4 18 e5! ♗e6 19 e6 ♗xf6 20 d5 (D)**

This position deserves a diagram. White has given up a pawn, but has managed to put a knight on a central square, unassailable and practically controlling the whole activity of the



black pieces. But what about the pawn? The extra pawn is blockaded, and is only getting in the way of the black pieces. Let us look at the 'mighty' fianchettoed bishop. It is a mere spectator. Black's position could still resist in an ending, but with the queens on the board, it is obvious that Black is in no position to face the upcoming storm. We can also see that the move ...g6 works in White's favour, since he can easily break open Black's kingside. With black pawns on h7, g7 and f7 and the bishop on d8, for example, the compensation would not be of the same character.

20... ♖h4

This move is directed to stop White's pawn-storm on the kingside.

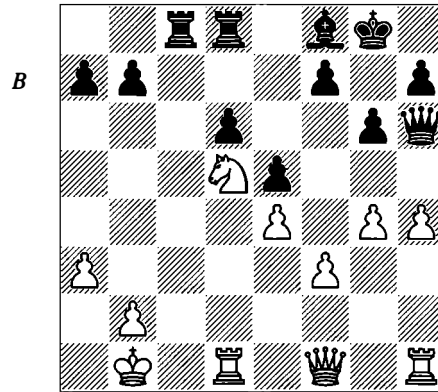
21 ♖e2 ♙f8 22 ♖f1!

Elegantly supporting the advance of the infantry, which will later decide the fight. The pawn-storm is going to open a breach for the almighty knight.

22... ♖ac8 23 g3 ♖g5 24 h4 ♖h6

24... ♖xg3 doesn't help, on account of the reply 25 ♖h3!

25 g4 (D)



Black's queen moves on the kingside haven't achieved a great deal, rather the contrary. The threat of 26 g5 explains the unusual move now played by Lisitsyn.

25...g5 26 hxg5 ♖xg5 27 ♖h5 ♖g6 28 g5 h6 29 ♖xh6 ♖xg5 30 ♖h5 1-0

The opening of lines for White's rooks becomes decisive.

## 8 Attacking a Weak Centre

In positions arising from the Pirc Defence, King's Indian, Queen's Indian, Alekhine or Grünfeld, White holds the initiative during a great part of the game. This is because he gets a strong central position at once, when locating his pawns on e4 and d4. The modern position of these openings has its justification in attacking the strong white centre sooner or later, in the hope that it will end up weak. In the variations where Black fianchettoes a bishop, one of the central pawns becomes a target. The bishop will reach its maximum usefulness when this central pawn disappears or is undermined.

The following game is a good example of the fight for the centre. One side maintains it, and the other tries to break it down. White gets a strong pawn-centre, but he loses the thread when playing in a doubtful way. This is fully exploited by Black, whose fianchettoed bishops get plenty of possibilities.

### Scheichel – Adorjan Hungarian Ch 1971

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5

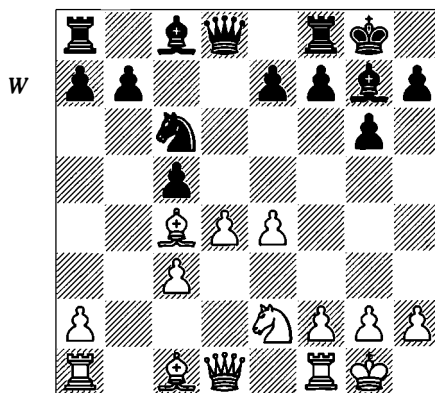
The Grünfeld Defence was a long-time favourite of Grandmaster Adorjan.

4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♘g7 7 ♙c4 c5 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♗c6 (D)

From the point of view of the evolution of this line, it is important to highlight that it is too early to play 9...♗c7 due to the continuation 10 ♙f4! e5 11 dxe5 ♙xe5 12 ♙xe5 ♗xe5 13 ♙d5 ♗d7 14 f4 ♗e7 15 c4! and the white bishop becomes an unwelcome guest whose elimination only favours the formation of a powerful white centre.

10 ♙e3 ♗c7

An interesting alternative to the main move, 10...♙g4. Black brings the queen to the c-file to exert pressure on the c4-bishop, and makes d8 available to the rook, which will be located opposite the white queen. This gives Black



good chances to damage White's central structure.

11 ♖c1

This is the best move. The white rook indirectly defends the bishop and subtly, the d-pawn. Other continuations are less impressive:

a) 11 dxc5? ♗e5 12 ♙b3 ♗g4! 13 ♙f4 ♗xc5 14 ♗d5 ♗xd5 15 exd5 ♗e5 and the c-pawn is going to be the target.

b) 11 ♙f4 ♗a5 12 d5 ♗e5 13 ♙b3 c4! 14 ♙c2 (if 14 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 15 ♙xc4 ♙g4! Black recovers the pawn and bases his hopes on his strong dark-squared bishop) 14...e6! and the black pieces become very active.

c) 11 ♗c1 ♗a5 12 ♙d3 b6 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♗a3 ♗d8 15 ♗fd1 ♙g4 16 f3 ♙d7! and Black is OK; e.g., 17 ♙xc5 ♙a4! 18 ♙xe7 ♙xd1 19 ♙xd8 ♗xd8 20 ♗xd1 ♗b6+ 21 ♗d4 (21 ♗h1 ♗c4!) 21...♙xd4+ 22 cxd4 ♗xd4+ 23 ♗h1 ♗c4 followed by ...♗b2.

11...♗d8 12 h3?!

This move, as used by former world champion Boris Spassky, prepares White's next move (f4). If White played that immediately, he could be bothered by the possibility of ...♙g4, adding more pressure to d4. As usually happens, the first attempts to refute a line are not successful.

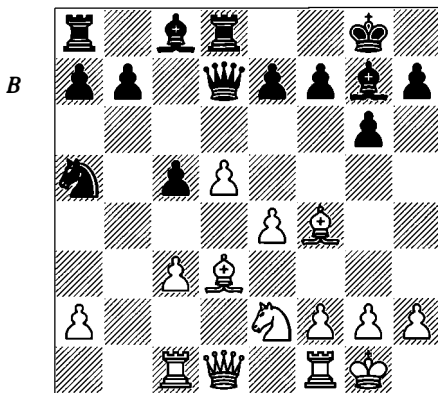
At this point, the best continuations are 12 ♗d2 and 12 ♙f4.

a) After 12 ♖d2, Adorjan's suggested move 12...a6!? is very interesting:

a1) 13 ♙h6 b5! (13...♙h8?! 14 a4 ♘a5 15 ♙a2 ♙d7 16 ♚f4 e6 17 e5! gives White the initiative, Rashkovsky-Kupreichik, USSR 1974) 14 ♙d3 ♖d7! 15 ♙xg7 ♚xg7 16 d5 c4! 17 ♙c2 e6 18 ♚cd1 exd5 19 exd5 ♖d6 and the passed d-pawn is easily blockaded. Black has an advantage.

a2) 13 f4 b5 14 ♙d3 f5! (once more, the battle for the centre) 15 ♘g3 (15 exf5? c4! 16 ♙b1 gxf5 {the bishop aims for a fianchetto} 17 ♘g3 e6 18 ♚h5 ♙h8 19 ♚f3 ♚e7 20 ♙f2 ♙b7 21 ♚e3 ♚f7! 22 ♚ce1 ♚d6! 23 ♙h4 ♘g6 24 ♙g5 b4! and now that the white centre has been broken up, the advance of Black's pawn-majority creates new problems, Haik-Kouatly, Cannes 1986) 15...e6 16 d5!? fxe4! 17 ♘xe4 ♚xd5 18 ♙xc5 ♖d8!?. Black has some pressure and could try to break with ...e5.

b) 12 ♙f4 ♖d7 (12...e5 gives up the d5-square to the white bishop: 13 ♙g5 ♚d6 14 ♙d5) 13 d5 ♘a5 14 ♙d3 (D) and now:



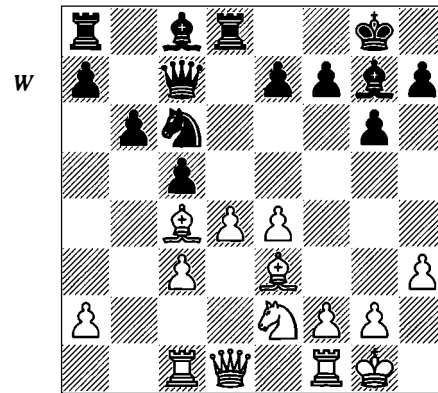
b1) 14...e5 15 ♙e3 b6 16 f4 exf4 17 ♙xf4 ♖e7 (trying to strengthen e5) 18 ♖d2 ♙g4, Polugaevsky-Tukmakov, Moscow 1985.

b2) 14...b5!? 15 ♚b1 (15 ♙e3 e6!) 15...a6 16 ♖c1 e5 17 ♙g5 (17 ♙e3 c4 18 ♙c2 ♚b7! 19 f4 exf4 20 ♙xf4 ♚e8, Balashov-Hort, Moscow 1971) 17...f6 (17...♚f8!? preparing the central break ...f5) 18 ♙e3 c4 19 ♙c2 ♚b7 20 f4 ♘d6 with a very complex game from the strategic point of view.

b3) 14...b6 15 c4 e5 16 ♙d2 (if 16 ♙g5, 16...♚f8 is interesting, supporting ...f5, which

would break up White's centre) 16...♘b7 (after the blockade of the white centre, this knight manoeuvre to d6 is well known) 17 a4 ♘d6 18 ♘c3 ♙a6 19 ♖e2 and now 19...f5! is a typical way to get counterplay (otherwise the black pieces will remain passive), Polugaevsky-Gutman, Biel IZ 1985.

12...b6 (D)



This is the key to Black's plan: the second bishop is fianchettoed in order to press strongly on both White's central pawns.

13 f4 e6

Trying to prevent the threat of f5 above all. This move in the Grünfeld, reducing the central storm to which Black's pieces are subject, ends up being decisive in the evolution of the game. The break ...f5, now well supported, can be carried out at any time, producing a disorder on the light squares.

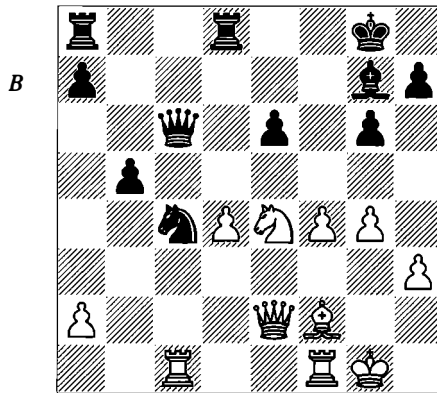
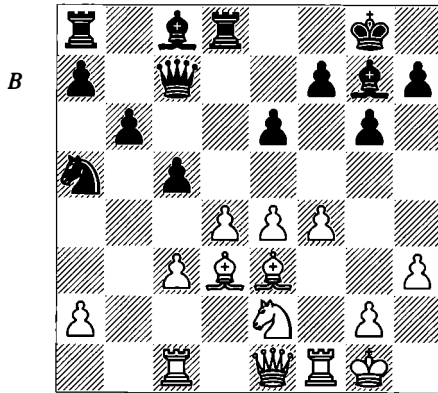
14 ♖e1?!

Although logical, since the queen belongs on the kingside, this move is unnecessary at this point, since there are other factors that should be attended to, such as the e4-square. It is preferable to play 14 g4 first, and after 14...♘a5 15 ♙d3 f5 16 ♘g3! (the knight is best located behind his pawn, and presses on f5) 16...fxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♙b7 18 ♖e2 ♖c6 the game is complicated, and perhaps more pleasant for Black.

14...♘a5 15 ♙d3 (D)

15...f5!

Once the white bishop has been forced off the a2-g8 diagonal, this move is possible. The white centre is under attack.



### 16 g4

Although risky, this move is necessary if the goal is to defend the e4-square with the knight, because it is best placed behind the pawn. The first time White used this dubious set-up was in Gligorić-Smyslov, Yugoslavia-USSR 1959, and Black obtained everything he could hope for from the opening. There followed 16 ♖f2 ♗b7 17 e5 (17 ♘g3 seems worse in comparison with the main game) 17...c4! 18 ♗c2 ♘c6! 19 g4 ♘e7 20 ♖h2 ♗c6 21 ♘g3 b5 with a comfortable advantage for Black, who can easily get a passed pawn on the queenside. The knight could support this purpose in the near future, but not now, since at the moment it is involved in defensive tasks, neutralizing White's possible h4-h5 advance. Surprisingly, after this game there followed two very similar ones, years later, where White deviated playing by 18 ♗b1 (instead of 18 ♗c2) and he was likewise at a disadvantage.

### 16...♗b7!

An improvement over Spassky-Fischer, Siegen OL 1970, in which Black favoured 16...fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗b7 18 ♘g3 ♘c4 19 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 20 ♗f2 ♗c6 21 ♗e2! cxd4 (this move is not forced; 21...b5!?) 22 cxd4 b5 23 ♘e4! (D).

Fischer, in not maintaining the central tension and quickly giving the e4-square up, has allowed the white knight possibilities of attacking the isolated e6-pawn. The position is extremely complex and Bobby challenges the natural laws by exchanging the dark-squared bishops: 23...♗xd4?! (better is 23...♗ac8 24 ♘c5 ♗e8, with some pressure for Black) 24 ♘g5 ♗xf2+?! (both 24...♗b6 and 24...♗f6 are

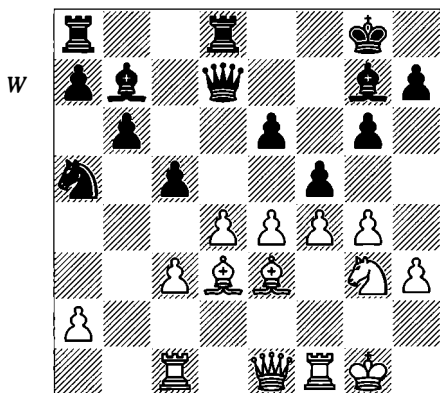
more reliable, aiming to get an equal ending: 25 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 26 ♘xe6 ♗d2) 25 ♗xf2 ♗d6 26 ♗e1 ♗b6 27 ♘e4 ♗d4 28 ♘f6+! ♖h8 29 ♗xe6 ♗d6 30 ♗e4 ♗f8? (the decisive error; it is still possible to save the game by playing 30...♗ad8; facing the exchange of queens, it is best to take the open file: 31 g5 ♗d2 32 ♗e2 ♗xe2 33 ♗xe2 ♗e3 34 ♗xe3 ♗d1+!) 31 g5 (the strong f6-knight and the weakened black king decide the game; White is now threatening 32 ♗e7) 31...♗d2 32 ♗ef1 ♗c7 33 ♗xd2! ♘xd2 34 ♗d4 ♗d8 35 ♘d5+ ♖g8 36 ♗f2 ♘c4 37 ♗e2 ♗d6 38 ♗e8+ ♖f7 39 ♗f8+! 1-0. A superb game by Boris Spassky.

The text-move (16...♗b7) was a new idea of the gifted Soviet grandmaster Stein, who suddenly died in the peak of his career. Black leaves the tension between the e4- and f5-pawns and reorganizes his pieces. If Black keeps such an unassailable bulwark, the idea will obviously be successful. The sad situation of White's queen helps the black forces.

### 17 ♘g3

The shortcomings of 14 ♗e1 are made clear by the fact that he cannot accept the pawn offered: 17 exf5 exf5 18 gxf5 ♗e8! (the queen has trouble when located within the scope of the black rook) 19 ♗g3 (19 ♘g3 cxd4 20 cxd4 ♗d7! gives Black serious threats) 19...gxf5! 20 ♖h2 (after 20 ♗xf5 ♘c4 21 ♗f2 the life radiated by the cornered knight is clearer: 21...♘d2! – in this type of position White's light-squared bishop should be alert to the possibility of ...♘c4) 20...♗e4! and Black has absolute control of the light and dark squares and he will press along the e-file.

17...♖d7! (D)



Without a doubt Black based his 16th move on this strong move that attacks d4 and locates the queen on a more favourable square, far from the gaze of the white rook. This important decision (not to loosen the pressure on e4 and to force the white pieces to wait and see) should have been properly valued, considering the consequences of the capture on f5 once again. Black's queen plays a fundamental role, aiming at the h3-square.

18 ♜d1

The queen's rook is pursuing the black queen stubbornly, in a passive defence of the d-pawn, although it is necessary to remember that it is Black who will decide the right moment to resolve the central situation. The diagram truly presents a beautiful picture, where the strategic situation of the black pieces seems perfect. They are all carrying out their mission perfectly, and exert pressure on both sides of the board, ready to expand. The f- and c-pawns symbolize that sense of danger. It seems as if White has assumed a sad defensive role.

The practical value of the text-move is limited, since it provides a poor defence of the d4-pawn. White will have to sacrifice something, either the pawn or the c4-square. 18 gxf5, endorsed by Spassky, is no solution either. Black has two good options:

a) 18...cxd4 19 fxe6 ♜xe6 20 f5 gxf5 (not 20...♜e7? 21 cxd4 ♜xd4 22 ♜xd4 ♜xd4+ 23 ♖g2 ♜e5 with inadequate compensation, Spassky-Stein, Moscow 1971) and now 21 ♜g5 dxc3! 22 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 or 21 ♜xd4 ♜xd4+ 22

cx4 ♜xd4 23 ♜e3 ♜ad8 24 ♖xf5 ♜g6+ 25 ♖h2 ♜xd3! 26 ♖e7+ ♖g7 with a comfortable advantage in the ending.

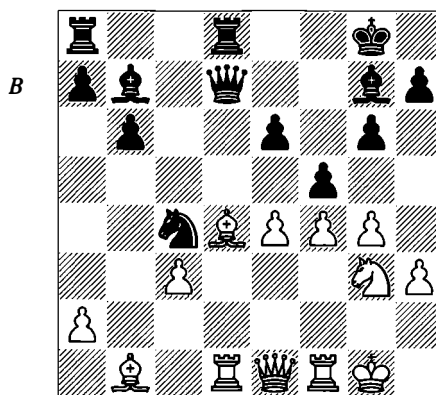
b) 18...exf5! 19 exf5 (what else?) 19...cxd4 20 ♜xd4 (after 20 cxd4, 20...♜e8! takes advantage of the bad situation of the queen again) 20...♜xd4+ 21 cxd4 ♜xd4+ 22 ♖h2 ♜e8! gives Black a nearly winning position.

18...cxd4 19 ♜b1

Finally White gives up the c4-square, which will be very well utilized by Black to break up White's central pawns. 19 ♜c2 is not possible since the black queen will reach the c-file, but White should have sacrificed the d-pawn: 19 cxd4 ♜xd4 20 ♖h2 fxc4! 21 hxc4 (21 ♜e2 allows 21...♜a4!) 21...♜g7 and Black keeps the initiative since the sacrificed pawn doesn't offer real counterplay.

19...♖c4 20 ♜xd4 (D)

The only chance, partially because White cannot afford to lose more time, and he must seek activity. After 20 ♜f2 the power of the c4-knight would be obvious: 20...♖a3! (seizing the opportunity to get rid of the bishop, the defender of the light-squares) 21 ♜xd4 ♖xb1 22 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 23 ♜xb1 ♜d3! and dominant black bishop and the rotten situation of the white king form a devastating scene for White.



20...e5!

White's centre is now smashed to pieces. Black exploits the fact that simplification into an ending would not solve White's problems – rather the opposite: 21 ♜xe5 ♜xd1 22 ♜xd1 ♜xd1 23 ♜xd1 ♖xe5 24 fxe5 ♜xe5.

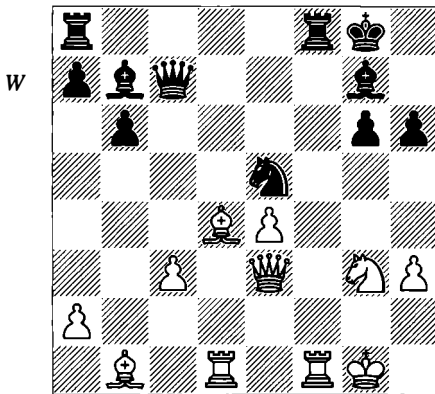
21 fxe5 fxc4 22 ♜e2 ♜c7

Very precise, firmly preventing the advance of the e-pawn, due to the unstable situation of the g3-knight.

23 ♖xg4 ♜xe5

The victory of Black's strategy. All White's pawns have been isolated. As if these facts are not enough, there is the comparison between the white and the black pieces. Another intriguing picture is presented when looking at Black's pawn-structure. Black's central pawns have fought to weaken White's pawn-centre, and their disappearance has opened files and diagonals for their pieces.

24 ♖g5 h6 25 ♖e3 ♜f8 (D)



Preventing any possibility of counterplay.

26 ♜g2 ♙a6 27 ♜xf8+ ♜f8 28 ♙xe5?

This appears to be the decisive mistake. It doesn't seem entirely necessary for White to give up this important bishop, although after 28 ♙c2! ♖e7!?, the threats of ...♖h4, ...♜f3, and ...♙c8 will force it anyway. 28 ♙c2 is without doubt the right move, but this would not change the outcome.

28...♖xe5 29 ♙c2 ♙c4!

The black bishop is going to paralyse its white counterpart. After 29...♖xc3? 30 ♖xc3 ♙xc3 31 ♙b3+ ♖h8 32 ♜d7 White gets some counterplay, and activates his bishop. Evidently, Black should not be interested in forcing this variation.

30 ♙b3 ♙xb3 31 axb3 ♖xc3 32 ♖xc3 ♙xc3

The ending is hopeless: an extra pawn, a potential strong passed pawn, bishop against knight, the isolated e4-pawn...

33 ♜d7 ♜f7 0-1

The same topic recurs in my game against Geller that follows. With Black, I chose a defence in which my famous opponent was an expert, the King's Indian Defence. I think that against a player with his theoretical knowledge, you are bound to have doubts about choosing any particular line, so it makes sense to choose the opening with which you are most familiar, even if it is also his favourite weapon against 1 d4.

I believe this is a modern contribution of the leading players of the 1990s, and this is more clearly noticed starting from the Kasparov-Karpov match in 1985. Since then, players like Anand, Kramnik, Shirov and Topalov haven't show a great fear for the 'expertise' of their opponents, because they trust their home preparation and their own conclusions.

**Geller – Romero**

*Palma de Mallorca 1989*

1 d4 ♜f6 2 ♜f3 d6 3 g3 g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 c6

White chose the Fianchetto Variation and Black avoided the most critical lines, 6...♜bd7 and 6...♜c6. My intention was to choose an innovative set-up where I could develop my own ideas.

7 ♜c3 ♖a5 8 h3

Preventing the queen from passing from the queenside to the kingside, since 8...♖h5? would now be met by 9 ♜g5 threatening ♙f3.

Currently, 8 e4 is considered the strongest move, and if 8...♖h5 then 9 e5! dxe5 10 ♜xe5, but when the game was played this continuation hadn't received much attention.

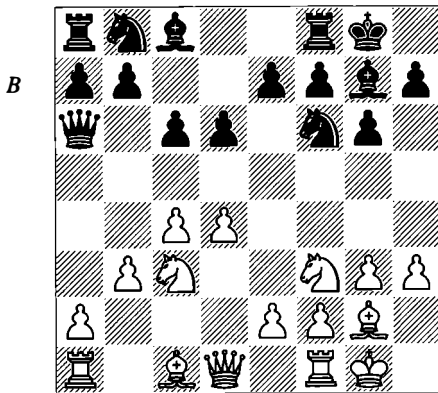
8...♖a6!?

This creative move first appeared at grand-master level in P.Nikolić-Gavrikov, Tunis IZ 1985. The central c4-pawn is the target of Black's plan. The queen is displaced, and this is a serious drawback, but White must give up part of his central supremacy.

The most usual move is 8...♙e6, and after 9 d5 cxd5 10 ♜d4 ♙d7 Black will exert pressure on the queenside by playing ...♜c8, ...♙e8, ...♜fd7, ...♜b6, etc., although Black can end up being suffocated due to lack of space. A more interesting possibility is 10...dxc4! with which

Black can reach a dynamically balanced position.

9 b3 (D)



9...b5!

Again, a flank move is employed to counter White's pawn-centre. The black queen, supporting the b7-square, will defend the threats on the open diagonal.

10 cxb5

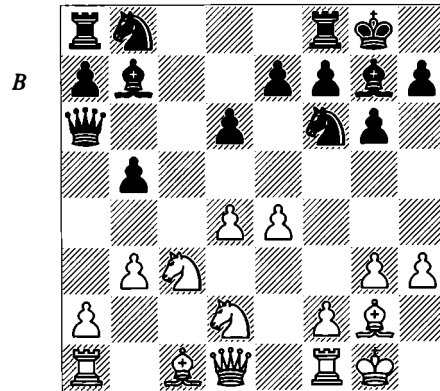
A more flexible option is 10 d2 bxc4 11 dxc4, allowing Black to achieve a partial strategic success by exchanging his b-pawn for the white c-pawn, although this offers more play to White's fianchettoed bishop and allows him to place his king's knight on a more suitable square. After 11...e6 12 e3 dbd7 13 b2 ffc8 a virgin middlegame opens to both sides.

10...cxb5 11 d2?!

Geller doesn't chose the right plan. The complications that arise after 11 d3 b4 12 e1 bxc3 (12...e3!) 13 xa8 d5 are difficult to foresee, while the natural continuation, 11 b4 b7 12 a4 bxa4 13 xa4 c4! 14 b2 dbd7 15 a1 c7 16 b5 cb8 17 xa7 xa7 18 xa7 e4! 19 b5 cb7 allowed Black full equality in Nikolić-Gavrikov, Tunis IZ 1985. The pressure on the a7-knight allowed Black to take a quick initiative, based on good piece-play.

11...b7 12 e4 (D)

Geller occupies the centre, convinced that he can support it easily with his two fianchettoed bishops. Of course, one idea that might have persuaded him to take this wrong decision was



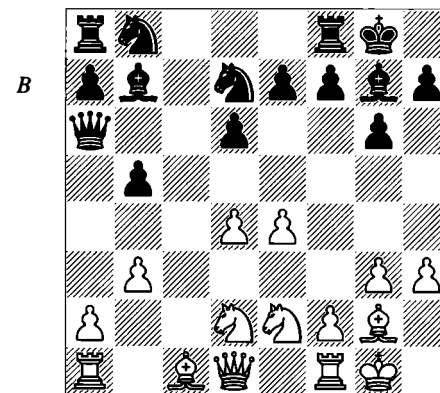
the unusual location of the black queen. With just two moves, e1 and f1, he would begin to question the Black's choice of plan.

12...fd7!

The first step against the d4-pawn. 12...b6 is also tempting, but White had prepared an elegant trap: 13 b2! xd4 14 e5 xg2 15 exf6 xf1 16 fxg7 xg7 17 xf1 and the white bishop becomes hostile.

13 e2 (D)

The only move, since 13 f3 b4 14 d5 xd5 15 exd5 db6 unleashes a fierce attack on the d4- and d5-pawns.



13...c5!

Unquestionably, a beautiful move. The knight will hit White's most sensitive points: e4, d4 and mainly, d3. In this way Black secures the e6-square for the knight, so that White's d-pawn can be attacked again. Besides these two possibilities, Black has other promising prospects: the installation of the knight on d3,

eliminating a bishop that could defend the pawn. In fact, after 14 ♖b2? ♜d3! 15 ♙c3 b4! Black wins a piece.

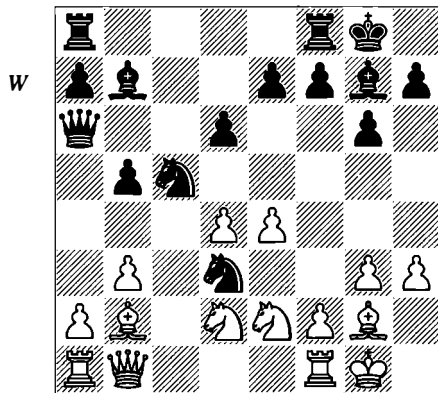
It is necessary to give 13...♜c5 its due value, since without this move we can say that White's strategy would be completely justified. Let us suppose that Black acted with excessive laxity, playing 13...♜c6, meeting 14 ♖b2 by 14...♜c5. In that case, White has 15 ♖b1! and after 15...♜e6 16 ♜f3 ♖b6 17 ♜d1 (17 d5 ♜ed4! 18 dxc6 ♜xe2+ 19 ♜h2 ♖xc6! 20 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 21 ♖b2+ ♜c3 22 ♜d4 ♖c5! tending to a balanced situation), he would consolidate the centre and reaffirm the sad disposition of the black knights, in face of the latent threat of d5.

Black's text-move has some parallels with the ideas like ♜c4 White uses to exert pressure on the weak d-pawn in the classical line of the Queen's Indian Defence, an opening where the readers can find several examples of successful attacks against Black's hanging centre.

14 ♖c2 ♜c6 15 ♖b2 ♜b4!

Black's 13th move forced White to place his queen in an exposed situation, and gained time to enter on d3 with decisive effect.

16 ♖b1 ♜bd3! (D)



The ease with which the knight has gone from b8 to d3 is quite surprising. The white bishop cannot escape from the web made by the black knights: 17 ♙c3 b4. Black is seeking to exchange this knight for the bishop while the other will head towards e6, ending his devastating work on the white centre. Geller, already in serious time-pressure, showed unmistakable signs of concern. It turns out that White

practically lacks any useful moves – just 16 moves into the game!

17 ♜d1?!

The king's rook will defend the weakness and allows the queen's knight to re-enter the battle via f1. However, the clump of white pieces on the queenside allow a new resource, this time directed against the other central pawn, e4.

White should be more cautious and play 17 a3 first (intending ♙c3) 17...♜xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♜ac8 19 ♜fd1 (this is necessary to shake off the pressure; 19 ♜ad1 allows 19...b4!, while 19 b4 {giving the d2-knight a flight-square} leaves another hole in the position after 19...♜a4). If now Black doesn't play actively, he will lose some of his advantage. For example: 19...♜c7 20 ♖b1 ♜e6 21 ♜f1! ♜fc8 22 ♜e3. Undoubtedly Black should play more forcibly: 19...f5! 20 exf5 ♙xg2 21 ♜xg2 ♜xf5, and strong threats await the white king.

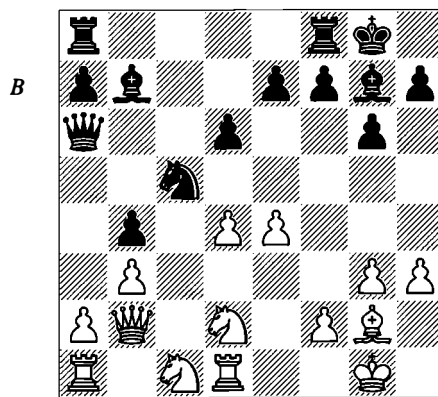
17...b4

It seems logical that the queen, from a6, wants to enter the game, and all the more if at the same time it diverts a piece that was protecting d4. Nevertheless, 17...f5! seems more interesting, attacking the new weaknesses and then the white king.

18 ♜c1

All White's minor pieces are tied to defending the central pawns (therefore 18 ♙f1 is not possible).

18...♜xb2 19 ♖xb2 (D)



19...f5!

Black has activated all his pieces, and both bishops are pointing directly at the heart of

White's position. It can be said that the game is entirely decided.

**20 a3**

A typical 'time-trouble' move. When your opponent is attacking you in some place, you react on the opposite side. Even after the better 20 f3 ♖e6 21 ♘c4 (if 21 ♘f1, then 21...♗xd4! 22 ♗xd4 ♖b6 23 ♗e2 e5 winning) 21...d5! 22 exd5 ♗xd5, Black has a dominant position.

**20...bxa3 21 ♗xa3 0-1**

Here Geller overstepped the time-limit. Black has a pleasant choice between 21...♖c6 and 21...♗xd4, concluding the strategic battle.

In the next example, White's hypermodern play follows the conceptual ideas of the Grünfeld Defence. White gives the centre to Black in order to hit it later, with the help of his fianchettoed bishop. In this kind of position, the g2-bishop is once again the most important piece.

### Romero – del Rio

*Spanish Cht 1995*

**1 d4 e6 2 g3!?**

This is quite a subtle move-order by which to reach Catalan positions, and it has its pros and cons. White avoids theoretical lines of the Queen's Indian Defence, but on the other hand allows Black to attack the centre quickly. Black now tries to lead the game to less well-known paths.

**2...♗f6 3 ♗g2 c5**

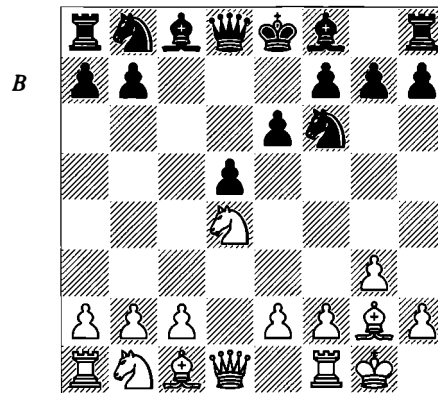
Black avoids playing ...d5, because then White would react with c4, entering the Catalan Opening.

**4 ♗f3 cxd4 5 ♗xd4 d5 6 0-0!?** (D)

The line 6 c4! is very well known: 6...e5 7 ♗f3 d4 8 0-0 ♗c6 9 e3 ♗c5 with an even game, according to modern theory, although it is rather pleasant for Black due to his space advantage. White prefers to keep the possibility of playing c4 under more favourable circumstances.

**6...e5**

Quite ambitious, entering a kind of Grünfeld with two tempi less, although Black does gain something due to the fact that White cannot exchange on c6, and must retreat his knight. IM del Rio hoped to keep the balance thanks to his



tremendous centre, but it will be brutally attacked. Perhaps, as my opponent suggested, it was better to admit defeat, and go into a form of Tarrasch Defence by playing 6...♗e7 7 c4 0-0, etc.

**7 ♗b3 ♗c6**

7...h6 (preventing ♗g5) is met by 8 c4.

An interesting possibility is 7...♗e6!? 8 ♗c3 (8 ♗g5 ♗bd7) 8...♗e7 (8...h6 9 f4 exf4 10 ♗xf4 ♗c6 11 ♖d2) in order to reply to 9 ♗g5 with 9...♗bd7! but as on so many occasions, the recipe to hit the centre can vary depending on the specific plan that Black is going to adopt in each case. This time the attendance of the bishop at e6 invites the dynamic 9 f4!?, although this is indeed a compromising move that can cause some irreparable damage to White's own pawn-structure. 9...exf4 10 ♗xf4 ♗c6 11 ♖d2 0-0 12 ♗ad1 ♗e8 13 ♗xd5 (13 e3 ♗c8) 13...♗xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 (15...♖b6+ 16 e3 ♗b4) 16 ♗xd5 ♗f6 17 ♖f2 ♗xb2. Perhaps it would be interesting for White to balance all these plans and after 9 ♗g5 (forcing Black to determine his queen's knight's situation) 9...♗bd7! to hit the centre with 10 f4 exf4 (10...♖b6+ 11 ♖h1 ♗g4 12 ♗xe7 ♗e3 13 ♖d2 ±) 11 ♗xf4 ♖b6+ 12 ♖d4. The d7-knight loses the control of the position and is more passive once Black has an isolated queen's pawn.

**8 ♗g5 ♗e6 9 ♗c3 d4!?**

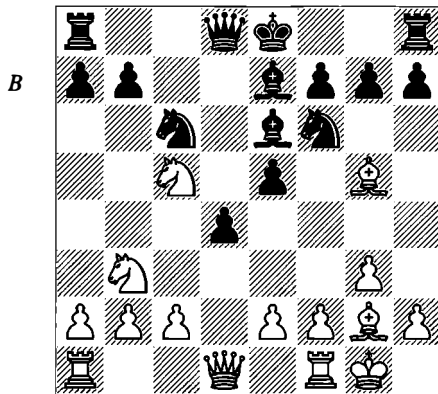
Probably a mistake. After the game both players agreed that 9...e4!?, although ugly, is stronger. For example: 10 f3 ♗e7! 11 fxe4 ♗xe4!. White can play other moves, but it is clear that the critical continuation is 9...e4.

Now White's game seems simple and straightforward.

10 ♖e4 ♗e7

10...♗xb3 11 axb3 ♗e7 12 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 13 ♖d3 0-0 14 ♘c5 leaves White with absolute control of the light squares: 14...♗c8 15 ♗e4 g6 16 ♘xb7 ♗xb7 17 ♗f3 ♗e7 18 ♗xc6 ♖ac8 19 ♖a6 ♗g7 20 ♖fa1 ♖c7 21 ♖d5 ♖fc8 22 c3 dxc3 23 bxc3 e4 24 ♗xe4 ± Mochalov-Ikonnikov, Budapest 1991.

11 ♘ec5! (D)



11...♗c8

Or:

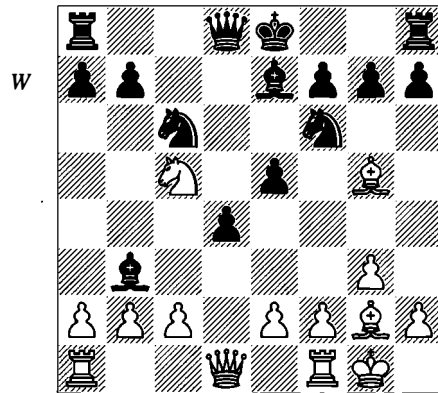
a) 11...♗d5 is Black's most active continuation, and I analysed it at the board with a type of fear with which every chess-player is surely familiar. After 12 ♗xf6! (12 ♘xb7 ♗b6 13 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 15 ♘7c5 ♖hd8 with a strong centre in return for the pawn, even though this line is unclear) 12...♗xg2 13 ♗xe7 ♖d5 14 ♗g5 (14 ♗h4!?) 14...♗xf1 15 ♗xf1 b6 I guessed that Black's centre and my uncoordinated minor pieces (16 ♘d3 is not possible on account of 16...e4) give Black some compensation. But in the quiet of home analysis, it was easy to find a satisfactory solution:

a1) Not 16 e4?! dxe3 17 ♖d1 ♗f3! (rather than 17...exf2+? 18 ♗xf2 ♘d4 19 ♖xd4 exd4 20 ♗b5+ ♗f8 21 ♘d7+ winning).

a2) 16 ♘d3 e4 17 ♗g2 0-0 18 ♗d2 ♖fe8 19 ♘f4 ♖c4 20 c3 (20 e3 ♗xc2 21 ♖c1 ♗xb2) is possible.

a3) 16 ♘a6 ♖c8 17 ♖c1 seems best.

b) 11...♗xb3 (D) is a very interesting possibility, seeking simplification:

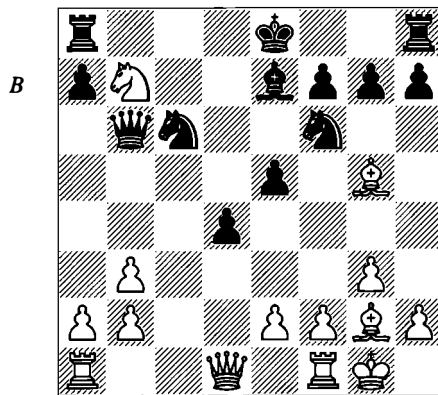


b1) 12 ♘xb3 is unconvincing. Then:

b1) 12...♘d5? 13 ♗c1 ♘b6 14 e3 dxe3 15 ♗xe3 ♘c4 16 ♗e2 ♘xe3 17 ♗xe3 (17 ♖xe3 0-0 18 c3 ♗b6 19 ♖ad1) 17...0-0 18 ♖ad1 ♗c7 19 c3 f5? (19...♖ad8 20 ♖d5 ±) 20 ♖d5 ♖ad8 21 ♖fd1 ♗h8 22 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 23 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 24 ♗xc6 bxc6 25 ♘d4 ♖d6 26 ♘xf5 ♗d1+ 27 ♗g2 ♖d5+ 28 ♗f3 e4 29 ♗g4 g6 30 ♘e3 ♗c5 31 ♖d7 ♗b6 32 ♘g4 ♖d5 33 ♗xd5 cxd5 34 ♘f6 d4 35 ♘xe4 dxc3 36 bxc3 ♗g7 37 f4 h5 38 ♗f3 ♗f7 39 ♘g5+ ♗f6 40 h3 1-0 Csom-M.Röder, Budapest 1990.

b12) 12...h6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 e3 dxe3 15 ♖xe3 0-0 with a defensible position for Black.

b2) 12 ♘xb7! ♗b6 13 ♗xb3! (D) (13 ♗xc6+ ♗xc6 14 ♘a5 ♗xc2 15 axb3 ♗xd1 16 ♖fxd1 h6 is unclear) and the pressure on c6 dooms Black.

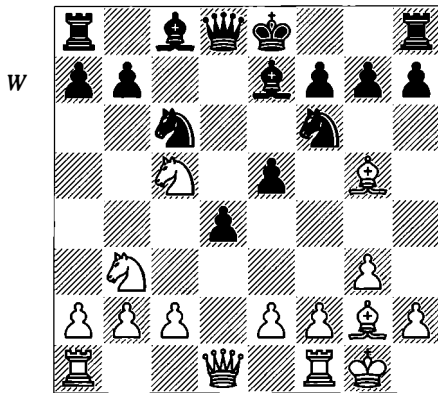


b2) 13...♖c8 14 ♖c1 0-0 15 ♗xf6 (15 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 16 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♘a5 ♗a6 18 ♘c4 h6 19 ♗c1 e4 20 ♗xd4 ♗xa2 ±) 15...gxf6 (15...♗xf6

16 ♖d6 ♜c7 17 ♛c2 ♚d7 18 ♜c4 ♛a6 19 ♛f5 +-) 16 ♛c2 d3 (16... ♛xb7 17 ♙xc6 ♛a6 18 ♛e4 ♛xa2 19 ♛g4+ ♖h8 20 ♙e4 ♛xc1 21 ♛f5! ♛xf1+ 22 ♖xf1 wins for White) 17 ♛xd3 (17 exd3 ♚d4 18 ♛xc8 ♛xc8 19 ♛xc8+ ♖g7 ±) 17... ♛xb7 18 ♛f5 ♛fd8 (18... ♚d4? 19 ♛g4+) 19 ♛c4 ♖f8 (19... ♚d6 20 ♛fc1 ♖f8 21 ♛xh7 ♖e8 22 ♛c2) 20 ♛xh7 ♖e8 21 ♛fc1 ♚d6 22 ♛c2 1-0 P.Schlosser-Schroll, Graz Z 1993.

b22) 13... ♛xb7, capturing White's knight at once, has not been refuted: 14 ♛c1 ♛c8 15 ♛c2 0-0 (15... e4 16 ♙xf6 d3 17 exd3 ♙xf6 18 ♙xe4 ♖d7 19 ♛c4 +-) 16 ♙xc6 ♛a6 (reaching a critical position) 17 b4 (17 ♛c4 ♛xa2 18 ♛a1 ♛xb2 19 ♛xa7 ♙d8 ±; 17 a3 ♚d5; 17 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18 a3 ♛b6 19 ♛c4 e4 20 ♛fd1 ♛fd8 with compensation) 17... ♛xa2 18 ♛f5 ♛e6 (18... ♛xb2 19 b5 with compensation) 19 ♛xe6 fxe6 20 b5 ♙d8 21 ♙d2 ♙b6 22 ♙b4 ♛f7 23 ♙d6 g5 24 h3 e4 25 ♖g2 ♚d5 and Black has no trouble, Plachetka-Luther, Namestovo 1987. It is very probable that White has some continuation ensuring him a clear strategic advantage, and the reader interested in this line should explore deeply before using this move in an important game.

We now return to 11... ♙c8 (D):



**12 e3**

White has another way to open the centre, viz. 12 c3!?:

a) 12... ♛b6 13 cxd4 ♚xd4 14 ♚a4! ♛b4 15 ♚xd4 exd4 16 ♛b3! (the weakness of Black's d4-pawn will be clear in the ending) 16... ♙d7 17 ♛xb4 ♙xb4 18 ♛fd1! (White has exploited his lead in development and parried the threat

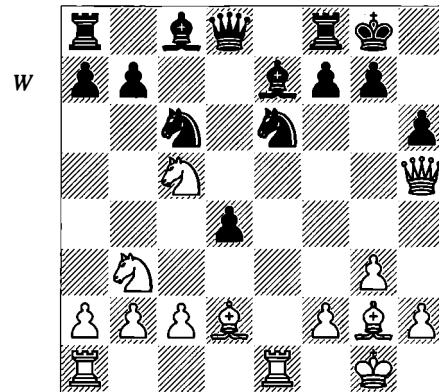
to his knight by tactical means) 18... ♙xa4 19 ♛xd4 a5 20 a3 ♙xa3 21 ♛xa4 ♙xb2 22 ♛xa5 ♛d8 23 ♛b1 b6 24 ♙c6+ ♖f8 25 ♛a4 ♙d4 26 ♛d1 1-0 Garcia Ilundain-Martin Gonzalez, Spanish Cht (Salamanca) 1998.

b) The question is if White gets enough advantage in case of the critical reply 12... dxc3!. Black will have a better structure, in return for suffering White's initiative.

**12... dxe3?!**

Now the centre collapses like a house of cards. 12... 0-0 is more stubborn: 13 exd4 exd4 14 ♛e1 h6 15 ♙f4 ♚d5 16 ♙d2 ± ♚c7 (16... b6 doesn't work due to 17 ♛f3!; 16... ♛e8 17 ♛f3) 17 ♛h5, and then:

a) In case of the logical 17... ♚e6 (D), aiming to get rid of the beast, White can choose between two continuations, representing opposite styles:



a1) Sacrifice the exchange: 18 ♚xe6 ♙xe6 19 ♛xe6 fxe6 20 ♙xh6, and then:

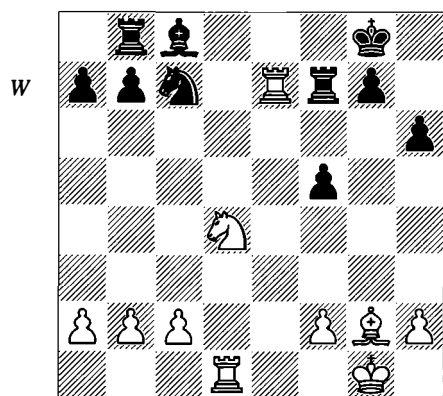
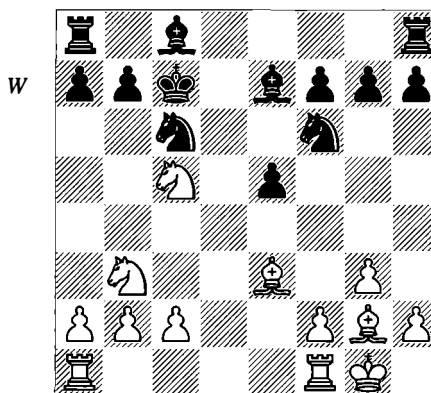
a11) 20... ♛e8 21 ♛g4 (21 ♛xe8 ♛axe8 22 ♙d2 with compensation) 21... ♛f7 22 ♛f1 (22 f4 ♛f6 23 ♙g5 ♛g6) 22... ♚e5 23 ♛e4.

a12) 20... gxf6 21 ♛g6+ ♖h8 22 ♛xh6+ ♖g8 23 ♛g6+ ♖h8 24 ♙e4 ♛f5 25 ♛h6+ ♖g8 26 ♛xe6+ ♛f7 27 ♙d5 ♛e8 28 ♛g6+ ♖f8 29 ♛h6+ ♖g8 30 ♛e1 +-.

a2) Positional blockade and total command of the open file: 18 ♚d3 ♙d6 19 ♛e2 ♛f6 20 ♛ael ♙d7 (20... ♛e8 21 ♚bc5) 21 f4 ♛fe8 22 ♚f2 ±.

b) 17... ♚e8 18 ♛d5! (White superbly conceives the best possible plan in order to realize his strategic advantage; it is necessary to get rid

of the superfluous pieces, as the great Capablanca did so adeptly) 18...♙d6 (18...♖b6 19 ♘a4 ♗a6 20 ♘xd4) 19 ♙f4! (a move for undogmatic minds; I will always remember with pleasure what the Romanian grandmaster Mihai Suba told a strong 'coffee-house player': "you know little about chess and above all you are dogmatic!") 19...♙xf4 20 ♗xd8 ♘xd8 21 gxf4 (this exchange of queens allows Black to win the important central pawn, giving more scope to the fianchettoed bishop) 21...♙e6 22 ♘xe6 fxe6 23 ♘xd4 ♘c7 24 ♖ad1 ♖b8 25 f5!? (25 ♙e2 ♗f7 26 ♖d3 +-) 25...exf5 26 ♖e7 ♖f7 (D).



27 ♘c6! ♖xe7 (27...bxc6 28 ♖d8+ ♖f8 29 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 30 ♖xc7 ♙e6 31 b3 ♖d8 32 ♗f1! +-) 28 ♘xe7+ ♗f8 29 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 30 ♙xb7 (White is winning) 30...♖b8 31 ♙c6 ♙e6 32 b3 ♘f4 33 c4 ♖c8 34 ♙d7 ♖c5 35 ♗f1 g5 36 ♖d4 ♗e7 37 b4 ♖e5 38 a3 ♘g6 39 c5 ♘h4 40 c6 ♘f3 41 c7 ♖e1+ 42 ♗g2 g4 43 ♖xg4 ♗xd7 44 ♖c4 ♗c8 45 ♗xf3 ♖a1 46 ♖c3 ♖a2 47 ♗g3 f4+ 48 ♗f3 ♖d2 49 h4 ♖a2 50 ♗xf4 ♖xf2+ 51 ♗g4 ♖f6 52 ♖c5 a6 53 ♖c3 ♖b6 54 ♖c4 ♖d6 55 ♗h5 ♖e6 56 a4 ♖d6 57 b5 1-0 Speelman-Rogers, British Ch (Swansea) 1987.

**13 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8**

After 13...♘xd8 14 ♙xe3 ♖b8 Black would suffer due to the lack of defence of his e-pawn. Now the king comes to the rescue of the queen's bishop, but White finds the way to take advantage of the momentary delay in development and the feeble situation of the black king.

**14 ♙xe3 ♗c7 (D)**

After 14...♘g4 15 ♖ad1+ ♗c7 16 ♙d2 Black gets nothing: 16...♙f5 17 ♘xb7.

**15 f4!**

The best chance, opening the game for my strong minor pieces and obtaining the key to the d4-square, where I could place either the bishop or the knight. At first glance it seemed stronger to exert pressure on the e5-pawn by playing 15 ♖fe1, but I realized that Black had a simple and useful defensive move: 15...♖e8 (15...♙d6 16 ♙g5!) followed by the eventual expulsion of the knight from c5. If White doesn't do something active, his advantage will vanish.

Unlike Petrosian-Bannik (where we considered the possibility of opening the game with f4), there is not a static advantage here, so that this break against the centre becomes necessary. Accordingly, White opens the game for his king's rook as quickly as possible via the f-file and gets control of the d4-square, to which the b3-knight could enter.

**15...b6**

Black is unable to support e5, since 15...♙d6 is met by 16 fxe5 ♙xe5 17 ♘d3 ♙d6 18 ♘d4! (18 ♙g5) with a clear advantage. On the other hand, taking on e5 with the knight is not a good solution, since the pressure on b7 will remain and it would allow some tactical blows like ♘a6. For instance, 15...♖e8 16 fxe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘a6+.

**16 ♘d3**

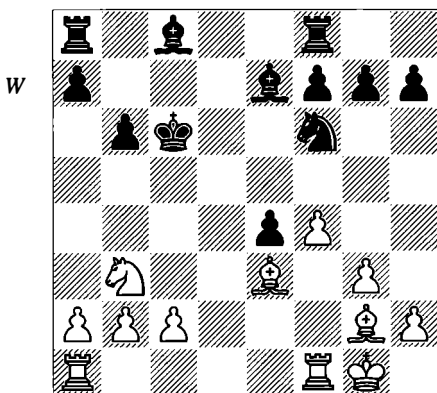
16 ♙e4 is met by 16...♘g4! followed by the defence ...f5 and ...e4. 16 fxe5?! is not good due to 16...♘g4.

**16...e4 17 ♙e5 ♖f8**

A difficult choice that didn't satisfy me. However, 17...♙e6 18 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 19 ♘d4+ ♗c7 would offer White a pleasant choice between

20 ♖xe6+ fxe6 21 ♖ae1 (21 ♖h3 ♘d5 22 ♖d4) exerting pressure on the e4-pawn, or else the impetuous 20 f5.

18 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 (D)



The black king is a little exposed and the e-pawn is very weakened, but it is necessary to find the decisive continuation; otherwise the advantage would not be so clear. I thought about flexible moves, since I hadn't decided what piece I should locate on d4, since after 19 ♖fe1 would follow 19...♞e8 and after 19 h3 comes 19...h5, when the g2-bishop may not be too effective. In the end I found the solution.

19 ♖d4!

Seemingly, White is allowing the defence of the e-pawn by means of ...♖f5, a trap into which Black falls hopelessly. The white bishop is freeing the e-file in order to exert pressure on the e-pawn, and at the same time it is pressing the knight that is defending the advanced pawn. The b3-knight will enter the action later on.

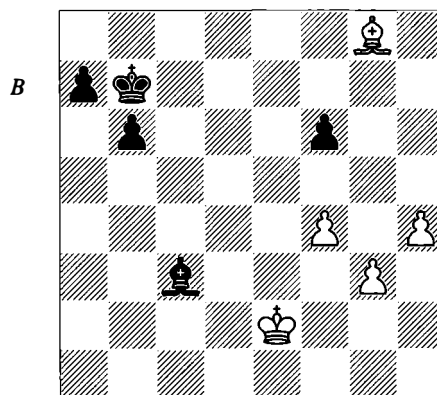
19...♖f5?!

19...♞e8! is the most resilient:

a) If White exerts pressure on e4 by 20 ♖fe1 ♖f5 21 ♖xf6 (21 ♖e5 ♜b7 22 ♘d2 ♖ad8) 21...♖xf6 22 g4 ♖xg4 23 ♖xe4+ ♖xe4! 24 ♖xe4 ♖xb2 ∞, the bishop-pair compensates, as so many times, for the exchange. This line clearly shows that the side with the advantage should not force the action in violent fashion if he is not ready to do so.

b) The best White can do is to allow the knight to enter the central battle: 20 ♖e5 ♜b7 21 c3! (a good useful move, waiting to see how Black defines his defensive set-up) 21...♖f5 22

♘d4 g6 23 ♘xf5! gxf5 24 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 25 ♖h3 ♖ad8 26 ♖fd1 (26 ♖xf5 ♖d5) 26...e3 27 ♖xf5 e2 (27...h6 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♞e1 ♖d2 30 ♖xe3 ♖xb2 31 ♖e4+ ♜c7 32 ♖d5 ±) 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♞e1 ♖d2 30 ♜f2 ♖xb2 31 ♖xh7 (31 ♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 32 ♜xe2 h6 33 ♖e4+ ♜c7 34 ♖d5 ±) 31...♖xa2 32 ♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 33 ♜xe2 ♖xc3 34 ♖g8 f6 35 h4 (D).



An instructive opposite-coloured bishop ending: 35...♜c6 36 h5 ♘d6 37 g4 ♜e7 38 h6 ♜f8 39 ♖c4 a5 40 ♘d3 and the white king proceeds to g6, winning.

20 g4!!

This move demonstrates that Black's pieces are overloaded with defensive tasks. The flight of the b3-knight to the d4-square becomes an actual threat.

20...♖e6

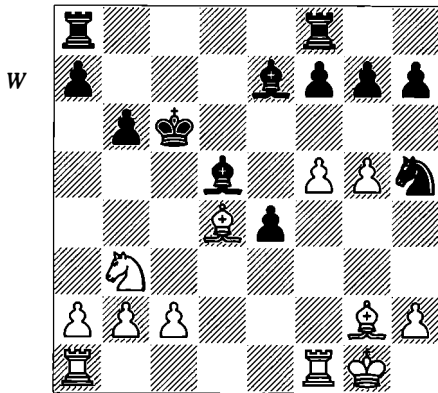
There is no satisfactory defence. The capture 20...♖xg4 is not appealing: 21 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 22 ♖xe4+ ♜c7 23 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 24 c3! ♖h4! (in order to control the e-file) 25 ♘d4 ♞e8 26 ♖ac1! (26 ♘f3 ♖xf3 27 ♖xf3 ♞e2 gives some counterplay; 26 f5 ♞e4!) followed by ♖c2, securing the advantage.

If 20...♘xg4 then 21 ♖xg7 followed by ♘d4+, and White will win the exchange.

21 g5 ♘h5 22 f5!

White is attacking sharply, since winning the pawn gives the opponent some chances of counterplay, due to the good situation of the black knight and the weaknesses that were created with the advance of White's kingside pawns; thus 22 ♖xe4+ is too hasty in view of 22...♖d5 23 ♖xd5+ ♜xd5 24 ♖ad1 ♜c6.

22...♙d5 (D)



23 c4!

Obeying all strategic principles. White is opening lines to increase the activity of his rooks.

23...♙xc4 24 ♙xe4+

I thought about first playing 24 ♖fc1 ♗d5 (the only move, since 24...♗b5 fails to 25 a4+ ♗b4 26 ♘d2) 25 ♞d1, but after 25...♙xb3! 26 axb3 ♙c5 the black king escapes and the material advantage maybe is not enough for a win.

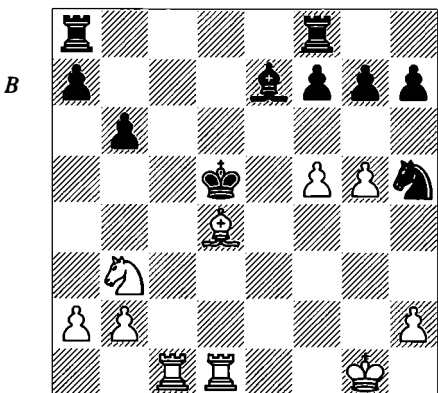
24...♙d5

In reply to 24...♗b5 White has two good continuations:

a) 25 ♙xa8 ♞xa8 (25...♙xf1 26 ♙f3) 26 ♞fc1 (26 f6 ♙xf1 27 ♞xf1 also wins) 26...♙xb3 (26...♙xg5 27 a4+ ♗b4 28 ♙c3+ ♗xb3 29 ♞a3#) 27 axb3 ♙xg5 (27...♘f4 28 ♞c7) 28 ♞c7 ♞d8 29 ♙c3 +.

b) 25 f6 gxf6 26 ♞f5+!

25 ♞ac1+ ♗d6 26 ♙xd5 ♗xd5 27 ♞fd1 (D)



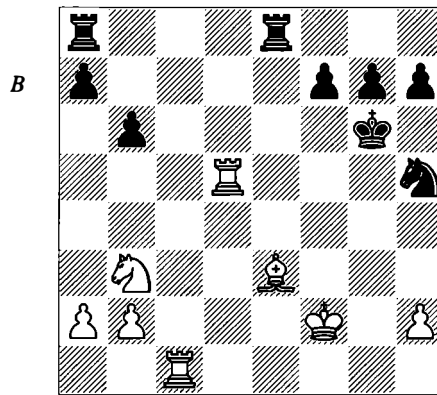
The black king is fighting alone against a large army.

27...♙xg5

Black could well resign now, but White was in severe time-trouble.

28 ♙e3+ ♗e4 29 ♙xg5 ♗xf5 30 ♙e3 ♞fe8 31 ♞d5+ ♗g6 32 ♗f2 (D)

Or 32 ♞g5+ ♗h6 33 ♞g3+.



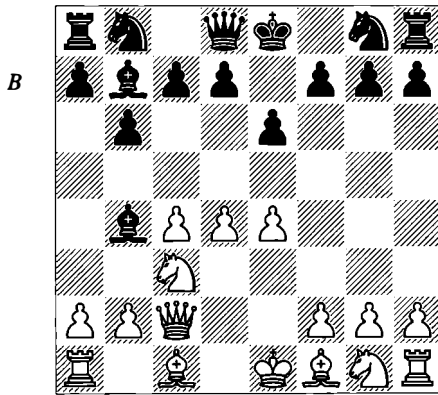
32...f5 33 ♞g1+ ♗f6 34 ♙d4+ ♗e6 35 ♞e5+ ♗d6 36 ♞xf5 g6 37 ♞f3 1-0

The English Defence is named in honour of the many creative English chess-players who developed it in the 1970s, such as Basman, Keene, Stean, Miles and later Speelman. It was conceived as a more flexible defence than the Queen's Indian or the Nimzo-Indian, because Black reserves the right to develop his king's knight later, depending on White's moves. Probably the conquest of the centre is the only way to refute this defence, but this offers Black some interesting possibilities, notably the attack on the centre with ...f5.

The games of these players, and also Korchnoi who experimented with it too, made a great impression on their contemporaries. Many players were very surprised that moves like ...♗h4, carried out at such an early stage of the opening, could not be clearly refuted.

Farago – Miles  
Hastings 1976/7

1 d4 b6 2 c4 ♙b7 3 ♘c3 e6 4 e4 ♙b4 5 ♗c2 (D)



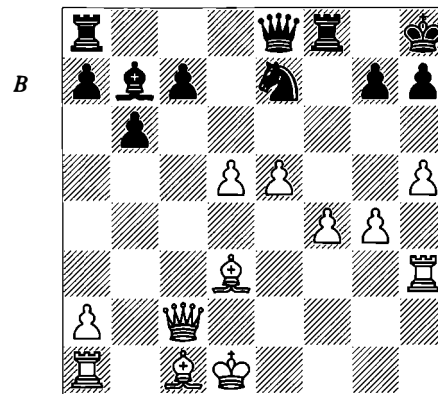
### 5... ♖h4

This 'brute force' move is without a doubt the most dynamic interpretation of this opening. Black takes aim at e4 immediately, in conjunction with his previous moves ...♗b7 and ...♗b4, taking advantage of the fact that White is unable to support the centre with f3.

a) A far older game featured 5... ♖f6 6 ♗d3 ♖c6 7 ♖ge2 (or 7 ♖f3) 7...e5 8 d5 (Grünfeld-Kostić, Teplitz Schönau 1928) and now Black cannot play 8... ♖d4 due to 9 ♖xd4 exd4 10 a3 with an advantage for White.

b) Miles had experimented with the immediate 5... ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3, spoiling White's pawn-structure, followed by 6... ♖e7 with the idea of a further ...f5. The knight would be less flexibly placed on f6. Speelman's next two moves offer a vivid picture of White's treatment: 7 h4!? 0-0 (7...f5 8 exf5 ♖xf5 9 ♗g5!) 8 ♖h3 (possible due to White's space advantage and the difficulties Black has opening the game) 8...d6 (fixing White's centre before making any break; this type of set-up often arises after the exchange of the dark-squared bishop, and the queenside set-up with ...b6, ...♗b7 doesn't handicap this treatment; rather, the only problem that Black is facing is the lack of space, which White wants to exploit at any cost; after 8...f5 9 exf5 ♖xf5 10 ♗g5 ♖e8 11 ♖f3 d6 12 ♗d3 White would take advantage of the open position) 9 ♗d3 e5 10 f4!? f5 (hoping to open lines against the white king, with a double-edged decision) 11 exf5 exd4 12 cxd4 ♖bc6 13 ♖c3 (it will not be appropriate to profit from the material advantage in the line 13 f6? ♖xf6 14 ♗xh7+ ♖h8 since after 15 d5 ♖d4 16 ♖d3 c5! threatening

...b5 and probably ...g6, Black's counterplay has new life in return for a pawn) 13...d5!? (13... ♖xf5 14 d5) 14 ♖f3 ♖xf5 15 g4 ♖e8+ 16 ♖d1 ♖d6 17 cxd5 ♖e7 (Miles keeps playing according to the position, in an active way; this is a fight with no holds barred, where time plays a really important role) 18 ♖c2 ♖h8 (18... ♖xd5 19 ♗xh7+ ♖h8 20 ♖e5) 19 ♖e5 (the threat is stronger than its execution! 19 ♗xh7 ♗c8 20 ♖e5 ♗xg4+ 21 ♖xg4 ♖h5) 19... ♖f7 (to get rid of the strongest white piece) 20 h5 (if 20 ♗xh7, then 20... ♖xe5 21 dxe5 g6 22 h5 ♖d7!) 20... ♖xe5 21 dxe5 (D).



21... ♖d7? (21... ♖xd5!? is probably better – after 22 h6 g6 23 ♖b2 the threat of e6+ is difficult to stop without losing a piece, but Black has chances with the white king in the middle of the board) 22 e6! ♖xd5 23 h6! with a large advantage for White, Speelman-Miles, British Ch (Morecambe) 1975.

### 6 ♗d3 f5

A typical move in this defence. Black is trying to open the game for his fianchettoed bishop, with all his developed pieces (except the g8-knight, which is awaiting the right moment) exerting pressure on the central point e4.

### 7 g3

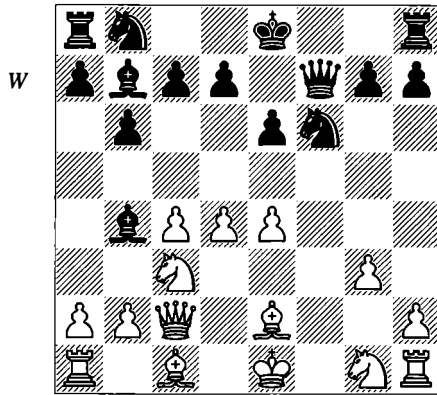
If White must play in this way, weakening the light-squared diagonal on which lies the sleeping monster at b7, Black can feel satisfied with the outcome of the opening. Another idea is 7 ♖f3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♖xc3 ♖g4 9 0-0 fxe4 10 ♖e5 ♖h4!? 11 ♗c2 d6 12 ♗a4+ c6 13 d5 with an unclear position, according to the Cuban GM Guillermo Garcia, although White must

prove the correctness of the piece sacrifice after 13...dxe5 14 ♖xe5 ♗e7.

7...♗h5 8 ♙e2 ♖f7 9 f3

White has finally played f3, but meanwhile he has weakened his whole kingside and placed his pieces poorly.

9...fxe4 10 fxe4 ♘f6 (D)



**11 d5**

White's position is extremely precarious. In order to get rid of the pressure on e4 and complete his development, Fargo is forced to over-extend his centre. If White attempts to defend the weakness caused on the a8-h1 diagonal, by returning the bishop to the fianchetto, it doesn't arrive in time: 11 ♙f3 ♖g6, winning the central pawn.

What strikes us about the rest of the game is how Black simply continues his natural development while he punches away at White's 'sound' central pawn-structure.

11...0-0 12 ♘f3 ♗g6

An interesting queen manoeuvre. Now the white bishop must come to the defence of e4, a detail that adds potency to the knight manoeuvre ...♘a6-c5, and the black queen finds another good square from where to increase the pressure on the weakened white kingside. It seems like this manoeuvre with the queen is more justified with the white king on e1. Otherwise, it would be more natural to complete development with 12...♘a6. After this, White would play 13 0-0 (probably Miles feared 13 e5 ♘g4 14 ♘g5 ♖f2+ 15 ♙d1 but it doesn't work due to 15...♗f5, since 16 ♙xg4 ♖d4+! leaves everything in order) 13...♙xc3 (this necessary

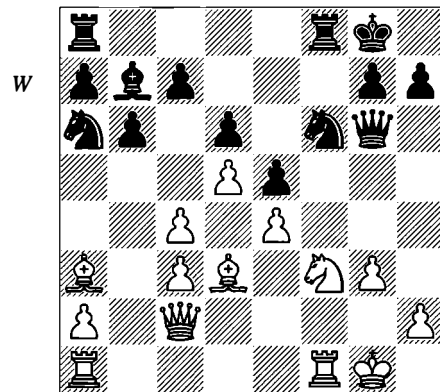
exchange already represents a small concession in comparison with the game continuation; 13...♘c5 allows counterplay with 14 e5!) 14 bxc3 ♖g6! and now:

a) 15 ♙f4 ♘c5! gives Black the initiative.

b) 15 ♙d3 ♘c5 16 ♙a3 ♘xd3! 17 ♙xf8 ♖xe4 18 ♗ad1 ♗xf8! 19 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 20 ♗xd3 exd5 (or maybe better 20...♙a6) is also promising for Black.

c) The active 15 ♘e5 ♖xe4 16 ♖xe4 ♘e4 17 ♗xf8+ ♗xf8 18 ♘xd7 ♗e8 doesn't withstand the slightest analysis: 19 ♙h5 ♗e7 20 ♙a3 ♗xd7 21 dxe6 ♗d2 22 e7 ♘f6 with a decisive advantage for Black.

d) 15 ♙a3!? (preventing the completion of Black's intended knight manoeuvre) 15...d6 16 ♙d3 e5 (D).

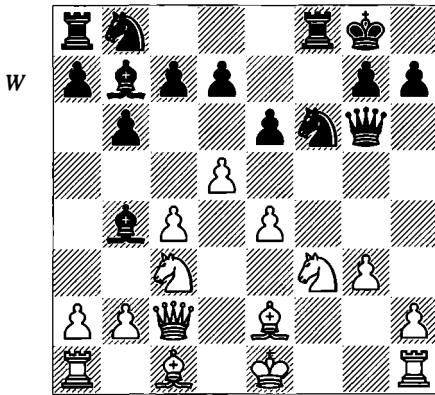


Our first impression is that this position is very healthy for Black from a positional point of view, but that his pieces were not wholly ready for the structural change that took place in the last moves. White's centre is not suffering but his pieces remain restricted in their duties. After 17 ♘h4 ♖e8 Black must play ...♙c8-d7 immediately and ...♘c5 later, without fearing the exchange, while White must keep his dark-squared bishop alert on a3, seeking a kingside attack and, perhaps, bringing the knight to e3. Black is clearly better.

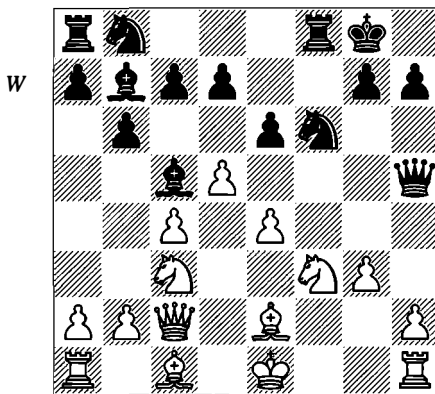
Now we return to the position after 12...♗g6 (D).

13 ♙d3 ♖h5 14 0-0?!

Probably, the eagerness to bring the king to a safe place is the reason for this almost decisive mistake. It was better to play 14 ♙e2, in order



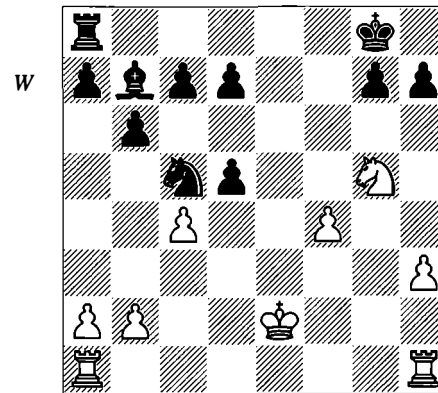
to hinder Black's development, due to the continuous threat of a discovered attack on the black queen. The idea of opening the game for the fianchettoed bishop with 14...♖xe4 is well met by 15 ♗g5! ♜g6 16 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 17 ♗xe4 exd5 18 ♗d2. Therefore, Black should choose between playing 14...♜g6, or aiming to get something against the white king with the odd-looking 14...♗c5 (D). After this last idea, the following lines appear:



a) 15 ♗f4 ♗g4! 16 ♗e5 ♜xf4! 17 ♗xg4! ♜xg4 18 ♜d1 leads to a truly complex position. Black must now decide which type of compensation is better, although he can attempt to release the rook using the tactical resource 18...♗f2+ 19 ♗xf2 ♜f7+ 20 ♗g2 ♜g5 21 ♜f1 ♜e7. It is more natural to try to catch some reward on the road by 18...♜xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗b4+ 20 ♗c3 ♜e5, but there is also a less materialistic option: 18...♜e5 19 ♗xg4 ♗a6 (19...exd5 20 cxd5 ♗d4) 20 ♜d2 ♗d4 21 0-0-0 ♗xc3 22

bxc3 ♗c5 followed by ...♗a6 with a lot of positional compensation.

b) 15 ♗a4 ♗a6 16 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 (Black keeps the pressure on White's centre, even sacrificing his important dark-squared bishop for the sake of development) 17 e5 ♗g4 18 ♗g5 ♜f5! 19 h3 ♜xe5 20 ♗f4 ♗e3! 21 ♜d2 ♗g2+ 22 ♗f1 ♜xe2 23 ♜xe2 ♜xe2+ 24 ♗xe2 ♗xf4+ 25 gxf4 exd5 (D).



Finally, the centre collapses. Black, with two pawns for the exchange, a sound pawn-majority and good play for his pieces, has the advantage.

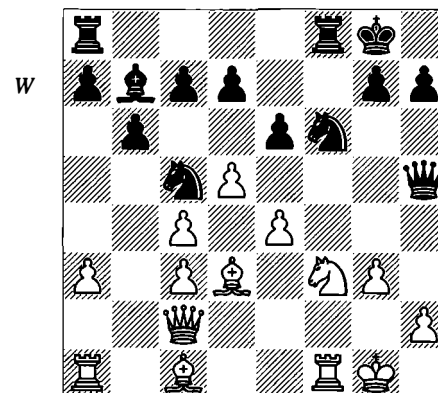
14...♗a6 15 a3

Farago has several reasons to be concerned, and he is not able to quench the fire everywhere. The combination of threats (...♗c5 and ...♗b4, ...♗c5, ...♗g4) is difficult to deal with.

15...♗xc3 16 bxc3

16 ♜xc3 ♗c5 17 e5 ♗g4 (or 17...♗fe4) leaves White's centre very exposed.

16...♗c5 (D)



With all the black pieces developed, the centre cannot withstand further pressure.

17 ♖e3

There's no real solution. With 17 ♖f4 the cover on the f-file will be fleeting: 17... ♗g4! 18 ♖xc7? ♗xd3 19 ♖xd3 ♖xf3. Now Miles tactically profits from his opponent's weak light squares, and undermines the white centre.

17... ♗xd3 18 ♖xd3 exd5 19 exd5 ♗xd5!

This tactical blow wins a pawn and opens the 'English' diagonal.

20 cxd5 ♖xf3 21 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 22 ♖d1 (D)

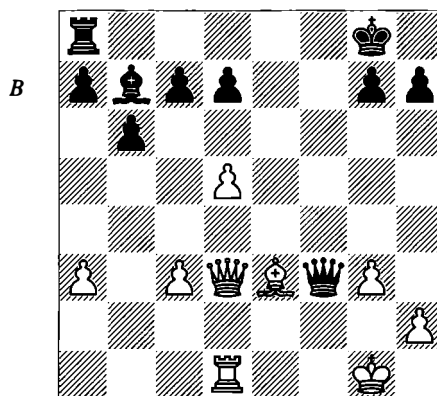
22... ♖a6 23 ♖d2 ♖c4 24 ♖f4

If 24 d6, then 24...c6 followed by ...♖d5.

24...d6

The d5-pawn falls unavoidably.

25 h4 ♖f8 26 ♖h2 ♖e2! 27 ♖g1 ♖e8 28 ♖g2 ♖c4 29 ♖f2 ♖e4 30 ♖d4 ♖xd5



Two pawns down and with more weaknesses waiting to be attacked, not even the opposite-coloured bishops can save White.

31 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 32 h5 h6 33 g4 ♖c4 0-1

# 9 Open and Semi-Open Files

Some openings tends to lead to pawn-structures where open files and semi-open files are more important features than doubled pawns or other weaknesses. Let us recall positions from the Steinitz Variation of the Ruy Lopez with a semi-open b-file, or Sicilian lines where the c-file is closed to the traffic of black pieces by the unexpected white move  $\text{dxc6}$ .

The model game below is a typical example of the effects of pressure on a semi-open file. The advance of a pawn is eventually forced, and this provides a target for attack. Geller plays the game in a totally challenging spirit, until he reaches his goal – truly hypermodern chess.

## Najdorf – Geller Zurich Ct 1953

Once more, I have chosen a game from the Zurich 1953 Candidates tournament. Why? It is not a whim. Not only was it a very high-level event, but it also included players with great creative skill, such as Bronstein, Gligorić, Keres, Najdorf, Geller, Petrosian, etc., many of whose opening and middlegame ideas have prevailed.

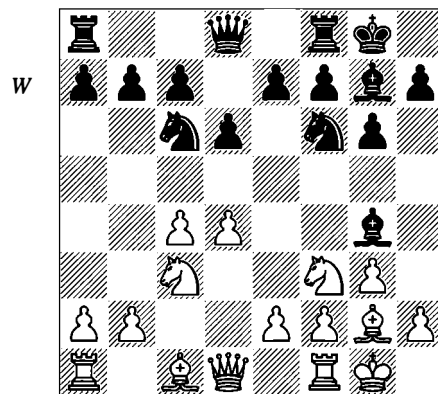
Also, for second time, I am annotating a game between Geller and Najdorf. Efim Geller seemed to play his best chess against the Argentinean grandmaster; we again see him in brilliant form. These two players ended up sharing 6th-7th place with +1, and if Najdorf had improved his personal score with Geller, he could have aimed for 2nd place.

**1 d4  $\text{dxf6}$  2 c4 d6 3  $\text{dxf3}$  g6 4 g3  $\text{g7}$  5  $\text{g2}$  0-0 6 0-0  $\text{dxc6}$**

Geller has chosen the King's Indian Defence and Najdorf has replied with the extremely sound Fianchetto Variation. Black's 6th move puts pressure on the d4-pawn. White could win a tempo by playing 7 d5 but in that case the knight doesn't retreat, but Black instead plays 7...  $\text{da5}$ , attacking White's c4-pawn. Black's plan would

then be adjusted: first he would secure the position of the knight with the advance ...c5 and then he would prepare the break ...b5. The new situation of the black knight would be fully justified whether White exchanged pawns on b5 or allowed the knight to remain pressing on c4.

**7  $\text{dxc3}$   $\text{g4}$ ?! (D)**

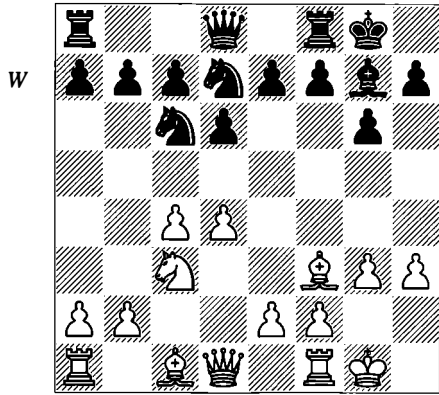


This seems a logical complement to the previous move, fighting for d4. Black, if necessary, is going to give up his light-squared bishop with the healthy idea of giving more play to the g7-bishop. However, this idea is no longer considered viable for Black, despite its basis in logic, since if White replies by advancing his d-pawn, Black has no good way to justify his bishop move.

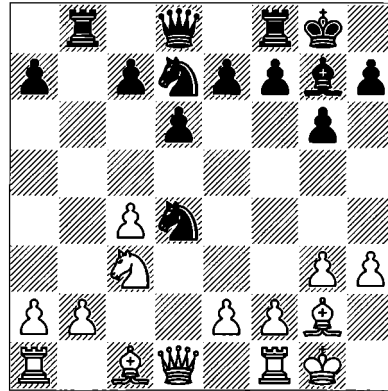
**8 h3?!**

For a long time, this move was considered best, until the strength of the sound positional recipe 8 d5! was recognized. After 8...  $\text{dxf3}$  9  $\text{exf3}$ ! (instead of the obvious 9  $\text{dxf3}$   $\text{de5}$ ) White will exert strong pressure on e7. The damage to White's kingside pawn-structure proves no handicap, since the f-pawn can help, sooner or later, in ruining Black's kingside defences. On the other hand, 8...  $\text{da5}$  does not seem appropriate, since ...  $\text{g4}$  is not a useful move in that case.

8...♙xf3 9 ♙xf3 ♘d7 (D)



B



Another key move in the battle for the centre. Now the advance of White's d-pawn doesn't make sense, while defending d4 would only delay the problems: 10 e3 e5!, and now:

a) 11 dxe5 ♘dxe5 12 ♙e2 ♖e8 gives Black a good game.

b) After 11 ♘e2 exd4 12 exd4 ♗f6! White is forced to give up his fianchettoed bishop.

c) 11 d5 is better, although after 11...♘e7 Black is able to carry out the typical expansion with ...f5.

10 ♙g2(!?)

As David Bronstein writes, "if you think White is forced to exchange his d-pawn for Black's b-pawn, then you should score a definitive strategic success in the opening for Geller, since both don't have the same value." In favour of Najdorf I must say that this doesn't seem at all a shallow strategic decision, and opening the game for the bishops (and mainly for the light-squared bishop) seems to compensate for his 'small sacrifice' quite adequately.

What a difference we see in the way of thinking of two top-flight grandmasters! Najdorf, in his own book on the 1953 Candidates tournament, considers this move to be the best possible continuation.

The fight now becomes extraordinarily complex.

10...♘xd4

Of course, Black accepts the challenge. If 10...e5, then 11 dxe5 ♘dxe5 (the bishop isn't attacked now) 12 ♗a4.

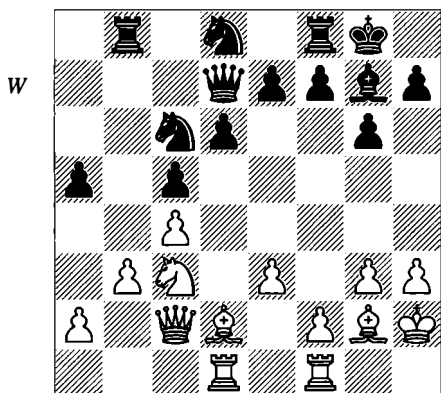
11 ♙xb7 ♖b8 12 ♙g2 (D)

Najdorf assesses the position as advantageous for White: "thanks to the bishop-pair, which I value a lot, and the space advantage. White doesn't have any major weaknesses and Black cannot get important squares for his knights easily."

12...♖b4!

This rook move is impressive. In our first contact with chess, we were taught that rooks should not take big steps forward unless they have an absolutely promising scope. That is not what Black is seeking by playing the rook to b4.

Undoubtedly, the Soviet players Geller and Petrosian worked together in the analysis of this position. In the sixth round, Petrosian (against Najdorf), made a serious positional mistake by playing 12...c5? here, occupying the square that should be reserved for the knight. Why is this? White will probably need to play b3 to defend himself against the pressure on the b-file and to secure the c4-pawn. If Black wants to attack on the queenside he needs to play ...a5-a4, undermining b3. Given that Black doesn't have his light-squared bishop any more, then he needs a knight on c5 to support the advance ...a4; otherwise it is unlikely to happen under good conditions. The above-mentioned game Najdorf-Petrosian, Zurich Ct 1953 strengthened the veteran Argentinean's trust in this line. There followed 13 e3 ♘e6 14 ♗c2 a5 15 ♙d2 ♘e5 (Black can play 15...♘b6 with the idea 16 b3 a4; White's compensation after 17 ♘xa4 ♘xa4 18 bxa4 ♙xa1 19 ♖xa1 ♗b6 20 ♙c3 ♗a6! will not be enough) 16 b3 ♗d7 17 ♖h2 ♘c6 18 ♖ad1 ♘ed8 (D).



The black knights have no meaningful positions and Black lacks a reasonable plan to rejuvenate his position. Meanwhile White is ready to improve his position systematically, by means of  $\text{♞a4}$ ,  $\text{♝c3}$ , the exchange of bishops, and the development of a dangerous attack on the kingside, playing  $\text{f4}$  (or  $\text{♖e4-h4}$ ),  $\text{♝f3}$ ,  $\text{♜g2}$ ,  $\text{h4-h5}$ ,  $\text{♞h1}$ , etc. Black is probably lost.

Geller's move, although creative, is seeking to put all these considerations in practice, trying to enforce the advance  $\text{b3}$  by every possible means, in order to have an attacking point later.

**13 e3 ♘e6 14 ♖e2 ♘e5!**

Truly provocative. Geller's pieces are acting like houseflies on  $\text{c4}$ , but in this case the desired effects are different. Bronstein explains it very well: "in some openings (Alekhine, Grünfeld), Black parks his pieces in the centre to provoke the advance of the white pawns, so that these can be attacked. Geller uses a similar idea in the middlegame, trying to provoke the advance of the  $\text{f-}$  and  $\text{b-pawns}$ ."

Instead,  $14...♘b6$  is a seemingly logical way to attack White's  $\text{c4-pawn}$ . After  $15 ♘d5! ♘xd5$   $16 \text{cxd5}$  Black would clarify the position and strengthen the scope of the 'Indian bishop', but not to his profit: White's development problems would disappear. After  $17 ♞b1$ , followed by  $\text{b3}$  and  $\text{♝d2}$ , Black's attack on the queenside has lost its power and White has several plans:

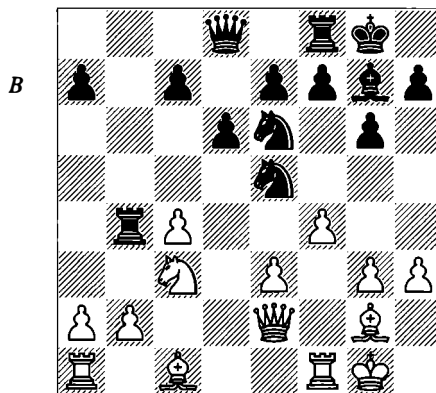
1) pressure on the  $\text{c-file}$  after getting ready to expel the knight by  $\text{a3}$  and  $\text{b4}$ .

2) kingside expansion.

**15 f4 (D)**

White avoids having to play  $\text{b3}$  by tactical means, but he weakens his position. Possibilities

such as  $15 ♘d5$  or  $15 \text{a3}$  can be considered. The first will tend to transpose to the game, while the second rebounds on White due to  $15...♞xc4$   $16 \text{f4} ♞xc3$ . Black would get enough compensation for the exchange, thanks to the superb posting of the knight on  $\text{c5}$ .



**15...♘d7**

The knight must retreat (as was foreseen) despite the loss of time. If  $15...♘xc4?$ , then  $16 \text{a3}$ .

Seemingly, and in comparison with the piece set-up after his 12th move, White has made a little progress. He has controlled the  $\text{d4-square}$  and developed his queen. The whole discussion really hinges on  $15 \text{f4}$  – was it useful or a wasteful move? It doesn't seem that White should feel too concerned about its consequences, but they will become clear later on. It is also important to note the provocative (or indeed psychological) style of Geller's play. Black feels safe, with a very sound position, and he relies on White's attack collapsing.

**16 ♘d5**

White's pieces appear very active, but it is an illusion: the  $\text{d5-knight}$  will soon have to retreat. Najdorf continues to have trouble developing his queenside forces (the bishop and the rook) and Black's attack on this flank seems more promising than White's on the other side of the board.

It might seem that White played in too hurried a fashion, but I am not entirely sure. His next move will show the idea. Taking advantage of the black rook's strange situation with  $16 ♘b5$  does not work:  $16...♖b8$   $17 \text{a3} ♞b3$   $18 ♖c2 ♘dc5!$ . On the other hand, it seems interesting

to strengthen the position (in the absence of any other useful move) with 16 ♖h2. In that case Black should reply 16...a5 (Black threatens 17...♗b6; 16...♗ec5 would allow the manoeuvre ♗b5-d4) 17 ♗b5!? ♗dc5! 18 ♗a7 (Black was ready to expel the knight quickly by means of ...♗d7 and ...c6, releasing the rook just in time: 18 ♖b1 ♗d7 19 b3 c6 20 a3? ♖xb3) 18...♖b6 19 ♗c6 ♗d7 20 ♗xa5 ♗a4! and the knight is lost.

16...♖b8 17 ♗c2

White's last two moves clearly reflect the uncomfortable situation he is in. The development of his queen to e2 didn't help his queenside situation, and so it is transferred to c2.

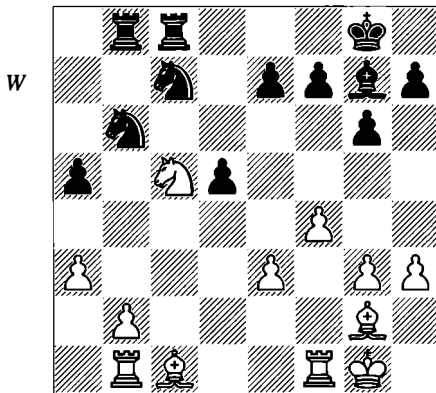
17 ♗c3 deserves attention, as it hinders the natural development of the black queen, which is going to play a key role in the attack on the b-file. Without this retreat, Black's plan will be justified and carried out mechanically.

17...c6 18 ♗c3 ♗c7 19 ♖b1 a5

Preventing the threatened b4 and continuing with Black's original plan.

20 ♗d2

20 a3, with the idea of b4, is interesting. 20...♗b6 (with the idea of replying to 21 b3 with 21...a4!) is met by 21 ♗e4!, when 21...a4 22 c5 leaves White rather more active. 21...♗c5 22 b4! and 21...c5 22 ♗c3! are also poor for Black, so he should opt for an ending by 21...d5! 22 cxd5 cxd5 23 ♗xc7 ♗xc7 24 ♗c5 ♖fc8 (D).



The ending can be assessed as advantageous for Black. His strong pawn-centre, the activity of the rooks along the b- and c-files, the weaknesses in White's position – now visible – and

the superb postings for the knights would tip the scales in his favour.

20...♗ec5

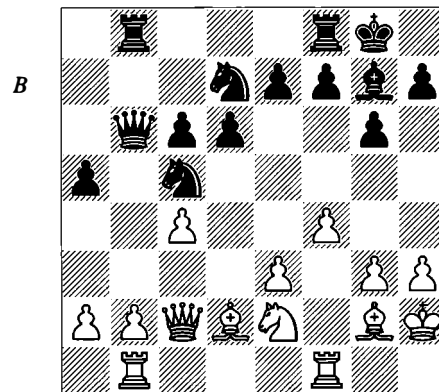
Why this knight and not the other one? This decision is never easy, not even for an experienced player. In this specific case, the knight placed on d7 will have better prospects and good squares from which to defend the fortress. For instance, after a possible break by means of f5, the knight could settle comfortably on e5.

21 ♗e2?!

With this move Najdorf reveals his plan. In my opinion, White's position was not so easy to break after 21 b3. The c3-knight is in its best place to stop Black's counterplay.

21...♗b6 22 ♖h2 (D)

Preventing any tactical possibilities along the a7-g1 diagonal. On the other hand, 22 ♗d4 is reckless: 22...♗xd4 23 exd4 ♗e6.



22...♖fc8!

Very flexible. The rook, by opposing the white queen, is supporting the central advance ...d5, which will highlight the weakness of the e4-square. White's previous move, 21 ♗e2, clearly favours this reaction.

Another possibility is 22...a4, but it is important to assess the consequences of the counter-blow 23 ♗d4 ♖fc8 24 b4 axb3 25 axb3 e5 26 fxe5 dxe5 27 ♗f3 ♗xb3. At first glance, after 28 ♗c3 White's initiative is gaining strength.

23 ♗c3?

Just as in his game against Petrosian, Najdorf exchanges bishops in order to weaken Black's kingside defences and create attacking chances. However, Black's kingside pawn-structure is

quite sound and can resist White's rather modest attacking ideas. It is probably better to keep this bishop, which strengthens the possible b4 advance, just in case Black's attack on the queenside makes it necessary.

After the natural 23 b3 Black has a pleasant choice between the unusual idea 23...♖a6 and the more standard-looking 23...♗a6 (intending ...d5). In fact, both moves would prepare the central break ...d5, pressing on c4 once more.

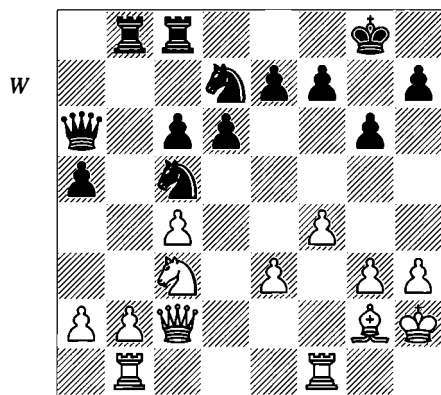
a) After 23...♖a6!?, if White opts for 24 ♖d1 d5 25 cxd5 cxd5 26 ♙xd5 ♖b4!? (or 26...♗f6 speculating with White's queen placing, by playing ...♗d8), the drawback of playing f4 would be clear. Everything depends on the assessment of the line 24 ♖c3 ♖b4 25 ♗c1 (25 ♗b2 d5!) 25...♙xc3 26 ♗xc3 ♖xa2, when White gets some counterplay.

b) Black does better to play 23...♗a6 24 ♖c3 a4!?, hoping to meet 25 b4 with 25...♗e6 26 ♖xa4 (otherwise follows ...d5 or ...♖b6 and ...d5) 26...♗a8, when the position is extremely complex; e.g.:

b1) 27 ♖b2 ♗xa2 28 b5 cxb5 29 ♙xa8 ♗xa8.

b2) 27 ♖c3 ♗xc4 28 b5 (28 a4 ♖b6!? 29 a5 ♖d5 favours Black, as does 28 ♗f2 ♗a3 or 28 ♗fc1 ♙xc3!) 28...cxb5 29 ♙xa8 b4 with enough compensation for Black.

23...♙xc3 24 ♖xc3 ♗a6 (D)



According to Bronstein, it is better to bring the queen to a more active square, such as b4. This seems true. I also feel that Geller didn't want to take any unnecessary risk and he carries out the 'demolition work' patiently.

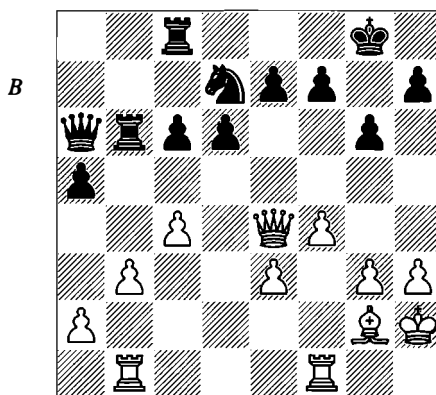
25 b3 ♗b6

Geller is going to put his rooks on the b-file, thereby strengthening the break with ...a4 even more.

26 ♖e4 ♖xe4

Otherwise the white knight would go to g5, cooperating in the attack.

27 ♗xe4 (D)



27...♗e8?!

Without a doubt, this was the right moment to reply to a flank attack with a counterattack in the centre, by means of 27...e6! 28 g4 d5. This presses on c4 and makes the advance of the a-pawn easier. Geller, in his eagerness not to create weaknesses, begins to play in a somewhat passive way.

28 f5! ♖e5 29 f6!

While Geller trusted the defensive power of the knight, Najdorf's tactical ability enables him to create new entry points. The purposeful advance of the f-pawn may seem a hopeless resource, but a careful analysis of the position shows the opposite. White's tactical chances end up being surprising.

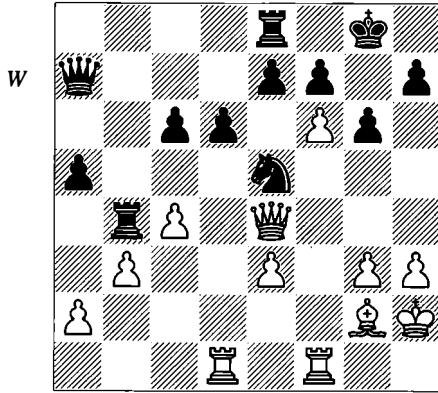
29...♗a7

The queen comes back to the fight for the dark squares, once the fianchettoed bishop has disappeared. The defence of d6 is another argument justifying this move.

30 ♗bd1 ♗b4?! (D)

This error was based on an excess of optimism. Black is not ready to carry out the thematic advance 30...a4 yet because of the blow 31 c5, very typical of the fierce attack White has rushed on Black's central pawns. It was

more likely to bring the queen to the defence of the d6-pawn.



**31 ♖d4!?**

It is not too simple to state whether this move is a good idea. White provokes ...c5, which means that he can use the d5-square, but Black also benefits from this in some ways. Playing ...c5 puts this pawn on a dark square, out of reach of the white bishop; Black's queen's rook is able to defend d6 and White can now no longer play the manoeuvre ♖d4-h4. The one thing we can say for sure is that Najdorf's follow-up to this move, bringing the queen directly to h4, fails to justify it.

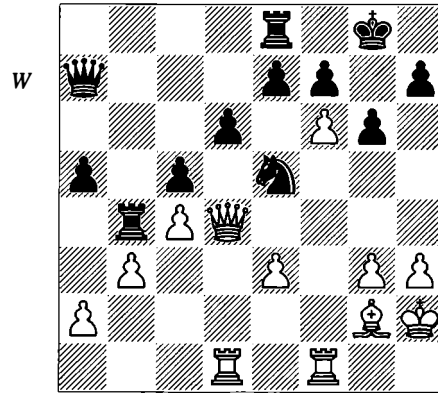
31 ♖f4 ♖c7 32 ♖h6! exf6 33 ♖xf6 ♖d8 34 ♖d4 seems to me a very interesting alternative, since White has good practical chances in a certainly atypical position. Black's best option would be 34...♖e7! (continuing the attack on b3 would be suicide: 34...a4? 35 ♖h4 followed by 36 ♖xh7+ ♔f8 37 ♖e6!) 35 ♖h4 ♔g7! (parrying the threats ♖fxd6 and c5) 36 ♖fxd6 ♖xh4 37 g4 ♖xd6 38 ♖xd6 a4! and although theoretically speaking Black can aim to get some advantage, White should not have difficulties in reaching a draw.

**31...c5 (D)**

Black acquiesces, and allows White to use the d5-square.

**32 ♖h4?**

This placement of the queen fails to make use of the concession that White has been granted. 32 ♖f4! is the critical line. This move creates the same threat as in the game but also hits the black knight, so that the threatened



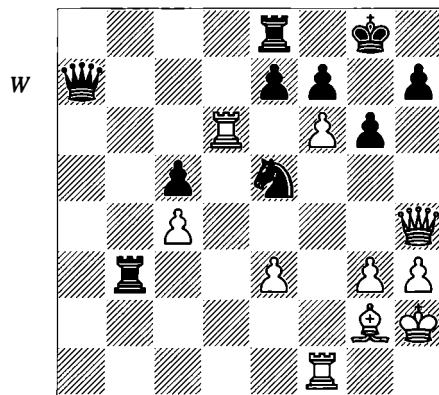
♖xd6 would in turn threaten ♖xe5. Therefore, Black should take steps against this by playing 32...♖c7 33 ♖h6 exf6 34 ♖xf6, and now:

a) Not 34...♖d8?, which is too passive, and allows 35 ♖d5 a4 36 ♖df1, when after 36...♖d7? 37 ♖6f4! White wins by force.

b) 34...a4 is necessary, so as to open lines and gain counterplay against the white king as quickly as possible. After the continuation 35 ♖fxd6 axb3 36 axb3 ♖xb3 37 ♖f4 the position remains unclear, but Black should certainly be OK.

These lines show the strong point of White's 31st move, getting a good square for the bishop on d5 by provoking ...c5. In my view, this was White's last chance. After the text-move, Geller's plan can be completed safely.

**32...a4 33 ♖xd6!? axb3 34 axb3 ♖xb3 (D)**



Strategically, Black's plan has ended successfully. Najdorf, in his desire to get counterplay, has weakened his whole pawn-structure, and as

a consequence he cannot even aim to play an ending.

35 fxe7 ♖xe7 36 ♗xe7 ♜xe7 37 ♕d5?

White should occupy the d5-square with the rook and get rid of the c5-pawn, in order to play an ending with two pawns against three on the same flank. In spite of the passivity to which the white pieces are doomed, there would be some drawing chances.

37...♜xe3 38 ♜d8+ ♔g7 39 ♜c8 ♝d3 40 ♜a8 ♜e2+ 41 ♔g1 ♜d2 42 ♜a1 ♝b4 0-1

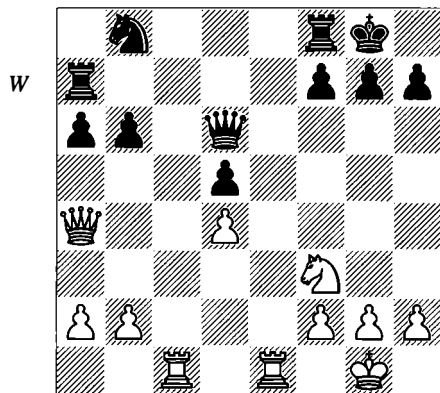
A rather surprising resignation. After 43 ♕f3 (43 ♕g2 ♜e3) 43...♝c2! (White can fight on following 43...♜e3 44 ♜ac1) 44 ♜a2 (preventing ...♝d4; 44 ♜ac1 ♝d4 45 ♜f2 ♜d3! is conclusive) 44...♜e1! White faces very serious problems.

I have always been captivated by Botvinnik's impressive display in his game versus Alekhine in the AVRO tournament of 1938. Black had no obvious weaknesses, but White enjoyed the absolute control of a file and he used it to decide the game with masterly technique.

### Botvinnik – Alekhine

Amsterdam AVRO 1938

1 ♝f3 d5 2 d4 ♝f6 3 c4 e6 4 ♝c3 c5 5 cxd5 ♝xd5 6 e3 ♝c6 7 ♕c4 cxd4 8 exd4 ♜e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜e1 b6?! 11 ♝xd5 exd5 12 ♜b5 ♕d7? 13 ♗a4 ♝b8 14 ♕f4 ♜xb5 15 ♗xb5 a6 16 ♗a4 ♕d6 17 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 18 ♜ac1 ♜a7 (D)



19 ♗c2

Beginning to use the c-file. From now on this file will be the base of White's operations.

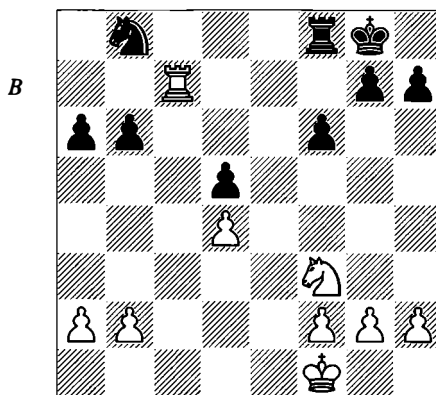
19...♜e7

19...f6 20 ♗f5.

20 ♜xe7 ♗xe7 21 ♗c7!

Since Black's queen is his only active piece, it is good for White to exchange queens to reach an advantageous ending where he has an advantage due to the activity of his rook in comparison with its black counterpart. Even so, this doesn't seem to be important enough to win the game.

21...♗xc7 22 ♜xc7 f6 23 ♔f1 (D)



Black doesn't have entry points along the e-file, so that the advantage of the white rook is unquestionable, since it is ruling the only accessible file.

23...♜f7 24 ♜c8+ ♜f8 25 ♜c3!

White wants to keep rooks and the control of the c-file at any cost. The accuracy of Botvinnik's actions is impressive.

25...g5?!

This exposes the kingside and creates a new weakness. However, this mistake is understandable, because Black is suffocated and entirely passive. 25...♝d7 and 25...♔f7 are both better.

26 ♝e1

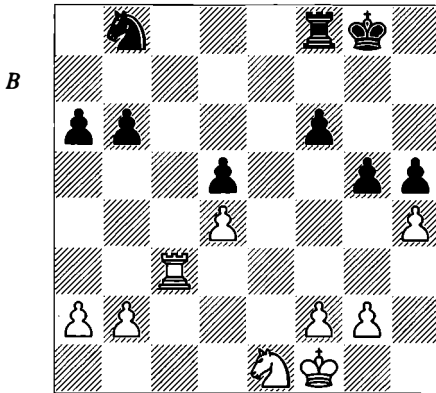
Recycling the knight towards a better posting, such as e3, attacking d5.

26...h5

26...h6 27 ♝c2 ♔f7 28 ♝e3 ♔e6 29 g4.

27 h4!! (D)

The deepest move in the whole game. The c-file is not enough to win and it is necessary to



get another attacking point (the principle of two weaknesses) so that Black cannot concentrate just on the defence of a single weakness.

27...♖d7

27...♗f7 28 hxg5 fxg5 29 ♖f3 ♗f6 30 ♖e5.

28 ♖c7 ♖f7 29 ♖f3

Forcing the g-pawn to advance, weakening Black's kingside completely. White thus gets points for the blockading knight and targets in the weak kingside pawns.

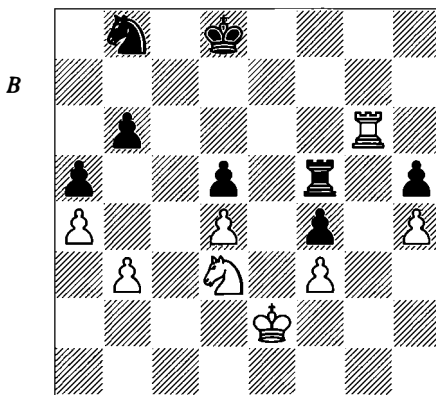
29...g4 30 ♖e1 f5 31 ♖d3 f4 32 f3

Fixing the weakness on f4.

32...gxf3 33 gxf3 a5 34 a4 ♗f8 35 ♖c6 ♗e7 36 ♗f2 ♖f5 37 b3 ♗d8 38 ♗e2

White keeps improving the position of his pieces. He will soon be ready to start picking up the weak pawns.

38...♖b8 39 ♖g6! (D)



Not allowing any sort of counterplay. The rook has played its role on the c-file and now is going to take some pawns.

39...♗c7 40 ♖e5 ♖a6 41 ♖g7+ ♗c8 42 ♖c6 ♖f6 43 ♖e7+ ♗b8 44 ♖xd5

The pawns have begun to fall.

44...♖d6 45 ♖g5 ♖b4 46 ♖xb4 axb4 47 ♖xh5 ♖c6 48 ♖b5 ♗c7 49 ♖xb4 ♖h6 50 ♖b5 ♖xh4 51 ♗d3 1-0

This is an impressive example of how a slight advantage, in this case the control of a file, can lead to victory in spite of the fact that Black hasn't made obvious mistakes.

But in modern chess it is rare that a side gets a major static advantage without any compensating factors. The following example is very instructive. Gulko makes full use of his control of the c-file, evading all the obstacles his famous opponent puts in his path.

**Gulko – Karpov**

*Dos Hermanas 1994*

1 e4 c6

The Caro-Kann Defence is Karpov's favourite weapon, together with the Petroff Defence. His narrow repertoire makes it quite easy for opponents to prepare for him. He started to adopt this defence thanks to his analysts, Podgaets and Epishin, who have also used it.

2 d4 d5 3 e5

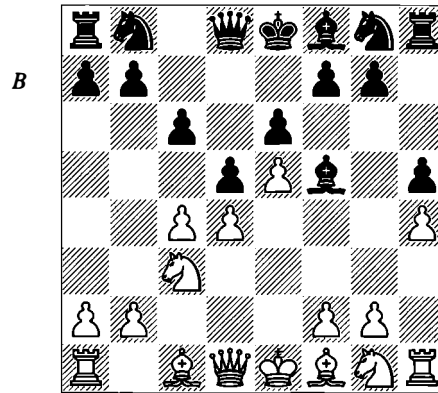
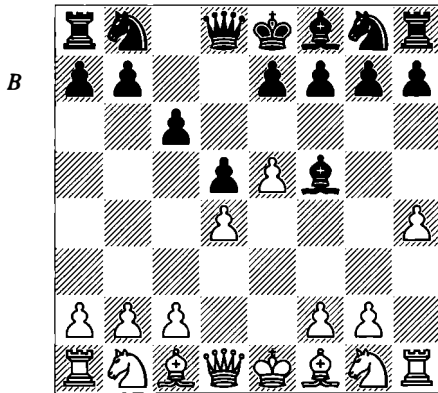
The Advance Variation has enjoyed intermittent popularity, mainly in its more dynamic version. The main shortcoming of this advance is that it allows Black's light-squared bishop to settle on an ideal square, f5. Its advantages are also obvious: a space advantage and tempi gained by attacking this bishop. It is a very sharp line, creating good tactical possibilities.

3...♗f5

Karpov, induced by Epishin and Khenkin's interesting results, has also experimented with the gambit 3...c5 4 dxc5 but its theoretical status has never been very clear.

4 h4!? (D)

The main line is 4 ♖c3 e6 (4...a6 is Karpov's recent idea against this aggressive set-up, waiting for White to define the set-up of his pieces) 5 g4 ♗g6 6 ♖ge2, popularized by Jan Timman and John Nunn in the 1980s, and also used by Alexei Shirov and Garry Kasparov recently, the latter to beat Karpov at Linares 2001.



#### 4...h5

4...h6 is the line Botvinnik used against Tal, in the rematch for the world championship in 1961. Botvinnik took advantage of his better strategic concept, that led to an overwhelming victory in the match, reducing the positions to 'frozen structures', as Lev Polugaevsky put it. The best reply is 5 g4! ♔d7 (5...♗h7 is met by 6 e6!) 6 h5 e6 7 c3 c5 8 f4 ♘c6 9 ♘f3, now considered advantageous for White, since Black's kingside can hardly be freed in a viable way, and the black king doesn't find a safe place in any part of the board. And where will the white king be located? This original idea is curious: 9...♚b6 10 ♘f2 ♜c8 11 ♘g3 leaves White better, thanks to his space advantage. The next step of the plan is to play a3 followed by b4.

#### 5 c4

White is playing in the centre, anticipating Black's typical counterplay based on ...e6 and ...c5 that would leave the initiative in Black's hands. Inserting the moves h4 and ...h5 seemingly favours White, because he can use the g5-square for his 'bad' bishop, and exploit the weakness of the h5-pawn to delay Black's castling, and even to create advantageous tactical situations. Black, on the other hand, will now get control of the d5-square (after a well-timed ...dxc4) and prepares to bring one of his knights there, thus controlling an important part of the board.

5...e6 6 ♘c3 (D)

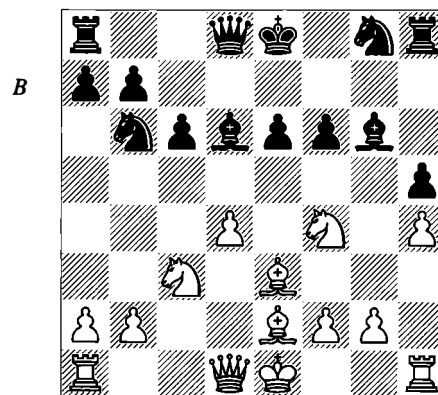
6...♗e7

A seemingly odd move. The bishop takes the natural place of the g8-knight, but it also prevents White from using the g5-square for his

bishop. The king's knight will eventually be developed to h6, but the h5-pawn needs to be well-protected first. Otherwise:

a) 6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 ♘d7 8 ♘ge2 and White can take advantage of the e4-square, where he is going to place a powerful knight.

b) The main line until the appearance of the text-move was 6...♘d7, as played in the model game Timman-Karpov, Linares 1992: 7 ♗g5 f6!? (a new dynamic approach, removing the wedge on e5) 8 exf6 gxf6 9 ♗e3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♘b6 (Black's control of d5 and the isolation of White's d-pawn compensate for the weaknesses that have appeared in Black's position after 7...f6) 11 ♗e2 ♗g6 12 ♘h3 ♗d6 13 ♘f4 (D).



13...♗xf4! 14 ♗xf4 ♘e7 (Black has equalized; he controls the weak points e6, f6, h5 perfectly, and exerts pressure on the squares d4 and d5) 15 ♚d2 ♘bd5 16 ♜d1 ♘f5 17 ♗d3 ♘f7 18 ♘e2 ♚e7 19 a3 ♜ad8 20 ♗g3 ♚f8 21 0-0 ♘fe7 22 ♗c4 ♗f5 23 ♜fe1 ♚h6 24 ♚a5 a6 25 ♘c3

♖h7 26 ♖d2 ♖hg8 27 ♖h2 ♖d7 28 ♖a4 ♖h6  
 29 ♖dd1 ♖gd8 30 ♖b3 ♖g4 31 f3 ♖f5 32 ♖e2  
 ♖g8 33 ♖e1 (intending ♖c5) 33...b6 34 ♖c3  
 ♖f4?! (leaving e6 weak) 35 ♖xf4 ♖xf4+ 36 g3  
 ♖d6 37 ♖e4 (37 ♖e3!) 37...♖c7 38 ♖c4 a5 39  
 ♖c1? (39 ♖xf6 =) 39...♖xd4! 40 ♖xf6? ♖xf6?  
 (40...♖xh4+ 41 ♖g1 ♖xg3+ 42 ♖f2 ♖g2+!  
 would have won for Black) 41 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 42  
 ♖xe6+ ♖g7 43 ♖f7+ ♖h6 (43...♖h8 44 ♖f6+  
 ♖h7 {44...♖g7 45 ♖h6+ ♖h7 46 ♖f8+} 45  
 ♖xg8+ ♖xg8 46 ♖xd4 +-) 44 ♖f6+ ♖g6 45  
 ♖xd4 +- and White won after a further 10  
 moves.

**7 cxd5**

This simplifying move doesn't guarantee an advantage. It hardly seems realistic to seek a refutation of Black's set-up, but if that is possible the move would have to be 7 ♖h3, to bring this knight to f4 and force Black to take action to protect h5. Black has an interesting reply in 7...♖g4!?

**7...cxd5**

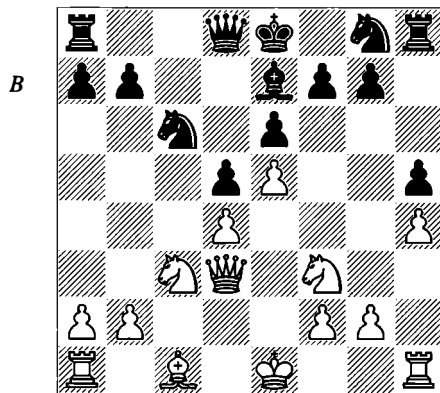
White's central majority would be strong after 7...exd5 8 g3 (8 ♖d3!? ♖xd3 9 ♖xd3 ♖xh4 10 ♖f3 ♖e7 11 e6) 8...♖d7 9 ♖d3 ♖xd3 10 ♖xd3 ♖f8.

**8 ♖d3!**

Gulko develops his pieces in a straightforward manner, hoping to profit from the 'operating centre' on g5 and the uncomfortable set-up of the black pieces once he has played ...♖e7.

The alternatives are 8 ♖f3?! ♖g4! and the more interesting 8 ♖g5!?

**8...♖xd3 9 ♖xd3 ♖c6 10 ♖f3 (D)**



**10...♖b4?!**

This was a critical moment of the game. The text-move doesn't belong to a plan; it tries to delay a decision while awaiting the course of events. Karpov doesn't have a clear plan and seems to be uncomfortable. The natural line is 10...♖h6 11 ♖xh6 ♖xh6 12 g3, but Black would lose his castling rights and his king's rook would take a while to return to play.

10...♖b4 is interesting, continuing with the logical development of the knight.

**11 ♖e2**

11 ♖b5+ ♖d7 12 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 would be very welcome for Black.

**11...♖c8 12 0-0 ♖c6 13 g3 ♖d7**

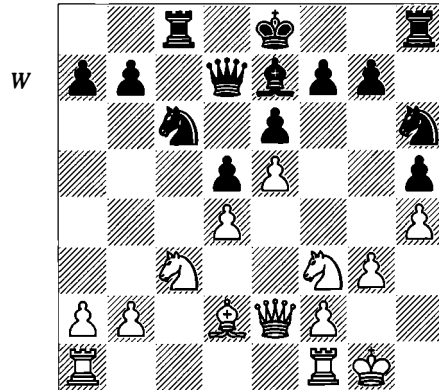
13...♖h6 14 ♖xh6 ♖xh6 15 ♖ac1 ±.

**14 ♖d2!**

White is playing accurately, trying to impede Black's plans. If 14 ♖e3, then 14...♖b4! 15 ♖ac1 ♖ge7 =.

**14...♖h6 (D)**

Black is trying to play ...♖f5 to exert pressure on d4. 14...♖b4? fails to 15 ♖b5!.



**15 ♖xh6!**

White loses a tempo, but it is well worth it. He exchanges off his 'bad' bishop, and could on no account let the black knight reach f5, where it would be superbly located, pressing on White's Achilles' Heel in these positions (something similar happens in the French): the d4-pawn. He also gets a good reward in return for the bishop; Black will be very slow to connect his forces, and they will also lack counter-play, without a clear plan in sight.

This situation is very unpleasant for the defender, because even in the happiest situation

he cannot aspire to get the whole point. White's psychological situation is very different: he knows that he can build his position little by little, without any danger. Instead 15 ♖ac1? ♜f5 16 ♗d3 0-0 is a shade better for Black.

### 15...♞xh6 16 ♖ac1

It is logical for White to exert pressure on the queenside, trying to win control of the disputed c-file.

### 16...♜f8

16...♞g6!? 17 a3 ♞g4 and now rather than 18 ♖fd1 g5 ∞ 19 hxg5 h4 (19...♙xg5 20 ♜xg5 ♞xg5 21 ♜b5 ♜f8 22 ♗e3 ♞g6 23 ♜d6) 20 ♜xh4 ♞xd4, White should play 18 ♗d3!, keeping the advantage and avoiding complications.

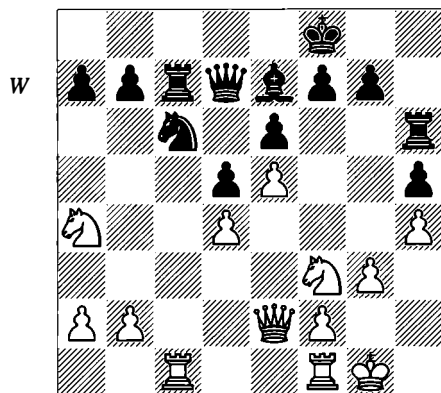
### 17 ♜a4

White begins a standard plan: doubling rooks on the c-file, followed by a3, b4-b5 in order to win the gain absolute control. Meanwhile Black can do little.

17 a3 is another option, suggested by Ftačnik, with the idea of b4.

### 17...♞c7 (D)

### 17...♜g8.



### 18 ♞c3 ♞g6

Karpov tries to counterattack. It is clear that he should try to worry White's forces by pressing on d4.

An attempt to castle 'by hand' is too slow and ponderous to counteract White's initiative on the c-file: 18...g6 19 ♖fc1 ♜g7 20 a3 ♞h8 21 b4 (21 ♜c5 ♙xc5 22 ♞xc5 ♞hc8 23 ♗e3 a6 24 ♞lc2 b6 25 ♞5c3 ♜a5) 21...♞hc8 22 ♗c2 b5 (22...♙d8 23 ♜c5) 23 ♜c5 ♙xc5 24 ♞xc5 with a clear advantage for White.

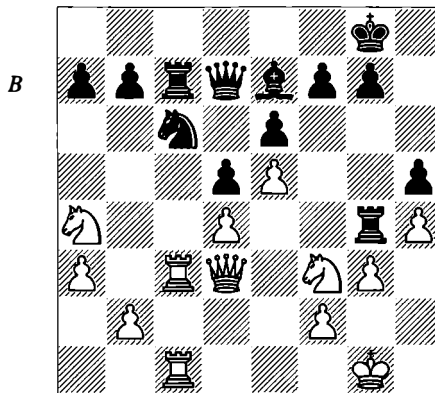
### 19 ♖fc1 ♞g4

Black exerts pressure on d4, and puts his rook in action.

### 20 ♗d3 ♜g8

Preventing the unpleasant move ♗h7. If 20...♞e4, then 21 ♜c5 ♙xc5 22 ♞xc5 f6 23 b4! ♜xb4 (23...b6 24 ♞5c2 ♜xb4 25 ♗a3) 24 ♗a3 ♞xc5 25 ♗xb4 b6 26 ♗a3 winning.

### 21 a3 (D)



With the unpleasant threat of b4-b5.

### 21...f6

Karpov attempts to destabilize White's central bastion before he takes possession of the c-file.

### 22 ♜c5

After 22 b4 fxe5 the threat of ...e4 prevents b5 for the time being. Therefore, after 23 dxe5 d4 24 ♞3c2 ♗d5 Black would get counterplay on the light squares.

### 22...♙xc5

It is possible to wait patiently with the submissive retreat 22...♗c8, but the complications after 23 ♜xb7! are in White's favour: 23...♗xb7 24 ♗c2 fxe5 25 ♞xc6 ± ♞xc6 26 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 27 ♞xc6 exd4 28 ♞xe6 ♞e4 (28...♙f6 29 ♞d6 d3 30 b4 ♞c4 31 ♞xd5 ♞c3 32 a4 ±) 29 ♞xe4 (29 ♞a6 ♙c5 30 ♞a5 ♙b6 31 ♞xd5 ♞e2) 29...dxe4 30 ♜xd4 ♙f6 31 ♜b5 (31 ♜b3 ♙xb2 32 a4 ♜f7 33 ♜c5 ♜f6 34 ♜xe4+ ♜e5) 31...♙xb2 32 a4 a5 33 ♜d6 ♜f8 34 ♜xe4 ♜e7 35 ♜f1 ♜e6 36 ♜e2 ♜d5 37 ♜d3.

### 23 ♞xc5 ♗f7

The queen is planning to go to the kingside, defending the e6- and f6-pawns. It also allows the rook to move to another file, freeing the

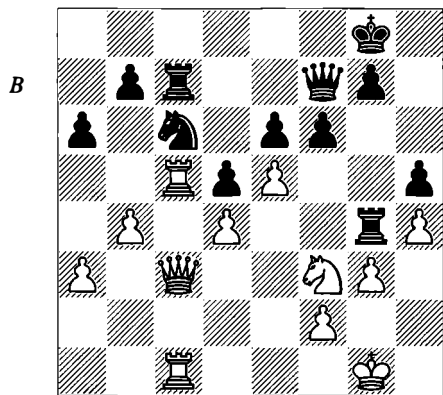
knight, and keeping the second rank secure. This way, Karpov finally resigns himself and abandons the control of the c-file: a small strategic surrender. The attempt to transfer this rook to the f-file (a part of his plan with ...f6) fails due to the weaknesses in Black's kingside, which are clearly exposed: 23...♖c8 24 b4 a6 25 a4 ♜f8 26 b5 axb5 27 axb5 ♘a5 28 ♖c7 (28 exf6 ♘c4 29 ♘e5 ♘xe5 30 dxe5) 28...♗d8 29 ♖c8! (29 ♘g5 fxg5 30 ♗g6) 29...♗xc8 (29...♗b6 30 ♜xf8+ ♝xf8 31 ♖c8+ ♝f7 32 ♗h7) 30 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 31 ♗a3! (the queen penetrates Black's camp in a decisive way, in search of the weak central pawns) 31...♘c4 32 ♗e7 ±.

23...fxe5 is met by 24 ♘e5 and after the surrender of the black bishop the total control of the position exerted by White is clear.

**24 b4 a6**

After 24...fxe5 25 ♘e5 ♘xe5 26 dxe5 ♖xc5 27 ♖xc5 Black's position remains chaotic. The rook endings are lost and the mating-nets pile up with the f4-rook misplaced and offside.

**25 ♗c3 (D)**



White triples on the c-file and supports the advance with a4 and b5.

**25...♗d7?!**

This was a critical moment. Black can try the active 25...♗g6!?:

a) 26 a4 b6! 27 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 28 ♗xc6 ♖xg3+ with perpetual check.

b) 26 exf6 ♗xf6 27 ♝g2 ♖f7 28 ♖d1 with a steady advantage for White.

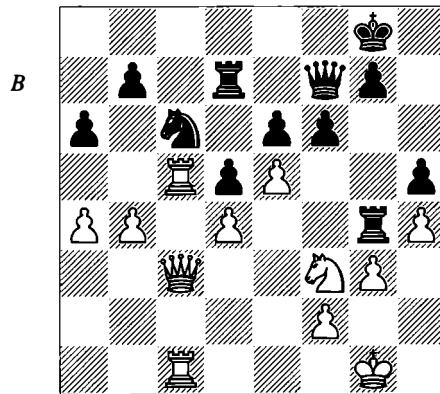
c) 26 ♝g2 ♖f7 27 exf6 ♖xf6 (27...♗xf6 transposes to variation 'b'; 27...gxf6 28 ♖xc6 bxc6 29 ♗xc6 ♖e4 and now 30 ♗xa6 ± is better

than 30 ♗e8+ ♝g7 31 ♖c8 ♗h7, with only a slight advantage for White) and then:

c1) 28 ♖xc6 bxc6 29 ♘e5 ♗e4+ 30 f3 ♗e2+ 31 ♝h3 ♖e4! 32 fxe4 ♖f2 33 ♖h1 ♖h2+ 34 ♖xh2 ♗f1+ with a draw.

c2) 28 ♘g5! ♖xg5 29 hxg5 ♗e4+ 30 ♝gl ♘xd4 (30...♖f3 31 ♗e1 ♗xe1+ {31...♖xa3 32 ♗xe4 dxe4 33 g6 ♝f8 34 ♖e1 ±} 32 ♖xe1 ♘xd4 33 g6 +-) 31 ♖c8+ ♝f7 (31...♝h7 32 gxf6 ♘e2+ 33 ♝h2 ♘c3 34 f7) 32 ♖c7+ (32 ♗c7+ ♝g6 33 gxf6 ♘f3+ 34 ♝g2 ♘d2+ =) 32...♝g6 33 gxf6 (33 ♖xg7+ ♝xg7 34 gxf6+ is unclear) 33...♘e2+ 34 ♝h2 ♘c3 35 fxg7 ♝h7 36 ♖1xc3 ±.

**26 a4 (D)**



**26...♘e7**

26...♗g6 27 b5 axb5 28 axb5 ♘e7 and now, rather than 29 ♖c8+ ♝h7 (29...♘c8 30 ♗xc8+ ♝h7 31 ♘h2 ♖xg3+ {31...♖e7 32 ♘g4 hxg4 33 ♖e1 ±} 32 fxg3 ♗xg3+ 33 ♝h1 ♗xh4 34 ♖f1) 30 ♖a8 ♖c7, White should play 29 ♖a1!.

**27 ♘h2**

27 ♖c7 is very appealing, to start pressing along the second rank, since 27...♖xc7 doesn't work: 28 ♗xc7 ♗g6 (28...♘c6 29 ♖xc6 bxc6 30 ♗xc6) 29 ♘h2! (29 ♗e7 ♖xg3+ 30 fxg3 ♗xg3+ is a draw) 29...♖xg3+ (29...♘f5 30 ♘xg4 ♗xg4 31 exf6 gxf6 32 ♗c8+) 30 fxg3 ♗xg3+ (30...♘f5 31 exf6) 31 ♝h1 ♗xh4 32 ♖f1 +-. Black can offer more resistance by 27...♗e8 28 exf6 gxf6 29 ♗e3 ♘f5 30 ♖c8 ♘xe3 31 ♖xe8+ ♝f7, or even 27...♘f5. Gulko prefers to avoid surprises and with a prophylactic move he is able to make sure that the black queen will be in a passive situation for a while.

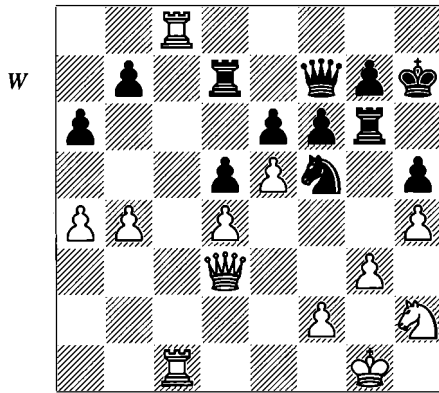
27...♖g6

27...♖e4 28 f3 ♖e2 29 ♖d3 followed by ♖c8+, winning.

28 ♖d3!?

White prefers to keep his queen like a guard-ian in the centre of the board, while the rooks conduct operations on the c-file. He threatens to invade the seventh rank.

28...♗f5 29 ♖c8+ ♔h7 (D)



30 ♔h1

White prevents a capture on h4.

30...♗h6?

Useful moves never come to mind when short of time. Besides, these moves possibly don't exist. After 30...♖e7 White has more than one way to increase the pressure:

a) 31 ♖e2 ♗xd4 32 ♖xh5+ ♖h6 33 exf6 ♖xh5 34 fxg7 ♖xe7.

b) 31 exf6 gxf6 32 ♖e2 ♗g7.

c) 31 ♖d1!? ♖h6 (31...fxe5 32 ♗f3 exd4 33 ♗e5 ♖d8 with compensation) 32 ♗f3 ♖xb4 33 exf6 gxf6 34 ♗g5+ fxg5 35 hxg5 e5 (35...♖g6 36 ♖xh5+ ♗h6 37 ♖g8!) 36 gxh6 ♖xd4 37 ♖xd4 (37 ♖xh5 ♖xf2 38 ♖g8 ♗xg3+ 39 ♖xg3 ♖xg3) 37...♗xd4 38 ♖c7 ♖xc7 39 ♖xc7+ ♔xh6 40 ♖xb7 +-.

d) 31 b5! axb5 32 axb5 ♖b4 33 ♗f3 ± ♖g4 34 ♖b1 ♖xd4 (34...♖a4? 35 exf6 gxf6 36 ♖e1 ♔g7 37 ♖xe6 ♗xd4 38 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 39 ♖f5 +-) 35 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 36 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 37 exf6 gxf6 38 b6.

31 ♖1c2?

Gulko has spent much of the game manoeuvring, but now he had a golden opportunity to take advantage of Karpov's mistake. He needed to

look to the kingside: 31 g4! is very strong, exploiting the pinned rook:

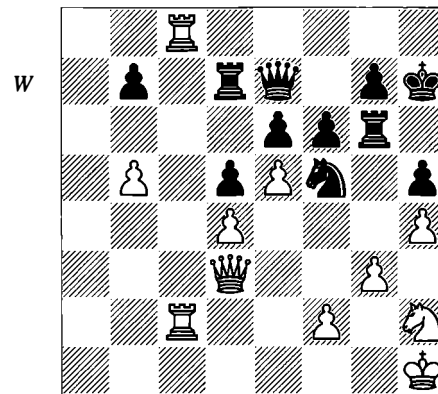
a) 31...f5 32 gxh5 (32 g5 ♗g4 33 ♗xg4 fxg4 34 ♖1c2 ±) 32...♖g4 33 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 34 ♖g3 ♖xh5 35 ♖1c7 +-.

b) 31...♗xg4 32 ♗xg4 f5 33 ♗h2 ♖e7 34 ♗f3 ♖xb4 35 ♗g5+.

31...♗f5 32 b5

This advance, sooner or later, was necessary to make progress. White threatens to get to b6 and play ♖c7, with crushing effect. If 32 ♗f3, then 32...♗e7.

32...axb5 33 axb5 ♖e7 (D)



This move comes somewhat late, but the attempt to activate the queen and put pressure on d4 and b5 is logical and natural.

34 ♖2c5

A little misstep in a critical stage of the game. Instead:

a) 34 ♖d1 is interesting, though not too clear: 34...fxe5 (34...♖h6 35 b6!) 35 dxe5 ♗xh4 (35...d4 36 ♖xh5+ ♖h6 37 ♖e8) 36 gxh4 ♖xh4 37 b6 (37 ♖d3 ♖g5) 37...♖e4+ 38 f3 ♖xe5 39 ♖8c7 ♖d6 40 ♖xb7 ♖g3.

b) White should complete his former plan with 34 b6! ♖b4 35 ♖2c7 ♖e1+ 36 ♗f1! (36 ♖f1? ♖e4+ 37 ♔g1? ♗xg3 +-; 36 ♔g2? ♗xh4+ 37 ♔h3 ♖xf2 +-), and then:

b1) 36...♖xc7 37 bxc7 ♖xf2 (37...♖c1 38 ♖e8 ♖xc7 39 ♖xe6 ♗h6 40 ♗e3) 38 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 39 c8♖+ ♔h7 40 ♖xe6 ♗xh4 41 ♖h3 +-.

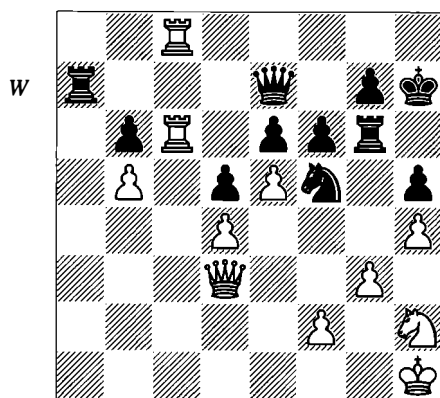
b2) 36...♖g4 37 ♖xd7 ♖xd4 38 ♖f3 ♖xf1+ 39 ♔h2 ♔g6 40 ♖g8 ♖g4 41 exf6 ♔xf6 42 ♖f8+ ♔g6 43 ♖xf5.

b3) 36... ♖xf2 37 ♜xd7 ♜xh4 38 ♜c2! also wins for White.

34...b6

34...fxe5 35 dxe5 would enable the knight to reach g5.

35 ♜5c6 ♜a7! (D)



Finally, the rook sees the exit of the tunnel.

36 ♜f3 ♜a3

Forcing the exchange of queens is insufficient: 36... ♖a3 37 ♖xa3 (37 ♖e2 ♜xg3 38 ♜h2 doesn't appear very healthy for White) 37... ♜xa3 38 ♜g2 ♜xf3 (38... ♜a2 39 ♜f1) 39 ♜xf3 ♜xd4+ 40 ♜g2! (40 ♜e3 ♜xc6 41 bxc6 ♜g4 42 exf6 gxf6 43 ♜e8 ♜c4 44 ♜xe6 ♜g6 45 ♜d6 d4+ 46 ♜d3 ♜c1 47 c7 ♜xc7 48 ♜xb6 ♜f5 49 ♜xd4) 40... ♜xc6 41 bxc6 ♜g4 42 f4 +-.

37 ♖d1 ♜g4?

More stubborn is 37... ♜a2 38 exf6 ♖xf6, when White should hurry to win the exchange by 39 ♜g5+ (39 ♜c2 ♜a3 {39... ♜a4 40 ♜b8} 40 ♜g5+ {40 ♜e5 ♖xh4+} 40... ♜xg5 41 hxg5 ♖xg5) 39... ♜xg5 40 hxg5 ♖xg5 41 ♜c2 ±.

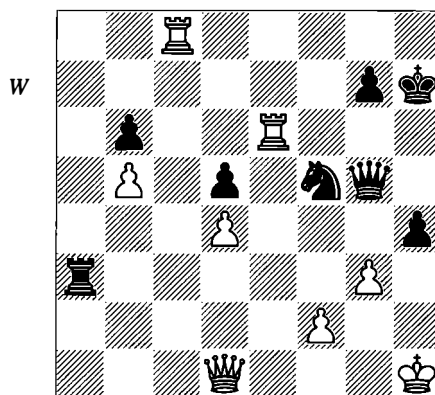
38 exf6 ♖xf6

38...gxf6 39 ♜8c7 +-.

39 ♜g5+ ♜xg5

39... ♜g6 40 ♜xe6 +-.

40 hxg5 ♖xg5 41 ♜xe6 h4 (D)



42 ♜ee8!

42 ♜xb6?? hxg3 43 fxg3 ♜xg3+ 44 ♜h2 ♜e4 -+; 42 g4? ♖f4! is unclear.

42...hxg3 43 ♜h8+ ♜g6 44 f4!

With this move White stops Black's offensive while creating his own threats, with the entry of the queen via h5. 44 fxg3? ♜xg3+ 45 ♜h2 ♜a2+ 46 ♜h3 ♜a3 keeps Black in the game.

44... ♜e3

There is no good defence. If 44... ♖xf4, then 45 ♖h5+ ♜f6 46 ♜hf8+ ♜e7 47 ♖f7+ ♜d6 48 ♜fd8#, while 44...g2+ is met by 45 ♜g1 ♜e3 46 ♜c6+ ♜f7 47 fxg5 ♜xd1 48 g6+ ♜e7 49 ♜xg2 +-.

45 ♜c6+ ♜f7 46 fxg5 ♜xd1 47 g6+ ♜e7 48 ♜g2!

Avoiding the last trap: 48 ♜g8? ♜e3 49 ♜xg7+ ♜d8 50 ♜gc7 ♜a2 with perpetual check.

48... ♜e3+ 49 ♜xg3 ♜f5+ 50 ♜f4 ♜xd4 51 ♜xb6 ♜e6+ 52 ♜e5 ♜e3+ 53 ♜xd5 ♜e1 54 ♜xe6+ 1-0

54... ♜xe6 55 ♜e8+ ♜xe8 56 ♜xe6 +-.

# 10 Positional Exchange Sacrifices

The 'positional exchange sacrifice' is a topic with many practical examples. Its extreme complexity and the impossibility of a methodical study make this point one of the most difficult in our game. Of all the positional factors that have an impact on this topic, the most important is normally the pawn-structure. Typically one gives up an exchange to cause weaknesses and/or positional disorder. Any defender of the Sicilian Defence will no doubt have had the opportunity to make an exchange sacrifice for a white knight on c3. The resulting chaos is obvious: isolation of the white pawns, together with strong pressure on White's e-pawn.

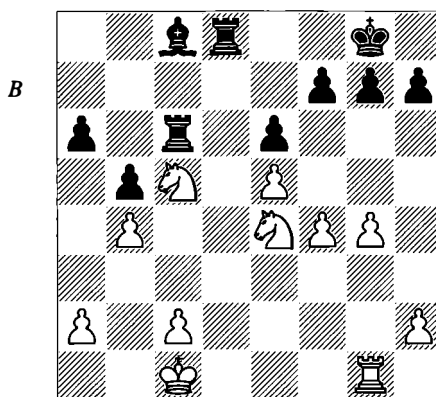
The effect of this kind of sacrifice, *a priori*, doesn't depend so much on the nature of the position: closed, semi-closed or open. It can be broadly stated that compensation will be greater when the opponent's major pieces have less mobility, or have difficulties becoming active due to the lack of open files, and our minor piece displays its best qualities.

What sort of minor piece is most effective against a rook? There are no general answers, but a strongly centralized knight, unopposed by another piece of the same or smaller value, or a knight that supports a direct offensive on a weakened king, is often a sign that the exchange sacrifice is justified.

In the following diagram, we see the excellent coordination of a pair of knights fighting against a rook and a 'bad' bishop. The compensation is clearly based on the superb squares d6 and c5, the little scope of the rooks and the permanent weakness a6 hindering the activity of the bishop.

Alternatively, two strong and well-coordinated bishops might end up overpowering a rook and knight.

The exchange sacrifice that Dolmatov makes in the following game is very instructive. We might even say that the whole assessment of the



**de la Villa – M. Gomez**  
*Portugalete 1986*

opening is based on this positional sacrifice, which dramatically alters the character of the game.

**Martin Gonzalez – Dolmatov**  
*Barcelona 1983*

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♙b4 4 ♗e2!?**

This unusual line came into fashion after enjoying some success in games continuing 4...dxe4 5 a3 and now 5...♙xc3+ 6 ♗xc3 ♗c6 7 ♙b5 or 5...♙e7 6 ♗xe4 ♗f6 7 ♖d3! followed by ♙f4 and 0-0-0.

**4...♗f6**

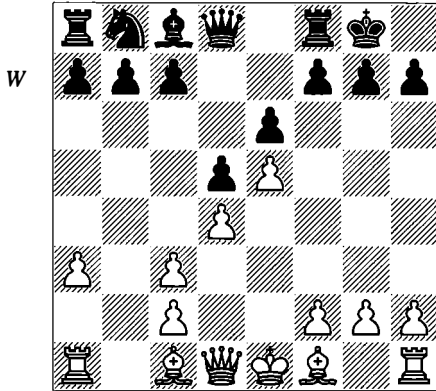
One of the ideas behind this move is the direct threat on e4 in case White plays 5 a3, forcing Black to make a decision. After 5...♙xc3+ 6 ♗xc3 ♗xe4 7 ♗xe4 (7 ♖g4 0-0 8 ♗xe4 f5!) 7...dxe4 the task of recovering the pawn is complicated.

**5 e5 ♗e4 6 a3 ♗xc3 7 ♗xc3**

In the game Cuartas-de la Villa, Villajoyosa 1981, White played 7 bxc3. White weakens his pawn-structure without Black having to give up his dark-squared bishop, but he seeks to transfer the knight to f4 and to begin hostilities

against Black's kingside. The game continued 7...♗e7 8 ♘f4 c5! 9 ♖g4 g6 10 h4! h5 (fixing the white pawn on h4 and removing the queen from the defence of d4) 11 ♖g3 ♘c6 with a large advantage for Black.

7...♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 0-0 (D)



9 ♖h5(!)

This move openly declares his intentions, and is probably not best. In the event of 9 ♗d3 f5, 10 exf6 (if not, there would follow 10...b6 and 11...♗a6, exchanging off White's 'good' bishop) 10...♖xf6 11 0-0 c5 allows Black a satisfactory position. According to the later development of the game, it seems interesting to play 10 g4, a similar plan to that of Martin, but without exposing the queen. Thereby we would be avoiding the bishop manoeuvre carried out by Dolmatov in the actual game.

9...f5

The f-pawn's advance is necessary, because Black doesn't have his king's knight any more.

10 g4

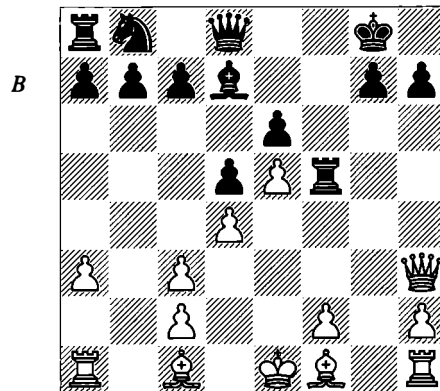
This is consistent with his previous move. Martin is playing in an excessively risky style, in my opinion. Given the total absence of defenders on Black's kingside, the idea of getting the g-file for the rook seems attractive, but only from a superficial approach.

White didn't assess well the consequences of weakening his pawn-structure, and this factor will be like a millstone around his neck for the rest of the game. My opinion is that moves like this should only be carried out when there are many factors justifying it.

10...♗d7!

The bishop arrives just in time to defend the king. The seemingly natural 10...b6, to counter 11 ♗d3 with 11...♗a6, doesn't work on account of the fine reply 11 ♗g5!. Then 11...♖e8 is met by 12 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 13 gxf5 exf5 14 ♗g2! followed by c4 eventually. This ending is very advantageous since White can activate the bishops not only with the break c4, but also with the advance of the h-pawn. Black could avoid the ending, but this involves a regression in his initial plan. After 11...♖d7 12 gxf5! (12 ♗d3 ♗a6 13 gxf5 ♗xd3! 14 fxe6 ♖xe6 15 cxd3 is bad for White, since both 15...c5 and 15...♖f5! leave Black with a very comfortable game) 12...♖xf5 13 ♗d3 ♖f7 14 ♖g4 ♘d7 (if 14...♖f3, 15 ♗f6!) 15 ♗xf5 exf5 16 ♖g3 c5 followed by the blockading manoeuvre ...♘f8-e6, it seems Black gets some compensation and is ready to defend his king properly, but this is not entirely true: the black bishop is not playing along its best diagonal, while White's attack, with the advance of the h-pawn, proceeds smoothly.

11 gxf5 ♖xf5 12 ♖h3 (D)



13...♗e8!

This is the fundamental idea behind Black's strategy. The bishop is going to g6, and Black will sacrifice the exchange if necessary by leaving the rook on f5 if it is attacked by White's light-squared bishop. In that case Black's bishop would rule the whole board. Another important detail relevant in most practical examples of exchange sacrifices is that the opponent's rooks lack useful files on which to develop their power.

13 ♗d3 ♗g6 14 ♖g1 ♖f8

Keeping control of f5. White was threatening 15 ♖xg6! hxg6 16 ♗xf5, with a fierce attack on Black's king.

15 ♗xf5

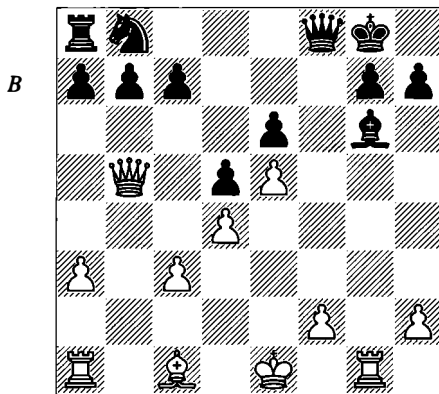
It is a pity that the typical break to activate the bishops, 15 c4, is unsuccessful. 15...dxc4? 16 ♗xc4 ♖f7 17 ♖b3! gives White a winning position, but Black has the far better 15...♗c6!.

15...♗c6!

Black has not only successfully transferred his queen's bishop to the kingside (and quite quickly), but he did it winning two tempi against the white queen.

16 ♖f3 ♗c6

An extremely cautious decision. Capturing the helpless c2-pawn by 16...♗xc2 would rekindle White's attacking ideas thanks to the queen manoeuvre 17 ♖e2 ♗g6 (17...♖f5 might appear to provide play on the light squares, but it opens new prospects for the white bishop: 18 ♗h6!) 18 ♖b5 (D).



This manoeuvre would make the development of the knight difficult if Black had to reply 18...b6, but that is unnecessary. After 18...♖c8 19 a4 ♗c6 20 a5 a6 21 ♖b3 (21 ♖c5 seems to put the queen on a good square, but must be rejected thanks to a tactical resource: 21...♗b8 22 ♗a2 b6! 23 ♖xc6? ♗e8!) 21...♗b8 22 ♖a4 (or 22 ♖a3), White rules out any ...♗xa5 ideas (from where the knight would head for c4), and can hold the position.

The other available move is 16...♗d7, with the same idea as in the game (to bring the knight to c4) and keeping the threat of hitting the centre with the classical break ...c5.

17 ♖e2

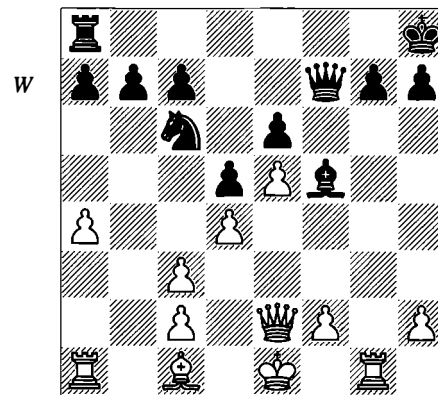
After 17 h4 ♗h8 the threats remain blocked and the white h-pawn will become a weakness.

17...♗h8 18 a4?!

White disobeys a classical principle, anxious to gain some breathing-room. In worse positions it is better not to provoke new weaknesses that in the long run may only favour the opponent. We have also seen that this axiom is difficult for a player to fulfil if he is under pressure. Still, it is better to play 18 f3 at once, followed by ♗f2.

18...♖f7! (D)

Avoiding all obstacles. After 18...♗a5 19 ♖b5 b6 20 ♖d7!! the white queen would infiltrate among the black pieces, hindering their coordination and causing a defensive rearrangement. In that case, the exchange of queens would not be advantageous to Black, as it leads to an ending that you could consider even. In the current position it is necessary to keep the queens. Black also avoided a more hidden possibility: 18...b6 19 ♗a3 ♖f7 20 ♗b4!, when the black knight can no longer reach c4.



19 a5?!

White is following his plan of giving the queen's rook some play along the a-file. However, this idea only favours Black, as it allows him to get a passed pawn. Once more, it seemed useful to prepare a place for the king, by means of 19 f3. On the other hand, the possibility 19 ♖b5 has lost its strength, since after 19...♗b8 20 a5 Black can strike on the light squares: 20...♗xc2! 21 a6 ♖f3! 22 ♗e3 bxa6! 23 ♖xc6? ♗d3.

**19...b6 20 axb6**

Maybe Martin's primary idea was to play 20 a6!? ♖a5 21 ♜xa5 bxa5. At first glance it seems really interesting from a positional point of view, since the bishop finally gets some play, and at the same time it can exert pressure on the important a7-pawn.

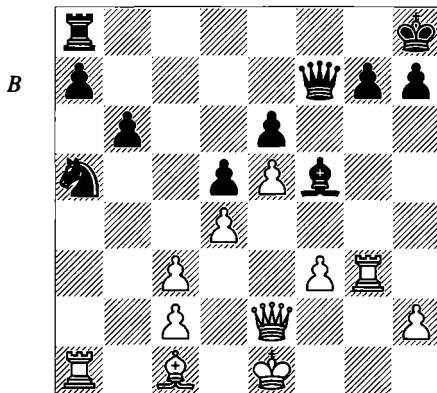
a) 22 ♙a3 ♜b8 (decisively entering via the b-file) 23 ♘d2 ♜d7! (intending ...♜a4) 24 ♙c5 ♜b2 25 ♜c1 a4! clearly shows that Black's a-pawn, supported by more pieces, could be faster.

b) White can prevent the black rook from playing an important role in the battle by 22 ♜b5!? though I believe Black's pieces are better arranged and generate rapid counterplay: 22...♙xc2 (looking for the d3-square) 23 ♜b7 ♜f8 24 ♙e3 ♙d3! (if 24...♜f3, then 25 ♘d2 ♜f5 26 ♜xc7!) 25 ♘d2 ♙c4 and White cannot take the a7-pawn yet, since 26...♜f5 would be very strong.

**20...cxb6 21 ♜g3 ♖a5 22 f3 (D)**

White secures his king position, though the damage is already done.

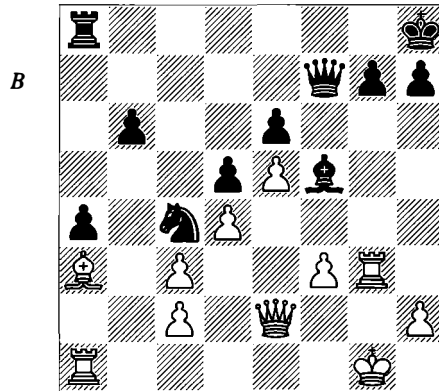
Again the possibility 22 ♜xa5 bxa5 arises but after 23 c4 dxc4 24 ♜xc4 ♜b7! the black queen makes its presence felt. Its entry via the light squares b1, h1 or e4 would be difficult to prevent.



**22...♖c4 23 ♘f2 a5 24 ♘g1 a4**

Another interesting plan is to support the advance of the b-pawn as far as b4, while exerting pressure on the c-file and, more specifically, the point c2. This would give White's queen's rook a useful file, so Dolmatov prefers a surer method.

**25 ♙a3 (D)**



**25...♙g6!**

The f5-square is essential for Black's set-up, and in fact, any black piece would be well placed on this square. The queen and bishop will now line up against c2, tying White down. However, the ultimate reason for this move is pressure on f3 and on the f-file, and the additional possibility of invading f4 with the queen.

**26 ♘f2 ♜f5 27 ♜a2 ♜a7!**

The possibility of exerting pressure down the f-file is not wasted. The black rook cannot reach f8, but the f7-square is available to it.

**28 ♙c1**

It is hard to say whether this move is forced. The only clear fact is that retreating his bishop has given Black a simple plan to penetrate White's fortress. The queen's entry via f4 has the subtle threat of confining the white rook. The sequence ...♖xa3, ♜xa3 ♜c1, ♜a2 ♜b1 isn't an illusion. For instance, after 28 ♘g1 ♜f4 29 ♜e1 ♖d2! the entry of the knight decides matters. The f3-pawn cannot be defended properly.

**28...h6**

A good prophylactic move, controlling the g5-square and giving the black king some *luft*.

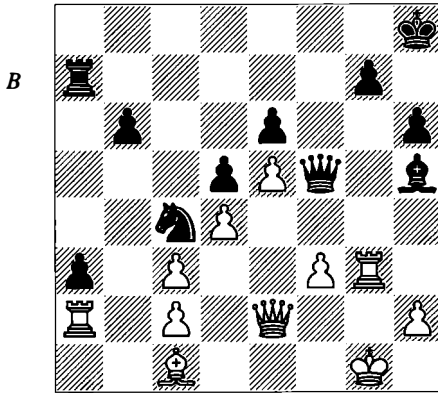
**29 ♘g1 a3 30 ♜g2 ♙h5 31 ♜g3 (D)**

**31...♜f8!**

Dolmatov reveals the last link of his chain. The queen defends the passed pawn, allowing the rook to move to the f-file.

**32 ♜h3 ♙g6 33 ♜g3 ♙f5**

33...♘h7 is met by 34 ♜g2, preventing the rook from reaching f5.



34 ♖g2 b5!?

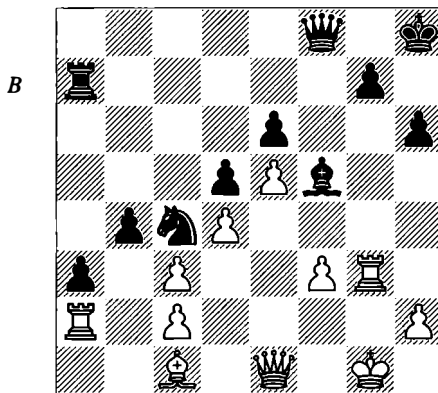
Planning ...b4 to penetrate White's position. Another good option is 34...♗e8 to enter via the light squares (a4 or b5). We have reached a point where Black has many good options but he must choose only one. Sometimes, this situation is not so comfortable.

35 ♗f2

The white queen would be perfectly located on e1, except that it would mean abandoning the defence of the vital point, as shown by 35 ♗f1? ♕xc2! 36 ♖xc2 a2. The same would happen in the event of 35 ♕d2.

35...b4 36 ♗e1 (D)

Martin relies on this defensive resource, hoping to activate his pieces.



36...♕xc2!

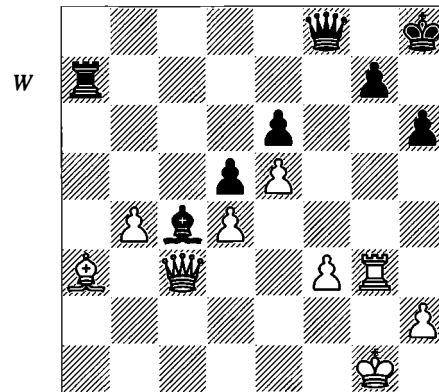
Black executes his strategy with the aid of a piece of tactics, securing hegemony on the light squares.

37 cxb4

If 37 ♖xc2, then 37...b3! (37...a2 isn't so decisive: 38 ♖xa2 ♖xa2 39 cxb4) 38 ♖cg2 b2! and Black will win.

37...♕b1 38 ♖a1?!

Possibly losing the last chance to prolong the agony. After 38 ♖xa3 ♘xa3 39 ♕xa3 ♕d3! (the seemingly conclusive 39...♖xa3 40 ♗xb1 ♗f4 turns out not to be: 41 ♗g6! ♗xd4+ 42 ♖g2 ♗xe5 43 ♗e8+ ♖h7 44 ♗g6+ with a draw by perpetual check) 40 ♗c3 ♕c4 (D) with a great advantage for Black, but White still has possibilities of getting a draw.



White, despite being a pawn ahead, has a remarkably passive bishop, and he must somehow try to counter Black's attempts to penetrate (e.g. ...♗f5-b1).

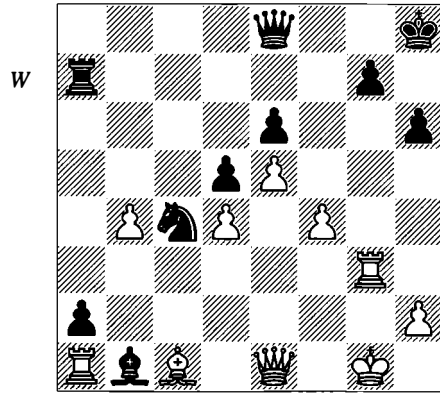
38...a2 39 f4

Although this is aesthetically ugly, everything proves this is the only move. Of course Black now has an important diagonal to create threats on the white king, but this way the king's rook can defend the third rank and the b-pawn. After 39 ♗c3 ♖b7 (or 39...♖a4 40 b5 {40 ♕d2 ♖a3!} 40...♗b4 reaching a won ending) 40 ♕d2 ♘xd2! 41 ♗xd2 ♗xb4 42 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 43 ♖g4 ♕f5! Black wins.

39...♗e8! (D)

The last worthy decision. The queen attempts to penetrate via the light squares, and will do so when White is unable to prevent the loss of the b-pawn. The hasty 39...♗f5 is less effective due to 40 ♗e2! ♖b7 41 ♖b3, while after 39...♖a4 40 ♖b3 ♕c2 41 ♖g3! White is in command of the situation. The bishop's defensive task in all these lines becomes essential,

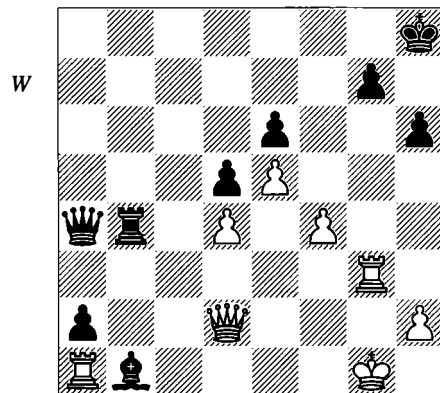
since it prevents any entry by the knight or the rook.



40 ♖e2?

A mistake in time-trouble. Better is 40 ♖d1, preventing the invasion of the black queen via a4. Black has the reply 40...♖b7! (worse is 40...♖b5 41 ♖b3 ♖a4 42 ♔d2 holding on, or 40...♖a4 41 ♖e1 {41 ♔d2!? ♔a3!?) and entry via a4 is denied) with the following possibilities: 41 ♖e1 ♖a4!; 41 ♖b3 ♖g6+ 42 ♔g3 ♖e4!; 41 ♖b3 ♖b5 42 ♖xb1 axb1♖ 43 ♖xb1 ♖xb4 and the ending is hopeless; 41 ♔d2!? ♔xd2 42 ♖xd2 ♖a4 and there is nothing to prevent the fall of the b- and d-pawns. The same position is going to happen in the game, but with a tempo more.

40...♖a4! 41 ♖e1 ♖b7 42 ♔d2 ♔xd2! 43 ♖xd2 ♖xb4 (D)



Black has given up his powerful knight, but he has acquired a lot in return: penetration by

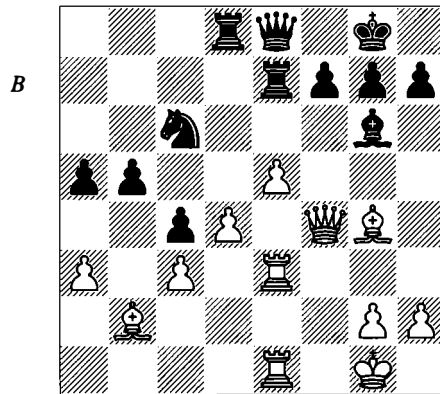
the rook, raking the whole fourth rank. After all, the knight was dominating the bishop, but that bishop was also preventing infiltration.

44 ♖d3 ♔xd3 45 ♖xd3 ♖b3! 0-1

A nice positional achievement.

Often, an exchange sacrifice offers good chances of success if the enemy rooks cannot quickly take up active positions, while our forces proceed with a logical plan, and start creating threats. If we also have a sound blockading position, limiting the action of the enemy pieces, it is not unusual for the compensation to be at least sufficient.

In his masterpiece *Ajedrez en la cumbre*, Tigran Petrosian shares with us a difficult decision he needed to make in an important tournament game.



Reshevsky – Petrosian  
Zurich Ct 1953

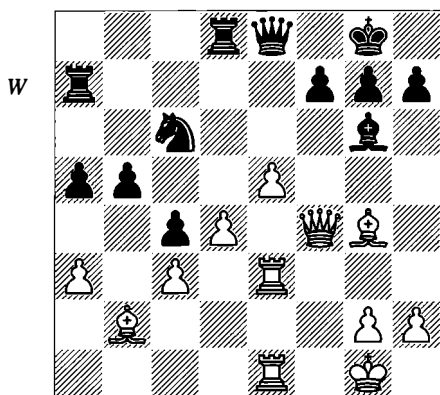
White's last move was 25 ♖f1-e1. Petrosian had used the Nimzo-Indian Defence, and Reshevsky had methodically prepared and carried out the central advance that is thematic in the Rubinstein Variation (4 e3).

Petrosian acknowledges in his book that he felt uncomfortable, and when considering the pros and cons, he understood how difficult his position was. White has a strong pawn-centre, and though it looks a little inflexible, or immobile, this is not really so. White is threatening to support the advance of his d-pawn by playing ♔f3. Another threat comes with the h-pawn. If Black prevents this pawn from reaching the

h6-square by playing ...h6 himself, his position will be seriously weakened, allowing a fierce attack against his king. White would expel the bishop, put his rook on g3 and activate the dark-squared bishop by placing it on c1 with threats against g7 and h6. The attack would be unstoppable.

Everything takes us to the same conclusion: Black should act quickly to defend. The success in this task consists of two ideas that work together: halting White's centre pawns and manoeuvring the knight to d5. Then the assessment would be dramatically altered, because the knight would not only impede White's centre, but would also activate his queenside majority. However, to do this he needs at least three moves! Transferring the knight via b6 or c7 seems very difficult and too slow, so we must consider only the 'straightforward' manoeuvre: e7-d5. Thus we must decide where to put the rook.

Logically we only seem to have two squares available: a7 and b7. After 25...♖c7 26 e6 ♗e7 27 ♜g5! Black could resign. The most natural seems to be 25...♗a7 (D), since 25...♗b7 leaves the rook within the scope of the white bishop after 26 ♕f3.



White then has three good options:

a) 26 e6 f6 (if 26...♗e7 then 27 exf7+ ♕xf7 28 ♜g5!) 27 e7!? ♗xe7 28 a4! b4 29 d5! ♜f8 30 d6 ♗d5 31 ♕e6+ ♕f7 32 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 33 ♜d4! winning.

b) 26 ♕f3 ♗e7 27 e6 f6 (27...♗d5 28 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 29 exf7+ ♜xf7 30 ♜b8+ is winning for White) 28 a4! ♗d5 (if 28...b4, then 29 d5) 29

♕xd5 ♗xd5 30 axb5 followed by 31 ♕a3 and White's 'bad' bishop comes to life, supporting the strong passed pawns.

c) 26 h4!?

After checking all these variations, two details become clear:

1) The advance of the e-pawn gives Black great trouble.

2) The undermining blow a4 not only weakens Black's c4-pawn, but also revives the b2-bishop.

To find the right plan Black needed to overcome a psychological barrier that ambushes the chess-player when he puts a piece where it can be taken by a less valuable one. Indeed, we often discard moves like the next one intuitively.

**25...♗e6!!**

Luckily, Petrosian was accustomed to overcoming that barrier, to the extent that he has become regarded as the ultimate expert in exchange sacrifices. Petrosian's games showed that exchange sacrifices were relevant in many more types of positions than had previously been thought.

This move prevents all threats of a central advance, and is really the only move, which may of course have helped Petrosian to find it.

After 26 ♕xe6 fxe6! White's centre is stymied and nothing can prevent the knight from reaching its destination. The black bishop gains new power, since it has no opponent on the light squares; its power might well equal a rook. White's rooks lack useful lines on which to play, allowing us to conclude that there is full compensation.

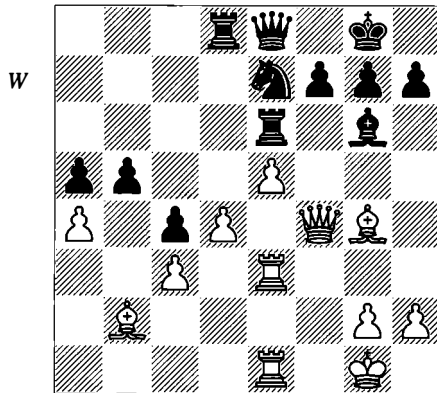
**26 a4!**

Reshevsky is not intimidated, and he chooses the most interesting continuation. The idea behind this move is the weakening of the c4-pawn. After 26...b4? 27 d5! ♗xd5 28 ♕xe6 fxe6 29 ♜xc4 White would bring his b2-bishop into the action, and break down Black's fortress.

An attack on the kingside, with 26 h4, is another option. White aims to play h5 and to bring the rook to g3 (exerting pressure on g7) but the advantages of locating the rook on e6 would be clear again: the rook hinders the advance h6: there would follow 26...♗e7 27 ♗g3 ♗d5 28 ♜f2 ♗c6 and Black is preparing his counterplay with ...b4.

Despite White's unexpected resource on the queenside, Petrosian completes his plan successfully.

26...♞e7 (D)



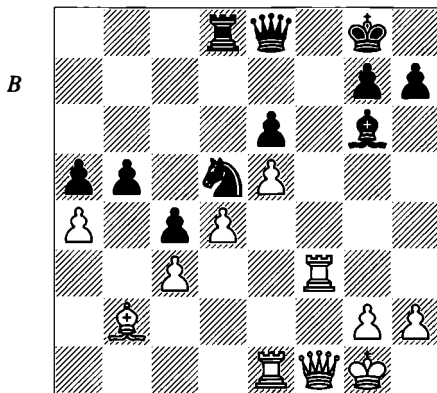
27 ♗xe6

Once White has broken the chain of black pawns, he decides to accept the offer. White's remaining bishop has some chances of being activated via a3, and in that case it can help in an attack against Black's king.

27...fxe6 28 ♛f1

The queen keeps an eye on the c4-square, preventing the advance of the b-pawn, which would happen in case of 28 ♛f2 ♞d5 29 ♜f3 b4, with disastrous consequences for White.

28...♞d5 29 ♜f3 (D)



We have reached a critical position, where the first consequences of the exchange sacrifice can be assessed.

29...♗d3

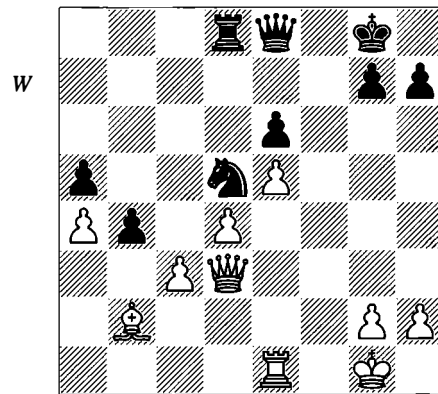
Petrosian takes the opportunity Reshevsky has offered him, so as to avoid further risks. This is quite a reasonable decision.

Instead, 29...♛c6 (intending ...b4) 30 axb5 ♛xb5 31 ♗a3 h6 seems interesting. Black threatens, according to Bronstein's theory, to attack the white pieces located on dark squares, once he has established control over the light squares. In the current position this translates into the threat of 32...♛b3. With such strong pieces and an valuable passed pawn, Black would have a promising game.

30 ♜xd3!

The only move, as otherwise 30...b4 would follow.

30...cxd3 31 ♛xd3 b4! (D)



White must make the difficult decision of whether to play for a draw or a win.

32 cxb4

Reshevsky doesn't want to take too many risks either. 32 c4 seems tempting, but Black has a very strong retreat (32...♞b6) recovering the pawn and getting two healthy connected passed pawns. In spite of the existence of the bishop, which usually tips the scales in this type of position with pawn races, White's connected passed pawns are harder to advance, with the added shortcoming that they can be blocked.

32...axb4

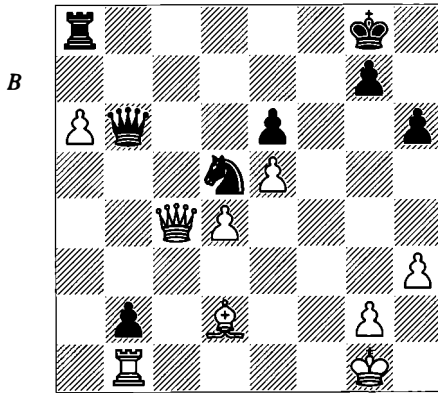
Black can also play 32...♞xb4 33 ♛b3 ♞d5 with a likely draw, but the text-move is far more logical.

33 a5 ♜a8 34 ♜a1 ♛c6 35 ♗c1

The position is balanced, since the passed pawns will be seemingly annulled, leading to a

general simplification. White's 'bad' bishop makes it impossible for him to realize the pawn advantage. With this move, White transfers the bishop to a better diagonal, and tries to tempt Black into 35... ♖xa5 36 ♖xa5 ♜xc1+ 37 ♜f1 ♜e3+ 38 ♜h1 h6 39 ♖a8+ ♜h7 40 ♜b1+! g6 41 ♖a7+ ♜h8 42 h3.

35... ♜c7 36 a6 ♜b6 37 ♖d2 b3 38 ♜c4 h6 39 h3 b2 40 ♖b1 (D)



40... ♜h8

Black could also capture the a6-pawn:

a) 40... ♖xa6 41 ♜c8+ ♜h7 (41... ♜f7? is bad: 42 ♖f1+ ♜e7 43 ♜f8+ ♜d7 44 ♖f7+ ♜c6 45 ♜e8#) 42 ♜c2+ forcing the draw.

b) The ending after 40... ♜xa6 41 ♜xa6 ♖a6 42 ♖xb2 ♖a4 seems more interesting. Black, in spite of having the better pieces, would have no option to play for a win due to the lack of material. After 43 ♜f2 ♖xd4 44 ♜f3 it is enough to activate the bishop to reach complete equality.

41 ♖e1 1/2-1/2

White is close to being worse.

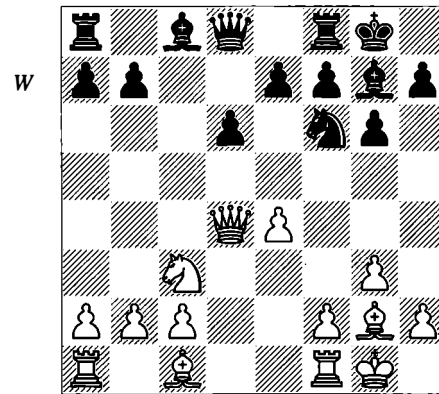
The following game demonstrates other motivations for a healthy exchange sacrifice. Black's dark-squared bishop seems more powerful than White's rook in a position where White has problems on those dark squares. There are several factors supporting the exchange sacrifice, all important for the overall assessment. In the game, de la Riva returns the exchange to free himself from the pressure, a decision that is very natural, but in this case proved wrong, since new and decisive dynamic factors appear, among them the control of the open e-file.

de la Riva – Romero

Catalonian Cht 1988

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 g3 ♖g7

From a theoretical point of view, this move follows an independent path from the one recommended in modern opening books. With this move Black stops fighting for the centre for a moment. 6... ♘c6 is usually played and in case White allows the exchange after 7 ♖g2 (7 ♘de2 keeps all the pieces on the board and maintains control of d5) 7... ♘xd4 8 ♜xd4 ♖g7 9 0-0 0-0 (D), it is considered that Black has solved his opening problems. White's idea, once he has concluded his kingside development, is to play ♘d5 and exert pressure on f6 until Black is forced to exchange knights on d5. Then he would adopt a restraining plan by means of a4, ♖a2, b3, c4, and exerting pressure on e7 later. Let us consider some specific lines:



a) 10 h3 and then:

a1) The game Sanz-Romero, Benidorm 1984 is illustrative: 10... ♖d7?! 11 ♜d3! ♖c8 12 a4 ♖c6 13 ♖e1 ♘d7 14 ♘d5! ♖xd5 15 exd5 ♖f6 (preventing a later ♖g5) 16 ♖a2!. White slowly prepares the straitjacket with b3 and c4, with play on both flanks thanks to his space advantage. For example, he will play h4-h5, ♖h6 and even ♖h3. Normally in the Sicilian White suffers due to Black's control of c4; here this is not a problem, and Black lacks counterplay.

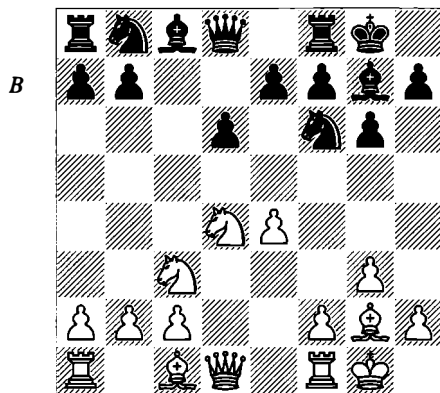
a2) The recommended classical line continues with 10... ♖e6 11 ♜d1 and then I advise Black to adopt an idea that has passed largely

unnoticed: 11...♖a5 12 ♘d5 (usually this is the goal of White's opening, so that after the exchange on d5 he would exert pressure on e7) 12...♙xd5! 13 exd5 ♘d7 14 c3 ♙f6! (as before, preventing ♙g5 ideas) 15 ♙h6 ♜fc8 16 h4 b5!, Janošević-Martinović, 1978. Black threatens counterplay with ...b4 or to put a knight on c4. The reader will have noticed that the advance of Black's b-pawn is possible when the white knights have disappeared from the board and cannot enter the c6-square (we imagine a knight located on d4 now).

b) 10 ♖b4!? is a move developed by Popović, and is much more ambitious. The white queen not only exerts pressure on the queenside but also prevents the black queen from being activated for a while. However, an antidote was discovered: 10...a5!? 11 ♖b3 ♙e6 12 ♖xb7?! ♙c4 (from now on there won't be any truce against the white queen) 13 ♜d1 ♘d7 14 ♙e3 ♜b8 15 ♖c6 ♘e5 16 ♖a4 ♜b4 17 ♖a3 ♙e6 18 b3 ♘g4 19 ♙d2 ♖b6 20 ♜f1 ♙d4, Jusić-Jirovsky, Stockerau 1991.

7 ♙g2 0-0!? 8 0-0 (D)

8 h3! has been favoured in recent times. 8...♘c6 9 ♙e3 (in the event of 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 e5 dxe5 11 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 12 ♙xc6 ♜b8 White needs to solve some development problems and the lack of protection of h3, reducing White's structural advantage to the utmost; 9 ♘de2!?) 9...♙d7 10 0-0 ♘e5 11 ♘de2 (Matulović-Watson, Belgrade GMA 1988) and in this position Black should continue actively with 11...♘c4 12 ♙c1 b5!



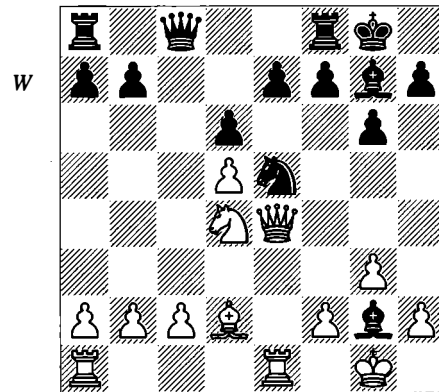
8...♙g4!

At the time of the game, this was a novelty and a very unpleasant move for White! This move allows Black a second opportunity in the battle for the centre. The white queen doesn't have any ideal square to which to move, and any interposition has practical disadvantages. After the unsightly 9 f3, the g2-bishop will be blocked for some time and the thematic move ♘d5 loses its strength. Otherwise, Black is in time to control the c8-h3 diagonal, aiming to exchange the light-squared bishops.

9 f3

The other two options allow Black an entirely satisfying game:

a) 9 ♖d3 ♖c8 (leaving d7 to the knight) 10 ♘d5 ♘xd5 11 exd5 ♘d7 (the white queen will have trouble finding a safe square) 12 ♙d2 (12 b3 ♘e5 with themes on f3; if 12 ♙g5, then 12...♘e5 13 ♖b3 h6!) 12...♘e5 13 ♖e4 ♙h3! (White exchanges bishops to exert pressure on d5 later) 14 ♜fe1 ♙xg2 (D) and now:



a1) In Illescas-Romero, Spanish Cht (Zamora) 1988, White lost his central pawn: 15 ♖xg2? f5! 16 ♖e2 ♖c5 17 ♙c3 ♖xd5+ 18 ♖g1 ♜fe8 19 ♜ad1 ♖c4 20 f4 ♖xe2 21 ♜xe2 ♘c6 with a decisive advantage for Black in the ending.

a2) White should play 15 ♖xg2 ♖c4 16 ♙c3 b5 17 f4 (or: 17 a3 a5; 17 ♜e3 b4 18 b3 ♖c5 19 ♙b2 ♘c4!; 17 ♘b3 b4 18 ♜e4 ♖xd5 19 ♜xb4 ♘f3+ 20 ♖h1 ♙xc3 21 bxc3 e5!) 17...b4, when Black has enough play.

b) 9 ♘de2 ♖c8 10 ♜e1 (after 10 ♘d5 ♘xd5 11 exd5 ♙h3! White's d5-pawn suffers again) 10...♘c6 11 f3 ♙h3 12 ♙xh3 ♖xh3 13 ♘f4

♖d7 14 ♘cd5 e6 and Black has a comfortable game, with pressure on the queenside, Garcia Carbo-Romero, La Coruña 1989.

9...♗d7 10 ♗e3

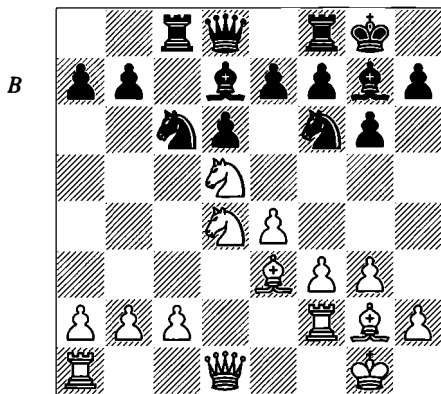
White does not have time to play h3 and f4: 10 h3 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 ♖c8 12 f4 (this type of expansion used to be not very effective with White's former set-up; another line is 12 ♖d2 ♖c7 with the idea of ...♗e5) 12...♗a5 13 e5 ♗e8 ♞.

10...♘c6 11 ♗d5

Once again the thematic move...

11...♖c8 12 ♖f2 (D)

After a long reflection comes an unusual move marking the beginning of a plan. The mechanical 12 c3 allows Black to get counterplay after a quick access of the 'globetrotter' to the most critical square in White's camp: 12...♗e5 13 ♖e2 ♘c4 14 ♗f2 (14 ♗g5?! ♘xd5 15 exd5 ♖b6) 14...b5 ♞.



12...♖e8!

A good prophylactic move, and a standard idea in this type of position. From the lowest to the highest level, everybody plays some positions with more ease. Any player who knows the secrets of a typical position will intuitively know the most suitable moves in a specific position, coming from the typical position from which he is taking his bearings.

The text-move protects e7 and plans the opening of the e-file in the long run, by means of ...e6 and ...d5. Another logical possibility is 12...e6!?

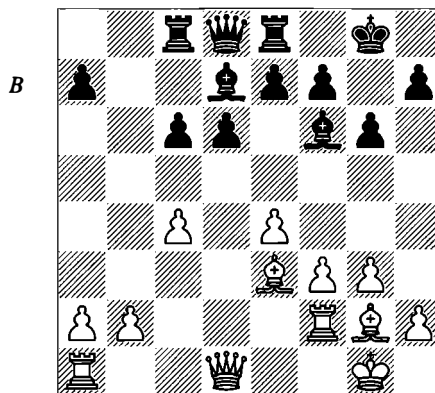
13 ♘xf6+

The automatic 13 ♖d2 hits unexpected trouble in the form of 13...♘xd5 14 exd5 ♘xd4 15

♗xd4 ♖xc2!. Tactics always profit the lucky one...

13...♗xf6 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 c4 (D)

Now a silver lining illuminates the meaning of White's 12th move. He threatens both c5 and ♗d4. The immediate 15 ♗d4 allows 15...♗xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♖b6, when Black's central supremacy would be undeniable.



15...c5 16 f4

Black's plan is becoming more and more plain: mobilize his pieces on the queenside, attack against the b-pawn until it advances to b3, and then the a-pawn will advance to a4 to weaken White's b- or c-pawn. We have seen this plan before, in Chapter 9.

Meanwhile, White should start action in the centre. A kingside attack, beginning with the advance of the h-pawn (16 h4) is also possible, but maybe too slow.

16...♖c7

Necessary caution. After 16...♖b8 17 e5 dxe5 18 ♖d2 the rook reaches the d-file with devastating effects.

17 ♖c1 ♖b8 18 b3 (D)

Sooner or later this move will be necessary. Black now has a target for his attack.

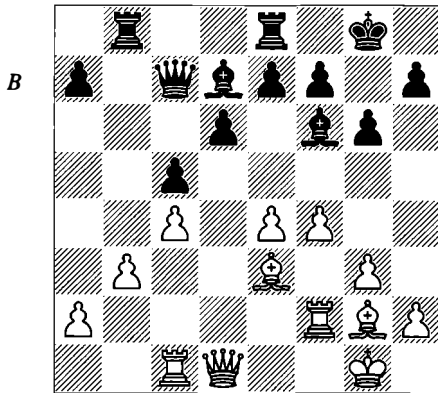
18...a5

Another idea, perhaps more suitable to the position, is the preventive 18...♗c6!?. Black would forestall the course of events, but this approach demands considerable thought, with its inevitable toll on the clock.

19 e5!

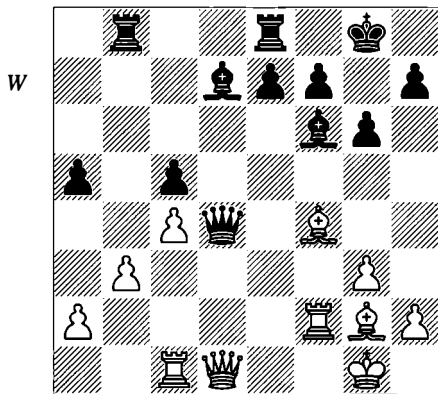
Freeing his forces.

19...dxe5 20 fxe5 ♖xe5!



A curious position arises after the natural choice 20...♙xe5 21 ♖d5. White would not be worse, in spite of the strength of Black's central pawns, thanks to the activity of his bishops.

21 ♙f4 ♖d4 (D)



A correct exchange sacrifice, based on three strategic principles:

- 1) the bishop-pair's combined action (sometimes stronger than the pair rook+bishop)
- 2) control of the dark squares
- 3) the great mobility of Black's pawn-majority in the centre and kingside.

22 ♙xb8 ♖xb8 23 ♖e1 ♖d6 24 ♖xf6?

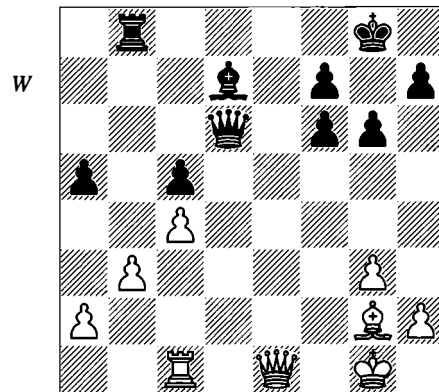
The text-move seems to even the game, but this subjective assessment can be deemed as part of the usual evaluation scheme, easy to commit during a delicate situation in a chess competition. The attempt to exchange pieces to clarify the position, leading to a situation with equal material, seems to be a reflex action.

Instead, Whiteshould hold the position with his advantages and shortcomings.

One possibility is 24 ♖h1 a4 25 bxa4 ♙d4! (also possible is 25...♙xa4 26 ♙d5 ♙e8! patiently preparing ...e6) 26 ♖e2 e5 27 a5 f5 28 ♙d5+ ♖g7 29 ♖b1 ♙c6 30 ♙xc6 (30 ♖xb8 ♙xd5+ 31 cxd5 ♖xb8) 30...♖xc6+ 31 ♖g2 ♖xb1 32 ♖xb1 ♖a4, which shows the vulnerability of the white king and the control of the black bishop.

White should play 24 ♖xa5 ♙d4 25 ♖d2!, when the following question arises: should Black recover the exchange? The bishop is probably stronger than the rook, and without a doubt, it is due to the poor coordination of both white rooks, lacking good files where to play. In the line 25...e5! 26 ♖h1 f5 27 ♙d5+ ♖g7 Black has a long-lasting initiative.

24...exf6!! (D)



Control of files and piece activity are major factors in major-piece middlegames. Now Black gets the e-file, an ideal route into White's position. The doubled f-pawns don't reduce the dynamic mobility of Black's pawn-majority. Other factors are the weakness of White's king and the bad situation the white queen is going to be in. In spite of all these considerations, this was still a difficult decision at the board.

25 ♖d1

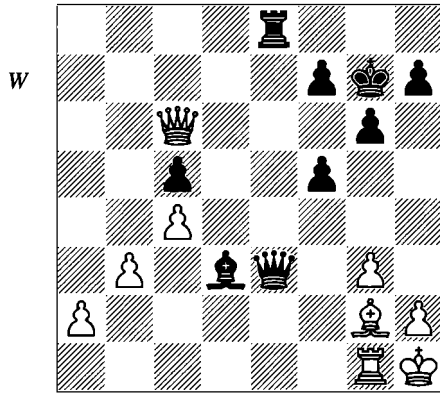
25 ♖xa5 also leads to a precarious situation: 25...♖d4+ 26 ♖h1 ♖e8 27 ♖e1 ♖e3 gives Black a large advantage.

25...♖e6 26 ♖xa5 ♖e3+ 27 ♖h1 ♖e8!

Coming just in time to control the file, and threatening ...♙h3.

28 ♖f1 ♙f5 29 ♚b5 ♘d3 30 ♖g1 ♙g7 31 ♚c6 f5 (D)

The advantage becomes decisive. Once Black has improved the position of his bishop, the pawn-majority advances. 31...♙e4!? is also interesting.



32 ♚f3

The ending after 32 a4 ♙e4 33 ♙xe4 ♚xe4+ (or 33...♖xe4 ♠) 34 ♚xe4 fxe4 shows Black's unquestionable superiority.

32...♚d4

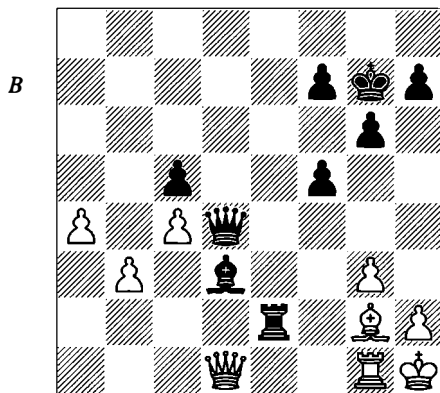
Or 32...♚xf3 33 ♙xf3 ♙e4.

33 ♚d1

If 33 ♖d1, then 33...♙e2.

33...♖e2 34 a4 (D)

34 ♚a1 can be met by 34...♙e4 or 34...♖b2.



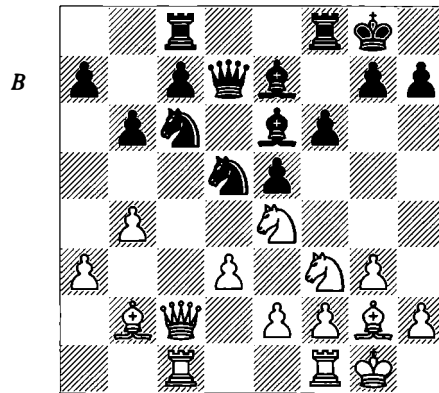
34...♚e3

Threatening ...♙e4.

35 ♚a1+ f6 36 ♚c1 ♚f2 0-1

The passivity of the white pieces is clear.

In the next game, White makes an important decision, giving up the exchange when the most natural move assured a sizeable advantage anyway. Why? Surely because the kind of position reached in the game matched better the traits of the player with the white pieces. Therefore, this was also an interesting decision from the psychological point of view.



Karpov – Hjartarson  
Seattle Ct (2) 1989

This position arose via the Reversed Dragon line of the English Opening. White has just played 15 ♖ac1, exerting pressure on the c-file.

15...♘d4

This move is forced, since after 15...♘d8 16 d4 the central break would only favour White.

16 ♙xd4 exd4 17 ♚c6!

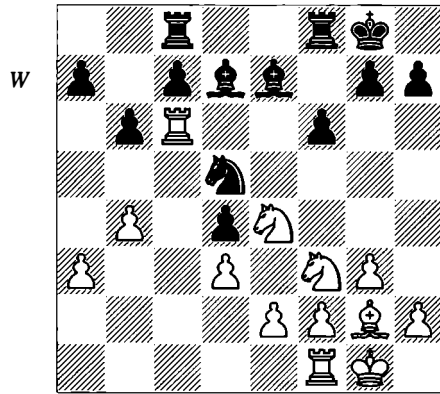
A superb choice. White has several playable moves, changing the character of the position completely. This move essentially commits White to an exchange sacrifice, with unclear effects for any layman.

One interesting line is 17 ♘xd4 ♘xb4 18 axb4! (18 ♚b2 ♘d5 19 ♘xe6 ♚xe6 20 ♚b5 c6 21 ♘g5!? cxb5 22 ♘xe6 ♘c3 23 ♖c2 ♙xa3 24 ♘xf8 ♙xf8 gives Black fabulous compensation; the queenside pawns run like racing cars supported by their minor pieces) 18...♚xd4 19 b5 ±. This advantage is very comfortable. With the pressure on both the a- and c-files and the action of the b5-pawn fixing Black's weak pawns, together with White's strong central mobility, there is no doubt about the type of advantage. For instance, there could follow 19...♖fd8!?

(19...f5 20 e3 ♖d7 21 ♕c3) 20 ♖a1 f5 21 ♕d2 ♗e5 22 ♗fb1 ♕f6 23 ♖b3 ♕d5! 24 ♕xd5+ ♗xd5 25 ♖xa7 c6 26 bxc6 ♗xc6 and Black tries to activate himself on the c-file in order to compensate for White's strong centre.

Karpov is swapping this dream position (in which the advantage seems steady, the risk minimal and the opponent's agony would last during a lot of time) for another where he sacrifices material and the advantage seems less sizeable and docile. Let us see why he is taking this decision.

17...♗xc6 18 ♗xc6 ♕d7 (D)



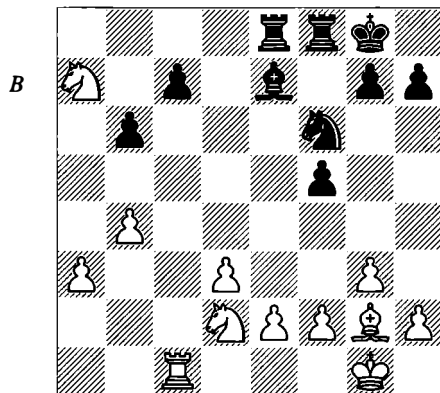
19 ♕xd4!

This is the reason. The knight will prove very strong on c6, and the fianchettoed bishop begins to unfold its activity. 19 ♗c2 is met by 19...f5.

19...♕xc6 20 ♕xc6 ♗ce8 21 ♗c1 f5

If 21...♕d8, then 22 ♕d2 ♕e7 23 ♕xa7.

22 ♕d2 ♕f6 23 ♕xa7 (D)



White wins two valuable pawns for the exchange, without lessening the activity of his pieces at all. His centre will be a steamroller.

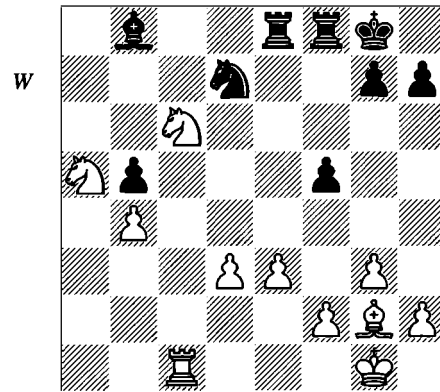
23...♕d6

23...c5 24 ♕c6 cxb4 25 axb4 ♕d6 26 ♕c4 ♕c7 27 e3 is similar to the game.

24 e3 c5 25 ♕c4 ♕b8 26 ♕c6 b5 27 ♕4a5

White's knights are ruling the whole board, paralysing the opponent, whose pieces must remain passive. Another option of similar value is 27 ♕b6!?

27...cxb4 28 axb4 ♕d7 (D)



29 d4!

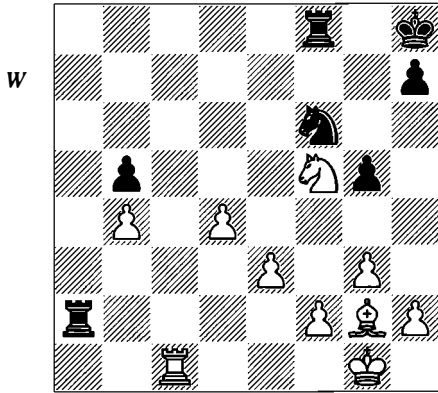
White's centre advances and, in so doing, controls more and more critical squares. The contrast between this mobile centre and the dark-squared bishop is remarkable. Hjartarson now decides to begin quick counterplay on the kingside, to give his pieces some life. For this reason perhaps it was interesting to think about 29 h4!?

With the text-move, White threatens ♕f1, but it was already possible to crown the previous effort with new booty: 29 ♕xb8 ♗xb8 (29...♕xb8 30 ♗c5) 30 ♗c7 ♕e5 31 d4 +-.

29...g5!? 30 ♕xb8!?

A small positional concession in return for a third pawn. After all, the loss is not very serious, since the other knight will gain access to the wonderful c6-square. Another interesting move is 30 ♕f3!?, to reply to 30...f4 31 gxf4 gxf4 with 32 e4, limiting Black's attempts at counterplay.

30...♗xb8 31 ♗c7 ♕f6 32 ♕c6 ♗b6 33 ♕e7+ ♖h8 34 ♕xf5 ♗a6 35 ♗c1! ♗a2 (D)



**36 h3!**  
Thus preventing the last chance of counterplay: ...g4.

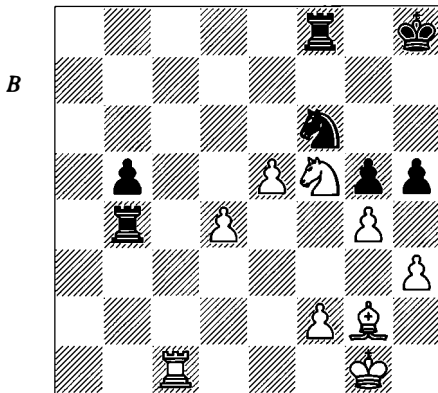
**36...Bb2 37 e4 Bxb4 38 g4**

Not 38 e5? Qh5 39 Qe4 Qg7, when the d4-pawn is lost.

**38...h5**

There are no good options: 38...Qe8 39 Bc8 Bg8 40 Qe7 Bf8 41 d5 Bb1+ 42 Qh2 Bb2 43 Qf5 Qg8 44 d6; 38...Bd8 39 e5 Qd5? 40 Qxd5 Bxd5 41 Bc8+ and mate next move.

**39 e5 (D)**



**39...hxg4**

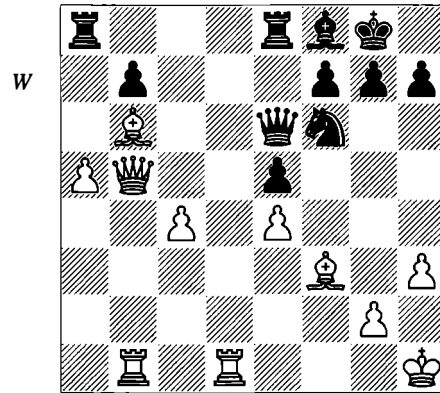
Hopeless, but if the knight retreated, there would follow 40 e6.

**40 exf6 gxh3 41 Qxh3 Bxf6 42 Bc8+ Qh7 43 Bc7+ Qg6 44 Bg7+ Qh5 45 f3 1-0**

Black resigned on account of Qg4#.

We will all remember for a long time the interesting decision Anand took to score his first

win in the PCA World Championship at New York in 1995 against Garry Kasparov. Vishy placed a rook under the very nose of his opponent's knight, whose capture allowed him to create a powerful central pawn-mass.



**Anand – Kasparov**  
*New York PCA Wch (9) 1995*

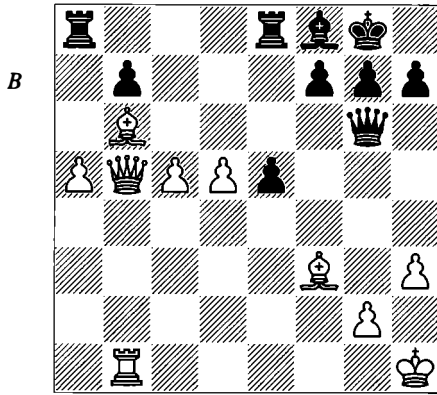
Black has just played 26...Wc8-e6. White is ruling the board, with his impressive bishop on b6 controlling the d-file. He has the bishop-pair, pressure on the queenside (Black's b7-pawn is weaker than any of White's pawns), and Black's f6-knight is expectantly watching over the powerful light-squared bishop and the entry through the critical squares d7 and d5. However, Black's position is still solid. More is needed to perturb the great Garry. Anand embarks on an interesting and thematic exchange sacrifice, with the idea of exerting pressure on e5 and along the d-file. One wonders how surprised he must have been when Kasparov accepted the challenge...

**27 Bd5! Qxd5??**

An inexplicable move: a most surprising error by one of the best players in history! Black should wait to capture the rook under better conditions. It was interesting to start kingside action immediately, in search of the only weakness in White's camp: his king. After 27...h5! Black will perhaps be threatening ...g5 and ...g4. Another possibility for Black is to continue with the manoeuvre ...g6 and ...Qh7-g5, although he always needs to be alert to an entry on the seventh rank, countering it with the

exchange of the light-squared bishop. After 28  $\text{♙c7}$  Black defends successfully: 28... $\text{♚e7!?$  29  $\text{♜xb7}$  (29  $\text{♙d6}$   $\text{♜d8}$  30  $\text{♙xf8}$   $\text{♞xd5}$  31  $\text{exd5}$   $\text{♞xa5}$  32  $\text{♜xb7}$   $\text{♞xf8}$ ) 29... $\text{♞ac8}$  30  $\text{♙d6}$   $\text{♜xb7}$  31  $\text{♞xb7}$   $\text{♞xd5}$  32  $\text{♙xf8}$   $\text{♞f4}$ . Therefore White would have better chances, but he should still find the way to penetrate Black's domain.

28  $\text{exd5}$   $\text{♜g6}$  29  $\text{c5}$  (D)



How different the position looks now! Now the advance of White's central pawns cannot be prevented.

29... $\text{e4}$

Probably Kasparov put the emphasis on the advance of the e-pawn when deciding to capture the rook. His counterplay on the kingside doesn't include enough pieces to be effective.

30  $\text{♙e2}$   $\text{♞e5}$

The idea of activating the bishop by means of 30... $\text{♙e7}$  31  $\text{d6}$  (31  $\text{♜b3}$   $\text{e3}$ ) 31... $\text{♙f6}$  32  $\text{d7}$   $\text{♞f8}$ , taking advantage of the weaknesses in White's kingside and threatening ... $\text{♙e5}$ , runs into 33  $\text{♙c7!}$ .

31  $\text{♜d7!}$  (D)

31... $\text{♞g5}$

31... $\text{♞e7}$  is met by 32  $\text{♜g4}$ , when the exchange of queens would only increase the disruption of Black's pieces (which can hardly stop White's passed pawns) and the lack of mobility of Black's pawn-majority.

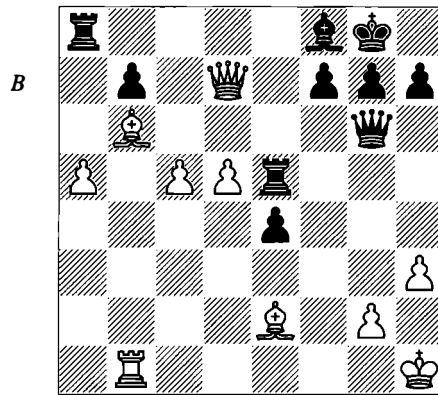
If 31... $\text{♜g3}$ , then 32  $\text{♜xb7}$   $\text{♞g5}$  33  $\text{♞g1}$  +-.

32  $\text{♞g1!}$   $\text{e3}$  33  $\text{d6}$

33  $\text{♜xb7}$   $\text{♞e8}$  34  $\text{d6}$ .

33... $\text{♞g3}$  34  $\text{♜xb7}$   $\text{♜e6}$  35  $\text{♚h2!}$

The simplest move. 35  $\text{♞d1!}$   $\text{♞b8}$  36  $\text{♜d5}$  +- also wins. However, White needed to avoid 35

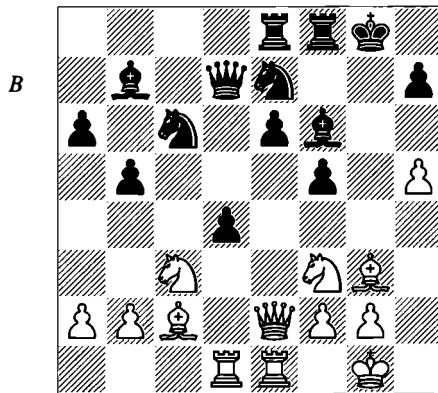


$\text{♞f1}$   $\text{♞b8!}$  (with the point 36  $\text{♜xb8}$   $\text{♞xh3}$ + 37  $\text{♚g1}$   $\text{♜e5}$ ).

1-0

After 35... $\text{♞e8}$  36  $\text{d7}$  the game is over.

In the next game, played with a rapid time-limit, Black makes a completely intuitive exchange sacrifice to restore his spoiled pawn-structure and to direct a powerful central pawn assault. In theory, this central mass should reduce the power of white pieces. Let us see what happened:



Sanz – Romero  
Cubillos del Sil rpd 2000

22... $\text{♞d5!}$

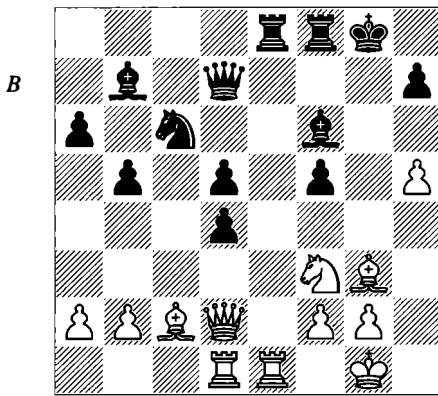
Black plans a thematic exchange sacrifice to activate his pieces and mobilize his centre. Of course, he had quieter continuations, though none without risk. White has compensation for the pawn and threatens  $\text{♙b3}$ , exerting pressure

on e6. The alternative is 22...♖a5 23 b4! ♘c4 24 ♗b3 ♗xf3 (24...♗d8 25 ♘a4) 25 ♜xf3 ♜c6 26 ♜xc6 ♘xc6 27 ♘a4. This move, activating the knight, offers good chances for counter-play.

23 ♘xd5 exd5

Are you sure that Black wanted to push his weak centre? To force this position seemed madness, but he had seen further...

24 ♜d2 (D)



24...♗e4!

The anticipated move.

25 ♘g5! ♗fe8

Irresponsibly, Black wanted to force the capture. Surely 25...♖h8!? was a more useful move in this position, and more in agreement with the previous sacrifice.

26 ♘xe4 dxe4

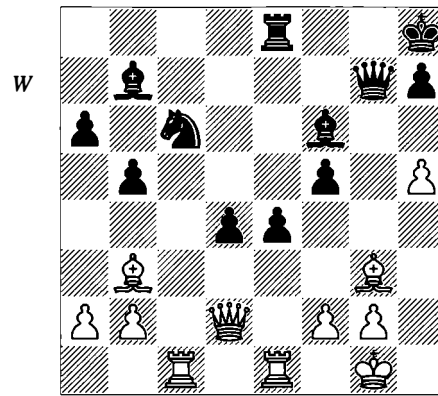
Black has compensation. Finally the pawn-structure had been restored, due to the pressure on the e-file, and I was proud of the culmination of my plan begun on move 22.

27 ♗b3+ ♖h8 28 ♗c1 ♜g7!? (D)

The position is indeed appealing for Black, whose powerful centre is waiting for the right moment to advance, and at the same time, all his pieces have an unusual potency. The last move is unduly ambitious, but the position was no longer advantageous for Black. He is planning an attack on the g-file. On the other hand, one of the white rooks has hurried to occupy the only open file, to hold Black's activity back. White's bishops are strong, the white queen can be easily activated, and the black king is showing gaps. But the clock played

against White, who needed to calculate all the complications accurately, and understandably enough, he failed during time-trouble.

Black must avoid 28...♘e5 29 ♗ed1 (29 ♜f4 ♗a8) 29...♜g7 30 ♜f4! (a provocative move) 30...♗g5 (30...♘d3 31 ♗xd3 ♗g5 32 ♜xf5 ♗xc1 33 ♗e6! +-) 31 ♜xf5 ♗xc1 32 ♗xc1 e3 33 h6! +-.



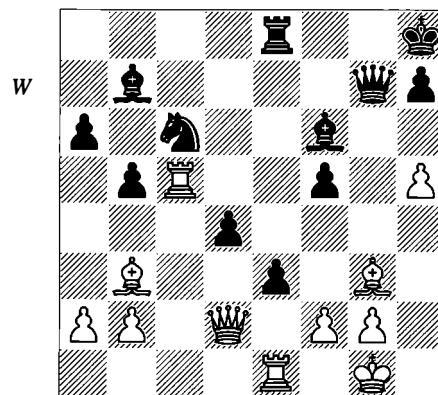
29 ♗c5?

White should play 29 ♗d5! e3:

a) 30 ♗xc6 ♜d7 31 fxe3 ♗xc6 (31...dxe3? loses to 32 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 33 ♜xe3 ♗xc6 34 ♜c5) 32 ♗xc6 ♜xc6 33 exd4 ♗xe1+ 34 ♗xe1 ♜d5 35 ♗f2 (35 b3 =) 35...♜xa2.

b) 30 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 31 fxe3 (31 ♗xc6?? loses after 31...exd2 32 ♗xe8+ ♜g8) 31...♜xg3 32 ♗xc6 dxe3 33 h6! (33 ♗e2 ♜h4 ♢) 33...♗e5! (33...exd2?! 34 ♗xe8+ ♜g8 35 ♗xg8+ ♖xg8 36 ♗d6 ♗g5 ±) 34 ♗xe3 ♜h2+ 35 ♖f2 ♜h4+ 36 ♖e2 ♜h5+ with perpetual check.

29...e3!? (D)



The pawn advances, creating tactical possibilities.

**30 ♖c2**

White is lost. If 30 ♖e2 d3 31 ♖xd3 both 31...♗d4 32 ♖cc1 ♖b4 (32...f4) and 31...f4 win.

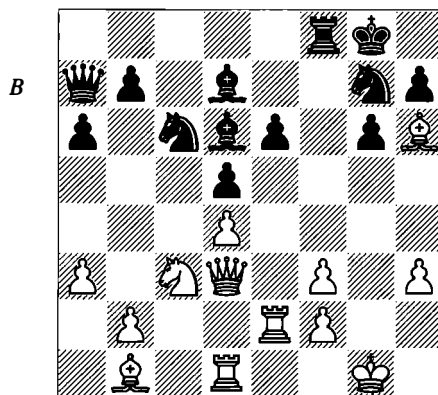
**30...f4**

Black's counterplay and the power of the light-squared bishop exerting pressure on g2 come into sight.

**31 ♗xf4 ♖b4 0-1**

In the following diagram, Black has already sacrificed the exchange on f3 (in a very typical line of the Tarrasch French: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖d2 ♖f6 4 e5 ♖fd7 5 c3 c5 6 ♗d3 ♖c6 7 ♖e2 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♖b6 9 ♖f3 f6 10 exf6 ♖xf6 11 0-0 ♗d6 12 ♖c3 0-0 13 ♗e3).

Black is preparing to press strongly on d4, an idea similar to what usually happens in some Sicilians with the exchange sacrifice on c3, to exert pressure on the e4-pawn. Now he can afford the luxury of giving up a second exchange, which is somewhat unusual in tournament practice. This is an isolated but very instructive case, since the rooks are deprived of play and Black has a strong pawn-centre and very active minor pieces, aiming at the very weakened white king.



**Glavina – Romero**  
*La Mota del Cuervo 1995*

**25...♖f5!**

The quiet regrouping 25...♖e7! leaves Black with more than enough compensation.

**26 ♗xf8 ♖xf8**

In my opinion the compensation is enormous. White's rooks are deprived of play and his pieces totally lack coordination. On the contrary, Black's knights are gods and the dark squares are completely at his mercy, with the dark-squared bishop playing a key role. Black's minor pieces rule the whole board. A highly instructive position.

# 11 Positional Sacrifice of Two Pawns

## Activity versus Material

In this chapter, we shall examine complex or sophisticated sacrifices that seek strategic compensation. Sacrifices of small amounts of material in quiet positions tend to have clear-cut aims: a pawn sacrifice to open lines or gain the centre, or simply to activate the pieces, or a classical exchange sacrifice, such as we have already seen.

Situations where a side gives up more material (a whole piece or two pawns), trusting his intuition and the activity he gets in return for material, are more complex. The following game is a very good example.

**Kramnik – Malaniuk**  
*Moscow OL 1994*

1  $\text{d}f3$   $f5$  2  $g3$   $\text{d}f6$  3  $\text{e}g2$   $d6$  4  $d4$   $g6$

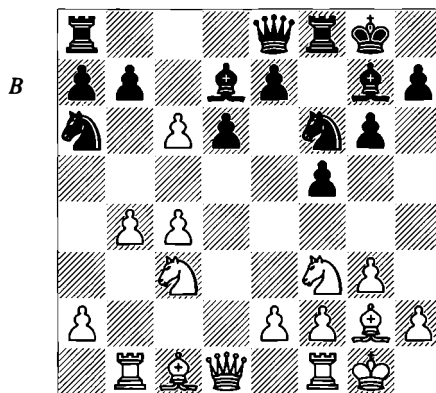
Black plays the Leningrad Dutch, a weapon used by many top players, which combines a kingside fianchetto with pawn control of the e4-square. It is less flexible than the King's Indian Defence, although the modern treatment of it involves quick development of the queenside forces as one of its strong points.

5 0-0  $\text{e}g7$  6  $c4$  0-0 7  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{e}e8$

The classical variation is 7...  $\text{d}c6$  8  $d5$   $\text{d}e5$  9  $\text{d}xe5$   $dxe5$ . The idea is to add another piece to the attack against White's king: 10  $e4$   $f4$  11  $gxf4$   $\text{d}h5$  12  $f5$   $\text{d}f4$  gives Black some initiative for the pawn. Therefore, White does better to prefer a quiet set-up, trying to mobilize his queenside majority quickly: 10  $\text{b}b3$  followed by  $\text{d}d1$  or  $c5$ .

Another option for Black is to play 7...  $c6$  immediately (without defining the situation of the queen yet) and after 8  $d5$   $e5!$ ? 9  $dxe6$   $\text{e}xe6$ , there appears a standard position of the Leningrad Dutch, with the d6-pawn backward but with good activity for the black pieces.

8  $d5$   $\text{d}a6$  9  $\text{e}b1$   $\text{e}d7$  10  $b4$   $c5$  11  $dxc6$  (D)



11...  $\text{e}xc6$

This is Mikhail Gurevich's idea, which seeks greater activity for his pieces to compensate for his inferior pawn-structure. Without a doubt, modern concepts motivate this move. The main continuation is 11...  $bxc6$ , which controls more light squares, especially  $d5$ .

12  $\text{b}b3$

The queen is perfectly placed here, where it defends  $c3$  and  $c4$ , threatens the advance  $c5+$ , and allows the centralization of White's rooks.

12  $b5$  is also judged to be advantageous, as long as White meets 12...  $\text{e}xf3$  with 13  $exf3$   $\pm$ . Worse is 13  $\text{e}xf3!$ ?  $\text{d}c5$  since this knight supports well the drawback of giving the main role to the light-squared bishop: 14  $\text{e}e3$   $\text{f}c8$  15  $\text{e}xc5$  (15  $\text{d}a4!$ ?  $\text{d}ce4$  16  $\text{b}b3$   $\text{e}f7$  17  $b6$   $a6$  18  $\text{f}c1$   $\text{f}c6$   $\mp$  Hertneck-Lutz, Baden-Baden 1992) 15...  $\text{f}xc5$  16  $\text{e}xb7$   $\text{f}xc4$  17  $\text{e}c6$   $\text{e}f7$  18  $\text{e}b3$   $\text{f}c8$  19  $a4$   $\text{f}d8$  20  $a5$   $d5$  21  $a6$   $e6$  (Black's centre annuls the light-squared bishop) 22  $\text{e}b7$   $\text{d}e8$  23  $\text{d}a2$   $\text{d}d6$  24  $\text{d}b4$   $\text{e}c7$  (it is also possible and surely more accurate to accept the sacrifice: 24...  $\text{d}xb7$  25  $axb7$  {25  $\text{d}c6$   $\text{f}xc6$  26  $bxc6$   $\text{d}a5$ } 25...  $\text{e}xb7$  26  $\text{d}c6$   $\text{f}d6$  27  $\text{d}a5$   $\text{e}b6$ ) 25  $\text{d}c6$   $\text{f}e8$  26  $\text{d}xa7$   $\text{d}xb7$  27

axb7 ♖xb7 28 ♜c6 ♚b6 ♠ and the strong black centre prevails, Gelfand-M.Gurevich, Linares 1991.

**12...♜e4**

This active and 'freeing' move is in agreement with the previous decision. Instead:

a) 12...♜h8! is interesting. 13 ♙b2 e5 (even though it leaves the d-pawn backward) 14 e3 ♜d8 15 a4 (15 ♜fd1) 15...b6 16 ♙a3 and then:

a1) 16...♙a8 17 ♜bd1 h6 18 ♜b5 e4 19 ♜fd4 ♚e7 20 h3 h5 21 ♜e2 ♜h7 22 ♜d2 ± Annakov-Reinderman, Buenos Aires jr Wch 1992. The break 22...d5 is not possible yet: 23 ♜fd1 dxc4 24 ♚xc4 ♜xd2 25 ♜xd2 ♜d8 26 ♜xd8 ♚xd8 27 ♚f7 ♚d1+ 28 ♙f1 ♙d5 (or 28...♚xa4 29 ♜f4) 29 ♚xa7 ♙c4 30 ♜bc3! with an advantage.

a2) 16...♜e4 17 ♜xe4 fxe4 18 ♜d2 ♙xa4 19 ♚a2 b5.

b) Another idea opposed to the classical dogma is 12...h6 13 c5+ ♜h7 14 cxd6 exd6 15 ♙b2 ♚e7 16 e3 ♜ac8 17 ♜fd1 ♜fd8 18 ♜d4 ♙xg2 19 ♜xg2 ♜c7 20 ♜bc1 ♜g4 (20...♜e4 21 ♜d5 ♜xd5 22 ♚xd5 ±; 20...d5 21 b5 ♜e4 22 a4 ±) 21 h3 ♜e5 22 ♜d5 ± Lukacs-Dao Thien Hai, Budapest 1994. White uses his control of the light squares.

**13 ♙b2 ♜xc3?!**

This natural move is somewhat unfortunate. Alternatives:

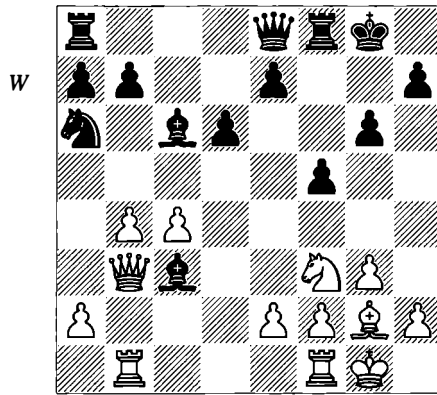
a) 13...♙xc3 14 ♙xc3 ♜xc3 and now 15 c5+? (the same idea as in the main game) fails to 15...♜d5! 16 ♜d4 (16 b5 ♜xc5 17 ♚c4 e6 18 bxc6 bxc6) 16...e6.

b) According to modern theory 13...♜c8 is best, as in Lukacs-Beim, Budapest 1994. After 14 ♜xe4 ♙xe4 15 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 16 ♜bc1 ♜f6 White has a very slight positional advantage due to the pawn-structure, but nothing decisive.

**14 ♙xc3 ♙xc3 (D)**

**15 c5+!?**

White is trying to get enough play for his pieces and lends a touch of originality to the natural course of the game. 15 ♚xc3!? offers a small but long-lasting advantage, according to Kramnik. There would follow 15...♜c8! 16 ♜bc1 ♜f6 (similar to what happened in Lukacs-Beim {see the comment to Black's 13th move} but perhaps with a useful tempo less) 17 a3 ♜g7 18 ♜fe1 ♜b8 19 c5 (the conquest of the



e5-square will never go into effect) 19...♙e4 20 ♚e3 dxc5 21 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 22 ♚xc5 a6 23 ♜e5 ♙xg2 24 ♜xg2 ♜d7 25 ♚c3 ♜xe5 26 ♚xe5 ♚c6+ 27 ♜g1 (27 e4 ♜g8) 27...♚d6 28 ♚xd6 1/2-1/2 Illescas-Topalov, Leon 1993.

**15...e6**

Or:

a) 15...d5? is very bad due to 16 ♚xc3, when White has gained control of the dark squares e5 and d4.

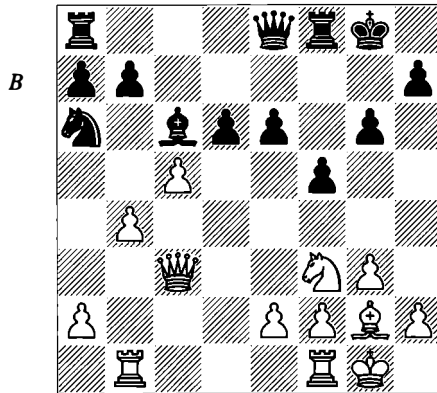
b) 15...♚f7? (hunting the a2-pawn is a poor idea) 16 ♚xc3 and then:

b1) 16...♚xa2?! 17 ♜a1! (17 cxd6 exd6 18 ♜a1 ♚f7 19 ♜g5 ♚e7) 17...♚f7 18 ♜g5 ♚e8 (18...♚f6 19 ♚b3+ ♜h8 20 ♙xc6 bxc6 21 ♜e6) 19 ♚b3+ ± ♜h8 20 ♙xc6 ♚xc6 21 b5 (Ftačnik).

b2) 16...♙b5 17 a4 ♙xa4 18 ♜g5 ♚g7 19 ♚xg7+ ♜xg7 20 ♙xb7 +.

c) 15...♜f7 is answered by 16 ♚xc3 dxc5 (16...♙e4 17 ♜g5) 17 b5 ♙xb5 18 ♜e5.

**16 ♚xc3 (D)**



**16...dxc5!**

Or:

a) 16...♖d8 is similar to the game, except that White doesn't need to sacrifice any pawns to show his strategic advantage after 17 cxd6 ♖xd6. But he can also 'take a risk' playing 18 b5 ♗xb5 19 ♘d4 ♗c6 20 ♘xc6 bxc6 21 ♖b7 ♖f7 22 ♖fb1 ± c5 (a very sorry position for Black) 23 h4 (or 23 e3) with clear superiority.

b) 16...♗e4 17 cxd6! ♗xb1 18 ♖xb1 gives White more than enough compensation for the exchange. Black needs to take care of his e6-pawn and the threat of the concealed advance of the passed d-pawn, in addition to the difficulties in bringing his knight into the battle. After 18...♖d8 (18...♖c8 19 ♗d4 ♖a4 20 ♘g5 ♖xa2 21 ♖a1 ♖c4 22 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 23 ♘xe6 +-) 19 ♖e5 ♗d7 20 b5 ♘b8 21 ♖d1 White's pieces rule the board.

**17 b5!**

This move totally alters the pawn-structure and was the basis of Kramnik's decision to play 15 c5+. It is necessary to trust a position a lot – and to have a superb intuition – to give up two pawns for mere positional compensation. The idea behind this move is to take advantage of White's control of the e5-square and occupy it with the knight, thus avoiding the exchange of bishops, the other white minor piece that will be a destabilizing influence in the near future. But without immediate tactical elements, this decision hardly has any precedents in modern top-level chess. Of course Black is without counterplay, but he is able to rearrange his position slowly, solving the trouble caused by the bad location of his pieces, so this decision demands a great chess understanding.

After 17 bxc5?! Black gets a good game by 17...♖c8! ♖ (c5 is weak) or 17...♗e4! 18 ♖bc1 ♖c8.

**17...♗xb5 18 ♘e5**

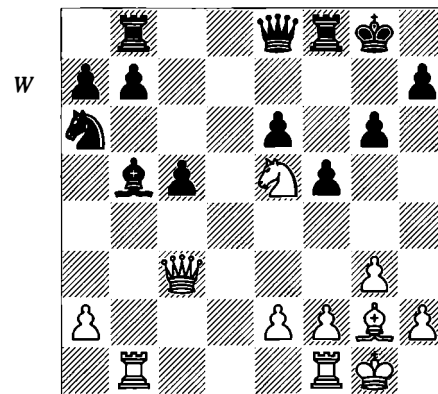
Black is two pawns ahead, but the situation of his pieces is very feeble. The knight is off-side, and bears a heavy load, the defence of c5. The b5-bishop lacks a good diagonal, and its best theoretical square would be to come back to c6 trying to remove one of White's superb pieces. However, this is inadvisable, because Black's king would be quickly exposed when the white rook penetrates to the seventh rank

creating lethal threats. This detail (the black king's weakness) is vital to the assessment of the sacrifice, along with Black's obvious trouble in defending his weak dark squares. Black's queen cannot extinguish all the fires either, since it is very restricted by White's centralized knight and logically also, due to its work as 'nanny' of the b5-bishop.

18 ♘g5 ♗c6 19 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 20 ♗xb7 is also interesting but after 20...♖e7! 21 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 22 h4 Black has solved many of his problems, and the compensation, which without doubt still exists, is greatly lessened.

**18...♖b8 (D)**

There is no alternative: 18...♗c6?! 19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 ♖b7! +- (20 ♖c4 ± Notkin); 18...♗xe2 19 ♖fe1 ♗b5 20 ♗xb7 ♖b8 21 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 22 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 23 ♘d7 ±.

**19 ♖fe1! (D)**

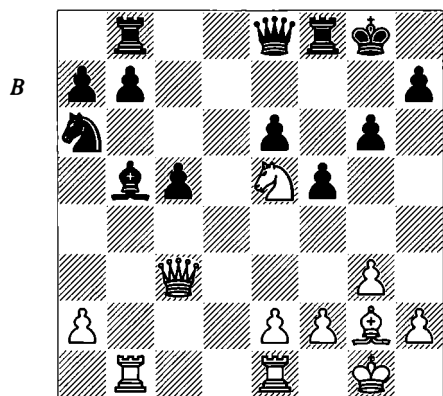
This quiet move is great. White tries to open the position in the only possible way: via the e-file, with e4. This break would keep the rook targeted on the black queen and the e6-pawn. Also, giving up a third pawn would be too much. Let us examine a few other moves:

a) 19 ♖a5 ♗xe2 20 ♖fe1 looks tempting but Black can release his bishop by playing the intermediate move 20...b6! 21 ♖a3 ♗b5, when the black knight is ready to go to c7 and to defend, if required, the weakness of e6.

b) Another curious possibility suggested by Kramnik is 19 g4 ♗xe2 20 ♖fe1 ♗xg4 (for a moment White is four pawns down!) 21 ♖xb7 (21 ♗xb7 ♖a4) 21...♖xb7 22 ♗xb7 ♘c7 (22...♖b5 23 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 24 ♘d7 ♖d8 25 ♘f6+ ♗f7 26

♖h7 e5 27 ♖xe5 ♗d6 also seems to solve Black's problems) 23 ♖xc5 ♗d8 and the black queen is ready to be activated, for example, penetrating to d2.

c) 19 ♜fd1 is interesting, threatening to enter via the d-file. However, after 19...♙a4! (19...♙xe2 20 ♜d7 ♘b4 21 ♜xb4 cxb4 22 ♖c7 +; 19...b6 20 e4 ♘c7 21 exf5 exf5 22 ♜e1 ♜d8 23 ♘c6 ♙xc6 24 ♜xe8 ♙xe8 25 ♖a3 ±) 20 ♜d2 b6 21 e4 Black can react calmly: 21...♜d8! 22 ♜xd8 ♖xd8 23 ♖c4 ♘b4! 24 a3 (24 ♖xe6+ ♙g7) 24...♗d6 25 axb4 ♖xe5 26 b5 (26 bxc5 b5) 26...♗d4 27 ♖xe6+ ♙h8 28 e5 and level play will result.



**19...b6**

Black is trying to bring his knight quickly to the defence of the c5-pawn. After 19...♙c6, with the idea of exchanging one of White's active pieces, it becomes clear that the b5-bishop was fulfilling an important defensive task. For White, who must give up a critical piece, it is best to keep the e5-knight:

a) 20 ♘xc6?! bxc6 21 ♖a5 ♜xb1 (21...♘b4 22 ♖xc5 ♜b5 23 ♖xa7 ±) 22 ♜xb1 ♖c8 23 e3 ♜f7! and now neither 24 a3 ♜b7 (24...♜d7 25 ♙fl ♘b8 26 ♙c4) 25 ♜xb7 ♖xb7 nor 24 ♜d1 ♖b7 (24...♜c7 25 ♜d6 with compensation) 25 ♙fl ♘b4 can satisfy White.

b) 20 ♙xc6! bxc6 21 ♖c4 (the e5-knight and the rook operating along the d-file keep Black's pieces extremely passive, and zugzwang is not far off) 21...♜b5 (21...♖c8 22 ♜xb8 ♘xb8 can be met by 23 e4 ± or 23 ♜d1 ±) 22 a4 ♜xb1 23 ♜xb1 ♖c8 24 ♜d1 with compensation. For example: 24...♘c7 (24...♘b8 25 ♜d6 ♜e8

26 h4) 25 ♖xc5 (25 ♘xc6 ♘d5 26 ♖xc5 ♖a6) 25...♘d5 (25...♜d8 26 ♜b1 a6 27 ♘xc6 ♘d5 28 ♜d1 +-) 26 ♖xa7 ♖b8 27 ♖xb8 ♜xb8 28 ♘xc6 ♜b6 (28...♜b2 29 ♜a1 ♜b6 30 ♘e5) 29 ♜cl g5 30 a5 ♜a6 31 ♜c5 ±.

**20 e4**

This break opens new possibilities for the rooks, besides adding tactical resources around Black's king and queen, since the kingside is weakened.

20 a3 is too passive to be considered.

**20...♘c7**

Malaniuk prefers the most logical option, at a moment when he has a lot of choices that lead to rather unclear assessments. Intuition plays a major role here. Other moves:

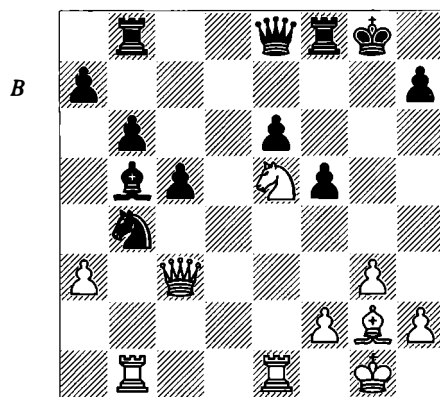
a) 20...fxe4 21 ♘g4! e5 22 ♜xe4 ±.

b) 20...f4 21 ♘g4 e5 (21...h5 22 ♘f6+ ♜xf6 23 ♖xf6 ±) 22 ♘e5 with the threat of ♘g4 and ♘h6+.

c) 20...♜d8!? can be considered.

d) 20...♙a4!? is another idea.

e) 20...♘b4! is surely the best practical possibility to counter White's pressure. 21 exf5 (21 a3 ♘c6 22 ♜xb5 ♘xe5 23 ♖xe5 ♖xb5 24 ♖xe6+ ♜f7 25 exf5 ♗d7! 26 fxg6 ♖xe6 27 ♜xe6 ♜d7 ♢) 21...gxf5 22 a3 (D) (22 ♗d2 ♗d8!) and now:



e1) 22...♘c6 23 ♜xb5 ♘xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♖xb5 25 ♖xe6+ ♜f7 (25...♙g7 26 ♖e5+ ♙g6 27 ♗d6+ wins for White) 26 ♙d5 ♜bf8 27 ♖xf5 ♙g7 (27...♖b2 28 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 29 ♜e8+ ♙g7 30 ♖g5#) 28 ♖g5+ ♙h8 29 ♙xf7 ♜xf7 30 ♗d8+ ♙g7 31 ♜e8 +.

e2) 22...♘d5! and then:

e21) 23 ♖xd5 (a radical solution) 23...exd5 24 ♗d2 and now:

e211) 24...♗d8? 25 ♗g5+ ♖h8 26 ♜xb5 ♗xb5 27 ♘f7+ ♜xf7 28 ♗xd8+ ♖g7 29 ♜e8 h6 30 ♜g8+ ♖h7 31 ♜h8+ ♖g7 32 ♗g8+ ♖f6 33 ♜xh6+ ♖e7 34 ♗b8! +-.

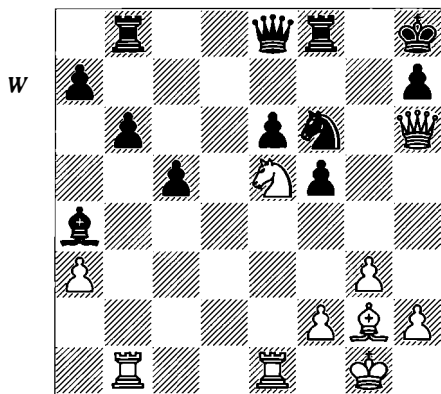
e212) 24...♗c6!? 25 ♗g5+ ♖h8 26 ♗h6 (White has compensation) 26...♗a8 (Black wants to keep the chance of playing ...♗b7, guarding the second rank; 26...♗c8 is the alternative) 27 h4 (27 ♗b2 d4 28 ♗be2 ♗e4) 27...♜g8 (27...d4 28 h5 ♗e4!? is another defensive possibility) 28 h5 ♗f8 29 ♗e6 ♗b7.

e22) 23 ♗d2! ♘f6 and now:

e221) 24 ♗bd1!? ♗e7.

e222) 24 ♗ed1 ♗a4 25 ♗g5+ ♖h8 26 ♗d2 ♗c8 (26...♗d8 27 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 28 ♗h6 ♖g8) 27 ♗f4 b5 28 ♗b7 ♗b8 29 ♗c6 ♗e7.

e223) 24 ♗g5+ ♖h8 25 ♗h6 ♗a4 (D) (controlling the d1-square; 25...♗a6 26 ♗bd1).



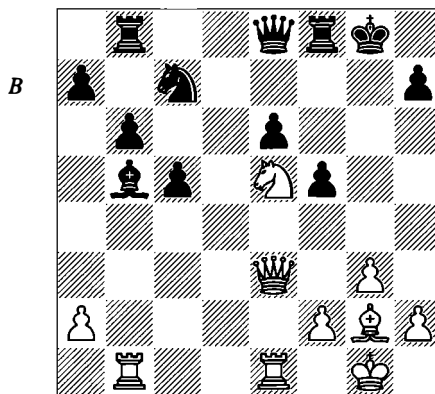
This position is critical for the assessment of Kramnik's sacrifice. White will try to bring his queen's rook – the only piece that is not fully participating – to the kingside. Kramnik suggested 26 ♗bc1 (planning ♗c4-h4; 26 ♗f3 is met by 26...♗d8 27 ♗e3 ♗c2 28 ♗be1 ♗e4) 26...♗h5 (26...♗d8 27 ♗c4 ♘g8 28 ♗g5 ♗b5 29 ♗h4 ♗f6 30 ♗f3 ♗e7 31 ♗c6 ♗a6 32 ♗a4 ♗c8) 27 ♗f4. In theory White has great compensation, but it becomes clear that the black knight is now better placed, near his king, and the black bishop is active: 27...♗b3!? 28 ♗f3 (28 ♘c6 ♗a8 29 ♗d6 f4) 28...♗e8 (28...♘g4? 29 h3 ♗xh3? 30 ♘xg4 fxg4 31 ♗e5+ ♖g8 32

♗g5+ ♖h8 33 ♗xg4 +-) 29 ♘c6 ♗a8 30 ♗h6 and now 30...a5! enables Black to defend the second rank when the knight returns to the battlefield.

### 21 exf5 gxf5

21...exf5 is bad in view of 22 ♘g4! fxg4 23 ♗xe8 ♗xe8 24 ♗e5 ♗f7 25 ♗d5 ±. Nor is it fully sound to capture with the rook: 21...♗xf5 22 ♗h3 ♘d5 (22...♗f8 23 ♘g4; 22...♗h5 23 ♗g4) 23 ♗a3 (23 ♗d2 ♗c6 24 ♗xf5 exf5 25 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 26 ♗e5 ±) 23...a6 24 ♗xf5 gxf5 gives White a slight advantage.

### 22 ♗e3 (D)



The queen moves towards the enemy king. Black's pieces lack coordination and the c7-knight doesn't end up cooperating in defensive missions, the same as the bishop that is 'cut off' on the queenside, seemingly with few chances of entering the battle.

### 22...a6?!

Black is guarding the bishop in case White takes it with the rook at some point, or, supposing Black played ...♗e7, anticipating the reply ♗c6. However, the b6-pawn is now weakened and the black rook will have to remain on b8, rather than being activated.

There are other options, but on the whole White's position is already easier to play or at least Black is more uncomfortable. Let us see:

a) 22...♗h5 23 ♗f3!.

b) 22...♖h8 23 ♗h6 ♗g8 (23...♗a4 24 ♗f3 intending ♗h5 and ♘g6+) 24 ♗xb5 ♗xb5 (or 24...♘b5 25 ♗c6 +-) 25 ♘f7#.

c) 22...♘d5 23 ♗xd5 exd5 24 ♗g5+ ♖h8 25 ♘f3 and there is no reasonable way for Black

to prevent the rook entry on the seventh rank:  
25...♙e2 26 ♖d2 ±.

d) 22...♗e7 23 ♙c6! f4 (23...♙a6 24 ♘d7 +-; 23...a6 24 ♙xb5 axb5 25 ♘c6 +-) 24 ♗f3 ♙xc6 25 ♘xc6 ♗g5 26 ♘xb8 fxg3 27 ♗xg3 ♗xg3+ 28 hxg3 ♙xb8 29 ♙bd1 ±.

e) 22...♙d8 23 ♗g5+ ♙h8 24 ♗h6 (or 24 ♙f3) 24...♙g8 (24...a6 25 ♙f3 ♙d6 26 ♙h5 ♗d8 27 ♙g6 ♗e7 28 ♙xh7) 25 ♙xb5 ♘xb5 26 ♙c6 ♗f8 27 ♗xf8 ♙gxf8 28 ♙xb5 ±.

f) 22...♙a4 is possible. This move is always a defensive trick that Black should consider, because it covers the d1-square, preventing White's queen's rook from penetrating via this file. 23 ♙bc1! seems to be the best reply, with the idea of the rook-lift ♙c4-h4. Other interesting and active ideas to keep in mind are 23 h4!?, 23 ♗f4!?, and 23 ♙f3, when 23...♗e7?! is met by 24 ♙c6!.

23 ♗g5+ ♙h8 24 ♙bd1

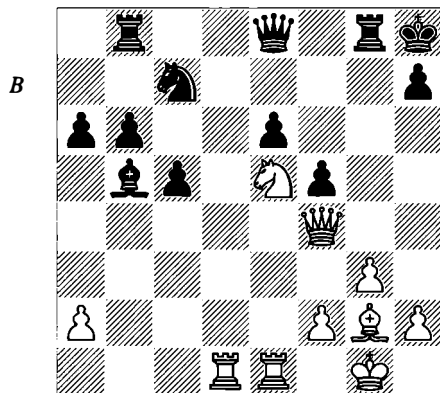
Black is now completely dominated and he cannot fight against White's control of the d-file.

24...♙g8

If Black obstructs d5 by 24...♘d5 (24...♙d8? 25 ♙xd8 ♗xd8 26 ♘f7+ +-; 24...♙c8 25 ♙d6 ±) White can decisively sacrifice the exchange: 25 ♙xd5!? exd5 26 ♙xd5 ♙c8 (26...♙d8 27 ♘f7+ +-; 26...♗d8 27 ♘g6+ ♙g7 28 ♙e7+ +-; 26...c4 27 h4 intending h5 and ♘g6+) 27 ♘f7+ ♗xf7 28 ♙xf7 ♙xf7 29 ♙e7 ±.

25 ♗f4! (D)

The queen gets another very strong diagonal, and it is also preparing the advance a4, ruining the hopes of the bishop. After 25 ♗f6+ ♙g7 26 ♙d6 ♗e7 Black can defend.



25...♗e7

25...♙g7 26 ♙d6! ♗e7! 27 ♙ed1 ♙e8 is better. Black's position proves quite resilient, and his bishop performs several defensive tasks. Then:

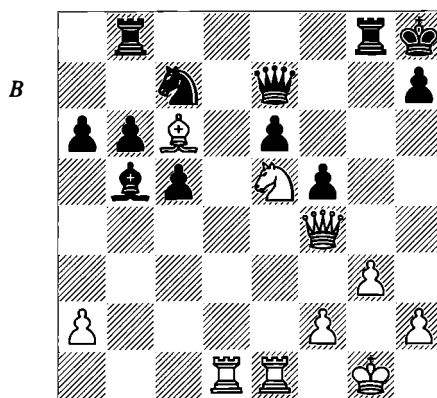
a) 28 ♙d7 ♙xd7 29 ♘xd7 e5.

b) 28 ♙c6 ♘b5 (28...♙h5 29 ♙d7 ♙xd1 {29...♗g5 30 ♗xg5 ♙xg5 31 ♙xc7 ♙xd1 32 ♘f7+} 30 ♙xe7 ♙xe7 31 ♘d7 +-) 29 ♙xb5 (29 ♙d7 ♙xd7 30 ♙xd7 ♗f8 31 ♘f7+ ♙xf7 32 ♙xf7 ♗xf7 33 ♗xb8+ ♙g7 34 ♗xb6 ♗a7 35 ♗d8 ♘d4 is unclear; 29 ♙d6 29 ♘d4 30 ♙xd4 cxd4 31 ♘g6+ ♙xg6 32 ♗xb8+ ♙g8 33 ♗e5+ ♗g7 34 ♗xe6 f4) 29...axb5 30 h4 (30 ♗h6 ♗g5 31 ♗xe6 ♙e7) 30...♗f6 31 ♙e1 ♙d8 (31...b4!?) 32 ♘f3 (or 32 ♙xb6 ♙d4 33 ♗f3) 32...♙g4 (32...♙xd6 33 ♗xd6 ♙f7 34 ♘g5 ♙g8) 33 ♙xd8 ♗xd8 34 ♗e5+ ♙g7 35 ♘g5.

c) 28 ♘c6! (in my opinion White should keep his bishop and get rid of the black one, even at the expense of the powerful knight) 28...♙xc6 29 ♙xc6! b5 30 ♗e5 c4 (30...♙d8 31 ♙xd8+ ♗xd8 32 ♙xc5) 31 ♙cd6 ♙g8 32 ♙c6! (32 ♙xe6 ♗xe6 33 ♙d5 ♗xd5 34 ♙xd5 ♙e8) with crushing positional control.

26 ♙c6! (D)

A pragmatic and forcing move – maybe the only one of the game. Again 26 ♙d6!?, deserves attention.



26...♙g4?

This move hardly puts up any resistance. 26...♙bf8 27 ♙d7 +-; 26...♙bd8 27 ♙xd8 (27 ♙xb5 ♙xd1 {27...axb5 28 ♘c6 ♙xd1 29 ♘xe7 ♙xel+ 30 ♙g2 +-} 28 ♙xd1 ♘xb5 29 ♙d7 ♗f6 30 ♘f7+ ♙g7 31 ♘h6+ ±) 27...♙xd8 28

♙xb5 (intending ♜c6) 28...axb5 29 ♜c6 ♖d7 30 ♜xd8 +-.  
**27 ♜xg4 ♙xc6 28 ♜d6!**

After 28 ♜e5 ♙d5 Black might still resist thanks to his strong bishop.

**28...♙e8**

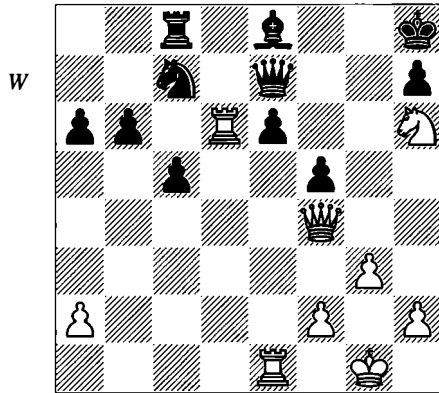
Or: 28...♙d5? 29 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 30 ♖xb8+ +-; 28...fxg4 29 ♜xc6 ♜b7 30 ♖xg4 +-.

**29 ♜h6?!**

While this move doesn't lose the advantage, it makes things more difficult due to Kramnik's time-trouble. He should play 29 ♜dx6! ♜xe6 30 ♖e5+! (or 30 ♖xb8 fxg4 31 ♖e5+ +-) 30...♖g7 31 ♖xb8 ♜c7 32 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 33 ♖xe8+ +-.

**29...♜c8! (D)**

Lengthening Black's resistance. 29...♖g7 30 ♜dx6 ♜xe6 31 ♖xb8 +-.



**30 ♜xb6**

30 ♜dx6! ♜xe6 31 ♖e5+ ♖g7 32 ♖xe6 wins a piece: 32...♙d7 33 ♜f7+ ♙g8 34 ♖xd7 +-.

**30...♖g7 31 ♜b7 ♙c6 32 ♜a7 ♜d5**

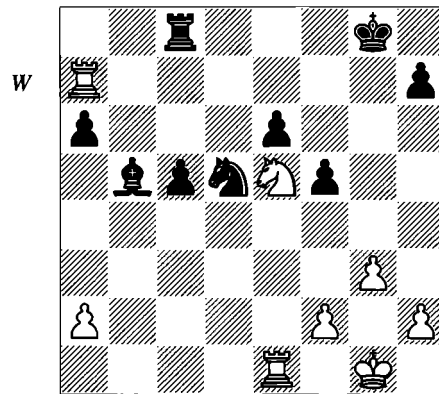
Or: 32...♙e4 33 ♖e5 ♖xe5 34 ♜f7+ ♙g8 35 ♜xe5 +-; 32...♙d5 33 ♜c1 c4 34 ♖e5 ♖xe5 35 ♜f7+ ♙g8 36 ♜xe5 +-.

**33 ♖e5**

Simpler than 33 ♜xg7 ♜xf4 34 ♜e7 ♜h3+ 35 ♙f1 ♙b5+ 36 ♙g2 ♜g5 ±.

**33...♖xe5 34 ♜f7+ ♙g8 35 ♜xe5 ♙b5 (D)**

35...♜c3!? 36 ♜xc6 (36 ♜xa6 ♜e2+ 37 ♜xe2 ♙b5 38 ♜xe6 +-) 36...♜xc6 37 ♜e7 +-.



**36 a4 ♙xa4 37 ♜xa6 ♙b5**

37...♙b3 38 ♜xe6 c4 39 ♜c6 +-.

**38 ♜xe6 c4 39 ♜d6 ♜b4 40 ♜b6 ♜c2 41 ♜b1! 1-0**

Black resigned on account of 41...♜a3 42 ♜1xb5 ♜xb5 43 ♜xb5 c3 44 ♜b1 +-.

# 12 Coordinating a Rook and a Knight

In many games we witness the superb connection between rook and bishop, in their usual clash against rook and knight, which usually act together in a clumsier way. However, as we will see in some semi-closed positions, both pieces may work harmoniously, mainly when the knight reaches a dominant position, and has good possibilities offered by a favourable pawn-structure.

**Ioseliani – Zsu. Polgar**  
*Monaco wom Ct (8) 1993*

**1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 c5**

Black is the first to begin hostilities in the centre, taking advantage of the fact that White has not played c4 yet.

**3 c4**

With this move, White declares her intention of fighting for the initiative in the centre.

**3...cxd4 4 cxd5 ♗f6**

Black has achieved a symmetrical pawn-structure, similar to the Queen's Gambit Accepted, which is a good choice when seeking a draw. Zsuzsa is also a great expert in this defence.

**5 ♖a4+**

This check is unnecessary; 5 ♖xd4 ♖xd5 transposes to the game.

**5...♗d7 6 ♖xd4 ♖xd5 7 ♗c3!?**

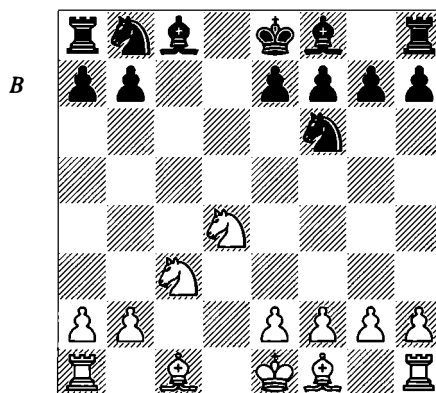
Symmetrical openings are sound but they produce an additional psychological problem for the side keeping symmetry. When it is broken, the side that is ahead can often develop a powerful initiative.

**7...♖xd4 8 ♗xd4 (D)**

White has a lead in development, as a result of the first central skirmishes, but Black has been able to exchange queens and doesn't have any weaknesses.

**8...♗d7**

It is not easy to find the most accurate method to counter the entry of a white knight on b5.



The standard 8...a6 has clear drawbacks, since it weakens the critical squares b6 and c5, which White might try to exploit technically with the thematic moves 9 e4 and 10 ♗e3. With her current decision, Black is relying on development (or 'anti-development'), but it is a risky approach.

**9 ♗db5! ♗d8**

9...♗a6 is good, since White's b5-knight will exert very unpleasant pressure. Now follows a new move, justifying Ioseliani's previous play.

**10 ♗e3!**

White's control of b6 means that Black cannot repel the knight free of charge: it will come at the cost of the invasion of another white minor piece, and condemning the black king to a sort of claustrophobia.

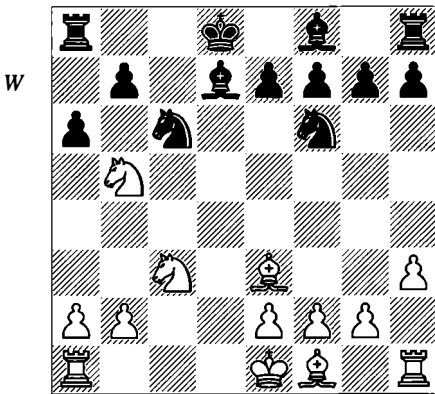
In Cifuentes-Dlugy, Amsterdam 1987 White played in a more unconcerned way and he lost his advantage: 10 ♗f4 ♗c6 11 ♖d1 a6 12 ♗d4 ♗xd4 13 ♖xd4 e6 14 g3 ♗c5 15 ♖d3 ♗e7 16 ♗g2 ♖a7 17 0-0 ♖c8 18 ♖fd1 b5 with a balanced position in the ending.

**10...♗c6 11 h3!**

A very precise move. This move exudes expansion and a good rearrangement of pieces (g4-g5 and ♗g2) and prevents the freeing move ...♗g4, which, for example, would be Black's reply against 11 0-0-0.

**11...a6 (D)**

In Robatsch-Motwani, Manila OL 1992, Black happily gave up the d6-square but he didn't obtain a very promising game: 11...e6 12 ♖d1 b6 13 g3 ♗b4 14 a3 (14 ♗g2!) 14...♗xc3+ 15 ♜xc3 ♜e7 16 ♗g2 ♜hd8 17 0-0 ♗e8 18 ♜b5 ♜d5 19 ♗xd5 (19 ♗g5+ f6 20 e4 is better) 19...♜xd5 20 ♜xd5 exd5 21 ♜c1 ♜d8 22 ♜d4 (22 ♜c7 d4! 23 ♗g5+ f6 24 ♗xf6+ gxf6 25 ♜xe8 d3!) 22...♜xd4 23 ♗xd4 f6 24 ♜c7+ ♜d7 25 ♜c3 ♜d6 1/2-1/2. White didn't continue accurately after getting a comfortable positional advantage.



Obviously, Polgar had prepared this improvement at home and she relied on the following defensive manoeuvre.

**12 ♗b6+ ♜c8 13 ♜a3**

13 ♜c7!? is very interesting. Complications might then follow: 13...♜b8 14 e4 e6 15 ♜d1 ♗b4 16 ♜xa6 bxa6 17 ♗xa6+ ♜b7 18 0-0 ♜b8 19 ♜a4 ♜xb6 (19...♜e5 20 ♜d4) 20 ♜xb6 ♗e8, and it is not clear how White can make progress after capturing on a6.

**13...e5 14 ♜c4**

Bringing the cornered knight to the battle for the centre (and to the b6-square) seems a logical decision. The attempt to force the game by means of 14 0-0-0 ♗e6 15 g4 doesn't trouble Black: 15...♜d7 16 ♗e3 ♗c5 17 ♗xc5 ♜xc5 18 ♗g2 ♜c7 19 ♜d5+ ♗xd5 20 ♜xd5 ♜e6 21 ♜hd1 ♜ad8.

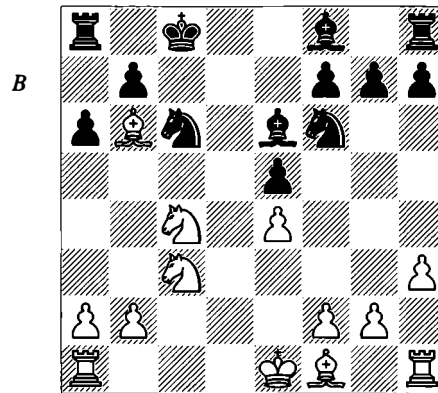
**14...♗e6!**

First, this move controls d5, but the underlying idea is to get rid of the uncomfortable thorn (that on b6). Death to the intruder! The

d7-square is kindly given to the knight, to expel the white bishop who is trapping the black king. This will lead in turn to the desired connection of the black rooks.

**15 e4! (D)**

The weakness of the d4-square is a less high-priority reason than the control of d5. In the event of 15 e3 ♜d7 the bishop would have no retreat.

**15...♗b4!**

The pawn-structure is going to play a major role and Zsuzsa judges it useful to give up this useful bishop (which controls the weak dark squares) in return for 'king + good squares for the knights'. After 15...♜d7 would follow 16 ♜d5!.

**16 0-0-0 ♗xc3**

Black must remove this knight. If 16...♜d7, then 17 ♜d5 ±.

**17 ♜d6+**

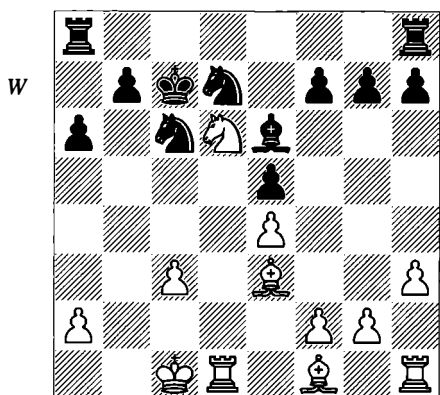
White must defend his e-pawn, but with this check White gives up the outpost on b6. You cannot have everything!

**17...♜b8 18 bxc3 ♜d7**

The capture on a2 might be suggested only by an unconscious analysis module: 18...♗xa2 19 c4! ♜d7 20 ♜xf7 (20 ♗e3 seems better still) 20...♜xb6 21 ♜xh8 winning the exchange.

**19 ♗e3 ♜c7! (D)**

Finally Black can use her king for the first time in the game, and a critical position arises. From what looked like a very difficult position, Black is ready to finish her development, and White must find a way to create problems. White now has a number of natural moves.



Which of them would you choose? I prefer 20 g3! in order to open the game for the bishops with a future f4 (20 f4 is not possible at once, because of 20...exf4 21 ♔xf4 ♘de5), but I keep a sublime admiration for Ioseliani's actual choice. Certainly, this is one of those moments when you would want to be facing one of the top-ten players in history and make them participants of this dramatic decision. We have two good moves, but as so many times... we can only choose one! After 20 g3 the 'computer' capture remains poor, although it is much less risky now: 20...♔xa2 21 ♔c4 ♘f6 22 ♘xf7 (22 ♖b2 ♗hd8 23 ♔c5 ♘xe4) 22...♔b3! 23 ♗e1 ♗he8 24 ♖b2! ♘a5 25 ♔c5!? ♔xc4 26 ♘d6 with a slight advantage.

Another option is the slow but instructive idea 20 ♘f5!? g6 21 ♘d6. White loses a tempo in return for weakening the dark squares. Do you think it is worth it?

**20 ♔c4!?**

Without a doubt this is a logical move. Ioseliani seeks to exchange Black's most active piece, responding to the dogma: quick connection of the rooks and a future doubling on the d-file, where White has good chances. However, the text-move has also its drawbacks: when capturing, the active knight retreats, and the 'theoretical' (and practical) advantage of the bishop-pair disappears. Obviously, Ioseliani had weighed all those factors, ending up with a deeper understanding of the position.

On the other hand, the analogous idea 20 ♔e2 allows 20...♘f6, preventing the bishop exchange on g4.

**20...♔xc4**

20...♘f8 loses a pawn without compensation: 21 ♔xe6.

**21 ♘xc4 f6**

Sooner or later this reply is necessary. The attempt to avoid this advance doesn't lessen the evils: 21...♗hd8 22 ♗d2 b5 23 ♘d6 ♘f6 24 ♗hd1 ♗d7 25 g4 (25 ♔g5!? seems even more effective: 25...♗ad8 {25...♘d4? 26 ♔xf6 gxf6 27 ♘f5} 26 ♔xf6 gxf6 27 ♘e8+ winning) 25...♗ad8 26 ♔c5 with an impressive control by White's forces.

**22 ♗d2!**

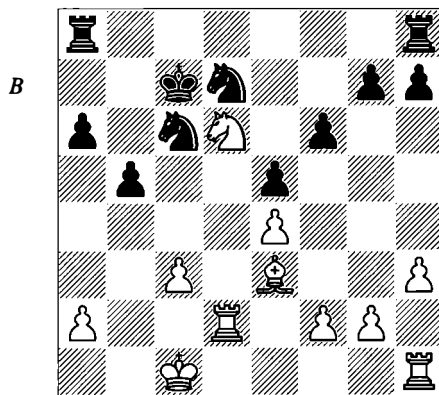
22 ♗d3!? looks very interesting, in order to attack along the third rank. We will check the accuracy of this comment later on.

**22...b5**

Black cannot activate the pieces without expelling the knight first, always attentive to the b6-square. Therefore 22...♗hd8 is not possible due to 23 ♗hd1!? (23 ♘d6 ♘f8!?) with the threat of 24 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 25 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 26 ♘b6+. Then, the previous retreat of the white knight (♘d6xc4) doesn't mean a loss of time, strictly speaking.

**23 ♘d6 (D)**

The knight returns where it was accustomed. From there it can go to f5. 23 ♗hd1 ♗ad8 24 ♘d6 ♘b6 gives White nothing.



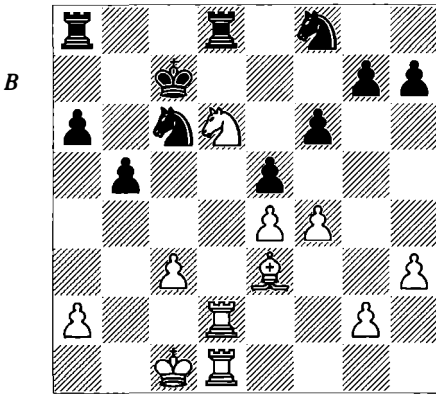
**23...♘b6**

A natural move, but perhaps perfunctory. This knight is looking for new horizons, e.g. the control of the squares c4 and a4, although White can place an unexpected obstacle in its path – one that was probably in Ioseliani's mind when she decided to play 20 ♔c4. White will

base her advantage on the coordination of her rook and knight, and in Black's troublesome kingside pawn-structure, which requires painstaking defence. Other possibilities:

a) 23...♘f8?! has a similar idea to line 'b', but it appears somewhat passive. Both 24 f4 exf4 25 ♙xf4 ♘g6 26 ♘xb5+ ♗b6 and 24 ♙hd1 ♙d8 (24...♗e6 25 ♘f7) 25 ♘f7 ♙xd2 26 ♙xd2 ♙g8 27 f4 (27 ♙c5 ♗e6 28 ♙d6+ ♗b6) 27...♗d7 (27...♗e6 28 f5 ♗ed8 29 ♗d6) 28 f5 ♗a5 fail. However, 24 c4!? and 24 ♘f7 ♙g8 25 ♙hd1 (25 f4) deserve attention.

b) 23...♙hd8 24 ♙hd1 ♘f8 is possible. The aim is to bring the knight towards the better central location e6, from where it will guard against White's assault on g7 (by means of ♘f5), without altering the pawn-structure. The only drawback of this manoeuvre is the momentary detachment of the knight from the e5-square. White should profit immediately from this with 25 f4! (D). Then:



b1) 25...exf4?! 26 ♙xf4 ♗e6 (my primary defensive plan is now impossible: 26...♗g6? loses to 27 ♘xb5+! ♗b6 28 ♙c7+) 27 ♙g3 ♗b6 (27...♗e5 28 ♘f7! {or 28 ♙d5}) 28...♙xd2 29 ♙xd2 ♗c5 30 ♘xe5 ♗xe4 31 ♙d7+ ♗b6 32 ♙xg7 ♘xg3 33 ♗d7+ ♗c6 34 ♘xf6 +-) 28 c4!? b4 29 ♙d5 (29 c5+! ♗a7!) 29...♗e7 30 ♙f2+ ♗c7 31 ♘f7! ♘xd5 32 exd5 with absolute control.

b2) 25...♗e6 doesn't solve the problem either. 26 f5 and now:

b21) 26...♘f4 seems only to endanger the knight: 27 h4 ♗e2+ (27...♘xg2 28 ♙xg2 ♙xd6 29 ♙xg7+) 28 ♙xe2 ♙xd6 29 ♙b6+ ♗d7 30

♙xd6+ ♗xd6 31 ♙d2+ ♗e7 32 ♗c2 ♙b8 33 ♙c5+ ♗e8 34 ♙d6 ♙c8 35 ♙e6+ ♗d7 36 h5 (or 36 g4 in order to break with g5). White's rook and bishop rule the whole board.

b22) 26...♗ed4 27 ♘f7 (27 cxd4 ♙xd6 28 d5 ♗a5 doesn't get White much) 27...♙d7 28 cxd4 (28 ♘g5!?) 28...♙xf7 29 dxе5 ♘xe5 30 ♙f4 ♙e8 31 ♙d5 ♗c6 32 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 33 ♙xe5 fxe5 and White gets a very advantageous structure; e.g., 34 g4! (34 ♙d5? ♙xf5!) 34...♙d7? 35 ♙xd7 ♗xd7 36 a4! +-.

b3) 25...♙d7 acknowledges that Black has no radical solution. White can reply:

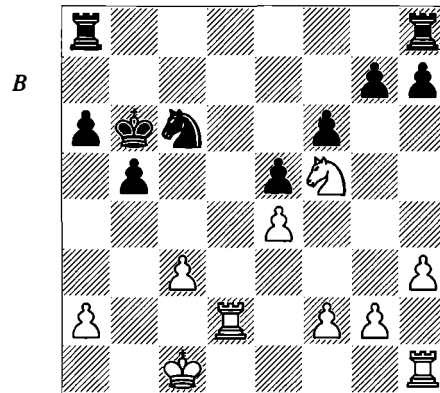
b31) 26 c4!? is an interesting way to break open lines.

b32) 26 f5 ♙ad8 27 ♙c5 ♗a5 28 ♙d5 gives White pressure.

**24 ♙xb6+!**

A great idea! White liquidates the knight that goes to c4 and envisages the advantage in the superb coordination of her rooks together with the knight. The structure is now in the foreground, and the static character of Black's kingside structure fully compensates for the defects of White's queenside.

**24...♗xb6 25 ♘f5! (D)**



**25...♙hd8**

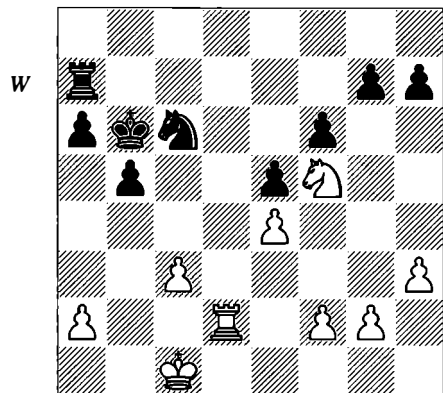
The only move. If 25...g6, then 26 ♗e3 and the weakness on f6 will be obvious: 26...♙ad8 (26...♙hf8 27 ♙d7 ±) 27 ♙hd1! (27 ♗d5+ ♗b7 28 ♘xf6 ♙xd2 29 ♗xd2 ♙f8!) 27...♙xd2 28 ♙xd2 ♙f8 29 ♙d7 h5 30 ♙g7.

**26 ♙hd1!**

'The threat is stronger than its execution.'

**26...♙xd2 27 ♙xd2 ♙a7! (D)**

Again the only defence, preventing the invasion by the white rook via the seventh rank, and defending the g7-pawn without weakening the pawn-structure. 27...g6 is met by 28 ♖e3 ♜f8 29 ♜d7!.



We are facing another critical point of the game. Black has been able to control the entry-points of the rook and she seems to be ready to counter the active situation of the f5-knight. Ioseliani manages to make progress in the only possible way, trying to create a new reason of concern for the opponent. This classical rule of the side wanting to exploit an advantage is called in chess jargon 'the principle of two weaknesses'.

**28 h4!**

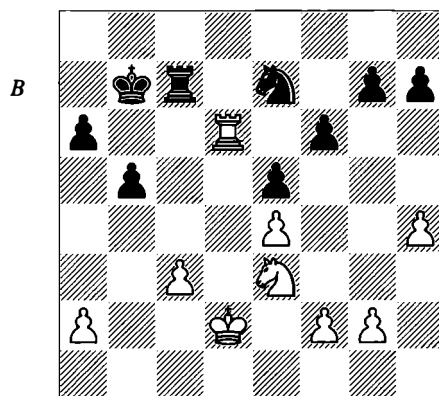
Beginning a plan to weaken the kingside pawns. In addition to its logical appearance, the combined attack of the h-pawn and the knight is aesthetically pleasing.

**28...♜f7**

Stopping the advance of the h-pawn drastically by 28...h5 is worse, since Black would have to take on an inferior structure after the break with f3 and g4, and after this, it is not clear that the new weaknesses could be held after an attack by the white rook.

Natural moves are not always the best solutions in concrete situations, and we have a good example here. With the text-move, Zsuzsa is trying to free herself by means of the advance ...g6 and ...f5, as well as locating her king on c7 to help guard the entry-squares. This plan fails since there is not enough time to carry out this defence. The most appropriate move is 28...♜c7!

seeking counterplay on the other side of the board, with ideas like ...♘d4, ...b4 or ...♘a5, according to White's reply. After 29 ♘e3 there might follow 29...♘e7 (another consistent move is 29...♗b7) and it is hasty to go in with the rook by means of 30 ♜d6+ (30 ♗b2! is better: White brings up his king, anticipating an eventual exchange of rooks) 30...♗b7 (30...♜c6 loses to 31 ♜d7!) 31 ♗d2 (D) (31 ♗b2!? and 31 ♗c2!? may both be more accurate) and White's theoretical advantage is not easy to exploit.



For instance: 31...♜c6 (not 31...♘c8 32 ♜e6 ♜d7+ 33 ♘d5 ♘d6 34 ♗d3, when White makes progress) 32 ♜d8 ♜c8 33 ♜xc8 ♗xc8 34 c4 and then:

a) 34...b4? 35 ♗c2 (35 ♘d5 ♘c6 36 ♗c2 ♘d4+; 35 ♘f5 ♘xf5 36 exf5 ♗c7 37 ♗c2 ♗c6 38 ♗b3 ♗c5; 35 h5!? ♘c6 {35...h6 36 ♗c2 ♗b7 37 ♗b3 a5 38 ♗a4 ♗a6 39 c5} 36 h6 g6? {36...gxh6} 37 ♘d5 f5 38 ♘f6) 35...♗b7 (35...♗d7 36 ♗b3 ♘c6 37 ♘d5 a5 38 ♗a4) 36 ♗b3 ♘c6 37 ♘d5 (37 ♘f5 g6 38 ♘d6+ ♗b6 39 ♘e8 ♗c5 40 ♘xf6 h5!) 37...a5 38 ♗a4 ♗a6 39 c5 ♘d4 40 ♘c7+ ♗b7 41 ♘e8 ♗c6 42 ♘xg7 ♗xc5 43 ♘h5 f5 44 ♘f6 h6.

b) 34...♗b7 35 ♗c3 (35 cxb5 axb5 36 ♗c3 ♗b6) 35...♗b6 36 a4! =. Black has no need to go in for 36...bxa4 37 ♘d5+ ♘xd5+ 38 cxd5 ♗c5 39 ♗b2.

**29 h5 ♗c7**

Preventing the entry of the rook via d6 and d8. This was an important moment. Is 29...g6 playable? Let's see:

a) 30 ♘h4 (attacking g6 does not yield much) 30...♘e7 31 ♜d6+ ♗b7 32 ♜e6 gxh5!

(32...a5) 33 g3 f5 34 ♖xe5 fxe4 35 ♖xe4 ♣d5 =.

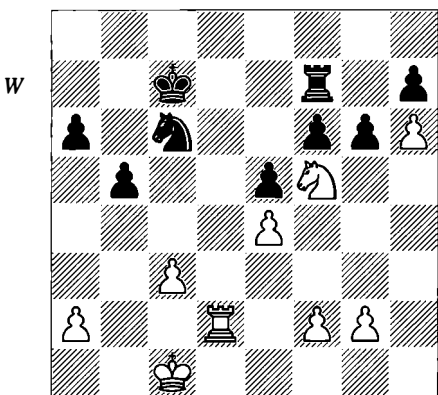
b) 30 hxg6 hxg6 31 ♣h4 ♣e7 32 ♖d6+ ♣b7 33 ♖e6 g5! (or 33...♖h7) 34 ♣f5 (34 ♣f3 ♣g6!? 35 g3 ♣f8) 34...♣xf5 35 exf5 ♖c7 (35...g4!?) 36 ♖xf6 (36 ♣d2 ♖c6) 36...♖xc3+ 37 ♣d2 ♖a3 38 ♖g6 ♖xa2+ 39 ♣e3 ♖a3+ (39...♖c2!?) 40 ♣e4 b4 with counterplay.

c) Perhaps Polgar restrained her first impulse due to the surprising idea 30 ♣h6 which allows the entry of the white rook, seeming to create serious threats. In fact the threat is not so serious: 30...♖g7 31 ♖d6 (31 g3 ♣c7 {or 31...gxh5} 32 ♖d3 gxh5 33 ♣f5 ♖g4 34 f3 ♖g5 and Black holds without problems) 31...gxh5! 32 g3 h4 (Black can also wait patiently with 32...♖g6 33 ♣f5 ♣c7!, and react with ...♖g4 later on) 33 gxh4 (33 ♣f5 ♖g4 34 ♣e7 ♣c7 35 ♖xc6+ ♣d7) 33...♖g1+ 34 ♣b2 (34 ♣d2 ♖a1 35 ♖xf6 ♖xa2+) 34...♖e1 with a balanced position.

**30 h6**

Finally White fixes the weakness at h7.

**30...g6 (D)**



**31 ♣g7!**

The h-pawn has provoked a weakening of Black's pawn-chain, and now provides ideal support for the dominant white knight, always in perfect coordination with the rook.

**31...♖e7!?**

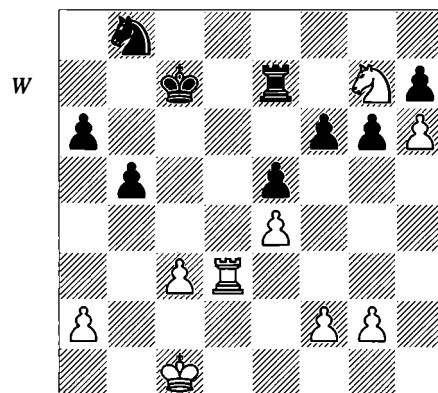
Tactics force Black into complete passivity. For instance: 31...♣d8 32 ♣e8+!.

**32 ♖d3!?**

White chooses a direct route towards f6.

**32...♣b8 (D)**

The knight goes to the defence, in the most logical way, and besides it will be placed in a more flexible position than before, on c6. However, this move doesn't anticipate White's next move, which Ioseliani surprisingly misses. Thus the attempt to get rid of White's h-pawn seems a better solution, by means of 32...♣d8!? 33 ♖f3 ♣f7! (33...♖f7? 34 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 35 ♣e8+ +-) 34 ♖xf6 ♣xh6 (logically, White keeps her positional advantage intact, thanks to her better pieces) 35 ♣e6+! (35 ♖xa6 ♣b7!) 35...♣c6 and now 36 ♣g5+ ♣b7 37 f3 or even better 36 f3! ♣g8 37 ♣d8+! ♣d7 38 ♖xa6 directly.



**33 c4!?**

This mistake could have had decisive importance in this critical game. As happens so often, straightforward and purely strategic play doesn't lead to the desired goal. Of course it is also difficult to think about minor risks when you have several aces in your hand, but in this case 33 ♖g3!! (with the incredible threat of 34 ♖xg6!) is no immature adventure, but pure intuition on the strength of the h-pawn. Black would then have to play 33...g5 (33...♖f7 34 ♖xg6 hxg6 35 h7 ♖f8 36 ♣e6+ doesn't help Black either) when 34 c4! has the same idea as in the game, but here White has also seriously weakened the opponent's pawn-structure.

**33...bxc4 34 ♖c3 ♣d6 35 ♖xc4 ♣c6**

Black cannot allow the white rook to enter, and she backtracks with the knight to block it; e.g., 35...♣d7 36 ♖c8!.

**36 ♣d2 ♖f7 37 ♣e3 ♖f8**

The rook cannot get much activity and it should control the jumps of the white knight.

The freeing attempt 37...f5!? (37...♖b7 is met by 38 ♘e8+) would produce opposite effects to those wanted, due to the unexpected move 38 ♘e6! followed by ♘g5, and the continuous threat against the h-pawn will be like a bone in Black's throat. For instance:

a) 38...♖b7 39 ♖xc6+ ♗xc6 40 ♘d8+ ♗c7 41 ♘xb7 ♗xb7 (41...f4+ 42 ♗f3 ♗xb7 43 ♗g4 ♗c6 44 ♗g5) 42 exf5 gxf5 43 f4 e4 44 g4 fxg4 45 ♗xe4 ♗c6 46 f5 +-.  
 b) 38...f4+ 39 ♗f3 ♘d7 40 ♘g5!?.  
 c) 38...♘a5 39 ♖a4 ♗xe6 40 ♖xa5 ♖a7 (40...f4+ 41 ♗f3 ♖a7 42 ♗g4 ♗f6 43 ♖c5 must be simpler) and with the preparatory move 41 g3 White shall be able to make good use of her excellent rook.

**38 g3!**

White must continue with her work and try to turn her small advantage into victory. This move prepares a new break, supporting the 'lone' but dominant situation of the white knight.

Did Ioseliani know that she could have already decided the game? Probably not, since this would have had a negative result in her mind.

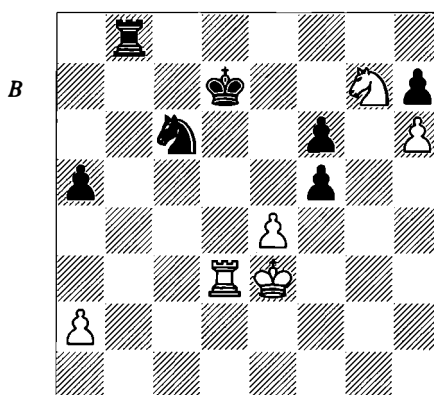
**38...♖b8**  
 The alternative is 38...♘e7!? 39 ♖b4 ♗c6, when it seems that the black king is able to prevent the entry by the rook.

**39 f4 ♘e7**

Now that the first rank is protected, Black directs her knight toward the h6-pawn, also trying to dispute the privileged 'observer' located on g7. Alternatives:

a) The spectacular 39...♘d4 proves impractical and would not prevent the happy coordination of White's rook and knight. After 40 ♖a4 ♖b6 41 ♖a5 (41 ♘e8+? ♗d7 42 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 43 fxe5 ♘c2+; 41 f5! gxf5 42 ♘xf5+ ♘xf5+ 43 exf5 reaches an ending that we shall see later on) 41...♘c6 (41...♘b5!) 42 ♖d5+ ♗e7 43 f5 g5 44 ♖c5 (44 ♘e6 ♖b2 45 ♘c5 ♘b8 46 ♖d2) 44...♗d6 45 ♖c2 White has reached her goal.

b) According to Alexandria the text-move was a mistake, and instead she suggests playing 39...exf4+!. Very probably she is right since after 40 gxf4 it seems that Black breathes a little and the pressure decreases. There might follow 40...a5 41 ♖c3! ♗d7 (41...♖b2? 42 ♘e8+) 42 f5! gxf5 (42...g5 43 ♘h5) 43 ♖d3+! (D).



However, this check keeps things in their place. All the king moves have their drawbacks: 43...♗c8 (43...♗c7 44 ♘e6+ ♗c8 45 exf5 ♖b2 46 ♖d6 ♖c2 ±; 43...♗e7 44 ♘xf5+) 44 ♘xf5 ♖b1 (44...♖b2 45 ♘d6+ ♗b8 46 ♖b3+ ♖xb3+ 47 axb3 ♘e7 48 ♗d4) 45 ♖d6 ♘e5 46 ♗d4 with a clear advantage for White.

**40 ♖a4! ♖a8?**

A fatal mistake on the last move before the time-control. After the active 40...♖b6! White has several possibilities:

a) 41 ♖a3 ♘g8.

b) 41 fxe5+ ♗xe5 42 ♘e8 (42 ♖d4 ♖d6) 42...♖c6.

c) 41 ♖c4 ♘g8 42 ♘e8+ ♗d7 43 ♖c7+ ♗xe8 44 ♖xh7 ♘xh6 45 ♖xh6 exf4+ 46 gxf4 ♖b2!.

d) 41 ♖a5!? exf4+ (alternatively, 41...♘c6 42 ♖d5+ or 41...♘g8 42 fxe5+ fxe5 43 ♖d5+) 42 gxf4 ♘g8 43 e5+ fxe5 44 fxe5+ ♗e7 45 ♖c5 and now rather than 45...♘h6 46 ♖c7+ ♗d8 47 ♖a7 ♘f5+ 48 ♘xf5 gxf5 49 ♗f4 with good chances for White, 45...♖b7! seems to hold on without problems.

e) 41 f5!? is best:

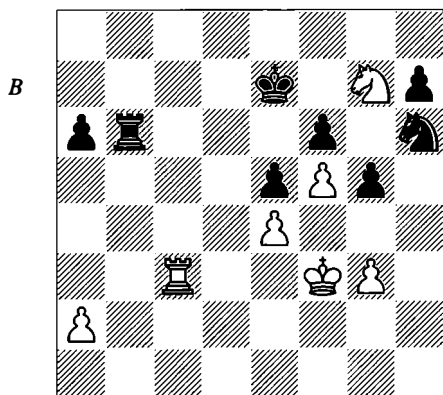
e1) The rook ending arising from 41...gxf5 42 ♘xf5+ ♘xf5+ 43 exf5 ♗d5 (43...♗c5!?) 44 ♗d3 ♖d6 45 ♖g4 is not very encouraging, but we will analyse it deeper in the notes to move 41, though with the black rook on another square, something that does not seem extremely important.

e2) 41...g5!? and here:

e21) Black has enough practical resources in the line 42 ♖c4 ♘g8 43 ♘e6 (43 ♘h5 ♗d7) 43...♘xh6 44 ♖c7 ♘g4+.

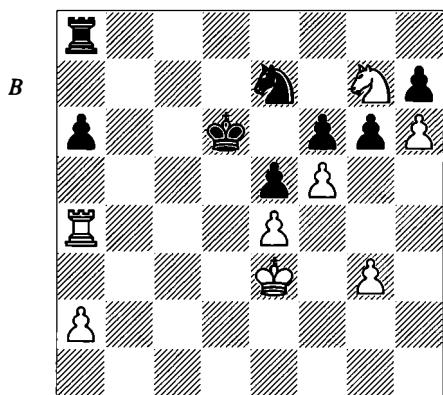
e22) 42 ♖f3 ♘g8 43 ♗h5 (43 ♜c4 ♜c6 44 ♜xc6+ ♖xc6!) 43 ♜a3 ♗hx6 44 ♜d3+ ♖e7 45 ♜c3) 43...♖c5!.

e23) 42 ♜a3! ♗g8 43 ♜d3+ ♖e7 44 ♜c3 ♗hx6 45 ♖f3!? (D) (45 ♜c7+ ♖d8 46 ♜a7 ♗g4+ 47 ♖f3 ♗h2+).



Although White has the advantage (in spite of the pawn less) it is obvious that Black keeps some hopes. The following line displays the terrific activity unfolded by the white pieces: 45...♖d6 (45...♖d7 46 ♗e6 ♜c6 47 ♗f8+ ♖d6 48 ♜xc6+ ♖xc6 49 ♗hx7 ♗g4+ 50 ♖e3 ♗g8 51 ♖d3) 46 ♜c8 ♜b2 47 ♜e8 (or even 47 ♗h5), and the sad situation of the black knight and the importance of capturing Black's f6-pawn are clear.

41 f5! (D)



Just in time, this pawn goes to help the white knight, creating new weaknesses and new entry points in Black's position.

41...g5

Black should play 41...gxf5! 42 ♗xf5+ (42 exf5 ♗g8). Then:

a) 42...♗xf5+ 43 exf5 ♖d5 leads to a rook ending that is clearly hopeless for Black, but rook endings are always hard work, and White must be accurate here:

a1) 44 ♜g4 ♜c8 45 ♜g7 ♜c3+.

a2) 44 ♗g4 a5 (44...♖c5 is possible) 45 ♖f3 ♖c5 (45...♜a7 46 ♖g3 ♜a8 47 ♖h4 e4) and then:

a21) 46 ♗g5 fxg5 47 ♖g4 ♖d5 48 ♖xg5 e4 (48...♜g8+ 49 ♖f6 ♜f8+ 50 ♖g7 ♜xf5 51 ♜xa5+ ♖e6 52 ♖xh7!?) 49 ♖f4 e3 50 ♜e4 (50 ♖xe3 ♖e5 51 ♜f4 ♜a6) 50...♜a6 51 ♜xe3 ♖hx6 52 ♜e5+ (52 ♜d3+ ♖c4 53 ♜d7 ♖h2) 52...♖d6 53 ♜xa5.

a22) 46 ♖e4 ♖b5 47 ♜a3 ♜d8 48 ♜d3 ♜xd3 49 ♖xd3 ♖c5 50 ♖e4 ♖d6 51 a4 ♖e7 (51...♖c6) 52 ♖d5 ♖d7 53 ♖c5 ♖c7 54 ♖b5 ♖d6 55 ♖xa5 ♖c5 56 ♗g5 57 f6 ♖d6 58 ♖b5 ♗4.

a3) 44 ♜a5+ ♖c4 45 ♗4 with good winning chances.

However, Black can avoid this storm and continue playing against the h-pawn:

b) 42...♖e6. The new rook ending is probably equal after 43 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 44 ♜b4 ♖f7 followed by ...♖g6, but White may continue pressing, securing the position of the knight, clearly the main character of the game, by means of 43 ♗4!. Now, the liquidation confirms White's advantage again, thanks to the potential passed pawn: 43...♗xf5+ 44 exf5+ ♖d5 45 ♜a5+ (45 ♖f3!? with the idea of ♗5 and ♖g4) 45...♖c4 46 ♗g5 fxg5 47 ♜xe5.

This was, of course, the best practical chance and would have forced White to play very accurately. Now Ioseliani finishes off elegantly, with a precise manoeuvre.

42 ♜b4!

42 ♗e6 ♗g8.

42...♖c6 43 ♗e6

Pursuing the entry on the seventh rank.

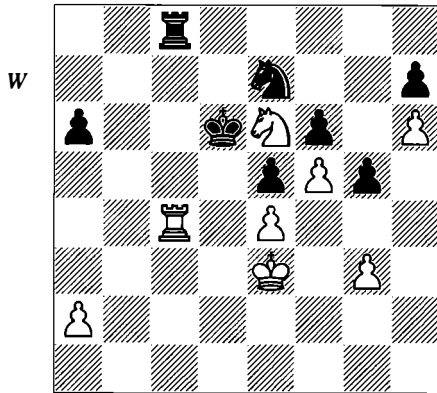
43...♜c8

43...♗g8 44 ♜c4+.

44 ♜c4+ ♖d6 (D)

45 ♜a4!

After 45 ♜xc8 ♗xc8 46 ♗f8 Black will confine the knight, and the compensation will be dubious: 46...♖e7 47 ♗hx7 ♖f7 (or 47...♗d6).



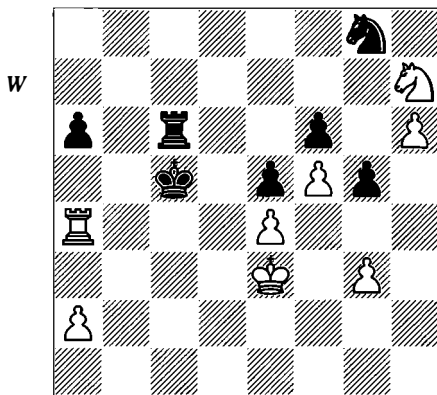
**45...♞c6?**

Losing a pawn and the game. But 45...♞a8 doesn't solve the problems either:

a) 46 ♞b4 ♜c6 47 a4 (or simply to penetrate to the seventh rank by 47 ♞c4+ ♜d6 48 ♞c7 ±) 47...a5 48 ♞b2 ♜g8 49 ♞c2+ ♜d6 50 ♞c7.

b) 46 ♞a5 ♜g8 47 ♞d5+ ♜e7 48 ♜c5 (48 ♞c5 ♞a7 49 ♞c8 ♜xh6; 48 ♞d2 ♞a7 49 ♞c2 ♜xh6 50 ♞c6) 48...♜xh6 (48...♞a7) 49 ♞d7+ ♜e8 50 ♞xh7 and White wins easily.

46 ♜f8 ♜g8 47 ♜xh7 ♜c5 (D)



48 ♜xg5 ♜xh6 49 ♜e6+ ♜b5 50 ♞a3

The rest is simple.

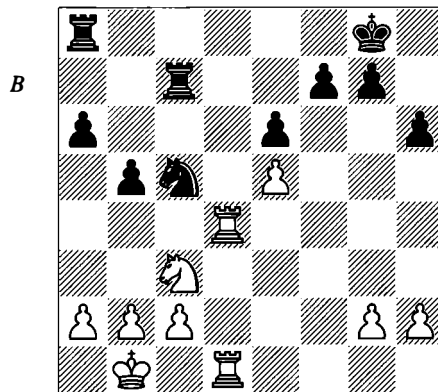
50...♞c2 51 ♜d3 ♞g2 52 ♜c7+ ♜c6 53 ♞c3+ ♜b7 54 ♜d5! ♜g4

In case of 54...♞xg3+ there follows 55 ♜c4 ♞xc3+ 56 ♜xc3 ♜g4 (56...♜g8 57 ♜c4 (57 ♜b4 ♜c6 58 a3 ♜d6 59 ♜a5 ♜c5) 57...♜c6 58 a3 (Black is in zugzwang) 58...♜d6 59 a4 ♜c6 60 a5 ♜d6 61 ♜b4) 57 ♜d3! ♜c6 58 ♜e2 ♜c5 59 ♜f3 ♜h2+ 60 ♜g2 ♜g4 61 ♜g3 +-.

55 ♞c7+ ♜b8 56 ♞f7  
56 ♞g7! ♞xg3+ 57 ♜e2 is decisive.  
56...♞xg3+ 57 ♜c4 ♞a3 58 ♜xf6 ♜f2 59 ♜d5 ♞xa2 60 ♜xe5 a5 1-0

Black decided to avoid more suffering. Nineteen moves with the same knight! The finishing touch would have been 61 ♜d6 ♞d2+ 62 ♜c6 a4 63 ♜d7+.

The following example illustrates the coordination between White's rook and knight perfectly. Together they support the advance of a pawn-majority on a flank, everything in perfect harmony with the space advantage acquired previously. The e5-pawn looks like a weakness, but this never becomes relevant; instead it obstructs Black's forces (splitting the board in two halves) and also reduces the activity of the black king and the power of Black's pawn-majority.



**Short – Kramnik**  
Amsterdam 1993

**25...♞b8?**

Black believes that he has comfortably equalized, but he doesn't realize the danger, something that usually happens in positions of a quiet character, and every now and then to the very best players. Without a doubt, psychology influenced the development of this game and Kramnik was more relaxed than is acceptable.

25...♞ac8 is well answered by 26 a3, but Black should take prophylactic measures by 25...♞aa7!? to give the knight a good retreat-square on d7.

After the text-move, Black will be restricted to passivity.

**26 b4! ♖b7 27 ♘e4**

Once the black knight is displaced, his white counterpart occupies a privileged place in the centre, supported by the e-pawn. Black's knight is misplaced on b7, and has poor future prospects.

**27...♙f8 28 ♖b2 ♙e7 29 a3**

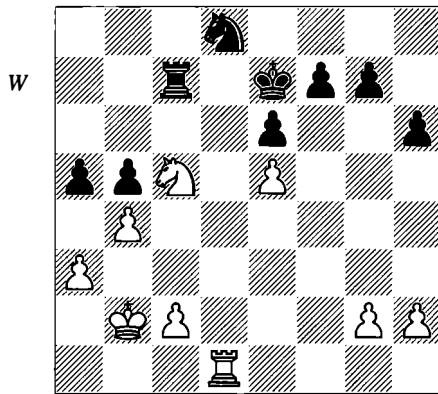
The most suitable break to make progress is with the help of c4. With this move Short clearly prepares this plan.

**29...♞d8**

By exchanging one of the rooks Black is implicitly accepting his secondary role. Any active attempt would be self-defeating: 29...♞bc8 30 ♞1d2 (30 ♖b3 f6!) 30...f6 31 exf6+ gxf6 32 g4 and Black's attempt to free himself has only made the weakness of Black's pawns clear.

**30 ♞xd8 ♘xd8 31 ♘c5 a5 (D)**

After 31...♘c6 32 ♞d6! ♘xe5 33 ♞xa6 ± White's queenside pawns, in connection with his active pieces, guarantee a comfortable advantage. Besides, Black's b-pawn is very weak.



**32 c4!**

Creating a passed pawn.

**32...axb4 33 axb4 bxc4 34 ♖c3 ♘c6?!**

It is better to try to exchange the strong white knight and to hurry up his bare hopes in the rook ending by means of 34...♘b7 35 ♖xc4 ♘xc5 36 bxc5 f6. Now:

a) 37 exf6+ (this move is not compulsory) 37...gxf6 38 ♞d3 (38 g4!?) 38...♞c8 leaves White better, but I cannot see a forced win; for example:

a1) 39 ♞h3 ♞g8 40 ♞xh6 ♞xg2 41 ♞h7+ ♖d8 42 c6 ♞c2+ 43 ♖b5 e5 44 h4 e4 45 h5 e3 46 h6 ♞b2+ (46...e2 47 ♞d7+ ♖c8 48 h7 ♞b2+ 49 ♖c5 ♞c2+ 50 ♖d4 ♞xc6 51 h8♙+ ♖xd7 52 ♙h7+ ♖d8 53 ♙e4 with a technical win) 47 ♖c5 ♞h2 (47...♞c2+ 48 ♖d4 ♞xc6 49 ♞a7) 48 ♞d7+ ♖c8 49 ♞e7 and now 49...♞xh6? loses to 50 ♖b6!, but it seems Black can get a draw by 49...e2! 50 ♖d6 e1♙ 51 ♞xe1 ♞d2+ 52 ♖e7 ♞h2 53 ♞e6 ♞xh6 54 ♖d6 ♞h8 55 ♞xf6 ♞d8+ 56 ♖c5 ♞d1.

a2) 39 ♞b3 e5 40 ♞b7+ ♖e6 41 ♞b6+ (41 ♖b5 e4) 41...♖f5 42 ♖d5 e4 (42...h5? is too slow due to 43 c6 h4 44 ♖d6, when White's rook will outweigh Black's pawns) creates counterplay that is not so easily ignored.

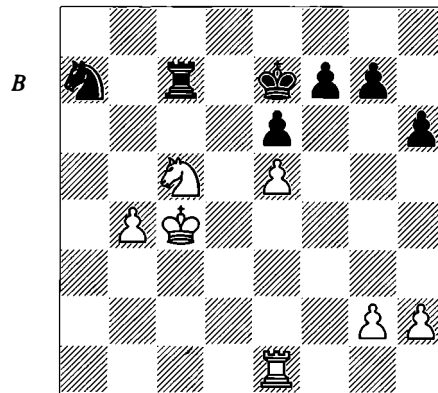
b) 37 ♖b5 (White would surely do well to neglect the pawn and begin to support his passed pawn) 37...fxe5 38 ♖b6 ♞c8 39 c6 ♞b8+ 40 ♖a7 ♞b2 41 ♞d7+ ♖f6 42 c7 ♞a2+ 43 ♖b7 ♞b2+ 44 ♖c8 ♞xg2 45 ♖d8 ♞c2 46 c8♙ ♞xc8+ 47 ♖xc8 e4 48 ♖c7 g5 49 ♖d6 ♖f5 50 ♞e7 +-.

After the text-move, the knight, seemingly active now, will be 'tamed' little by little until it becomes a tame lamb in the hands of White's king and passed b-pawn.

**35 ♞e1**

On e1, the rook, though temporarily passive, prevents ...f6.

**35...♘a7 36 ♖xc4 (D)**



**36...♖d8**

36...♘c8 37 ♖b5! and the king is gaining space and activity.

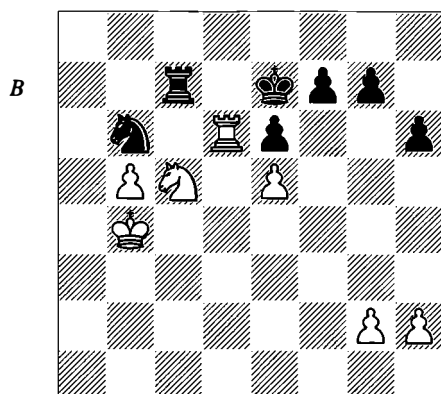
**37 ♞d1+! ♖e7**

37...♔c8 would deprive the knight of its ideal blockading square, and White would take advantage by advancing: 38 b5 ♖e7 39 ♜d6 ♕b8 40 b6 ♒c8 41 ♜d8 and the knight is reduced to ashes.

**38 b5 ♒c8 39 ♕b4 ♒b6?!**

This hastens the end. However, 39...♞a7 40 ♒a4 ♞b7 41 ♞c1 is also decisive.

**40 ♜d6! (D)**



**40...♒d5+ 41 ♜xd5! 1-0**

Kramnik resigned here, maybe prematurely, without being acquainted with his possibilities for counterplay in king and knight endings versus a dominant lone king. 41...exd5 42 b6 ♞c8 and then:

a) 43 ♒a6 ♞c1 44 ♕b5 ♔d7.

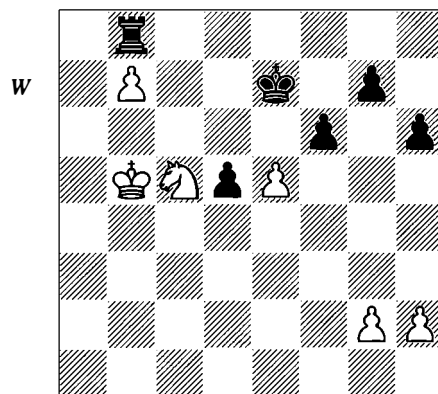
b) 43 ♕b5 f6!? 44 e6 (44 exf6+ gxf6 {or 44...♕xf6!}) 45 ♒a6 d4 46 b7 ♜d8) 44...♔d6! 45 ♒a6 ♞c1 46 e7 ♞b1+ 47 ♒b4 ♞e1 48 b7?! (48 ♒xd5!?) 48...♔c7 49 ♒xd5+? ♕xb7 50 ♔c5 ♞e6.

c) 43 b7! ♞b8 44 ♕b5 (the defensive idea 44 ♔c3? ♔d8! 45 ♔d4 ♔c7! 46 ♒a6+ ♕xb7 47 ♒xb8 ♕xb8 48 ♔xd5 ♔c7 49 e6 ♔d8!! 50 exf7 ♔e7 = is worth mentioning) with the following variations:

c1) 44...♞xb7+ 45 ♒xb7 ♔e6 46 ♕b4 (46 ♒d8+ ♔xe5 47 ♒xf7+ ♔e4 is only unclear) 46...♔xe5 47 ♔c3 and the king, with the help of a knight, cannot be prevented from penetrating.

c2) 44...d4 is an advance White wished to provoke; he now wins by 45 ♔c4! (not 45 ♔c6? ♜d8 {45...♔d8 46 e6! +-} 46 ♒d3 ♔e6 47 ♔c7 ♜d7+ {47...♞e8 48 b8♗ ♞xb8 49 ♕xb8 ♔d5 50 ♔c7 ♔e4 =}) 48 ♔c8 ♞xb7 49 ♕xb7 ♔d5 50 ♒f2 ♔xe5 51 ♔c6 ♔f4, leading to a draw) 45...♔d8 (45...♜d8 46 ♔d3 and Black is in zugzwang) 46 ♔xd4 ♔c7 47 ♒a6+ ♕xb7 48 ♒xb8 ♕xb8 49 e6! +-.

c3) 44...f6 (D) and here:



c31) 45 exf6+ gxf6 46 ♔c6 d4 47 ♒d3 (47 ♔c7 ♞g8 48 b8♗ ♞xb8 49 ♕xb8 ♔d6 50 ♒d3 h5) 47...♔e6 48 ♔c7 ♞g8 49 b8♗ ♞xb8 50 ♕xb8 h5 51 ♔c8 f5 52 ♔d8 (52 g3 ♔d5 53 ♒f2 ♔e6 54 ♔c7 f4! 55 gxf4 ♔f5 56 ♒d3 ♔e4 =) 52...h4 53 ♔e8? (54 ♒f4+) 53...♔d5 54 ♒f2 ♔e5 55 ♔f7 (55 g3 hxg3 56 hxg3 ♔f6 57 ♔d7 ♔g5 58 ♔e6 d3 59 ♔e5 d2 =) 55...♔f4 56 ♒d1 h3 57 gxf3 ♔g5 58 ♔e6 ♔h4 59 ♒f2 d3 60 ♔xf5 d2 61 ♔f4 d1♗ 62 ♒xd1 ♔xh3 eliminates White's last pawns.

c32) 45 e6! ♔d6 46 ♕b6 d4 47 ♔a7 ♞e8 48 b8♗+ ♞xb8 49 ♕xb8 d3 50 ♒xd3 ♔xe6 51 ♔c7 ♔f5 52 ♔d6 ♔e4 53 ♒c5+ ♔e3 54 ♒e6 ♔f2 (54...g5 55 ♔e7 ♔f2 56 g4 +-) 55 ♒xg7 ♔xg2 56 h4! +-.

c4) 44...f5!/? might be a good way to hinder White's attempts to win. The idea is to get rapid counterplay on kingside, based on ...g5, ...f4, etc.

# 13 The Dead Bishop

## Opposite-Coloured Bishops: Good vs Bad

Sometimes a player keeps a 'decorative' piece that hardly comes into play, without being able to carry out the job assigned at the beginning of the game. As a rule, we are speaking in these cases of knights or bishops.

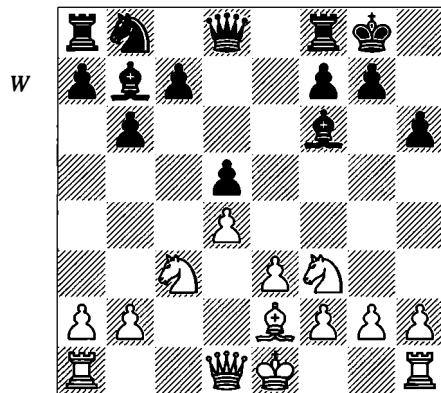
In the game we are about to see, Black's bishop never takes part in the game, because the diagonals it controls are not important, and it can't move along other diagonals without giving up material. In this game we also observe a rigid structure on the part of Black and some lack of space to manoeuvre with his pieces. His only active chance (... $\text{d}e4$ ) is wasted by careless play that eases White's strategy and hastens the outcome.

Garcia Ilundain – Gild. Garcia  
Candas 1994

1  $\text{d}4$   $\text{d}5$  2  $\text{c}4$   $\text{e}6$  3  $\text{d}f3$   $\text{d}f6$  4  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{e}7$  5  $\text{e}g5$

This continuation is the main line of the Queen's Gambit.

5...0-0 6  $\text{e}3$   $\text{h}6$  7  $\text{h}4$   $\text{b}6$  8  $\text{e}2$   $\text{b}7$  9  $\text{e}xf6$   $\text{e}xf6$  10  $\text{cxd}5$   $\text{exd}5$  (D)



11  $\text{b}4$

In order to leave the  $\text{d}5$ -pawn isolated after Black's thematic advance ... $\text{c}5$ .

11... $\text{a}5$ ?!

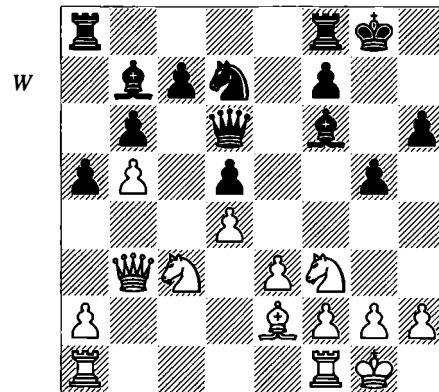
A major theoretical alternative is 11... $\text{c}5$  12  $\text{bxc}5$   $\text{bxc}5$  13  $\text{Bb}1$   $\text{d}c6$  (13... $\text{W}a5$ ?! 14  $\text{Wd}2$   $\text{cxd}4$  15  $\text{d}xd4$   $\text{e}xd4$  16  $\text{exd}4$   $\text{e}a6$  17  $\text{d}b5!$   $\pm$ ), when White may retain an edge, but the position becomes rather simplified.

The most popular move here is 11... $\text{c}6$ , and we shall take a look at this in two games below.

12  $\text{b}5$

White locks in the dark-squared bishop and will exert pressure on  $\text{d}5$ . Black's chances are based on a kingside attack.

12... $\text{Wd}6$  13 0-0  $\text{d}d7$  14  $\text{Wb}3$   $\text{g}5$  (D)



This expansion is logical. Black intends to play ... $\text{e}g7$  and ... $\text{f}5$ .

15  $\text{d}d2$

From  $\text{d}2$  the knight controls  $\text{e}4$  and has in mind the manoeuvre  $\text{d}f1$ - $\text{g}3$ - $\text{f}5$ .

However, perhaps 15  $\text{d}e1$  is more precise, even though it discards the idea of placing the bishop along the  $\text{b}1$ - $\text{h}7$  diagonal, because the knight can enter the  $\text{e}5$ -square quickly. There can then follow 15... $\text{e}g7$  16  $\text{d}d3$  (16  $\text{e}f3$   $\text{d}f6$  17  $\text{d}d3$   $\text{d}e4$ ) and the planned move isn't

possible now. 16...f5 17 ♖f3 ♜f6 18 ♜e5 and then:

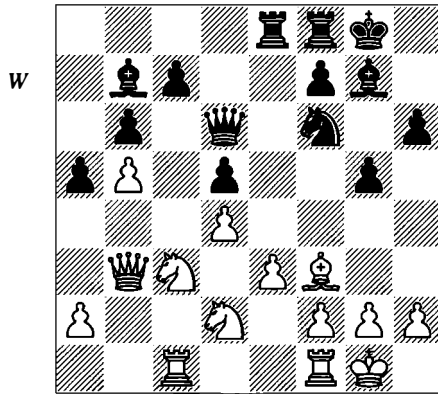
a) 18...♜e4 19 ♖xe4 fxe4 20 ♜xe4 ♖e6 21 ♜c3 (21 ♜d2 ♖xe5 22 dxe5 ♖xe5 23 ♜f3 ♖xf3 24 gxf3 ♖f8!?) 21...♖xe5 22 dxe5 ♖xe5 23 ♖ad1.

b) 18...a4 19 ♜xa4 ♜e4 20 ♖xe4 fxe4 21 ♜c6 ♖xc6 22 bxc6 ♖xc6 23 ♜c3 ♖fd8 24 ♜xe4 (or 24 ♖ac1) 24...♖e6 25 ♜c3 c5 26 ♖fd1 ±.

15...♖g7

15...♖ad8 16 ♖f3! ♜b8 17 ♖g4! ♖g7 18 ♖f5 ±.

16 ♖f3 ♜f6 17 ♖ac1 ♖ae8 (D)



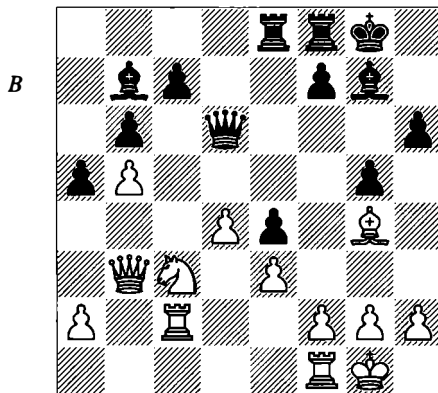
Black threatens ...♜e4.

18 ♖c2!?

With this move White controls e4 and f5, and aims at the c7-pawn.

The main alternative is clearly 18 ♖c2 ♜e4, and now:

a) 19 ♜dx4 dxe4 20 ♖g4 (D) and then:



a1) 20...♖e7 21 ♖fc1 (21 f3? exf3 22 ♖xf3 ♖xe3 23 ♖xb7 ♖xd4) 21...♖h8 22 ♖f5 ♖d8 followed by ...♖f6.

a2) 20...♖b4!? 21 ♖xb4 axb4 22 ♜a4 ♖a8 23 ♖xc7 ♖xa4 24 ♖xb7 ♖xa2 and here:

a21) 25 ♖xb6 b3 26 ♖a6 ♖b8 27 ♖xa2 bxa2 28 ♖d7 (28 ♖f5 ♖xb5 29 ♖xe4 ♖b2 30 ♖a1 ♖f8 31 g3 ♖e7 32 ♖g2 ♖d6) 28...♖d8 29 ♖c6 ♖xd4.

a22) 25 ♖f5 b3 26 ♖xe4 b2 27 ♖xb6 ♖a1 (27...♖e8 28 ♖b1 ♖a1 29 ♖c6 ♖b8 30 b6) 28 ♖a6 ♖e8 29 ♖fxa1 (29 ♖d3 ♖xd4! 30 exd4? ♖eel →) 29...bxa1 ♖+ 30 ♖xa1 ♖xe4 31 b6 ♖e7 32 ♖a7 ♖f8 33 b7 (33 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 34 e4 f6; 33 ♖f1 ♖e6) 33...♖c7.

b) 19 ♖fc1 ♖e7 20 ♜cxe4 dxe4 21 ♖g4 ♖d5 (21...♖d8 22 ♖c3) 22 ♜c4 ♖g6 23 ♖a3 ♖fe8 24 ♜d2 (24 ♜e5 ♖xe5 25 dxe5 ♖g7 =) 24...f5 25 ♖e2 ♖f7 26 ♖c4 ± and White reaches his strategic goal, the exchange of light-squared bishops.

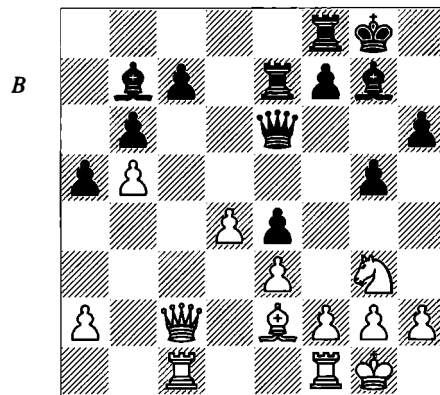
18...♖e7?

This move allows a beautiful positional manoeuvre by the white knight.

18...♖e6 is better:

a) 19 ♜a4 ♖e7 20 ♜b2 ♜e4 21 ♜d3 f5 22 ♖b2 (22 ♖fe1) 22...f4 23 exf4 (23 ♖ce1) 23...♖xd4 24 ♖xd4 ♜xd2 25 ♖fe1 ♜xf3+ 26 gxf3 ♖d6 27 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 28 fxe5 hxe5 29 ♖e1 ♖g7.

b) 19 ♜e2 ♖e7 20 ♜g3 ♜e4 21 ♜dx4 dxe4 22 ♖e2 (D) and now:

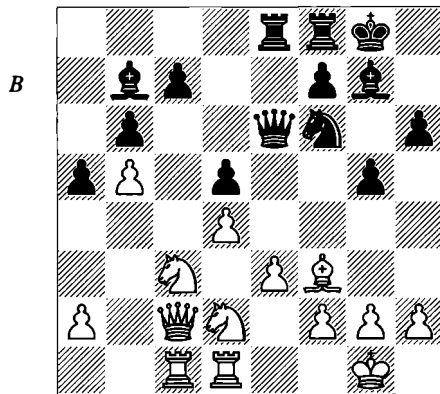


b1) 22...♖h8! prevents White's counterplay based on the exchange of the light-squared bishops. The b7-bishop assumes an important

defensive role, as we will see later on. 23 ♖h1 (23 ♘h5 f5; 23 f4 exf3 24 ♙xf3 ♚xe3+ 25 ♖h1 ♙c8 26 ♘f5 ♙xf5 27 ♚xf5 ♞) 23...f5 24 f4 exf3 25 ♙xf3 ♙c8 26 e4 fxe4 27 ♙xe4 =.

b2) 22...f5 23 ♙c4 ♙d5 24 ♘h5 f4 25 ♙xd5 ♚xd5 26 ♚c4 ♚xc4 27 ♞xc4 ♞ff7 (27...♞ef7 28 ♞fc1) 28 ♞c6. The exchange of the light-squared bishops and the queens eases White's task when exerting pressure on the c-file, and, in this occasion, on e4.

c) 19 ♞fd1 (D) and here:



c1) 19...♘g4 20 ♘c4 f5 21 ♘e5 and now:

c11) 21...♙xe5 22 dxe5 ♞d8 23 ♚b3 ♙xe5 (23...a4 24 ♘xa4 ♞d7 25 ♘c3 {25 ♞c6 ♚xe5} 25...♞fd8 26 ♞d3 g4 {26...♙xe5 27 ♞cd1 ±} 27 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 28 ♘xd5) 24 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 25 ♘xd5 ♞f7 26 ♘xc7 (26 ♞d3) 26...♞xd1+ 27 ♚xd1 ♚xa2 28 ♘d5.

c12) 21...♙xe5 22 dxe5 ♞d8 23 ♙xg4 fxg4 24 ♘e2 ♞d7 25 ♘d4 ♚xe5 26 ♚g6+ ♚g7 27 ♚xg7+ ♞xg7 28 ♘e6.

c2) 19...♘e4 20 ♘dxe4 (20 ♘cxe4 dxe4 21 ♙e2 ♞e7) 20...dxe4 and then:

c21) 21 ♙e2 and now rather than 21...f5 22 ♘a4 ♞e7 23 ♙c4 ♙d5 24 ♙xd5 ♚xd5 25 ♚c4 ♚xc4 26 ♞xc4 f4 ±, Black should quietly prepare this advance with 21...♞e7 22 ♚a4 ♚d6 23 ♙c4 ♖h8.

c22) 21 d5 ♙xd5 22 ♘d5 exf3 23 gxf3 gives Black a choice between 23...♙e5 and 23...♚h3.

d) 19 ♚b3! is critical, preventing ...♘e4 and preparing to double rooks on the c-file.

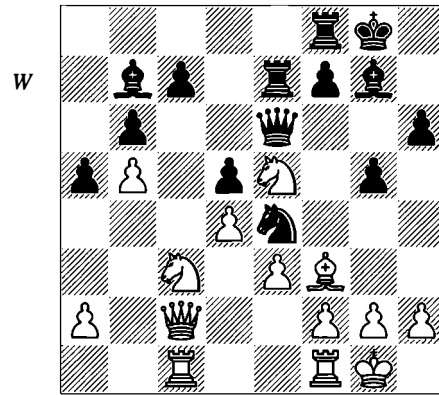
19 ♘c4! ♚e6

19...♚b4 20 a3.

20 ♘e5

The white knight, after a thousand rodeos, finally reaches the desired square. It is important to notice that when White pressed on the d5-pawn with all his pieces, forcing ...♘f6. Black didn't protect the e5-square appropriately.

20...♘e4! (D)



21 ♘c6!

Removing the piece that holds Black's position and the already seriously damaged light-squares. 21 ♘xe4? is wrong due to 21...dxe4 22 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 23 ♚xe4 f6 24 ♞c6 ♚xa2.

21...♙xc6 22 bxc6 ♚xc6

There are no good options other than capturing this pawn. If 22...♘c3, then 23 ♚xc3 ± and White takes the light squares; after 22...f5 23 ♚b3 ♞d8 24 ♙xe4 White has a decisive advantage due to his good knight vs bad bishop, and the other negative elements of Black's position.

23 ♚b3!

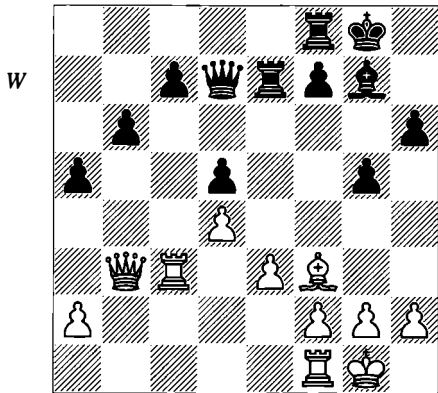
Finally, White breaks the obstruction between the light-squared bishop and d5-pawn, and with the next and forced exchange he clears up the situation in White's favour.

23...♘xc3

23...♘d2 24 ♘xd5!

24 ♞xc3 ♚d7 (D)

With the knight gone, the opposite-coloured bishops play a leading role in the battle. Black's bishop is blocked by the white pawns located on dark squares, and White's is exerting intense pressure on the light squares (especially d5). What a difference there is between them!



Another fault of the advance ...a5 is now clear: the stiffness of the structure, with Black unable to defend d5 by ...c6.

Black's extra pawn hardly compensates for the pressure he is suffering.

**25 ♖c2!**

The idea behind the positional sacrifice is the full control of c6, and the text-move, of a prophylactic nature, is necessary to maintain the advantage, since it prevents Black's counterplay that would follow in the event of 25 ♙xd5? c5 =.

**25...♗d8**

25...a4 26 ♜xd5 +-.

**26 g3**

White makes sure that his bishop will remain on this diagonal, exerting pressure on d5. A move in Capablanca's style.

26 ♜fc1 is useful too, since 26...g4 (26...a4 27 ♜b4 ♙f8 28 ♜d2) is met by 27 ♙e2 (not 27 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 28 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 29 ♙xg4? {29 ♙d1 ♜d6 =}) 29...♙c1+ 30 ♙d1 ♜dc8), maintaining the advantage: 27...c5 28 ♜xb6.

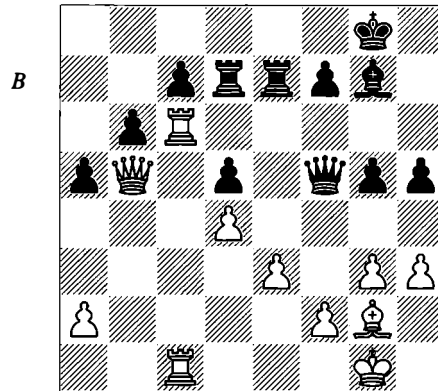
**26...♜f5**

Maybe 26...a4 is better: 27 ♜b4 c5 (27...♙f8 28 ♜d2 ♙a8 29 ♜fc1 ♙a7 30 ♜d3) 28 dxc5 bxc5 29 ♜xc5 d4 30 ♜d5! ♜e8 31 exd4 ± and even though White now has a material advantage, Black's g7-bishop is back to life. Sometimes it is difficult to take decisions like this (on this occasion, giving up two pawns), thinking we will always have another (and better) chance to free our position, but actually this tends not to happen, and like in this game, there is no way back.

**27 ♙g2 h5 28 ♜fc1 ♜dd7 29 h3 ♙f8 30 ♜c6**

White's major pieces are gaining further ground. Black's problems stem from his bishop. It doesn't have any good diagonal at its disposal, while White's bishop is attacking a key pawn. Besides, White's bishop defends its king.

**30...♙g7 31 ♜b5 (D)**



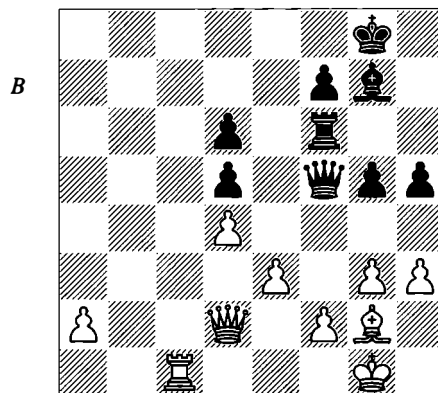
White threatens 32 e4 ♜h7 33 e5.

**31...♜d6?!**

With this hopeless move Black not only gives up material but accepts a life imprisonment. Also, the black bishop will continue to assume a very secondary role.

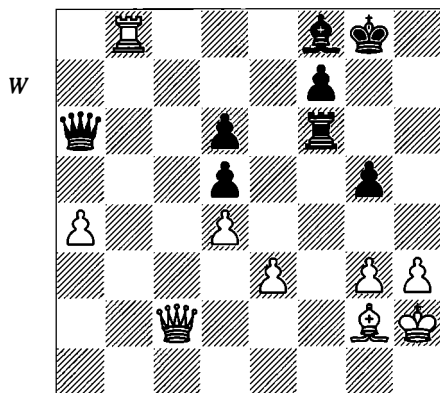
31...g4 32 hxg4 hxg4 33 ♜a6 (the logical way to continue, squeezing his opponent like a boa constrictor; less sound is 33 e4?! ♜g5 {33...♜xe4 34 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 is unclear} 34 e5 {34 ♜d1!} 34...♜d2) 33...♙f8 34 a4 ♜h7 35 ♜b7 ♜d3 36 ♜6c3 (36 ♙f1) 36...♜g6 37 ♜xc7 ±.

**32 ♜xd6 cxd6 33 ♜xb6 ♜e6 34 ♜xa5 ♜f6 35 ♜d2 (D)**



Now the passed a-pawn will decide the game, together with the perpetual pressure on d5, and the 'dead' bishop.

35...♖d7 36 ♜c2 ♜b5 37 a4 ♜a5 38 ♜b1 ♙f8 39 ♙h2 h4 40 ♜b8 hxg3+ 41 fxg3 ♜a6(D)



42 a5 ♙g7 43 ♜c8 ♜xc8 44 ♜xc8 ♜f2 45 ♙g1 ♜a2 46 ♜a8 ♜a1+ 47 ♙h2 ♙e7

47...♜a2 48 a6 ♙e7 49 a7.

48 ♙xd5 g4 49 h4 ♜e1 50 a6 ♜e2+ 51 ♙h1 ♙f6 52 ♜a7 1-0

As promised, here are two additional games featuring 11...c6.

### Topalov – Kramnik Linares 1998

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♙e7 5 ♙g5 h6 6 ♙h4 0-0 7 e3 b6 8 ♙e2 ♙b7 9 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 b4 c6

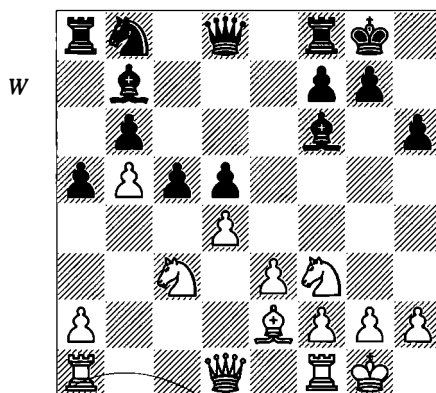
This move has been especially favoured by Nigel Short, who studied this variation of the Queen's Gambit a lot, together with Boris Spassky, another expert with the black side.

12 0-0 a5 13 b5 c5 (D)

14 ♜e1

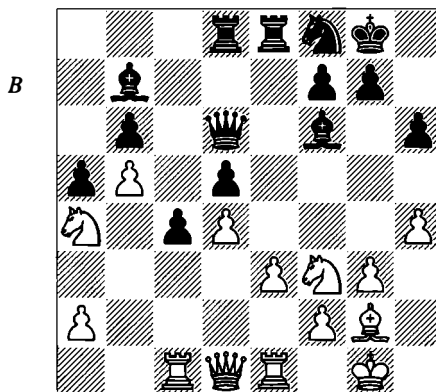
The Bulgarian GM introduces a new idea. This move has several positional ideas. To start with, it allows the transfer of the bishop to g2. Another idea is to leave the black pieces without play, especially the bishops. Of course, Black won't consider capturing on d4, since it gives White two good options.

The main line here is actually 14 ♘e5, which we shall examine below.



14...♜e8 15 ♜c1 ♘d7 16 g3 ♘f8 17 ♘a4 17 dxc5 bxc5 18 ♘a4 c4 19 ♘c5 ♜b6 is unclear.

17...c4 18 ♙f1 ♜d6 19 ♙g2 ♜ad8 20 h4 (D)



Part of White's plan, which Topalov worked out at home for this game.

20...♘e6

The e6-knight is basically a defensive piece in this position. This idea is typical in positions of the Queen's Gambit, when a black pawn is on c6 or c7, strengthening the c5-square for a further advance at the right moment. 20...♜e7 is another possibility, anticipating ♘d2, which threatens ♘xc4.

21 ♘c3

Or: 21 ♘h2 ♘c7 22 ♘g4 ♙c8 23 ♘xf6+ ♜xf6; 21 ♘e5 ♙xe5 22 dxe5 ♜xe5 23 ♘xb6 ♘c5 ♚.

21...g6

21...♘c7, defending d5 and with the idea of bringing the bishop to c8, doesn't seem suitable:

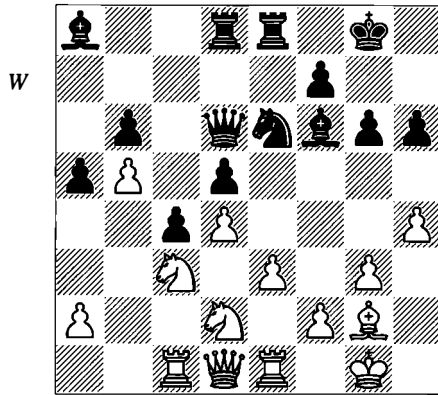
after 22 ♖c2 Black has no time for 22...♗c8 due to 23 e4.

22 ♘d2

22 ♜e2!? followed by ♞d2 was Kramnik's suggestion.

22...♗a8 (D)

If 22...♜e7? then 23 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♘de4.

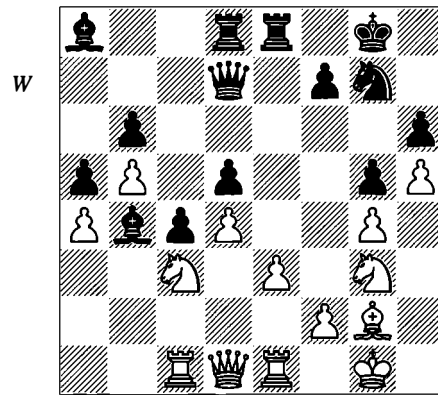


25 g4 ♖d7 26 ♘g3 ♘g7

f5 is weak.

27 a4 ♗b4 (D)

It seems to be Kramnik who has improved the potential of his pieces more. 27...♗d6 is met by 28 ♗xd5! ♗xg3 29 ♗xa8 ♗xf2+ 30 ♗xf2 ♜xa8 31 e4! ± (c4 is weak), with the idea of e5.



23 h5?

A dubious idea. If you are going to play something like this you need to be very sure of what you are doing. White should try to close the position, for instance with 23 f4:

a) 23...♗g7 24 h5 (24 ♖c2 h5; 24 ♘f3 f5 25 ♗e5 ♗xe5 26 fxe5 ♖e7 27 h5 g5) 24...g5 25 ♗h3!? (25 ♘f3 f5).

b) 23...♘g7 (Sutovsky's idea) 24 ♘f3 (24 ♗h3!? h5 25 ♘f3) 24...♘f5 25 ♗f2 h5 26 ♗e5 (after 26 ♗h3 ♘h6 27 ♗e5 ♗e7 {27...♗b7 28 ♖f3} 28 ♗g1 ♗g7 29 ♖c2 Black will close the position with ...f5 and transfer the knight to g4 and f6; even after an exchange sacrifice nothing will happen) 26...♘h6 (Black is stopping the idea of ♗c6, exerting pressure on d5) 27 ♖f3 (27 ♗h3 ♗e7; 27 ♗f3 ♗e7 28 ♗c6 ♗xc6 29 bxc6 ♖xc6 30 ♖b1 ♗b4) 27...♗g7 28 ♗c6 ♘g4+ 29 ♗g1 ♗xc6 30 bxc6 ♜xe3 31 ♜xe3 ♗xd4 32 ♘xd5 and now Black must avoid 32...♖xd5? 33 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 34 ♗xd5 ♘xe3 35 ♗xc4.

23...g5 24 ♘f1

The complementary idea to control f5, but Kramnik finds a perfect antidote.

24...♗e7!

The black bishop becomes active, and will go to b4.

28 ♗h3 ♗b7 29 ♖c2 ♗d6 30 ♘f5

30 ♘ce2 ♗c8 followed by ...f6 and ...♖f7 to advance with ...f5.

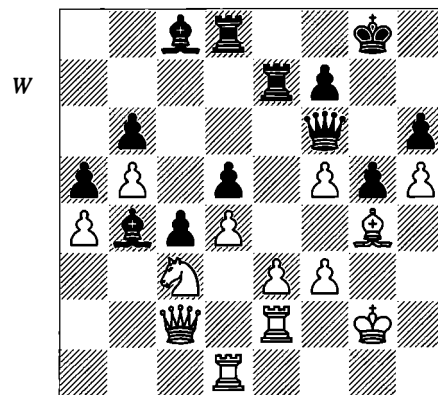
30...♘xf5 31 gxf5 ♗b4 32 ♗g2 ♖d6 33 f3 ♜e7 34 ♜e2 ♜de8 35 ♜ce1

35 ♘d1 ♖f4.

35...♖f6

35...♗xc3 36 ♖xc3 ♖b4 37 ♖c2 f6 (ideas with ...♗g7 intending ...♗f6 are not possible since White can play f6+) 38 ♗f2 c3 39 ♖b1 ♖d6.

36 ♗g4 ♗d6 37 ♖d1 ♗b4 38 ♖c2 ♜d8 39 ♜d1 ♗c8 (D)



40 e4?  
 40 ♖a2 ♜de8 41 ♜f2 ♜d6 42 ♜h1 c3 43 ♜d3 ♜c7 44 ♜c2 ♗d7 45 ♗xc3 ♜ec8 46 ♜hcl ♗a3 47 ♜bl ♜h2+ 48 ♜fl ♜hl+.

40...♗xc3 41 e5

41 ♜xc3 dxe4 42 fxe4 ♗b7 43 ♗f3 g4.

41...♜xe5 42 dxe5 ♗xe5 43 ♜de1 ♗c7 44 ♜e8+ ♜g7 45 ♜xd8

Anyway the ending is lost.

45...♗xd8 46 ♜d1 ♗b7 47 f4 d4+ 48 ♗f3 d3 0-1

**Zviagintsev – Kasimdzhanov**  
*Essen 2002*

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 d5 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 ♗f3 h6 6 ♗h4 0-0 7 e3 b6 8 ♗e2 ♗b7 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 b4 c6 12 0-0 a5 13 b5 c5 14 ♗e5!?

White hastens his action against the d5-pawn and threatens ♗f3.

14...♜c7

After 14...cxd4 15 exd4 ♗xe5 16 dxe5 d4 17 ♗a4 Black has improved his bishop, but at the cost of weakening his d-pawn, opening the c-file (c6 is controlled by White) and leaving the b6-pawn exposed. On the other hand, White's e5-pawn is hanging. Now:

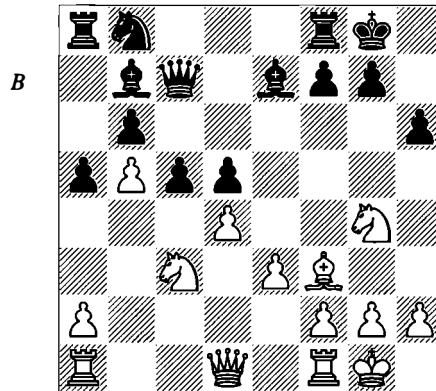
a) 17...♜a7 18 f4 ♜d5 19 ♜f2 ♗d7 20 ♜c1 ♜c8 21 ♜xc8+ ♗xc8 22 ♜c2 ♗b7 23 ♗c4 (23 ♜c7 d3 24 ♜d8+ ♜h7 25 ♗g4 ♗a8) 23...♜e4 24 ♜xe4 ♗xe4 25 ♜d2 and the d-pawn falls, Khalifman-Beliavsky, Moscow rpd 2002.

b) 17...♜g5 18 ♗g4! (18 ♗f3 ♗xf3 19 ♜xf3 ♗d7 20 ♜d5 ♜ad8 21 f4 {21 ♜xd4 ♗xe5 22 ♜xb6? ♗f3+ 23 ♜h1 ♜f4} 21...♜g6 with counterplay) 18...♜xe5 19 ♗xb6 ♜a7 20 ♜b1 ± Onishchuk-Vaganian, Poikovsky 2002. Black has problems coordinating his queenside forces.

15 ♗g4 ♗e7

If 15...♗d7 then 16 ♗f3 ♜ad8 17 ♗xd5 (17 ♜d3!? ♜d6) 17...♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 cxd4 19 ♜c1! ♜d6 20 e4 h5 (20...♗c5 21 f4) 21 ♜c6 (alternatively, 21 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 22 ♜xd4 ♗xd5 23 ♜cd1) 21...♜b4 22 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 23 ♜xf6 gxf6 24 ♜xh5.

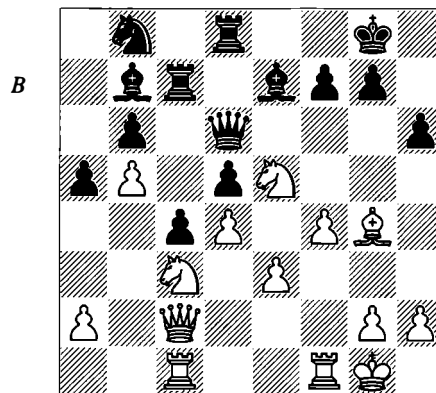
16 ♗f3 (D)



16...♜d8 17 ♜c1 ♜a7

This is a thematic way to bring the queen's rook into play, since the queen's knight cannot move. Black is planning ...♗a8 and then to bring the rook to the c-file. The game Onishchuk-Rõtšagov, Moscow 2002 was interesting: 17...c4 18 ♗e5 ♗b4 (18...♗f6 19 ♗c6 ♗xc6 {19...♗xc6 20 bxc6 ♜xc6 21 e4} 20 ♗xd5 ±) 19 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♜xd5 21 ♜xc4 ♜d8 (21...♜b7 22 ♜c2) 22 ♜f3 with strong pressure.

18 ♗e5 ♜d6 19 ♗g4 ♗a8 20 ♗a4 ♜c7 21 ♜c2 ♗b7 22 f4 c4 23 ♗c3 (D)



23...f6??

23...♗d7 retains some practical chances.

24 ♜g6! 1-0

In view of 24...fxe5 (24...♗f8 25 ♗f5) 25 ♗e6+ ♜h8 26 fxe5.

# 14 Lack of Communication

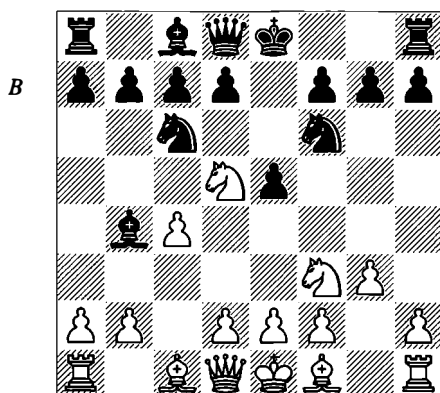
## The Pawn that Splits the Board in Half

Sometimes, a pawn on the fifth or sixth rank, when strongly supported by pieces, causes such disruption to the opponent that he doesn't have enough freedom to transfer his pieces quickly to the other side of the board, where they could be necessary. This happens in the model game we are going to see in this chapter; the black bishop located on the queenside looks like a decorative piece that cannot enter the game, so that when Lautier begins operations against the black king with all his available forces, the dark squares are left helpless.

The 'disconnecter' job carried out by the d5-pawn is essential for White's success. The question is if Black could have freed himself with a thematic break such as ...c6.

**Lautier – Karpov**  
*Dortmund 1993*

1 c4 ♟f6 2 ♞c3 e5 3 ♟f3 ♞c6 4 g3 ♟b4 5 ♞d5  
(D)



5...e4

Black wins space in the centre and asks where the knight is going. Other moves:

a) 5...♟c5!? was played in Korchnoi-Karpov, Tilburg 1991.

b) 5...a5 6 ♟g2 0-0 7 0-0 ♖e8 8 d3 h6 9 ♞d2 (9 b3!? d6 10 ♟b2 ♟g4 11 h3 ♟h5 12 e3 ♟c5 13 a3 ♟a7 14 ♞c3 ♞d7 15 ♖c2 ♞c5 16 ♞h4 ♞e6 17 ♞d5 ± Serper-Timman, Manila OL 1992) 9...d6 10 ♞xf6+ ♖xf6 11 ♞e4 ♖g6 12 a3 ♟c5 13 ♟d2 ♟d7 14 ♞c3 ♞d8 15 ♞b5 ♟b6 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 ♖xa1 18 ♖xa1 c6 ∞ Timman-Lobron, Manila OL 1992.

6 ♞h4(!)

Provocation? The knight is now precariously placed, but White is betting in favour of his development lead. After ...d6, the threat of ...g5 will force White to make a quick decision. However, Black's threats against this knight may prove illusory, since they cost him several tempi and weaknesses.

Black should take care of his weakened e4-pawn, and he should look out for the possible capture of his esteemed dark-squared bishop, but so far he has played the opening accurately and is well placed in the fight for development. Karpov avoids entering complications during the game, and White manages to develop his kingside pieces quietly, and keeps his piece safe, and takes advantage of his sound and safer pawn-structure.

In the Sicilian Defence, the 'mother line' of the 1 c4 e5 English (1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 ♞c6 3 ♟b5 ♟f6 4 ♞c3 ♞d4 5 e5) Black usually takes this knight to the centre by 5...♞xb5 6 ♞xb5 ♞d5, although he usually has trouble after the enigmatic 'leap in the dark' of the king's knight, 7 ♟g5! with the strong threat of ♖f3. In the current position, 6 ♞xb4 ♞xb4 7 ♞d4 is not an improvement, since the extra move g3 does not seem very useful. Black's good development would compensate for White's bishop-pair.

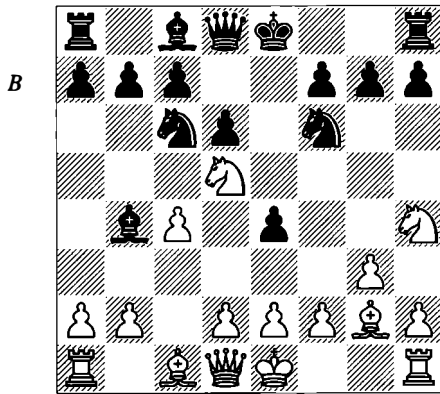
6...0-0

We can now analyse some instructive lines offered by this opening system. 6...d6!? is interesting, threatening ...g5 in the event of the natural development  $\mathfrak{g}2$ .

a) 7 a3 is well met by 7... $\mathfrak{a}5!$ .

b) 7  $\mathfrak{d}xb4$   $\mathfrak{d}xb4$  8 d4? (White hurries to prevent the latent threat ...g5, but this is a serious mistake; better is 8 a3!  $\mathfrak{d}c6$  9 d3 exd3 10  $\mathfrak{w}xd3$  = M.Gurevich-Adams, Munich 1993) 8...exd3 9 exd3 0-0 10  $\mathfrak{e}e2$   $\mathfrak{e}h3$   $\mp$  Korchnoi-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 1993.

c) 7  $\mathfrak{g}2!$  (D) is Topalov's idea, based on the point that ...g5 is not a real threat.



c1) 7... $\mathfrak{c}c5$  8 0-0 (8  $\mathfrak{w}c2$  0-0!?) and now:  
c11) 8... $\mathfrak{e}e6$  9 d3  $\mathfrak{d}xd5$  10 cxd5  $\mathfrak{e}xd5$  11 dxe4  $\mathfrak{e}e6$  12  $\mathfrak{d}f5!$  with a slight advantage for White.

c12) 8...g5 9 d4  $\mathfrak{d}xd5$  10 dxc5  $\mathfrak{d}db4$  11  $\mathfrak{e}xg5$  (11 a3  $\mathfrak{d}a6$ ) 11... $\mathfrak{w}xg5$  12 cxd6 cxd6 13 a3  $\mathfrak{d}a6$  and now 14  $\mathfrak{w}xd6$  or 14 b4.

c2) 7...g5 8  $\mathfrak{w}a4!$  and then:

c21) 8...gxh4 9  $\mathfrak{d}xb4$   $\mathfrak{e}d7$  10  $\mathfrak{d}xc6$   $\mathfrak{e}xc6$  11  $\mathfrak{w}b3$   $\pm$  intending  $\mathfrak{w}c3$ , b3 and  $\mathfrak{e}b2$ .

c22) 8... $\mathfrak{e}a5$  9  $\mathfrak{d}xf6+$   $\mathfrak{w}xf6$  10  $\mathfrak{e}xe4$  gxh4 11  $\mathfrak{e}xc6+$   $\pm$ .

c23) 8... $\mathfrak{c}c5$  is a critical move. 9 d4!  $\mathfrak{e}xd4$  10  $\mathfrak{e}xg5$   $\mathfrak{e}xb2$  11  $\mathfrak{b}b1$  h6 (11... $\mathfrak{g}g8!$ ? 12  $\mathfrak{e}d2!$ ? { 12 f4 exf3 13  $\mathfrak{d}xf3$   $\mathfrak{w}xg5$  14  $\mathfrak{d}xg5$   $\mathfrak{d}xd5$  } 12... $\mathfrak{e}e5$  13  $\mathfrak{e}a5$   $\mathfrak{c}f8$  with a complex game) 12  $\mathfrak{e}xf6$  (12  $\mathfrak{e}xh6$   $\pm$ ) 12... $\mathfrak{e}xf6$  13  $\mathfrak{d}xf6+$   $\mathfrak{w}xf6$  and White can choose between 14 0-0 and 14  $\mathfrak{e}xe4$   $\pm$ .

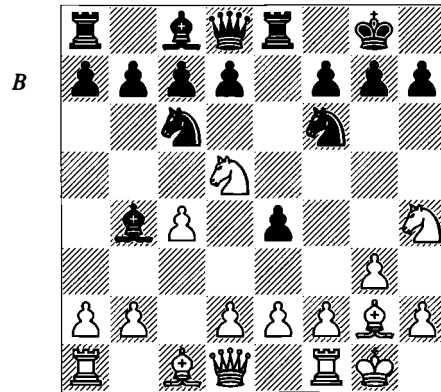
c24) 8... $\mathfrak{e}d7$  9  $\mathfrak{d}xb4$   $\mathfrak{d}d4$  (9...gxh4!?) 10  $\mathfrak{w}d1$  gxh4 11  $\mathfrak{d}c2!$  (to get rid of the d4-knight) and then:

c241) 11...h3? 12  $\mathfrak{e}xe4!$   $\mathfrak{d}xe4$  13  $\mathfrak{d}xd4$   $\mathfrak{w}f6$  14  $\mathfrak{d}f3$   $\pm$   $\mathfrak{e}c6$  15 0-0 h6 16 d4! (16 d3  $\pm$ ) 16...d5 (16...0-0-0 17 d5  $\mathfrak{e}d7$  18  $\mathfrak{e}e3$  intending  $\mathfrak{e}xa7$  and  $\mathfrak{e}d4$ ) 17 c5 0-0-0 18  $\mathfrak{d}e5$   $\mathfrak{w}hg8$  19 a4 h5 20  $\mathfrak{a}a3!$  (overprotecting g3) 20... $\mathfrak{w}e6$  (20...h4 21 b4) 21 b4 f6 22  $\mathfrak{d}d3!$  +- Topalov-Adams, Las Palmas 1993.

c242) 11...c5 12  $\mathfrak{d}xd4$  cxd4 13 d3!  $\pm$ .

c243) 11... $\mathfrak{d}xc2+$ ! 12  $\mathfrak{w}xc2$  and now, rather than 12... $\mathfrak{e}c6$  13 b4 (13 0-0  $\mathfrak{w}e7$   $\pm$ ) 13...a6 14  $\mathfrak{e}b2$   $\pm$ , Black should opt for 12... $\mathfrak{w}e7$  13 d3  $\pm$ .

7  $\mathfrak{g}2$   $\mathfrak{e}8$  8 0-0 (D)



### 8...d6

Alternatively:

a) 8...b5 tries to take over the centre, but this destabilizing idea doesn't achieve its goal: 9  $\mathfrak{d}xb4$   $\mathfrak{d}xb4$  10 a3  $\mathfrak{d}c6$  11 cxb5  $\mathfrak{d}d4$  12 d3  $\mathfrak{d}xb5$  13 dxe4  $\mathfrak{e}b7$  14 f3 d5 15 exd5  $\mathfrak{d}xd5$  16 e4  $\mathfrak{d}b6$  17 a4  $\mathfrak{w}d4+$  18  $\mathfrak{c}h1$   $\mathfrak{a}ad8$  19  $\mathfrak{w}c2$   $\mathfrak{d}d6$  20  $\mathfrak{e}f4$   $\mathfrak{d}bc4$  21 b3  $\mathfrak{d}e3$  22  $\mathfrak{w}f2$   $\mathfrak{d}xe4$  23 fxe4  $\mathfrak{d}xf1$  24  $\mathfrak{w}xf1$   $\pm$  Smejkal-Haiik, Smederevska Palanka 1982.

b) The critical line is 8... $\mathfrak{e}f8$  9 d3. Then:

b1) 9... $\mathfrak{d}xd5$  10 cxd5 exd3 11  $\mathfrak{w}xd3$   $\mathfrak{d}e5$  12  $\mathfrak{w}c2$  (here we see the need for watching over the c7-pawn) 12...c5 13 f4 (13 b3 d6 14  $\mathfrak{e}b2$   $\mathfrak{e}e7$  15  $\mathfrak{e}xe5$  dxe5 16  $\mathfrak{d}f5$   $\mathfrak{e}xf5$  17  $\mathfrak{w}xf5$   $\mathfrak{e}d6$  18 e4  $\mathfrak{a}c8$  19  $\mathfrak{a}ac1$  g6 20  $\mathfrak{w}f3$   $\mathfrak{a}f8$  21  $\mathfrak{e}h3$   $\mathfrak{a}c7$  22  $\mathfrak{w}d3$   $\mathfrak{w}g5$  23  $\mathfrak{a}c2$  h5 24  $\mathfrak{w}e3$  = Altyzer-Tatai, Zurich 1987) 13... $\mathfrak{d}g6$  14  $\mathfrak{d}f3$  d6 15 e4  $\pm$  Vaganian-Taimanov, Baku 1977. White has reached his dream position: a central advantage, a black knight misplaced at g6 and docile black bishops, which are a far cry from those in a proper Modern Benoni.

b2) 9...exd3 (Black avoids exchanging on d5, so as not to doom his c7-pawn) 10 ♖xd3. Then:

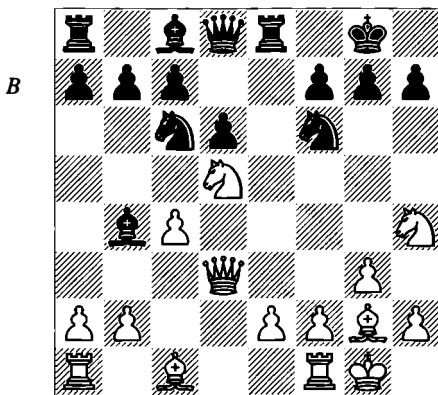
b21) 10...♗e5 11 ♖c2 a6 (11...c6 12 ♗e3 d5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 ♖d1 ♗e6 15 ♖b3? d4! 16 ♖xb7 dxe3 17 ♖xd8 exf2+ 18 ♖h1 f1♖+ 19 ♗xf1 ♖axd8 20 ♖xa7 ♖d1 21 ♖g2 ♖c8 22 b4 ♗d5+ 23 ♖g1 ♗xb4 24 ♗a3 ♢ Contin-Grosz-peter, Cannes 1990) 12 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 13 ♗d2 ♗g6 14 ♗c3 ♖e6 15 ♗xg6 hxg6 16 ♖a4 g5 17 ♗d2 ♖f6 18 ♗c3 ♖h6 19 ♖c2 d6 20 e4 ♗h3 21 ♗xh3 ♖xh3 22 ♖ael g4 23 f4 gxf3 24 ♖xf3 = Svidler-Grosz-peter, Biel 1989.

b22) 10...h6 11 b3 ♗e5 12 ♖c2 c6 13 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 14 ♗b2 ♖e6 15 ♗f5 d6 16 ♗d4 ♖e7 17 ♖ad1 a5 18 h3 ♖c7 19 ♖c3 ♖b6 20 ♖h2 ♖b4 21 ♖c2 a4 22 e4 axb3 23 axb3 ♖a2 24 ♖b1 ∞ Petursson-Strenz-wilk, Saint Martin 1993.

### 9 d3

Another meaningful possibility is now 9 ♗xb4 ♗xb4 10 d3 (10 d4?! h6 with the idea of ...g5) 10...h6 (10...exd3 11 exd3 ±) 11 dxe4 ♗xe4 12 ♗e3 ±.

### 9...exd3 10 ♖xd3 (D)



### 10...♗e5 11 ♖c2 ♗xd5

Black must not allow ♗g5.

### 12 cxd5 ♗c5

This bishop defends the queenside and proves active, making it difficult for White to advance his central pawns, though its situation becomes artificial.

### 13 b3!

The dark-squared bishop will aim at Black's kingside. 13 ♗d2?! has similar ideas but is less

precise, since it allows Black to free himself by 13...♗g4! 14 ♗c3 ♖d7 =. 13 h3 ♖f6 14 ♖h2 g5 15 ♗xg5 ♖xg5 16 f4 ♖g7 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 1/2-1/2 was the brief course of Dorfman-Smyslov, USSR Ch (Moscow) 1976.

### 13...♖e7

This queen move prepares ...♗g6, forcing the exchange of knights by exerting pressure on e2. The main alternative is to play ...♗g6 at once. Let us see what happens:

a) 13...♗g4 14 ♗b2 ♖g5 and now 15 e4 is met by 15...♗d7 intending ...♗b5, so White should prefer 15 ♖ad1 ± followed by ♗d4.

b) 13...♗g4?! achieves nothing positive: 14 h3 ♗h5 15 ♗b2 ♖g5 16 ♖h2 ±.

c) 13...♗g6 14 ♗f3! (14 ♗xg6 will be similar to the game) 14...♗e5 (14...♖f6 15 ♗b2 ♗f5 16 ♖xc5 dxc5 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 18 ♖fc1 b6 19 b4 ♗e4 20 bxc5 ♗xd5 21 ♗d4 ♗xg2 22 ♖xg2 ♖ad8 23 e3 ♖d5 24 ♗b5 ∞ Makarychev-Nevednichy, USSR Spartakiad 1979) 15 ♗xe5 (the exchange of knights takes place, but under favourable circumstances) 15...♖xe5 16 ♗b2 ♖e8 17 e4 ±.

### 14 ♗b2 a5 15 a3

With this move White is restricting Black's chances for counterplay, such as the advance ...a4, which would free Black's queenside pieces. For instance, 15 ♖ael is met by 15...a4!.

### 15...♗g6

15...♗d7!? is an interesting possibility, preparing the break ...c6, coordinating his pieces and getting active play.

### 16 ♗xg6

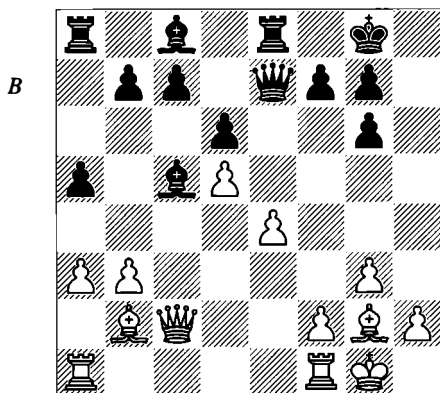
White is forced to exchange this knight, and in a sense to shield Black's king.

There wouldn't be too much compensation for the pawn if the knight retreated, but of course it would demand precise calculation: 16 ♗f3? (inserting 16 ♖c3 ♖e5! doesn't assist White) 16...♖xe2 17 ♖c3 ♗e5 (17...f6 18 ♖ael ♖b5 is also possible) and then:

a) 18 ♖ael? ♗xf2+! (18...♗xf3+? 19 ♗xf3 ♗xf2+ 20 ♖h1! +-) 19 ♖f2 (19 ♖h1 ♗xe1 20 ♖xe1 ♖b5 21 ♗xe5 dxe5 22 ♖xe5 f6 23 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 -) 19...♗xf3+ 20 ♖xf3 ♖xe1+ 21 ♗f1 f6 -+.

b) 18 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♗f3 (19 ♖ael? ♗xf2+! -) 19...♖b5 (19...♗d4?? 20 ♖xc7 +-) 20 ♖d2 ♖xb3 ♢.

16...hxg6 17 e4 (D)



17...g5?!

This move seems natural in some ways. Karpov seeks to hold back White's central attack (after ♖h1 and f4) but the move also neglects the black king. Instead:

a) 17...c6? 18 ♖c3 f6 19 dxc6 bxc6 20 b4 +-.

b) 17...♗d7 (intending ...c6) 18 ♖fe1 (18 ♖ae1? ♗b5) 18...f6 (18...c6?! 19 e5 cxd5 20 ♗xd5 ±) 19 ♖c4 ♖f7 20 ♗d4 ♗xd4 21 ♖xd4 ±. White maintains a slight positional advantage on both flanks.

18 ♖ae1 f6

Ribli suggests 18...♗d7!?, while 18...g4 is met by 19 ♖h1 (rather than 19 e5 ♗d7).

19 ♖h1 g4

It is possible to get rid of the 'disconnecter' d5-pawn by 19...c6, but in that case White's central pawn-storm would become dangerous: 20 f4! (20 dxc6 bxc6 21 b4? axb4 22 axb4 ♗xb4 23 ♖b3+ d5 24 ♖c1 ♗a6 ♢) 20...cxd5 (20...gxf4 21 gxf4 and the opening of the g-file of course favours the attacking side) 21 e5 fxe5 22 fxe5 with a powerful initiative for White.

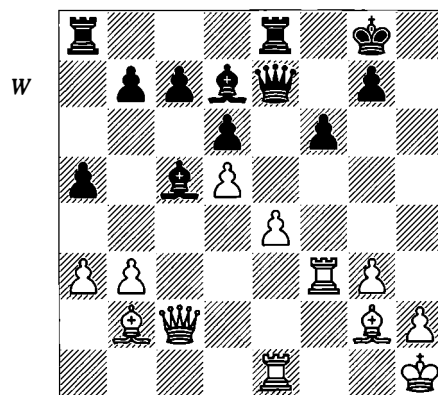
20 f4 gxf3 21 ♖xf3

Black has carried out his plan: he has prevented White from creating a strong mobile pawn-centre. However, White now has a clear plan of attack against the black king. The dark-squared bishop cannot help him, since it is in no position to support f6 and g7. How exactly is White going to attack? By advancing the g-pawn. One of the rooks will also be able to occupy the g-file from the third rank and create

more serious threats. Meanwhile, the white king is very well defended.

21...♗d7?! (D)

21...♗g4 22 ♖f4 ♖d7 (22...♗h5 Ribli) 23 ♖c4 (threatening 24 e5) 23...♖e5!? (23...b5 24 ♖d3 ±) and here 24 ♖ef1 ± is preferable to 24 ♗xe5 fxe5 25 ♖ff1 ♗xa3 =.



22 ♖f4 ♖f8

Black tries to play 23...g5, but obviously White prevents it.

23 ♖ef1

White improves the placement of his rooks, once the central advance is not feasible, and prepares another more hidden plan. The immediate 23 ♖h4 doesn't work due to 23...g5!.

23...♗e3!

Or:

a) 23...c6? 24 ♖h4 (intending e5) 24...g5 25 ♖h6 +-.

b) 23...♗b5? 24 ♖1f3 ± (24 ♗h3!? ♗xf1 25 ♗e6+ ±).

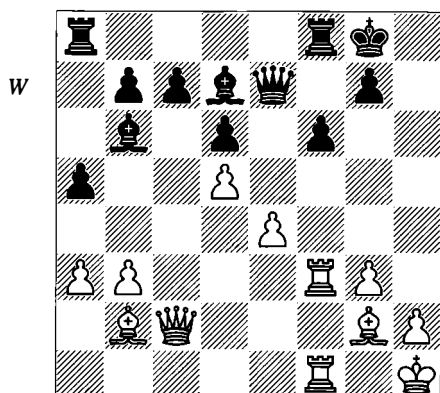
c) 23...♖ae8 24 ♖h4 ±.

24 ♖4f3 ♗b6 (D)

The bishop cannot leave the c7-pawn to its fate. Black should have played ...c6 earlier. 24...♗h6?! fails to 25 ♖xc7 ♖fc8 26 ♖b6 ♖c2 (26...♖c5 27 e5! +-) 27 ♖3f2 ±.

25 g4!

Finally, and after the necessary preparations, White believes he has reached the right moment to push this pawn. Lautier wants to weaken Black's control of e5. One of the goals is to open the diagonal of the dark-squared bishop, whose power is similar to a dormant volcano, which is currently stymied by the f6-pawn.



As Karpov did with the plan started with his move ...g5, Lautier uses this same pawn to mobilize his centre. The advance of White's central pawns will revive the other sleeping pieces behind the e4-pawn. The idea of the advance g4, with the king very well covered at h1, has some similarities to the minority attack that usually happens in the Exchange QGD. But in this case the idea is not so calm, mainly because the black king is behind the Black's pawn-cover that White seeks to demolish! Likewise, we should note that Lautier has another more powerful plan in mind: to attack the opponent's king with his major pieces. The fact that the b6-bishop is not participating in the game is clear. It patrols an empty diagonal that plays a minor role in the fight, and cannot easily transfer elsewhere, mainly because Black hasn't achieved his planned central break with ...c6.

25 ♖d3 (intending ♖f4) is met by 25...♗e8! with the idea of ...♗b5.

**25...♗ae8?**

Confronted with a difficult decision, Black makes a mistake. Otherwise:

a) Accepting the pawn by 25...♗xg4?! is dubious since 26 ♖g3 gives White a very strong attack.

b) 25...♗b5! 26 ♖e1 and now:

b1) 26...♗d7?! 27 ♖h3 g5? 28 ♖f1 ♖f7 29 ♖h6 ♖af8 30 ♖d2 ♗xg4 31 ♖xg5+ +-.

b2) 26...♗e8!, with the idea of ...♗g6 (defending the king) having first deflected the rook, is Konikowski's proposal. White may continue with the planned 27 g5, but after 27...fxg5 28 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 29 e5 ♖f2! 30 ♖xf2 (it seems better not to exchange queens, even though

after 30 ♖c1 ♗g6! 31 e6 ♖f8 Black is very active in return for the strong passed white pawn) 30...♗xf2 31 ♖f1 ♗c5 32 e6 ♗g6 Black's bishops have regained much life and he is able to defend the position.

**26 ♖h3!**

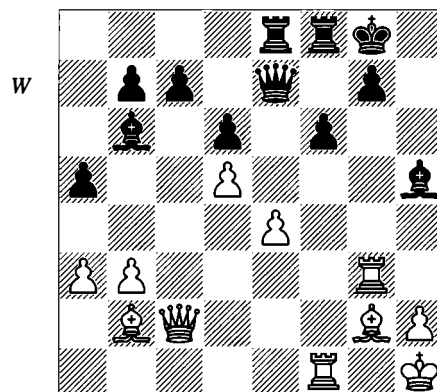
The threat is e5. The mobility of the rook via the third rank and the threats against h7 are additional ideas behind the advance of the g-pawn. Instead, 26 ♖g3 is met by 26...c6.

**26...♗xg4 27 ♖g3**

27 ♖h4 f5 28 ♖c3 ♖g5 29 ♖g3 ♖e3.

**27...♗h5 (D)**

27...♗d7 28 ♖d2 (intending ♖h6; less good is 28 ♖g6 ♖h7! 29 e5 dxe5 30 ♖gxf6+ ♖h8) 28...♖h7 29 ♖f4 g5 30 ♖f3 ♖g6 31 ♖d3 ♖h6 32 ♗h3! ♗xh3 33 ♖xh3+ ♖g7 34 e5 +-.



**28 ♖d2!**

The queen joins the attack, and it threatens to break into the royal palace, dodging every kind of obstacle. The difference between the rooks of one and the other side is critical for the outcome of the game. While Black's rooks await the opening of files, White's have them available for an immediate attack on the f- and g-files. Black's bishops are also powerless. They don't display any great activity and remain on the defensive. Black's position is in crisis. 28 ♖f5? is worse owing to 28...♖f7! (intending ...♗g6) 29 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 30 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 with compensation.

**28...g6**

28...♖h7 is met by 29 ♖f4 ♖f7 30 ♖h4! followed by ♖f5.

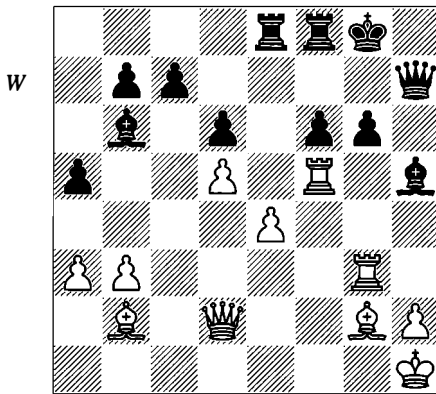
**29 ♖f5 ♖h7 (D)**

Black gives up the important f6-pawn because the problems are piling up. Instead:

a) 29...♟f7? 30 ♜xh5! gxh5 31 ♞h6 +-.

b) 29...♟h8 30 ♜xh5+ gxh5 31 ♞h6+ ♞h7 32 ♟xf6+ +-.

c) 29...♟h7 30 ♜xh5+ (30 ♞f4 gxf5 31 ♞xf5+ ♟h8 32 ♞xh5+ ♞h7 33 ♟xf6+ ♜xf6 34 ♞xe8+ +- ) 30...gxh5 31 ♞f4 f5 (31...♞d7 32 ♟h3 +- ) 32 ♜g5! ♞f7 33 ♞h4 +-.



### 30 ♟xf6

White gets the first fruits: the black queen was unable to defend every line. The material balance will be restored, but strategically speaking, Black has resigned. Now there is no way to stop the e4-pawn, and all the energy that is created with every step it takes.

30...♜f7 31 ♞g5

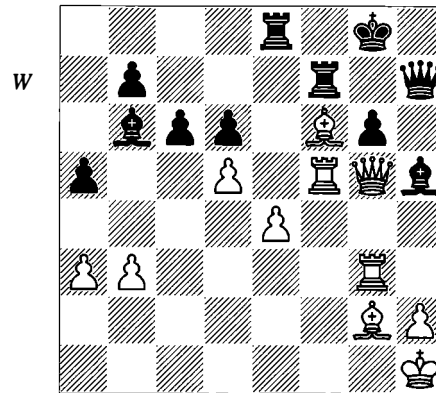
31 ♜gg5 is also decisive.

31...c6 (D)

The break comes too late and White acclaims the opening of lines. 31...♟f8 32 ♜f4 c6 33 ♟h3 cxd5 34 ♞xd5 +-; 31...♜ef8 32 ♟h3 (32 ♟c3 is not so clear, but it does keep an advantage; e.g., 32...♟f2 33 ♜xf7 ♟xf7 34 ♜h3 ♟b6 35 e5 ♟e8 36 e6 ♜f5) 32...c6 33 ♟c3 cxd5 34 exd5 +-.

32 e5

This long-awaited move is more useful if played when Black has reacted in the centre, because it opens up more lines for the g2-bishop. Although the text-move doesn't ruin anything, 32 dxc6 bxc6 33 e5 is more overwhelming:

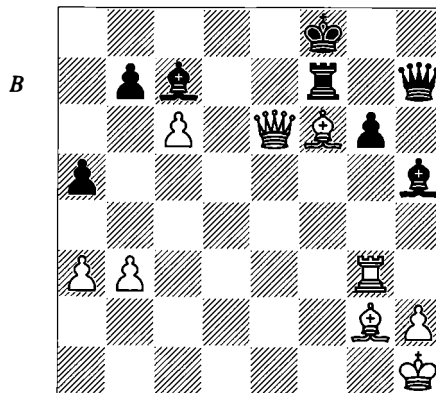


33...d5 (33...dxe5 34 ♟xc6 ♜c8 35 ♟d5 +- ) 34 ♜f4 (34 ♞xh5?? loses to 34...♞xh5 35 ♜xh5 ♜xf6! 36 exf6? ♜e1+ 37 ♟f1 ♜xf1+ 38 ♟g2 ♜g1+ -+; 34 ♟f3 is good though) with the idea of continuing ♜h4, with a decisive advantage.

32...dxe5 33 dxc6 ♟f8

The best defence is 33...e4! even though it doesn't save the game either: 34 cxb7 ♟c7 (34...♞b7 35 ♞xh5 wins for White) 35 ♟e5! ♜xf5 (35...♟xe5 36 ♜xe5 +- ) 36 ♞xf5 ♟xe5 (36...♜xe5 37 ♞c8+ +- ) 37 ♞xe5 ♜xe5 38 b8♞+ +-.

34 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 35 ♞xe5 ♟c7 36 ♞e6! (D)



36...♟g4

36...♟xg3 37 ♞c8#.

37 ♞xg4

37 ♜xg4?? ♞xh2#.

37...♜xf6 38 ♞c8+ 1-0

# 15 The Crazy World of Attacking without Rules

There are positions where established statements, for instance the need for harmony among the pieces, seem to favour one of the players. Some dynamic factors remain hidden to ordinary chess-players, but become clear to the great geniuses. In the game we are about to see, White's attack succeeds thanks to the fleeting disconnection among the black forces and the weaknesses of his back rank.

Few players can actually create a work of art in chess like both participants of this game. One of them is the Latvian-born Spanish citizen Alexei Shirov. There seem to be no established rules for this artist of the board who trusts his tactical intuition blindly, discovering hidden possibilities. How deeply did Shirov see? Where did he stop calculating and where did he trust his position? In fact, does he trust his position or his skill to find incredible moves, in crazy positions, specially designed for the way he conceives chess?

This game rightly deserved the beauty prize of the Linares tournament in 1998. It is reminiscent of Tal's best days, and of his matchless creative magic. After a somewhat unconventional opening, where Shirov gave up a pawn at an early stage in return for an unclear attack, it seemed that the most logical result would be a draw by repetition. However, Shirov spurned this possibility and played on for a win, despite obvious risks. Shirov then forced the gain of the exchange, but Black seemed to get enough compensation. Far from looking for a technical win, Shirov maintained the pressure against Black's king and he decided to stoke the fire. A wonderful queen manoeuvre (♖g4-h5-f3) rounded the game off in excellent style.

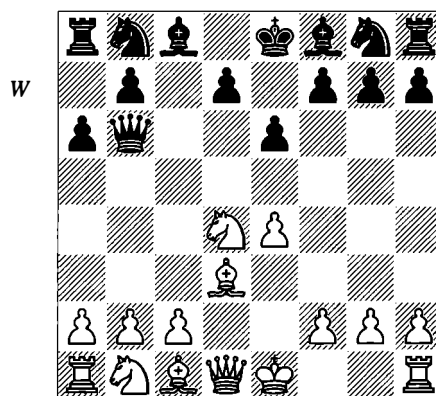
So let's enjoy this fantastic game, which is an example of adventure, risk, creativity and fighting spirit.

**Shirov – Topalov**  
*Linares 1998*

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 a6 5 ♘d3

With this move, White wants to keep the development of his queen's knight flexible, which is very useful if Black expands on the queen-side by ...b5, since White could reply a4, when ...b4 would allow the ideal manoeuvre ♗d2-c4.

5... ♖b6!? (D)



This original idea has proved successful in recent tournament practice. The queen tries to displace the d4-knight from its superb centralized position, considering its retreat as a success. He doesn't mind if he loses a tempo with his queen. In this kind of Sicilian, the queen usually develops to c7, so that this is not very important. White has no good way to keep the knight on d4, having already played ♘d3 and being unable to play ♘e3 due to the vulnerability of the b2-pawn. The move 6 c3 is harmless and hinders the ideal development of the knight via c3, and also means a setback in White's plans in this line, which involve playing c4 and ♗c3 with an undeniable central supremacy,

similar to the fashionable line that Kasparov has used against Black's set-up: 5 c4.

Here are two other popular lines with this queen manoeuvre: 1 e4 c5 2 d3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 a6 5 d2 c3 b5 6 d3 ♖b6 7 d2 b3 ♗c7; 1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d2 f6 5 d2 c3 a6 6 f3 ♖b6. Likewise this queen move resembles the line 5...d3 6 d2 b3 d3 e7 that has also been played in this position recently, even though it allows the aggressive reply 7 ♗g4.

6 d2 b3 ♗c7 7 ♗e2

In a later game Shirov-J.Polgar, Merida 2000, what is most likely a more precise move-order was used: 7 f4 d2 f6 8 ♗e2. We shall take a look at this full game later.

7...d2 f6 8 d2 c3

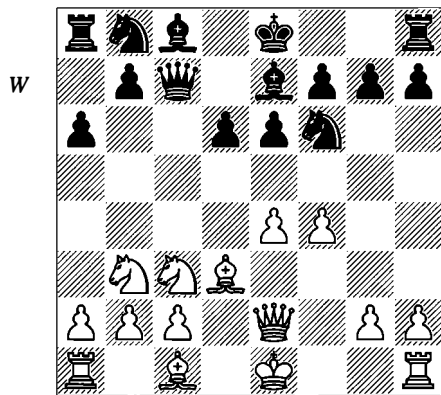
White avoids the piece set-up with c4 that will gain more ground on the queenside, preferring a sharper route.

8...d6 9 f4

As normal, Shirov plays very directly.

9...d3 e7 (D)

Black doesn't fear the central advance and prefers not to give any clue about the future of his queen's knight. He could adopt a flexible piece set-up with ...d2 b7, ...b5 and ...d2 b7 and there is no reason to fear e5, losing a pawn without apparent compensation. The other option is 9...d2 c6.



10 e5!?

10 g4 b5 11 g5 d2 f7.

10...dxe5 11 fxe5 d2 f7 12 d3 f4 d2 c6 13 0-0

White considers it most logical to castle kingside, because it wins time to exert pressure on the f-file.

However, castling on the other side deserves consideration, since pressure on the d-file can also prove useful. 13 0-0-0 d2 xe5 14 d2 b1 (14 d2 hf1!?) 14...0-0 and now:

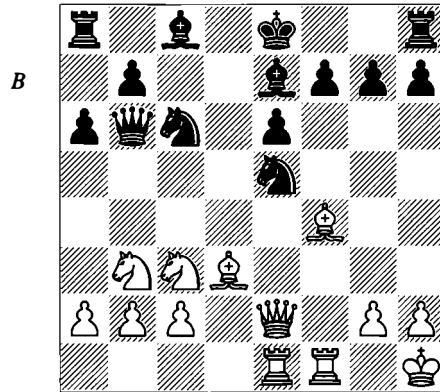
a) 15 d3 e4 f6 16 d3 xc6 (16 d3 hel!?) 16...bxc6 17 d3 hel a5!?

b) 15 d3 hel f6 16 d3 h5 g6 (16...f5 17 g4) 17 d3 h3 and Black can choose between 17...d2 d8 and 17...d3 b6 18 d3 e4 d2 f7 19 d3 g3 d2 ce5.

13...d2 xe5 14 d2 ael

14 d2 h1 gives White nothing: 14...0-0 15 d3 e4 (15 d2 ael f6 16 d3 e4 g6) 15...f6 (15...d3 d6 16 d2 ad1 f6) 16 d2 ad1 d3 d7.

14...d3 b6+ 15 d2 h1 (D)



15...d2 xd3?!

This move looks like a mistake. Although Black removes an important bishop, he frees White's game (especially on the d-file) and leaves his own kingside, where his king is destined to reside, short of defenders.

15...d2 g6! is better. 16 d3 e3 ♗c7 17 d3 xg6 (17 d3 h5 d2 ce5; 17 d3 f2 0-0 18 d3 b6 ♗b8) 17...hxg6 18 d3 f4 e5 (18...d3 d6 19 d2 d5 ♗d8 20 d2 dl offers White some pressure in return for the pawn) 19 d2 d5 ♗d6 20 d2 xe7 d2 xe7 (20...d3 xe7 21 d3 xe5 0-0 =>) 21 d3 xe5 d2 xe5 22 d3 xe5+ ♗xe5 23 d3 xe5+ d3 e6 (23...d3 d6 24 d2 e3 d3 e6 25 d2 dl+) with a balanced ending, where White must be careful not to overpress:

a) 24 d2 c5 d2 h5! 25 d2 xh5 (25 d2 fel d2 xe5 26 d2 xe5 d2 d8) 25...gxh5 26 d2 el d2 d8! ♗.

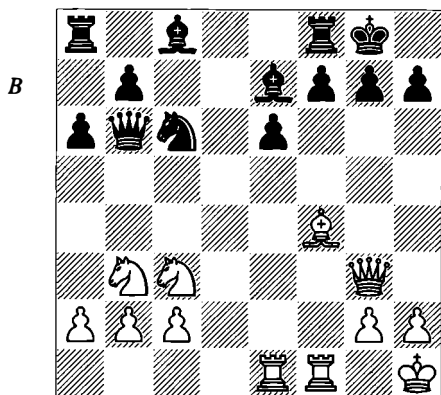
b) 24 d2 e2 d2 ad8 25 d2 c5 and now 25...d2 d6 or 25...d2 h5.

c) 24 d2 d4 d2 d6 =.

16 d3 xd3

The direct outcome of exchanging pieces is that White's queen is now comfortably placed, controlling important kingside squares.

16...0-0 17 ♖g3 (D)



White has enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn. He has better development (although Black's very solid structure mitigates the effects of this) and he is pressing along an important diagonal (the squares c7 and d6 are especially important). Besides, the move ♖h6 is now in the air.

17...♗h8

This prophylactic measure is not clearly the best move. Black can opt for other, more direct, defences, but they all have their drawbacks:

a) 17...♗d7 18 ♖h6 g6 19 ♗e4 gives White the initiative.

b) 17...f6 18 ♖d1! (18 ♖h6 ♗f7 19 ♖d1 ♗e5 20 ♗e4) 18...♗f7? (18...e5 19 ♖h6 ♗f7 20 ♗d5 ♖a7 21 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 22 ♗xf6) 19 ♖e3! +- ♖b4 20 a3 ♖c4 21 ♗f4.

c) 17...f5 seems to be the best alternative to the text-move, controlling the knight's jumps to the centre and displaying the full activity of the dark-squared bishop. The only drawback is the weakening of the dark squares and the e-pawn, even though the advantages are sizeable too. It seems to be correct.

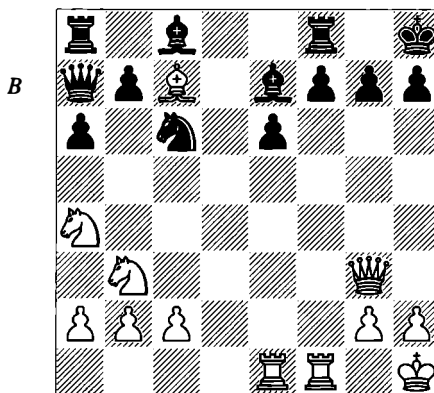
c1) 18 ♖d1 ♖d8 (after 18...♖f6 19 ♖e3 ± White wins a clear exchange without compensation) 19 ♖c7 (19 a3 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♖a7) 19...♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♖b4 21 ♖d6 ♖xd6 and now 22 ♖xd6 gives White compensation, and is preferable to 22 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 23 ♖xd6 ♗f7.

c2) 18 ♖c7! ♖a7 (18...♖b4 19 ♗f4 ♖d6 20 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 21 ♖xf5 ±) 19 ♗a4 ♖d8 and now:

c21) 20 ♖d6 ♗f6 21 ♖f3! (21 ♗ac5 b6 22 ♖f3 ♗e7 is unclear; 21 ♖d1 b6) 21...♗d4 22 ♖h5 g6 23 ♖h6 with compensation.

c22) 20 ♗b6 ♖xc7 21 ♖xc7 ♗f7 22 ♗xc8 ♖xc7 23 ♗xa7 and now both 23...♗d8 and 23...♗xa7 24 ♗d4 are unclear.

18 ♖c7 ♖a7 19 ♗a4 (D)



19...f6!

Black prepares to give up the exchange, and he hopes that his decision to play 15...♗xd3, removing the important light-squared bishop, will finally bring him some profits. Not in vain he would he have got the bishop-pair, since his 'sleepyhead' c8-bishop would wake up and display great energy.

19...♗b4 20 ♗b6 ♗xc2 21 ♖c1 ♗b4 22 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 23 ♖d6 +- was a line given by Israeli GM Sutovsky, Shirov's analyst during the tournament. 19...b5 is also bad: 20 ♗b6 ♖b7 21 ♗d7! ±.

20 ♖b6 ♖b8 21 ♖c7 ♖a7 22 ♗b6!

Shirov decides to continue. The first part of the game was especially creative and it would be a shame for the game to end so tamely. Shirov's ambition and generosity for chess enthusiasts is remarkable.

22...e5

The advance of Black's pawn-centre reduces White's previous control on the dark-squared diagonals and allows the opening the game for the light-squared bishop that threatens to be a destabilizing piece.

23 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♖d1

White continues well. This move displays his technical repertoire. The rook will operate in a more active way on the d-file, and at the same time he is threatening to exchange the dark-squared bishops, restricting Black's compensation.

**24...♞e8!**

Shirov had underestimated this very accurate defensive move. After 24...♞e6 25 ♟d6, the technical work of realizing the advantage would begin.

**25 ♟d6**

This is the most pragmatic move. If Black wants to avoid the exchange of bishops he must now entrench his pieces on their back rank. Black keeps his valuable bishop-pair at a high cost in 'underdevelopment'. Alternatively:

a) 25 c3 (a quiet approach such as this doesn't give White too much) 25...♞e6 26 ♟d6 ♟d8 27 ♘c5 ♟c4 (27...♞xa2 28 b3 ♟b6 29 ♘d7) 28 ♞fe1 b6 (28...♞c8!? 29 b3 ♟f7 30 ♘e4 ♟h5 31 ♞d2 f5) and now:

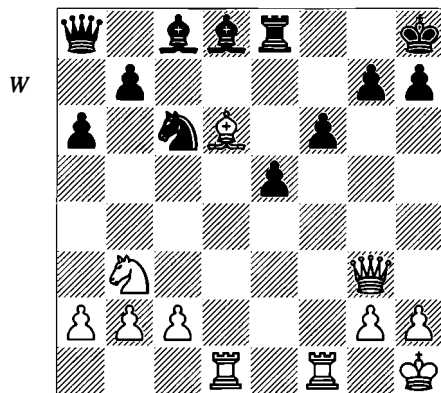
a1) 29 ♘e4 can be met by 29...♞xa2 or 29...♘a5.

a2) 29 b3 ♟f7 30 ♘e4 ♟h5! 31 ♞d2f5 with counterplay.

a3) 29 ♞g4 ♟xa2 30 ♘xa6 is slightly better for White.

b) 25 ♟b6 ♞e6 is the other interesting option. Then White can choose between 26 ♘c5, 26 ♞d2 and 26 a3 ♞c8 27 ♞d2; instead, 26 c3 is answered by 26...a5! 27 ♘c5 ♟xc5 28 ♟xc5 ♞a6.

**25...♟d8 (D)**



**26 ♘c5!?**

"He had a technically winning position. I cannot understand why Shirov played this combination", remarked Nigel Short in the press office of the tournament, a view shared by most of the analysts attending.

His comments stem from the view that in general there is no need to create complications when having an advantage (furthermore, the b3-knight does a good job guarding d4, the entry square of the black knight), but looking a little deeper we observe that things are not so easy. Black threatened to fianchetto his queen's bishop (...b6 and ...♞b7) and to become stronger on this diagonal, with the help of the queen, delighted to return from her forced exile.

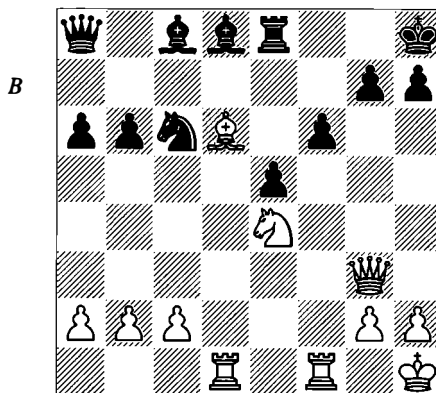
Shirov's manoeuvre actually fits the requirement of the position: he improves the situation of the knight and brings it to the centre of the battle, although its new location is less safe, and more fleeting. Incidentally, Shirov considered that Black has enough counterplay if White opts for a technical approach. Here are two alternatives:

a) 26 c3 ♞e6 (26...b6) 27 ♘c5 ♟c4 28 ♞fe1 ♞c8 (28...♟xa2!?) 29 b3 ♟g8 favours Black.

b) 26 ♞d2 b6 (26...e4 27 ♞fd1 ±; 26...♞e6!?) is the critical move) 27 ♞fd1 ♟b7 28 ♟a3 (28 ♞g4 ♘e7 29 ♞e6 ♟c6 30 ♞f7 ♘g6) 28...♘e7 29 ♞d7 with the advantage.

**26...b6 27 ♘e4 (D)**

The knight threatens to reach the d6-square (once the bishop is expelled), but Black can attack the knight, which is unstable in its current situation.



**27...♘d4?**

This was a very critical moment in the game. Topalov chose an aggressive move (creating various tactical threats), directing the knight to the centre of the board and bringing it near the black king's defences. However, this natural move turns out to be a serious mistake. But what other wizard would have foreseen the course of the game? Alternatives:

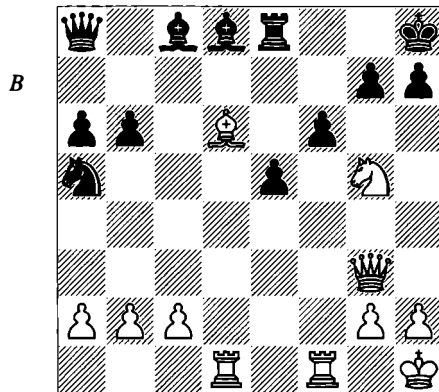
a) 27...♙e6?! is poor, since it fails to challenge White's centralized knight. After 28 ♙a3! the strength of the possible invasion on d6 is clear. 28...♙c7 29 ♚h4 (with dangerous threats on f6) 29...♘d4 30 ♘xf6 gxf6 31 ♚xf6+ ♔g8 32 ♚g5+ ♔h8 33 ♙e7! +-.

b) Black should play 27...♘a5!?. Then:

b1) 28 ♘xf6 is answered by 28...♙xf6.

b2) If 28 ♚fe1, then 28...♙b7 (rather than 28...♙f5 29 ♚f3 ♚c8 30 h3 or 28...♚c6 29 c3).

b3) 28 ♘g5! (D) is a tactical possibility suggested by Ljubojević.



b31) 28...fxg5 29 ♚xe5 ♚g8 (29...♚c6 30 ♚f7) 30 ♙f8 ♙f6 31 ♚xf6 ♙h3 32 ♙xg7+ ♚xg7 33 ♚g1 and the threat of ♚f7 causes Black serious material losses.

b32) 28...♔g8 29 b4 h6! 30 bxa5 hxg5 31 axb6 ♚c6.

b33) 28...♚b7! 29 b4 ♘c6 30 ♚f3 and now:

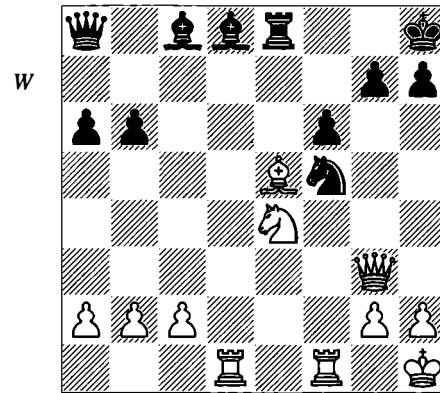
b331) 30...h6 31 ♚h5! ♙d7 32 ♘f7+ ♔h7 33 ♚f3 (33 ♘hx6 g6 34 ♚h4 f5 35 ♚h3 ♔g7) 33...♘d4 34 ♘xd8 ♚xd8 35 ♚xf6 ♙e8 36 ♚xe5 gxf6 37 ♚xd4 ±.

b332) 30...♘d4 31 ♚xb7 ♙xb7 32 ♘f7+ ♔g8 33 ♘xd8 ♚xd8 34 ♙c7 ♚c8 35 ♙xb6 ♚xc2 36 ♚g1 ♚xa2 37 ♙xd4 exd4 38 ♚xd4 ±. 28 ♙xe5!

Exploiting the fact the black knight is walking a very thin line. If 28 c3 then 28...♙e6.

28...♘f5 (D)

Topalov had been relying on this continuation. 28...fxe5 is met by 29 ♘d6!.



29 ♚g4!!

A hellish move, placing the queen on a very exposed square. Did he anticipate this move when playing 26 ♘c5 ? It is hard to believe. What did he see and what didn't he see? In fact, when asked these questions, Shirov replied that he saw nothing concrete, but he felt that there should be something in this position, and when the position arose he duly found it. The wizard pulled out two rabbits in a row, but we should recognize the huge value of finding this move under pressure, even if he hadn't foreseen it. His calmness in these positions is impressive.

Other moves are worse:

a) After 29 ♚xf5, which of course was the move Topalov expected, there would follow 29...♚xe4!.

b) 29 ♚d3 ♙b7 30 ♚d7 ♙c6 (30...♚g8 31 ♘g5) 31 ♚xf5 ♙xe4 ±.

c) 29 ♚c3 and now:

c1) 29...fxe5 30 ♚xe5 ♚c6 (30...♚f8 31 ♘d6 ♙f6 32 ♚xf5 ♙xf5 33 ♚xf5) 31 ♚xf5 is unclear.

c2) 29...♙b7! 30 ♚xf5 (30 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 31 ♘xf6 ♙xg2+ 32 ♔g1 ♙xf1 33 ♚xf1 ♘h4) 30...♙xe4 31 ♚xf6 ♙xf6 32 ♙xf6 gxf6 33 ♚xf6+ ♔g8 -+.

29...♙e3?!

Topalov, caught in an elegant trap, could not react according to the circumstances. The game

gave too many turns in his head: first he won a pawn, and then he lost the exchange, later he seemed to have enough compensation... And now? He failed to see the danger that awaited him in time or he didn't know how to change his 'microchip'. The text-move seems logical, since the knight is threatening three major pieces! However, Black had a more resilient option...

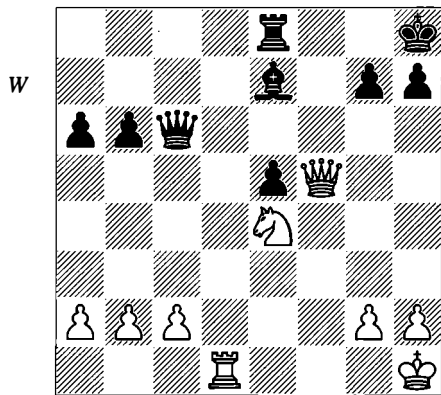
a) 29...♗e7? 30 ♖h5 ♗g6 31 ♜xd8! ♜xd8 32 ♗xf6.

b) 29...♙b7? and then:

b1) 30 ♗xf6? ♙xf6 (30...gxf6? 31 ♜xf5 ♜xe5 {31...fxe5 32 ♜f7 +-} 32 ♜xe5 fxe5 33 ♖f5 +-) 31 ♙xf6 gxf6 (31...♙xg2+? 32 ♖xg2 ♖xg2+ 33 ♗xg2 ♗e3+ 34 ♗h3 ♗xd1 35 ♙d4 +-) 32 ♖xf5 ♙xg2+ 33 ♗g1 ♙xf1 34 ♖xf6+ ♗g8 is unclear.

b2) 30 ♜xf5! ♙xe4 31 ♜d7 ♙e7 32 ♜f4 ♙c6 33 ♜c7 fxe5 34 ♜f7 +-.

c) 29...fxe5! is best. 30 ♜xf5 ♙e7 (30...g6 31 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 32 ♜xd8+ ♗g7 33 ♖f3) 31 ♖f3 ♙xf5 32 ♖xf5 ♖c6 (D).



Considering that certain endings without queens are not advantageous for White, Shirov would have to prove good technique to realize his undeniable advantage: his strong centralized blockading knight tasks vs a bad bishop obstructed by an isolated pawn. Let us see some sample lines without going into too much detail:

c1) 33 h3 is one idea.

c2) 33 ♖d7 ♖xd7 34 ♜xd7 ♜d8 35 ♜xd8+ ♙xd8 could be a draw according to Topalov.

c3) 33 c3 h6 34 h3 and then:

c31) 34...♜f8?! 35 ♖xe5 ♙c5 36 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 (36...bxc5 37 ♜d6) 37 ♖xc5 bxc5 38 ♗g1 c4 39 ♜d4 ♜b8 40 ♜d2 ♗g8 41 ♗f2 ♗f7 42 ♗e2!, followed by ♗d1-c2, denies Black real drawing chances.

c32) 34...♙f8 is met by 35 ♜d7 or 35 ♖f7, but not 35 ♖d7 ♖g6.

### 30 ♖h5 ♗g8

There is no way back. Alternatives:

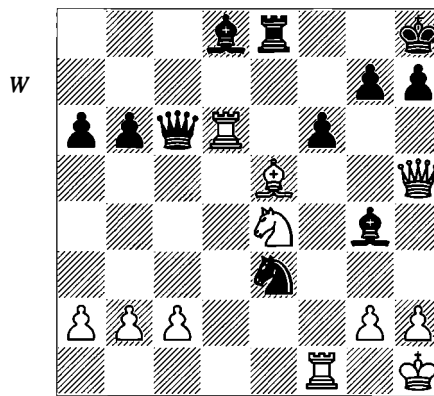
a) 30...g6 31 ♜xd8.

b) 30...♜f8 31 ♖f7! ♗g8 32 ♜xd8.

c) 30...♖c6 31 ♜d6 and then:

c1) 31...♖b5 32 ♜e1 ♙g4 (32...♖xe5 33 ♖xe5 fxe5 34 ♜xe3 +-) 33 ♖f7 ♖xe5 34 ♜xe3 ♙h5 35 ♖d5 ♖f4 36 ♖d3 ♙c7 (36...♙e7 37 g3 {37 ♜d7 ♙c5} 37...♖h6 38 ♜e6 +-) 37 g3 ♖xe3 (37...♖f5 38 ♗xf6 ♖xd3 39 ♜xe8+ ♙xe8 40 ♜d3 gxf6 41 ♜c3!! +-) 38 ♖xe3 ♙xd6 39 ♖xb6 and White's material advantage is decisive.

c2) 31...♙g4 (D).



All the pieces are hanging! 32 ♜xc6 ♙xh5 33 ♜e1 ♗xc2 34 ♜xc2 ♜xe5 (34...fxe5 35 ♜c8 ±) 35 ♜c8 and then:

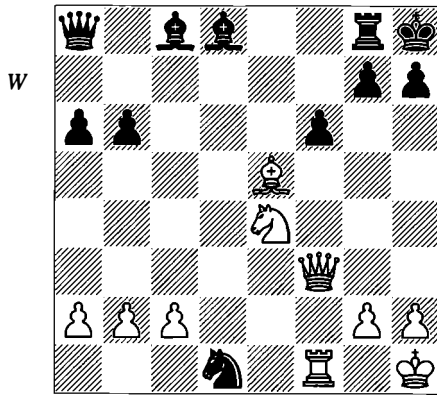
c21) 35...♜e8 36 ♜e3! ♜f8 (36...h6 37 ♗xf6; 36...♗g8 37 ♗xf6+; 36...g5 37 ♗d6) 37 ♗d6 ♗g8 38 ♗b7 ♙e7 39 ♜xf8+ ♗xf8 40 ♜e6 +-.

c22) 35...♜d5 36 ♗c3 ♜d6 (36...♜d4 37 g4 ♙g6 38 ♜d1 ♙d3 39 ♗g1 +-) 37 g4 ♙g6 38 ♜d1.

### 31 ♖f3!

Concluding a beautiful queen manoeuvre. Shirov takes advantage of the cornered black king, confined behind his rook, to find another very beautiful tactical idea.

31...♖xd1 (D)



32 ♖d6 ♖a7

32...♗xf3 33 ♖f7#.

33 ♖xc8 ♖d7 34 ♖d6! 1-0

Accurate to the end. Black cannot capture the bishop and therefore he loses a piece, without being able to react because of the control exerted by the white knight. 34...♖xb2 35 ♖b3 (35 ♖d5) 35...h6 (35...♗f8 36 ♖xb2! ♖xd6 37 ♖a3) 36 ♖f7+ (36 ♖d5 ♖c4!? 37 ♖f7+ ♖xf7 38 ♖xf7 ♖xe5 39 ♖b7 also wins) 36...♗h7 37 ♖xb2 ♖c7 38 ♖a3! ♗e8 39 ♖d6 ♖xd6 40 ♖d3+.

Now we shall examine the game referred to in the note to White's 7th move.

**Shirov – J. Polgar**  
*Merida 2000*

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 a6 5 ♖d3 ♗b6 6 ♖b3 ♗c7 7 f4 ♖f6 8 ♗e2 d5

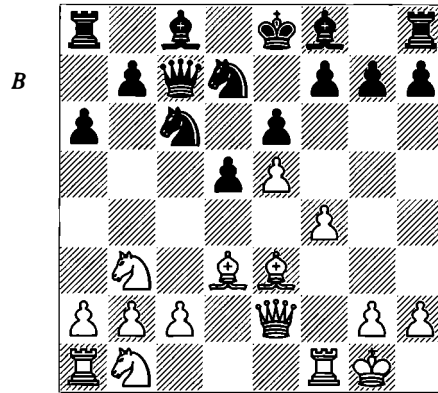
Perhaps Shirov's new idea was 8...d6 9 ♖1d2!? followed by ♖f3.

9 e5 ♖fd7 10 0-0 ♖c6 11 ♖e3 (D)

11...g5!?

Shirov underrated this move. White's initiative seems very unpleasant in case of 11...♖e7 12 ♖1d2, followed by a possible c4, opening the c-file and aiming at the black queen. Therefore Judit risks provoking central complications that are difficult to predict. In return for a pawn Black gets some initiative, as Shirov recognized later.

12 f5! ♖dx5 13 ♖xg5 ♗g8



Sooner or later Black should do something about this bishop, which is preventing ...0-0-0.

Not 13...♖xd3 14 cxd3 ♖d6 15 ♖h5 ♖e5 16 ♖c3 h6 17 ♖f6! ♖xf6 18 fxe6 ♖xc3 19 ♗xf7 +.

14 ♖f4 ♖d7 15 fxe6 ♖xe6 16 ♖xh7 ♗h8 17 ♖f5!

This move reduces Black's pressure.

17...0-0-0

17...♖xf5 18 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖xe5+ ♖xe5 20 ♗xf5 +.

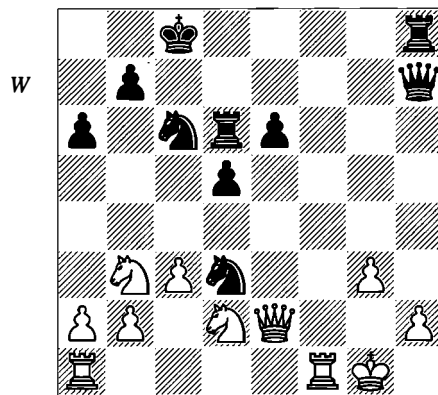
18 ♖xe6+ fxe6 19 ♖1d2 ♖d6 20 g3

White anticipates the threats on h2 and protects f4. But probably this is a hasty move, so I suggest 20 c3!?, with the idea of ♖d4.

20...♖h7 21 c3 ♖d3 22 ♖xd6

22 ♖xe6+ ♗d7.

22...♗xd6 (D)



The game reaches its climax.

23 ♗f6

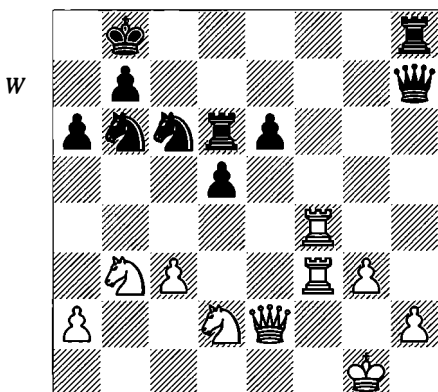
23 ♖f3 e5 gives Black compensation.

23...♖xb2 24 ♖af1?!

According to Polgar, White should have played 24 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 25 ♖xe6+ ♖b8 26 ♖f1 (26 ♖e2 is better) though Black could get some compensation after 26...♗d3!?. For instance: 27 ♖f6 ♖e8 28 ♖c5 (28 ♖d4 ♖xd4 29 ♖xd4 ♖xd4+ 30 cxd4 ♖e4 31 h4 ±) 28...♗c4 29 ♖d6+ ♖a8 30 ♖e6 ♖a7 31 ♖b1 ♖xa2 32 ♖d2 with a clear initiative for White. Here Shirov would surely tell us: 'I don't take care of material; the overall assessment is to me the most important thing'.

24...♖a4 25 ♖f3 ♖b8 26 ♖f4 ♖b6 (D)

This move seems natural, but the reckless-looking 26...b5 is also possible, supporting the a4-knight (c3 and c5 are weak), and 27 ♖xa4? bxa4 28 ♖c5 doesn't work in view of 28...♗a7.



27 ♖c5 ♖d8!

This move is a great defensive idea. It defends the entry-point f7, and also e6 and b7, and enables the queen to pass through c7. Now the situation on the board seems to be balanced. If 27...♗c2, then 28 ♖f7 ♖d8 29 ♖e5 ♖xf7 30 ♖xf7 ♖hd8 31 ♖xb7.

28 ♖db3

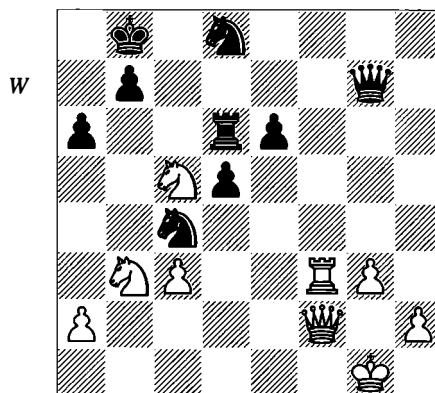
28 c4!? is interesting, but not 28 ♖f1 ♖c7.

28...♖c4 29 ♖h4 ♖g7 30 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 31 ♖f2 ♖g7 (D)

Polgar suggested 31...e5 during the post-mortem analysis: 32 ♖f8 ♖h5 (32...♖h6 33 h4 ♖g6 34 ♖h2) 33 ♖d2.

32 ♖d4!?

A very risky move. 32 ♖f8 ♖xc3 33 ♖f7 (33 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 34 ♖xd8+ ♖c7 35 ♖f7+ ♖xd8 36 ♖xe6 ♖d3 =) 33...♖e1+ (33...♖b4!?) 34 ♖g2



♖e2+ 35 ♖h3 leads to an elegant draw after 35...♗g4+!! 36 ♖g2 ♖e2+.

32...♗c7

Perhaps this is not the best move. Now, the unbalanced position that arises is slightly better for White.

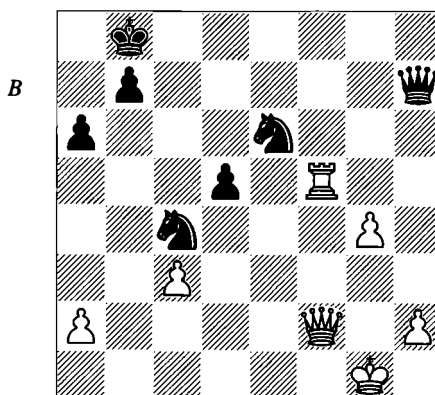
33 ♖cxe6! ♖xe6 34 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 35 ♖f5!

This rook controls the e6-knight and puts pressure on d5. White will win by exchanging queens, while the advance of White's pawn-majority would weaken his king, so that *a priori* it seems a dangerous decision.

35...♗h7

If 35...♗d6 then 36 ♖h5.

36 g4 (D)



36...♖c8

Black had other interesting moves:

a) 36...♗h6 37 g5 ♖g6 (37...♗h3 38 ♖g3+ ♖xg3+ 39 hxg3 ±) 38 h4.

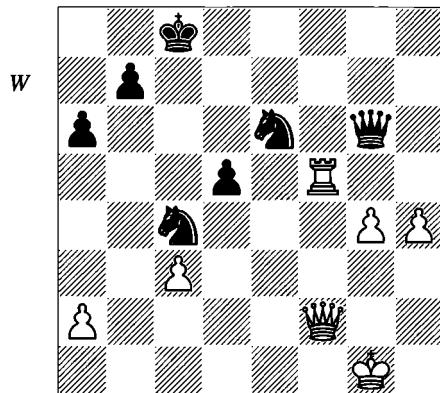
b) 36...♗h3!? 37 ♖e2 (37 ♖f3 ♖h4 38 ♖g3+ ♖xg3+ 39 hxg3 ♖c7 40 ♖xd5 ±) and now not

37...♖e3?, when 38 ♜h5! ♜xg4+ 39 ♜xg4 ♖xg4 40 h3 +- costs Black a knight. He can try 37...♖c7 or 37...♖a7!? 38 ♜xe6 ♜xg4+ 39 ♖f2 ♜h4+ 40 ♖f1 ♜h3+.

**37 h4!**

The pawn advances, leaving the square to the king.

37...♜g6 (D)



**38 ♜f3**

If 38 g5?, then 38...♖e3.

Both players were in time-trouble, but now Judit misses her chance and gets a hopeless position.

38...♖e3?

If 38...♖d2?!, then 39 ♜e2 ♖e4 40 ♜xd5 ♖xc3 41 ♜c4+ ♖b8 42 ♜d6. Instead 38...♜h6! provides good chances for a perpetual check.

**39 ♜f6 ♜b1+ 40 ♖h2?**

The last move before the time-control. 40 ♖f2! ♖d1+ 41 ♖g3 ♖c5 42 ♜f8+ ♖c7 43 ♜f4+ ♖b6 44 ♜b4+ wins easily.

40...♜e1!

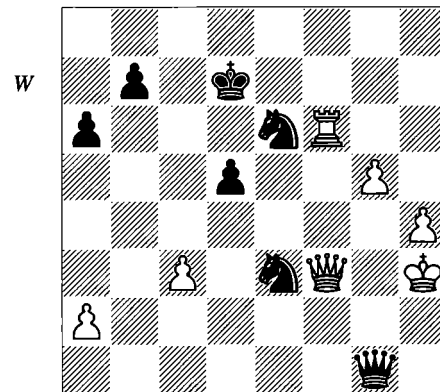
The move Shirov missed, and now he needs to set the game on the right course again.

**41 ♖h3 ♖d7**

41...♖c5 42 ♜g6! (42 ♜h6 ♜xc3) 42...♖e4 43 ♜f8+ ♖c7 44 ♜e7+ ♖b8 45 ♜d8+ ♖a7 46 ♜b6+ and mate next move.

**42 g5 ♜g1 (D)**

42...♜xc3 43 g6 ♜e5 44 ♜f7+ ♖e8 45 ♜f6 (45 ♜xb7 ♖f4+) 45...♜xf6 46 ♜xf6.



**43 g6 ♖c5?**

The mutual zugzwang position the game is reaching is funny. The text-move speeds up Black's demise, but after 43...b5 there follows 44 ♜f7+ ♖c8 (44...♖c6 45 g7) 45 a4! bxa4 46 g7 ♖xg7 47 ♜f8+, hunting down the black monarch.

**44 ♜f7+ ♖c6 45 ♜g3!**

Shirov shows his skills right up to the end.

**45...♜h1+ 46 ♜h2 ♜c1**

46...♜e4 47 ♜c7+ ♖b5 48 ♜b2+ ♖a4 49 ♜b4+.

**47 g7 ♜xc3 48 ♜g3 1-0**

# 16 Knowledge of Positions

A good knowledge of specific positions is of great practical benefit, as it broadens our horizons enormously. A good understanding of an opening, its ideas, and the right plans, gives you a wonderful sensation during a game.

In every game featured in this book I have sought to highlight typical positions that are likely to be of value to the reader. I hope these games encourage players who are reluctant to spend much time working on their technique to devote more time to the subject.

Especially, my ambition in these pages is to keep the flame of learning alive. All those games that follow a strategic idea until the end, and are wonderfully performed (even if some mistakes appear sooner or later) should be recorded in our memory. Only thus will we end up understanding positions and put into practice the lessons from the great chess-players.

The association of ideas is vital for improvement. Even players who show the greatest mastery in dealing with a particular type of position didn't invent all those delightful ideas themselves – many ideas can be learnt from studying games by earlier masters, such as we have examined repeatedly in this book. In short, creativity is not enough on its own.

Great players have at their disposal a knowledge of a great variety of typical positions, although in practice they may not have had the opportunity to face some of them. Capablanca and Karpov, to give an example of two players extensively acclaimed for their technical gifts, studied a great many such positions, and their games demonstrate a high level of perfection. Sometimes, although their choice is not always the simplest continuation, to the eyes of any chess-player it will seem the simplest, once we have replayed the game. The secret of their strength is based on this ease, which is not opposed to original decisions at all. They, like few other players, have the instinct to look deeply into the position and they know how to stop at

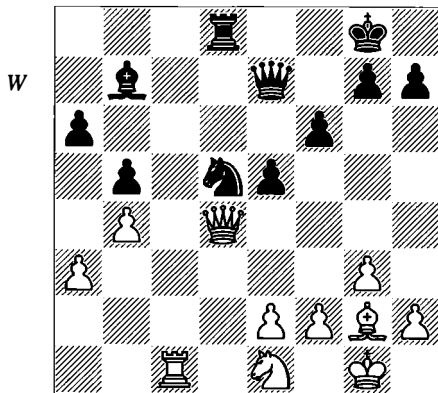
the right moment where there is a 'hidden' important strategic detail. This is what we mean by creative technique. In practice, it is not easy to emulate.

There are many examples of visual association of ideas. Some of them appeared at the same time this book was written, and others have appeared in a sporadic way, without previous comparison. Among these last ones I could highlight the similarity of the move 18 ♖c5 in the game Petrosian-Bannik (see the Introduction), with 20 ♗d5 of the game Karpov-Seirawan (Chapter 3). Both moves offer, in a surprising way, a not very appealing exchange of pieces for White, since Petrosian and Karpov's bishops seem stronger. However, in both cases the decision is entirely right. After the exchanges, their opponents' best-hidden weaknesses become apparent, together with perfect coordination among their own remaining pieces. Without those moves, victory would surely have slipped out of their hands. This final detail is what raises them to another dimension.

Many other examples might take the same place of the former ones, but I only want to stress a few that come to my mind now. Who doesn't remember the following famed game where White missed a strong queen move? (*See diagram on following page*).

Szabo played the Catalan Opening, and was patiently building a sound advantage, thanks to his control on the dark squares. At this point Szabo played the 'natural' 25 ♖c5, knowing beforehand that the exchange of queens provided him a comfortable advantage. However, had he followed a less mechanical technique he would have discovered a more ambitious and threatening possibility, based on the dark squares. Can you see it?

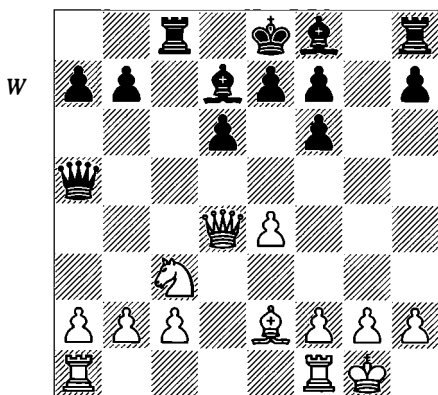
25 ♖a7! reasserts Bronstein's theory to which I have referred so many times: Black's bishop and knight, thanks to the control exerted



**Szabo – Geller**  
Zurich Ct 1953

by White, are going to be harassed relentlessly. We should not forget that when considering moves such as this, you must take the utmost care about tactical traps. In our particular case, we must anticipate moves like 25...♖a8, which fails to 26 ♕xd5+, based on the undefended black queen. If Black defends his queen with 25...♜f8, then after 26 ♘d3 ♖a8 27 ♗c5 White has won some time and, more importantly, brought his knight to its dream square. Black's most active possibility is to close the diagonal of the white bishop by 25...e4, but after 26 ♕xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♗xb7 ♗xe2 28 ♗xa6 White has made some genuine gains, even though Black seems to have achieved some compensating activity.

Many years after I first saw this game, a similar idea occurred to me while studying an opening variation.

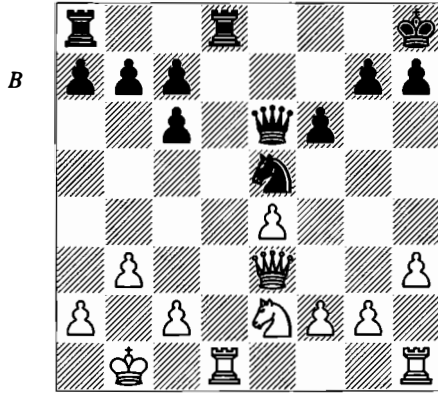


In this position from the Sicilian Defence, White plays 11 a4 trying to exchange the light-squared bishops. This would, in principle, favour White: it removes a potential weapon (the bishop-pair) from Black, which could be a significant factor later on. Black replies 11...a6. Although the position is different from that of the game Szabo-Geller, his last move seriously weakens Black's queenside – and especially the b6-square. The move 12 ♗a7! is knocking at the door. Again, a move on dark squares attacks pieces located on light squares. After 12...♕c6, 13 ♕b5! would be an overwhelming reply, taking advantage of the queen's vulnerability. After 12...♗c7, avoiding the exchange of light-squared bishops, there follows 13 ♘d5 ♗b8 14 ♗d4 (the ending after 14 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 15 ♘b6 is interesting for White thanks to the superb location of his knight) 14...♞xc2 15 ♕c4!? ♗c8 16 b3 and Black has difficult problems. I must admit that finding the move 12 ♗a7! took me some minutes, trying to understand all the subtleties of this queen penetration. Therefore the events I am about to describe left me totally perplexed. In 1992, at Wijk aan Zee, I showed this position (just before White's 12th move) to Peter Leko, a 12-year-old boy who already played good chess and had an Elo rating of 2385. After taking a brief look at the position, the Hungarian prodigy pointed out the move. Thirty seconds had passed. How could this be possible?

Some grandmasters to whom I described this case tried to explain it by the theory of 'long moves'. This type of move is the most difficult to see, since our concentration is often reduced to a part of the board, where the main operations are usually taking place. We must not forget either that an isolated piece means a serious danger. A 'long move' is the last we see in a game but the first that occurs to us when solving a difficult problem. This theory is interesting and might explain partly this case. If Peter had not foreseen the tactical threats of the position, and more importantly, if he had not previously studied games where the queen gets to the corner with unusual ease at critical moments, very likely he would not have discovered this move.

It is interesting that in 1999, Peter Leko, already recognized as part of the elite of chess,

had the occasion to carry out a similar idea, although with little success:



**Leko – Svidler**  
*Linares 1999*

### 19...a5

19...b6 weakens c6: 20 f4 ♘f7 21 ♘d4 ♖e8 22 ♖f3.

### 20 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 21 ♖a7(?) ♘f7 22 ♘c3

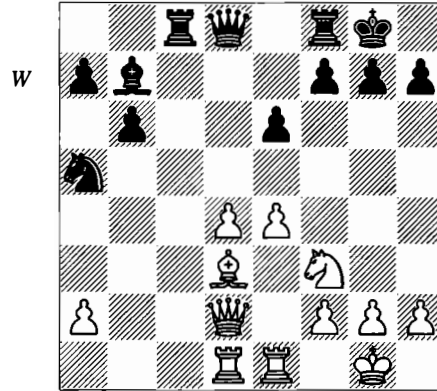
Probably Leko had now seen the danger involved in the queen's departure from the centre and that he could not continue with 22 f3! because of 22...f5! 23 ♘d4 ♖g6 24 ♘xf5 (24 exf5 ♖xg2 25 ♖e1 ♖f2 26 ♖e7 ♘h6) 24...♖xg2 25 ♖g1 ♖xf3 26 ♖xg7 ♘d1+ (both 26...♖xe4? 27 ♖xf7 ♖e6 28 ♖d4+! and 26...♖c3? 27 ♖g1 are losing for Black) 27 ♖b2 ♖f4, when White is in trouble.

22...♖e5 23 ♖e3 ♖e8 24 ♖d1 ♘d6 25 f4 1/2-1/2

After 25...♖e6 Black has annoying counterplay against e4, the d6-knight is a good defensive piece and White's central pawn-majority cannot be put to good use.

## Further Examples

Positions with hanging pawns are, from a strategic point of view, of great complexity. These pawns often have great tactical power, but while restrained, they are weak points capable of being exploited. The position I am going to show has some contacting points with the subject of 'hanging pawns'.



**Polugaevsky – Tal**  
*USSR Ch (Moscow) 1969*

White is able to brag about his strong pawn-centre, although for the time being it appears to be restrained, since the advance of the d-pawn is being prevented. Tal has guided his pieces toward White's central chain, and he hopes to be able to put pressure on d4, which is particularly vulnerable. After a move such as 16...♘c4 Black would begin to create problems on the queenside, since 17 ♖b4 ♖d6 would only favour Black, who will get a very comfortable ending. Therefore, White should act quickly. The black king is unprotected, but how to take advantage of it? After 16 e5, the white bishop would have a very clear target. The most serious drawback is that this move gives Black absolute control of the d5-square and especially, the possibility of 16...♘xf3. Since Black's fianchettoed bishop is a strong obstacle to White's plan, he should try to close its diagonal abruptly:

### 16 d5! exd5

Since ...e5 is impossible, Black is forced to accept the offer. Belov recommends 16...♖d6!?, although the ending after 17 dxe6 (17 ♖e2 e5 ±) 17...fxe6 18 ♖b5! is unpleasant for Black.

### 17 e5!

The sacrifice of a central pawn has caused not only the white bishop to gain activity, but Black's extra pawn is isolated and blocks the action of his own bishop. Thanks to the advance of the d-pawn, the white knight will get a good attacking route (♘d4-f5) and also the e-pawn is able to advance up to the sixth rank, weakening Black's kingside even more.

17...♗c4(?!)

Later examples have tried to give new life to Black's cause, although without success:

a) 17...d4 18 ♖g5 h6 19 ♗h7 ♗c4 (19...♗e8? loses to 20 ♗f6+ gxf6 21 ♖xh6) 20 ♖f4 ♗b2 21 ♗xf8 ♗xd1 22 e6 ♗c7 23 ♖f5? (missing 23 ♗h7! ♗b2 24 e7) 23...♗xf8 24 ♖h7 ♗e3 25 e7+ ♗xe7 26 ♖xg7 ♗c6 27 fxe3 dxe3 28 ♗xe3+ ♗e6 29 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 = Gulkov-Tkebuchava, Moscow 1994.

b) 17...♖e7 18 ♗d4 g6 19 ♖h6 f5 20 h4 ♗c6 21 ♗b5 (21 ♗f3!?) 21...♗d8! 22 ♗d6 ♗c5 23 h5 ♗f7 24 ♖f4 ♗c8 25 hxg6 hxg6 26 ♖g3 ♖g5?? (losing a piece; 26...♗h7! holds the position) 27 ♗xc8 ♖xg3 28 ♗e7+ and White won in Pogorelov-Magem, Sitges 1993.

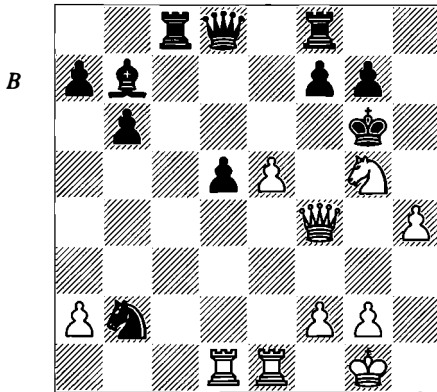
18 ♖f4 ♗b2

The only active choice.

19 ♗xh7+! ♗xh7 20 ♗g5+ ♗g6

The only move.

21 h4! (D)



B

21...♗c4 22 h5+ ♗h6

If 22...♗xh5, then 23 g4+ ♗g6 24 ♖f5+ ♗h6 25 ♖h7+ ♗xg5 26 ♖h5+ ♗f4 27 ♖f5#.

23 ♗xf7+ ♗h7 24 ♖f5+ ♗g8

Surprisingly, the king has returned to g8, but practically there are no defenders.

25 e6! ♖f6

25...♖e7 allows 26 h6!, with threats that are difficult to parry.

26 ♖xf6 gxf6 27 ♗d2

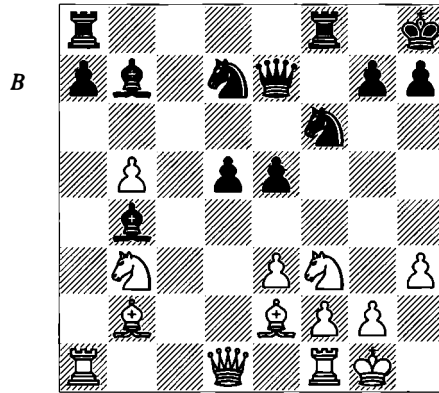
27 ♗d6 ♗xd1 28 e7 ♗c1 29 h6 has been suggested as a possible improvement.

27...♗c6 28 ♗xb2 ♗e8 29 ♗h6+ ♗h7 30 ♗f5 ♗xe6 31 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 32 ♗c2 ♗c6 33 ♗e2

♗c8 34 ♗e7+ ♗h8 35 ♗h4 f5 36 ♗g6+ ♗g8 37 ♗xa7 1-0

White combined a positional sacrifice (16 d5 exd5 17 e5) with other eminently tactical ideas (19 ♗xh7+, 21 h4) that involved a lot of preparation beforehand.

But let us see another diagram:



B

Mirallès – Romero  
Sharjah jr Wch 1984

Although there are more pieces on the board and White has more defenders than in the previous game, the outcome is terribly similar. White has the strong positional threat of ♗a5, forcing Black to give up one of his bishops. Black must react quickly:

16...d4! 17 exd4 e4

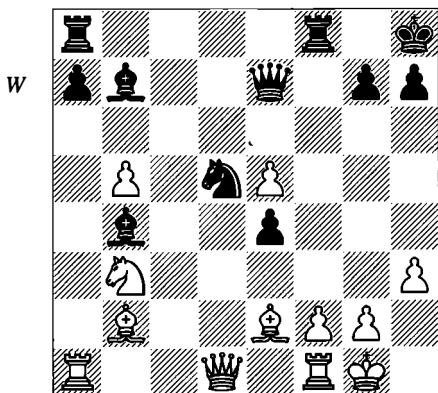
This advance is essential to block the diagonal of White's fianchettoed bishop. The only differences regarding the position of the previous game are the strong bishop at b7 (that impacts favourably in the manoeuvre ...♗d5-f4) and the situation of the dark-squared bishop (at b4 instead of d6). Black, although he has won a tempo attacking a piece, must face the possibility of the blockade on the e-file.

18 ♗e5 ♗xe5 19 dxe5 ♗d5 (D)

Although White won the d4-square to locate a strong piece and he placed a 'stone' on the e-file, the location of the bishop at b4 allows an additional possibility: the threat of ...♗c3.

20 ♗g4

Anticipating Black's threats 20...♗c3 and 20...♗f4 followed by ...♖g5, with mating ideas



at g2. Therefore, the bishop tries to block the g-file.

**20...e3! 21 ♖f3**

There is no return. 21 f3 would stop every attempt against g2, but it would leave the white bishop imprisoned by the pawns. Thus, both 21...♗f4 and 21...h5 would be conclusive. In the same way, 21 ♗d4 would allow 21...♗f4, with devastating effects.

**21...♗c3! 22 ♖xc3 ♖xf3 23 gxf3**

White's kingside is steadily getting weaker. 23 ♖xb4? is bad on account of 23...♗g5!.

**23...♖xc3 24 ♖a4 ♗xe5**

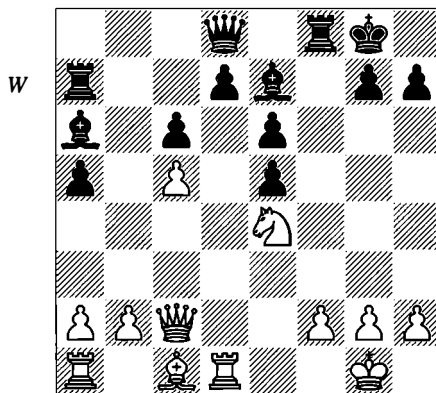
Black has crushing control, but Mirallès now hastens the outcome.

**25 fxe3? ♗g3+ 26 ♖h1 ♗xh3+ 27 ♖g1 ♗g3+ 28 ♖h1 ♖f5 29 f4 g6 0-1**

## The Lasting Power of the Bishop

In many positions arising from the French or the Stonewall, Black seeks to activate his bad bishop via the other side of the board, even though the manoeuvre is somewhat tortuous (e.g. ...♖c8-d7-e8, etc.) and has technical drawbacks. For instance, the e6-pawn, the heart of Black's pawn-chain, may require additional defence.

However, sometimes the 'lashes' of the bishops can be more surprising and distant, thus changing the former approach of the game. I will always share the bitter helpless feeling that a player can end up experiencing when accidents like this happen:



### de la Villa – Rivas Spanish Ch 1981

White has sacrificed a pawn, and although Black has a central majority, White has absolute control thanks to the blockade accomplished by the c5-pawn and the e4-knight. Black lacks mobility and has no viable pawn-breaks. Confident in his advantage and Black's lack of counterplay, White found the only move that drastically changes the game.

**16 ♖d2??**

Intending ♖c3. If White had instead played 16 b3 (intending ♖b2) or 16 ♖e3, followed by doubling rooks on the d-file, Black would have encountered enormous difficulties saving the game.

**16...♖e2!**

Played with considerable relief.

**17 ♖e1 ♖h5**

Black intends ...♖g6. The bishop passed from occupying a regrettable position to taking an active part in the fight.

The next example has some similarities (*see diagram on following page*):

This is a well-known theoretical line, where White has sacrificed a pawn.

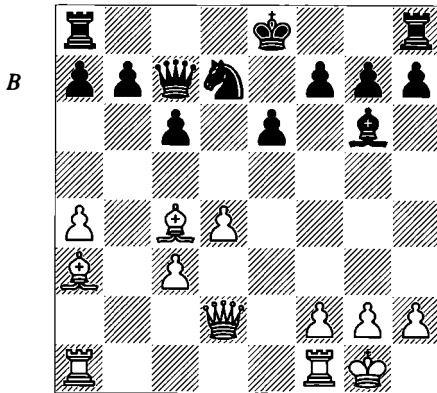
**14...0-0-0?**

The critical line is 14...c5! 15 dxc5 0-0-0. The text-move allows White to improve the location of his dark-squared bishop.

**15 ♖e7! ♖de8**

15...♗b6 doesn't work: 16 ♖xd8 ♗xc4 17 ♗e2.

**16 ♖h4 f6 17 a5! ♖hf8**



**Razuvaev – Levitt**  
*Reykjavik 1990*

If 17...e5 at once, White would play 18 f3 with the idea of ♕f2, pressing along the a7-g1 diagonal.

**18 ♕g3 e5 19 f4!**

This game is an example of Razuvaev's virtuosity: virtually every move is a threat and follows a particular plan.

**19...♖d6**

Preventing 20 fxe5 fxe5 21 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 22 ♕e6!.

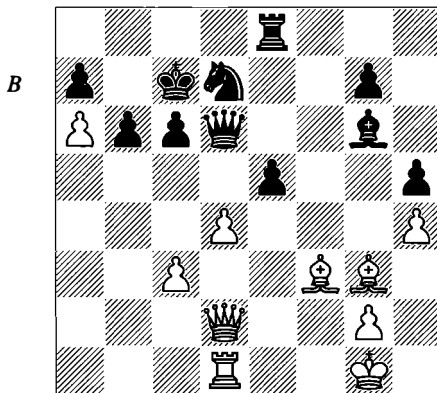
**20 fxe5 fxe5 21 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 22 a6! b6 23 ♖d1**

Pressing on the d-file.

**23...♗d6 24 ♕e2! h5 25 ♕f3**

Now there is pressure on c6.

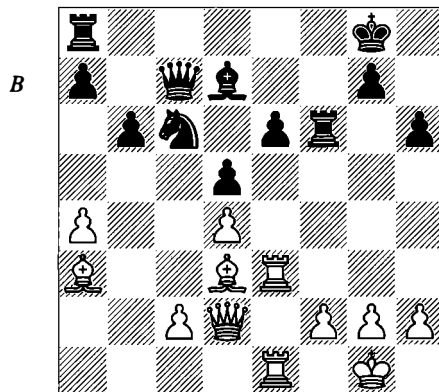
**25...♝c7 26 h4! (D)**



Fixing h5 and protecting the king.  
**26...♗f7 27 ♝h2 g6 28 c4!**

Finally attempting to open the position.  
**28...♝c8**  
If 28...♕xc4, then 29 ♖c3!  
**29 ♖c2 ♗f6 30 c5 b5 31 d5 ♕xd5 32 ♕xd5 cxd5 33 ♖xd5**  
The threats of ♖d6 and ♗d3 are decisive, and White won a few moves later.

The next example, more complex and less predictable, suggests a sort of review of the previous matter.



**Wedberg – S. Mohr**  
*Budapest 1988*

**19...♗a5??**

This allows a profitable tactical and positional manoeuvre by the bishop:

**20 ♕e7!!**

The bishop changes its course to open a gap in Black's kingside defences. At the same time, White diverts an important piece from the defence of its king: the black rook which is zealously guarding the g6- and h6-squares. The manoeuvre is definitely beautiful, because it was not easy to foresee that h6 will be so weak.

**20...♖f7 21 ♖g3 ♝h8 (D)**

**22 ♕g5! hxg5 23 ♗xg5 ♝g8**

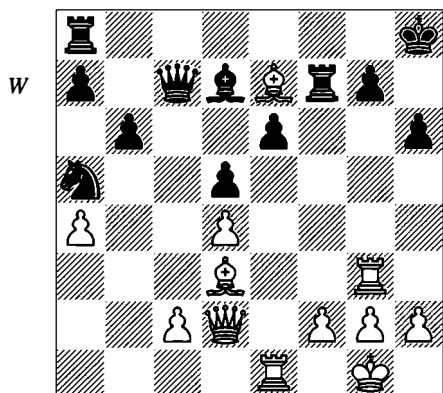
The only move. If 23...♖f4 24 ♗h5+ ♝g8 then 25 ♖f3! winning.

**24 ♗g6**

24 ♗h5 seems better, preventing 24...♝f8.

**24...♖e8?**

The decisive error. More resistant is 24...♝f8  
25 ♖h3 ♝e7 26 ♗g5+ ♝d6 27 ♖e5+ ♝c6 28 ♕b5+ ♝b7 29 ♕a6+ ♝c6 30 ♖c3+ ♗c4 and



now both 31  $\text{♙xc4}$  and 31  $\text{♜xc4+!}$ ? offer good chances of scoring the whole point.

25  $\text{♜h3 ♗f8 26 ♜h8+ ♗e7 27 ♜g5+ ♗d6 28 ♜xe8 ♗xe8 29 ♜e5+ ♗c6 30 ♜xe6+ ♗b7 31 ♜xe8$

and White won some moves later.

I imagine that Wedberg's decision to change the route of the bishop didn't involve a great deal of calculation, because we are intuitively aware that a king cannot resist the attack of three pieces in an open field.

Like de la Villa, Mohr sinned from being too confident when playing his move 19... $\text{♗a5}$ . If instead he had opted for 19... $\text{♜f4!}$ ? (or 19... $\text{♜c8}$ ) and only after 20 c3 played 20... $\text{♗a5}$ , the situation would have been very different.

## Twin Positions

In Chapter 4 we analysed the game Miles-Hübner, where White skilfully exploited a slight advantage (centre, bishop-pair and space). In the next example, Black could have forced a similar position. Let us see how from a different opening (in this case the Catalan), Morović went into a position that my readers will already know is very difficult.

**Karpov – Morović**  
*Las Palmas (5) 1994*

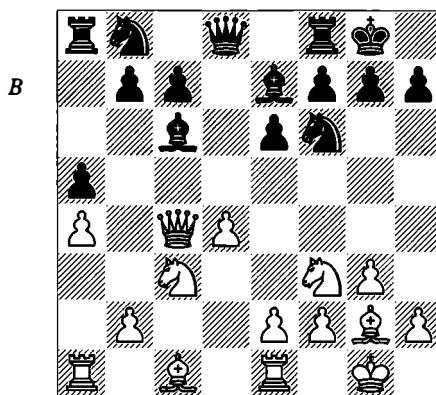
1 c4  $\text{♗f6 2 d4 e6 3 ♗f3 d5 4 g3 ♗e7 5 ♗g2 0-0 6 0-0 dxc4 7 ♜c2 a6 8 a4 ♗d7 9 ♜xc4 ♗c6 10 ♗c3}$

10  $\text{♗g5!}$ ?

10...a5

10...b5!? 11  $\text{♜d3 b4 12 ♗b1 ♗e4 =}$ .

11  $\text{♜e1 (D)}$



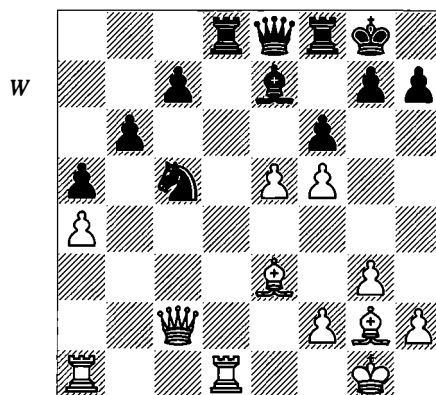
11... $\text{♗e4? 12 ♜d3 ♗xc3}$

12...f5 13  $\text{♗e5 ♗xc3 14 ♗xc6! +-}$ .

13  $\text{bxc3 ♗d7 14 c4 ± ♗b6 15 c5 ♗d7}$

15... $\text{♗d5!}$ ?; 15... $\text{♗xa4 16 ♜c2 ♜e8 17 e4}$  intending  $\text{♗e5}$ .

16  $\text{♜c2 e5?! 17 dxe5 ♗xf3 18 exf3 ♗xc5 19 ♜d1 ♜e8 20 ♗e3 b6 21 f4 ♜d8 22 f5 f6 (D)}$



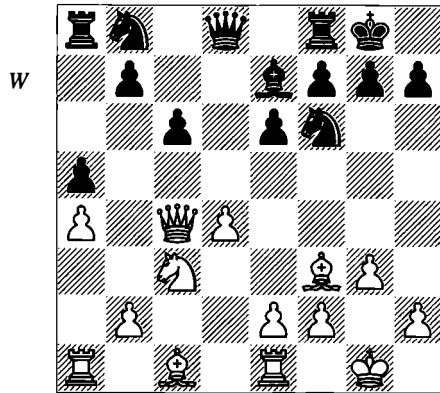
23 e6 +-  $\text{♗d6 24 ♜c4 ♗h8 25 ♗f3 ♜e7 26 ♜ac1 ♜e8 27 ♜d4 g6 28 fxg6 ♜xg6 29 ♜h4 ♗e7 30 ♜h6 ♜g7 31 ♜h5 ♜g6 32 ♜g4!}$

f5 is weak.

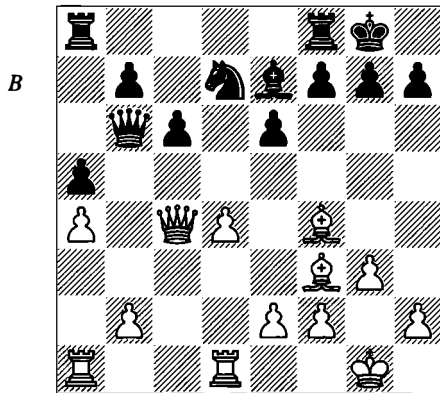
32... $\text{♜g8 33 ♜h4 ♜g7 34 ♗h6 ♜gg8 35 ♗e3 ♜g7 36 ♜h3 ♜gg8 37 ♗g4 1-0}$

On move 11 Black made a serious mistake that was decisive for the outcome of the game, because White took complete possession of

the centre. Karpov suggested the improvement 11... $\text{Bxf3}$  (the bishop is located on a bad square, in front of the c-pawn, as we saw in Karpov-Seirawan, and it is better to get rid of it) 12  $\text{Bxf3 c6}$  (D).



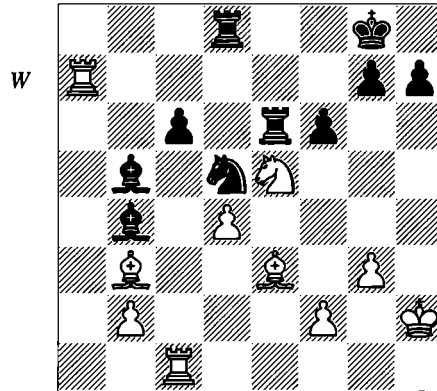
White is only slightly better in this case. Readers can compare this position with that arising on move 16 in the game Miles-Hübner. The pawn-structure is the same, and the exchange of knights would simply lead to the same situation.



This is another example of association of ideas.

In one of his many magazine articles, Tal confesses some of his inmost experiences, very pertinent to the topic of this chapter.

In his note to the game Tal - Brinck-Clausen, Tal relates that he played according to a previous game. The following position appeared after a complex and rich Marshall Attack:



Tal - Spassky  
Tbilisi Ct (1) 1965

28  $\text{Qxc6!}$

This spectacular move starts the fireworks.

28... $\text{Bxc6}$

Spassky replies cautiously. White's idea was to meet 28... $\text{Bxc6}$  with the subtle 29  $\text{Ba8!!}$   $\text{Bd6}$  30  $\text{Bcc8 B a5}$  (30... $\text{Bxc8}$  doesn't work due to 31  $\text{Bxc8+ Qf7}$  32  $\text{Bb8}$  recovering the piece) 31  $\text{Bxd8+ Qxd8}$  32  $\text{Bf4 Bd7}$  (32... $\text{Bc6}$  33  $\text{Ba6}$ ) 33  $\text{Bc7!}$  with a large advantage.

29  $\text{Ba6 Qf8}$

If 29... $\text{Bc8}$  30  $\text{Baxc6 Bxc6}$  31  $\text{Bxc6 Bxc6}$  then 32  $\text{Qxd5+}$  will win material.

30  $\text{Baxc6 Bxc6}$  31  $\text{Bxc6 Qxe3}$  32  $\text{fxe3 Qd2!}$  33  $\text{Qc4 Qxe3}$  34  $\text{d5 Qd2}$

and a draw was agreed after some more moves.

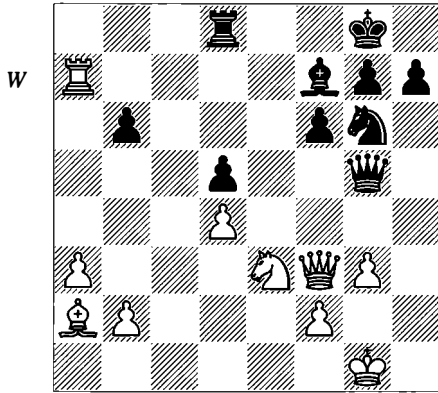
Let us now see the later game (see diagram overleaf):

The two positions are very different, but several common elements produce the required ingredients for the same combination. The pawn at d5, the white bishop acting on the diagonal where the black king resides and the rook on the a-file, acting as a diverting element, envisage the same solution we saw in the game Tal-Spassky. In this particular case, Tal had a great advantage, which is to know beforehand a tactical motif (experienced by yourself) and also to have it very fresh in his memory (only one year elapsed between the two games).

33  $\text{Qxd5! Qxd5}$

If 33... $\text{Bxd5}$ , 34  $\text{Bxf7}$  winning.

34  $\text{Ba8! Qxa2}$



**Tal – Brinck-Claussen**  
Havana OL 1966

There is nothing better. 34...♖c1+ 35 ♔g2 ♕xa2 36 ♖xd8+ ♗f7 fails to 37 b3! ♖e1 38 ♖d6!.

**35 ♖xd8+ ♗f7 36 ♖c6!**

36 ♖b7+? ♗e7 37 ♖d7 f5 38 d5 ♖c1+! 39 ♔g2 ♖c5! is at least OK for Black.

**36...♗e7 37 ♖e8+ ♔e6 38 ♖c8!**

Threatening 39 ♖c6+ and at the same time preventing ...♖c1+.

**38...♖d5**

38...♕d5 loses to 39 ♖c7!.

**39 ♖c3! ♖d7 40 ♖e3+ ♔d6 41 ♖b8+ ♔c6 42 a4!**

A strong *zwischenzug*, cutting off the king's escape route. Black is unable to coordinate his pieces well, and cannot prevent White from building an unstoppable mating-net with rook and queen.

**42...♗d5 43 ♖e1 ♖d6 44 ♖c1+ ♔d7 45 ♖c8+ 1-0**

## Two Different Treatments in the Same Position

In this section I will show a typical topic in elite tournaments. In the same position two grandmasters chose different lines, but of similar strength. Everything depends on the preferences and the style of the player, and that he feels happy with the resulting position, making the decision in a critical position of the game.

**1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 ♖b4!?**

This rare continuation (instead of the standard 3...♗c6) has often been defended by Yusupov.

**4 ♗xe5 0-0 5 ♕e2 ♖e8**

The best move, continuing development and creating some disharmony in White's development.

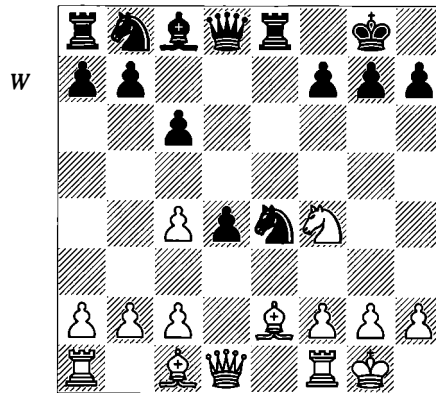
**6 ♗d3! ♕xc3 7 dxc3 ♗xe4 8 0-0!?**

A mistake? White usually prevents Black from advancing his d-pawn two squares, gaining space, so it is interesting to study the model game Psakhis-Yusupov, USSR Ch (Vilnius) 1980/1: 8 ♗f4 c6 (the alternative is 8...d6 9 0-0 ♗d7 10 c4 a5 11 f3 ♗ec5 12 b3 ♖f6 13 ♖b1 c6 14 ♗h5 ♖g6 15 ♗g3 ± Shirov-Yusupov, Bundesliga 1994/5) 9 c4 d6 (the sacrifice 9...d5!? 10 cxd5 ♕g4 ∞ Salazar-Fernandez, greatly changes the character of the game) 10 0-0 ♕f5 11 a4! a5 12 ♖a3 ♗d7 13 ♖e3! ♗dc5 14 g4 ♕e6 15 f3 ♗f6 16 b3 to follow with ♕b2. A superb idea to connect the queenside pieces, in a very efficient way.

**8...d5!**

Fixing White's pawn-structure on the queenside, so that the advantage of the bishop-pair could be reduced. Black intends ...♗d6.

**9 ♗f4 c6 10 c4! d4 (D)**



The d4-pawn will remain like a thorn in the enemy lines; it also helps define the c2-pawn as a target. However, the d4-pawn might also prove exposed, so this is a very rich position from a strategic point of view. The f4-knight is a strong piece and Black has trouble with his development (his bishop lacks a safe diagonal),

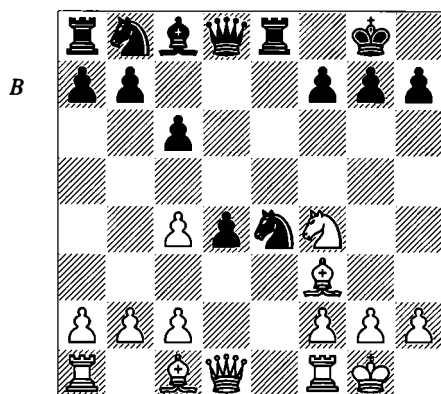
while the e4-knight can be expelled at any moment.

However, everything isn't so easy for White, who lacks space to manoeuvre with his pieces. His bishops currently have no scope, and the f4-knight is a static piece. It is necessary to find a logical and natural plan to make progress. The reader should look for his own plan and later consider the two moves White has preferred in high-level play.

### Option A

**Adams – Hübner**  
*Dortmund 1996*

11 ♖f3!? (D)



With this move Michael Adams attempts to solve the problem of the light-squared bishop (decisive for the communication of White's forces) and, at the same time, he drives the strong black knight out of e4. If White played f3 immediately he would weaken the e3-square and White's pieces would lose potential. The English GM is trying first to displace the black knight and then he will try to exchange his bishop for its black counterpart, which maybe could exert pressure on c2. Thus he is planning to transfer his queen to the kingside, with chances of beginning an attack on the black king, releasing the whole energy of his pieces. Very interesting.

11... ♗g5

Not 11... ♗a6? 12 c3 ±.

12 ♖g4 ♗e6

Therefore Hübner prevents the white queen from quickly passing to the kingside. 12... ♗a6!? is an option, while if 12... ♖xg4 13 ♗xg4 ♗e6 14 ♗h5 (14 ♖e1!?) 14...g6 15 ♗g3 ♗d7 then 16 f4 secures the initiative.

13 ♖e1 ♗a6!?

13... ♗xf4 14 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 15 ♖xc8 ♗e2+ 16 ♗h1 ♗xc8 17 ♗xe2 is slightly better for White.

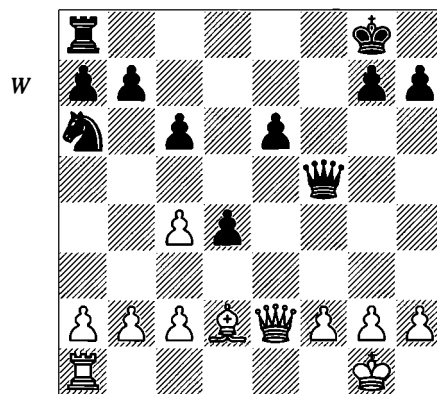
14 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 15 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 16 ♖xe6 fx6

Black's pawn-structure is disastrous, but the position has been simplified a lot and he has some counterplay against c2.

17 ♖d2

Another idea is 17 ♖f4 ♗f6 18 ♖g3.

17... ♗f6 18 ♗e2 ♗f5! (D)



Black's queen is located on its best square.

19 c3 d3!? 20 ♗e3 ♗c5 21 ♖e1 ♖d8 22 f3 b6 23 b3

23 b4 ♗a4 24 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 25 ♖xe6 ♗f7!? 26 ♖e4 ♗xc3 =.

23...h6 24 ♗f1 ♖d6

White's advantage has been reduced to a minimum.

25 ♗f4 ♖d7 26 ♗e5 ♗xe5 27 ♖xe5 ♗f7 28 ♗e1 ♗f6 29 ♖e3 e5 30 ♖c1 e4! 1/2-1/2

Black has achieved too much activity, getting the deserved reward of a draw.

### Option B

**Romero – Fernandez Garcia**  
*Spanish Ch playoff (Bilbao) 1993*

11 ♖e1!?

The problem of expelling the e4-knight at once after 11 f3 ♘f6 is that if 12 b3 there follows 12...c5!, when Black settles a bulwark on d4, at the same time protecting the d5-square. Besides, by occupying the f3-square with the pawn, White is unable to put his bishop there, in order to fight for the control of d5.

11...♘a6!

11...c5 is met by 12 ♙f3!

12 ♙f1!

Thus concluding the regrouping plan, with the idea of fighting for the control of the e-file. White's pieces begin to breathe.

12...♙f5 13 f3 ♘f6 14 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 15 g4!

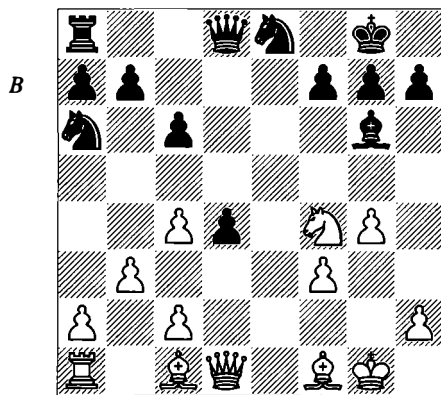
A move in the spirit of the position: expansion and space.

15...♙g6

Now the f4-knight is able to eliminate the black bishop if this proves desirable.

16 b3! (D)

White anticipates Black's idea of ...♗b6, and he seeks to play against the d-pawn. During a great part of the game the possibility of Black reinforcing his centre by means of ...c5 is questioned by the activity the white bishop would display on the h1-a8 diagonal. Another idea is 16 ♙d2 ♗b6 17 ♘xg6 (17 ♗c1 ♙xc2 wins for Black) 17...hxg6 18 b3, with a small advantage.



16...d3?

This was based on erroneous calculation. Better is 16...♗f6! and after the precise reply 17 ♗d2! (defending the knight and threatening ♙b2) a critical position appears. There could follow 17...♗d8 (17...d3 18 c3 intending ♙a3

and ♗e1) 18 ♙a3! (18 ♙b2 ♙xc2 19 ♘h5 ♗g6) and now 18...♙xc2? doesn't work on account of 19 ♗e1! ♘d6 20 ♘h5 ♗g6 21 ♙xd6 ♗xd6 22 ♗xc2, when White will win a piece, with a sound and indisputable advantage.

17 c3 ♗b6+ 18 ♘g2 ♗d8 19 ♗e1!

This multi-purpose move threatens to secure the advantage by ♙e3, the capture of the d3-pawn and exerting pressure on the e-file. 19 b4 is met by 19...d2! 20 ♙xd2 ♘xb4 21 ♘xg6 hxg6 22 ♗b1 ♗a5.

19...♘ec7

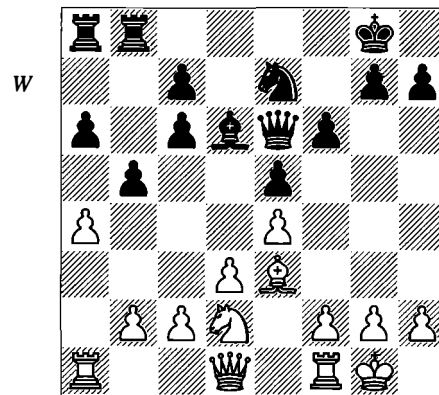
The pair of black knights needs to regroup. The e6-square seems ideal but only one knight can occupy it. Another possibility is 19...♘f6 20 ♗e3 (alternatively, 20 ♙e3 ♗a5 21 ♙d4) 20...♗a5 21 b4! (21 ♘xg6?! ♗xc3!; 21 ♙d2 ♗a3) 21...♗a4 (21...♗g5 22 ♘d5) 22 ♘xg6 (22 ♘xd3?! ♗c2+ 23 ♘f2 ♘c7 gives Black compensation) 22...♗c2+ 23 ♗d2! hxg6 24 ♗xc2 dxc2 25 ♙e3 ♗d1 26 ♗c1 with a typical winning endgame for White.

20 b4!

White has a large advantage, which he duly converted into victory.

## A Typical Mistake in Modern Chess

Finally, I will show a typical problem in current chess.



Christiansen – I. Sokolov  
Manila OL 1992

This position arose from an Exchange Spanish (1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♘b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 0-0 ♜d6 6 ♗a3 ♘e6 7 ♗g5 f6 8 ♗xe6 ♜xe6 9 d3 b5?! 10 ♗b1 ♘d6 11 a4 ♗e7 12 ♘e3 0-0 13 ♗d2 ♜fb8), and is very distinctive on account of Black's queenside pawn-structure.

Please think carefully about the piece arrangement on the queenside. The weakening move 9...b5 has been countered with the break a4. However, White now lost his composure and chose the wrong plan. Christiansen, a player with a very creative style, continued with the mechanical 14 ♗b3?! ♗c8! 15 ♜h5? and after 15...♗b6 16 axb5 axb5 he was near to being dominated on the queenside. The problem was probably that he was ignoring the natural plans in this position.

The most suitable move is 14 c4!. Again, creative strategy produces this kind of move. This weakening move in White's camp creates quick threats against Black's damaged pawn-structure,

by exerting pressure on the c-file. Now the move 14...♗c8 would be senseless (since the knight is not able to go to b6), and after 14...♗g6 would follow 15 ♜c2!. The c-pawn opens a new square for the queen, the best in my view, where it eyes c6 and c7. White maintains all his chances; for example, the thematic advance d4 (before or after closing the position with c5), as well as the manoeuvre ♗b3-a5.

This 'conceptual' mistake (very frequent even among the best grandmasters in the world) is not an isolated case nowadays. The condition of current competition demands that one is 'soaked' in opening theory and, often, to take practical decisions. This way, some grandmasters of the world elite don't even hide this 'less than perfectionist' spirit, trying to choose not the best moves, but rather those that are natural and avoid time-trouble. We can hardly blame them; the pressure from the clock, and ever more rapid time-limits are to blame.

# Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
+−	White is winning
±	White is much better
±	White is slightly better
=	equal position
∞	unclear position
∓	Black is slightly better
∓	Black is much better
−+	Black is winning
Ch	championship
Cht	team championship
Wch	world championship
Wcht	world team championship
Ech	European championship
Echt	European team championship
ECC	European Clubs Cup
Ct	candidates event
IZ	interzonal event
Z	zonal event
OL	olympiad
jr	junior event
wom	women's event
rpd	rapidplay game
tt	team tournament
sim	game from simultaneous display
corr.	correspondence game
adv	advanced chess (man + machine)
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
1/2-1/2	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
( <i>n</i> )	<i>n</i> th match game
( <i>D</i> )	see next diagram

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When a player's name appears in **bold**, that player had White. Otherwise, the FIRST-NAMED PLAYER had White.

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£17.99

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ISBN 1 901983 92 7



9 781901 983920 >