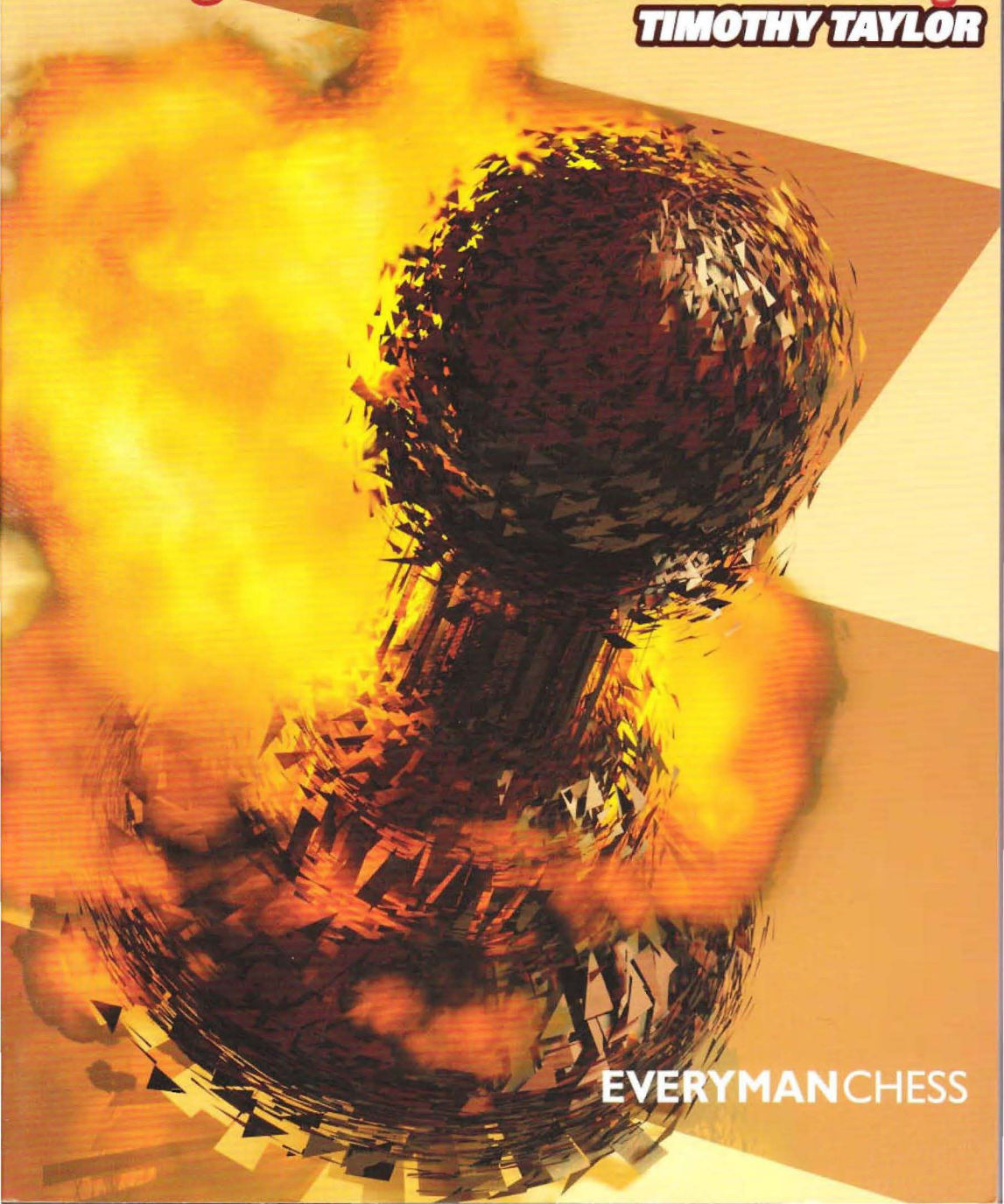


PAWN SACRIFICE!

winning at chess the adventurous way

TIMOTHY TAYLOR



EVERYMANCHESS

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978 1 85744 5657

Distributed in North America by The Globe Pequot Press, P.O Box 480,
246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House,
10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

tel: 020 7253 7887 fax: 020 7490 3708

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To my beautiful wife Liz

Contents

	Bibliography and Acknowledgments	4
	Introduction	5
1	King Attack	13
2	Line Opening	44
3	Development	64
4	Deflecting	85
5	Pawn Cracker	101
6	Obstructive	118
7	Preventive	132
8	Two Bishops	144
9	Vacating	162
10	Charge Up	177
11	Endings	195
12	Confusion	209
13	You Don't Have to be a Master	232
	Index of Openings	237
	Index of Players	238

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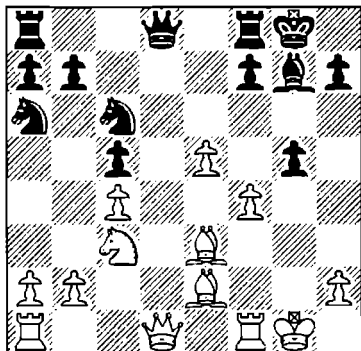
Introduction

Should you buy this book?

There have been many books on sacrifices, all building on Rudolf Spielmann's 1935 classic, *The Art of Sacrifice in Chess*, but as far as I know this is the first book to deal specifically with pawn sacrifices. I have tried to categorize every type of pawn sacrifice, and give instructive examples of each.

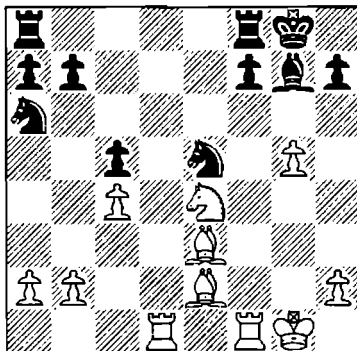
But is this book for *you*? I think I can answer that question right now.

Take a look at the diagrams below, all related to Game 2 in this book, Taylor-Hermansen.



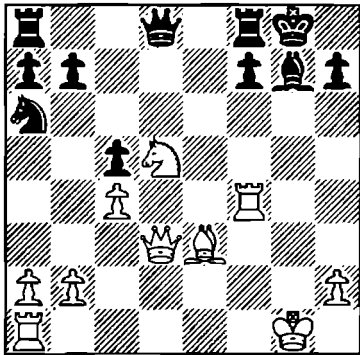
Black has just played **15...g5**, which I viewed as a serious kingside weakening. I played **16 ♗d3**, boldly sacrificing my e-pawn for attack, and my opponent resigned on move 29.

Some hours later, enter Mr. Fritz (dum de dum dum!): the evil machine not only failed to approve of my "brilliant" 16 ♗d3, but did not even list that move among its first three picks! *Fritz* rather insistently wanted to force a superior endgame as follows: 16 fxd1 17 ♖axd1 ♗xe5 18 ♗e4, reaching this diagram:



Fritz assesses this position as a clear advantage to White, and it's easy to see why: White has the two bishops and the better pawn structure. Black has weak squares at d6, f6, and f5, and his c-pawn is under immediate attack. One could say that Black can only struggle for a draw here, while White has a lasting advantage and easy play.

I mentioned my 16 ♔d3 was "unapproved". The machine gives as best play the following sequence: 16... gxf4 17 ♖xf4 18 ♜d5 19 ♜xd3 20 ♜xd3 and assesses this position as equal – a much lower evaluation than its "clear plus for White" endgame (see diagram).

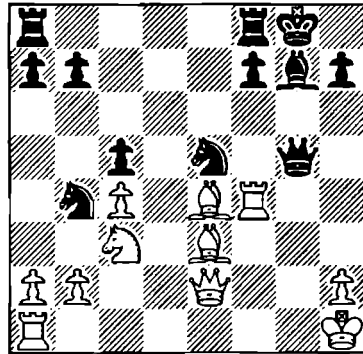


White has a much better placed knight, and in general, all his pieces are ready to attack. However, Black has retained his extra pawn, and even though his king position is rather open, that extra pawn may give enough ballast – from a mechanical viewpoint – to state that the game is even.

I personally would rather play White, as in a practical game Black would have great difficulties keeping

the balance against White's attacking chances, but I do not dispute that the position may be objectively equal.

Now one more diagram: what happened in the game? This position occurred just four moves after the initial pawn sacrifice: 16... gxf4 17 ♖xf4 18 ♜g5+? 19 ♜h1 20 ♜ab4 21 ♔e4 22 ♜xe5 23 ♜e2 .



After an inaccuracy by Black, I was able to keep my light-squared bishop – and so, as even *Fritz* will tell you, White is already winning despite the pawn minus, and the game did not last another ten moves.

Let's sum up: Black made a doubtful move (15...g5). White could have exploited this mechanically by forcing play into a better ending. This would be a no-risk proposition for White – he could hardly lose, and could certainly claim good winning chances. A prolonged endgame might result, but White's advantage should persist with reasonable play.

However, since I had the white pieces, I preferred to keep queens on and offer an unclear pawn sacrifice.

With best play, Black can reach a more or less defensible position, where his extra pawn balances White's attacking chances.

Unfortunately for Black, finding the narrow path to that defensible position was not easy – after a single mistake White obtained a winning position, and the game never reached move 30!

There you have it: if you are salivating over that endgame grind in the second diagram, then you might want to put this book down right now before you are converted to adventurous chess!

But if you believe that fortune favours the brave, that the surprise of an unexpected sacrifice will often carry the day, that the defender is likely to err while the attacker has all the fun, then this book is for you!!

Only Real Sacrifices!

Rudolf Spielmann was not only a brilliant attacking player, he also left us the wonderful legacy of his aforementioned classic, *The Art of Sacrifice in Chess*. This is one of my favourite chess books, and is also an excellent teaching tool – for the right kind of student! (Those who break out in hives at the thought of being material down are not really the right kind!).

I am, of course, indebted to this classic work, and I have borrowed much of Spielmann's classification system, about which more in the next section of this introduction.

First, let's go over the difference between what Spielmann called a "sham"

and a "real" sacrifice. Basically, a sham sacrifice is part of some tactical operation which can be calculated, while a real sacrifice is by definition incalculable: the player ventures a real sacrifice based on various positional considerations, or psychological considerations, without any idea if or when he will get the material back.

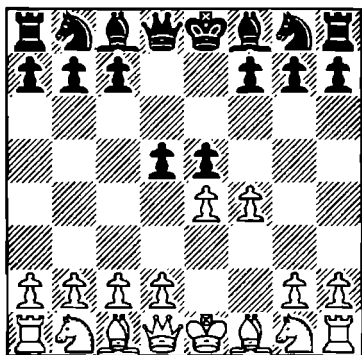
A simple example of each kind of sacrifice can occur in one of the oldest openings, the King's Gambit:

After **1 e4 e5 2 f4**, White is offering a *real* sacrifice. There is certainly no known way that White can get his pawn back if Black is determined to keep it; by sac'ing the f-pawn, White is counting not on material or tactics, but rather on such positional factors as central pawn majority, open f-file, etc. He might also feel that he will shock his opponent with this "19th century" opening, and I am all for such psychological ploys!

Now let's suppose that after these initial moves (1 e4 e5 2 f4) Black declines the gambit and offers a pawn himself by playing the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit, **2...d5**.

(see following diagram)

White has two possible pawn captures: on e5 and d5. The latter is defended, so can we take the "free pawn"? Absolutely not! After 3 fxe5?? Black would win at once with 3...♖h4+. In other words, the sacrifice of the e-pawn is a *sham* sacrifice.



Let's suppose White takes the other pawn: **3 exd5**. Now Black continues with the Falkbeerian **3...e4!** (unwilling to let his queen be attacked following **3...Wxd5? 4 Qc3**) and commits himself to being a pawn down, but has evident compensation in view of White's disconnected central pawns and Black's strong sentinel at e4. Thus the Falkbeer is, like the King's Gambit, a real sacrifice – but the tangential offer of the e-pawn, certainly never captured beyond grade school level, is a sham sacrifice, and such will not be discussed in this book.

What interests me, like Spielmann, are the courageous, imaginative sacrifices that involve risk and have no clear result. This, to me, is *really* playing chess!

Are we going to be studying the King's Gambit then? Absolutely not! No openings – okay, there are three exceptions in this book, Games 18, 32 and 34 feature important types of sacrifices that rarely occur outside the opening, so in all three cases these sacrifices were part of known opening theory.

But in general, no. The other sixty-

four (now there's a mystic number!) games feature sacrifices that were invented over the board. In other words, no Blackmar-Diemer, no King's Gambit, no Najdorf Poisoned Pawn, etc. What courage does it take to play the White side of the Najdorf Poisoned Pawn? Not much intestinal fortitude, but a great deal of midnight oil in the land of the database!

Instead, the subject of this book is pawn sacrifices that occur in the middlegame (and rarely, in the ending). And as I look at the above sentence, I see that "occur" is not the right word: these pawn sacrifices were *played* – decided on, in the heat of battle, with no textbook or computer assistance.

Perhaps "bravely ventured" is the best phrase! In every game in this book, at some point one of the players said to himself, "I'm going to sacrifice this pawn – I don't see when or how I'm getting it back, but I like my position." And then he boldly went for it!

Types of Real Pawn Sacrifices

Spielmann came up with eight categories of real sacrifices (note that he was considering all amounts of material, from pawn to queen):

1. Sacrifices for Development
2. Obstructive Sacrifices
3. Preventive (or Anti-Castling)

Sacrifices

4. Line Clearance Sacrifices
5. Vacating Sacrifices
6. Deflecting or Decoy Sacrifices
7. Castled King's Field Sacrifices
8. King Hunt Sacrifices

He also adds special chapters on the Exchange Sacrifice and Queen Sacrifice, which obviously are not relevant to this book.

I started with the above eight categories, and then checked out a large number of pawn sacrifices – I soon discovered that, while some of Spielmann’s categories work just as well for pawns (e.g. Development), others needed to be modified or added.

I finally came up with the following twelve categories: Pawn Sacrifices for:

1. King Attack

Spielmann’s 7 and 8 above combined – any pawn sacrifice that has a basic aim of attacking the king.

2. Line Opening

A pawn dies to open a line.

3. Development

A pawn is given up to gain a lead in development.

4. Deflecting

An enemy piece is deflected by the offer of a pawn.

5. Pawn Cracker

A category not seen in Spielmann’s list, as it only applies to pawns: here a pawn is given up to crack or break up the opponent’s infantry line.

6. Obstructive

A pawn is sacrificed so that the enemy forces are obstructed.

7. Preventive

A pawn is sacrificed to prevent castling.

8. Two Bishops

A pawn is given up to obtain the two bishops – this sacrifice was rarely seen in Spielmann’s day, but is a staple of modern play.

9. Vacating

A pawn is given up to clear a square for a more valuable piece.

10. Charge Up

No equivalent in Spielmann: this is where a pawn is given up to energize or charge up your entire position.

11. Endings

An unexpected category: a pawn is given up to achieve a superior *pawn-down* ending!

12. Confusion

When you have a bad game, all is not lost: Sacrifice a pawn for no reason and then watch your opponent’s confusion!

The following twelve chapters cover each sacrifice in detail. The first two chapters – King Attack and Line Opening respectively – have the most games, nine for the former and seven for the latter. The reasons are simple: regarding King Attack, anyone would be willing to sacrifice a pawn to checkmate the opposing king, and many people who won’t sacrifice for any other reason are willing to give up

material to aim for the ultimate goal in chess. Such attacks are the subject of the first chapter, and examples are plentiful: this is the most common real pawn sacrifice. Likewise Line Opening is vitally important, and almost equally popular. In fact, one could make the case that *every* type of pawn sacrifice is line opening in one way or another – after all, a pawn disappears from the board, so a line, or at least a square, always opens.

I regard the other ten types of sacrifices as having more or less equal value, and I have given five examples of each.

I will start each chapter with the simplest example, and then continue on through difficult, more difficult, and then finish with the most brain challenging – or brain twisting! I guarantee games like Aronson-Tal (Game 9, last of the King Attack chapter) and Gligoric-Stein (final example of Confusion, Game 66, Chapter 12) will leave your head spinning like a possessed Oscar winner!

How the Games were Chosen

The games in this book were chosen both for objective and subjective reasons. Objectively, each game had to be a good example of that type of pawn sacrifice (though the reader should note that the categories are not cast-iron enclosures – a pawn may be sacrificed to open a line on the enemy king, so the category could be either King Attack or Line Opening – in such a case I've simply gone for what I see as the

predominant motivation for the sac).

Subjectively, each game should be entertaining!

Spielmann used only his own games in his book, for as he says, "As a matter of course, I am more familiar with them; I am naturally better able to give the reasons underlying my own combinations." For the same reasons I have included a number of my own games in this book, but if I had stuck solely to my own games, I could never have covered the full range of pawn sacrifices!

When I was on the research part of this book, I first surprised myself by coming up with twelve categories, when I had expected something more like the Spielmann eight. Then, when I discovered the great variety of sacrifices, I had the rather chastening realization that there were several types of pawn offers I had rarely or never tried. For example, I can't recall ever making a real pawn sacrifice in the ending, and I have very rarely ventured into "Pawn Cracker" or "Obstructive" territory.

One conclusion I drew from my research is that the ability to make a wide variety of pawn sacrifices is a mark of chess strength! For example, the mighty Mikhail Tal is absolutely the king of pawn sacrifices, and he is represented in nine of the twelve categories.

Petrosian is the master of the end-game pawn sacrifice, but he is surprisingly represented in many other categories as well. I never knew until researching this book that the (according

to not-so-accurate reputation) very “quiet and boring” Armenian World Champion actually sacrificed pawns with wild abandon!

Other than my own games (where I *know* that I came up with the pawn sacrifices over the board – the Kramnik-approved opening sac of Game 18 excepted) I have not used examples from the modern computer age, for fear that the pawn sacrifice was not an over the board inspiration, but rather a well-worked-out *Fritz* home preparation! I remember a recent Chessbase.com article in which a young GM was complimented on a sharp victory – whereupon the young man not just admitted, but boasted that the entire game had been prepared, and offered to show the journalist said prepared variations on his laptop!

I am interested in Larsen’s definition of a sacrifice as demanding “courage and imagination” and that does not mean a sacrifice checked to the nth degree by a mechanical friend!

How the Games are Analysed

I’m old enough (fifty-five as I write these words) that I’ve seen a lot of changes in a lifetime of chessplaying, but beyond any doubt the biggest change has come about because of computers. The mechanical brain has affected everything in the chess world, including aesthetic appreciation of what were once considered beautiful games, and has even had an adverse effect on players’ creativity.

I call this latter effect “Fear of *Fritz*”

and I’ve seen it in many of my students. For example, a player will say something like, “I thought of sacrificing something here, but I was afraid that *Fritz* (or *Shredder* or *Rybka* or, as one of my students has affectionately named his personal chess machine, *Satan*) would not approve.” Then I say something like, “Yes, but your coach might approve!” but that doesn’t weigh too heavily when someone has already allowed himself to be intimidated by a bunch of chips!

The fact is, many real, that is to say, *speculative* sacrifices are “unapproved” by *Fritz*. You will recall that I opened the book with just such an example: the machine said I should have obtained a clear advantage with a simple and boring line, and disapproved of my sharp and risky sacrifice – but having a healthy ego (some would say *too* healthy!) I prefer to play as I please, enjoy the game, and try to be creative. Tal never worried unduly about the absolute justification of his sacrifices – he sac’ed on feel, on intuition, and sometimes just to disturb his opponent! I love that kind of play!

However, we live in the age of *Fritz* and there is no way to turn back the clock. I have checked all my analysis in this book on my *Fritz 9* computer.

The games are analysed in this way: in every case I give complete games (so one can see the organic relationship of the pawn sacrifice to the rest of the game), but I have only very lightly annotated the game until we get to the point of the actual pawn sacrifice. Full

analysis begins at this point, where the player has to decide whether or not he should boldly give up material. I have tried to explain his thought processes by listing the **Favourable Omens** that suggest a pawn sacrifice is possible.

Then, after the pawn sacrifice has been played, I have asked **Mr. Fritz** whether the initial sacrifice is “approved” (one of *Fritz’s* first picks, and usually makes the evaluation get better on the screen) or “unapproved” (not picked by *Fritz*, usually makes the evaluation go down). My sacrifice against Hermansen was of course “unapproved”, but to my mind, that is not the end of the story. There are human elements that go beyond the mechanical. I have put myself in charge of such human elements, so following the query to Mr. Fritz, the **Author** will offer his opinion.

Let’s look at the human elements of Taylor-Hermansen. A living, breathing person, faced by an unexpected sacrifice, often blunders right away – just as my opponent did, and thousands of other players have lost in just this fashion. Furthermore, playing the “unap-

proved” 16 ♗d3 cheered me up: it meant I got “my kind of position” – that is, a position with chances of a direct attack on the king – while my opponent was reduced to difficult defence. I think these human elements are very important: as Tal says, some advantages “may not lie within the realm of the 64 squares of the chessboard.”

There’s more to life, and chess, than *Fritz* – as you will see, even Petrosian had some totally “machine unapproved” sacrifices.

Is this a risky way to play? Often, yes – and so as to answer that question, I have followed each game with as objective a **Risk Assessment** as I can come up with – said assessment will combine both the mechanical and human elements.

Yes, you may have to risk a little to win by pawn sacrifice – but in this author’s opinion, if you accept that life and chess are both risky, if you follow your instincts and boldly sacrifice when the feeling is right, you will win a lot more games – and have a lot of fun as well!

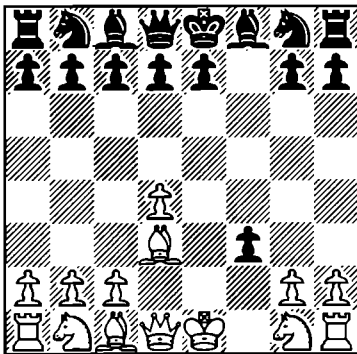
Let’s see how it’s done.

Chapter One

King Attack

As mentioned in the introduction, anyone would be willing to sacrifice a pawn to checkmate the opposing king, but please note again that we are not discussing “sacrifice followed by forced mate” in this book. Let’s take a silly example:

After **1 d4 f5 2 e4 fxe4 3 f3 exf3** White can “sacrifice” a second pawn with the deep **4 ♖d3**.



Then if Black – having had a hard day at the office – accepts this “brilliant” sac with **4...fxg2**, White will

probably find **5 ♖h5+** and mate in two.

Very interesting, yes ...Not!

In this chapter we will see *real* sacrifices that lead to a King Attack, but do not *guarantee* victory. A certain amount of boldness is required!

In this first, relatively simple example, we will see that Master of Attack(!) Petrosian slowly manoeuvre into a superior position against an opponent who only wants a draw – and then when the moment is right, the Tiger unsheathes his claws...

Game 1

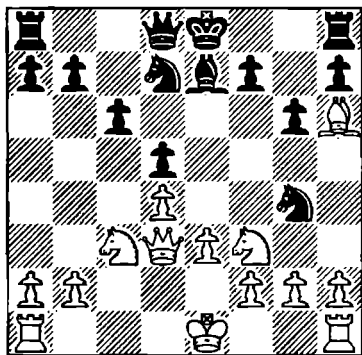
M. Bobotsov-T.V. Petrosian
Lugano Olympiad 1968
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 ♠f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♠f3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♠c3 c6 6 ♖g5 ♗e7 7 ♖c2 g6 8 e3 ♗f5 9 ♖d3 ♗xd3 10 ♖xd3 ♠bd7 11 ♖h6

It's possible to play actively here, e.g. 11 0-0-0 ♠g4 12 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 13 ♖c2

♟g6 14 ♖b1 0-0-0 15 ♚he1 ♖b8 16 e4 when White had good play in T.Taylor-D.Sharavdorj, Las Vegas 2005, but it's clear Bobotsov is only after exchanges and a draw.

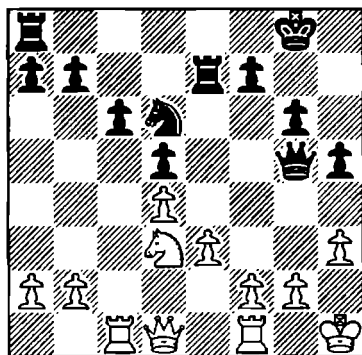
11...♗g4



12 ♙f4

12 ♙g7 ♜g8 13 ♙e5 ♗gxe5 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♛c7 is better for Black.

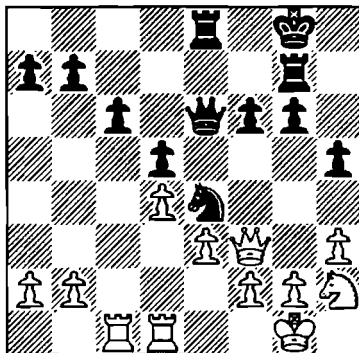
12...0-0 13 0-0 ♚e8 14 h3 ♗gf6 15 ♗e5 ♗b6 16 ♙g5 ♗e4 17 ♙xe7 ♛xe7 18 ♛c2 ♗d6 19 ♗a4 ♗bc4 20 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 21 ♗c5 ♗d6 22 ♚ac1 ♛g5 23 ♛d1 h5 24 ♖h1 ♚e7 25 ♗d3 ♗e4 26 ♗c5 ♗d6 27 ♗d3



After a great deal of shuffling the

game is still equal – but here White has to *do something* instead of waiting for a gift draw or a not so pleasant mating attack. After the positionally required 27 b4 White is fine: 27...♗c4 28 ♗b3 ♛f5 29 ♗d2 b5 30 ♗b3 is even.

27...♛f5 28 ♗e5 f6 29 ♗f3 ♙g7 30 ♗h2 ♚e8 31 ♖g1 ♗e4 32 ♛f3 ♛e6 33 ♚fd1



Since White created no counterplay on the queenside, Petrosian was able to calmly build up on the kingside – the moment is ripe!

Let's take a look at the **Favourable Omens**:

Black has a dominant knight on e4 (the only piece that either side has on the fifth rank).

The white queen is a bad defender, looking directly at enemy pawns – the black queen is a good attacker, supporting those same pawns.

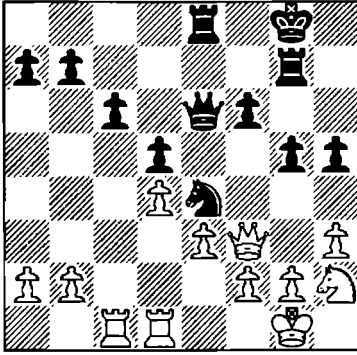
The black rooks both aim towards the white king, especially the rook on g7. This same rook can easily be switched to the f- or h-files should they open up.

All Black needs are open lines, and that can best be accomplished with a

pawn sacrifice –

It's time.

33...g5!



Black opens lines for his heavy pieces and moves over to direct attack. The sacrifice can hardly be declined, since in that case Black will play ...g5-g4 anyway and smash the white king-side at no cost. Note that both black rooks will benefit from kingside line openings, but the white rooks get nothing out of this and remain inactive.

Mr. Fritz? Approved! (yes, *Fritz's* #1 pick) – and one might add, even normally materialistic players might be willing to venture this pawn sacrifice. It's evident that Black's attack is virtually overwhelming.

Author's opinion: We're all on the same page here. 33...g5 is clearly the best move.

34 ♖xh5 f5 35 ♜e1?!

Sacrificial Shock! This phrase is often associated with Spielmann, but he actually never uses it in his book. What he does say is this: "The case of a player making a sacrifice and his opponent forthwith responding with a

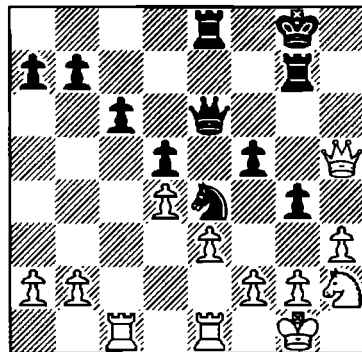
bad mistake is by no means exceptional, and is easily explained by the natural effect so imparted. If one wanted to set up a table of probabilities regarding the prospects of a real sacrifice, the effect of surprise would have to rank very high as a factor in favour of success."

All very flowery, but I think Sacrificial Shock does the job in a few less words!

This game is a perfect example of the malady: after 33 seemingly placid moves, Bobotsov was evidently stunned by Petrosian's pawn offer – and so immediately errs. This phenomenon occurs over and over again, even in the games of experienced Grandmasters: the opponent is shocked, he's surprised, he's stunned and smacked – and so slips!

As the further course of the game shows, 35 ♖e2 was necessary here, though Black would still have a tremendous attack after 35...g4.

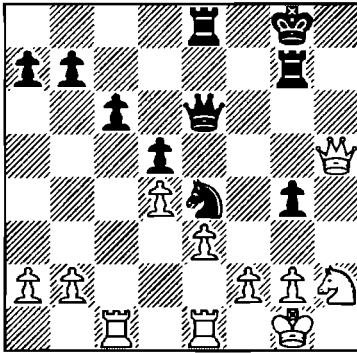
35...g4



A line opening for Black, but even more important, a line *closing* for the

white queen!

36 hxg4 fxg4



37 f3

If White does nothing, Black traps his queen with the quick sequence, ...♖g6, ...♗e7, and ...♞h7.

37...gxf3 38 ♖xf3

Black also wins the queen after 38 ♗xf3 ♜f8 39 ♗e2 ♗f2.

38...♞h7 39 ♗e5 ♗c8 40 ♗f4 ♗f8 41 ♗e5 ♗f5 0-1

The “king attack” sacrifice has turned into a “queen snare”! Compare the monstrous black rooks to their passive white counterparts!

Risk Assessment: This was as risk free as a real sacrifice gets – yes, White could have saved his queen (35 ♗e2) but then would have surely lost his king.

Game 2
T.Taylor-R.Hermansen
 Los Angeles 2007
King's Indian Defence

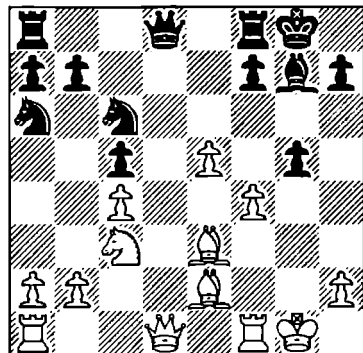
1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5

f4 0-0 6 ♖f3 ♖a6 7 ♗d3 ♗g4 8 0-0 ♖d7 9 ♗e3 e5 10 fxe5 c5 11 dxc5 dxc5 12 ♗e2 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 ♖xe5 14 f4 ♖c6 15 e5

At this point I had obtained a solid plus with one of my favourite openings, the Four Pawns Attack against the King's Indian. White has the two bishops, more space, better development, etc. Only one thing bothered me: when I play the Four Pawns Attack, I can usually count on deciding the game with a middlegame attack, which reflects both the nature of the opening and my style – but here the queens have been staring at each other for two moves, and I was expecting them to disappear from the board at any moment! I was happy I stood better, but I wasn't all that excited about the prospect of a long endgame grind (Rowson's “joy of grinding” notwithstanding!).

Then Black's move came like an early Christmas present!

15...g5?!



After the correct 15...f6 White has nothing better than 16 ♗xd8 ♗fxd8 17

exf6 ♖xf6 18 ♜f3 with that lovely plus-equals in the ending – but now...

Favourable Omens:

Black has weakened his kingside, and there's probably no way to repair the damage.

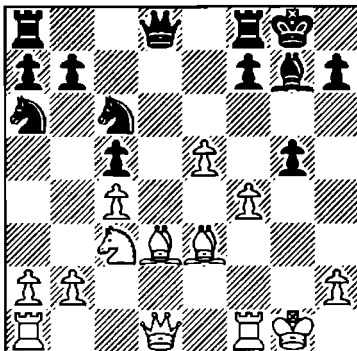
The g-file is almost certain to open completely, and White is only two moves away from putting a rook on it, aiming directly at the black king.

White retains the positional advantages already mentioned, namely the two bishops and advantage in space.

However, none of these favourable omens could justify the pawn sacrifice if Black could exchange queens – so the most important omen of that all is that now White can play 16 ♜d3, which not only attacks the weakened black king position along a (now) unobstructed diagonal, but also shields the white queen from exchange.

As for unfavourable omens, there is only one: by playing ♜d3, White gives up a centre pawn – but I didn't think Black would live long enough to enjoy it!

16 ♜d3!



As mentioned in the introduction, **Mr. Fritz** gives a resounding *unapproved* to this move! The machine likes 16 fxg5 ♜xd1 (16...♜xe5 17 ♜b3 and White keeps the queens on with attack) 17 ♜axd1 ♜xe5 18 ♜e4 with a big advantage to White.

However, the **Author's** opinion (who is, of course, completely unprejudiced on this issue, despite also being the player in question!) is that in a practical game, the sacrifice has every chance of success, and every chance of *quick* success. The ending advantage preferred by *Fritz* is all very well, but the longer the game goes on, the more chance there is for human error. By placing enormous practical problems before Black immediately – and taking advantage of the surprise value of the sacrifice (see the following Spielmann quote) – White has every chance of a speedy win.

As Spielmann wrote: "If each and every sacrifice had to be of that cast-iron soundness which can be verified by analysis [and in our day, computers!] it would be necessary to banish from the game of chess that proud and indispensable prerogative of the fighter: enterprise. All real sacrifices would have to disappear; only the sham sacrifices, which are in effect not sacrifices at all, would be allowed to remain."

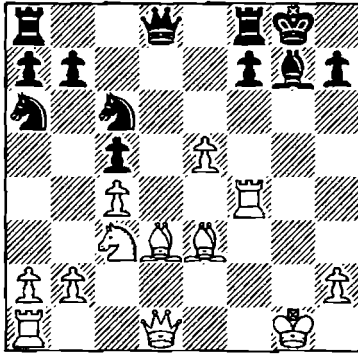
I'm proud to have played an enterprising, Spielmannesque, *real* sacrifice – and I'd do it again!

16...gxf4

With White's light-squared bishop

activated, Black can hardly force the exchange of queens, for the ending is just too bad: 16...♖ab4 17 ♕e4 ♖xd1 18 ♜axd1 gxf4 19 ♕xc5 or 16...♖cb4 17 ♕e4 ♖xd1 18 ♜axd1 gxf4 19 ♕xf4 with an overwhelming endgame advantage in both cases.

17 ♜xf4



17...♖g5+?

Sacrificial Shock! As in Game 1, a sacrifice is made, and the opponent almost immediately blunders. Here the check allows the a1-rook to join the attack with tempo in a few moves, and this will give White a decisive advantage.

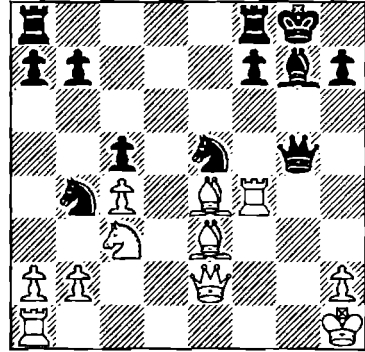
Best was the much simpler 17...♖xe5 18 ♖d5! (not 18 ♕xh7+? which is premature in view of the following defensive resource: 18...♖xh7 19 ♖h5+ ♖g8 20 ♜h4 ♖xh4! and Black wins by fork) 18...♖xd3 (on other moves White saves the bishop) 19 ♖xd3 when White (as already stated in the introduction) certainly has compensation for the pawn, but no clear win, the computer verdict being equal – though I prefer White’s practical at-

tacking chances.

18 ♖h1 ♖ab4

18...♖xe5 19 ♕f5 ♜fe8 20 ♖b3 ♖g6 21 ♜g1 also gives White a clear advantage.

19 ♕e4 ♖xe5 20 ♖e2



The queen’s rook is coming over, and every white piece is attacking. White has a decisive advantage, just four moves after I decided to sacrifice, and just one move after the pawn was actually taken!

20...♖e7 21 ♖h5 f5 22 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 23 ♖xf5 ♖h4 24 ♜g1 ♖g6 25 ♕g5!

Winning a piece.

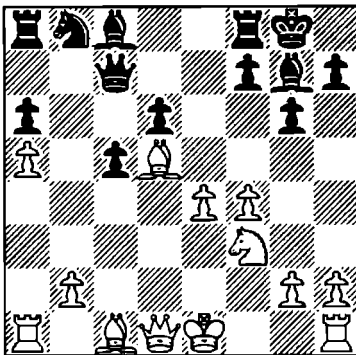
25...♖h5 26 ♕f3 ♖e7 27 ♖e6+ ♖f7 28 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 29 ♕xe7 1-0

Even now that I “know” (that is, the computer told me!) that I lost all my advantage with 16 ♕d3, and that I could have been about +1 on the Fritz evaluator with 16 fxg5, I still cannot give too harsh a **Risk Assessment**. I think that the practical problems for Black are so great – even if he finds the best sequence after the sacrifice – that White would be favoured in any contest between humans. On the other

hand, that was a centre pawn I so cavalierly offered (unlike Petrosian's h-pawn). Therefore I'll call this one moderately risky.

Game 3
T.Taylor-M.Lee
Las Vegas 2006
Benko Gambit

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 b6
The Shirov Attack.
5... ♗xb6 6 ♘c3 d6 7 e4 g6 8 a4 ♙g7 9
a5 ♖c7 10 ♙c4 0-0 11 f4 e6 12 ♘f3
exd5 13 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♙xd5

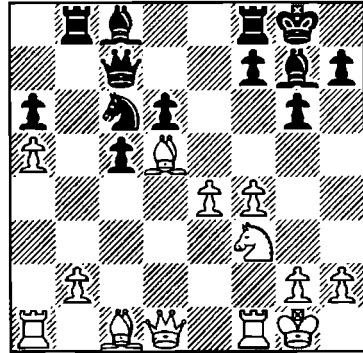


14... ♘c6

A few days later I played the same first fourteen moves and then my opponent varied with 14... ♙b7. I was able to win with a pawn sacrifice similar to the main game: 15 0-0 ♘c6 16 f5! ♘xa5 17 fxg6 hxg6 18 ♘g5 ♙xd5 19 exd5 ♘c4 20 ♗b3 ♙d4+ 21 ♖h1 ♘e5 22 ♗h3 f5 23 ♘e6 ♗f7 24 ♘xf8 ♙xf8 25 ♙xa6 ♗b7 26 ♙xd6 ♗b5 27 ♙e1 ♘g4 28 ♙xg6+ ♙g7 29 ♗c3 ♙f7 30 b3 ♖h7 31 ♙xg7+ ♙xg7 32 ♙b2 ♙f7 33 ♗h8+ ♖g6 34 ♗g8+ 1-0

T.Taylor-R.Perez Marco, Los Angeles
CC Championship (rapid) 2007.

15 0-0 ♙b8



The a-pawn can hardly be saved – it's time to look for **Favourable Omens!**

White's bishop on d5 is the most dominant piece on the board.

White's e- and f-pawn couple are much stronger than Black's blockaded d- and c-pawns.

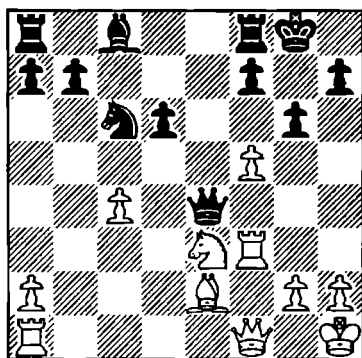
The contemplated sacrifice of 16 f5 will bring the c1-bishop and f1-rook into action, in both cases aiming toward the black king position. Furthermore, the white knight can go to g5, with the possibility of a triple attack on f7.

The a1-rook can be swiftly transferred to the kingside via a3.

Perhaps the biggest positive omen is my own *feel* for the position. I have played similar openings all my life – I've always loved directly attacking the king. This position is very similar to many Bird's Opening and Four Pawns Attack King's Indian games I have had in the past. The break f4-f5 is a standard blow in such positions. Let's just

take one of a hundred examples, a game featured in my book *Beating the King's Indian and Grünfeld*:

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6
5 ♙e2 0-0 6 f4 c5 7 ♗f3 cxd4 8 ♘xd4
♙c6 9 ♙e3 ♚b6 10 ♘c2 ♚a5 11 0-0 ♘d7
12 ♙d2 ♚b6+ 13 ♚h1 ♘c5 14 b4 ♙xc3
15 bxc5 ♚a5 16 ♙xc3 ♚xc3 17 cxd6
exd6 18 ♙f3 ♚f6 19 ♘e3 ♚d4 20 ♚f1
♚xe4 21 f5! (as in the main game, every
white piece attacks Black's weakened
kingside)

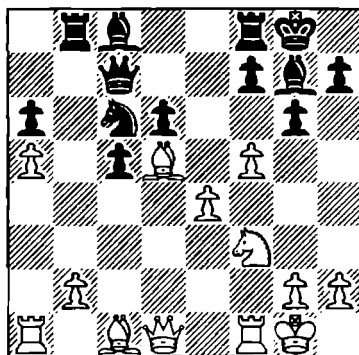


21...♙xf5 22 ♘xf5 gxf5 23 ♙d3 ♚e7
24 ♙xf5 ♘e5 25 ♙e1 h6 26 ♙e4 ♚h8 27
♙h3 ♚g7 28 ♙g3+ ♚h8 29 ♚c1 ♚f6 30
♙f4 ♙g8 31 ♙h7 ♚e6 32 ♙xg8 ♙xg8 33
♙h4 ♙g6 34 ♙xg6 ♘xg6 35 ♙xh6+ ♚g7
36 ♙h3 ♚e2 37 ♙b3 ♚e7 38 h3 b6 39
♙g3 ♚g8 40 ♚f1 ♚g7 41 ♚a1+ ♚g8 42
♙g4 ♚e6 43 ♚d4 ♚f8 44 ♙e4 ♘e5 45
♚d5 ♚f6 46 ♙e1 ♚g7 47 ♙d1 ♚f5 48
♚xd6 f6 49 c5 bxc5 50 ♚xc5 ♚g6 51
♚xa7 ♘d3 52 ♚g1 ♚e4 53 ♙f1 ♘f4 54
♚f2 ♘e2+ 55 ♚h2 ♚e5+ 56 g3 ♘c3 57
♚f4 ♚e6 58 a3 f5 59 g4 1-0 T.Taylor-
G.Grigore, Paks 2003.

Such experience is an advantage that goes beyond the particular posi-

tion on the board. I felt the time was right and didn't waste much time thinking about it – I went ahead and sacrificed, confident that this would give me the better game.

16 f5!



White sacs both the f- and a-pawns, but as Tal says, Black can only take one at a time!

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The computer thinks that my position is already bad, and that this move makes it worse.

Needless to say, in the **Author's** opinion, the machine simply doesn't understand the position. This is a typical example of where human intuition, backed by years of experience, exceeds the computer's calculating power.

In any case, if the sacrifice is bad, then, yes, White's position is already bad. But I don't think the Shirov Attack can be refuted so easily. I believe White is better here, and even Mr. Fritz will soon agree.

16...gxf5

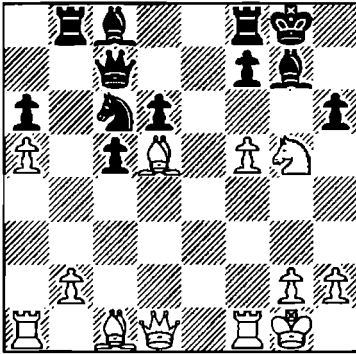
Worse is 16...♙xa5 17 ♙g6 hxg6 18 ♘g5 when White already has a win-

ning attack.

17 ♖g5

I quickly flipped on *Fritz* here, just to double check – the machine says I'm down -1.03, a very clear advantage to Black. Furthermore, the machine recommends Black's next move – but doesn't see White's reply!

17...h6 18 exf5!



A piece is not too much to sacrifice, given the fact that Black's king position has already been destroyed by the attacking f-pawn.

18...♖e7

Accepting the piece loses: 18...hxg5 19 f6 ♖h8 20 ♖h5 ♖e5 21 ♖xg5+ ♖h7 22 ♖f5 ♖xf5 (22...♖e8 23 ♖h6+ ♖g8 24 ♖g5+ and mates) 23 ♖xf5+ ♖g8 24 ♖g5+ ♖h7 25 ♖a3 and mates.

Likewise freeing the bishop first just removes Black's last defender: after 18...♗d4+ White wins in entertaining fashion with 19 ♖h1 ♖b4 20 ♖a3! ♖xd5 21 ♖g3 hxg5 22 ♖xg5+ ♖g7 23 ♖xg7+! ♖xg7 24 ♖g4+ ♖h8 (if 24...♖f6 25 ♖g5+ ♖e5 26 ♖e1+ ♖d4 27 ♖g4+ ♖f4 28 ♖xf4+ ♖d5 29 ♖e4 mate, or 26...♖e3 27 ♖xe3+ ♖f6 28 ♖g5 mate) 25 ♖h4+ ♖g7

26 ♖g5+ ♖h8 27 f6 ♖xf6 28 ♖xf6 ♖f5 29 ♖xf5 ♖fe8 30 ♖h6+ ♖g7 31 ♖g5+ ♖f8 32 ♖h8 mate.

19 ♖e4

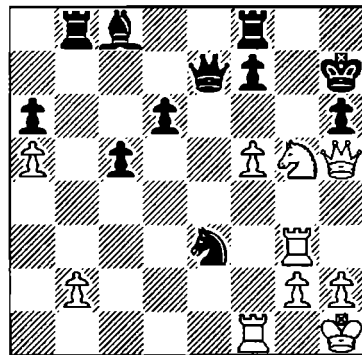
Without a single apology, *Fritz* now states that White has a decisive advantage. Black can't defend his shattered king position against White's all-piece assault.

19...♗d4+ 20 ♖h1 ♖b4 21 ♖a3!

One of the favourable omens: the queen's rook joins the attack with amazing speed.

21...♖xd5 22 ♖g3+ ♖h7 23 ♖h5 ♖e3 24 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 25 ♖g5+

25 f6 wins more quickly.



25...♖xg5

If 25...♖g7 26 ♖xf7+ ♖g5 (or 26...♖h7 27 ♖xh6 mate, or 26...♖f6 27 ♖g6 mate) 27 f6+ ♖g8 28 ♖xg5+ hxg5 29 ♖g6 mate.

26 ♖xg5 ♖xf5

If 26...♖xb2 27 f6 wins.

27 ♖xf5 ♖xf1 1-0

I was about to play 28 ♖f6, forcing mate in four, when my opponent resigned.

Note that after the pawn sacrifice,

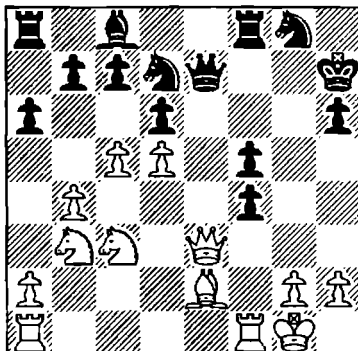
every white piece, including the so-far-unmoved queen's bishop and rook, could and did take part in the attack.

Risk Assessment: I don't think there was any risk associated with this sacrifice at all. The reader may be surprised by this assessment – after all, didn't White just sacrifice two different pawns, then two different pieces? Isn't that risky play?

Answer: not really. The point is, White deliberately went in for a sharp opening, the Shirov Attack against the Benko Gambit, and anyone who has seen Shirov's games with this system knows that the position demands a strong attacking feel and a willingness to sacrifice. In other words, 16 f5 is not *risky*, but rather *required* by the demands of the position.

How was I supposed to defend my a- and b-pawns at that moment? By 16 ♖d2 - ? Now *that* would have been risky! A passive, defensive, non-sacrificing move would have *risksed loss* – instead, White played according to the dictates of this particular type of position, sacrificed, and so was successful.

b4 ♖f6 13 ♗xf6 ♜hxf6 14 ♜b3 ♜e7 15 ♜d2 ♝h7 16 ♜e3 ♜g8 17 c5 f5 18 exf5 gxf5 19 f4 exf4



The moment of decision: White can either obtain a favourable ending with 20 ♜xe7+, or sacrifice a pawn. Seeing that White is the great Mikhail Tal, guessing which way he played is a bit of no-brainer – but let's look at the ever popular **Favourable Omens!**

After the contemplated 20 ♜xf4 dxc5, Black must, if he wants the pawn, “surrender his last base” (Tal), meaning that Black has no solid central outpost (if he doesn't take the pawn, he has the possibility of central play with ...♞e5).

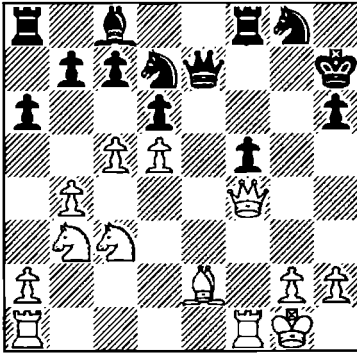
Black's queenside is “frozen” (another colourful Tal comment) which I gather refers to Black's completely undeveloped queenside pieces.

Black's kingside is already broken up, and White can bring more artillery to bear on the weak f5-pawn. Winning this pawn, as seen in the game, allows a direct attack on the king.

Needless to say, Tal goes for it! 20 ♜xf4!

Game 4
M.Tal-R.J.Fischer
 Candidates Tournament,
 Zagreb 1959
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♞f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♞c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♞f3 e5 7 d5 ♞bd7 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 a6 10 0-0 ♜e8 11 ♞d2 ♞h7 12



And needless to say – **Mr. Fritz? Unapproved!**

The computer wants Tal to play 20 ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 21 ♝xf4 with equal material and a clear advantage in the endgame due to Black's weak pawn structure. The machine thinks Tal loses half of his advantage on this move, and the other half on the next (that is, going from about +1 to +0.5 to equal).

Meanwhile Tal does not even mention the queen trade in his notes, and gives the second pawn sacrifice (the coming, and equally unapproved 21 ♙d3) an exclamation mark!

What are we to make of this?

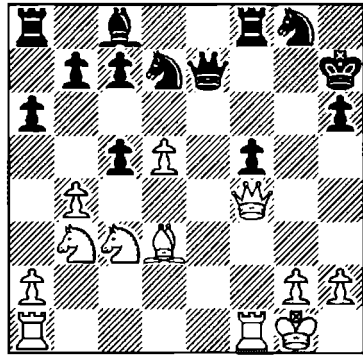
Author's opinion: I have to go with Tal. Anyone who has looked at Petrosian-Fischer, Portoroz Interzonal 1958 (Game 3 in *My Sixty Memorable Games*, played just a year before the current game) knows that defeating Fischer in the endgame just because he has isolated f- and h-pawns is no easy task! Even Petrosian couldn't accomplish it.

Instead, Black is suddenly faced with a desperate defensive task as Tal sacs first one, then a second pawn, then

a piece! Yes, the computer can find some sort of defence, but even Fischer falls to Sacrificial Shock.

And with all this turmoil for Black, Tal is in his element!

20...dxc5 21 ♙d3!



I'm not going to take away Tal's exclamation! White goes over to direct attack.

Note the repeating themes: this is one of my favourite games, and when playing Hermansen I unconsciously used some of these ideas – one sees the light-squared bishop moving into attacking position, while the e-file is cleared for the a1-rook to come in with tempo.

For the record, *Fritz* wants White to play the nebbishy 21 a3 (!).

21...cxb4

Tal dryly comments: "After his previous move, this capture could readily be expected."

22 ♝ae1

This could also be a "development" sacrifice, showing that all sacrificial categories can contain elements of others, like a slow fade in film where one image is superimposed on another –

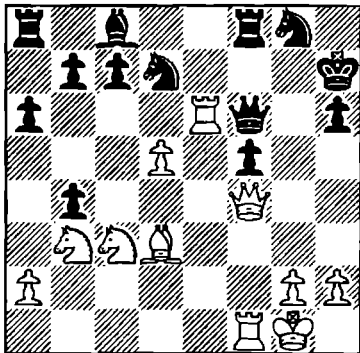
here the development masks the looming attack.

22...♖f6?

Banking on even more “material win” Fischer attacks a white knight but, as Tal points out, this is already the decisive mistake (and note we once again see the decisive mistake almost immediately after the sacrifice!).

Tal correctly states that the best defence is 22...♗d6 when the computer is able to thread the needle to a more or less equal position after a series of only moves: 23 ♔xf5+ ♖h8 24 ♗d4+ ♔df6! (if 24...♗f6 25 ♗xb4 and White is clearly better – Tal) 25 ♔xc8 ♖axc8 26 ♔e4 (26 ♖e6 c5 27 ♗h4 ♗d8 28 ♔e4 ♔xe4 29 ♖xh6+ is a draw) 26...♗xd5 27 ♗xb4 when Black’s material advantage may just balance his insecure king and White’s attacking chances.

23 ♖e6!



Down two pawns, why not toss a knight on the fire?

23...♗xc3

Fischer takes everything that’s not nailed down, and in return loses a single unit: his f-pawn. Yet the loss of this

mere pawn opens the floodgates for White’s heavy pieces and the attack is quickly decisive.

24 ♔xf5+ ♖xf5

Forced, for if 24...♖h8 25 ♖xh6+ ♖g7 (or 25...♔xh6 26 ♗xh6+ ♖g8 27 ♗h7 mate) 26 ♖h7+ ♖f6 27 ♔e4 mate.

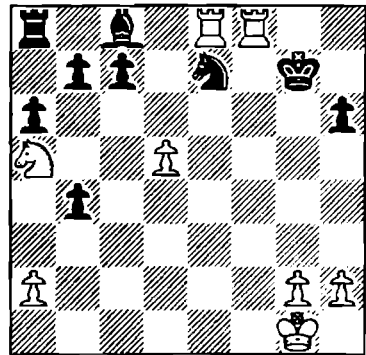
25 ♗xf5+ ♖h8

Or 25...♖g7 26 ♗f7+ ♖h8 27 ♖g6 and mates.

26 ♖f3 ♗b2

26...♗g7 27 ♖g3 ♗f8 28 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 29 ♖e8 amusingly wins practically all the undeveloped pieces on the back rank.

27 ♖e8 ♔df6 28 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 29 ♖xf6 ♖g7 30 ♖ff8 ♔e7 31 ♔a5



A beautiful zugzwang!

31...h5

As can be seen, every other try loses as well: 31...b6 32 ♔c6; 31...c6 32 d6; 31...♔g6 32 ♖xc8; 31...♖g4 32 ♖xa8; 31...♖a7 32 ♖f2; 31...♖h7 32 ♖xe7+.

32 h4 ♖b8 33 ♔c4 b5 34 ♔e5 1-0

Black is not only zugzwanged, but will soon be mated! A tremendous attack by Tal – and now our **Risk Assessment**: I would call this moderately

risky, since there is a way Black can survive to approximate equality, while he would suffer forever in the alternative bad endgame.

On the other hand, Tal's method – sacrifice! – led to yet another quick win, and the ending might only have led to a draw following Fischer's well-known tenacious defence. It's interesting to see the great Fischer completely lose his bearings after the sacrifice, chopping material as if his king is not about to be hammered – yes, Sacrificial Shock affects even future world champions!

Game 5

M. Tal-P. Kampenuss

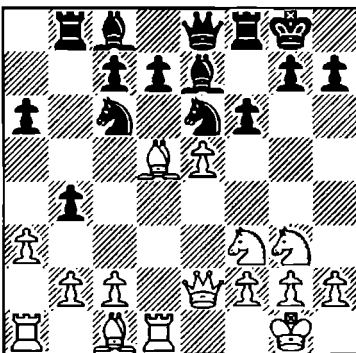
Latvian Championship 1953

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♝c6 3 ♗b5 ♜f6 4 0-0
 ♜xe4 5 d4 ♗e7

5...♞d6 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 ♜f5 is
 the dreaded Berlin Wall.

6 dxe5 0-0 7 ♛e2 ♝c5 8 ♞d1 ♛e8 9 ♜c3
 a6 10 ♗c4 b5 11 ♗d5 ♞b8 12 a3 b4 13
 ♜e4 ♜e6 14 ♜g3 f6

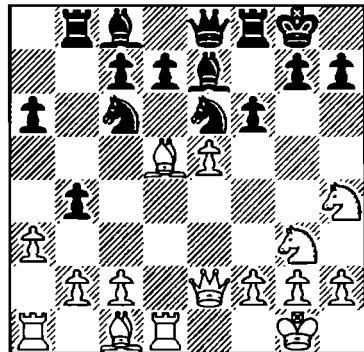


It's safe to say White's advantage is substantial: more space, better development, strong centre, etc. Black's opening hardly meets the standards of modern chess, and White can improve his position in a number of ways.

All of the above are **Favourable Omens**. What else did Tal see before he embarked on his next, 15 ♞h4 - ? I imagine he noticed that after the pawn sac at least one knight could go to the attacking square f5, and he might have had the amazing ♜g6 idea in mind already.

However, there is no forced way to advantage, and I think the most important omen for Tal was the idea that he could make a completely unexpected move here, and so stun his opponent!

15 ♞h4!?



White sacrifices his centre pawn for ...no apparent reason! This is what I call a complete surprise for the opponent!

Mr. Fritz? Emphatically *unapproved*. The machine says that Tal not only loses his one point advantage with this move, but even stands worse now.

Fritz gives two simple lines: 15 axb4 ♖xb4 16 ♗e4 fxe5 17 ♜xe5 with a steady advantage or, even better, 15 exf6 ♗xf6 16 ♜e4 bxa3 (16...♗e7 17 ♜eg5 is good for White) 17 ♜xf6+ ♗xf6 18 ♖xa3 and White has the two bishops and a better pawn structure. What can I say?

Author's opinion: I have to admit I would never even have considered sac'ing a pawn in this position – but I love Tal's wild and crazy vision: now that I dominate in the centre, I'll hang a pawn and put my knight on the rim! And just watch where that knight ends up!

Still, my opinion is that the sacrifice is unsound – at least for you and me (the Wizard of Riga had his own rules) – but this is one of many examples that I have put in the book for just this reason: despite being objectively unsound, the stunning effect of the surprise sacrifice wins the game anyway!

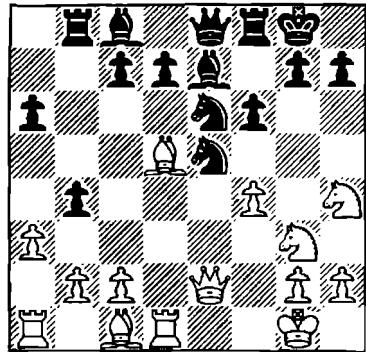
15...♜xe5

Sacrificial Shock! Black makes a mistake *immediately!* His mind blown by Tal's seemingly "crazy" move, Black fails to see the danger, and furthermore, fails to take the time to find the precise answer.

That answer is 15...bxa3! to weaken the long diagonal and give Black tactical chances. White has to play 16 b3 (16 bxa3 fxe5 17 ♜hf5 ♗f6 now eyes the rook on a1 and Black is better) 16...fxe5 17 ♜hf5 ♜cd4! – Black counters in the centre, and White has to scramble to equalize – the best I can find is 18 ♜xe7+ ♗xe7 19 ♗xe5 ♜xc2 20 ♖a2 ♜b4

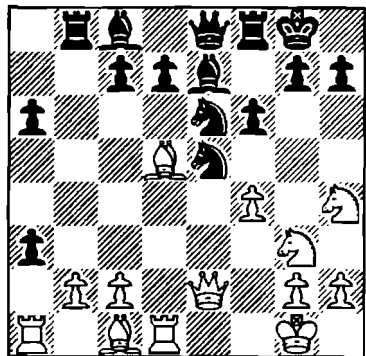
21 ♗xa3 ♗f7 22 ♗b4 ♖b4 23 ♗c4 ♗f4 and White might make a draw.

16 f4



16...♗c5+?

Even now Black should play 16...bxa3! and then:



a) 17 fxe5 axb2! favours Black.

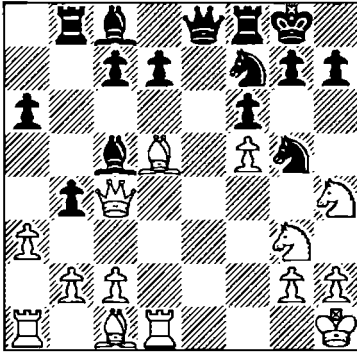
b) 17 b3 is too slow here, e.g. 17...♜f7 18 f5 (if 18 ♗xa3 ♗xa3 19 ♖xa3 ♜xf4 wins) 18...♜eg5 19 ♗xa3 (if 19 ♗g5? ♗c5+ wins) 19...♗xa3 20 ♖xa3 ♗xe2 21 ♜xe2 c6 and Black is clearly better.

c) 17 bxa3 (forced) 17...♜f7 18 f5 ♜eg5 19 ♗e3 (if 19 ♜g6 ♗c5+ 20 ♜f1 ♗xe2+ and Black gets the queens off

with advantage; or 19 ♖c4 c6 and Black shakes off the pressure) 19...c6 20 ♖a2 ♗d8 21 ♖g6 ♞e8 and Black holds.

The text move helps White by driving his king to safety while exposing Black's bishop.

17 ♖h1 ♖f7 18 f5 ♖eg5 19 ♖c4



White transfers the queen onto the vital diagonal with gain of tempo, but this is only possible because of Black's mistaken check.

19...♞b5 20 ♖xg5 fxg5 21 ♞e1 ♗d8

It's already too late to avert the impending disaster: on 21...♖e7 Tal has the winning 22 f6!, as a white knight is coming to f5.

22 ♖g6!

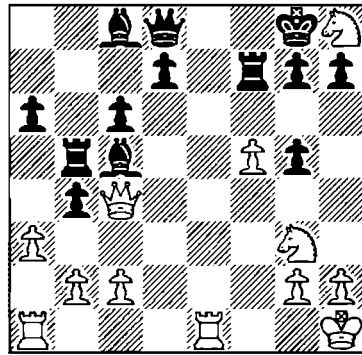
Evidently the point of 15 ♖h4!

22...c6

Nothing helps: 22...hxg6 23 ♖xf7+ ♞xf7 (if 23...♖h7 24 fxg6+, or 23...♖h8 24 ♗g4 ♞xf7 25 ♗h3+ ♖g8 26 fxg6 and mates) 24 fxg6 and White has a material advantage plus attack.

23 ♖xf7+ ♞xf7 24 ♖h8!!

The knight journeys to the end of the earth to win the game for the Wizard!



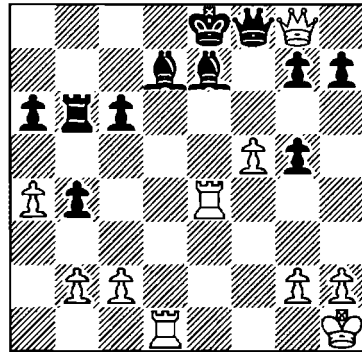
24...d5

Another way is 24...♖xh8 25 ♗xf7 and there is no defence to ♞e8+.

25 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 26 ♗e2 ♖d7 27 a4 ♞b6 28 ♞ad1 ♗f6

Or 28...♖d6 29 ♖e4 ♖e7 30 ♖d2 ♖xf5 31 ♗f2 ♖g6 32 ♞xe7 and wins.

29 ♖e4 dxe4 30 ♗c4+ ♖e8 31 ♞xe4+ ♖e7 32 ♗g8+ ♗f8



33 ♞xe7+

Finishing with a sledgehammer!

33...♖xe7 34 ♞e1+ ♖d6 35 ♗xf8+ ♖c7 36 ♗xg7 c5 37 f6 1-0

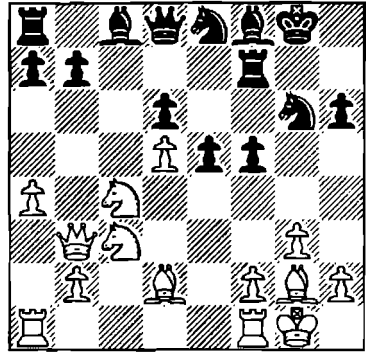
This game practically defines "Sacrificial Shock". A player strong enough to get into the Latvian Championship

should have been able to find the key resource 15...bxa3! when he can't lose and might win, but Black just couldn't cope with the surprise effect of Tal's sacrifice.

As Bobby Fischer wrote of facing one of Tal's "mad genius" moves, "Such a surprise that I didn't dare believe my eyes!" To find a calm and exact defensive resource under such conditions was more than Kampenuss could manage.

Nonetheless, I have to give an honest **Risk Assessment**, and I would put this one at *extremely risky*. White has an excellent position and could win the game with natural moves, but instead sets up the chance of glorious tactics – and the chance of a loss or grovelling for a draw.

sacrifices for later when there is more direct contact:



17...d4 18 b5 f4 19 ♖c2 ♜g7 20 ♗h1 ♘h4 21 gxh4 ♘g4 22 f3 ♘xh2 23 ♙e1 ♘xf1 24 ♙xf1 ♙e7 25 ♗h2 ♙f5 26 ♘c3 ♗e8 27 ♙h3 ♗h5 28 ♘d2 ♗h8 29 ♙xf5 ♗xf5 30 ♘de4 ♜ag8 31 ♙f2 ♗h5 32 ♗h3 a6 33 ♜g1 ♜xg1+ 34 ♙xg1 ♙xh4 35 ♙f2 ♗g6 36 ♗g4 ♗xg4 37 fxg4 ♙e7 38 ♘g2 ♜xg4+ 39 ♗f3 h5 40 b4 ♜g8 41 b5 ♗h7 42 ♘a2 h4 43 ♙xh4 ♙xh4 44 ♘xd6 ♜g3+ 0-1 N.Kirov-Z.Mestrovic, Sarajevo 1974.

Game 6
R.Vaganian-L.Stein
 USSR Championship,
 Riga 1970
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 g3 0-0 5 ♙g2 d6 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 0-0 e5 8 d5 ♘e7 9 c5 ♘e8 10 cxd6 cxd6 11 ♗b3 h6 12 e4 f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 ♘d2 ♘g6 15 ♘c4 ♜f7 16 a4 ♙f8 17 ♙d2

So far we have a typical King's Indian Defence: White has queenside pressure, while Black has more space and better chances on the kingside. The chances are roughly balanced. It's possible for Black to play in a "normal" way here and win, saving the

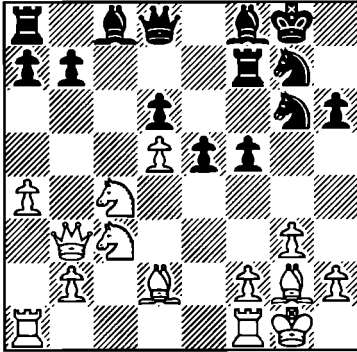
But Stein comes up with a far from normal, almost incredible pawn sacrifice: the best description I can come up with is a deep positional idea hidden behind a bluff!

As near as I can tell, Stein would have reasoned as follows: I have **Favourable Omens** such as my e- and f-pawn duo, and my pieces in general are ready to attack the white king, but the wing attack by itself is unlikely to be successful unless I also have a presence in the centre. Ah, White has a hole on d4! How I wish I could get my knight there! With a knight on d4, my

kingside attack would gain enormously in power –

And so he came up with the extremely imaginative:

17...♖g7!?



Black's idea is ...f5-f4, followed by ...♗f5-d4. Of course, if you have your board set up, you might see a small technical flaw in this plan, but more on that later!

Right now, let's ask **Mr. Fritz!** *Unapproved*, and resoundingly so: the machine feels Stein is just dropping a whole pawn here, as his evaluation drops from about equal to minus one. By the way, the number one silicon pick is the immediate 17...f4.

Author's opinion: I hate to side with the mechanical monster, but I too feel this sacrifice is unsound – unless (and this is something I have no knowledge of) Stein knew his opponent and was sure that he would not “move outside the box” on move 19.

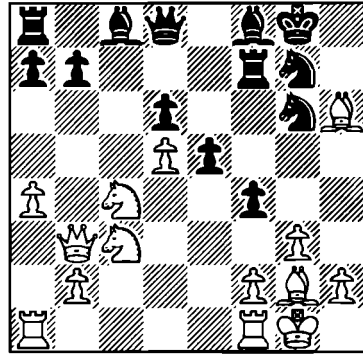
To me this sacrifice is like betting all your money on black at roulette: brilliant if you win, but you could equally look broke and woeful as you stare at

the ball on a pretty red square! Yet I have to admire Stein's willingness to risk a whole point in a highly prestigious event like the Soviet Championship!

18 ♖xh6

White correctly takes the offered pawn.

18...f4



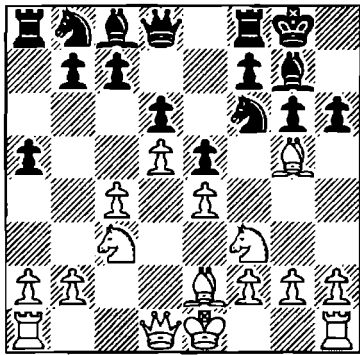
Black continues with his idea.

19 ♗e4?

And White blunders! Sacrificial Shock or King's Indian Voodoo, take your pick on this one!

The wise chessplayer should beware of slavishly following what “everybody knows”. For example, “everybody knows” that White should not give up his dark-squared bishop for a knight in the King's Indian Defence, for then “of course” Black's bishop will become very strong.

Most of the time, there is a sound basis for this maxim, especially in the opening. For example, in the Petrosian system after 1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♖e2 0-0 6 ♗f3 e5 7 d5 a5 8 ♖g5 h6



thousands of players have tried 9 ♙h4 or other bishop moves, but only ten (in the *Big Database*) have played the dubious 9 ♙xf6 – and the brave ten, none over 2300, have only scored 25% for their trouble. Here’s an example: R.Schreiner-T.Halasz, Eger 1986, continued after the above set-up with 9 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 10 0-0 ♚e7 11 a3 f5 12 ♜d2 ♜d7 13 b4 ♜f6 14 ♞c1 h5 15 ♙d3 ♙h6 16 ♞b1 h4 17 ♚c2 ♜h5 18 ♜e2 f4 19 ♜h1 axb4 20 axb4 f3 21 ♜xf3 h3 22 ♜fg1 hxg2+ 23 ♜xg2 ♚h4 24 ♜g3 ♜f4+ 25 ♜h1 ♙h3 26 ♜xh3 ♚xh3 27 ♞g1 ♜xd3 28 ♜f5 ♚f3+ 29 ♞g2 ♞xf5 30 exf5 ♜f4 0-1. Note that Black duly activated his dark-squared bishop (14...h5, 15... ♙h6) and won easily.

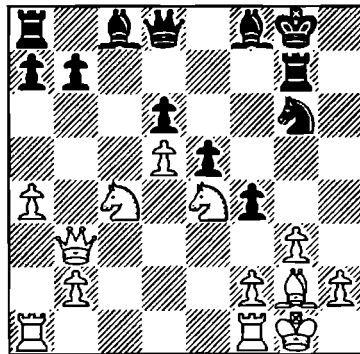
However, this was an opening position and the pawn structure, especially Black’s pawn structure, was still fluid, and he could arrange his pawns to maximize his two bishops.

Such is not the case here: Stein’s kingside pawns are fixed on dark squares, and so his “dreaded” King’s Indian bishop is actually a *bad bishop* that he wants to exchange. In other

words, Stein wants to play ... ♜f5 (the knight heads for d4) which also compels the exchange of dark-squared bishops (leaving Stein with the better bishop, as White’s light-squared bishop is blocked by the d-pawn).

How can White stop all this? Call Stein’s bluff, break the “rule”, and chop the damn knight before it becomes dangerous!

After 19 ♙xg7 ♞xg7 20 ♜e4 , try as I might, I can’t find any compensation for Black at all.

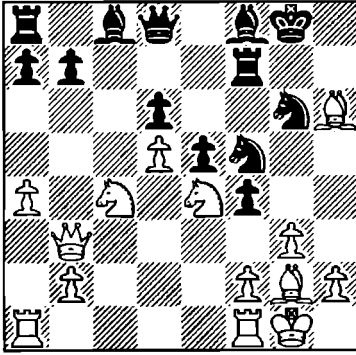


White has two well-placed, invulnerable knights, both bearing down on Black’s weakest point (d6). If one of the knights is exchanged (Black plays ... ♙f5xe4) White’s light-squared bishop comes into its own as an attacking piece against Black’s kingside. White’s king is adequately protected, as Black doesn’t have enough pawn levers (no h-pawn!) to get through on the g-file.

I have to call the position (after 19 ♙xg7 !) clear advantage to White. One can imagine Stein holding his breath while waiting for Vaganian’s next move, or (more likely, in Stein’s case) lighting

another cigarette – and then the move came, and all was right in his world.

19...♖f5!

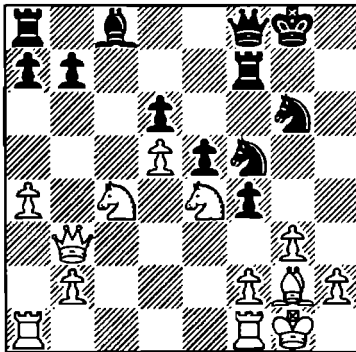


Now I completely believe in this sacrifice!

20 ♗xf8

White can't avoid the exchange with 20 ♗g5 as Black still forces the bishops off with 20...♗e7.

20...♜xf8



21 f3?!

White is afraid of play against the f3-square, but limits his light-squared bishop even more. In my opinion this is one of those positions where you just have to grab material and hope you can

survive the attack. I recommend 21 ♜a3 ♘d4 22 ♜xd6 ♜g7 23 ♜fd1 ♗g4 24 ♜d3 ♜af8 when the computer says equal, but obviously the position is wildly double-edged – White's two extra pawns may balance Black's attacking chances, and it's still anyone's game.

21...b6!

Black takes time to complete his development and remove White's most active piece.

22 a5

White should consider radically preventing ...♗a6 with another "out of the box" move, namely 22 ♜b5, when he is still in the game.

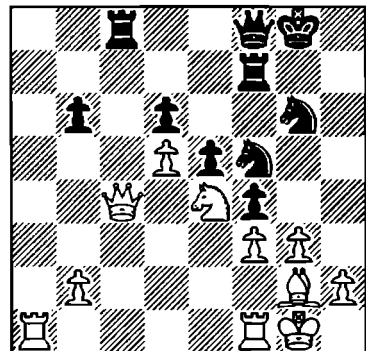
22...♗a6 23 axb6 axb6!

Black saves a move compared to 23...♗xc4 24 ♜xc4 axb6, as White can't take: 24 ♘xb6 ♜b7 and the pin is too strong.

24 ♜d3

Returning material with 24 ♜xa6!? also fails for White: 24...♜xa6 25 ♘g5 (or 25 ♗h3 ♘d4) 25...♜fa7 26 ♜d3 fxg3 27 hxg3 ♜f6 28 ♘e4 ♜g7 29 ♘cxd6 ♘xg3 30 ♘xg3 ♘f4 and wins.

24...♗xc4 25 ♜xc4 ♜c8



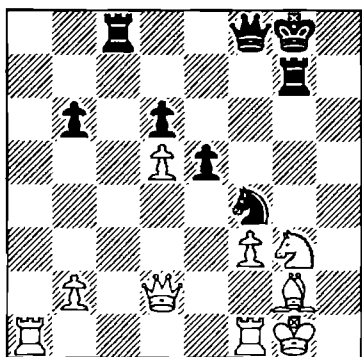
The last black piece enters play with tempo – note how the inclusion of the last rook often tips the balance in the attacker’s favour.

26 ♖d3 fxg3 27 hxg3 ♜xg3!!

This knight, which had long been expected to light on d4, suddenly strikes the fatal blow in another direction! Black has a winning attack.

28 ♜xg3 ♜f4 29 ♖d2 ♜g7

A great position! Every black piece is attacking, and White, a full bishop up, can do nothing to stem the tide.



30 ♖f2

Or 30 ♖f2 ♜h8 31 ♜h2 (if 31 ♜a4 ♜xg3 wins material) 31...♜h7+ 32 ♖g1 ♖h6 33 ♜fc1 ♜g8 with a winning attack.

30...♖f6 31 ♜g1 ♖h4 32 ♖e3 ♜xg3 33 ♜h1 ♜xg1 34 ♜xg1+ ♖f8 35 ♜c1 ♜xd5+ 36 ♖xd5 ♖h6+ 37 ♖e2 ♜xc1 38 ♖a8+ ♖g7 39 ♖b7+ ♖f6 40 ♖d5 ♜c2+ 0-1

Black mates in two.

A spectacular attack by Stein, but also a great gamble. I think the whole game turned on one move, for if White had been willing to play against “what everybody knows” and taken the

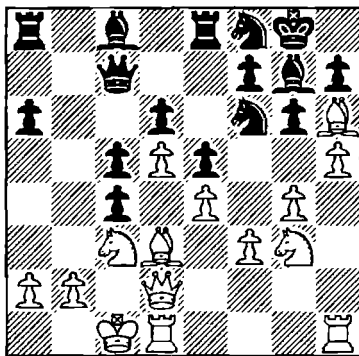
knight on g7, Black would have faced prolonged suffering.

Risk Assessment: Since chess is not yet roulette, I have to say *extremely risky* – but don’t let me stop you! After all, Stein won the game!

Game 7
M.Tal-A.Tolush
 USSR Championship,
 Moscow 1957
King’s Indian Defence

I have a student who asked me not to show him any more Tal games. I said, “Why not, the games are wonderful!” “But I don’t understand them!” he said. The pawn sacrifice on move 17, not just unapproved by *Fritz*, but unmentioned as well, is a classic example of Tal’s magic realism style.

1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜c3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 d4 ♜g7 5 f3 e5 6 ♜ge2 ♜bd7 7 ♜g5 c6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 d5 c5 10 g4 a6 11 ♜g3 ♜e8 12 h4 ♖a5 13 ♜h6 ♜f8 14 h5 ♖c7 15 ♜d3 b5 16 0-0-0 bxc4



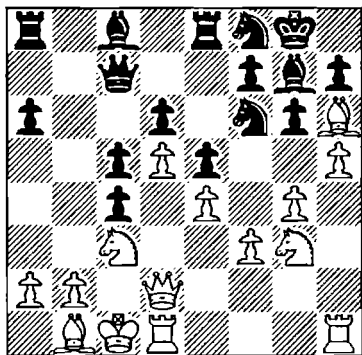
This looks like a routine chop/chop

exchange of pawns, and few people would think there is a possibility of a pawn sacrifice here. But Tal is not just anyone, and there are **Favourable Omens**:

First, the material cost is even slighter than usual, since the extra pawn that Black is allowed to keep is doubled and blockaded, and thus plays little part in the game.

White has a strong kingside attack already underway, so any move that saves time and helps the attack is good. How does this move save time? White avoids having to make a defensive move after the logical sequence (suggested by Fritz) of 17 ♙xg7 ♚xg7 18 ♙xc4 ♞b8 19 ♞h2 ♞b4 . Then how does 17 ♙b1 help White's attack? Because the b1-h7 diagonal is going to open up, that's how! Of course, to even imagine that, you might have to be Tal!

17 ♙b1 !

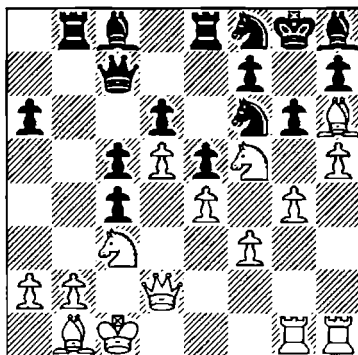


Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The computer can't even imagine this move! Its first three picks are 17 ♙xg7 ♚xg7 18 ♙xc4 ; 17 ♙xc4 ; and finally 17 ♙e2 so it can get the pawn later. Retreating the

bishop to b1, scorning the pawn on c4, is inconceivable to the machine – but this might well be the best move.

In the **Author's** opinion Tal has struck buried gold here: he saves one important tempo for the attack (as previously pointed out) and his line opening idea with f3-f4 is simply brilliant!

17... ♙h8 18 ♞dg1 ♞b8 19 ♙f5 !



What Hans Kmoch called the “Benoni Jump” in his classic book, *Pawn Power in Chess*. The knight cannot be taken because of White's threats down the g-file.

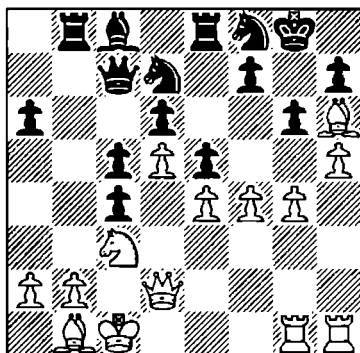
19... ♙d7 20 ♙g5 ♙g7

Black can get mated if he's not careful; e.g. 20...a5? 21 ♙e7+ ♚g7 22 h6 mate, or 20... ♙b6 21 ♙h6+ ♚g7 22 hxg6 hxg6 (clearly 22... ♙xg6 loses to 23 ♙f5+) 23 ♙f6+ ♚xf6 24 ♙g8+ ♚g7 25 ♞h6+ ♚xg8 26 ♞xh8 mate.

21 ♙xg7 ♚xg7 22 ♙h6+ ♚g8 23 f4!

There you have it: White is one battering ram (f4-f5) away from decisively softening up the g6-square, so Black has to take – which in turn means the b1-bishop is just one line clearance sac (e4-e5!) away from a beautiful king

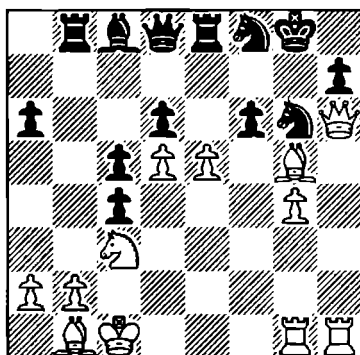
attacking diagonal!



23...exf4 24 ♖xf4 ♘d8 25 hxg6 ♗xg6
26 ♜h2 ♗de5 27 ♙f4 ♗f8 28 ♜h6
♗eg6

In view of the threat ♙g5-f6, Black has to release his blockade of the white e-pawn.

29 ♙g5 f6 30 e5!!



Clearly the point of 17 ♙b1! – White breaks through in typically dazzling style.

30...♖xe5

If 30...fxg5 31 ♙xg6 hxg6 32 ♜h8+ ♗f7 33 ♜h7+ ♗xh7 34 ♜xh7+ ♗f8 35 ♜f1+ ♙f5 36 gxh5 mating, as Tal notes.

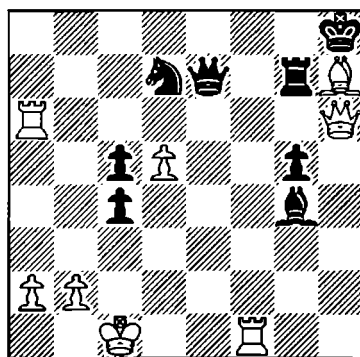
31 ♙xg6 ♖b7

Other moves are no better: if 31...hxg6 32 ♜h8+ ♗f7 33 ♜h7+ ♗xh7 34 ♜xd8 wins, or 31...♙g5 32 ♙h7+ ♗f7 33 ♗e4 wins, as Tal points out.

32 ♗e4 fxg5 33 ♜f1 ♖xe4

If 33...♗xg6 34 ♗f6+ ♗f7 (or 34...♗h8 35 ♜xh7+ ♖xh7 36 ♖xh7 mate) 35 ♜xh7+ ♗f8 36 ♜g8+ ♗e7 37 ♜g7 mate.

34 ♙xe4 ♖g7 35 ♜f6 ♙xg4 36 ♜hf1 ♗d7 37 ♖xd6 ♜e7 38 ♖xa6 ♗h8 39 ♙xh7



39...♗b8 40 ♙f5+ ♗g8 41 ♙e6+ ♙xe6
42 ♖xe6 1-0

White has a mating attack.

It's clear that the **Risk Assessment** for this sacrifice is very low. White only gambled away an immobile doubled pawn, and in return gained a valuable tempo – and what's more, the hidden but very real possibility of a dynamic breakthrough resulting in the light-squared bishop adding decisive firepower to the kingside attack. Once more, bringing "one more piece" to the attack proved decisive.

The pawn sacrifice was powerful and, in my opinion, clearly the best

move – but how many people would have chopped on c4 without a second thought?

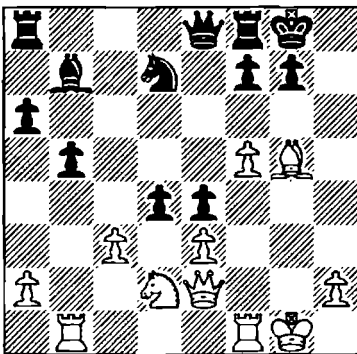
Game 8

T.Taylor-R.De Guzman
Northern California
Championship 2003
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♞f3 ♟b4+ 4 ♜c3 0-0
5 ♟g5 h6 6 ♟h4 b6 7 e3 ♟b7 8 ♟d3 d6
9 0-0 ♟xc3 10 bxc3 ♜bd7 11 ♜d2 c5 12
f4 d5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 g4

Not exactly the most subtle way to announce my attacking intentions!

14...♞e8 15 ♞e2 a6 16 ♜ab1 b5 17 g5
hxg5 18 ♟xg5 ♜e4 19 ♟xe4 dxe4 20 f5
cxd4?!



Up to here the game has been double-edged but about even: White has space and attacking prospects on the kingside, while Black has space in the centre and prospects on the c-file. So far there haven't been many tactical opportunities, but now Black makes a careless move which gives White the

fleeting chance to make an extremely dangerous pawn sacrifice. White has to seize the moment, for the chance will be gone if not taken immediately!

For the record, Black should have played the safe 20...f6 21 ♟f4 cxd4 22 cxd4 ♜b6 23 ♟d6 ♞f7 24 ♞g2 ♜c8 when both man and machine can agree that the position is about even.

Now what is this opportunity, and what are the **Favourable Omens**?

First of all, the opportunity comes about because Black made an assumption that is not always true: this assumption goes something like this (and everybody does this when calculating) – "I take, he takes back, I do this, and so on..." But there is no rule in chess that you *have to take back* after a capture! Even strong opponents (my opponent here is an IM) sometimes forget this, and in this position the lapse seems excusable, since White's recapture looks forced, as otherwise Black can push on with an extra, passed pawn on the sixth rank!

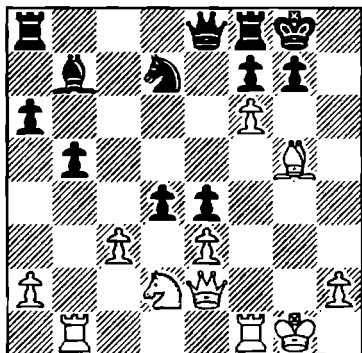
But what's more important than a pawn? Easy answer: a king! So the first favourable omen is that White has a free tempo (by eschewing the recapture on d4) to attack Black's king!

The second favourable omen is that White can get his f-pawn to f6, where it dangerously cramps Black's king position, and threatens to open lines for the white bishop and king's rook.

Third, White can bring his queen swiftly to the attack, and the queen's rook can get there pretty fast too, as will be seen in some variations.

The downside, of course, is that White gives up at least one, and possibly more, important centre pawn, but since I could feel White's attack was very dangerous, I didn't worry about mere pawns!

21 f6!



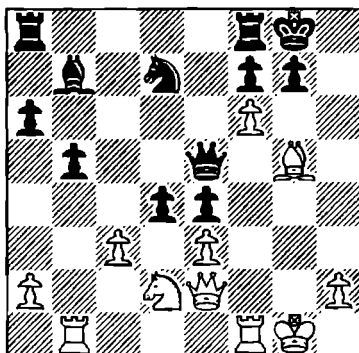
I played this move almost right away, mainly on feel (remember I have great experience with f-pawn attacks) and I think this had a big psychological effect on my opponent (an off board advantage!). De Guzman immediately realized he had been careless (he had probably intended to play 21...f6 after I recaptured, but now saw that wasn't going to happen! No doubt he kicked himself for his carelessness, and in such a state of mind it's difficult to withstand Sacrificial Shock!

However **Mr. Fritz** is not a great believer in psychology: so what does the machine say? The computer wants me to recapture on d4, and doesn't even consider 21 f6 – and when I enter that move, it immediately goes to *decisive advantage* for Black. How's that for *unapproved!*

Of course the **Author's** opinion is just a little bit different! First of all, I don't think Black is better at all: White's kingside threats are too real. Second, even though (according to my own analysis) Black can make a draw with best play, finding that narrow path to the draw is so extraordinarily difficult that in a practical game White's attack will nearly always go through.

This is essentially Spielmann's attitude: what is important is the "practical effect" of the sacrifice, not what analysts say after the game is done. It's clear that Black, facing a pawn inches from his king, and surprisingly and suddenly thrown into an immensely complicated middlegame position, has extremely difficult practical problems to solve.

21... ♖e5!!



Black finds the first of three difficult and only moves. All the tempting pawn captures or pushes fail:

a) The daring advanced pawn can't be captured: 21...gx f6 22 ♙x f6 ♘x f6 23 ♚g2+ ♙h7 (if 23...♙h8 24 ♖x f6 wins) 24

♖h3+ (White wins with the stair method) 24...♔g7 25 ♖g3+ ♔h7 26 ♖h4+ forces mate.

b) 21...d3 certainly looks tempting. Black gets a protected passed pawn on the sixth, but White gains a tempo for his attack: 22 ♖g4 ♖e6 23 ♖h4 ♖e5 24 ♔h1 with a winning attack, e.g. 24...♖xc3 25 ♖h6 ♔xf6 (or 25...♖xd2 26 ♖xg7 and mates) 26 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 (if 26...♔h7 27 ♖xc3) 27 ♖g1+ ♔g4 28 ♖xg4 mate. If instead 23...♖fe8 24 fxg7 ♔xg7 25 ♖f6! ♔xf6 26 ♖h6+ ♔g8 27 ♖xf6 wins. This final mating pattern is a typical theme illustrating why the attack is so strong: White has a local superiority on the kingside, whereas the protected passed pawn and the black pieces on the queenside can't help the only piece that matters: the black king!

c) How about taking another pawn while threatening a piece? Tempting, but once again Black loses a fatal tempo: 21...dxc3 22 fxg7 ♔xg7 23 ♖f6+! ♔h6 (if Black takes with 23...♔xf6 White again uses the stair method to force mate: 24 ♖g2+ ♔h7 25 ♖h3+ ♔g7 26 ♖g3+ ♔h7 27 ♖h4+ etc) 24 ♖g7+! (White insists!) 24...♔xg7 25 ♖g4+ ♔h6 26 ♖h4+ (the white queen loves climbing those stairs!) 26...♔g6 27 ♖g3+ ♔h6 28 ♖f4 f5 29 ♖h4+ ♖h5 30 ♖f4+ ♔g6 31 ♖xh5 ♔xh5 32 ♔h1 and White mates or wins decisive material.

d) Let's say Black takes the other pawn: 21...dxe3 22 fxg7 ♔xg7 23 ♖f6+ ♔xf6 (23...♔h6 24 ♖xe3+ wins even faster than in variation 'c') 24 ♖g2+ and again White climbs the stairs to victory!

e) Black can try to defend with the

queen, and he chooses the right square in the game. Had he played 21...♖e6 White wins quickly as follows: 22 ♖h5 dxe3 23 ♖f4 ♔xf6 (if 23...exd2 24 ♖h4 mates) 24 ♖xf6 exd2 25 ♖g5 g6 26 ♖h4 again forces mate.

Note the helplessness of Black's bishop in these variations: blocked by his own centre pawn, this piece can't defend the vulnerable king – meanwhile the white bishop is extremely strong. As is well known, bishops of opposite colour favour the attacker.

Black deserves great credit for finding the one and only saving move after the surprising sacrifice – but he's not out of the woods yet!

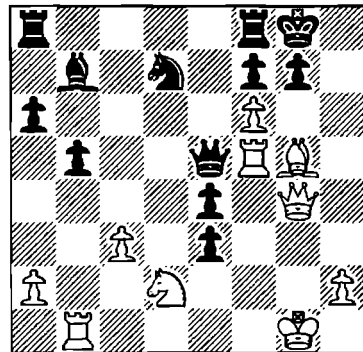
22 ♖g4!

Because of the precise placement of the black queen White can't play 22 ♖h5 due to 22...♔xf6.

22...dxe3!

Again correct: Black opens a line so his queen can stay on the long diagonal.

23 ♖f5!

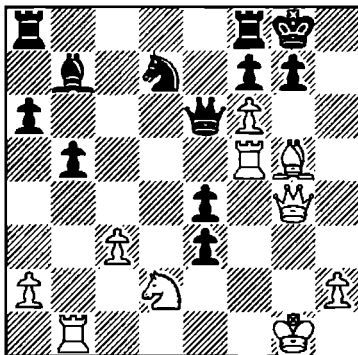


Blow for blow! White attacks the queen and offers yet another pawn sac!

23... ♖e6?

Finally Black succumbs to Sacrificial Shock. If he had succeeded in finding the third successive move, he should achieve a well-earned draw.

Black needs the queen on the long diagonal to defend against White's dark square mating attack. After the correct and only good move 23... ♖xc3! best play for both sides looks like this: 24 ♙h4! g6 25 ♜f4 exd2 26 ♜h6 ♜d4+ (with mate in one threatened, Black must keep checking!) 27 ♜g2 e3+ 28 ♜h3 ♙g2+ 29 ♜g3 (not 29 ♜xg2 ♜g4+ 30 ♙g3 gxh5 when Black defends g7 and wins) 29... ♜xf6 (necessary: if Black tries 29... ♜d6+ 30 ♜xg2 ♜c6+ 31 ♜h3 White escapes the checks and wins) 30 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 31 ♜xf6 ♙e4 32 ♜g1 ♜fd8 33 ♜h4 d1 ♜ 34 ♜fxg6+ fxg6 35 ♜xg6+ and draws by perpetual. But this is a tough line to find for either side!



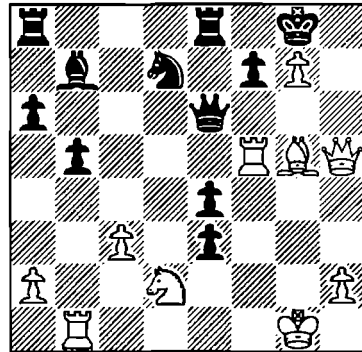
24 fxg7!

Just like that, White has a winning attack. This game shows the extreme difficulty of defending against a king's field pawn sacrifice.

24... ♜fe8

Of course not 24... ♜g7 25 ♙f6+ and mates. Also losing is 24... exd2 25 gxh8 ♜+ ♜xf8 (if 25... ♜xf8 26 ♜bf1 wins) 26 ♙xd2+ and White's material advantage should be decisive.

25 ♜h5



It's hard to believe, but only four moves have gone by since White sac'ed with 21 f6! – and already White is winning the queen!

25... ♜xg7

In view of the threat of mate in one, Black must give up material.

26 ♙h6+ ♜xh6

If 26... ♜h7 27 ♜h1! with a mating attack.

27 ♜xf7+ ♜g8 28 ♜xh6 ♜xf7 29 ♜f1+

29 ♜c4! wins practically immediately, but I missed this move in time trouble – the previous part of the game cost some serious thinking time!

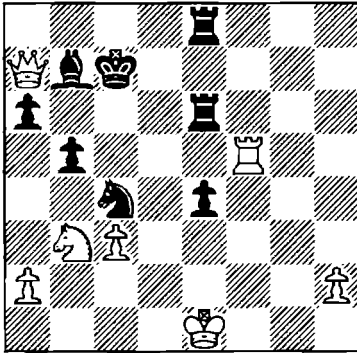
29... ♜e7 30 ♜h7+ ♜d6 31 ♜h6+ ♜e6 32 ♜xe3 ♜g8+ 33 ♜f2 ♜c7 34 ♜e1 ♜e5

34... ♜b8 is a better defence, but White should still win eventually.

35 ♜f5 ♜ge8 36 ♜b3 ♜c4 37 ♜a7

Infiltration! – this is why Black should have thrown in ... ♜b8. Now

White wins easily.



37...♖e7 38 ♘c5 ♖b6 39 ♗xb7 ♖xb7
40 ♖c5+ ♗d7 41 ♖f6 ♗e5 42 ♖d6+ ♗e8
43 ♖c8+ ♗f7 44 ♖f5+ ♗e8 45 ♖xa6
♖b8 46 ♖e6 ♗d3+ 47 ♗e2 ♖d8 48
♖xe7+ 1-0

48...♗xe7 49 ♖xe4+ ♗f8 50 ♖xd3
forces an easily won pawn ending.

Risk Assessment: I would call this somewhat risky, since even though analysis vindicates the sacrifice, over the board White had to find many accurate moves to carry through the attack – and there was no fall-back, since I had let my centre be destroyed! On the other hand, Black's task was harder (as it always is for the defender) and the strain of finding successive "only moves" was finally too much for him.

Game 9

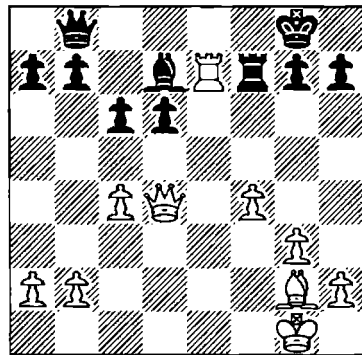
L.Aronson-M.Tal
USSR Championship,
Moscow 1957
Dutch Defence

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 ♗f3 ♗f6 4 ♗c3 ♖e7 5

g3 0-0 6 ♖g2 d6 7 0-0 ♖e8 8 ♖e1 ♖g6 9
e4 fxe4 10 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♗c6 12
♖e2 ♖f6 13 ♖d2 e5 14 dxe5 dxe5

Tal played this risky move out of "a desire to complicate the game."

He rejected the natural knight capture as too equal, and a recent game of mine bears out this assessment: 14...♗xe5 15 ♖c3 ♗xf3+ 16 ♖xf3 ♖f5 17 ♖ee1 c6 18 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖b3 ♖f7 20 ♖e3 ♖b1 21 ♖d1 ♖c2 22 ♖e2 ♖af8 23 f4 ♖f5 24 ♖e1 ♖d7 25 ♖d3 ♖f6 26 ♖c3 (it's dead even – just what Tal didn't want!) 26...♖d8 27 ♖d4 ♖b8 28 ♖e7 ♖xe7 29 ♖xe7 ♖f7.



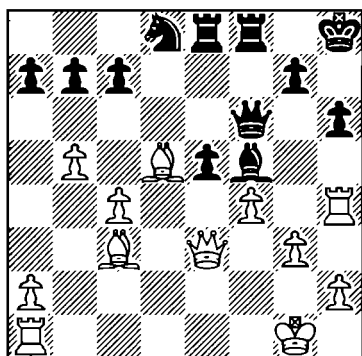
Now the logical follow-up to all of White's quiet moves would be 30 ♖e3 which virtually forces the draw. Fortunately, at this point my opponent suddenly started playing for a win – and lost as follows: 30 ♖e1 b6 31 ♖e4 ♖f8 32 ♖d3 g6 33 b4 d5 34 cxd5 ♖xb4 35 ♖b1 ♖c5+ 36 ♗h1 ♖d6 37 ♖e1 ♖e7 38 ♖c4 b5 39 ♖d3 c5 40 ♖d1 ♖g4 41 ♖f1 c4 42 ♖d4 ♖b6! 43 ♖xb6 axb6 44 ♖g2 c3 45 ♖c1 b4 46 h3 ♖d7 47 ♖f1 ♖e4 48 ♗g1 ♗f8 49 ♖d1 ♖a4 50 ♖c1 ♖d4 51 ♗f2 c2 52 ♖e2 ♖d1 53 ♖xd1 cxd1 ♖ 54

♖xd1 ♙xd1 55 ♖e3 ♖e7 56 ♗d4 ♗d6 57 ♗c4 ♙e2+ 58 ♗xb4 ♗xd5 0-1 V.Aradhyula-T.Taylor, Los Angeles 2007.

15 ♙c3 ♙f5 16 ♗h4 ♙xh4 17 ♖xh4 ♖ae8 18 ♗e3 h6 19 b4 ♗f6 20 b5 ♗d8 21 ♙d5+

Better is 21 c5! as Tal recommended, which might show that Black's play was "perhaps too risky". This was successfully tested in a later game: 21...c6 22 ♖a4 cxb5 23 ♖xa7 ♗f7 24 ♖a8 ♗d7 25 ♖e1 ♗d3 26 ♗c1 ♙g4 27 f4 ♗f7 28 ♙xe5 ♗d7 29 ♙f1 ♖xe5 30 ♙xd3 ♗d4+ 31 ♖e3 ♖xe3 32 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 33 ♗xe3 ♗f7 34 ♗e4 ♗d7 35 ♗f2 ♙e6 36 a3 ♙d5 37 ♙xb5 ♗xb5 38 ♗xd5+ ♖e7 39 ♖e3 ♗b2 40 ♗e5+ 1-0 Y.Yakovich-S.Dyachkov, Russian Club Cup 1998.

21...♖h8 22 f4



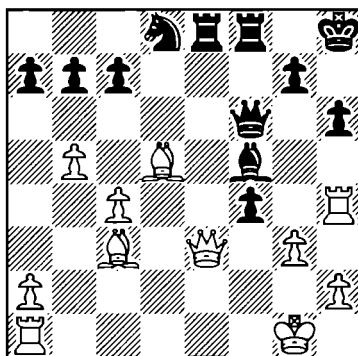
"Now Black firmly seizes the initiative," writes Tal. The average person might think Black is losing a pawn here, but Tal sees a powerful pawn sacrifice!

What are his **Favourable Omens?** Essentially there are four of them: four rooks, four favourable omens. The vi-

tally important point that Tal sees in this complicated position is that his two rooks are very well placed, ready to barrel down some soon to be opened files, while White's two rooks are disconnected and out of play.

Tal brilliantly creates an attack based almost entirely on the rook factor – something not all of would have noticed, or realized was a key element of the position.

22...exf4!



Amazingly *approved* by **Mr. Fritz**, but I suspect grudgingly so – the machine doesn't see anything else!

Likewise in the **Author's** opinion this is the only way to go.

23 ♗d2

Two tactical points justify Black's last move: if 23 ♗xe8 ♗b6+ wins, or if 23 ♙xf6 fxe3 24 ♖xh6+ ♙h7 and Black is at least equal.

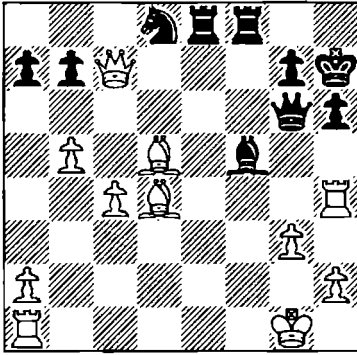
23...♗b6+

Tal makes the far-sighted comment that the purpose of this move was to lure White's dark-squared bishop away from defence of e1 – a square the black rook covets.

24 ♖d4 ♜g6 25 ♜xf4 ♔h7

White was threatening 26 ♜h6+.

26 ♜xc7



And so White takes the sacrificed pawn.

I showed this position to a student once, and asked him to guess Black's best move; and I gave him a couple of hints. I said, "After this move, Tal wrote a note that said, 'The rest is easy.' In other words, after this move Black is sure that he has a winning attack. Furthermore, the move must come with a major threat, so that White is put in a defensive posture from which he never escapes."

My student just could not find the move.

Finally I suggested that he use the "human computer" method: simply try all legal moves until he saw one that looked right – and by now you've guessed it: the very last legal move he looked at was the correct one!

A hint for *you*: if someone asks you to find a Tal move, look at the *whole board* – remember 24 ♜h8!! from Game 5.

26...♖b1!!

Tal's complete note reads as follows: "This move shuts the white rook out of the game. The rest is simple."

I *do* think Black has a tremendous attack here; I *don't* think it's simple! The important thing to notice is how both of Black's rooks have been unmasked, and directly threaten the white king.

27 ♖e5

White tries to block the e-file; if White ignores the threat of heavy piece infiltration, he loses quickly, e.g. 27 ♖xa7 ♜c2 and mates, or 27 b6 ♜e1+ 28 ♔g2 ♜e2+ 29 ♔g1 ♜c6 30 ♖c3 ♜e7 31 bxa7 ♜d3 and mates.

27...♜e6 28 ♜d6

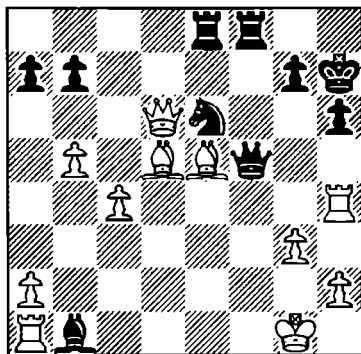
Fritz gives 28 ♜a5 (not mentioned by Tal) as the best try, and I'm sure this is correct. The white queen then defends the key e1-square (remember Tal's comment on move 23) and threatens to smoke out Black's blockading bishop. After some analysis, I finally found a precise winning sequence for Black, but you tell me if it's simple!

Black's best continuation is the move 28...♜g5! uncovering an attack on the bishop at e5. After 29 ♜e1 ♖c2 30 ♜e2 (if 20 ♜e3 ♜f5 wins) 30...♜f7! (a hard move to see) 31 ♜c1 (if 31 ♖xf7 ♜xf7! wins material) 31...♖d3 32 ♜b2 ♜fe7 33 ♖c3 ♜e2 34 ♜a3 ♜f5 the heavy pieces finally penetrate and Black forces mate.

Simple, no?

28...♜f5

Tal works his way in, threatening mate on the way!



29 ♙f4 ♜g5

29...g5 also wins, but Tal wisely did not want to weaken his king position in time pressure.

30 ♜b4 ♙e4 31 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 32 ♞f1 ♞e2

The rook finally breaks through on the e-file – Black is clearly winning now, but I still wouldn't say it's simple!

33 ♜d6 ♞xa2

Spielmann comments that one should not stop to take pawns during an attack until they "fall into one's lap" – that is, they can be taken with no loss of time. Here this material capture comes with the powerful threat of doubling on the seventh rank – with the queen in front!

34 ♜d5 ♜c2 35 c5 ♞d8!

Amazingly enough, Black can still lose this game (that's why I said the position was still not simple). If Black immediately goes to triple on the seventh, he would lose tragically as follows: 35... ♞e8?? 36 ♞xh6+! ♙xh6 (36... g6 37 ♜d7+ ♙g6 38 ♜xe8+ ♙h7 39 ♞e7+ ♙g6 40 ♙d2 ♜xd2 41 ♞f6+ ♙h5 42 ♞e8+ ♙g4 43 ♜c8+ ♙h5 44 g4+ ♙h4 45 ♞xh6 mate) 37 ♜xg5+ ♙h7 38

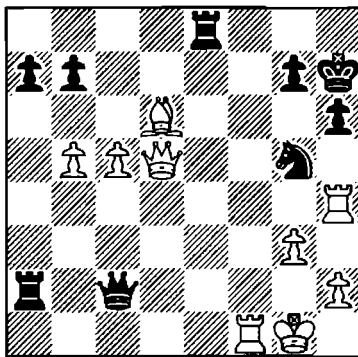
♜h5+ ♙g8 39 ♜xe8+ ♙h7 40 ♜h5+ ♙g8 41 ♜d5+ ♙h7 42 g4 and White wins with his extra piece.

But Tal is alert!

36 ♙d6

Or 36 ♜xb7 ♞d1 37 ♞xh6+ ♙xh6 38 ♙xg5+ ♙h7 and White can't hold the seventh and eighth ranks.

36... ♞e8 0-1



White lost on time, but there is no defence:

a) 37 ♞xh6+ fails without the white bishop on f4. Black wins most simply with 37... ♙xh6 and White has no good check.

b) 37 c6 ♞e1 shows the key idea of Black's heavy piece attack: mate is forced.

c) 37 ♙h1 (relatively speaking the best try, but still hopeless) 37... ♞e2 38 ♜f5+ (if 38 ♙g1 ♞d2 39 ♜xb7 ♞e4 forces mate, while 39 ♜f5+ ♙g8 40 ♞f2 ♞d1+ 41 ♙g2 ♞e1 42 ♞f1 ♞e2+ is another assassination by heavy pieces!) 38... g6 39 ♜d7+ ♙g8 and White can only prolong the game by giving up a piece – but the ending is a fairly easy win; e.g. 40 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 41 ♞f8+ ♜xf8

42 ♖xf8 ♗xf8 43 ♜xh6 ♕g7 44 ♜h4 ♘f3
 45 ♜h3 ♜a1+ 46 ♗g2 ♘e1+ 47 ♗f2 ♘d3+
 48 ♗e3 ♘xc5 49 ♗d4 ♘e6+ 50 ♗c3 ♜a5
 51 ♗b4 b6 and there are no technical
 problems.

A truly magical attack by Tal – now what is our **Risk Assessment?** I would say moderately risky, for even though the sacrifice itself was *Fritz*-approved, the follow-up attacking moves were extraordinarily difficult to see, and Tal could have lost the game had he made even one slip right up to the next to last move!

Of course he didn't slip!

Summary:

What makes a King Attack pawn sacrifice work? The advantage of surprise is important here as with all sacrifices, but there is another element that I see

dominating these games. That element is “bringing the attacking pieces to the enemy king.”

Many games were decided by some local superiority in force around the defending king. For example, in Game 2 and 3, White brought in the queen's rook with decisive effect. In Game 7 Tal's seemingly buried light-squared bishop suddenly entered the game and ended resistance. In the last game, the whole idea of the sacrifice was to free the black rooks to attack the white king.

So here's something to think about: if you can, for the mere cost of a pawn, bring another piece to attack your opponent's king – creating at least a temporary superiority in force in that region – then maybe you should go ahead and toss that little guy!

Chapter Two

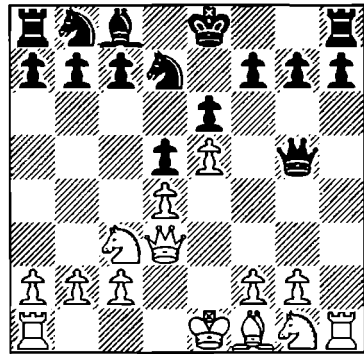
Line Opening

Sometimes pawns just get in the way, and one wishes that your opponent would do you a favour and take one or two! This is the essence of a line opening sacrifice: a well-known opening sacrifice of this type is the famous Alekhine-Châtard Attack from the French Defence. The following short rapid game is a good illustration:

G.Kasparov-V.Korchnoi
Zürich (rapid) 2001

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♗f6 4 ♕g5 ♗e7 5 e5 ♗fd7 6 h4 (this opening sacrifice has been known for a hundred years – White simply wants to open the h-file for his rook, and is willing to give a pawn to do so) **6...♗xg5 7 hxg5 ♜xg5 8 ♜d3** (the unmoved rook on h1 is actually developed with a threat, thanks to the missing h-pawn)

(see following diagram)



8...♗c6 9 ♗f3 ♜g6 10 ♜xg6 fxg6 11 ♖b5 ♗e7 12 ♗xc7 ♜b8 13 ♖b5 ♖b6 14 c3 ♗d7 15 ♗d3 ♖a5 16 b3 ♗xb5 17 ♗xb5 h6 18 ♖h4 ♜hc8 19 ♜h3 (the rook enjoys its open line) **19...g5 20 ♖g6+ ♗f7 21 ♜f3+ ♗xg6 22 ♗d3+ ♗h5 23 ♜h3+** (and forces mate!) **23...♗g4 24 f3+ ♗f4 25 ♗f2 g4 26 g3+ 1-0**

Clearly the position after 8 ♜d3 is not particularly dangerous for Black if White has his h-pawn, but when that pawn is missing – and a crucial line is

open, here the h-file – then White's play is very dangerous indeed.

All the games in this chapter feature the attacker willingly giving up a pawn to open a line, usually a file for a rook, though sometimes a diagonal for a bishop.

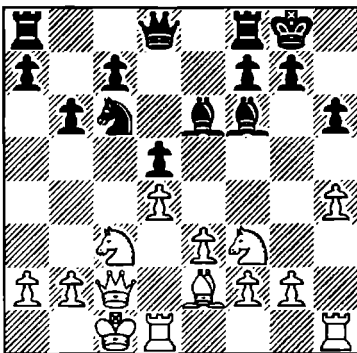
This is a very common sacrifice; we start with a simple example.

Game 10
T.Taylor-F.Trois
Eerbeek 1978
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 ♠f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♠c3 d5 4 ♠g5 ♠e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♠f3 h6 7 ♠h4 b6 8 ♣c2 ♠b7 9 ♠xf6 ♠xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 0-0-0 ♠c6?!

Black can and should try a line opening pawn sac of his own: 11...c5 12 dxc5 ♠d7! when, no matter how White plays, lines open on the queenside where the white king lives. In this way Black could have obtained good counterplay.

12 h4 ♠c8 13 ♠e2 ♠e6



The **Favourable Omens** are practi-

cally shouting from the heavens, but nonetheless I will enumerate them:

Black has just moved his queen's bishop three times without getting it to a very good square.

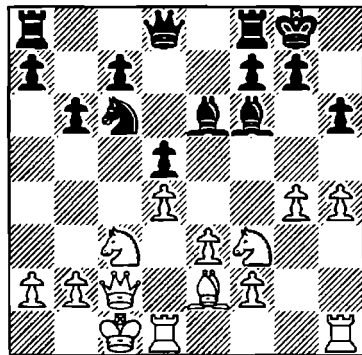
White has completed his development, and his rooks are ready to back up any pawn play on the kingside.

White can potentially attack the mating square h7 with queen, knight and rook.

Black has a target pawn at h6 that White can use as a lever to open at least one kingside file.

There is no reason to wait.

14 g4!



I didn't waste much time calculating here: it's obvious that any capture of the g-pawn opens one or two files for White's attack, e.g. 14...♠xg4 15 ♠g5 ♠xg5 (or 15...hxg5 16 hxg5 g6 17 ♠xg4 ♠xg5 18 f4 ♠f6 19 ♠e6 ♣g7 20 ♠xd5 wins) 16 hxg5 ♣xg5 (if 16...♠xe2 17 ♠xe2 wins because of the double attack to c6 and h6) 17 ♠xg4 ♣xg4 18 ♠xd5 ♣g6 19 e4 and the strong centre plus the open h- and g-files give White a winning attack.

Does **Mr. Fritz** like this? Indeed, this is the kind of simple pawn sac the computer sees – stamp this one Approved! The **Author**, of course, concurs.

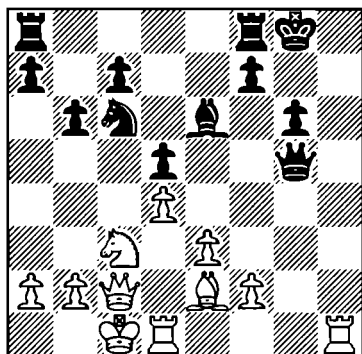
14...g6

Black declines the sacrifice for the moment, so I simply pushed the pawn forward, offering the exact same type of line opening sac on the next square!

15 g5 hxg5

Black can hardly resist any more, for if 15...g7 16 h5 and everything opens up.

16 g4xg5 g7xg5 17 hxg5 g7xg5



Black is a pawn ahead, but White has accomplished his mission. With two open files pointing to the black king, all I have to do is swing the heavy pieces over without loss of time.

18 f4!

Beginning the process of opening the second rank for the white queen with tempo.

18...g6

If 18...g3 19 g3d2 wins.

19 b5

Once again moving with tempo – now the second rank is clear, so the

white queen can come in with powerful effect.

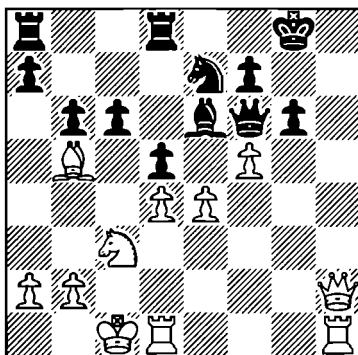
19...e7 20 h2

Threatening mate in one always gets your opponent's attention!

20...fd8 21 e4 c6

Or 21...dxe4 22 gxe4 g7 23 h4 and White infiltrates on the dark squares.

22 f5!

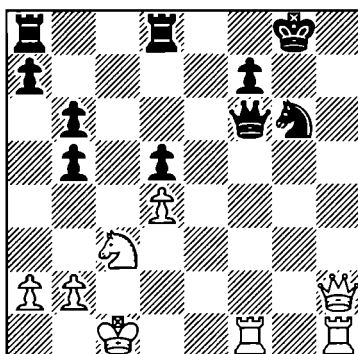


The line opening theme continues.

22...xf5

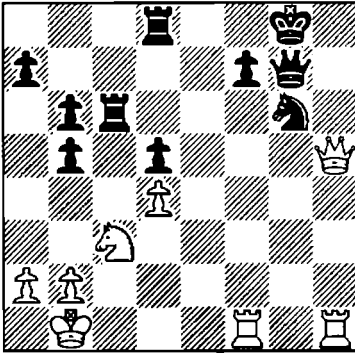
White wins at least a piece against 22...cxb5 23 fxe6 or 22...d7 23 e5 g5+ 24 d2 h5 25 f6!.

23 exf5 cxb5 24 fxg6 g6 25 df1



Speaking to the theme of this chapter, White now has *four* open kingside files, stretching from e to h. Black has no reasonable defence against the heavy piece attack.

25... ♖g7 26 ♜h5 ♝ac8 27 ♚b1 ♝c6



28 ♘d5 ♝cd6 29 ♘e3 ♜h8 30 ♜f3 ♜g7 31 ♘f5 ♝f6 32 ♘h6+ ♜xh6 33 ♜xf6 ♜f8 34 ♝fg1 1-0

Triumph of the open lines! Mate is coming very soon.

Risk Assessment? Nil. Any good player should see that the open lines provide way more value than a mere pawn.

Game 11

M.Tal-T.Ghitescu
Leipzig Olympiad 1960
Sicilian Defence

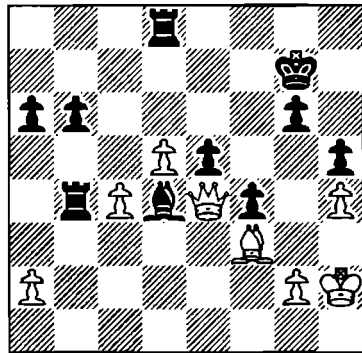
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 c4 ♘f6 6 ♘c3 ♘xd4 7 ♜xd4 d6 8 ♙e2 ♙g7 9 ♙e3 0-0 10 ♜d2 ♘g4 11 ♙d4 e5 12 ♙e3 ♘xe3 13 ♜xe3 f5 14 ♝d1 ♙f6 15 0-0 b6 16 ♙f3 f4 17 ♜d3 ♙e6 18 b3 ♙e7 19 ♜e2 ♝f7 20 ♝d3 h5 21 ♝fd1

♙f8 22 ♘b5 ♝d7 23 ♝1d2 a6 24 ♘xd6 ♜c7 25 ♜d1 ♝ad8 26 ♘e8 ♝xd3 27 ♘xc7 ♝xd2 28 ♜a1 ♙f7 29 ♘d5 ♙xd5 30 exd5 ♙c5 31 b4 ♙d4

Not 31... ♙xb4 as 32 ♜b1 wins by double attack: this simple variation shows the power of the queen if it can find open lines.

32 ♜b1 ♘g7 33 h4 ♝xf2 34 ♚h2 ♝b2 35 ♜e4 ♝xb4

Black has two rooks and a pawn for the queen, so White has to take action before Black can begin exploiting his material superiority. But what action? Both the white queen and bishop are blocked by their own pawns ...ah ha!



Favourable Omens:

After the contemplated 36 d6, the white queen becomes the "cat among the pigeons" – it infiltrates into Black's position and can easily threaten both of Black's undefended rooks.

Two rooks are usually superior to the queen when the rooks' king is safe; the pawn sacrifice means White can launch an attack, destroying that illusion of safety.

Finally, the moribund white bishop

can, after the sac, reach excellent attacking outposts along the soon to be open h1-a8 diagonal.

36 d6!



Correct and practically the only move: on anything else Black blockades with ...f6 and stands better.

Mr. Fritz? Approved, number one pick.

The **Author** concurs.

36...f6

Even worse is 36...c4 37 b7+ c6 38 e7 cc8 39 e4 and White, with a passed pawn and a violent king-side attack, wins easily.

37 b7+ f8

Not 37...c6? because of 38 c8 winning a rook.

38 e5

Look at the change in activity (of the white pieces) compared to the position just before the sacrifice!

38...e8

Black finds the longest resistance, but can't change the result. 38...f6 would have led to a quick finish: 39 d7 a5 40 d8+ g7 41 g8+ h6 42 h8 mate.

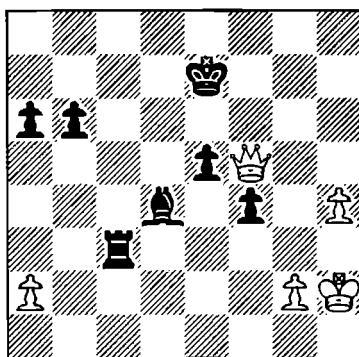
39 c6+! f6

Black has to give up the exchange, for if 39...d8 White wins everything as follows: 40 b8+ e7 41 e8+ f6 42 d5 f5 43 f8+ e6 44 cxd5+ e5 45 b4. That's a powerful queen!

40 f6+ e7

Black can't save his g-pawn, for if 40...f7 41 d7+ and the rook at b4 will fall to a fork.

41 g6 f6 42 f5 f3 43 f5



The passed pawn gives White excellent winning chances.

43...d6 44 h5 f2 45 h6 g3+ 46 h3 f2+ 47 g4 f3+ 48 h5 g2 49 h7 h2+ 50 g4 1-0

Black resigns as he must lose his rook, e.g. 50...d5 51 c8 f7 52 g8+ d4 53 f7.

Risk assessment: As in Game 3, the only risk for White would be *not* playing the pawn sacrifice! Clinging to material might have lost, but boldly opening lines for the queen and bishop promised much more. Once again, no risk at all – assuming one has the courage to give up the pawn!

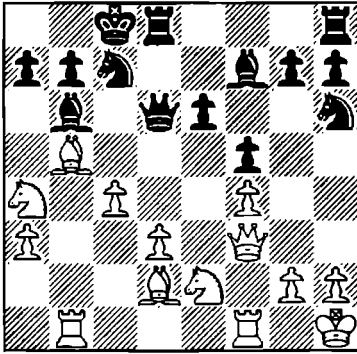
Game 12

T.V.Petrosian-R.Amirkhanov

Tbilisi 1948

Scandinavian Defence

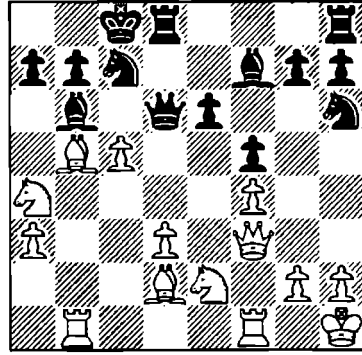
1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♖xd5 3 ♘c3 ♜a5 4 ♙c4
 ♙f5 5 ♘ge2 e6 6 0-0 c6 7 ♘g3 ♙g6 8 d3
 ♘d7 9 f4 ♘h6 10 ♖h1 0-0-0 11 ♜f3 ♘f6
 12 a3 ♘d5 13 ♙d2 ♜c7 14 b4 f5 15
 ♚ab1 ♙f7 16 b5 ♙c5 17 ♘a4 ♙d4 18
 ♘e2 ♙b6 19 bxc6 ♜xc6 20 ♙b5 ♜d6 21
 c4 ♘c7



At this point the **Favourable Omens** are everywhere, and these are Black's hapless minor pieces! The best of them is the bishop on b6, but that piece can be easily exchanged. The other black minors have nothing positive to say.

The fact that Black's king is on an already half open file should obviously get one thinking about opening the file all the way! The fact that this is possible by force, whereupon White gains the two bishops plus a powerful pinning rook on the c-file, is the clincher.

22 c5!



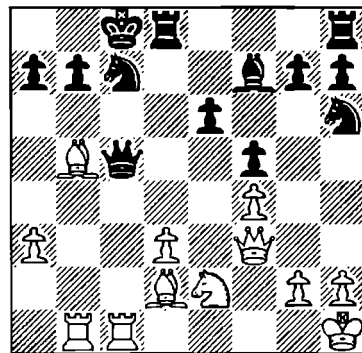
Black must take, so his only good minor piece disappears, and a white rook will come to the c-file with tempo.

Mr. Fritz? Ex post facto approved!

When first shown this position, *Fritz* offers the following top three picks: 22 d4; 22 ♘xb6+; 22 ♙c3. It doesn't "see" 22 c5 at all – but once one enters that move, the light shines on its circuits, and it suddenly gives White greater advantage with the pawn sacrifice than it offered to any of its previous "best picks"!

In the **Author's** opinion, 22 c5 should be seen right away – it's *my* number one pick!

22...♙xc5 23 ♘xc5 ♜xc5 24 ♚fc1



Two open files leading to the black king, plus White has the two bishops which will get ever more powerful as the board opens: Black is already defenceless.

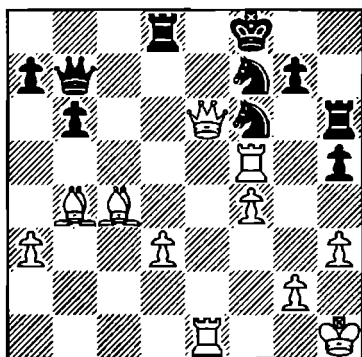
24... ♖d5 25 ♜e3 b6

If 25...a6 White opens all lines in devastating fashion: 26 ♙xa6! bxa6 27 ♜xc7+ ♜xc7 28 ♜a7+ ♜d6 29 ♜b6+ ♜c6 30 ♙b4+ ♜d5 31 ♙xa6! and mates.

26 ♙a6+ ♜d7 27 ♙c4 ♜b7 28 h3!

A typical Petrosian move: Black can't improve his position, so Tigran takes time to eliminate counterplay.

28... ♜e8 29 ♘d4 ♘d5 30 ♜e5 ♜f8 31 ♘xe6+ ♙xe6 32 ♜xe6 ♘f7 33 ♜e1 h5 34 ♜b5 ♘f6 35 ♜xf5 ♜h6 36 ♙b4+ 1-0



After 36... ♜g8 37 ♙e7 wins everything.

Risk Assessment: none to speak of – White's open lines and two bishops are more than enough for the pawn.

But what if this was your own game? You play 22 c5, you win stylishly, and then you go home and run it by Fritz (and I know you do!). You see the computer offers three different moves instead of your pawn sacrifice.

Will you second guess yourself? I hope not, for you can take it from me – or Petrosian! – that 22 c5 is the strongest move in the position.

Game 13

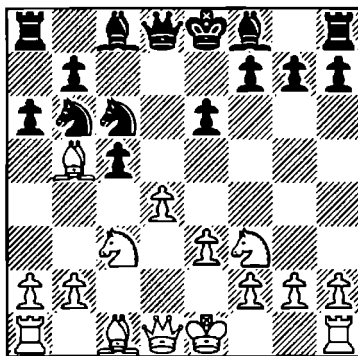
M.Tal-Z.Milev

Munich Olympiad 1958
Semi-Tarrasch Defence

1 c4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 ♙c4 ♘b6

Normal is 7...cxd4.

8 ♙b5 a6

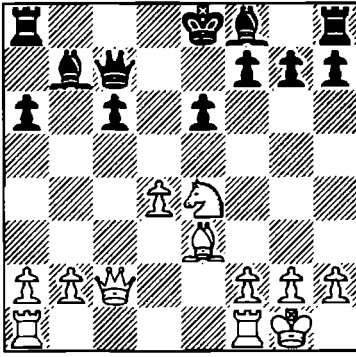


Black isn't paying much attention to development or king safety – not a good procedure against Tal! Instead, Black could get an acceptable game with 8... ♙d7 9 a3 cxd4 10 exd4 ♙e7 11 0-0 0-0 as in L.Popov-S.Nikolov, Bulgarian Championship, Sofia 1982.

9 ♙xc6+ bxc6 10 0-0 ♙b7 11 ♘e4 ♘d7 12 ♜c2 ♜b6 13 ♘e5 cxd4

Better is 13... ♘xe5, though White has a clear advantage after 14 dxe5.

14 ♘xd7 ♜xd7 15 exd4 ♜e8 16 ♙e3 ♜c7



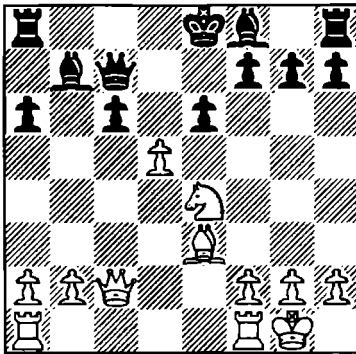
White has an obvious advantage, but is there a pawn sacrifice? Let's consult the **Favourable Omens!**

The most important is that Black can't castle in this game!

White has a lead in development and his rooks are connected.

The problem is that White doesn't have open lines to get at the black king – can we say opportunity is knocking?

17 d5!

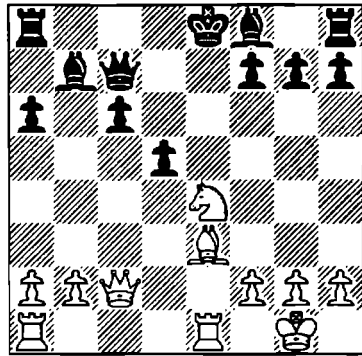


As in the last game, **Mr. Fritz** initially finds this violence to be unapproved (the machine's first pick is the far more cautious 17 f4), but upon seeing Tal's follow-up, changes its mind

faster than a politician fading in the polls! So I suppose the final verdict is *approved!*

The **Author** gives the move a big thumbs up, and advises the reader that games do not win themselves: if White doesn't strike now, his superior position might eventually peter out to nothing!

17...exd5 18 ♖fe1



The key! Tal takes advantage of the newly opened line (the e-file) and launches a deadly attack. Now even the computer can see that it's time for Black's last rites!

18...♗d8

If Black tries to shield the e-file with 18...♗e7, White whips up a winning attack with 19 ♗c5! Black has no serious defence, e.g. 19...♗f8 (if 19...♗d8 20 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 21 ♖c5 ♗c7 22 ♗c3 is decisive) 20 ♖g5 ♗e8 (or 20...♗xc5 21 ♗xc5+ ♗g8 22 ♗e7 ♗c8 23 ♗xf7 with a mating attack) 21 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 22 ♗e1 wins material.

Critical is 18...dxe4, just taking the piece – but Tal would prevail with 19 ♗xe4+ and then:

a) 19...♖e7 20 ♛c4 ♔d7 (all other moves lose the queen) 21 ♜ad1+ ♕c8 22 ♛g4+ ♕b8 23 ♙f4+ and the queen goes anyway.

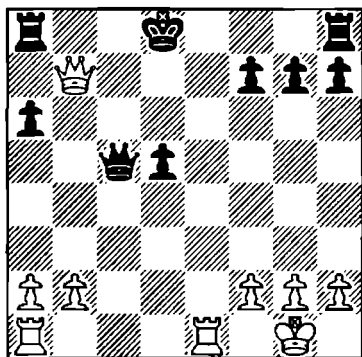
b) 19...♕d7 20 ♜ad1+ ♙d6 21 ♛f5+ ♕d8 22 ♜xd6+! ♛xd6 23 ♙b6+ again wins the queen.

c) 19...♙e7 20 ♙c5 and White wins back the piece with a crushing position (remember that Black can't castle).

19 ♛b3 c5?

This loses quickly. The best try is 19...♕c8, but after 20 ♔c5 the stranded black king will never survive in the long run, e.g. 20...♙d6 21 ♙d4 ♕b8 22 h3 ♜g8 23 ♜a1 g5 24 ♜c3 h6 25 ♜ce3 with a winning attack.

20 ♔xc5 ♙xc5 21 ♙xc5 ♛xc5 22 ♛xb7 1-0



White has three open files to attack the king – Black wisely resigned!

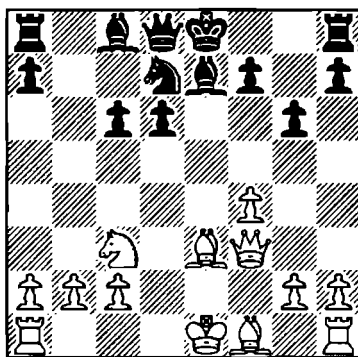
Risk Assessment: As is common with line opening sacrifices, there is not much risk. As long as one sees the follow-up 18 ♜fe1 (temporarily giving up a piece) the initial pawn sacrifice is golden.

Black is severely hampered by his

inability to get his king out of the centre – and Tal's pawn sacrifice opens lines by force in exactly that region.

Game 14
D.Edelman-T.Taylor
 Syosset, New York 1984
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♔f3 ♔c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♔xd4 ♔f6 5 ♔c3 d6 6 f4 g6 7 ♔xc6 bxc6 8 e5 ♔d7 9 exd6 exd6 10 ♙e3 ♙e7 11 ♛f3



Of the fourteen games in the *Big Database* that reached this position, thirteen (including such GMs on the Black side as Medniz and Timman) chose the "proper" 11...d5. I was the only player to offer a pawn here.

What **Favourable Omens** did I see?

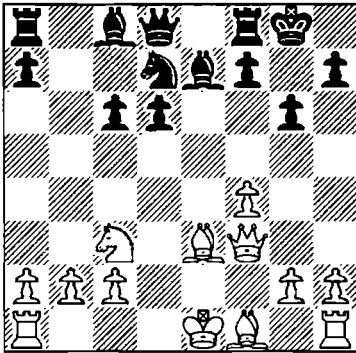
First of all I saw that White almost had to castle queenside in this position, and I already had the open b-file. By giving up my c-pawn, I could attack the white king on two adjacent open files!

This was the main positional basis for my sac, but there was an "off

board” consideration that was at least as important. So far my young, clearly booked-up opponent had made his moves with amazing speed. By playing outside the box, and outside the book, I forced him to think with his own head – he could stop following Tal right now!

And yes, Tal did have this position once with White: his opponent played the “approved” 11...d5 – and Tal beat him with a fine pawn sacrifice! (Game 31 in this book).

11...0-0!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! Of course the routine 11...d5 is what the machine likes.

Author’s opinion: As mentioned above, one important reason I played the sac was to get my opponent out of the book. I knew I had some positional compensation for the pawn with the open lines, though I wasn’t convinced I had enough even then – but I felt the psychological factors trumped any positional inadequacies.

Now that the game has been published (and I often run into opponents

who know my own games better than I do!) I wouldn’t play it again. The advantage of surprise is gone – but it was an excellent one-time weapon!

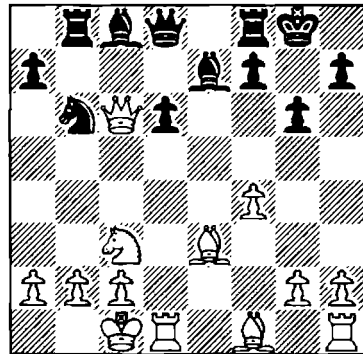
12 0-0-0

12 ♖xc6 ♜b8 transposes to the game after 13 0-0-0 – practically the only move, for if 13 b3 ♙b7 14 ♜c4 ♙h4+ and White’s king perishes in the cross-fire.

12...♜b8 13 ♖xc6

White takes the right pawn. I didn’t lose any sleep over 13 ♙xa7? ♜a8 14 ♙d4 ♙b7 as Black has excellent compensation with two united pawns in the centre and two open files to attack!

13...♟b6



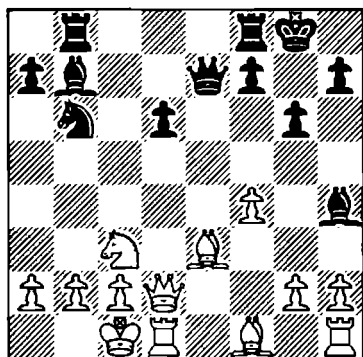
The reason Black doesn’t have full compensation for the pawn – despite the open lines – is that giving up the c-pawn left me with an isolated d-pawn. In other words, this weakness meant that I couldn’t attack any squares directly in front of this pawn.

White could take advantage of this key positional factor right now, and play the very strong 14 ♙d4. Not only does this move tend to secure White’s

queenside, it also has an aggressive aspect: White is threatening his own line opening sacrifices with h2-h4-h5 or possibly f4-f5. Objectively I see a clear advantage to White after this accurate move – the following variation shows how quickly Black could lose: 14...♙b7 (or 14...♙f5 15 h4! ♙xh4 16 ♙e2 and White's attack is very dangerous) 15 ♖b5 ♙a8 16 ♗d3 ♗d7 17 f5! ♜fc8 18 ♗e3 ♘a4 19 fxg6 fxg6 20 ♙b5 ♜xb5 21 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 22 ♗e6+ and White wins. Of course this variation is not forced, but it shows that if White goes over to the attack, Black will be left struggling.

The move White actually plays is not at all bad, and he will get a good chance for the advantage later – but the defensive nature of the move showed my opponent's shock, and gave me confidence that the sacrifice was working.

14 ♖f3!? ♙b7 15 ♖f2 ♙h4 16 ♗d2 ♗e7!?



I think I will call this second pawn sacrifice "The Stein Bluff", after Stein's great trick from Game 6.

Certain openings, like Stein's King's

Indian and this Dragon Sicilian, have raised the stature of Black's dark-squared bishop to mythic proportions – the dreaded Dragon bishop! Arrrgghhhhhh! One is taught never to give up one's own dark-squared bishop as White – not even for a rook! – because then the dreaded Dragon ...etc, etc, etc.

Yet this bishop is, after all, just a minor piece, sometimes strong, sometimes not so strong. Here it's not so terrifying.

If White were thinking logically (but he was probably still feeling the after-effects of Sacrificial Shock) and could find the strength to disobey the rules, he could find White's best move here: the simple 17 ♙xb6 (one is allowed to give up a bishop for a knight!) axb6 18 ♗xd6, when White is up two pawns, and compensation will be hard to come by; e.g. 18...♗e3+ 19 ♗d2 ♙f2 (if 19...♗e7 20 ♙c4 completes White's development and the two extra pawns provide insurance against any dragons!) 20 ♖b1 ♗xd2 21 ♜xd2 ♙e3 22 ♜d3 ♙xf4 23 ♘d5 ♙e5 24 g3 ♜fd8 25 ♙g2 ♖f8 26 ♜hd1 and Black doesn't really have anything for the missing pawn.

17 ♙g1

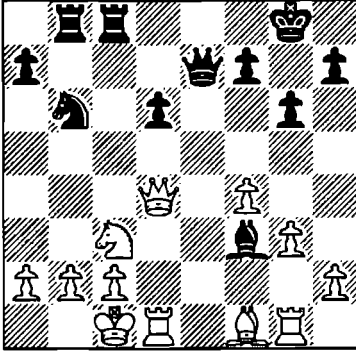
The Stein Bluff succeeds! White makes another passive, defensive move: it's clear that Sacrificial Shock is still being felt.

White now plans to exchange my "dreaded" Dragon bishop, but is unaware that the other bishop might be more dangerous!

17...♖fc8

Black makes use of the free move to take over the file opened by the initial pawn sacrifice.

18 g3 ♖f6 19 ♖d4 ♖xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♖f3!



Black infiltrates behind enemy lines and now stands fully equal. White faces a critical choice.

21 ♖d2?

White chooses the worst of his three options, and quickly goes under.

Black also gets good play (but by no means a forced win) following the second best move 21 ♖d3. Black infiltrates further with 21...♗e1+ 22 ♖d1 ♖xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♗a5 and reaches a good attacking position: the two open files (the *raison d'être* of the pawn sac in the first place) provide fully adequate compensation for the material.

The best choice is the counter-attacking 21 ♖a6!. With this move White gives back his extra pawn, but also completes his development. The position should then level out as follows: 21...♖xd1 22 ♖xc8 ♖xc2! (a nice desperado) 23 ♖h3 ♖a4 (but not 23...♖f5? 24 ♖xf5 gxf5 25 g4 when

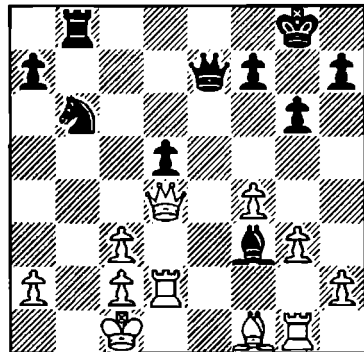
White has an attack) 24 ♖e4 (not 24 ♖xa4?! ♖xa4 and Black's attack is very real, as the knight is immune: 25 ♗a4? ♗e3+) 24...♗c7+ 25 ♗c3 (also 25 ♖b1? ♖c2+ 26 ♖a1 ♖xe4 27 ♗xe4 ♗c5 is good for Black) 25...♗xc3+ with an approximately equal endgame.

21...♖xc3!!

This tactical blow is possible because of the three open lines: the b, c, and e-files, all of which are occupied by black heavy pieces. The line opening sacrifice has really proved its worth – and note that Black has obtained a winning position just eight moves after White took the pawn! Yes, White had his chances, but they are gone now.

22 bxc3

Forced.

22...d5!

Continuing the line opening theme, Black clears a key diagonal for his queen, thus threatening a quick mate, e.g. 23 h4 (or any other innocuous move) 23...♗a3+ 24 ♖b1 ♖c4+ and mates; 23 ♖b5 ♗a3+ 24 ♖b1 ♖c4 also wins immediately.

23 ♖e2

This move loses in two ways, as the note to Black's next reveals.

The only other reasonable try is 23 ♖d1, giving back the exchange, but White's king position is too compromised and Black wins quickly: 23... ♗xd1 24 ♕xd1 (not 24 ♜xd1 ♜e3+) 24... ♖c4 25 ♗xc4 (obviously forced) 25... dxc4 and Black has a cornucopia of open attacking lines! White's best defence is 26 ♕c1 (suicidal is 26 ♜e1 ♜b1+ 27 ♕d2 ♜xe1 mate, or 26 ♜e5 ♜xe5 27 fxex5 ♜b1+), but after 26... ♜b6! Black has a winning attack anyway; e.g. 27 ♜e5 ♜a3+ 28 ♕d2 ♜d6+ 29 ♕e3 ♜e6 and wins, or 27 ♜d1 ♜a3+ 28 ♕d2 ♜d6, or 27 ♜xc4 ♜e3+ 28 ♕d1 ♜b1 mate.

23... ♗xe2

This gives Black a winning material advantage, but allows White to prolong the game. Quicker is 23... ♖c4! 24 ♗xf3 (if 24 ♗xc4? ♜a3 mate) 24... ♜b7 25 ♕d1 ♜e8 and White has to give up his queen to stave off mate.

24 ♜b4 ♜xb4 25 cxb4 ♗f3 26 ♜d3 ♗e4 27 ♜a3 ♜c8 28 c3 d4 29 g4 ♜xc3+ 30 ♜xc3 dxc3 31 f5 ♖d5 32 a3 ♖f4 33 ♜f1 ♖e2+ 34 ♕d1 ♗d3 35 f6 g5 36 a4 c2+ 37 ♕d2 c1♜+ 38 ♜xc1 ♖xc1 39 b5 ♗e2 40 ♕xc1 ♗xg4 41 ♕d2 ♗d7 42 ♕c3 h5 43 ♕d4 g4 44 ♕e5 ♕h7 45 ♕d6 ♗xb5! 46 axb5 h4 47 ♕e7 ♖g6 48 b6 axb6 0-1

In this case, an honest **Risk Assessment** must consider more than just the position on the board. Yes, 11...d5 (just like all the Grandmasters play) is the objectively best move. But by playing that move, I *risked* entering my opponent's home preparation. By playing my over the board inspiration – by of-

fering a pawn – I induced Sacrificial Shock, and torpedoed my opponent's home cooking!

Nonetheless, when White has two sound ways to get the advantage (14 ♗d4, 17 ♗b6) the assessment has to be *extremely risky*. Yet I obtained a winning position just eight moves after my pawn was taken!

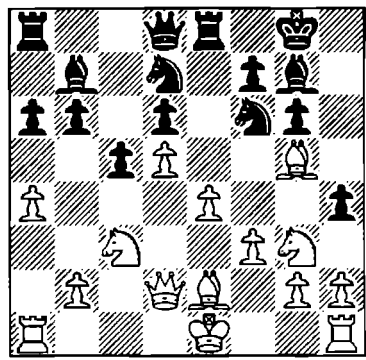
And as we'll see in Game 31, playing "correctly" might only lead to a loss!

Game 15
Z.Vranesic-L.Stein
 Amsterdam Interzonal 1964
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♗g7 4 e4 0-0 5 f3 d6 6 ♗e3 b6 7 ♗d3 ♗b7 8 ♖ge2 c5 9 d5 e6 10 ♜d2 exd5 11 cxd5

What started as a King's Indian has now morphed into a Modern Benoni-type position.

11... ♖bd7 12 ♖g3 ♜e8 13 ♗e2 a6 14 a4 h5 15 ♗g5 h4!



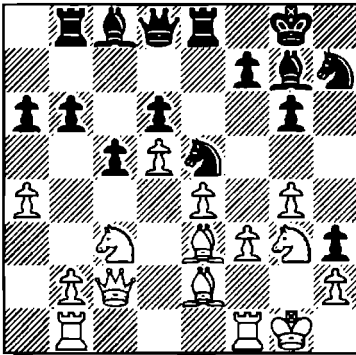
16 ♖f1

White wisely refuses the sham sacrifice: 16 ♖xh4? ♜xe4 17 ♜f4 (both 17 ♜xe4 ♜xh4 and 17 ♖xd8 ♜xd2 are clearly better for Black) 17...♜xg3! 18 ♖xd8 ♖xc3+ 19 bxc3 ♜xe2 20 ♜xd6 ♜axd8 and Black's three pieces should defeat the queen.

16...♜f8 17 ♜c2 h3

This time it's a real sacrifice, of the "pawn cracker" type (see Chapter Five). Once again White wisely declines to capture the intrepid h-pawn, for if taken, White's kingside pawns will be forever broken, and a black knight may eventually land on f4.

18 g4 ♜h7 19 ♖e3 ♜b8 20 ♜d1 ♖c8 21 ♜g3 ♜d7 22 0-0 ♜e5 23 ♜b1!



White prepares b2-b4 to neutralize Black's queenside pawn majority. If White succeeds in that, then his central pawn majority and kingside space will tilt the position in the first player's favour.

Strong measures are needed – indeed, Stein's second real pawn sacrifice of the game is imminent. What are the **Favourable Omens?**

First of all, notice that White has

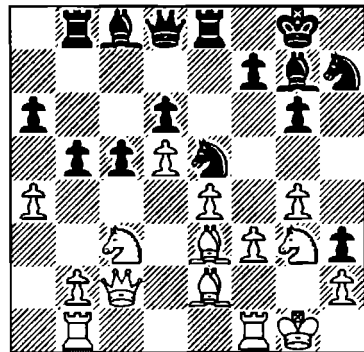
many advanced pawns. Right now they appear strong, and control a lot of space – but as is well known, pawns can't move backwards! If Black can *open lines* he will be able to attack these pawns from the side, or even from behind. The question comes to mind: "can Black open the b-file?" Yes, of course – at the cost of a pawn!

Another line opening factor relates to c8-bishop, so far pretty much unemployed – but if it can exchange itself for its opposite number, many light squares in the enemy camp – particularly the key square and pawn at f3 – become weak.

Finally, and this is not so much *favourable omen* as *positional necessity*, if Black does nothing he will simply get a bad game with no counterplay.

The time to break is now.

23...b5!

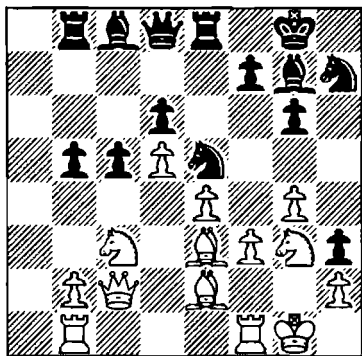


Mr. Fritz? *Unapproved!* The computer evaluates Stein's position as slightly worse *before* this move, and much worse *after* this move! But what does the machine want to play? The silicon options fail to come to grips

with the position: the machine offers 23...c4 and 23...♖e7, but White is clearly better in both cases if he plays 24 b3 against the former and 24 b4 against the latter.

In the **Author's** opinion, Stein's sacrifice is the only good move here, as otherwise Black will be left with a defensive, prospectless position.

24 axb5 axb5



25 ♖xb5?!

As we have seen, Stein has been known to bluff, but that is not the case here. Vranesic has resisted temptation twice so far, refusing the h-pawn, and simply can't resist this "free gift" – but he should!

The best move is to decline the sacrifice, when White is better: 25 b4! (White follows his positional plan and keeps lines closed) 25...c4 (or if 25...cxb4 26 ♖xb4 with the advantage, as b5 is a weakness that won't go away – though White should not be in a rush to take it) 26 g5! and White keeps his space advantage – the pawn on g5 is immune because of the potential fork with f3-f4 – and stands somewhat bet-

ter. Nevertheless, Black does get a protected passed pawn out of the deal, and the game is far from over.

If White was determined to take the pawn, the other way was preferable: 25 ♗xb5 ♗d7 26 ♗e2 (not 26 ♗xd7?! ♖xd7 with wonderful open line counterplay in all directions) 26...♖b4 and Black has play, though not as much as in the game, mainly because White has kept his important defensive light-squared bishop.

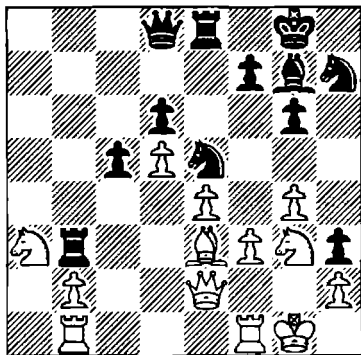
25...♗a6!

Now I see fully adequate counterplay for Black.

26 ♖a3

This is probably too ambitious (White doesn't seem shocked, just overconfident!). White is trying to get his knight to the ideal square c4, whereas he should be thinking about how to save the game! Better is 26 ♖c3 ♗xe2 27 ♖cx2 ♗e7 intending ...♗eb7, when Black still has great pressure.

26...♗xe2 27 ♖xe2 ♖b3!



Black takes the open line and runs with it! The daring black rook pressurizes White's poorly defended bishop at

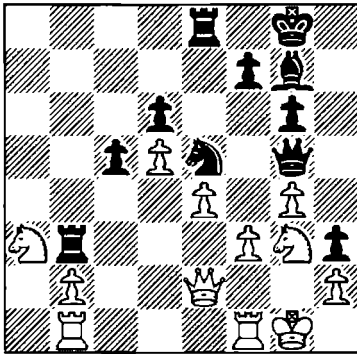
e3 and pawn weakness at f3. The immediate threat is 28...♖xg4! 29 fxg4 ♜xe3! and wins.

Black is already better; one sees how it was in White's interest *not* to open the b-file: 25 b4 was the right move.

28 ♖d2 ♖g5 29 ♖xg5

A big but necessary concession, as White has no other way to defend the f3-pawn.

29...♜xg5



More open lines! The black queen has an active diagonal and frontal pressure on the white king; the King's Indian bishop really has become a monster (!); and Black is ready to bring a second rook to the b-file he opened with the pawn sacrifice.

No one is going to hold this position against Stein!

30 ♖c4

If 30 f4 ♜xg4 31 fxe5? ♜xg3+ wins the queen.

30...♖xc4!

Simple and decisive: the frontal attack on b2 triumphs, after which Black switches to a horizontal attack along

the seventh rank.

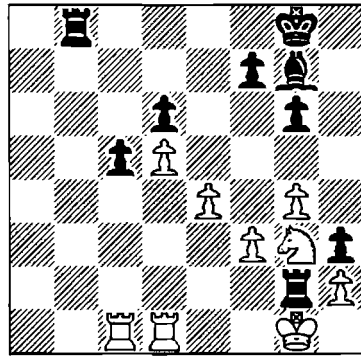
31 ♜xc4 ♜eb8 32 ♜c1

Since 32 ♜f2 loses to 32...♖d4, the b-pawn is gone, as is White's game.

32...♜xc1 33 ♜bxc1

Black wins just as easily after 33 ♜fxc1 ♖xb2 34 ♜xb2 ♜xb2 or 34 ♖d1 ♖d4+ and White should resign.

33...♜xb2 34 ♜fd1 ♜g2+! 0-1



The spurned h-pawn decisively reinforces Black's attack! All variations lead to mate or heavy material loss; e.g. 35 ♖h1 ♜bb2 36 ♖f1 ♖d4 37 ♜xd4 cxd4 38 e5 dxe5 39 d6 ♜b7 40 ♜c7 (or 40 ♖g3 f6 followed by ...♖f7-e6) 40...♜b1 41 ♜c8+ ♖g7 and mates; or 35 ♖f1 ♜bb2 36 e5 ♜xg3 37 exd6 (if 37 hxg3 h2 and queens) 37...♜gg2 38 d7 ♜xh2 39 d8♜+ ♖f8 and mates.

Risk Assessment: If risk is assigned here, I would place the blame on the opening rather than the particular pawn sacrifice: the Modern Benoni is inherently risky, as White is given a strong central pawn majority and Black must take his chances where he can find them. If Black had not sacrificed, he would probably have been gradu-

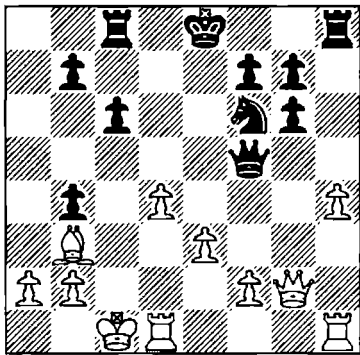
ally squeezed to death. So I would say the sacrifice was *necessary*, more than risky.

Note that White's best chance of an advantage after 23...b5 was in declining the sacrifice with 25 b4, refusing to open lines for Black – in other words, White does best when he *leaves* Black a pawn at b5, and Black does best when this pawn *disappears*.

This game is an object lesson on greed: the open b-file led to White's downfall!

Game 16
T.V.Petrosian-B.Ivkov
 European Team Cham' ship,
 Hamburg 1965
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗f3 d5 3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 ♙g4 5 ♙xc4 e6 6 ♘c3 a6 7 h3 ♙h5 8 g4 ♙g6 9 ♗e5 ♗bd7 10 ♗xg6 hxg6 11 g5 ♗d5 12 ♗xd5 exd5 13 ♙xd5 c6 14 ♙b3 ♜xg5 15 ♜f3 ♗f6 16 ♙d2 ♜f5 17 ♜g2 a5 18 0-0-0 ♙b4 19 ♙xb4 axb4 20 h4 ♝c8



Black is threatening ...c6-c5 with an

attack – either White allows the c-file to open for the black rook or, if White pushes by, Black pushes by as well, playing ...c5-c4 with tempo and dangerous threats.

Meanwhile the white rooks have no open files to work with – can someone say “line opening sacrifice”?

What are White's Favourable Omens?

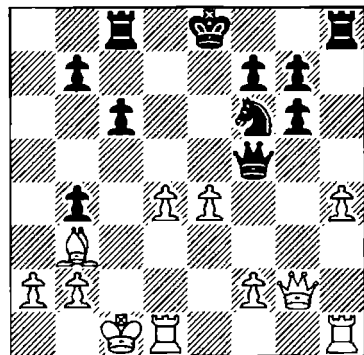
First, the black king is still in the centre, so an open e-file would be a quite nice thing to have! Furthermore, since Black's rooks don't defend each other, *any* open file will probably fall into White's hands.

White has a central pawn majority that restricts Black's pieces.

At this point (an important caveat, given the way the game goes!) White has the superior minor piece.

With all this in mind, Petrosian plays...

21 e4!



...which offers the e-pawn, but really sacs the h-pawn!

Clearly the e-pawn is a sham sac: Black loses to a simple pin if he takes.

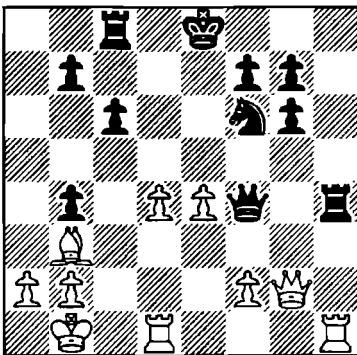
However, the h-pawn can fall following a check, and this is the path Black follows.

How about **Mr. Fritz? Unapproved!** Strangely enough, *Fritz* does want to sac, but in a different way. The machine's number one pick is the incomprehensible (to this human) 21 h5?! After the further variation 21...♞xh5 22 ♞xh5 ♜xh5 23 ♙c2 ♚f6 24 ♜b1 ♞c7 25 ♙b3 ♚f5+ 26 e4 ♚f4 27 ♙c4 ♜f8 28 f3 g5 29 ♙b3 g6 I see Black consolidating his extra pawn with a good game, while the computer still sees a slight advantage to White. I guess we'll have to agree to disagree!

From this one might guess that in the **Author's** opinion, Petrosian is correct. I think White has first to take over the centre (and so indirectly secure his king) – and only then offer the h-pawn.

21...♚f4+ 22 ♜b1 ♞xh4

22...♚xe4+ still fails to 23 ♚xe4+ ♜xe4 24 ♞d1 f5 25 f3.



23 e5?

This time it's the attacker who errs just after sacrificing the pawn! Correct is 23 ♞xh4 ♚xh4 24 f3 when the sac

works like a charm: Black can't prevent White from taking over the h-file; the white centre is secure, so Black's knight has no active play; and White has the small but nasty threat of 25 ♚d2, just winning his pawn back with a huge positional advantage. Black has no time to block the h-file and consolidate as in *Fritz*-approved sacrifice, for if 24...♜h5 25 ♚d2 ♚e7 26 d5! cxd5 27 ♚xd5 and White's positional domination is worth much more than one pawn.

This accurate line would have fully justified the pawn sac, but now Ivkov gets a chance.

23...♞xh1 24 ♞xh1 ♜h5?

Sacrificial Shock appears to have affected both players! Yes, it looks "safe" to block the h-file, but the knight is just a target here and has no positive effect on the position.

Correct is the strong centralization 24...♜e4! which gains a tempo by threatening ...♜d2+, removing the strong white bishop. This is what I was referring to when I made that "minor piece caveat". In this position (which could have occurred, but only because of White's error) the two minor pieces have about equal value. White should now play 25 ♜a1 with an approximately even game.

The attempt to exploit the open file fails: 25 ♞h8+ ♜d7 26 ♚h3+ ♚f5 27 e6+ fxe6 28 ♙xe6+ ♜xe6 29 ♚xf5+ gxf5 30 ♞xc8 ♜xf2 and Black's two passed pawns for the exchange give him equal chances.

Another violent try that rebounds is

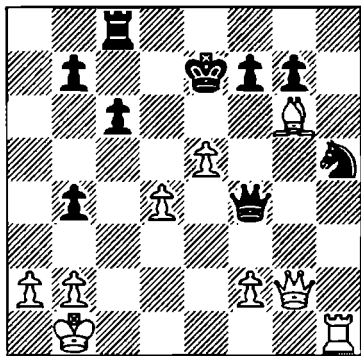
25 e6?! ♖d2+ 26 ♕c2 ♖xb3 27 exf7+ ♕xf7 28 ♕xb3 ♜d8 and Black is better.

After the aforementioned 25 ♕a1 (best) White keeps his bishop but only has equality in view of Black's equally strong knight.

25 ♖c2 ♕e7

If 25...♗xd4 26 e6! shatters Black's position; note the huge difference in strength of the opposing minor pieces – a big argument for 24...♖e4.

26 ♖xg6!



Suddenly attacking the weak knight on this rim! While this spectacular move gets the pawn back with interest, it isn't a forced win – but Ivkov is reeling from the unexpected blows and makes another mistake.

26...fxg6 27 ♗xg6 ♗xd4?

Sacrificial Shock part two! Correct is the cool 27...♜f8 28 ♗xh5 (28 ♜xh5 ♗xd4 is equal in view of the counter-threat of ...♗d1 mate) 28...♗f5+! and Black should draw the pawn down ending; e.g. 29 ♗xf5 ♜xf5 30 ♜h8 (if 30 ♜h7 ♕f7 31 ♜h2 ♜f4) 30...♜xf2 31 ♜b8 b5 32 ♜b7+ ♕f8 33 ♜c7 ♜d2 34 ♜xc6 ♜xd4 35 ♜c5 g5 36 ♜xb5 g4 37 e6 ♕e7

38 ♜e5 g3 39 ♜g5 ♜d3 40 ♕c2 ♜f3 41 ♜g6 ♕d6 and White can't improve his position.

28 ♗xh5

Now White is clearly better, with a dangerous passed pawn and plenty of open lines. Note also that White's king is much safer than the opposing monarch.

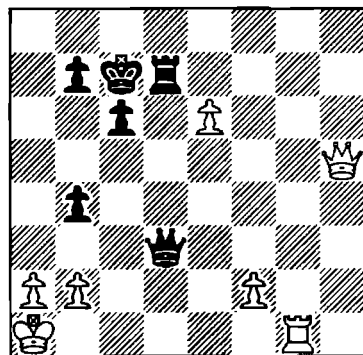
28...♗d3+ 29 ♕a1 ♜d8

Black has no time for counterplay: if 29...b3 30 ♗g5+ ♕f7 31 e6+! forces mate in a few moves. The queen and rook are deadly when the board opens up like this.

30 ♜g1 ♜d7

If 30...♜g8 31 ♜d1 and White seizes an even more valuable file, with a mating attack coming very soon.

31 ♜xg7+ ♕d8 32 ♜g1 ♕c7 33 e6



And now White wins with the extra passed pawn.

33...♜d5 34 ♗g4 b3 35 e7 ♜e5 36 ♗g7 ♕d6 37 ♗xe5+ 1-0

Bang! You're dead!

Risk Assessment: The sacrifice, if followed up correctly, wasn't particularly risky; White could have obtained a

strong centre, plus open h-file, plus attack. However, after Petrosian's slip, the position became equally risky for both sides – but it was the defender who could not handle the pressure.

Summary:

As pawn sacrifices go, line opening offers are amongst the easiest. It's rather clear when such a sacrifice is appropriate: if one can significantly increase the range of a piece (often a rook) by a

pawn sacrifice, then go ahead!

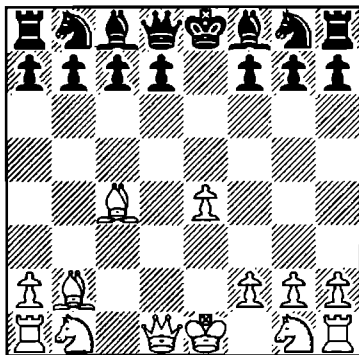
The attacker does not get a completely free ride. Remember that in my game against Edelman, the sacrifice was objectively unsound because my open lines were bought at the cost of a weak pawn structure.

But it's also important to note that psychological factors (as were seen in that same game) might fully justify a sacrifice for one-time use. Surprise is key!

Chapter Three

Development

In common with line opening, the sacrifice for development is both relatively easy and quite common. It is, of course, a feature of many gambits, most notably the Danish Gambit: **1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 ♖c4 cxb2 5 ♙xb2**



and White has sacrificed two pawns for a big development advantage.

If the sacrifice is not part of opening theory, it usually occurs just at the beginning of the middlegame. The trade-off is clear: while the defender takes material, the attacker brings more

pieces to the fray.

As usual, we start with a simple example.

Game 17

T.Taylor-C.Acor

Las Vegas 2006

Budapest Defence

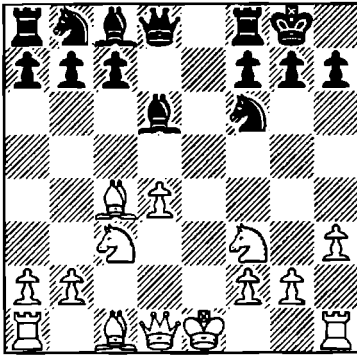
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e5 3 e3 exd4 4 exd4 d5 5 ♘c3 dxc4

According to the *Big Database*, this is the *sixth* most popular move here, and there is a good reason why development moves like 5...♙e7 or 5...♙b4 are preferred: the capture does nothing to help Black's position (unless he fancies he will defeat the isolated pawn in some distant endgame), but does develop White. This lead in development encourages both of my coming pawn sacrifices.

6 ♙xc4 ♙d6 7 ♘f3 0-0 8 h3

I came up with this move over the

board: the idea was to tempt my opponent into "winning" a pawn. I had no clue, until I analysed the game later, that this idea goes back to the World Championship match between De la Bourdonnais and McDonnell in 1834! (Note that while the official Kasparov-approved World Champion title did not yet exist, this is considered a world title match by James Gelo in his book *Chess World Championship*.)



8...♖e8+ 9 ♕e3 ♖f4 10 0-0!

A sham pawn sacrifice, and even more accurate than "my great predecessor"! Instead, De la Bourdonnais played 10 ♖e2, which was also effective after 10...♗e7 11 0-0 ♕xe3 12 fxe3 ♗xe3+ 13 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 14 ♘e5 ♕e6 15 ♕xe6 fxe6 16 ♖f2!, winning the exchange and soon the game in L.De la Bourdonnais-A.McDonnell, 7th game, 3rd match, London 1834.

10...♕d6

The same trick works here: if 10...♕xe3 11 fxe3 ♖xe3 12 ♘e5 ♕e6 13 ♕xe6 fxe6 14 ♖f2 and the French trap slams shut.

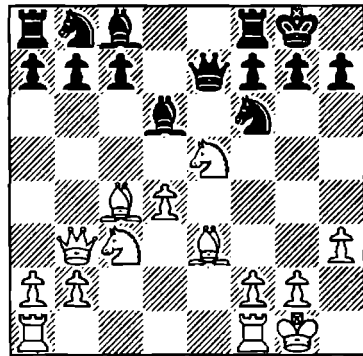
However, by declining the sacrifice,

Black loses more time, and White's development lead increases – a real sacrifice is coming soon!

11 ♗b3

Since I didn't commit my queen to e2, I can transfer the lady – with attack – to this even more active square. Black's retrograde defence puts him still further behind in development.

11...♖f8 12 ♘e5 ♗e7



The **Favourable Omens** are practically serenading from the rooftops! Both sides are castled, both queens are developed, but White has a lead of four minors developed to two for Black.

An oft-quoted rule (though chess doesn't really have any rules that are universally applicable) is that a development lead of three pieces is worth a pawn. This maxim is indeed often true – *is* true here – but might be completely false in a closed position!

However, here the board is sufficiently open, so I didn't hesitate a moment to bring to bring on the three piece lead – at the cost of a mere pawn!

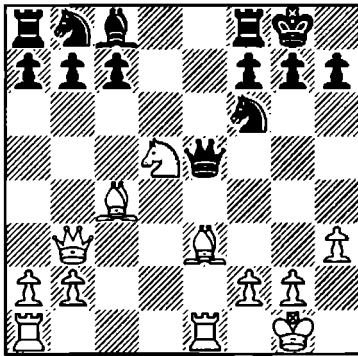
13 ♖fe1!

It's hardly worth asking, but for the

record: **Mr. Fritz?** Approved! *Fritz's* number one pick, and the **Author** of course concurs.

White simply develops a rook to the file that will be opened if Black accepts the pawn – but Black hardly has a choice, for if he doesn't take the offered material, White will follow with 14 ♖f4 or 14 ♖g5, obtaining a dominating position at no cost.

13...♙xe5 14 dxex5 ♖xe5 15 ♘d5



What more can White want? He threatens to win at once with 16 ♖c5, and capturing the powerful knight doesn't help: 15...♘xd5 16 ♖c5 ♖f6 17 ♖xf8 and Black has nothing for the exchange.

15...b5

No worse than any other move.

16 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6

If 16...gxf6 17 ♖h6 bxc4 18 ♖f3 and White wins material while keeping an eye on the exposed black king.

17 ♖d5 c6

With every piece in play, White can easily overcome any defence: 17...♘c6 18 ♖ac1 ♘a5 19 ♖xb5 c6 20 ♖b4 ♖a6 (20...cxd5 21 ♖xf8+! ♙xf8 22 ♖c5+ ♙g8

23 ♖e8 is a mating motif I remember from a Chigorin game) 21 ♖f3 and Black's whole position is en prise. Alternatively, if Black tries 17...♖e6 White can play simply 18 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 19 ♖xb5 and the better minor piece plus Black's shattered pawns add up to a winning positional advantage.

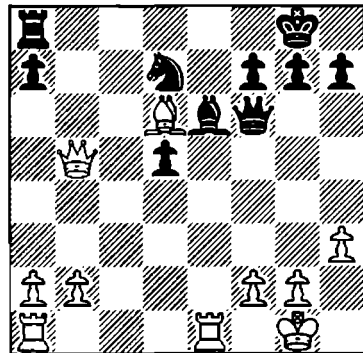
18 ♖c5 cxd5

Or 18...♖d8 19 ♖e7 and wins.

19 ♖xf8 ♖e6

If 19...♙xf8 20 ♖b4+ and White scores again with the thematic Chigorin mate. Note that in this variation Black's sole developed piece is his queen – a sad situation that will show up again in a later game in this chapter: Taylor-Shamkovich, Game 20.

20 ♖xb5 ♘d7 21 ♖d6

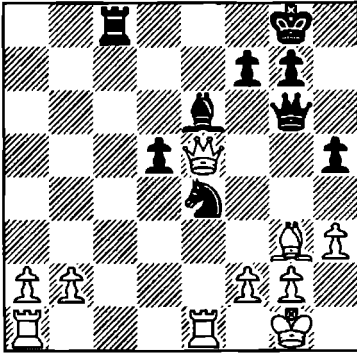


White has won the exchange for nothing and should win mechanically.

21...♖g6 22 ♖g3 ♘f6 23 ♖b7 ♖d8 24 ♖xa7 ♘e4 25 ♖c7 ♖c8 26 ♖e5 h5

Here I made a classic chess mistake of the "I'm totally winning, why doesn't he resign?" type. Yes, White by any calculation has a completely decisive advantage, but that doesn't mean

there isn't one last trick in the position! I should just play 27 h4, when Black's "attack" is completely extinguished, and I can simply follow with a2-a4-a5-a6 etc until Black resigns.



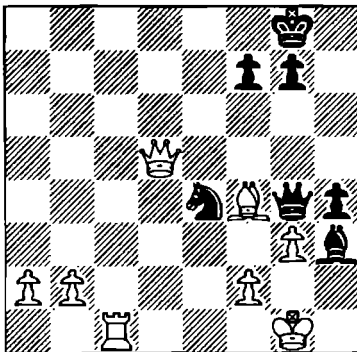
27 ♖ac1? ♜xc1 28 ♜xc1 h4!

Suddenly Black has counterplay, for if 28 ♙xh4? ♜h6 wins a piece. Note that this "trap" wasn't even in the position until White's "helpful" 27 ♖ac1!

29 ♙f4 ♙xh3 30 g3 ♜g4?

30...♙e6 would have prolonged the game.

31 ♜xd5!



Now White forces the win – for the second time!

31...♟f6

There are no saves: 31...♜f3 32 ♜d8+ ♚h7 33 ♜xh4+ ♚g8 34 ♜xh3 ♜xf2+ 35 ♚h1 ♜f3+ 36 ♜g2 ♜h5+ 37 ♚g1 and Black is out of checks, or 31...hxg3 32 ♜a8+ ♚h7 33 ♜xe4+ f3 34 f3 and Black is out of pieces.

32 ♜d8+ ♚h7 33 ♜d3+ ♚g8 34 ♙e5 ♜g5 35 ♜e3 1-0

Morphy used to win games like this in the 19th century (without, of course, slipping up like I did in a winning position!). He often got so far ahead in development that his opponents simply didn't have enough pieces in play to resist.

So here: after 15 ♟d5, White's development advantage – in a wide open position – is so great that it's clear Black has no meaningful defence.

Risk Assessment: Absolutely nil if White sacrifices the pawn. The only risk in the position occurs if White is too fearful to sacrifice, retreats (13 ♟f3? instead of 13 ♜fe1), and allows Black to complete his development. After such craven play one might indeed lose the ending with the isolated pawn!

I want to make this point very clear, as this situation has already arisen in some previous games of this book (Games 3, 11 and 15). *Sometimes real sacrifices are simply required by the position.* Being cautious – or fearful – and clinging to material in a position that demands boldness is in fact a risky way to play. In such positions it is *less risky* to sacrifice than it is to keep material level.

I hope that the reader of this book

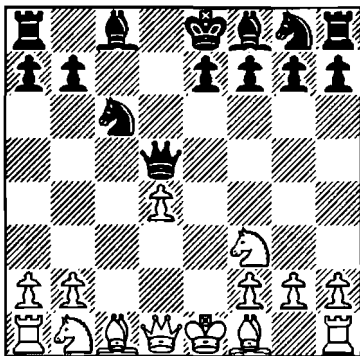
will learn to recognize such key positions, and will then not hesitate to sacrifice!

Game 18
O.Maldonado-T.Taylor
 US Open, Los Angeles 2003
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 ♖xd5 4 d4 cxd4

This is one of three times in this book that I'm illustrating a sacrifice with a known opening. While I prefer to show games in which the player dreams up the sac over the board, this particular type of sacrifice for development is so common that I felt it should be included here.

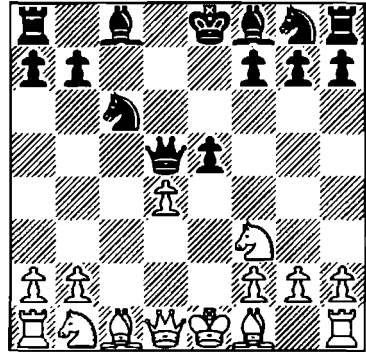
5 cxd4 ♘c6 6 ♘f3



It's already time to sacrifice! Where are our friendly **Favourable Omens**? The most important is that Black already leads in development. Second, after the contemplated 6...e5, White can only "win" a pawn by giving up the castling privilege and exposing his king.

On the other hand, if Black does not sacrifice, if White can play 7 ♘c3 with impunity, White will regain the lost tempo and stand well.

6...e5



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The machine likes the straightforward developing move 6...♗g4, but in the **Author's** opinion this move fails to deal with the main issue of White tempoing Black's queen. As Murray Chandler writes in his excellent book *The Complete c3 Sicilian*, after 6...♗g4 7 ♗e2 "White's knight comes to c3 quickly, and Black's inferior development starts to show."

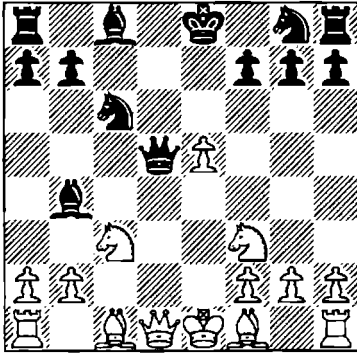
By playing 6...e5 immediately – by sacrificing! – Black forces the issue, and gains the vital resource ...♗b4, so as to maintain his strong queen in the centre.

In other words, instead of an "inferior development" Black gains an active development!

7 ♘c3 ♗b4 8 dxe5!

White takes the bait. It's worth studying this type of position, for as I said, it occurs in many openings, for example the Nimzowitsch Defence: 1 e4 ♘c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 ♖xd5 4 ♘f3 e5!

sacs for much the same sort of counterplay.



Black gets a significant lead in development, and furthermore, has *easy* development: he castles with tempo, connects his rooks, etc. Meanwhile, despite the absence of queens, White's king is rather unsafe. As will be seen in a moment, Black has quite enough pieces to deliver mate under the right circumstances!

Instead of the materialistic pawn grab actually played, the generally accepted move is the much more circumspect 8 $\hat{a}d2$.

8...♝xd1+ 9 ♞xd1

As I've mentioned before, my categories tend to bleed into each other. I put this under "development" which is certainly key, but one could also file it under "preventive" (White's castling has been prevented) or even "king attack" as Black will also get that going soon. Even the "two bishops" advantage will show up before long!

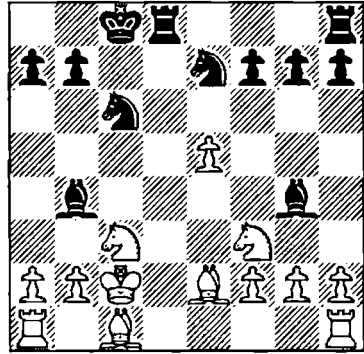
9...♗g4

Black develops with a big threat: 10...♞xe5.

10 ♗e2 0-0-0+

Every move comes with tempo.

11 ♞c2 ♞ge7



Black has completed his development and stands at least equal, as White still has to solve the problems of his disconnected rooks and unsafe king (the latter is constantly menaced by the possibility of ...♗f5+)

12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗xe7

In his rush to complete his development, White underestimates the power of the two bishops in this open position. Correct is to make Black work a bit: 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♗g3 ♞f5 with approximate equality.

13...♗xe7

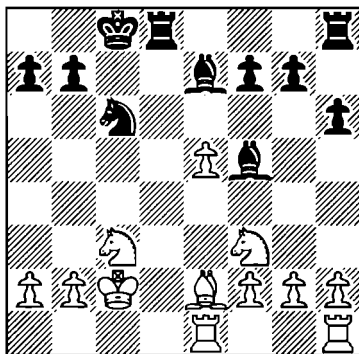
Black's position has become more harmonious: the long-range dark-squared bishop is active on both sides of the board, while the shorter stepping knight now has free access to the attacking square b4.

14 ♞ae1

Another inaccuracy; better is 14 ♞ac1 when Black can take the draw with 14...♗f5+ 15 ♞b3 ♗e6+ 16 ♞c2 ♗f5+), though I would have recovered

my pawn and kept the game going with 14...♗xf3 15 ♗xf3 ♖xe5.

14...♗f5+!



Black is already better, and we're barely out of the opening. White has to make serious concessions just to survive, and it's already possible for the game to end abruptly: 15 ♖c1 ♖xe5! – this surprising motif will reoccur, with decisive effect, later in the game. Black recovers his pawn with a large advantage, for if 16 ♖xe5 ♗g5+ 17 f4 ♗xf4 is mate!

15 ♖b3 ♗e6+ 16 ♖c2

If 16 ♖a4 a6 and White will have to pitch material to avoid mate.

16...♖b4+

As mentioned in the note to move 13, the black knight now enjoys this attacking square. Note that it's not just the number of developed pieces, but rather their quality: most of White's pieces are out now, but they threaten absolutely nothing, while Black's minors are harassing White with every move.

17 ♖b1

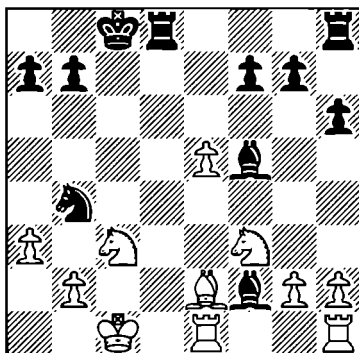
Or 17 ♖c1 ♖xa2+ and Black just

takes his pawn back with the better game.

17...♗f5+ 18 ♖c1 ♗c5 19 a3

I expected this move, as 19 ♖hf1 ♖d3+ 20 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 21 ♖h1 ♗xf2 22 ♖d1 ♗e3+ is a simple winner for Black – and I had prepared a little trick!

19...♗xf2!



The theme of Black's raking bishops reappears – not quite mate this time, but winning practically all White's pieces is good enough! Of course 20 axb4 ♗e3+ is crushing.

20 ♗c4

White has to give up the exchange, for if 20 ♖d1 ♗e3+ 21 ♖d2 ♖xd2 22 ♖xd2 ♖d8 23 ♖b1 ♖c6 24 ♖hd1 ♗xb1 25 ♗g4+ ♖c7 26 ♖xb1 ♗xd2 wins.

20...♗xe1 21 axb4 ♗xc3

I choose the simplest path, after which the technical phase presents no difficulties.

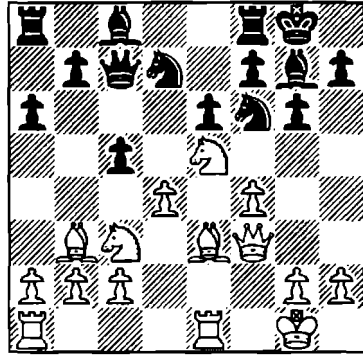
22 bxc3 ♗e6 23 ♗xe6+ fxe6 24 ♖d4 ♖d5 25 ♖e1 ♖d7 26 ♖d2 ♖f8 27 ♖e2 ♖f5 28 ♖d3 ♖fxe5 29 ♖a2 a6 30 ♖f2 ♖f5 31 ♖d2 e5 32 g4 ♖f4 33 ♖e3 ♖xg4 34 ♖f3 ♖e6 35 ♖e2 ♖c4 36 ♖c2 e4 37 ♖d4+ ♖dxd4 0-1

Risk Assessment: This sacrifice (6...e5) has been played by Kramnik! Risk is essentially nil, for if White accepts the pawn, Black has at least three pawn sacrifice categories worth of play! One can see that in this specific game Black never had worse than a draw. The only danger would have been not sacrificing (the Fritz-approved 6...g4) when Black will be gradually pushed back.

Since this is an opening sacrifice, we have statistics available – let’s consult the *Big Database*: after 6...e5, White achieves only a normal 55%. However, after the Fritz-approved non-sacrificing 6...g4, White scores a crushing 67%!

As I’ve said before, it can be very risky not to sacrifice!

of the loose rook (14 ♖xa8 ♜b7) and I can’t see an advantage with any other move, as Black will develop the c8-bishop with tempo to the long diagonal and can face the middlegame with confidence.



However, since you can see this game is in the “Development” section, you can guess Black did not play that accurate move!

13...cxd4?

Like 5...dxc4 in Game 17, this move develops White’s bishop without improving Black’s position. Instead of having a fairly passive dark-squared, blocked by its own pawns, White (thanks to Black’s gift!) now has a powerful one threatening the weak dark squares around Black’s king!

14 ♜xd4 ♜xe5

Now 14...b6? fails to 15 ♖xa8 ♜b7 16 ♜b5 and the white queen escapes.

After the played capture, White has two plausible alternatives – 15 ♜xe5 or 15 fxe5. One of these moves sets up a pawn sacrifice – guess which one Tal chose!

The daring Latvian comments about

Game 19

M.Tal-I.Bilek

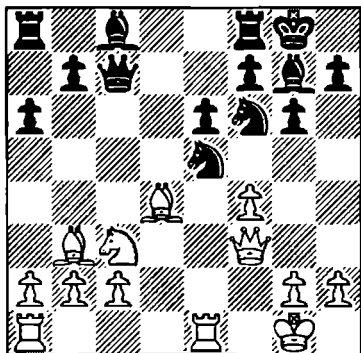
Miskolc 1963

Modern Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♜g7 4 ♘f3 c6 5 ♜c4 ♜f6 6 e5 dxe5 7 ♜xe5 0-0 8 0-0 ♜bd7 9 f4 ♖c7 10 ♖f3 a6 11 ♝e1 e6 12 ♜b3 c5 13 ♜e3

As Tal comments, this is “the critical point of the game.” White is somewhat ahead in development – and his pieces are well placed – so it is absolutely imperative that Black gets his last minor piece out as soon as possible. This is tactically possible – as Tal accurately comments, “Strongest was the simple 13...b6 with quite a good position.” White can’t take advantage

his following pawn capture/sacrifice: "Only with the pawn, of course, since White is not at all afraid of losing it." That's the philosophy of this book! One must not be afraid to sacrifice when one wants to win big games (Bilek was the Hungarian champion at the time).



So now we know Tal is going to take with the pawn (creating a "weak" isolated pawn for himself) and that he will sacrifice it almost immediately. What **Favourable Omens** did he see that justified his boldness?

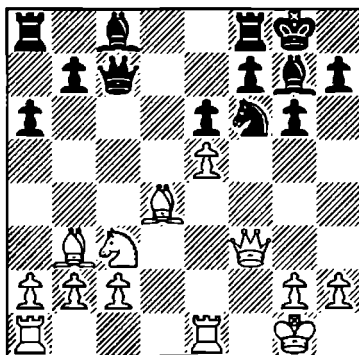
The first is development: right now Tal is ahead in development by one minor piece. But after taking with the pawn, Black's development, already behind, will go into reverse! His well-posted king's knight will have to retreat to d7 (other squares are even worse) where it blocks the still unmoved queen's bishop. While Black is untangling, White can make good progress towards a direct attack.

Another important factor is that Black can't win the pawn without giving up his dark-squared bishop (see the note to move 16), leaving him terribly

weak on the dark squares, and exposing his king even more.

Thirdly, there is negative reasoning. What if White plays the materialistically safe 15...♙xe5 - ? Then Black has an easy game: 15...♝c5+ 16 ♖h1 ♕d7! and Black offers the b-pawn to get his bishop to the long diagonal with tempo. It's clear Black has an excellent game with good counterplay in this variation. One can say the pawn capture is required by the position.

15 fxe5!



Mr. Fritz? Approved! The machine has no interest in letting Black develop as given above, and the **Author** would hate to see that too!

15...♞d7 16 ♞e4!

The logical continuation of the attack: Black can only take the pawn by giving up his important king-defending fianchettoed bishop, but if he doesn't take, White has ♞f6+ with a winning attack.

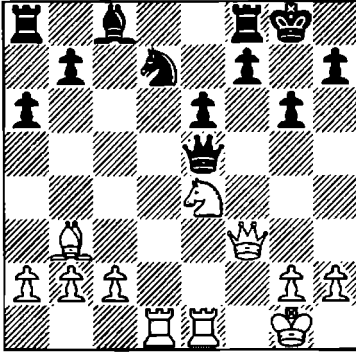
16...♙xe5

Unfortunately necessary, for if 16...♞xe5 17 ♞f6+ wins immediately.

17 ♙xe5 ♝xe5

If 17...♖xe5 18 ♜f4 and Black's dark squares are already cracking.

18 ♖ad1



Feast your eyes on this position! White has every piece developed, and every piece is an active, attacking piece. Black's queen's rook and bishop have never even moved, and aren't going to be moving for quite some time (actually Black's bishop never does get a chance to make a single move in this game!). Furthermore, Black's seriously weak dark squares (notably d6 and f6) are calling to White's knight!

What does Black have for all this suffering? A pawn!

18...♙g7

If Black takes more material with 18...♜xb2 White shuts out her Majesty with 19 c3 and attacks unhindered.

19 ♘d6 ♜c5+ 20 ♙h1 ♘e5

Not 20...♘f6? 21 ♜xf6+! winning a piece.

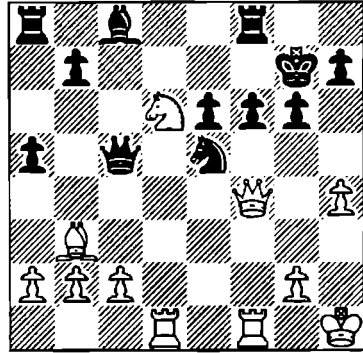
21 ♜f4 f6 22 ♖f1 a5!

A spirited defence! As Tal comments, Black intends to "smoke out the knight from d6" (with ...♖a6) and in some cases, Black might threaten ...a5-

a4.

White needs a great move to carry through his attack.

23 h4!



All rook pawns are equal, but some rook pawns are more equal than others! While Black's a-pawn leads to an attack on a piece, White's h-pawn helps to attack the king!

23...♖a6

Here 23...a4 does nothing as White can simply recover material with 24 ♘xa4 while maintaining his attack.

24 ♘e4 ♜e7 25 h5! h6

White's idea is seen if Black plays 25...a4 now: White breaks through with 26 h6+ ♙h8 27 ♘xf6 and the weak dark squares around Black's king will sooner or later cost the game.

After the played 25...h6, Tal takes aim at the new weakness on g6.

26 ♜g3 a4 27 ♖xf6!!

Tal breaks through in his characteristic style.

27...♖xf6 28 ♜xe5 axb3 29 axb3!

Nonchalant! "White's position is so strong that he has no reason to hurry," says Tal, although some people might

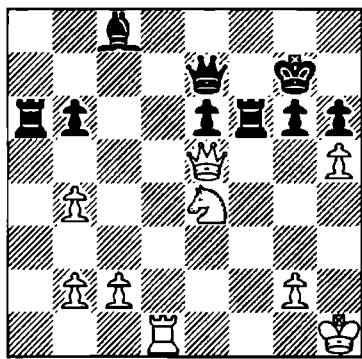
be worried about being a full rook down!

However, Black's bishop is still not playing, and the pin on f6 is deadly.

29...b6

Black still hopes to activate his queen's rook (via a5 this time), but Tal's unhurried reply sets him straight!

30 b4! 1-0



Black can't even find a move here, despite his extra rook! First of all, he still can't develop his hapless bishop: 30...♗b7 31 ♘f6 ♜f6 32 ♞d7+ wins, and the same variation works if the bishop goes the other way: 30...♗d7 31 ♘f6 ♜f6 32 ♞d7 etc. Let's try the rook (the one that can legally move!): 30...♞a8 31 ♞f1 is curtains. How about a king move? The only real possibility is 30...♔f7, but then 31 ♘xf6 ♜xf6 32 ♜c7+ and it turns out Black loses not just his bishop, but his remaining rook as well!

In other words, Black is in zugzwang – he wisely resigns.

Risk Assessment: Any time one gives up a centre pawn for long-term play there is some real risk – I'll label

this one *moderate*. The value of this game is increased by Black's excellent defence (22...a5! – no sacrificial shock here!) and Tal had to find some star moves (23 h4!, 27 ♞xf6!) to carry through his attack.

The reader should be warned that, even though White got a great position after the pawn sac, the game did not win itself. Tal had continually to find the best and sometimes only move, or his development advantage might have slowly disappeared like a mirage.

That said, Tal was indeed equal to the task – and how about that full board zugzwang after 30 b4!.

Game 20
T. Taylor-L. Shamkovich
 New York 1976
Trompowsky Attack

At the time this game was played, I had never in my life defeated a Grandmaster – and here I was, facing not just any GM, but someone who had defeated Tal and Bronstein, among others! Besides that, he outrated me by about three hundred points – how could I have a chance against someone like that?

Clearly I would have no chance at all if I played fearfully or passively – I decided I would have to take the fight to my opponent!

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗g5 c5 3 ♘c3!

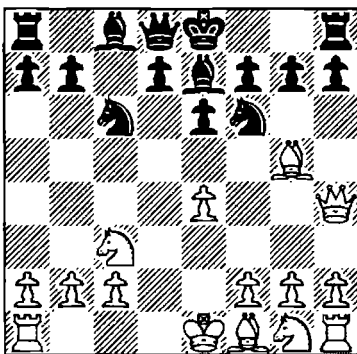
As hard as it is to believe now, this move was an innovation – on move three! My friend Steve Spencer had

shown me the move a few weeks before the game, and I had looked at it for a few minutes (yes, that was opening preparation in those days!). I liked White's quick development and decided to play it at the first opportunity.

As it happened, that chance turned out to be against Shamkovich! I assure you, I hadn't made any analysis of the pawn sacrifice that I played on move seven – that was an over the board inspiration, in a position already completely new to both players.

Of course, after I won the game, and it was published everywhere – unheralded master beats famous GM with innovation on move three! – my line became "theory" and was taken up by a slew of famous GMs like Vaganian, Sahovic, Conquest, and nowadays Moiseenko. I'm sure everything, including my pawn sacrifice, has been subjected to the most minute analysis by now – but it is the focus of this book to deal with the practical effects of the sacrifice over the board, in this particular game. We will get to this sacrifice very soon!

3...cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♘c6 5 ♗h4 e6 6 e4 ♙e7



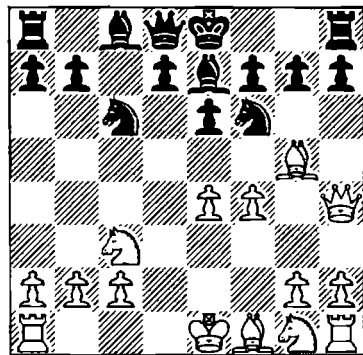
One doesn't have to sacrifice a pawn here – White can get the advantage with calmer moves (see the Conquest game below). But as mentioned above, I was determined to take the fight to my famous opponent – and besides, I saw some **Favourable Omens**, some on the board and some off.

First of all, by playing my contemplated 7 f4, I get an "f-pawn attacking position" in which I am very comfortable, but my opponent might find rather stressful!

Second, I create an immediate threat (8 e5 with a bind) that puts the pressure on Black.

Third, and most important, if Black wants the pawn, he has to move his queen (as can easily be calculated) no less than four times! I was sure I could get adequate development compensation while I was kicking the black queen about, so I boldly went for the sacrifice!

7 f4!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! My sacrifice doesn't make the top three, which are, in this order, 7 ♘f3, 7 0-0-0, and 7 ♙d3

– with White evaluated as plus equals in all. A much later game, given below, does seem to vindicate *Fritz's* number one pick, as White gets an advantage without any special craziness: 7 ♖f3 ♜a5 8 ♙b5 d6 9 0-0 ♙d7 10 ♜fe1 a6 11 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♜xe5 ♜c8 14 ♜ad1 0-0 15 ♜d3 ♜b4 16 f4 ♜b6+ 17 ♖h1 ♜xb2 18 ♜g3 ♖h8 19 ♙h6 g6 20 ♙g5 ♖g7 21 ♜h6+ ♖g8 22 ♙xf6 1-0 S.Conquest-G.Garcia, Cienfuegos 1996.

This is all very well, but I doubt the steady 7 ♖f3 would have upset Mr. Shamkovich very much. On the other hand, and in this **Author's** opinion, the bold 7 f4 created a crisis on the board that set the stage for my win. By this I mean Shamkovich could see I was trying to blow him off the board! He also felt that, since I was so low rated compared to him, such boldness (or madness!) must be flawed! One could see he was determined to punish me for my effrontery, and he played the very risky...

7...♜b6

...which means I have won the psychological duel: I get my kind of position, where I can attack at will, and Black must desperately defend.

Nowadays the quiet defence 7...d6 is considered best, but that isn't a refutation!

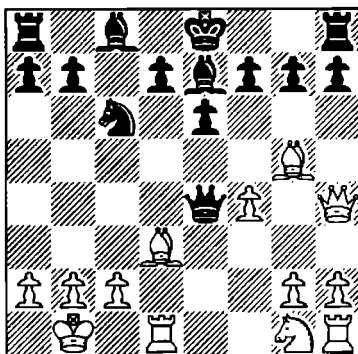
8 0-0-0 ♜e3+

White develops; Black moves his queen a second time.

9 ♖b1 ♜xe4 10 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 11 ♙d3!

Black has just moved the queen three times out of the last four moves, and now I force the lady to move again

– while I continue my development!



Note that White must not be afraid to sac a second pawn here – on the slower 11 ♖f3?! Black has 11...f6 with good counterplay. When one sacrifices for development, one must develop with speed!

11...♜b4!

Probably the best move – it's extremely dangerous to take the second pawn, e.g. 11...♜xg2 12 ♜e2 (White has every piece out and the overworked black queen is going to be hit by a rook in a minute) 12...f6 (if 12...♙c5 13 f5 and White's attack is probably unstoppable) 13 ♜h5+ ♖d8 14 ♙h4 and I doubt Black will survive with his king caught in the centre.

A later game saw Black try to ease his position by exchanging bishops, but this didn't work out too well either: 11...♙xg5 12 ♜xg5 ♜d4 13 ♖f3 ♜f6 14 ♜h5 h6 15 f5 d5 16 g4 e5 17 ♙b5 e4 18 ♜xd5 g6 (or similarly 18...exf3 19 ♜e1+ ♖f8 20 g5 ♜xg5 21 ♜xg5 hxg5 22 ♜d8+ ♜xd8 23 ♜e8 mate) 19 fxg6 exf3 20 g7 ♜xg7 21 ♜e1+ ♖f8 22 ♜d8+ 1-0 J.Gil Gonzales-F.Arnold Perier, Spanish

Team Championship 1996, as Black is getting mated on e8.

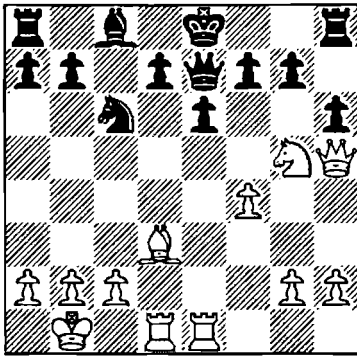
12 ♖f3 h6 **13** ♜he1

White has a big lead in development and an excellent attacking position – note the sleeping black pieces on the queenside.

13... ♗xg5 **14** ♖xg5 ♜e7

Black is hoping to exchange queens, but I wasn't about to let that happen!

15 ♜h5!

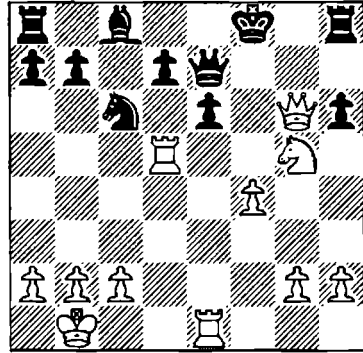


White avoids the exchange of queens and threatens 16 ♖xf7!. The critical moment of the game has been reached.

It seemed that Shamkovich was prepared for my move. I felt like I could read his mind, and I was sure he was ready to play the natural 15...g6 – and then he noticed my trick – I saw the shock in his eyes – and then we both dug in, furiously analysing the position that only the two of us could see.

After 15...g6 I was prepared to play 16 ♗xg6 fxg6 17 ♜xg6+ which I'm sure Shamkovich had initially dismissed as harmless – but then he saw White's

follow-up: after 17...♗f8 I was planning the spectacular rook offer 18 ♜d5!!. Now we were both trying to analyse this amazing position!



Clearly the rook is immune, and furthermore, it threatens to give itself up again on f5! Black pretty much has to take the white knight, as other moves are too dangerous, e.g. 18...♖d4 19 ♜xe6!! dxe6 (19...♖xe6 20 ♜f5+ wins) 20 ♜d8+ ♜xd8 21 ♜f7 mate.

So after 18...hxg5 White continues with 19 ♜f5+ and gets Black's queen – but at a price! Black must answer 19...exf5 20 ♜xe7 ♖xe7 (20...♗xe7 loses the rook, not the knight) 21 ♜f6+ ♗g8 22 ♜xe7 reaching a highly unusual position. White has queen vs. two rooks and a bishop, but all three of Black's pieces are still on their original squares – how's that for a lead in development! White has only one piece, but that one piece is developed; Black has three pieces, but none of them are out!

As we calculated, we both came to the realization that this strange position is reached almost by force if Black plays 15...g6. What is the evaluation?

That is what the young master and the experienced Grandmaster were trying to figure out, while Black's clock ticked!

First, can we calculate a few more moves? This seems possible – what if Black plays 22...♖xh2 and develops (finally!) with a threat of mate? White counters with the natural 23 ♗xg5+ and if 23...♔h8 it's clear White has a perpetual check if he wants it. What if Black runs the other way? After 23...♔f7 24 ♗xf5+ ♔e8 White can draw with 25 ♗e5+ ♔d8 26 ♗f6+ ♔c7 27 ♗c3+, but suppose White wants to play for a win? Then White has 25 ♗e4+ ♔d8 26 g4!, defending the mate while advancing his connected passed pawns. This line looks very dangerous for Black.

So it seems 23...♔h8 is best after all. Can White then play for a win? Not easily, for if White takes a move to stop the mate, Black can finally start to develop his queenside, e.g. 24 b3 d6. So what's the verdict? After 23...♔h8, White should take the forced draw with 24 ♗f6+ ♔g8 (Black doesn't let his f-pawn fall with check) 25 ♗g5+ and draws.

I'm sure that Shamkovich, a great calculating player who was applying his full mental effort, was able to calculate this variation to the end – draw! Now if Shamkovich had been playing Tal, I'm sure he would have continued with the natural and best 15...g6, and the game would have gone down as an entertaining draw – but he was playing me! And taking a draw would not have

“punished” me for my “unsound” pawn sacrifice. So I suspect that here he began to look for alternatives.

Remember Black has to meet White's current threat of ♖xf7. What if Black protects this square? 15...0-0 doesn't look promising as White can simply play 16 g4 with an easy direct attack. It's possible with 15...♗f8, but this loses the castling privilege and besides that, White can create a winning attack with 16 ♖h7! ♗h8 17 f5! and Black's king will soon perish. What's left?

If Black is determined to avoid the draw after 15...g6, then the only move he has is the following...

15...♖d8?

My sacrifice has its effect, as this move can only be described as a blunder: Black moves his sole developed minor piece to the back rank, and falls hopelessly behind in development – all because he wanted to refute my pawn sacrifice!

16 ♖e4

Even our materialistic mechanical friend says clear advantage to White here: Black has virtually no development whatsoever, unless one counts a queen in front of his own king!

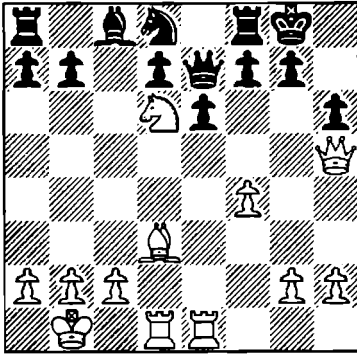
16...0-0

If 16...d5 17 ♖c3 and White wins the pawn back with a big advantage, which is still better than the game – but by this point my opponent was determined not to give back material.

17 ♖d6

The knight is immune, White has a winning bind – so Black goes pawn

hunting with his only active piece!



17...♖f6 18 ♠e3!

Pawns mean nothing now – White simply brings every piece to attack the black king.

18...♖xf4 19 ♜g3 ♔h8

Also losing are 19...♞b8 20 ♜f1 ♖xd6 21 ♖xh6 g6 22 ♜xg6+ fxg6 23 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 24 ♖h7 mate, and 19...f5 20 ♘e8! (a truly far flung knight outpost!) 20...♞f7 21 ♜f1 ♖d2 22 ♜xg7+! ♔f8 (or if 22...♜xg7 23 ♘f6+ ♔h8 24 ♖e8+ ♜g8 25 ♖xg8 mate) 23 ♜xf7+ ♘f7 24 ♘c7 ♞b8 25 ♘xf5! and wins.

20 ♜f1 ♖d2

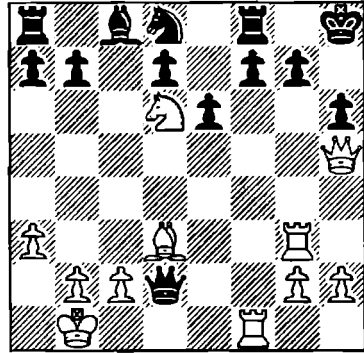
I quickly saw the sham queen sacrifice and mate: 21 ♖g6 fxg6?? 22 ♜f8+ ♔h7 23 ♘xg6 mate, and just as quickly saw Shamkovich's desperate trick: after 21 ♖g6 he has 21...♖d1+! when he survives to an ending!

I was sure there had to be a forced win here, and eventually I found it – once I realized the black queen (his only developed piece!) was terribly short of squares.

21 a3!! 1-0

With a very surprising threat! If

Black makes any normal defensive move – let's say 21...f5 – then White wins the queen with 22 ♘c4!. White's little a-pawn move took away Black's last flight square!



Let's say Black saves his queen with 21...b5, covering c4. Then White switches to the other side of the board and delivers mate: 22 ♖g6! (only now!) 22...♖d1+ 23 ♔a2! (the second point of White's rook pawn move – the white king has a flight square!) and in view of multiple mate threats, Black can only play 23...fxg6 allowing 24 ♜xf8+ ♔h7 25 ♘xg6 mate.

Black's sole counter-attack also fails: 21...g6 22 ♜xg6! fxg6 23 ♜xf8+ ♔g7 24 ♜f7+ ♘f7 (or 24...♔g8 25 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 26 ♞h7 mate, or 24...♔h8 25 ♖e5+ ♔g8 26 ♖g7 mate) 25 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 26 ♘xf7 mate.

Shamkovich took a long think, but as there are no other variations, finally he resigned. And so I defeated my first GM, and 21 a3 is still my favourite winning move.

Risk Assessment: Even though White gives up a centre pawn, I don't

think this sacrifice is particularly risky, in view of Black's loss of time with his queen. It's obvious that moving the queen four times (or more!) in the opening, when White has an attacking position, is dangerous to say the least. I think White has at least enough compensation for the pawn, or pawns, if the sacrifice is accepted.

Another question is whether 7 f4 is the best move. While it was unquestionably the best move *in this particular situation*, nowadays the prepared opponent will simply defend with 7...d6. That being the case, the strongest move may well be the *Fritz*-approved and *Conquest*-played 7 ♖f3. However, in this particular game, the psychological effect of my surprising sacrifice proved decisive.

One final note: my success in this game did wonders for my confidence! The next year, I tied for first in the US Open, defeating three GMs in the process (in one case with a speculative pawn sacrifice!). Who did I tie with? GMs Andy Soltis and ...Leonid Shamkovich! And the year after that I made my first IM norm.

I believe there is a direct correlation between chess strength and the ability (and willingness!) to sacrifice material.

Game 21
T.V.Petrosian-B.Larsen
 San Antonio 1972
Dutch Defence

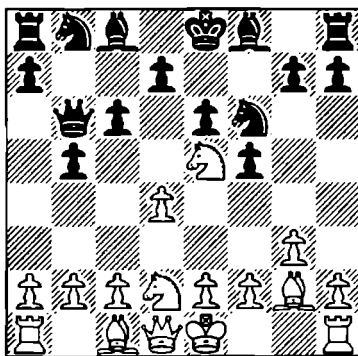
1 d4 e6 2 ♖f3 f5 3 g3 ♖f6 4 ♗g2 b5!?

A novelty: Bent is trying to use one of his ideas from Bird's Opening (1 f4 d5 2 ♖f3 ♖f6 3 e3 g6 4 b4! with a good game for White, e.g. B.Larsen-B.Spassky, Amsterdam Interzonal 1964 – see my book *Bird's Opening* for full analysis) with reversed colours – but the missing tempo causes problems.

5 ♖e5 c6 6 ♖d2

As Petrosian points out, 6 a4 b4 7 ♖d2 is more accurate, as then Black can't play 7...♝b6 in view of 8 ♖dc4 with advantage.

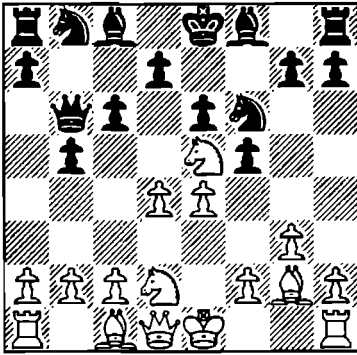
6...♝b6



The pawn sacrifice is coming, and I'm sure the main **Favourable Omen** Petrosian saw was the early development of the black queen. He saw that if Black takes the pawn, the queen will have to move again and again before reaching safety, and White will get a big lead in development.

7 e4!?

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The machine doesn't even consider giving up a centre pawn here, and recommends the simple defence by development 7 ♖df3.



In the **Author's** opinion, the machine is right! I think this sacrifice is dubious (Petrosian himself, in his annotations, gave the move "?!"). Let's let the World Champion explain: "White obtains a big advantage in development, but it is difficult to make use of this. Black has no weaknesses and the pawn configuration b5-c6-d7-e6 keeps White's pieces out of Black's camp."

I would add that after the machine's 7 $\text{Qd}f3$, White actually stands well: for example, 7... $\text{Qb}7$ 8 0-0 c5 9 a4 b4 10 $\text{Qf}4$ with Kramnikian pressure.

The American IM Anthony Saidy, who was also playing at San Antonio, said after the game that this was the first time in Petrosian's career that he had made an incorrect pawn sacrifice – and that's one big reason I'm putting this game in! The great Petrosian makes an incorrect pawn sacrifice, makes a move that he himself comes to regard as dubious – gets a much worse or possibly lost position, and – wins the game!

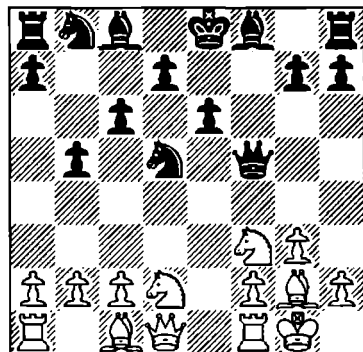
How did this happen? The point is, there are advantages in pawn sacrifices that are not immediately present on the

board. Yes, the sacrifice is objectively incorrect. Unlike my game against Shamkovich, where I got wide open play, here the position is mostly closed. Furthermore, while Shamkovich never had a safe king, here Larsen castles early and his king is quite safe for most of the game.

So White must have obtained some other kind of advantage: and in a word, this advantage was time. I don't mean chessboard time, White's lead in development – I mean clock time. White's development advantage demands extremely precise play from Black, and Larsen was equal to the task. As we'll see, he makes a whole set of sterling defensive moves, and finally neutralizes White's advantages – and should then take over the game himself. But he hesitates, probably already short of time; and later, in serious time trouble, blunders away a draw.

So one advantage of a pawn sacrifice is that it really makes your opponent think!

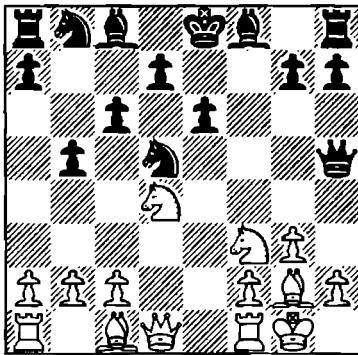
7... $\text{Wxd}4$ 8 $\text{Qef}3$ $\text{Wc}5$ 9 $\text{exf}5$ $\text{Wxf}5$ 10 0-0 $\text{Qd}5!$



Precise! Rather than rush to catch up in development, Larsen blocks White's fianchettoed bishop and gives his queen room to retreat. But it costs time to find such moves!

11 ♖d4 ♜f7 **12** ♘2f3 ♜h5!

The sixth queen move! Black not only avoids White's threat of ♘e5 and ♜h5+, but also develops the queen to the ideal Dutch attacking square. White can push it back, but by the time Petrosian does so, Larsen will be ready to castle.



It's evident that Black's sterling defence has now given him at least equality.

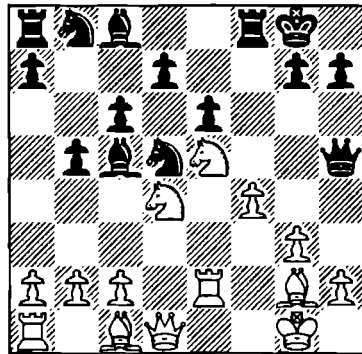
13 ♜e1 ♙e7 **14** ♜e5 ♜f7 **15** ♜e2 0-0 **16** ♘e5 ♜h5

Back again! After White's next, Black is clearly better, so perhaps White should try the risky tactic 17 g4!? ♜e8 18 ♘xb5 cxb5 19 ♙xd5 ♘c6. White has recovered his pawn, but I think Black is a little better in view of White's weak king position.

17 f4 ♙c5!

Beautiful! Larsen has concocted a defensive masterpiece. It's safe to say

White has absolutely nothing for the pawn (on the board!). But I have no doubt that Bent was way behind on the clock, and this too is an effect of a surprising and dangerous pawn sacrifice. Finding all these precise and often counter-intuitive moves was no easy task!



18 ♙h1 ♙b7

Larsen finds it difficult to adjust to playing for a win, fails to take over control of the game – finally loses his way and goes under.

Correct is the powerful but psychologically difficult move 18...♙xd4!! This is yet another counter-intuitive move that seems characteristic of this game. After moving his queen numerous times, should Black make a third move with his king's bishop, and give it up for a knight when Black's dark squares appear weak?

Yes! There are two clear reasons why this capture works: the first is that by taking the knight, Black finally stops the harassment of his queen. With only one knight, Petrosian just can't cover enough squares to give the black queen

trouble – which means said piece can start playing an active role.

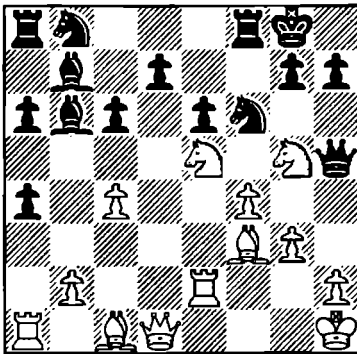
Second, Black's "weakness" on the dark squares is actually an illusion: Black can advance his pawns in the centre and on the queenside, covering any needed key squares such as e5 and d4.

Here's a sample variation: 18...♙xd4!! 19 ♖f3 ♜e8 20 ♜xd4 d6 21 ♘g4 ♘d7 22 b3 ♘7b6 23 ♙b2 ♜g6 24 ♘f2 c5 25 ♜e4 ♜f7 26 ♘g4 ♙d7 and Black, with his central pawn mass, well-placed minor pieces, and (let's not forget) a good extra pawn, has a decisive advantage according to our friend Mr. Fritz.

19 ♘df3 ♙b6

Black should play 19...a5, but Larsen has lost the thread.

20 a4 a6 21 c4 ♘f6 22 ♘g5 bxa4 23 ♙f3



Look at White's *two* powerful knights, and the harassment of Black's queen – finally, Petrosian stands better.

23...♜e8 24 ♙e3 ♙xe3 25 ♙xe3 h6 26 ♘e4 ♘xe4 27 ♙xe4 d5 28 ♙g2?!

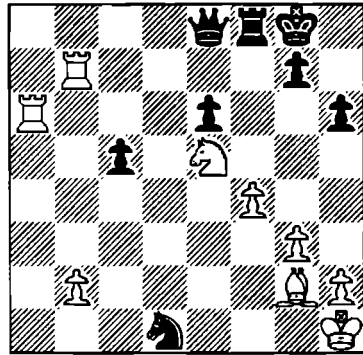
28 ♙g6 should win for White.
28...♘d7 29 ♙xa4 c5

Better is 29...a5 with equality – Larsen.

30 cxd5 ♘b6 31 ♙a5 ♘xd5 32 ♙b3 ♙d8

Larsen comments that at this point he had only eight minutes left for eight difficult moves!

33 ♙xb7 ♘e3 34 ♜e2 ♙d1+ 35 ♜xd1 ♘xd1 36 ♙xa6



36...♘e3 37 ♙aa7 ♘f5 38 g4 ♜d8 39 h3?

39 ♙f3 wins on the spot!

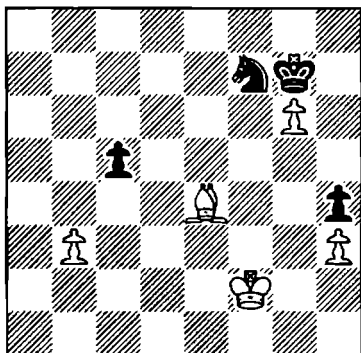
39...♜d1+??

39...♜d2 at least draws, but Larsen had no time to see it! Black can even win after 40 gxf5? ♜c1+ 41 ♖h2 ♜xf4+ 42 ♖h1 ♜xe5 43 fxe6 ♙f2 44 e7 ♙e2 45 ♙a8+ ♖h7 46 e8♜ ♙e1+ 47 ♙f1 ♜d5+ 48 ♖h2 ♙xe8, but Petrosian would probably have played the correct 40 ♘f3 when Black must force the draw with 40...♜c1+.

40 ♖h2 ♜d4 41 ♘g6 ♘e3 42 ♙xg7+ ♜xg7 43 ♙xg7+ ♖xg7 44 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 45 ♙f3 h5 46 g5?

White should win with 46 ♖g3. Now Black gets one more chance to save the game, but the exhausted Larsen misses it.

46...h4 47 ♖g1 e5 48 fxe5 ♘c4 49 ♜f2
 ♙xe5 50 ♙e4 ♜g7 51 b3 ♘f7 52 g6



52...♘g5

Losing. As Petrosian points out, Black can draw in two ways:

a) 52...♙e5 53 ♜e3 ♘xg6 54 ♙xg6 ♜xg6 55 ♜f4 ♜f6 56 ♜g4 ♜e5 57 ♜xh4 ♜d4 58 ♜g5 ♜c3 59 h4 ♜xb3 60 h5 c4 and draws.

b) 52...♘d6 53 ♙c2 (53 ♙d3 ♘b7 54 ♜e3 ♘a5 56 ♙c2 ♘xb3 is the same) 53...♘b5 54 ♜e3 ♘d4 55 ♙d1 ♘xb3 56 ♙xb3 ♜xg6 with the “wrong colour” bishop and rook pawn draw.

53 ♙f5 ♜f6 54 ♜e3 ♘e6 55 ♙xe6 ♜xe6 56 ♜e4 ♜f6 57 ♜d5 ♜xg6 58 ♜xc5 ♜f5 59 b4 ♜f4 60 b5 ♜g3 61 b6 1-0

Certainly not one of Petrosian’s best games, but instructive on the pawn sacrifice front. Of course our **Risk Assessment** must call giving up a centre pawn in a closed position very very risky indeed! Had Black found the accurate 18...♙xd4! I’m sure he would have won the game – but the impression I have is that Larsen just didn’t

feel he had time for such an uncompromising move. He simply tried to catch up in development, and that is when Petrosian finally gained compensation.

The last part of the game is very messy, with wins and draws missed right and left, which shows how much energy this game cost – but Black, having to defend, having to make so many difficult moves so early, had the much more difficult task.

Yes, in some world where players never get tired, and never get in time pressure, the sacrifice is “incorrect” – but in the real world, White had good practical chances, and he did win the game.

Summary

The development pawn sacrifice can be very simple, as Game 17 shows: in an open position, a three piece lead in development can be virtually decisive. On the other hand, a three piece lead in development – in a closed position – might not lead to much of anything, as Petrosian found out!

It’s also important to note the quality of the developed pieces: recall in Game 18 how White finally caught up in development, but his pieces were so inoffensive he was completely over-matched against Black’s active play.

Finally, remember that even an active, *Fritz*-approved sacrifice – as in Tal-Bilek, for example – does not win by itself; you still have to play well to the end!

Chapter Four

Deflecting

The deflecting sacrifice is more difficult than the three we have already seen: the King Attack, the Line Opening, and the Development sacrifice. Here a pawn is offered to deflect an enemy piece away from the main battle – in some cases, deflected right off the board, as the attacker gives a pawn in order to force the exchange of an opposing enemy piece.

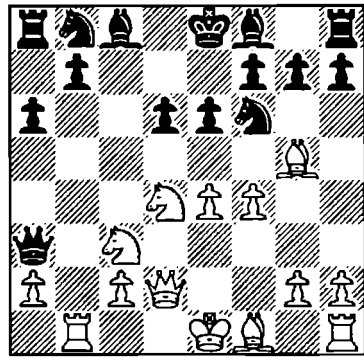
A typical opening example is the famous Najdorf Poisoned Pawn variation. After **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♜b6 8 ♜d2** (White offers a pawn to deflect the black queen) **8...♜xb2 9 ♝b1 ♜a3**

(see following diagram)

Black's queen is – *temporarily* – far away from the main central battlefield. The verdict, as to who is better in this complex position, is still unknown.

To carry off this kind of sacrifice requires excellent positional judgment, as

the deflected piece might return to the fray at just the wrong moment; or exchanging said piece might require too much time.



I discovered that I don't have a quality deflective sacrifice among my games – but I will be looking for my chance! On the other hand, I could have filled up this whole chapter just with Tal games!

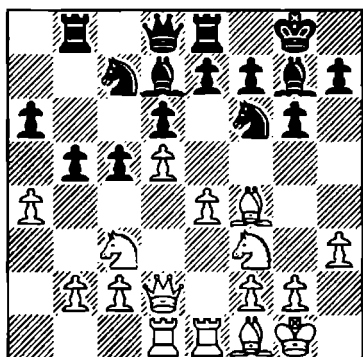
We start, as usual, with the simplest example – but it isn't that simple. There are no easy deflective sacrifices.

Game 22
M.Tal-P.Benko
 Candidates Tournament,
 Bled 1959
Old Benoni

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 g6 3 d4 ♙g7 4 d5 d6 5 ♘c3 ♘f6 6 ♗b5+ ♘bd7 7 a4 0-0 8 0-0 a6 9 ♗e2 ♞b8 10 ♞e1 ♘e8 11 ♗f4 ♘c7 12 ♗f1 b5 13 ♗d2!?

One might expect the natural 13 axb5 here (which is of course *Fritz's* number one pick) but Tal wants to keep his a-pawn for the moment – it's better to sac it later!

13...♞e8 14 h3 ♘f6 15 ♞ad1 ♗d7



I think Black should try to slow down or prevent White's central break with e4-e5 – to this end 15...b4 16 ♘b1 ♗b7 should be played. However, Benko has another idea: he threatens White's a-pawn, and tries to compel him to exchange on b5.

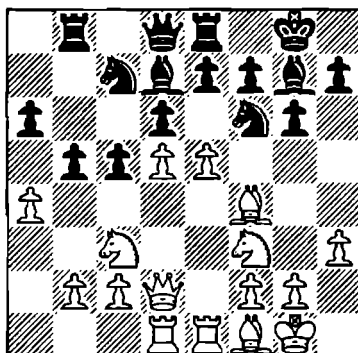
But Tal doesn't care! He sees some **Favourable Omens**, and pitches the a-pawn overboard!

What are these omens? First and foremost, White does accomplish his central break. Basically this means the board is cut in two: White's pawn wedge hinders Black's queenside to kingside communication – the kingside which White will shortly attack! At the very least, this means Black will have a difficult defensive task.

Second, Tal sees that the cut off black kingside is poorly defended. His advancing e-pawn will attack the knight on f6, and the defending fianchettoed bishop can be harassed by ♗h6. White's heavy pieces back up the central pawn advance, and can be quickly switched to the kingside.

Last, but far from least, to win the inoffensive a-pawn Black must allow his queen's bishop to be deflected far from its natural defensive position.

16 e5!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! Needless to say the machine wants to exchange on b5 first.

The **Author**, on the other hand, takes issue with the machine. First of all, if White plays à la *Fritz*, one gets 16

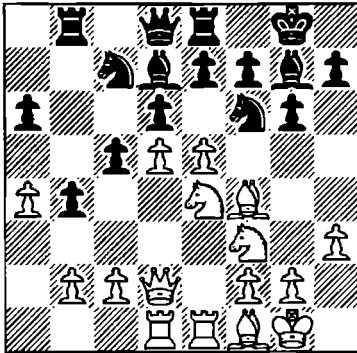
axb5 axb5 17 e5 b4! and Black has good chances, e.g. 18 exf6 (if 18 ♖e4 ♕xe4 19 ♜xe4 ♜a8 and Black can use the open a-file for counterplay) 18...bxc3 19 bxc3 (not 19 fxe7? cxd2 20 exd8 ♜ dxel ♜ 21 ♜xb8 ♜xd1 22 ♜xc7 ♜b5 and Black wins) 19...♙xf6 when Black has equality in view of White's pawn weaknesses on the queenside.

That's no way to win a chess game! Furthermore, I simply believe in the sacrifice: with a critical defensive piece (the light-squared bishop) out of play, and the black king cut off from much of its army, I think the way to win is to play à la Tal!

16...b4

Much worse is 16...dxe5 17 ♙xe5 b4 18 ♕e4 ♕xe4 19 ♜xe4 ♙xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♙xa4 21 b3 ♙b5 22 ♜h6 ♜d6 23 ♙xb5 ♕xb5 24 ♕d7! and White has a winning attack.

17 ♕e4



17...♕xe4

Black is forced to content himself with the a-pawn, for Tal's centre pawn is taboo: 17...♕fxd5 18 ♙g5 f6 (worse is 18...♜c8 19 exd6 winning) 19 ♙xf6!

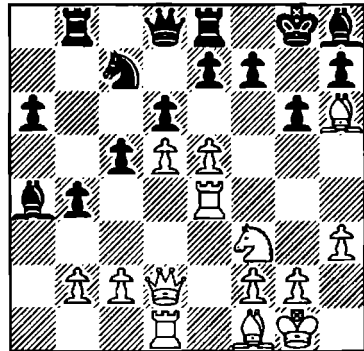
exf6 20 exd6 and White recovers his piece with the better game.

18 ♜xe4 ♙xa4

Note that in the similar position with the a-pawns exchanged (note to move 16) Black could play ...♜a8 here with counterplay, but obviously that move is senseless now. Benko has nothing better than to take the a-pawn – but Tal has the attack!

19 ♙h6 ♙h8

Best: clearly Black can't allow White to exchange dark-squared bishops. The trick 19...♙xc2 fails miserably after 20 ♜h4 ♙xd1 21 ♙xg7 and mates. However, 19...♙e5 is semi-playable, if obviously very risky. White answers 20 ♕xe5 dxe5 21 ♜xe5 e6 22 dxe6 ♕xe6 23 ♙xa6 ♜xd2 24 ♜xd2 b3 25 c3 ♙b5 26 ♙xb5 ♜xb5 27 f4 when Black is in trouble in view of the weakness of his back rank.



20 ♜de1?!

Just because I believe in Tal's sacrifice, doesn't mean I believe in every one of Tal's moves. In my opinion this is a premature attack that suddenly allows Black a way out.

The important thing to remember is that the board is cut in two, thanks to White's advanced pawn wedge, and White should make sure he retains that advantageous structure – *before* he goes over to direct attack.

Therefore I think 20 ♖c4!, defending d5 in advance, is correct, when White's attack will come with great force; e.g. 20...♙b5 21 ♙a2 a5 22 ♜h4 a4 23 e6 fxe6 24 dxe6 ♙f6 25 ♜g4 ♙xb2 26 c4 ♙c3 27 ♗d3 ♙a6 28 ♜xg6+ hxg6 29 ♗xg6+ ♖h8 30 ♖g5 and mates. Of course this variation isn't forced, but it gives an idea of White's attacking resources, and shows how difficult it is for Black to defend when he has such a hard time getting his pieces over to the kingside.

20...f6?

A fatal error, just two moves after the pawn was taken: can we blame Sacrificial Shock?

Black must seize his chance – the white d-pawn is insufficiently protected – and play 20...dxe5!. If White responds casually with 21 ♖xe5?! Black seizes a centre pawn with 21...♗xd5! (but not 21...♗xd5? 22 ♙c4 ♗xd2 23 ♙xf7 mate) and after 22 ♙xa6 e6 it's clear that Black has solved his problems, and stands better with his extra pawn. There is a big difference between sac'ing an out-of-the-way rook pawn and a vital centre pawn! Instead, White has to play 21 ♙c4 when he has certain play for two pawns, but clearly Black is doing far better than he deserves!

21 e6!

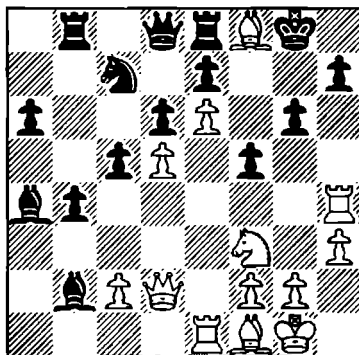
Now White's central wedge assumes concrete form – Black's defen-

sive task, when he can't bring his own pieces to the kingside, is virtually impossible.

21...f5 22 ♜h4 ♙xb2

Benko voluntarily deflects his second bishop, whereupon Tal forces the win. Black can prolong the game with 22...♙f6, but after 23 ♖g5 it's impossible to see how Black defends his cramped kingside in the long run.

23 ♙f8!!



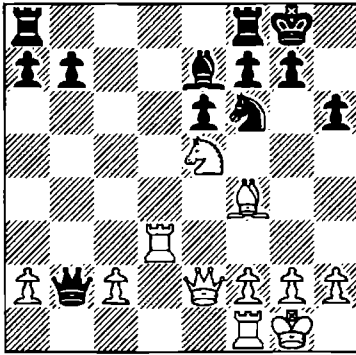
Two deflected black bishops, off eating pawns – and one killer white bishop finishing off a black king!

23...♜xf8 24 ♗h6 ♜f7 25 exf7+ ♖xf7 26 ♗xh7+ ♙g7 27 ♜h6 ♗g8 28 ♗xg6+ ♖f8 29 ♖g5 ♗xd5 30 ♜h8+ 1-0

Against any legal move, Tal will play next 31 ♖h7 mate!

Tal learned from this game, but Benko did not: three years later Tal defeated him with a very similar deflecting sacrifice:

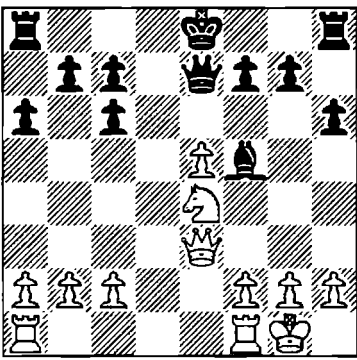
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♖f6 4 ♙g5 dxe4 5 ♖xe4 ♖bd7 6 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 7 ♖f3 c5 8 ♙c4 cxd4 9 0-0 ♙e7 10 ♗e2 h6 11 ♙f4 0-0 12 ♜ad1 ♙d7 13 ♜xd4 ♗b6 14 ♜d3 ♙b5 15 ♙xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♖e5 ♗xb2



Game 23
P.Morphy-J.Löwenthal
 14th matchgame,
 London 1858
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♖b5 a6 4 ♖a4 ♘f6
 5 d4 exd4 6 e5 ♘e4 7 0-0 ♘c5 8 ♖xc6
 dxc6 9 ♘xd4 ♘e6 10 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 11
 ♗e2 ♖c5 12 ♘c3 ♗e7 13 ♘e4 h6 14
 ♖e3 ♖xe3 15 ♗xe3 ♖f5?!

(Deflection!) 17 ♖g3 ♖fc8 18 ♖xh6
 ♖f8 19 ♗e3 ♗xc2 20 ♖e1 ♖c7 21 h3
 ♖ac8 22 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 23 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 24
 ♗g5+ ♗f8 25 ♗xf6 ♗h7 26 ♖e3 ♗f5 27
 ♗h8+ ♗e7 28 ♗h4+ ♗f6 29 ♗b4+ ♗e8
 30 ♗b5+ ♗f8 31 ♖f3 ♗d8 32 ♗b4+ ♗e8
 33 ♖g3 1-0 M.Tal-P.Benko, Candidates
 Tournament, Curacao 1962.



Now let's get back to our traditional **Risk Assessment**. I'm going to have to call this somewhat risky, even though I believe the sacrifice was sound. The reason is that White's best moves are far from obvious, and even Tal lost his way (the precipitous 20 ♖de1). In other words, the risk lies in the fact that White can go astray – when should he consolidate his centre? when should he go over to direct attack? – and this difficulty, while one is material down, could make all three results possible!

Black should have castled (kingside of course – not 15...0-0-0 16 ♗a7), when White is a little better with his space advantage and superior pawn structure – but Black has a reasonably safe king and can blockade White's kingside pawns on the light squares; e.g. 15...0-0 16 f4 ♖f4 17 ♘g3 ♗e6. In general, nothing terrible happens to Black if he just makes the most natural move on the board.

That said, Sacrificial Shock came to the attacker's aid once again, as Black missed his one good counterchance and went down in flames!

Instead, he moves an already developed piece a second time, without any necessity. When one sees such a move, one should look immediately for

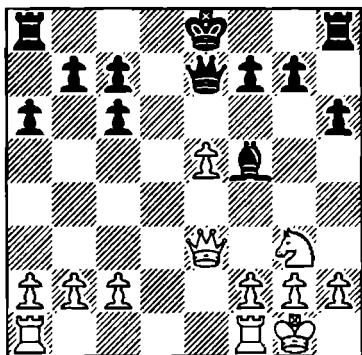
One last note: this was the simplest deflective sacrifice I could find! I repeat, this sacrifice is not easy.

Favourable Omens! The first one is obvious and has already been mentioned: Black's king remains in the centre.

The second omen is more subtle: White has a strong kingside pawn majority (especially as opposed to Black's lamed queenside four, which cannot create a passed pawn) but the problem is, how to advance it? White would like to create a powerful duo – pawns at e5 and f5 – but Black has so far blockaded this advance with his bishop – ah, but now this bishop is vulnerable!

Morphy clearly sees the idea – if White moves to attack the bishop, he also takes f5 under control, and can start advancing his kingside pawn majority – while the black bishop, deflected, can only munch on an out-of-the-way pawn.

16 ♖g3!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The machine likes 16 ♖fe1 and 16 ♖ae1, both of which indirectly protect the pawn at e5. However, in the **Author's** opinion, such "safety" is short-sighted. For example, after 16 ♖fe1 0-0 Black is really threatening the e-pawn, so 17 f4 – but

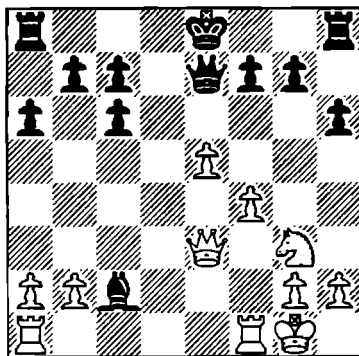
then Black plays 17...♞fd8 with an easy development, and it's hard to see how White can improve his position with his pawns blockaded.

On the other hand, as seen in the game, White gets long-term compensation if the pawn is taken – and there is no good way to decline! In other words, White gets a powerful, long lasting initiative by sacrificing the pawn – but quickly runs out of gas if he protects it!

16...♞xc2

The bishop is deflected onto a far from useful square, where it will be subject to tempo-gaining attacks. Unfortunately for Black, once he played 15...♞f5, there was no turning back: if 16...♞e6 17 ♖xf5 ♞xf5 18 ♞c5 and the black king is caught in the centre, while if 16...♞h7 17 f4 and the white pawns roll forward at no cost.

17 f4



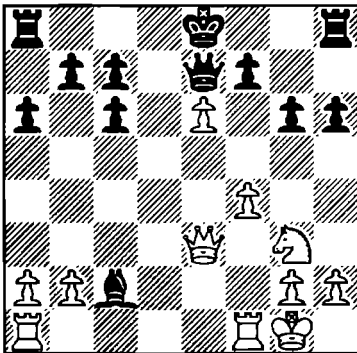
Threatens to form the duo with f4-f5, e.g. 17...0-0 18 f5 with a tremendous attack – what a difference a few tempi make! Whereas on move 16, castling was a safe move for Black, now it's like

diving into the piranha tank!
17...g6!

In his haste to blockade the f-pawn, Black weakens the long diagonal. Löwenthal is clearly shocked now – one can only imagine what he felt like after he saw White's next move!

If he could have kept his head, perhaps he would have found the best move: 17...♖b4!. Black has to let the kingside go, and seek shelter for his king on the queenside; he also threatens 18...♖b6. White answers 18 ♜f2! ♙h7 (not 18...♖xb2? 19 ♜c1 winning a piece) 19 ♘h5 0-0-0 20 ♘xg7 when White has recovered his pawn with the better game, but at least Black can hope for counterplay on the open g-file.

18 e6!

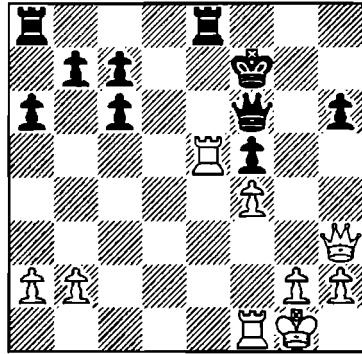


This sham sacrifice shatters Black's position – Löwenthal must have been reeling! Clearly the intrepid white e-pawn can't be taken in view of the fork ♖c3, when Morphy takes full advantage of the deflected bishop.

18...♙f5

If 18...0-0 19 f5 with a continued attack – even Black's h-pawn is hanging!

19 ♘f5 gxf5 20 exf7+ ♙xf7 21 ♖h3 ♖f6 22 ♜ae1 ♜he8 23 ♜e5!



The dust clears, and Morphy's great positional judgment shows itself clearly – let's assess:

Black is tied down to two weak, isolated pawns on the kingside – but if he gives up either one, his already breezy king will be exposed even more.

White will obtain control of the e-file, since Black can't capture twice on e5 without losing his queen.

In view of White's central superiority and kingside attacking chances, Black's queenside pawn majority is of little importance, and the doubled pawns there can be vulnerable to attack.

That Black is a pawn up is not much solace.

Morphy's deep positional idea was hard to see, but now that he's reached this position, even the machine understands that White is better.

23...♙g6 24 ♜fe1 ♜xe5 25 ♜xe5 ♜d8 26 ♖g3+ ♙h7 27 h3!

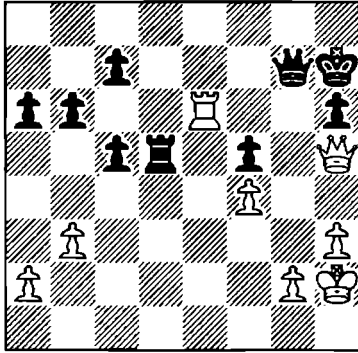
A characteristic Morphy move: he doesn't need to hurry, and so takes

time to ensure the safety of his king. Whereas there will never be safety for Black, with his split pawns.

27...♠d7 28 ♖e3 b6 29 ♔h2 c5 30 ♖e2 ♗g6 31 ♜e6

Not 31 ♗xa6 ♜g7 with counterplay. White correctly prefers his positional advantage to recovering material.

31...♗g7 32 ♗h5 ♠d5 33 b3!



...suddenly Black is in zugzwang!

33...b5

Nothing is better, e.g. 33...♗f8 34 ♗g6+ ♔h8 35 ♜e8 or if 33...a5 34 a4.

34 ♠xa6

White gets his pawn back with no concessions – in fact, gets his pawn back with interest, as the zugzwang is still in effect!

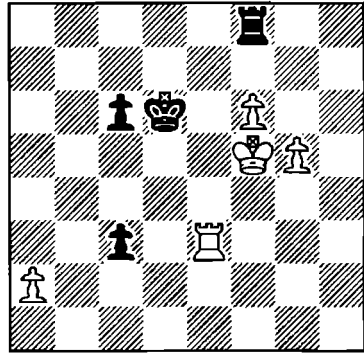
34...♠d6

Black doesn't have a better move, e.g. 34...b4 35 ♜e6 and Black must make still more concessions.

35 ♗xf5+ ♗g6 36 ♗xg6+ ♔xg6 37 ♠a5

White can probably win the pawn ending, but there is no reason to give Black a passed pawn. After the text move the rook ending is easy, as Black is still lamed by his doubled pawns.

37...♠b6 38 g4 c6 39 ♔g3 h5 40 ♠a7 hxg4 41 hxg4 ♔f6 42 f5 ♔e5 43 ♜e7+ ♔d6 44 f6 ♠b8 45 g5 ♠f8 46 ♔f4 c4 47 bxc4 bxc4 48 ♔f5 c3 49 ♜e3 1-0



The doubled pawn falls, and then White will promote on the kingside.

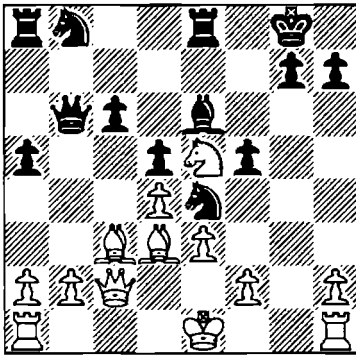
A great game by Morphy, but quite difficult for the student (and I definitely include myself as a student here!). What's hard to see is the extent of White's positional domination when he gets the key position after move 23. White is not getting his pawn back – at least not soon – but Black just has no play at all, while Morphy continually, if slowly, improves his position.

Note that the key break 16 e6 was set up by the possible fork targeting Black's deflected bishop.

Risk Assessment: The way I see it, the sacrifice is required by the position – if White sacrifices, he gets good winning chances (assuming one has Morphy's positional understanding, of course!). If White plays the Fritz-approved 16 ♠fe1, my guess would be a draw. So I conclude that the sacrifice is not really risky, just difficult!

Game 24
K.Klasups-M.Tal
 Riga Championship 1954
Dutch Defence

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 c6 5 e3
 ♘e4 6 ♙d3 f5 7 g4 ♙b4 8 ♙d2 ♙xc3 9
 ♙xc3 0-0 10 gxf5 exf5 11 ♙b4 ♖e8 12
 ♗c2 a5 13 ♙c3 ♙e6 14 c5 b6 15 cxb6
 ♗xb6 16 ♘e5



The most obvious feature of the position is that both sides have strong knights in the centre. Since Black's knight can potentially be driven away by f2-f3, most players would try to get rid of White's knight. This is not difficult: Black can develop his last piece toward the centre and so play 16...♘d7 with equality.

But Tal is not like "most players"! He sees **Favourable Omens**, and offers a deflecting pawn sacrifice!

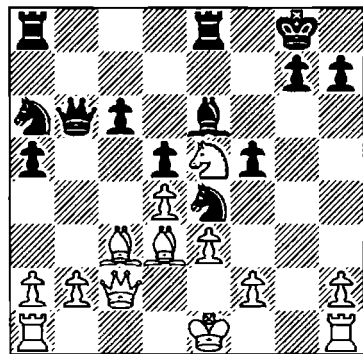
Tal's idea is to play 16...♘a6, which looks like it might be an oversight, as White can attack two pawns (c6 and a5) with ♗a4. Of course Tal did not

make an oversight – the first favourable omen he sees is that the white queen will have to go out of her way to win the pawn. It's easy to calculate, as in the game, that after Black protects his c-pawn, the queen must take on a5 (if White really wants the pawn) where her Majesty will be seriously deflected from the main battle area (the centre and White's already weakened kingside).

I'm just guessing here, but I would be willing to bet that Tal's second favourable omen was of an off board nature – his opponent is a fellow Latvian, and Tal probably knew his style well, and knew he liked to capture material – and so would allow himself to be deflected.

As we will see in the next note, the danger to Tal is not the acceptance of the sac, but rather declining it – but if his opponent had a propensity to snatch pawns, then Tal could count on him swallowing the bait!

16...♘a6!



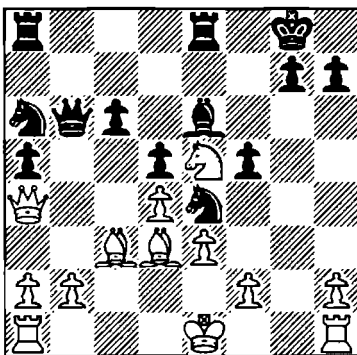
Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! However, as near as I can understand the silicon

mind, it seems the computer finds fault with Tal's positional play (ignoring the centre) rather than with the sacrifice.

The **Author** wishes he knew the full story. If I am correct, and Klasups was a dyed-in-the-wool pawn-snatcher, then I approve the sacrifice. Against a solid positional player, however, the move 16...d6 is clearly unsound, as White gets the advantage in the centre, keeping his strong knight, with the fairly simple 17 0-0 c5 (17...d4? is a pawn blunder, not a pawn sacrifice: 18 e4xb4 axb4 19 e4xc6) 18 f3 dxc3 (or 18...d6 19 e4d2 d4 20 dxc5 e4xc5 21 e4d4 e4c7 22 e4ac1 e4e7 23 e4b1 with a positional advantage in view of Black's three isolated pawns) 19 bxc3 e4f8 20 e4ab1 e4d6 and with the big knight in the centre – compare Black's sickly steed on a6! – White can get a clear advantage with both 21 e4h1 and 21 f4.

As a Dutch player myself, I would certainly recommend 16...d7, but evidently Tal had his reasons – now we'll see Klasups run to snatch that pawn!

17 e4a4?!



Unapproved! Neither author nor computer thinks White should go out of his way to take a mere pawn, but some people just love to devour the little guys!

17...e4c8 18 e4xa5

White can't take with the bishop as his b-pawn is hanging – but now the white queen is exposed and out of play.

18...e4b7 19 e4xe4?

White panics, just one move after taking the pawn! I think we've seen this before!

Weak is 19 0-0 c5 20 e4b5 e4e7 21 e4h1 e4c7 22 e4b6 e4cb8 23 e4c6 e4xc3 24 bxc3 c4 25 e4c2 e4b2 and Black is better.

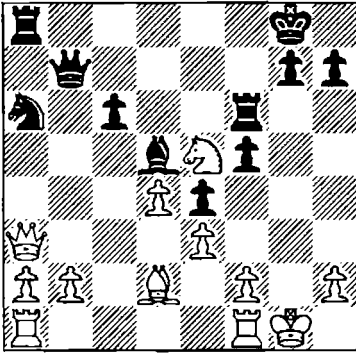
White's only good move is the active 19 f3! when, surprisingly, Black has no good discovery on the white queen: 19...e4ac5?! 20 e4b4 e4xd3+ 21 e4xd3 e4a6 22 e4c5 e4xc5 23 dxc5 comes to White's advantage, so Black must play 19...e4xc3 20 e4xc3 c5 when he has active queenside (line opening!) play for the pawn, but the white queen has come back into the game – something that is much harder in the game continuation.

19...dxe4

Now White has permanent holes on the light squares, and his queen is still out of play. Black has at least full compensation for the pawn, and probably stands a little better already.

20 0-0 e4d5 21 e4a3 e4f8 22 e4d2 e4f6

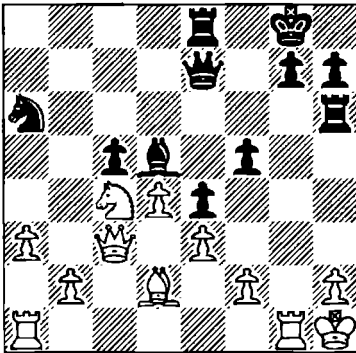
Tal methodically sets up to attack White's kingside (weakened by the missing g-pawn) while the white queen is still a spectator.



23 ♖h1 c5

Black should be winning now, with threats all across the board (right now he threatens 24...cxd4 25 exd4 e3+ winning a piece), but White does have a desperate counterchance: the long dark diagonal is opening up, and White might get counterplay against g7. Tal underestimates this factor in the game.

24 ♛c3 ♛e7 25 a3 ♛e8 26 ♜c4 ♛h6 27 ♛g1



27...♛c7?

Remember Lasker's maxim? "When you see a good move, wait! Don't play it! Look for a better one!" Tal should have thought of that maxim here. Hav-

ing had his own way for a while in this game, I think Tal probably played the text move quickly, seeing that he wins a piece – but now White gets significant counterplay.

If Tal had looked a little longer, I'm sure he would have seen the forced win that was available: best is 27...♛h4! 28 ♛g2 f4! 29 dxc5 (if 29 exf4? e3 forces mate) 29...♛e7 30 ♛d4 ♜c7 31 ♜c3 f3! 32 ♛xg7+ ♖f8! and Black wins.

28 ♛g2 cxd4 29 ♛xd4 ♜xc4

There goes a piece...

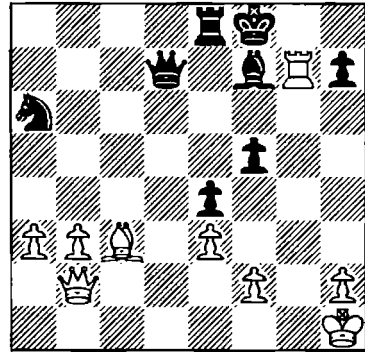
30 ♜c1 ♜c6 31 b3!

Wait a minute! White has counterplay!

31...♛d6

Black could lose after 31...♜b5 32 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 33 ♜c3 ♛e7 34 ♛c4+.

32 ♛b2! ♛d7 33 ♜c3 ♛d1+ 34 ♛g1 ♛xg1+ 35 ♛xg1 ♜f7 36 ♛xg7+ ♖f8



37 ♛g1??

Losing in one move. After White's heroic counter-attack, it's a pity he didn't play the simple 37 ♛xh7 when, with three pawns for the piece and an attacking position, White certainly shouldn't lose and in some cases can

play for a win!

37...♙g6

Black blocks the g-file and is now just a piece up – Tal cashes in easily against his dispirited opponent.

38 b4 ♖c7 39 b5 ♜xb5 40 ♙b4+ ♜f7 41 ♜b3+ ♜d5 42 ♜c2 ♖e6 43 ♜d1 ♜c8 44 ♜a4 ♙h5 45 ♜a7+ ♜c7 46 ♜xd5 ♙f3+ 47 ♙g1 ♜xa7 48 ♜xf5+ ♙g6 49 ♜d5 ♜c7 50 h4 ♜c1+ 51 ♙h2 ♜h1+ 52 ♙g3 ♜g1+ 53 ♙h3 ♖g7 54 ♙e7 ♜h1+ 55 ♙g3 ♖h5+ 56 ♜xh5 ♙xh5 0-1

Another complex deflecting sacrifice and a wild game: what's the **Risk Assessment?** I find the sacrifice to be extremely *positionally risky*, and I doubt Tal would have played the imaginative but eccentric 16...♖a6!? against Petrosian! The iron Tigran would have played positionally in the centre, when the misplaced knight would have found nothing to say. In other words, the sacrifice is very risky if White doesn't accept it!

But against this particular opponent – who rushed to devour the pawn – the sac definitely worked, and Tal soon had a winning position – of course, that wasn't the end of the adventure, but Tal came home with the full point.

Game 25

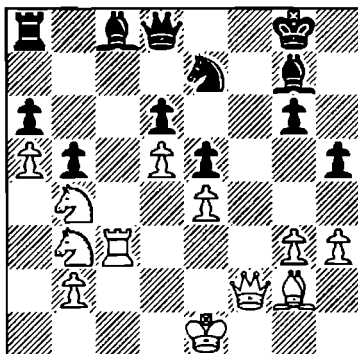
T.V.Petrosian-M.Najdorf

Bled 1961

King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 e5 6 ♖ge2 c6 7 ♙g5 ♖bd7 8 d5 ♖b6 9 ♖c1 cxd5 10 cxd5 0-0 11 a4 a6 12

♖b3 ♙d7 13 a5 ♖c8 14 ♙d3 b5 15 ♖a2 ♖e7 16 ♖b4 ♖h5 17 g3 f6 18 ♙e3 f5 19 ♜c1 ♜e8 20 ♜c7 ♖f6 21 ♜d2 fxe4 22 fxe4 ♙h3 23 ♙g5 ♜f7 24 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 25 ♙f1 ♙g4 26 ♙e2 ♙h3 27 ♙f1 ♙g4 28 ♙g2 ♜f8 29 h3 ♙h6 30 ♜d3 ♙c8 31 ♜f1 ♜xf1+ 32 ♜xf1 ♜d8 33 ♜c3 ♙g7 34 ♜f2 h5



In a typical King's Indian, White has outplayed his opponent. Right now Black has no active play, and no pieces further advanced than the second rank! On the other hand, Black is monitoring White's invasion squares (b6 and c6) and White has no pawn breaks. Furthermore, if White does nothing, Black's last move shows he is trying to activate his dark-squared bishop, possibly with a pawn sacrifice: ...h5-h4, and if White answers with either g3-g4 or g3xh4, Black can consolidate his position with ...♙h6-f4.

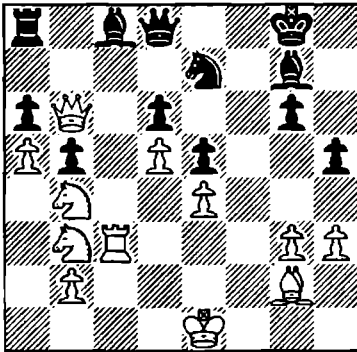
In other words, White's evident positional advantage might gradually disappear, if he does not find some way to break into Black's position: time for a pawn sacrifice! What are the **Favourable Omens?**

First of all, Petrosian has the knight pair, which he was most skilled in handling, especially in closed positions like this. His knight on b4 is ideally placed, eyeing the hole at c6 – now if the other knight could get into the game...

Black only has one defender of the seventh rank: his queen. His rook can't even go to a7! A white rook on c7 would have a devastating effect, aiming at poorly defended black pieces in every direction.

Petrosian comes up with an amazing deflecting sacrifice: he deflects the black queen right off the board! Although one does not normally combine "queen exchange" with "pawn sacrifice", here White's positional advantage makes it all worthwhile!

35 ♖b6!!

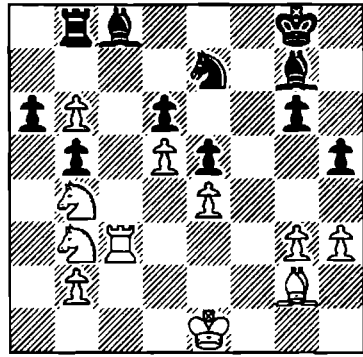


Mr. Fritz? Approved! This is *Fritz's* number one, for it turns out that the queen is Najdorf's only good defender. Once that is gone (and Black has no choice, as if 35... ♗d7 36 ♜c7 wins), first the seventh rank (♜c7 is coming) and then the c6-square falls. Yes, that's the

second point: after Black takes the queen, the recapture a5xb6 opens up the a5-square for White's second knight, which trampolines to c6 with fatal effect!

In the **Author's** opinion, this is all simply brilliant! I am thankful for the lesson!

35... ♗xb6 36 axb6 ♜b8



Black "wins" a pawn in the ending.

37 ♜c7

Without queens, this invasion square is available.

37... ♗f8

The bishop never gets to h6!

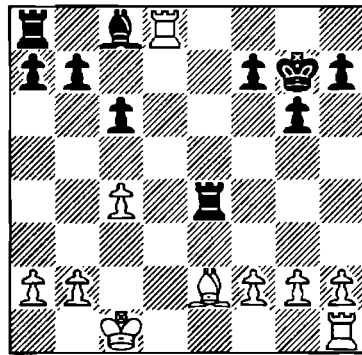
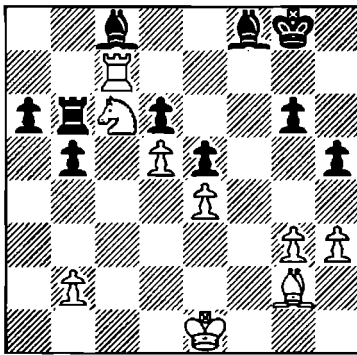
38 ♘a5 ♜xb6

Black enjoys his last supper...

39 ♘bc6 ♘xc6 40 ♘xc6 1-0

...and then resigns!

White wins easily after 40... ♗b7 41 ♘a5! (though there is an interesting false trail: 41 ♘d8 ♗a8 42 ♜c8 ♗b7 43 ♜b8 ♗e7 44 ♘xb7+ ♖g7 and it's hard to see how White wins, despite the extra piece, for the white knight is so thoroughly pinned) 41... ♗a8 42 ♜c8 ♗b7 43 ♜b8 ♖g7 44 ♜b7, as the knight is able to escape.



Risk Assessment: Absolutely nil, provided White sees the sacrifice! As mentioned above, Black might find counterplay if White can't find a way in, so the key was understanding that the queen was Black's vital defender. Once a pawn offer deflected her off the board, Black's game was hopeless!

The first is obvious: as mentioned above, two of Black's pieces aren't working, so that means his only piece in play is the rook at e4.

If White executes the planned 18 ♖f3 ♜xc4+, he will have an immediate threat of ♜e1-e8, winning a piece, which will put Black under grave pressure. Furthermore, White will then have the almost hidden possibility of exchanging Black's sole active piece, the rook on c4, when White's two remaining pieces are much better than Black's remaining back rank sluggards!

Tal is ready!

18 ♖f3!

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! Unsurprisingly, the machine likes 18 ♜e1 or 18 ♖d3, but such materialism gets nowhere, e.g. 18 ♜e1 b6 19 ♔d2 ♖b7 and Black solves his problems.

In the **Author's** opinion, Tal's move is not only best, but the best way to play for a win!

18... ♜xc4+ 19 ♔d2 c5?!

Black advances the candidate! Did Black think he was winning, a pawn up in the ending? Instead he should be

Game 26

M.Tal-I.Smirin

USSR Team

Championship 1990

King's Indian Defence

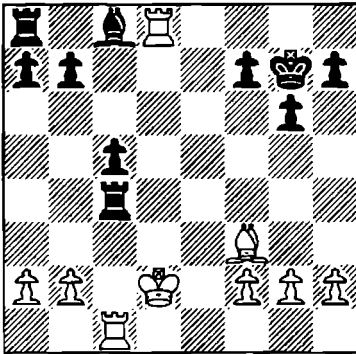
1 ♖f3 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0-0 6 ♖e2 e5 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 9 ♖g5 c6 10 ♖xe5 ♜e8 11 0-0-0 ♖a6 12 ♖d6 ♖xe5 13 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 14 ♖xf6 ♖c5 15 ♖d6

Tal is not interested in defence with 15 f3 because of 15...♖e6, when his rook is short of squares.

15... ♖xe4 16 ♖d8+ ♖g7 17 ♖xe4 ♖xe4

White's rook on d8 is paralyzing two black pieces – can you spell **Favourable Omens?**

struggling to draw: best is 19...b6 20 b3 ♖c5 21 b4 ♖c4 22 b5 ♗b7 23 ♖d7 ♗c8 24 ♖d6 when White recovers his pawn with the better game, but Black is still playing. Note that the seemingly attractive (at first sight!) trick 19...♖c2+ fails to 20 ♕xc2 ♗f5+ 21 ♖d3! and wins. **20 ♖c1!**



Tal's point! He must have been studying some games of his friend Petrosian! Black's rook is first deflected from the centre, then removed from the board entirely!

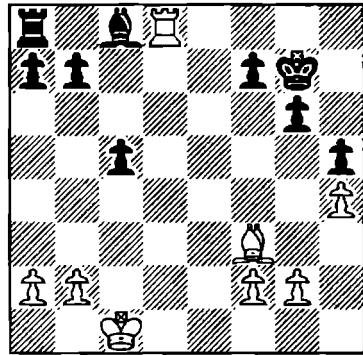
This concept, admittedly new to me when I started this book, is extremely interesting and as I see, very useful. One must of course throw away such old baggage (otherwise known as "chess rules") that say when you're material up, you should always exchange, and when material down, one should avoid exchanges.

The truth is more complicated: even in an ending, material can be trumped by position. In other words, Tal – with only rook and bishop left – has an attacking position that weighs far more heavily than Black's extra pawn.

20...♖xc1

20...♖d4+ 21 ♖xd4 cxd4 22 ♖c7 ♗e6 23 b3 ♖d8 24 ♖xb7 is an ending White ought to win, as both of Black's isolated pawns are extremely weak.

21 ♕xc1 h5 22 h4

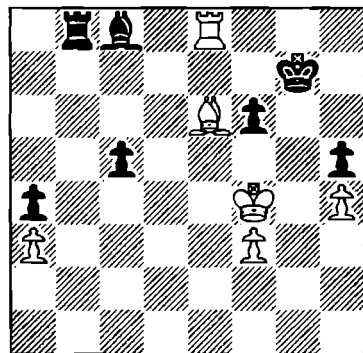


Black is a pawn up, but can do absolutely nothing. In the next phase, Tal patiently improves his position while Black frantically thrashes about without improving anything!

22...♖b8 23 ♖e8 f6 24 ♗d5 g5 25 g3

Unhurried!

25...gxf4 26 gxf4 ♕g6 27 ♕d2 b5 28 ♕e3 b4 29 a3 bxa3 30 bxa3 a5 31 ♕f4 a4 32 f3 ♕g7 33 ♗e6



Now that Tal has everything to his liking, he wins the exchange and finishes the game.

33...♙xe6 34 ♖xb8 ♙b3 35 ♖b5 1-0

White wins cleanly after 35...c4 36 ♖c5 ♗g6 37 ♖e3 ♗h6 38 ♗d4 ♗g6 39 f4! ♙a2 40 f5+ ♗f7 41 ♖xc4 ♙c4 42 ♖c4 ♗e7 43 ♖c5 etc.

Once again we see Petrosian's idea of "deflecting off the board" as the opponent's one good piece is first lured, then exchanged. One can be a pawn down in the ending and still be better! This concept will be explored even more in Chapter 11.

And our **Risk Assessment?** In this case, very simple: there is no risk at all, even in the pawn down ending, as White's positional advantage is just too great. The risk, as I have often noted, lies in not sacrificing the pawn (or not even seeing the idea) when Black might have been able to find his way to a draw.

Summary

The deflecting sacrifice is quite difficult, and requires both imagination and a high level of positional understanding. What one gets is usually not immediate (like a kingside attack, which anyone can understand), but rather a better position due to one of the enemy pieces being deflected out of the game. Very exact play is required: Morphy's masterful Game 23 is a model to study; meanwhile note that even the great Tal misplayed his "simpler" deflective sacrifice in Game 22.

On the even more counter-intuitive level, Petrosian's concept of "deflecting off the board" is very important: it may be worth a pawn just to get rid of your opponent's best developed piece! This means that, as Petrosian showed in Game 25, one must not reject out of hand exchanging queens because you lose a pawn – that might be the way to reach a winning pawn down endgame!

Chapter Five

Pawn Cracker

Let's say you have an isolated pawn at e4, and your opponent has a fine defensive duo in front of it – pawns at d6 and e6. Wouldn't it be nice if you could crack that pawn wall? Suppose you advanced your pawn to e5, and because of other elements in the position, he had to take: then you would have no pawn (you might be happy to get rid of your isolani) but your opponent would no longer have a duo, only the weak doubleton e5/e6. This might be an excellent trade: your *pawn* for his *pawn structure!*

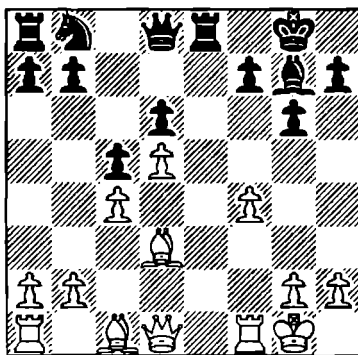
Such is the subject of this chapter: pawn sacrifices for structural and positional advantage. I managed to pull off one of these, but as usual our friends Tal and Petrosian will lead the way!

Once again we start with the simplest example – unlike in the last chapter, this one really is simple!

The first Petrosian "pawn cracker" I came across was the following impressive game I analysed for my *Beating the*

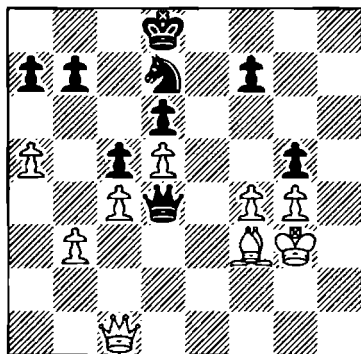
King's Indian and Grünfeld book. It's worth taking a look at the sudden break 40...g5 which completely destroys White's pawn structure:

1 c4 g6 2 ♘c3 ♙g7 3 d4 d6 4 e4 ♘f6
5 f4 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♙e2 exd5 9
exd5 ♙f5 10 0-0 ♘e4 11 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 12
♘g5 ♙e8 13 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 14 ♙d3 ♙e8



15 ♙b1? (White should play 15 f5 here with some advantage) 15...♘d7 16 a3 ♙d4+ 17 ♖h1 ♙e3 18 ♙e1 ♙xc1 19 ♙xe8+ ♙xe8 20 ♙xc1 ♙e3 21 g3 ♙e8 22 ♖g2 ♖f8 23 ♙c2 ♙e7 24 ♙e2 ♙d4 25

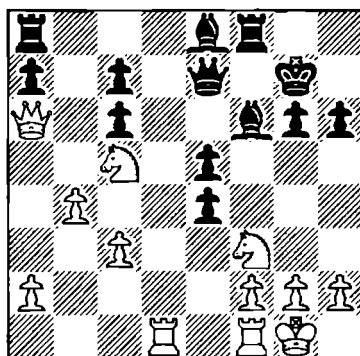
♖e1 ♜xe2+ 26 ♜xe2 ♘b6 27 b3 ♘d7 28 a4 ♘f6 29 ♙c2 ♜c3 30 ♙d1 h5 31 ♜c2 ♜d4 32 ♙f3 ♚e7 33 ♜c1 ♚e8 34 ♜c2 ♚d7 35 ♜c1 ♘g8 36 h3 ♘f6 37 g4 hxg4 38 hxg4 ♚d8 39 a5 ♘d7 40 ♚g3 g5!



(Petrosian strikes: this “pawn cracker” destroys White’s united pawns) 41 fxg5 (if 41 f5 f6) 41...♚e7 42 ♙e2 ♘e5 (the knight is now invulnerable on e5, and a typical mating attack with queen and knight ensues) 43 g6 ♘xg6 44 g5 ♚f8 45 ♚g2 ♘h4+ 46 ♚f1 ♚g7 47 ♙d1 ♘f5 48 ♚e2 ♜g4+ 49 ♚d3 ♜g1 50 ♜b2+ ♚h7 51 ♙h5 ♜g3+ 52 ♚e4 ♘d4 53 ♜d2 ♜h4+ 54 ♜f4 ♜xh5 55 ♜xd6 ♜f3+ 0-1 R.Wade-T.V.Petrosian, Belgrade 1954.

d5 8 h4 ♙f5 9 g4 ♙e6 10 ♘h3 ♜e7 11 ♘f4 ♙f7 12 ♜d2 ♘d7 13 0-0-0 0-0-0 14 ♜a5 ♚b8 15 ♘xd5 ♜e4 16 ♜xc7+ ♚a8 17 ♘c3 ♜xh1 18 ♙b5 ♜xh4 19 ♙xd7 ♙h6 20 ♘b5 ♙d5 (if 20...♙xe3+ 21 fxe3 ♙c4 22 ♜xc4 ♙xd7 23 ♜c5 b6 24 ♜c6+ ♜b7 25 ♘d6 ♜hb8 26 ♘xb7 ♜xb7 27 ♜e8+ ♜b8 28 ♜e4+ ♜b7 29 d5 wins) 21 ♜c5 b6 22 ♜xd5+ ♚b8 23 ♜d6+ ♚b7 24 ♜c7+ ♚a6 25 ♜xa7 mate, T.Taylor-G.Young, Los Angeles 2007 – but Petrosian prefers to wait for his chosen moment before he sacrifices a pawn!

4...♘f6 5 e3 d6 6 ♘gf3 ♘c6 7 ♜b3 h6 8 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 9 e4 e5 10 ♙b5 ♚f8 11 ♙xc6 bxc6 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♜a4 ♜d6 14 ♘b3 ♙d7 15 ♜d1 ♜e7 16 ♘c5 ♙e8 17 b4 ♚g7 18 0-0 ♜f8 19 ♜a6 fxe4



Black may have seven pawns to six, but five of the seven are isolated, and four of those are doubled! Black’s position is dreadful.

The **Favourable Omens** clamouring to be heard are: first, Petrosian’s knight pair, which is far superior to Black’s bishops, since the clerics are both blocked by their own shattered pawns.

One white knight is powerful and

Game 27
T.V.Petrosian-P.M.Nielsen
Copenhagen 1960
Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5 2 ♙g5 g6 3 ♘d2 ♙g7 4 c3

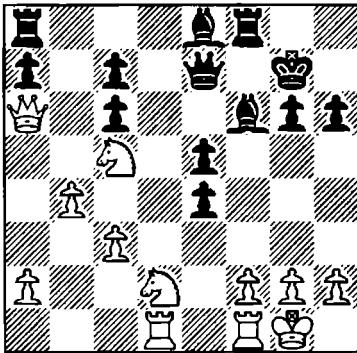
It’s possible to play more sharply – 4 e4!?! (an early King Attack sacrifice) 4...fxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♘f6 6 ♘xf6+ exf6 7 ♙e3

invulnerable on c5 – what if the other could reach a powerful and invulnerable square on e4? Would that not be worth a pawn? Certainly!

And even more tempting, the only way Black can stay a pawn up (as seen in the game) is to open the f-file for White's king's rook, adding another attacking piece!

With all these pluses one hardly needs to consider *Fritz's* number one pick (the lukewarm 20 ♖xe4), and let's go straight to Petrosian's star move!

20 ♖d2!



As mentioned above, **Mr. Fritz** wants to play the far from inspiring 20 ♖xe4, but does give Petrosian's more accurate move as its second choice – so I guess we can say semi-approved!

Needless to say, the **Author** – who wants to see every white piece attack – is firmly in the Armenian camp!

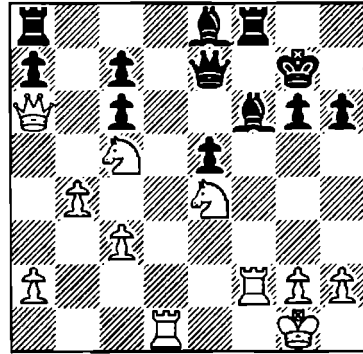
20...e3

On any other move White gets a dominant position for nothing.

21 ♖de4!

Black's cracked pawns translate to ideal knight outposts!

21...exf2+ 22 ♖xf2

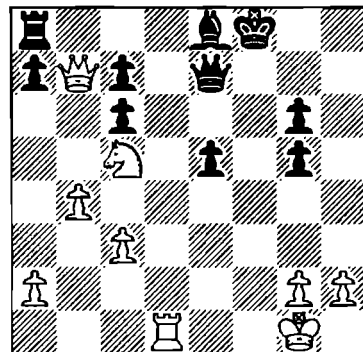


Let's assess: While White is a pawn down, he has two powerful knights, which are much stronger than the opposing bishops. White has two open attacking files for his rooks (the d- and f-files), while the black position is littered with static targets. It's not too early to say that White has a positionally won game.

22...♗g5 23 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 24 ♖xg5 hxg5

I think this must be the *ultimate pawn cracker* position!

25 ♜b7 1-0



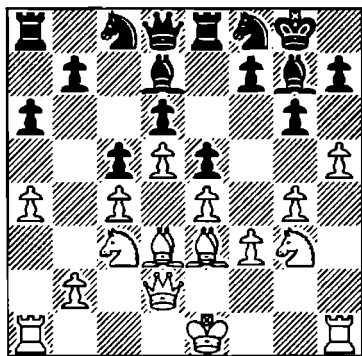
Winning a whole rook.

Risk assessment: Absolutely nil: it

should be evident that once his king's knight reaches e4, White will win by positional domination, and one minus pawn won't affect that evaluation.

Game 28
T.V.Petrosian-M.Bertok
 Bled 1961
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 e4 ♙g7 5 f3 0-0 6 ♙e3 e5 7 ♘ge2 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 g4 c5 10 h4 ♘d7 11 ♘g3 ♙e8 12 ♙d3 a6 13 h5 ♘f8 14 ♚d2 ♙d7 15 a4 ♘c8



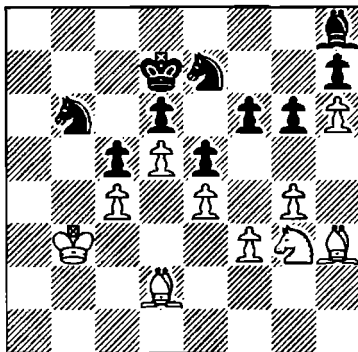
Petrosian has Black tied up, unable to break on either side, and now commences to grind.

16 ♙f2 f6 17 a5 ♙e7 18 ♙hb1 ♙e8 19 h6 ♙h8 20 ♘a4 ♘c7 21 b4 ♙xa4

The white knight was too strong, but now Petrosian has a long-term advantage in his two bishops.

22 ♙xa4 ♘d7 23 b5 ♘f8 24 ♙a2 ♙f7 25 ♙ab2 axb5 26 ♙xb5 b6 27 axb6 ♙b7 28 ♙f1 ♙xb6 29 ♙xb6 ♘xb6 30 ♚b2 ♘a4 31 ♚c1 ♘d7 32 ♙a1 ♘ab6 33 ♙xa8 ♚xa8 34 ♚c2 ♙f7 35 ♘e2 ♚a4 36 ♚xa4

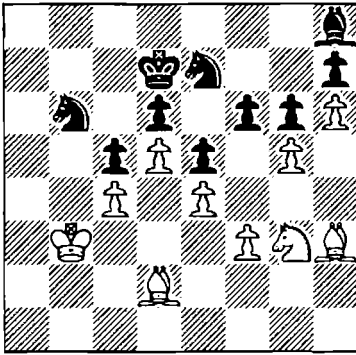
♘xa4 37 ♘g3 ♘db6 38 ♙c1 ♘c3 39 ♙e1 ♙e7 40 ♙d2 ♘ca4 41 ♙c2 ♘c8 42 ♙b3 ♘ab6 43 ♙h3 ♙d7 44 ♙d2 ♘e7?!



The only chance is 44...g5, when White is obviously better, but it's hard to find a way to penetrate Black's position.

Since Black missed this possibility, that is the first of our **Favourable Omens** – with the two bishops one needs to open the game, and if White delays too long, Black might slam the door! Therefore 45 g5+ already stands out, but is this a pawn sacrifice? After all, the g5-square is protected by a bishop. Let's put it this way: to me (in the past – before I got all this pawn sac tutelage!) this would have been a *pawn exchange*, but to Petrosian, this is a *pawn cracker sacrifice!*

The mighty Tigran is not interested in getting his pawn back – at least not right away – he is interested in breaking Black's structure into two islands, leaving him with immobile targets on both wings, all the while activating White's pieces to the utmost!
45 g5+!



Approved! Number one for **Mr. Fritz**, and number one for the **Author** – but I must candidly admit that, while I would have quickly seen this move, I doubt I would have seen Petrosian’s deep idea.

45...♙e8 46 ♖a5! ♜ec8 47 ♜h1!

Like a photograph in the developing tray, the picture gradually becomes clear. The black knights are now tied to each other by the revitalized and invulnerable white bishops; the black bishop has no legal move that evades capture; White can leisurely bring his knight to an attacking position on f6 or g5; and all Black gets out of this mess is one worthless pawn!

47...fxg5 48 ♜f2 ♖f6 49 ♖g4 ♖d8 50 ♜h3 ♖f6 51 ♖d2 ♜e7 52 ♜xg5

White recovers his pawn with a decisive advantage.

52...♖xg5

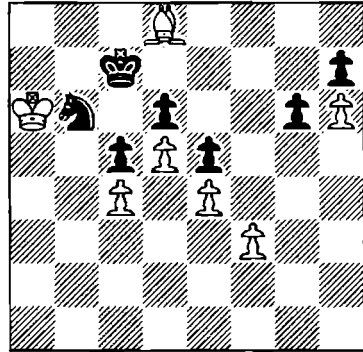
Forced, but with two bishops against two knights, with the latter lacking any outposts or possibility for counterplay, White’s win is just a question of time.

53 ♖xg5 ♜f7 54 ♖d2 ♜ec8 55 ♖xc8

♜xc8 56 ♖g5 ♜b6 57 ♖d8 ♜c8 58 ♙a4 ♙e8 59 ♖g5 ♙d7 60 ♙b5 ♙c7 61 ♙a6 ♜b6

If 61...♙d7 62 ♙b7 forces a winning pawn ending, or 61...♙b8 62 ♖d8 ♙a8 63 ♖c7! and Black is in zugzwang.

62 ♖d8+ 1-0



White obtains the opposition and wins.

Risk assessment: Absolutely nil. While Black was a pawn up for five moves, at no point in that sequence did he have any chance to use the extra pawn – his broken structure and inferior minor pieces meant that Petrosian could proceed at his leisure.

Game 29

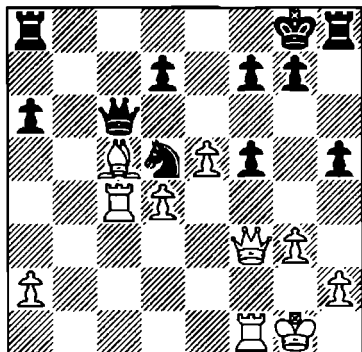
T.Taylor-D.Rensch

Agoura Hills, Los Angeles 2006

English Opening

Two other “pawn cracker” encounters are worth comparing to the main game. Here Tal disdains material equality to leave Black with long-term pawn weaknesses:

1 e4 c5 2 d3 e6 3 d3 a6 4 g3 b5 5 d4 cxd4 6 dxd4 b7 7 g2 d6 8 0-0 b4 9 e5 xg2 10 xg2 xc3 11 bxc3 d5 12 g4 f8 13 f4 h5 14 f3 d6 15 f5 dxd4 16 cxd4 c7 17 c4 bxc4 18 a3+ g8 19 d6 a7 20 c5 c7 21 ac1 c6 22 g1 exf5 23 xc4

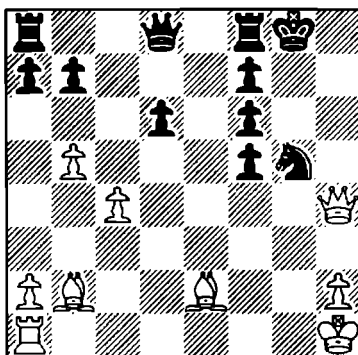


(note the similarity to the main game after 22 d4 – in both cases Black’s doubled f-pawns and missing e-pawn add up to long-term structural problems) 23...xc4 24 fcl b6 25 xc6 xc6 26 b4 h6 27 cb1 d5 28 b8+ h7 29 b7 c7 30 xc7 dxc7 31 d8 e6 32 xd7 dxc5 33 dxc5 e6 34 d5 f6 35 exf6 xf6 36 d6 g6 37 b6 f7 38 f2 e6 39 c6 e4 40 xa6 f4 41 a5 fxg3+ 42 hxg3 h4 43 c5 hxg3+ 44 xg3 e8 45 f4 a8 46 e5 e7 47 d5 a7 48 a4 g5 49 a5 g4 50 b5 g3 51 b7+ xb7 52 cxb7 g2 53 b8 g1 54 c7+ e8 55 c8+ e7 56 c7+ e8 57 d6 d4+ 58 c6 e4+ 59 b6 b4+ 60 a6 a4 61 b7 b4+ 62 b6 e7+ 63 c8 e4 64 b5+ f8 65 a6 e6+ 66 c7 e7+ 67 d7 c5+ 68 c6 e3 69 b7 e7+ 70 c8 e3 71 wf6+ g8 72 d8+ h7 73 c7+

h6 74 a7 e4 75 b6+ 1-0 M.Tal-M.Taimanov, USSR Championship, Riga 1958.

And here’s another of my games, that makes me agree with Robert Evans’ dictum that one learns from success, not from failure: since I had the successful attack against tripled pawns in my memory banks, it was easy to see a similar idea in the main game, played a year later:

1 d4 d6 2 c4 g6 3 d3 g7 4 e4 0-0 5 f4 d6 6 e2 c5 7 d3 cxd4 8 dxd4 b6 9 e3 a5 10 0-0 d6 11 d2 d7 12 d2 d8 13 h1 d5 14 b4 xc3 15 xc3 dxe4 16 b2 d6 17 b5 db8 18 d3 dbd7 19 g4 d5 20 d4 h6 21 d5 d6 22 c3 h7 23 g5 hxg5 24 fxg5 d5 25 dxf6+ exf6 26 g3 f5 27 h4+ g8 28 xf5 gxf5



(the tripled pawns appear – a very similar pawn structure and mating attack could have occurred in the main game, see the position after 28...e2 29 xf6!! gxf6 in the notes) 29 g1 1-0 T.Taylor-E.Ortiz, Los Angeles 2005. Black resigns in view of the threat 30 xg5+ and 31 h8 mate. Full analysis

is in *Beating the King's Indian and Grünfeld*.

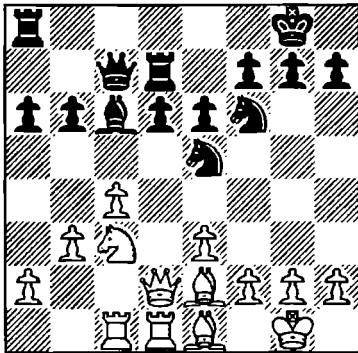
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 ♘c3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♖c7 6 e3 a6 7 ♙e2 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♙d2 d6 10 ♚c1 ♘bd7 11 ♜c2 b6 12 ♘c6!

White parachutes into the enemy position and snags the two bishops!

12...♗e8

Taking the knight ends up as material loss: 12...♜xc6 13 ♙f3 d5 (after 13...♜xc4 14 ♙xa8 d5 15 e4 Black doesn't have enough for the exchange) 14 cxd5 ♜c7 (if 14...exd5 15 ♘xd5 ♜xc2 16 ♘xe7 wins) 15 dxe6 ♙b7 16 ♙xb7 ♘g4 17 f4 ♜xb7 18 exd7 and White emerges with an extra pawn.

13 ♘xe7+ ♗xe7 14 ♗fd1 ♙b7 15 ♙e1 ♘e5 16 b3 ♗d7 17 ♜d2 ♙c6



Not a very active move, just putting the ball back in White's court. Could there be **Favourable Omens?**

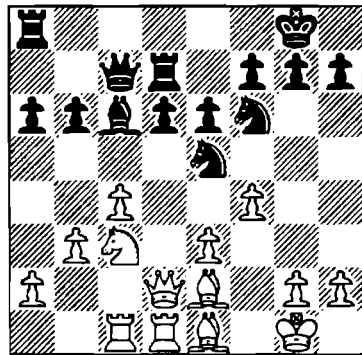
Yes! First of all, White has the two bishops – in particular, the only dark-squared bishop on the board. White has the possibility to activate this bishop, while cracking Black's kingside pawns.

Furthermore, the crack thus created (Black's central e-pawn becomes a weak f-pawn) means that White can invade d5 with his knight, and the strength of this knight can lead to a further exchange, which gives White the c6-square, deep in Black's territory!

Finally there is that "off-board" advantage, of my own personal familiarity, liking, and experience with similar f-pawn attacks. By playing f4-f5, I reach *my kind of position*, while Black will be struggling in unfamiliar waters.

Without wasting much time, I went for it!

18 f4!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The machine can't even conceive of this move, doesn't list it in its top picks, and dislikes – or disdains – my following move even more! The computer likes the creeping 18 f3, and claims plus over equals for this mousy little move – but as Gigi's lover would roar: "It's a bore!"

Needless to say, the **Author** happily gives an exclaim to himself!

18...♘g6

As 18...♖g4 19 ♗h4 leaves Black in a highly precarious position with tangled knights, he is essentially forced to allow my f-pawn to advance again with tempo!

19 f5!

The computer likes 19 ♗d3, but that's no way to crush a hedgehog!

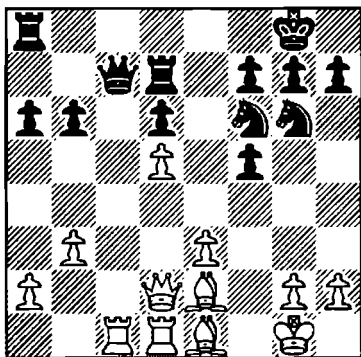
19...exf5

Black practically has to accept the sacrifice now, for if 19...♖e5 20 ♗h4 ♖e4 21 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 22 f6 with an attack, free of charge.

20 ♖d5 ♗xd5

If 20...♗d8 21 ♗d4 centralizes and forces the exchange anyway.

21 cxd5



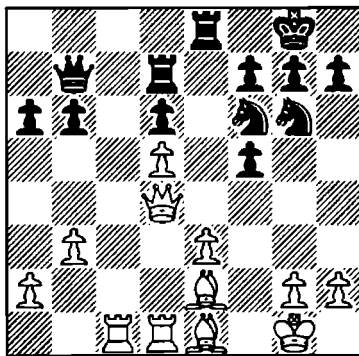
This position is reached more or less by force after the sacrifice, and this is what I had in mind when I embarked on the f4-f5 attack. I evaluated the position in White's favour then, and I hold to that now, based on the following factors: White has two bishops against two knights in a fairly open position; White has more space, and can sink a piece into the hole on c6; Black's extra doubled pawn is weak and more of a

hindrance than a help.

Interestingly enough, the computer, no matter how much time it is given to think, evaluates this same position as equals over plus; that is, a small advantage to Black.

The course of the game, and the accompanying analysis, seem to justify my opinion: White does stand a little better with best play, but the compensation is of the long-term type that the computer cannot yet understand.

21...♗b7 22 ♗d4 ♗e8



23 ♗c6?

Of course human error can creep in, or in this case, jump in! I knew my next two moves were going to be ♗f3 and ♗c6, but I didn't realize that move order was crucial – the bishop should go first: 23 ♗f3 ♖e5 24 ♗c6 b5, and thus White reaches the excellent position seen in the game.

After my actual boneheaded move, the result of the game could have been completely different!

23...b5?

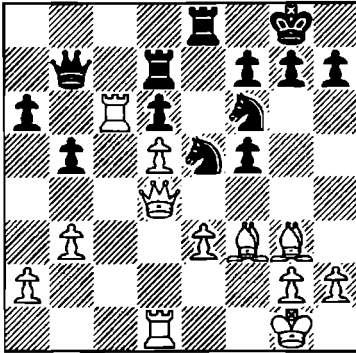
Black should win after 23...♖xd5!, as my centre pawn goes, and the

knight is immune in view of 24 ♖xd5 ♜e7.

24 ♖f3

Now everything's fine again!

24...♜e5 25 ♖g3



With every piece active, particularly the raking bishops, White has tremendous pressure for the pawn. Black, suddenly very unhappy with his position, commits a serious error while trying to find counterplay. What could he have done differently?

First of all, none of the obvious captures work, e.g. 25...♜xc6 26 dxc6 wins by fork, and 25...♜xd5 fails (now!) to the simple 26 ♖xd5.

A better try is 25...♜eg4 26 ♖xd6 ♜xe3, but after 27 ♝dc1 White's c-file domination gives White a pull.

Also reasonable is 25...♜fg4 26 ♖f4 ♜xf3+ 27 gxf3 ♜e5 28 ♖xe5 dxex5 (if 28...♝xe5 29 ♝xd6 wins back the pawn with the better game) 29 ♖b6 ♖a8 30 d6 and White looks better in the heavy piece ending in view of the passed pawn – but Black has chances to draw.

25...♝de7?

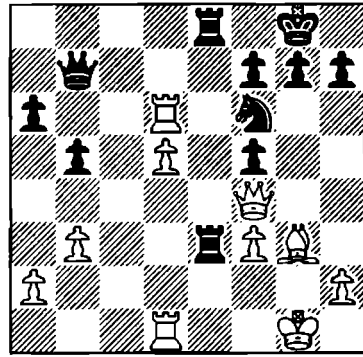
Black seeks counterplay on the e-

file, but has to open the sixth rank for White's powerful rook in the process – and furthermore must open the g-file (in order to capture on e3) which also aids White's attack.

26 ♝xd6

White is on the attack! The sacrifice on f6 is definitely "in the air".

26...♜xf3+ 27 gxf3 ♝xe3 28 ♖f4!

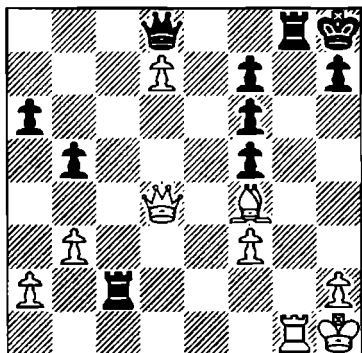


White brings the queen over to Black's poorly defended kingside, and incidentally attacks the weak f5-pawn, a legacy of the successful pawn sacrifice.

28...♖a7

Black probably missed a key check (given in the note to his next move), but it's hard to find a better move. White's attack, with constant threats of ♝xf6 and mate on the g-file, plus the passed d-pawn, is close to winning: e.g. 28...♝e2 29 ♝xf6!! gxf6 (as in Taylor-Ortiz above, the tripled f-pawns prevent Black's pieces from defending, while the open g-file is an attacking highway for White) 30 ♖h1 ♖e7 31 ♝g1 ♖h8 32 d6 ♖d8 (if 32...♖e5 33 d7! ♝d8 34 ♖h4! wins) 33 d7 ♝g8 (if 33...♖xd7

34 ♖h4 ♜e7 35 ♜g3 mates, as Black can't bring any defenders over) 34 ♜d4 ♜c2 35 ♖f4



and there is no defence, though the variations are entertaining and worth examining:

a) 35...h5 36 ♜e1 ♜c6 37 ♜d5 ♜e6 (or 37...♜c2 38 ♜xf5 ♜xa2 39 ♜xh5+ ♚g7 40 ♜h6 mate) 38 ♜xe6 fxe6 39 ♜xe6 ♜g7 (if 39...♜f8 40 ♖c7 ♜g7 41 ♜xg8+! and wins) 40 ♜e8+ ♜g8 41 ♜xh5+ ♚g7 42 ♖h6+ ♚h8 43 ♖f8 mate.

b) 35...h6 36 ♖xh6 ♚h7 37 ♜xg8 ♜xg8 38 ♜g1 and White emerges with queen vs. rook.

c) 35...♜xg1+ 36 ♜xg1 ♜c3 37 ♖h6 ♜g8 38 d8 ♜ ♜xd8 39 ♜g7 mate.

Other alternatives on the twenty-eighth move are similar, such as 28...♜c8 29 ♜c6 (but not 29 ♜xf6 ♜c2 with counterplay) 29...♜d7 30 ♜xf6!! gxf6 31 ♚h1 and again Black can't defend because of the destroyed pawns; e.g. 31...♜3e5 32 ♖h4 ♜d6 33 ♜h6 f4 34 ♜g1+ ♜g5 35 ♖xg5 and wins. Note that Black can't even attack White's queen, for if 28...♚h5 29 ♜xe3 is a back rank win.

29 ♖f2 ♜c5

29...♜e1+ 30 ♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 31 ♚g2 ♜e2 32 ♜d8+ ♚e8 was probably planned by Black, but then comes 33 ♜xe8+! and White wins the queen.

30 ♜c6!

Stronger than taking the exchange with 30 ♖xe3 – now White gets a whole piece!

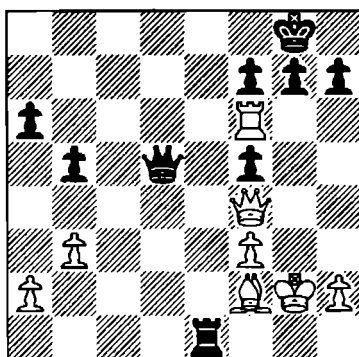
30...♜e1+

Or 30...♜a7 31 ♜xe3! ♜xe3 (worse is 31...♜xe3 32 ♖xe3 ♜xe3 33 ♜c8+ and the advancing d-pawn means that White will end up with an extra rook) 32 ♜c8+! ♚e8 33 ♜xe8+ and White comes out a piece ahead.

31 ♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 32 ♚g2 ♜xd5

I was hoping for the following variation, just so I could sac a rook too ...but either way White is winning; e.g. 32...♜e7 33 ♖xe1 ♜xe1 34 ♜b8+ ♚e8 35 ♜e6! ♜d2+ 36 ♚h3 and there are no more checks.

33 ♜xf6! 1-0



The blow we've all been waiting for! Black's kingside is destroyed – and White picks up a piece too.

Risk assessment: Despite *Fritz's*

thumbs down, I can't call this a very risky sac (unless of course, some silly human happened to play the moves in the wrong order!). The key position (after 21 cxd5), reached virtually by force after the pawn cracker sac, offers excellent long-term compensation. Furthermore, the idea of a second sacrifice on f6 – to give Black tripled pawns – is an important attacking motif that has now brought me two victories and might be good for a few more!

cided not to prevent this, since I liked the resulting position very much.”

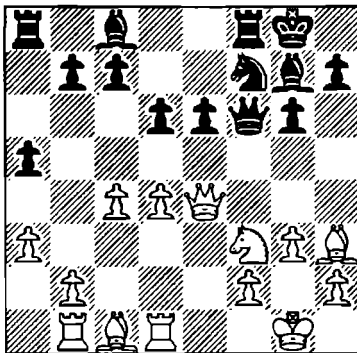
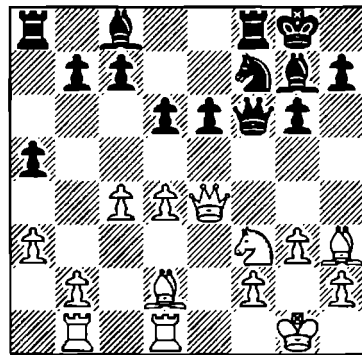
What **Favourable Omens** did Tal see? It's clear from his later comments that he feels winning the pawn weakens Black's position, and causes him to fall behind in development. After all, Black will move his d-pawn twice, while his c8-bishop remains at home.

Most important, a pawn cracker situation comes about: instead of the sound pawn structure Black has now, after winning the pawn he will have an isolated pawn, a set of doubled pawns, and three pawn islands.

Game 30
M.Tal-M.Botvinnik
 19th matchgame,
 Moscow 1960
Dutch Defence

1 c4 f5 2 d3 d6 3 g3 g6 4 g2 g7 5 d4 d6 6 c3 e6 7 O-O O-O 8 Wc2 c6 9 Ed1 We7 10 Bb1 a5 11 a3 d8 12 e4 fxe4 13 Qxe4 Qxe4 14 Wxe4 Qf7 15 Qh3 Wf6

16 Qd2!?



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The machine wants 16 e1, so that after the ...d5 and ...d5xc4 manoeuvre, White will be able to restore material equality by taking the isolated e-pawn.

Author: While I admire Tal for sacrificing a pawn in a key World Championship game, I have to go with the machine on this one: I'm afraid I see the sacrifice as completely unsound – which doesn't mean it's not a great bluff, like Stein's gambit from Game 6!

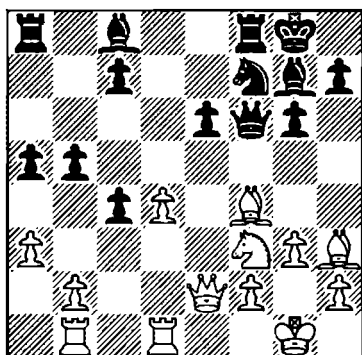
Tal comments, in his great book on the match, as follows: "With the 'threat' to win a pawn by 16...d5. I de-

16...d5!

Correct! Black wins a pawn, for White can't play 17 cxd5 in view of 17...exd5 winning a piece. One sees how badly placed White's light-squared bishop is in this variation, and Black will soon have the opportunity to exploit this bad piece placement further, as the long diagonal and particularly the f3-square are weak.

17 ♖e2 dxc4 18 ♙f4 ♘d6?

Sacrificial Shock! This defensive move allows White to reorganize his position, get counterplay, and soon the advantage. Actually, Black has a big advantage here – if he thinks of attacking, not defending. The key is the aforementioned weak long diagonal, and the solution is the bold 18...b5! which completely refutes Tal's sac.



Black defends his extra pawn, and prepares ...♙b7 with powerful threats on the light squares. The variations are quite convincing:

a) 19 a4 ♙b7 20 ♘e5 (20 axb5 ♙xf3 21 ♖xf3 g5 wins a piece for Black; this tactical point, showcasing White's weakness on the long diagonal, is a key

feature of the position) 20...g5 21 ♙d2 ♘xe5 22 dxe5 (obviously not 22 ♖xe5? ♖xf2 mate) 22...♖g6 23 axb5 ♙ad8 24 ♙xa5? (but if 24 ♙g2 ♙xg2 25 ♖xg2 ♖c2 and the queen infiltration gives Black a clear advantage) 24...♙xd1+ 25 ♙xd1 (if 25 ♖xd1 ♖e4 wins) 25...♙f3 wins the exchange and the game.

b) 19 ♙xc7 ♙b7 20 ♘e5 ♘g5 21 ♙g2 ♖e7 22 ♙xb7 (if 22 ♙b6? ♙xg2 23 ♖xg2 ♖b7+ 24 d5 ♙f5 wins decisive material) 22...♘h3+ with an attack and the better position, e.g. 23 ♖h1 (not 23 ♖g2? ♙xf2+) 23...♘xf2+ 24 ♖g2 ♘xd1 25 ♙xd1 ♖xc7 26 ♙xa8 ♙xa8 and Black emerges with a solid extra pawn.

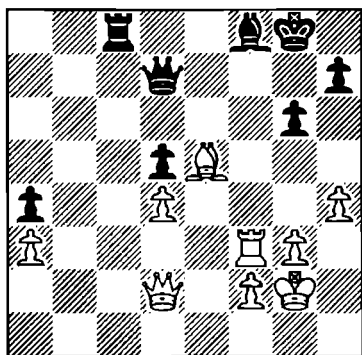
c) 19 ♖e4 ♙a7 and ...♙b7 comes with great effect anyway.

d) 19 b3 ♙b7 20 ♙g2 (once again, 20 bxc4 loses to 20...♙xf3 21 ♖xf3 g5) 20...♙d5 and Black consolidates with the extra pawn.

So Tal's position, that he "liked very much" could have quickly become a nightmare for him!

Why did Botvinnik miss the powerful 18...b5 - ? I think it was a kind of "chess blindness" exacerbated by our friend Sacrificial Shock. Normally ...b7-b5 is a very risky move in the Dutch (see Game 21) because of White's pressure on the long diagonal. Having that thought – something "everybody knows" – in his brain, Botvinnik didn't stop to notice that White's light-squared bishop – *in this particular position* – was *not* on the long diagonal!

Tal didn't seem to notice this either, and doesn't even mention 18...b5 in his notes.



Returning to the key sacrifice: as many extra points as Tal gets for sacrificing in a World Championship match game, the **Risk Assessment** has to be *extremely risky*. If Black finds 18...b5, he has both a material advantage and a better position. In fact, Black has to make two inferior moves in a row (18...d6 and 19...e8) before the sac works – but that’s the power of Sacrificial Shock! World Champion Botvinnik could not find his bearings after the unexpected “gift” – and lost the game, and soon his crown!

Game 31
M.Tal-G.Lisitsin
 USSR Championship,
 Leningrad 1956
Sicilian Defence

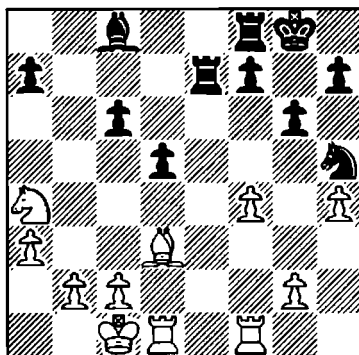
1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qf6 5 Qc3 g6 6 f4 Qc6 7 Qxc6 bxc6 8 e5 Qd7 9 exd6 exd6 10 Qe3 Qe7 11 Wf3

We recall this position from Game 14, Edelman-Taylor: there I played the unapproved 11...0-0 and won quickly,

albeit with some serious help from my opponent.

I remarked then that my sacrifice was good for one-time use, for surprise value, but that objectively the book move 11...d5 was better. On the other hand, Tal was not jarred out of his preparation – and this time I see a big 1-0 at the end of the game!

11...d5 12 0-0-0 Qf6 13 Qd4 0-0 14 h4 Bb8 15 Wf2 Bb4 16 Qxf6 Qxf6 17 a3 Wb6 18 Wxb6 Bxb6 19 Qa4 Bb7 20 Qd3 Qh5 21 Bhf1 Re7



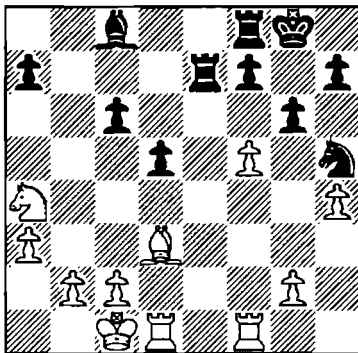
White has successfully split Black’s queenside pawns, and is set to blockade the hanging pawn couple (d- and c-pawns) with Qc5. On the other hand, Black has the advantage on the king-side, where White’s pawns are exposed to attack. In fact Black has a serious tactical threat right now: if White plays the positionally good but tactically careless 22 Qc5, Black gets the advantage with 22...Qg4!, when White loses material after both 23 Bde1 Bxe1+ 24 Bxe1 Qxf4 and 23 Qd2 Qxf4! (the knight is immune in view of the back rank mate).

How can White turn his kingside disadvantage to an advantage? I scent some **Favourable Omens!**

Since we're in the "Pawn Cracker" chapter, the reader can readily see the move: White can play f4-f5, getting rid of his weak f-pawn while destroying Black's kingside in turn! Then Black will be left with, from a to h, an isolated pawn, hanging pawns, doubled pawns, and an isolated pawn! How's that for an ultimate pawn cracker! Of course Black will be a pawn ahead, but with a pawn structure that bad, White shouldn't worry unduly about just a devalued extra pawn.

On the other hand, what if Black declines the pawn? Now that's a serious question!

22 f5



Mr. Fritz? *Approved*, number one on the machine hit parade. Does anyone want to play the contorted 22 f2 g4 23 g1?

The **Author** is, of course, all in favour of such f-pawn breaks.

22...gxf5!

After ruining his pawn structure in

this fashion, Black must fight hard to draw. I think it's much better to eschew material temptation and play 22... f8 23 g4 (or 23 f6 e5) 23... g3 24 f3 e3, when Black's active play on the e-file gives him equality.

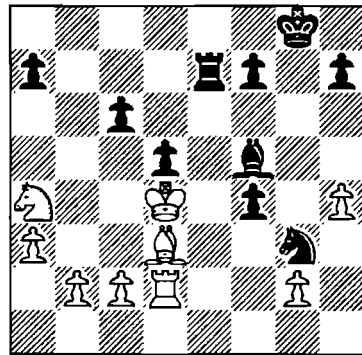
23 f8

Correct: this is a real sacrifice. White shouldn't think of taking the pawn back, as 23 x5? loses to 23... g3.

23...f8 24 xe7 xe7 25 d2!

White starts a king march that will, after one subtle mistake by Black, lead to victory.

25...g3 26 c3 f4 27 d4 f5 28 d2



White defends his second rank, but gives Black a momentary tactical chance. I think Black can make a draw here with the accurate 28... x3!. White has to capture with the pawn, for if 29 x3 e4+ wins a piece, and the same thing happens after 29 xd3 e3+ 30 d4 e4+.

So after the forced 29 cxd3 Black has 29... f5+ 30 c5 e6 31 f2 hx4 32 xf4 xg2 33 g4+ g6 and White has to reconnect Black's pawns, as otherwise the h-pawn is a good runner. The

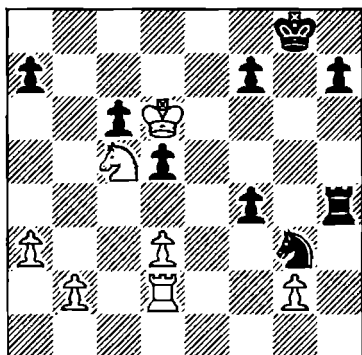
following long variations show that, with correct play, the connected passers hold the game: 34 ♖xg6+ fxg6 35 ♗xc6 ♖e3 36 ♖c3 h5 37 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 38 ♗xd5 ♗f7 39 ♗e5 g5 40 ♗f5 h4 41 ♗g4 ♗e6 42 b4 ♗e5 43 a4 ♗d5 44 ♗h3 (or 44 a5 a6 45 ♗h3 ♗c6 46 d4 ♗c7 47 b5 axb5 48 d5 b4 49 a6 b3 and draws) 44...♗c6 45 ♗g4 ♗d6 46 ♗h3 ♗d5 47 ♗g4 a6! (after the careless 47...♗d4? White wins with 48 a5!) 48 a5 ♗d6 49 d4 ♗c6 draws (but not 49...♗d5? 50 b5! and White queens with check).

While this is long and complicated, the key idea is very simple: here Black succeeds in reconnecting his pawns – in the game, Black’s pawns stay weak and isolated, and are soon picked off by Tal.

28...♞e6?!

Black takes three moves to win a pawn, but because of his bad structure, this acquisition does *not* give him a passed pawn!

29 ♖c5 ♞h6 30 ♗e5 ♖xd3 31 cxd3 ♞xh4 32 ♗d6

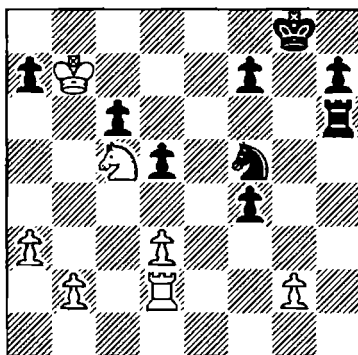


32...♞h6+

Now that Black has lost time with

his rook, exchanging pieces to enter a similar pawn ending (to the drawn one after 28...♖xd3) is very dangerous for Black; e.g. 32...♖f5+ 33 ♗xc6 ♞h2 34 ♖b3 ♖e3 35 ♖d4 ♞xg2 36 ♞xg2+ ♖xg2 37 ♗xd5 ♖e1 38 ♗e4 f3 39 ♖xf3 f5+ 40 ♗e3 ♖xf3 41 ♗xf3 (spot the difference!) 41...h5 (41...♗f7 42 b4 h5 43 b5 ♗e6 44 a4 also wins for White) 42 ♗f4 h4 43 b4 ♗f7 44 a4 ♗e6 45 a5 ♗d5 46 b5 ♗c5 47 b6! axb6 48 a6 ♗c6 49 d4 and White gets a queen, but Black does not!

33 ♗c7 ♖f5 34 ♗b7



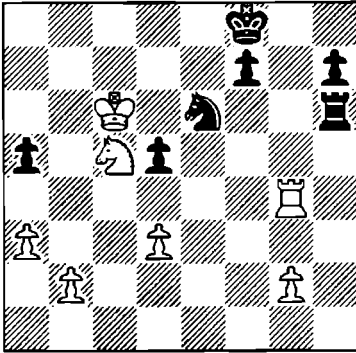
34...♖d4

The advantage of connected pawns as opposed to split pawns (the legacy of the pawn cracker sacrifice) is also seen in the following variation: 34...♞g6 35 ♗xa7 ♖e3 36 ♗b7 ♞xg2 37 ♞xg2+ ♖xg2 38 d4 ♖e1 39 ♗xc6 f3 40 ♖b3 f2 41 ♖d2 ♖f3 42 ♖f1 ♖xd4+ 43 ♗xd5 ♖c2 44 a4 – Black is still a pawn ahead, but his three weak pawns are held by White’s knight, whereas the connected white queenside pawns will advance, and it’s unclear how they can be stopped: the position appears to be a win for White, despite the pawn less.

35 ♖f2 a5 36 ♗xf4

The first weak pawn falls.

36... ♖e6 37 ♗g4+ ♕f8 38 ♕xc6



Material equality is restored, but all four of Black's remaining pawns are isolated and weak. White's advantage is clear, and Tal converts without much difficulty.

38... ♖xc5+ 39 ♕xc5 ♗e6 40 ♕xd5 ♗b6 41 b4 axb4 42 axb4 ♕e7 43 ♕c5 ♗f6 44 ♗d4 ♗f5+ 45 ♕b6 ♗f6+ 46 ♕c7 ♗f5 47 ♗e4+ ♕f6 48 ♕c6 ♗f2 49 g4 h5 50 gxh5 ♕g5 51 b5 f5 52 ♗b4 f4 53 b6 f3 54 b7 1-0

For if Black plays on with 54... ♗c2+ 55 ♕d5 f2, Tal has 56 b8 ♗f1 ♗57 ♗g3+ and mates. Perhaps Black should have played 11...0-0!?

Risk Assessment: When you observe Black's cracked up pawns after the acceptance of the sacrifice, one can see that this pawn offer is not too risky. Black's extra material is so devoid of cohesion that he often loses pawn up

endings, as in the note to move 34.

The best way for Black to fight against this sacrifice was to decline it! Then he would have maintained a reasonable game.

Summary

Most of these pawn cracker sacrifices were not very risky. The reason is that the dislocation of the enemy pawn structure gives the attacker long-term play (we saw Tal beat Lisitsin in the ending). It's always important to note not just the amount of material on the board, but the *quality* of said material. To take an extreme example, three tripled pawns are probably much worse – though numerically superior – to two connected passed pawns.

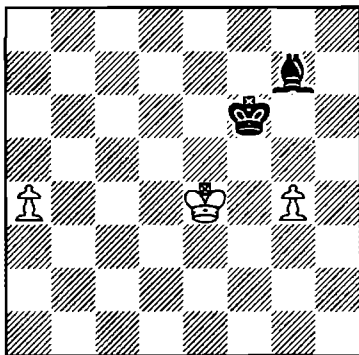
One should look for opportunities to give up (rather than defend) a weak pawn, especially if one can give it up in such a way as to create permanent weaknesses in the opposing camp. Furthermore, if doubled pawns are created, it may be possible to force tripled pawns by an additional sacrifice (as in Game 29), so as to create a wall in the opponent's position that prevents his own pieces from defending.

All in all, the pawn cracker seems a very useful and not too risky type of pawn sacrifice – but don't get carried away, as in Game 30 – unless you're Tal of course!

Chapter Six

Obstructive

The idea of the obstructive sacrifice is to force your opponent to block his own position, usually with a pawn. This is a common theme in problems, as in this famous one by H.Otten from 1892:



White plays **1 a5 ♖f8 2 ♔d5 ♗h6** and now instead of **3 ♕e4 ♗f8** and draws, White forces a self-block on Black with a timely pawn sacrifice! **3 g5+! ♗xg5 4 ♕e4 ♗h4 5 ♕f3** and wins.

Here it was the king that blocked Black's bishop, but as I say, normally

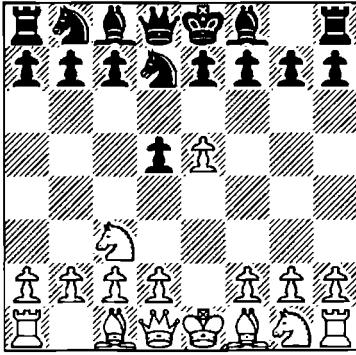
one forces a pawn to capture, but capture in such a way that it obstructs your opponent's play.

Curiously enough, this sacrifice almost always takes place (depending on who's doing the sacrificing) on e6 or e3. Furthermore, it rarely occurs outside of the opening, so this chapter has the other two exceptions to my "no opening theory rule" (we saw the first one in Game 18). These two are the first games in this section, Hector-Madsen (Alekhine's Defence), and Game 34, Grynspan-Pavlovic (King's Indian Defence). After seeing these games, one might choose not to allow such sacrifices!

Game 32

J.Hector-D.Madsen
Copenhagen 1996
Alekhine's Defence

1 e4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 e5 ♗fd7



The highest rated player in the *Big Database* who faced this position, GM Rozentalis, chose 3...d4 here and, as one sees, had no difficulty equalizing with Black: 4 exf6 dxc3 5 fxf7 cxd2+ 6 ♖xd2 ♜xd2+ 7 ♙xd2 ♙xg7 8 0-0-0 ♜c6 9 ♜f3 ♙g4 10 ♙e2 0-0-0 11 ♞he1 ♙f6 12 h3 ♙e6 13 ♙g5 ♙g7 14 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 15 a3 a6 16 ♙d3 h6 17 ♙d2 ♙d5 18 ♙e4 e6 19 ♙xd5 ♞xd5 20 ♞e4 ♜e7 21 c4 ♞f5 22 ♜c2 b5 23 b3 ♜d7 24 ♜d3 ♜g6 25 ♙e3 bxc4+ 26 ♜xc4 ♞a5 27 ♙c1 ♞d5 28 ♞e2 ♜c6 29 b4 ♞d1 30 ♞e1 ♞d5 31 ♙e3 h5 32 a4 ♞f5 33 ♞d1 ♞d5 34 ♞xd5 exd5+ 35 ♜d3 ♙f8 36 ♙d2 ♜d6 37 ♙e3 ♜c6 38 ♙d2 ♙e7 39 g3 ♜d7 40 b5 axb5 41 axb5 ♙c5 42 ♙e3 ♜d6 43 ♙d4 ♙xd4 44 ♜xd4 f6 45 ♜c3 ♜c5 ½-½ Y.Shabanov-E.Rozentalis, Ashdod 2003.

The question I must ask is, if 3...d4 is a fairly safe equalizer, and 3...♜fd7 allows a known and extremely dangerous obstructive sacrifice, why is the latter move the more popular alternative? I can't answer that, so let's move on to the ever popular **Favourable Omens!**

First, let's notice that Black's king's

knight completely blocks his queen and bishop, while also hindering his second knight! The only way to make sense of Black's cramped position is to enter a French Defence with ...e7-e6 and ...c7-c5, when Black can disentangle; e.g. 4 d4 e6 5 f4 c5 reaches a standard line of the Classical French. So the first favourable omen is obvious – it just so happens to be White's move! Since ...e7-e6 is necessary to Black's development, it's clearly in White's interest to prevent it – and this is possible with the obstructive 4 e6. Then the advancing white pawn will be too strong, but when Black takes, his doubled e-pawns will both have to move if he is to get his pieces out in any kind of efficient way – and this will cost time, which White can use for development and attack.

A further good omen is that there are elements of the pawn cracker in this sacrifice: Black's pawn structure will be broken in two.

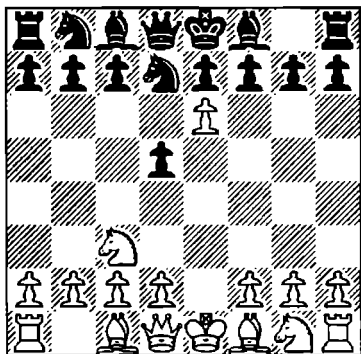
And finally, by opening the e8-h5 diagonal, Black's king position will be weakened.

According to the *Big Database*, GM Hector has played the following sac five times, scoring four wins and one (curses!) draw. I doubt he hesitated for one second before pushing his e-pawn forward.

4 e6!

Mr. Fritz? Approved! This number one pick clearly creates so much chaos in Black's position that even the machine is ready to go for it. As for the **Author**, I usually don't play 1 e4, so

I've never had this position – but if I ever get it, I'll be slamming that pawn to e6 in no time!



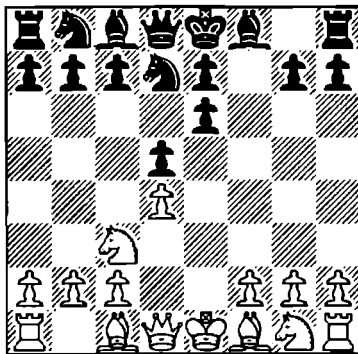
Spielmann gives an example of this very sacrifice in his book – he describes it as follows: “The obstructive sacrifice in its simplest and most familiar form!” He goes on to say, “The black pawn which will now occupy e6 is a “block” in problemist’s parlance. First of all, it prevents Black from consolidating his position against attack by playing ...e6. In principle this favours the attack. Further, the development of Black’s queen and both bishops is sadly hampered, and in the absence of a pawn at f7 the king’s field is much weakened. In addition, the extra pawn itself is a weakness, being backward on an open file.” He sums up with the following line: “On the whole, a sacrifice full of promise.”

I agree with every word!

4...fxe6 5 d4

(see following diagram)

5...c5



Spielmann’s illustrative game goes as follows: 5...♟f6 6 ♟f3 c5 – Spielmann comments: “The counter-sacrifice of the c-pawn remains ineffectual because it does not strike at the root of the evil, the shutting in of the bishops.” We will see a similar situation in the main game, but before that, let’s see how Spielmann completes the demolition of his foe! – 7 dxc5 ♟c6 8 ♟b5! (Spielmann claims a decisive advantage already, and Fritz concurs!) 8...♟d7 9 0-0 ♟c7 10 ♟e1 h6 11 ♟xc6 bxc6 12 ♟e5 g5 13 ♟d3 ♟g8 14 b4 ♟g7 15 ♟g6+ ♟d8 16 ♟f7 ♟e8 17 ♟xe6 ♟f8 18 b5 ♟e4 19 ♟xe4! dxe4 20 ♟f4!! (now that’s the way to play chess!) 20...♟xe5 21 ♟xe5 ♟d7 22 ♟d1 cxb5 23 ♟xd7+ ♟xd7 24 ♟xh6 ♟g8 25 c6 ♟e8 26 ♟xb5 1-0 R.Spielmann-S.Landau, Amsterdam 1933.

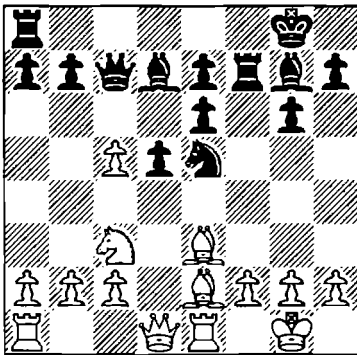
Since Landau was pretty much dead by move 8, and in the main game Madsen also faces a painful defence, what should Black try? Spielmann recommends the freeing return sacrifice 5...e5! 6 dxe5 e6 with “a much less arduous defence” – and again I agree

with the great master. The obstructive pawn is not worth keeping!

6 ♖f3 ♗c6 7 ♙b5 g6 8 ♙e3 ♙g7

Just as in Spielmann-Landau, the counter-sacrifice of the c-pawn brings no relief, as the e-pawns still obstruct! But other moves also fail to equalize, e.g. 8...cxd4 9 ♖xd4 ♗db8 (or 9...♖xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♜g8 11 ♚g4 ♖f7 12 ♙xd7 ♙xd7 13 ♚f4+ ♖e8 14 0-0-0 ♙g7 15 ♚he1 with a huge bind) 10 ♖xc6 bxc6 11 ♚d4 ♜g8 12 ♙e2, when Black can't castle and his position is a mess.

9 dxc5 0-0 10 0-0 ♚c7 11 ♜e1 ♖de5 12 ♖d4 ♙d7 13 ♙e2 ♖xd4 14 ♙xd4 ♜f4 15 ♙e3 ♜f7



White has recovered his pawn while maintaining a bind on Black's position, and now he should keep up the pressure with 16 ♚d2. Instead, Hector allows, just for a second, a tactical resource for Black.

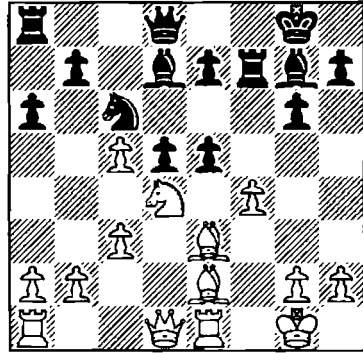
16 f4?! ♖c6?!

Black misses it! Correct is the counterstrike 16...d4!, when White can only take with the bishop, 17 ♙xd4, which allows 17...♜xf4 with counterplay.

17 ♖b5 ♚d8 18 c3

Now White's bind is even more firmly in place, and Hector does not relax again.

18...a6 19 ♖d4 e5



Black finally tries to free himself (perhaps this counter would have been better on move 5!), but must give up his important dark-squared bishop in the process. On the other hand, 19...♖xd4 20 cxd4 would have been positionally hopeless, as ...e6-e5 would then be prevented forever.

20 fxe5 ♙xe5 21 ♖f3 ♙f5

Black has no choice, as 21...♙g7 loses to 22 ♚xd5.

22 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♙d4 ♚c7 24 ♙xe5 ♚xe5 25 ♙c4 ♙e4

Black must allow the following combination, for if 25...♚c7 26 ♚xd5 e6 27 ♜xe6 ♙xe6 28 ♚xe6 ♚xc5+ 29 ♖h1 ♜af8 30 ♜f1 and White comes out a pawn ahead.

26 ♜xe4! dxe4 27 ♚d4!

White now wins technically.

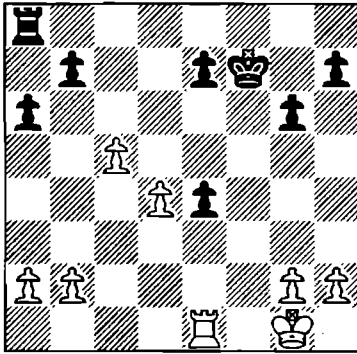
27...♚xd4+

Forced in view of 27...♚f6 28 ♜f1.

28 cxd4 ♖g7 29 ♙xf7 ♖xf7 30 ♜e1

The lasting effect of the obstructive

sac is seen, as the doubled e-pawns turn out to be a fatal weakness in the endgame.



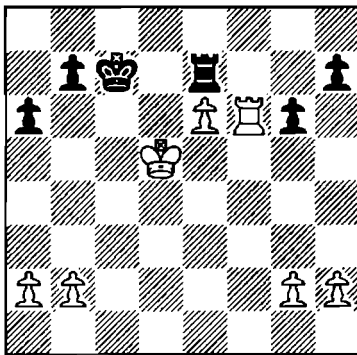
30...Nd8 31 Nxe4 e5

Or 31...xf6 32 cf2 cf5 33 ce3 cf6 34 b4 Nd5 35 a4 and White's queenside majority is decisive.

32 dxe5 ce6

White comes out two pawns ahead after 32...Nd2 33 Nb4 ce6 34 Nxb7 cxe5 35 Ne7+ cf4 36 Nf7+ ce3 37 c6 Nxb2 38 c7 Nc2 39 Ne7+ cf4 40 Nxh7.

33 cf2 cd5 34 Ne2 cxc5 35 ce3 Ne8 36 ce4 cc6 37 Nf2 Ne7 38 Nf6+ cd7 39 cd5 cc7 40 e6 1-0



White plays his pawn to e6 a second

time, with great effect!

Risk assessment: None at all – this sacrifice has been known to be very strong for over seventy years; Black's only hope is to find a good way to return the pawn.

But an even better idea for Black is to follow Rozentalis and not allow the sac in the first place!

Game 33
M.Tal-P.Kampenuss
 Latvian Championship 1958
Pirc Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 cf6 3 dc3 g6 4 ce2 dbd7 5 f4 c6 6 e5 cd5 7 de4 cg7 8 c4 d5b6 9 h4!

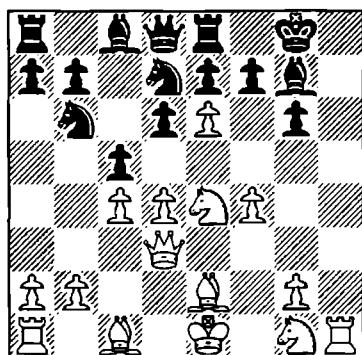
White prepares to attack, if Black castles kingside – and Kampenuss obliges! Practically anything else is better.

9...0-0? 10 h5 c5 11 hxg6 hxg6 12 Wd3 Ne8

If Tal thought for a second before playing the following obstructive sacrifice, I'd be surprised – how many **Favourable Omens** can you see in one second?

I see, after the coming 13 e6, a just moved black rook that will now be blocked by not one, but two e-pawns; a queen's bishop that has no legal moves, but even if the knight gets out of the way, will then be blocked by his new e-pawn; I see an isolated g-pawn that is already under veiled attack by the white queen; and finally I see a black king without protection, and Tal salivating!

13 e6!

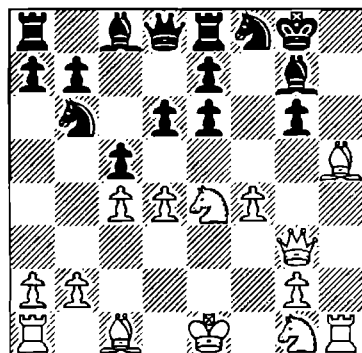


Mr. Fritz? Resoundingly ...Approved! And just in case you didn't notice, the **Author** is onboard too!

13...fxe6

Not that it would really help but, instead of blocking everything, 13...dxf8 is probably a better try, though of course White is much better after 14 exf7+ cxf7.

14 ♖g3 dxf8 15 ♙h5!



"You can't be subtle in this town!"
– Hunter S. Thompson.

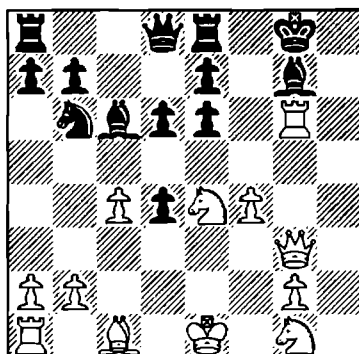
15...cxd4

Here are a couple of crunching variations if Black takes:

a) 15...gxh5 16 ♜xh5 d7 17 f5 d6 18 ♜g5 dxe4 19 ♜xg7+ c8 20 ♜g6 and mates.

b) 15...d5 16 dxc5 gxh5 17 ♜xh5, dxc4 18 d3 c7 (if 18...d7 19 ♜g5 wins) 19 de5+ xe5 20 fxe5 and the power of the obstructive sac is clearly seen – Black's own men, the doubled e-pawns, prevent any kind of defence. A typical finish would be 20...xd4 21 ♜f3+ c7 22 h6+ and mates.

16 ♙xg6 d7 17 ♜h5 c6 18 ♜g5 dxc4 19 ♜xg6



19...dxe4 20 ♜xg7+ c8

20...c7 21 ♜g8+ c7 22 ♜g7 mate.

21 ♜g5 1-0

Mate follows momentarily.

Risk assessment: None at all. One should always look for the sac on e6, if Black can't take back with a piece.

Game 34

M.Grynspan-M.Pavlovic

Lugano 1989

King's Indian Defence

1 d4 d6 2 c4 g6 3 d3 g7 4 e4 d6 5

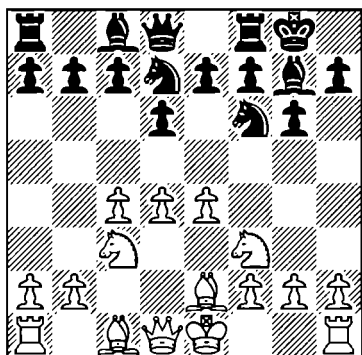
♠e2 0-0 6 ♖f3

This is a very well-known position and the normal move is 6...e5, blocking White's e-pawn – but 6...♖bd7 is playable, although it allows a well-known obstructive sacrifice. What's the best move? Let's ask two great World Champions who loved the King's Indian: Fischer and Kasparov.

According to the *Big Database*, Fischer had this position 25 times, and 23 times he chose the normal 6...e5. He only played 6...♖bd7 twice, and then only against much weaker opponents. Kasparov was even more consistent. According to the *Big Database* he had this position 54 times, and 53 (!) times chose the "no obstructive sac allowed" 6...e5, and only once – probably to avoid an early queen exchange – did he play 6...♖bd7 vs. Ulf Anderson, hoping for complications against that drawing master, but ended up with a draw anyway!

So the great majority of the time, these fighting champions preferred to allow the exchange of queens rather than an obstructive sacrifice!

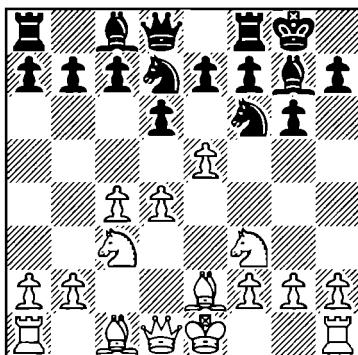
6...♖bd7



And the **Favourable Omens** appear! Black's just moved knight blocks his queen's bishop; if White can force Black to obstruct his own position even further with a pawn on e6, that bishop won't be playing for a long time! Also, as we have often seen, the obstructive sacrifice also has pawn cracker elements: once Black takes the pawn at e6, he will be left with three pawn islands and doubled isolated e-pawns.

What's not to like? Let's sac!

7 e5!

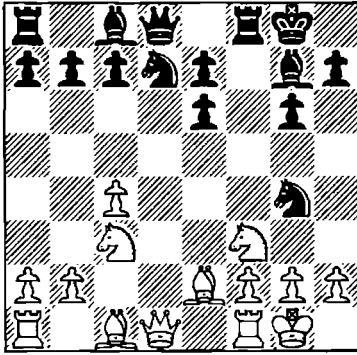


Mr. Fritz? Basically approved: the machine's first choice is, of course, the solid 7 0-0, but its second, and just slightly below castling on the evaluation meter, is the played 7 e5.

The **Author** has pleasant memories (but no longer a game score!) of having this position once in a weekend tournament. Needless to say, I played 7 e5 without a second thought and won easily.

Interestingly enough, the *Big Database* tells us that White scores 54% with the solid 7 0-0, but 57% with the enterprising 7 e5!.

7...dxe5 8 dxe5 ♖g4 9 e6 fxe6 10 0-0



There you have it! White has easy play and boardwide possibilities, while Black is cramped and blocked.

10...♖de5 11 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 12 ♔g5 ♔d7

The exchange of queens is no salvation, as after 12...♗xd1 13 ♖axd1 ♔f6 14 ♔e3 Black is still obstructed, has three pawn islands, and the queenside doesn't communicate with the king-side.

13 ♗d2 ♔c6 14 ♗e3 ♗d6 15 ♖fd1 ♗b4 16 ♖d2 ♖f7

16...♖xc4? fails to 17 ♗xe6+, when the weak pawn falls with check, meaning Black is pitching a knight as well.

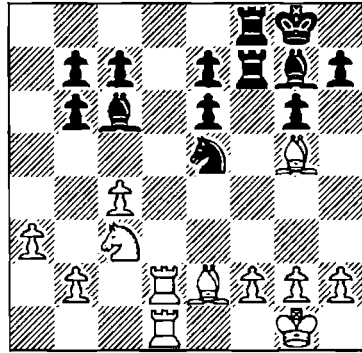
17 a3 ♗b6 18 ♖ad1

White should play 18 ♗xb6 right away to give Black another set of doubled pawns – and since he didn't, Black in turn should have played 18...♗xe3.

18...♖af8 19 ♗xb6 axb6

(see following diagram)

Now White's advantage ratchets up a notch, as Black's damaged clump of queenside pawns are another weakness.



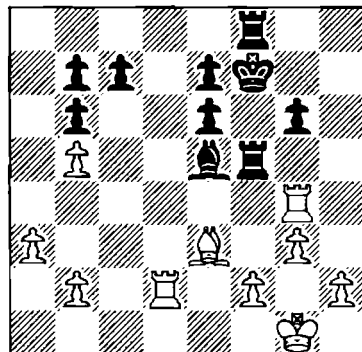
20 ♔e3 h5 21 ♖b5

Because of Black's obstructive pawns, his rook on f7 does *not* defend on the second rank – so Black has to give up the two bishops.

21...♔xb5 22 cxb5 ♖g4

Creating yet another weakness, but if 22...♖c8 White maintains his advantage with 23 ♖c2 threatening ♔xb6.

23 ♔xg4 hxg4 24 ♖c1 ♔e5 25 g3 ♖f5 26 ♖c4 ♖f7 27 ♖xg4



White recovers his pawn, but Black's bad structure remains. I won't give any more notes – it's clear that White should win now – but for entertainment value I will give the rest of

the game as presented in the *Big Database*. You may be surprised to see rooks offered with such wild abandon! I'm sure there's some kind of notation error here; if you have the time, perhaps you can figure out how the game actually played out. I think that after 34...♖b1 the game starts making sense again.

27...♙f6 28 a4 ♖d5 29 ♖c2 ♙e5 30 ♖h4 ♖d1+ 31 ♙g2 ♖e1 32 ♖e4 ♙d6 33 ♙f4 ♖e8 34 b3 ♖b1 35 ♙xd6 cxd6 36 ♖c7 e5 37 ♖xb7 ♖xb3 38 ♖xb6 ♖a3 39 ♖a6 ♖c8 40 ♖b4 ♖c2 41 b6 ♖aa2 42 b7 ♖xf2+ 43 ♙h3 ♖xh2+ 44 ♙g4 ♖ae2 45 b8♗ ♖hg2 46 ♖b3 1-0

Risk assessment: It certainly can't be very risky to play a high scoring, well-known sacrifice that the best players avoid.

Again, as in my conclusion to Game 32, I say the right way for Black is to avoid the sacrifice altogether, which in this case means playing 6...e5 – the Fischer and Kasparov-approved way. Sometimes the main line is the best!

Game 35
T.Kurosaki-T.Taylor
Los Angeles 2003
Réti Opening

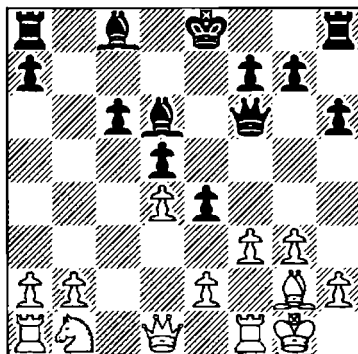
1 c4 c6 2 g3 d5 3 ♙g2 ♗f6 4 cxd5

Instead of the normal 4 ♗f3, White allows his opponent to set up a strong pawn centre.

4...cxd5 5 ♗f3 ♗c6 6 0-0 e5 7 d4 e4 8 ♗e5 ♙d6 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♙g5 h6 11 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 12 f3

White tries for counterplay against

the black centre, and hopes to gain a tempo off the queen after the expected 12...exf3 13 ♖xf3. But I saw **Favourable Omens!**



First, White's last move weakened e3, and that is the key "obstructive sac square" when Black is doing the sac'ing. By pushing my pawn to that square, I can divide White's position in two; his cramped kingside will not communicate with his queenside, and furthermore, Black will have targets at d4 and b2.

Let's give Spielmann the floor: "As a rule the obstructive sacrifice will have to be of such a nature that its effect will be felt principally in the centre. For the centre is the junction of all lines of development, and any obstruction set up there will be felt first."

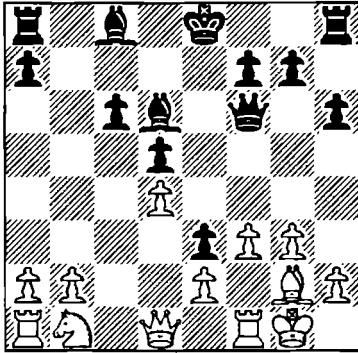
It's clear that my pawn on e3 – a vital central square – will be a "bone in the throat" that will affect all central play, and in general increase Black's initiative. Without hesitating very much, I went for it!

12...e3!

Mr. Fritz? Approved! The number

one pick, and the only way Black can play for an edge, as other moves surrender his central advantage.

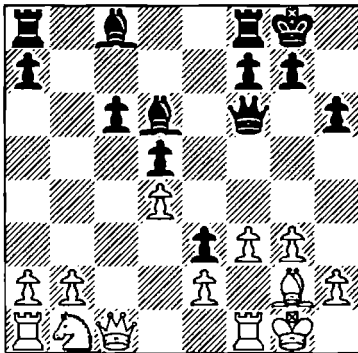
One sees that the **Author** has already given himself an exclamation point!



13 ♔c1

White forks two pawns, so I castled and gave him his choice!

13...0-0



14 ♕xc6

Clearly the e-pawn is the more valuable of the two, but White can't take it for tactical reasons: 14 ♕xe3 c5 15 ♘d2 (both 15 dxc5? ♕e5! and 15 ♗d1 cxd4 16 ♗xd4 ♕c5 lose quickly in view

of Black's threats on the dark squares) 15...cxd4 16 ♕f2 ♖e8 and Black has recovered his pawn with attack, while White still has serious weaknesses at e3 and e2.

Note that an obstructive sacrifice usually works by forcing an enemy pawn to block a key square – here, Black gives up a secondary pawn while his advanced e-pawn performs the obstructive duties.

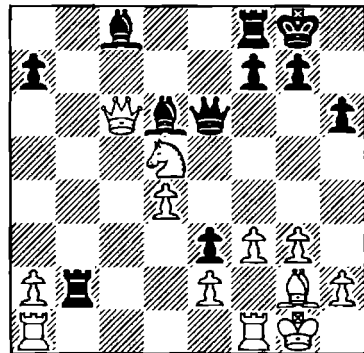
14...♗b8

This position reminds me of Game 22, Tal-Benko, where White's pawn on e6 cut Black's position in two.

15 ♘c3

If 15 ♕xd5 ♗xb2 with strong threats on the seventh rank.

15...♗xb2 16 ♘xd5 ♕e6



17 ♗fe1

Other moves are no better:

a) 17 ♘f4 ♕xf4 18 ♕xe6 ♕xe6 19 gxf4 ♕xa2 with a much superior ending.

b) 17 f4 ♗xe2 18 f5 ♗xg2+ 19 ♔xg2 ♕d7 20 ♕b7 (if 20 ♕c4 ♕e4+ 21 ♔g1 e2 22 ♗fe1 ♕e5 wins material) 20...♕e8 21 ♗ac1 e2 22 ♗fe1 ♕e4+ 23 ♔f2 ♕xf5 24

$\text{♞xe2 ♜xd4+ 25 ♝e3 ♙e4}$ and Black has a tremendous attack for the exchange.

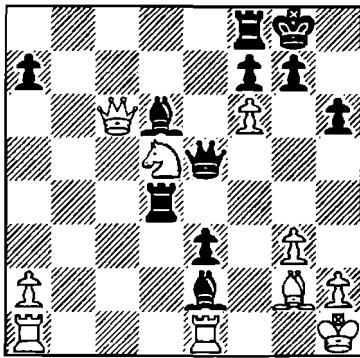
17...♞d2 18 f4 ♞xd4

Black recovers his material with advantage – the black pawn on e3 is still a powerful wedge.

19 f5 ♜e5 20 f6 ♙g4 21 ♖h1

White overlooks the following blow. Better is 21 fxc7 ♝xc7 when the first player can still resist despite Black's evident advantages of space and the two bishops.

21...♙xe2!



A surprising back rank combination. Now the obstructive black e-pawn has become even more powerful in its new role as a passed pawn, just two squares from queening – Black's advantage is decisive.

22 ♝e7+

The bishop is immune: $22 \text{ ♞xe2 ♞c4! 23 ♞ae1}$ (or $23 \text{ ♜xc4 ♜xa1+ 24 ♞e1 ♜xe1+ 25 ♙f1 ♞e8}$) $23...♞xc6 24 \text{ ♞xe3 ♜b2 25 ♝e7+ ♙xe7 26 fxe7}$ (if 26 ♙xc6 ♜xf6 wins easily) $26...♞e6 27 \text{ ♞xe6 fxe6 28 exf8♜+ ♝xf8 29 a4 ♝e7 30 ♙h3}$ (if 30 ♙d5 ♜d2 wins a piece) $30...e5$ and Black's material advantage plus passed

pawn is decisive.

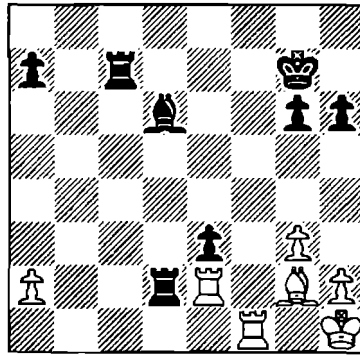
22...♖h8 23 fxc7+ ♝xc7 24 ♝f5+ ♜xf5 25 ♞xe2 ♞c8 26 ♜b7 ♞c7 27 ♜b3 ♞d3 28 ♜a4 ♞d2 29 ♞f1

White can't capture the extremely annoying pawn: after $29 \text{ ♞xe3 ♞xg2 30 ♝xc2 ♞c2+ 31 ♖h1 ♜f2 32 ♜d4+ ♖h7 33 ♜e4+ ♝g8 34 ♜g4+}$ (or 34 ♜e8+ ♙f8) $34...♖f8$ White is out of checks, and has no reasonable defence to mate.

29...♜d3 30 ♜g4+ ♜g6 31 ♜xc6+

If 31 ♜f3 Black continues to defend his passed pawn by tactical means, and wins after $31...♞cc2 32 \text{ ♞xd2 exd2}$.

31...fxg6 0-1



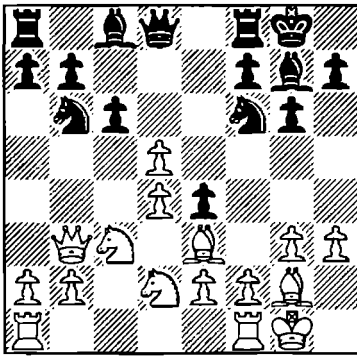
White lost on time, but there are no saves. Black wins slowly but surely after $32 \text{ ♞xd2 exd2 33 ♞d1 ♙b4}$, while if White takes the pawn, Black can force a winning pawn ending: $32 \text{ ♞xe3 ♞cc2 33 ♙e4}$ (if $33 \text{ ♞e6 ♞xg2 34 ♞xd6 ♞xh2+}$ and mate next) $33...♞xh2+ 34 \text{ ♝g1 ♙c5 35 ♙xc2 ♞xc2 36 ♞fe1 ♞c3 37 ♝f2 ♞xe3 38 ♞xe3 ♝f6 39 ♝f3 ♙xe3 40 ♝xe3 ♝g5 41 a4 a5}$ and wins according to Bahr's rule – Black will play $...h5-h4$, exchange pawns, leave the g-pawn on g6, and run over to the a-pawn, e.g. 42

♙f3 h5 43 ♘g2 h4 44 ♘h3 hxg3 45 ♙xg3
 ♙f5 46 ♘h4 ♙e4 47 ♘g5 ♘d4 48 ♙xg6
 ♙c4 49 ♙f5 ♘b4 50 ♙e4 ♙xa4 51 ♘d3
 ♘b3 52 ♘d2 ♘b2 etc.

Risk assessment: Once again, not very risky. The pawn on e3 so obstructs the white forces that Black's compensation is evident from the start.

Game 36
J.Pelikan-M.Najdorf
 Buenos Aires 1945
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♙g7 4 g3 0-0 5
 ♙g2 d6 6 0-0 ♘bd7 7 ♘c3 e5 8 h3 c6 9
 ♙e3 e4 10 ♘d2 d5 11 ♗b3 ♘b6 12 cxd5



At this point, Black can sacrifice a pawn by taking with a piece on d5 – or he could defend his centre with the “solid” 12...cxd5. Is that latter course very appetizing? Then White has a good reversed French, and after 13 a4 a5 14 ♖ac1 ♙e6 15 ♖c2 ♖c8 16 ♖f1 ♘e8 17 ♘b5 ♖xc2 18 ♖xc2 ♘d6 19 ♙f4 ♘bc4 20 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 21 e3 White was better with strong queenside pressure in

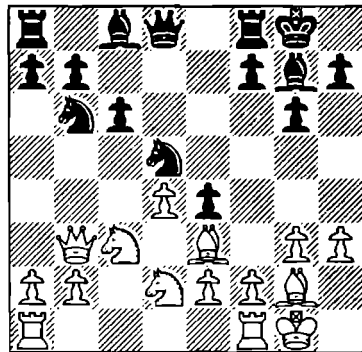
A.Esposito-M.Czerniak, Quilmes 1945.
 Najdorf isn't looking for such a defensive game, and besides, Don Miguel sees **Favourable Omens!**

First, if Black sacrifices, the only way White can win a pawn is by allowing the exchange of his dark-squared bishop for a knight. We've had a lot of discussion about this already in this book, and I may seem to be quite cavalier about this exchange – but here, where Black's king's bishop is active, the dark square mojo is indeed operating!

Second, in order to keep the sacrificed pawn, White must take back on e3 with a pawn, creating doubled pawns on the e-file – ah, there's our obstruction! As usual, these doubled pawns prevent White's queenside from communicating with the kingside.

Finally, because White has already played h2-h3, the exchange on e3 will lead to a weakening of the g3-pawn, and of White's kingside in general.

That's enough for Najdorf!
12...♘fxd5



Mr. Fritz? *Approved*, and a new re-

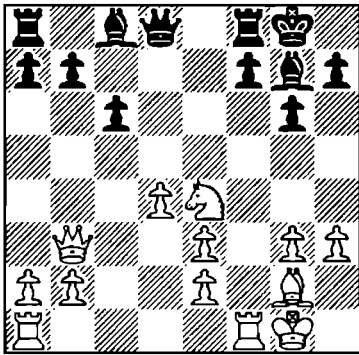
cord: every single sacrifice in this chapter is approved by the mechanical monster! Someone who knows much more about computers than I do will have to explain why perfectly good sacrifices of other types are unapproved, while the machine loves the obstructive!

Meanwhile, the **Author** happily goes along with Miguel!

13 ♖xd5

13 ♖cxe4 ♖xe3 14 fxe3 is similar to the game.

13...♖xd5 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe3 15 fxe3

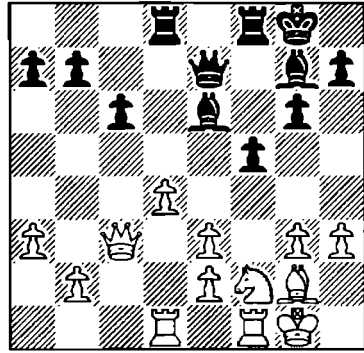


White keeps the extra pawn (if 15 ♗xe3 ♖xd4 and Black is better), but it's clear that the glaring weaknesses at e3 and g3 (both dark squares) are going to be long-term problems.

15...♗e7 16 a3 ♖f5 17 ♖f2 ♖ad8 18 ♖ad1

A better chance might be 18 e4 ♖c8 19 e3 c5 20 d5 ♗c7 21 ♖h1 c4, but obviously Black's dark square bind is worth more than a single pawn minus – and what is that white knight doing on h1?

18...♖e6 19 ♗c3 f5!



20 b4

If White tries to break free, Black is ready with tactical blows; e.g. 20 e4 fxe4 21 ♖xe4 ♖xf1+ 22 ♖xf1 ♖xh3! or 22 ♖xf1 ♖xh3 23 ♖xh3 ♗xe4 and in both cases Black regains his pawn with the better game.

20...♖h6 21 ♖d3

21 e4 fxe4 22 ♖xe4 ♖xh3 is the same trick.

21...b5! 22 ♗xc6

White swallows the bait and is quickly reeled in. Better is 22 ♗c5 ♖f7 23 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 24 ♖d1 (if 24 ♖xc6 ♖c4 25 ♖c3 ♖xe3 and White's position collapses) 24...♖c4 and Black wins material, but White can at least struggle on by giving up the exchange with 25 ♖f2.

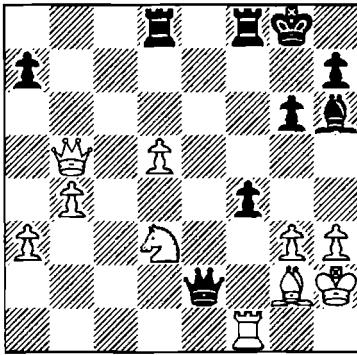
22...♖c4!

Black keeps the queens on and goes over to the attack, while White's disconnected and obstructed pieces can't mount any kind of effective defence.

23 ♗c5 ♗g5 24 ♖h2

If 24 ♖c3 ♗xg3 wins.

24...♖xd3 25 ♖xd3 ♗xe3 26 d5 ♗xe2 27 ♗xb5 f4!

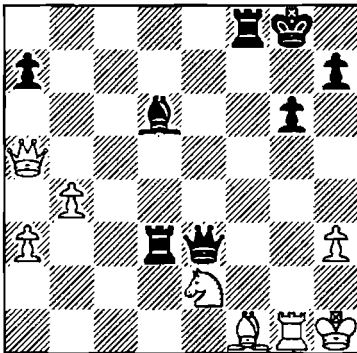


The dark-squared bishop breaks through.

28 gxf4 ♖xf4+ 29 ♔h1 ♖g3 30 ♖g1 ♖f3!

Stylish!

31 ♗a5 ♜df8 32 ♜c1 ♗d2 33 d6 ♖xd6 34 ♜e2 ♜d3 35 ♖f1 ♗e3 0-1



White resigns, for if 36 b5 ♗xh3+ 37

♖xh3 ♜xh3+ 38 ♔g2 ♜h2 mate, while 36 ♜g3 ♜xf1 37 ♜xf1 ♗xg3 38 ♗d8+ ♔g7 39 ♗d7+ ♔h6 is a simple loss as White has no more checks.

Risk assessment: As seems to be the norm for games in this chapter, not very risky: Black's two bishops, and White's permanent weaknesses and obstructed position, all add up to the fact that Black always had good play for his minor investment.

Summary

I am truly amazed that *Fritz* liked all these obstructive sacs. In general, if one can break up the enemy pawn structure while obstructing most of his pieces, you can sac with a clear conscience, and might even be blessed that night with a mechanical pat on the back! Note that while one usually forces an enemy pawn to do the obstructing, there are cases, as in Game 35, where the attacking player can use his own pawn to obstruct the opponent's position.

Looking from the other side of the board, if you are Black and know that in a certain opening position (as in Game 32's Alekhine Defence or Game 34's King's Indian) an obstructive sac might be coming – don't allow it!

Chapter Seven

Preventive

The preventive sacrifice is easily described: the attacker gives a pawn to prevent his opponent from castling. Clearly this sacrifice only occurs early in the game.

Let's start with a very simple example.

Game 37
P.Morphy-A.Morphy
New Orleans 1849
Evans Gambit

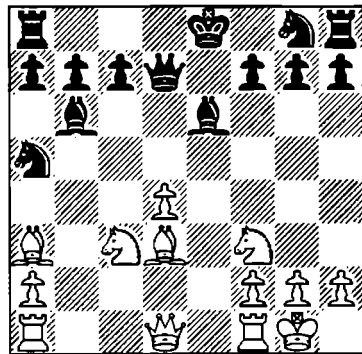
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♙c5 4 b4
♙xb4 5 c3 ♙c5 6 d4 exd4 7 cxd4 ♙b6 8
0-0 ♘a5 9 ♙d3 d5 10 exd5 ♗xd5 11
♙a3 ♙e6 12 ♘c3 ♗d7

Black is about to castle queenside; for example if White plays the passive 13 h3? then 13...0-0-0 and Black stands well with his safe king and extra pawn.

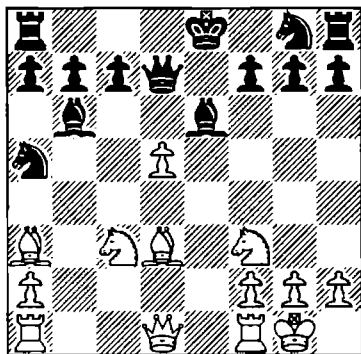
The young Paul Morphy has other ideas – he sees **Favourable Omens** and wants to make sure his foe – that is, his

father (!) – will not castle in this game. The most important omen is the open e-file, blocked only by the e6-bishop – and this piece can be attacked! After the planned 13 d5, Black must move said bishop and allow a powerful check, when his king will be caught in the crossfire of White's pieces. Note a further favourable omen is White's lead in development.

Showing no respect for his elders, Paul attacks!



13 d5!

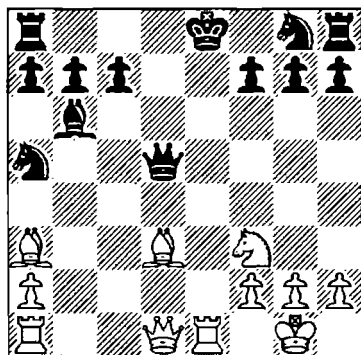


Mr. Fritz? Approved, number one pick. As for the **Author**, I'm all in favour of this blow – but I'm getting a little worried about what my son might do in a few years!

13...♙xd5

White wins a piece after 13...0-0 14 ♖e5 ♜e8 15 dxe6 ♜xe6 16 ♜e1, while also fatal are 13...♙f5 14 ♜e1+ ♔d8 15 ♖e5 and 13...♙g4 14 ♜e1+ ♖e7 15 ♖e5, with material dropping off the board in both cases.

14 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 15 ♜e1+ 1-0



The e-file is open and there is no defence to this deadly check: if 15...♙d7 16 ♙b5+ wins the queen, while if

15...♙d8 16 ♙e4 ♜xd1 (or 16...♜d7 17 ♜xd7+ ♙xd7 18 ♜ad1+ ♙e6 19 ♙c2+ ♙f6 20 ♙b2+ ♙d4 21 ♙xd4 mate) 17 ♜axd1+ ♙c8 (or 17...♙e8 18 ♙c6 mate) 18 ♙f5+ ♙b8 19 ♜d8 mate.

Risk assessment: Absolutely nil: this is a basic preventive sacrifice that should be in the armoury of all attacking players.

Game 38

P.Morphy-T.Hampton

London 1858

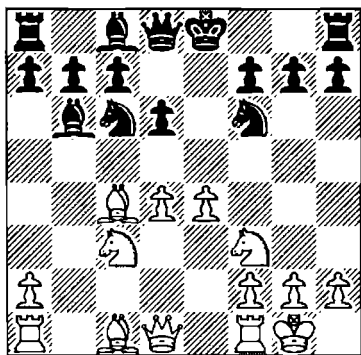
Evans Gambit

I don't think this next Morphy win is much more complicated than the last one, but for some reason, it completely confused my computer! Let's take a look.

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♙c4 ♙c5 4 b4 ♙xb4 5 c3 ♙a5 6 d4 exd4

Short wins like this game are why people don't play this way any more! The modern recipe is 6...d6 7 ♜b3 ♜d7 8 dxe5 ♙b6 (we're seeing a well-prepared simul opponent here!) 9 exd6 ♖a5 10 ♜b4 ♖xc4 11 ♜xc4 cxd6 12 0-0 ♖f6 13 ♙a3 0-0 14 e5 ♜g4 15 ♖bd2 ♖h5 16 ♜xg4 ♙xg4 17 ♙xd6 ♜fc8 18 c4 ♖f4 19 ♜ab1 ♙f5 20 ♜b3 ♙e6 21 g3 ♖e2+ 22 ♙g2 ♙xc4 23 ♖xc4 ♜xc4 24 ♜e1 ♜c2 25 ♜f1 ♜xa2 26 ♖g5 ♜c8 27 ♜f3 ♖d4 28 ♜d3 ♜cc2 29 ♖e4 ♖f5 30 g4 ♖e3+ 31 ♜xe3 ♙xe3 32 ♙g3 ♜c1 33 ♜xc1 ♙xc1 34 f4 ♜e2 35 ♖c5 b5 36 f5 ♙a3 0-1 R.J.Fischer-F.Parham, New Orleans (simul) 1964.

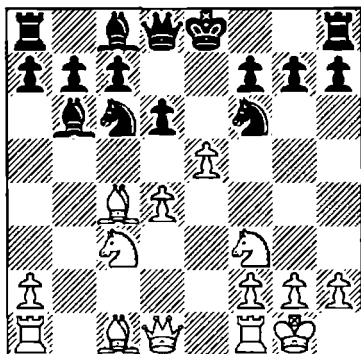
7 0-0 ♙b6 8 cxd4 d6 9 ♖c3 ♖f6



Black is about to castle, while retaining the extra gambit pawn. Should we let that happen? Certainly not, and Morphy has **Favourable Omens** on his side:

First, White leads in development, so any opening of the game will favour him. White has a strong pawn centre, and either pawn can move forward with attack. Finally, and most important, White can practically force the a3-f8 diagonal open, which means he can prevent Black from castling, and that's exactly what White wants.

10 e5!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! Not even

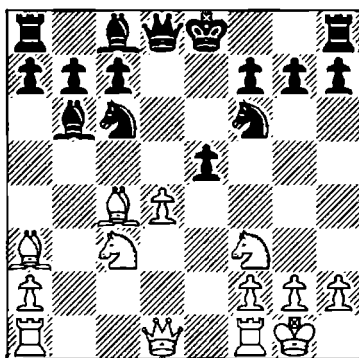
mentioned by *Fritz*, which claims White loses his advantage, and wants 10 ♖d3, 10 ♜e1 or 10 ♙g5 – none of which is active enough for an Evans Gambit player.

To the **Author**, Morphy's attacking blow is obvious, and I would have played it in a heartbeat. It's clear that once the black king is trapped in the centre, mayhem will follow.

10...dxe5

Since the alternative 10...♘d7 loses to 11 ♙g5, and other knight retreats look even worse, Black has to open the fatal diagonal.

11 ♙a3

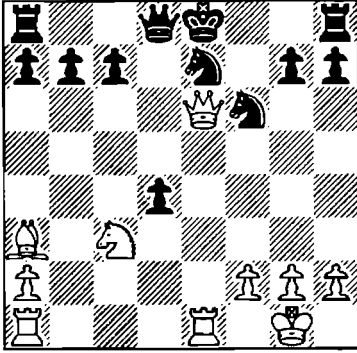


Looks great to me, though the computer quickly goes to slight advantage to Black! But before you follow *Fritz* on this one, you might want to know that Paul Morphy scored 3-0 from this position!

11...♙g4

The other Morphy wins continued as follows: 11...♙xd4 12 ♜b3 ♙e6 (if 12...♜d7 13 ♜a1 ♘a5 14 ♘e5 ♘xb3 15 ♘xf7+ ♜e6 16 ♙e6 ♙xe6 17 ♘xh8 0-0-0 18 ♜xe6 ♙xc3 19 axb3 ♜xh8 20

♖d1 and White should win the exchange up ending) 13 ♖xe6 fxe6 14 ♜xe6+ ♗e7 15 ♜xd4 exd4 16 ♜fe1 and now the games diverge:



a) 16...♗d7 17 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 18 ♜xe7+ ♗d8 19 ♖d1 b6 20 ♜xd4+ ♗c8 21 ♜b5 ♗b8 22 ♜xc7 ♜e8 23 g3 a6 24 ♖d6 ♗e4 25 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 26 ♜e7+ ♗c8 27 ♜xe4 axb5 28 ♜e8+ ♗b7 29 ♜xa8 1-0 P.Morphy-C.Golmayo Zupide, Havana (simul) 1864.

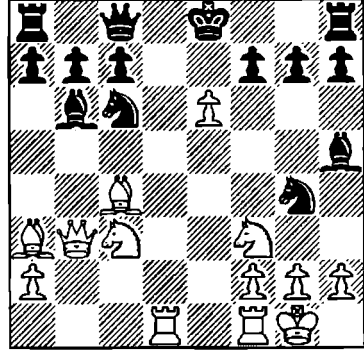
b) 16...♗fg8 17 ♜d5 ♗d7 18 ♖xe7 (18 ♜e4! was simpler) 18...♜xe6 19 ♜xe6 ♗d7 20 ♜ae1 ♜e8 21 ♜6e4 (and here 21 ♜6e5 c6 22 ♖d6) 21...c6 22 ♜xd4 cxd5 23 ♜xd5+ ♗c6 24 ♖d6+ ♗c7 25 ♜c1+ ♗b8 26 ♖h4 ♗h6 27 ♖g3 ♗a8 28 h3 ♗f5 29 ♜d7 g6 30 ♜cc7 ♗xg3 31 fxg3 ♜b8 32 ♜xh7 ♜xh7 33 ♜xh7 a5 34 h4 ♜g8 35 g4 b5 36 h5 a4 (36...gxh5 37 gxh5 b4 38 ♜f7 a4 39 ♜f4 ♜h8 40 g4 also wins for White) 37 h6 b4 38 ♜g7 ♜h8 39 h7 b3 40 ♜g8+ ♗b7 41 ♜xh8 b2 42 ♜b8+ ♗xb8 43 h8♜+ 1-0 P.Morphy-C.Stanley, New York (blindfold) 1857.

12 ♜b3

Every white piece attacks, and the black king has nowhere to run – even

the machine sees White's advantage now.

12...♖h5 13 dxex5 ♗g4 14 ♜ad1 ♜c8 15 e6!



15...f6

Obviously opening the e-file is fatal, but now White's passed pawn leads the mating attack.

16 ♜b5 ♖g6 17 ♖d5 1-0

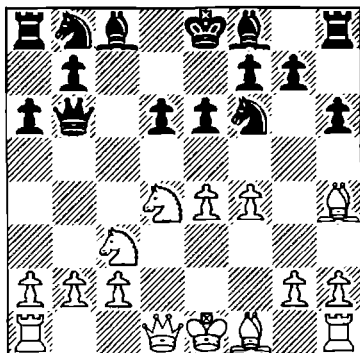
There is no defence; for example 17...a6 18 ♖xc6+ bxc6 19 ♜xc6+ ♗d7 20 ♜xd7 mate.

Risk assessment: Despite the inexplicable "unapproved" from our mechanical friend, from the human point of view, I can't see any major risk here. The black king is caught in the centre, and White's active pieces can attack it: end of story!

On the other hand, it would have been very risky indeed to play any of the *Fritz*-approved moves, all of which allow Black to castle and perhaps win eventually with his extra pawn. This is one more case where the sacrifice is positionally required, and so not risky – while the timid, non-sacrificing moves actually risk loss.

Game 39
M.Tal-G.Tringov
 Munich Olympiad 1958
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♟f6
 5 ♜c3 a6 6 ♙g5 e6 7 f4 h6 8 ♙h4 ♚b6



Black enters the famous Najdorf Poisoned Pawn variation, but with 7...h6 and 8 ♙h4 thrown in – what minor reverberations this has for the variation I don't know, and evidently Tal didn't either – so he creates confusion by saving his b-pawn while offering his f-pawn!

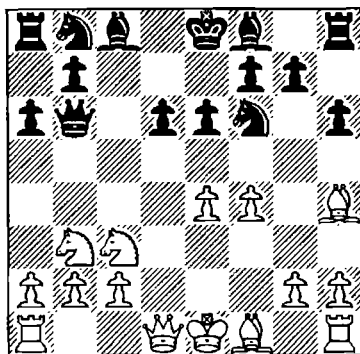
What **Favourable Omens** did Tal see? I'm sure the most important one was the preventive aspect of the sac: as played out in the game, Black will not be able to castle kingside – this becomes clear after three more moves (i.e. after 12 ♙xd6).

Second, there is the confusion I mentioned – had Tal sac'ed the b-pawn, his opponent would probably have been well prepared. The f-pawn

offer tilts the whole position!

Tal counted on surprise, and it worked!

9 ♜b3



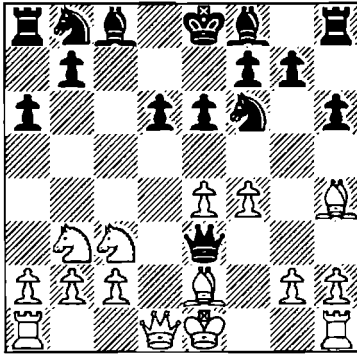
Mr. Fritz? Resoundingly *unapproved*.

The **Author** sees the surprise value of the move, but still cannot approve it – my guess is that Tal missed both a possible tactic (10...♜xe4) and a possible strategical idea (while kingside castling is prevented, Black may be able to castle queenside). In short, I think the sacrifice is unsound, though still good for surprise value.

Later on, no doubt after studying the position at home, Tal came up with a strong line for White: 9 a3 ♜c6 (9...♚xb2 10 ♜a4 traps the queen) 10 ♙f2 (keeping all his pawns – this counter is not available when the bishop is on g5) 10...♚c7 11 ♚f3 ♙e7 12 0-0-0 and White obtained a typical attacking position and went on to win as follows: 12...♙d7 13 g4 g5 14 ♜xc6 ♙xc6 15 fxg5 hxg5 16 ♙d4 ♜h6 17 h4 ♜d7 18 h5 ♚a5 19 ♙e2 b5 20 ♜hf1 f6 21 ♜a2 ♚c7 22 ♚b3 ♜f7 23 ♚e3 ♙g8 24 ♜b1 ♜e5 25 ♜c3 ♜g7 26 ♜d2 ♜b8 27

♖fd1 ♙e8 28 ♘a2 a5 29 ♗c3 ♗xc3 30
 ♙xc3 ♜a8 31 b4 ♙c6 32 bxa5 ♙xe4 33
 ♙b4 ♜f7 34 ♘c3 ♙c6 35 ♘xb5 ♙xb5 36
 ♙xb5 d5 37 c4 ♜b8 38 a6 ♜hh8 39 ♜a2
 ♙xb4 40 axb4 dxc4 41 ♜d7+ ♘xd7 42
 ♜xd7+ ♜f8 43 a7 1-0 M.Tal-F.Olafsson,
 Candidates Tournament, Bled 1959.

9...♗e3+ 10 ♙e2



10 ♗e2 is not in the spirit of the sac:
 after 10...♗xf4 11 ♙g3 ♗g5 12 ♘d2 ♘c6
 13 ♘f3 ♗a5 14 0-0-0 e5 15 h3 ♙e6 16
 ♜b1 (so far H.Alcota-G.Rosenbluth,
 Santiago 1992) Black was much better,
 and could have consolidated his ad-
 vantage with 16...b5.

10...♗xf4

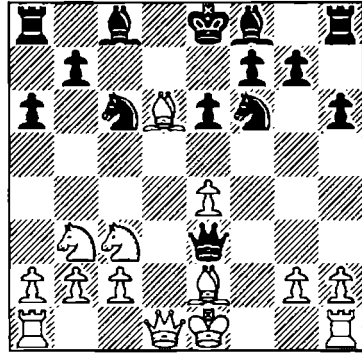
Perhaps even stronger is 10...♘xe4
 11 ♘xe4 ♗xf4 and Black regains his
 piece. I doubt Tal saw that surprising
 turn, for it's hard to see any compensa-
 tion for White here: if 12 ♘xd6+ ♙xd6
 13 ♙g3 ♗b4+ 14 c3 ♙xg3+ and White
 has little or nothing for the pawn, or 12
 ♙g3 ♗xe4 13 0-0 (13 ♙xd6 is met by
 13...♗xg2) 13...♙e7 and again Black is
 better.

11 ♙g3 ♗e3 12 ♙xd6

White recovers his pawn (for the

moment!) and makes it difficult for
 Black to castle kingside. Is this enough
 for an advantage? Given that Black can
 fairly easily castle long, I don't think
 so, and neither does Tal – check out the
 following note!

12...♘c6



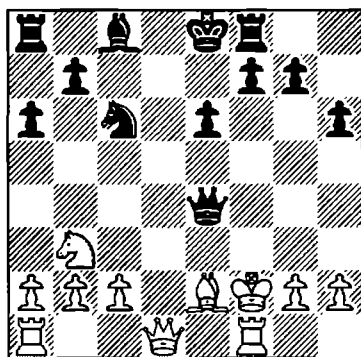
13 ♜f1

Tal insists on giving up a pawn, but
 this follow-up sac is no more approved
 than the first one!

Two rounds later, Tal took on this
 position again – as Black! His opponent
 played 13 ♙xf8 (making sure Tal can't
 castle kingside) 13...♜xf8 14 ♗d2
 ♗xd2+ 15 ♜xd2 ♙d7 16 ♜e3 0-0-0 – but
 not queenside! Black has equalized,
 and Tal commenced to manoeuvre
 while watching for his chance: 17 ♜ad1
 ♘e5 18 h3 ♙c6 19 ♘a5 ♜c7 20 ♘xc6
 ♜xc6 21 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 22 ♜d1 ♜xd1 23
 ♘xd1 ♜c5 24 c3 a5 25 b3 b5 26 a3 b4 27
 cxb4+ axb4 28 a4 ♜b6 29 ♘b2 ♘fd7 30
 ♙b5 ♘c5 31 ♘c4+ ♘xc4+ 32 ♙xc4 ♘b7
 33 ♜d4 ♘a5 34 e5 ♘c6+ 35 ♜e4 ♜c5 36
 ♙e2 ♘d4 37 ♙c4 h5 38 g4 hxg4 39 hxg4
 g5 40 ♜e3 ♘c6 41 ♜e4 ♘a5 42 ♜d3 ♜c6
 43 ♜d4 ♜b6 44 ♜e4 (and here it is! 44

♖e3 draws) 44...♜xc4 45 bxc4 ♖a5 (Tal wins a pawn and grinds out the queen ending) 46 c5 b3 47 ♖d3 ♖xa4 48 c6 ♖a3 49 c7 b2 50 ♖c2 ♖a2 51 c8♞ b1♞+ 52 ♖d2 ♞b2+ 53 ♖d3 ♞b5+ 54 ♖d2 ♞d5+ 55 ♖c2 ♞e4+ 56 ♖d2 ♞g2+ 57 ♖d3 ♞g3+ 58 ♖c2 ♞b3+ 59 ♖d2 ♞d5+ 60 ♖c2 ♞e4+ 61 ♖d2 ♞xe5 62 ♞a6+ ♖b3 63 ♞b7+ ♖c4 64 ♞xf7 ♞d4+ 65 ♖e1 ♞xg4 66 ♞f1+ ♖d4 67 ♞f2+ ♖e4 68 ♞c2+ ♖f4 69 ♖f2 ♞f3+ 70 ♖g1 e5 71 ♖h2 ♞g3+ 72 ♖h1 ♞e1+ 73 ♖h2 g4 74 ♞c4+ ♞e4 75 ♞f7+ ♖e3 76 ♖g1 ♞d4 77 ♖g2 ♞e4+ 78 ♖g1 ♞f3 79 ♞e6 ♞d1+ 80 ♖g2 ♞e2+ 81 ♖g3 ♞f3+ 82 ♖h4 e4 83 ♞b6+ ♖e2 84 ♞c7 e3 0-1 J.Fichtl-M.Tal, Munich Olympiad 1958.

13...♜xe4 14 ♜xe4 ♞xe4 15 ♜xf8 ♞xf8 16 ♖f2



White is “castling by hand” and Black rushes to castle himself – and blunders! Sacrificial Shock claims another victim!

16...♜d7??

If Fichtl had followed Tal (from the present game) this far, I’m sure Tal (as Black) would have played the careful and accurate 16...♞e5 17 ♖g1 ♜d7 18

c3 0-0-0 when Black’s king is relatively safe, his queen is strong, and White is not getting his pawn back: in short, after that precise sequence, Black would have excellent winning chances.

However, after the move played, the game ends abruptly.

17 ♞xd7+! ♖xd7 18 ♜c5+ ♖e7 19 ♜xe4 f5 20 ♜c5 1-0

White is a piece up.

Risk assessment: No one believes in this sacrifice: not me, not *Fritz*, and certainly not Tal, who was happy to play the other side of the position just two rounds later.

This complete lack of soundness, and *extremely risky* play, is one reason I put the game in this book! Would Tal have won in twenty moves had he played “correctly”? Surprise is the “thumb on the scale” when a sacrifice is weighed. Black was surprised, confused, blundered and lost in 20. Two rounds later, Tal was unsurprised, cool, and confident, and ground out his win in 84 moves!

Tal was often called “lucky” – I call him bold!

Game 40

T.V.Petrosian-R.J.Fischer

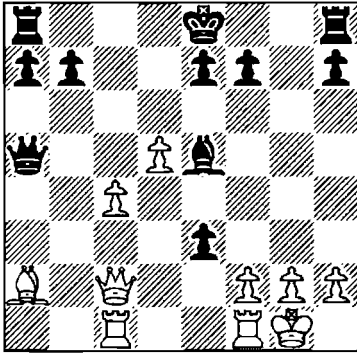
2nd matchgame,

Buenos Aires 1971

Grünfeld Defence

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 d5 4 ♜f4 ♜g7 5 e3 c5 6 dxc5 ♞a5 7 ♞c1 ♜e4 8 cxd5 ♜xc3 9 ♞d2 ♞xa2 10 bxc3 ♞a5 11 ♜c4 ♜d7 12 ♜e2 ♜e5 13 ♜a2 ♜f5 14 ♜xe5

♙xe5 15 ♖d4 ♜xc5 16 ♜xf5 gxf5 17
0-0 ♜a5 18 ♜c2 f4 19 c4 fxe3



Black has just captured a pawn, and the automatic thing is to take the pawn back – right?

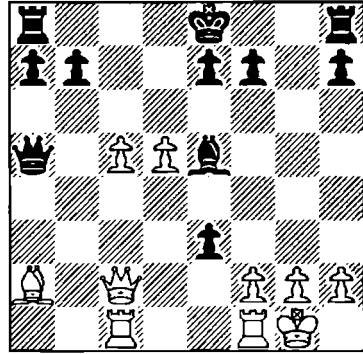
Wrong! There is no rule requiring recapture, and Petrosian sees **Favourable Omens!**

First, after the planned 20 c5, Black won't be able to castle on either side: 20...0-0-0 drops a piece to 21 ♜f5+, while 20...0-0 loses to 21 ♖b1 f5 (or 21...exf2+ 22 ♜xf2 f5 23 ♜xf5 with a winning attack) 22 fxe3 and White wins a pawn while maintaining a strong attack.

Second, it's well known that f7 is the weakest square around an uncastled black king: Petrosian's next prepares to unleash his bishop against that very square. Furthermore, there are bishops of opposite colours, which help the attacker – Black has no minor piece that can defend f7.

Finally, White throws a monkey wrench into Black's plan: no doubt Fischer intended (had White played the stereotyped 20 fxe3) 20...♜c5 with a

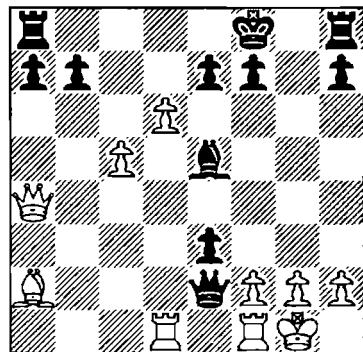
bind on the dark squares – but that won't happen in this game!
20 c5!



Mr. Fritz? Semi-approved – the machine gives this as its second choice after the materialistic 20 fxe3.

As for the **Author**, I am all in favour of this tigerish advance! I think it's far superior to *Fritz's* first pick, as the light-squared bishop, activated by the pawn sac, becomes a monster – and this would not have happened had Black been able to blockade with ...♜c5.
20...♜d2 21 ♜a4+

Black won't castle in this game!
21...♞f8 22 ♜cd1 ♜e2 23 d6!



White unleashes the bishop!

23...♖h5

Petrosian finds a powerful second sacrifice against this move, but alternatives don't impress either: 23...exd6 24 fxe3 f6 25 ♖xd6! with a winning attack, or 23...♙xh2+ 24 ♕xh2 ♖h5+ 25 ♔g1 e2 26 dxe7+ ♔g7 (if 26...♕xe7 27 ♖d7+ means White stays a piece up) 27 ♖d4+ f6 28 ♖d3 exf1♖+ 29 ♕xf1 ♖h1+ 30 ♕e2 ♖h5+ 31 ♕d2 ♖h6+ 32 ♕d1 ♖he8 33 ♖h3 ♖g6 34 ♖g3 wins the queen.

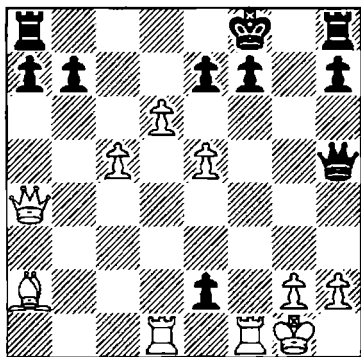
24 f4!

Petrosian sacrifices the exchange to remove Black's only good defensive piece.

24...e2?!

The only try is 24...♙f6, though White should win after 25 ♖d5. After the text, Black's hapless rooks (the legacy of the preventive sacrifice – they have no natural way to come into the game) can do nothing against White's three ragingly active pieces.

25 fxe5



White has a winning attack – f7 cannot be held.

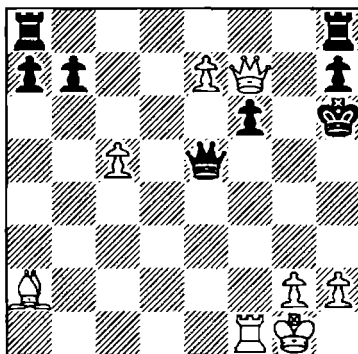
25...exd1 ♖ 26 ♖xd1 ♖xe5

Or 26...exd6 27 ♖f1 etc.

27 ♖f1 f6 28 ♖b3 ♔g7 29 ♖f7+

White finally gets there! The rest is a technical execution.

29...♕h6 30 dxe7



30...f5

The two alternatives fail to entertaining variations:

a) 30...♖hg8 31 ♖xf6+ ♖g6 32 ♖f8+ ♔g5 33 ♖f2 ♖e1+ (if 33...♖xc5 34 e8♖ ♖xf8 35 ♖e3+ ♕h5 36 ♙f7 with a mating attack) 34 ♖f1 ♖e3+ 35 ♕h1 ♖e2 36 ♖f5+ ♕h4 (or 36...♔g4 37 ♖f4+ and mates) 37 g3+ ♕h3 38 ♖h5+ ♖xh5 39 ♖f1+ ♔g4 40 ♖f4+ ♕h3 41 ♙c4 ♖d1+ 42 ♙f1+ ♖xf1+ 43 ♖xf1+ ♔g4 44 ♖f4+ ♕h5 45 ♖h4 mate.

b) 30...♖ag8 31 ♖xf6+ ♖g6 (if 31...♔g5 32 h4+ ♕xh4 33 ♖h6+ and mates) 32 ♖f8+ ♖xf8 33 exf8♖+ ♔g5 34 ♖f1 and White has an extra piece.

31 ♖xf5 ♖d4+ 32 ♕h1 1-0

White mates or wins the queen.

Risk assessment: Not very risky at all, for White's attack was evidently worth far more than a pawn – or an exchange, for that matter. The key factors were that the black king had no

safety, the black rooks could not play, and the opposite-coloured bishops helped White's attack.

One should think about the moment of sacrifice: like Tal in Game 7, Petrosian did not automatically recapture when a pawn was taken – he looked for the best move regardless of material loss.

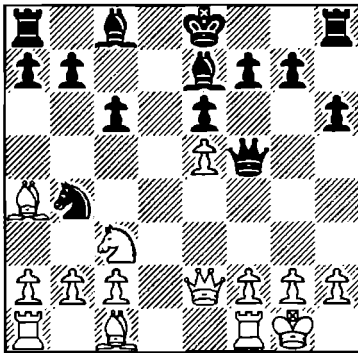
Game 41

M.Tal-B.Larsen

6th matchgame, Bled 1965

Alekhine's Defence

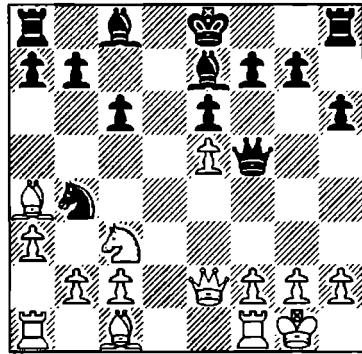
1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 dxe5 5 ♗xe5 e6 6 ♖f3 ♖f6 7 ♖g3 h6 8 ♘c3 ♗b4 9 ♗b5+ c6 10 ♗a4 ♘d7 11 0-0 ♗xe5 12 dxe5 ♖g6 13 ♖f3 ♖f5 14 ♖e2 ♗e7



Black is ready to castle, but it's White's move – and Tal sees **Favourable Omens!** The most important is that Black is not castled *yet*. Second, the black queen is misplaced and exposed to tempo-gaining attacks. As soon as Tal realized he had a way to prevent

castling entirely, he went for it!

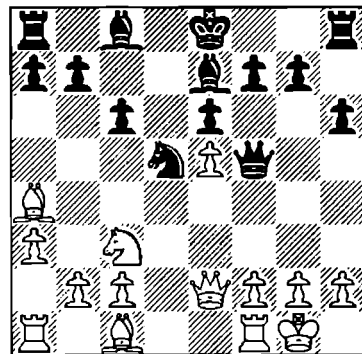
15 a3!



Mr. Fritz? Approved! As Tal comments, driving the black knight to a better square at d5 does not make sense unless one sees the following move – but Tal was ready and the computer likes the next move too!

As for the **Author**, I think this is one of the most interesting and instructive games in the book, and of course I approve Tal's sac.

15...♘d5



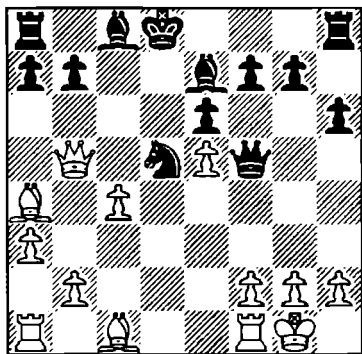
16 ♘b5!

Tal's point: the sacrifice has to be accepted, for if 16...0-0 17 ♘d4 ♖g6 18

c4 ♖b6 19 ♙c2 and Black's game collapses around his harassed queen.

Since the above variation is basically unplayable, that means the preventive sacrifice has succeeded – for Black isn't ever going to legally castle in this game!

16...cxb5 17 ♜xb5+ ♔d8 18 c4



Black must try to find the best way to return the knight, as he can't keep the piece in view of his wide open king. Possibilities are:

a) 18...♖c7 19 ♜d1+ and wins.

b) 18...♖f4 19 ♜a5+ (19 ♜d1+ ♔c7 20 ♜d7+ ♙xd7 21 ♜xd7+ ♔b8 22 ♜xe7 ♜xe5 23 ♙e3 with a strong attack, as given by Tal, is also good) 19...b6 20 ♜d2+ ♔c7 21 ♜xf4 "wins at once" – Nunn.

c) 18...♖b6 19 ♜a5 and White will regain his piece with some combination of ♙e3 and c4-c5.

So Larsen takes a pawn, and gives the piece back right away – after which Tal makes the following instructive comment: "The position of his king in the centre allows White easily to organize a decisive attack without any sig-

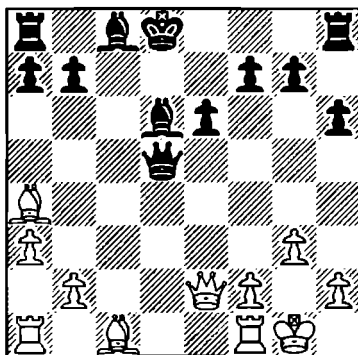
nificant material sacrifice."

Let me repeat those last words: "without any significant material sacrifice." This is a clear statement of Tal's philosophy – a pawn is just not worth that much – and something for all chessplayers to think of when they are pondering whether to sac a pawn or not. Remember, one pawn is not that significant! If you have some kind of reasonable favourable omens, go ahead and sac the itsy-bitsy thing!

18...♜xe5 19 cxd5 ♙d6 20 g3 ♜xd5

Black can't get any pawn cover for his king, for if 20...exd5 21 ♙f4 ♜f6 22 ♜a5+ ♔e7 23 ♜fe1+ ♙e6 24 ♙xd6+ ♔xd6 25 ♜b4+ ♔c7 26 ♜ac1+ leads to mate.

21 ♜e2



Black's king and queen are on the same open file, while the c8-bishop and both rooks are still unmoved. White has way more compensation than he needs for one insignificant unit!

21...♔e7 22 ♜d1 ♜a5 23 ♜g4 ♜f5

If 23...e5 24 ♜xg7 ♜xa4 25 ♙xh6 with an "irresistible attack" – Tal.

24 ♜c4 ♜c5 25 ♜d3 ♜d5 26 ♜c3 ♙e5

Since both 26...♖e5 and 26...♗c5 fail to 27 ♔f4, Tal finally gets away from the constantly reoffered queen exchange.

27 ♖e1 ♗c5 28 ♔d2

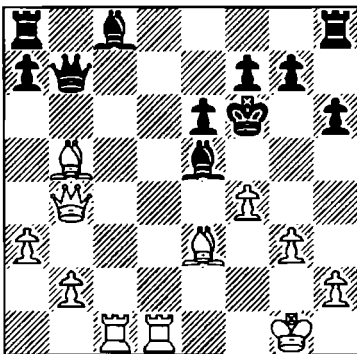
“It only remains for White to develop his queen bishop, and all his pieces will be included in a decisive attack” – Tal.

The threat of ♔b4 gains time for the inclusion of White’s last piece, the queen’s rook. Meanwhile Black has not succeeded in developing even one more piece – White’s advantage is decisive.

28...♙f6 29 ♖ac1 ♗b6 30 ♔e3 ♗a6 31 ♗b4 b5

Not surprisingly, everything loses: 31...b6 32 ♔c6 ♖b8 33 f4 ♔c7 34 ♔e4 ♔d8 35 ♔d4+ e5 36 ♔xe5+ ♙e6 37 ♗d6 mate, while 31...♗e2 32 ♗h4+ g5 33 ♗e4 ♗xb2 34 ♖c2 ♗xa3 35 ♔c5 traps the queen.

32 ♔xb5 ♗b7 33 f4



33...♔b8

If 33...♔c7 34 ♖d7 ♔xd7 35 ♔d4+ e5 (if 35...♙f5 36 ♔d3+ wins the queen) 36

fxe5+ ♙g5 (36...♔xe5 37 ♗d6+ ♔e6 38 ♗xe5+ leads to mate) 37 h4+ and the black king has to go to a fatal light square, after which the black queen will be won after bishop-somewhere check.

34 ♔c6 1-0

Winning a rook.

Risk assessment: If White does not sac, then Black might slowly catch up in development and equalize. So there is a risk in *not* sacrificing. However, the sac itself is not very risky at all: Black’s king, as in all the games of this chapter, is caught in the middle and subjected to mayhem!

Summary

The preventive sacrifice is pretty easy for humans to understand – just stop him from castling! – but it’s not so loved by the computer (see particularly Game 38, when the obvious and strong 10 e5 was unapproved).

In general, if you can catch the opposing king in the centre, especially if you force the enemy monarch to move, so castling won’t ever be possible in the game – and you can attack said monarch – then there is no reason not to give up an insignificant amount of material.

However, one must watch out for the situation where one prevents castling on one side – whereupon your foe (as in the notes to Game 39) blithely castles on the other! This is why it’s important to make the opposing king actually move.

Chapter Eight

Two Bishops

The idea of sacrificing a pawn just to obtain the two bishops probably goes back to the great attacking player David Janowski – take a look at this classic example:

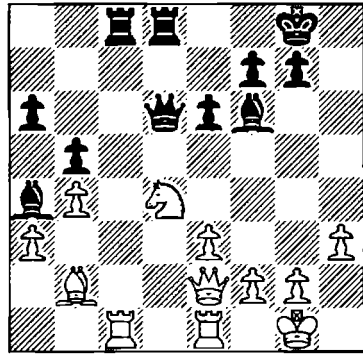
E. Bogoljubow-D. Janowski
New York 1924

1 d4 d5 2 $\text{c}3$ $\text{c}6$ 3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 e6
5 $\text{xc}4$ c5 6 $\text{c}3$ $\text{c}6$ 7 0-0 $\text{e}7$ 8 $\text{e}2$
0-0 9 $\text{d}1$ $\text{c}7$ 10 a3 a6 11 dxc5 $\text{xc}5$
12 b4 $\text{e}7$ 13 $\text{b}2$ $\text{d}7$ 14 $\text{ac}1$ $\text{ac}8$
15 $\text{d}3$ $\text{fd}8$ 16 $\text{e}4$ $\text{xe}4$ 17 $\text{xe}4$
 $\text{e}8$ 18 $\text{d}4$ $\text{wb}6$ 19 $\text{wf}3$ $\text{e}5$ (Black
sacrifices a pawn to get the bishop pair)
20 $\text{xh}7+$ $\text{xh}7$ 21 $\text{wh}5+$ $\text{g}8$ 22 $\text{we}5$
 $\text{f}6$ 23 $\text{wh}5$ $\text{a}4$ (both black bishops
become extremely active)

(see following diagram)

24 $\text{e}1$ $\text{d}6$ 25 h3 $\text{c}2$ 26 $\text{wf}3$ b5 27
 $\text{e}2$ $\text{a}4$ 28 $\text{wf}3$ $\text{c}4$ 29 $\text{a}1$ $\text{dc}8$ 30
 $\text{b}1$ e5 31 $\text{e}2$ $\text{c}2$ 32 $\text{bc}1$ $\text{e}4$ (the

unopposed light-squared bishop becomes a *monster* on the long diagonal)
33 $\text{wg}4$ $\text{b}7$ 34 $\text{xc}4$ $\text{xc}4$ 35 f4 $\text{d}2$
36 $\text{wg}3$ $\text{e}4$ 37 $\text{c}3$ $\text{d}5$ 38 $\text{xe}5$
 $\text{xe}3!$ (Black strikes the decisive blow)
39 $\text{wg}4$ $\text{xe}5$ 40 fxe5 $\text{xe}5$ 41 $\text{h}2$
 $\text{d}2$ 42 $\text{wg}3$ f6 43 h4 $\text{d}5$ 44 $\text{wf}2$ $\text{c}4$
0-1



However, the *modern* pawn sacrifice for the two bishops did not come into play until the Tal-Spassky Candidates match of 1965, and it was only much more recently that this sacrifice became

normal at the highest levels. To put it simply, the top GMs finally came to understand Spassky's basic idea: instead of sacrificing a pawn to get two bishops and attack, à la Janowski, Spassky's point was that the two bishops would counterbalance the extra pawn – even in an ending – so that the side with less material could *draw!*

This idea completely flummoxed Tal during the match in question, and is a key reason why Spassky won the contest. Nowadays the Marshall Gambit (once a bold attacking opening for Black) is pretty much used in just this way – as a drawing weapon.

Here's Spassky's history-making game, with a modern example covered in the notes.

M.Tal-B.Spassky

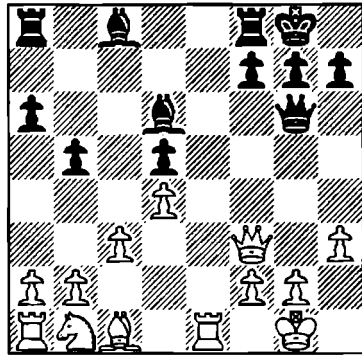
5th matchgame, Tbilisi 1965

1 e4 e5 2 d3 c6 3 b5 a6 4 a4 d6 5 0-0 e7 6 e1 b5 7 b3 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 exd5 dxd5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 e5 c6 12 xd5 cxd5 13 d4 d6 (the basic idea, and still very popular today: Black has a sound pawn structure, a fairly open game, and the two bishops – this is now considered fully adequate to draw) **14 e3** (not 14 xd5? xh2+) **14... h4 15 h3 f4 16 e5 f6 17 e1 g6 18 f3**

(see following diagram)

18... f5 (18... e6 19 e3 c2 20 e2 g6 21 f3 c2 22 e2 g6 23 f3 ½-½ J.Polgar-A.Shirov, Cap

d'Agde 2003, is a typical modern draw) **19 e3 e4 20 g4 h5 21 xg6 xg6 22 d2 f6 23 b3 f5 24 c5 xc5 25 dxc5 d7 26 ad1 c6 27 h4 fe8 28 f3 f7 29 f2 h8 30 d2 ae8 31 de2 e6 32 f4 xe2+ 33 xe2 e8 34 xe8 xe8 35 g4 g6 36 b4 c6 37 e3 e6 38 d4 f7 39 c7 e7 40 d6+ e6 41 f4 ½-½**



The idea has spread to other openings; for example, we see this line in John Watson's latest *Play the French* volume – after the opening sequence 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 d2 e7 4 d3 c5 5 dxc5 d6 6 e2 c6 7 g3 b4!? Watson writes: “White is a pawn up, but Black has the bishop pair versus either the knight pair or a knight and bishop. One can argue that the bishop pair offers full compensation...”

I'm not all that thrilled with the “if I draw with Black it's a success” school of thought, but one must recognize the reality of modern play. It is possible to use the two bishops sac to play for a win – usually with White – and a masterly example is Stein-Minic, Game 45.

Before we get to that well-played

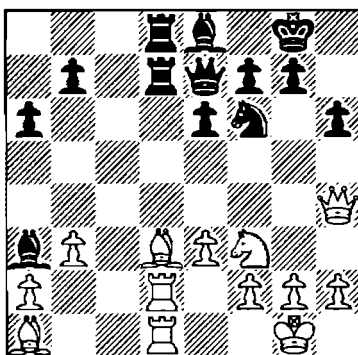
but difficult win, let's look first at a rather straightforward "bishops for draw" scenario – which then takes a turn in the bishops' favour when White decides he doesn't want a draw while ahead on material!

Game 42

A.Bisguier-L.Stein

Stockholm Interzonal 1962

English Opening



After Stein and Karpov won the great Moscow 1971 tournament – ahead of Smyslov, Tukmakov, Petrosian, Tal, Spassky, etc – the American representative Robert Byrne made a comment that went about like this: 'Karpov won with a wide range of diverse positional play – but all Stein did was obtain the two bishops and let them loose!'

Of course this is a bit of an exaggeration, but it is true Stein loved his bishops – and that's why four of the five games in this section feature his name in the winner's column!

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗f3 c5 3 c4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 e6 5 e3 d5 6 ♗c3 ♗c6 7 ♙e2 ♙d6 8 0-0 0-0 9 b3 a6 10 ♙b2 ♗xd4 11 ♚xd4 ♚c7 12 ♚h4 dxc4 13 ♙xc4 ♗d8 14 ♗fd1 ♙d7 15 ♗ac1 ♙c6 16 ♙d3 ♚e7 17 ♗e2 h6 18 ♗d4 ♙e8 19 ♗c2 ♙a3 20 ♙a1 ♗d7 21 ♗f3 ♗ad8 22 ♗cd2

The pawn structures are symmetrical, both sides are doubled on the d-file, there is no imbalance in the forces – is it time for a draw? Not yet! First it's time for a pawn sacrifice!

What are the **Favourable Omens?**

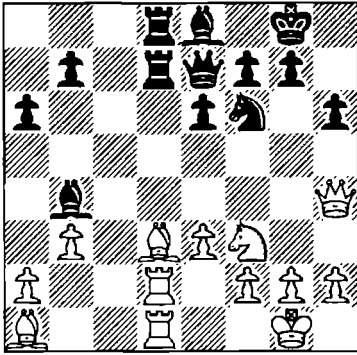
Actually, the conditions listed above, all of which point to a draw, are the fundamental reason for the sacrifice! Yes, many times the pawn sacrifice for the two bishops is really a sacrifice for a draw. In making his next move, I'm sure Stein easily calculated the forced draw that could ensue – but he played the move anyway. Why? As near as I can deduce, he felt the position was objectively even. Black can hardly improve his position, for example if 22...b5 White answers 23 ♗e5 ♗d6 24 ♙d4, and the position is probably incrementally better for White, as Black's queenside advance has only weakened the c6-square.

In other words, quiet play gets nowhere for Black, and trying to win a drawn position against a fellow GM is also a dangerous enterprise (but Stein does have a sly plan in mind!).

First, Stein makes an active move, that practically forces White to take a pawn – and in the process, creates an imbalance: namely, Black gets the two bishops. White can then force a draw,

and that's fine – but what if White, carried away by his material advantage, scorns the draw and tries to win? Ah, that is the most favourable omen of all, for then Black may take over the game!

22... ♖b4!



Mr. Fritz? Approved! *Fritz's* number one pick: Black does not risk losing but must accept a draw in many variations, which is typical for the two bishop pawn sacrifice.

The **Author** has another learning experience here: I realize that one of the keys to being a strong grandmaster is to know when the position cannot be forced, when it's time to take the draw.

23 ♙xf6

Since White can't move his rook without losing the bishop on d3, taking the pawn is the only good option.

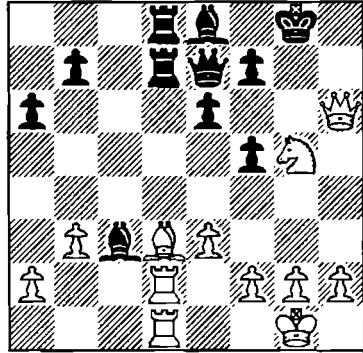
23... ♗xf6

23... ♗xf6? 24 ♗xb4 wins for White as there is no back rank mate: 24... ♜xd3 25 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 26 ♜xd3 ♗a1+ 27 ♗e1.

24 ♗xh6 f5 25 ♘g5 ♙c3

This position is reached pretty much by force after Stein's 22... ♖b4. Black has the two bishops, and the un-

opposed dark-squared one is particularly strong, parrying any mating attack while still keeping one eye on White's rook.



On the other hand, Black's king is far too open to avoid perpetual check, and so one must conclude that the position is still in balance. As Stein recognized that equality existed, and a draw was the logical result, so Bisguier should also correctly evaluate the position, and take the draw.

Best play for both sides now is actually the simple 26 ♗h7+ ♙f8 27 ♗h6+ ♙g8 and a handshake. Anything else can only lead Black into trouble, e.g. 27... ♙g7 28 ♗h4 ♙c3? 29 ♙xa6! ♜xd2 (if 29... ♖xa6 30 ♜d4! wins) 30 ♜xd2 ♙g8 31 ♜xd8 ♗xd8 32 ♙f1 and White is now two pawns up.

26 h4?

Playing for a win is fatal for White.

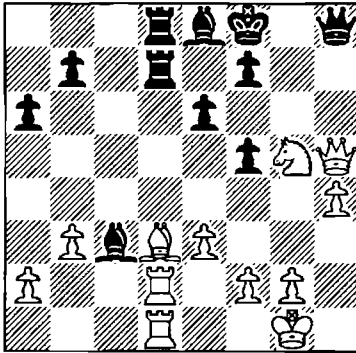
26... ♗f6!

Black's point: with queens off, and total control of the dark squares, plus the pin on the d-file, Black will win the pawn down ending!

I'm sure Bisguier missed this move

– who thinks that the pawn down player will go for the exchange of queens?

27 ♖h7+ ♕f8 28 ♖h5 ♖h8!



Black uses every square on the long diagonal! No matter how White thrashes about, he can't avoid the fatal exchange of queens.

29 ♖h7+

29 ♖xh8+ ♖xh8 30 ♖f3 ♖c3 is a simple way to lose.

29...♕g8 30 ♖g5+ ♖g7

Not 30...♖xh7? 31 ♖xf5+ with counterplay; Stein is relentless in his quest to remove the queens.

31 ♖c2 ♖xg5!

Stein will not be diverted!

32 ♖xg5 ♖xd3 0-1

Risk assessment: No risk at all, provided Black accepts the fact that a draw is the logical result. When White overplayed his hand, then Black could attack, but only then.

I find this game very instructive: generally speaking, when I play chess, I win, or I lose – while strong GMs tend to win, or they draw. It's important to recognize, as Stein did here, when the

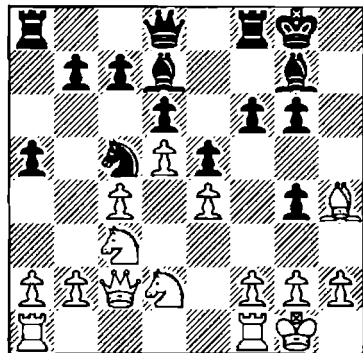
position is objectively drawn – so he went for it, while still giving his opponent a chance to go wrong, which is what happened. The extra pawn clouded White's judgment – I suppose yet another case of Sacrificial Shock!

Game 43
G.Lazarev-L.Stein
Riga 1962
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 0-0 5 ♖f3 d6 6 ♖e2 e5

Note that Stein avoids the obstructive sac of Game 34!

7 d5 ♖a6 8 0-0 ♖c5 9 ♖c2 a5 10 ♖e3 ♖g4 11 ♖g5 f6 12 ♖h4 ♖d7 13 ♖d2 h5 14 ♖xg4 hxg4

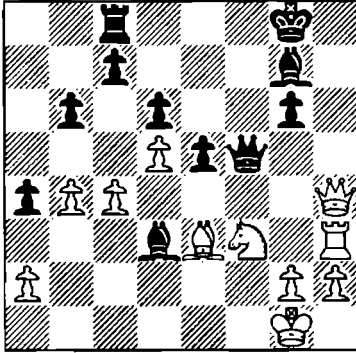


Black gets the two bishops, though they are not very active yet.

15 f3 gxf3 16 ♖xf3 ♖e8 17 ♖ae1 b6 18 ♖d2 f5 19 ♖g5 ♖f7 20 ♖h4 ♖h7 21 ♖f2 fxe4 22 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖xf2 24 ♖xf2 ♖f8 25 ♖f3 ♖f5 26 ♖h4+ ♖g8 27 ♖e3 ♖d3 28 ♖h3 ♖f5 29 ♖g3 ♖c8 30 b3 a4 31 b4 ♖d3 32 ♖h3 ♖f5

Not 32...♙xc4 33 ♖h4 ♙xd5 34 ♗h7+ ♕f7 35 ♖g3 when White has a strong attack.

33 ♖h4



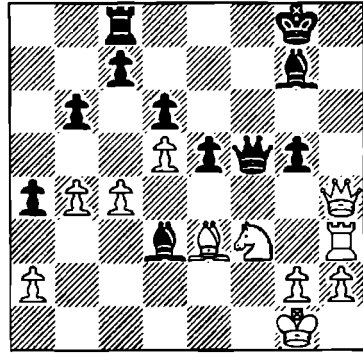
Can one see **Favourable Omens** when your opponent is threatening a mating attack?

Yes! The first point is that after the projected ...g6-g5, the mating attack goes away. So Black gains king safety by removing all pawns from in front of his king! Sounds ridiculous, but true – his queen plus two bishops will then control the dangerous invasion squares of h7 and h8. Furthermore, the bishops will not just defend: Black will follow with 34...e4, and both bishops will attack enemy squares as well.

Of course, as in the previous game, the black king will be open, and perpetual check may be a possibility – but a draw for Black is not the end of the world; and besides, White, enjoying his extra pawn, might push too hard...

33...g5!

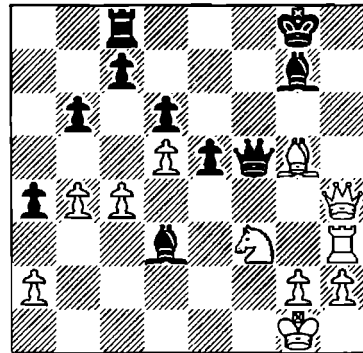
Mr. Fritz? Approved! This is the machine's number one, which comes with an "equal" evaluation.



The **Author** finds it difficult to wrap his mind around this concept of "denuding the king in order to save him" and, furthermore, finds it difficult to conceive of "boldly sacrificing a pawn to keep the draw in hand", but clearly I have much to learn and I tip my hat to Mr. Stein.

34 ♙xg5

White can't take any other way: 34 ♖xg5? ♖xg5 35 ♖xg5 ♙xc4 and Black wins the ending, or even worse, 34 ♖xg5?? ♖f1 mate.



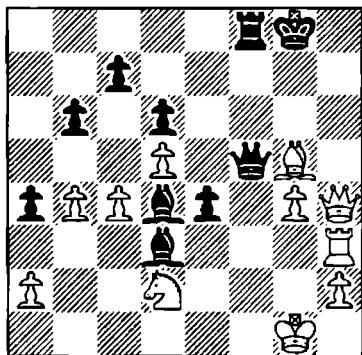
34...e4

Both bishops are activated and Black has a passed pawn! Of course,

there is that open king...

35 ♖d2 ♜f8 **36** g4 ♙d4+

36...♜e5 makes it too easy for White to draw: **37** ♜h7+ ♜f7 **38** ♜h5+ etc.



37 ♙e3

King moves fail to a Black invasion: **37** ♜h1? ♜f1+ **38** ♖xf1 ♜xf1+ **39** ♜g2 ♜g1 mate, or **37** ♜g2? ♜f2+ **38** ♜xf2 ♜xf2+ **39** ♜g3 ♜e2 **40** ♜h4 ♙f2+ **41** ♜h5 ♙e1 **42** ♖f1 ♜xa2 **43** ♖e3 (if **43** ♜g6 e3+ wins as the pawn goes through) **43...♜f7** **44** ♙d8 ♜e2 **45** g5 ♙d2 **46** g6+ ♜g8 **47** ♖g4 ♜g2 **48** ♖h6+ ♜f8 and with White's g-pawn stopped, Black is free to queen either a- or e-pawn.

37...♙xe3+ 38 ♜xe3 ♜e5 **39** ♜g2 a3 **40** ♜h6?

White fails just at the time control. Correct is **40** b5 (preventing any pawn breaks) and it's not clear how Black makes progress, e.g. **40...♜f4** (not **40...♜f6?** **41** g5 ♜g6 **42** ♖xe4 and White is better) **41** ♜e1 with a likely draw.

40...♜f6!

Black gains a vital tempo.

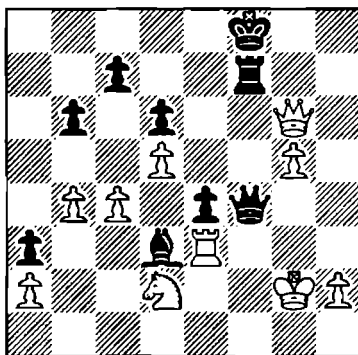
41 ♜h5

Also good for Black is **41** ♜h4 ♜b2.

41...♜f4 42 g5 ♜f7 **43** ♜g6+

Or **43** g6 ♜g7 with advantage.

43...♜f8!



Black is playing for a win. Stein can escape to the queenside with his king, while White's rook and knight are under heavy threat.

44 ♜h6+ ♜g7

White must lose material, and there is no perpetual check.

45 c5

If **45** ♜h8+ ♜f7 **46** ♜h5+ ♜e7 and Stein escapes!

45...♜xe3 46 ♜f6+ ♜e8 **47** ♜xg7

Or **47** ♜e6+ ♜d8 **48** ♜f6+ ♜e7 **49** ♜f8+ ♜e8 **50** ♜f6+ ♜c8 **51** ♜f5+ ♜b8 and once again the black king evades the checks.

47...♜xd2+ 48 ♜h3 ♜e3+ **49** ♜g4 ♜f3+ **50** ♜h4 ♜f4+ **0-1**

Black is a piece up and his bishop is about to come into play.

Risk assessment: As is typical for this kind of sac, there is very little risk, provided again that the sacrificer does not mind a draw. Stein kept the game as complicated as possible, and White missed his solid drawing chance on move forty.

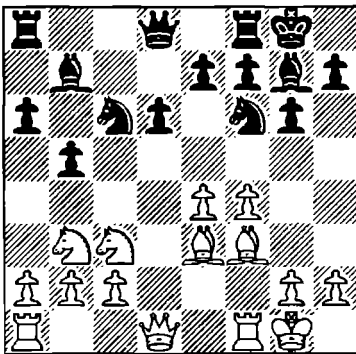
It's very interesting to see how safe the black king was, with no pawn cover – as the bishops provided sterling protection against all invaders!

Game 44

Y.Sakharov-L.Stein
Ukrainian Championship,
Kiev 1960
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dx4 d6
5 c3 a6 6 e2 g6 7 0-0 g7 8 e3 0-0
9 f4 c6 10 b3 b5 11 f3

The late GM Wojtkiewicz (always known to US players as Wojo) used to play this line, and he always played 11...b7 – Black completes his development without weakening any central squares – which is clearly the best move. For example:



a) 12 d5 d7 13 d4 dx4 14
ex4 ex4+ 15 wx4 e5 16 fxe5 ex4
17 wx5 wb6+ 18 h1 dx5 19 e2
Ac8 20 c3 fd8 21 d1 b4 22 eb3 Ac5
23 wd2 bxc3 24 bxc3 wc7 25 d5 xc3
26 Ab1 Ac2 27 wh6 Ab8 28 xxb8+

wxb8 29 wf4 wc7 30 h3 we7 31 we3
xg7 32 wb6 wg5 33 wg1 a5 34 f2 c1
35 f1 xf1 36 wxf1 we3 37 wb5 we1+
38 h2 wd2 39 h1 h5 40 wb6 wc1+ 41
h2 wa3 42 wf2 0-1 J.Pierrot-
A.Wojtkiewicz, Buenos Aires 1998.

b) 12 wd2 d7 13 wf2 a5 14 dxa5
wxa5 15 a3 ex3 16 bxc3 wxc3 17 d4
wc7 18 f5 de5 19 h4 f6 20 wg3 h8 21
fxg6 dxg6 22 Aae1 Ag8 23 d1 wc4 24
wf2 de5 25 we3 Ag7 26 f2 Ag8 27 h5
Ag3 28 wd2 we6 29 wf4 wh3 30 wd2
dc4 31 we2 e5 32 ea7 wh4 0-1
W.Morrison-A.Wojtkiewicz, Washing-
ton DC 1999.

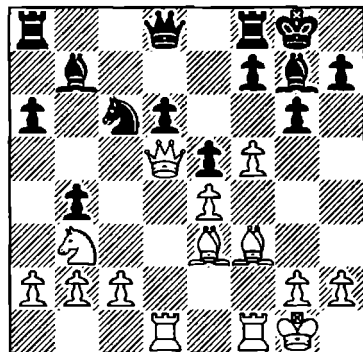
11...e5?!

Yes, it has been known to happen! Strong GMs do make mistakes, sometimes as early as the eleventh move!

12 f5!

I'm sure Stein didn't need a not-yet-invented chess computer to tell him he stood worse: White has a kingside bind, the d5-square, and pressure against the backward d-pawn.

12...b4 13 d5 dx5 14 wxd5 eb7 15
Ad1

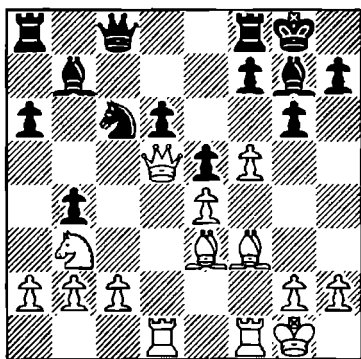


What was a worse position has

slipped down precipitously to a practically lost position! What should Black do? He is losing his d-pawn and, at first sight, no compensation can be seen. Can any **Favourable Omens** be found in this dark well of despair?

There is a slim reed to cling to: in the main line, after Stein's contemplated 15...♖c8, White will be induced – if he wants to go two pawns up, not just one – to give up the two bishops. With two bishops and an open board (open because Black's pawns will be dropping like flies!) Black will hope for tactical chances with his long-range clerics.

15...♖c8!

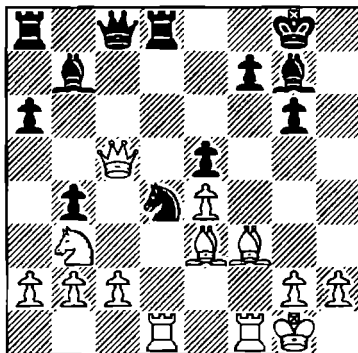


Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The machine prefers dour defence a pawn down, and gives the far from inspiring line 15...a5 16 fxxg6 hxg6 17 ♖xd6 ♘d4 18 ♖xd8 ♜fxd8 19 ♘xd4 exd4 20 ♙f4 when Black just might eke out a draw.

In the **Author's** opinion, Stein's move is the best practical chance – if Black wants to win! Yes, Black is lost from a computer point of view, but his opponent has to make hard choices

now – and human beings have been known to make mistakes! While the *Fritz* line might lead to a loss or a draw, now – if White gets confused by the curious three pawn sacrifice that is coming – all three results are possible.

16 fxxg6 hxg6 17 ♖xd6 ♜d8 18 ♖c5 ♘d4



Stein's point: he gets his knight to this strong square, and hopes to induce White to take it with his bishop, thus giving Black his beloved two bishops.

As your annotator I must admit, aside, that (1) taking with the bishop, as played, is in fact not bad and should win for White, and (2) White is by no means compelled to play this way, and could avoid giving up the two bishops, obtaining a no risk single pawn up situation.

19 ♙xd4

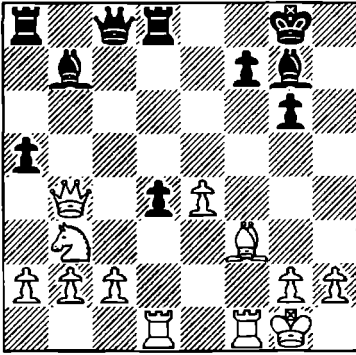
Stein could dream of lines like 19 ♖xc8? ♜axc8 20 ♙xd4 exd4 21 ♜f2 ♙h6 when the two bishops do give compensation, but White's simplest path is 19 ♖xb4 ♘xc2 20 ♜xd8+ ♖xd8 21 ♖xb7 ♘xe3 22 ♜f2, when White has one solid extra pawn, and eliminates a black bishop. With 23 ♜d2 coming, no com-

pensation for Black can be seen.

19...exd4 20 ♖xb4

The two bishops hardly give Black any compensation for the two missing pawns, so...

20...a5!



Stein offers a third pawn! Sometimes it's hard to tell when Stein is sacrificing or bluffing, but on this one I think the verdict is clear: bluff! The offer of the a-pawn is backed up by ...absolutely nothing!

But Sakharov, being human, is confused by Black's largesse. He thinks there must be something going on with all these sacrifices – so he refuses this one, just to be on the safe side – and suddenly Black gets counterplay!

21 ♖e7?

After the correct 21 ♖xa5 White's overwhelming material superiority should win easily, e.g. 21...♗a6 (or 21...♖b8 22 ♗a4 ♖a8 23 b4 etc) 22 ♖f2 d3 23 e5 dxc2 (if 23...♗xe5 24 ♖c6 dxc2 25 ♖e1 ♗d6 26 ♗c3 and the connected passed pawns win) 24 ♖c1 ♗xe5 25 ♖fxc2 ♗e6 26 ♗xa8 with a decisive material advantage.

21...♖e8 22 ♗c5 ♗b8

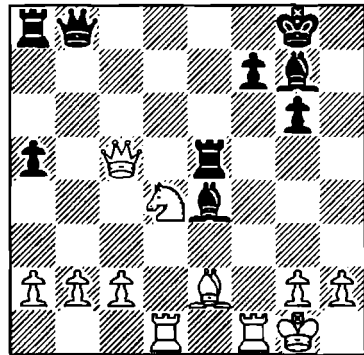
No more queen exchange! Now 23 ♖xa5? fails to 23...♖e5, while if 23 ♖xd4 ♗a6 24 ♖f2 ♗xb2 and Black has compensation due to White's disconnected pawns (as in Grigore-Taylor, Game 56).

23 ♗e2

White should play the not so obvious 23 ♖f2! defending his c-pawn and preparing a counter-attack against Black's f7-square in many variations. In this way White should preserve a winning material advantage.

The text move allows – cue scary music – Black to activate his bishops!

23...♗xe4 24 ♖xd4 ♖e5



Every black piece is active! The position has become confusing and uncertain – and White could fall into a snare at any moment, e.g. 25 ♗c3 would allow 25...♗xg2! with attack.

25 ♗c4 ♗d5 26 ♗d3 ♗xb2

Black is now only one pawn down – he has a sound position, a safe king and mighty bishops. I think Black is already better from a practical point of view.

27 ♖f3 ♜b6+ 28 ♜h1 ♜f5 29 c4 ♙c6 30 ♜h4

The machine says White must find 30 ♜g1 here, but if such a retreat is the best move, White's position has fallen a long way!

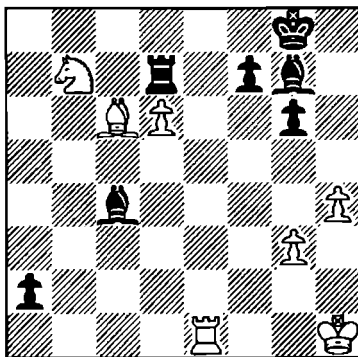
30...♜xf1+ 31 ♙xf1?

White collapses from an overdose of Sacrificial Shock! Correct is 31 ♜xf1 ♜d8 when Black has compensation, but no clear way to win.

31...♜f2 32 ♜f3 ♜xa2!

Black is better with material equality and the two bishops! Best of all, the daring Stein now has a dangerous passed pawn – yes, the scorned a-pawn that should have been snapped off on move 21 will soon win the game for Black!

33 ♜g5 ♜f2 34 ♜d6 ♙a4 35 ♜e4 ♜h4 36 ♜d5 ♜b8 37 g3 ♜h5 38 ♜e1 ♜xd5 39 cxd5 ♙b3 40 d6 ♜d8 41 ♙g2 a4 42 h4 a3 43 ♜c5 ♙c4 44 ♜b7 ♜d7 45 ♙c6 a2!!



How's that for revenge of the pawn!

46 ♙xd7 ♙d5+ 47 ♜h2 ♙xb7 48 h5

After 48 ♙e8 a1♜ 49 ♜xa1 ♙xa1 50 d7 ♙f6 51 ♜h3 ♙d5 52 g4 ♙e6 53 ♜g3

♜f8 54 h5 g5 55 h6 ♜e7 Black will round up both of the white passed pawns, and then win with his extra piece.

48...gxf5 49 ♜e8+ ♜h7 50 ♙f5+ ♜h6 0-1

Stein has perfect accuracy to the end: if 51 d7 a1♜ 52 d8♜ ♜h1+ mates with the aid of one powerful bishop, while if 51 ♜e1 a1♜ Black again emerges with an extra piece.

Risk assessment: This is a hard one to call. The way Stein played it, he was absolutely, incontrovertibly dead lost – if White took the third pawn, 21 ♜xa5. But Stein counted on human psychology, on people's fear of risk, and suspicion of "free" gifts – he used the idea that White would probably avoid "unnecessary" complications, that his opponent would not bother to calculate when he was already two pawns up, that he would just make a "safe", simple move – and his gamble paid off!

Had Stein played the "Fritz-approved dour defence" (15...a5) then he would have suffered for a long time, but perhaps could have made a draw. In that line Black is not clearly lost.

My heart is with Stein, but I still have to say this was *very risky* – Stein was willing to bet the whole game on one move, and it's not the first time he has taken such a gamble (remember Game 6!). But also remember that Stein won both of these games. Here, if he had not risked all from an already bad position, he would never have won, only used all his energy to maybe, maybe draw.

Game 45
L.Stein-D.Minic
 Yugoslavia-USSR match,
 Skopje 1969
English Opening

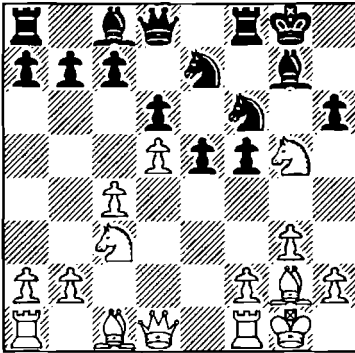
1 c4 g6 2 ♖c3 ♗g7 3 g3 d6 4 ♗g2 e5 5 e4

Almost universally played next is the cautious 5...♗c6.

5...f5! 6 exf5 gxf5 7 ♖h5+ ♔f8 8 d3 ♗f6 9 ♗d1 ♗f7 10 ♗f3 ♗f8 11 d4 ♗c6 12 0-0 ♗g8 13 d5

White plans to sac on e6.

13...♗e7 14 ♗g5 h6

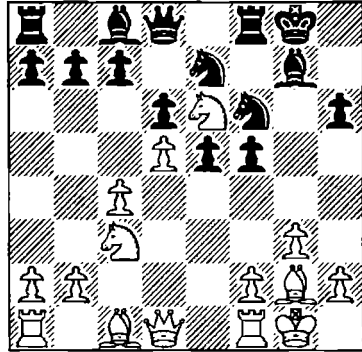


White could still bail out – should the knight parachute into e6, where it will be taken, and the new e-pawn inevitably lost, or should White retreat? Can there be **Favourable Omens**?

As we should know by now, probably the only omen Stein needed was that Black has to give up the two bishops to win the pawn! Besides that, Black will have to lose time rounding up the pawn, which White can use to

good effect – in the game Stein succeeded both in breaking up Black's pawn structure and capturing his last bishop by the time Black "wins" the pawn. Stein probably never thought of retreat!

15 ♗e6!



Mr. Fritz? Approved (number one pick): the machine correctly notes that retreating the knight gives the advantage to Black, who then has a strong duo in the centre while White has no play.

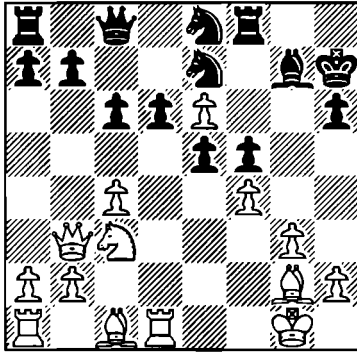
The **Author** is happy to see a two bishops sacrifice made not to draw, or out of desperation, but rather as a serious winning attempt!

15...♗xe6 16 dxex6

Nimzowitsch, in *My System*, described this situation best (referring to Nimzowitsch-Alekhine, Semmering 1926) where Alekhine (as Black) parachuted a knight into enemy territory, where it was then taken by a bishop, just as in this game – leaving behind a far advanced but weak pawn. Nimzowitsch wrote: "Black has a passed pawn, which, it is true, is very

sick, but very highly insured against death. We mean to say that the bishop diagonals are compensation." Change "Black" to "White" and that is the case here.

16...c6 17 ♖b3 ♜c8 18 ♞d1 ♞e8 19 f4 ♜h7



Black still hasn't had a second's peace to take the "sick" pawn!

20 fxe5 ♙xe5

This exposes the bishop, but even more dangerous is 20...dxe5 21 ♞d7 ♙f6 22 ♞e4! fxe4 23 ♙xe4+ ♜h8 24 ♙xh6 when White's bishops run amok with what must be a winning attack.

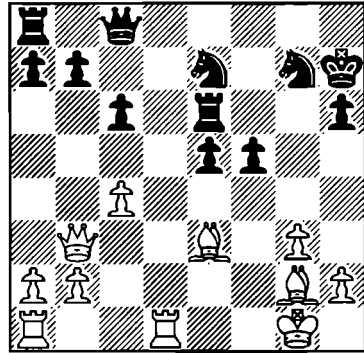
21 ♞e2 ♞f6 22 ♞d4 ♞g7 23 ♞f3 ♞xe6

Black finally captures the pawn, but now the insurance kicks in – White obtains two bishops against two knights.

24 ♞xe5 dxe5 25 ♙e3

Let's assess: White is a pawn down, and he won't be getting it back in the near future. However, he has considerable positional compensation. First and foremost, Stein has two bishops against two knights in a fairly open position; both bishops and the white queen bear down on Black's queenside. White has

a rook on the open d-file, and can quickly double; White has only two pawn islands; Black has three.



My guess is that Stein felt, with considerable justification, that he was already better here – though I should note, aside, that the computer only sees equality.

25...♞g6 26 ♞d2 ♞e7?!

Too slow: Black "passes" and lets White build up, and Black can't afford that. Despite his extra pawn, Black is the one fighting for survival here! Correct is to advance one of his centre pawns before White is set to counter-attack.

Strongest is 26...e4! (but not 26...f4 27 gxf4 exf4 28 ♙f2 ♞e7 29 ♙h3 ♜c7 30 ♜h1 when White has too many attacking lines, and stands clearly better) 27 ♞ad1 (when Black finally gets around to playing ...e5-e4 in the game, Stein is able to react quickly with g3-g4 – but here the immediate 27 g4? would fail to 27...f4) 27...♞e5 and Black's well-centralized knight compensates to some extent for the power of the white bishops.

50 ♖xa7!

50 ♖xe5?! ♜f3+ 51 ♔g3 ♜xe5 52 ♖xa7 ♜d3 is less clear

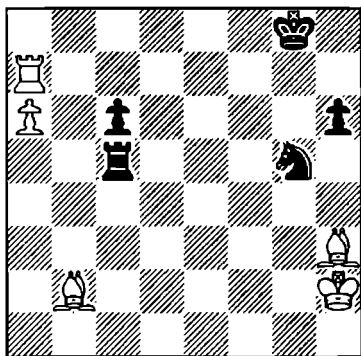
50...♗d5

50...♜xh3 51 ♖xe5 ♜g5 52 ♖f4 is a winning ending for White.

51 a4!

All Stein needs is one passed pawn.

51...♖xc5 52 a5 ♜d3 53 a6 ♜xb2 54 ♖xb2 1-0



White is still a pawn down, but Black is resigning! If 54...♖c2+ 55 ♖g2 ♖xb2 56 ♗b7 ♗a2 57 a7 and White comes out a rook ahead.

Risk assessment: White held a one pawn minus for a full twenty moves, which is a lot longer time than most chessplayers would feel comfortable being material down. But when I look at Stein's steady play, I get the feeling, as I mentioned before, that he was confident throughout, and probably evaluated the position in his favour (though the computer sees approximate equality).

Looking over the game again, once can see that White always had board-wide play (note the daring 57 h4) and

the knights never had defended points of support. Once the board was stripped clean of pawns (except for the solitary a-pawn that White needed to win) the difference between the bishop pair and knight pair was so great that Black had to resign or give up a rook for a mere pawn.

So, what is the assessment? I have to say moderately risky, for it takes some nerve to play accurately for twenty moves while material down, and Stein could have (but never did!) slipped somewhere in there.

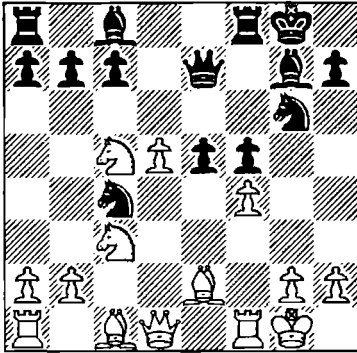
That said, I think objectively the sacrifice was sound. An instructive point is that one of those "rules that everybody knows" was torpedoed in this game: you know the one about "you have to have play on both sides to win an ending" and "endings with pawns on only one side are drawn even if one player is a pawn up..." Right. With two powerful bishops, Stein only needed one rook's pawn to carry the day.

Game 46
M.Tal-V.Savon
 USSR Championship,
 Baku 1961
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♜f3 0-0 6 ♖e2 e5 7 0-0 ♜c6 8 d5 ♜e7 9 ♜e1 ♜d7 10 ♜d3 f5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 f4 ♜g6 13 ♖e3 ♜b6 14 c5 ♜c4 15 ♖c1 dxc5 16 ♜xc5 ♗e7

Black attacks the knight, but we

know Tal won't retreat – the **Favourable Omens** are the same as in the last game: White gets the two bishops, and has diagonal pressure through the centre.

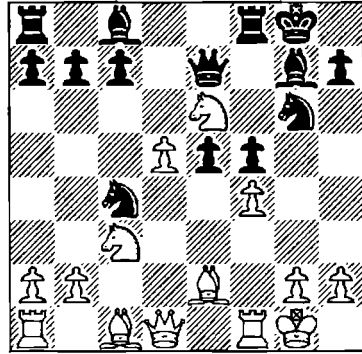


But it's the *unfavourable omens* that concern me! After the contemplated 17 $\text{d}6$ $\text{e}6$ $\text{e}6$ 18 $\text{d}xe6$, Black will be fully developed with his rooks connected, while White is well away from that happy state. Black has pressure on the white f4-pawn, and so the two bishops won't get a free ride – there is often the possibility that Black might exchange knight for bishop on f4. Unlike the previous game, where the d-pawn moving to e6 freed the long diagonal for White's light-squared bishop, here this same bishop is rather inactive on e2. Finally, and most important, in Stein-Minic Black took seven moves to collect the pawn after it arrived on e6 – and was under fire the whole time – while here we can see Savon can quickly and efficiently dine on the far advanced pawn.

17 $\text{d}e6$

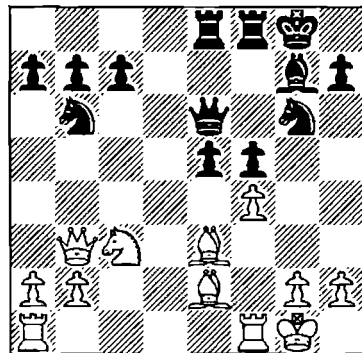
Tal goes for it!

Mr. Fritz? Approved, number one pick – but I think for once the machine is over-optimistic!



The **Author** shouts out *unapproved!* I prefer the simple defence 17 $\text{d}3a4$ with equality.

**17... $\text{d}xe6$ 18 $\text{d}xe6$ $\text{d}b6$ 19 $\text{W}b3$ $\text{I}ae8$
20 $\text{d}e3$ $\text{W}xe6$**



Chop! That pawn didn't last long! Now I think Tal is a victim of "unsuccessful sacrificial shock". He could try 21 $\text{W}xe6+$ $\text{I}xe6$ 22 $\text{d}d1$, but after 22... $\text{c}h8$ 23 $\text{d}b3$ $\text{I}c6$, it's hard to see any compensation for White. Therefore he tries something more active – an active blunder!

21 ♖c5? ♜f6?

Black misses his chance! Sharper is 21...♗xf4! sacrificing the exchange. Then Black is two good pawns up, and White's bishop pair is gone too. I see a clear advantage to Black after 22 ♖xf8 ♜xf8, although it's true he has no difficulties in the game line.

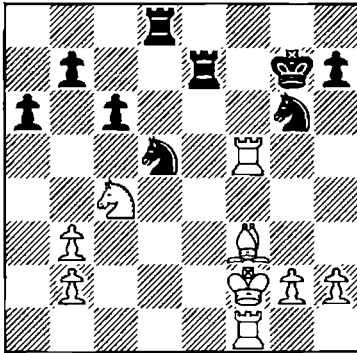
22 ♜xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♖h5 ♜xb3 24 axb3 ♜a8 25 ♖b5 ♜c6 26 ♖d4 a6 27 ♜xf5

White just barely manages to restore material equality, but still stands worse in view of his doubled isolated b-pawns.

27...♗g6 28 ♖xg7 ♜xg7 29 ♖c3 ♜e6 30 ♜af1 ♜e7 31 ♖f3 c6 32 ♖e4 ♖d5 33 ♜f2 ♜ae8 34 ♖d6 ♜d8 35 ♖e4 ♜de8

Black could play for a win with 35...♖b4, but he shows that he is content with a draw.

36 ♖d6 ♜d8 37 ♖c4



But the fearless Tal plays for a win! Fortunately for Black, this move virtually loses by force. Fortunately for White, Black doesn't see it!

37...♖f6?

I think this is a case of Tal shock! Clearly White's knight holds the fork-

ing square at e3, so any 1900 player would kick the knight that defends the square – but a Grandmaster bamboozled by Tal's genius might miss this ever so simple move. Black wins after 37...b5 and now: 38 ♖a5 ♖e3 39 ♖xc6 ♜d2+ 40 ♖e1 (if 40 ♜g1 ♖xf5 wins a piece) 40...♜ed7 and Black wins the exchange with a crushing position, or 38 ♖xd5 cxd5 39 ♖a5 ♖e5 and Black is a pawn up with the better position.

38 ♜g1 ♜e6 39 g3 h6 40 h4 ♜de8 41 ♖a5 ♜8e7 42 b4 ♖e5 43 ♖b3 ♜d6 44 ♖c5 ♖xf3+ 45 ♜5xf3 ♖d5 46 ♜d1 ♜f6 47 ♜f2

Here 47 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 48 ♜d4 would defend the pawn, but instead Tal sacs again!

47...♜xf3+ 48 ♜xf3

If Black doesn't take, and just plays 48...h5, then neither side has any good pawn breaks, and the game is a draw. But Savon, probably aware he missed chances earlier, tries to make up for it here – unfortunately, this sacrifice, and not either of the ones before, is sound!

48...♖xb4?! 49 ♜d6!

Tal makes a King Attack sacrifice in a rook and knight endgame! With the kingside pawns advancing, and even the white king helping out, Black's king is in grave danger.

49...♖d5 50 g4 ♜f7+ 51 ♜g3 ♖f4 52 h5 ♜h7 53 ♖e4 ♖e2+ 54 ♜h4 ♖g1?!

The only slim hope for Black is 54...♜f1 55 ♖f6+ ♜h8 56 g5 ♜f4+ 57 ♖g4 hxg5+ 58 ♜xg5 ♜d4 59 ♜e6 ♜d5+ 60 ♖e5 ♖d4, but even in this line White still has a great attacking position and will probably win.

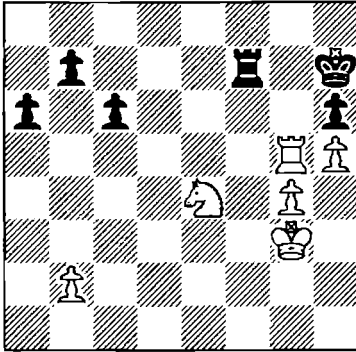
55 ♖g6

Trapping the black king.

55...♟f3+ 56 ♖g3 ♟g5

If 56...♟e5 57 ♟f6+ wins.

57 ♖xg5!!



The mad genius of Latvia forces a king and pawn ending that wins for White – by one tempo!!

57...hxg5 58 ♟xg5+ ♖g8 59 ♟xf7 ♖xf7
60 ♖f4 a5 61 ♖f5 a4 62 g5 b5 63 g6+
♟g8 64 h6 b4 65 ♖f6 a3 66 h7+ 1-0

It's all over, for if 66...♟h8 67 ♖f7
axb2 68 g7+ ♟xh7 69 g8♖+ ♟h6 70 ♖g6
mate.

I don't think Tal had Stein's patience to set up the two bishops sacrifice, and after giving up the pawn, he played too impetuously (21 ♟c5). There were a couple of points where Black could have had good winning chances, so my **Risk Assessment** is *extremely risky!* To begin with, despite *Fritz's* approval, I don't think the sac for the two bishops was sound at all – Black was able to capture the pawn at e6 too fast. Maybe Tal didn't have health insurance!

Certainly the pawn/exchange sac of 37 ♟c4 was completely unsound, and yet Tal's restless search for the initiative put extreme mental pressure on his opponent. By the time Tal offered a sound sacrifice, Savon didn't know which way was up – took it – and then we see Tal finish beautifully! Risky, risky chess – but it paid off!

Summary

The pawn sacrifice for the two bishops is unique among my twelve categories, in that it is the only one where the sacrificer is often aiming at a draw – or is at least *willing* to take a draw. For example, Games 42 and 43 should both have ended in draws with best play. If the sacrifice goes with long-term positional pressure, as in Game 45, one can play for a win – but this procedure demands great patience and exactness. Not everyone is ready to be a pawn down for twenty moves! Playing impetuously does not go with the two bishops sacrifice, as Tal showed in the last game of the chapter – his seemingly bold moves could easily have backfired on him. However, once Tal got on his home turf, and offered a King Attack sacrifice, he was off and running!

To sum up, the Two Bishops sacrifice is difficult and subtle, and not one to be used as a do or die winning attempt. The sacrifice goes hand in hand with slow, delicate manoeuvring, and the willingness to take a draw if that is all there is in the position.

Chapter Nine

Vacating

As mentioned in the introduction, the definition of a vacating sacrifice is this: a pawn is given up to clear a square for a more valuable piece. This occurs most often with an isolated pawn, as in three of the five games in this chapter: Games 47, 50 and 51.

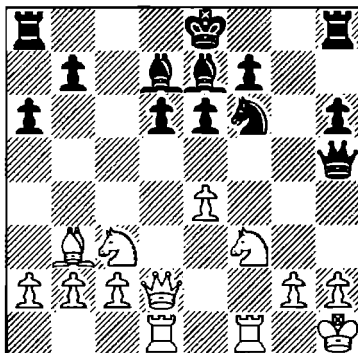
This particular theme is easy to understand: the isolani can be a target for your opponent, so why not sacrifice it? And a central isolated pawn (seen on either e4 or d4 in the three examples cited) already stands on a great square, a square that your own knight, perhaps, jealously covets! So you toss your pawn to make your knight happy – such is chess!

We will also see a couple of examples here of vacating à la Petrosian, where Tigran goes to great lengths to unearth a square for a knight in the midst of what might seem to be an immovable pawn chain!

But first, let's see an easy destruction!

Game 47
M.Tal-B.Larsen
Portoroz Interzonal 1958
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♟f6
5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙g5 ♟bd7 7 ♙c4 ♚a5 8
♜d2 e6 9 0-0 h6 10 ♙h4 ♙e7 11 ♞ad1
♟e5 12 ♙b3 g5 13 ♙g3 ♟d7 14 f4 gxf4
15 ♙xf4 ♟h5 16 ♙xe5 ♜xe5 17 ♚h1
♟f6 18 ♟f3 ♜h5



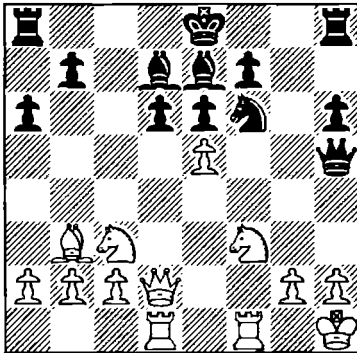
Two factors that stand out immediately when you look at this position are that White has an isolated e-pawn, and Black has not yet castled. Looking further, one sees – at this moment – that the c3-knight has no activity, as it is tied to defending said isolani.

If White treats the position quietly – let’s say by playing 19 ♖fe1, adding extra protection to the e-pawn, Black simply castles long and obtains quite a nice game. This is not what we want, and definitely not what Tal wants! Could there be **Favourable Omens**?

Yes! Just imagine if the knight were not passive on c3, but rather active on e4 – now that would be a *knight!* It would attack its opposite number on f6, threaten a check on d6, and might even travel further and harass the enemy queen from g3!

Let’s clear that square!

19 e5!



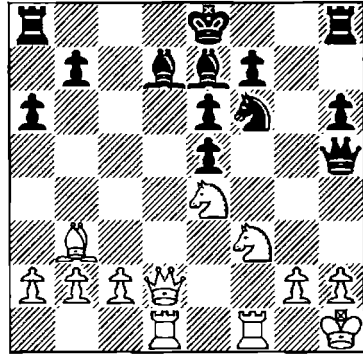
Mr. Fritz? Approved, and in fact the number one pick.

The **Author** is sad to see Bent Larsen, the hero of my chess youth, losing again to Tal – but completely approves

the sacrifice.

Since the pawn forks as well as attacks, Black must accept the “gift”.

19...dxe5 20 ♖e4



This is a classic vacating sacrifice – let’s assess: First of all, the queen’s knight has reached a powerful square, with the wide threat effect already mentioned in the favourable omens. But it’s not only the knight that has improved its stature – the white queen and queen’s rook have been presented with an open file, and a sweet target bishop at d7.

Black still hasn’t castled and, as we will see, it is now very dangerous to do so – but what else can Black play? Taking the dangerous knight fails tactically: 20...♞xe4 21 ♜xd7+ ♝f8 22 ♜xb7 ♞g3+ 23 ♝g1 ♞xf1 (both 23...♞c5+ 24 ♜f2! and 23...♞e2+ 24 ♝f2 also win material) 24 ♜xa8+ ♝g7 25 ♜a7 and White wins a piece.

The best I can find is 20...♞c6 21 ♞g3 ♜g6 22 ♞xe5 ♜g5 23 ♜e2, but then White has recovered his pawn with a big advantage.

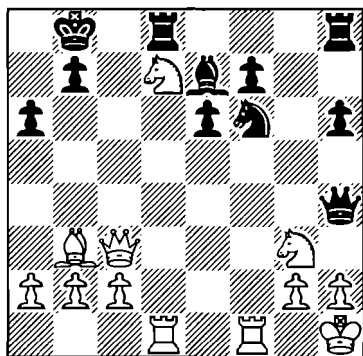
20...0-0-0

King safety?

21 ♖g3 ♜g4 22 ♜xe5 ♜h4 23 ♜c3+!

Not really!

23...♙b8 24 ♜xd7+ 1-0



White wins a piece after 24...♙b8 25 ♜xd7.

Clearly this is a very simple example, and so our **Risk Assessment** is also easy: no risk at all! One can see that the knight on e4 becomes a monster – all we have to do is get it there!

Game 48

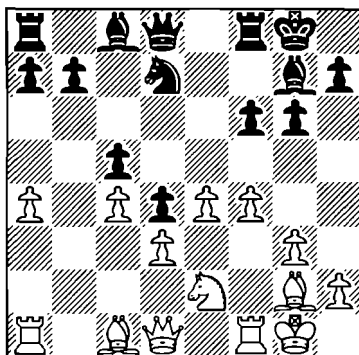
T.V.Petrosian-M.Bertok

Zagreb 1965

English Opening

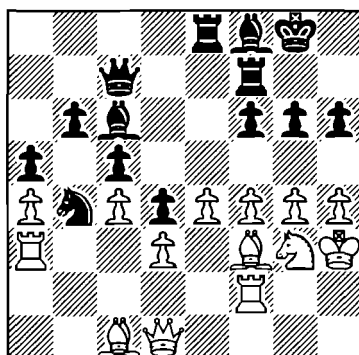
1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 g3 d6 4 ♙g2 g6 5 e4 ♙g7 6 ♘ge2 0-0 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d3 ♘d4 9 ♘xd4 exd4 10 ♘e2 c5 11 b4 ♘d7 12 bxc5 dxc5 13 f4 f6 14 a4

Typical Petrosian: White restrains any Black activity on the queenside, while maintaining a space advantage across the centre and kingside. It's clear White is slightly better; what is not clear is how White is going to win.



For a while, Petrosian does what he does best – he manoeuvres!

14...a5 15 g4 ♘b8 16 ♘g3 ♘c6 17 ♖f2 ♙d7 18 ♙f3 ♖a7 19 h4 h6 20 ♖b2 ♜c7 21 ♖g2 b6 22 ♙h1 ♜c8 23 ♖b1 ♘b4 24 ♖a1 ♙c6 25 ♖h2 ♜b8 26 ♖a3 ♖e7 27 ♙g1 ♜c7 28 ♜f1 ♖ff7 29 ♖f2 ♜d7 30 ♜d1 ♜c7 31 ♙g2 ♖e8 32 ♙h3 ♙f8



Not a great deal has happened in the last eighteen moves; White is still slightly better, but a couple of things have become clear. First, Black is not going to blunder; Bertok is playing calmly within the position and will evidently be satisfied with a draw. White has no usable open files, and all

this manoeuvring hasn't brought him any closer to winning.

Something radical has to happen if White is going to win! Did I hear someone say **Favourable Omens?** White's central break, e4-e5, must always be considered, and it's possible now, as a pawn sacrifice! The idea is to exchange off the light-squared bishops, and then the so far unemployed knight on g3 will get a beautiful and unassailable perch at e4. If White can both exchange light-squared bishops and put his pawns on light squares as well, Black's extra pawn will be blockaded, and his remaining bishop will become extremely bad.

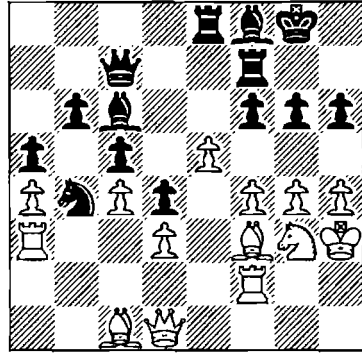
So yes, the positional omens are there – but the tactical omens run the other way. Advancing the e-pawn slightly but significantly weakens the c8-h3 diagonal, and ...there's the white king, on h3! So we know going in, Petrosian knows at this moment, that the sac he is considering is risky, and he might fall under attack – but if he does nothing, just keeps manoeuvring, he will never win the game! Petrosian takes a calculated risk, and sacs!

33 e5!

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved, just as expected. The computer doesn't allow for Sacrificial Shock, and feels Black is better after the bold pawn offer; the machine suggests 33 h5 g5 34 ♖f5 ♔d7 but how does White win here, with his knight always subject to exchange?

The **Author** admires Petrosian's boldness – I think Black would have an extraordinarily difficult time adjusting

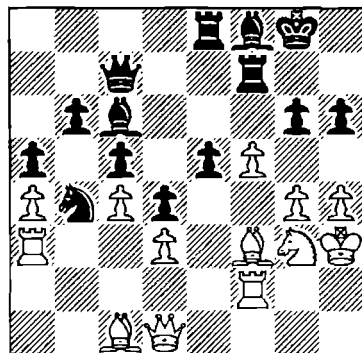
from manoeuvring defence to sharp counter-attack, and Bertok was unable to make that transition; he continued to play "solidly" – and went under.



33...fxe5

Acceptance is not forced: for Petrosian's positional idea to work, the light-squared bishops have to come off, so a very worthwhile and extremely sharp possibility is 33...♔d7 34 ♔e4 (or 34 exf6 ♔d6) 34...h5 35 f5 hxg4+ 36 ♖xg4 ♜g7 37 exf6 gxf5 38 f7+ ♜xf7 39 ♔g5 ♜g8 40 ♖xf5 ♔e7, when Black's Steinitz-like counterplay compensates for his breezy king position.

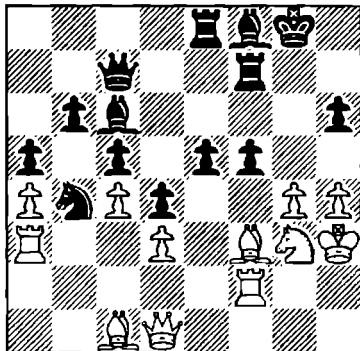
34 f5



34...♙xf3?!

Too compliant. Black needs to open lines so as to fight White's positional superiority with tactics aimed at the insecure white king.

A good try, though insufficient against best play, is 34...gxf5



with wild complications; here are a few sample lines.

a) 35 ♙xc6 ♜xc6 36 ♜xf5 h5 37 gxh5 ♘h8 38 ♜g1 ♙g7 39 ♜g6 ♜h1+ 40 ♙g3 ♜g8 41 ♜xf7 ♙f6+ 42 ♜xg8+ ♙xg8 and Black's queen should beat the disconnected white rooks.

b) 35 ♜xf5 ♜xd3! 36 ♜xd3 e4 37 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 wins for Black.

c) 35 gxf5! ♜d8 36 ♙xc6 ♜xc6 37 ♜e4 ♙g7 38 ♜g4 ♜df8 39 ♙h2 ♘h8 40 f6! and White is better. Note that White got the right bishops off and the knight to e4.

So what should Black play? Best is the even wilder 34...h5! with razor-sharp counterplay. Only in this way can Black cast doubt on White's pawn sacrifice – by focusing on the vulnerable white king, and the weakened c8-h3 diagonal.

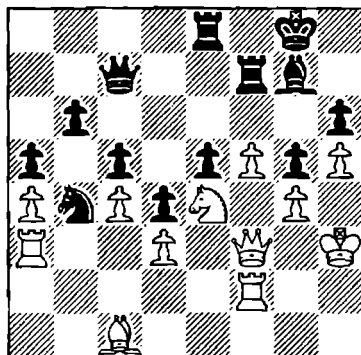
But Bertok, after being lulled to sleep by Petrosian's manoeuvrings, could not wake up in time to attack as ferociously as he should have! Instead he plays quietly, "safely" – right into Petrosian's hands.

35 ♜xf3 ♙g7

Better is 35...gxf5.

36 h5! g5 37 ♜e4

White achieved just what he aimed for: yes, Petrosian is a pawn down, but with his unassailable knight, safe king and protected passed pawn – while Black has a bishop on the same colour as all seven of his pawns – it is clear White stands better. Black did have his chance for sharp counterplay, but that's gone now, and all that's left is very, very difficult defence.



37...♙f6 38 ♙d2 ♙g7

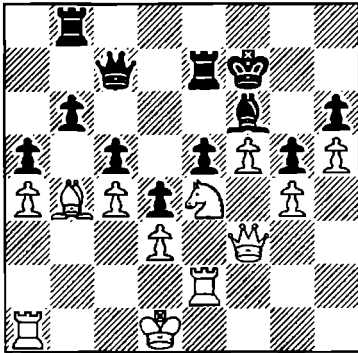
A passive defence like 38...♜c6 won't hold in the long run: 39 ♜f1 ♜b8 40 ♜b1 ♜d7 41 ♜ab3 ♙g7 42 ♜f2 and White infiltrates on d5 or b7.

39 ♜f1 ♜ff8 40 ♜aa1 ♜f7 41 ♜fc1 ♜ff8 42 ♙e1 ♜c6 43 ♜ab1 ♜b4 44 ♜b2 ♜f7 45 ♙g3 ♜fe7 46 ♙e1 ♙f7 47 ♜be2 ♙g7 48 ♙g2 ♜c6 49 ♜a1 ♜c7 50 ♙f1 ♙f7 51

♙e1 ♖g7 52 ♙d1 ♙f7 53 ♙e1 ♜b8

53...♘c6 won't avoid the coming exchange forever, for White will double on the b-file and force the black knight to return to b4.

54 ♙xb4!



Now White will open a crucial file, while his knight dominates Black's bad bishop.

54...axb4?

Taking toward the centre is the decisive mistake! Now White infiltrates and wins on the a-file.

Correct is 54...cxb4 when Black can meet White's c4-c5 break with ...b6-b5, thus gaining counterplay on the queen-side. White is probably still better, but the win is not clear, e.g. 55 ♜c2 ♙g7 56 c5 b3 57 ♜c4 b5 58 axb5 ♜xb5 59 ♘xf6 ♙xf6 60 ♜a8 ♙f7! (the dangers to Black are seen in the following variations: 60...b2 61 ♜b1 ♙f7 62 ♜a6 ♜d7 63 ♜g6+ ♙f8 64 ♜xh6+ wins, or if 60...♜xc5? 61 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 62 ♜f8+ wins the queen) 61 ♜a6 and White recovers his pawn, but the a- and b-pawns give counterplay.

55 ♜ea2 ♜b7

If 55...♜a8? 56 ♘xf6 wins at once.

56 a5 b3

No better is 56...♙g7 57 ♘xf6 ♙xf6 58 axb6 ♜xb6 59 ♜a8 (White infiltrates) 59...♜b8 60 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 61 ♜a6+ ♙f7 62 ♜xh6 b3 63 ♜h7+ ♙e8 (if 63...♙f6 64 ♜a6+ mates) 64 ♜h8+ wins.

57 a6 bxa2 58 axb7 ♙g7

58...♜xb7 59 ♘d6+ wins the queen.

59 ♜g2

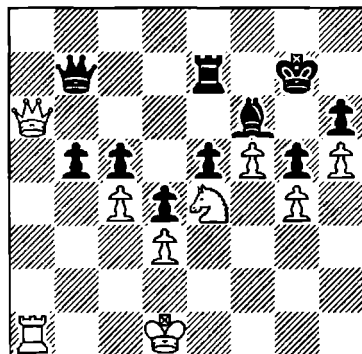
Petrosian goes for the ending, but better is to win at once with 59 ♘xf6! ♙xf6 60 b8♜! ♜xb8 61 ♜c6+ and the queen infiltration is decisive.

59...♜xb7 60 ♜xa2 b5

This break is not effective here, but as we saw, after the possible 54...cxb4 this kind of counter would give Black connected passed pawns.

Better is 60...♜d7, but after 61 ♜a4 followed by ♜b5 I'm sure Petrosian would win in the long run, as Black's position is nothing but a collection of static weaknesses.

61 ♜a6! 1-0



White is still a pawn down, but his position is winning:

a) 61...♜xa6 62 ♜xa6 bxc4 (after 62...♜f7 63 cxb5 the even material end-

ing is no contest) 63 ♖xf6 cxd3 64 ♖g6+ ♕f7 65 ♖xh6 c4 66 f6 ♖d7 67 ♖h7+ ♕e6 68 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 69 h6 and White queens a pawn.

b) 61...♖f7 62 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 63 ♗xc5 ♖b6 64 ♖a7+ ♕g8 65 ♗d7 ♖d6 66 cxb5 with another easy endgame win.

Once Petrosian got his position – and his big knight – after 37 ♗e4, it's impossible to believe that anyone could have held the game against the wily Armenian. Yes, the way the game went, Black could have put up a better fight with 54...cxb4, but even that position was difficult and demanded extremely precise defence.

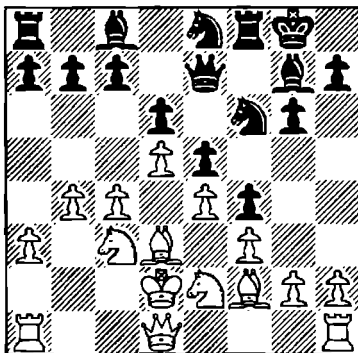
The real question is – what is our **Risk Assessment?** This is truly a difficult one to call. If Black is a computer, not a human, then perhaps 33 e5 is unsound, in view of the possible sharp counterstroke 34...h5!. On the other hand, could anyone have come up with that bold countershot after being lulled by Petrosian's lengthy manoeuvring game?

Let's call this one moderately risky.

Game 49

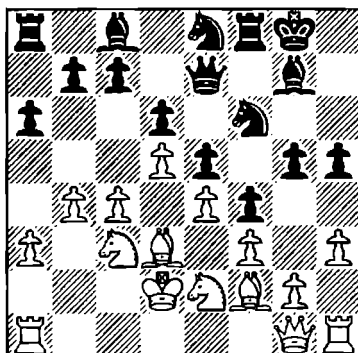
T.V.Petrosian-G.Kluger
Hungary-USSR match,
Budapest 1955
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 e5 6 ♖e3 0-0 7 ♗ge2 ♗bd7 8 d5 ♗b6 9 ♗g3 ♗e8 10 ♖d3 f5 11 ♖f2 f4 12 ♗ge2 ♖e7 13 b4 ♗d7 14 a3 ♗df6 15 ♗d2?!



Something very unusual happens in this game: Petrosian gets outplayed! I think this is the first step on the wrong path – while Petrosian has wandered with his king in many other games, here the queenside is too unstable and thus unsafe for His Majesty.

15...g5 16 h3 h5 17 ♖g1 a6



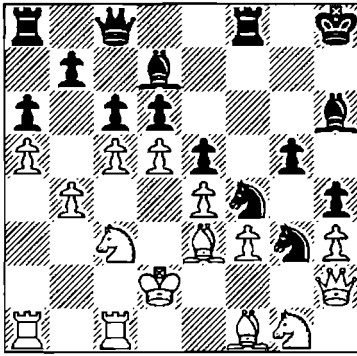
18 g4?!

And this looks like another faux pas: White opens the game on his opponent's strong side and gives him the f4-square. Kluger plays excellently until he obtains a winning position.

18...fxg3 19 ♖xg3 ♗h7 20 ♖e3 h4 21 ♖g2 ♕h8 22 ♖hf1 ♖h6 23 c5 ♖d7 24 a4

♠e6 25 ♘g1 ♖h5 26 ♜f1 ♜f4 27 ♜h2
 ♜f6 28 ♙f1 ♜6h5 29 ♜d1 ♜e8 30 a5
 ♜g3 31 ♜c3 ♜c8 32 ♜c1

Black has a winning position and should put Petrosian away (not a phrase one often writes!) with the active 32...c6!, which adds a King Attack to Black's positional advantage stemming from his dominant knights.



A few sample variations show that Black has a decisive advantage here:

a) 33 cxd6 cxd5 34 ♜xd5 ♜xf1+ 35 ♜xf1 ♜xd5 36 exd5 ♜c4 with decisive infiltration.

b) 33 ♙c4 ♜xh3 wins a pawn.

c) 33 dxc6 ♜xc6 and White's king position collapses.

d) 33 ♜a4 cxd5 34 ♜b6 ♜c6 35 ♙xf4 ♜xf1+ 36 ♜xf1 exf4 37 ♜xa8 ♜xa8 38 exd5 ♜xd5+ 39 ♜e1 ♜e8+ 40 ♜e2 ♜c4 with a winning attack.

The last line, with the exchange sacrifice, is critical: one can say that if Black had been willing to sac, he would have won the game!

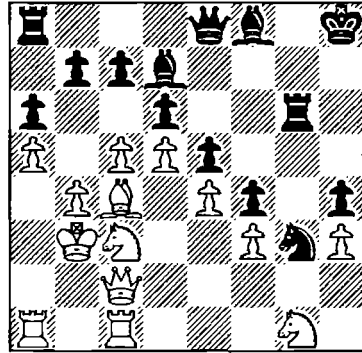
32...♜e8?!

Of course Black is still better after this, and he will get another winning

chance later, but the lack of boldness is not a good sign.

On the other hand, when Petrosian gets his chance, he sacrifices without hesitation.

33 ♙c4 ♙g7 34 ♜c2 ♜f6 35 ♜b3 ♙f8 36 ♜c2 ♜g6 37 ♙xf4 gxf4



Take a look at Black's wonderful position! He has a perfectly shaped and sound pawn structure, a strong outpost knight on the sixth rank, a rook on the only open file, a threat to win a pawn at c5, etc, etc. Meanwhile White has an immobile king's knight, an unsafe king, and no visible play. Can there be **Favourable Omens??**

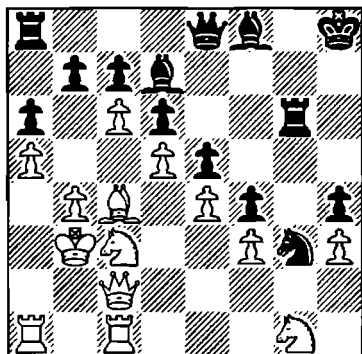
Here's what could happen if White does nothing: 38 ♜f2 ♙e7 39 ♜a4 ♜b8 40 ♙d3 ♙xa4+ 41 ♜xa4 dxc5 42 bxc5 b6 43 axb6 ♙xc5! 44 ♜xc5 ♜gxb6+ 45 ♜a3 ♜b3+ 46 ♜a2 ♜xa4+ and mates next. So there's our first omen: White is almost lost, and must sacrifice or die!

But what can White sacrifice? How can he at least make a dent in Black's powerful position?

Petrosian spies a vacating sacrifice, so he can put his knight on the strong

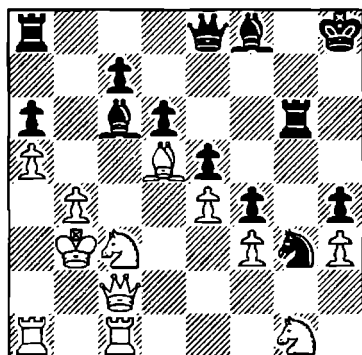
central square d5. It's the only chance, and he goes for it.

38 c6!



Mr. Fritz? Approved! The machine, as well as the **Author**, does not feel this move solves White's problems – rather, it is the only practical chance.

38...bxc6 39 dxc6 40 c6 41 d5



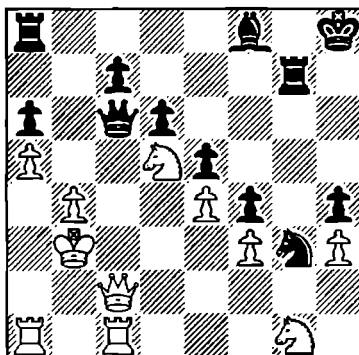
40...Eg7?

Black's advantage did not go away just because White sac'ed a pawn. What's happened is that White has created some play for himself, and if Black makes mistakes then White can take over the game. But the truth is that White is still close to lost: all the posi-

tional advantages Black had before are still there – the most important being White's unsafe king. So go for it!

After the correct 40...cxd5+ 41 dxd5 (if 41 exd5?! ♜f7 42 ♖a3 ♕f5 43 ♕ge2 ♕e3 and Black wins easily with his extra pawn and even superior sixth rank knight outpost) 41...c5!, Black activates his extra pawn and forces some kind of b/c exchange, exposing White's king even more. For example, if 42 bxc5 ♜b5+ and Black wins at once. Even after 42 ♜c4 Black plays 42...Eg7, planning to transfer to a queenside open file, and White is in dire straits – the strong white knight on d5 does not compensate for the pawn minus and, especially, the weak king.

41 cxc6 ♜xc6 42 d5!



That's Petrosian! He goes for the pawn down ending, for with queens off his king is safe. Meanwhile the white knight finds the vacated square!

42...♜b7??

Swimming in the sea of Sacrificial Shock, Black blunders and loses. Two moves ago, Black had a big advantage (over a full point on the *Fritz* scale), but

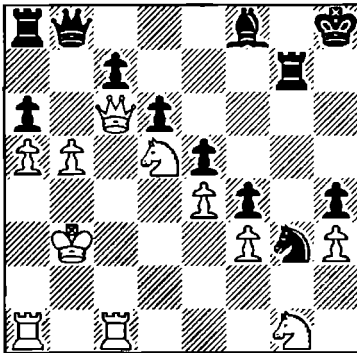
after this move, the advantage will shift that much to the White side. Petrosian is able to set up a complete blockade of Black's position.

Correct is the evident 42...♖xc2+ 43 ♜xc2 c5! activating the pawn as before. While with queens off this move is not so threatening, Black does maintain his extra pawn and should never lose. For what it's worth, the computer gives Black an equals over plus here, which sounds about right. Whereas after the played move Black's extra pawn is backward, blockaded, and soon lost – while White's strong knight weighs ever more heavily on the position.

43 ♖c6!

With an awesome bind!

43...♜b8 44 b5!



Petrosian forces a passed pawn.

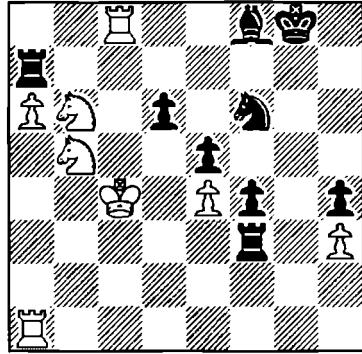
44...axb5

Or 44...♜a7 45 b6 ♜b7 46 ♔a2 cxb6 47 axb6 ♜g8 48 ♔b2, followed by ♜xa6 and White is better.

45 ♖xc7 ♜a7 46 ♖d5 ♜af7 47 a6 ♖h5 48 ♜b6!

Petrosian loves these pawn down/positional advantage endings.

48...♜xb6 49 ♖xb6 ♜a7 50 ♜c8 ♔g8 51 ♖e2 ♖f6 52 ♖c3 ♜g3 53 ♖xb5 ♜xf3+ 54 ♔c4 1-0



Black resigns in view of 54...♜g7 55 a7 ♜xa7 56 ♜xa7 ♜xh3 57 ♜aa8 ♖h7 58 ♖xd6 f3 59 ♖d7 f2 60 ♜xf8+ ♖xf8 61 ♜xf8+ ♔g7 62 ♜xf2 ♜a3 63 ♖f5+ etc.

Risk Assessment: The sacrifice is not risky, since White had a bad, virtually lost position for some time, and it was getting worse. If White doesn't play the sac (now *that* would be risky!) Black can win without difficulty. By playing the sac – even though Black is still clearly better afterward (in an objective sense of course) – Petrosian forced his opponent to deal with new problems, took away his easy ride, and suddenly all three results were possible!

Black could of course have won cleanly much earlier with 32...c6 – the fact that he missed that sacrificial attack (for Black!) showed his lack of boldness, and when Petrosian sac'ed and obtained play, Black's nerves deserted him altogether. Once again we see the human element trump computer position analysis!

The last two games of this chapter feature the most popular and important of the vacating pawn sacrifices: the advance of the isolated queen pawn.

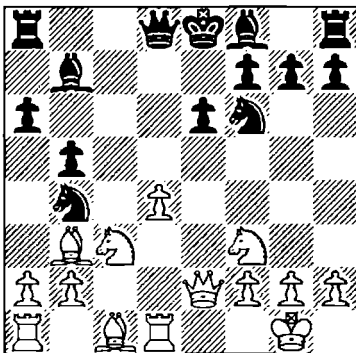
The queen's pawn isolani occurs in a wide range of openings, from the Queen's Gambit Accepted to the Giuoco Piano (as featured in the two games cited), to the Nimzo-Indian Defence. If you play either for or against the IQP, you simply must have a good understanding of this sacrifice.

Game 50
B.Spasky-A.Aftonov
 Leningrad 1949
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♘f3 ♙f6 4 e3 c5 5 ♙xc4 e6 6 0-0 a6 7 ♚e2 b5 8 ♙b3 ♘c6

8...♙b7 is universally played – the point is that piece guards the d5-square against any breakthrough. When the young Spassky saw Black's actual move, he was probably already thinking about a d4-d5 break.

9 ♘c3 cxd4 10 ♖d1 ♙b7 11 exd4 ♘b4

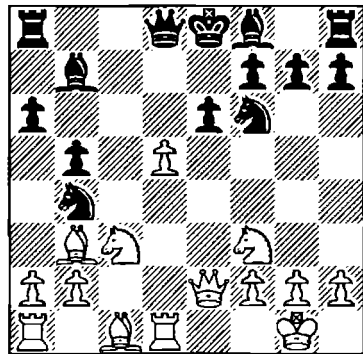


Black is about to blockade, and so justify his dubious opening – can there be **Favourable Omens?**

First, we see that White has a lead in development and is already castled, with one rook in play. Black can't castle until he gets his king's bishop out, and if the game opens, he won't have time for that. Also, White has a pin on the e-file, so the black e-pawn can't take if White plays the vacating d4-d5 sac. Furthermore, the black piece that does take on d5 will be pinned by the already developed white rook at d1, and further furthermore, the knight on f6 can be pinned by ♙g5!

I don't think we need to go any further!

12 d5!



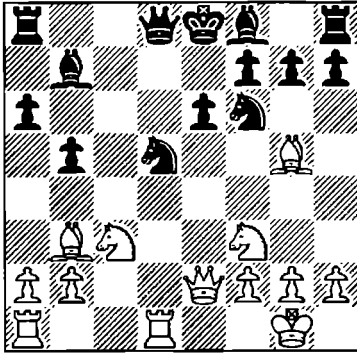
Mr. Fritz? Approved! Even a machine can see it's time to break through here, and an old IQP player like myself, that is, the **Author**, also votes for immediate attack.

12...♘bx5

The pawn must be taken, and nothing else is better. If 12...♘fxd5 13 a3 wins a piece, while 12...♙xd5 13 ♙g5

♙e7 14 ♖xf6 gxf6 (14...♙xf6 15 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 16 ♙xd5 also wins a piece) 15 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 16 ♙xd5 exd5 17 ♜d4 transposes to the game.

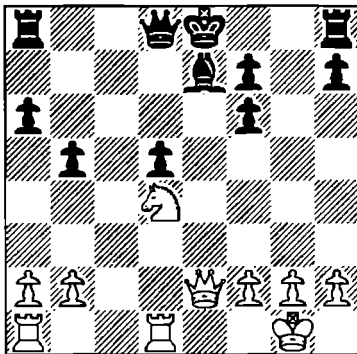
13 ♙g5



13...♙e7

Black is pinned to death and can't get out of all of them: if 13...♚a5 14 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 15 ♙xd5 wins a piece as usual.

14 ♖xf6 gxf6 15 ♜xd5 ♙xd5 16 ♙xd5 exd5 17 ♜d4



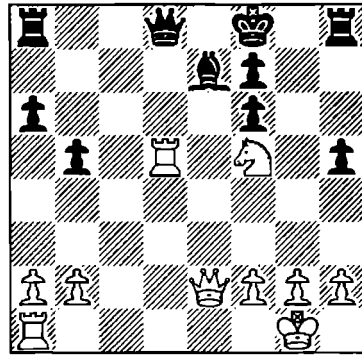
The end result of a classic vacating sacrifice: the weak white isolated pawn is gone, replaced by an even weaker *black* isolated pawn! Black also has

doubled f-pawns and an isolated h-pawn – in other words, no king safety. The white knight has taken the vacated d4-square with dynamic effect, eyeing both c6 and f5. White's positional advantage – despite the minus pawn – is practically decisive.

17...♙f8

Or 17...♚d7 18 ♖e1 ♙f8 19 ♚h5 h6 20 ♜f5, and the knight finds an attacking outpost even closer to the black king.

18 ♜f5 h5 19 ♖xd5!



Spassky wins with a pretty combination.

19...♚xd5 20 ♚xe7+ ♙g8 21 ♚xf6 1-0

Black must lose queen or king.

Risk assessment: The sacrifice itself is not risky at all; any IQP player should find this move by feel – and should actually play it.

The only risk is (as I have often noted in this book) if White does not play the sac and allows his isolani to be blockaded. Then White might lose an endgame down the road – while a bit of boldness means you could win like Spassky in 21 moves!

Notice how strong players like Petrosian and Spassky are *willing* to sacrifice – while Kluger, in the previous game, after completely outplaying Petrosian, was unwilling to make a small material investment to conclude the game. If one is to beat the best, one must be willing to give up material at the right time.

Game 51
W. Steinitz-C. Von Bardeleben
 Hastings 1895
Giuoco Piano

This game features what is beyond doubt the most famous vacating sacrifice in chess history. It has been published in every anthology of best games – for example, right now I am looking at Tartakower’s classic *500 Master Games of Chess*.

I’m sure you’ve seen this game before – but I could not leave it out: the ultimate vacating sacrifice, and one of the best attacks ever played.

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♙c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♙b4+ 7 ♘c3 d5

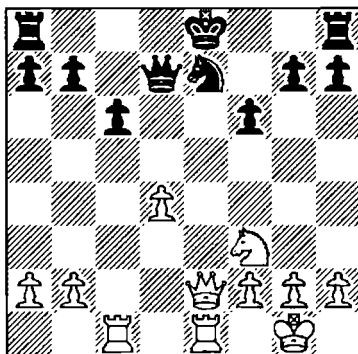
In large part because of this game, the stronger 7...♘xe4 is universally played now.

8 exd5 ♘xd5

The IQP makes its appearance. Right now it is just barely blockaded, and I’m sure that the Great Predecessor (yes, this game is in that book too!) Wilhelm Steinitz was already thinking of advancing the pawn further.

9 0-0 ♙e6 10 ♙g5 ♙e7 11 ♙xd5 ♙xd5

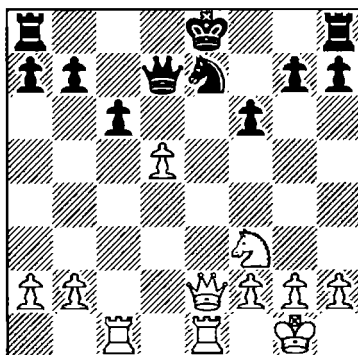
12 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 13 ♙xe7 ♘xe7 14 ♖e1 f6 15 ♗e2 ♗d7 16 ♖ac1 c6?!



Black should get out of the pin at once with 16...♗f7, when White has an evident advantage in space and mobility, but Black is still playing.

This means our **Favourable Omens** begin with Black’s uncastled king, and the pinned knight in front of it. These so lame Black’s game that we must ask – can we bring one more piece to the attack? Hmmm ...this just might be possible if we could get the d-pawn out of the way.

17 d5!!

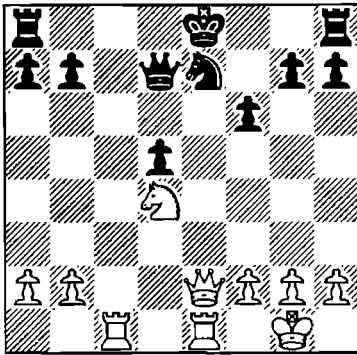


Tartakower writes, “A fine *vacating*

sacrifice. The square d4 is made available for the knight, thus greatly intensifying the attack.”

Mr. Fritz as well as the Author concur.

17...cxd5 18 ♖d4

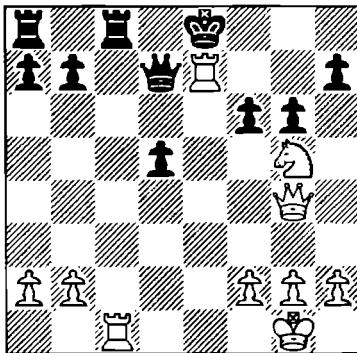


As in Spassky-Aftonov, the isolated pawn is now on the other foot, and the white knight on d4 is a powerhouse.

18...♟f7 19 ♖e6

The threat is ♜c7.

19...♜hc8 20 ♜g4 g6 21 ♖g5+ ♟e8 22 ♜xe7+!!



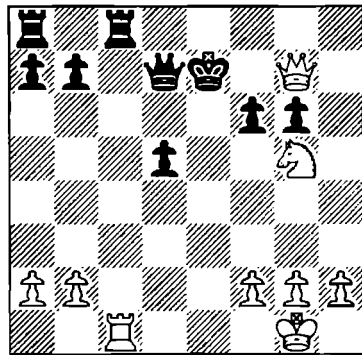
As Tartakower comments, now all four of White's pieces are en prise, one of them hanging with mate (!) and yet

Black can't take a single one!

If by some chance you haven't seen this game before, take your time and work through the variations – as White keeps the plates spinning – until mate!

22...♟f8 23 ♜f7+ ♟g8 24 ♜g7+ ♟h8 25 ♜xh7+ 1-0

At this point Von Bardeleben left the tournament hall without actually resigning – Steinitz demonstrated the win as follows: 25...♟g8 26 ♜g7+ ♟h8 (if 26...♟f8 27 ♖h7+ ♟xg7 28 ♜xd7+ and the queen goes with check) 27 ♜h4+ ♟xg7 28 ♜h7+ ♟f8 29 ♜h8+ ♟e7 30 ♜g7+



30...♟e8 (if 30...♟d6 31 ♜xf6+ ♜e6 32 ♜xe6 mate) 31 ♜g8+ ♟e7 32 ♜f7+ ♟d8 33 ♜f8+ ♜e8 34 ♖f7+ ♟d7 35 ♜d6 mate.

Risk assessment: One does not have to be as brilliant as Steinitz to realize White has a tremendous attack after the sacrifice and 18 ♖d4. Therefore, not risky, but logical and powerful.

Once again, had Steinitz *not* sacrificed, then Black could perhaps have obtained a playable game with ...♟f7 and ...♖d5 – so the only real risk would

have been a lack of boldness!

Summary

The vacating sacrifice is fairly simple, yet it can lead to the most savage attacks. Substituting a piece for a pawn can change the entire look of a game: for example, in the IQP sacrifice, the pawn on d4 (which threatens only e5

and c5) is replaced by a knight that threatens e6 and c6 as well as f5, all of which (as we saw in the last two games) can be crucial attacking squares.

Also note Petrosian's two risky wins, where a knight in the centre (especially in Game 49) made up for a multitude of sins!

Chapter Ten

Charge Up

One of my favourite chess books is *Leonid Stein: Master of Attack* by Raymond Keene, and a particular sentence from that book has stayed with me throughout my chess career: "This second game exhibits a stylistic theme peculiar to Stein: his facility for offering light material sacrifices (varying from one pawn to the exchange) not for immediate or even readily tangible rewards, but in order to charge up, or electrify his positions."

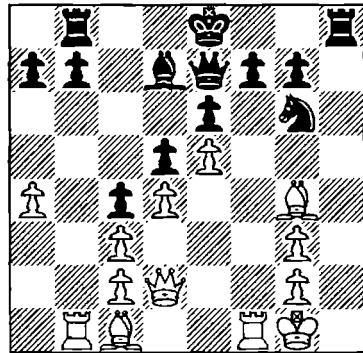
The above comment comes after the following game, where Stein beats the great Petrosian – note the nonchalant offer of the rook pawn at move 19!

L.Stein-T.V.Petrosian

USSR Championship, Moscow 1961

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 c3 b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3
xc3+ 6 bxc3 e7 7 g4 f5 8 d3 h5
9 f4 c6 10 e2 ce7 11 g3 g6
12 d2 d7 13 b1 b8 14 0-0 c4 15
e2 xg3 16 fxg3 h4 17 g4 hxg3 18**

hxg3 e7 19 a4!



(charging up the whole position! – note that the white rooks, both bishops, and the queen all become more active after this) **19...xa4 20 a1 b5 21 a3
d7 22 f2 b7 23 af1 d8 24 d1
h6 25 c1 h7 26 xe6 1-0**

I borrowed the key phrase from that Keene quote, "charge up", to describe the kind of sacrifice covered in this chapter. We all know about depressing positions where "I can't do anything!"

– but this is the opposite. After a charge-up sacrifice, you feel your position come alive, your pieces are up and raring to go, your game is electric with possibility.

This is one sacrifice that I have become comfortable with, if not mastered – I don't feel one masters anything in chess! – and thus there are three of my games in this chapter. I think the Charge Up is one of the most useful types of pawn sacrifice – but they are hard to evaluate, as the sac is intuitive by nature.

Let's start with a simple, *unapproved* example.

Game 52
P.Clift-T.Taylor
 Los Angeles (rapid) 2007
Nimzowitsch Defence

1 e4 ♘c6 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 ♗f6 4 ♘c3 ♙g4
 5 ♙e3 e5 6 d5 ♗e7 7 ♙e2 ♗g6 8 h3
 ♙d7 9 ♗d2 ♙e7 10 ♙d3 c5 11 a4 a6 12
 0-0 ♗h5 13 ♗e2 b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 c4
 b4 16 b3 0-0

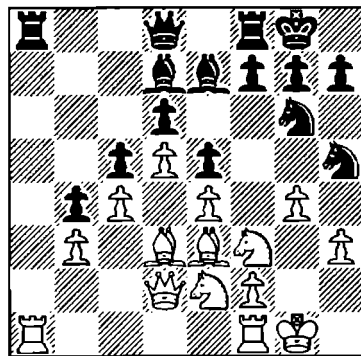
Black has easily equalized against White's quiet play – now suddenly White lashes out!

17 g4

Where should I move my knight? Obviously, retreating to f6 is possible, and it's no surprise the computer favours this: 17...♗f6 18 ♗g3 h6 19 ♗f5 ♗c7 with equality is the mechanical evaluation.

At the board I considered another move, and saw some convincing Fa-

vourable Omens: if Black advances to f4, the knight will be too strong, and White will have to accept the pawn sacrifice. This means the long dark diagonal will open up, and if I can get my king's bishop there then I will have terrific play with my outside passed pawn! Furthermore, if the game opens, I may have kingside attacking chances as well!



But wait a minute? Did I say outside passed pawn? I don't have one yet!

My idea, which charges up the entire black position – and the passed pawn comes into existence – is seen in the game. I will also describe the flaw in the conception. Let's see how this works out, and how it could have gone the other way.

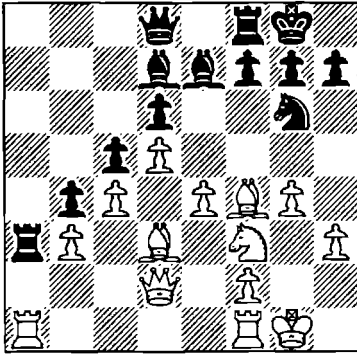
17...♗hf4!

Black refuses to retreat!

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! Of course the machine likes 17...♗f6, as already stated, with equality.

The **Author** realizes that the sac is objectively unsound, yet still approves it – explanation to follow.

18 ♖xf4 exf4 19 ♙xf4 ♖a3!



This move is the point of the charge-up sacrifice. Black's entire position is jumping now! Check out the many threats and *grande activité*: Black directly threatens the b-pawn, which would give him a protected passed pawn. If his daring rook is taken, Black gets that aforementioned outside passed pawn, just two squares from queening. The queening square can be covered by the dark-squared bishop, which can move to the now open long diagonal. If Black has time, he can take on f4 and thus secure the two bishops – and make his dark-squared bishop even stronger. Finally, there may be a way to attack White's swiss-cheesy kingside.

Obviously Black has more than enough for the pawn, and the charge-up sac is a big success – But!

One recalls that I said the sac was objectively unsound: didn't we reach this position, which is good for Black, practically by force?

Actually, no. When I played the sac, I was convinced that my opponent

would play in just this way – and most people would, especially in a rapid game, as this was. But what if White had been hyper-alert? What if this had been a slow game?

Then White might have realized that Black's last rook move was the key to the whole operation, and removed the rook!

Let's go back a move: White could and should have played 19 ♖xa8!! ♜xa8 (not 19...fxe3? 20 ♖xd8 exd2 21 ♖xd7 and White wins a rook) 20 ♙xf4 ♜a3 21 ♖b1 ♖xf4 22 ♜xf4 and clearly Black does not have enough for his pawn. The queen can't accomplish anything by herself, Black can't get a passed pawn, and White's extra pawn will weigh heavily once the f-pawn is mobilized.

But why was I confident White would not play this way? Because the key move is counter-intuitive. Who would stop an exchanging sequence to give up an open file? A grandmaster playing a slow game, that's who! But against a regular tournament player, in a rapid game, I think it's practically a lock that the game situation would come about – and that is why I still approve the sacrifice – given the specific situation and time limit.

Now back to the game, where everything has worked like a charm – though soon Black will in turn be affected by the rapid time control!

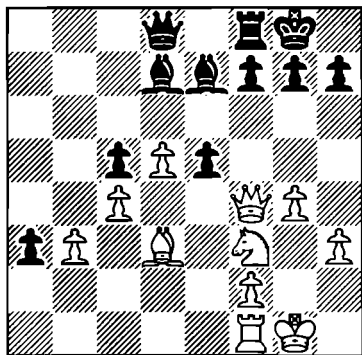
20 ♖xa3

If 20 ♙c2 Black plays 20...♜c7 planning to double on the a-file.

20...bxa3 21 e5

If 21 ♖g3 ♜b6 22 ♜c2 ♗f6 and the passed rook pawn is extremely dangerous.

21...♗xf4 22 ♜xf4 dxe5



23 ♜c1

There is no good way to recapture:

a) 23 ♜xe5 ♗f6 24 ♜e4 g6 25 ♘e5 ♜c7 26 f4 ♞e8 with wonderful compensation, e.g. 27 ♞e1 a2 28 ♞a1 ♗xe5 29 fxe5 ♞xe5 30 ♜f3 ♜a5 31 ♜f2 ♜c3 and wins.

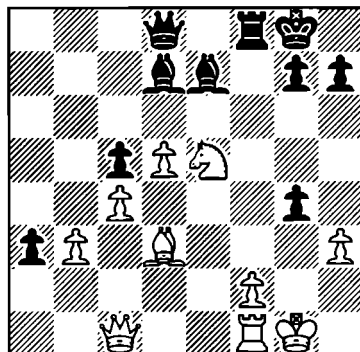
b) 23 ♘xe5 ♗d6 24 ♜e4 f5 25 ♜e2 (if 25 gxf5? ♗xf5 26 ♜e3 ♗xe5 wins a piece) 25...♗xe5 26 ♜xe5 fxe4 and Black has recovered his pawn with a strong attack, while White still hasn't dealt with the passed a-pawn.

23...f5?

Black is clearly better now, but I rushed things here, pushed along by the clock. Instead Black should win with the accurate 23...♗d6 24 ♜xa3 f5! (this is correct now, with White's queen out of play) 25 gxf5 ♜f6 with a winning attack, e.g. 26 ♜c1 e4 27 ♗xe4 ♗xf5 28 ♗xf5 ♜xf5 29 ♘e1 ♜xh3 30 f4 ♗e5! and White has no reasonable defence – a pretty possibility is 31 ♘c2 ♜g3+ 32

♗h1 ♞f5 33 ♜d1 ♜h3+ 34 ♗g1 ♞g5+! and mates.

24 ♘xe5 fxg4



As I was waiting for White's next move, I noticed – to my horror! – the following counterchance: 25 ♜c2! g6 (not 25...gxh3? 26 ♗xh7+ ♗h8 27 ♘g6+ ♗xh7 28 ♘xe7+ ♗h8 29 ♜e4 and White wins!) 26 ♗xg6 hxg6 27 ♜xg6+ ♗h8 28 ♜h6+ with a draw.

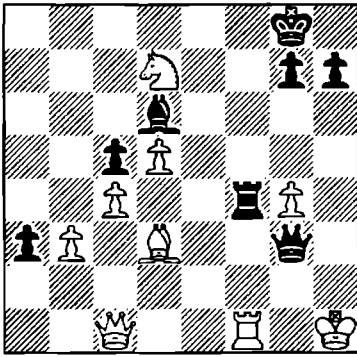
25 hxg4?

White misses his chance and now I could breathe again!

25...♗d6 26 ♘xd7

This loses at once. White can still fight for a draw – but probably not successfully – with 26 f4 ♜h4 27 ♜e1 (best; if 27 ♜e3 ♗xe5 28 fxe5 ♜xg4+ 29 ♗h2 ♞xf1 30 ♗xf1 a2 31 ♜c3 ♜d4! or 27 ♗xh7+ ♜xh7 28 ♘xd7 ♞a8 and the passed a-pawn is decisive in both variations – White really should have prevented 19...♞a3!) 27...♜xe1 28 ♞xe1 ♗c8 29 ♞a1 ♞xf4 30 ♘c6 ♞xg4+ 31 ♗f2 ♞f4+ 32 ♗g2 h5 33 ♞xa3 h4 and, remarkably, Black should win with the other rook pawn!

26...♜h4! 27 f4 ♜g3+ 28 ♗h1 ♞xf4



29 ♖xf4

If 29... ♖xg4 and mates, but I find it interesting that Black can also win with 29... ♖xf1+ 30 ♙xf1 ♖h2+ 31 ♖xh2 ♙xh2 32 ♗xh2 a2 and Black's charged-up position produces a new queen from nowhere! Of course 29... ♖xg4 is a quicker and objectively stronger win, but the sac queen/new queen variation shows the pawn sacrifice in the clearest light. Black's full board play is too much for White.

But note again, everything hinges on the passed pawn!

29... ♙xf4 30 ♖c2 ♖h3+ 31 ♙g1 ♙e3+ 0-1

Black has a mating attack and a new queen if he wants it!

What is the **Risk assessment?** In view of the possibility of a well-timed ♖xa8, one can call this sacrifice extremely risky. But I don't think it was at all risky in a rapid game. I don't know any regular chessplayers (I'm not counting Anand here!) who would have seen that giving up the a-file – while he was engaged on the other

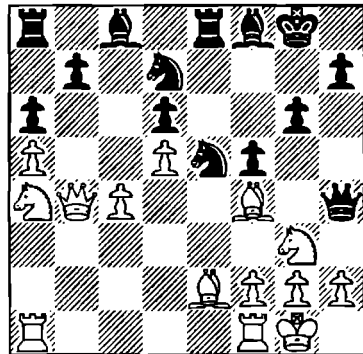
side, and with very limited time to think – was the only correct move!

Game 53
T.Taylor-Y.Sheynberg
 Agoura Hills, Los Angeles 2005
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♟ge2 0-0 6 ♟g3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 ♙e2 exd5 9 exd5 ♜e8 10 0-0 ♟fd7 11 ♟b5

White has obtained an advantage from the opening but misses the correct 11 ♟e4 here.

11... ♟b6 12 ♙f4 ♙f8 13 a4 a6 14 ♟c3 f5 15 ♖d2 ♟6d7 16 a5 ♟e5 17 ♟a4 ♟bd7 18 b4 cxb4 19 ♖xb4 ♖h4



20 ♙d2?!

White is still better after 20 ♖d2.

20... ♟f6 21 ♟b6 ♜b8 22 ♜fe1 ♙d7 23 ♜a3 ♜bd8 24 ♙f1

White's position does not inspire confidence. The queenside pieces are not threatening much, while Black is menacing on the other wing.

Here Black can get the advantage with the strong and accurate 24...f4

when none of White's choices are appetizing:

a) 25 c5 Δ fg4 26 h3 dxc5 27 W xf4 h h6 wins.

b) 25 Δ xd7 K xd7 26 Δ h1 K de7 with a clear positional advantage.

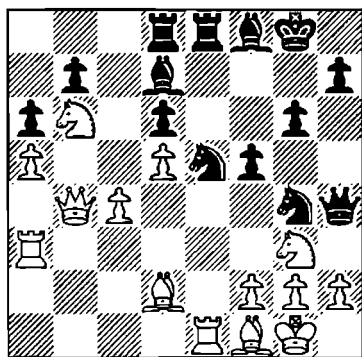
c) 25 Δ e4 Δ xe4 26 K xe4 Δ g4 and mates.

d) 25 Δ e2 Δ eg4 wins, which leaves us with the far from aesthetic...

e) 25 Δ h1 (best!) when Black is somewhat better after 25... h f5.

Instead of this accurate move, Black went for the direct attack.

24... Δ fg4?!



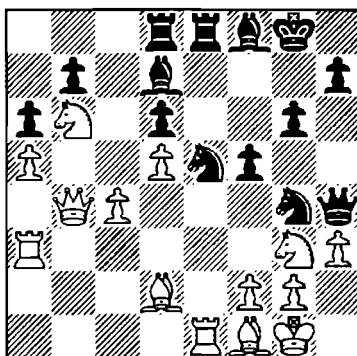
Looks scary at first, but then I began to see **Favourable Omens**.

Remember the note a few moves back: "White's position does not inspire confidence. The queenside pieces are not threatening much, while Black is menacing on the other wing." But what if White could create real threats (and a passed pawn!) on the queenside, while stopping Black's attack on the kingside? What if White could coordinate his whole position, charge it up to a fierce degree? What if White could do

all this for only one pawn??

The lovely omens are these: White can induce Black to sac a piece with 25 h3, and while Black is recovering said piece, break on the queenside with c4-c5. This means that White will sooner or later get a passed d-pawn, while the white queen will suddenly be active on the fourth rank, completely neutralizing Black's attack. Finally, Black's best piece, his knight on e5, will be undermined by the advance of the c-pawn, and White can attack that piece with considerable effect, as seen in the game.

25 h3!



Mr. Fritz? Approved, number one pick. The machine likes the forcing quality of the sacrifice, and undoubtedly calculates more than I did during the game. I knew my whole position would be charged up, and that was enough for me.

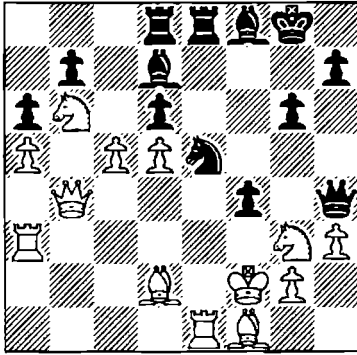
Of course, the **Author** still approves the sac – watch the white pieces come to life now.

25... Δ xf2

Black has no choice but to accept,

for if 25...♖f6 26 f4 and Black is forced back all along the line.

26 ♖xf2 f4 27 c5!



White's point! Suddenly one sees that the formerly inactive white queen and queen's rook are now strongly developed on open ranks!

27...fxg3+ 28 ♖xg3 ♗xb4

After the sharp 28...♗e7 White has 29 ♗b3 ♗d4+ 30 ♗e3 ♖f8+ 31 ♔g1 ♗xe3+ 32 ♖gxe3 ♔h4 33 cxd6 ♔f2+ (if 33...♗xe1 34 ♖xe1 ♖f7 35 ♖e7 ♔b5 36 ♔xb5 axb5 37 d7 and the passed pawn gives White a decisive advantage) 34 ♖h2 ♖f7 35 ♔b4 ♖h6 36 ♖e7 ♔xe1 37 ♖xe1 and White is better despite being the exchange down – he will play ♔d3 and ♖e7 with tremendous pressure.

29 ♔xb4 dxc5 30 ♔c3

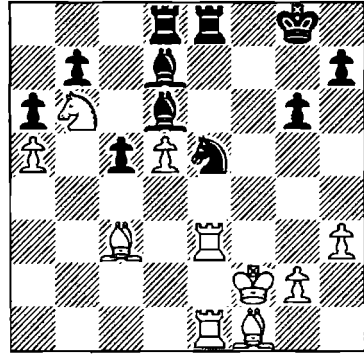
Black is a pawn ahead and the queens are off – if I've learned anything from Petrosian, it's that I have to be winning here!

30...♔d6

Black has no choice, for if 30...♔g7 31 ♖ge3 ♖f8+ 32 ♖g3 ♖f7 33 ♔xg7 ♖xg7 34 ♖e7 and White's big rook on the seventh gives him a clear advan-

tage, while 30...♖f7? loses to 31 ♖xd7 ♖xe1 32 ♖f6+.

31 ♖ge3



Compare this position to the one after 24 ♔f1 – unlike that unhappy memory, here every white piece is charged up and attacking! It's easy to see that Black must already surrender material.

31...♖f8+

Again if 31...♖f7 32 ♖xd7 ♖xe3 33 ♖f6+ wins everything.

32 ♖g1 ♖f7 33 ♔f6

White wins the exchange and the game.

33...♔b5 34 ♔xd8 ♖xd8 35 ♖c4 ♔f8 36 ♖d1 ♖g7 37 ♖e6 ♔xc4 38 ♔xc4 ♖d6 39 ♔e2 c4 40 ♖f1 ♖c8 41 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 42 ♖xd6 c3 43 ♖f6+ ♖e7 44 ♖f1 ♖d6 45 ♔f3 ♖c5 46 ♖f2 ♖b4 47 ♖e3 ♖xa5 48 ♖d4 b5 49 d6 b4 50 d7 ♖d8 51 ♔c6 ♖b6 52 ♔a4 a5 53 ♖f6+ ♖c7 54 ♖d3 ♖b8 55 ♖c2

Zugzwang! If 55...h5 56 ♖e6 h4 57 ♖e8 ♖d8 58 ♖b3 g5 59 ♖c2 Black must give up his rook.

55...b3+

Now all the pawns fall.

56 ♔xb3 ♖xd7 57 ♖xc3 1-0

Risk assessment: Since every white piece becomes twice as active after the sac as before the sac, I can't see any risk at all.

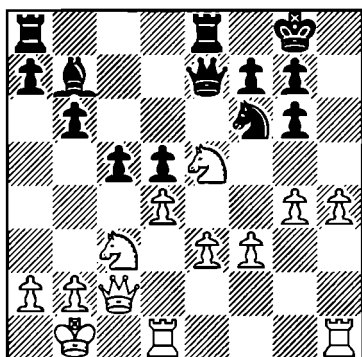
Game 54
T.V.Petrosian-A.Buslaev
 Tbilisi 1947
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♖f6 4 ♘f3 ♜bd7
 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♙f4 c6 7 e3 ♙e7 8 ♙d3
 ♜f8 9 h3 ♘g6 10 ♙h2 ♙d6 11 ♙xd6
 ♚xd6 12 ♚c2 0-0 13 0-0-0

Remember Game 1? There Petrosian was on the Black side of a very similar position, and his opponent quietly castled kingside, and played (unsuccessfully!) for a draw.

Now Petrosian, having the white pieces, goes for attack!

13...♙e8 14 ♖b1 b6 15 g4 ♚e7 16 ♙xg6
 hxg6 17 ♘e5 c5 18 f3 ♙b7 19 h4

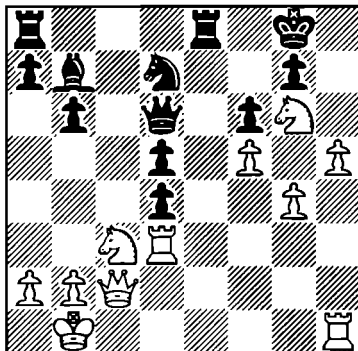


White has a clear advantage, as sooner or later the h-file will open.

19...♘d7 20 f4 f6 21 ♘xg6 ♚xe3 22
 ♙d3 ♚e6 23 f5 ♚d6 24 h5

White has a winning position, obvious to this human's eyes (White is breaking through on h6, strong knight pair, inactive black bishop, weak pawn at d5, etc, etc) and the computer also gives the decisive advantage sign.

24...cxd4



I've made the point a few times in this book that when your opponent captures one of your pawns (or even your queen!) there is no rule that says you have to take back right away. But one should note, those situations where one doesn't recapture are exceptional situations. This is not such a case!

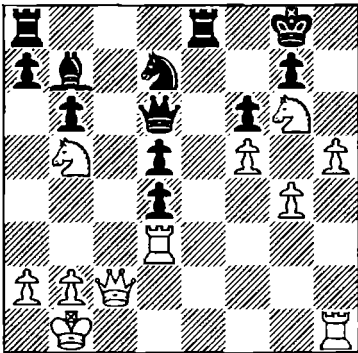
I believe that the extremely simple 25 ♙xd4 is the best move beyond any shadow of doubt. Black is already busted, and there's no need to give any extra chances to the opponent. A couple of simple continuations after the rook recapture are 25...♘e5 26 h6 ♘xg6 27 fxg6 gxh6 28 ♚d2 with a winning attack, or 25...♚c5 26 ♚d1 and White wins a pawn to begin with, while h5-h6 will come soon.

Instead, Petrosian sees **Favourable**

Omens, and offers what I consider the strangest pawn sacrifice in the book! What were those omens? I can't tell you, for all I see are quick and easy wins with no drama – but if I would guess, I think the mighty Tigran saw a kind of full board charge-up, where all his pieces became extremely active in a pawn down endgame!

It's still a mystery to me why he preferred this to a simply winning middlegame – but for entertainment value, this game can't be beat!

25 ♖b5!

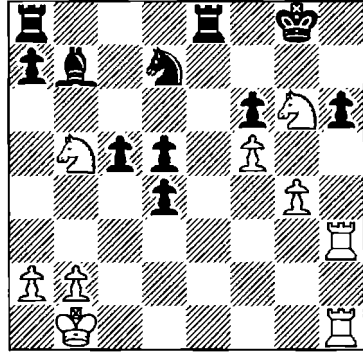


Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! *Fritz* wants 25 ♖xd4 and wins quickly, and the **Author** wants 25 ♖xd4 and wins quickly. No one on this planet wants Black to dodge the mating attack by getting the queens off; no one wants Black to connect his doubled isolated pawns – except of course on the Petrosian planet! I have to admire Petrosian for going his own way, and carrying out a plan no one else would even consider!

The truly wild thing is that the plan is *good* – it's not the best move, it wins more slowly than the obvious ♖xd4,

but White should still win!

25... ♗c5 26 ♗xc5 bxc5 27 h6 gxh6 28 ♖dh3!



Full board charge-up! White gives his opponent a solid extra pawn in the centre, but White's pieces go wild! The queen's knight attacks numerous rooks and minor pieces via threats to d6 and c7, the other knight attacks Black's king, and the white rooks invade on the h-file!

Amazingly enough, White has found an absolutely unique way to win – but soon Petrosian gets carried away with his own brilliance, and forgets to cash in!

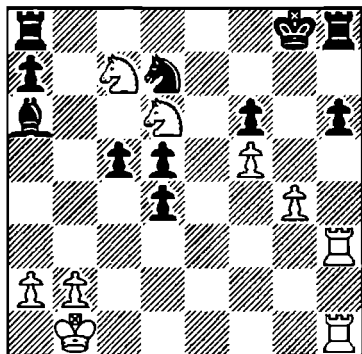
28... ♗g7 29 ♖d6 ♖a6 30 ♖f4!?

You're right, the black rook is hanging! White can win most quickly with 30 ♖a3! ♖c4 31 ♖xe8+, but Petrosian disdains capturing material in favour of activity.

30... ♖h8 31 ♖e6+ ♗g8 32 ♖c7?

But this is too much!! White absolutely has to cash in now, and he can win by force with the relatively simple 32 ♖xh6 ♖xh6 33 ♖xh6 with mating threats (if 33... ♖b8 34 ♖g6+ ♗h7 35

♠g7+ ♖h6 36 ♜f7 mate). Black has to give back even more material with 33...♜f8 but then White should win with his kingside pawns after the simple (too simple?) 34 ♜xf6.



32...♞b8 33 ♞e1 ♜e5

Black can now draw with the precise 33...♞c4 34 ♞b3 ♜e5 35 ♖a1 ♞a6 36 ♜xd5 (if 36 ♜xa6 ♞b6) 36...♖g7 37 ♜c7 ♞b7 38 ♜xb7 ♞xb7 39 ♜e6+ ♖g8 40 ♜xc5 ♠g7 41 ♞e4 ♠xg4 42 ♠xg4+ ♜xg4 43 ♜e6 ♠h7 44 ♜xd4 ♞d7 with equality. But Black is so confused by this point that he fails to realize that fortune is smiling upon him – utterly bamboozled, he begins tossing material, and finally, Petrosian starts taking it!

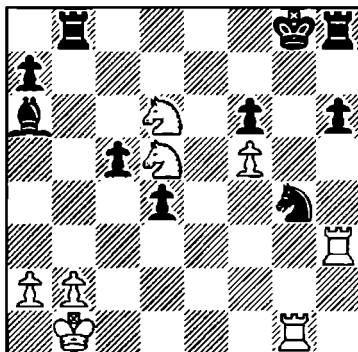
34 ♜xd5 ♜xg4?

A blunder. 34...♖g7 probably still draws, but Black (who probably couldn't predict a single one of Petrosian's last ten moves, let alone give a proper evaluation of them) is dazed and confused, or perhaps, Lost and Delirious!

35 ♠g1

Petrosian finally settles down and

wins technically.



35...h5 36 ♜xf6+ ♖g7 37 ♜xh5+ ♖f8 38 ♠xg4 ♞e2 39 ♠gh4 d3 40 ♜e4 ♞b4 41 ♜hf6 ♠xh4 42 ♠xh4 d2 43 ♠h8+ ♖e7

Or 43...♖g7 44 ♠h7+ ♖f8 45 ♜d7+ ♖e8 (if 45...♖g8 46 ♜ef6 mate) 46 ♜xd2 ♞d3+ 47 ♖c1 ♞xf5 48 ♜f6+ ♖f8 49 ♠xa7 and White has a solid extra piece. **44 ♠h7+ ♖d8 45 ♞d7+ ♖c8 46 ♠xd2 1-0**

One can almost get brain damage going through that game!

Risk assessment: The truly amazing thing about this rather bizarre sacrifice is that it's not that risky: even after giving Black a good extra pawn (connecting his pawns for good measure) White's pieces became so charged up that Petrosian could have forced a win at least twice. The risk came in when Petrosian became carried away with his extravagant ideas, and refused to win simply when the opportunity arrived – and so lost all his advantage. Of course, his opponent was too confused by that point to realize he had escaped!

One shouldn't forget that none of this was necessary: White could have avoided all risk with the simple 25

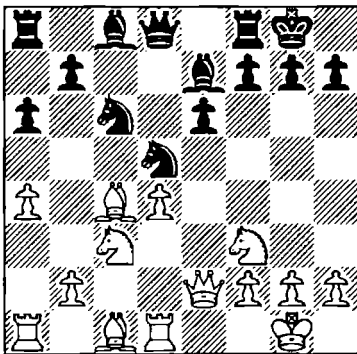
♞xd4, which would probably have forced resignation in a few moves.

Game 55
T.V.Petrosian-B.Spasky
 Moscow 1971
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

In this game we see the same opening – and the same d4-d5 breakthrough – as in Spassky-Aftonov, Game 50. The only difference is that this time Boris is on the wrong side of the breakthrough – and on the wrong side of the score table!

3 ♠f3 ♠f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♠xc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 a4 ♠c6 8 ♞e2 cxd4 9 ♞d1 ♠e7 10 exd4 0-0 11 ♠c3 ♠d5



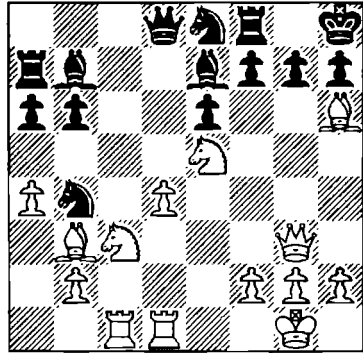
Perhaps remembering his great win from twenty-one years earlier, Spassky makes haste to blockade White's isolated pawn.

12 ♞e4 ♠cb4 13 ♠e5 ♞a7 14 ♠b3 ♠f6?!

But now he forgets, and lives to regret it! Black should not release the

blockade: correct is 14...b6 15 ♠xd5 exd5 16 ♞f3 ♞c7 17 ♠f4 ♠e6 and Black holds nicely, with a solid, if somewhat passive position.

15 ♞h4 b6 16 ♞g3 ♠b7 17 ♠h6 ♠e8 18 ♞ac1 ♠h8



By unpinning his g-pawn, Black attacks the bishop on h6 – and an attacked piece has to move, right? By now we know the answer to that one!

Once again, better is 18...♠d5. However, since Boris has failed to blockade – and the advance to d5 of the unblockaded isolani is always “in the air” – it must be time to look for some **Favourable Omens!**

The most important omen is that, after the contemplated 19 d5, White's rook on d1 will be “smiling” at Black's queen. The possible discovery that would occur after 19...gxh6 is easy to calculate, and in White's favour.

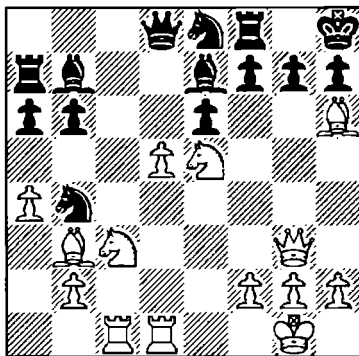
So what if Black takes the intrepid d-pawn? Unlike in Spassky-Aftonov, this is not a typical IQP vacating sac – White doesn't want the d4-square. What White wants is to activate all his pieces, charge up his whole position.

What does he get along these lines?

After the open d-file, the next most important asset White gets from the sac is the open diagonal e3-a7. Yes, when the bishop retreats, it will retreat with heavy attack, against Black's b-pawn and, indirectly, his bad rook at a7. Also White can exploit the pin against the b-pawn with a4-a5. The other white rook can often come into the game in these lines (if Black tries to block on c5). The king's knight can come back to c4 to attack b6, while the bishop and knight on b3 and c3 will pressurize whatever black piece or pawn took on d5. In other words, White can charge up all his pieces!

Remember, this book is about real sacrifices, and charge-up sacrifices are as real as they get. Petrosian is not calculating his way to victory, but rather improving his position so much, activating his pieces so much, that he feels he will have winning chances, regardless of how Boris defends.

19 d5!



Charge 'em up!

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! The ma-

chine likes 19 ♖e3, but one doesn't defeat ex-world champion Boris Spassky with such moves.

The **Author** is tingling with electrical charges, and absolutely approves the breakthrough.

19...exd5

First of all, Black can't take the bishop:

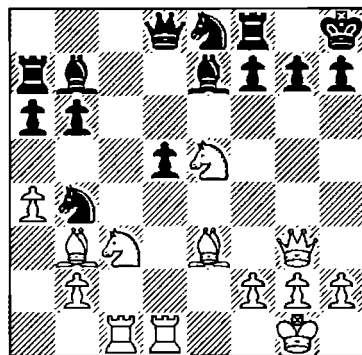
a) 19...gxf7 20 dxe6 ♜a8 21 ♘xf7+ ♞xf7 22 exf7 and White has a tremendous attack to go with his rook and two pawns for two pieces.

Other variations are less forcing, but all show the effects of the charge-up:

b) 19...♗xd5 20 ♖e3 ♗ef6 21 a5 ♖c5 22 ♖xd5 exd5 (if 22...♗xd5 23 axb6 ♖xb6 24 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 25 ♗c6 and White wins material) 23 b4 ♖xe3 24 ♜xe3 ♞a8 25 axb6 and White recovers his pawn with advantage.

c) Finally, 19...♖xd5 20 ♖e3 a5 21 ♖xd5 exd5 22 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♗c6 ♜a8 24 ♞xd5 and again White recovers his pawn and maintains a positional advantage.

20 ♖e3



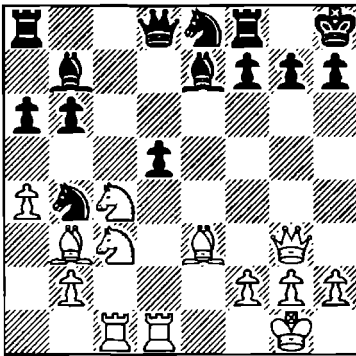
White is now attacking in all directions: the big threat is 21 a5.

20... ♖a8

20... ♖c5 21 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 22 ♖xc5 bxc5 23 ♖xc5 surprisingly spears a rook!

I'm sure Petrosian didn't see every one of these tactics, but he had confidence in the tremendous activity of the white pieces.

21 ♖c4!

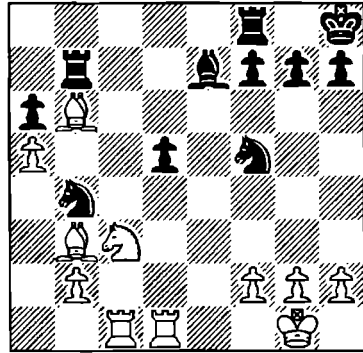


21... ♖d6

There is no good defence to the b-pawn: 21...b5 22 ♖b6 ♖b8 23 ♖bxd5 ♖xd5 (if 23...bxa4 24 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 25 ♖xa4 and the active dark-squared bishop is once again ready to strike the decisive blow) 24 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 25 ♖xd5 ♖d6 26 ♖cd1 ♖xg3 27 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♖xd8 ♖c7 29 ♖a8 with a much better ending.

22 ♖xb6 ♖b8 23 ♖a5 ♖f5 24 ♖xb8 ♖axb8 25 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 26 a5

Petrosian takes the favourable ending! For Tigran, winning such a position – where Black has two serious weaknesses (a6 and d5) – is simply routine.



26... ♖g5 27 ♖b1 d4 28 ♖d5 ♖c6 29 ♖a4 ♖c8 30 f4 ♖ce7 31 ♖bc1 ♖cb8 32 fxg5 ♖xd5 33 ♖c6 ♖xb6 34 axb6 ♖de3 35 b7 ♖xd1 36 ♖xd1 g6 37 g4 ♖g7 38 ♖xd4 ♖e6 39 ♖d7 1-0

Risk assessment: Given the enormous piece activity that is generated by the sac, I don't believe there is much risk here. In every line I could find, White at least recovered his pawn, while retaining a positional advantage.

The difficulty of the sac is that Black has multiple defences (and even three different ways to take the offered pawn!) and so the variations very quickly become incalculable. If you have such a position, you shouldn't try to calculate it: you should try to feel the power of the charged-up pieces, and trust their activity.

Game 56

G. Grigore-T. Taylor

Budapest 2003

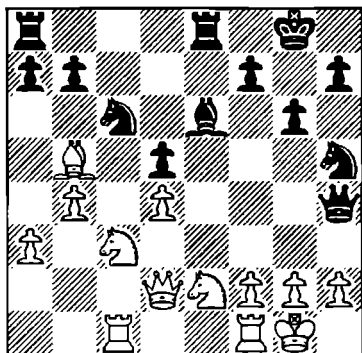
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♖e7 4 cxd5 exd5

5 ♖f4 ♜f6 6 e3 c5 7 ♗d3 ♜c6 8 ♜ge2
 cxd4 9 exd4 0-0 10 0-0 ♗e6 11 a3 ♗d6!

The exchange of my “good” bishop – to activate Black’s position – is the first sign that I am in good form and thinking outside the box!

12 ♜d2 ♗xf4 13 ♜xf4 ♖e8 14 b4 g6 15
 ♖ac1 ♜h5 16 ♜d2 ♜h4 17 ♗b5



At his point *Fritz’s* top three picks are the scintillating trio of 17...♜f6, 17...♖e7 and 17...♖ac8. Let’s say I play that number one pick, the dynamic 17...♜f6 – Wow! Then White can play 18 ♜f4 ♜xf4 19 ♜xf4 and I can rejoice that I reached a ...slightly worse ending! Where are the **Favourable Omens** when I need them?

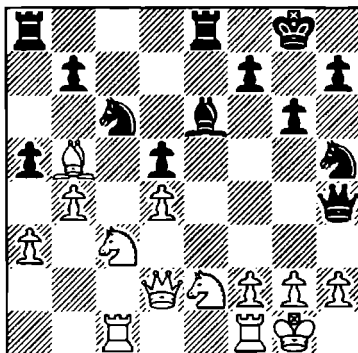
Ah, right here: Black’s queen is actively placed in an attacking position (and so should not be exchanged) and is backed up by the king’s knight. The king’s rook is well placed on the open e-file, and the bishop is ready to move toward the white king at any moment, adding attacking fuel and clearing the line for the rook.

So Black actually has a quite active position, and there is no need for

dreary defence! Nonetheless, what Black has, right now, is not enough for a breakthrough: Black needs to charge up his own position, while diverting White from the kingside.

Now we see it!

17...a5!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved, not even considered, and – according to the monster – just plain bad!

The **Author** ventures a different opinion: a mediocre chess teacher might explain this position as follows: “White’s last move, 17 ♗b5, and his previous pawn advances, show that White has superiority on the queen-side. Black’s queen placement shows his superiority on the kingside. Each player must play on his side of the board...” and blah blah blah!

What I prefer is the Shirov line that came to me while I was thinking of this move: “After this there will only be sacrifices!” Black’s played move, 17...a5, abandons rules and spheres of influence; charges up Black’s whole position; and introduces boardwide chaos!

I felt Latvian!

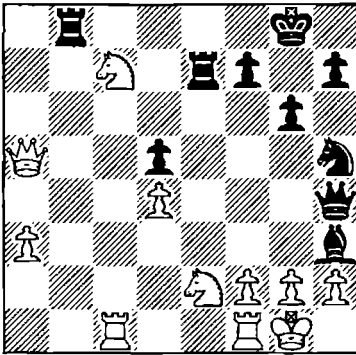
18 ♖xc6 bxc6 19 b5 cxb5 20 ♜xb5

I had predicted White's last three moves – I was sure GM Grigore would try to keep the position under control – and I was ready.

20...♞ab8!

Black's point. Now I have my open queenside file, and the only way White can refute my conception is to take the pawn – but then the white queen will be far away from the action, and White's king will fall under a violent attack.

21 ♜c7 ♞e7 22 ♝xa5 ♖h3!



Every black piece is charged up and attacking. I was stunned to discover that this move – logical and powerful and, by any human calculation, the best move in the position – is not even given in *Fritz's* top three picks (which are 22...♜f6, 22...♝g5 and 22...♞g7). Playing any of those moves, to me, is the same as raising the white flag of surrender!

In any case, I didn't consider any other move than 22...♖h3, for if that move doesn't work, the entire pawn

sacrifice doesn't work. Putting the computer aside, it's clear now that Black has a savage attack, and White has an extremely difficult defensive task.

23 ♜g3

Not 23 gxf3? ♞xe2 with a winning attack.

23...♜f4!

Just take a look at Black's charged-up pieces!

24 ♜xd5 ♖xg2 25 ♜xe7+

If 25 ♜xf4 ♖xf1 26 ♜d5 ♖d3 27 ♜xe7+ ♝xe7 and Black has compensation for just one pawn in view of his superior minor piece and safer king – plus all four of White's pawns are isolated!

25...♝xe7 26 ♞c7?!

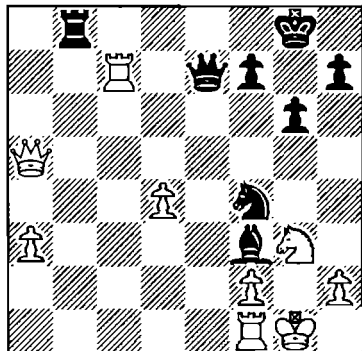
This looks tremendously strong, attacking Black's queen while preparing to double on the c-file, but is actually a mistake – after my next move I have full compensation for the material, and my attack rages.

Best is the very difficult to find, and very accurate, 26 ♞fe1! ♝b7 (if 26...♝h4 27 ♝e5 ♞d8 28 ♜e4 and White consolidates) 27 h4! (the white king gets an important flight square at h2, and the h-pawn might be part of an attack for White later) 27...♖h1 28 d5! (the key point! White gives a pawn back to slow Black's attack) 28...♜xd5 (if 28...♖xd5 29 ♞b1 ♝c8 30 ♞xb8 ♝xb8 31 h5 and White seizes the initiative) 29 ♞b1! and after four successive exact moves, it becomes clear that Black does not have enough compensation for the material.

It should come as no surprise that

the above variation is *Fritz*-assisted – to find this over the board, under the pressure of Black’s electrifying sacrifices, was no easy task, and even a strong GM could not find his way through the maze.

26...♙f3!!



Just because the queen is attacked, doesn’t mean I have to move it! Black’s attack is ferocious now, and White needs all his strength to hold.

27 ♖fc1 ♗e6 28 ♗c3 ♙d5

Black avoids White’s threat of ♖c8+ and d5+, and (incidentally!) sacrifices another rook!

29 ♖c8+ ♗g7!

Of course not 29...♖c8 30 ♗c8+ and the queens come off.

30 ♖xb8 ♗h3

With only one bishop for two rooks, Black is practically forcing mate!

31 ♖g8+! ♗h6 32 ♗f5+

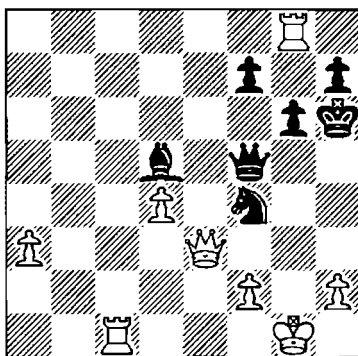
The only move.

32...♗xf5 33 ♗e3

(see following diagram)

White’s heroic defence has led to an

equal position: Black’s charged-up minor pieces are fully equal to White’s less than active two rooks. At this point the “best move” – the *Fritz*-approved move – is 33...♙c4 34 ♗xf4+ (not 34 ♖xc4? ♗g4+ 35 ♗f1 ♗d1+ 36 ♗e1 ♗f3 and Black forces mate; while if White makes an innocuous move, 34 ♖a8? say, Black wins the queen with 34...♗g5+ 35 ♗g3 ♗e2+) 34...♗xf4 35 ♖xc4 ♗g4+ and Black forces a draw by perpetual check.



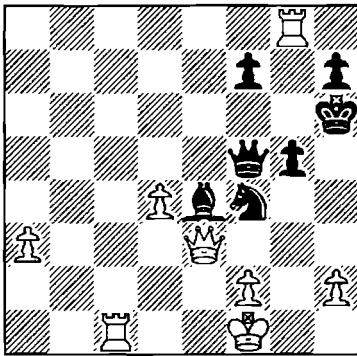
This would be a logical conclusion to the game – but is chess only logic? There are some compelling reasons *not* to take the draw: one, I simply wanted to win! I realized I was playing the game of my life here, and ending the cascade of sacrifices with a perpetual check seemed petty. Furthermore, while I was playing quickly, with élan, my opponent was struggling on every move as I kept blind-siding him with unexpected attacks. He had hardly any time left, and the thirty second increment we were playing with hardly helped – this position is far too complex to figure out in thirty seconds!

I risked, and risked big – but it paid off!

33...♙e4!

The computer says I'm lost now, but this move has a nasty, sneaky threat that took Grigore almost all of his seconds to see and counter: if White plays any quiet move, e.g. 34 a4, Black wins with 34...♝g5+ 35 ♖f1 ♙d3+ 36 ♗e1 ♞g2+ and the queen goes.

34 ♖f1! g5



Unpinning the knight, with further threats. In desperate time trouble, White falls.

35 ♜e8?

Mr. Fritz finds the icy defence 35 ♜e1! (the second time this move could have won for White!) 35...♙d5 (if 35...♙b7 36 h4! gxh4 37 ♖g1 and the white king finds a haven on h2, with a decisive material advantage) 36 ♜d8 ♙c4+ 37 ♖g1 ♞h3+ 38 ♖g2 ♙d5+ 39 ♜xd5 ♞f4+ 40 ♖h1 ♝xd5+ 41 ♝e4 and, the exchange up, White should win.

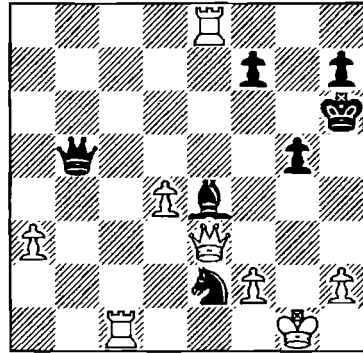
Does this ruin the quality of the game? I think playing 33...♙e4 shows boldness which is often rewarded in human vs. human contests. Some may

disagree. The reader can decide for himself!

35...♝b5+!

Now Black is winning... this check is bad enough, but my next check seals the victory.

36 ♖g1 ♞e2+! 0-1



All roads lead to mate or massive material win: 37 ♖f1 (if 37 ♝xe2 ♝xe2 38 a4 ♝f3 is good enough) 37...♞xc1+ 38 ♖e1 ♞d3+ 39 ♖d2 (or 39 ♖e2 ♞f4+ 40 ♖e1 ♞g2+ 41 ♖d1 ♝b1+ 42 ♝c1 ♝b3+ 43 ♖d2 ♝d3 mate) 39...♝b2+ 40 ♖d1 ♝b1+ 41 ♖d2 ♝c1+ 42 ♖e2 ♝e1 mate.

Risk assessment: This is an easy one: very very risky indeed! White could probably have refuted the first wave of sacrifices with the ultra-precise 26 ♜fe1, and after Black scorned the draw, White could have won again with 35 ♜e1. The initial sacrifice of the a-pawn virtually compelled the further sacrifices, so one could say the whole business was unsound!

On the other hand, the pressure of a seemingly endless series of unexpected, violent attacks put my oppo-

ment under so much pressure – on the board and on the clock – that he finally lost his way after a heroic defence.

To me, this is the best game I have ever played – so far! I like the transformation of the position from staid Queen's Gambit to Shirovian maelstrom; and I've never lost sleep over my "unapproved" 33...♗e4. After all, I won the game!

Summary

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the charge-up sacrifice is intuitive by nature. Very rarely can you calculate very far with this kind of sacrifice: one depends entirely on the activity of

one's pieces overcoming all obstacles. Consider, for example, Petrosian defeating Spassky in Game 55: Boris had a multiplicity of defences, and it would have been impossible to calculate them all – Tigran had to feel that his piece activity would overcome any defence.

In the same way, my wild win over Grigore was not a triumph of calculation but of charged-up pieces working overtime, so that two active minor pieces could be equal or better than two rooks!

The best way to learn this sacrifice is to try it – if you feel you can electrify your whole position for a pawn, go for it!

Chapter Eleven

Endings

In his instructive book, *Practical Endgame Lessons*, the late GM Edmar Mednis lays out “The Twelve General Principles” of the endgame. After the first one – the king is a strong piece and must be used – the reader may be quite interested in number two: “Material advantage wins in the endgame: hold on to your material.”

Apparently Petrosian never read this book! This is the only chapter where all the wins feature the same player – yes, the Iron Tiger himself! I can’t think of anyone else who so willingly sacrifices pawns in the endgame!

So why would you sacrifice a pawn in the endgame? The most common answer, seen in four of the five games in this chapter, is to obtain or advance a passed pawn. I would say that, generally speaking, endings are ultimately won by a passed pawn or pawns. Petrosian realizes that in many cases, a strong passed pawn outweighs a small material deficit.

In the last game of this chapter, Petrosian finds another reason to sac: to get a rook to the seventh. This idea is known as a drawing manoeuvre in rook and pawn endings, but here Petrosian is playing to win!

Of course, Mednis and many others have been giving us the standard “hold your material” advice for years, but Petrosian didn’t get to be the Ninth World Champion by obeying the rules!

Game 57

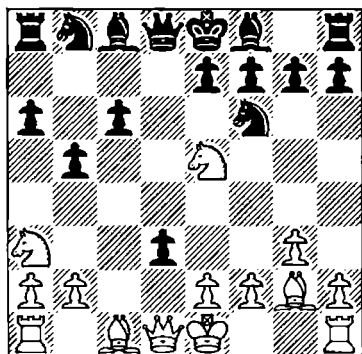
P.Benko-T.V.Petrosian
Candidates Tournament,
Bled 1959
Réti Opening

1 ♖f3 ♗f6 2 g3 d5 3 ♔g2 c6 4 c4 dxc4 5
♗a3 b5 6 d3 cxd3 7 ♗e5 a6

(see following diagram)

Looks *way* too provocative, but is,

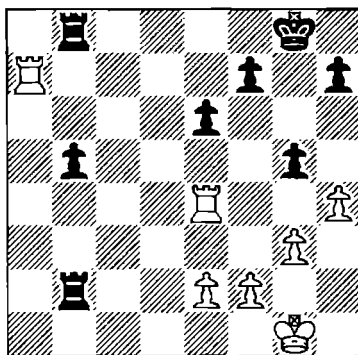
surprisingly, playable.



8 0-0

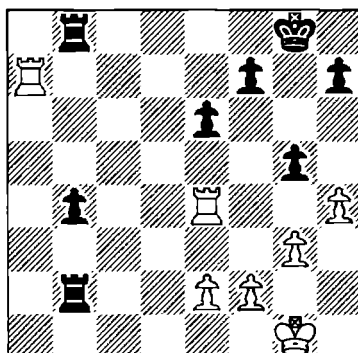
I can't resist including the following entertaining and extremely bizarre game – Benko steers clear of this madness, but perhaps he should have ventured it. Here White draws, while in the main game Black is better by move fifteen! – 8 ♖xc6 ♜xc6! 9 ♙xc6+ ♗d7 10 ♙xa8 ♜xa8 11 f3 dxe2 12 ♜xe2 h5 13 ♙g5 ♜d5 14 ♜c2 f6 15 ♙d2 ♜f7 16 ♜d3 g6 17 ♜e3 ♙c6 18 ♜xd5 ♙xd5 19 ♜f2 g5 20 a4 g4 21 axb5 ♙xf3 22 ♜xa6 ♜b7 23 ♜c1 h4 24 gxh4 ♙xh4 25 ♙f4 ♙h5 26 ♜c7 ♜xb5 27 ♜c4+ ♜xc4 28 ♜xc4 ♜f5 29 ♜e3 e5 30 ♜c7+ ♜g6 31 ♙g3 ♙h6+ 32 ♜d3 e4+ 33 ♜c3 e3 34 ♙e6 e2 35 ♙e8 ♙d5 36 b4 ♙d1 37 ♙ce7 ♙d2+ 38 ♜b3 ♙e1 39 b5 ♙xg3 40 hxg3 ♙g1 41 ♜c2 ♙xg3 42 b6 ♙g2 43 ♜d2 ♙g1 44 ♙xe2 ½-½ I.Fancsy-N.Sulava, Harkany 1994.

8...♙b7 9 ♜b3 e6 10 ♙d1 ♜c7 11 ♜xd3 ♜bd7 12 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 13 ♜c2 ♜c7 14 ♙e3 c5 15 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 16 ♙xc5 ♜c8 17 b4 ♜e4 18 ♜b2 ♙xc5 19 bxc5 0-0 20 ♜c4 ♙xc5 21 ♜d6 ♜c6 22 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 23 ♙d4 ♜c2 24 ♙xe4 ♙xb2 25 a4 ♙b8 26 axb5 axb5 27 ♙a7 g5 28 h4



Petrosian has smoothly outplayed Benko and is a pawn up in the ending, with a strong passed pawn – but now Benko has counter-attacked, with a direct threat on Black's g-pawn. Should this be defended? Or do I see a big black **Favourable Omen** rolling down the b-file?

I don't know how to say "passed pawns must be pushed" in Armenian, but Petrosian requires no translation! **28...b4!**



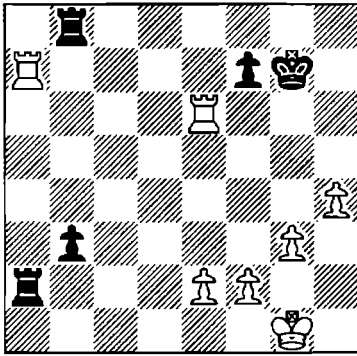
Mr. Fritz? Approved: number one with a bullet, says the mechanical bopper. The **Author** can't keep his hands off that pawn either!

29 ♖e5

The direct 29 hxg5 also loses: 29...b3 30 ♖f4 ♖a2! 31 ♖xa2 bxa2 32 ♖a4 ♖b1+ and wins. Note that White is never able to set up a “drawing machine” with both rooks on the seventh rank.

29...b3 30 ♖xg5+ ♖f8 31 ♖h5 h6!

Careful! Petrosian makes sure that only one white rook gets to the seventh.

32 ♖xh6 ♖g7 33 ♖xe6 ♖a2

Petrosian has just sac'ed three pawns, but the only pawn that matters is becoming a queen!

34 ♖c7

Giving up a rook immediately fails to save the game, e.g. 34 ♖xa2 bxa2 35 ♖a6 ♖b1+ 36 ♖g2 a1♚ 37 ♖xa1 ♖xa1 38 e4 ♖g6 39 f4 f5 40 e5 ♖e1 41 ♖f3 ♖h5 42 ♖f2 ♖e4 43 ♖f3 ♖b4 44 ♖f2 ♖g4 and wins.

34...b2 0-1

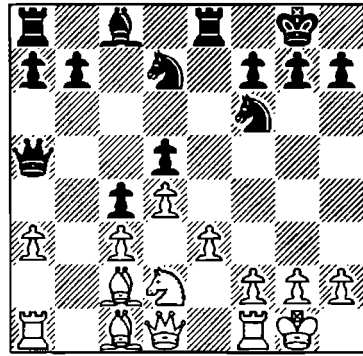
The pawn goes through.

Risk assessment: I can't see any significant risk here: Black's passed pawn is just too strong!

Now we go to a less one-sided example.

Game 58
T.V.Petrosian-R.Debarnot
Las Palmas 1975
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♖b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♖d3 d5 6 ♖f3 0-0 7 0-0 ♖bd7 8 cxd5 exd5 9 a3 ♖xc3 10 bxc3 c4 11 ♖c2 ♖e8 12 ♖d2 ♚a5

**13 ♖b2**

13 ♖b1 b5 (13...♚xc3 14 ♖b4 mouse-traps the queen) 14 a4 bxa4 15 ♖a3 is the sac I would have made, but I'm not Petrosian!

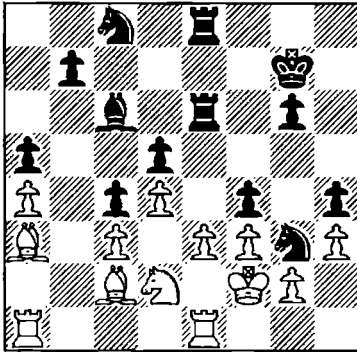
13...♖b6 14 ♖e1 ♖d7 15 a4 ♖e4 16 ♖f1 f5 17 f3 ♖f6 18 h3 h5 19 ♖g3 g6 20 ♖f2 h4 21 ♖f1 ♖e6 22 ♖g1 ♖f7 23 ♖e2 ♖h8 24 ♖c1 ♖c8 25 ♚e1 ♖c6 26 ♖a3 ♚c7 27 ♚f2 a5 28 ♖ae1 ♖g7 29 ♖d2

If I got this far I might have broken out with 29 e4 fxe4 30 ♖d2 – but I'm still not Petrosian!

29...♖h5 30 ♖a1 ♚g3 31 ♖f1 ♚xf2+ 32 ♖xf2 ♖he8 33 ♖ee1 ♖g3 34 ♖d2 f4

Black appears to be in command now – White can't take in view of 35

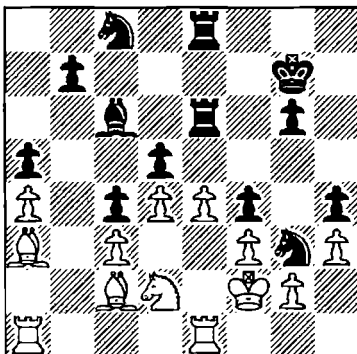
exf4? ♖e2+ 36 ♜xe2 ♜xe2+ winning a piece – but Petrosian sees **Favourable Omens!**



After the contemplated 35 e4 and subsequent exchanges, White will obtain a passed pawn, plus a long-range bishop against a knight. White's rook will be able to go behind the passed pawn, or might attack on the b- or e-files.

And besides all this, if White doesn't play 35 e4, and can't take on f4, what else is there?

35 e4



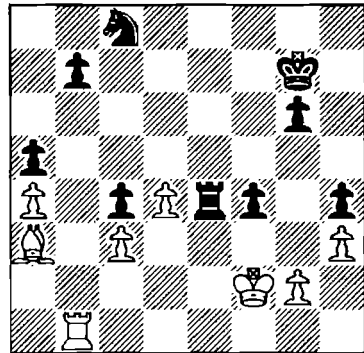
Mr. Fritz? Approved: the machine doesn't see anything better, but main-

tains the view that Black has the advantage.

The **Author** feels about the same way: I don't approve of White's conduct of the game so far, and while I think 35 e4 is the best practical try, I think White has waited too long to break through, and Black could get winning chances now.

Let's see how Petrosian deals with our negative vibes!

35...dxe4 36 fxe4 ♙xe4 37 ♗xe4 ♗xe4+ 38 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 39 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 40 ♖b1



White has reached this position practically by force: first, he activates his rook, then advances his passed pawn.

40...b6 41 d5 ♜e3?

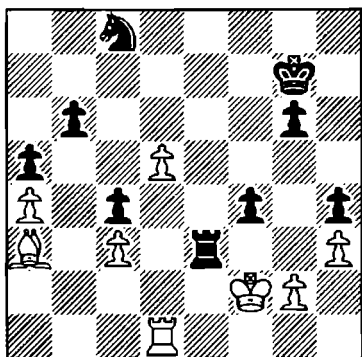
Sacrificial Shock! On the very first non-forced move after the sacrifice, Black makes a fatal error.

The key point is that Black failed to make a mental adjustment: after all the middlegame positional jockeying that came before, we are now in an endgame where passed pawns are paramount! Black fails to respect White's passed pawn – and quickly loses what

should be a better ending for him.

Correct is the Mednis style 41...♔f7! (the king is a strong piece in the ending – use him!) 42 ♖d1 ♕e8 (the king arrives in time to blockade White’s “dangerous criminal” – as Nimzowitsch called passed pawns) 43 ♙c1 (if 43 d6 ♕d7 44 ♕f3 ♖e3+ 45 ♕xf4 ♖xc3 46 ♙c1 ♖c2 with a material advantage and the initiative) 43...g5 44 d6 ♕d7 45 ♖d5 ♕xd6 46 ♖xg5 ♖e8 47 ♕f3 ♕e4 48 ♖h5 (or 48 ♖g7+ ♕c6 49 ♖g6+ ♕d5 50 ♖xb6 ♕xc3 51 ♖a6 ♕e2 52 ♖xa5+ ♕c6 and Black’s c-pawn is hard to stop) 48...♕xc3 49 ♙xf4 ♕xa4 50 ♖xh4 c3 and Black’s material advantage should be decisive.

42 ♖d1



Note that in this position White is clearly better (and doesn’t need Black’s next blunder to win, as the following variations show) despite being a pawn down. The advantages are better minor piece, more active rook, and most of all, the creature the rook is behind, the passed pawn!

42...♖xc3

Loses at once, but I doubt anything

would save the game at this point: if 42...♖d3 43 ♖xd3 cxd3 44 d6 wins a piece; or 42...♕f7 43 d6 ♕a7 44 d7 ♕c6 45 d8 ♕xd8 46 ♖xd8 ♖xc3 and White should still win with the extra piece, though it’s not that easy. Relatively speaking, this is the best practical chance – but Black still hasn’t adjusted to the sac, plays to win – and loses a rook!

43 ♙b2 1-0

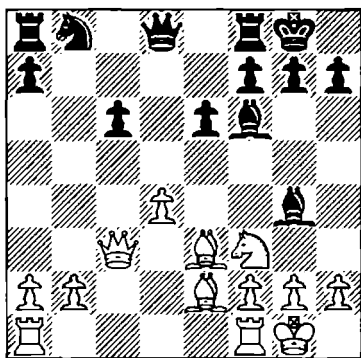
Risk assessment: I think this game is a perfect example of “it’s risky *not* to sac!” Petrosian had two good chances to sac a pawn in the middlegame (moves 13 and 29), but when he played quietly, his position deteriorated to the point where it was “sac or die”. When he finally did venture the sac, his position was objectively difficult, possibly lost – but by changing the position, he confused his opponent!

One endgame safeguard move (41...♔f7) and the sac would have looked extremely risky – but one can argue two points here. One is that, at the moment of the sacrifice (35 e4) White had no better choice; and two, by sacrificing, Petrosian forcibly changed the position from a middlegame with good Black pressure to an endgame where Black might win, but only after solid defence. This abrupt change, which affected everything (the black king hiding in the middlegame, to a king that should be out fighting like Henry V) so discombobulated Debarnot that he not only failed to capitalize on his better position, he actually lost!

My assessment of the actual sac is that it's more forced than risky; but I find that avoiding positional sacs on moves 13 and 29 was *extremely risky!*

Game 59
T.V.Petrosian-G.Pfeiffer
 West Germany-USSR match,
 Hamburg 1960
Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♖f3 ♗f6 4 ♗c3 dxc4 5 e4 ♙g4 6 ♙xc4 e6 7 0-0 ♙e7 8 ♙e3 0-0 9 ♗b3 b5 10 ♙e2 b4 11 e5 bxc3 12 exf6 ♙xf6 13 ♗xc3



Petrosian sees the weakness of the isolated black c-pawn and commences to manoeuvre.

13... ♗d6 14 h3 ♙h5 15 ♖ac1 ♖c8 16 ♗a5 ♙g6 17 ♗e5 ♙e4 18 ♗c4 ♗d5 19 f3 ♗xa5 20 ♗xa5 ♙d5 21 b3 ♙d8 22 ♗b7 ♙b6 23 ♗c5 a5 24 ♗a4 ♙a7 25 ♗f2 ♗d7 26 ♖c2 ♗f8 27 ♖fc1 ♗e7 28 ♙a6

He's still working on it, but can't find a way to win the pawn.

28... ♖cb8 29 ♙c4 ♖b4 30 ♗e2 ♗f6 31

♙d2 ♖b7 32 ♙a6 ♖d7 33 ♙e3 ♗e8 34 ♙d3 ♗d6 35 ♗c3 ♗f5?!

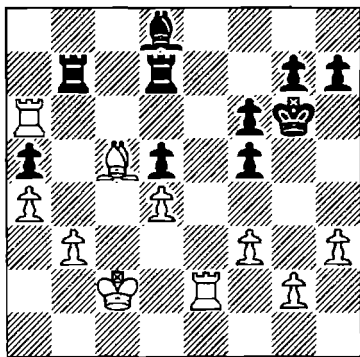
Black has survived twenty-two moves of Petrosian manoeuvring without ever letting the evaluation drop below plus over equals – but finally falls.

Correct is the solid 35...h6 when it's *not* clear how White wins, but it is clear that Petrosian would then manoeuvre around and around for another twenty moves!

36 ♙xf5! exf5 37 ♗xd5+ cxd5 38 ♗d3

The change in pawn structure means that the most important feature on the board now is White's queenside pawn majority and potential passed pawn. On the other flank Black has no such chances, in view of his doubled pawns.

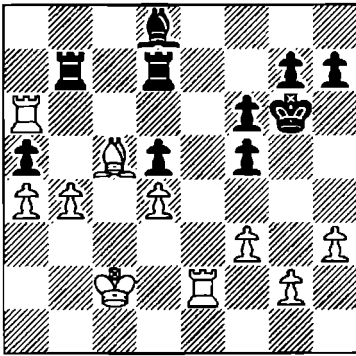
38... ♙b6 39 ♙f4 f6 40 ♖c6 ♙d8 41 ♖e1+ ♗f7 42 ♙d6 ♖b7 43 ♙c5 ♖d7 44 ♖ee6 ♙c7 45 ♖a6 ♖b8 46 ♗c3 ♖b5 47 ♖e2 ♙d8 48 ♗c2 ♗g6 49 a4 ♖bb7



This position is as good as it gets for White, so how can he win? Clearly manoeuvring alone won't do it. Could there be **Favourable Omens?**

Actually there is *one* omen, but that's enough: remember this is an end-game, where passed pawns rule – and White can create a passed pawn by force, as long as he has the confidence to sac a pawn! Petrosian doesn't hesitate.

50 b4!



Mr. Fritz? *Unapproved*, and the machine thinks White's clear advantage (a bit over plus one at this moment) drops about a third, down to around .70. The staid chip box does not put 50 b4 in its top three, and instead offers the sleepy 50 f4, the drowsy 50 ♖e8, and the somnolent 50 ♖e1.

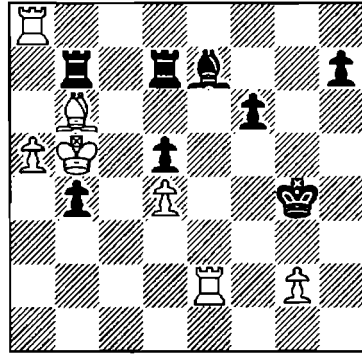
The **Author** hardly needs to point out that none of the *Fritz*-approved moves wins the game; none even starts to win the game – but Petrosian's bold sacrifice frees the a-pawn, and gives White every chance of victory. I approve!

50...axb4 51 ♖b3 ♖h5 52 a5

White's passed pawn starts its march!

52...♖h4 53 ♖a8 ♖e7 54 ♖b6 g5 55 ♖a4 g4 56 hxg4 fxg4 57 fxg4 ♖xg4 58

♖b5!



Petrosian knows all about that "king is a strong piece" business. Meanwhile *Fritz*, which evaluated White's position as only plus over equals a move ago, suddenly wakes up and says decisive advantage for White! **58...♖d8 59 ♖c6 ♖xb6 60 axb6 f5 61 ♖c8 ♖e7 62 ♖b2**

All b-pawns are equal, but some b-pawns are more equal than others!

62...h5 63 ♖c7 ♖bxc7+ 64 bxc7 ♖e8 65 ♖xd5! 1-0

Petrosian doesn't even bother to win Black's rook with 65 ♖d7 – the smooth finish he has in mind is 65 ♖xd5 h4 66 ♖c6 f4 67 d5 h3 68 gxh3+ ♖xh3 69 ♖xb4 f3 70 ♖b3 ♖g2 71 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 72 d6 etc. Therefore, Black resigns.

Risk assessment: I don't see any risk at all: White's passed pawn is so powerful that I can't even find a way for Black to draw. As usual, the real risk would have been playing à la *Fritz* (the three sleepies on move 50), when White would have risked losing a half point through lack of boldness.

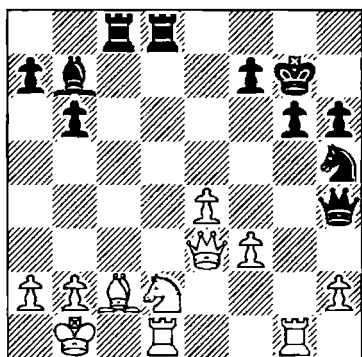
Game 60

T.V.Petrosian-A.Reshko

Leningrad 1967

Torre Attack

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 ♙g5 h6 4 ♙h4 c5 5 e3 b6 6 ♗bd2 ♙b7 7 ♙d3 ♙e7 8 c3 d6 9 e4 ♗bd7 10 ♚e2 ♗h5 11 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 12 g3 0-0 13 ♗h4 ♗f4 14 gxf4 ♚hx4 15 ♚e3 cxd4 16 cxd4 e5 17 fxe5 dxe5 18 0-0-0 exd4 19 ♚xd4 ♗fd8 20 ♖hg1 ♗f6 21 ♚e3 ♗ac8+ 22 ♙b1 g6 23 f3 ♙g7 24 ♙c2 ♗h5

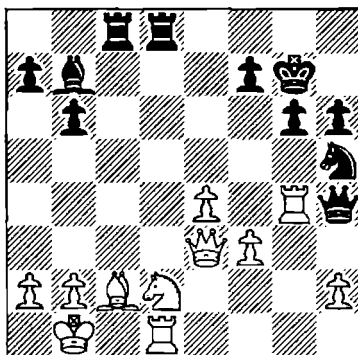


Black has held nicely against Petrosian's Torre Attack, and has obtained complete equality – while at this moment attacking White's h-pawn. Petrosian clearly does not want to make a defensive move, and so looks for **Favourable Omens**.

White sees that he can tempo the black queen with ♖g4 and then follow with e4-e5: this means White has suddenly set up a two piece attack against g6, which he can intensify with e5-e6 or ♗dg1.

It's clear from the rest of the game that both players were already in time trouble here: Petrosian sees the above mentioned omens, and sacrifices for attack (I'm sure at this point he didn't guess he was sacrificing for ending advantage!).

25 ♖g4!?



Mr. Fritz? Fritz says 'keep that material!' and offers 25 ♗f1 or 25 ♖g2, while being most disparaging about the move played and its follow-up.

The **Author** finds Petrosian's moves attractive, but seriously flawed (it was a brilliant idea, Grandmaster, except that it lost by force!). My feeling is Petrosian was going all out to win in a time-trouble situation, and rushed to make a disconcerting attacking move – but I'm going to join the computer on the unapproved evaluation, because when you come right down to it, Petrosian's move just loses!

One can't always depend on Sacrificial Shock – even though it works again here!

25... ♚hx2 26 e5

Evidently White's idea, but it would

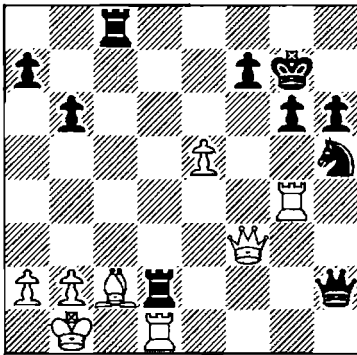
all come crashing down if Black finds 26...♖c5! and there are no saves: 27 f4 ♙c8 28 e6 (28 ♖gg1 ♗xf4) 28...♗xc2 29 ♗xc2 ♙xe6 with a decisive attack, or if 27 e6 ♗e5 and Black stops the attack with a winning position.

26...♙xf3?

Sacrificial Shock! Black not only misses the winning 26...♖c5, but also the strong alternative 26...♙a6.

The move actually played – just two moves after Petrosian's unapproved sacrifice – gives the advantage to White. Are good players always lucky? Or do they just know when to risk all?

27 ♗xf3 ♗xd2



28 ♗xg6+! fxg6

Even worse is 28...♗f8 29 ♗g8+ ♗g8 30 ♗g4+ and Black's rook at c8 falls with check.

29 ♗b7+ ♗g8??

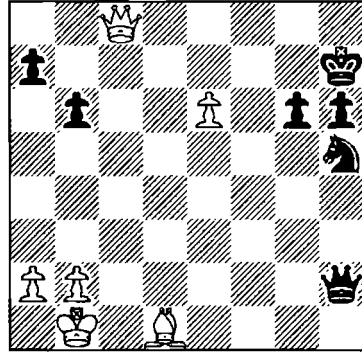
Sacrificial Shock part two! *Slightly* better is 29...♗h8 when the game position is reached, where White has some advantage – but at least there's no forced mate!

30 ♗xc8+??

The World Champion misses 30

♙b3+ ♗h8 31 ♗xc8+ ♗h7 32 ♗g8 mate. No one plays well in time pressure!

30...♗h7 31 e6 ♗xd1+ 32 ♙xd1



Now that the dust has settled, we see that a queen and minor piece ending has been reached. White has the better of the minors, for the long-range bishop can help his passed pawn, while defending against Black's. Meanwhile the black knight only has a defensive role. The key factor is White's menacing passed pawn, already on the sixth rank. It's important to note that the white bishop can cover the queening square.

Black's extra pawn cannot be felt at the moment, so one must assess the position as better for White – but we're still in the time-pressure phase, so there will be more mistakes from both sides!

32...♙g7 33 ♗d7?!

White should seize the opportunity to push the pawn to e7, when he should get a superior position with excellent winning chances, as in the game.

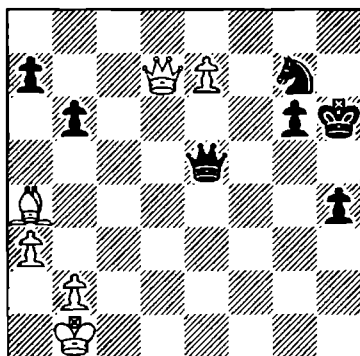
33...♗e5?!

Black in turn should take advantage of White's inaccuracy, and play a theme noted in Averbakh's book, *Queen and Pawn Endings*: pin the pawn and hold up its advance with 33...♖h3!, when Black is right back in the game.

34 e7 h5

The alternative 34...♖e4+ is no better: 35 ♖a1 h5 36 a3 h4 37 ♖a4 ♖h6 38 e8♖ ♖xe8 39 ♖xe8 ♖g2 (if 39...♖xe8 40 ♖xe8 g5 41 ♖d7 ♖h5 42 ♖b1 g4 43 ♖c2 h3 44 ♖d2 ♖h4 45 ♖e1 g3 46 ♖f1 wins) 40 ♖h8+ ♖g5 41 ♖e5+ and while White still has technical difficulties, he should win with the extra piece.

35 a3 ♖h6 36 ♖a4 h4



37 ♖d8

Much simpler is 37 e8♖ ♖xe8 38 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 39 ♖xe8 with a clean win, e.g. 39...g5 40 ♖c2 g4 41 ♖d3 ♖g5 42 ♖e3 h3 43 ♖d7 ♖h4 44 ♖f2 g3+ 45 ♖g1 h2+ 46 ♖g2 ♖g5 47 ♖c6 ♖f4 48 b4 ♖e5 49 ♖xg3 a5 50 bxa5 bxa5 51 ♖xh2 ♖d6 52 ♖b5 ♖c5 53 a4 ♖b4 54 ♖g3 etc.

37...♖e1+

Black may have some drawing chances after 37...h3.

38 ♖a2 ♖e6+ 39 ♖b3 ♖e5 40 ♖f7 1-0

Black either resigned here or lost on time. After 40...♖f6 41 ♖h8+ ♖g5 42 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 43 e8♖ White should win, though still not easily.

Risk assessment: Needless to say, *extremely risky*. Petrosian risked loss one move after sacrificing the pawn – and then stood better, one move after that! I think in this game the risk was too great – but then again, I don't know how many seconds Black had on his clock!

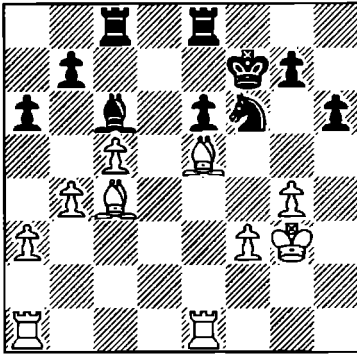
Once the position stabilized in White's favour, we saw again the great advantage of a passed pawn in the ending, even if overall the attacker is a pawn down.

Game 61
T.V.Petrosian-N.Karaklajic
 Belgrade 1954
Semi-Slav Defence

1 c4 ♖f6 2 ♖c3 c6 3 d4 d5 4 ♖f3 e6 5 e3 ♖bd7 6 ♖d3 ♖d6 7 e4 dxe4 8 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 9 ♖xe4 ♖b4+ 10 ♖f1 ♖e7 11 ♖c2 ♖f6 12 ♖d3 c5 13 dxc5 ♖xc5 14 ♖f4 ♖d6 15 ♖g5 h6 16 ♖h4 ♖d7 17 c5 ♖c8 18 b4 ♖e7 19 a3 ♖d5 20 ♖g3 0-0 21 ♖e5 a6 22 ♖e2 ♖a4 23 h3 ♖c3 24 ♖e1 ♖d5 25 ♖g1 ♖g5 26 ♖h2 ♖f4 27 ♖e4 f5 28 ♖e2 ♖c7 29 ♖he1 ♖xe5 30 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 31 ♖xe5 ♖fe8 32 ♖c4 ♖f7 33 g4 fxg4 34 hxg4 ♖f6 35 f3 ♖c6 36 ♖g3

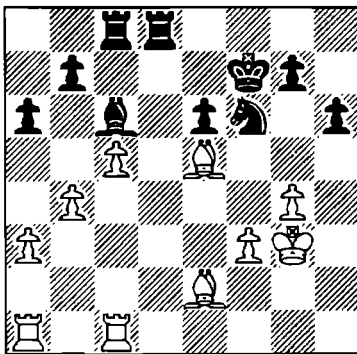
White has obtained certain long-term advantages: the two bishops, and a sound pawn structure, while Black has three pawn islands and a weakness

at e6. However, Black has an important counter-weight in his absolute control of the important central square d5. Black can post a piece there “forever” and so, to a large extent, frustrate White’s winning attempts.



36...♙d5 37 ♙e2 ♞ed8 38 ♞ec1 ♙c6

Petrosian decides to sac a pawn, and he sees **Favourable Omens!** The first is of a sort of negative nature: the master of manoeuvre sees that he can circumnavigate the board without breaking Black’s lock on d5, so if he wants to win, he has to find another way.

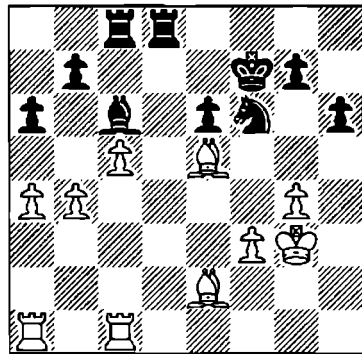


What are White’s advantages? The

queenside pawn majority comes to mind, but it’s hard to advance without losing a pawn – ah, perhaps we can sac! The wily Tigran sees that he can divert Black’s forces by sac’ing on the queenside, which allows his rook to penetrate to the seventh rank.

Finally, after a likely (but not forced) sequence of moves, White reaches a position (at move 51) where he can’t lose and might win, especially given that Black will have a long difficult defence in front of him.

39 a4!



Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! Not even in the top three – but the machine also fails to explain how White wins if he does *not* do something radical.

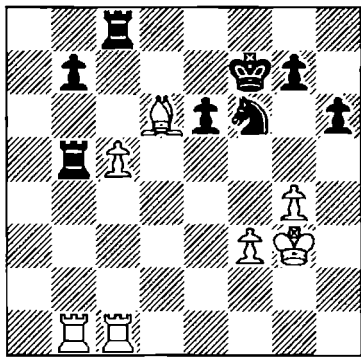
The **Author** must confess that in former days I would probably have played the routine 39 ♞d1 – and got nowhere after 39...♞d5 – but now my opponents had better watch out, for I am prepared to play à la Petrosian! (That means *approved* from the author’s standpoint!)

39...♞d5 40 ♙d6 ♞d2 41 ♙c4 ♞b2

If Black doesn’t go for the pawn,

White will soon get in b4-b5 for free – but that’s not the end of the world. I think Black might do better to decline the sacrifice with 41...♙d5, as with more pieces on the board, it’s hard for White to control the position, and Black may get counterplay on the kingside.

42 b5 axb5 43 axb5 ♙xb5 44 ♙xb5 ♖xb5 45 ♖ab1!



White’s first point: it’s clear that White’s rook will reach the seventh rank.

45...♖xb1 46 ♖xb1 ♘d7 47 ♖xb7 ♖e8 48 ♖f4 g5+

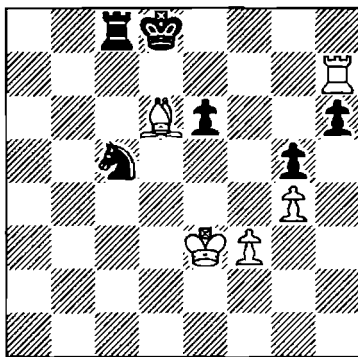
White’s second point: for Black to win the offered pawn, he must clear the seventh rank for White’s rook, while also fixing his kingside pawns on the colour of White’s bishop.

49 ♖e3 ♘xc5 50 ♖e7+ ♖d8 51 ♖h7

The key position: let’s assess.

White is a pawn down, and only has pawns on one side of the board. This sounds like a draw or worse, but Petrosian has the absolute seventh and superior minor piece. The black knight as it stands has no support points – and even if it got to the formerly strong d5-

square, this wouldn’t mean much as White can slip by with ♖d4-e5, attacking e6. Meanwhile the white bishop is extremely strong, given that both of Black’s kingside pawns are fixed on dark squares. One can see that White will win one pawn straight away, and then the g-pawn will be weak, fixed for the rest of the game on a square the bishop can attack, and that the knight can defend only with difficulty.



On the other hand, the reduced number of pawns means that Black has good drawing chances – if he can defend exactly for many moves!

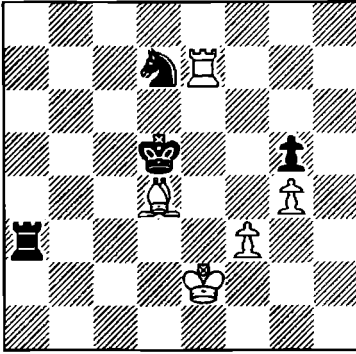
51...♖c6 52 ♙f8 e5 53 ♙xh6 ♖g6 54 ♙g7 ♖e7!

Since 54...♖e6 55 ♖h5 wins a pawn, Black must find the best way to give one back, to try to reach a two to one on the same side draw.

Possible but painful is 54...♘d7 55 ♖e4 ♖b6 56 ♖f5 (56 ♙xe5?! ♖b4+ 57 ♖f5 ♖b5 58 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 59 f4 is a draw) 56...♖b3 57 ♖h3 ♖e8 58 ♙h6 e4 59 ♖xe4 ♖b5 60 ♙g7 (not 60 ♖h5?? ♘f6+) 60...♖f7 and Black should hold, but it’s still a struggle.

Black's played move is best, activating his king.

55 ♖xe5+ ♔e6 56 ♙d4 ♜d7 57 ♞h5 ♞g8 58 ♞h7 ♞g6 59 ♞h8 ♔d5 60 ♞d8 ♞e6+ 61 ♔d3 ♞d6 62 ♞e8 ♞a6 63 ♞e7 ♞a3+ 64 ♔e2



64...♞a2+?

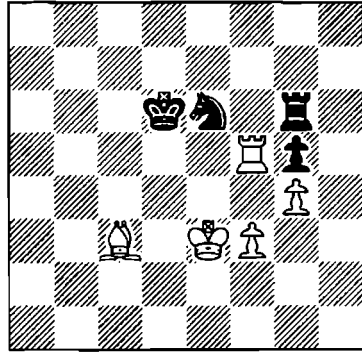
Black misses his chance! White's strong bishop has plagued Black for the entire ending, so Karaklajic should seize his chance to get rid of it!

After the correct 64...♔xd4! 65 ♞xd7+ ♔e5 66 ♞f7 ♔d4! 67 ♔f2 (or 67 ♞f5 ♞a2+ 68 ♔f1 ♔e3 and Black's active king secures the draw) 67...♞a2+ 68 ♔g3 ♞a5 Black draws, as both the king and pawn ending (69 ♞f5 ♞xf5 70 gxf5 ♔e5 71 ♔g4 ♔f6) and the rook ending (69 f4 ♞a3+) get nowhere for White.

But this proves that Black had to play 70 good moves, if he wanted to draw with Petrosian!

65 ♔e3 ♔d6 66 ♞e8 ♔d5 67 ♙g7 ♞a6 68 ♔f2 ♞g6 69 ♙c3 ♜c5 70 ♞f8 ♜d3+ 71 ♔g3 ♜f4 72 ♞f5+ ♔c6 73 ♔f2 ♞h6 74 ♙e5 ♜e6 75 ♙f6 ♞g6 76 ♔e3 ♔d6 77 ♙c3

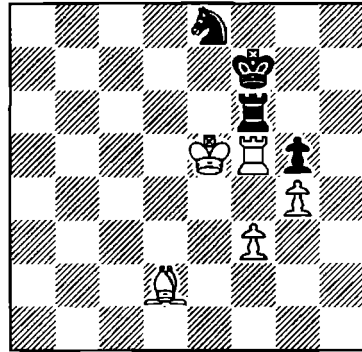
The bishop is a monster!



77...♜d8 78 ♔e4 ♔e6 79 ♞a5 ♜b7?!

Black's last chance is 79...♜f7 80 ♞a6+ ♜d6+ 81 ♔d3 ♔f7 82 ♞a5 ♔e8 83 ♙d2 ♜f7 84 ♔e4 ♔f8 85 ♔f5 ♔g7 86 ♙c3+ ♔h6 when Black is cramped and passive, but still holding for the moment!

80 ♞e5+ ♔f7 81 ♙d2 ♜d6+ 82 ♔d5 ♜e8 83 ♞f5+ ♞f6 84 ♔e5 1-0



Black has four options after this:

a) 84...♞xf5+ 85 ♔xf5 ♜g7+ 86 ♔xg5 ♜e6+ 87 ♔h5 ♜d4 88 f4 ♜f3 89 ♙c3 and wins easily.

b) 84...♔g6 85 ♞xg5+ ♔f7 86 ♞f5 and again the rooks come off with an easy technical win.

c) 84...♗g7 85 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 86 ♗xg5 ♝h7 87 f4! and the bishop vs. knight ending – or king and pawn ending – is clearly winning for White.

Therefore Black played variation 'd': Resigns!

Risk assessment: Unlike in Petrosian's previous game, here he doesn't risk losing with the pawn sacrifice – but there is a fairly high risk of a draw. I don't think even Petrosian could have done anything in the rook ending that would have resulted had Black played the correct 64...♗xd4.

However, the onus was on Black to play, as I mentioned, 70 (or more!) correct moves in order to secure that draw, and the probability that Black could do so was not that high. It's difficult for anyone to defend for hours with the only hope being to save a draw. So I'll say, some risk of draw, but better chances to win.

And what if Petrosian had not sac'ed? Then reaching the draw might have been much easier for Black.

Summary

Speaking alliteratively, all one has to know is that *Petrosian's passed pawns are powerful!* Carrying this over to your games, make sure you consider that a passed pawn – *the* winning weapon in the ending – can often outweigh a pawn minus.

Furthermore, positional advantages – for example the rook on seventh plus superior minor piece seen in the last game – might give so much play that a minus pawn can soon be converted to a plus pawn!

So, yes (with apologies to Mednis) sometimes it's not wise to keep material in the endgame – sometimes, as in Game 59, the only way to win is to give up material to get a passed pawn!

Chapter Twelve

Confusion

Sometimes your opponent is just too smug. You look across the board, and there he is, wearing his Andy Warhol t-shirt, dreamily calm in the midst of his prepared variation/middlegame he's crushed GMs with/grinding ending, and he just *knows* he's going to win, and you're just going to have to sit there and suffer, and he's going to enjoy it –

RRRRRRRRRRIP!

Then you rip the gauzy comfort zone right off his smiling face! What do you do? You sacrifice a pawn for no other reason than to confuse your opponent! He says to himself, "That can't be good!" Then he thinks: "But why did he do it? – there must be some idea!" Then, "I can refute this, but I have to leave my beloved comfort zone! Ohhhhh no!" and then finally, "O my God, I'm in time pressure and I haven't moved yet!"

The confusion sacrifice can have a surprising effect on human opponents.

Four of the five games in this chapter go from objectively lost, to confused, to winning! The one exception, Game 63, goes from objectively drawn – but looks lost! – to winning.

With five great turnarounds like that, one can be sure that Mr. Fritz marks all five as ...unapproved!!

Game 62

T.Taylor-J.Yoos

US Masters, Chicago 1990

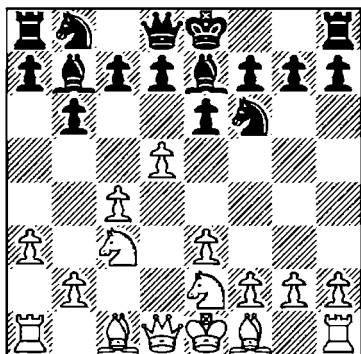
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♘ge2 ♙b7 6 a3 ♙e7 7 d5

In my very first opening book, *Rubinstein Variation, Nimzo-Indian Defence* (1984), I criticized this variation for Black, and concluded a brief analysis with this move and the comment that White has "a clear advantage in the centre".

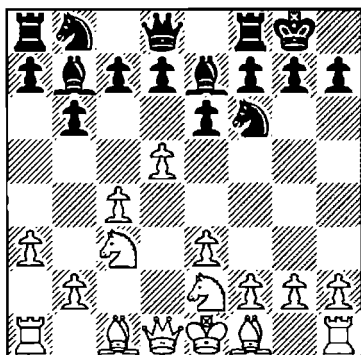
This comment is correct – if we con-

sult a more recent source, the *Big Database*, we see that White scores 63% from this position.



What I didn't analyse – and didn't even know, in those pre-database years – was the exact correct pre-continuation for White, or the tricks Black could play!

7...0-0



8 g3

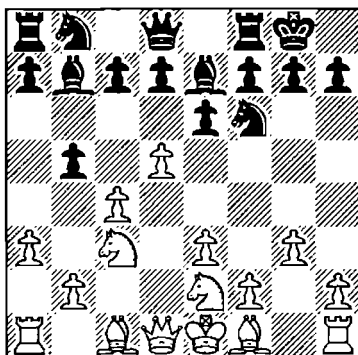
This was the first time I had this position in an actual game, and I played the above move without thinking too much – unaware that I was stepping right into a prepared variation! Much later the correct line was demonstrated by Mr. Thirteen himself: 8 ♘g3 ♜e8 9

♙e2 ♙f8 10 e4 d6 11 0-0 ♞bd7 12 ♙e3 c6 13 ♞d2 ♞c8 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 f4 and White stood clearly better with his sound centre and space advantage in G.Kasparov-V.Kramnik, Moscow (rapid) 2001. Usually I would say, "and Kasparov went on to win", but in fact, he blundered later and lost! Maybe he got confused?

Now back to my misadventures!

8...b5!

This move was a big surprise to me – I had no idea this ...b6-b5 blow had been played as early as 1939! (see Reshevsky-Kan below). Fritz wants me to play either the passive 9 b3, or Reshevsky's 9 cxb5, but if you look at the following games, you will see little joy on the White side.



a) 9 b3 bxc4 10 bxc4 ♞a6 11 ♙g2 ♞c5 12 0-0 ♜b8 13 a4 ♙a6 14 ♞b5 exd5 15 cxd5 ♞xd5 16 ♙xd5 c6 17 ♙c4 cxb5 18 axb5 d5 19 bxa6 dxc4 20 ♞xd8 ♞fxd8 21 ♙a3 ♙f8 22 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 23 ♞a4 ♜b4 24 ♞xb4 ♙xb4 25 ♞c1 ♞c8 26 ♞d4 ♙a3 27 ♞c2 ♙f8 28 ♞b5 ♞c6 29 ♞xa7 ♞xa6 30 ♞b5 ♞c6 31 ♙g2 g6 32 g4 ♙g7 33 ♙f3 h5 34 h3 hxg4+ 35 hxg4 ♙f8 36 ♙e4

♞c5 37 ♘a3 c3 38 ♘d3 ♞d5+ 39 ♘c4 ♞d1 40 g5 ♘e7 41 ♘b5 ♞d2 42 ♘b3 ♞d5 43 ♘xc3 ½-½ Z.Gyimesi-V.Dinstuhl, Budapest 1994.

b) 9 cxb5 ♘xd5 10 e4 ♘xc3 11 ♘xc3 ♘f6 12 ♘g2 c6 13 0-0 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 cxb5 15 a4 bxa4 16 ♘a3 ♞e8 17 ♞xa4 ♘c6 18 ♞d4 ♘a6 19 ♘d6 ♘c7 20 c4 e5 21 ♘xe5 ♘e6 22 ♞c3 f6 23 ♘d6 ♘g5 24 f3 a5 25 ♞fb1 a4 26 c5 ♘f7 27 ♞c4 g6 28 ♞a3 ♘g7 29 ♞d1 ♞a5 30 ♘f4 ♘e5 31 ♞c1 ½-½ S.Reshevsky-I.Kan, Lenin-grad/Moscow 1939.

Wonderful! White barely manages two draws!

The more I looked at the position, the less I liked it, and that sentiment is now shared by my computer, which already evaluates the position as slightly better for Black.

So here's my situation: I was surprised by the move; the move was good; my position was worse; and worst of all, my opponent was radiating confidence! Clearly he had been ready for me!

But I saw **Favourable Omens**, and I don't think he was ready for the coming *journey into confusion*.

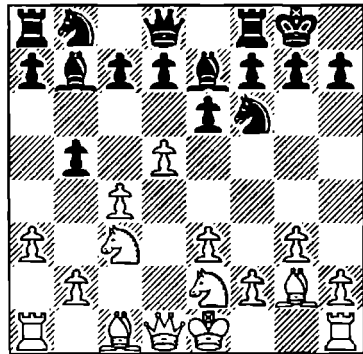
The advantages of the coming sac do not exist on the board – I will be the first to say White has no objective compensation for the coming pawn offer – but, remembering the Tal quote from the introduction, there are advantages “even though they may not lie within the realm of the 64 squares of the chessboard!”

The first advantage is that it was obvious that my opponent had thor-

oughly studied the position, and he had probably analysed all reasonable moves for White – so I could hardly confuse him with a reasonable move! But a strange, seemingly unmotivated move – played with confidence of course – would make him wonder about his own preparation. How could he have missed that move? What was its secret point? The fact that there was *no* secret point would take him a lot of clock time to see, and even then he couldn't be sure!

Second, it was also clear that my opponent had a hypermodern style: he deliberately let me build a “strong” centre, then chipped away at it from the wings. So, okay, I'll give up my whole centre, and let him play an open game! I like open, full board tactics – my guess was my opponent didn't!

I went ahead and boldly played...
9 ♘g2!



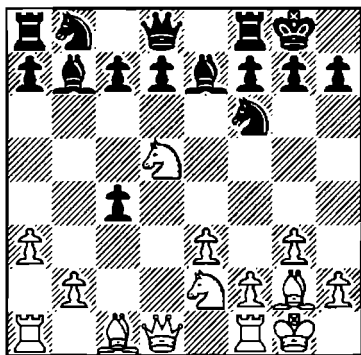
And my opponent was confused!

Mr. Fritz, however, is not: Unimpressed, shouts the mechanical marvel!

The **Author** is quite aware that the move played loses a pawn for ap-

proximately nothing, but still enjoys the confusion it created! If Reshevsky couldn't win this by playing an approved move, then I doubt I would have – so I still approve (in this specific one-time case) this nonchalant pawn gift!

9...bxc4 10 0-0 exd5 11 ♖xd5



I'm a pawn down and I have no centre, but I guarantee this position was not in my opponent's home preparation!

11...c6

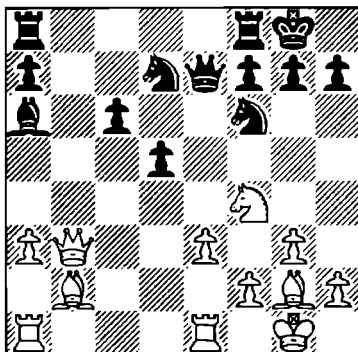
If 11...♖xd5 12 ♗xd5 White recovers the pawn, so I get the two bishops – which gives me some compensation, though certainly not enough.

12 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 13 b3!

I confidently open the game, and make it clear I have no intention of trying to get my pawn back. My opponent might have wondered here if he was the one who had stumbled into a prepared variation!

Of course objectively Black is clearly better, but it's hard to keep one's head in such a confusing position.

13...cxb3 14 ♗xb3 ♗a6 15 ♖e1 d5 16 ♗b2 ♖bd7 17 ♖f4



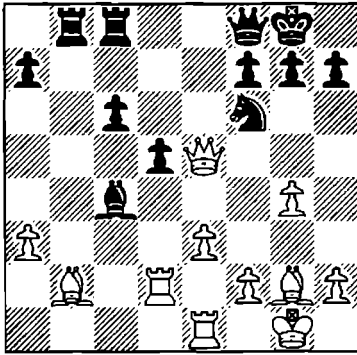
White is prepared to set up a battery on the long dark diagonal, and this worries Black. Perhaps the best way to meet this set-up is 17...♖ab8 18 ♗c3 ♖c5 19 ♗e5 ♗d7 20 ♗d4 ♖b3 21 ♖h5 ♖xh5 22 ♗xh5 ♖xd4 23 exd4 ♗d6 and Black consolidates with his extra pawn – but the move played is not bad.

17...♖fc8 18 ♖ac1 ♖ab8 19 ♗c3 ♖c5 20 ♗e5

I thought 20 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 21 ♖xc5 ♖xb2 was too simple, and so played this surprising move, offering the exchange of queens a pawn down – but Black can't take because of 20...♗xe5? 21 ♗xe5 targeting b8 and c5, when Black can't defend with 21...♖b5 because of 22 ♗f1 ♖a5 23 ♖xc5! and wins. It takes time to see all this!

White appears to have all the threats, despite being a pawn down – actually I'm just creating confusion, but my opponent doesn't have to know that!

20...♗f8 21 ♖c2 ♖d3 22 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 23 ♖d2 ♗c4 24 g4!



The key position, a kind of apotheosis of confusion! White is threatening to clear the long dark diagonal, and at first sight the pawn can hardly be taken in view of ♖g5 and what looks like many threats: to the black knight, to g7, perhaps ♕h3, the g-file, etc.

Black thinks, I'd better get the queens off quick – and loses!

24... ♖e8?

Actually Black could and should take the second pawn. After 24... ♖xg4 25 ♖g5 (or 25 ♖g3 f5 26 h3 ♖f6) 25... f5! no objective compensation for two pawns can be found. Black can ignore ♕h3 by giving a pawn back with ... ♖b3, and getting to the g-file is too slow – generally speaking, White has nothing... But the confusion worked over the board.

25 g5!

And just like that, White wins the exchange.

25... ♖xb2

The long diagonal kills on 25... ♖h5 26 ♕f3 g6 (or 26... ♖xe5 27 ♕xe5 attacking b8 and h5) 27 ♖h8 mate.

26 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 27 ♖xb2 ♖d6 28 ♕h3

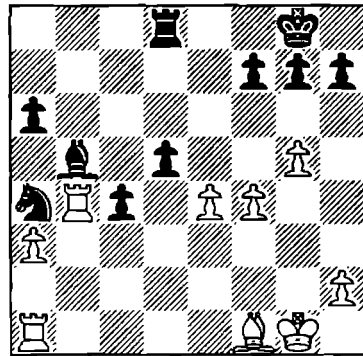
♖f8 29 ♕d7

29 ♕f1, chopping wood, is a better way to win.

29... ♕b5 30 ♖a2 ♖e4 31 f4 ♖d8 32 ♕h3 c5 33 ♖b1 a6 34 ♕f1 c4 35 ♖b4 ♖c3 36 ♖a1 ♖a4?

Black made this move in time pressure, a legacy of the confusion sacrifice. Instead, 36...h6 might hold.

37 e4!



The board opens, and it's all over.

37... dxe4 38 ♕xc4 ♕c6 39 ♕xa6 g6 40 ♖c1 ♖d6 41 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 42 ♖xa4 e3 43 ♕e2 ♖c2 44 ♖f1 ♖a2 45 ♖a8+ ♖g7 46 a4 h6 47 ♖a7 ♖b2 48 gxf6+ ♖xf6 49 ♖xf7 ♖b1+ 50 ♖g2 ♖b4 51 a5 1-0

Risk assessment: Obviously extremely risky, as White was just a pawn down for nothing but confusion from moves 9 to 24, after which I could have been two pawns down! But I can't smack myself down too hard, for I keep thinking how, back in 1939, the great Sammy Reshevsky must have been surprised too, by a player far below his class. Reshevsky played one of the approved lines, and made his draw – but I won!

Game 63
Em.Lasker-H.Pillsbury
 Hastings 1895
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♘b5 g6

Lasker soon shows that he is unprepared for this pet line of Pillsbury's – in other words, just as in the last game, White gets “caught” in the opening.

4 d4 exd4 5 ♗xd4

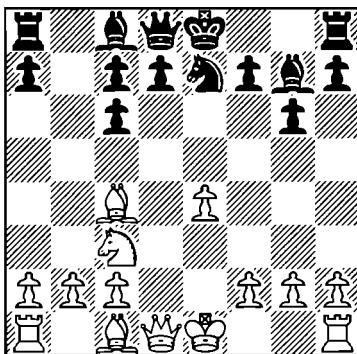
This move and the following are incorrect – White transposes to the Three Knights Game an important tempo down, as will be seen.

Two years later Lasker faced the same position. Fully prepared, the World Champion played what is even today considered best – 5 ♘g5 – and won stylishly: 5 ♘g5! ♘e7 6 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 7 0-0 ♗f6 8 ♘xc6 dxc6 9 ♗xd4 0-0 10 ♗c3 ♘e6 11 ♗fe1 b6 12 h3 ♗h5 13 ♗e3 ♗f6 14 ♗d4 c5 15 ♗de2 ♗ae8 16 g4 ♗g7 17 e5 ♗h4 18 ♗e4 f5 19 exf6 ♘xg4 20 fxg7 ♗f3 21 ♗f6+ ♗xg7 22 ♗xe8+ ♗f8 23 ♗g3 ♗xe3 24 ♗xe3 ♘d7 25 ♗xc7 ♗xh3 26 ♗ae1 ♘c6 27 ♗e6+ ♗g8 28 ♗f4 ♗g4 29 ♗e6 g5 30 ♗fh5 ♗f3 31 ♗f6+ ♗f7 32 ♗fe4 ♘xe4 33 ♗6xe4 ♗f6 34 ♗e5 ♗d8 35 ♗f5+ ♗g7 36 ♗e6 ♗d1+ 37 ♗g2 h6 38 ♗e7+ ♗g6 39 ♗fe5 g4 40 ♗5e6+ 1-0 Em.Lasker-Hyde/Bolus/Bodfish (consulting), Birmingham 1897.

5...♘g7 6 ♗xc6 bxc6 7 ♘c4 ♗e7 8 ♗c3

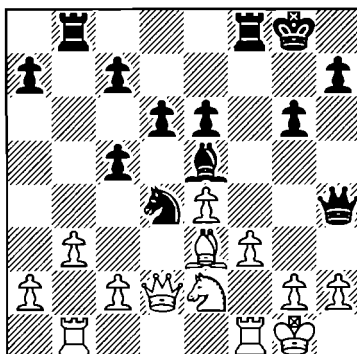
Compare this position with the Three Knights Game: the same position is reached in that opening after 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♗xd4

♘g7 6 ♗xc6 bxc6 7 ♘c4 ♗e7 and White is to move.



However, in the main game Lasker has lost a tempo with his Lopez bishop, so in fact the same position has been reached – but with *Black* to move! This gain of a full tempo no doubt encouraged Pillsbury, and to begin with he plays very well.

8...d6 9 0-0 ♘e6 10 ♘b3 0-0 11 ♘e3 c5 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 ♗d2 ♗b8 14 ♗ab1 ♗c6 15 b3 ♗h4 16 f3 ♗d4 17 ♗e2 ♘e5



It's almost impossible to tell if Lasker's pawn sacrifices in this and the following game were intentional confusion sacs or confusing blunders!

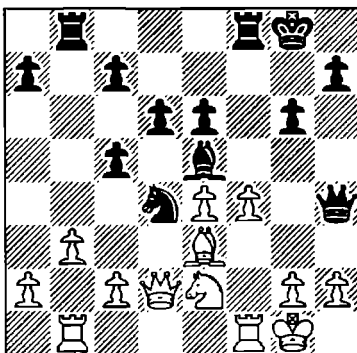
For the purpose of this book, I'm going to assume that the master of psychological chess made the sacs on purpose. So let's see what **Favourable Omens** the mighty Lasker might have seen!

This is conjecture, but I suspect the first omen that Lasker noticed was his young opponent's confidence (a common theme in the confusion sacrifice is that the opponent is sure he is winning – and so is not alert to nasty tricks!). A second factor is that Lasker just stands a little worse, and he has no play – under normal circumstances all he can do (in the face of Black's central pawn majority, more active pieces, and open f-file) is just hang in there and try to draw.

But suppose White wants to win? Then he needs ...something. How about a passed pawn? Ah ha!

Lasker sacrifices a pawn, playing on his opponent's confidence, or overconfidence, and conjures up long-term threats for himself by creating a passed pawn.

18 f4!



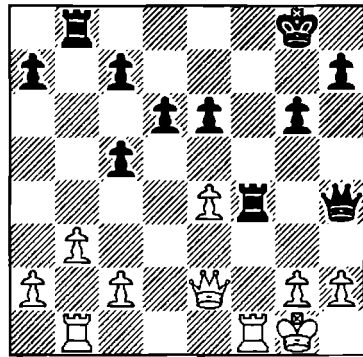
Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch, writing in the tournament book: "A great mistake."

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved!

The **Author?** Give me five, Emanuel!

Instead of the *Fritz*-approved 18 g3 Δ xe2+ 19 W xe2 W h5 with dreary near equality, Lasker sets fire to the position, and Pillsbury is unequal to the challenge.

18... Δ xe2+ 19 W xe2 Δ xf4 20 Δ xf4 R xf4



21 Δ xf4

If 21 g3 W g4 holds the pawn – this is not White's idea.

21... W xf4 22 R f1 W e5 23 W a6!

This is!

However you slice it, White picks up Black's a-pawn; and so Lasker has his "something" – the long-term asset of a passed rook's pawn.

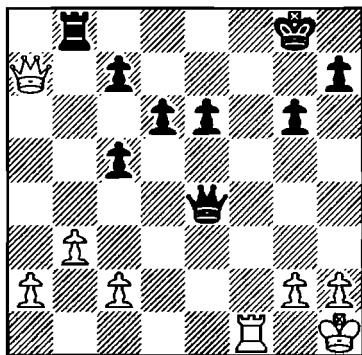
23... W d4+ 24 Δ h1 W xe4

Tarrasch, counting material, refers to Black's "won game". I'm sure Pillsbury felt the same way, but I also feel he was confused by Lasker's "blunder" and so misevaluated the position.

25 W xa7

In my opinion the passed pawn so

secured should always give White enough play to draw.



25...♞b7

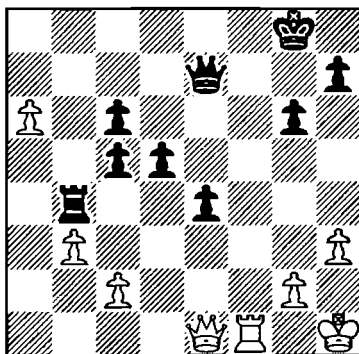
Or 25...♞c8 26 ♞a6 ♞a8 27 ♞e2 ♞e8 28 a4 e5 29 ♞c4+ and White has fully adequate compensation.

Note the position after 27 ♞e2 in the variation above: this is important, as it shows that, beside the passed pawn, White also has kingside threats: heavy pieces around an airy king can be murder! Perhaps Pillsbury could win this if he had a safe king – but he doesn't!

26 ♞a4 c6 27 ♞e4 ♞d7 28 a4 e5 29 h3 ♞b4

"29...♞e8 wins with certainty," says Dr. Tarrasch (giving no analysis), but I have to disagree. After 30 ♞c4+ ♔g7 (30...♞e6 31 ♞xe6+ ♞xe6 32 a5 ♞e7 33 ♞f6 ♞d7 34 g4 g5 35 ♔g2 ♔g7 36 ♞e6 ♔f7 37 ♞h6 is an easy draw for White) 31 a5 e4 32 a6 e3 33 ♞e1 ♞e7 34 ♞a4 (Black's e-pawn is blocked, White's a-pawn is very dangerous) 34...e2 35 ♞xc6 ♞h4 36 ♞c7+ ♔h6 37 ♞a5 ♞b4 38 ♞xb4 cxb4 39 ♔g1 ♞a8 40 ♞xe2 it's a clear draw.

30 ♞e1 e4 31 a5 d5 32 a6 ♞e7?



The last few moves have completely changed Tarrasch's opinion of the position, and he now writes: "Black entirely underestimates the threatening danger, or else he would have retired with his rook instead of pressing on his own centre."

This is correct: Black should hold after 32...♞b8. The rook is a much better blockader than the queen!

33 ♞g3 e3

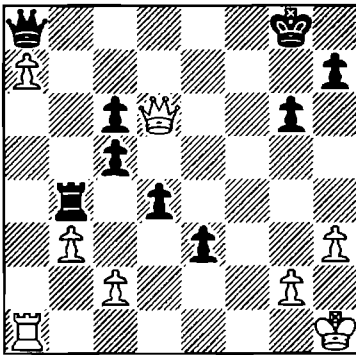
Dr. Tarrasch thinks that Black could still draw (with some difficulty) after the better 33...♞b6, but it's already too late! White wins with the precise sequence 34 ♞a1 ♞g7 35 c3! ♞a7 36 ♞d6 ♞xa6 37 ♞d8+ ♔g7 38 ♞f1 with a winning attack.

But Pillsbury still can't believe he's not winning! He presses forward and falls – a victim of confusion and Sacrificial Shock!

34 ♞a1 ♞f6 35 ♞e1 d4 36 a7 ♞d8 37 ♞a1 ♞a8

As is well known, the queen is a terrible blockader.

38 ♞d6



38...♖b7

After 38...♖g7 White plays on both wings – using his passed pawn and kingside attacking chances – to win as follows: 39 ♖e7+ ♖h6 40 ♖f1 ♖b7 41 ♖h4+ ♖g7 42 ♖f6+ ♖g8 (if 42...♖h6 43 ♖f4 ♖xa7 44 ♖h4 mate) 43 ♖f8+! and the black queen is forcibly diverted, allowing the white a-pawn to queen with devastating effect.

39 ♖xc6 e2 40 ♖xb7! 1-0

That's it! White gets back in time after 40...♖xb7 41 a8♖+ ♖xa8 42 ♖xa8+ ♖f7 43 ♖a1 ♖f6 44 ♖e1 ♖f5 45 ♖xe2, while if 40...e1♖+ 41 ♖xe1 ♖xb7 42 ♖e8+ ♖f7 43 a8♖ and White emerges a rook up.

Risk assessment: Not nearly as risky as it looks, for White's passed a-pawn is a powerful weapon. I think both Pillsbury, during the game, and Tarrasch in his notes, severely undervalued this asset.

By no means do I think the sac is a winning one – as I pointed out, Black has various drawing lines – but I would say the sacrifice is not risky if White is willing to draw (and since

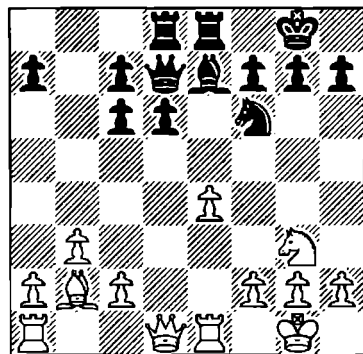
White, at the point of sacrifice is struggling to draw anyway, why not?). On the other hand, as Pillsbury found out, it was very very risky to play for a win in this pawn up position, as White just has too much play.

Game 64
S.Tarrasch-Em.Lasker
 2nd matchgame,
 Düsseldorf 1908
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♖b5 ♖f6 4 0-0 d6 5 d4 ♖d7 6 ♖c3 ♖e7 7 ♖e1 exd4 8 ♖xd4 0-0 9 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 10 ♖xc6 bxc6 11 ♖e2 ♖d7

11...♖xe4 12 ♖d4 d5 13 ♖xc6 ♖d6 14 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 15 f3 is a trap I fell into once as a junior player.

12 ♖g3 ♖fe8 13 b3 ♖ad8 14 ♖b2



Lasker was rather renowned for not caring much about the opening, and this game (in a world championship match!) is a good example. There is no doubt White has the advantage – just compare activity of the two minor

pieces, or look at his superior pawn structure, or finally consider that White has attacking chances on both wings – along the long diagonal, and against Black’s weak queenside pawns. What’s a world champion to do?

Do I hear the word *confusion*? What kind of **Favourable Omens** exist in this seemingly unpleasant position?

First, there is negative reinforcement: if Black plays the Fritz-approved 14...♖e6 White gets an easy advantage with 15 ♖d4 c5 16 ♖c3. Other defensive moves lead to the same sort of grim defensive position, and they don’t address White’s positional advantages.

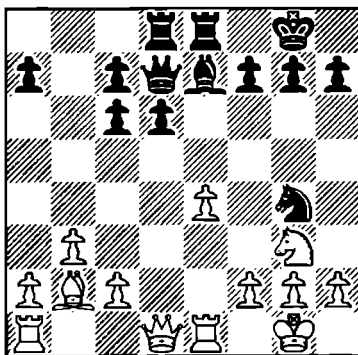
Now what if Black could get his knight to e5, and his bishop to f6 – this would go a long way toward neutralizing White’s edge, but the only problem with the proposed 14...♘g4 is that it loses a pawn. So?

Let’s see: if White takes on g7, Black takes on f2, so both king positions are weakened. White has to run off to a7 to win the pawn, so Black gains some time. Finally, Black gets a bishop vs. a knight, which is definitely an imbalance – and if the board opens up, the bishop may come into its own.

Most important, Black’s next is highly confusing – it looks like a blunder, but then White should be winning easily, yes? But if White *thinks* he is winning easily, he will be surprised!

14...♘g4!

Fortunately I have only one chapter of Confusion sacrifices, for otherwise the machine will surely melt down – for the record, **Mr. Fritz?** Unapproved!!



As for the **Author**, I sympathize: Black’s position is painful, so why not mix it up? After all, Lasker knows already (from Tarrasch’s annotations of the previous game) that the good doctor is inclined to overvalue a plus pawn!

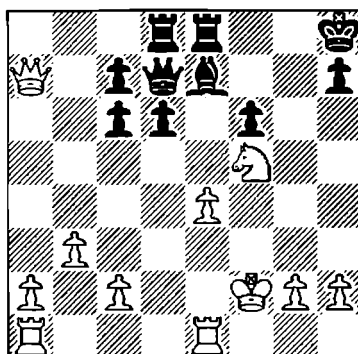
15 ♖xg7 ♘xf2!

Black must weaken White’s king position. Not 15...♗xg7 16 ♘f5+ and White is much better.

16 ♗xf2 ♗xg7 17 ♘f5+ ♖h8 18 ♖d4+

White can’t simplify right away, as 18 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 19 ♖d4+ ♗e5 20 ♖xa7 ♗g8 gives Black good counterplay.

18...f6 19 ♖xa7

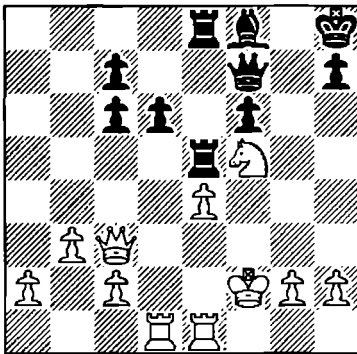


19...♠f8!

Much better than *Fritz's* recommended roll over and die 19...d5. Then White gets the advantage by simple moves. 20 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 21 ♜d4 ♜e5 (if 21...♜xe4 22 ♜xe4 dxe4 23 ♜xf6+ ♔g8 24 ♜g5+ ♔h8 25 ♜e5+ wins, or 21...dxe4 22 ♜xf6+ ♔g8 23 ♜c3 ♜d6 24 ♔g1 ♜d2 25 ♜c4+ ♜f7 26 ♜xe4 and again it's all over) 22 exd5 ♜de8 23 ♜xe5 fxe5 24 ♜c5 cxd5 25 a4 and White should win – it looks like Lasker-Pillsbury again, but this time White has an extra pawn!

By retaining minor pieces (even though the knight looks better than the bishop at this point) Lasker makes it complicated and confusing, and Tarrasch fails to find a path to victory.

20 ♜d4 ♜e5 21 ♜ad1 ♜de8 22 ♜c3 ♜f7



Another confusing move: Lasker offers the c-pawn. Can it be taken? Then Black has ...♜c5 and a check on c2 – better not.

23 ♖g3?

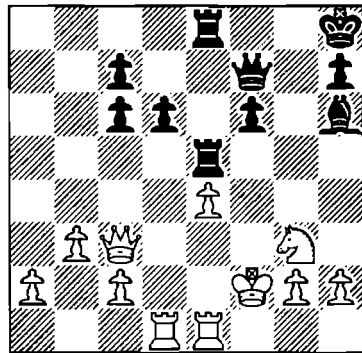
Better yes! Tarrasch begins an unmotivated retreat (this knight will end up on h1!) and finally loses the game.

This was the point where he had a clean win, if he had calculated clearly – but perhaps overconfident, he didn't work through the precise variations, made the safe move ...and started sliding downhill.

Correct is 23 ♜xc6! when White exchanges rooks or destroys the coherence of Black's position: 23...♜c5 24 ♜a6 ♜xc2+ 25 ♜e2 ♜xe2+ (if 25...♜c3 26 ♔g1 and Black's separated pieces are no threat to anyone) 26 ♜xe2 ♜e6 27 ♖g3 ♔h6 28 ♜c2 ♔f4 29 ♖f5 and the white knight retakes his ordained square. Black can't capture anything, and has no compensation whatsoever, e.g. 29...♜g8 (if 29...♔xh2 30 g3 wins a piece, or 29...♜xe4 30 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 31 ♔f3 ♜b4 32 a3 and again a piece goes) 30 g3 ♔e5 31 ♜c6 and Black is busted.

23...♔h6

Because of the knight's retreat, Black activates his bishop. White is still better, but one can hardly call this an easy win – which must have confused Dr. Tarrasch! Didn't Black blunder just ten moves ago?

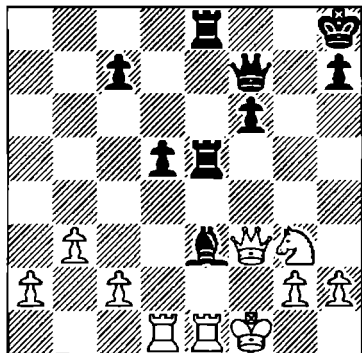


24 ♜f3 d5 25 exd5

If White wanted to be really safe, he could give back the pawn here, keep Black's bishop out, and still retain some advantage: 25 ♖g1 ♜e7 26 ♜f2 dxe4 27 ♘f5 ♜f8 28 ♜e2 and White is somewhat better.

Tarrasch's actual move is the best, but needs to be followed up exactly.

25...♗e3+ 26 ♖f1 cxd5



27 ♜d3?

It is absolutely essential to play 27 ♘f5, forcing a key exchange. I don't understand why Tarrasch deliberately avoided exchanges at move 23 and here, as that is the natural plan when one is material up.

After 27 ♘f5, either the minor pieces or at least one pair of rooks come off:

a) 27...♗c5 28 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 (28...fxe5 29 ♜xd5 e4 30 ♜c3+ wins a piece) 29 ♜e1 and White has exchanged his way out of any difficulty and remains a pawn up.

b) 27...d4 28 ♘xe3 ♜xe3 (or if 28...dxe3 29 ♖g1 and White has consolidated and can start advancing his a-pawn) 29 ♜xe3 dxe3 (worse is 29...♜xe3

30 ♜g4) 30 ♜e1 ♜e7 31 a4 and White's extra passed pawn has its say.

27...♜e6

Black takes over the f5-square – once the white knight's proud outpost – and...

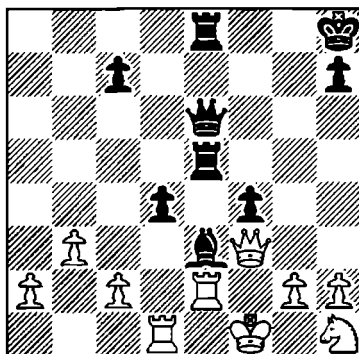
28 ♜e2 f5!

...marches forward!

29 ♜d1

It's too late to give back material, as 29 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 30 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 31 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 32 ♘xf5 ♜c3 clearly favours Black.

29...f4 30 ♘h1 d4

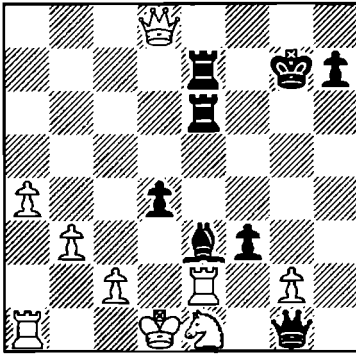


There is no confusion any more: Black is just better. The bishop is dominant, Black's rooks are more active than White's, and Black's queen can threaten both sides of the board.

31 ♘f2 ♜a6 32 ♘d3 ♜g5 33 ♜a1 ♜h6 34 ♖e1

Black recovers his pawn with a ferocious attack, for if 34 h3 ♜g3 35 ♜d5 f3 wins, while 34 ♜h3 ♜xh3! 35 gxh3 ♜g1 is mate.

34...♜xh2 35 ♖d1 ♜g1+ 36 ♘e1 ♜ge5 37 ♜c6 ♜5e6 38 ♜xc7 ♜8e7 39 ♜d8+ ♖g7 40 a4 f3!



The decisive breakthrough.

41 gxf3 ♖g5 0-1

Black has a mating attack: After 42 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 43 ♜a5 (if 43 ♜d7+ ♖e7 wins easily) 43...♖f4 there is no way to avoid mate; for instance both 44 c4 and 44 ♜b4 are met by 44...♜f2 with mate following quickly.

Risk assessment: No one can deny this was an extremely risky sacrifice. There is no doubt that White can win with exact play. And yet, what is the alternative? Black could play a difficult defensive game and hope to draw – instead, he manufactured such a crazy, confusing position that White lost his way, and Black won!

But I have to say it again: extremely risky!

Game 65

T.V.Petrosian-M.Taimanov

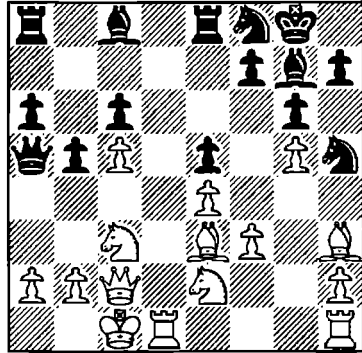
USSR Championship,

Moscow 1957

King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♖g7 4 e4 d6 5

f3 c6 6 ♖e3 0-0 7 ♜d2 a6 8 g4 b5 9 g5
 ♘h5 10 ♘g2 e5 11 0-0-0 ♘d7 12 c5
 dxc5 13 dxc5 ♜a5 14 ♜c2 ♖e8 15 ♖h3
 ♘f8



White has achieved absolutely nothing against Black's King's Indian. The computer gives as best 16 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 17 ♖b1 ♘e6 18 ♘c1 ♖cd8 which it calls equal. However, King's Indian players would love Black's position after 18...♖cd8, with both black knights poised to enter the key dark squares, and the Indian bishop himself ready to enter the game after a knight exchange. This is a typical successful King's Indian set-up, and any devotee of the opening would find this position very appealing.

Petrosian *did not* see that prospect as inviting! He reached into his bag of tricks, and came up with a confusion sacrifice!

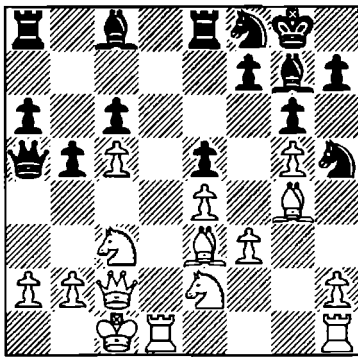
What **Favourable Omens** did he see? The first we have already touched on: he will get Taimanov out of his King's Indian comfort zone, and drag him willy-nilly into some bizarre backwater, with no trails and no clear ideas

like the knight jumps cited above.

Second, the planned move, 16 ♖g4, looks so bad and provocative (White essentially gives himself doubled g-pawns and an isolated e-pawn) that Taimanov will just have to try and refute it – but once Black starts playing for a win, there will inevitably be counterchances for White – counterchances which are now in short supply!

Tigran goes ahead and plays the curious...

16 ♖g4!?



...which offers the destruction of White's pawn structure, and soon, the sacrifice of a pawn!

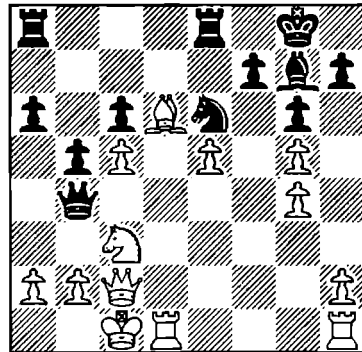
Note that although the actual pawn sacrifice comes a bit later, I think this is the key moment where Petrosian decided on an all points confusion attack!

Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! As mentioned above, the machine wants the seemingly solid 16 ♖xc8 with equality, although Black then gets an easy game.

The **Author** appreciates the cleverness of Tigran's idea: the move looks so bad that Black will become overconfident. Furthermore, the position will

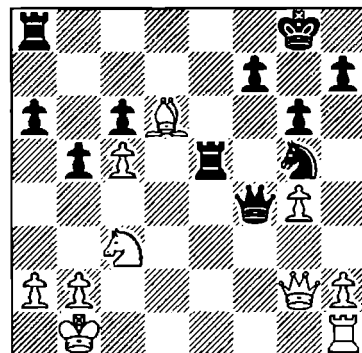
lose all resemblance to a normal King's Indian in a few moves. I give extra marks for guile, but I'm afraid I will also be giving a severe risk assessment down the road!

16... ♜xg4 17 fxg4 ♜f4 18 ♜xf4 exf4 19 ♜xf4 ♜b4 20 ♜d6 ♜e6 21 e5!?



White could bail out with 21 h4, but Petrosian plays consistently for confusion! He sacrifices material and slams the door on Black's Indian bishop, which can now only be extricated via exchange.

21... ♜g5 22 ♜de1 ♜xe5 23 ♜xe5 ♜f4+ 24 ♜b1 ♜xe5 25 ♜g2



The dust has settled a bit, so let's

assess the results of the first confusion sacrifice (there's going to be another one a little later on!). White is a pawn and the exchange down; he will win the exchange back, but not the pawn. White has successfully killed off Black's Indian bishop, but only has one simple threat (to Black's c-pawn).

No one could claim White has full compensation for the material here – and Taimanov probably thought he was just winning. But this overconfidence will lead to a fall!

Best for Black is 25...♚f3!, forcing the exchange of queens. After the logical 26 ♜xf3 ♘xf3 27 ♙xe5 ♘xe5 28 g5 ♖e8 Black's winning chances probably rank higher than White's drawing chances.

Taimanov perhaps avoided this dry technical position because he didn't want to face Petrosian's endgame prowess, or perhaps because he overestimated his middlegame chances. Yes, the move Taimanov plays should win (and for what it's worth, it's *Fritz's* number one pick!), but the complications become obscure and confusing.

In the endgame after 25...♚f3 only two results are possible; after the played move, all three results are on the table!

25...♖ae8 26 ♙xe5 ♖xe5 27 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 28 a3

Not 28 ♜xa6 ♖xc5 29 ♘a1 (29 ♘xb5? ♜e4+ is even worse) 29...b4 and Black has the material plus a strong attack.

28...♚f5+ 29 ♘a1 ♖xc5 30 ♜xa6

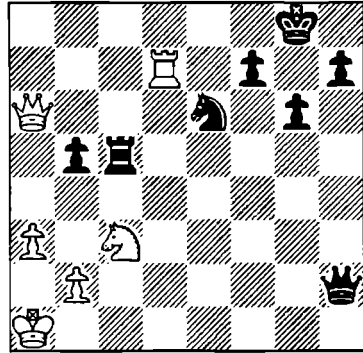
Petrosian gets what he wants! White is a clear pawn down, but the

position is unbalanced and confusing! To make it even more so, Petrosian sacrifices a second pawn!

30...♘e6 31 ♖d1 ♜e5 32 ♖d7!

The second confusion sacrifice!

32...♜xh2



At first sight the position is an easy win for Black (perhaps Taimanov thought so too): Black is two pawns up and has three connected passed pawns!

But appearances are deceiving, and the position is much more confusing than it looks. First of all, if passed pawns must be pushed, what happens when Black pushes his kingside pawns? Then his king loses much of its protection, while heavy pieces are on the board! Furthermore, Black's b-pawn is isolated, weak, and may well be lost soon. This will happen in the game, when in certain "race" situations, the white pawns may be faster than the black pawns, as the latter may have been held back too long for king safety.

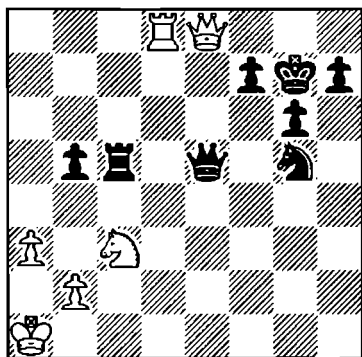
The objective verdict is clear: Black is winning. But over the board, with the time control approaching, with confusion plus overconfidence a

wicked combination, there is every chance for the wily Tigran!

33 ♖a8+ ♜g7 34 ♜e8 ♘g5 35 ♖d8 ♜g1+?!

This looks like a time-pressure check to me (and if I'm right, that shows the confusion sac is already paying dividends!).

Instead, Black has an excellent chance to win the game right now with the powerful centralization **35...♜e5!**.



This move defends the rook, and indirectly, the b-pawn, while preparing the advance of Black's kingside pawns. I can't find a way for White to save the game:

a) **36 ♜h8+ ♜h6 37 ♜f8+ ♜h5 38 ♖d1 ♖xc3!** (a typical motif in this position) **39 bxc3 ♜xc3+ 40 ♜b1 f5 41 ♖h1+ ♘h3 42 ♜e7 ♜d3+ 43 ♜b2 h6 44 ♜e8 ♜h4 45 ♖c1** (if **45 ♜xg6? ♜d4+** wins a rook with the next check) **45...g5 46 ♜g6 h5** and Black's kingside pawns are unstoppable.

b) **36 ♜f8+ ♜f6 37 ♖d6+ ♜f5 38 ♖d3** (**38 ♖d1 ♖xc3!** wins similarly to the **36 ♜h8+** variation) **38...h5 39 ♜d8 h4 40 ♘d5 h3 41 ♘e3+ ♜f4 42 ♘d5+ ♜g4 43**

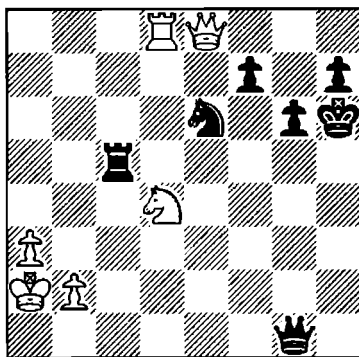
♘f6+ ♜f5, when White has run out of checks, and the black h-pawn will win.

But this is a hard variation to see in time trouble – practically speaking, I think Black would have had a much better chance of winning with the simple **25...♜f3**.

36 ♜a2 ♜h6

Not **36...♜f1?? 37 ♜f8+**, but now White gets connected passers too.

37 ♘xb5 ♘e6 38 ♘d4!!



An unbelievably great move – imagine trying to meet this in time pressure! Look what happens after the two obvious captures:

a) **38...♘xd4 39 ♜f8+ ♜h5 40 ♜xc5+** and wins.

b) **38...♘xd8 39 ♜f8+ ♜h5 40 ♜xc5+ ♜g5 41 ♜xg5+ ♜xg5 42 a4 ♘b7 43 b4 h5 44 a5 ♘d6 45 b5 h4 46 b6 h3 47 a6 f5 (47...h2 48 ♘f3+ ♜f4 49 ♘xh2** is easy, as is **47...♜g4 48 a7) 48 b7** and White has won the race and the game.

38...♖c1!

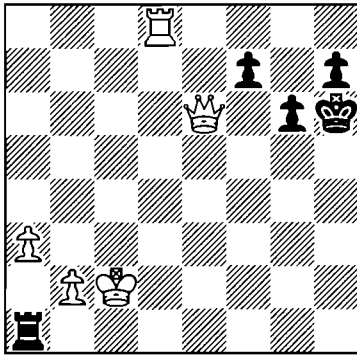
Taimanov comes back with a great move in return!

39 ♘xe6 ♖a1+ 40 ♜b3 ♜b6+ 41 ♜c2 ♜xe6??

“Everyone knows” that when one is material up, you should exchange pieces. But Taimanov, perhaps relaxing on the first move of the new time control, follows the “rules” to his doom!

Despite Black’s open king, he still has winning chances after the correct 41...fxe6, due to his extra pawn.

42 ♖xe6!! 1-0



The horror! White breaks all the rules, exchanges all the pieces, and wins the king and pawn ending a pawn down!!

Here’s the proof: 42...fxe6 43 ♖d1!! ♖xd1 (not 43...♖a2 44 ♖b3) 44 ♖xd1 and now:

a) 44...g5 45 a4 g4 46 a5 g3 47 ♖e2 ♖g5 48 a6 h5 49 a7 h4 50 a8♖ h3 51 ♖f3 g2 52 ♖g8+ ♖f5 53 ♖g3 e5 54 ♖f2 e4 55 ♖xh3 and White wins all of Black’s pawns.

b) 44...♖g5 45 a4 ♖f6 (45...h5 46 a5 h4 47 a6 h3 48 a7 h2 49 a8♖ defends Black’s queening square) 46 a5 ♖e7 47 a6 ♖d7 48 a7 and the black king can’t make it.

That must have been one sad resignation!

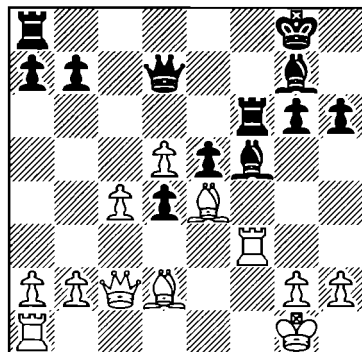
Risk assessment: extremely high. By playing 16 ♖g4, White creates permanent pawn weaknesses, and by 21 e5, commits himself to pawn sacrifices. While this got his opponent out of his comfort zone, White got a confusing but probably objectively lost position.

Note that Black’s fatal mistake came after the time control; one can never relax in chess, and one can certainly never relax when faced with a confusion sacrifice!

Game 66
S.Gligoric-L.Stein
 USSR-Yugoslavia match,
 Lvov 1962
King’s Indian Defence

If you thought the last game was confusing, just wait till you see this one!

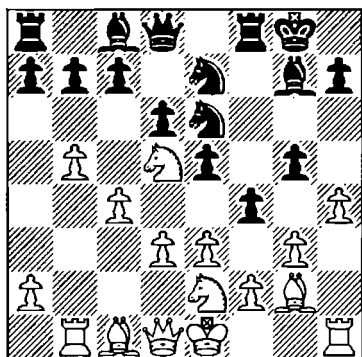
1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♖c3 ♖g7 4 e4 0-0 5 ♖g5 c5 6 d5 d6 7 ♖d3 e6 8 dxe6 fxe6 9 ♖ge2 ♖c6 10 0-0 h6 11 ♖d2 e5 12 ♖d5 ♖d4 13 ♖xd4 cxd4 14 f4 ♖xd5 15 exd5 ♖f5 16 ♖c2 ♖d7 17 fxe5 dxe5 18 ♖e4 ♖f6 19 ♖f3



Up to here we haven't seen anything out of the ordinary (a comment that won't apply to anything in the rest of the game). Two GMs have lined up their pieces, and both have played solidly. It looks like exchanges are coming up on the f-file, with an early draw possible. Black can play 19...♙xe4 20 ♜xe4 ♜xf3 21 gxf3 (not 21 ♜xf3 ♜f8 and Black has the initiative) 21...♜f5 and Black's kingside play against White's separated pawns balances White's queenside pawn majority.

This would be a "correct" way to play. To understand Black's next two moves, you have to know a little history: Stein had won his last two games against Gligoric, both times with unclear pawn sacrifices! (I almost used one in the pawn cracker section). Take a look!

1 c4 g6 2 ♘c3 ♙g7 3 g3 e5 4 ♙g2 ♘e7 5 d3 ♘bc6 6 ♚b1 d6 7 b4 0-0 8 b5 ♘d4 9 e3 ♘e6 10 ♘ge2 f5 11 ♘d5 g5 12 h4 f4! (line opening)



13 gxf4 gxf4 14 exf4 exf4 15 ♘exf4 ♘xf4 16 ♘xf4 ♙e5 17 ♜h5 ♜f5 18 ♜g4+ ♘h8 19 ♘e2 ♜xf2 20 ♜g5 ♜f8 21 ♙b2

♙f5 22 ♙xb7 ♙xb2 23 ♜xb2 ♚b8 24 ♙g2 ♜d7 25 ♘f4 ♘g6 26 ♜e2 ♘xf4 27 ♜xf4 ♜g7 28 ♜d2 ♙g4 29 ♜b2 ♙xe2 30 ♜xg7+ ♘xg7 31 ♘xe2 ♜f4 32 ♙e4 ♜bf8 33 ♜h2 ♘h6 34 ♘e3 ♙g4 35 ♘d4 ♜f5 36 a4 ♘g7 37 a5 h6 38 h5 ♘f6 39 ♘c3 ♜f1 40 ♜e2 ♙g5 41 ♙g6 ♜e5 42 ♙g2 ♜ee1 43 ♘d4 ♜e5 44 ♘c3 ♜c1+ 45 ♘b2 ♜ee1 46 ♙g4 ♜f1 47 ♙h7 ♜g1 48 ♜f4+ ♘g7 49 ♙e4 ♜cf1 50 ♜h4 ♘f6 51 ♘c3 ♘e5 52 ♙d5 ♜f4 53 ♜h3 ♜c1+ 54 ♘b2 ♜e1 55 ♘c3 ♜f2 56 ♜h1 ♜xh1 57 ♙xh1 ♜f5 58 d4+ ♘f6 59 ♘b4 ♜xh5 60 ♙c6 ♜h4 61 ♘c3 ♜h3+ 62 ♘c2 ♜a3 63 a6 h5 64 ♘b2 ♜d3 0-1 S.Gligoric-L.Stein, Stockholm Interzonal (play-off) 1962.

And now this:

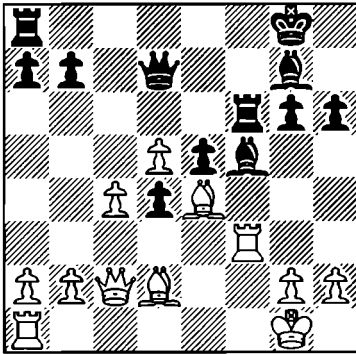
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♙e2 e5 7 ♘b3 ♙e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♙e3 ♜c7 10 ♜d2 ♙e6 11 ♜fd1 ♘bd7 12 a4 b6 13 f3 ♜fd8 14 ♜e1 ♜b7 15 ♜f1 ♜dc8 16 ♙d3 h6 17 ♜d2 ♘c5 18 ♘xc5 bxc5 19 b3 ♙d8 20 ♙c4 ♙a5 21 ♙xe6 fxe6 22 ♜c4 ♜e7 23 ♜dd1 ♘h8 24 ♙f2 ♘e8 25 ♘e2 ♜f7 26 ♙e3 ♙d8 27 f4 exf4 28 ♙xf4 ♙f6 29 e5! (pawn cracker) 29...dxe5 30 ♙e3 ♜e7 31 ♜g4 c4 32 bxc4 ♘d6 33 c5 ♘f5 34 ♙f2 e4 35 ♜xe4 ♙xa1 36 ♜xa1 ♜a7 37 ♘f4 ♜f6 38 ♜e1 ♜f7 39 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 40 ♜xe6 ♜d8 41 ♘d3 ♜e7 42 ♜xa6 ♜e2 43 g4 ♜xc2 44 ♘e1 ♜c4 45 gxf5 ♜f8 46 f6 gxf6 47 a5 ♘g7 48 ♘d3 ♜e8 49 ♜d6 ♜e2 50 a6 ♜a2 51 ♜d7+ ♘g6 52 a7 ♘f5 53 ♘g2 ♘e6 54 c6 ♜xc6 55 ♜d8 1-0 L.Stein-S.Gligoric, Stockholm Interzonal (play-off) 1962.

These games indicate that Gligoric was hardly at his best in sharp and confused positions, while Stein was a happy fish in such muddy waters.

Here, Stein could see that the objectively correct variation given above was easy to play for White, and had a high probability of a draw. And Stein wants to win!

One will see Stein scorn a draw later, even more riskily!

But besides a bloody-minded desire to win, what **Favourable Omens** did Stein see when he decided to keep the pieces on the board, and count on sacrificing a pawn?



We will see that Stein plans to offer up his h-pawn – but as will be seen in the game, when White goes to win this pawn, he will have to lose time: White will have to take at least two moves to win said pawn (♖h3 and ♗d1) – moves which Stein can use to gain counterplay in the centre, where Black has connected passed pawns.

However, I think the psychological favourable omen is more important: Stein's coming 20...h5 and 22...gx5 look (at first sight) like mistakes, and so will have to be refuted – which means Gligoric has to make the mental switch from playing solidly to playing

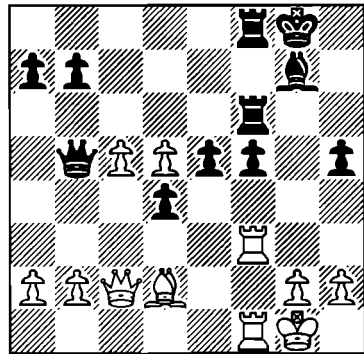
for a win. Once he thinks he is "winning" a pawn, he will undoubtedly start remembering his last two disasters!

Finally, even after winning the pawn, the position will be very confusing! White will have an extra pawn on the kingside, but a passed pawn on the queenside! Stein banks on Gligoric losing his way in this morass – and he's willing to take the risk!

Mr. Fritz? You guessed it – unapproved! The computer wants the "objectively correct" 19...♗xe4, doesn't understand Black's next few moves, and gives White the decisive advantage sign by move 26!

The **Author** quotes himself from the Introduction to this book: "I am all for such psychological ploys!" Call this one *approved!*

19...♞af8!? 20 ♞af1 h5!? 21 c5 ♜b5 22 ♗xf5 gx5!



It's too late to back down, even if Stein wanted to – mass exchanges on f5 fail as can be seen: 22...♞xf5 23 ♞xf5 ♞xf5 24 ♞xf5 gx5 25 c6! and White wins.

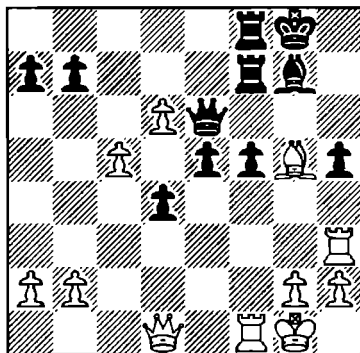
23 ♖g5 ♜f7 24 ♞h3

Gligoric goes for it – he must have been terrified!

24... ♜e8 25 d6

Not yet 25 ♞xh5 in view of 25... ♞d7.

25... ♜e6 26 ♜d1



The computer says White is winning: the black h-pawn is dropping off the board, and White has a passed pawn on the sixth rank – but somehow I don't think Stein was worried!

26... f4

Stein has no intention of keeping material equality. 26... ♜xa2?? 27 ♜xh5 wins at once.

27 ♜xh5 ♜f5!

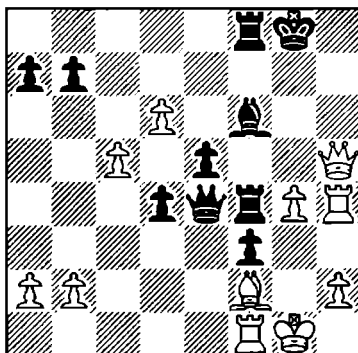
As we have seen a few times before, this is a safe king – from Stein's point of view! Black has no king-protecting pawns but defends backward on the diagonal.

28 g4 ♜e4

Mr. Fritz helpfully informs us 28 b4 was better for White; that Black can now draw with 28... ♜c2 29 ♞f2 ♜b1+ 30 ♞f1 ♜c2 etc; and that the played 28... ♜e4 is a serious mistake – but what the machine doesn't understand is that

Stein does not want a draw.

29 ♖h4 f3 30 ♖f2 ♞f4 31 ♞h4 ♖f6



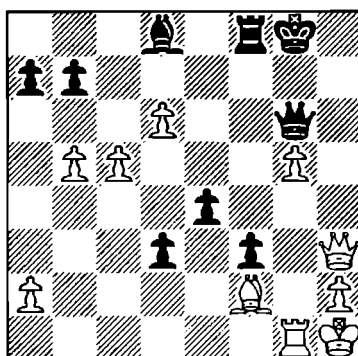
32 g5

The ever inhuman Mr. Fritz informs us that White can win with 32 ♞e1 ♜c2 33 d7!, but could you spot this in such a confusing position? I couldn't, and Gligoric couldn't either!

32... ♞xh4 33 ♖xh4 ♖d8 34 ♖f2 ♜f5 35 ♜h1 ♖g7 36 ♜h6+ ♖f7 37 ♞g1

White has a clear advantage on the chessboard, with kingside and queenside threats.

37... ♜g6 38 ♜h3 ♖g8 39 b4 d3 40 b5 e4



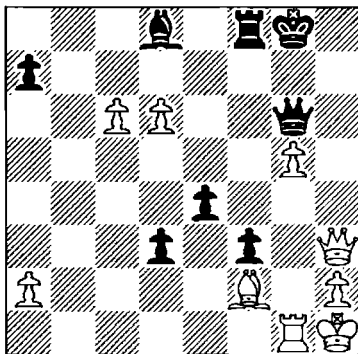
Black has three connected passed pawns! Lions, tigers and bears – O my!

Terrorized, White goes for the exchange of queens – when a dash of boldness would have won the game.

41 ♖h6!

This move is actually not so bad, but in a psychological sense, I think this is where Gligoric loses the game. Instead of searching for the exact, but sharp and complicated win, he goes for the illusory safety of the queen exchange. Much much better is the bold and precise 41 c6! which forces the win. White combines the advance of his queenside pawns with threats to the black king – there is no defence, as the following variations show:

- a) 41...♗b6 42 c7 ♜xd6 43 g6 (White threatens mate) 43...♞xc7 44 ♔g3 (and now the queen) 44...♞e7 (or 44...♞g7 45 ♞e6+ ♜f7 46 ♔e5 with a winning attack) 45 ♔e5 and mates.
- b) 41...♞xd6 42 g6 ♞c7 43 g7 and wins.
- c) 41...bxc6 42 bxc6 and now:



c1) 42...e3 43 ♖h6 ♜xh6 (if 43...♞e4 44 g6 and mates) 44 gxh6+ ♜h7 45 ♔xe3 ♗b6 46 ♔xb6 axb6 47 d7 f2 48 ♜f1 d2 49 c7 d1♞ 50 ♜xd1 f1♞+ 51 ♜xf1

♜xf1+ 52 ♔g2 and White comes out at least a queen ahead.

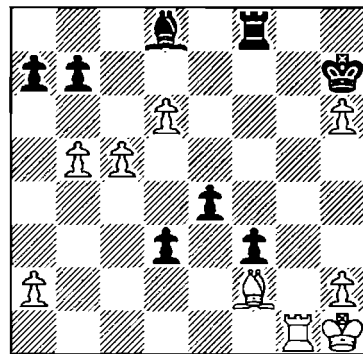
c2) 42...♞f7 43 ♔d4 ♜h7 44 c7 ♔xc7 (if 44...♜xh3 45 cxd8♞+ ♔f7 46 ♞e7+ ♔g8 47 d7 and mates) 45 ♞c8+ ♔f7 (or 45...♔d8 46 ♞xd8+ ♔f7 47 d7 and mates) 46 dxc7 and wins.

c3) 42...♗b6 43 c7 ♞xd6 (if 43...♔xf2 44 d7 ♔xg1 45 d8♞ and two queens are enough, but White is also getting a third one!) 44 g6 ♞xc7 45 ♔g3 with a winning attack as in variation 'a' – e.g. 45...f2 46 ♞e6+ ♔g7 47 ♔e5+ ♞xe5 48 ♞xe5+ ♔g8 49 ♞e6+ ♔h8 50 g7+ ♔h7 51 gxf8N+ ♔h8 52 ♞h6 mate.

c4) 42...♞d6 43 g6 ♞c7 44 g7 ♞xg7 45 ♞e6+ ♔h7 46 ♜xg7+ ♔xg7 47 ♞g4+ ♔f7 48 ♞f5+ ♔g7 49 ♔d4+ ♔f6 50 ♞g5+ ♔h7 51 ♔xf6 ♜xf6 52 ♞xf6 d2 53 ♞h4+ ♔g6 54 ♞xe4+ ♔g7 55 ♞d4+ etc.

This would have been a beautiful way to decide the game – but Stein's psychological calculations were correct: at the critical moment, Gligoric lost his way.

41... ♞xh6 42 gxh6+ ♔h7



43 ♔e3

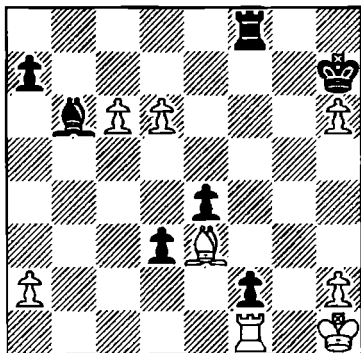
Even now 43 c6 gives White win-

ring chances, but as the saying goes, White has lost the thread.

43...f2 44 ♖f1 ♙a5 45 c6?

Finally, and yet – mistimed! White must play 45 d7, setting up immediate queening threats.

45...bxc6 46 bxc6 ♙b6!!



Unlike his opponent, when Stein gets his chance, he strikes boldly and accurately. Black destroys the blockade and wins the game with a series of powerful blows.

47 ♙xb6

There are no saves. If 47 c7 ♙xe3 48 d7 ♖g8 with a mating attack, e.g. 49 h3 ♖g1+ 50 ♖h2 ♙f4 mate or 49 h4 ♖g1+ 50 ♖h2 ♖xf1 51 d8 ♗h1+ 52 ♖g3 ♖g1+ 53 ♖h2 ♙f4+ 54 ♖h3 f1 ♗ mate. 47 ♙xf2 also fails to 47...♖xf2 48 ♖xf2 ♙xf2 49 c7 d2 50 c8 ♗ d1 ♗+ 51 ♖g2 ♗f3+ 52 ♖f1 ♙b6+ 53 ♖e1 ♙a5+ and mates.

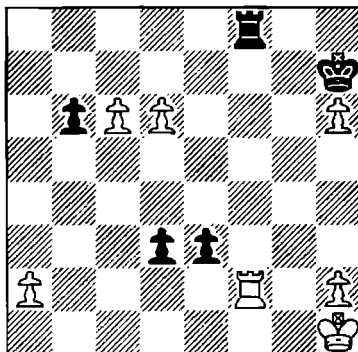
47...axb6

A classic pawn sacrifice position: White has five pawns on the board, and Black has four – but the critical point is that Black has three connected passed pawns, and White only two.

48 ♖xf2

If 48 c7 e3 49 d7 e2 and Black's new queen will force mate.

48...e3!!

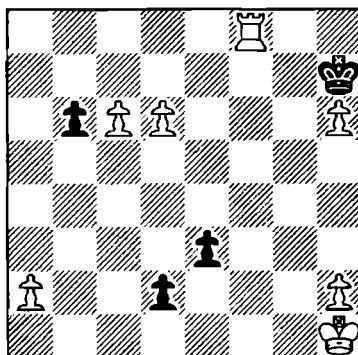


Accurate to the end: the pawns are more important than the rook. Instead, after 48...♖xf2 49 d7 d2 50 d8 ♗ ♖f1+ 51 ♖g2 d1 ♗ 52 ♗e7+ White has many checks.

49 ♖xf8

Or 49 ♖g2 ♖f1+ 50 ♖g1 ♖xg1+ 51 ♖xg1 d2 52 c7 d1 ♗+ 53 ♖g2 ♗g4+ 54 ♖f1 ♗f3+ 55 ♖g1 ♗f2+ 56 ♖h1 ♗f1 mate.

49...d2



50 c7

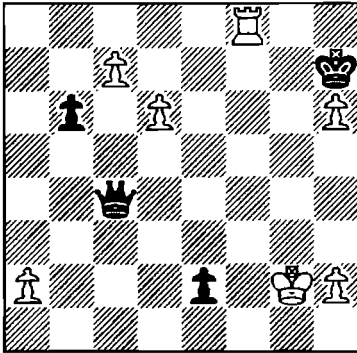
Another pretty win appears after 50

d7 d1♖+ 51 ♘g2 ♗g4+ 52 ♘f1 e2+ 53 ♘f2 e1♖+ 54 ♘xe1 ♗b4+ 55 ♘e2 ♗xf8 and the queen mops up.

50...d1♖+ 51 ♘g2 ♗g4+ 52 ♘f1

If 52 ♘h1 e2 and mates.

52...♗c4+ 53 ♘g2 e2



54 ♘f2

If 54 c8♗ ♗xc8 55 ♖xc8 e1♖ and White can't hold with rook vs. queen plus pawn; e.g. 56 ♖c7+ ♘h6 57 d7 ♗e4+ 58 ♘g1 ♗g4+ 59 ♘h1 ♗f4! 60 ♖c6+ ♘h7 61 ♘g2 ♗g4+ 62 ♘f1 ♗d1+ 63 ♘g2 ♗xd7 64 ♖xb6 ♗g4+ and the rook goes.

54...♗e6 55 ♘e1

After 55 c8♗ Black gets too many queens: 55...e1♖+ 56 ♘g2 ♗g6+ 57 ♘h3 ♗e3+ 58 ♘h4 ♗exh6 mate.

55...♗xd6 56 ♖h8+

The only chance, but Stein finishes à la the Artful Dodger!

56...♘g6 57 ♖g8+ ♘h5 58 c8♗

58 ♘xe2 loses to 58...♗e6+ 59 ♘d2 ♗xg8 60 h7 ♗c8 61 ♘d3 ♘h6 62 ♘d4 ♘xh7 63 ♘d5 ♗xc7.

58...♗d1+ 59 ♘f2 e1♖+ 60 ♘g2 ♗f1+ 61 ♘g3 ♗dd3 mate

Risk assessment: Obviously this was extremely risky: by disdaining equality on move 19, sacrificing a pawn, and then avoiding a draw on move 28, Stein certainly ventured close to the edge – but he had his reasons! He boldly entered a maelstrom of his own creation, confident that despite epic risks, he would emerge triumphant –

And he won!

Summary

The confusion sacrifice is a very effective weapon against humans, but you will never impress your computer with one of these. Your fellow chessplayers might give you a hard time, and your opponent will rant and rave – after he loses! – about your unsound sacrifice. But you can smile on the inside, because it *worked*.

The next time you have a bad position, or a position you simply don't like, cheer yourself up! Sac a pawn just for confusion, then watch your opponent flounder!

You will win many more games this way than if you drearily and unhappily defend.

Chapter Thirteen

You Don't Have to be a Master

So far in this book, every game has featured a pawn sacrificer who is at least an IM, and very often a GM or World Champion. But just because you have a rating under 2200 doesn't mean you can't sacrifice pawns!

For the final game of this book, I proudly present one of my wife's games. She came to me originally as a student, playing boring openings and defensive chess. I introduced her to her inner Tal, we got married, and she gained 300 rating points!

Here's a game which shows that bravery at the board can be rewarded at any rating level.

Game 67

L. Taylor-C. Gunawan

Agoura Hills, Los Angeles 2007

Centre Game

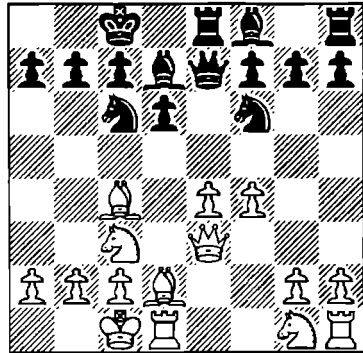
1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 ♖xd4 ♘c6 4 ♗e3
♜f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♙d2 ♙d7 7 0-0-0 ♗e7?!

It's safe to say this is not the best move.

8 f4

Probably best, though 8 ♘d5 ♘xd5 9 exd5 ♗xe3 10 ♙xe3 gives White a no-risk advantage (not exactly the subject of this book), and 8 ♘h3 planning ♘f4-d5 is also good.

8...0-0-0 9 ♙c4 ♗e8



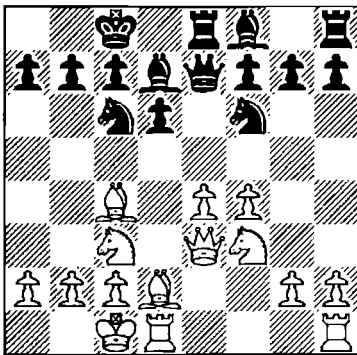
The moment of decision: Should White play the safe 10 ♙e1 with a solid advantage, or are there **Favourable Omens?**

Liz told me that one reason she sac'ed was to expose the weakness of 7...♖e7. She did not want to make a single defensive move after this, and proposes – if Black doesn't take the proffered pawn – complete happiness, namely the very aesthetic set-up for White of rooks at d1 and e1. Let us suppose that (after her planned 10 ♖f3) Black would play the defensive 10...h6. Then White plays 11 ♜h1 and Liz has her dream position.

On the other hand, if Black took the pawn, she had an idea for a piece sac that would directly threaten Black's king!

Happy to be giving a pawn or a piece or both, she went for it!

10 ♖f3

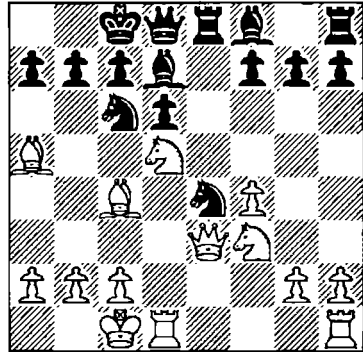


Mr. Fritz? Unapproved! *Fritz* gives the solid variation 10 ♜e1 ♙e6 11 ♙b5 ♟g4 12 ♜g3 h5 13 ♜d5 ♜d8 14 ♜e2 when White completes her development with a clear advantage in the centre and activity all across the board.

The **Author** agrees that White can get a big advantage without risk, as the machine suggests, but applauds Liz's

inventiveness and boldness. Only by fearlessly trying such sacrifices can players escape the prison of timidity, and learn the joys of attack!

10...♜xe4 11 ♜d5 ♜d8 12 ♙a5!?



Liz's point! This was her prepared follow-up to the pawn sacrifice, and now we can see that this is a sacrifice for King Attack, though to begin with White threatens to win the queen with 13 ♙xc7.

12...b6

Black is confused by White's violence and fails to notice he can safely take the piece: 12...♜xa5 13 ♜xa7 ♜c6 14 ♜a8+ ♜b8 15 ♜b4 ♜c5 16 ♜d4 c6 17 ♜b3 d5 and Black should win.

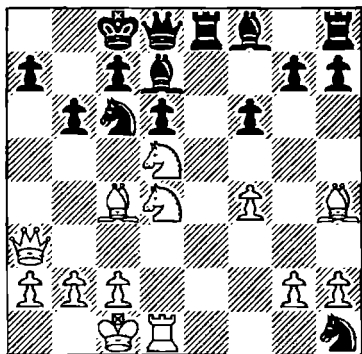
13 ♙e1

Undaunted, Liz plans a new attack on Black's immobile queen (♙h4) and sacrifices a rook!

13...♜g3 14 ♜a3 ♜xh1 15 ♙h4 f6 16 ♜d4!

(see following diagram)

White is a rook plus pawn down, but attacks with all her forces!



16...dxd4??

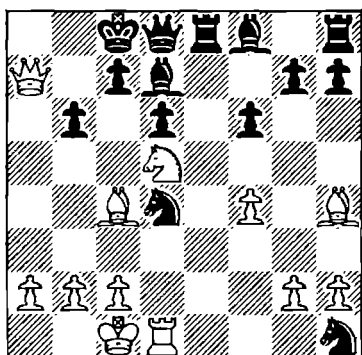
And just like that, and despite his large material superiority, Black is lost.

Playable but insufficient is 16...g5 17 dxc6 e6 18 Wxa7 b5 19 b4 with a tremendous attack for the material.

Best is the hard to find 16...a5 17 b4 c6! (17...dxc4 18 Wxa7 e6 19 Wa6+ d7 20 Wb5+ c8 21 Wa6+ is a draw) 18 bxa5 cxd5 19 e6+ (if 19 axb6 Wxb6 20 e6+ c7 21 d3 d8 and Black escapes) 19...cb8 20 Bxh1 bxa5 21 f2 Wb6 22 Wd3 e4 and White doesn't have enough for the exchange.

17 Bxd4??

17 Wxa7! could have forced mate.



Depending on Black's move, there is a short variation or a long one.

The short one is 17...e6 18 dxb6+! (Liz missed this move in her calculations) 18...cxb6 19 e6+ e7 20 Wxb7 mate.

Black lasts longer after 17...b5, but mate is still inevitable: 18 Bxd4! c6 (quicker are 18...e6 19 dxb6+ cxb6 20 Bxc4+ and mates, or 18...d7 19 dxb6+ c6 20 e6+ c5 21 a8 mate or 19...e7 20 e4 mate) 19 Wa8+ d7 20 Wb7+ e6 21 dxf6+ d5 (similar is 21...e6 22 e4+ e5 23 g4+ e6 24 f5+ e6 25 g5 mate) 22 e4+ e5 (22...d6 23 dxe8+) 23 g4+ e6 24 f5+ e6 25 g5 mate.

So Liz could have won brilliantly in 25 moves – all because she had the courage to boldly attack!

Unfortunately her tactics at this point weren't equal to her spirit, but the game's not over yet! She may not be seeing every mate, but she's still attacking, and her opponent is still reeling!

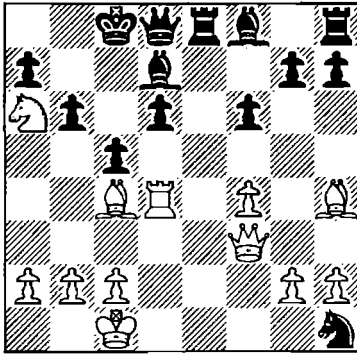
17...cb8 18 b4 c5?!

18...c6 calmly defends, when Black should eventually consolidate and win.

19 d6+ e7?!

This allows a second mating attack! Better is 19...b7 when White wins the queen, but Black might win the game if he could find the following very difficult variation: 20 e6+ e7 21 e6+ c6 22 Wf3+ d5 23 d8+ e7 24 Bxd5 e8 25 Bxd8+ Bxd8 26 g4 e6 27 Wxh1 e7+ 28 e1 d2 and Black should win the ending.

20 Wf3!



White doesn't miss her second chance! Liz sacrifices her second rook and forces mate!

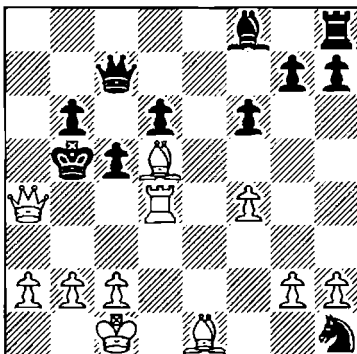
20...♖e1+

Despair – if 20...cxd4 21 ♖a8 mate, or 20...♗f5 21 ♖c6+ and mates, or 20...♙a4 21 ♖a8+ ♘d7 22 ♖b7+ and mates next.

21 ♙xe1 ♙a4 22 ♖a8+ ♘d7 23 ♖xa7+ ♘c6 24 ♙d5+ ♙b5 25 ♗c7+

25 c4 mate is one move quicker.

25...♖xc7 26 ♖xa4 mate



Risk assessment: Obviously this was extremely risky, as Liz's idea behind the pawn sacrifice (the further piece sacrifice 12 ♙a5) cannot be objectively

recommended. Black has played the opening poorly and, strictly speaking, there is no need for violence: the simple 10 ♖e1 gives White a big advantage.

On the other hand, one learns by taking risks, and besides that, this one paid off! Gunawan was unable to defend against Liz's full board attack. I love the beautiful mating attack that was possible after the unfortunately unplayed 17 ♖xa7, and forcing mate a rook to the bad after 20 ♖f3 – which *was* played! – was quite fine in itself.

The game shows a bold spirit, and I think if non-masters played this way (instead of timidly clutching their pawns!) they would both raise their ratings and enjoy the game much more!

Some Final Thoughts

When I look at some of the top players' games these days, I often feel as though the joy has gone out of chess. Where is the magic of Tal, the determination of Fischer, the wily schemes of Petrosian?

Sometimes it's hard to see anything but opening preparation, and often opening preparation in the most boring openings imaginable. Not so many years ago, World Champions like Fischer and Spassky played the King's Gambit in strong tournaments like the US and USSR championships!

The advent of chess machines has made many people leery of the speculative sacrifice in general – however, in my opinion, that fact just makes such sacrifices even more dangerous! Your opponents probably have little practice

in dealing with such boldness. I hope that this book helps you too find your “inner Tal”!

As for myself, I have never learned so much from writing a chess book – this was not a case of me explaining

what I already knew, but rather a learning experience for me, with the reader along for the ride! I hope you enjoyed the trip.

Now I’m off to sacrifice some pawns!

Index of Openings

Alekhine's Defence – 118, 141
Benko Gambit – 19
Budapest Defence – 84
Centre Game – 232
Dutch Defence – 39, 80, 93, 102, 111
English Opening – 105, 146, 155, 164
Evans Gambit – 132, 133
Giuoco Piano – 174
Grünfeld Defence – 138
King's Indian Defence – 16, 22, 28, 32, 56, 96, 98, 104, 123, 129, 148, 158, 168, 181, 221, 225
Modern Defence – 71
Nimzo-Indian Defence – 35, 197, 209
Nimzowitsch Defence – 178
Old Benoni – 86
Pirc Defence – 122
Queen's Gambit Accepted – 60, 172, 187
Queen's Gambit Declined – 13, 45, 184, 189
Réti Opening – 126, 195
Ruy Lopez – 25, 89, 214, 217
Scandinavian Defence – 49
Semi-Slav Defence – 204
Semi-Tarrasch Defence – 50
Sicilian Defence – 47, 52, 68, 114, 136, 151, 162
Slav Defence – 200
Torre Attack – 202
Trompowsky Attack – 74

Index of Players

Aronson.L-Tal.M , USSR Championship, Moscow 1957.....	39
Benko.P-Petrosian.T.V , Candidates, Bled 1959.....	195
Bisguier.A-Stein.L , Stockholm Interzonal 1962.....	146
Bobotsov.M-Petrosian.T.V , Lugano Olympiad 1968.....	13
Clift.P-Taylor.T , Los Angeles (rapid) 2007.....	178
Edelman.D-Taylor.T , Syosset, New York 1984.....	52
Gligoric.S-Stein.L , USSR-Yugoslavia match, Lvov 1962.....	225
Grigore.G-Taylor.T , Budapest 2003.....	189
Grynspan.M-Pavlovic.M , Lugano 1989.....	123
Hector.J-Madsen.D , Copenhagen 1996.....	118
Klasups.K-Tal.M , Riga Championship 1954.....	93
Kuroski.T-Taylor.T , Los Angeles 2003.....	126
Lasker.Em-Pillsbury.H , Hastings 1895.....	214
Lazarev.G-Stein.L , Riga 1962.....	148
Maldonado.O-Taylor.T , US Open, Los Angeles 2003.....	68
Morphy.P-Hampton.T , London 1858.....	133
Morphy.P-Löwenthal.J , 14th matchgame, London 1858.....	89
Morphy.P-Morphy.A , New Orleans 1849.....	132
Pelikan.J-Najdorf.M , Buenos Aires 1945.....	129
Petrosian.T.V-Amirkhanov.R , Tbilisi 1948.....	49
Petrosian.T.V-Bertok.M , Bled 1961.....	104
Petrosian.T.V-Bertok.M , Zagreb 1965.....	164
Petrosian.T.V-Buslaev.A , Tbilisi 1947.....	184
Petrosian.T.V-Debarnot.R , Las Palmas 1975.....	197
Petrosian.T.V-Fischer.R.J , Buenos Aires 1971.....	138
Petrosian.T.V-Ivkov.B , Euro Team Ch., Hamburg 1965.....	60
Petrosian.T.V-Karaklajic.N , Belgrade 1954.....	204

Petrosian.T.V-Kluger.G , Hungary-USSR, Budapest 1955.....	168
Petrosian.T.V-Larsen.B , San Antonio 1972	80
Petrosian.T.V-Najdorf.M , Bled 1961.....	96
Petrosian.T.V-Nielsen.P.M , Copenhagen 1960	102
Petrosian.T.V-Pfeiffer.G , Hamburg 1960.....	200
Petrosian.T.V-Reshko.A , Leningrad 1967	202
Petrosian.T.V-Spassky.B , Moscow 1971.....	187
Petrosian.T.V-Taimanov.M , USSR Ch., Moscow 1957	221
Sakharov.Y-Stein.L , Ukrainian Championship, Kiev 1960.....	151
Spassky.B-Aftonov.A , Leningrad 1949.....	172
Stein.L-Minic.D , Yugoslavia-USSR match, Skopje 1969	155
Steinitz.W-Von Bardeleben.C , Hastings 1895.....	174
Tal.M-Benko.P , Candidates Tournament, Bled 1959	86
Tal.M-Bilek.I , Miskolc 1963.....	71
Tal.M-Botvinnik.M , 19th matchgame, Moscow 1960.....	111
Tal.M-Fischer.R.J , Candidates Tournament, Zagreb 1959	22
Tal.M-Ghitescu.T , Leipzig Olympiad 1960.....	47
Tal.M-Kampenuss.P , Latvian Championship 1953.....	25
Tal.M-Kampenuss.P , Latvian Championship 1958.....	122
Tal.M-Larsen.B , 6th matchgame, Bled 1965	141
Tal.M-Larsen.B , Portoroz Interzonal.....	162
Tal.M-Lisitsin.G , USSR Championship, Leningrad 1956.....	114
Tal.M-Milev.Z , Munich Olympiad 1958.....	50
Tal.M-Savon.V , USSR Championship, Baku 1961	158
Tal.M-Smirin.I , USSR Team Championship 1990.....	98
Tal.M-Tolush.A , USSR Championship, Moscow 1957	32
Tal.M-Tringov.G , Munich Olympiad 1958	136
Tarrasch.S-Lasker.Em , 2nd matchgame, Düsseldorf 1908	217
Taylor.L-Gunawan.C , Agoura Hills, Los Angeles 2007	232
Taylor.T-Acor.C , Las Vegas 2006	64
Taylor.T-De Guzman.R , Northern California Ch., 2003	35
Taylor.T-Hermansen.R , Los Angeles 2007.....	16
Taylor.T-Lee.M , Las Vegas 2006	19
Taylor.T-Rensch.D , Agoura Hills, Los Angeles 2006	105
Taylor.T-Shamkovich.L , New York 1976.....	74
Taylor.T-Sheynberg.Y , Agoura Hills, Los Angeles 2005.....	181
Taylor.T-Trois.F , Eerbeek 1978	45
Taylor.T-Yoos.J , US Masters, Chicago 1990	209
Vaganian.R-Stein.L , USSR Championship, Riga 1970.....	28
Vranesic.Z-Stein.L , Amsterdam Interzonal 1964	56

PAWN SACRIFICE!

Pawn sacrifices are incredibly common in chess games, and yet curiously they have been neglected in literature... until now.

In this pioneering work, Timothy Taylor carries out an in-depth study of this major subject. Using an abundance of instructive examples, Taylor uncovers the secrets of pawn sacrifices, highlighting the many reasons for their success and indicating the ideal situations in which pawn sacrifices work, as well as those cases in which they are not so effective.

The ability to handle pawn sacrifices is one of the most important skills in chess, and enhancing this skill will undoubtedly improve your understanding and results. This book will show you how to do this.

- An enlightening and entertaining guide to pawn sacrifices
- Covers essential tactical and positional ideas
- Includes risk assessment and computer evaluations

International Master **Timothy Taylor** is an experienced tournament player who has enjoyed several notable successes, including winning the US Open. He is also a renowned chess writer; one of his previous books, *How to Defeat the Smith-Morra Gambit*, became a US Chess Federation bestseller, while his first book for Everyman Chess, *Bird's Opening*, provoked much positive interest.

Outside of chess, he is the author of two published novels, *Elaine the Fair* and *Amanda*, and he also directed the film *Wicked Pursuits*.

EVERYMAN CHESS

www.everymanchess.com

published in the UK by Gloucester Publishers plc
distributed in the US by the Globe Pequot Press

ISBN 978-1-85744-565-7



US \$24.95 UK £14.99 CAN \$26.95