



# Attacking with g2-g4

**The Modern Way to Get  
the Upper Hand in Chess**

DMITRY KRYAKVIN

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**Dmitry Kryakvin**

## **Attacking with g2-g4**

### **The Modern Way to Get the Upper Hand in Chess**

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*Dedicated to my parents*

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## ***Part I***

### **Botvinnik's heritage**

#### ***Chapter 1***

##### **A cultural check**

As often happens, the first step is to dig out the roots in a time long ago. 1930, almost 100 years ago. Leningrad is experiencing chess fever, and with the white pieces is the young Misha Botvinnik. His opponent is one of the strongest Leningrad first-category players (a ranking which, when the system was changed, started being called Candidate Master) and later a participant in the Great Patriotic War. Grigory Miasoedov was a year older than Botvinnik and was also considered very promising, as shown by the fact that, like Botvinnik, he had also been included in the list of opponents at Capablanca's famous 1925 simultaneous display.

Game 1

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

**Grigory Miasoedov**

Leningrad ch-city 1930/31 (11)

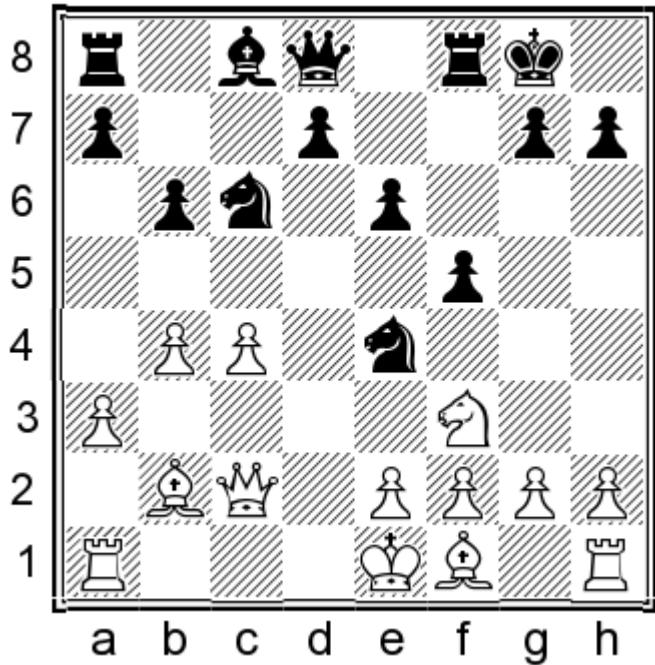
This game has already long since become a unique test of chess culture. The tricky question ‘Do you know my game against Miasoedov?’ is one with which in later years Mikhail Botvinnik regularly baffled holders even of the highest chess title.

In 2011, at a press conference at the Botvinnik Memorial tournament, the then Editor of 64 (and now executive director of the Russian Chess Federation) Mark Glukhovsky posed this very question to the elite grandmasters playing in the event. Levon Aronian did not bat an eyelid before immediately recalling all of the subtleties of this surprising battle! We will not lag behind the Armenian GM but will examine this fascinating game in detail.

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qb3 c5 5.dxc5 Nc6 6.Nf3**

In another game against Miasoedov in 1932, Botvinnik played 6.Bg5, avoiding the complicated variations which occur in the game. Much water has flowed since then and one can improve both sides’ play. But that is not why we are studying this game, so we will refrain from any opening debates.

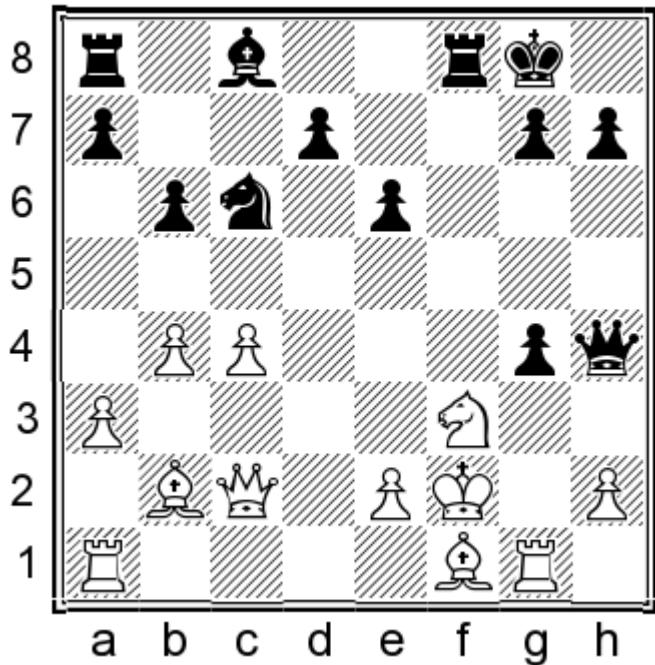
**6...Ne4 7.Bd2 Nxc5 8.Qc2 f5 9.a3 Bxc3 10.Bxc3 0-0 11.b4 Ne4 12.Bb2 b6**



**13.g4!?**

The Patriarch admitted that this brave thrust had been prepared at home. Brave, daring and interesting! Analysis shows that Black has only one continuation which allows him to hold the balance, and Miasoedov finds it.

**13...Nxf2! 14.Kxf2 fxg4 15.Rg1 Qh4+**



**16.Ke3**

The variations 16.Rg3 gxf3 17.Kg1 Nd4! and 16.Kg2 gxf3+ 17.Kh1 Nd4!, as given by Mikhail Moiseevich, are correct and favour Black, so the king must come forward.

**16...Qh6+ 17.Kf2 Qh4+**

Black has no choice – on 17...Qxh2+ there follows 18.Rg2! Qf4 19.Rd1, and the white king soon runs to g1, beating

off the attack.

## 18.Ke3 Qh6+

So, a draw? Certainly not – that is not why the future World Champion prepared the flank thrust.

## 19.Kd3

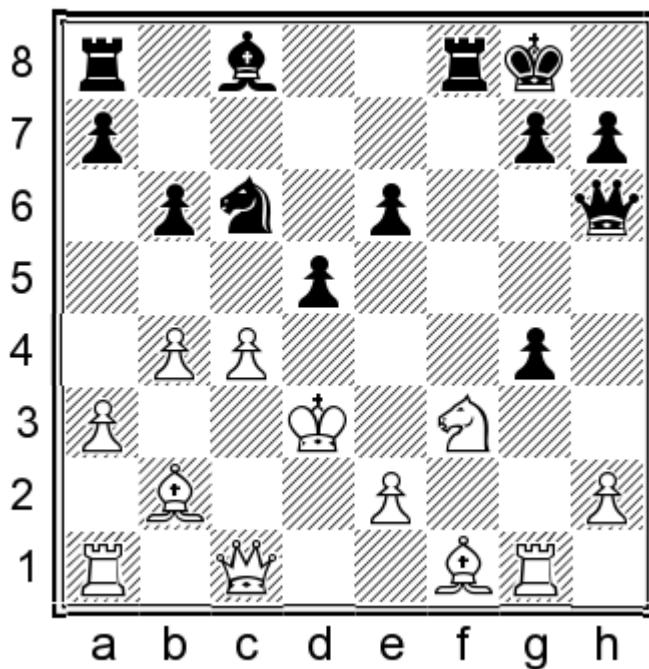
Botvinnik wrote that at the board, the king flight to the queenside, which he had prepared at home, did not come easily to him, and his intuition did not deceive him – with correct play, it should lead to a difficult position for White. But White's provocative play is not easy to refute – for example, nothing comes from 19...e5 20.Qd2! Qd6+ 21.Kc2, and the king march triumphs. Surprisingly, in this position (without the repetition on moves 17-18), two strong players mistakenly took the knight here: 17.Kd3 gxf3?? 18.Rxg7+ Qxg7 19.Bxg7 Kxg7 20.Qb2+! (the white queen is lost after 20.exf3?? Rxf3+ 21.Ke4 d5+!– Stepanov-Romanovsky, Leningrad 1929) 20...Kg8 21.exf3 Rxf3+ 22.Ke2 Rf7 23.Bg2 Rg7 24.Rg1 Rb8 25.Bxc6 1-0 Belavenets-Kotov, Moscow 1935. Miasoedov plays better.

## 19...d5!

The situation is heating up – now there is the serious threat of ...e6-e5, and Botvinnik tries to coordinate his pieces on the queenside.

## 20.Qc1

The sixth World Champion awards this move an exclamation mark, correctly pointing out that the tempting 20.Rxg4 loses after the simple 20...e5, but in the variation 20.Qd2 Qg6+ 21.Kc3 Qe4 the computer points out a stunning improvement: 22.cxd5!. Now after 22...exd5 23.Nd4 only Black risks losing, since after the apparently winning 22...Ba6 23.Qg5 Nxb4! White has the cold-blooded 24.Rc1!!, maintaining the balance! This is one of the drawing lines: 24...Rf5 25.Qxg4 Rc8+ 26.Kd2 Rc2+ 27.Rxc2 Qxc2+ 28.Ke1 Nd3+ 29.exd3 Qb1+ 30.Kf2 Qxb2+. Here White can agree a draw immediately or even try to run with his king, although this does not change the assessment. It looks as though having the queen on c1 is no worse, but in his variation another computer discovery awaits us.



## 20...dxc4+

The move 20...Rf4!! leads to a very dangerous position for White. If the knight retreats by 21.Ne5 Black simply brings his last piece into play with 21...Bb7 with a whole bunch of threats, whilst the intended 21.Kc2 is met by

21...e5!, so as... to defend the Nc6! After 22.Bxe5 Rxc4+ 23.Bc3 Rxc3+ 24.Kxc3 Qf6+ 25.Kb3 Black can take the knight without loss of time with 25...gxf3, continuing a terrible attack with practically equal material. Of course, delving into such subtleties without a computer is practically impossible (especially over the board) and Botvinnik justifiably felt throughout the whole game that he was seeking ways to play for a win.

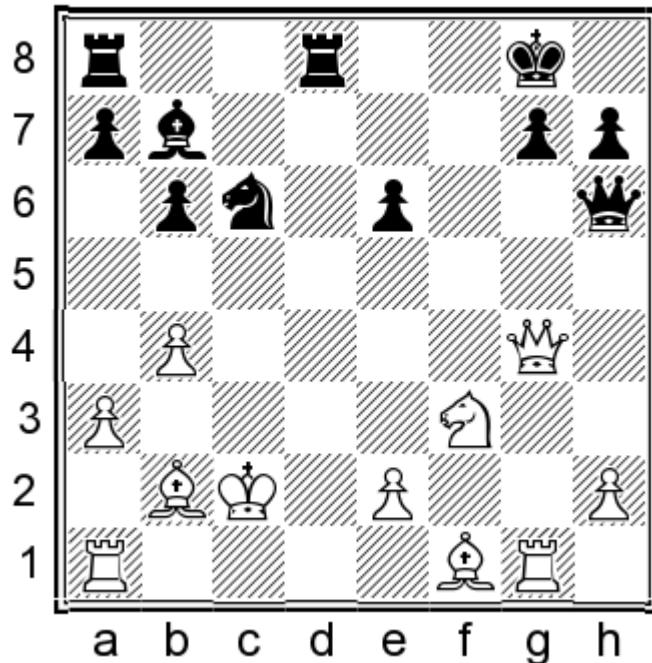
## 21.Qxc4

Less successful is 21.Kxc4? Rf4+ 22.Kb3 e5! – the king does not find a comfortable hiding-place.

## 21...Rd8+

Apart from his inaccuracy on the last move, Miasoedov continues to play the game very strongly. In the variation 21...Rf4!? 22.Qxc6 Ba6+ 23.b5 Rc8 24.Qd7 Rf7 the queen is trapped, but after 25.Qxf7+ Kxf7 26.Ne5+ Kg8 27.bxa6 Rd8+ 28.Ke4 Qd2 29.Nd3 Rxd3 30.exd3 Qxb2 31.Bg2 White has more than enough for it and he is the one playing for a win.

## 22.Kc2 Bb7 23.Qxg4



Now what? There is no time for 23...Rac8 because of the problem with g7, nor is there time to defend this square. The only way out is to give check!

## 23...Nxb4+! 24.axb4

Now even the all-powerful computer cannot find anything but drawing lines. A peaceful outcome also results from Botvinnik's line 24.Qxb4 Rac8+ 25.Bc3 Bxf3 26.Rd1 Rxc3+ 27.Qxc3 Be4+ 28.Rd3 Rxd3 29.exd3 Qxh2+, and even the daring 24.Kb3!? Bd5+ 25.Kxb4 a5+ 26.Kb5 Bc6+! 27.Kxb6 Qe3+ 28.Nd4! Rab8+ 29.Kxc6= – Black must give perpetual check.

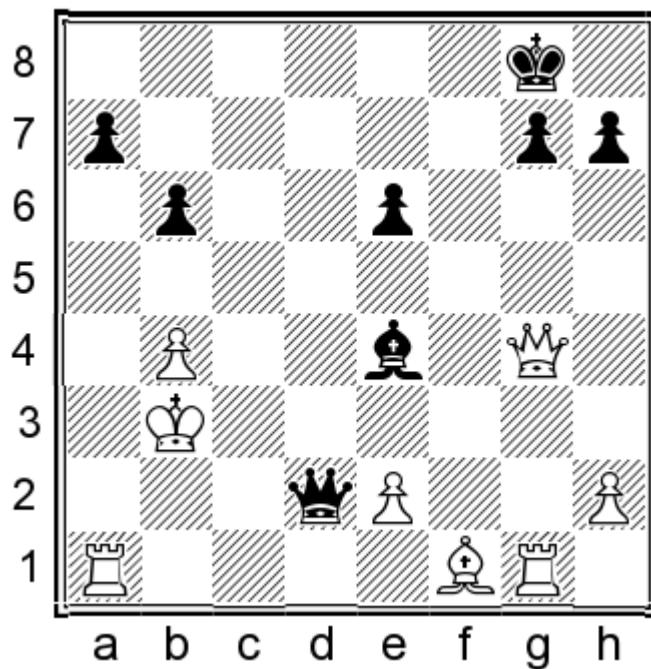
## 24...Rac8+ 25.Bc3 Rxc3+

Continuing the carousel of sacrifices, which have still not come to an end – soon Miasoedov throws another exchange onto the fire.

## 26.Kxc3 Qe3+ 27.Kb2

27.Kc2 only includes the bishop in the attack after 27...Be4+ 28.Kb2 Rd2+ 29.Nxd2 Qxd2+, and now it is White

who must play accurately – for example, 30.Kb3? loses.



**Test 1.** Find how?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** All is simple: 30...Bd5+ 31.Ka3 (he can give up the queen, but this only prolongs the game) 31...Qc3 32.Ka4 Qc2+! 33.Kb5 Qc6+ 34.Ka6 b5+, and mate next move.

**27...Rd2+ 28.Nxd2 Qxd2+ 29.Kb1 Qd1+ 30.Kb2 Qd2+**

The fog clears. Draw.

This is how Leningrad first-category players played in those days! Of course, from the modern viewpoint of total erudition, knowledge and the computer, it is hard to compare modern players with those of last century, but we are struck by the power with which Grigory Miasoedov battled against the well-prepared future World Champion.

### Game 2

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

**Leonid Savitsky**

Leningrad ch-city 1932 (10)

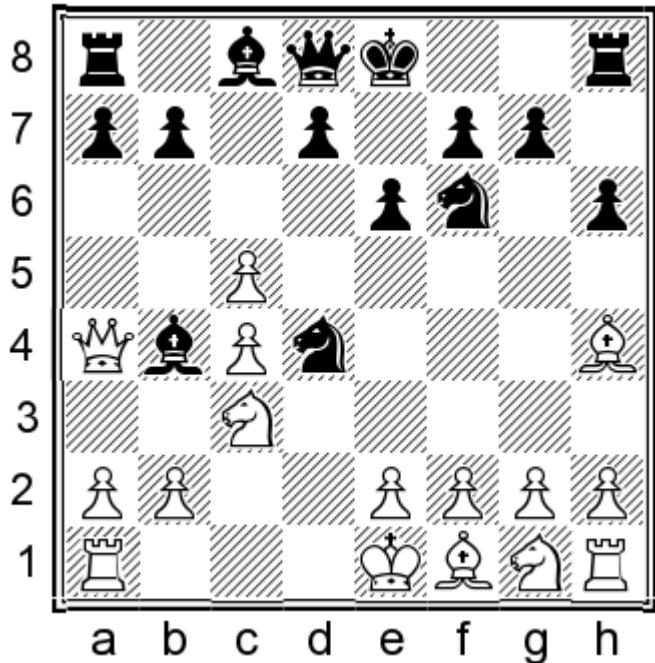
**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qb3 c5 5.dxc5 Nc6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bh4**

After the game with Miasoedov, Botvinnik changes system, and quite successfully – the best reply to the bishop raid was not found immediately.

**7...Nd4**

The most precise route to a satisfactory game was shown by Vyacheslav Ragozin: 7...g5 8.Bg3 Ne4 with numerous threats, from 9...Nd4 to 9...Qa5. Savitsky demonstrates an equally interesting idea, but in an imprecise form.

**8.Qa4**



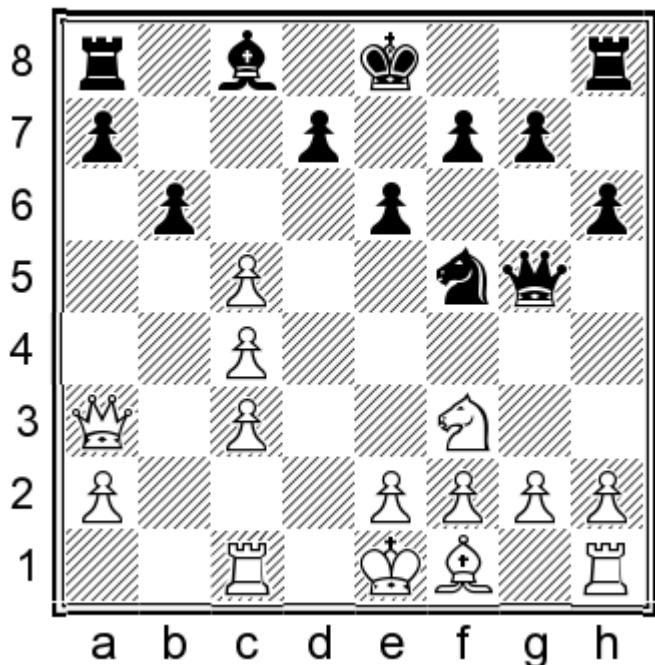
**8...Bxc3+**

Botvinnik considered that Black had no alternative to the capture on c3, but he underestimated the gambit continuation 8...b6! 9.cxb6 Bb7 (play in the style of the second half of the 20th century!) 10.bxa7 Bc6 11.Qd1 Nf5 12.Bxf6 Qxf6 – the difference in piece activity fully compensates for the sacrificed pawns, and, most of all, Black has managed to seize control of the crucial diagonal h1-a8. In his writings, the Grandmaster-mentor of world champions frequently pointed out the importance of fighting for control of the long diagonals, and here he demonstrates this rule himself.

**9.bxc3 Nf5 10.Bxf6 Qxf6 11.Rc1 Qg5 12.Qa3 b6**

An attempt to solve all his problems in a concrete tactical way, which fails – the position requires a gambit approach.

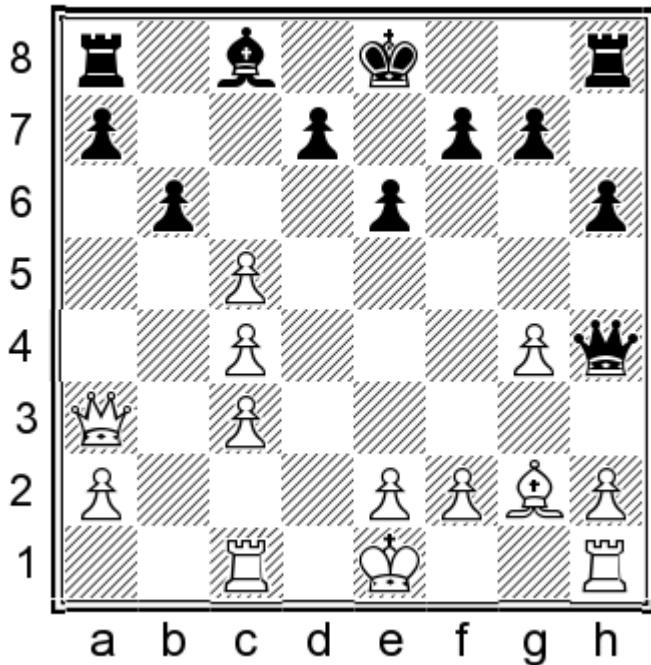
**13.Nf3**



### 13...Qe7?

Savitsky does not sense the danger and misses a decisive blow, which is not hard to find, once one knows the theme of our book. He could hold the balance with 13...Qf4! (not allowing g2-g4) 14.e3 Qb8 15.cxb6 axb6 16.Qb3 0-0 – of course, Black does not solve all his problems, but the opening of the a-file and the breaking up of the white pawn structure allows Black to hope for a positive outcome. Now, however, his position collapses in a few moves.

### 14.g4! Nh4 15.Nxh4 Qxh4 16.Bg2



The move with the g-pawn has seized the long diagonal and that is that – Black is helpless! Savitsky plays a few more moves, but soon acknowledges that further resistance is pointless.

### 16...Rb8 17.Qxa7 Qg5 18.0-0 Qe5 19.cxb6

A more materialistic approach was also perfectly possible – 19.f4 Qxc5+ 20.e3 Qd6 21.Rfd1, winning the rook. Black resigned.

Leonid Savitsky was a pupil of the well-known master and trainer Pyotr Romanovsky, like the majority of the promising youngsters in Leningrad at that time. In 1932, Savitsky became a USSR Master of Sport and twice reached the final of the national championship, but then died soon after of heart trouble, at the very early age of just 24.

#### Game 3

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

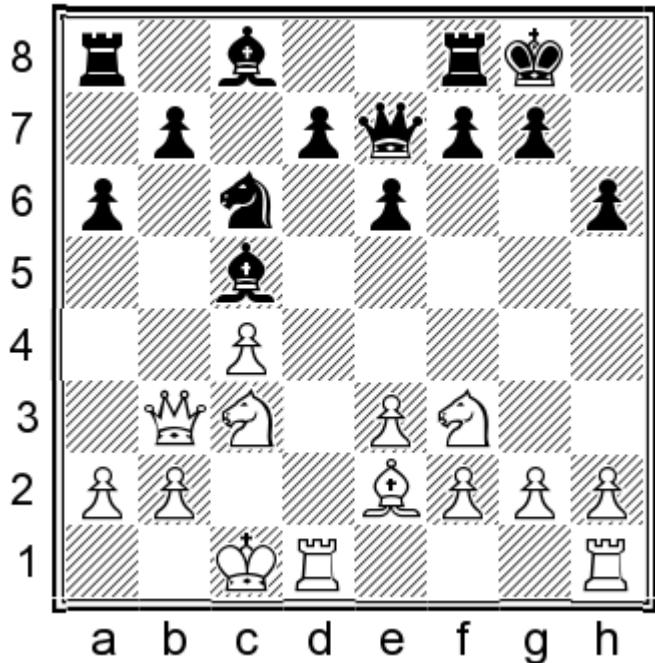
**Veniamin Sozin**

Leningrad Masters 1932/33 (5)

### 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qb3 c5 5.dxc5 Nc6 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bxf6

Once again, Botvinnik chooses a fresh treatment (for himself) and creates an interesting battle in an opening line he had played a lot. Here too, Mikhail Moiseevich manages to achieve the march of the g-pawn in a surprising way!

### 7...Qxf6 8.Nf3 Bxc5 9.e3 0-0 10.0-0-0 Qe7 11.Be2 a6



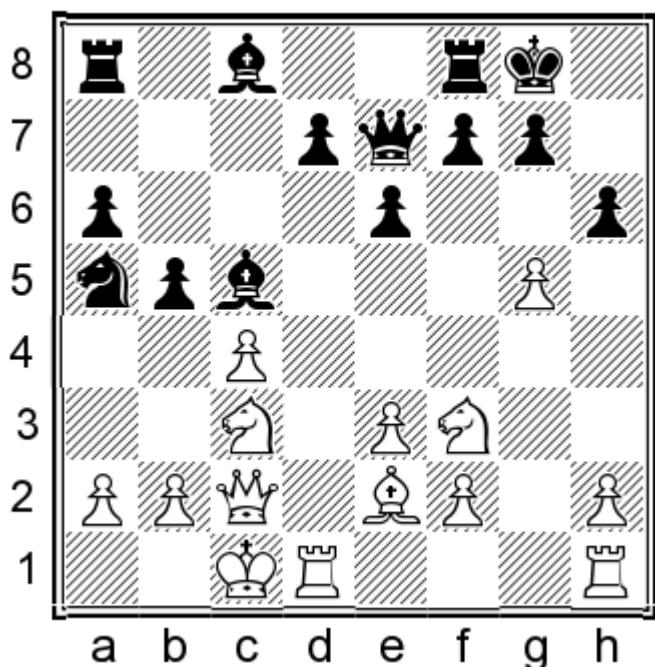
**12.g4**

White has no other option – after castling queenside he can only launch a battering ram on the kingside. Veniamin Sozin finds the correct plan of counterplay, but does not carry it out to its logical conclusion.

**12...b5! 13.g5 Na5**

Botvinnik considered that after 13...hxg5 14.Rhg1 White would have a dangerous attack with the threat h2-h4, but after 14...bxc4 15.Qxc4 d5 16.Qg4 Rb8 Black is slightly quicker – already he threatens 17...Ba3. The text does not lose, but in order to equalize, Black needs to find several accurate moves, which Sozin does not manage to do.

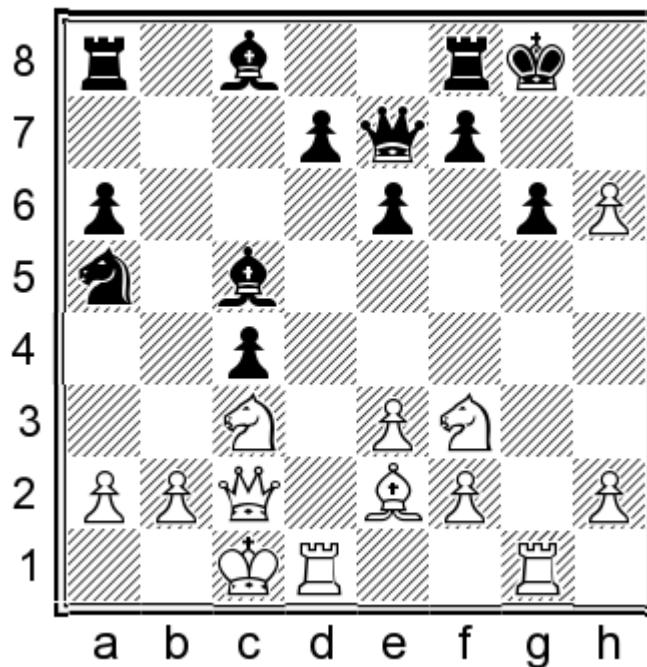
**14.Qc2**



**14...bxc4?**

Undoubtedly, it was no easy to decide on the computer's 14...h5 15.g6 f6 16.Rhg1 Bb7, but the variation 14...Bb7 15.gxh6 Nxc4 16.Rhg1 (16.hxg7? Rfc8! with a counterattack) 16...g6 17.h4 Bxf3! 18.Bxf3 Rac8 19.h5 g5 allows him to stay afloat. After the move chosen by Sozin, Black's attack on the queenside grinds to a halt, whilst White has more than one way to win the game.

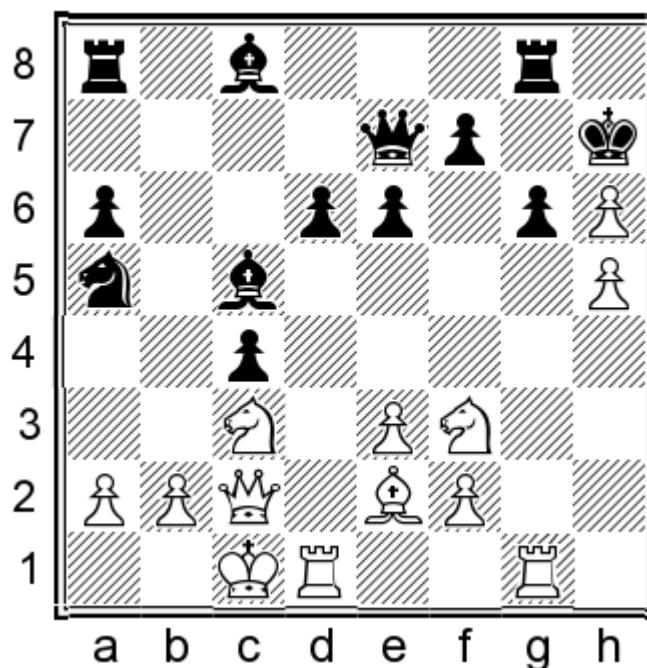
**15.gxh6 g6 16.Rhg1**



**16...Kh7**

Botvinnik considered this king move the decisive mistake and suggested 16...d5, not allowing the Nc3 to get closer to the king, but White has several ways to finish the game: 17.Ne5 Bb7 18.Nxg6 fxg6 19.Rxg6+ Kh8 20.Rg7 with large material gains.

**17.h4 Rg8 18.h5 d6**



Over the board, the Patriarch came up with

**19.Ng5+ Kh8 20.Nce4+-**

and forced his opponent's resignation 20-odd moves later.

In his four-volume work, the sixth World Champion gave the immediately winning variation 19.hxg6+ fxg6 20.Rxg6 Rxg6 21.Rg1 Qf6 22.Nh4 Qf5 23.Qxf5 exf5 24.Rxg6 – the threat of 25.Nd5 is too dangerous. I can offer another, less convincing variation: 19.Rg3 Bb7 20.Rdg1 Qf6 21.hxg6+ fxg6 22.Ng5+ Kh8 23.Nce4, and Black cannot meet all the threats.

Veniamin Sozin was a well-known theoretician, who for several decades edited the legendary magazine *Shakhmatny Listok*. One of his best-known discoveries is the so-called Sozin Attack (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 or 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 5...Nc6 6.Bc4), which later became a favourite weapon of Robert James Fischer. Sozin appeared many times in USSR Championship finals and played successfully in Leningrad tournaments, but in 1935 was stripped of his title, following a so-called 'qualification check'. A special commission, on which Mikhail Botvinnik incidentally sat, gave Veniamin the chance to demonstrate his deserving the title by results, but Sozin was already over 40 and his best years were behind him... alas, after such a blow Sozin, who was a book-keeper by education, gave up playing chess. What can one say, they were difficult times, not just on the black and white squares!

Thus, we have already seen several games in which the advance of the g-pawn has unhinged players who were far from being weak. Here are several other striking examples. In the following game, Botvinnik's opponent was one of the strongest Leningrad masters, and USSR Championship runner-up, Vladimir Alatortsev.

The Patriarch recalled his battles with one of his main rivals of the time: 'I played many games against Vladimir Alatortsev. I won a number, games of great significance, but also had some tough draws. I only lost once, when we played an exhibition game at a fast time control, the moves of which were broadcast live on radio. This was in Leningrad 1933. Alatortsev played particularly well in complicated, sharp positions. He usually set up his position well, especially as White and it was not easy to play Black against him...'

However, this time Botvinnik had White and effectively did not allow his opponent to emerge alive from the opening.

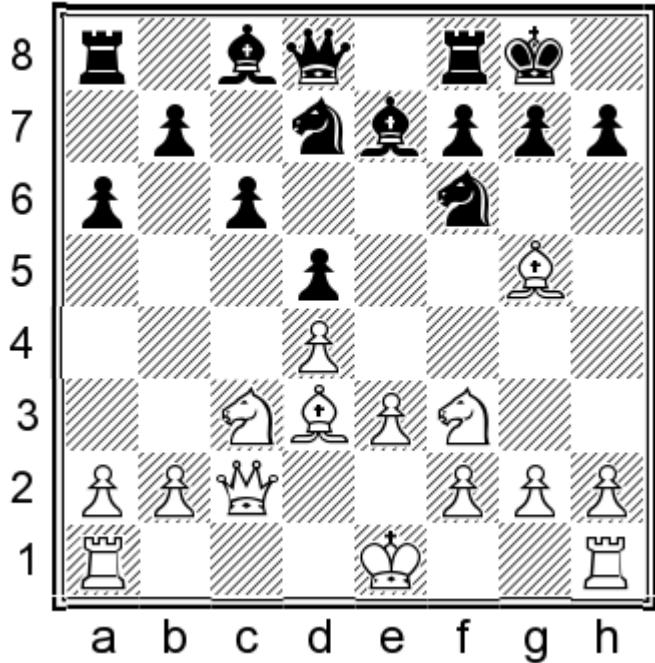
#### Game 4

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

**Vladimir Alatortsev**

Leningrad 1934 (1)

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 d5 3.Nf3 Be7 4.Ne3 Nf6 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 a6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Bd3 c6 9.Qc2 Nbd7**



Garry Kasparov, in Volume Two of *My Great Predecessors*, says that Alatortsev happily entered the Carlsbad Variation with the inclusion of the non-obligatory move ...a7-a6, since the theory of the 1930s did not know of any other plan except the minority attack. Botvinnik looked into the situation differently and played a plan which is well-known to us, but was absolutely new at the time.

### **10.g4!?**

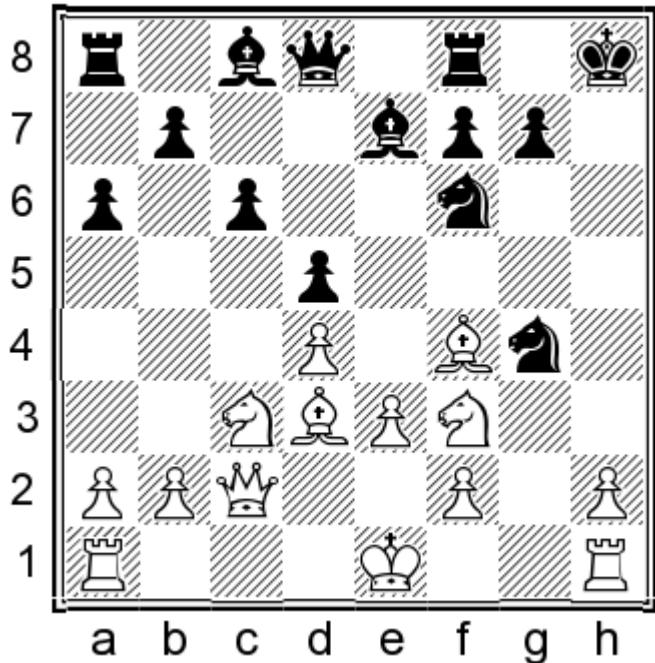
Now there is no question of any quiet struggle. As in the previous game, Black does not find the best reaction and loses almost without resistance, through shock.

### **10...N<sub>x</sub>g4**

Mikhail Botvinnik himself pointed out the strongest continuation 10...g6, but did not give any further variations. Let us work some out ourselves.

On the tempting 11.Rg1 Black creates sufficient queenside counterplay after 11...c5!?, e.g. 12.Bh6 c4 13.Bf5!? Re8 14.0-0-0 b5, and it seems to me that White's game is rather harder to play. Maybe because of such a line the move 10.g4 did not become very popular, although it worked out more than well enough in this stem game.

### **11.Bxh7+ Kh8 12.Bf4 Ndf6 13.Bd3**

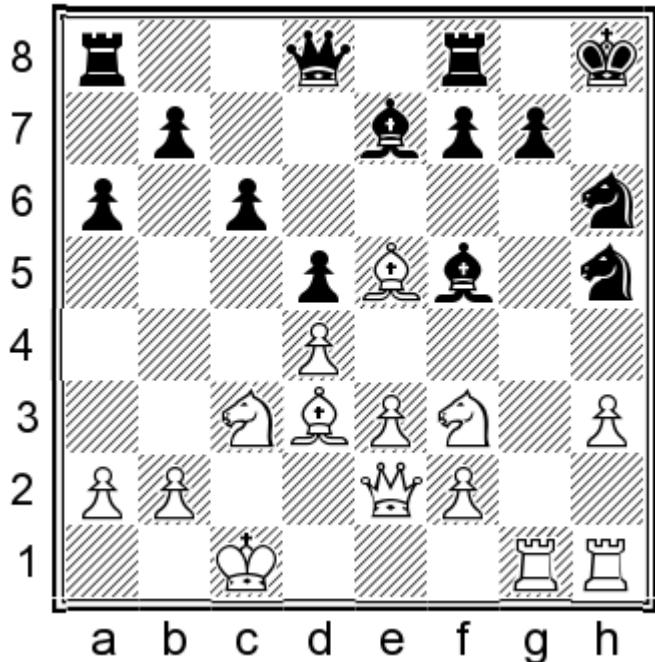


**13...Nh5**

A reasonable practical chance was the pawn sacrifice 13...Ne4 14.Nxe4 dxe4 15.Bxe4 Qa5+ 16.Nd2 Bb4, although even here, after the simple 17.Rg1 White has the initiative.

Alatortsev tries to solve his problems with a series of non-standard manoeuvres, but only throws petrol on White's fire. The knights on the edge of the board cannot be good!

**14.h3 Ngf6 15.Be5 Ng8 16.0-0-0 Nh6 17.Rdg1 Be6 18.Qe2 Bf5**



After a series of simple and natural moves, Botvinnik knocks out his opponent with an elegant blow:

**19.Bxf5 Nxf5 20.Nh4!**

Black resigned.

Over many years, Viacheslav Ragozin helped Mikhail Botvinnik in preparing for important events, including battles for the world crown. Of course, this helped both of them – Ragozin grew into a strong grandmaster and himself shone more than once in battles against the stars of the period. At the same time, in training games, the ‘pupil’ was ruthless with his trainer and Ragozin simply could not play against Botvinnik.

#### Game 5

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

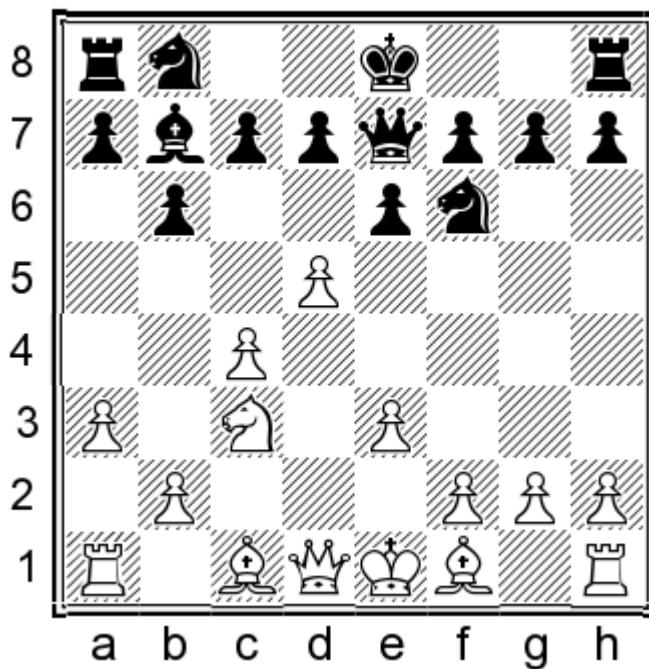
**Viacheslav Ragozin**

Moscow Chigorin Memorial 1947 (11)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 Qe7 5.Ne2**

The alternative for Botvinnik was the sharp Sämisch Variation 4.a3, in which he had some remarkable successes (his win against Capablanca) and also some striking reverses (the loss to Reshevsky in the 1948 match-tournament). However, in later matches with Smyslov the World Champion often used a more solid system, not allowing Black to double the white pawns on c3. In modern practice, the strongest players usually meet this system with 4...0-0 5.Ne2 c6!?, retreating the bishop to c7. But Ragozin does not react in the best way – he allows Botvinnik to obtain the bishop pair and a strong centre.

**5...b6 6.a3 Bxc3+ 7.Nxc3 Bb7 8.d5!**

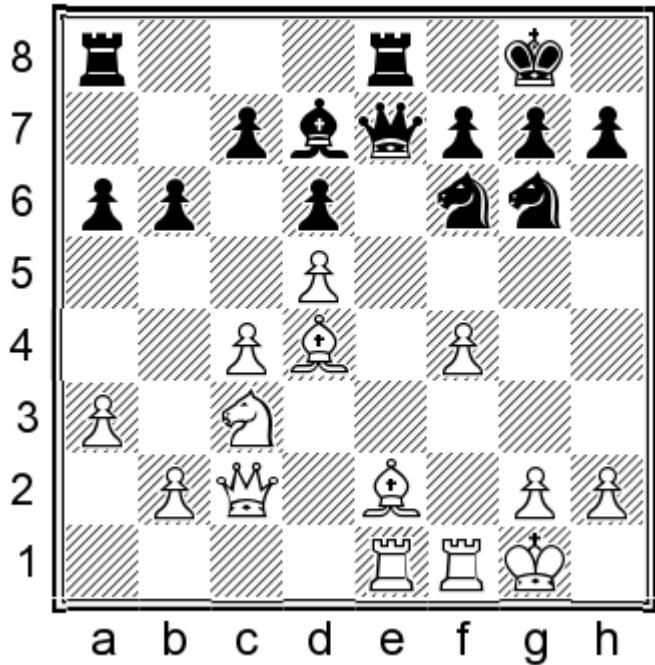


An important move in White’s plan. The advance of the d-pawn fixes White’s space advantage, and, in addition, the remaining black bishop is now forced to stare rather sadly at the restricting white pawn.

**8...d6 9.Be2 Nbd7 10.0-0 0-0 11.e4 exd5 12.exd5 Rfe8 13.Be3 a6 14.Qc2 Ne5 15.Rae1**

White has placed his pieces excellently and strengthened his opening advantage.

**15...Bc8 16.Bd4 Bd7 17.f4 Ng6**



**18.g4!**

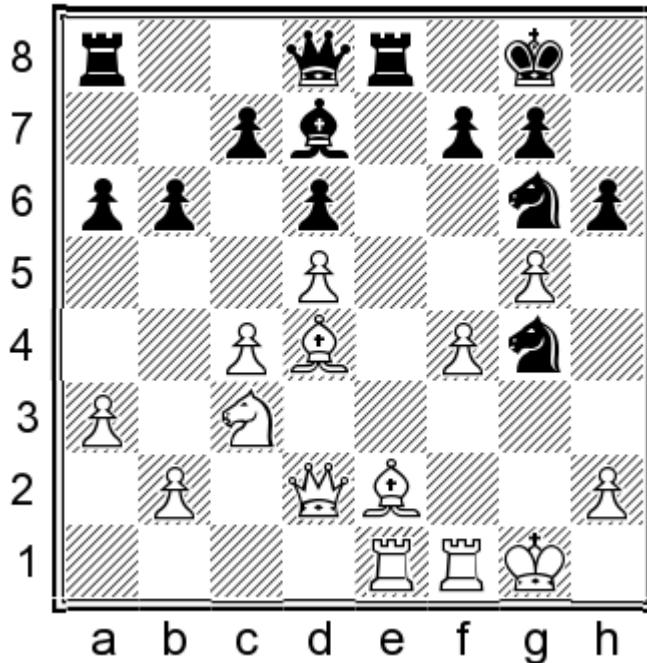
The problems facing Ragozin are more serious than those with which Alatortsev wrestled in the previous game, but Black has great defensive resources. For example, he could try the waiting move 18...Kh8!? and patiently defend his lines after 19.Qd3 Qd8 20.h3 – White's advantage is indisputable, but he still needs to show considerable efforts to win.

Black also has a good chance to defend as follows: 18...h6 19.Bd3 (19.h3!? keeps the advantage, but in his four-volume work Botvinnik gives the bishop move) 19...Qxe1 20.Rxe1+ Rxe1+ 21.Kf2 Re7 22.Bxf6 gxf6 23.Bxg6 fxg6 24.Qxg6+ Rg7 25.Qxf6 Rf8 26.Qxh6 Rh7! (this is probably the move Botvinnik underestimated) 27.Qg6+ Rg7 28.Qe4 Rxg4, and despite his material advantage, White will find it difficult to realize, because of the activity of his opponent's pieces.

Viacheslav Ragozin did not manage to sense the position very subtly (one can understand him, when every day in training Botvinnik's tank runs over one...) and within a few moves, the Soviet master is a piece down.

**18...Qd8 19.g5 Ng4 20.Qd2 h6**

His task is not the least eased by 20...f5 – White can even not hurry with concrete variations and play, e.g. the quiet move 21.Bd1.



**21.f5 N6e5 22.h3 Nf6 23.gxf6 Qxf6 24.Qf4 Re7 25.Kh1+–**

Black has no compensation for the lost piece and capitulated after another eight moves.

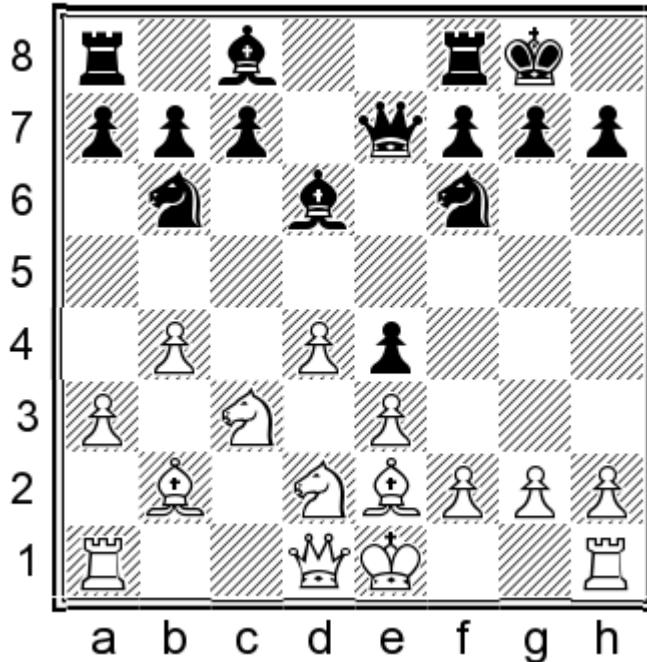
#### Game 6

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

**Theo van Scheltinga**

Wijk aan Zee 1969 (4)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5 6.a3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 Bd6 8.Nf3 Nbd7 9.b4 e5 10.Bb2 e4 11.Nd2 Nb6 12.Be2 Qe7**

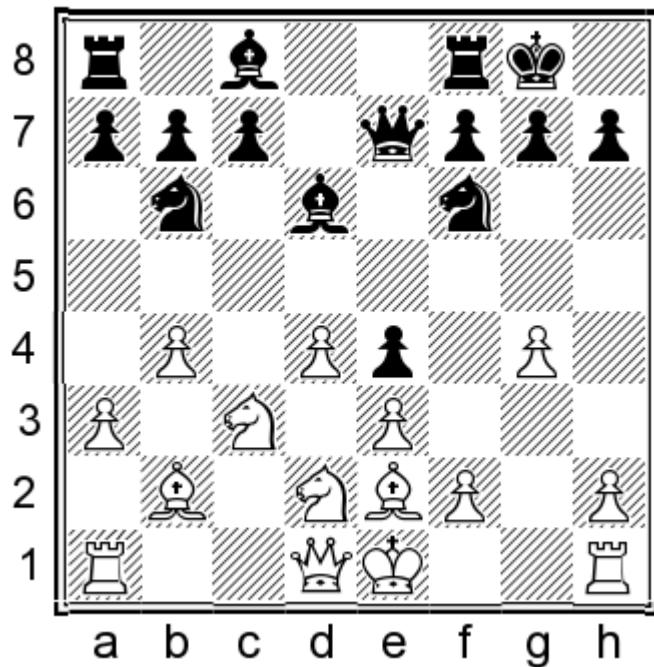


Lovers of chess literature will know this position, of course. This not very well-known game did not escape the eager eye of Mark Dvoretsky, who added it to his famous card index of tests.

The search for the correct move is not so simple, providing only that you have not studied the first half of this

chapter.

**13.g4!?**



**13...Nbd5?**

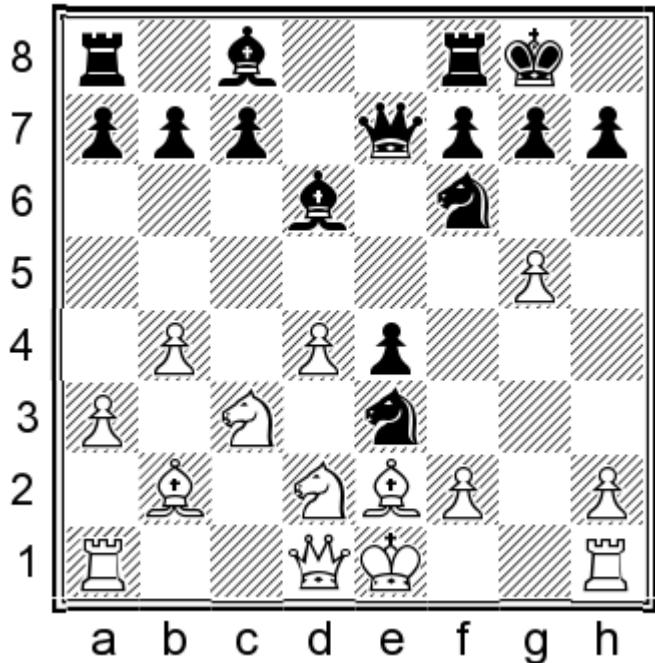
Another astonishing reaction to the unexpected march of the g-pawn! Van Scheltinga cannot cope with the sharp change in the situation and immediately gives the game away.

**Test 2.** How would you have reacted to Botvinnik's blow?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** There is no satisfactory way to defend the e4-pawn, but one should not forget that White has not yet castled. After 13...Nfd5 (it is also possible to include 13...a5 14.b5 and now 14...Nfd5) 14.Ndxe4 Nxc3 15.Nxc3 f5, I would rather be Black – White is too far behind in development. The Dutchman instead puts the other knight on d5 and pays the price immediately:

**14.g5 Nxe3**



**15.fxe3**

Maybe Van Scheltinga had counted on 15.gxf6 Ng2+ 16.Kf1 Ne3+ 17.fxe3 Qxf6+, but White is not forced to enter this variation.

**15...Nd5 16.Nxd5 Qxg5 17.Nxe4 Qxd5 18.Bf3 Kh8 19.Nxd6 Qxd6 20.0-0+-**

And despite the Dutch master's resistance, Botvinnik realized his extra piece without especial difficulty.

Even when approaching 60, the Patriarch retained great practical strength – in this supertournament, he shared first with Geller, ahead of Portisch, Keres, Olafsson, Benko, Ceric, Donner, Kavalek, Lombardy and other well-known players!

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## Chapter 2

### Heavy artillery

Despite the fact that all of Botvinnik's opponents in the preceding games were players of considerable strength, maybe none were that well-known to the average enthusiast of our game. Maybe the impression will be gained that Botvinnik only went for such daring play in games against lesser opposition, but this would be wrong. Among victims of this g-pawn march were Candidate Mark Taimanov, World Championship challenger David Bronstein, and even World Champions Vasily Smyslov and Tigran Petrosian, with the latter two examples occurring in World Championship matches!

Despite the higher class of the aforementioned opponents, their first reaction to Botvinnik's g2-g4 move was often wrong, as with his other opponents. The dreaded pawn almost seems to have hypnotised opponents and stopped them finding the correct reply.

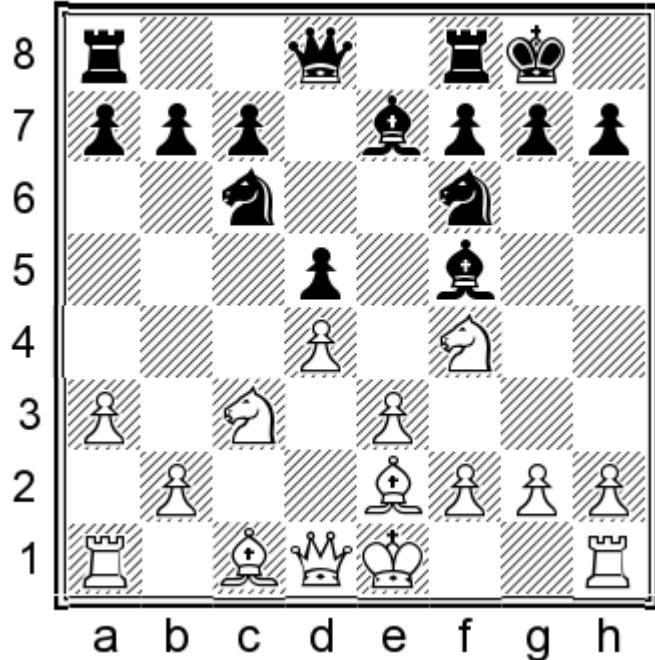
Game 7

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

**Mark Taimanov**

Moscow m 1952 (4)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 Nc6 5.Ne2 d5 6.a3 Be7 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Nf4 0-0 9.Be2 Bf5



Botvinnik described Black's last move as 'committal' and, without much doubt, allowed himself to be provoked. The fact is that this match for the USSR championship had an undertone between the players. Botvinnik considered that Taimanov had not behaved correctly in their game in the championship itself, when the players had agreed a draw, but decided to play on until the time control (in the Soviet Championship, there was a required minimum number of moves, before draws could be agreed), and the young man had then played several more moves, trying to win.

## **10.g4 Be6 11.Nxe6**

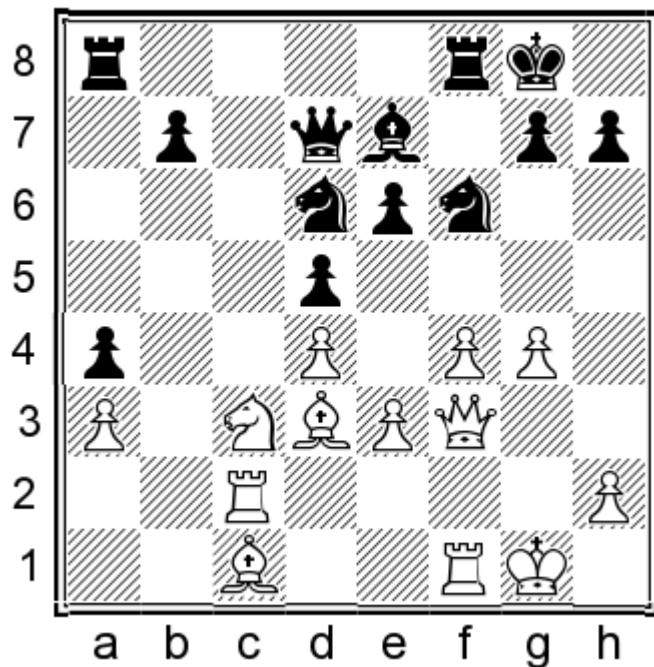
Mikhail Moiseevich considered the capture of the bishop to be a serious mistake and gave the continuation 11.g5 Nd7 12.h4, but after 12...Nb6 White hardly has anything better than 13.Nxe6.

## **11...fxe6 12.0-0 Qd7 13.f4 Nd8**

Taimanov finds a very interesting and strong plan, involving the transfer of the knight and the advance of the c-pawn. Botvinnik, in his turn, prepares to bring his rook along the second rank.

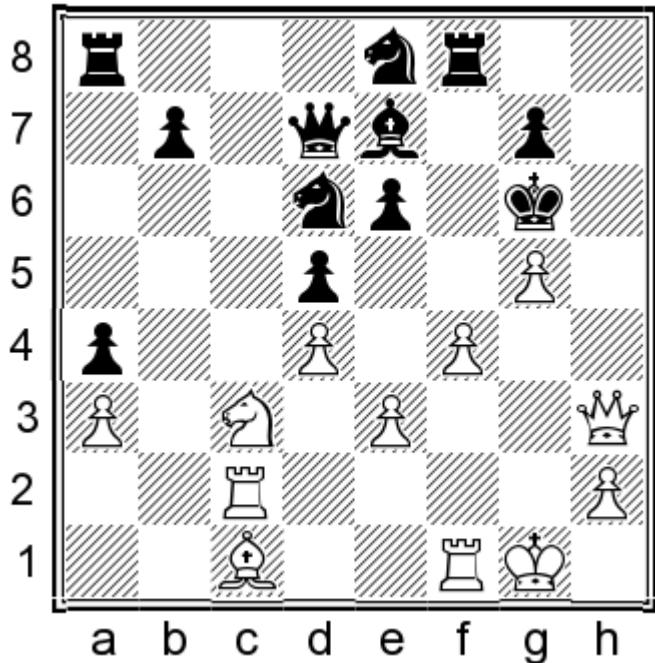
## **14.Bd3 Nf7 15.b4 a5 16.b5 Nd6 17.Qf3 a4 18.Ra2 c6 19.bxc6 Qxc6 20.Rc2 Qd7**

Black needs only to play ...g7-g6, after which the strategic factors will be in his favour, so Botvinnik plays va-banque.



## **21.g5 Nfe8 22.Bxh7+ Kxh7 23.Qh3+ Kg8**

On 23...Kg6 the sixth World Champion had prepared a continuation, leading to a very strong attack.

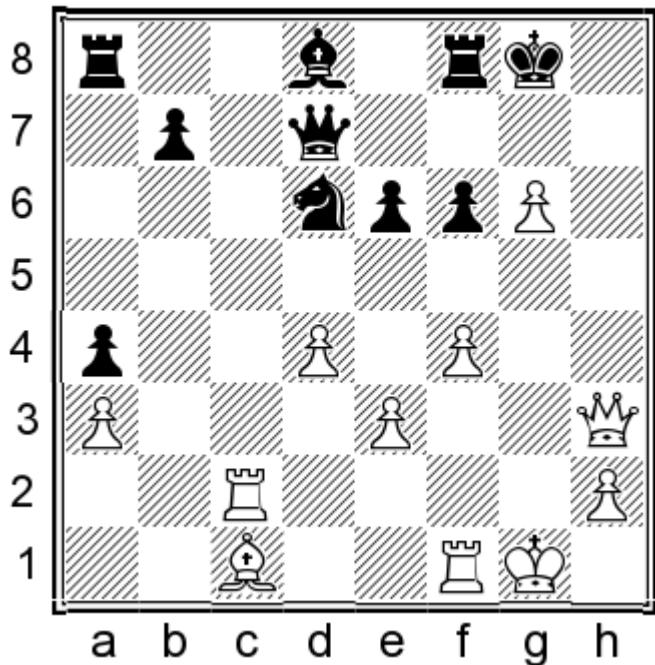


**Test 3.** Play like Botvinnik!

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The first move is the simple 24.Nxd5. Now Black should defend the squares b6 and c7 by means of 24...Bd8. Now where should the white knight go? Correct, to e5! 25.Nb4! Rc8 26.Nd3 Rf5 27.Rxc8 Qxc8 28.Ne5+ Rxe5 29.fxe5 Nf5 30.Qf3. White has rook and pawns against two enemy minor pieces, and a strong initiative.

**24.Nxd5 Bd8 25.g6 Nf6 26.Nxf6+ gxf6**



**27.g7?**

One can only envy Botvinnik's analytical strength – even modern computers cannot improve on the variations he gives in his books. The author of those books quite correct criticizes himself for the adventurous pawn move and demonstrates the beautiful winning variation: 27.Rg2 Re8 28.g7 Nf7 29.Rf3 Rc8 30.Bb2 Rc7 31.Qh4 Qc8 32.Bc3!!.

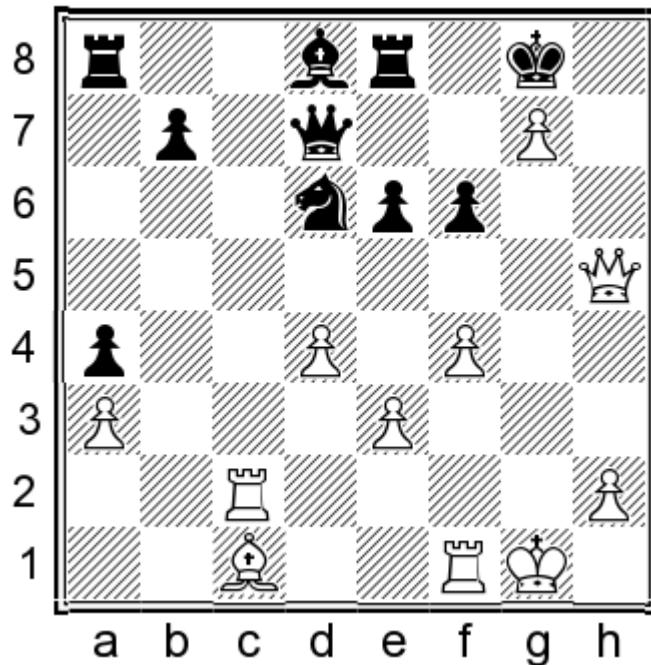
Now on the capture of the bishop there follows ((32...Rxc3)) 33.Qh8+!, mating, and even the computer's 32...f5 33.Qh5 Bg5 34.fxg5 Rxc3 35.g6 Rc1+ 36.Kf2 Qc2+ 37.Kg3 Qc7+ 38.Kh3 Nh6 39.Qxh6 Qxg7 40.Qh4! with the idea of Rg2-g5-h5 leads to a winning position for White.

## 27...Re8?

A mistake in reply, which Botvinnik does not pardon.

The fearless 27...Kxg7 28.Rg2+ Kf7 29.Qh5+ Ke7 30.Bd2 Qe8 31.Rg7+ Rf7 would leave Black safe – White's attack peters out. The winner gave as the least evil 28.f5 Kf7 29.e4, but here too, after 29...Bb6, it is not obvious how to continue the attack.

## 28.Qh8+ Kf7 29.Qh5+ Kg8



Here too, despite time trouble, the Patriarch finds an accurate win.

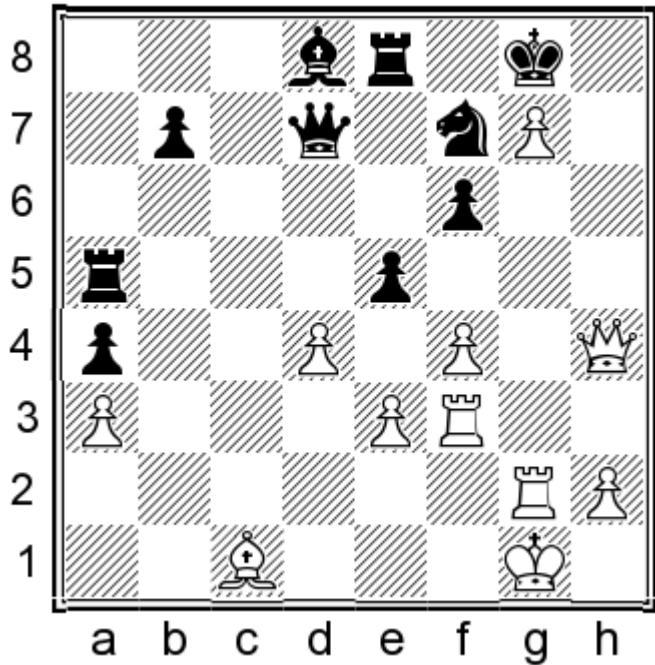
## 30.Rg2 Nf7 31.Rf3 Ra5 32.Qh4!

This is the move which brings White the victory – Black has no satisfactory defence against doubling on the h-file.

## 32...e5

If 32...Qc6 the familiar motif 33.Qh8+!, with a quick mate, again comes to White's aid.

In the game, Botvinnik played 33.Rh3 Qxh3 34.Qxh3 and in the end won with the extra queen without undue problems, but White has an even stronger continuation.



**Test 4.** Can you play stronger than Botvinnik?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** White can ice his attacking cake nicely with 33.f5! Ng5 34.Rxg5 fxg5 35.Qh8+ Kf7 36.Qh7! (ambush) 36...Rg8 37.Qg6+ Ke7 38.f6+, and the white pawns sweep away all before them.

In the end, Botvinnik won the match 3½-2½. The main thing was that relations between these two great players were soon repaired and years later, when in 1971 Taimanov played his Candidates match against Fischer, he consulted Botvinnik. However, as Taimanov himself admitted, having lost 0-6, it was all in vain!

The following game was a training encounter, although one of importance – the USSR team was about to play in the Olympiad for the first time. The Soviet chess leadership was seriously worried about failure – what would happen if the Soviets flopped and the Yugoslavs (at the time, relations with Marshall Tito were very bad) or, even worse, the Americans were to win?

So, a big training camp was organized, from which six players would be chosen to go to Helsinki. A powerful Scheveningen tournament was held, in which a team of young players battled the Soviet classics.

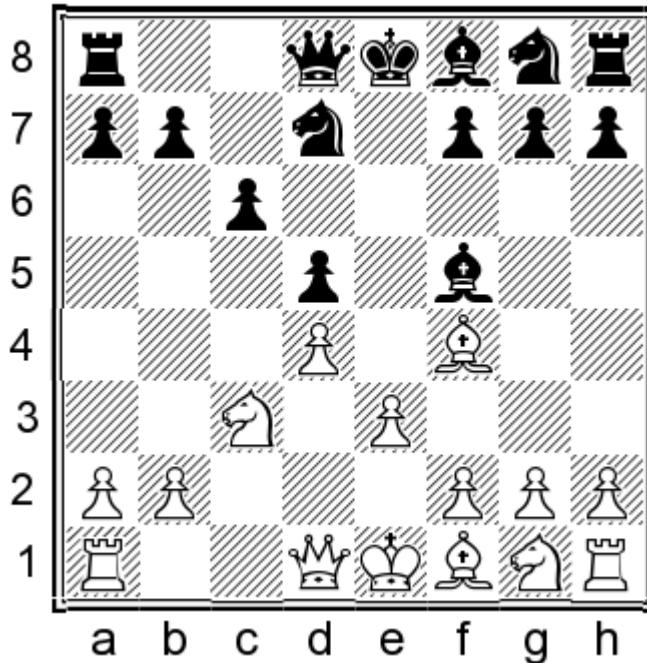
Game 8

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

**David Bronstein**

Voronovo 1952

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.cxd5 exd5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bf4 Bf5 6.e3 Nd7**

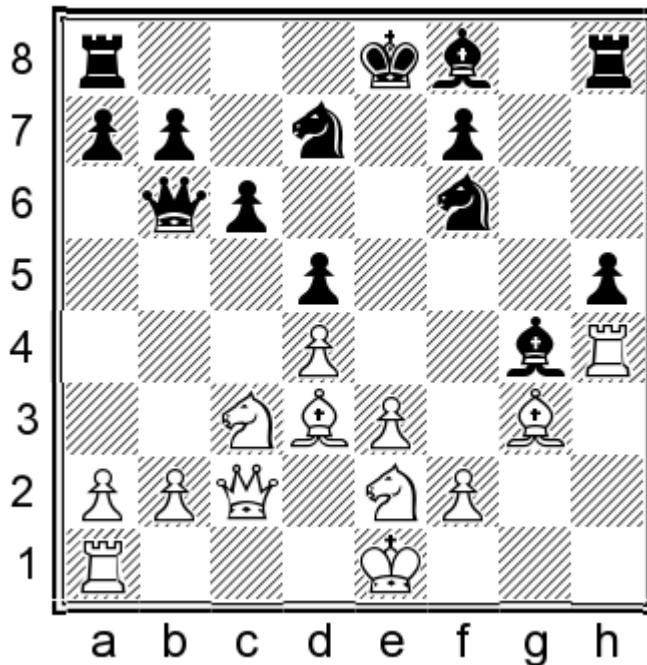


The move-order chosen by Bronstein has never had great popularity, but this does not stop Botvinnik pushing his g-pawn in his customary manner.

**7.g4 Be6 8.Bd3 g5!? 9.Bg3 Qb6**

David Ionovich reacts to a flank attack in like manner. It made sense to continue what he has started with 9...h5!? 10.gxh5 Ngf6 11.h4 Rxh5, liquidating White's active pawn assault. The attempt to overload the enemy queen does not work – Botvinnik bravely goes for a pawn sacrifice, seizing the initiative.

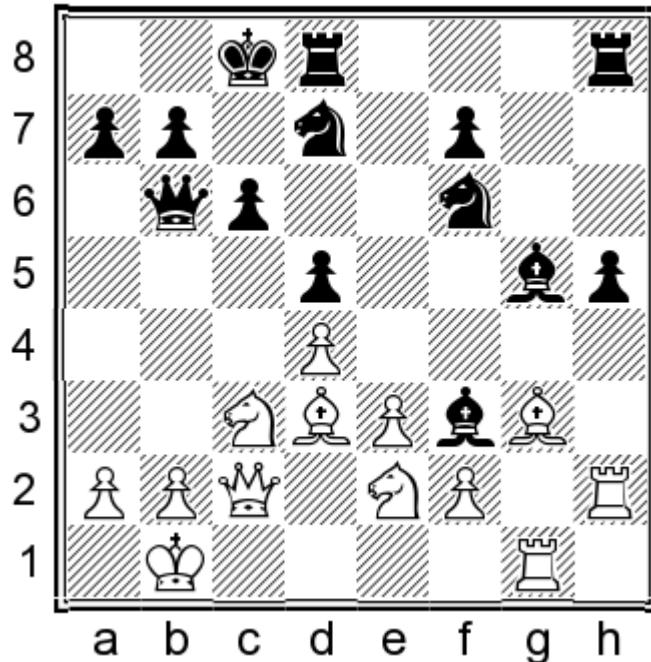
**10.Qc2!? Bxg4 11.h4 gxh4 12.Rxh4 Ngf6 13.Nge2 h5**



The kingside is clearly the main battlefield and so it makes sense to post the leader of the white army as far as away as possible.

**14.0-0-0 Bh6 15.Kb1 Bg5 16.Rh2 Bf3 17.Re1**

Now the World Champion is preparing the advance of the e-pawn, but it was equally good to put the rook on another file – 17.Rg1, since 17...0-0-0 loses at once.



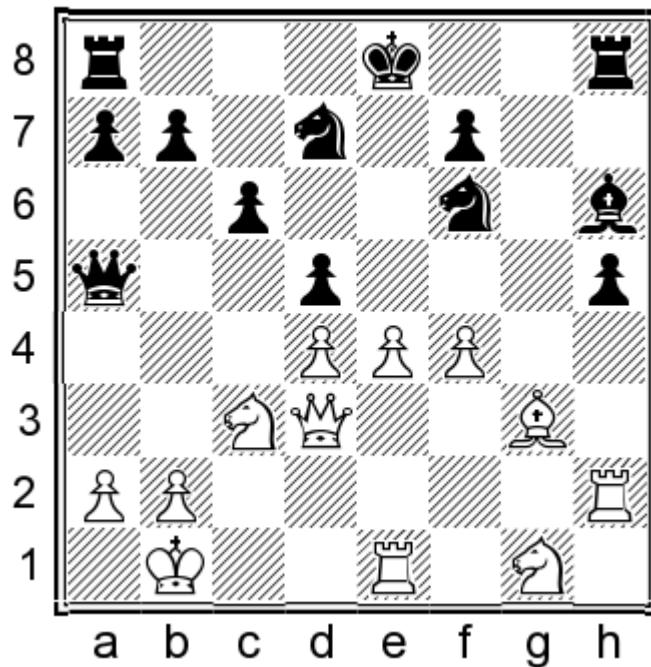
**Test 5.** Find the winning variation.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** It is all simple – after 18.Bd6! Bh6 19.Na4 Qa5 20.b4 the black queen is trapped.

**17...Qa5 18.Ng1 Be4 19.f4 Bxd3 20.Qxd3 Bh6 21.e4**

The attack could also be continued without the advance of the e-pawn: 21.Qf5 0-0-0 22.Bh4 Bg7 23.Nf3 followed by Ne5, but this is not why the Patriarch put the rook on e1.



**21...0-0-0**

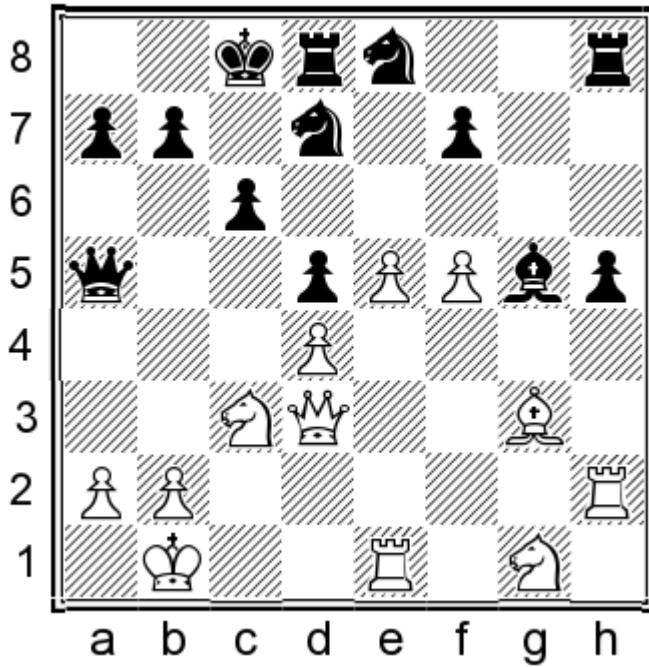
The computer fearlessly captures 21...dxe4!? 22.Nxe4 Kf8 and claims an extra pawn for Black. It looks extremely

dangerous, but White has nothing concrete and he has to show a good deal of strength and energy to show the correctness of the pawn sacrifice. After the text, White keeps a powerful pawn phalanx, which decides the game.

## 22.e5 Ne8

The last practical chance was the return of material by 22...Ne4 23.Nxe4 dxe4 24.Qxe4 Nb6 in the hope of organizing a blockade on the central squares. Now, however, Black cannot avoid a crush.

## 23.f5 Bg5



## 24.e6 Ndf6 25.Nf3 Bh6 26.Ne5 Nd6 27.Bh4 Nfe4 28.Bxd8

White's position is winning. Bronstein resigned immediately after the time control.

Despite this win, in many games of the training event, after a three-year lay-off from practical play, the World Champion (who had been writing his doctoral dissertation in the years 1948 to 1951) played poorly and, in an unprecedented step, he was left out of the Olympiad team. Apparently a vote had been taken among the other players of the team, and his inclusion wasn't supported.

In 1951, Botvinnik had also played the famous World Championship match with Bronstein, and in 1952 he had returned to active chess, but he was still showing signs of ring-rust.

On the other hand, this proved a useful psychological stimulus for Mikhail Botvinnik – over the next few years, he avenged himself on his 'enemies' and returned brilliantly to form.

Now it is time to turn to an example in which the march of the g-pawn occurred in a World Championship match.

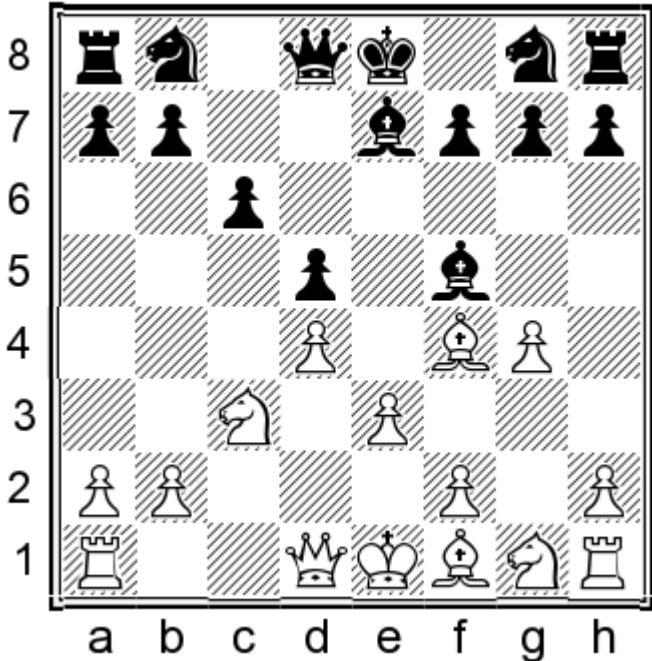
### Game 9

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

**Tigran V. Petrosian**

Moscow Wch 1963 (14)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Be7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.g4



Botvinnik's idea has not lost its popularity in the past 50 years. In particular, this position was seen several times in games by Anatoly Karpov, with both colours, including World Championship matches against Kasparov, and is also seen often in our day – one need only recall the game Kramnik-So, Berlin ct 2018.

### **7...Be6 8.h3**

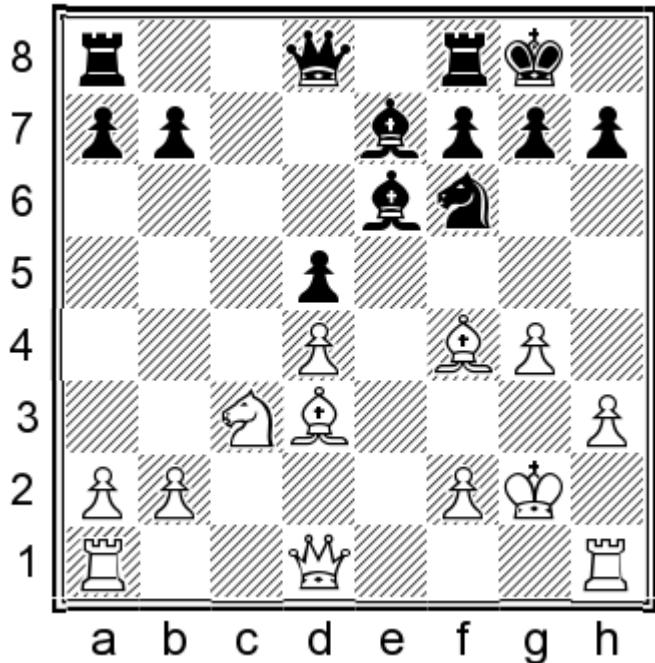
In his notes, Botvinnik pointed out the interesting move 8.h4!?, which nowadays is more popular than the modest text. Mikhail Moiseevich himself later played the more adventurous h2-h4: 8...Nd7 9.h5 Qb6 10.Rb1 Ngf6 11.f3 h6 12.Bd3 Qa5 13.Nge2 b5 14.Nc1 Qd8 15.Nb3 0-0 with a complicated battle, Botvinnik-Spassky, Leiden 1970.

Among fresh ideas, there is the interesting move 8.Qb3!? from Kramnik-So, Berlin ct 2018.

### **8...Nf6 9.Bd3 c5 10.Nf3 Nc6 11.Kf1 0-0 12.Kg2 cxd4**

In another World Championship match, Black tested 12...Rc8 13.Rc1 Re8 14.dxc5 Bxc5 15.Nb5, but Anatoly Karpov was unable to demonstrate the solidity of his defences in Kortchnoi-Karpov, Merano Wch 1981 (13).

### **13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.exd4**



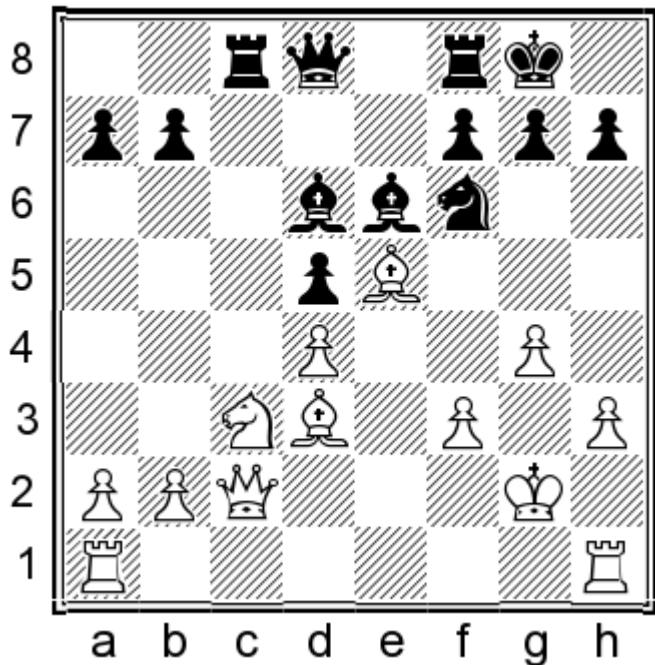
Black's position already looks dangerous and requires concrete, rather un-Petrosian-like countermeasures, such as 14...Bd6!? 15.Bg5 h6 16.Bh4 g5 17.Bg3 Bxg3 18.fxg3 Qb6 19.Qd2 Rad8, where the white attack gradually comes to nothing, because of the unsafe position of his own king.

However, Tigran Vartanovich remains true to his strategy of solidity and continues to wait patiently.

#### **14...Nd7 15.Qc2 Nf6**

Returning the knight far from spoils Black's position – his redoubts remain solid. The next 4-5 moves see both Soviet GMs demonstrate wonderful play at a very high level.

#### **16.f3 Rc8 17.Be5 Bd6**



#### **18.Rae1**

'Again it is a mistake to go for the pawn with 18.Bxf6 Qxf6 19.Bxh7 Kh8, because the initiative passes to Black,'

Botvinnik correctly sums up. On the contrary, White plays to restrict his opponent's pieces.

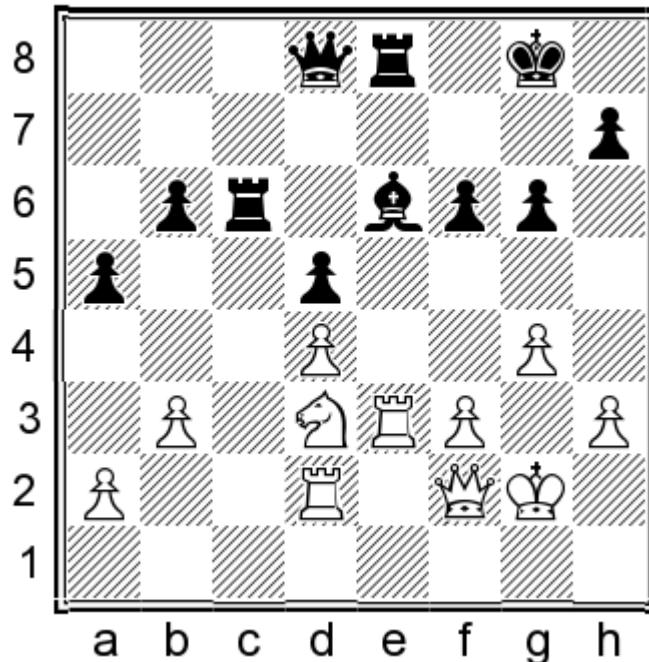
**18...Bxe5 19.Rxe5**

Inaccurate is 19.dxe5?! d4! 20.exf6 Qxf6, regaining the piece, with the initiative.

**19...g6 20.Qf2 Nd7 21.Re2 Nb6 22.Rhe1 Nc4 23.Bxc4 Rxc4**

Now White has a good knight against a bad bishop, tied to defending the pawn on d5.

**24.Rd2 Re8 25.Re3 a6 26.b3 Rc6 27.Na4 b6 28.Nb2 a5 29.Nd3 f6**



Petrosian arranges his pawns on dark squares, so as to increase the mobility of his bishop. At this very moment, the World Champion makes an important break into the enemy structure, removing the f6-pawn and so gaining access to e5.

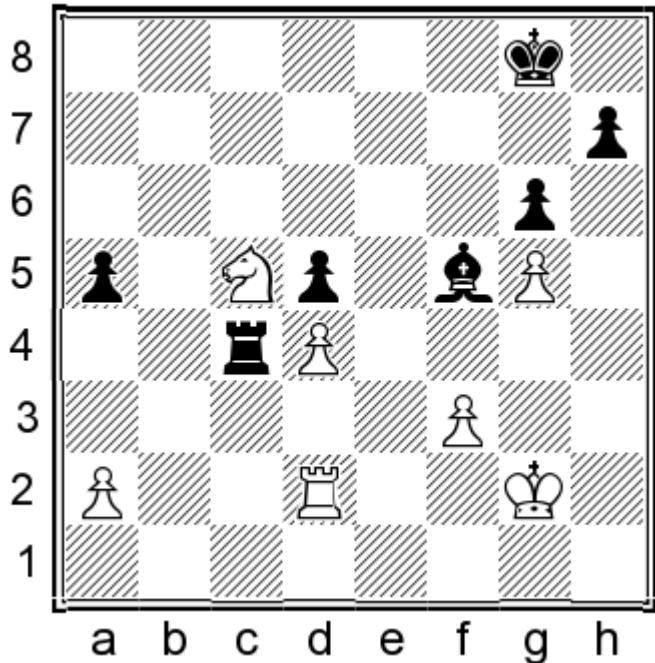
**30.h4 Bf7 31.Rxe8+ Bxe8 32.Qe3 Bf7 33.g5 Be6 34.Nf4 Bf7 35.Nd3 Be6 36.gxf6 Qxf6 37.Qg5!**

The programmed queen exchange. Black cannot take on d4 because of 38.Ne5, but Petrosian plays a small diversion on the queenside just before the time control and reduces the amount of material on the board.

**37...Qxg5+ 38.hxg5 a4??!**

The wrong flank! It was more accurate to exchange the other pawn with 38...h6!. Now the exchange is achieved at a high cost – the white knight gets to c5.

**39.bxa4 Rc4 40.a5 bxa5 41.Nc5 Bf5**

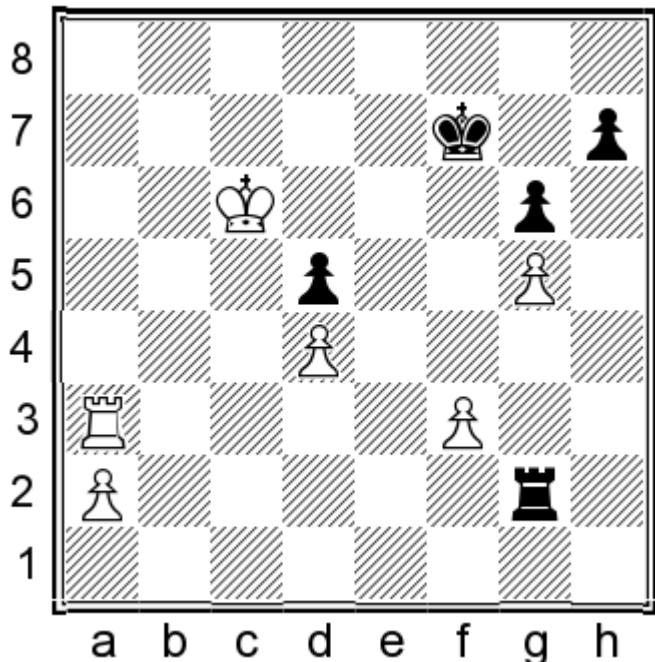


The time control has been reached. White is trying to dominate the dark squares, in reply to which Black advances his a-pawn, trying to fix and surround the pawn on a2.

**42.Kg3 a4 43.Kf4 a3 44.Ke5 Rb4 45.Nd3 Rb5 46.Kd6**

All White's pieces are activated to the maximum extent, but he still needs to spend time to remove the dangerous pawn on a3.

**46...Kf7 47.Kc6 Bxd3 48.Rxd3 Rb2 49.Rxa3 Rg2**



The great master of analysis has managed to extract the most from a complicated situation and has taken the game into a rook ending with an extra pawn. However, one should not forget about the drawish tendencies of rook endings – White's position is winning, but requires filigree technique.

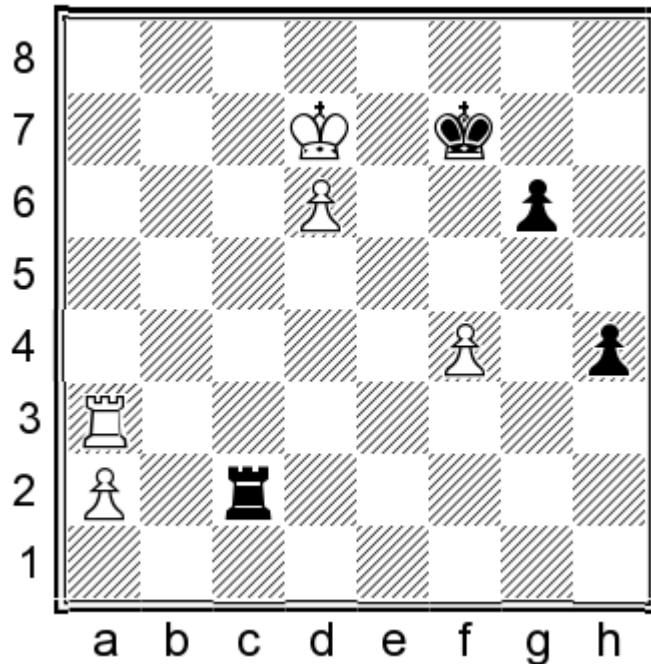
**50.Kxd5?**

It was practically impossible to decide on the far-from-obvious 50.Rb3!!, but this is the move which would guarantee Botvinnik the win. Liquidating the advanced passed pawn with 50...Rxa2 does not help because of 51.Kd6! Rg2 52.Rb7+ Kf8 53.f4 – White cuts off the king and easily wins by promoting the d-pawn.

A more complicated battle starts after 50...Rxg5 51.a4 Rg1 52.a5 Ra1 53.Kb6 h5 54.a6 h4 55.a7 h3, but after an exchange of ‘trumps’ with 56.f4! h2 57.Rh3 Rb1+ 58.Kc5 Rc1+ 59.Kxd5 Ra1 60.Rxh2 Kg7 61.Kc6 Rxa7 62.d5+– Black’s passed pawns are gone, whilst the d-pawn is already prepared to go to the eighth rank.

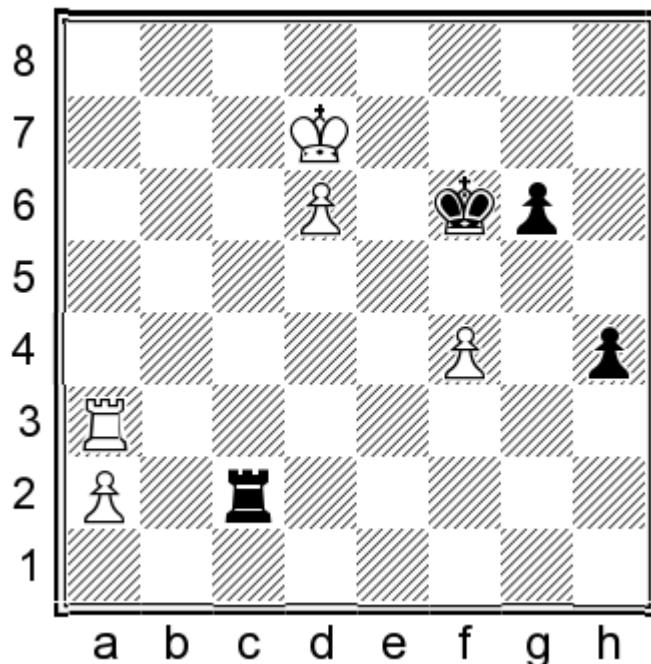
Botvinnik calculated that the passed d-pawn is closer to its goal, but here Black could have made a study-like draw.

50...R<sub>x</sub>g5+ 51.Kc6 h5 52.d5 Rg2 53.d6 R<sub>c</sub>2+ 54.Kd7 h4 55.f4



55...Rf2?

He does not manage to save the game with just an active rook – in the endgame, one needs to play with all the pieces, especially the king. After 55...Kf6! White has two ideas, but in all variations, Black holds:



## *analysis diagram*

- A) 56.Rh3 Rxa2 57.Rxh4 Kf5 58.Kd8 Rd2 59.d7 Rd1!=, and White cannot strengthen his position without losing the f4-pawn;
- B) After 56.Ra8 Kf5 57.a4 h3 58.a5 Kxf4 59.a6 h2 60.Rh8 Ra2 we soon reach a position, like the one after 56.Rh3, in which White has given away the f4-pawn. The passed g-pawn guarantees Black a draw;
- C) 56.Rd3 Rxa2 57.Kc7 Kf5 58.d7 Ra7+ 59.Kc6 Rxd7 60.Kxd7 Kxf4= – despite his active pieces, White cannot stop the two passed pawns;
- D) The most dangerous line for Black is 56.Kd8 Rd2 57.d7 Kf5 58.Ra5+ Kxf4 59.Ke7 g5 60.d8=Q Rxd8 61.Kxd8. Here White even keeps the passed a-pawn, but this still does not bring success: 61...h3 62.Ra6 g4 63.Rh6 Kg3 64.a4 Kh2! 65.Rg6 g3 66.a5 g2 67.a6 g1=Q 68.Rxg1 Kxg1 69.a7 h2 70.a8=Q h1=Q – Black is in the key zone by one tempo.

Tired by a difficult defence, Tigran Vartanovich did not find the king move and lost at once.

### **56.Kc8 Rxf4 57.Ra7+**

Here there is no question of a draw, as the rook is behind the h-pawn and the only remaining white pawn decides the game. Black resigned.

After this instructive game, the score was equalized at 7-7. However, Botvinnik was already not young and in the remaining portion of the match, it was hard for him to oppose such a strong fighter as Tigran Petrosian. By winning three games without reply, Armenia's chess hero conducted the match to victory. And thanks to the fact that this was the very cycle in which the defeated champion's right to a return match had been removed, the above game turned out to be the last won by Botvinnik in battles for the world chess crown!

The champion's main historic opponent also did not escape Botvinnik's favourite pawn advance.

Game 10

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

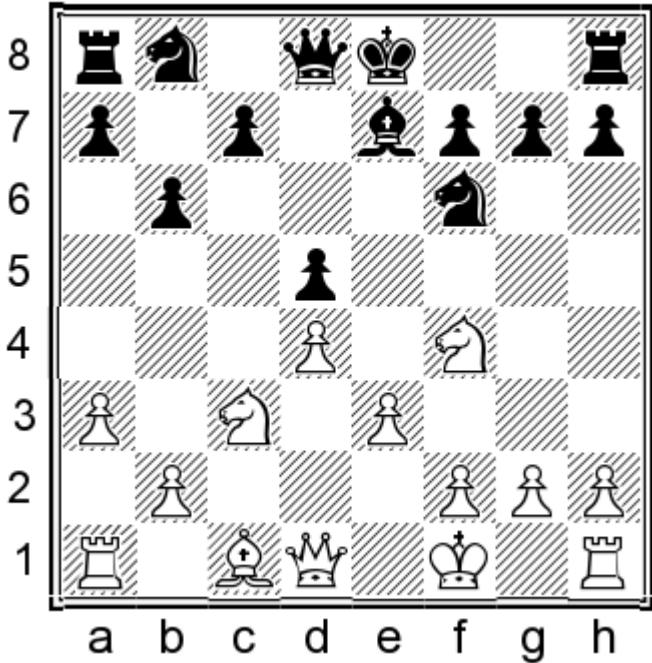
**Vasily Smyslov**

Moscow Wch 1954 (2)

### **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 b6 5.Ne2 Ba6 6.a3 Be7**

Vasily Vasilievich had already surprised Botvinnik with the move 4...b6, having up to now chosen different fourth moves in his favourite Nimzo-Indian. After this game, Smyslov repeated the variation several times, but never again retreated the bishop to e7, presumably because of this game.

### **7.Nf4 d5 8.cxd5 Bxf1 9.Kxf1 exd5**



### **10.g4! c6**

Again g2-g4 in the Nimzo-Indian, and again this advance shocks even so great a player as Smyslov. However, it is not clear how Black should reply. Black has mostly tried 10...g5, but after for example 11.Nh5 Nxh5 12.gxh5 Qd7 13.Qf3 c6 14.e4 he still has to seek equality. After the move in the game, Smyslov condemns himself to an extremely difficult defence, after the opening shock.

### **11.g5 Nfd7**

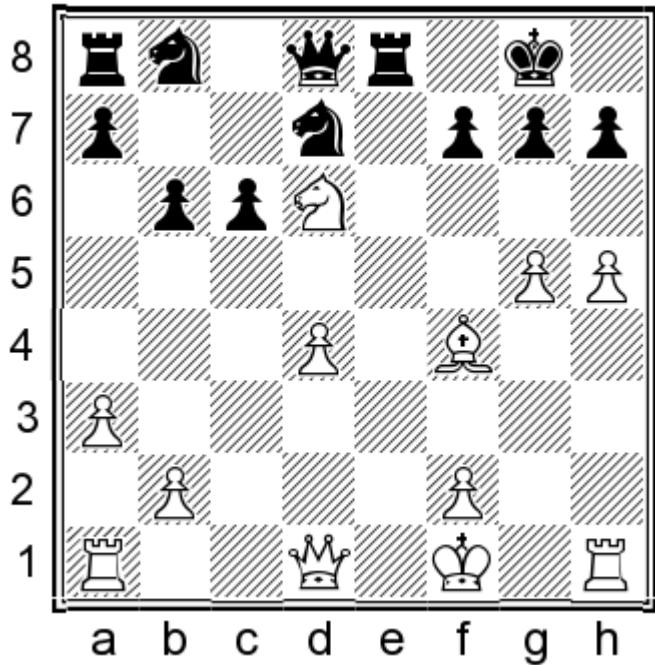
The commentators' recommendation 11...Ne4 12.Nxe4 dxe4 13.h4 0-0 certainly does not ease Black's life, but instead of 14.Nh5, which allows 14...c5 with counterplay, it is simpler to play 14.Bd2 followed by bringing the bishop to c3, retaining all the advantages of his position.

### **12.h4 Bd6**

A correspondence player tried to prove the correctness of Smyslov's set-up and even succeeded: 12...0-0 13.e4 dxe4 14.Nxe4 Nc5 15.Nxc5 Bxc5 16.Be3 Bd6 17.Nd3 Qd7 18.Qf3 f6, and the game ended in a draw after many adventures, Irzhanov-Rizzo, ICCF 2006. However, the set-up pointed out earlier with 13.Qg4 Re8 14.Bd2 allows White to count on more. In the chapter on Botvinnik in *My Great Predecessors* the move 13.Qg4 is also recommended by Garry Kasparov.

Smyslov tries to exchange the opponent's active knight, but in the end only helps him bring his remaining minor pieces closer to the centre.

### **13.e4 dxe4 14.Nxe4 Bxf4 15.Bxf4 0-0 16.h5 Re8 17.Nd6**



Only 17 moves have been played, but it is already hard to offer Black any good advice – a rare thing in a World Championship match.

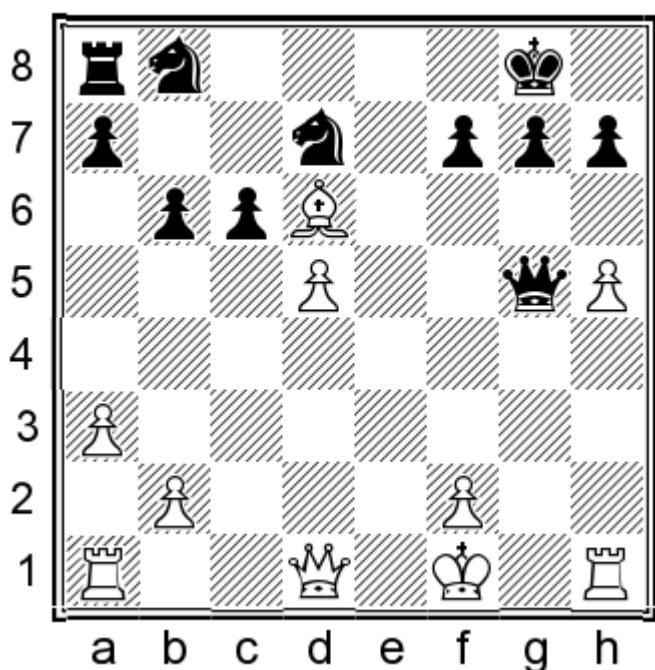
### **17...Re6**

Botvinnik considered that Black should part with the exchange by 17...Kf8, but there is no rush to grab the loot – the more forcing 18.Qd3 with the threats of 19.Qxh7 and 19.g6 practically wins at once.

### **18.d5**

Another way to realize the advantage is 18.g6! Qf6 19.gxh7+ Kxh7 20.Qd3+ Kg8 21.Nf5 followed by 22.Rg1, and Black is defenceless. However, Botvinnik's decision also reaches a technically winning position.

### **18...Rxd6 19.Bxd6 Qxg5**



### **20.Qf3! Qxd5**

'His sufferings are not eased by 20...cxd5 21.Rg1, e.g. 21...Qh4 22.Rg4 Qd8 23.Rc1 or 21...Qd2 22.Bb4 Qxb2 23.Re1 Na6 24.Qxd5 etc.' (G.Kasparov)

## 21.Qxd5 cxd5 22.Rc1

Despite the material equality, Black cannot arrange his pieces normally and his defences quickly collapse. The rest requires no commentary – simply look and admire how elegantly Botvinnik conducts the game to victory.

## 22...Na6 23.b4 h6 24.Rh3 Kh7 25.Rd3 Nf6

The rook pendulum finally breaks the black defences and the rest is simple.

## 26.b5 Nc5 27.Bxc5 bxc5 28.Rxc5 Rb8 29.a4 Rb7 30.Rdc3

Black resigned.

At the start of the match, Smyslov came under several heavy blows from his opponent and fell behind ½-3½, but he did not panic and in the end, a very tough match in 1954 ended in a 12-12 tie and the World Champion retained his title.

Game 11

**Mikhail Botvinnik**

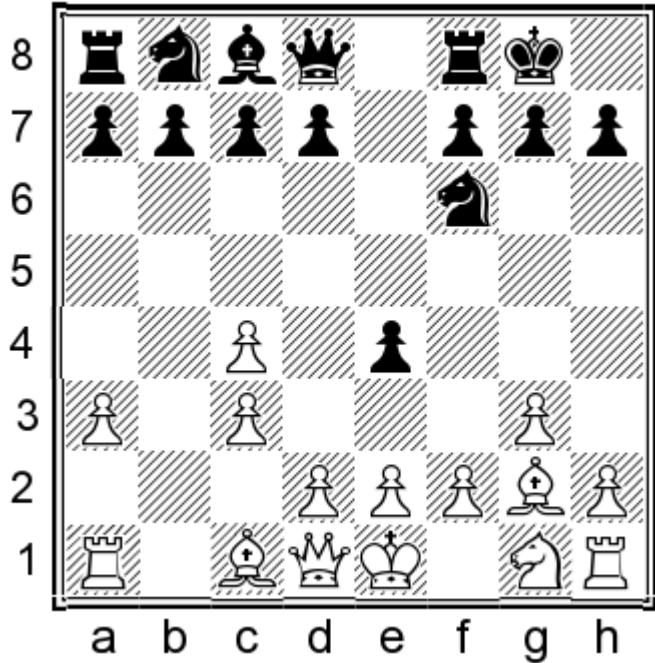
**Vasily Smyslov**

Moscow tt 1964 (4)

This encounter between Botvinnik and Smyslov took place in the team championships of the USSR, where the event brought together teams from the various republics, plus the sports societies Spartak, Trud, CSKA, Burevestnik and Lokomotiv. Mikhail Botvinnik played for Trud, which represented the trade unions. Modern Russian youngsters will probably have a hard time understanding what was meant by trade unions, but such organizations were very powerful and the team traditionally won medals in such events and fought for first place. Vasily Smyslov in his turn represented Burevestnik, the sporting organization for students and teachers of various levels.

The line-up on top board was tremendous – Mikhail Botvinnik, Vasily Smyslov, Tigran Petrosian, Mikhail Tal, Leonid Stein, Efim Geller and the strong master Georgy Borisenko. Botvinnik shone in this event and took the gold medal, with 4½ out of 6! Trud also won overall and Burevestnik, despite winning the individual match 6-4, were a point behind. This game played a significant role in the event, since Botvinnik managed to open his side's account against their main rivals.

## 1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3 Bb4 4.Bg2 0-0 5.a3 Bxc3 6.bxc3 e4!?



At the time, this was a novelty, and a very interesting one. Now the position assumes the characteristics of the Rossolimo Sicilian, with colours reversed.

**7.Nh3 Re8 8.0-0 d6 9.Nf4 b6 10.f3**

Not the most successful move from Botvinnik, and the seventh World Champion, after some thought, found a very strong reply. Why open the f-file for White's rook?

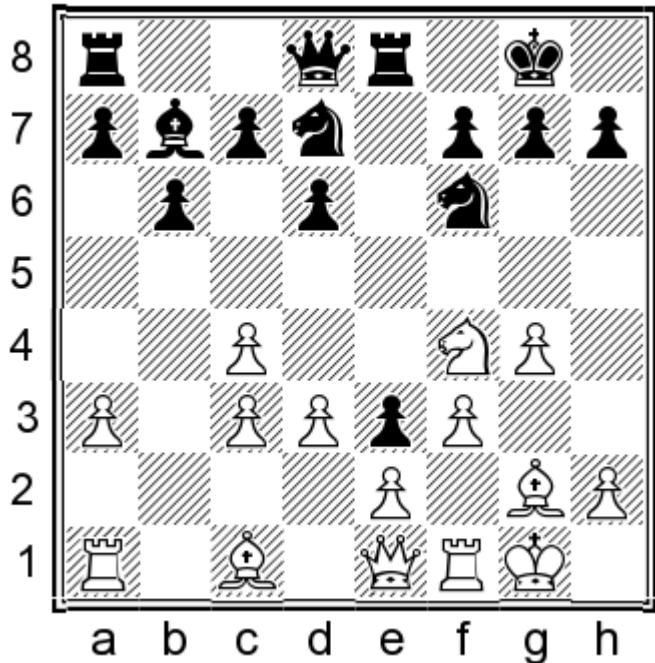
**10...e3!?**

Long before the famous 2nd match game Kasparov-Karpov, Seville Wch 1987.

**11.d3**

Taking the pawn with 11.dxe3 Ba6 12.e4 Nc6 is not good, as Black soon regains it and retains the better pawn structure. It would appear that White is 'on the ropes', but Botvinnik still has his favourite plan in reserve.

**11...Bb7 12.Qe1 Nbd7 13.g4**

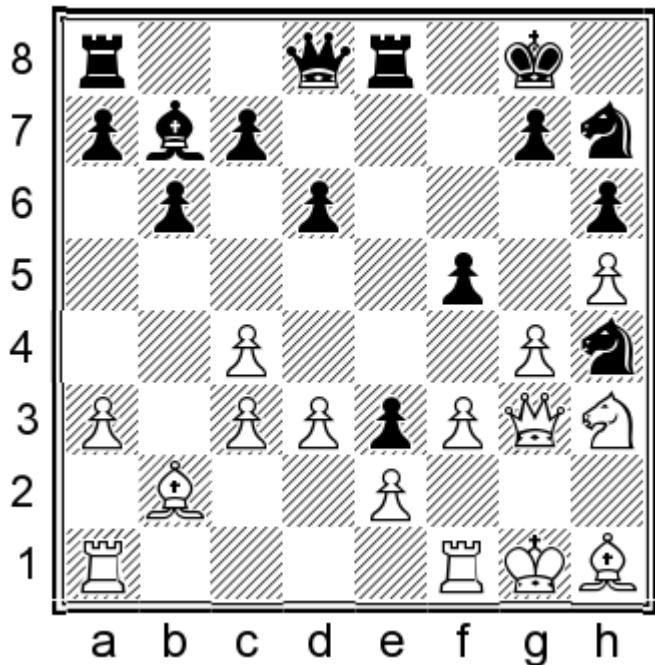


Not g2-g4, but g3-g4, but still unexpected and very effective! Thanks to the g4-pawn, White obtains counterplay, but it is still early to be thinking in terms of equality – Smyslov retains the initiative with the aid of a knight manoeuvre.

**13...h6 14.h4 Nf8 15.Qg3 Ng6 16.Nh3**

The immediate pawn advance looks good: 16.Nxg6 fxg6 17.f4 Bxg2 18.Qxg2 Qd7 19.f5 gxf5 20.gxf5, and already, for example, the capture on e3 is threatened because of the weakness of the rook on a8. Botvinnik evidently did not want to split his pawns too early and quietly retreats the knight.

**16...Nh7 17.h5 Nh4 18.Bh1 f5 19.Bb2**



**19...Qf6??!**

In his four-volume work, Botvinnik writes the following concerning this move: ‘The first moment in the game where Black can be criticized’ and suggests the move 19...Ng5. The move definitely has the right to exist, but

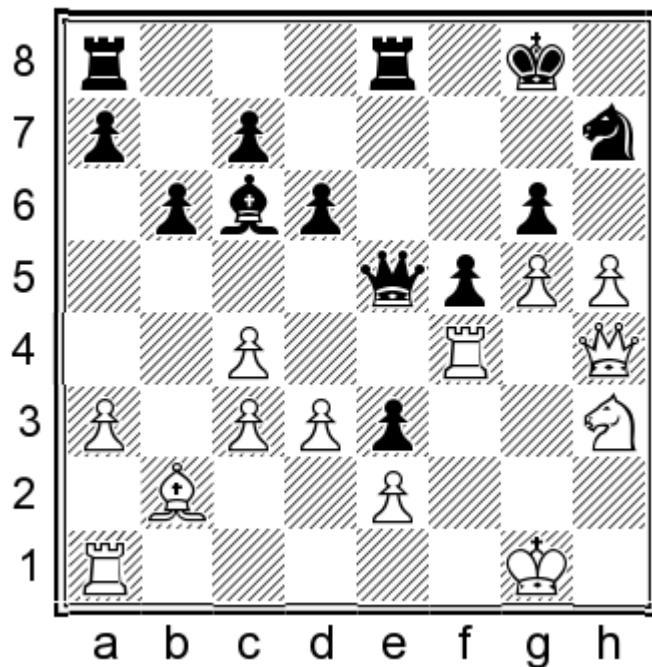
objectively one has to see through the computer variation 20.Nxg5 hxg5 21.f4 Bxh1 22.Kxh1 Re6!? 23.gxf5 Rh6 24.Kg1, and here only 24...g4! 25.Qxg4 Qf6, with the subsequent capture of the pawn on h5 and f5, leads to a large advantage for Black.

I would also not leave Smyslov's move without criticism, but I would suggest another interesting idea for Black. The rook on e8 has done its job on the central file and now it can be brought closer to the centre of the battle: 19...Rf8!?, and on 20.Nf4 there is 20...Qf6. Smyslov puts the queen on f6 immediately and immediately regrets it.

## 20.f4 Bxh1 21.g5!

An important inclusion, after which we can only speak of White having the advantage.

## 21...hxg5 22.fxg5 Qe5 23.Qxh4 Bc6 24.Rf4 g6



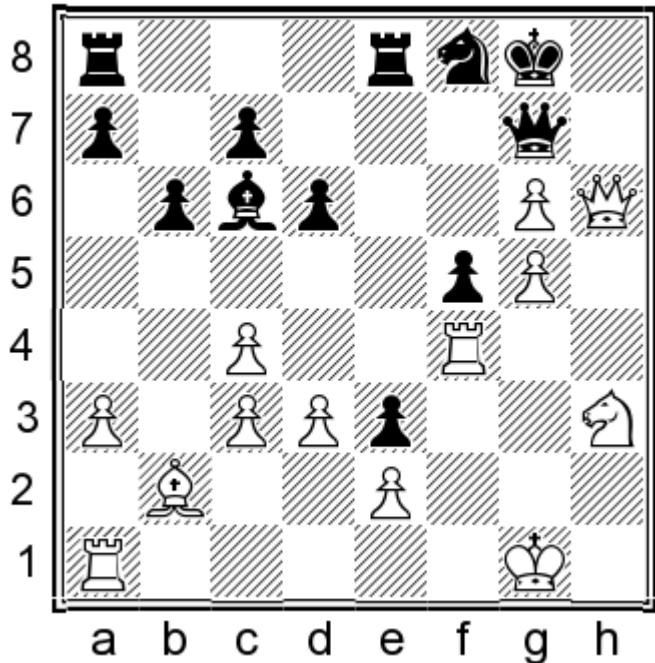
## 25.hxg6

Smyslov defends very ingeniously, winning tempi for the defence. Botvinnik correctly realizes that after the knight reaches f8, it will be too late to take the pawn, but he could also force Black himself to capture: 25.Rff1!? Nf8 26.Nf4 gxh5 27.d4 Qh8 28.Kh2 – for the moment, Black is holding, but the defence is very difficult. However, Botvinnik should not be criticized, as his method wins, although not without some help from his opponent.

## 25...Nf8 26.Qh6 Qg7?

Apparently the decisive mistake, which Botvinnik in his book passes by without comment. After the accurate 26...Re7! White has nothing better than 27.d4, after which the queen can now be brought 'back to base' with 27...Qg7 28.Rxf5 Nxg6 29.Raf1, and now, unlike in the game, Black has 29...Bd7, leading to mass exchanges.

After the move 26...Qg7, White has effectively an extra tempo compared to the above variations, which allows him to obtain a decisive advantage.



**27.Rxf5 Nxg6 28.Raf1 Rf8**

As already pointed out, here the move 28...Bd7 is impossible: 29.Qxg7+ Kxg7 30.Rf7+.

**29.Rf6 Qxh6 30.gxh6 Rxf6 31.Rxf6**

After a successful attack the sixth World Champion has an extra pawn and is already prepared to take another. Smyslov, of course, battles on, but unsuccessfully.

**31...Kh7 32.Bc1 Rg8 33.Ng5+ Kxh6 34.Bxe3+–**

As well as the pawn deficit, Black has a very weak king and uncoordinated pieces. Smyslov resigned ten moves later. Thus, the working professors beat the students and teachers!

## Chapter 3

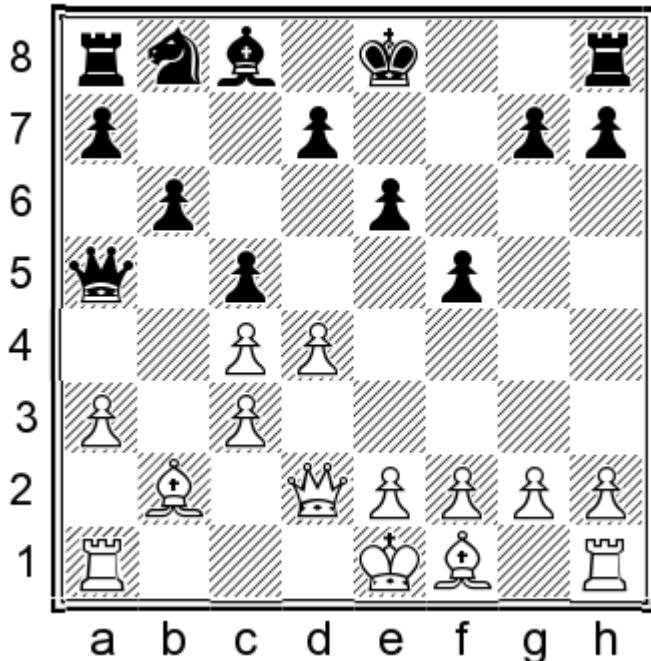
# Isaak Lipnitsky's favourite position

Mikhail Botvinnik not only liked to play g2-g4 himself, but also rated very highly Isaak Lipnitsky's book *Questions of Contemporary Chess Theory*, which contains, besides the majority of the above examples from the games of the sixth World Champion, a particularly beautiful example of the g-pawn battering ram.

Nowadays, the name Lipnitsky says little to the modern reader, but, just as the prematurely deceased Leonid Stein, this was a player with a very interesting, striking style, and great practical strength. He also died tragically early, at just 35.

Lipnitsky won the Ukrainian Championship, regularly qualified for the final of the USSR Championship, and in 1950 was silver medallist in this marathon tournament. He had an equal score against Smyslov, Keres, Bronstein and Tal, drew with Botvinnik and had a win against Petrosian to his credit. In the database, he has only 159 games, but the older generation of Soviet players always pronounced the name Isaak Lipnitsky with respect.

The GM's eternal memorial was the above-mentioned book, which came out in 1956. In John Collins' book on Bobby Fischer, (a fact unearthed by Yakov Zusmanovich), it is stated that the future American World Champion obtained Lipnitsky's book when still quite young and virtually slept with it under his pillow! It is a striking textbook on dynamics, the battle for the initiative and the linkage between the opening and the middlegame, and was recommended to readers by the great trainer Mark Dvoretsky. Having been reprinted in Dvoretsky's book, Lipnitsky's famous position then appeared in many other publications. Here it is.



Here is what Isaak Lipnitsky says: 'White's bishop on b2 is out of play and his c4-pawn weak. With his last move 10...b6 Black clearly declares his plan: pressure against the c4-pawn by means of ...Ba6, ...Qa4, ...Nc6-a5. After superficial play, White can find himself in trouble. Can he force the favourable (for himself) move ...c5xd4 ?

Concretely assessing the characteristics of the position, White plays 11.g4!!.. This move sharply changes the situation. Black already finds that he cannot besiege the pawn...

But this move would not even enter the head of a player who was bound by dogmatic ideas. After all, the move breaks a number of rules:

- it neglects development;
- it launches an unprepared attack;

– it weakens the king's cover, etc.

Blindly following these rules, a dogmatic player would probably play 11.e3, and would later no doubt wonder why 'correct' play had not worked out for him.

But the whole point is that in this particular position, the above rules do not apply and do not govern the position, so constructing one's play in accordance with them is a mistake. The move 11.g2-g4!! is an example of a purely creative approach to the position. But does this concrete, creative decision breach chess principles? Definitely not!

The concrete characteristics of this position are as follows:

- the majority of the black pieces are located on the queenside and only his queen is currently in play;
- Black's kingside has no piece protection.

It is obvious that, in such conditions, it favours White to start a sharp battle on the kingside, where he currently has several pieces available. Thus, with a concrete approach to the position, one can see that the chess rule which applies most of all in this position is: strike the blow at the most vulnerable point in the opponent's position.'

The position is probably one Lipnitsky reached in analysis (his book does not give any lead-up moves) or occurred in a little-known game – there is no such game in the database. It probably arose after

#### **1.d4 e6 2.c4 Bb4+ 3.Nc3 f5**

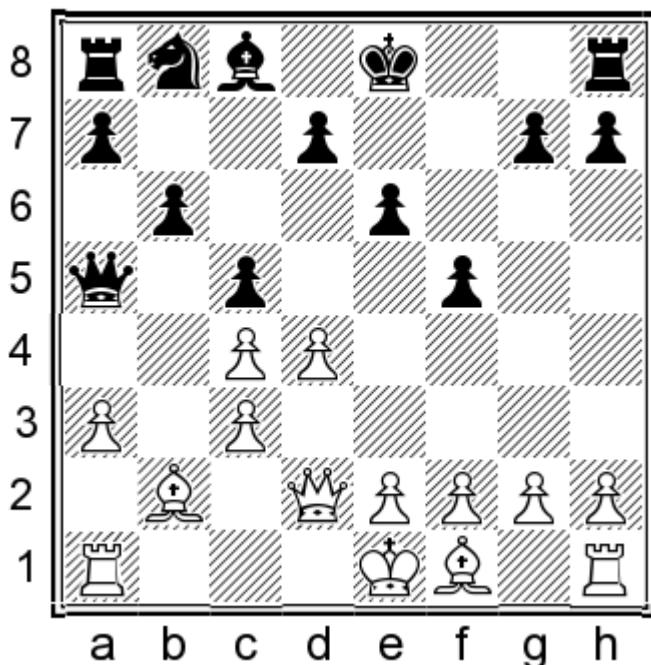
– this cunning hybrid of the Dutch and the Nimzo-Indian defences was worked out by Alapin and then later played quite often by Keres. Several times, this 'Dutch Nimzo-Indian' was seen in the practice of Botvinnik himself and in our days it is often played by Dmitry Andreikin.

Most likely, the game continued

#### **4.Nf3 Nf6 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Ne4 7.Qc2 c5 8.Nd2 Qa5**

Or 8...Nxd2. After this, Lipnitsky's position almost arose in the game Agababean-Uskova from the 1994 Moscow Olympiad, but now instead of 9.Qxd2 Qa5 10.Bb2 b6, there unfortunately occurred 9.Bxd2.

#### **9.Bb2 Nxd2 10.Qxd2 b6**



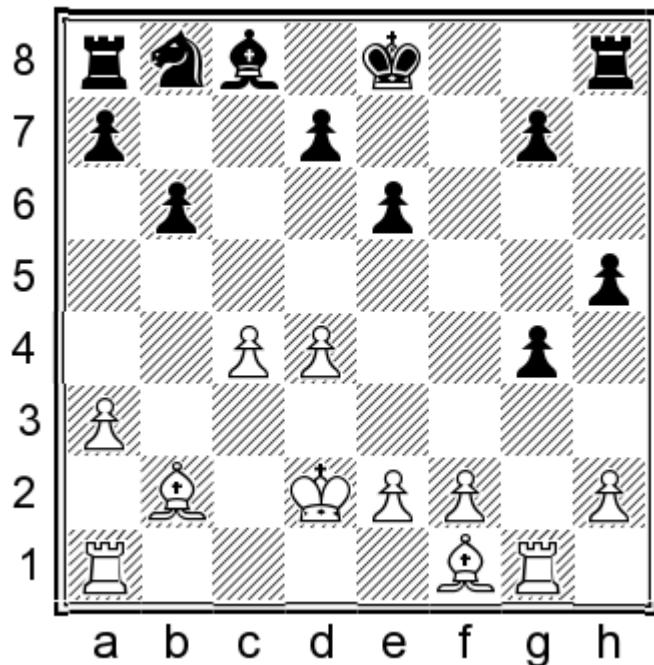
We already know that the correct move is

#### **11.g4!**

The psychological strength (not to mention the chess strength!) of the blow g2-g4 is so great that nobody in 60 years has thought of trying to defend Black's position. This is despite the white bishop on b2 being cut off and unable to take part in the attack.

## 11...Bb7

Isaak Lipnitsky correctly points out that Black has no time to go after the c4-pawn: 11...Ba6? 12.gxf5 Bxc4 (12...exf5 13.Qe3+) 13.Bg2 Nc6 14.fxe6 with a tremendous attack for White, and it is also bad to take the foot-soldier on the kingside: 11...fxg4? 12.Bg2. Therefore the correct reply is Lipnitsky's 11...cx d4!. On 12.gxf5 Black obtains good compensation for the pawn with 12...Qxf5?! (dangerous is 12...dxc3?! 13.Bxc3 Qxf5 14.Bg2 and the bishops are opened up) 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.Rg1 0-0 15.Qe3 d5. Therefore, 12.cxd4 Qxd2+ 13.Kxd2 fxg4 14.Rg1 h5



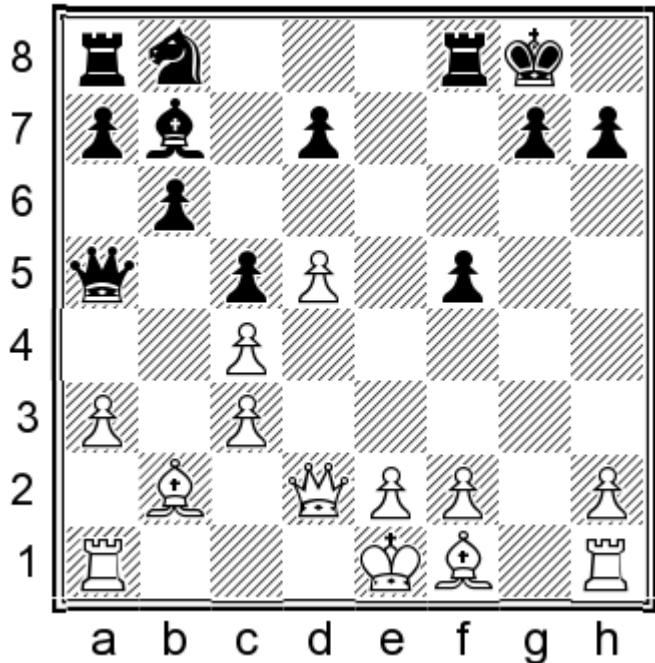
15.h3, but now Black is not obliged to play 15...gxh3 16.Bxh3, but instead has 15...Nc6! 16.hxg4 (probably better is 16.Bg2 Bb7, but does Black have any real problems here?) 16...Na5 and who is better? There is a threat of a fork on b3, and Black's plans include pressure on c4 whilst the white pieces are still largely on their starting squares.

But the development of the bishop does not lose, either. On the contrary, for example, many players whom I have invited to look at the position consider that from a practical viewpoint, Black should keep the queens on and fight for the initiative, without fearing sacrifices. But computer analysis shows that White has some further unexpected resources!

## 12.d5

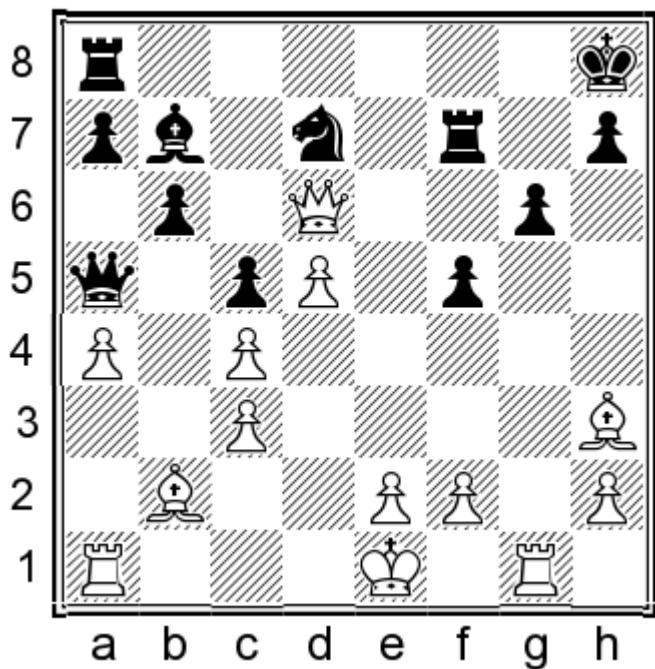
On 12.Rg1 there is 12...f4! 13.Qxf4 cxd4 14.Qxd4 0-0 – White has an extra pawn but a terrible king. The only units in play are the queen and Lipnitsky's pawn, while Black can attack all the vulnerable points with his active forces.

## 12...0-0 13.gxf5 exf5



Lipnitsky here stops calculating after 14.Rg1, with an unfavourable assessment for Black, but after 14...Qa4 does White have anything better than 15.Qg5 Rf7 16.Qd8+ Rf8 or 15.Bh3 g6 16.Qh6 Qc2 17.Rxg6+ hxg6 18.Qxg6+ with a draw?

It is more subtle to take the square from the black queen with 14.a4!? d6 15.Rg1 Nd7 (15...Kh8? 16.Qg5!) followed by 16.Qh6 Rf7 17.Bh3 (17.Qxd6?! Re8 18.e3 Ne5 gives Black splendid compensation) 17...Kh8 18.Qxd6 g6 (18...Re8 19.Bxf5 Ne5 20.Be6 Nxc4 21.Qg3 Rfe7 22.Bc1).



How should one play in this irrational position? A strong computer confidently advises 19.Rg3 Re8 20.Re3!?!? 20...Rxe3 21.fxe3, and claims an advantage for White. Despite the obvious inadequacies of the white pawn structure, the threat of e3-e4 outweighs Black's pressure against c4!

What conclusions can we draw from this analysis? Isaak Lipnitsky undoubtedly suggested the strongest move in the position (11.d5 or 11.Rg1 could transpose), but his conclusion that White immediately obtains a large advantage of tremendous attack, was clearly premature. Even so, one cannot but be amazed that as far back as 1956, Lipnitsky realized the best defence was the exchange on d4, despite the fact that it brings alive White's bishop on b2.

However, we saw above that even the strongest players in the world often crumbled when faced with such a blow as

g2-g4 in the hands of the sixth World Champion. It would not be at all easy for Black to find all these variations in the Lipnitsky position, even if it were played by a strong grandmaster.

Now let us try to confirm or refute this with concrete examples, moving seamlessly from the classics of the sixth World Champion to contemporary theoretical *tabiyas*, in which White throws forward the pawn from g2 to g4!

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## Part II

# The Dutch Defence

### Some history

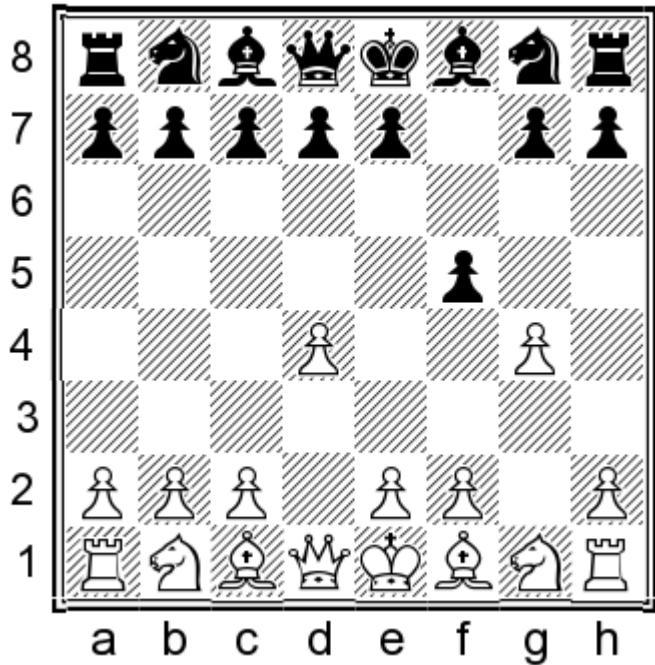
The Dutch is an aggressive opening, which aims at seizing the initiative. It has never been hugely popular, but has featured in the opening repertoires of many world champions, beginning with Steinitz and ending with Carlsen. Botvinnik was no exception and made a great contribution to the development of the Stonewall.

It is considered that the inventor of the defence was a Dutch player called Elias Stein, who published the first analysis of the opening in the book *Nouvel essai sur le jeu des Echecs*, in 1789! From the very beginning, the life of the move 1...f7-f5, temporarily weakening the position of the black king, evoked in White a strong desire to remove the bold pawn immediately and develop an attack on the weakened black king.

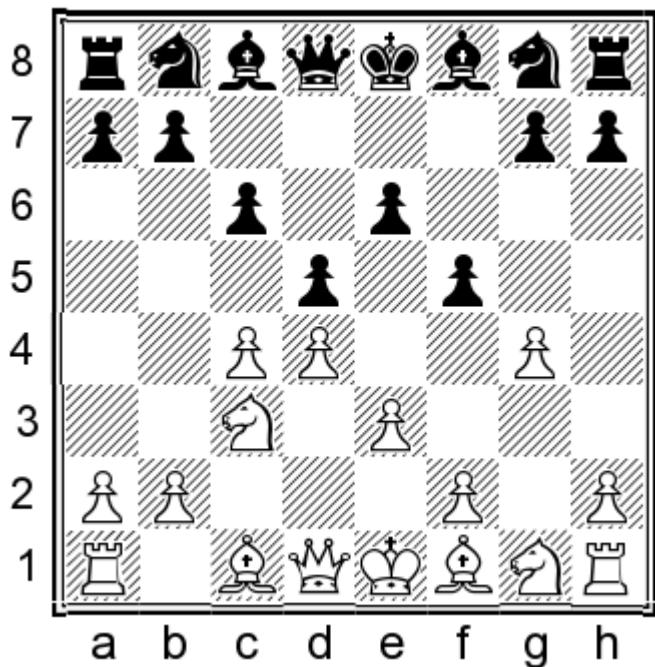
The leader of the English chess school, Howard Staunton, immediately found the gambit 2.e2-e4!?, which was tested in supertournaments and matches between the best players of the time and it was only thanks to the influence of the first World Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, that White began to play the fianchetto systems which are more common to our eyes these days. Even so, periodically White would try the strategy of a battering ram with h2-h4-h5 against the Leningrad System and various lines involving g2-g4 against the Stonewall. For example, as well as the line we will examine below, it is worth considering 1.d4 f5 2.Nf3 e6 3.h3 Nf6 4.g4!?, as played by Alexander Grischuk and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

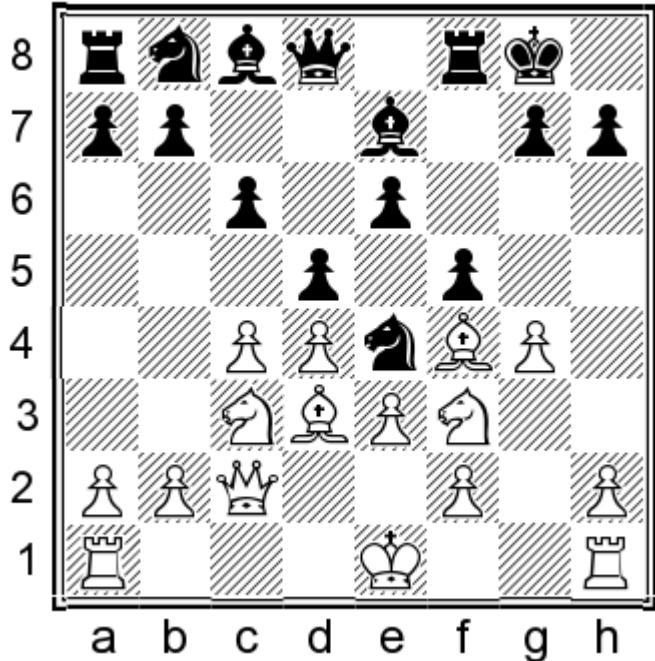
### Conception

Objectively, the immediate attack 2.g4 (Krejcik's Gambit) can surprise only an inexperienced practitioner of the Dutch Defence. In addition, the white king is now weakened! In my youth, I had the opportunity to meet with the famous grandmaster and Dutch Defence expert Vladimir Malaniuk (1957-2017). Malaniuk was a very stately, distinguished man – he had served in the naval forces, had broad shoulders, a dark moustache, and enviable composure. But when opponents played some kind of variation such as 2.g2-g4 against Vladimir Pavlovich, his whole outward appearance changed – his eyes burned, and his hands twisted into a real knot, as if he was already rubbing his hands together in anticipating of the coming point. And his scores in such branches were such as even world champions could envy. However, in the latest computer era, Krejcik's Gambit began to sparkle with new colours, and even Malaniuk almost once slipped on the ice of the white attacking plan.



On the other hand, once White has already carried out the necessary mobilization, the attack g2-g4 can be a formidable weapon. Very often this technique is found in a kind of hybrid of the Slav and Dutch defences, when after constructing the triangle d5, e6, c6, Black suddenly changes his plans and plays...f7-f5:

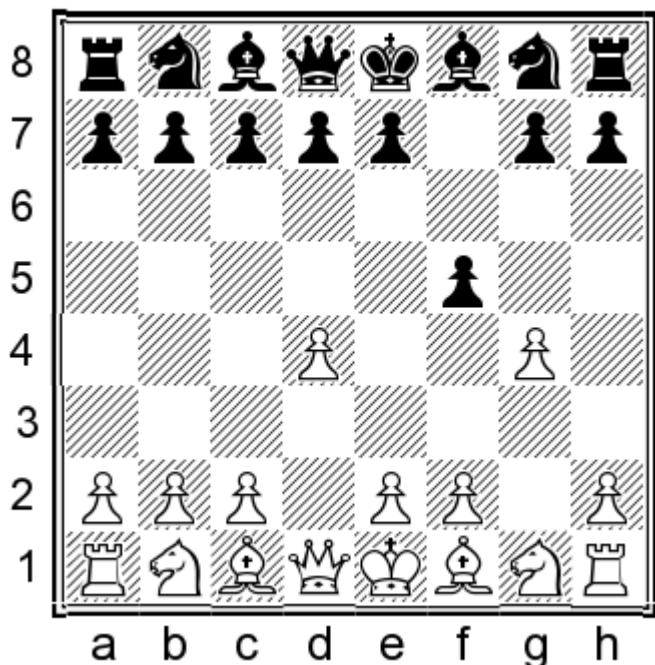




Yes, in this case, White usually can't return to the classical plans with the bishop on g2, but he is ahead of the opponent in development (Black has moved only pawns!) and so can afford an aggressive attack a la Botvinnik.

## *Chapter 4* The Krejcik Gambit

1.d4 f5 2.g4!?



### Some history

The move 2.g2-g4 was proposed by the Austrian master Josef Krejcik (1885-1957). Krejcik has gone down in history not only as a composer and study artist, but as the head of the Austrian chess federation. The maestro greatly

appreciated the beauty of chess, and the sacrifice was his main weapon – only gambits were included in the repertoire of the Austrian! Few people supported Krejcik's creative impulse, and a surge in the popularity of the gambit happened only at the turn of the millennium.

## Important nuances

After 2.g2-g4, Black faces a problem similar to that which the Danish Prince Hamlet once faced. Namely – to take or not to take? The reply 2...d5 promotes development, whilst on 2...fxg4 White can occupy the centre with 3.e4 or try to open the h-file by 3.h2-h3. Black has an extra pawn, but is it worth the effort to save it? By the way, in this second case, after 3.h3, Black again faces a similar problem – should he hold on to the material or return it by ...g4-g3?

The games below show that greed in chess can be punished, and White has generally been successful in those cases where Black's mind was fascinated by the idea of a material advantage! Then, in fact, the rook on h1 begins to play from its original square, eyeing the black camp threateningly, and a host of other tactical motifs appear. On the other hand, reliable development has usually provided the practitioners of the Dutch Defence with good practical results.

### Game 12

**Timur Gareev** 2618

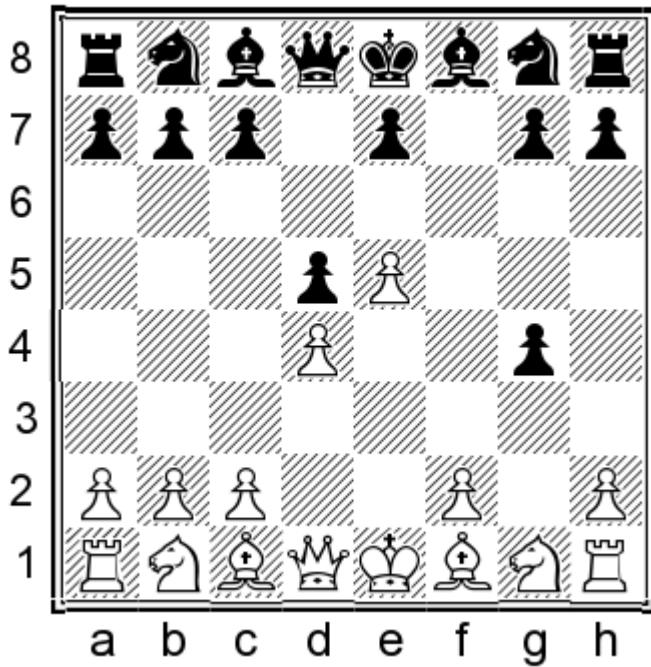
**Anthony McCarthy**

Las Vegas 2016 (blindfold simul)

**1.d4 f5 2.g4**

Timur Gareev is a very striking and unusual person. Quite recently, the well-known GM astounded the chess world with a record blindfold simultaneous, achieving a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*, and did a good deal to get chess on TV. This game was played in one of Timur's blindfold simul.

**2...fxg4 3.e4 d5 4.e5**



**4...Bf5**

It is more principled to confront White with counterplay, and after 4...c5! Black has in the main done well, starting with the game Menacho-Machulsky, Cadiz 1991, which went 5.dxc5 Nc6 6.Bb5 d4!?, and ending with the game Strovsky-Bajarani, Zolochiv 2017, in which play continued 5.c3 Nc6 6.h3 cxd4 7.cxd4 Qb6 8.Ne2 gxh3 9.Bxh3

Bxh3 10.Rxh3 e6.

### 5.h3 Qd7

Much too cooperative is 5...gxh3 6.Bxh3 Bxh3? 7.Nxh3, and Black has clear problems with the defence of the squares e6 and h7.

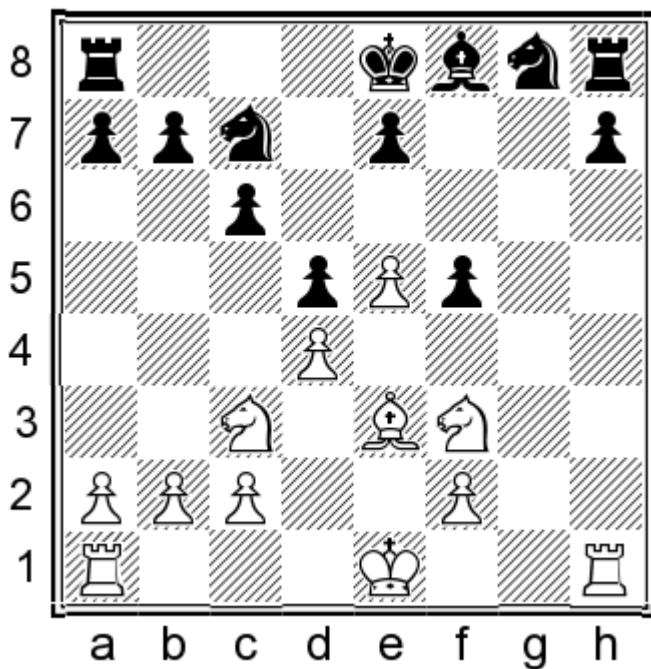
### 6.Nc3 gxh3?!

Black cannot stand it and after all opens the h-file for the white pieces. It was more logical to develop with 6...Nc6.

### 7.Bxh3 c6?!

It was still not too late for 7...g6, but the simul opponent clearly thought that with an extra pawn, he could have something in reserve in the endgame.

**8.Qh5+ g6 9.Bxf5 Qxf5 10.Qxf5 gxf5 11.Nf3 Na6 12.Be3 Ne7**



### 13.Ne2!

Now it turns out that all of Gareev's pieces will surround the enemy king. For example, after 13...e6 14.Nf4 h6 15.0-0 Ne7 16.Nd3 Bg7 17.Rh5 White regains the h-pawn by force and continues to penetrate deep into the enemy camp. It is very much like the Benko Gambit, but with both colours and flanks reversed!

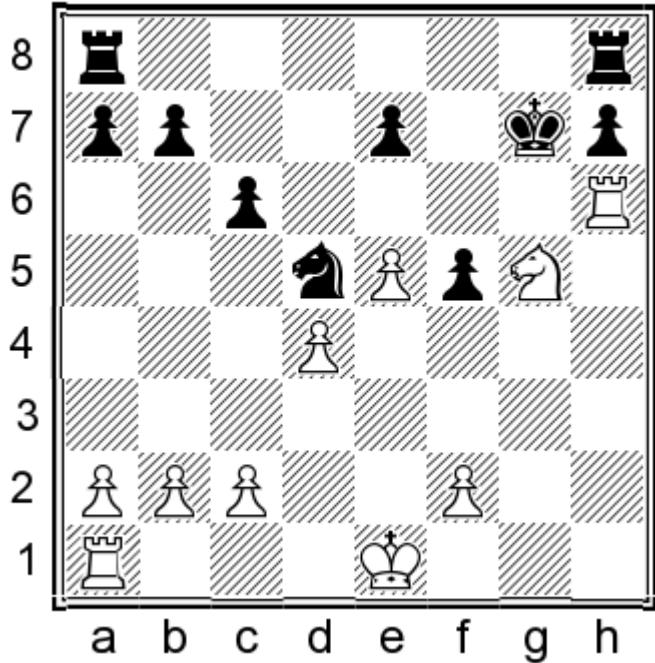
### 13...Bg7 14.Nf4 Bh6?!

A cunning idea. Black allows White to regain the pawn, but at the same time he is able to breathe more freely.

### 15.Nxd5 Nxd5 16.Bxh6 Nxh6 17.Rxh6 Kf7 18.Ng5+??

After the simple 18.Kd2 White has an undeniable advantage, but maybe Timur wanted to play for beauty.

### 18...Kg7



**19.Re6?? h6! 20.c4 hxg5 21.cxd5**

Maybe Gareev wanted to please the spectators in Las Vegas by battling with connected passed pawns against a rook after 21...Rh1+? 22.Kd2 Rxal 23.Rxe7+ Kf8 24.d6, or maybe he just rather banally forgot the move 19...h6 had been played. How can one spot this little pawn when blindfolded and playing on ten boards?

**21...Kf7!**

Now he has no compensation for the rook.

**22.Rxe7+ Kxe7 23.d6+ Ke6 24.0-0-0 Rh2 0-1**

A shame, because we could have had a textbook game!

### Game 13

**Karen Movsziszian 2490**

**Ferdinand Stoll 2250**

Bad Wörishofen 1997 (5)

**1.d4 f5 2.g4!? fxg4 3.e4 d5**

Very interesting is 3...e5! 4.dxe5 Nc6 5.Qxg4 d6, and Black regains the e5-pawn with a comfortable position, as seen in the game between two well-known female players of the past, Kozlovskaya-Prudnikova, Riazan 1992.

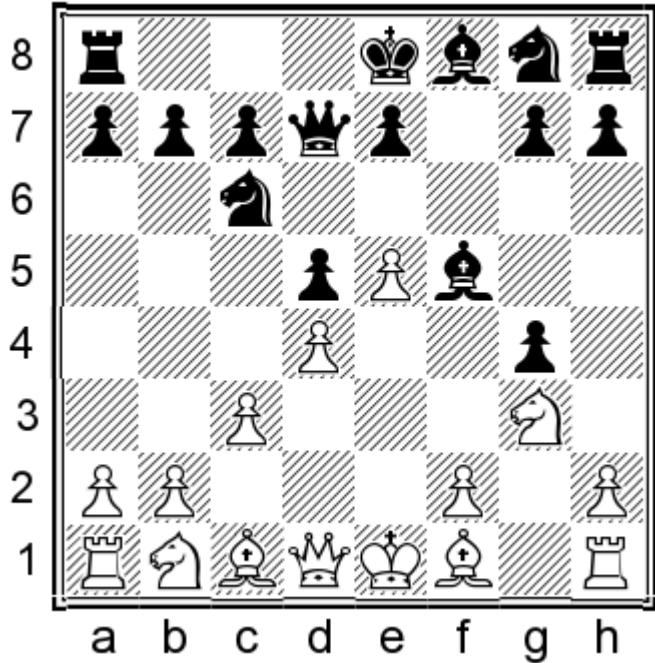
**4.e5 Bf5 5.Ne2**

This time White does not immediate try to open the h-file, but first takes aim at the Bf5.

**5...Qd7**

As in the previous game, 5...c5! was logical.

**6.Ng3 Nc6 7.c3**



**7...g6?!**

If 7...0-0-0 8.h3 Black is rescued by the only move 8...Bxb1 (8...gxh3?? 9.Nxf5 Qxf5 10.Bxh3+–; 8...h5? 9.Nxf5 Qxf5 10.Bd3 Qf3 11.Qxf3 gxf3 12.Bf5+ Kb8 13.Nd2±) 9.Rxb1 gxh3 10.Bxh3 e6 11.Nh5, but here too, White has excellent compensation for the pawn. However, he should retain the key defender of the light squares by 7...Bg6!.

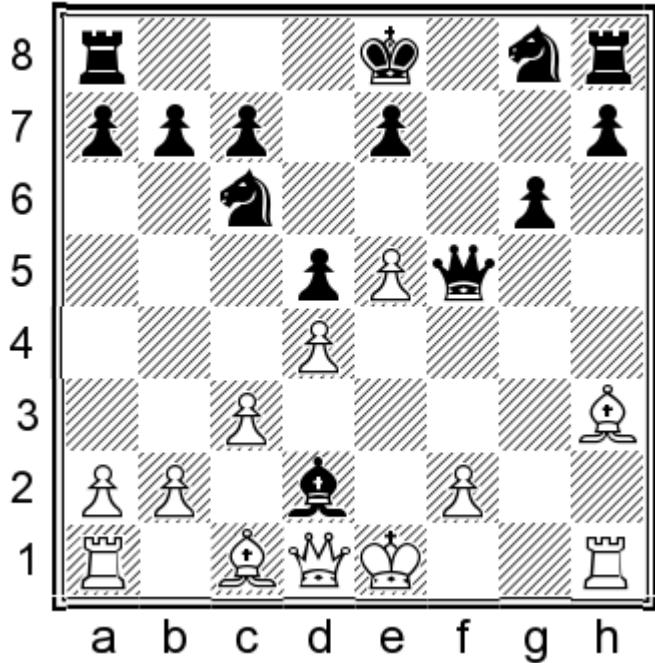
**8.h3 gxh3 9.Nxf5 Qxf5**

Obviously, things are bad for Black after 9...gxf5 10.Qh5+ Kd8 11.Bxh3±; however, after the capture by the queen things do not look so clear – for example, a check is threatened on e4. Tempting is 10.Rxh3, but Karen Movsziszian plays a stronger move, which accords with the main principle of chess – one must play with all the pieces!

**10.Nd2! Bh6?!**

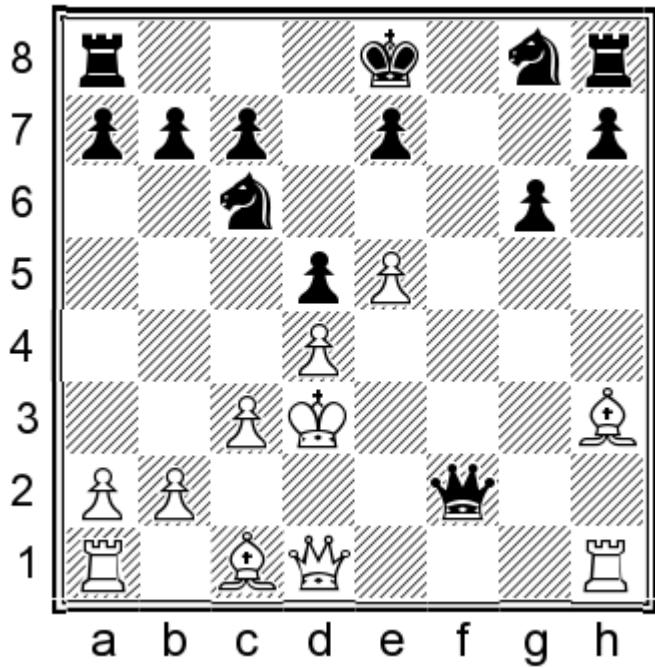
The last chance to adopt a defensive stance was 10...e6 11.Bxh3 Qf7 12.Qg4 Nd8. Now the Armenian GM carries out a splendid attack, in which he does not fear even to bring his king into the centre of the board!

**11.Bxh3! Bxd2+**



How to recapture, so as not to lose a rook?

**12.Kxd2! Qxf2+ 13.Kd3**



**13...Qg3+?**

The white king on d3 is solidly defended by its pieces, whilst its black colleague is poorly placed, having nowhere to run to, and is soon about to come under fire.

There would still have been some intrigue after the pawn push 13...h5!? 14.Rf1 Qh4 15.Qf3 Nh6 with the idea of going into an inferior endgame after 16.Bxh6 Qe4+, but White is not obliged to take on h6 and has excellent alternative possibilities.

**14.Be3 Nxe5+**

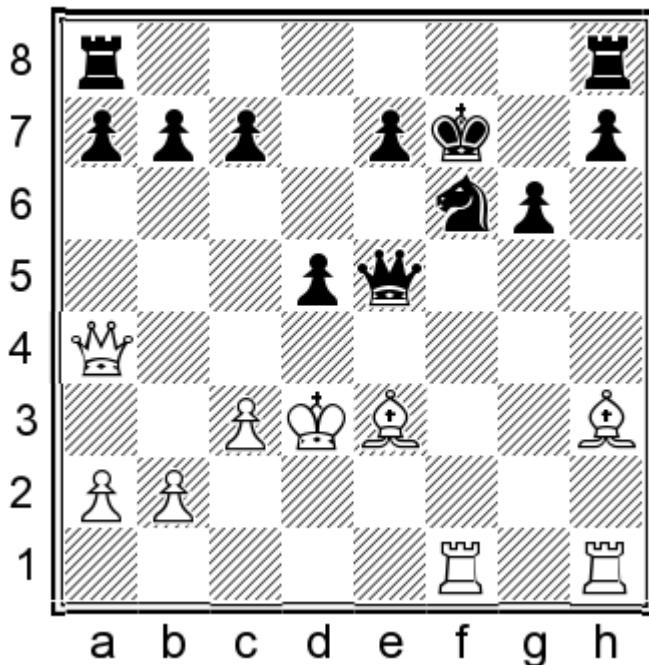
A nice mate arises after 14...Nh6 15.Qe2 0-0 16.Be6+ Nf7 17.Rag1 Ncxe5+ 18.dxe5 Qxe5 19.Rxg6+ hxg6 20.Bd4

$\text{Qxe2+ } 21.\text{Kxe2}$  (pointed out by Movsziszian). In the game, White also wins with a direct attack. Black has to give up the knight, so as to save his queen from being trapped, but he does not manage to survive.

**15.dxe5 Qxe5 16.Qa4+ Kf7**

Not better was  $16\dots\text{c6 } 17.\text{Bf4}$ .

**17.Raf1+ Nf6**



**18.Rxf6+! Qxf6**

The game also ends after  $18\dots\text{exf6 } 19.\text{Qd7+ Qe7 } 20.\text{Be6+ Kf8 } 21.\text{Bh6+}$ ;  $18\dots\text{Kxf6 } 19.\text{Bd4}$ .

**19.Rf1**

Black resigned.

Game 14

Matthieu Cornette 2552

Valentin Panbukchian 2375

Malakoff 2010 (3)

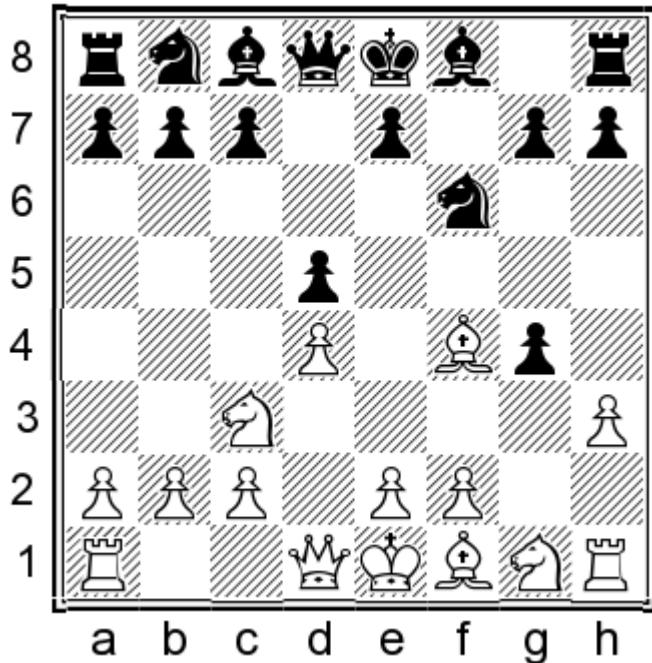
**1.d4 f5 2.g4 fxg4 3.h3**

The French GM manages without 3.e4, counting on taking control of the centre with pieces.

**3...d5 4.Nc3 Nf6**

Black can rightly look into the counter-gambit  $4\dots\text{e5!?$  Baureis-Kühl, Eckernförde 2001, although it has not been tested in tournament practice.

**5.Bf4**



**5...Bf5?!**

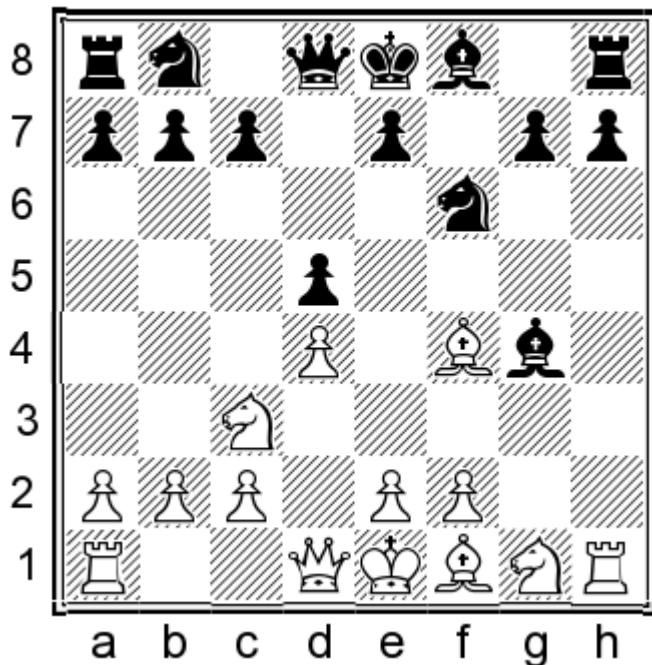
In hanging onto the material, Black gradually slips into a quagmire and will be swept away by the force of Cornette's attack.

**Test 6.** Can you react correctly to the French grandmaster's attacking set-up?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Here again, 5...c5! was essential – we are already familiar with this typical counter-blow at the white centre.

**6.hxg4 Bxg4**



**7.Qd3!**

A splendid multi-purpose move. The queen looks at b5, takes aim at the h7-pawn and also helps to support e2-e4.

**7...Nc6 8.0-0-0 e6 9.f3 Bh5**

An important tactical nuance, as he cannot play 9...Bf5 10.e4 dxe4 (on 10...Bg6 unpleasant is 11.Qe3!) 11.fxe4 Nxe4 12.Nxe4 Qd5 13.Re1 Qxa2 14.c3, and the piece is stronger than the black pawns, whilst White's king is safe.

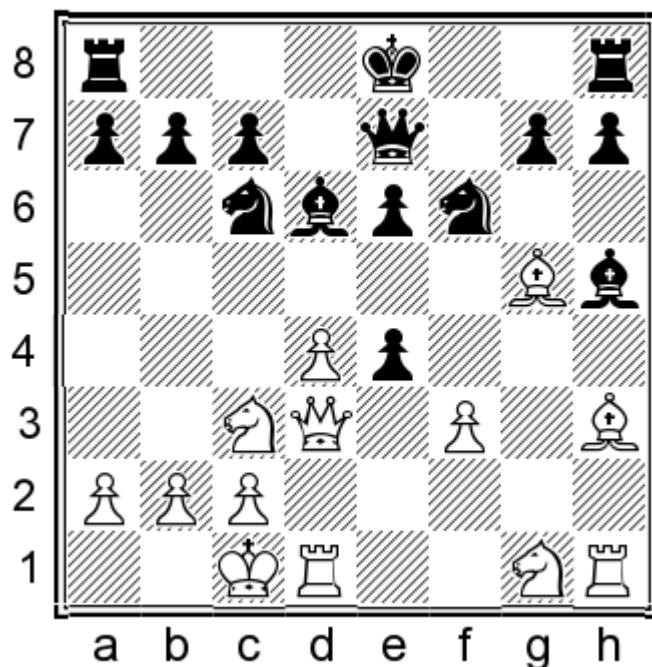
**10.Bh3 Bd6?!**

It was essential immediately to evacuate the king to the long side: 10...Qd7, although after 11.e4 White's initiative is very strong.

**11.Bg5! Qe7?**

During a battle, the priceless one is sometimes the bugler who sounds the retreat: 'All back!' – 11...Bf7 12.e4 Be7. Black has mobilized his kingside, but suddenly disaster strikes from the other wing.

**12.e4 dxe4**



**13.Qb5!**

A terrible double blow at b7 and the Bh5, and Valentin Panbukchian has to surrender.

**13...0-0 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Qxh5 g6 16.Bxe6+ 1-0**

Finally, it's time to showcase the classic black games. At one time, the play of the aforementioned Vladimir Malaniuk made a big impression on me. His battles with future European champion Pavel Tregubov in 1996 I studied many years ago in the journal *Shakhmaty v Rossiiya* – a wonderful, but, alas, long-extinct publication.

Game 15

Pavel Tregubov 2470

Vladimir Malaniuk 2585

Moscow 1996 (6)

## 1.d4 f5 2.g4 d5

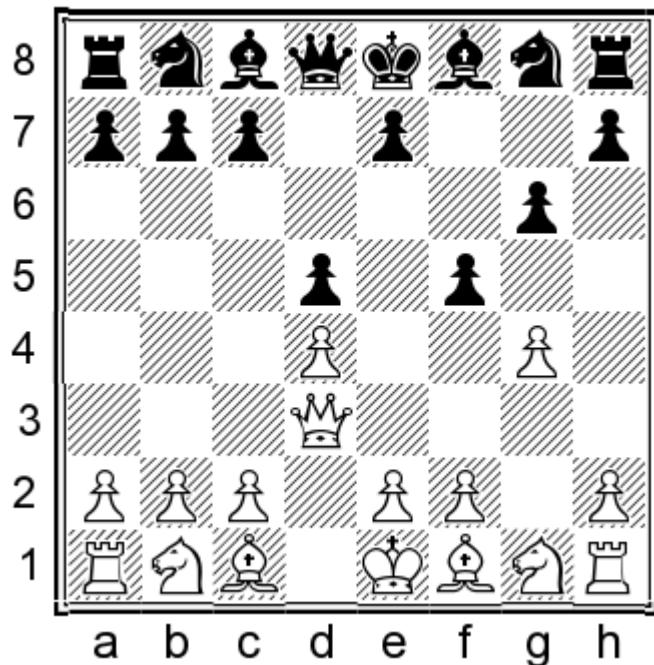
At a tournament in Spain the same year the same players had a game which went 2...fxg4 3.h3 g3!? (Malaniuk immediately returns the pawn, to keep the h-file closed!) 4.fxg3 Nf6 5.Nc3 d5 6.Bg2 e6 7.Nf3 (7.e4!?) 7...Bd6 8.Ne5 c5 9.Bf4 Nh5! Tregubov-Malaniuk, Linares 1996 – Black obtained an excellent position and went on to win.

## 3.Qd3!?

Movsziszian played 3.g5 here, whilst GM Teske played 3.gxf5, but it was Tregubov's move which breathed new life into Krejcik's half-forgotten gambit. After all, we are taught as children not to develop the queen before the minor pieces! The vulnerable position of the most powerful piece is definitely a clear minus, but the plusses of its position on d3 are clearly demonstrated in the present game.

## 3...g6

3...e6 is not very attractive because of its passivity, whilst after 3...fxg4 4.h3 a new layer of interesting positions opens up, where Black has a choice between holding with 4...Nf6 and returning the pawn by 4...g3.



## 4.gxf5?

The tempting idea to attack b7 proves incorrect and is instructively refuted. Many years later, our hero was faced by a compatriot with 4.g5! Bg7 5.h4 Nc6 6.Nf3 e5 7.dxe5 Nxe5 8.Nxe5 Bxe5 9.Be3 Ne7 10.Nc3 c6 11.0-0-0 Be6 12.Bd4 Qd6 13.e3 h5!?, Kislynsky-Malaniuk, Wroclaw 2011 – White controls the central dark squares and his advantage is underlined by the transfer of the knight to f4 by means of 14.Ne2!.

A further five years later, the former Candidates match finalist Gata Kamsky suffered a defeat against a young player of Algerian descent: 4...e6 5.h4 Bg7 6.h5 Nc6 7.Nf3 Qd6 8.a3 Nge7 9.h6 Bf8 10.Rh4 b6 11.Bf4± with total domination of the dark squares, Bellahcene-Kamsky, Karlsruhe 2016.

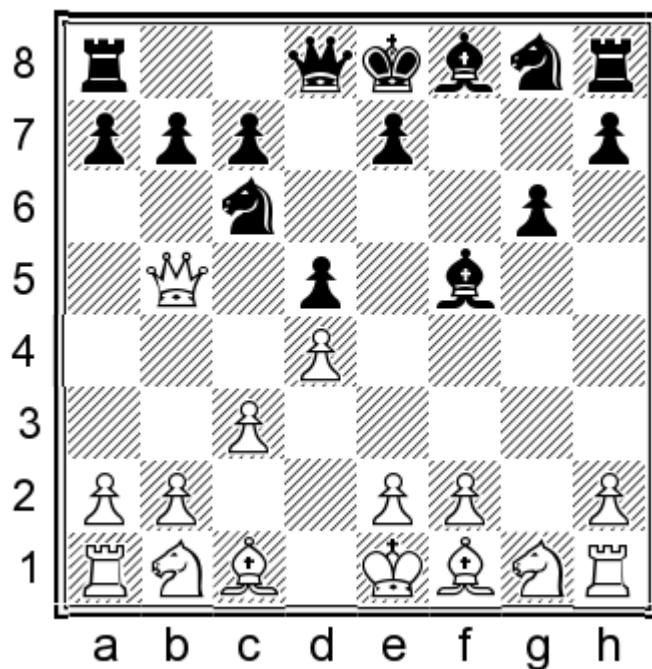
**Test 7.** What should Black do in reply to such a dangerous white flank attack?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Probably here too it is necessary to begin the battle for the central squares with 4...c5!? (Salewski-Klawa, Germany tt 2011/12). Of the many tempting possibilities, is it not correct to recall the old adage that a flank attack is best met by a counter in the centre?

**4...Bxf5 5.Qb5+ Nc6 6.c3**

Not 6.Qxb7? because of 6...Nxd4 7.Na3 e5!, but now surely Black should defend the b7-pawn?



**6...Qd6!**

It is very striking how Black replies to White's queen manoeuvre Qd1-d3 with a symmetrical answer!

**7.Bh3**

Again White cannot play 7.Qxb7? Rb8 8.Qa6 Nxd4 9.Qa4+ (9.Qxd6 Nc2+ 10.Kd1 cxd6+) 9...Nc6 with a huge development advantage for Black.

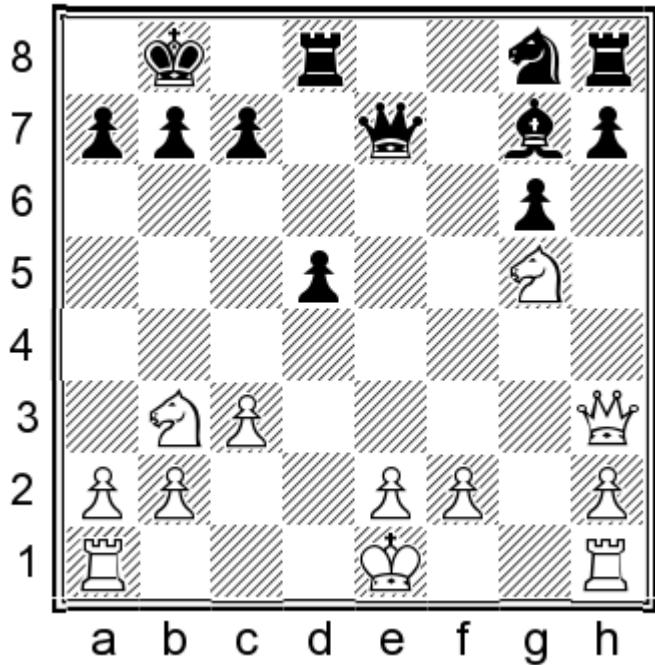
**7...Bxh3 8.Nxh3 0-0-0 9.Bf4 Qd7 10.Qd3**

Pavel Tregubov brings the queen back into play and has managed to bring several pieces out also, but the important thing is that White's pawn structure is seriously weakened by the advance of the g-pawn, which is underlined by Malaniuk's next moves.

**10...Bg7 11.Nd2 e5 12.dxe5 Nxe5 13.Bxe5 Bxe5 14.Ng5 Bg7 15.Nb3 Qe7 16.Qh3+**

Not 16.Nf3 Nf6 17.0-0-0 Rhf8 followed by ...c7-c5 and the entry of the knight on e4.

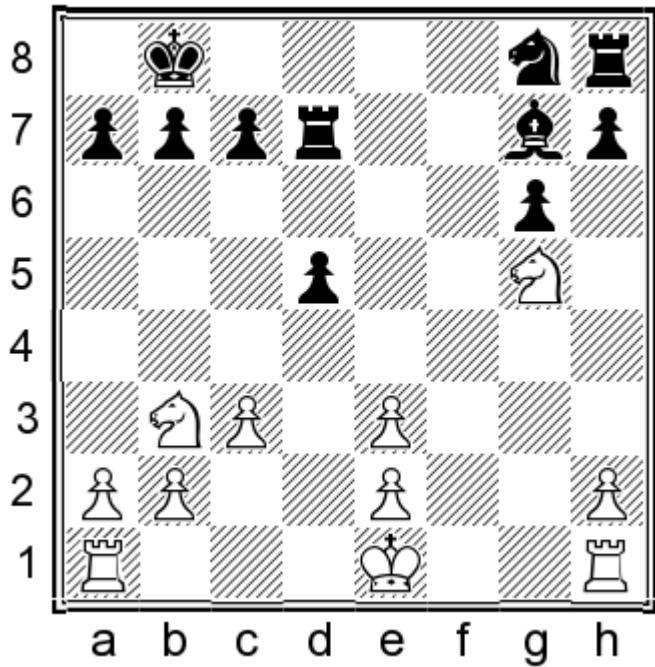
**16...Kb8**



**17.Qe3!?**

An original attempt to exchange queens and at the cost of a totally ruined pawn structure to try to carry out a knight raid in the heart of the enemy position. But the Ukrainian GM is on the alert.

**17...Qxe3 18.fxe3 Rd7!**



**19.Rd1**

Nothing is given by 19.Nc5 Re7 20.Rf1 Nf6. It was possible to try 19.e4 or 19.Ne6, but, given the black player's excellent technique, I doubt if this would have changed the result of the game.

**19...Nf6 20.Rf1 Re7 21.Nc5 Rhe8**

The pawn e3 is doomed.

**22.e4 c6 23.Rd2 b6 24.e5 Ng4 25.Nd3 Nxe5 26.Nxe5 Bxe5**

And Black easily realized the extra pawn.

In those years, Vladimir Malaniuk was considered the real king of open tournaments. Having won this important game against Pavel Tregubov, he ultimately shared 1st-3rd places in the Alekhine Memorial with Oleg Korneev and Semen Dvoiry. A year later, he confidently excelled in the final of the Russia Cup, a series of strong grandmaster Swiss in Russia. Malaniuk can safely be called a player who was not afraid of the move g2-g4!

## Conclusions

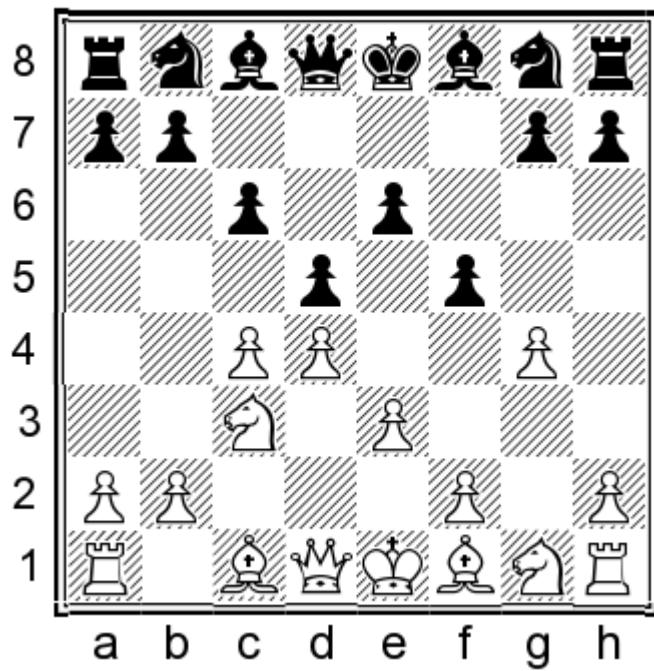
1. In the fight for the initiative, White tries to open the h-file. If his dreams materialize, then the resulting concentration of a powerful force of pieces on the right-hand side of the board usually promises him a serious initiative.
2. Black should not hang onto material, but should try in reply to land blows at the centre with ...c7-c5 and ...e7-e5.
3. One of the most interesting lines is the continuation 1.d4 f5 2.g4 d5 3.Qd3, where theory has yet to pronounce her last word.

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## Chapter 5

### Attacking with a cast-iron alibi

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4



#### Some history

It is believed that the extravagant move 5.g2-g4 was first applied at a high level, namely in the British Championship, by Gerald Abrahams. Abrahams was a truly versatile person – a composer, lawyer, historian, philosopher, politician (for 40 years a member of the Liberal Party) and the author of several books. Of his legal work, the most famous is the investigation into the murder of Julia Wallace in 1931 in Liverpool, where her husband was the main suspect. As an alibi, William Herbert Wallace claimed he was at a chess club. Dozens of books and films have been devoted to the murder of Mrs. Wallace – indeed, this is a script worthy of Arthur Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie!

Abrahams played various card games with great pleasure and success, but the main passion of the Liverpool resident was chess. Abrahams achieved his greatest success in the championships of Great Britain in 1933 and 1946, when he won bronze medals. The peak of his career was undoubtedly his participation in the USSR-Great Britain radio match (1946), where on the 10th board Abrahams beat Botvinnik's second and assistant grandmaster Viacheslav Ragozin with a score of 1½-½.

Gerald Abrahams had a taste for studying opening theory, and made a distinct contribution to the development of the Noteboom Variation, which is often known as the Abrahams-Noteboom. Ten years after he introduced the move 5.g2-g4 to the English public (1953), the famous grandmaster Lajos Portisch brought it into the international arena. He was followed by others – Yuri Yakovich, Michal Krasenkow, Evgeny Bareev, Vadim Zviagintsev, Evgeny Najar, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, and Krasenkow played both White and Black!

## Important nuances

Now Black has to choose the type of pawn structure he wants. In the case of 5...fxg4 6.Qxg4 Nf6 7.Qg2!? he has gained a tempo for the development of his pieces, but the enemy queen is eyeing the g7-pawn, preventing the bishop from leaving f8, whilst White prepares queenside castling.

Once again, declining and developing reaction is possible: 5...Nf6 6.gxf5 exf5, where White has hopes for a siege of the isolated d5-pawn by means of Nc3, Qb3, Bg2, Ne2(h3)-f4 etc. Black, too, will not stand still – the features of the pawn structure suggest the transfer of knights to the central squares with the subsequent goal of attacking the base of the white pawn chain – its supports on f2 and e3. As to who will be first in this ‘big game’, that will be decided by the future.

Game 16

Alexander Ipatov 2497

Sergey Volkov 2623

Moscow 2010 (4)

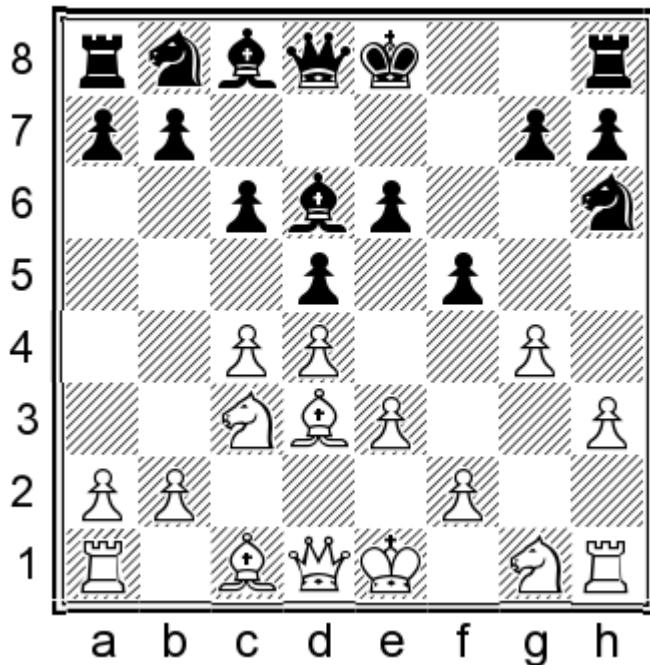
**1.d4 e6 2.c4 d5 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 Nh6!?**

The 2000 Russian Champion is a very creative player and often goes his own way in opening discussions. The knight is not very active on the edge of the board, but it does not block the f-file for its major pieces and is prepared personally to recapture the enemy pawn on f5.

**6.h3!**

Because 6.gxf5? Nxf5, as in the stem game of this line, Bergsma-Koomen, Baarn 1941, is not good for White; he should support his attacking unit.

**6...Bd6 7.Bd3**



**7...e5!?**

White has a relatively simple plan – to castle queenside and concentrate his forces on a kingside attack, so Volkov avoids 7...0-0 8.Nf3 Na6 9.a3 Nc7 10.c5 Be7 11.Qc2, which leaves the initiative in White’s hands, and instead immediately attacks the centre.

Another classical principle – meet a flank attack by a counter in the centre! We saw similar motifs in the previous chapter.

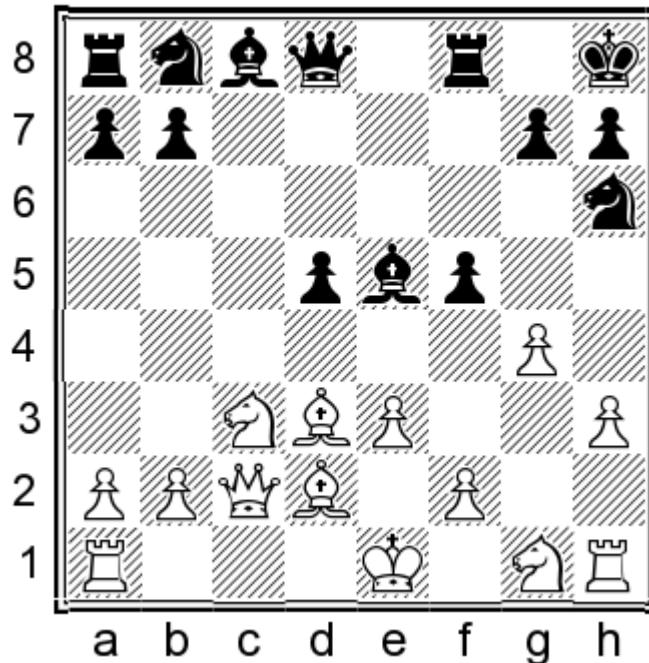
### **8.cxd5 0-0 9.Qc2??**

An inaccuracy, which could have cost White dear. On c2, the queen risks later being attacked by the enemy knight. Therefore, more accurate was 9.dxe5 Bxe5 10.Bc2 with ideas from the game, for example 10...Qf6 11.g5! Qxg5 12.Nf3 Qe7 13.Nxe5 Qxe5 14.Qd4!? – the pawn has been returned, but in the ending White's two bishops will have their say.

### **9...Kh8?!**

Also too slow. More energetic is 9...cxd5!, and the variations 10.Qb3 Nc6 11.Qxd5+ Nf7 and 10.Nxd5 Nc6 give Black very strong compensation for his minimal material deficit. Now, after his next move, Ipatov is only one move away from queenside castling.

### **10.Bd2 cxd5 11.dxe5 Bxe5**



### **12.g5!?**

The kamikaze pawn takes another step forward, and it cannot be taken: 12...Qxg5? 13.Nf3, whilst 13...Qg2 is refuted by the effective 14.Ke2! – the black queen is trapped.

### **12...Nf7! 13.f4**

The latest round in the battle for the central squares.

Now Black cannot be happy with 13...Bxc3?! 14.Bxc3 or 13...Bc7?! 14.0-0-0, but it is worth giving serious attention to the gambit 13...Nc6!?, and White has to find 14.Nce2 (he is crushed after 14.fxe5? Nb4 15.Qb1 Nxe5 16.Be2 f4+ or 16.Bc2 d4+) 14...d4!? with a very sharp battle.

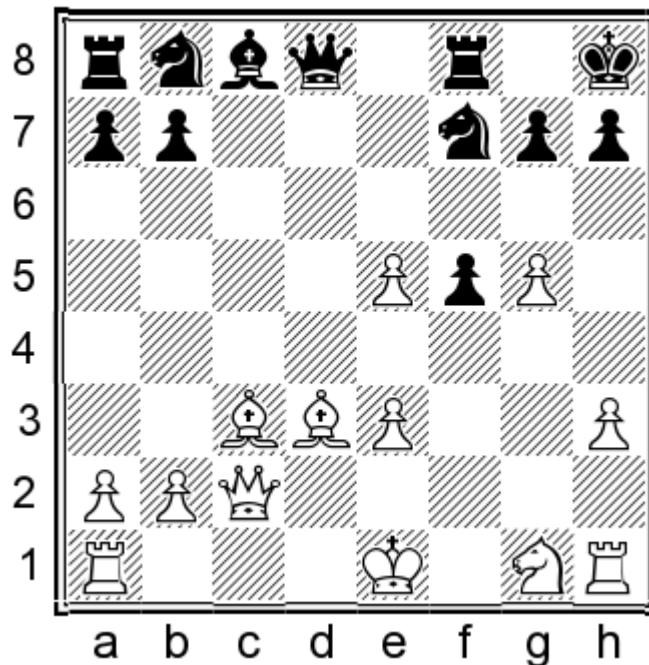
In the game, Sergey Volkov chooses another principled continuation.

### **13...d4!? 14.fxe5 dxc3**

Again, 14...Nc6!? looks interesting, trying at the cost of a piece to get all his pieces into the battle and surrounding

the white king. The text does not lose, but it allows Ipatov to bring his powerful bishop onto the long diagonal, from where it will attack the pawn on g7.

### 15.Bxc3

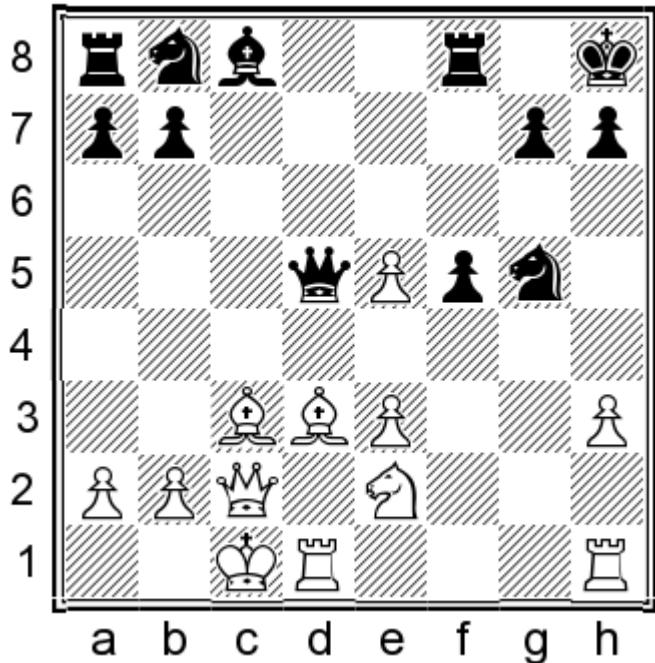


### 15...Nxg5?

Black's desire finally to devour this pawn is understandable, but it turns out to be poisoned. But it is already not easy to see the strong resource 15...Qd5!? 16.e4 Qc5! 17.Nf3 (17.exf5 Nxe5) 17...fxe4 18.Bxe4 Nxg5, taking the white pawn with much greater effect.

Now the white pieces are all fixing their glance on the castled position of the black king. One can say with confidence that Alexander Ipatov's opening plan has been realized 100%! Black is not even helped by the fact that he can take the a2-pawn.

### 16.0-0-0 Qd5 17.Ne2



**17...Nc6**

Going into the endgame after 17...Qxa2 18.Rhg1 Qa1+ (18...Ne6 19.Bxf5) 19.Qb1 Qxb1+ 20.Kxb1 does not solve all Black's problems: 20...Ne6 (pursuing further material gains can end in disaster: 20...Nxh3 21.Rg3 Nf2 22.e6 Nxd1 23.Bxg7+ Kg8 24.Bd4#) 21.Bc4 Na6 22.Nd4 Nac7 23.Bb4 and in the endgame the two powerful white bishops dominate the board.

**18.e6**

Maybe stronger was 18.Rhg1, but White immediately unmasks his bishop.

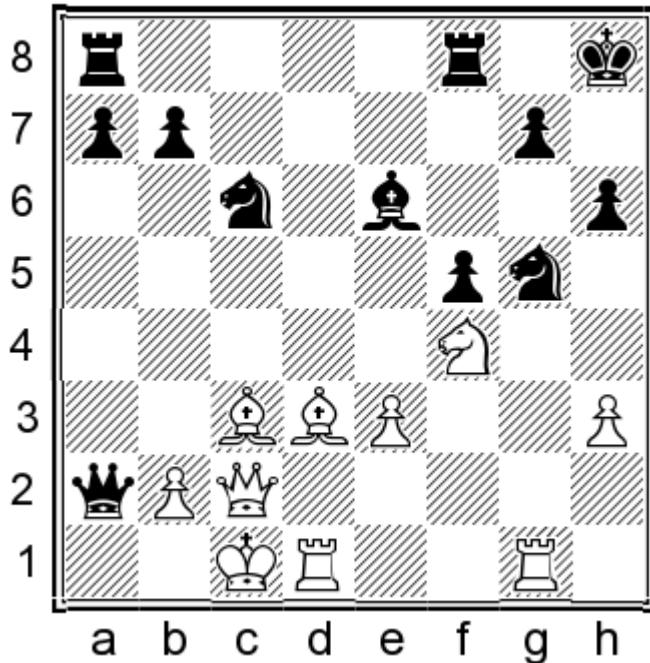
**18...Qxa2**

18...Nxe6 19.Rhg1 Rf7 20.e4 is winning for White.

**19.Rhg1 h6**

Now there is no help from 19...Qa1+ 20.Qb1 Qxb1+ 21.Kxb1 Nxe6 22.Nf4 Rf7 23.Bc4, and Black dies.

**20.Nf4 Bxe6**



**21.Rxg5!?**

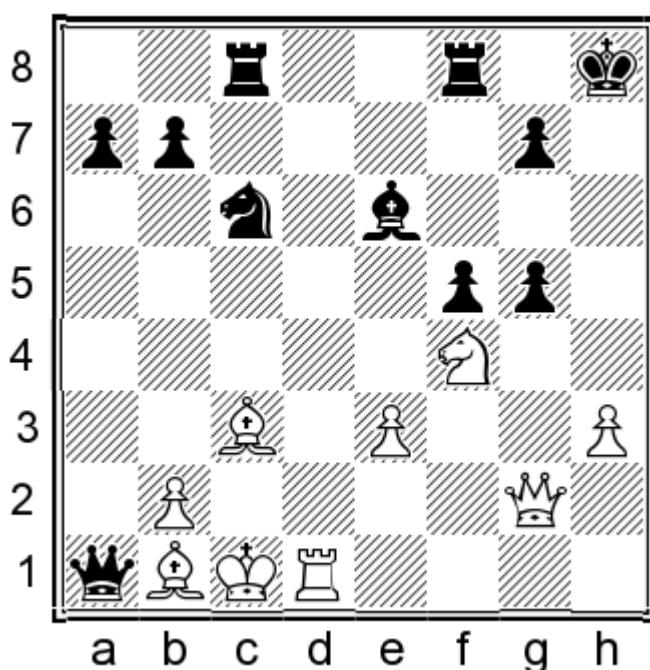
The computer prefers 21.h4! Na5 22.Rdf1 Nb3+ 23.Kd1! Nd4 24.exd4 Bb3 25.hxg5, and the army of white pieces should beat the black queen. However, over the board it is hard to calculate such variations, and one can understand White's desire for something simpler. However, now the battle flares up with renewed strength.

**21...hxg5 22.Qg2! Rac8**

22...Kg8 23.Qxg5 Rf7 24.Rg1 with a dangerous attack.

**23.Bb1 Qb3?**

The ambush 23...Qa1! would force White to solve a very difficult task.



*analysis diagram*

For example, after 24.Qxg5? Ne5! 25.Nxe6 (25.Ng6+ Kg8 26.Ne7+ Kf7 27.Nxc8 Rxc8 with unclear play) 25...Rxc3+ 26.bxc3 Qxc3+ 27.Bc2 Qa1+ 28.Kd2 Nf3+ 29.Ke2 Nxg5 30.Rxa1 Nxe6 it is already White who needs to seek a draw in the endgame.

Stronger is 24.Kd2!! Ne5 25.Bxe5 Rfd8+ 26.Nd3 Bb3 27.Qxg5 Rxd3+ 28.Kxd3 Qa6+ 29.Kd2 Qa5+ 30.Bc3 Qd8+ (30...Rd8+? 31.Ke2 Bxd1+ 32.Ke1, and Black cannot defend the king: 32...Qc7 33.Qh6+ Kg8 34.Ba2+ Kf8 35.Qh8+ Ke7 36.Qxg7+ Ke8 37.Qg8+ Ke7 38.Qf7+ Kd6 39.Be5+ Kxe5 40.Qe6#) 31.Qxd8+ Rxd8+ 32.Bd4 Bxd1 33.Kxd1 f4 34.Ke2 fxe3 35.Kxe3 – White's bishops are strong, but not much material remains and Black has chances of a draw.

## 24.Bc2! Qxc3

More tenacious was 24...Qa2 25.Qxg5 Ne5 26.Bxe5 Rxc2+ 27.Kxc2 Bb3+, and after 28.Kd2? Qa5+ 29.Ke2 Bxd1+ 30.Kxd1 (30.Kf1 Rf7) 30...Qd8+ Black manages to exchange queens.

Again, His Majesty the king comes to the rescue: 28.Kc3!! Rc8+ 29.Kd2, and now the rook is deflected, for example 29...Qa5+ 30.Ke2 Bxd1+ 31.Kf1 Qa6+ 32.Kg1 Rc7 33.Qd8++–.

In the game Volkov gave up the queen, after which White won without great difficulty:

## 25.Ng6+ Kg8

25...Kh7 26.Nxf8+.

**26.bxc3 Rf6 27.Qxg5 Rc7 28.Rd6 Kf7 29.Qh5 Rxg6 30.Rxe6 Kxe6 31.Qxg6+ Kd5 32.Qxf5+ Ne5 33.Qe4+ Kd6 34.Qd4+ Ke6 35.Bb3+ 1-0**

An experienced, strong GM could not withstand the pressure of the World Junior Champion! It is definitely good to play g2-g4, when you are a young and fearless d'Artagnan. However, if you are a bit older, you remember Porthos and his 'I fight, because I fight!'

Game 17

**Maxime Vachier-Lagrave** 2715

**Toshiyuki Moriuchi** 2316

Villandry 2011

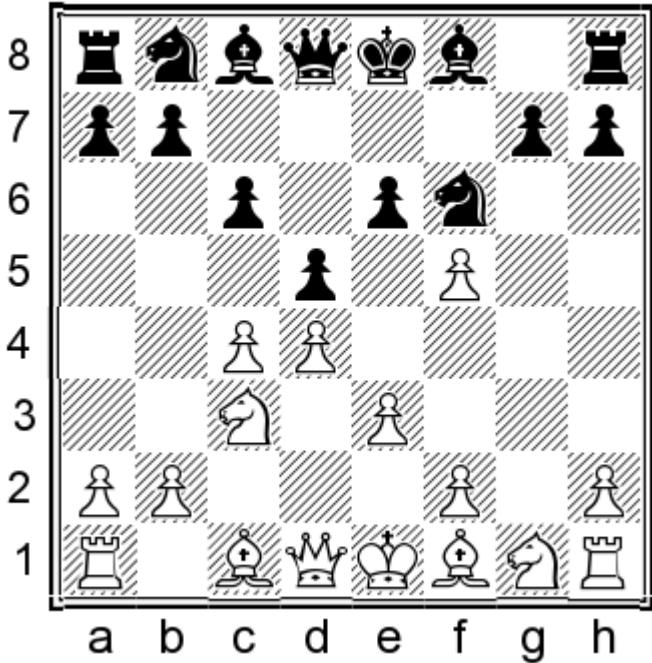
## 1.d4 d5 2.e4 e6 3.Nc3 e6 4.e3 f5 5.g4!?

This instructive game was an exhibition affair, between one of the world's top chess players and a legend of the Japanese chess variant Shogi. Toshiyuki Moriuchi plays chess very decently and has a stable rating over 2300.

## 5...Nf6

A more fundamental reply, after which there follows the exchange on g5, since now h2-h3 makes no real sense for White.

## 6.gxf5



## **6...exf5**

It is worth considering the counter-gambit 6...Bb4!? 7.Bd2 (it is dangerous to open the f-file with 7.fxe6?! 0-0) 7...0-0 8.Nge2 e5!?, played in the game M.Gurevich-Krasenkow, Erfurt 2004 (Black cannot back out halfway, since 8...exf5 9.Qb3 and 8...dxc4!? 9.Nf4 is in White's favour) 9.Qb3!, and now instead of 9...exd4! with a complicated battle, Michal Krasenkow erred with 9...Bxc3? 10.Bxc3 Ne4 (the powerful white bishops are opened up after 10...exd4 11.Nxd4 Ne4 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.Bg2 and White wins, but closing the centre is also now not good for Black: 10...e4 11.Nf4) 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.Bg2 Bxf5 (12...Rf7 13.dxe5 Bxf5 14.Ng3+–) 13.Qxb7 – White won easily and Black has not found any followers for this rather idealistic approach.

## **7.cxd5**

Not the strongest continuation, but one can understand that in such a game, the French number one permits himself a few liberties.

## **7...cxd5**

In the next game, we see how strong the knight recapture is, but taking with the pawn is also possible.

Now how does White attack the pawn on d5? Faced with this task in 1963, the 'Hungarian Botvinnik' Lajos Portisch chose the extravagant 8.Nh3 Bd6 9.Qf3!? and even won. But in the 21st century, Maxime does not permit himself such a creative approach, even against a professional shogi player.

## **8.Bg2 Na6**

The immediate jump 8...Ne4 9.Nge2 Qh4 10.Ng3 does not work, as there are no threats and the pawn d5 hangs. But the attentive reader may notice that even the immediate win of a pawn does not promise White an easy life: 8...Nc6 9.Nge2 Bd6!? 10.Bxd5 (not allowed is 10.Nxd5? Nxd5 11.Bxd5 Bb4+) 10...Nxd5 11.Nxd5 Be6, and Black has extensive compensation in the form of play on the light squares 12.Ndf4 Bf7 with the idea of 13...g5 or 12.Ndc3 Bf7.

The knight move is a general strengthening one – from c7, the knight solidly defends Black's main weakness.

## **9.Nge2 Nc7 10.Qb3**

White has to begin with the queen move, since after 10.Nf4 Black has the cunning 10...Bd7! 11.Qb3 (bad is

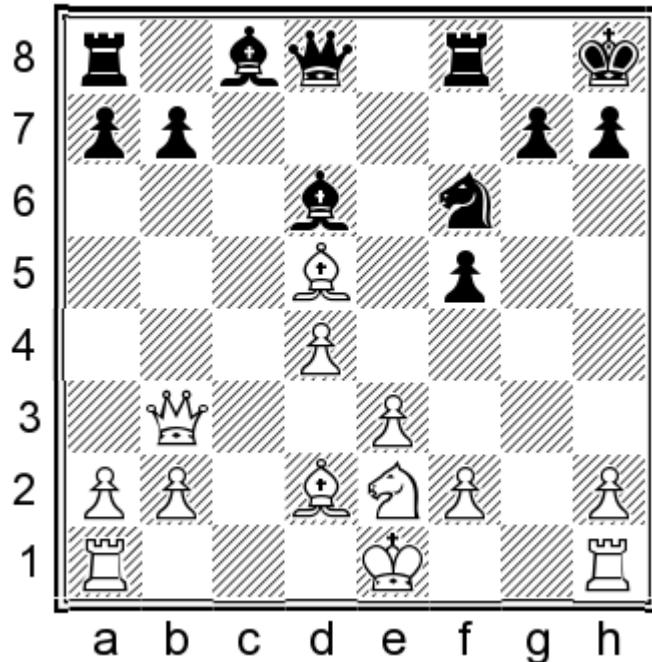
11.Nfxd5? Nfxd5 12.Bxd5 Nxd5 13.Nxd5 Bc6) 11...Bc6, and now there is no getting at the d5-pawn!

## 10...Bd6 11.Bd2 0-0

White is behind in development and his pawn structure is vulnerable, and so for the sake of completing his development Black is ready to accept a minimal material deficit. Toshiuki Moriuchi gives up the centre pawn, but he also has a good initiative after 11...Be6!? 12.Qxb7 0-0 13.Qb3 Ne4.

## 12.Nxd5 Ncxd5 13.Bxd5+ Kh8

Also good was 13...Nxd5 14.Qxd5+ Rf7 15.0-0-0 Qe7.



## 14.Bf3

He would like to reinforce d5 with 14.Nc3, but then there is the unpleasant 14...Rb8 15.Bf3 b5!.

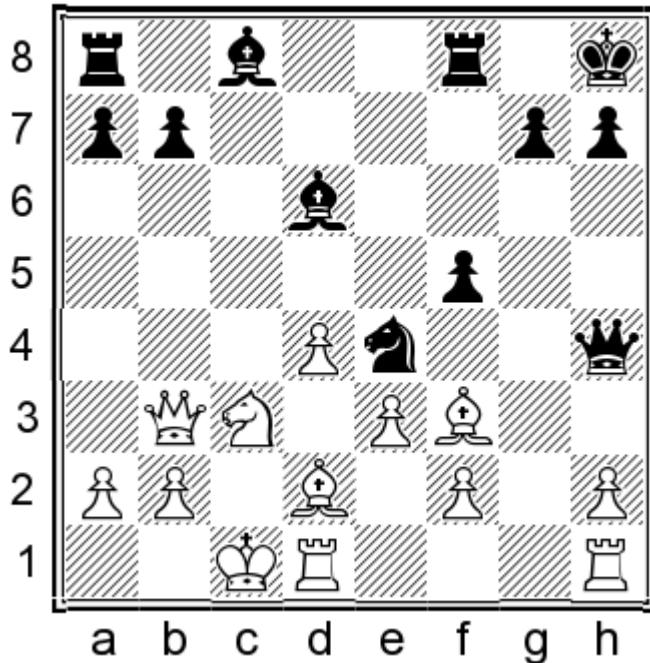
## 14...Ne4 15.Nc3

White gets crushed after 15.Bb4?! Be6! 16.Qa3 Qh4 17.Ng3? Bxb4+ 18.Qxb4 f4! 19.Nxe4 fxe3+. Black has played the opening superbly, and if the Japanese games master had been assisted by a strong GM chess player, then MVL could have faced great difficulties. But in a hand-to-hand fight, the higher-rated player starts with every move to outplay his less experienced opponent.

## 15...Qh4

Of course, the king could have been kept in the centre with 15...Nxd2! 16.Kxd2 f4.

## 16.0-0-0



**16...Nxc3**

Now Black could get the advantage with 16...Nxf2! 17.Be1 f4!? 18.e4 Qh3 19.Bxf2 Qxf3, when he has two powerful bishops, a passed pawn and an active queen.

**17.bxc3 Qxf2 18.Rdf1 Qh4 19.Kb2 a5?!**

The wrong pawn! After 19...Rb8!, with the idea of a storm with ...b7-b5-b4, Black's chances are, at a minimum, not worse.

**20.Ka1 Qe7 21.Rb1**

White has fully stabilized, reinforced his king, and can now go over to active operations.

**21...a4 22.Qc2 Qc7 23.c4**

Even stronger is 23.e4! – the black king is under fire!

**23...Rb8 24.c5 Bd7?**

There was no need to despair – 24...b6! 25.c6 b5, and the whole battle still lies ahead as Black has his counterchances. Now MVL coldly picks off Black's weaknesses.

**25.Rb6 Be7 26.Rhb1 Bc6 27.Bxc6 bxc6 28.Rxb8 Rxb8 29.Rxb8+ Qxb8 30.Qxa4 h6**

More tenacious was 30...Qe8, but Black was very short of time and he quickly gives away material.

**31.Qxc6 Qxh2 32.Qc8+ Bd8 33.Qxd8+ Kh7 34.Qa5 Qe2 35.c6 1-0**

In GM practice, when professionals are playing Black as well as White, the rather reckless 7.cxd5 usually leads to definite problems for the first player.

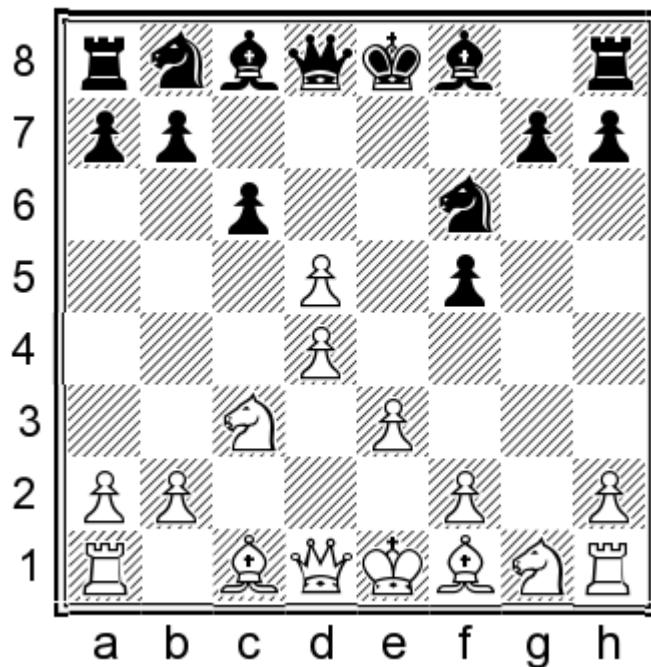
Game 18

Sergey Volkov 2558

Vladimir Malakhov 2623

The 2001 Russian Championship was the last of a series of tournaments that, thanks to the sixth FIDE president and the president of Kalmykia, Kirsan Illyumzhinov, were held in Elista. In that year, the championship had the status of a qualifier for the European Championship – players who scored '+2' or  $5\frac{1}{2}$  points out of 9 ended up going through. At the moment this game was played, both the current national champion of the country Volkov and also GM Malakhov had just '+1', so the stakes were high.

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 Nf6 6.gxf5 exf5 7.cxd5??!**



7...Nxd5!

Another setback for White saw 7...cxd5 8.f4?! Nc6 9.Nf3 Bb4 10.Bd2 0-0 11.Bd3 Be6 12.Rc1 Ne4 13.0-0 (Black controls all the squares and the rook transfer will strengthen the attack) 13...Rf6 14.Be1 Rh6 15.Rc2 Bf7 16.Rg2 Rc8 17.Ne5 Nxe5 18.fxe5 Bxc3 19.bxc3 Be6 20.Qb1 b6 21.Qb4 Rg6 22.Bg3 h5, and the Polish grandmaster could not hold on much longer in the game Jakubowski-Kovalenko, Poland tt 2015.

But taking with the knight is even stronger, since now Black intends to seize all the central squares.

8.Nge2 Be6 9.Bg2

Back in classical times, a USSR Champion was a victim of this variation: 9.Rg1 g6 10.Bg2 Na6 11.Bd2 Nac7 (Dorfman-Popchev, Havana 1988) and Black won.

Time-wasting with Rg1 is unjustified, but the text does not help either.

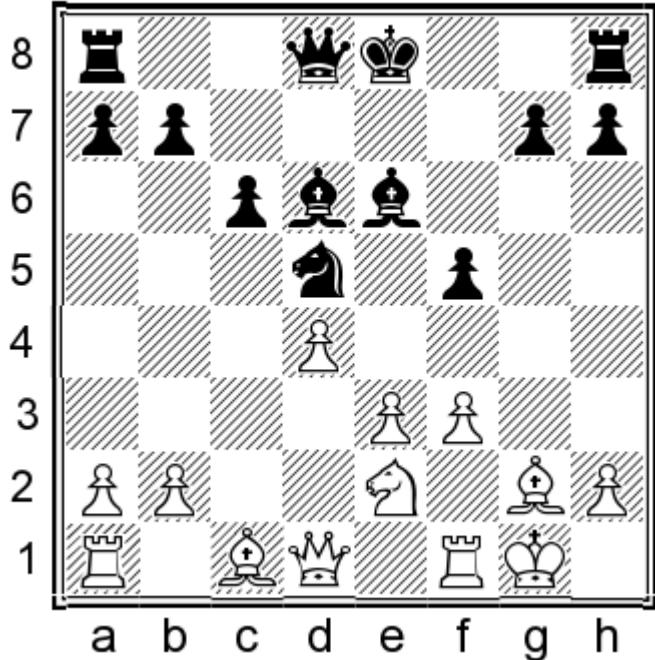
9...Na6 10.0-0 Nac7

How should we fight against the black pieces? The only idea is f2-f3 and e3-e4, but this leads to a serious weakening of the white king's position.

**11.Nxd5 Nxd5**

Of course, not 11...Bxd5 12.f3.

**12.f3 Bd6!**



Malakhov begins pointing his forces at the white king's castled position.

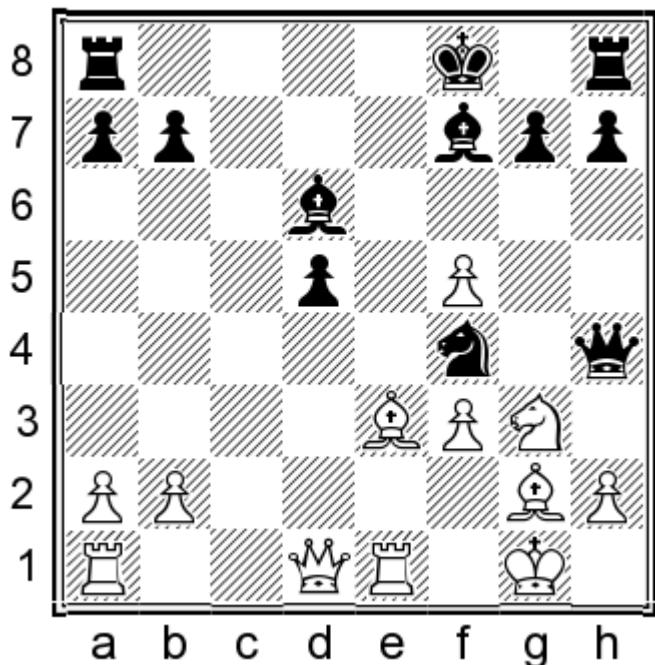
**13.e4 Qh4 14.Ng3**

Now the black knight gets to f4, but 14.e5 Bc7, followed by queenside castling and an attack on the kingside, is no better for White.

**14...Nf4 15.d5**

Since the black king has not yet castled, it is tempting to open the centre, but with the loss of the dark-squared bishop, White has few trumps left in his hand: 15.Bxf4 Bxf4 16.exf5 (16.d5 0-0-0) 16...Bd5 17.Re1+ Kf7, and here Black can simply ignore the exchange sacrifice 18.Re4!? Rhd8, and aim at all the white weaknesses.

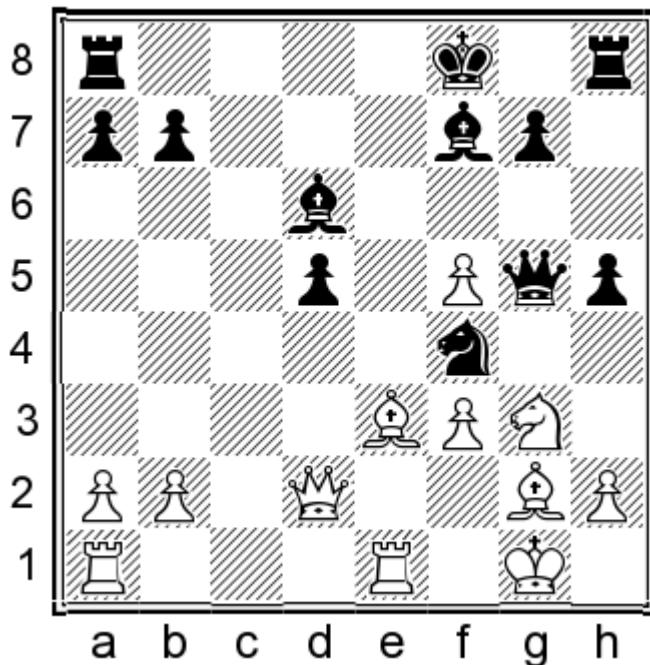
**15...cxd5 16.exf5 Bf7 17.Re1+ Kf8 18.Be3**



With ingenious play, Sergey Volkov has managed to pose Black some difficulties, and at first glance it is not

obvious how Black should continue the attack, given the weakened position of his king. But Vladimir Malakhov finds a brilliant idea – it is essential to bring up additional forces to help the paratrooper on f4.

**18...h5! 19.Qd2 Qg5!**



**20.Rad1?**

Volkov probably calculated that he needed to reinforce the idea 20.Ne4! Qxg2+ 21.Qxg2 Nxg2 22.Nxd6 Nxe1 23.Rxe1 b6 24.Rc1, where White has good chances of a draw – he is an exchange down and has no mate threat, but his pieces are active. But Malakhov saw through his opponent's plan, and with a prophylactic move, Black turns things in his favour:

**20...Kg8!**

On 20...h4 there would follow 21.Ne4!.

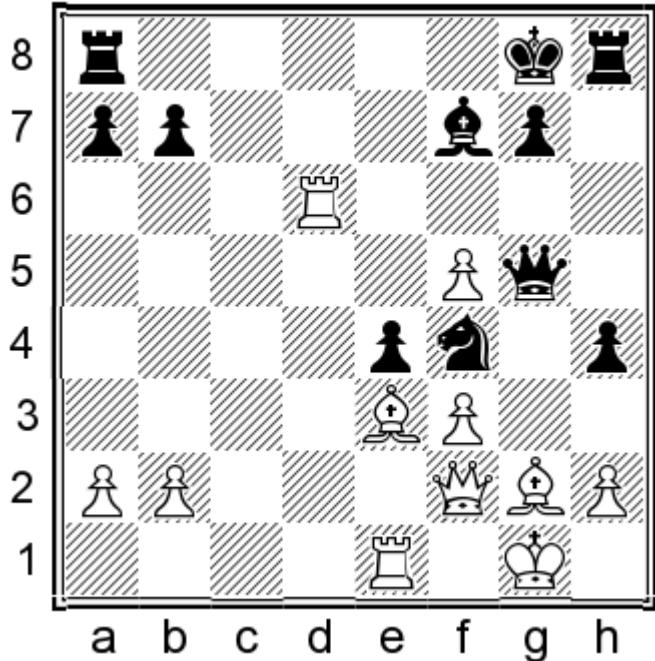
**21.Qf2**

The black bishop destroys the white army in the event of 21.Bxf4 Bxf4 22.Qd3 h4 23.Ne2 Be3+ 24.Kh1 h3 25.Bf1 Bf2+. The ex-Russian Champion prefers material losses.

**21...h4 22.Ne4**

White has no saving chances after 22.Ne2 Nh3+ 23.Kf1 Nxf2 24.Bxg5 Nxd1 25.Rxd1 h3, as he is material down and has to retreat the bishop to h1.

**22...dxe4 23.Rxd6**



White suffers decisive material losses.

**23...Nh3+ 24.Kf1 Bc4+ 25.Re2 Qe7 26.Bxh3 Qxd6 27.Ke1 Bxe2 28.Qxe2 Qd3**

And Black soon won.

As a result, Malakhov qualified for the European championship from one of the leading places, whilst Volkov had to make a heroic comeback at the finish, which the Saransk grandmaster managed.

The tension in the pawn triangle ‘c4 versus d5 and c6’ is in White’s favour, as he can always exchange, whereas Black doesn’t usually benefit from the ...dxc4 exchange. Therefore, one should not rush to take on d5 with white – this gives Black the square c6, and the leading theorists have usually preferred to start by bringing the queen to b3.

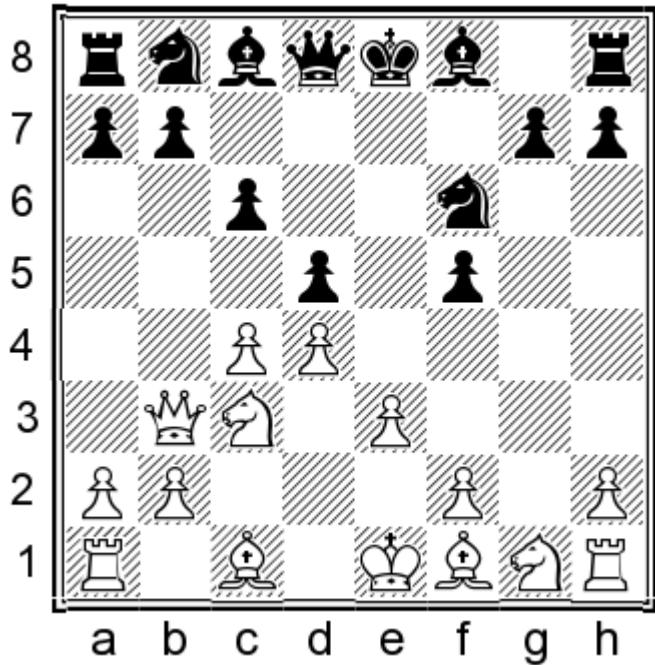
#### Game 19

**Evgeny Najer** 2683

**Kamil Banas** 2243

Novi Sad tt 2016 (1)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 Nf6 6.gxf5 exf5 7.Qb3**

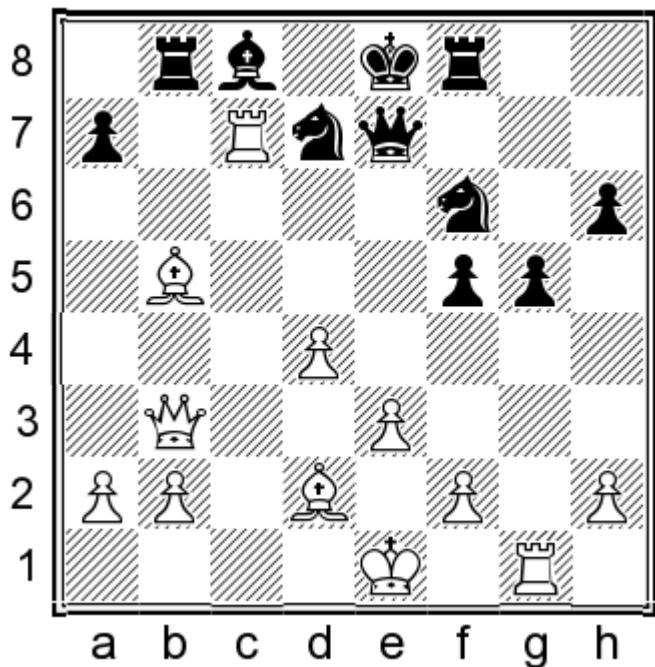


### 7...Na6

Another endgame variation arises after 7...Qb6, but now White gets a promising ending, whether he himself exchanges queens or forces his opponent to do so: 8.cxd5 Qxb3 9.axb3 Nxd5 10.Nxd5 cxd5 11.Bg2 Nc6 12.Ne2 Bd6 13.Nc3 Nb4 14.0-0 Be6 15.Nb5 Kd7 16.Bd2 (Yakovlev-Bellon Lopez, Stockholm 2001) – White obtained the advantage of the two bishops and gradually realized it; or 8.Qxb6!? axb6 9.cxd5 Nxd5 10.Nxd5 cxd5 11.Bg2 Be6 12.Ne2 Bd6 13.Bd2 Nc6 14.Nc3 Ne7 15.Nb5 (Kunin-Meng, Worms 2013), and here the position of the white knight on b5 is even more unpleasant since it cannot be driven away by a pawn.

It seems the ancients were right, that it is better to die standing up than live forever on your knees, so 7...dxc4!? 8.Bxc4. Defending f7 leads to loss of time: 8...Qe7?! 9.Nf3 b5 10.Bf1 Be6 11.Qc2 Nbd7 and now both the simple 12.Bg2, and 12.Ng5!? (Hambleton-Z.Mamedjarova, Geneva 2013) are good for White.

But the fearless 8...Bd6 leads to striking complications: 9.Nf3 (9.Bf7+?! Kf8) 9...Qe7 10.Ng5 Rf8 11.Bd2, and here a very instructive, even if not so new game was played 20 years ago in the Armenian Championship: 11...h6 12.Ne6 b5 13.Nxb5 cxb5 14.Bxb5+ Nbd7 15.Rc1 Rb8 16.Rg1 g5 17.Nc7+ Bxc7 18.Rxc7.



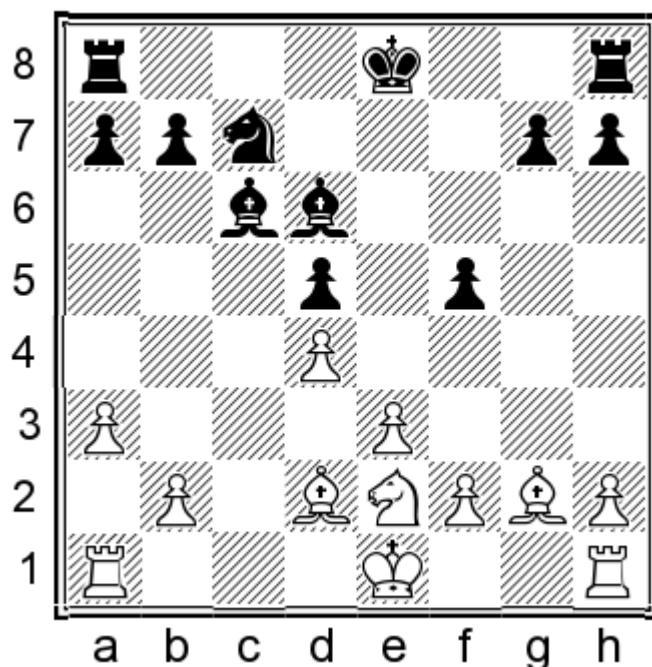
White has sacrificed a pawn, but his threats are extremely dangerous and after the mistake 18...Qf7? 19.Qc3! Kd8 20.Qa5! Rb6 21.Rxa7 Qe6 22.Bb4 Rf7 23.Ra8 Nd5 24.Bc4 N7f6 25.Rb8! Rc7 (more persistent was 25...Rfb7 26.Rxb7 Bxb7 27.Bc5, but even this is no fun for Black) 26.Rxb6 Qxb6 27.Bxd5 Qxa5 28.Bxa5 Nxd5 29.Kd2+– (Nadanian-Lputian, Yerevan 1999) the rook and pawns are stronger than the minor pieces and Ashot Nadanian won one of the most beautiful games of his career.

However, somewhat stronger is to counterattack with a threat of check on b1: 18...Qe4! 19.Bb4 Nd5 20.Bxf8 Kxf8 – a battle to the death has only just begun.

### **8.cxd5 Nxd5**

White has a free advantage after 8...cxd5 9.Bb5+ Bd7 10.Nf3 Bb4 11.Bxd7+ Qxd7 12.Ne5 Qe6 13.Qa4+ and the black king cannot castle.

### **9.Nxd5 Qxd5 10.Qxd5 cxd5 11.a3 Bd7 12.Bd2 Bd6 13.Bg2 Nc7 14.Ne2 Be6**



The Slovakian player has reliably strengthened the d5-pawn, and, it would seem, Black has no reason to fear. However, not everything is so simple. Without queens, Black has no counterplay against the white king, and Evgeny Najer plans the exchange of dark-squared bishops, followed by using the weaknesses of the squares the bishop previously defended.

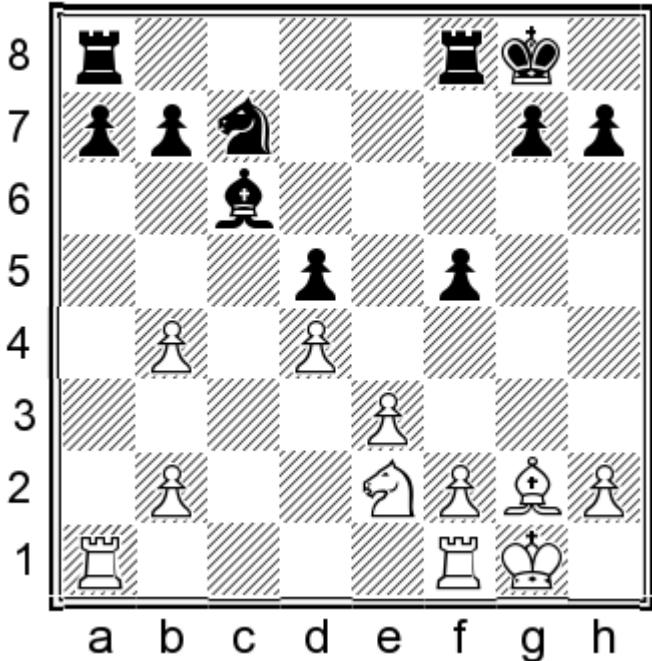
### **15.0-0**

The immediate 15.Bb4 is possible, but in this game, the 2015 European Champion plays according to the precept ‘do not hurry’ and invites his opponent to do something.

### **15...0-0**

Black can try to prevent the exchange favourable to White: 15...a5 16.Rfc1 Kd7, and now forcing play with 17.b4 axb4 18.Bxb4 Nb5 19.a4 Nxd4! 20.Nxd4 Bxb4 21.Nxf5 g6 22.Nd4 Kd6 leads to a position where Black should hold. But I suspect that the trainer of the Russian women’s team would instead have continued in a subtle, non-contact manner, with 17.h4!?, and then b2-b4 would have come in more favourable circumstances.

### **16.Bb4 Bxb4 17.axb4**



White's main achievement with this sacrifice is to weaken the square e5. Now Najer's knight immediately aims to get there.

### **17...Rfd8 18.Rfc1 Rd6**

Black, with his bad bishop on c6 and inactive pieces, finds it difficult to count on active counterplay and must defend passively. It was risky even to play 18...g5 19.h4! h6 (19...gxh4 20.Nf4) 20.hxg5 hxg5 21.f4!, and White gets new outposts, finally weakening the enemy pawn structure.

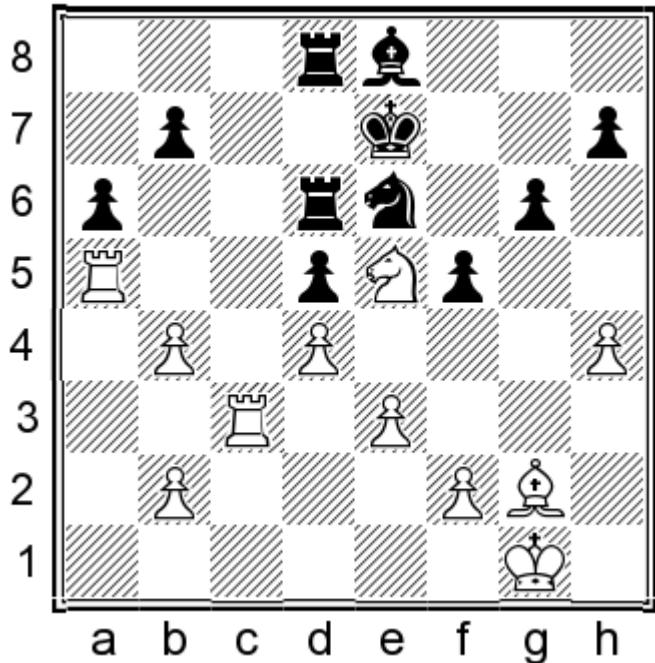
### **19.Nf4 a6 20.Nd3 Ne6 21.Ne5 Be8 22.Rc3 Kf8**

Banas defends stubbornly – Black has defended his vulnerable points, moved away the bishop and brought the king towards the centre.

### **23.Bh3**

The immediate 23.f4 is possible, but again the ‘do not hurry’ principle applies. And it works, as Black soon commits the decisive mistake.

### **23...g6 24.Bg2 Rad8 25.Ra5 Ke7 26.h4**



**26...Rb6?**

Undoubtedly he needed to drink the bitter cup down to the bottom, by means of 26...Kf6, but unfortunately, Black decides that this is the moment for counterplay.

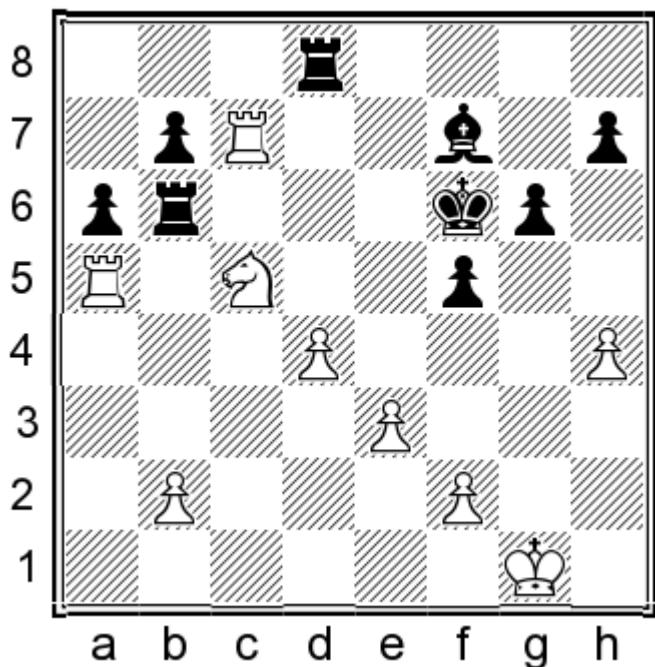
**27.Bxd5 Rxb4 28.Bxe6 Kxe6 29.Nd3! Rb6**

There is no good alternative: 29...Rb5 30.Rxb5 Bxb5 31.Nc5+ Kd5 32.Nxb7±. The white knight conveniently defends the pawn on b2 and will jump to c5.

**30.Rc7 Bf7**

30...Kf6 31.Rxh7+–.

**31.Nc5+ Kf6**



## 32.Rxb7

32.Nd7+ wins the exchange, but the Russian GM prefers to take pawns and not allow the opponent the least practical chances.

**32...Rxb7 33.Rxa6+ Kg7 34.Nxb7 Rb8 35.Nd6 Bd5 36.Ra5 Bf3 37.Rb5 Ra8 38.Kh2 Ra6 39.Kg3 Ba8 40.Ne8+ 1-0**

An excellent achievement! Incidentally, at this European Club Championship, Evgeny Najer's team SSM Legacy Square Moscow took the bronze medals.

Game 20

**Rustem Dautov** 2636

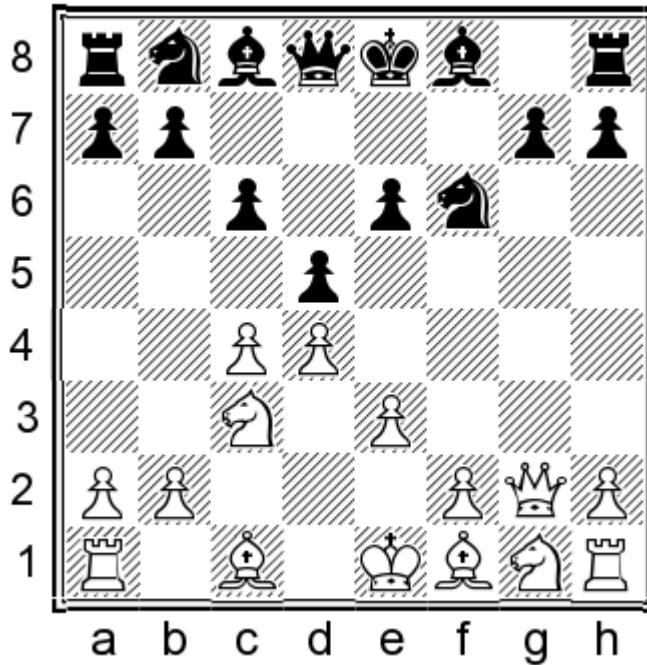
**Michal Krasenkow** 2641

Esen 2002 (2)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 fxg4**

Certainly, why shouldn't Black take the bold pawn and then gain a tempo attacking the queen that recaptures? But it turns out that the queen can retreat to the square just vacated by the pawn itself!

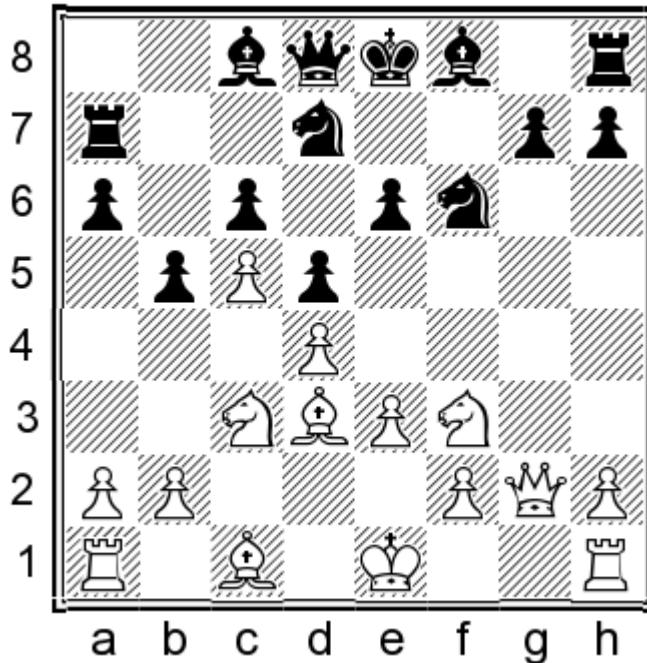
**6.Qxg4 Nf6 7.Qg2!?**



**7...c5**

Over the next few moves, White intends to gather a group of forces to attack the enemy king, so Black should hurry up with his counterplay.

**7...a6 8.Nf3 b5 9.c5 Nbd7 10.Bd3 Ra7** (it is already too late for 10...e5 11.dxe5 Nxc5 12.Bc2 Nfe4 13.0-0, and he cannot defend the knight on e4: 13...Bf5? 14.Nd4).



*analysis diagram*

Here in the game Krasenkow-Bayram, Izmir tt 2016, White played 11.e4, after which the game could have become sharper (Krasenkow eventually won).

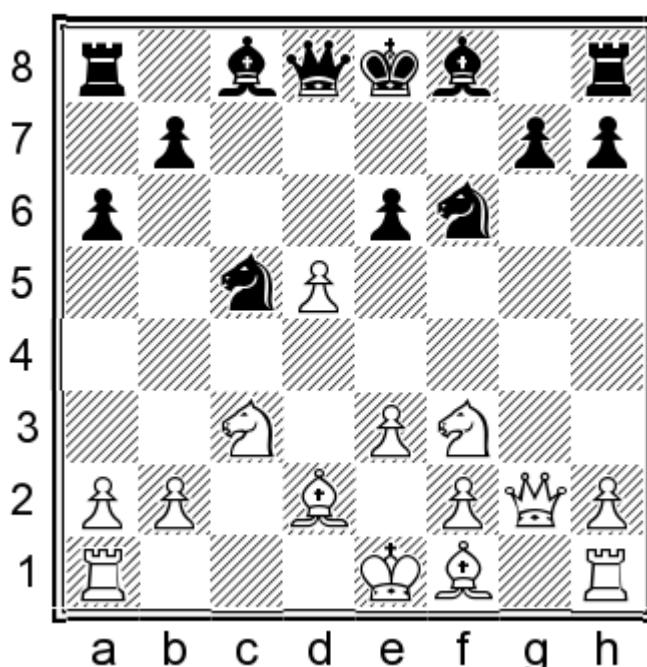
**Test 8.** How can White immediately place Black's risky strategy in doubt?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The attacking moves 11.Rg1 or 11.Ng5 look good, but the strongest move of all is 11.Qh3! – the queen aims at the e6- and h7-pawns, and also threatens an extremely unpleasant bishop check on g6.

### 8.Nf3

After the alternative 8.dxc5 a very interesting game was played many years ago in the Russian team championship. There followed 8...Na6 9.Bd2 Nxc5 10.Nf3 a6 11.cxd5.



### *analysis diagram*

It may seem that White can be satisfied – 11...exd5 12.Nd4 g6 13.0-0-0 is in his favour. However, the black player, GM Valery Popov, exploited his opponent's lack of development.

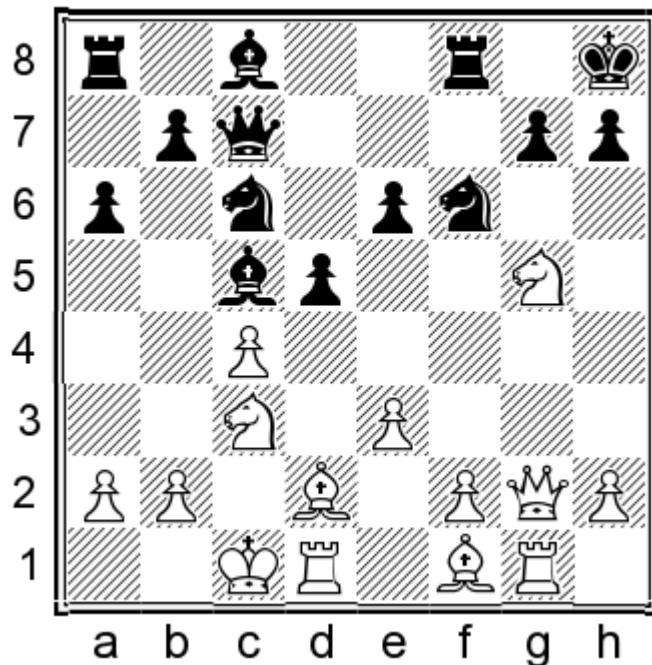
**Test 9.** Do you see how Black can sharpen the play?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** There followed the powerful gambit blow 11...b5! 12.Nd4 (it is extremely dangerous to take the pawn because of 12.dxe6 Bb7, but GM Popov insists) 12...b4 13.Nd1 (after 13.Nxe6 Nxe6 14.dxe6 bxc3 15.Qc6+ Ke7 16.Bxc3 Bxe6 two pawns are not sufficient compensation for the piece) 13...Bb7 14.Bxb4 (Bareev-V.Popov, Tomsk 2001) and in the subsequent play, one of the world's leading GMs of the time, as White, managed to win, but had Black played 14...Bxd5! 15.f3 e5, things would have been very difficult for Bareev.

**8...Nc6 9.Bd2 Bd7**

Both sides aim at the fastest possible development. White gets a powerful attack after 9...cxd4?! 10.exd4 dxc4 11.0-0-0 Na5 12.Re1, whilst 9...a6?! 10.0-0-0 Qc7 was instructively refuted in Seirawan-Yermolinsky, Key West ch-USA 1994: 11.dxc5 Bxc5 12.Rg1 0-0 13.Ng5 Kh8.



### *analysis diagram*

**Test 10.** Now Yasser Seirawan's move 14.Kb1 keeps a large advantage for White, but did he have a combinative way to win?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** It is extremely surprising, but the direct blow works: 14.cxd5 exd5 15.Nxh7!! Nxh7 (15...Kxh7 16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5 Ne5 18.Bc3, and Black cannot defend all his weaknesses) 16.Nxd5 Qf7 17.Bc3 with a decisive attack.

14...Ne5? 15.Na4 Ba7 16.Bb4 Rg8 17.Qg3, and because of the threat of a capture on e5, Black suffers large material losses.

**10.0-0-0 Qe7**

GM Krasenkow prepares to evacuate the black king, because it is extremely dangerous to play 10...Rc8 11.dxc5 Bxc5 12.Rg1 g6 13.Ng5. In all variations an important factor is that the white queen on g2 stops Black developing his kingside.

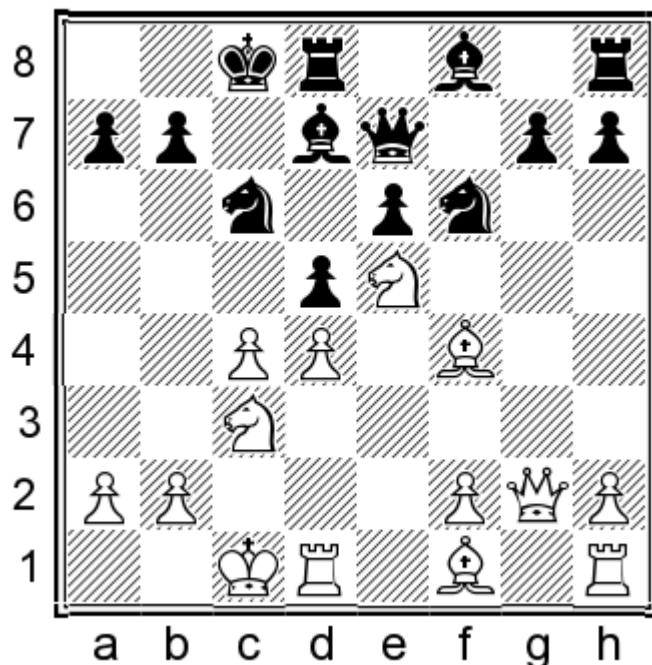
### 11.Ne5! cxd4?

But this is a significant inaccuracy, thanks to which Dautov's dark-squared bishop is unmoved. Correct was 11...0-0-0.

### 12.exd4 0-0-0

Not 12...Nxd4? 13.Bg5 Nc6 14.Nxd7 Qxd7 15.Bxf6 gxf6 16.cxd5, and the black king does not manage to hide.

### 13.Bf4±



### 13...Qe8

In their notes to the game, the players point out the beautiful variation 13...dxc4 14.Bxc4 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Qb4 16.Rd4! Bc5 17.a3 Qb6 18.Rd2 Nh5 19.Bg5± Rdf8 (19...Bc6 20.Bxd8) 20.Qg4, and White's threats are more serious.

### 14.cxd5 exd5

In the event of 14...Nxe5 15.Bxe5 Nxd5 16.Nxd5 Bc6 (16...exd5 17.Qxd5±) 17.Bc4 exd5 (or 17...Bxd5 18.Bxd5 Rxd5 19.Rhg1 Rg8 20.Qh3 with pressure) 18.Bd3 White is better, but maybe this was objectively the lesser evil. Krasenkow tries to sharpen the battle, but in the end does not succeed in benefitting.

### 15.Nxc6

It was possible to take the pawn with 15.Nxd5 Nxd5 16.Qxd5, which gives Black compensation for the material deficit.

### 15...Bxc6 16.Qg3! b5

The hiding queen leaps out into the battle. Now Black cannot be happy with 16...Qg6 17.Bh3+ Nd7 (17...Bd7? 18.Nb5+–) 18.Qxg6 hxg6 19.Be6 Rh5 20.Rhg1 with a difficult endgame, but otherwise Dautov has the chance to

exploit his domination of the diagonal b8-h2.

### 17.Be5?

Very strong was 17.Bb8!. Mate is threatened and the tempting defence 17...Qf7? loses to 18.Nxb5! Bxb5 (18...Kb7 19.Qb3!+) 19.Bxb5 Kb7 (19...Qb7? 20.Ba6!+) 20.Be5+-. More tenacious is Dautov's 17...Rd7! 18.Bh3 Kb7 19.Bxd7 Qxd7 20.Be5 b4 21.Ne2 Ba4 22.b3 Ne4 23.Qe3 Bb5 24.Kb2 Bxe2 25.Qxe2 Nc3 26.Qf3 Nxd1+ 27.Rxd1± – Black has even regained the exchange, but in the final position, his Bf8 cannot come into the game without unpleasant consequences for his side.

### 17...Kb7

The black king can find a resting place, and the game immediately becomes sharper, because White's position is not without its drawbacks too.

### 18.Qd3

Not 18.Nxb5? Bxb5 19.Qb3 Rc8+ 20.Kb1 because of 20...Rc4!.

### 18...Ne4 19.Nxe4 dxe4= 20.Qb3

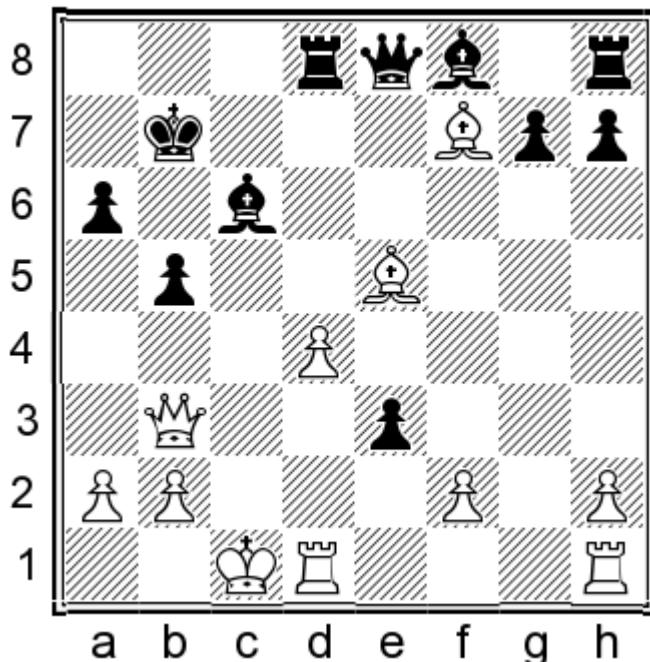
Playing with fire, instead of the accurate 20.Qe3 Bd6=. In search for the initiative, White overplays his hand.

### 20...a6 21.Bc4?

He should have urgently attended to his king with 21.Kb1 Bd5 (21...e3? 22.d5±) 22.Qe3 Qf7 23.a3 Bd6 24.Bg2 Qf5=.

### 21...e3! 22.Bf7??

Now it was already bad to play 22.d5? Bd7 23.Bc3 exf2, but it was worth considering 22.Rhe1 exf2 (22...Bf3?! 23.Rxe3 Bxd1 24.Kxd1 with good compensation for the exchange) 23.Re2, although admittedly, after 23...Be7 he does not have 24.Rxf2? because of 24...Be4+.



White was counting on 22...Qe7? 23.fxe3 Bxh1 24.Rxh1 with a splendid attacking position, but a cold shower awaits.

**22...Be4!!–+ 23.Rd3**

23.Bxe8 Rc8+ 24.Qc3 Rxc3+ 25.bxc3 Ba3#.

**23...Qe7 24.Rc3 Bxh1 25.Rc7+ Qxc7+ 26.Bxc7 exf2 0-1**

White cannot prevent his opponent getting a new queen.

After such a strong blow at the start of a solid round-robin with an impressive line-up (Vadim Zviagintsev, Peter Leko, Christopher Lutz, Daniel Fridman, Rustam Kasimdzhanov, Viktor Kortchnoi, Artur Yusupov, Thomas Luther), Rustam Dautov suffered continuous setbacks in the tournament. Krasenkow, on the contrary, played well and shared third place. Such is the price of luck in the sharpest opening *tabiyas!*

## Conclusions

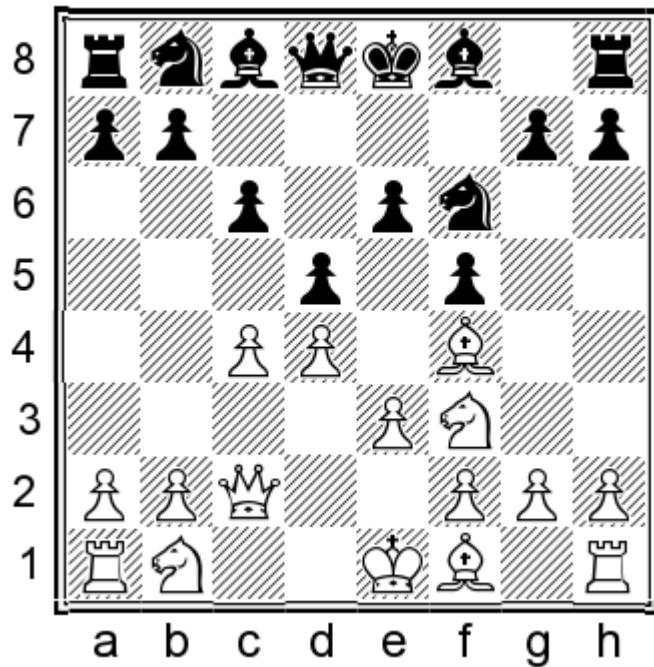
1. The thrust 5.g2-g4 dramatically shakes up the calm nature of the Stonewall. Both kings are potentially in danger, and it is of great importance who will be the first to bring his pieces into battle.
2. White seeks to open the g-file or besiege Black's weak pawns, but he needs to remember that the extravagant pawn thrust has seriously weakened a whole complex of squares in his own camp.
3. According to the current state of theory, it is preferable for Black to decline the g4-pawn, since if he captures, the white queen gets to an attacking position and the statistics here are in his favour.

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## Chapter 6

### A pistol shot against the Stonewall

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Qc2 f5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3



#### Some history

It is hard to say who first worked out the move order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Qc2 f5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 with the idea of further attacking Black's position by g2-g4. After all, initially White usually was content with the fact that he has managed to get his dark-squared bishop on f4, to take control of the holes in the black Dutch wall. However, gradually the white players began to be overwhelmed by more aggressive thoughts!

The idea with g2-g4 has two tracks – Muscovite and Ukrainian. A whole group of strong chess players from the capital of Russia played this way in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but nevertheless, a real high-level baptism of fire was obtained thanks to Kharkiv GM, Igor Novikov. Novikov's opponents were very strong – one of the leaders of the young generation, Alexey Dreev, and the second of the two 'K's' Sergey Makarychev. Both games ended peacefully, but soon White had the chance to take a lot of scalps against weaker opponents.

Now the variation has gained a second youth thanks to its modern tireless popularizer Roman Ovetchkin. The famous grandmaster and coach has a YouTube channel that is rapidly gaining popularity, Roman publishes new educational videos about the theory and practice of chess. One of the most vivid and memorable is precisely about the g2-g4 thrust, thanks to which Ovetchkin has won a number of serious games and many casual ones.

#### Important nuances

Compared to the previous attempts from the 'Dutch' part of the book, here the g2-g4 lunge is made after a series of developing moves by White and therefore has a pronounced 'Botvinnik' character. White is well developed and has every chance of immediately getting at the opponent's castled position. It is a real shot at the black fortress! That is

why strong players have tried to avoid this position as Black, and even if they fell into it, they avoided White's battering ram by any means possible – they made concessions, exchanging bishops by 6...Bd6 or immediately turning to diversionary operations on the opposite flank.

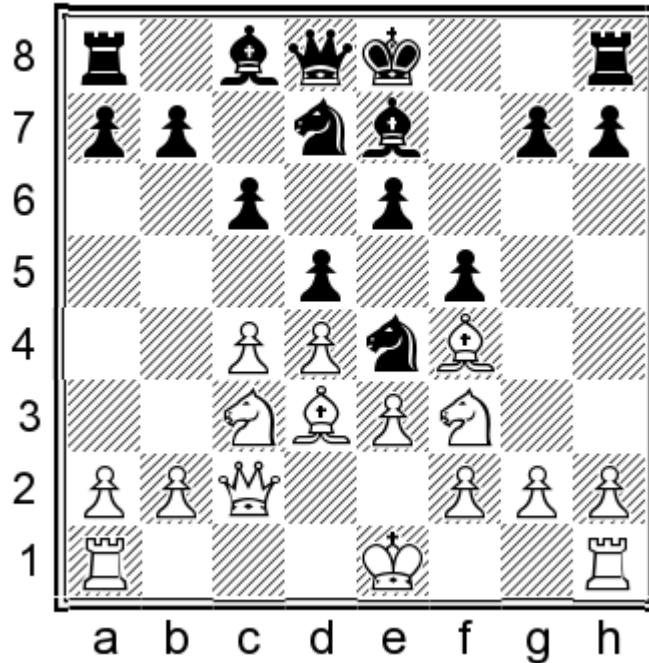
Game 21

Roman Ovetchkin 2501

Alexey Bochkarev 2410

Samara 2012 (6)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Qc2 f5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 Ne4 7.Nc3 Be7 8.Bd3 Nd7**

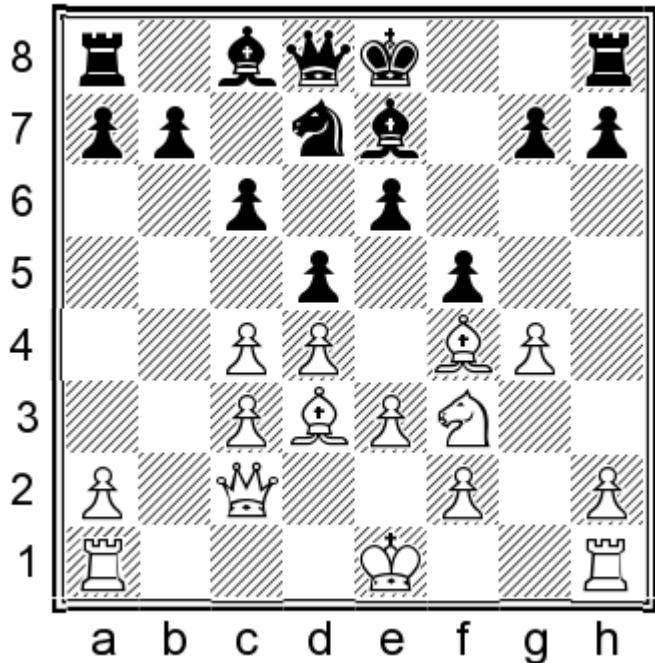


Black has established his knight in the centre and tries to reinforce it, but a sudden blow from the g2-pawn removes one of the central ramparts.

**9.g4! Nxc3**

It doesn't look great to play 9...fxg4 10.Bxe4 dxe4 11.Ne5 0-0 12.0-0-0± – White is ready not only to begin an attack on the g-file, but can also simply take the black pawns.

**10.bxc3**



**10...fxg4?!**

Missing a nice *zwischenzug*.

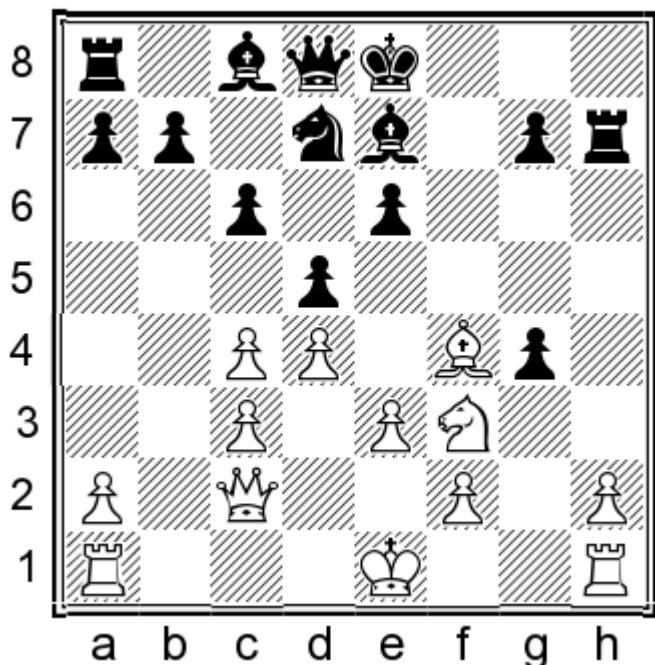
**Test 11.** What would you recommend for Black?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Once again, a counter in the centre is the best reply to a flank attack. Thus 10...dxc4!? 11.Bxc4 fxg4 12.Ne5 Nxe5 13.Bxe5 Bf6, and the whole battle lies ahead.

**11.Bxh7! Rxh7?**

The decisive mistake. He had to play 11...Kf8, and suffer. Probably Alexey Bochkarev had counted on 12.Qxh7? Nf8, covering his king and taking on f3, but after White's next move, everything is back in its place.



**12.Qg6+! Kf8 13.Qxh7 gxf3 14.Rg1 Bf6**

The black king has not managed to leave the danger zone, but it seems as though the square g7 is solidly defended. However, this turns out to be an illusion – White wins easily.

**15.Qh8+ Kf7 16.Rxg7+! Bxg7 17.Qxd8 Bf6 18.Qc7+–**

And White soon won.

The author must admit that he himself has found it psychologically easier to fight against the Stonewall after watching Roman Ovetchkin's video. Why was it so scary to fight against this system before? Probably, my childhood and the deeply-studied Botvinnik books again played a role. After all, the Patriarch played the Dutch in masterly fashion and mated a number of by no means weak opponents with it.

So, such a strong player as the several-time champion of Russia and member of the Bronze Horseman team, Maxim Matlakov, has long been armed with this nice idea.

## Game 22

**Maxim Matlakov 2665**

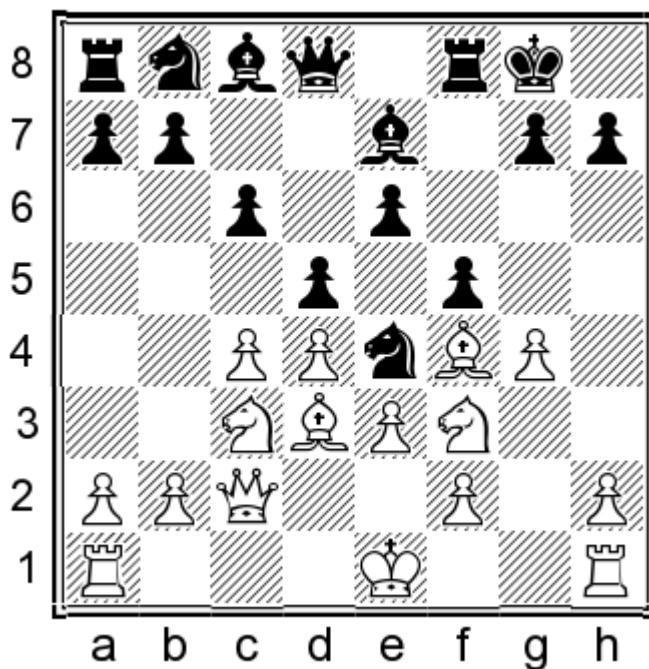
**Dmitry Melnikov 2292**

St Petersburg 2012 (6)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Qc2 f5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 Ne4 7.Nc3 Be7 8.Bd3 0-0**

Castling is more useful to Black than the knight move to d7, but here too, the pawn thrust is quite dangerous.

**9.g4!**



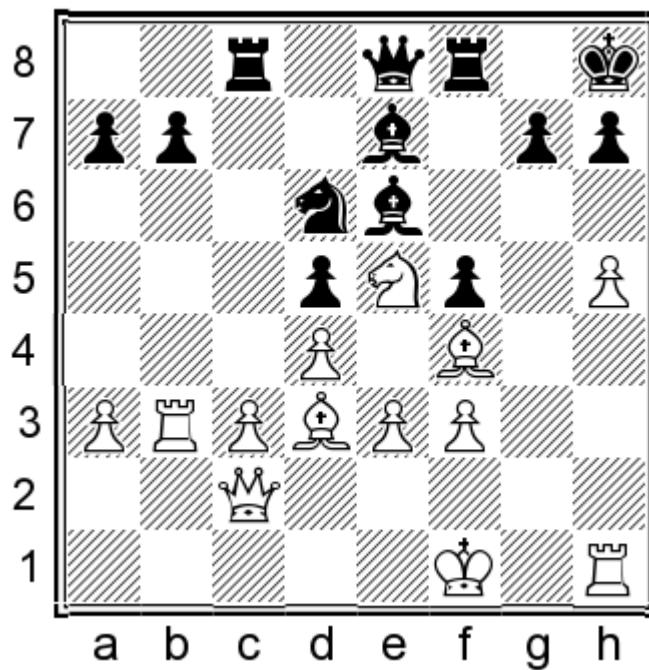
**9...Kh8**

This position has arisen many times in GM practice, and Black has tried numerous methods of fighting against White's idea. The majority of the time he does not succeed.

A) **9...Qa5 10.Ke2!?** The simple 10.a3 is also good, but the king move, clearing the back rank for a transfer of the major pieces to the kingside, looks even more effective! **10...Na6 11.a3 Nxc3+ 12.bxc3 Kh8 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.Rab1**

**Nc7 15.Ne5 Ne8 16.gxf5** Good are both 16.h4!? and 16.g5!? with dangerous threats, but even at move 10 White had shown that he wants to open the g-file! **16...exf5 17.h4 Nd6 18.h5 Ne4**

Mobilizing all his reserves does not help Black: 18...Be6 19.f3 Rac8 20.Rb3 Qa4 21.Kf1 Qe8.



*analysis diagram*

**Test 12.** How does White crown his attacking operations?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** As Robert James Fischer once wrote: open the h-file, check, check, mate!

22.Ng6+! hxg6 23.hxg6+ Kg8 24.Rh8+ Kxh8 25.Qh2+ and the black king perishes.

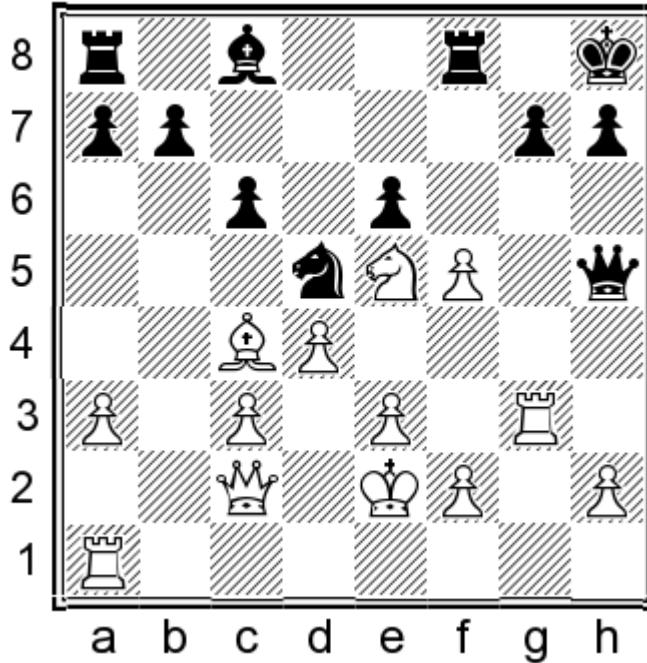
**19.Rb3 Bg5 20.Bxg5 Nxg5**

Black has slightly restricted the white pieces and exchanged dark-squared bishops, but even so, his position looks dangerous.

**21.h6! g6 22.Qb2 b6?** The decisive mistake; he should have preferred 22...Qc7. **23.Rb5 Qa4 24.c4! Bb7** Now we see the danger to the black king from the weakness of the long diagonal: 24...dxc4? 25.Nxg6+ hxg6 26.d5++–.

**25.cxd5 f4 26.e4 Ba6 27.f3 Nf7 28.d6 Rac8 29.Nxg6+! 1-0** Gustafsson-Hoolt, Germany Bundesliga 2009/10;

B) 9...Na6 10.a3 Nxc3 11.bxc3 Nc7 12.Rg1 Kh8??! (12...dxc4 13.Bxc4 Nd5 is more tenacious) 13.Be5 Bf6 14.Rg3!? (White is gathering a mass of pieces and soon the black king will start to feel uncomfortable in his home) 14...dxc4 15.Bxc4 Nd5 16.Ke2! (again, the computer recommends 16.g5, but we already know that the king move is more ideal) 16...Bd7 (Black can play his queen out: 16...Bxe5 17.Nxe5 Qh4 18.gxf5 Qh5+.



**Test 13.** How can White most effectively oppose this guerrilla raid on his king?

Show/Hide Solution

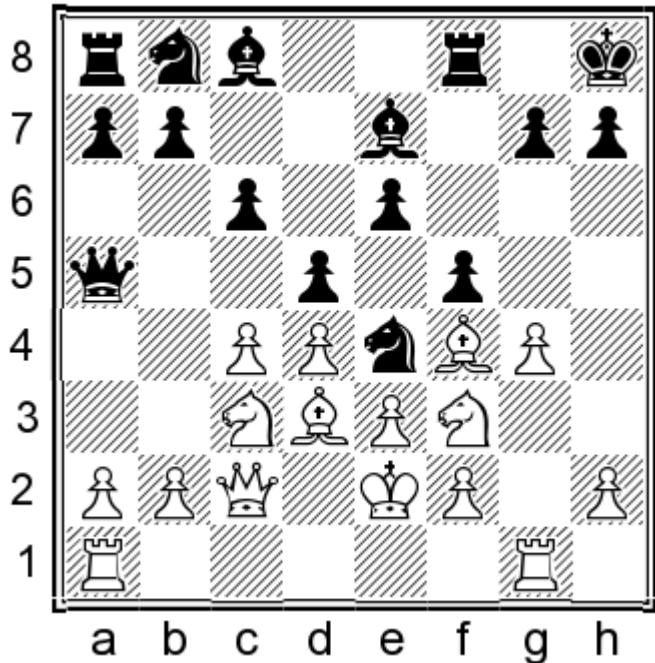
**Solution:** The queen on her own is not a threat! White should continue the attack and not pay any attention to the lady's excursions: 19.Kd2! Qxh2 20.Rag1! Qxf2+ 21.Kc1 Qxc2+ 22.Kxc2, and the ending proves to be extremely difficult for Black: 22...exf5 23.Bxd5 cxd5 24.Rxg7±, mate is threatened and Black has to play 24...Be6, parting with the pawn on b7)

17.Rag1 g6 18.Rh3 Bxe5 19.Nxe5 Be8 20.gxf5 gxf5 21.Kd2!? (immediate blows do not work, so White plays a useful move, getting the king out of a possible check) 21...Qf6 22.Qb1 Rc8? (a tragic oversight instead of the normal 22...b5) 23.Bxd5 1-0 Agrest-Munk, Helsingor 2009 – next move the white queen takes on b7 with decisive threats.

C) Finally, again 9...fxg4?! is bad for Black: 10.Bxe4 dxe4 11.Ne5 Nd7 12.0-0-0 Nxe5 13.Bxe5 Bd7 14.Rdg1 Bf6 15.Rxg4 Bxe5 16.dxe5 Qc7 (in all variations, White continues his attack, taking black pawns along the way; 16...Be8 17.Rhg1 Bg6 18.Nxe4) 17.Rhg1 Qxe5 18.Qxe4 Qxe4 19.Rxg7+ Kh8 20.Nxe4 Be8 21.Nf6! Bg6 22.R1xg6 Rxg6 23.Rxh7+ Kxh7 24.Rxf6 1-0 Psakhis-Sequera Paolini, Elista 1998.

Maxim Matlakov's opponent, a strong FM from St Petersburg (who also has a 2-0 score against the present author), immediately withdraws his king from the soon-to-be open line, but suddenly misfortune comes not from the kingside but from the queenside!

**10.Rg1 Qa5 11.Ke2!**



By now a typical device. Matlakov completes his development, whilst avoiding simplification.

**11...Nd7?**

It is hard to imagine, but this is a serious mistake, allowing White to break through.

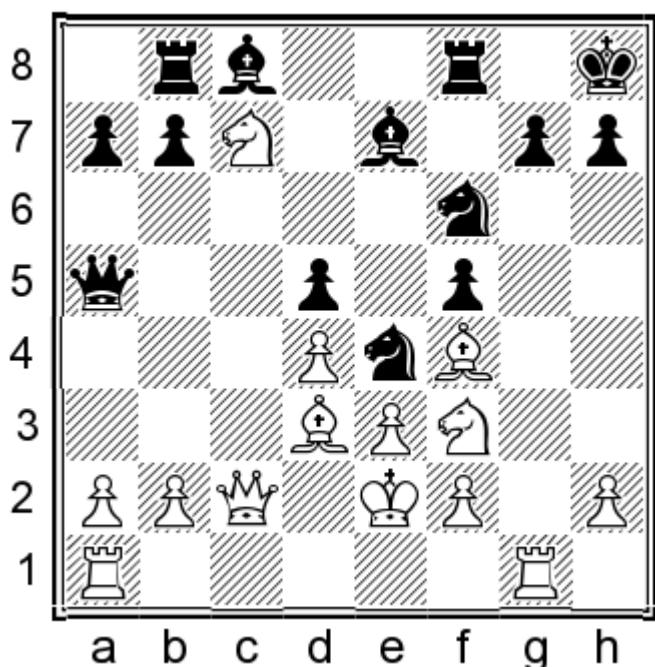
**12.gxf5! exf5 13.cxd5 cxd5**

On 13...Nxc3+ White can choose between playing with or without queens: 14.Qxc3 Qxc3 15.bxc3 cxd5 16.c4 or 14.bxc3 cxd5 15.Rg2, but in either case, Black has serious problems.

**14.Nb5!**

Suddenly Black has serious problems defending the square c7.

**14...Ndf6 15.Nc7 Rb8**



In reply, Melnikov sets a cunning trap.

**Test 14.** Try to find what happens after the tempting 16.Nxd5?.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Black's idea is very clever: 16...Nxd5 17.Bxb8 Be6 18.Be5 Rc8!! 19.Bxg7+ Kg8, and wherever the white queen runs to, there follows a knight check on c3, winning the white queen.

Matlakov thought for a while and found the simplest path to victory:

**16.Na6 Ra8 17.Qc7! Qxc7**

The ending is also bad for Black after 17...Qb6 18.Qxb6 axb6 19.Nc7 Ra5 20.a3 Bd6 21.Be5, but at least here he does not lose anything immediately.

**18.Nxc7 Rb8 19.Nxd5**

White has an extra pawn and the better position, and the game is not long prolonged.

**19...Bd6 20.Bxd6 Nxd6 21.Nf4 Bd7 22.Ne5 Bb5? 23.Bxb5 Nxb5 24.Ne6 1-0**

In this Botvinnik Memorial 2012, Maxim Matlakov shared 1st-8th places with 7/9. One must admit that knowing one device against the Stonewall is not enough to achieve such a quality result!

So as not to offend the black players, we will offer one more game, this time won by him. And not against any old Tom, Dick or Harry, either, but against none other than Garry Kasparov! Admittedly, it was in a simul, which the 13th World Champion gave in Israel.

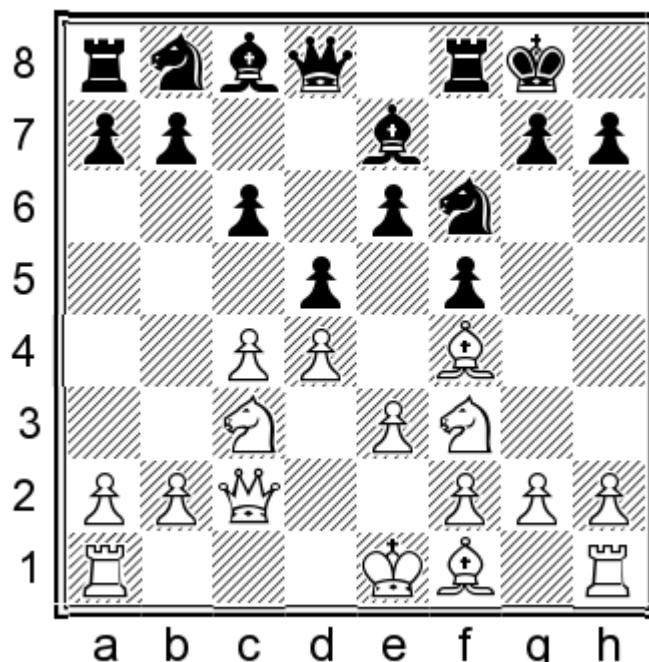
Game 23

Garry Kasparov 2785

Michael Kreizberg 2245

Jerusalem simul 1996

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Qc2 f5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 Be7 7.Nc3 0-0**



## 8.h3

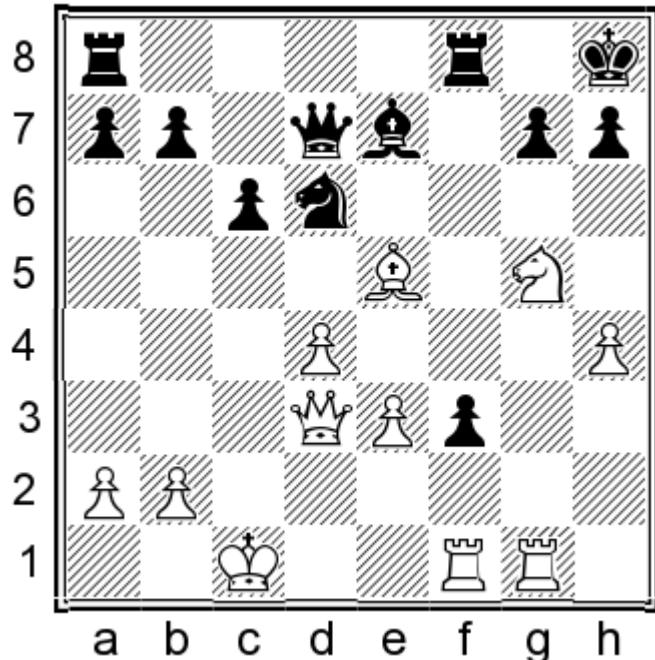
Black has not put his knight on e4, so as not to provoke his great opponent, but White can insist and try to carry out his programmed advance in one move. For example, 8.Bd3 Bd7 (8...Ne4 9.g4 leads to a transposition to the above game) 9.Ne5 Be8 10.g4 Ne4? (neither 10...fxg4?! 11.0-0-0 nor 11.h3 looks very pretty, but Black does have the standard chance to muddy the waters with 10...c5!? 11.gxf5 cxd4 12.exd4 Nc6 with counterplay) 11.gxf5 exf5 12.cxd5 Nxc3 (12...cxd5 13.Nxd5+) 13.bxc3 g5 14.d6! Bxd6 15.Rg1 Be7 16.h4 g4 17.Qb3+ Kh8 18.Qxb7+ Raetsky-Shumiakina, Pardubice 1992.

Kasparov prepares the advance.

## 8...a6

In the interesting game Yermolinsky-Pupols, Las Vegas 1997, White attacked strongly, but his little-known opponent put up stern resistance against the then leader of the US team.

8...Nbd7 9.g4 Ne4 10.gxf5 exf5 11.Rg1 Kh8 12.0-0-0 Ndf6 13.Be5 Be6 14.Nxe4 fxe4 15.Ng5 Bf5 16.f3!? Ne8 17.h4! exf3 18.Bd3 Qd7 19.Rdf1 dxc4 20.Qxc4 Nd6 21.Qc2 Bxd3 22.Qxd3.



Here Black was unable to withstand the pressure and after 22...Qf5? 23.e4 Qd7 24.Nxh7! his defences collapsed: 24...Rf7 (or 24...Kxh7 25.Rxg7+ Kh6 26.Qe3+ Kh5 27.Rh7+ Kg4 28.Qg1+ Kh3 29.Qg3#) 25.Rxf3 Qe6 26.Ng5 Bxg5+ 27.Rxg5 Nc4 28.Rxf7 Nxe5 29.Rh5+ Kg8 30.Rxg7+ 1-0.

**Test 15.** Can the defence be strengthened?

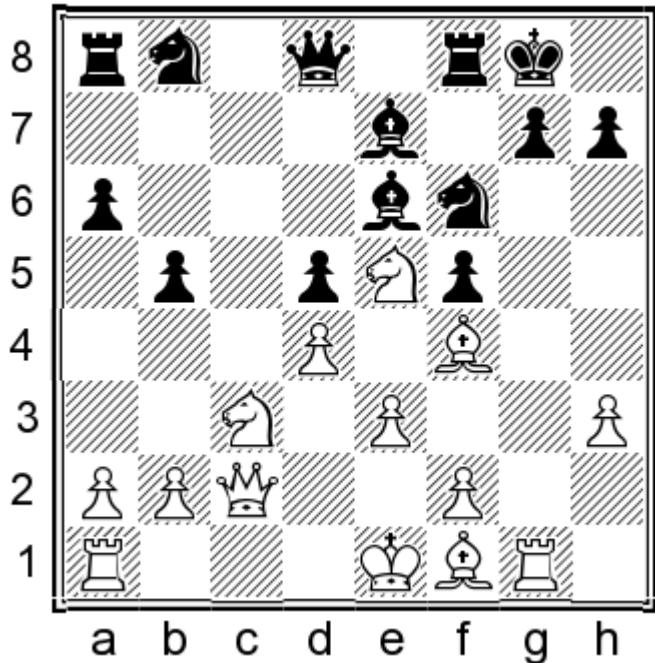
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Definitely. Whilst the pawn on f3 is alive, Black can regroup and protect his king. He just needs to eliminate White's 'centre forward': 22...Bxg5! 23.Rxg5 Rf7 24.Rh5 Rf5 25.Rxf5 Nxh5 26.Qe4 Rf8 27.Qxf3 (27.Rxf3 Rf7), and Black is saved by the striking 27...Rf7 28.e4 Nh6!.

## 9.g4 b5 10.cxd5

A typical simul move, aiming at simplicity above all, but stronger is 10.c5!, cramping the black queenside and preventing the active development of his pieces.

## 10...cxd5 11.gxf5 exf5 12.Ne5 Be6 13.Rg1



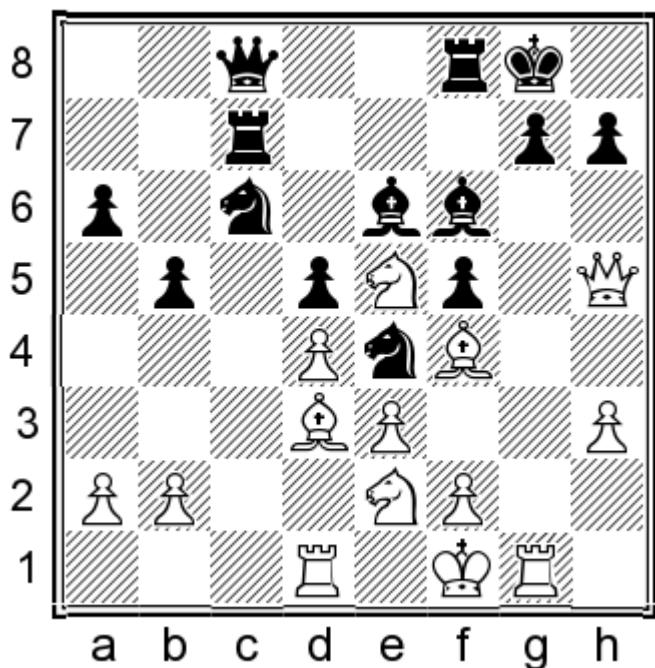
**13...Ra7!**

A splendid resource. The rook protects g7 and creates counter-threats along the c-file.

**14.Bd3 Ne4**

White's king position is also far from ideal and Kasparov has to spend time to ensure that His Majesty does not get under the feet of his own pieces.

**15.Kf1!? Rc7 16.Qe2 Bf6 17.Qh5 Qc8 18.Ne2 Nc6 19.Rd1**



Look how a great player has found a good square for each of his pieces! Now, so as to sustain the pressure, Black needs to bring his rook into play: 19...Re8! with the idea of meeting 20.f3 with 20...Nxe5 21.Bxe5 (21.dxe5 Bf7) 21...Bf7 22.Qh6 Bg6, solidly defending the king.

**19...Ne7? 20.f3! Nc6**

On 20...Nd6 there follows the crushing blow 21.Ng4! – the daring knight cannot be captured, whilst not taking is also bad.

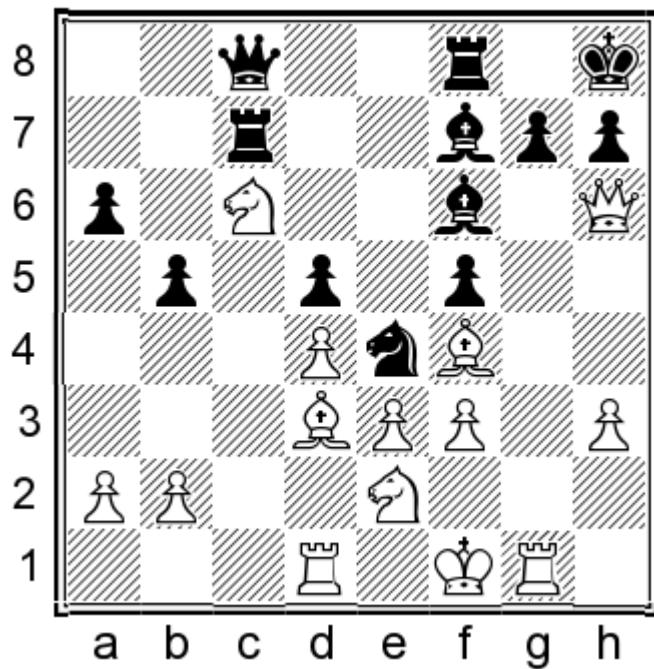
In reply, Black tries to confuse his great opponent and succeeds in the conditions of a simultaneous exhibition!

## 21.Nxc6?

Despite all the dangers, the knight should have been taken: 21.fxe4! fxe4 22.Bb1 – a piece is a piece. In addition, the simul-giver overlooks the surrounding of his queen.

## 21...Bf7! 22.Qh6 Kh8?

Black wins with 22...Rxc6 23.fxe4 fxe4 24.Bb1 Kh8, but now it is White rather than Black who lands an effective blow!



## 23.Rxg7! Bxg7 24.Be5 Be8 25.Nf4??

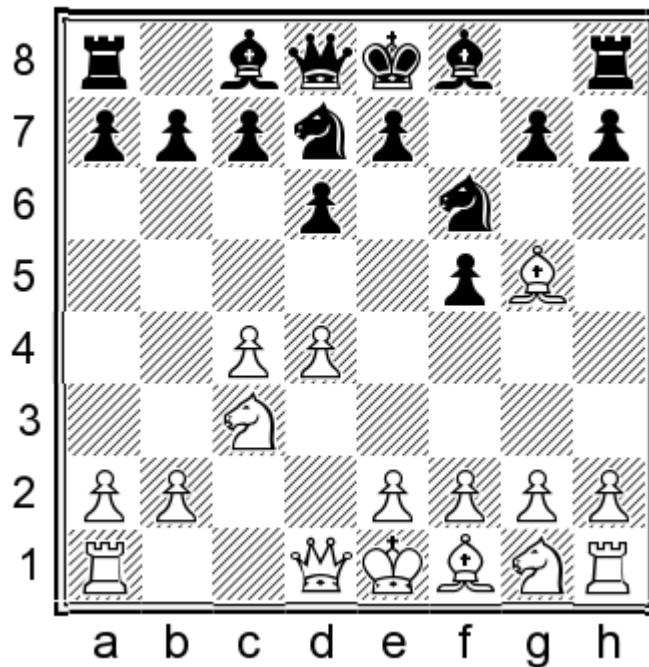
After 25.Nb4! White has excellent compensation for the exchange, and an attack, but one more oversight finally destroys his position.

## 25...Nf6 26.Qg5 Rxc6 27.Bxf5 Bd7 28.Bd3 Ne8 29.Qh5 Bf5 0-1

Simuls, especially if the line-up is strong, are usually very difficult to give. Garry Kasparov was opposed by 25 worthy opponents, and the World Champion had a hard time. Kasparov lost another game to Israeli minister Nathan Sharansky, a former prisoner of the Soviet regime and a master-strength chess player. As Sharansky later told reporters, in the opening he surprised the World Champion with a scheme he had carefully studied in prison! The only pity is that in that game there was no g2-g4 motif.

Of course, the variety of ‘anti-Dutch’ attacks associated with the aggressive g2-g4 thrust is far from exhausted by the move-orders considered above. At the last moment, I came across an interesting idea from Alina Kashlinskaya, the WGM and wife of Radoslaw Wojtaszek. She shocked Black after the initial moves 1.d4 f5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 d6 (3...g6 has to reckon with another battering ram 4.h4!) 4.Bg5 Nbd7.

1.d4 f5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 d6 4.Bg5 Nbd7

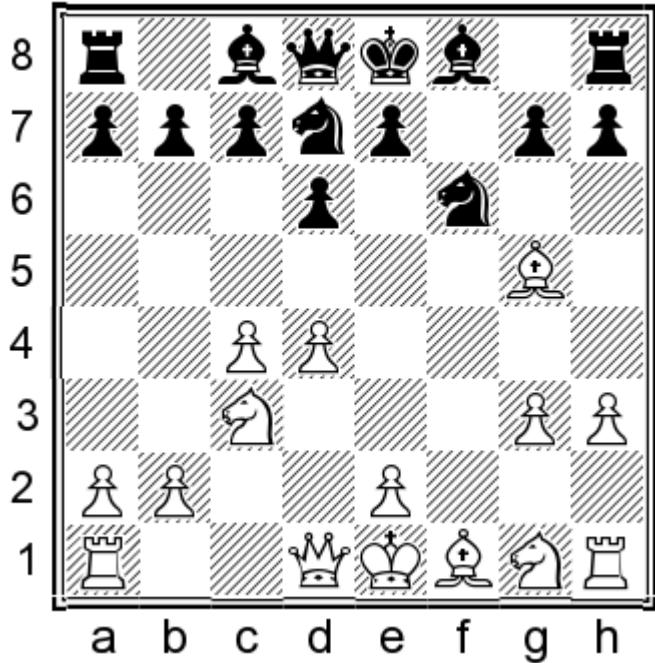


5.g4! fxg4

The principled continuation. Half-measures are not suitable for Black here. Bad is 5...Nxg4?! 6.e4 g6 7.exf5 gxf5 8.Qe2 Bg7 9.Nf3 with a strong initiative for White. In another game, Alina was faced with 5...e6?! 6.gxf5 exf5 7.Qc2 g6 8.0-0-0 Bg7 9.e4 fxe4 10.Nxe4 0-0 11.Bd3 Qe8 12.Re1 Qf7 with rather unclear play (Kashlinskaya-Batsiashvili, Doha rapid 2016), although in the end, Kashlinskaya won. But rather stronger was 9.h4! h6 10.Bxf6 Nxf6 11.Nh3, and Black's defences are hanging by a thread.

6.h3 g3 7.fxg3

Too sharp is 7.f4?! e5! 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.fxe5 Nxe5 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.0-0-0+ Bd7<sup>3</sup> Pakleza-Miton, Chorzow 2013.



**7...g6?!**

It is stronger to react in the same style as Miton with 7...e5 followed by developing the bishop to e7, not allowing White a target for the attack.

**8.Nf3 Bg7 9.Qc2**

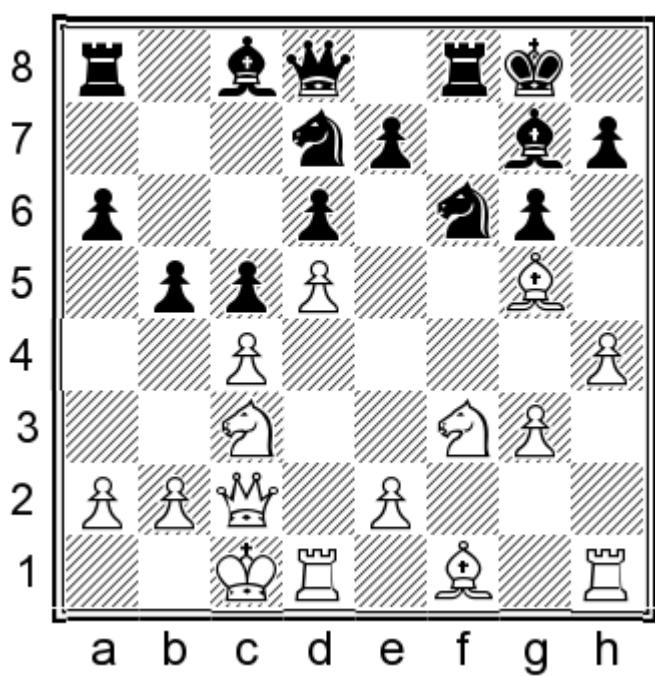
Quieter is 9.Bg2 0-0 10.0-0 with advantage to White, but the Russian lady is after more aggressive play.

**9...c5 10.d5 0-0 11.0-0-0?!**

Also here, it was still not too late for 11.Bg2.

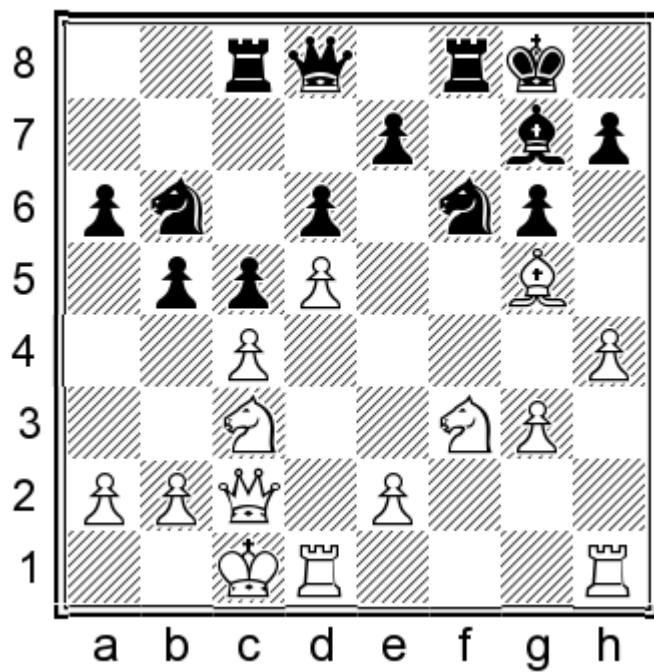
**11...a6 12.h4 b5!**

Black has excellent counterplay, as the Bg7 not only defends the king but also supports the counterattack from afar.



### **13.Bh3 Nb6 14.Bxc8 Rxc8?!**

As a result of her opponent's inaccuracy, Alina now manages to break through to the opponent's king. More subtle was 14...Qxc8! 15.h5 Nxh5 16.Bxe7 Nxg3 – in such a position, material is not so important and the key thing for Neiksans would be not to allow the white forces to break in down the h-file.

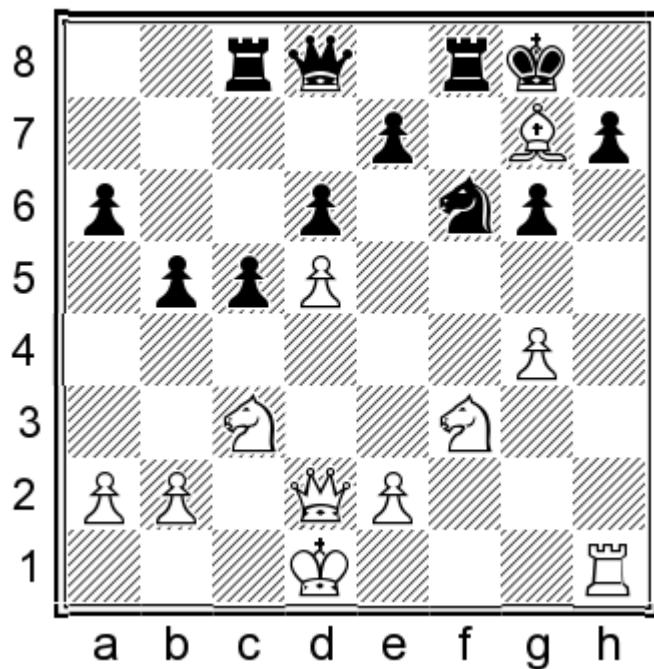


### **15.h5! Nxh5 16.g4 Nf6 17.Bh6 Nxc4 18.Bxg7 Ne3**

White keeps a crushing initiative too after 18...Kxg7 19.Ng5 Qe8 20.Nce4.

### **19.Qd2 Nxd1 20.Kxd1!?**

White does not slacken the pace of the attack. All her pieces are aimed at the black king.

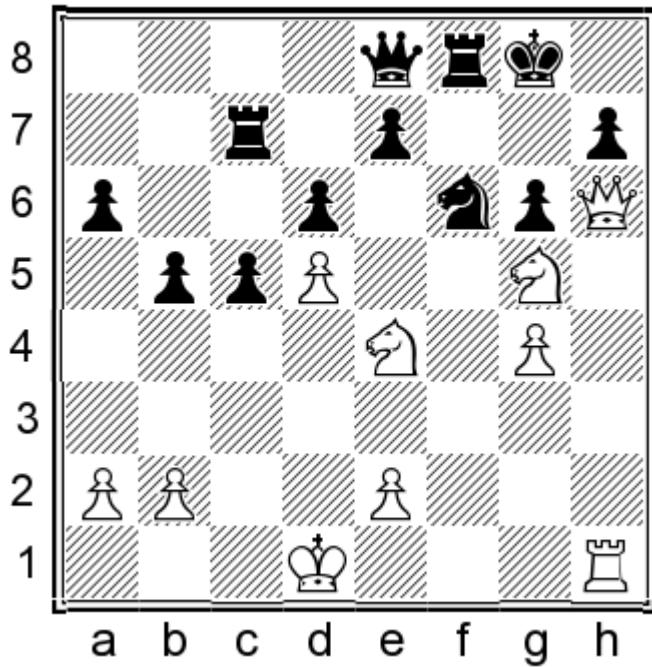


Taking with the king offers Black his last chance to sharpen the game by means of 20...Nxg4!, but after the tempting capture of the bishop, it is already very difficult to beat off the attack.

**20...Kxg7? 21.Qh6+ Kg8 22.Ng5 Qe8**

He does not lose immediately after 22...Rf7!? 23.Nxf7 Qf8±.

**23.Nce4 Rc7**



**24.Ne6 Qf7 25.N4g5 Nxg4 26.Nxf7**

And White realized his material advantage.

Alina Kashlinskaya's inspirational attack fits perfectly into our concept – energy, pressure and opening lines on the kingside will surely produce results!

### Conclusions

1. The battering ram of the g-pawn in this line is extremely dangerous, and after moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Qc2 Black should look for an alternative to the move of the f-pawn. For example, just play 4...Nf6.
2. If White manages to undermine the f5-pawn in favourable circumstances, then his initiative is extremely dangerous. It is worth noting the spectacular resource Ke1-e2!, thanks to which White usually escapes the pin along the e1-a5 diagonal and clears the first rank to transfer his major pieces to the kingside.
3. Again, in reply, Black should look for counterplay by making a counter-thrust in the centre, but due to White's good development this is relatively difficult.

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## **Part III**

### **The Queen's Gambit Declined**

#### ***Chapter 7***

#### **Strolls with the Queen's Gambit**

##### **Some history**

When did the Queen's Gambit come into existence? Probably, when White got a little tired of the dashing attacks of the Italian school, and decided to switch hands and start the game with the queen's pawn. The first games starting with 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 date back to 1834, and were still encountered in the battle of the French leader Louis Charles de la Bourdonnais against his Irish opponent Alexander McDonnell. At the time of the first world champions, Wilhelm Steinitz, Emanuel Lasker and José Raul Capablanca, the Queen's Gambit had an established reputation as the number one opening in the world – the newly formed theory of positional play required reliable control of the centre of the chessboard and developing the pieces as solidly as possible.

The 20th century delighted the chess kingdom with a whole palette of new openings, to the analysis of which computers were actively connected at the turn of the millennium. Of course, these days it is much easier to teach a young fan of a black-and-white game to play the King's Indian Defence, the Modern Benoni or even the Slav Defence, rather than underlining the durable Queen's Gambit. However, Black's impregnable bastions continue to have a reputation as a 'world championship opening', as the Queen's Gambit was once christened by Garry Kasparov's coaching staff, during the great confrontation with Anatoly Karpov. Probably the same words can be said about supertournaments.

In the computer age, the theory of the Queen's Gambit quickly advanced, and it soon became clear that everything in the forced lines was analysed all the way through – any sensible attempt by White to 'press' was met by a black reaction. At the highest level, people began again to speak of the 'draw death', a hundred years after Capablanca began to think about such an ugly death for his favourite game.

But genuine matadors of the chequered board have again proved that chess is inexhaustible. It turned out that ways could be found, the presence of which was not even suspected by the masters of the past. And here again the battering ram g2-g4 came to the fore, which was once used by Mikhail Botvinnik. However, whereas the Patriarch believed that White's attack should be carefully checked and prepared, then modern grandmasters went much further and began to act according to the rule of Napoleon Bonaparte – the main thing is to get involved in the battle first, and then we'll see what happens.

##### **Conception**

It is clear that if we want to explore all the nooks and crannies of the Queen's Gambit, all possible orders of moves and all the traces of the g2-g4 move in them, then we need a whole huge encyclopedia, not a book of this size. Therefore, we will not get carried away and will merely take a few short strolls around the most famous examples.

It is rather difficult to create a classification, but with g2-g4 we should distinguish between cases where it has the purpose of a battering ram assault and those where the move aims merely to restrict the scope of the worst black piece, the c8-bishop. Often these two ideas are intertwined, and some experience is needed to understand whether it is necessary to move this pawn to g5 later or whether it has already captured the bridgehead, and one just has to wait

for the regular units of the white army to come up. One can argue about this for a long time, but it is better just to look at the games! Black's counterplay here is also quite understandable – he should not just hunker down, but should strike at the white centre before the opponent's king has time to escape to the edge of the board, opening the operational space for the rooks.

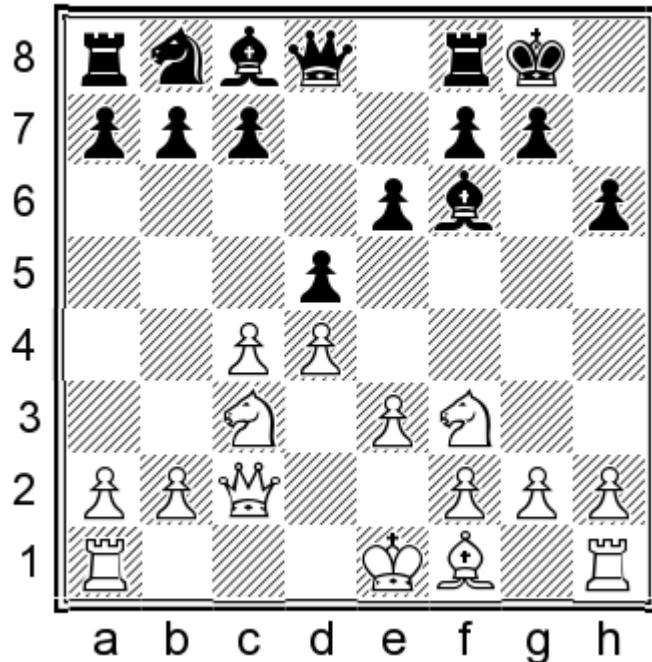
Game 25

**Konstantin Lerner** 2525

**Janis Klovans** 2450

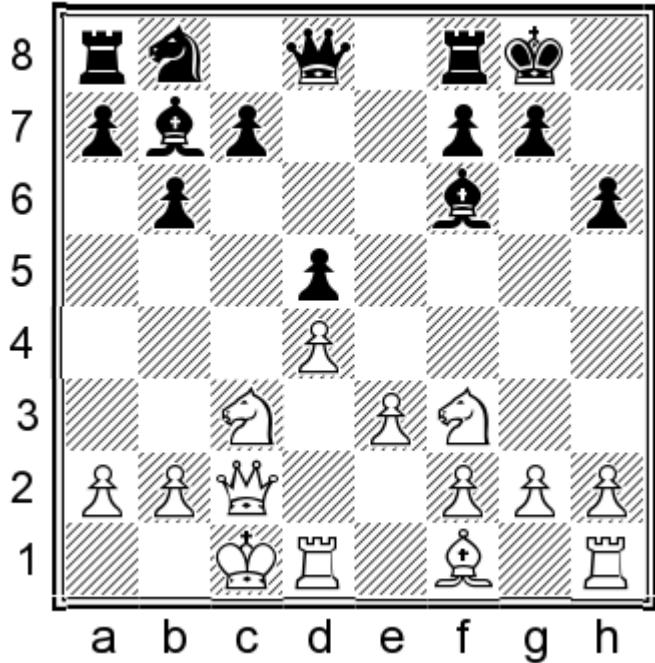
Jurmala 1983 (9)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 h6 7.Bxf6 Bxf6 8.Qc2**



At that time, the famous TMB, the Tartakower-Makagonov-Bondarevsky Variation, was at the peak of its popularity and caused White a lot of inconvenience. After all, the World Champion Anatoly Karpov regularly used it with black. However, during his great confrontation with Garry Kasparov, Karpov had to play against his favourite scheme with white as well. The great K's, of course, knew the danger of a potential assault on Black's kingside, weakened by the move ...h7-h6, so they immediately acted with the retorts 8...c5, 8...dxc4 9.Bxc4 c5 or 8...Na6, with a similar idea. But in 1983, a year before the first Karpov-Kasparov match, these nuances were barely known.

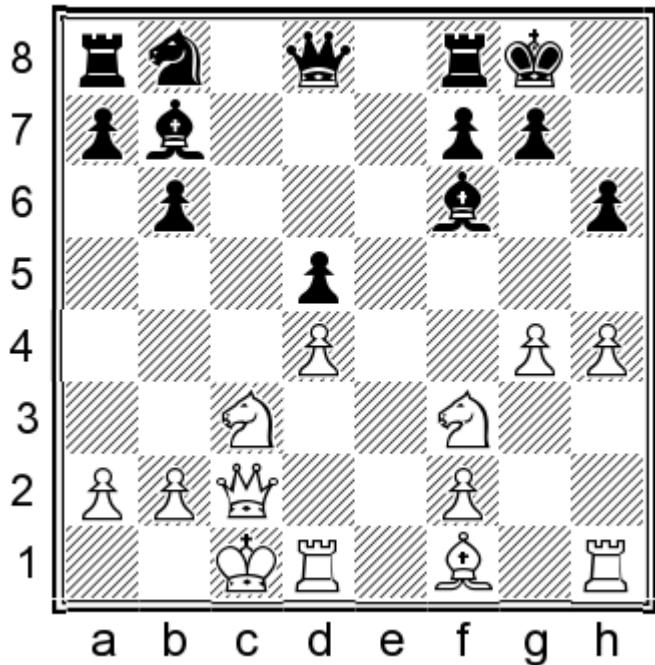
**8...b6 9.0-0-0 Bb7 10.cxd5 exd5**



**11.h4**

A preparatory move by the neighbouring pawn, although nowadays one also sees 11.g4!? g6 12.h4 Bg7 13.Ne5 c5 14.f4 with the initiative for White, Schekachikhin-Shadunts, St Petersburg 2017.

**11...c5 12.g4! cxd4 13.exd4**



This position has been seen a number of times in grandmaster practice, and the first such occasion was discouraging for Black: 13...Qd6 14.Kb1 Nc6 (interesting is 14...Qf4 15.Be2 Na6, after which White's simplest is to play 16.Qc1!?, heading for a slightly more pleasant endgame) 15.g5 Qf4? (already too late) 16.gxf6 Qxf3 17.fxg7 Qxh1 18.gxf8=Q+ Rxf8 19.Ba6+– Hebert-Adianto, Lucerne 1982.

Stronger is 13...Nc6 14.Kb1 Bc8!?, but here too, despite the computer's positive assessment, to a human player, Black's position looks extremely dangerous – every inaccuracy could prove fatal: 15.Bh3 (more subtle is 15.Rg1!?) 15...Bxh4? (there is the important resource 15...g6!, and White cannot allow himself to play 16.g5? Bxh3 17.Rxh3 Qd7 18.Rg3 Nb4 19.Qb3 Qf5+) 16.Nxh4 Qxh4 17.Nxd5 Bb7 18.Bg2 Qg5 19.f4 Qd8 20.f5 (20.g5 wins) 20...Qg5

21.Be4? (or now 21.Rh5+) 21...Rfe8 22.Rdg1 Nxd4, and Black can defend, Gagunashvili-Lintchevski, Budva 2009.

Janis Klovans immediately puts the pawn on g6, but now comes under a real attacking typhoon.

At the start of this Jurmala tournament, Mikhail Tal was present, and in the presence of the Riga Magician, Konstantin Lerner could not permit himself any half-measures.

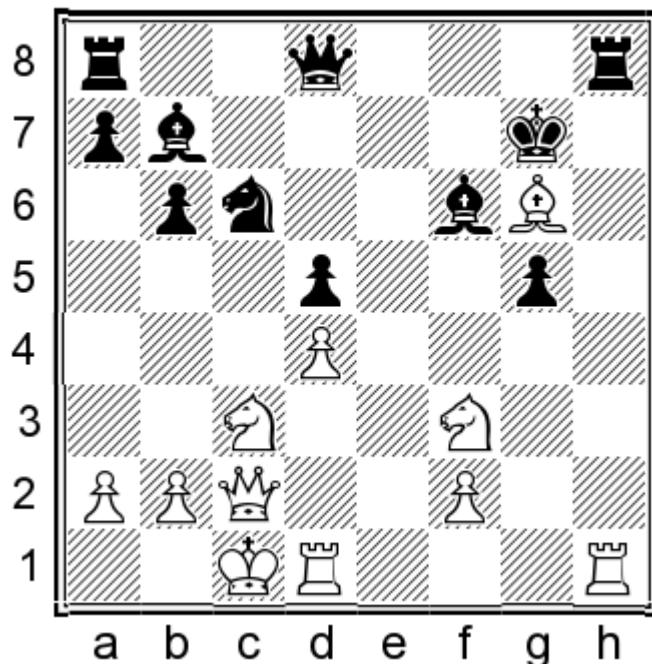
**13...g6 14.g5! hxg5 15.h5!**

An unpleasant surprise – White does not attack along the h-file, but creates an object of attack on the g-file instead, which proves indefensible.

**15...Kg7 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.Bd3 Nc6**

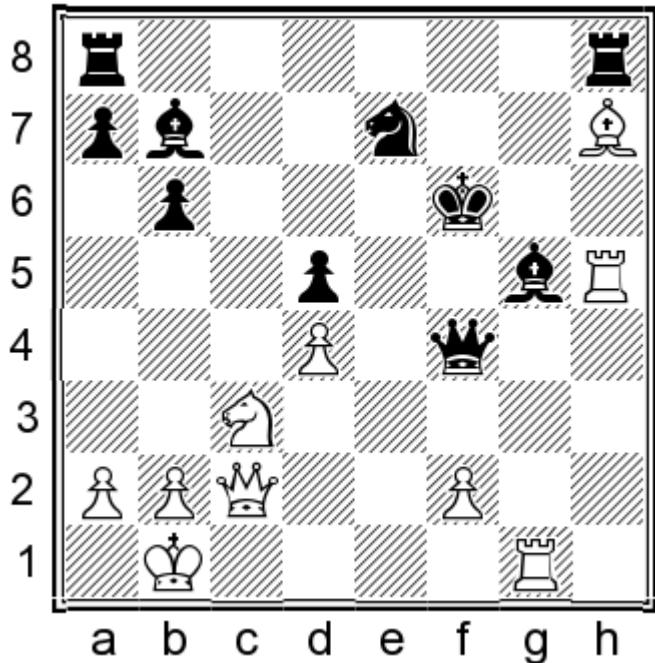
There is no time to defend with 17...Qe8 18.Rdg1, so Klovans brings the knight into play.

**18.Bxg6 Rh8**



At first glance, things don't seem so bad for Black, his main hope being the 'central defender', the Bf6, but White's next move ensures Lerner's pieces a decisive breakthrough.

**19.Bh7! Ne7 20.Rdg1 Qd6 21.Nxg5! Qf4+ 22.Kb1 Bxg5 23.Rh5 Kf6**



Formally, Black gets enough material for the queen after the following liquidation, but his pieces are scattered and lack the necessary coordination.

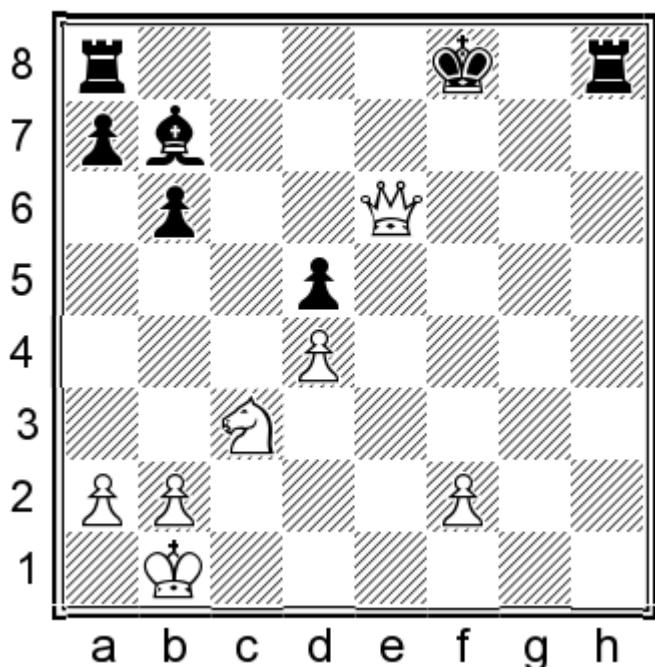
#### **24.Rhxg5**

Possibly even stronger was 24.Ne2 Qd2 25.Qc7, but Lerner chooses the simplest path to the win, one not requiring calculation of any additional variations.

**24...Qxg5 25.Rxg5 Kxg5 26.Qd2+ Kf6 27.Qf4+ Ke6 28.Bf5+!**

Black must exchange the last defender, the Ne7.

**28...Nxf5 29.Qe5+ Kf7 30.Qxf5+ Kg8 31.Qe6+ Kf8**



**32.Qd7!**

The final trick. Now not 32...Rb8 33.Qc7, and Black loses the pawn on d5.

**32...Ba6 33.Nxd5 Rh1+ 34.Kc2 Rc8+ 35.Kd2 Rcc1**

And Black immediately resigned, because he is mated in three: 36.Qe7+ Kg8 37.Nf6+ Kh8 38.Qf8#.

Many years later, the trainer of the Russian men's team won even more quickly. This was at the European Cup in 2011, where the star-studded Moscow team was paired in an early round with the team from Oslo.

#### Game 26

**Alexander Riazantsev** 2688

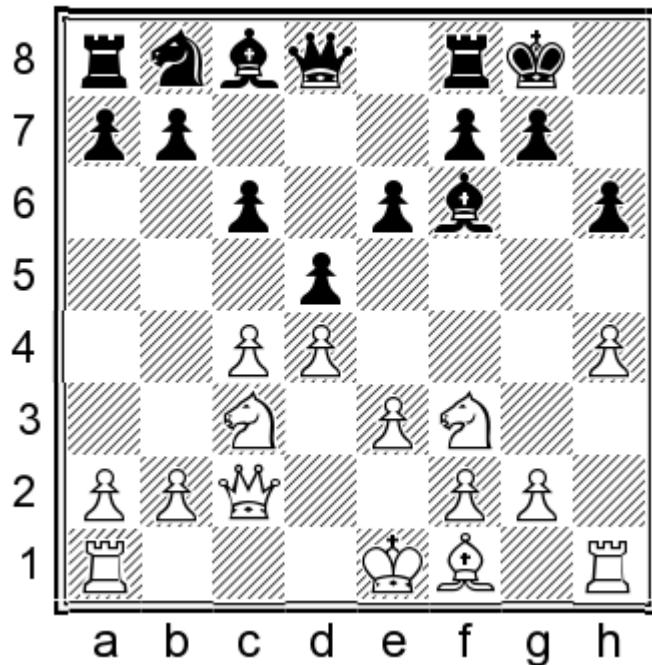
**Nikolai Getz** 2391

Rogaska Slatina tt 2011 (2)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bxf6 Bxf6 7.e3**

I would remind you that Black should attack the white centre immediately with 7...0-0 8.Qc2 c5, but the Norwegian master does not suspect any danger.

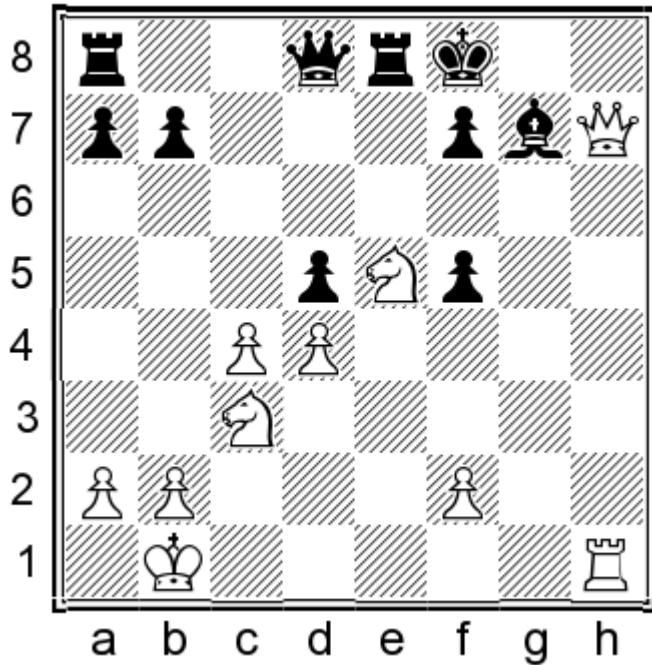
**7...c6 8.Qc2 0-0 9.h4**



**9...Nd7?**

After this slow move, White throws everything at the black king. Black has tried advancing his pawn to c5, even with loss of tempo:

A) 9...c5 10.0-0-0 cxd4 11.exd4 Nc6 12.g4 g6 13.g5 hxg5 14.hxg5 Bxg5+ 15.Kb1 Bf6 16.Bd3 Nb4?! (16...Bg7!) 17.Qd2 Nxd3? (completely missing the danger, although things are already dangerous; 17...Bg7 18.Ne5) 18.Qh6! Re8 19.Rxd3 e5 (after 19...dxc4 20.Ne5 White easily creates decisive threats against the black king) 20.Nxe5 Bg7 21.Qh7+ Kf8 22.Rf3 Bf5+ 23.Rxf5 gxf5.

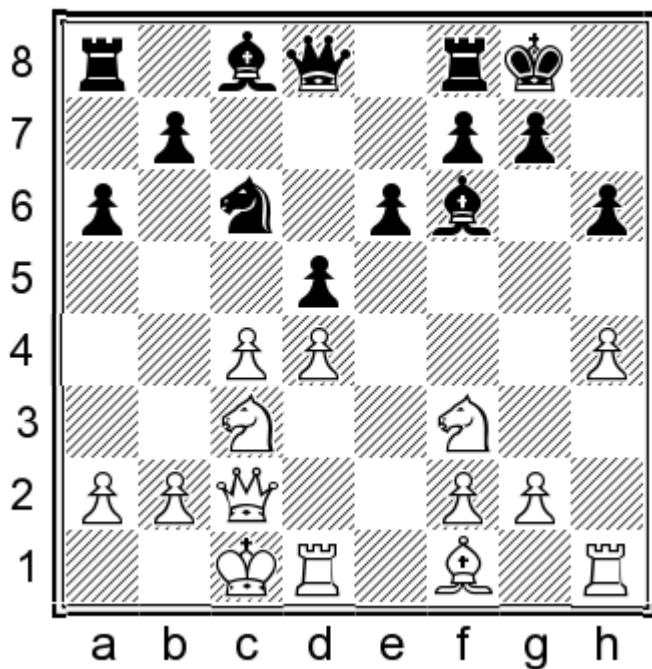


**Test 16.** Victory is not far away and in the game Salem-Kravtsiv, Riyadh rapid 2017, White landed the decisive blow. There are many variations, but in the conditions of a rapid game, can you find the simplest path to the win?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** 24.Rg1 Bxe5 25.Nxd5 and mate can be avoided only at the cost of large material losses, whereas after 24.Qxf5? Rxe5! 25.dxe5 dxc4 26.Rd1 Qe8 Martyn Kravtsiv managed to survive.

It is interesting that in the tie-break of the last Women's Russian Superfinal, Natalya Pogonina obtained a similar position even with an extra tempo (having played ...c7-c5 in one go) and still came under a tremendous attack: **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e3 h6 6.Bxf6 Bxf6 7.Qc2 0-0 8.h4 c5 9.Nc3 cxd4 10.exd4 Nc6 11.0-0-0 a6?**



*analysis diagram*

**12.g4! dxc4 13.g5 hxg5 14.hxg5 Bxg5+ 15.Kb1 f5**

Here, game commentator Sergey Shipov pointed out the practically forced win 16.Bxc4 Na5 (16...b5 17.Bb3 Na5

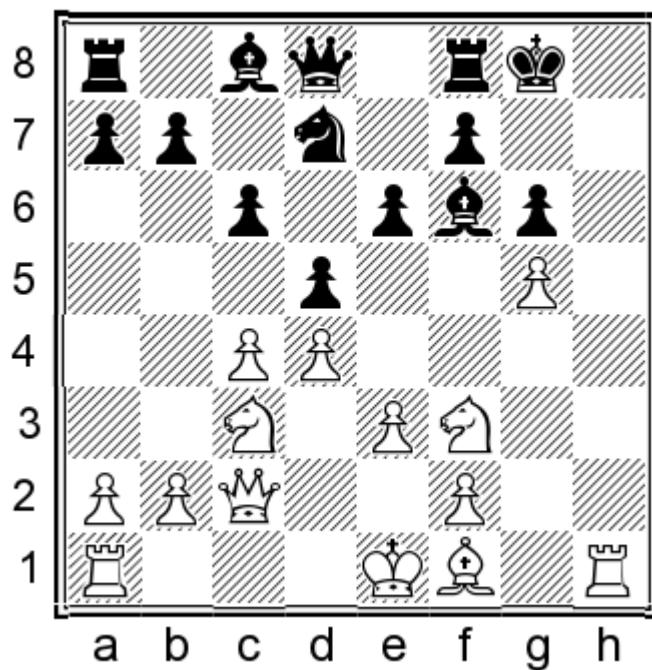
18.d5!) 17.Rdg1 Bf6 (17...Be7 18.Be2) 18.Qxf5 Nxc4 19.Qh7+ Kf7 20.Ne5+, winning. Probably Black can play other moves, but even so, White's attack is huge.

Olga Girya preferred 16.Nxg5?! Qxg5 17.Bxc4 b5 18.Bb3 Na5 19.Rdg1 Qf6 20.Nd5!? exd5 21.Bxd5+ Be6 22.Bxe6+ Qxe6 23.Qc7 Qe4+ 24.Ka1 Qxd4 25.Qxa5 Rfd8 26.Qc7 Rac8 27.Qh2! Qf6 28.Qh7+ Kf7 29.Qh5+, and won after 29...Kf8 30.Rg6 Qe5 31.Rg5 Rc5 32.Qh8+ Kf7 33.Qxd8, Girya-Pogonina, Izhevsk rapid 2019, whereas Black could have held with 29...g6! – White has excellent compensation for the pawn, but no more than that;

B) Here, a rising star of Indian chess began to prepare the retreat of the bishop with 9...g6 10.0-0-0 Nd7 11.e4 Bg7 12.Kb1! (White should not relax prematurely with 12.h5 g5 13.Kb1 g4 14.Nh2?! c5! 15.dxc5 d4, and Black took over the initiative in Kanep-Akopian, Gibraltar 2011) 12...b6 13.e5 Bb7 14.Rh3 Qe7 15.cxd5 exd5 16.h5 g5 17.Qf5 Qe6 18.Bd3 Qxf5 19.Bxf5 Rfd8 20.Nh2 with the better ending for White, Mamedyarov-Praggnanandhaa, Kolkata 2018, which the rating favourite duly won, but another very attractive-looking line is 14.cxd5 exd5 15.h5 g5 16.Bd3, trying to realize the advantages of his position with queens on.

### 10.g4 Be7

It is already too late for 10...g6 11.g5 hxg5 12.hxg5



*analysis diagram*

### 12...Bg7

Black is also in trouble if he accepts the sacrifice: 12...Bxg5 13.Bd3 Kg7 14.cxd5 exd5 15.Rg1 f6 (15...Bf6 16.Bxg6!) 16.Bxg6 Rh8 17.0-0-0 Nf8 18.Bf5 Rh5 19.Ne2 Bxf5 20.Qxf5 Qd7 (White's attack continues even after the exchange of queens) 21.Qxd7+ Nxd7 22.Nf4 Rh6 23.Nxg5 fxg5 24.Rxg5+ Kf6 25.Rdg1+– Ipatov-Grover, Kocaeli 2013.

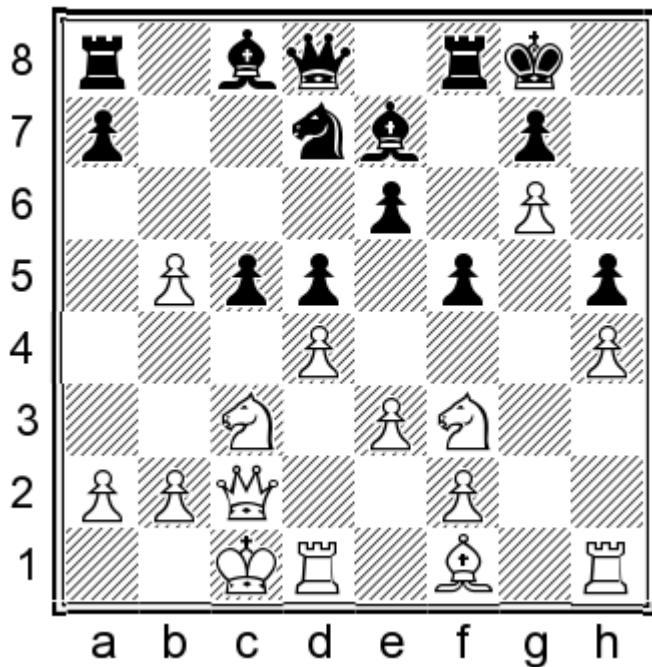
**13.0-0-0 Qe7 14.cxd5 exd5 15.Bd3 Re8 16.Rh4 Qd6 17.e4!** Also possible is 17.Rdh1 c5 18.e4, but why dawdle with bringing up the reserves? 17...Nf8 18.Rdh1 dxe4 19.Nxe4 Rxe4 After 19...Qd8 20.Ne5 Bf5 21.Nf6+ Bxf6 22.gxf6 Qxf6 23.Rh8+ Kg7 24.f4 Bxd3 25.Qh2 Black's defences down the h-file collapse, but the exchange sacrifice only delays the inevitable. **20.Bxe4 Be6 21.Kb1**, and White won, Dubov-Mozharov, Moscow 2012.

Nikolai Getz removes the bishop from the path of the advancing white pawns, but Black still doesn't manage to defend the kingside.

### 11.g5 h5 12.0-0-0 b5

A desperate attempt to distract White with some counterplay, instead of the passive 12...g6 13.Bd3 Qe8.

**13.cxb5 c5 14.g6 f5**



**15.Ne5**

White has the relatively simple 15.dxc5 Nxc5 16.Nd4 or 15.Ne2, but Alexander Riazantsev is looking to take the h7-pawn more quickly, after which the black king is mated.

**15...Nxe5 16.dxe5 f4**

Including the black queen in the defence still can't stop the white attack: 16...Qe8 17.Ne2 Qxg6 (17...Qxb5 18.Nf4 c4 19.Bg2! Rb8 20.Nxd5 exd5 21.Bxd5+ Kh8 22.Qe2 with a mating attack) 18.Nf4 Qh6 19.Rg1 with decisive threats.

**17.Bc4 Bb7**

There is no defence: 17...Kh8 18.exf4 Rxf4 19.Qe2 Rf5 20.Bd3+-. The Norwegian gives up the queen.

**18.e4 dxc4 19.Rxd8 Raxd8 20.Qe2**

And White won.

Needless to say, after such an introduction, the inspired SCHM-64 beat the strong champions of Norway, who had Jon Ludvig Hammer on the first board, by a score of 5-1!

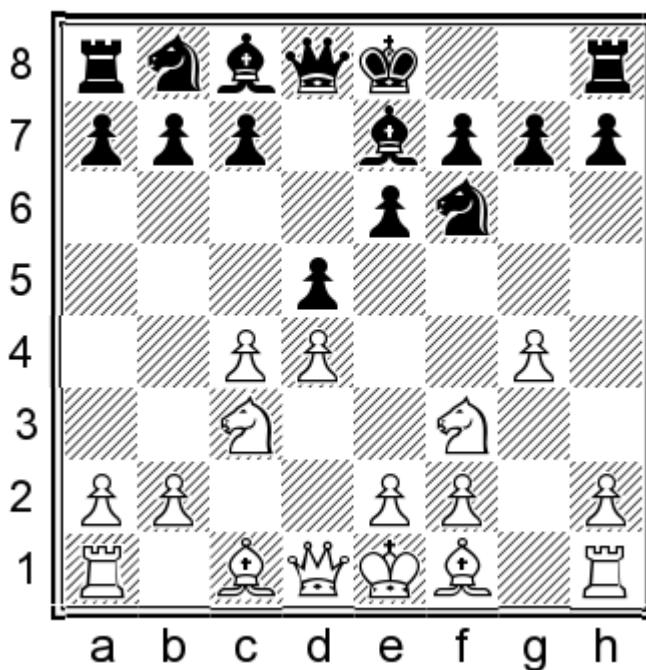
That is not so interesting, you might say. Here g2-g4 can be played without fundamental knowledge about Mikhail Botvinnik's favourite move. The target on h6 more or less invites the white pieces to storm the kingside! OK, in that case, I will bring to your attention another example, where the early moves contained nothing at all to foreshadow the ensuing chess brawl.

Game 27

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov 2761

Ruslan Ponomariov 2734

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Be7 5.g4!?**



Wow, what's this? Of course, Black will not take the pawn on g4, losing in return the important pawn on g7, but does White have any prerequisites for developing an attack? Moreover, none other than the 2001 FIDE World Champion Ruslan Ponomariov was sitting opposite Shakhriyar Mamedyarov! Ruslan played brilliantly in this particular supertournament in Germany and took first place in a battle with Mamedyarov, Le Quang Liem, Vladimir Kramnik, Arkady Naiditsch and Peter Leko. The grandmaster from Azerbaijan was lagging behind the leader and sought to catch up in this, their face-to-face meeting.

**5...0-0!**

Black has also played 5...h6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.h3!? (Tikkanen-Grabarczyk, Borup 2008), whilst a correspondence game went 5...dxc4 6.e4 Bb4 7.Qc2 c5 8.a3 Qa5 9.axb4! Qxa1 10.Bxc4 Nc6 11.bxc5 Nb4 12.Qd1 0-0 13.g5 Nd7 14.0-0 Qa5 15.e5 with improbable complications, Eklund-Walker, ICCF email 2003.

Proponents of the black pieces may also care to look at 5...c5!? 6.g5 (6.dxc5!?) 6...Ne4 (Rosenberg-Gaillard, New York 2008), but Ponomariov played the most solid move – castles.

**6.g5**

Somewhat slow is 6.Rg1?! c5 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.e3 Ne4 (Eklund-Cranbourne, ICCF email 2003) – White still needs to develop his pieces. Very instructive is 6.Qc2?! – 6...dxc4! (not falling for the trap 6...c5 7.g5 Nfd7? (7...Nh5, 7...Ne8, retaining the central pawn) 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Nxd5 Nakamura-Johannessen, Oslo 2010) 7.e4 Nc6 8.g5 Nd7 9.Bxc4 Nb6 10.Ne2 Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Kxd2, and suddenly the last blow against the white centre: 12...Nxd4! 13.Nexd4 e5 and White's attack boomeranged in Bergez-Schekachev, Creon 2000.

**6...Ne4 7.Qc2!?**

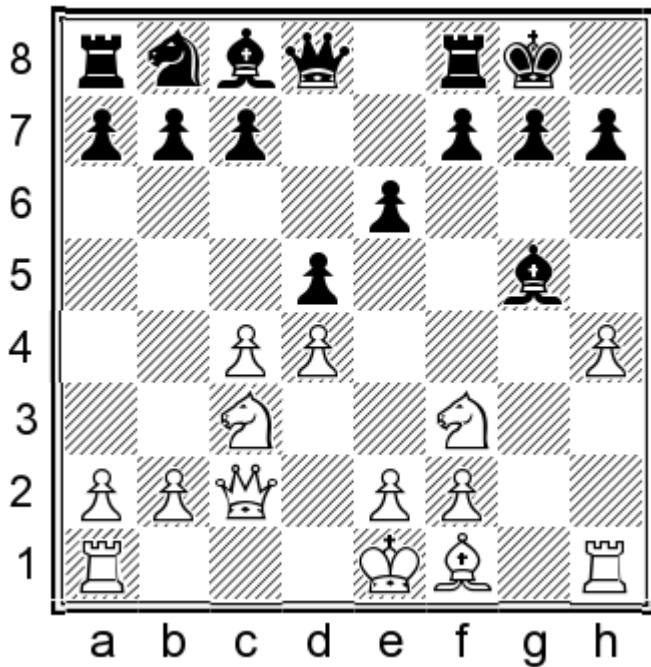
Entering the battle for the central squares and also offering a gambit pawn. On 7.h4 there would follow 7...c5!, Thier-Strzelczyk, Liberec 2009.

**7...Nxg5**

The principled decision, as opposed to 7...Nxc3 8.Qxc3 – the gambit is accepted.

## **8.Bxg5 Bxg5 9.h4!?**

9.Nxg5!? Qxg5 10.h4 looks interesting, but Mamedyarov poses Black with another task – where should the bishop retreat?



## **9...Bh6**

It is hard to say which of the bishop moves is best.

Commentating on the game live, Michal Krasenkow showed the interesting variation 9...Be7 10.Ng5 f5 11.cxd5 exd5 12.e4?! fxe4 13.Nxd5 Kh8!, and White's attacking moves have finished, whilst his weaknesses remain. However, Shakhriyar was not obliged to play so directly.

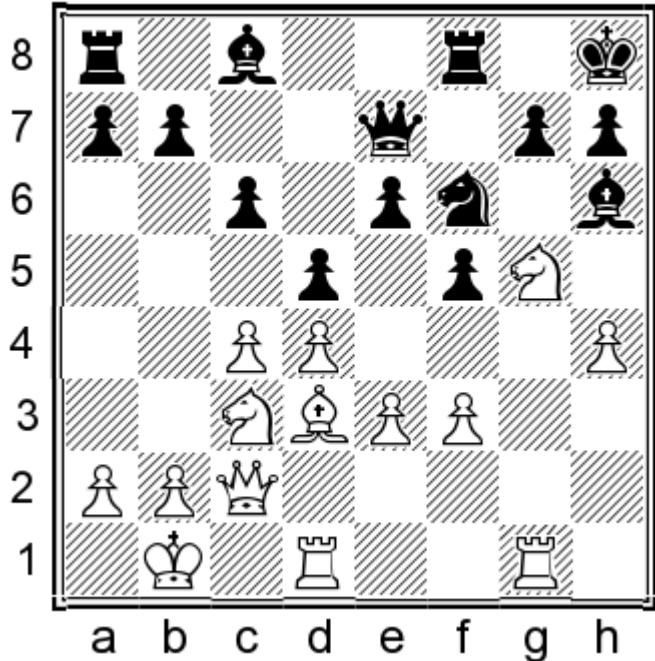
## **10.e3 c6 11.Ng5! f5**

The position of the black bishop has its minuses: 11...g6!? 12.f4 Nd7 13.Qg2 and h4-h5 gains in strength. The Ukrainian GM had prepared in advance for White's attack and sets up a defensive wall.

## **12.Rg1 Qe7 13.0-0-0 Nd7 14.f3**

White cannot manage without seizing some operating space in the centre, since his resources for a storm of the kingside are inadequate.

## **14...Nf6 15.Kb1 Kh8 16.Bd3**

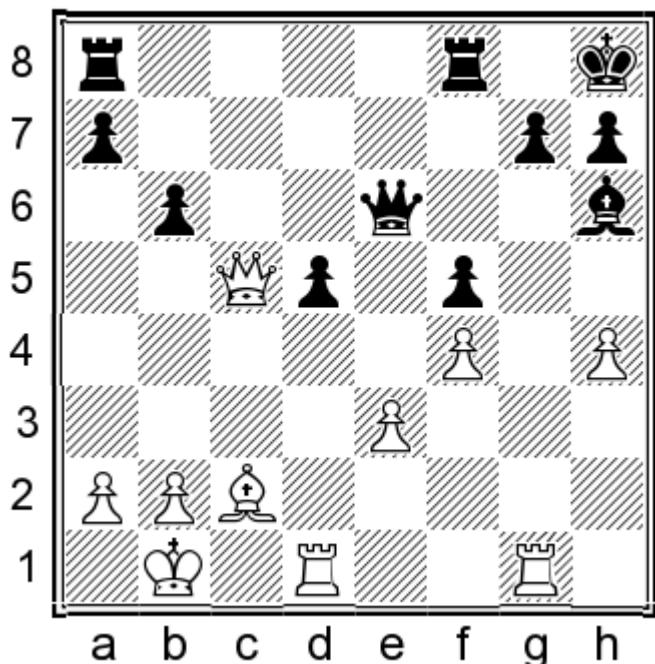


Always in such positions, the defending side can play stronger and try to cool the ardour of the aggressor with exchanges, but usually there is also an opportunity to try to seize the initiative, by returning more than just the excess material. Psychologically, this is very difficult – it is an extra pawn, after all! All of the commentators pointed out the interesting opportunity 16...Bd7!? with the idea 17.e4 fxe4 18.fxe4 dx<sub>c</sub>4 19.Bxc4 b5 20.Bb3 e5! 21.dxe5 Qxe5 22.Nf7+ Rxf7 23.Bxf7 Bg4 with good counterplay. Perhaps Ruslan was put off by the fact that in the complications arising, his bishop on h6 was not too active, so he went for solidity instead.

**16...e5 17.cxd5 Nxd5 18.Nxd5 cxd5 19.dxe5 Qxe5 20.Qc5!**

White aims at the pawn on d5, but in the meantime, Ponomariov's pieces come into play.

**20...Be6 21.f4 Qf6 22.Nxe6 Qxe6 23.Bc2 b6**



**24.Qxd5**

Nothing particular is changed by 24.Qd4 Rae8 25.Rd3 Qe4 with the significant drawing tendencies of opposite-coloured bishops.

#### 24...Qxe3 25.Bxf5 Qc5

Of course, Black did not want to allow 25...Qxf4 26.Bc2 Rac8 27.Qd3 g6 28.h5, bringing danger to his king, but it was worth considering 25...Rae8!? (we play with all the pieces!), hoping to take the f4-pawn in better circumstances.

#### 26.Qxc5 bxc5 27.Rd5 Bxf4 28.Rg4

Black is left with an extra pawn, but all White's pieces are active, and the opposite-coloured bishops are the harbingers of a draw – Mamedyarov defended the ending without any problems. However, Ponomariov's confident defence meant that the exotic 5.g4 did not become well established in practice – the Azeri grandmaster did not find followers here.

Indeed, without the most compelling reasons, a g2-g4 attack in Queen's Gambit structures can be very risky, especially if your opponent is the best chess player in the world.

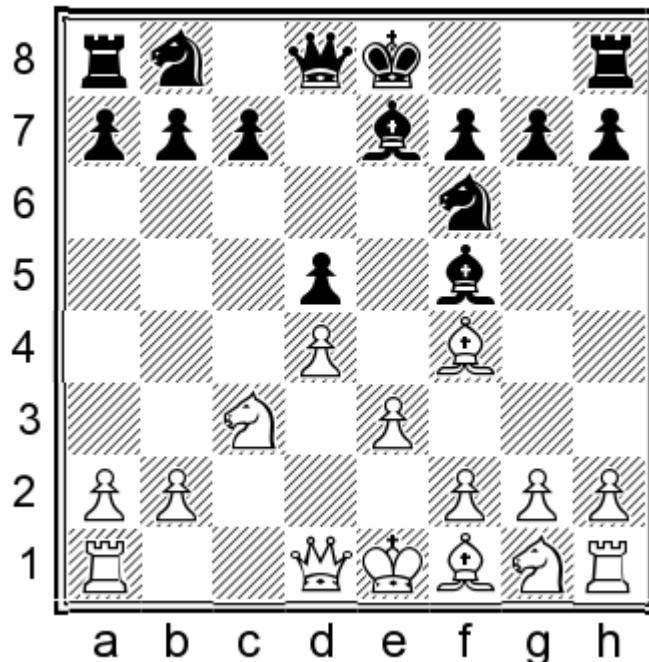
Game 28

Veselin Topalov 2725

Garry Kasparov 2795

Linares 1997 (6)

#### 1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Be7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 Bf5!?

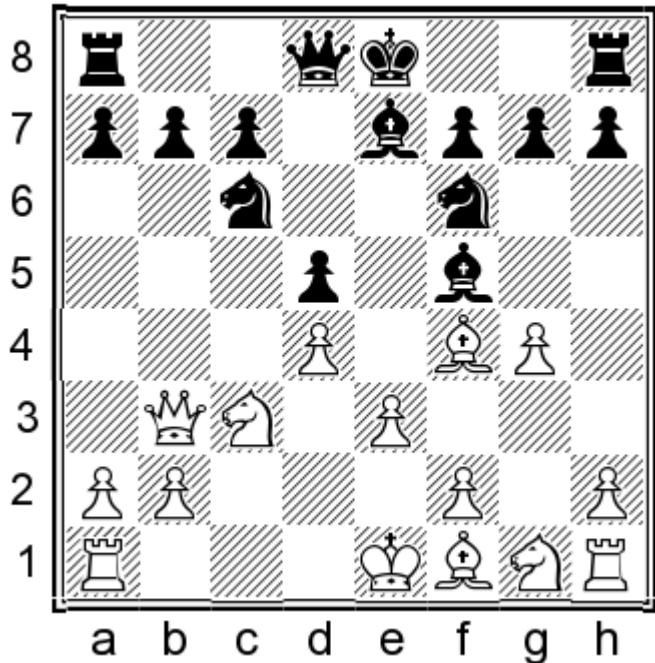


At that time, Ubilava's gambit was still not very well researched, although it became fashionable after the 12th game of the fourth K-K match (1987). Up until then, the centre of attention had been ...0-0 7.Nf3 or 7.Bd3.

#### 7.Qb3

'Topalov takes up the challenge. The vegetarian 7.Nge2 0-0 would be a psychological concession by White,' wrote Kasparov in the third volume of his collected games.

#### 7...Nc6 8.g4!?

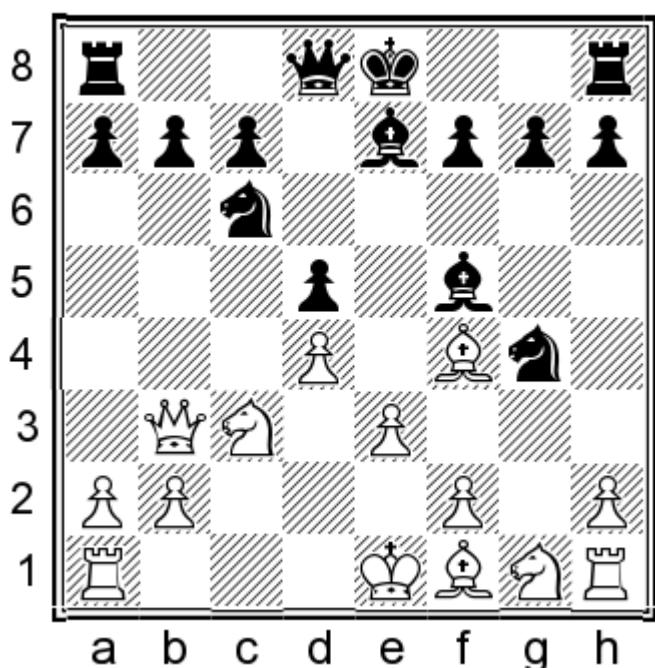


'This position was studied deeply in the match Karpov-Kasparov (1985), and the move 8.g4 was rejected by both teams' (Ubilava). 'I was shocked into a slight stupor – was it really possible to play like this?! It turns out that it is indeed possible! If 8.Qxb7, then 8...Nb4, and in numerous analyses in the mid-1980s, we did not find an advantage for White after either 9.Rc1 0-0 (played three times by Ubilava) or 9.Bb5+ Kf8 10.Kd2 a6, Salov-Timoschenko, Irkutsk 1986. It seems that more solid is 8.a3 Na5 (Gavrikov-Ubilava, Tbilisi 1983) 9.Qa2!? (an old idea of Timoschenko, first played in Flear-Korneev, Nice 2000). However, something unimaginable awaited me' (Kasparov).

The then interesting line 8.a3 Na5 9.Qa2 is still seen at elite level, but the advance of the g-pawn has also not gone totally out of tournament practice.

### 8...N<sub>x</sub>g4!

In his notes, Kasparov emphasizes that taking with the knight is necessary, as the bishop is required on f5. After this game in Linares, everyone followed the 13th World Champion's path exclusively.



## 9.Nxd5?

'A serious miscalculation. Also in Black's favour is 9.a3? (Alexandrov-Azmaiparashvili, Groningen 1997) 9...Bh4! 10.Bg3 0-0 (or 10...Bxg3 11.hxg3 Ne7). And 9.Qxb7 is harmless because of 9...Nb4 10.Bb5+ Kf8 11.Bxc7 Qc8 12.Bc6 Nxc6 13.Qxc6 Rb8 14.Nxd5 Rxb2 15.Nxe7 Nxf2! and ...Nd3+. Stronger is 9.Qxd5!' (Kasparov).

Now after the exchange of queens White has slightly the more pleasant endgame, so stronger is Kasparov's recommendation 9...Qc8?! 10.Qg2 (Aronian-Kramnik, Monte Carlo blind 2011) or 10.a3 Nf6 11.Qg2 (Nakamura-Topalov, St Louis blitz 2018) with extremely complicated play, where the last word of theory has yet to be spoken.

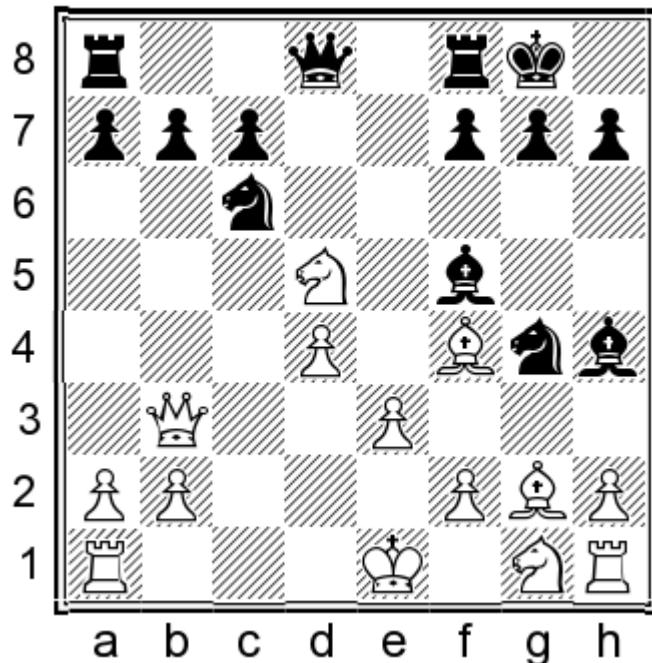
## 9...0-0!

'Playing for a lead in development. Maybe Topalov was counting on 9...Be4 10.Nxc7+ Kf8 11.Be2 (or 11.f3 Nxd4 12.exd4 Qxd4 13.Nh3 Bb4+ 14.Ke2 with headspinning play) 11...Bxh1 12.Bxg4 with compensation for the exchange. Now, however, there is a threat of the unpleasant pin Be6, and the assessment changes in favour of Black' (Kasparov).

## 10.Bg2

The white pieces are not developed and any direct clash could end badly for him – 10.Nxe7+?! Qxe7 11.Be2 g5! 12.Bg3 Be4! 13.f3? Bd5! with the idea of 14.Qxd5? Qb4+, winning the queen. Or 10.Bxc7?! Qd7 11.Bg2 (11.Nxe7+? Qxe7–+) 11...Be6 12.h3 (12.Nxe7+? Nxe7! 13.Qxb7 Bd5–+) 12...Nxe3! 13.fxe3 Bh4+ 14.Kf1 Rac8 15.Bf4 Na5 16.Qd1 Bxd5, and the white king is not to be envied.

## 10...Bh4!



**Test 17.** How would you defend, having fallen into such a difficult position in the opening against Garry Kasparov?

Show/Hide Solution

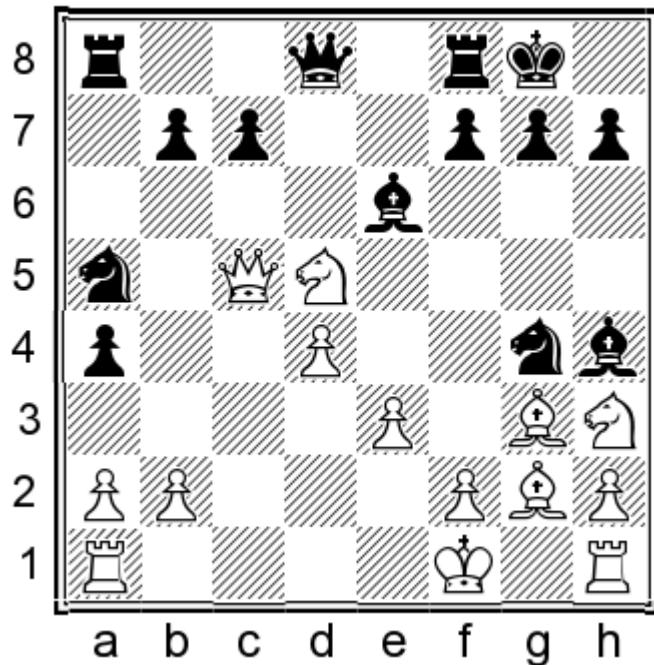
**Solution:** It looks completely illogical, but 11.Nh3! Be6 12.0-0 Nxd4! 13.exd4 c6 14.Bg3 Bxd5 15.Bxd5 cxd5 16.Nf4, and now White is active and it is not so simple for Black to realize his extra pawn. After other continuations, Topalov falls into a difficult position – 11.Bg3 is weaker.

## 11.Bg3 Be6 12.Kf1

The king must defend the bishop, since there is a threat of 12...Na5. But now too the pin on the knight causes White a mass of inconvenience and the advance of the g-pawn has only left him with weaknesses.

**12...a5 13.Nh3 a4 14.Qc4 Na5 15.Qc5?!**

It is psychologically difficult to go back, but objectively stronger was 15.Qe2 Bxg3 16.hxg3 Nxf2! 17.Kxf2 Bxd5 18.Bxd5 Qxd5 19.Nf4 Qd6, although it must be admitted that even here, Black has an extra pawn and every chance of winning. After the text, Topalov's position is already lost.



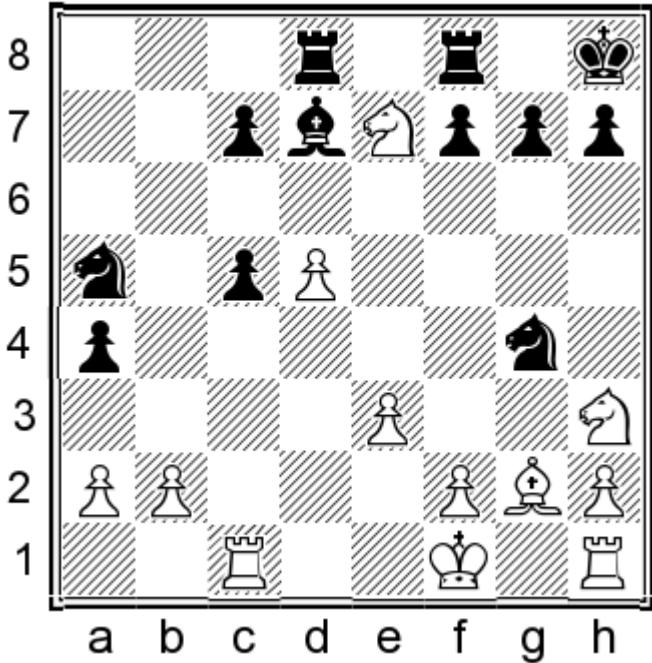
**15...b6!**

'The most precise: White has no good square for the queen and must go into a lost endgame' (Kasparov).

**16.Bxh4 bxc5 17.Bxd8 Raxd8 18.Ne7+**

On 18.Nhf4, strong is 18...g5!, and then after 19.Nxe6? fxe6 the Rf8 comes into play. The Bulgarian GM tries to avoid opening lines, but Black's pieces stand much better and more harmoniously anyway, and this factor proves decisive.

**18...Kh8 19.d5 Bd7 20.Rc1**



'For a moment, Topalov thought the worst was behind him. But even with his broken queenside pawns, Black retains a tremendous initiative: White perishes because of his lack of development and the chronic weakness of the pawn on b2' (Kasparov).

## **20...c4 21.Ng5**

White lacks just one tempo for consolidation: 21.Rc2 Rfe8 22.Nc6 Bxc6 23.dxc6 Rxe3! or 21.Ke2 Rb8 22.Rc2 Rfe8 23.Nc6 Nxc6 24.dxc6 Bf5 25.e4 (25.Rd2 a3!) 25...Bxe4 26.Bxe4 Rxe4+ 27.Kf3 Rd4. Veselin Topalov brings his worst piece into the game, but this also fails to help.

## **21...h6 22.Nf3**

Possibly 22.Ne4 was more tenacious, although even here, after 22...Rb8 23.Rc2 Rfe8 24.h3 Ne5 White has to part with material.

## **22...Rb8 23.h3 Nf6 24.Nd4**

It turns out that things are very bad after 24.Rc2? Rfe8 25.Nc6 Nxc6 26.dxc6 Bf5 27.Rd2 Bd3+ and ...Ne4 with a complete rout. With a heavy heart, White has to give up the b2-pawn.

## **24...Rxb2**

Black has a completely winning position, but Kasparov began playing a little casually and Topalov got some drawing chances. In the end, Black won nevertheless.

Yes, g2-g4 attacks against Kasparov didn't work, especially if his opponents failed to remember the opening analysis properly. As a result, the World Champion confidently excelled in the Spanish supertournament with a result of 8½ out of 11, having won the decisive game against his main rival Vladimir Kramnik. Even so, an excellent performance by Topalov saw him share 3rd-4th places with Michael Adams.

Having pleased the black supporters, let us return to the examples in which White's aggressive designs triumph.

There was no equal to the Armenian national team at the 2011 World Team Championship – the multiple Olympic champions won the World Championship in brilliant style, leaving behind the teams of China, the USA, Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Israel and others. India did not perform so well, but in the last round they deprived the rating favourites Russia of a chance for medals, beating the team of Evgeny Bareev in their head-to-head match. The Indian players fought no less stubbornly against the winners – the fate of the match was decided on the first board.

Game 29

Levon Aronian 2805

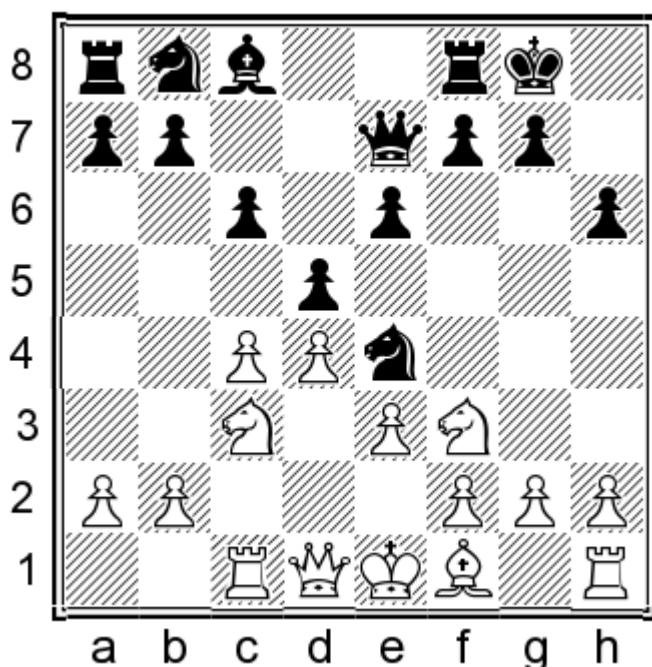
Pentala Harikrishna 2669

Ningbo Wch-tt 2011 (6)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.e3 Ne4**

Lasker's simplifying variation, which has a very solid reputation. In the final game of the World Championship match Anand-Topalov (2010), the Bulgarian, loath to play a tiebreak against his opponent, overplayed his hand against the Lasker and in the end suffered a decisive defeat. After that, the black knight jump became a mainstream line, until the public was captivated by Levon Aronian's discovery.

**8.Bxe7 Qxe7 9.Rc1 c6**

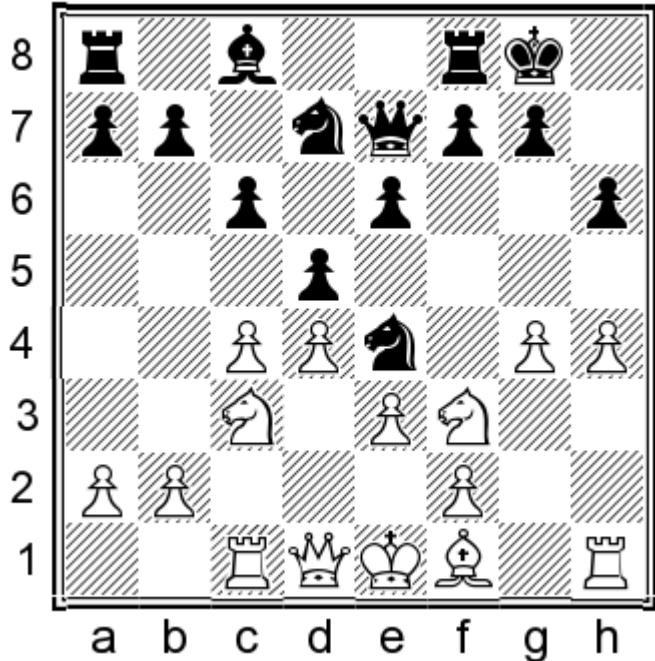


Topalov started with the modest 10.Be2 Nxc3 11.Rxc3 dxc4 12.Bxc4 Nd7 13.0-0 b6 14.Bd3 c5 15.Be4 Rb8, and later tried to exploit the black weakness on c5, but fell under a crushing counterattack from Anand. The Armenian GM showed, however, that if one wants war, then one must not postpone one's intentions for long!

**10.h4!?**

In GM practice, White usually starts with this neighbouring pawn, although 10.g4!? is also possible, when a bad reply is 10...f5?! (10...Nd7 transposes to the game after 11.h4) 11.gxf5 Qf6 12.Bg2 Qxf5 13.0-0 Nxc3 14.Rxc3 Nd7 15.Qc2 Nf6?! (Black is worse after the exchange of queens. If 15...Qh5 16.Nd2) 16.Ne5 Qxc2 17.Rxc2 Bd7 18.Bh3 Rfe8 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.Rc7 Bb5 21.Rfc1, and Black is in a bad way, Halkias-Fridman, Warsaw Ech blitz 2010.

**10...Nd7 11.g4**



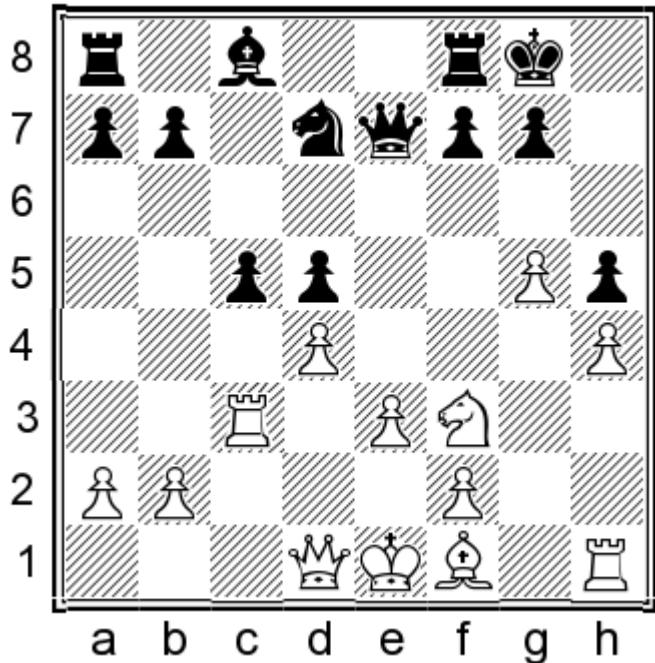
**11...e5?!**

Pentala Harikrishna answers logically with a counter in the centre, but the snag is that this is not actually very good in this position, and Black risks being left with pawn weaknesses.

What are the alternatives? Not especially impressive is 11...Ndf6 12.Rg1!? Nxc3 13.bxc3 with a simple plan for White of a storm on the kingside, whilst 11...f5 12.gxf5 exf5 also looks bad after 13.cxd5 Nxc3 14.Rxc3 cxd5. Lines have opened for the white rooks and the GM playing White quickly obtained complete domination: 15.Qb3 Qe4 16.Be2 Nf6 17.Rg1 f4 18.Rc7 Ne8 19.Nd2± Sambuev-Martchenko, Montreal 2011.

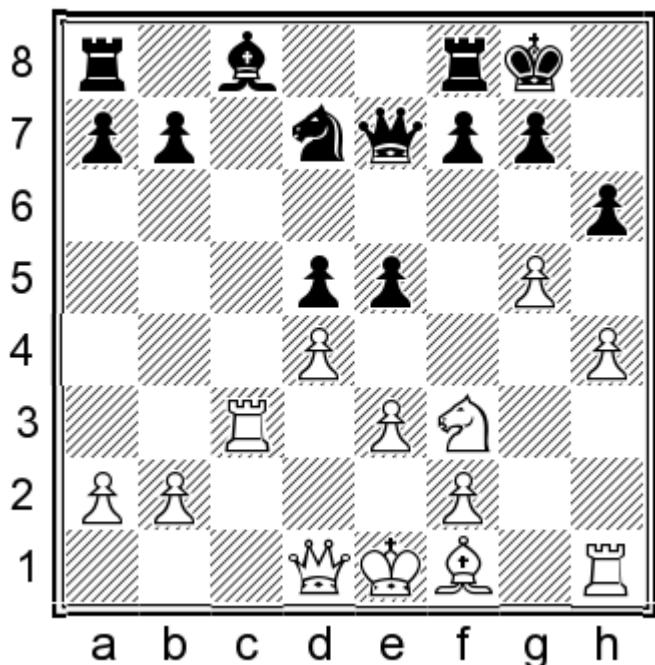
In the game Ragger-Alexeev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, the Russian GM equalized surprisingly easily after 11...Nd6!? 12.c5 Ne8 13.g5 e5 14.gxh6 gxh6 15.Rg1+ Ng7 16.Bh3 f5 17.dxe5 Nxe5 18.Nxe5, and a draw was agreed in view of the variation 18...Qxe5 19.Qd4 Qxd4 20.exd4 f4. However, it was a shock if such an intricate knight manoeuvre should be a panacea for Black, and objectively stronger is 12.g5 h5 13.c5 Nf5 14.Bd3 with the initiative for White.

Contemporary theory has taken forward the first plan, mentioned above: 11...Nxc3 12.Rxc3 (White gets nothing after 12.bxc3 g6 13.g5 h5 14.cxd5 exd5 15.Bg2 Nb6 16.Ne5 Bf5 17.Bh3 Bxh3 18.Rxh3 Nc4 19.Nxc4 dxc4 Indjic-Prohaszka, St Louis 2018 – Black is not intimidated solely by the advance of the pawns) 12...c5!? (another variation on the kingside ‘fortress’ is 12...g6, as seen in the game Faizrakhmanov-Pogonina, Sochi 2017) 13.cxd5 (it is important not to allow the opening of lines on the kingside; 13.g5 h5, Mamedyarov-Fridman, Porto Carras 2011) 13...exd5 14.g5 h5



On the direct 15.dxc5 Nxc5 16.Qxd5 the reply 16...b6!? looks good, and if 17.Qxa8 Bg4 18.Qc6 Rc8 19.Qxc8+ Bxc8 20.Nd2 Qe5 21.Rg1 Bg4, then in the final position the black queen is able to cause a lot of problems for the white rooks. The alternative is 15.Bg2 c4 16.0-0 b5 17.Nh2 (Gupta-Kravtsiv, Abu Dhabi 2015), but now the Ukrainian player did not worry about the pawn on h5 but played the interesting sacrifice 17...Nb6 18.Qxh5 Bf5 19.Rcc1 Qe6 20.Qf3 Rac8 21.b3 a5. Black has full compensation for his minimal material deficit and he went on to win.

#### **12.cxd5 Nxc3 13.Rxc3 cxd5 14.g5**

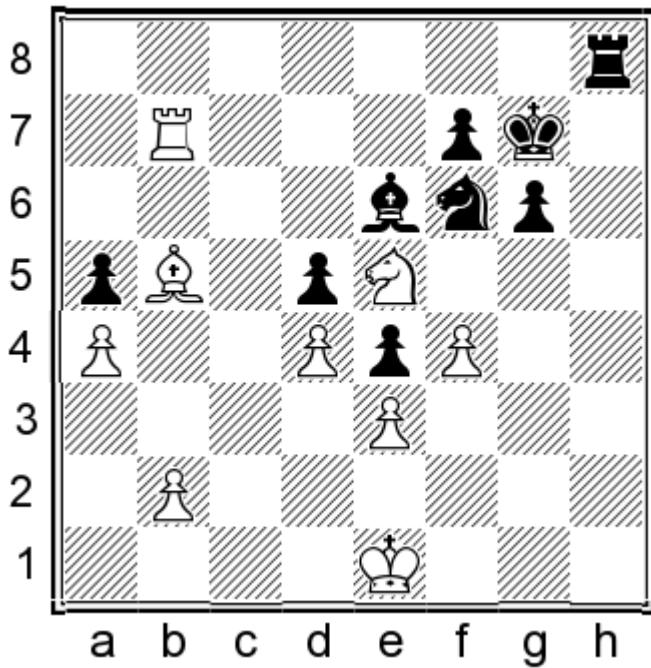


Black's problem is that, as well as the kingside attack, White has many positional plusses and can often win even by going into the ending!

#### **14...h5**

This familiar device, preventing White opening lines, proves ineffective with the c-file open. By contrast, after the bold 14...hxg5!? it is not easy for the attacking side to demonstrate his advantage: 15.hxg5 e4 16.Ne5 g6 17.Ng4

$\text{Qxg5}$  18.f4 Qd8 (not 18...exf3? 19.Qxf3 Kg7 20.Rc7 with a strong attack, Colpe-Grabarczyk, Lüneburg 2015) 19.Qd2 (Black manages to defend and to exchange queens) 19...Kg7 20.Qh2 Rh8 21.Qxh8+ Qxh8 22.Rxh8 Kxh8. Here White's activity is sufficient to regain the pawn, but Black goes over to a counterattack: 23.Bb5 Kg7 24.Rc7 Nf6 25.Ne5 Be6 26.Rxb7 a5 27.a4 Rh8.



*analysis diagram*

All of this has been almost forced, and the only way White can retain winning chances is with the Samurai-like 28.b4!? axb4 29.a5. In the game Stauskas-Krivenosov, Vilnius 2018, White did not decide on this and a draw resulted immediately: 28.Ra7 Rh1+ 29.Kd2 Rh2+ 30.Kc3 Rh3 31.Kd2 Rh2+ 32.Kc3 Rh3 33.Kd2.

In GM practice, Black has more often gone for 14...e4 15.Nd2 hxg5 16.Qh5!?.

**Test 18.** Why didn't White immediately play 16.hxg5 Qxg5 17.Rh5 ?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** This proves to be a serious mistake, where it is White's king that gets into trouble, instead of Black's. 17...Qg1! 18.Rh3 (18.Rxd5 Nf6, the black knight threatens f6-g4-h2) 18...Nf6 19.Rg3 Qh1 20.Nb3 b6 21.Kd2 Bg4 with a black attack in Wang Hao-Kravtsiv, Shenzhen 2011.

Now White is happy with 16...g4 17.Qxd5 (Arabidze-Bulmaga, Athens 2011), with excellent play against the weak black pawns, whilst after 16...g6 17.Qxg5 Qxg5 18.hxg5 Rd8 19.f3 exf3 20.Nxf3 White has an endgame advantage. The further play was instructive: 20...Nf8 21.Bd3 Be6 22.Kd2 Rac8 23.Rhc1 Nh7 24.a4 Rxc3 25.bxc3 Bg4 26.Ne5 Be6 27.Rg1 Kf8 28.e4 b6 29.Ke3, and White realized his advantage in technical style, Matlakov-Howell, Minsk 2017 – largely thanks to this win, Maxim Matlakov became 2017 European Champion.

### 15.Bb5 exd4!?

It is somewhat strange that in this position nobody has played 15...e4!?. Now the greedy 16.Bxd7 Bxd7 17.Ne5 Bf5 18.Qxh5 Rac8 gives Black counterplay, whilst after 16.Nd2!? g6 17.Rc7 White is a little better, but it is too early to speak of a real advantage.

### 16.Qxd4 Qe4

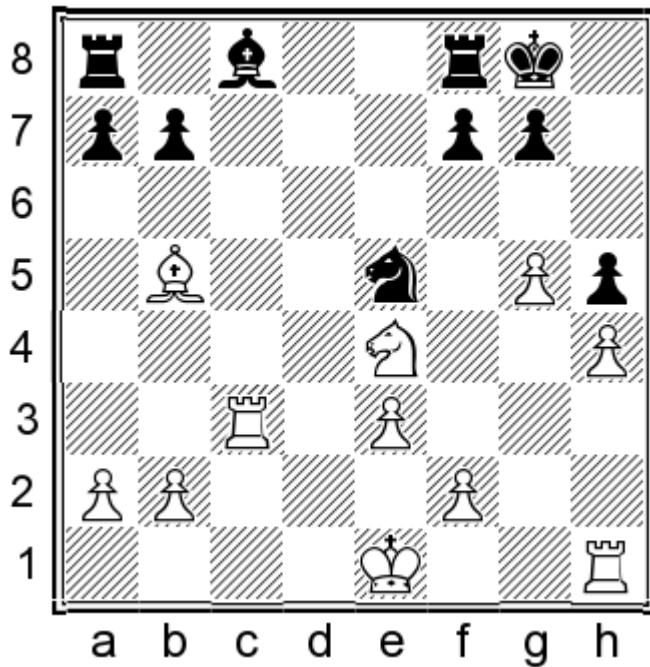
White is better after the simple 16...Nb6 17.0-0 Bf5 18.Rfc1 with play on the c-file and against the IQP. And after 16...Rd8 there could follow 17.g6! Nf8 (17...fxg6 18.Qxd5+ Kh8 19.Qg5! with an excellent ending) 18.gxf7+ Qxf7

19.Ng5 Qf6 20.Qxf6 gxf6 21.Nf3 Bg4 22.Rg1 Kh8 23.Nd4 with a difficult endgame for Black, Ipatov-Chigladze, Yerevan 2014. Harikrishna immediately offers a queen exchange, not allowing White to land the pawn blow.

### 17.Qxe4 dxe4 18.Nd2 Ne5

A manly decision – the Indian grandmaster gives up a pawn. On the other hand, after 18...f5 19.Nb3 White's play is very easy, as his knight lands on d4 next move, seriously complicating the life of the Bc8.

### 19.Nxe4



### 19...Be6

Defending is always a difficult choice. After 19...Nf3+ 20.Kf1 Bg4 21.Be2 Rfd8 White should give serious consideration to 22.a3!? Nd2+ 23.Nxd2 Rxd2 24.Bxg4 hxg4 25.Rg1 Rxb2 26.Rxg4± (recommended by Igor Stohl) – the g-pawn lives, and is full of ambition to promote to a queen. However, in rook endings, as Tartakower and others have pointed out, there are always drawing chances, which was not the case for Black in the game continuation.

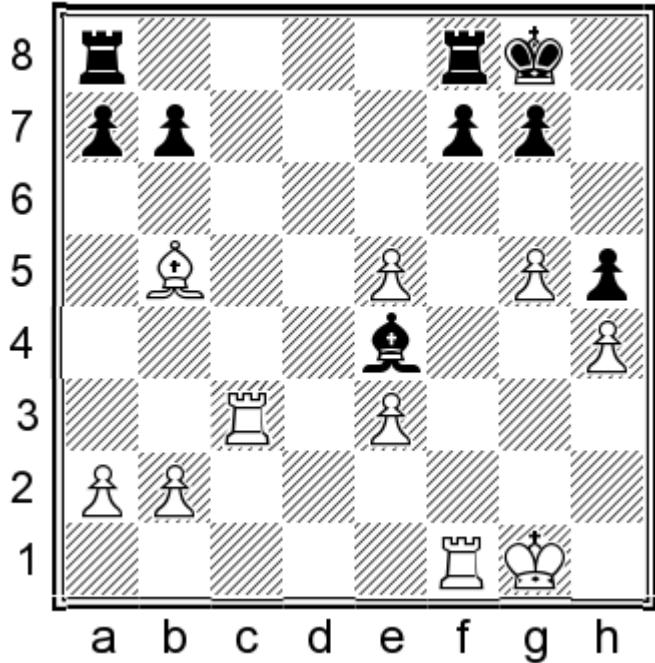
### 20.f4!

Clearly stronger than 20.Ng3 Rfc8!. Black must immediately decide the position of his knight, on which all his counterplay is based.

### 20...Bd5

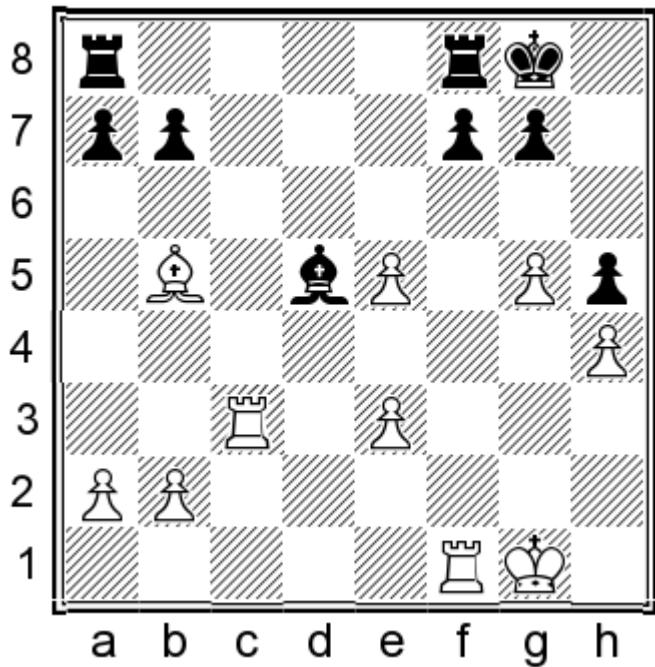
No better was 20...Ng4 21.Nc5 Bxa2 22.Ke2 – White wants to put his rook on a1 or bishop on d7, after which he will again have an extra pawn.

### 21.fxe5 Bxe4 22.0-0



The e5-pawn is weak, but at the same time wishes to advance and ensure its side a decisive advantage. For example, 22...Rac8 23.Rxc8 Rxc8 24.e6! fxe6 25.Bd7 Rc2 26.Bxe6+ Kh7 27.Rf4!±, therefore much more tenacious was 22...Rad8!? 23.Rc7 Rd2 24.Rf2 Rd1+ 25.Bf1 Re1 with serious counterplay.

**22...Bd5?**



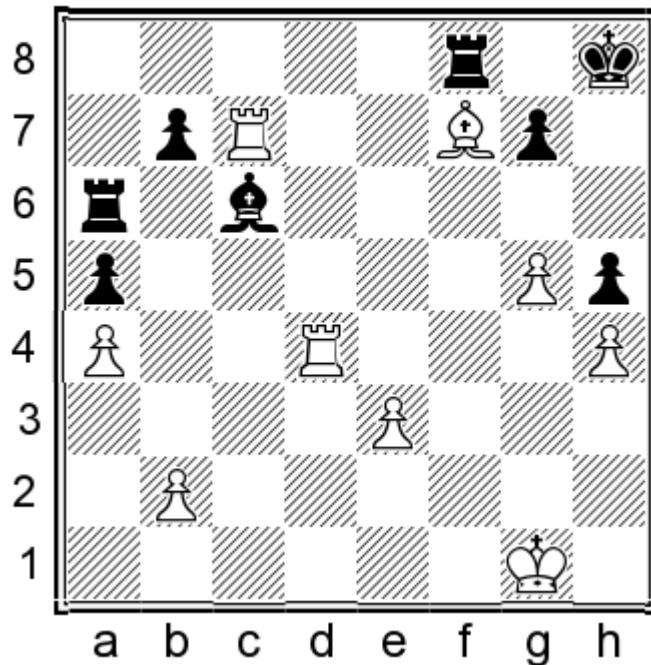
One can understand Harikrishna – Black defends against e4-e5 and attacks the pawn on a2, but it transpires that this is virtually the decisive mistake.

**Test 19.** How would you cement your advantage in the place of the Armenian GM?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** While the black rook is out of play, White can play for domination! 23.Bd7! Rfd8 (a beautiful variation is 23...Bxa2 24.b3 Rad8 25.e6 fxe6 26.Bxe6+ Kh7 27.Rxf8 Rxf8 28.Rc1 Rd8 29.Bf7!± (Stohl) – at the end Black's king and bishop are stalemated, and he is one step from defeat) 24.Rc7 a5 (if 24...Bxa2 our favourite pawn lands the decisive blow: 25.g6! fxg6 26.e6 Rdb8 27.Rd1 a5 28.e7 Bf7 29.Bc8!+–) 25.a4+– Ra6 26.Rf4 Rf8 27.Rd4 Bc6

(27...Be6 28.Rxb7+–) 28.e6!? (there is also the simple path 28.Bxc6 Rxc6 29.Rxb7+–, but, as a true artist, Aronian continues to stalemate his opponent) 28...fxe6 29.Bxe6+ Kh8 30.Bf7!.



*analysis diagram*

Again Black has no moves. After 30...Rb6 31.b3 Bf3 32.g6 Rc6 33.Rxc6 bxc6 34.e4 Be2 35.e5 he resigned because of the unavoidable advance of the e-pawn. It seems that in many cases the advance g2-g4 and then g4-g5 can prove very useful in the subsequent endgame.

And here is another example where the advance of the white pawn looks like pure hooliganism, although it happened in a game between two superclass GMs in a top tournament.

The capital of Russia has hosted many tournaments dedicated to Mikhail Tal, but in 2014 the Russian Chess Federation made an exception by holding the Petrosian Memorial – 85 years had passed since the birth of the ‘Iron Tigran’. In rivalry with Vladimir Kramnik, Levon Aronian, Boris Gelfand, Ding Liren, Peter Leko, Alexander Morozevich and Ernesto Inarkiev, Alexander Grischuk won a brilliant victory in the tournament with 5½ out of 7! How Alexander played can be seen from the game below.

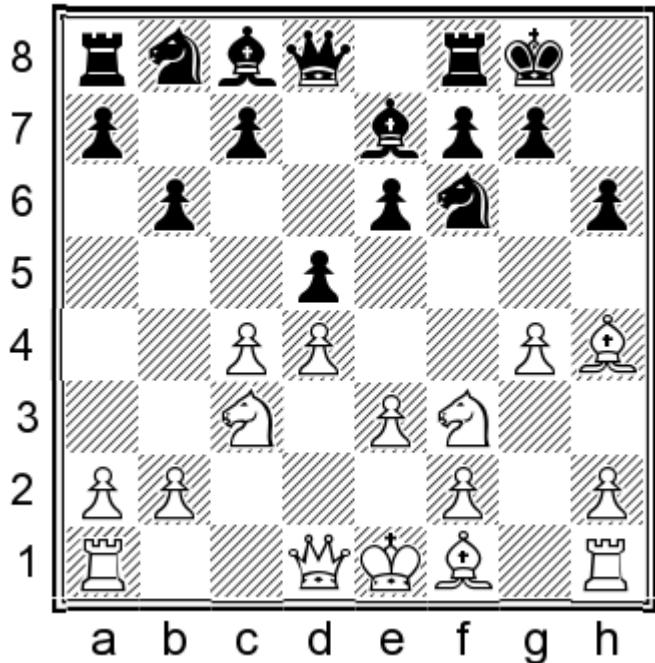
Game 30

**Alexander Grischuk** 2795

**Peter Leko** 2731

Moscow 2014 (5)

**1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.e3 b6 8.g4!?**



Again!

#### **8...Nxe4**

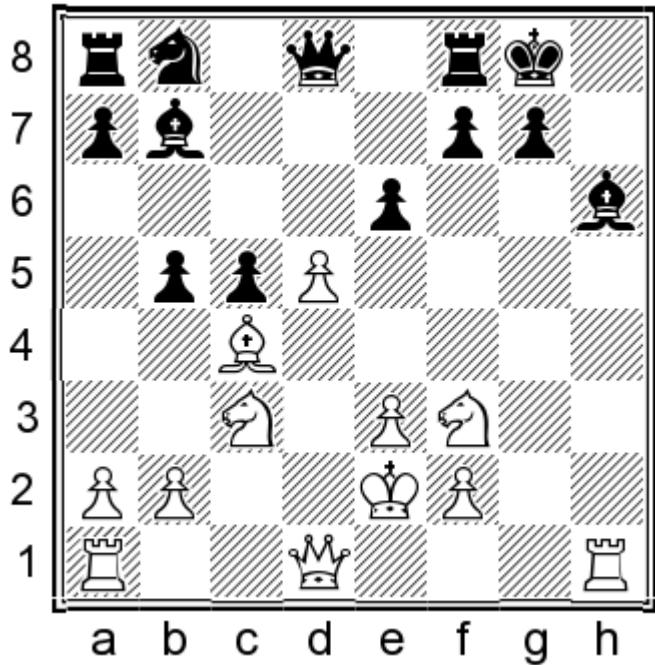
Peter Leko meets White's attacking thrust in a very principled way and although this did not work out well in the game, the Hungarian GM showed the right path for Black.

It is immediately clear that it is bad to play 8...g5?! 9.Bg3 Nxe4? 10.h4 f5 11.hxg5 hxg5 12.Ne5 Nf6 13.Ng6+– (Nachbar-Dischinger, Germany tt 2010/11), whilst the neutral 8...Bb7 does nothing to interfere with White's plans: 9.Bxf6 Bxf6 10.cxd5! (10.h4 c5! 11.g5 cxd4 12.gxf6?! dxc3 13.fxg7 Re8, and Black is better, Predke-Usmanov, St Petersburg 2011) 10...Bxd5 (10...exd5 11.h4!) 11.Nxd5 exd5 12.h4 c5 13.g5 Be7 14.Bd3 Nc6? (the only way to defend the kingside was 14...Qd6!) 15.gxh6 g6 16.Qa4 c4 17.Qxc6 cxd3 18.Qc3± Kunin-Varoquier, Cappelle-la-Grande 2013.

A nice draw could follow after 8...c5!? 9.Rg1 Ne4 (interesting is 9...Nc6!?, Assaubayeva-Gagare, Sharjah 2018) 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.cxd5 Nxc3 12.bxc3 cxd4 (12...exd5 13.g5!?) 13.cxd4 (not all these moves are forced; 13.g5!?) 13...Bb7 14.g5 hxg5 15.dxe6 Bxf3 16.Qxf3 Qb4+ 17.Kd1 Qa4+ 18.Ke1 Qb4+ 19.Kd1 with a repetition in Gouret-Eustache, Paris 1990.

And a game between two titled GMs ended in a beautiful win for White, and is probably the game Grischuk had concentrated upon:

8...dxc4 9.Bxf6 Bxf6 10.h4 Bb7 11.g5 hxg5 12.hxg5 Bxg5 13.Bxc4 c5? (he should have move the bishop immediately: 13...Bh6!?) 14.d5 Bh6 15.Ke2!? b5 P.H.Nielsen-V.Georgiev, Dresden 2008.



**Test 20.** Imagine yourself at the Olympiad, surrounded by chess legends, and you have a chance to create a real work of art. What would you play as White?

Show/Hide Solution

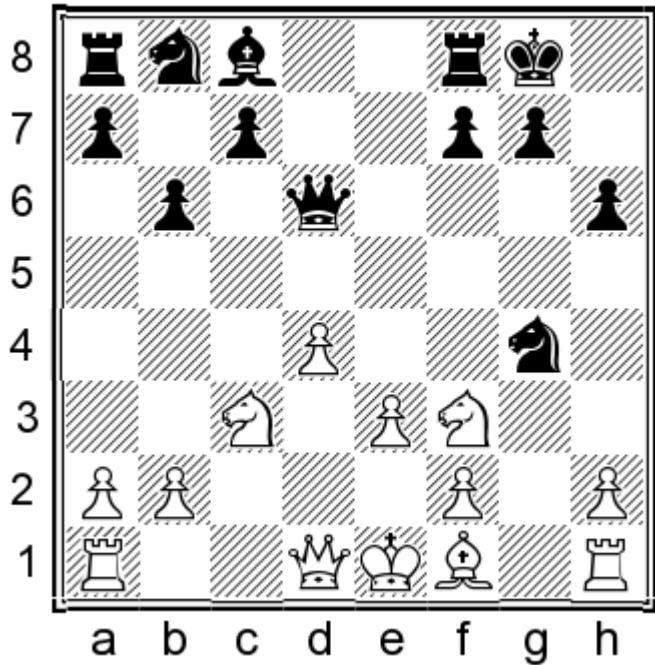
**Solution:** Nielsen did not mess about – 16.Rxh6! gxh6 17.Qh1 Kh7 (17...Qf6 18.Rg1+ Kh8 19.Ne4 Qxb2+ 20.Nfd2+–) 18.Ne4 Rg8 19.Ne5!, and to his enormous shock, Black realized that on 19...Rg7 there is the knockout blow 20.Qxh6+!!.. Very beautiful!

It must be said, though, that Black has a number of good moves at his disposal: 8...Nbd7! 9.Rg1 Bb7 10.g5 Ne4 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Bb5 g6 (12...c6!? 13.Bd3 c5) 13.Bxd7 Qxd7 14.gxh6 Bxh4 15.Nxh4 Kh7 (15...Qh3?? 16.Qh5 Nxf2 17.Rxg6+ Kh8 18.Rg3 Nd3+ 19.Kd2 1-0 Shabalov-Amanov, Las Vegas 2010) with a good game for Black, according to Krasenkow's recommendation, or even 8...Ne4!? 9.Bxe7 Qxe7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.Nxd5 Qd6 12.Nc3 Nxc3 13.bxc3 Bxg4 14.Rg1 Bh5 15.Be2 Nd7 with an adequate position, Brustkern-Welin, Sweden tt 2009/10.

### 9.Bxe7 Qxe7 10.cxd5 exd5

There is no need at all to play such stuff as 10...Bb7 11.Rg1 Nf6 12.dxe6 Qxe6 13.Ne5 Nbd7 14.Bc4 Qh3? 15.Qc2 Nxe5 16.dxe5 Qxh2 17.Qg6 Ne8 18.0-0-0, and White won, Le Ruyet-Talla, Pardubice 2013. Leko plays much more solidly.

### 11.Nxd5 Qd6 12.Nc3



**12...c5!N**

A draw resulted in a quite high-class game between two Indian players: 12...Bb7 13.Rg1 Nf6 14.Ne5 c5 15.Ng4! (15.Bc4 cxd4 16.Qxd4 Qxd4 17.exd4 Nc6 18.Nxc6 draw, Barbero-Vegh, Budapest 1988) 15...Kh8 16.dxc5 Qxd1+ 17.Rxd1 Nxe4 18.Rxe4 Bf3 19.Be2 Bxg4 20.Bxg4 Nc6 21.Bd7 Ne5 22.c6 Rac8! 23.Bxc8 Rxc8 24.f4 Nc4 25.Rd7 Rxc6 Vishnu-Deepan, Jalgaon 2013, but the long-time leader of the Hungarian team is looking for more and is ready to give up the exchange to achieve his goal.

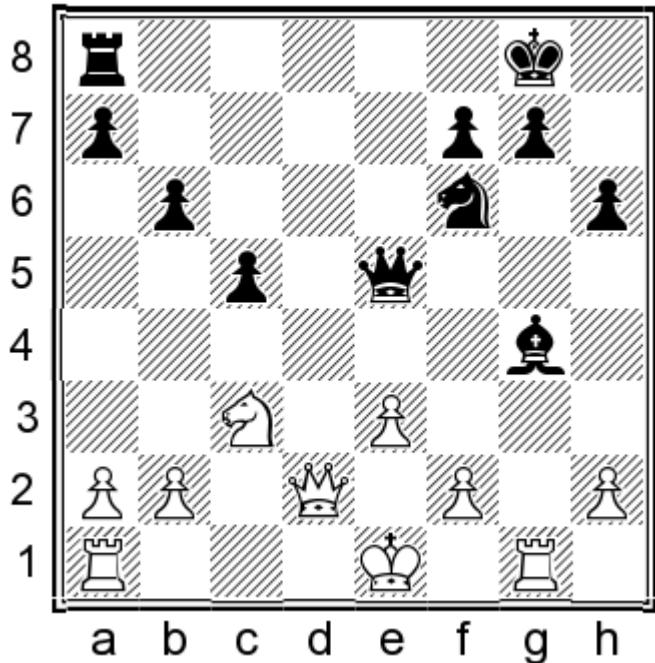
**13.Rg1 Nf6**

A good alternative is 13...Nc6!? 14.d5 Ne7 15.Bc4 Ng6 (Krasenkow).

**14.Bg2 Bg4 15.Qd2??**

The cautious 15.dxc5 Qxc5 16.Qd4 should have led to equality, but Grischuk also aims at a more complex struggle.

**15...Nbd7! 16.Ne5 Nxe5 17.dxe5 Qxe5 18.Bxa8 Rxa8**



White has won the exchange for a pawn, but the squares around his king are very weak and Black's compensation is obvious.

**19.Rg3 Ne4?!**

Overlooking a strong white resource. After 19...Qf5! Black retains all the advantages of his position.

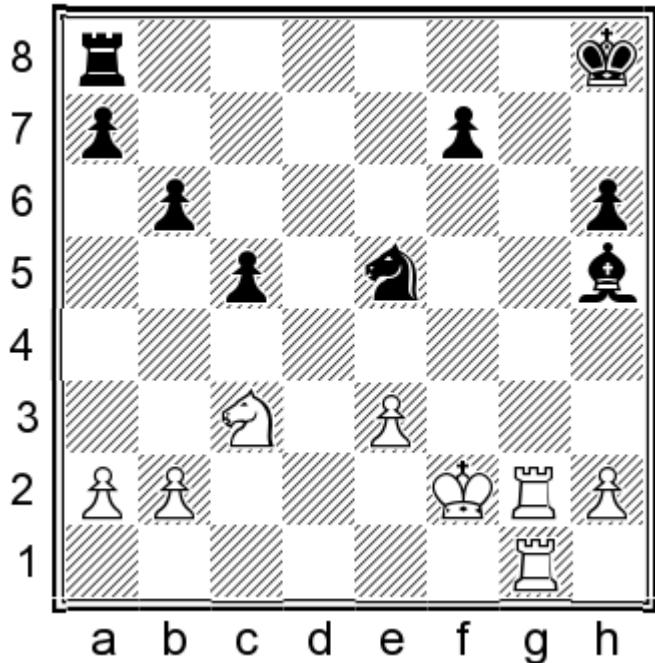
**20.f4! Nxd2**

It turns out that after 20...Qe8 21.Nxe4 Qxe4 22.Qg2! Black is forced to exchange queens, when the white king can rest easy.

**21.fxe5 Nf3+ 22.Kf2 Nxe5 23.Rag1 Bh5?**

A draw is guaranteed by 23...Rd8! 24.Rxg4 Rd2+ 25.Kf1 Nxg4 26.Rxg4 Rxb2 27.Rg2 Rb4 (Adam Tukhaev), and the three pawns are not weaker than White's knight.

**24.Rxg7+ Kh8 25.R7g2!**



**25...Rd8**

Black's forces lack harmony and his king can also not feel safe. There is a nice refutation of 25...Nf3 26.Rd1! Nh4 27.Rd6 Nxg2 28.Rxh6+ Kg7 29.Rxh5 (Tukhaev), winning the knight.

**26.e4 c4?**

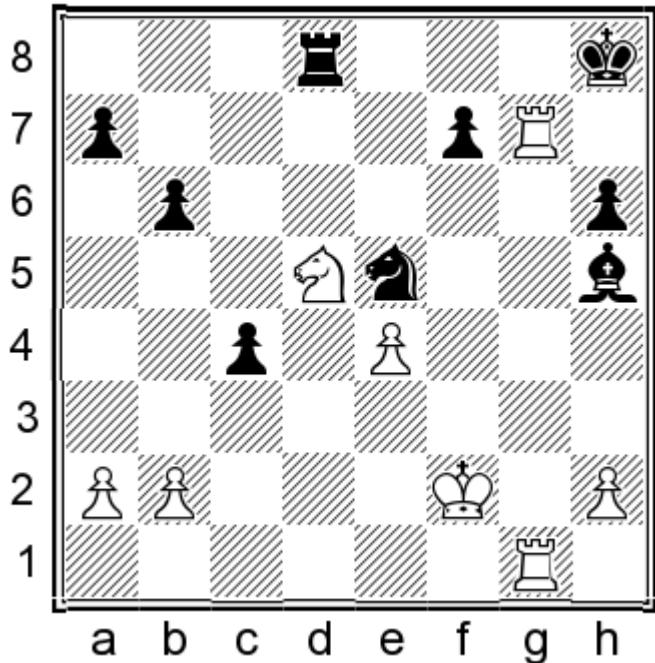
The only good defensive plan for Black was to arrange his minor pieces thus: 26...Nf3 27.Rd1 Nd4 28.Rd3 Bg6. Discouraged by the turn of events, Leko loses immediately.

**27.Nd5 Bf3?**

Also bad was 27...Bg6 28.Ke3 b5 29.Rf1.

**28.Rg7+– Bh5**

The opening of the g-file proves decisive; 28...Bxe4 29.Nf6 Bg6 30.R1xg6+–.



**29.Nf6 Rd2+ 30.Ke3 Rd3+ 31.Kf4**

And the white king hides from checks. Black loses after 31...Ng6+ 32.R1xg6 Rf3+ 33.Ke5. Black resigned.

Of course, in modern chess, where the computer provides great help to players, it often happens that White plays g2-g4 in the Queen's Gambit, planning a slaughter, only to find that Black has analysed everything and the game turns out to be that 'grandmaster draw', so disliked by chess fans!

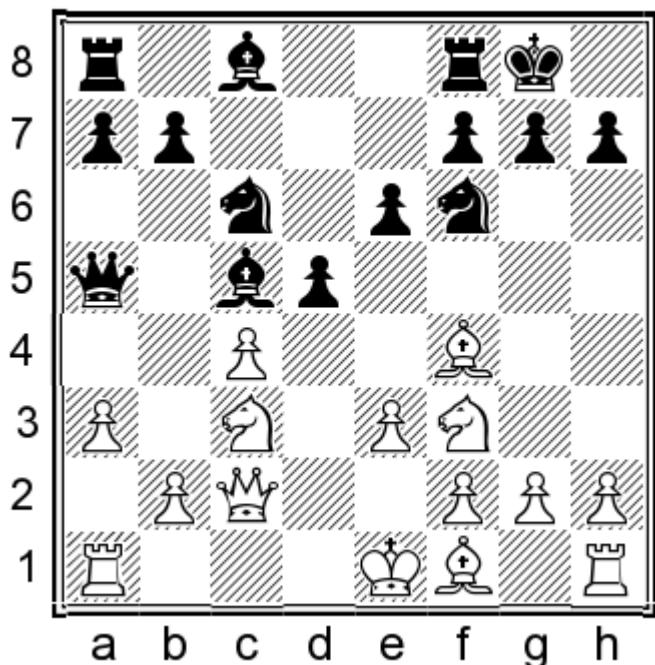
Game 31

Sergei Karjakin 2773

Hikaru Nakamura 2777

St Louis rapid 2018 (8)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.e4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bf4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.Qc2 Nc6 9.a3 Qa5**



A current *tabiya*, seen in World Championship matches between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Kortchnoi (1978), as well as Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana (2018). Magnus checked the work of the American coaching team in the lines 10.Nd2 and 10.Rd1, while here, Sergey immediately castles queenside.

## 10.0-0-0 Be7 11.Kb1

In 2002, an interesting experiment took place in Leon, Spain – Vladimir Kramnik and Vishy Anand met in a rapid chess game, where both could use the help of a computer. The quality of the game turned out to be sky-high (by the standards of then, but modern engines also approve!), and the Russian grandmaster won 3½-2½. In one of the games, the following happened:

**11.g4 dxc4 12.Bxc4 e5 13.g5 exf4 14.gxf6 Bxf6 15.Nd5 Ne7 16.Nxf6+ gxf6 17.Rhg1+ Kh8**

The doubled black pawns are an unpleasant factor, but they protect his king whilst the white monarch still has to think about his safety.

## 18.e4! b5!

Inaccurate is 18...Be6 19.Bxe6 fxe6 20.Qb3 Qc7+ 21.Kb1 Qc6 22.Rge1 e5 23.Rc1 or 20...Qa6 21.Kb1 Rad8 22.e5 with the initiative for White (analysis by Robert Cifuentes Parada).

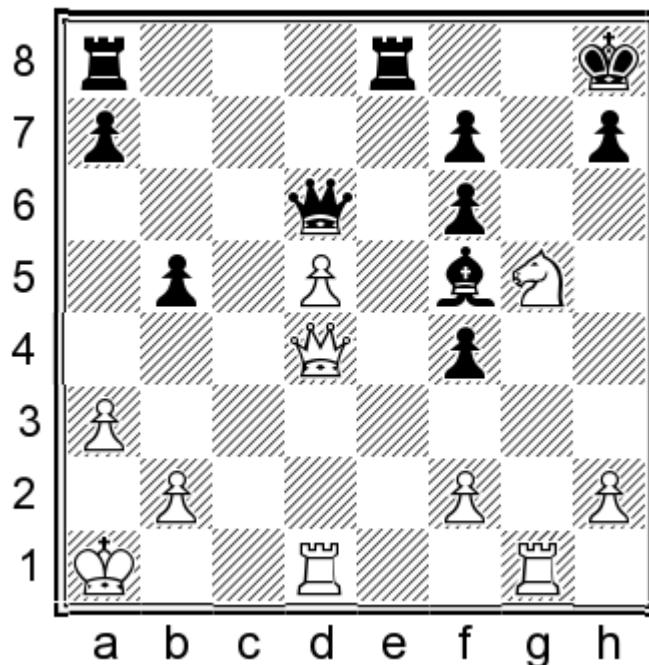
## 19.Bd5 Nxd5

19...Rb8? allows the white queen to enter: 20.Qc5!, but not bad is 19...Be6 20.Bxa8 Rc8 21.Qxc8+ Nxc8 22.Kb1 b4 23.Nd4, providing Black does not blunder with 23...bxa3?? (23...Qb6!) 24.Nc6!. However, the players are currently following a well-known game between Akopian and Short.

## 20.exd5 b4

He cannot afford to dawdle: 20...Bd7 21.Kb1 b4 22.Rd4!, and Black needs to find computer moves such as 22...Rg8!, and after 22...bxa3? 23.Rxf4! (threatening Qxh7!) 23...f5 24.Rh4 not overlook 24...Rab8? (24...f6 is correct) 25.Qc4! Rxb2+ 26.Ka1+-.

Safer from a human standpoint is 20...Bg4 21.Qe4 Qc7+ 22.Kb1 Rfe8 23.Qd4 Bf5+ 24.Ka1 Qd6 25.Ng5.



**Test 21.** How should we defend against mate on f7?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The ugly move 25...Rf8! parries all White's threats, whereas 25...Re7? allows 26.Ne6! Qe5 27.Rge1 (27.Qb4!) 27...Qxd4 28.Nxd4 Rxe1 29.Rxe1± Mamedyarov-Tregubov, Dubai 2002 – here the weakness of the black

pawns is fully felt.

## 21.axb4 Qa1+

21...Qxb4 is too hasty because White can force a favourable ending: 22.Rd4 Qd6 23.Qc6!..

## 22.Kd2 Qa6 23.Qc6

In the game Akopian-Short, Groningen 1996, White played 23.Nd4? Rd8 24.b5 Qb6 25.Qe4 Bb7, and White came under a terrific attack. Anand and his electronic assistant played better.

## 23...Rd8 (23...Bb7!?) 24.Kc3

Armed with the latest technology, the players know that after 24.Qxa8? Qc4! White is undone.

## 24...Bb7 25.Qxa6 Bxa6

Anand-Kramnik, Leon 2002 – again we have an endgame on the board, but Black has strong counterplay against the white king, on account of which he can hold the balance.

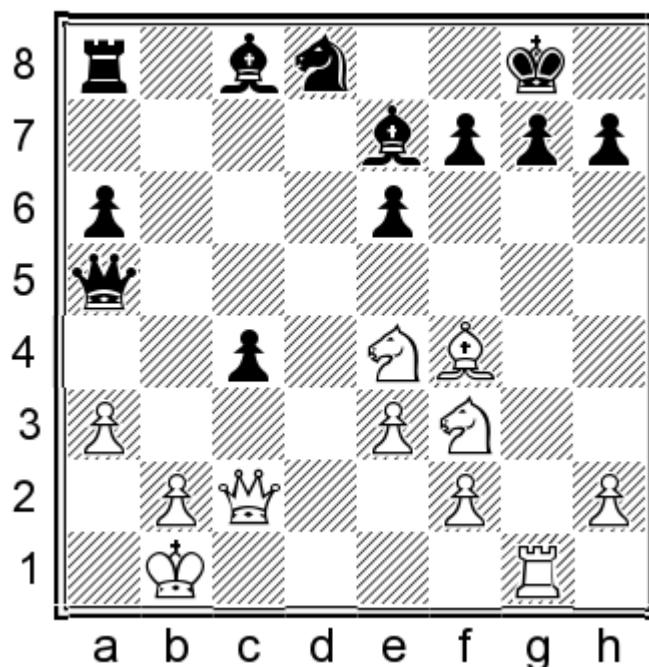
‘Why in the comments to such a short game as Karjakin-Nakamura is there such a detailed, deep analysis of the old game Anand-Kramnik?’ the reader may ask in surprise. This is done on purpose to show what work, invisible to the outside eye, is sometimes hidden behind so many grandmaster draws. Sergey and Hikaru had to keep in mind many of the calculations, similar to those given above. And in such cases, such mutual checking of the lines often leads to a quick fizzling out of the game.

## 11...a6 12.g4 dxc4 13.Bxc4 b5 14.g5 bxc4

Extremely dangerous for Black is 14...Nh5 15.Bd3 Nxf4 (15...g6 16.Be4) 16.Bxh7+ Kh8 17.Be4 – it is better not to allow such a bishop to be preserved.

## 15.gxf6 Bxf6 16.Ne4 Be7 17.Rhg1 Rd8 18.Rxd8+ Nxd8

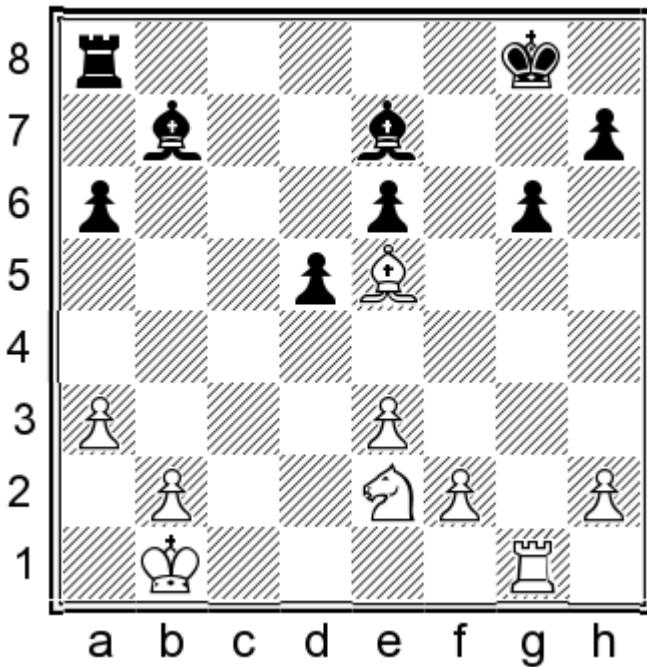
White’s attack appears very dangerous – 18...Qxd8 19.Bh6 (19.Qxc4 Bb7) 19...g6 20.Bg5 with a strong initiative, but here too, Nakamura demonstrates the best defence. The American played well in this supertournament in St Louis – in the rapid he shared 1st-2nd places with Mamedyarov and in the blitz he finished second behind Vachier-Lagrave.



The key variation is 19.Be5 g6 20.Bf6 Bxf6 21.Nxf6+ Kg7 22.Rg5 Qb6 23.Qc3 Qb3! – amazingly, none of White’s discovered checks do anything: 24.Ne8+ Kf8 25.Qh8+ Ke7, and already Karjakin had to find accurate moves to maintain the assessment of 0.00.

The Russian decides to go into the endgame, where the black weaknesses may tell.

**19.Qxc4 Qd5! 20.Qxd5 exd5 21.Nc3 Bb7 22.Nd4 Ne6 23.Be5 g6 24.Nxe6 fxe6 25.Ne2**



**25...Bh4!**

A precise counter – Black reminds White that his pawn structure is also not without its drawbacks.

**26.f4 Bf2 27.Rc1 Rc8**

Draw. One could play on in the final position, but neither player has any objective chances of success – the two black bishops are balanced by the presence of good outposts for the white knight.

The next match was played in the traditional Nutcracker match-tournament, which is hosted in Moscow before the New Year – a quartet of famous grandmasters of the older generation confronts the four strongest Russian juniors. In 2018, Alexey Sarana, Andrey Esipenko, Semen Lomasov and David Paravyan managed to snatch victory on tie-break, against Nigel Short, Boris Gelfand, Evgeny Najar and Peter Leko.

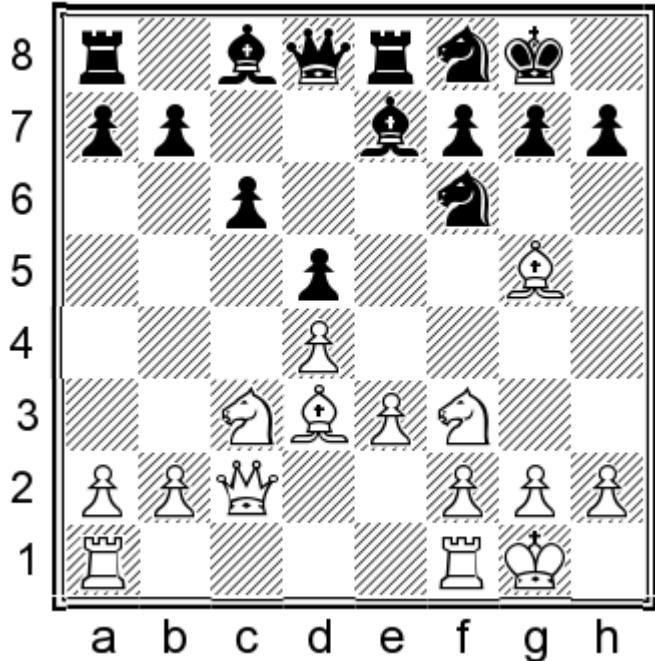
Game 32

**Peter Leko 2669**

**Alexey Sarana 2618**

Moscow 2018 (4)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Nbd7 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be7 7.e3 0-0 8.Bd3 Re8 9.0-0 c6 10.Qc2 Nf8**



We have the classical Carlsbad structure, named after the 1923 international tournament, where it was used several times.

White has adopted many plans here: 11.Rab1 (the Minority Attack), 11.Rae1 (an attack in the centre), 11.Bxf6 (another Minority Attack), but the most dangerous set-up here is the one much liked by Anatoly Karpov:

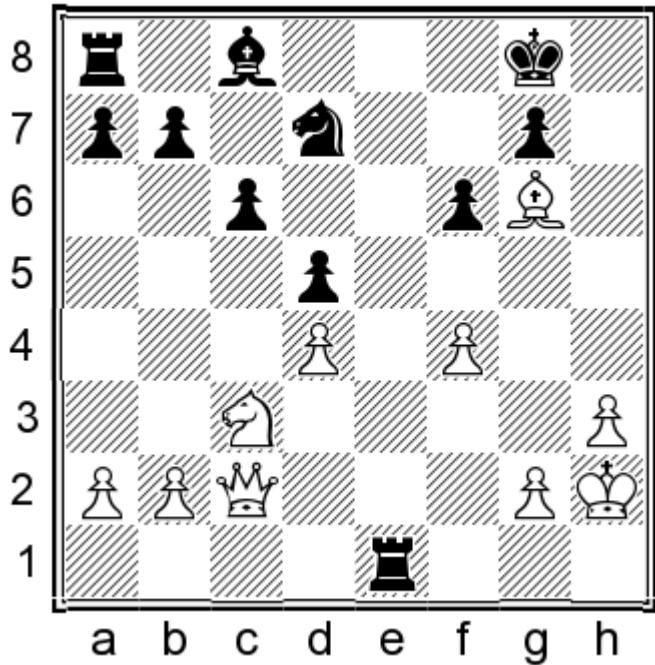
### **11.h3 g6**

After the typical Carlsbad knight jump 11...Ne4 there is 12.Bf4 Nxc3 (the central squares are weakened after 12...f5 13.Ne5) 13.bxc3 Be6 14.c4 with a small, but stable advantage for White.

It is more cunning to exchange with the move 11...Nh5, trying to exploit the h3-pawn as a target for the attack.

It has been known for a long time that the following line is refuted: 11...Ng6?! 12.Ne5 Nd7 (after 12...Nxe5 13.dxe5 Nd7 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 there is no need to grab the pawn with 15.Bxh7+?! Kh8 16.f4 g6, since there is the simple 15.f4!)

13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.f4 f6? (more solid is 14...Ndf8 15.Rae1, but this does not ease Black's position) 15.Nxg6! hxg6 16.Bxg6 Qxe3+ 17.Kh2 Re7 18.Rae1 Qxe1 19.Rxe1 Rxe1.

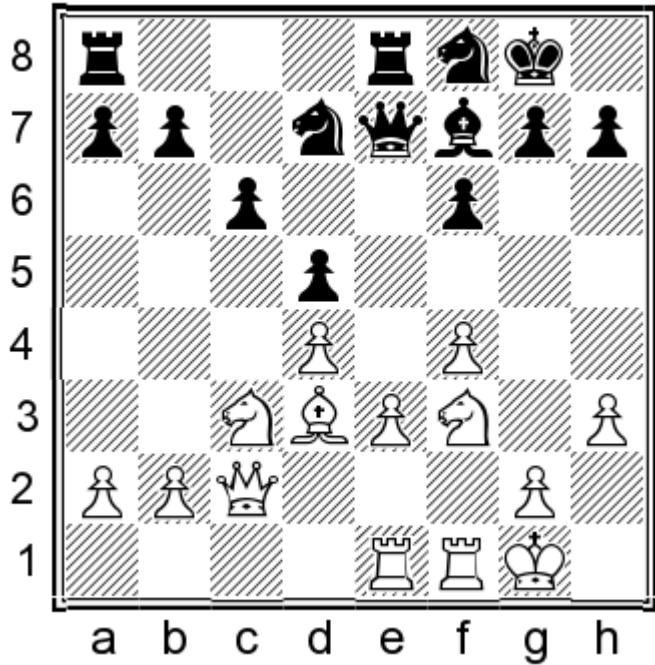


**Test 22.** The white queen should be stronger than the two black rooks in this position. But how can this be demonstrated arithmetically?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** One of the black rooks simply gets trapped: 20.Ne2! Nf8 21.Bd3 Bd7 22.Qd2 Ra1 (or 22...Rf1 23.Nc1) 23.b4 Ne6 24.f5 Ng5 25.Nc1! Ne4 26.Qb2 Rxc1 27.Qxc1 is a disaster and the rest did not last long. 27...a5 28.b5 Nd6 29.Qc5 Nxf5 30.g4 Nh4 31.Qe7+– Khenkin-Arkhipov, Moscow 1988.

The intrigue is preserved in the variation 11...Be6 12.Ne5 N6d7 13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.f4 f6 15.Nf3 Bf7 16.Rae1.



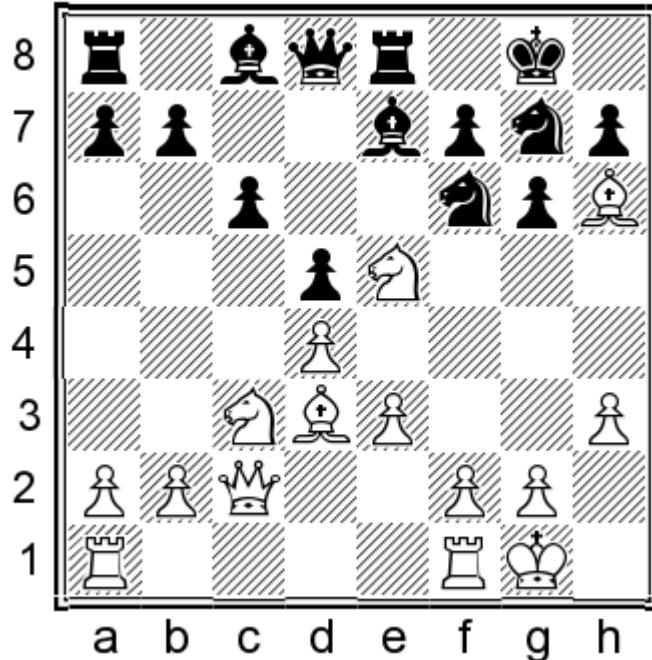
White is ready to carry out the so-called ‘Pillsbury Attack’ – the white king gives way to the g1-rook and the g2-pawn goes to g4-g5, trying to knock out the black pawn on f6 and provide an outpost on e5 for the knight. True, the position remains complicated, Black aims for counterplay on the queenside, whilst it is not even easy for White to land a serious blow on the kingside: 16...c5!? 17.Qf2 c4 18.Bb1 Nb6 19.f5 Qc7 20.Kh1 Rad8 21.g4 Nfd7 22.Rg1 Qd6 23.g5 Bh5 Ggg-Amadeus Chess, playchess 2007.

Alexey Sarana regroups in accordance with classical advice, aiming to exchange the Bc8, but here there is a surprise in store.

## 12.Bh6!

Transposing by 12.Ne5?! fails to 12...N6d7!..

## 12...Ne6 13.Ne5 Ng7



## 14.g4!

There will be no exchange on f5! In addition, the black Ng7 is now rather oddly placed.

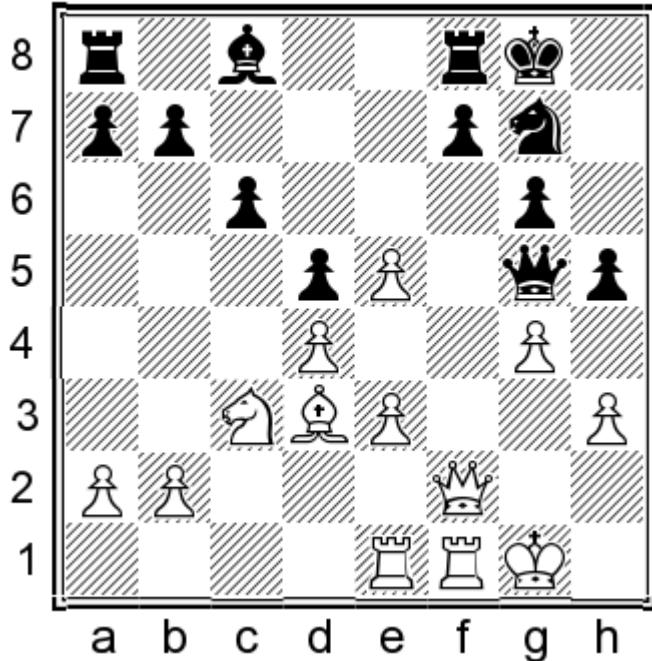
## 14...Nd7 15.f4 Bb4

It is not so easy for Black to find a solid answer to the white set-up, which was adopted as far back as 1988 by Slobodan Mirkovic. Later in the 1990s the Russian GM Andrey Shariyazdanov won a number of precious game in this line.

After the committal 15...f6 the sacrifice is not so clear: 16.Bxg6 hxg6 17.Bxg7 Nxe5 18.Bxf6, but White can settle for the simple 16.Nf3 Bf8 17.Rae1 Nb6, and now very strong is 18.f5! gxf5 (or 18...g5 19.e4) 19.Nh4 with a fearsome attack.

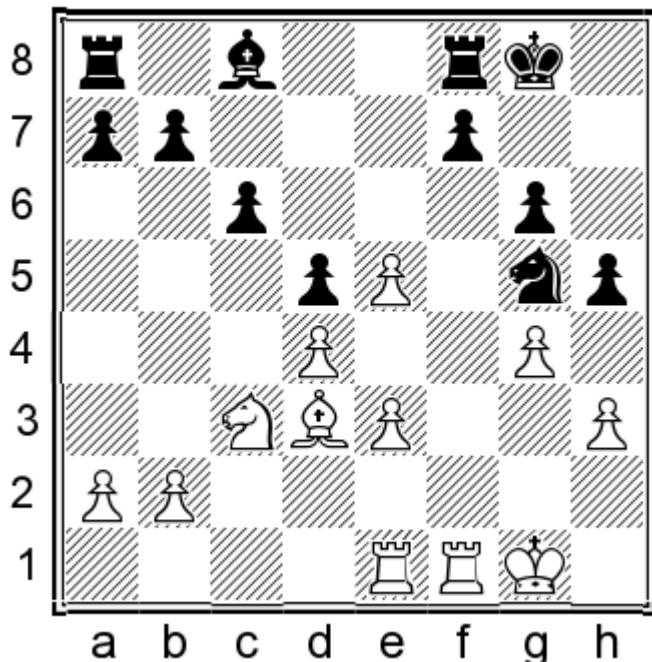
After 15...Bf8 one can play the classical 16.Qf2 f6 (16...Nxe5 17.fxe5 Be6 18.e4! is dangerous for Black) 17.Nf3 Nb6 18.Rae1 (Christiansen-Van der Sterren, Lucerne Wch-tt 1989), going over to the Pillsbury plan. But it also looks very strong to use the plan invented by a top Czech GM: 16.Rf3 Ne6 17.Bxf8 Nxf8 18.Qf2 f6 19.Nxd7 Bxd7 20.f5 g5 21.h4 h6 22.hxg5 hxg5 23.e4 with a strong attack, Navara-Duda, Yerevan 2014.

Finally, exchanging knights with 15...Nxe5 16.fxe5 also condemns Black to a prospectless defence, because of the white pressure on the f-file: 16...Bg5 (I cannot omit to mention a memorable game for me: 16...Rf8 17.Rf3 Be6 18.Raf1 c5 19.Qf2 Bh4 20.Qg2 cxd4 21.exd4 Bg5 22.Bxg5 Qxg5 23.Rf4 Rad8 24.Bc2 Ne8 25.Qf2, and Black's position is difficult, Kryakvin-Kuipers, Hoogeveen 2018) 17.Bxg5 Qxg5 18.Qf2 Rf8 (18...Be6 19.Rae1 Rf8 20.Qf6! Qxf6 21.Rxf6 Ne8 22.Rf2 with the better endgame, Shariyazdanov-Saptarshi, Raipur 2002) 19.Rae1 h5.



*analysis diagram*

Here again there follows a typical queen raid, which Shariyazdanov has used a number of times to pour water on the flames of the black counterplay: 20.Qf6! Ne6 (bad is 20...Qxf6 21.exf6 Ne8 22.Be2 hxg4 23.hxg4 Nd6 24.Kf2 Re8 25.Rh1, and with the pawn on f6, Black has hardly any moves, whilst his king is in deadly danger) 21.Qxg5 Nxg5.



**Test 23.** The pawn on h3 is under attack, and if it is defended, the pawn g4 is lost. But Andrey Shariyazdanov had prepared a subtle idea. White to play.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The GM from Yekaterinburg played 22.h4!. After 22...Nh3+ 23.Kh2 hxg4 (23...Bxg4 24.Rf6+–) 24.Kg3 Re8 25.Rf6! Re6 26.Rxe6 Bxe6 27.Be2+– the black knight is trapped, so Karen Asrian moved it back with 22...Nh7, but still ended up with a very difficult position: 23.gxh5 gxh5 24.Kh2 Bg4 25.Rf4 Kg7 (no help is 25...f6 26.Ref1 Rae8 27.Bxh7+ Kxh7 28.Rxf6+–) 26.Ref1 Be6 27.Ne2! Rh8 28.Ng3 Nf8 (28...Rae8 29.Nf5+ Kf8 30.Nd6 Re7 31.Bg6+–) 29.Nf5+ Kg8 30.Rg1+ Ng6 31.Ne7+ 1-0 Shariyazdanov-Asrian, Elista 1998.

## **16.Qf2 f6 17.Nf3 Nf8**

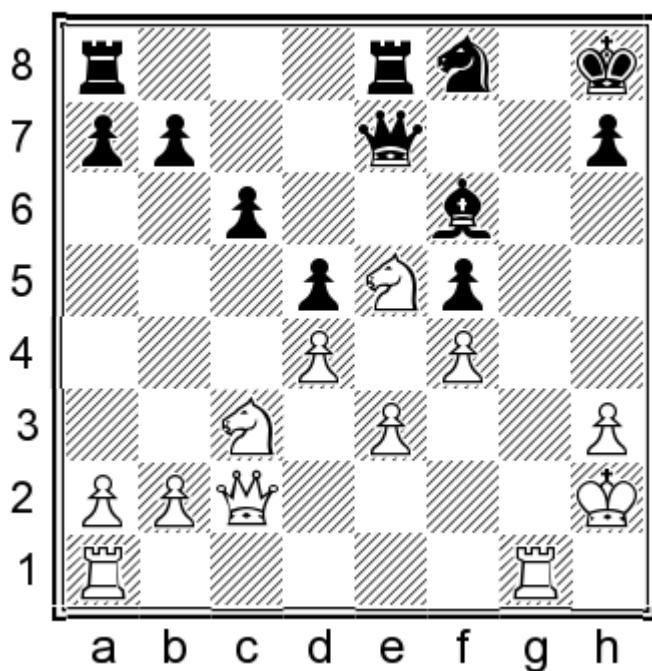
We must pay tribute to Alexey Sarana – the young grandmaster has managed to pose serious problems to the 2004 vice-World Champion, and Peter Leko did not understand these problems at the board. With the accurate 18.a3 or 18.Rae1, the advantage remains with White, whereas after

## **18.Nh4?! f5!**

Black obtained counterplay.

## **19.Bxg7 Kxg7 20.gxf5 Be7 21.Nf3 Bxf5 22.Bxf5 gxf5 23.Kh2 Bf6 24.Rg1+ Kh8 25.Ne5 Qe7 26.Qc2**

There followed another excellent move, after which Sarana's position is out of danger:



## **26...Ne6! 27.Qxf5 Bxe5 28.dxe5 Rf8 29.Qg4 d4**

And Black's active pieces ensured him a draw.

Incidentally, in rapid chess, Alexey used the Pillsbury-Karpov-Shariyazdanov variation against Nigel Short and achieved an important victory, eventually becoming the best among the young players in the event.

The background of the next game is simply amazing and could serve as an idea for a whole book. The event took place at the popular Aeroflot festival, where a ticket to the Dortmund Super Tournament was competed for in the main tournament. And in the first round, one of the favourites, Rapid World Champion Daniil Dubov, used a rare version of the Queen's Gambit against his opponent, the talented Uzbek junior Nordibek Abdusattorov. Dubov achieved a big advantage, but at that moment the unexpected happened!!

A Moscow terrorist called the police and said that a bomb had been placed in the Cosmos Hotel, where the Aeroflot tournament was taking place! The special services urgently evacuated all the hotel guests, the round was interrupted... employees from the relevant departments with trained dogs were looking for a bomb, but the threat was fake.

Naturally, given that everyone has phones with built-in engines and Internet access, resuming the games was impossible. Those who already had a large advantage by the time of evacuation suffered, primarily Dubov. When a new round was played, Abdusattorov was ready, played accurately and easily drew. But it is surprising that Daniel's shot was fired on one of the neighbouring boards, where another of the talented young Russian grandmasters used

his idea.

### Game 33

**Andrey Esipenko** 2603

**Dai Changren** 2473

Moscow 2019 (1)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Be7 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bf4**

Strange-looking, but modern engines often list such moves as their first choice. White counts on exploiting the weakening of the black kingside.

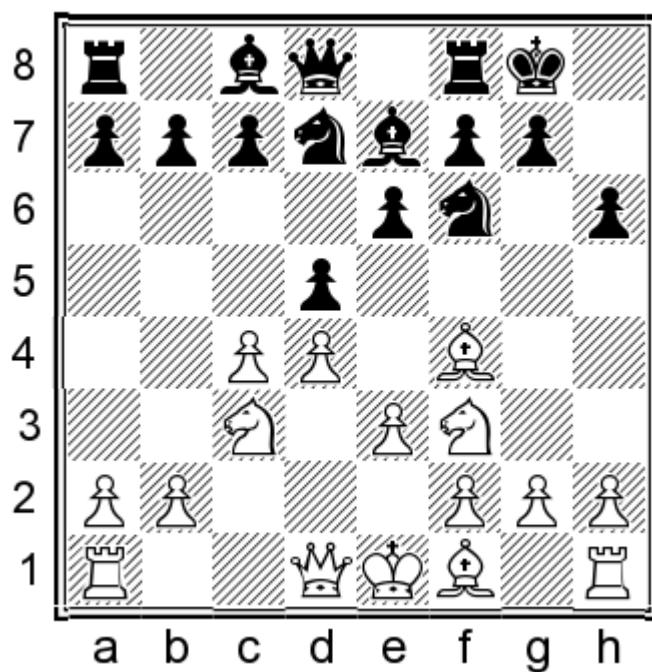
**6...0-0**

Interestingly, long before the advent of Stockfish and AlphaZero, the retreat of the bishop to f4 was played by the Danish prince, Bent Larsen. Here is one example: 6...c5 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.e3 Nc6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Bd3 0-0 11.0-0 Re8 12.Qb3 Bb6 13.Rad1 Be6 14.Bb1 d4 15.Qa4 Bg4 16.exd4 Bxf3 17.gxf3 Nh5 18.Bg3 Nxd4 19.Be4 Qf6 20.Rd3 Ne6, and Black had an excellent position, although White won, Larsen-King, New York 1990.

**7.e3 Nbd7**

White has often been successful in the line 7...b6 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Nxd5 exd5 10.Bd3 c5 (10...Bb4+ 11.Kf1) 11.0-0 Nc6 12.Bb5 Bb7 13.Qa4 Qc8 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.Rac1 Qe6??! 16.Nd4! 1-0 Ikonnikov-Wiersma, Dieren 2017, but each time, the question arises: was it really necessary to lure Black's pawn to h6? And what plusses does White get from its being there?

As to the second part of the Dubov- Abdusattorov encounter, at home the Uzbek junior easily chose a variation in which ...h7-h6 was more of a plus than a minus: 7...c5 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.a3 Nc6 10.Qc2 Qa5 11.Ra2!? Ne4 12.Bd3 Nxc3 13.bxc3 d4 14.exd4 Nxd4 15.Nxd4 Bxd4 16.0-0 Be5 17.Be3 Qc7 18.f4 Bd6 19.Qf2 b6 20.Bd4 Bc5, and Black had an excellent position, Dubov-Abdusattorov, Moscow 2019.



After the game continuation, White throws forward the g-pawn against the black castled position, but for the moment this does not guarantee him success.

**8.g4 dxc4 9.Bxc4 c5**

The American candidate played well here: 9...Nb6 10.Bb3 Nfd5 11.Bg3 c5 12.Ne5 cxd4 13.Qxd4 Nxc3 14.bxc3 Nd5 15.0-0 Qa5, and Black emerged on top in a complicated battle Grischuk-Caruana, Khanty-Mansiysk 2015. The Chinese player underestimates the strength of White's threats – with an open centre, it certainly looks as though counterplay should arise of its own accord.

**10.g5 hxg5 11.Bxg5 cxd4 12.exd4 b5!?**

Sacrificing a pawn, since after 12...Nd5 13.Bd2 (13.Rg1) 13...b6 14.Rg1 White's attack is fairly simple.

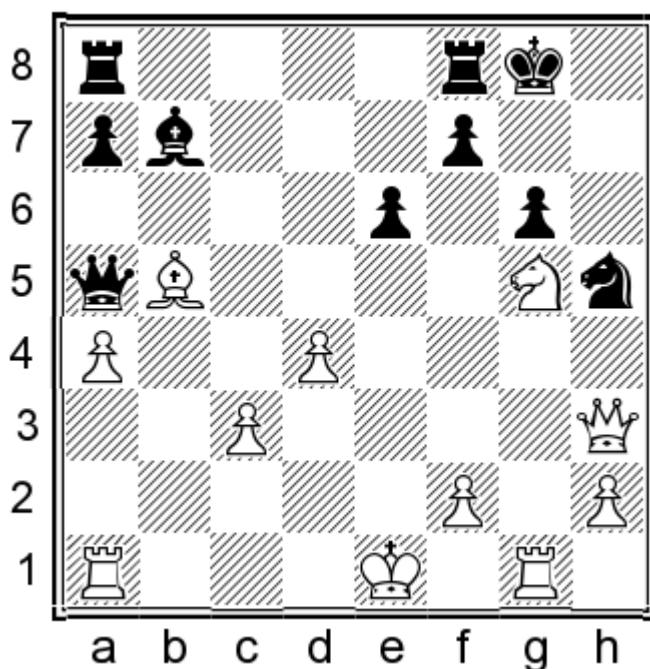
**13.Bxb5 Nd5 14.Rg1 Bxg5 15.Nxg5 Nxc3?**

A mistake, strengthening White's position in the centre, but finding the right decision is quite difficult. The computer is not frightened: 15...Rb8! 16.Bd3 Qc7 17.Qh5 N7f6 18.Nxd5 exd5 19.Bh7+ Kh8 20.Qh4 Rxb2 with sufficient counterplay, but a human sees mates everywhere.

**16.bxc3 Qa5 17.Qd3 Nf6 18.a4 Bb7 19.Qg3 Nh5 20.Qd3**

He could retreat to a different square with 20.Qe3, but Esipenko simply repeats moves and puts the queen on the h-file.

**20...Nf6 21.Qg3 Nh5 22.Qh3 g6**



A brilliant continuation of the attack was 23.Kd2!! Rac8 (23...Bd5 24.Be2 Nf6 25.Qh6 Rab8 26.Rg3 with decisive threats) 24.Nxe6! fxe6 25.Rxg6+ Ng7 26.Rxg7+ Kxg7 27.Rg1+ Kf6 28.Qh4+ Kf7 29.Qh7+ Kf6 30.Qg7+ Kf5 31.Qe5# – the king move allows the second rook to join the attack. But 23.Be2 Rac8 24.Kd2 Nf6 25.Rac1 Rfd8 is not so convincing. Alas, next move, the Chinese player commits the decisive mistake, and does not allow Andrey Esipenko to complete his attacking combinational path.

**23.Rc1 Ba6??**

Correct was 23...Rac8.

**24.Ne4! Bb7**

Black just loses a piece: 24...Bxb5 25.Qxh5.

**25.Nc5 Nf4 26.Qg3 Qc7 27.Nxb7 a6 28.Be2 e5 29.Nc5 Rfe8 30.Nd3!**

Simplest. Black resigned.

## Conclusions

1. In the positions of the Queen's Gambit, the move g2-g4 does not lead to the creation of any long-term static weaknesses. Often, if the game does not work out to a checkmate, then later the g-pawn provides White with a better ending. No wonder it was here that Mikhail Botvinnik loved the move so much!
2. On the other side, Black should not senselessly move pawns in the centre according to the principle 'counterattack at all costs'. Often this results in the creation of weaknesses, and the happy white players are distracted from their Napoleonic plans in order to simply fight against the IQP.
3. In practice, the main continuations are ones where White often does not checkmate, but conquers space on the kingside and limits the enemy pieces. This is logical, since only in blitz games in the park can one hope to checkmate a strong opponent with the g2-g4 move alone, not supported by objective factors. And even then, not always.

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## Part IV

### The Nimzo-Indian Defence

#### *Chapter 8*

#### Even if the Devil is helping you

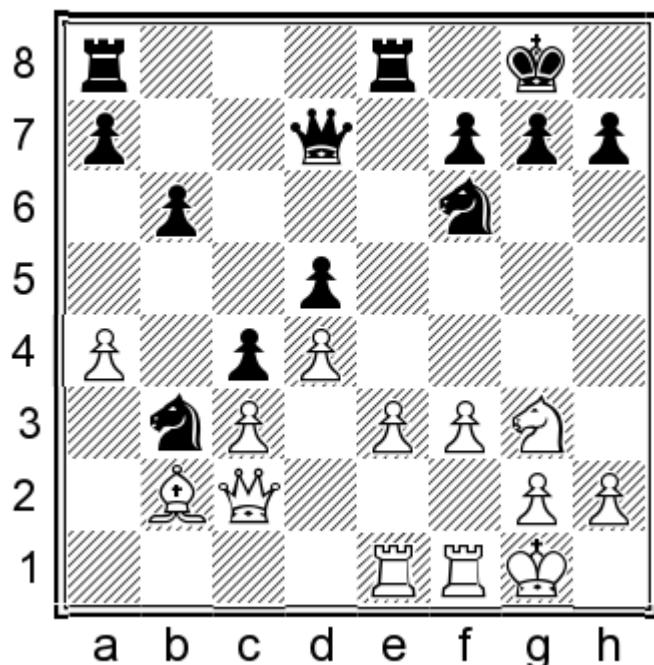
##### Some history

In 1997, the Dutch town of Tilburg hosted one of the biggest super-tournaments of the season. The World Champion Garry Kasparov, the strongest grandmasters of the planet Vladimir Kramnik, Alexey Shirov, Petr Svidler, Michael Adams, Judit Polgar, Joel Lautier, Loek van Wely and a number of other famous chess players lined up at the start. Svidler achieved a tremendous success in the tournament – the young player shared first place in the tournament with Garry the Thirteenth and the heir to the throne. The only woman in the tournament played beautifully – Judit lost only one game to Kasparov and finished with a result of 6 out of 11.

That same Kasparov-Polgar game somewhat unexpectedly repeated the famous game Botvinnik-Capablanca, which was played in the legendary AVRO Tournament 1938.

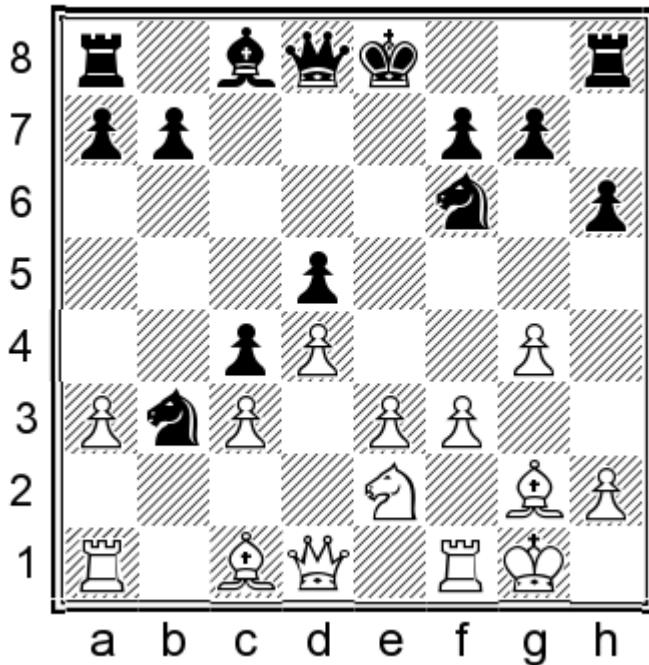
**Mikhail Botvinnik**  
**José Raul Capablanca**  
Rotterdam 1938 (11)

1.d4 Nf6 2.e4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Bd3 0-0 9.Ne2 b6 10.0-0 Ba6 11.Bxa6 Nxa6 12.Bb2 Qd7 13.a4 Rfe8 14.Qd3 c4 15.Qc2 Nb8 16.Rae1 Nc6 17.Ng3 Na5 18.f3 Nb3



**Garry Kasparov**  
**Judit Polgar**  
Tilburg 1997 (2)

**1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Bb4 4.e3 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Nf6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.f3 c4 9.Ne2 Nc6 10.g4 h6 11.Bg2 Na5 12.0-0 Nb3**



Judit boldly fixed the white queenside and led the knight along the same route as the great Cuban. Meanwhile, the World Champion was not idle – he carried out his teacher's plan of a pawn roller, and eventually crushed Black's position. It is interesting that in Soviet times this position was also encountered in a game played by another long-term mentor of Kasparov, Alexander Nikitin.

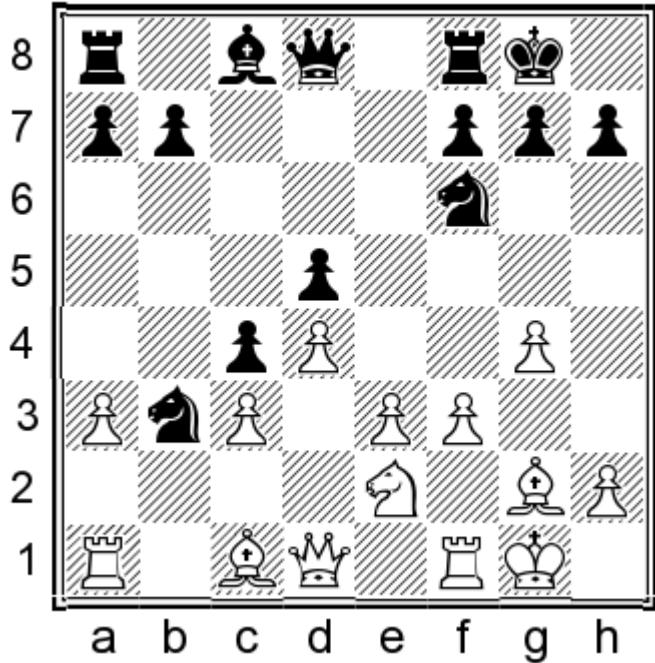
Contemporaries did not take the idea of Polgar and her coach Lev Psakhis too seriously, but the plan was revived again in 2013, when suddenly in his match with Vishy Anand for the World Championship, it was used by Magnus Carlsen, who brought the idea from the training camp of the Norwegian team.

The outstanding Indian grandmaster was by that time two points behind, and this was his last attempt to save the match. However, Black celebrated the victory.

In the end, this furious duel actually turned out to be the coronation of the Norwegian.

**Viswanathan Anand**  
**Magnus Carlsen**  
Chennai Wch m 2013 (9)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 c4!?** 9.Ne2 Nc6 10.g4 0-0 11.Bg2 Na5 12.0-0 Nb3



Despite Magnus' victory, in tournament practice, that stubborn thing called 'statistics' still favoured White. Ex-World Champion Vladimir Kramnik could not defend the black redoubts in his last tournament, being defeated by Anish Giri.

### Important nuances

There are important differences between the positions of Botvinnik-Capablanca and Kasparov-Polgar. In the first, the light-squared bishops are traded and the white pawn stands on a4 – Capablanca tried to surround it. In the more recent version, White's potential problem is not a possible material deficit, but that his pieces on the kingside still lack harmony, and Black plans to quickly pressurize the opponent's weak pawns. It turns out that there is no time to wait and manoeuvre! Like Botvinnik, White is obliged, without hesitation, to ram the opponent with e3-e4.

There is another important difference related to the theme of our book. In Kasparov-Polgar, White already has a pawn on g4, which is ready to drive away the knight on f6 and provide White with a bridgehead for the offensive. In the game, the best-ever female player tried to drastically limit her opponent's possibilities by ...h7-h6. Judit's followers were not so categorical, because it turned out that g4-g5 is far from always advantageous for White anyway!

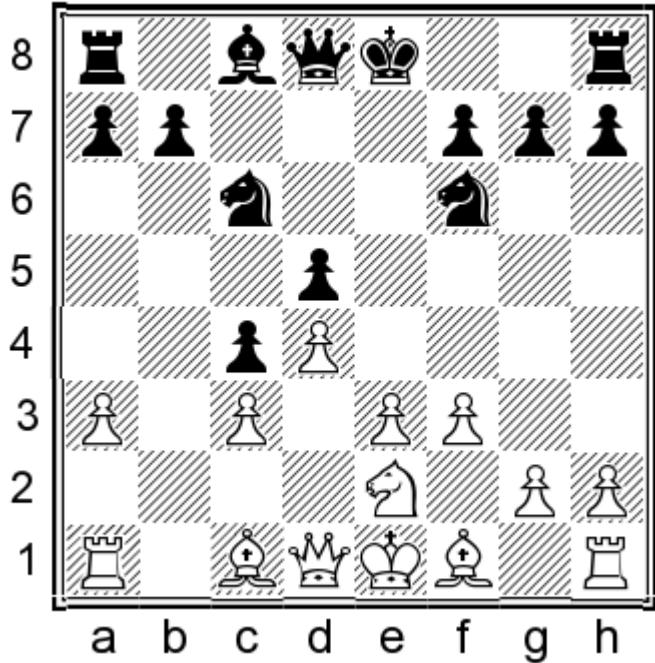
Game 34

Garry Kasparov 2820

Judit Polgar 2670

Tilburg 1997 (2)

**1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Bb4 4.e3 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Nf6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.f3 c4 9.Ne2 Nc6**



As is often the case in contemporary chess, the position can arise via a number of move-orders, the most popular being 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 c4!?. 9.Ne2 Nc6. The next game will deal with this variation.

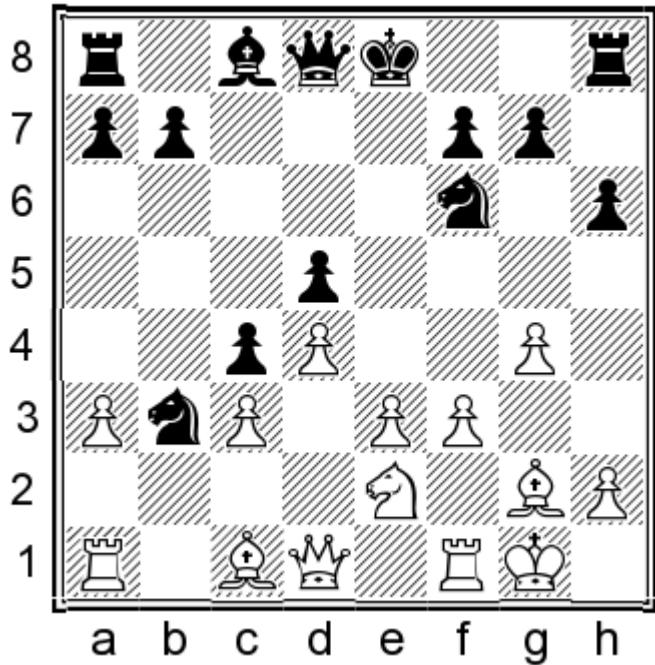
### **9...Nc6 10.g4!**

White is practically forced to advance our favourite pawn, since after the tame 10.Ng3 there follows 10...h5!, Marusenko-Pavlov, Kiev 2010. White's does not want to allow ...h5-h4, whilst after 11.h4 Black can reply effectively with 11...Qc7!.

### **10...h6**

Garry Kimovich and Judit were following an uncharted path, and spending a lot of time already on decisions in the opening stage. Later, Black tried to dispense with this move, assuming that it weakens the position of the king, and g4-g5 in itself is not fatal.

### **11.Bg2 Na5 12.0-0 Nb3**



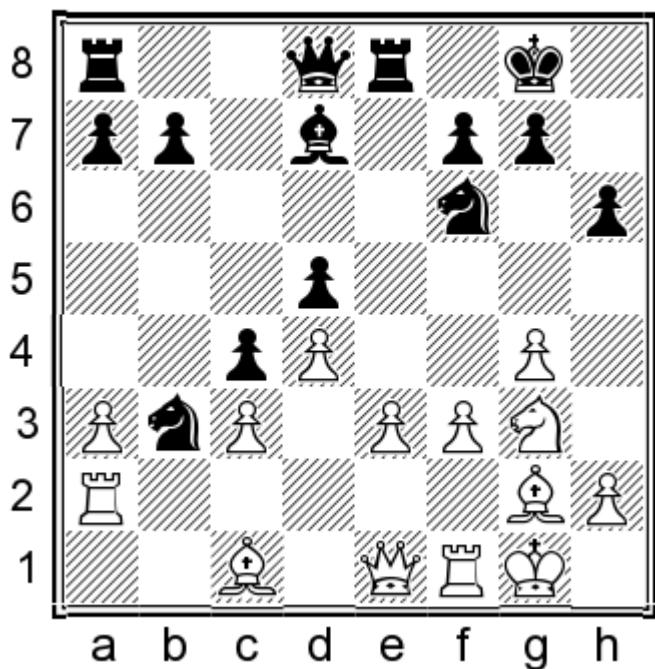
### 13.Ra2

Garry Kasparov's favourite Nimzo-Indian manoeuvre – the rook comes along the second rank to support the clump of white attacking pieces. However, practice in recent years shows that it is more effective for the rook to remain on the queenside with 13.Rb1, preventing Black's counterplay.

### 13...0-0 14.Ng3 Bd7?

Judit underestimates the potential strength of White's attack. Only ten years later was it shown that Black should play ...b7-b5, ...a7-a5 without loss of time and immediately start counterplay on the queenside. Instead, with the text Black intends ...Re8, ...Ba4 with pressure, but she simply does not have time.

### 15.Qe1 Re8



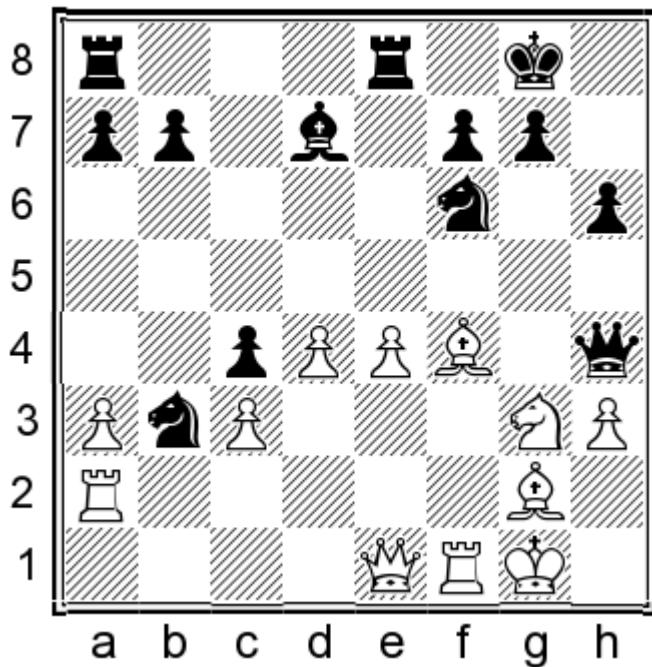
### 16.e4!

16.Re2!? also looks excellent, but Kasparov plays a stronger and more idealistic move. He sacrifices our thematic pawn, to open lines for the attack on the kingside.

**16...dxe4 17.fxe4 Nxg4 18.Bf4 Qh4**

On her own the black queen cannot hold back the white pieces but, at least, she can create some counter-threats.

**19.h3 Nf6**



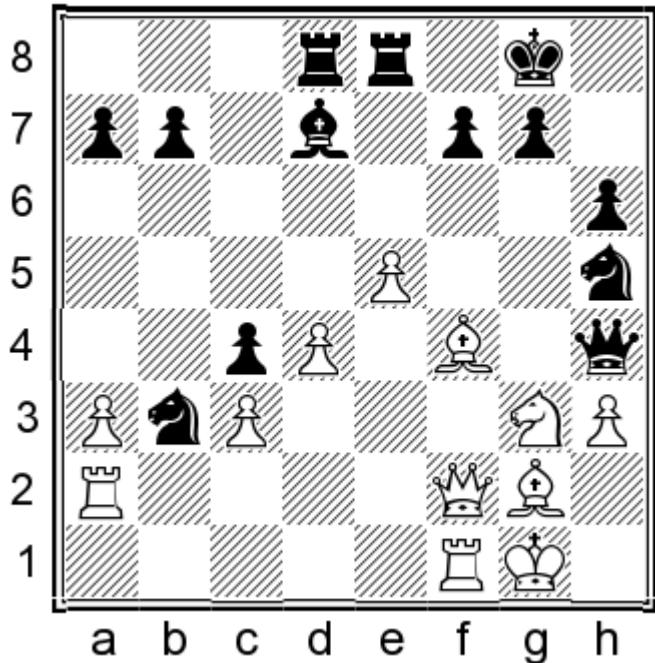
**20.e5!**

Of course, after 20.Be5?! Judit would happily have given the exchange: 20...Rxe5! 21.dxe5 Nh5, obtaining good counterchances. But Kasparov is not messing with trifles and sets his guns firmly on the black king.

**20...Rad8**

The alternatives were unattractive: 20...Bxh3 21.Bxh3 Qxh3 22.Rh2 Qe6 (22...Qg4 23.Rg2) 23.Rg2 Ng4 24.Ne4 with a very strong attack, or 20...Nh5 21.Nxh5 Qxh5 22.Bf3 Qxh3 23.Rh2 Qe6 24.Rg2 – here the first blow at the black citadel could also be the last. Polgar brings another fighting unit into the battle, envisaging a potential blockade on d5, but this does not save her.

**21.Qf2 Nh5**



## **22.Bxh6! Re7**

It is easy to calculate the winning variations, even if you are not Garry Kasparov: 22...gxh6 23.Qxf7+ Kh8 24.Nxh5 or 22...Qxg3 23.Qxf7+ Kh7 24.Qxh5 gxh6 25.Rf7+ Kg8 26.Rf6 Qe3+ 27.Kh2+-.

## **23.Nf5!**

White also retains a powerful attack after 23.Nxh5 Qxh5 24.Be3 Bc6 25.Qf4, but Kasparov's move leads to a simpler and more precise win.

## **23...Qxf2+ 24.Rxf2**

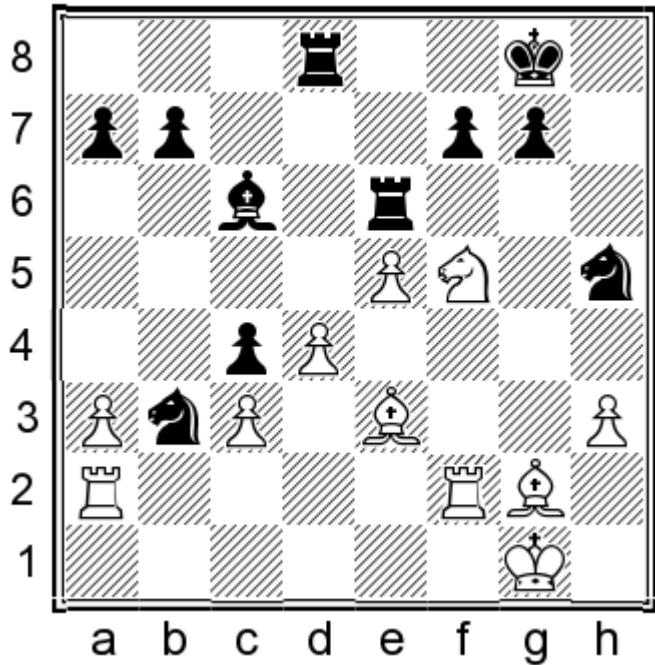
There is no necessity to blunder the exchange: 24.Raxf2? Bxf5 25.Rxf5 Ng3.

## **24...Re6**

The knight can be exchanged: 24...Bxf5 25.Rxf5 gxh6 (25...g6 26.Rf1) 26.Rxh5 Kg7 27.Rh4 Nc1 28.Rf2, but then the power of the white rooks, together with the advance of the passed d-pawn, and supported by the bishops (plus the Nb3, which, as in Capablanca's case, remains cut off) quickly leads to the end of Black's resistance.

## **25.Be3 Bc6**

Counting on 26.Bxc6 bxc6, but...



**26.Bf1! f6**

Black cannot defend the pawn on c4, since then he loses his knight on the edge of the board: 26...b5 27.Be2 or 26...Bd5 27.Be2.

**27.Bxc4 Bd5 28.Be2**

And Kasparov had a decisive material advantage.

**28...fxe5 29.Bxh5 exd4 30.Bg5 Rd7 31.Rae2 Be4 32.Nxd4 1-0**

In the third volume of the series by Garry Kasparov and Dmitry Plisetsky, devoted to the 13th World Champion's career, there is an interesting quote from Judit Polgar's second, Lev Psakhis, who said in Tilburg: 'When you prepare for the 'white' Kasparov, you want to turn into a little red insect, like in the story by Franz Kafka, and hide somewhere far, far away...' In the position after the e3-e4 breakthrough, these words are even more relevant!

After the game in Tilburg, the variation was practically forgotten for a decade and went through a new baptism of fire in battles between... computer engines! A series of tournaments in the so-called 'freestyle' competitions, where the player was allowed to use any computer help, took place on the Playchess.com game server. The battle for a large prize pool from the PAL Group attracted many strong grandmasters, who combined the analytical power of their electronic favourites with the leading role of human grey cells, as well as ordinary chess fans who bet on multiprocessor monsters. As a result of the truly epic battles at that time on Playchess, a new chess revolution took place – many new variations were invented, the old ones were re-evaluated, and the grandmasters realized the need to regularly study the databases of postal chess and computer tournaments. Soon, freestyle chess novelties surged into elite tournaments and grandmaster opens.

The variation under discussion also did not escape the computer revolution.

Game 35

**Zacks**

**Octopus**

PAL/CSS Freestyle playchess.com 2006 (2)

The American Steven Cramton and Stephen Zackery played under the pseudonym Zacks – they managed to sensationaly win the first such championship with the help of three powerful computers. In the semi-finals, groups

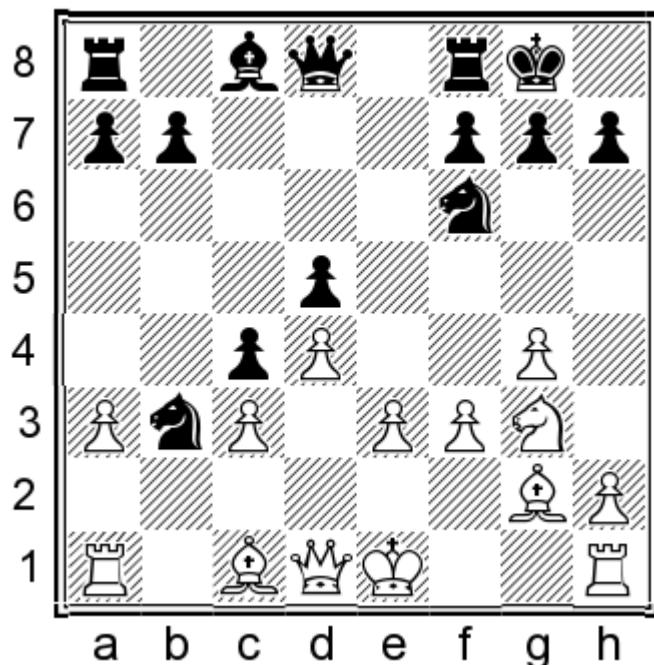
with strong grandmasters – Vladimir Kosyrev, Vladimir Dobrov, Konstantin Landa – fought against the American amateurs, but no one could defeat the ‘dark horses’.

Given Zacks’ opening repertoire, rumours began to multiply on the Internet that Steven and Stefan were helped by Garry Kasparov. A ChessBase correspondent directly asked the great champion, who had already ended his career by then, to which Kasparov joked: ‘Even if the Devil helped them, this is not forbidden by the rules!’ True, the first experience of the ‘devilish’ version was unsuccessful for Zacks.

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5**

The main line is 7...Nxd5 – this was tested at the very highest level in the 2008 World Championship match between Viswanathan Anand and Vladimir Kramnik. However, a player using the nickname Octopus is naturally not going to deny himself the chance of extending his knight’s tentacles to the square b3!

**8.e3 c4 9.Ne2 0-0 10.g4 Nc6 11.Ng3 Na5 12.Bg2 Nb3**

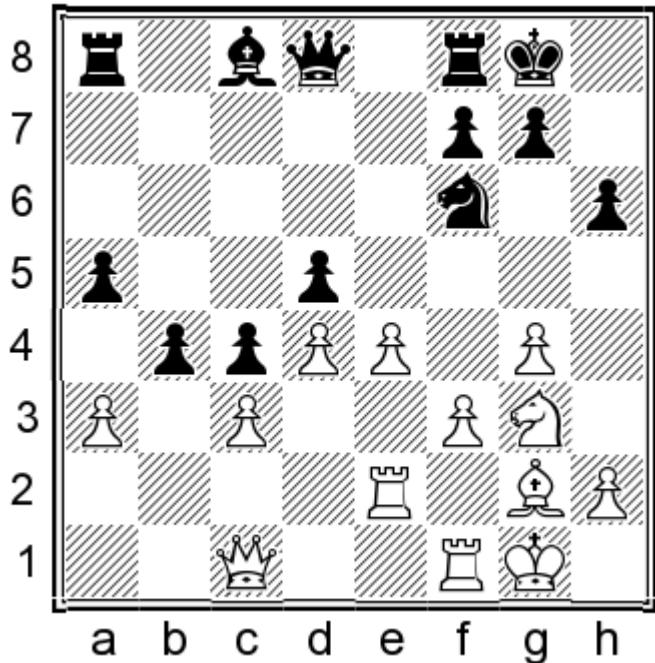


We have the familiar position on the board and the Americans follow Kasparov’s path.

**13.Ra2 h6 14.Re2**

More Kasparovian was 14.0-0, but then, no doubt, 14...a5 would have followed.

**14...Nxc1 15.Qxc1 a5 16.0-0 b5 17.e4 b4!**

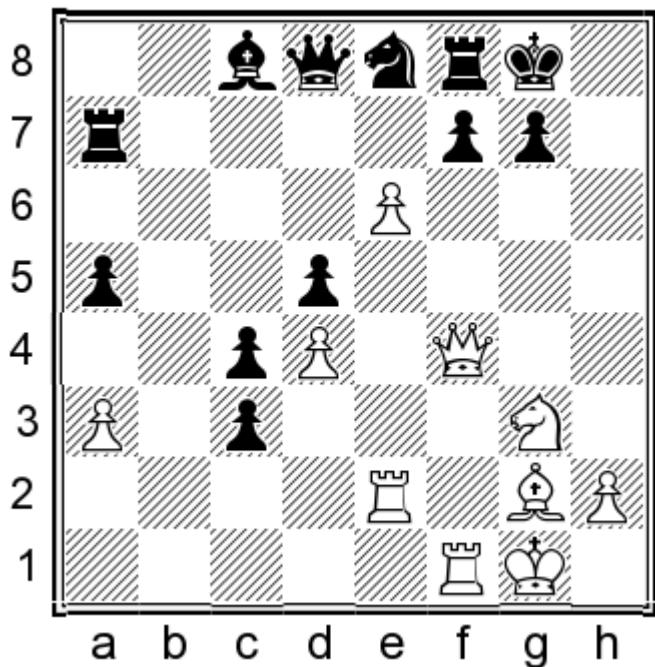


By energetic counter-measures, Black has managed to get at the base of the white pawn chain. Now White already must keep an eye on the queenside whilst he is attacking.

### **18.e5 Ne8 19.g5?**

An emotional decision, designed to clear lines for a direct attack on the black king. The g-pawn battering ram has fulfilled its destiny, and White understandably was not attracted by the alternative 19.axb4?! axb4 20.cxb4 Qb6 followed by ...Ne8-c7-b5, whilst 19.f4?! Nc7 20.f5 Qg5 probably struck the American team as too slow.

**19...hxg5 20.f4 gxf4 21.Qxf4 bxc3! 22.e6 Ra7!**



A brilliant reply! Black has taken some extra pawns and is now prepared to give up the exchange, obtaining great compensation. Probably, the engines of the time, used by Zacks, overestimated White's position. The modern Stockfish, on the other hand, immediately and decisively prefers Black.

### **23.Bxd5!?**

Of course, it was never about 23.Qf3 Nf6 24.exf7+ Raxf7 25.Qxc3 Qb6μ.

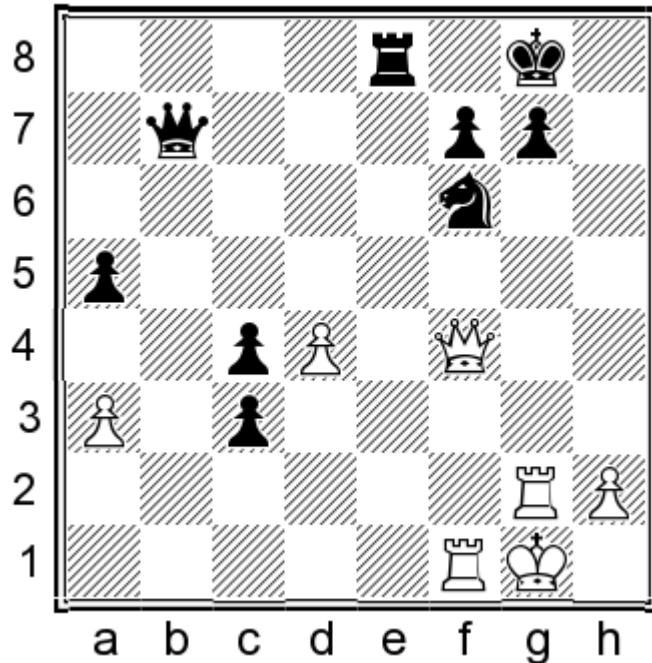
**23...Qxd5 24.e7 Rxe7 25.Rxe7 Bh3 26.Rf2 Nf6**

Black has splendid compensation – the c-pawns are doubled, but they remain no less dangerous passed pawns.

**27.Re5 Qb7! 28.Re1 Rb8 29.Nf1**

With 29.Rc2 Rd8 White is not threatening to take on c3 because of mate on g2.

**29...Bxf1 30.Rxf1 Re8 31.Rg2**



White has only one chance – to gather all his forces and throw them at the black king, before the opponent regroups and promotes his the passed pawns. Perhaps this would have succeeded in a human game, but in a battle with the help of electronic intelligence, Octopus easily parried the threats.

**31...Ne4 32.Qh6**

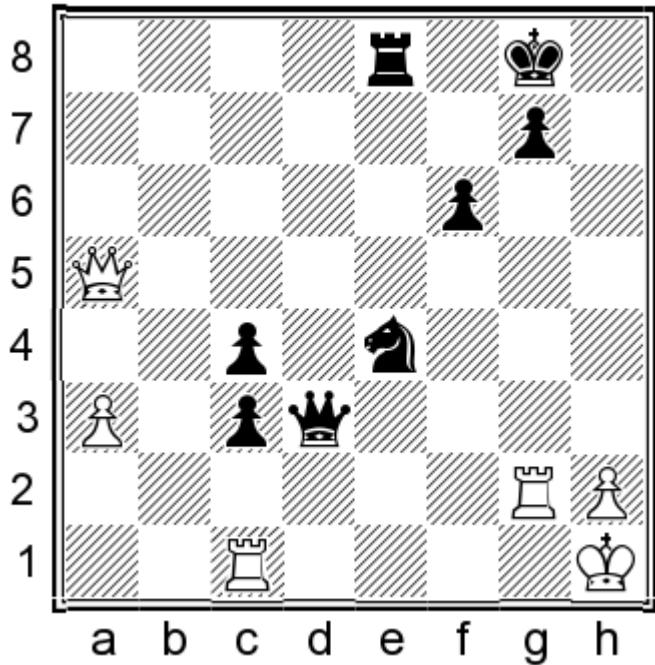
32.Qg4 g6μ.

**32...f6 33.Qh5 Qd7 34.Qxa5**

34.Kh1 Ng5 is also sad for White, but in the game, White's passed a-pawn only manages to make one small step.

**34...Qxd4+ 35.Kh1 Qd3 36.Rc1**

36.Rfg1 Qf3–+.



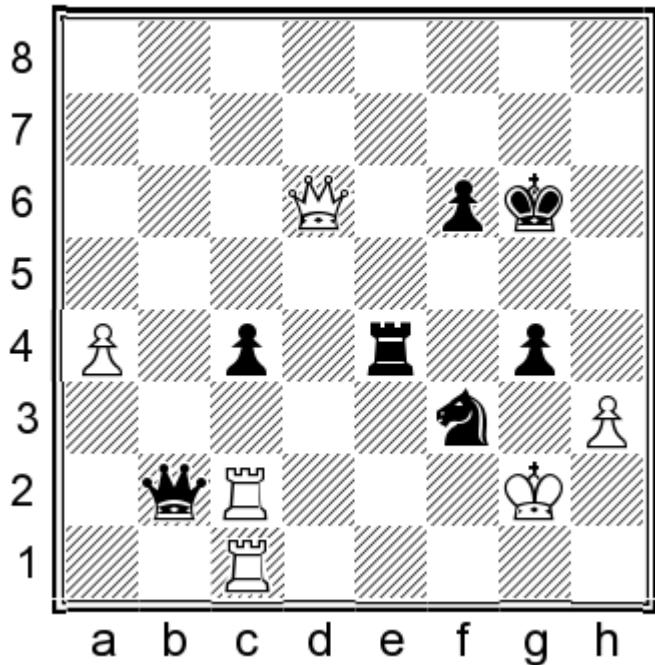
**36...g5!**

A wonderful move, ensuring living space for his king. In addition, the black pawn will not be averse to disturbing the white king. As we see, ...g7-g5 can also be very strong!

**37.Qb6 Kf7 38.a4 Qd5 39.Kg1**

There is no help from 39.Qe3 Re5 40.Kg1 Qd3, but after the text also Black starts a decisive storm.

**39...Nd2 40.Qb5 Qd3 41.Qc6 c2 42.Rf2 Qd4 43.Kg2 Re4 44.h3 g4 45.Qc7+ Kg6 46.Qg3 Qb2 47.Qd6 Nf3 48.Rfxc2**



**48...Ne1+! 49.Rxe1 Qxc2+ 50.Kf1**

And White resigned, since after 50...Rxe1+ 51.Kxe1 Qc3+ he has only one pawn in the queen ending, whilst Black

has many.

Revenge came a year later, although Zacks' opponent again managed to show a defence to the new plan.

### Game 36

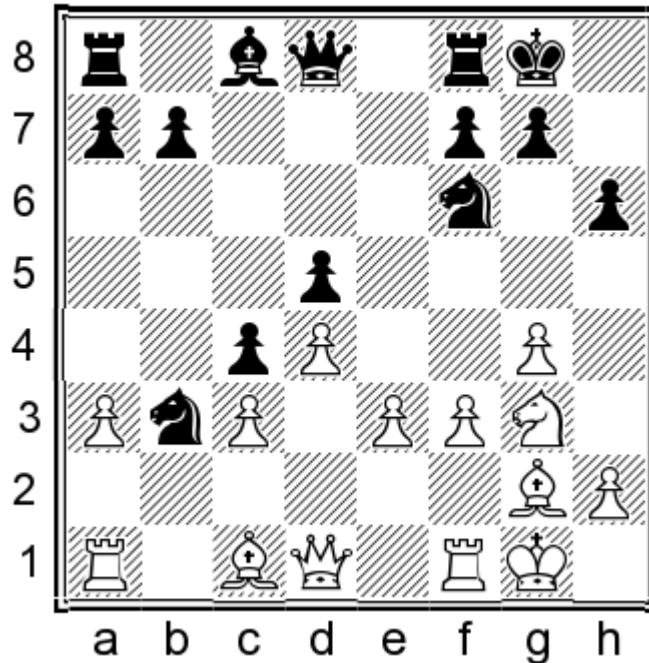
Zacks

Nebula Rybka 2.2

PAL/CSS Freestyle playchess.com 2007 (5)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 c4 9.Ne2 0-0**

One opponent tried to copy Octopus' play: **9...Nc6 10.g4 h6 11.Bg2 Na5 12.0-0 0-0 13.Ng3 Nb3**



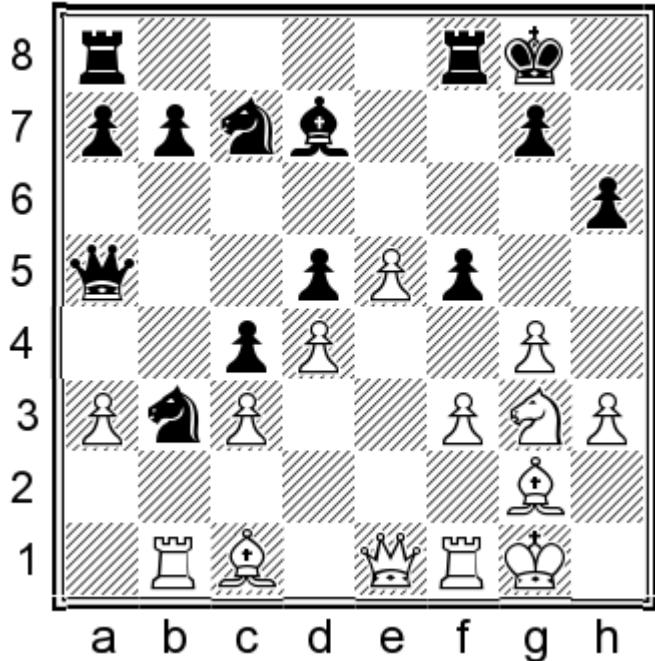
But now White unveiled his improvement:

**14.Rb1!**

Now it turns out that Black's idea of a pawn storm is not so effective, as after the exchange on c1, the white rook will control b4!

In the game, Black went back to Capablanca's idea of attacking with pieces on the queenside and trying to defend the king with minimal forces. But it seems this plan is historically destined to fail, as, like Polgar, Black lost without making an obvious mistake:

**14...Bd7 15.h3 Qa5 16.Qe1 Ne8 17.e4 Nc7 18.e5 f5**



**Test 24.** How should White continue his attack?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The main thing is not to be afraid of giving up the g4-pawn! After all, on practically every page of this book the daring pawn offers its life, so that its army can effect a breakthrough to its strategic target.

**19.f4! fxg4 20.f5 gxh3 21.Bxh3 Nb5 22.Bb2**

The last defensive move, after which Black cannot hold back the storming e-and f-pawns.

**22...Kh7 23.e6 Be8 24.f6 Bg6**

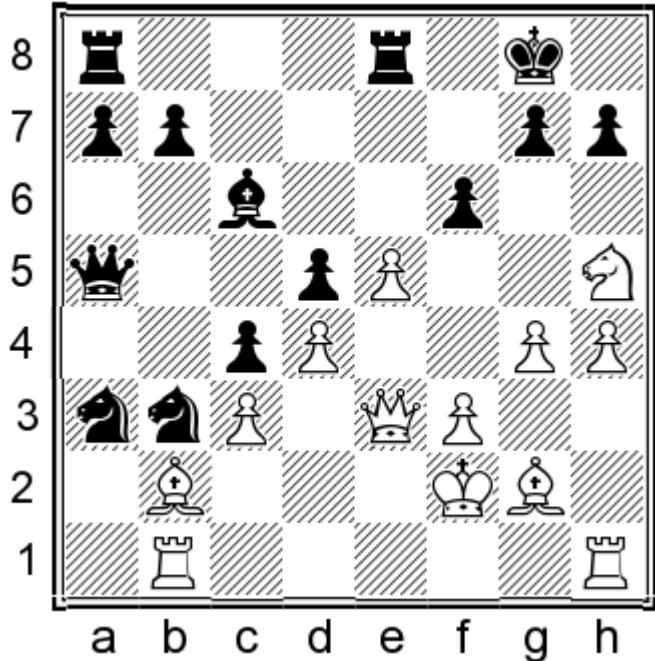
After 24...Rxf6 25.Rxf6 gxf6 26.Qe3 Black's position is indefensible, but things are no easier now.

**25.f7 Qc7 26.Bf5 Bxf5 27.Nxf5**

And the white passed pawns decided the game, 1-0 (33) Zacks-Goldbar, playchess.com 2007.

**10.g4 Nc6 11.Ng3**

In the 2006 championship, other teams tested the aggressive plan of a pawn offensive by White, but with another idea: 11.h4 Na5 12.Nf4 Ne8 13.Rb1 Nc7 14.Kf2 Re8 15.Bg2 Bd7 16.e4 Bc6 17.Qe2 Nb3 18.e5 Nb5 19.Bb2 Qa5 20.Qe3 Nxa3 21.Nh5 f6.



All according to the classical recipe – White has collected a group of forces aimed at the black king, whilst Black storms the queenside.

**Test 25.** Who is faster and what should White play?

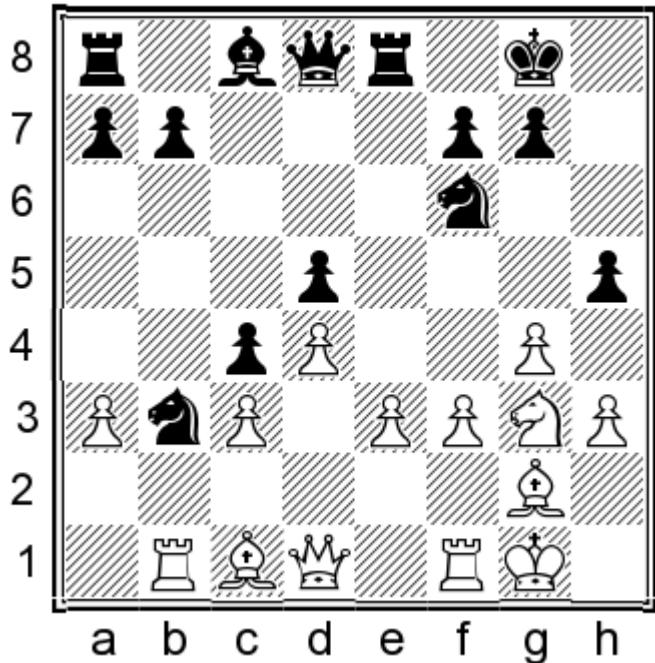
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** It is not so easy for White to include his reserves, whilst his opponent has already broken through on the queenside. There only remains 22.Nxg7! Nxh1 (extremely dangerous for Black is 22...Kxg7? 23.exf6+ Kxf6 (23...Kh8 24.Qh6 Rg8 25.Rbe1 Rg6 26.Qh5 Re8 27.Rxe8+ Bxe8 28.Re1 Qd8 29.Re7) 24.Qh6+ Ke7 25.Rbe1+ Kd7 26.Qxh7+ Kd6 27.Qf7 – White is attacking and is ready to throw forward his passed pawns) 23.Nf5! (23.Nxe8? Rxe8, and there is nothing more to attack) 23...Bd7, forcing perpetual check: 24.Nh6+ Kh8 25.Nf7+ (25.Rxb1 Qa2 26.Nf7+ also leads to a draw) 25...Kg8 26.Nh6+ Kh8 27.Nf7+ Kg8 28.Nh6+ ½-½ Randori-Everest, playchess.com 2006.

**11...Na5 12.Bg2 Nb3 13.Rb1 Qa5**

Another Capablanca-like raid after pawns, but this time Black has not spent time on ...h7-h6.

Incidentally, in 2007, a way was shown of taming the dangerous white plan: 13...Re8 14.0-0 h6 15.h3 h5!.



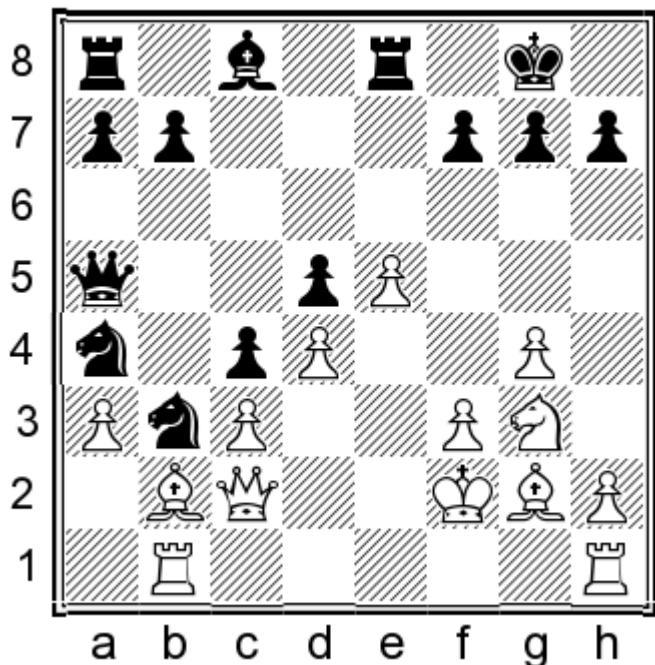
*analysis diagram*

A splendid counter-thrust! Now 16.g5 h4 is unpleasant for White, whilst something has to be done about the unpleasant pawn, so White has to play 16.Ne2 b6 17.Nf4 hxg4 18.hxg4 Bb7 19.Kf2 g6 20.Bb2 Qd6 21.Qe2 Re7 22.Rbe1 Rae8, and Black obtained a good position (0-1, 55 moves) in Zacks-Kreuzfahrtschiff, playchess.com 2007.

**14.Bb2 Re8 15.Kf2 Nd7**

The knight heads after the c3-pawn, and Black ignores the World Freestyle Champion's offensive.

**16.e4 Nb6 17.e5 Na4 18.Qc2**



**18...Nxb2!**

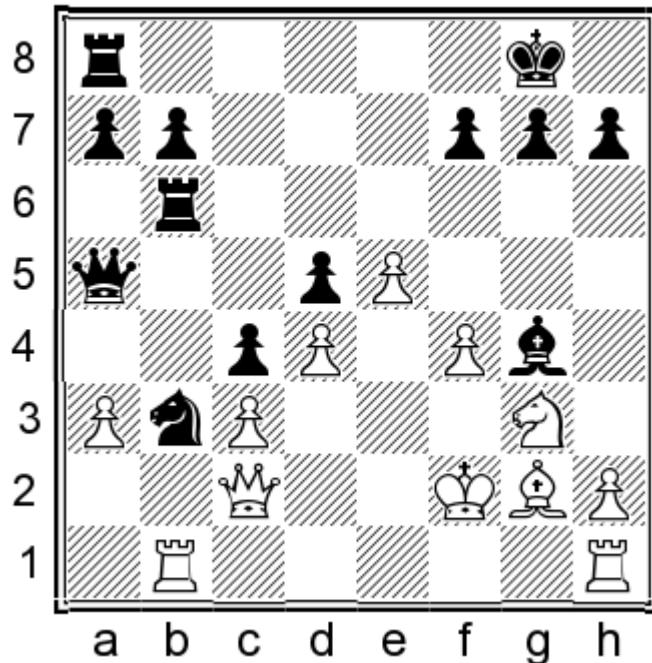
An important inclusion, since after 18...Re6 19.f4 Rb6 20.f5 Nxb2 White can simply take with the rook – 21.Rxb2.

Now, however, 19.Rxb2? is bad because of a 19...Bd7 with the terrible threat of bringing the bishop to a4.

**19.Qxb2 Re6!?** **20.f4 Rb6**

Black continues his plan consistently. He threatens the knight jump and taking on d4, so the queen must move.

**21.Qc2 Bxg4**



Done! The g4-battering ram has been sacrificed, and now the white pieces, which have hitherto been somewhat dislocated, suddenly develop great activity.

**22.f5 g6 23.Rhf1!**

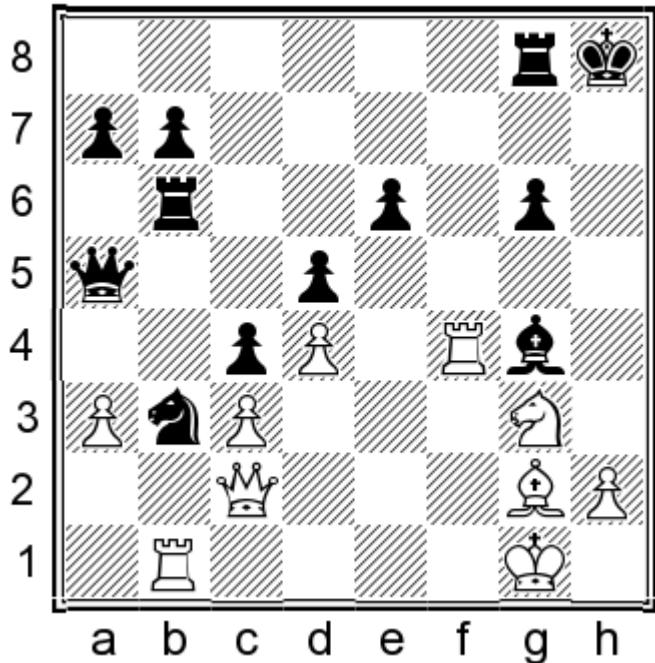
The last white piece comes into the battle, whilst the king will hide on g1.

**23...Rd8**

This position was also reached in another game in the event. Black tried to defend with **23...Kh8**, spending a precious tempo on improving the position of his king: **24.Kg1 Rg8 25.e6! fxe6 26.fxg6 hxg6**

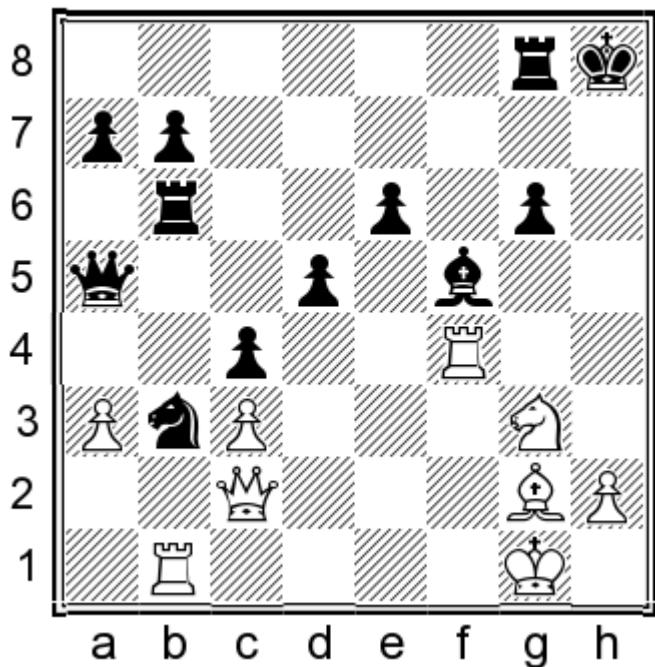
Even worse is **26...Rxg6 27.Rf8+ Kg7 (27...Rg8 28.Qf2+-) 28.Rbf1+-** with decisive threats.

**27.Rf4**



**27...Nxd4**

Not seeing any salvation, Black gives up a knight. White wins easily after 27...Bh5 28.Nxh5 gxh5 29.Rf7 Rg7 30.Rf8+ Rg8 31.Rbf1 Qxa3 32.Rxg8+ Kxg8 33.Qg6+ Kh8 34.Qe8+ with mate, whereas 27...Bf5 requires a last display of strength from him.



**Test 26.** How would you crown the attack?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Decisive is 28.Rh4+ Kg7 29.Qe2!. Now the rook on b1 cannot be taken because of 30.Qe5+ and 31.Rh7, which only leaves 29...Qxc3 30.Qe5+ Kf8, and now the nicest way is 31.Ne2! Qc2 32.Rh7 Qxb1+ 33.Kf2 with a decisive netting of the black king.

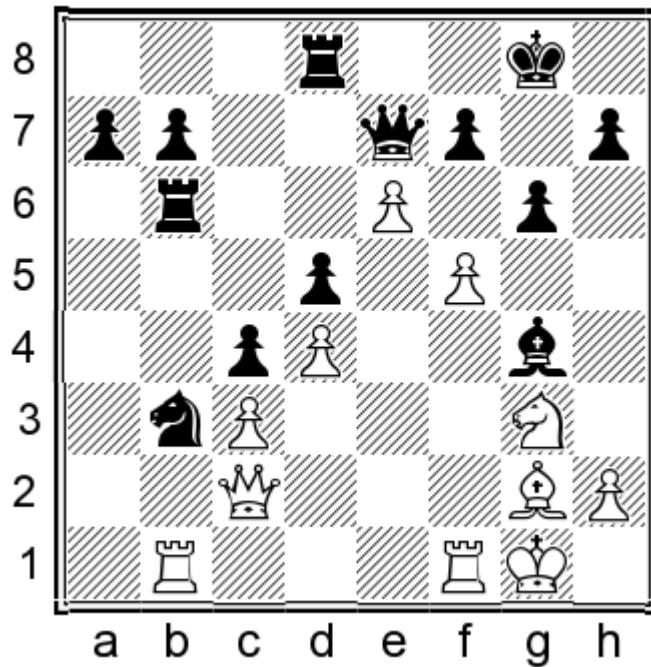
**28.Rxd4 Bf5 29.Rh4+ Kg7 30.Nxf5+ gxf5 31.Re1**, and White realized the extra piece in Pulse\_exchange, Rybka 2.3-Intagrand, Rybka 2.3, playchess.com 2007.

**24.Kg1 Qxa3**

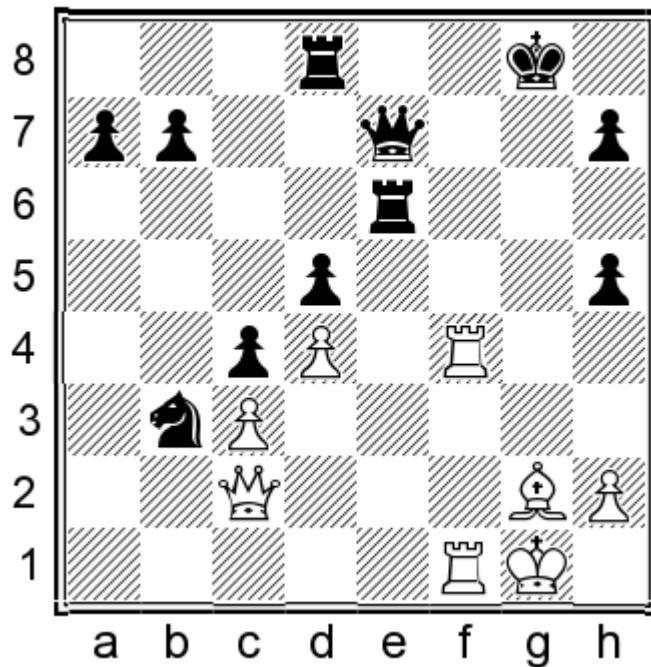
This way the queen returns to the defence by the shortest route. Black cannot be happy with 24...Bxf5 25.Nxf5 gxf5 26.Qxf5 Rf8 27.Kh1 Re6 28.Rf4.

### 25.e6 Qe7

White also has a strong attack after 25...fxe6 26.fxg6 Qe7 27.Rbe1. Black has defended the pawn on d5 and returned the queen to his own camp, but he is killed by the bishop, which decided to feast on the very pawn about which this book was written!



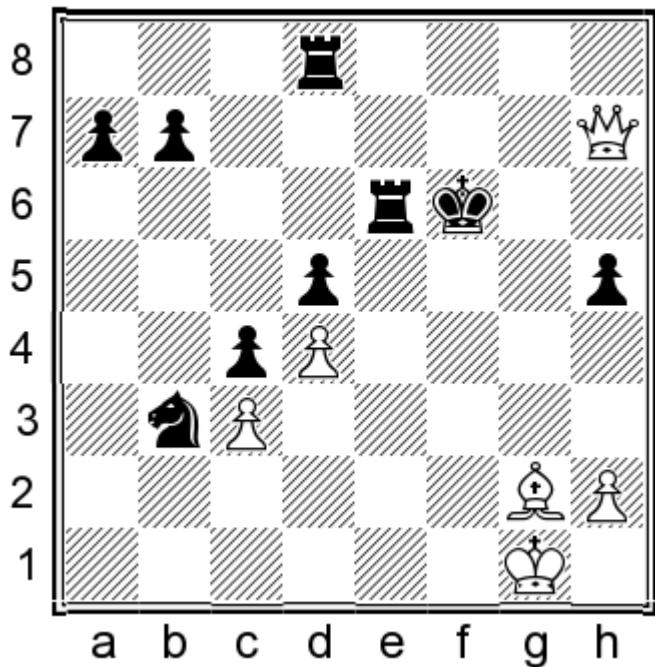
**26.Rf4 Bh5 27.Rbf1 fxe6 28.fxe6 Rxe6 29.Nxh5 gxh5**



After a series of forced moves, White exchanges his two rooks for the enemy queen, obtaining the possibility of breaking into the opponent's camp with his strongest piece.

**30.Rf7! Qxf7 31.Rxf7 Kxf7 32.Qxh7+ Kf6**

Now what? After all, for the queen Black has not only two rooks, but also the queenside pawns.



However, Zacks plays a surprisingly strong quiet move, after which everything falls into place.

**33.Bf3!!**

Incredible. White simply wants to play h2-h4 and take on h5 with the bishop, setting up a mating net. Black's pieces, especially his knight, lack mobility, since everywhere they come under blows from the all-powerful white queen.

**33...Re1+ 34.Kf2 Ree8**

To somehow restore the harmony, Black gives up the exchange, but this does not help either.

**35.Qh6+ Kf7 36.Bxh5+ Ke7 37.Qg5+ Kd6 38.Qf6+ Kd7 39.Bxe8+ Rxе8 40.Qf7+**

The last accurate check, and White has a decisive material advantage.

**40...Re7 41.Qxd5+ 1-0**

And so, if Black is even sometimes smashed in machine battles, which mortal would dare to step on the dangerous minefield where Judit once died the death of the brave? It took a long time to wait for an answer to this question, but the 'human' rebirth of the variation did not happen just anywhere, but in a World Championship match! The leader of modern chess, Magnus Carlsen, was ascending the throne, and his predecessor was desperately trying to save a match in which he had already lost two games.

### Game 37

**Viswanathan Anand** 2775

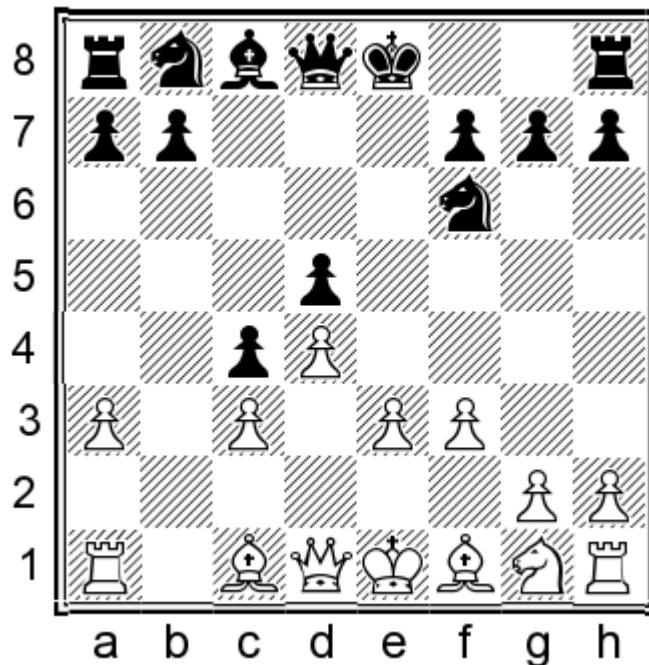
**Magnus Carlsen** 2870

Chennai Wch m 2013 (9)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5**

In the match Anand-Kramnik (2008), the more popular line 7...Nxd5 was tested, leading to a strategic picture somewhat different from that in the line we are considering.

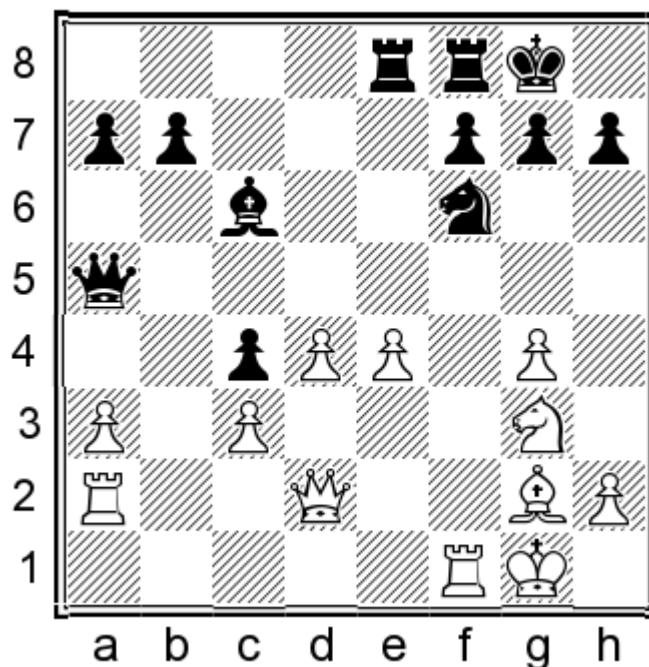
8.e3 c4



At the beginning of 2013, this was played by Carlsen's former trainer Simen Agdestein, who later said that the pawn move had been studied by the Norwegian team at a training camp.

**9.Ne2 Nc6 10.g4 0-0 11.Bg2**

In another 2013 example, where Black was crushed, he did not manage to show the computer plan with ...b7-b5 and ...a7-a5. For example, 11.Ng3 Na5 12.Bg2 Nb3 13.Ra2 Qa5 14.Bd2 Bd7 15.0-0 Bc6 16.e4! dxе4 17.fxe4 Nxd2 18.Qxd2 Rae8? (if you are suffering, then it might as well be for a pawn; 18...Nxg4 19.Nf5 Bd7 (not 19...g6? 20.h3! gxh5 21.Rxf5 Qd8 22.hxg4+–) 20.h3 Nf6 21.Rb2 Rab8 22.Nd6, although here too, White has a powerful attack)



**Test 27.** How would you execute the storm of the black king in White's shoes?

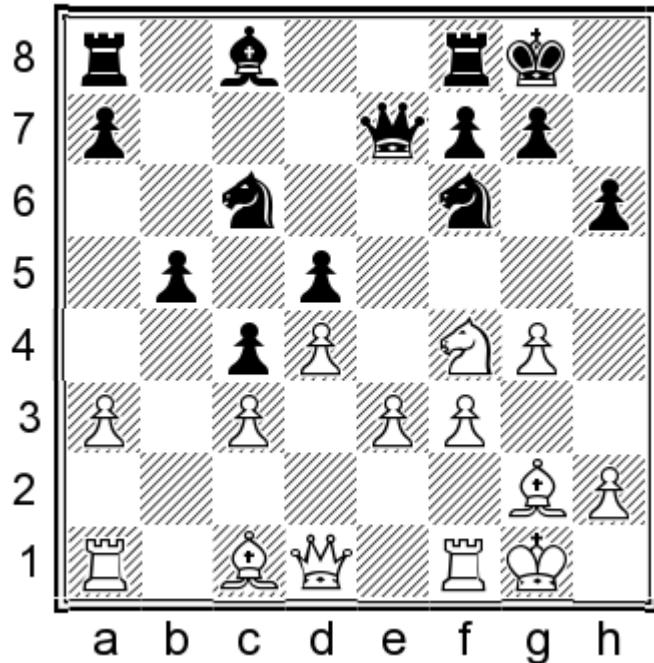
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The World Junior Champion of 2012, Alexander Ipatov, found an effective way to end the game:

19.Rxf6! gxf6 20.h4! (it is essential to take the g5-square from the black queen; 20.Qh6? Qg5!) 20...Re6 (20...Kh8 21.Qh6 Qd8 22.Nh5 Rg8 23.Nxf6+–) 21.d5 Rd6 22.Qh6 Qc5+ 23.Rf2 f5 (the last hope, but also illusory) 24.Qf4 Bd7 25.exf5 Re8 26.f6 (instead of the prosaic 26.Ne4) 26...Rxd5 27.Bxd5 Qxd5 28.Qh6 Qd1+ 29.Nf1 1-0 Ipatov-Debashis, Kocaeli 2013.

## 11...Na5

And here is the game played by Kasparov's long-time trainer, Alexander Nikitin: 11...Qe7?! 12.Nf4 b5 13.0-0 h6

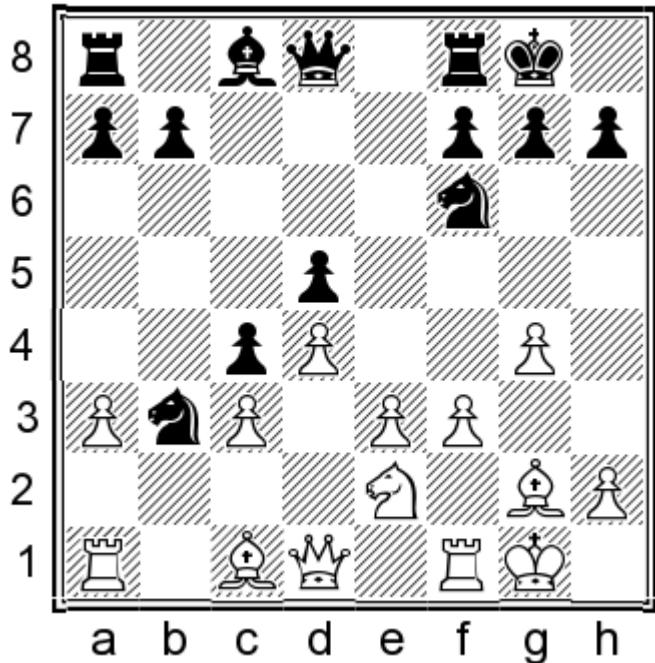


*analysis diagram*

14.h4! (there is no need for 14.e4!? dxe4 15.fxe4 Bxg4 16.Qe1, since as a result of the unfortunate position of the black queen on e7, the pawn on d5 is hanging) 14...Rd8 15.g5 hxg5 16.hxg5 Ne8 17.e4 Nc7 18.Nxd5 Nxd5 19.exd5 Na5 (bad is 19...Rxd5 20.f4 Rd6 21.f5+–) 20.f4 Nb3 21.Ra2 Bb7 22.Re2 Qd7 23.Re5± Nikitin-Belinkov, Moscow 1966.

## 12.0-0 Nb3

During the live online coverage, fans of Carlsen were getting excited, as he steps into the territory of a sharp and complicated battle, traditionally considered to be more Vishy's field.



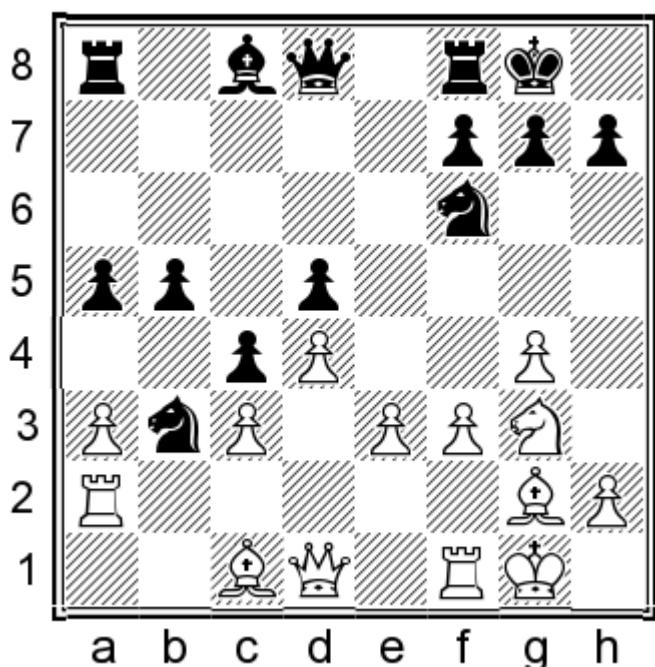
**13.Ra2**

The old way, with the rook on a2. Of course, the World Champion remembered the game Kasparov-Polgar!

**13...b5**

The challenger, of course, was fully informed about the computer battles and immediately pushes his queenside pawns.

**14.Ng3 a5**



**15.g5**

In a later game, the Russian champion of 2000 preferred a sharper, more committal, Kasparovian conception: 15.e4!? dxе4 16.Bg5 h6 17.Bxf6 Qxf6 18.fxe4 Qg5 19.e5 Bxg4 20.Qe1 Rad8 21.Ne4, and in a complicated battle,

with the classical sacrifice of the g4-pawn, eventually emerged on top, Volkov-Smirnov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013. Later still, another Indian star, Santosh Vidit, against Kramnik, also did not shrink from sacrificing the pawn for the sake of the attack. But more about that at the appropriate time!

Anand reasoned that since the black queen is not on a5, the knight manoeuvre to a4 is not so dangerous, and he can calmly drive away the other black knight.

### **15...Ne8 16.e4 Nxc1**

Commentating on the game on the Russian chess federation website, GM Pavel Maletin recommended the simple 16...Nc7 with the idea of 17.Be3 Rb8 18.Qe1 b4 19.axb4 axb4 20.Ne2 bxc3 21.Nxc3 Bb7 22.Qg3 Ra8 23.Rxa8 Bxa8 24.Rd1 Bc6=, but in view of Anand's relatively poor form in this first match against Carlsen, the latter takes more risk.

### **17.Qxc1 Ra6 18.e5 Nc7?!**

Carlsen intends to play ...b5-b4 in full comfort, which gives White a great practical chance. More logical was the immediate 18...b4!? 19.axb4 axb4 20.Rxa6 Bxa6 21.cxb4 Qb6 22.Qc3 Nc7 (Krasenkow) – a device, seen several times in the engine games. Or the solid 18...g6!? 19.f4 Ng7, recommended by Maletin.

### **19.f4?!**

The passion for the attack! All the experts agreed that here Anand simply had to transfer the rook to its rightful place (after all, the opponent has allowed it!): 19.Rb2!? Qe7 20.Rb1. Now after 20...Rb6 21.f4 b4 22.axb4 axb4 23.cxb4 Rxb4 Black walks into the ambush 24.Qa3! Na6, and White has a splendid choice between winning a pawn with 25.Bxd5!? Qd8 26.Rxb4 Nxb4 27.Qxb4 Qxd5 28.Qc5 and play for domination by 25.Rb2 Qb7 26.Rfb1 Rxb2 27.Qxb2 Qd7 28.Qb6 (Maletin) – in both cases, Black faces an unpleasant fight for a draw.

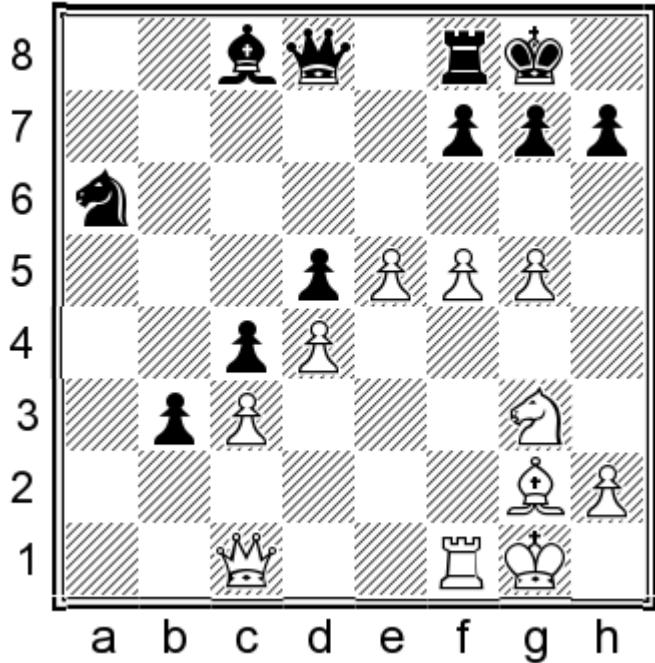
### **19...b4 20.axb4**

Much analytical effort was spent around the move 20.a4!?, by which White does not allow Black to open the queenside. But the Indian GM is trying to mate Carlsen's king and refuses to be distracted by trivia.

### **20...axb4 21.Rxa6 Nxa6 22.f5**

Crossing the Rubicon! Anand has concentrated great forces against the enemy king, but taking down a player of the strength of Carlsen is not so simple.

### **22...b3**



How to give mate? The direct way does not work: 23.f6 g6 24.Qf4 Kh8!? 25.Qh4 b2 26.Qh6 Rg8 27.Rf4 b1=Q+ 28.Bf1 Qd1! – an extremely important defensive resource. To paraphrase an old saying, the advantage of having two queens is that one can always give one away! 29.Rh4 Qh5 30.Nxh5 gxh5 31.Qxh5 Bf5 32.Qxf7 Nc7, White has three pawns for the piece, but Black's forces occupy excellent positions and the g5-pawn will be lost.

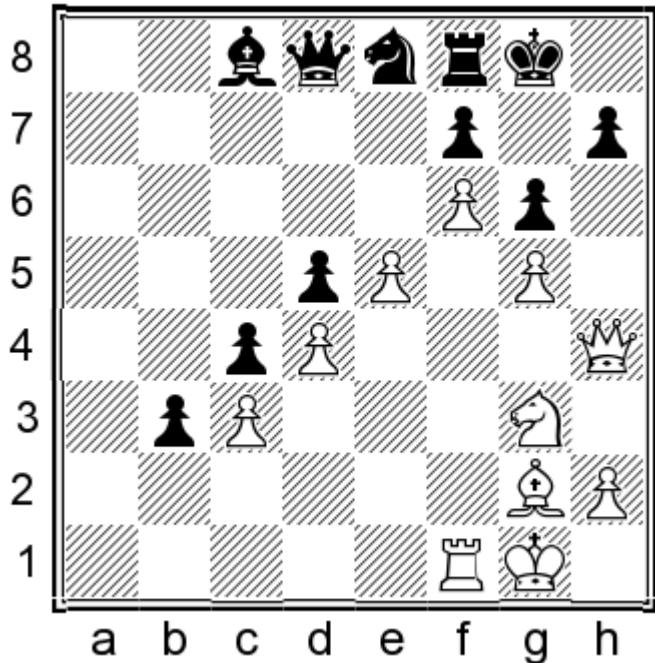
### **23.Qf4**

GM Alexey Dreev on chess-news.ru suggested the subtle 23.h4!? Nc7 24.h5. Now after the direct 24...Nb5? there follows the decisive 25.f6 Be6 26.g6! hxg6 27.hxg6 fxg6 28.Qg5 Nxc3 29.Qxg6 Qc7 30.Nh5, and the square g7 collapses. But stronger is 24...Ne8!, with the familiar motif 25.f6 gxf6 26.gxf6 Kh8! 27.Ne2 Rg8. Anand first prepares the queen's route to h4.

### **23...Nc7 24.f6 g6**

On 24...gxf6 White had prepared 25.Qh4!? followed by bringing in the minor pieces, but Magnus believes in his fortress and the second queen which will soon appear from the b-file.

### **25.Qh4 Ne8**



**26.Qh6**

One can try combining threats on the kingside and against the d5-pawn, but here too, the resources of attack and defence balance each other: **26.Ne2!?** **B<sub>e</sub>6** **27.Nf4** **Q<sub>a</sub>5** **28.B<sub>h</sub>3** (Maletin) **28...Bxh3** **29.Qxh3** **b2** **30.e6**

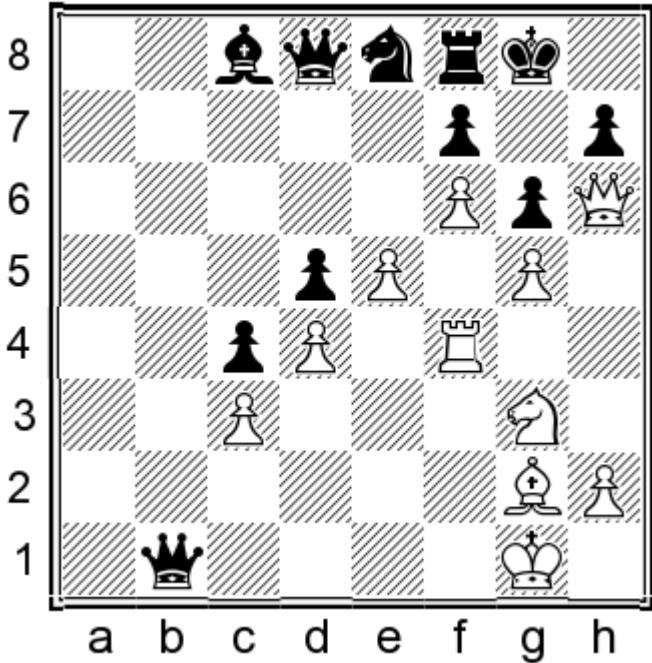
Maybe this line would have been a sterner test, because the challenger had to see at the end of the variation **30.Nxg6** **hxg6** **31.e6** **Q<sub>a</sub>1** **32.e7** that there is **32...Nxf6!** **33.exf8=Q+** **Kxf8** **34.gxf6** **Kg8**, and White cannot stop ...b2-b1=Q, with perpetual check.

**30...Nd6**

Here it looks dangerous to play **30...Q<sub>a</sub>1?!** **31.e7** **b1=Q** **32.exf8=Q+** **Kxf8** **33.Nxd5** with dangerous threats.

**31.Nxg6** **hxg6** **32.Qh6** **Nf5!** **33.Rxf5** **b1=Q+** **34.Rf1** **Qxf1+** **35.Kxf1** with a draw, since Black should give perpetual check. The Indian GM had found a beautiful variation, but his calculations had a significant hole in them, which decided the fate of the match.

**26...b2** **27.Rf4!** **b1=Q+**



Incredible! White is attacking a whole queen down! Carlsen had assessed everything correctly and after 28.Bf1 Qd1! 29.Rh4 Qh5 30.Nxh5 gxh5 31.Rxh5 Bf5 32.g6! Bxg6 33.Rg5 Nxh6 (not so dangerous is 33...Qa5 34.Rg3 Qa3 35.h4) 34.exf6 Qxf6 35.Rxd5 Qf3 36.Rc5 Qxc3 37.Rxc4= (Krasenkow) we reach drawish outlines. But Anand thought he had found a way to keep the black queen out of d1!

## 28.Nf1??

On 28...Qd1?? 29.Rh4 Qh5 30.Rxh5 gxh5 31.Ne3 Be6 the attack, along the lines of the game Fischer-Panno, Buenos Aires 1970, is crowned by the inactive bishop: 32.Bxd5!+-. But Anand had completely forgotten that after the knight retreat, Black can give up the queen in a more favourable version...

## 28...Qe1!

Nightmare! White had to resign at once...

Despite the Norwegian's brilliant defence (with the exception of White's resource on the 19th move, Carlsen was in full control of the situation all the time), he still didn't add to the popularity of Black's line. Games happened here and there at the grandmaster level, but not at the elite level. That is until in 2019, ex-World Champion Vladimir Kramnik, who finished his tournament career with the event at Wijk aan Zee, gave it a try. However, Vladimir Borisovich, for whom the tournament in Holland frankly did not work out, was again unlucky here. Three years before the game, his opponent Santosh Vidit had lost a rapid game in the same line against GM Maxim Turov (the game did not make it to the database), after which he made important adjustments to his variations and was not caught by surprise by the great Russian.

### Game 38

**Santosh Vidit** 2695

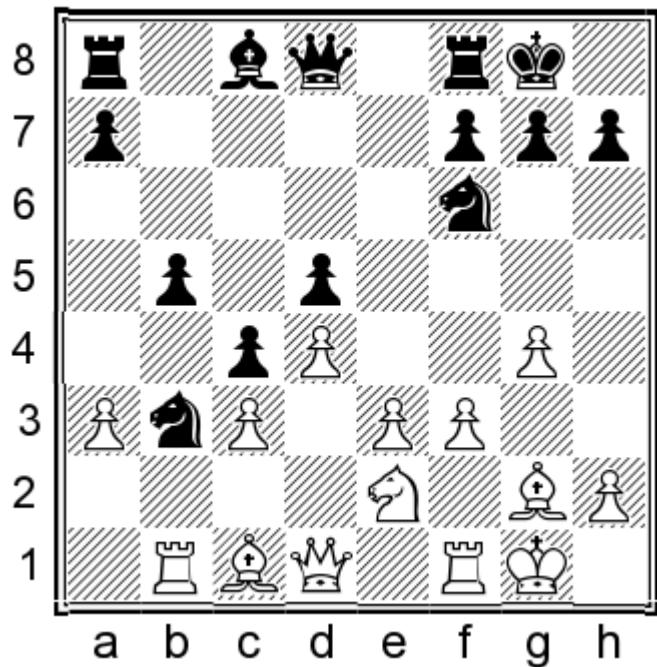
**Vladimir Kramnik** 2777

Wijk aan Zee 2019 (10)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 c4 9.Ne2 Nc6 10.g4 Na5 11.Bg2 Nb3**

The many-time leader of the Russian team plays the knight to b3 before castling, and accurately follows the freestyle/Carlsen plan, but to his misfortune, his opponent is even better prepared.

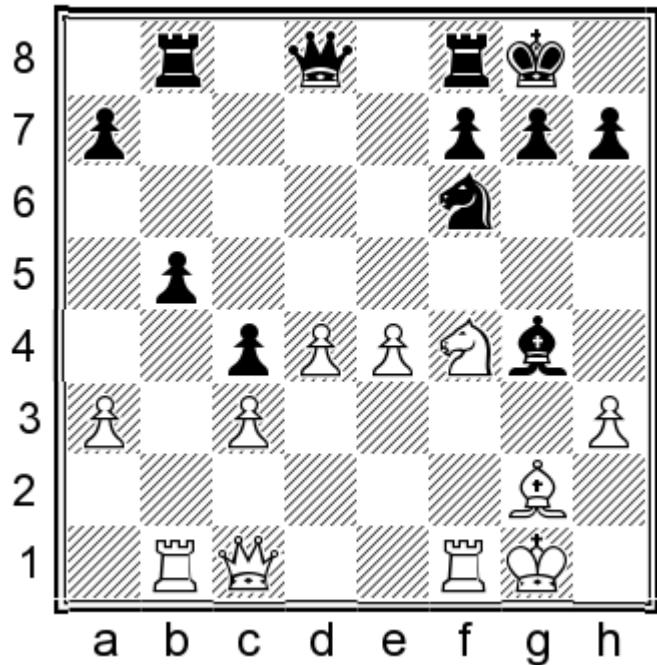
**12.Rb1 0-0 13.0-0 b5**



**14.e4!**

Against Turov, Vidit played the less accurate 14.g5 Ne8 15.e4 a5, and Black's queenside counterplay eventually triumphed. It turns out that with the position of the rook on b1, the blow in the centre is even stronger and Vidit plays the subsequent attack every bit as well as the silicon-armed Zacks!

**14...dxe4 15.fxe4 Nxc1 16.Qxc1 Bxg4 17.Nf4 Rb8 18.h3**



At the post-game press conference, the Indian explained that, after the game, Kramnik had said that he had examined this variation, but mixed things up at the board, and that here he should have played 18...Bc8 – the idea is that after 19.e5 Nd7 the bishop can go to b7 in the future, whilst the knight's prospects are also not so bad. However, after

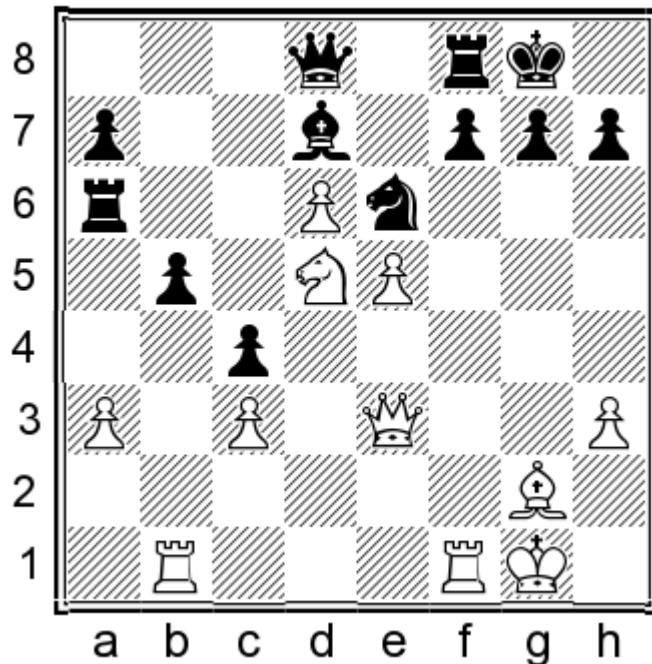
**18...Bd7?! 19.e5 Ne8 20.Qe3**

the black pieces are starting to suffocate and Vidit (who does not make a single backward move in the whole game!) just walks through the black defences.

**20...Rb6 21.d5 Nc7**

As we already know from the previous examples, the attempt to activate the queen does not usually succeed: 21...Qg5 22.d6 g6 23.h4! Qxh4 24.Nd5 Ra6 25.Ne7+ Kg7 26.Rf4 with a deadly attack.

**22.d6 Ne6 23.Nd5 Ra6**

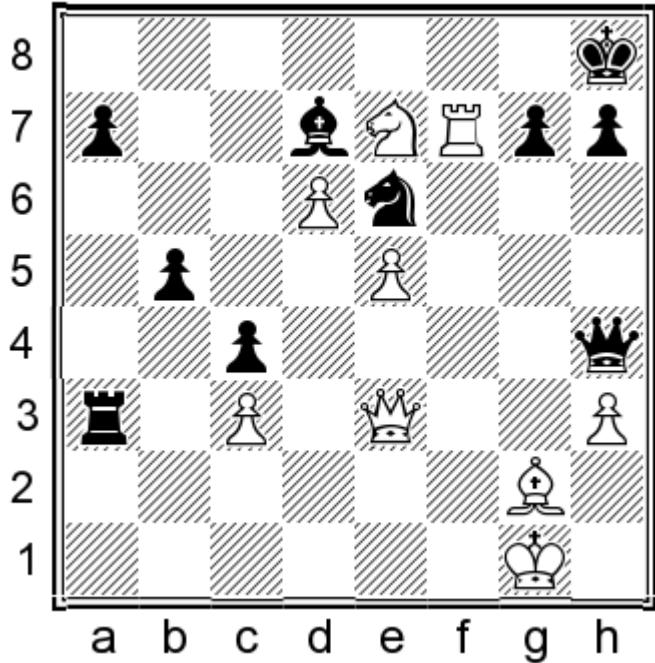


Kramnik adds a rook and knight to the defence, but the energy of the white pieces is such that a crush is unavoidable.

**24.Rf5! Qh4 25.Rbf1 Rxa3**

In the line 25...Nd8 26.R1f4 Qh6 27.Nf6+! gxf6 28.Rg4+ Qg6 Black can give the queen after 29.Rxg6+ hxg6 30.Rxf6 Rxa3 31.h4, but this only delays the end.

**26.Ne7+ Kh8 27.Rxf7 Rxf7 28.Rxf7**



**28...Qh5**

If 28...Ra1+ 29.Kh2 Qe1 30.Nf5 the white pawn on d6 has the decisive say.

**29.Qf4**

Black resigned.

After such a show of strength, who will be the next to attempt to defend the black cause?

### Conclusions

1. Objectively, only the very boldest players can play Black with 7...exd5 instead of taking with the knight! Even in 'freestyle' or correspondence chess. In any case, Black cannot do without ...b7-b5 and ...a7-a5.
2. For White, the plan with the rook on b1 is more promising – in this case, even the strongest black reaction, involving the idea of a pawn assault on the queenside, does not guarantee him a comfortable game.
3. After the necessary precautions on the queenside, White needs to demonstrate fairly assertive play on the kingside. For example, the g4-pawn should be sacrificed, without giving Black an extra tempo for reorganizing his pieces after the move g4-g5. And as practice has shown, for the sacrificed pawn, White usually gets a fearsome attack!

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## ***Chapter 9***

### **In the footsteps of a great rivalry**

#### **Some history**

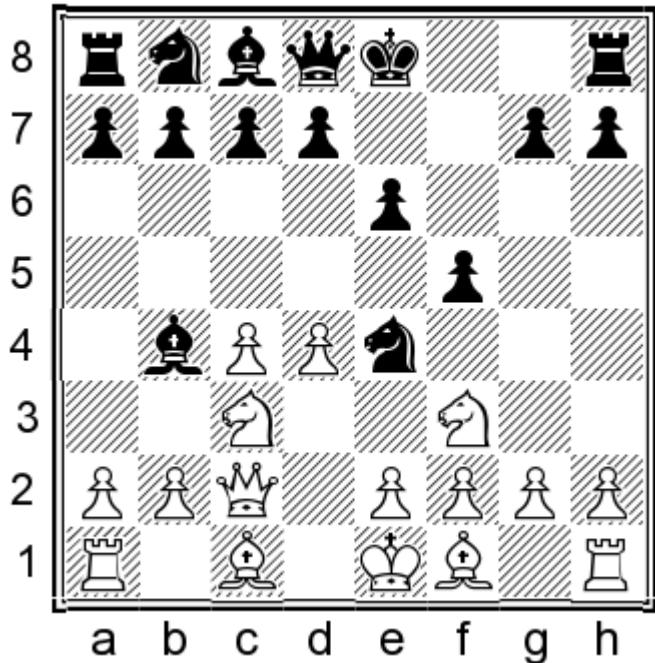
In 1985, the second of Anatoly Karpov's matches against Garry Kasparov was held in Moscow – the young challenger from Baku took the crown from the World Champion in an incredibly tense struggle, winning with a score of 13-11. Disputes over the legality of the termination of the previous, unlimited match had not yet subsided – that unprecedented marathon was interrupted after 48 games with a score of 5-3 in favour of Karpov. Ahead of the two K's lay three more full-fledged matches and the turbulent 1990s, with a split in the chess world, as well as a sixth match that never happened. There was enough genuine ‘drive’ in the battle of 1985, where Karpov was one point behind going into the final game and boldly attacked the opponent's Sicilian redoubts, trying to save the match!

Of course, apart from the 24 games in the 1985 series, there were enough other critical moments: the stormy start by Kasparov and the comeback by Karpov, who regained the lead after the fifth game. The tragic blunder of the World Champion in the 11th game and the incredible Sicilian in Game 16, where the outcome of the game was decided in the Baku player's favour by the dominant position of the black knight on d3.

But finally, Garry Kasparov took the lead after Game 19, in which Anatoly Karpov made a risky attempt to seize the initiative in his favourite variation of the Nimzo-Indian with 4.Nf3 and 5.g3. Having scored a beautiful victory, the challenger led with a score of '+2', and only Karpov's outstanding strong-willed qualities almost allowed him to save the match.

The move 4...Ne4 after 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nf3 was used by the classics Geza Maroczy and Siegbert Tarrasch almost 100 years ago, but the game Kasparov-Karpov dealt it a terrible blow. Only twenty years later did grandmaster Maxim Turov attempt to strengthen Black's game. His rare idea was immediately picked up by Vasily Ivanchuk. At the 2012 Rapid World Championship, he managed to inflict a spectacular defeat in this line on future World Champion Magnus Carlsen, who, it would seem, applied the strongest line for White, as recommended in Kasparov's 2008 book on the matches with Karpov. This game from the 12th round turned out to be one of the most important in the tournament race – as a result, Sergey Karjakin overtook Carlsen at the very finish line.

It is also interesting that after **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nf3 Ne4 5.Qc2 f5**



Garry Kimovich wrote in his book: ‘It does not make sense for White to avoid the fianchetto of the king’s bishop. After 6.e3 b6 7.Bd3 Bb7, a favourable variation of Nimzowitsch’s defence arises for Black – perhaps this was what Karpov expected from me (later I had to defend Black’s position against Graf (Geneva 1996)). Knowing my tastes, he might have expected the extravagant 6.g4, although such attacks are good only for less important events. 6.g3 is sounder and more logical, after which Karpov thought for some time...’

Of course, Kasparov could not help but think of his great teacher’s famous pawn thrust! But it was only used in practice by the Armenian GM, Levon Babujian, who decided to launch himself against the enemy barricades with the help of the g-pawn thrust.

### Game 39

**Magnus Carlsen** 2837

**Vasili Ivanchuk** 2769

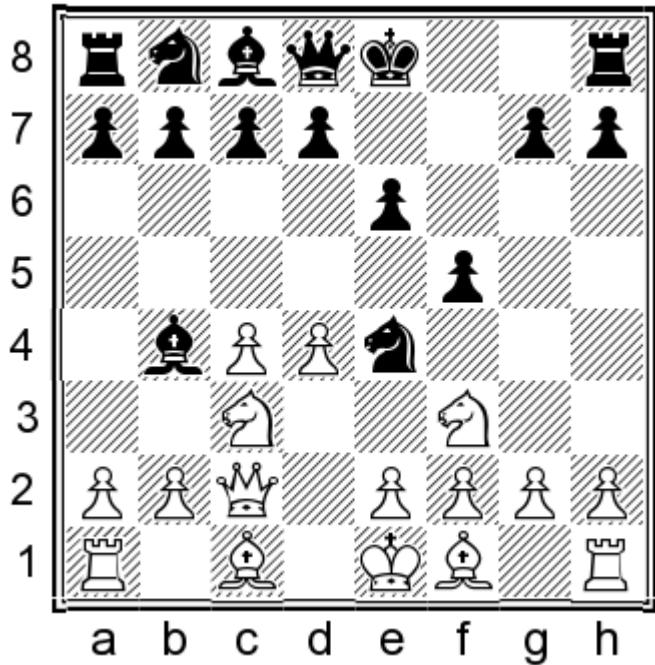
Astana Wch rapid 2012 (12)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nf3 Ne4 5.Qc2**

In the source game, the white queen went to the less natural square, 5.Qb3, but Maroczy was rather more skilled in such positions than his by no means weak opponent: 5...c5 6.Nd2 Bxc3 7.bxc3 Nxd2 8.Bxd2 Qc7 9.e4 d6 10.Be2 e5 11.0-0 Nc6 12.d5 Ne7 13.f4 exf4 14.Bxf4 Ng6 15.Bg3 0-0 16.Bd3?! (16.Bh5!=, and Black does not manage to establish his knight on e5) 16...Re8 17.a4 Ne5, Kostic-Maroczy, Teplitz Schönau 1922 – Black is better, but Kostic fought hard and drew.

**5...f5**

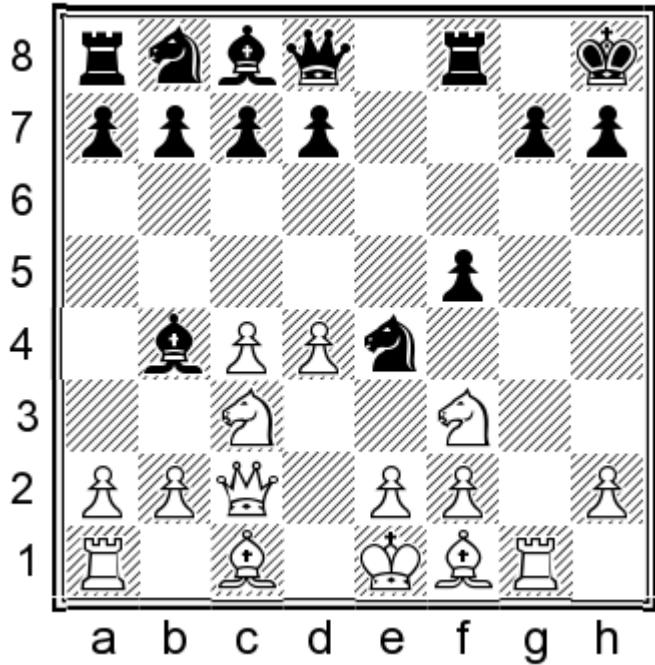
In one of the games of the 1937 World Championship return match, there followed 5...d5 6.e3 c5 (Euwe-Alekhine, Netherlands 1937), but Alekhine soon faced a far from pleasant choice between taking on c3 or retreating to f6, and the line was not explored further after that.



**6.g3**

Thus, this was where Kasparov doubtless remembered the g-pawn advance...

6.g4!? 0-0 7.gxf5 exf5 8.Rg1 Kh8.



**Test 28.** White cannot play without developing his queenside and without mobilizing all his resources. So how would you continue development, 9.Bd2 or 9.Bf4 ?

Show/Hide Solution

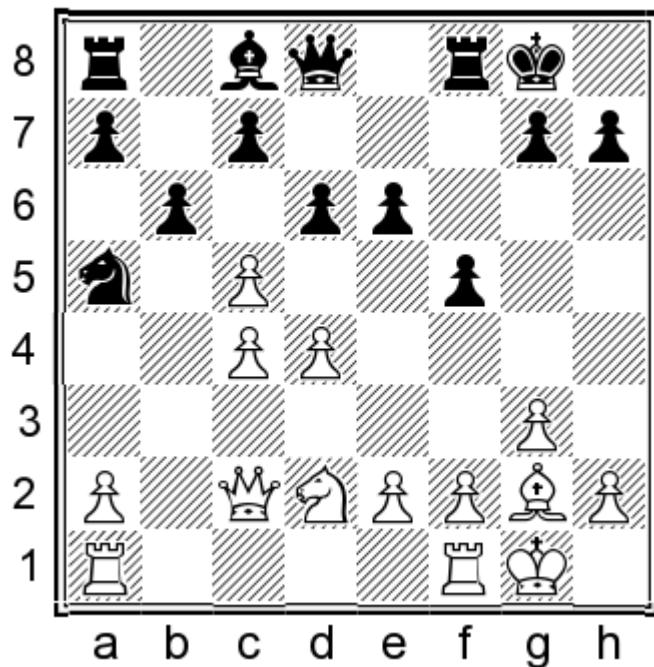
**Solution:** In thinking of a kingside attack, White should not forget about the danger to his queenside. If 9.Bf4 d6 10.e3 Nd7 11.Bd3 Ndf6 12.0-0-0 Bxc3! 13.bxc3 Bd7 14.Ng5 Qe8 (Babujian-Lysyj, Martuni 2009), Black has good counterplay, although subsequently White did succeed in winning. The best handling was shown by my countryman and childhood friend Viacheslav Weetik: 9.Bd2! Nxd2 10.Qxd2 Qf6 11.a3 Bxc3 12.Qxc3 d6 Weetik-Petrenko, Shakhty 2015 – here White can attack without needing to watch for possible counterplay, e.g. 13.e3 b6 14.Bg2 Bb7

15.0-0-0, and White is better.

## 6...b6

In Game 19 of the 1985 World Championship match, events developed as follows: 6...Nc6 7.Bg2 0-0 8.0-0 Bxc3 9.bxc3 Na5. Karpov tries to underline the weakness of the white pawns after 10.c5 d6

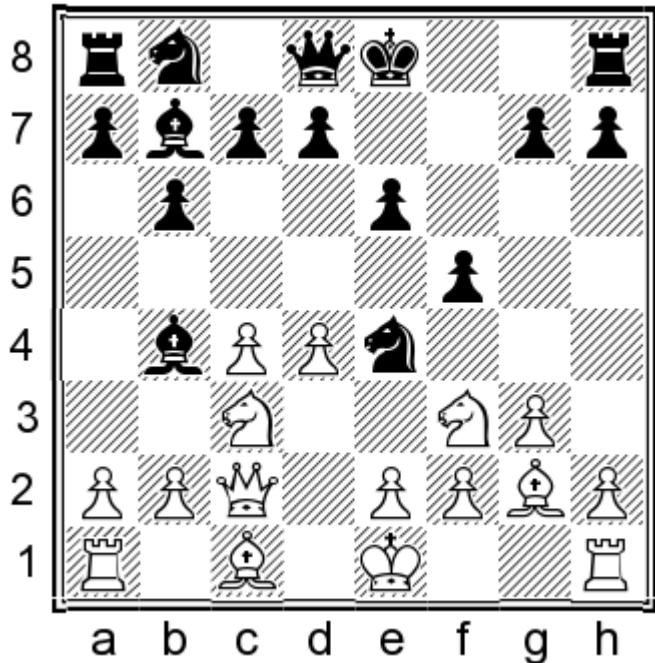
(Kasparov gives the interesting try 10...b6!? 11.c4 Ba6 12.Nd2 Nxd2 13.Bxd2 Nxc4, but here White is not obliged to take the exchange – 14.Bxa8?! Qxa8, but has the much stronger zwischenzug 14.Bb4!, additionally threatening simply to take the pawn b6) 11.c4! b6 (it is dangerous for Black to open the game with 11...dxc5 12.Ba3! – the bishops exert full power) 12.Bd2 Nxd2 13.Nxd2.



*analysis diagram*

Here Black has to choose the lesser of two evils: the isolation of the knight or the weakening of a complex of squares. The 12th World Champion erred: 13...d5? (after 13...Bb7! 14.Bxb7 Nxb7 15.c6 Na5 16.d5 Qe7 17.Qd3 Rae8 Black is solid and it is not clear whether one can exploit the fact that his knight is offside) 14.cxd5 exd5 15.e3 Be6 16.Qc3 Rf7 17.Rfc1 Rb8 18.Rab1 Re7 19.a4 Bf7 20.Bf1. White has lasting pressure and he eventually conducted the game to victory, Kasparov-Karpov, Moscow 1985.

## 7.Bg2 Bb7



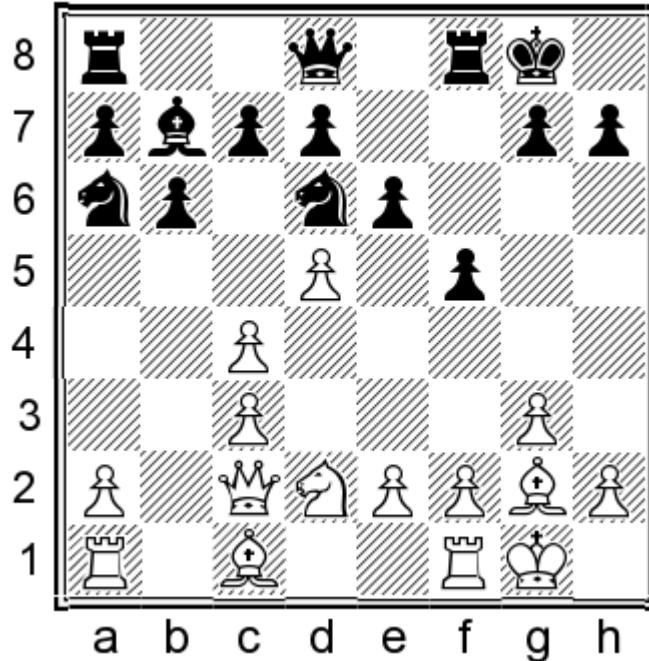
**8.Nd2!**

An important subtlety, first seen by correspondence. After 8.0-0 Nxc3 9.bxc3 Be4 10.Qa4 (interesting is 10.Qb3 Be7 11.Bh3 Nc6 12.Qa4 Na5 13.d5!? with unclear play, Romanov-Turov, Dagomys 2008) 10...Be7 11.Bf4 0-0 12.Rad1 d6 13.c5?! Qd7! 14.Qa3 Nc6 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.c4 Na5 (Rapport-Turov, Wijk aan Zee 2013), Black achieved his aim of doubling and besieging the white pawns.

**8...Bxc3 9.bxc3 Nd6 10.d5**

Again following Kasparov – White aims to shut out the bishop on b7. However, also good is 10.Bxb7 Nxb7 11.e4 0-0 12.0-0 Nc6 13.Ba3 d6 (after 13...Ne7 14.Rae1 the Rumanian champion and well-known postal player Janos Balogh managed to defeat Paul Keres himself) 14.d5 exd5 15.cxd5 Ne7 16.Nf3 Qd7 17.Nd4 with an advantage for White, Narciso Dublan-Rojano Barbera del Valles 2014.

**10...Na6 11.0-0 0-0**



Unlike Balogh's plan, here White needs to clear the pawn barriers to open up his bishops, otherwise Black will succeed in blockading the position. But instead of 12.e4! Magnus played

**12.Ba3?! Qf6 13.e4 f4! 14.Rab1 Rae8 15.Qd3 e5 16.Nb3 Nb8**

and Ivanchuk already had an excellent game. Another dubious reaction from White followed – the Norwegian parts with his main advantage.

**17.Bxd6?! Qxd6 18.c5 Of6 19.c4 d6 20.c6 Bc8**

The potential threat of a black kingside attack outweighs the pawn on c6. Trying to draw Ivanchuk into complications, Magnus provokes an immediate crisis.

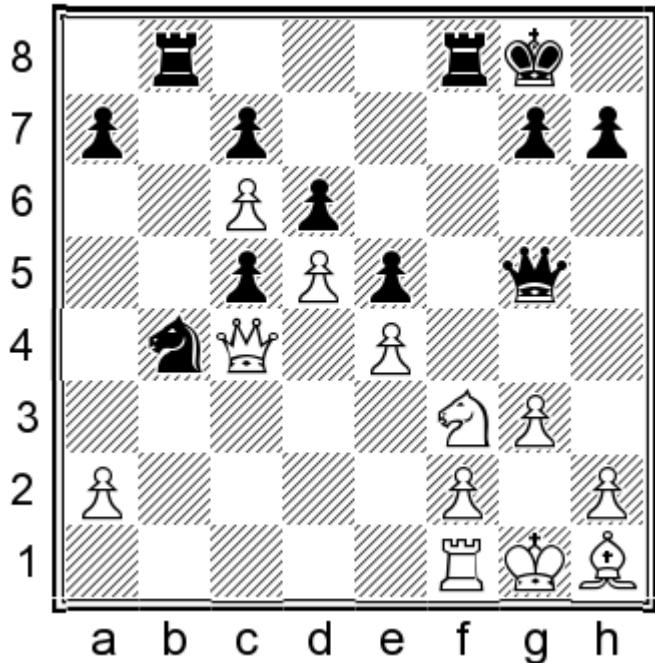
21.c5!? f3! 22.Bh1 Ba6 23.Qe3 Bxf1 24.Rxf1 bxc5 25.Nd2

The position remains unclear – the f3-pawn is dropping whilst the Nb8 is still out of the game, but it is precisely with this latter factor that the brilliant Ukrainian GM starts to battle.

25...Na6! 26.Qa3!?

26.Nxf3? Rb8u so Magnus prevents Black taking the b-file, with an ingenious queen zigzag.

26...Nb4 27.Qh3 Rh8 28.Qc4 Qg5 29.Nxf3



**29...Rxf3! 30.Bxf3 Qd2**

Suddenly Black returns the exchange, and instead of 31.Bg4 or 31.Rb1 the future chess king collapses.

**31.a3? Nd3 32.Bg4**

No better is 32.Qa4 Rb1 33.Bd1 a5.

**32...Rf8 33.f3 g6–+**

Black completely dominates and Carlsen could not defend his king (0-1, 44).

I have heard it asked why Vasily Ivanchuk is often called a genius, even though in his career he has never played for the classical championship title? Perhaps the answer is that in those games, when Ivanchuk beat Garry Kasparov, Magnus Carlsen, Vladimir Kramnik and other champions, he did it at some sort of cosmic level!

Apart from the branch on the sixth move, the game Carlsen-Ivanchuk is not strictly relevant to our topic, but it is given to show what dangers White can expect if he does not give the black plan due attention. Apparently, this is why Levon Babujian did not stop there and came up with a new version of the plan to undermine Black's position by means of g2-g4.

#### Game 40

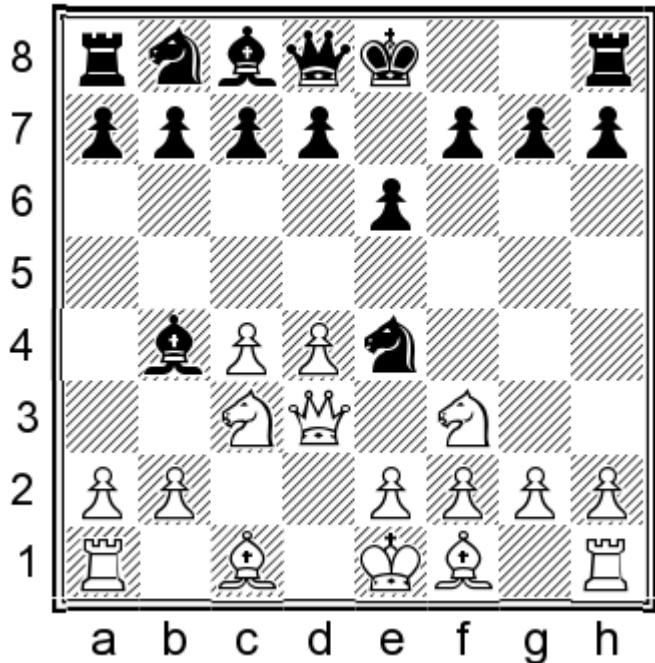
**Levon Babujian 2482-**

**Babken Arutiunian 2067**

Jermuk 2014 (1)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nf3 Ne4 5.Qd3!?**

Highly unexpected! Here the queen is closer to events on the kingside, and in the event of g2-g4 can be included effectively in active operations.



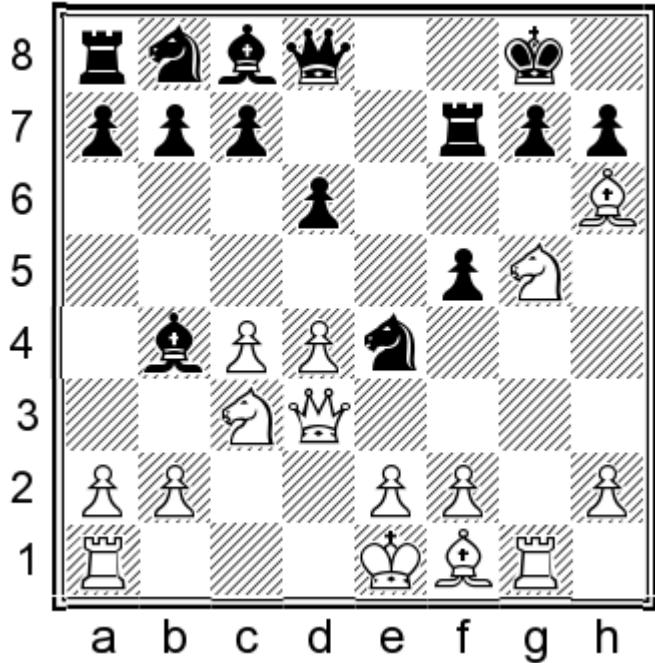
**5...f5**

On the other hand, it now looks more appropriate to play 5...d5!? 6.g3 0-0 7.Bg2, and now, instead of 7...f5 8.0-0 c6 9.a3 Be7 10.b4 Nd7 11.Rb1 (Predke-V.Solovyov, St Petersburg 2015), it is obvious that Black has a wide choice of logical plans for mobilization.

**6.g4!**

Back in the mists of time, another of the founders of positional play instructively outplayed a less well-known player here: 6.g3 b6 7.Bg2 Bb7 8.0-0 Nxc3 9.bxc3 Be4 10.Qd2 (Karl Gilg quickly goes over to passive defence instead of 10.Qe3!? Be7 11.Ne5) 10...Be7 11.Ne1 Bxg2 12.Nxg2 0-0 13.Qd3 Nc6 14.Re1 Na5 15.Be3 Qc8 16.c5 d5! 17.cxd6 cxd6 (Gilg-Tarrasch, Semmering 1926), and again Black has fulfilled his aim, and the weak pawns later fell victim to Tarrasch.

**6...0-0 7.gxf5 exf5 8.Rg1 d6 9.Bh6 Rf7 10.Ng5**

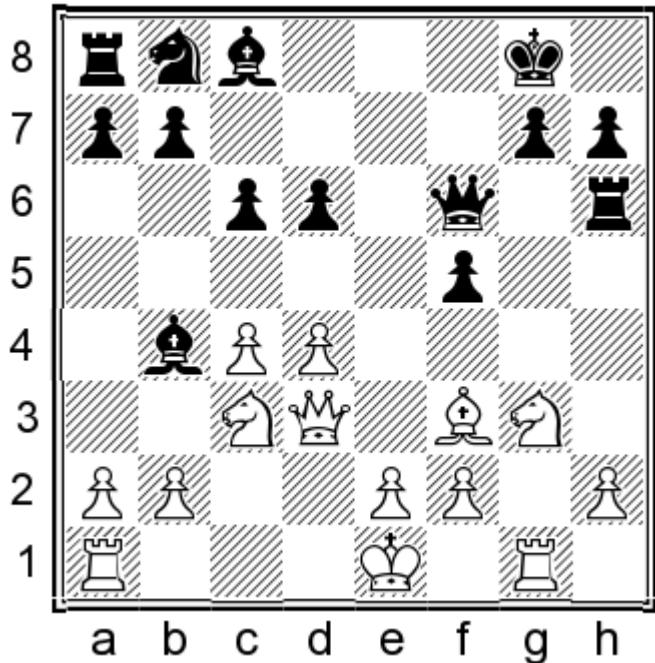


**Test 29.** White is playing for mate without hesitation, and what should the opponent do now?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** As in the game Babujian-Lysyj, Black should try to give White some weaknesses to fasten onto:  
10...Bxc3+! 11.bxc3 Rf6 12.Nxe4 (12.Bxg7? Rg6!–+) 12...Rxh6 13.Ng5 Nc6 and he has good counter-prospects: the doubled c-pawns and the pawn on h2.

**10...Rf6?? 11.Ngxe4 Rxh6 12.Ng3 Qf6 13.Bg2 c6 14.Bf3**



**14...Qg5?**

After 14...Qf7 15.a3 Ba5 16.0-0-0 the initiative is still on White's side, but in the game, Black tries to extinguish the fire by throwing petrol on it – after White's reply, it becomes obvious that Black has only put his queen under attack from the white rook.

**15.Rg2! Rg6 16.e3 f4 17.Nge2 Bxc3+**

No better was 17...Qf6 18.Rxg6 hxg6 19.0-0-0 Bf5 20.Ne4±, so he has to make the belated exchange of knights on c3.

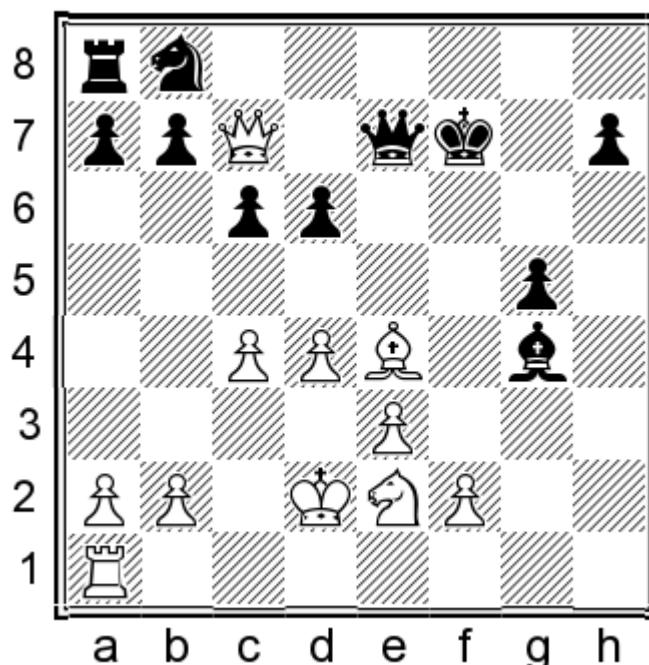
**18.Qxc3 Qh6 19.Nxf4 Rxg2 20.Bxg2 g5 21.Ne2 Qxh2 22.Be4 Bg4**

Black has succeeded in establishing material equality, and even creating counter-threats, but White has a powerful manoeuvre available, after which his queen gets close to the enemy king.

**23.Qa5!**

The pawn on g5 hangs and mate is threatened on d8.

**23...Qh6 24.Qd8+ Kf7 25.Kd2! Qf6 26.Qc7+ Qe7**



Everything is defended, but the black pieces on the queenside are still stuck on their original squares, whilst White, by contrast, brings in his rook with decisive effect.

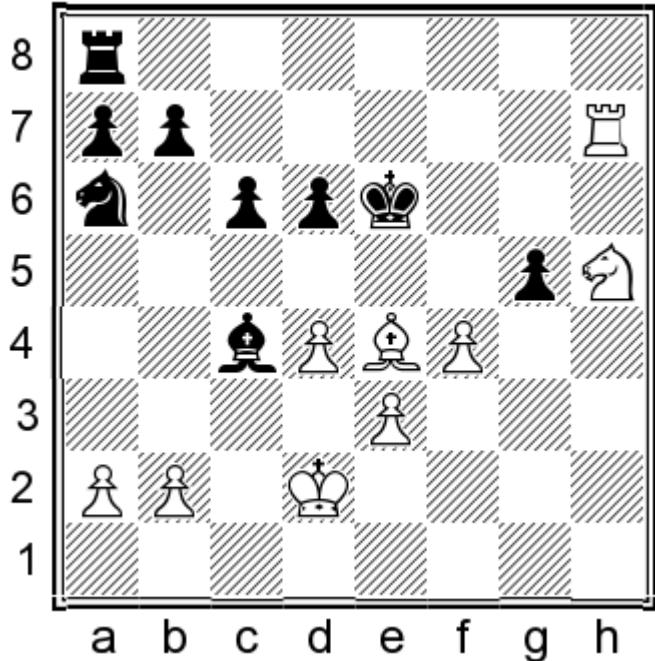
**27.Rh1! h5**

27...Qxc7 28.Rxh7++–.

**28.Qxe7+ Kxe7 29.f3 Be6 30.Rxh5 Bxc4**

Not only is the b7-pawn hanging, but Black's king is in trouble and this factor, despite the absence of queens on the board, proves decisive.

**31.Rh7+ Kf6 32.Ng3 Na6 33.Nh5+ Ke6 34.f4**



**34...d5**

More tenacious was 34...gxf4 35.b3 fxe3+ 36.Kxe3 Bd5 37.Nf4+ Kf6 38.Bxd5 cxd5 39.Nxd5+ Kf5 (39...Ke6? 40.Ke4+) 40.Rxb7, but here too, White's win is not difficult.

**35.Bf3 gxf4? 36.Bg4+**

And Black resigned, since he is mated next move.

### Conclusions

1. The combination of a knight on e4 + pawn on f5 in the structures characteristic of the Nimzo-Indian are not only a fairly aggressive arrangement for the purpose of attacking the white king, but can also be used as a positional weapon. White dare not be too relaxed, else he can already find himself with doubled c-pawns, which can be a target for the black pieces.
2. Unlike similar Dutch set-ups, the g2-g4 strike here is by no means a panacea for all occasions (note that Kasparov and Carlsen preferred the modest g2-g3), but it is still a very attractive resource for lovers of a sharp, intense game.
3. When it comes to the pawn thrust to which this book is devoted, then Black must remember that he has gone to b4 with the bishop in order to spoil white pawns on the queenside and he should not delay in creating counterplay.

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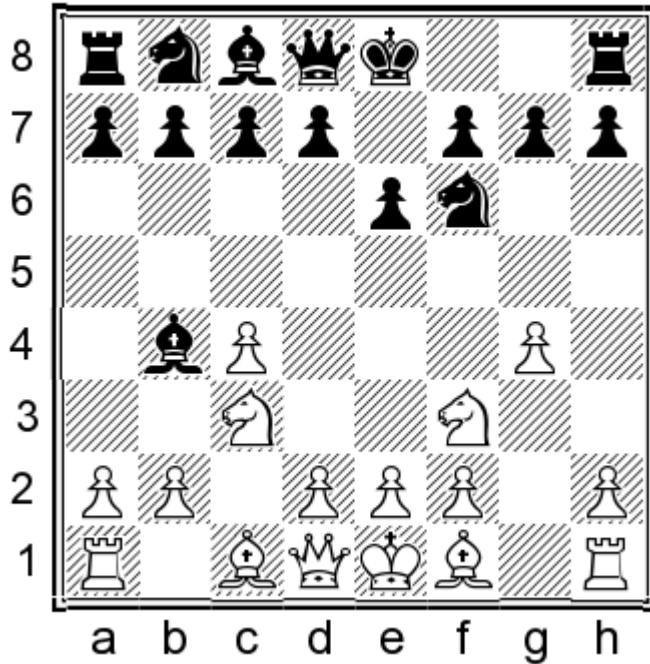
## Part V

### The Anti-Nimzo-Indian

#### Chapter 10

#### The Groningen Attack, or Zviagintsev-Krasenkow Variation

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.g4



#### Some history

It is hard to believe, but the first games in this interesting and poisonous variation were only played in the mid-1990s! It often happens that ideas of genius occur to several people at the same time, and this situation is no exception. I will ‘pass the microphone over’ to one of the inventors of the variation, Michal Krasenkow.

‘The story begins when I was preparing for a game against Eduardas Rozentalis in the Polish team championship (the game was played in 1997 – author). I knew my opponent as a strong GM with great experience in the Queen’s Indian and Nimzo-Indian Defences. I had no desire to enter these, so I began to look for alternatives. Suddenly a thought popped into my head: “After 1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 he plays 3...Bb4. Can’t one play 4.g4 here, as in the Shabalov-Shirov Variation against the Meran?” I looked at the database and found that nobody had ever played this! I had a quick look at some lines on the board (don’t forget that engines were still quite weak at the time) and the line proved very sharp and interesting! An important point was that taking 4...Nxd4 does not suit Black, because of 5.Rg1 regaining the pawn and ruining the kingside.

I decided to save the novelty for the future and chose a different line against Rozentalis, but I used the variation a couple of months later in the second round of the FIDE Knockout World Championship in Groningen. It

unexpectedly turned out that the day before, in the first round tie-break, grandmaster Vadim Zviagintsev had played 4.g4 in a game against Joel Benjamin. Moreover, Vadim said that he had already played it a year earlier, at a rapid tournament in Moscow against Mikhail Gurevich, but the game did not get into the database, due to the fact that it was played at the qualifying stage and was not recorded. Thus, the first ‘public’ appearance of the 4.g4 variation happened in Groningen; that is why I think it should be called the ‘Groningen Attack’, and I’m sorry that this name has not become generally accepted.’ (extract from the book *Learn from Michal Krasenkow*, Thinkers Publishing 2019 – author)

Vadim Zviagintsev has not yet written an autobiography, but I will add that the brave move 4.g4 was pointed out by his trainer Mark Dvoretsky (1947-2016), when writing about his student’s creativity. Zviagintsev did not win the game, but the variation still brought him success, as he eventually reached the 1/8 final, and four years later in the analogous tournament in Moscow Zviagintsev twice advanced the g-pawn in his match against Michael Adams – admittedly, the latter survived this test and went through to the fourth round. Things went even better for Michal Krasenkow – in Groningen he went one round further (and won a game in the variation concerned) and overall had superb results in this line – more than ten victories and only two defeats! Therefore I decided to listen to the Polish GM and call the line The Groningen Attack, but also to offer the alternative Zviagintsev-Krasenkow Variation.

In over twenty years, the variation has not lost its relevance and is still a frequent guest in tournaments of various levels, especially in competitions with a shortened time control. Up to now, hardly any of the branches have shown a clear path to advantage or equality, so if you apply your hand to the development of the option, you are welcome!

### Important nuances

Unlike most of the variations given in the book, the capture of the pawn here is not one of the principal continuations – according to the database, after 4...Nxg4 5.Rg1 White has scored 100%. Therefore, the main branches can be divided into approximately two layers. First we highlight the move 4...h6, not allowing the immediate advance of g4-g5, and the second, various continuations associated with the preparation of a convenient retreat for the knight (4...d6, 4...0-0, 4...d5, 4...Bxc3 & 5...d6), as well as 4...b6, not worrying about sending the knight to the edge of the board. The rest of the moves tested in practice (4...Nc6, 4...c5) can hardly be considered successful opening developments – they are more like admitting defeat in the opening battle, because many players retreat to g8 after 5.g5.

It is difficult to deduce some general concept for the variation for White, but two main directions can be distinguished. One of them is the advance of the g- and h-pawns as far as possible if the opponent castles kingside, as well as playing in the style of the 4.Qc2 variation, that is, something like a2-a3, Qxc3, b2-b4, Bb2 with pressure along the long diagonal. Since Black’s play directly depends on White’s ideas, there’s no point even trying to derive a general concept for him. Still, having looked at several dozens of games won by Black, I can summarize by saying that fast and optimal completion of development played an important role in them.

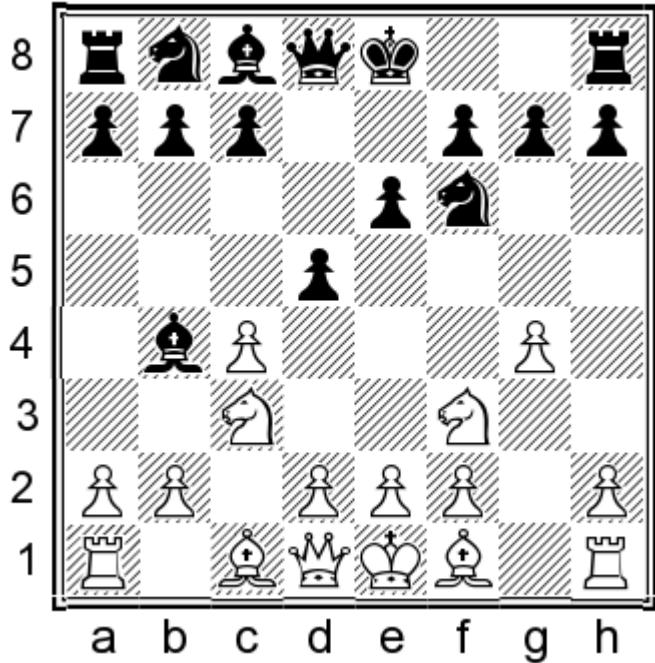
#### Game 41

**Michal Krasenkow** 2645

**Gildardo Garcia** 2480

Groningen Wch k.o. 1997 (2)

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.g4!? d5**



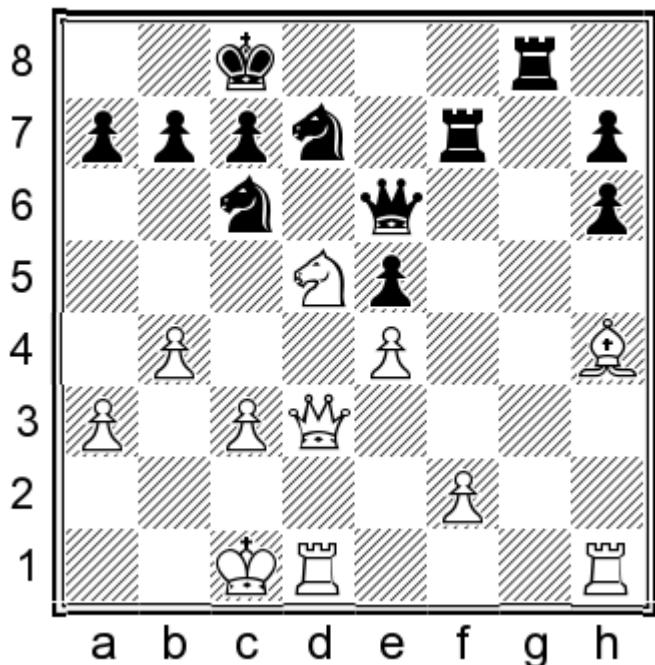
It is logical to start our survey with the stem game.

Admittedly, unlike Garcia, a day earlier Joel Benjamin had played 4...h6, but Vadim Zviagintsev has also met in practice the bold move of the d-pawn.

### 5.g5 Ne4 6.Qa4+

The game Zviagintsev-Piket, Tilburg 1998, which belongs amongst White's best achievements in this variation, continued as follows: 6.h4 Nc6 7.Qc2 f5 8.gxf6 Nxf6 9.a3 Bxc3 10.dxc3 Qe7 11.Bg5 Bd7 12.0-0-0 dxc4 13.h5 0-0-0 14.h6 Rhg8 15.Bh3 gxh6 16.Bh4 (the two bishops are a great strength!) 16...Rdf8 17.Nd2 Qf7 18.Nxc4 e5 19.Bxd7+ Nxd7 20.Ne3 Ne5 21.Nd5 Nd7 22.Qd3 Qf5 23.e4 Qe6 24.b4 Rf7.

White's logical play certainly makes an impression.



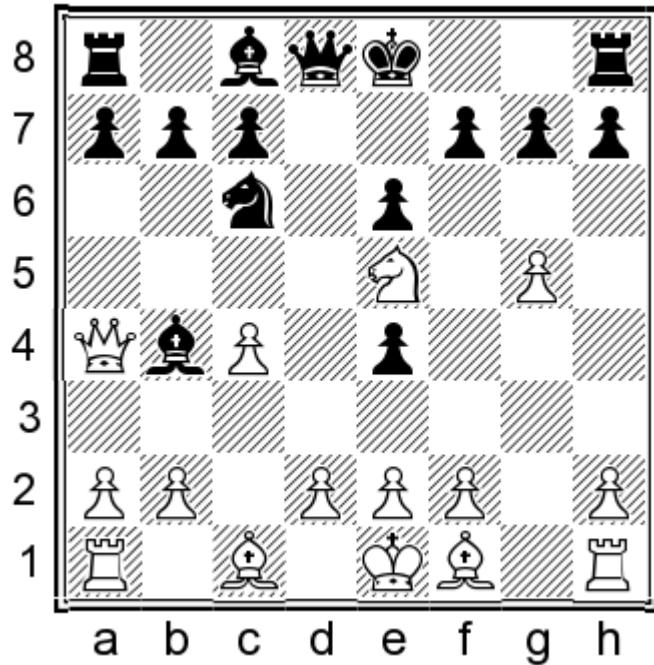
Gradually, Jeroen Piket has been completely outplayed and Zviagintsev finished the game in just two more moves.

**Test 30.** Can you find how?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Suddenly it turns out that after 25.Qc4! Black cannot meet the two threats. Jeroen played 25...a6 and prevented the move b4-b5, but resigned after the check 26.Nb6+, as he loses his queen.

**6...Nc6 7.Nxe4 dxe4 8.Ne5**



Banking on exploiting the diagonal a4-e8, but Black has a good reply:

**8...e3! 9.fxe3 Qxg5**

Now after 10.Nxc6 Bd7 11.Qxb4 Bxc6 the Rh1 is in trouble, so the knight must move back.

**10.Nf3 Qe7?!**

Up to this point, Black has not played badly, but he should not have cut off the dark-squared bishop's retreat – this ends up costing a tempo.

In later games, players learnt from others' mistakes. For example, Black obtained a splendid position after 10...Qf6 11.a3 Be7 12.d4 0-0 13.Qc2 e5 14.d5 Bf5 15.Qc3 e4 16.Qxf6 Bxf6 17.dxc6 exf3 18.exf3 bxc6 (G.Jones-Sammalvuo, Klaksvik 2008), and Jones had to make several more precise moves to secure a draw.

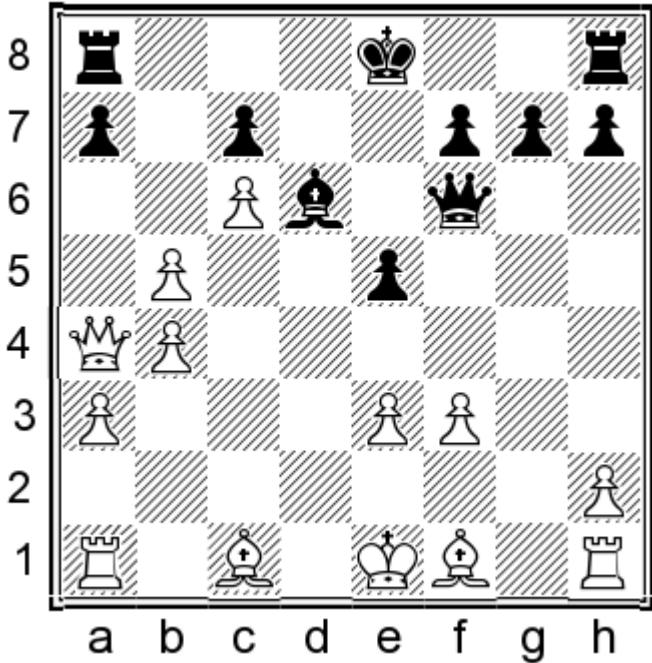
**11.a3 Bd6 12.d4 Bd7 13.Qc2 Qf6 14.b4**

It is getting harder and harder for Black to breathe, so the Columbian tries to break the Gordian Knot with a piece sacrifice:

**14...e5 15.d5 Bf5 16.Qa4 Be4 17.dxc6 b5 18.cxb5**

Slightly more accurate is 18.Qxb5, keeping the queen in play: on 18...Bxf3 19.exf3 Qxf3 White has the move 20.Qd5.

**18...Bxf3 19.exf3**



**19...e4?**

Of course, the situation is far from easy, but there were still chances to force some accuracy from the opponent: 19...Qxf3 20.Rg1 Be7 21.Rg3 Bh4 22.Ra2 Bxg3+ 23.hxg3 Qxg3+ 24.Rf2 0-0, and here only the accurate move 25.Qd1! followed by Qf3 deprives Black of any hope. Several commentators suggested 25.Bg2 Rad8 26.Qb3 h5 27.Kf1 h4 28.Bd5, considering White's position technically winning, but one only needs to play a couple more moves (28...Qh3+ 29.Ke2 Qg4+ 30.Bf3 Qg1) for the situation on the board to become considerably sharper and it may even be that it is already time for White to agree a draw by repetition.

**20.Ra2 exf3 21.Rf2 Rd8 22.Qc2 Be5 23.Bb2**

In general, the game has ceased to have any intrigue left. Garcia played a few more moves, waiting until his opponent had castled, and then resigned.

**23...0-0 24.Bxe5 Qxe5 25.Rxf3 Rd6 26.Bg2 Qxb5 27.Rf5 Qa6 28.Ra5 Qb6 29.Qc5 Qb8 30.0-0**

Black resigned.

Let me remind the reader that Viswanathan Anand won the 1997 Knockout World Championship, having won a dizzying final in the Armageddon game against Michael Adams. However, according to the rules of the competition, Anand then had to play against Anatoly Karpov in a 'super-final' and here the 'fresh' ex-World Champion won in a tie-break.

Michal Krasenkow won no fewer than four rounds in this extremely strong event of 128 famous players – he beat Paul van der Sterren, Gildardo Garcia, Evgeny Bareev and Zurab Azmaiparashvili, and lost only to Nigel Short in the quarterfinal, Short in turn then losing to Adams. It was a good tournament for the Polish grandmaster and the attack 4.g2-g4 came in handy!

Now we will analyse in detail a game by the other founder of the variation – it is nice that Vadim Zviagintsev has results no worse than Michal Krasenkow in the line.

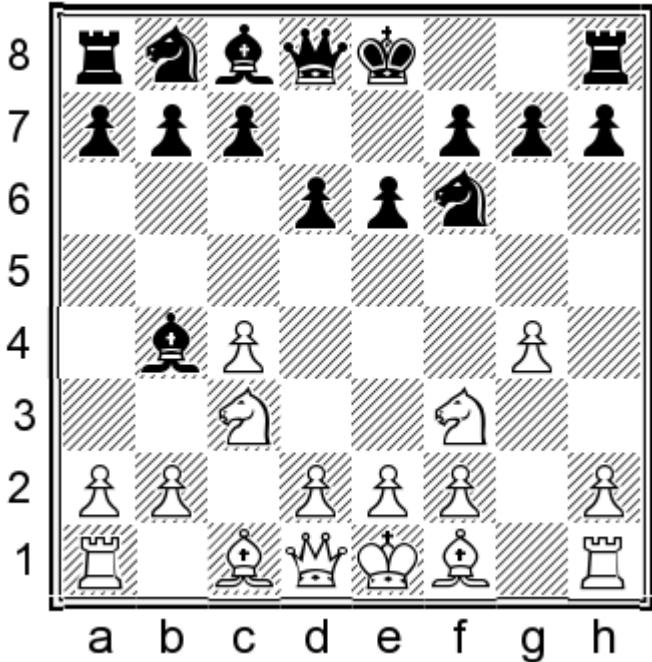
Game 42

Vadim Zviagintsev 2659

Alexey Gogonov 2604

St Petersburg rapid 2014 (5)

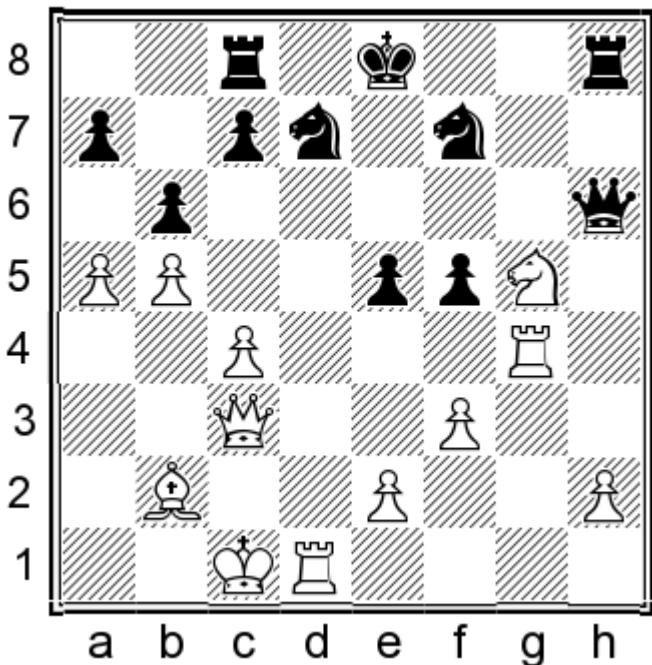
1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4 4.g4 d6



Evidently with the idea of retreating the knight to d7. At first glance, it seems fine, but a closer examination reveals that the knight seriously impedes Black's development, and another, superior square for it should be sought.

#### 5.g5 Nfd7 6.h4

The other 'father' of the variation did not hurry with the advance of the h-pawn and handled the line somewhat differently, also getting a good position: 6.Qc2 Nc6 7.a3 Bxc3 8.Qxc3 e5 9.b4 Qe7 (Michał Krasenkow has also met 9...b6 10.d4 Bb7 11.Rg1 Qe7 12.d5 Nd8 13.Nh4 g6 14.f4 f5, where after 15.e4! Nf7 16.exf5 exf4+ 17.Kd1 gxf5 18.Ra2! the Polish GM developed a strong initiative: 18...Nfe5 19.Bxf4 Qf7 20.Nf3 0-0-0 21.Nd4 c6?? 22.dxc6 Nxc6 23.Nxc6 Bxc6 24.Rd2 Rxe8 25.Rxd6 and White soon won, Krasenkow-Mchedlishvili, Warsaw 2005) 10.Bb2 Nb6 11.b5 Nd8 12.a4 Bg4 13.Bg2 Rc8 14.d4 f6 15.gxf6 gxf6 16.Rg1 Rg8 17.Bh3 h5 18.dxe5 dxe5 19.Nd2 Qe6 20.a5 Nd7 21.0-0-0 Rh8 22.Bxg4 hxg4 23.Ne4 b6 24.f3 Nf7 25.Rxg4 f5 26.Ng5 Qh6.



Up to this moment, Krasenkow has played superbly, but in fact resigned after just two more moves: 27.Rgg1 Nxg5

28.Rxd7 Ne4+, losing the queen.

**Test 31.** Does White have a way to keep the initiative?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The accurate 27.Qd3!, attacking d7 and f5, allows him to retain all the plusses of his position. There is no time to take the rook because of 27...fxg4 28.Qxd7 Kf8 29.Qxf7#, whilst after 27...Nd6 White can play 28.Rg2 Rg8 29.f4 exf4 30.Rdg1 – the weakness of the black king should soon have its say.

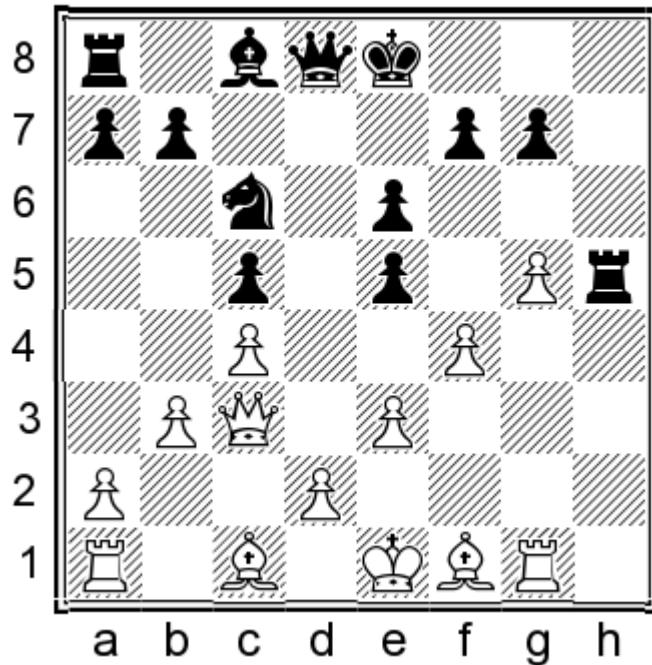
**6...c5**

In the game Zviagintsev-Tunik, St Petersburg 2011, played three years earlier, Black tried to bring the knight via d7-c5-e6, but he could not equalize: 6...Nc6 7.Bg2 Bxc3 8.dxc3 e5 9.Qc2 Nc5 10.Be3 Ne6 11.b4 Qe7 12.c5 Nf4 13.Bxf4 exf4 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.Qd2 Bf5 16.Qxf4 – Zviagintsev took the pawn and gradually won the game.

**7.Qc2 Nc6 8.b3 Nde5 9.Nxe5 dxe5**

So far, Alexey Goganov has coped well with his opening problems. The Nd7 has been exchanged, and the pawn on e5 does a good job of limiting White's possibilities in the centre, but the opening stage is not yet over.

**10.e3 h6 11.Rg1 hxg5 12.hxg5 Bxc3 13.Qxc3 Rh5 14.f4**



**14...exf4?!**

All of Black's previous moves were associated with play on the kingside, so it is not surprising that in a rapid game, Alexey did not find the calm 14...b6 15.Bb2 Bb7 16.0-0-0 Qe7, completing his development with roughly equal chances. Goganov instead plays concretely, hoping to break through to the enemy king, but the complications turn out in White's favour.

**15.Qxg7 fxe3 16.dxe3 Nb4?**

It was already essential to find 16...e5!, not only giving the bishop scope, but also closing the a1-h8 diagonal. Now after 17.Bb2 there is Qa5+, so White must play 17.Bd2, but here too, after 17...Bf5 18.Bg2 (on 18.0-0-0 there is 18...Rh7! exchanging queens) 18...e4 19.0-0-0 Rh7 20.Qb2 Bg6 plenty of fight lies ahead.

With the knight jump, Goganov threatens a check, gives a check, then another, then moves his queen, and then stops the clocks...

### 17.Bb2 Nc2+ 18.Ke2 Rh2+ 19.Bg2 Qe7

The checks have finished and there is nothing to do, as the white bishops are too strong. There is no help from 19...e5 20.Rac1 Bf5 21.Qxe5+ Qe7, and here White can avoid getting involved in complications and quietly go into the ending with 22.Qxe7+ Kxe7 23.Be5, which does not involve any intrigue.

### 20.Bf6

Black resigned.

After 20...Qf8 21.Qxf8+ Kxf8 22.Rad1 it's a complete slaughter.

The question naturally arises as to what happens if Black does not allow the move g4-g5 ? Here too, Michal Krasenkow has demonstrated the potential of White's position.

#### Game 43

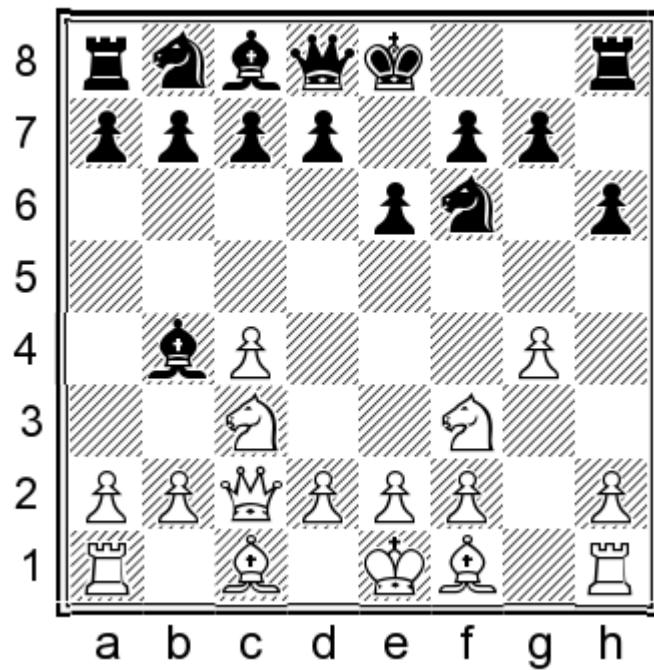
**Michal Krasenkow** 2651

**Wouter Spoelman** 2414

Wijk aan Zee 2007 (3)

### 1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.g4 h6 5.Qc2

A clear example of the fact that without development, pawn advances do not work. Not being allowed access to g5, White begins to work against the Bb4, whilst developing his queenside.



### 5...b6

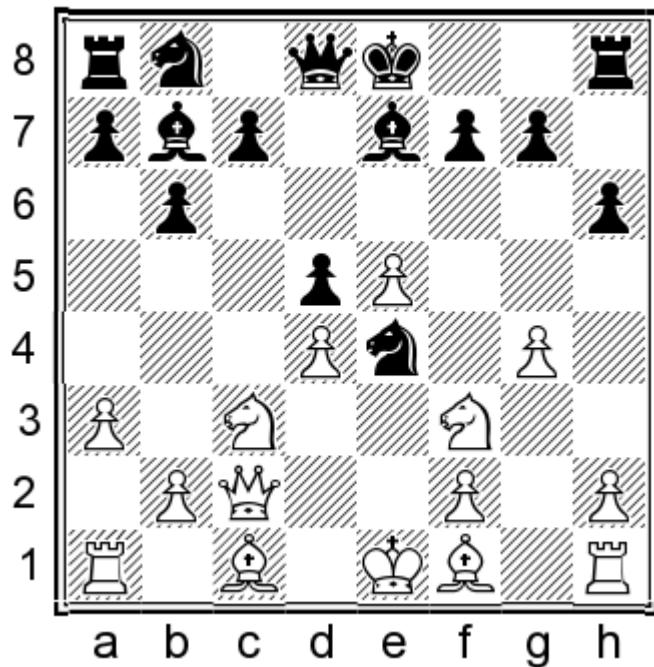
As we have pointed out earlier, in many variations in this line there are more questions than answers. Thus, here the move 5...Nc6!? led to a very complicated position after 6.d4 d5 7.g5 hxg5 8.Bxg5 dxg5 9.e4 b5 in the game Piorun-Yuffa, Moscow 2018. We will not hurry with a detailed analysis of the variation – we will leave room for an argument between GMs in practical and will return to the game.

### 6.a3 Be7

The move 6...Bxc3 is more in the spirit of Nimzowitsch, and has also been seen in Krasenkow's practice: 7.Qxc3 Bb7 8.Rg1 d6, and here Michal chose 9.d4 Nbd7 10.b3 Qe7 11.Bb2 Ne4 12.Qe3 and eventually won, Krasenkow-Jedynak, Trzcianka rapid 2018, but I prefer the direct 9.h4!?, which has been tried by another regular player of the variation, Kacper Piorun: after 9...e5 10.g5 hxg5 11.hxg5 Nh5 12.d4 (Piorun-Sadzikowski, Warsaw 2013) Black had to deal with both the knight's position on h5 and ensuring that he does not collapse in the centre at once.

Retreating the bishop allows Black to create a powerful pawn block, but this is not so critical with the inclusion of the moves on the kingside.

**7.e4 Bb7 8.d4 d5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.e5 Ne4**



Black's hopes are obviously connected with the powerful bishop on b7, but with a single powerful move, Krasenkow destroys his opponent's hopes of creating counterplay on the long diagonal.

**11.Bb5+! c6 12.Nxe4 cxb5 13.Ng3 Nc6**

Now the fianchettoed bishop is out of action, and the white knights have secure outposts in the centre. Black could have extinguished his opponent's attacking ambitions by means of the exchange 13...Qc8!? 14.Qxc8+ Bxc8, but here too, after 15.h3 Nc6 16.Bd2 Black faces long suffering in the endgame.

**14.Bd2**

The immediate 14.Nf5!? also looks good, but Michal prefers to bring all of his pieces into play, only then to consider where it is best to sacrifice.

**14...Qd7 15.h3 b4 16.0-0 Ba6?!**

It is hard to reconcile oneself to the fact that the light-squared bishop will take no part in the game, but even so, he should have done this – on a6, the bishop only comes under attack, but also drives the enemy rook to an active position. With 16...bxa3 17.bxa3 0-0 it was rather easier to beat off the attack.

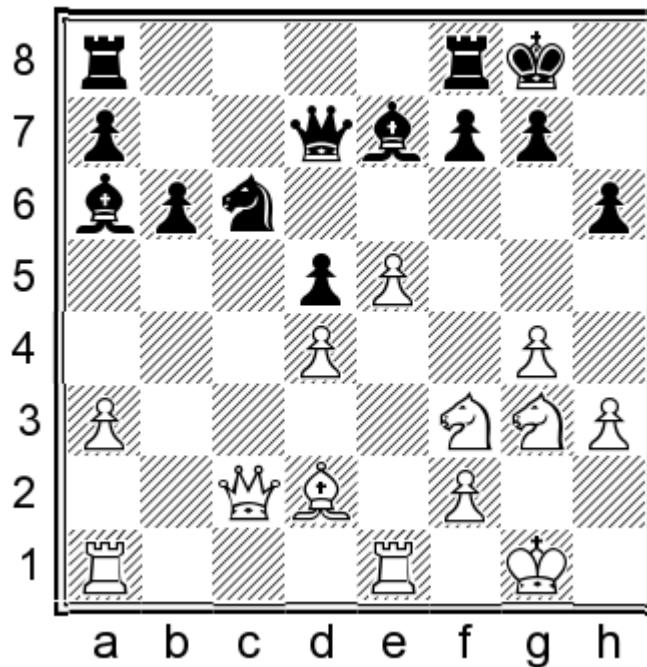
**17.Rfe1 bxa3 18.bxa3**

Here White could have exploited the inconvenient position of the bishop and immediately played 18.Nf5!, where

after 18...Kf8 19.Nxe7 Nxe7 20.Rxa3 the last inactive piece comes into the game.

Taking the pawn is a more practical decision, where it is not necessary to calculate unnecessary variations, as Black has no other obvious moves except to castle.

**18...0-0**



The weakening provoked by the move 4.g4, finally tells – 15 moves later!

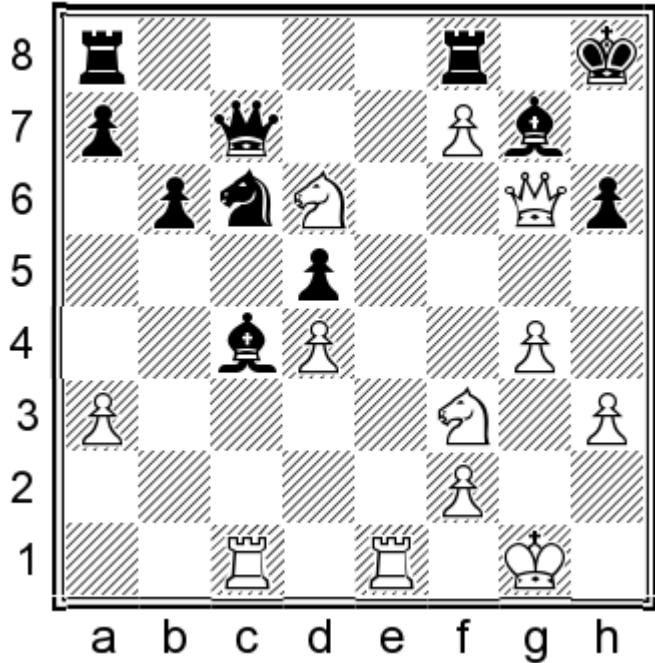
**19.Bxh6! gxh6 20.e6 Qc8 21.Rac1**

All the consequences of the unfortunate move 16...Ba6 can be clearly seen. Not only was White able to prod his opponent last move, thanks to the rook on e1, but now the knight on c6 needs defending.

**21...Bc4 22.Nf5 Bf6 23.exf7+ Kh8 24.Nd6**

It is impossible to know what to recommend for Black. He can only watch as the white knights hop from one good square to another, creating more and more threats.

**24...Qc7 25.Qg6 Bg7**



White of course has more than one beautiful way to win, but Michal Krasenkow chooses the most effective one, mating in 5-6 moves.

**Test 32.** Can you play as well as the great specialist of the variation here?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The most accurate is 26.Ng5! with the direct threat of mate on h7 (on the capture 26...hxg5 there follows 27.Qh5+ Bh6 28.Qxh6#) leaves Black nothing better than to delay the execution by 26...Bd3, but here too, after any closing of the diagonal 27.Nf5 (no worse are 27.Re4!? or 27.Nde4) 27...Bxf5 28.gxf5 Black cannot avoid mate.

Michal Krasenkow won that Wijk aan Zee tournament with 10½ out of 13, half a point ahead of the then young Russian star Ian Nepomniachtchi. The third placed Emanuel Berg was a full 2½ points behind!

#### Game 44

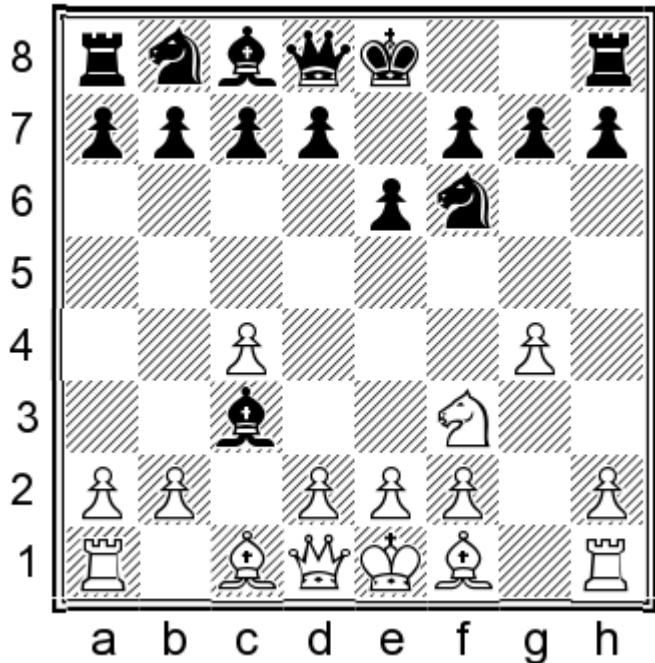
**Michal Krasenkow** 2702

**Viacheslav Dydyshko** 2525

Zakopane 2000 (1)

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.g4 Bxc3**

This game was played in the Polish team championship, Krasenkow's opponent being a classic of Belarussian chess, Viacheslav Dydyshko. One can say that at 50, the 11-time Belarussian champion was no longer young. So you will be very surprised to hear that within a few years after this, Dydyshko had raised his rating to a career high 2587!



## **5.dxc3**

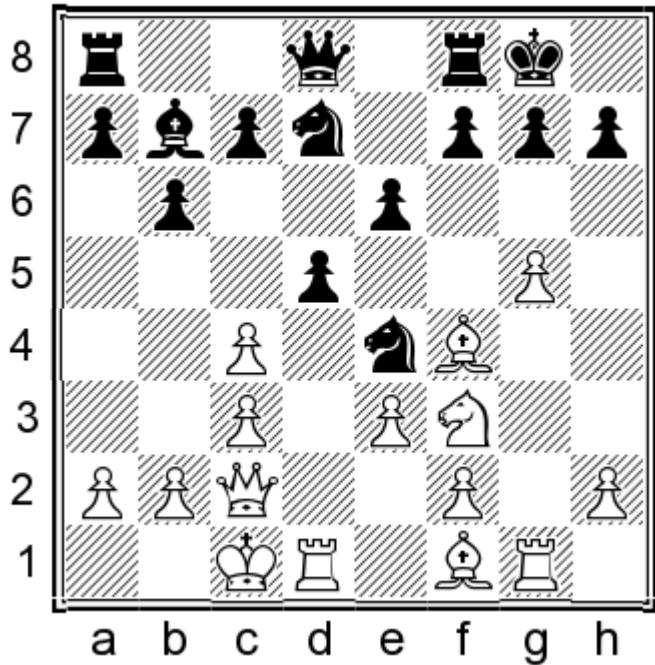
In my humble opinion, the immediate capture on c3 is a trifle premature and it is better to play some sort of intermediate move, since one can capture on c3 at practically any moment, even after 5.g5.

In practice, taking with either pawn is roughly equivalent. For example, the still young but nonetheless quite experienced Hikaru Nakamura won a good game after 5.bxc3 d6 6.g5 Nfd7 7.Bg2 Nc6 8.d3 e5 9.h4 Nb6 10.Be3 Qe7 11.Nd2 Bd7 12.a4 Na5 13.Nb3 Bc6 14.Nxa5 Bxg2 15.Rg1 Bh3 16.c5!? Nd5 17.Nxb7 Nxe3 18.fxe3 dxc5 19.Qb3 0-0 20.Qa3, and the c5-pawn soon fell, Nakamura-A.Sokolov, Mainz 2009 (rapid). Nakamura went on to win, but did not do so very convincingly, unlike Michal Krasenkow, whose game we are examining as the main line.

## **5...d5 6.g5 Ne4 7.Bf4!?**

All of Michal's followers have played 7.Qc2, but the Polish GM's move looks rather more logical, as White can quickly castle queenside.

## **7...0-0 8.e3 b6 9.Qc2 Bb7 10.0-0-0 Nd7 11.Rg1**



**11...a6**

Oddly enough, Black, who has made ten logical developing moves, now already needs to take non-standard measures in order to maintain equality. The far-from-obvious move 11...Nec5!? poses specific problems for White and forces him to slow down the pace of the attack: 12.Ne5 (the threat was 12...dxc4) 12...Nxe5 13.Bxe5 a5 14.Kb1 a4, and it is not so easy to continue the attack. For example, after 15.h4 there is the reinforcing move 15...Qe7. The text move aims to create counterplay, but it is not at all justified – White turns out to be faster.

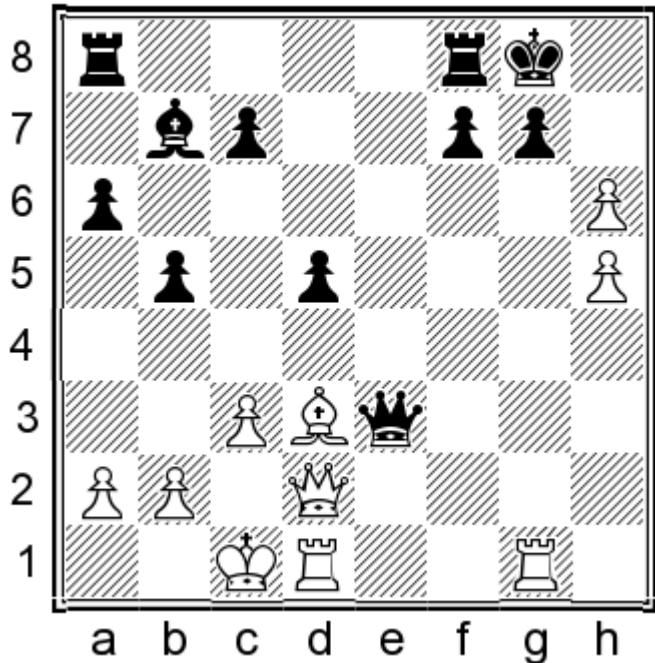
**12.h4 b5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.h5**

Krasenkow has avoided opening lines on the queenside and continues to push his pawns. The position is already difficult for Black.

**14...Ndc5 15.Ne5 Ne6 16.Bd3 Qe7**

Even the computer acknowledges the triumph of White's strategy and suggests giving up the exchange with 16...f5 17.gxf6 Qxf6 18.Nd7 Qf5 19.Nxf8 Rxf8, but even here, after, say, 20.Kb1 Black's chances of saving the game are not good.

**17.f3 N4xg5 18.Bxg5 Nxg5 19.f4 h6 20.fxg5 Qxe5 21.gxh6 Qxe3+ 22.Qd2**



The finishing touch. Even the exchange of queens does not simplify Black's life – the kingside initiative is too powerful.

**22...Qxd2+ 23.Kxd2 g6 24.hxg6 fxg6 25.Rxg6+ Kf7 26.h7**

And Dydshko did not prolong his resistance any further.

Of course, White does not win every game in this variation. Such GMs as Mikhail Gurevich and Loek van Wely have defeats to their name, and in 2010, one of the strongest GMs in the world at the start of the current millennium, Alexander Morozevich, proved 'not to be up to the task'.

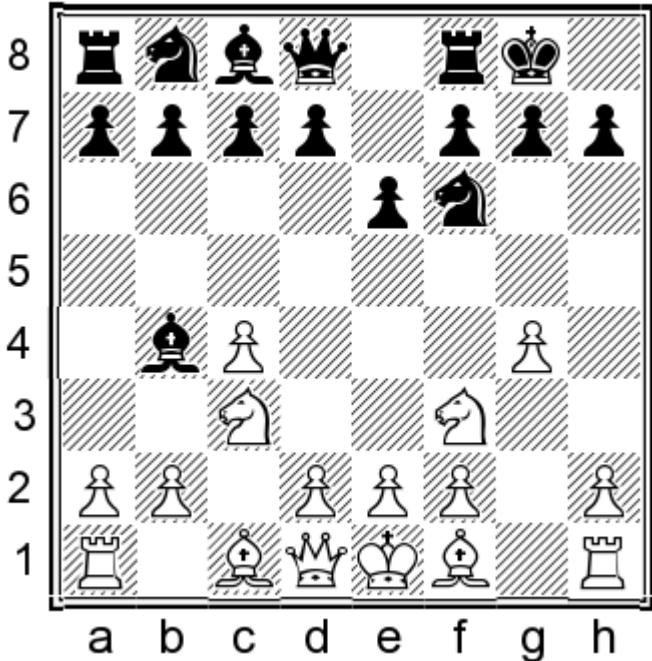
#### Game 45

**Alexander Morozevich 2732**

**Ioannis Papaioannou 2625**

Bursa Wch tt 2010 (2)

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.g4 0-0**



Another principled reply to the bold advance of the g-pawn. Counting on development first and foremost proves justified and White does not get at the black king without fatal consequences.

### **5.g5 Ne8 6.Rg1**

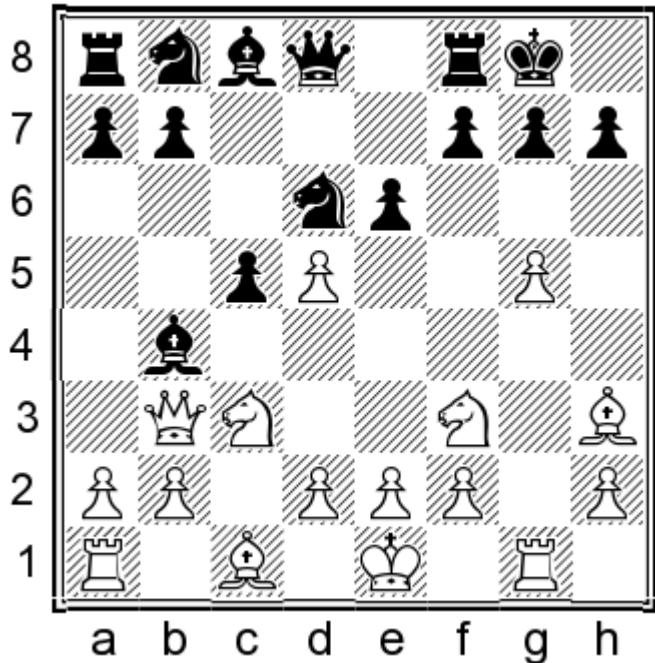
Both creators of the variation chose 6.Qc2 d5, and to judge by the results, this cannot be regarded as a bad choice – both won convincingly. Let us begin with Michal Krasenkov: 7.b3 Be7 8.Rg1 c5 9.e3 Nc6 10.Bd3 f5 11.gxf6 Nxf6 12.a3 Qe8 13.Bb2 Qh5 14.Be2!, and the queen sortie has not justified itself, as the lady begins to come under attacks with tempi. There followed 14...d4 15.Nxd4 Nxd4 16.exd4 Qxh2 17.0-0-0 cxd4 18.Ne4 Qf4 19.Bd3 Nxe4 20.Bxe4 h6 21.Bxd4 Bf6 (the best chance was 21...Bxa3+ 22.Kb1 e5, hoping to escape with an extra pawn) 22.Be3 Qd6 23.c5 Qa6 24.a4. All of White's forces are looking at the enemy king and soon Black resigned in Krasenkov-Romanishin, Lviv 2000.

Vadim Zviagintsev won his game equally convincingly: 7.a3 Be7 8.d4 c5 9.dxc5 Bxc5 10.e3 Be7?! (forgetting about development – it was possible to try 10...dxc4 11.Bxc4 Nd7, developing the queenside) 11.h4 dxc4 12.Bxc4 Nd6 13.Bd3 Nf5 14.e4 Nd6 15.Bf4 f5 16.exf5 Nxf5 17.0-0-0. In 16 moves, apart from pawns, Black has moved only two minor pieces, which, of course, cannot bring success – 20 moves later, Zviagintsev accepted his opponent's resignation, Zviagintsev-Riazantsev, Moscow 2003.

### **6...d5**

Another way of developing as Black was tried by the Lviv wizard, Vasily Ivanchuk, and worked extremely well: 6...b6 7.Qc2 Bb7 8.a3 Bxc3 9.Qxc3 c5 10.Bg2 d5 11.d3 d4 12.Qc2 Qc7 13.Bd2 Nd7 14.0-0-0 Nd6 15.Bf4?!? (it was worth considering the typical 15.h4 e5 16.h5 e4 17.Nh4 with an unclear position) 15...Rfe8 16.Ne5 Bxg2 17.Nxd7 Qxd7 18.Bxd6 Qxd6 19.Rxg2 Rab8 20.Rd2 b5 – the initiative has passed to Black, and Ivanchuk did not waste his chances, Agrest-Ivanchuk, Sweden tt 2003/04.

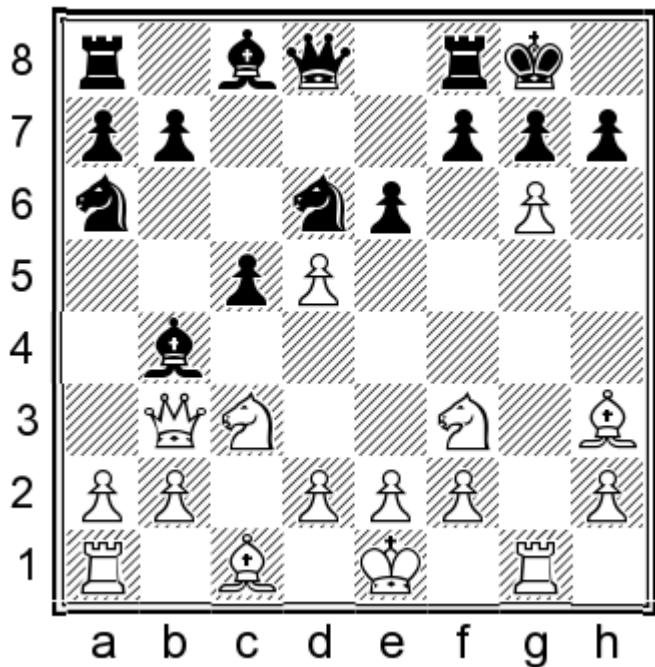
### **7.Qb3 c5 8.cxd5 Nd6 9.Bh3**



Morozevich is in his element – Black is hardly likely to guess his moves. However, we must also give Papaioannou his due – the Greek player banks on the fastest possible development, not hesitating to sacrifice a pawn, which looks very sensible.

#### **9...Na6 10.g6**

Alexander probably refrained from the tempting 10.dxe6 because of 10...c4 11.Qc2 Bxe6 12.Bxe6 fxe6 with good compensation – it is not so simple for White to complete his development, and so Morozevich continues to throw fuel on the fire.



#### **10...c4**

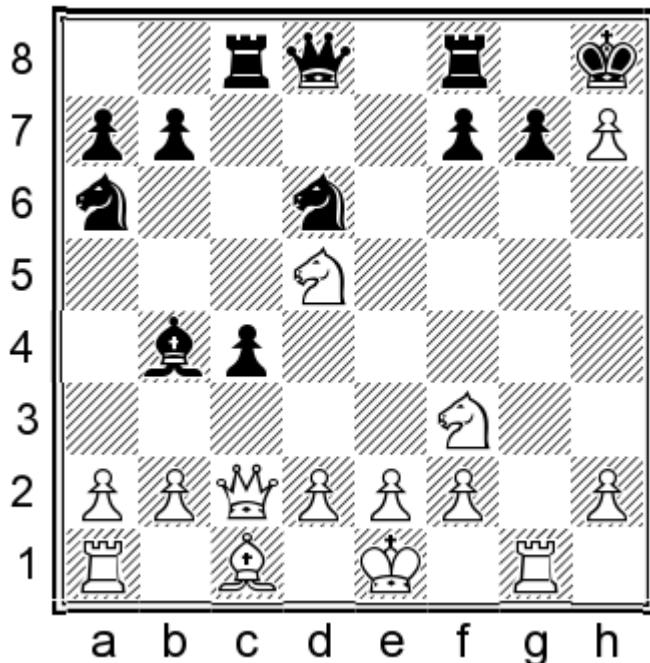
The pawn move is part of Papaioannou's strategic plans, but 10...fxg6!? was well worth considering, since after 11.dxe6 c4 12.Qc2 Black has a very strong continuation, which ensures him a lasting initiative.

**Test 33.** Try to find it!

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** There is the excellent-looking 12...Rxf3! 13.exf3 Nc5. Here it is also not necessary to calculate many variations – the e6-pawn will sooner or later fall, and the complex of weak squares, undeveloped pieces and the king stuck in the centre make White's position unpleasant.

**11.gxh7+ Kh8 12.Qc2 exd5 13.Bxc8 Rxc8 14.Nxd5**



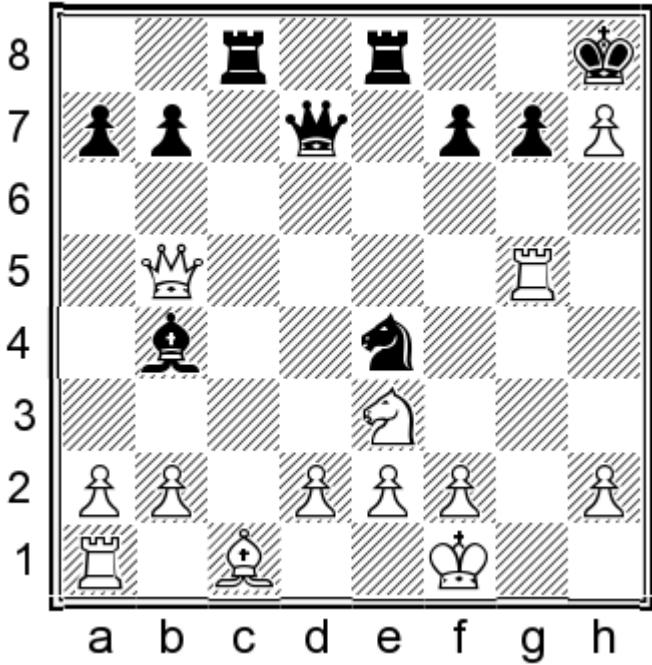
Morozevich grabs another pawn, but in doing so, neglects his development, unlike his opponent. Whose strategy will prove correct?

**14...Re8 15.Kf1 Ne4 16.Ne3 Qd7 17.Ng5**

There are several ways to defend against the check on h4, and the one I like best is 17.Rg4 Qe6 18.Rh4 – despite the rather surreal piece placement, Black has nothing concrete and White still has extra pawns.

Instead of this, Morozevich provokes his opponent into sacrificing a third pawn, and Papaioannou does so with a clear conscience.

**17...Nac5 18.Qxc4 Nxg5 19.Rxg5 Ne4 20.Qb5**



**20...Rc6!**

No exchanges! Suddenly it turns out that the c4-pawn was poisoned – White has great problems, because of the opening of the c-file, which is sharply illustrated by the short variation 21.Re5 Rec8!, and it is not obvious what to do with the Bc1. Morozevich puts the rook on a different square, but this does not change the assessment of the position – Black has a winning position.

**21.Rf5 Nd6 22.Qd3 Rxe3! 23.dxe3 Qxf5**

The blow which fixes a decisive advantage for Black. The least of the evils was 24.Qxf5 Nxf5, but even here, White will not manage to bring all his pieces into battle quickly: 25.e4 Nd6 26.f3 Nc4 – soon Black will start to devour the pawns, one after the other.

The Russian chose

**24.a3**

and resigned after 24...Qh3+ 25.Kg1 Nf5 – there is no satisfactory defence to the check on g6.

In the second round of the Team World Championship in Bursa, the rating favourite of the tournament, the Russian team sensationally lost to the Greek team 1½-2½. The Greeks' second victory was achieved by Hristos Banikas, who defeated Evgeny Tomashevsky. However, this did not stop the Russians from scoring 13 team points out of 14 in the remaining matches and taking first place. But in the annals of chess in Greece, there was another reason for pride.

We'll finish the analysis of the variation with another game by the grandmaster, who is currently the champion in terms of the number of games played in it. The game clearly shows that even in the sidelines, one can start an interesting mutual fight against an opponent who has tremendous experience in playing the typical positions arising from this opening.

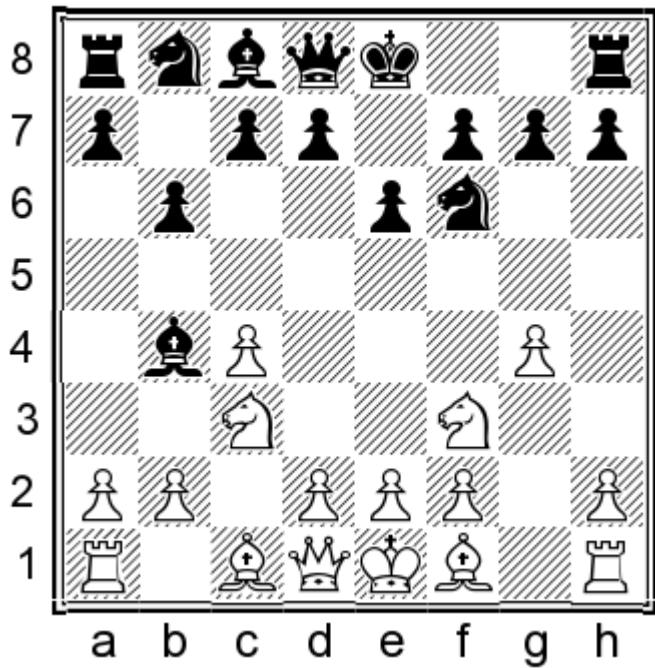
Game 46

**Michał Krasenkow** 2656

**Martyn Kravtsiv** 2543

Warsaw rapid 2009 (6)

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.g4 b6**



The last of the moves not yet considered, quite often met in grandmaster games. The idea is quite clear – g2-g4 has weakened the long diagonal, and the fianchettoed bishop will exert great pressure, but at the same time, the knight on f6 lacks a stable outpost in the centre and will have to go to the edge of the board.

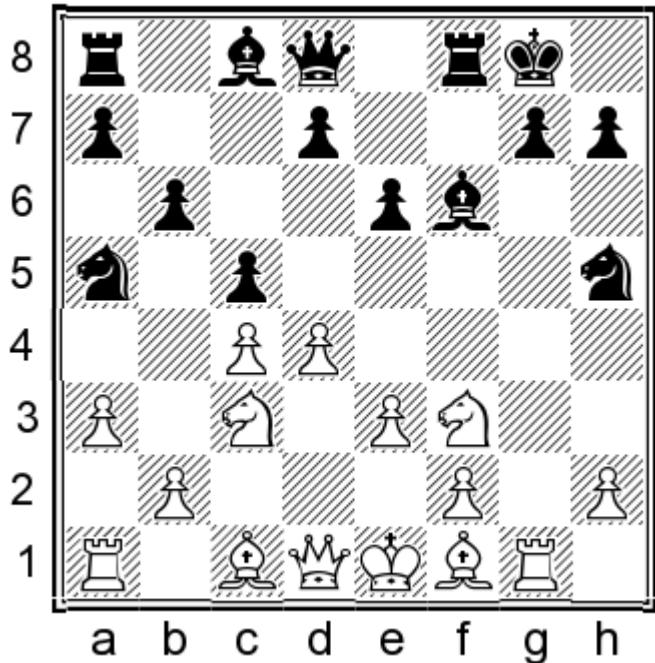
### **5.g5 Nh5**

In another Krasenkow game, Black tried to post the knight more actively, but only added to his problems: 5...Bxc3 6.dxc3 Ne4? (it was not too late to play 6...Nh5, although here there is no doubt about White's advantage) 7.Qd4 Bb7 8.Qxg7, winning a pawn and preventing Black from castling, Krasenkow-Hoang Thanh Trang, Budapest 2004.

### **6.Qb3 Ne6 7.a3 Be7 8.d4 f6 9.gxf6**

White also has the sharper 9.d5!?, although here the variations are not so simple: 9...Na5 10.Qc2 Bb7 11.Rg1 0-0 12.g6 Nxc4 13.gxh7+ Kh8, and here only the precise 14.Bg2! allows White to keep the initiative: 14...f5 15.b3 Nd6 16.Ne5 Kxh7 17.Bf3 – the small material deficit does not make itself felt, because of the unsafe black king.

### **9...Bxf6 10.e3 0-0 11.Rg1 Na5 12.Qd1 c5**



### 13.Ne5

Even for a GM, especially in a rapid game, it is hard to understand when the knight jump into the centre is bad. But the game shows that this decision is far from the best.

**Test 34.** Does White have another good continuation?

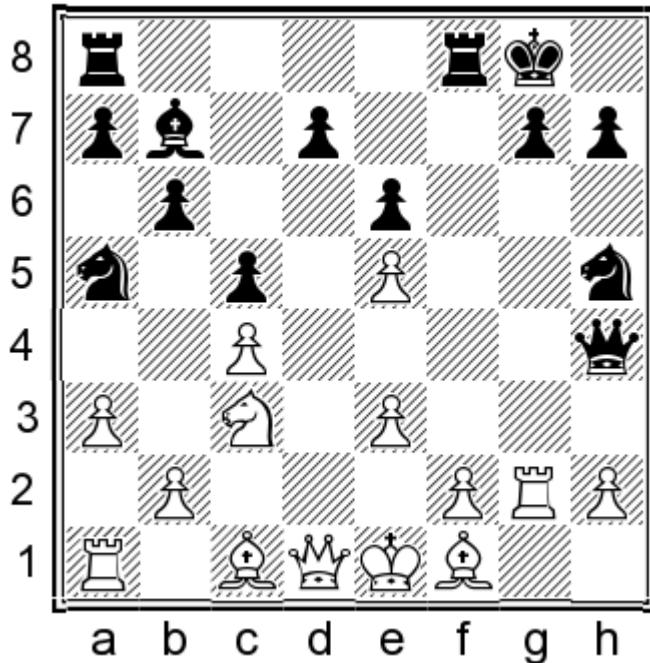
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** It appears that after 13.Ng5! Bxg5 14.Qxh5 Bh4 the weakness of the f2-pawn prevents White achieving anything significant, but if we play a few more moves – 15.Bd3! Bxf2+ 16.Ke2 Qh4 17.Bxh7+ Kh8 18.Rg5!, everything falls into place – Black has serious problems. Even after the strongest reply 18...Ba6 19.Bd3+ Qxh5+ 20.Rxh5+ Kg8 21.Ne4 Black still has trouble with his king, even in the endgame.

### 13...Bxe5 14.dxe5

After 14.Qxh5 there follows Rf5!, and already Black starts to dictate the play, and so Krasenkow continues to play against the bad knight.

### 14...Qh4 15.Rg2 Bb7

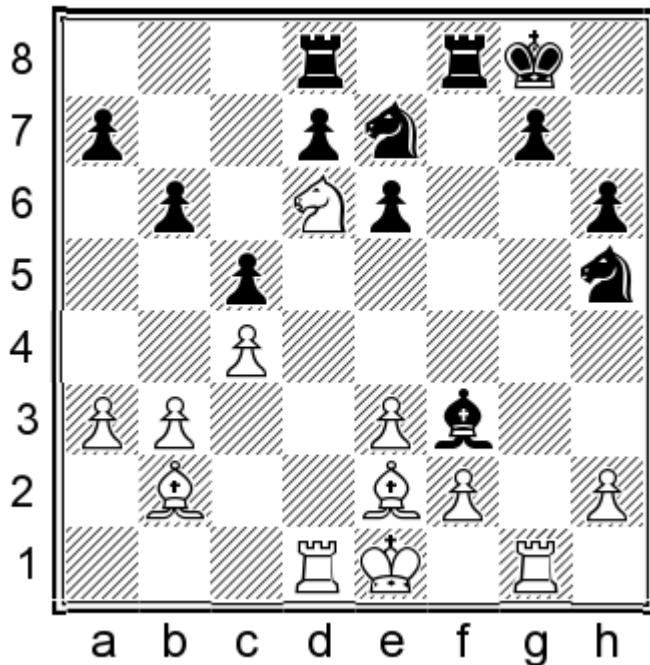


Martyn Kravtsiv finds a very good moment to put the bishop on the long diagonal, forcing his opponent to exchange queens, which definitely helps Black.

**16.Qg4 Qxg4 17.Rxg4 Bf3 18.Rg1 Nc6 19.Be2 h6**

He should have defended against the attack by the rook on g5 by the familiar 19...Rf5!, creating an unpleasant threat of doubling on the f-file. Now White has the idea of creating tension on the a1-h8 diagonal, taking advantage of the fact that the structure on the kingside is slightly weakened.

**20.b3 Nxe5 21.Bb2 Rad8 22.Nb5 Nc6 23.Nd6 Ne7 24.Rd1**



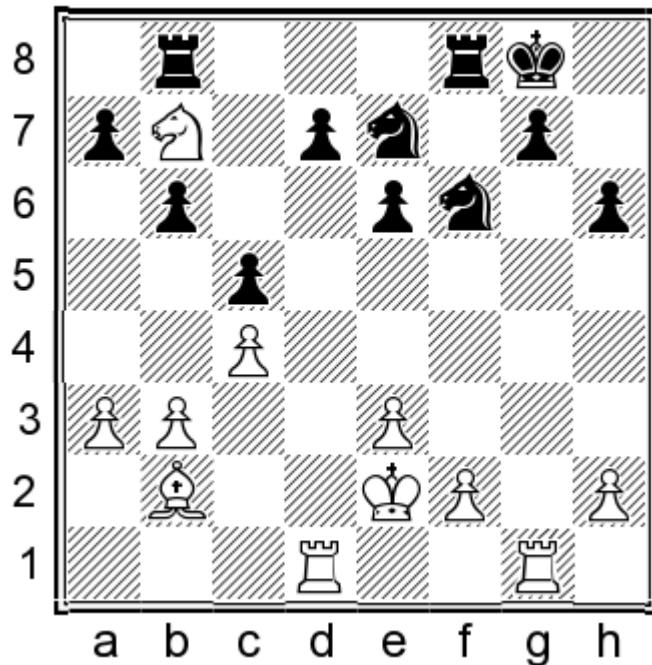
Black has kept the extra pawn, but has still not managed to coordinate his pieces and needs to be careful.

**24...Bxe2 25.Kxe2 Nf6??!**

One can understand Kravtsiv's desire to finally introduce the idle knight from h5 into the game, but it was worth

delaying this just one more move. By playing 25...Nf5, defending g7 and trying to disturb the d6-knight, Black could have solved all his problems. Now Krasenkow has the opportunity to turn the tide of the struggle, which he immediately seizes.

**26.Nb7 Rb8**



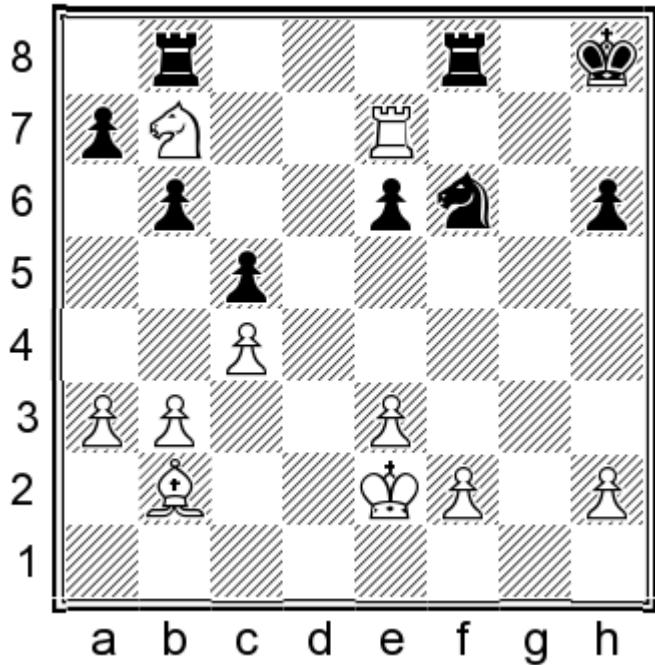
**27.Rxd7!**

We have seen several times that the Bb2 actively supports White in an energetic middlegame attack, but the decisive blow on g7 can also be landed in the endgame.

**27...Nxd7**

Black had the opportunity to eliminate the dangerous bishop by 27...Nf5. Now, due to the bad location of the b7-knight, White has to play 28.Bxf6 Rxf6 29.Nd8 e5, but even after 30.a4 Black has not shown clear equality. Kravtsiv decided to keep the extra exchange, but such a powerful bishop is no worse than a tied-down rook.

**28.Rxg7+ Kh8 29.Rxe7+ Nf6**



**30.Nd6**

Time-trouble prevented Michal finding the more precise 30.Be5 Ra8 31.Rxe6 Kg7 32.Nd6, keeping all the advantages of the pin, but even after

**30...Kg8 31.Rxe6 Ne8 32.Nxe8 Rfxe8 33.Rxh6**

Krasenkow gradually conducted the game to victory.

Inspired by such creative success, Michal Krasenkow led the Warsaw AIG Life rapid tournament, which had an extremely strong line-up (Vladimir Malakhov, Vasily Ivanchuk, Sergey Movsesian, Daniel Fridman, Alexey Dreev, Radoslaw Wojtaszek, Vugar Gashimov, Alexey Shirov, Victor Bologan and fifty other GMs) with 9 out of 10, but at the finish he slowed down a little and finished seventh. In any case, specific places are gradually erased in history, but bright, beautiful victories remain!

## Conclusions

1. It is very difficult to give any general advice on playing this opening, because after a few moves one can get a completely new position for the variation, but one can almost always consider a plan with Qc2, b2-b3 (or a2-a3 and b2-b4), Bb2 and castling queenside, with a further advance of the kingside pawns.
2. Black, in turn, should immediately outline at least an approximate arrangement of his pieces and a development strategy as a whole – starting from what to do with the f6-knight and ending with the decision to play ‘for development’ or ‘for material gains’ with the hope of repelling the enemy assault.
3. The move 4.g4 can really turn out to be a dangerous weapon against fans of the Nimzo-Indian Defence (especially if the opponent does not expect such a turn of events), but in general, practice shows that in the end an interesting non-standard fight results, in which the one who plays better on the day wins.

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## Part VI

# The Slav Defence

### Some history

The Slav Defence was seen at a high level even in the World Championship match between Wilhelm Steinitz and Johannes Zukertort in the distant 1886. Moreover, it was owing to it that the future World Champion had a very difficult start to the confrontation with his main rival. In the fifth game, after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3, Steinitz played 4...Bf5 – emphasizing that he preferred this opening to the Queen’s Gambit for the sake of free development of the light-squared bishop. However, Zukertort responded with 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Qb3, attacking the undefended b7-pawn. Since the invention of the gambit 6...Nc6!? and if 7.Qxb7 Bd7! 8.Qb3 Rb8 9.Qd1 e5 (first played by Sabino Brunello) was still 126 long years away, Wilhelm the First, with a heavy heart, returned the bishop to c8 and subsequently went down to a heavy defeat.

However, already at the beginning of the 20th century, the minds of the strongest players of that time were won over by the very complicated Meran Variation 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7.

And in battles for the world crown the Czech version of the Slav Defence, starting with the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5, enjoyed great popularity with the leaders of the new era. Incidentally, the Slav Defence was so called due to the contribution to the development of the opening made by players of Slavic origin – first Simon Alapin, and then Efim Bogoljubow, Alexander Alekhine and Milan Vidmar. However, there are enough other names in specific cases: the Bled Attack, the Dutch Variation, the Czech Defence, the Krause Attack, the Smyslov Variation.

Time passed, the great chess players fought their battles, and Alekhine, after first playing Bogoljubow and then Max Euwe, starting watching closely a young player with horned-rimmed glasses from the USSR, whose name was Misha Botvinnik.

It was Botvinnik who significantly expanded the ideas of his contemporaries in the Slav, and won a number of brilliant victories thanks to the idea of Stahlberg-Grünfeld-Junge 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 – the variation would soon carry Botvinnik’s name. But it should be noted that the heirs of Mikhail Botvinnik and Vasily Smyslov did not really favour the once-popular opening. Mikhail Tal played the Slav Defence at the very end of his life, whereas Boris Spassky, on the contrary, used it only at the very beginning of his career, having learned it at the hands of his coach, Vladimir Zak. Tigran Petrosian sometimes made the first moves 1...d5, 2...c6, but much less often than he turned to the Nimzo-Indian or the Queen’s Gambit, whilst Robert James Fischer and Anatoly Karpov completely ignored the opening.

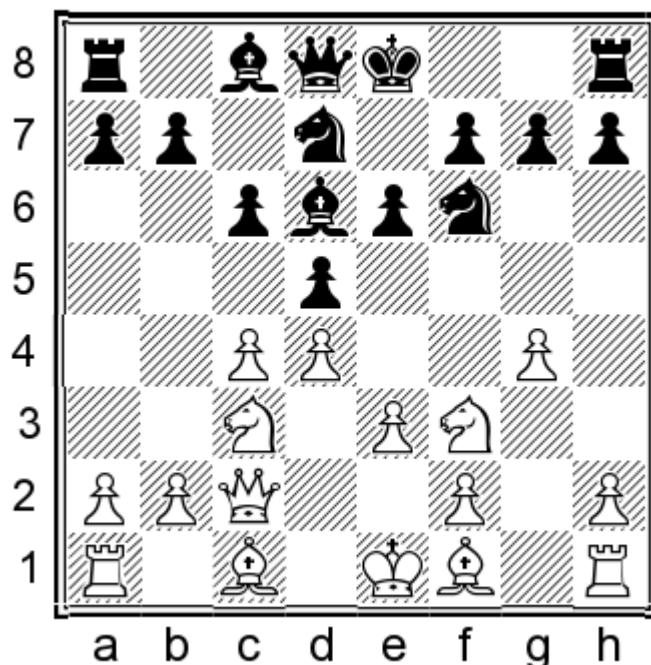
Even Garry Kasparov, Botvinnik’s favourite student, at first found himself on the ‘other side’ of the barricades and inflicted heavy blows on his teacher’s system. That was the story of the 1981 USSR championship, when Kasparov knocked out Iosif Dorfman and Gennady Timoschenko in the Botvinnik System, and Evgeny Sveshnikov publicly promised to defend the honour of the defence and made a draw, preferring the modest 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 h6.

As a result, the real new heyday of the Slav Defence began only in the revolutionary 1990s. A unique cohort of players appeared on the stage, the best representatives of which are still in the elite of world chess. The successes of Vishy Anand, Vladimir Kramnik, Boris Gelfand, Alexei Shirov, and later Alexander Morozevich made the Slav the main arena of elite battles at supertournaments. Soon, Veselin Topalov joined the Slav ranks, and later Levon Aronian, Magnus Carlsen, Anish Giri and other leading modern players.

On its way to recognition, the Slav Defence had to overcome many stones and bumps. White was not sleeping, but developed a number of effective battering ram counters to the popular system. And once again, the white players turned to the good old recipe of the sixth World Champion. Indeed, what if one confuses Black with the lunge g2-g4?!

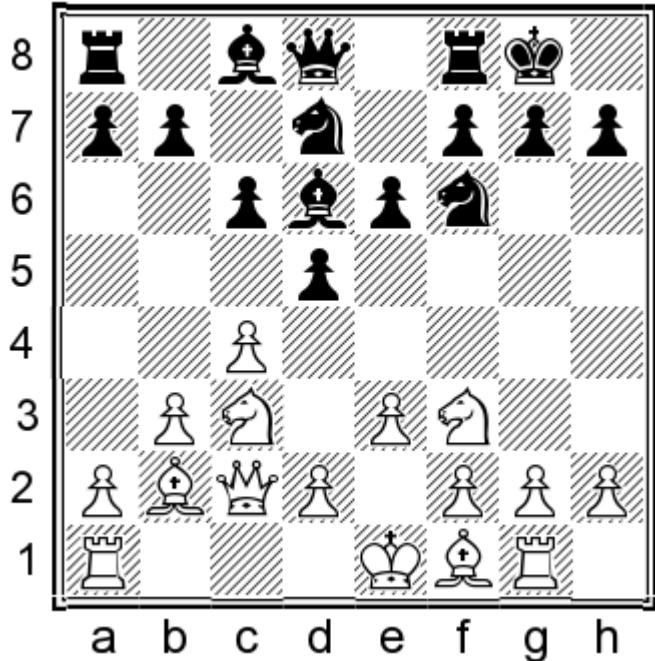
## Conception

In Slav positions, the g4-square is usually controlled by Black's knight, and the lunge g2-g4 is a real gambit. Its rationale is that White intends to meet ...Nf6xg4 with Rh1-g1 and use the open g-file. That is why the Botvinnik-style strike is carried out just when the black bishop has already left the f8-square, and Black has not yet managed to castle. For example, this is exactly what happens in the Shabalov-Shirov Gambit after **1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4!?**.



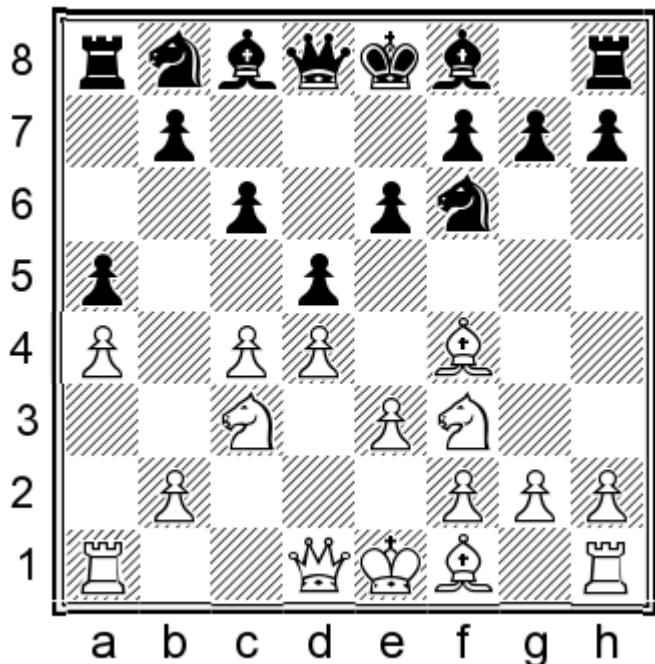
Black again faces the dilemma repeatedly encountered in our book: to take or not to take. The resulting positions are incredibly complex, and in general, the defending side has used three main strategies. The first is to take on g4 and meet the attackers on the kingside head-on. The second is to try to limit White's attacking intentions and play primarily for development, or, finally, the third – to open fire with all guns in the centre, in the hope that in the resulting complications, the weakness caused by the advance of the g-pawn will play a role.

However, in our time, a new plan has arisen for White. After all, maybe it makes more sense only to attack on the kingside once the black king has taken up residence there? And so in the games of grandmasters quite often, and with great success, one sees the very modern **1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 Bd6 7.Qc2 0-0 8.Rg1** with the idea of g2-g4 and a further pawn assault on the castled position.



This looks very committal. What is going on? White doesn't even have a pawn on d4, and Black is free to respond with ...e6-e5. The attacker's pieces are deployed on the back three rows, and still he decides on such aggression. But the point is that, whilst White has not yet occupied the centre, he is quite well developed, and the already-mentioned 8...e5 may run into the reply 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.Nb5 with the capture of the black bishop. However, Black is gaining time for the development of his pieces, and it is here that the main battles have taken place, in which the Meran Variation responded with dignity to the flank aggression.

We already know that g2-g4 is a recipe for almost all occasions, therefore the g-pawn lunge also occurs in those branches of the Slav Defence where, it would seem, there are no real prerequisites for this. Thus, there is the invention of the 2018 challenger Fabiano Caruana at the World Cup 2015, when the American was just starting to storm Mount Olympus. In his game against the recognized theoretical grandmaster Evgeny Tomashevsky, after **1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 a6** Fabiano started with the restrained **5.a4 e6 6.Bf4 a5 7.e3**,



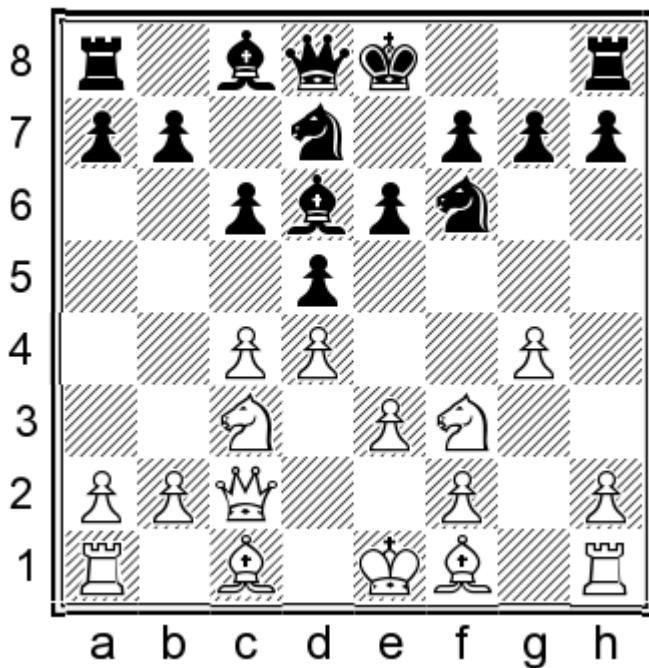
but after **7...Be7** suddenly lunged forwards with **8.g4!?** and scored a striking win in a sharp battle.

Consequently, in this variation Black started to play the cunning **7...Na6!?**, ensuring his knight the outpost on b4 and for the time being not allowing the g-pawn advance.

## Chapter 11

# The Shabalov-Shirov Gambit

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4



### Some history

A terrible weapon against the Meran came into being in 1992 thanks to two bright Latvian chess players – Alexander Shabalov and Alexei Shirov. Soon, the two young musketeers were joined by the master of the g2-g4 attack, whose name has repeatedly appeared on the pages of our book. I mean Michal Krasenkow, who immediately had several published games in the variation.

After some cooling of interest in the gambit idea following certain games from the 1990s, Garry Kasparov himself turned to the mighty weapon for White, when trying to defend the human mind in his battles against electronic intelligence. Later, the invention of Shabalov and Shirov stood the test of time – it was used by the champions and contenders of modern times, and in 2018 the gambit became one of the themes of the epic battle of the best computer program Stockfish against the neural network AlphaZero.

### Important nuances

At the dawn of the variation, Black was eager to punish White for his insolence – he would take 7...Nxe4 and after 8.Rg1 he tried a huge number of continuations: 8...Nxh2, 8...f5, 8...Nh6, 8...Qf6 and even 8...h5. However, when the founding fathers and followers of the gambit everywhere proved the validity of their claims (after all, it is easier for White to develop and transfer new forces to the centre of the conflict), then Black's reaction became more modest.

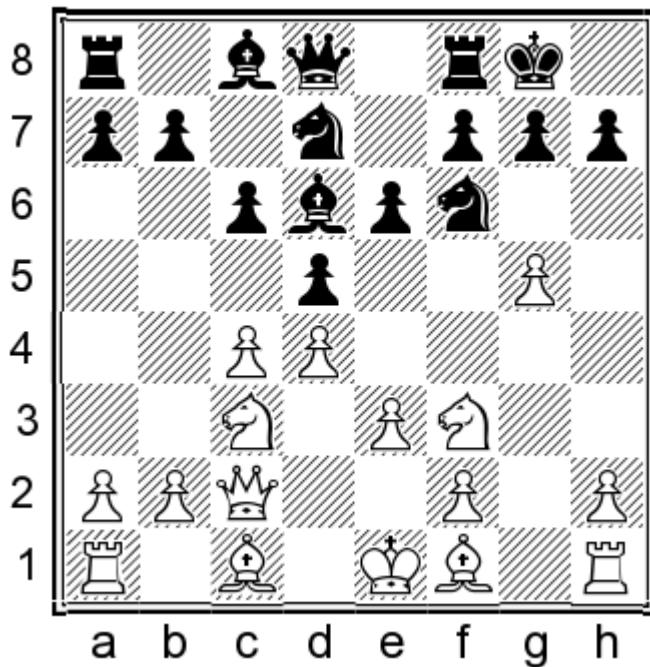
Vladimir Kramnik introduced the subtle 7...Bb4, with the idea of putting his knight on the central square e4 in response to g4-g5, and with the light hand of Boris Gelfand and Levon Aronian the preventive 7...h6 gained great popularity – while White insists on the continuation of the battle, Black gets time to open the centre. In this case, the fire of the battle will usually soon envelop the whole board – White is preparing to evacuate the king to the queenside, and the struggle begins on the principle of ‘who will be first’! An excellent training ground for chess players who love a sharp, intense game, for both sides!

Alexei Shirov 2655  
Throstur Thorhallsson 2425  
Reykjavik 1992 (5)

**1.d4 d5 2.e4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 0-0??!**

Such chess nihilism in reply to White's aggression has not been developed further, but even so, you may come across such nonchalant castling in tournament practice.

**8.g5**



**8...Nh5**

One should mention the counter-gambit 8...Ne4!? 9.Nxe4 dxe4 10.Qxe4 e5, which was seen in the games Kempinski-Beliavsky, Polanica Zdroj 1996, and Alexandrov-Sveshnikov, Sochi 2004. Black intends to attack the white queen with ...f7-f5, but a pawn is a pawn and with the accurate 11.c5 Bc7 12.b4! f5 13.Qh4 the advantage remains on White's side.

**9.Bd2**

A subtle moment. The hasty 9.Bd3 is less accurate: 9...g6 10.Bd2 a6 11.c5 Bc7 12.h4 e5, and Black gets good play. Shirov puts his dark-squared bishop on its 'obligatory' square d2, whilst his other bishop, depending on circumstances, may take aim at the Nh5, a piece which would certainly not appeal to Dr Tarrasch.

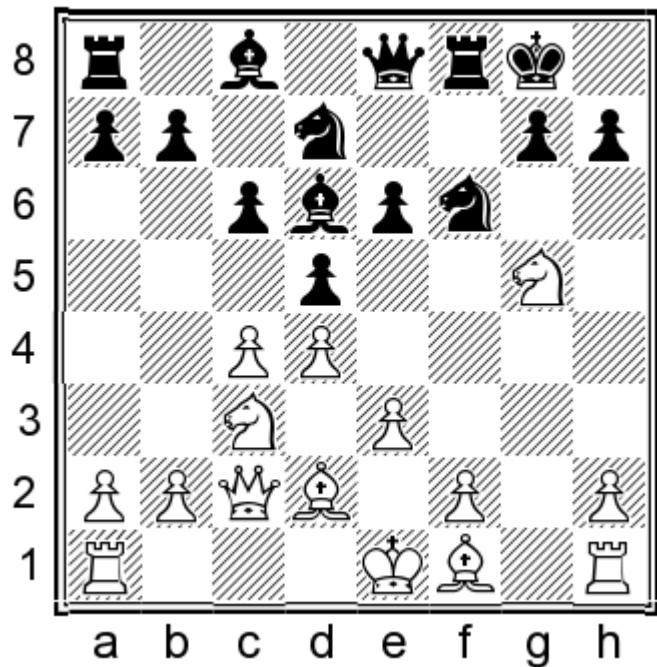
**9...f5!?**

Understandably, the Icelandic GM was not too enamoured of 9...a6 10.c5 Bc7 11.h4 e5 12.Be2 g6 13.0-0-0 with a powerful initiative for White, so the future GM offers White a choice – to allow the position to be closed or help Black return the errant knight to the game.

**10.gxf6**

The great player, following the principle 'fire on board', does not need to be asked twice to open lines! All the more so, since after 10.0-0-0 b6 11.Be2 Bb7 12.h4 Qe8 13.Kb1 Rc8 Black is ready with counterplay on the queenside.

**10...Nhxf6 11.Ng5 Qe8**



**12.0-0-0**

An interesting possibility was 12.f4!?. Judging by the winner's notes, at the board White was concerned about the counterattack 12...e5!? 13.fxe5?! Nxe5 14.dxe5 Qxe5 15.Nf3 Qh5 16.Be2 Bg4 17.Rf1 Nd7 with a strong initiative, but it is much better to evacuate the king with 13.0-0-0 e4 and then prepare a breakthrough to the e6-square with 14.f5!.

**12...h6 13.h4!**

White's idea is significantly more aggressive! The knight cannot be taken because of 13...hxg5? 14.hxg5 Ne4 15.Nxe4 dxe4 16.Qxe4 Rf5 and the simplest for White is to play 17.c5 Bc7 18.Bc4 – Black is defenceless in the face of the threats. However, Shirov's opponent eliminates the Nc3, intending to occupy e4 with his own knight.

**13...Bb4!? 14.Bd3 Bxc3**

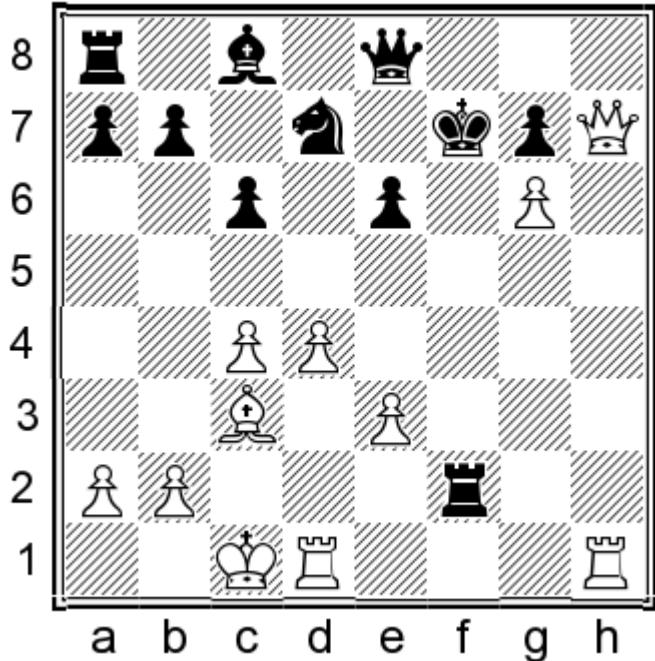
The knight has to be removed, before it can move away and cause trouble: 14...b6 15.Bh7+ Kh8 16.Ne2! Bd6 17.Nf4 Bxf4 18.exf4 with a tremendous attack.

**15.Bxc3 hxg5??**

The Icelandic master accepts the challenge! With 15...b6 16.cxd5 exd5 (bad is 16...cxd5? 17.Bb4 Bb7 18.Bh7+ Kh8 19.Bg6, and the black rook drops) 17.Bg6 Qe7 18.Rde1 Ba6 19.f3 White gradually prepares an attack, whereas now he has to solve complicated problems, which require accurate calculation and fantasy. Objectively, though, White's attack should succeed.

**16.hxg5 Ne4 17.Bxe4 dxe4 18.Qxe4 Rf5**

He loses immediately after 18...Rxf2 19.Qh7+ Kf7 20.g6+, and the black rook pays with its life for taking the white pawn.



White has two pawns for the piece, and soon will break in down the h-file, but the main thing for the attacking side is not to allow the defenders to regroup their ranks.

**19.Qh4!±**

19.g6?! Qxg6 20.Rdg1 Nf6 21.Qh4 Qh7 22.Qg3 Rh5 is a blow into thin air – what has White got for giving up his important pawn?

**19...Qg6 20.Qh8+!**

With 20.f4 Rf8 the black rook could return home, whereas now his major piece finds itself in a very original position.

**20...Kf7 21.f4**

There it is! The rook resembles a mammoth, trapped in a pit by ancient man. Meanwhile, White intends 22. Qd8 and 23. Rh8, after which the black garrison will be forced to surrender. There is no choice, for example, hopeless is 21...b6? 22.Qd8 Nf8 23.Rh8+–.

**21...Nf8 22.Qh4**

The threat is to trap the rook with e3-e4, and the king has to move to free the only escape route.

**22...Ke8 23.e4 Rf7 24.Rhe1!**

The blows f4-f5 and d4-d5 are on the agenda, whilst the rook on a8 and bishop on c8 are mere spectators and cannot help their king.

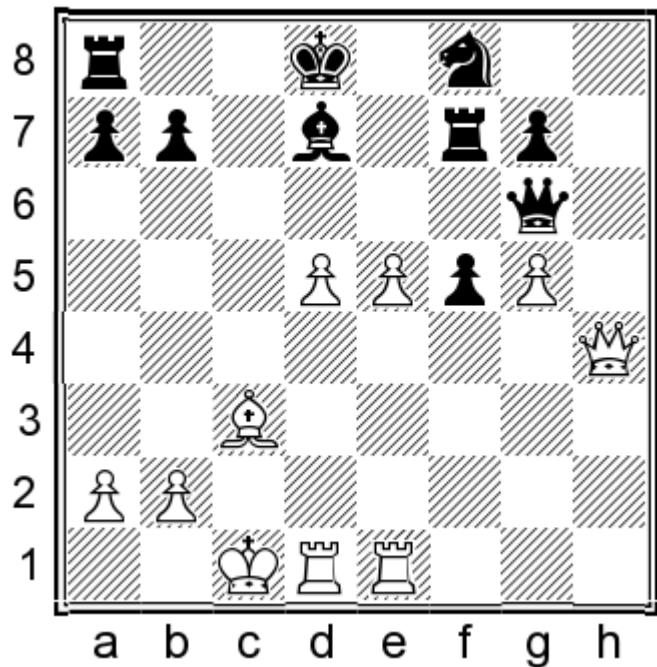
**24...Kd8**

He loses after 24...Bd7 25.f5 Qh7 26.Qxh7 Nxh7 27.g6, but the king does not manage to run far.

**25.d5! cxd5 26.cxd5 Bd7**

Even worse is 26...exd5 27.f5 with a decisive advantage.

**27.f5! exf5 28.e5**



The white pawns have broken through in the centre anyway, and it is not clear how they can be stopped. One must give Thorhallsson his due – at this moment, he finds the only chance and almost turns round the outcome of the game against the great attacking genius.

**28...f4!?**

Other variations are easy to calculate – 28...Rc8 29.e6 or 28...Re7 29.e6 Bb5 30.Bb4 Rc7+ 31.Kb1 Rc4 32.Qh8, and Black will not survive.

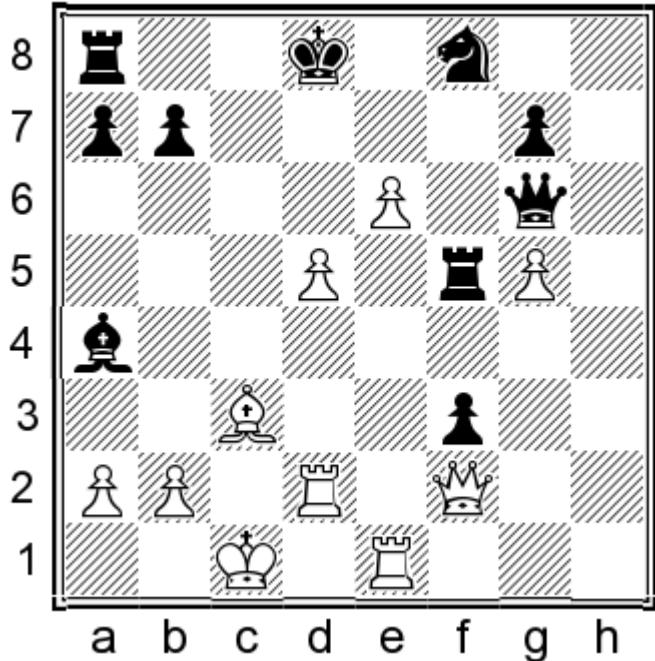
**29.e6 Ba4**

Threatening mate in one, thanks to which he wins a tempo to save his forces from the blows of the white pawns.

**30.Rd2 Rf5 31.Qf2!**

It was possible to regain the piece with 31.e7+ Kd7 32.exf8=Q Raxf8 33.Qf2 Qb6, but in the final position, we have equal pawns and opposite-coloured bishops. From f2, the white queen is not able to blockade the black passed pawn, but eyes a7 and seeks a new route to a close encounter with the enemy king.

**31...f3**



**32.Re4?**

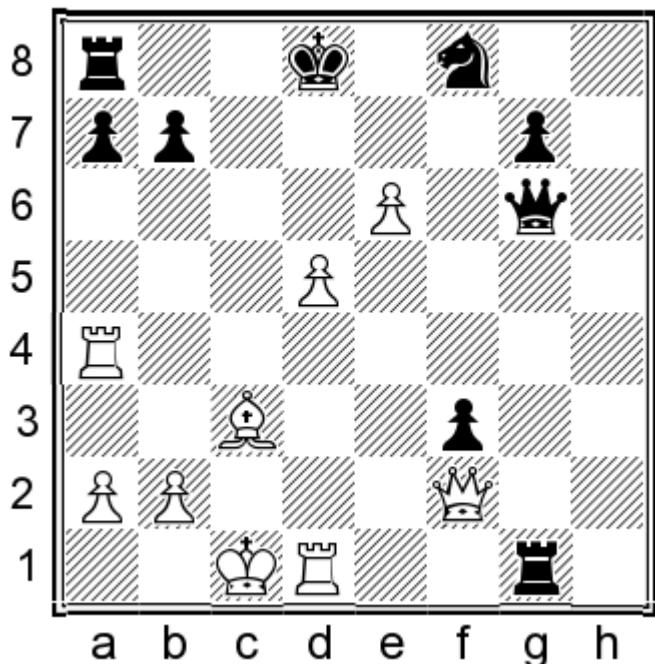
The game could have been crowned with some brilliant geometry: 32.Qc5! Ke8 (32...f2 33.e7+ Kd7 34.exf8=N+ Raxf8 35.Re7+ Kd8 36.Qc7#) 33.Qb4! Rxd5 (a crucial nuance is 33...b5 34.Qc5! – a lovely queen pendulum) 34.Qxa4+ b5 35.Qa6 Rxd2 36.Qc6+ Ke7 37.Bb4++– (pointed out by Shirov).

The rook move is less strong, since now White has weakened the back rank and Black can exploit this.

**32...Rxg5 33.Rxa4?**

Already things are completely unclear after 33.e7+ Kd7 34.exf8=N+ Rxf8, since in such a position, the knight on f8 was hardly any stronger than the powerful attacking e6-pawn. But paradoxically, White could have retracted his last move: 33.Re1! Ke8 34.Qxf3 Rc8 35.Qf2, and therefore retained a crushing initiative.

**33...Rg1+ 34.Rd1**



### **34...Rg2?**

An impulsive time-trouble decision. Thorhallsson creates a threat of mate, which White repulses. As Lubomir Ftacnik pointed out, another hasty move is 34...Rxd1+ 35.Kxd1 Qd3+ 36.Kc1 Rc8 37.Rf4 Rxc3+ 38.bxc3 Qxc3+ 39.Qc2 Qe1+ 40.Qd1 Qe3+ 41.Qd2+-, but much stronger was the subtle check 34...Qg5+! 35.Qd2 Rxd1+ 36.Kxd1 Qg1+ 37.Kc2, allowing Black to advance his main trump one square further: 37...f2. Now there is no point in 38.e7+ Kd7, and the trick 38.Rxa7!? is easily met: 38...Rxa7 39.Qf4 Qg6+ (White's idea is 39...f1=Q? 40.Qb8+ Ke7 41.Qc7+=) 40.Kb3 Nxe6 41.Qxf2 Ra6 42.dxe6 Qxe6+, and Black keeps an extra exchange, whilst after 38.Rf4 f1=Q 39.Rxf1 Qxf1 40.Qg5+ Ke8 41.Qe5 g6 White keeps some activity, but he is a rook down.

### **35.Qh4+ Ke8**

White easily wins the ending after 35...Qg5+ 36.Qxg5+ Rxg5 37.Rf4 Ng6 38.Rxf3+-.

### **36.Re4!**

White again controls the course of the game. His king is safely protected, and who will save the black king?

### **36...Rc8**

36...f2 37.e7+-.

### **37.d6 Rd8 38.Qe7#**

It is rare for a game at this level to end with a clean mate in the centre of the board, but it would seem that things concluded in time-trouble!

In the end, Alexei Shirov shared first in the tournament with Johann Hjartarson, whilst the move 7.g4!? made it to the pages of newspapers and magazines.

Game 48

Alexander Shabalov 2535

Comp Mephisto Risc

Neulsenburg rapid 1992 (2)

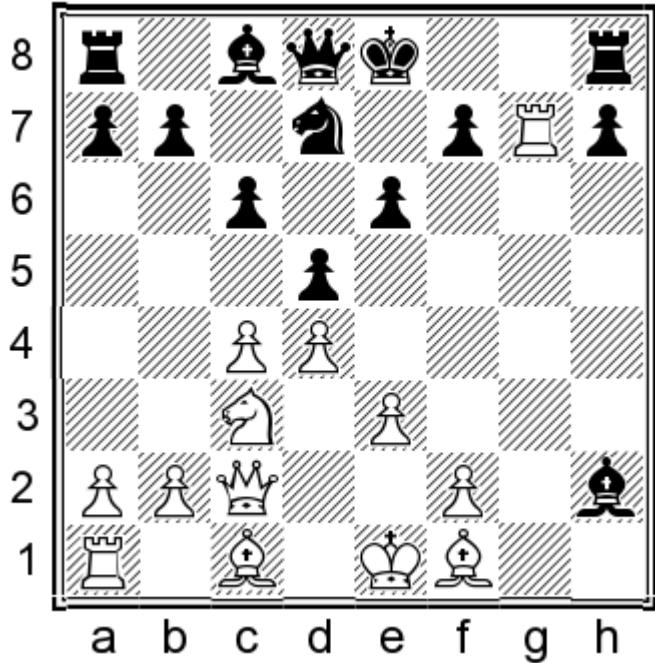
### **1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.e3 e6 5.Nc3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4**

In our day, beating a computer, especially at rapid chess, is simply an impossible dream for a chess professional. But this was back in 1992, when engines had only just beaten their first GM and Garry Kasparov's epic battles against electronic monsters still lay in the future.

### **7...Nxe4**

Of course, the machine takes the pawn and then a second.

### **8.Rg1 Nxh2 9.Nxh2 Bxh2 10.Rxg7**



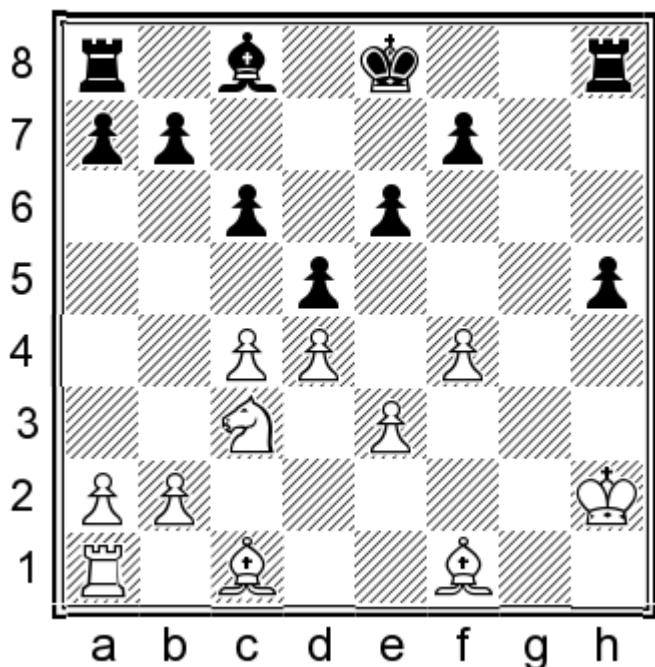
**10...h6?**

Later 10...Qf6 and 10...Nf8 were both tried, whereas after this thoughtless pawn advance, the bishop is trapped. Modern engines point out Black's mistake immediately, but for Mephisto in 1992 this was much more difficult, because it takes White another six moves to capture the bishop.

**11.f4! Qh4+ 12.Qf2 Qxf2+ 13.Kxf2 Nf6 14.Rg2 h5**

Black tries to bring help to the prisoner, and gives two pieces for the rook.

**15.Rxh2 Ng4+ 16.Kg3 Nxh2 17.Kxh2+-**



Formally, the position is close to material equality, but Black's position is hopeless, since the minor pieces control the game and are pointing at the weak squares in the centre. This is especially clear to see in the variation 17...f5 18.Nb1!? b6 19.Nd2 Bb7 20.Nf3, and the knight reaches an outpost.

**17...b6 18.e4! Ba6**

Shabalov consistently opens lines for his bishops, and if these long-range pieces find freedom, then Black will have no hope.

18...Bb7 19.cxd5 cxd5 20.exd5 Bxd5 21.Nxd5 exd5 22.Bd2 0-0-0 23.Ba6+ Kd7 24.Re1+–.

**19.b3 0-0-0 20.Be3 Rhg8 21.Rc1 h4**

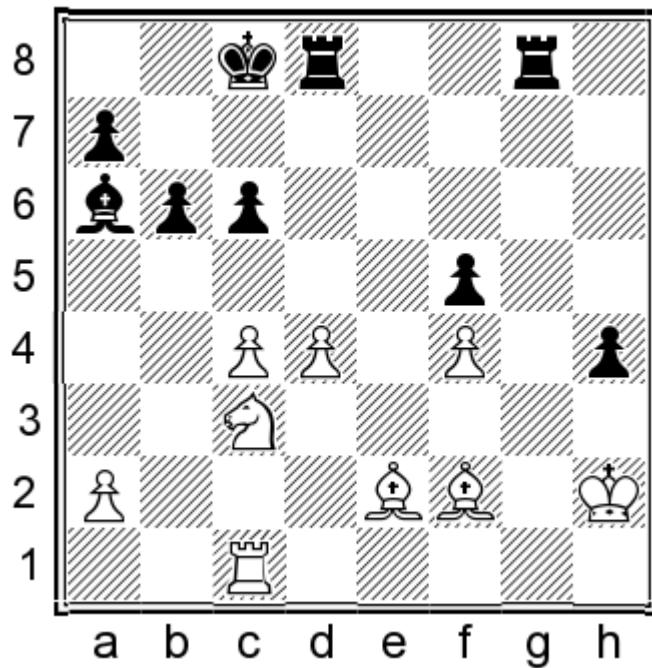
Black's only chance is some sort of breakthrough by his rooks.

**22.Be2 dxc4**

The robot goes over to active operations, since he gets nothing after 22...Kb7 23.a4 Rg3?! 24.Bf2, whilst White is calmly strengthening his position with every move.

**23.bxc4 f5 24.e5?**

This was after all a rapid game, and the GM almost allows the black pieces to become active, which could have been prevented by the accurate 24.exf5 exf5 25.Bf2.



**24...Rg3?**

24...c5 allows all the black pieces to start playing: 25.Nb5! (not 25.d5 exd5; 25.dxc5 Bb7 26.Bf1 (26.Rg1 Rxg1 27.Bxg1 Rd2) 26...Rg3 27.Re1 Rdg8 28.cxb6 Bg2 looks totally unclear) 25...cxd4 26.Nxd4 (or 26.Bxd4 Bxb5 27.cxb5+ Kb8) 26...Rg3 27.Bf2 Bb7 – lines have opened and Black has powerful counterplay. Naturally, the modern Stockfish finds this in seconds, but the 1992 robot missed its chance, which proved to be its last.

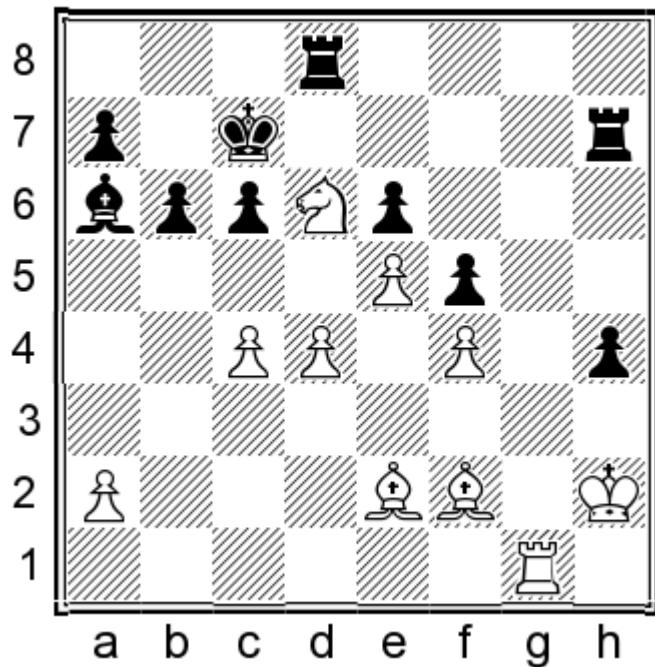
**25.Bf2 Rg7 26.Nb5! Kb8**

Not 26...cxb5 27.cxb5+, and the knight enters the enemy position.

**27.Nd6 Rh7**

With the ghastly bishop on a6, Black has no counterplay; 27...Rdg8 28.Bf3.

**28.Rg1 Kc7**



Maybe Mephisto was counting on holding after 29.Rg6 Kd7, but Shabalov demonstrates a much more convincing plan. Often in the endgame, a storm by a wing pawn helps one break into the enemy position, as the pieces exploit the entry point.

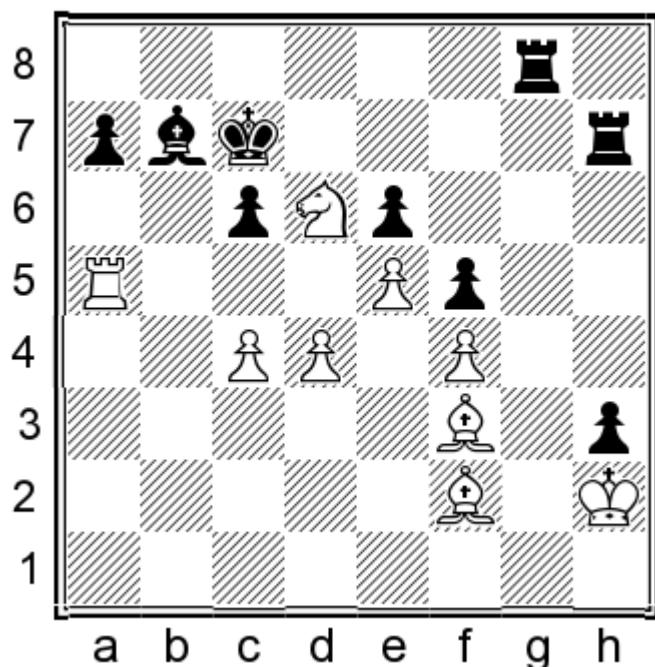
**29.a4! Rdh8 30.a5 bxa5**

After 30...Rb8 31.Ra1 Black has no other move than to take.

**31.Ra1 Rg8**

More tenacious is 31...Rb8, and before taking on a5, Shabalov would have had to remove the bishop from attack 32.Ra2 (32.Rxa5? Rb2) 32...Rb1 33.Bf3 Rb3 34.Bh1.

**32.Rxa5 h3 33.Bf3 Bb7**



The sufferings of the useless bishop end practically at the same time as the game itself. White's massive pawn phalanx advances in the centre.

### **34.Nxb7 Kxb7 35.d5 Kb8 36.dxe6**

And the computer soon lost.

Alexander Shabalov played well in this event in Germany, with characteristic energy. If it had not been for a final-round defeat against Rafael Vaganian, one of the inventors of our gambit could well have celebrated sole victory. The computer did more modestly, but took several scalps of strong players, for example in the last round defeating Grandmaster Lutz Espig.

Game 49

**Michal Krasenkow 2555**

**Alexander Filipenko 2390**

Moscow 1992

The 1992 Tal Memorial brought together an exceptionally strong line-up. Dozens of current and future grandmasters gathered to commemorate the recently deceased chess magician. Victory, with a result of 6½ out of 9, was shared by Michal Krasenkow, Naum Rashkovsky and Sergey Makarychev – a trio of not only well-known strong players, but also authoritative chess trainers and popularizers of the game.

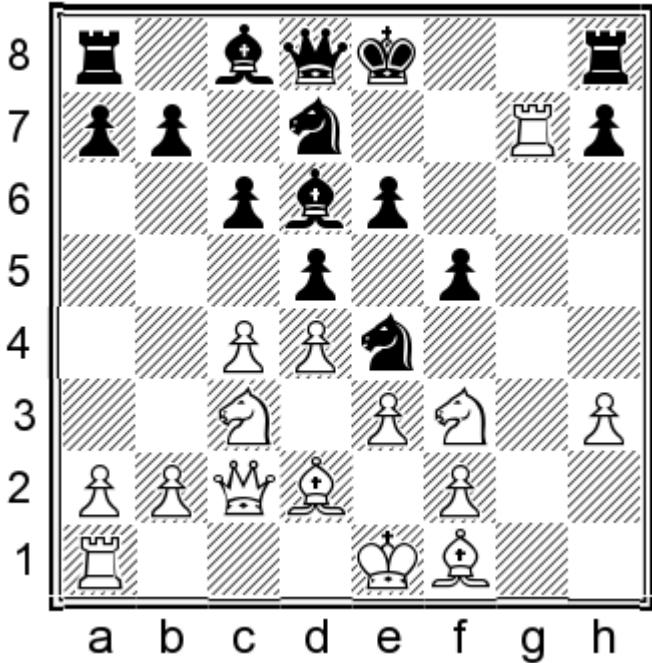
In a conversation with the author of this book, Michal Krasenkow modestly recalled a few details of a long-past event: ‘We played in the area of Tsvetnoy Bulvar. Vitaly Tseshkovsky lost a winning position against me, and this resulted in my success in the tournament. I don’t remember who won on tiebreak, but the prizes were shared equally. They were large, especially for those difficult times. If I am not mistaken, \$8,000, \$6,000 and \$4,500.’

But the real key to success in the hands of Krasenkow was the miracle Shabalov-Shirov Gambit, in which he scored bright victories.

### **1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 Nxg4 8.Rg1 f5**

Krasenkow’s opponent is the famous master and theorist, Honoured Coach of Russia Alexander Filipenko, who for a long time helped Alexey Dreev and Alisa Galliamova. In the game, Filipenko brought a new plan for Black into fashion – he returned the pawn, but created the conditions for transferring his wandering knight to the excellent e4-square.

### **9.h3 Ngf6 10.Rxg7 Ne4 11.Bd2**



### **11...Qf6**

Later Black tried other ways of driving away the white rook, e.g. 11...Kf8!? 12.Rg2 Rg8 Wells-M.Gurevich, Antwerp 1994, and now the strong sacrifice of the f2-pawn which we will see in Kasparov's game: 13.0-0-0! Rxg2 14.Bxg2 Nxf2 15.Rg1 Ne4 16.Be1 Ndf6 17.Ne5, (Dao Thien Hai-Thallinger, Budapest 1995) or 11...Nf8 12.Rg2 Ng6 13.0-0-0 Bd7 14.Qb3 Qb6 15.h4 Nxd2 16.Kxd2 Qxb3 17.axb3 with the better endgame for White in Sargissian-Al Sayed, Gibraltar 2005.

The queen move looks rather more natural.

### **12.Rg2 b6**

This attempt to fianchetto the bishop is met by a white queen raid, so later players looked for something different. Significantly more popular is 12...Nf8 13.0-0-0 Ng6. The transfer of the knight to g6 looks logical, but now White has several paths to develop his initiative, e.g. 14.Bd3 Bd7 15.Rdg1 Bc7 16.Be1 (Kasparov-P.H.Nielsen, Reykjavik rapid 2004) 16...0-0-0, but now White was able fearlessly to quieten down the enemy cavalry: 17.h4!? Nxh4 18.Nxh4 Qxh4, which was seen in the game Krasenkow-Al Sayed, Amsterdam 2004 (dangerous is 18...Nxc3 19.Qxc3 Qxh4 20.Qa3 Kb8 21.Bb4 Rc8 22.Bc5 with threats against the black king): 19.f3 Qh3. In the game Krasenkow did not take the piece, but that option was possible: 20.fxe4 fxe4 21.Be2 Bh2 22.Bg3 Bxg1 23.Rxg1 Rhg8 (Black has regained the piece, but even so, the white pieces are stronger than his rook) 24.Bf1 Qh6 25.Qd2 Rdf8 26.Be2 Rg5 27.Bd1! Qg6 28.Ne2±, and having harmoniously regrouped his ranks, White has secured his advantage. So, even in the main line, Black's path is not strewn with roses.

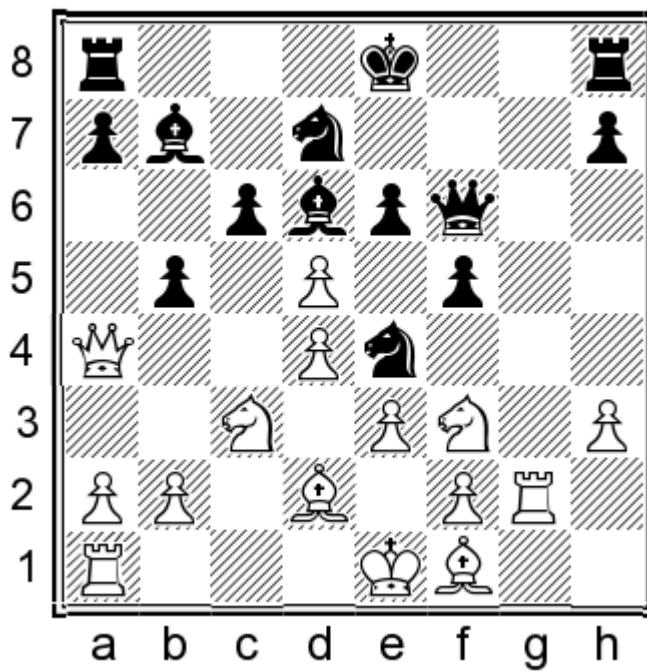
### **13.Qa4!?**

The Polish GM with the Moscow roots immediately takes the bull by the horns. It was possible to develop quietly with 13.0-0-0 Bb7 14.Kb1 with the idea of 14...0-0-0? 15.cxd5 Nxc3+ 16.Bxc3 exd5 17.Bd3 Rhf8 18.Rdg1, and Black has to give up his entire central position, in order to secure his king. But it is extremely tempting immediately to exploit the weakened light squares in Black's camp!

### **13...Bb7 14.cxd5 b5?**

Filipenko was probably put off by the discomfort after 14...exd5 15.Ba6! b5 16.Qa5 Rb8 17.0-0-0<sup>2</sup>, but this was the lesser evil, since the emotional pawn counterattack is met by a sacrifice reminiscent of the game Morphy-

Consultants!



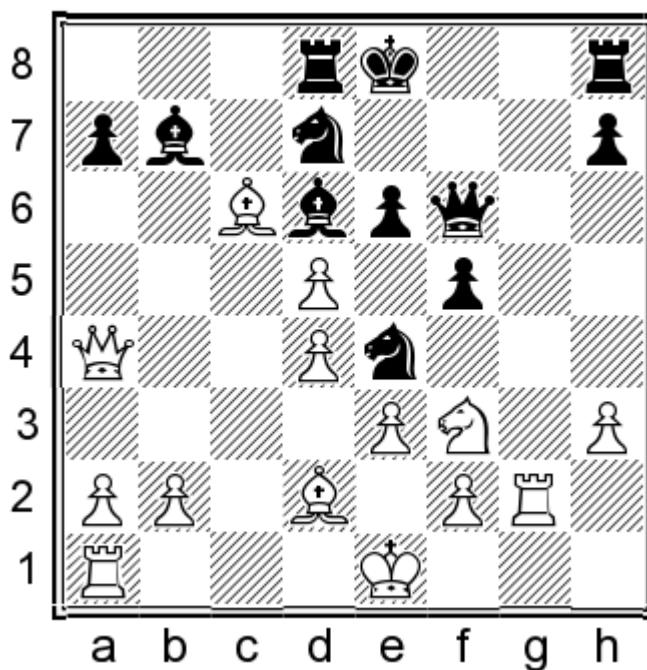
### 15.Nxb5! cxb5 16.Bxb5 Rd8?

White's pressure is very dangerous, despite the fact that his king has not yet escaped to either side of the board and he has not yet mobilized all his forces. Of course, the master is reluctant to retreat his queen from her active position, but the rook move could have been punished immediately.

After 16...Qe7! White should play 17.Bxd7+ Qxd7 18.Qxd7+ Kxd7 19.Rg7+ Kc8! (19...Be7? 20.Bb4 Rae8 21.Ne5+ Kd8 22.d6+) 20.dxe6 Bd5 21.Ba5 Bxe6 22.Rc1+ Kb8 23.Bc7+ Bxc7 24.Rcxc7 Bd5 25.Ne5, obtaining a large advantage, thanks to his total control over the 7th rank.

### 17.Bc6?

Slightly detracting from the game's overall impression. Instead, a raid by the inactive bishop, 17.Ba5! Bxd5 18.Bxd8 Qxd8 19.Rg7 Nef6 20.Ne5, would put the full stop on the game. Black is helpless.



## **17...Nxd2?**

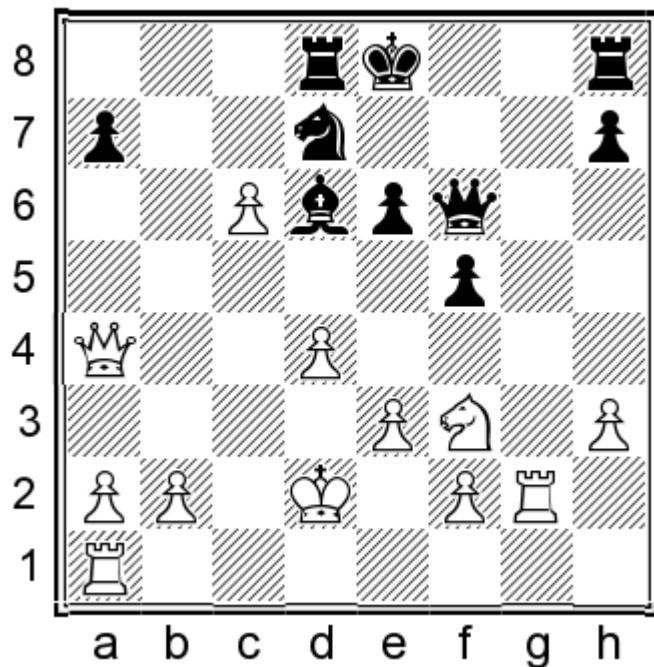
Only a careful note of the fact that the only weakness of the white position is his weak king could lead Black to the counterattacking thrust 17...f4!! 18.Bxb7 (it is easy to see that 18.exf4 Nxd2 or 18.dxe6 Bxc6 19.Qxc6 Qxe6 leave Black a favourable position) 18...fxe3 19.Bxe3 Qxf3 20.Kf1 Ng3+ 21.Kg1 Ne2+, giving perpetual check.

He cannot fight with the white grouping on the queenside, as it is just too strong – neither 17...Bxc6 18.dxc6 nor 17...Bc8 18.Ba5, but the decision in the game is hardly any better.

## **18.Kxd2 Bxc6**

The rule ‘the best move is a retreating move’ definitely does not apply in every position – 18...Bc8 19.Rag1 exd5 20.Bxd5±, mobilizing all his forces. White is winning now, and Black still hasn’t solved the problem of his king.

## **19.dxc6**



## **19...Nb6**

The last chance to confuse White was the clever 19...Nc5!? 20.Qxa7 (not 20.dxc5? Qxb2+) 20...f4 (nothing is given by 20...Ne4+ 21.Ke2), but after the calm 21.Re1! Ne4+ 22.Kd1 all chances would lay on Krasenkov’s side.

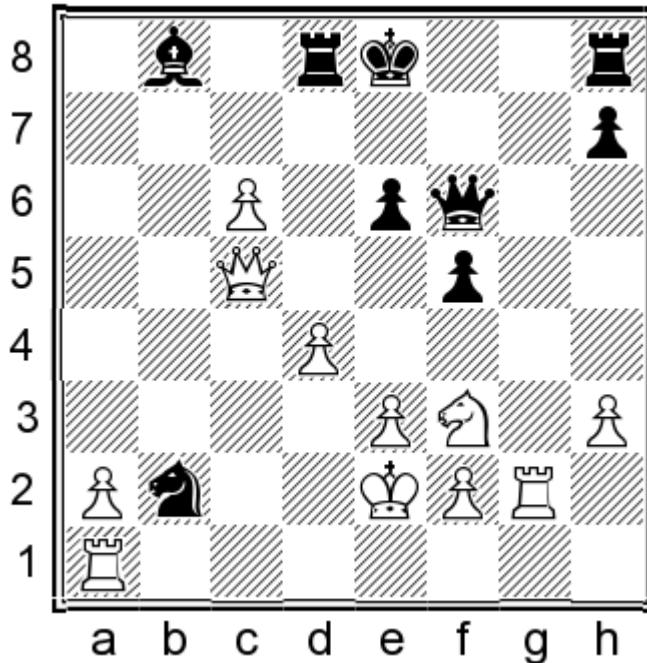
## **20.Qxa7 Ne4+?**

A blow in the air, as the knight is soon lost. But the other squares are significantly worse than e4 in the previous variation – 20...Nd5 21.Rg7 forces him to run back; 21...Ne7 22.Rag1, and the white attack achieves its aim.

## **21.Ke2 Bb8**

An unpleasant surprise – after 21...Qe7 22.c7! Qxc7 23.Qxc7 Bxc7 24.Rc1 the piece is regained and White’s extra pawns remain. Filipenko returns the material in another way, but still gets a lost endgame.

## **22.Qc5 Nxb2**



**23.c7 Bxc7 24.Qxc7 Qe7 25.Qxe7+ Kxe7 26.Ne5 Rdg8 27.Rxg8 Rxg8 28.Rb1 1-0**

Later, Black's position was defended according to the newfangled trend by none other than the Slav Defence expert, Evgeny Sveshnikov. At that time, the grandmaster from Chelyabinsk was considered the greatest specialist in the emerging set of positions (the Meran Variation, the Botvinnik Variation, the Moscow Variation), and published an article in the journal *Shakhmaty v Rossia* entitled 'The Slav Circle', which for a long time was considered almost canonical. However, Sveshnikov could not withstand Krasenkov's pressure.

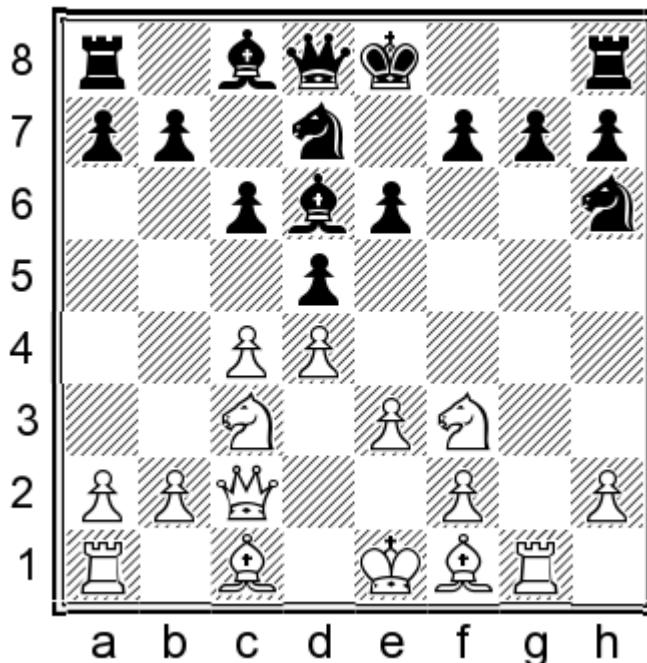
#### Game 50

**Michal Krasenkov** 2555

**Evgeny Sveshnikov** 2525

Moscow 1992

**1.Nf3 d5 2.d4 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 c6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 Nxg4 8.Rg1 Nh6**



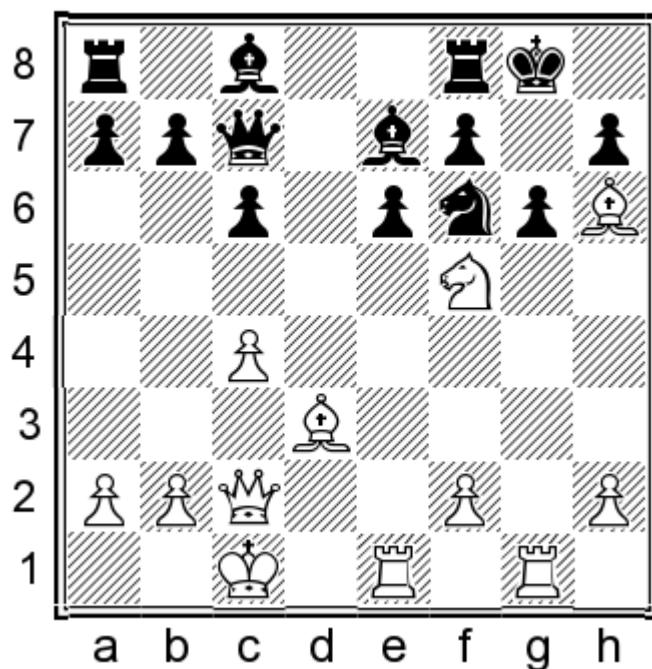
Fully in the spirit of Sveshnikov's recommendation in the Slav Circle article. After the knight retreat to the edge of the board, we have a true gambit on the board, since White cannot now play 9.Rxg7 because of 9...Qf6 with a fork, and so he must seek other ways to develop his initiative.

## 9.e4

White has also tried to postpone the opening of the centre for a move or two. 9.Bd2 Nf5, and then:

A) 10.e4 dxe4 11.Nxe4 Be7 12.0-0-0 Nf6 13.Bd3 g6 14.Bc3 0-0 15.h4 Qc7 16.Ne5 Nxh4? (it is dangerous to make this capture and open the h-file for White, and he should instead settle for 16...b5!?, trying to seize the d5-square for his knight) 17.Ng5 Nf5 18.f4 b5 19.Qh2! (White also has tremendous pressure after 19.Bxf5 exf5 20.Qh2 or 19.Rh1 Ne3 20.Qh2 Nxd1 21.Nxh7 Nh5 22.Kxd1) 19...b4 20.Bxf5 exf5 21.Nxh7! Ng4 (21...Nxh7 22.Rh1) 22.Nxg4 fxg4 23.Rh1 g3 24.Qh6 bxc3 25.Nf6+ 1-0 Shirov-Dreev, Moscow blitz 1993;

B) Or 10.0-0-0 Nf6 11.Bd3 0-0 12.e4 dxe4 Be7 14.Ng3 Nxd4. Despite his heavy defeat in the game against Krasenkow, Sveshnikov stuck in principled fashion to his novelty and in a game against the well-known Armenian GM he took a second pawn. The black queenside is asleep for the time being, but White has still to demonstrate that his initiative is worth the sacrificed material: 15.Nxd4 Qxd4 16.Bh6 Qe5 (the bishop cannot be taken: 16...gxh6? 17.Nf5+) 17.Rde1 Qc7 18.Nf5 g6 (of course, not 18...exf5 19.Bxg7 Ng4 20.Bc3 – the knight is regained and the black king position ruined. But what now? After all, if White immediately takes the exchange, then the opponent obtains excellent compensation)



**Test 35.** How should White continue the attack?

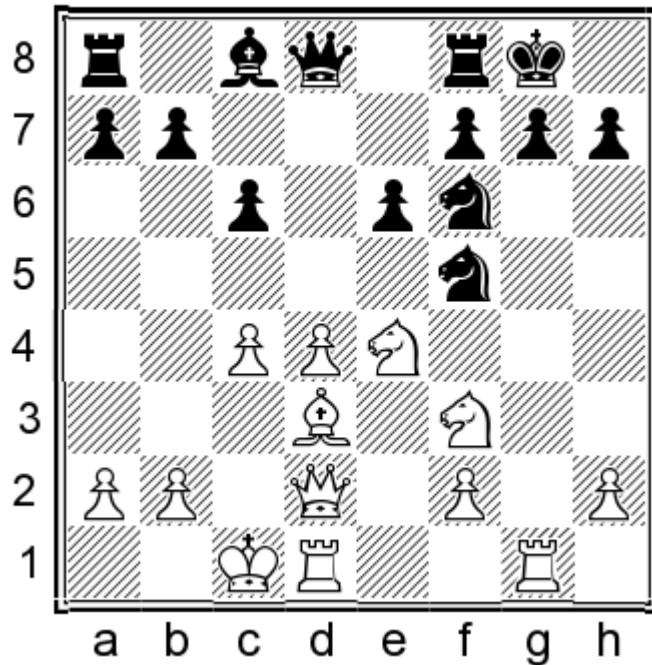
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** In the game, he tried to go after the g6-pawn with 19.Nh4?!, but nothing came of this: 19...Bd6! 20.Kb1 Bf4 21.Bxf8 Kxf8 (Lputian-Sveshnikov, Tilburg 1992), and Sveshnikov eventually emerged victorious. It is significantly stronger to play for domination – 19.Nxe7+! Qxe7 20.Qc3 (not the hasty 20.Bxf8 Qxf8, as in this position, the bishop is stronger than the rook) 20...Ne8 (20...Rd8? 21.Bg5 Kg7 22.Re3, and the pin on the knight at f6 is decisive) 21.f4 Bd7 22.Rd1 (again not hurrying with 22.f5 Qf6) 22...Rd8 23.Bc2, and it is hard for Black to move, e.g. 23...Qf6? 24.Qa3!.

## 9...dxe4 10.Nxe4

The white bishop is too precious to be exchanged for the wandering knight: 10.Bxh6 gxh6 11.Nxe4 Bf4.

**10...Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Qxd2 Nf5 13.0-0-0 Nf6 14.Bd3 0-0**



The compensation looks great, but how can we exploit the opening of the g-file?

**Test 36.** For example, can we take on g7?

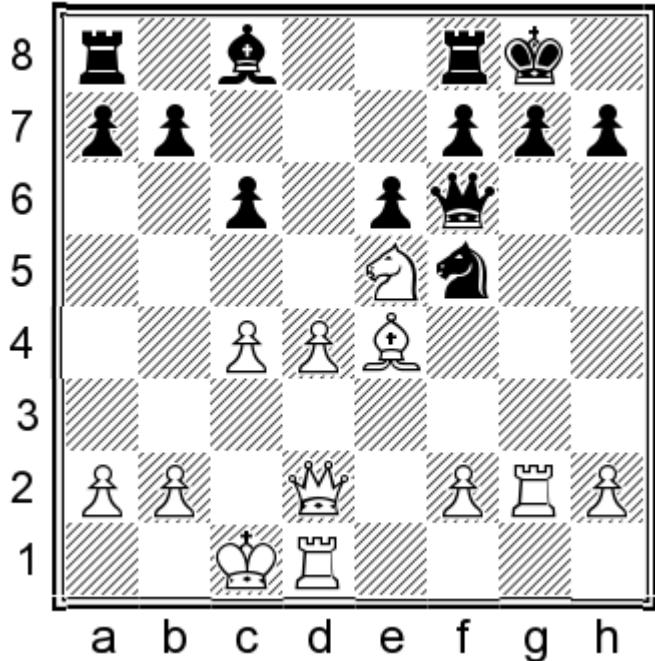
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** 15.Rxg7+!? is extremely tempting, but leads only to a draw. Not 15...Nxe4 16.Qh6 Nxe4 17.Bxe4 f5 18.Ng5 and Black has to surrender the queen: 18...Qxg5+ 19.Qxg5 fxe4 20.Rg1 Rf7 21.Qd8+ Rf8, for which he has reasonable material equivalent in terms of a rook and two minor pieces, but the defender's forces are scattered and cannot consolidate: 22.Qd6!, and, for example, the tempting 22...Rf7? simply loses: 23.d5! exd5 24.Qd8+ Rf8 25.Qe7 Rf7 26.Qe8+ Rf8 27.Qe5! Rf7 28.Rxg7+ Rxg7 29.Qe8#.

However, correct is 15...Kxg7! 16.Qg5+ Kh8 17.Ne5 Qe7! (after 17...Bd7? 18.Rg1 h6 19.Qxf6+ Qxf6 20.Nxf6 the bishop comes under attack, e.g. 20...Be8 21.Bxf5 exf5 22.Kd2±) 18.Qxf6+ Qxf6 19.Nxf6 Kg7 20.Nh5+ Kh6 21.Nf6 Kg7= Genov-Fridman, Istanbul 2003.

Michal Krasenkow played rather more strongly – White calmly doubles rooks on the g-file, bringing up yet another attacking piece for the storm.

**15.Rg2! Nxe4 16.Bxe4 Qf6 17.Ne5**



**17...Rd8?**

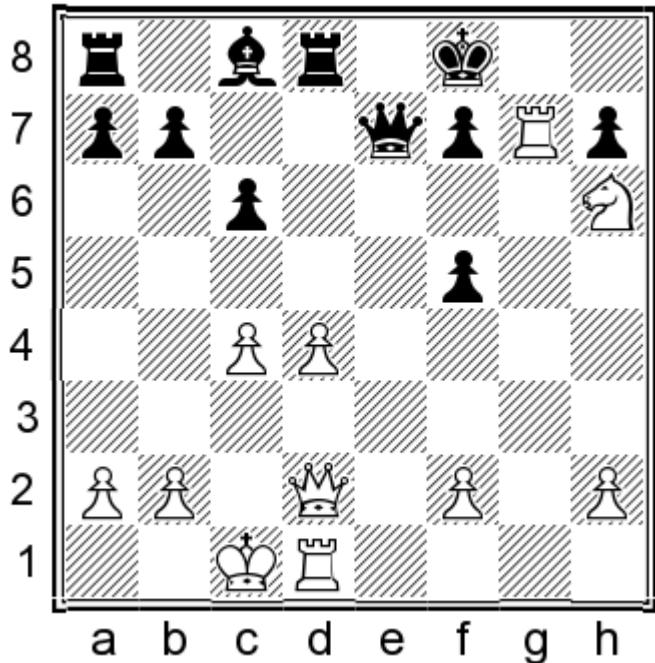
One can easily understand Evgeny Sveshnikov, who tries to extinguish the flames by attacking the pawn on d4, but correct was the more accurate 17...g6!. After 18.Qf4 White has good compensation for the material, and the whole battle lies ahead. Now a sudden straight blow from the knight allows one of the tournament winners to obtain a decisive advantage.

**18.Ng4! Qe7?**

Black had no doubt suffered a very unpleasant surprise. On 18...Qxd4 there follows 19.Nh6+, and Black cannot play 19...Kf8? 20.Qb4+ because of the loss of the queen! But he had to try sacrificing the exchange: 19...Kh8 20.Nxf7+ Kg8 21.Nxd8 Qxe4 22.f3 Qxc4+ 23.Kb1 and White has a clear advantage, but the position remains sharp and Krasenkov would still need to find some accurate moves.

**19.Bxf5 exf5 20.Nh6+ Kh8**

Nothing changes after 20...Kf8 21.Rxg7.



Does it seem as though Black is defending? No, now the blow which was premature on move 15 works, and leads to the end of Sveshnikov's king.

### **21.Rxg7! Kxg7 22.Rg1+ Kh8**

There is no route forward: 22...Kf6 23.Qg5+ Ke6 24.Re1++-.

### **23.Qe2!**

A nice blow on the theme of deflection, after which Black resigned.

The variations are short and clear: 23...Qf6 24.Qe5; 23...Re8 24.Qxe7 Rxe7 25.Rg8#; 23...Qxe2 24.Nxf7#; 23...Be6 24.Nxf7+.

Mikhail Tal would have been pleased with this game, with its effective mating finish.

Of course, with his first steps in the line White also experienced some setbacks. For example, at the super-tournament in Dortmund the emerging star of English chess decided to play the gambit against the world champion. However, as often happened, Garry Kasparov was up to the mark and unveiled the most forthright reaction to the advance of the g-pawn.

#### Game 51

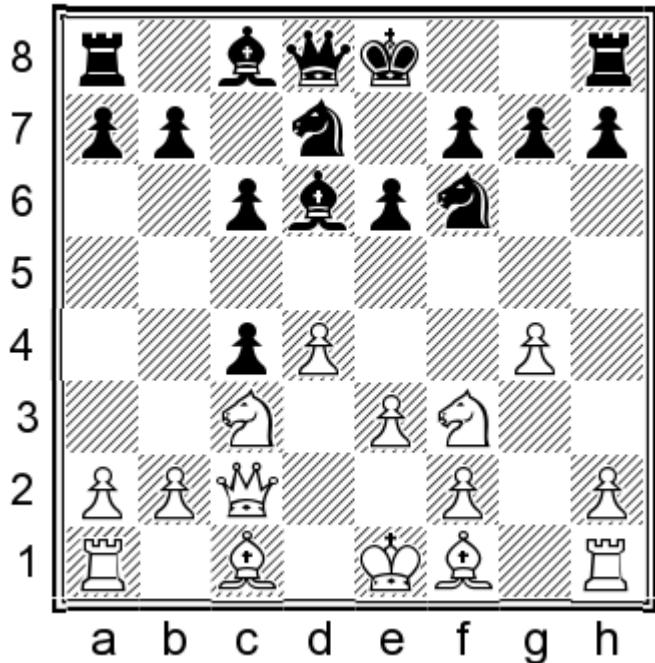
**Michael Adams** 2620

**Garry Kasparov** 2780

Dortmund 1992 (8)

### **1.d4 d5 2.e4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 Nf6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 dxс4!?**

At that time, this was a novelty, and later the move was at the forefront of the most relevant theoretical discussions. Faced with an innovation from the thirteenth World Champion, Adams reacted unsuccessfully. Indeed, a fair amount of ingenuity is required of White, because Black intends to clear the centre, and then the shortcomings of the g-pawn move will clearly outweigh its advantages.

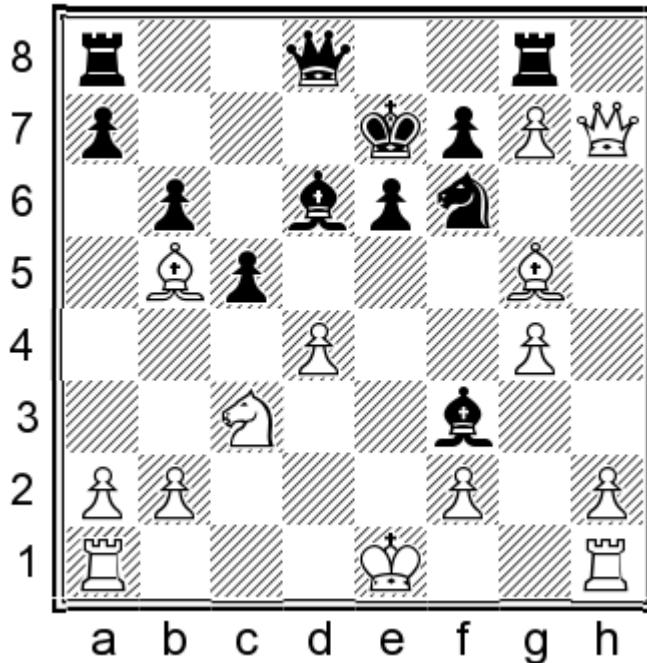


### 8.e4?

Later, one of the main lines became 8.g5 Nd5 9.Bxc4 e5! 10.Bd2 0-0 11.Nxd5 cxd5 12.Bxd5 exd4 13.Be4!? dx<sub>e</sub>3 14.Bxe3 Qa5+ 15.Kf1 Ne5!, with a sharp and roughly equal game (Mamedyarov-Zherebukh, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011) – in the battle for the initiative, the two sides have rejected each other's sacrifices and try to outdo the other in a kind of gambit gentlemanship.

White often tries to be more subtle with **8.Bxc4**. Of course, if there follows 8...e5! 9.g5 Nd5, then we get the above variation where, as we saw, lines do not get opened, but in practice Black has sometimes played **8...b6?!**, which is less accurate. Thus, **9.e4**. The inventor of the gambit played against the future World Championship challenger in a game Gelfand-Shabalov, Bermuda 2004, which went **9...Bb7 10.e5 c5**. Because of the threats on the long diagonal, White really has to enter an exchange of blows. The reward for his efforts is a powerful passed pawn on g7, which is ominously close to the desired promotion: **11.exf6 Bxf3 12.fxg7 Rg8 13.Qxh7 Nf6!** Shabalov avoids a beautiful crush after 13...Ke7 14.Bg5+! f6 15.0-0! fxg5 16.Rfe1 Bxg4 17.Bxe6! Bxe6 18.Nd5+ Kf7 19.Qh5+ Kxg7 20.Rxe6 with decisive threats against the black king.

### 14.Bb5+ Ke7 15.Bg5



The white rook on h1 is under attack, but Black will not succeed in taking it – if his knight on f6 perishes, so will Shabalov's king.

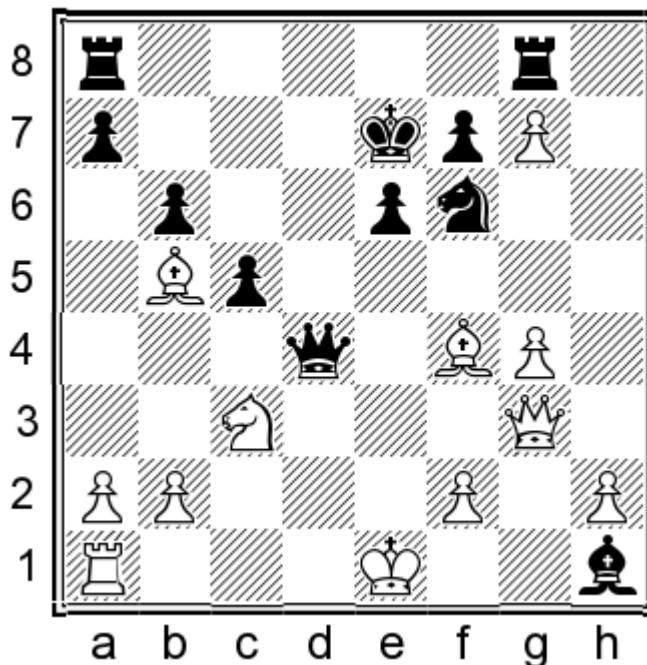
**Test 37.** What if we try to defend with 15...cxd4 ? Black is ready to defend his knight with the bishop from e5.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The simple 16.Ne4!? Bxe4 17.Qxe4 is not best, because there is the more attractive and precise line 16.Qh6 Be5 17.Ne4! Bxe4 18.f4! – Black has an extra piece and he can take the rook, but none of this helps.

In the game, Alexander Shabalov tried to deflect the powerful attacking bishop with 15...Bf4!? – taking on f4 is not possible, since the white queen would be attacked. But Boris Gelfand found a convincing refutation:

**16.Qh3! Bxh1 17.Bxf4 Qxd4 18.Qg3**

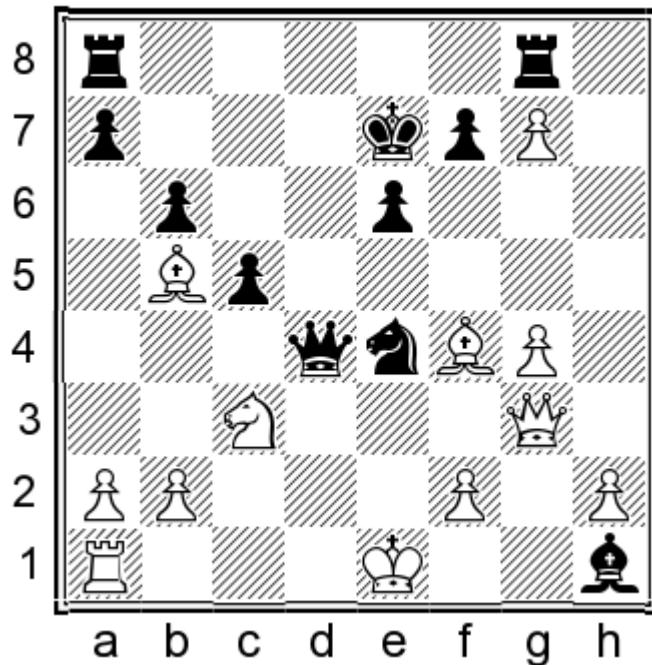


White has extremely powerful compensation for the exchange and Black does not manage to remove the 'splinter' on g7 because of the threat 19.Rd1.

**18...Ne4**

Here Gelfand gave the check 19.Qh4+ Qf6 20.g5, and won surprisingly quickly after 20...Qf5? 21.0-0-0+— threatening check with the rook on a7 and the bishop. However, stronger was 20...Qxg7! 21.0-0-0 Rad8 (Tikhonov-Novitsky, Minsk 2004) 22.Rxh1 Rh8 – White has to defend against the threats with 23.Be5 Qxe5 24.Qxe4 Qxg5+ 25.f4 Qf6 26.h3, and in the final position he is only a fraction better.

For a while, the line was considered playable for Black, until the computer revolution saw the Playchess team and the analytical engine Rybka and its programmer Vasik Rajlich show an improvement of the attack:



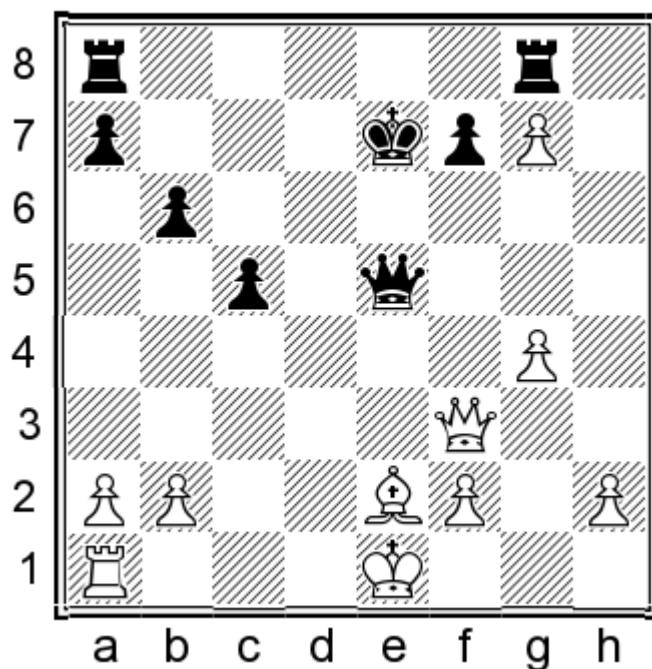
**19.Nxe4! Qxe4+ 20.Be2! e5**

Otherwise the bishop is trapped: 20...Rxg7 21.f3+—.

**21.Bxe5 Bf3**

Obviously if 21...f6 22.Bc3 Rxg7 23.0-0-0 White wins, but what should be done if Black saved the bishop?

**22.Qxf3 Qxe5**



This is where the human analyses ended – Black has kept the exchange and is ready to devour the pawn on g7. But the computer power allowed it to be established that White's attack is irresistible in all variations.

**Test 38.** Can you find the accurate move, after which the storm by the white army should be crowned with success?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Looking at the games of the greatest masters of attack, sometimes one is amazed – often the most violent attack begins with prophylaxis. The computer is not inferior in this regard: White modestly moves his king, making way for the rook.

### **23.Kf1!! Rad8**

The king is lured into a mating net very nicely after 23...Qxg7 24.Qe4+ Kf6 25.Qf4+ Ke7 26.Qc7+ Kf6 27.Qd6+! Kg5 28.f4+ Kh4 29.Qd3+–.

### **24.Re1 Qxg7 25.Bc4+ Kf8**

The wandering king is finally sheltered behind the trusty pawn, but he does not run far.

### **26.Re4!**

Defending the pawn g4, preparing a blow on f7 and a simple move for domination. Black is in a bad way after 26...Rd7 27.Rf4 Qg6 28.h4+–, and the advancing white pawns decide the outcome of the battle.

Therefore there followed 26...Qg6 27.Bxf7! Qxf7 28.Rf4 Rg7 29.h4 Kg8 30.Rxf7 Rxf7 31.Qe2, and the queen and pawns proved stronger than the rooks: 31...Rd4 32.Kg2 Kh7 33.h5 with a quick win in Rajlich-King Crusher, playchess.com.

The other try on move 9 is also not so encouraging for Black: 9...e5 10.g5 – here, unlike in Adams-Kasparov, 1992 Black cannot carry out a favourable clearance of the centre and is obliged to retreat the knight to the edge of the board: 10...Nh5 11.Be3 0-0 12.0-0-0 Qc7 (after 12...Qe7 it is enough to disturb the knight, offering it a sad choice: 13.Ne2! g6 14.Ng3, Schandorff-Bocharov, Istanbul 2003) and the computer monster tried to hold the black position here against Garry Kasparov. However, the great champion played the attack faultlessly, and once again executed his teacher's favourite pawn thrust:

13.d5 b5 (forced, since after the quiet 13...Bb7 14.Rd2 Bb4 15.Rhd1 White is pressing and the Nh5 is out of play) 14.dxc6 bxc4 15.Nb5! Qxc6 16.Nxd6. The white knight dominates in the centre and virtually paralyses the black army. The chess terminator played 16...Bb7 17.Qc3 and here Black suddenly gave up the exchange: 17...Rae8?!(Kasparov-Comp Deep Junior, New York 2003), after which the realization was no great problem for Kasparov. In his commentary, Garry Kimovich pointed out that he was expecting 17...Rab8 18.Rhe1 Qa4 19.Kb1 Bc6 20.Rc1 – White has safeguarded his king and now goes after the c4-pawn.

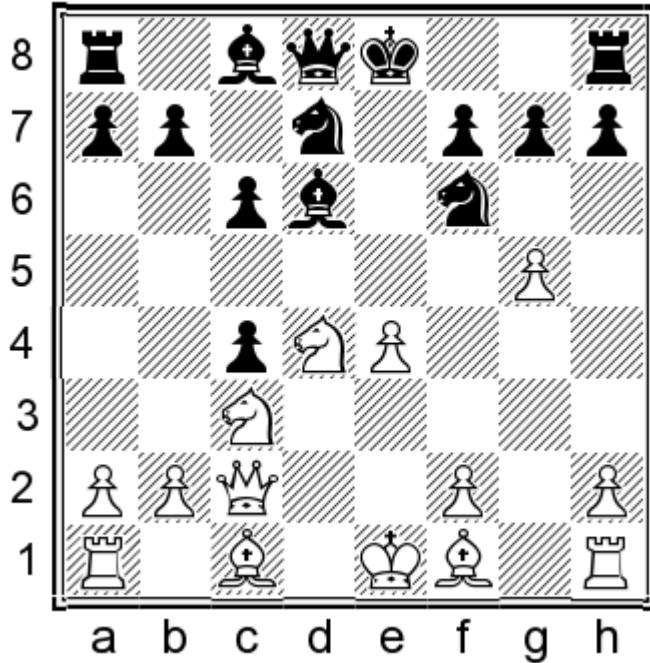
Meanwhile, at the board in Dortmund 1992, Michael Adams could have had no idea of the sort of battles which would arise in future from the position on the board in front of him. Maybe the Englishman intended a set-up similar to those seen above, but simply mixed up the move-order and allowed a strong black retort.

### **8...e5! 9.g5**

White gives away all the dark squares after 9.dxe5 Nxe5 10.Nxe5 Bxe5 11.g5 Nh5, so he must go all the way. Alas, though, Black is not obliged to put his knight on h5.

### **9...exd4! 10.Nxd4**

It is hopeless after 10.gxf6 Qxf6 11.Nxd4 Qxd4 12.Be3 Qf6 13.Bxc4 Ne5 14.Be2 Nf3+ – White is a pawn down with a bad position.



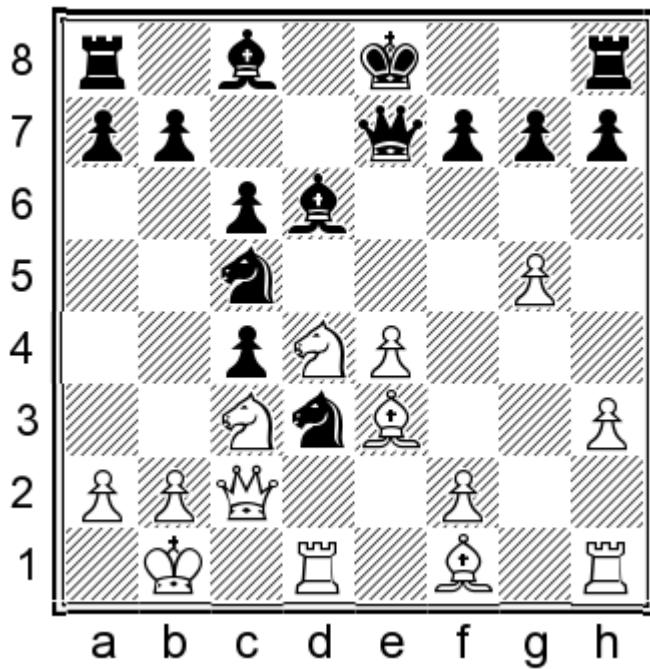
**10...Ng4! 11.h3**

Bad is 11.Bxc4 Nde5 12.Be2 Bc5+ or 11.f4 Bc5, but the English GM, despite being hit by the opponent's powerful novelty, plays a series of good moves and almost puts things right with his position. Admittedly, as so often happened against Kasparov, it only lasted a short while...

**11...Nge5 12.Be3!**

Bad is 12.f4 Bc5! 13.Nf5 Nf3+ 14.Ke2 Nd4++.

**12...Nc5 13.0-0-0 Ned3+ 14.Kb1 Qe7**



Kasparov has manoeuvred his octopus-knight via c5-d3, a device that was a hallmark of his and one with which Garry the Thirteenth even beat his great predecessor Anatoly Karpov. The knight can only be removed at great cost, e.g. 15.b3? Nb4 16.Qd2 Nxe4++, but White has no cause for desperation: 15.h4! g6 (in the game, Garry also

defended the square f5 like this, not allowing the exchange 15...0-0 16.Nf5 Bxf5 17.exf5) 16.f3 Bd7 17.h5 with counterplay – White is a pawn down, but everything is defended and there are targets to attack.

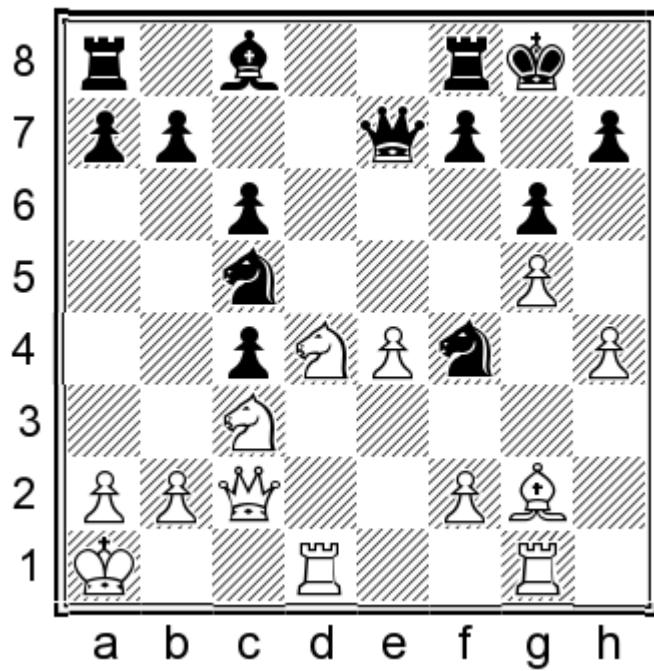
## 15.Rg1?! g6!

An excellent solution, not allowing 15...0-0?! 16.Nf5 Bxf5 17.exf5 Be5 18.f6 with an attack for White.

## 16.Bg2?

White should probably have chosen 16.f3 or 16.h4, although with the rook on g1 this is already not so effective. In the game, Kasparov now even permits himself kingside castling, as the centralized black pieces enable him to ward off all the threats.

## 16...0-0 17.Ka1 Bf4! 18.Bxf4 Nxf4 19.h4



## 19...Rd8 20.Qd2 Ncd3 21.Qe3 Bg4 22.Rd2 Qe5

And White stopped the clocks, because after 23.Nc2 Rd7 he has practically no reasonable moves. A terrible rout!

The tournament in Dortmund was very difficult for Kasparov, who sensationally lost to Robert Hübner and the young Gata Kamsky. However, the final victory over Adams eventually helped the World Champion overtake Vasily Ivanchuk.

At that time, any idea used by the invincible Garry Kasparov instantly became a worldwide fashion, both among the elite and in the circles of ordinary chess players. It is therefore not surprising that the year 1993 was that of the capture 7...dxc4. One of the key duels happened at the FIDE interzonal tournament.

At that time, after the departure of Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short from the auspices of the International Chess Federation and the creation of the rival PCA, two interzonals were held – in Biel and Groningen. FIDE selected ten players, and Jan Timman and Artur Yusupov were allowed through without needing to qualify. The twelve players played two rounds of elimination matches and then the remaining three were joined in the semifinals by Anatoly Karpov.

In Biel, the qualifiers included Boris Gelfand, Gata Kamsky, Alexander Khalifman, Joel Lautier, Leonid Yudasin, Vladimir Kramnik, Valery Salov, Michael Adams, plus the big surprise Paul van der Sterren.

Alexei Shirov performed excellently, but in the end, in the most annoying way, he was just behind Vishy Anand on

tiebreak – one wonderful grandmaster went to the Candidates, and the other remained behind. However, this sporting failure was offset by a number of creative achievements by the brilliant master of attack.

### Game 52

Alexei Shirov 2685

Vladimir Akopian 2600

Biel izt 1993 (5)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4!?** **dxc4 8.Bxc4**

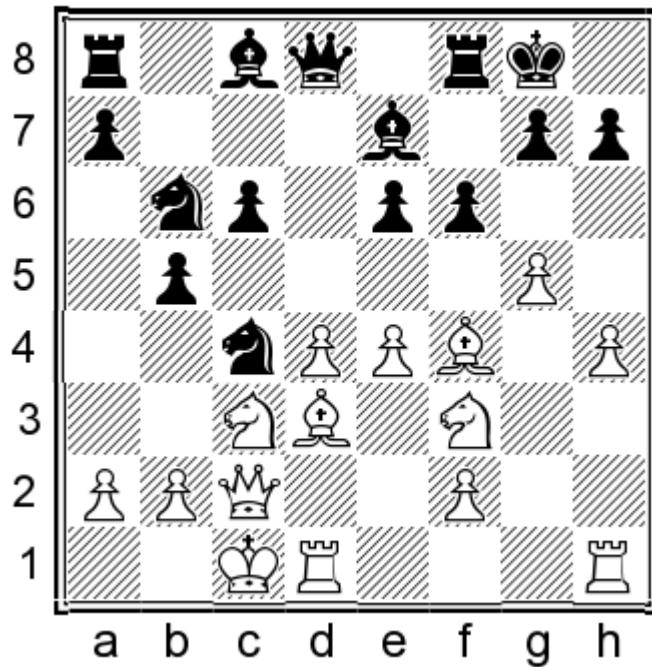
Alexei Shirov plays the most principled continuation.

**8...b5?!**

I should remind the reader once again that it took Black many years of searching to find the idea 8...e5 9.g5 Nd5. Instead, Vladimir Akopian tries to meet White's assault with a symmetrical pawn counter on the other flank.

**9.Bd3**

In the Playchess days, Rajlich won another instructive game after 9.Be2!? 0-0 10.e4 Be7 11.g5 Ne8 12.Bf4 Nd6 13.0-0-0 Nb6 14.Bd3 Ndc4 15.h4 f6.



**Test 39.** Maybe you do not have a super-computer or the latest analytical module. But in this position, White's methods of attack should be in the arsenal of every cultured chess player. How can we crush Black's bastions?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Correct is 16.g6!. Few people in this position would ever reply 16...h6, whilst after 16...hxg6 17.Rhg1 Qe8 18.e5 f5 19.Rg3! Bb4 20.Rdg1 a direct crush down the g-file soon brought White the victory in Rajlich-King Crusher, playchess.com 2006.

Why did Shirov put the bishop on d3? It is logical that on this square the bishop is more active, plus after the other bishop retreat the Uzbek GM defended solidly: 9.Be2 b4!? 10.Na4 Bb7 11.g5 Nd5 Malaniuk-Serper, Lucerne 1993, with unclear play.

**9...Bb7**

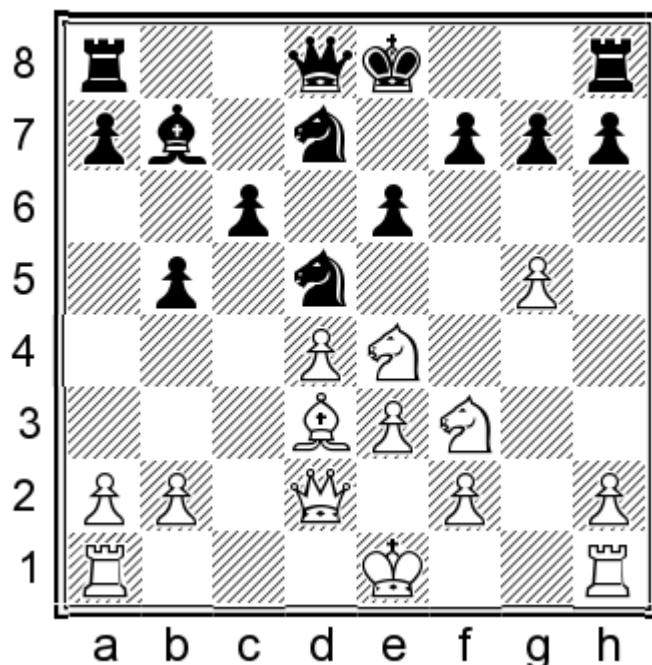
In his commentary, Shirov correctly points out that it is not favourable for Black to play 9...N<sub>x</sub>g4 10.Ne4 Bb4+ 11.Bd2 Bxd2+ 12.Nfxd2 0-0 (he must defend against the fork on d6) 13.Rg1 Ngf6 14.Qxc6 Rb8 15.Rc1 with strong pressure for White but maybe he should play like Serper with 9...b4!? 10.Na4 Bb7 ? Now the white knight gets an active position in the centre.

### 10.g5 Nd5

Black tries to create active counterplay. In the rather odd variation given by GM Lubomir Ftacnik, 10...c5? 11.Nxb5 Bxf3 12.Nxd6+ Ke7 13.gxf6+ gxf6 (no better is 13...Kxd6 14.fxg7) 14.Rg1 Kxd6 material equality is retained, but the position of the black king on d6 does not give him any chance of surviving: 15.Rg3 Bb7 16.b3+-.

### 11.Ne4 Be7

Of course, Vladimir Akopian clings to the dark-squared bishop like gold dust; after 11...Bb4+?! 12.Bd2 (it is even worth considering 12.Ke2!? Be7 13.Bd2) 12...Bxd2+ 13.Qxd2 who will defend the square c5?



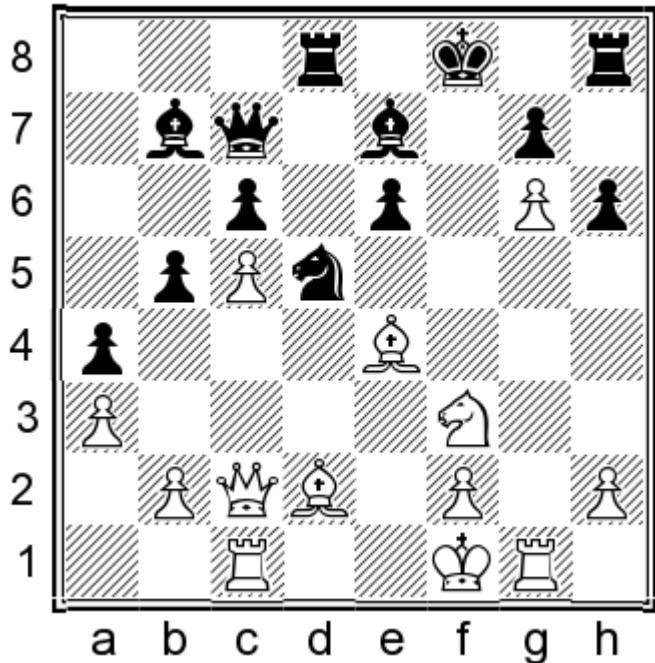
White has created an important precondition for the future assault by putting his pawn on g5, but now it is important for him to mobilize all his pieces, so that the subsequent storm will be harmonious and not be a premature rush with inadequate forces. Another expert on the line played a pawn sacrifice in this position: 12.a3 Qb6 13.b4?! a5! 14.Nc5 axb4 15.Nxd7 Kxd7 16.e4 Nc7 17.0-0, Shabalov-Lesiège, New York 1993, and even managed to bamboozle his opponent, but Shirov's treatment looks more solid.

### 12.Bd2! Qb6

12...Nb4 13.Bxb4 Bxb4+ 14.Ke2 only allows White to coordinate his rooks, whilst on e2 his king will feel perfectly comfortable.

### 13.Rc1 Nb4

Another remarkable example from the crossroads of human and computer chess was played at the aforementioned Playchess advanced chess league: 13...a5 14.a3 h6 15.Rg1 Kf8 16.g6! f5 17.Nc5 Nxc5 18.dxc5 Qc7 19.Kf1 a4 20.e4 fxe4 21.Bxe4 Rd8 Dobrov-VoidChessICC, playchess.com 2005.



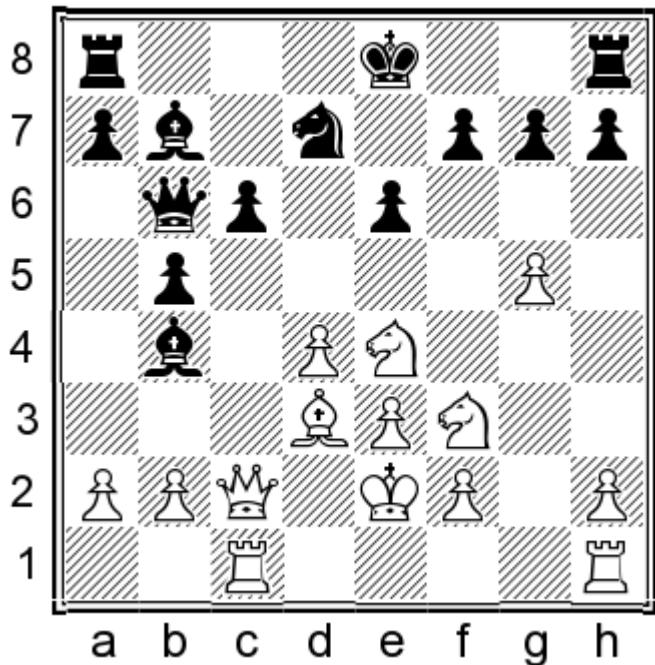
**Test 40.** How should White play?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** White has a mass of tempting possibilities. However, one is struck by the fact that both sides have the same problems: their king prevents the coordination of their own forces. Therefore Dobrov refrained from forcing variations and played simply 22.Kg2! Kg8 23.Rge1± – the Russian GM's defences soon crumbled.

Meanwhile, no other strong possibilities are evident for Black, and the finalist at the 1999 FIDE knockout takes the dark-squared bishop anyway.

**14.Bxb4 Bxb4+ 15.Ke2**



Now what? Akopian's position looks extremely unpleasant, especially because at first glance, White's play seems quite simple – 15...0-0-0? 16.Qb3 winning the pawn on b5, 15...Be7 16.h4 a5 17.Nc5± or 15...Rc8 16.a3 Be7 17.b4 a5 18.Nc5±. Occupation of c5 and the attack on the kingside should decide things easily.

However, the white king remains in the centre, although it is defended by his forces – why not make him feel some discomfort?

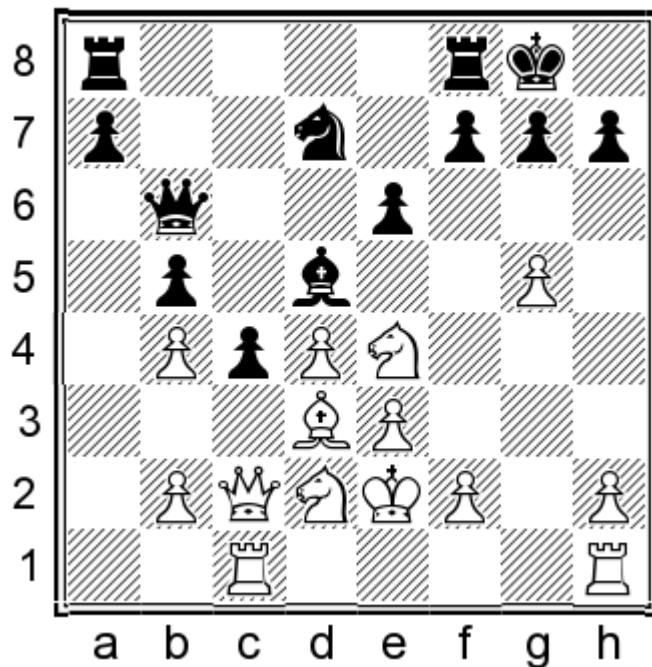
**15...c5!?**

The justification for this central counter is the variation 16.dxc5 Nxc5 17.Nxc5 Rc8, but chess is not checkers and capturing is not obligatory.

**16.a3! c4 17.axb4 Bd5!?**

The primitive 17...cxd3+ 18.Qxd3 Bd5 19.Nfd2 0-0 20.Rhg1 leaves White with not only an extra pawn, but also excellent piece placement, so Akopian keeps the tension – the white bishop on d3 looks doomed, but the execution is postponed.

**18.Nfd2! 0-0**



**19.Rhg1!**

Another accurate move, as Shirov emphasizes that the black king is in danger. For example, if 19.Nc5 cxd3+ 20.Qxd3 Nxc5 21.bxc5 Qb7 22.Rhg1 a5 23.Rg4 White is still better, but the black queenside pawns will advance and things are not entirely clear.

**19...e5!?**

A practical chance – Black refuses to allow 19...cxd3+ 20.Qxd3 Rac8 21.Nc5±, but objectively the text should lose.

**20.dxe5!**

Lovely play, instead of prosaically 20.Nxc4 bxc4 21.Bxc4, trying to play just for extra material (at least, temporarily).

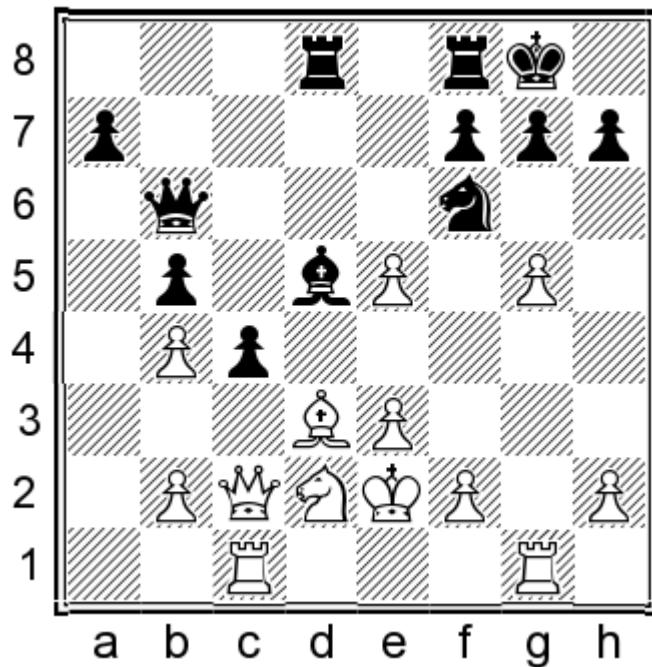
**20...Rad8**

The knight cannot abandon the defence of important squares around its king: 20...Nxe5 21.Nf6+!, whilst taking the doomed bishop 20...cxd3+!? 21.Qxd3 Qe6 changes nothing fundamental: 22.Nf6+!, and Black is in a bad way.

Including the rook allows him to strengthen the threat of taking on d3.

## 21.Nf6+ Nxf6

Alas, it is completely hopeless after 21...gxf6 22.Bxh7+ Kh8 23.gxf6, and the white queen hurries to the h-file from f5. Meanwhile, if one looks closely, there is now a real threat of 22...cxd3, winning the queen.



**Test 41.** How dangerous are Black's counter-threats, and how would you continue the attack?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** In the game, Shirov settled for the simple

## 22.Bf5!?

The bishop has survived much of what has threatened him, and, before exchanging, removes another of the enemy king's main bodyguards.

## 22...Nh5 23.Bxh7+ Kh8 24.Bf5

With advantage to White, which the Riga GM conducted to victory. However, there was a stronger defence in 22...Nd7! 23.Bxh7+ Kh8 – the e5-pawn is hanging, and 24.Rg4?! g6 25.Rh4 Kg7 does not work, so White would need to come up with something else.

It is a great pity that the game did not see the queen sacrifice 22.gxf6! cxd3+ 23.Qxd3 Bf3+ 24.Nxf3 Rxd3 25.Rxg7+ Kh8 26.Kxd3+–. The rook, knight and pawns should overcome the enemy queen!

Simple methods did not prove adequate to cool White's fervour, even for those who among the strongest in the world! But there were few people of the level of Kasparov at that time who were producing powerful ideas for Black.

In this regard, Vladimir Kramnik won the most important psychological game three years later. The future World Champion did not just beat his conqueror from the 1994 Candidates matches and the future World Championship challenger, he also showed the simplest set-up, which won the hearts of both grandmasters and ordinary amateurs for a long time.

The game was played in the Eurocup qualifying group, where the German super club Empor (top boards Kramnik, Shirov, Lobron) competed with the Yugoslav Agrouniversal (Gelfand, Beliavsky, Popovic) for a place in the finals.

As it happened, the top boards set the tone for the match – the Germans prevailed with a score of 4-2.

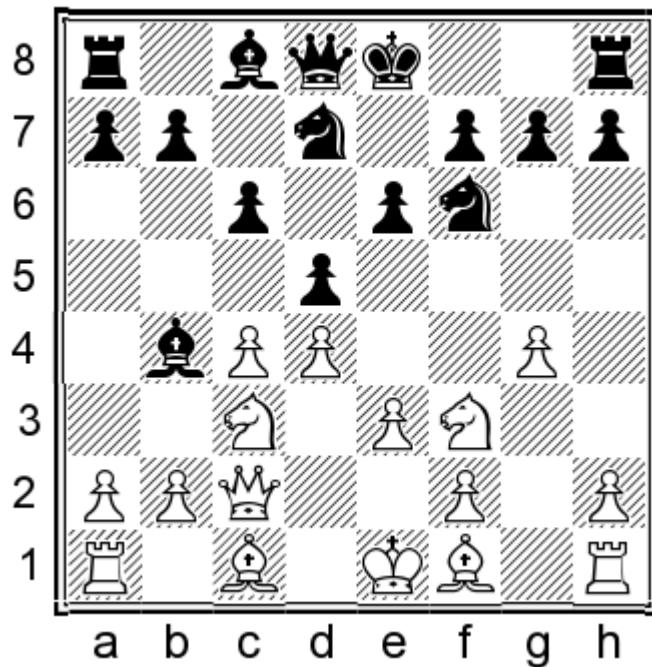
Game 53

Boris Gelfand 2665

Vladimir Kramnik 2765

Berlin tt 1996 (2)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 Bb4!?**

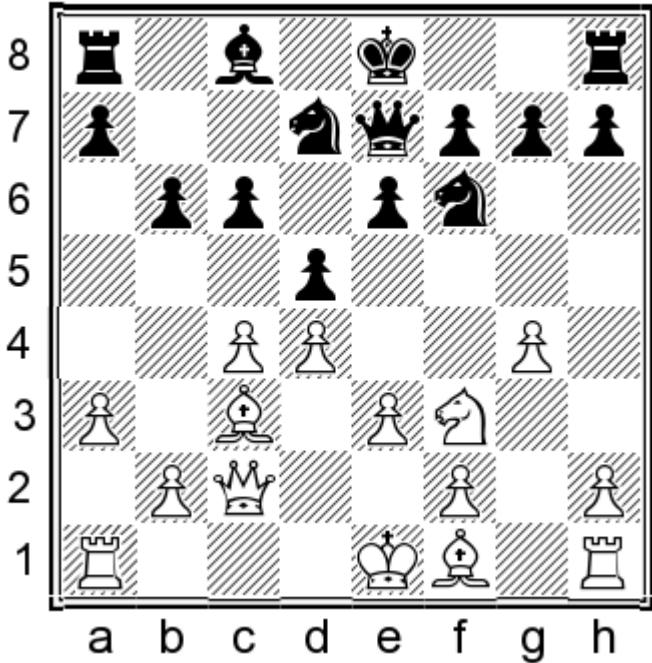


This expenditure of a tempo to get control of the central square b4 was first played in Krasenkov-Pekarek, Germany Bundesliga 1992/93, but next move Black played ...a7-a5 and lost quickly. But a year later, the correct idea was shown by the well-known female player Ilakha Kadymova at the Berlin festival. However, it was Kramnik who introduced the plan to the very top level.

**8.Bd2 Qe7 9.a3**

Later White switched his attention to 9.g5 or 9.Rg1!?, but seeing the position for the first time, Gelfand decided to fight against the ‘tempo-eating’ dark-squared bishop. But it transpires that White cannot manage without the set-up pawn g5 + rook g1 anyway, otherwise his entire kingside construction looks strange and will be a source of headaches.

**9...Bxc3 10.Bxc3 b6!**



The Russian ignores the pawn on g4, as it is more important to activate his worst piece, which is the bishop on c8.

### **11.Bd3?!**

He is reluctant to meet his opponent head on with 11.cxd5 exd5 – the black bishop can no longer come to a6, but now it obtains another diagonal on which the g4-pawn is located.

White played better in a subsequent game: 11.Rg1! Ne4 12.Bd3 Nxc3 13.Qxc3 Bb7 14.cxd5 exd5 15.g5 g6 16.h4 (Kempinski-Pinter, Batumi 1999) with a complicated game, but Boris Gelfand allows Kramnik to exchange a pair of bishops, which is not in his favour.

### **11...Ba6 12.Qa4**

Instead 12.cxd5 Bxd3 13.Qxd3 exd5 looks terrible – why did White play g2-g4 ? On 12.b3 Black can show typical chess greed with 12...Nxe4 13.Rg1 f5, whilst after 12.g5 dxc4 13.Be2 Nd5 14.Bd2 b5 Black simply has an extra pawn, so there is no alternative to the queen move.

### **12...dxc4! 13.Qxa6**

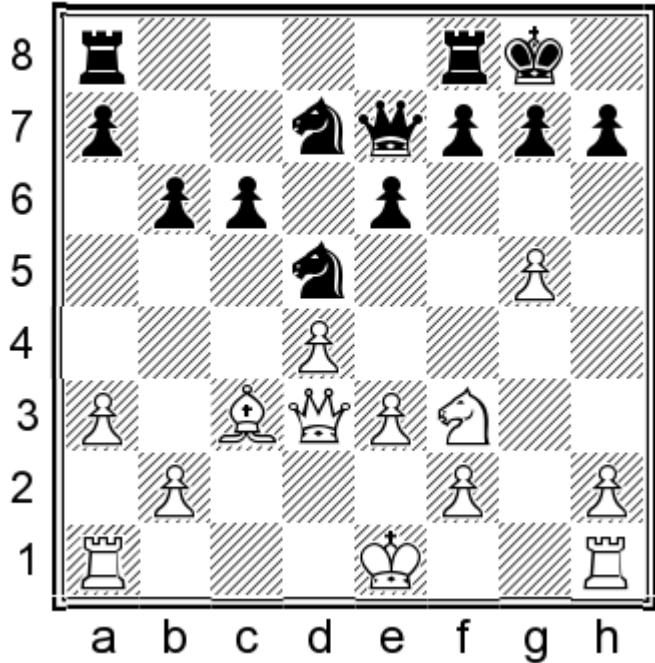
Taking the other pawn opens a valuable diagonal for the black bishop: 13.Qxc6 Rc8 14.Qa4 Bb7 15.Be2 a5µ (Kramnik).

### **13...cxd3 14.Qxd3**

In games between strong players the explanation of a mistake is very often that the player departed from his prepared variation, because he suddenly realized that it does not work and he either made a banal miscalculation or misjudged the position.

Thus, here Gelfand could have intended the interesting attempt to penetrate with 14.Qb7 0-0 15.Ne5!?, but on closer examination realized that 15...Qe8! 16.Nxd3 (16.Nxc6 Nd5 is dangerous, as the pawn on d3 is still alive and the white raiding party is still stuck in the enemy camp) 16...Rc8 17.Qxa7 Nxg4 – Black's king is better, he has no weaknesses and the white queen still has to find a route home.

### **14...0-0 15.g5 Nd5**



Nothing remains of White's attack and meanwhile, it would be nice if he could ensure a solid place for his king.

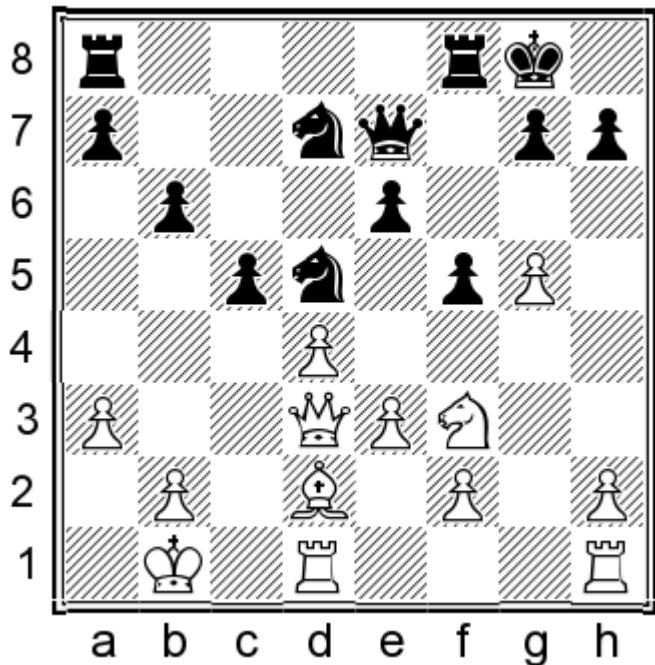
### **16.Bd2 f5!?**

Black could secure his advantage with 16...e5 17.dxe5 Nxe5 18.Nxe5 Qxe5 19.0-0-0 Rad8μ but Kramnik plays rather more subtly – White cannot open the f-file and has to accept that the enemy knight can come to e4.

### **17.0-0-0**

Naturally, the king wants to escape the centre, but on the queenside it jumps from the frying pan into the fire. One can recommend 17.h4, trying to distract Black with a pawn offensive, or the modest 17.Rc1, but it is one thing to give advice, by pressing the space bar on the computer, but another thing entirely to battle a future world champion with the clock ticking.

### **17...c5 18.Kb1**

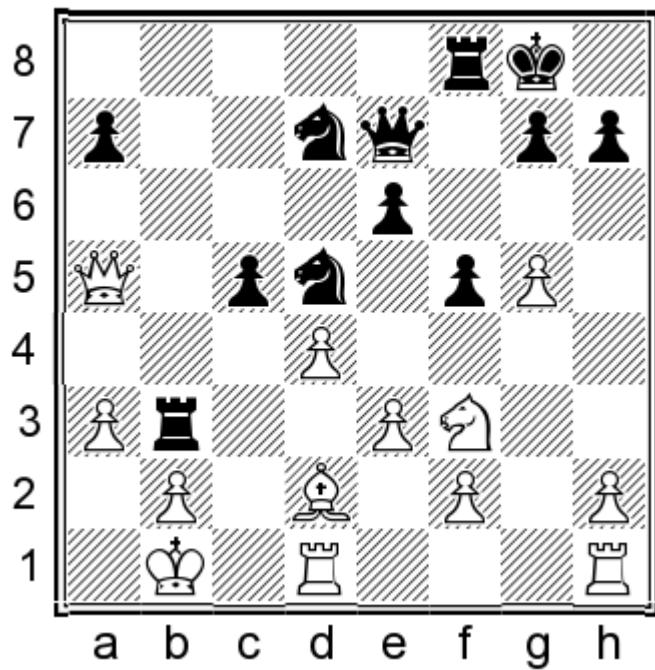


**18...b5!**

Another effective decision, possibly prompted by the association with similar ideas in the Caro-Kann. White has to take the daring pawn, opening the b-file for Black's heavy artillery. Note that Black can always meet 19.g6 with 19...h6.

**19.Qxb5 Rab8 20.Qa5 Rb3?!**

The rook wants to get closer to the enemy king, where it creates more threats, and it is not first obvious why the modest 20...Rb6! is stronger. However, with the text, Kramnik gives his opponent a serious chance to defend.



**21.Ka2?**

It is always very difficult to decide which rook to put on an open file. Likewise, should one move the king to h1 or h2, when castled kingside? The problem the Israeli GM had to solve was no less tricky. It seems that on a2, the king is ready to take on the daring rook, but it would be better for His Majesty to retire deeper into his own air-raid shelter: 21.Ka1! Rfb8 22.Rb1 cxd4 (here the motif in the game is not so strong: 22...e5 23.dxe5 Nxe5 24.Nxe5 Qxe5 25.Qxc5 Rxb2 26.Qd4!, offering the queen exchange and saving his king from any unpleasantness) 23.Nxd4 – the rook on b3 is attacked (it would also have done better not to meddle in the thick of the battle), and the bold 23...Nc5!? 24.Nc6 Qd6 25.Nxb8 Rxb8 26.b4 Qe5+ 27.Ka2 Ne4 28.Rb2 Nxf2 29.Rhb1 Ne4 gives Black excellent compensation for the exchange, but all the battle would lie ahead, whilst one popular computer engine assesses the position as 0.00.

**21...Rfb8 22.Rb1 e5!**

Black gets in ...e6-e5 anyway and this proves decisive.

**23.Rhc1**

White loses after 23.dxe5 Nxe5 24.Nxe5 Qxe5, and b2 hangs with check: 25.Bc3 Nxc3+ 26.bxc3 Qe4; also hopeless is 23.Ka1 e4 24.Ne1 N7b6 25.Qxc5 Qxc5 26.dxc5 Nc4.

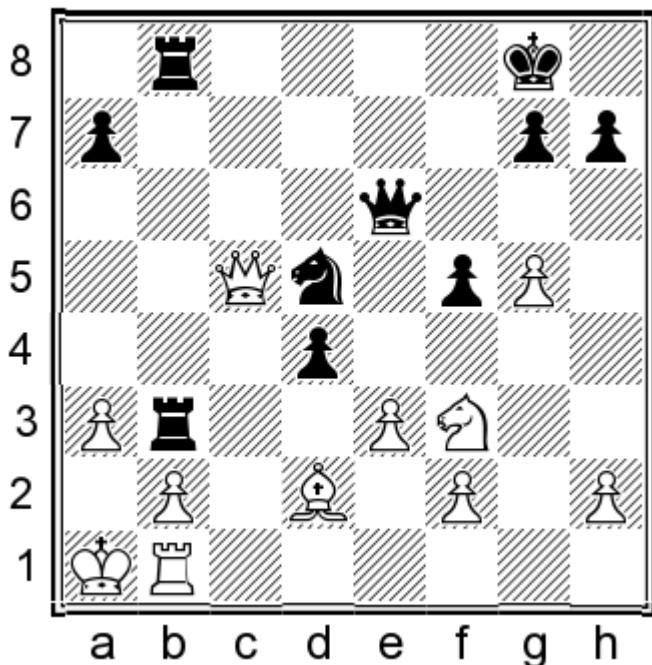
**23...Qe6!**

An important inclusion of the queen, leading to a forced mate.

**24.Ka1 exd4 25.Rxc5**

Not 25.exd4 because of the loss of the knight after 25...Rxf3, but giving up the exchange does not work either.

**25...Nxc5 26.Qxc5**



**26...Nc3!**

A beautiful conclusion to the attacking symphony.

**27.Nxd4 Rxb2 28.Rxb2 Qa2+!**

White resigned because of mate in one.

Over the next seven years, the battle in the variation continued with varying success. After Black's first victories and a significant increase in the army of fans of Kramnik's exchanging idea ...Bb4, ...Qe7, ...Bxc3, ...Ne4 at the start of the new millennium, White gradually found the right sequence of moves, starting with 9.Rg1!. Thus, Garry Kasparov's second at the 2000 match with Vladimir Kramnik, grandmaster Mikhail Kobalia, played the line twice and then it was the turn of the ex-World Champion himself, who had decided to battle with another electronic monster.

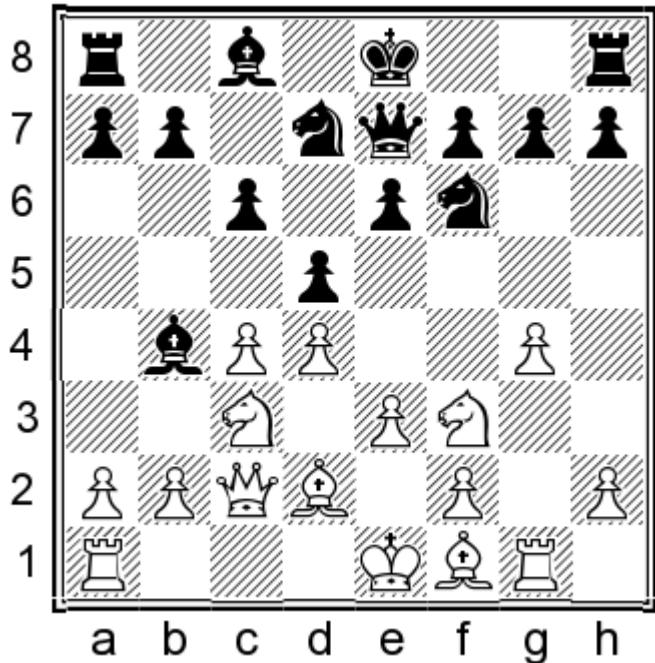
Game 54

**Garry Kasparov 2830**

**Comp Fritz X3D**

New York m 2003 (1)

**1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 Bb4!? 8.Bd2 Qe7 9.Rg1!**

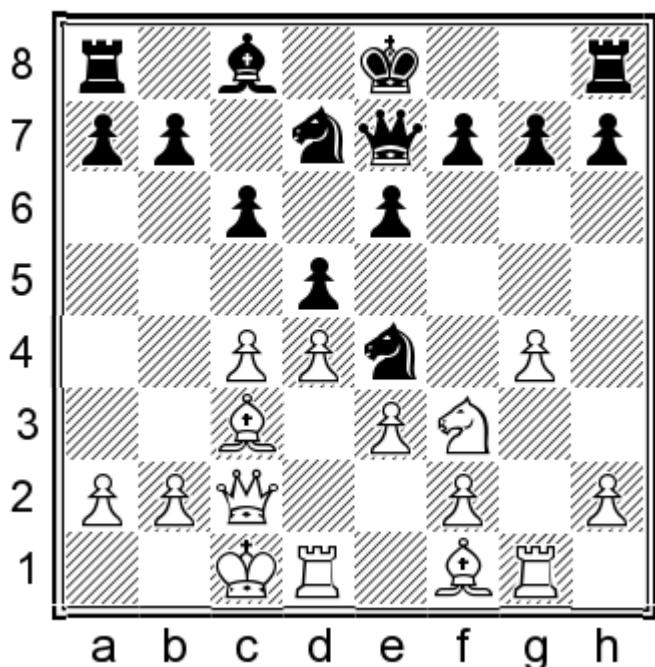


### 9...Bxc3

At that time, it was considered that the following line was almost refuted: 9...b6 10.cxd5! cxd5 (the subtle point is that after 10...exd5 11.g5 Bxc3 12.Qxc3 Black's knight and pawn c6 are hanging) 11.Bd3 Bb7 12.g5 Ne4 (the queen is allowed in after 12...Bxc3 13.Qxc3 Ne4 14.Qc7± Barsov-Sandipan, Dhaka 2001) 13.Nxe4 dxe4 14.Bxe4 Rc8 15.Qb3± (Kobalia-Sandipan, Dubai 2001) with a healthy extra pawn. These discouraging games for Black were probably in the computer's database. As a result, Black was forced into a complete re-think, but the exchange or activation of the bad bishop on c8 is now postponed indefinitely.

### 10.Bxc3 Ne4 11.0-0-0!?

This had already been played at the start of 2003 by Magnus Carlsen's future trainer, Peter Heine Nielsen. At first, White usually removed the black knight from its central square with 11.Bd3!? Nxc3 12.Qxc3 dxc4 13.Bxc4 0-0 14.0-0-0 b6, but now Black is ready to put his bishop on b7 and play ...c6-c5.



## 11...Qf6?!

The greedy computer is ready to take a pawn! Even with the modern Stockfish, the queen move comes among its top three moves, but nobody has ever decided to repeat Fritz's move – 11...Qf6 is just too much a breach of everything one is taught as a youngster!

Later the main line became 11...Nxc3 12.Qxc3 0-0. Nielsen here decided to win a tempo by attacking the pawn on h7, but 13.Qc2 allowed the counter-blow 13...e5 in P.H.Nielsen-Rogozenco, Germany Bundesliga 2003/04.

The game Lysyj-Timofeev, Krasnoyarsk 2007, showed just how dangerous Black's counterplay against the white king can be. That game continued 13.cxd5 exd5 14.g5 c5! 15.Bd3 (the pawn is untouchable: 15.dxc5 Nxc5 16.Rxd5 Be6! 17.Rxc5? Rac8, and the white queen is lost) 15...c4 16.Bb1 b5 (Black is attacking and White has to blockade with his own queen) 17.Qa5 Rb8 18.Rg4 Qd6 19.Rh4 g6 20.Rf4 a6 21.b4? (more tenacious was 21.a3 b4 22.axb4 Rb5 23.Qa3 Rxb4, but here too, things are difficult for White) 21...Nb6, and the white queen has to sit on a5 and watch as her army perishes.

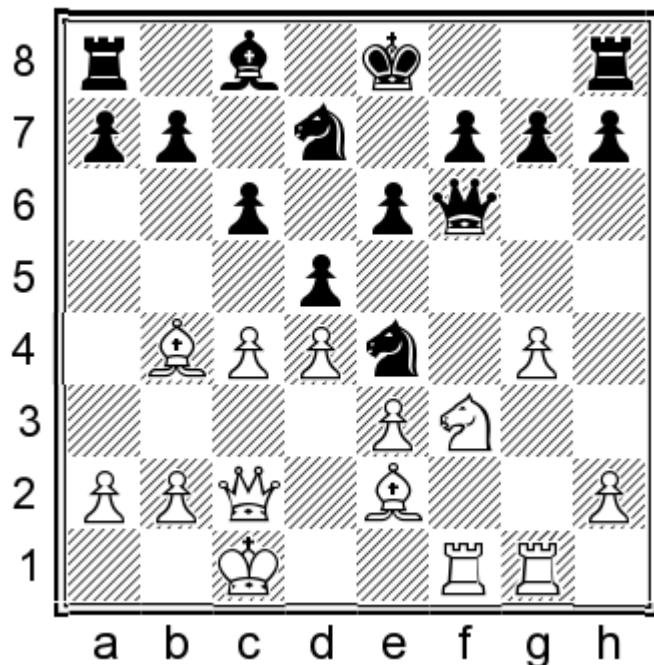
Kasparov probably intended 13.Bd3 dxc4 (improbable complications could result from 13...c5!? 14.g5 b6) 14.Qxc4 c5 15.g5!? 1-0 Alexandrov-Yevseev, Sochi 2004.

One can only be proud of humanity, when one thinks that anyone, even a great champion, would not be afraid to take on a computer in such a position.

## 12.Be2!

The pawn must be given up since after the inconvenient 12.Bg2 b6!? the passive black bishop will get to a6.

## 12...Nxf2!? 13.Rdf1 Ne4 14.Bb4



Black has lost a lot of time, and still has his king in the centre and undeveloped pieces. But the machine is the machine, and never loses heart.

## 14...c5!

Nothing major is changed by 14...a5 15.Ba3.

## 15.cxd5 exd5 16.dxc5 Qe7

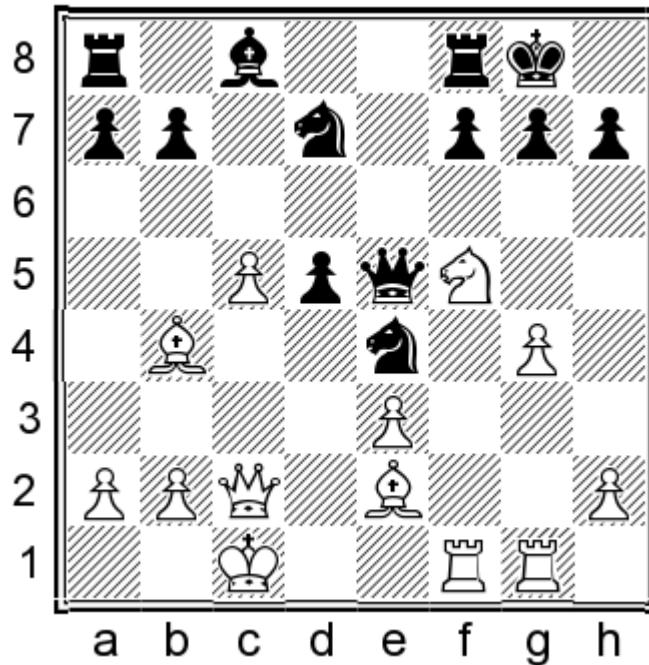
Black's counter-blow has barricaded the diagonal a3-f8, after which he is ready to castle and concentrate on the

weak white pawns on e3 and c5. White must hurry.

**17.Nd4 0-0**

Not yet 17...Ndxc5? 18.Bb5+.

**18.Nf5! Qe5**

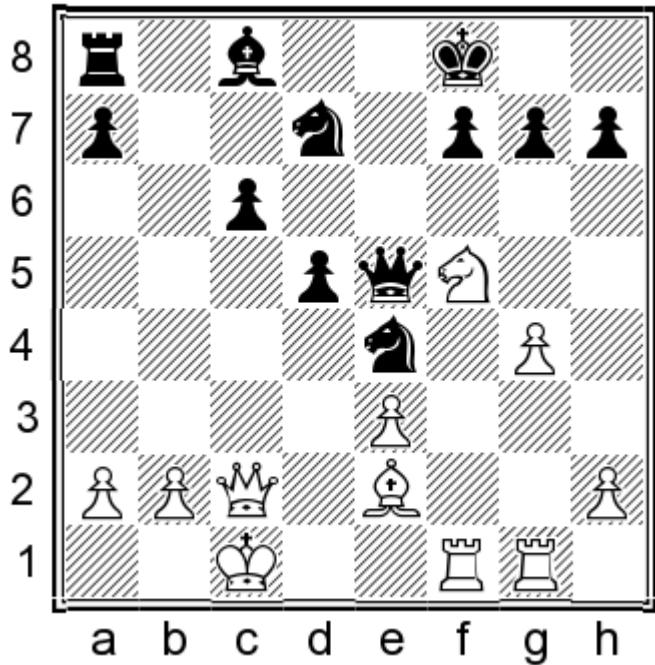


The knight jump forces the black queen to take her eye off the Bb4, and now White can win the exchange. The only thing is that some weaknesses in White's position remain and the machine's pieces come to life.

**19.c6 bxc6 20.Bxf8**

Fritz is weaker than modern engines in assessing positions, but it calculated variations deeply and accurately. The very tempting 20.Ne7+ Kh8 21.Nxc6 Qg5 22.Bxf8 allows Black to regain the material: 22...Qxe3+ 23.Kb1 Nd2+ 24.Ka1 Nxfl 25.Bxg7+ Kxg7 26.Rxf1 Bb7 27.Na5<sup>2</sup> Rb8, and in the final position, material is equal and both kings feel unsafe.

**20...Kxf8**

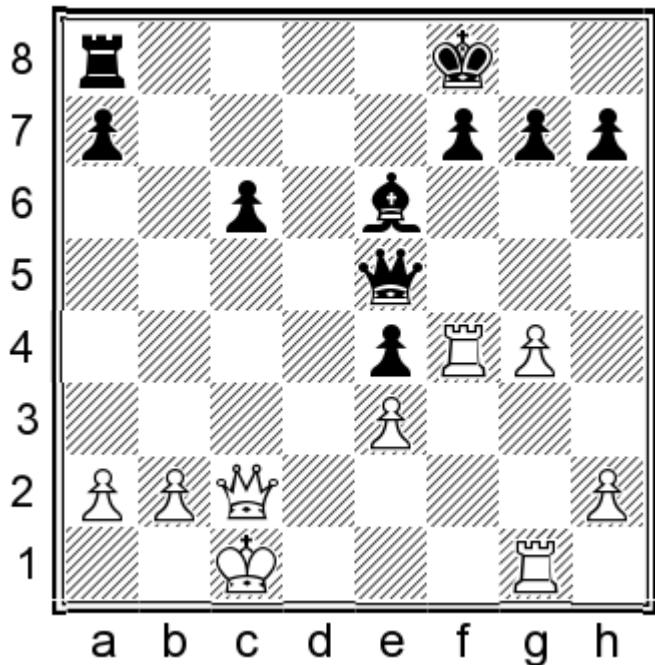


**21.Ng3!**

Another small trap from the robot was 21.Qxc6 Nb6 22.Qc2 (22.Kb1 Nd2+) 22...Bd7 23.Kb1 Rc8 24.Qd1 (the bishop must guard the square c4 to avoid the unpleasantness of 24.Qd3 Nc4) 24...Na4 25.Qd4 (25.Nd4? Nac3+) 25...Qxd4 26.Nxd4 Nd2+, regaining the exchange. But I doubt that Kasparov could have looked seriously at the capture of the c6-pawn.

The knight stands beautifully on f5, but is not doing anything, so the great champion exchanges a pair of knights and then swaps his bishop for Black's other knight, to reduce the computer's attacking potential.

**21...Ndc5 22.Nxe4 Nxe4 23.Bd3 Be6 24.Bxe4 dxe4 25.Rf4**



**25...Bd5**

Black must also be accurate: 25...Bxa2? 26.Qxc6 Re8 27.Rd1, and the exchange of queens is unavoidable. White

easily wins the endgame with an extra exchange.

## 26.Qc5+

The modern engine suggests the subtle 26.Kb1!? Rb8 27.g5 Kg8 28.h4 – prophylaxis, then more prophylaxis, which prevents Black safeguarding his king. Certainly, in this line White's would have significant winning chances, but I would suggest that after such a wonderful opening to the game, Kasparov was keen to end it with a combined attack by the major pieces!

## 26...Kg8 27.Rgf1 Rb8 28.R1f2

White has everything defended and has well-placed pieces, whilst the a7-pawn hangs in several lines. The position looks technically winning, but Fritz makes just two moves and his army springs to life, as if by magic.

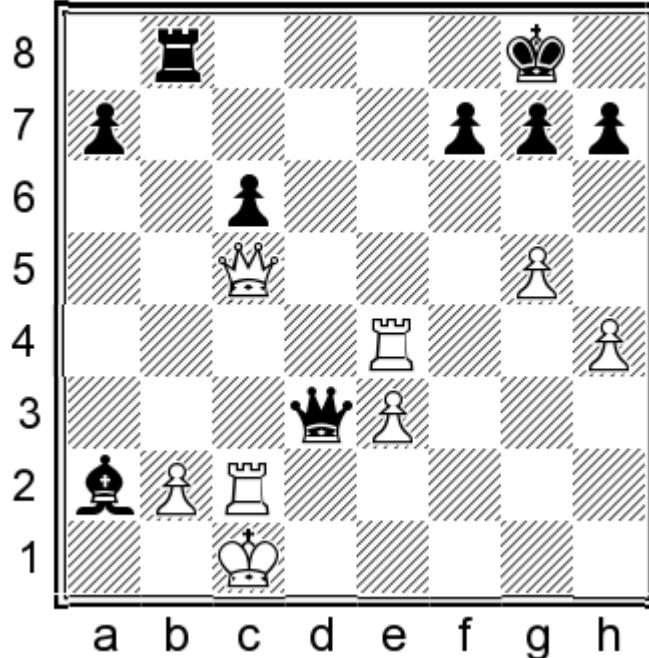
## 28...Qc7 29.Rc2 Qd7 30.h4?!

Now the pawn set-up on the king-side comes too late. After the modest 30.Kb1 there is 30...Rb5 31.Qd4 Qe7 32.g5 (32.b3 h6!) 32...a5, and the once weak pawn is now used as a battering ram (less effective is 32...Qa3 33.b3 a5 34.Rb2). White should have tried 30.b3! Rb5!? 31.Qd4 Qe7 32.g5 Qxg5 33.Qxa7, but finding this is not easy and winning the position against a multiprocessor monster is even harder.

## 30...Qd8 31.g5 Bxa2!

A shotgun hanging on the wall is sure to fire at the end of the day, and so the bishop has finally taken the a2-pawn.

## 32.Rxe4 Qd3!



A lovely move, based on the variation 33.Qf5 Rf8! 34.Re5 Qd6 35.Qe4 Bd5 36.Qf4 Qd7, and it is not clear who is playing for a win. To avoid the worst, Kasparov creates a threat of mate and forces the chess Gollem to give perpetual check.

## 33.Rd4 Qxe3+ 34.Rcd2 Qe1+

He could press further with 34...Qe8 35.Rd7 Bd5 36.Qe7!, but risks landing in an inferior ending.

## 35.Rd1 Qe3+ 36.R1d2 Qg1+ 37.Rd1 ½-½

Although Garry Kasparov did not manage to win this game (the match ended in a 2-2 draw), the results of the opening duel were clearly in his favour. The variation 7...Bb4 was clearly suffering a crisis, which would be confirmed many years later in the battle of the best analytical module against a neural network. This spurred the best grandmasters of the world to search for new ways to play as Black, and the results were not long in coming.

In 2008, at the Tal Memorial in Moscow, one of the most striking was the game between two of the leading Russian grandmasters. Alexander Morozevich was then at the peak of his sporting form and was rated among the strongest players in the world. The Muscovite often posed his rivals difficult, irrational tasks already in the initial stage of the game, and the fight against the fourteenth World Champion, who had just recently lost his title, was no exception.

#### Game 55

**Alexander Morozevich** 2788

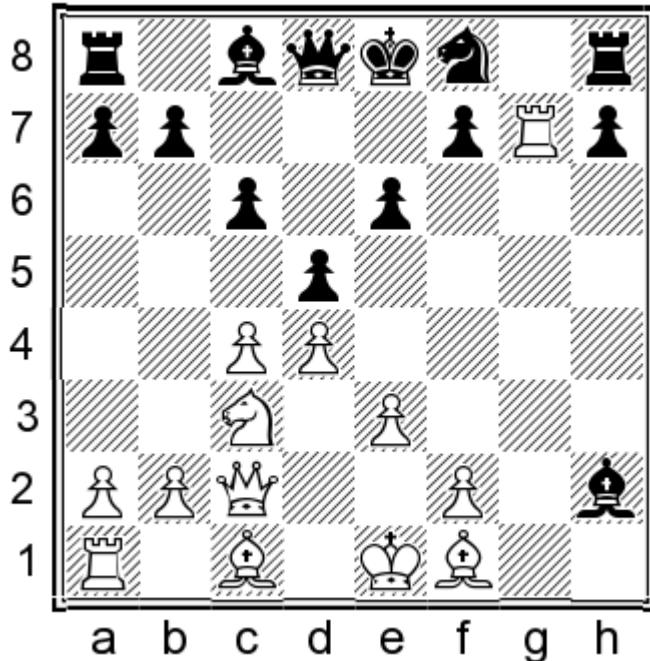
**Vladimir Kramnik** 2788

Moscow 2008 (3)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 Nxg4**

After Garry Kasparov's battles against the electronic monster, both sides would have been aware of the pitfalls that lie in wait for Black after 7...Bb4. Vladimir Kramnik quite unexpectedly returned to the reply used in the 1990s, when the Meran player simply considered himself obliged to accept the white challenge.

**8.Rg1 Nxh2 9.Nxh2 Bxh2 10.Rxg7 Nf8**



This is the key idea in the new interpretation of the line with capturing on g4. Black threatens to surround the rook with 11...Ng6, which therefore has to retreat, and so Black gains an important tempo.

**11.Rg2 Bd6**

Evgeny Sveshnikov also stuck by his idea into the new century, but after 11...Bc7 12.e4 dxc4 13.Be3 Ng6 14.0-0-0 b5 15.e5± White's attacking chances outweighed the great Slav specialist's material gains: 15...f5? 16.exf6 Qxf6 17.Qe4+– Daskevics-Sveshnikov, Riga 2006. Undoubtedly, on d6 the black bishop is better placed. An important nuance here is that after e3-e4 White has the threat of Bc1-g5, which it would be useful to be able to block with the dark-squared bishop.

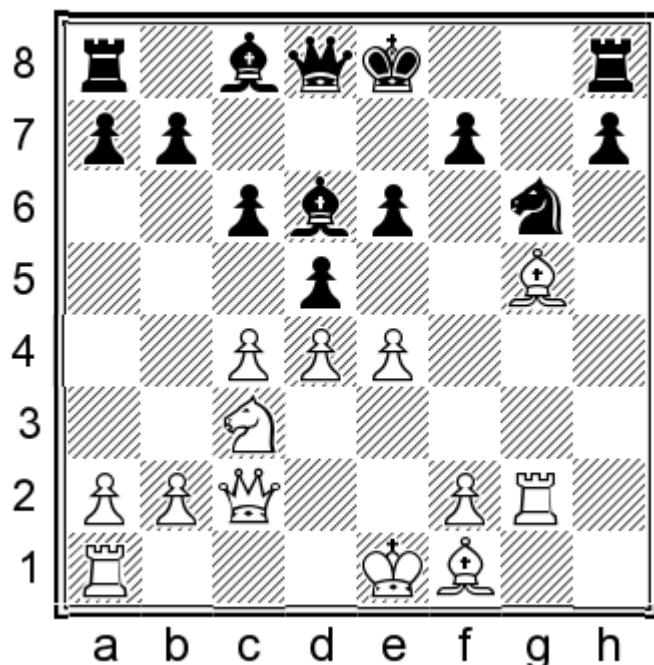
**12.e4**

This had already been tested by correspondence and after the timid 12.Bd2 Black suddenly activated his knight: 12...Ng6! 13.0-0-0 Nh4 14.Rg1 Nf3 15.Rh1 h5 16.Kb1 Qf6 17.Bc1 Bd7 18.Be2 h4 – the saboteur on f3 cannot be got rid of and the h-pawn now looks more like a dangerous passed pawn than a weakness. In the end, Black justly emerged victorious in Szafraniec-Reschke, ICCF 2002.

## 12...Ng6!?

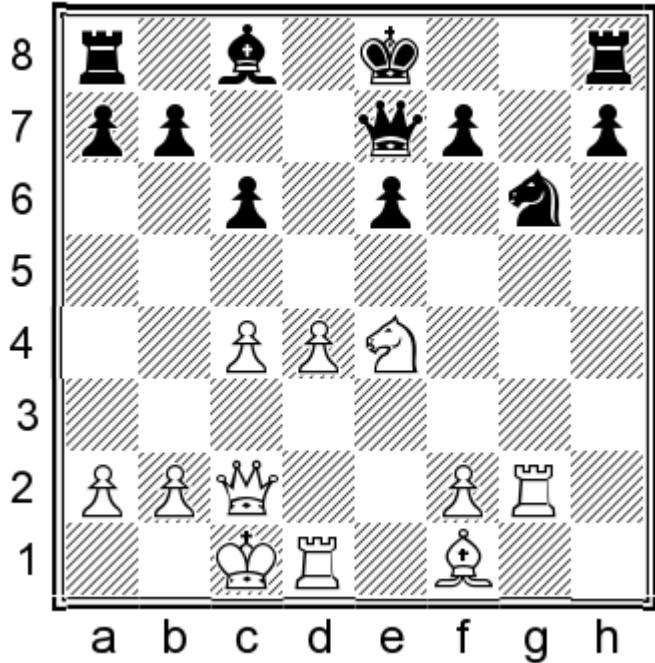
Demonstrating their home analysis, the GMs continue exchanging rapid moves and pressing the clock. Eight years earlier, the well-known Kazakh player and trainer won easily after 12...dxe4 13.Nxe4 Be7 14.Bh6 f5 15.Nc3 Bd7 16.0-0-0 Qa5 17.d5! 0-0-0 18.Qe2 Re8? 19.Qe5 Ng6 20.Rxg6 (Kotsur-Mohandes, Dubai 2003), and Black is lost because of 20...hxg6 21.Bf4 with disaster down the h2-b8 diagonal. In commentaries to the game, the exchange sacrifice 15...Qxd4!? 16.Bg7 Bf6 17.Bxh8 Bxh8 18.Qe2 was recommended, with some compensation, but Kramnik was not happy with such a turn of events.

## 13.Bg5



Morozevich is very determined. Commenting on the game, Michal Krasenkow told readers and fans that in the case of 13...f6!? 14.Be3 Nh4 White would continue the attack in the style of the old masters with 15.0-0-0! Nxg2 16.Bxg2 with excellent compensation, no matter what assessment the computer gives us! Once again, he comes to the conclusion that Mikhail Tal would be very pleased with this turn of events, but Vladimir Kramnik prefers just to exchange a couple of pieces and hopes to gradually show that he has an extra pawn.

## 13...Be7 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 15.0-0-0 dxe4 16.Nxe4



White dreams of seizing the square d6 after 16...Bd7? 17.c5±, so the knight has to be driven out of the centre before it can do any harm.

### **16...f5 17.Nd2 c5 18.dxc5**

White gets good compensation for a minimal material investment with 18.Nb3!? cxd4 19.Nxd4 Bd7 20.Rg3 0-0-0 21.c5 with the idea of setting up a powerful group of attacking pieces on the queenside, but taking on c5 looks equally strong as it immediately opens files and diagonals.

### **18...Bd7**

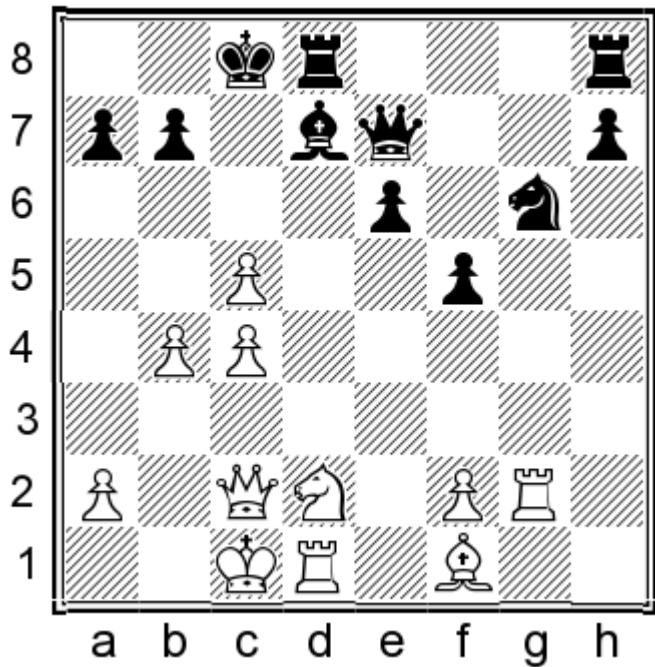
Morozevich had already thought about his decisions several times, whilst Kramnik was still playing very quickly, as the ex-World Champion had had the position at home.

It may not be apparent to the reader why Black did not take the pawn 18...Qxc5. However, here the very subtle 19.Qd3!? prevents 19...Bd7? because of 20.Ne4, whilst on 19...Qe7 there is already the unpleasant 20.Qc3. And next move the pawn is already not available.

### **19.b4 0-0-0**

Knowing how the game continues, one might think about 19...a5!? 20.b5 Qxc5 21.Nb3 Qb4 – the annoying queen prevents White attacking in complete comfort.

Vladimir Kramnik clearly did not anticipate the extreme danger posed by the enemy rook on the third rank.

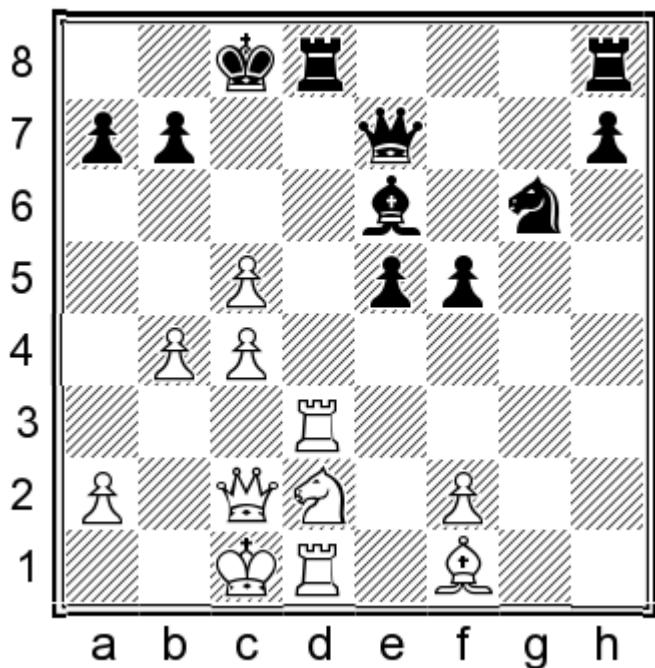


**20.Rg3! e5**

Later Kramnik's line was defended by the young female player Marina Brunello, and her game went 20...Rhg8!? 21.Ra3 Kb8 and 20...Nf4. Black tries immediately to activate all the pieces, without wasting time on pawn moves.

**21.Rd3 Be6??**

Continuing the plan indicated with the move 20...e5 and... the decisive mistake! It is hard to believe that the black king's castled position is so weak that it should collapse under Morozevich's first blow, like a house of cards. But he should have played 21...e4 22.Rd6 Ne5 – the bishop is still tied to defending c6.



**22.Ra3! a6**

None of the variations require great effort to calculate: 22...Kb8 23.Qa4 a6 24.c6; 22...Qd7 23.Rxa7 Kb8 24.Ra3 Nf4 25.Qb3 h5 26.b5 Qd4 27.c6. After the black bishop has abandoned his king to its fate, in almost every variation the

blow c5-c6 decides matters. The same is true in the game.

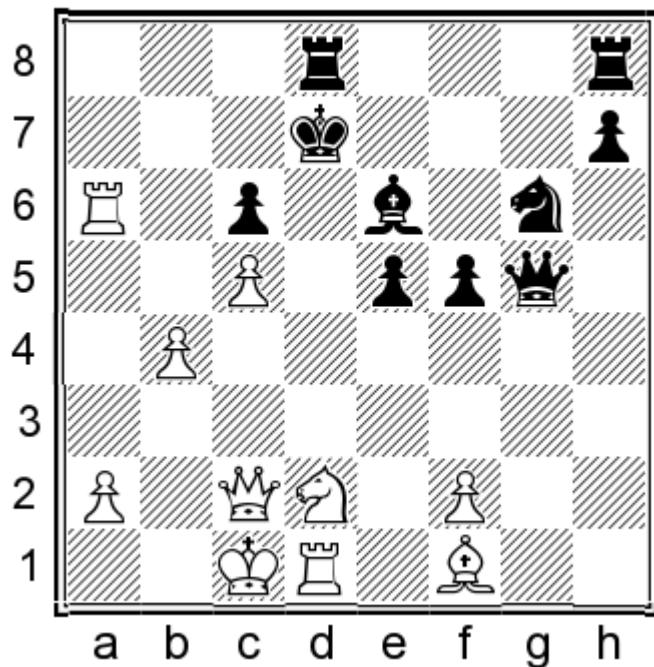
### 23.c6! bxc6

Here the leader of the Russian team had already used up his large reserve of time but Black's position is already beyond salvation: 23...Qxb4 24.cxb7+ Kc7 (24...Qxb7 25.c5 with a decisive blow on the square a6) 25.Rxa6 Rd6 26.Rxd6 Qxd6 (exchanging the first wave of attackers, but new reinforcements come in their place) 27.Qa4 Qc6 28.Qa3 Kxb7 29.Nb3, and this is the end for the black king.

### 24.c5 Qg5

24...Rd4 25.Rxa6 Rxb4 26.Rxc6+ Kd7 27.Ra6+– is too simple. Kramnik comes up with a last chance which consists in trying to run with his king, but it does not work.

### 25.Rxa6 Kd7



### 26.Bc4! Bxc4 27.Qxc4 Ne7 28.Kc2

White also wins beautifully by 28.Qf7 Ra8 29.Kb2 Rxa6 30.Ne4+, but Alexander Morozevich chooses his own, equally effective way of winning.

### 28...Ke8 29.Nf3 Qf6 30.Rd6! Rxd6 31.cxd6

Black resigned because he cannot take the d6-pawn, nor can he not take it.

It may seem strange that the brilliant leader of the young generation, the future World Champion Magnus Carlsen, did not participate in the new round of the debate. At that time, the mighty Norwegian was actively working with Garry Kasparov and inherited many opening lines from the repertoire of the thirteenth World Champion. However, here the axe fell on a stone. It appears that Magnus, as he was getting stronger, sometimes received painful blows, either from players of the older generation, who caught him out in lines where the great Garry used to know everything with both colours, or from other outstanding grandmasters, who had simply analysed certain lines to death with supercomputers. In our variation, Levon Aronian caught Carlsen in some analysis and moreover, Grandmaster Lars Schandorff published an article on this subject, arguing that the fans of the move g2-g4 may be in danger.

Game 56

Magnus Carlsen 2776

Levon Aronian 2750

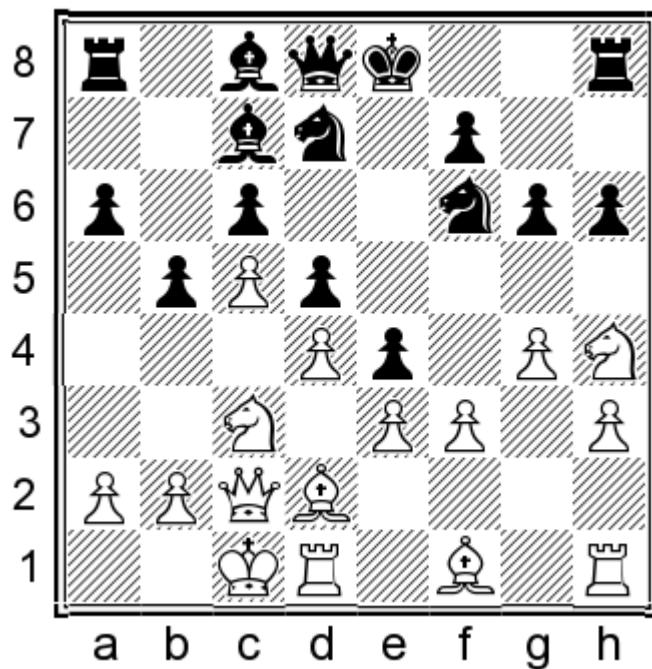
Linares 2009 (8)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 h6!

At the end of the first decade of our millennium, this restraining move emerged as the best defence against the Shabalov-Shirov Gambit.

8.Bd2

Another of Garry Kasparov's students, Hikaru Nakamura, also used the advance of the g-pawn: 8.Rg1 e5 9.Bd2 e4 10.Nh4 g6 11.h3 a6 12.0-0-0 b5 13.c5 Bh2 14.Rh1 Bc7 15.f3 was seen in Nakamura-M.Muzychuk, Gibraltar 2016.



The women's World Champion has solidly defended against White's strategy and had Mariya paid just a little more attention to the centre she could have posed the American serious problems: 15...Qe7! 16.fxe4 Nxe4 17.Nxe4 dxe4 18.Ng2 0-0 with an excellent position. However, in the game there followed the rash 15...a5? 16.fxe4 b4.

**Test 42.** Black wants to bring the bishop to a6 and win the battle for the central squares, but White is significantly ahead in development. How did Hikaru exploit this?

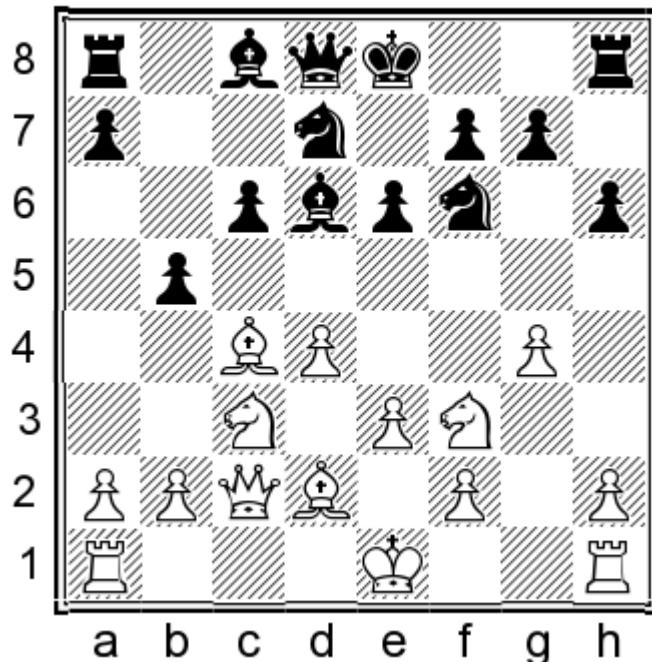
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Of course, White sacrificed a piece for a group of passed pawns, as David Bronstein once did in a similar situation: 17.Nxd5! cxd5 18.exd5 Bg3 (not 18...Nxd5 19.Qe4+) 19.Nf3 (it is a pity Nakamura did not go for the extremely artistic 19.Nxg6! fxg6 20.Qxg6+ Kf8 21.e4! Qe8 22.Bxh6+ Ke7 23.Qg5 when White is two pieces down, but his group of central pawns is ready to sweep away everything in its path) 19...0-0. Black castles into a mating attack, and the game ended almost immediately: 20.Rg1 Qc7 21.Bc4 Ba6 22.d6 Bxd6 23.Qxg6+ Kh8 24.Qxh6+ Nh7 25.Ng5 Ndf6 26.Rdf1 1-0.

Strictly speaking, in the above game, White's prospects from the opening were dubious, and so more principled is 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.Nb5 Bb8! (it is worth considering 10...Bb4+ 11.Ke2!?, Mamedyarov-Jumabaev, Astana blitz 2012, but giving the check is not obligatory) 11.g5 hxg5 12.Nxg5, after which Black has the choice between the machine move 12...0-0 13.Bd2 a6 14.Nc3 Qc7!? (Rybusia-Komodo1, playchess.com 2008) and the more human 12...e4 13.Bd2 Nb6 14.Qc5 Bd7 15.Nd6+ Bxd6 16.Qxd6 Qb8, as occurred in the battle between the two young leaders of

the chess schools of Hungary and Austria, Rapport-Ragger, Baku 2016. There followed 17.Qe5+ Qxe5 18.dxe5 Rxh2 19.exf6 gxf6! (Black cleverly regains the piece) 20.Nxe4 dxe4 21.Bb4 Rh8 22.0-0-0 Bc6 23.Bc3 Ke7 24.Bb4+ Ke8 25.Bc3 Ke7 with a draw. It is hard to imagine where either side could strengthen his play!

**8...dxc4! 9.Bxc4 b5**



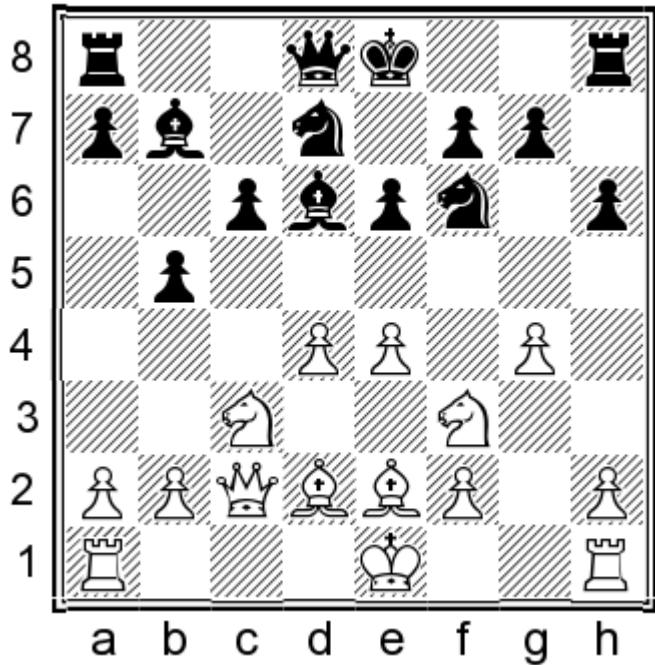
**10.Be2**

The Armenian GM had already tried 10.Bd3?! in this position and suffered. 10...Bb7 and the black kingside is defended by the pawn on h6 and, in contrast to the game Shirov-Akopian, Biel 1993, Vallejo Pons managed to quickly play ...c6-c5 and seize the initiative: 11.Rg1 Rc8 12.a3 c5! 13.Nxb5 Bb8 14.Qd1 cxd4 15.exd4 Nc5 16.Be2 Bxf3 17.Bxf3 Nd3+ 18.Ke2 Nxb2 19.Qb3 Nc4 (Aronian-Vallejo Pons, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005), and Aronian was forced to work very hard to save his king in the centre of the board.

Magnus Carlsen manoeuvres more concretely – from e2 the bishop does not forget about the g4-pawn, whilst his next move opens the diagonal h1-a8.

**10...Bb7 11.e4**

Too optimistic is 11.g5?! hxg5 12.Nxg5 b4! 13.Na4 (not much better is 13.Nce4 Nxe4 14.Nxe4 Be7, and White has a weak pawn on h2) 13...c5, and Black won in the game Romanov-Sjugirov, St Petersburg 2008.

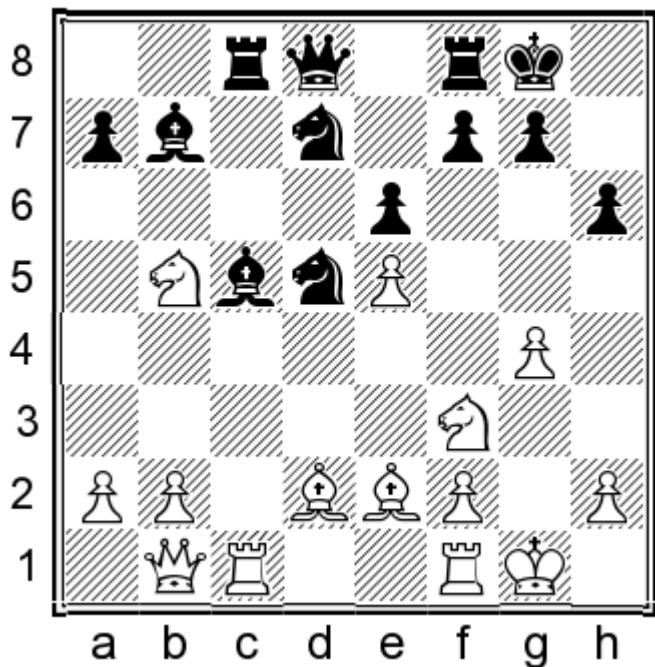


**11...Be7!**

The right move, since 11...e5? 12.dxe5 Nxe5 13.Nxe5 Bxe5 14.0-0-0 Qc7 15.Be3 a6 16.h4! (Belikov-Mammadov, Alushta 2010) relieves White of all the weaknesses in his position and allows him to attack without hindrance. But after the poisonous bishop retreat the moves ...c6-c5 or ...b5-b4 are on the agenda, and the advance of the c-pawn.

**12.g5**

Even one of the most erudite members of the elite suffered a setback in the game Ivanchuk-Korneev, Barcelona 2006: 12.Rc1 c5! 13.e5 Nd5 14.Nxb5 0-0 15.dxc5 Bxc5 16.0-0 Rc8 17.Qb1? (correct was 17.Qd3!?, keeping the queen in play).



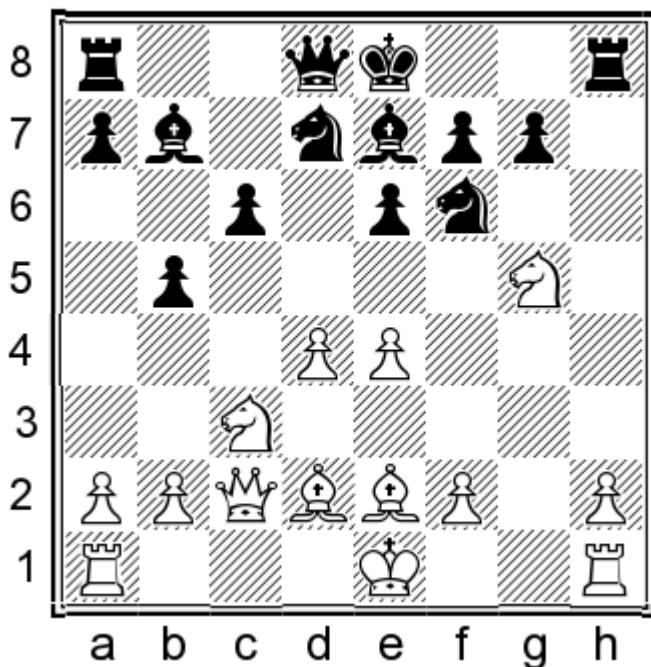
**Test 43.** Black has excellent compensation for the pawn and on almost any move lately, White's best option would have been to return the pawn to g2, were that allowed in the rules. How can Black's positional plusses be best transformed into something real?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** An excellent move is 17...f5!, bringing the rook into action, but Oleg Korneev found an even stronger decision: 17...Ne7! 18.Bf4 Ng6 19.Bg3 Ndx5! 20.Nxe5 Nxe5 21.Rfd1 (21.Bxe5 Qd5+) 21...Qf6+ 22.Nd6 Bxd6 23.Rxd6 Nf3+ 24.Kf1 Be4 25.Qxe4 Rxc1+ 26.Bd1 Rd8 0-1. It is all very logical – White had a weak long diagonal and pawn on e5. The Spanish GM simply underlined these weaknesses with his knight transfer.

### 12...hxg5 13.Nxg5

Magnus has forced his knight to g5, maybe not following Kasparov's analysis as much as an old memory of a game by his second Peter Heine Nielsen, which went 13...Qb6 14.0-0-0 Qxd4 15.Be3 Qb4 16.f4 with pressure for the sacrificed pawn, P.H.Nielsen-Smeets, Warsaw 2005. However, much water had flowed under the bridge since that European Championship...



### 13...b4

More precise is 13...c5!?, not giving White a choice over what to take on c5 with: 14.dxc5 b4! (of course, not 14...Nxc5?! 15.Bxb5+ Nybäck-Kojima, Beijing rapid 2008) 15.Na4, and now 15...Rh4! 16.c6 Rc8!. All the black pieces are in play and according to tournament practice and also analysis by Schandorff, White has trouble holding – 17.cxd7+ Nxd7 (queen and knight are attacked) 18.Nxe6 fxe6 19.Qb3 Rxe4 20.Rg1 Qa5 21.Kf1 Rxe2 22.Kxe2 Ne5 23.Rg3 Qb5+ 24.Ke1 Ba6 with mate (Miedema-Giri, Haaksbergen 2009) or 17.Bb5 a6 18.cxd7+ Nxd7 19.Bxd7+ Qxd7 with a terrible attack for Black, Epiney-Bubir, IECG 2007.

### 14.Na4 c5! 15.Nxc5

Carlsen does not fall for 15.dxc5?! Rh4! – in the game Black is also doing well, but without a pair of minor pieces, it is easier for White to defend.

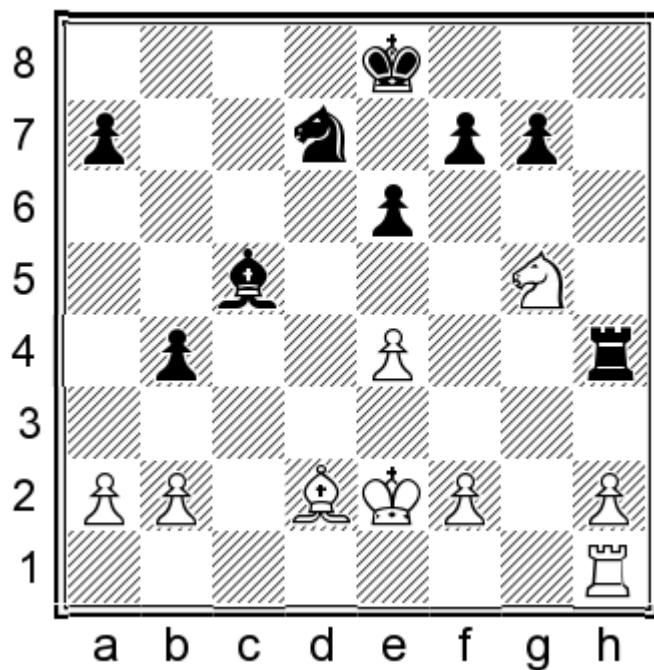
### 15...Nxc5 16.dxc5 Rc8 17.Qa4+!

An excellent practical chance. In an engine battle, White came under a tremendous attack after 17.Bxb4 Nd7 18.Bb5 0-0 19.Bxd7 Qxd7 20.h4 f6 21.Nf3 Qb5 22.Bc3 Rxc5 23.0-0-0 e5 24.Rde1 Rc7 Rybusia-Badbishop1, playchess.com 2007.

### 17...Bc6 18.Bb5

Not 18.Qxb4 Nd7 – the most important thing for White is to get the queens off.

**18...Bxb5 19.Qxb5+ Qd7 20.Qxd7+ Nxd7 21.Ke2 Rh4 22.Rac1 Rxc5 23.Rxc5 Bxc5**



The ending is more promising for Black. White needed to defend his pawn weaknesses, and Magnus almost coped with the task, but later could not stand his opponent's pressure in a non-trivial rook ending. As a result, Carlsen finished just half a point behind the winners of the tournament Vasily Ivanchuk and Alexander Grischuk.

Desperate in his attempts to strike the opponent a blow in the main line, White at some point began to respond to 7...h6 with the restrained 8.h3 – never mind the attack, we defend the pawn for now, and we will see what happens. But here too, the best panacea against a flank operation is a counter-strike in the centre.

Taking place during a re-evaluation of the modern lines of the Shabalov-Shirov Gambit, the 2009 World Cup ended in a brilliant victory for Boris Gelfand. In distant and snowy Khanty-Mansiysk, this outstanding grandmaster of the older generation, after starting with victories over Andrey Obodchuk, Farrukh Amonatov and Judit Polgar, consecutively defeated young Maxime Vachier-Lagrange, Dmitry Jakovenko, Sergey Karjakin, and then in the final Ruslan Ponomariov. Gelfand's quarter-final against Jakovenko began with a few calm draws, after which the intensity of the battle increased sharply – the Israeli player won with white, after which the Russian was obliged to try to take revenge.

#### Game 57

**Dmitry Jakovenko 2736**

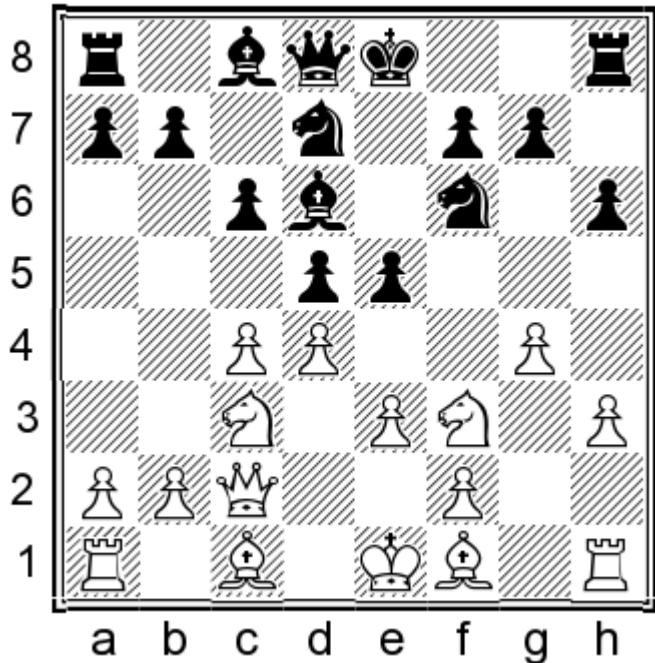
**Boris Gelfand 2758**

Khanty-Mansiysk 2009 (5)

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 h6 8.h3 e5!**

A year before this encounter, at the Russian team championships, Morozhevich beat Gelfand after 8...dxc4 9.e4 e5 10.Bxc4 exd4 11.Nxd4 Ne5 12.Be2 Ng6 13.Be3 Bf4 14.Bxf4 Nxf4 15.0-0-0 Qa5 16.Qd2 g5 17.h4! – it turned out that Black's blockade is shaky and White breaks through it because of his superior development.

The counter-blow 8...e5 after the relatively slow 8.h3 is extremely logical, and was seen in the source game Wojtkiewicz-Khalifman, Rakvere 1993, and in 2009 there were several other topical duels.



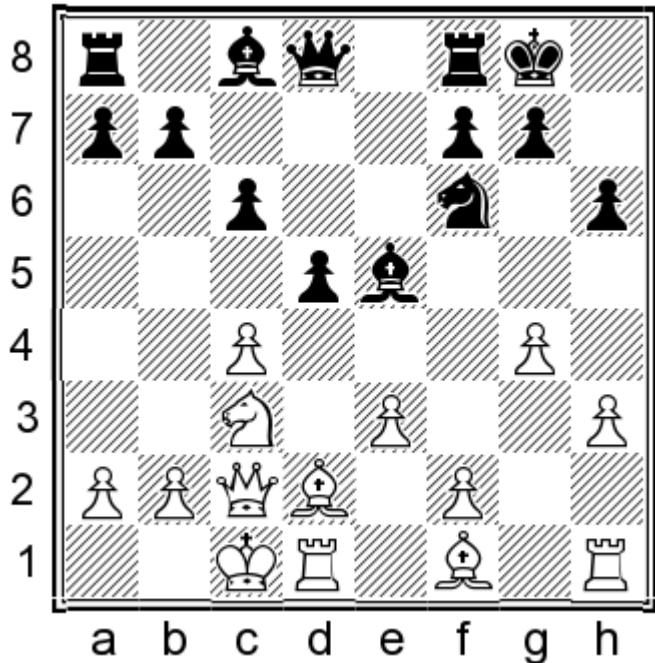
## **9.Bd2**

After 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.dxe5 Nxe5 11.Nxe5 Bxe5 the course of the battle is quite pleasant for Black: 12.Bg2 0-0 13.0-0 Be6 14.f4 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Rc8 (Krasenkow-Fernandez Aguado, Barcelona 2009) and White's two bishops did not compensate for the pawn weaknesses in his position.

## **9...0-0 10.dxe5**

After White's setback in the present game, Jakovenko's successors tried numerous alternatives, such as 10.0-0-0, 10.cxd5, 10.g5, but all without any great success. Here is one instructive example: 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.Nb5 Bb8 12.Rc1 Ne4! 13.Bb4 Re8 14.Bg2 Qb6! (a splendid decision; the queen transfers to g6, where it poses definite questions to the gambit pawn g4) 15.Qa4 a6 16.Nc3 Nxc3 17.bxc3 e4 18.Nd2 Qg6! 19.Qb3 Nf6 20.c4 Be6 21.Ba3 h5! 22.Qxb7 Ra7 23.Qb1 hxg4, and Black won with a direct attack, Alexandrov-Lastin, Moscow 2012. When the late 2002 Russian champion Alexander Lastin had the initiative, then it was impossible to stop him!

## **10...Nxe5 11.Nxe5 Bxe5 12.0-0-0**



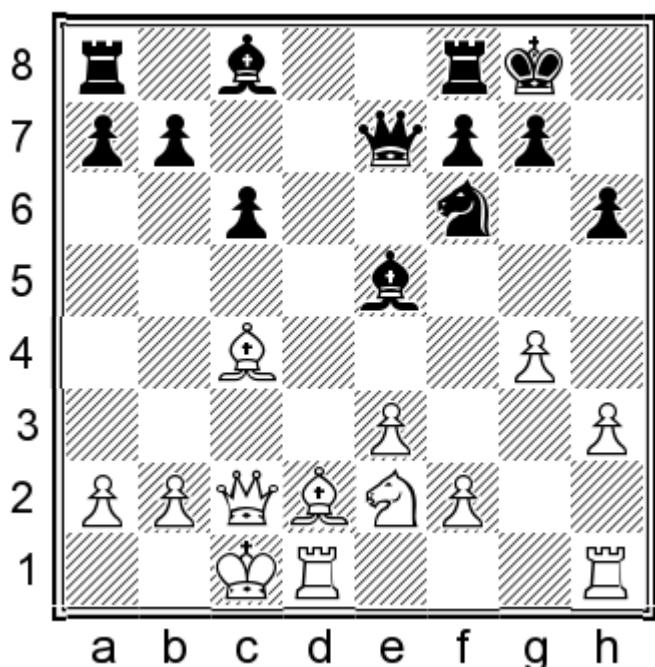
White castles queenside and is ready to throw forward his kingside pawns, exploiting the enemy pawn on h6 as a target. Even so, the defenders are well centralized and in practice two replies have recommended themselves.

#### **12...dxc4**

The 2013 Russian Superfinalist from Ulan Ude preferred 12...Qe7 13.Kb1 Rd8 14.f4 Bxc3 15.Bxc3 Qxe3 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.f5 Bd7 18.h4?! Qf4 19.Be2 Re8 20.Bd3 Re3 21.Rhf1 Qe5, and also obtained an excellent position, Jakovenko-Shomoev, Vladivostok 2014 – Jakovenko was forced to conduct the game to a draw with some accurate moves.

#### **13.Bxc4 Qe7 14.Ne2**

A fighting move, not allowing 14.Kb1 Bxc3 15.Bxc3 Be6= (Jakovenko-Leko, Nanjing 2009), but after Gelfand's sharp reaction, White simply will not be able to achieve f2-f4 and g4-g5.

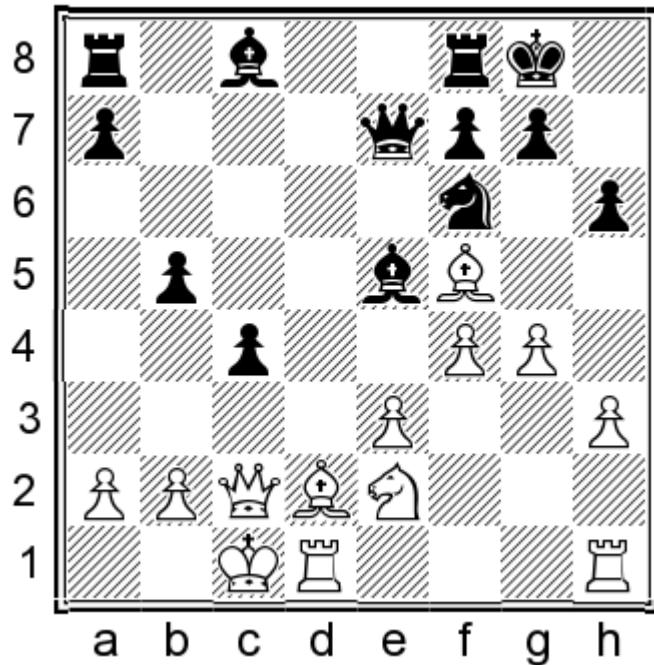


#### **14...b5! 15.Bd3 c5**

Black goes over to a counterattack and outstrips his opponent in creating threats. 16.Bxb5? is bad because of 16...Rb8, and there is a threat to trap the bishop on d3.

#### 16.f4 e4 17.Bf5

The alternative is depressing – 17.fxe5 cxd3 18.Qxd3 Qxe5 19.Bc3 Qe6!. Now the pawn on a2 is hanging and Black intends to bring the bishop to b7 or jump his knight into e4 with a strong attack on the compromised position of the white king.



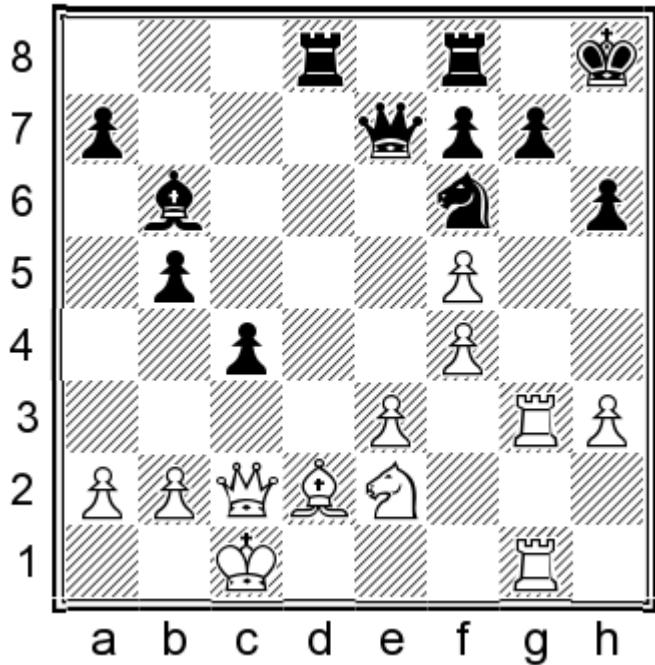
#### 17...Bc7!

Another subtle and strong move – the bishop transfers to b6 to attack the pawn on e3.

#### 18.Rhg1 Bxf5 19.gxf5 Bb6 20.Rg3

White's last chance is to double rooks on the g-file, but Boris Gelfand parries the threat of taking on g7.

#### 20...Rad8! 21.Rdg1 Kh8



**22.Nd4**

On 22.Rxg7 follows the winning counterblow 22...Rxd2.

**22...Bxd4 23.exd4 Rg8 24.a4 Qe4!+–**

And after the exchange of queens Black coldly collects all of White's pawn weaknesses, ensuring himself progress into the semifinal of the World Cup.

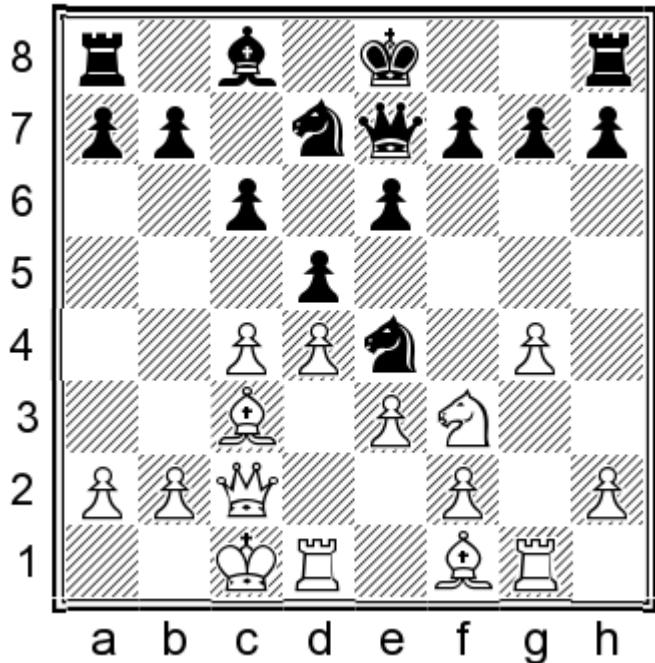
Ahead of Boris Gelfand there awaited star-studded matches in Kazan 2011 and a dramatic match against World Champion Vishy Anand in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow (2012), while the Shabalov-Shirov Gambit departed the elite level for a while – White was busy rebuilding and looking for other interesting ways. Moreover, in the next World Cup, Black showed the reliability of his position in the line 7...dxc4 8.g5 Nd5 9.Bxc4 e5!, which temporarily cooled the ardour of even the bravest musketeers.

The gambit again came to the attention of chess experts a decade later, when there was a new breakthrough in the computer perception of our ancient game. The long-time leader in the chess computer world, the Stockfish module, was unexpectedly challenged by the artificial intelligence neural network AlphaZero – this self-learning algorithm based on unprecedented 21st-century technology allowed the chess analogue of SkyNet to win this huge confrontation. AlphaZero showed very interesting and fresh interpretations of a number of classic positions – for example, it proved ruthless in a classic Queen's Indian tabiya.

A Slav duel was equally interesting, in which it played both colours. But it is particularly interesting that neither Stockfish nor AlphaZero used the latest line with ...dxc4 and ...h7-h6, but went for Kramnik's classical line!

Game 58  
**AlphaZero**  
**Stockfish 8**  
TCEC 2018

**1.d4 d5 2.e4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 Bb4 8.Bd2 Qe7 9.Rg1 Bxc3 10.Bxc3 Ne4 11.0-0-0**



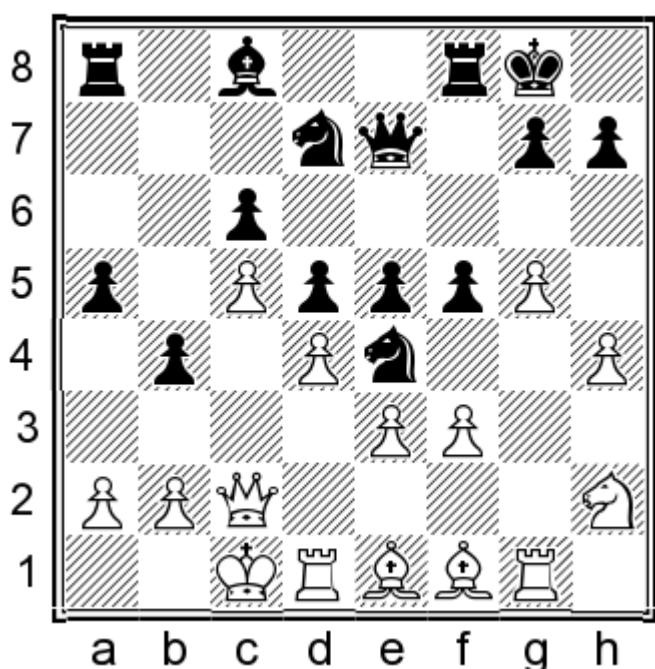
In this position, Fritz brought the queen out to f6 against Kasparov, but in these latest computer games both ‘terminators’ castled.

**11...0-0 12.Bc1!**

This move was played by Stockfish in a game against its predecessor Houdini, although according to MegaBase, it was first played by someone called Ataman in the 2004 Turkish Championship.

**12...b6**

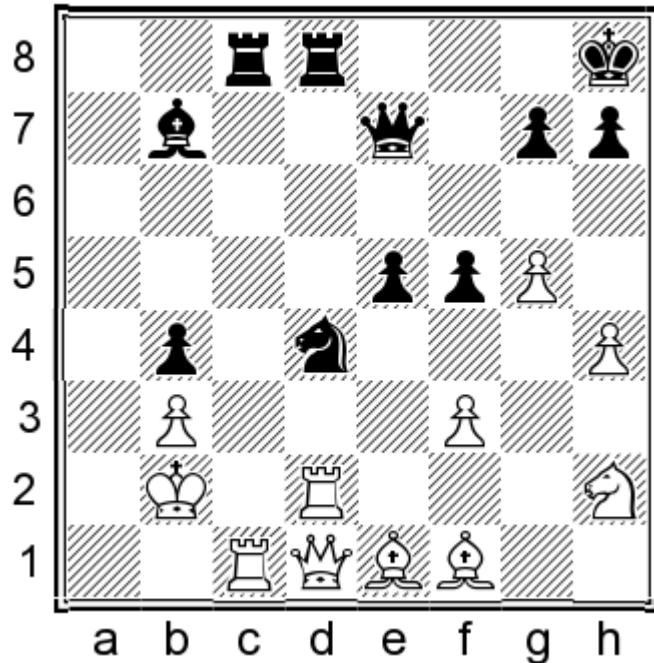
Playing Black, AlphaZero played the surprising positional piece sacrifice 12...b5 13.c5 a5 14.h4 b4! (the game between the computer predecessors went 14...e5 15.Kb1 exd4 16.exd4 Re8 17.Bd3 Nf8 18.Ne5 Bb7 19.f3 Nxc5 20.Nxc6 Bxc6 21.dxc5 d4 22.f4 and White had the advantage because of the powerful bishop pair, but he did not win, Stockfish 8-Houdini, chessdom.com 2016) 15.g5 f5 16.Nh2 e5 17.f3.



*analysis diagram*

Is the knight trapped? No, AlphaZero simply gives up the piece for an initiative, which is far from obvious to a human player!

17...Nexc5!? 18.dxc5 Rb8 19.b3 a4! 20.Kb2 axb3 21.axb3 Nxc5 22.Rc1 Ne6 23.Qxc6 Rd8 24.Rg2 Kh8 25.Rd2 d4 26.exd4 Bb7 27.Qc2 Rbc8 28.Qd1 Nxd4.



Incredible! Black simply plays quiet moves, even though he has only a pawn for a knight. At this moment, his threats seem especially dangerous, but Stockfish ‘pulls itself together’ and finds a lovely regrouping, which neutralizes the threats.

29.Bf2 Ra8 30.Bxd4 exd4 31.Bb5! d3 32.Kb1 Qe5 33.Ba4, and White won in Stockfish 8-AlphaZero, 2018.

### 13.h4 Bb7

Against its predecessor, Stockfish played differently, but also obtained a dangerous position: 13...a5 14.Ng5 Nxg5 15.hxg5 Qxg5 16.f4 Qe7 17.e4 dxe4 18.Qxe4 Re8 19.Kb1 Bb7 20.Bd3 Nf8 21.Qe3 Qc7 22.Ka1 f6 23.Bc3 with an initiative for White, but the game ended in a draw, Houdini 5-Stockfish 8, chessdom.com 2016. AlphaZero plays Houdini’s gambit idea and demonstrates an absolutely cosmic example of the strength of two bishops.

### 14.Ng5! Nxg5 15.hxg5 Qxg5 16.f4 Qe7

It is always especially nice when a storm is preceded by prophylaxis, as so often in Kasparov’s games.

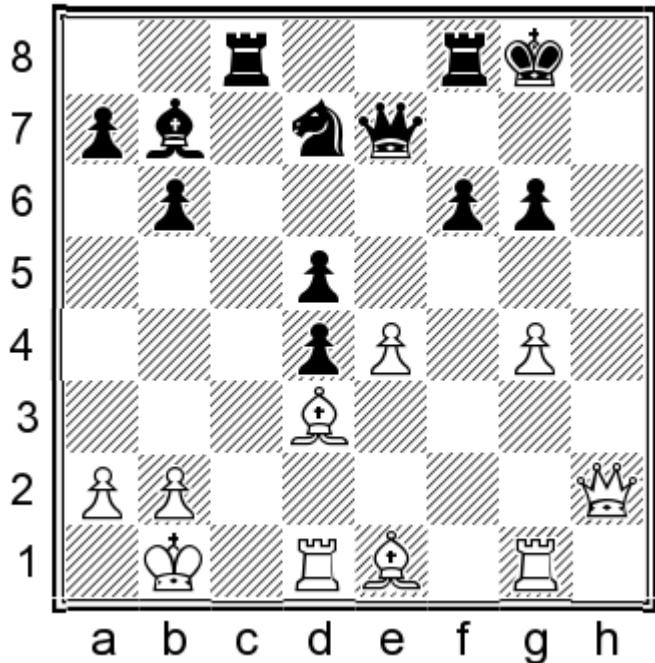
### 17.Kb1!? c5 18.Bd3 g6 19.cxd5 cxd4

Both 19...Bxd5 20.e4 and 19...exd5 20.Qh2 are dangerous – Black should go for an exchange of blows and open the c-file, even though the white king is not actually there.

### 20.e4 Rac8 21.Qh2 f6

21...Nc5 allows the unpleasant pin 22.Bb4 a5 23.Ba3.

### 22.f5! exd5 23.fxg6 hxg6



What has the second pawn been given for? Black will put his queen on g7 to cover the threats on the h-file and his forces are normally placed and provide adequate cover. AlphaZero's subsequent play resembles the use of an extra man in top-class ice hockey. The white pieces roll away from the goal as far as possible and begin to 'stretch' the defenders. At some point, the centre forward bursts through for a shot, there is an instant touch of the puck and... GOAL!

#### **24.Rh1!!**

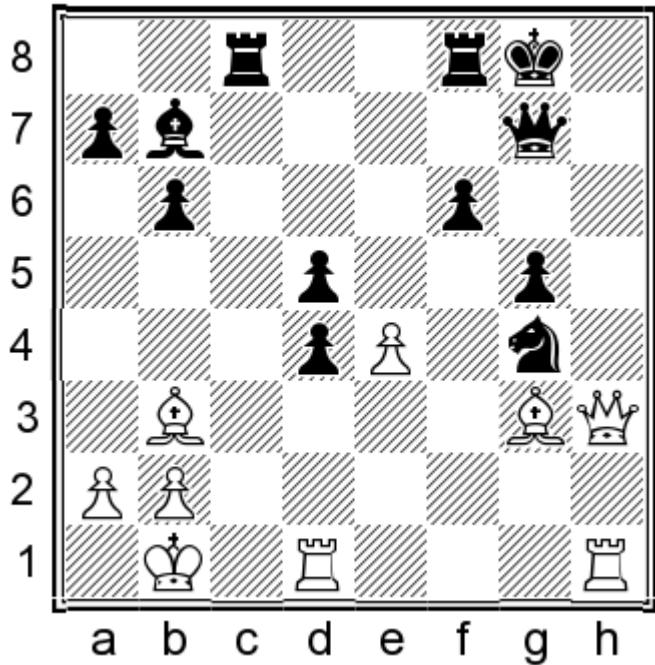
Inaccurate is 24.exd5 Qh7!, destroying the attacking harmony.

#### **24...Qg7 25.Bc2! Ne5 26.Bb3 g5**

The rook can stand in the way of the dangerous bishop – 26...Rc4. Now Black is happy with 27.Bxc4 dxc4 28.Rxd4 Nf3, but there is the very strong 27.Qh3!, and now White is ready to evict the intruder from c4.

#### **27.Bg3 Nxg4 28.Qh3**

After a series of quiet moves, White has achieved a position of complete domination, and is ready to go over collecting the harvest.



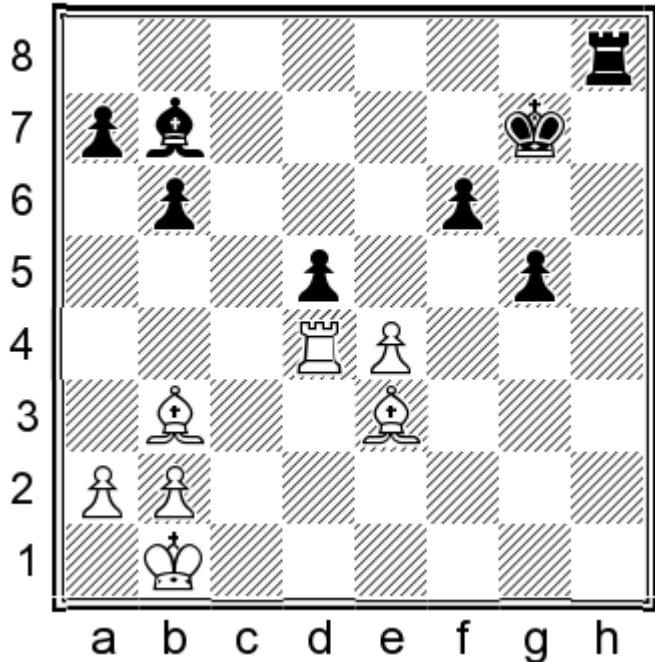
**28...Ne3**

Nothing changes after 28...Ne5 29.Rxd4.

**29.Rxd4 Kf7**

After 29...Nc4 30.exd5 Na5 31.Ba4 the white bishop one way or another gets to the black king.

**30.Bf2 Rh8 31.Qd7+ Kg6 32.Qxg7+ Kxg7 33.Rxh8 Rxh8 34.Bxe3**



As a result of the complications White has a piece for two pawns, and the winner of the match does not give his opponent any chances when it comes to the realization stage.

**34...Re8**

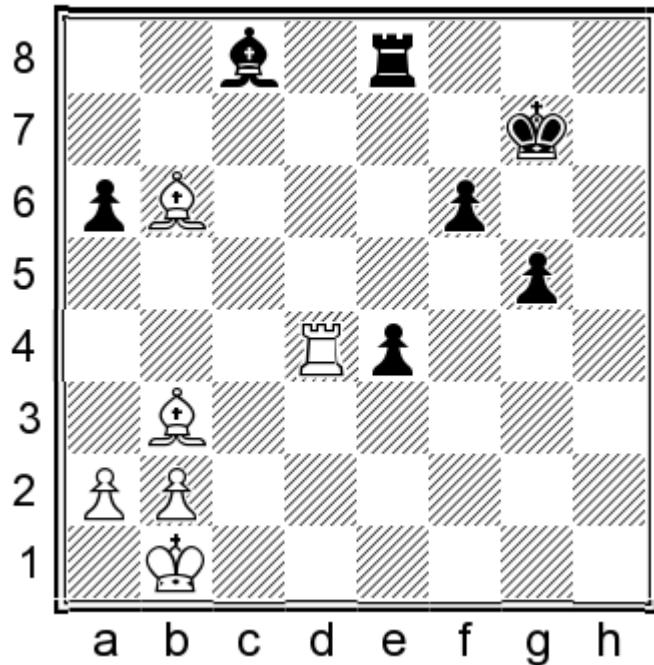
No better was 34...Rh3 35.Bd2 Rh4, since White can reply 36.Ra4 a5 37.exd5 Rxa4 38.Bxa4 Bxd5 39.Be3, with the

death of the black queenside pawns.

**35.Ra4 a6 36.Bxb6 dxe4**

Black now has no fewer than three passed pawns, but they do not get to go far.

**37.Rd4 Bc8**



**Test 44.** At the end of the chapter you have a unique chance – to try to repeat the manoeuvre found by the unbeatable machine, which leads to the win by the most technical route.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The task is not as simple as may appear at first sight. For example, 38.Rd8? Rxd8 39.Bxd8 Kg6! gives Black excellent chances of saving the game – his pawns are now harmoniously advancing towards the first rank. AlphaZero first moves its king and forces Stockfish to move one of the pawns: 38.Kc1! e3, and only now exchanges rooks: 39.Rd8! Rxd8 40.Bxd8 Kg6 (or 40...Bg4 41.Bc4, winning the pawn on a6) 41.Bb6 Bb7 42.Bc2+ Kf7 43.Bxe3, winning.

It is a pity that the latest techno-logical monsters did not give us clues against the lines that are more relevant for humans, but that may happen in the future! Perhaps the gambit will still terrify the adherents of the Meran after the new revelations of the neural network.

## Conclusions

1. It is better to be rich than poor, healthy than sick, and to play chess as well as AlphaZero. But if you do not have the strength of a neural network, then it is better to carefully study the lines given above. Moreover, over the years that the gambit has existed, there have been a lot of nuances in the emerging variations.
2. Usually taking the gambit pawn on g4 gives White a good initiative – the g-file is opened, the attacking side quickly castles queenside and brings all his pieces to threatening positions. It is very important that for the minimum material costs, the main drawback of these pieces' location on the kingside – that is, the g4-pawn – immediately disappears.
3. Black, on the other hand, should prepare counterplay in the centre according to the well-known patterns, the ones we have discussed so much in this book. And he should also think about taking on g4 not immediately, but much later, after complete mobilization.



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## Chapter 12

### Inverted chess

#### Some history

In modern times, chess strategy has changed significantly. Whereas during the reigns of Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik and Vishy Anand, opening research included qualitative and quantitative preparation of new ideas, on the basis of the ‘move to move’ principle, in order to surround the opponents on all sides, the new leaders of the game have introduced a fresh approach, rejecting immediate piece collisions. As a joke, it is sometimes even called ‘inverted chess’ – after all, White is playing more according to the precepts of Richard Réti and other fans of hypermodernism, by not seeking to occupy the centre, but rather trying to develop quickly in a restrained, self-contained way, avoiding early clashes and exchanges.

Often, in the latest variations, it all comes down to move-orders. White is satisfied if Black did not choose a line where the latest computer research guarantees him comfortable equality, but he still occupies the centre with pawns, transferring the struggle to one of the *tabiyas* familiar to a wide circle of players. Probably one of the principal exceptions is the anti-Slav, where the first player does not put the d2-pawn on d4 and plays according to the plan: Nf3, c2-c4, e2-e3, Nc3, Qc2, b2-b3, Bb2. Thus, he avoids the simplifying variations of the Slav Defence with the move ...dxc4, but nothing prevents Black from copying the Meran strategy and waiting for White to finally get fed up with playing the anti-Slav moves and transpose into the usual lines by playing d2-d4. But White is not going to be limited to half measures.

The most striking illustration of the aforementioned is White’s idea of suddenly attacking the Meran set-up by the very unexpected breakthrough g2-g4, supported by the rook from g1. Many people can apply for a patent here at different times: both the Kazan and the Saratov schools in Russia (the master Mikhail Lushenkov has used the variation a great deal), and in the Americas the leader of Venezuelan chess, Eduardo Iturriaga, lit the way. However, unconditional primacy belongs to grandmasters Klaus Bischoff and Vadim Zviagintsev, already familiar to us, who, at the turn of the millennium, tried the thrust of the g-pawn, not against any old Tom, Dick or Harry, but against one of the most important experts on the Meran Variation, Alexey Dreev! Dreev feels the resulting Meran positions to his very fingertips, yet out of the three games where Alex played Black in the line, he managed to win only once, and even then in a blitz game (and the result was not the result of the opening duel), and White’s positions looked very promising in every case. Another player who certainly deserves a place in the queue at the copyright office with regard to this variation is the highly creative Dutch IM and blitz specialist Manuel Bosboom, who has also played it a good deal and won some brilliant games with it.

But a decade ago, the scheme became insanely popular, and those black supporters who were not familiar with bumps and potholes in the new roads suffered crushing defeats here. So far, in recent years, no effective antidote has been developed... but first things first!

#### Important nuances

In reply, Black has used a very active version of the strategy we have frequently seen in this book, against White’s flank strategy – counter-strokes in the centre and on the queenside. Of course, Black has tried the immediate play in the centre with ...e6-e5, but not always with the desired effect. Compared to the Shabalov-Shirov Gambit, the white d-pawn has not yet reached d4, and Black’s central thrust does not guarantee the opening of the centre – he needs something extra.

Much sharper positions arise after ... b7-b5!? – here the real battle begins between the opposing attacks and it is

completely unclear who will be first. Through trial and error, Black gradually came to the conclusion that he should leave his knight on b8, so that after the exchange c4xd5, c6xd5, it can travel along the route c6-b4! But here, White has not yet spoken his last word.

Meanwhile, if Black reacts in a way that is not the best and most relevant theoretically, White's plan is very simple – the g- and h-pawns storm the opponent's king, followed by queenside castling. Of course, at the same time, as in every version of the bully's opening repertoire, one needs to believe in oneself very much!

In 2001, a traditional blitz tournament took place in Moscow – the legendary competition run by the newspaper *Vechernaya Moskva*. For more than half a century, this Moscow blitz was regarded as an unofficial championship of the country (the USSR, and then Russia). Its winners have included Mikhail Tal – 10 times, Evgeny Vasiukov – 8, Tigran Petrosian and David Bronstein – 4 each, Viktor Kortchnoi – 3, Vasily Smyslov – 2. In recent years, the time has come for the titans of blitz of the XXI century, led by Alexander Morozevich, Alexander Grischuk and other prominent blitz players.

The 2001 tournament brought together a strong field – Sergey Rublevsky, Peter Svidler, Alexander Morozevich, Vadim Zviagintsev, Alexei Korotylev, Alexey Dreev, Alexander Grischuk, Evgeny Bareev and other famous players. Revived after the crisis of the 1990s, the blitz event took place in the magnificent Metropolitan Park Museum and was held thanks to the energetic support of the then head of the Moscow Chess Federation, Viacheslav Beresnev. Immediately after the tournament, Svidler, Dreev, Rublevsky and Grischuk, together with Alexander Khalifman and Alexander Motylev, flew to the Celestial Empire for the first match against the rapidly rising Chinese players. In a word, it was very important for each of the participants to play well, and the blitz gladiators were not embarrassed to use important novelties, even with a time control of 5 minutes each.

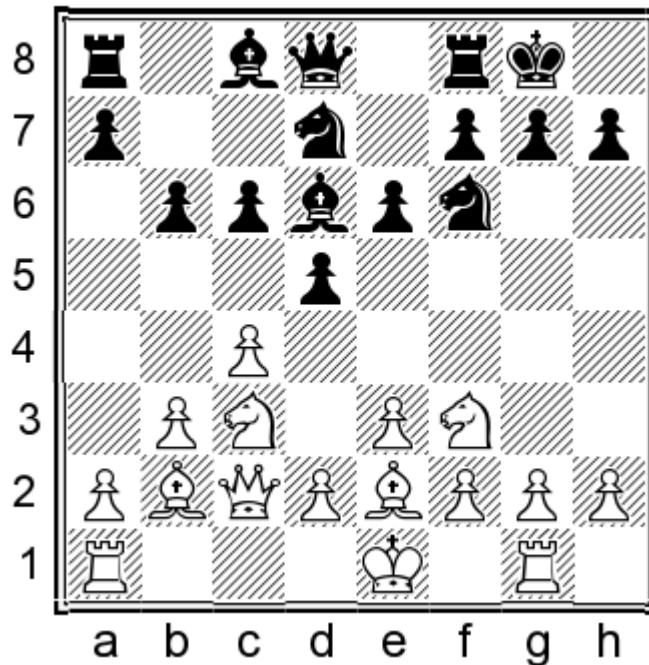
### Game 59

**Vadim Zviagintsev** 2638

**Alexey Dreev** 2690

Moscow blitz 2001

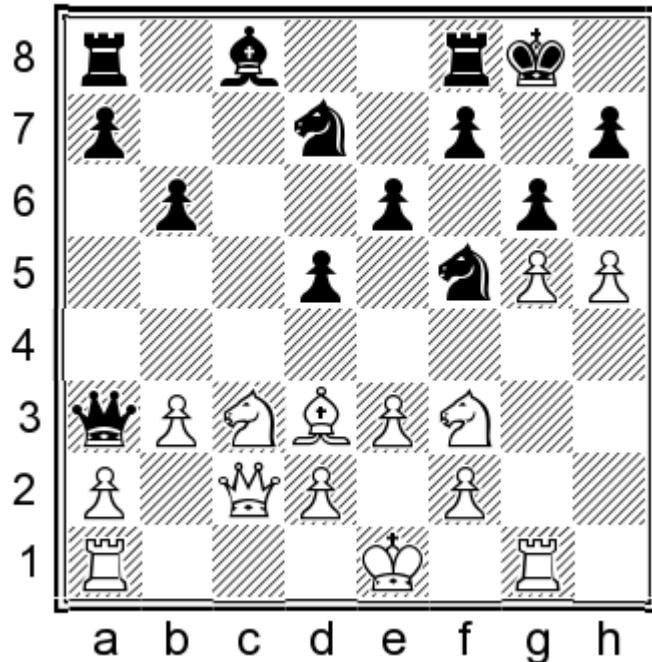
**1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Qc2 e6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 Bd6 7.Be2 0-0 8.Nc3 b6 9.Rg1**



**9...Ne5**

In both classical source games, Dreev banked on the exchange of the enemy bishop on b2, but did not equalize fully: 9...Qe7 10.g4 Ba3 11.g5 Ne8 12.Bxa3 Qxa3 13.h4.

A) Now in a tournament in England, the Russian GM started with 13...Nd6?, and White developed a strong initiative: 14.Bd3 g6 15.h5 Nf5 16.cxd5 cxd5.



Here Klaus Bischoff inaccurately exchanged pawns with 17.hxg6?! fxg6 18.Bxf5 exf5 19.Nd4?! (and here he should have played 19.Nb5!) 19...Ba6 20.b4 Qxb4 21.Nxd5 Qc4! (after the exchange of queens, Black faces no threats) 22.Qxc4 Bxc4 23.Nf4 Ne5 24.f3 with a draw in Bischoff-Dreev, Hastings 2000. However, significantly stronger is 17.Bxf5! exf5 18.Nb5! (it is understandable that the poisoned pawn cannot be taken: 18.Nxd5? Bb7) 18...Qc5 (other retreats allow White to win the central pawn with tempo: 18...Qe7 19.Nc7; 18...Qb4 19.Nc7) 19.Qxc5 bxc5 (19...Nxc5 20.Nc7) 20.d4 with a clear advantage in the endgame, on account of the superior structure and the black weaknesses.

For Black, it is better at move 13 to exchange on c4. Now White cannot take on d5 and open the centre, which in the end permitted Dreev sufficient counterplay. However, as analysis shows, with best play things are still not totally harmless for Black;

#### B) 13...dxc4! 14.bxc4 Nd6 15.h5

An interesting alternative is to play by analogy with Bischoff: 15.Bd3 Nf5 and now 16.Be4!? or 16.h5?!, but not the greedy 16.Bxf5?! exf5 17.Qxf5 Qb4!, since this gives Black excellent counterplay on the light squares.

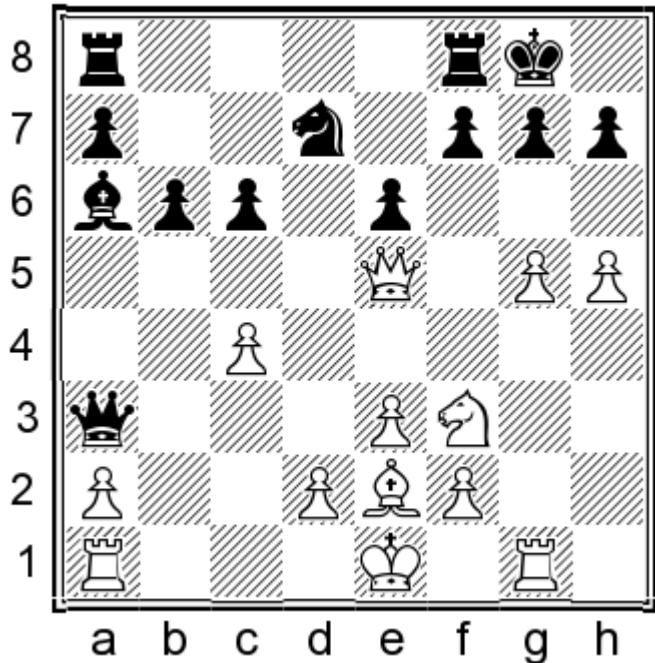
#### 15...Ba6 16.Ne4

It was possible to transpose into positions from the previous note with 16.Bd3 Nf5, but Zviagintsev decides to activate the queen.

#### 16...Nxe4 17.Qxe4 Nc5

It was more solid to return the queen with 17...Qd6!, especially in the light of White's 19th move.

#### 18.Qe5 Nd7



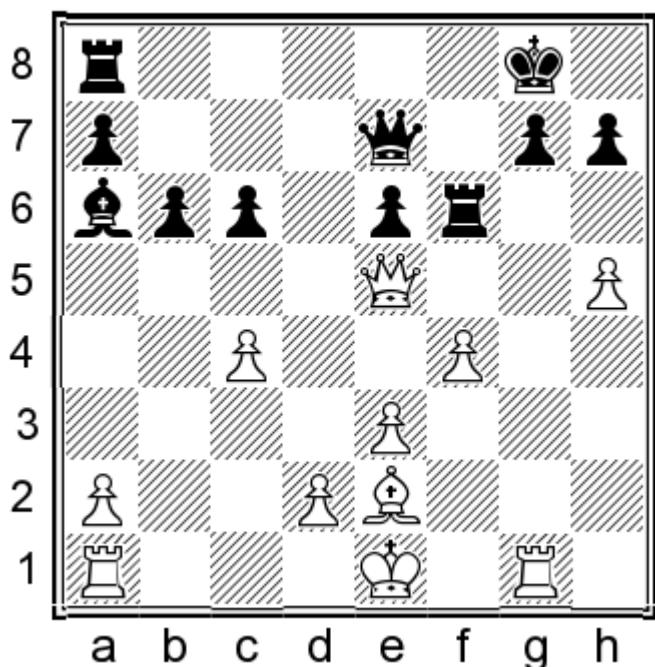
**19.Qd4**

It looks very strong to play 19.Qc7! Rfd8 20.g6 with the initiative, but maybe Vadim thought his position so promising that he did not wish to take even the risk of the queen penetration into the enemy camp.

**19...Qe7! 20.Ne5**

The return of the queen immediately consolidates Black's position and already nothing is given by 20.h6 e5! 21.Qb2 g6 22.d4 Rae8 with good centralization and a subsequent ...f7-f6.

**20...Nxe5 21.Qxe5 f6 22.gxf6 Rxf6 23.f4 draw, Zviagintsev-Dreev, Poikovsky 2002.**



White's decision to agree a draw may look rather premature, since he has an active queen and pressure along the g-file. But the players understood that the white king has issues and Black has a sudden active resource.

**Test 45.** Can you find it?

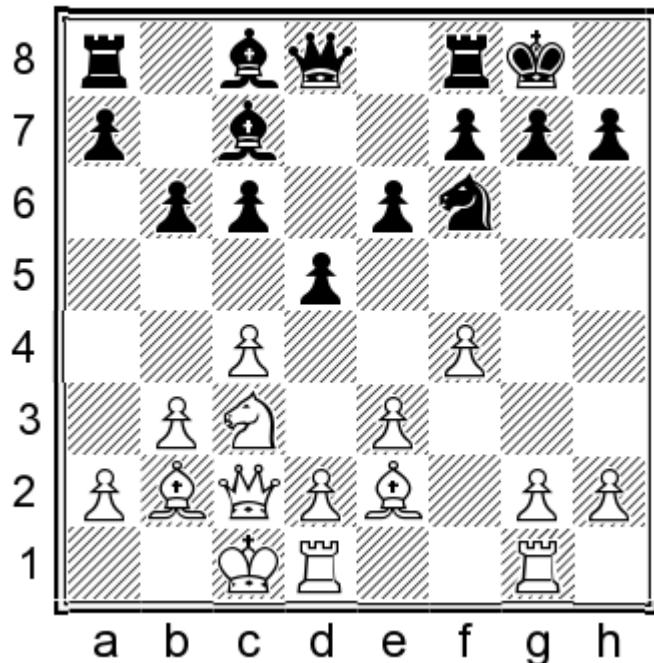
Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Certainly, with his move, Black can underline that there are weaknesses in the white camp. With this in mind, the most suitable move is 23...Rf5 – the rook is going to a5, taking aim at the a2-pawn. The chances are roughly equal, but nowadays Sofia rules would not allow a draw to be agreed. However, one must remember that this game was played in 2002.

### 10.Nxe5 Bxe5 11.f4

In blitz, Dreev has exchanged a pair of knights, believing that this should help Black obtain counterplay in the centre and on the queenside.

### 11...Bc7 12.0-0-0



### 12...b5!?

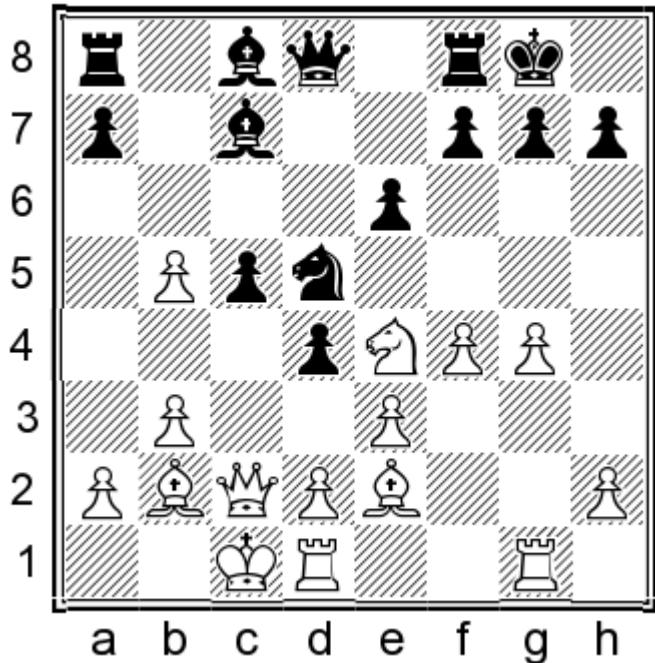
Black also has another line: 12...dxc4 13.bxc4 e5 14.fxe5 Ng4!? 15.h3 Nxe5 16.d4 Ng6 with the aim of weakening the white structure, but the Moscow GM may not have liked such knight journeys and his knight position on g6. Given the time control, Dreev provokes a crisis.

### 13.cxb5 c5?

Stronger was the simpler 13...cxb5! 14.Ba3 (14.Bxb5 Bb7) 14...Bd6 15.Bxd6 Qxd6 16.Nxb5 Qe7 with compensation for the pawn. Maybe Black overestimated the break ...d5-d4.

### 14.g4 d4 15.Ne4 Nd5

After 15...Nxe4 16.Qxe4 Rb8 17.exd4 Bb7 18.Qe3 a lot of pawns have already been given up and where is any real compensation for them?



**16.Qxc5?**

After this typical blitz mistake Black's idea is justified. However, after the correct 16.Nxc5! with the idea of 16...Nb4 17.Qc4 White's advantage was close to decisive. In the game, though, there followed a time scramble with a mass of mutual mistakes and missed opportunities, after which the critical moment arose:

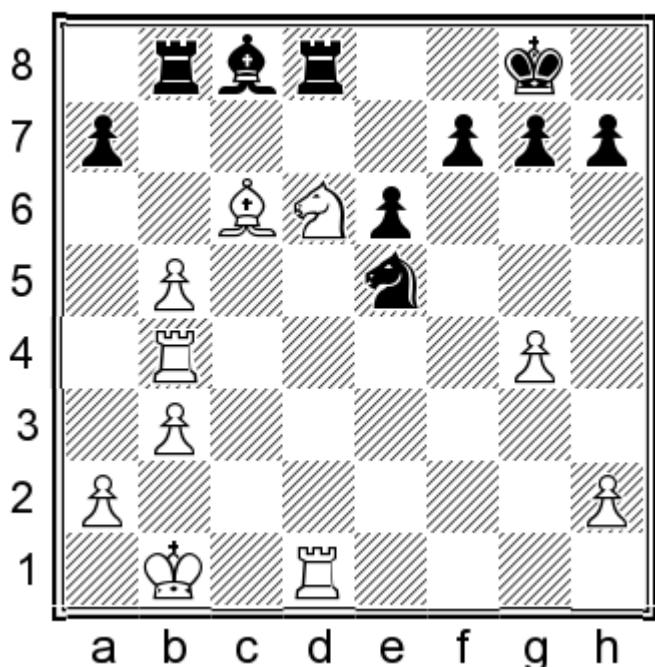
**16...Bb6 17.Qd6 dxe3 18.Rg3 Qxd6 19.Nxd6 Nxf4**

**19...Bc7!.**

**20.Bf3 Rb8 21.dxe3 Bxe3+ 22.Kb1 Rd8 23.Bc6**

**23.Nc4!..**

**23...Bc5 24.Be5 Ng6 25.Rc3! Bb4 26.Rc4! Nxe5 27.Rxb4**



Here it is! Black can take on c6!

**Test 46.** Would you accept Zviagintsev's generous gift?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The correct answer is no! Black should reply with a small tactical operation, exploiting the undefended rook on d1 – 27...Bb7! 28.Bxb7 Rxb7 with an ending where all three results are possible. In the game, with seconds left, Dreev took the bishop...

**27...Nxc6? 28.bxc6!**

and it turned out that after 28...Rxb4 29.c7 Rd7 30.Nxc8! Rxd1+ 31.Kb2! the clumsy black rooks cannot stop the passed pawn: 31...Rxg4 32.Ne7+ Kf8 33.Nc6! and White wins.

In the game, everything ended much less beautifully:

**28...Ra8 29.c7 Rf8 30.Rb8 Ba6 31.Rxa8 Rxa8 32.Nb5**

And Black resigned.

It is a great shame that the main variation remained hidden!

Of course, things do not always work out so well for White. In the game below, played in the Bundesliga, it is his own king which almost ends up in a mating net!

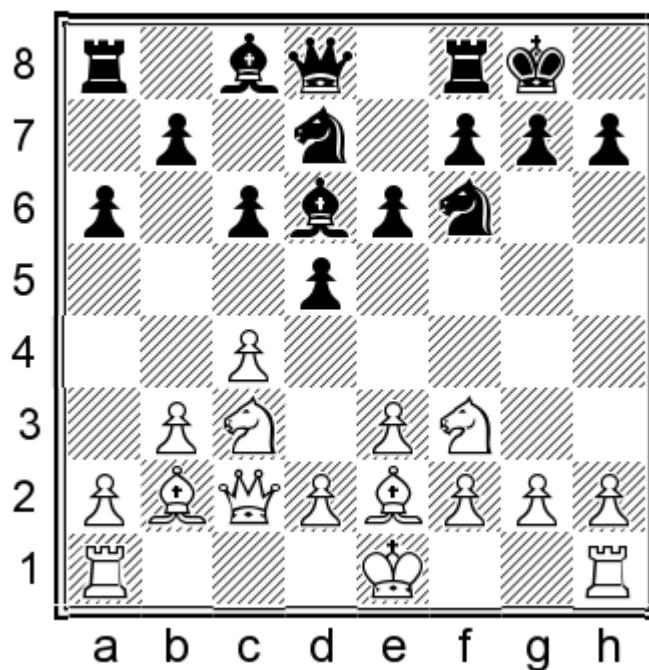
#### Game 60

Laurent Fressinet 2718

Wouter Spoelman 2538

Germany Bundesliga 2010/11 (9)

**1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 Bd6 7.Qc2 0-0 8.Be2 a6**



Somewhat unexpectedly, Black does not worry about the career of his Bc8 just yet, but prepares a counterblow in the event of White castling queenside. Interestingly, this position was reached as far back as 1931 in the final game of the match between Tartakower and Sultan Khan. The Indian genius, despite having experience only of Eastern chess, proved fully the equal of one of the world's strongest players and the match was drawn 5½-5½. Tartakower

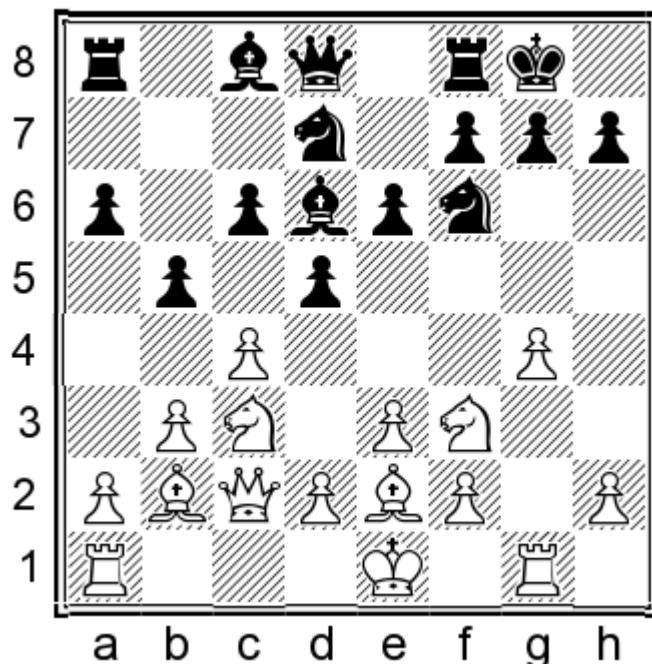
was a great optimist, both in life and at chess, and so in the decisive game, the creative player and journalist decided to permit himself some strategic risk: 9.e4?! dxe4 10.Nxe4 Nxe4 11.Qxe4 e5! 12.Qc2 Qe7 13.0-0-0?, and here Sultan Khan immediately hit back: 13...e4! 14.Nd4 Nf6 15.g4 c5 16.Nf5 Bxf5 17.gxf5 Be5 18.Rhg1 Rad8 19.Rg2 Kh8! 20.Rdg1 Rg8 – we have seen this picture in the book already, in Dmitry Jakovenko's game against Boris Gelfand. White's play on the g-file has come to nothing and the central squares are in the hands of the Indian master, who went on to win.

Now White usually settles for the modest 9.d4, but we have already said that we are writing about those who are not used to half measures. Here Laurent Fressinet boldly threw the pawn battering ram forward, but it turns out that in this version Black has excellent chances to launch a counterattack, which is more dangerous.

### **9.Rg1 b5!**

In the variation 9...e5 White's attack runs as if on oiled tracks: 10.g4 e4 11.g5 Ne8 (11...exf3 12.gxf6 g6 13.Bxf3 dxc4 14.bxc4 Nxf6 15.h4 is dangerous for Black, but it is worth considering the knight sacrifice 11...Ng4!? (Jakubiec-Krivoshey, Griesheim 2003) which White should not accept) 12.Nh4 Nc7 13.0-0-0 Ne5 Yuffa-Bykov, St Petersburg 2016 – it is always nice to present a game by one of one's students, but now Danya could have significantly strengthened the effect of his march with the move 14.d3!.

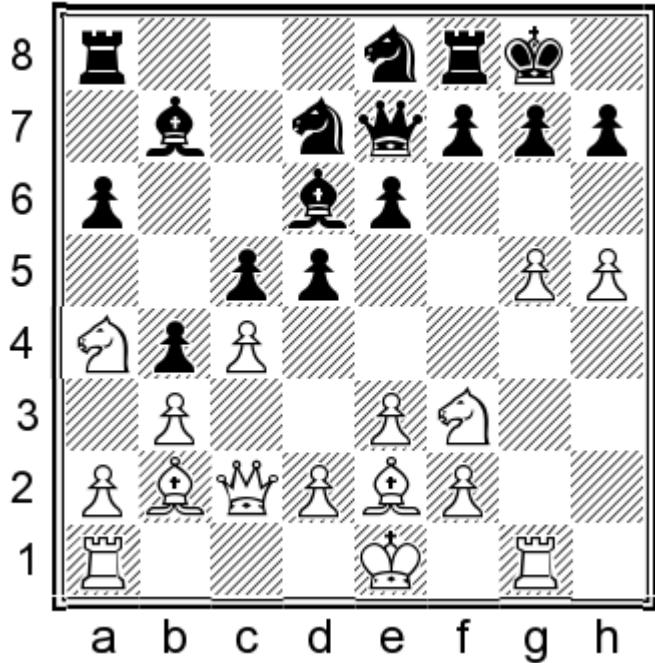
### **10.g4**



Despite the effect of surprise, GM Wouter Spoelman does not lose his head and finds an excellent idea in reply to his titled opponent's aggressive set-up.

### **10...bxc4!**

At the turn of the millennium, when the first paths in the new scheme were laid down by Bischoff and Zviagintsev, the 1985 USSR champion Mikhail Gurevich had his say in the line: 10...b4?! 11.g5!? (also very good is 11.Na4!?, delaying the further advance of the g-pawn) 11...Ne8 (after the exchange of blows 11...bxc3 12.gxf6 cxd2+ 13.Qxd2 Nxf6 14.0-0-0 White's initiative is more dangerous but it was still worth that way, since in the game, Black lost very meekly) 12.Na4 Qe7 13.h4 Bb7 14.h5 c5.



*analysis diagram*

Black hoped for counterplay in the centre, but, as is often the case in this type of position, it is restrained by the ‘bad’ knight on a4, the sight of which would make Dr. Tarrasch uncomfortable. In addition, Mikhail Gurevich found a strong move for White, and it turned out that both black replies were bad:

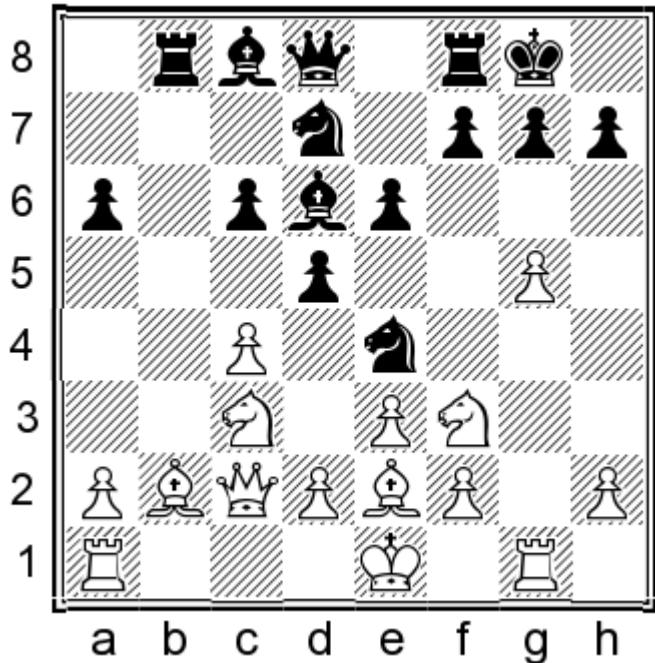
15.cxd5! Bxd5 (15...exd5 16.Nh4! – the knight breaks in at f5) 16.0-0-0 Ra7 17.Kb1 Nc7? (loses a piece, but after 17...Bc6 hardly anyone would bet on Black) 18.e4 Bc6 19.e5+– M.Gurevich-Kallai, Germany Bundesliga 2001/02.

With his move, Spoelman shows that for him the most important thing is to open the b-file. And he turns out to be absolutely right, since after that White can no longer attack without having to keep an eye on his own goal.

### **11.bxc4 Rb8 12.g5**

An Olympiad game saw 12.Nd4 Qc7 13.f4 c5 14.Nb3 d4! 15.g5 Ne8 16.Ne4 Bb7 17.Bd3 Bxe4 18.Bxe4 f5! 19.gxf6 Ndxf6 and Black stood excellently, Rahman-Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son, Batumi 2018, and the Vietnamese player duly went on to bring his team a valuable point.

### **12...Ne4!**



Another fearless move, based on accurate calculation. On 13.Nxe4 dxe4 14.Nd4 there follows 14...c5! with the idea of 15.Nc6? Rxb2 16.Qxb2 Qc7+, and so it is not desirable for White to exchange knights in such a situation – the black pawn on e4 will be too strong. However, in the game this problem soon confronted Fressinet again.

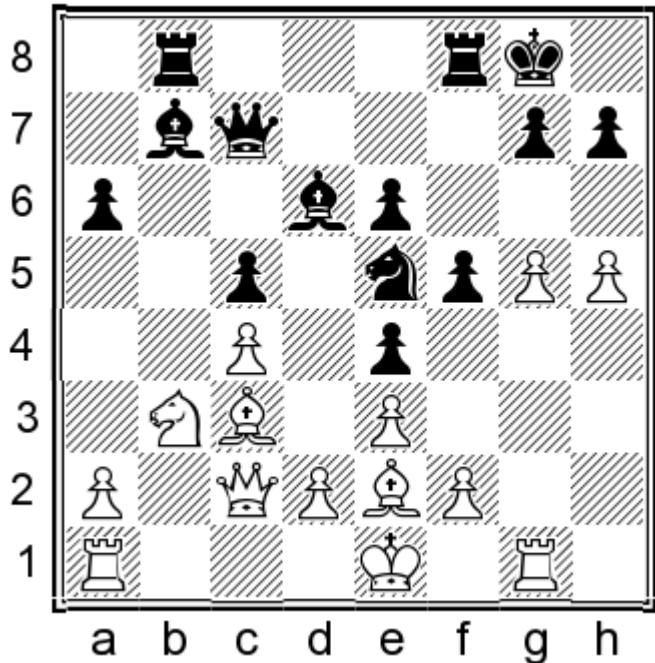
### **13.Nd4 Qc7 14.Nxe4?**

A very dangerous decision, after which the white king never feels safe again. Of course, the French GM did not fancy 14.f4 Nxc3 15.Qxc3 e5 16.Nf5 Bb4 17.Qc2 d4! 18.exd4 exf4 or 14.cxd5!? cxd5 15.Rc1 (the ending is unpleasant for White after 15.Nxe4 Qxc2 16.Nxc2 dxe4) 15...Qb7 16.Ba1 Ndc5 17.Rb1 Qc7 18.Rxb8 Qxb8 with the initiative for Black in both cases. However, he should have stuck to his guns – 14.h4!? Kunic-Bratkovic, Senta 2015.

### **14...dxe4 15.Bc3**

In all cases, it does not require great efforts from Black to find the correct moves: 15.Nb3 Be5 16.Bxe5 Qxe5 17.0-0-0 c5 18.h4 a5 with an unpleasant assault on the white position.

### **15...c5! 16.Nb3 Bb7 17.h4 Ne5 18.h5 f5**

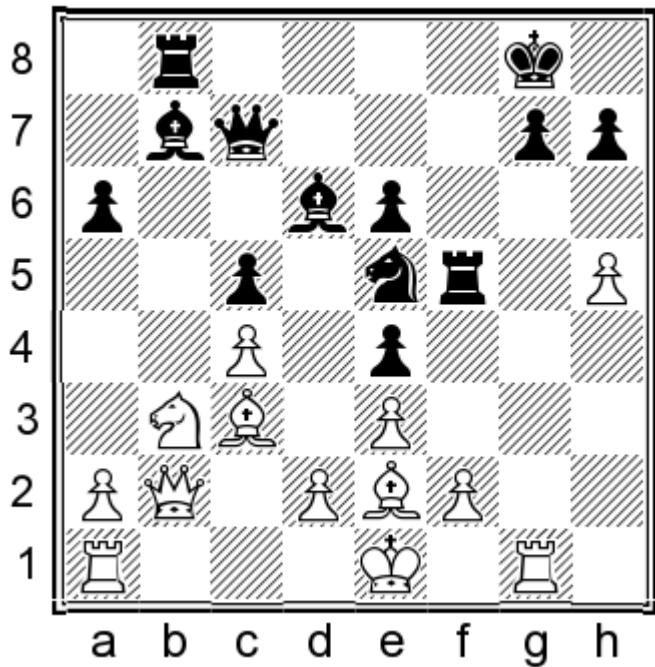


Excellent play! Spoelman's pieces control the central sector and the timely counterblow with the f-pawn ensures the safety of the black king.

### **19.gxf6**

White must open the g-file, since after 19.0-0-0 Bc6 20.Qb2 f4 it is not clear what he can do next, whilst Black has a mass of both attacking and defensive moves.

### **19...Rxf6 20.Qb2 Rf5**

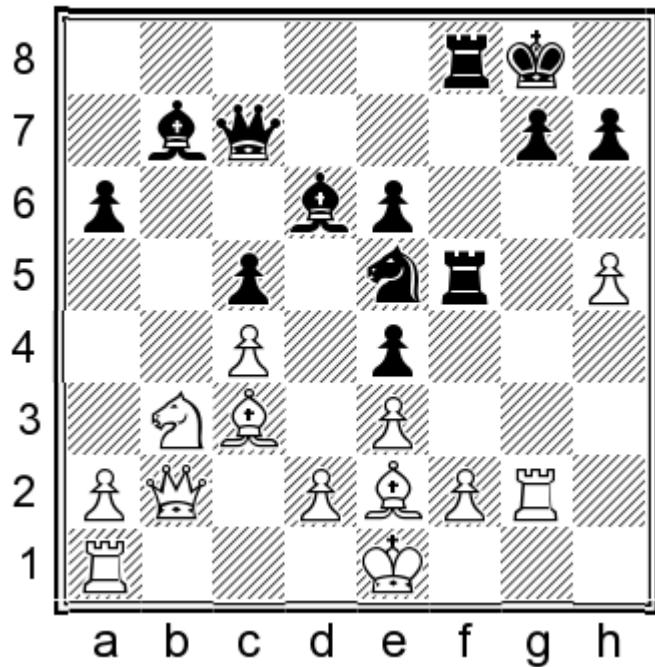


### **21.Rg2?**

It was possible to ignore the f2-pawn with 21.0-0-0, since it is dangerous for Black to take it – 21...Rxf2? because of 22.Rg5 Rf5 23.Rdg1. But the Dutch GM's next move shows that he would probably have declined the Greek Gift – 21...Rbf8 22.Rdf1 R8f7 with advantage.

**21...Rbf8?!**

He could cynically have gone after the pawn with 21...Rxh5 22.0-0-0, and then come back 22...Rf5, but two very creative players had not come to the board that day just to engage in mundane pawn-grabbing.



**22.Qa3?**

Allowing a lovely blow. Correct was 22.Na5 Ba8 23.Rb1, trying to contain the black counterplay with all his forces.

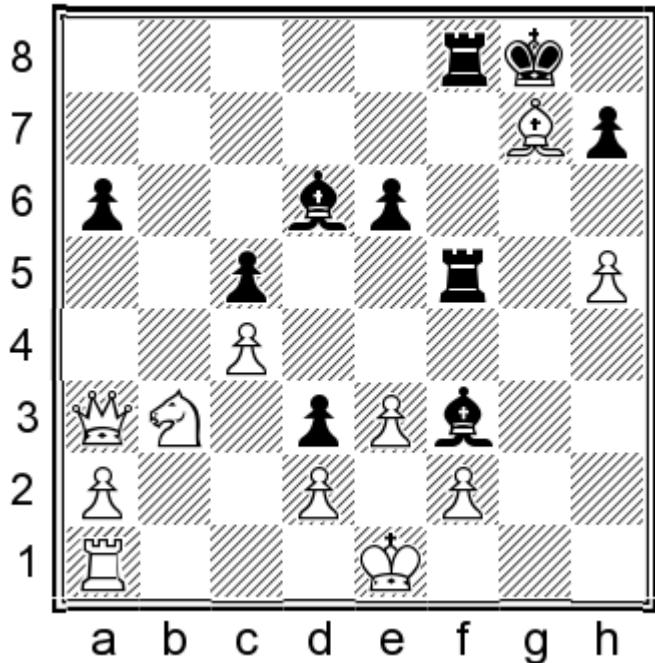
**22...Nd3+!!**

Black could simply and in all comfort play 22...Qe7, but Spoelman carries out a beautiful combination with a queen sacrifice!

**23.Bxd3 exd3 24.Rxg7+**

The black queen must be taken, since after 24.Rg1 e5 the attack continues free of charge.

**24...Qxg7 25.Bxg7 Bf3!**



A beautiful quiet move crowns a series of blows. Of course, he did not sacrifice the queen merely for the sake of 25...Kxg7?? 26.0-0-0. Now the threat is ...Rf5-h5-h1#, and Fressinet finds the only resource to continue the fight:

**26.Nd4! cxd4!**

Insufficient for victory is 26...Rxh5? 27.Qxd3 Rh1+ 28.Qf1 Rxh1+ 29.Kxf1 cxd4 30.Bxf8 Bxf8 31.exd4 and the rook and pawns should hold in the battle against the powerful bishops.

**27.Qxd6**

One of the bishops must be taken: 27.Qxd3 Kxg7-+.

**27...Kxg7 28.h6+!**

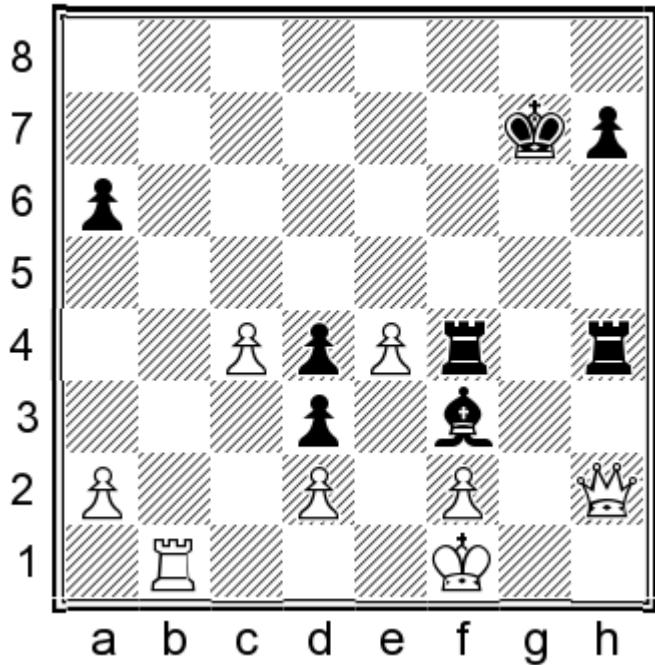
Laurent Fressinet again demonstrates amazing ingenuity when on the edge of the precipice. He loses easily after 28.Qxd4+ Kg8 29.Qxd3 Rxh5 30.Qf1 Rh1 31.Qxh1 Bxh1, but the intermediate check with the pawn allows him to create a little confusion in the black camp.

**28...Kxh6 29.e4!?**

Again the last chance, since after 29.Qxe6+ R8f6 30.Qe7 Rg6 31.Qh4+ Kg7 32.Qe7+ Kg8 33.Qe8+ Rf8 the appearance of the black rook on the back rank is unavoidable.

**29...Rf4 30.Rb1**

The rook tries to come to the aid of the queen. White's defences are breached very nicely after 30.Qxe6+ R8f6 31.Qh3+ Kg7 32.Kf1 (or 32.Rb1 Rxe4+ 33.Kf1 Be2+ 34.Kg2 Rg4+-+) 32...Rg4 33.Qh2, and now the rooks crush the queen: 33...Rff4! 34.Rb1 Rh4+-.



*analysis diagram*

Here the players' fatigue and time-trouble started to tell. Spoelman gave a series of checks: 30...Rxe4+?! 31.Kf1 Be2+?! (31...Rf5!) 32.Kg2 Rg8+? (it is hard for a human player to calculate lines such as 32...Rg4+ 33.Kh3 Rf6!, with the motif Rg4-g5-h5+) 33.Kh3 Bg4+ 34.Kh2? (34.Kg3!) 34...Bf5 35.Qe7 Rf4? (White's error on move 34 could be exploited by means of 35...Rg5! with decisive domination of the dark squares) 36.f3!, and Laurent's king escaped from the mating net (drawn on move 41).

**Test 47.** Assume you are not in time pressure and can think about the variations. Let's consider how Black could complete one of the most beautiful attacks in recent chess history.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** All the most difficult moves for humans to see are quiet ones. One always wants to concentrate on what at the dawn of computer programming were called FVs (forced variations) such as checks and captures. Here, the shortest path to victory was the modest defensive move by the rook 30...R8f6! 31.Kf1 (nothing is changed by 31.Qe7 Rg6 or 31.Qe5 Rxe4+) 31...Rh4 with decisive penetration. Despite the inevitable mistakes, let's give credit to both players!

We will continue our excursion around the team championships of the countries of the Old World, and the next in turn is an exciting game from the French club championship. The discussion is in the line where Bischoff and Zviagintsev battled with Dreev.

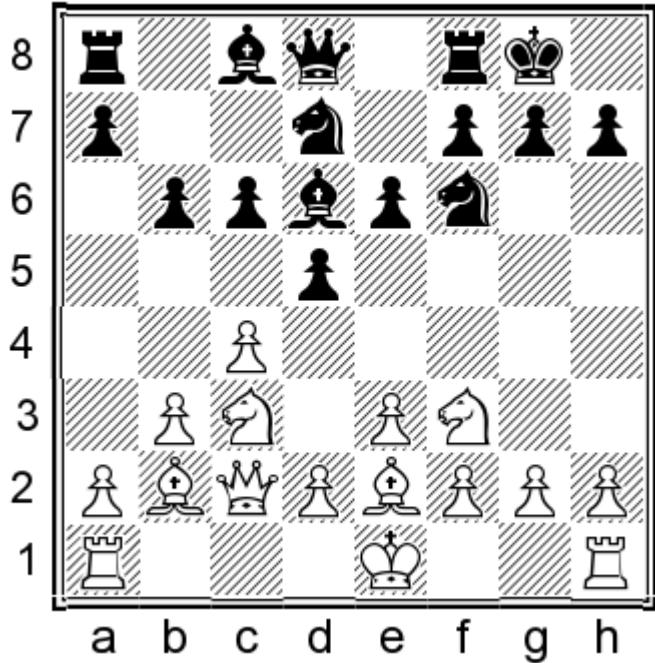
Game 61

Anish Giri 2776

Bart Michiels 2536

France tt 2015 (3)

1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Qc2 Nbd7 6.b3 Bd6 7.Bb2 0-0 8.Be2 b6



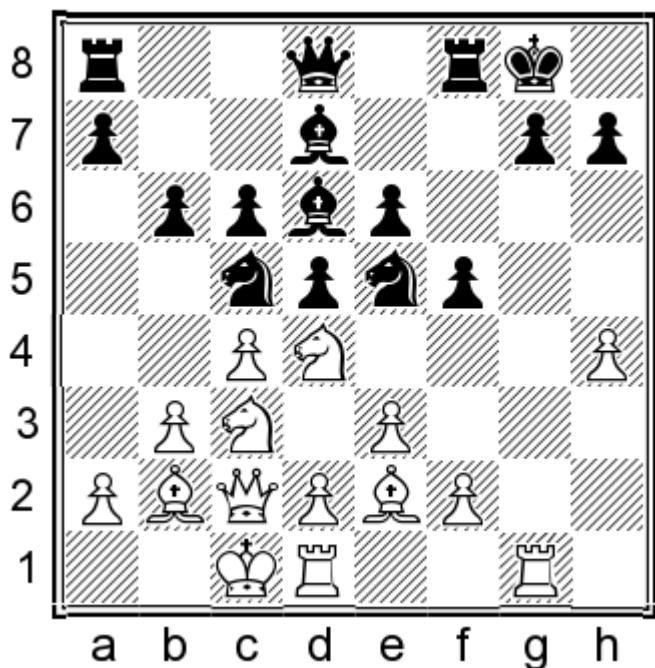
### 9.Rg1!?

The brave and undaunted fighter Levon Aronian once sacrificed the g-pawn here without the preliminary rook move. Moreover, not against just anyone, but against no less a player than Boris Gelfand. The gambit is a real one, because, unlike the Shabalov-Shirov Gambit, here it is not possible to regain the pawn on g7.

9.g4!? Nxg4 10.Rg1 f5 11.h3 and now:

A) 11...Ngf6?! is less accurate: 12.Nd4 Qe8? (unpleasant is 12...Ne5 13.f4, but he should play 12...Nb8!? – the move does not look very pretty, but does not lose anything immediately) 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.Ncb5! Be5 15.Nc7 Bxc7 16.Qxc7 (the white queen breaks into Black's camp and, with the help of the knight, takes back the material with interest) 16...Rb8 17.Qd6 Rf7 18.Nxe6 with a quick win for White, Andreikin-Kaplan, Plovdiv 2008;

B) Gelfand does everything correctly – he places his pieces more actively and does not concede the initiative, viz. 11...Nge5 12.Nd4 Nc5 13.0-0-0 Bd7 14.h4!?.



## *analysis diagram*

A less experienced player might settle here for taking a second pawn with 14...Qxh4, but after 15.f4 Ng6 (bad is 15...Ng4 16.Bxg4 fxg4 17.Rh1) 16.Nf3 Qe7 17.Ng5 White is attacking the black citadel and in the hands of such a master as Aronian, this is doubly dangerous!

Gelfand plays much more strongly – Black loses some tempi, but transfers the bishop, solidly defending the square g7, after which he himself will go over to the offensive: 14...Be7! 15.Rg2 Bf6 16.Rdg1 dxc4 17.bxc4 b5! 18.Nd1 Na4. White is in some trouble, but Aronian managed to equalize the chances in Aronian-Gelfand, Leon rapid 2010. However, it is clear that one needs to have very considerable self-belief to repeat Aronian's experiment!

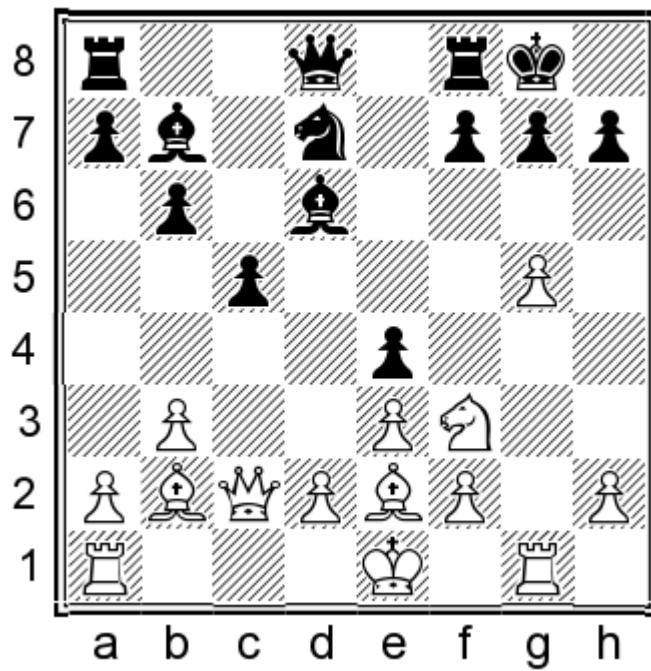
### **9...Bb7**

In tournament practice Black gradually moved away from Dreev's plan of exchanging dark-squared bishops with ...Qe7 and ...Ba3. He intends instead to use the time he has saved to reconstruct his central position and simply erect a solid barrier against the sniper on b2.

Dreev also tried the alternative 9...Ne5 in a later encounter: 10.g4!? (Zviagintsev preferred 10.Nxe5 Bxe5 11.f4) 10...Nfxg4 11.0-0-0 Nxf3 12.Bxf3 Ne5 13.Be2 Ng6 14.f4 Qh4 15.Rg2 Wojtaszek-Dreev, Warsaw blitz 2011. White's compensation sufficed for a draw, but evidently, Zviagintsev's line is more promising.

### **10.g4 e5**

In this position there is a trap, which is well-known within a narrow circle. Thus, Black plays 10...c5?!, opening up his bishop, and on 11.g5 throws the knight forward: 11...Ne4? 12.cxd5 exd5 13.Nxe4 dxe4.

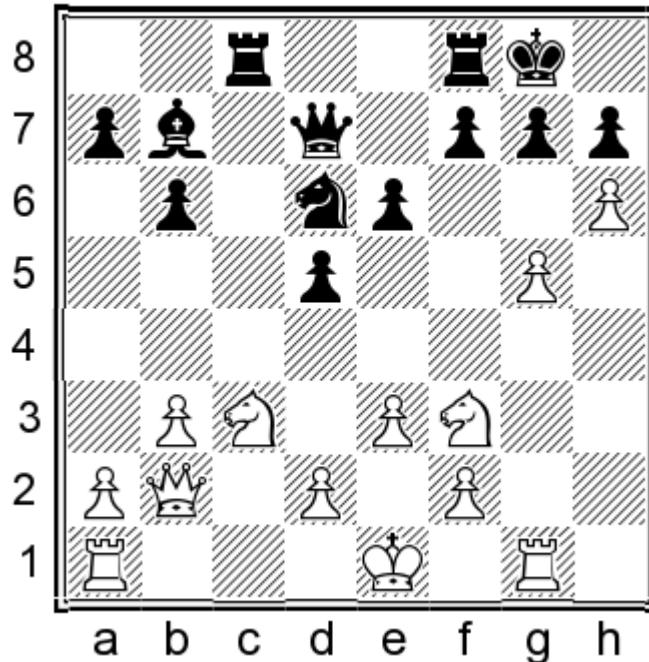


## *analysis diagram*

And here, out of the blue, there ensues a crushing attack on the king. Black's incautious operation has cleared the long diagonal, which can be exploited by White in a hidden way with 14.Qc3! f6 15.gxf6 Nxf6 (taking with the rook does not help because of the piece sacrifice 15...Rxf6 16.Ng5 Be5 17.d4! exd3 18.Qxd3 Bxb2 19.Rd1! Qe8 (Reinderman-Admiraal, Netherlands tt 2017/18. The square g7 cannot be defended: 19...Rg6 20.Qc4+) 20.Qxh7+! Kf8 21.Bh5 Bc3+ 22.Kf1 Ba6+ 23.Kg2 Bb7+ 24.f3+-, and the white king runs away and the crush is unavoidable) 16.Ng5 Qe7 17.Bc4+ Bd5 (Khismatullin-Demidov, Sochi blitz 2017; 17...Kh8 18.Ne6 Rf7 19.Nxg7+-), and now the simplest is 18.Bxd5+ Nxd5 19.Qc4 Rf5 20.Nxe4 g6 21.Nf6+ with an easy win.

The sister of the 15th women's World Champion exchanged dark-squared bishops after some preparation: 10...Qe7

11.g5 Ne8 12.h4 Rc8 13.h5 Ba3 14.Bxa3 Qxa3 15.cxd5 cxd5 16.Bb5 Qe7 17.Qb2 Nd6 18.Bxd7 Qxd7 19.h6 (Nepomniachtchi-A.Muzychuk, Jerusalem rapid 2018).

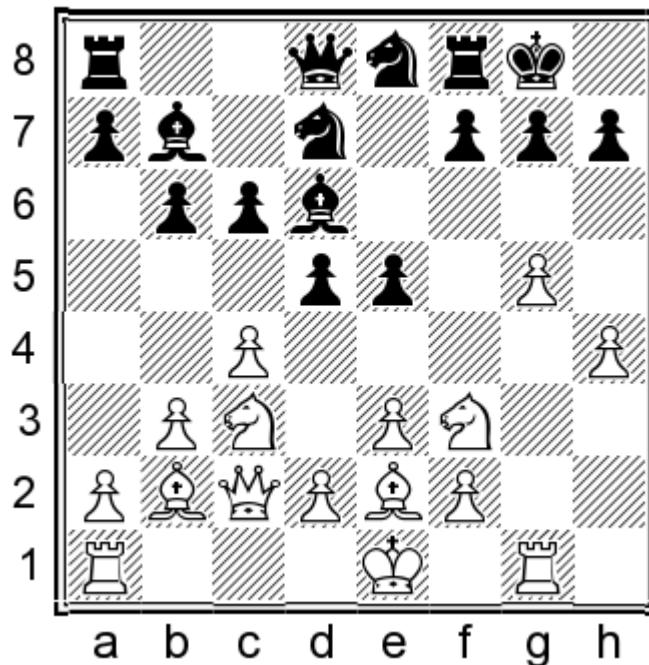


**Test 48.** The weakening of the dark squares could critically damage the black position. Can you think of a way to prevent White seizing the square f6?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Again, resolute action in the centre is the only way. Anna could have given her powerful opponent an unpleasant surprise with 19...d4! 20.Nxd4 e5 21.hxg7 Rfd8 22.Nde2 Nf5 with tremendous compensation for the sacrificed pawns. In the game, she played more meekly with 19...Nf5, and after 20.Ne2 g6 Ian could have secured his advantage with 21.Ne5! Qc7 22.Ng4 Qc2 23.Qxc2 Rxc2 24.Kd1!±, solidly seizing the square f6. Instead, after 21.Ng3 f6!? a fighting draw eventually resulted.

**11.g5 Ne8 12.h4**

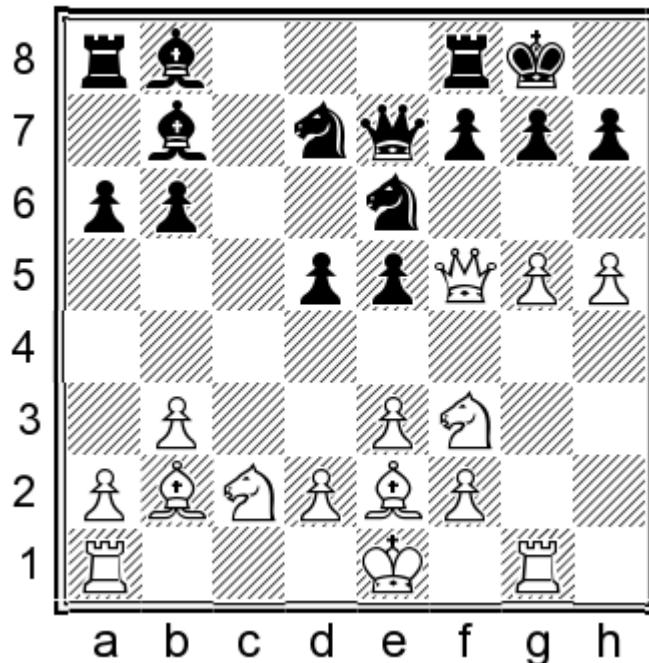


The black knight has been driven back, and White continues to push his pawns forward. The defender needs to play

accurately and in the first instance regroup his lines. For example, after 12...e4 13.Nd4 Be5 14.d3 exd3 15.Bxd3 g6 16.Nf3 Bh8 17.h5 Black's active operations in the centre allow White to bring his pieces to threatening squares with tempi, Papin-Ter Sahakyan, Chennai 2013. Therefore Bart Michiels activates the e8-knight.

### 12...Nc7 13.Bd3

Without the bishop there is no attack. White played more directly in the game Ovod-M.Brunello, Novi Sad 2016: 13.h5 Ne6 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.Nb5 Bb8 16.Qf5 a6 17.Na3 Qe7 18.Nc2.



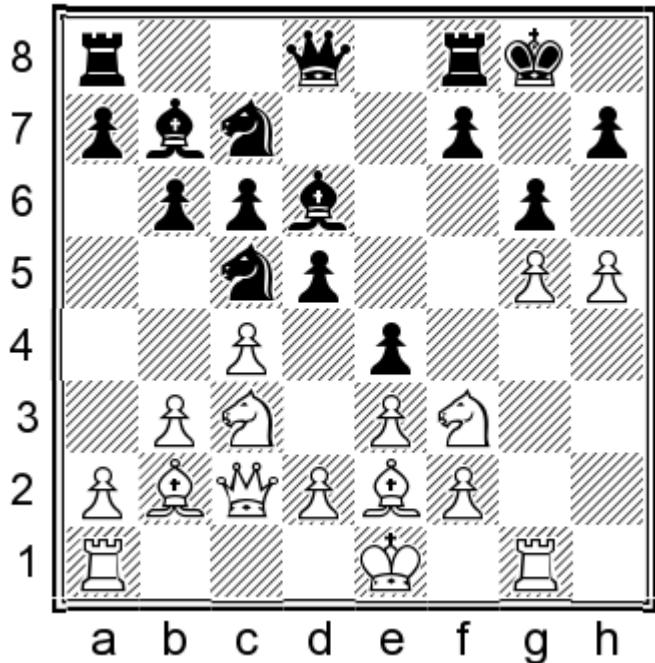
**Test 49.** How can Black fight for the initiative?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** With a central strike! After 18...d4! 19.0-0-0 Bd6 20.exd4?! is bad because of 20...Nf4!, so Black has an excellent position.

### 13...g6 14.h5 Nc5 15.Be2 e4

It was possible to play in the style of Marina Brunello's game with 15...N7e6, but the Belgian player is not afraid of a direct fight with one of the best players on the planet.



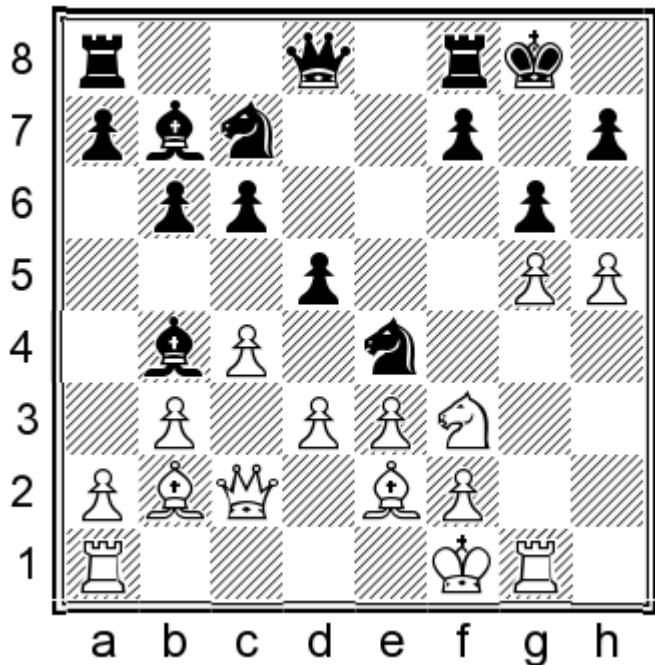
**16.Nxe4!**

Anish takes up the gauntlet and is ready to give up a piece to open the long diagonal. Black would be happy with the timid 16.Nh4 Re8 or 16.Nd4 Be5.

**16...Nxe4**

Taking the Trojan Horse with 16...dxe4? is much more dangerous: 17.Qc3 f6 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.gxf6 and Black has to give up the exchange: 19...Qxf6 (he loses after 19...exf3 20.Qc2 Qe8 21.Rxg6+ Kf7 22.Rg7+ Ke6 23.Qh7 Rh8 (23...fxe2 24.Qh3#) 24.Bxf3 Rxh7 25.Bg4# or 19...Kf7 20.Ng5+ Ke8 21.f7+) 20.Qxf6 Rxf6 21.Bxf6 exf3 22.Bxf3 Kf7 23.Bc3 – the rook and two pawns are slightly stronger than the black pieces, thanks to the passivity of the bishop on b7.

**17.d3 Bb4+ 18.Kf1**



## **18...Bc8?**

But this is a mistake! Black is undone by the pursuit of an extra exchange, just when after 18...Nxf2! 19.Kxf2 (19.a3 Nh3 20.Rg3 Bd6 21.Rxh3 Ne6 22.Qc3 d4! – another central blow!) is dangerous for White. After 19...Re8 the outcome of the game would remain unclear.

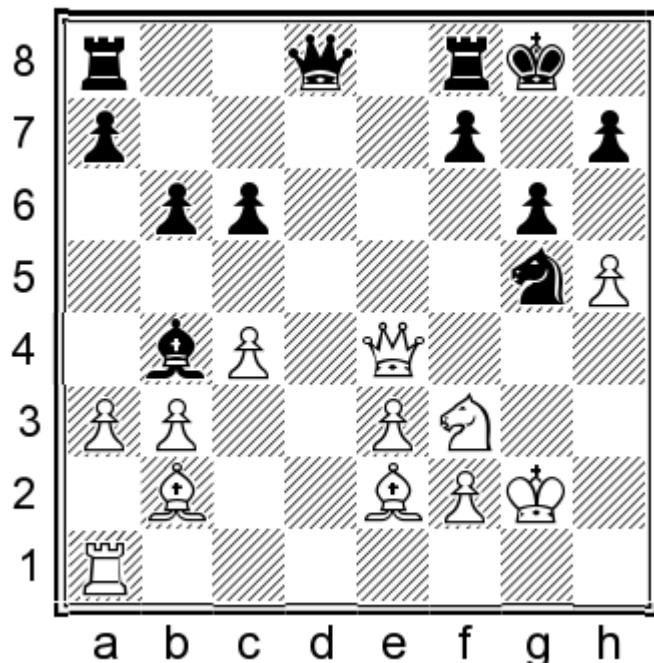
## **19.dxe4 Bh3+ 20.Rg2 Ne6**

In the event of 20...Bxg2+ 21.Kxg2 the black bishop will sooner or later be driven from b4, and then the diagonal a1-h8 will be fatally exposed, to the detriment of the black king's health. Michiels had based his hopes on the knight move – if the pawn g5 can be eliminated, it may be possible to seal off the long diagonal.

## **21.a3 dxe4**

This inclusion cannot be avoided, since after 21...Bc5 22.cxd5 cxd5 23.Qc3 White's plan is realized immediately.

## **22.Qxe4 Bxg2+ 23.Kxg2 Nxg5**



Black has taken the exchange and even won the g5-pawn with tempo, but this does not save him from the hurricane of White's attack.

## **24.Qf4! Nxf3 25.axb4**

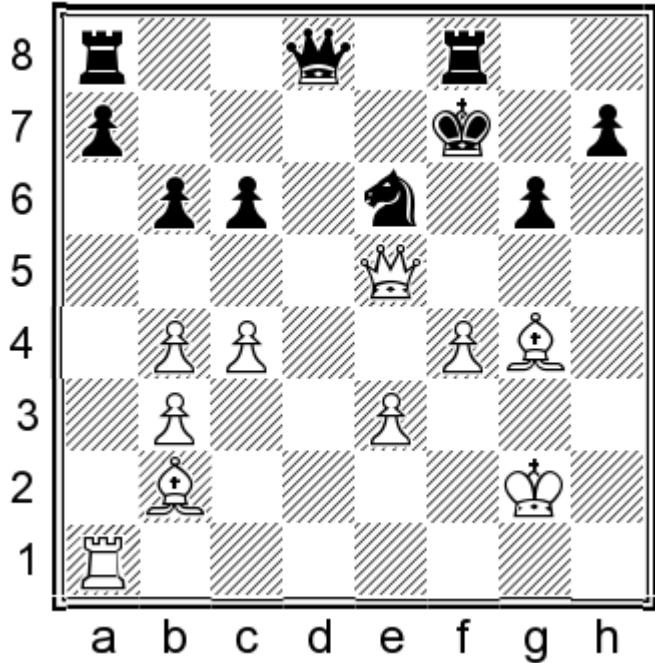
A simpler route to a point in the tournament table was 25.Bxf3 Bd6 26.Qh6 f6 27.Bxc6, but Giri chooses the pretty route, and we the readers can only thank the GM for his creative choice.

Black's knight and rook are unable to defend the king against the raking bishops.

## **25...Ng5 26.hxg6 fxg6?**

More tenacious was 26...f6!? 27.gxh7+ Nxh7 28.Bf3 Qd7 29.b5, but even here, White's advantage is sufficient to win – his bishops dominate the whole board.

## **27.Qe5 Kf7 28.f4 Ne6 29.Bg4**



**29...Qe7**

The counter-sacrifice of a piece with 29...Re8 30.f5 Nf4+ (30...gxf5 31.Bh5+) gives nothing after 31.Qxf4 Qd2+ 32.Qf2+–.

**30.Rh1 Nxf4+**

In such a situation, one usually wants to end the game with a bang, such as 30...h5 31.Bxh5! gxh5 32.Qxh5+ Kg8 33.Qg6+ Ng7 34.Qh7+ Kf7 35.Qxg7+ Ke8 36.Qg6+, but the opponent rarely allows such things. White has a simple win after 30...Rh8 31.Bxe6+ Qxe6 32.Qg7+.

**31.exf4 Qxe5 32.Bxe5 h5 33.Bf3+–**

And Anish Giri showed that his two bishops are stronger than Black's rook.

The variation also has an interesting, female interpretation. According to ChessBase, the following order of moves was used mainly by female grandmasters: World Champion Antoaneta Stefanova, grandmaster Galina Strutinskaya and... Anish Giri's wife Sopiko Guramishvili!

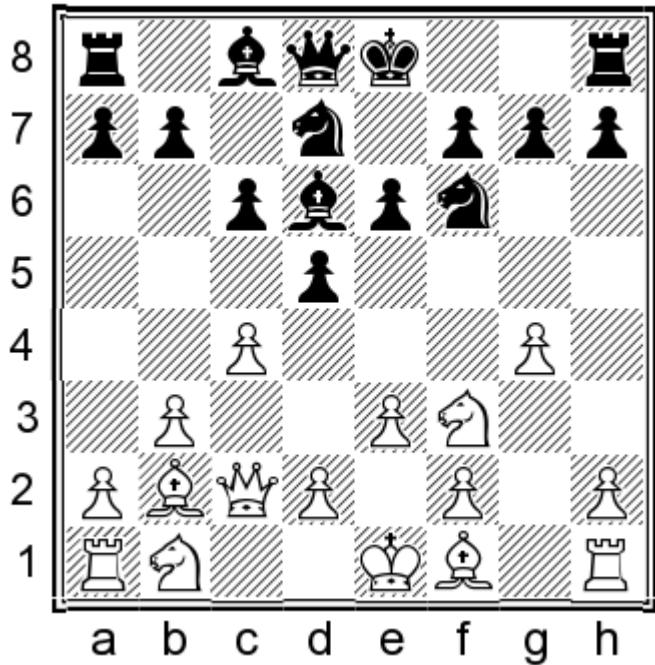
Game 62

**Antoaneta Stefanova 2527**

**Anna-Maja Kazarian 2257**

Riga Ech 2017 (5)

**1.Nf3 d5 2.b3 Nf6 3.Bb2 Nbd7 4.c4 e6 5.e3 c6 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4!**



The fairer sex is usually not prone to long vacillations and is used to resolving issues by immediately cutting the ‘Gordian knot’. Here we see that approach – indeed, why not try the same idea without developing the bishop from f1 to e2?

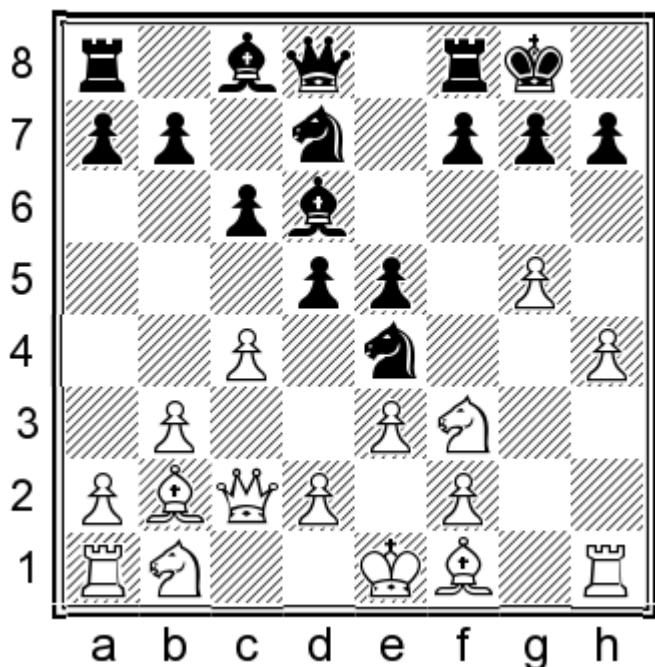
**7...0-0**

In other duels on the same theme Black has played 7...h6 8.Rg1 (Guramishvili-M.Petrosyan, Jermuk 2012) and 7...e5 8.g5 Ne4 9.h4 (Strutinskaya-Ilyina, Moscow 2018).

**8.g5 Ne4 9.h4 f6!?**

Anna-Maja correctly realizes that in this position it is logical to open the f-file, since the white bishop does not defend the Nf3.

After 9...e5



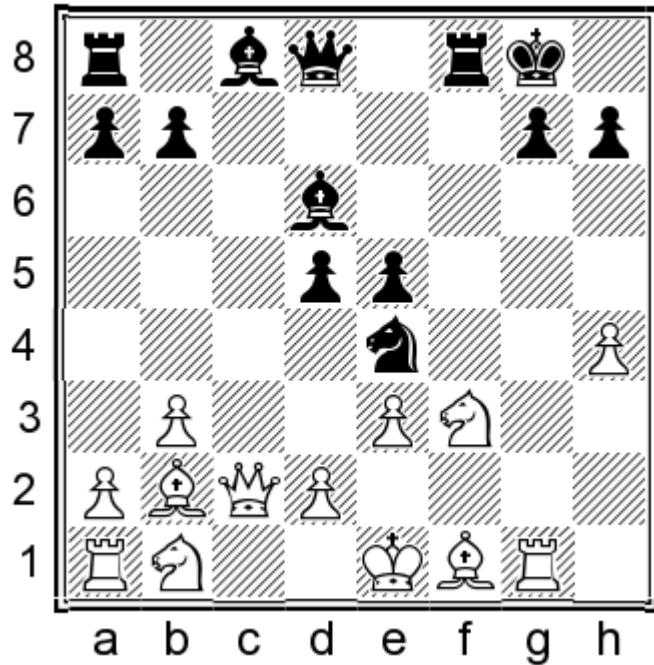
*analysis diagram*

the strongest continuation is 10.d3 Qa5+ 11.Ke2! (Garcia Palermo-Sarmiento Alfonso, Santa Cruz de la Palma 1995). Of course, the king on e2 is quite safe, and the knight is defended, but such a decision is hard to take at the board. Instead, Stefanova opens the kingside and sows the wind...

### **10.gxf6? Ndxsf6 11.Rg1 Nxsf2?**

The quiet 11...e5 is stronger and simpler, after which all of the pieces threaten to come into the attack on the white king. However, the sacrifice on f2 is very tempting, and the variations are very lovely...

### **12.Kxf2 e5 13.Ke1 Ne4 14.cxd5 cxd5**



Just imagine the excitement one would feel, on the verge of beating the women's World Champion, and in such style, too! For example, 15.Be2? Rxf3! 16.Bxf3 Qxh4+ 17.Kd1 Qf2 18.Qd3 Qxf3+ 19.Qe2 Qf5 with two pawns for the exchange and a deadly attack. Even more beautiful is 15.Ng5 Qf6! 16.Nxe4 Qxh4+ 17.Ng3 Qh2 18.Rg2 Rxf1+! 19.Kxf1 Bh3 or 19.Nxf1 Qxg2 20.Qd3 Bg4 21.Nc3 d4 22.exd4 Rf8+ – Black sacrifices a host full of pieces and in the end breaks through to the white king. Nothing significant changes after 15.Bc4 Be6.

**Test 50.** However, White has only one move and Antoaneta Stefanova found it. Can you emerge unscathed from the flames of the black attack?

Show/Hide Solution

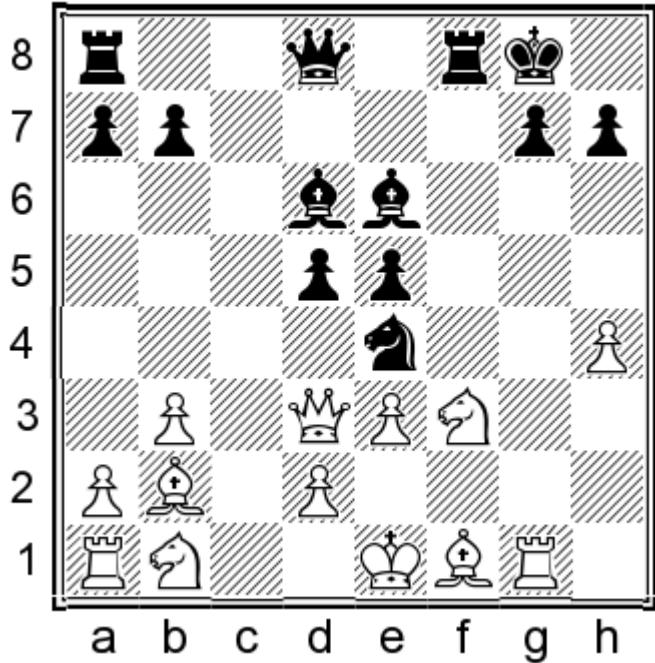
**Solution:** In any position, even the most desperate, one should always ask oneself the question: are there any drawbacks to the enemy position? The black pawn on d5 is undefended, and if we take it, and with check?

### **15.Qd3!**

With this brilliant move Stefanova completely changes the course of the game! White's pieces are not developed, but her queen will manage on her own, if she can evacuate the king to c2.

### **15...Be6?**

In reply, Black needs to find the computer-like 15...Be7! 16.Ng5 Bf5, not giving up the pawn and continuing to seek compensation, whereas after the move played in the game she is simply left a piece down.



### **16.Bh3! Rxh3**

None of the other moves work either, for example 16...Bxh3 17.Qxd5+ or 16...Qe7 17.Bxe6+ Qxe6 18.Ng5.

### **17.Bxe6+ Kh8 18.Qxd5 Qxh4+ 19.Kd1 Rd8**

For a moment, it may appear that things are not so simple, but Stefanova calmly takes the pawn and moves the king away and Black can only give a few final checks.

### **20.Qxb7 Ng5 21.Bd5 Rf2 22.Bc3 Qh5+ 23.Kc2 Qg6+ 24.Kb2**

With a quick win for White. Would you agree that the chess queen is always up to date with modern fashions?

In recent years, the Swedish GM Nils Grandelius has become one of the leaders of European chess, with his rating close to 2700. However, the smiling Scandinavian wins not just because of his inner calm, but also because he is generally very well prepared in the opening.

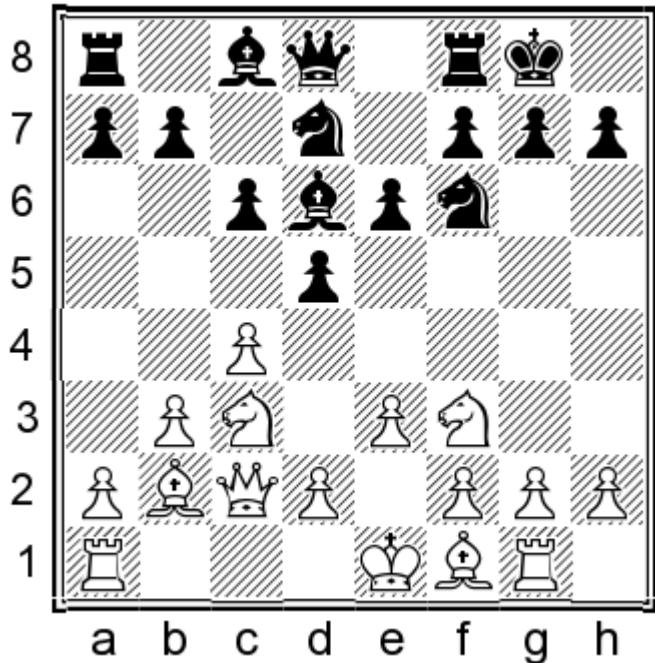
Game 63

Nils Grandelius 2668

Mu Ke 2455

Helsingør 2018 (9)

**1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 Bd6 7.Qc2 0-0 8.Rg1**

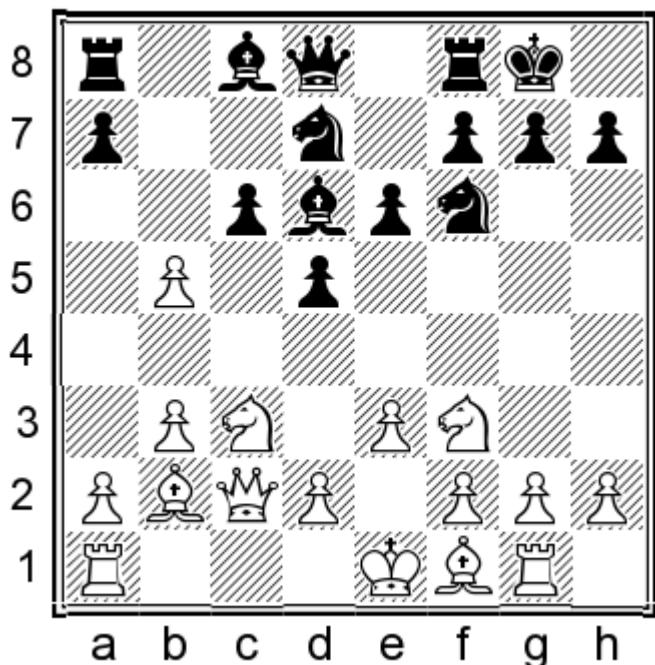


As we have already convinced ourselves, Black cannot manage without a pawn blow in retaliation. The alternative to the game continuation is a blow on the other flank:

**8...b5!?**

Now what should White do? He can stick to his guns with 9.g4, and if 9...b4 10.g5 bxc3 11.gxf6 Qxf6 12.Bxc3 e5 13.Ng5 g6 14.f4 d4 the real trouble starts, Nyzhnyk-Ali Marandi, chess.com 2019, in which the Ukrainian GM emerged victorious. However, it is significantly stronger to open the b-file: 9...bxc4! 10.bxc4 Rb8 11.Rb1 Nc5 12.Nd4 Bd7 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.Ncb5 Be7 15.g5 Nfe4 (Dobrov-Shirov, Jurmala 2015) – in the later complications, the fact that Black's king is safer whilst White's remains in the centre told. It is a good sign when the author of *Fire on Board* plays the black side of the g2-g4 line!

This means we should take the pawn: **9.cxb5**.



*analysis diagram*

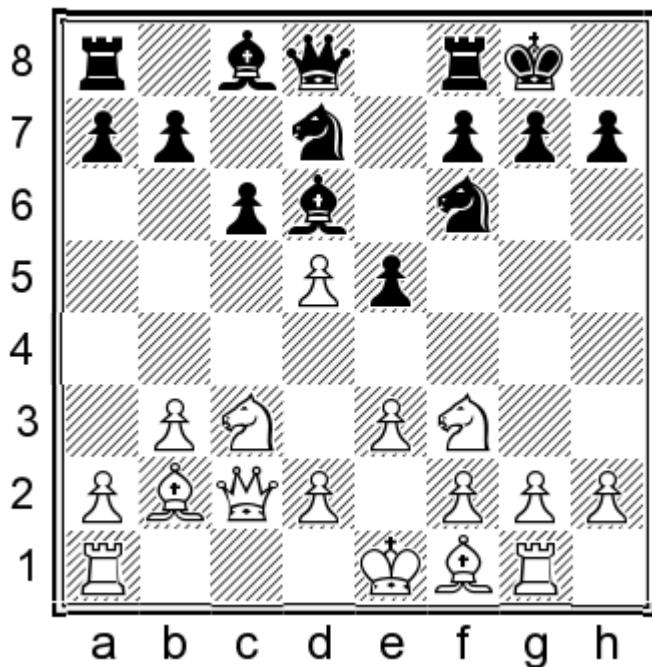
A) Interesting is 9...c5 10.g4 Bb7 11.g5 Nh5 (dubious is 11...Ne4? 12.Bd3 f5 13.gxf6 Ndxsf6 14.Bxe4 dxe4

15.Ng5+– Vyprachticky-Vavra, Czech Republic tt 2018/19) 12.0-0-0 e5, as happened in the game Michalik-Matsenko, Prague 2013. But here too, White has the initiative after 13.d3 Qe7 14.Be2 g6 15.Nd2 Ng7 16.Bf3;

B) Vladimir Dobrov improved White's play after 9...Bb7 10.bxc6 Bxc6 11.Nb5 Bxb5 12.Bxb5 Rc8 13.Qd1 Qa5 14.Be2 e5 15.g3! Ba3. With a series of strong moves, White has stabilized and it is not so easy for Black to find compensation for the sacrificed pawn: 15...Rfe8 16.a3 d4 17.exd4 exd4 18.Kf1. 16.Bxa3 Qxa3 17.Kf1 Rc7 18.Kg2, and White eventually won, Dobrov-Lei Tingjie, Wijk aan Zee 2017.

The Chinese player demonstrates a more solid approach.

### 8...e5 9.cxd5



### 9...cxd5

9...Nxd5 10.Ne4 has also been played – we reach a kind of Hedgehog with colours reversed. White is already well prepared to execute Robert James Fischer's famous plan in his game with Ulf Andersson (Siegen 1970). For example, 10...Bc7 11.g4 Re8 12.g5 Qe7 13.a3 a5 14.h4 Nf8 15.h5 (Bocharov-Galliamova, Kazan 2014) or 10...Qe7 11.Nxd6 Qxd6 12.a3 Re8 13.d3 c5 14.Be2 b6 15.g4 Bb7 16.h4 a5 17.g5 Bocharov-Belozerov, Tomsk 2009. Admittedly, the American champion's king hid on h1, and his rooks doubled on the g-file, but Dmitry Bocharov castled queenside and took the initiative.

The Chinese player probably expected Nils to try to exploit the weakness of the dark squares on the queenside by means of 10.Nb5 Bb8 11.Ba3 Re8 12.Rc1 (Gagunashvili-Zozek, Baghdad 2017), but Grandelius also lunges forward on the kingside here.

### 10.g4!? d4!

White would be happy with 10...e4 11.g5 Ne8 12.Nd4 or 10...h6 11.g5 hxg5 12.Nxg5, but Mu Ke is up to the mark.

### 11.g5 dxc3 12.gxf6 cxd2+

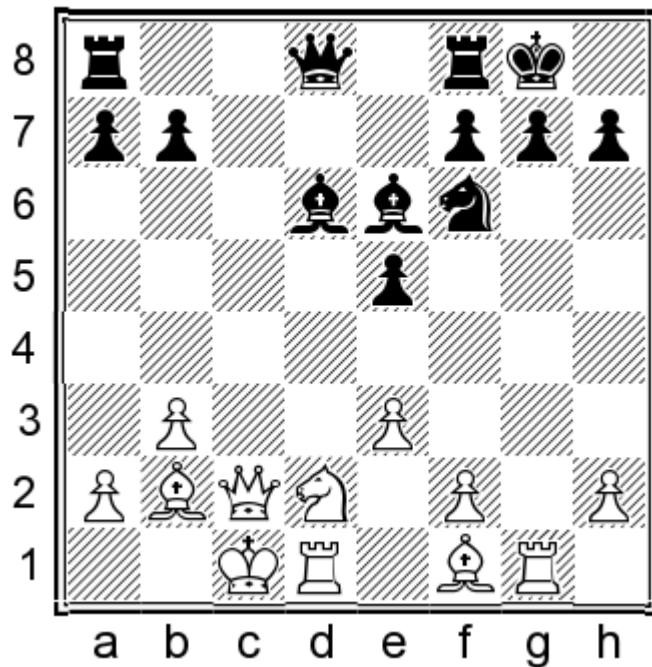
Obviously, he cannot take on b2 because of mate, but it was possible to take the pawn in another way: 12...Qxf6 13.Ng5 cxd2+ 14.Qxd2 Qe7 15.0-0-0 Ba3 16.Ne4 – Black probably did not like the fact that White dominates the open d-file and can take his knight to the important square d6.

Now it seems that the open c-file should complicate the Swedish GM's life, but Grandelius had seen an ingenious refutation.

### **13.Nxd2 Nxf6**

More precise was 13...Qxf6! 14.Bd3 g6 15.0-0-0 Nc5!, and it is not clear whether Nils would have been able to come up with anything – Black has strong counterplay.

### **14.0-0-0 Be6**



The black queen remains on the d-file and this circumstance can be exploited.

### **15.Nc4! Bxc4 16.Bxc4**

Hasty is 16.Bxe5 Bd3! 17.Rxd3 Rc8 18.Bc3 Qe7, but White has also achieved something serious – he has exchanged off his opponent's strong bishop and obtained a serious static trump.

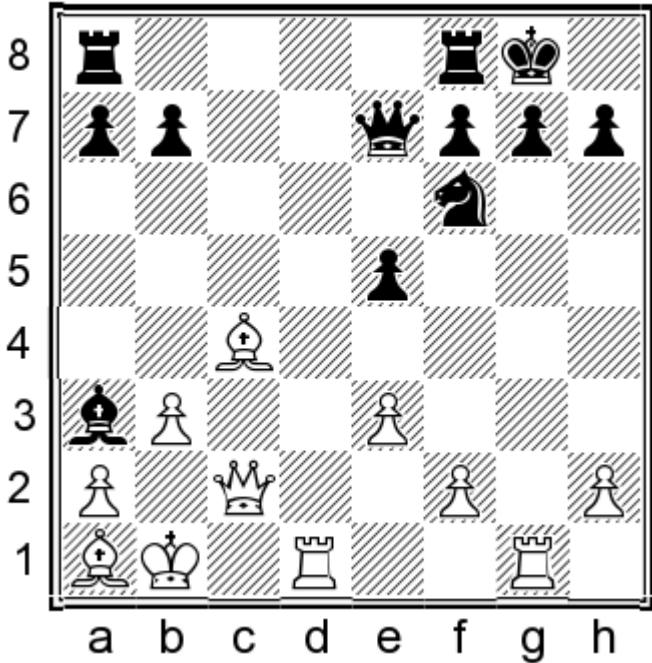
### **16...Qe7 17.Kb1 Ba3**

Black underestimates White's attacking potential – doubling on the g-file, together with f2-f4 and the support of the powerful bishops, should lead to the desired end.

However, the bishop move does not spoil anything yet.

### **18.Ba1**

Interesting is 18.Bxa3!? Qxa3 19.Rg5, but Nils Grandelius wants to keep his attacking bishop.



**18...Rac8?**

He should urgently exchange White's second rook, before it gets involved in the attack! With 18...Rfd8 19.Qf5 Rxd1+ 20.Rxd1 Rd8 White retains compensation for the pawn, but the real battle lies ahead.

**19.Rg5!**

A deadly and already unstoppable attack starts out of the blue.

**19...Rc5**

Not 19...Bd6 because of 20.f4! exf4 21.Qf5!+–, and this means Black has problems.

**20.Rdg1 Ne8**

After 20...g6 White gives mate with 21.Rxg6+ hxg6 22.Qxg6+ Kh8 23.Qg7#. The Swedish player repeats moves and then lands the knockout blow:

**21.Rh5 Nf6 22.Rhg5 Ne8 23.f4! Kh8**

All defensive measures are too late: 23...b5 24.Bxe5 Rxe5 (24...bxc4 25.Rxg7+) 25.Rxe5, winning the exchange and attacking the black queen, or 23...exf4 24.Rxg7+.

**24.Bxe5 f5 25.Bd4**

White attacks with material equality. 25.Rxf5 or even 25.Bxg7+ Nxg7 26.Rxg7 Qxg7 27.Rxg7 Kxg7 28.Qg2+ Kh8 29.Qxb7 are sufficient for victory, but Grandelius simply takes the exchange – the unfortunate piece cannot retreat because of the many threats.

**25...b5 26.Bxc5**

26.Qg2! looks nice, but the Swede simply takes material and realized it after

**26...Qxc5 27.Bd3**

with a quick win.

I would like to write that this win helped Grandelius to a great finish, but traditionally in the tournament in Denmark there are ten rounds! In fairness, Nils won in the tenth round as well.

For a long time Black could not stand such pressure, but after a series of unsuccessful attempts, he nevertheless found the correct sequence of moves – to play ...e6-e5 as quickly as possible, without disturbing the b8-knight and even risking the exchange of the important bishop on d6.

Game 64

Peter Svidler 2753

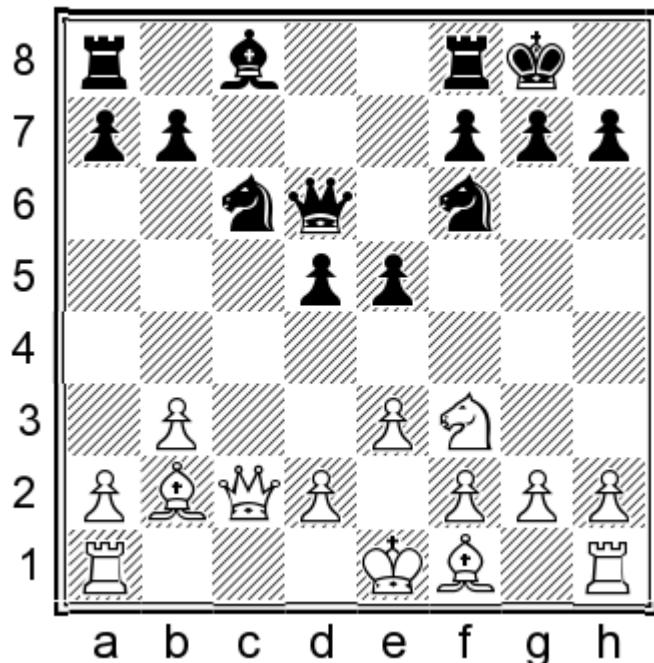
Anna Muzychuk 2564

Jerusalem rapid 2018 (2)

**1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Qc2 Bd6 6.b3 0-0 7.Bb2 e5!**

It is precisely because of this move that in recent times, White has preferred 7.d4, going into the old, standard Meran lines.

**8.cxd5 cxd5 9.Nb5 Nc6 10.Nxd6 Qxd6**

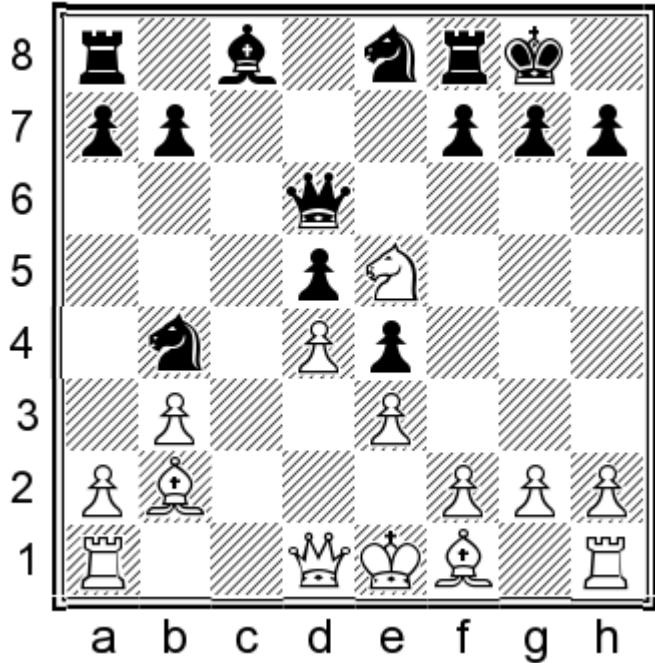


White has taken the important bishop, but Black is ahead in development and, also very important, his queen's knight comes out to a good position, from where it can jump to b4.

**11.d4**

Black is perfectly happy with 11.Rc1 Bg4 12.h3 Bh5 13.a3 Bg6 (Nepomniachtchi-Motylev, Poikovsky 2013), whilst after 11.Bb5 Nb4 12.Qc1 (White can also lose at once after 12.Qb1? Qc5) Black is ready with the typical 12...d4!?, Anton Guijarro-Ponomariov, Madrid 2016. After 11.d4 White puts his knight into the centre, but in reply, the opponent starts to hunt the knight in question.

**11...Nb4 12.Qd1 e4 13.Ne5 Ne8!**

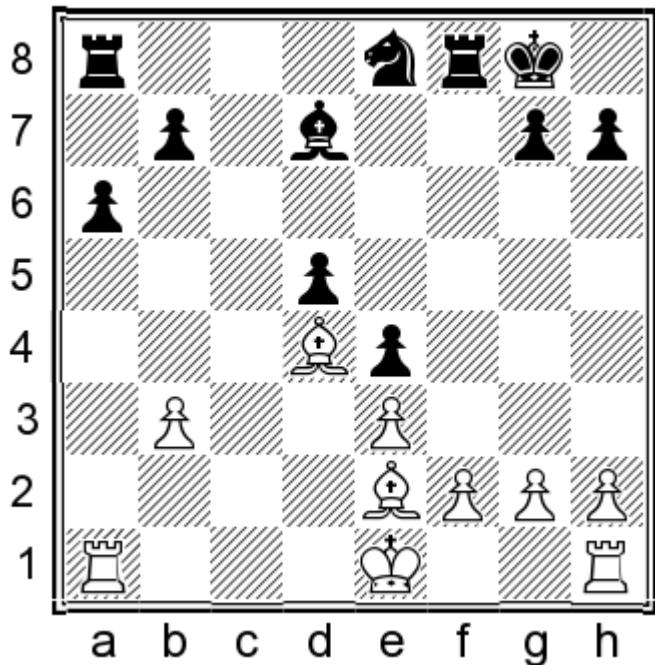


Now how do we save the knight?

**14.a3 f6 15.axb4**

The winner of the previous game once appeared on the losing side of this position: 15.Nc4?! dxc4 16.axb4 Qxb4+ 17.Qd2 Qxb3 18.Ra3 Qb6 19.Bxc4+ Be6 20.d5 Nd6 21.Ba2 Bd7, and Black had a healthy extra pawn in Grandelius-Al Sayed, Sarajevo 2011. Peter Svidler also has to part with a pawn, but goes into an endgame, where his two bishops compensate for the minimal material deficit.

**15...Qxb4+ 16.Qd2 Qxd2+ 17.Kxd2 fxe5 18.Ke1 exd4 19.Bxd4 a6 20.Be2 Bd7**



If Black now manages to activate his bishop, then his chances of success would become real, but just in time, Svidler starts play on the kingside and opens lines for his bishops.

**21.f4! exf3**

If Black does not capture, then White carries out a pawn offensive on the kingside.

## 22.gxf3 Nd6 23.Be5

Objectively, Black retains some practical chances of success and the indefatigable Magnus would certainly not let his opponent off here, without a strict and prolonged examination.

But this was a rapid game and Anna decided that there was no point in wasting energy fighting against two such powerful bishops. After all, she had won the opening battle!

## 23...Nf7 24.Bd4 Nd6 25.Be5 Nf7 26.Bd4 Nd6 27.Be5 Nf7

Draw.

Finally, we must offer one more example with the move g2-g4, which is not strictly the anti-Meran system.

It is surprising, as one might ask in what opening does Black seem to have a greater reserve of solidity than in the Slav? But real toreadors find possibilities to surprise the opponent even here. The event was a stage of the FIDE Grand Prix and what would that be without g2-g4 ?!

Game 65

Fabiano Caruana 2803

Evgeny Tomashevsky 2749

Khanty-Mansiysk 2015 (3)

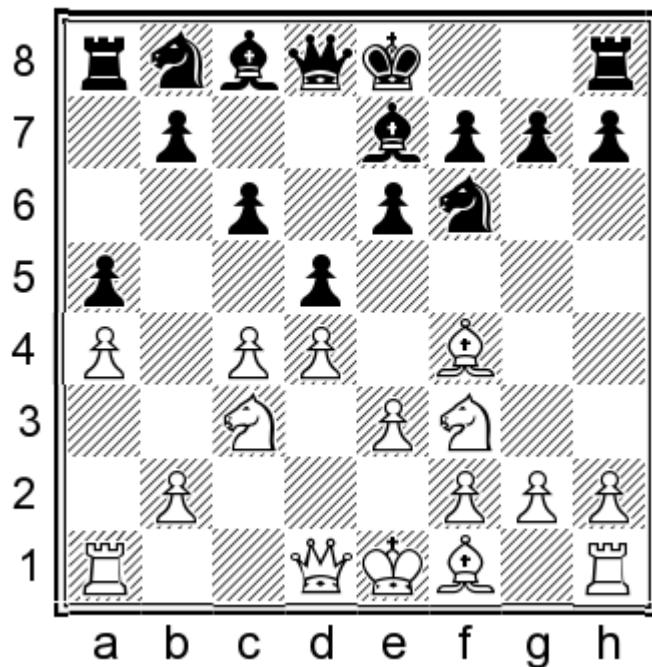
## 1.d4 d5 2.e4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 a6

This time it is the Chebanenko Variation, but here too, our subject is topical.

## 5.a4 e6 6.Bf4 a5

The main reply – Black fixes the weak square and intends to occupy it with his knight.

## 7.e3 Be7



8.g4!?

Here is the surprise! Taking the pawn is definitely bad, because it allows the white rook into g7.

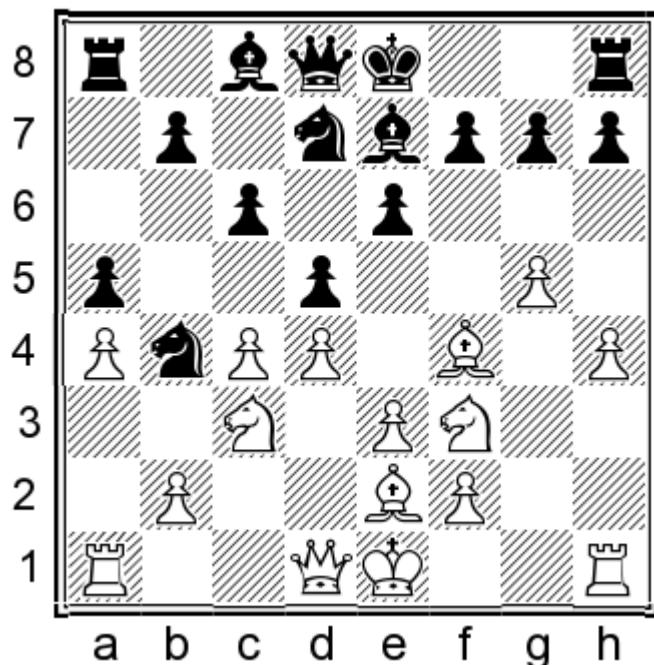
### 8...Na6

As well as the main game, the variation has occurred only twice in practice, so we have plenty of scope for independent analysis and to use the 2018 challenger's idea.

White developed a crushing attack after 8...h6?! 9.Rg1 c5 10.dxc5 Bxc5 11.g5! hxg5 12.Rxg5 in Mihajlov-Hobber, Sarpsborg 2018. In another game, Black refrained from creating pawn weaknesses and the game ended in a draw: 8...0-0 9.g5 Ne4 (after 9...Nh5 10.Bxb8 Rxb8 11.h4 g6 12.Be2 the black knight on the edge of the board feels uncomfortable) 10.h4 c5 11.Bd3 Nxc3 12.bxc3 dxc4 13.Be4 cxd4 14.exd4 Nd7 15.Qb1 f5 with complications, Zontakh-Korchmar, Voronezh 2015, but it is worth considering Grandmaster Roiz's suggestion 13.Bxc4 cxd4 14.cxd4, taking the game into quieter channels.

Evgeny Tomashevsky does not change his original plan and brings the knight to b4.

### 9.g5 Nd7 10.h4 Nb4 11.Be2



### 11...b6

Here Roiz recommended 11...0-0! with the idea of meeting 12.h5 with 12...dxc4 13.Bxc4 (if 13.g6 there is even a nice draw by perpetual: 13...fxg6 14.hxg6 h6 15.Bxc4 Nd5 16.Bxh6 gxh6 17.Rxh6 Bf6 18.Ng5 Bxg5 19.Rh8+ Kg7 20.Rh7+ Kg8 21.Qh5 N7f6 22.Rh8+ Kg7 23.Rh7+ Kg8=) 13...Nb6 14.Be2 N6d5, winning tempi by the attacks on the enemy bishops. The game continuation is also logical, but after

### 12.h5

and head-spinning complications, the game ended in a victory for the American.

Caruana shared 1st-3rd places in this Grand Prix stage, and eventually qualified for the Candidates via the series, whereas Evgeny, who had a great series, did not manage to squeeze into the Moscow Candidates. At such times, we can convince ourselves that the wilful Caissa sometimes favours those brave souls who throw forward the pawn from g2 to g4!

Tomashevsky was undoubtedly rather unlucky, though, as he deserved to play in the Candidates as well.

## Conclusions

1. In the centre, the opposing forces do not enter into direct confrontation, so White's attack can be very dangerous if he succeeds in kicking the black knight from the f6-square with the early advance of the g-pawn and quickly castling. Literally one superficial and non-concrete move by Black can lead to disaster.
2. The sacrifice ...b7-b5 often leads to a complete change of scenery – White forgets about his impending attack, takes the gambit pawn and goes on the defensive, trying to prove to Black that he has no compensation. It is certainly a line for passionate or even hopeless romantics!
3. Any, even the most creative idea, can meet a harsh computer response. When Black found 7...e5!, White immediately found it difficult to fight for the advantage. Alas, here, on the once-untouched paths, an entire theoretical shrub has grown – you cannot play it without a deep, comprehensive study of the lines that arise. Playing it 'on spec', relying only on a couple of basic ideas, it is no longer possible.

## Part VII

# The King's Indian Defence

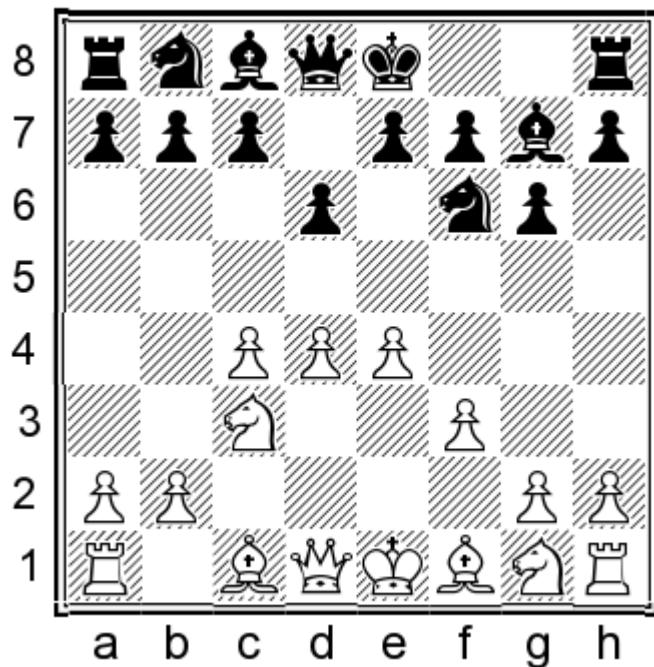
### Some history

The King's Indian Defence is probably one of the most popular openings of our time. How many of us have not studied in our childhood the brilliant victories of world champions Robert James Fischer and Garry Kasparov, as well as the wonderful grandmasters Leonid Stein, Svetozar Gligoric, Miguel Najdorf and other classics of the past? Another attractive feature of the opening is the universal move-order – largely irrespective of what White plays, Black can follow the plan ...Nf6, ...g7-g6, ...Bg7, ...0-0, ...d7-d6 and then undermine the white centre by ...e7-e5 or ...c7-c5.

As for the entertaining name, the opening is certainly not a modern contribution by the mighty Indian school of chess. It turns out that the strong master and brilliant journalist Savielly Tartakower, the author of the cult book *Hypermodern Chess*, wrote: 'This is how they played in ancient India,' referring to the games of the Scottish chess player John Cochrane, who served in the East from 1824-1869 (then India was a British colony). Cochrane led the chess society in Calcutta, but suffered greatly from a lack of worthy rivals. However, later at least one was found – this was Mahescandra Bannerjee, also known as 'the Brahmin'. Mahescandra played Indian chess and did not know the European version of the game, but was a very capable student. Brahmin was addicted to the fianchetto of the king's bishop, and Cochrane had to fight against this opening, which a century later conquered the chess world.

Many years later, the King's Indian would fit very well with the concept of so-called hypermodernism – Black allows White to establish a pawn centre and then puts pressure on it with pieces and pawns. Often, after White answers ...e7-e5 with d4-d5, Black can organize the so-called 'King's Indian Attack' by carrying out the advance ...f7-f5 and attacking the white king with all his might.

Therefore, from the very beginning of the theoretical discussions, White was worried about a logical question – is it possible to stop Black from doing this and to prevent the f-pawn from being advanced? Or to allow the advance, but at the same time open up the black king? Immediately make a reservation that in the pages of this book you will not see the Sämisch Variation. After 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3,



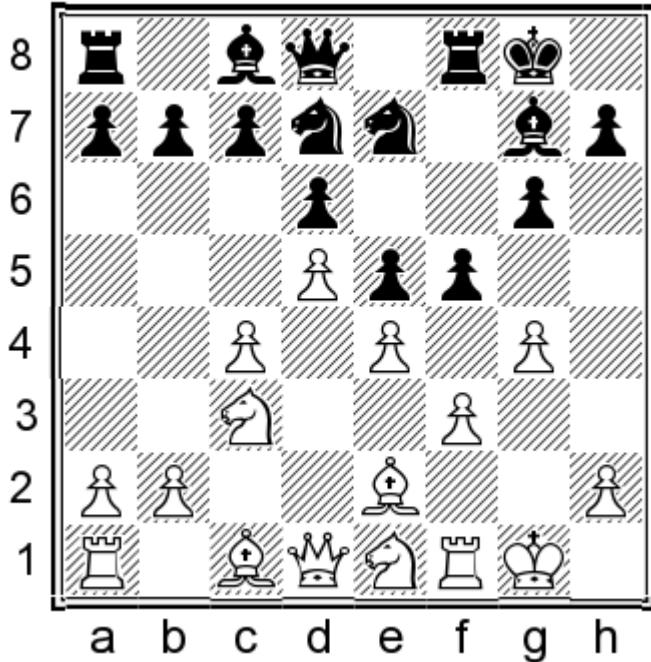
White advances g2-g4 in literally every other line, and the character of the struggle sometimes resembles not the King's Indian Defence, but the English Attack in the Najdorf Sicilian or the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian – White can also give mate on occasion!

Therefore your author has decided to leave the German master's idea for as separate examination and to devote attention here to some rarer or just fashionable variations. There are plenty of them, after all!

## Chapter 13

### The Portisch-Gipslis Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3 f5 11.g4



#### Some history

The classical variation of the King's Indian Defence has always been very popular among fans of closed openings, so the various move-orders and tricky ideas in the Classical would fill an entire monograph. Of course, among a whole bunch of set-ups there is a place for a variation with the advance of the g-pawn.

Oddly enough, many players (especially the pioneers) who made this move did so solely from defensive motives, and not attacking ones. Almost always, Black's play in such positions is connected with a full-on attack on the kingside, so why not fix the pawn structure and then calmly deal with the opponent on the queenside?

In practice, this variation was introduced by one of the most prominent representatives of positional play in the twentieth century – Lajos Portisch, who had numerous followers among Hungarian chess players. Less well-known are the victories of Aivars Gipslis (1937-2000), most of which the Latvian grandmaster scored at about the same time – in the 1960s.

Alas, the lack of full-fledged elite battles meant that the variation was not subsequently developed that much. But even in the last twenty to thirty years, the opening has had its followers – at the end of the last millennium, Jozsef Pinter upheld the variation and in the new century Le Quang Liem and Vladimir Belov scored some bright victories with it, as did the latter's students.

#### Important nuances

The variation is very flexible and the set of strategic techniques here is extensive – White's ideas are directly dependent on Black's reaction. White's general concept is to completely deprive his opponent of counterplay on the kingside and gradually break through the position on the opposite side of the board. The analysis shows that Black should not rush with the move ...f5-f4 – if he really wants to determine the structure, then it is better to do this by

...c7-c5 at the right time, whilst the undermining move ...c7-c6 is also possible. Also, one must not forget that White himself can start active play on the kingside, by transferring his rook to the g-file and the bishop to f2, where it can both reinforce the h4-pawn and threaten the c4-c5 breakthrough.

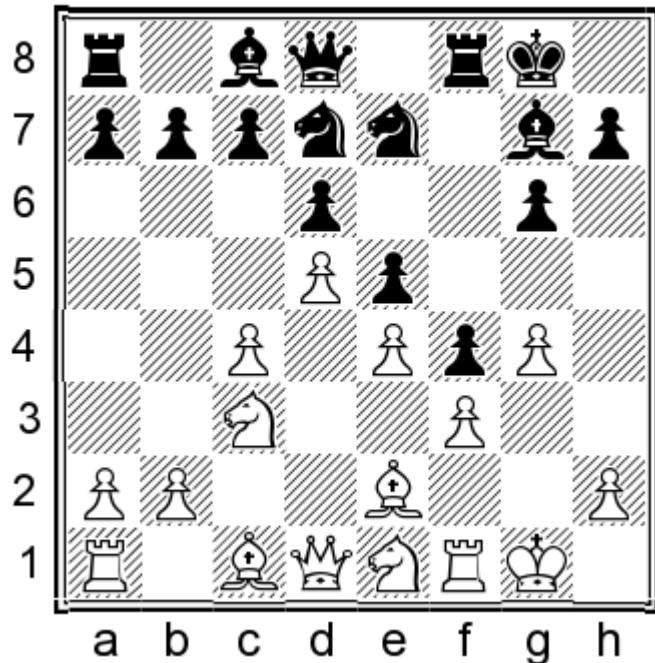
### Game 66

Lajos Portisch

Svetozar Gligoric

Madrid zt 1960 (6)

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3 f5 11.g4 f4



This was one of the first tests of this variation, and immediately with a most serious examiner in the wonderful King's Indian player Svetozar Gligoric. The 1960 Zonal tournament in Madrid gathered together a constellation of European names – Lajos Portisch and Svetozar Gligoric eventually shared first place with the famous Dutch grandmaster Hein Donner and Arturo Pomar, who had played Alekhine! As a result, an additional match-tournament was scheduled in which Gligoric won first place, and Portisch and Pomar shared the second, pushing Donner into fourth. Naturally, the duel of the main favourites was of the most fundamental nature.

The Yugoslav decided to immediately close the flank, in the hope of taking the game into classical patterns, and he managed to solve his opening problems.

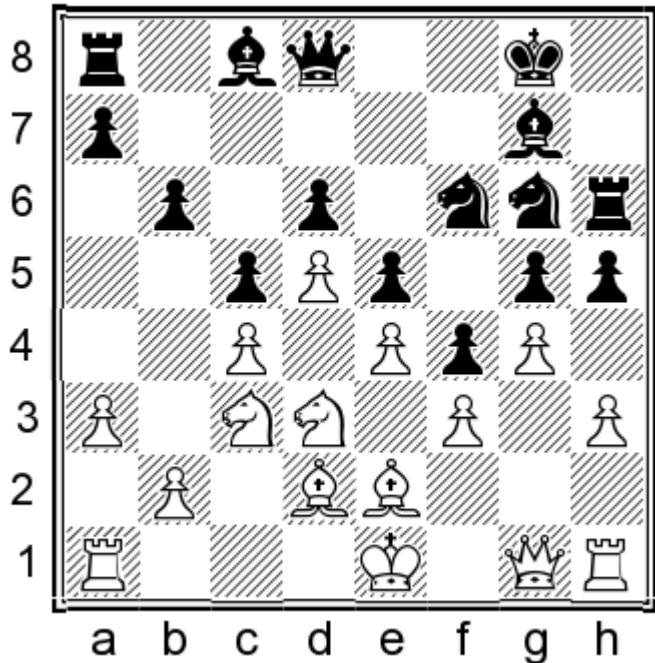
### 12.Bd2

A much more poisonous plan involves the move 12.h4, preventing ...g6-g5, but even after this, White needs to show great accuracy: after 12...a5 the most precise move is the subtle 13.Rf2!, not rushing to develop his pieces on the queenside, for example 13...c6 14.b3, retaining the tension. In one of the relatively recent games play went 13.Kg2 Nc5 14.Nd3 Bd7 15.Bd2 Nc8 16.Be1 Nb6 17.b3 a4, and Black managed to get good counterplay – 20 moves later, the game ended in a draw, Stern-Naiditsch, Germany Bundesliga 2013/14.

12...g5 13.Nd3 h5 14.h3 Rf6 15.Kf2 Rh6 16.Rh1 Ng6

It made sense to clear some breathing space with 16...c6 – the kingside is solidly closed and the knights on g6 and f6 are hardly likely to have much point – the weight of the battle shifts to the queenside.

17.Qg1 Nf6 18.Ke1 c5 19.a3 b6



**20.b4**

The position is quite blocked, so there was no need to hurry to open lines and White could instead first improve the position of his king with 20.Kd1!? followed by Kc2, after which he can organize the break b2-b4. Now the game takes on a more or less concrete character with equal chances.

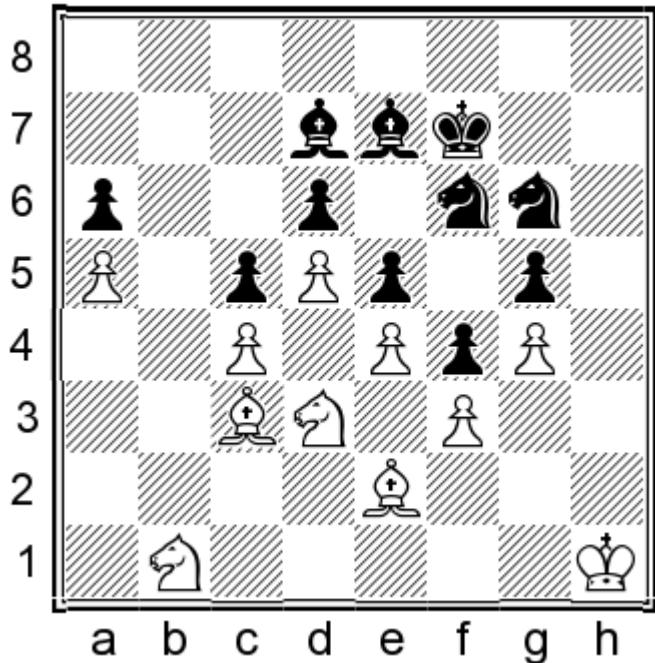
**20...Bd7 21.bxc5 bxc5 22.Rb1 Rb8 23.Kf2 Bf8 24.Rxb8 Qxb8 25.Qb1 Qc7 26.Kg1**

The king has to return to g1 to defend the Rh1 and free the queen.

**26...Be7 27.Nb5 Qb6 28.a4 a6 29.a5 Qb8 30.Nc3 Qxb1+ 31.Nxb1**

Although visually Black's position may look better because of his advanced pawns, White's position is very solid and the assessment does not really depart from the realms of equality. Gligoric does not agree with this and seeks chances to pose his opponent problems.

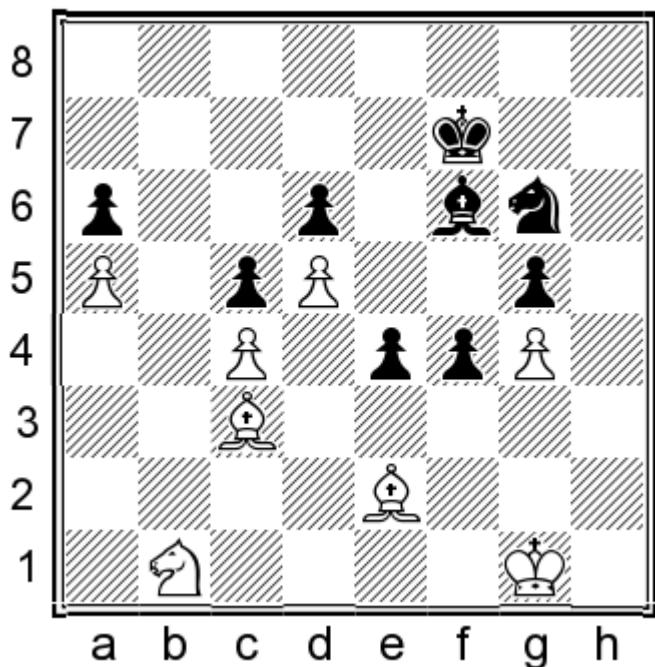
**31...Kf7 32.Bc3 hxg4 33.hxg4 Rxh1+ 34.Kxh1**



**34...Bxg4!?**

Objectively the piece sacrifice does not change the assessment of the position, but it heats things up to boiling point. Now both sides have to play with maximum accuracy. It is also notable that the blow falls on the very pride of White's opening novelty – the pawn on g4!

**35.fxg4 Nxe4 36.Kg1 Ng3 37.Bd1 e4 38.Nc1 Bf6 39.Ne2 Nxe2+ 40.Bxe2**



**40...Nh4?!**

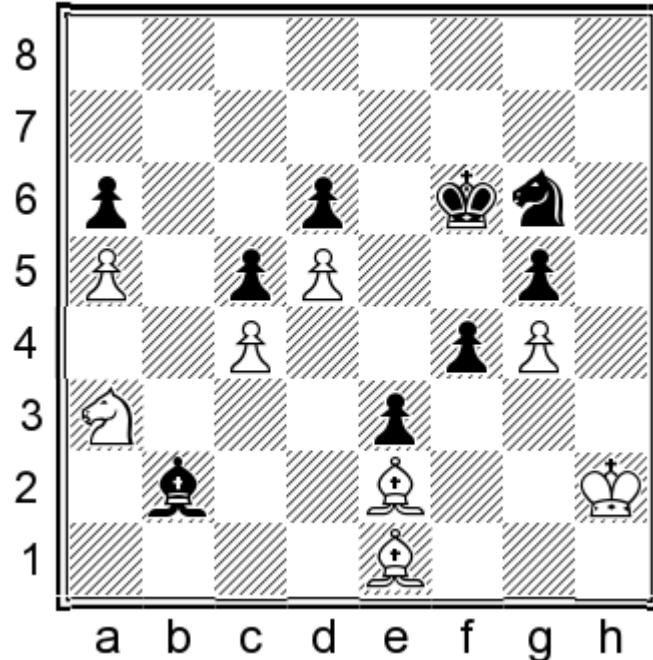
The problem of the last move of the time control! Lajos has not panicked in the face of the sacrifice, but has played accurately and so Black must already concern himself with equalizing. The accurate check 40...Bd4+ 41.Kf1 Ne5 would force White to agree to exchanges, after which the game ends in a draw, e.g. 42.Bxd4 cxd4 43.Nd2 d3 44.Nxe4 dxe2+ 45.Kxe2 Nxc4 46.Nxg5+. Svetozar overrates his position, counting on promoting his pawns, but

runs into some unpleasant counterplay from Portisch.

**41.Bd1 e3 42.Be1 Bd4 43.Kh2 Kf6 44.Na3**

The immediate 44.Bxh4 gxh4 45.Na3 was also strong, with the same idea as that realized in the game, but the move-order chosen by Portisch does not spoil anything.

**44...Ng6 45.Be2 Bb2**



**46.Nb5!**

Thanks to this elegant tactical trick (the queen cannot be taken because the pawn queens) the white knight comes into play with decisive effect.

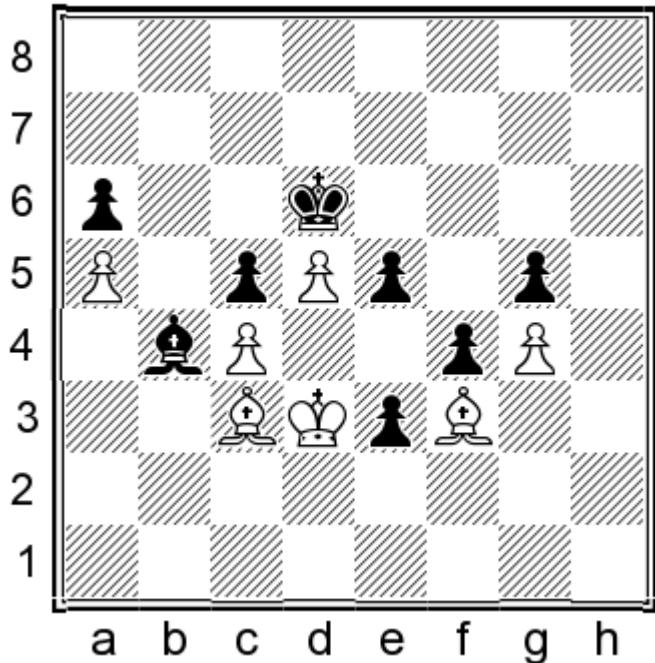
**46...Ke7 47.Na7 Kd7 48.Nc6 Ne5**

Black cannot avoid the exchange of knights and after this White has a simple winning plan, based on the weakness of the light squares. Watch the Hungarian's excellent technique – he was always especially strong in such positions.

**49.Nxe5+ dxe5 50.Bf3 Bc1 51.Kg2 Bd2**

Black tries to tie the e1-bishop to its position, but the white king quickly extinguishes this sliver of activity. Gligoric does not want to exchange bishops, since the enemy king quickly gets to the square f5.

**52.Kf1 Bc1 53.Ke2 Kd6 54.Kd3 Bb2 55.Be4 Ba3 56.Bf3 Bb4 57.Bc3!**



The e5-pawn is attacked and cannot be defended.

**57...Ke7 58.Bxe5 Bxa5 59.Ke4 Bd2 60.Bd1 a5 61.Kf3 1-0**

Now let us consider a well-known game by another adherent of this variation, Aivars Gipslis. Aivars did not often enter battle in the main lines of the King's Indian Defence, but if he made such a decision, then it was only with the expectation of the g2-g4 variation! And he achieved excellent results in it – 5 wins and 2 draws (no defeats), and if one also counts games when the knight retreated to e8 at move eight, then there are two more wins (and not all of the games from the Soviet period ended up in ChessBase). However, Portisch in terms of statistics did not lag behind the Soviet player – three wins and two draws.

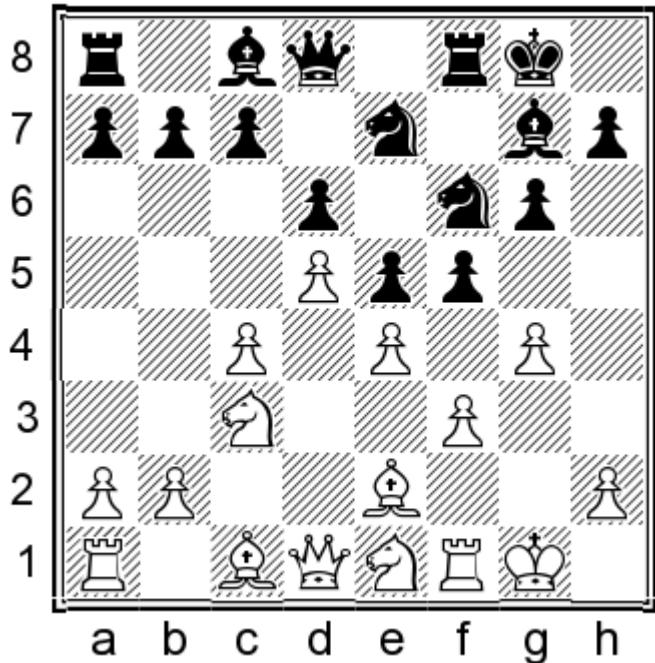
Game 67

Aivars Gipslis

Eduard Gufeld

Leningrad ch-URS 1963 (4)

**1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.d4 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3 f5 11.g4 Nf6**



Once again, the honour of the King's Indian is being upheld by one of its most fervent advocates, this time Eduard Gufeld, the author of a splendid book about his favourite opening. The move 11...Nf6 is fully in Gufeld's style – without determining the structure, Black tries to find a suitable moment for counterplay.

#### **12.Nd3 Kh8 13.h4**

In 2016-17 one of my pupils, IM Mikhail Popov, grew fond of the variation with g2-g4. According to him, the most accurate move-order in this position is 13.Be3 c6 14.Rc1, so as after the planned 14...b5 to have the move 15.c5!, which Mikhail tested in practice, winning a good game, M.Popov-Belous, Moscow 2017.

#### **13...Nfg8?!**

A hard move to explain. More natural is 13...c6 14.Be3 b5 with a complicated game, e.g. 15.Nb4 cxd5 16.cxd5 Bd7 17.g5 Nh5 18.Nxb5 Ng3 – this position can only really be got to grips with in the quiet of one's study, which is what the two players did in Rumiancevas-Winkler, ICCF email 2009, fighting to a draw.

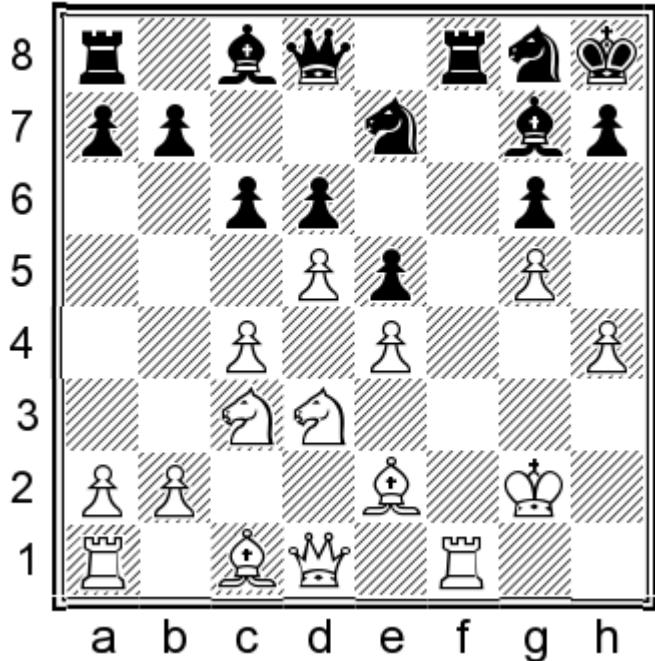
#### **14.g5 c6 15.Kg2**

Gipslis ignores the queenside, considering that it is not in need of further strengthening, but the prophylactic 15.a4!?

#### **15...fxe4**

Implementing a brave, but incorrect plan. The immediate 15...b5! allows Black to change the 'one-way' trend of the game and to seize the initiative. After the release of the tension in the centre there is no good way back.

#### **16.fxe4**



**16...Nf5**

Otherwise what was it all for? After 16...Rxf1 17.Bxf1 b5 18.b3 it is not clear how Black can break through, whilst his minor pieces have hardly any squares.

**17.exf5 gxf5 18.Nf2 Ne7 19.Rh1 e4**

The famous Gufeld dark-squared bishop comes into action, but at too great a cost, both in terms of material and the weak squares on the kingside.

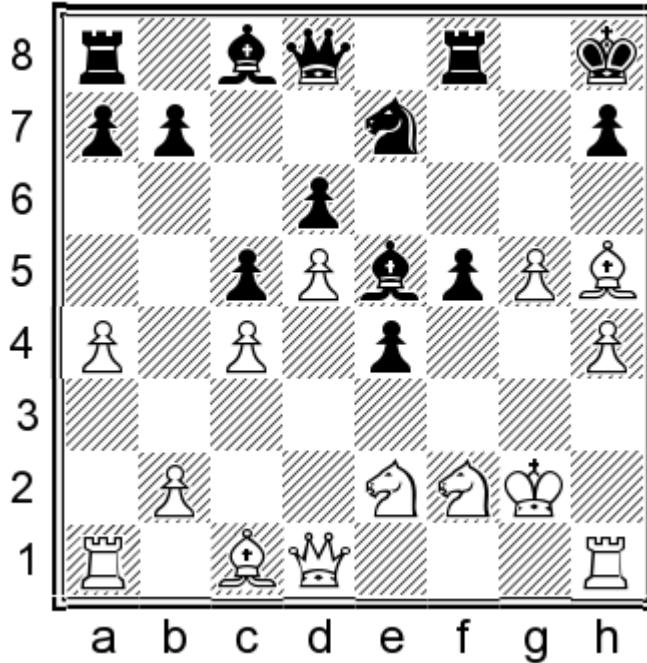
**20.a4**

Now the a-pawn move is irrelevant and it was possible to start with the immediate 20.Nh3.

**20...Be5 21.Bh5 c5?!**

It is clear that White's advantage is indisputable, but by closing the queenside, Black loses his last chance of saving the game. To my mind, he had to try either the raid 21...Qa5, or 21...b6, bringing the Bc8 into play.

**22.Ne2**

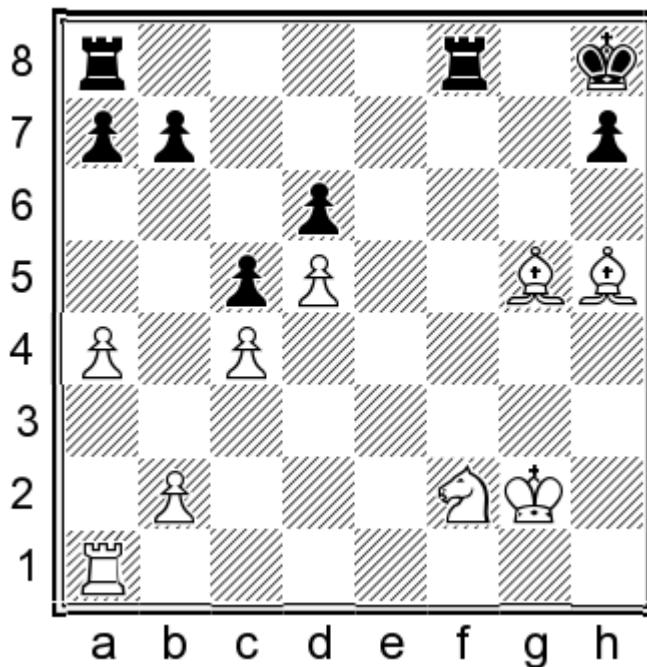


Here Gufeld, a very sharp combinative player, tried to save the game in his own style, sacrificing half the chess set. Unfortunately for him, Gipslis calmly calculated the variations, gathered in the harvest and accepted the capitulation. That was fully in accordance with *his* style!

**22...e3 23.Bxe3 f4 24.Bd2 Nf5 25.Nxf4 Nxh4+ 26.Rxh4 Qxg5+**

Black has regained some material, but after the exchanges he hardly has any fighting forces left, whilst White retains his advantage.

**27.Rg4 Bxg4 28.Qxg4 Bxf4 29.Qxg5 Bxg5 30.Bxg5**



White has three minor pieces against the black rook and, unfortunately for Black, his plan to win the bishop on g5 is refuted by Gipslis.

**30...Rg8 31.Ne4 h6 32.Rh1!**

Now if the bishop is taken, there follows a check on f7 and so resistance is pointless.

### 32...Rxg5+ 33.Nxg5 Rg8

White's position is easily winning and so Gufeld resigned without waiting for the reply. Aivar Gipslis performed superbly in the 1963 USSR Championship – '+2' in the tournament with Boris Spassky, Leonid Stein, Ratmir Kholmov, Efim Geller, David Bronstein, Alexey Suetin, Lev Polugaevsky, Viktor Kortchnoi, Vladimir Bagirov, Yury Averbakh, Igor Bondarevsky and other strong players. Not the least role was played by the application of our favourite variation! By the way, Eduard Gufeld was also in great shape and scored '+3', and if it had not been for the defeat against Gipslis he could have competed for a medal!

The idea of 'freezing' the kingside quickly gained popularity, and soon it was adopted by Bent Larsen, who achieved a beautiful and important victory over the ex-World Champion, and not just in some ordinary Swiss, but in a Candidates match!

The match between Larsen and Tal saw a bright, uncompromising struggle – everything was decided in the final game, which the Riga Magician won, and with it the overall match with a score of 5½-4½. But it all started very well for the Prince of Denmark!

#### Game 68

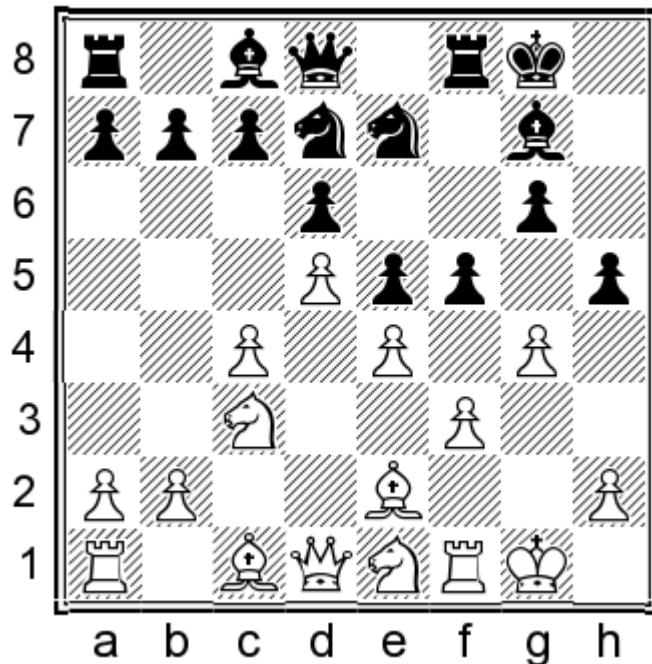
**Bent Larsen**

**Mikhail Tal**

Bled m 1965 (1)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 0-0 5.Nf3 d6 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3 f5 11.g4 h5**

This move did not attract many followers and that is perfectly understandable – It favours White to stymie his opponent's attacking intentions completely, even at the cost of the g-pawn.



### 12.g5

Of course, not 12.gxf5 gxf5 13.Nd3 f4 – on account of the open lines, Black has splendid chances to get through to the king.

### 12...h4

Immediately cutting off the g5-pawn from its camp – White only needed to play h2-h4, and the Gordian Knot would be able to be broken only at the cost of a piece.

### 13.Nd3 f4 14.Kh1 Kf7 15.c5!?

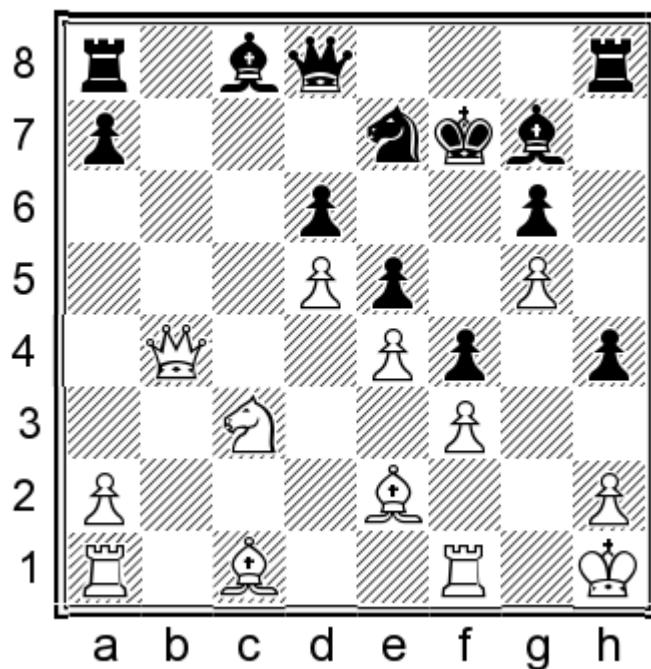
Much later, a game between two GMs saw the slower 15.Bd2 Rh8 16.b4 Rh5 17.Rg1 Ng8 18.c5, and Igor Miladinovic managed to win in Miladinovic-Kornev, Vrsac 2006. Larsen, as often happened, had his own view of the position, and one fully worthy of consideration, as Black hardly wishes to take the pawn.

[Translator's note: There is a significant background story to the Larsen-Tal game, which Larsen recounted in the old RHM book *How to Open a Chess Game*. His play up to here was all preparation. The game Wade-Reshevsky, Buenos Aires 1960, had gone 14.Qe1?! Kf7 15.Kh1 Rh8 16.Rg1 Nf8 and Black eventually won. Looking at the game, Larsen realized that 14.Qe1 was a waste of time if White could not take on h4 after Black's reply, and that 14.Kh1 was an obvious improvement. Over the board, Tal suspected nothing, rapidly followed Reshevsky's ...Kf7 idea 'and after 15.c5, probably felt like resigning!' (Larsen)].

### 15...Rh8 16.Qb3

Another possible line is 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.Rg1 followed by the emergence of the bishop on a3, but Larsen plans to bring a different piece to this square.

### 16...b6 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.Qa3 Nc5 19.Nxc5 bxc5 20.b4 cxb4 21.Qxb4



The Dane has successfully opened up the queenside, but things are not so simple – move by move Black manages to develop his pieces and regroup.

### 21...Bh3 22.Rg1 Rb8 23.Nb5 Nc8 24.Ba3 Bf8 25.Qc4

All the threats have been beaten off and Larsen seeks an exchange of queens.

### 25...Be7 26.Qc7

The move 26.Rac1 looks more logical, but the small zigzag 26...Qa5! 27.Bb4 Qb6 with the threat of ...a7-a6 already forces White to exert care. Bent is true to his plan, and not without reason – Black's problems remain.

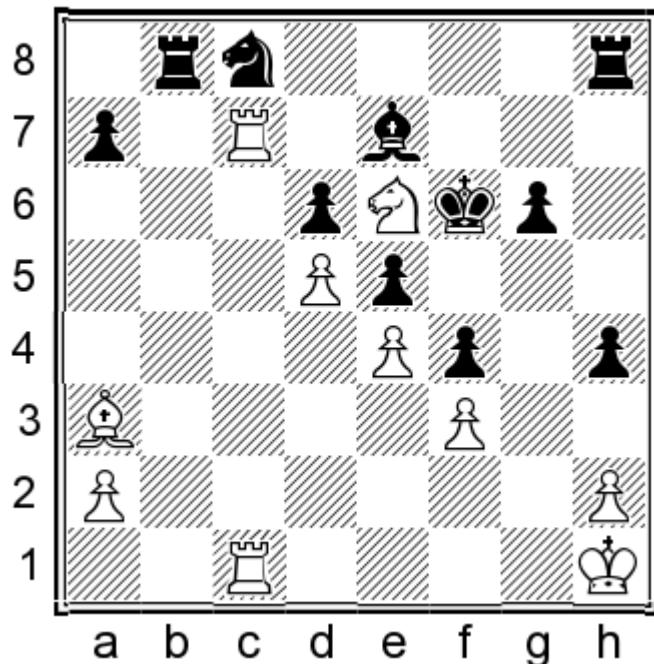
### 26...Qxc7 27.Nxc7 Rh5 28.Bf1 Bxf1

He does not want to give e6 to the enemy knight, but it comes there anyway: 28...Bd7 29.Ne6!?. Taking the knight is unavoidable, but then the bishop comes to h3 and the two long-range bishops will completely control the game from the edge of the board.

### 29.Rgxf1 Rxg5 30.Ne6 Rh5 31.Rac1 Kf6

It seems as though nothing should threaten the black position, but the first impression is deceptive. It was vital to flick in the intermediate move 31...h3!?. The reason why will become clear later.

### 32.Rc7 Rh8 33.Rfc1



### 33...g5?

It was still not too late to return to the plan with 33...h3, the main idea of which is to create counterplay and not just occupy the role of spectator: 34.Kg1 Rg8 35.Kf2 g5, and on the kingside White needs to keep his eyes open.

### 34.h3

Sealing up the flank. Now White will have no need to hurry, which Larsen takes advantage of to bring his king to the centre.

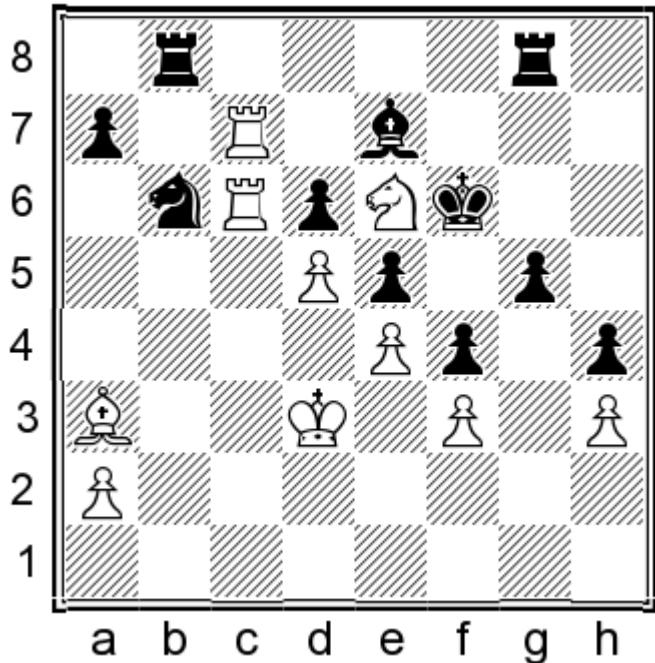
### 34...Rg8 35.R7c6 Kf7 36.Kg2 Kf6

Suddenly it transpires that Black is practically in zugzwang and he must wait while White prepares the decisive storm.

### 37.Kf1 Rh8 38.Ke2 Rg8 39.Kd3 Rh8 40.Rc7

The time control. Larsen has secured a decisive advantage. There is no satisfactory defence against 41.R1c6.

### 40...Nb6 41.R1c6 Rhg8



Tal resigned without resuming, as both 42.Bxd6 and 42.Rxe7 Kxe7 43.Bxd6 win, and even the far from obligatory, but beautiful 42.Nf8?!. A rare game in which Tal was pressed back on the ropes! Interestingly, Larsen had a reputation as a ‘trouble-maker’ on the board, but this is misleading and his practice is full of such strategically complete works of art.

Now let's move on to more modern battles. In the early 2010s, the Vietnamese grandmaster Le Quang Liem was on a serious run and stormed the elite – he won games one after another, as soon as he got a slight advantage and a clear plan. Here is one striking example – it is difficult to name the moment at which the Chinese opponent went wrong, but even so, he could not avoid defeat. And the man sitting opposite Le Quang Liem was not just any chess player – he was the future leader of Chinese chess.

The game was played in the last round in the Asian Championship and was of fundamental importance – Le Quang Liem was half a point behind Ding Liren and after this determined victory he managed to share the first place.

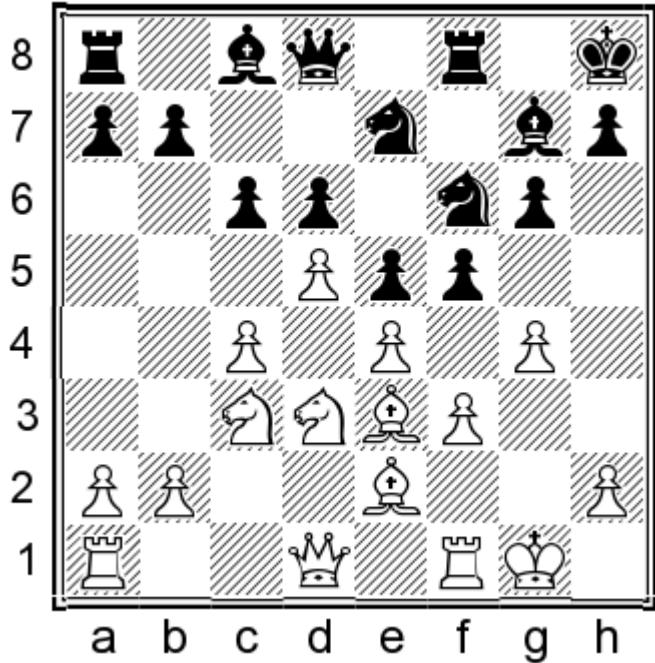
#### Game 69

**Le Quang Liem** 2689

**Ding Liren** 2565

Olongapo City Ach 2010

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3 f5 11.g4 Nf6 12.Nd3 c6 13.Be3 Kh8**



#### **14.Kh1**

We have already studied this position in the game Gipslis-Gufeld and I suggested as the strongest reply 14.Rc1, but Le Quang Liem has preferred the king move into the corner in the majority of games.

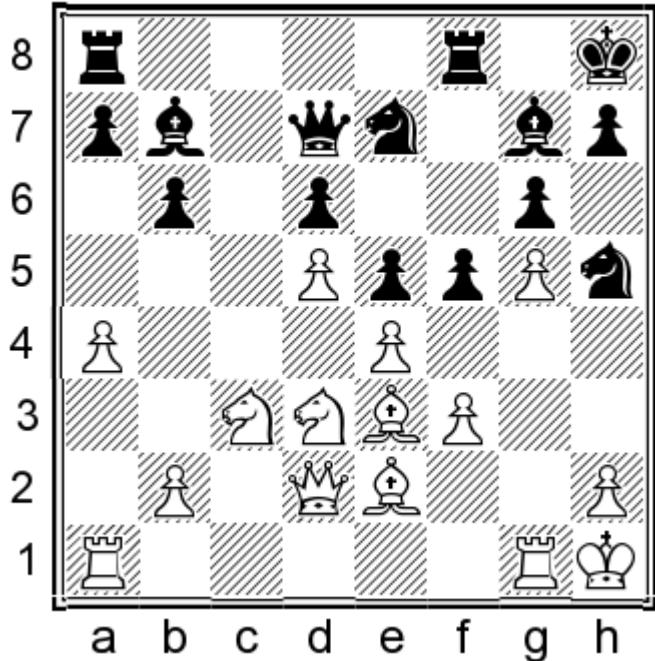
#### **14...b6**

In a later game, Ivan Cheparinov managed to place the Vietnamese player's opening concept in some doubt by playing 14...b5 15.g5 Nh5 16.Nb4 c5 17.Nc6 Qd7 18.cxb5 fxe4 19.Nxe4 Nf5 20.Qd2 and even refused the repetition of moves after 20...Nfg3+ 21.hxg3 Nxg3+ 22.Nxg3 Qh3+, choosing 20...Nd4 21.b4 Qh3, and went on to win, Le Quang Liem-Cheparinov, Moscow 2011.

#### **15.Rg1 Bb7 16.g5**

Very often in similar positions the clarification of the pawn structure favours White, but the Vietnamese GM correctly judges that in the event of 16.gxf5 gxf5 17.Qf1 cxd5 18.cxd5 Rf7 White loses part of his advantage. After the move in the game, the pawn on g5 is prepared to hold the kingside all by itself.

#### **16...Nh5 17.Qd2 Qd7 18.a4 cxd5 19.cxd5**



**19...f4?!**

After this move Le Quang Liem does not give his opponent the slightest chance of a favourable outcome to the game. He could still have held with 19...Rf7, retaining some minimum flexibility in the pawn structure.

**20.Bf2 h6**

Chess wisdom says not to play on the flank where one is weaker, but unfortunately, Black also has no chance of play on the queenside.

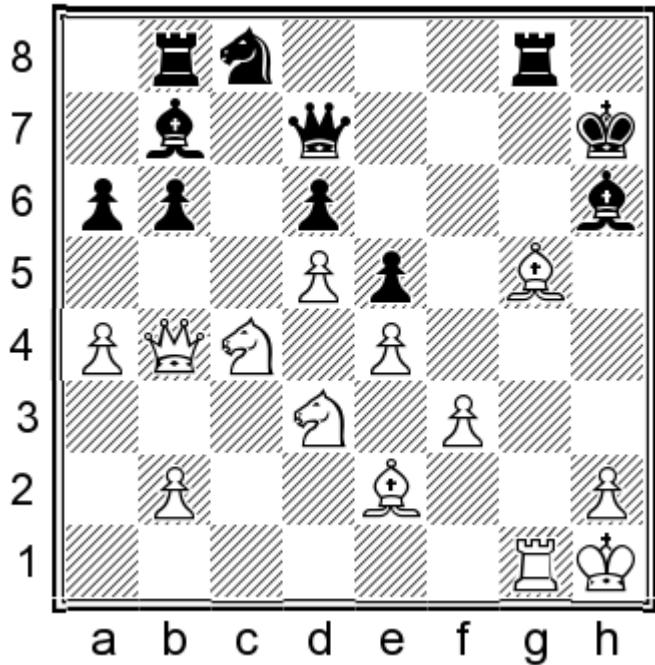
**21.Nb5 a6 22.Na3 hxg5 23.Nc4 Rab8 24.Qb4 Nc8 25.Rxg5**

Black's position is hanging by a thread. The last hope is to hang on patiently, and hope that his opponent will miss some sort of counterblow, but Le Quang Liem continues to play the game at a very high level.

**25...Kh7 26.Rag1 Rg8 27.Rxg6**

Accurately calculated. Although it looks as though White should be able to win however he wants, with such a weak black king, for an unquestioned victory he needs to see White's 31st move.

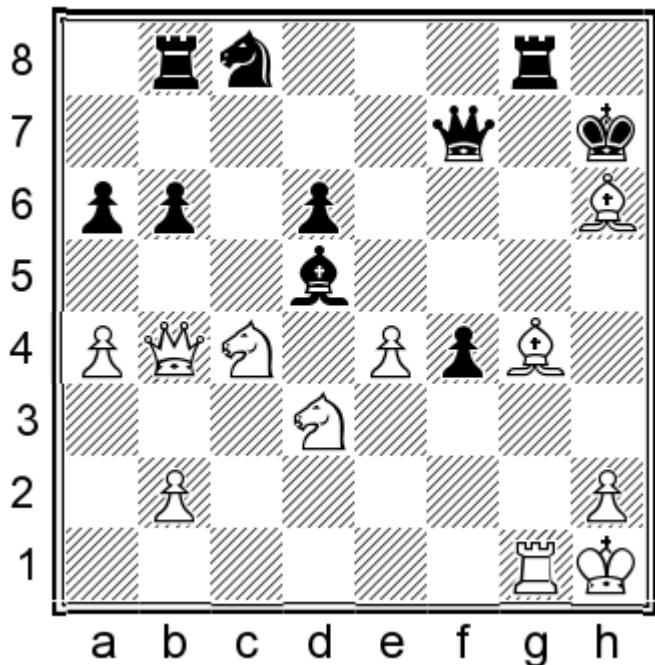
**27...Ng3+ 28.Bxg3 Kxg6 29.Bxf4+ Kh7 30.Bg5 Bh6**



**31.f4!**

Not only avoiding premature exchanges, but also including practically all of his pieces in the attack. It is a miracle that Black does not lose immediately.

**31...exf4 32.Bg4 Qf7 33.Bxh6 Bxd5**



This blow is the last hope, which worked to some extent in a practical sense, as the Vietnamese player did not find the most precise way to win.

After **34.Nd2 Kxh6 35.exd5 Qxd5+** Le Quang Liem could have put an effective end to a splendidly played game with **36.Ne4! Qxd3 37.Nf6!**, and White breaks through to the royal apartments. Nonetheless, after **36.Qe4 Qxe4+ 37.Nxe4** the advantage was more than sufficient for him to win, although it took him quite a few more moves.

The question may arise – how then should Black fight against this variation, if players such as Tal, Gligoric, Gufeld and Ding Liren cannot oppose anything to the freezing of the kingside? Is the King's Indian in danger of refutation?

Teimour Radjabov stood up for all King's Indian players. Twice, 2700 players went into this line against the Azeri and both times Teimour did not experience any special problems, even managing to win one of the games in his dynamic style.

The FIDE Grand Prix stage in Elista was one of Teimour's best tournaments. The Azeri grandmaster not only shared 1st-3rd places with Dmitry Jakovenko and Alexander Grischuk, but also gave several bright lessons in dynamic play.

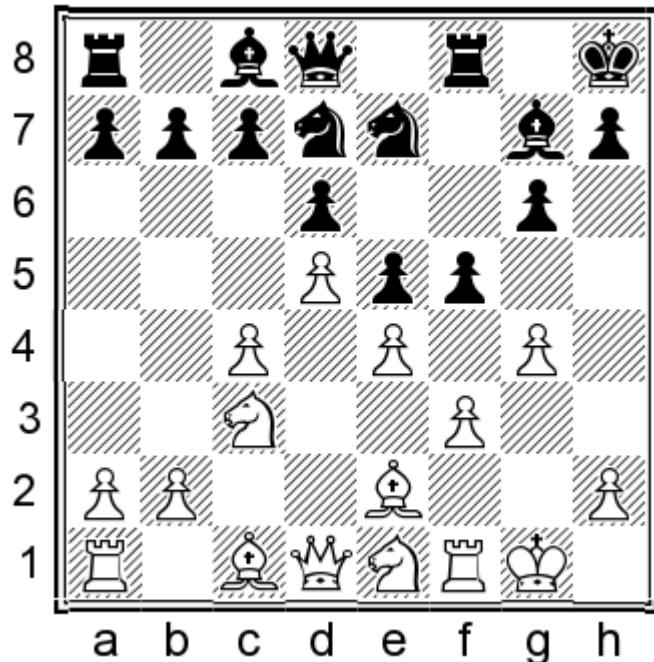
Game 70

Pavel Eljanov 2720

Teimour Radjabov 2751

Elista 2008 (9)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3 f5 11.g4 Kh8**



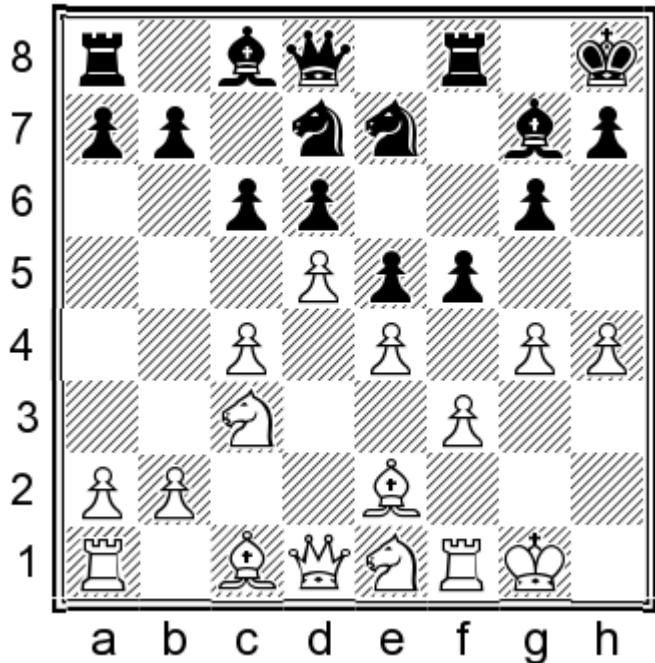
A very cunning plan on Black's part – he makes an interesting ‘ass’ in the style of Tigran Petrosian, and forces White to say the next word.

**12.h4**

Vladimir Belov, who is always distinguished by his excellent theoretical knowledge, handled the line slightly differently and managed to score an important victory in the last round of a strong rapid event in the Czech Republic: 12.Nd3 c6 13.g5 b5 14.b3 bxc4 15.bxc4, and here Daniil was seduced by a ‘poisoned’ pawn: 15...Qb6+?! (better is 15...Ba6!?) with a complicated game) 16.Kh1 Qd4 17.Bb2 Qxc4 18.Rc1! fxe4 19.fxe4 c5 20.Nxe5 Qd4 21.Rxf8+ Nxf8 22.Nf7+ Kg8 23.Nxd6, and White had a healthy extra pawn, and soon Vladimir won shared first place, Belov-Yuffa, Pardubice 2015 (rapid).

In Belov's game, the h-pawn remained in its starting position, whereas Pavel Eljanov immediately sends it into battle.

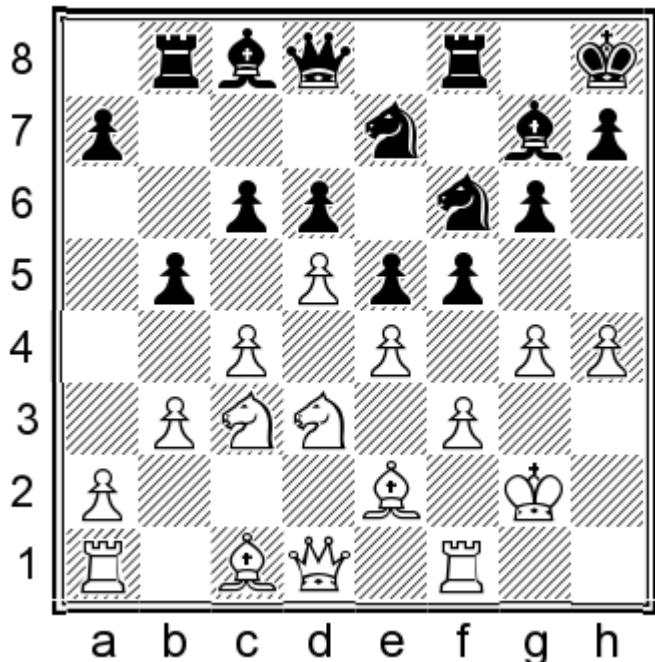
**12...c6**



**13.Kg2**

Analysis shows that if White wants to bring the rook to the h-file, then it is better to do it by means of Rf1-f2-h2. In view of this, I prefer 13.Be3, and on 13...Nf6 to reply with the accurate 14.Nd3, waiting for Black's reaction. The young Alexander Shimanov did not show such accuracy, playing 14.Kg2 Qd7 15.g5, and after the unexpected 15...f4! his game went downhill, Shimanov-Matinian, Rybinsk 2010.

**13...Nf6 14.Nd3 b5 15.b3 Rb8**



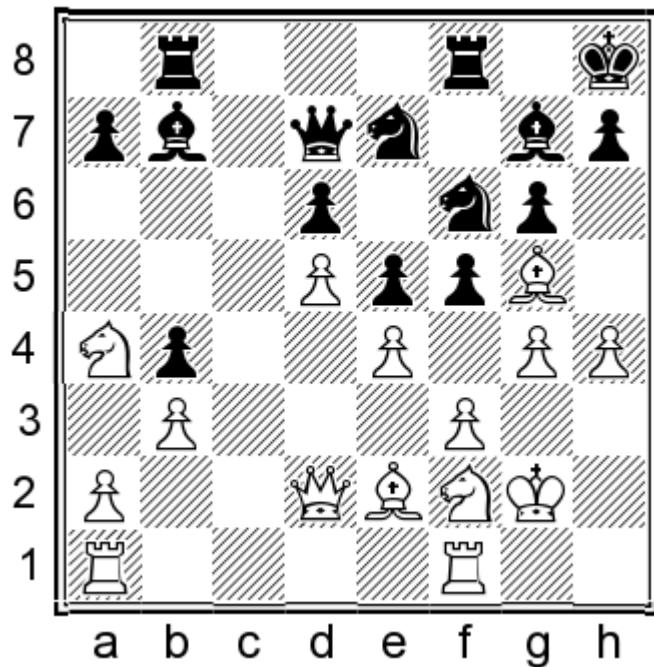
So far, both sides are playing well. Both play in the style of the variation, maintaining the tension to the last moment. Who will capture first?

**16.Nf2 b4 17.Na4 Bb7**

There are four pawns between the king and bishop, but already from this moment, there are ideas in the air of freeing

operating space for the bishop to emerge.

**18.Bg5 Qd7 19.Qd2 cxd5 20.cxd5**



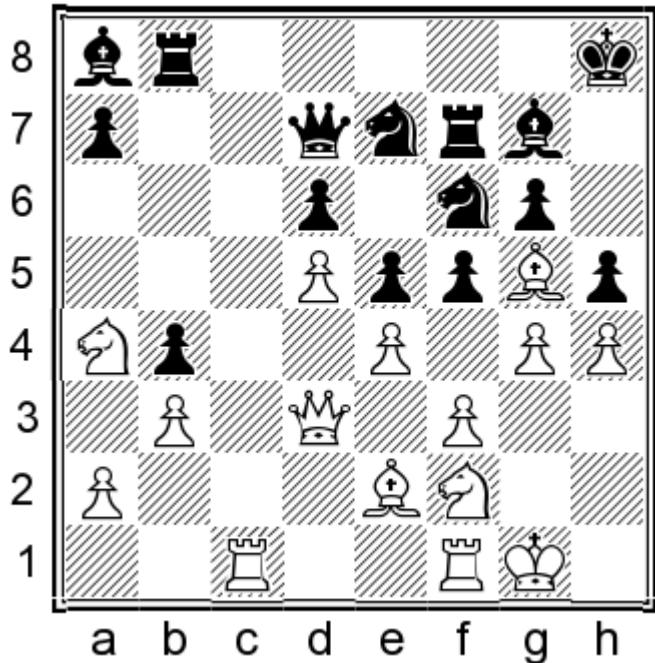
**20...Neg8**

Here it was already possible to emphasize the bad position of the king on g2: 20...fxe4!? 21.fxe4 Nxd5 22.exd5 Nxd5 23.Kh2 Qc6 – despite the piece deficit, the open long diagonal gives Black good chances of a successful conclusion of the attack. Radjabov however operates on the principle of not hurrying, and knowing the outcome, he can hardly be criticized for this decision.

**21.Rac1 Ba8 22.Qc2 Rf7 23.Qd3**

Radjabov has covered the valuable square c7 and Eljanov does not find anything better than to mark time. To my mind, it was time to pay attention to the rule about improving one's worst piece, by bringing the knight into the centre: 23.Nb2!? fxe4 24.fxe4 Rbf8 25.Kg1, defending against blows on d5.

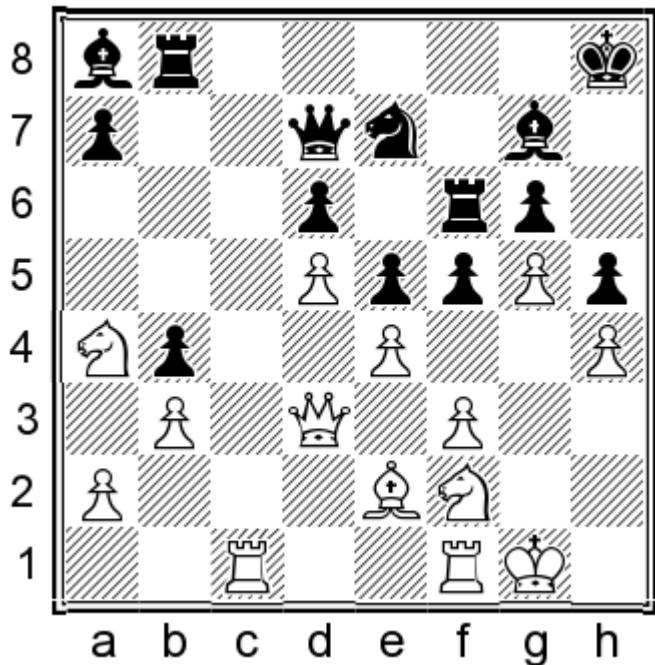
**23...Ne7 24.Kg1 h5**



**25.Bxf6?!**

White allows his opponent to take the initiative, although psychologically White's position is not simple and mistakes are understandable. The machine, unburdened by such emotions, understands that after 25.gxf5 gxf5 26.Qe3, Black has no concrete threats and White can begin to evacuate the Na4 or even turn his attention to the kingside.

**25...Rxf6 26.g5**



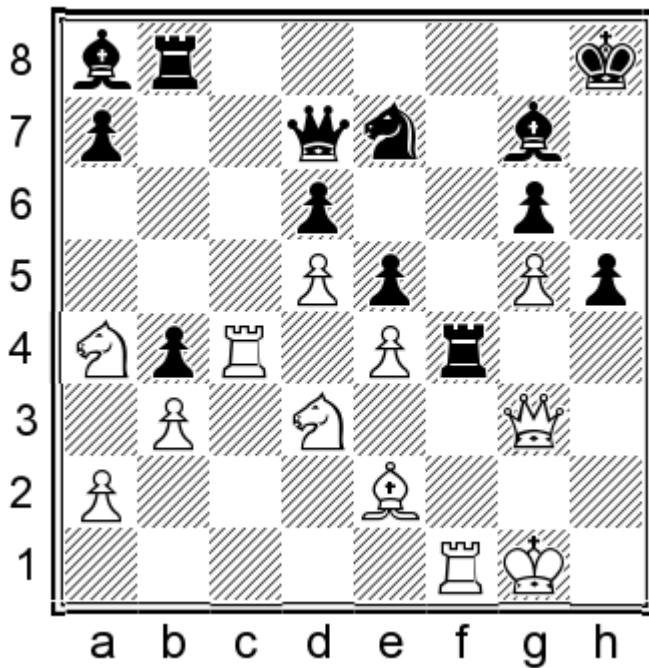
**26...fxe4!**

Evidently a resource White had missed. The black rook breaks through to White's position.

**27.fxe4 Rf4 28.Rc4**

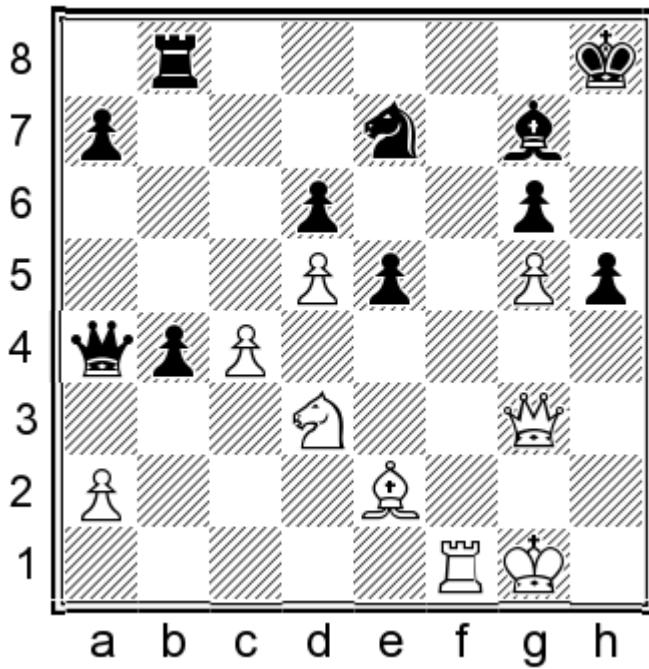
On the immediate 28.Qg3 one can recommend 28...Bxd5! 29.exd5 Nf5!, with a very strong initiative, therefore Eljanov first allows Black to consume a pawn.

**28...Rxh4 29.Qg3 Rf4 30.Nd3**



It might seem as though White has solved almost all his problems – after the exchange of rooks on f1 almost all of Black's pieces are out of play, but Radjabov has prepared a blow which answers all questions about who will be victorious.

**30...Bxd5! 31.exd5 Rxc4 32.bxc4 Qxa4**



White is already two pawns down and a third is attacked. Eljanov tried to muddy the waters:

**33.c5**

But Radjabov calmly calculated the variations and took every piece that he could:

**33...Qxa2 34.cxd6 Nf5 35.Rxf5 Qxe2 36.Rf2 Qe4 37.d7 Qxd5 38.Kh2 Kh7 39.Rf6 Qxd7 40.Nxe5 Qd2+**

White resigned.

## Conclusions

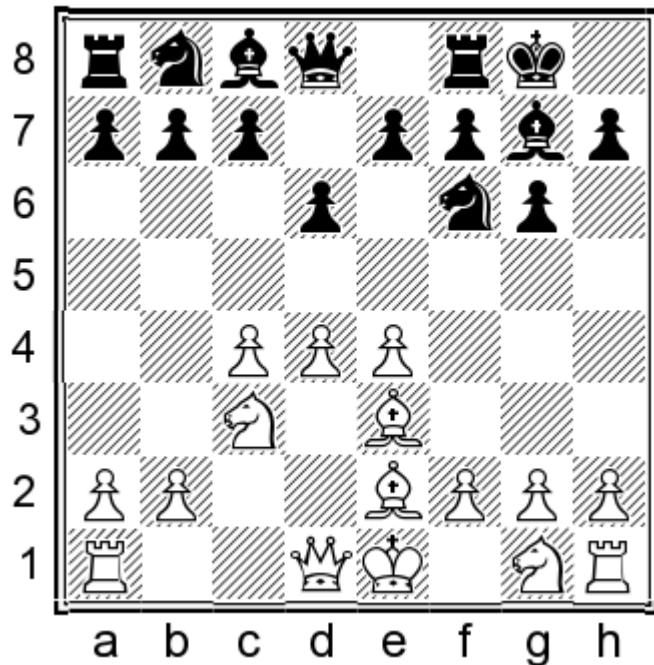
1. The move g2-g4 does not always lead to insane complications – in this case, the game usually comes down to a clear, reasonable balance of attack and defence. Much more often, one has to delve deeper into the position, not to calculate long variations, but in order to understand clearly which piece should go to which square.
2. Often, Black will not be ready for the fact that no King's Indian attacks will occur on the board today, and he will continue to search for the possibility of playing 'romantic' chess. Therefore, when carrying out his plans, White must be extremely attentive to the opponent's possibilities, as one blow can turn the situation upside down.
3. As practice shows, passive play (especially with a closed pawn structure) does not lead to anything good, so Black must make very responsible decisions from the very beginning and do so energetically, so as not to be completely crushed.

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## Chapter 14

### The Riazantsev Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Be3 followed by g2-g4



#### Some history

Due to the fact that there is no fixed *tabiya* in this variation, but only a general idea related to the holding back of the g1-knight and playing a quick g2-g4, it is difficult to say which player invented the variation. From my point of view, despite the fact that individual games with a similar pattern were played back in the 1930s, the flowering of this variation began with the games of Matthew Sadler in the late 1980s. For several years, the Englishman valiantly defended the honour of the variation, and managed to achieve several important victories over such players as, for example, Andrei Istratescu and Michal Krasenkow.

In our time, the variation has not lost relevance. Many 2700s have tested their opponents with a dashing pawn attack, and in my opinion, Alexander Riazantsev can be considered the main modern supporter of the variation – once I myself had to capitulate against him in this line.

#### Important nuances

More often than not, White resorts to this idea after Black has carried out ...e7-e5 – in response, the centre is closed with d4-d5 and then the advance of the wing pawns gains in strength. Therefore, Black often tries not to rush with the move of the e-pawn, keeping in reserve ...c7-c5. But often the blocked centre does not scare the black players. White has to hide the king on the queenside, and with accurate play, Black manages to create counterplay associated with an attack on the enemy monarch.

Despite the bold pawn play, the opening stage often ends with the fixing of the pawn structure, after which the strategic skills of the opponents come to the fore and the player who can better reorganize his pieces for the decisive

blow wins.

We start the review with two contrasting portraits of the line – in the first White's opening idea worked out with a bang, and in the second, the black player played almost perfectly and achieved a beautiful, confident victory.

### Game 71

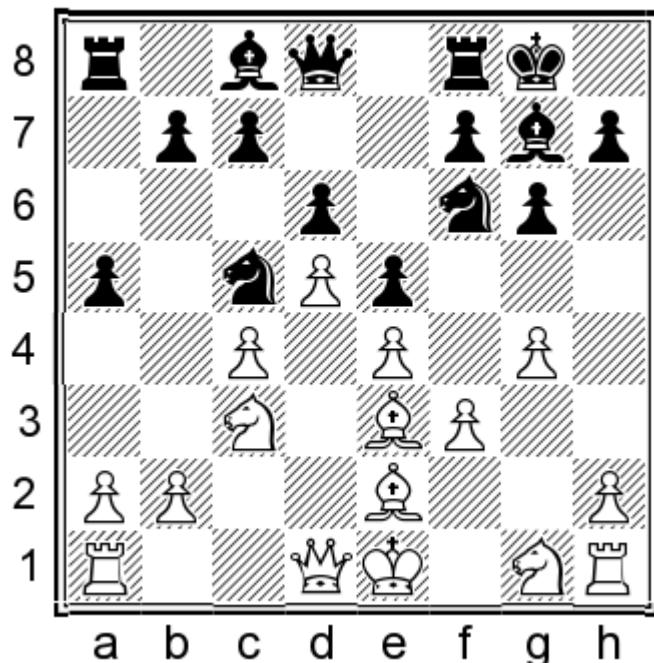
**Maxim Rodshtein** 2699

**Vladislav Kovalev** 2636

Heraklio Ech-tt 2017 (9)

The match between the national teams of Israel and Belarus took place in the last round of the European Team Championship and was of great sporting significance. Due to this victory on the second board, the Israelis managed to win the match by the minimum score and finish directly behind the teams of Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Croatia and Hungary.

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Bc3 e5 7.d5 Na6 8.g4 Nc5 9.f3 a5**



This position can be reached via several move-orders (for example, the knight on c5 can come via a6 or d7). The black player here is one of the most determined King's Indian adherents, Vladislav Kovalev – this makes it all the more interesting to see how Maxim Rodshtein poses him problems even on his own 'home field'.

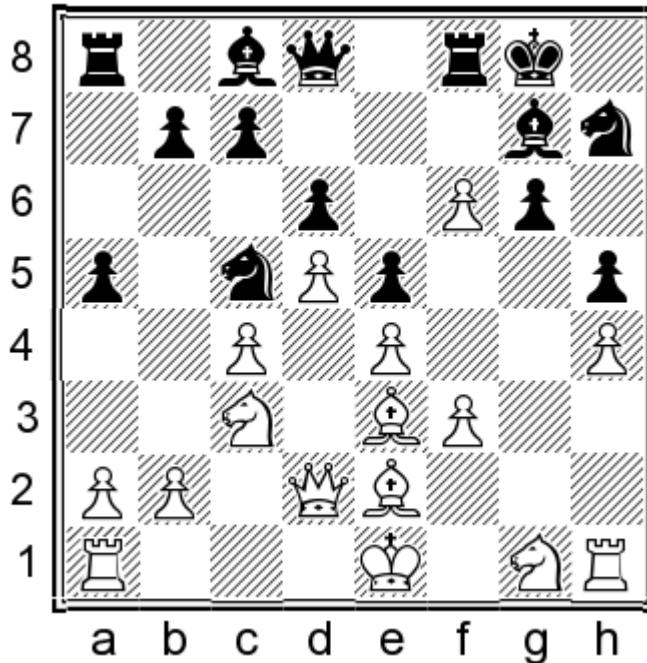
**10.h4 h5**

A sensible decision – Black does not want to allow h4-h5.

**11.g5 Nh7 12.Qd2 f6**

This break cannot really be avoided, so the KID player should not hesitate to advance the f-pawn.

**13.gxf6**



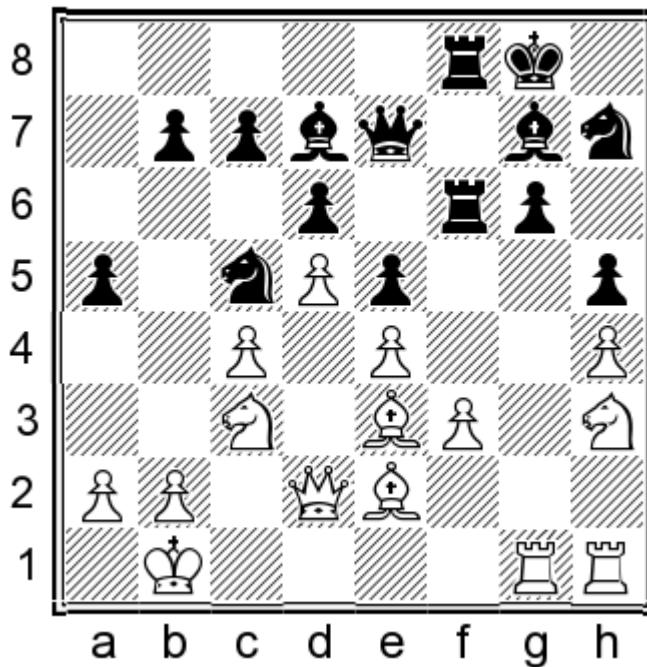
**13...Rxf6**

Later Vladislav somewhat improved his opening approach, choosing 13...Bxf6, but didn't equalize: 14.Bf2 Bd7 15.0-0-0 Qe7 16.Kb1 Rad8 17.Bf1 Kh8 18.Nge2 Bg7 19.Bg2, and despite the fact that a draw was soon agreed, one can hardly recommend this line to Black, Badelka-V.Kovalev, Orsha 2018.

**14.0-0-0 Bd7 15.Nh3 Qe7**

It is a bit late for counterplay against the white king, so Kovalev banks on completing his development.

**16.Rdg1 Raf8 17.Kb1**



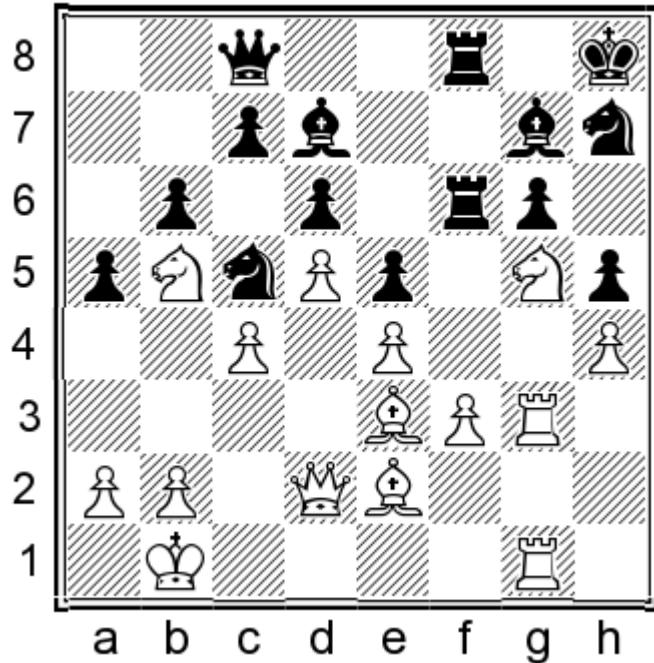
**17...Qe8**

Black could try the sacrifice 17...Rxf3 18.Bxf3 Rxf3, but after the simple 19.Nf2 it is not quite clear what he has for

the exchange. Black's position is quite solid, and the Belarusian GM does not rush to force events.

**18.Rg3 b6 19.Rhg1 Kh8 20.Nb5 Qc8 21.Ng5**

Rodshtain places his pieces ideally and goes over to the decisive storm.



**21...Na6**

Again Black has an exchange sacrifice at his disposal, and this time it looks rather more promising: 21...Bxb5!? 22.cxb5 Nxg5 23.Bxg5 Kh7 24.Bxf6 Rxf6 25.Bd1 Bh6 26.Qg2 Qe8 – of course, Black can hardly count on more than a draw, but his chances of holding are quite high.

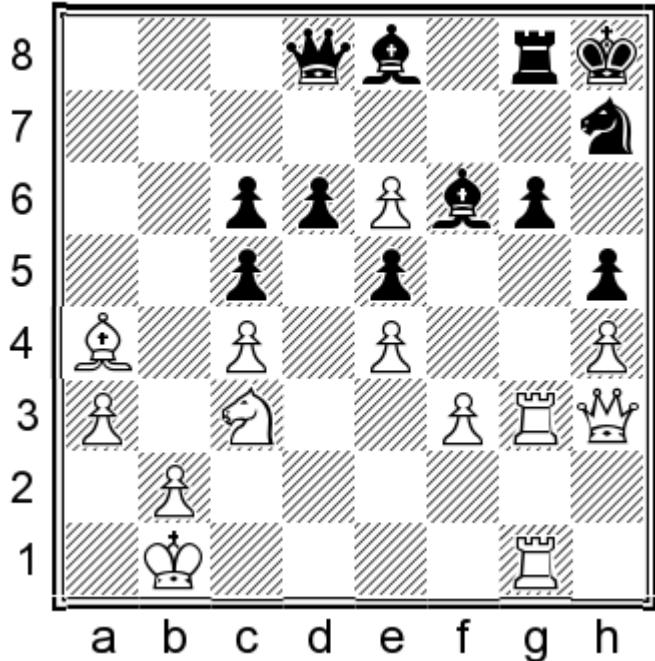
**22.a3**

Maxim understandably refrains from the immediate 22.Ne6!? Bxe6 23.dxe6 Qxe6 24.Nc3 – although this retains the advantage, there is no need for White to hurry.

**22...a4 23.Bd1 Nc5 24.Qg2 Be8 25.Bxc5**

But now the bishop has been deflected to cover the pawn on g6, White can turn to concrete play.

**25...bxc5 26.Ne6 Rxe6 27.dxe6 Bf6 28.Qh3 Rg8 29.Bxa4 Qd8 30.Nc3 c6**



Rodshtein easily conducted the game to its logical conclusion:

**31.Bxc6 Bxc6 32.Rxg6 Rxg6 33.Rxg6 Be8 34.Rg1 Bxh4 35.Nd5 Bg5 36.f4!**

Opening the long diagonal. White won in 45 moves. A brilliant achievement by the Israeli GM! However, we have a wonderful opportunity for aesthetic pleasure, by looking for an alternative way to finish off the game.

**Test 51.** Find another beautiful way to an immediate win in the above diagram position.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Another way to win was the unexpected 31.Qf5!?. Exploiting the weakness of the eighth rank, White ‘piles up’ on the g6-pawn and after 31...Bxh4 32.Rxg6 Bxg6 33.Rxg6 Rxg6 34.Qxg6 leaves Black with nothing to hope for – his broken pawn structure ensures White a decisive advantage.

The following game occurred in the Grand Prix stage at Palma de Mallorca, and as we know, in the hands of Teimour Radjabov the King’s Indian is doubly dangerous.

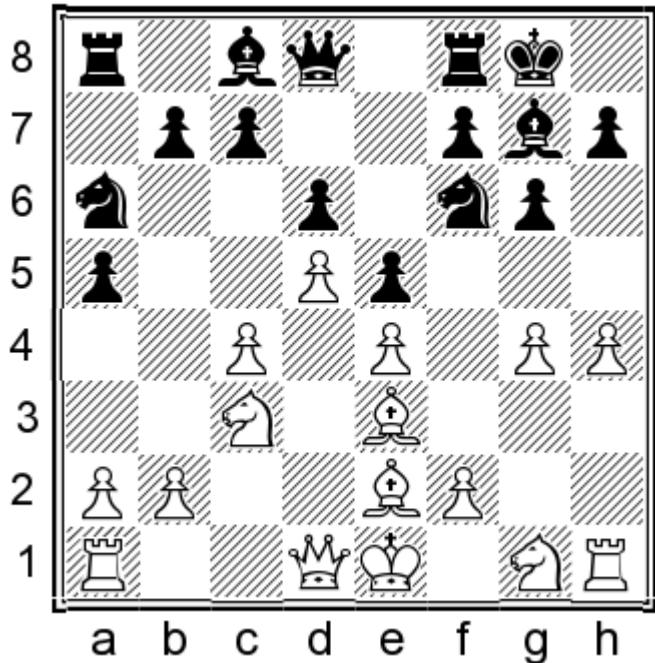
Game 72

Francisco Vallejo Pons 2705

Teimour Radjabov 2741

Palma de Mallorca 2017 (2)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Be3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.g4 Na6 9.h4**

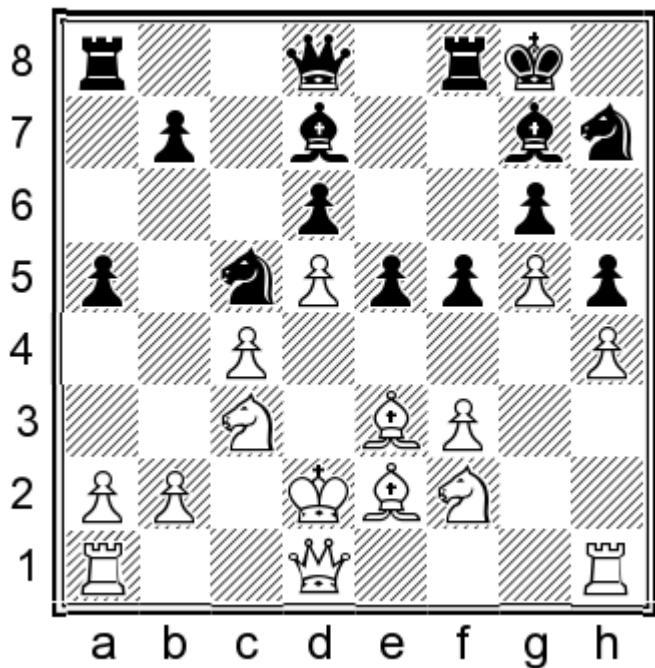


The above-mentioned Matthew Sadler played 9.g5 here and won a good game in Makagonov style: 9...Ne8 10.h4 f5 11.Nf3 Nc5 12.Nd2 b6 13.h5 Rf7 14.Qc2 Na6 15.Nf3 gxh5 16.Rxh5 f4 17.Bd2 Bf8 18.0-0-0 and White won, Sadler-Istrateescu, Calicut Wch-jr 1993. The details of this variation are examined in the relevant chapter.

#### **9...Nc5 10.f3 h5 11.g5 Nh7 12.Kd2**

Vallejo departs from the Rodshtein game and follows his own path, involving walking the king to the queenside. The other possible development of events is the immediate knight transfer 12.Nh3 Bd7 13.Nf2 c6 14.Nd3 – by comparison with the game, the king on e1 is better placed and Black does better to find a different plan.

#### **12...Bd7 13.Nh3 c6 14.Nf2 cxd5 15.exd5 f5**



White has to spend several more tempi to safeguard his king, so Radjabov immediately starts to open the position.

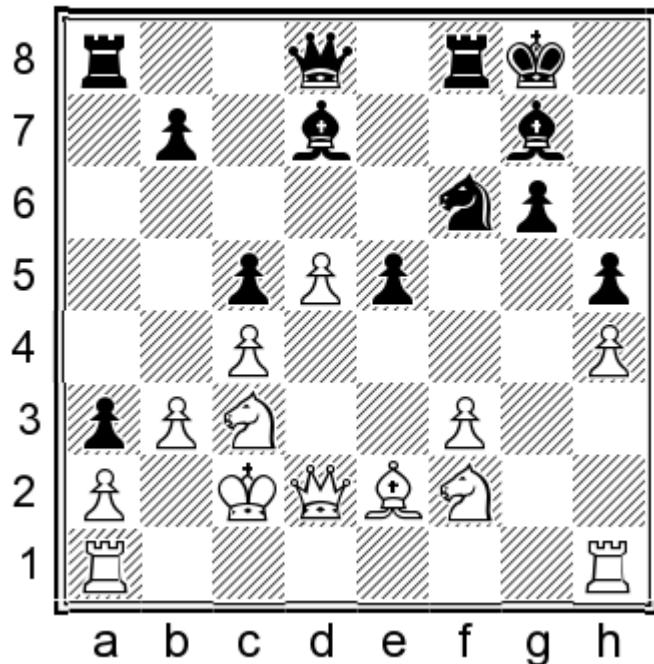
#### **16.gxf6 Nxg6 17.Bxc5**

A necessary measure – it is essential to prepare the transfer of the king to c2, by taking control of e4.

**17...dxc5 18.Kc2 a4 19.Qd2**

A small but significant inaccuracy. One should not forget that the strongest KID piece, the dark-squared bishop, is only awaiting the moment when it can come into play with decisive effect. The move 19.Nfe4!? prevents the opening of the long diagonal and would give White good chances of success.

**19...a3 20.b3**



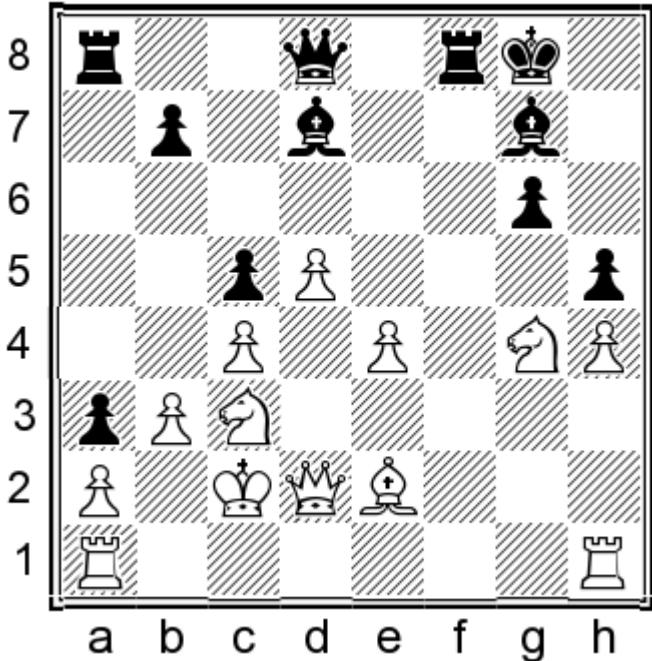
**20...e4!**

Teimour begins to seize the initiative. Never forget about the Bg7!

**21.fxe4 Ng4**

Another accurate move. The additional break 21...b5 22.cxb5 Ne8 23.Rh2 does not bring any benefit, as White holds his lines.

**22.Nxg4**



**Test 52.** Such a knight cannot be tolerated and Vallejo immediately liquidates it. But why not take with the bishop 22.Bxg4 ? Try to find the solution independently.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The unexpected 22...Bxc3! completely destroys White's coordination. White loses material by force, whilst the attempt to maintain the balance by means of 23.Kxc3 Qf6+ 24.Kc2 only makes the situation worse: 24...Qb2+ 25.Kd3 Qd4+ with an immediate win.

**22...hxg4 23.h5 Rf2 24.h6**

At first, the computer very much likes 24.Rae1, but gradually it starts to realize that after 24...Qe7 25.d6 Qe6 the black bishops are ready to break into the white position.

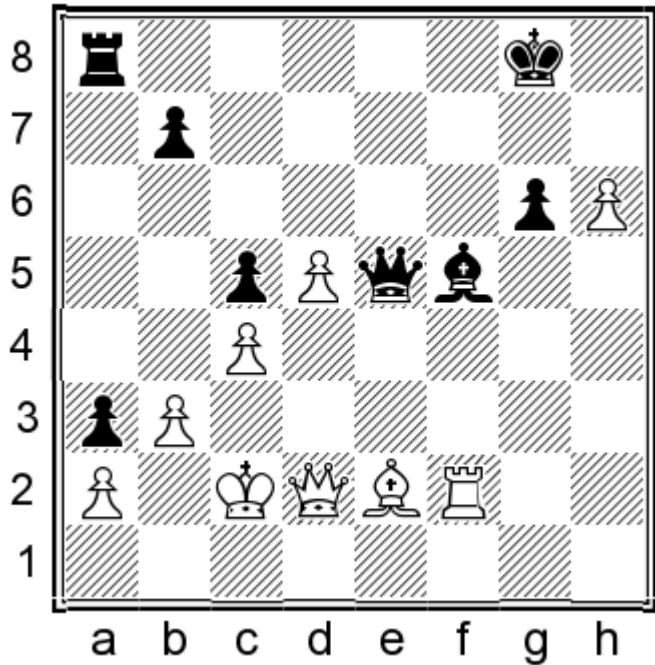
**24...Be5 25.Raf1 g3 26.Rxf2 gxf2**

Black remains material down, but the far-advanced passed pawn on f2 and two powerful bishops give more than sufficient compensation.

**27.Nd1 Qf6 28.Rf1**

It appears White has the chance to force a favourable exchange of queens by means of 28.Qe3 Bd4 29.Qf3 Qxf3 30.Bxf3 Rf8 31.Be2, but now the accurate move 31...g5 leaves White no hope: the g-pawn comes to aid its colleague.

**28...Bd4 29.Nxf2 Bxf2 30.e5 Qxe5 31.Rxf2 Bf5+**



**32.Kd1**

Buying Black off with the exchange also fails: after 32.Rxf5 Qxf5+ 33.Qd3 Qxd3+ 34.Kxd3 Kh7 the ending is easily winning for Black. White must move the king away and hope for a miracle.

**32...Qa1+**

An even more precise solution was 32...Re8 33.d6 Qa1+ 34.Qc1 Qxa2, preventing White sacrificing the exchange because of mate on e2.

**33.Qc1 Qxa2 34.Rxf5 Qxb3+ 35.Kd2 Qa2+ 36.Ke1**

After 36.Kd1 Qb3+ 37.Kd2 Black, of course, will not repeat, but will go into a technically winning endgame with 37...a2 38.Qa1 Qb4+ 39.Kc2 Qb1+ 40.Qxb1 axb1=Q+ 41.Kxb1 gxf5.

**36...Qb2!**

The only move, but sufficient. White cannot exchange queens, nor can he not exchange.

**37.Qf4 Qb1+ 0-1**

An impressive win by Radjabov, which can feature in his list (by no means short!) of best games.

And here is another game from our day, where the black pieces are handled by another classic of the King's Indian, but already one of the older generation.

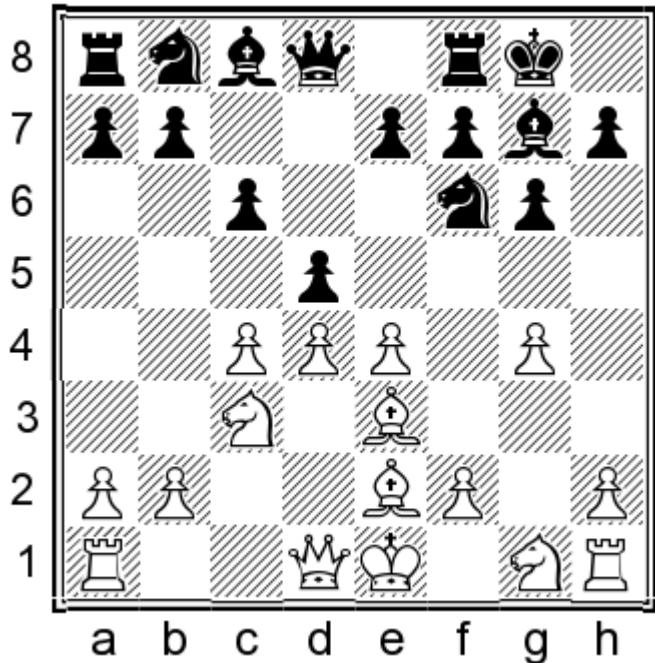
Game 73

Michael Fedorovsky 2471

Zdenko Kozul 2617

Karlsruhe 2018 (8)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Be3 c6 7.g4 d5**



A completely different approach to meeting the pawn offensive. Often White meets 6...c6 by not making the direct assault, but instead switching to the quiet 6.Nf3, but the bold pawn move is also popular.

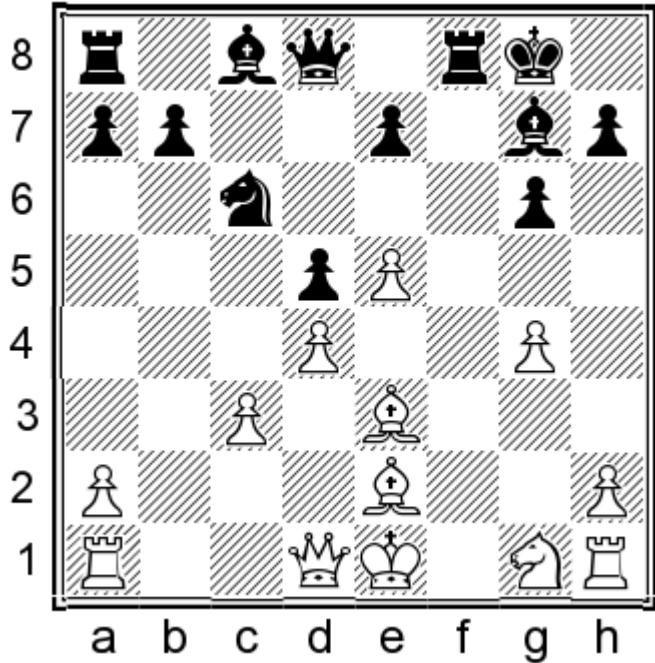
### **8.cxd5**

More accurate than the immediate 8.e5 – after 8...Ne4 9.Nxe4 dxe4 10.Qc2 c5 11.Qxe4 cxd4 White could not even equalize with either 12.Qxd4 Qxd4 13.Bxd4 Nc6 14.Bc3 Nxe5 15.h3 Be6, Xu Xiangyu-Spraggett, Lisbon 2019, or 12.Bxd4 Nc6 13.Bc3 Nxe5! 14.Rd1 Qc7 (Badelka-Bodnaruk, Sochi 2019) – in both cases, Black liquidates the dangerous e5-pawn and has a comfortable game.

### **8...cxd5 9.e5 Ne4 10.f3**

Judging by the fact that Black cannot improve the variation after 7...d5, then the whole conception seems to be flawed. After the aggressive 10.h4! I have not managed to find equality for Black. The break after 10...Nxc3 11.bxc3 f6 12.h5 is too late, so the most principled continuation is 10...Nc6, but here too, after 11.h5 Qa5 12.Kf1 Nxc3 13.bxc3 Qxc3 14.Nh3 White has rich compensation for the pawn, so I urge all adherents of the ...d6-d5 break to apply themselves to the search for the best solution for Black!

### **10...Nxc3 11.bxc3 f6 12.f4 fxe5 13.fxe5 Nc6**



#### **14.h3**

After this slow move Black's pawn break with ...f7-f6 is fully justified. It was still not too late to go into direct attacking mode with 14.h4!?, as Black is hardly likely to be able to generate dangerous counterplay on the queenside.

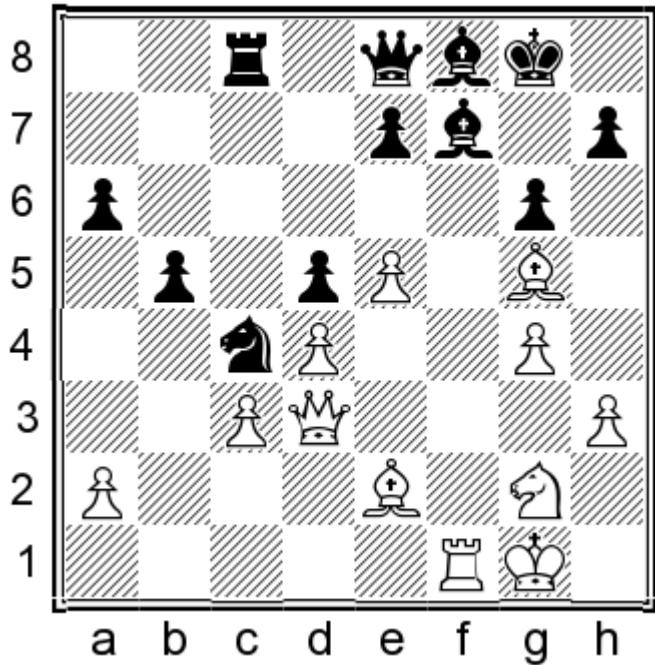
#### **14...Na5 15.Nf3 Nc4**

The square c4 is not going to run away from the black knight, so it was possible to complete the development of the remaining pieces with 15...Qc7 16.Rc1 Bd7 with approximate equality.

#### **16.Bg5 Be6 17.0-0 Rc8 18.Qd3 b5 19.Nh4**

Since White has nothing to worry about on the queenside, he continues to play on the kingside, aiming all his pieces at the enemy king's defences.

#### **19...Qe8 20.Rxf8+ Bxf8 21.Ng2 Bf7 22.Rf1 a6**



**23.Bc1!**

Now, having somewhat tied down the black pieces, Michael himself employs caution, not only covering his weak squares, but also moving the bishop further from the path of the enemy pawns.

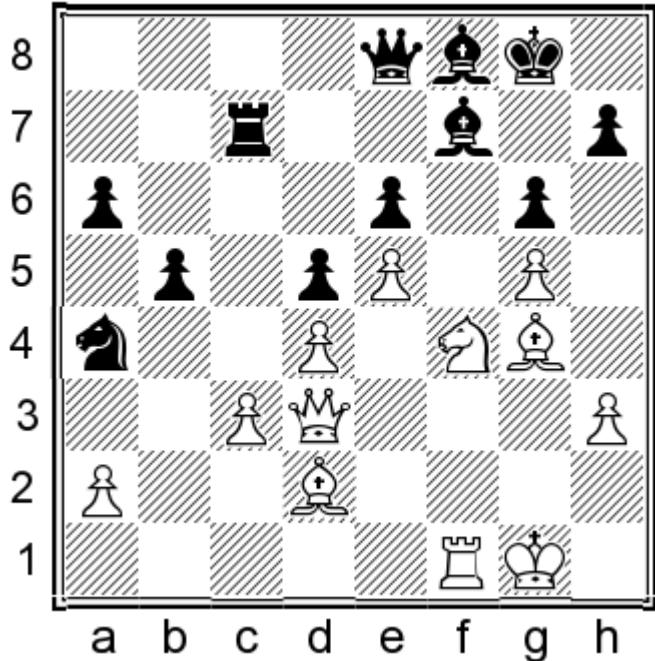
**23...Rc7?!**

Not sensing the danger. Black had to open fire immediately with 23...e6 24.Nf4 b4 – then the base of White's strong pawn centre is shaken a little and he has to be slower with his attack.

**24.Nf4 e6 25.g5**

White only needs to get the h-pawn into the attack and the game will be over, so Kozul starts an emergency regrouping of his pieces.

**25...Nb6 26.Bd2 Na4 27.Bg4**



**27...Ba3?**

The experienced GM does not manage to keep the thread of a difficult defence and gives the game away in one move. Admittedly, it should be pointed out that it is not easy to find a good plan, for example 27...Nb2 28.Qf3 Nc4 29.Be1 is no help, as the bishop just moves closer to the theatre of operations.

**28.c4!**

Black loses one of his bishops.

**28...Bb2 29.cxd5 exd5 30.e6 1-0**

A convincing victory by the German master. Can any daredevil prove the correctness of Black's conception?

We end this survey of the variation with an interesting battle between two Indian players. The game is here not just because of the beautiful finish, but also because of Sethuraman's reaction, which to my mind is the most principled one in this line.

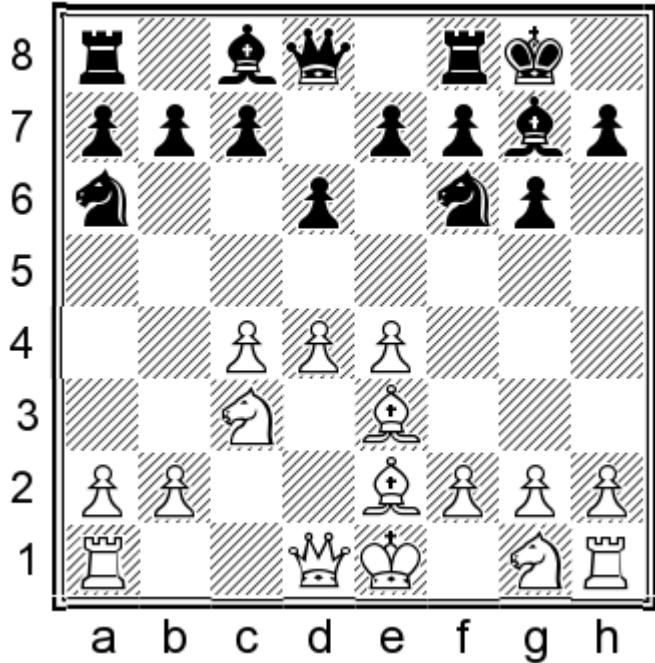
Game 74

**Harsha Bharathakoti** 2492

**S.P. Sethuraman** 2673

Douglas 2018 (2)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Be3 Na6**

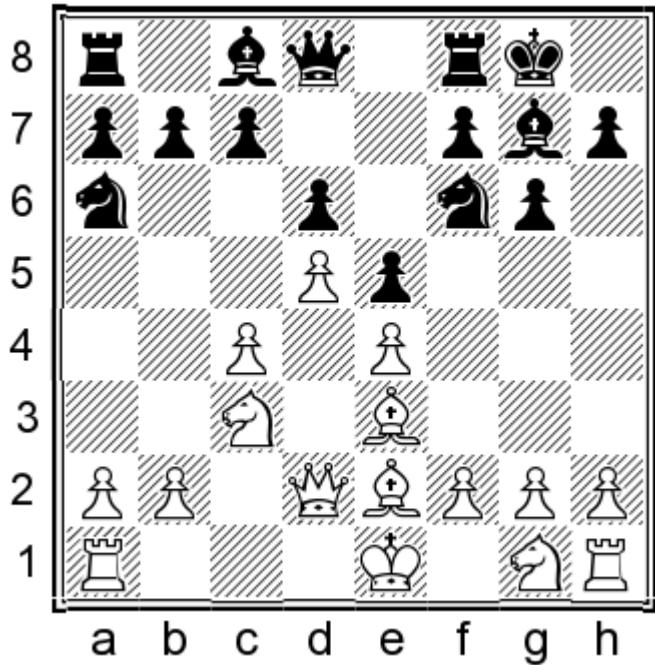


**7.g4**

In reply to the cunning move 6...Na6 White most often refrains from g2-g4, and goes into the main line with 7.Nf3. But one of the strongest theoreticians of our time, Alexander Riazantsev, not only did not go into known lines, but also refrained from the advance of the g-pawn!

Riazantsev begins with the subtle move 7.Qd2, and after 7...e5 8.d5 is already prepared to advance his kingside pawns.

Here are some examples from his numerous victories:

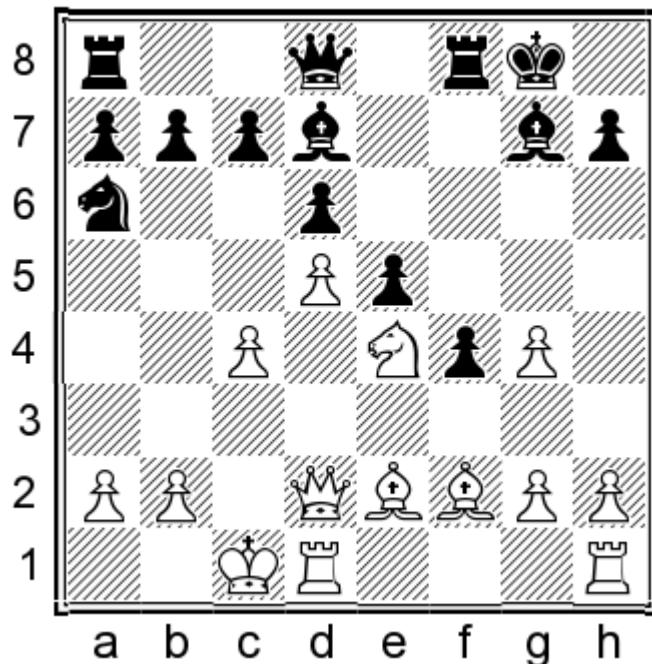


*analysis diagram*

A) 8...Nc5 9.f3 a5 10.g4 a4 11.0-0-0 Bd7 12.h4 a3 13.b3 c6 14.Kb1 (it was worth considering 14.dxc6!? Bxc6 15.h5, releasing the tension himself) 14...cx d5 15.cxd5 Qa5 16.Rc1 b5 17.Nd1 Qxd2 18.Bxd2 h5 19.g5, and here Vladimir Belous decided on a piece sacrifice: 19....Nfxe4 – absolutely correct, but not taken to its logical conclusion:

20.fxe4 Nxe4 21.Be1 Bf5 22.Rc2 Nc5 23.Ne3 Bxc2+ (stronger is 23...Be4!? – there is no hurry with the exchange) 24.Kxc2 Rfc8? (the decisive mistake, the pawn had to be kept with 24...Rfb8) 25.Bxb5 e4 26.Bc6, and on account of the weak pawns on e4 and d6, White soon won, Riazantsev-Belous, Taganrog 2015;

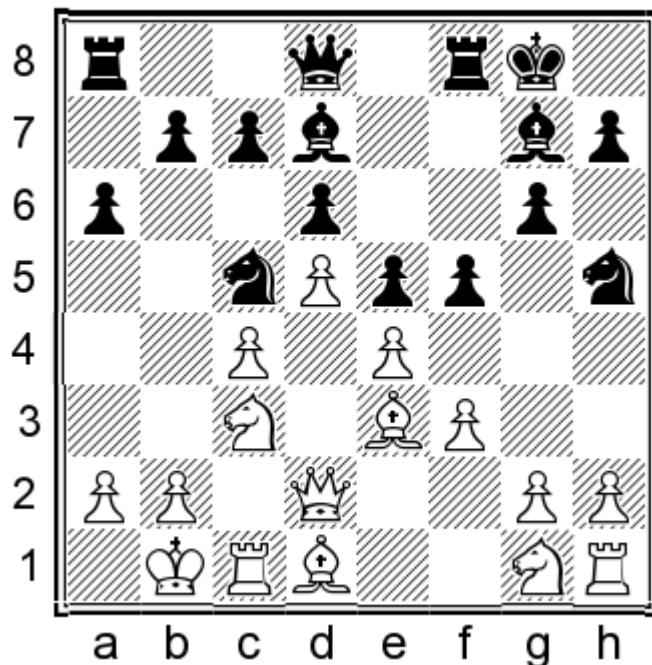
B) I once myself contributed to Professor Riazantsev's score in this line, and my position from the opening was not satisfactory: 8...Bd7 9.f3 Nh5 10.0-0-0 f5 11.exf5 gxf5 12.Nh3 f4 13.Bf2 Nf6 14.Ng5 Ng4 15.Ne6 Bxe6 16.fxg4 Bd7 17.Ne4.



*analysis diagram*

White has occupied the important square e4, which later helped Alexander Riazantsev not only win an important game, but also to qualify for the Superfinal of the Russian Championship, in which he managed to win the main prize, Riazantsev-Kryakvin, Kolomna 2016;

C) Another very interesting idea was demonstrated by Ilya Iljiushenok, but he did not manage to play it quite accurately: 8...Nc5 9.f3 Nh5 10.0-0-0 a6 11.Kb1 Bd7 12.Rc1 f5 13.Bd1.



## *analysis diagram*

Here, to my mind, he should have tried 13...b5!?, attacking his opponent from all sides, but Ilya chose 13...Qe8, and after 14.Nge2 fxe4 15.Nxe4 b6 16.Bc2 the game did not last long, Alexander soon winning, Riazantsev-IIjiushenok, Cheliabinsk rapid 2017.

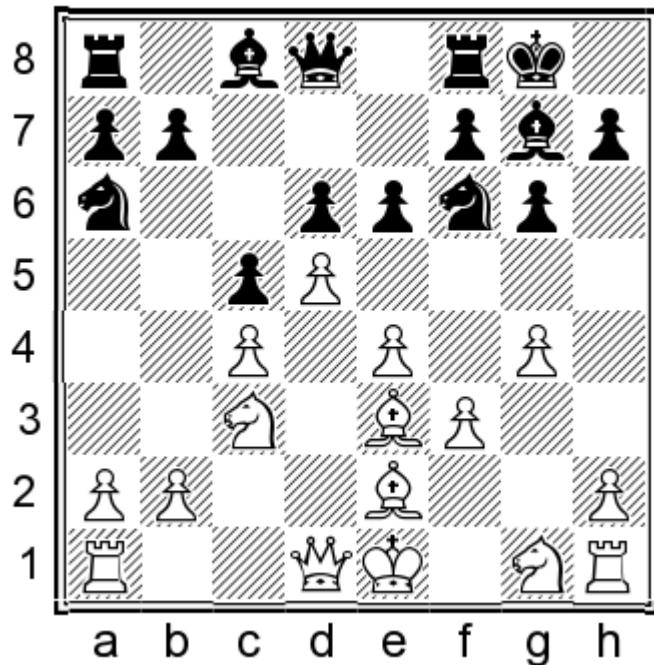
Riazantsev also gained great experience in this line at the European Rapid Championship in 2016, where Alexander managed to win the main prize.

However, we have become too distracted – the game on the agenda is that with an immediate g2-g4, but if you have to play against Riazantsev, I recommend you pay attention to my recommendation in the game with Iljiushenok. But fresh ideas are also welcome!

### **7...c5**

With the pawn on g4, White cannot go into Benoni tabiyas, so in this case the break ...c7-c5 is very good for Black.

### **8.d5 e6 9.f3**



### **9...exd5**

One untried idea for Black here is 9...Re8!?. Black not only maintains the tension in the centre, but also prepares an elegant trap, for example after 10.Nh3 exd5 11.cxd5 there follows the sudden blow 11...Bxg4!, and it turns out that White is in dire straits: 12.fxg4 Nxe4 13.Nxe4 Qh4+ 14.Nef2 Rxe3 15.0-0 Rae8 with a very strong initiative for Black. Sethuraman goes his own way, but also obtains good play.

### **10.cxd5 Nc7 11.a4 a6 12.h4**

White has to stick to his guns, as he has to close the kingside in order to complete his development.

### **12...h5 13.g5 Nh7 14.Qd2 Bd7 15.f4 Re8 16.Bf3 Bg4**

White has set up very solidly, so Black must take active measures, so as not to come under a press.

### **17.Bxg4 Bxc3 18.bxc3 hxg4 19.Ne2 Rxe4 20.Ng3**

In his turn, White correctly assesses the position and goes for a sacrifice of the central pawn, counting on breaking through the enemy redoubts.

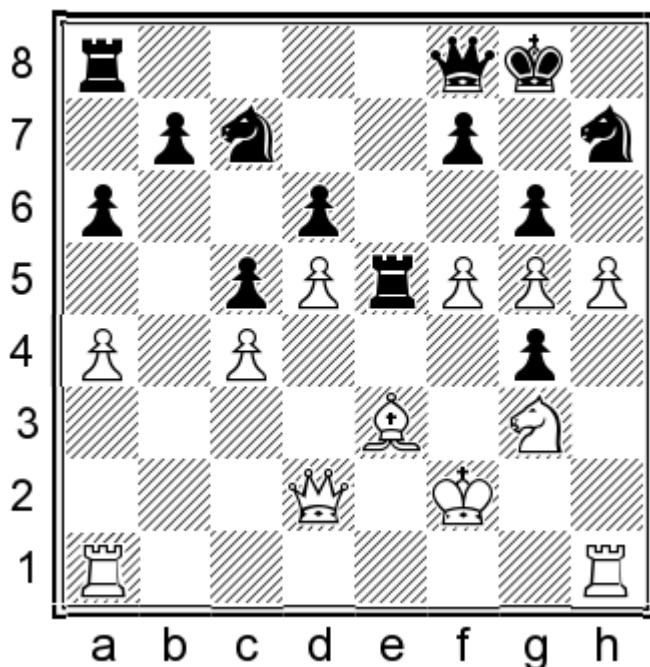
## 20...Re8

An inaccuracy which may cost Black the game. The more subtle 20...Re7! was much stronger, with the idea of including the rook in the attack with the queen: 21.Kf2 Qe8 (already threatening the capture on d5) 22.Rhe1 Nf8 with a complicated game.

## 21.Kf2 Re7

Sethuraman acknowledges his mistake, but loses a precious tempo – now the counterplay is too late and he has to go onto the defensive.

## 22.h5 Qf8 23.f5 Re5 24.c4



Pawns are the soul of chess! And it is not important that several of them have to be sacrificed for the sake of a beautiful win.

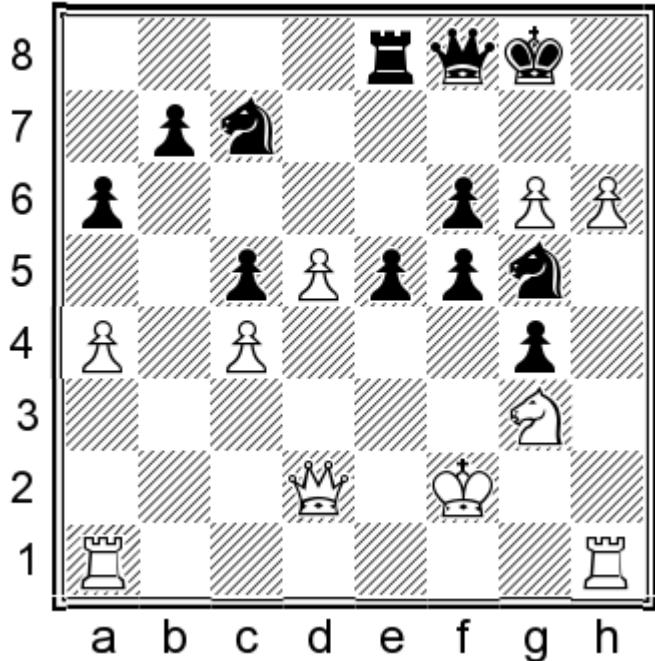
## 24...gxf5 25.Bf4 f6 26.g6 Ng5 27.h6

‘Materialism’ after 27.Bxe5 dxe5 28.Qc2 is by no means unjustified, but the Indian player does not hurry and is relishing the position, advancing his kingside pawns even further.

## 27...Rae8

At first the engine gives Black good hopes of surviving after the knight jump 27...Ne4+ 28.Nxe4 Rxe4, but after a couple of accurate moves: 29.Rh5! Rxc4 30.Re1!, it begins to see that the threat h6-h7 can be avoided only at too great a cost.

## 28.Bxe5 dxe5



**29.Nxf5!**

White had quite a few ways to win, but the Indian player chooses the most aesthetic. Black temporarily gets an extra queen, but the pawns are so strong that this does not help him.

**29...Ne4+ 30.Ke2 Nxd2 31.g7**

It was even possible not to hurry with this and to rather mock the opponent with the simple recapture 31.Kxd2, but Harsha avoids unnecessary flashiness.

Black resigned.

### Conclusions

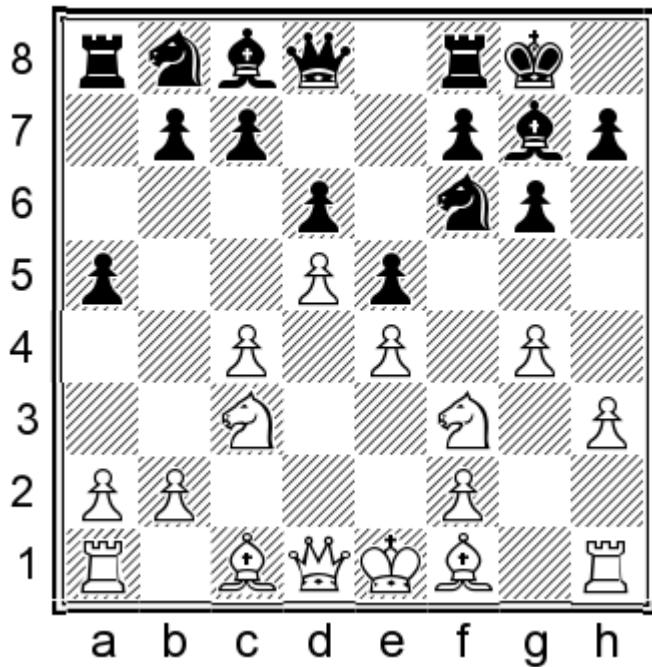
1. Ideally for White, this set-up should be unexpected by the opponent. Of course, in our time, an experienced KID player is ready for almost anything, but if he does not have a good reply ready, the white flank attack will go smoothly.
2. Black, in his turn, should pay more attention to this attack – with the advent of computer analysis, this opening is gaining more and more popularity. By way of general advice, it is not good to close the centre without clear reason, nor should Black delay his counterplay, because then there simply may not be time left for this.
3. Unlike some other variations in the book, I could quite recommend this idea for practical use (especially the move-order that Alexander Riazantsev uses). Of course, for this it is necessary to explore the opening in more detail, acquiring a few of your own innovations and looking at the games of the strongest players – I'm almost sure that plenty more exciting games will be played on this topic.

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## Chapter 15

# The secret nooks and crannies of the Makogonov Variation

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.h3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.g4



### Some history

The line with 6.h3 has long been known in chess literature as the Makogonov Variation, in honour of the well-known Soviet player Vladimir Makogonov (1904-1993), but only in the 21st century have various GMs taken serious steps to develop it. The first to play it regularly was the then IM, now GM and Russian Champion Igor Lysyj. Amongst all the games he has in the database, he has lost only two (and that was in 2005), and to this day is happy to advise others who are interested in the variation.

Another major contribution in the 2010s was made by Evgeny Tomashevsky, who over a period of several years defeated Morozevich, Nakamura and Grischuk in this variation! And this is only the games that made it to the database – the list of those who he has beaten in rapid and blitz is no less eminent. Others who have tried the variation include Ian Nepomniachtchi, Dmitry Jakovenko (the author was personally a victim of his), Alexander Riazantsev and many others. In addition to the Russians, the variation is popular among the Chinese (many a pawn has been sent up to g4, by players from Li Chao to Ding Liren), as well as the Israelis Evgeny Postny and Maxim Rodshtein, who have played more than a dozen games each.

### Important nuances

White's main idea is to block the ...f7-f5 break, whilst having in reserve a flank attack with his kingside pawns. However, it does not in fact stop Black at all, and contrary to logic, it is precisely at this point that he usually prepares a counterattack, despite the fact that the important g-file is opened. Another plan for Black is to undermine the queenside: since the king is unlikely to be comfortable on the kingside, he often has to hide on the queenside,

which Black is ready for.

White's goal is not so much to create threats on their own, as to clearly and correctly fend off the opponent's ideas. If he succeeds, then the idea of his own offensive comes into action of its own accord.

We begin our review with two games by one of the most well-known Russian KID players, Dmitry Kokarev. In principle, Dmitry tries never to depart from his main opening without special need, and he has tremendous experience and in-depth analysis, so it is all the more valuable when the white player beats him.

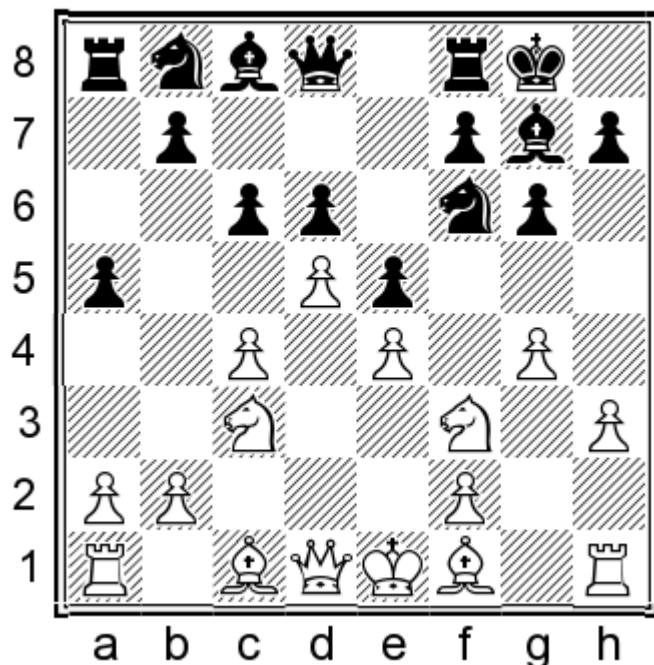
### Game 75

Alexander Riazantsev 2646

Dmitry Kokarev 2630

Ulan Ude 2009 (4)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.e4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 0-0 5.Nf3 d6 6.h3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.g4 c6**



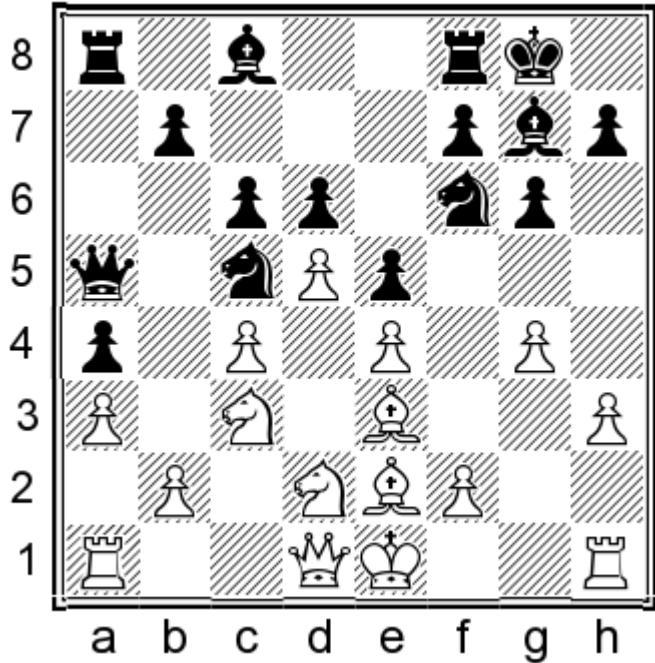
Not the most popular continuation, but an interesting one. Black's plans include a quick ...a5-a4 followed by bringing the queen to a5, which makes it significantly more difficult for White to castle queenside. However, as we have already seen, Alexander Riazantsev does not enter these g2-g4 set-ups without thorough preparation and so here too, he demonstrates the strongest plan.

**9.Be3 a4**

In one of his games, Alexander Morozevich decided to return to standard schemes, and, judging by the development of the game, had prepared it all beforehand: 9...Na6 10.Be2 Nc5 11.Nd2 a4 12.Bxc5 dxc5 13.Nxa4 Bh6! 14.Nxc5 Qb6. Morozevich has sacrificed two pawns, but is ready to regain rather more. Leitao refused the slightly more pleasant endgame, arising after 15.Nd3 Bxd2+ 16.Qxd2 Nxe4 17.Qe3 in favour of the move 15.Ncb3, but Alexander was also ready for this: 15...Bxd2+ 16.Nxd2 Qxb2! (without prejudice) 17.a4 Qd4 18.0-0 Nxe4 19.Nxe4 Qxe4. Material equality has been established and soon the game reached a rook ending with two pawns each, Leitao-Morozevich, Tromsø 2013.

The idea with 9...a4 was used by Viktor Bologan in 1999 against Jeroen Piket, but after Riazantsev's next move, both players were on their own.

**10.a3 Qa5 11.Nd2 Nbd7 12.Be2 Nc5**



Black has completed his plan, not only establishing the queen on a5, but also entrenching his knight on c5. Queenside castling is hardly appealing now, so White must be very careful, but he plays very strongly also.

### **13.Kf1!**

Suddenly, it turns out that all of Black's pieces on the queenside are out of a job, whilst the white king is conveniently placed on g2, where it does not get under its own pieces' feet and is not subject to blows from the opponent.

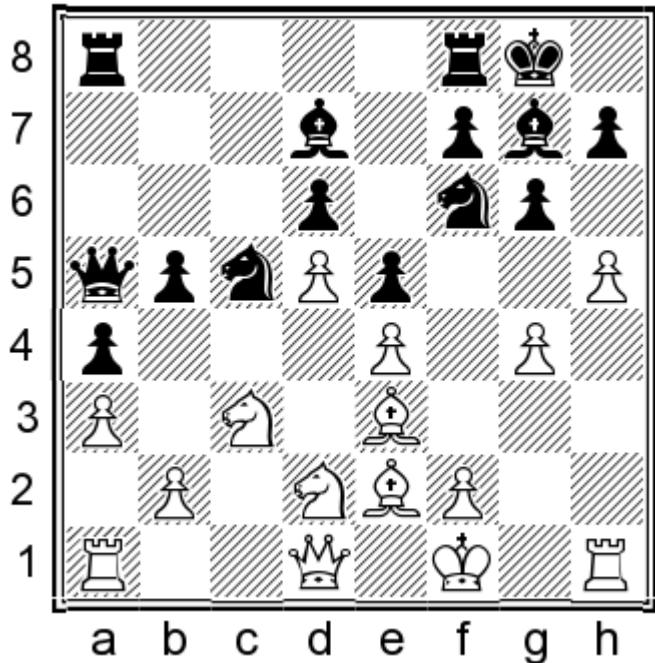
### **13...cxd5**

Dmitry continues to escalate the tension on the queenside, but now that it is clear that the white king is not coming in that direction, the queen could return to base: 13...Nfd7 14.h4 Qd8! – here she is not in the way and can probably assist in the defence.

### **14.cxd5 Bd7 15.h4 b5**

Each plays in his own half of the board, as if paying no intention to the other. It is obvious that this cannot go on forever, so who will blink first?

### **16.h5**



**16...Rfb8**

Even so, he needed only to play one prophylactic move, although it is not a move which easily makes it even onto one's list of candidate moves: 16...h6!! 17.g5 hxg5 18.Bxg5 b4 – despite the fact that White is starting to get at the king, the Nf6 holds all the necessary squares, whilst on the queenside Black arrives in time. After the move in the game, the knight is driven back to e8 and the game is essentially over, as White is just too fast.

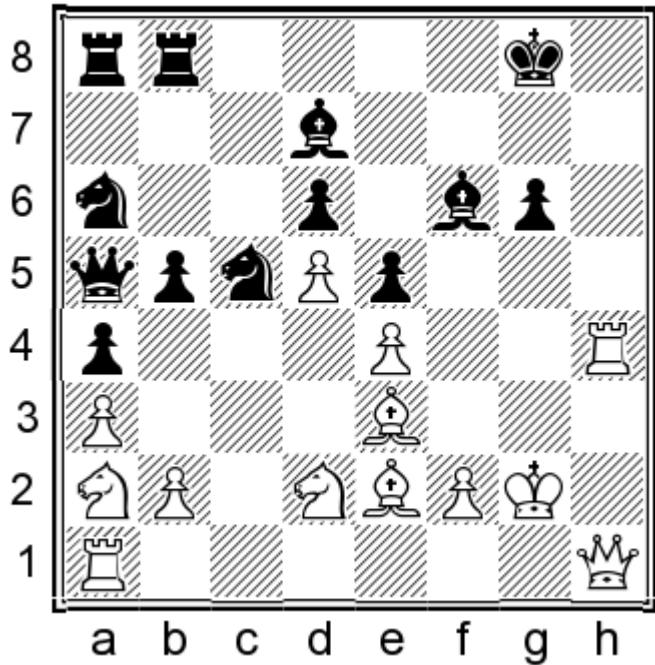
**17.g5 Ne8 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.Na2!**

Prophylaxis is an important thing! Just one backward move, and Black will never be able to play ...b5-b4, despite all his efforts.

**19...Nc7 20.Kg2 N7a6 21.Rh4 f5**

There is no time for 21...b4 – 22.Qh1 Bb5 23.Bxb5 Qxb5 24.Rh7, and White only needs to liquidate the Bg7 to ensure the crush.

**22.gxf6 Bxf6 23.Qh1**



**23...Qd8**

Black sounds the retreat, but it is already too late – his position collapses. Even 23...Bxh4 cannot correct things – 24.Qxh4 Qd8 25.Bg5 Qf8 26.Bf6 with a decisive attack.

**24.Rh7 Rb7 25.Qh2 Be8 26.Rh1**

The rook, quietly slumbering in the corner all game, provides the decisive addition to the attack. Black is defenceless.

**26...Rg7 27.Rxg7+ Bxg7 28.Qh7+ Kf8 29.Bh6 Bxh6 30.Qxh6+ Ke7 31.Bg4**

And Alexander Riazantsev won.

Shortly after, Kokarev improved Black's move-order.

#### Game 76

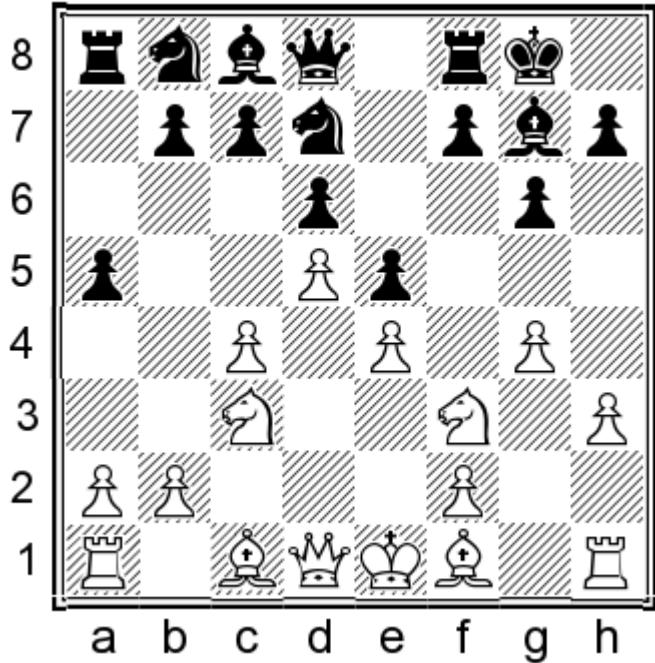
**Alexey Goganov 2620**

**Dmitry Kokarev 2624**

Kolomna 2016 (9)

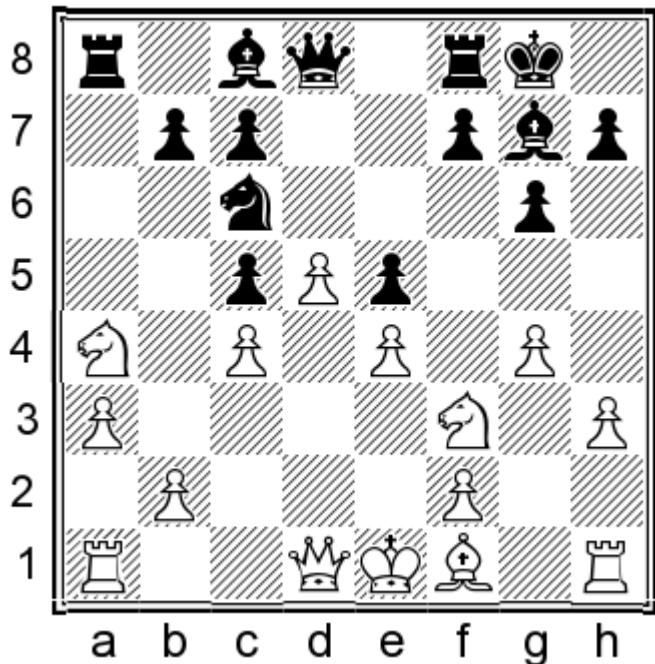
**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.h3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.g4 Nfd7**

A subtle move – Black holds the b8-knight back for the moment, and brings the other knight to c5, whilst being ready, if appropriate, to break with ...f7-f5.



### **9.Bg5**

A more popular continuation is 9.Be3, after which Black most often goes back into the main variation with 9...Na6, but not so long ago, Mikhail Popov told me that in practice he had successfully tried another idea: 9...Nc5 10.a3 a4 11.Bxc5 dxc5 12.Nxa4 Nc6!.



This is the reason the knight was kept on b8 – now it can jump to d4! The endgame after 13.dxc6 Qxd1 followed by ...Rxa4 is perfectly fine for Black, whilst the tournament game went 13.Nxc5 Qe7 14.Nb3 Nd4, and in the end, the talented Israeli junior got confused in the complications, Milikow-M.Popov, Pardubice 2018.

### **9...Qe8 10.Nd2 Nc5 11.Rg1**

In a later game between the same opponents, Alexey slightly changed his move-order: 11.Be3 Nba6 12.a3, but did not pose his opponent any problems: 12...a4 (not a whit inferior is 12...f5!? 13.f3 Bd7 with a sharp game) 13.Rg1 Bd7 14.Qf3 c6 15.0-0-0 cxd5 16.Nxd5 Bc6 17.Nf6+ Bxf6 18.Qxf6 Qe6 19.Qxe6 Nxe6 – Kokarev equalized easily and later outplayed his opponent, Gogonov-Kokarev, Serpukhov rapid 2018.

**11...Nba6 12.a3 Bd7**

With the rook on g1 it is already not simple to carry out the plan with a quick ...f7-f5, and therefore Dmitry, as in the previous game, seeks play on the other flank.

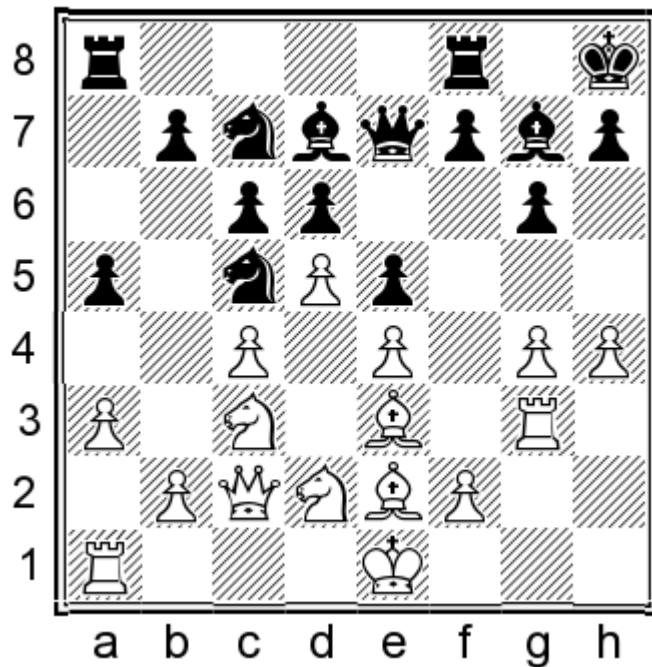
**13.Qc2 c6 14.Be2**

The computer very much likes the variation 14.h4 Nc7 15.h5 b5 16.h6 Bh8, but here there is absolutely nothing to terrify Black – the attack has stalled and the problem of the Bh8 can be solved later.

**14...Nc7 15.Be3 Qe7 16.Rg3**

It seems that this move was inspired by one of the games of Tomashevsky, which we will analyse later, but in this position I could not divine its sacred meaning and to my mind, 16.0-0-0 was also perfectly possible.

**16...Kh8 17.h4**



**17...f5**

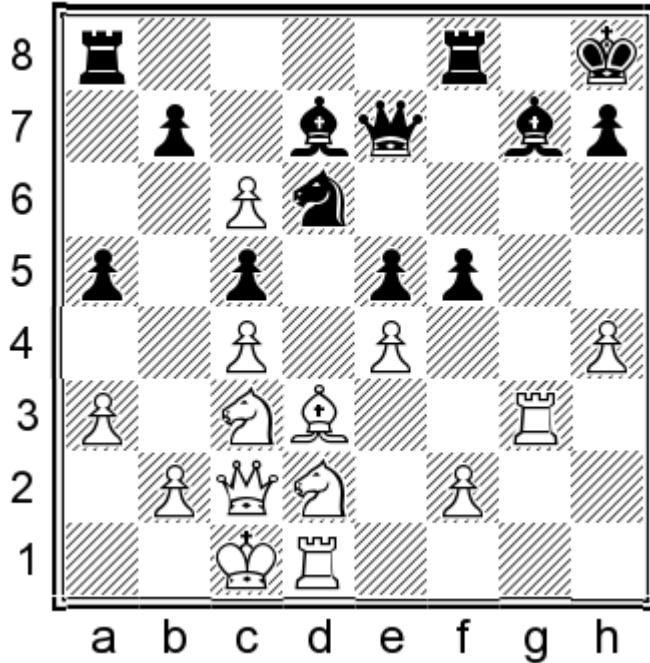
It is time! All of Black's pieces are ready for the opening of the position, whilst White has lost several tempi and is not ready for a mating attack. I don't think Dmitry even momentarily considered the variation 17...Qxh4 18.0-0-0 cxd5 19.Nf3 Qe7 20.exd5 with a very strong attack – White's initiative is visible to the naked eye.

**18.Bxc5 dxc5 19.gxf5 gxf5 20.0-0-0**

Necessary and logical, but now the black knight gets several convenient posts. The first is on d6.

**20...Ne8 21.Bd3 Nd6 22.dxc6??**

I think Alexey underestimated Black's reply, else he would have chosen 22.Rdg1 Bh6 23.Kb1 or 22.Nf3 – in both cases, White has reasonable play.



**22...bxc6!**

Rules are made to be broken and this is one of those cases. Black has three isolated pawns and he is getting ready to play ...fxe4, isolating two more! But there are still many pieces on the board, and the thing which is of first importance is dynamic factors, not static ones. It is far more important to deprive the white knight of the square d5, to where it would head with the greatest of pleasure in the event of 22...Bxc6.

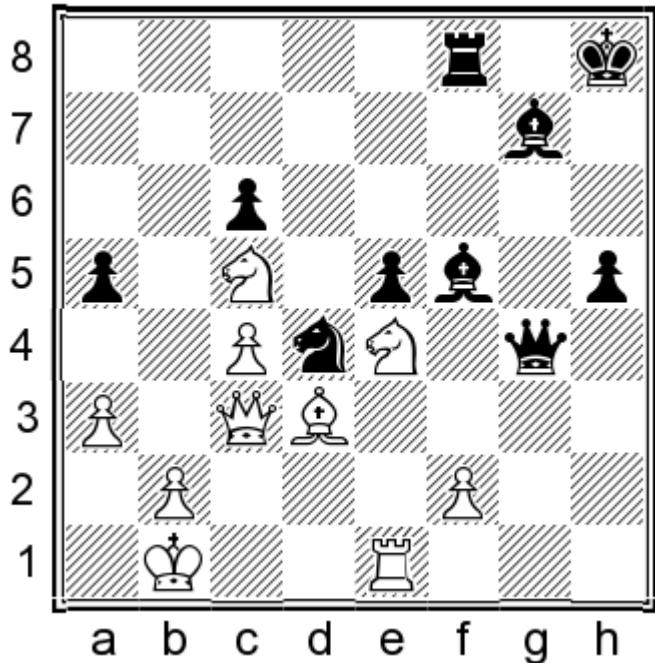
**23.Na4 fxe4 24.Nxe4 Nf5**

The knight sees a second, more convenient square (d4) and is ready to jump into there. White, meanwhile, can only hope that it does not cause him especial problems.

**25.Rf3 Nd4 26.Rxf8+ Rxf8 27.Qc3 Qxh4 28.Naxc5 Bf5**

Passing up the interesting move 28...Bg4!?, although the move does not greatly change the general assessment of the position. Then if 29.Rg1 he can again chase the rook with 29...Qh2!, and after 30.Re1 h5 obtain similar variations to the game, but with two extra tempi.

**29.Kb1 Qg4 30.Re1 h5**



**31.Ka2**

Goganov rightly reasons he will only be able to stop the pawn when it reaches his half of the board, and so for the time being he hides his king in a more secure place so that it does not accidentally suffer an accident in the ensuing battle.

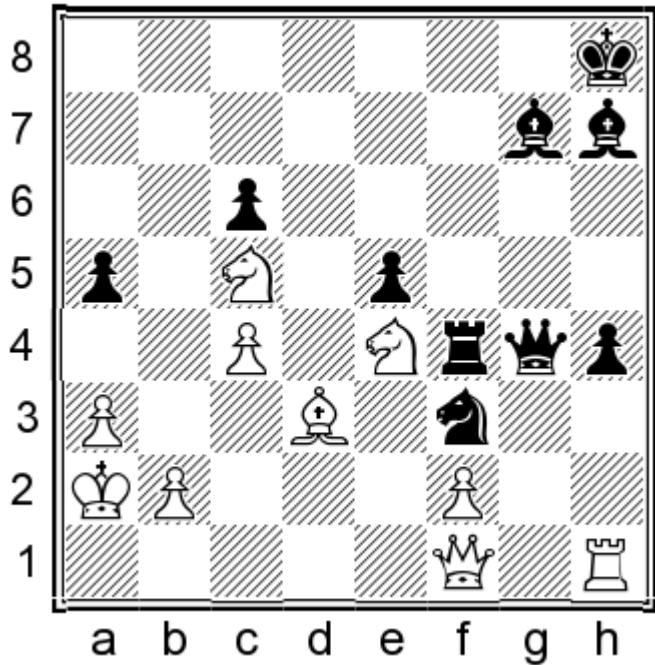
**31...h4 32.Qc1 Nf3 33.Rh1 Bh7**

It was also possible simply to push the pawn further with 33...h3, but Kokarev found a different plan, involving the transfer of the rook to f4.

**34.Qf1**

If White had been able to calculate the numerous variations at the level of the computer in a few seconds, then of course he would have played 34.Qe3 h3 35.Be2 Qg2 36.Ne6 Qxh1 37.Nxf8 Bxf8 38.Bxf3 Qg1 39.Qc3 h2 40.Qxe5+ and offered a draw. But the St Petersburg player made the human decision simply not to allow the pawn any further.

**34...Rf4**



**35.Nd6?!**

Alexey Goganov did not have enough time to find the only saving line, but you have rather more time to search for the right answer.

**Test 53.** Can you save the game?

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Black has practically achieved ideal coordination, so it is essential to strike at his Achilles Heel, which is his weak back rank – 35.Qd1!. The threat of 36.Be2! is very dangerous, so Black must go into the variation 35...Rxe4 36.Nxe4 Bxe4 37.Bxe4 Qxe4, and things would not be bad, were it not for the *zwischenzug* 38.Rh3!!, and now after 38...Nd4 39.Qh5+ White gets a draw.

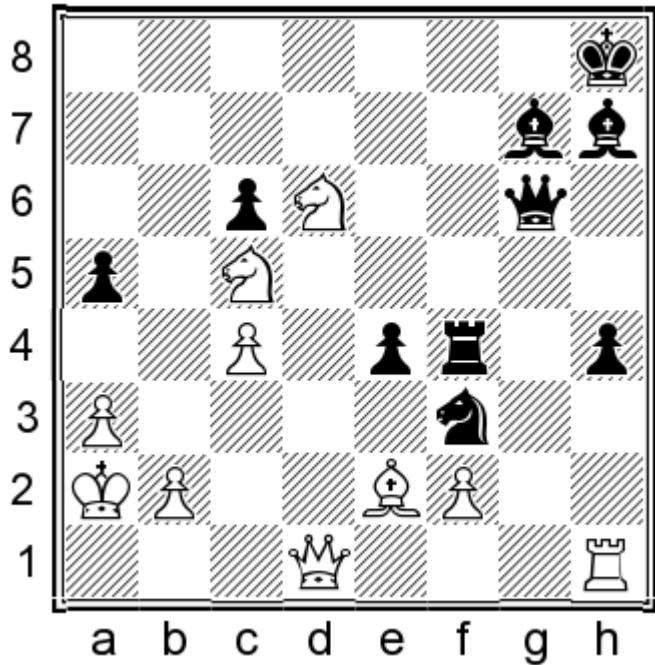
After the text, White has hardly any remaining chance from the computer's viewpoint, but there are rather more at the human level.

**35...e4!**

The dark-squared bishop has been waiting patiently for 30 moves and now it comes into play with great effect.

**36.Be2 Qg6 37.Qd1**

Alexey does not go into the endgame a piece down: 37.Ncxe4 Rxe4 38.Nxe4 Qxe4 39.Bxf3 Qxf3 40.Rxh4 Qf6 41.Rxh7+ Kxh7 – there are definite chances to save the game, but psychologically it is much easier to play with equal material. The queen manoeuvre was found slightly later than it was needed, and Kokarev had a chance to demonstrate this, but he also commits an inaccuracy.



**37...Nd4?!**

Nothing has changed since Botvinnik's day – control of the long diagonal, if correctly exploited, gives the stronger side a decisive advantage. For example, in the first game Matulovic-Botvinnik in the USSR-Rest of the World match in 1970, the issue was decided essentially by Botvinnik's Q+B battery down the a1-h8 diagonal.

After 37...Qf6! the best method of defending against mate on b2 is 38.Na4, but another strong move, 38...Qd4!, forcing transposition into the endgame after 39.Qxd4 Bxd4, gives Black splendid winning chances, as the two bishops, passed pawn and the weakness on f2 should have their say.

**38.Ndxe4 Nxe2 39.Qxe2 Qg2 40.Qd2**

Thus, the Achilles Heel has its say at the last moment. Black ends up with an extra bishop, but this does not help him at all, as he cannot avoid perpetual check.

**40...Rxe4 41.Qd8+ Bg8 42.Rxh4+ Rxh4 43.Qxh4+ Bh7 44.Qd8+**

Draw.

Of course, a review of this variation would not be complete without some games by perhaps the main protagonist of the Makagonov variation in the 21st century, Evgeny Tomashevsky. The Saratov grandmaster has studied this line so deeply that after a couple of brilliant victories, his opponents almost stopped playing 7...a5, preferring the jump 7...Nh5, but even there Tomashevsky has achieved truly outstanding results.

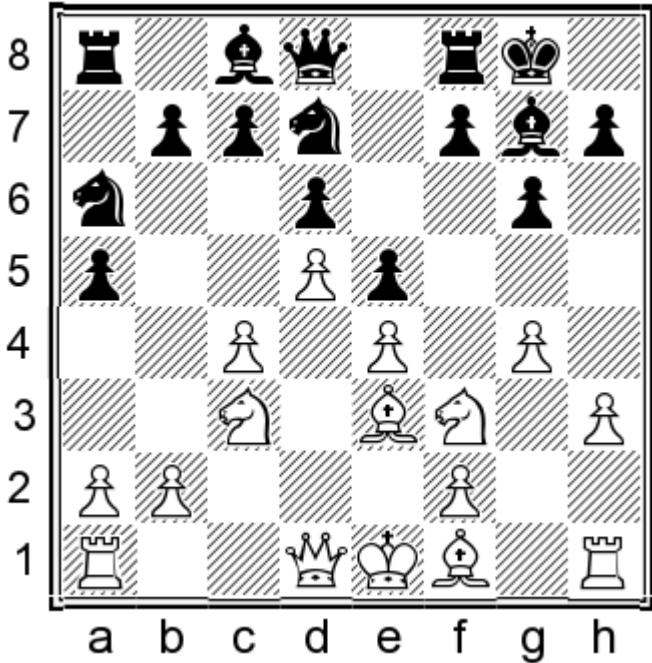
### Game 77

**Evgeny Tomashevsky 2716**

**Alexander Grischuk 2810**

Tbilisi 2015 (3)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.h3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.g4 Na6 9.Be3 Nd7**



A non-standard idea, worked out by Ernesto Inarkiev. His idea is that Black postpones pawn breaks for a time and manoeuvres with his knights, slowing up White's attack, so as only then to play ...f7-f5 or ...c7-c6 in favourable circumstances. On the way, he also creates a threat to fix White's queenside pawns with ...a5-a4.

The resulting positions are very complicated and contain a mass of nuances, many still undiscovered. Unless one counts Tomashevsky, Lysyj and Riazantsev, of course.

### 10.a3

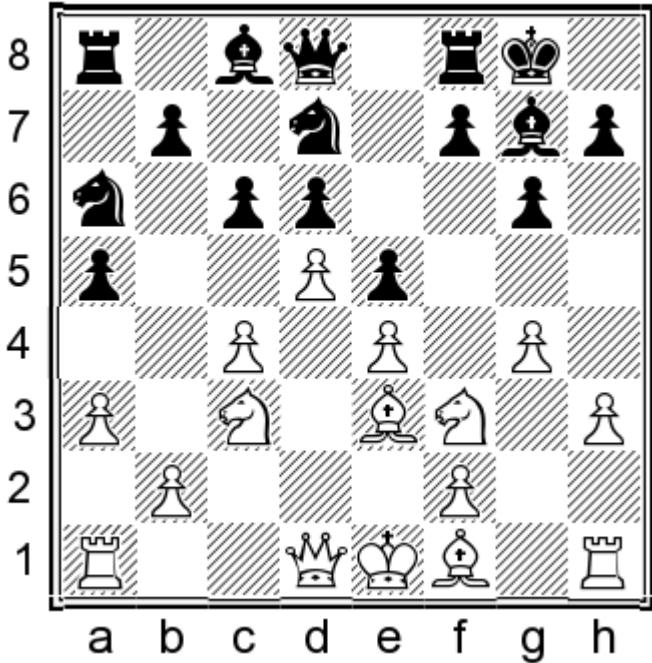
Prophylaxis against the knight coming from d7 to c5, whilst on 10...Nac5 the correct plan was demonstrated in his time by the current World Champion: 11.Rg1 a4 12.Nd2 c6 (transposing) 13.Qc2 Nb6 14.0-0-0 Bd7 15.Kb1 cxd5 16.cxd5 Rc8 17.Bb5!, Carlsen-Topalov, Nanjing 2009. White seizes the light squares and now he does not even need to play on the kingside.

Black has sought alternative paths, and soon he tried 10...Nb6!? 11.Rg1 (less accurate is 11.Be2 Bd7 12.b3 Nc5 13.Rg1 Kh8 14.h4 f5 15.gxf5 gxf5 16.Ng5 a4!, Jakovenko-Kryakvin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2014 – Black has powerful compensation for the exchange) 11...Bd7 12.Nd2. Admittedly, in the game Tomashevsky-Nakamura,Dubai rapid 2014, Hikaru went wrong – 12...a4?, and after 13.g5 f5 14.h4 f4 15.Bxb6 cxb6 16.Qf3! Qc8 17.Nb5 Qc5 18.h5 gxh5 19.Bh3! the Saratov GM easily trampled on Black. Later Antonios Pavlidis showed a path to equality: 12...Nc5 13.b3 Qe7 14.g5 f5!, Jakovenko-Pavlidis, Minsk 2017.

The history of the variation does not end there. Later, in the game Tomashevsky-Movsesian, Belgrade 2018, 11.Rg1 Bd7 12.h4 was played, but the Armenian GM equalized without undue trouble: 12...Kh8 13.b3 Nc5 14.a4 c6 15.dxc6 Bxc6 16.Bd3 Nbd7 17.Bc2 Nf6 18.Nd2 h5! – soon Tomashevsky agreed a draw. We await new refinements from the trusty followers of the g-pawn thrust!

Before my game with Dmitry Jakovenko, I thought that Black's play could be seriously improved and when the familiar moves were played by the firm hand of Alexander Grischuk, my heart began to beat faster... but one of the world's top-rated players decided to surprise his opponent even earlier!

### 10...c6



Black shows that he is even prepared to sacrifice a pawn to open the position. Tomashevsky in turn decides otherwise. Analysis shows that if 11.dxc6 Ndc5 12.b4 (12.Nb5 bxc6 13.Nxd6 a4 or 12.cxb7 Bxb7 13.Qc2 Ne6) 12...Ne6 Black has compensation for the sacrificed material, since the pawn on g4 cannot move back. However, Tomashevsky does not intend to be thus deflected from his plan.

### **11.Rg1 Rb8 12.Nd2 Ndc5**

Now 13...Bd7 followed by the exchange on d5 and ...b7-b5 is on the agenda. Therefore White is obliged to put his rook on b1, accepting that he will not now be castling queenside.

### **13.Rb1 Nd7**

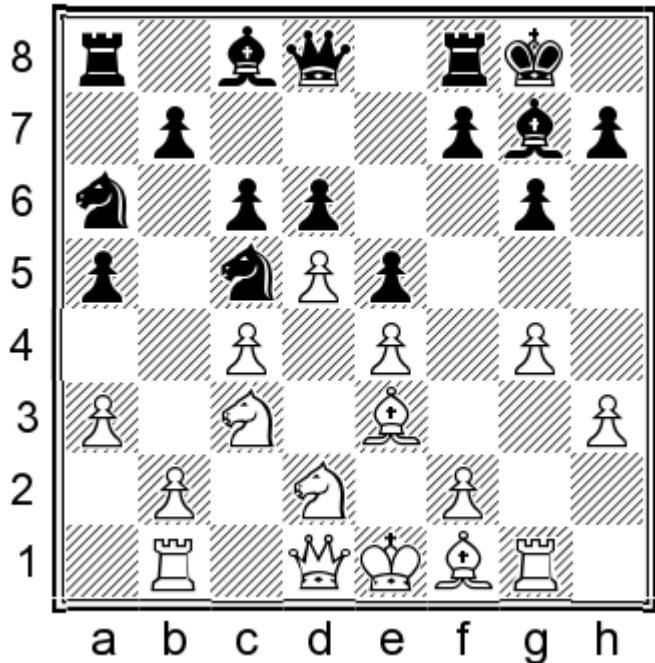
A very important moment! Why didn't Black simply play 13...Kh8 with the intention of ...f7-f5? White has to play 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4 Nd7, and now there is the typical 16.h4! c5 (after 16...Qxh4 17.g5 f5 the queen is trapped: 18.Rg3! f4 19.Nf3 Qh5 20.Rh3 Qg4 21.Rh4), and here White can prevent the variation 17.bxc5 Naxc5 18.h5 gxh5 19.gxh5 f5!, and instead force the knight to block the path of the f-pawn by means of 17.Nb5! Nf6 18.bxc5 Nxc5 19.f3, retaining the hope of advancing the pawns further.

The retreat of the knight parries 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4 because of 15...c5!, but does not stop White playing 14.h4! – again, taking the pawn would be very dangerous. However, here Evgeny apparently decided that Grischuk is after all a comrade on the national team and so he offers a repetition.

### **14.Qf3 Ndc5 15.Qd1**

Of course, for a fighter like Alexander it is not nice to agree such an early draw and, besides, where is the guarantee that next move Tomashevsky won't return to the move h3-h4, pointed out above? The computer recommends 15...a4, but maybe after 16.Nxa4 Nxa4 17.Qxa4 Bd7 18.Qd1 White just has a healthy extra pawn? The Muscovite plays much more subtly.

### **15...Ra8**

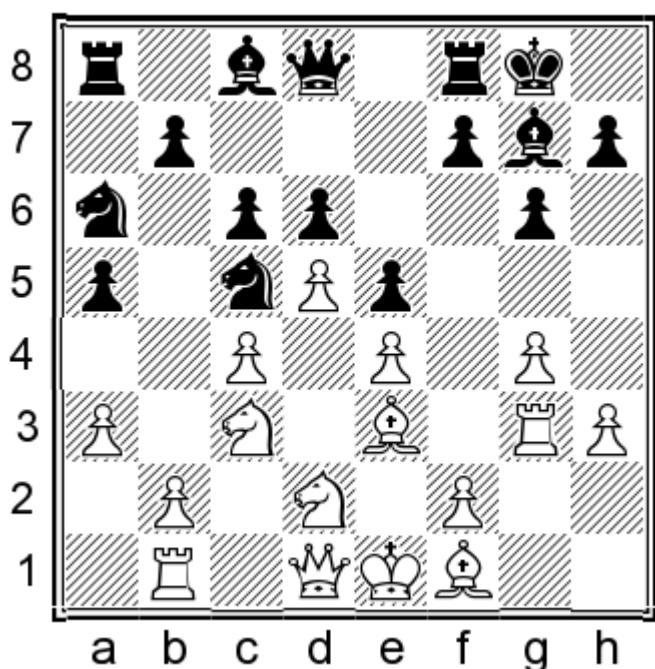


For all its outward simplicity, White is actually facing the riddle of the Sphinx. Let us try 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 Nd7 18.Ra1, and now a good line looks to be 18...Nb6! 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.b5 Nb4 21.Rxa8 Nxa8 22.c5 d5!. I will not say that Black's pieces are ideally placed, but the whole board is on fire and at the same time, the black king is as safe as houses, whilst White's is in the middle of the fire on e1! White has to play instead 19.Qb1 but here too, after 19...c5 20.bxc5 Nxc5 21.Rxa8 Nxa8 Black feels relatively comfortable, as White has nothing concrete.

But here Tomashevsky simply played a genius move. I cannot say that it leaves Grischuk completely defenceless, but the idea itself astounded me.

### 16.Rg3!!

Piece coordination and, the main thing, the rook defends the Be3! The benefits of this become clear a little later. I think it was this move that Alexey Goganov was thinking of in the previous game, but here, unlike in his game, the move is definitely extremely strong and important.

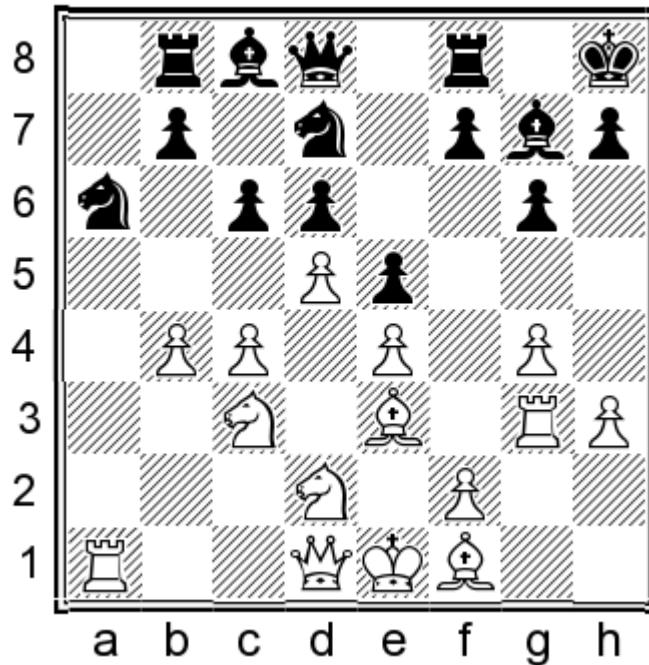


### 16...Kh8?

Probably, somewhere around here Black commits a serious mistake – the Muscovite underestimates the strength of an exchange sacrifice. Black had alternatives: for example, the already familiar idea 16...Bf6!?, provoking White into g4-g5, when the bishop retreats and then he breaks with ...f7-f6.

### **17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 Nd7 19.Ra1 Rb8**

Now after 19...Nb6 20.dxc6 bxc6 21.b5 Nb4 22.Rxa8 Nxa8 there is 23.c5 d5 24.Qa4! d4 25.Qxb4 – the rook on g3 defends the Be3! But, on the other hand, what has Black got to complain about? He is ready to play ...c6-c5, and within a move ...f7-f5 also. What can White do? Sacrifice the exchange? Are you serious? With a bishop on f1 and rook on g3?



### **20.Rxa6!!**

Eugene has very accurately estimated that, in the time it takes for him to bring up his reserves, the opponent will not be able move by move to establish normal piece mobility within his camp.

### **20...bxa6 21.dxc6 Nb6**

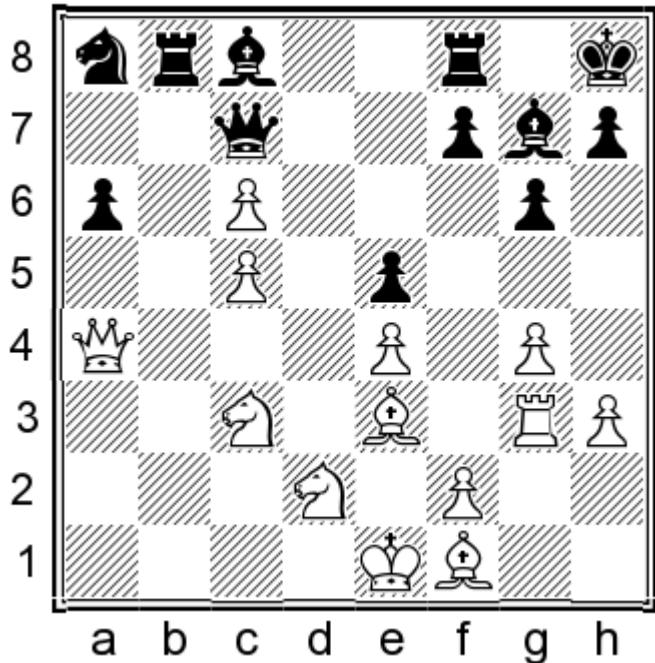
There is no point to 21...Nf6 22.Qa4 Be6 23.Nd5.

### **22.Qa1?!**

At first glance, Tomashevsky's move looks best, as White's strongest piece invades Black's queenside, defending the passed pawn on c6 and, most important of all, the following variation does not work for a concrete reason: 22...f5 23.gxf5 gxf5 24.c5! f4 25.cxb6! fxe3 26.c7 Qf6 27.Nf3 exf2+ 28.Kxf2, and not 28...Rxb6 because of 29.Nd5. However, Grischuk finds practically all the only moves, allowing him to emerge intact.

By way of an alternative, White had the concrete move 22.b5 axb5 23.Nxb5 Qe7, but here he had to see the far from obvious resource 24.Nb1! with the threat of a knight transfer, and attacking the pawn on d6.

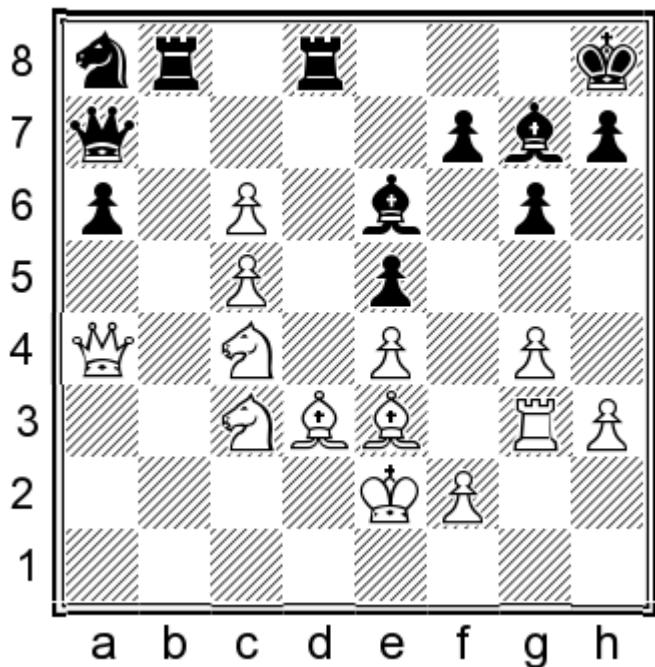
### **22...Qc7 23.c5 dxc5 24.bxc5 Na8 25.Qa4**



**25...Qa7?!**

Up to this moment, Alexander has played excellently, and elegantly untangled, and only had to take one more ‘anti-materialistic’ step to equalize: 25...Be6! 26.Nd5 Qd8 27.Nb6 Nc7 28.Nd7 Rb2!. Of course, White regains the exchange: 29.Nxf8 Bxf8, but suddenly it turns out that all of Black’s pieces are in the right place, whilst White has to establish coordination anew. Black’s compensation for the pawn is more than sufficient. However, the position remains extremely sharp and Tomashevsky, like an honest human, allows Grischuk another chance.

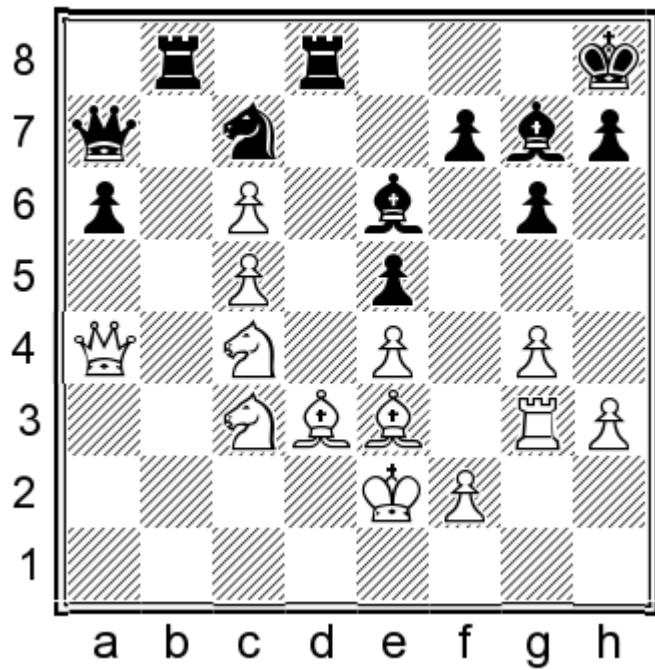
**26.Nc4 Be6 27.Bd3 Rfd8 28.Ke2**



**28...Nc7?**

Time-trouble undoes Alexander. The advantage of having extra material is that one can return it at the right moment: 28...Rd4!!. The ‘spy’ must be taken, but after 29.Bxd4 exd4 30.Nd5 Qxc5 the pawn is not going anywhere, the king

is in the centre and the rook on g3 is out of play.



## 29.Nb6

Now the pawn c5 is defended, and one can only sympathize with Black. However, the Rg3 is still not in the game for the moment, and this was the last chance to ‘die on our feet’: 29...Bf8! 30.Qa5! (too hasty is 30.Bc4 Bxc5! 31.Bxc5 Rxb6 32.Bxb6 Qxb6, and Black frees himself) 30...f6 31.Rf3 (again he must not rush: 31.Bc4 Bxc4+ 32.Nxc4 Ne6 with counterplay) 31...Be7 32.Bc4 Bxc4+ 33.Nxc4 Rb3 – of course, even here the position is not so sweet, but it is still possible to fish in murky waters.

After the other bishop move, the python’s grip tightens fatally.

## 29...Bf6? 30.Bc4! Bxc4+ 31.Qxc4 Ne6 32.Ncd5 Bg7 33.Rf3 Re8

The last oversight, but after 33...Rf8 the hopelessness of Black’s position is demonstrated best of all by the prophylactic 34.Kf1.

## 34.c7 Rb7

Or 34...Nxc7 35.Rxf7.

## 35.c8=Q Rxc8 36.Nxc8 Rb2+ 37.Kf1

And Black stopped the clocks.

## Conclusions

1. As in the Gipslis Variation, this line is thoroughly saturated with various strategic subtleties, which are very difficult to comprehend at the board. The ideal situation for White is to completely ‘strangle’ Black on both sides, then smoothly proceed to a pawn attack on the kingside or, in case of an excessive weakening of the queenside, to switch to that side of the board.
2. Simple manoeuvring will doom Black to long suffering, so he needs to constantly monitor the situation, avoiding complete strangulation. The main ideas are playing ...f7-f5 after some preparation, or setting up counterplay on the queenside, which is especially good when the white king can no longer hide on the squares f1 and g2.
3. One of the important nuances regarding the time control was mentioned by Igor Lysyj: it is better for White to

play this line in classical chess, because in games with a short time control one can have a good position, but unexpectedly miss a counterattack, after which the position will immediately fall apart.

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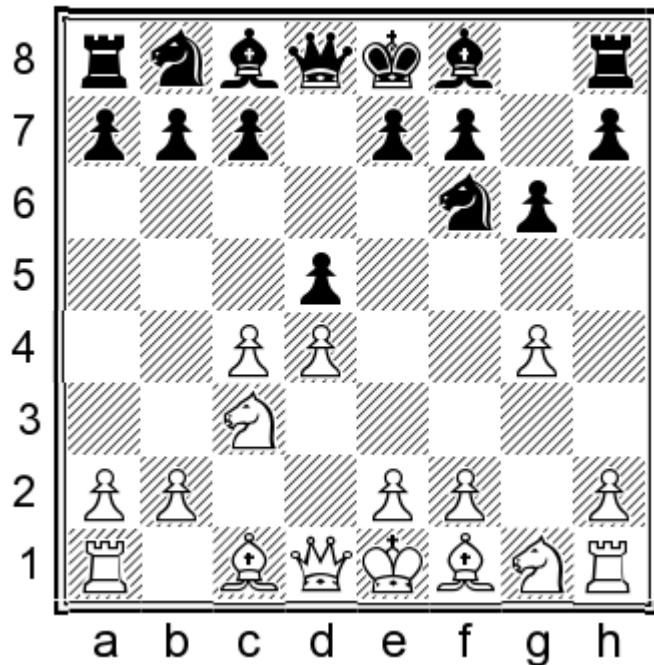
## Part VIII

### The Grünfeld Indian Defence

#### Chapter 16

##### The Murey Attack

1.d4 Nf6 2.e4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.g4



##### Some history

Surprising an opponent with an interesting novelty in the Grünfeld Indian Defence was already a hard task in the 1970s, let alone today. This was also understood by that generator of interesting opening ideas, Jacob Murey, one of the key figures in Viktor Kortchnoi's team during the Baguio City match with Anatoly Karpov. Thanks to Murey, in 1975 the chess world learned that even in the Grünfeld, one can send the g-pawn forward without undue prejudice. It is far from immediately possible to understand the logic of the defector's second, but Emanuel Lasker spoke briefly and succinctly about such a development of events half a century before, commenting on one of the games of the World Championship match between Alekhine and Euwe: this is an extended fianchetto!

In general, there is nothing more to tell about the history of the variation, because it doesn't really have one. The courageous pawn move, understandably, it seems to me, never obtained much popularity, so we can safely move on to our review. After all, in this book the author has been at pains to explain to the reader that the move g2-g4 is interesting in almost any position, but it is far from always the strongest.

##### Important nuances

Certainly, if the pawn is taken by the knight, the white knight takes on d5, whilst after 4...Bxg4 5.Bg2, the bishop moves to the long diagonal with considerable effect and begins to put pressure, in particular, on the b7-pawn. If Black does not respond to the flank diversion, he must reckon with the advance of the pawn to g5. However, Black also has no special reasons for worry – he has done nothing wrong in the opening, and the move g2-g4 significantly weakens the white king's future position, whilst Black's fianchettoed bishop looks no less menacing.

In 1975, Chelyabinsk hosted the All-Union qualifying tournament – a strong Swiss was to determine those lucky ones who ended up in the Higher and First Leagues of the Soviet championship. Jacob Murey did not play very well in the qualifier and, trying to cheer himself up, went in for an interesting opening experiment.

### Game 78

**Jacob Murey 2445**

**V.Napolov 2200**

Chelyabinsk 1975

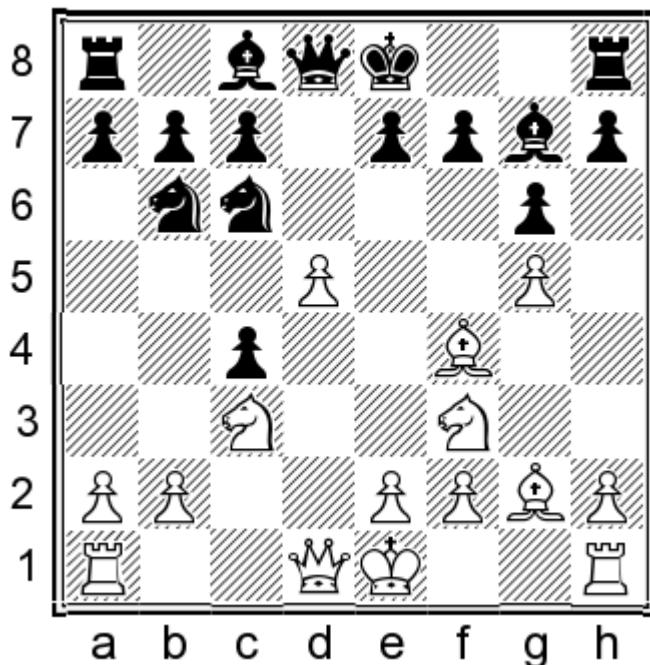
**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.g4!?** **dxc4**

A fully understandable decision by Black – if you are unsure what to do, take a pawn. As well as good old materialism, the move also has a positional basis, since it frees d5 as a retreat square for the knight.

**5.g5 Nd5 6.Bg2 Nb6 7.Bf4**

Now, having driven the knight from f6 further away, it is time to remember development.

**7...Bg7 8.Nf3 Nc6 9.d5**



**9...Nb4**

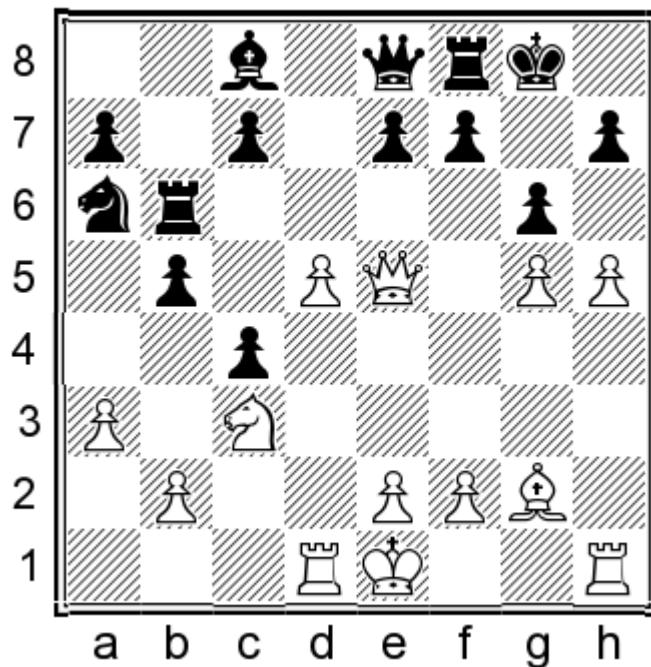
One of the greats of Czech chess was tempted to grab a second pawn and, as the game showed, he was right: 9...Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 Nxd5 11.Bg3 0-0 12.Qd2 Be6 13.Rd1 Qc8 14.h4 Rd8 15.Ne5 Ndb4 16.Nxc6 Nxc6 17.Qe3 (17.Qc1 is a little better, but here too, Black's advantage is indisputable) 17...Rxd1+ 18.Kxd1 Qd7+ 19.Qd2 Qe8, and White did not manage to hold in Deglmann-Jansa, Bayerisch Eisenstein 2012.

**10.Ne5 0-0 11.a3 Na6 12.Qd4 Nd7**

Missing the chance to place White's entire opening conception in doubt. After 12...c6! he manages to exchange off the important pawn (either immediately or even after the preliminary ...Nc7), and White can simply not develop. Napolov directs the game towards holding the c4-pawn and loses several precious tempi.

### 13.Rd1 Qe8 14.h4 b5 15.Qe3 Ne5 16.Bxe5 Bxe5 17.Qxe5 Rb8 18.h5 Rb6

Black has successfully defended the pawn, nevertheless his position is not to be envied – the problems with his king outweigh his extra material. Murey had several ways to develop his initiative, but he did not find the strongest move in the position.



**Test 54.** Try to find the most precise path to an advantage.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** Psychologically it is hard to see attacking moves that retreat, but here was an ideal case of this. After 19.Qh2! White does not even need to calculate any variations – the attack develops by itself. For example, after 19...f5 there could follow either the move 20.d6!?, freeing the d5-square for his minor pieces, or the direct 20.Rd4!? with the idea of tripling the major pieces on the h-file.

If you suggested 19.d6!?, then you are also basically right – after 19...Rxd6 20.Nd5 Be6 21.h6 f6 22.gxf6 Rxf6 23.Nxf6+ exf6 24.Qxf6 White's position is winning, and Black has no good alternatives.

Murey played 19.Be4 and also won confidently, although his opponent could several times have made things harder: 19...f6 (after 19...Bg4!? 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.f3 Bh5 White would still have to find one or two strong moves to secure a clear advantage) 20.gxf6 exf6 21.Qxe8 Rxe8 22.hxg6 (the last chance was 22...hxg6 23.Bxg6 Re7 with some slim hopes of escaping) 22...f5 23.d6! cxd6 24.Nd5 hxg6 25.Nxb6 axb6 26.Bc6 Rd8 27.Bxb5 – soon the c4-pawn dropped and Napolov admitted defeat.

As often happens with rare and offbeat opening ideas, only the inventor had good results with it. The overall statistics could be better, but Jacob Murey has two out of two in this line!

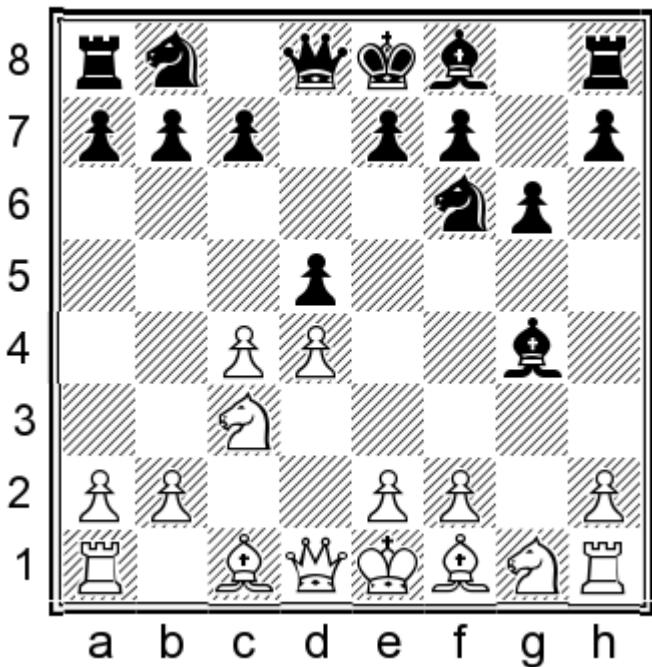
Game 79

Jacob Murey 2525

Patrick Janotta

Metz 1994 (7)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.g4 Bxg4**



**5.Bg2**

Other players have played 5.Qb3, but Murey is faithful to the ‘extended fianchetto’.

**5...Bg7**

The variation 5...c6 6.Qb3 Qb6 could have demonstrated the disadvantages of the early development of the king’s bishop, since now there is no getting at the b7-pawn and it is not clear what White has achieved in parting with the pawn. The move in the game cannot be considered bad, but now Black needs to show a certain accuracy.

**6.Qb3 Nbd7**

The pawn on b7 should certainly be given up, but only by means of 6...Nc6!, banking on development. After 7.e3 e6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.Nxd5 Nxd5 10.Bxd5 0-0 almost all of Black’s pieces are in play, which cannot be said of White’s – he has brought out just two, and it remains unclear where his king will go. In the game, Patrick Janotta also decided to develop first of all, but at quite a high cost.

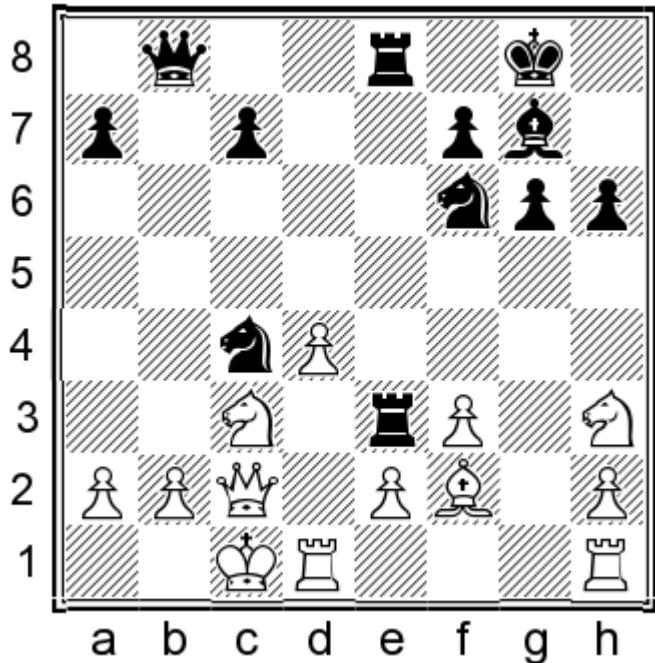
**7.cxd5 0-0 8.Qxb7 Rb8 9.Qa6 Rb6 10.Qd3**

Suddenly it turns out that, despite his well-placed pieces, Black has nothing concrete for the pawn. Janotta decides to break in the centre, after which the main decider is not positional details, but the skill of the two individual players.

**10...e5 11.dxe6 Rxe6 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bh4 Rfe8 14.0-0-0 Qb8 15.f3 Re3 16.Qd2**

One can only envy Murey’s cold-bloodedness – he quietly castles into the storm on the queenside and counts on successfully defending. But is everything really so sunny for White?

**16...Bf5 17.Bh3 Bxh3 18.Nxh3 Nb6 19.Bf2 Nc4 20.Qc2**



**20...Qb4?**

As often happens in chess, just one accurate move separates winning from losing.

**Test 55.** Can you find it? A small hint: at the end of the main variation, you need to find a precise retreat to secure a decisive advantage.

Show/Hide Solution

**Solution:** The knight jump 20...Nd5!, allowing the last piece to join the attack, is easy enough to find, but there is the concrete point that after 21.Bxe3 Ndxe3 22.Qb3, what do you play? It turns out that the subtle 22...Qa8!!, with the simple idea of bringing the rook to b8, leaves White with no hope of salvation – it is not obvious how he can even resist for long.

**21.Qb3!**

Now the assessment changes through 180 degrees. If queens are exchanged, Black loses, because as well as being a pawn down, his pieces are all attacked. Janotta decides to ‘go all in’, but after sacrificing half the set he achieves nothing and resigns.

**21...Rxc3+ 22.bxc3 Qa5 23.Qxc4 Qa3+ 24.Kc2 Nd5 25.Qxd5 Rxe2+ 26.Rd2 Rxd2+ 27.Kxd2 1-0**

In principle, on this major note, one could finish the description of this variation and write that White is doing well and finally has a fresh, dangerous idea against one of the most popular openings of recent years. But that would not be entirely fair to Black. Repeatedly, White faced great difficulties right after the opening, and by way of a counterweight to the previous games, it is enough to offer one more game, which is both recent and convincing.

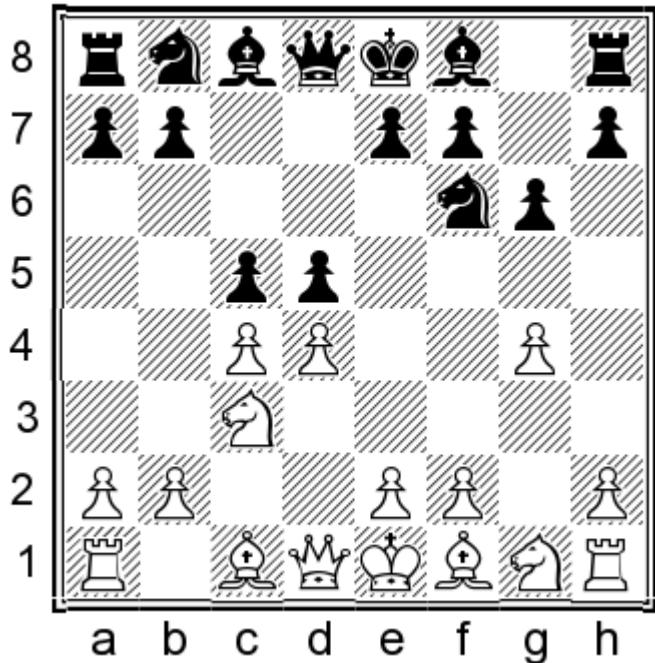
Game 80

**Sinisa Drazic** 2394

**Nikola Sedlak** 2604

Budapest 2018 (8)

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.g4 c5**



Possibly the strongest reaction. In principle, the Grünfeld Indian Defence is all about a counter in the centre, and the move g2-g4 does not exactly help White to defend it.

## 5.g5

By way of alternatives, one could consider 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Bg2 or 5.dxc5 d4 6.g5, but here too, Black can scarcely have any problems.

### 5...cxd4 6.gxf6 dxc3 7.Qxd5 Qxd5

Black could also try 7...Qb6!?, temporarily avoiding an endgame, but the experienced Nikola Sedlak correctly reasons that after the exchange of queens, only Black can count on an advantage. And without queens, it will also be easier to deal with an ingenious tactician like Sinisa Drazic.

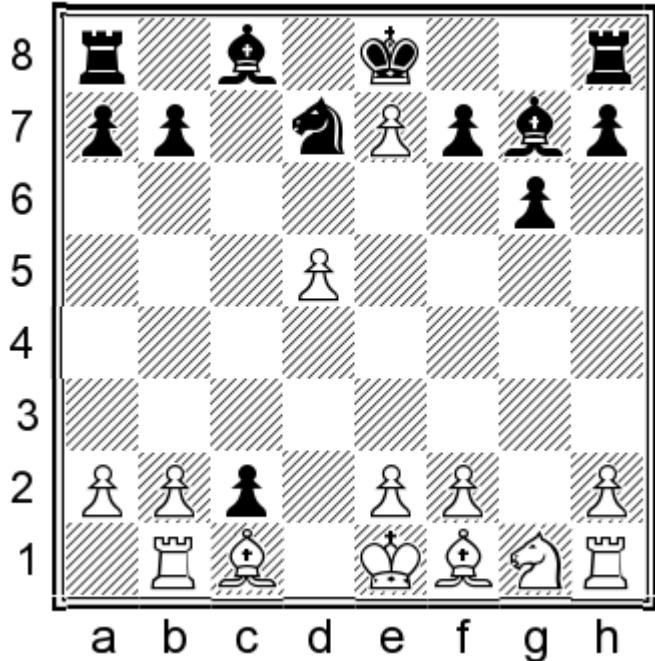
### 8.cxd5 Nd7 9.fxe7?!

It was not too late to limit the bloodspill by means of 9.bxc3 Nxf6 10.c4 Bg7, but even to the naked eye, it is clear that with White seriously behind in development, he faces a difficult fight for a draw.

### 9...Bg7!

Of course, the bishop's place is on the long diagonal. The pawn on e7 will fall sooner or later, whereas the question of the black c-pawn is much harder to answer.

### 10.Rb1 c2



It is not often that you see both sides with a pawn on the seventh rank after ten moves. Despite the fact that the e7-pawn is currently an extra pawn, one can only speak of an advantage for Black, as all the white pieces are in their starting positions.

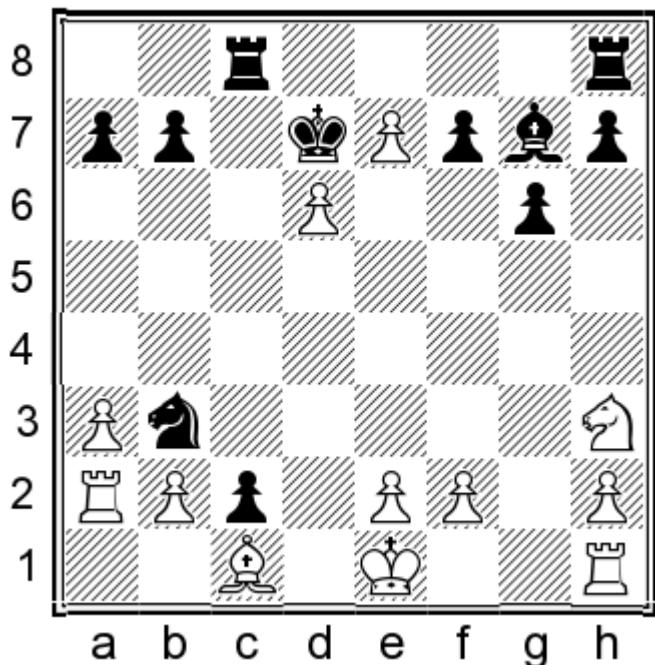
**11.Ra1 Nc5 12.d6 Bd7 13.Bh3 Rc8 14.Bxd7+ Kxd7 15.Nh3**

Drazic tries with all his might to bring to life his sleeping pieces on the kingside, but he does not manage to cope with his problems on the other side of the board.

**15...Na4 16.a3 Nc5**

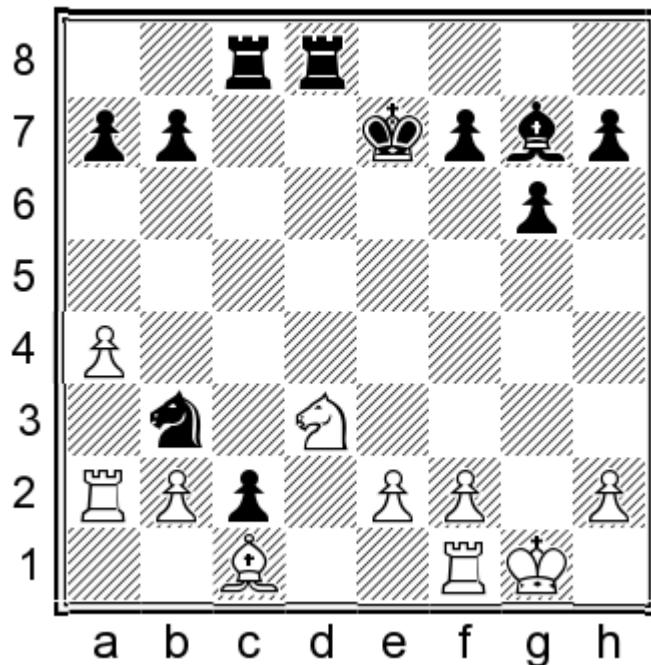
It was already possible simply to take some pawns with 16...Kxd6 or 16...Nxb2, but Sedlak finds a more effective decision – he ‘concretes over’ the enemy queenside.

**17.Ra2 Nb3**



An incredible position! Neither the rook on a2 nor the bishop on c1 can move unscathed. The rest does not require commentary – just sit back and enjoy the triumph of Black's strategy.

**18.0-0 Kxd6 19.Nf4 Kxe7 20.Nd3 Rhd8 21.a4**



**21...Rxd3!**

The last small combination. Black does not win material immediately, but his king comes to help the pawn on c2, whilst his white colleague cannot do the same.

**22.exd3 Nxc1 23.Rxc1 Bh6 24.Raa1 Kd6 25.Kf1 Kd5 26.Ke2 Kd4 27.a5 Re8+**

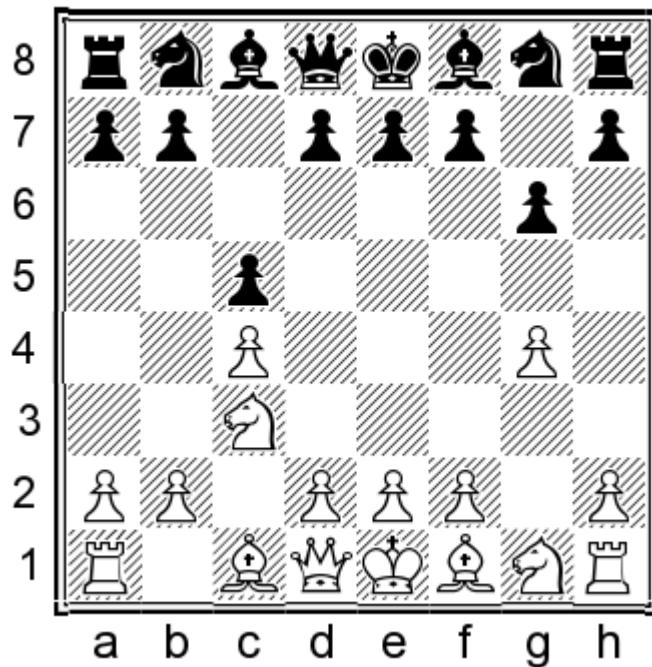
And Drazic acknowledged the inevitable.

### Conclusions

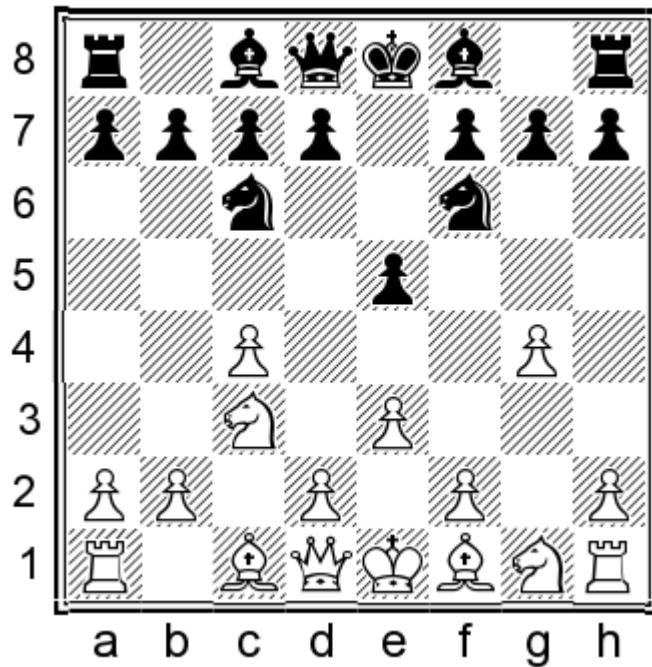
1. White's main idea is to take the opponent by surprise. He hopes to try to exert pressure on the long diagonal by driving the f6-knight away from its convenient post, but it is necessary for White to take into account the fact that the flank attack takes time, and he may in the future not have enough for the optimal development of the pieces.
2. The rational strategy for Black follows from the first point – to carefully develop his pieces, and fight for the centre, but to do it within reason, so as to prevent a disaster along the diagonal h1-a8.
3. This variation is presented as a way to broaden your horizons, rather than as a refutation of the Grünfeld Indian – even with proper preparation, you are unlikely to pose insoluble problems for Black.

## *Chapter 17* 21st century creations

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 g6 3.g4



1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.e3 Nc6 4.g4



### Some history

After the appearance in the elite of such a player as Richard Rapport, opening theory began to assume new colours. The Hungarian grandmaster is in a constant search for innovative ideas – it is even difficult to calculate the exact number of new set-ups he has found in lines which would seem to have been known for a long time. Fortunately for

us, two of his variations are closely related to the theme of our book. In the period 2014-15, Richard often started the game with the c-pawn, and then, after a couple of moves, sent the g4-pawn off on a distant voyage.

Rapport scored points with varying success, but the Hungarian is not one of those players who gives up after failures. With amazing persistence, Richard continued to move the g-pawn two squares forward, modifying the arrangement of his pieces a little, and, despite the fact that his opponents could have expected such a development of events, no one demonstrated a clear refutation of White's impudent play.

The Hungarian grandmaster made a serious contribution to two branches of the English Opening, each completely different in tone, so we will not mix them up and will deal with each in turn.

### A) 1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 g6 3.g4

#### Important nuances

It is rather difficult to single out a specific idea or threat here – rather, White simply adopts a plan with a double fianchetto and castling queenside, hoping to exchange the bishop on g2 for the c6-knight, favourably changing the pawn structure. Black mainly tries to develop his king's knight on e7, so as not to walk into the advance of the g-pawn, and the further plan already depends on Black's mood for the game – he can castle queenside, symmetrically with White, or walk into the 'bayonet' by castling kingside.

Game 81

Richard Rapport 2691

Leinier Dominguez Perez 2754

Wijk aan Zee 2014 (5)

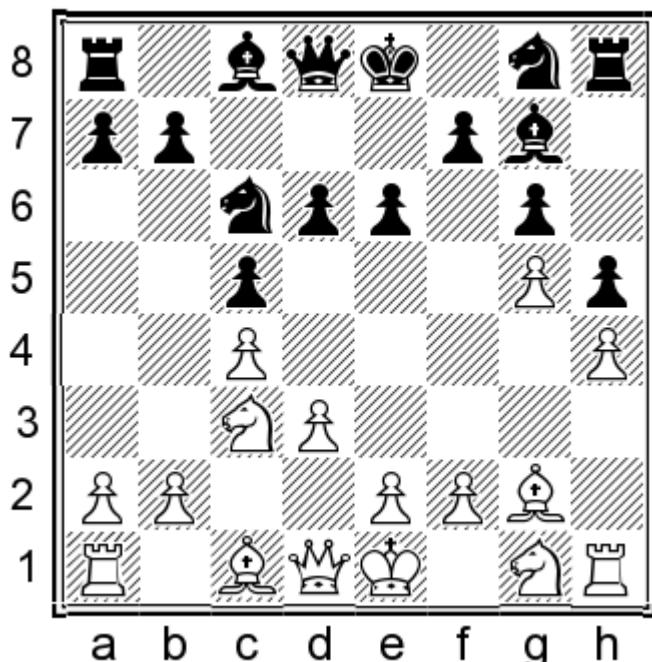
### 1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 g6 3.g4

Effectively a novelty – prior to this, the move had only been seen once in this position. Fortunately for Black, the pawn advance does not require a very precise reaction and it is possibly just to gradually develop the pieces.

### 3...Bg7 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.d3 d6 6.g5

Later Richard came to the conclusion that it was possible not to hurry with this advance and simply to defend the pawn with 6.h3. Now, however, Black has another square for the king's knight.

### 6...e6 7.h4 h5



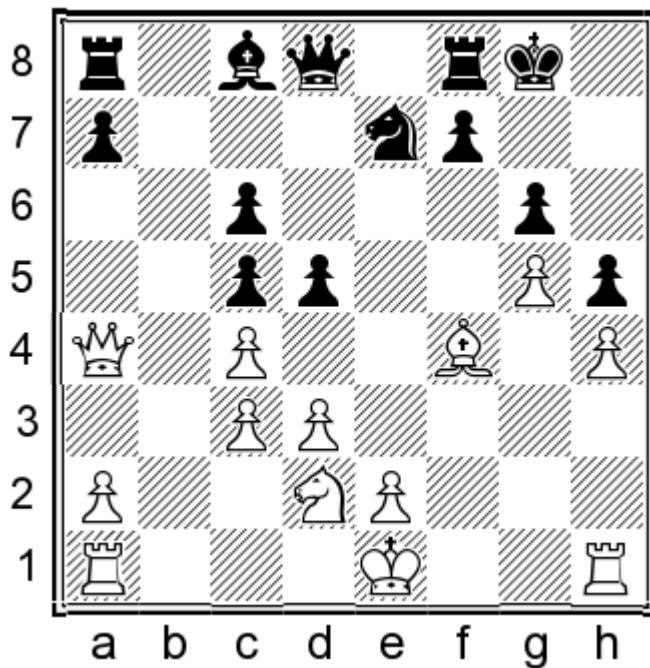
## **8.Bxc6+!?**

One of Rapport's main ideas. The light-squared bishop does not really exert serious pressure down the long diagonal, whereas the knight on c6 can be very useful in the fight for the central squares.

**8...bxc6 9.f4 e5 10.fxe5 Bxe5 11.Nf3 Bxc3+**

Richard was not at all afraid of 11...Bg3+ 12.Kf1 Bg4, and probably quite rightly, as his king feels quite comfortable in the centre after the exchange on c6. Therefore Dominguez Perez decides on an analogous exchange.

**12.bxc3 Ne7 13.Bf4 0-0 14.Nd2 d5 15.Qa4?!**



A serious inaccuracy, which tells a few moves later. Tigran Petrosian described such pieces as 'paper tigers' as they appear to stand well but do not bring any special benefit and are located far from the main theatre of events.

An interesting alternative was the unexpected 15.0-0!? Bh3 16.Rf2 Nf5 17.e4, leading to a complicated battle, but kingside castling hardly entered the Hungarian grandmaster's plans.

**15...Bg4 16.Rh2 Re8 17.Rb1**

An alarm bell should ring – now the king has nowhere to go to escape from the centre. The b-file is fully under White's control, but it is not obvious what use it can be.

**17...Qd7 18.Rf2 Qe6 19.Nb3?**

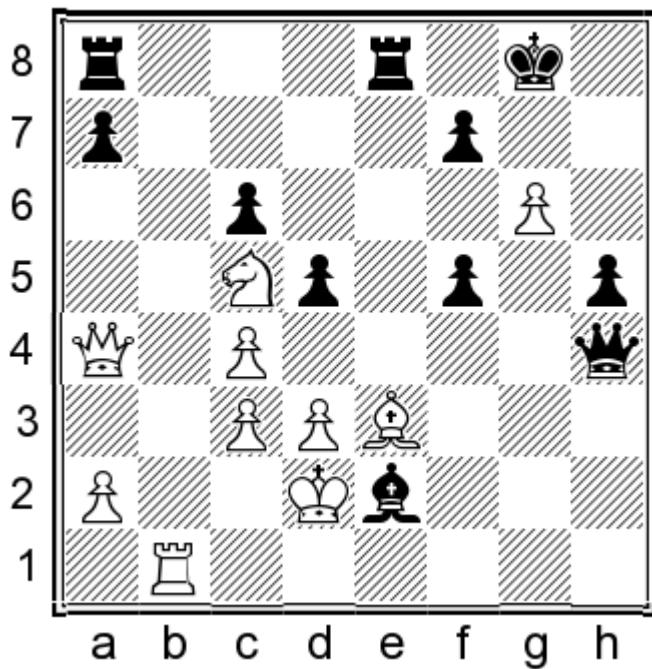
Of course, he does not want to enter the variation 19.cxd5 Nxd5 20.Ne4 Bf5 21.Nxc5 Qe7 22.Ne4 Bxe4 23.Qxe4 Qxe4 24.dxe4 Rxe4 25.Bg3 Nxc3 26.Rb7, hoping to save a difficult endgame a pawn down, but he would then retain decent chances of a draw, thanks to the activity of his rook. The move in the game, on the other hand, allows a decisive blow on the stranded king.

**19...Bxe2! 20.Kd2**

After 20.Rxe2 there follows 20...Qg4 with a double threat to Bf4 and a check on g1, so Rapport tries to run with his king but there is already nowhere to run to.

**20...Qg4 21.Nxc5 Qxh4 22.Be3 Nf5 23.Rxf5 gxf5 24.g6**

An attempt to somehow muddy the waters, to which the then Cuban grandmaster reacts resolutely.



**24...Rxe3! 25.Kxe3 Re8+ 26.Kd2 Qf2**

White has a few checks, but once they run out, he can stop the clocks. That is roughly how the game ended.

**27.gxf7+ Kxf7 28.Qxa7+ Kg8 29.Rb8 Bxd3+ 30.Kxd3 Qe2+**

In view of 31.Kd4 Qe3# White resigned.

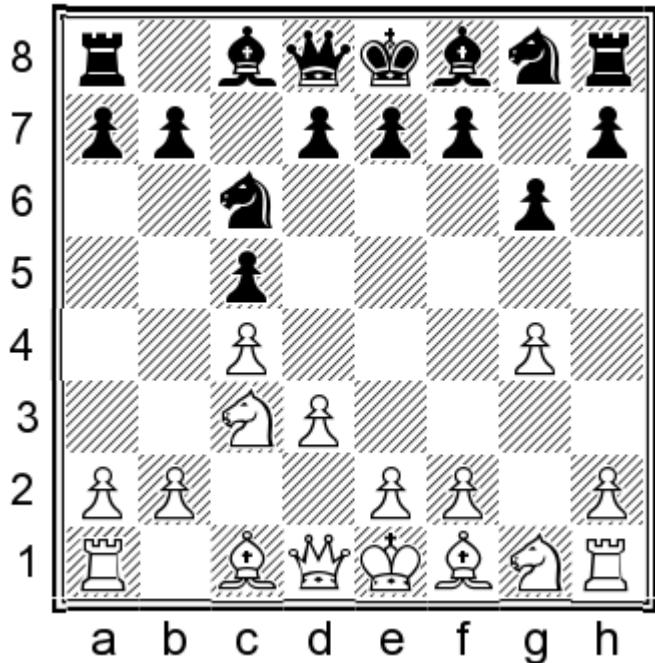
Game 82

**Richard Rapport** 2693

**Pavel Eljanov** 2753

Ashdod rapid 2015 (2)

**1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.d3 g6 4.g4**



The position is different but the general picture is the same – an extended fianchetto.

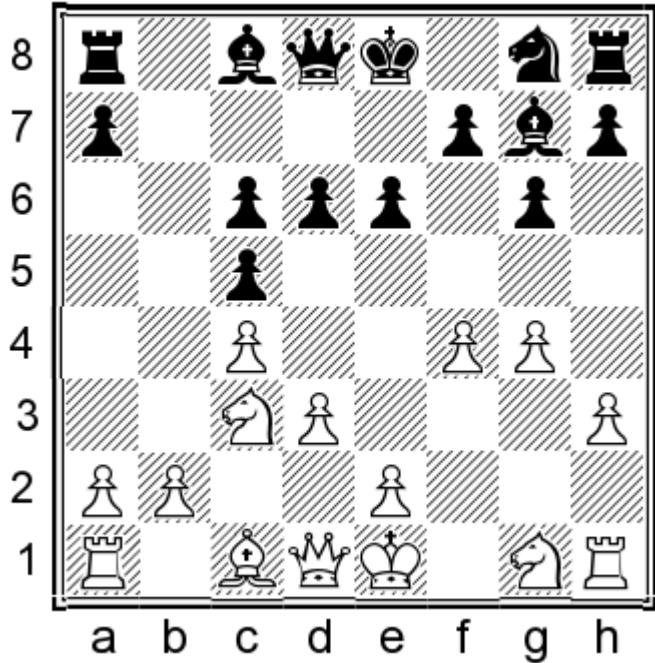
#### **4...Bg7 5.Bg2 d6 6.h3 e6**

Jumping ahead, I can say that in this game with Eljanov, Rapport again fails to score the point, but the Hungarian has had games in which a similar set-up has brought dividends. We will briefly look at some of these:

A) 6...h5 7.g5 h4?! (a dubious decision – much simpler is 7...e6 with a standard battle for the scheme) 8.Qd2 e5 9.Bxc6+ bxc6 10.b3 Be6 11.Bb2 Rh5 12.Ne4 a5 13.f4 f5 14.gxf6 Bh6 15.Ng5 Qxf6 16.N1f3 Bd7 17.fxe5 dxе5 18.Rg1 Bxh3 19.Qe3 Bd7 20.Bxe5 – White is much better and ten moves later, Richard accepted resignation in Rapport-Dezelin, Paracin 2014;

B) 6...Bd7 7.Qd2 a6 8.b3 e5 9.Bb2 Nge7 10.e3 f5 11.gxf5 Bxf5 (up to this moment Schreiner has played quite well, but here he should have taken the pawn with the other piece: 11...Nxf5!?, controlling the square h4) 12.Nge2 Be6 13.h4 Nf5 14.h5 g5 15.0-0-0 Nh4 16.Be4 0-0 17.Rdg1 – the march of the h-pawn eventually decided the game in White's favour, Rapport-Schreiner, Austria tt 2015/16.

#### **7.Bxc6+ bxc6 8.f4**



**8...h5**

Eljanov had an interesting chance to wrench the game out of normal channels with 8...f5!? with the possible follow-up 9.g5 h6 10.Nf3 hxg5 11.Nxg5 Nh6 – for the moment, White cannot get at the g6-pawn, whilst the central pawn phalanx looks quite threatening. However, Pavel's move does not spoil anything.

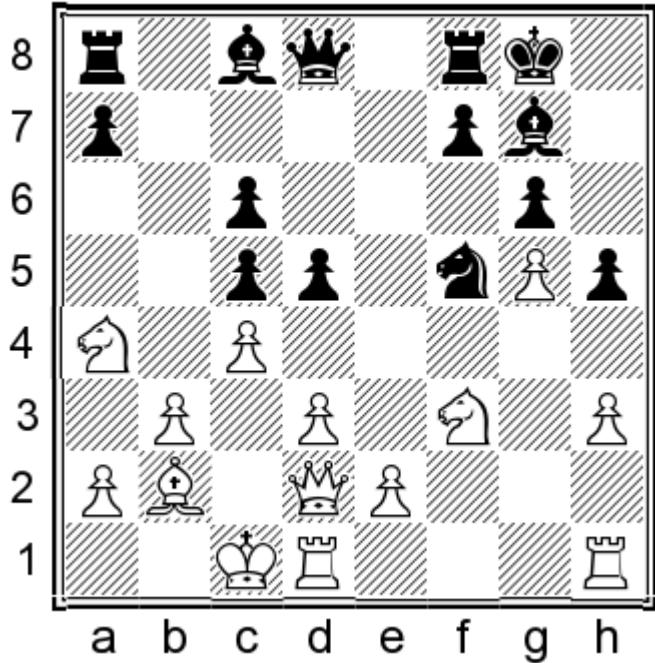
**9.g5 e5 10.fxe5 Bxe5 11.Qd2**

This move is somewhat out of place, but the dark-squared bishop does not need the c1-h6 diagonal anyway – its place is on b2.

**11...Ne7 12.Nf3 Bg7**

Unlike the game against Dominguez Perez, here the check 12...Bg3+ gives Black good chances, although at the end of the variation 13.Kd1 d5 14.Kc2 0-0 15.e4 dxc4 16.dxc4 it was essential to see the far from obvious 16...Nf5!?, beginning a hunt for the enemy king. In rapid chess, such subtleties are quiet hard to spot, so the Ukrainian GM banks on development.

**13.b3 d5 14.Bb2 0-0 15.0-0-0 Nf5 16.Na4**



**16...d4**

The c5-pawn could have been defended in an elegant way: 16...Bd4!? 17.Kb1 Be3 18.Qc3 d4 19.Qe1 a5 – unlike in the game, here the bishop is not blocked by its own pawn, but takes a major part in the attack.

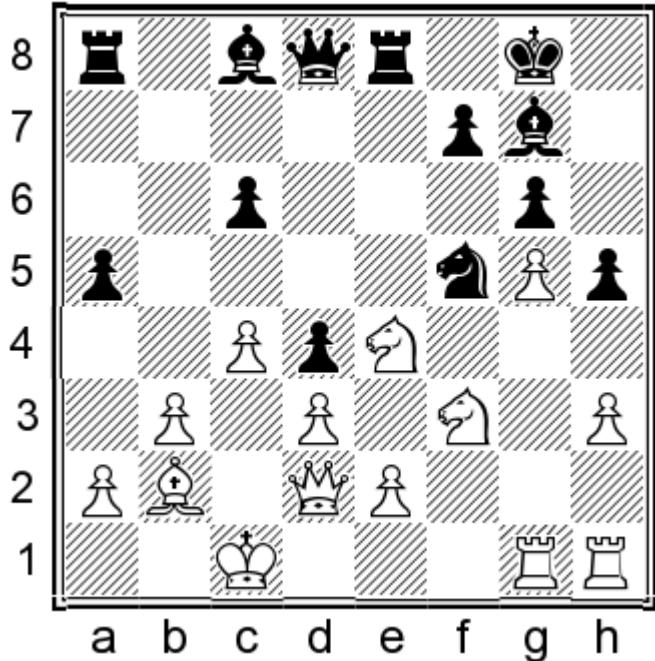
**17.Nxc5**

On mature thought, I would have taken on c5 with the bishop: 17.Ba3 Re8 18.Bxc5. Here after 18...Ne3 19.Rdg1 Bf5 White also has problems finding moves, but at least his bishop has some sort of work.

**17...Re8 18.Ne4**

At first, the computer very much likes the subtle move 18.Kb1, but after 18...Qc7, planning after the knight retreat immediately to occupy the square c5, it takes back its word, if one can say this of a computer.

**18...a5 19.Rdg1**



**19...c5!?**

Sacrificing a second pawn, although one which can hardly be taken. A good alternative was 19...a4 20.b4 a3 21.Ba1 Rb8 with good chances to break through on the b-file.

**20.Qf4**

Taking the pawn is too dangerous: 20.Nxc5 Qb6, and any retreat of the knight brings unpleasantnesses – on 21.Ne4 the immediate 21...a4 is strong, whilst the attempt to blockade with 21.Na4 Qc7 22.Kb1 Bd7 also fails to bring anything good – the knight has nowhere to go.

**20...a4 21.Nh4 Nxh4 22.Qxh4 Bb7 23.Rf1**

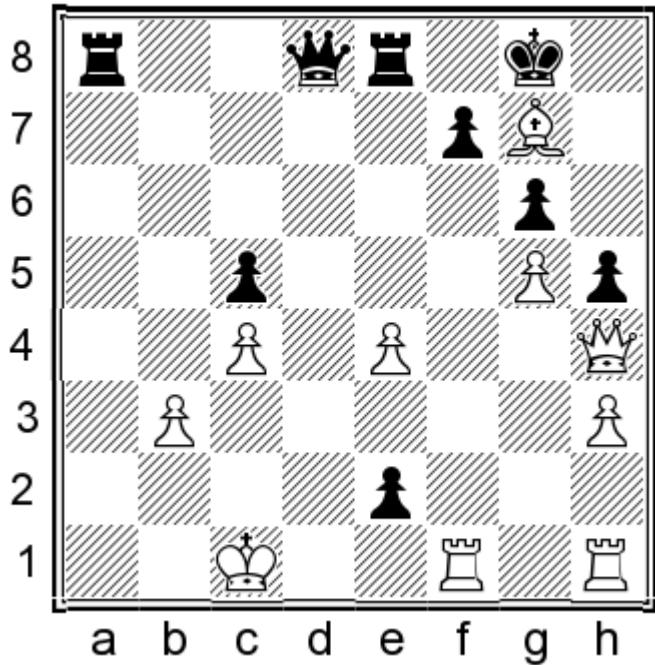
A last attempt to muddy the waters, but with a series of accurate moves, Eljanov reduces the game to the technical stage.

**23...Bxe4 24.dxe4 axb3 25.axb3 d3**

The sleeping Bg7 joins in the attack, not for long, but very effectively.

**26.Bxg7 dxe2**

No worse is 26...Kxg7 27.Qf4 dxe2 28.Qxf7+ Kh8, hiding from the checks, but in rapid chess one wants to play as solidly as possible, and not calculate unnecessary variations.



**27.Rxf7**

He also loses after 27.Bb2 exf1=Q+ 28.Rxf1 Re6 29.Qf4 Qe7 30.Bf6 Qb7 – there are no threats down the long diagonal.

**27...Kxf7 28.Bb2 Kg8**

The further course of the struggle is not particularly interesting – Eljanov calmly brought the game to its logical conclusion. It is a remarkable achievement for the Ukrainian grandmaster – it's even difficult to say with the naked eye at what point White made the decisive mistake. We can only conclude that against Pavel, one needs to advance different pawns...

**B) 1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.e3 Nc6 4.g4**

### Important nuances

The ideas of this variation are similar to those that we considered above – if White ends up not managing to disturb the f6-knight, then, as if nothing had happened, he establishes the ‘extended fianchetto’ and plays normally. It is even better if he manages to disturb the knight, as then he can play to capture the central square d5.

Whereas in the previous case, almost no one dared to take up the bold move with the g-pawn except Richard Rapport, then this variation can be found in the games of several extra-class grandmasters – from the under-20 World Champion Aryan Tari up to Magnus Carlsen.

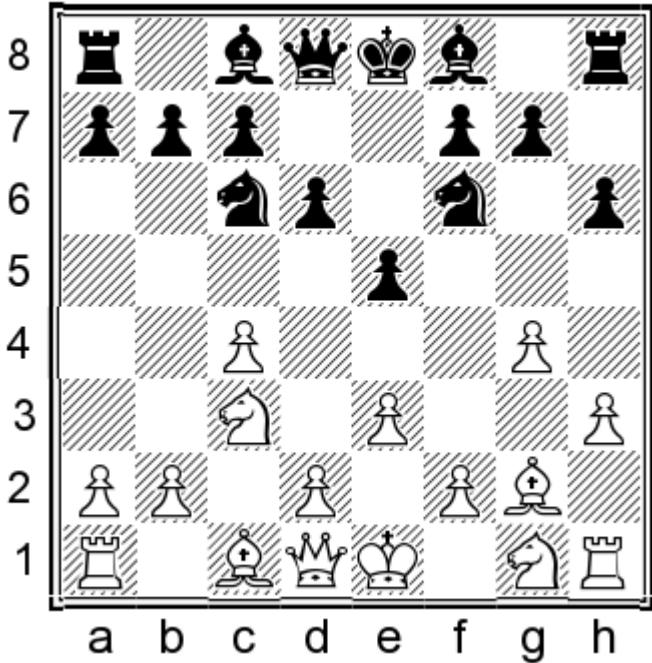
Game 83

**Richard Rapport** 2676

**Levon Aronian** 2795

Germany Bundesliga 2013/14 (13)

**1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.e3 Nc6 4.g4 h6 5.Bg2 d6 6.h3**



**6...Ne7**

The *tabiya* of the variation with 4...h6. Here GMs have tried various different ways to get sufficient play, but by no means all of them have managed to equalize. For example, Sergey Karjakin did not manage to do so, although it was in blitz, which is perfectly explicable:

A) 6...g6 7.Nge2 Bg7 8.d4 0-0 9.0-0 Re8 10.d5 Nb8 11.f4 exf4 12.exf4 c6 13.Ng3 cxd5 14.cxd5 Na6 15.g5 hxg5 16.fxg5 Nd7 17.Nge4 (even stronger was 17.Nce4!?) 17...Nac5 18.Nxd6 with an extra pawn and an overwhelming position for White, Indjic-Karjakin, St Petersburg blitz 2018;

B) A more interesting line was played by Milos Pavlovic, who beat the main practitioner of the variation: 6...Be6 7.Nd5 e4 8.Ne2 Ne5 9.Nef4 Bxd5 10.cxd5 g5 11.Ne2 c6 12.Ng3 Nd3+ 13.Kf1 cxd5 14.f3 h5 15.fxe4 hxg4 16.Qc2 gxh3 17.Bxh3? (the decisive mistake; after 17.Rxh3 the whole battle lies ahead) 17...Rxh3! 18.Qa4+ Nd7 19.Rxh3 Qf6+ 20.Ke2 g4 21.Rh5 N3c5, and faced with material loss, Richard stopped the clocks, Rapport-Pavlovic, Basel 2015.

**7.d4 Ng6 8.Nf3 Be7 9.Qc2 c6 10.dxe5 Nxe5 11.Nxe5**

He could have delayed this exchange – after 11.b3!? without the preliminary exchange, it is easier for the bishop to exert pressure on the long diagonal.

**11...dxe5 12.b3 Qc7 13.Bb2 Bd7 14.0-0-0 0-0-0**

Neither side has any choice as castling kingside would be too dangerous.

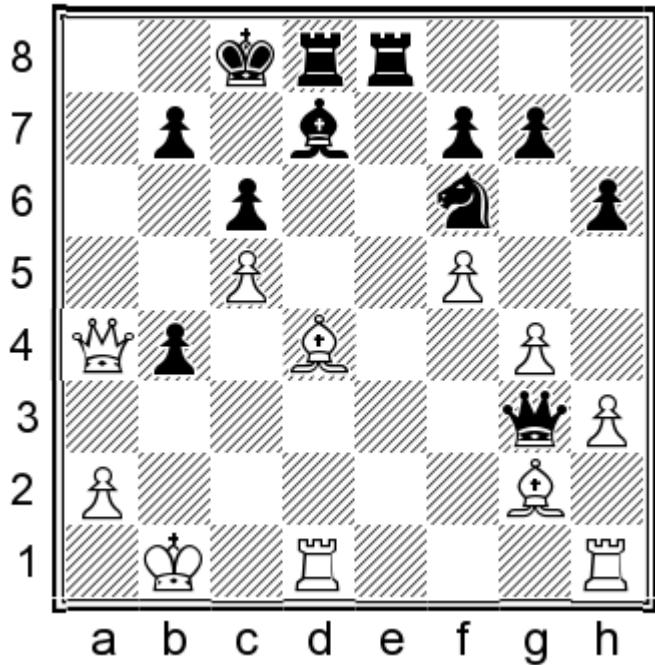
**15.Ne2 Be6 16.f4 exf4 17.exf4 Bd6 18.f5**

Rapport's desire to press back the enemy pieces is understandable, but after this move, the important square e5 is weakened. In view of this, it was possible instead to try 18.Rhf1!? – White has all of his pieces in play and it is not so simple for Black to get out of the confines of his first three ranks.

**18...Bd7 19.Kb1 Be5 20.Nd4 Rhe8 21.b4 a5!**

A deep and accurately calculated move. Black organizes counterplay move by move and escapes from the press.

**22.c5 axb4 23.Qa4 Bxd4 24.Bxd4 Qg3**



**25.Bf3**

A move in Rapport's style. The position is objectively drawn anyway, but Richard finds the most aesthetic way to that result.

**25...Qxf3 26.Qa8+ Kc7 27.Qa5+ Kc8 28.Qa8+ Kc7 29.Qa5+**

With perpetual check.

We end this not very extensive, but quite interesting chapter with a fascinating game by the World Champion, Magnus Carlsen. His blitz game against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave had its inaccuracies, but once again reminds that GMs of super-class can still play chess in the old romantic spirit.

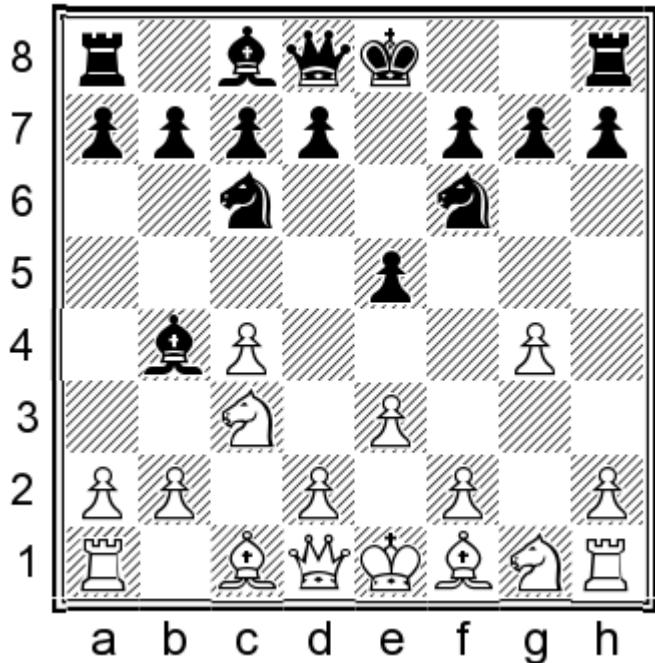
Game 84

Magnus Carlsen 2832

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2796

Leuven blitz 2017 (12)

**1.c4 e5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.g4 Bb4**

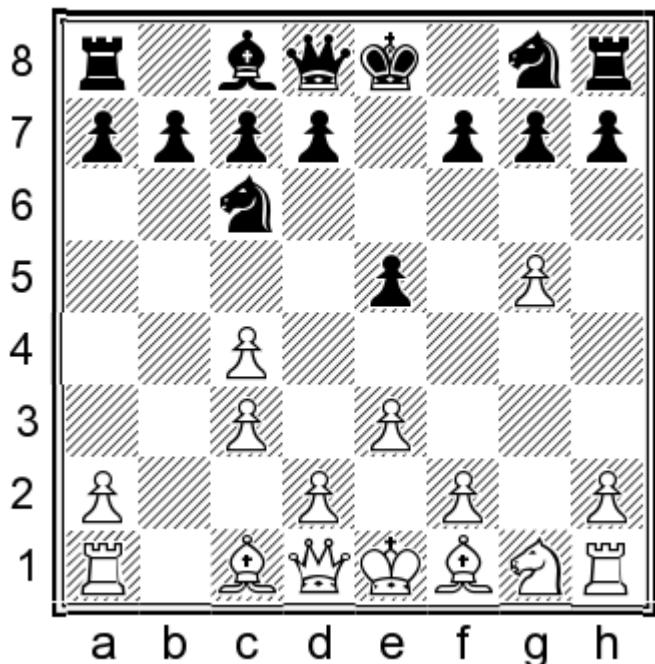


A sensible move from the French GM. Given that one of White's ideas involves the occupation of d5, why not liquidate the main contender for that square?

### **5.g5 Bxc3 6.bxc3**

After 6.gxf6 Ba5 7.fxg7 Rg8 Black regains the pawn and is seriously ahead in development, so Carlsen chooses a more natural plan.

### **6...Ng8**

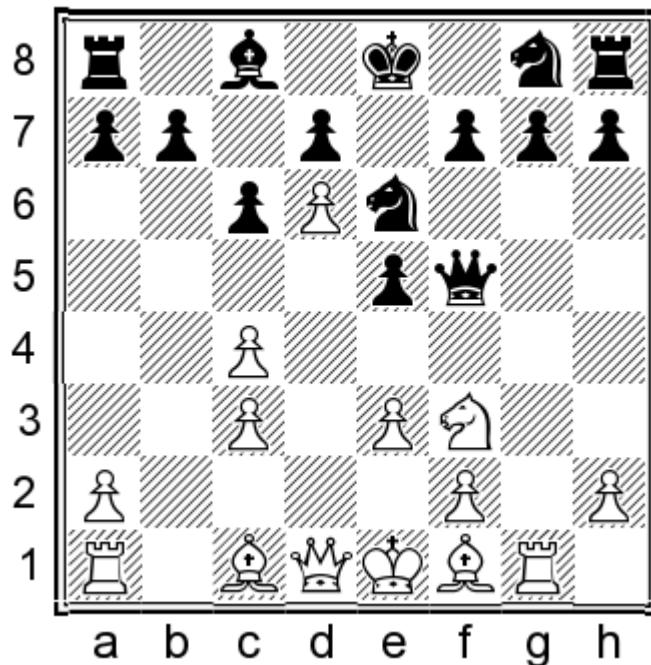


What should we do with the pawn on g5? Of course, one can always defend it with 7.h4!?, but after 7...d6 8.d4 h6 White simply cannot complete his development. In view of the fast time control, Magnus takes objectively the strongest decision – he sacrifices the g5-pawn.

### **7.d4 Qxg5 8.d5 Nd8 9.d6!**

Shutting in the c8-bishop on its starting square, on which it is destined to remain for 20 moves!

**9...c6 10.Nf3 Qf5 11.Rg1 Ne6**



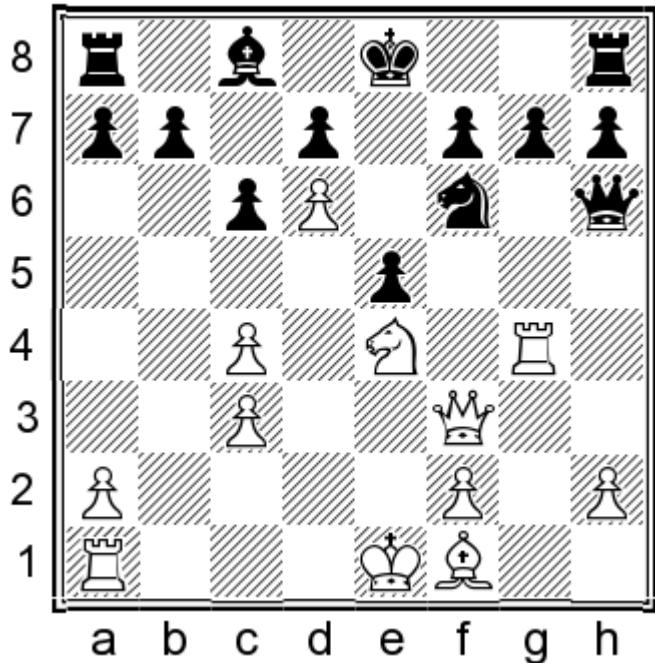
The cold-blooded computer does not understand the World Champion's 'altruistic' ideas and suggests putting an end to the game as soon as possible, with the variation 12.Rg3!? Nf6 13.Bh3 Qh5 14.Bxe6 dxе6 15.Rg5 Qh6 16.e4 0-0, and the game should end in a repetition of moves after the rook retreats along the g-file. Magnus, in his turn, shows a human approach to the position, throwing a second pawn onto the fire.

**12.e4!? Qxe4+ 13.Be3 Qf5 14.Ng5 Nf4 15.Bxf4 Qxf4 16.Rg4 Qf6**

Nominally, Magnus is sacrificing a third pawn, but this capture would clearly be excessive: 16...Qxh2?! 17.Qe2 f6 18.Nh3 g6 19.Qe3 – Black has only his queen in play and she is almost trapped.

**17.Ne4 Qh6 18.Qf3 Nf6**

Knowing what happens, it is easy to find the move 18...g6!? with the immediate threat of ...f7-f5, as well as freeing g7 for the queen. The knight check on f6 is not dangerous, as Black can still castle.



**19.Rxg7! Qxg7?**

Strangely, this natural move proves to be Black's first mistake and is already enough to cost him the game. Black can successfully resist after 19...Kf8! with the idea of taking on g7 with the king. The retreat 20.Rg3 is forced, but now there is time for 20...Nxe4 21.Qxe4 Qxd6 22.Qh4 Qe7 23.Qh6+ Ke8. Of course, after 24.0-0-0 White has very powerful compensation, but nothing concrete is obvious and Black's two extra pawns should sooner or later tell.

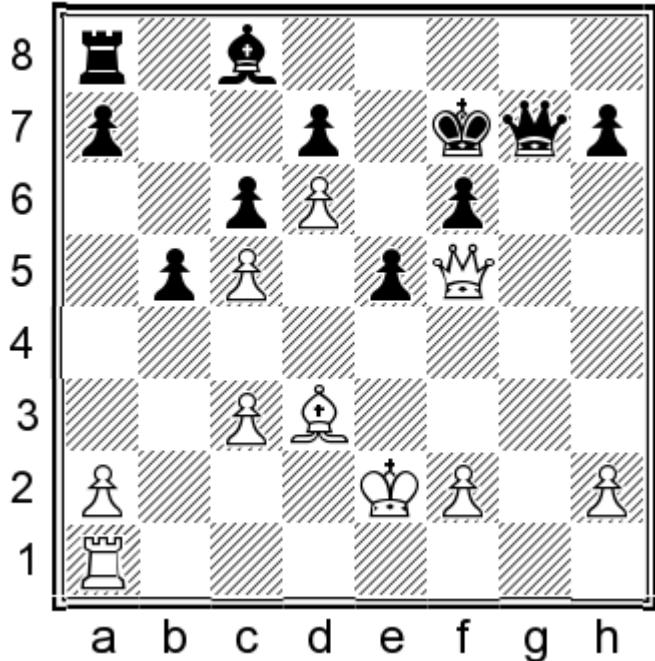
**20.Nxf6+ Kd8 21.Qf5 Re8**

Vachier-Lagrave has no choice, as he cannot allow the queen capture on e5.

**22.Nxe8 Kxe8 23.c5**

White has more than enough ways to retain the initiative. There is also the simple 23.0-0-0, and the trickier 23.f4!? exf4 24.Kd2, opening the e-file, but here too, Carlsen goes his own way.

**23...b5 24.Bd3 f6 25.Ke2 Kf7**



Black clings on with his last breath: White just needs to bring his rook into play and the game will be over. The simplest way is 26.a4, but Magnus is true to himself and plays another striking manoeuvre:

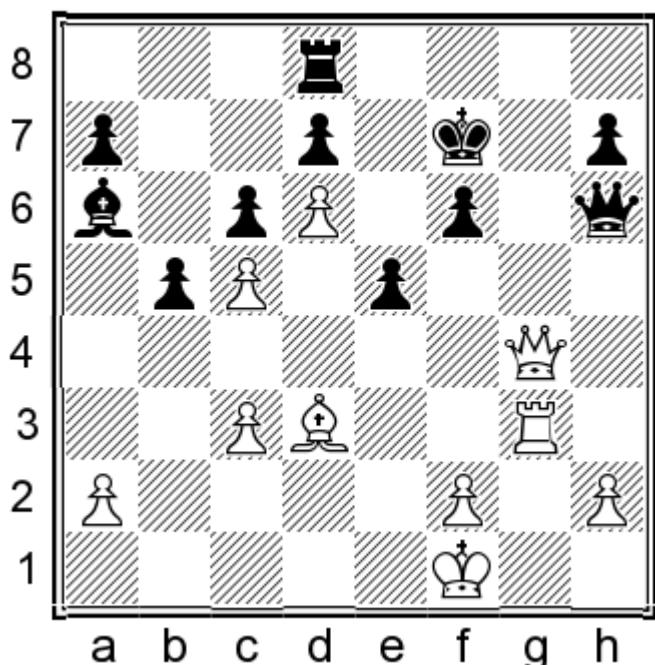
## 26.Rh1!?

There is no defence against 27.Kf1 and Rh1-g1-g3. Amazing!

**26...Rb8 27.Kf1 Qg6 28.Qf3 Qh6 29.Rg1 Ba6**

Finally the bishop emerges from its place, but too much water has already flowed under the bridge, and anyway, it is hardly much better placed on a6.

**30.Qg4 Rd8 31.Rg3**



Later, Magnus missed a direct win, but was triumphant anyway. An energetic attack, seasoned with several sacrifices and an effective rook move into the corner. Can one ask for more from a blitz game?

## **Conclusions**

1. Since the English is a flank opening, White's ideas are related to playing on the flanks, and often it is just a matter of a double fianchetto, with pressure on the squares d5 and f5.
2. In practice, the variation is quite rare, and usually a few moves are enough for the players to reach a completely new position. The statistics are on Black's side, so he can breathe easy – as practice shows, almost any sensible set-up allows him to start a full-blown fight.
3. Despite the fact that g2-g4 in the above variations has the right to exist, I would not advise inexperienced players to go for this opening set-up – the positions arising are very difficult and usually lead to an equal game, in which the one who understands chess better wins. But do not despair – to fight for the advantage, you can try many other lines in which g2-g4 follows more logically from White's strategy!

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1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 (Games 5-7)

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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Bf5 6.e3 Nd7 7.g4 (Game 8)

3...Be7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 c6 6.e3 Bf5 7.g4 (Game 9)

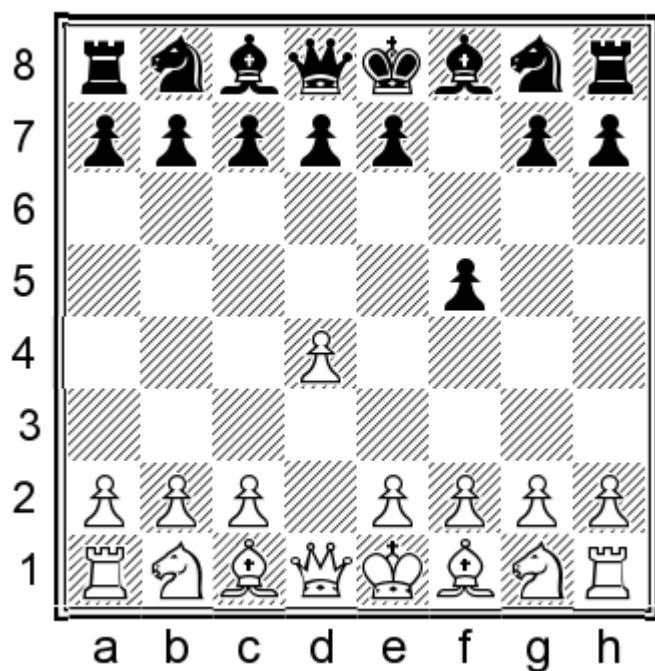
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 b6 5.Ne2 Ba6 6.a3 Be7 7.Nf4 d5 8.cxd5 Bxf1 9.Kxf1 exd5 10.g4 (Game 10)

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3 Bb4 4.Bg2 0-0 5.a3 Bxc3 6.bxc3 e4!? (Game 11)

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1.d4 e6 2.c4 Bb4+ 3.Nc3 f5 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Ne4 7.Qc2 c5 8.Nd2 Qa5 9.Bb2 Nxd2 10.Qxd2 b6 11.g4

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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 Nh6 (Game 16)

5...Nf6 (Games 17-19)

5...fxg4 (Game 20)

## Chapter 6

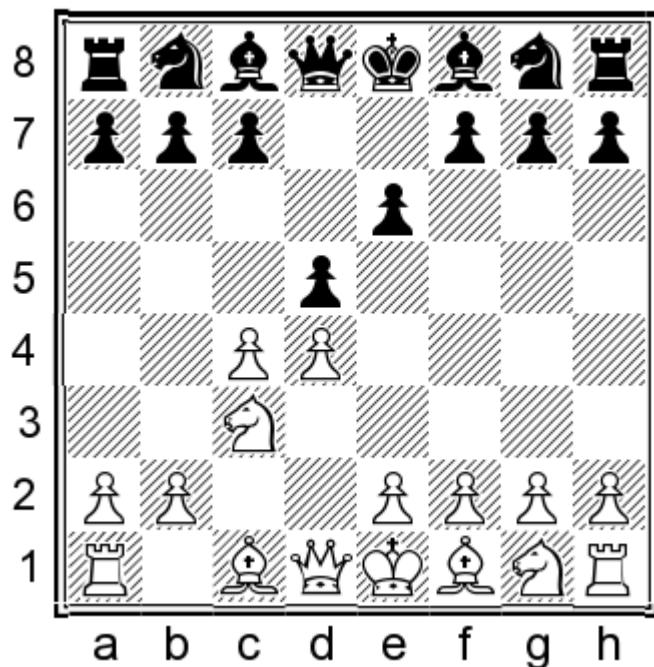
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Qc2 f5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 Ne4 7.Nc3 Be7 8.Bd3 Nd7 9.g4 (Game 21)

8...0-0 9.g4 (Game 22)

6...Be7 7.Nc3 0-0 8.h3 a6 9.g4 (Game 23)

1.d4 f5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 d6 4.Bg5 Nbd7 5.g4 (Game 24)

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3...Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 h6 7.Bxf6 Bxf6 8.Qc2 b6 9.0-0-0 Bb7 10.cxd5 exd5 11.h4 c5 12.g4 (Game 25)

5...h6 6.Bxf6 Bxf6 7.e3 c6 8.Qc2 0-0 9.h4 Nd7 10.g4 (Game 26)

5.g4 (Game 27)

3...Be7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 Nf6 6.e3 Bf5 7.Qb3 Nc6 8.g4 (Game 28)

3...Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.e3 Ne4 8.Bxe7 Qxe7 9.Rc1 c6 10.h4 Nd7 11.g4 (Game 29)

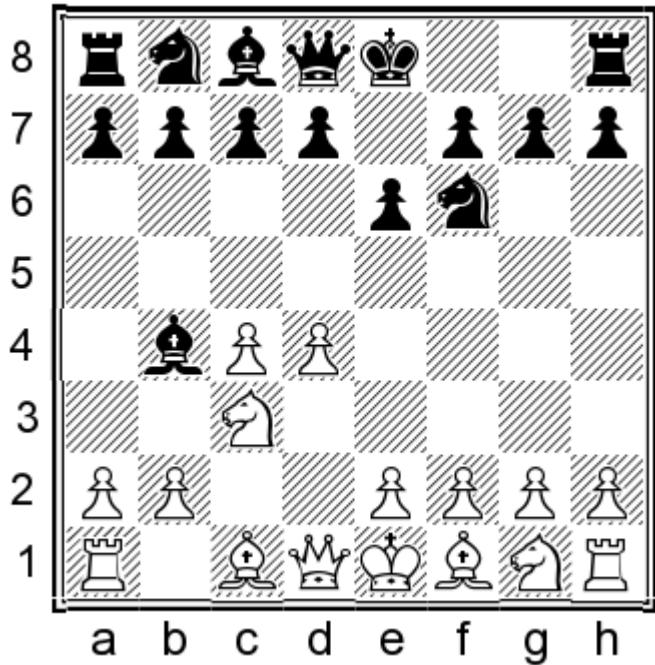
7...b6 8.g4 (Game 30)

5.Bf4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.Qc2 Nc6 9.a3 Qa5 10.0-0-0 Be7 11.Kb1 a6 12.g4 (Game 31)

4...Nbd7 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 Be7 7.e3 0-0 8.Bd3 Re8 9.0-0 c6 10.Qc2 Nf8 11.h3 g6 12.Bh6 Ne6 13.Ne5 Ng7 14.g4 (Game 32)

4...Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bf4 0-0 7.e3 Nbd7 8.g4 (Game 33)

## Part IV – The Nimzo-Indian Defence (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4)



## Chapter 8

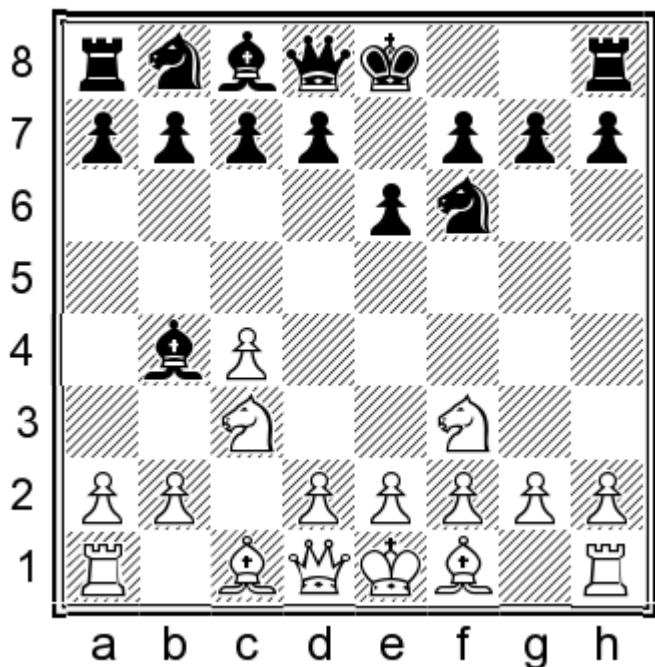
4.f3 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.e3 c4 9.Ne2 0-0 (9...Nc6) 10.g4 (Games 34-38)

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5.Qd3 f5 6.g4 (Game 40)

## Part V – The Anti-Nimzo-Indian (1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4)



## Chapter 10

4.g4 d5 (Game 41)

4...d6 (Game 42)

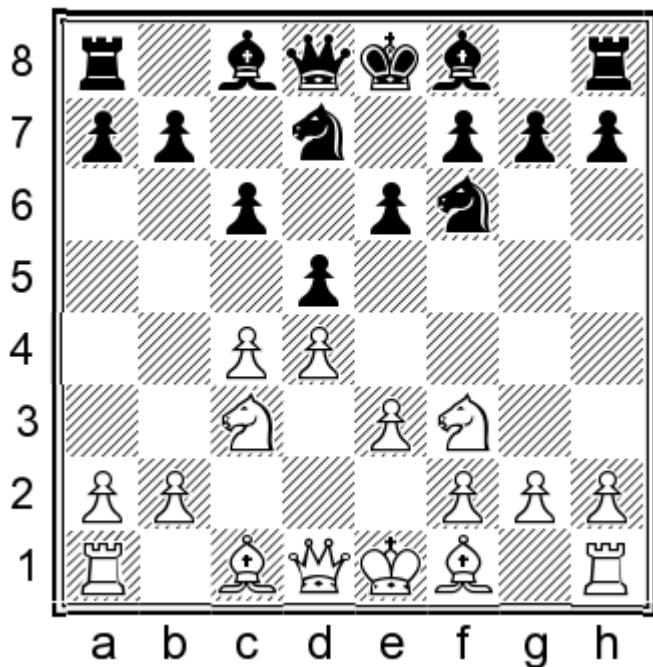
4...h6 (Game 43)

4...Bxc3 (Game 44)

4...0-0 (Game 45)

4...b6 (Game 46)

## Part VI – The Semi-Slav Defence (1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7)



### Chapter 11

6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 0-0 (Game 47)

7...Nxe4 (Games 48-50, 55)

7...dxc4 (Game 51-52)

7...Bb4 (Games 53-54, 58)

7...h6 (Game 56-57)

### Chapter 12

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Qc2 e6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 Bd6 7.Be2 0-0 8.Nc3 b6 9.Rg1 (Games 59, 61)

9...b5 10.g4 (Game 60)

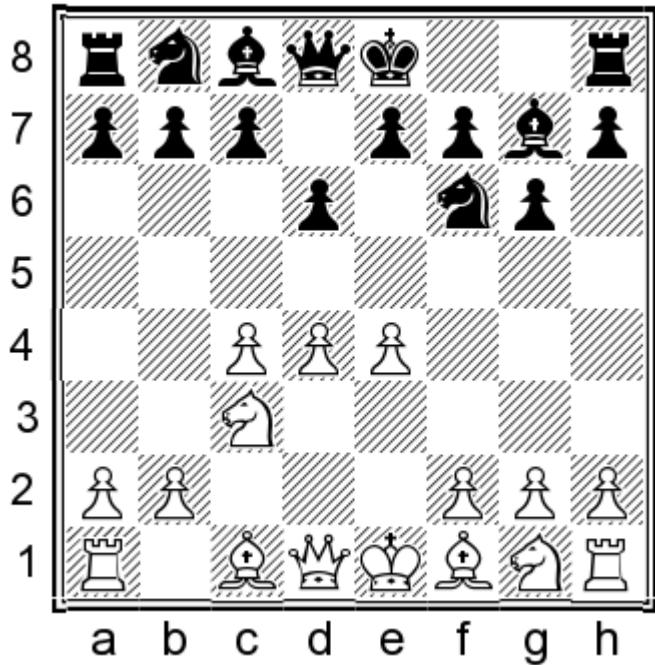
7.g4 (Game 62)

4.Nc3 e6 5.Qc2 Bd6 6.b3 0-0 7.Bb2 e5 (Game 64)

1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 Bd6 7.Qc2 0-0 8.Rg1 e5 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.g4 (Game 63)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 a6 5.a4 e6 6.Bf4 a5 7.e3 Be7 8.g4 (Game 65)

## Part VII – The King's Indian Defence (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6)



## Chapter 13

5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.Ne1 Nd7 10.f3 f5 11.g4 f4 (Game 66)

11...Nf6 (Game 67, 69)

11...h5 (Game 68)

11...Kh8 (Game 70)

## Chapter 14

5.Be2 0-0 6.Be3 e5 7.d5 Na6 8.g4 (Games 71-72)

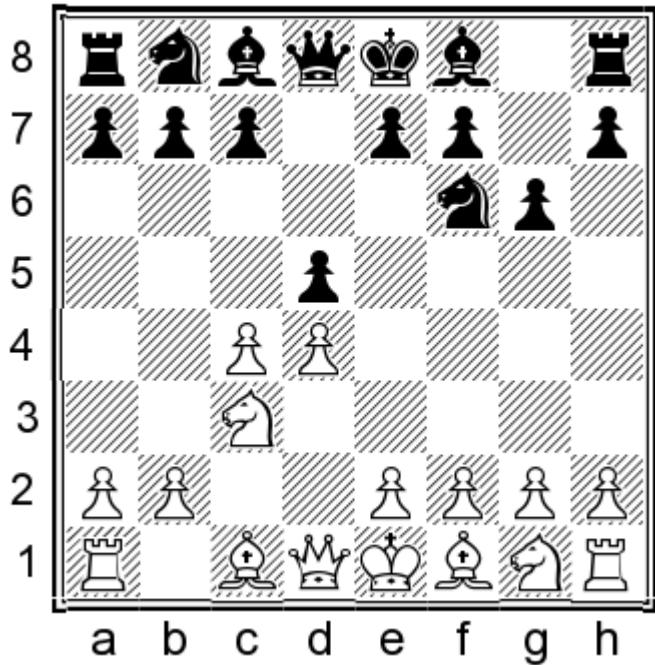
6...c6 7.g4 (Game 73)

6...Na6 7.g4 (Game 74)

## Chapter 15

5.Nf3 0-0 6.h3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.g4 (Games 75-77)

**Part VIII – The Grünfeld Indian Defence (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5)**



## Chapter 16

4.g4 dxc4 (Game 78)

4...Bxg4 (Game 79)

4...c5 (Game 80)

## Chapter 17

1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 g6 3.g4 (Game 81)

2...Nc6 3.d3 g6 4.g4 (Game 82)

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.e3 Nc6 4.g4 h6 (Game 83)

4...Bb4 (Game 84)

